Post-Roman Transitions
CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

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IDENTITIES IN THE LATIN WEST

Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages were a decisive period for the formation of identities in the Latin West. Presenting the results of projects and international collaborations centred in Vienna, this sub-series of volumes within the CELAMA series is devoted to exploring the social context, cultural resources, and political consequences of these new models for identification.


Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the back of the book.

Volume 14
## Contents

Illustrations vii

Preface
   WALTER POHL and GERDA HEYDEMANN ix

Christian and Barbarian Identities
in the Early Medieval West: Introduction
   WALTER POHL 1

### Section 1: Scripts for Identity — Resources of the Past

Who is Allowed to Pray for the King?
Saint-Maurice d’Agaune and the Creation of a Burgundian Identity
   ALBRECHT DIEM 47

*Patrisia, peregrinatio, and paenitentia:*
Identities of Alienation in the Seventh Century
   ALEXANDER O’HARA 89

*Religiones and gentes* in Isidore of Seville’s *Chronica maiora*
   JAMIE WOOD 125

Adventus, Warfare, and the Britons in
the Development of West Saxon Identity
   JOHN-HENRY CLAY 169
Arrivano i barbari a cavallo! Foundation Myths and \textit{Origines gentium} in the Adriatic Arc
FRANCESCO BORRI 215

Tuscan as \textit{gens}? Shaping Local Identities and Communities in Early Medieval Tuscany
MARCO STOFFELLA 271

Section 2: Romanness and Otherness — Signs of Distinction and their Ambiguities

Who Were the Romans?
Shifting Scripts of Romanness in Early Medieval Italy
MAYA MASKARINEC 297

The Fading Power of Images: Romans, Barbarians, and the Uses of a Dichotomy in Early Medieval Archaeology
PHILIPP VON RUMMEL 365

Remembering the Warriors: Weapon Burials and Tombstones between Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Northern Italy
IRENE BARBIERA 407

Who is the Barbarian?
Considerations on the Vandal Royal Title
ROLAND STEINACHER 437

Die Wahrnehmung der nichtfränkischen Völker in der merowingerzeitlichen Historiographie
GERALD KRUTZLER 487

Scritture nazionali e aree culturali: le epigrafi tra forme, contenuti e trasmissioni testuali in Italia e nell’Europa altomedievale
FLAVIA DE RUBEIS 549
ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

Figure 1, p. 371. ‘The Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus’, Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps. c. AD 260.

Figure 2, p. 374. ‘Victory of the Israelites over the Amorites’, Roma, Santa Maria Maggiore. c. AD 432–40.

Figure 3, p. 382. ‘Roman’ Grave Goods from Grosseto, loc. Grancia.

Figure 4, p. 383. Characteristic ‘Germanic’ Grave Goods from Erpfting, Bavaria. Sixth century.

Figure 5, p. 392. ‘Togatus’ from Ostia, Ostia, Museo Archeologico, Scavi di Ostia Antica. c. AD 400.

Figure 6, p. 392. ‘Monza-Diptychon’, Monza, Tesore del Duomo. c. AD 400.

Figure 7, p. 395. ‘Silver Plate from the Treasure of Isola Rizza’, Verona, Museo di Castelvecchio, Inv. 13871. Sixth century.

Figure 8, p. 420. ‘Funerary Epigraphs from Aquileia, depicting horsemen’, Aquilea, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Third to fourth century AD.

Figure 9, p. 421. ‘Funerary Epigraphs from Aquileia, depicting soldiers with shield and lance’, Aquilea, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. Third to fourth century AD.
Graphs

Graph 1, p. 413. Percentage of Graves with Weapons.

Graphs 2a–2e, pp. 414–15. Types of Weapons Distributed in Northern Italy between the First Century BC and the Ninth Century AD.

Graph 3, p. 419. References to the Status of Soldiers on the Inscriptions from Aquileia and Concordia.

Maps

Map 1, p. 171. South-West England in the Early Saxon Period, showing major settlements, roads, and battles recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

Map 2, p. 386. Weapon Furnishings in the Southern German Region.

Tables

Table 1, p. 106. The Ethnic Terms in Jonas of Bobbio’s Hagiography

Table 2, p. 150. The Succession of Kingdoms in the Second Redaction of the *Chronica maiora*

Table 3, p. 157. Persia and Persians at the End of the *Chronica maiora*

Table 4, pp. 428–29. Specific Information Regarding the Cemeteries Surveyed in this Study.
This volume traces the interplay between Christianity, ethnicity, and the formation of political identities in a post-Roman World. Through a variety of case studies, the papers explore the tenacity and the malleability of Roman and Christian forms of identification and othering in the barbarian kingdoms of the early medieval West. It is closely connected with its companion volume, *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, which appeared as volume 13 in this series. As a collective effort, these volumes represent a main result of an extraordinary project, ‘Ethnic Identities in Early Medieval Europe’. This research programme, carried out between 2005 and 2010, was funded by the Wittgenstein prize of the FWF (Austrian Science Fund), which created the opportunity to build up a team of young researchers to study the role of ethnic identities in early medieval Europe in a much broader perspective than had so far been possible.1 The volume was finalized in the context of the SFB F42–G18, ‘Visions of Community’, also funded by the FWF since 2011. The Institute for Medieval Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences provided an excellent environment and offered indispensable infrastructure for our research. The project also profited enormously from the facilities and the inspiring atmosphere at the University of Vienna, both at the History Department and at the *Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*. Both institutions made it possible to integrate the junior researchers financed through the Wittgenstein project into an open working group, together with junior scholars on their payroll, with graduate students, with a number of visiting fellows from abroad, part of whom came with their

1 See also <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/gema/wittg_pro/wittg_pro.htm>.
own grants, and with many associated researchers. The two volumes owe much to the lively atmosphere, the many informal discussions, and the inspiring meetings in the project group, and of course to the new ideas and approaches that were developed in their course. Most contributions were repeatedly discussed in the Wittgenstein team at different stages, and efforts were made to link them to each other and to the central interests of the project, even though they had been deliberately designed to explore a wide range of very different sources and questions within the overarching theme of early medieval identity formation.

We are grateful to the institutions that have made the experience of the Wittgenstein project and the work on the two volumes possible. Many thanks are due to all friends and colleagues who offered suggestions, advice, and inspiration for this volume, specifically: Richard Corradini, Marianne Pollheimer, Gerald Krutzler, Francesco Borri, and Hannes Rois helped with the preparation of the manuscript; John Clay, Jamie Kreiner, Meg Leja, Matthew Gillis, and Timothy Scott helped with the English. The Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona has kindly granted permission to reproduce the Silver Plate from the Treasure of Isola Rizza as a cover image for this book, for which we are grateful. Thanks also go to Yitzhak Hen, who accepted the volumes for his series, and to all those at Brepols who had their share in the publishing process. It has been a pleasure to work with this group, and we hope that, for many, it will also be a pleasure to use and read this volume.

2 On the plate, see Philipp von Rummel’s contribution in this volume (Figure 7), and, for recent work on the treasure of Isola Rizza, see Margherita Bolla, ‘Il tesoro di Isola Rizza’, in Roma e i Barbari: la nascita di un nuovo mondo, ed. by Jean-Jacques Aillagon (Milano, 2008), pp. 392–93; and Margherita Bolla, ‘Il “tesoro” di Isola Rizza: osservazioni in occasione del restauro’, in Numismatica e antichità classiche, 28 (1999), 275–303.
The story of the fall of Rome has often been told as a tale of destruction: the failure of an empire, the demolition of its infrastructure, the end of civilization. For a long time, this account of ‘decline and fall’ was the dominant paradigm. But it can also be analysed as a long-term process of transformation, accentuated not by one fatal blow to classical civilization, but as a multitude of transitions that eventually created rather different societies. At a time when the paradigm of catastrophe seemed finally superseded, it has recently and very forcefully been revived. A familiar polemic has subse-
quently returned to the field. What were the reasons and the consequences of the dismantling of the western Empire? The debate tends to fall back on the old dichotomy: catastrophe or continuity? This either-or approach still gives some leeway to differentiating studies and new insights. How much of urbanism, long-distance trade, the manufacturing of goods, the tax-system, classical education, or artisanal skills survived the political disruption? But it risks feeding back the results, however complex they may be, into a rather simple overall frame of interpretation: classical culture is lost in a seemingly irresistible tide of barbarians; in a major historical backlash, nature reclaims many lands where culture has reigned for hundreds of years. The barbarians, that is the implication, are a force of nature, and ethnicity is their natural form of organization, as opposed to the civic culture of the ancient Mediterranean. Or, alternatively, the barbarians were an episode that hardly had any impact, and Roman civilization survived under an only slightly different guise.

Romans against barbarians — the ideology-packed Roman narrative of the civilizing mission of the Empire in defence against the brute forces of human nature is still there, half-hidden in the back of our intellectual mind-set. As a matrix of interpretation, it can build directly on a good deal of the evidence; that is an advantage, but it may also be deceptive. Roman narratives of devastating barbarian raids may often be exaggerated, although they are not simply invented. There are substantial clues in the material evidence that many cities were really destroyed, some regions depopulated, economic activities stopped, and cultural skills lost. But was all of that due to bloodshed and destruction? Quite remarkably, some of the most catastrophic events in European history, with an enormous loss of lives — the Black Plague from 1348 onwards, the Thirty-Years War in Germany, or the Second World War — did not at all lead to the end of civilization or to a fundamental change of culture. Furthermore, destruction was by no means general in the Roman Empire; it mostly affected its European parts, and even here, after the turmoil of the fifth century many regions were able to regenerate, if to different degrees. While, for instance, Aquileia was in decline after being plundered by Attila’s army, Ravenna prospered and expanded. The Roman-style aristocracy disappeared in post-imperial

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5 Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*; Goffart, ‘Rome’s Final Conquest’.

6 Mathisen, *Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul*. 
Britain and kept its influence and traditional pride in Gaul. Simple dichotomies such as Romans/barbarians, continuity/catastrophe therefore cannot go all the way in explaining the complex process of social and cultural change in and beyond the Empire. This is the main methodological problem with the Roman/barbarian dichotomy: by concentrating on the great drama (which German scholars liked to style *welthistorisches Ringen*, a world-historical confrontation) between Romans and ‘Germans’, we tend to obliterate other important and less obvious parts of the process. There is no room for all the paradox, the subtlety, the ambiguities in it. In many cases, Roman and barbarian officers or peasants were not all that different from each other. Really ‘barbaric’ barbarians might have their moments of glory, but could not build lasting kingdoms on Roman territory. Here, Roman barbarians and barbarian Romans competed for power within an imperial framework that could not be sustained everywhere in the course of events. Furthermore, the focus on violence and destruction, so attractive for the general reader, diverts attention from the many changes and innovations of the period, so masterfully exposed by Peter Brown and others. We need the whole range of forms of historical change — destruction and discontinuation, decline and reduction, reshaping and reuse, experiment and innovation — to explain the complex transitional phase from pagan to Christian empire and kingdoms, with its variously contracting and expanding periphery of pagan tribal or segmentary societies. I still believe that ‘Transformation of the Roman World’ is an adequate overall label for these multiple changes.

In the process, some social spaces contracted, for instance the ancient city with its intricate distinctions of status and merit, or the world of the imperial aristocracy between the imperial court, traditional public office and its lavish villas and extensive properties in many provinces; or the erudite world of pagan intellectuals and schools, whose teachings had remained the noblest sign of distinction in the classical world for so long. Other social spaces expanded or emerged: the new networks of the barbarian military elite, the ‘soft power’ of an episcopate between old wealth and new values, the fast-spreading archipelago of monastic communities, or the relatively self-sufficient village economies in many parts of Europe. Not all of these changes in the physiognomy of social

7 Delogu and Gasparri, eds, *Le trasformazioni del v secolo*.
9 Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*. 
roles were necessarily confrontational; educated senators and imperial officials could become bishops, and the villa could turn into a village, not necessarily to the detriment of the peasants.\(^{10}\) We can also describe this as a transformation of identities: the contraction of old and the emergence of new forms of identity and community. Ethnicity was one of these emerging forms of identification. Educated Greeks and Romans had long regarded it as a rather barbarian form of belonging, and had prided themselves in their civic, provincial, or imperial identities. Gradually, ethnicity came to be accepted as a mark of distinction in former Roman provinces.

These changes of identity are the focus of the present volume. Early medieval ethnicity provided the point of departure for the Wittgenstein prize project, and it soon became clear that ethnic identities had to be studied in the context of other forms of identity and community. The project, located at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna, was financed by the Austrian Research Fund (FWF) between 2005 and 2010. This volume and its companion volume, Strategies of Identification, give an overview of the results of the studies pursued in the project.\(^{11}\) As I have argued in the introduction to the latter volume, what the term ‘identity’ provides is a set of tools for analysis, not easily-accessible answers to our questions, and far less simple labels for the sense of belonging of individuals to collectives.\(^{12}\) Identities do not simply exist, once and for all, as quasi-natural categories. They are the result of a series of different identifications: of an individual with a group (which can be accepted by the group or not), of the group as such (as a collective or through its representatives), and by outsiders in their perception and recognition of that group (including contemporary and modern scholarly identifications). The success of a group, and of its identity, rests on the interplay of these three forms of identification. This requires a regular process of communication within the group and beyond it. Such identification can happen through symbols (similar dress, typical objects, or common rituals), but most importantly through language; in a complex society, writing is necessary, and increasingly so the more inclusive and abstract the social group is. A face-to-face group such as a clan or a village can maintain its boundaries and its identity more easily than a social class or a people. Furthermore, larger and more inclusive identities do not simply build on smaller units, they often also compete with them for the loyalty of

\(^{10}\) See Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*.

\(^{11}\) Pohl and Heydemann, eds, *Strategies of Identification*.

group members. Societies maintain and develop complex discourses in which all sorts of identifications can be expressed, accepted, refused, legitimized, and explained. The methodological consequence for the study of the past is that our written sources are not just more-or-less distant reflections of the social reality of a group out there. They also represent traces of the constant process of identification and negotiation which is part of social reality. In different contexts and situations, group identities can be more or less ‘salient’. They may matter more or less to different individuals, in different situations, or in certain social environments. This is important to keep in mind when we deal with the complex relationship between ‘texts and identities’ in our written sources, but also with some methodological problems in the archaeological evidence. It is not always easy to tell whether an individual belongs or does not belong to a given group. But we can find traces of, often multiple, acts of identification.

In the Latin West (the region on which the present volume focuses), three fundamental shifts of identity roughly coincided between the fourth and the seventh centuries. Firstly, Christianity became the dominant creed and strove to develop forms of identification and social cohesion worthy of its high spiritual ambition. Secondly, in most Latin-speaking areas, Romanness ceased to be an imperial and hegemonial identity that provided a frame of reference for numerous civic, provincial, and regional loyalties, and was transformed in various ways. And thirdly, new elites of predominantly barbarian origin came to be perceived and organized according to ethnic categories. That these three elements were fundamental for the western Middle Ages is generally acknowledged. But they have mostly been regarded as separate ‘pillars’, and the interaction of these three processes has never been systematically studied.

Why were different late antique and early medieval changes of identity usually studied separately? This surely has pragmatic reasons, for understanding the intricacies of the establishment of the Christian faith often requires reading rather different sources than the violent see-saw of barbarian histories. But on the conceptual level, it is also due to rather essentialist views of social groups. To put this view bluntly: Romans remained Romans, but they had become subdued and lost much of their precious culture; and the victorious barbarians took many centuries to become civilized, in which Christianity played an

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14 On the history of research on the post-Roman period since the eighteenth century, see Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages*. 
important part, without, however, changing the fundamental, ‘national’ selves of the Romance or Germanic peoples. In this view, the ascent of ethnicity in the West has been regarded as part of the social baggage that the barbarians brought with them from the forests of Germany: they were organized in natural groups based on common blood, unlike the classical world with its artificial bonds to city, province, and empire. In terms of social organization, it was the return of a ‘natural’ ethnic order that destroyed the Roman Empire. That is the implicit background to many traditional views on the subject.

Recent research has, however, demonstrated to what extent the barbarians were transformed before they grabbed power in parts of the West: the composition of migrating groups changed considerably, a process that has been described as ethnogenesis. Loose alliances of local and tribal groupings were replaced by medium- and large-scale kingdoms, often under the same names. The barbarian elites gradually converted to Christendom, adapted to a written Latin language of state, and (as the archaeological evidence shows) changed many of their cultural features, such as costume, ornamental styles, and burial habits. Before they founded their kingdoms, most of them (for instance Alaric’s Visigoths, Geiseric’s Vandals, the Gibichung Burgundians, Theoderic’s Ostrogoths, or Clovis’s Franks) had spent decades on Roman territory. Furthermore, a simple observation can be made: all these large-scale barbarian kingdoms were founded on Roman territory, and they were Christian (or only became large-scale after they had become Christian, as in Britain or later in Scandinavia and the Slavic world). Apart from the transient steppe empires of Huns or Avars, no supra-regional realms with ethnic designation were established without a certain Christian and Roman basis, and a degree of literacy. On the other hand, almost all of them were distinguished by an ethnic label, with the exception of a few smaller Roman polities (such as Raetia Curiensis, papal Rome, or some Italian city-states). There is, thus, a lot to say for looking for the common process behind the changes of Roman, Christian, and barbarian identities.

The present volume seeks to offer such a common perspective in this introductory essay and in a number of pilot studies, and thus to open doors for further work in this field. The individual contributions mostly approach these


‘post-Roman transitions’ by departing from one of the major shifts of identity, addressing ethnic, Roman, or religious communities, but in conjunction with each other. Thus, Albrecht Diem regards Burgundian ethnicity through the lens of a monastic community. Alexander O’Hara deals with three seventh-century authors distancing themselves from their native identities. Jamie Wood addresses Isidore’s Christian stylization of the Visigoths. John Clay studies the transition from the post-Roman British realms to Anglo-Saxon Wessex. Francesco Borri regards the barbarians as a counterfoil to emerging civic identities in the Adriatic. And Marco Stoffella sketches the relative significance of local, regional, and ethnic identities around early medieval Lucca. All of them raise the question of the ‘scripts for identity’ which can shape identifications, and which have left their mark in our sources. Texts build on previous texts and draw on the resources of the past to circumscribe the significance of present identities, or to delineate communities of the future.17

The second part of this volume unites several studies on the manifold relationship of Romans and barbarians in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Although they deal with rather different aspects of the problem — the changes in historiographic ‘scripts of Romanness’ in early medieval Italy (Maya Maskarinec), differences or similarities in material culture and burial practices (Philipp von Rummel and Irene Barbiera), Latin titles of barbarian rulers in Roman provinces (Roland Steinacher), perceptions of barbarians in the post-Roman Merovingian kingdom (Gerald Krutzler), or the development of Roman epigraphic script in barbarian hands (Flavia de Rubeis) — none of them simply pits Romans against barbarians. Several of them explicitly raise the question: who were the Romans? Who the barbarians? And what became of them?

This introduction seeks to provide a wider frame in which these case studies can be read together. In the first section, it directly addresses the question of ethnicity, arguing that the fundamental change between Antiquity and the early Middle Ages was not so much the emergence of new peoples and ‘nations’, but the development of a new way of thinking about peoples, and about their roles in history. The second section deals with what I would identify as the main reason why the rule by gentes over large parts of the former Roman Empire came

17 This is the topic of a joint research project financed by HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) under the title ‘Cultural memory and the resources of the past, 400–1000 AD (CMRP),’ in collaboration between the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the Universities of Utrecht, Cambridge, and Leeds; see McKitterick and others, eds, Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past.
to be considered as natural and legitimate: a Christian world-view inspired by the Bible. The third section explores the question of early medieval Romanness, which at the same time constitutes a particularly delicate test-case for the theory of ethnicity. Could being Roman be an ethnic identity? The very multiplicity of Roman identifications defies any formal typology of ethnic, territorial, civic, political, or religious identities. Thus, while ethnic identities represent a point of departure, and also a constant point of reference for this volume, its contributions explore a much wider range of shifting identities, and thus give an impression of the great variety of post-Roman transitions.

An ‘Ethnic Turn’ of the Early Middle Ages?

Studying early medieval ethnicity requires dealing with a *histoire croisée* of strong national master narratives which have lost ground but have not disappeared; and, at the same time, with more recent trends in research that regard nations as a modern phenomenon, or claim that they did not matter much at all. But at a first glance, we have to acknowledge that most modern European nations have something to do with the early medieval past. A look at the map of Europe about one thousand years ago shows mostly familiar names: France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Kingdoms of the Danes and Swedes. Most of these names had not been on the map five hundred years before. In western Europe, most names of nations go back to the period of the fall of Rome (or even before that); in the north and east of Europe, many names are attested later in the first millennium. It is remarkable how few modern European nations have been constructed on a more recent basis of identification. Most of the relatively few nations that only reached statehood in the late medieval or modern age have constructed particularly powerful ‘invented traditions’, such as the heroic origins of the Swiss confederation, the supposed Daco-Roman continuity in Romania, the Moravian identification in Slovakia, or the ancient Belgian past that provided a new name for the former Habsburg Netherlands in 1830 (and which increasingly proves too feeble to create common ground for the Flemish and the Walloons). The ancient Batavian origins of the Netherlands received much less attention.

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19 For an overview, see Smith, *The Nation in History.*
20 This overview is necessarily sketchy; as will be argued in what is to follow, none of the
For a long time, modern historiography has therefore regarded the early Middle Ages as the period when the European nations originated. Linear ‘German’ or ‘French’ or ‘English’ national histories took the glorious migrations that brought Rome to its knees as their starting point. The assumption was of an inborn essence in all of these peoples that made their success and persistence possible. This construct was based on ancient beliefs in the common origin of peoples, expressed in terminology (in Latin, both gens and natio are derived from ‘birth’) and in origin myths, from the sons of Noah to Hengist and Horsa, and was endorsed by generations of scholars who regarded the nation as the fundamental form of human collectives.21

It is now generally acknowledged that, quite to the contrary, peoples are not the agents of history, immutable in its course, but rather one of the most elusive and contradictory results of historical change. The early medieval kingdoms were not at all nations in the modern sense. Military elites of some tens of thousands of specialized warriors ruled over an overwhelming majority of civilians, largely Roman provincials.22 Gradual assimilation took many centuries until the ruling elites in Gaul or Italy had adopted the language of their subjects, while these in turn took on the ethnic name of their lords. Interestingly, the change of language, costume, and many other cultural elements was hardly noticed by contemporary authors, and had little detectable impact on identities (which shows that language is not necessarily a key to ethnic identity).23 Our evidence makes it hard to comprehend that scholars ever found the principle of cohesion underlying these kingdoms in the blood (or the genes) of their subjects. Feelings of identity were mostly rooted in small, face-to-face groups. To integrate these disparate groups over large territories — the Frankish kingdom under Charlemagne was about as big as the first European Community of the 1960s — required both a remarkable effort of organization, and a consider-

names designated a ‘nation’ from the start. The writing of national histories in Europe was the topic of the ESF programme ‘Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe’ (2003–08), from which the book series ‘Writing the Nation’ resulted, for instance: Evans and Marchal, eds, History, Nationhood and the Search for Origins. See also Berger, ed., Writing the Nation. For invented traditions, see Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds, The Invention of Tradition, and Anderson, Imagined Communities.

21 See Leerssen, National Thought in Europe; Geary and Klaniczay, eds, Medievalism.
able degree of abstraction and ideological legitimation, for the development of these ‘ethnic kingdoms’ (for instance, those of the Franks or the Anglo-Saxons) was by no means a natural process.

None of the modern nations are the direct heirs of the peoples mentioned above; their composition changed, and the political rule exerted in their name has a broken and ambiguous history. Medieval history is full of ethnic paradox and changes of rulership: after 1066, England could have become La Grande Normandie instead of Great Britain; Greece was part of a Romanía which we call Byzantium, but that could also have turned into a Slavic or Albanian nation, into a Frankish realm called Morea, or into an Islamic state called Yunanistan; Spain might have remained a Gothia or a caliphate named after a side-line of the Prophet’s family; Ireland could still be called Scotland, and Scotland Pictland; instead of Germany, independent states of the Saxons, Bavarians, and Swabians might have developed. The composition, territory, and even the language of many European peoples changed; or their independent rule was resumed after long intervals, for instance in Poland, Croatia, and Ireland. Some states even latched on to long-disappeared peoples of the distant migration age that had little to do with them, as in late medieval Burgundy or modern Sweden (where two of the three crowns are those of the Goths and Vandals). Furthermore, many ethnic names that appeared in the early Middle Ages have come to denote stable regional units: Bavaria, Lombardy, Burgundy, or Moravia. But in spite of their widely different historical fates, most early medieval ethnonyms have remained on the map. This indicates the success of identity politics connected with them — the heroic past with its noble genealogies and its suggestive ideas of common blood and fate seems to have proved attractive for a wide variety of later societies. In many successive generations, these resources of the past were used as ‘scripts for identity’. But they are essentially ‘invented traditions’, although many of them may refer to historical fact.24 The identification with the presumed ‘forefathers’ of the distant past of course hardly stands up to scholarly scrutiny.

Thus, the persistence of ethnonyms in the political landscape of Europe cannot be due to the unity and vigour with which these peoples constructed their kingdoms from the fifth century onwards. Research on ‘ethnogenesis’ has shown how complex the processes of ethnic aggregation and the formation of distinct peoples were.25 Neither was it the long-term success of Goths, Vandals,

24 Hobsbawm and Ranger, The Invention of Tradition.
Introduction

Burgundians, Alamanni, Saxons, or Lombards that made the political model of the ethnic kingdom last, for none of their kingdoms remained independent in the course of the early Middle Ages. No doubt the success of this model had something to do with the Franks; but even Frankish political identity enjoyed very mixed fortunes in the course of the early and high Middle Ages. In Mediterranean Europe, chiefly in Italy and Spain, the model of ethnic rule failed after its initial success; even the late medieval Lombards only reluctantly faced their Longobard origins, so that one thirteenth-century author wrote that the Lombards had successfully defended Italy against the Longobard invasion. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, it was more due to the new peoples in the eastern and northern periphery, Swedes, Danes, Poles, Czechs, Croats, Hungarians, etc., that the model of ethnic rule was reinvigorated. Throughout the Middle Ages, alternative political models were always at hand: the Roman Empire, the papacy, the regnum Italiae as a kingdom built on an ancient region, the Italian city-states, etc. Still, in the long run, the ethnic model proved the most vigorous, and in time became the basis of modern nations.

If the reason for this success is not the natural strength of ethnic ties and the continuous persistence of national identities — how else can we explain why in one thousand years of troubled history, of wars and revolutions, the ethnic landscape of Europe has changed relatively little? We have become so accustomed to see the world as a world of nations that we have taken for granted that Europe should have developed that way, as an aggregate of independent peoples. But ethnicity played a very different part in many other political cultures before and around medieval Europe. The Roman Empire was a multi-ethnic empire that was based on a city-state, and the populus Romanus was composed of people of widely different origin who had acquired the legal status of Roman citizens. The Byzantine Empire that grew out of Rome predominantly consisted of Greek speakers who stubbornly called themselves Romans, Rhomaioi, and distinguished themselves from many of their neighbours by their orthodox creed, while other orthodox states, in part based on their ethnic heritage, rose on its periphery. The Islamic states were based on religion and, for a long time,

26 Pohl, ‘Zur Bedeutung ethnischer Unterscheidungen’; Reimitz, Writing for the Future; Reimitz, Omnes Franci: Identifications and Identities.
27 Busch, ‘Die Lombarden und die Langobarden’.
28 See below, and Farney, Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition.
29 Page, Being Byzantine; Zacharia, ed., Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity, especially the contribution by Rapp, ‘Hellenic Identity, romanitas and Christianity’.
on the supreme legitimacy of the family of the prophet; when the Abbasid Caliphs lost their power to regional dynasties, some of whom had strong ethnic ties (such as the Daylamite Buyids, the Kurdish Marwanids, the Hamdanids and other Bedouin dynasties in Iraq and Syria), a system of ethnic states could have developed; but, very interestingly, ethnic solidarities only provided relatively reliable military backing for a limited period, but no ideological legitimacy as they did in the early medieval West. China, like Rome, was an empire with a hegemonial identity surrounded by despised barbarians; and, unlike Rome, it managed to integrate invading barbarians almost completely into its political and cultural matrix. India has a long history of shifting regional and hegemonial powers mainly identified by their dynasties, from the Guptas to the Mughals. Not that ethnic identities did not matter in all of these societies; sometimes they even became politicized — the very name Mughals came from the ethnonym, Mongols. But in none of these cultural regions did a relatively stable plurality of states with ethnic denomination, comparable to the European political system, develop.

Therefore, the decisive change after the end of Roman rule in the West was not so much the emergence of single peoples whose names were bound to remain on the map. It was the gradual development of a system in which ethnic rule was considered legitimate. Ethnic identities came to be used as points of reference for political power and social cohesion in former Roman territories. The new regna were governed in the name of a gens, to which political agency was often ascribed (Franks or Lombards wage war or raise a king). In theory, power was wielded by these gentes, so that the fall of the Lombard Kingdom in Italy in 774 could be described as the passing of the kingdom of Italy from the gens Langobardorum to the gens Francorum. A plurality of ethnic states had formed a political landscape in which ethnicity provided essential distinctions. Ethnicity is a relational category, and ethnic identification of some groups tends to lead to ethnic perceptions of other groups, however adequate that may have been in some cases.
This political matrix developed only gradually. Of course, there had been *gentes* and kings before in the periphery of the ancient world. But that was a barbarian political model of regional rule, and could not be transplanted directly to Roman provinces. Barbarian invaders were of course not simply brainwashed when they entered Roman territory, forgot their identities, and adapted to whatever their new environment had to offer. The post-Roman *regna* and *gentes* have certain links to previous peoples and kingdoms in the barbarian world — the names, for instance, and, in some cases, king lists and origin myths. But there was no barbarian precedent for their rule; the failed kingdoms founded by Arminius and Marbod in the Augustan wars could not serve as models after almost half a millennium.34 Barbarian identities were no self-referential continuum that imposed itself on the Roman world. Much of the legitimacy of the post-imperial barbarian kingdoms was derived from late Roman political language, literacy, and administration, and, of course, from Christianity. Over time, their ethnic forms of legitimacy were refined and used with growing self-confidence. That was a process in which bishops had an important role to play, not least the bishops of Rome (see below).

We can establish the basic grammar of legitimation according to the most common formula for medieval and modern royal titles: *N. Dei gratia rex* (*Francorum*, *Langobardorum*, etc.).35 Ethnicity and Christianity are combined in this title, so that royal authority is derived both from God and the *gens* (or from the land named after it). This formula took some time to spread after the fall of western Rome.36 Most barbarian kings first preferred to underline the universal character of their rule over Roman territories by using the ‘absolute’ title, *rex* or *flavius rex*, without any specification which would have been, at the same time, a limitation. It is remarkable that the ancient territorial names, Italy, Gaul, or Spain, played almost no part in the self-representation of post-Roman rulers. Things might have developed differently, for in the centuries of

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36 Gillett, ‘Was Ethnicity Politicized’, is correct in maintaining that the ethnic title was not used universally from the start.
empire Gallic identity had repeatedly become a political issue. But the ethnic identities of the new rulers prevailed. The ethnic title was first used in contexts where it was mainly addressed to the army and the members of the ruling gens, for instance on precious objects used for donatives. Roland Steinacher, in his contribution in this volume, discusses the case of the title rex Vandalorum et Alanorum, which is among the earliest ethnic titles attested. Ethnic titulation was also used in the promulgation of laws, for instance in the Lombard kingdom. The prologue to Rothari’s edict in 643 is an instance of elaborate self-designation: ‘Ego in dei nomine Rotari, vir excellentissimus, et septimo-decimum rex gentis Langobardorum’. The law-code was chiefly directed at the Lombards, while the ethnic title does not appear in the preserved royal charters, which were often addressed to churches and monasteries. It seems likely that for some time barbarian kings tended to present themselves with the ethnic title to their gens and army, and without it to the general population. In the British Isles, regnal titles also show some variety (although the evidence is complicated by the question of authenticity in many of the transmitted charters). In the late seventh century, in the prologue of Ine’s laws, we get ‘Ic Ine med Godes gife Wesseaxna kyning’, while he could be rex Saxonum in his charters. But the development of West Saxon identity was a complicated process, as John Clay shows in his contribution to this volume. Legislation always had ideological functions, often reaching back to the prologues of the Theodosian Code, but increasingly showcasing ethnic ideology. The long prologue to the Lex Salica, probably added in the 760s, ascribes divine origin to the entire people:

The whole Frankish people, established by the power of God, are strong in arms, weighty in council, firm in the compact of peace, pure in body, distinguished in form, brave, swift, and austere. Recently converted to the Catholic faith, they are free from heresy, rejecting barbarian rites with the help of God, keeping the faith; and according to their customs they seek the key to wisdom and desire justice.


41 Lex Salica, ed. by Eckhardt, p. 2.
God and the *gens* thus came to form the double basis for legitimate rulership. Increasingly, the territorial designation derived from the ethnonym could replace that of the *gens*, as in *rex Angliae*, while on the other hand collective names derived from territorial designations were also used like ethnonyms, for instance *Hispani* or *Lotharingi*.42

The importance of ethnic bonds for the Latin Christian polities was not on the same level in all cases, and neither did it experience a steady growth. There were some periods and places in which it was pushed into the forefront in many texts — often in times of conflict or crises of identity, for instance in late Merovingian Francia when Neustrians and Austrasians competed for being ‘the’ Franks, or in the ninth- and tenth-century Lombard principates in southern Italy where Lombards had in fact become assimilated to the Romance-speaking majority, but insisted on their noble Lombard progeny all the more.43 On the other hand, lack of explicitly attested ethnic identification may also indicate a self-assured identity which did not have to be highlighted.44 Frankishness could not only mean different things at different times, but also to different people at the same time, as Helmut Reimitz has shown in detail.45 Gregory of Tours not only omitted, but actively countered narratives on which Frankish identifications could be built, for instance, an ancient origin narrative and an impressive king list, which Fredegar, in the successive century, underlined. At the same time, Fredegar was very interested in the entire ethnic landscape of Europe, past and present. As the contribution by Gerald Krutzler in this volume shows, Merovingian texts displayed an acute awareness and an often differentiated perception of the multiplicity of *gentes* that lived in and beyond the Frankish kingdoms. The ‘ethnic’ Europe that emerged after the Empire had faded out was a landscape in which ethnicity had become a main, although not the only feature of distinction between groups of people on both the regional and the supra-regional level.

A crucial period for the development of visions of community which sought to bring political, ethnic, and Christian identities into close conjunction was

42 For the problem of the distinction between ethnic and territorial identities, see Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Identification’, pp. 16–17.

43 See Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*.

44 This is a problem with the argument in Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy*. The relatively rare occurrence of Gothic identifications on, for instance, gravestones does not prove that Gothnicness did not matter; even modern nationalists rarely mentioned their nationality on gravestones.

the early Carolingian age — the passage from the *Lex Salica* is just one obvious example. It was a brief period of active and coordinated political intervention into the discourses of identity, and its political and intellectual elites sought to reinforce a close conjunction between *gens, regnum, ecclesia*, and later also *imperium*. But in a sense the very success of Carolingian politics and its imperial ambitions charged the Frankish model with too many and too contradictory meanings. In the course of the ninth century, once again extensive spaces for reappropriation of traditional modes of identification by particular interest groups opened. Still, fundamental resources had been created or at least passed down from the previous periods in carefully-adapted form, and remained available for further uses.

Many medievalists assume that the medieval European nations finally took shape when the Carolingian hold on most of Latin Europe was lost. In this view, Ottonian Germany, Capetian France, Alfredian England, and the new nations of northern and eastern Europe achieved the kind of stable nationhood that the post-Roman kingdoms in the first centuries of the Middle Ages had not been able to attain. Leaving aside the thorny problem of terminology — ‘when is a nation?’ — this approach seems to have a lot to recommend it. However, these emerging ‘nations’ of the central Middle Ages developed rather differently. None of them got through ‘1066 and all that’ (or French ‘feudal anarchy’, or the chronic internal discord of the Holy Roman Empire) without dramatic loss of cohesion or crises of identity. Moreover, the development of single nations is not all there is. Arguably, the Norman Kingdom in Great Britain might not have become England without the sacral ring of the name *Angli/Anglia* that goes back to Pope Gregory the Great and the Venerable Bede. France might not have overcome the centrifugal tendencies of the *mutation féodale* and the Hundred Years’ War without its glorious Frankish past; and the nineteenth-century German nation was not least built on the overwhelming sense of history of its educated elites. Many medieval realms, and much more

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46 Cf. De Jong, ‘Ecclesia and the Early Medieval Polity’.
47 Reimitz, ‘Nomen Francorum obscuratum’.
49 Connor, ‘When is a Nation?’; Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*.
so modern nations, relied on notions of ‘who we really are’. Regardless of their political ups and downs, the accumulated resources of the past shaped the landscape on which new political fortunes were built.

The approach presented here thus addresses a different level of historical change: the development of ‘scripts for identity’, of ethnic discourse, of a model of government in the name of a people. This regards the general way in which the role of ethnic groups in the political landscape and within a universal religious community could acquire significance — a point that is often forgotten. On this basis, resources for specific ethnic or political identifications could be created, for instance, the rich body of texts that presented historical precedents of Frankishness and its various meanings. Many of these models and discursive strategies remained available throughout European history, although they might always be modified in the course of textual transmission. Linear histories of European nations in the course of the Middle Ages, seen as successive stages in the unfolding of the modern nation, can hardly accommodate the multiplicity of the evidence. We should therefore study the ways in which ethnic and ‘national’ discourses and visions of community developed, and in which they were applied in politics. The hypothesis presented here is that late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages were a formative stage in the discourse of legitimate ethnic rule, and that Christian ideas played an important part in this development.

**Christian and Ethnic Identities**

In the Old Testament, ethnicity plays a key role. God’s covenant was with a people, the people of Israel: “I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land”, says the Lord. “I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people” (Jer 31. 33). ‘You must be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the other peoples to be mine’, the Lord says in Leviticus (Lv 20. 26), framing a series of detailed norms for the people of Israel. Belonging to the chosen people implied accepting an enormous moral responsibility. More often than not, God’s own people strayed from the covenant, and were duly punished. The moral and ritual drama in which God’s protection and His punishment were enacted mainly unfolded in scenarios of ethnic conflict. Surrounding peoples, from the Egyptians and

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51 See, for instance, Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*; Grosby, *Biblical Ideas of Nationality*; Smith, *Chosen Peoples*. 
Philistines to Assyrians and Babylonians, served as instruments of God’s wrath. The Latin text of the Old Testament provided numerous instances of ethnic identification and conflict that could serve as a model in the Middle Ages: early medieval readers could easily distinguish in it a landscape of gentes and reges not unlike their own.

In the New Testament, this ethnic vision was turned on its head, but also, paradoxically, reaffirmed. Paul’s epistle to the Colossians (3.11) emphatically states that among the Christians ‘there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all’. The clear implication is that Jesus Christ had overcome ethnic boundaries. From a Pauline, and also from an Augustinian point of view, conversion made ethnicity meaningless. In a sense, the Christians themselves had become God’s new people. Ethnic metaphors were widely used for early Christian communities. For instance, Peter (1 Pt 2. 9–10), developing the passage from Leviticus and other Old Testament texts, addressed the early Christians: ‘But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of His own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. You once were not a people, but now you are God’s people’. This people of the elect should come from all the peoples of the earth. Jesus calls upon the disciples at the end of the Gospel of Matthew (28. 19): ‘Therefore go and make disciples of all nations’; and in Mark (13. 10) he says: ‘First the gospel must be preached to all nations’. This means that Christianity is open to all, regardless of their origin, and in that sense the passage is usually understood. But it should be noted that the text does not say omnes homines, or homines omnium nationum, or similar; omnes gentes have to receive the word of God and be baptized. The gospel is addressed, in the first place, to the gentes.

This implication becomes clearer in the polemic between the early Christians and the Jews: what, in Christian eyes, distinguishes the New from the Old Testament is that not only the Jews, but also the gentes have a right to receive

52 Cf. Corradini, ‘Die Ankunft der Zukunft’.
53 Buell, Why this New Race?; Lieu, Christian Identity.
54 ‘Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis […] qui aliquando non populus, nunc autem populus Dei’.
55 For instance, Geary, The Myth of Nations, p. 54: ‘The new people of God was not bound by any traditional ethnic, or, indeed, legal or gender category’.
56 Cf. Sim, ‘Christianity and Ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew’, who otherwise underlines the different approaches to ethnicity in the gospels of Matthew and Mark.
God’s grace. This was the thrust of the argument in Tertullian’s early third-century work *Adversus Iudaeos*; he wanted to counter both the idea that the Christians were just a Jewish sect, and that they were a people of their own, distinct from both Romans and Jews.57

For he [God] has promised to Abraham that in his *semen* all the nations (*nationes*) of the earth would be blessed, and that from the womb of Rebecca, two peoples (*duo populi et duae gentes*) would issue forth, the Jews, that is Israel, and the *gentes*, that is us. Therefore, both were called *populus* and *gens*, so that from the name given none would presume to claim the privilege of grace for itself.58

The *gentes*, that is us. The term that was used as an outside designation in the Hebrew Bible, *goyim*, translated into Latin as *gentes*, is here emphatically turned into a self-identification. This shift in the role of the Jews and the *gentes* was made easier by the ambivalent Latin usage and added another semantic dimension to it. In the medieval Latin West, *gens/gentes* could thus be used for both one’s own people and the others. A clear distinction between *populus* and *gens*, for which there were classical precedents and which would have offered an alternative, did not become current in medieval Latin.59 Through Christian usage, the term *gens* became charged with a multiplicity of meanings. In Tertullian’s view, there were two *gentes*, the Jews and the Christians; the latter in turn at least notionally consisted of members of all the other *gentes*. That the term *gens* was not just a vague collective designation for the non-Jews/pagans becomes clear in another passage. Tertullian argues that, even in the Old Testament, God had variously been presented as the God of all peoples. In whom else, he maintains, should all the peoples, *universae gentes*, now believe but in Christ? This is followed by an impressive list of *gentes*, starting with the catalogue from the Acts of the Apostles (2. 9–10), from Parthians and Armenians to Egyptians and Romans, to which Tertullian adds a number of further peoples of the present, Gauls, Britons, Germans, Sarmatians, and others.60


60 Tertullian, *Adversus Iudaeos*, ed. by Hauses, vii. 4, pp. 204–08.
A world of gentes could thus become the theatre for the history of salvation and the horizon for Christian missions. This becomes clear, for example, in Prosper’s *De vocatione omnium gentium*, a mid-fifth-century treatise against Pelagianism. Pelagius had argued that the road to salvation was in the personal moral responsibility of each individual. His opponents, first of all Augustine, tried to show that on the contrary, it was by God’s grace that one could attain salvation. However, there was a problem with this argument. Why did God’s grace work so unevenly among individuals? Divine revelation had first exclusively reached the people of Israel, and even after the death of Christ, the message of redemption had only gradually spread to other people. This is the problem that Prosper’s text raises, and subtly answers. *Vocatio omnium gentium* is in fact an ambiguous phrase: it could mean that all pagans are being called upon individually. Then, it would be impossible to prove that the just God had really called everybody. But it can also mean the calling of all peoples, in line with earlier usage. And this is what Prosper tries to prove: the Lord’s calling has gone out to all peoples. Some gentes may have received it earlier and others later, but none will be left out.

Prosper bolsters this view by an impressive array of passages both from the Old and the New Testament to prove that omnes gentes in fact means all peoples. The Lord’s world was not a universal church or empire without distinctions. Already the first biblical quote from Deuteronomy (32. 8–9) sets the scene: ‘When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided up humankind, he set the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the heavenly assembly. For the Lord’s allotment is his people’. The number of peoples corresponds to the heavenly assembly, an idea that is also linked to the wide-spread assumption that there were only seventy two peoples on earth. The fact that not all of them had received the revelation of the Hebrew Bible is turned into an act of divine patience with a quote from the Acts of the Apostles (14. 14), when Paul and Barnabas preach at Lystra: ‘In past generations he (i.e. God) allowed all the gentes to go their own ways’. Prosper’s

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61 But see Wood, “The End of the Earth”, who argues that Bede is the first early medieval historiographer who is interested in missionary history.


63 Prosper, *De vocatione omnium gentium*, ed. by Teske, i. 6, p. 84–85 (Prosper, *The Call of All Nations*, trans. by de Letter, i. 5, p. 30–31).

64 Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel*. 
interpretation is that God ‘has never denied the gifts of his goodness to any of the gentes’. The diversity of the gentes thus becomes a heavenly gift; and all of them belong to God in their quality as peoples. Later, Prosper turns to the passage from Peter addressing the ‘chosen people’, to make the point that the Christians had not been chosen as individuals:

What is said here, however, does not apply to the same men but to men of the same people (genus). The call which appeared at the approach of the end of the world has no retrospective effect on the past ages. So those about whom these things are successively said are, in a sense, the same men and yet not the same men.

Questions of identity, indeed.

The Bible, and its complex reception in the Latin-Christian world, can certainly help to explain early medieval modes of thought, and that is not a new insight, although it has hardly been employed in the study of early medieval ethnicity so far. Of course, the people of Israel as a model for Christian nations was ambiguous and highly problematic. The contemporary Jewish people remained a challenge to Christian appropriations of the Hebrew Bible and its

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65 Prosper, *De vocatione omnium gentium*, ed. by Teske, t. 24, p. 102; Prosper, *The Call of All Nations*, trans. by de Letter, t. 11, p. 50: ‘Sicut est quod sanctus Petrus apostolus scribens sui et futuri temporis gentibus, ait: Vos autem genus electum, regale sacerdotium, gens sancta, populus acquisitionis; ut virtutes annuntietis eius qui de tenebris vos vocavit in admirabile lumen suum: qui aliquando non populus, nunc autem populus Dei, qui non consecuti misericordiam, nunc autem misericordiam consecuti (1 Pt 2. 9–10). Numquid cum haec praedicarentur, adhuc illi homines permanebant quos omnes Deus in praeteritis generationibus dimiserat ingredi vias suas (Acts 14. 15), et iidem ipsi, qui prius traditi fuerant voluntatibus suis, nunc de tenebris in lumen admirabile vocabantur?’


history of salvation.\textsuperscript{69} From a Christian point of view, the biblical matrix was inescapably dynamic: which of the \textit{gentes}, and who among them, would heed the call for salvation and join the Christian \textit{populus}? Who would relapse, and who could be part of the \textit{civitas Dei}, in accordance with the unfathomable will of God? Which of the \textit{gentes} would be able to attain divine protection by its faith and deeds? Such a dynamic sense of the mysterious workings of divine favour and intervention among the nations could not but shape contemporary perceptions of the meaning of ethnic communities, and impinge on their political uses.

One element in which the Christian world of nations differed from both the classical and the biblical view was that the Christian message tended to go beyond ethnocentrism. Greece and Rome, curious and watchful as they had been of the many barbarian nations beyond the boundaries of their civilization, had basically juxtaposed ‘us and them’, Greeks (or Romans) and barbarians.\textsuperscript{70} The Hebrew Bible also worked on the basis of a rather strict divide between ‘us’, the chosen people, and ‘them’, the \textit{goyim} who venerated false gods; although as usual in the Hebrew Bible, there are also examples to the contrary: the ‘universal horizon of biblical particularism’, as Jon D. Levenson has put it.\textsuperscript{71} Christianity constructed a similar boundary between the church and the pagan \textit{gentes}, although, as shown above, this divide was rather dynamic. It was both the strength and the weakness of the Christian empire of late Antiquity that it combined the binary logic of Rome and of early Christianity in a triumphal, but increasingly precarious ‘us’ — the orthodox Romans — and ‘them’ — the pagan, barbarian \textit{gentes}.

But then, many of these \textit{gentes} became Christian too, and, roughly at the same time, the Roman \textit{sacra res publica} eroded. The dynamic relationship between Christianity and ethnicity, which was already predisposed in the biblical world-view, now acquired new spaces to unfold. The rule of \textit{gentes} and their kings was in general accepted relatively smoothly by many bishops and Christian aristocrats. Bishop Avitus of Vienne wrote to Clovis on the occasion of his baptism: ‘Let Greece, to be sure, rejoice in having an orthodox ruler,\textsuperscript{69} Yuval, \textit{Two Nations in Your Womb}; Cf. Feldman, \textit{Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient World}.  
\textsuperscript{70} Harrison, ed., \textit{Greeks and Barbarians}; Isaac, \textit{The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity}; Eliav-Feldon, Isaac, and Ziegler, eds, \textit{The Origins of Racism}; Gruen, \textit{Rethinking the Other in Antiquity}; Pohl, \textit{The Barbarian Challenge}.  
but she is no longer the only one to deserve such a gift’. Remarkably, the Roman empire had now become ‘Greece’ to a bishop from southern Gaul. The fact that the Franks had been converted was duly seen as a sign of divine providence. Avitus told Clovis: ‘God has made your people completely his own through you’. Conversion of a pagan people represented divine choice. Having been called upon by divine providence could therefore become an important element of ethnic identity. Thus, ideas of election and the subtle comparison of one’s own people to biblical parallels became wide-spread in the early medieval kingdoms. Saint Patrick called the Irish a ‘people just now coming to the faith, which the Lord has chosen from the ends of the earth’. And Pope Gregory the Great referred to divine providence in his letter to the missionary Augustine in Britain: ‘For I know that Almighty God has displayed great miracles through your Love in the nation (gens) which He has willed to be chosen’. Bede, writing about the period when the Angles and Saxons were pagans and did not receive Christian teachings from the Britons, resumes: ‘Nevertheless, God in his goodness did not reject His people whom He foreknew, but he had appointed a much worthier herald of truth to bring the people to the faith’. The high-blown words that Peter had addressed to the early Christian communities were increasingly employed to flatter specific peoples. They are used, for instance, in Pope Paul I’s letter to Pippin and in Pope Stephen III’s letter of 770 to Charlemagne, where the Franks are directly addressed as gens sancta. And Alcuin, Charlemagne’s advisor, wrote that by the baptism of Clovis the Franks had become gens sancta, populus adquisitionis. Ideas of providential choice and identification with ‘God’s own people’ were especially current for the Franks under the Carolingians. Explicit enunciations of the idea of the ‘Franks as the

72 Avitus, Selected Letters and Prose, ed. by Wood and Shanzer, no. 46 (to Clovis), p. 370.
73 Avitus, Selected Letters and Prose, ed. by Wood and Shanzer, no. 46, p. 373.
75 Gregory I, Registrum Epistularum, ed. by Norberg, xi. 36: ‘Scio enim quia omnipotens Deus per dilectionem tuam in gente quam eligi voluit magna miracula ostendit’ (Gregory I, Letters, trans. by Martyn, III, 780).
76 Bede, Historia ecclesiastica, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, i. 22, p. 68: ‘Sed non tamen divina pictas plebem suam, quam prescivit, deseruit, quin multo digniores genti memoratae praecones veritatis, per quos crederet, destinavit’.
77 Codex epistolaris Carolinus, ed. by Gundlach, no. 39 and 45, pp. 461 and 552.
78 Alcuin, Vita ii Vedastis episcopi Atrebatensis, ed. by Krusch, c. 2, p. 417.
New Israel’ may be relatively rare. But by implication it can already be found, for instance, in the 730s in the Liber Historiae Francorum, and was accentuated even more in the Continuations of Fredegar. In this volume, Jamie Wood reassesses the evidence for Isidore’s views on the Visigoths as a chosen people.

The success of Christendom among the new kingdoms of Latin Europe was thus not only due to the fact that they needed some Roman-type infrastructure, and bishops could help to maintain or create it. These kingdoms also relied on notions of ethnicity and legitimate rule over a people, which had matured in the context of Christian discourse and were inspired by biblical precedent. In the course of time, Christianity must have changed the ideas of what it meant to belong. Of course, Christian identity was always propagated with much more fervour and intensity than ethnic identifications. It was conferred through an elaborate ritual, baptism; it implied the promise of nothing less than eternal salvation; it required a strict code of behaviour, a rigorous control of the right faith, and the regular presence at rituals of the Christian community. An extensive literature dealt with its exact definition, and attempted to draw precise boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

Medieval ethnic identities were much less clearly defined and less consequential. But there were many ways in which they could be influenced by Christian visions and practices of community. Christian authors kept using ethnic metaphors to define the (or a) Christian community. For instance, Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History extolled Jesus Christ as king: ‘Who established a nation (ethnos) never even heard of since time began, which now lies not hidden in some obscure corner of the earth, but extends wherever the sun shines.’ Such uses of ethnic language for the Christians tinged the terms with providential overtones.

On a smaller scale, monasteries did not only provide examples of communities inspired by Christian values. They also became centres of an extended network in which the pious gifts of the laity were exchanged with intercessory prayer for the earthly well-being of the soul for the donors. In this volume, Albrecht Diem addresses an early example, the monastery of St Maurice.

79 Garrison, ‘The Franks as the New Israel?,’ p. 120.
80 Reimitz, Writing for the Future.
81 Buell, Why this New Race?
83 Brown, Through the Eye of a Needle.
d’Agaune, which became a royal monastery in the short-lived Burgundian kingdom of the early sixth century. Monasteries served, as Mayke de Jong has put it, as ‘powerhouses of prayer’; and some of them enjoyed royal patronage and prayed for king and kingdom, which they might come to symbolize (in the case of St Maurice, perhaps paradoxically, also after the Franks had conquered the Burgundian kingdom). Consequently, churches and monasteries could serve as metaphors for gens and kingdom. Gregory of Tours had still designed the spiritual topography of Gaul as an alternative to a Frankish or Roman identification. But soon, gens and kingdom became firmly grounded in the sacred topography of the realm. Paul the Deacon, who wrote after the fall of the Lombard kingdom in 774, explained its demise in a prophecy ex eventu to the Byzantine emperor Constans II before he attacked the Lombards in the seventh century:

> The people of the Lombards cannot be overcome in any way, because a certain queen coming from another province has built the church of St John the Baptist in the territories of the Lombards, and for this reason St John himself continually intercedes for the gens of the Lombards. But a time shall come when this sanctuary will be held in contempt and then the gens itself shall perish.86

Which is, as Paul adds, what had happened in his own day. The ethnic language in this passage is overwhelming: three occurrences of gens and three of Langobardi in these few lines should not leave a shadow of doubt that squandering the protection of the saint had led to the downfall of the gens Langobardorum. Saints and martyrs turned into patrons, not only of local communities but of peoples and kingdoms, such as John the Baptist and the Archangel Michael for the Lombards, St Denis for the Franks, or later St Wenceslas and St Adalbert for Czechs and Poles.

The liturgy of war is another obvious example that geared spiritual resources to the means and ends of a political or ethnic community. A liturgical text in

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84 De Jong, In Samuel’s Image, p. 87; see also De Jong, ‘Carolingian Monasticism.’
85 Reimitz, ‘The Art of Truth.’
87 Pohl, ‘Liturgie di guerra nei regni altomedievali.’
an early eighth-century Reichenau manuscript asks the Lord to give victory to the kings of the Franks: ‘qui sulus es rix bonus, sulus pristans, prista Francurum rigibus victuriam’, like he had once liberated the people of Israel from Egypt.\(^8^8\) The Carolingians developed such liturgies further. The army regularly had to take part in them, for instance when Charlemagne ordered three days of fasting, praying, and singing psalms before his forces crossed the Avar frontier in 791.\(^8^9\) Increasingly, all inhabitants of the kingdom were called upon to do the same, in order to seek divine support against the enemies of the Franks. There are hints in the sources that such a massive involvement of the population at large was not just a half-hearted ambition at court but also had some impact.\(^9^0\) Of course, the community called to reconfirm its liturgical unity in these instances was not just the \textit{gens Francorum}, but all the subjects of the kings of the Franks, sometimes defined as \textit{populus} or \textit{ecclesia}. This corresponds to other forms of symbolical integration such as the oaths that all subjects of the king (and not only the Franks) had to swear at certain occasions, and which, according to the studies of Stefan Esders, go back to late Roman precedents.\(^9^1\) Early medieval kingdoms were not only based on ethnicity, yet the Christian \textit{populus} of the kingdom created forms of identification that could also add to the integrative potential of ethnicity. Behind the notion of \textit{populus}, there was the central experience of communion in a Christian society: Sunday Mass and the joint celebration of the Eucharist. If a small minority of Franks were capable, in the course of centuries, to integrate the Romance-speaking majority under the common name of the French, this was not least due to the cohesive energy of Christian forms of community building.

\(^8^8\) ‘Prista Francurum rigibus victuriam ut liberati a ribelli suo saluentur quia tu sulus pius omnipotens eternus qui liberasti israhel de omnibus malum egipto’: \textit{Codex Augiensis ccl.iii}, ed. by Dold, p. 71; this \textit{Oratio pro regibus Francorum} is dated by Lowe to the first half of the eighth century: \textit{Codices Latini Antiquiores}, ed. by Lowe, \textit{viii} (1959), no. 1101; see also McCormick, \textit{Eternal Victory}, pp. 344–45, with a dating before 718/19 (because it refers to Frankish kings in the plural), cf. Hen, ‘The Uses of the Bible and the Perception of Kingship’.


\(^9^1\) Esders, ‘\textit{Sacramentum fidelitatis}’; Esders, ‘Rechtliche Grundlagen frühmittelalterlicher Staatlichkeit’.
Romans and Barbarians after Rome

For several reasons, Romanness is relevant for the study of early medieval identities. First, the Roman state created powerful forms of representation and a political language that deeply influenced all successive European polities. Second, Roman identity in all its variety and ambiguity is a fascinating test case for the study of social identity in general: it could be civic, political, imperial, juridical, cultural, territorial, religious, and also ethnic; self-designation and outside perceptions could differ considerably. Third, it is striking how dynamic Roman identity was; ‘barbarians’ became Romans and, later, Romans became ‘barbarians’ on a massive scale. Fourth, Romanness continued after Rome, and the variety of its forms increased after ‘central Romanness’ had lost its hegemony. Studies of Roman identity in Antiquity have therefore increased in recent years. Early medieval Romanness has been less thoroughly studied; the present volume offers some case studies on the subject, while broader research is in preparation.

In the western tradition, Rome could serve as an example for a non-ethnic nation, defined by the legal status of its citizens and not by their common blood; in the Latin terminology of the period, as a *populus* and not as a *gens*. Several classical authors expounded this argument. Livy underlined that the inhabitants had become ‘populi unius corpus’ through the legislation of Romulus. Ancient authors mostly agreed that the city had been founded by a mixed population, essentially composed of autochthonous groups (most importantly the *Latini*) and by migrants from Troy led by Aeneas. As Jordanes and Paul the Deacon wrote after Florus:

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92 Woolf, Becoming Roman.

93 Cf. Heather, The Fall of the Roman Empire, pp. 432–43.

94 For instance, Mitchell and Gatrex, eds, Ethnicity and Culture, esp. the contribution by Gatrex, ‘Roman Identity in the Sixth Century’; Farney, Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition; Edwards and Woolf, eds, Rome the Cosmopolis; Laurence and Berry, eds, Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire; and the essay collection in Mattingly, Imperialism, Power and Identity, esp. pp. 205–45.


96 Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, trans. by Foster, i. 8, 1, pp. 30–31: ‘Rebus divinis rite perpetratis vocataque ad concilium multitudine quae coalescere in populi unius corpus nulla re praeter-quam legibus poterat, iura dedit’.
He [Romulus] had made the image of a city rather than a city: the inhabitants were missing. There was a place in the proximity: he turned it into an asylum, and at once a miraculous force of men flowed in, Latin and Tuscan shepherds, and even Phrygians from across the sea under Aeneas, and Arcadians under the leadership of Evander. Thus congregated a body, as if out of different elements, and made the Roman people.97

In Livy and in many other histories, the foundation of the city post-dated the assimilation of these groups by several generations; they delighted in the diversity of the ethnic heritage of the Romans, and felt no need to write it out of history. In the so-called Origo gentis Romanae, probably a fourth-century text, the foundation of the city comes only at the end, after an extensive narrative about Ianus, Saturn, Hercules, Latinus, Aeneas, and the kings of Alba Longa.98 Eutropius compiled a different vision of the Roman past; his Breviarium, written around 370 CE, begins with the foundation of the city by Romulus.99 It is remarkable, as Maya Maskarinec shows in this volume, that Paul the Deacon, when he reworked Eutropius’s text about 400 years later from a Christian perspective, chose to include the earlier origins that the Breviarium had omitted. An analogy to the Origo gentis Langobardorum, which Paul used extensively in his Lombard History, seems obvious.100 Roman histories remained important throughout the Middle Ages, and provided a wealth of opportunities for appropriation and identification. The great divide between Antiquity and the Middle Ages that has become fundamental for the organization of the discipline tends to obscure to what extent medieval authors understood their own time as a continuation of what Rome had once been.

Classical Romanness was not simply a civic identity, it was based on a number of strategies of identification, solidly rooting it in divine origins, Homeric epic, an Italian ethnic landscape (which was, however, gradually overcome and


98 Origo gentis Romanae, ed. by Sehlmeyer. The title comes from the ‘titulus’ of two fifteenth-century manuscripts of the Corpus Aurelianum, in which it has been transmitted, and may or may not be ancient (see p. 16, assuming that it is ancient).


100 Cf. Pohl, ‘Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy’.
unified through military exploits), aristocratic genealogies, and a citizenship that was increasingly open to many subjects of the Empire, regardless of their origin. The tremendous success of Romanness was not least due to this multiplicity; but it also accounts for some of the limits of an identity that remained, as Andrea Giardina has argued, in a sense unfinished.101 In the sixth century, the ‘notion of Roman identity’ had become ‘extremely elastic’, as Geoffrey Greatrex has argued, and allowed the incorporation of a number of ethnē who also maintained their ethnic identities.102

The wide range of Romanities also facilitated their continuing uses in the early Middle Ages. In changed political circumstances, the many different shades of Romanness now further unfolded. The citizens of the Byzantine Empire called themselves Romans (Rhomaioi).103 The identification with Rome must have been attractive for Greek-speakers because the word rhōmē meant ‘force’. The name Romani could also apply to the citizens of Rome, the Latin speakers of the West, the inhabitants of regional ‘Roman’ units in the post-imperial world, the followers of the Roman church,104 or to the renewed western empire of the Franks and Saxons. As the hegemony of the empire receded, Romans could increasingly be regarded as a gens among others. Isidore, in his Etymologies, derived the name from Romulus, ‘who founded the city of Rome and gave the name to people and city (genti et civitati)’.105 On the whole, Roman identity had become rather weak, and the proud self-identification as ‘Roman’ in the West faded away. Gregory of Tours is a good example, who almost completely avoided the term ‘Romans’ in the contemporary sections of his Histories; he identified himself as a bishop, from a family of bishops, of senatorial status.106 As Alexander O’Hara shows in this volume, ‘identities of alienation’ could offer a way for Romans to dis-

101 Giardina, L’Italia romana.
104 For instance, see Gregory of Tours, Liber in gloria martyrum, ed. by Krusch, c. 24, p. 502: ‘Romanos enim vocitant nostrae homines religionis’ (Gregory of Tours, Glory of the Martyrs, trans. by van Dam, p. 23): ‘By Romans they [i.e. Arian Goths] refer to men who accept our [Catholic Nicene] Christianity’.
105 Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, ed. by Lindsay, ix. 2. 84: ‘Romani a Romulo nomine nuncupati, qui urbam Romam condidit gentique et civitati nomen dedit’.
106 Reimitz, Writing for the Future; see also Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History; Heinzelmann, Gregor von Tours.
tance themselves subtly or violently from traditional allegiances. The avoidance of Roman identification was rarely as emphatic as in Liudprand of Cremona’s tenth-century account of his embassy to Constantinople. Countering the western claim for empire, the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus challenged him: ‘You are not Romans, but Lombards!’ Liudprand replied that ‘we, that is, Lombards, Saxons, Franks, Lotharingians, Bavarians, Swabians, and Burgundians, regard Roman! as one of the worst insults.’ For political uses, ‘Roman’ was often replaced by more neutral terms, for instance by the popes who variously defined their political sphere of influence as (sacra) res publica, peculiaris populus, or res publica sancti Petri. In Germanic-speaking areas and beyond, the name *walboz, which was derived from the pre-Roman tribe of the Volscæ, came to be used for Latin-speakers (but also for Britons): thus, there were or are the Welsh in Wales, the Walloons in Belgium, the Walchen in the Alps, and the Vlachs in South-Eastern Europe. Some (but not all) of these names eventually turned into self-designations. Other groups styled themselves as ‘Latins’, like the Ladin in the South Tyrol. Still, ‘Romans’ continued to be used for distinction, both by the in- and the out-group, for instance in what was to become Switzerland, where the bishops of Chur ruled a semi-autonomous Roman polity until the Carolingian take-over. Thus, a local Carolingian scribe could still see these Romans as analogous to the Alamanni, and supplement Charlemagne’s title patricius Romanorum with et Alamannorum, as if it had been coined for the two groups of population in the area.

In general, Romans under barbarian rule tended to fall back on more particular civic or regional identities. As soon as the Roman army had left Britain at the beginning of the fifth century, the name ‘Romans’ disappears from our sources about the island, and the remaining provincial population is regularly called Britons, although Latin-speakers and even Latin inscriptions survived at least into the sixth century. In Gaul, according to the legendary

107 Liudprand of Cremona, Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana, ed. by Becker, c. 12, p. 182; for an excellent analysis, see Gandino, Il vocabolario politico e sociale, pp. 257–70.
108 See Noble, The Republic of St Peter.
111 e.g. Constantius of Lyon, Vita S. Germani, ed. by Borius, p. 154: ‘Interea Saxones Pictique bellum adversus Britannos iunctis viribus susceperunt’. In his Letter to Coroticus, St Patrick refused to address his fellow Roman Britons who had enslaved some of his Irish con-
report in Procopius, the Arborychi (probably the military units of the *tractus Armoricānus*), who had served the Romans since the day of Augustus, returned to their old identity after the end of Roman rule.\(^{112}\) Quite generally, civic, territorial, and even old Gallic identities came to the forefront among the Roman population, for instance, Aquitani or Arverni (the inhabitants of the *civitas Arvernorum*).\(^{113}\) In his contribution to this volume, Marco Stoffella sketches his extensive research on the significance of Tuscan regional and of more local identities in the Lucca region. Francesco Borri, also in this volume, presents the case of the cities along the Adriatic, mainly Venice, Grado, Spalato, and Ragusa, which remained under Byzantine control for much longer. They traced their origin back to the flight of the Roman population from other cities when the barbarians arrived, a kind of negative *origo gentis*. It is interesting to see that at some stage the Byzantines attempted to differentiate between *Romanoi* (the Romans of Dalmatia) and the Greek-speaking *Rhomaioi*, as Constantine Porphyrogenitus attests; but this distinction did not gain wide currency.\(^{114}\)

In many contexts, early medieval Romanness was in the first place regarded as a cultural identity that could rely on a long history of self-fashioning of cultured Romans.\(^{115}\) It is characteristic in what way Procopius describes the fate of the Roman troops in northern Gaul (‘the other Roman soldiers’ apart from the Arborychi):

> These soldiers, having no means of returning to Rome [...], gave themselves, together with their military standards and the land which they had long been guarding, to the Arborychi and Germans; and they handed down to their offspring all the customs of their fathers, which were thus preserved [...]. For even at the present day they are clearly recognized as belonging to the legions which they served in ancient times, and they always carry their own standards when they enter battle,
and always follow the customs of their fathers. And they preserve the dress of the Romans in every particular, even as regards their shoes.\textsuperscript{116}

A similar story was told by the late seventh-century second book of the \textit{Miracula Demetrii}. It relates how the Avars had resettled the captives from Roman cities in Pannonia:

Thereafter they mixed with the Bulgars, Avars, and other heathen peoples (\textit{ethnikoi}), had children with one another, and became a populous nation (\textit{laos}). Each son, however, assumed from his father the traditions and attitudes of his kin (\textit{genos}) toward the customs of the Romans [...]. Sixty years and more after the barbarians had subjected their forefathers, a new and different people (\textit{laos}) had developed.\textsuperscript{117}

Roman culture and traditions could be maintained even when Romans became part of a ‘new and different people’.

Features of Roman culture could still confer prestige. Already in the imperial period, ‘barbarians’ had frequently used them to display their status. In the post-imperial West, the contents of this culture were transformed, and it becomes harder to define which objects are ‘Roman’: anything following (former or contemporary) Roman models, or products of Roman workshops? Cultural contents that contemporaries could identify as Roman, or those that modern scholarship can class as such? When do cultural traits or ensembles cease to be ‘Roman’, and under what circumstances can they start being used for different identifications?\textsuperscript{118} In that sense, Flavia de Rubeis revisits the case of the evolution of writing on the basis of an assessment of the epigraphic production. Our palaeographical evidence offers a good overview of the gradual development from the younger Roman cursive of late Antiquity to the early medieval half-cursive scripts and their regional differences (Cencetti’s ‘particolarismo grafico’),\textsuperscript{119} until a new standardization was attempted with the Carolingian minuscule in the ninth century. Traditional palaeography had regarded these different styles of writing as ‘national scripts’. In the epigraphic evidence, however, particularities in script or decoration do not allow to delineate coherent ethnico-cultural areas. Rather, inscriptions in the post-Roman West, which came


\textsuperscript{118} Cf. the introduction in Laurence and Berry, eds, \textit{Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire}, pp. 1–9.

\textsuperscript{119} Cencetti, ‘Dall’unità al particolarismo grafico’.
to be a rather restricted elite phenomenon, respond to the same social stimuli and necessities of representation everywhere. In that sense, Lombard epigraphy was not recognizably ‘Lombard’, as opposed to ‘Roman’; but likewise, there was no obviously ‘Roman’ epigraphy which could serve as a cultural marker of the Roman population of the West. There were, perhaps, certain epigraphic styles which were particular to papal representation (such as the Capitalis Damasiana), and, in general, the production of inscriptions was still comparatively intense in the city of Rome.

The question of cultural definitions of Romanness is even thornier with the archaeological evidence, and that is the topic of the contributions by Irene Barbiera and Philipp von Rummel in this volume. Archaeologists have always tried to arrive at clear distinctions between ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’ evidence. This has led to a very detailed picture, as synthesized, for instance, in the differentiated overview by Volker Bierbrauer. Still, not all evidence fits this model, and the two contributions attempt a fundamental critique of this approach. Grave-goods, and especially weapons, have always been regarded as one of the basic distinctive features; Roman graves in general lack grave goods. In this respect, the statistical material from northern Italian cemeteries from the first century BCE to the tenth century CE, as presented by Irene Barbiera, has yielded some surprising results. Weapon burials never stop in the Roman period, although they reach a temporary low in the third/fourth centuries CE. This corresponds to a peak in the representation of warriors with their arms on funerary monuments. Warrior masculinity continued to be represented for the afterlife, if in changing forms. In the sixth/seventh centuries, the percentage of burials with weapons becomes higher again, but is certainly not exceptional in comparison. Thus, Irene Barbiera concludes, the ‘barbarian’ period of the fifth to eighth centuries is neither unique for its weapon burials nor for its displays of warrior masculinity in general.

Philipp von Rummel addresses the methodological issue in a more general and conceptual manner. The dichotomy between Romans and barbarians is an ancient concept which helped to establish clear-cut boundaries that corre-

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120 See also De Rubeis, ‘La scrittura delle élites tra crisi e rinnovamento’.
121 See Cardin, Epigrafia a Roma nel primo medioevo, a book written in close co-operation with the Wittgenstein project.
122 See, in general, Pohl and Mehofer, eds, Archaeology of Identity.
123 Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen’.
124 See also von Rummel, Habitus barbarus.
sponded to the logic of empire. In the early Middle Ages, the crisis of Roman identity threatened this great divide, and the boundaries had to be redrawn, essentially between Christians and pagans, although the ideological uses of the concept of the barbarian continued. Modern scholars reappropriated the clear binary logic of the Roman/barbarian distinction, and also extended it to the early medieval period. This may not be totally inappropriate, and many individuals may have been recognizable as either Romans or ‘barbarians’ at the time; but in many other cases, the distinction may not be possible at all. If Agathias, in the sixth century, writes that the Franks were ‘practically the same as ourselves except for their barbaric style of dress and peculiar language’, he still allows for some distinctions; but the differences are the exception, not the rule. It is still likely that lavish migration-age burials with weapons in northern France or Italy, relatively rare as they are, can in general be interpreted as a trace of the barbarian warrior elite, even though it is possible that some of them were ambitious Roman upstarts who had chosen a barbarian-type military career, or whose family wanted to demonstrate their social status in the barbarian way. But it is hard to tell whether in Roman-type burials, with little or no grave-goods, actual ‘Romans’ were buried. They might also be poor or assimilated barbarians, or the heirs of Roman provincials who had assumed a different identity. Volker Bierbrauer cautiously speaks of Roman, Frankish, and other ‘cultural models’, and thus avoids any whole-sale identification of ethnic and cultural identities. But Philipp von Rummel doubts whether this can solve our methodological problems, especially if lack of grave-goods is a central criterion. Conversely, in a number of instances, it has been shown that ‘barbarian’ styles and objects were also used by Roman soldiers or even civilians, or at least produced by Romans for barbarian tastes.

In the post-Roman kingdoms, ‘barbarians’ and ‘Romans’ most likely lived in a differentiated cultural continuum in which classical, provincial, and post-classical Roman elements coexisted with emerging Christian forms of expression and with objects of representation which are known from barbarian graves. These elements may have been used for various purposes, to show allegiance to a (not necessarily ethnic) group or polity, but also to assert status or demonstrate specialness by a display of rare and unique objects. The more recurrent a cul-

125 Agathias, Historiae, ed. by Keydell, i. 2. 3–4, p. 11 (Agathias, The Histories, trans. by Frendo, p. 10).
126 Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen im fränkischen Siedelgebiet’.
127 Cf. Halsall, Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul.
tural pattern is in our evidence, the more likely it was linked with recognizable ‘serial’ strategies of identification. Here, our concern should be to establish new links between archaeological and textual evidence. So far, interdisciplinary collaboration has mainly relied on broad common categories, many of which were dichotomies (Romans/barbarians, Christians/pagans) or ethnic designations. It has to be acknowledged that such classification has brought important progress in establishing order in an endless variety of evidence. But there is a point at which these classifications tend to come in the way of further differentiation. In our scholarly language we use the term ‘barbarian’ that is so rich in ideological overtones, because no convincing alternative terminology has yet been suggested. But we have to be aware that early medieval sources, biased as they may be, do not overwhelmingly class the population of post-imperial Europe into Romans and barbarians, and even less, into Romans and Germans. Many other strategies of identification seem to have been current in the period, and we should be more attentive to their traces in the sources. We have used the term ‘Roman’ for classification for so long that we should be aware when it corresponds to the usage of the sources, and where it results from a modern classification. This may lead to a better understanding of ‘Romanness after Rome’.

On the whole, late antique and early medieval identities in Europe were more complex than traditional research allowed for, and we need to map them out in a way adequate to their complexity. But they were not totally flexible or meaningless either. Both religious and ethnic identities can entail a considerable degree of commitment and sense of belonging, and early medieval sources are full of instances of strong identification with religious or ethnic groups. Gradually, the discourse of identity changed. Ethnicity acquired a growing legitimacy as a basis for political rule, and stopped being regarded as a mainly barbarian form of organization. Perhaps this was because Christianity offered a path of salvation to all the gentes, so that these gentes, not just one of them, could become legitimate parts of a Christian universe.

128 Pohl, ‘Vom Nutzen des Germanenbegriffes’, with a critique of the uncritical use of the term ‘Germans’.

129 For the role of ethnic discourse, see Pohl, ‘Introduction: Strategies of Identification’, pp. 27–43.
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Introduction


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Who is Allowed to Pray for the King?  
Saint-Maurice d’Agaune and the Creation of a Burgundian Identity

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[...] to what point the monks — who are called solitarii — should be able to rejoice forever, guided by God and, living under the holy rule and sharing the life of the blessed fathers, they should be able to pray to God more fully for the state of the church and the well-being of the king and of the patria.¹

This passage concludes the dispositio of a privilege issued around 637 by Bishop Burgundofaro of Meaux for the benefit of the monastery of Rebais-en-Brie. The charter grants an extensive list of rights to the monastery, including the protection of its possessions and all received gifts from episcopal and royal claims, the privilege of the community to elect its abbot and to invite a bishop of choice for ordinations and the blessing of altars, the restriction of episcopal jurisdiction, and the immunity of the monastic space.

¹ Privilege of Burgundofaro of Meaux for the Monastery of Rebais, in Diplomata, ed. by Pardessus, ii, no. 275, p. 40: ‘[...] quatenus monachi qui solitarii nuncupantur, de perfecta quiete valeant, duce Domino, per tempora exsultare, et sub ipsa sancta regula viventes et beatissimorum patrum vitam sectantes, pro statu Ecclesiae et salute regis et patriae valeant plenius Deum exorare’. The text is also available in Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina, ed. by Migne, lxxxvii, cols 1134c–38a. The translation is my own.

* Max Harris, Gerda Heydemann, Matthieu van der Meer, Walter Pohl, Jonathan Pollac, Helmut Reimitz, Barbara Rosenwein, Ian Wood, and Zachary Yuzwa have read and commented different versions of this article. I am very grateful for their corrections and suggestions. This article was completed in the Library of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, one of the finest resources for medieval studies in North America. After this article went to press, I received a draft of the article by Anne-Marie Helvétius, ‘L’Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d’Agaune dans le haut Moyen Âge’, which discusses very similar questions on the basis of the same set of sources and comes partly to different conclusions.
All those rights are bound to only two conditions: the monks have to live in the tradition of the blessed fathers and according to the *sancta regula*, and they have to pray for the good state of the church, the well-being of the king, and for the *patria*.  

None of the elements that express the terms of this contract sounds particularly alien to anyone dealing with the history of medieval monasticism. The *sancta regula*, the model of the *vita beatissimorum patrum*, and the requirement to pray for the *status ecclesiae* and the *salus regis et patriae* appear in variations in other monastic privileges issued by Frankish bishops during the seventh and early eighth centuries; they appear in the *Formulae*-collection of Marculf (written probably in the late seventh century), became standard elements of royal charters granting immunities to monasteries, and eventually defined what modern historians regard as a royal monastery — a concept that got its definitive shape in the course of the Carolingian monastic reforms.

The question of how we have to understand the *sancta regula* has been discussed in previous contributions to the Wittgenstein project. The general problem of how monasteries turned into places of collective intercessory prayer, and its theological implications, have been addressed as well, though...
certainly not completely resolved. For all of these problems, the privilege of Rebais forms a key text simply because it is the first preserved charter that combines all these elements to define the role and the place of monasteries within secular and ecclesiastical structures.

This article aims at shedding light on another aspect of the requirement to support secular rule and political structures through prayer by giving it its history and by connecting this history with the transformation of ethnic and political identities in sixth-century Gaul. The narratio of the privilege of Rebais claims that the privileges, but also the responsibilities of the monasteries, have their roots in a venerable monastic past:

And this has been decided, lest bishops in future should think that we have determined this on our own accord, because under the rule of this constitution [operated] the place of Agaune, as well as the monasteries of Lérins, Luxeuil, and the basilica of the lord Marcellus, both as to the liberty of the inhabitants and as to anything entrusted to that place by any persons.

Differently from the just-described key requirements of monastic life, the reference to monasteries of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, Lérins, Luxeuil, and the basilica of Saint-Marcellus in Chalons-sur-Saône had a relatively short afterlife. The Musterklöster (model monasteries), as Friedrich Prinz called them, keep showing up in a formulaic fashion in several Merovingian episcopal privileges, but it seems that after about a century nobody saw the need any more to legitimate

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8 The transformation of monasteries into places of collective intercessory prayer was first and foremost a theological challenge: what qualifies a community of unavoidably sinful human beings to take over an individual holy man’s task to pray on behalf of the world? Latin monastic texts from the sixth and seventh centuries were particularly creative in offering solutions for this problem. See Diem and Müller, ‘Vita, regula, sermo’; Diem, ‘Das Ende des monastischen Experiments’. Avitus of Vienne addresses this problem in his homily at the occasion of the refoundation of Saint-Maurice, which will be discussed extensively below: Avitus, Opera, ed. by Peiper, Homilia 25, p. 146: ‘Vos nunc habitaturos hic […] saecoli labor ad spem perpetuae qui etis invitat, quibus occupatis actione felici omne peccandi tempus excluditur; a quibus quidquid sinistrum cessisse laudabile est, quod non delectat, caelestes si nequeat. Mundum quidem fugitet, sed orate pro mundo, excluso a vobis seculo’.

9 Privilege of Rebais, in Diplomata, ed. by Pardessus, ii, no. 275, p. 40: ‘Et ne hoc nos proprii deliberationis instinctu sacerdotalis posteritas aestimet decrevisse, quum etiam sub huius constitutionis norma Agaunensium locum, inoque et monasteria Lirinensium, Luxoviensium, vel basilica domini Marcelli, tam de inhabitatoribus libertatem, quam a quibuscunque ibidem aliquid delegatum, eatenus fuit sanctum’.

10 A list is provided in Diem, ‘Was bedeutet Regula Columbani?’, p. 79 with n. 108.
a well-established feature of monastic life with its alleged roots in an increasingly remote past. They became a history that got out of use.\(^{11}\)

Eugen Ewig and Friedrich Prinz assumed that the four places mentioned in the charter held similar privileges to those Rebais would receive.\(^{12}\) Although we can trace most of the specific liberties granted by the privilege of Rebais back to at least one of these four monasteries, there is no indication that any of the Musterklöster was in a position similar to that which Rebais received in 637. All of them operated in different networks and balances of power with different parties involved. Getting a grip on these different power balances may provide us with a deeper understanding of the rise of monastic institutions, but also of those transformations of political structures and collective identities that are addressed in the Wittgenstein Project.

Lérins achieved the right to choose its abbot undisturbed by episcopal claims of power and control;\(^{13}\) Luxeuil successfully defended the concept of the monastery as separate space protected from non-monastic intruders;\(^{14}\) an episcopal council held at Valence around 583 granted the protection of the possessions of Saint-Marcellus with words that reappear in the privilege of Rebais,\(^{15}\)

\(^{11}\) See Ewig, ‘Die Gebetsklausel für König und Reich’.


\(^{13}\) Concilium Arelatense a. 449–61, in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. by Munier and de Clercq, i, 133.


\(^{15}\) Concilium Valentinum a. 583–85, in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. by Munier and de Clercq, ii, 235: ‘et quia tam laudabili deuotioni non solum sacerdotalem, sed etiam diuinam credimus posse connuuentiam conspirare, idcirco praesenti constituzione unanimi consensus Deo medio synodus sancta decrevit, ut si quid basilicae sancti Marcelli uel sancti Symphoriani uel quibus-cunque locis uel seruientibus Deo per quascunque authoritates aut scripturarum epistolas praefatus dominus rex uel supra nuncupata iugalis sua filiaeque eorum siue in ministerio altiarorum siue in quibuscunque specibus, quae ad divinum cultum pertinere noscuntur, contulisse uel adhuc conferre uolerit, neque episcopi locorum neque potestas regia quocumque tempore successura de eorum voluntate quicquam minorare aut auferre praesumat’. Cf. *Privilege of Rebais*, in *Diplomata*, ed. by Pardessus, ii, no. 275, p. 40: ‘Ergo omnes unius conspiracyonis consensus, antedictorum virorum postulationi sanctorum religiones libertissime annuentes, ita ab omnibus decretum est ut quid quid praedicti monasterii, vel monachis ibidem sub evangelica religione viventibus, ab ipsis eorumque parentibus, vel regio munere seu a quibuslibet Christianis, in agris, mancipiis, ministerio, sacris voluminibus, vel quibuscunque speciebus quae ad orna-
and Saint-Maurice d’Agaune became one of the first (probably even the first) monastery that was deliberately organized around the task of serving the king and the kingdom through prayer.

All four themes — power, space, possession, and prayer — are worth further investigation. If we are interested in the interplay between the transformation of ethnic identities and post-Roman political structures, the core of the Wittgenstein project, Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, as it was shaped about one hundred and twenty years before Rebais received its privilege, is the place to start. The ‘foundation’ of the monastery of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune formed the key moment for the creation of a Burgundian kingdom that transcended Roman and barbarian identities; its foundation marked a profound (and vigorously contested) transformation of monastic ideals, and it contributed, more broadly, to an integration of monastic institutions into wider political structures that became a distinct feature of the Latin medieval world. As such, the history of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune does more than reflect the ‘transformation of the Roman world’. I hope to show that it also played an important role in this process, at least as far as Gaul is concerned.

Communities of monks or nuns who were required to produce intercessory prayer for king, kingdom, or patria became a distinctively Frankish variant within the vast diversity of ‘monasticisms’ emerging in the late and post-Roman world around the Mediterranean Sea. Charters forged in later centuries aim at dating the beginning of the fruitful coalition between rulers and monasteries as far back as possible and depict it as a self-evident aspect of Frankish rule.

\[ \text{tum divini cultus pertinere noscitur, aut caeteris rebus, collata, aut deinceps collatura sunt, seu quod ad altare fuerit oblatum, ut ad quicumque, Deo inspirante, transmissum, praesentis vitae nostrae successorumque nostrorum, nullus sibi exinde aliquid clericorum aut pontificum, vel regalis sublimitas suis usibus usurpare aut minuere praesumat.} \]

Parallels are marked in bold. See also Diem, ‘Was bedeutet Regula Columbani?’; pp. 81–82; Rosenwein, Negotiating Space, pp. 45–46.


\[ \text{17 There are several diplomatic forgeries that relate the first intercessory communities in Gaul to the Frankish king Clovis (d. 511). The monasteries of Ferrières, Saint-Mesmin de Micy, Reôme, Saint-Pierre-le-Vif, and Saint-Hilaire in Poitiers claim to be founded or at least supported by the first Christian Merovingian king or his wife. See the falsified charters, Dip. nos 1–6, in DD Mer. (Merowinger 1), ed. by Kölzer, pp. 1–28. Remensnyder, Remembering} \]
Only in the Carolingian period did this model start to be exported into the entire Latin post-Roman world.\textsuperscript{18}

The ‘royal monastery’ (as historians call it), however, initially emerged as just one among many options to give monastic life a place within secular and ecclesiastical structures. The late ancient world knew individual holy men who prayed for kings and emperors, cursed them, or instructed them. It also knew various forms of interactions between monastery, church, and society, and various ways of acting out the dynamic tensions between city and desert. It seems, however, that only Frankish rulers managed to place monastic communities and their collectively achieved sanctity in their service and eventually to turn monasteries into multifunctional supporting pillars of their rule and touchstones of a political identity.

Royal monasteries had to be invented, and tracing the process and the circumstances of their invention gives unique access to the emergence of post-Roman political structures and the development of new identities in the part of the Roman world that later became the regnum Francorum. Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, however, our first royal Musterkloster, was originally not a Frankish monastery but a product of co-operation between a Burgundian king and the bishops within his range of power. It became part of the Erbmasse (bulk of heritage) of the Burgundian kingdom that was incorporated into the expanding Frankish world: a long-lasting success that was, as will be shown here, rather an accidental result of the very specific political constellations that turned a Roman region ruled by Burgundian kings into a Burgundian regnum.

1. The Foundation of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune

The story of Saint-Maurice’s foundation as it is told in the Vita abbatum Acaunensium evolves as follows: Hymnemodus, a barbarian member of the court of King Gundobad (d. 516), decides to become a miles Christi and attempts to

\textit{Kings Past}, pp. 14–22, provides a methodological framework for analysing diplomatic forgeries as sources on foundation myths of monasteries.

enter a monastery of the Grigny congregation (a group of filiations of Lérins located close to Lyon).\textsuperscript{19} Out of fear of the king, the Abbot of Grigny initially refuses to admit him. Yet, despite Gundobad’s resistance, Hymnemodus eventually becomes Abbot of Grigny.\textsuperscript{20} The royal attitude towards monasteries drastically changes under Gundobad’s son Sigismund, who founded Saint-Maurice in the year before his father’s death. The following section of the \textit{Vita}, which describes the establishment of a new monastic community at Saint-Maurice, is quoted in full:

When Sigismund, son of King Gundobad, who was already girded with the honour of patriciate, had abstained from the treachery of the Arian depravity, he followed the faith of the Catholic teaching and dedicated his mind most intensely to the pursuit of religion.

At this time did Maximus, the bishop of the city of Geneva [...], incite Sigismund’s heart to this piety in order that the dwellings mingled with the vulgus promiscuum were removed from the place that the martyrs of Thebes had adorned with fruit bearing spots of manifold red through their precious death and praised through the spilling of their blood. And that place, which had received the brilliance of life through the atrocity of their passion, should regain the splendour of the inhabitants, and the everlasting day should make its entry after the deeds of darkness had been expelled. This should happen in such a way that with their [the martyrs’] very protection he [Sigismund] would most safely take possession of the kingdom and its integrity.

This was done under the condition that it would not come into his mind to stray one step away from the path of piety and justice, because the saints protect those of whom they know that they would by no means deviate from the good order. This [place] has therefore deserved to be enriched with all abundance and prosperity, and it would have owned it already for a long time if the ambushes of the old enemy had not been so strong due to the overflowing transgressions of the people. Therefore after holding council he [the king] willingly agreed by the full inspiration of God that all women be removed from this place, and after getting rid of worldly families, the family of God, that is the family of monks, be settled there,

\textsuperscript{19} On Grigny, see Prinz, \textit{Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich}, p. 71. Ueding, \textit{Geschichte der Klostergründungen}, pp. 83–86, shows that Grigny consisted of several monasteries — probably in a setting similar to that of the Jura monasteries (see below).

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Vita abbatum Acaunensium}, ed. by Krusch, c. 1, p. 330: ‘Quantumque regis minaces insidiae procedebant, tantum in Christi servitio acris excellebat, adeo ut non post multum temporis, sancto Caelestio abbate de hoc sacculo ad Chrstum migrante, ipse, Deo favente, ex totius congregationis concessu, fratum supplicationibus vix coactus, abba loco eius succederet’.
who were to persist by day and by night under the norm of the rule in the divine work and service.\textsuperscript{21}

Sigismund’s conversion to Catholicism, his ascent to power, and his rule over the entire kingdom were thus affirmed by the Catholic bishop Maximus. For this purpose they cleansed the powerful but entirely corrupted martyrs’ shrine of the Roman general Maurice and his legion from the \textit{vulgus promiscuum}, from women and lay people, and restored the splendour of this place by allocating monks (the \textit{familia Dei}) who had to perform prayer by day and by night. The act of turning a Roman martyr shrine, placed at a major connection route between Italy and Gaul,\textsuperscript{22} into a place of prayer for a barbarian king and the unity (\textit{integritas}) of his rule became the bride gift of this bishop in the marriage between the Burgundian rulers and the Catholic church.\textsuperscript{23}

The \textit{Vita abbatum Acaunensium} does not tell us the end of the story, which indicates that the text was probably written rather closely after the events it describes. Less than ten years later, in 522, Sigismund entered the monastery, allegedly as an act of penance for the murder of his son Sigistrix. Soon afterwards, he was killed by the Merovingian King Chlodomer (d. 524) and buried

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{Vita abbatum Acaunensium}, ed. by Krusch, c. 3, pp. 331–32: ‘Cum Sigismundus, Gundebadi regis filius, iam honorem patriciatus accinctus, Arrianae pravitatis perfidiam abie- cisset, fidem catholici dogmatis consecutus, animum suum erga religionis studia intentissime commodabat. Eo tempore Maximus Genavensis urbis antistes [omni sanctitate et puritate con- spicuus cunctaeque industriae ac strenuitate egregius, apud quem praedicatio divini sermonis vehementer pollebat], ad hanc devotionem Sigismunde praecordia incitavit, et /ut de loco illo, quem pretiosa morte Thebei martyres et effusione sanguinis incliti felicibus maculis rosea vari- etate ornaverant, promiscui vulgi commixa habitatio tolleretur, et illi, cui splendor vitae per passionis atrocitatem fuerat adquisitus, nitor habitantium remearet, exclusisque actionibus tenebrarum, dies perpetuus habitaretur; ita fore, ut isdem patrocinantibus, et regno et regni integritate tutissime poteretur, eo facto, si cogitatio eius a pietate et iusticiae itinere minime deviare, quia hos sancti tuentur, quos sciunt a bono ordine nullatenus declinare. Quod tamen cum omni habundantia et prosperitate habere promeruit et adhuc tempore longiore habuerat, si non, exundantibus populorum delictis, antiqui hostis insidia valuisset. Igitur, habito consilio, universitate Dei instinctu conplacuit, ut omnes mulieres de loco eodem tollerentur, et remo- tis familis secularibus, Dei inibi, hoc est monachorum, familia locaretur, qui die noctuque sub norma regulari divinis operibus et officiis insisterent’.
\item \textsuperscript{22} See Wood, ‘Liturgy in the Rhône Valley’, pp. 211–12, who argues that Italy certainly belonged to Saint Maurice’s zone of attraction, which would explain the role of the shrine as a place for curing malaria.
\item \textsuperscript{23} See also Rosenwein, ‘One Site, Many Meanings’, pp. 273–74; Paxton, ‘Power and the Power to Heal’, p. 101.
\end{itemize}
in the monastery, where he was eventually venerated as a martyr. With the defeat of Sigismund’s brother Godomar in 532 the short episode of an independent Catholic kingdom of the Burgundians came to an end and Gaul came entirely under Frankish rule.

We can assume that Bishop Maximus did not act by himself when he took the initiative to purge Saint-Maurice. He may have been supported by Bishop Avitus of Vienne, a friend and advisor of both Gundobad and Sigismund, whose homily for the dedication of Saint-Maurice is preserved. The author of the Vita abbatum Acaunensium and Gregory of Tours (our other main witness on the beginnings of Sigismund’s monastic project) obscure in different ways that Saint-Maurice was already a thriving monastic settlement long before its ‘foundation’ in 515, and that the king’s and the bishops’ initiative meant, in fact, the destruction of this community. Gregory does not mention this older monastic community at all, and tells us that Sigismund built the monastery (aedificavit); the Vita abbatum Acaunensium describes the place as being inhabited by a depraved crowd that certainly does not even deserve to be called a monastic community.

2. Voices of Dissent

The women, lay people, and the vulgus promiscuum who were removed from Saint-Maurice did probably not like what happened to them. We may not be able to hear their voice, but there are indications that Sigibert’s and Maximus’s

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25 Avitus, Opera, ed. by Peiper, Homilia 25, pp. 145–46. On Avitus, see the discussion by the editors in Avitus, Selected Letters and Prose, ed. by Wood and Shanzer.

26 The main sources on the cult of Saint-Maurice are the Passio martyrum Acaunensium, ed. by Krusch (ascribed to Eucherius of Lyons), and the Vita Severini abbatis Acaunensis, ed. in Theurillat, L’Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, pp. 26–27. See also Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, pp. 69–70; Berschin, Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter, 1, 261–66; Paxton, ‘Power and the Power to Heal’, pp. 100–01; Rosenwein, ‘Perennial Prayer at Agaune’, pp. 47–48; Masai, ‘La Vita patrum iurensium’.

27 Gregory of Tours, Historiae, ed. by Krusch and Levison, III. 5, p. 100. Fredegar, Chronicae, ed. by Krusch, IV. 1, p. 124, uses ‘aedificare iussit’.
initiative met fierce resistance on various levels — and it appears to be very fruitful to focus on these voices of dissent in order to understand what it meant to transform an ancient Roman martyr shrine into an institution that became the prototype of a royal monastery in the service of barbarian rulers. These voices of dissent may challenge the assumption that a monastic model that became prevalent throughout the Middle Ages somehow organically and naturally evolved from the world of the sancti patres and the earliest monastic communities in Gaul.

The prologue of the Vita abbatum Acaunensium makes a vigorous and slightly nervous claim on the discursive monopoly on events at Saint-Maurice d’Agaune: writing down this story prevents posterity from being misled by fabulae vanae:

Though a belief animated by the merits of blessed men ever calls to mind the exemplary memory of their way of life in later generations of people, nevertheless it is necessary to commit the truth to letters lest through a long stretch of time through confused stories one seems to lose the true path, so that those men who, inflamed by the ardour of faith and the love of holiness, desire to nourish their hearts with discourse and thirstily drink up not the empty air from a cloudy haze but rather a shower of truth. For that reason, I am convinced that, by the service of my attendant pen, the life of the holy abbots Hymnemodus, Ambrosius, and Achivus ought to be included on this page, abbots who excellently took charge of supporting the congregation of the monastery at Agaunum; even, as the record of their righteous charity exhorts, how the monastery itself was founded by the helpful suffrage of the only begotten word, our Lord and God Jesus Christ. Nor in fact do I fear to describe with indecorous speech their fertile faith, which in fear of God they exercised with wondrous affect, because, whatever of their praises dim speech might obscure, the very same an enlightened report makes clear by the brilliant merits of their deeds.²⁸

²⁸ Vita abbatum Acaunensium, ed. by Krusch, prologus, pp. 329–30: ‘Beatorum virorum sanctae conversationis imitandam memoriam quamvis opinio meritis vivificata sucedentibus populis semper insinuet, tamen, ne per longas temporum lineas, confusis fabulis, certum transtem videatur omittere, necessarium est veritatem litteris assignare, ut hii, qui calore fidei et sanctitatis amore accensi, pectora sua sermocinatione cupiunt satiari, non inanem aeram de nebulosa caligine, sed verum imbrem hauriant sitientes. Quam ob rem vitam sanctorum abbatum Ymnemodi, Ambrosii et Achivi, qui susciπiendae congregatio Acaunensis monasterii eximie praefuerunt, vel qualiter ipsum monasterium fuerit institutum, piac caritatis recordatione suadente, unigeniti verbi Dei ac domini nostri Iesu Christi opitulante suffragio, stili famulantis officio huic paginae credidi inserenda. Neque enim vereor fructuosam fidem eorum, quam in timore Dei miro semper exercerunt affectu, sermone inculto describere, quia, quicquid de eorum laudibus dictio obscura celaverit, id, fulgentibus actuum meritis, relatio inlustrata clarificat.’ This translation follows suggestions made by Zachary Yuzwa.
Moreover, the author stresses in suspicious repetition the *concordia* and the *unanimitas* of almost everyone who was involved in the project. He also emphasizes the fact that the monastic communities themselves more than willingly followed the lead of their abbots.  

One of the most outspoken voices of dissent on the developments in Saint-Maurice comes from the *Vita patrum Iurensium*, even though this text does not directly address the reformation of Saint-Maurice. The *Vita vel regula sanctorum patrum Romani Lupicini et Eugendi monasteriorum Iurensium abbatum*, as the text is called in its manuscripts, describes the rise of the Jura monasteries, a congregation of monastic foundations that had emerged in the first half of the fifth century out of a humble community of hermits who sought to emulate the desert fathers in the wilderness near the Lake of Geneva. The text uses the form of a narrative in order to provide a *regula* on how monastic communities can successfully turn into long-lasting institutions while retaining their uncorrupted ideals and their original ascetic vigour. The main protagonists, the abbots Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus, represent different stages in this process of institution forming.

The work was commissioned by John and Armentarius, a monk and a hermit from Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, and it was probably written either shortly before or shortly after the refoundation of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune. I suggest

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29 See, for example, *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 1, p. 330: ‘ex totius congregationis consensus’; c. 4, p. 332: ‘qui de servitio vel de optutibus eius neququam discesserat [...] Nisi me transitus de hac luce a te separaverit, numquam me a tuis obsequiis scias esse discersurum’; c. 5, p. 333: ‘qui illum semper secum unanimem habuerunt [...] Sed ille, inconcussa stabilitate cordis, de firme proposito non discessit’; c. 8, p. 334: ‘congregatione electione [...] ut omnes abbatae paene superstite illum eligerent [...] cum electione congregatione abba est ordinatus [...] cum sancto Achivio vel Probo unanimem dilectionem habuerit’. 

30 *Vita patrum Iurensium*, ed. and trans. by Martine. The authenticity of the work has been disputed but is now widely accepted. See Martine’s introduction, pp. 14–44, and the introduction to the English translation: *The Lives of the Jura Fathers*, trans. by Vivian, Vivian, and Russel, pp. 48–52. See n. 68, below, on the possible authorship of Bishop Viventiolus of Lyons and his involvement in resolving dissent within the Jura monasteries.

31 See *Vita patrum Iurensium*, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 4, p. 238: ‘Igitur, praefatorum venerabilium Iurensium patrum actus vitamque ac regulam, quantum inibi proprio intuitu vel seniorum traditione percepit, nitar fideliter in Chisti nimine repicare [...]’. It is by no means unusual to use narratives for describing how monasteries should be organized and kept on track. The boundaries between *vita* and *regula* are often not clearly definable. For an analysis of three other ‘*vitae vel regulae*’ (Jonas’s *Vita Columbani*, his *Vita Iohannis*, and the *Vita Pacomii iunioris*) see Diem, ‘Was bedeutet Regula Columbani?’; Diem, ‘The Rule of an Iro-Egyptian Monk in Gaul’; Diem and Müller, *Vita, regula, sermo*.
that the Jura monasteries, as described in this *Vita vel regula*, served as an alternative model to the imminent or already realized changes in Saint-Maurice. The prologue of the work gives some indication of the desperation of the two members of the community of Saint-Maurice:

This is why, John and Armentarius, my dear devout brothers, you with twin affections knock so insistently at the door of your friend. [...]. Breaking, therefore, the modesty appropriate to an unlettered heart, I shall put myself forward for your benefit as the narrator of the life of the three abbots of the Jura Mountains, that is, the holy fathers Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus, and I shall present it in the form of the loaves of bread mentioned above. Your life and conduct is, to be sure, one of spiritual contemplation: you, John, following the Apostle John of old, recline upon the sarcophagus of Saint Maurice, head of the legion of Theban martyrs, just as the famous apostle and companion of Christ reclined upon the breast of the author of our salvation; you, Armentarius, like the dove from the seafaring ark, are content to remain enclosed there in the monastery in your private cell and laugh at the swirling commotion of the world. Neither of you, however, is able, without spiritual nourishment, to devote himself fully to these exercises without harm. Your ‘Acaunus’, in the ancient Gallic expression, is recognized to be a rock, as much primordially from nature as now also because of the Church, through the truthful prefiguration of Peter. Nevertheless, may your Charity acknowledge among the forests of pine and fir of the Jura Mountains the same rock allegorically ‘discovered’ long ago by the psalmist ‘in the fields of the forest’. There the holy brothers, who have followed firm in their monastic stability, now tread upon this rock, whose hidden meaning is now made clear.32

Reading the *Vita vel regula* of the Jura monasteries against the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* reveals differences that address core features of Maximus’s and Sigismund’s project.

The Jura monasteries (at least the communities of monks) are, according to the *Vita patrum Iurensium*, in principle open to everyone who wants to become a monk, and they also serve guests, pilgrims, and sick people; they were certainly not meant to be places of overall *quies*.33 Initially, ‘outsiders’ were not even spatially separated from the community. Only at a very late stage the Abbot of the Jura monasteries built dwellings that were exclusively reserved

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to the monks. 34 Avitus of Vienne, quite differently, stresses in his homily for
the dedication of Saint-Maurice especially its monastic quies and its permanent
separation from the turmoil of the world. 35 The people removed from Saint-
Maurice by Sigismund and Maximus might have been of the same sort as those
who crowded the Jura monasteries.

Yet, despite its aspired quies, Saint-Maurice d’Agaune was much more
entangled with the world than the Jura monasteries. Romanus, Lupicinus,
and Eugendus kept a friendly but distinct distance from bishops and were not
happy with any of their attempts to interfere with monastic matters. Bishops
got the respect they deserved, but not more. 36 Saint-Maurice, to the contrary,
was founded by bishops, populated by priests and clerics from their households,
and its rule was confirmed by a gathering of bishops. Several sources emphasize
the close connection between the monastery and the Burgundian episcopate. 37

The only passages in the Vita patrum Iurensium that express an unconcealed
anger address the destructive role that priests may play in the monastery:

But as I report this about that most holy man [Abbot Romanus modestly exercising
his priestly duties], others rise up before the eyes of my heart. After making their
monastic profession, through mad ambition these attain clerical rank. Without
delay, wearing the pretentious fashions of an inflated self-esteem, these perfumed
and delicate young fellows are borne aloft, not only above their deserving equals,
but also above their elders and seniors. Uninstructed in even the most basic and
rudimentary principles, they make every effort to take advantage of their priestly

34 Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 170, p. 422.
35 Avitus, Opera, ed. by Peiper, Homilia 25, p. 146: ‘[...] omnis operis necessitate scelusa,
sola erit requies sinceritas actionis [...]’. For the subsequent text, see n. 47, below.
36 Romanus was summoned to Bishop Hilarius of Arles (a former monk of Lérins). He had
to convince the Bishop of the quality of his monastic endeavour, received priesthood, and was
allowed to return to his community. In the same context the author inserts a diatribe against
Hilarius having exceeded his competence by deposing Calodonius, the Bishop of Besançon.
See Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, cc. 18–19, pp. 258–60. Romanus tries to
do his best not to be absorbed into the range of power of the Bishop of Geneva: Vita patrum
Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, cc. 49–50, pp. 292–94. Eucherius is well respected by
bishops but by no means willing to accommodate them: c. 140, p. 388.
37 See Vita abbatum Acaunensium, ed. by Krusch, cc. 3 and 5–7, pp. 331–34. On the respec-
tive episcopal households, see Rosenwein, ‘Perennial Prayer at Agaune’, pp. 54–55. Later refer-
ences to episcopal involvement can be found in Fredegar, Chronicae, ed. by Krusch, iv. 1, p. 124;
see also the falsified foundation charter of Saint-Maurice (ninth century) ed. in Theurillat,
L’Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, pp. 75–82 (at pp. 78–79).
office and to preside from their seats of authority — they who, because of their vanity and youthful lack of seriousness, still need to be disciplined and reined in.  

Romanus is, as the *Vita* tells us, ordained to priesthood against his will and never uses his priestly privileges; Eugendus manages to escape ordination. With regard to the role of priest-monks Saint-Maurice d’Agaune and the Jura monasteries could not be more different.

The *Vita patrum Iurensium* and the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* also disagree about the role of secular rulers. The *Vita patrum Iurensium* describes Abbot Lupicinus as follows: ‘He did not burst with vainglorious pride at the flattery of state officials (*iudices*), nor was he ever moved or shaken from his devotion to justice by fear of princes (*principes*).’ The Burgundian King Chilperic, probably Gundobad’s uncle (d. c. 480), figures in the *Vita patrum Iurensium* as *patricius* and *iudex* who acts within the framework of a still existing Roman Empire. Lupicinus appears at Chilperic’s court as a terrifying and utterly respectless *vir Dei*. For him the *iudex* and *princeps* Chilperic represents the party that happens to hold power in this part of Gaul — the party he has to address in his function as intercessor for a group of unjustly enslaved people. One of Lupicinus’s other acts of intercession saves a Roman *dux* called Agreppinus from being executed in Rome for treason. Neither the range of actions nor the pool of recruitment of new monks was determined by any boundary of secular rule. Romanus, Lupicinus, and Eugendus, and their community are still Roman *moines sans frontières*.

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38 *Vita patrum Iurensium*, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 21, pp. 260–62; trans. from *The Lives of the Jura Fathers*, trans. by Vivian, Vivian, and Russel, p. 111. No other passage of the *Vita patrum Iurensium* is as polemical as this one. Another diatribe against priests in the monastery can be found in cc. 133–34, pp. 382–84. According to c. 151, pp. 400–02, Eugendus kept priests separate within the community and did not allow them to get involved in disciplinary matters.


41 On the transition towards monasteries as communities of ordained monks, see Nußbaum, *Kloster, Priestermönch und Privatmesse*.


45 Activities and contacts beyond the direct surrounding are described, for example, in *Vita
Chilperic fully acknowledges Lupicinus’s power and provides him with some necessary gifts for his monastery, and the saint does not request more. Gregory of Tours turns the same story in his Liber vitae patrum into an even more explicit praise of monastic self-sufficiency. Here Lupicinus agrees to receive material support to nourish and vest the monks, but he explicitly refuses to accept vineyards and fields as permanent possessions.\footnote{Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 95, p. 340: ‘Mox uero, uigoris regii sententia promulgata, liberos restituit libertati, et Christi famulum, oblatis ob necessitatem fratrum uel loci muneribus, honorifice fecit ad coenobium repedere’; Gregory of Tours, Liber vitae patrum, ed. by Kursch, i. 5, p. 667: ‘“Ideo petimus potentiae vestrae, ut ad victus vestitusque necessaria aliquid tribuatis” . Rex vero haec audiens, ait: “Accipite agros vineasque, de quibus posseditis vivere ac necessitates vestras explere”. Qui respondit: “Agros et vineas non accipiemus, sed, si placet potestati vestrae, aliquid de fructibus deligate. Quia non decet, monachos facultatibus mundanis extollere, sed in humilitate cordis Dei regnum iustitiamque eius exquerere”. At rex, cum audisset haec verba, dedit eis praescriptionem, ut annis singulis trecentos modios tritici et centum aureos ad conparandum fratrum inumenta’.

In contrast, both the Vita abbatum Acaunensium and Avitus’s homily praise Sigismund for lavishly endowing Saint-Maurice in order to ensure that the monks will not have to worry about their material situation and can fully concentrate on their task to pray.\footnote{Avitus, Opera, ed. by Peiper, Homilia 25, p. 146: ‘[…] cui inter divinas laudes, omnis operis necessitate seclusa, sola erit requies sinceritas actionis. […] [directed towards Sigismund:] Ditati donis, pauperes verbis, percepimus magna, paucas persolvimus; ornasti ecclesias tuas gazarum cumulo, numero populorum; struxisti simptibus, quae muneribus cumulares altaria; numquam quidem contulimus verba virtuti, sed cum ad praesens psalmisone sollemne perveentum est, parum puto, si dicam verba nostra: vicisti hodie inuper et opera tua. See also Vita abbatum Acaunensium, ed. by Krusch, c. 3, pp. 331–32 (text in n. 21, above).}

All three holy abbots of the Jura monasteries act at numerous occasions as intercessors for the sick, the oppressed, and the possessed outside the monastery. For each of the protagonists, the Vita patrum Iurensium describes how the community, or at least members of the community, take over their abbots’ intercessory abilities. This shows the author’s concern of depicting the Jura monasteries as a congregatio sancta that continues and institutionalizes the virtus of its founders.\footnote{Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, cc. 14 and 16, pp. 254–58; c. 128, pp. 376–78; c. 145, p. 394; and cc. 155–60, pp. 404–10. On mobility and regionalism in late antique Gaul, see Mathisen, Roman Aristocrats in Barbarian Gaul, pp. 20–24.}

Both the transmission and the shape of this collective sanc-
tity and the power of intercession are profoundly different from what the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* describes.

The abbots and monks of the Jura monasteries serve people from all different social backgrounds and origins by causing miracles and by a combination of the saints’ prayer and the recipients’ faith.49 Organized intercessory prayer performed by the community, however, does not figure in the *Vita patrum Iurensium*. The text addresses numerous aspects of monastic discipline and ascetic vigour, but liturgy plays a marginal role and liturgical discipline is not mentioned at all.50 The monks of the Jura monasteries still went to the fields, and the discipline and vigour in which they performed manual labour plays a key role in the *Vita patrum Iurensium*.

The *regula* of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune (as it is mentioned and acted out in the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*) encompasses little besides the community’s liturgical order and liturgical discipline. Therefore, the monks of Saint-Maurice were endowed with possessions for the explicit purpose that they did not have to work and could fully dedicate themselves to prayer.

The prologue to the *Life of Eugendus* (the third part of the *Vita patrum Iurensium*) even expresses a subtle criticism on wasting too many words in too elaborate prayer — which could be understood as a side blow against Saint-Maurice:

> Human weakness, while delighting in a chant or in music, and while admiring lovely oratory with its appropriate utilization of vocabulary and verb tenses, is inclined toward judgment; may the Divinity, then, who favours my undertaking, see to it that my simple and unadorned style is not trampled upon by the boasting of arrogant judges with their windy verbiage. Moreover, as I have already said, I have dedicated these little works especially to you, whom I know to be the disciples not of orators but of fishermen (non oratorum, sed piscatorum). You look for ‘the kingdom of God not in philosophic language but in virtue’, and prefer to pray to the Lord through a pure and continuous observance (magisque pura ac iugi observantia Dominum exorare) rather than to pray through a foolish and perishable eloquence (quam vana perituraque facundia perorare).51


50 References to individual prayer and liturgical practice can be found in *Vita patrum Iurensium*, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 10, p. 248 (prayer of Lupicinus); c. 46, p. 290 (Romanus and the monk Palladius are singing the Hours); cc. 64–65, pp. 310–12 (Lupicinus’s private prayer); cc. 129–30, pp. 378–80 (Eugendus prays the Hours).

51 *Vita patrum Iurensium*, ed. and trans. by Martine, cc. 118–19, pp. 364–66: ‘Sic adnuens Diuinitas faxit, ut humana procluioior in diuidicando fragilitas dum melo delectatur aut musicis,
Both the Jura monasteries and Saint-Maurice d’Agaune claim to stand in the tradition of the monastery of Lérins, the first outpost of Egyptian monasticism in Gaul, and to fulfil or at least uncorruptedly adapt the ideals of the sancti patres. According to the Vita abbatum Acaunensium, Saint-Maurice is populated with monks from the monasteries of Grigny and Île-Barbe, two monastic communities that were founded by Lérinsian monks and probably followed Lérinsian rules. The Vita patrum Iurensium is very explicit about its ties to Lérins and its roots in the desert father tradition, but also honest about the necessity to adjust it to new circumstances. At the end of the work, the author expresses the hope that Agaune would return to the model of Lérins as well. The Vita patrum Iurensium closes with providing the two lost monks of Saint-Maurice with an excerpt of the rule of Lérins as an addition to the Vita itself — clearly a claim that the Jura monasteries have the authority to bring Saint-Maurice back on the right path of tradition:

But if rustic loquacity is not able to satisfy your souls, which have already rejected philosophy, [then] the institutes which we, at the instigation of the holy priest Marinus, the Abbot of Lérins, have selected as your outline for the monastery, that is for the community of Agaune, will, with Christ’s help, lavishly fulfil your desires both for the honours of the institution and for the authority of the one who ordered them.


53 References to Lérins can be found in Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 174, pp. 426, and c. 179, pp. 432–34. References and allusions to the desert fathers (especially Anthony) are ubiquitous in the Vita patrum Iurensium.

54 Vita patrum Iurensium, ed. and trans. by Martine, c. 179, pp. 432–34: ‘At si animos uestros, spreta dudum philosophia, rusticana quoque garrulitas exsatiare non quiuerit, instituta quae de informatione monasterii uestri, id est Acaunensis coenobii, sancto Marino presbytero insulae Lirinensis abbate compellente, digessimus, desideria uestra, tam pro institutionis insignibus quam pro iubentis auctoritate, Christo opitulante, luctulenter explebunt’. (My own translation). On this passage, see also Zelzer, ‘Die Identifizierung der Institutio de informatione’. 
3. Creating Consensus: Barbarians in the Monastery

The *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* begins, as already mentioned, with a heavily contested monastic entry — a variation on the *topos* of a Roman young man leaving his appalled family, his wealth, and political ambitions behind in order to live a perfect monastic life. Hymnemodus, however, is not a promising member of a noble Roman family but a *barbarus* at the court of a Burgundian king, a barbarian by birth but nevertheless immune to all roughness, as the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* puts it. This in itself indicates a major shift, though, we have to keep in mind that *barbarus* does (certainly in this context) not necessarily have a negative connotation but rather indicates a legal status that encompassed the readiness to carry out military responsibilities. There are, at least for Gaul, no previous references to any *barbarus* entering a monastery, let alone becoming an abbot, but there are also only a few references problematizing ethnicity in the context of monastic entry after Hymnemodus. Gregory of Tours’s *Liber vitae patrum*, written at the end of the sixth century, may serve as a case in point. He tells about monks and ascetics of diverse ethnic and social backgrounds without ever addressing this diversity as problematic or worth of justification. In Gregory’s view, bishops have to be Roman and should be aristocrats, but monks can come from anywhere.

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55 Hymnemodus’s successors Ambrosius and Achivius had as well entered the monastery against the will of their families. See *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, cc. 8–9, pp. 354–55. Two (of many) other examples: *Vita Caesarii*, ed. by Krusch, pp. 458–59; Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. by Kursch, vi. 1, p. 680.

56 *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 1, p. 330: ‘Sanctus igitur Ymnemodus natione quidem barbarus, sed morum benigneitate modestus, ita inmunis ab omni feritate beneficio divinitatis effectus est, ut sub habitu saeculari iugum Christi blanda clementiae libertate portaret’.

57 The *Liber constitutionum*, the Burgundian law code issued by Gundobad and his son Sigismund, uses *barbarus* in a strictly legal sense as opposed to *Romanus*, but particularly refers to those in the king’s service. See, for example, *Liber constitutionum*, ed. by von Salis, ii. 1, p. 42: ‘Si quis hominem ingenuum ex populo nostro cuiuslibet nationis aut servum regis, natione duntaxat barbarum, occidere damnabili ausu aut temeritate praesumpserit, non aliter admissum crimen quam sanguinis sui effusionem conponat’.

58 Foreign monks are mentioned in Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae patrum*, ed. by Kursch, iii. 1, p. 672; xv. 1, p. 721; monks of a very low social background in v. 1, p. 677; ix. 1, p. 702; xiii. 1, p. 715. A study of references to ethnicity in Jonas of Bobbio’s works is provided by Alexander O’Hara in this volume.

In the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, an option for upper class Roman jeunesses becomes accessible to a non-Roman, and, more importantly, this ‘non-Romanness’ becomes a ‘non-issue’ — already in the course of the story that the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* tells. Hymnemodus, the barbarian miles Christi, recruits monks with Roman names (Ambrosius, Iustus, Probus, and Ursolus) but also at least one other barbarian (Drabestio). His first successor, Ambrosius, was a cleric and presumably came from a Roman family; his second successor Achivus came from a soldier’s family, probably in Burgundian service (*cum patre Eracleo in Grationopolitano território militiam egit*), but the author of the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* does not call him *natione barbarus* any more. The foundation charter of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune, an obvious Carolingian forgery, contains a list of witnesses that lists along with four bishops four *comites* bearing Germanic names, and, since at least three of the four bishops’ names are correct, the list may have been taken from a contemporary charter and still reflect the spirit of collaboration between Roman bishops and barbarian courtiers.

In Merovingian hagiography, Hymnemodus is not only the first but also the last explicit *barbarus* who enters a monastery, with the exception of Radegund of Poitiers who is *natione barbara* because she came to the Frankish court as a Thuringian slave. For Hymnemodus, however, it is not so much his ‘barbarian’ background but his role at Gundobad’s court that forms a major obstacle for his monastic conversion, and he manages to circumnavigate the problem only by becoming a monk and hermit before joining the monastery. After that, the king still fiercely resists even his subsequent ascent to abbatial dignity.

Ian Wood has convincingly shown that the dichotomy between Arian Burgundians and Catholic Romans has to be regarded rather as a construct than as a reality, and even the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* does not excessively

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61 *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, cc. 8–9, pp. 334–35.

62 For the list, see Theurillat, *L’Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d’Agaune*, p. 81: ‘Maximus episcopus Genevensis; Theodorus urbis Sedunensis [Theodorus, Bishop of Sitten is nowhere else recorded]; Victor urbis Gratinopolitanus; Viventiolus urbis Ludgunensis and Fredemarus comes; Gondeulfus comes; Benedictus comes; Agano comes; Bonefacius comes; Theudemundus comes; Fredeboldus comes’. See Amory, *Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community*, p. 14.


64 See n. 20, above.

65 See Wood, ‘Royal Succession and Legitimation in the Roman West’, pp. 68–71; Wood,
play the Arian card. King Gundobad is depicted as an unsympathetic figure who gives the new *miles Christi* Hymnemodus a hard time, but he is not explicitly slandered because he is an Arian or a heretic. In the author’s narrative, the critical distinction between Gundobad’s rule and that of his son Sigismund is not so much the shift from Arianism to Catholicism; rather, it is the shift from one political setting to another. In the new setting a Burgundian king may regard a court member’s monastic entry as something different than desertion and recognize that a place such as Saint-Maurice can actually support his rule. The king himself became a benefactor but also beneficiary of his monastic foundation — most notably a foundation appropriating a venerable shrine of Roman soldier martyrs. The *barbarus* Hymnemodus bridges these entirely different settings and facilitates the transition. The notion of barbarian v. Roman dissolves, and a formerly Roman institution becomes an integral part of the Burgundian apparatus of power. Gundobad’s resistance — if we regard it as more than just a rhetorical device — is consciously presented as a dissonance that had to be resolved by the new Catholic ruler Sigismund.

The King, however, was not the only one who needed to be brought on board for this endeavour. According to the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, the entire project of reorganizing and appropriating Saint-Maurice d’Agaune was initiated by Bishop Maximus of Geneva. He assigned to Hymnemodus the task of travelling along other monasteries and episcopal sees that were situated in the region controlled by the Burgundian kings in order to recruit clerics, abbots, and monks to inhabit the new monastery and to replace those who had lived there before. Maximus’s intention was to fortify the coalition between Sigismund and the Catholic ecclesiastical structure. Relapse into Arianism or religious indifference was not unheard of and had to be prevented by collaboratively establishing a space fruitfully shared by king and church.

At least two of Maximus’s colleagues, Victorius of Grenoble and Viventiolus of Lyon, initially appeared to be rather unhappy with this idea and especially disliked that Hymnemodus and his followers recruited their own clerics and

‘The Latin Culture of Gundobad and Sigismund’. See also Kaiser, *Die Burgunder*, pp. 152–65. The fact that king Gundobad was probably indeed still Arian prevented neither him nor Bishop Avitus of Vienne to enter an amicable co-operation than included even discussions on theological matters outside the question of Arian or Catholic Christology.


67 See *Concilium Epaonense a. 517*, in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. by Munier and de Clercq, c. 29, i, p. 31. The canon imposes severe penance on those who had fallen back into heresy.
monks and abbots from their dioceses. Hymnemodus had, at least according to the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, little problem convincing Victorius. Viventiolus, however, who was a former monk of the Jura monasteries, was not given much of a choice. The author of the *Vita abbatum* does not include him in his repeated claims of overall unanimity.

Yet Hymnemodus succeeded in populating the monastery with a significant number of monks and clerics from places under Burgundian rule. Eventually, the monastery’s refoundation was confirmed by a group of bishops who explicitly sanctioned the liturgical rule of the community. Maximus was probably able to convince his episcopal colleagues that it was worth ‘sacrifying’ some of their own people to serve in this new institution that ensured that their bar-

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68 See Wood, ‘A Prelude to Columbanus’, p. 14 and note 118, and Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, p. 103, who suggest that Viventiolus may have been the author of the *Vita patrum Iurensium*. The link between Viventiolus and the Jura monasteries is documented in a letter of Avitus of Vienne to Viventiolus, written shortly before the death of Eugendus. The letter indicates that Viventiolus at that time had control over the Jura fathers and that he played some role in resolving conflicts about the course of the Jura monasteries. Avitus praises him for holding the community together. Unfortunately, the letter is fragmentary and its meaning unclear. Avitus, *Opera*, ed. by Peiper, *Epistula* 19, p. 52: ‘ut quo in aliis fraterna dissensio [...]

69 *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 5 and c. 7, p. 333–34: ‘Idem et sanctus Victorius Gratianopolitanae civitatis episcopus ingrate ferens, quod corpore ei absentaretur, blandis eum sermonibus liniebat, quem etiam postea occurrens ad sanctorum basilicam multis precibus coram fratribus precabatur, ut deberet ecclesiam vel fratres, qui eum educaverant, visitare. Sed ille, inconcussa stabilitate cordis, de firmo proposito non discessit’.

70 *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 7, p. 334: ‘Psallendis interim vel subsistendi regula instituta sancto Innemodo a coetu episcoporum, qui illic ad constituendum monasterium venerant, traditur, nec multum post ad Christum de hac luce migravit’.
barian ruler would never ‘even think of deviating from the path of piety and justice’ as the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* puts it.\(^\text{71}\) Only about two years later the first (of two) regional councils under Burgundian rule gathered at an unidentified place called Epao. This marked the definitive transition towards a new regional church structure determined by the sphere of control of a barbarian kingdom.\(^\text{72}\) At Epao, the bishops consented, among other things, to keep strict control over the monasteries situated in their dioceses and decided on a catalogue of strict regulations on incest.\(^\text{73}\) At a second episcopal gathering that was held at Lyons only a few years later, the king was taken by his words, and the coalition between Burgundian bishops and Catholic Burgundian rulers was challenged, when the bishops threatened to excommunicate Sigismund for supporting an incestuous member of his royal court. The bishops made clear that their support for Burgundian rule was not unconditional.\(^\text{74}\)

\(^\text{71}\) See n. 21, above.


\(^\text{73}\) Six chapters of the acts of Epao address monastic matters: c. 8, p. 25, stresses the episcopal control of monastic possessions; c. 9, p. 25, forbids an abbot to rule over more than one monastery; c. 10, p. 26, forbids new foundations without notification (*notitia*) of bishops; c. 19, p. 29, emphasizes the episcopal control over the deposition of abbots; c. 22, p. 29, assigns monasteries to serve as prisons for criminal clerics; c. 38, p. 34, enforces enclosure of female monasteries. All regulations imply that bishops exercised control or at least supervision over the monasteries in their dioceses. For the wider historical context, see Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, pp. 32–35.

\(^\text{74}\) *Concilium Lugudunense a. 518–23*, in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. by Munier and de Clercq, 1, 38–41; *Vita Apollinaris*, ed. by Krusch, cc. 2–3, p. 198; see Pontal, *Die Synoden im Merowingerreich*, pp. 46–48, and especially Wood, ‘Incest, Law and the Bible’, pp. 296–301. Viventiolus, Maximus, and Victorius attended this council as well. Avitus was probably dead at that time.
4. Perpetual Prayer

The *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* is very explicit about what the bishops imposed on the community of Saint-Maurice when they were gathering to restore the shrine of Maurice and his Thebean Legion:

The set rule (*regula*) of psalm-singing and persistence [in the monastery] was given to Hymnemodus by a gathering of bishops who had come there in order to establish the monastery.\(^{75}\)

Hymnemodus,\(^{76}\) before his death, gives a last instruction to his monks never to go astray from the good path they have chosen at that point.\(^{77}\) Hymnemodus’s successor Ambrosius dedicates all his virtues to kingdom and king:

For, even though there was in him the gift of prophecy, nevertheless there was in him plentiful humanity with the providence of all that has to be given, the strict perseverance in abstinence, abundant dedication to brotherly love, and the distinction of loving discipline. The divine generosity conceded all these virtues during his lifetime to the monastery of Agaune and to the *regnum* and to the *regio*.\(^{78}\)

Subsequently, he forces his monks to cling to their liturgical discipline under all circumstances, against all dangers, sufferings, and despite adversities and prosperities.\(^{79}\)

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\(^{75}\) *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 7, p. 334. Text in n. 70, above.

\(^{76}\) Ian Wood suggests that the Latinized name Hymnemodus was in itself a reference to the liturgical programme of Saint-Maurice: a barbarian Imnemod, Ememud, or Immemud becomes the embodiment of *hymnus*. See Wood, ‘The Latin Culture of Gundobad and Sigismund’, pp. 377–78; Wood, ‘The Governing Class’, p. 15. See also *Die Inschriften des Kantons Wallis bis 1300*, ed. by Jörg, pp. 41–43.

\(^{77}\) *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 7, p. 334: ‘De cuius sententiis vel aliquid relatio praesens digne suscipiet, nam hos, qui aliqua scintilla religionis accendebantur, seu quos secum habebat, sive quos ubique forsitan repperisset, paterna omnes pietate fovebat et monebat, ut cum summa cutela ambulantes proficerent, dicens ad eos: “Videtis, fratres, aliquos inordinante progredientes, qui etiam bene currentes impedire nituntur; illos oportere magis cavere et corripi quam sectari”’.

\(^{78}\) *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 8, p. 334: ‘Nam cum inesset gratia prophetiae, erat tamen in eo larga cum omni providentia tribuendi humanitas et ar ta abstinenti constantia profusaque fraternali caritatis dilectio ac piae disciplinae distinctio; omnia enim bona temporibus eius et monasterio Acaunensio et regno et regioni largitio divina concedit’.

\(^{79}\) *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 8, pp. 334–35: ‘Debemus persistere vigiles in oratione vel in officio divino, et tam animo quam corpore vigilantes, exclusa a nobis invidia et rancore d iaboli, et in omnibus gratia augeatur et ne quisquam ab officio sancto terrore periculo subtrahatur, sed omnia patienter suffere vel adverse vel prospera’.
The virtues that Ambrosius’s successor Achivus deploys perfectly qualify him to pray for other peoples’ sins.\(^{80}\)

The liturgy and the liturgical discipline at Saint-Maurice is thus depicted as one of the main concerns, at least in the early history of the monastery. It had to be approved, explained, enforced, and defended — probably not only because of the challenge of keeping up the manpower and the rigour necessary for a ceaseless prayer of psalms, but also because there was disagreement on whether monastic life should be reduced to a continuous ‘production’ of psalms. In the long run, however, the Burgundian bishops and the abbots of Saint-Maurice succeeded in implementing and perpetualizing Saint-Maurice’s liturgical ordo; it became the ‘trademark’ and the major export product of Saint-Maurice for at least the next two hundred and fifty years.\(^{81}\) Avitus of Vienne’s vision was fulfilled:

May our Gaul flourish; let the world long for what [this] place has brought forth. Today let there begin an eternity for devotion and dignity for the region, with these men praising God in the present world, who will praise him equally in the future. May death renew rather than end this action [the psalmody of Saint-Maurice]. May you rediscover in heaven what customary rewards you will carry form this land. May such great honour follow your perseverance that whatsoever effort you expended on the task be repaid to you as a prize in recognition of your merit.\(^{82}\)

Modern literature coined for Saint-Maurice’s liturgy the expression *laus perennis*, a neologism avoided here.\(^{83}\) The *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* simply refers to a ceaseless prayer of psalms, which is laid out in a regula. Other sources are more specific about how this prayer was organized, though there is no specified ordo psallendi of Saint-Maurice preserved. We can assume that Saint-Maurice had,

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80 *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*, ed. by Krusch, c. 9, p. 335: ‘Alienus a culpis pro culpas tamen pallens erubescebat alienis, pro qua puritate, quicquid pro quibuscumque necessitate patientibus a Domino poposcisset, tamquam vere Dei famulus accipere merebatur’.

81 See nn. 85, 104, and 123, below.


like other monasteries, liturgical hours (prime, secunda, terce, sext, etc.) and that at each of these hours prayer was performed by different groups of monks in shifts. In this way, the psalm-singing could be extended over the entire time span until the next hour of prayer.\(^{84}\) Several sources (on Saint-Maurice, but also on monasteries that used its liturgy) call these shifts *turmae*.\(^{85}\) According to the falsified foundation charter of Saint-Maurice which was produced in the Carolingian period, these *turmae* consisted of monks and clerics who were recruited from one specific monastery or episcopal see.\(^{86}\) I would assume that this depiction has at least a kernel of truth. Why should a Carolingian forger invent this aspect of Saint Maurice’s liturgy?

Barbara Rosenwein has challenged the established assumption that this liturgical programme was copied after the liturgy of the so-called *Akoimetoi* (the sleepless), monks from Constantinople who also performed a day-and-night prayer in shifts.\(^{87}\) Even though there may have been contacts and cross-influences between Byzantine and Western monks and the liturgical practice of the *Akoimetoi* and the monks of Saint-Maurice shows striking similarities, I follow her suggestion of looking closer to home for understanding the function of Saint-Maurice’s liturgy and the intentions behind its implementation, which may be rooted in the very specific constellation in which Saint-Maurice was reorganized.


\(^{86}\) Foundation charter of Saint-Maurice, ed. in Theurillat, *L’Abbaye de Saint-Maurice d’Agaune*, p. 78: ‘Recte mihi videtur ut secundum plenissimam devotionem domini regis de psallendi institutionibus fiant VIII normae, id est Granensis, Isalana, Jurensis et Melvensis et ceterae; et succedentes sibi in officiis canonicis id est nocturnis matutinis, prima, secunda, tercia, sexta, nona, vespertina in pace die noctuque indesinender Domino famulentur’. The text refers to Grigny, Isle-Barbe, and the Jura monasteries. I could not identify the *monasterium Melvensis*.

Since the beginnings of communal monastic life, monks were singing psalms at fixed hours. Numerous monastic rules prove that ‘liturgical discipline’ was one of the key concerns of monastic discipline in general.\textsuperscript{88} Several elaborate liturgical \textit{ordines} are preserved: for Lérins, the community of John Cassian, Caesarius’s nunnery, the foundations of Caesarius’s successor Aurelian, and the monasteries addressed by the \textit{Regula Benedicti} and the \textit{Regula magistri}, and Columbanus’s \textit{Regula monachorum}.\textsuperscript{89} We can assume that regular prayer was part of a general monastic practice, but not all our sources describe the prayer of the community as the centre of monastic life. Liturgy does not matter very much in Sulpicius Severus’s depiction of Martin’s monks and their eastern competitors; the author of the \textit{Vita patrum Iurensium} is not interested in liturgy, as shown above; Gregory of Tours’s monastic diversity hardly defines itself by its liturgical vigour; the monks in the \textit{Dialogi} of Gregory I do all sorts of other things. Even his description of Benedict’s monastic foundations carries very few references to liturgy and liturgical discipline.\textsuperscript{90} Reforming Saint-Maurice may have included transforming one aspect of monastic life into the main obligation of the community by shaping an economic framework that enabled the monks to sing psalms instead of working, and by imposing on them a \textit{regula} that forced them to do so.

Monks may have prayed psalms forever, but these psalms started to sound different when they were produced at a shrine of military martyrs (who were depicted as ‘in rebus bellicis strenui et virtute nobiles, sed nobiliores fide’),\textsuperscript{91} by monks divided in squadrons (\textit{turmae}). These monks were supposed to be on ceaseless guard in serving the \textit{integritas regni}, and they unanimously gathered around a barbarian \textit{miles Christi} and his successor, who fully dedicated his vir-


\textsuperscript{90} There are, to my knowledge, no references to liturgy or liturgical discipline in the works of Sulpicius Severus. The only reference to liturgy in the second book of the \textit{Dialogi} of Gregory I tells about a monk who could not concentrate on prayer: Gregory I, \textit{Dialogi}, ed. by de Vogüé and Antin, ii. 4, pp. 150–52.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Passio martyrum Acaunensium}, ed. by Krusch, c. 3, p. 33.
tues pro regno et regione. Sigismund could not get enough of these songs and we should assume that he knew very well what the monks were singing on his behalf. After all, many of the psalms are (or could be understood as) songs of a people and its king imploring God for help against the threats of their enemies. Monks and nuns may have sung these songs with their own battle for perfection and the war on demons, temptations, and human weakness in mind, but most likely they were understood much more literally when produced by Sigismund’s monastic auxiliary troops. For example:

Ps 3. 7–9: Non timebo milia populi circumdantis me. Exsurge, Domine salvum me fac, Deus meus | quoniam tu percussisti in maxillam omnes adversantes mihi, dentes peccatorum contrivisti | Domini est salus, et super populum tuum benedic-tio tua.

Ps 8. 3: Ex ore infantium et lactantium perfecisti laudem propter inimicos tuos, ut destruas inimicum et ultorem.

Ps 78. 6: Effunde iram tuam in gentes, quae te non noverunt, et in regna, quae nomen tuum non invocaverunt.

Ps 134. 10: Qui percussit gentes multas et occidit reges fortes.

This shift of emphasis towards praying psalms as the main monastic activity does not exclusively grow out of a monastic tradition. Psallere is not necessarily a monkish activity; it is what clerici are supposed to do — and sometimes even the entire Christian community — if danger is afoot. Psalm-singing as

92 The term turmae appears (in the military sense) in the Passio martyrum Acaunensium, ed. by Krusch, c. 2, p. 33. See also Rosenwein, ‘Perennial Prayer at Agaune’, p. 53: ‘Thus the monks at Agaune were organised as groups of local men conscripted into squadrons named (as had been Roman legions) by their place of origin. Lengthy liturgy was in this way associated with inverted militarism’.

93 See also Gindele, ‘Die gallikanischen Laus perennis-Klöster’, p. 38. Ian Wood places the introduction of a strictly organized monastic intercessory prayer on behalf of the ruler in yet another specifically Burgundian context. He shows that already in the times of Gundobad, Catholic bishops had developed a special prayer for the benefit of the king, which is reflected in one of Avitus’s letters. See Wood, ‘Liturgy in the Rhône Valley’, p. 208, on the basis of Avitus, Opera, ed. by Peiper, Epistula 85, p. 95: ‘Post festivitatem, in qua de presentia vel incolumitate domni nostri vota nostra merito claruerunt’.


95 See, nn. 97–98, below.
paramilitary activity is neither new nor exceptional. Augustine tells in his *Confessiones* how the regular singing of hymns and psalms was installed at the cathedral of Milan to defend the besieged church against an Arian takeover: *we shall overcome*. Only eight years before the events at Saint-Maurice, the singing nuns of Caesarius’s monastery joined in the defence of the city, which was besieged by the Franks and the Burgundians. Gregory of Tours provides numerous examples of clerics and entire urban populations singing psalms as a means of military defence. Gerda Heydemann shows, in the companion volume to this book, to what extent the psalms and all attempts to find their true meaning in Christian exegesis may have contributed to processes of ethnic identity-shaping.

5. Excluding the Others: The ‘vulgus promiscuum’

This brings us back to one of the rather puzzling and therefore hitherto untranslated categories appearing in the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium*: the *vulgus promiscuum* who was not welcome any more at the king’s new martyr shrine. At first glance the text exemplifies the *vulgus promiscuum* as women and secular families (mulieres de loco eodem tollerentur, et remotis familias secularibus), but I suggest that the meaning of this term goes beyond that. The *vulgus promiscuum* included, besides women and lay people, also monks who did not belong to the king’s new church. Their presence at the new martyr shrine was due to the cooperative effort of the king and the burgomasters of Aachen. The king provided the territory, the burgomasters and the church fathers provided the community.Haydemann shows, in the companion volume to this book, to what extent the psalms and all attempts to find their true meaning in Christian exegesis may have contributed to processes of ethnic identity-shaping.

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97 See for example Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, II. 37, p. 100; III. 29, pp. 133–34; IV. 5, p. 145; VIII. 3, p. 328; X. 1, p. 409. See also *Vita Genovefae*, ed. by Krusch, c. 12, p. 219.

98 See also Pohl, ‘Liturgie di guerra nei regni altomedievali’.
there any more. After all, we know that there had been monks at this place that the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* described as so profoundly depraved, and something had to be done with them as well. The newly allocated praying *turmae* may indicate a ‘militarization’ of liturgy, but the expression *turma* has yet another connotation. In Jerome’s translation of Exodus 12. 50, the people of Israel consists of *turmae*: ‘Feceruntque omnes filii Israel sicut praeceperat Dominus Moysi et Aaron. Et eadem die eduxit Dominus filios Israel de terra Aegypti per turmas suas’.

With its new, regionally composed *turmae* at Saint-Maurice, the Catholic Burgundian kingdom may have shaped itself as the new chosen people. About two hundred and fifty years later the idea of a ‘New Israel’ became one of the legitimating discourses of Carolingian rule. Understanding *turmae* as ethnic category would also add another meaning to the *vulgus promiscuum* that was forced to leave Saint-Maurice d’Agaune. A verse from the same section of Ex 12. 37–38 calls all those other people that left Egypt along with the people of Israel *vulgus promiscuum*, and we should assume that the author of the *Vita abbatum Acaunensium* had this verse in mind when he chose his words:

> Profectique sunt filii Israel de Ramesse in Succoth, sescenta fere milia peditum virorum absque parvulis. Sed et vulgus promiscuum innumerabile ascendit cum eis oves et armenta et animantia diversi generis multa nimis.

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

Not everyone is allowed and suitable to pray for the king and the kingdom. *Vulgus promiscuum* may have referred to those who were regarded as unfit to provide this service and to adopt a new identity related to a *regnum Burgundionum*.

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101 Garrison, ‘The Franks as the New Israel?’.

102 A very similar regional understanding of *vulgus promiscuum* can be found in the *Vita Columbae*. Columba predicts that the *vulgus promiscuum* will not have access to his funeral on Iona. Indeed, a storm prevents people from outside from being present. The phrasing, especially the combination of *vulgus promiscuum* and *familia*, could indicate that Adomnan knew the *Vita abbatum*. See Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, ed. by Alan O. Anderson, iii. 23, p. 230: ‘Quidam namque aliquando unus de fratribus coram uenerabili uiro sempliciter loquens: “Ad celebrandas”, ait ad sanctum, “tuas post tuum obitum exequias, ut putatur, totus harum prouinciarum populus hanc Ionam remigans replebit insulam”. Quod uerbum audiens sanctus consequenter ait: “O mi filiole, non ut loqueris sic res probabit. Nam promiscuum populi uulgus nullo modo ad meas poterit exsequias uenire. Mei soli familiares monaci mea sepulchralia conplebunt et exsequialia honestabunt officia”’.

simply because they came from other parts of Gaul now under the control of the enemies of the Burgundian rulers. Why, after all, should a monk from Arles or from Tours produce songs imploring God for the integritas of the Burgundian regnum? Those who replaced this vulgus promiscuum may have been Romans or barbarians, but they were united by their allegiance to the two parties that sealed their coalition through the foundation of Sigismund’s monastery: members of the court (like Hymnemodus and probably Achivus) or members of episcopal households under Burgundian rule and episcopally controlled monasteries.

The other side of such a new ‘territorial’ identity appears in an almost contemporary event described in the Vita of Caesarius of Arles: in 508 the Burgundians besieged the city of Arles. Bishop Caesarius, a proud member of an old Roman family, suddenly turned into a suspected Burgundian spy simply because his family came from Chalons-sur-Saône, which at that time was under the rule of the Burgundian king.103

6. Redefining the Model: The Legacy of Saint-Maurice

The experiment of a Catholic Burgundian kingdom did not last very long. The Frankish kingdom, which only seventeen years after the reorganization of Saint-Maurice incorporated the Burgundian regnum, presumably went through a similar transition from a regio under Frankish control to a Frankish regnum. Monasteries such as those founded by Radegund (d. 586) and Chlothar I (d. 561) in Poitiers, Bishop Aurelian of Arles (d. 551), Childebert I (d. 558) and his wife Ultrogotha in Arles, or Brunhild (d. 613) in Autun may have played a very similar role in this process as Saint-Maurice did,104 but in those


104 Baudonivia, Vita Radegundis, ed. by Krusch, c. 10, p. 384: ‘Semper de pace sollicita, de salute patriae curiosa quandoquidem inter se regna movebatur, quia totos diligebat reges, pro omnium vita orabat et nos sine intermissione pro eorum stabilitate orare docebat. Ubi eos inter se amaritudinem moveri audisset, tota tremebat, et quales litteras uni, tales alteri dirigebat, ut inter se non bella nec arma tractarent, sed pacem firmarent, et patria ne periret. Similiter et a eorum proceres dirigebat, ut praecelsis regibus consilia salutifera ministrarent, ut, eis regnantibus, populi et patria salubrior redderetur. Congregationi suae assiduas vigilias inponebat et, ut sine intermissione pro eis orarent, cum lacrimis docebat’. See also the diptych for the monastery in Arles founded by King Childebert I (d. 558) on praying for the abbots and royal founders of the monastery, edited in Bernard, ‘Les Diptyques du monastères des Saints-Apôtres’,
cases no one had to be excluded or removed as being unfit to pray for the king. A Frankish kingdom that covered Roman Gaul entirely did not have to deal with the others.

For the Frankish world, however, we have another, slightly later voice of dissent against turning monasteries into centres of political identity-formation: Gregory of Tours. In his *Decem libri historiarum*, monasteries receive their place within Frankish society, but Gregory does not allow them to play much of a role in royal politics or for the establishment of secular or ecclesiastical political structures. His hagiographical works depict Gaul as a colourful and diverse ascetic and monastic landscape that reflects and continues the monastic diversity of the Mediterranean world. Saint-Maurice appears in this landscape, as do the Jura monasteries, but there are no descriptions of royal foundations as prevalent monastic models or focal points of political or ethnic identities. For Gregory, monasteries were useful and well-liked only as long as they did not compete with the role bishops played in the establishment of a political identity or break their spiritual monopoly. Gregory effectively used his discursive power to write any possible ambition in that direction out of history.

After the Frankish takeover, Saint-Maurice continued to serve as a place of incessant prayer for secular rulers. The new Merovingian rulers of Burgundy continued supporting Saint-Maurice. King Guntram (d. 593) explicitly used the model of Saint-Maurice for founding himself a new holy hot spot, the basilica of Saint-Marcellus in Chalons-sur-Saône, which became another *Musterkloster* for the Rebais privilege.

It is likely that the Burgundian King Theuderic II (d. 613) and his grandmother Brunhild wanted to shape another Saint-Maurice by initially supporting

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106 I am planning to discuss this aspect in depth in a follow-up study.


Columbanus’s foundation Luxeuil.109 Yet, as Jonas of Bobbio tells us, Columbanus (d. 615) was entirely unwilling to submit himself to the *mores comprovinciales* in Theuderic’s kingdom, and particularly to the idea that kings could do with their monasteries whatever they wanted.110 The dramatic showdown between Theuderic and Brunhild and the Irish monk mainly circles around this problem and the question whether monasteries could claim to be more than simply holy hot spots in the king’s backyard. The conflict ended devastatingly for both rulers and triumphally for Columbanus and the branch of the Merovingian family headed by Chlothar II (d. 629). Chlothar had, as Jonas tells us, a better understanding of the role and function of monasteries within political structures.111

Jonas’s work — which can, in a similar way as the *Vita patrum Iurensium*, be read as a monastic programme — skilfully redefines the balance of power between secular rulers, bishops, and monasteries.112 It describes the rise of a powerful new monastic network that revolved around Columbanus’s foundation Luxeuil. This network of new *loci sancti* is empowered by King Chlothar II, his son Dagobert I (d. 639), and members of their courts — in exchange for the monks’ prayer. Unlike what happened a century earlier in Saint-Maurice, bishops were not a party of their own any more in this new coalition. Those bishops who were involved in the foundation of Columbanian monasteries represented the interests of their own families rather than a structural episcopal interest or claim for control — which brings us back to the episcopal privileges discussed in the beginning of this essay. If we compare the limitations put on monasteries in the acts of the councils of Orléans in 511 and Epao in 517 with the liberties and rights granted in the privilege of Rebais (and later episcopal privileges), we see a fundamental shift that enables monasteries to act as independent political parties, instead of just serving as royal or episcopal tools of power.113

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110 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, I. 19, p. 88: ‘[…l] conquestusque cum eo, cur ab conprovincialibus moribus discisceret, et intra septa secretiora omnibus christianis aditus non pateret’. For Jonas, see the contribution by Alex O’Hara in this volume.
111 The conflicts are analysed in Diem, ‘Monks, Kings, and the Transformation of Sanctity’, pp. 531–42.
113 *Concilium Aurelianense a. 511*, in *Concilia Galliae*, ed. by Munier and de Clercq, c. 7, i, p. 7: no contact with the king without episcopal permission; cc. 19–22, pp. 10–11: episcopal control over monastic discipline, monastic property, and new monastic foundations; c. 9, i, p. 26: abbots may not rule more than one monastery; c. 19, i, p. 29: disciplinary power over the abbot. All these regulations are either undermined or abandoned in episcopal privileges.
Epilogue

At the end of this article I would like to touch upon the impact that Saint-Maurice d’Agaune had on the further development of monastic institutions and the interplay between monasteries and secular power. For this purpose it seems to be logical to return to the world in which the privilege of Rebais was shaped, i.e. Columbanian monasticism. The Vita Columbani does not mention Saint-Maurice d’Agaune at all. This can be explained as part of Jonas’s policy of damnatio memoriae and his rather stingy way of giving Columbanian monasticism a past on the Continent. Jonas claims that the monastic movement initiated by Columbanus did not introduce anything new but simply restored a monastic ideal that has been abandoned and fallen in decline for a long time (just as the Vita abbatum Acaunensium claimed a restoration of the shrine of Saint-Maurice to its ancient glory). Jonas’s claim of discontinuity and restoration would have been weakened by admitting how much Columbanian monasticism was inspired by Saint-Maurice d’Agaune. Moreover, Saint-Maurice d’Agaune had close ties to the branch of the Merovingian clan which for three generations had been dominated by Columbanus’s nemesis Brunhild. For Jonas, this was probably reason enough to write Saint-Maurice out of the history of Columbanian monasticism, just as much as he deprived Childebert II (d. 595), Brunhild’s son, from his decisive role in Columbanian history.

Yet besides the Musterklöster-section in the privilege of Rebais mentioned at the beginning of this article, there are several other texts that indicate that Saint-Maurice was an important source of inspiration for Columbanian monasticism and that the Columbanian notion of a royal monastery, as it was developed in Jonas’s Vita Columbani, had its roots at least partly in the long-lasting success of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune. Amatus (d. 630), the founder of the Columbanian filiation of Remiremont, was, according to the Vita Amati, recruited by Columbanus’s successor Eusthasius (d. 629) during a visit of Saint-Maurice d’Agaune. The Vita Amati tells how Amatus introduced the liturgy of

114 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 5 and ii. 1, pp. 71 and 113.
115 For chronological reasons we have to assume that Brunhild’s son Childebert II was the first Merovingian king who welcomed Columbanus. Jonas replaces him by his father Sigibert I (d. 575). See Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 6, p. 72. Ian Wood argues that Brunhild was probably the first main supporter of Columbanus and his foundations. See Wood, ‘Jonas, the Merovingians and Pope Honorius’, pp. 107–15.
116 On the influence of Saint-Maurice on seventh-century monasticism, see also Rosenwein, ‘One Site, Many Meanings’, p. 282.
his home monastery into Remiremont. Saint-Maurice d’Agaune’s mode of ceaseless psalm-singing was subsequently introduced into several monasteries related to the Columbanian monastic movement, such as Sadalberga’s foundation in Lyon, the monastery of Soissons, Saint-Riquier, Saint-Bénigne, and eventually Saint-Denis, which became the burial place of the Merovingian kings, just as Saint-Maurice d’Agaune had been Sigismund’s burial place. It is not unlikely that Saint-Maurice’s ceaseless psalm singing became the preferred liturgy in the entire Columbanian monastic movement, and that we should take the request to pray continuously (iugiter/plenius/indesinenter exorare) as it is expressed in episcopal privileges and royal charters literally. When Saint-Maurice’s ceaseless liturgy is mentioned in the context of Columbanian monasteries, there is never a statement that marks this liturgy as different from the liturgical practices in other Columbanian monasteries.


118 Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, pp. 104–07, gives an overview on traces of the liturgy of Saint-Maurice in other monasteries. In many cases, however, his assumptions are too much based on conjecture. See also Kaiser, Die Burgunder, pp. 174–75.

119 Vita Sadalbergae, ed. by Krusch, c. 17, pp. 59–60.

120 Privilege of Bishop Drauscius for the Monastery of Soissons (666–67), in Diplomata, ed. by Pardessus, ii, no. 35, p. 140: ‘[…] sub regula beatissimorum patrum, ad laudes Christi die noctuque canendas vel pro aeterna retributione sunt conlocatae, nostrae vilitatis extremitate supplice deprecationis petitione deposcerunt […]’.

121 Sources in Prinz, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, p. 106.

122 Dip. no. 68 (Chronicle of St Bénigne), in DD Mer. (Merovinger 2), ed. by Kölzer, p. 528.

123 Fredegar, Chronicae, ed. by Krusch, iv. 79, p. 161; Dip. no. 85 (Clovis II for Saint-Denis, 654), in DD Mer. (Merovinger 2), ed. by Kölzer, p. 219: ‘[…] eo scilicet ordene, ut sicut tempore domini et genetoris nostri ibidem psallencius per turmas fuit instetutus vel sicut ad monasthirium sancti Mauricii Agaunensis die noctoque tenetur, ita in loco ipso celebretur’. It is inserted in Gesta Dagoberti, ed. by Krusch, c. 51, pp. 424–25. The author of the Gesta Dagoberti refers to this liturgy two more times in his work: c. 35, p. 414; c. 44, p. 421. See also Balthild’s claim to submit Saint-Denis and other basilical monasteries to the ‘sanctus ordo regularis […] ut melius eis delectaret pro rege et pace summi Regis Christi clementiam exorare’: Vita Balthildis, ed. by Krusch, c. 9, p. 494.


125 The phrase indesinenter exorare appears in Eligius’s foundation charter of Solignac: Eligii charta cessionis Solemniacensis, ed. by Krusch, p. 748.
Jonas reveals that, after Columbanus’s death there were massive conflicts over who could claim the heritage of Columbanus. One of the strongest voices of dissent against the course chosen by Columbanus’s successor, Euthasius, came from the monk Agrestius, who gained significant support in several Columbanian monasteries. His main attack was directed against the liturgical practice of Luxeuil, which he considered inflationary, and he might have shared this view with the author of the *Vita patrum Iurensium*. Despite similarities with the past, the *Vita Columbani* shows how much the attitudes towards these voices of dissent had changed. Agrestius dies a cruel death, just as every other monk, layman, or ruler who disagreed with the monastic model allegedly propagated by Columbanus. God has made his decision on how monasteries should work. The monastic experiment, Jonas tells us, is over, and the same might apply to the processual and dynamic character of ethnic identities. The *regnum Francorum* has gained its shape, structure, and identity, and monasteries have found their place in it. Monks (and nuns) have gotten used to singing psalms for their kings.

Yet another *vulgus promiscuum*, monks unfit to pray for the king, had a last short appearance at a rather unexpected moment. When Columbanus started his *tournée royale* through Gaul, this world was again divided; this time between different Merovingian kings, who were more than willing to slit each other’s throats. All of them regarded the holy man and powerful intercessor for their own benefit, as long as he operated within their kingdom, and as a serious danger once he crossed over to the neighbouring kingdoms — or if he got seriously angry. After the once hopeful coalition between Columbanus and Theuderic II and Brunhild was shattered, Brunhild and her grandson became very keen on shipping the holy man back to Ireland, but they had no intentions to give up Luxeuil as a holy place in their service. Therefore they forced Columbanus’s Frankish followers to abandon their exiled abbot and to stay in Luxeuil, but allowed those monks who had joined Columbanus in Ireland to accompany him into exile. Once the bonds with Columbanus were broken, these foreigners were not suitable any more to pray for the king.

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126 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, ii. 9, p. 125: ‘At ille prorumpuit, se scire Columbanum a ceterorum mores disciscere et ipsa missarum sollemnia multiplicatione orationum vel collectarum celebrare et ipsa multa alia superflua, quae cum auctori acsi heresea tradita execrari debere’. See n. 51, above, on the views on prayer expressed in the *Vita patrum Iurensium*.

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Writing towards the end of the seventh century in the mountains of the Bierzo in north-western Spain, Valerius remembered the advent of the monastic life he had chosen more than forty-two years before:

Long ago when I, an unworthy sinner, a native of the province of Asturias, engrossed in worldly pleasures during my adolescence, eager for earthly riches, intent upon vain learning, in my concern for these things in the darkness of this lower world, was slackening the reins, suddenly I was driven by a desire for divine grace to attain the beginnings of the religious life. Setting out with the supreme effort of one fleeing the world, like one riding on a ship, I hastened to cross the sea to the shore of the monastery of Compludo, inflamed with an ardent desire, and terrified by the fear of future judgment, hoping through the path of conversion to attain at length the light of truth.¹

Valerius did not have to travel far to Compludo, the monastery founded in the remote Bierzo region in Galicia by Fructuosus of Braga in the mid-seventh century, yet he describes it as though he had embarked on a sea voyage to another land. Although Valerius never left the confines of the Bierzo — his world is a regional and localized one — he characterized his conversion in terms of *peregrinatio*. Ascetic exile (*peregrinatio*) was a voluntary form of exile that meant abandoning the native region and/or country, the security, setting, and social bonds into which one was born. As we see from Valerius’s example, in which he uses the rhetoric of ascetic exile to express a new sense of identity as an *alienus*, the experience or perception of exile could be a powerful factor in the shaping of personal identity.

Exile is, of course, significant not only for the construction of individual but also of collective (including national) identities. The foundation myth of Rome as articulated by Virgil was based on a group of exiles, while the concept of exile and alienation is central to Judaeo-Christian belief and identities. Abraham’s obedience to God’s command to leave his native land and kindred for another made him and his descendants blessed, while the Jews’ experience of exile in Egypt and their covenant with God turned them into a chosen people that established the basis of a sacred nationalism. In writing about Columbanus’s exiled monastic community in the forests of Alemannia in the seventh century, Jonas of Bobbio likened them to the Israelites in the Desert.

2 *In actual fact, Compludo, nestled in a heavily forested valley, is only about 42 km from Astorga, the Roman provincial capital. Valerius probably took the Roman road over Monte Irago, which may have marked the regional boundary between Asturias and the Bierzo regions, and which once connected the city with the rich gold mines of Las Médulas.*

3 *On the practice of *peregrinatio* in the early Church and in the early Middle Ages in general, see Kötting, *Peregrinatio religiosa*; Von Campenhausen, ‘Die asketische Heimatlosigkeit’; Angenendt, *Monachi Peregrini*.


The starving monks came across a flock of birds covering the whole countryside, ‘just as once quails covered the camp of the Israelites’. Jonas refers to them as the ‘manna of birds’ and their presence there was clearly miraculous, because they did not fly away when the monks attempted to capture them. In 610, Columbanus along with the Irish and Insular contingent of his community had been banished from Burgundy by the Merovingian King, Theuderic II. Theuderic had followed an ethnic strategy in ridding the troublesome Irish monk from his kingdom by banishing him and the other foreigners for not complying with local customs. Only Columbanus’s monks who came from Gaul were allowed to remain behind in the communities. The exiled, Insular contingent, who were later joined by some of the other monks from Burgundy, would eventually make their way to Italy where they founded Bobbio in the Ligurian Apennines. For Jonas, Bobbio was the culmination of Columbanus’s peregrinatio, a place chosen by God (an angel had shown Columbanus the way to Italy), and sanctified by miracles. In his account of the birds in Alemannia, Jonas linked Columbanus’s exiled community with the chosen people of Israel in order to emphasize Bobbio’s pre-eminence over Columbanus’s Frankish communities. It shows how the experience of exile could be a powerful factor in the construction of identities.

Modern discourses on the sociology of exile offer a nuanced and varied discussion of this social and historical phenomenon. Exile has always been a means by which differences and boundaries between individuals and/or groups have been monitored and maintained. According to Frank Parkin, hegemonic groups use ethnicity, language, and religion as part of a strategy for them to acquire privileges for themselves by excluding others access to needed resources. These processes of social exclusion are thus closely allied to the dynamics of power. However, traditional, structuralist approaches have been modified by more subtle understandings of the workings of exile. Political exile has been

7 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 27, p. 215: ‘velut Israhelitarum castra coturnix olim operuit’ (alluding to Numbers 11. 31).
8 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 27, p. 215: ‘alitum manna’.
9 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 20, p. 196.
10 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 27, p. 217; i. 30, pp. 220–22.
11 For a new reading of the Vita Columbani and the context in which it was written, see O’Hara, ‘Jonas of Bobbio and the Vita Columbani’.
12 See Strange and Bashford, eds, Isolation.
13 Parkin, Class Inequality and Political Order.
recognized as only one form of exile among a number of others. We can distinguish other, less obvious kinds of exile in addition to religious, cultural, sexual, economic, and penal forms. One such kind is symbolic exile, which refers to individuals who understand their lives in terms of religious, philosophical, or aesthetic notions of exile.\footnote{Böss, ‘Theorising Exile’, p. 20. For a sociology of exile, see, e.g., Tabori, The Anatomy of Exile; Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves; Said, ‘Reflections on Exile’.} The *peregrini* or ascetic exiles of the early Middle Ages are the classic examples of this kind of exile, men who abandoned everything for an ascetic ideal of alienation. To what extent did this kind of exile play a role in the shaping of their identities and did it play a part in the construction of collective identities also? How far can we understand the experiences of these men as reflecting the values, drives, and concerns of the societies in which they lived? The ritual of *peregrinatio* as a monastic expression of the monk’s abandonment of society and the *saeculum* marked a further step in the individual’s inner transformation modelled on Christian ideals. Such transformations, often ritually enacted, can reveal the primary intuitions, drives, and conflicts active within a culture.\footnote{Sec, for example, the essays in Shulman and Stroumsa, eds, Self and Self-Transformations. This volume considers the idea of the ‘self’ as a cultural formation like any other and how ‘the kind of transformation(s) a culture puts forward as a goal or possibility for human life always expresses the primary axioms, conflicts, and intuitions that make up its particular world’: Introduction, p. 4.}

The role and dialectics of exile in the shaping of identity in the early Middle Ages remains an understudied one. There is a surprising dearth in historical and legal studies on exile in the early and high Middle Ages. The proceedings of the 2002 International Medieval Congress at Leeds on the theme of exile, for example, although entitled *Exile in the Middle Ages*, is confined to the period c. 900–1300 and largely focuses on banishment as a form of social punishment.\footnote{Napran and van Houts, eds, Exile in the Middle Ages.} Exile is briefly defined as ‘the banishment of a person by a higher authority’, reflecting the limited scope of the volume and the absence of a broader sociological approach. If we can define identity as ‘the interface between the individual and the social group’,\footnote{Pohl, ‘Archaeology of Identity: Introduction’, p. 4. On identity in the early Middle Ages, see also Pohl, ‘Identität und Widerspruch’; Pohl, ‘Aux origines d’une Europe éthnique’.} a dynamic process by which the individual constantly negotiates and defines himself in relation to others and social models, then voluntary exile, the conscious breaking of this bond, is also a powerful statement of identity.
It is rare in early medieval sources that we are able to see clear self-identifications or to get an insider view into how individuals thought of and expressed their own sense of identity.\textsuperscript{18} There are exceptions, of course. The writings of the Irish abbot and monastic founder, Columbanus, the Italian monk and hagiographer, Jonas of Bobbio, and the Spanish hermit, Valerius of Bierzo, offer a vivid insight into how the experience or perception of alienation shaped the personal identities of these three men. Columbanus, who left Ireland as an ascetic exile in 590, wrote a series of letters on the Continent to ecclesiastical leaders in which he sought exemption from complying with Gallic ecclesiastical norms.\textsuperscript{19} He wanted to continue in the ecclesiastical traditions he had followed in Ireland in the face of opposition from the Gallic bishops. These letters are the most personal expressions of how the saint conceived of his own identity.

Jonas, who grew up in a frontier town in the Italian Alps, and who became a monk at Bobbio in 616, less than a year after Columbanus’s death there, is unusual because, for a hagiographer, he occasionally writes about himself in his \textit{Vita Columbani}.\textsuperscript{20} Although he never characterizes himself as an ascetic exile, Jonas wrote the \textit{Vita Columbani} as a missionary on the north-east frontier of the Frankish kingdom near the English Channel. His later career as a missionary and as an abbot lay far from Italy and the town in which he was born and remembered fondly and the monastery of his youth. One did not necessarily have to travel overseas to consider oneself a \textit{peregrinus}. As Arnold Angenendt has discussed, leaving one’s home, family, and native region for a monastic life, crossing the Alps to live in another land, and undertaking missionary work to foreign peoples were all forms of \textit{peregrinatio}.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{18} Pohl, ‘Archaeology of Identity: Introduction’, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{21} Angenendt, ‘Die irische Peregrinatio’.
As we have seen with Valerius, who spent all his life in a peripheral region in the north-west of the Visigothic kingdom, he too conceived of his eremitical life in terms of ascetic exile. In comparison to the travels of Columbanus and Jonas, the world of Valerius can seem regional and limited. Yet Valerius has left an autobiographical account that in its conception and originality is unique in the early Middle Ages. Valerius lived during the second half of the seventh century and died within a decade or so of the Muslim conquest of the Visigothic kingdom in 711. He lived in a peripheral conflict-zone of the kingdom, where the Visigothic kings waged frequent campaigns against the Basques and Astures, whom they never fully succeeded in conquering.\(^\text{22}\) Nothing is known about Valerius apart from what he tells us in his writings, the *Ordo querimoniae praefatio discriminis* (Account of my Grief, Explanation of My Trials), *Item replicatio sermonum a prima conversione* (Further Account since First Conversion), and *Quod de superioribus querimoniis residuum* (What Remains from Former Griefs), which together comprise his autobiographical writings.\(^\text{23}\) In addition to this work, which he conceived of as a whole and wrote for other ascetics in the Bierzo, Valerius wrote a number of other religious works and poems.\(^\text{24}\)

\(^\text{22}\) On Visigothic campaigns against the Basques and Astures, see Barbero and Vigil, *Sobre los orígenes sociales de la Reconquista*, pp. 51–67.


\(^\text{24}\) These works are in Valerius of Bierzo, *Obras*, ed. by Fernández Pousa. *De vana saeculi sapientia* is a short treatise on spurning worldly vanity in which Valerius gives a résumé of biblical history, an account of some esoteric royal and noble martyrs, stories from the lives of the Desert Fathers, and a description of heaven. His *Vita et epistola beatissimae Egeriae*, likewise written for the monks of the Bierzo, is an account of a fourth-century pilgrimage made to the Holy Land by the nun Egeria, in which the nun is presented as an example of fortitude and perseverance to the monks. Another treatise, *De genere monachorum*, is concerned with pseudo-monks and the problem of landowners who forced their *coloni* to become monks in the monasteries they had established on their lands. His *Dicta beatum Valeri ad beatum Donadeum scripta, de Bonello monacho, de caeleste revelatione* describes three visions of heaven and hell which were told to Valerius by Maximus, a monk of Compludo, and two hermits of the Bierzo, Bonellus and Baldarius. The description of heaven related to him by these monks closely resembles the description he gives of his garden in his autobiographical accounts. Valerius also wrote hagiog-
Valerius’s story is anything but ordinary and prosaic, but a vivid and fascinating portrait of a religious mind reflecting on his life as a hermit over forty-two years. It is a candid, if eccentric, narrative of a religious exile within his own country. Although there are numerous studies on Valerius in Spanish historiography, he is little known in Anglophone scholarship. In considering the question of the individual in the early Middle Ages, Walter Pohl has remarked that ‘hardly anybody, for instance, knows the seventh-century author Valerius of Bierzo and his repeated attempts to come to terms with his trials and grief.’ Valerius is one of the few cases from the early Middle Ages by which we can study in-depth the efforts of an individual to fashion his self-identity in terms of Christian dialectics. Roger Collins, one of the only Anglophone scholars to study Valerius, considered him to be ‘at first sight, the oddest, certainly the least well understood, and the most unjustly vilified’ of all the major literary figures of Visigothic Spain. Others have judged Valerius as being ‘childish’, ‘tough and intransigent’, and of having a persecution complex.

The difficult character of Valerius is similar in so many respects to that of Columbanus. Both were unyielding, driven in their single-minded pursuit of an asceticism unconstrained by episcopal supervision. Both suffered persecution and elicited conflict with ecclesiastical authorities. While Columbanus was the archetype of the travelling, sea-faring Insular monk, Valerius was a land-locked hermit content to endow his experiences with maritime metaphors. Both were independent, stubborn, holy men in the true fashion of late Antiquity. Jonas, however, is a representative of a different, more distinctly medieval kind of monasticism. He was a product of Columbanus’s monastic experiment that stressed the sanctity of the institution and the community above that of the


individual ascetic. Jonas pursued his monastic vocation within the structured bounds of a more institutionalized monasticism, yet this did not prevent him from occasionally writing about himself in his hagiography.

We can study these three individuals, Columbanus, Jonas, and Valerius, writing during the early, mid-, and late seventh century, respectively, as examples of the way in which early medieval individuals wrote about and constructed their identities. As we shall see, the theme of exile and alienation played an important role in this. It also leads us to consider how these individual identities of alienation can be understood within the broader context of the development of a more distinct Latin Christian consciousness during this time.

**Columbanus**

When Columbanus was a young man in Ireland, he was greatly tempted by the local *lascivae puellae*. Troubled by this sexual desire, he came across a female anchorite whom he asked advice as to how he could overcome these temptations. The woman told him that for fifteen years she had been living there in her cell but that, if she had not been a woman, she would have left Ireland for a *potioris peregrinationis locus*. As he was a young man, she advised him to undertake this course of action. He would never be free from these temptations as long as he remained in his native land. She then reeled off a litany of biblical *femmes fatales* to emphasize her point:

> Do you not remember the urgings of Eve which ruined Adam, Samson’s seduction of Delilah, David’s corruption from former righteousness by the beauty of Bathsheba, the deceiving of wisest Solomon by the love of women? Flee! O young man flee! Escape ruin, through which you know for certain many have been ruined. Shun the way that leads to the gates of Hell!\(^{30}\)

Columbanus duly left his family home and his native region of Leinster (*natalis solum*),\(^{31}\) to study first with a biblical scholar before entering the monastery

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\(^{30}\) Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 3, p. 157: “Non reminisceris suasu Evae Adam dilapsum, Samsonem a Dalida seductum, David a pristina iustitia pulchritudine Bersabeae corruptum, sapientissimum Salomonem mulierum amore deceptum?” “Perge”, inquit, “o iuvenis, perge, evade ruinam, per quam multos conperis corruisse, declina viam, quae inferi ducit ad valvas”.

of Bangor on the north-east coast of Ireland. Columbanus’s departure from his kin-group and native region made him an exile within Ireland, the lesser grade of *peregrinatio* which the female anchorite herself had undertaken.\(^{32}\) After many years as a monk at Bangor, Columbanus was ready to undertake the superior type of *peregrinatio*. Despite initial hesitation at not wanting to lose a valuable member of the community, Comgall, his abbot, consented to allow Columbanus to leave, as he realized that it would be beneficial for the salvation of others. Comgall gave Columbanus twelve companions to accompany him, and, with the blessing of the community, this elite group of monks embarked on their voyage. They landed on the coast of Brittany, where they decided to travel further inland into Merovingian Gaul.\(^{33}\) During the course of the next twenty-five years, until his death in northern Italy in 615, Columbanus berated Merovingian kings, shunned Gallic bishops, exhorted popes, preached against Arian heretics, founded monasteries, and generally exerted his spiritual *potentia* wherever he went.

Although the concept of *peregrinatio* was not unique to the Irish, it became a distinctive feature of Irish monasticism during the course of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries.\(^{34}\) Undertaking *potior peregrinatio* was a commitment to spending the rest of one’s life in voluntary exile and submitting oneself completely to the will of God. It is clear that Columbanus had no clear plan as to where he would ultimately go on his arrival on the Continent,\(^{35}\) as was the case of the three Irish *peregrini* who arrived at the court of Alfred the Great in 891. These men had left Ireland in a thin, hide-covered boat without any oars and with only a week’s supply of provisions. They allowed the boat to drift on the sea as their only concern was to be exiles wherever they happened to land.\(^{36}\)

Such extreme, ascetic heroism was seen by the Irish as a form of martyrdom.\(^{37}\) As Jonas was aware, it was only undertaken after many years had been

\(^{32}\) On the two distinctions between exile within Ireland and exile overseas, see Charles-Edwards, ‘The Social Background to Irish *peregrinatio*’, p. 46.

\(^{33}\) Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 4, pp. 159–60.


\(^{35}\) Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 4, p. 160.

\(^{36}\) *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Plummer, a. 891, i, p. 82.

\(^{37}\) On the various concepts of martyrdom as understood by the Irish, see Stancliffe, ‘Red, White and Blue Martyrdom’.
spent in the monastery, and was then dependent on the permission of the abbot. Underlying the practice of ascetic exile was the ritual of the monk's total separation from the world. Whereas Columbanus had been an ambue, an exile within Ireland, when he left his native region, he became a cú glas, a 'wolf', a total outsider, when he undertook potior peregrinatio. Yet this renunciation of the world may also have served to raise Columbanus's legal standing in Irish society. By the mid-seventh century, the peregrinus had attained a legal status equivalent to that of the normal Irish king and bishop. This might explain to some extent Columbanus's indifference to the authority of the kings and bishops he encountered on the Continent. According to Thomas M. Charles-Edwards it is probable that this high status given to the peregrinus developed in the second half of the sixth century (thus before Columbanus had left Ireland) and was then codified in the seventh-century legal codes. It also translated into close ties between kings and peregrini. The exile could count on the protection of kings and we see this in practice in the way that Columbanus always went directly to royal courts on the Continent. Columbanus undoubtedly felt that his status as a peregrinus entitled him to royal hospitality and protection.

The concept of peregrinatio as understood by the Irish substantially shaped the way Columbanus conceived of his own identity and the way he related to the new society in which he found himself in on his arrival on the Continent. He still had a strong sense of being Irish and, from his letters, we can see how determined he was to maintain Irish monastic custom and traditions. These two identities for Columbanus, of being Irish and a religious exile, were compatible. In writing to Pope Boniface IV in 613 on behalf of the Lombard king and queen, Agilulf and Theodelinda, Columbanus describes himself as a peregrinus Scotus. His neutral identity as an exile might have been seen by the Lombard king and queen as beneficial in his role as mediator between them and the pope in trying to resolve the divisions of the Three Chapters Controversy.

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38 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 4, p. 159.
40 Charles-Edwards, ‘The Social Background to Irish peregrinatio’, p. 53. The law is *Bretha Crólige*, ed. by Binchy, c. 4, p. 6. It is likely that the family and kin-group of the peregrinus also gained in prestige. On this, see Enright, ‘Iromanie-Irophobic Revisited’, p. 372.
43 Gray and Herren, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters Controversy’. Gray and Herren have pointed out that ‘Columbanus appears to be an honest broker and not — wittingly at least
In the opening address of the letter Columbanus lists a series of comparisons that emphasize the contrast in status between himself and the pope, among which is Columbanus’s awareness that he is a foreigner (peregrinus) writing to a native (indigena). He further emphasizes his foreignness while at the same time clearly expressing a strong sense of Irish identity:

For all we Irish, inhabitants of the world’s edge, are disciples of Saints Peter and Paul and of all the disciples who wrote the sacred canon by the Holy Ghost, and we accept nothing outside the evangelical and apostolic teaching; none has been a heretic, none a Judaizer, none a schismatic; but the Catholic Faith, as it was delivered by you first, who are the successors of the holy apostles, is maintained unbroken.

Here Columbanus is at pains to reassure the pope that the Irish are thoroughly orthodox and that Christianity has been preserved there unadulterated. He outlines their veneration for Rome, not as the former capital of the Roman Empire, but as the seat of the bishops of Rome and the site of the apostles’ relics. With his customary directness, Columbanus explains his audacity in speaking out and urging the pope to resolve the Three Chapters schism by declaring that this is partly due to the libertas paternae consuetudinis, a tradition of free-speech in his native land. Emphasizing the cultural differences between the norm in his country and on the Continent, Columbanus goes on to say that ‘amongst us (i.e. the Irish) it is not a man’s station but his principles that matter’.

While Columbanus embraced the scriptural idea that the Christian has no true home on earth, this did not, in practice, mean a relinquishing of his Irish identity. Rather, if anything, the experience of ascetical exile reinforced his Irish identity, as he continually strove to justify his position in Gaul by recourse to Irish traditional practice.


44 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula v. 1, p. 36. This is also evident in his letter to Gregory the Great, where he describes himself more as a stranger than a scholar (‘magis peregrino quam scolo’): i. 4, p. 6.

45 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula v. 3, p. 38: ‘Nos enim sanctorum Petri et Pauli et omnium discipulorum divinum canonem spiritu sancto scribentium discipuli sumus, toti Iberi, ultimi habitatores mundi, nihil extra evangelicam et apostolicam doctrinam recipientes; nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus fuit; sed fides catholica, sicut a vobis primum, sanctorum videlicet apostolorum successoribus, tradita est, inconcessa tenetur’.

46 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula v. 11, p. 48.

47 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula v. 11, p. 48: ‘Non enim apud nos persona, sed ratio valet’.
For Columbanus, remaining faithful to Irish monastic tradition was of particular importance. This is especially evident by his ridged adherence to the Irish method of calculating the date of Easter. This divergence from the continental norm and his unwillingness to submit to the authority of the Gallic bishops caused considerable tensions between Columbanus and the bishops. Columbanus seems to have believed that his status as a *peregrinus* entitled him to complete immunity — that somehow he was outside Gallic ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and that he was free to establish and live the same kind of monastic life he had led in Ireland. This is most evident in a letter Columbanus wrote to one of Gregory the Great’s successors, either Sabinian or Boniface III, in 604 or 607. As he was writing during a vacancy in the papacy, it is unclear to which pope the letter was addressed. He had written to Gregory the Great in around 600 to try and secure his support in defending his stance on Easter against the Gallic bishops, but this does not seem to have been successful. Columbanus again sought this immunity from Gregory’s successor:

> [...] that you may grant to us pilgrims in our travail the godly consolation of your judgement, thus confirming, if it is not contrary to the faith, the tradition of our predecessors, so that by your approval we may in our pilgrimage maintain the rite of Easter as we have received it from generations gone before. For it is admitted that we are in our native land, while we accept no rules of the Gauls, but dwelling in seclusion, harming no one, we abide by the rules of our predecessors.

What does Columbanus mean here when he says that ‘constat enim nos in nostrum esse patria’? He is clearly not in his *patria* anymore, yet he seems to envis-

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50 Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, p. 29.

51 In the letter to Gregory’s successor Columbanus bemoans the machinations of Satan in preventing ‘the bearers of our letters’ from reaching Gregory: Columbanus, *Opera*, ed. by Walker, *epistula* III. 2, p. 23.

52 Columbanus, *Opera*, ed. by Walker, *epistula* III. 2, p. 24: ‘Ut nobis peregrinis laborantis tuae pium sententiae solatium praestes, quo si non contra fidem est nostrorum traditionem robores seniorum, quo ritum Paschae sicut accepimus a maioribus observare per tuum possumus iudicium in nostra peregrinatione. Constat enim nos in nostra esse patria, dum nullas istorum suscipimus regulas Gallorum, sed in desertis sedentes, nulli molesti, cum nostrorum regulis manemus seniorum.’ Walker translates ‘nullas [...] regulas Gallorum’ as ‘no rules of your Frankish friends’, which I have amended.
age that, by adhering to Irish tradition, he is, in some theoretical way, still in Ireland or, at least, outside Gallic jurisdiction.

We see a similar identification between being an ascetic exile yet remaining faithful to Irish traditions in Columbanus’s letter to the Gallic bishops which he wrote in lieu of attending a synod of bishops to which he had been summoned to defend his position over Easter. He again outlines that he has come to Gaul for the sake of Christ as a *peregrinus* and that he seeks to maintain the traditions of his predecessors. He asks them to show compassion on ‘your poor veterans and aged pilgrims’ and that, despite differences, they are all united in Christ, ‘for we are all joint members of one body, whether Franks or Britons or Irish or whatever our *gentes* may be’. Here, Columbanus, echoing the Gospels and St Paul, advocates the unity of Christian identity that is not dependent on biological or ethnic identities. This generic Christian identity is one that is more apparent in Columbanus’s sermons, where he writes about the Christian as having no home on earth ‘since our Father is in heaven’ and on the necessity for the true Christian, who has abandoned everything — home, family, country — for Christ to ‘live as travellers, as pilgrims, as guests of the world’. Yet, as we see from his letters, Columbanus did not abandon his Irish identity when he became a *peregrinus*. It was compatible with his identity as a *peregrinus* and one which he was forced to defend as he struggled to gain tolerance for his Irish peculiarities. When Columbanus was finally expelled from Burgundy in 610 and was sentenced to be deported back to Ireland, this was above all the result of a cultural conflict. Columbanus was unwilling to accommodate himself to both local ecclesiastical and secular customs, and so Theuderic expelled him not only from his kingdom but from the country. Columbanus was resolute that he would not return to Ireland, as by undertak-

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55 Columbanus, *Opera*, ed. by Walker, *epistulae* 11. 9, p. 22: ‘Unus enim sumus corporis com-membra, sive Galli, sive Britanni, sive Iberi, sive quaeque gentes’. I have chosen not to translate *gentes* here as ‘ethnic group’ or as ‘race’, as it appears in Walker’s translation.
58 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 19, p. 191: ‘ut qui ab omnium saecu-larum mores disciscat, quo venerit, ea via repetare studeat’.
ing *potior peregrinatio* he knew that this entailed leaving the country for the rest of his life: ‘I do not think it is pleasing to my Creator that I return once again to my native land which I left behind out of fear of Christ’.\(^{59}\) Jonas’s words echo those of Columbanus himself in his letter to the bishops, where the sentiments expressed are the same.\(^{60}\) While Columbanus embraced the notion he expressed to the bishops of a common Christian unity irrespective of nationality which was reflected in the multi-ethnic make-up of his communities, the Franks were less charitable. When Columbanus gave the option to his monks of either following him into exile or remaining in Luxeuil, he was told that only his compatriots or those who had come to him from Brittany were permitted to accompany him. Those from Gaul were forced to remain.\(^{61}\) The distinction which Columbanus would later make in his address to Pope Boniface IV, ‘foreigner to native’, was not mere rhetoric.

**Jonas of Bobbio**

While Columbanus had a strong dual identity of being Irish and a *peregrinus*, Jonas’s sense of identity is more difficult to discern. Jonas’s voice is a more subtle one, constrained as he was by the genre in which he was writing. Nevertheless, Jonas’s individuality is sufficiently apparent that we can get a sense of his identity.

Jonas was born around the turn of the seventh century in the Alpine town of Susa, which was, at that time, part of the Frankish Kingdom of Burgundy.\(^{62}\) The ancient Roman town, situated on the banks of the Dora Riparia below the Alpine passes that, for centuries, had allowed travellers to cross to and from Gaul and Italy, was a frontier outpost of the Franks.\(^{63}\) Susa was a town situated


\(^{61}\) Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, t. 20, p. 196: ‘custodes regii inquit, nequaquam hinc se sequi alios permisuros, nisi eos quos sui ortus terra dederat, vel qui e Brittanica arva ipsum secuti fuerant; ceteros, qui Gallico orti solo, preceptis esse regiis inibi remansuros’.

\(^{62}\) For the history of the Susa region in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see Gallina and others, ‘Dalle Alpes Cottiae al ducato longobardo’; Sergi, ‘La Valle di Susa medievale’.

on the boundaries of Byzantine, Frankish, and Lombard territories, and was contested by all three. However, it does not appear to have been part of the Lombard Kingdom. It was still in Byzantine hands in the early 570s, a military outpost that had withstood the Lombard conquest. In this respect it was like a handful of other strategic positions in northern Italy, such as Aosta and the fortified island of Comacina in Lake Como, which had retained imperial garrisons. In 574, Susa was under the control of Sisinnius, the imperial military commander in the region (magister militum). However, Gregory of Tours, Fredegar, and Paul the Deacon all mention how Susa was ceded to the Franks following an incident in which Lombard warlords took refuge in the town after a failed invasion of Gaul. Gregory tells of how two of the Lombard leaders, Zaban and Rodan, following their severe defeat at Embrun by the Gallo-Roman general, Mummolus, retreated to Italy, where they took refuge in Susa. He adds that they received a harsh welcome by the locals but, nonetheless, Sisinnius — for a reason unknown to us — gave them asylum. Mummolus pursued the fugitives and sent a messenger on to Susa to inform Sisinnius of his imminent arrival, the news of which prompted the Lombards to leave. When Amo, the third member of the raiding party who had been more successful, heard the news of his companions’ defeat, he likewise fled Gaul. Neither Gregory nor Paul, who relied on Gregory’s account, mentions the outcome of this incident, which was the cessation of Susa to the Franks. For this we rely on Fredegar’s account, which relates how, ‘as retribution for their audacity’, the Lombards ‘ceded the cities of Aosta and Susa, with all their lands and inhabitants, to King Guntram’, as well as agreeing to pay a yearly tribute of 12,000 gold solidi to the Franks, whose over-lordship they also acknowledged. Fredegar was mistaken in thinking that Aosta and Susa were Lombard cities (an understandable error, if most of the surrounding territory was under Lombard control). He also, unlike Gregory and Paul, mentions nothing about Sisinnius or his decision in aiding the fleeing Lombards (despite the fact that Gregory’s Histories was one of his major sources). Wallace-Hadrill suggested that Fredegar must have meant that the Lombards acquiesced in the town’s surrender, but there is no


evidence for this. Rather, the Franks may have either seized or claimed Susa from the Byzantines for having given refuge to the Lombard dukes. It remained in the regnum Francorum for centuries thereafter. By the time of Jonas’s birth, therefore, Susa was in Frankish control. Although cisalpine, its political orientation had shifted northwards, as it reflected the growing rise to dominance of the Franks.

Susa’s nodal position at the conflux of competing polities is important when we come to consider Jonas’s ethnic identity. Jonas’s biblical name gives us no clue as to his ethnic identity, and perhaps we should be hesitant to give him one. He wrote of Bertulf, third abbot of Bobbio and the man who commissioned him to write the Vita Columbani, that he was ‘of noble, though barbarian, origin’ (genere nobilis, licet gentilis) and a relative of Bishop Arnulf of Metz. In other words, Bertulf was a Frank. In Fredegar, writing slightly later than Jonas, we see a similar differentiation between ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’. This is probably no indication of ethnic allegiances, but it is noteworthy nonetheless that Jonas makes the differentiation. He was a man conscious of the classical past and of Italy’s pre- eminent position in the ancient world. We can detect what perhaps may be described as Jonas’s Italian sense of identity — his cultural ethnicity — when he notes, ‘to us of Ausonia there are, according to the poet’ (nobis Ausoniae iuxta poetam sunt) in reference to Virgil. Here Jonas borrows the poetical term used by Virgil for Italy, while he uses the term Italia a total of eight times in his hagiography.

A similar cisalpine orientation is evident in Jonas’s interesting comments on beer, where it is apparent that he was writing from the perspective of those whose habitual drink was wine. Beer, he explained, was a fermented bever-

68 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, ii. 23, p. 280.
69 Fredegar, for example, mentions Merovingian kings such as Chlothar I taking possession of cities rito barbaro, while he sometimes differentiates between those of Frankish and Roman birth. The patrician, Quolen, is presented as genere Francus, as is Bertoald, mayor of the palace, while Protadius, the lover of Queen Brunhild, was genere Romanus: Fredegar, Chronicae, trans. by Wallace-Hadrill, iv. 17, 18, and 24, pp. 11, 14, and 15.
70 See Ewig, ‘Volkstum und Volksbewusstsein im Frankenreich’.
71 See, for example, Jonas’s remarkable poem on Columbanus in which he praises the saint’s fame as eclipsing the great deeds and figures of classical Antiquity: Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, Versus ad mensam canendi, p. 225.
72 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, Epistula ad Waldebertum et Bobolenum, p. 148.
age ‘boiled from the juices of grain or barley’, which, apart from people in the Balkans, was drunk ‘by all the people in the world who live beside the Ocean, that is Gaul, Britain, Ireland, Germany, and others who are not dissimilar from them in their customs’. Jonas’s comments, which he makes in the context of narrating a beer miracle that took place in Luxeuil, are also illustrative of his ethnographic awareness. Not all people drank beer. The Scordisci and the Dardanian peoples (gentes) in the Balkans did not. It was only those northerners living by the Ocean — Gauls, Britons, Irish, and Germans — who were characterized by their drinking of beer. This, therefore, was an ethnic indicator. We see a similar ethnographic awareness throughout the Vita, and this is the more notable because it contrasts to other narrative sources from this period where, on the whole, it was rare for people to be identified by their ethnic group. Table 1 on the following page illustrates the variety of ethnic terms used by Jonas in his three saints’ Lives.

Jonas thus characterizes various people as ‘Lombard’, ‘Frankish’, ‘Burgundian’, ‘Irish’, ‘Brittonic’, ‘Saxon’, ‘Suebian’, and ‘Syriac’. In some cases, specifically when writing about the Lombards and Franks, Jonas used these terms when designating kings, while in others he was less status specific. Athala, for example, was ex Burgundionorum genere, while the nun Willesuinda was ex genere Saxonorum. Columbanus, while gathering the harvest during bad weather at Fontaine, placed four monks at each corner of the field: Cominus, Eunocus, and Equonanus were, Jonas notes, ex Scottorum genere, while the fourth, Gurganus, was genere Brittonem. His few references to the Lombards all concern their kings. Although Jonas (in contrast to Paul the Deacon) viewed them as Arian heretics, he does not display the pejorative rhetoric found, for example, in Gregory the Great’s letters. He did not identify with the Lombards in any way.

73 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 16, p. 179: ‘ex frumenti vel hordei sucos equoquitur, quamque prae ceteris in orbe terrarum gentibus preter Scordiscis et Dardanis gentes quae Oceanum incolunt usitantur, id est Gallia, Brittania, Hibernia, Germania, ceteraeque ab corum moribus non disciscunt’.
74 See the comments in his translation: Jonas of Bobbio, Vie de Saint Colomban, trans. by de Vogüé, p. 50, n. 41.
76 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, ii. 1, p. 230.
77 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, ii. 17, p. 268.
78 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 13, p. 174.
79 Gregory disliked the Lombards and spoke of them as ‘the unspeakable nation of the
Neither did he with the Franks, although he attested to their pre-eminence in Gaul. ‘Their name’, he wrote, ‘is considered foremost before all the other peoples who live in Gaul’. 

He was writing as an outsider. In narrating the time when one of Columbanus’s gloves was stolen and returned by a raven at Luxeuil, Lombards’, while the phrase ‘swords of the Lombards’ repeatedly appears in his letters. See Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World*, p. 99.


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Table 1. The Ethnic Terms in Jonas of Bobbio’s Hagiography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aethiopes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alemanni</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baioaarrii</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britto genere</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgundionorum genere</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dardani gens</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franci</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neustrasi Franci</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francorum reges</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galli</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiberus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populus Israhel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israhelitae</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langobardi</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poenus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaei</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxonorum genus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scordisci gens</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottorum gens</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scytha gens</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicambri</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suevi</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrorum genus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venetii qui et Sclavi dicuntur</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warasqui gens</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
he noted that the Gallic name for ‘gloves’ (tegumenta manuum) was wantos. This piece of linguistic trivia indicates a differentiation Jonas was making between what he called a ‘glove’ and that of the Gauls, who called it something else. Another instance is his reference to the Neustrian Franks. Jonas mentions Chlothar as a king who ruled over the Neustrian Franks, who, he adds, were those Franks who lived in ‘the furthest confines of Gaul by the Ocean’. There would have been no need to give a geographical idea of where the Neustrian Franks lived for a Frankish audience, but maybe there was for Jonas’s Italian audience. These examples are indications that Jonas was primarily writing from an Italian perspective. Moreover, what these examples reflect is Jonas’s awareness that he and those he wrote about lived in a multi-ethnic society, a perception that would have been reinforced by his monastic life in a mixed community of, amongst others, Irish, Frankish, and Lombard monks. Nevertheless, these distinctions were not highlighted by more precise descriptions of the ways in which different peoples could be distinguished. In speaking of the Suebians, for instance, he does not refer to the distinctive way in which they wore their hair, the ‘Suebian knot’, nor does he mention the famed long hair of the Frankish kings. He was also silent on Lombard habits of hairstyle and dress, such as we find in Paul the Deacon. Thus, while Jonas was conscious of different ethnic groups, he was not concerned to further illustrate their differences.

Jonas’s entry into Bobbio as a monk in 616 also raises the question of whether he took a religious name on becoming a monk. The Hebrew name Jonas is very rare in the Middle Ages, and so we need to consider whether this

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81 Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 15, p. 178.
84 On the various ways in which Jonas could have distinguished those ethnic groups which he wrote about, see Pohl, ‘Telling the Difference’.
85 Jonas describes how Columbanus, while walking in the forests around Annegray, heard the voices of ‘many Suebians’ who were raiding in the area. He also notes that the neighbouring peoples of Columbanus and his monks in Bregenz were nationes Suaevorum: Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 8, p. 167; i. 27, p. 213.
86 His account of King Theudebert’s deposition and forced clericalization would have been a perfect opportunity to mention the long hair of the Frankish kings, but Jonas mentions nothing about this: Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Columbani*, ed. by Krusch, i. 28, p. 219.
had a particular significance for its bearer: did his family single him out from birth for an ecclesiastical career by giving him such a name, or did he himself choose it to mark a new religious identity? Names are, of course, potent indicators of identity, whether individual, ethnic, devotional, or familial, and this was especially true of the early Middle Ages.\(^8^8\) In early medieval society where the vast majority of people bore Germanic names, Jonas would have stood out alone by his name. At Bobbio, for instance, he would have been in the company of men such as Baudacharius, Blidemundus, Fraimeris, Hermenoaldus, Meroveus, and Theudoaldus, all of whom bore Germanic names.\(^8^9\) Christian names were much less prevalent during this period than they were from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, when a revolution in the Christianization of naming practices took place. In sixth-century Ravenna, for example, only six per cent of names were Christian, while the peasants of Saint-Martin of Tours in the seventh century, with the exception of Peter, bore no scriptural names.\(^9^0\) Thus, while Christian names were on the whole rare, Old Testament names were extremely rare.\(^9^1\) Jonas’s is the only instance of this name from Lombard Italy.\(^9^2\) An idea of how rare the name was can also be shown from later monastic books of commemoration that became popular from the Carolingian period onwards.\(^9^3\) Remiremont, a Columbanian foundation in Burgundy which Jonas mentions, began commemorating its dead by writing their names in a book in the early ninth century.\(^9^4\) This *Liber memorialis* lists about 11,500 names, most of which are Germanic. The name ‘Ionas’ appears three times. Likewise, the island monastery of Reichenau on Lake Constance lists ten instances of the name ‘Ionas’ in its famous necrology containing about 40,000 names.\(^9^5\) This gives some idea of the rarity and hence significance of the name.

\(^8^8\) On this see, e.g., Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, esp. pp. 86–114 (on Christian names); Jarnut, ‘Avant l’an mil’.

\(^8^9\) On the sixteen Bobbio monks mentioned by Jonas and the areas in which they may have come from, see Zironi, *Il monastero longobardo di Bobbio*, pp. 28–46. Zironi argued on this evidence that Irish monks were not prominent in the early community. However, Richter, *Bobbio in the Middle Ages*, has recently re-vindicated the Irish presence in and influence on Bobbio.


\(^9^3\) On these sources, see Huyghebaert, *Les documents nécrologiques*.

\(^9^4\) *Liber memorialis von Remiremont*, ed. by Hlawitschka, Schmis, and Tellenbach.

\(^9^5\) *Das Verbrüderungsbuch der Abtei Reichenau*, ed. by Autenrieth, Geunenich, and Schmid.
Columbanus himself identified with the plight of Jonah when he was about to be deported back to Ireland. 96 The Irish saint on other occasions clearly associated himself with the prophet. In letters to two popes, he emphasized the spiritual nature of his name: in Latin (Columba) and Hebrew (Jonah) it meant ‘the dove’. In his letter to Gregory the Great he used the Hebrew version, ‘ego, Bar-iona (vilis Columba), in Christo mitto Salutem’, 97 while in his letter to Boniface IV, written from Milan, he wrote: ‘I am called Jonah in Hebrew, Peristera in Greek, Columba in Latin, yet so much is my birth-right in the idiom of your language, though I use the ancient Hebrew name of Jonah, whose ship-wreck I have also almost undergone’. 98 It is tempting to see in Jonas’s name a conscious decision of the monk to identify himself with his hero. It is, however, unlikely that Jonas took this name on becoming a monk. This practice was not yet established during this period as can be seen from the list of Bobbio monks, none of whom bore religious names. There was not yet a marked distinction in terms of nomenclature between the clergy and laity. It is more probable that, like Paul the Deacon, Jonas’s family gave him a biblical name at birth. In Italy and elsewhere the sons of the nobility destined for the Church could be given particular religious names. We can only speculate as to how Jonas came to have this name and, if it was his from birth, as seems likely, why his family chose to give him this particular name. We are more certain, however, of the particular significance that this name would have had within the monastic community at Bobbio and the wider Columbanian familia.

Jonas, then, is an unusual example of a cultural and religious exile. While he is remarkably consistent in noting the ethnic identities of others, he is abstruse when writing about his own. Although he grew up in a Frankish garrison-town near the Lombard kingdom, he did not identify himself with either the Franks or the Lombards. Rather, he appears to have had an Italian cultural identity. His comments on beer, the Neustrian Franks, and the Gallic name for gloves, all suggest that he was writing as a cultural outsider while, as a monk and missionary in Merovingian Gaul, it is likely that he also would have seen himself as a peregrinus.

96 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula iv. 8, p. 34.
97 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula i. 1, p. 1.
98 Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula v. 16, p. 54: ‘mihi Ionae hebraice, Peristerae graece, Columbae latine, potius tantum vestrae idiomaticae linguae nancto, licet prisco utor hebraeo nomine, cuius et pene subivi naufragium’.
Valerius of Bierzo

Unlike Columbanus and Jonas, we cannot detect any sense of an ethnic or cultural identity in Valerius. If we can ascribe one to him at all, his was a provincial one. As we have already mentioned, when Valerius went to the monastery of Compludo he characterized it in terms of exile and of leaving his native province of Asturias. Many years later when he was a hermit in this region he mentions how his nephew, John, came to him ‘from the land of my birth (de terra nativitatis meae)’.\(^9\) John had been in the service of the Visigothic king and, together with his servant, Evagrius, had left everything, including his wife and children, in order to live a religious life with his uncle. It is evident from this that Valerius’s family must have been of high status with connections to the Visigothic ruling elite. Although very much living in a peripheral, frontier region of the kingdom, Valerius mentions that he received the support of the king on a number of occasions.\(^10\) His level of education and knowledge of legal terminology are also evidence of Valerius’s high social level.\(^11\) Valerius, therefore, was not an ignorant rustic but a sophisticated, well-educated man with connections to the Visigothic court. It is all the more interesting then that he does not display more of an elite identity, but this may be due to the ascetic sensibilities and conventions he had adopted.

In contrast to Columbanus and Jonas, Valerius does not identify people according to ethnic identities. The only instance in the whole of his autobiographical writings in which he distinguishes someone in ethnic terms is one of his enemies, the priest Justus, whom he characterizes as ‘a weakling of puny stature, and with the colour very black to behold of the barbarous Ethiopian people’.\(^12\) Even in this case he is following an ancient ascetic and exegetical topos in likening an evil or demonic person to the Ethiopians.\(^13\) In a separate instance, he describes another of his enemies, the priest Flainus, as a *vir barbaro-

\(^12\) Valerius of Bierzo, *Ordo querimoniae*, c. 6, in *Valerio of Bierzo*, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 87: ‘forma exiguae pusillitatis tantillum, ac teterrimae visionis colore barbaricae nationis Aethiopum’.
\(^13\) See, e.g., Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference*. 
rus and valde lubricus (‘very shifty’). Aherne thought that Valerius’s use of the term barbarus here probably denotes a Visigoth, which raises the same questions as Jonas’s comment on Abbot Bertulf of Bobbio mentioned above. Given Valerius’s family status and links with the Visigothic court, however, we cannot infer any ethnic identity from this.

Like Columbanus, who, according to Jonas, left Ireland out of fear of Christ (ob Christi timorem relicto), Valerius was driven by a similar compunction and belief in the imminence of Doomsday. He writes how initially he was ‘terrified by the fear of future judgement’ to become a monk and, in an acrostic poem at the end of his first autobiographical account, he asks God to forgive him his sins at the approach of Judgement Day.

This apocalyptic fear was coupled with a very real belief in the Devil and the power of his agency. In contrast to Columbanus, who hardly ever mentions the Devil, or in Jonas, where the Devil is a passive force, Valerius’s Devil is the traditional antagonist of the Desert Fathers. He is a constant presence and menace in Valerius’s accounts to such an extent that the autobiographical writings could be seen, as Collins noted, as Valerius’s In Diabolum. Yet, as Collins cautions, Valerius’s accounts of the Devil ‘should not be interpreted as evidence of peculiar personal obsessions.’ Valerius was writing in an established ascetic tradition of demonology and his accusations against the Devil follow the form of a logical, Roman legal argument. In another acrostic poem at the end of the Ordo querimoniae, Valerius appeals to God as the justissime judex to repeal the legal document that places him in the Devil’s power, the ‘diabolicae cau- tionis adversum me conscripta […] chirographa.’ The Devil was, in a sense,

104 Valerius of Bierzo, Ordo querimoniae, c. 2, in Valerio of Bierzo, ed. and trans. by Aherne, pp. 73–75.
105 Valerius of Bierzo, Ordo querimoniae, c. 2, in Valerio of Bierzo, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 75, with n. 29 on p. 168; on attempts to identify this Flainus, see n. 30, p. 168. On barbari in the Visigothic laws, see Sivan, ‘The Appropriation of Roman Law’.
106 Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 20, p. 195.
107 Valerius of Bierzo, Ordo querimoniae, c. 1, in Valerio of Bierzo, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 68.
112 Valerius of Bierzo, Epitameron proprium praeiati discriminis, l. 9, in Valerio of Bierzo, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 111.
an essential component of Valerius’s ascetic identity, a necessary villain to the hermit’s heroic individualism. David Brakke has studied how conflict with demons in late Antiquity was a central component in the discourse and formation of individual and collective monastic identities. It was the means by which monks asserted their spiritual prowess and what distinguished them as holy men. In Jonas, demons and the Devil have little power but are the foils for displays of prayer by Columbanus and his monks, often acting in concert. In this respect, Valerius cuts an old-fashioned, solitary figure in his independent, real struggles against the Devil. Valerius, for example, is tormented and attacked by the Devil and demons for a whole year, is subjected to the Devil farting in his face while praying, and is terrified by the Devil who appears in the guise of a giant, ‘of huge stature, towering even to the clouds’. The Devil is, therefore, an active, constant protagonist through the course of Valerius’s eremitical career and is often the only figure against whom Valerius asserts his struggle for ascetic independence.

While Valerius displays a more intimate knowledge of the Devil than does Columbanus, his worldview was the same in many respects. Both expressed similar philosophies on how one should live as pilgrims and shun the world, while Valerius likewise conceived of his ascetic undertaking as *peregrinatio*. He notes that copying books was for him ‘a consolation of my ascetic exile and a correction of my way of life’. We see a similar polarization between the monastic sphere and the wider world as we find in Columbanus and Jonas. Valerius relates how, after he had been badly beaten by robbers, Christians took him to the estate of Ebronato. He missed his former solitude and dreaded this more social environment. He decided to become an *inclusus*, imprisoning himself in a cell near the altar of the church, so ‘that my foot should no longer go into the turmoil of the outside world, and that through the slave-camps of

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113 Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk*.
114 On this, see Diem, ‘Encounters between Monks and Demons’.
this present life, the divine right hand should keep me from the eternal dungeon of the abyss.'

When Ricimer evicted Valerius from his cell because he wanted to make him a priest of his proprietary church, Valerius describes this in dramatic language, ‘as if falling from heaven, rushing into hell, he was cast, ‘out again into the theatre of the world.’

The way Valerius characterizes his abandonment of society, from the ‘obscene contagion of the world’, is also evident in his vivid descriptions of his hermitages. These accounts reflect a keen naturalist sensibility. For example, he compares the high mountains around him in his final place of retreat, the cell of St Fructuosus above the monastery at Rufiana, to the Alps of Gaul. Although there was a narrow and perilous path leading from the farms on the other side of the mountain to his hermitage, Valerius characterizes this as a place cut-off from the world and the society around him:

For it is such a place of ordered quiet like that of Paradise that, even though [...] it is surrounded by a wall of very high mountains, nevertheless it is not darkened by the sombre shadows of any one of them, but is bright with the lovely glory of flooding light and lush with unusually beautiful green verdure. Far from the world, free from the distraction of anything worldly, and undisturbed by the intrusion of women, it is quite evident to all the faithful fleeing from worldly pleasures and business that it is prepared by the Lord for the sake of attaining perfectly the summit of holiness.

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120 Valerius of Bierzo, *Ordo querimoniae*, c. 4, in *Valerio of Bierzo*, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 79: ‘et pes meus commotionem ultra foris exiret, atque ut per haec presentis lautomiae castra ab eterno voraginis carcerem me dextera divina sustolleret’.


Like Columbanus, Valerius's independence from ecclesiastical authorities led to conflict.\textsuperscript{125} He is particularly scathing of the local priests, whom he characterizes as violent drunks, and of the pseudo-monks at Rufiana. He never became a priest and appears never to have wanted to. In his first hermitage in the mountains between Astorga and Castro Pedroso, Valerius managed to live there for some years until his reputation as a holy man began to attract people who wished to help him and to bring him food. This provoked the envy of the local priest, Flainus, who came in a rage to confront Valerius at his hermitage.\textsuperscript{126} Valerius is not more specific as to why this priest reacted so strongly against him except that he was envious. Flainus succeeded in driving Valerius away to another, more remote hermitage, where he continued to persecute the hermit. He stole some religious books which Valerius had copied, while he attributed being attacked by robbers to the instigation of Flainus or ‘his patron’, the Devil.\textsuperscript{127} When Ricimer later wanted to make Valerius a priest of his new church and built an altar on the site of the hermit’s hut, Valerius saw Ricimer’s intention as being instigated by the Devil, as his becoming a priest would mean being ‘ensnared by many worldly attractions, enriched by many fat offerings,’\textsuperscript{128} which would lead to his downfall. The proof of Ricimer’s wickedness was seen when the church he was building collapsed, killing him, and leaving the hermit once again ‘miserable in my often repeated catastrophes’.\textsuperscript{129} After this, Valerius came into conflict with another local priest, Justus. Valerius gives a wonderful description of this man. To his disgust, Justus was ordained a priest for no other reason than that he was funny and was a fine musician.\textsuperscript{130} Valerius was given aid and shelter by a local man, Simplicius, with whom he began to perform the Divine Office. Justus could not stand this and so:

\textsuperscript{125} On this, Santiago Castellanos has remarked: ‘Valerio y sus actividades representaban, entre otras cosas, un conflicto permanente entre la autoridad oficial, episcopal, y sus propias iniciativas personales, generalmente ajenas a la acreditación oficial’: Castellanos, \textit{La hagiografía visigoda}, p. 338.

\textsuperscript{126} Valerius of Bierzo, \textit{Ordo querimoniae}, c. 2, in \textit{Valerio of Bierzo}, ed. and trans. by Aherne, pp. 73–75.


\textsuperscript{130} Valerius of Bierzo, \textit{Ordo querimoniae}, c. 6, in \textit{Valerio of Bierzo}, ed. and trans. by Aherne, pp. 87–89: ‘Per quam multorum domorum convivia voragine percurrente, lascivia cantilenae modulatione plerumque psallendi adeptus est celebritatis melodia’.
Raging, and gripped by a heavy drunkenness that could not be shaken off, he burned in such madness of frenzied insanity that he would allow me no quiet even during the night [...]. Goaded by his arrogant madness and drunkenness, and glaring like a mad dog, raging with teeth gnashing in unspeakable revilings, full of drink and foaming at the mouth, [he] struggled to tear me apart with his own hands.\textsuperscript{131}

This conflict reached its climax when Justus tried to cut Valerius’s throat with a sword in church. Valerius was only saved by the intervention of other monks there.\textsuperscript{132} Justus was completely drunk when he attempted to kill Valerius, as afterwards he began to dance around singing ‘wicked ditties’.\textsuperscript{133} When, after this, Valerius had settled in the Bierzo, he relates how Isidore, bishop of Astorga, wanted to bring him to Toledo, presumably to make him a priest. For Valerius, Isidore, even though he was a bishop, was acting in concert with the Devil because he wanted to take him from his place of retreat. The bishop’s sudden death was seen as just punishment, Valerius even remarkably asserting that ‘everlasting hell swallowed him’.\textsuperscript{134}

In addition to being harassed by local priests and bishops, Valerius also came into conflict with the local population. He does not distinguish them as Basques or Astures, but the image he presents of them is of a barbarous and semi-pagan people. He mentions, for example, how people venerated pagan shrines on the summit of one of the mountains, which were destroyed by Christians and a basilica dedicated to St Felix erected on the site.\textsuperscript{135} In writing about others, he especially distinguishes people who are Christian, which suggests that not everyone was Christian. When robbers had attacked him, he was rescued by ‘some very faithful Christians’,\textsuperscript{136} while he later writes of getting alms from ‘good Christians’.\textsuperscript{137} The local priests and monks at Rufiana, against whom his treatise \textit{De genere monachorum} was intended, were also dangerous, uncivilized men. When Valerius received a gift of two horses from a \textit{vir illustre}, the jealous monks stole the horses and then drove them off a cliff. When the horses

\textsuperscript{131} Valerius of Bierzo, \textit{Ordo querimoniae}, c. 6, in \textit{Valerio of Bierzo}, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{132} Valerius of Bierzo, \textit{Ordo querimoniae}, c. 6, in \textit{Valerio of Bierzo}, ed. and trans. by Aherne, pp. 91–93.
\textsuperscript{133} Valerius of Bierzo, \textit{Ordo querimoniae}, c. 6, in \textit{Valerio of Bierzo}, ed. and trans. by Aherne, p. 93.
miraculously survived, one of the monks then murdered Valerius’s minister, John, by slitting his throat. Visitors who used to come to Valerius to consult his collection of books were also often attacked and killed by the locals. The locals also killed Valerius’s animals, eliciting a comparison Valerius makes between himself and the prophet Elias, writing, ‘I remained alone’ (1 Rg 19. 14). This is perhaps an apt biblical borrowing to describe Valerius’s plight, a man who alone had overcome the trials and difficulties of the eremitical career he had embraced. Valerius was a fiercely independent holy man, preoccupied with his own ascetic struggles and wary of ecclesiastical interference. His identity was quintessentially that of the Christian alienus. We have little idea of his own sense of ethnic identity because he did not write about it, while he was uninterested to distinguish others according to their ethnic group.

Valerius was similar in many ways to Columbanus, except that Columbanus actually left his country as a peregrinus. This ritual shaped his identity on the Continent and influenced his relations with others. His identity of alienation also shaped his monastic communities, which he envisaged as independent entities separate from ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction. This would also lead to a new type of legal document that developed in the mid-seventh century to ensure that these communities remained independent. Columbanus’s unwillingness to compromise his traditional Irish practices and religious observance led to his banishment from Burgundy in 610. As we have seen, he had a strong dual identity of being an ascetic exile and Irish. Nevertheless, he advocated the unity of Christian identity above that of particular ethnic groups. In his letters to Gregory the Great and Boniface IV, he refers to Europe not in a geographical sense but as a distinct social and religious unit of which the pope is the spiritual head. As Peter Brown has argued, the period between the mid-sixth and mid-


139 On the privilege of immunity, see Rosenwein, Negotiating Space; Ewig, ‘Das Formular von Rebais’; Ewig, ‘Bemerkungen zu zwei merowingischen Bischofsprivilegien’.

140 In both instances Columbanus uses the phrase totius Europae in the sense of a whole, distinct cultural area over which the Bishop of Rome has an especial religious authority. This is very much a European, not a regional, perspective. See Columbanus, Opera, ed. by Walker, epistula i. 1, p. 2 (to Gregory the Great): ‘Domino Sancto et in Christo Patri, Romanae pulcherrimo Ecclesiae Decori, totius Europae flaccentsis augustissimo quasi cuidam Flori’; epistula v. 1, p. 36 (to Boniface IV): ‘Pulcherrimo omnium totius Europae Ecclesiariwm Capiti, Papae praedulci, pracecelso Præsuli, Pastorum Pastori’. We see a similar emphasis on Rome’s authority in the Vita Columbani, where Jonas cites Matthew 16. 18 as the biblical foundation for papal primacy. This is cited in the context of the rebel monk, Agrestius, who joined the schismatic Aquileans who defended the Three Chapters controversy. Rome’s primacy here is clearly emphasized as Jonas
seventh century was one in which a profound change in the imagination took place and which saw the rise of western Christendom as a religious and cultural unit.¹⁴¹ Christianity became for the first time an otherworldly religion in the true sense — one more intently focused on sin, repentance, death, and the afterlife — and which has been seen as marking the end of ancient Christianity.¹⁴² We see this in Columbanus and Valerius, men whose mentalities were distinctly otherworldly and who were preoccupied with the problems of sin and repentance. Both shunned episcopal oversight and relied to some extent on royal patronage. This is especially true of Columbanus, whose status as a peregrinus meant that he depended on royal patronage. This served to bring his monasteries more fully into the orbit of royal and aristocratic networks and ultimately triggered a process that led to monasteries becoming more integrated in social power structures.

The individualism of Valerius and Columbanus comes across strongly in their writings. Such individual ascetic careers would become increasingly rare, however, during the course of the early Middle Ages, and it is as a representative of a new kind of monasticism that Jonas wrote. In a way, Jonas’s monastic career was Columbanus’s peregrinatio in reverse, taking him from Bobbio across the Alps where he became a missionary on the north-east frontier of the Frankish kingdom. As an assistant to Bishop Amandus, he was an important figure in the missionary impulse of the seventh century.¹⁴³ He too might well have considered himself a peregrinus. He writes, for example, about a Frankish monk who wanted to follow Columbanus’s example and undertake potior peregrinatio to Ireland.¹⁴⁴ Jonas does show a remarkable ethnographic awareness, but he was

notes that, once Agrestius became a member of this schismatic group, he was ‘separated from communion with the See of Rome and divided from the communion of the whole world (Romanae sedis a communionem seiunctus ac divisus est totius orbis communione, quicumque Romanae sedis iungerentur, damnans)’: Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, ii. 9, p. 247.


¹⁴² See, for example, Brown, ‘Gloriosus obitus: The End of the Ancient Other World’; Hillgarth, ‘Eschatological and Political Concepts in the Seventh Century’.


¹⁴⁴ Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by Krusch, i. 11, p. 170.
not concerned to illustrate ethnic differences. He was the first, for instance, to
depict Ireland and the Irish in a wholly positive light, even though he must have
been aware of the classical ethnographic traditions that characterized Ireland
and the Irish as particularly barbaric. 145 This change in perception that marks
a break with the classical and late antique ethnographic tradition undoubtedly
stemmed from Jonas’s experience in a community of exiled Irish monks. His
experience of monastic life in multi-ethnic communities that included Irish,
Briton, Frankish, and Lombard monks is also indicative of this new, idealized
Christian identity, where ethnic differences were subsumed under the over-
arching religious umbrella of Latin Christendom.

Columbanus, Jonas, and Valerius are thus individual examples that I have
chosen because they span the course of the seventh century and because of the
personal nature of their writings. Nevertheless, they are also representatives of
an ecclesiastical elite whose understanding and practice of the Gospel in terms
of ‘a therapeutics of exile and distress’ 146 led to the fashioning of new Christian
political and social identities.

145 See the comments on Ireland and the Irish in Jonas of Bobbio, Vita Columbani, ed. by
Krusch, i. 2, p. 153. For the classical and late antique ethnographic tradition, see, e.g., Freeman,
Ireland and the Classical World; Killeen, ‘Ireland in the Greek and Roman Writers’.
146 Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, p. 82.
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Introduction

The Roman Empire in Spain did not fall until the 620s. It was only in this decade that the Visigothic kings managed to expel the final Roman forces from the south. Although the political fall of Rome in Spain took far longer than has often been imagined, the social and intellectual landscape had been in transition for many decades. This chapter uses the historical writings of Isidore of Seville, the pre-eminent bishop and scholar of seventh-century Spain, to show how individuals and communities managed the practical and interpretive transition from Roman to Visigothic control.

Traditionally, Isidore’s writings on historical subjects take secondary place in analyses of his corpus behind such works as his *De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos, Sententiae*, and, above all, *Etymologiae*, all of which were transmitted far more widely in subsequent centuries. Isidore’s theological, pastoral, and scientific works undoubtedly provided contemporaries with the practical and conceptual tools to negotiate and understand a changing world, and this may help to explain their later popularity. However, an underappreciated strand of Isidore’s project is his effort to construct a vision of the past that was agreeable to all of the constituent parts of the Visigothic polity. Historical writing played a central role in this process. The volume of Isidore’s historical output should alert us to its importance. Isidore wrote a chronicle, of which there were three redactions, and a history, in two redactions. A number of his non-‘historical’

* I would like to thank Drs Kate Cooper and Sam Koon of the University of Manchester for reading earlier drafts of this paper.
writings, notably the *Etymologies* and *De viris illustribus*, contain substantial, if incidental, material on the history and geography of the ancient world and shed an illuminating light on his more traditional works of history.\(^1\)

It has long been recognized that Isidore promoted religious uniformity and the idea that the Catholic people of Spain were united behind the Visigothic kings and opposed to outsiders. This chapter argues that, as part of this broader project, Isidore deliberately propagated the idea that the Visigoths were a favoured people throughout their history. Through a broad range of historical writing, Isidore constructed a complex historical narrative that positioned the Visigoths as the preeminent ethno-political group at the culmination of world history. He did this by channelling the histories of the Romans, Jews, Persians, Scythians, and Visigoths to demonstrate both the historical and contemporary predominance of the latter.\(^2\) At this point, it is important to make a terminological point about the use of the terms ‘Visigoths’ and ‘Goths’. Throughout this paper, I refer to the ‘Visigoths’, to the ‘Visigothic kingdom’ and its kings, but for Isidore these people were *Gothi*. I have chosen to use the modern term ‘Visigoths’ in order to avoid confusion with the Ostrogoths and because it is clear that for Isidore these were the only Goths, historically speaking, who really mattered.

Historical writing was central to the construction and negotiation of identity in the post-Roman kingdoms. It allowed the elites of ethnically-defined political units to articulate a version of the past that was agreed by, or at least agreeable to, the constituent parts of their polity. Historical accounts often focused on points of opposition to outsiders and may also have formed part of broader efforts to encourage individuals or groups to reconcile themselves to the proposed dominant power and its accompanying narrative. On other occasions, visions of universal identities derived from Christian or Roman traditions acted as forces for communal integration and consensus-building. However, it

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is important to stress that ‘neither “universal” nor “ethnic” communities are the “natural” way in which human society has to be organized’; both forms resulted from historical processes and the retrospective depiction and construction of such processes by contemporary and near-contemporary commentators. The authors of histories and chronicles thus played a central role as cultural brokers between Roman subjects and barbarian kings, creatively communicating, negotiating, renegotiating, organizing, and reorganizing categories of distinction between insiders and outsiders. By unpicking historical accounts, we can thus better understand the emergence of the post-Roman political and intellectual world and gain some valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies that were deployed by individuals traversing such uncertain terrain.

The histories and chronicles of the post-Roman kingdoms consistently describe contemporaries in ethnic terms. Such a system of identification probably emerged gradually as authors sought to construct discourses that would exclude undesirable elements and laud the distinguishing features of emergent elites. However, such identities had to be open enough to include those whose adherence it was desirable to attract to the cause. The development of a vision of the world as divided into a number of different peoples was thus highly contingent and has been described as an ‘operational tool’ for the legitimization of rule and the organization of society. By examining how and why Isidore distinguished certain key features of particular ethnic groups as points of belonging and difference in his historical writings, we can begin to unpick the processes of political legitimation and social organization that led to the establishment of the Visigothic kingdom in succession to the Roman Empire in Spain.

Isidore played a key role in fusing ancient ethnographic and biblical traditions into a system that proved influential in subsequent centuries. His ‘theory’ of ethnicity divided peoples according to their names, weaponry, apparel, and hairstyles, with particular stress being placed upon language as a distinguishing

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4 For a more comprehensive discussion of the concept of the cultural broker, which has played an important role in modern anthropology, and its application in studies of post-Roman history, see the contribution by Reimitz, ‘Cultural Brokers of a Common Past’, in Pohl and Heydemann, eds, Strategies of Identification.
feature, although his discussion of this topic is confused and in his descriptions of a number of peoples in the *Etymologies* he hardly mentions language at all.\(^8\) An examination of the changing contents of Isidore’s historical writings is thus perhaps a better way of both exploring and understanding his conception of contemporary ethnicities and the processes by which they had emerged.

Although Isidore’s historical and theoretical writings on the topic of ethnic identity point to the gradual divergence into multiple ethnicities over the course of history, Isidore constructed a story that privileged the Visigoths above all other peoples throughout history. In this process there was a significant degree of interaction between what we might term the theoretical and practical bases for Isidore’s writings. As an individual and an author, therefore, Isidore was in constant interaction with his social milieu, seeking to define, refine, and redefine social, political, and religious identities, including ethnicity, in response to altered social, political and religious realities.\(^9\)

**Methodology and Sources**

Isidore’s chronographic writings are central to understanding his attempts to focus the entire span of world history upon the Visigoths. He narrated the histories of a range of ethnic groups in such a way as to tie the Visigoths firmly into the course of universal history, to legitimize them in religious and political terms, and to undermine their competitors’ claims on an exalted religious status of any sort. The two redactions of Isidore’s *Chronica maiora* cover the entirety of world history from Creation to his own day and mention a large number of peoples.\(^10\) In the process, the peoples of Isidore’s past are plotted along two axes. Firstly, they are placed into an absolute chronological context in relation to time since Creation. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, their position is established in relation to the other peoples of history. By examining Isidore’s historical writings against the framework created by his chronicles, we are thus able to come to an overall understanding of how he related his patchwork of specific ethnic pasts to universal salvation history.

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\(^10\) Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martin; for a translation of the text, see Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, trans. by Koon and Wood.
Isidore’s chronicles are unusual because virtually all of the sources which he used to construct them are still extant. His use of these earlier texts reveals a lot about how he treated his sources and how he responded to a range of alternative, and in some cases competing, historical models, some of which were highly antithetical to his own vision of the past. This means that we can profitably examine not only the choices that Isidore made when selecting from his sources, but also how he integrated, and in some cases excluded, existing textual traditions in furthering his own historical vision.

Isidore’s chronographies have received little attention from scholars in the past, frequently being dismissed as ‘scissors and paste’ compositions derived largely from second-hand material and offering a deficient account of world history. However, it is the very ‘cut and paste’ nature of Isidore’s account of history that makes his chronicles so interesting. Indeed, such a methodology was perhaps more typical of how early medieval historical works were composed than has previously been supposed. Why, if such an approach was not common practice, would Gregory of Tours, a near contemporary of Isidore from Francia, have ended his Ten Books of Histories with an explicit warning against those coming after him reusing different part of his work?

I conjure you all, I say, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Judgement Day feared by all sinners, that you never permit these books to be destroyed, or to be rewritten, or to be reproduced in part only with sections omitted, for otherwise when you emerge in confusion from this Judgement Day you will be condemned with the Devil. Keep them in your possession, intact, with no amendments and just as I have left them to you.

Helmut Reimitz has recently demonstrated how the redactors of the six book version of Gregory’s Histories were not as clumsy and derivative in their work as used to be assumed. Instead, these and other Merovingian historical writings were part of concerted attempts by authors and audiences to locate themselves in particular places and times through the construction of historical, spiritual, and social identities. A similar motivation and methodology underscored the production of Isidore’s chronicles.

12 Gregory of Tours, Historiae, ed. by Krusch and Levison, x. 31, p. 449; Reimitz, ‘Social Networks and Identities’, p. 231.
The first redaction of the *Chronica maiora* was written under King Sisebut in 615/16 and the second version under King Swinthila in 626. The first redaction has four hundred and eighteen chapters; when writing the second, Isidore added sixty-eight chapters, as well as expanding and editing a number of existing entries. Therefore, although largely based on the earlier redaction, the second version of the *Chronica maiora* represents a significant augmentation of that text. Isidore's *De viris illustribus* was written sometime between 615 and 618. It consisted of thirty-three chapters and continued the earlier bio-bibliographic catalogues of Jerome and Gennadius, which had defined famous men in terms of their literary outputs while creating an image of specific authors and writings as canonical. Isidore reproduced these imperatives, but also tried to generate an image of an orthodox and literary episcopal elite for Spain in order to remedy the absence of Spanish churchmen from the works of his predecessors.

Isidore is unique among the historians of the barbarian kingdoms of the early Middle Ages because he wrote histories of three separate peoples: the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Sueves. The resultant text, which came to be known as the *Historia Gothorum*, probably gained its name because of its emphasis upon, and clear preference for, the Visigoths, in the same way that Gregory of Tours's *Decem libri historiarum* came to be known as the *Historia Francorum*. Initially, however, the *Historia Gothorum* was a history of the Goths, Sueves, and Vandals. Indeed, that is how it is referred to in Braulio of Zaragoza's *Renotatio librorum domini Isidori*, written shortly after Isidore's death. There are longer and shorter redactions of the *Historia Gothorum*: the shorter ends with the death of Sisebut in 621 and the longer in the middle of Swinthila's reign in 625. It is generally accepted that the longer redaction is an expanded version of its shorter predecessor. The text contains a lot of information about relations

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15 Rouse and Rouse, ‘Bibliography before Print’, pp. 135, 139–40; Vessey, ‘Peregrinus against the Heretics’; Vessey, ‘The Forging of Orthodoxy’; Vessey, ‘From *cursus* to *ductus*’.
16 Jerome had only referred to nine Spaniards. Gennadius mentioned five Spanish men, none in the latter part of his text. Isidore therefore introduced several illustrious Spaniards to the period covered by Jerome and Gennadius. For more on this see Wood, ‘Playing the Fame Game’.
between the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Sueves, about how they interacted with the Roman Empire, and about how their respective stories related to the unfolding of salvation history. By comparing these narratives with what Isidore says in the *Chronica maiora*, we can learn a lot about his changing conceptions of the roles of various ethnic and religious groups throughout history.

The writing of the two redactions of both the *Chronica maiora* and the *Historia Gothorum* seems to have been largely dependent upon a rapidly changing political and religious situation around the year 620. When the first redactions were written, the Byzantine Empire was still in control of a portion of territory in south-eastern Spain, and the ultra-orthodox King Sisebut was in power. By the time that the second redaction was composed in the mid-620s, the situation had changed dramatically. Sisebut’s son and successor, Reccared II, had been deposed by King Swinthila, the Byzantine forces had been expelled from Spain, and the bishops of southern Spain, led by Isidore, had dealt with what they presented as a serious outbreak of heresy in the former Byzantine province.19

There can be little doubt that both the first and second redactions of the *Chronica maiora* and the *Historia Gothorum* were primarily written for the benefit of the Visigothic monarchy. The first redaction seems to have been composed as part of a wider project intended to celebrate the triumphs of Sisebut in the religious and political spheres, against the Jews and Byzantines respectively. The second redaction amplified several elements of the first, celebrating the religiosity of the Visigoths and their kings and undermining the Byzantines far more effectively than the first redaction. Sisebut’s son had been deposed by Swinthila and this dynastic change is reflected in the contents of the second redaction of both the *Historia Gothorum* and the *Chronica maiora*, in which Sisebut is downgraded and the achievements of Swinthila are emphasized. It therefore seems likely that the second redactions were also written with a royal audience in mind. We should also imagine that the text played a role in persuading any members of the Visigothic elite who doubted the legitimacy of Swinthila’s rule and the greatness of his achievements. There are likely to have been many such doubters, especially in the far-flung regions of Spain and the recently-reconquered Byzantine territories in the south. Indeed, the rebellion which finally toppled Swinthila from power seems to have had significant support from the nobility and the episcopacy.20


20 García Moreno, ‘La oposicion a Suintila’.
Alongside classical ethnographic traditions, biblical models and narratives played a central role in the development and propagation of early medieval notions of ethnicity. These two discursive traditions helped to explain the coexistence of and competition between numerous ethnically defined communities, at the same time allowing for the continuance of the universalism implicit in the Roman and Christian traditions. Roman historical and ethnographic models were frequently universalizing in scope, after all, but under the banner of Roman political and cultural dominance. Likewise, the biblical narrative of the past helped to reconcile the seeming contradiction between the fact that there existed a diversity of peoples in the present with common origins and ultimate shared destiny, but that believers in Judaism and Christianity held an exalted place in God's plan for mankind. For example, the biblical narratives of the Tower of Babel and the genealogy of the sons of Noah provided interpretive frameworks for understanding the existence of different peoples, their origins, languages, and conflicts.

In his Historia Gothorum, Isidore identifies the contemporary Goths with a variety of historical and biblical peoples. Isidore's conflation of Gog, Magog, Goth, Getan, and Scythian has been variously interpreted. Pohl saw the confusion of names as an attempt to neutralize any apocalyptic sense inherent in the name 'Goth'. Furtado read it as part of an attempt to defend the antiquity of the Visigoths in opposition to their main enemies, the Romans. On this interpretation, by creating a biblical ancestry for the Visigoths, Isidore was able to demonstrate that their origins lay further back in time than those of the Romans, at the same time helping him to make sense of how their history connected to God's plan for mankind. That Isidore intended his readers to rec-

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21 See Borst, Der Turmbau von Babel; and the papers in Brett, ed., Ethnicity and the Bible.
24 Pohl, 'Telling the Difference', pp. 22–23; Pohl, 'The Construction of Communities', p. 13. For Isidore on the Tower of Babel, see Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, ed. by Lindsay, ix. 1. 1; Isidore of Seville, Chronica maior, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 22, pp. 22–25.
27 Furtado, 'From gens to imperium', p. 409.
Recognize the Visigoths as holding a favoured place in history is evident from the final dating formula of the second redaction of the *Historia Gothorum*, which states: ‘the kingdom of the Goths is found to have lasted, with divine favour [*Deo favente*], for two hundred and fifty-six years’. For Furtado these chapters of Isidore’s history are surface manifestations of his attempts to promote the Visigoths in opposition to the Romans in both the religious and political spheres. Indeed, King Swinthila, who was ruling at the time at which the second redaction of the *Historia Gothorum* was written, is described as having been chosen by *gratia divina*, further implying divine support for the people and their rulers.

There were specific reasons for the changes which Isidore made to his account of the Visigothic past in the second redaction of the *Historia Gothorum*. One such reason was a desire to laud Swinthila and his achievements. When analysis of these chapters is coupled with exploration of Isidore’s coverage of a whole range of ethnic histories in his chronicles, it soon becomes evident that he was also making a wide-ranging effort to situate the Visigoths within, and ultimately at the culmination of, universal history. In order to achieve this objective when writing historically, Isidore chose not only to privilege the Visigoths above all other peoples, but to denigrate any possible competitors for an exalted status. Primarily, this involved demonstrating that both the Jews and the Romans had, through their actions, lost any entitlement to an exalted religious status, although some effort was expended in demonstrating the illegitimacy of other barbarian peoples and in emphasizing the importance of the Visigoths. Particular emphasis was placed on the military prowess of the Visigoths in opposition to the Romans, while Isidore also devoted significant attention in later portions of the *Chronica maiora* to illustrating a steady breakdown in Roman power and legitimacy, especially in the West — territories are lost, revolts and civil wars abound, and heresies arise.

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failure to deal with external and internal threats is thus juxtaposed to a steadily expanding Visigothic power, culminating in the expulsion of the Romans from Spain at the close of the Chronica maiora. The other key signifier of Visigothic ascendancy at the end of the Chronica maiora, the conversion of the Jews to Christianity under King Sisebut, represents the culmination of his efforts to demonstrate the illegitimacy and disempowerment of the Jews. As in the case of the Romans, Isidore sought to show how the Jews had gradually lost all power in the secular and religious spheres as history unfolded.

Jewish History

Isidore’s narration of both the distant and recent past was intimately connected to his efforts to position the Visigothic kings in relation to internal and external competitors for leadership. Following the conversion of the Visigoths from Arianism to Catholicism in 587–89, the Jews replaced the Arians as the major figures of concern for the Church and the state in Spain, both of which were entrusted with promoting and protecting the orthodoxy of Spain. Any group standing outside the orthodox consensus was automatically placed in a vulnerable position. Not only was their loyalty put in question almost by default, but their very existence suggested that the king had failed in his duty to protect and propagate the faith. The Jews were in a particularly vulnerable position because they hindered the identification between regnum and ecclesia that writers such as Isidore were eager to promote for the benefit of ecclesiastical and royal elites. Indeed, the establishment and maintenance of religious authority was frequently linked to the justification or consolidation of social and political power, and it is thus very difficult to make a distinction between ‘political’

Alonso (second redaction), c. 3, pp. 174, 176; Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, ed. by Lindsay, ix. 2. 89, see also ix. 2. 63 for the Massagetae as the ‘strong Getae’. Hillgarth, ‘Historiography in Visigothic Spain’, pp. 295–99; Reydellet, La Royauté dans la littérature latine, pp. 524–54.

and ‘ecclesiastical’ narratives in the early Middle Ages. This interlinking of religious and political identity — and loyalty — led the Visigothic literati to create an idealized image of society that completely excluded the Jews. In his theological writings on the Jews, Isidore tried to show that their beliefs and practices were false because they had rejected Christ’s ministry and sought to limit Christian contact with them in the present. In his De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos, for example, Isidore argued that the Jews did not merit the name Israel because they did not believe in Christ and therefore that the Christians were the true chosen people. In his historical works, Isidore built a similarly negative picture of the Jews at the same time as using them to demonstrate the special position of the Visigoths in God’s plans. In order to lend depth to this picture, Isidore also took various liberties with his account of the Jewish past.

The Jews appear consistently throughout the earliest parts of the Chronica maiora, with Jewish patriarchs and kings forming the chronological framework at the start of the work. By recording the succession of Jewish patriarchs back to Adam, Isidore placed the Jews, and those who succeed them, in a prime position in his account of salvation history. Nonetheless, at no point in the nar-

34 Isidore’s De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos was ‘concerned with controverting Jewish beliefs and arguments against Christianity, on the basis of passages from the Old Testament used to show that the Jews were confounded by the authority of their own scriptures’: Collins, Early Medieval Spain, p. 63; Albert, ‘De fide catholica contra Judaeos’; Katz, The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms, p. 35. Isidore of Seville, De fide Catholica, Ep. dedicatoria, 1–2, cols 449–50: ‘I believe, on the the basis of the strength of knowledge from numberless small discoveries, that the authority of the faith of the prophets confirms grace and proves the ignorance of the treacherous Jews, which things were announced in advance concerning the Nativity of the Lord and our Saviour according to the divinity, concerning his embodiment, also concerning the passion and death, or concerning the resurrection, the kingdom and the judgement’.
35 Dahan, La Polémique chrétienne, pp. 126–27; Collins, Early Medieval Spain, p. 139.
36 Each patriarch is linked to his predecessor, his successor, and the people who are supposed to have descended from him; e.g. Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 20, pp. 20–21: ‘Arfaxat annorum cxxxv genuit Salam, a quo antique Samaritae uel Indii’ (Arfaxat, 135 years, begot Salam, from whom the Samaritans or Indians descend’); Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 21, pp. 22–23: ‘Sala annorum cxxx genuit Heber, a quo Hebrei nuncupati sunt’ (Sala, for 130 years, brought forth Heber, from whom the Hebrews are named’.
rative does Jewish history predominate. This was not due to lack of information, because Isidore could have derived plenty of material on the Jewish past from Eusebius-Jerome’s *Chronicon* or a Latin translation of Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*, which he had at his disposal. Although this may have been due to the summary nature of the *Chronica maiora*, it also seems to have been part of a conscious decision to minimize references to the actual facts of Jewish history. In order to account for the apparent ambiguity in Isidore’s account of the Jewish past, it may be useful to distinguish between the roles of Jews as historical agents and their position as actors within salvation history. Isidore did his best to discredit the Jews as actual historical agents, but was content to allow them a position within the history of salvation as this was necessary to demonstrate the succession of the Christians to the status of chosen people.

Those features of Jewish history which Isidore did mention were not intended to suggest an exalted position for the Jews in the divine plan. From the one hundred and forty-four year long Jewish servitude in Egypt to the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey, the work is peppered with references to setbacks for the Jews. Taken together, these references suggest that the Jews were not just oppressed politically and defeated militarily; their homeland was controlled and inhabited by other peoples. This is not to say that Isidore’s entries concerning the Jews were wholly negative. A number of ‘positive’ events from Jewish history are recorded, possibly due to the constraints imposed by audience expectation and the need to make narrative sense out of his text. If the Jews were to function as a model for the Christians, who were supposed to take their place in salvation history, then it is unsurprising that they were granted some ‘positive’ features.

In his ostensibly more balanced entries on the Jewish past, Isidore focused particular attention upon the authorship of scripture, instances of prophecy, and the lives of the prophets. These issues were particularly important to Isidore because they helped to indicate the truth of the Christian message and therefore to further undermine Judaism. For Isidore, the Incarnation was inextricably linked to the end of the Jewish *regnum*, while the fact that the Jews had prophet-

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37 Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 44, pp. 34–35; c. 102, pp. 56–57; c. 147, pp. 72–73; c. 161, pp. 78–79; c. 164, pp. 80–81; c. 167, pp. 82–83; c. 193, pp. 94–95; c. 197, pp. 96–97; c. 207, pp. 100–01; c. 213, pp. 102–03; c. 227, p. 108–09.

38 Even some of the ostensibly ‘positive’ chapters serve to undermine Jewish claims to divine favour; for example, three of the positive chapters refer to the freeing of the Jews from various captivities, Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 55, pp. 40–41; c. 171, pp. 84–85; c. 201, pp. 98–99.
Religiones and gentes in Isidore of Seville’s Chronica maiora

ical foreknowledge of these events but still chose to ignore their import further undermined Jewish legitimacy. So, even those entries which are not pointedly anti-Jewish were useful to Isidore’s overall aim of discrediting the Jews.

When Isidore’s depiction of the history of Jewish temporal power is examined, a similar strategy of selective inclusion and exclusion is apparent. This is most striking when we compare Isidore’s choices with his sources’ depiction of the Jewish kingdom. So, while the Chronicon of Eusebius-Jerome stated that David was the first to rule among the Jews, Isidore simply states that David ruled for forty years. Isidore was much less reticent when it came to reporting the end of the kingdom, happily following Eusebius-Jerome and noting the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy about the end of Jewish temporal and spiritual power. Eusebius-Jerome, however, had continued to maintain the Jewish filum (a column) in the Chronicon after this date, and on four subsequent occasions referred to leaders of the Jews, one of whom is termed rex. It was not until several reigns later that the filum on the kingdom of the Jews disappears, when Jerusalem is captured under Vespasian. Isidore mentioned the capture of Jerusalem in his Chronica maiora, but neither made reference to the Jewish regnum nor ascribed any religious significance to the event. This is strange, because in his De fidei Catholica contra Iudaeos the destruction of Jerusalem and the ending of Jewish religious rights is described as having been prophesied by Daniel and is interpreted as divine punishment for the Jews’ failure to accept Christ’s message. In the Chronica maiora, therefore, Isidore deliberately chose

39 Drews, The Unknown Neighbour, p. 71: ‘[In the De fide] Isidore’s exegesis is based on the assumption that Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and that Old Testament types point to the gospel and to the teaching of the church’.

40 Eusebius-Jerome, Chronicon, ed. by Helm, a. 1077 a. Chr., p. 67a; cf. Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 107, pp. 58–59.

41 Eusebius-Jerome, Chronicon, ed. by Helm, a. 34 p. Chr, pp. 160–61 (fulfillment of prophecy); later references to Jewish leaders: a. 4 p. Chr., p. 170 (Iudaorum dux); a. 13 p. Chr., p. 171 (Iudaorum principatum); a. 37 p. Chr., p. 177 (Iudaorum princeps); a. 44 p. Chr., p. 179 (Iudaorum rex).

42 Eusebius-Jerome, Chronicon, ed. by Helm, a. 70 p. Chr, p. 187.

43 Isidore mentioned that Titus took Jerusalem, but did not refer to the end of the kingship of the Jews, Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martin (both redactions), c. 251, pp. 120–23. Isidore of Seville, De fide Catholica, i. 5. 5–11, cols 461–62; ii. 7–12, cols 512–18. For Isidore and prophecy, see Isidore of Seville, Sententiae, ed. by Cazier, t. 18. 7, p. 63: ‘Often those things which are going to occur happen just as though they are narrated in the sacred scriptures [...]. But why are future events written as if past, unless because those things which to
to ignore his source for earlier entries on the Jewish kingdom and to exclude an interpretation of the events at Jerusalem that would have been well-suited to his polemical purposes. By excluding this and earlier references to the kingdom of the Jews, Isidore uncoupled the Jewish people from the flow of universal history — their kingdom had no clear beginning or end, and it was difficult to gauge the true extent of their power.44 By choosing to ignore the exegetical interpretation of the fall of Jerusalem that he had propagated in the De fide Catholica, Isidore focused attention on the Incarnation as the exact moment at which the Jewish covenant with God ended and the mantle passed on to the Christians. The reference to Jerusalem in the De fide Catholica was well placed in such a polemical work but was redundant in a text like the Chronica maiora, which was underpinned by a teleological rationale that saw history as moving inevitably towards a single end-point.

Subsequent entries on the Jews in the Chronica maiora reinforce the impression that they had lost divine favour with their denial of Christ, an event that was central to Isidore’s account of salvation history. This mirrors the attitude of Isidore’s other works towards the Incarnation. The illegitimacy and impotency of the Jews is repeatedly emphasized in the sections after the Incarnation: they did not control the Temple, they had no legitimate leadership, and rebelled against rightful authority.45

The last three references to the Jews in the Chronica maiora all discuss instances of Jewish conversion to Christianity and illuminate Isidore’s changing conception of the status of the Jews as history neared his own day. In the first two cases, Isidore reports instances of divine intervention resulting in Jewish

his point should be written in the work, have now happened in divine predestination. Therefore those things happen to us due to the passage of time, which are foreseen by the creator of everything without [reference to] time’; 1. 18. 8, pp. 63–64: ‘For this reason the revealed prophecy of future things mixes with present things, in order that that future thing is thus believed, just as it is determined that such a thing has been fulfilled. For by its custom it speaks through the present about future times [...]’.

44 Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 237, pp. 114–15.
45 Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 241, pp. 116–17: Caligula ordered a statue of Jupiter to be placed under his name in the Temple of Jerusalem; c. 251, pp. 120–23: Titus took and destroyed Jerusalem. 1,100,000 Jews died by famine and the sword and another 100,000 were publicly sold [into slavery]; c. 261, pp. 126–27: Domitian ordered that all of the line of David be killed; c. 269, pp. 130–31: the Jews rebelled, were subjugated by Hadrian, and Jerusalem was renamed Helia after Hadrian. Isidore does not, however, link these disasters to Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ, as Orosius had done, see Rohrbacher, The Historians of Late Antiquity, pp. 202–06.
Religiones and gentes in Isidore of Seville’s Chronica maiora

Conversion to Christianity. The third reference to the conversion of Jews occurs at the very end of the Chronica maiora, where Isidore mentions that they were converted to Christianity under the Visigothic King Sisebut. Isidore had already implanted the idea that Jewish conversion resulted from the direct intervention of God against those believing and acting wrongly, leading them to realize their error and accept orthodoxy. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that he intended the conversion of the Jews at the end of the Chronica maiora to be seen as one of the culminating points of God’s plan for the Visigothic people. The conversion of the Jews represented the fulfilment of divine wishes that had previously been demonstrated by the direct intervention of God in history. Indeed, in his De fide Catholica contra Iudaeos, Isidore specifies that the Jews will come to believe in Christ at the end of the world. The depiction of Jewish conversion to Christianity in the Chronica maiora therefore served a triple purpose, allowing Isidore to demonstrate the errors of the Jews, to praise the orthodoxy of the ruling monarch and the Visigothic people, and to demonstrate that at the end of the Chronica maiora the Visigoths and their kings had assumed the role of God’s agents in the arena of conversion, carrying out his wishes by converting the Jews.

Religion and Empire: Romans and the Church

There is virtually no variation between the depictions of the history of the Jews in the two redactions of the Chronica maiora. This indicates that Isidore thought that the first redaction succeeded in disempowering the Jews histori-

46 Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 345, pp. 162–65; c. 379, pp. 180–83.
47 Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 416, pp. 204–05: ‘et Iudaeos sui [Sisebut] regni subditos ad Xristi fidem convertit’ (he [Sisebut] converted the Jews who were the subjects of his kingdom to Christianity); Cohen, Living Letters of the Law, p. 108; Drews, The Unknown Neighbour, p. 202; more generally, see González Salinero, Las conversiones forzosas de los judíos.
48 It is worth noting another instance of divinely inspired conversion in the Chronica maiora: Barbas, an Arian bishop in the Vandal kingdom, was confronted by a miracle when baptising using a non-Catholic formula, resulting in the conversion to Catholicism of the person he was hoping to baptise, Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 393, pp. 190–91.
49 Isidore of Seville, De fide Catholica, ii. 5, cols 508–10.
ically, gradually moving them from the mainstream of salvation history. There was thus no point in altering the second redaction of the *Chronica maiora*. When we turn to examine Isidore’s depiction of Roman history, however, we see that he was far less faithful to his earlier account of the past when writing the second redaction. These changes were aligned with alterations in the political and religious context within which he was writing. The main contextual factor was the conflict between the Visigoths and the Byzantines in the south of Spain, which culminated in the expulsion of the latter in the 620s. This was quickly followed by doctrinal conflict between the ecclesiastical leadership of the recently united regions.

Since the time of Eusebius, Christian chroniclers had sought to reconcile church and empire by emphasizing that it was the role of the emperor to protect the church, promote orthodoxy and combat heresy. Isidore, however, sought to give the church an existence largely independent of the emperor in order to demonstrate that the Romans had no legitimate claim to Christian leadership and therefore were in no way superior to the Visigoths in the field of religion. With this motivation in mind, it is unsurprising that both redactions of the *Chronica maiora* refer to persecution of Christians under a number of pagan Roman emperors, as well as the Arian Constans (actually Constantius II). These episodes served a number of important purposes: they allowed Isidore to discuss important episodes in the early history of the church, to demonstrate the punishments God gave to persecutors, to denigrate the Romans as persecutors, and to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over paganism and orthodoxy over heresy.

After describing the persecutions, Isidore made further and consistent efforts to illustrate the turbulent nature of the relationship between the Roman state and the church. Even the conversion of Constantine was no panacea. In both redactions, Philip the Arab, who was ruling when Rome’s millennium occurred,

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51 Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martin (both redactions), c. 247, pp. 118–21, c. 258–61, pp. 124–27 (including c. 259a, p. 127 of the second redaction); c. 299, pp. 142–43; c. 310, pp. 146–47; c. 312, pp. 148–49; c. 317, pp. 150–51; c. 325, pp. 152–53; c. 336, pp. 158–59; c. 344, pp. 162–63; c. 370, pp. 175–76, c. 390, pp. 188–89 (= persecution under the Arian Vandal King Thrasamund); also Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by Lindsay, vi. 16: ‘times of persecution’. Isidore also refers to the fates of several victims of persecution, including: Peter (crucified), Paul (killed by the sword), Simon Cleopas (crucified), Cyprian (martyred); Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 247, pp. 118–21; c. 266, pp. 128–29; c. 310, pp. 146–47. Vandal persecution: c. 377, pp. 180–81; c. 390, pp. 188–89.
is described as the first Christian emperor.\textsuperscript{52} By noting that the Empire was ruled by a Christian at the time of its one thousandth year, Isidore stayed true to his sources, Jerome and Orosius, who argued that this conjunction proved that the Roman Empire was ultimately a Christian project. Additionally, however, it allowed Isidore to undercut Constantine’s central role in the story of reconciliation between Christianity and Rome. Although Isidore does mention several of the key events of Constantine’s reign, the last of the entries on this emperor refers to his deathbed baptism into Arianism and concludes: ‘Alas, what pain: he started well and ended badly!’\textsuperscript{53} This has the effect of casting further doubts upon the authenticity of what several of Isidore’s sources had seen as a key turning point in Christian history. Furthermore, by referring to the Emperor Philip as a Christian and stating that Constantine had converted to Arianism from orthodoxy, Isidore reinforced the power of later entries, which depict the Romans as having fallen away from this pristine state. The subsequent conversions of Constans (actually Constantius II) to Arianism and of Julian to paganism, and their mistreatment of Christians, serve to dissociate the Empire and Christianity and dent Constantine’s watershed reputation.\textsuperscript{54} The story of Roman religion, therefore, is one of movement away from Catholicism and towards heresy, the reverse of that which Isidore attempted to tell about the Visigoths.

Isidore devoted considerable attention to augmenting this narrative of decline when he came to write the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} in the mid-620s, at the very moment when the Visigoths were expelling the Roman Empire from southern Spain. However, this was not the end of Isidore’s attempts in the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} to demonstrate that the Roman Empire was confessionally deviant. In the second redaction of the text he depicts a number of sixth-century Byzantine emperors as heretics. This was part of a concerted effort to rewrite the history of imperial Christianity, and was intimately connected to Isidore’s personal interactions with heretics in southern Spain in the late 610s.

\textsuperscript{52} Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 303, pp. 144–45.

\textsuperscript{53} Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 334, pp. 156–57: ‘Heu pro dolor: bono usus principio et fine malo!’

The Byzantine Empire and Heretics

Isidore’s main line of attack against the Romans was fairly blunt: to undermine their religious legitimacy by suggesting that their emperors were heretics. Isidore showed particular interest in the theological disagreements that resulted from the Council of Chalcedon, the Three Chapters Controversy, and the development of the heresy of the *Acephali*.55 The Three Chapters Controversy developed in the aftermath of the Emperor Justinian’s decision, in 543, to condemn Theodore of Mopsuestia and certain works of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa, even though they had been reinstated by the Council of Chalcedon (451) after condemnation at Ephesus II (449). The resulting council (Constantinople II, 553) was followed by dissent, discord, and schism between Monophysites and supporters of Chalcedon, with most western churchmen, including the papacy, in the latter camp.56 The *Acephali* (‘headless ones’) were an extreme group of Monophysites who refused to accept the *Henotikon* published by the Emperor Zeno in 481. Originating in Egypt, they received their name because they were originally in communion with none of the five patriarchs of the Empire. In Isidore’s mind the *Acephali* included anyone who rejected Chalcedon, and he conflated them with those who were in favour of the Three Chapters of Justinian, as his comments on the heresy in the *Etymologiae* make clear:

The Acefalites are so called, that is, without a head whom the heretics follow — for their founder, from whom they originated, is not known. Opposing the Three Chapters of the Council of Chalcedon, they deny the individuality of the two substances in Christ and preach that there is a single nature in his person.57

In the first redaction of the *Chronica maiora*, Isidore devotes little more attention to the *Acephali* than he did to other heretical groups. By the time he came


56 Gray and Herren, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters Controversy’, for Western views of the Three Chapters and the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople (553), held under Justinian. Rejection of Constantinople (553), and the orthodoxy of Justinian, may have been more to do with emphasising support for Chalcedon (451) than with rejecting the substance of the later council. See also Chazelle and Cubitt, eds, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene*.

to write the second redaction of the text, Isidore’s interest in the matter of the Acefali had increased exponentially.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (first redaction), cc. 384–85, p. 184; cf. Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), cc. 384–85, p. 185; c. 386a, p. 187; c. 389a, p. 187; c. 394a, p. 191; c. 397a–b, p. 193; c. 401a, p. 197.}

Isidore emphasized imperial error by referring repeatedly to the emperors’ attitudes to Chalcedon in the second redaction. His implicit argument here is that the emperors had rejected the decisions of an ecumenical council and caused the Three Chapters Controversy. Anastasius even found fault with and corrected the gospels.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 389a–b, p. 187.} The growth in interest in the Acefali is particularly noteworthy because Isidore did not usually emphasize the connections between emperors and religion. In the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora}, however, he consistently records whether the ruling emperor supported or opposed the Acefali, suggesting that he was deliberately using adherence to Chalcedon and attitude towards these particular heretics as markers of Roman unorthodoxy.

Isidore devoted a number of chapters to presenting Justinian as a heretic in the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora}. This was probably because Justinian had sanctioned the Byzantine invasion of Spain in the mid-sixth century, an event which has posed a severe threat to the integrity of the nascent Visigothic state and, in Isidore’s eyes at least, to the orthodoxy of the Catholic population of Spain. Isidore’s first strategy, therefore, was to present Justin I, Justinian’s predecessor, more favourably in the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} than the first. Isidore accomplished this aim by deliberately interpolating a detail stating that Justin was a lover of Chalcedon and had abandoned the Acefali.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 394a, p. 191. Further additions to the second redaction throw this into sharper relief: Justinian, receiving the heresy of the Acefali, compelled every bishop in his empire to condemn the Three Chapters of Chalcedon; then the Theodosian and Gaianan heresies appeared in Alexandria.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 397a–b, p. 193.} Imperial abuse of the church thus led to new heresies. Although the first redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} made no reference to religion in the reign of Justin II, the second reported that John of Biclarum, \textit{Chronicon}, ed. by de Hartmann, p. 59, praises Justin II.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maiora}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 394a, p. 191. Moorhead, ‘The West and the Roman Past,’ pp. 157–58, for further examples of Isidore’s dislike for Justinian, his concern for the Three Chapters controversy, and general disdain for Byzantium; Herrin, \textit{The Formation of Christendom}, p. 230, for the changes made to the creed at the council of Toledo (589), which ignored innovations in the East.}
Justin II destroyed those who had published in opposition to Chalcedon and ordered the celebration of the memory of the council.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maior\a}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 401a, p. 197: ‘He destroyed those things which had been published against the synod of Chalcedon and he ordered the profession of faith of the 150 fathers to be celebrated at the time of the offering.’} According to Isidore, therefore, this was a complete reversal of the situation under Justinian and the reaffirmation of orthodoxy had positive consequences: the Armenians first become Christian.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maior\a}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 401b, p. 197.} By adding entries on the war against the Ostrogoths in Italy and the invasion of Spain, Isidore reminded his audience of exactly why they disliked Justinian: not only was he a heretic who ignored the rulings of councils, but he had defeated fellow Goths in Italy and had invaded \textit{Hispania}.\footnote{Isidore of Seville, \textit{Chronica maior\a}, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 399a–b, p. 195. For Roman military intervention in Spain, see Vallejo Girves, \textit{Bizancio y la España tardo antigua}; García Moreno, ‘The Creation of Byzantium’s Spanish Province’; for Isidore and Byzantine religious deviance, see MacCoul, ‘Isidore and the Akephaloi’, pp. 172–74; Fontaine, ‘Isidoro de Sevilla frente a la España bizantina’; Moorhead, \textit{Justinian}, pp. 125, 132–34, 173. Justinian’s predecessor and successor, Justin I and Justin II, were both defenders of Chalcedon and Justinian was not an acephalite (or monophysite) until the end of his life, if ever. Justinian’s wife, Theodora, was sympathetic to the heretics; see Whittow, \textit{The Making of Orthodox Byzantium}, pp. 42–46.} Isidore therefore depicted selected emperors as supporting the \textit{Acefali} and opposing Chalcedon as part of his wider efforts to demonstrate the problematic nature of the relationship between the Empire and the church, especially relating to the negative role of the emperors in the Three Chapters Controversy and the rise of \textit{Acefali}.

For Isidore, Justinian seems to have stood as the prototypical ‘bad’ emperor, who interfered in the life of the church, overturned synods, and adopted heretical beliefs. To western eyes this demonstrated how the correct relationship between empire and \textit{ecclesia} had been corrupted by contemporary Romans. This will be discussed in more detail below, but it is unsurprising that in his other works Isidore’s approach to Justinian was equally as negative as in his chronicles. Justinian did not live up to Isidore’s ideal of what a ruler should be and how he should act.\footnote{For more background to the Three Chapters Controversy, orthodoxy, and imperial authority, see Maas, \textit{Exegesis and Empire}; Maas, “Delivered from their Ancient Customs”} In the \textit{Etymologiae}, Isidore listed four \textit{venerables synodi} (the ecumenical councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon), while in the \textit{Chronica maior\a} he referred to five councils (the ones outlined above and the non-ecumenical council of Carthage). However, by the
time Isidore wrote these texts there had actually been five ecumenical councils: the four referred to in the *Etymologiae* and Constantinople II, held under Justinian in 553. Constantinople II was also excluded from the *Hispana*, a collection of the *acta* of church councils, which Isidore is thought to have edited in the early seventh century. Isidore was definitely aware that this council had taken place because there are references to its proceedings in the records of the second council of Seville (619), over which Isidore presided. All of this suggests that Isidore knew that Justinian was not a heretic and deliberately decided to ignore that fact when writing the second redaction of his *Chronica maiora*, instead painting a picture of the emperor as a supporter of heresy and excluding all reference to the ecumenical council over which Justinian had presided.

Perhaps the key to understanding the changes between the two redactions of the *Chronica maiora* is Isidore’s own involvement with a Bishop Gregory. This interaction is recorded in the acts of the second council of Seville, held in 619 in the period between the writing of the first and the second redactions of the *Chronica maiora*. Gregory came from Roman territory in southern Spain which the Visigoths had recently reconquered from the Empire. At the council, Isidore and his fellow bishops described Gregory as an adherent of the heresy of the *Acefali* and interpreted his presence in Spain as a dire threat to uniformity and orthodoxy. They devoted a significant amount of space to refuting his views. That the *Acefali* continued to blight the Roman Empire is made clear in both redactions of the *Chronica maiora*, which states that many in the East languish in the heresy up to Isidore’s own time.

Isidore’s reconstruction of imperial religious history conflated the identities of the two main enemies of the contemporary Hispano-Visigothic church and

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67 Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 385, p. 185: ‘Cuius heresis peste plurimi actenus Orientalium languent’.
state, the Roman Empire, and eastern heretics. Particular emphasis was placed on undermining Justinian because he had ordered the invasion of Spain and, by precipitating the Three Chapters Controversy, had, to Spanish eyes, supported the *Acefali*, who had so recently blighted Spain. He aimed to increase awareness of the threat posed by easterners to the orthodoxy and security of *Hispania*. It is no coincidence that Isidore’s earliest biographer, Braulio of Zaragoza, considered Isidore’s confrontation with Gregory at the second council of Seville to be among his greatest achievements:

*With what a flood of eloquence, with what barbs of divine scriptures and proofs from the Fathers he confounded the heresy of the Acephalites, is revealed in the acts of the council which met under his leadership at Seville, in which he established the catholic truth against Gregory, the leader of said heresy.*

**Visigothic Religion: A Catholic Heritage**

At the same time as denigrating the Romans and their leaders as heretics, Isidore moulded the religious history of the Visigoths into a narrative of orthodox perfection. His Visigoths were as ‘Catholic’ as possible throughout their history, not solely after they had actually converted from Arianism to Catholicism in the late 580s. Again, he intensified his efforts to create a Catholic past for the Visigoths in the second redaction of the *Chronica maiora*. This was related to the conflicts between the Byzantines and the Visigoths in southern Spain in the late sixth and early seventh centuries. Neither of the two redactions of the *Chronica maiora* refers to Visigothic paganism; Isidore is only interested in the Christian past of the Visigothic people, and in focusing that past upon their Catholic heritage. The first redaction of the *Chronica maiora* described how Fritigern, the apparent victor in a civil conflict between two Visigothic groups, was convinced, in exchange for help from the Byzantine Emperor Valens, to convert from Catholicism to Arianism along with his people. In this account, therefore, one Visigothic faction was complicit in the conversion. The second redaction, however, simply states that through persuasion the Visigoths were made heretics by Valens; responsibility is placed squarely at the feet of the

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68 MacCoull, ‘Isidore and the Akephaloi’, pp. 177–78, for the *Acefali*.


Religiones and gentes in Isidore of Seville’s Chronica maiora

There is also variation in the exact confessional allegiances of the Visigoths between the two redactions: the first suggests that the Visigoths converted from Catholicism to Arianism, while the second remained silent on this issue, implying that the Visigoths converted from paganism to become heretici of an unspecified variety. The second redaction of the Chronica maiora thus offers a clearer account of the conversion of the Visigoths to heresy than its predecessor, blaming the Romans, removing any hint of Visigothic culpability or apostasy and ignoring their Arianism.  

The differences between these conversion narratives led to a small but important alteration to the description of the conversion of the Visigoths from Arianism to Catholicism at the end of the text. While the first redaction of the Chronica maiora describes the Visigoths as ‘reverting’ to the Catholic faith, the second redaction has them ‘converting’ to Catholicism from an unspecified heresy. In the first redaction of the Chronica maiora, Isidore was suggesting that the Visigoths had a ‘Catholic’ past to which they were returning as his own day neared. This strategy was abandoned in the second redaction, presumably because Isidore realized that the story he had earlier told of conversion from Catholicism to Arianism and then back again was not very flattering, for it implied apostasy: straightforward conversion from heresy to Catholic orthodoxy was a better option. It was vitally important that Isidore get this story right because, as Furtado has acknowledged, the final conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism under Reccared is one of the hinges upon which...
Isidore hangs his account of the place of the Visigoths in salvation history. As was noted previously, Isidore saw a definite place for divine intervention in the case of conversion from Judaism to Christianity, and his somewhat selective depiction of the Visigothic conversion from Arianism to Catholicism should be interpreted as receiving similar divine sanction. The precise delineation of the confessional history of the Visigoths was of prime importance, because the claims of the Visigothic monarchy to Catholic orthodoxy were central criteria for both religious and political integration in the seventh-century kingdom. Royal legitimacy stemmed as much from the credibility of kings’ claims to be defenders and propagators of orthodoxy as from their actual abilities and successes in those fields.

The Succession of Kingdoms

It is clear, therefore, that Isidore saw the Visigoths as occupying an exalted place in God’s plan for mankind, a place which the Jews and the Romans no longer merited. In order to bolster the impression of Visigothic supremacy, Isidore adopted the idea of a succession of kingdoms. This allowed him to place the Visigoths as the dominant power at the culmination of universal history. Isidore also retrojected Visigothic supremacy onto the distant past by emphasizing the historical supremacy of the kingdoms of peoples that were closely associated with the Visigoths. Isidore thus positioned the Visigoths as one of the dominant powers throughout history, not simply in the present.

To gain a better understanding of this issue we need to explore a number of intertexts between the *Chronica maiora* and Isidore’s other writings. The succession idea originated from analyses of the prophetical writings of Daniel. The succession of kingdoms theory had also been adopted by a number of Isidore’s sources. Although Isidore never states explicitly that the succession of king-

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75 Furtado, ‘From *gens* to *imperium*’, pp. 408, 412–14.

76 Isidore’s depiction of the conversion, perhaps the defining moment in the history of late sixth-century Spain, was as selective as his earlier accounts of the Christian past; cf. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, pp. 1–24.


78 Reydellet, ‘Les Intentions idéologiques’, pp. 387–88; Daniel 2. 31–45 recounted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, in which he sees a statue made from various metals. This was often interpreted as representing a succession of four kingdoms. The Donatist *Liber Genealogus*, another of Isidore’s sources, also mentioned the succession. Orosius, *Historiae adversum paga-
Religiones and gentes in Isidore of Seville’s Chronica maiora

149

doms is guiding his presentation of history in the Chronica maiora, in the Etymologiae he is clear that such a process had occurred in the past:

Every nation has had its own reign in its own times — like the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Greeks — and fate has so rolled over their allotments of time that each successive one would dissolve the former. Among all the reigns on earth, however, two reigns are held to be glorious above the rest — first the Assyrians, then the Romans — as they are constituted differently from one another in location as much as time. For as one began first and the other later, so one was in the East, the other in the West. Indeed, the beginning of the latter came close upon the end of the former. Other reigns and other kings are considered mere appendices of these two.79

Examination of the Chronica maiora reveals that Isidore did chart the rise and fall of a number of different kingdoms, although there is considerable confusion about the relationships between them and their overall place in history, as Table 2 reveals.

Isidore’s sources were not consistent in their presentation of the succession of kingdoms either. It may, therefore, have been the very openness of his sources’ presentation of the succession that appealed to Isidore. It allowed him to vary the succession to meet his own objectives.80 Reydellet explained the confusion by suggesting that, in the Chronica maiora, Isidore was not interested in charting the history of a succession of hegemonic kingdoms, but in charting a spiritual succession. This helped to explain his lack of focus on the Persian kingdom, for example.81 While this might help to explain the halting nature of Isidore’s application of the succession, it is directly contradicted by

79 Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, ed. by Lindsay, ix. 3. 2–3.

80 Isidore’s vocabulary (for example, in chapters 103 and 105) is far from definitive on the question of a succession. The fall of some of the kingdoms is not referred to at all, others seem to exist at the same time (Assyrians and Lacedaimonians), and the names of some kingdoms are confused (Medes and Persians, Alexandrians and Greeks), while some last for an extremely short period of time. Although the Egyptian kingdom assumed principium and the kingdoms of the Assyrians and Sicyonians are stated to have arisen, Isidore continued to structure the Chronica maiora according to the reigns of the Jewish patriarchs. The overarching regnal structure is as follows: Isidore of Seville, Chronica maiora, ed. by Martin (both redactions), cc. 4–166, pp. 8–91: Jewish rulers; cc. 167–69, pp. 82–83: Hebrew captivity; cc. 170–94, pp. 84–95: Persian emperors; cc. 195–232, pp. 94–111: Greek kings; cc. 233–418, pp. 110–209: Roman emperors.

Table 2. The Succession of Kingdoms in the Second Redaction of the *Chronica maiora*

| Chapter | The statement on the matter in the *Etymologiae*. The table above also suggests that Isidore was interested in the rise and fall of the Persians. So, although it is difficult to discern a succession of kingdoms, Isidore was experimenting with the idea in the *Chronica maiora*. He established a complex web of relationships between the Visigoths and the Persians and Scythians in order to underline the succession. These relationships will be explored in greater detail later in this paper, but it is enough to note here that, by developing an ethnic genealogy for the Visigoths, Isidore was able to further position them at the centre of world history from the earliest times.

As the *Chronica maiora* neared his own time, Isidore shifted his history of the Roman Empire and his chronological framework to the East. This was a deliberate attempt to demonstrate that the Visigoths had succeeded the
Romans as the dominant force in the West. Significantly, this shift occurs immediately after the Visigothic sack of Rome (410, under Honorius). Prior to the sack, Isidore referred to both eastern and/or western Roman emperors in the regnal dating chapters which form the chronological framework of the text.\(^{82}\) After the sack of Rome, only Byzantine emperors are mentioned. Isidore definitely knew that both eastern and western empires continued to exist after this point because he refers to Valentinian III (ruler 425–55) as *Occidentis imperator* when writing about Vandal history.\(^{83}\) By no longer referring to the western emperor in the *Chronica maiora* after Rome had been sacked by the Visigoths, Isidore suggested that the Visigoths had superseded the Romans in the West. Thereafter, he focused his attention on discrediting the eastern emperors. The sack of Rome is also emphasized in the first redaction of the *Historia Gothorum*, which states that those who had come under Visigothic control after the sack of Rome preferred Visigothic domination to that of the Romans:

> And from then up to this point in time the Romans, who remain in the kingdom of the Goths, embrace them to such a degree that it is better for them to live poor with the Goths than to be powerful among the Romans and bear the heavy yoke of tribute.\(^{84}\)

Isidore thus devoted considerable textual energy to demonstrating the replacement of Roman by Visigothic power in the West.

Isidore demonstrated Visigothic supremacy by showing that the Visigoths had defeated the Romans in the military sphere and by suggesting that the Visigoths were no longer a barbarian ‘other’. They could now govern the Roman population for the benefit of both parties.\(^{85}\) By the simple act of no longer mentioning the western Roman emperors after Rome had been sacked by the Visigoths, Isidore denied them any place in history after that event. The Visigoths became by default the main power in the West because they were the only political group that was referred to in any detail after the sack of Rome. This also enabled Isidore to devote all of his attention to undermining the Byzantine emperors.

\(^{82}\) Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 372, pp. 178–79.

\(^{83}\) Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, ed. by Rodríguez Alonso (both redactions), c. 74, p. 294.

\(^{84}\) Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum*, ed. by Rodríguez Alonso (first redaction), c. 16, p. 196: ‘Unde et hucusque Romani, qui in regno Gothorum consistent, adeo eos amplexuntur, ut melius sit illis cum Gothis pauperes vivere quam inter Romanos potentes esse et grave iugum tributi portare’.

Spain was the main contemporary arena for the competition between Byzantines and Visigoths. The *Chronica maiora* culminates with the Visigothic conquest of the Byzantine province in southern Spain. Isidore’s changing depiction of this event reveals a great deal about the methods he employed in constructing the *Chronica maiora* and the reasons which may have underlain those methods. The first redaction of the *Chronica maiora* states:

Sisebut, the most glorious *princeps* of the Goths, made many cities of the Roman military in Spain subject to himself by warfare, and he converted the Jews who were the subjects of his kingdom to Christianity.

The second redaction of the *Chronica maiora* has the following to say:

Also, in Spain Sisebut, king of the Goths, took many of the same cities of the Roman military, and he converted the Jews who were the subjects of his kingdom to Christianity. After which Swinthila, the most religious *princeps*, began a war with the remaining Roman cities and, with a swift victory, was the first to obtain the *monarchia* of Spain.

Isidore was keenly aware of the symbolic significance of the terminology he was deploying in these extracts. Most importantly, the second redaction of the *Chronica maiora* emphasizes how Swinthila was the first to obtain the monarchy (*monarchia*) of the whole of Spain. This is thrown into further relief when we compare it to the use of similar terminology earlier in the text. Alexander of Macedon is stated to have obtained *monarchia* in both redactions.

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86 See Furtado, ‘From *gens* to *imperium*’, p. 411, on the centrality of conflict with Rome to the construction of the *Historia Gothorum*, and the focus upon Spain in that text.

87 Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by Lindsay, xv. 1. 67: ‘But now it [Cartagena] has been overthrown and reduced to desolation by the Goths’.


89 Furtado, ‘From *gens* to *imperium*’, p. 411, for the significance of such political terminology for Isidore in the *Historia Gothorum*.

90 Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (both redactions), c. 195, pp. 94–97.
Julius Caesar had been described as the first Roman to obtain sole *principatus* in the first redaction, in the second he is said to have obtained ‘monarchia totius imperii Romani’. Importantly, a reference to the conquest of certain areas of Spain by the Visigothic king Leovigild which had been present in the first redaction of the *Chronica maiora* was removed from the second version of the text, no doubt with the intention of further amplifying the achievement of Swinthila. Intertextual inquiry can deepen our understanding of this issue. At the beginning of the *Historia Gothorum*, he says that Alexander and Caesar (along with Pyrrhus) were particularly respectful of the military power of the Visigoths. Isidore therefore demonstrated the power of the Visigoths and their kings by creating links to earlier figures of great power and through the use of loaded vocabulary about political sovereignty.

### A Scythian regnum

Isidore’s histories of peoples were presented in similar ways to his accounts of individual rulers. An examination of the first *regnum* that Isidore mentions at the start of his world history — the Scythian kingdom — helps to underline the special role that Isidore carved out for the Visigoths in world history. A number of writers before Isidore, such as Orosius, Jerome, and Jordanes, had linked the Goths, the *Getae*, and the Scythians. Isidore developed this association further and added something new to the canon: the Persians. It should be remembered at this point that the Scythians were the ‘odd one out’ in the list of peoples associated with Gothic origins at the start of the *Historia Gothorum*. As the quintessential ‘Other’, the Scythians played an important role in the definition of group and individual identities in Greek and Roman ethnographic traditions.

In Isidore’s *Chronica maiora*, however, they were more fully integrated into the

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91 Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (first redaction), c. 234, p. 112, cf. Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 234a, p. 113; Isidore of Seville, *Chronica maiora*, ed. by Martín (second redaction), c. 235a, p. 113, in which Isidore states that Augustus triumphed over Spain.


93 Reydellet, *La Royauté dans la littérature latine*, pp. 518–23, for the significance of the term *monarchia* for Isidore.

94 For the Scythians in the classical ethnographic tradition, see Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, pp. 55–168.
course of universal history. Isidore narrates the rise of the Scythian kingdom in a highly selective manner. Isidore did not derive the first entry on them from Prosper of Aquitaine, his main source for the earliest part of the text, or from any other of his most frequently-used sources. Instead, he modified an entry from Justinus’s *Epitoma historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*: ‘There were in these times the ancients Vezosis the Egyptian, and Tanaus, the King of Scythia, of whom one died in Pontus and the other [died] all the way in Egypt.’95 So, while in Justinus’s *Epitoma* the Egyptian and Scythian kingdoms are treated together, Isidore uncoupled the two and placed the Scythians before the Egyptians. This entry is of vital importance because it helped to connect the Visigoths and their kingdom into the flow of history at the earliest possible moment, because, for Isidore, the Visigoths were Scythians. This is made plain in both redactions of the *Historia Gothorum*, most forcefully in the first, where Isidore states: ‘The kingdom of the Goths is certainly very ancient, because it arose from the kingdom of the Scythians’.96 According to Isidore, therefore, the people from whom the Visigoths were descended had established the world’s first regnum. Isidore therefore modified deliberately an entry in order to place the Scythian ancestors of the Visigoths at the summit of power at the very start of history. Importantly, the fall of the Scythian kingdom is never referred to in the *Chronica maiora* — the Scythians remained undefeated, just like the Visigoths.

A number of references in the *Etymologiae* suggest that Isidore was attempting to position the Visigoths at the centre of a matrix of ancient ethnic groups by genetic and geographical association. He explains that the Dacians were off-
shoots of the Goths, that the Goths are said to have been called *Getae* by the ancients, and that the Massagetae are Scythian in origin and are known as the ‘strong Getae.’

Elsewhere in the text, Isidore creates a link between the Goths and the Scythians by stating that both peoples originated from Magog. The Scythians and the Massagetae are stated to live in the same region. Furthermore, the regions of the Goths and the Scythians are both said to have been named after Magog. The Scythians were integral to Isidore’s efforts to place the Visigoths in an early place in history and to connect them to a biblical and ethnically diverse past. Although this was in order to construct the Visigoths as the main ingredient of Isidore’s historical melting pot.

**Persians and Parthians**

Isidore’s effort to place the Visigoths at the centre of a network of ethnic histories was deepened further by relating them to the Persians and the Parthians through the Scythians. In the *Etymologiae*, Isidore has the following to say about the Parthians: ‘The Parthians likewise take their origin from the Scythians, for they were Scythian exiles, which is still evident from their name, for in the Scythian language exiles are called *Parthi*. For Isidore the Persians and the Parthians were very closely related. Although Parthia and Persia are described as neighbouring regions in the *Etymologiae*, due to the ‘invincible strength of the Parthians’ other adjoining areas, such as Persia, came to be included under the name ‘Parthia’. Isidore’s conception of the role that the Persians had played in history is made plain in the second redaction of the *Historia Gothorum*, which describes the Persians as the agents of God’s wrath:

> It should be noted that, while every battle is damaging to the peoples involved, the Huns actually served a purpose by perishing. This is because they had been raised up for the discipline of the faithful, just like the nation of the Persians. For they were the rod of the wrath of God. As often as his indignation went forth against the faithful, he punished them with the Huns, so that, chastened by their suffering,
the faithful would force themselves away from the greed of this world and from sin and claim the inheritance of the celestial kingdom.\textsuperscript{102}

Elsewhere in the \textit{Etymologiae}, Isidore connects the Persians and the Huns to the Visigoths through their neighbours the Massagetae and the Scythians, who, as we have already seen, were both related to the Visigoths.\textsuperscript{103} Again, geographical and genealogical proximity served to position the Visigoths at the centre of a network of ethnic groups, into the central flow of world history, and as a people who had been selected by God for a special role in history.

Importantly, a layer of entries seem to have been added deliberately to the final part of the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} in order to underpin this very point. The Persians act consistently to punish persecuting and heretical emperors, as can be seen from Table 3.

In the second redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora}, the Persians, distant relatives of the Visigoths and agents of God’s wrath, punished those emperors who oppressed the church. Their victories towards the end of the text (chapters 413 and 414) suggest implicitly that the transition from Roman to Visigothic power (reported in chapters 415 and 416) had divine sanction. The only reference to Roman victory over the Persians under Christian emperors (by Belisarius, Justinian’s general) in the first redaction of the \textit{Chronica maiora} is removed from the second redaction because Isidore wanted to denigrate Justinian as a heretic in that version of the text. Mention of the fortunate nature of the victory could have led to the suggestion that, even under a heretical emperor, the Romans had divine support and it therefore had to be expunged.

Interestingly, the penultimate chapter of the \textit{Chronicon} of John of Biclarum, one of the main sources for the last part of Isidore’s chronicle, stated that the Persians had converted to Christianity and signed a peace treaty with the Emperor Maurice.\textsuperscript{104} If Isidore’s main intention in writing the \textit{Chronica maiora} had been to chart the growth and triumph of Catholicism, this event should surely have been included in his work. However, this would have undermined his attempts to use the Persians to demonstrate that the replacement of Roman with Visigothic power was divinely sanctioned. Hence the conversion story was excluded and Persian victories over Rome were emphasized in its place.

\textsuperscript{102} Isidore of Seville, \textit{Historia Gothorum}, ed. by Rodríguez Alonso (second redaction), cc. 28–29, pp. 216, 218.

\textsuperscript{103} Isidore of Seville, \textit{Etymologiae}, ed. by Lindsay, ix. 2. 62; ix. 2. 66.

\textsuperscript{104} John of Biclarum, \textit{Chronicon}, ed. by de Hartmann, c. 92 [a. 589], p. 82.
Table 3. Persia and Persians at the End of the *Chronica maiora*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First redaction</th>
<th>Second redaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>312. Valerian, stirring up a persecution of Christians, was captured by the king of the Persians and grew old there in the disgrace of his life.</td>
<td>312. Valerian, stirring up a persecution of Christians, was captured by the king of the Persians and grew old there in the disgrace of his life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>329a. He [Constantine] prepared a war with the Persians. At the approach of which they trembled to such an extent that they ran to meet him as suppliants promising to carry out his orders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>335a. Constans, terrible in the cruelty of his habits, endured many things from the Persians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>345a. But, while proceeding against the Persians, Julian died, having been hit by a javelin as the attack was happening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>347a. and he [Jovian] returned, having signed a peace with the Persians [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>398. Belisarius the patrician triumphed marvellously [<em>mirabiliter</em>] over the Persians.</td>
<td>413. Also, [under Phocas] most serious Persian wars are raised against the Romans. By which, when the Romans had been strongly subdued, certain eastern parts were lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>413. Also, [under Phocas] most serious Persian wars are stirred up against the Republic. By which, when the Romans had been strongly subdued, many provinces and even Jerusalem were lost.</td>
<td>414a. Heraclius completes the sixteenth year of his <em>imperium</em>. At the start of which [reign] the Slavs took Greece from the Romans, the Persians Syria and Egypt and many provinces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, Isidore may have had a more prosaic reason for the ways in which he told the stories of the Jews, Romans, Scythians, and Persians. The Scythians were very far away from Spain and could in no way offer a serious threat to the Visigoths. Conversely, the Romans and Jews were a very real and present danger to the political and religious integrity of the seventh-century Visigothic kingdom. ‘Scythian’ was an ancient ethnographic umbrella term for ‘outsiders’ more than an actual people to identify with, and could thus be appropriated without significant rhetorical risk. The fact that Isidore knew that the Persians were engaged in contemporary conflicts with the Romans may also have influenced him to conjure up connections with the Visigoths, on the basis of something approaching the maxim that ‘the enemy of your enemy is your
friend’. Nonetheless, in so carefully constructing a series of links between these ancient peoples and the Visigoths, I suggest that Isidore moulded consciously his depiction of the origins of the Visigoths in order to carve out a special niche for them in the divine scheme. He did this through associating them with a host of ancestors of great diversity and antiquity. By creating a range of historical, geographical, and genealogical relationships between the Visigoths and other ethnic groups, Isidore created an origin myth that could function as an integrative force in the Visigothic kingdom. He distinguished the Visigoths from their competitors and demonstrated to their subjects that the kingdom had an ancient and a legitimate past.

**Conclusion**

Throughout his writings Isidore attempted ‘to establish certain sets of cultural values and social norms across a rather varied population’. His annexation of the histories of a series of different ethnic groups served to create for the Visigoths an ancient and biblical past. The historical identity that was constructed for the Visigoths and their kings helped to reconcile divergent interests within the kingdom of the early seventh century, mediating between those who had already reconciled themselves to the fact of Visigothic rule — especially the controversial rule of Swinthila — and those who were undecided. In this case, therefore, the writing of history was an integrative act, functioning to understand, explain, and construct contemporary political, social, and spiritual identities and relationships through reference to a variety of pasts.

Isidore targeted the Jews and the Romans because he was attempting to show that the Visigoths were favoured by God throughout history. These two peoples therefore had to be discredited in the *Chronica maiora*, in order that the Visigoths could later succeed them in the political and religious spheres. The second redaction of the *Chronica maiora* was a far more thorough effort at achieving the separation of church and empire than the first redaction. In this text, Isidore did his best to uncouple empire and church by presenting several Roman leaders as heretics and demonstrating that God had used the Persians as a divine scourge for the Romans. However, in writing about the suc-

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cession of the Visigoths to a favoured status, Isidore did far more than abuse the Romans and the Jews and laud the Visigoths. Our intertextual investigations have revealed that, through the creation of a matrix of interrelated histories of a range of different ethnic and religious groups, Isidore positioned the Visigoths and their rulers at the centre of universal history. The depiction of the Arians and Acefali in the *Chronica maiora* was a way of attacking the Romans as supporters of heresy while undermining what were, in Isidore’s eyes, the two greatest historical threats to orthodoxy of the Visigoths and Spain. The Jews were also attacked due to the perceived threat that their errors posed to orthodoxy in contemporary Spain and the disruption they caused to the establishment of a confessional state. Isidore further suggested that the victories of his favoured people were God-given by charting the numerous victories of the Persians — distant relatives of the Visigoths in Isidore’s eyes, as well as a divine scourge — over the Romans. The political replacement occurred when Swinthila expelled the Roman forces from Spain, reaffirming the Scythian-Visigothic ascendancy signalled at the start of the *Chronica maiora*. In the religious sphere the process culminated with the Visigothic conversion to Catholicism under Reccared I and the subsequent conversion of the Jews by Sisebut. This final event demonstrated that the Visigoths had successfully taken on the Roman mantle of extending the Catholic faith to other peoples.

In constructing his account of world history, Isidore engaged in a delicate balancing act; he had to uncouple the universal Christian message from the political universality that was inherent in the Roman historiographical tradition. While the first of these was potentially useful to Isidore’s efforts to buttress his Visigothic past, its Roman counterpoint was highly dangerous. This thematic and interpretive balancing act was forwarded through a dual approach. Firstly, some sources were deliberately excluded, misread, or misrepresented in order to put a pro-Visigothic slant on world history. Secondly, a raft of typological and intertextual relationships were created between the Visigoths and other peoples in furtherance of what we might term a political theology that placed the Visigothic people at the culmination of world history.

An exploration of the relationship between the varying contents of the two redactions of the *Chronica maiora* and the changing contexts of production reveals that Isidore was seeking to comment actively on and influence contemporary affairs through altering his accounts of universal history. When these relationships are viewed from the perspective of other Isidorian writings, this active engagement comes into even sharper relief. Isidore was not simply experimenting with universal Christian history: he was focusing its entire span on the Visigoths. This was accomplished by demonstrating the exemplary role which
the Visigoths and their kings had played throughout history, by denigrating any groups or individuals who had challenged the Visigothic supremacy and by propagating ideas about the central role of the Visigothic people and their ethnic relations in the distant and not so distant past. In Isidore’s account of universal history, the Visigoths did not simply stand as the dominant power in his own day, but were positioned in a predominant place throughout history.

Isidore was also attempting to create a unified Visigothic identity, building upon the foundations laid by Leander of Seville, his brother and predecessor at Seville, at the Third Council of Toledo and by John of Biclarum’s Chronicon. Isidore sought to retroactively impose unity upon a historical situation in which there had been very few instances of the Visigoths acting in a unified manner. This was part of a broader attempt to normalize Visigothic royal control. Isidore was writing to persuade several different constituencies at once: Hispano-Roman, Catholic and Visigothic, and to unify them under a single identity. The construction of an image of the Visigoths as a favoured people was one way by which he could appeal to all of these groups at once. Of course, none of these groups were unitary. Regional identities, at least partially the result of geographical factors, served to disaggregate any Spanish political unit and thus had to be overcome when attempting to create an image of a historically unified peninsula.

Although Isidore rejected contemporary Roman claims to universal political and religious leadership, he utilized terminology derived from Roman political thought in order to parallel Visigothic kings with emperors and to legitimate their succession to the empire. Therefore, although Isidore was largely opposed to the Romans, he still worked within historiographical and political paradigms which they had created. Eusebius had tied the fate of the Roman Empire to that of the church and subsequent writers, such as Orosius, largely followed him. Isidore was one of the first chronographers to move beyond this interpretative framework by demonstrating that the Roman Empire and

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107 See Pohl, ‘Telling the Difference’, pp. 63, 67, for the existence of overlapping systems of identification, which resulted in the development of ‘flexible’ and ‘largely virtual’ identities in order to encourage loyalty.


109 Smith, Europe after Rome, p. 273, for later reception of Isidore’s ideas about empire, which drew heavily on classical influences.

the Catholic church were not necessarily bound into a reciprocally-beneficial relationship. For Isidore, the Romans, like the Jews, were a central part of the divine plan (and thus of his narrative), but were ultimately dispensable. The pasts of these two groups had to be reported in order to make sense of universal history, but the way in which Isidore recounts their histories demonstrates his largely hostile attitude towards them.

Through linking the Visigoths with the Persians Isidore posed a subtle question about the role of the Persians in Roman history as God’s scourge, especially in the context of contemporary Persian victories over the Romans. At the same time he emphasized the role of God in the destiny of nations and that this could be activated by or transferred to other nations. The implied relationship between Visigoths and Persians makes this connection more attractive, but it is unlikely that Isidore intended the Visigoths to be seen as the direct descendants of the Persians and thus as a divine scourge themselves.

In his *Chronica maiora* Isidore managed to blend successfully two discursive traditions that were potentially in conflict. The first of these traditions privileged the universal and orthodox viewpoint of the Catholic church. Isidore inherited this strand of his historical project directly from predecessors such as Orosius and Eusebius-Jerome. The second tradition was much newer and aimed to establish the supremacy of particular successor kingdoms over the Romans and other ethnically-defined competitors. Isidore differed significantly from his predecessors in promoting a move away from the universalism implicit in Roman claims to political leadership and, as we have seen, he preferred the Visigoths to the Romans. Nonetheless, this was not an insurmountable tension, and it does not seem to have bothered Isidore. All he had done was alter the content, not the form, of this discourse. Roman historians had always privileged one people — their own — over all others, and the universal message implicit in Christianity had simply provided them with further ammunition to back up their claim to an exalted status. Within this framework, therefore, Isidore simply replaced the Romans with the Visigoths. The addition of the claim to a special status for his Visigoths was one of the next logical steps in achieving the total replacement of Romans with Visigoths.

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111 Cf. John of Biclarum’s *Chronicon*, which has been seen as an intermediate stage between those who placed themselves within the imperial tradition and those, like Isidore, who sought to move away from it; cf. Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers*, pp. 5–6.

The term ‘Roman’ held a multiplicity of meanings and possibilities for medieval authors, as is shown by Maya Mascarinec elsewhere in this volume in relation to the meaning and use of Roman-ness in early medieval Italy. ‘Roman’ was a slippery concept for Isidore, but was also laden with possibilities. There were inherent tensions (just as there are now interpretive tensions) between ‘imperial’ Roman identity, ‘Hispano-Roman’ identity, ‘eastern’ Roman identity (or ‘Greek’ identity) compared to ‘western’ Roman identity. We can add to the mix the ‘Romans’ from the city of Rome. I have argued that one of Isidore’s basic aims was to persuade the ‘Romans’ from Spain that the imperial Roman past was no longer a legitimate point of reference in either political or religious terms. Instead, for Isidore, the Roman past becomes the venue in which Visigothic history is played out and against which Visigothic legitimacy is constructed.

The fragility of Visigothic control meant that Isidore’s offering had to be acceptable to as many as possible of the people who mattered within contemporary Spain. These included: Hispano-Roman ecclesiastical elites, the Visigothic ruling elite, and various regional elites, especially those in the south-east who had been so recently under Byzantine control. All of these groups had to be reconciled if the Hispanic-Gothic kingdom was to survive, and this is why Isidore tailored his account to meet the requirements of each of them. Orthodoxy, historical pedigree, geographical, proximity, and political unity were all essential elements in the Visigothic identity which Isidore moulded in the *Chronica maior*. As each of these elements could act as an integrating factor for the constituent parts of the Visigothic polity.

This is not to say that there were no Visigoths in Spain, or that there was no sense of historical or contemporary ‘Visigothic’ identity aside from that constructed by writers like Isidore. But that is not what has concerned me in this paper. An analysis of Isidore’s writings reveals that Visigothic identities in seventh-century Spain were actively appropriated and modified to meet contemporary social and political challenges and to create and influence a meaningful social world. Indeed, the fact that such active engagement took place suggests that Visigothic identity discourse was alive and well when Isidore was writing: it was dynamic and available for exploitation, perhaps with a ready-made audience willing to buy into Isidore’s particular adaptations. We should not, however, assume that ‘ethnicity’ was a permanent means of social integration, always out there and waiting to be moulded by any intellectual who was willing and able to do so. The structural role of ethnic discourse, as a tool for political integration, only emerged within the post-Roman kingdoms through the work of intellectuals like Isidore and owes a lot to religious, especially Christian, discourse. The specific activation of a Gothic identity discourse at the moment at
which Isidore was writing may thus point to something particularly significant, remarkable even, about the contemporary context. Isidore worked within an established discourse that was based on existing ideas about Gothic identity. His perception, use, and transformation of that identity discourse were largely, if not wholly, conditioned by concrete contemporary contexts and conflicts. In writing a history of his favoured people, Isidore helped contribute to the creation of a type of ethnically defined but religiously derived historical identity which was to have a significant afterlife. Isidore was thus a key transitional figure in the historiography of the early medieval West, acting as a cultural broker both at the time at which he was writing and between the Roman and post-Roman thought worlds.

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**Adventus, Warfare, and the Britons in the Development of West Saxon Identity**

John-Henry Clay*

**Introduction**

Among the many debts of gratitude which historians of Anglo-Saxon England owe to the Venerable Bede is that, thanks to him, we can witness the term ‘West Saxon’ come into use as a political and ethnic group name. Bede, writing before 731, twice mentioned in the *Historia ecclesiastica* that the West Saxons of the late seventh century had formerly been known as the Gewissae.¹ The significance of the name-change, which occurred at a moment of dynastic transition and rapid development in the complexity of Anglo-Saxon kingship, has long been recognized and commented upon.² It is unclear why Bede chose (twice) to clarify a dynastic name-change which had happened some forty or more years previously. We might reasonably assume that he obtained his information directly from Bishop Daniel of Winchester, his chief source for West Saxon his-

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tory, and it may be that his purpose as a historian was primarily to avoid confusion. The name Gewissae is itself curious: in Bede’s own time it seems that the West Saxons explained it by reference to a dynastic Stammvater called Gewis, a personal name which is unattested in any other contemporary source; more likely is an antiquated group-name with a root in Old English gewiss, ‘certain, sure, trustworthy,’ which might render a meaning such as ‘the strong ones’, or, as Chadwick suggested in 1907, ‘confederates’.

Bede, however, finds little support in the late seventh-century sources. First of all, the term rex Gewissorum appears in only one surviving charter, a relatively late donation of King Cuthred dating from 745, who appears to have been using it as a consciously archaic term. The first ‘Gewissan’ king to leave behind a genuine charter, King Centwine, who ruled between 676 and 685, styled himself rex Saxonum, as did his successor King Cædwalla (685–88). Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury, later bishop of Sherborne (d. 709), poetically referred to both Centwine and Cædwalla as rulers of the imperium Saxonum, and Bede himself also records that Cædwalla’s funerary inscription in Rome gave him the title rex Saxonum. There is therefore little doubt that the ‘Gewissan’ kings of the seventh century tended to refer to themselves simply as kings of the Saxons.

As significant as this name change is, one may wonder whether it has much helped to elucidate the origins of Wessex, so threadbare and tangled are the

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3 Gewis appears in the genealogy of the West Saxon king Ine (688–726) from the Anglian Collection list of royal genealogies (see below).

4 Coates, ‘On Some Controversy Surrounding Gewissae/Gewisser’.

5 Chadwick, Origin of the English Nation, p. 147, n. 2. In Collingwood and Myres, Roman Britain and the English Settlements, p. 403, n. 2, Myres attempted to rehabilitate Gewiss as a genuine historical figure, but modern consensus has leaned firmly towards Chadwick’s view that he is entirely mythical and derived from a pre-existing group name. For a recent discussion, see Kleinschmidt, ‘The Geuissae and Bede’, pp. 95–98. An alternative meaning of ‘westerners’ has also been suggested (see Walker, ‘Bede and the Gewissae’, p. 178, n. 18), while Wood, ‘Before and after the Migration to Britain’, p. 50, has entertained the possibility that the name is Celtic in origin.

6 See Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, no. 256. We should not ignore the possibility that Cuthred was in fact encouraged to employ the name by its appearance in Bede’s work.

7 For occurrences of rex Saxonum, see Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, nos 235 and 237.

8 Aldhelm, Carmina ecclesiastica, ed. by Ehwald, iii, pp. 14, 16.

9 Walker, ‘Bede and the Gewissae’, pp. 183–84, suggests that the term rex Saxonum was preferred in the early charters because the Gewissan kings held a virtual dominion over the other Saxon kingdoms of the South; only when this domination proved to be temporary and the future of the Gewissae was found in western expansion was the term ‘West Saxons’ adopted.
Map 1. South-West England in the Early Saxon Period, showing major settlements, roads, and battles recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. 
strands of evidence in which it is ensnared. The historical evidence comprises the scanty narrative of Bede, who provides our first trustworthy chronological anchor with the conversion of King Cynegils to Christianity in 635 but has virtually nothing to say prior to that, and a loose collection of later annals and genealogical and regnal lists. These texts are the written detritus of ninth-century dynastic myth-making, which celebrates the forging of the West Saxon kingdom at the hands of Germanic pirates who landed on the Solent coast of Hampshire at the end of the fifth century and embarked on a centuries-long programme of expelling or subjugating the British population. The archaeological evidence, as noted long ago by E. T. Leeds, contradicts this West Saxon propaganda. It places the earliest Saxon activity of the region decisively not in southern Hampshire c. 500, but in the upper Thames valley several decades earlier. J. N. L. Myres attempted to reconcile the evidence with a geographical contortion, suggesting that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*’s account was largely reliable, but that the Gewissan invaders of Hampshire, leaving behind precious few archaeological traces of themselves, swiftly absorbed the pre-existing Saxon groups of the Thames valley into a West Saxon confederacy. Martyn Whittock, one of the numerous medievalists of the last century who have peered into this particularly dim and enticing corner of Anglo-Saxon history, asserts that any straightforward account of what Myres called ‘the problem of Wessex’ is likely to be a poor one; and the fact that his own narrative, derived largely from the work of Myres, differs in fundamental points from the contemporary efforts of Barbara Yorke only illustrates his point.

The problem of Wessex, put briefly, is the mutual antagonism of historical and archaeological sources. Regrettably, the West Saxons produced no narrative sources comparable to the Kentish *adventus* legend transmitted by Nennius in

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his ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*, but rather a series of annals, a number of genealogies of individual rulers, and the West Saxon *Genealogical Regnal List*, a short text which recalls the names, regnal lengths, and pedigrees of every West Saxon ruler in continuous succession from Cerdic to King Æthelwulf (d. 858). Each of these three sources, which have been discussed at length by David Dumville, is associated with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, whose archetype was compiled towards the end of King Alfred’s reign (871–99): the annals comprise much of the early material of the *Chronicle*, while the genealogies of individual rulers are interspersed throughout it and three of the nine extant copies of the *Genealogical Regnal List* were incorporated into *Chronicle* versions A, B, and G. In addition, we have a genealogy of King Ine from the *Anglian Collection*, a compilation of royal genealogies, and regnal lists covering most of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Critical analysis of the annals and genealogical and regnal lists by Sisam, Sims-Williams, Dumville, Moisl, and Yorke has revealed the extent of chronological manipulation and corruption to which they had been subjected and all but eroded their remaining credibility as authentic historical accounts. They are now regarded not as genuine recollections of kingship and conquest stretching back into the fifth century, but as products of identity formation which in their present form date from the ninth century. Later in this article, I will discuss the likelihood that they were partially based on material from an earlier stage of identity formation which can be related to the late seventh-century name-change from Gewissae to West Saxons.

In this respect, provided one is interested in questions of identity, the value of these sources has only increased as their credibility has diminished. Yet even the ninth-century architects of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, whose interests apparently included throwing their dynastic hooks as far back into the Solent

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17 The collection survives in four manuscripts, the earliest of which dates from c. 934×37, although Dumville has argued for its original creation in Mercia or Northumbria towards the end of the eighth century, and the fact that the West Saxon list ends with Ine implies that the genealogy was composed during his reign. Dumville, ‘The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies’, esp. pp. 25–26.
past as possible, only reached the end of the fifth century, giving Cerdic an adventus in the year 495; and an earlier version of the myth, according to the original (shorter) regnal lengths reconstructed by Dumville,\textsuperscript{19} reached only as far back as the early or mid-sixth century, a hundred years shy of the archaeological evidence. From the perspective of a text-deprived late seventh-century king, in other words, living memory could reasonably account for perhaps four generations, and mythology add a couple more. Anything before that belonged to a Germanic past which lay reliably hidden behind the fogs of time and the English Channel. If we seek the origins of the West Saxons in the Gewissan past, therefore, it does not help to stand at the end of the seventh century and squint backwards. We must return to the fifth and start from there. The aim of this paper is to examine the two centuries which preceded the emergence of the Gewissae into recorded history, to trace the processes which eventually gave rise to their southern hegemony, and then to explain why, at the end of the seventh century, Ine and his peers chose to portray the past in the way they did. I will argue that, while the West Saxon origin story was a fiction, it was also a deliberate and canny manipulation of existing traditions; furthermore, its constituent elements — the glorification of warfare and the violent subjugation of the native Britons — had a certain parabolic quality, which echoed both the realities of the late seventh century and, whether Ine and his followers knew it or not, the realities of the fifth.

**Gildas and the adventus Saxonum**

We do not know how long a group called the Gewissae had existed under that name by the late seventh century. The appearance of the fictional ancestor Gewis in the genealogy of King Ine (688–726), however, suggests that it carried considerable political weight, especially considering that Gewis was placed two generations before Cerdic, the mythical founder of the West Saxon gens. We might further suppose that Bede would not have felt the need to explain the name-change from ‘Gewissae’ to ‘West Saxons’ were the former not already well established. Kleinschmidt suggests that the name ‘Gewissae’ was originally a broader ethnic term which only became restricted to a particular dynasty once the term ‘West Saxons’ came into use,\textsuperscript{20} although the absence of terms such as


\textsuperscript{20} Kleinschmidt, ‘The Geuissae and Bede’, pp. 97–98.
*rex Gewissorum* in the charter tradition makes this uncertain. It is equally plausible that ‘Gewissae’ had always been a dynastic name, or referred to a local territorial grouping of the sort recorded in the *Tribal Hidage*, albeit one which came to achieve exceptional influence over its neighbours. The foundation of the first Gewissan bishopric at Dorchester-on-Thames in 635 would lead us to locate the Gewissan ‘homeland’ in the upper Thames valley, and the appearance of very early continental Saxon material culture in precisely this area might even encourage us to trace the name ‘Gewissae’ itself back to the fifth century. Indeed ‘Gewissae’, should it mean something akin to ‘the strong ones’, sounds like just the sort of name a band of young mercenaries, newly-settled, politically embryonic, and tactically vulnerable, might give themselves.

By this point, of course, we have left our evidence behind, but it may at least have pointed us in the right direction. The earliest Saxon settlement in the upper Thames took place in the immediate aftermath of Rome’s withdrawal from Britain c. 410. The historical sources for fifth-century Britain, while better than for the sixth, are highly problematic. The only insular source of use to us here is the *De excidio Britanniae* of Gildas, a fierce moral polemicist who set his criticism of several contemporary British kings within the framework of a

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21 See above. There are so few reliable charters from late seventh-century Wessex, however, that it would be unwise to make any strong judgements on this point. King Centwine left a single charter in his name, and Cædwalla just six, only two of which are broadly regarded as authentic. The two genuine charters are in Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, nos 231 and 235; the inauthentic charters, which may be based to varying degrees on authentic seventh–century material, are nos 230, 232–34. For a discussion of the charter material, see Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex*; Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, pp. 240–43; and Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*. We must also take into account the flexibility in the use of royal titles before the ninth century: Dumville, ‘The Terminology of Overkingship’, p. 347.

22 Dumville, ‘The Tribal Hidage’. The *Tribal Hidage*, which varies from 300 to 100,000 hides in its tax assessments of different groups, portrays a highly varied social landscape which could allow for numerous levels of group- and self-identity. It is likely that the vast 100,000 hide assessment of the West Saxons conceals numerous smaller social units, of whom the Gewissae may originally have been one. See Pohl, ‘Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles’.

23 My thanks to Walter Pohl for this suggestion. On the dynamic processes inherent in the formation of early medieval barbarian tribes, see Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples*, trans. by Dunlap, p. 8. It is interesting to note that young men aged between about twenty and thirty seem to have been accorded the highest social status at the early Saxon community of Dorchester, receiving wealthier grave assemblages and enjoying a richer and more varied diet than men over thirty. See Privat and O’Connell, ‘Stable Isotope Analysis’, p. 788.
providential interpretation of the island’s history. A major concern of historians has been to establish the chronology of his account by means of a few continental references to contemporary events in Britain, later traditions, and the structure and contents of the text itself. Most scholars have tended to place the composition of the text in the early or mid-sixth century, with Wood opting for an earlier bracket of 485/520. Higham has made a case for the relatively early date of 479/84, which he reached by freeing the text from a pair of chronological anchors: the use of unreliable later Welsh and Irish traditions, which tended to pull it into the sixth century, and the traditional association of the British appeal to Aëtius (‘Agitius’ in Gildas’s text) with his third consulship, that is between 446 and 454.

While there are numerous debatable aspects of Higham’s interpretation of the text, the chief virtue of his chronological reckoning is that it brings the De excidio Britanniae into closer harmony with the continental sources, the archaeological evidence, and the learned late Latin context in which it was

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25 For the traditional dating, see Dumville, ‘Gildas and Maelgwyn’, pp. 51–60; Dumville, ‘The Chronology of De Excidio Britanniae’. Lapidge, ‘Gildas’s Education’, judging that Gildas’s Latin would have been notably archaic at so late a date, prefers to place the composition earlier in the sixth century. See also Wood, ‘The End of Roman Britain’.

26 For the appeal, see Gildas, De excidio Britanniae, ed. by Mommsen, c. 20, p. 36; Gildas, The Ruin of Britain, trans. by Winterbottom, pp. 23–24. Higham, The English Conquest, pp. 119–41, was developing his earlier subscription to a date of c. 500: Higham, ‘New Light on the Dark Age Landscape’, p. 364. Jones, ‘The Appeal to Aëtius in Gildas’, suggested that the appeal to ‘Agitio ter consuli’ was intended not for the thrice-consul Roman general Aëtius, but for Aegidius, who was active in the Loire region c. 456–65, and that the Britons were refugees in Gaul who were seeking protection from Saxon, Burgundian, or Visigothic attacks; yet see also Casey and Jones, ‘The Date of the Letter of the Britons’, where Jones argues alongside Casey that the addressee was indeed Aëtius, but dates the appeal to an earlier phase of his career in the late 420s, with the ter consuli being an anachronistic interpolation by Gildas. Higham, The English Conquest, pp. 124–36, takes this line of argument further with the plausible suggestion that the entire address and letter which Gildas ‘quotes’ was in fact his own poetic reconstruction of oral tradition.

27 In particular his argument that Gildas repeatedly alludes to the Saxons, who are explicitly mentioned only once in the text (Gildas, De excidio Britanniae, ed. by Mommsen, c. 23, pp. 38–39; Gildas, The Ruin of Britain, trans. by Winterbottom, pp. 26–27), through a variety of metaphors, and that the obscure reference to a ‘pater diabolus’ relates to a purported Saxon high king who exercised some form of hegemony over much of the British people and church. Higham, The English Conquest, esp. pp. 160–66. There is little concrete support in the text for such an interpretation.
seemingly written. His attempt to locate Gildas in the south west (specifically in the region of later Dorset and Wiltshire), against the older opinion, which tended towards the north and extreme west, is more convincing. These chronological and geographical adjustments, while the former in particular must be accepted with a degree of caution, greatly increase Gildas’s authority as a contemporary witness of events in fifth-century southern Britain.

This has implications for our interest in the earliest Gewissae (or their predecessors) in the upper Thames valley. Although the provinces of Britain had been suffering economic decline and political disruption since the late fourth century, culminating in the messy usurpation of Constantine III in 407 and his withdrawal to the Continent of most of Britain’s remaining army, the departure of imperial administration c. 410 appears to have led to social, political, and economic fragmentation of a degree and suddenness quite unparalleled elsewhere in the Empire. The economic impact is best illustrated by the archaeological record, which demonstrates the final cessation of new coinage, the collapse of the pottery industry, and the almost complete abandonment of villas and towns, both large and small, by c. 430. The end of Roman Britain was, in the words of A. S. Esmonde Cleary, ‘nasty, brutish, and short’ — but, pointedly, it came about chiefly through long-term economic and political factors, exact-
erbated by a severe famine and plague, not, as Gildas later imagined, mainly because of barbarian raids. The settlement of Anglo-Saxon warbands was a consequence, not a cause, of British collapse.

If we were to follow Higham in his early dating of the *De excidio Britanniae*, the British despatch to Aëtius must have occurred in the late 420s or early 430s, around which time he was regaining control of northern Gaul after twenty years of barbarian control. This success may well have given some Britons hope that their own province might be restored to the Empire, and prompted them to send a formal appeal. Gildas states that, although Aëtius failed to send any military assistance, the Britons were nonetheless able to defeat the barbarians themselves, winning a temporary respite. This portrayal of events finds some corroboration in Constantius’s *Vita Germani* (written c. 480), which describes

32 Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 20, p. 36; Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, trans. by Winterbottom, pp. 23–24, refers to the ‘famis dira ac famosissima’ which struck around the same time as the widespread abandonment of the cities, while in c. 22, pp. 25–26, he refers to a ‘pestifera lues’ which struck shortly afterwards. While precise dating is impossible, these events must have occurred after the Roman withdrawal of 409 and before the British appeal to Aëtius, which is dated to c. 425×435 by Higham, *The English Conquest*, p. 137. Stevens, ‘Gildas Sapiens’, p. 363, relates the *pestifera lues* to the great plague of 442/3 reported by Hydatius; but see also Todd, ‘*Famosa pestis* and Britain in the Fifth Century’, pp. 320–21, whose *a priori* dismissal of Gildas as an ill-informed polemicist inclines him to distrust his authority on this matter. Todd also remarks (p. 323) that no other contemporary source, insular or continental, refers to a plague reaching Britain in the fifth century. There is little reason to connect Gildas’s *pestifera lues* specifically with the plague of 442/3, nor to assume that it never happened because of a lack of direct corroboration. The late second-century mass burial outside Roman Gloucester of almost one hundred individuals, apparently victims of a major pestilence, indicates that Britain may have been visited by the infamous Antonine Plague of AD 165–80 (or a similar outbreak) without mention of it being made in historical sources. See Chenery and others, ‘Strontium and Stable Isotope Evidence’, p. 157.

33 Cf. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 13. This is not to say that barbarian raids could not have a devastating local impact: several villas along the vulnerable Bristol Avon were violently destroyed in the late fourth century, and some were not reoccupied; occupants of the villa at North Wraxall were murdered and their bodies thrown down a well. Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 9–10; Chadwick Hawkes and Dunning, ‘Soldiers and Settlers’, p. 32.

34 Higham, *The English Conquest*, p. 137. Wood, ‘The Fall of the Western Empire’, p. 257, follows precisely the same reasoning when, in accordance with the conventional later dating of the *De excidio Britanniae*, he connects the British appeal to Aëtius’s second recovery of northern Gaul in the mid-440s.

the first visit of Germanus of Auxerre to Britain in 429 in order to combat Pelagianism. In the *vita*, the Britons of the south east are not yet subject to Saxon rule but are threatened by barbarian raids; they have soldiers, but lack organization and military expertise. Germanus obligingly takes command of the British forces, has them baptized, and wins a bloodless victory over a Pictish and Saxon warband. The fact that Germanus also met with an official ‘of the rank of tribune’ (*tribuniciae potestatis*) may indicate that Aëtius did at least send a formal representative of the Empire (apparently with his family) across the Channel, while Germanus’s expulsion of the defeated Pelagian heretics demonstrates that Britain, at least to some degree, still lay within the horizons of imperial authority in the late 420s.

After the second visit of St Germanus c. 435, during which he purportedly met not a tribune but a more vaguely described ‘chief man of the region’ (*regionis illius primus*), the next secure date relating to events in Britain is the entry in the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* under the year 441: ‘The provinces of Britain, which to this day have endured various misfortunate events, are made subject to Saxon rule.’ The reliability of this entry has survived the scrutiny of the *Chronicle*’s numerous flaws, and can safely be regarded as referring to an event of sufficient import to have been noted by contemporaries in southern Gaul. In the view of the anonymous Gallic chronicler, the year 441, not c. 410, represented the true end of Roman Britain. The entry appears to describe the formal establishment of Saxon rule over at least a significant part of southern

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41 *Chronica Gallica ad a. 452*, ed. by Burgess, a. 441, p. 80: ‘Britanniae usque ad hoc tempus urbis cladibus euentibusque latae in dictionem Saxonum rediguntur’.
42 Muhlberger, ‘The Gallic Chronicle of 452’, pp. 30–32; Jones and Casey, ‘The Gallic Chronicle Restored’; Burgess, ‘The Dark Ages Return to Britain’. Despite Burgess’s intention being to invalidate the Gallic Chronicle’s usefulness as a source for fifth-century British history (*contra* Jones and Casey), he acknowledges the accuracy of the entry for 441. He is somewhat too hasty to dismiss it, however, as bearing no meaningful relation to events in contemporary Britain (p. 192, n. 26). We may accept it as marking an event of singular importance to contemporaries without regarding it as the watershed moment at which Britain ‘became’ Anglo-Saxon.
43 Muhlberger, ‘The Gallic Chronicle of 452’, p. 32. Chrysos, ‘Die Römerherrschaft in Britannien’, p. 268, similarly suggests that the event of 441 was of special significance to a Gaulish audience because it ended any foreseeable prospect of a Roman reoccupation of the island.
Britain, and Higham has associated it with the end of the war which started, according to Gildas, with the rebellion of Saxon mercenaries brought by Vortigern to eastern Britain. 44 Such a view logically places Vortigern’s initial invitation to the Saxons some time in the early 430s, allowing roughly a decade for their rebellion, the subsequent war, and the truce of 441. This chronology is significantly earlier and more compressed than in previous interpretations of Gildas’s narrative, not least that of Bede, who placed the *adventus Saxonum* in 449 and the decisive battle of Mons Badonicus in 493. 45 Such a late date for the *adventus*, however, is rendered unlikely by the archaeological evidence. The chief virtue of Higham’s hypothesis is that it corrects this disjunction without doing damage to the essential structure of Gildas’s narrative. 46

*The First Saxons of the Upper Thames: Fifth to Sixth Centuries*

As mentioned above, some of the earliest continental Saxon material away from the east coast appears in the furnished cemetery of Berinsfield, on the outskirts of Dorchester-on-Thames. The cemetery was small, comprising perhaps 150 to 200 burials in total, 114 of which were excavated in 1974–75. Artefact typology, particularly of continental-style women’s brooches, allowed its period of use to be placed between the mid-fifth century and the late sixth or early seventh century, 47 with some of the material dated by Böhme to as early as 420. 48 The cemetery at Berinsfield has attracted special interest, both because of its early date and because of its proximity to the late Romano-British cemetery of Queenford Farm, some six hundred metres to the south. Queenford Farm,

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44 Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 23, pp. 38–39; Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, trans. by Winterbottom, pp. 26–27. It is this association of the end of the war with the Gallic Chronicle’s entry for 441 which leads Higham to an approximate date of c. 479×484 for the composition of the *De excidio Britanniae*, by adding the forty-four years which Gildas states (albeit in a grammatically problematic passage) had passed since the battle of Mons Badonicus in the latter stages of the war: ‘quique quadragesimus quartus ut noui orditur annus mense iam uno emenso, qui et meae natuitatis est’ (*Gildas, De excidio Britanniae*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 26, p. 40; Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, trans. by Winterbottom, p. 28).


46 See, for example, Stevens, ‘Gildas Sapiens’, pp. 361–63, who attempted to resolve the difficulty by arguing that Gildas had misplaced the British appeal to Aëtius within his narrative, believing that it had preceded the *adventus Saxonum*, when in fact it had come after the Saxon rebellion. His chronology was criticized by Myres, ‘The *adventus Saxonum*’.

47 Boyle and others, *Two Oxfordshire Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries*, p. 126.

which may have contained as many as 2000 burials, was partially excavated in 1972 and 1981, and was almost exclusively composed of unfurnished west-east inhumations.\textsuperscript{49} It appears to have been one of the main extramural cemeteries of the small Roman town of Dorchester.

The original carbon-14 dates supplied by a number of the Queenford Farm burials appeared to demonstrate the continuity of the cemetery into the sixth century, which provoked some comment in the literature; Yorke remarked upon the oddity of a British community which continued unfurnished burial even in the midst of such concentrated Saxon settlement,\textsuperscript{50} while Thomas, Stumpf, and Härke cited Queenford Farm as evidence for an apartheid-like social division between Saxon and British populations.\textsuperscript{51} A recent reanalysis of the skeletal material from Queenford Farm, however, has corrected the original flawed data and confirmed that the cemetery fell out of use at the beginning of the fifth century. The same researchers undertook carbon-14 analysis of the population of Berinsfield cemetery, and concluded that it was founded very soon afterwards, possibly, though not certainly, with a brief period of overlap.\textsuperscript{52}

Whether or not the population buried at Berinsfield were immigrants from across the North Sea is another question, but the sudden and total shift in burial customs and location, the intrusive nature of the Berinsfield material culture, and the significantly higher average stature of the Berinsfield burials compared to those of Queenford Farm makes it overwhelmingly likely that they were.\textsuperscript{53} Heinrich Härke undertook a comparative analysis of a number of burials from early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, including Berinsfield, and made the important observation that males buried with weapons in the fifth and sixth centuries were on average 2–5 centimetres taller than those buried without; his conclusion, in the absence of any obvious dietary or health factors which might have created

\textsuperscript{49} See Chambers, ‘The Late- and Sub-Roman Cemetery’; Booth, ‘Late Roman Cemeteries in Oxfordshire’.

\textsuperscript{50} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, pp. 46–48; see also Härke, ‘Ethnicity, “Race” and Migration,’ p. 15.

\textsuperscript{51} Thomas, Stumpf, and Härke, ‘Evidence for an Apartheid-like Social Structure,’ p. 2654.

\textsuperscript{52} Hills and O’Connell, ‘New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession,’ pp. 1104–06. The carbon-14 dates from eleven burials from Queenford Farm and five from Berinsfield clearly demonstrate only that the shift between the two cemeteries was sudden and complete; there was neither an extended transition phase nor an extended period when neither cemetery was in use.

\textsuperscript{53} Hills and O’Connell, ‘New Light on the Anglo-Saxon Succession,’ p. 1106, faced with the sharp break in local burial practice, express this view with caution; Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, pp. 30–31, takes it for granted.
such a difference, was that the men buried with weapons were descended from
Germanic immigrants, or were immigrants themselves. Crucially, the observed
height difference breaks down by the end of the seventh century.\(^{54}\)

While his observations were in general valid, Härke did not comment on
one anomaly in his data set, namely that the men buried without weapons at
Berinsfield, in contrast to the other early cemeteries, were just as tall as the men
buried with weapons.\(^{55}\) According to Härke’s hypothesis, the weaponless men
at Berinsfield were either unusually tall Britons, or, rather more likely, Saxons
filling the lower social roles elsewhere filled by Britons. Might we not relate this
anomaly to Berinsfield’s unusually early date, and suggest that the local com-
munity, at least in the fifth century, was chiefly composed of Germanic immi-
grants of all social levels, and that they had moved, whether by invitation or
invasion,\(^{56}\) into a district whose former occupants had already left, as the new
dating of the Queenford Farm cemetery could suggest? It may not be a coinci-
dence that one late fourth-century burial from Dorchester contained a belt set
of a type common in military graves of north-east Gaul and the Rhine fron-
tier, suggesting that late Roman Dorchester may have been home to a garrison
of settled continental troops.\(^{57}\) Even if there was no direct continuity between
these troops and the later Saxon settlement (there is certainly no direct archae-
ological connection between them), both Britons and Saxons must have long
known that Dorchester controlled a strategically important Thames crossing at
the junction of Dubonnic, Atrebatic, and Catuvellaunic territory.

pp. 154–55. Härke’s conclusion rests upon the similar average height difference between
the prehistoric and Roman-period ‘Celtic’ populations of western Europe and neighbouring
Germanic populations.

\(^{55}\) The difference between the two groups was a negligible 0.2 cm, compared with a dif-
fERENCE of 2.2 cm at Pewsey, 4.7 cm at Worthy Park, 3.8 cm at Abingdon I and 2.4 cm at

\(^{56}\) Present evidence does not allow a judgement either way on this question. Yorke, Wessex
in the Early Middle Ages, pp. 31–32.

\(^{57}\) The evidence for this comprises four famous burials from Dorchester-on-Thames: a male
‘military’ inhumation at Dyke Hills, south of the town, which included a set of late Roman belt
fittings directly paralleled by examples from the Rhineland; and three female burials, two near
the male burial and another north of the town, which together contained five brooches of unam-
biguously Germanic design. See Kirk and Leeds, ‘Three Early Saxon Graves from Dorchester’;
Britain, pp. 142–44, points out that the remaining garrisons of Roman Britain would have soon
evaporated once their pay stopped.
It would then conceivably follow that the political success of these ‘prototype’ Gewissan warriors enabled them either to expel or to establish direct control over surrounding British communities whose own elites had fled. As Coates points out, it is not difficult to encourage a defenceless population to vacate desirable land: the invaders need only destroy their agricultural base by burning their crops or stealing their cattle, and such terror tactics might cause a disproportionate number to flee the area, leaving it open for newcomers with no archaeologically detectable break in land use. If, on the other hand, the Saxons desired to control land rather than resettle it, they could extract tribute by force from the native population. There was early Saxon occupation at the nearby Romano-British villas of Shakenoak Farm and Barton Court Farm, but not necessarily direct continuity. The Romano-British cemetery at Frilford continued directly into the Anglo-Saxon period, but again the nature of the continuity is uncertain. These Saxons, as they moved into new areas of the upper Thames valley, continued the Berinsfield tradition of furnished weapon burial as one means of asserting and advertising social dominance, which may have taken on a new ethnic significance when practised among a predominantly British lower-status population.

58 The upper classes of Roman Britain must have stood to lose most from the turbulence of the fifth century. They also would have had access to greater portable wealth than the landed majority, which suggests that the mid-century flight of Britons to north-west Gaul included many of the elite. Contemporary historical accounts from Gaul refer to nobles, at least one bishop, and an army 12,000 strong among their number. See Thompson, ‘Gildas and the History of Britain’, pp. 221–22; Stevens, ‘Gildas Sapiens’, p. 369. Gildas, De excidio Britanniae, ed. by Mommsen, c. 4, p. 29; Gildas, The Ruin of Britain, trans. by Winterbottom, p. 17, himself laments that those books which had not been burned had been taken overseas by his exiled countrymen, who evidently belonged to the literate class: ‘quantum tamen potuero, non tam ex scriptis patriae scriptorurne monimentis, quippe quae, uel si qua fuerint, aut ignibus hostium exusta aut ciiuium exilii classe longius deportata non compareant, quam transmarina relatione, quae crebris inrupta intercapedinibus non satis claret’. See also Liebeschuetz, ‘The Refugees and Evacuees’, pp. 77–79, who observes how lands described as ‘deserted’ in early medieval sources could have been political vacuums devoid of large-scale administrative structures rather than unsettled wastelands.


60 Brodribb, Hands, and Walker, The Roman Villa at Shakenoak Farm; Miles, Archaeology at Barton Court Farmed.


62 Jones, The Archaeology of Ethnicity, p. 122. It is now commonly acknowledged that ethnicity may have played a part in the expression of identity through early medieval burial ritual, but it was never the only factor, and perhaps rarely a significant one. Stoodley, ‘From the Cradle
The best future hope for scientifically identifying first-generation continental immigrants in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries seems to be through stable isotope analysis, but this is still very much a developing field in early medieval archaeology. Until such a study is made of the Berinsfield population, we must rely on more traditional approaches of inferring migrant populations from material evidence. Yet however practically and theoretically problematic such approaches are, Berinsfield offers an unusually compelling example of a community composed largely of incomers with few pre-existing social or cultural ties to the surrounding population. The model proposed here, which may have occurred along similar lines elsewhere in southern and eastern England, is of to the Grave', for example, has examined how certain early Saxon grave-goods served to differentiate particular life-stages among both males and females; Crawford, 'Votive Deposition', has suggested that furnished burials may have provided a public forum for votive deposition, thus fulfilling a pagan religious function; King, 'Grave-Goods as Gifts', has reviewed the evidence that some grave-goods were offerings made at the open grave as part of a symbolic public discourse; Devlin, 'Social Memory', has discussed the importance of constructing social memory through burial ritual; and Gowland, 'Beyond Ethnicity', p. 56, has called for a further shift of interest away from ethnicity towards such approaches. Hakenbeck, 'Situational Ethnicity and Nested Identities', p. 26, has undertaken an informative analysis of two large fifth- to seventh-century Bavarian cemeteries, and judges that the sheer variety of burial customs within and between each cemetery can only be explained by considering ethnicity alongside other facets of personal, communal, social, and supra-regional identity.

Archaeologists both in favour of and against models of large-scale Anglo-Saxon immigration have expressed enthusiasm for the potential of stable isotope analysis to help resolve the debate. See Härke, 'Ethnicity, “Race” and Migration', pp. 16–17; Gowland, 'Beyond Ethnicity', p. 59; Higham, 'Britons in Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 13–14. For a discussion of stable isotope analysis and the results of its application in a number of prehistoric and medieval British contexts, see Budd and others, 'Investigating Population Movement'. Evans, Stoodley, and Chenery, 'A Strontium and Oxygen Isotope Analysis', p. 271, have confirmed the broad archaeological attribution of a group of ‘intrusive’ burials in a late fourth-century Winchester cemetery to first-generation immigrants from Pannonia, but also revealed unexpected complexity in the precise origins of the immigrants and their relationship with the local population. Chenery and others, 'Strontium and Stable Isotope Evidence', pp. 158–59, have used a similar approach to examine the diversity of origins of the population of Roman Gloucester.

Privat and O'Connell, 'Stable Isotope Analysis', have employed the technique to investigate the dietary habits of the early Saxon Berinsfield population, but not its geographical origins.

Whether and to what degree ethnicity can be inferred from archaeological assemblages is an old and ongoing debate. For a recent summary and discussion, see Härke, 'Ethnicity, “Race” and Migration'; for a discussion from a historical perspective, see Pohl, 'Archaeology of Identity'.

a pocket of relatively concentrated Saxon immigration focused on a warband near Dorchester, followed by the rapid expansion of Saxon control over British communities left demoralized after the critical political and economic collapse of the first half of the fifth century. Many Britons, indeed, may have thought Saxon rule no worse an alternative than the return of Roman government, and it is entirely plausible that influential locals judged their best option to be co-operation and alliance with the foreigners rather than resistance. In such cases, individuals may have subscribed to such rites as furnished weapon burial as part of a developing political and social discourse which was strongly informed by both late Roman and Germanic martial customs.

The war between Britons and Saxons appears to have ended in a stalemate in 441. We need not project Gildas’s vision of universal devastation across the entire island in order to accord him the respect he deserves as a near-contemporary commentator, especially with regard to his well-informed depiction of the hiring of Saxon mercenaries. There is ample independent evidence for widespread urban abandonment in the early fifth century, for the emigration of British elites across the Channel, and for a shift towards a less intensive agricultural and settlement landscape. Lowland Britain, while far from deserted, offered space for those communities who were abandoning en masse the increasingly marginal Frisian littoral, and there were plenty of opportunities for martially-minded young men hoping to better their social situation in a rich and vulnerable country. Gildas’s complaint that he was unable to reach the shrines of St Alban at Verulamium and St Aaron and St Julius at Caerleon

due to the ‘division of the barbarians’ fits well with the expansion of Saxon settlement in the upper Thames valley by the end of the fifth century.\textsuperscript{75}

Yet even supposing that there was some degree of Saxon unity following the initial rebellion and war of the 430s, there is little evidence that it lasted. On the contrary, the archaeological evidence speaks of considerable variation in burial customs around Dorchester in the fifth and sixth centuries as well as across south-east Britain as a whole, and this may reflect a high degree of heterogeneity in cultural and political identity at the regional level.\textsuperscript{76} The expansion of established warbands such as those of the upper Thames provided the necessary friction for conflict, and the continued immigration of new individuals and communities from across the Channel and North Sea provided the fuel. With no surviving structures of Roman administration to give universal form and stability to the exercise of power, the result was a political landscape of great fragmentation and fluidity which lasted until the end of the sixth century.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{75} Gildas, \textit{De excidio Britanniae}, ed. by Mommsen, c. 10, p. 31 (Gildas, \textit{The Ruin of Britain}, trans. by Winterbottom, p. 19): ‘Clarissimos lampades sanctorum martyrum nobis accendit, quorum nunc corporum sepulturae et passionum loca, si non lugubri diuortio barbarorum quam plurima ob scelera nostra ciuibus adимерentur, non minimum intuentium mentibus ardorem diuinae caritatis incuteren: sanctum albanum uerolamiensem, aaron et iulium legiionum urbis ciuies ceterosque utriusque sexus diuersis in locis summa magnanimitate in acie christi perstantes dico’. See Higham, \textit{The English Conquest}, pp. 103–06.

\textsuperscript{76} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, pp. 44–45; Wood, ‘Before and after the Migration to Britain’, p. 42; Hines, ‘The Becoming of the English’, p. 54; Moreland, ‘Ethnicity, Power and the English’, p. 33. Bearing in mind the fact that personal and group identity can operate on several different levels at once, there is no need to adopt Moreland’s view (pp. 34–35) that this variety in burial custom invalidates any notion of a common Saxon identity. Semple, ‘Polities and Princes’, pp. 422–23, has argued that the clustering of South Saxon burial mounds around particular hills and coastal inlets is symptomatic of a fragmented political landscape which lasted from the fifth to the eighth century.

\textsuperscript{77} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, pp. 89–90, observes no clear continuity in administrative organization between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods in the south-east, in contrast to the south-west, where the counties of Dorset, Somerset, and Devon appear to have arranged according to former Roman \textit{civitas} capitals. Howe, \textit{Migration and Mythmaking}, p. 49, also comments on the fact that Anglo-Saxon historiographers never sought to invent a ‘Roman’ past for their \textit{gens}, instead perpetuating a strong tradition of migration and \textit{adventus}. A sharp contrast to the situation in early Anglo-Saxon England is offered by the Visigothic kingdom, which was established within a surviving late Roman framework of law, culture, and urban life. Wolfram, \textit{Die Goten}, pp. 234–36.
If the Saxons of the south-east were a fractious, quarrelsome kaleidoscope of competing groups, much the same could be said of contemporary British rulers, whose propensity for mutual aggression, rendered as ‘civil war’ by his late Roman mindset, so appalled Gildas.\textsuperscript{78} Numerous prehistoric hillforts, for example at South Cadbury, Cadbury-Congresbury, Old Sarum, and Uffington Castle, were reoccupied by British elites at this time.\textsuperscript{79} The post-Roman earthwork of West Wansdyke may have been constructed in the late fifth or sixth century as a physical delineation of British and Saxon territory;\textsuperscript{80} it is interesting to note that the enormous Roman temple and bath complex at Bath, which lies immediately north of West Wansdyke, was systematically demolished and left in ruins at some point between 450 and 500, perhaps in a symbolic political gesture.\textsuperscript{81} On the far side of Selwood, Bokerley Dyke cut the road from Durotrigan territory to Old Sarum and Winchester, both of which have concentrations of early Saxon furnished burials. At Silchester, one of the largest towns of Roman Britain and the hub of its southern communications network, a similar dyke severed the road to Dorchester-on-Thames, and proved so successful that the road fell permanently out of use. For a space of between twelve and thirty kilometres in every direction around Silchester there is scarcely a single early Saxon burial, producing a large and conspicuous void in distribution maps.\textsuperscript{82} Ongoing excavations suggest that the city was deliberately abandoned in the late sixth or early seventh century, its wells filled in and the site left to waste.\textsuperscript{83} There is some evidence that its immediate post-Roman hinterland was preserved as a single territorial block, even though the settlement itself was never reoccupied.\textsuperscript{84} Given this archaeological evidence, it would not be unreasonable to suspect that Silchester was the centre of a British enclave which survived until well into the sixth century.

\textsuperscript{78} Gildas, \textit{De excidio Britanniae}, ed. by Mommsen, c. 27, p. 41 (Gildas, \textit{The Ruin of Britain}, trans. by Winterbottom, p. 29): ‘reges habet britannia, sed tyrannos […] belligerantes, sed ciulia et iniusta bella agentes’. Laycock, \textit{Britannia, the Failed State}, has recently argued that Britain suffered from incessant inter-tribal conflict throughout the Roman occupation, and that these conflicts worsened during the ‘balkanization’ that followed the Roman withdrawal.


\textsuperscript{80} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{81} Gerrard, ‘The Temple of Sulis Minerva’, pp. 159–60.

\textsuperscript{82} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, p. 13, figure 4.

\textsuperscript{83} Fulford, \textit{Life and Labour in Late Roman Silchester}, p. 281.

\textsuperscript{84} Cleary, \textit{The Ending of Roman Britain}, p. 198.
There is little doubt that the second half of the fifth century was a period of considerable upheaval across the south. Not until the late sixth century do we begin to see increasing archaeological evidence of social polarization and the consolidation of new hierarchies in Saxon areas. Furnished burials become fewer overall, while a small number display continued wealth, suggesting a significant shift in the nature of burial practice, and there appears to have been an increase in the number of permanent boundaries within settlements, which may be interpreted as a greater tendency towards the delineation and control of space. The late sixth century also saw the appearance and spread of mound burial within the territory of what would become Wessex, a custom which continued for a century and left parts of southern England peppered with barrows. Among the richest and largest mound burials are those at Cuddesdon, Taplow, and Lowbury Hill near Dorchester, and in Wiltshire at Swallowcliffe Down and Rodmead Hill. A number of archaeologists have made the argument that such burials, which tend to be situated in physically prominent positions, often near important communication routes, are symptomatic of an elite attempting to establish an indelible and highly visible claim on a contested landscape. As Tania Dickinson puts it, ‘there is every reason to link the appearance of the grandest of Early Saxon burials in the late sixth and early seventh century with the emergence of regional kingship’.

The distribution of burial mounds is therefore of some importance in identifying areas of special political stress in the emergent kingdom of the Gewissae. Two of the densest concentrations are in the upper Thames valley, particularly along the chalk ridgeline of the Icknield Way, and in southern Wiltshire.

Dickinson and Speake have discussed that the Asthall Barrow cremation burial (Oxfordshire), which dates from 710/40, ought to be understood in the context of the contemporary political struggle between Mercia and Wessex for control of the region north of the upper Thames. Similarly, Semple argues that the barrows of northern Wiltshire represent Saxon attempts to assert increasingly direct control over a border region, and the same is likely true of southern Wiltshire, where the custom of burial mounds spread from the early Saxon settlement area of Old Sarum. The proportion of surviving Celtic place-names does indeed suggest that western Wiltshire, in contrast to the east, was largely British-speaking until a relatively late date.

Ceawlin, who died in 593 according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, is the first Gewissan king of whose existence we can be confident. His prominence in the Chronicle is echoed by Bede, who wrote that he was the pre-eminent Southumbrian king of his day. He also gains some credibility from the Chronicle’s mention of his victory (s. a. 568) at the unidentified Wibbandun against King Æthelberht of Kent, the first Anglo-Saxon ruler to convert to Christianity following St Augustine’s arrival in 601. The entry s. a. 591 states that a certain Ceol took the throne and held it for five years, and Ceawlin’s last battle, recorded under the following year at Woddesbeorge (possibly Adam’s Grave in northern Wiltshire), resulted in his defeat, expulsion, and, s. a. 593, death. This ignominious end to a successful king, from whom King Ine claimed direct descent as the basis of his legitimacy, adds a final layer of historical plausibility. Ceawlin’s existence, therefore, is not in doubt, but the chronology of his career is much less certain. David Dumville has observed that Ceawlin’s reign, which lasted for seven or seventeen years according to the Genealogical Regnal List, was greatly extended to thirty-two years when this tradition was incorporated into the annalistic format of the Chronicle. While this had the effect of projecting the battles associated with his name further into the past,
rendering the *Chronicle* dates unreliable, it is quite possible that the sequence, locations, and protagonists of the battles were accurately preserved.

We can therefore accept that Ceawlin died c. 593 and consider the *Chronicle*’s record of his activity without lending credence to particular dates. He first appears s. a. 556, fighting alongside his (probably mythical) father Cynric against the Britons in northern Wiltshire. Under the year 568 appears his victory against Æthelberht of Kent, and he went on to capture numerous British towns to the east, west and north of the upper Thames by the end of his reign. There is a record of expansion in every direction except towards Silchester in the south, perhaps because its fall, if it happened near the beginning or middle of the sixth century, was simply too early to survive in those oral traditions which were later adapted into the annals of the *Chronicle*. We receive the picture of an active, aggressive king who was able to extend Gewissan control in several directions at once, largely at the expense of neighbouring British leaders, and to lay the foundations for a style of rule which, in its scope and complexity, began to resemble more closely the Frankish territories.95

As mentioned, the *Chronicle* claims s. a. 591 that Ceawlin was succeeded by Ceol, who ruled for five years; he was succeeded by Ceolwulf, who reigned until Cynegil’s accession in 611. From this point on we enter surer historical territory. In 628 at Cirencester, which Ceawlin had captured from the Britons a generation earlier, the Gewissae were fought to a stalemate by Mercia; even an attempt by King Cynegil to forge an alliance with Northumbria, culminating in the foundation of a bishopric at Dorchester under Northumbrian sponsorship in 635 and the marriage of his son Cenwalh to King Penda of Mercia’s sister,96 could not protect the Gewissan heartlands. In 645, Penda drove Cenwalh, now king, into exile for three years, and in 661 Penda’s son ravaged Dorchester and the downlands along the Icknield Way.97 Even as the ancient Gewissan grip on

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95 See Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 35, who discusses the evidence for increasing riverine trade and the minting of runic coinage in the upper Thames region from the beginning of the seventh century. It is reasonable to suspect that economic and political changes in Wessex at this time were the result of contact with Francia via Kent, which had lain well within the Frankish sphere of influence throughout the sixth century. See James, *The Franks*, p. 103; Wood, ‘Before and after the Migration to Britain’, pp. 47–49; Wood, ‘Frankish Hegemony in England’.


97 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, aa. 645, 661, pp. 29–30. The annal for 661 states that King Wulfhere, son of Penda, invaded as far as Ashdown (op Æcesdune), an ancient name for the Berkshire Downs.
the upper Thames was loosening, however, Cenwalh was pushing south and west, permanently transferring his bishopric to Winchester and defeating the Britons at Bradford on Avon in 652, Penselwood in 658, and Posbury in 661, breaking through the British-Saxon border, which had endured for two centuries, and annexing the later counties of Dorset, Somerset, and Devon.²⁸

The *Chronicle* states that Cenwalh died in 672 and was succeeded for one year by his widow Seaxburg, who was followed by Cenwalh’s distant cousin Æscwine (674–76), who was in turn succeeded by Cenwalh’s brother Centwine (676–85/86).²⁹ According to Bede, conversely, Cenwalh’s territory was divided between a number of sub-kings for about ten years.¹⁰⁰ This apparent contradiction between our sources is most likely a result of the fluid nature of seventh-century Gewissan politics, which allowed for a number of ‘kings’ to reign simultaneously, any one of whom might exercise supremacy over some or all of the others.¹⁰¹ The custom of joint rulership would come to a virtual end in 685/86 with Cædwalla, following whom it appears to have been a particular concern of West Saxon kings, especially Ine and Alfred, to establish their right to exclusive rule by tracing a direct lineage of kingship down their bloodline to Ceawlin and the *adventus* of the mythical founder Cerdic.¹⁰²

The accession of Cædwalla was a pivotal moment that marks the true beginnings of Wessex. His father Cenberht appears to have been a sub-king of the Gewissae before his death in 661, when Cædwalla was still an infant.¹⁰³ Cædwalla was sent into exile in the Chilterns and the Weald, the sparsely set-


²⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, aa. 672, 674 and 676, p. 30.


¹⁰² The ruling relationship of Ine to his father Cenred is uncertain. Ine promulgated his law code under his own name while acknowledging the assistance of his father: *The Law of King Ine*, ed. by Liebermann, prologue, pp. 88–89, but in a South Saxon charter of 692 Cenred subscribes as *rex Westsaxonum*, while Ine appears beneath him with no title, implying that Cenred was the senior of the two (Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 45). Neither Bede, obtaining his information directly from Bishop Daniel of Winchester, nor the *Chronicle* (except in Ine’s genealogy) mention Cenred at all. Since Ine probably had a strong influence over both of these sources, it may be that he preferred posterity to minimize the role of his father during the early years of his reign. See Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, p. 120; Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, p. 84.

tled and densely forested regions to the north and south of the lower Thames, where he remained until his mid-twenties. In 685, he emerged from exile at the head of a warband, and went on to overcome his rival rulers in Wessex and to conquer Sussex, Kent, Surrey, and the Isle of Wight before his abdication in 688. He and his successor Ælfwine claimed to be second or third cousins descended from Ceawlin himself, unlike the previous six kings, who, with the exception of Æscwine, had been descendants of Ceawlin’s brother Cutha. Cædwalla’s coup may therefore have been represented by his supporters as the ‘restoration’ of exclusive Gewissan kingship to the house of Ceawlin.

Cædwalla’s determination to sweep the board clear of rival pieces is clear from the course and consequences of his short but bloody career. There is, first of all, Bede’s notorious account of the conquest of Wight, during which Cædwalla mercilessly hunted down and executed the two surviving princes of the Jutish royal house. Bede also remarks prosaically that Cædwalla ‘defeated and banished’ the Gewissan sub-kings, and we may gauge his success from the fact that the line of Ceawlin’s brother Cutha, which according to the Chronicle had monopolized rule of the Gewissae for three generations, vanishes from our sources following the withdrawal (or banishment) of King Centwine and Mynors, v. 7, pp. 468–73, gives Cædwalla’s age at death in 689 as about thirty, which places his date of birth c. 659.


105 This is according to the genealogies contained in the Chronicle, which appear to represent the tradition of the late seventh century. Cædwalla’s great-grandfather is named as Cutha (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, a. 685, p. 32), Ælfwine’s great-grandfather as Cuthwine (a. 688, p. 32). Since Cutha could be an abbreviation for Cuthwine, these may be the same person, which would make Cædwalla and Ælfwine second cousins (see Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, p. 223). It could also help explain the later insertion of an ancestor named Cutha beneath Cuthwine in Ælfwine’s genealogy (a. 855, p. 45), if a later annalist was attempting to reconcile two versions of Ælfwine’s genealogy, one of which gave his great-grandfather as Cuthwine, the other in abbreviated form as Cutha. In the Anglian Collection this additional Cutha is changed to Cuthwulf.


to a monastery. 108 Where Ine later suffered rebellion against his rule, it appears to have come from his close family, including his own wife Æthelburg, who led an insurrection in the west, and a certain Ealdberht, who may have been his son or cousin. 109

**The Survival of Seventh-Century Traditions in Ninth-Century Sources**

As Jacqueline Stodnick has remarked, the very name ‘West Saxons’ implicitly evokes ‘contemporary notions of Anglo-Saxon migratory history’. 110 Unfortunately, the dynastic origin myths of the ninth-century West Saxons survive only in the barest fragments. These sources provide a skeletal narrative of invasion and warfare, which presumably once formed the frame around which the flesh of dynastic propaganda was wrapped: stories and songs intended to fire the hearts of nobles and assert the legitimacy of their rule, such ‘valiant deeds of ancient heroes’ as inspired the seventh-century St Guthlac, a fiery teenage scion of Mercian royalty before his monastic conversion, to lead his warband across the wild British borderlands. 111 These stories, if they were ever written down at all, have been lost, but some of their flavour survives even the terseness of the annalistic format.

The *Chronicle* account of the West Saxon *adventus* begins with the year 495, when ‘two ealdormen, Cerdic and Cynric his kinsman, came to Britain with five ships to the place called *Cerdicesora*, and on the same day they fought with the Britons.’ 112 Six years later another party, led by Port and his two sons, landed at Portsmouth (*Portesmuþa*) and slew a young British nobleman. In 508, Cerdic and Cynric fought and killed a British king named Natanleod, capturing the

108 Aldhelm, in the third of his *Carmina ecclesiastica*, celebrates Centwine’s entry into the monastic life, although it may well have been less than voluntary. Aldhelm, *Carmina ecclesiastica*, ed. by Ehwald, iii, ll. 2–5, p. 14.

109 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, s. a. 722, p. 34.


112 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, s. a. 495, p. 19: ‘Her cuomon twegen aldormen on Bretene, Cerdic 7 Cynric his sunu, mid v. scipum in þone stede þe is gecued Cerdicesora 7 þy ilcan dæge gefuhtun wip Walum’.
territory from Netley Marsh (Natanleaga) to Charford (Cerdicesford). In 514, ‘the West Saxons came to Britain with three ships to the place called Cerdicesora, [and] Stuf and Wihtgar fought with the Britons, who fled’. In 519, Cerdic and Cynric ‘began to rule, and in that same year they fought with the Britons at the place named Charford (Cerdicesford)’, in 527 at Cerdicesleaga, in 530 they took the Isle of Wight, and in 552, after Cerdic’s death, Cynric defeated the Britons at Old Sarum. The link between this mythical phase of West Saxon history and the historically plausible reign of Ceawlin is formed by the battle of Beranbyrg (probably Barbury Castle in north Wiltshire) s. a. 556, where a young Ceawlin supposedly fought alongside his father Cynric. The annalistic format remains consistent as it moves towards the seventh century, with each annal typically identifying the West Saxon protagonist(s), the antagonist, and the place at which the battle was fought.

Two features of the Chronicle in its ninth-century form are of particular interest to us here. First, the early annals present a narrative of continual Saxon conquest and expansion throughout the sixth century, primarily against the Britons. Second, almost every ‘West Saxon’ king, both in the Chronicle itself and in the Genealogical Regnal List associated with it, is explicitly linked by patrilineal descent to Cerdic, who was, as Dumville puts it, the ‘crucial legitimising factor’ for any prince who aspired to the throne of Wessex. Thus the annals for 552 and 597 trace the genealogies of Cynric and Ceolwulf respectively via Cerdic back to Woden; Cynegils (s. a. 611) is traced to Cynric; Cynegils’s successor Cenwalh (643–72) is given no genealogy, and only in Chronicle version ε (s. a. 641) and in the Genealogical Regnal List is he recorded as Cynegils’s son;

113 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 501, p. 20: ‘Her cuomon Westseaxe in Bretene mid .iii. scipum in þa stowe þe is geecueden Cerdicesora, Stuf 7 Wihtgar, fuhton wiþ Brettas 7 hie gefliemdon’.
114 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 519, p. 20: ‘Her Cerdic 7 Cynric rice onfengun on þy ilcan geare hie fuhton wiþ Brettas þær mon nu nêm nêp Cerdicesford’.
115 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 527, p. 21: ‘Her Cerdic 7 Cynric fuhton wiþ Brettas in þære stowe þe is geecueden Cerdicesleaga’.
116 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 530, p. 21: ‘Her Cerdic 7 Cynric genamon Wihte ealond 7 ofslogan fealæ men on Wihtgarabyrg’.
Æscwine (s. a. 674), Cynegils’s second cousin twice removed if the genealogies are to be believed, is traced back via Ceawlin’s brother to Cerdic; Centwine (s. a. 676) is traced back to Ceolwulf; Cædwalla (s. a. 685) is traced back via Ceawlin to Cerdic; and Ine (s. a. 688) also via Ceawlin to Cerdic. Ine abdicated in 726, and the *Chronicle* does not provide any genealogical information for the next four rulers. The fifth is Beorhtric (s. a. 783/84), whose ‘direct paternal line goes to Cerdic’. His successor Æthelwulf, however, is given a fully Christianized pedigree (s. a. 858), which links him via Ine’s brother Ingild and Ceawlin not only to Cerdic, or even Woden, but to Noah and ultimately Adam.

Æthelwulf owes his important place in the *Chronicle* chiefly to having fathered King Alfred the Great, during whose reign the text was originally compiled. When we see the history of the West Saxons as embodied in the *Chronicle*, it is from the point of view of Alfred and those of his contemporaries to whom it spoke. It is evident that the compilers drew on earlier annals and genealogical material, but the nature and provenance of this material is extremely uncertain. Dumville and Whitelock have suggested that the West Saxons began to keep annals and regnal lists from the mid-eighth century at the latest, while Moisl has argued that the preservation of myths and genealogies was based on oral traditions that reached back well into the pre-Christian period.

The immediate question here is whether, and to what degree, the *Chronicle*’s account of the kings prior to Ine was already in existence at the end of the seventh century, when the West Saxon name first came into use. We should not expect too complete an answer. The annals of the *Chronicle*, the individual genealogies it contains, and the *Genealogical Regnal List* are inconsistent with regard to dates and regnal lengths, both compared to one another and between different versions of the same text. Dumville demonstrated that the *Genealogical Regnal List*, which lists each king of Wessex along with the length of his reign, embodied an older tradition than that incorporated into the *Chronicle*. Once the difficulties of the internal textual variations are resolved as far as possible, it is a straightforward matter to count backwards from Cynegils, the earliest king whose reign is fairly securely dated, subtracting the regnal lengths of each king

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120 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, s. a. 783/4, p. 39: ‘his ryhtfędren cyn gęþ to Cerdice’.
122 Moisl, ‘Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies’.
as given in the *Genealogical Regnal List*. This results in a date of 538 for Cerdic’s *adventus*, far short of 495, the date given by the *Chronicle*, and 494, the date supplied by the *Genealogical Regnal List* itself. Two kings in particular had their careers drastically lengthened when they were fitted, not altogether happily, into an annalistic format: Ceawlin’s reign was extended from seven or seventeen years to thirty-two years, as already mentioned, and the period from Cerdic’s landing to the founding of Wessex grew from six to twenty-four years.

The reasons for these extensions are no more obvious than the date at which they were made. Yorke has suggested that the beginning of Ceawlin’s reign was placed earlier so that he should clearly precede King Æthelberht of Kent, since, according to Bede, Ceawlin was the second king to hold dominion over the southern kingdoms, and Æthelberht the third. This, however, may have depended upon a misreading of Bede, who appears to have placed the beginning of Æthelberht’s *life*, not his *reign*, in 560, but expressed himself in a way that was open to misinterpretation. If the scribe responsible for establishing an absolute chronology for the West Saxon tradition believed incorrectly that Æthelberht’s reign had begun in 560, it is not surprising that he was forced to extend Ceawlin’s reign to match it. This would have taken place after Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, completed in 731, was widely disseminated.

Aside from the fact that Ceawlin’s reign lasted for seven or seventeen years according to the *Genealogical Regnal List* and thirty-two years according to the *Chronicle*, there are also the fingerprints of an extension within the *Chronicle* itself. Stenton noted that the *Chronicle* appears to duplicate the arrival of the West Saxons (in 495 and again in 514) and the foundation of their kingdom six years later (500/01 and 519 respectively), an interval that mirrors, and

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125 Brooks, ‘The Creation and Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent’, pp. 65–67. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, ii. 5, pp. 150–51, writes: ‘Anno ab incarnatione dominica dcxvi, qui est annus xxi, ex quo Augustinus cum sociis ad praedicandum genti Anglorum missus est, Aedilberct rex Cantuariorum post regnum temporale, quod l et vi annis gloriosissime tenerat, aeterna caelestis regni gaudia subiit’. (‘In the year AD 616, twenty-one years after Augustine had been sent with his companions to preach to the English people, King Æthelberht of Kent, after the earthly realm which he had held for fifty-six years, entered the eternal joys of the heavenly realm’). Brooks, observing that a regnal length of fifty-six years both grants Æthelberht unusual longevity and is incompatible with independent continental evidence, argues that Bede was using poetic licence here, and by *regnum temporale* meant the entirety of Æthelberht’s life.
perhaps imitates, the arrival of Hengist and Horsa in Kent in 449 and the start of their rule in 455.\textsuperscript{127} Kenneth Harrison identified a further duplication of a battle of Cerdic and Cynric against the Britons (508 and 527), and suggested that this feature was the result of two versions of one narrative which had been disjointed by an interval of nineteen years. This was the length of both the Dionysiac Easter cycle, within tables of which the earliest annals were recorded, and the lunar cycle which Harrison argued provided the chronological framework for West Saxon oral history.\textsuperscript{128} It is unclear whether this duplication was a deliberate attempt to alter the date of Cerdic’s \textit{adventus}, or was caused by the technical difficulties of fitting variant versions of oral tradition into an absolute chronology. These extensions of regnal lengths demonstrate, on the one hand, the readiness of scribes to manipulate an existing chronology in response to present political concerns, and on the other a certain degree of respect for the body of the traditional narrative. The precise length of a king’s reign, that is, was apparently more negotiable than his position in the genealogy, or else the annalists could have inserted new kings instead of extending reigns.\textsuperscript{129}

The genealogical traditions enshrined in the seventh-century annals of the \textit{Chronicle} are not straightforward to interpret, especially since the relentless conservatism of alliterative names and the occasional use of nicknames or abbreviations means that it is not always clear which member of the family is being referred to.\textsuperscript{130} Yet one can quite easily draw a family tree of Ceawlin’s descendants from the information contained in the \textit{Chronicle} and find it to be internally consistent down to the end of the seventh century, provided that


\textsuperscript{128} Harrison, ‘Early West Saxon Annals’. See also Story, ‘The Frankish Annals of Lindisfarne and Kent’, pp. 84–90.

\textsuperscript{129} While there are contradictions between the various genealogies, they are relatively minor compared to the chronological manipulations. The only clear contradiction in the genealogies of the seventh-century kings is between the \textit{Chronicle}’s genealogies of Ine under the years 688 and 855; the former lists five generations between Ine and Cerdic, the latter seven, inserting one ancestor named Cutha as Ine’s great-grandfather and another named Creoda as Cerdic’s son. The five-generation version appears under both 688 and 855 in \textit{Æthelweard, Chronicon}, ed. by Campbell, pp. 20, 33; the seven-generation version (with the name Cuthwulf in place of Cutha) also survives in the Anglian Collection. It is likely that the shorter genealogy, which evidently appeared under both 688 and 855 in the lost version of the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} used by \textit{Æthelweard}, and which was left unaltered only under 688 in the surviving Old English versions, is the earlier.

\textsuperscript{130} For further discussion, see Kirby, \textit{The Earliest English Kings}, pp. 40–44.
one is prepared to accept, for instance, that Ceawlin had both a brother and a nephew by the name of Ceolwulf, and that he named one of his sons Cutha after his other brother, and that his grandson and great-nephew were called Cynegils. Alliteration among members of one dynasty was not unusual among Anglo-Saxons. If the Gewissae of the seventh century seem to have been strikingly, perhaps suspiciously, fond of the custom, we should note that five of the six known third-generation descendants of Ceawlin and this brothers were named Cenwealh, Centwine, Cenred, Cenfus, and Cenberht, and there is no reason to doubt that any of these lived; the first three are historically attested kings, and the remaining two the fathers of kings, if not kings themselves. 131 The seventh-century genealogies also survive in a discreet cluster within the Chronicle, distinct from the obviously mythical elements of the sixth century and the information void of the eighth, and are tied to the ninth century only by a delicate patrilineal thread between Inc’s brother Ingild and King Alfred’s grandfather Egbert. It is unlikely that the seventh-century genealogies were fabricated in all their complexity in the ninth century, and equally implausible that they were devised by those five eighth-century successors of Inc whose own pedigrees the Chronicle ignores.

Mythical Origins: Britons and Saxons in the Reign of King Inc, 688–726

While we should remain wary of a source which bears so many fingerprints of later scribes, it does seem that the genealogies of the Chronicle largely preserve late seventh-century traditions of Gewissan descent from King Ceawlin. Beyond Ceawlin, however, the story is very different: the rot begins with his alleged father Cynric, and sets in deeply with the mythical Cerdic. It also seems likely that the tradition of Cerdic’s adventus and the subsequent expansion of Wessex through conquest was well-established in Inc’s day, not least since, according to the Anglian Collection, Inc appears to have promoted himself as

131 Cenwealh is well attested in both the Chronicle and Bede, Historia ecclesiastica, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, III. 7, pp. 232–37; Centwine was king from 676 to 685 and was referred to in a poem by his contemporary Aldhelm, Carmina ecclesiastica, ed. by Ehwald, III, l. 3, p. 14; Cenred, aside from his identification in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 688, p. 32, as the father of King Inc (688–726), is also named in The Law of King Inc, ed. by Liebermann, prologue, pp. 88–89, and appears as rex Westsaxonum when confirming a 692 charter of King Nunna of Sussex (Sawyer, Anglo-Saxon Charters, no. 45); Cenfus is named by The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, ed. by Bately, a. 674, p. 31, as the father of King Æscwine (674–76), and Cenberht (a. 685, p. 32) as the father of King Cædwalla (685–88).
a direct descendant of Cerdic. This tradition may have included the relative chronology as it survives, but by no means the absolute dates of the *Chronicle*, which are broadly reliable only back to Cynegil's reign. One consequence of pushing the West Saxon *adventus* from 538 to 495 was to associate Cerdic and his kinsmen more closely with the Kentish and South Saxon founders, who, according to the *Chronicle*’s narrative, had arrived in 455 and 477 respectively. The West Saxon *adventus* tradition, however, is more textually complicated than either of these, consisting as it does of not one, but three arrivals.

We noted above that two features of the surviving West Saxon dynastic propaganda stand out: the importance of Cerdic as the font of regal legitimacy, and the role of the Britons as the perpetual victims of West Saxon aggression. We can relate both of these features to the political situation in which the Gewissae found themselves in the late seventh century, and thereby better understand the way in which elite identity was formulated according to contemporary needs and concerns. The first feature reflects a desire to push the origins of the West Saxon kingdom two generations further back than Ceawlin, to an ancient landfall on the Hampshire coast. As already discussed, the narrative actually records three separate landfalls, beginning with the arrival of Cerdic and Cynric in 495, which was followed by a second *adventus* at Portsmouth of one Port with his two sons in 501, and finally the arrival of Stuf and Wihtgar in 514. Barbara Yorke has emphasized the clearly mythical elements in each arrival: the recurrence of two brothers, the set-piece battle upon landing which quickly routs the local Britons, and the obvious later derivation of personal names from geographical locations. ‘Port’ appears to derive from Latin *portus*, probably referring to Portchester, ‘Wihtgar’ from *Uectis*, now the Isle of Wight, and the British ruler ‘Natanleod’ from *Natanleaga*, probably Netley Marsh. The *Chronicle*’s account of the mythical Cerdic’s arrival also links his activities to three local places: *Cerdicesora, Cerdicesford* and *Cerdiceslea* (only the second

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133 This is not to say that there are no discrepancies with independent sources, for example the death of Bishop Hæddi of Winchester, which the *Chronicle* places in 703 and Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. by Colgrave and Mynors, v. 18, pp. 514–15, in 705.
of which survives as modern Charford on the river Avon south of Old Sarum). Like the *Chronicle’s* other suspicious etymologies, this probably represents the shaping of myth around existing place-names. Because of the threefold occurrence of the extremely rare personal name element *Cerdic-* in such a small area, Stenton plausibly suggested that the place-names did indeed derive from a single historical individual, though probably a post-Roman British ruler rather than a Saxon invader.\(^\text{135}\)

Even if we accept that Cerdic may have been a genuine figure, how and when he became a Saxon invader and grandfather of Ceawlin is impossible to ascertain, except that he was known as such by the end of the seventh century. The origins of Port, Stuf, and Wihtgar are equally obscure, but Yorke suggests that the odd triple *adventus* of the West Saxons may conceal further Jutish legends which the West Saxons appropriated and incorporated into their own dynastic myth.\(^\text{136}\)

There are good reasons to support this view. Having three similar mythical arrivals, one after the other, seems unnecessarily complicated, especially considering that the very purpose of *adventus* legends is to provide a particular ruling dynasty with a clear moment of origin.\(^\text{137}\) The three arrivals also reflect the three political groupings of the Solent: Cerdic and Cynric for the West Saxons, Port arriving at Portsmouth for the Jutish province of the Meon valley, and Stuf and Wihtgar for the Jutes of the Isle of Wight, which the *Chronicle* (s. a. 534) claims was later granted to Wihtgar by Cerdic. According to the sequence of events, Cerdic, and by implication his lineage, was quite clearly senior to the later arrivals. This would have had obvious benefits for the Gewissae, for it legitimized the seventh-century Saxon conquest — or reconquest, according to the *Chronicle’s* narrative — of vulnerable Jutish territory, which gave them valuable access to continental trade links and a breathing space from Mercian pressure on the Thames.\(^\text{138}\) It also directed the socially embedded martial inclinations of all English-speaking noblemen, Saxon and Jute alike, towards an outside and ancient enemy: the Britons.

The actual relationship between the British and early Saxon populations of the south between the fifth and seventh centuries is a fraught question, particularly the degree to which the Britons — who are, problematically, virtually invisible in the archaeological record — underwent either replacement

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\(^{137}\) Cf. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, p. 61, who writes that ‘the migration was cherished as a source of political order’.

or acculturation. Since the 1980s, there have been influential arguments for a model of elite emulation and acculturation by which small but powerful Saxon warbands gradually established cultural dominance over the majority British underclass.\textsuperscript{139} The British influence on aspects of Saxon material culture is also more widely acknowledged than it was forty years ago.\textsuperscript{140} Now Higham, one of the architects of the acculturation model, expresses the fear in his recent edited volume on this topic that ‘an elite dominance interpretation of cultural change is becoming the new orthodoxy’\textsuperscript{.141} Opposing voices have maintained that the Germanic immigration was larger in scale than a few isolated warbands,\textsuperscript{142} that the immigrants ‘moved into a landscape from which a major withdrawal had taken place’,\textsuperscript{143} and that ‘the significance of ethnic barriers [between Britons and Saxons] has been underplayed in the early medieval historiography of Britain’.\textsuperscript{144} The most persistent challenge to theories of acculturation has been presented by the English language itself, which shows remarkably little influence from Celtic, although there is also disagreement among linguists on this issue.\textsuperscript{145}

Faced with such complexities, it is perhaps best to agree with Ian Wood’s multifaceted conclusion that ‘some places saw rapid takeover with minimum disruption, others saw instances of carnage, and yet others saw a slow, destruc-


\textsuperscript{140} Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Early Germanic Kingship}, p. 22, dismissed the possibility of British influence on the Anglo-Saxons in half a paragraph; since then a considerable amount of archaeological work has been done on detecting British technical and artistic influence on Anglo-Saxon metalwork in particular. For a full review and discussion, see Laing, ‘Romano-British Metalworking’, pp. 42–56.

\textsuperscript{141} Higham, ‘Britons in Anglo-Saxon England’, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{142} Yorke, \textit{Wessex in the Early Middle Ages}, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{143} Coates, ‘Invisible Britons’, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{144} Smyth, ‘The Emergence of English Identity’, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{145} Coates, ‘Invisible Britons’, regards the lack of Celtic loan-words in English as proof of mass population replacement; Tristram, ‘Why Don’t the English Speak Welsh?’, argues that there is evidence for Celtic influence on English at the level of phonology and morphosyntax rather than vocabulary.
tive infiltration'. The original arrival of the Gewissae in the upper Thames, according to the archaeological evidence, likely preceded or immediately followed the first war between Saxons and Britons in the 430s; this may have been one instance of ‘carnage’, although direct and unambiguous evidence of such episodes is notoriously difficult to detect in the archaeological record. The expansion of Gewissan control up the Thames valley and beyond likely involved a complex combination of violence and relatively peaceful capitulation, depending on time and place. The same could be said of the Gewissan annexation of the British west in the seventh century. It was heralded by the battles of Bradford-on-Avon in 652 and Penselwood in 658, in the wake of which the Britons were driven ‘as far as the Parret’, a river in central Somerset. This saw the end of British rule in the region, but there is no reason to believe that there was a mass expulsion of the native population. Padel has invoked the dominance of English place-names in western Wessex in order to support the model of a ‘major replacement of population, language, and place-names [occurring] over a large area in a comparatively short space of time’. The assumption that early medieval place-names are necessarily representative of the ethnicity of the inhabitants, however, is invalidated by C. P. Lewis’s study of Merseate hundred on the eleventh-century Welsh Marches. The hundred contained nineteen manors, all with English names (the majority being -tun place-names, as in Padel’s study of Devon), yet the vast majority of its population was Welsh: fifty-eight households compared to thirty-two English households, with most of the latter concentrated in a single royal manor. Had we a Domesday Book for seventh-century Wessex, we might equally find a surprising number of Britons populating an overwhelmingly ‘English’ toponymic landscape for several generations before English became the dominant language.

The evidence of Ine’s *Law Code* (written 688/93) also describes Britons of several classes living under Saxon rule, and this aspect of the text should properly be related to the newly acquired British lands to the west, not necessarily to Wessex as a whole. Following the conquest, large numbers of Britons sud-

146 Wood, ‘Before and after the Migration to Britain’, p. 46.
147 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. by Bately, a. 658, p. 30: ‘Her Cenwalh gefeaht æt Peonnum wiþ Walas, 7 hie gefliemde oþ Pedridan’.
150 Grimmer, ‘Britons in Early Wessex’, pp. 108–11. Far less should Ine’s Law Code be used as evidence for an apartheid-like social structure which was applied across Anglo-Saxon England.
denly found themselves at the mercy of a Saxon elite, newly arrived from the east, who had taken over tracts of land as the spoils of victory. Among these Saxon incomers were the parents of St Boniface, born c. 675 near Exeter. The much lower *wergeld* of a Briton compared to a Saxon of equivalent rank, as promulgated at several points in the *Law Code*, clearly demonstrates the legally and socially inferior status of the British population under West Saxon rule.  

While the *Law Code* does not define the criteria for distinguishing between Britons (*wealas*) and Saxons (*englisc*), the fact that such a distinction could be externally imposed through legal structures demonstrates that it was seen, at least by Ine and his advisors, as a meaningful and important one.  

Ine inherited the legacy of the previous generation of Gewissae who had conquered these expansive British territories by the sword. The most popular songs and stories of military glory in his court may well have been about this successful war in the west, less often about the ignominious Gewissan retreat from the upper Thames. By tracing his own lineage directly back to Cerdic, who was overthrowing British rulers almost from the moment his feet landed on the shores of the Solent, Ine promoted a dynastic identity whose legitimacy was self-evident. The defeat and oppression of the Britons was a present reality, codified in law and forming the very basis of West Saxon power; it provided a mirror in which Ine could see himself as the sole king of a unified, victorious Saxon people, just like Cerdic before him. It is of course ironic that the name ‘Cerdic’ appears not to be Anglo-Saxon at all, but is probably derived from British ‘Ceretic’. There are echoes of this down the seventh-century genealogies, for the first historical king of the Gewissae, Ceawlin, also seems to have borne a British name, as did Cenwalh and Ine’s own predecessor Cædwalla. In Ine’s time, however, it is unlikely that the British origin of these names was acknowledged, or, if it was, that it was held to be of much importance. The primary concern of the earliest West Saxon annalists was to narrate the steady expulsion and subjugation of the native Britons, and they left no room for accounts of the intermarriage or alliance which likely had occurred.


151 Alexander, ‘The Legal Status of the Native Britons’.


Conclusion

We can see that the West Saxon origin myth of Cerdic, perhaps inspired in content by a similar Kentish myth,\(^{154}\) fulfilled two important political needs. First, it planted the origins of the Gewissan dynasty firmly in southern Hampshire, passing over the fact that the region had formerly been ruled by a Jutish dynasty, and that the Gewissae had beenshouldered out of the upper Thames by Mercia. Second, it justified Saxon rule over the Britons of Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, a sizeable area which had been conquered with relative swiftness between 652 and 661. The triumphant *adventus* myth of Cerdic helped buttress this social reality by portraying the Saxon advance as inevitable, and the battles of Cenwalh and Ine in the west as a natural continuation of the deeds of their ancestors. In a sense, although the tradition had become disjointed from the past, it was not entirely inaccurate. The earliest Saxon groups, presumably including those settled at Dorchester-on-Thames, had managed to conquer the south-east with relative swiftness in the middle of the fifth century, as evidenced by Gildas and the *Gallic Chronicle of 452*. Two centuries later it was the Gewissae, also based in the upper Thames, who conquered most of the remaining British territory in the south-west. Tradition and myth, far from being purely ideological fabrications, were adapted to fit and account for historical forces which had long outlasted living memory, but whose momentum was still felt.\(^{155}\) The Cerdic myth was a fitting and plausible explanation as to how, when, and why the ancestors of the Gewissae had come to Britain: not as mercenaries, but as conquerors from the outset.

We should regard the *Chronicle*’s story of West Saxon origins as an extremely valuable source, not for fifth-century history, but for the dynastic myth-making of later centuries. The ninth-century compilers of the *Chronicle*, luckily for us, were not overly conscientious when it came to reconciling the tangle of annals, traditions, and genealogies they had inherited. In this article we have teased apart these threads and peered between the confusions and contradictions in order to win a glimpse of an earlier stage of dynastic propaganda, to which the Alfredian chroniclers looked back and sought to connect their own rulers. They found that this earlier story, tailored to the political needs of the late seventh century,

\(^{154}\) York suggests that the inspiration was ultimately Gothic in origin, and arrived in Kent via the person of King Æthelbert’s father Irmenric, who had a Gothic name: York, ‘Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends’, pp. 25–28.

\(^{155}\) See the contribution of Francesco Borri in this volume for a similar observation concerning the origin myth of early medieval Venice.
still fitted well in the ninth. It bore the colours of antiquity, continuity, and victory. Alfred took it up just as he took up the Law Code of Ine and appended it to his own laws; in both cases he was claiming the authority of the past in much the same way as his seventh-century forebears had attempted to do when they first planted their unsteady feet in the Jutish south and the British west.

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One of the most vivid images in Venetian history is of the Romans fleeing from the inland cities on account of the barbarians to the marshes and lagoons where Venice was destined to be built. While the barbarians conquered and pillaged the Italian cities, the Romans, from then on called Venetici or Venetians, built a unique town destined to marry the sea and to preserve the Roman traditions through the ‘Dark Ages’.

These images, although seriously criticized by historians, still constitute an important part of popular narrative, and continue to appear in academic debates. It is not my intention to refute these dramatic events. I agree that the barbarians did not come just for a cup of tea, as Bryan Ward-Perkins pointed out.

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2 Grubb, ‘When Myths Lose Power’; Rando, ‘Venedigs “Früh”-Mittelalter in der Moderne’. For an example of the traditional view concerning the oldest myths of Venetian history, see the otherwise excellent book, Nicol, Byzantium and Venice, p. 4. On the subject, see the considerations of Reimitz, ‘Positivismus’.

Nevertheless, the traditional interpretations of the ‘Age of Migrations’ and the origins of Venice are burdened by many methodological weaknesses. The very idea of the violent destruction of a city and the consequent foundation of a new one in a safer and more defendable place is, to a great extent, an historiographical construction. We know that very few cities met their end as a result of violent conquest, and Stefano Gasparri used to say that, with the exception of Carthage and Sodom, the examples are very small in number. Contemporary events also demonstrate that the complete destruction of a city is a rather uncommon phenomenon even with modern weapons and technology. Moreover, specifically in the Venetian case, the idea that the marshes and the water could stop the barbarians because they were unable to sail, presupposes the old-fashioned topos of Roman sea power (following Alfred Thayer Mahan) and of the very barbarian nature of the barbarians, who were so uncultivated that they were incapable of manoeuvring a ship — an image proposed by many classical authors up to Procopius and still utilized by Henri Pirenne and J. B. Bury at the beginning of the last century. Finally, it is questionable why Venice should be considered an Italian unicum, and why the ‘Venetian way’ was not imitated in other parts of the peninsula when, according to classic historiography, the barbarians were pillaging and burning many centres of old Roman civilization.

The strongest argument for accepting and maintaining these old foundation traditions is that many literary sources actually mention them. We notice, in fact, that from the end of the eighth century many chroniclers and historians describe the transfer of the Aquileian episcopal see to Grado, and, later, the settlement of the Roman population in Cittanova, Torcello, Metamaucum/ Shakers’ is also very helpful, although written before the publication of Ward-Perkins’s book. For a critique of the ‘negationist’ approaches to the end of the Roman Empire, see Wickham, ‘La Chute de Rome’, and, more recently, Gasparri, ‘Tardoantico e alto medioevo’. For a more historiographical approach, see Wood, ‘The Fall of the Roman Empire’.


Malamocco and *Rivus Altus*/Rialto. Upon closer inspection, however, the varying storylines in these sources, including the shifting role of the barbarians, reveal these narratives for what they are: an effort to find an explanation for a present situation in the past, a sort of idol of origins, as Marc Bloch would say, with the function of clarifying the present. These narratives, therefore, were not ‘campfire stories’ (or in this case ‘forum stories’) memorializing a long-lost ‘Age of Migrations’ (again, the term ‘Age of Flight’ would be more appropriate), but a way of rationalizing the urban discontinuity that the Adriatic area experienced between the third and seventh centuries. They can thus help us to understand the social and cultural situation in which they were born and the questions they were supposed to answer. As noted by Chris Wickham: ‘cities get burned by enemies, or hit by earthquakes, throughout their history, but if they are not rebuilt afterwards it is because of longer-term causes than one disaster encompasses on its own’. The foundation traditions examined here were efforts to explain also these longer-term causes of discontinuity.

Most interesting is that those stories were not peculiar to Venice, but were shared in a much wider area, namely the Adriatic arc of Roman/Byzantine tradition. We are able to trace them already in the tenth century, up to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, noticing strong regional variations, especially in Split and Venice, the cities where literary culture was flourishing and documentation is more abundant. From this perspective as well, although this is sometimes not recognized in modern historiography, Venice was not ‘un altro mondo’, but was part of a wider and integrated area, a region with peculiar characteristics that was later overshadowed by the city’s dynamism.

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8 Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 13. See also: Pohl, ‘Conclusione: il v secolo’. Among the many reviews of Wickham’s book, see Haldon, ‘Framing Transformation’.

9 I refer here to the very important book of that title: Cracco, *Un ’altro mondo*. Challenging the traditional view on the oldest of Venetian history, I follow the direction suggested in Gasparri, ‘Venezia tra i secoli VIII e IX’; Gasparri, ‘Venezia tra l’Italia bizantina’; and Gasparri, ‘Come nasce Venezia?’. 

1. Defining the Area: The Adriatic Arc in the Early Middle Ages

Between the third and seventh centuries, the Adriatic arc (Dalmatia, Istria, and northeast Italy) experienced an intense discontinuity in urban life, which had its roots in the powerful social, economic, demographic, and political changes taking place in late Antiquity. The extent of these transformations may be grasped by considering that the names of two of the major administrative provinces that covered the Adriatic basin, Venetia and Dalmatia, underwent a peculiar semantic evolution, which finally resulted in them referring to different, or partially different, regions than in Roman times. The major Roman centres of the region suffered severe urban decline, both in terms of population and in terms of the preservation of architectural richness, while smaller towns, more suited to contemporary needs, began to emerge. In this process, two of the ecclesiastical metropolises on the Adriatic, Salona and Aquileia, lost their urban character, the latter becoming the regional paradigm of the abandoned Roman city.

In contrast to narrative sources, which explain discontinuity in Salona and Aquileia by means of a migration myth, archaeological evidence suggests a remarkably different picture, one that does not confirm the violent and total destruction of these two cities. The archaeological evidence points to intense decline and urban discontinuity, but also signs of weak urban life up to the middle of the seventh century, a pattern very similar to that observed in several Mediterranean centres. Such findings puzzled many archaeologists, who,

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12 La Rocca, ‘Le “invasioni”’, p. 58; Sotinel, Identité civique et christianisme, pp. 1–2.


15 On urban decline in the seventh-century Mediterranean, see Hodges and Whitehouse, Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe, pp. 20–53, as well as the new up-dated French edition: Hodges and Whitehouse, Mahomet, Charlemagne et les origines de l’Europe, trans. by Morrison. See also: La Rocca, ‘Lo spazio urbano tra VI e VIII secolo’; and Wickham, Framing the Early Middle Ages, pp. 690–92. On the debate on urban continuity/discontinuity:
trusting narratives that were common in historiography, searched for the traces of the barbarian *Wanderung*, and dated the layers according to the written sources discussed here, thereby creating a circular argument.\textsuperscript{16}

The Adriatic arc was, after the seventh century, a relatively backwater province of Byzantium, apparently linked to Constantinople by elite exchange and the commerce of luxuries. Nevertheless, between the eighth and ninth centuries the settlement of powerful Frankish elites in the newly conquered provinces in Italy and the western Balkans integrated the Adriatic into a wider network of exchange, which connected the eastern Mediterranean to central Europe and the Baltic Sea.\textsuperscript{17} The presence of rich aristocrats, and the consequent demand for wealth, brought about the rapid enrichment of the Adriatic region and a profound change in the fabric of social structures.\textsuperscript{18} The sudden growth in the Venetian lagoons (the place where most of the wealth was gathered and redistributed), the formation of the Croatian dukedom, and the rise of the Dalmatian cities should all be understood as different aspects of the same development, the extent of which is evidenced in the foundation of Benedictine monasteries along the sea-routes, the rise of Dalmatian piracy, and the great prosperity mentioned by the testament of the *dux Venetiarum* John, who died in 831.\textsuperscript{19}

Adriatic communications relied on the Dalmatian, Istrian, and Venetian harbours offering an infrastructure that allowed safe navigation up to the Po Valley, Ravenna, and Comacchio.\textsuperscript{20} The emergence of systems of exchange along the Adriatic and the availability of greater wealth strongly influenced local soci-

\textsuperscript{16} See, for example, the difficulties of finding evidence for a break in urban life: Marasović, *Diocletian’s Palace*, pp. 45–46. See also n. 94, below.


\textsuperscript{20} Pryor, *Geography, Technology, War*, pp. 93–94.
eties, bringing about the rise of powerful new social groups in the major nodes of the Adriatic arc. These groups shared striking similarities, including comparable \emph{origines gentium}. It was the very nature of premodern navigation, conducted without instruments and only during the daylight, thus requiring stops at night, that provided the contact and exchange necessary for the development of mutual likenesses among communities separated by many sea miles.\footnote{McCormick, \textit{Origins of the European Economy}, pp. 402–30; Vernet, ‘La navigaciòn en la alta adad media’.}

One important characteristic of these Adriatic-Byzantine elites was their inclusion among the few Latin/Romance-speaking subjects of the Byzantine Empire, which was otherwise populated by \textit{Greci}.\footnote{Ortalli, ‘Venise et Constantinople’; Ortalli, ‘Realtà veneziana e bizantinità latina’. On the \textit{Greci} the literature is very wide; see the article by Gantner, “The Label “Greek””.} It is possible to find virtually unique Latin epigraphs from the beginning of the ninth century praising Byzantine emperors, as well as documents dated according to the years of the reigns of the same rulers.\footnote{Mihaljćić and Steindorff, \textit{Namentragende Steininschriften}, pp. 95–95.} There apparently even existed similar expressions, attested in Istria and Dalmatia, describing imperial authority. Moreover, these elites sought prestige through similar avenues, travelling to Constantinople and obtaining imperial dignities in order to boast of their status in a local society: a very suggestive relationship between the centre and the north Adriatic peripheries.\footnote{Borri, ‘Gli Istriani e i loro parenti’; McCormick, ‘The Imperial Edge’.} The extent of these shared similarities can be understood from the \textit{Plea of Rižana}, a well known \textit{placitum} which took place close to the river Rižana in Istria (today Slovenia) in the first decade of the ninth century. The \textit{placitum} consisted of a long complaint by the Byzantine elites of Istria, who were facing profound changes brought about by the Frankish conquest of the peninsula. On this occasion, the Istrians referred to Venetians/\textit{Venetici} and Dalmatians as ‘relatives’ \textit{(parentes)} and neighbours, thereby highlighting a sense of belonging which linked men who were close to Byzantium on the Adriatic arc.\footnote{The most updated and complete edition is \textit{Placitum Rizianense}, ed. by Krahwinkler, with extensive commentary. Recent contributions to the issue are: Margetić, ‘L’Istria bizantina ed alcuni problemi’; Esders, ‘Regionale Selbstbehauptung’.}

The extent of this shared sense of identity is, however, difficult to assess, and the difficulty is similar to that which we encounter when describing Byzantine-Italian identities.\footnote{Pohl, ‘Invasion and Ethnic Identity’, pp. 25–27. For an alternative view, see Cosentino, \textit{Storia dell’Italia bizantina}, pp. 383–89.} One major issue is the lack of a common name: it seems that

\begin{itemize}
\item Ortalli, ‘Venise et Constantinople’; Ortalli, ‘Realtà veneziana e bizantinità latina’. On the \textit{Greci} the literature is very wide; see the article by Gantner, “The Label “Greek””.
\item Mihaljćić and Steindorff, \textit{Namentragende Steininschriften}, pp. 95–95.
\item Borri, ‘Gli Istriani e i loro parenti’; McCormick, ‘The Imperial Edge’.
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\end{itemize}
these men referred to themselves according to their provinces of provenance or, less often, to the cities to which they belonged. A broader definition of identity could have been that accorded by the term *milites*. This evidence comes from Venice, and, later (in the eleventh century), Dalmatia: the *militia*, the army, conceived more in an ideological than factual fashion, was the backbone of these Latin-Byzantine communities and of hegemonic power within society. Indeed, the Adriatic-Byzantine elites did not occupy a territorially coherent area because the unity of the Adriatic arc relied on a network of communication routes and sea lines. It is easy to recognize that the Istrians and their neighbours shared an identity that could hardly be called ethnic, since it lacks many of the elements listed by Anthony D. Smith or Raoul Naroll as definitive of ethnic groups.

Still, in spite of these difficulties, it appears that these men developed common traditions of common descent. I will not venture into the question of the actual level of faith placed in these traditions, but it is clear that the *origines* discussed here represent markers of identity and the legitimization of contemporary social and cultural roles. The richest and most developed evidence originates from *Venetiae* and *Dalmatia*; apparently, the Frankish conquest of Istria in 791, and its consequent transformation of the local elites, altered the role of these origin traditions and their successive developments.

2. The ‘Negative’ of a Barbarian History?

The oldest traces of these traditions date to the first half of the ninth century. The core of all these stories was the destruction of a glorious city at the hands of a famous barbarian and the consequent dispersion of the Romans to recently founded, or less prestigious, centres. The popularity of the barbarian leader —
Francesco Borri

who had many faces and could be depicted as Alboin, Attila, or Totila — was apparently considered a direct reflection of the importance of the old urban centre, which became the long-lost fatherland. In contrast with the barbarian *origines gentium*, we find no Scandinavian or Scythian *Urheimat*, nor a Trojan legend; rather, the origins of these traditions were sought in an old Roman city, whose ruins still covered the Italian and Dalmatian landscapes. After the conquest of Aquileia, its inhabitants moved to Istria, the Venetian lagoons, and Ravenna; similarly, the Salonians escaped to the coastal cities, settling Spilt, Kotor, Trogir, Zadar, Rab, Krk, Osor, and Dubrovnik/Ragusa.

In the construction of these traditions, the Byzantine elites on the Adriatic arc, apparently beginning with the *Venetiae*, looked to the barbarian *origines gentium*, mainly to the works of Paul the Deacon, in order to understand their own past. They managed to develop what I call the ‘negative’ of a barbarian history. The stories did not borrow facts from the *Historiae Romanae*, which circulated widely, and the Scipios, the Caesars, and the pagan gods are not present, reappearing only in much later narratives. These traditions were instead built out of a mould provided by the barbarian histories, using the latter as their main source and model; this could also explain their late development. What appears interesting is that, due to the political continuity and the urban discontinuity in the Adriatic arc, these stories were apparently specific to certain communities.

What occurred was, essentially, a turnover of perspectives, with the bearded forefathers of the early medieval kingdoms becoming the ‘famous destroyers’: the villains necessary for the transition between past and present conditions. At the same time, the anonymous male and female objects of the conquest grew to be the heroic founders of the medieval Adriatic towns, becoming less and less anonymous as the traditions developed, and eventually gaining names and

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34 See the review article: Lekson, ‘Landscape with Ruins’.

personalities that served to glorify contemporary families and powerful groups. Therefore, men who did not picture themselves as the successors of the barbarian kings and warriors drinking mead in a frozen landscape tried to build an alternative past whose roots laid in Roman times. These men did so in order to explain their present condition, one in which, despite many changes, they still lived in the orbit of the Empire, gaining power and prestige thanks to relations with Constantinople.

It is possible that a nucleus of these legends concerning the myth of flight and rebirth was in existence prior to the spread of Paul the Deacon’s *History of the Lombards* and the consequent development of the *origines*; the evidence comes from the *Cosmography* of Aethicus Ister — a text probably written in the second half of the eighth century whose obscurity is well known. The *Cosmography* is the fictional account of a wandering Scythian philosopher and able seaman called Aethicus, a native of Ister, who, upon taking a journey around northern Europe, is lucky enough to meet demons, monsters, and other such creatures. The text was supposedly edited by a second fictional character called Jerome, whom we are meant to believe is the famous translator of the Bible. There has been extensive debate about Aethicus/Jerome’s origin among scholars: while the name Ister could suggest a Danubian origin, Ian Wood has recently proposed, with good evidence, that Aethicus’s homeland could have been ‘what an innocent reader of the work’s title might expect it to be’, namely, the Istrian peninsula. In the *Cosmography*, we read a fantastic story about how the wars between Francus and Romulus devastated Istria; the author reports that, after these violent times, into the middle of the eighth century, many lands of the Adriatic peninsula were still burnt ruins from the effects of pil-laging. Following Wood’s idea, we can see how the Istrian Aethicus/Jerome, like other more real authors after him, apparently found in the past a mythical time of conflict between Romans and barbarians, which served as the justification for the shifting geography of the Adriatic settlements. As a consequence of these raids, the former population fled to the sea, returning home only during Aethicus/Jerome’s time:

> My laziness will not let me omit how his [Romulus’s] breed in that time went from Istria to the island of Cassiopea [Corfu] as prisoners, returning after many years to this unreachable wasteland covered with nauseating mud and the ashes of burnings [Aethicus/Jerome refers to Istria], with great sorrow and tedium, and until the day of my birth the land that once was cultivated was left abandoned.\(^{36}\)

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\(^{36}\) Aethicus Ister, *Cosmographia*, ed. by Prinz, p. 233: ‘Quid subolis ignaviae meae meruerit
It is possible that, even in Istria, traditions centred upon a ‘famous destroyer’ were developed, but the only evidence for this comes from folkloric material that links the character of Attila to some demonic masks carved in ecclesiastical and private buildings and dating back to the twelfth century. This evidence is, clearly, very problematic.

3. Patriarch on the Run

The *origines* that link the settlement of the Adriatic arc to the flight of the Roman population to marshes, islands, and safer places apparently developed from the narrative traditions of the retirement of patriarch Paul of Aquileia (sometimes called Pauline), who moved to Grado in the aftermath of the Lombard conquest of *Venetiae* (569). In the years of patriarch Elias (575–87), and after the synod of Grado, the island was renamed *Aquileia Nova* and became the patriarchal see until the first years of the seventh century, when the Lombard kings and dukes of Friuli elected John, who resided in Cividale, patriarch of Aquileia. Meanwhile in the Byzantine lagoons, an alternative candidate, Candidianus, was chosen. From now on, two sees, broadly oriented towards Pavia and Constantinople, competed for the heritage of the Roman metropolis. It would be pointless to follow the endless rivalry between the two centres, but it is from these events that the idea of the birth of Venice, and later of other Adriatic centres, originated. The events are relatively obscure: in 559 Pelagius I (556–61) addressed a letter to the patrician Valentinian mentioning

non praetermittam, cum eo tempore captivati ab Histria Casiopas insolas pervenerunt, post multa annorum curricula vix ad vastam et inviam, caenum ac pulverum ustionem cum magno merore et taedio repedaverunt, et usque in diem nativitatis meae culta quae dudum fuerunt, in solitudinem redacta sunt. Casiopas is probably Corfù (n. 935). I am grateful to Andreas Zajic, who discussed the passage with me. The war between Francus and Romolus is on pp. 230–33. For a summary of the debate, see pp. 2–9 and Herren, ‘The *Cosmography* of Aethicus Ister’. See also Smolak, ‘Notizen zu Aethicus Ister’. The quotation is from Wood, ‘Aethicus Ister: An Exercise in Difference’, p. 205.

37 Zar, ‘Figure apotropaiche in Istria’; Brioni, ‘La leggenda di Attila’.


39 See the essays in Chazelle and Cubitt, eds, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene*, which has helped to frame the discussion on the subject in the most recent international debate.
patriarch Paul (the one who later moved to Grado) as apparently still residing in Aquileia, while a few decades later Gregory the Great named Severus patriarch of both Aquileia and of Grado, and from one of his letters we understand that Severus had his see in the lagoons.\(^{40}\)

With the exception of the *Acts of the Synod of Grado* — which was supposedly composed in the sixth century, but is only attested, in heavily interpolated fashion, in the eleventh-century *History of the Venetians* and, subsequently, in the *Chronicle of the Patriarchs of New Aquileia* — the oldest source describing the transfer of the bishop of Aquileia to Grado is the *History of the Lombards* written by Paul the Deacon at the end of the eighth century.\(^{41}\) Paul set the story in the first years of the Lombard invasion of Italy, narrating that the patriarch Paul, fearing the incoming Lombards, left Aquileia to take refuge on the island of Grado, bringing with him the church treasure: ‘Also the blessed patriarch Paul, who presided over the city of Aquileia and its people, fearing the barbarity of the Lombards, fled from Aquileia to the island of Grado, carrying away with him all the treasure of his church.’\(^{42}\)

Paul’s story was destined to be the core of the Venetian tradition, but his narrative contains significant differences from later developments. First, there is no mention of a fleeing population, only of a bishop moving to the imperial lands after Alboin’s conquest of Italy; nor does Paul describe the widespread and terrible devastation that the later historiography associates with this episode. Second, the flight to Grado is, in Paul’s account, merely a temporary phenomenon, lasting until the Patriarchate of Aquileia was restored under King Agilulf (590–616).\(^{43}\)


\(^{41}\) John the Deacon, *Historia Veneticorum*, ed. by Berto, I, 6, pp. 54–56; *Chronica de singulis patriarchis*, ed. by Monticolo, p. 8.


A seemingly similar tradition is narrated in the *Translation of Saint Mark* (BHL 5283–85). For a long time, the text was understood to be an eleventh-century compilation, largely quoting the *History of the Venetians*, written by John the Deacon at the court of the Venetian duke Peter II Orseolus (991–1008), but the discovery of a manuscript dating from the ninth century altered this view, turning the *Translation* into one of the sources upon which John was able to rely. The *Translation* is a unique text, describing the theft of Mark’s body in Alexandria and its journey to *Rivus Altus*. The episode is supposed to have taken place in the years 827–28, and the text was probably compiled in reaction to the decision taken at the synod of Mantova (827) to abolish the archiepiscopal rights of Grado. The theft was also recorded, in a much less positive way, in the *Travels* of the monk Bernard and the *Life of Luke* (BHL 4894).

The anonymous author of the *Translation* wrote just a generation after Paul, but quoted parts of the *History of the Lombards* in order to set the theft of the relics in a historical framework. Therefore, the oldest Venetian history follows the narrative of Paul the Deacon; but in the *Translation of Saint Mark* it is also possible to notice the first overturning of perspectives mentioned earlier. If, in Paul’s narration, the Lombards who provoked Paul’s flight were perceived, with a certain degree of approximation, as the ancestors of the author, in the *Translation* they represented the climax of three successive destructions of Aquileia, and they appear in the narrative only as the reason for the flight of the Venetian forefathers. Moreover, the transfer of the patriarchal see became, for the first time, the flight of the entire population. The anonymous author wrote:

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44 *Translatio sancti Marci*, ed. by McCleary, pp. 235–64, which is used here. There is also a more recent edition: *Translatio Sancti Marci*, ed. by Dennig-Zettler. On the *Translatio*, see Cracco, ‘I testi agiografici’; and Dennig-Zettler and Zettler, ‘La traslazione di San Marco’.


48 On Paul’s identification with the Lombard past: Pohl, ‘Paul the Deacon’, pp. 113,
When the Lombards were crossing to Italy, the people, fearing their swords, fled to the near islands. Thus they gave the name Venetiae, which is the land from which they fled, to the islands they settled.\textsuperscript{49}

A minor element in the \textit{History of the Lombards} was, a few decades after its composition, developed and expanded by the Venetian historiography in order to become one of the central elements of local history.

A second major development is a document issued by the chancellery of Louis II (844–75) in 855, in which the character of Attila is, for the first time, linked to the foundation of the Venetian settlement:

For the reason that the same city [Aquileia], due to the sins of its inhabitants, suffered for the conquest of Attila and the wild Huns, in the days when many other cities are known to have been destroyed by the sieges and the havoc of the pagans, Paul, the blessed bishop of the city, fled to the island called Grado with the church treasure. Honoratus, the Archbishop of Milan went to Geneva for the same fear.\textsuperscript{50}

The document was Louis II’s confirmation of the rights of the bishops of Aquileia in Istria, rights that were decided during the council of Mantova (827). However, the acts of the council, on the other side, justified the existence of the bishoprics in Grado, just as Paul the Deacon did: ‘Paulus […] fearing the barbarity of the Lombards […] fled to the island of Grado’.\textsuperscript{51} It is striking that in less than thirty years the Lombards of Alboin mutated: here the \textit{barbarorum rabies} is the one of Attila and the Huns.

The transfer of the bishopric of Aquileia was, therefore, in Louis II’s diploma, anachronistically set back by more than a century. Paul, as we saw, did not link the move of Paul of Aquileia to Grado to the Hunnish invasion,

\textsuperscript{116–17}, who points out the difficulties of presenting Paul just as an exponent of a form of Lombard heritage.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Translatio sancti Marci}, ed. by McCleary, p. 245: ‘At vero cum langobardi Italian introissent, hic inde populi multitudo eorum gladios formidans ad proximas insulas transiit’.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ludovici II. Diplomata}, ed. by Wanner, DD. Lu. ii. 17, p. 98: ‘Siquidem cum cogentibus peccatis habitatorum suorum eadem civitas Attile sevissimi Honorum regis esset iam manibus tradita, quo in tempore plures quoque civitates Italie obsidionem vastationemque gentilium passe esse noscuntur, accidit, ut eisdem urbis beatus Paulus antistes ad insulam, que Gradus nuncupatur, cum omni ecclesie thesauro confugeret; Honoratus etiam Mediolanensis archiepiscopus eodem metu lanuensem urbem expeteret’.

but to the Lombard one. It is puzzling to understand why the Hunnish conquest of Aquileia replaced the later invasion of Alboin. Even if at the moment it appears difficult to describe a clear chain of mental developments behind the transformation of the story, it is possible to frame the intellectual milieu in which Attila became the starting point of the Venetian *origo gentis*.

4. Barbarian Mutants I. Lombards to Huns

Attila the Hun may well be the most famous barbarian of all times. Even today he is one of the paradigmatic characters of ancient history. Like Hannibal, he embodies the ideal of Rome’s enemy, yet his character has many roles, including the fictional archetype of the proud heathen king (and I like to picture him as Jack Palance in *The Sign of the Pagan*) or, together with his Huns, the most ferocious and ruthless destroyer of civilizations, where he becomes a sort of eternal paragon for every atrocity.\(^{52}\) It is well known that Bram Stoker’s Dracula claimed Attila as one of its forefathers, and even the Germans, called Huns by the allies in World War I, were associated with the savage conqueror.\(^{53}\)

If we limit our investigation to the Venetian traditions, it seems that the rise of the figure of Attila followed the diffusion of the *Roman History* of Paul the Deacon, and the core of the tradition was Paul’s description of the Hunnish


\(^{53}\) Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 27: ‘We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserker displayed to such fell intent on the seaboards of Europe, aye, and of Asia and Africa too, till the peoples thought that the werewolves themselves had come. Here, too, when they came, they found the Huns, whose warlike fury had swept the earth like a living flame, till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia had mated with the devils in the desert. Fools, fools! What devil or what witch was ever so great as Attila, whose blood is in these veins?’ On the Germans/Huns: Dickson, *War Slang*, p. 70. See also Stickler, *Die Hunnen*, pp. 111–14; Ridley, *Attila the Hun and King Arthur*. 
conquest of Aquileia in 452. According to Paul, the siege of Aquileia took three years instead of the general ‘long time’ proposed by Jordanes, and its outcome was also different: while, in Jordanes’s narration, the Huns ‘just’ pillaged the city, in Paul’s, the city was completely destroyed. Moreover, Paul added the anecdote of the young girl, ‘forma quidem eximia sed candore pudicitiae amplius decorata’, throwing herself from a tower in order to avoid the lust of the (wicked, we suppose) Huns (sordissimis hostibus ludibrium).

Not only in his Roman History did Paul show interest in the Hunnish King; Attila is also mentioned in the Deeds of the Bishops of Metz as the ravager of Gaul, and even in Paul’s masterpiece, the History of the Lombards, there is an element in the well-known episode of the Lombard conquest of Treviso traceable to the King. This episode requires a broader discussion.

The Deacon mentions an encounter between the bishop of the city, Felix, and King Alboin at an unknown place along the river Piave. The episode clearly resembles the meeting between Attila and Pope Leo described in the Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine. The aftermath was, however, completely different.

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54 Jordanes, Getica, ed. by Mommsen, cc. 219–21, p. 114 (Jordanes, Gothic History, trans. by Mierow).
57 Paul the Deacon, Liber de episcopis Mettensibus, ed. by Pertz, p. 262: ‘Eo igitur tempore cum reverendus hic praesul vitam cunctis virtutibus decoratam duceret, Attila rex Hunorum, omnibus belluis crudelior, habens multas barbaras nationes suo subjectas dominio [...] ad universas deprimendas Gallias suae saevitiae relaxavit habenas’.
Alboin, in opposition to Attila, behaved like a gentleman (‘erat largissimus’), granting church properties to the bishop in a written document. Felix, also, unlike his predecessor, did not stop the conquering King, but implicitly blessed the rest of his march. If, for Attila, the encounter with the Bishop of Rome signalled the end of his good fortune, for Alboin, the meeting with Felix initiated his glorious progression. Even the length of the siege of Aquileia, three years according to Paul, may recall the Lombard conquest of Pavia. This could be the key to understanding Paul’s Attila — Cristina La Rocca has suggested that the historian aimed to build a parallel narrative between the two kings, who advanced into the same territory but with strikingly different outcomes: ‘Attila che soltanto distrugge è costretto a ritirarsi; Alboino che rispetta e patteggia può proseguire il suo cammino di occupazione’. In Paul’s view, Alboin and Attila were two sides of the same coin, a coin that depicted a conquering king acting in radically different ways.

Paul’s Attila played a further role, in which he became the reason for the continuity/discontinuity of the settlement of Venetiae. In his Roman History, the Deacon, after narrating the destruction of Aquileia, included two lists of cities, the pillaged and the destroyed ones. These elements, unknown to Jordanes, were a projection into the past of a situation contemporary to the author. Attila’s destructions were, quite simply, a literary way of explaining the stark discontinuity in the Italian settlement and the reason why there existed towns that had lost many of their urban aspects in the days of the Deacon. Paul created a time before and a time after the conquests of Attila, adopting the Hunnish King as a chronological watershed for the history of settlement in north-eastern Italy. Even the most famous of Attila’s Italian conquests was a largely fictional episode; archaeological excavations in Aquileia have not discovered the massive destruction described by the literary sources, but Paul found in Attila the justification for the marbles of Aquileia looming among the vegetation.

After Paul’s History, interest in the Hunnish King seems to have spread quickly, and Paul’s narrative was apparently at the root of a sort of ‘Attila revival’

60 Pohl, ‘Premesse e conseguenze’, pp. 150–51, 160. He also points out the parallels between Alboin’s conquest and that of King Theodoric. See also Settia, ‘Aureliano imperatore’.
61 La Rocca, ‘I Longobardi’, p. 154. I would like to thank Cristina La Rocca for allowing me to read her manuscript.
62 See also the considerations of Pohl, ‘Premesse e conseguenze’, pp. 156–58.
63 La Rocca, ‘Città scomparse in area veneta’, pp. 289–90.
64 On the lack of layers of destruction see n. 14, above.
during the ninth century. Sources dependent on the Roman History show great concern with the episode of the siege of Aquileia, which was a central feature of the Verses for the Destruction of Aquileia, attributed alternately to Paulinus of Aquileia or to Paul the Deacon. In the Verses, there is no relationship between Attila and the rise of Grado to a patriarchal see, nor between Attila and the settlement of the lagoons, but there is the idea of a massive and total destruction brought about by the Huns and their king. The author of the Verses was very well acquainted with the narratives of Jordanes and Paul the Deacon (and, for this reason, it is possible he was Paul himself), quoting many elements already present in both of the accounts, such as the massive size of the Hunnish army (500,000 soldiers), or the sagacity of the king, who understood from the fact that birds were flying away from the walls of Aquileia that the city was doomed (the same anecdote of Jordanes was reported by Procopius, as is often the case).

A second poem, also on the conquest of Aquileia but written a few decades later and dedicated to Louis II (Ernst Dümmler dated its composition to 844–55), shows many similar elements, but also suggests certain differences. Here, too, the destruction of the city is complete, but we find no mention of Attila. The barbarians are Avars (probably the Huns), Goths, and Lombards. The poem therefore describes the three subsequent destructions mentioned in the contemporary Translation of Saint Mark. The idea that the Avars/Huns, the Goths, and the Lombards were successive scourges sent by God in retribution for the sins of the Aquileians became an alternative tradition to the story of Attila. It was repeated for a long time and still proposed, after two centuries, in John the Deacon’s History of the Venetians.


67 On the many similarities between Procopius’s and Jordanes’s works, see Svennung, Jordanes und Scandia.


69 For a comparison with other competing traditions, see Reimitz, ‘Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge’.
Other ninth-century sources also show an interest in the pagan king, following the great historiographical impact of Paul the Deacon’s *History of the Romans*. In the *Life of Saint Geminianus* (BHL 3297), Attila, while attempting the destruction of Modena, is, for the first time, called ‘scourge of God’ (*flagellum Dei*).\(^{70}\) In the *Life*, there is also a fascinating mention of the Caspian Gates, behind which Alexander the Great enclosed the Huns during his *anabasis*.*\(^{71}\) Attila also plays a role in Agnellus’s *Book of Pontiffs*, written in the middle of the ninth century. Here, the action of Pope Leo is quoted again, but it is transferred to Ravenna due to Agnellus’s antagonism to the Roman see.\(^{72}\) More interesting is that, in this source, Attila is not the evil destroyer but a wise king bearing the symbols of imperial authority, who, like Alboin in Treviso, grants wealth to the church, even faking the conquest of the city in order to spare Ravenna, while still maintaining the oath he gave to his soldiers.\(^{73}\)

The first complete attestation of the Venetian tradition comes from the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913–59), who wrote about it in his treatise *On the Administration of the Empire*. It is striking to find Attila’s legend written in Greek so far away from the Venetian lagoons, but Emperor Constantine was able to rely on many sources unknown to us. These sources are generally understood to be imperial dossiers redacted from provincial authorities on the field that furnished rich data on the Adriatic arc. In Chapter twenty-eight, dedicated to the *Venetiae*, Attila, the King of the Avars, comes from the north to destroy Aquileia: here, like in the *Translation of Saint Mark*, the modality of the settlement is changed.\(^{74}\) The transfer of the bishopric does

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\(^{72}\) Brown, ‘The Church of Ravenna’.


\(^{74}\) Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. and trans. by Moravcsik and Jenkins and Jenkins, c. 28, l. 4–11, p. 118: ‘Οἱ δὲ νῦν καλούμενοι Βενετίκοι ύπηρέχον Φράγγοι ἀπὸ Άκουλελγίας καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑτέρων τόπων τῆς Φραγγίας, καὶ κατώκους εἰς τὴν ξηρὰν ἀντικρυ τῆς Βενετίας. Τοῦ δὲ Αττίλα, τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ἀβάρων, ἐλθόντος καὶ πάσας τὰς Φραγγίας
not occur, and the narrative focuses on the Venetians (called Φράγγοι by the Emperor) finding their way to the lagoons.

A good comparison to Constantine’s story comes from Liudprand’s Antapodosis. Liudprand of Cremona was a contemporary of the Emperor and had the chance to meet him personally during his diplomatic activities in Constantinople.\(^75\) Even when mentioning the violent conquest of the city, Liudprand does not link the episode to the foundation of Venice. It seems, therefore, that those traditions were mostly local ones, at least until the great success and wide circulation of Andrea Dandolo’s Extended Chronicle. Apparently, the episode of the destruction of Aquileia was well known, but we cannot say the same of the tradition concerning the birth of Venice. Landulfus Sagax, who wrote his Roman History (or Historia Miscella after the edition of Pierre Pithou in 1569) between the tenth and eleventh centuries, also provided a very vivid account of the siege of Aquileia without mentioning the successive flight of its inhabitants to the lagoons.\(^76\)

Moreover, if today the role of Attila in the origins of Venice is widespread in non-academic contexts, and most of the students of Venice’s grammar schools learn that the founders of their city fled from the ‘Barbari a cavallo, con due corni per cappello’ in the last tragic days (according to the teachers) of the Roman Empire, in the eleventh century John the Deacon, adhering to Paul the Deacon’s narrative, still linked the flight of the patriarch to Alboin’s march. However, John did enrich Paul’s History, following the later traditions, and added the escape of the population, as had already happened in the Translation of Saint Mark:


\(^76\) Landolfus Sagax, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xv. 6–7, 11, pp. 6–7; Prelog, ‘Landolfus Sagax’.
The people of the same province, refusing the Lombard lordship, went to the neighbour- ing islands, and, in this way, the name *Venetia*, from where they fled, was given to the same islands, and the people who are still living there are called *Venetici*.77

The shifting name of the province was already mentioned by Paul the Deacon and the Anonymous of Ravenna, but neither of them mentioned the migration of the population.78 Therefore, the elements constituting this tradition matured slowly, with many alternatives being offered.

Not just the identity of the famous destroyer was debated, or the number of pillagings necessary to demolish a Roman city, but also the very location of the Venetian origins. Some evidence indicates that the city destroyed before the settlement of the lagoons was Altinum. The best-known evidence comes from the twelfth-century *Chronicle of Altinum* and *Chronicle of Grado*. The *Chronicle of Altinum* mentions the Hunnish destruction of Aquileia, even describing the sack of a pagan temple dedicated to Behel, but this source claims that it was only after the destruction of Altinum that the *Venetici* were finally convinced to settle Torcello in the Venetian lagoons.79 Neither of the chronicles, however, mentions a clear relation between Attila and Altinum; rather, the destroyers of the city are nameless. Yet, in Paul’s *Roman History*, the town figures among those destroyed by the King, a piece of information unknown to Jordanes.80 The bond between Attila and Altinum also appears in the *Cosmography* of Ravenna, where the only mention of the Hunnish King is as the destroyer of the city.81

77 John the Deacon, *Historia Veneticorum*, ed. by Berto, i. 5, p. 52: ‘Populi vero eiisdem provintie penitus recusantes Longobardorum ditioni subesse, proximas insulas petierunt. Sicque Venetie nomen, de qua exierant, eiisdem insulis indiderunt, qui et actenus illic degentes Venetici nuncupantur’.


79 *Chronicon Venetum*, ed. by Simonsfeld (on Behel’s temple, see p. 15). See also Rosada, ‘Storia di una cronaca’; Fasoli, ‘I fondamenti della storiografia veneziana’; Carile, ‘Chronica gradensia’.


Eventually, however, the idea of Attila destroying the glorious Aquileia before the settlement of the lagoons was, as we have mentioned, destined to have great success. The tradition of Attila appears in the *Chronicle* of Otto of Freising, which, surprisingly enough, may be the first Latin chronicle to clearly report it. We see here the traditional elements of the birds leaving the walls and the consequent, brutal conquest of Aquileia, but then Otto continues:

Without Attila noticing it, the inhabitants fled to the sea, to the island called Venice after their name, *Venetici*. They moved with them the relics of the saint Hermachorae, the first of their bishops, and they began to live there. That is the reason why until today there is a quarrel concerning the patriarchal dignity between Grado and Aquileia. The siege of the city was so massive and prolonged, and the multitude of soldiers so great, that the inhabitants say that an incredibly high mountain, called Utinus, that I myself saw, was built by the army as a wall.

Otto was apparently able to visit the places and listen to locals. Nonetheless, after him, other authors reported the Venetian tradition that survived until our own time. Like Otto, the first modern historians of Venice, Henri Pirenne among them, preferred the Attila tradition to the possible alternatives. Still today in Torcello, in front of the church of Santa Maria Assunta, there is an old stone chair called *Trono di Attila*.

5. The Strange Fall of Salona (and of Other Smaller Places)

Roman cities on the opposite shore of the early medieval Adriatic also suffered severe discontinuity; for example, the centre of Roman life, the metropolis of Salona, must have been, like Aquileia, in very bad shape. Determining the rea-
son for this decline is difficult due to the poverty of the evidence: sources on the
city become scarce after the letters that Gregory the Great addressed to its bish-
ops. Later sources, the oldest one being again Constantine Porphyrogenitus’s
*On the Administration of the Empire*, explained this long silence by reference to
a violent destruction, which apparently took place in the first half of the sev-
enth century. The Emperor reported two slightly different versions of the fall of
the city, both largely archetypical, in which the villains are the barbarian tribes
from beyond the Danube: at the beginning of the account, they are said to be
wandering without knowledge of what lies on the northern shore of the river,
but once provoked by the inhabitants of ancient Dalmatia, called ‘Ῥωμάνοι, the
barbarians cross over and take Salona.\(^8\)

After the conquest, the Salonitans escape to an Adriatic island, eventually
asking Emperor Heraclius (610–41) for permission to settle the abandoned
palace built by Diocletian (284–305) in Split. According to Constantine
Porphyrogenitus, therefore, both Aquileia and Salona were conquered by the
Avars, and the fall of the two cities was at the origin of the early medieval set-
tlement of the Adriatic arc. A very important difference is that the foundation
myths of the eastern Adriatic shore did not include a ‘famous destroyer’ until a
very late period, even if J. B. Bury proposes that Attila may be implicitly men-
tioned in the traditions of the foundation of Ragusa/Dubrovinik, as we will
soon see.

The destruction of Salona is not referred to in any other narrative until the
thirteenth century. Contemporary sources do not exist, and the metropolis of
Dalmatia is never mentioned after the beginning of the seventh century and
earlier than the brief entry ‘Ἰωάννης τῆς ἀγίας Σαλονηντιανᾶς’, in the acts of the
second council of Nicea in 787, the only exception being the *Cosmography*
of Ravenna.\(^6\) From the seventh century onwards, many historians tried to
find a solution to the disappearance of Salona and, relying on Constantine
Porphyrogenitus and Thomas Archdeacon, a thirteenth-century Dalmatian
historian, they imagined a terrible conquest — a vision strengthened by the
many stereotypes regarding nomadic and Slavic violence.\(^7\) Essentially, it was

\(^8\) Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. and trans. by Moravcsik

\(^6\) Anonymous of Ravenna, *Cosmographia*, ed. by Schnetz, v. 14, p. 95; Lamberz, *Die
Bischofslisten des vii. Ökumenischen Konzils*, p. 48. That the mention of a bishop does not prove
urban continuity is well demonstrated by Brandes, ‘Byzantine Cities’; La Rocca, ‘Città scom-
parse in area veneta’, pp. 292, 298.

\(^7\) Ostrogorski, *Byzantinische Geschichte*, p. 64: ‘Um 614 wurde Salona, das Zentrum der
thought that the fall of Salona must have happened between the last entry in Gregory’s register, or an epigraph that can be dated to the second decade of the seventh century, and the pontificate of John IV (640–42), a Dalmatian pope who sent a certain Abbot Martin to the Balkan coast in order to ransom the prisoners of the barbarians and collect the relics stolen by the pagans.

Even if this passage has been universally used as the terminus ante quem for the destruction of the city, it is clear that neither Salona nor Avars and Slavs are mentioned in the Book of Pontiffs, and Martin’s mission could well be linked to John’s Dalmatian origin, instead of being the reaction to an unmentioned conquest of the city. However, the event was thought to be connected to Isidore’s entry on the Slavic conquest of Graecia, and Salona was supposed to have been conquered in 614, as the archaeologist Frane Bulić maintained, or in 639, according to more recently discovered numismatic evidence.


88 Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, iii. 9551; Katičić, ‘Die Literatur des frühen kroatischen Mittelalters’, p. 29; Gabričević, ‘Question de la datation du sarcophage’, suggests dating the inscription to the sixth century.


92 Bulić, ‘Sull’anno della distruzione di Salona’; more recently, see Marović, ‘Reflections about the Date of the Destruction of Salona’. Jakšić, ‘Constantine Porphyrogenitus’, dates the conquest to 622–26. Finally, for a wider view, see McNally, ‘Split in the Byzantine Empire’. A good survey of Byzantine coins in the Balkan region is Curta, ‘Byzantium in Dark Age Greece’.
Bulić, who was writing more than a century ago, wondered why the chroniclers dealing with Italy, such as the ‘Copenhagen Continuator’ of Prosper of Aquitaine, the *Fredegar-Chronicles*, or, later, Paul the Deacon, did not describe the conquest of Salona.\(^{93}\) In effect, the tragic fate of the city, which later chroniclers and contemporary historians imagined to be havoc and flames, left no trace in the extant documentation. The reason for this lack is, as far as I am concerned, quite simple; it is that Salona was never conquered. The causes of Salona’s decline, instead of being found in the Avar’s proverbial siege, should be sought in the less exciting and often mentioned transformations that the great urban centres underwent at the end of Antiquity. The idea of a violent bloodshed, however, was so influential that, even after the first archaeological excavations found that continuity and a slow decline were more indicative of the fate of the city during the first half of the seventh century, a brutal conquest was still invoked in the same survey, although this survey included no evidence to support such an idea.\(^ {94}\) Moreover, the breathtaking site of Salona suffered as a result of the work of modern excavations, which were mainly conducted in order to uncover the early imperial layers; this work destroyed the early medieval ones and obstructed a deeper understanding of that era of the city’s history.\(^ {95}\) The research is, therefore, very much oriented towards classic Christian archaeology, following the path shown by Ejnhard Dyggve more than half a century ago.\(^ {96}\) A very similar *forma mentis* can also be perceived in the studies of Diocletian’s palace in Split, but here as well, the layers show continuity through the first half of the seventh century, and continuous settlement from the fourth century onwards, not the sudden migration of frightened Romans described by the chronicles.\(^ {97}\)

If we return to literary sources, the first traces for the development of the idea of a violent conquest of the ancient episcopal cities in Dalmatia comes from a letter of Pope Stephen VI (896–97) to Bishop Theodosius of Nin, the

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\(^ {93}\) Bulić, ‘Sull’anno della distruzione di Salona’, pp. 268–70.


\(^ {95}\) Hodges, *Towns and Trade in the Age of Charlemagne*, p. 28. See also the considerations of Ward-Perkins, ‘Urban Continuity?’, pp. 7–9.


future Archbishop of Split. In this letter, the Pope mentions the destruction of the *ecclesia* and its consequent restoration:

We strongly desire that the church of Salona, which you, with the help of God, claim to have restored, will return to its former condition. Moreover, with assiduous prayers, we beg for the restoration of all the churches destroyed by the fury of the barbarians, so that the edification of new churches should not overcome the restoration of the old.\(^98\)

Stephen’s testimony is extremely important: two decades earlier, the church of Salona was already linked to the town of Split, but was represented only by an archpresbyter; unfortunately, we do not know of any bishop there. In a letter of John VIII (872–82), dated to 879, the salutation reads:

To the most reverend and holy bishops Vitalis of Zadar, Domenicus of Osor and to John, archpresbyter of the Salonian church, and all the elders and citizens of the town of Split, and also Zadar (Beograd na moru?) and the other towns.\(^99\)

Stephan’s mention of the destruction/restoration of the city could therefore be suggestive of the ongoing process of the appropriation of Salonitan metropolitan rights by the community of Split. These claims may finally have borne fruit at the beginning of the tenth century, when the synod of Split (925) established the authority of the Salonian bishop, sitting in Split, over the Dalmatian sees and also over the *episcopus Chroatensis*, the bishop of Nin.\(^100\) The idea is, unfortunately, speculative due to the difficult transmission of the acts of the synod, which survive only in an enlarged version of the chronicle of Thomas Archdeacon, the *Historia salonitana maior*, a sixteenth-century compilation; the synod was unknown to Thomas himself.\(^101\) If this were not the case, the


Francesco Borri

synod of Split could be a very good *terminus ante quem* for the development of the tradition of the Salonians’ flight to Split. It may not be by chance that the first complete narrative of Salona’s fall, and the consequent birth of Split, was compiled in the same years as the synod (a narrative reported in Constantine Porphyrogenitus’s *On the Administration of the Empire*).

In the same *Acts*, there is also mention of a common older origin for the sees of Ragusa/Dubrovnik and Kotor, perhaps a reference to the Roman see of Epidaurum, as we will now see.\(^{102}\) The narrative about the foundation of Ragusa/Dubrovnik presents, in fact, many similar elements to the narratives about Split. Like the Split legend, it survives in Constantine Porphyrogenitus and in a much later text, the so-called *History of the Duklja*, a history composed primarily of mythical material. Both the identity of its author and the year of composition have been debated, but later historiography identified the writer as Bishop Gregory of Rab, who lived at the end of the twelfth century.\(^{103}\) This date, although widely accepted, remains a hypothesis, and the first proof of the chronicle’s existence is the *Extended History* of Andrea Dandolo, who was able to quote from it in the first half of the fourteenth century.

According to Constantine, Ragusa/Dubrovnik (῾Ραούσιον) was founded in the aftermath of the destruction of Epidaurum (Πίταυρα). The fleeing population, as in the account of Salona, established the city of Ragusa, a better-fortified and safer town. Constantine apparently relied on a source that reported a list of the families of noblemen who fled from Epidaurum. The Emperor wrote that the foundation of Ragusa occurred five hundred years before his time (c. 449–51) — this was the element that J. B. Bury read as a trace of Attila’s myth.\(^{104}\)


\(^{103}\) Anonymous of Duklja, *Chronicon*, ed. by Šišić. On its date of composition, see Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, pp. 14–15; Steindorff, ‘Die Synode auf der Planities Dalmæ’, pp. 279–80. See also the recent theory of Bujan, ‘La Chronique du prêtre de Dioclée’. Bujan believes the *Chronicle* to be a creation of the humanist Mauro Orbini (from the fifteenth to sixteenth century), who is traditionally considered the first author to publish an Italian translation of the work. Bujan proposes that Orbini summarized older accounts deriving from the *Annals of Ragusa* and the *Chronicle of Maurilius* in order to build a false account of earliest Dalmatian history.

As in the case of Split, Constantine linked the birth of a new city to the destruction of another ancient and more prestigious city, and he presented the birth of the new city as a result of the flight of the population. These two narrative elements are, in this case as well, largely fictional. The city of Ragusa/Dubrovnik, like Split, was already in existence and populated before the supposed conquest of Epidaurum, and the story was a later attempt to explain a more complex transformation and to claim a glorious heritage for the town. The ongoing process of association between Ragusa/Dubrovnik and Epidaurum is attested, perhaps for the first time, in the *Cosmography* of Ravenna, but it is well known that the text is heavily interpolated. The anonymous cosmographer (or anonymous interpolator) wrote: ‘Epidaurum, that is Ragusa’.

For Constantine Porphyrogenitus, therefore, the medieval settlement of the Adriatic arc was explained according to a common pattern. Aquileians (Φράγγοι), Salonians, and Epidaurians (both Ῥωμᾶνοι) survived the Age of Migration by fleeing to new, previously empty locations: the islands of the Venetian lagoons, the empty halls of Diocletian’s palace, or the rocks where Ragusa/Dubrovnik was destined to be built. It seems clear that an Age of Flight followed the much more famous Age of Migrations. According to the traditions, the Empire played a role in this; indeed, it is striking that Emperor Heraclius, who gave the Salonians permission to live in the palace of Split, also appears in the Venetian tradition as the emperor who sent the chair of Saint Mark to Grado. The actions of allowing the settlement of Diocletian’s palace and of sending Mark’s chair are only superficially different. In both situations, Heraclius is the ruler who confirms and grants rights to the new community, and who acts as the preserver of continuity in the face of the discontinuity experienced by the settlers.

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106 John the Deacon, *Historia Veneticorum*, ed. by Berto, i. 4, p. 52: ‘Ad cuius roborem Heraclius post hec augustus beatissimi Marci sedem, quam dudum Helena Constantini mater de Alexandria tulerat, sanctorum fultus amore direxit, ubi et actenus veneratur pariter cum cathedra, in qua beatus martir sederat Hermachoras’.

6. Thomas Archdeacon: Barbarian Mutants II

The narrative of Thomas Archdeacon is the first work focused on the history of Dalmatia, with the possible exception of the Chronicle of Duklja, whose date of composition, as I will shortly explain, I believe to be later. Thomas was a native of Split who travelled widely and took an active part in the political life of the city during the years that saw the wars against Trogir, the Mongol invasion, and the consequent flight of Béla IV (1235–70) to Dalmatia. The Archdeacon reached the pinnacle of his career in 1243, when he was elected archbishop of Split. However, his election did not please the Hungarian party in the town, and Thomas had to resign from his post; it may have been for this reason that the Archdeacon vented his frustration in literature, leaving us a history of the bishops of Salona and Split from the bishops’ origins up to his own days. Thomas was especially concerned with events contemporary to his own lifetime, for which events he is a very valuable and entertaining source. His account of the early history of his town, however, is largely imaginative, due to his lack of sources. Nevertheless, Thomas did a good job of describing life in ancient Dalmatia, quoting Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, Jerome’s Vita Hilarionis, Lucan, and Virgil. However, his account of the events following the end of Gregory’s letters becomes very obscure. This situation was not unique to Thomas; other authors who were interested in Dalmatia, such as Peter Damian (c. 1007–72), could only report the sixth- and seventh-century struggle between the pope and the bishops of Salona, Maximus and Natalis, due to the scanty nature of sources describing early medieval Dalmatia, sources which are also very difficult for us to trace and identify. This lack of otherwise widely-circulated early medieval chronicles and annals can perhaps be explained by the fact that Thomas, like us, could find no mention of Salona; yet, even characters like Borna, described as dux Dalmatiae in the Royal Frankish Annals, whom we would expect to be interesting for Thomas, are not mentioned by the Archdeacon.

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108 Thomas Archdeacon, Historia, ed. by Karbić; see also the classic edition of Thomas Archdeacon, Historia Salonitana, ed. by Rački.

109 On Thomas, see Cocci, ‘Venezia e il Medio-Adriatico’; Curta, Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, pp. 16–17; Kršnjavi, Zur Historia Salonitana; Selem, Tommaso Arcidiacono. A recent contribution with an extensive bibliography is Matijević Sokol, ‘Archdeacon Thomas of Split’.


111 Annales regni Francorum, ed. by Kurze, aa. 818–21, pp. 149, 151–52, 155. On Borna, see Curta, Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, pp. 135–37; Depreux, Prosopographie de l’entourage, pp. 146–47.
The core of the first section of the History is the now well-known motif of the conquest of Salona and the settlement of Split, which followed the destruction of the Roman centre. In his account, Thomas follows Augustinus’s model, painting the barbarians as God’s retribution for the Salonians’ sins and wicked ways; interestingly, in the History, the barbarians who conquer the Roman metropolis are the Goths of King Totila.\textsuperscript{112} The Archdeacon places the destruction of Salona in a chronologically confused timeline, describing the Gothic conquest of the city after the Maximus affair, which was at the beginning of seventh century, many decades later than the end of Gothic rule in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{113} In the History, we read that Totila came from the north (the land between Germany, de partibus Teutonie, and Poland) with an army of Goths.\textsuperscript{114} From the mountains of Croatia, the barbarians descended to the sea, placing the city under siege and, after few dramatic pages, conquering it. When the Goths entered the metropolis, as we might expect, panic erupted, and the inhabitants fled to the sea, taking refuge on the islands for a while and eventually settling the deserted palace of Emperor Diocletian in Split.\textsuperscript{115}

We do not know of any sources that contain the elements elaborated by Thomas. It appears that the author was transcribing a tradition intended to justify the rights of Split as ecclesia Salonitana as well as the Salonitan origin of the Archdeacon’s town-fellows. If many elements of Thomas’s narration were also present in Constantine Porphyrogenitus’s On the Administration of the Empire, it is striking that the Avar/Slav protagonists of the Emperor’s treatise are, in Thomas’s account, Goths. As in the Venetian tradition, where the Lombards mutated to Huns, in Thomas’s piece, the Avars became the more prestigious Goths.

The notion of Goths conquering Salona puzzled many historians, particularly because the presence of Totila in Dalmatia was corroborated by the Chronicle of Duklja, which spoke of three brothers, the principes Gothorum Brus, Ostroyllus, and Totilla (sic), who decided to declare war on the kings of Istria and Dalmatia during the reign of Anastasius (491–518).\textsuperscript{116} Given this

\textsuperscript{112} See Corradini, ‘Die Ankunft der Zukunft’.


\textsuperscript{114} Thomas Archdeacon, Historia, ed. by Karbič, c. 7, p. 34: ‘Gothorum tempore, qui Totila duce de parti bus Teutonie et Polonie exierunt.’

\textsuperscript{115} Thomas Archdeacon, Historia, ed. by Karbič, cc. 7–10, pp. 32–52.

\textsuperscript{116} Anonymous of Duklja, Chronicon, ed. by Šišić, c. 1, p. 293: ‘exiit quoque gens a septentrionali plaga, quae Gothi nominabantur, gens ferox et indomita, qui crant tres fratres principes, filii regis Svevladi, quorum nomina sunt heac: primus Brus, secundus Totilla, tertius vero Ostroyllus’. 
evidence, it has sometimes been proposed that Thomas was reporting the 
Croat migration, which, according to traditional historiography (that relies on 
Constantine Porphyrogenitus), took place in the first or the second quarter of 
the seventh century. 117 The evidence has been used in the most uncritical way 
possible, and it has been assumed that the Croats were indeed a lost Gothic Stamm that forgot its language but still had pure Germanic blood running 
through its veins. From this argument, many racist theories were born, which 
were very popular among the Ustaša fascists during World War II and many 
‘exiled’ Croatian historians up to the 1970s. 118 Croatian Gothicism, although 
a very interesting phenomenon, has never been thoroughly studied. 119 But it is 
clear that the Croats and Goths can be equated only in ideologically oriented 
works, not only because the ‘Gothic theory’, as it is termed in some of the histo-
riography, is a blatant and xenophobic mythe aryen, but also because it relies on 
an imprecise reading of the History of the Bishops of Salona and Split. 120 Thomas 
mencions a Croatia already in existence when the Gothic King came from the 
north and, due to the country’s richness, decided to conquer it. Moreover, the 
Archdeacon searched for Croatian origins in ancient ethnography, quoting 
Virgil and Lucan and implicitly linking the Croats to Crete due to the conson-
ance of their names. 121

The Goths in Dalmatia were apparently part of a new tradition, unknown 
before Thomas’s time. Yet Thomas’s brilliant narrative enjoyed only moderate 
success, since it was quoted and elaborated only by Thomas Tuscus at the end

117 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio, ed. and trans. by Moravcsik and 

118 The theory was formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century: Gumplowicz, 
‘Die politische Geschichte der Serben’, but attained its most developed form in Šegvić, ‘Die 
gotische Abstammung der Kroaten’. On this, see Bartulin, ‘The Ideology of Nation and Race’, 
pp. 176–223, 245–51; Yeomans, ‘Of Yugoslavian Barbarians’. After WW II, the idea was pro-
posed again (as one example) by Guldescu, History of Medieval Croatia. See also: ‘Goti’, in 

119 Paul, ‘Gotizismus’; Svennung, Zur Geschichte des Gotizismus. For a general introduction 
to the phenomenon, see Zellhuber, Der gotische Weg in den deutschen Krieg, pp. 19–24, 35–40.

120 On this subject, the classic is Poliakov, Le mythe aryen; more recently: Olender, Les 
langues du paradis. See also: Banti, ‘La nazione come comunità di discendenza’; Smith, Chosen 
Peoples, pp. 166–217.

121 Thomas Archdeacon, Historia, ed. by Karbić, c. 7, p. 36: ‘qui nunc dicuntur Chroatae, 
dicebantur Curetes vel Coribantes’. The Coribantes were the mythical warriors protecting the 
baby Zeus in Crete. See Gordon, ‘Kureten’.
of the thirteenth century and by Andrea Dandolo in the fourteenth. The Gothic tradition was otherwise forgotten until the Dalmatian humanists discovered it.

In order to comprehend Thomas’s narrative, we must understand the role of the barbarians in the conquest of Salona. Thomas equates Goths to Slavs (but not just the Croats), something that is surely suggestive. However, rather than the Goths, we should take Totila as the starting point to understand the Archdeacon’s account. Totila was, in fact, the barbarian leader who formed the central aspect of the tradition, and the barbarians themselves were shaped according to the role of their king, in a striking example of barbarian loyalty, which, however, was destined to mislead generations of historians.

7. Totila’s Bow

Totila’s myth is not comparable to that of Attila. It has been noted that both rulers embodied the archetypal proud and fierce persecutor of the Christians, but the Gothic King was famous primarily through the writings of Procopius, and, before he became the hero of Felix Dahn, who wrote about him in *A Battle for Rome*, his deeds were not very popular, being less well-known than those of his Hunnish colleague. Totila was mentioned in the Latin sources dealing with the Gothic War — principally, in the continuator of Count Marcellinus, in Jordanes’s *Romana*, and, more extensively, in Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*.

122 Thomas Tuscius, *Gesta imperatorum et pontificum*, ed. by Ehrenfeuchter, p. 491: ‘Sed civitate Salona destructa per Totilam, archiepiscopatus cum archiepiscopi corpore in iam dictum palatium est translatus, ibique civitas fabricata, que Spalatum est vocata’.


where the King faces many of the protagonists of the Pope’s hagiographical collection, namely, Benedict, Sabinus, Cassius of Narni, Cernobius of Populonia, Fulgentius of Otricoli, and Herculianus of Perugia. Moreover, Totila did not experience such a rich and fruitful Nachleben as other barbarian kings, such as Theodoric or Alboin. Regardless of his heroic feats, the Gothic King was relatively neglected by the later literary tradition.

Despite this situation, the name Totila appears quite often in Latin sources. Even a superficial overview, however, makes it clear that the name Totila does not always describe the Gothic King, but rather indicates the much more popular Attila the Hun. It is possible that the confusion originated from the consonance between the two names, but it is difficult to understand how this barbarian crisis of identity began.

An early attestation of these shifting identities may be found in Godfrey of Viterbo’s work. Godfrey (1125–95/1200) was an historian who worked as court notarius under Frederick Barbarossa (1152–90) and Henry VI (1190–97). In his Memoria seculorum, he described Attila and Totila as two kings of the Hungarians. He wrote:

We read that two were the kingdoms of the Hungars. The first, ancient one was close to the swamps of the Maeotis at the frontiers between Europe and Asia, and the second, more recent one is in Pannonia and derives from the former; therefore, some call Pannonia New Hungary. The Hungarians are also called Huns. Under Attila and Totila, who once ruled over them, they laid waste many kingdoms in Gaul and Italy.

Many elements are blended in this short account. It is sufficient to say that Godfrey identified the Huns and Hungarians and considered Attila the ancestor of both peoples, as Lambert of Hersfeld (before 1028 — after 1081) had already done. Godfrey narrated the well-known episodes associated with

127 Carnevale, ‘Totila come perfidus rex tra storia eagiografia’. I would like to thank Laura Carnevale, who kindly sent me a copy of her article.


130 Lambert of Hersfeld, Annales, ed. by Hesse, a. 1071, p. 184.
the battle of Chalons fought by Attila and Aëtius in Gaul (451) and the consequent Hunnish invasion of Italy, which ended with the famous meeting between Attila and Pope Leo. Godfrey, however, added a character to the story, namely, King Totila: he made Attila and Totila two co-protagonists, who both performed Attila’s deeds, known thanks to many attestations in Prosper, Jordanes, and Gregory of Tours. I do not believe that Godfrey depended on a chronicle that is now lost; rather, it seems that in his own days there were already conflicting traditions according to which the two names were used in similar contexts to describe Attila. Quite simply, there must have been versions of Paul’s or Landulfus’s Roman History, or other narratives, in which the King of the Huns was called Totila. Geoffrey probably had access to both of them, and, in order to find a solution to these multiple personalities, he transformed the Hunnish King Attila/Totila into two distinct characters: Atili [sic] et Totila.

In a later chronicle, Totila was again identified with Attila: Martin of Troppau (d. after 1278) described Totila as rex Wandalorum (and it is very interesting that in many sources of the twelfth century the Huns are called Vandals, who were, at the time, identified with the Slavs). It is Totila who is said to have met with Pope Leo after having burnt down Aquileia, and it is again Totila’s broken bow, which appears to the sleeping Emperor Marcian (451–58), that announces the king’s death. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Giovanni Villani, writing about the origins of Florence, remembered the violent conquest of Totila as a flagellum Dei; he was, however, describing Attila’s feats. The names had become so interchangeable that the name Attila was also used to describe the king who died at Tagina.

The tradition was even stronger among Hungarian historians. One of the most exemplary statements comes from Heinrich von Mügeln (living in the

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131 On the evolving meanings of the name Wandalı: Steinacher, ‘Wenden, Slawen, Vandalen’.
133 Giovanni Villani, Nuova cronica, ed. by Porta, 1. 1, 1, p. 3; Luzzati, ‘Villani, Giovanni’, cols 1678–79; Ragone, Giovanni Villani e i suoi continuatori.
135 Macartney, The Medieval Hungarian Historians, pp. 41–42.
fourteenth century), who wrote in his chronicle: ‘After this battle Attila, whom someone called Totila, was chosen by the Huns as their king.’  

An even more striking comparison comes from a letter sent by the Hungarian King Béla IV to Pope Innocent IV (1243–54), in which the King described the havoc brought by the Mongols to his land and quoted a memory of the past:

Let us take as an example Totila, who advanced, conquering, from the East to the West, establishing his court in the middle of the kingdom of Hungary; fighting the Caesars coming from the West to conquer the East, he founded many strongholds that defined the frontiers of our kingdom.

Totila is Attila once more.

The Hungarian tradition, moreover, furnishes us with a further element that enables better understanding of Thomas the Archdeacon’s account of the conquest of Salona. The Deeds of the Hungarians, written in the second half of the thirteenth century (the terminus ante quem is May 1285) by Simon of Kéza, a cleric living at the court of Ladislaus IV of Hungary (1272–90), describes King Attila pillaging the eastern Adriatic coast, an element that never appears in older narratives. According to Simon:

Then [Attila], after holding his formal court, marched from Pannonia through Styria, Carinthia, and Dalmatia until he reached the Adriatic by the cities of Salona and Split, both of which he ordered to be destroyed and burned. Finally he left and seized the city by the sea [...] and many other towns in the mountains, until finally he reached Aquileia.


137 Béla IV, Ep. ad Innocentium IV papam, in Codex diplomaticus, ed. by Fejér, iv. 2, p. 222: ‘Totila (Atilla) in exemplum veniar, qui ex parte Orientis ad Occidentem veniens subiugandam, in medio regni Hungariae sedem suam principaliter collocavit; et contra Caesares, qui ex occidente ad sibi submittendum oriens dimicabant, quam plurima ad constructionem exercitus faciunt, infra regni nostri terminos deponebat’. On this, see Birnbaum, ‘Attila’s Renaissance’, p. 93, n. 9.

138 On the relationship between Béla IV and the papacy, when the latter was under threat from the Mongol invasion, see Berend, At the Gates of Christendom, pp. 163–71. The relationship between the Mongols and Béla IV also comprise a central role in Thomas Archdeacon. See Sweeney, ‘Thomas of Spalato and the Mongols’.

139 Kézai Simon, Gesta Hungarorum, ed. by Veszprémy, c. 15, p. 54: ‘curiaque solemni celebrata egressus est de Pannonia per Styriam, Carinthiam et Dalmatiam pertransiens, apud urbem Salonam mari Adriatico et Spaletum se coniunxit, ubi ambas urbes dirui fecit et cremari.’
The same modality of conquest was already present, in a much simpler version, in the *Chronicle* of Magister P., the anonymous notary of King Béla IV (1172–96). The Magister wrote: ‘The mighty King Attila, in the year of the Lord’s incarnation 451, descending from the Scythian Land with a strong army, came to Pannonia, and, after having put the Romans to flight, he gained the kingdom.’

Simon of Kéza’s Attila, therefore, embodied a tradition in which Attila conquered Dalmatia along with Salona; this tradition was perhaps intended to legitimize the Hungarian takeover of the eastern Adriatic coast at the beginning of the twelfth century. Writing a few decades before Simon, Thomas reported the same tradition of Attila destroying Salona, giving to his Totila an itinerary very similar to that of the Hungarian Attila. He wrote: ‘The same duke [Totila], before bringing war to Italy, wasted the region of Dalmatia and moved to Salona, which he partially destroyed.’ A thirteenth/fourteenth-century source, moreover, the so-called *Hungarian-Polish Chronicle*, made Attila (called Aquila) the conqueror of Croatia, exactly as Thomas the Archdeacon did with Totila.

It seems, therefore, that Thomas the Archdeacon, like many modern historians, positioned the destruction of Salona during that period of time in which his sources became more meagre, that is, after Gregory the Great’s death, and relied on the contemporary tradition of Attila/Totila in Dalmatia. Moreover, Thomas found a solution to the conflicting traditions concerning the King’s name by cutting him in two: he wrote of an Attila who was ancestor of the Hungarians, ‘ferocissimus persecutor Christianorum’, and of a Totila who was conqueror of Salona. In the process, the Archdeacon established Totila once again as King of the Goths.

Egressus tandem circa mare [...] civitate ac cetera multa oppida occupans in montanis, pervenit tandem Aquilegiam. For the use of Attila’s myth during the Middle Ages in Hungary, see Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, pp. 205–10; Birnbaum, *Humanists in a Shattered World*, pp. 144–46; Randy, ‘Recollecting Attila’.


It is now possible to see that the reference in the Chronicle of Duklja to Totilla (sic) as one of the three Ostrogothic brothers who conquered Dalmatia can no longer be interpreted as a confirmation of Thomas’s account, but rather should be considered a quotation from it. There was no libellus Gothorum, as the author mentions in his introduction, because there was no Gothic tradition in Dalmatia. It was Thomas who gave Attila/Totila the role of a Gothic king and who thereby puzzled generations of scholars. Following Thomas, the Priest of Duklja constructed his Gothic history. The error of modern scholars was to compare Thomas’s account merely with Constantine’s On the Administration of the Empire, without considering the cultural framework of thirteenth-century Dalmatia. Instead, the traditions associated with the fall of Salona collected around the character of Attila — who in some cases was called Totila — as is attested in many chronicles from the time of Goeffrey of Viterbo. If we keep in mind the Attila tradition, Totila’s conquest in Dalmatia can be explained without relying on the nonsensical association between Goths and Croats.

8. Conclusions: Andrea Dandolo, the Two Totilas, and Attila’s Twisted Ways

This paper has traced origin traditions from their first attestations to their later developments. The foundation myths were apparently a method of explaining the peculiar urban discontinuity and the profound transformations of the social, economic, and political structures of late Roman life, as well as a method of legitimizing the new Byzantine/Adriatic elites who rose to power between the eighth and ninth centuries. Even if these origines have often been understood as peculiar to Venice, this paper suggests how they were, rather, shared among many urban centres of the Byzantine Adriatic.

Essentially, the origines centred upon the destruction of a large Roman city, an event that took place during the obscure Age of Migration: after the conquest of the city in question, the citizens settled a new community during what I have called the Age of Flight. The creation of this past was primarily a means to answer contemporary questions of identity and to validate present conditions by constructing a bond with a glorious past and claiming, at the same time, the episcopal rights of an ancient Roman see.

What is more striking is that these traditions were not developed independently and did not rely on a detailed account of previous events but were an elaboration of the barbarian histories — mainly that of Paul the Deacon — for which they constituted a negative. It is, in fact, possible to follow a reversal of perspectives, whereby the objects of conquest became the founding fathers of
the cities in the Adriatic arc. On the other hand, the very heroes of the barbarian histories, such as Attila or Alboin, acted as the *deus ex machina* that explained the discontinuity of the Adriatic arc — a discontinuity that unfolded through a pattern of violent destruction, flight, and the subsequent foundation of a new city.

In the tenth century, this tradition was already evident in Venice, Split, Ragusa/Dubrovnik, and, perhaps, Istria. We have seen that, for a long time, many alternative versions, which dealt with the modality of the conquest, the name of the protagonists, and many other secondary elements competed with one another, until they reached their mature forms around the twelfth or thirteenth century. A crucial role was played by Attila, whose popularity apparently spread after the diffusion of Paul the Deacon’s works. The Hunnish King was already regarded as the famous destroyer in the legend of the origin of Venice composed by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, and it seems that Thomas Archdeacon described the King’s conquest in order to construct a fictional flight of the Salonians to Split. A complication lies in the fact that Thomas’s villain is a certain Totila, King of the Goths, but we have also seen that in the high Middle Ages both the names Totila and Attila could have been used to describe the King of the Huns. These shifting personalities were one of the main reasons why the common origins of these traditions have not, until now, been recognized. Very soon after Thomas’s *History* began to circulate, matters became rather messy; a good example comes from Andrea Dandolo’s *Extended History*.

Writing in the fourteenth century, Andrea developed a historical narrative that dealt primarily with Venice and covered the period from the first century AD to the year 1280. Collecting material ranging from the first days of the Roman Empire until the coming of age of the Venetian Republic, the historian had to deal with most of the characters we have encountered in this article. Andrea, however, was no longer able to recognize the single matrix of these traditions, which he painstakingly tried to frame into a coherent picture. The similarities and contradictions of the combined traditions resulted in the presence of two men called Totila in different sections of Andrea’s work. One of them was the King of the Ostrogoths, who died in Italy fighting Narses; the second, more unusually, was Totila, King of the Goths, who sat in Dalmatia and became the forefather of the Moravian principedom, and for whose description Andrea depended on the *Chronicle of Duklja*, which was first attested in this text.\(^{144}\)

The name Totila appeared, therefore, in two different contexts, and the presence of a Totila in Dalmatia influenced Andrea's account of Attila. Andrea wrote: 'In fact Attila [Athila], King of the Huns, after having collected his men, marched along the sea, conquering Trogir, Sibenik, Beograd na moru, Zadar, Nin, Senji, Pula, Poreč, Ljubljana, Trieste', before heading towards Aquileia.\footnote{Andrea Dandolo, \textit{Chronica}, ed. by Pastorello, v. 5, p. 58: 'Nam, Athila rex Hunorum, reasumptis viribus, circa mare pertransit, cepitque Tragurium, Sibinicum, Belgradum, Iadram, Nonam, Signiam, Polam, Emonam, Parencium, Émonam, Tergestum.'} It is easy to recognize how the itinerary of Andrea's Attila echoed that of Simon of Kéza's narrative, but it should also be noted how Salona, the most important (and presumably rich) centre of late Roman Dalmatia, is missing from the list of the destroyed towns. This element may cause us to wonder about Attila's twisted ways. If something strange did occur, however, it was not on the part of Attila, but in Andrea's mind.

Andrea, being acquainted with Thomas the Archdeacon's narrative, knew that Salona was destroyed by Totila, King of the Goths.\footnote{Andrea often quoted Thomas's \textit{Historia}. See, for example: Andrea Dandolo, \textit{Chronica}, ed. by Pastorello, iv. 3, p. 15: 'Hec quidem sedes in Spalato, destructa Salona, cum corpore pontificis translacta est.'} As an historian, however, he was no longer able to recognize behind Thomas's account the Attila tradition that he himself was reporting in order to explain the origin of Venice. Following this apparent confusion, he created this peculiar route for the Hunnish King. Salona must have been absent from Attila's conquering march because Andrea, following Thomas, thought that the city had been conquered by Totila and his Goths. Meanwhile, Andrea the historian fused the narrative of Thomas with that of the \textit{Chronicle of Duklja}, as many scholars did after him. In doing so, he made a completely distinct character out of the Dalmatian Attila/Totila. Hence, in his story, there are two Totilas, as well as an Attila who has a rather unusual sense of direction.

If we follow the long history of these traditions and their roots in the social changes taking place on the Adriatic arc between the eighth and ninth centuries, we realize how, for a fourteenth-century historian, the single matrix of these foundation myths was irredeemably lost. Andrea was, in fact, puzzled by how the Venetian traditions overshadowed much older and more widespread ones; his confusion, in the end, contributed to the creation of the Venetian legend, a myth that was destined to be long lasting.
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Tuscans as gens?
Shaping Local Identities and Communities in Early Medieval Tuscany

Marco Stoffella

To Lara and Tommaso

The Ambiguous Character of Local Identity

The concept of local identity has been broadly examined and has, at times, been used to excess and therefore misused. In recent years it has been at the centre of various political discourses and has also been used by the scientific community, in particular by sociologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists. The cultural and political importance of the two concepts of identity and community has arisen from the uncertainties of globalization; the answers to these same uncertainties have been found in a symbolic anchoring to local peculiarities, which have been often ‘rediscovered’, and in the ideological and political valorization of the concept of community.

It is possible, in the local dimension, to find symbols that corroborate the feelings of identity and the sense of belonging to single communities. More than other concepts, therefore, that of local identity has been characterized by perceptions of separateness and by the search for a genuine ‘authenticity’. The logic behind this research has been that of aut... aut, which has aimed to remove ambiguities — but it is precisely such ambiguity that constitutes the concept of identity.

1 Riccio and Brambilla, eds, Transnational Migration. For archaeological approaches to this subject see Revell, Roman Imperialism and Local Identities. See also the conference organized in memory of Corinne Crawford at the UC Berkeley Department of Classics in 2008 on ‘Local Identities in the Ancient Mediterranean’. 
We can describe collective identity as a social representation and a symbolic construction in which a plurality of persons — who are part of the same community and who are planning their existence within it — recognize themselves. Identity, therefore, is a system of consciousness, communication, and action, which is expressed as a common sense, as a narrative construction which structures exchange and which forms political discourses. Furthermore, communities need to symbolize common identity elements, which they believe to be shared, just as single individuals need to symbolize the constitutive elements of their own identity. In conclusion, it is possible to state that local identity is a representation that a specific community has of itself that does not reflect reality, but contributes to the construction of reality. This same representation is not only a mental construction, but has strong practical implications since it directs behaviour and practices.

Moreover, to grasp the ambiguous character of local identity requires overcoming the dichotomy that describes it as either an open or a closed system. For this reason it can be useful to define local communities as complex systems which co-evolve in the space of their possibilities. Thus, local communities are ‘closed’ because they have a particular social organization and a propensity to reproduce themselves; but local communities are also ‘open’ because they are influenced by external and disruptive elements. To a static and exclusive image of collective identities we do not, therefore, need to oppose an open image, but an evolutive and flexible one.

Collective identities are not immutable, but evolve through processes that cause discontinuities and instabilities. Individuals who belong to the same community share repertories of traditions, stories, behaviours, and relations which are continuously re-signified and reinvented according to the circumstances. In addition, individuals or groups in a community have different aims which are pursued through competing representations of their collective identity, selected according to these same aims. Identity, in fact, is in constant evolution and is thus a temporary outcome of political, historical, and social constructions.

These general reflections on the characteristics of local identities allow us to tackle important issues related to the links between the construction of local

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2 Serge Moscovici, *Le rappresentazioni sociali.*
3 Augé, *Non-lieux.*
5 Gianluca Bocchi and Ceruti, ‘Introduzione: la sfida della complessità.’
6 Bodei, *Destini personali.*
identities, the management of political issues, and the different forms of communities during the early Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the area of northern and central Italy. In the following analysis, I will concentrate my attention on issues that are also common and transverse to many of the other realities which were part of the Carolingian Empire. Based on a broad scholarly literature, we can assert that in Tuscany between the eighth and eleventh centuries complex processes of construction of distinct identities took place that originated with some major socio-cultural developments. Firstly, the emergence in the first decades of the ninth century of a new elite that we could define as ‘colonial’. This new elite, which was in some cases of transalpine origin and in others of Lombard extraction but had in common a strong political pro-Carolingian attitude, absorbed the local elites, settled in the territory during the phase of the strengthening of Carolingian rule, and integrated itself into the regional and local context, establishing itself in the pre-existing substrate. Secondly, we can observe the construction of an identity among the Tuscan native population under the impact of Carolingian and post-Carolingian rule and the affirmation or even invention of local traditions and cults in accordance with the new political conditions. Finally, one of the most interesting aspects of politics in Tuscany during the early Middle Ages was the attempt, by those we can call regional leaders, to create a specific regional or provincial discourse of development that entailed the reformulation of regional or provincial identities.

Regional Identity as the Identity of a People

Historiography has stated that regionalism or provincialism, which I consider here to be synonymous, are two aspects that are in competition with the unity of the so-called ‘early medieval state’, thoroughly discussed at the conference in Vienna in 2007. However, an investigation of the regional or provincial development in Tuscany during the early Middle Ages suggests that identitarian politics at a regional level, and indeed even more so at a local one, are more complex and finely nuanced than might initially seem to be the case. Tuscan regional identity was neither exclusive nor opposed to others, but was one of

7 Hlawitschka, Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder; Stoffella, ‘Crisi e trasformazione delle élites’.
8 For a general overview, see Lucca e la Toscana nell’alto medievo.
9 Pohl and Wieser, eds, Der frühmittelalterliche Staat. See also Airlie, Pohl, and Reimitz, eds, Staat im frühen Mittelalter.
a series of multiple and overlapping identities. These were structured within a hierarchy of places and local identities that reached down to, and interacted with, county and village level, as well as up to what we could, anachronistically, call the ‘national level’. At the same time, it is clear that the appeal of localism began to influence the ways in which regional leaders participated in ‘national politics’. Moreover, there are indications that the emphasis on localism may have had tangible results in the county and in the town or city, becoming more significant to identity formation than regionalism, although the consequences of this for regional and local politics remain unclear. In order to explain these general considerations, we need to consider some examples and analyse them.

In the early Middle Ages, narratives of the origins of peoples have often been included in identity discourses to dignify their vicissitudes or to legitimize their role in specific political contexts. Very broad and accurate research has been carried out on these narrative typologies and the Wittgenstein Projekt has produced fundamentally important results. Within the identitarian narratives it has sometimes been possible to individuate explicit references to the construction of identities which refer to smaller social groups than those usually defined as gentes. The so-called Frankish Table of Nations or Genealogia gentium is an imaginary bridge between the Frankish context, Carolingian Europe, and early medieval Tuscany. As is well known, it is a text where numerous people of Germanic origin are enumerated, who all lived between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Some variants of the so-called Frankish Table of Nations that have been independently transmitted include explicit identitarian references to peoples of a regional or sub-regional character.

In fact, in one variant of the genealogy — transmitted by two manuscripts revised in Italy — the name of the people of Turingi was replaced by that of the Tusci, meaning precisely the inhabitants of early medieval Tuscany. Thanks to the ability of clever intellectuals and copyists, therefore, between the tenth and eleventh centuries, the identity of a ‘people’ was attributed to the inhabitants of Tuscia and full dignity given to the Tusci compared with the other peoples mentioned in the Table. By analysing the Italian variants of this genealogy some

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10 Pohl, ‘Telling the Difference’.
11 Among the many texts produced during the last years of research at the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Institut für Mittelalterforschung, see for example Corradini and others, eds, Texts and Identities.
12 Goffart, ‘The Supposedly “Frankish” Table of Nations’.
13 Le Jan, ‘Mémoire thuringienne et opposition politique’.
questions can be posed. Was this text an intellectual elaboration that corresponds to other documentary or narrative sources, or was it a clumsy attempt to misrepresent a remote or non-existent reality? Was it a sign of an ongoing identity-process, or the mistake of an inaccurate or inventive writer? In order to answer these questions and to understand more profoundly the ‘Italian’ version of the Frankish Table of Nations, we first need to examine the genealogy, the manuscripts, as well as the institutions which produced or preserved them.

The Frankish Table of Nations

Interpreted by scholars from the second decade of the nineteenth century as the ‘fränkische Völkertafel’, it is today better known as the Frankish Table of Nations following Walter Goffart’s exhaustive study. Goffart’s analysis has fixed some important points: the text was written around 520 in Ostrogothic Italy or in Constantinople, then copied and enlarged in Francia around 700. From Francia it returned to Italy, where different versions were reproduced and have survived. The Table of Nations, in fact, is transmitted in the illustrated Codex legum Langobardorum which comes from La Cava, Archivio della Badia della Santissima Trinità, 4 (henceforth referred to as Cavensis 4). Six other versions exist in diverse manuscripts and are preserved both north and south of the Alps. An eighth version is included in the ninth-century Historia Brittonum. All these versions can now be confronted, thanks to Goffart’s comparative edition in which they are all reproduced.

The so-called Frankish Table of Nations continues from Tacitus Germania’s threefold division of the Germans into Ingaevones, Herminones, and Istaevones and enhances the origins of the Germans. According to Goffart, however, the gentes mentioned within it — among which are the Goths, Vandals,
Thuringians, Lombards, Bretons, and Franks — ‘belong more to the neighbourhood of the sixth, rather than to the one of the second century’.  

It is also worth noticing, as already underlined by Goffart, that each version differs in some respects from the others, and that they are preserved in different contexts.  

There is, however, one exception, because two of them are almost identical: these are the versions in the Cavensis 4 and the Casinensis 384, the latter being a patristic florilegium (Florilegium patristicum ordine litterarum A — Q dispositum) which dates back to the early tenth century.  

The common elements of the ‘fränkische Völkertafel’ in the two codices are: the list of names of gentes, which follows exactly the same order, the fact that both texts differ from all the other extant versions in presenting Tuscans, instead of Thuringians, as close relatives of the Lombards, Burgundians, and Bavarians, the fact that they both recognize Mulius as the common ancestor, and finally that they list twelve, rather than thirteen, peoples.  

Walter Goffart has traced the peculiarity of these two versions back to the Beneventan area, where Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Reichenau ccxxix — the version F of his edition — also originated.  

All three versions of the Table of Nations mentioned embody a more emphatically modernized catalogue of peoples than any of the other transalpine recensions: Casinensis 384 and Cavensis 4, respectively m and e of Goffart’s edition, displace the Lombards and introduce the Tuscans, whereas the older F embodies even more drastic changes, one of which places the Franks almost at the head of the list.  

In con-
trast, the version preserved in the Vaticanus Latinus 5001, a copy of a historiographic miscellany, dated around 1300, can be traced back to the transalpine group. This Vatican version was produced in Salerno from a manuscript written in southern Italy (c. 974) which can be traced back to Montecassino or to some previous codices written there. ²⁶

The version in the Casinensis 384 can be considered to be the model for that of Cavensis 4, even if the Frankish Table of Nations precedes a glossary of the Leges both in the Vaticanus Latinus 5001 and in the Cavensis 4. ²⁷ It is not surprising, therefore, that the Table of Nations copied in the Casinensis 384, nearly identical in the Cavensis 4, can be definitively traced back to southern Italy, presumably to Montecassino. Walter Pohl has already shown in detail how both codices he analysed that still preserve the so-called Frankish Table of Nations — respectively Cavensis 4 and Vaticanus Latinus 5001 — were assembled to assist specific strategies of memory and identity-building in or around St Benedict of Montecassino. ²⁸ We need, therefore, to concentrate our attention on the most interesting and most studied of the two codices which maintained the pro-Tuscan version of the genealogy.

The Cavensis 4

The illustrated Codex legum Langobardorum from La Cava, Archivio della Badia della Santissima Trinità, MS 4 is a famous manuscript of Lombard law, written c. 1005, which also includes a collection of Carolingian capitularies. ²⁹ Its content has been inventoried many times because of its illuminated portraits of the different legislators and the plurality of texts it transmits. ³⁰ At the very beginning of the codex is the Table of Nations, named by the copyist as Genealogia gentium (‘genealogy of peoples’). ³¹ The text, however, is written on


²⁷ Pohl, Werkstätte der Erinnerung, p. 139.


²⁹ Goffart, ‘The Supposedly “Frankish” Table of Nations’, p. 140. A detailed description of its content is in Pohl, Werkstätte der Erinnerung, pp. 113–16. The portraits of the legislators are described and reproduced in Rotili, La miniatura nella Badia di Cava, ii, pp. 7–20; Fobelli, ‘In margine a due noti manoscritti’.

a separate fragment; this leaf, one-third as large as those of the Cavensis 4 that follow, is sewn to the front of the codex and numbered fol. 1.\textsuperscript{32} Scholars have deduced that it has been written in a different hand from that which compiled the main manuscript;\textsuperscript{33} analogies have been found between the hand who wrote the \textit{Table of Nations} and that of the last quaternion.\textsuperscript{34}

However, as already mentioned, this version of the \textit{Table of Nations} is a peculiar one because it states that Tuscans, rather than Thuringians, are the relatives of Lombards, Burgundians, and Bavarians.\textsuperscript{35} Tuscans have traditionally been part of the Lombard kingdom, and of the subsequent kingdom of Italy (\textit{regnum Italiae}), too. At the very beginning of the eleventh century, however, the anonymous writer of the Cavensis 4 placed Tuscans on the same level as the Burgundians, Bavarians and, even more strikingly, the Lombards. The Tuscans were explicitly distinguished from the latter. As Walter Pohl has recently stressed, ‘medieval texts are much more ambiguous and full of contradictions than we tend to think’, and ‘manuscripts offer privileged access to such contextual traces, while editions often eliminate them, removing the scars of time to create a smooth, seamless text’.\textsuperscript{36}

Therefore, concentrating our attention simply on major works of early medieval historiography could be misleading. In order to answer the main issues raised above, we need to understand more about the Cavensis 4, its origins, and the cultural \textit{milieu} in which it was produced. Only after making this analysis will we be able to proceed with a further discussion on the nature of a presumed Tuscan identity, which emerged at the beginning of the eleventh century, due to the name swap by the anonymous writer in the very first part of Cavensis 4. We will need to go back from the eleventh century to the early Middle Ages in order to find out if and when a Tuscan identity ever existed, and to what extent it is possible to describe it.

The manuscript-text Cavensis 4 is special in many respects:\textsuperscript{37} in the first place, together with a second codex written in the first half of the eleventh

\textsuperscript{32} Goffart, ‘The Supposedly “Frankish” \textit{Table of Nations}’, p. 140; See the \textit{praefatio} in \textit{Leges Langobardorum}, ed. by Bluhme, p. xxxi; Pohl, \textit{Werkstätte der Erinnerung}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{33} Dold, \textit{Zur Ältesten Handschrift des Edictus Rothari}, pp. 45–46.

\textsuperscript{34} See the \textit{praefatio} in \textit{Leges Langobardorum}, ed. by Bluhme, p. xxxi.

\textsuperscript{35} Pohl, \textit{Werkstätte der Erinnerung}, p. 138. See also above, n. 23.

\textsuperscript{36} Pohl, ‘History in Fragments’, p. 353.

\textsuperscript{37} Badia di Cava de’ Tirreni, Bibl.del. Badia, MS 4.
Tuscans as gens?

... century in Byzantine Bari (now in Madrid), it contains one of only two preserved original texts from the *Leges Langobardorum* written in southern Italy. Secondly, together with a third law book — a copy of the *Leges* collection made by Lupus of Ferrières for Eberhard of Friuli and now preserved at Modena — it contains the miniatures of the legislators. The Cavensis 4 is also one of the three Law Codes in which the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* precedes Lombard law itself. Furthermore, among many texts only the Cavensis 4 preserves the most southern collection of Carolingian capitularies, which institutes a direct connection between Lombard and Carolingian law. Finally, the Cavensis 4’s collection of capitularies is also identical with the collection in Codex Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi F. iv. 75, which was completed around the year 1000 in central Italy, probably in San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome.

The law book itself, although still classified as Cavensis 4 for its modern provenance, could not have been written at the Cava de’Tirreni, since the monastery was founded in the first half of the eleventh century. Moreover, the existence of MS Trinità di Cava is attested for the first time in a diploma issued by Guaimario III and his son Guaimario IV, Princeps of Salerno, in 1025, by which time the codex was two decades old. The manuscript was kept at the monastery of Cava de’Tirreni after 1263, taken there from Sant’Angelo di Casalrotto near Mottola, one of Cava’s minor dependencies in Apulia. It is

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38 Madrid, Bibl. nac. de España, MS 413; Cavallo, ‘Per l’origine e la data del Cod. Matrit. 413’, i, pp. 135–42; Pohl, ‘History in Fragments’, p. 360.
43 Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*, p. 109, n. 13. On the monastery of Trinità di Cava see Lorè, *Monasteri, principi, aristocrazie*, pp. 13–24, especially pp. 17–18, where the author stresses the importance of the cave Arsicia, where Alferio founded the monastery and where also Liuzio, previously monk in Montecassino, lived for some years around 1011. He was then replaced by the same Alferio.
44 *Codex Diplomaticus Cavensis*, ed. by Morcaldi, v, no. 764.
improbable that the manuscript originated in Apulia, given the kind of script used. Guided by its content, Lowe located its writing in Benevento, an ascription that has been accepted, with some adjustments, by many scholars. Its production has therefore been variously attributed to Benevento, Salerno, or Capua, where palace-courts were active and where such a law-book could have been required for practical use.

Convincing textual parallels with two other manuscripts, originally produced at the monastery of St Benedict of Montecassino (Montecassino, Archivio della Badia, MS 175 and Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS lat. 5001), however, clearly indicate the origin of Cavensis 4 at Montecassino, or at least within its cultural milieu. A systematic analysis of the manuscript conducted by Walter Pohl has recently shown that, based on some shorter texts copied into it and the marginal notes they contain, the codex can be precisely traced back to St Benedict of Montecassino, to some codices previously written in the famous monastery or to the monks who moved temporarily from Montecassino to St Benedict of Capua. We need therefore to look more closely at the contents of the codex in order to establish some possible connections with the Tuscan milieu.

**Connections between Montecassino and Tuscany**

The Cavensis 4 begins with the already mentioned version of the *Genealogia gentium* which states that Tuscans are relatives of the Lombards, Burgundians, and Bavarians; the genealogy is followed by the *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, and by the mass of the *Leges Langobardorum* illustrated with colour miniature portraits of the legislators. Its other content includes shorter texts, such as regnal lists — a *Catalogus regum Langobardorum* from Alboin to Henry II and a

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49 The existence of common elements in these three codices has been underlined by Cilento, ‘La cronaca della dinastia capuana’, p. 288, n. 36. A detailed analysis of the three codices is now in Pohl, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung*, p. 142.
52 *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. by Waitz, pp. 1–6.
Catalogus principum Beneventi — texts of treaties, and a glossary; among the narrative texts is also the Capua Chronicle (Chronica comitum Capuae), also contained in Casinensis 175. The rest of the codex is filled with a selection of Carolingian capitularies issued for Italy derived from the mid-ninth-century collection of northern Italy, which is itself a copy of the Leges collection made by Lupus of Ferrières for Eberhard of Friuli now in Modena.

Walter Pohl, in his detailed study of the Cavensis 4 and of the two other manuscripts from the cultural milieu of contemporary Montecassino, has reasserted that the last historical event which enables us to date the codex is the capture of Pavia by King Henry II and the withdrawal of Arduin in 1004, an episode that is mentioned at the very end of the king list (fol. 176v). The Capua chronicle, instead, ends its narrative four years earlier, with the capture of Capua between November 999 and March 1000 by Ademar — Otto III’s favourite, who had been promoted the previous year to become the head of the march of Spoleto. Most significantly, the chronicle contains the story of the murder of Prince Landenulf of Capua, an episode which is also described in the Casinensis 175 in a later and more detailed addition. The narrators of Cavensis 4 and Casinensis 175 refer to how Landenulf, son of Princess Aloara, widow of Prince Pandulf I Ironhead, was murdered in the spring of 993 in front of the church of St Marcello Maggiore in Capua as a result of a local con-

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54 Mordek, Bibliotheca capitularium regum Francorum manuscripta, pp. 98–111; see also above, n. 40. The will of Eberhard of Friuli, in which the collection is mentioned, has been discussed by La Rocca and Provero, ‘The Dead and their Gifts’.

55 For Montecassino, Arch.del.Badia, MS 175 and BAV, MS Lat. 5001, see the comments and detailed analysis in Pohl, Werkstätte der Erinnerung, pp. 77–107 and 14–76.

56 For the text, see Pohl, Werkstätte der Erinnerung, p. 109: ‘Ardynus factus est rex in Italia, et regnavit an(nis) non plenter duo. Et pugnavit in Italia cum exercitu Henrici regis, qui fuit dux de Baioaria. Iste Henricus post discessum superscripti Ottoni factus rex Totonicoru(m), et post perdicione exercitui eius, ipse per semedipsum venit in Italia, et omnes Lambardi mentiti sunt Arduini regis, et subdiderunt se Henrici regis. Et ipse applicuit usque urbem Papia, et igne cremavit eam, et sic reversus est in Totonicu(m) regnum suum’ (La Cava, Arch. del. Badia del. Sant.Trinità, MS 4, fols 175v–176v).

57 Cilento, ‘Ademario’; a more precise reconstruction of the events is in Cilento, ‘La cronaca della dinastia capuana’, pp. 345–46.
The efficacy of the contemporary military expedition led by Hugh, Marquis of Tuscia and lieutenant to Otto III in Italy, however, is mentioned only in the version of the *Chronica comitum Capuae* in the Cavensis 4. Here, the positive role played in 993 by Hugh of Tuscia at Capua is described in detail and his successful efforts in exercising justice and persecuting those guilty of murder are recorded and exalted.

Even monks of Montecassino are positively described, having played a pitiful role when Prince Landenulf’s position was violently usurped by his brother Laidulf, Count of Teano. Landenulf’s corpse was left to lie naked, until the monks of St Benedict rescued and buried him in their monastery; soon after, miracles began to happen. This piece of political hagiography, as Pohl has stressed, might go back to the time of Abbot Manso of Montecassino, who was a cousin of Prince Pandolf I Ironhead, a relative to the Princess of Capua and supporter of Landenulf and Aloara. While in the *Life of St Nilus* Abbot Manso is negatively represented as an aristocrat who dined with music while St Nilus prayed at St German, a monastery on the slopes of Cassino, in the *Capua Chronicle* this cynical depiction is missing. Absent as well are the episodes of 996, three years after Landenulf’s murder and the succession of his brother Laidulf as Prince of Capua. During this same year Abbot Manso was blinded by his enemies while he was in St Benedict of Capua. He was forced to resign from Montecassino and died in the spring.

As illustrated in the episodes above, it was a highly conflictual time, both within the principality of Capua and inside the abbey of Montecassino: a group of monks who had been exiled by Abbot Manso or had escaped because they were dissatisfied with his rule, returned to the abbey and seized control. Therefore, Otto III’s intervention in southern Italy in 999 may initially have been welcomed by many monks, but Otto and Ademar soon dashed these hopes, not least by taking hostages from many noble families and deporting them to north of the Alps. Among these was Atenulf, son of Pandulf III and brother of the powerful Prince of Capua Pandulf IV, a future leader at Montecassino and abbot of the monastery. Atenulf was offered to Otto and Ademar by local nobility and sent to Germany; he succeeded in escaping from German custody, returned to his family’s land, and was elected abbot of Montecassino in 1011. The last episodes mentioned in the Capua Chronicle of Cavensis 4 are, respectively, Ademar’s investiture with Capua by Otto III and the former’s four-month rule over the principality.

According to Walter Pohl, the last lines of the Catalogus regum Langobardorum in the Cavensis 4 make it clear that Otto’s arch-enemy, Arduin of Ivrea, had the sympathies of the manuscript’s compiler, who may have been opposed to the intervention of King Henry II, since the German ruler continued the policy of the earlier Saxon emperors towards Montecassino and the southern principalities. This position in the monastery of St Benedict may have been reversed in 1014, after Henry II’s imperial coronation in Rome and the issue by the emperor’s chancellery of a diploma for Montecassino; moreover, it became anachronistic after 1022 with the emperor’s visit to the monastery to supervise the election of Abbot Theobald, Atenulf’s successor and one of those who had left Montecassino in 985/86 when Manso was elected leader of the monastic community after the death of Abbot Aligern.

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71 Hoffmann, ‘Die älteren Abtslisten von Montecassino’, pp. 295–300; Beolchini, ‘Man-
The illustrated law book Cavensis 4 with its selection of Carolingian capitularies, therefore, may still reflect concerns about the German kings: it is remarkable that the historiographical texts reporting contemporary events are cautious in recording conflicts with the Teutonic rulers and extremely careful in the selection of episodes. Moreover, hagiography is used to introduce the murder of Landenulf, while the blinding of Abbot Manso is not even mentioned. The account of Otto III’s and Ademar’s actions are meticulously reported in neutral tones, even if disappointment can be discerned between the lines. From the last lines of the Chronicon comitum Capuae, however, one hero positively emerges: this is Hugh, the Marquis of Tuscia and Otto III’s lieutenant in Italy. Hugh is represented as the protagonist of a reconciliation process within the conflict-ridden principality of Capua immediately after the turmoil of 993. This role which, among others, portrays Hugh, one of the political leaders of tenth-century Italy and the most influential officeholder of Tuscany and central Italy, as a very positive character, requires further discussion.

The use of Montecassino material at Salerno and other monastic and political centres demonstrates that Montecassino’s memories were disseminated more widely; moreover, the Montecassino vision of its political environment was in many respects the only narrative that survived from Lombard southern Italy. If within this monastic cultural milieu Tuscans were raised to the status of gens, the questions already raised can now be modified and posed once more. At the end of the tenth century two different versions of the Table of Nations were available at Montecassino. Why did the author of Cavensis 4 choose the version in which Tuscans displace Thuringians? Is there a connection between the promotion of the Tuscans to the rank of people and the character of Hugh, Marquis of Tuscia, exalted in the last part of the Capua Chronicle copied in the Cavensis 4? One possible answer could rest on the fact that political and cultural connections between Beneventan and Capuan areas and Tuscan ones were highly complex. A good example of such connections is the marriage in the second half of the tenth century between Willa, the daughter of Prince...
Landulf IV of Capua and Benevento, and Rodulf II, a member of the important Aldobrandeschi family that controlled a large part of southern Tuscany. Gemma, another daughter of Prince Landulf IV, married the Tuscan count Cadolo, a member of the Cadolingi family.\textsuperscript{76}

Moreover, we must take up the issue raised by the \textit{Table of Nations} and pose a more general question, to investigate if and how communities and identities in early medieval Tuscany were shaped. This is a particularly hard task to fulfil, because we lack historical narratives for Tuscany/\textit{Tuscia} from either the Lombard or the Carolingian period.\textsuperscript{77} The information we have comes almost exclusively from subsequent periods and from texts produced in other regions than Tuscany. Information can be deduced from such diverse sources as private charters, diplomas, \textit{placita}, as well as hagiographic texts, some of which have been investigated in recent years.\textsuperscript{78} From the perspective of these sources, the decades of the late tenth century and early eleventh century appear to be central in shaping a regional Tuscan identity and to be a kind of turning point in this process.\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{Tuscan Identities during the Eighth and Ninth Centuries}

The nature of this multifaceted Tuscan identity emerges from many aspects at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries, but it can also be located in the previous centuries. Recent research has demonstrated that, between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, there existed the concept of \textit{Tuscia} as a particular territory, distinct from other regional or provincial areas of the Italian Peninsula and politically organized in the homonymous march of \textit{Tuscia} from the earliest years of the Carolingian period. However, although from an administrative and political point of view, the use of the concept of \textit{Tuscia} can be corroborated in the sources, it is more difficult to make this territory coincide with an unambiguous popular identity. Studies carried


\textsuperscript{77} Gasparri, ‘The Fall of the Lombard Kingdom’, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{78} A detailed list, even if not complete, of the available sources in which the identity of Tuscany emerges, is in Kurze, ‘Dall’età franca al Mille’; Gasparri, ‘The Fall of the Lombard Kingdom’, pp. 60–61.

\textsuperscript{79} Ronzani, ‘La nozione della \textit{Tuscia}’. 
out mainly on private charters, in fact, have emphasized how difficult it can be to detect the concrete existence of a Tusci people between the early and high Middle Ages. The analysis of some specific elements — such as the dating used immediately following the Carolingian conquest, or the reception and transmission in Tuscany of a particular version of the Liber Pontificalis — have highlighted peculiarities and attempts to affirm identity processes in a ‘provincial’ dimension, that is in a regional or sub-regional area.\(^{80}\)

More specifically, the analysis conducted many years ago by Wilhelm Kurze, for example, revealed that the terms Tuscia and Tuscany were used throughout the early and high Middle Ages.\(^{81}\) Moreover, the regional and political concept of Tuscia seems to have been used with particular emphasis during the second half of the eleventh and twelfth centuries by local political elites, especially newly-emerged communal elites such as those in Pisa or Lucca. During the same period, there is also a lack of positive references to the regional political authority of the march of Tuscia itself.\(^{82}\)

However, the existence of a regional identity, different from the northern identity which extended to Lombard Austria and Neustria, has been recently discussed by Stefano Gasparri, mainly through an analysis of the dating of Tuscan private charters.\(^{83}\) The historian noted that 774 — the year of the Carolingian conquest — coincides with a clear change in the dating of documents in Tuscia. Between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries, in fact, Tuscan notaries — those from Lucca and Pisa in particular — constantly referred to Charles’s conquest of the Lombard kingdom and the years of his reign after the taking of Pavia.\(^{84}\) With several secondary variations — like the mention of Charles’s reign ‘over the Lombard people’ — this dating appeared in Lucca and Pisa immediately after the conquest but, strikingly, did not appear elsewhere in the Peninsula.\(^{85}\) It seems possible to affirm, therefore,


\(^{81}\) A detailed list, even if not complete, of the available sources in which a sort of regional identity of early medieval Tuscany emerges, is in Kurze, ‘Dall’età franca al Mille’, pp. 35–52.

\(^{82}\) Ronzani, ‘La nozione della Tuscia’, pp. 72–76.


\(^{84}\) The numerous charters of Lucca are edited in Chartae Latinae Antiquiores, ed. by Bruckner, xxx–xl; the first charter issued in Lucca after the Frankish conquest is dated 16 July 774 and is in xxxvi, no. 1047; see also nos 1057–58. For Pisa, see xxxiv, nos 753, 756, 758, 767, 773.

that for some decades a certain way of dating was typical of Lombard Tuscia. It is a way of dating that emphasizes the Lombard identity in Tuscany and that, especially in northern Tuscia, kept the memory of the events of 774 alive.

Even the uses of typical Lombard expressions and formulae in placita that were celebrated in early medieval Tuscany immediately after the Carolingian conquest, show that many categories — such as that of Arimanni — were used to recall the recent Lombard past. We can therefore affirm that Tuscia had an exclusive way of memorializing the events of the late Lombard kingdom and its fall, including the continued use in the early Carolingian period of Lombard epithets such as gasindus. Finally, important reflections on the existence of a regional Tuscan identity, and, more generally, the regional identities of eighth-century Italy, come from Paolo Delogu, who has stressed the existence of regional economic differentiations. For instance, beginning from King Liudprand, there was an autonomous minting in Tuscany and in Benevento of coins which were different in kind and weight to royal ones. Spoletans, Beneventans, Friulans, and Tuscans, therefore, appear to have identified themselves through their regionally-based coinage and through autonomous minting, also differentiating themselves from other Lombards of the Kingdom.

**Regional or Local Identities?**

With the example of ethnic communities used by the late Romans that in no way reflect natural facts in mind, we must ask ourselves if the awareness of a distinctive feature of an ethnic Tuscan group or community returned with the Carolingians as a deliberate imperial policy. The Carolingian Empire gave some room to regional identities, often based on revived ethnic traditions and expressed through law and costume. The Frankish Table of Nations, therefore,

\[86 \text{Gasparri, ‘Nobiles et credentes omnes liberi arimanni’, pp. 32–38.}\]

\[87 \text{It is the case, for example, of Perisundu gasindus domni regi, who subscribed a document issued in 793 in Lucca, 8 January; see Chartae Latinae Antiquiores, ed. by Bruckner, xxxix, no. 1136.}\]

\[88 \text{Delogu, ‘Il regno longobardo’, p. 130.}\]


\[90 \text{Delogu, ‘Il regno longobardo’, p. 130.}\]

\[91 \text{Pohl, ‘History in Fragments’, p. 358, where the manuscript which contains the Lombard law and comes from the Cava monastery is cited.}\]
could be considered as one of these forms of expression, representing Tuscia as
distinct from other people while at the same time setting them in a broader
category similar to the Franks, Lombards, Burgundians, and Bavarians. From
the eighth century onwards, however, we must emphasize the numerous
references to deep-rooted identities of minutely local character. These identities
were linked to individuals belonging to a particular diocesan, urban or village
community. From this point of view, references from the different territories
that were part of early medieval Tuscia are varied.

For example, beginning with the Lombard period there are mentions of
disputes between different neighbouring communities, but all from the same
Tuscan regional area: the disputes between Arezzo and Siena, Pisa and Lucca,
Pistoia and Lucca are well known. Furthermore, even the analysis of some
hagiographical texts highlights the existence of local communities organized at
an urban, valley, or village level, where it is possible to recognize an identitarian
character sometimes found in the shared religious cult or rite. Moreover, this
cult or rite was consciously modified or transformed in order to influence the
process of the identitarian construction of a specific community.

We need to consider, therefore, how people regarded their place in society
and how, and by whom, it was defined. Taking a wide range of approaches and
case studies into account makes it possible, for example, to describe conflicts
of identity based on gender, wealth, class, status, place of residence, political
or religious affiliation. Among the subjects that can be analysed using this
approach are the transformation of neighbourliness and what happened during the
processes in which membership in communities was defined. Moreover, the
conflicts between ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction, local and city-based
identities both in the territories and the county and diocesan border areas of
Tuscany can be more thoroughly investigated.

There was certainly a strong link between the religious feelings of a com-
munity and its local identities. Saints’ cults as well as pilgrimage to basilicas or
patronage to churches, for instance, represent significant instances of the social

93 Tabacco, ‘Arezzo, Siena, Chiusi nell’alto medioevo’, pp. 163–66; Gasparri, ‘Il regno lon-
gobardo in Italia’, pp. 7–16. On the dispute between Arezzo and Siena, see also Bougard, ‘A vetustissimis thonis’.
94 Susi, ‘Africani, cefalofori e “saraceni”’; Zaccagnini, Vita Sancti Fridiani; Grégoire, ‘Aspetti
culturali’.
95 Collavini, ‘Da società rurale periferica’.
96 Wickham, Community and Clientele.
mechanisms of local, sometimes ethnic, and always religious identifications. Although religion was not the prominent marker of local feeling of belonging, at the same time, these were cultural patterns which served as a basis for new ‘invented traditions’; they were the expression of strong local affiliations during a period of transition that brought uncertainty not only in economic or social terms but also in terms of identity. The analysis of religious aspects can be particularly profitable because it allows us to highlight both the processes of identitarian construction from the bottom up — as for example, within secondary ecclesiastical districts or those of baptismal churches — and the existence of processes of identity creation through the writing or collation of particularly meaningful texts. From this perspective, therefore, the analysis of local identities can be fruitful both to contextualize within specific areas the multiple identitarian phenomena during the early Middle Ages, and to evaluate those more general phenomena of identitarian construction which can be found in some major narratives from the same period.

At the same time, however, the appeal to a local identity can also be connected with the more general political need for regional or national authorities to establish control over local societies. The regional leadership’s appeal to localism would seem to have had a significant impact at more local levels in cities, towns, and villages, and especially at the county/diocesan level. Here, the consequences for politics within the province/region are less clear, and indicate the need for further research. The new entrepreneurs and ‘managers’ who were stimulated by the Carolingian and post-Carolingian reform agenda in Tuscany were characterized and motivated by an intense localism, as indeed, somewhat differently, were the officials working in the system as it began to change.

Conclusions

Research on local, diocesan, and regional elites suggest that the county and the town or city were considerably more significant for local identity formation than the province/region itself. Moreover, whereas in urban areas there was a strong social and economic identification with the town or city, in rural areas

97 Stoffella, ‘Aristocracy and Rural Churches’.
98 Caroli, ‘Bringing Saints to Cities and Monasteries’; Vocino, ‘Santi e luoghi santi al servizio’.
social identification was with the village, although it was the county/diocese which was seen as the key political and economic community. Even a preliminary attempt to create an index of localism, based on the background of these local or regional elites, immediately helps us to explain the apparent strength of a sense of attachment to the local.101

Localism is usually defined, even by elites themselves, as meaning either native place, duration of living and working in a local area or in the family home. Those county-level leadership officials can be recognized as significant ‘managers of change’ on the frontline of economic and social development, and thus also as politically important. Certainly, their career paths would seem to indicate the overall importance of the county/diocese level. Unlike officials at regional, district, or local levels, county or diocesan-level officials were more likely to be upwardly mobile; moreover, serving as a county-level leadership, those elites were the most significant testing ground for further political advance.102

There is some evidence that the provincial leadership’s encouragement of a discourse of localism had a considerable impact on the development of collective identity at the more local, and particularly at county/diocesan, level. Various interpretations of Tuscan identity have stressed the strength of local cultures which can be found within the regional area; it seems therefore possible that counties/dioceses may represent the fundamental building blocks of culture and identification within Tuscany. These observations all draw attention to the county/diocese level, and suggest the importance of monitoring the impact of the regional leadership’s management of identity politics on the development of the county/diocese level and its localism.

In conclusion, one inference that emerges clearly from the analysis of Tuscan multiple identities in the early Middle Ages is that ‘national’, regional, and more local levels of identification have been intended to be very permeable. Identification with one’s native place is, to a large extent, presented as both entailing a regional and regnal identification. This may prove to have been a strength but also a weakness of the political system: a strength because it encouraged people to act and socially ‘invest’ in the localities: a weakness, however, when there were fewer resources and sharper competition for them. Under the latter more competitive circumstances, a strong local identification may have led to conflicts over political identities between the local and the provincial/regional, or the provincial/regional and the regnal elites.


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In early medieval Italy ‘Roman’ was an ambiguous term that could have various significations: civic — Romans as inhabitants of the city of Rome —, regional — the Romans as inhabitants of Italy, or other former Roman provinces, in contrast to the Lombards and other newer ‘barbarians’ —, and the Romans of the progressively regionalized Roman Empire (or, as it is called today, the Byzantine Empire), increasingly, however, referred to as Gr(a)eci. This multiplicity of meanings was not new, but the fact that these categories no longer coincided was. The overarching framework of the Roman Empire as a monolithic supra-ethnic category encompassing the vast extent of the Mediterranean world belonged to the past; the remaining fragments of ‘Romanness’ no longer fit together so neatly. In this article, I wish to bring out some of the texture of this change with an example of how Roman history was written and reconfigured in early medieval Italy to reflect contemporary perceptions of ‘Romanness.’ I will look at various reworkings of Eutropius’s Breviarium, which were among

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1 Although it is anachronistic, I generally use the conventional term ‘Byzantine’ for the sake of clarity when referring to the Roman Empire post-Justinian. These different meanings of ‘Roman’ are found in Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz — Romans as inhabitants of Rome: vi. 34, pp. 175–76; Romans as inhabitants of Italy: ii. 4, p. 74; Romans as inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire: iv. 36, p. 128 (For an English translation see Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, trans. by Foulke).
Maya Maskarinec

the most widely circulating Roman histories in the medieval West, considering their shifting historical conceptions of ‘Romanness’.

Eutropius’s ten-book Roman history, written in the late fourth century, was subsequently modified and continued in the eighth by Paul the Deacon, who turned it into a sixteen-book Roman history. Although Paul had promised that he would continue his Roman history, he did not, instead writing a *History of the Lombards*. Roughly by the end of the ninth century, however, excerpts from Paul’s *Lombard History* were turned into a seventeenth book that was added to the *Roman History*. The Appendix to this paper summarizes these texts and indicates their relationships.2

I will begin by considering how Paul the Deacon modified Eutropius’s text; Section 1 examines Paul the Deacon’s new opening to Eutropius’s text wherein the focus of Roman history is shifted towards the Romans as a people (not, as for Eutropius, a city). Although by doing so Paul the Deacon does not deny the exceptionality of the Roman Empire stressed by Eutropius, he presents the Romans in their origins as more similar to other peoples, past and present, of the Mediterranean world, explaining their formation, as a unified Roman people and an Empire, as a process. Paul the Deacon supplements Eutropius’s nearly secular text by adding an ingredient he considers key to the Romans’ success: their chosen role in God’s plan for the spread of Christianity. Section 2 addresses Paul the Deacon’s Christianization of the Romans, demonstrating how, although fundamentally Christianizing Roman *history*, Paul layered Christianity lightly onto the Roman *Empire*, leaving it easily imaginable that the two could become disentwined. In his *Lombard History*, Paul does precisely this, severing the bond between the Byzantines and Christianity and introducing a discontinuity between the Roman Empire of the past and the Byzantines of his day; this is the subject of Section 3. Thus for Paul the ancient Roman Empire retains its unique exceptionality. At the same time, Romani are left to inhabit Italy. Finally in Section 4, I turn to an alternate reading of the Roman Empire, examining how the seventeenth book, although almost exclu-

2 Eutropius’s *Breviarium* is cited here according to Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, and is available in English: Eutropius, *Breviarium*, trans. by Bird. There are two standard editions which consider Paul the Deacon’s modifications of Eutropius’s text: *Eutropi Breviarium et Pauli Landolfique additamentis*, ed. by Droysen, and Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, but no English translation of Paul the Deacon’s expanded *Historia Romana* exists. I am grateful to Marianne Pollheimer for helping me with the Latin translations throughout. For the *Historia Langobardorum*, I have followed Foulke’s translation, though I have used ‘Lombard’ rather than ‘Langobard’ and have translated *gens* as ‘people’, rather than ‘nation’ or ‘heathen’. 
sively excerpted from Paul’s *Lombard History*, posits a much longer lasting, but regionally restricted, Roman Empire in the East, whose relationship with the Christian church headed by the pope is increasingly strained. Nonetheless the Empire is prolonged up to iconoclasm in the early eighth century, at which point the text leaves us hanging.

From Eutropius to the seventeenth book, I will follow the tug between the interpretation of the Romans as something exceptional — a unique world *imperium* — and the contemporary early medieval reality of a Christianized world populated by diverse peoples within which it was increasingly questionable if and where the Romans and their distinctiveness were to be found.

1. Paul the Deacon’s New Beginning for the Historia Romana

How did the Roman people, the *populus Romanus*, come to be? This was a process that Eutropius took for granted in the fourth century, but was no longer so clear to Paul the Deacon in the eighth. Here I focus on how the beginning of Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Romana* modified the fourth-century text of Eutropius on which Paul the Deacon’s history was based in order to explain the formation of the Roman people. I will first examine Eutropius’s text to understand its model of Roman history and the reasons Paul the Deacon may have chosen it as the basis for his history, before addressing the ways in which Paul the Deacon found it inadequate.

Eutropius’s *Breviarium*, written between 364 and 375, is a perspective on Roman history from within. Dedicated to the Emperor Valens, the text serves

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3 A version of this section was presented at the Text and Identities Workshop in Auxerre, 17–19 October 2008, and I am grateful to the participants for their suggestions. Naturally the formation of Roman identity was a much more complex process. See Giardina, *L’Italia romana*, and Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*.

4 The most thorough recent work on Paul the Deacon’s modifications of Eutropius is Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’. Also fundamental is Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*.

5 For an introduction to Eutropius see Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity*, pp. 49–59, and Den Boer, *Some Minor Roman Historians*, pp. 114–72; for a more optimistic reconstruction of what we can know about Eutropius contrast with Bird, ‘Eutropius: His Life and Career’, and Bird’s introduction to Eutropius, *Breviarium*, trans. by Bird, pp. vii–lvi. The dating is derived from Eutropius’s dedication of the text to the Emperor Valens. Bird suggests he presented the work to Valens when Valens celebrated his triumph over the Goths and assumed the title *Gothicus Maximus* in late 369 (p. xiii). Although little about Eutropius’s life is
as a guide for the emperor to follow the examples of his illustrious predecessors. As the opening lines of his text explain, Eutropius understands Rome as a unique phenomenon: ‘The Roman Empire — human memory is scarcely able to recall anything smaller in its beginning nor greater in its growth in the whole world — had its beginning from Romulus’. This model of Roman history — Rome as a unique power — is developed by Eutropius in his sparse summary of the Romans *ab urbe condita* up to the late fourth century. In his history, Eutropius almost completely eliminates Roman religion. In a way that would have been unimaginable for Livy, Eutropius’s primary source, Eutropius manages to tell Roman history with rarely any mention of religious events. For example, when telling of the Romans’ victory in the Second Punic War, Eutropius does not mention how the Magna Mater was brought to Rome, an event crucial to Livy’s narrative. In Eutropius’s text the model emperor is a successful general and an astute politician acting in cooperation with the senatorial elite: the Roman gods are not lurking in the background.

verifiable, as mentioned in the *Breviarium*, he certainly accompanied the Emperor Julian on his Persian campaign in 363 and served as *magister memoriae* under the Emperor Valens, to whom he dedicated his history.

6 For the dedication: Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, *praefatio*, p. 2. This dedication was at times, but not consistently, included in manuscripts containing Paul the Deacon’s expanded version of Eutropius’s *Breviarium*. Eutropius’s text is based primarily on Livy and Suetonius — these two authors explain the difference in the feel between the two halves of Eutropius, with the latter (based on Suetonius) being more focused on suggesting the model for an ideal emperor. For the structure of Eutropius see Bird, ‘Structure and Themes in Eutropius’ *Breviarium*.

7 Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, t. 1. 1, p. 3: ‘Romanum imperium, quo neque ab exordio ulla fere minus neque incrementis toto orbe amplius humana potest memoria recordari, a Romulo exordium habet’.

8 In general, ‘pagan’ historiography of the fourth century was characterized by its lack of religious content, a phenomenon which Momigliano addresses, demonstrating how easily such texts could be Christianized, though his emphasis is on how fourth-century Christian historiography disregarded political history, instead following the models of ecclesiastical history created by Eusebius: Momigliano, ‘Pagan and Christian Historiography’.

9 Only infrequently does Eutropius mention the construction of temples and when he does these are remarked upon as urban constructions, not religious occurrences, see for example regarding Domitian: ‘Romae quoque multa opera fecit, in his Capitolium et Forum transitorium, Divorum porticus, Isium ac Serapium et Stadium’ (Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, vii. 23. 5, p. 49).


11 Augustus (Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, vii. 8–10, pp. 43–44) and Trajan
Eutropius’s text traces the successive territorial expansion of what began as a small city founded by Romulus. He begins with Rome’s foundation, which he dates threefold: as eleven days before the Kalends of May, the third year after the sixth Olympiad, and three hundred and ninety-four years after the fall of Troy. It is an event that predates the development of Roman laws or customs, or even a fully formed Roman people. Throughout his history Eutropius continues to emphasize the importance of the city of Rome, characterizing the foundation of Constantinople as a dangerous attempt to rival Rome. For Eutropius, Roman history is that of the rise of a world *imperium*, centred on the city of Rome and held together by the emperor.

Eutropius’s text became a standard of Roman history in late Antiquity and continued to circulate on its own in the Middle Ages, while also constituting the basis for Paul the Deacon’s text in the late eighth century and then of Landolfus Sagax’s around 1000. Eutropius’s text was certainly popular on (viii. 2–5, pp. 50–51) are presented as ideal emperors, lauded for their temperament and cooperation with the elite, but particularly for their military accomplishments. Emperors such as Caligula (vii. 12, p. 45), Vitellius (vii. 18, p. 47) or Domitian (vii. 23, p. 49) are described as despised by all and subsequently die gruesome, and in Eutropius’s opinion, deserved, deaths.


13 Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, x. 8. 1, p. 67: ‘primusque urbeb nominis sui ad tantum fastigium evehere molitus est, ut Romae aemulam faceret’. Constantinople is understood as a rival to Rome, but neither as the new capital of the Empire and replacement for Rome, nor even as another, second capital. Rome remains the point of reference through which this city’s new status is referenced and understood. Constantinople has yet to acquire significance on its own terms. Throughout Eutropius notes the senatorial aristocracy’s role in ratifying new emperors through whom Rome’s expansion occurred.

14 The expansion of the Empire is recorded only in terms of military conquest. Eutropius shows little interest in the subsequent Romanization of provinces. For example, he makes no mention of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in AD 212 granting all freemen in the Empire citizenship; indeed he writes that apart from the construction of baths in Rome Caracalla did nothing memorable (Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, viii. 20, p. 56).

15 A valuable list of *Historia Romana* manuscripts has been compiled by Mortensen, ‘The Diffusion of Roman Histories’, though for descriptions of the manuscripts themselves see Crivellucci’s notes in preparation for his edition: Crivellucci, ‘Per l’edizione della *Historia Romana*’. For an overview of the textual transmission of Eutropius see Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, pp. 159–63. Recently completed is a close analysis of one particularly interesting compilation which includes the *Historia Romana*: Kretschmer, *Rewriting Roman History*. 
account of its brevity and its easily accessible style, but the text also allowed Roman history to be read as a model for a uniquely successful military and political imperium.\textsuperscript{16} Alternate models of Roman power existed and competed with Eutropius’s secular optimism, particularly Orosius’s \textit{Historiae Adversum Paganos}, a Christian universal history, which included a critical view of the Romans’ pagan past.\textsuperscript{17}

The abundance of surviving manuscripts of Eutropius testifies to the popularity of Eutropius’s narrative.\textsuperscript{18} Even in northern Italy, almost contemporary with Paul the Deacon, the compilers of the famous \textit{Epitome Phillipsiana} from Verona, For the medieval production and use of Latin ‘classics’ (though not including Eutropius) see the essays in Chavannes-Mazel and Smith, eds, \textit{Medieval Manuscripts of the Latin Classics}, and Olsen, \textit{L’Étude des auteurs classiques latins}.

\textsuperscript{16} Regarding the \textit{Historia Romana} in the twelfth century, Mortensen, ‘The Texts and Contexts of Ancient Roman History’, and Mortensen, ‘Working with Ancient Roman History’, argue on the basis of the manuscripts that it was used as a reference book, a quarry for historical, geographical and military knowledge. Chiesa, ‘Storia romana e libri di storia romana’, in contrast, emphasizes the literary aspect of Roman history in the ninth- to eleventh-century manuscripts, suggesting that they were read as romance-like literature, primarily at court, rather than in the monastery. Regarding historical culture in the ninth century, see Werner, ‘Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph’, who stresses history’s function as the continuation of the Old and New Testament’s demonstration of the works of God in the world, in particular to provide examples of behaviour and the interpretation of signs for Christian rulers. That classical Antiquity could provide both models for admonition as much as for emulation is brought out in Nees’s study of uses of Hercules at the Carolingian court: Nees, \textit{A Tainted Mantle}. For introductions to the understanding and use of the past in the Carolingian world see Goetz, ‘Vergangenheitswahrnehmung’; McKitterick, \textit{History and Memory}; and McKitterick, \textit{Perceptions of the Past}. The nuanced use of history for the construction of identity is brought out in Reimitz, ‘The Art of Truth’, as well as by the essays in Hen and Innes, eds, \textit{The Uses of the Past}.

\textsuperscript{17} For the popularity of Orosius, see Mortensen, ‘The Diffusion of Roman Histories’, as well as Hillgarth, ‘The \textit{Historiae} of Orosius’. For Orosius’ negative interpretation of Roman history see Chiesa, ‘Storia romana e libri di storia romana’. Regarding Orosius \textit{as historia} and its implications for our understanding of the concept, see Werner, ‘Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph’, pp. 7–16.

\textsuperscript{18} From the ninth century there survive an equal number (3) of manuscripts of Eutropius’s and Paul the Deacon’s Roman history. Eutropius: Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibl., MS Memb. i. 101; Leiden, Bibl.der Rijksuniv., BPL. 141-iv; \textit{Epitome Phillipsiana}: (St Petersburg, Nat.Libr. Russia, Class. Lat. Q.v.9, St Petersburg, Nat.Lib.Russia, Class. Lat. Q.v.IV.5, Berlin, Staatsbibl., Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS Phillips 1885 (a), Berlin, Staatsbibl., Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS Phillips 1896 (b)). Paul the Deacon: München, Bayerische Staatsbibl., Clm 3516; Lucca, Bibl. Capitolare Feliniana, MS 27; BnF, MS Baluze 270 (fragments). No earlier manuscripts survive.
chose Eutropius’s — not Paul the Deacon’s — *Historia Romana*, though they made use of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*. Particularly telling is a ninth-century manuscript, now in Gotha, that combines Eutropius’s text with that of his contemporary, Rufus Festus, who wrote an even shorter *Breviarium*, similarly focused on Rome’s military exploits (but concentrating on the Empire’s eastern half). The combination of Eutropius and Festus reemphasizes the presentation of the Romans as an exceptional world *imperium*. In addition, this manuscript includes excerpts from Frontinus’s *Strategemata*, a handbook of military stratagems, thus uniting the example of a militarily successful Roman Empire with a technical guide of how to achieve the Romans’ feat.

When Paul the Deacon undertook to write a Roman history in the mid-/late eighth century, he added to Eutropius’s text six new books that brought Roman history up to the age of Justinian, inserted about two hundred brief interpolations into it (disproportionally in the first book), and added a section preceding Eutropius’s history that extended the beginning of Roman history to back before Rome’s founding (see the Appendix). According to the account that Paul the Deacon gives in his work’s dedication, he sought to improve the text after he had recommended it to Adalperga, the daughter of

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19 The *Epitome Phillipsiana* is a historical compendium of sorts, most probably from ninth-century Verona, which assembled a wide variety of excerpts from Jordanes, Eusebius, and Isidore, among others. See McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 52–57.


21 The conflation between between ‘Rome’ and ‘Empire’ that often occurred in medieval perceptions of the Roman past is brought out by Lhotsky, ‘Das römische Altertum’, iii, pp. 9–25.

22 Frontinus explains the function of the *Strategemata* as a handbook for military commanders in the preface to Book 1 (included in the Gotha manuscript): ‘[...] debere adhuc institutae arbitror operae, ut solertia ducum facta, quae a Graecis una στρατηγημάτων appellacione comprehensa sunt, expeditis amplectar commentariis. Ita enim consilii quoque et providentiae exemplis succinti duces erunt, unde illis excogitandi generandique similia facultas nutriatur’ (‘I still feel under obligation, in order to complete the task I have begun, to summarize in convenient sketches the adroit operations of generals, which the Greeks embrace under the one name *strategmata*. For in this way commanders will be furnished with specimens of wisdom and foresight, which will serve to foster their own power of conceiving and executing like deeds’). Frontinus, *Strategemata*, ed. by Bennett, i. *praefatio*, pp. 2–3. The selections used in the Gotha manuscript are primarily the introductions to each of Frontinus’s four books.

23 Composed after the poem dedicated to Adalperga when she had only one child (at the time of the *Historia Romana*, she had three) and before the *Historia Langobardorum*: Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, p. 10. For a summary of Paul the Deacon’s life and work, see Pohl, ‘Paulus Diaconus’, and Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, Chapter 5.
King Desiderius, who found Eutropius’s text unsatisfactory — that is, too short and lacking in Christianity. From his additions to Eutropius’s text, it is clear that Paul the Deacon had access to a variety of other texts, including Orosius, as well as older Roman historians, such as Livy; yet Paul the Deacon preferred Eutropius, despite finding parts, including its beginning, insufficient.

Paul the Deacon’s new beginning to Eutropius’s Roman history, derived primarily from Jerome’s *Chronicle*, is not extensive, but with it Paul the Deacon expands Roman history by more than four hundred years, narrating the mythical prehistory of the Romans, the reign of Janus, the arrival of Saturn, Aeneas’s flight from Troy and the many kings who preceded Romulus.

An interpolation in the second chapter of Eutropius’s text suggests the reason for this expansion. Eutropius explains that: ‘When the city was founded, it received its name Rome, from his name [Romulus].’ Paul the Deacon however expands this explanation, adding ‘and it is from that that the name for the Romans is derived.’ The naming of the *city* Rome is unsatisfactory for Paul the Deacon; significant for him is how the Roman *people* acquired their name. Whereas most of Paul’s interpolations are lifted directly from his sources, there does not seem to be any direct precedent for this explanation.

This interest in the Romans as a people — in contrast to Eutropius’s focus on Rome as a city — is found throughout Paul the Deacon’s beginning. Paul explains the origins of the Romans in terms similar to those used for contemporary peoples, such as the Lombards. In addition, using Jerome’s *Chronicle*, Paul

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24 See section II below.

25 Paul the Deacon’s other sources include: Orosius, Jordane’s *Historia Romana*, Virgil’s *Aeneid* or Servius’s commentary on Virgil, Augustine’s *City of God*, Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, and perhaps Aurelius Victor’s *Origo Gentis Romanae* and *De viris illustribus*. For a complete list, see Crivellucci’s edition (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci). In Crivellucci’s edition this beginning encompasses eighty-six lines of new text. Paul the Deacon also adds approximately thirty-four lines of text within the first two chapters of Eutropius’s first book, thus roughly doubling their former length. In no subsequent chapter of the *Historia Romana* does Paul the Deacon include such extensive interpolations.

26 Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. by Santini, t. 2. 1, p. 3: ‘Condita civitate, quam ex nomine suo Romam vocavit [...]’.

27 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 2, p. 11: ‘Condita ergo civitate, quam ex nomine suo Romam vocavit, a qua et Romanis nomen inditum est [...]’ (italics are my own).

28 Cf. the editor’s comment: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 2, p. 11, with n. 2. Authors such as Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. by Conte, t. 277, p. 12, do, however, express similar ideas.
the Deacon’s new beginning synchronizes the Romans with the history of other world peoples of the past. Thus the Romans are made more comparable to other peoples, both those of the past as well as the regionally restricted ethnic identities of the eighth century. Yet, as we shall see, in modifying Eutropius’s text, Paul does not deny the exceptionality of the Romans. Unlike other peoples past and present, the Romans managed an extraordinary feat, coalescing to form a unified people, the basis for empire.

Paul’s new beginning explains who the Romans were before they became Romans and how they were melded together to become one people. Thus, Paul reaches into a mythical — and pagan — past, a period that Roman historians, such as Livy, had traditionally treated as more legend than fact. 29 It is a time when humans mingle with the divine. Janus and Saturnus, the first kings of Rome, were gods worshipped by the Romans; King Picus is transformed into a bird by the renowned sorceress — famosisima maga — Circe. While he includes these mythical associations, Paul introduces them with qualification: ‘First in Italy, as it pleases some — ut quibusdam placet — Janus ruled,’ or, as he tells of Picus’s transformation into a bird, he writes, ‘Picus, about whom it is reported fabulously [...]’. 30 Once Eutropius’s text begins, Paul even adds additional scepticism. Where Eutropius had already expressed doubt that Romulus was the son of Mars, Paul additionally questions whether Rhea Silvia was Romulus’s mother. 31

Although Paul the Deacon treats these stories as unbelievable, he appears to regard them as necessary components of Roman history. A similar technique is found in Paul the Deacon’s Lombard History, in which he characterizes as a ridicula fabula the story of how the Langobardi acquired their name, but proceeds nonetheless to narrate it. 32

29 Livy, Ab urbe condita, ed. by Foster, i. praefatio 6, pp. 4–5: ‘Quae ante conditam condendamque urbem poeticis magis decora fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est. Datur haec venia antiquitati ut miscendo humana divinis primordia urbiunm augmenta faciat [...]’ (‘Such traditions as belong to the time before the city was founded, or rather was presently to be founded, and are rather adorned with poetic legends than based upon trustworthy historical proofs, I purpose neither to affirm nor to refute. It is the privilege of antiquity to add dignity to the beginnings of cities [...]’).

30 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, i, p. 5: ‘Primus in Italia, ut quibusdam placet, regnavit Ianus’. i, p. 6: ‘Picus [...] de quo fabulose dicitur [...]’.

31 Adding ‘ut praemissum est’ (Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, i. 1, p. 10).

There are further similarities between Paul the Deacon’s narrative of the beginnings of the Romans in his *Historia Romana* and that of the Lombards in the *Historia Langobardorum*. Considering these two origin stories in contradistinction reveals similarities not only between Paul’s narrative technique in both texts, but also in how he understands the two peoples, Romans and Lombards. Many of the same elements appear in both: earlier names, the naming of the people, their geographical location, migration, crossing of boundaries, and the development of customs and culture. These similarities may be more generally associated with Herwig Wolfram’s criteria of an *origo gentis*, motifs frequently found in the explanation of the origins of people. Roman ethnographers interpreted ‘barbarian’ *gentes*, both inside and outside the Empire, as tightly knit groups of people defined by genealogical descent — in supposed contrast to the ‘civilized’ *populus Romanus*, a category defined politically by citizenship. The model that they developed for describing these peoples provides a framework for analysing the commonalities of the origins of the Lombards and the Romans.

Examining Paul the Deacon’s beginning in terms of these criteria suggests the extent to which the categories once used by the ‘universal’ Roman Empire for describing barbarians who had not advanced to the political ‘sophistication’ of the Romans have been turned around and used to describe the Romans themselves. The Roman *populus*, defined by citizenship — attachment to the city of Rome in Eutropius’s model — are interpreted by Paul as similar to a *gens*, that is, a people bound by genealogical ties. This inversion evidences the instability of ‘Romanness’ in the eighth century, which Paul the Deacon combats with his attempt to define more precisely who the Romans are.

Paul the Deacon’s beginning fulfils the criteria of an *origo gentis* well. At its core, it is an explanation of the origins of the Romans. The Romans did not always

33 Wolfram, ‘*Origio Gentiis*’; Plassmann, *Origio gentis*, especially pp. 191–242, regarding Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Langobardorum*; see further Pohl, ed., *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen*. Regarding earlier Greek and Roman interpretations of the origins of barbarians, see Bickerman, ‘*Origines gentium*’.

34 This is particularly the case for Tacitus’s *Germania*. On the terminology and ideology of *populus* and *gens*, see Adams, *The ‘Populus’ of Augustine and Jerome*, esp. pp. 109–21; Zientara, ‘*Populus — Gens — Natio*’; Geary, *The Myth of Nations*; Pohl, ‘*Gentilismus*’. Geary in particular emphasizes that *gens/populus* should not be seen as clear distinguishing markers between biologically versus constitutionally organized peoples, but rather terms that viewed the world from a Roman perspective — the Romans as a people produced through a historical process and held together by law, in contrast to the ‘static’ peoples outside the Empire.
exist, nor did they suddenly appear. The Romans, like the Lombards, slowly gained their identity. In his *Historia Langobardorum*, Paul tells of the Lombards, that they were formerly known by another name, the Winnili, who had their origins among distant Germanic peoples,\(^{35}\) their population slowly increased with freed slaves and adopted strangers, including even one of their kings, Lamissio, during their migration south.\(^{36}\) Similarly, for the Romans, Paul the Deacon tells of a time *ante urbem conditam*, when kings ruled who were not yet Romans, but from whom the Romans originated, and he presents the Romans as constituted by an astonishing abundance of peoples melded together by intermarriage, including the Latins, Etruscans, Phrygians, Arcadians, and Sabines.

Paul the Deacon shows considerable interest in geographically locating the prehistory of both the Lombards and the Romans. In the *Historia Langobardorum*, Paul begins by describing the northern regions and the abundance of peoples this cold climate produced, locating the origins of the Lombards (then still the Winnili) in the far northern *Scadinavia*.\(^{37}\) In the *Historia Romana*, Paul the Deacon similarly orients the reader from the first line of the text: ‘Primus in Italia’. Describing the reign of Saturn, the second of the early kings, he writes that Saturn ruled in the city of Saturnia, the ruins of which can still be seen ‘today’ not far from Rome itself.\(^{38}\) Similarly Paul the Deacon pinpoints the foundations of other early kings, thus constructing an archaeology of the pre-Roman past.\(^{39}\)

The story of many gentes, such as the Lombards, is one of migration. Paul the Deacon records the migration of the Winnili (who became the Lombards)

\(^{35}\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 1, p. 48: ‘[...] Winnilorum, hoc est Langobardorum, gens, quae postea in Italia feliciter regnavit, a Germanorum populis originem ducens [...]’.

\(^{36}\) A slave, in return for fighting against the Assipitti in single combat, is freed: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 12, pp. 53–54; slaves are freed to increase the number of warriors: i. 13, p. 60; i. 15, pp. 54–55: Lamissio is the son of a prostitute, abandoned and discovered by King Agelmund who becomes king of the Lombards.

\(^{37}\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 1, pp. 52–53. The *Historia Langobardorum* also contains a description of the Italian provinces, similarly attesting to Paul’s interest in the later geographical location of the Lombards: ii. 14–24, pp. 81–86.

\(^{38}\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, i, p. 5: ‘Deinde Saturnus, Iovem filium e Grecia fugiens, in civitate, quae ex eius nomine Saturnia dicta est, cius ruinae actenus cernuntur in finibus Tusciae haut procul ab Urbe’.

\(^{39}\) The later King Aremus Silvius positions a ‘praesidium’ among the Alban mountains, ‘ubi nunc Roma est’ (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, i, p. 9); Aventinus Silvius is buried ‘in eo monte, qui nunc pars Urbis est’ (i, p. 9).
south from the *insula Scadinavia*, locating their progress along the way.\(^{40}\) Particularly significant is a river-crossing made possible by the mythical Lombard King Lamissio’s victory over the Amazons.\(^{41}\) Paul’s Roman prehistory too includes migrations, although in the Roman case this process is better described as waves of immigration, as peoples congregated in Italy and became integrated, forming a new people. Both Saturn and later Aeneas migrate across the Mediterranean to become kings of Italy.

How a people acquires its name is significant for Paul the Deacon. As we have seen, Paul added to Eutropius’s explanation of the derivation of the name of Rome from Romulus in order to explain that it was from this that the Romans were named. Of Lombards he tells at length of the tale whereby the god Godan bestows the name of Lombards (*Langobardi*) and victory on the women dressed up with long beards who appear before him at dawn, though Paul proceeds to scorn the tale as a ridiculous fable.\(^{42}\)

Even with the foundation of Rome — and the beginning of Eutropius’s text — Roman identity is not yet stabilized. In the second chapter of Eutropius’s text, Eutropius describes briefly, in two sentences, how the Romans had invited neighbouring peoples (*nationes*) to games in Rome, seized their wives and conquered their neighbours. Paul expands this story considerably: ‘then the Romans established friendship with the Sabines so that the king of the Sabines, Tatius, ruled equally with Romulus, and the Sabines and the Romans were caused to be one people, *unus populus*’.\(^{43}\) The rape of the Sabine women forms the basis for the expansion of Roman identity. This specific interest in *unus populus* does not appear to come from any of Paul’s sources. Although Jerome, Jordanes, and

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\(^{40}\) From the *insula Scadinavia* (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 1, p. 48) they depart to *Scoringa* (t. 7, p. 52). Then they continue to wander through *Mauringa, Golanda* (t. 11–13, pp. 53–54), cross a river (t. 15, p. 55) and come to *Rugiland* (t. 19, p. 57).

\(^{41}\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 15, p. 55. This passage has often been remarked upon as a crucial point in Lombard history. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 383, calls it ‘the symbolic dividing line between, one might say, their mythical and their heroic periods’. Though Paul tells the story, he follows it quickly with his own scepticism: ‘Constat sane, quia huius assertionis series minus veritate subnixa est. Omnibus etenim quibus veteres historiae notae sunt, patet, gentem Amazonum longe antea, quam haec fieri potuerint, esse deletam’.

\(^{42}\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 8–9, pp. 52–53.

Aurelius Victor all tell of the friendship of the Sabines and Romans, none use this expression: ‘Sabinique et Romani unus populus efficerentur’. The Sabines do not diminish the ‘Romanness’ of the ‘original’ inhabitants. On the contrary, not only are the Romans and Sabines together unus populus, but the Romans acquire many of their ‘Roman’ customs from the Sabines. Paul explains, again supplementing Eutropius, that the Romans proceeded to exchange names and ‘it held from that custom that no Roman is without a praenomen’.

The Romans even acquire another name for themselves, Quirites, from their association with the Sabines. Quirites, Paul explains, now using Jerome’s chronicle, is derived from the Sabine word for a particular type of spear which Romulus customarily carried and from this spear — or from the Sabine name for Romulus, Quirinus (similarly derived from the name for the spear) — the Romans are called Quirites. Unlike for Eutropius, the foundation of the city itself is not the defining moment of Roman history: the city has been established, but the Romans as a people are still developing their identity.

Throughout these migrations, before and after the founding of Rome, the Romans are acquiring their customs and civilization. It is from Saturn that they learn agriculture, the minting of coins, and acquire civilization (humanis moribus) — having before been semiferi. It is the mother of Faunus, Carmentis Nicostrata, who invented the Latin letters/language (litteras), while King Latinus improved/reformed the Latin language (Latinam linguam corregit). Thus Paul’s beginning of the Historia Romana also explains the development of the Romans as a people in terms of the gradual acquisition of their culture.

Paul the Deacon does not invent any of these components of Roman prehistory; all have a precedent, many in the most renowned of Roman myths, Virgil’s Aeneid. But by selecting, reorganizing and supplementing Eutropius’s text with them, Paul the Deacon has subtly reconfigured the identity of the Romans.

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44 Jerome, Chronicon, ed. by Helm, aa. 729–35 a. Chr., p. 90a; Aurelius Victor, De viris illustribus, ed. by Pichlmayr, ii. 10, p. 26; Jordanes, Romana, ed. by Mommsen, c. 92, p. 11.

45 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, i. 2, p. 12: ‘et ex illo consuetudo tenuit, ut nemo Romanus sit absque praenomine’. Paul’s source here is unclear. Crivellucci (nn. 10–13), suggests that Paul may have had Valerius Maximus’s text on which Iulius Parrus’s epitome De Praenominibus was based, since Iulius Parrus suggests but does not explain how the Romans acquired a praenomen.

46 Paul has no need to explain how the Romans acquired other laws and customs as Eutropius already explained that Numa Pompilius established leges Romanis moresque, as well as organizing the year into twelve months and founding temples and sacred spaces (sacra ac templum) throughout the city: Eutropius, Breviarium, ed. by Santini, i. 3. 2, p. 3.
Romans, or to be more precise, the pre-Roman Romans. He has made these people understandable in comparable terms to those used in reference to other contemporary ‘barbarian’ peoples, regionally restricted gentes around the Mediterranean. To be sure, in name the Romans never become a gens; in both the Historia Romana and Historia Langobardorum, Paul the Deacon continues to use populus to describe the Romans and gens to describe the Lombards, Vandals, or other non-Roman peoples, but the Romans, at least in their origins, have become more comparable to other gentes.47

By the end of the Historia Romana and in the Historia Langobardorum, the similarity between the Romans (or as we know them, the Byzantines) and other peoples, such as the Lombards again becomes more pronounced. I will discuss this in more depth in Sections 2 and 3, but one example indicates the phenomenon. In Paul the Deacon’s sixteenth and last book, describing Justinian’s treaty with the Lombards in 548, he writes: ‘At this time the gens Langobardorum in Pannonia were living in friendship with the populus Romanus’.48 The Romans are still a populus and the Lombards a gens, but these categories, populus versus gens, and the peoples, Lombards v. Romans, have become comparable.

As well as telling of the prehistory of the Romans, Paul the Deacon’s new beginning also expanded the scope of his history in another way. Using Jerome’s Chronicle, Paul the Deacon synchronized Roman history with biblical history and contextualized his Roman history within world history. This framework embeds the Romans, as one of many peoples, in a Christian world.

Paul the Deacon situates the reign of Latinus among an impressive selection of eleven comparative chronological events:

Troy was captured by the Greeks, Labdon was in the third year of his rule among the Hebrews, Tautanes ruled among the Assyrians, Thous among the Egyptians, it was 4019 years from the beginning of the world, 777 years since the flood, 835 years since the birth of Abraham and the forty-third year of the reign of Ninus among the Assyrians, 310 years from the birth of Moses, 303 years before the founding of the city of Rome, [and] 306 years before the first Olympiad.49

47 Most often, however, Paul the Deacon prefers to refer to the Romans simply as Romani: Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, p. 195.

48 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xvi. 20, p. 236: ‘Hac etiam aetate gens Langobardorum amica tunc populi Romani apud Pannonian degebat, quibus in regni gubernaculo Audoin praecerat’. Paul the Deacon is referring to Justinian’s foedus with the Lombards in 548. This treaty is one of many fifth-/sixth-century treaties by which the Lombards were integrated into Italy, although the Byzantine Empire formally continued to consider the territory part of its empire until Constantine IV. See Pohl, ‘The Empire and the Lombards’.

49 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, 1*, pp. 6–7: ‘Regnante tamen
In part, this passage, with its mention of the capture of Troy by the Greeks, transitions nicely to the subsequent section which narrates how Aeneas came to Italy after the fall of Troy. But such a narrative technique does not suffice to explain the eleven comparative chronological events from world history, including those from the past, such as the beginning of the world, and those in the future, such as the founding of Rome, among which Paul situates the reign of Latinus. Rather than simply reading Jerome’s *Chronicle* for a specific year, Paul the Deacon has looked back and also forward so that he can include various peoples from Jerome’s chronicle. He has chosen primarily, but not exclusively, biblical events. Thus he positions the Romans within a universal history, among the various other peoples of the world that existed before and contemporaneously with the Romans.

Describing the foundation of Rome, which Eutropius had triple-dated, Paul the Deacon adds an alternate Orosian calculation for the years since the fall of Troy (‘419 years after the fall of Troy, or, as it pleases Orosius, 404 years’), as well as synchronizing the date with Old Testament history (‘six years before the ten tribes of Israel were transferred by Sennacherib, the King of the Chaldeans, into the mountains of the Medes’). By using Orosius’s dates, Paul introduces uncertainty into the date of Rome’s foundation. Whereas in Eutropius’s text this was the crucial moment when Rome’s history began, for Paul it is an event in the distant past difficult to situate precisely among the other significant events of world history.

As with the founding of Rome, so too during the reigns of the first kings of Rome, Paul supplements Eutropius with concurrent world history, usually, but not exclusively, biblical history. During the reign of Numa Pompilius, Paul...
records that Hezekiah was ruling among the Hebrews; during that of Tullus Hostilius he notes that, ‘in these times the city of Byzantium was founded which afterward was called Constantinople’.\footnote{Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Romana}, ed. by Crivellucci, i. 4, p. 14: ‘His temporibus Bizantium civitas est condita, quae postea Constantinopolis est appellata.’}

Thus, Paul’s new beginning reduces the exceptionality of the people who would later become the Romans. They are portrayed as one strand among the many peoples who constitute world history. What distinguishes the Romans from other peoples — past and present — is the feat that they accomplished; the formation of a unified people, the basis for empire. Although as the Lombards migrate south they come into contact with other peoples, such as the Suebi, these different groups never coalesce into one entity.\footnote{One such integration is when King Wacho conquers the Suebi (Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Langobardorum}, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 21, pp. 59–60). Later, however, the \textit{Historia Langobardorum} describes a Suebian man, Droctulf, who though he grew up with the Lombards, is said to have remembered his Suebian identity and accordingly deserts to the Romans (iii. 18, pp. 101–02).} And though the Lombards arrive in Italy as a group of mixed peoples, Paul the Deacon claims that the names of the villages in Italy still preserve their diverse identities.\footnote{Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Langobardorum}, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, ii. 26, p. 87: ‘Certum est autem, tunc Alboin multos secum ex diversis, quas vel alii reges vel ipse ceperat, gentibus ad Italian adduxisset. Unde usque hodie eorum in quibus habitant vicinos Gepidos, Vulgares, Sarmatas, Pannonios, Suavos, Noricos, sive alis huiuscemodi nominibus appellatus.’} The Saxons, who are said to have come to Italy with the Lombards, even decide to return to Gaul, since the Lombards will not let them live under their own rule.\footnote{Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Langobardorum}, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iii. 5–6, pp. 94–95.}

The Romans, however, do succeed. As Paul the Deacon describes, using Jordane’s \textit{Roman History}:

\begin{quote}
The Latin and the Etruscan herdsmen, and even from across the sea the Phrygians under Aeneas and the Arcadians under the leadership of Evander, all flowed in. Thus congregated a body, as if out of different elements, and made the Roman people.\footnote{Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Romana}, ed. by Crivellucci, i. 2, p. 11: ‘Latini denique Tuscique pastores, etiam transmarini Friges, qui sub Aenea, Arcades, qui sub Evandro duce, influxerant. Ita ex variis quasi elementis congregavit corpus unum populum Romanum efficit’ (= Jordanes, \textit{Romana}, ed. by Mommsen, c. 90, p. 10).}
\end{quote}

Here we have the recipe for Roman identity; the \textit{populus Romanus} are not homogeneous in origin, but are composed out of various pre-existing peoples
that have been mixed together. Yet their varied origins do not undermine their unity; the Romans became *unus populus*, a body of distinct elements integrally connected. Whereas Eutropius had taken Roman unity for granted, Paul did not; on the contrary, his new beginning explains this process.

It is worth returning to the beginning of the *Historia Romana* once more to consider how Paul’s recipe for Roman unity works. Most of the legends Paul relates can also be found in the first book of Livy’s Roman history, and yet a brief comparison between these texts brings out some significant differences in their relative conceptions regarding the formation of the Roman people. The ‘ingredients’ suggested by Livy’s history are numerous, including the migration of the Trojans, the opening of an asylum to collect inhabitants for the early city, and the rape and marriage of the Sabine women.57 But without question the crucial components for unifying the city are in Livy’s text the physical city of Rome, religion, custom and, perhaps most importantly, law. After Romulus founded the city and as his first act fortified the Palatine, Livy relates that ‘when Romulus had duly attended to the worship of the gods, he called the people together and gave them the rules of law, since nothing else but law could unite them into a single body’.58 Indeed, Rome’s rise to greatness could be seen in the state’s flexibility in giving citizenship to meritorious foreigners.59 Paul’s model of unification, in contrast, has a much stronger emphasis on the organic, biological formation of a people. The early kings and the migrations of people indicate the Romans as a people interrelated by blood. Distinctly missing is the legalistic emphasis of Livy; religion, customs, and the physical city are also of minimal importance. In the early chapters of Eutropius’s history, Paul adds the story of the opening of the asylum and the tale of the rape of Sabine women that paves the way for the subsequent incorporation of the whole Sabine peo-

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57 Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, ed. by Foster, i. 1, pp. 8–11; i. 8, pp. 30–33; i. 9, pp. 32–39.

58 Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, ed. by Foster, i. 8. 1, p. 30: ‘Rebus divinis rite perpetratis vocataque ad concilium multitudine quae coalescere in populi unius corpus nulla re praeterquam legibus poterat, iura dedit’ (trans. by Foster, p. 32). The importance of the physical city of Rome is particularly emphasized by Camillus’s plea, after the sack of the city, not to abandon Rome for Veii (end of Book v).

59 For example, as the plebeians advocate for the right of intermarriage with the patricians, Livy gives a long speech to a Canuleius, a tribune of the plebs, who begins by emphasizing that plebs and patricians alike dwell in the same city, then turns to Roman history to demonstrate how Rome’s power grew by allowing meritorious foreigners into the city and giving them citizenship: ‘Ergo dum nullum fastiditur genus in quo eniteret virtus, crevit imperium Romanum’ (Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, ed. by Foster, iv. 3, p. 266). This is, however, a plebeian and not Livy speaking; there are patrician speeches with different viewpoints.
ple. Thus Paul imagines the formation of a unified Roman people as the pro-
cessual mixing and melding together of peoples, not the institutionalization
emphasized by Livy.

Whatever the ingredients needed to form a people, there was no doubt that
for the Romans the mixture had been just right. It is no longer prominently
placed at the forefront of the history, but Paul the Deacon’s Historia Romana
still includes Eutropius’s beginning — that human history can remember noth-
ing greater in its growth, in the whole world, than the Roman Empire: the
Roman Empire remains unique. Situated after the description of Rome’s pre-
history, Eutropius’s explanation of the Romans has taken on a different nuance
of meaning. No longer does the Roman Empire appear out of nowhere with
Romulus; rather the migration of peoples was a slow, continuous process form-
ing unus populus. Like any other people, the Romans are a constructed entity, a
mixture of various peoples. Unlike others, the Romans managed to coalesce to
form one people; otherwise there is nothing fundamentally different between
them and any other, such as the Lombards.

Paul the Deacon’s Romans are a model of empire achieved through the unity
of peoples. It is a recipe for how to turn ethnic identity into a politically and
militarily successful unity, how to become unus populus and how to become a
world imperium, a feat to which none of the peoples in Paul the Deacon’s con-
temporary world could lay claim. 60 But why, according to Paul the Deacon, did
the Romans succeed? To understand this, we must turn to Paul the Deacon’s
Christianization of the Roman Empire.

2. Paul the Deacon’s Christianization of Eutropius’s Roman Empire

The Romans, as presented in Eutropius’s Breviarium and in the modifications of
Paul the Deacon, are an unparalleled success story. What enabled the Romans
to establish a unified people and expand into an astounding Empire, an endeav-
our in which other peoples had and would continue to fail? To understand
this phenomenon and its consequences, I turn in this part to how Paul the
Deacon integrated Christianity into the Roman Empire he had inherited from
Eutropius’s text. 61 As I will show, although for Paul the Deacon Christianity

60 Here it should be emphasized that Paul the Deacon was certainly writing the Historia
Romana before Charlemagne’s coronation in 800 and most probably also before the Carolingian
conquest of Italy in 774: Pohl, ‘Paulus Diaconus’, p. 529.

61 Sestan, ‘Qualche aspetto della personalità,’ remains the most thorough study of Paul’s
is the key to the expansion of the Roman Empire, Paul layered Christianity subtly onto the Roman Empire. In particular, heresy begins to unravel the bond between the two, threatening the success of the Roman Empire (and perhaps even its very existence). This possibility becomes increasingly plausible towards the end of the *Historia Romana*, as the Roman Empire shrinks and a power vacuum develops in the West, while Christianity becomes increasingly detached from the Roman Empire.

In his continuation of Eutropius’s Roman history, Paul the Deacon retained Eutropius’s focus on empire as the basis for his understanding of Roman history. Although Paul the Deacon concentrates on events in the western half of the Empire, like Eutropius, he structures his text around Roman emperors. When there are two emperors, Paul the Deacon reports on both. After the deposition of Romulus Augustulus (476) he reverts to the emperor in the East.

Although upholding Eutropius’s structure, what Paul the Deacon considered lacking in the text, as he relates in the work’s dedication, was Christianity. Having given Adelperga the text of Eutropius to read, he tells us that she complained to him of its brevity and its lack of any mention of the history of ‘our religion’, recommending that he expand the text and add ‘something from the text of the sacred scriptures, by which the times of his [Eutropius’s] narration would be manifest more clearly’. Paul the Deacon tells us that he complied and added congruences from divine law (*ex divina lege*) and thus ‘I rendered it interpolations, particularly with respect to their Christian content. The shadows of Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine and their repositioning of Rome with respect to Christianity loom large throughout this section, although I will not pursue the question of Paul’s links with them here. The bibliography regarding the relationship of Romanness and Christianity is vast. Some useful introductions include Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*; Inglebert, *Les Romains chrétiens*; Schott, *Christianity, Empire, and the Making of Religion*.

[Eutropius’s history] harmonious with the most sacred history’. As we have seen in Section 1, this harmonization meant inserting temporal correspondences between Roman and biblical events. However, Paul’s Christianization of Eutropius’s text was not limited to meshing Roman and Christian time. His aim was more ambitious.

In the seventh book of Eutropius’s Roman history, in the midst of lavish praises of Augustus’s reign, Paul the Deacon undertook a fundamental Christianization of Eutropius’s text:

During these days, across the Tiber, out of a lodging inn, a spring of oil overflowed from the earth and for the whole day it flowed with an enormous stream signifying out the people for the favour of Christ. Then indeed there appeared to the sight a circular rainbow in the sky around the sun. Therefore in the forty-second year of the most firm and true peace brought about by Caesar, the lord Christ was born in Bethlehem, whose arrival that same peace served.

‘Christianization’ for Paul the Deacon did not mean merely indicating what Christian events had occurred during Roman history. Instead, by compressing these passages of Orosius and Jerome, Paul the Deacon incorporates their views into Eutropius’s distinctly secular text: the city of Rome, the Roman Empire, and Christianity are inextricably stitched together. The Empire created through the Augustan peace was there to spread Christianity; Christ in turn manifested his birth through miracles in the city of Rome. Thus the Roman Empire and Christ are shown to be part of the same fabric of history preordained by God.


From Paul’s perspective the Romans succeeded in building an empire because they were meant to. Roman exceptionality was part of God’s plan. Although Paul adds the dimension of Christianity to the Roman Empire, it is astonishing how few other modifications Paul made to the subsequent chapters of Eutropius’s text. There is little to describe the process through which the Roman Empire became Christian. We hear of Christ’s death during the reign of Tiberius, the martyrdom of Peter and Paul under Nero, and the persecutions under Decius. Astonishingly, using Eutropius verbatim, Paul the Deacon makes no mention of Constantine’s conversion, and even retains Eutropius’s comment that ‘[Julian] persecuted the Christian religion too much, but nevertheless in such a manner that he abstained from bloodshed’. We find the same, rather unstable and at times even ambiguous Christianization of the Roman Empire in Paul’s six-book continuation of Eutropius. On the one hand, it becomes clear that, from Paul’s perspective, Christianity has become integral in defining the Romans; it is the ‘glue’ that keeps their Empire together. And yet, as quickly becomes evident in the Historia Romana, Paul does not regard the Roman Empire and the Christian oikoumene as so straightforwardly identical.

When Paul the Deacon’s continuation of Eutropius’s Roman history opens with the reign of Valentinian in 364, Paul seemingly takes for granted that a unique bond between Christianity and the Roman Empire has been established. We hear that Valentinian maintained his undiminished Christian faith, while Gratian returns Italy, plagued by the Arian heresy, to the true faith.

68 Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, p. 222, writes that the subject of the Historia Romana is the ‘Catholic oikoumene, of which Italy and Africa essentially form the Western half, and in which Italy is treated as an entity on a par with the eastern Empire itself’. I am much indebted to Cornford’s work on Paul the Deacon’s continuation of the Historia Romana in this section, though I would suggest a more complex view of the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Christian oikoumene.
69 Valentinian: Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xi. 1, p. 151: ‘Qui [Valentinianus] cum sub Iuliano Augusto christianitatis integrum fidem gereret, cum, ut dictum
one and the same, while enemies of the Romans are enemies of the Christian faith. The most straightforward example of this equation whereby Empire and Christianity are opposed to barbarism, heresy, and paganism is Africa. The Vandals are most often portrayed as cruel heretical barbarians persecuting true Christians and working to ruin the Empire.70 Elsewhere we find usurpers frequently described as perfidious, while the terror of the Roman world, the Scythians, who set into motion the inundation of Italy by Radagaisus and his Goths, are described as barbarians who have vowed to furnish their gods with all the blood of the Roman genus.71

The ‘Christianization’ of the Roman Empire is particularly evident in Paul’s presentation of emperors. Along with a narrative account of the significant events of an emperor’s reign, as in Eutropius’s text, Paul the Deacon often presents short biographical sketches of the emperors that include an account of their character, death, and the span of their reign. But now the most significant aspect of a Roman emperor is his Christian faith.

Good emperors are idealized as the servants of Christ on earth, conquering under the sign of the cross. An example of a Roman emperor par excellence, Theodosius, can demonstrate the extent to which the well-being of the Empire is shown to depend on the Christian piety of the emperor. Theodosius trusts est, scutariorum tribunus esset, iussus ab imperatore sacrilego aut immolare idolis aut militia excedere, sponte discessit; nec mora Iuliano interfecto Iovianoque mortuo, qui pro nomine Christi amiserat tribunatum, in locum persecutoris sui accepit imperium’. Gratian: xi. 13, pp. 157–58.


to the mercy of God to repair an empire afflicted by the wrath of God and places all his trust in the work of Christ. Seeing the virtue and benevolence of Theodosius, all the Gothic peoples give themselves to the Roman Empire. Even the Parthians and the barbarian nations who had up to then been enemies of the Roman name send embassies requesting peace. In battle against the usurpers Eugenius and Arbogastes, although overwhelmed in numbers, Theodosius joins battle under the sign of the cross and a holy wind turns away the enemy and gives him the victory.

Yet most emperors are not ideal Christians like Theodosius, and the Roman Empire is shown to suffer the consequences. In the process, Paul the Deacon makes clear that the Roman Empire is not the bulwark protecting Christianity which, from Paul’s perspective, it ideally should be. Throughout Paul’s continuation there is an emphasis on the effects of Christian impiety and heresy on the Empire’s well-being. Emperor after emperor strays from the path of true Christianity and usually suffers the consequences — military defeats or gruesome deaths. Most dramatic is the case of Valens, who after the disastrous defeat of the Battle of Adrianople burns to death ignobly in a hut. Paul, following his source, Orosius, characterizes these calamities as just punishment for Valens, since he had sent Arian bishops to the Goths, thus corrupting them with the Arian heresy.

Throughout Paul’s six-book continuation heresy never lurks far away, continually threatening the relationship between God and the Roman Empire. Paul shows that through their heretical thinking and impiety, the emperors cause the Roman Empire to fragment and lose its distinctiveness. The Romans are again becoming, as they had appeared in Paul’s account of their origins, more similar to other gentes. As the Roman Empire shrinks, barbarian ‘imperial’ figures take power, often described in more depth than the Roman emperors themselves. Christian piety remains crucial for success, but a particular bond between the dwindling Roman Empire and Christianity is ever more elusive.

Particularly from Book XIII onwards, the borders of the Roman Empire contract dramatically. Geiseric and his Vandals capture Carthage, a scene of devastating destruction. With the Anglo-Saxon invasion, the whole island

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73 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, xii. 4, p. 164.
74 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, xi. 11, p. 156: ‘Iusto itaque Dei iudicio ab illis igne crematus est, quos ipse perfidiae succenderat igni’.
of Britain, from east to west, is irrevocably lost to the Romans. 76 Non-Roman ‘imperial’ figures rivalling the Roman emperors enter the picture — most prominently Attila. As the powerful king of the Huns and many other conquered peoples, Attila is described as having set his mind on demolishing the Empire in the West. 77 The battle of the Catalaunian Plains, where Attila and his Huns fight the Romans commanded by Aëtius to a standstill, is an encounter between near equals: ‘There assembled from here and there the strongest peoples, the battle lines were set, and there was a battle so harsh and pertinacious such as scarcely is narrated by any history’. 78

The figures of both Attila and Aëtius are profiled in considerably more depth than their contemporary emperors Marcian and Valentinian. When Attila dies (after deciding not to advance to Rome, swayed by the intercessions of Pope Leo), his death becomes known to the emperor in Constantinople through a dream of a fractured bow; of Aëtius’s death, quoting Bede, Paul writes that, ‘thus Aëtius, a most warlike man and formerly the terror of the most powerful King Attila, lay dead, with which equally the Empire of the West and the safety of the Republic collapsed and thus far it has not had the power to rise up again’. 79 No longer are the Roman emperors so distinctively unique. Hand in hand, one can trace the rise of military commanders similar to the emperor (whether fighting for or against the Romans) and, correspondingly, the

76 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xiii. 17, pp. 187–88. Paul the Deacon’s rather isolated references to Britain have been variously interpreted. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History, p. 264, writes, ‘The apparent function of each entry is, as type to antitype, to offer a capsule summary of the next book. The British event anticipates in miniature what would take place on a large scale in the heartland of the Empire’. Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, pp. 154–55, suggests that Paul included all the information on Britain that was available to him, pointing out that Paul includes all but one of the entries about Britain found in Bede’s Chronicle.

77 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xiv. 2, p. 191: ‘fultus itaque fortissimarum gentium, quas sibi subiugarat, praeсидio ad Occidentale demoliendum animum inten dit imperium’.


decreasing importance of the Roman emperor, who now rules his patch of the Mediterranean like any other ruler.

As various provinces fall away from imperial control, even the old heart of the Roman Empire, Italy and Rome herself, do not remain unscathed. Although Rome was no longer the Empire’s capital, Paul the Deacon treats the sacks of the city as highly significant, at times emphasizing these events more than his sources. Of Alaric’s sack of Rome in 410, Paul writes that the city was burned and devastated, even supplementing a precise date of the event dated from Rome’s foundation.\(^80\) When Geiseric and the Vandals sack Rome in 455, though Pope Leo’s pleading mitigates their plunder, the devastation is nonetheless underlined.\(^81\) A crucial caesura is Odovacer’s deposition of Romulus Augustulus. Paul boldly proclaims, having dated the event from Rome’s foundation, that this is the end of the power of the Romans in Rome.\(^82\)

The sack prompts Paul, beginning in Book xvi, to switch, explicitly, his dating schema. This is an independent decision on Paul’s part, not done by any of his sources: ‘With the cessation already of the Empire of the city of the Romans it appears expedient and suitable to me, to deduce the line of counting from the years of the incarnation of our Lord, by which it is more easily possible to recognize the time than that which had been used’.\(^83\) Even time itself, the fabric onto


\(^82\) Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, xv. 10, p. 215: ‘Ita Romanorum apud Romam imperium toto terrarum orbe venerabile et Angustalis illa sublimitas, quae ab Augusto quondam Octaviano cepta est, cum hoc Augustolo perit, anno ab Urbis conditione millesimo ducentesimo nono, a Gaio vero Caesare, qui primo singularem arripuit principatum, anno quingentesimo septimo decimo, ab incarnatione autem Domini anno quadringentesimo septuagesimo quinto. Igitur delecto ab Augustali dignitate Augustulo Urbem Odovacer ingenit sus totius Italie aedepus est regnum’. Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, pp. 208–10, emphasizes how although Paul the Deacon follows his sources (the chronicle of Marcellinus and Jordanes’s *Historia Romana* / *Getica*) in describing the events of 476 he gives it particular emphasis. The *Historia Romana* makes a clear step in the direction of treating the date as a caesura of Roman history. Regarding the creation of 476 as a turning point see Croke, ‘AD 476’, who shows that this tradition originated in Constantinople, not in the West.

which history is mapped, must be changed to reflect the changed circumstances: Christian time has superseded Roman time. Paul’s switch to dating from Christ’s birth rather than from the founding of Rome is indicative of the relationship between the Roman Empire and Christianity that is developing. Roman history occurs within Christian time, but the Romans no longer define this time.

Nowhere in Paul’s text is an explicit, or even implicit, break between the Roman Empire and the Christian oikoumene portrayed. However, the Roman Empire is less and less a universal empire and the similarities between the Roman emperor and ‘barbarian’ kings, such as Odovacer, become more explicit. The Romans are one of many peoples in the Mediterranean world. They are Christians, but neither the only Christian people, nor necessarily God’s favourite. Meanwhile the papacy in Rome is given a more pronounced role, pleading with these new barbarian leaders or influencing the emperor. For example, Pope Leo uses his influence to provide for the safety not only of Rome, but all of Italy, while the Emperor Justinian having lapsed into the Euthycian heresy is corrected by Pope Agapitus.

Yet the tensions in the text should not be exaggerated. Throughout the most turbulent times in the Historia Romana, the persistence of the Roman Empire is not questioned. Difficulties were, after all, nothing new in Roman history; in the second to last chapter of his text, Eutropius wrote of Jovian’s ignominious defeat and treaty with the Persians: ‘before his time this had never happened in practically one thousand one hundred and eighteen years since the Roman Empire had been founded’. Still Paul the Deacon managed to continue the history of the Roman Empire for over a century past this point. The division into eastern and western parts of the Empire with two emperors, Honorius and Arcadius (395), is seen as just that: one empire with two seats. Although

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85 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, x. 17, p. 148 = Eutropius, Breviarium, ed. by Santini, x. 17. 1, p. 70: ‘Qui iam turbatis rebus exercitu quoque inopia laboro rante uno a Persis atque altero proelio victus pacem cum Sapore, necessariam quidem, sed ignobilem, fecit, multatus finibus ac nonnulla imperii Romani parte tradita. Quod ante cum annis .mc. et duobus de viginti fere, ex quo Romanum imperium conditum erat, numquam accidit’ (Eutropius, Breviarium, trans. by Bird, p. 69).
86 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xii. 9, p. 168: ‘Anno ab Urbe condita millesimo centesimo quadragesimo nono Archadius Augustus in Oriente, Honorius frater eius in Occidente quadragesimo secundo loco commune imperium, divisum tantum sedibus, tenere coeperunt’. As Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, p. 247, writes: ‘It soon becomes clear that for Paul, though the Empire might have two thrones, the Republic is a single body’.
Odovacer is presented as an enemy conquering Roman territory and with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus (476) the power of the Roman Empire is said to cease in Rome. Theodoric is presented as an ally of the Roman people. He is commended to the *senatus populusque Romanus* by the emperor and restores the province to the Empire. Only subsequently, as an Arian heretic, does he lose his legitimacy.  

Most significantly, Paul’s Roman history ends with a snippet that re-emphasizes the unique success of the Romans as a Christian empire: a brief summary of the restored Roman-Christian Empire of Justinian. Paul describes how, as soon as he came to power, Justinian turned his attention to restoring the *respublica*. Paul reports Belisarius’s victories against the Persians, the defeat of the Vandals, the reconquest of Carthage, and, in greater depth, the Gothic wars in Italy. Justinian’s success is undeniable, and through his restoration the Roman Empire is shown, to an extent, to regain its earlier splendour.

3. The ‘Romans’ in Paul the Deacon’s *Historia Langobardorum*

Paul the Deacon had introduced Christianity into Eutropius’s almost secular text, explaining the success of the Roman Empire through its chosen role in spreading the Christian message. By the end of the *Historia Romana*, what persists is undoubtedly still a Roman-Christian Empire. But its borders have contracted and its relationship to Christianity — only tenuously linked by Paul the Deacon to the Empire to start with — has become increasingly detached. After Justinian, though, what comes next?

At the end of the sixteenth and last book of the *Historia Romana*, Paul the Deacon promises, as he had already done in his dedication, that he will con-

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Mortensen, ‘Impero romano’, argues forcefully against Goffart that Paul the Deacon did not see the Roman Empire as having come to an end.


88 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, xvi. 23, p. 238: ‘Is ad Italian veniens magno cum Gothis certamine conflitit. Quibus ad internicionem poene consumptis regem Totilam, qui ultra iam decem annos regnaverat, interfecit universamque Italian ad reipublicae iura reduxit’. Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, p. 226, points out that though the conclusion of book sixteen is based for the most part on the *Liber Pontificalis*, ‘it is Paul, however, who introduced the concluding remarks about the restoration of the Republic, and thus he who introduced the terms reduxit (to bring back, or to restore) and Respublica’.

tinue his Roman history with a forthcoming book. Instead, Paul chose a different subject for his subsequent historical work: the history of the Lombards—a text which, as I discussed in Section 1, begins by telling of the origins of the Lombard people. It also continues their history up to the death of Liudprand in 744 (see Appendix B). That is, Paul’s Lombard History covers the very time period, post-Justinian, that Paul had promised he would narrate in a subsequent book of Roman history and even contains much material that would

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90 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, Epistula dedicatoria, p. 4: ‘promittens, Deo praesule, si tamen aut vestrae sederit voluntati, aut mihi, vita comite, ad huiuscemodi laborem maiorum dicta suffragium tulerint, ad nostram usque aetatem pro telare’; xvi. 23, p. 238 (end of Book xvi): ‘Quia vero restant adhuc quae de Iustiniani Augusti felicitate dicantur, inequenti Deo praesule libello promenda sunt’.

91 The bibliography on the Historia Langobardorum is vast; fundamental are Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History, pp. 378–431, and Pohl, ‘Paulus Diaconus und die Historia Langobardorum’. Two recent volumes about Paul the Deacon include much material: Chiesa, ed., Paolo Diacono. Various hypotheses have been devised to explain why Paul did not continue the Historia Romana. In his dedication to the Historia Romana, Paul the Deacon had promised to continue granted his text was pleasing to his patroness and that he found sufficient sources to continue. Mortensen, ‘Impero romano’, pp. 364–66, has hypothesized that the latter had applied: Paul was unable to find sources to continue his text and thus abandoned the task until he was motivated to begin on a different project, the Historia Langobardorum. Most ingeniously Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History, p. 378, has posited that the two texts should be read together as the history of Italy: ‘As Paul’s first instalment is Roman mainly because of Eutropius, so the Lombards of the second instalment are prominent rather than fundamental: the subject of both is Italy’. There is certainly a close connection between the two texts; after all, the Historia Langobardorum does tell of the reign of Justinian as Paul the Deacon had promised he would. However, as already the name, Historia Romana, attested to in most manuscripts, indicates, the two works have different foci—the Roman Empire and the Lombard people—although both emphasize events occurring in Italy, and both include much material not directly related to their primary subject. (For the way in which the Historia Langobardorum situates Lombards into the larger contours of the past see especially Pohl, ‘Paolo Diacono.’) Certainly the shift must lie in the changing circumstances of Paul’s life. The precise dating of the Historia Langobardorum is uncertain, but as Pohl, ‘Paolo Diacono’, p. 376, has demonstrated, it was certainly completed before 795/6. Whereas the Historia Romana was written for Adelperga, the daughter of King Desiderius and the wife of Archis II, duke of Benevento, it is unclear for whom or why the Historia Langobardorum was written. Goffart, The Narrators of Barbarian History, pp. 344–47, who firmly believes that the text is unfinished, suggests that it was written for a Beneventan audience and in particular Grimuald III. In contrast McKitterick, ‘Paul the Deacon and the Franks’, argues that the Historia Langobardorum is not unfinished and should be seen in relation to, even written for, a Frankish audience, in particular Pippin of Italy. Undoubtedly, as Walter Pohl demonstrates, Paul had a complex personality, and his diverse texts bear witness to different registers of identity: Pohl, ‘Paul the Deacon’.
seem suitable for such a continuation. But, rather than attempting to continue his Roman history, Paul shows the Roman Empire fading away; ‘Byzantine’ history post-Justinian is less and less interpreted as ‘Roman’ history. Though the Romans were not Paul’s primary focus in the Historia Langobardorum, in the process of telling the history of the Lombards, he shows a change occurring: the ‘Byzantines’ cease to be the Romans. Through their heresies the Byzantines complete their transformation into a regionalized identity — one of the many coexisting gentes of the early medieval world.

One way to observe this shift occurring in the Historia Langobardorum is Paul’s changing terminology for the framework of the ‘Empire’. Justinian is described as ruling over the imperium Romanum, the Roman Empire; in 602, Phocas — and all subsequent emperors — controls the regnum Romanorum, the Kingdom of the Romans. After Phocas we do still hear of an imperium, but we never find it coupled with Romanus; we only hear of a regnum Romanorum. Unlike the framework of empire under Justinian, where vast territories and peoples are described as coexisting under the umbrella of the imperium Romanum, by the end of the Lombard History it is the kingdom of the Roman people that coexists alongside various others of the Mediterranean world.

The first Roman emperor discussed by Paul in the Historia Langobardorum appears towards the end of Book I: Justinian, about whom Paul had promised to tell in his forthcoming book of Roman history. Consistent with this promise and his brief summary of Justinian’s reign at the end of the sixteenth book of Roman history, Paul praises Justinian and presents his reign as a restoration of the Roman Empire. Justinian conquers the gens Wandalorum, the gens Gothorum, and other gentes. Thus the Roman Empire is presented as a comparable entity to that found in the Historia Romana. The Empire is an umbrella encompassing a wide array of different gentes. The reason for Justinian’s success in restoring this imperial framework is stated clearly: ‘This Emperor [Justinian]

92 Phocas: Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Wäizt, iv. 36, p. 128. Regnum Romanorum: iv. 36, p. 128; v. 30, p. 154; vi. 11–12, p. 168. Already in the fourth century, regnum had been used to describe the Roman Empire. Significant here is not the term per se, but the shift in progress within Paul’s text.

93 We always continue to hear of an imperator; he never slips into a rex like kings who are described ruling their regna on the territory of the former Roman Empire. Respublica is also used infrequently in the text (e.g. Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Wäizt, ii. 4, p. 74). The choice of terminology seems also to reflect, in part, Paul’s choice of sources; where Paul quotes Gregory of Tours almost verbatim he uses Gregory’s terminology, that is, imperium (Tiberius and Maurice). When using Bede’s Chronicle, which does not specify either term, he most often inserts regnum Romanorum (Phocas, Constans II, Justin II, Leo III).
in fact was Catholic in his faith, upright in his deeds, just in his judgments, and therefore to him all things came together for good’: Christian piety brings about imperial success.\textsuperscript{94}

Already under Justinian’s successor, Justin II, however, the orthodoxy and the unity of the Roman Empire begin to falter and here, for the first time in the \textit{Historia Langobardorum}, the Byzantines, for specificity’s sake, are referred to by a new category of reference, the ‘Greeks’.\textsuperscript{95}

Now the whole people of the Goths having been destroyed or overthrown, as has been said, and those also of whom we have spoken having been in like manner conquered, Narses, after he had acquired much gold and silver and riches of other kinds, incurred the great envy of the Romans although he had laboured much for them against their enemies, and they made insinuations against him to the Emperor Justin and his wife Sophia, in these words, saying, ‘It would be advantageous for the Romans to serve the Goths rather than the Greeks wherever the eunuch Narses rules and oppresses us with bondage, and of these things our most devout emperor is ignorant: Either free us from his hand or surely we will betray the city of Rome and ourselves to those peoples’. When Narses heard this he answered briefly these words: ‘If I have acted badly with the Romans it will go hard with me’.\textsuperscript{96}

In their anger, in order to articulate the distinction between the non-Gothic inhabitants of Italy and the state in the east that is supposed to represent their interests, but no longer does, the enemies of Narses reach for the term \textit{Greci}.


\textsuperscript{95} Paul does use \textit{grecus} earlier in the \textit{Historia Langobardorum} in reference to the Greek language, as in describing that Justinian had built the church called in Greek Hagia Sophia: ‘Extruxit quoque idem princeps intra urbem Constantinopolim Christo domino, qui est sapientia Dei patris, templum, quod greco vocabulo Agian Sophian, id est sanctam sapientiam, nominiavit’ (i. 25, p. 63).

Narses’ enemies in Italy seek to demonstrate that the state in the east no longer pays heed to the well-being of all its Roman citizens. It is no longer acting as the Roman Empire, but as a regional power. These Easterners, the Greci, are placed parallel to the gentes, the surrounding world of Goths, and other ‘barbarians’ whom the inhabitants of Italy claim it would be equally advantageous for them to serve, rather than be (free) members in an imperial framework. The administrators of the Roman Empire are expected to act in the interests of the whole overarching Empire; since they do not behave accordingly, they face the moral consequences, losing their claim to represent the Empire. Thus they lose their Romanness and the former Roman Empire shrinks into a narrower category of reference: Greci.

Grecus was an outside denomination, with derogatory potential, that by the ninth century had become the predominant western term of reference for the ‘Byzantines’.97 (From the Byzantine perspective though Grecus would always remain an insult as the Byzantine Empire strove to retain the term ‘Roman’.)98 In the Historia Romana, Paul the Deacon had used the term Greci once before with respect to the Romans.99 The Ostrogoths complain to Theoderic, who is tarrying in Constantinople, that while they are nearly starving he is stuffing himself with Greek delights.100 Here the term clearly refers to regional special-

97 See the contribution by Gantner, ‘The Label “Greek”’; cf. Borri, ‘Neighbours and Relatives’, p. 20, with n. 78; Duboisson, ‘Graecus, Graecylvs, Graecari’; Wickham, ‘Ninth-Century Byzantium’, p. 248, points to Einhard’s Vita Karoli (where the Byzantine emperors, the ‘Roman emperors’, are jealous of the title of emperor that Charlemagne has received) and the Council of Paris in 825 as some ‘of the very few times a western writer uses the word “Roman” for the Byzantines after 800’. Regarding Western perspectives of the Byzantines more generally see Arbagi, ‘Byzantium in Latin Eyes’, with a discussion of Paul the Deacon’s Lombard history at pp. 15–17.

98 Wickham, ‘Ninth-Century Byzantium’, argues that, while during the ninth century the Byzantines were willing to address the Frankish emperor as basileus or imperator, they strived to keep ‘Roman’ to themselves, as demonstrated by the title basileus ton Romaion, which starting with Michael I (811–13) was put on coins: ‘It appears, that is to say, that as long as Romanity belonged to the east, the west could have emperors too’ (p. 246). The ‘Byzantine’ attachment to Romanness should not, however, be overemphasized: Mango, Byzantinum, esp. Chapter 1, emphasizes that in Byzantium the ‘main links of solidarity were two: regional and religious’ (p. 30).

99 A reader of the Historia Romana would also have encountered Grecus earlier in Eutropius’s text in a neutral sense: the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Greece (Eutropius, Breviarium, ed. by Santini, III. 12. 2, p. 19; x. 8. 3 p. 67). Paul the Deacon also uses Greci in this sense in his new introduction to Eutropius’s text, reporting that ‘Troia a Grecis capta est’ (Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, t’, p. 6).

100 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xv. 14, p. 218: ‘qui dicerent quas,
ties. When the enemies of Narses reach for the term, they likewise intend it as a regional specification with similarly pejorative overtones that, at its core, avoids linguistic confusion. With *Romani* it would not have been clear to whom Narses’ enemies were referring. As a result, though, it becomes more evident that the Mediterranean world is fragmenting into various groups that include Goths, Greeks, and Romans who no longer have an overarching structure holding them together.

Slowly the term *Greci* begins to creep into the *Historia Langobardorum* to describe the Byzantines. Of the Emperor Maurice, late sixth century (582–602), Paul the Deacon relates that he was the first Greek emperor.101 This phrase ‘primus ex Grecorum genere’ is particularly significant in that it is Paul’s addition to what is otherwise an almost verbatim quotation from Gregory of Tours.102 From this point on in the *Historia Langobardorum*, the ‘Byzantines’ are generally referred to as *Greci*, though the term does not lose its pejorative overtones.103

This linguistic transformation is indicative of the shift that has occurred, whereby, from Paul’s perspective in the late eighth century, the eastern emperors become regionalized, losing their prerogative to rule over a Roman Empire.

For Paul the Deacon the reasons for the Empire’s increasing fragmentation are nothing new. The change is the result of the same processes that had been at work in the later books of Paul’s Roman history whereby heresy causes ter-

dum ipse Grecorum epulis superflueret, inopiae miserias sustinerent’. The passage comes from Jordanes, who, however, uses the term *Romanus* in the passage: ‘quam ipse otiose frui regni Romani bona et gentem suam mediocriter victitare’ (Jordanes, *Romanas*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 290, p. 133).


102 Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, vi. 30, pp. 298–99. Goubert, *Byzance avant l’Islam*, p. 41, points out that the label is Paul’s doing, suggesting that it is the result of Maurice being from Cappadocia, rather than a European town. He, however, also points to the fact that Evagrius makes him a Roman, although from a family residing in Cappadocia.

103 As noted above, n. 93 the term *regnum Romanorum* does continue to be used. Also during Phocas’s reign we hear of Roman provinces (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iv. 36, p. 128) and Constans II is described as the foremost of the Romans, v. 30, p. 154: ‘Romanorum regnum Constantinus, Constantii augstii filius, succipit regendum, Romanisque principatus est annis decem et septem’. *Greci*: iv. 46, p. 135; v. 7, pp. 147–48; v. 10, p. 190; v. 11, pp. 149–50. These passages all are negative portrayals of the *Greci*, but generally very little positive, or even neutral, material is related about the Byzantine Empire in the seventh and eighth centuries.
ritorial and political regionalization. The bond between the eastern Empire and Christianity, already presented in Paul’s *Roman History* as tenuous, unravels further. The Byzantines relinquish their position as defenders of the Christian church. It is the increasingly independent papacy in Rome which heads the Christian church and preserves Christian orthodoxy, even at times in opposition to the Easterners. Meanwhile the power vacuum in Italy that had been shown developing in Paul’s *Roman History* is, in part at least, filled by others, such as the Lombards. Like the Lombards, or any other people, the Byzantines are now liable to succeed or fail in accordance with their Christian piety (or impiety). No longer are they accorded any unique Christian advantage.

The Lombards’ invasion of Italy demonstrates clearly how the Byzantines become a regional player as a result of their Christian impiety. The Emperor Justin II, described as having lapsed into the Pelagian heresy as well as being a ‘man given to every kind of avarice, a despiser of the poor, a despoiler of senators’, quickly credits Narses’ enemies’ accusations against him. Consequently, motivated by hate and fear, Narses invites the Lombards into Italy, tempting them with gifts of Italian fruit. The arrival of the Lombards is foreshadowed in ominous terms: ‘In Italy terrible signs were continually seen at night, that is, fiery swords appeared in heaven gleaming with the blood which was afterwards shed’.

The fragmentation of the Roman Empire is not blamed on Narses or the Lombards, about whom the text assures us that, ‘during all the time the Lombards held Pannonia, they were the allies of the Roman state against its rivals’; it is the emperor who is implicitly blamed for turning against Narses. Narses receives

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104 Neither the Lombards nor the papacy are, however, portrayed as successors to the Romans in Italy. In particular, Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, p. 419, notes the comparative absence of the popes from the second half of the sixth book of the *Historia Langobardorum* despite the fact that Paul undoubtedly had the sources (esp. *Liber Pontificalis*). In a sense the *Historia Langobardorum* (as well as the later books of the *Historia Romana*) could also be characterized as emphasizing the power vacuum.


107 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, ii. 1, p. 72: ‘Omnique tempore quo Langobardi Pannoniam possiderunt, Romanae rei publicae adver-
lavish praise, in particular for his Christian virtues, with a description far more elaborate than that which even the well-liked Justinian had received: ‘For he [Narses] was a very pious man, a Catholic in religion, generous to the poor, very zealous in restoring churches, and so much devoted to vigils and prayers that he obtained victory more by the supplications which he poured forth to God, than by the arms of war’.

In contrast, about Justin II we hear that ‘when he turned away the ear of his heart from the divine commands he became mad, having lost the faculty of reason by the just judgement of God’.

It is the heresy of the emperor that has led Italy to be severed from the Empire.

From Paul’s perspective, the Byzantines no longer have a monopoly on Christianity. The ‘Roman Empire’ in the East would continue to claim a unique bond with Christianity. In the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 681–82, Constantine IV asserted that the Empire existed wherever ‘Christ established his church as if it were his own house’. No matter its actual boundaries, the Byzantine Empire as the Christian Empire maintained a theoretical claim to all Christian lands. Paul the Deacon would not have agreed. Pious emperors are able to harness Christian energy into preserving the Roman Empire. Tiberius, for example, as he is particularly generous in his almsgiving, repeatedly discovers hidden treasures.

But when Constans II attempts to (re)conquer Italy, a prophecy states in no uncertain terms that the Romans do not have a monopoly on divine favour. Since John the Baptist is interceding for the Lombards, they will momentarily retain Italy. The Byzantine Empire must compete with the Lombards and other peoples both for land and for divine favour.


110 Quoted in Olster, ‘From Periphery to Center’, p. 99.

111 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iii. 12, p. 98.

One of the most climactic demonstrations of the transformation the former Romans have undergone is the description of the Byzantine expedition to Italy in 663–68. From their arrival on Italian soil the Byzantines are referred to almost exclusively with reference to the Emperor Constans II. When the group is referred to collectively *Greci* is used, or referring to one specific Byzantine, *Greculus*. At one point, a certain Lombard, Sesuald, is captured by the Greeks, but chooses nonetheless to carry out his task and announce to the besieged Lombards in Benevento that aid is on its way. Sesuald adds a plea for his family, since this faithless people (*perfida gens*) — that is, the Byzantines — will surely now kill him. In the West, perfidy was becoming an increasingly common epithet for the Byzantines. Nonetheless, the phrase stands out. Two terms, *gens* and *perfidia*, which the Roman-Christian Empire had traditionally used to characterize its enemies in contrast to its own Christian Empire — *gens* as a sub-imperial, usually barbarian, grouping; *perfidia* as a trait characteristic of usurpers and heretics — have now been turned around and thrown back at the Byzantines.

When the Emperor Constans II is militarily unsuccessful against the Lombards, he heads to Rome where the Byzantines, referred to as *Greci*, are greeted by the population of Rome, the *populus Romanus*, headed by the pope. This is anything but a joyful reunification of different Roman peoples. Instead the Byzantines spend the next twelve days looting the ancient ornamentation of the city. Disregarding even the sanctity of the Christian church, they strip the tiles off the church of the Holy Virgin, the Pantheon. The situation is clear; these are not Romans looting Rome, but impious and perfidious foreigners.

hoc ipse beatus Iohannes pro Langobardorum gente continue intercedit’. See also n. 126.

113 Regarding Constans II and the expedition see Corsi, *La spedizione italiana*, and Corsi, ‘La politica italiana di Costante II’.


115 Along with a whole host of other derogatory qualities including *invidia, fraud, falsitas, sublimitas*; Wickham, ‘Ninth-Century Byzantium’, p. 248. On perceptions of difference between Greco-Romans and Italo-Byzantines (primarily attributed to nature or language) see Hunger, *Graeculus perfidus, italos itamos*.

116 Regarding *perfidia* in the *Historia Romana*, see n. 71.

117 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Wäit, v. 11, pp. 149–50, loosely following *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. by Duchesne, Vitalianus, i, pp. 343–45. The *Liber Pontificalis* does not use the term *Greci* here, which also explains in part why Paul does not use the term *Greci* for the Byzantines while they are in Rome. However Paul, when describing
Yet, as this passage well demonstrates, for Paul the shift from a Roman Empire to eastern Greeks inhabiting a kingdom does not mean the end of the Romans. Or rather, to be more precise — with ‘Roman’ being such an ambiguous term — it does not mean the end of the Romani. Romani still appear in Paul’s text as inhabitants of Rome and the Byzantine (non-Lombard) territories in Italy more generally.\(^{118}\)

In the first two books of the Historia Langobardorum we still meet Romani as the ‘native’ inhabitants of Italy. During the Lombard invasion, Paul the Deacon tells that ‘the Romans had then no courage to resist because of the pestilence which occurred at the time of Narses [...]’.\(^{119}\) Two passages about the fate of the Romans after the Lombard invasion have been much discussed. First, of the Lombard King Cleph, Paul remarks that ‘of many powerful men of the Romans some he destroyed by the sword and others he drove from Italy’; and in the following chapter, in the time of the Lombard dukes, Paul writes: ‘In these days many of the noble Romans were killed from love of gain, and the remainder were divided among their “guests” and made tributaries, that they should pay the third part of their products to the Lombards.’\(^{120}\)

Constans II’s plundering of the western provinces, has added the phrase ‘Grecorum avaricia’.

\(^{118}\) My interpretation here is much indebted to the analyses of Cornford, ‘Paul the Deacon’s Understanding of Identity’; see Cornford, ‘The Idea of the Roman Past’, pp. 196–97, and Pohl, ‘Le identità etniche nei ducati di Spoleto e Benevento’, esp. p. 95, which looks at the meaning of ‘Roman’ in Paul the Deacon. Apart from the specific references to ‘Romans’ that I discuss here, ‘Roman’ also is used in a generic sense, as in referring to customs of dress (Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 4, p. 54; iv. 22, p. 155), as well as with reference to the ancient Romans (i. 1, pp. 47–48; i. 9, pp. 52–53; ii. 14, p. 81; ii. 23, pp. 85–86). Regarding the description of the city of Rome in the Historia Langobardorum: Gatto, ‘Città e vita cittadina’, pp. 201–04.


From Book III onwards, Romani appear as the inhabitants of Byzantine (non-Lombard) territories in Italy more generally. As the Narses episode demonstrates, these Romani are not equal members of the Empire, but subjects of the Byzantines. But Paul’s Lombard History does not emphasize this relationship of the Romani to the Greci; the Romani are most often portrayed as a substantially independent collective waging war and making treaties with the Lombards in Italy. Yet, though presented as distinct from the Greci, they are not presented in more favourable terms. In fact, arguably the opposite is true. The Romani are frequently presented as malicious, treacherous and cunning, if generally unsuccessful in their scheming. For example, Gregory, patrician of the Romans, kills the sons of Gisulf by ‘crafty treachery’ (dolosa fraude); or in Ravenna ‘a drink was given him [the Lombard Aio] by the malice of the Romans which made him lose his reason, and from that time he was never of full and sound mind’; even in the last (sixth) book of the Lombard History, telling of events of the early eighth century, we hear of Romans ‘swollen with accustomed pride’ attempting to attack the Lombards. All in all the Italian Romani are a regional identity in Italy, rather equivalent to other regional identities, though quite similar in temperament at least to their Greek masters.

A narrower, more particular, but little mentioned group of Romani are the inhabitants of Rome, who, as in the episode of Constans II’s visit to the city, are referred to as the populus Romanus. Headed by the pope, these Romani show

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121 Passages referring to the inhabitants of Byzantine territory: Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 19, pp. 102–03; iv. 3, p. 117; iv. 8, pp. 118–19; iv. 16, pp. 121–22; iv. 28, pp. 125–26; iv. 32, p. 127; iv. 33, p. 127; iv. 38, pp. 132–33; iv. 42, p. 134; iv. 45, p. 135; v. 27, p. 154; v. 28, p. 154; v. 37, p. 157; vi. 27, p. 174; vi. 40, pp. 178–79; vi. 49, pp. 181–82; vi. 51, pp. 182–83; vi. 54, pp. 183–84; vi. 56, p. 185. McCormick, ‘The Imperial Edge’, addresses the question as to what extent there existed a distinct ‘Italo-Byzantine’ identity, arguing that there was a difference in outward appearance, names, language, and even perhaps genetics, but also pointing to the movement of peoples, communication, and processes of static integration (in particular, imperial ceremonies and church services) that knit Italy into the Empire at large.


123 Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iii. 24,
greater independence from the East. When Philippicus Bardanes (711–13) sends ‘letters of perverted doctrine’ to Pope Constantine, the Pope rejects them and:

The Roman people determined that they would not take the name of the heretical emperor upon their documents, nor his likeness upon their coins. Hence his image was not brought into the church, nor was his name mentioned in the solemnities of the mass.\textsuperscript{124}

Here the \textit{populus Romanus} as a collective act forcefully and determinedly, emphasizing their opposition to the Emperor — and it is worth emphasizing again that Paul gives them, and not the Emperor, the adjective Roman. Apart from this incident, however, the \textit{populus Romanus} are given little agency in Paul’s text. Elsewhere we hear of them dying of the plague and being divided into seven parts by Pope Gregory.\textsuperscript{125} Thus, throughout the \textit{Lombard History}, even the \textit{Romani} who inhabit the city of the pope do not appear remarkably distinctive from other civic or regional identities in Italy.

In a sense we could parallel the Roman situation in Italy to that of the ‘death’ of the Lombard \textit{gens} as foretold by a hermit’s prophecy in the \textit{Historia Langobardorum}: ‘But a time shall come when this sanctuary [the church of John the Baptist] will be held in contempt and then the people itself (\textit{gens ipsa}) shall perish’, the accuracy of which Paul confirms.\textsuperscript{126} As Walter Pohl has argued,
this death of the Lombard gens is not the end of the Lombard people, but the end of the Lombards as a political identity. With the Frankish conquest, the rule of the regnum of Italy and the Lombard people has passed into the hand of the gens Francorum. In this kingdom, ‘the gens Langobardorum was not its subject any more but its object; still, the Lombards retained their ethnic identity and some of the political potential that history had created’.127

Similar, but rather more complicated, is the situation of the Romani in Italy. Likewise, they are no longer politically autonomous; rather, they are ruled over by the Byzantines. The Romani are now the objects of rule, not co-subjects of an Empire. In this transition with Romani — one regional identity — subordinated to the Greci — another regional identity — we can locate the end of the Roman Empire. Still, as in the case of the Lombards, loss of political authority is not equated with the end of the Romani: Romani still persist in Italy, thus retaining their ‘political potential’ and ‘regional’ identity.

Yet one should not push the comparison too far. In the end, examining the passages referring to Romans in the Historia Langobardorum establishes fewer conclusions about these Romans and the nature of Roman identity than emphasizing that the text is a history of the Lombards, not of the Romans. Paul’s focus throughout is not on telling the story of the Romans. Perhaps Paul even purposely minimizes the ‘Romanness’ in his history, offering less of a resource of Roman identity for any of the contemporary powers of his day (Byzantines, Franks, or papacy) to assert themselves as the successors of the Roman Empire. Nonetheless he does not go so far as to eliminate Romani from his text.

To summarize; by the end of Paul’s Lombard history, the rather less remarkable eighth-century Byzantines are no longer presented as the unique Roman Empire of the past. Instead, they are a regional power; they are Christians, but without an exclusive bond to Christianity. There remain civic and regional ‘Roman’ identities in Italy, but Paul the Deacon does not allow the survival of a Roman imperial identity. Naturally, even in Italy, this was only one way to interpret Roman history. In my final section, I will turn to an alternate reading of Roman history; the so-called seventeenth book, a text that, remarkably, uses excerpts of Paul’s Historia Langobardorum to tell a different story.

isdem locus venerabilis largiretur’ (Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, trans. by Foulke, p. 219). See also n. 112.

127 Pohl, ‘Gens ipsa peribit’, p. 75.
4. Prolonging the Roman Empire: A Seventeenth Book to the Historia Romana

Sometime before 900, that is, roughly within the century after Paul the Deacon, an anonymous compiler undertook the task of continuing Paul the Deacon. Sometime before 900, that is, roughly within the century after Paul the Deacon, an anonymous compiler undertook the task of continuing Paul the Deacon. Sometime before 900, that is, roughly within the century after Paul the Deacon, an anonymous compiler undertook the task of continuing Paul the Deacon. Stitching together passages of Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum that discuss the Romans, the compiler constructed a continuation of the Historia Romana from Justinian (527–65) to 730. Placed after Paul the Deacon’s sixteen books of Roman history, this text, assembled from the words of Paul himself, became the seventeenth book of the Historia Romana. This remarkable text, although constructed almost exclusively from Paul’s Lombard history, manages to offer an alternative reading of the history of the Roman Empire. The compiler accomplished this by selectively choosing passages and combining them into a self-sustaining text added on to Paul’s Roman history. As I will show in this section, the seventeenth book manages to prolong the Roman Empire up to what the text characterizes as the start of Byzantine iconoclasm in 730, even as it restricts this Empire, politically and territorially, to the East and, in the words of Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum, shows the religious and political dimensions of this constricted Roman Empire visibly unravelling. As the Roman Empire becomes more elusive, so do its Romans, leaving it questionable whether and where Romans can still persist without an empire to contain them.

It is difficult to contextualize the seventeenth book. The oldest manuscript that includes this text has been dated to the late ninth or early tenth century, and

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128 More substantial and well-known is the continuation of the Historia Romana by Landolfus Sagax around 1000, which expanded the Historia Romana into twenty-six books that continue the history up to 813. Landolfus probably worked in southern Italy. His primary source for the later history was Anastasius Bibliothecarius’s Latin version of Theophanes Homologetes. Recently discussed in Chiesa, ‘Storia romana e libri di storia romana’, pp. 247–50.

129 The text of the seventeenth book is included in the edition of the Historia Romana by Crivellucci. Martini, A Catalogue of Manuscripts, n. 26, corrects some of Crivellucci’s readings of the oldest manuscript. The passages of the Historia Langobardorum include: i. 25–26 (up to ‘virtutibus effulsit’); ii. 1–3, 4 (only beginning ‘Inter haec Justiniano’)–5, and 11; iii. 11–12, 15, 17–18, 20, 22–26; iv. 26, 33, 36, 49–50 (only up to ‘suam patriam repedavit’); v. 6–14, 30; vi. 4, 11–14, 23, 31–32, 34, 36, 41, 47, 54, 49 (the ending has been rearranged by the compiler). Apart from minor wording changes (in cc. 10, 39, 51–53) the only text not from Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum is a sentence in c. 49, taken from Bede, Chronic, ed. by Mommsen, a. 589, pp. 319–20, and the incipit and first half sentence of the text. I will discuss these changes in more depth below.
its production has been located in a northern Italian scriptorium. In this manuscript, immediately following the sixteenth book, the text segues: ‘Here begins the seventeenth book, which we have excerpted from the history of the Winnili [that is, the Lombards], which certainly was composed by the author earlier mentioned.’ We know little more to anchor the context or circumstances of the text’s formation than the indications the text itself gives. It presents itself as the little book (libellus) that Paul the Deacon promised but never completed, self-consciously using the text of Paul the Deacon’s Lombard history.

As the likely north Italian provenance of the earliest manuscript suggests, the origins of the text are most probably to be placed in ninth-century north Italy. In particular, the excerpts of the seventeenth book are extremely similar, though not identical, to the excerpts of Paul the Deacon’s Lombard history found in a well-known and fascinating miscellany, the Epitome Phillipsiana from ninth-century Verona. As Laura Pani has demonstrated, these two texts must be related since both share a short excerpt from Bede (located at precisely the same point in the text) — one of the two lines in the seventeenth book not taken from Paul the Deacon. But since both the excerpts in the Verona miscellany and the seventeenth book contain passages of the Historia Langobardorum not included in the other, both compilers must have had access to more complete versions of the Lombard history and it is impossible to postulate securely which of the two textual versions came first. In any case, this relationship suggests that the seventeenth book was constructed in northern Italy. Similar excerpts, again including the sentence from Bede, but also not identical to either those of the

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130 Virginia, Private Collection (formerly Oslo, Schøyen, MS 50). The most thorough description is found in Martini, A Catalogue of Manuscripts, no. 26; also see Kraus, Cimelia, pp. 138–39. Bernard Bischoff consulted by Kraus hypothesized that it was written in ninth-/tenth-century north Italy. I am grateful to David Ganz, Richard Corradini, and Laura Pani for examining some plates. They agree that this dating/localization is probable. A north Italian provenance is also made more probable by the fact that this manuscript is listed in the Nonontola catalogue of 1355 and possibly already in that of 1002–35: Gullotta, Gli antichi cataloghi, p. 82, n. 100, and pp. 161–63.


132 See above nn. 18–19.

133 Pani, ‘La transmissione dell’Historia Langobardorum’, pp. 399–403, includes a comparison of the excerpts in both, but does not offer her own hypothesis, noting only that the passage from Bede excludes the possibility that the two compilations were entirely unrelated (pp. 383–84).
seventeenth book or the Verona miscellany, are likewise found in another north Italian text, John the Deacon’s *Chronicon Venetum*. A north Italian context for the seventeenth book’s formation is further supported by the half sentence seemingly independently composed by the compiler — a half sentence not included in the Verona miscellany. Here the term *Pelasgum* is used to refer to the Greeks. This is an unusual term neither found in Paul the Deacon nor in most other texts of the period. Agnellus of Ravenna does, however, use the term *Pelasgi* for Byzantines twice in his *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, written in the 830s/840s, again suggesting a north Italian origin of the text.

The underlying logic of the seventeenth book is easily identifiable. The text assumes the imperial model of the earlier books of the *Historia Romana* and attempts to situate the text of Paul’s *Lombard History* within such a framework. As a result the compiler forms a continuous, if sometimes rather staccato, narrative that includes an assortment of material. The Byzantine Empire is understood as the continuation of the Roman Empire, the rise of which had been traced by Eutropius and the continuation of which had been followed by Paul the Deacon. As the earlier sixteen books had done, the seventeenth book arranges itself according to the succession of emperors. Like the earlier books of the *Historia Romana*, the result is a text punctuated at marked intervals by the depositions, deaths, and ascensions of new Roman emperors. In the earliest surviving manuscript, this framework of imperial succession was particularly reinforced by a list of Roman emperors, from Augustus to Leo III (717–41), immediately following the seventeenth book.

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134 John the Deacon, *Chronicon Venetum*, ed. by Pertz, pp. 4–38. These excerpts also do not include the seventeenth book compiler’s independent half sentence nor the compiler’s other textual changes.

135 The Pelasgians were considered to be the inhabitants of Greece before they were Hellenized. There also existed a legend, however, that inhabitants of Italy, especially the Etruscans, were descended from the Pelasgians. See Briquel, *Les Pélasges en Italie*.

136 Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. by Deliyannis, c. 143, p. 321: ‘Post mortem uesto Iustiniani augusti leuauerunt super se Pelasgi nouum imperatorem, et constituuerunt eum dominum uniuersae terrae, ac imperium confirmatum fuit in manu eius’. Agnellus also uses *Bizantini* (e.g. c. 153, p. 331), *Greci* (e.g. c. 86, p. 253), *Danai* (c. 140, p. 317) and *Mirmidoni* (c. 143, p. 322) for the Byzantines. These diverse terms seem to be part of Agnellus’s use of classical sources, in particular Virgil, to lend rhetorical weight to his text. Virgil uses the term *Pelasgi* for the Greeks throughout the *Aeneid* and even tells that they were the first to have held the Latin borders (‘qui primi finis aliquando habuere Latinos’): Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. by Conte, viii. 600–03, p. 252. I am grateful to Francesco Borri for alerting me to Agnellus of Ravenna’s use of *Pelasgi*.

137 Virginia, Private Collection (formerly Oslo, Schøyen, MS 50), fols 107v–109v:
To construct this continuation of the Roman Empire, the compiler excerpted, generally speaking, only those passages of the *Historia Langobardorum* referring to Byzantine history. He omitted most of the *Lombard History* with its descriptions of Lombards, Franks, and other peoples of the Mediterranean. The resulting text is about a fifth of the size of the *Lombard History*. Nonetheless, the seventeenth book is still on the long side in comparison to the earlier books of the *Historia Romana*; it is more than double the length of any of books eleven to sixteen. Not surprisingly, given that the text is constructed out of a Lombard history, it necessarily focuses, even more so than Paul the Deacon’s continuation of Eutropius, on events occurring in the West, and in particular in Italy (although as I will argue the compiler’s interest was not Italy *per se*).

Although upholding the ‘Byzantine’ Empire as the continuation of the Roman Empire, the compiler had a very particular understanding of this Empire — restricting it, territorially and politically, to the East. This is already signalled in the opening line of the seventeenth book, which is also the compiler’s only independent half-sentence:

Thus as it was described, when the Empire of the Romans had already ceased among the *Itali* and many peoples were raging against them [the *Itali*], so that it [the Empire] had gone over to Greek jurisdiction (*ius...Pelasgum*) at this time by good fortune, Justinian Augustus was ruling *this same* Roman Empire.138

[**Bold = Compiler; Regular = Paul the Deacon**]

With ‘*ut premissum est*’ the compiler refers back to the passage in the fifteenth book of the *Historia Romana* where Paul had described how the power of the Romans ceased in Rome.139 Unlike Paul, however, the compiler does not refer to Rome, but to the *Itali*, the inhabitants of Italy. Thus the compiler has regionalized and broadened the category over which Roman power is said to have ceased. The compiler also similarly shifts Roman identity, referring to an *imperium Romanorum*, the empire of the Romans, not the *imperium Romanum*, the

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138 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, ed. by Crivellucci, xvII. 1, p. 239: ‘*Quum iam, ut premissum est, Romanorum desineret apud Italos imperium plurimeque gentes irruerent contra ipsos ad iusque pertransierat Pelasgum*, hac tempestate lustinianus Augustus Romanum *eundem* felici sorte regebat imperium’ [in part Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, i. 25, p. 62]. **Bold = Compiler; Regular = Paul the Deacon.**

Roman Empire Paul had described Justinian ruling. This is done even as the compiler emphasizes by inserting ‘eundem’ (‘the very same’) that the empire Justinian rules over is the very same — though to a reader of the Historia Romana it may appear rather different — as the Roman Empire which has irrevocably lost power among the Itali. These modifications indicate the phenomenon of the seventeenth book: although interpreting the ‘Byzantines’ as Romans, the compiler considers this Empire in much narrower terms, as comprising a particular people and, from the start, relegated to the Pelasgi.

Where the compiler came across passages in Paul’s Historia Langobardorum that discuss Romani in Italy, he generally chose not to include them, only excerpting the passages referring to eastern Byzantine history. It seems that when the compiler came across Romani in Italy, he ‘translated’ them as Itali, and thus not part of the Empire of the Romans (the Byzantines) nor relevant to a Roman history. This is the case already at the beginning of the seventeenth book. During the reign of Justinian, the History of the Lombards includes a long description of a plague in Liguria, concluding that, ‘these evils happened to the Romans only and within Italy alone, up to the boundaries of the peoples of the Alamanni and the Bavarians’. But the seventeenth book does not include any of this passage. Instead the compiler chose to excerpt only the text that immediately follows: ‘Meanwhile, the Emperor Justinian departed from life and Justin the younger undertook the rule of the state (respublica) in Constantinople’.

During the reign of Justinian, the compiler even, in one of very few instances, modified the text of Paul the Deacon for the purpose of eliminating Romani from the text. In the Narses episode (which I discussed above), the compiler has changed Romani in their first occurrence to the vaguer ‘them’: ‘[…] Narses, after he had acquired much gold and silver and riches of other kinds, incurred the great envy of them (ab his)’ [changed from ‘of the Romans (ab Romanis)’]. The change, however, makes the passage harder to under-

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142 See above n. 96.

stand and it would seem that the compiler too recognized this, choosing not to change the subsequent uses of Romani in the passage.

As the seventeenth book continues it tells of the Lombards’ entrance into Italy. However, the compiler does not include the passages (from Book II) of Paul’s Lombard History that tell of the Romans’ lack of courage to resist the invasion, nor of how the Lombards destroy and expel the Romans from Italy. Instead, having told of Narses’ death and the transport of his body and wealth to Constantinople, the compiler picks up with a passage from Book III of the Historia Langobardorum with Justin ruling in Constantinople.

Throughout the rest of the seventeenth book, the compiler continued, quite comprehensively, to eliminate passages referring to Romani in Italy. Thus we neither hear of strife nor treaties between the Lombards and Romans. For example, we do not hear of Rothari capturing ‘all the cities of the Romans which were situated upon the shore of the sea from the city of Luna in Tuscany up to the boundaries of the Franks’. Nor do we hear of any of the treacherous deeds of the Romans, nor does the compiler tell us when the Roman people are dying from pestilence. More generally, the compiler excluded passages of Paul’s Historia Langobardorum that refer to the history of Italy, such as the description of the reason for its name as well as the description of the Italian delecta, ut dictum est, vel superata Narsis omni Gothorum gente, his quoque de quibus diximus pari modo devictis, dum multum auri sev argentui sev ceterarum specierum divitas adquisisset, magnam ab his [changed from ab Romanis] pro quibus multa contra eorum hostes laboraverat invidiam pertulit’ (Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, trans. by Foulke, p. 58). Cf. Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, ii. 5, p. 75; cf. Bede, Chronica, ed. by Mommsen, a. 523, p. 308; Liber Pontificalis, ed. by Duchesne, Iohannes III, pp. 305–07.

145 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xvii. 12, pp. 244–45 [Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iii. 11, pp. 97–98].
146 Passages referring to the ‘Italo-Byzantines’ in Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, that are excluded in the seventeenth book: iii. 19; iv. 3; iv. 8; iv. 16; iv. 28; iv. 32; iv. 38; iv. 42; iv. 45; v. 27; v. 28; v. 37; vi. 27; vi. 40; vi. 44; vi. 49; vi. 51; vi. 54; vi. 56. Included is Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xvii. 24, p. 254 = Historia Langobardorum, vi. 33, p. 127, which probably refers to the ‘Italo-Byzantines’: in Gradus, Candidianus is ordained bishop by the Romans. Yet it is somewhat ambiguous whether this refers to the Byzantines or the church in Rome.
provinces. In another of the few subtle changes to Paul’s text, the compiler eliminated a mention of Italy: ‘While these things occurred [in Italy (in Italia) is omitted], a heresy arose in Constantinople […]’. This is a textual change that makes the narrative flow more smoothly since the previous line in the seventeenth book does not refer precisely to Italy (it relates how the Archbishop Theodore and the Abbot Adrian are sent by Pope Vitalian to Britain and how Theodore described the penance necessary for sinners) — but this in itself is yet another indication that the compiler’s interest is not Italy per se.

As a result, what we have is a rather paradoxical situation; to constitute a Roman history the compiler incorporates text that discusses Greci. At the same time, insistent that this Roman Empire exists only in the East, the compiler has omitted many of the western Romani that could be found in Paul the Deacon’s Lombard History, as well as ‘Italian’ history more generally. So whereas Paul in his Lombard History maintained civic and regional ‘Roman’ identities in Italy, the compiler eliminated these. Instead the compiler constructed a Roman Empire that is remarkably long lasting, but which, composed only of rather ineffectual Greci in the East, in its geographical extent and political ability is rather unremarkable. This is the result of the interpretation of the inhabitants of Italy as Itali, not Romani, but also suggests a particular relationship between Empire and Romanness: Romans inhabit an Empire. Romans, the compiler implies, can exist only where there is an empire to contain them.

The seventeenth book does not set itself an easy task and unsurprisingly struggles in its attempt to keep the Roman Empire alive. As the compiler never modified the text of Paul’s Lombard History by inserting text, the seventeenth book inevitably charts a dissolute and dissolving Empire. Particularly strained, however, is its effort to retain the Christian dimension of the Roman Empire. This is especially the case since the pope in Rome — and not the emperor in Constantinople — is acknowledged as the guardian of the Christian faith.

This leads us to the highly significant dimension of the seventeenth book, which I have not yet addressed: the compiler’s inclusion of Roman religious

148 Excluded passages: reason for Italy’s name, Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Wàitz, ii. 24, p. 86; description of Italian provinces: ii. 14–23, pp. 81–86; generic references to the Romans and references to Roman history: i. 1, pp. 47–48; i. 4, p. 49; i. 9, pp. 52–53; ii. 14, p. 81; ii. 23, pp. 85–86; iv. 22, p. 124.

history. Whereas Paul was content to separate imperial and Christian history and portray the Christian church with its authority, the pope in Rome, as overlapping less and less with the Empire, the compiler continues to regard Christianity as integral to the Roman Empire and relevant to a Roman history. Put another way, the seventeenth book interprets both the Byzantine Empire and Christianity as ‘Roman’, but recognizes the Roman emperor as the Romans’ political authority and the pope in Rome as the Romans’ religious authority. The compiler struggles to tell both tales of Romanness, since, despite the tensions between the two, he refuses either to conflate them or eliminate one as a category of Romanness.

In order to tell Roman religious history the compiler included, interspersed among the passages about the Byzantines, numerous excerpts that refer primarily, or exclusively, to important Christian events and persons, in particular the papacy.150 Not surprisingly given that most of Paul’s passages about the papacy had been taken from the Liber Pontificalis, correspondingly they often strive to legitimize and praise the papacy.151 The compiler makes no attempt to smooth over this growing divergence between Constantinople and Rome. For example, in a passage that makes no reference to the eastern Empire, the compiler includes excerpts about Gregory the Great organizing all the people of Rome into a sevenfold litany to exterminate the pestilence and sending missionaries to Britain.152 Described in depth is the Three Chapters Controversy — which may again be an indication of the text’s north Italian’s provenance, since these passages make reference to north Italy. Although, as Walter Pohl has demon-

150 Passages focusing on Christian events include: Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xvii. 5, p. 241 [Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, t. 26, pp. 63–64]; xvii. 17, p. 250 [Historia Langobardorum, iii. 20, p. 103]; xvii. 19–22, pp. 251–53 [Historia Langobardorum, iii. 23–26, pp. 104–08]; xvii. 24, p. 254 [Historia Langobardorum, iv. 33, p. 127]; xvii. 37, pp. 261–62 [Historia Langobardorum, v. 30, p. 154]. However, not all passages about the papacy from the Historia Langobardorum are included. References to popes not included are ii. 10, pp. 78–79; iv. 5, p. 117; vi. 29, pp. 174–175; and vi. 43, pp. 179–80.

151 For an overview of shifting papal ideology and foreign relations in the seventh to ninth centuries see Noble, ‘The Papacy in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries’; Delogu, ‘The Papacy, Rome and the Wider World’.

152 Paul the Deacon, Historia Romana, ed. by Crivellucci, xvii. 20–21, pp. 251–52 (Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, iii. 24–25, pp. 104–05; iii. 24 = much shortened version of Gregory of Tours, Historiae, ed. by Krusch and Levison, x. 1–2; Historia Langobardorum, iii. 25 = Liber Pontificalis, ed. by Duchesne, Gregorius I, pp. 312–14, also quoted in Bede, Chronica, ed. by Mommsen, a. 531, p. 309).
strated, Paul the Deacon has misrepresented the issue, presenting passages both in support and against the schism, the compiler included all the relevant passages, thus further propagating Paul’s confusion. Close details of the event and establishing their accuracy were not the compiler’s interest, but rather he sought out all the passages that tell of the controversy. Again it is the pope who is portrayed in the most favourable light as the upholder of orthodoxy.

Thus the seventeenth book’s primary subjects, the Byzantines, are presented in an increasingly unfavourable light, while the papacy is accorded respect and authority. As the seventeenth book progresses, the passages incorporated by the compiler show the growing independence of the papacy from the eastern Empire. When Rome is besieged, we see that Pope Pelagius can be ordained pontifex Romanae Ecclesiae without the authority of the emperor. Upon Pope Boniface’s request, the emperor confirms that Rome as the ‘see of the Roman and Apostolic Church should be the head of all churches’. Constans II’s expedition to Italy and his ‘sack of Rome’ are described in full detail, as are the Roman people’s refusal to follow the orders of Philippicus Bardanes.

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154 There is a vast literature regarding the development of ideas of papal primacy. A useful place to begin is Noble, The Republic of St Peter. See also Mordek, ‘Der Römische Primat’, and other essays in the same volume.


The growing tension comes to the fore in the last chapter, which describes the start of Byzantine iconoclasm. Unlike in the rest of the excerpts, however, the compiler does not follow the exact order of Paul’s *Lombard History*:

[**Historia Langobardorum**, vi. 49 (second half)]: At this time the Emperor Leo burned the images of the saints placed in Constantinople and ordered the Roman pope to do the like if he wished to have the emperor’s favour, but the pope disdained to do this thing. Also the whole of Ravenna and of Venetia resisted such commands with one mind, and if the pope had not prohibited them they would have attempted to set up an emperor over themselves. [vi. 49 (first half)]: At this time King Liudprand besieged Ravenna and took Classis and destroyed it. Then Paul the Patrician sent his men out of Ravenna to kill the Pope, but as the Lombards fought against them in defence of the pope and as the Spoletans resisted them on the Salarian bridge as well as the Tuscan Lombards from other places, the design of the Ravenna people came to naught. [vi. 54 (near end)]: Again when Hildeprand the nephew of the king and Peredeo the duke of Vincentia got possession of Ravenna, the Venetians suddenly attacked them. Hildeprand was taken by them and Peredeo fell fighting manfully. [vi. 49 (end)]: During the same time the Emperor Leo went on to worse things so that he compelled all the inhabitants of Constantinople either by force or by blandishments, to give up the images of the Saviour and of his Holy Mother and of all the saints wherever they were, and he caused them to be burned by fire in the midst of the city. And because many of the people hindered such wickedness from being done, some of them were beheaded and others suffered mutilation in body. As the Patriarch Germanus did not consent to this error he was driven from his see and the presbyter Anastasius was ordained in his place.

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158 It is worth noting that Paul the Deacon was clearly writing with hindsight here. For a reassessment of iconoclasm in the East see Haldon and Brubaker, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*.

Maya Maskarinec

[Not Included: Middle of vi. 49: Also king Liudprand attacked Feronianum, Mons Bellius, Buxeta, and Persiceta, Bononia and the Pentapolis and Auximum, fortresses of Emilia. And in like manner he then took possession of Sutrium but after some days it was again restored to the Romans.]

The compiler’s rearranging is not dramatic, but it has reoriented Paul’s text. First the compiler switched around the order of two passages of Paul’s text to increase the emphasis on Byzantine iconoclasm. He describes Leo’s iconoclasm and then he tells how the Lombard King Liudprand fought in defence of the pope, rather than vice versa. This suggests that the Lombards’ actions were in response to Leo’s iconoclasm, rather than an unrelated event that preceded it. Then, as done throughout the seventeenth book, the compiler omitted a passage referring to Romani in Italy: how Liudprand and his Lombards attacked the Romani. Instead the compiler jumped forward to include a passage about Ravenna and the Venetians; this likely reflects the interests and context of the north Italian compiler. In the last line of the seventeenth book, the compiler returns to events in Constantinople and tells of the increasing wickedness of the Emperor Leo and the unwillingness of both the people and the church of Constantinople to comply with the heretical emperor. The Roman Empire, it seems, is falling apart. In Constantinople the final shreds of its Christian legitimacy are now under attack by the emperor.

What we are left with is no longer an empire as a reader of the Historia Romana would have come to recognize it. It is an empire neither as a framework encompassing various territories and peoples, nor as the upholder of orthodoxy encompassing all Christians. Instead, there are heretical Greci in the East. At this point, we can almost see the compiler visibly throwing up his hands in despair. Imperium has given way to regnum, Romans to Greeks; now eius sanctae genitricis vel omnium sanctorum, casque in medio civitatis incendio concremare fecit. Et quia plerique ex populo tale scelus fieri praepediebant, aliquanti ex eis capite truncati, alii parte corporis multati sunt. Cuius errori Germanus patriarcha non consentiens, a propria sede depulsa est, et eius in loco Anastasius presbiter ordinatus est’ [Historia Langobardorum, vi. 49, pp. 181–82; Liber Pontificalis, ed. by Duchesne, Gregorius II, i, pp. 396–410] (Paul the Deacon, History of the Lombards, trans. by Foulke, pp. 289–93; 297–98).


161 A useful overview of events is provided by Anastos, ’Leo III’s Edict’.
the emperor himself has renounced the Roman church. What is left to hold a Roman history together?

After this point, there were no more passages about the Byzantines in Paul's Lombard History for the compiler to excerpt, so on one level the end of the seventeenth book is simply due to the lack of a source. (Paul the Deacon's Historia Langobardorum only carries on for another decade or so. There was one more episode involving Romans that the compiler could have included: 'the Spoletans uniting with the Romans brought great disasters on the king's [Liudprand's] army'. But again the compiler chose not to include Romani in Italy as part of Roman history.) Nonetheless, it is tempting to suggest that, with iconoclasm, even the compiler, who unlike Paul was willing to prolong the Roman Empire into the eighth century, identified a breaking point — with the papacy significantly positioned.

What comes next? One passage in the seventeenth book would seem to offer a very subtle hint as to what might succeed the Roman Empire. Earlier in the narrative, before the iconoclastic struggles between the pope and the emperor had begun, the compiler retained a tantalizing sentence of Paul the Deacon's text about the Franks: 'At this time in Gaul, in the kingdom of the Franks, Anschis, the son of Arnulf, who is believed to be named after Anchises the former Trojan, conducted the sovereignty under the title of steward of the palace'. Since the Franks claim to possess an eponym that, like the lineage of the Romans, can be traced back to Troy, might not they be legitimate successors of the Roman Empire? However, the seventeenth book, quite noticeably, does not elaborate or expand on this idea. On the contrary, quite pointedly, the Franks are not shown as the successors of the Roman Empire, either in the text itself or in the list of emperors that follows the text in the oldest manuscript.

The absence of the Franks is especially evident when the seventeenth book is contrasted with the excerpts included in the Epitome Phillipsiana. Although almost identical in every other respect, the Epitome Phillipsiana continues past

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Leo’s iconoclasm, subsequently including an excerpt that shows Charles Martel sending his son Pippin to the Lombard King Liudprand and the Franks and Lombards waging war together against the Saracens. By including passages that emphasize the relationship between the Franks and the Lombards, the Epitome Phillipsiana acknowledges the Franks. By not including them, the seventeenth book pointedly chooses not to acknowledge the Franks as the successors of the Romans.

Instead, what the seventeenth book has done, in a delicate manoeuvring act, is use the text of the Historia Langobardorum to prolong a much less exceptional Roman Empire (and the Historia Romana) all the way up to the start of Byzantine iconoclasm in 730. The relationship of this Empire with the Christian church headed by the pope becomes increasingly strained. Yet the compiler continued to emphasize the Christian dimension of ‘Romanness’. Simultaneously, however, from the start the compiler has restricted the Roman Empire exclusively to the East, interpreting the Italian Romani whom he found in Paul’s text as neither part of this Empire nor relevant to a Roman history (that is, not Romans). Yet as the text ends iconoclasm appears to break apart the Roman Empire in the East, leaving only narrower regional and civic identities in its wake.

164 Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, vi. 53–54, pp. 183–84 (up to ‘ad Italiam rediit’). Noticeably the Epitome Phillipsiana does not include the subsequent passage, also not included in the seventeenth book, which shows Liudprand waging war against the Romani, nor the sentence that is included in the seventeenth book in which Hildeprand and Peredeo, taking possession of Ravenna, are killed by the Venetians.

165 Another telling contrast is a comparison of the seventeenth book with an 871 letter from Louis II to Basil I, transmitted only in the so-called tenth-century Chronicon Salernitanum, though generally considered, at least in its outlines, authentic: for an edition of the letter alone, see Ludovici II. imperatoris epistola, ed. by Henze; cf. Chronicon Salernitanum, ed. by Westerbergh, c. 107, pp. 101–21. Discussion: Wickham, ‘Ninth-Century Byzantium’, pp. 253–54; Musca, L’emirato di Bari, pp. 118–23. In this letter Louis II defends his use of the title of Roman emperor at length using many themes similar to the seventeenth book: the ‘Greekness’ of the Byzantines, the Byzantine emperors’ loss of legitimacy through their heresies, and the pope’s authority in legitimizing a Roman emperor. The Greeks, the letter argues, have themselves to blame for their loss of the Roman Empire. Had it not been for their heresies, all the external challenges they faced would have been negligible. Their wrong opinions (kakodōsia), their abandonment of the seat of Empire, Rome (sedes imperii), the Roman people (gentem Romanam), and the Roman language, Latin, have resulted in the transfer of the Roman Empire elsewhere. The parallel is especially intriguing in that the Byzantine emperor is advised to consult history, mainly biblical, but also Roman. Yet, though much of the logic resounds with the text of the seventeenth book, the letter uses these examples to support the Frankish claim to have become the new Roman emperors.
In the end, the seventeenth book does not seem to establish any basis for the continuation of the Roman Empire. None of the peoples of the seventeenth book are presented in wholly favourable terms.\textsuperscript{166} The papacy is certainly presented most favourably, but as the upholder of orthodoxy, not as a political power capable of establishing a new empire.\textsuperscript{167} The compiler, as the task of continuing the \textit{Historia Romana} suggests, was on the search for Romanness. But in the end he seems unable to find many Romans. Nowhere does the compiler leave many resources of ‘Romanness’ in place for a continuation or reconstruction of a Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{168} Already in the opening line we are told that the power of the Romans had ceased in Italy, and throughout the text no \textit{Romani} are left in Italy upon which a new Empire could built. ‘Romanness’ has vanished from the West: it is not still lurking there for a new western Roman Emperor to associate himself with. With iconoclasm and the corresponding loss of legitimacy of the Byzantines as the Roman Empire, Romanness seems also to have vanished from the East. The seventeenth book does not suggest that the Roman Empire will be resurrected in either East or West; the Roman Empire has irretrievably faded.

In the collapse of the Roman Empire, as understood by the seventeenth book, the peculiarity and uniqueness of imperial Roman identity comes most clearly into perspective. As I argued above, we could compare the ‘death’ of the

\textsuperscript{166} Much material regarding Lombard strife with the Byzantine Empire (or with the papacy) is excised, and when discussing the Lombards the seventeenth book could be said generally to have a pro-Lombard attitude. However, it seems more accurate to characterize the seventeenth book as uninterested in them. There is a relative abundance of material relating to Benevento, but it seems probable that this is more the result of an interest in Constans II’s expedition to Italy, than an interest in Benevento \textit{per se}. About the interest in Benevento, see the introduction in Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Romana}, ed. by Crivellucci, pp. I–li.

\textsuperscript{167} Paul the Deacon does not include much in the \textit{Historia Langobardorum} that could be construed as establishing the Roman church as the new Roman state, nor does the compiler seem to have made an effort to include what little there was. For example he omits a passage showing Liudprand confirming the patrimony of the Cottian Alps to the Roman church (Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Langobardorum}, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, vi. 43, pp. 179–80). However, not all passages referring to the papacy are included (see n. 150). The favourable treatment of the papacy, however, did lead Crivellucci to hypothesize that perhaps the seventeenth book was the product of a clergyman; see his introduction in Paul the Deacon, \textit{Historia Romana}, ed. by Crivellucci, p. li.

\textsuperscript{168} It should be noted for clarification that, of course, an Empire need not be Roman: although the Romans were firmly entrenched as the prototype for Empire, there also circulated throughout the Middle Ages ‘Rome-free’ imperial ideologies: Nelson, ‘Kingship and Empire’. 
Lombards and of the Romans in Paul’s *Historia Langobardorum*.169 Ruled over by different peoples (Franks/Byzantines), the Lombards and Romans cease to operate as a political body, though Romans and Lombards still continue to populate Italy. The compiler of the seventeenth book, however, does not maintain such a reservoir of Roman potential. ‘Romanness’ belonged to a certain mode of imperial belonging; without an *imperium* to inhabit, the Romans too disappear.170 The *populus Romanus* does not have the same durability as other forms of identity. Instead of remaining Romans without an empire, the inhabitants of the former Empire retain only their non-Roman, ethnic, civic, or regional identity — with the significant exception of the inhabitants of Rome, who, as still today, remain Romans in a much more limited civic sense of the word.

Thus, the seventeenth book could be characterized as delegitimizing ‘Romanness’ as a potential resource for political organization. As a delegitimizing text, the seventeenth book resonates well with the cultural climate of ninth-century north Italy, where definite sympathies are hard to pin down. For example, one could compare it with Agnellus’s *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, in which the Byzantines, the papacy, and the Lombards all receive their share of abuse.171 For a more specific context of the seventeenth book’s formation two speculations present themselves:

1) An early ninth-century date, with the seventeenth book as a reaction against Frankish attempts to use Romanness and the Empire.172

169 See end of section III above.

170 For the sixth century see Greatrex, ‘Roman Identity in the Sixth Century’, who points to empire as the key to Romaness, ‘the fundamental definition of a Roman in the empire of Justinian was that of loyalty to the Emperor’; as well as noting the importance of Christianity (p. 268). On account of these two factors Greatrex argues for the elasticity of the category of Romanness, suggesting that ‘ethnicity’ is peculiarly unhelpful in coming to grips with the notion of Romanness or Roman identity in the sixth century (p. 278).

171 See the introduction to Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. by Deliyannis, pp. 3–19; Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna*. Regarding Byzantine and Roman traditions in Ravenna see Brown, ‘The Interplay between Roman and Byzantine Traditions’. For the situation in Italy more generally see Classen, ‘Italien zwischen Byanz und dem Frankenreich’; Brown, *Gentlemen and Officers*; Brown, ‘Byzantine Italy’. Regarding how peoples in the West, in particular in Italy, came to perceive themselves as inhabiting a post-Roman world, see Moorhead, ‘The West and the Roman Past’.

172 As suggested by Peter Brown, perhaps the text could even be imagined as reacting to Charlemagne’s taking of *spolia* from Ravenna after 787 (when Pope Hadrian I gave permission for Charlemagne to take mosaics, marbles, and other materials from the palace at Ravenna). See Brenk, ‘Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne’, pp. 108–09; Kinney, ‘Roman Architectural
2) A second possibility would be a much later date towards the end of the ninth century, at the time of Louis II or later, as it became clear that the Frankish experiment of a Roman Empire would not hold.

I cannot find concrete evidence for either of these ideas. However, the earliest manuscripts associated with the excerpts that constitute the seventeenth book do indicate the way in which the seventeenth book was involved in an ongoing and ever more pressing search to legitimize the post-Roman world constituted of ethnic kingdoms.

The ninth-century Epitome Phillipsiana, whose excerpts from Paul’s Historia Langobardorum are otherwise almost identical to those of the seventeenth book, continues further to show the Lombards and Franks collaborating for the defence of Italy against the Saracen threat.173 This and the other historical selections included in the miscellany tell of a post-Roman world of gentes (which includes the Franks) in the West, whose responsibility it now is (following the end of the Roman Empire) to act in defence of Christianity. The oldest manuscript including the seventeenth book as such, from the ninth century, evidences a similar urge to legitimize this post-Roman world of gentes.174

Following the seventeenth book and the list of Roman emperors up to Leo III (717–41) is an exceedingly brief summary (roughly three hundred and thirty words) of Lombard history from the Historia Langobardorum. This overview of the Lombard migrations and kings, from their origins up to Rothari, provides historical material relevant to a compilation focused on Italy and presents the Lombards as among the gentes that replaced the Roman Empire.175 Both manu-

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173 Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, vi. 53–54, pp. 183–84 (up to ‘ad Italiam rediit’).

174 See n. 130.

175 This epitome is included in the Monumenta Germaniae Historica volume: Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, p. 195. Like the seventeenth book, this summary is extracted from Paul’s Lombard history. It is entitled De Regibus qui praefuerunt winolis et statione eorum (‘Regarding the Kings Who Ruled Over the Winnili and their Places of Residence’). The text, having clarified that the Winnili are the Lombards, enumerates the kings of the Lombards and describes the locations through which the Lombards migrated on their path southward from Scandinavia to Italy. Also provided are such details as the kings’ lengths of rule, their relationships, and their deaths. This brief text summarizes the basic outlines of Lombard history which are entirely absent elsewhere in the compilation. The Lombards are not, however, positioned as the successors to the Roman Empire. The Lombard leaders are consistently referred to as kings, not emperors, ruling a regnum, not an imperium, nor is any other
scripts show a more articulated expression and legitimization of a post-Roman world whose potential outlines are already discernible in the seventeenth book. So who were the Romans?

In the first century CE, even before the establishment of the Roman Empire of Augustus, Cicero wrote of Romanness as a second layer of identity:

I do indeed think that all municipal men have two homelands, one by nature and the other by citizenship. [...] So we too regard that place where we were born and that place where we have been enfranchised as our homeland. But it is necessary for the latter to stand first in our affection, to which the name ‘Republic’ has attached itself to us all. For this we must die, for this we must give ourselves entirely, and for this we must give all our possessions as though for sacrifice. But that homeland which raised us is not much less sweet than that which has adopted us. Thus I shall never say that this is not my homeland, though that one is greater and this is contained in it.176

Roman identity, as described by Cicero, had a particular, almost paradoxical, quality. Although one’s acquired, externally received identity, not one’s ‘inborn’ identity, one’s patria, the homeland to which one was assured to feel a natural bond, ‘Romanness’ (here defined as Roman citizenship in particular) overarched and overrode other forms of identity.

Throughout the centuries, the Roman identity described by Cicero had changed dramatically. As Eutropius’s Breviarium indicates, by the late fourth century Roman identity had lost its emphasis on citizenship and had become closely bound up with the emperor and empire. By the eighth century when Paul the Deacon came to rework Eutropius’s text, Roman identity had changed contours yet again. The Roman Empire had become a Christian Empire and a Christian dimension could not be omitted when telling Roman history. Yet as the former Romans in the East came to be understood by Westerners as ‘Greeks’, attempt made to assert their primacy. By ending with Rothari (636–52) and not Liudprand, the last king described in Paul’s Lombard history and even mentioned in the seventeenth book, the compilation further re-enforces its presentation of the Lombards as a historical phenomenon, not as a contemporary power with which to be reckoned.

176 Cicero, De legibus, II. 5, quoted and trans. by Farney, Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition, pp. 6–7: ‘ego mehercule et illi et omnibus municipibus duas esse cenSEO patrias, unam naturae, alteram civitatis [...] sic nos et eam patrim ducimus, ubi nati, et illam, a qua excepti sumus. Sed necesse est caritate praestare, qua rei publicae nomen universae civitatis est; pro qua mori et cui nos totos dedere et in qua nostra omnia ponere et quasi consecrare debemus. Dulcis autem non multo secus est ea, qua genuit, quam illa, quaec exceptit. Itaque ego hanc meam esse patriam prorsus numquam negabo, dum illa sit maior, haece in ea continetur.’
and post-Roman kingdoms that defined themselves in non-Roman terms established themselves in the West, ‘Romanness’ became increasingly difficult to find — as is demonstrated by the so-called seventeenth book of Roman history added on to Paul’s Historia Romana. In the East, the Byzantines continued to vaunt themselves as Romans; in the city of Rome the inhabitants remained Romans and, at times, ‘Roman’ was still used in contrast to the newer elites in the ethnic kingdoms built out of former Roman provinces. But ‘Romanness’ as a second overarching layer of identity had essentially slipped away.

Where Romanness survived, and even thrived, was in the manuscripts of Roman history which continued to be copied throughout the Middle Ages. They indicate that the peculiarity of Roman identity continued, despite (or perhaps even because of) the changed world, to captivate readers. The different layers and interpretations of Roman history which were built onto Eutropius’s text did not supplant each other, but offered a plurality of interpretations from which medieval western audiences could choose. Eutropius’s ten-book Roman history, Paul’s sixteen-book Roman history, Paul’s Lombard history, and the seventeen-book Roman history all provided similar but differently nuanced interpretations of the Roman past. They offered a profusion of Romans to choose from, from mythic prehistory up to the eighth century: religious pagans, Christians, and heretics, in Rome, Italy, Constantinople, and the wider Roman Empire. They more or less stressed the exceptionality of the Roman Empire and reconfigured its relationship to Christianity. A range of readings of the Roman Empire was made possible, from understanding the Roman Empire as contemporary history, the history of the neighbouring Byzantine Empire, to ancient history, an unparalleled singular achievement of the past. Nor were these texts the only versions of Roman history available. Eutropius, Paul the Deacon, or the seventeenth book could be expanded or contracted and situated in diverse manuscript combinations — and naturally other Roman histories circulated too, such as Orosius, Livy, Lucan, or Josephus. These remind us that the Roman Empire possessed and brought forth many histories. In the fourth century, the pace of historical writing began to quicken, as a changing world knotted itself more firmly to the Roman past, producing a vast and ever growing corpus of Roman histories onto which later authors would continue to build. Roman identity, in a plurality of interpretations, remained tangible and actual, a force delineating the construction of past communities and offering potentials for the future.
APPENDIX:
SUMMARY OF TEXTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

Texts:

Eutropius, *Breviarium* (10 Books) (AD 364–75)
Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* (16 Books) (AD c. 770)

= New Beginning + Eutropius’s *Breviarium* (Bks 1–10) + Bks 11–16

Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* (before AD 795/96)
Anonymous north Italian compiler, *Historia Romana* (17 Books) (ninth century)¹

= Paul’s *Historia Romana* (Bks 1–16) + 17th book (excerpts of Paul’s *Historia Langobardorum*)

Appendix A: Versions of the Roman History²

Bold: Eutropius; Regular: earlier sources; Underlined: Paul the Deacon;
Underlined and Bold: 17th book (anonymous compiler)

Dedication: Paul the Deacon to Adalperga (often missing)
Preface: New Beginning of Book 1: Janus, Saturn > Romulus

Jerome’s *Chronicle*

Dedication: Eutropius to Valens (often missing)

Book 1: Foundation of Rome > Gallic Sack of Rome

Book 2: > End of the First Punic War (c. 241 BC)

Book 3: > The Defeat of Carthage in the Second Punic War (c. 201 BC)

¹ A number of arguments suggest a ninth century north Italian compilation: the earliest surviving manuscript containing this text, an Italian history book regarding the Roman past, Virginia, Private Collection (formerly Oslo, Schøyen, MS 50), seems to be from ninth-century north Italy; the similarity of the excerpts to those found in the *Epitome Phillipsiana* from ninth-century Verona; the use of Pelasgi for the Greeks in the compiler’s only independent half sentence, a term also found in Agnellus of Ravenna’s early ninth century *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*.

Book 4: > Jugurthine War (c. 105 BC)
Book 5: Sulla and Marius (81 BC)
Book 6: Pompey and Caesar (AD 44)
   Bks 1–6; Livy
Book 7: > Death of Domitian (AD 96)
Book 8: > Severus Alexander (AD 235)
Book 9: Maximus > Diocletian (AD 303)
Book 10: > Jovian (AD 364)
   Bks 7–10; Suetonius, Enmann’s Kaisergeschichte
   (hypothesized as common source for Aurelius Victor/Eutropius)
In Books 1–10, Paul the Deacon adds interpolations to Eutropius roughly 200 times (c. 3000 words)
Orosius’ Historiae Adversos Paganos, Epitome de Caesaribus, Jerome’s Chronicle
Book 11: Valentinian I > Theodosius I (AD 364–92)
Book 12: > ‘Barbarians’ cross into the Spanish Peninsula (AD 392–409)
   Bks 11–12; Orosius (Bk 7), Epitome de Caesaribus
Book 13: > Death of Theodosius II (409–50 AD)
   Orosius (Bk 7), Prosper
Book 14: > Marcianus (450–57 AD)
   Prosper, Jordanes’ Getica
Book 15: > Zeno Augustus (457–91 AD)
   Jordanes’ Getica
Book 16: > Justinian: ‘Quia vero restant adhuc quae de Iustiniani Augusti felicitate dicantur, inequenti Deo prae- sule libello promenda sunt’. (AD 491–552)
   Liber Pontificalis
Book 17: Justinian > Leo III (Byzantine Iconoclasm) (>AD 730)
   Excerpts of Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum

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3 See n. 129, above.
Appendix B. Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum

Book 1: Winnili (who become the Lombards) in Scadinavia > Alboin’s rule, his victory over the Gepids and marriage with Rosamund

Book 2: > Death of Alboin and the time without kings (AD 574–84)

Book 3: > Agilulf (AD 615)

Book 4: > Grimoald (AD 662)

Book 5: > Cunincpert (AD 700)

Book 6: > Death of Liudprand (>AD 744)

Unfinished?

Sources: Origo Gentis Langobardorum, Gregory of Tours’s Historiarum Libri Decem, Liber Pontificalis, Secundus of Trento’s Historiola de Gestis Langobardorum (lost)
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The Fading Power of Images: Romans, Barbarians, and the Uses of a Dichotomy in Early Medieval Archaeology

Philipp von Rummel*

The role of ethnic identities in the early Middle Ages has been a much debated issue not only among historians, but also in archaeology. As a result of this debate, the intricacy of ethnicity and ethnic identity as analytical categories is now widely acknowledged. The number of studies which aim at reconstructing ancient ethnicity from distribution maps and cultural models alone is fortunately decreasing, whereas those who still have faith in traditional methods occasionally complain that recent critical tendencies jeopardize the status of archaeology as a historical discipline. The discussion within this area of archaeology is fuelled by the problem that there is little consensus on what we actually mean by ethnicity. To avoid terminological problems as far as possible, it should be noted at the outset that the following discussion relates to ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic identity’ as expounded by Walter Pohl. In particular, we need to be aware of the fact that an ethnic name does not correspond automatically and permanently to a stable group. Ethnic identity is

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2 For more detail cf. von Rummel, ‘Gotisch, barbarisch oder römisch?’.

not an intrinsic quality, but something that must be constantly reproduced in a respective discourse. This is also true for the central problem of this discussion, that is, Roman ethnic identity and its analytical value in early medieval studies.

1. The Problem and its Relevance

In the following, I do not intend to discuss the fall of the Roman Empire. This paper does not call into question the existence of Goths or Vandals, or other groups with ethnic names, nor does it doubt that between the third and the eighth centuries massive political, social, and economic changes took place. Rather, I will focus on one particular problem, that is, on the transformation of the interpretative framework through time. I would like to raise the question of whether the familiar dichotomy between Roman and non-Roman is a useful foundation upon which to base our explanation of archaeological phenomena in the early Middle Ages. Taking its cue from the title of a famous book by Paul Zanker, this paper questions the power of Roman images as our point of departure for explanatory models in post-Roman Europe.

The key problem here is the image of Romanness in both a specific and a wider sense — in its material representations and the ideas which they convey. Images and other archaeological artefacts can be viewed as constituting a body of social knowledge. They form part of an ‘order of discourse’, as Walter Pohl explains. Like texts, images belong to the symbolic language that allows to mark, communicate, legitimate, affirm, deny, or negotiate identity and difference among ethnic groups. Not only do they belong to this discourse, but they also serve to translate the complexity of societies into more clearcut forms. The Roman period was characterized by an ingenious handling of images, which was tied to complex networks of social communication. Images were geared towards representing the needs of the community; but since experience of the present largely depends on knowledge of the past, contemporary imagery was rife with traditional views. For centuries, the Augusteans vision of Romanness and the image of the ‘Other’ were of great importance in the Roman Empire. This vision was itself largely bound to the Hellenistic binary division of the

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4 Pohl, ‘Archaeology of Identity’; Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups.
5 Zanker, The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus.
world into Greeks and/or Romans on the one hand, and barbarians on the other. Even if a homogenous Roman identity had always been an ideal rather than reality, the *gens togata*, as a manifestation of Romanness, remained a literary and iconographic topos right into the fifth century and beyond, as did the contrasting depiction of the barbarian. The political changes of the late fourth and fifth century, however, led to a profound crisis of representation. Whereas the fourth-century answer to this crisis was a strong emphasis on *Roma aeterna*, the fifth century brought about a need to redefine Rome in changed political and social surroundings.

Despite the growing body of scholarly work from different fields within late antique and early medieval studies which addresses the crisis of Roman identity in the West, it is surprising that even nowadays, much of it is based on explanations better suited to the Augustan period than to the early Middle Ages. ‘Roman’ in its essentialist meaning is still widely considered an objective parameter for the interpretation of early medieval problems. It is usually combined with a non-Roman factor to form simple binary systems: Roman v. barbarian, Roman v. German, Roman v. Gothic, Roman v. Lombard, and so forth. It goes without saying that the counterparts of ‘Roman’ are also usually conceived as essentialistic units. Many Roman authors would take much pleasure in knowing how readily some modern historians and archaeologists buy into their intellectual concepts. But it is also distressing to see just how much impact, contrary to better knowledge, the generalized dichotomy between Roman and barbarian/Germanic still has on almost every aspect of research on the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, from historiography to disciplinary boundaries to the establishment of research networks.

Despite various recent publications dedicated to problems of Romano-Germanic acculturation, it is well known today that, from a theoretical point of view, traditional methods developed in acculturation studies are not easily transferable to the field of history. As defined by the anthropologists Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, the study of acculturation requires certain preconditions which

10 Maas, ‘Ethnicity, Orthodoxy and Community’; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*; Pohl, *Die Völkerwanderung*.
are, at least for the subject to which this volume is dedicated, almost impos-
sible to meet. The problem is rather straightforward: is it not possible to define
either clearly separated ‘different cultures’ nor ‘first contacts’ between cultures
in late antique and early medieval Europe.\textsuperscript{13}

Nevertheless, the question of how new groups in Roman territory differed
from others, and how this difference varied in the course of time, remains an
important and legitimate one. More appropriate theoretical concepts, such as
hybridity or liminality, allow for a much more open-minded approach to these
problems.\textsuperscript{14} As a concept in late antique studies, hybridity is, however, feasible
only if it is not bound to the same sort of essentialist models that prevail in
traditional studies of acculturation.\textsuperscript{15} Recent archaeological studies on early
medieval cemeteries and settlements across Europe provide a wide range of
texts for the ways in which essentialist ethnic models serve as a starting
point for explaining the evidence. Critical approaches towards this practice are
usually countered with the allegation that, if archaeology were to follow recent
critical tendencies, it would lose its capacity to work historically, and that the
discussion poses a real threat to archaeology’s status as an independent aca-
demic field. Besides, the discussion has again become increasingly politicized;
this shows that different conceptions of the Migration Period largely depend
on one’s understanding of ancient ethnicity and identity. Historians, therefore,
face the constant challenge to assess the multiple levels of ‘collective memory’
and ‘social memory’ of different generations.\textsuperscript{16} Reassessing familiar presup-
positions does not inevitably lead to the disastrous outcomes that have been
predicted by some European scholars in recent years. Ancient societies can be
imagined in a number of different ways, and thus reveal the varying importance

‘Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals hav-
ing different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the
original culture patterns of either or both groups’.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{13} On the distinction of cultural groups, see Brather, ‘Kulturgruppe und Kulturkreis’. ‘First
contact’ did not exist in late antique and early medieval Europe, as every acting ‘foreign’ group
in this period had contact with the Roman Empire before entering Roman territory, or was a
product of the Roman Empire itself. For acculturation as a problem of methodology in histori-
cal research, see Gotter, ‘Akkulturation als methodisches Problem’.

\textsuperscript{14} See, for example, Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}.

\textsuperscript{15} As to these problems cf. Pieterse, \textit{Globalization and Culture}.

Memory}; Assmann, \textit{Das kulturelle Gedächtnis}; and on late Antiquity in particular Diefenbach,
of the classical world for the explication and structuring of the modern world. It is crucial to study and to discuss the rules according to which the differences and similarities of human beings were shaped.

For the study of ethnic identity in this period, it is important to recognize that traditional ways of thinking about rulership and Roman identity within a Roman imperial framework underwent significant changes from the fifth century onwards. They did not, however, disappear entirely. Ethnographers were still able to describe the traditional distance between the uncivilized peoples and their own society in ways that had not changed much since the time of Herodotus. Time-honoured models persisted, yet the world which they were supposed to explain was constantly changing. The discourse within which the old models were used had to be continually adjusted to new circumstances, a process that continues to the present day. Ancient Roman conceptions of social classification still form part of our social memory, mainly by virtue of the surviving Roman texts and their cultural authority which was reinvigorated since the Renaissance. This also holds true for the sharp distinction between Romans and barbarians discernible in different genres of Roman art and literature. If we use dualistic models of Romanness and ‘Otherness’ to explain early medieval phenomena, we need to consider the historical changes and continuities of the concepts of ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’. To this end, we can distinguish three general phases:

(i) Imperial Roman conceptions of Romans and barbarians
(ii) Ambiguities and challenges to the concept in the post-imperial West
(iii) Modern uses of the binary system

Of course, within these phases, modifications occurred in the perception and depiction of barbarians. The important point for us, however, is that the general aspects of the conceptual dichotomy between Romans and barbarians survived surprisingly unchanged from Roman times right into modern historiography. It seems that the redefinition of Romanness in the time of Augustus, its later permanence, and its transformation in Christian thought has a much wider impact on recent historiography than we usually tend to admit. The question therefore is about the heuristic value of this concept for modern historiography and archaeology, especially for interpreting cemeteries, which will be discussed in Section 4 of this paper. Sections 2 and 3 lead up to this question by discuss-

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ing the apparent immutability and yet steady transformation of the contrast between ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’. Section 5 concludes with a bid for a more prudent use of the term ‘Roman’ in early medieval archaeology, and for an explanatory framework that is more suitable to the period under consideration.

2. The Power of Images: Imperial Conceptions of Romans and Barbarians (Phase I)

Within the Roman Empire, it had been common for centuries to set one’s own Roman position within a binary system which was derived directly from Greek thought, but which also built upon traditions that can be traced back as far as Egypt and the Near East in the fourth century BC. According to this model, the Greco-Roman world was surrounded by barbarians who embodied the qualities, both positive and negative, of the Other. Imperial art and literature forcefully instantiated this Gegenwelt, a clearly delineated opposite that illuminated the uniqueness of the Roman world. It was a construct that had always been based more on a theoretical discourse than on practical experience.

The model provided a neat and easily understandable means of expressing belonging and difference. Multifarious phenomena were thus reduced to simplified images, which lent structure to their complexity and made it easier to articulate them. The number of visual representations of outsiders rose dramatically under the Emperor Augustus. From then on, they would be among the most popular themes of Roman representational art, and can be found in almost every type of monument. The internal consolidation of the principate demanded external success in order to legitimize Augustus’s reconfiguration of the political structures of the Empire. The public expressions of the contrast between outsiders and Romans, as well as of the subjugation of the Other, also served to underline the ideology of Roman world domination, stressed at the time and claimed throughout the following centuries. This contrast between Roman and barbarian, and the overthrowing of the latter, remained a constant theme in texts and images during the consolidation of the Empire under the tetrarchs, as well as under the Constantinian and Theodosian dynasties. It

19 Zanker, ‘Die Gegenwelt der Barbaren’.
20 Kienast, Augustus, pp. 92–100.
21 Cf. Schneider, ‘Barbar II (ikonographisch)’.
Figure 1. ‘The Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus’, Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps, c. AD 200.
Photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Rom, Inst. Neg. 58.2.011.
Philipp von Rummel

clarified Rome’s mission to civilize the barbarians and simultaneously justified Roman imperialism. This Roman self-image was unimaginable without the sharp otherness of the barbarian.

The well-known Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus, dating from c. AD 260, is a prime example of this iconography. The Roman army’s triumph which it depicts hardly looks like a real battle. It is more a representation, almost a caricature, even — which is just as purposeful — of the humiliation of two defeated hordes of barbarians. The barbarian enemies, relegated to the lower section, are portrayed in wild disorder through gesture, facial expression, clothing, and weaponry, while the Romans proceed above them upright and in disciplined lines.22

The Roman Empire’s unique identity was continually called to mind and reproduced in different genres of art and literature, through the marked contrast with the Other, the outsider. The ‘Other’ was a stereotype, moulded, in part, after form inherited from Greek art; it did not describe a ‘real world’ which existed in opposition to the Roman Empire. It was an ideological construct which formed part of the conceptual background of every fairly well-educated Roman.23

At the same time, everyone who had actually come into contact with the ‘outsiders’ or had taken part in a battle knew that the contrasts were not quite as clear as they tended to be represented in image and text. Romans in the different regions of the Empire were very different from one another and often hardly ‘Romanized’ at all outside the regional centres, while their neighbours and those further beyond the frontiers were seldom as barbaric as artists and writers liked to claim.24 Such propagandistic images must have seemed grotesque in situations where their distance from reality was obvious. Lactantius’s description of the encounter between the Sassanid King Shapur and the Roman Emperor Valerian vividly makes this point. According to Lactantius, whenever Shapur wanted to mount a horse or climb into a carriage, he commanded the captured Emperor to bend over, so that the King could then set his foot on the Roman’s back and say, laughing reproachfully, that this was the real world, not what Romans liked to depict in paintings and on walls.25

22 See the entry by Lucilla de Lachenal, in Giuliano, ed., Museo nazionale Romano, 1, 5, no. 25, p. 56; Künzl, Ein Traum von Imperium.
23 Christ, ‘Römer und Barbaren’; Dauge, Le Barbare.
24 Cf. for example Woolf, Becoming Roman, who states (p. 241) that nothing was more characteristic of life in the Roman Empire than being ‘culturally peripheralized’; Kulikowski, Rome’s Gothic Wars, pp. 34–43.
25 Lactantius, De mortibus persecutorum, trans. by Städele, v. 2–3, pp. 100–03: ‘Hic captus a Persis non modo imperium, quo fuerat insolenter usus, sed etiam libertatem, quam ceteris
3. A Long Life: Ambiguities and Challenges to the Concept in the Post-Imperial West (Phase II)

Even as the military situation of the Roman Empire became increasingly tense in the late fourth and above all early fifth centuries, this did not bring an end to the old images. On the contrary, against the backdrop of a renewed intensification of the ideology at the end of the fourth century, the old image of the barbarian became especially vital for describing the positive and distinctive qualities of Romanness. In the late fourth and first half of the fifth centuries, the answers that the intellectual elite developed in response to the pressing question about the continuity of the Empire were not trendsetting but traditional. Given the rapidly increasing regionalization of the Empire and the differences between the various barbarian groups who both faced and settled within it from the late fourth century onwards, the old Roman/barbarian dichotomy became wholly divorced from reality. Still, this did not prevent the continued success of the concept.  

The *Suda* contains a story of Attila’s disgust over Roman images of victory, which precisely captures the inadequacy of the old Roman iconographic vocabulary:

> Milan: A city filled with men, which Attila took and whose population he sold into slavery. When he saw a picture of the Roman emperor sitting on a golden throne with dead Scythians lying at his feet, he called a painter and demanded that he himself be depicted on a throne with Roman emperors carrying sacks of gold on their shoulders and emptying them at his feet.  

This story underlines the power of images. Even the most conservative iconographic patterns cannot be dismissed as mere rhetoric removed from contemporary reality, but need to be understood as forms of representation which

ademerat, perdidit vixitque in servitute turpissime. Nam rex Persarum Sapor, is qui cum ceperat, si quando libuerat aut vehiculum ascendere aut equum, inclinare sibi Romanum iubebat ac terga praebere et imposito pede supra dorsum eius illud esse verum dicebat exprobans ei cum risu, non quod in tabulis aut parietibus Romani pingerent'.

26 Cf. for example Heather, ‘The Barbarian in Late Antiquity’, p. 242; Dewar, ‘We’re All Romans Now’.

were discussed and taken seriously as agents of identity. As part of a broader discourse, they help to define the boundaries within which identity and otherness are continually negotiated and adjusted.

In a slightly different vein, this is also true of the nave mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, created between 432 and 440, which also underline
The fading power of images. The depiction of the first victory of the Israelites over the Amorites (Ios. 10. 9–10) draws upon a model comparable to the relief on the above-mentioned Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. In the case of Santa Maria Maggiore, the ancient symbolism and motifs of the Roman/barbarian theme are transferred to a Christian context and projected onto the Old Testament. A similar interplay between biblical texts, traditional Roman principles of order and contemporary realities can also be observed with regard to late antique exegesis of biblical texts.

Even after the fall of the western Empire in 476, when there were no more western Roman emperors left to appear in triumphal iconography, the ancient images and their underlying notions continued to flourish. The process of social and political change did not significantly alter the strategies deployed for anti-barbarian propaganda in representational art, which by definition catered to the political need to legitimize Roman rule. Romanness and ‘barbarianess’ therefore retained their appeal as tools for mapping the world. They were even adopted by the Empire’s successor states. The Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea transferred the old role models to the context of the Vandal kingdom, with the Vandals fulfilling the part traditionally played by the Romans and the Moors taking the barbarian side. The educated Roman senators in the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy likewise hearkened back to the ancient images. One of the most famous depictions of defeated barbarians is the Barbarini ivory, dating to the reign of Justinian. The ivory depicts the mounted Emperor in armour with a cruciform sceptre, trailed by a barbarian leader in much smaller scale, all beneath Christ, who bestows blessings upon the scene. In the lower panel, two lines of defeated barbarians flock together to pay homage.

Although there is a marked decline in the number of depictions of barbarians produced in reliefs and sculptures, this does not mean that the concepts associated with them lost their relevance. Instead, elites changed their strategies of representation. Not only did the barbarian topoi remain in use, there is

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30 Schneider, ‘Barbar II (ikonographisch)’, p. 944.
also evidence from the sixth-century West that the concept of Romanness continued to function as a category to order the contemporary world. In his mid-sixth-century account of Justinian's Gothic wars, Procopius reports on Gaul:

Now other Roman soldiers, too, had been stationed at the frontiers of Gaul to serve as guards. And these soldiers, having no means of returning to Rome, and at the same time being unwilling to yield to the enemy, who were Arians, gave themselves, together with their military standards and the land which they had long been guarding for the Romans, to the Arborychi and Germans; and they handed down to their offspring all the customs of their fathers, which were thus preserved, and this people has held them in sufficient reverence to guard them even up to my time. For even at the present day they are clearly recorded in the traditional registers to which they were assigned when they served in ancient times, and they always carry their own standards when they enter battle, and always follow the customs of their fathers. And they preserve the dress of the Romans (σχῆμα τῶν Ῥωμαίων) in every particular, even as regards their shoes.

Procopius thus affirms that, in fifth-century Gaul, there were still soldiers who were recognizably Roman from their outward appearance. Agathias, writing some decades later, adds one further point in support of seeing outward appearance as a criterion of distinction. With regard to the Franks, he states:

[...] the Franks are no nomads, as indeed some of the barbarian peoples are, but their system of government, administration, and law is modelled more or less on the Roman pattern, apart from which they uphold similar standards with regard to contracts, marriage, and religious observance. They are in fact all Christians and adhere to the strictest orthodoxy. They also have magistrates in their cities, and priests, and celebrate the feasts in the same way as we do, and, for a barbarian people, strike me as extremely well-bred and civilized and as practically the same as ourselves except for their uncouth style of dress and peculiar language (μόνον τὸ βαρβαρικὸν τῆς στολῆς καὶ τὸ τῆς φωνῆς ἰδιάζον).

34 Dewing translated ‘they are clearly recongnized as belonging to the legions to which they were assigned’. I changed this as the original ἔκ τε γὰρ τῶν καταλόγων ἐς τὸ δέ τοῦ χρόνου δηλούνται, ἐς οὔ το παλαιὸν τασσόμενοι ἑστρατεύοντο’ does not refer to a legion as an army unit but to lists, registers (κατάλογοι).


The old elements of distinction — otherness, dress, and appearance — once again fulfil a crucial function here. As before, ‘Roman’ and ‘civilized’ were an inseparable pair; Agathias puts Catholic Christian orthodoxy to the foreground as a unifying bond. This clearly demonstrates a change in priorities during the sixth century. The dichotomy between civilization and barbaricum still functioned as an interpretative framework, but its structure had changed. Other criteria had now replaced the contrast between Romans and barbarians as the main object of interest.37

But what does the difference between Roman and barbarian mean in the light of these changes? With regard to the usefulness of the Roman/barbarian binary model in the early Middle Ages, it is significant that, according to Procopius, there were Gaulish Romans who distinguished themselves from their neighbours not only by their appearance, but by their lineage. Before the passage about the remaining Romans, Procopius writes of the Arborychi, who were in the service of Rome. As he moves on to the passage just cited, he comments that there were also ‘other Roman soldiers’ (καὶ στρατιῶται δὲ Ρωμαίων άτεροι) on the frontiers of Gaul. This is a common feature in Procopius. When writing on the wars, he regularly describes soldiers in Roman service as Romans, even when it is clear that they are not actually Romans, but people of different origin. Nonetheless, these ‘Romans’ are on the emperor’s payroll and under his orders, which accounts for their political loyalty as Romans. Among the Gauls, this is clearly not the case. While they have allied themselves, faute de mieux, with the Franks, they also preserve the traditions of the Roman army, including outward appearance. This information provided by Procopius is much more difficult to integrate with our wider understanding of this problem than the passage from Agathias. Other sources, in contrast to Procopius’s observations, much more often point towards the conclusion that within the military sphere in particular, sharp divisions between Romans and non-Romans were not easy to come by. Rather, ‘military’ and ‘barbarian’ became closely intertwined notions.38 It is especially interesting to note that Procopius alludes to traditional lists or personnel rosters (κατάλογοι). Hence Procopius adds another dimension to the social and professional aspect of the military, namely the category of ancestry, which brings his perception of this group of ‘Romans’ in Gaul close to a gens in the original meaning of the word. As a consequence of

37 Cf. e.g. Greatrex, ‘Roman Identity in the Sixth Century’; Maas, “Delivered from their Ancient Customs”; Newbold, ‘Attire in Ammianus and Gregory of Tours’.
38 von Rummel, Habitus barbarus.
political events in Gaul, the Roman military unit was apparently compelled to act independently, and the strategies they developed to do so made them comparable to barbarian groups that had developed from army units.\textsuperscript{39}

If Procopius is reliable, some Gaulish Romans drew on traditions of the Roman army; yet as ‘Romans’, they were no longer part of a large interregional organization, but formed a group of small or middling size, not dissimilar from other \textit{gentes} which surrounded them. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure as to what these soldiers really looked like, or, most importantly, whether their dress indeed differed from that of their Frankish neighbours in aspects beyond the use of ancient unit emblems (and perhaps other military features which were no longer common elsewhere). It is nonetheless clear that Romanness in this case could no longer be conceptualized as part of a binary pattern, but had to be redefined as merely one unit among many within a world of \textit{gentes}.

4. \textit{A Successful Reanimation: Modern Uses of the Roman-Barbarian Binary Model (Phase III)}

If we can thus observe a remarkable persistence in concepts from the imperial period (Phase I) in late Antiquity, they also had to be constantly adapted to new circumstances (Phase II). Nonetheless, modern historical and archaeological discussion still mainly employs the two poles of ‘Roman’ and ‘barbarian’ as they were used in Phase I. A so-called ‘Germanic’ fibula, for instance, regularly becomes ‘Roman’ in archaeological interpretations if there are enough examples of the type in the Mediterranean. The main point of contention with regard to Childeric’s grave still remains the question of whether it is ‘Roman’ or ‘barbarian’, or both, while a \textit{Grubenhaus} is so utterly un-Roman that it is uncritically taken as the final proof of the end of Roman civilization. But is this really the question we should be asking? The fact that ancient terminology survived into the early Middle Ages does not imply that phenomena of this period can be interpreted like second- or third-century problems. Romans and barbarians should rather be analysed as part of a shared world, differentiated between centres and peripheries, not as separate, clearly distinguishable cultures.\textsuperscript{40} In Roman literature, we can observe a conscious debate about this idea of cultural change. Writers of the Greco-Roman East, for example, described

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. Steinacher, ‘Zwischen Rom und den ‘Barbaren’.

\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Dick, \textit{Der Mythos vom ‘germanischen’ König tum}; Halsall, \textit{Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West}, pp. 63–162.
how intellectuals of Roman, Celtic, or Syrian origin, through their acceptance of Greek *paideia*, gained membership within a prestigious group of scholars and acquired skills in Attic Greek. Transformation was indeed possible, not least from an intellectual point of view. Barbarians did change, and Romans also changed. Following the rapid political developments of the late fourth and fifth centuries, Roman intellectuals were forced to readjust their Romanness, not only (albeit mainly) in the Roman West. To be Roman had lost one of its most important qualities in the late fifth-century West, namely that of being part of the political and administrative system represented by the Roman Empire. Other elements of the complex phenomenon that we call ‘Rome’ survived, but in the sixth and seventh centuries it became increasingly difficult to define what was Roman and what was not. It was now no longer possible — even if we assume that this had ever been the case — to distinguish easily between barbarian and Roman, a development that already became apparent with Cassiodorus’s effort to combine Gothic rule and Italian *romanitas*. What did survive, of course, was the binary system that set the boundaries between ‘Us’ and ‘the Others’; it was, after all, very convenient. But both poles of the binary model had changed.

In archaeology, the particular persistence of the Roman/barbarian dichotomy was based on the assumption that old concepts retained their meaning, but that the channels and media of transmission shifted from text and image to archaeological finds. As the evidence from literary and iconographic sources declines in quantity from the second half of the fifth century onwards, the number of large cemeteries with richly furnished graves increases, a phenomenon found in every part of the former western Empire with the exception of North Africa. And the building blocks of the new political order, the barbarian successor states, were at least nominally ethnic. While most archaeologists agree that it is difficult to distinguish between single Germanic groups in the archaeological evidence, the contrast in the later fifth century between Romans

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42 Cf. the paper by Maya Maskarinec in this volume.

43 Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy*, pp. 66–89; Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy*, pp. 43–78; Hen, *Roman Barbarians*, pp. 27–58

44 Ament, ‘Reihengräberfriedhöfe’.

and barbarians is widely considered to be more obvious than in the preceding centuries. Based upon authors such as Procopius and Agathias, who suggest a distinction between ‘Roman’ and ‘non-Roman’ forms of costume and outward appearance, early medieval archaeology, from its very beginnings as a discipline, has ventured to identify material evidence according to this binary model.

Our point of departure is thus a paradox: whereas the groups which originated in the political disintegration of the Roman Empire ultimately prevailed as a structuring principle for supra-regional order, pointing towards a Europe of nation states, the number of sources describing the visual expressions of belonging to one of these groups declines. Simultaneously, archaeological finds which are interpreted as strategies of differentiation increase in number from the sixth century onwards, particularly burials. The so-called Reihengräber (row graves) and new forms of material objects now dominate the picture; they even appear in regions where barbarian influence was weaker than it was in northern Gaul, southern Germany, or along the Danube. Thus, within certain spheres of material culture, there seems to appear a clear contrast between the graves attributed to the Roman population on the one hand, and the barbarian migrants on the other. The contrast on which this powerful image rests is an old friend: the contours of barbarian, or un-Roman, culture are defined and identified only against the backdrop of traditional Roman culture. In view of this situation, it is debatable whether we are dealing with a change in media of transmission. Can we really still trace the old dichotomy between Romans and barbarians after the political collapse of the western Roman Empire, albeit now with archaeological finds instead of texts and images?

Scholarly debate on this question turns above all on the distinction between northern barbarian influences and Roman peculiarities in material culture. Similar problems and questions, which arise in other parts of the Empire, for example in Africa, Egypt, Arabia, or the Asian frontier, have been com-

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47 Fehr, Germanen und Romanen im Merowingerreich; von Rummel, Habitus barbarus, pp. 18–64.
paratively neglected. With regard to the question of the distinction between Germans and Romans, Volker Bierbrauer has recently compiled all the relevant data on the archaeology of Roman burial customs for the *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*. He persuasively demonstrates that burial customs varied widely, even within relatively small regions. This makes establishing a norm difficult. The general taste was for west-east oriented graves, sometimes stone-lined in varying ways, crypts, or slab graves with the corpse lying on its back. In contrast to so-called ‘Germanic’ burials, grave goods are generally absent from these ‘Roman’ graves. With respect to the overwhelming lack of grave goods, Roman graves are distinctive, according to the widely accepted traditional view, first and foremost due to the lack of weapons in male burials, and the absence of substantial metal finds in certain positions in female burials. The identification of Roman elements thus proceeds largely from the definition of so-called Germanic material. The migration-period horizon of the Lombards in Italy is commonly regarded as an especially clear example of this distinctiveness. It is distinguished by ‘the initial appearance of an external cultural facies within a completely differently structured environment, that is, the otherness of the Roman environment’. Out of two fixed frames of reference, therefore, one immigrant and one native, only one is — supposedly — precisely defined. The often-invoked ‘Roman cultural model’ takes shape primarily with reference to the ‘Germanic model’.

Coherence is derived not with reference to one culture — however multifaceted and varied in itself — but by its contrast with the Other. The element of alterity within this binary system, formerly conceived as the barbarian world outside the Roman Empire, is transformed into Vandal, Ostrogothic, Lombard, or Frankish culture within the borders of the former Empire. In early medieval archaeology, therefore, the overwhelming lack of ‘Germanic’ features remains the decisive criterion for the identification of Roman graves.

There is a well-established consensus among scholars on the outward appearance of the Other, the non-Roman groups, at least with regard to burial archaeology, from which most of the relevant evidence is derived. Above all, rich personal furnishings are taken to be incompatible with the Christian belief that the modes of burial will not make a difference in the life to come.  

51 Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen’, passim.
52 Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen’, p. 213.
55 Cf. now Bierbrauer, ‘Christliche Jenseitsvorstellungen’, passim.
Traditional scholarship regarded the Romance-speaking population as largely Christian, whereas the immigrant barbarian groups, despite their superficial, or partial, Christianization, were thought to have preserved their pagan heritage, along with a belief in the importance of endowing their dead with goods. Grave goods in general were therefore seen as signs of the Other. Grave goods which were, and still are, singled out for their non-Roman character include certain types of weapons in men’s graves, above all two-edged slashing swords and shields, and certain types and combinations of brooches (the ‘peplos dress’ or ‘multiple brooch dress’), jewellery and belt fittings among women.

The ‘Roman cultural model’ (romanisches Kulturmodell), by contrast, is primarily defined by the lack of these features. This can complicate the distinction, given that, for example, Gothic men’s graves are likewise defined by the lack of
weapons, while there are, of course, occasionally unfurnished graves to be found among barbarian groups. Difficulties also arise when the number of grave goods in burials increases, but not according to a ‘Germanic model’. Furthermore, there is a logical problem with the identification of Roman graves: it is hard to see

how Roman burials should be distinguishable through both the accumulation of Roman objects and the overwhelming lack of grave goods at the same time.\footnote{Riemer, \textit{Romanische Grabfunde}, p. 21.}

Two examples may serve to illuminate the difficulties of making the distinction. In what remains the standard work on Roman grave goods in Italy, Ellen Riemer devotes an entire chapter to ‘Germanic brooches’.\footnote{Riemer, \textit{Romanische Grabfunde}, pp. 133–36.} The \textit{Silberblechfibeln} (silver plate fibulae) of Castel Bolognese, the cloisonné-decorated pair of \textit{Vogelwirbelfibeln} (bird-shaped fibula) from Imola, Villa Clelia Grave 185, or the pair of silver \textit{Zikadenfibeln} (cicada-shaped fibula) from Ladispoli Grave come from cemeteries with otherwise Roman material. Yet these finds are automatically attributed to Germanic graves, on the basis of the brooches’ form and type. Why the brooches should be taken as signs of ethnic differentiation, however, is not explained. A detailed argument as to what exactly makes these brooch types, and not others, signifiers of non-Roman group identity has yet to be made. The fact that these objects are found in Roman as well as supposedly Lombard cemeteries, also challenges this line of thinking. This is a general problem when dealing with the Migration Period: to our current state of knowledge, ‘distinctive cultures’, with clearly definable groups as bearers of these cultures, did not exist in early medieval Europe. If only individual elements could be designated as ‘foreign’ with some confidence, this could contribute in important ways to our understanding of the coexistence of immigrants and natives. However, most of the criteria distinguishing ‘Roman’ from ‘Germanic’ material culture have been in use since the nineteenth century and have been rather uncritically adopted. Archaeologists in turn have combined these criteria with a selective presentation of burial finds to build up working hypotheses which are presented as if they rest on well-grounded evidence. Hence, to interested non-specialists, it is impossible to assess the adequacy of the conclusions presented without conducting further extensive research.

The problem of weapon furnishings, which in German-speaking literature is often regarded as a ‘Germanic’ ritual, is another case in point.\footnote{Bierbrauer, ‘Archäologie der Langobarden in Italien’, p. 26; Bierbrauer, \textit{Alboin adduxit Langobardos in Italia}. Weapons in graves not specifically Lombard: Brogiolo and Possenti, ‘Alcuni riscontri archeologici’, p. 170; Settia, ‘Longobardi in Italia: necropoli altomedievali’.} Since, in most cases, the assessment of the material begins with the assumption that the lack of weapons is a valid criterion for identifying ‘Roman’ male burials, it comes as no surprise that archaeologists hardly ever find weapons in ‘Roman’ graves. Otherwise, these graves would by definition not be Roman. It is therefore all...
the more remarkable that catalogues of ‘Roman’ grave goods list significant numbers of male graves which do include weapons. In order to safeguard the theory of ‘Germanic’ weapon furnishings, many weapons (above all one-edged swords [scramasax] and arrows) are denied the status as weapons. In this way, the graves in which they appear can still be categorized as ‘Roman’. Yet when counting the graves listed in Riemer’s catalogue which contain saxes, sparthas, lances, or arrowheads, sixty-four out of seventy-one definitely male burials with grave goods in Italy exhibit weapons, seven of them swords or lances. To these one might add, depending on the respective ethnic identification, the weapon burials from the ‘mixed’ cemetery of Romans d’Isonzo and other more recently discovered cemeteries. Altogether, considering the total number of catalogued graves, this adds up to a significant amount. Do these represent ‘Roman’ graves with exceptional status, or minimally furnished ‘Germanic’ graves? With regard to this question, five of the Sardinian graves that Riemer lists as displaying weapons are particularly noteworthy. These graves pose a challenge to traditional interpretations, since, according to the written sources, there was no Lombard settlement on the island. Further research is needed to determine whether these are really ‘exceptional cases’ which break ‘the rule of weaponless burials’. I Irene Barbiera, in her contribution to this volume, demonstrates from a different angle that weapon burial was not a ‘foreign’ element which was only brought to Italy by the immigrants in the sixth century.

Other types of grave goods, such as earrings, buckles, combs, or gold-leaf crosses, present similar problems. In many publications, the relevant criterion for labelling individual finds as ‘Roman’ as opposed to ‘Germanic’ is not revealed. This further complicates any assessment of the situation as a whole, since only those familiar with the material are in a position to judge how many

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60 Cf. Riemer, Romanische Grabfunde, p. 242: Firmano, grave 5 (no. 1: arrowheads); Romans d’Isonzo (no. 7, grave 118: arrowhead); Laino d’Intelvi (no. 23: scramasax); Imola, Villa Clelia grave 165 (no. 59: lance); Fiesole, via Riobico (no. 67) grave 4 (lances) and grave 11 (lance); Grosseto, loc. Grancia grave 61 (no. 72: scramasax); no. 104: arrowheads); Borutta (no. 184: lances, scramasax or sword); Bultei (no. 185: lances); Laerru (no. 186: scramasax); Nuoro (no. 195: lances); Tonara (no. 196: lance).


62 Cf. the paper by Irene Barbiera in this volume.
relevant finds are not taken into account due to unstated premises. The recurring assertion that such furnished graves should be regarded as exceptional and merely departing from the ‘typically unfurnished character of Roman graves’ becomes highly questionable given the considerable number of known furnished graves of non-Germanic character.

For the Bavarian region, Arno Rettner has recently enlarged the set of criteria for identifying Roman populations, adding a paucity of certain features as characteristic, including a low number of weaving swords, food offerings, or animal burials.\(^63\) In addition, there is the criterion of weapon furnishing, an analysis of which demonstrates that these occurred more than twice as frequently outside of Bavaria than within the region.\(^64\) Rettner thus concludes: ‘Anyone who crossed the Iller from the west or from the Danube from the north between the fifth and sixth centuries would have entered a region which followed a different burial custom. Though the grave goods themselves, for example the brooches used in female dress, are wholly comparable in their form, the frequency with

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63 Rettner, ‘Baiuaria romana’.
which they were included in burials is not’. The presupposition of certain burial practices as Roman in turn led Rettner to conclude that there was a large Roman population in Bavaria, which successfully introduced the newly arrived immigrants to their own fashions and customs: the latter thus would have abandoned burial mounds and chambers, furnishings indicative of social rank, opulent foodstuffs and animal burials, as well as extensive weapon assemblages, and buried their dead ‘according to the late Roman pattern’ (Map 1). In southern Bavaria around c. 500, we cannot detect a significant break from its late Roman development, but rather clear continuity. In contrast to other regions north of the Alps, typically ‘Merovingian’ cemeteries appear in Bavaria only in the middle of the sixth century. This observation is of particular relevance with regard to our question. It underlines the fact that the processes of economic and social change during the fifth and sixth centuries followed a very different course in different regions. Yet, when attempting to refine the definition of ‘Roman’ material in contrast to non-Roman material, it does not take us much further. This holds true at least until we arrive at a better understanding of the reasons for the different developments of particular regions. Was Romanness still strong enough in some regions to influence the newcomers? This may have been the case — but exactly what do we mean by ‘Romanness’?

Despite archaeologists’ reluctance to discuss terminology, it is nonetheless important to remain constantly aware of the problem. ‘Romans’ and ‘Germans’, with all the different implications these concepts carry with them, exert a pervasive influence on archaeological research. The concept of ‘Germans’, as well as its Roman counterpart, presumes the existence of large groups known by these names, or implicitly constitutes them as such. In combination with the equally problematic concept of archaeological cultures and the deep-rooted but ultimately unprovable premise of a Roman-Germanic dualism, the ‘Germanic’

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69 Cf. the synthesis in Brather, ‘Kulturgruppe und Kulturkreis’.
still continues to figure as the subject of archaeological-historical narratives.\textsuperscript{70} Yet, there never existed a group of this name, or at least no group which ever considered or identified itself as ‘German’. The same is true of ‘eastern’, ‘western’, or ‘northern Germans’. Jörg Jarnut, therefore, has justly argued that the term ‘Germanic’ should be abandoned in early medieval studies.\textsuperscript{71} While the concept of the Germans has been convincingly deconstructed, the complementary concept of the Romans has not yet been sufficiently problematized, and it is still too often used in an essentialist sense. No doubt there were indeed ‘Romans’. Within the Roman Empire, however, the conceptual distinction between \textit{populus} and \textit{gens} points to a more differentiated relationship to ethnicity than in the barbarian \textit{regna}.\textsuperscript{72} The — at least theoretical — importance of the Roman \textit{populus} headed by the senate, as a political actor, rapidly diminished from the middle of the fifth century onwards. Since the middle of the sixth century, it was no longer possible to relate the concept of ‘Romans’ to any meaningful political unit in the western Empire; its meaning becomes increasingly blurred. Romanness remains as a linguistic, Christian, and historical-symbolic category. These aspects, however, can only to a certain extent be used as a contrast to Goths, Lombards, and Franks. The concept of Romans or Romanness, at least \textit{a priori}, has only limited heuristic value for archaeology. It is therefore only slightly more useful than the concept of Germans that Jarnut rejected.

One can also hear and read of the ‘Roman world’, in which particular things were common or uncommon. ‘Germanic’ or ‘barbaric’ elements are generally recognized by the fact that they were unknown in the Roman world. Barbarian culture is thereby sometimes credited with a remarkably strong resistance to absorption by the Roman world. Yet Vandals, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, but also Franks and Lombards, no matter how far it is possible to trace their origins outside the \textit{imperium Romanum}, were not just products but also part of the ‘Roman world’. In archaeology, the ‘Roman world’, which also functioned as the frame of reference for the barbarians, therefore does not seem particularly suitable as an analytical category, at least not if our focus remains within the borders of the Empire. This does not mean, however, that questions about migration, foreigners, and ethnicity within the Roman world are not feasible ones. Even less it is intended to deny ruptures and fundamental processes of change between late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{70} Pohl, ‘Ursprungserzählungen und Gegenbilder’, pp. 32–34.
\textsuperscript{71} Jarnut, ‘Germanisch’.
\textsuperscript{72} Geary, \textit{Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter}.
\textsuperscript{73} Cf. for example Ward-Perkins, \textit{The Fall of Rome}; Valenti, ‘Ma i “barbari” sono veramente
The archaeological problem begins even before the point of applying labels, that is, with assessing which of the features identified in the archaeological record provide access to past identities, and which do not. If A engages in trade with B and B thus acquires an object which is common in A’s region, this does not necessarily tell us anything about any relation of identity or alterity between A and B. Only once the phenomena keep recurring and can be grouped according to regular patterns can we attempt to proceed to farther-reaching claims. Still, when it comes to considering possible expressions of Roman identity in material culture, this is precisely the problem. We cannot observe either sufficient frequency nor homogeneity; quite the contrary is the case. The vast Romania of the sixth century, stretching from North Africa to Spain, Gaul, and beyond Italy to the Danube, displays a high degree of archaeological variation. Statistically significant clusters of grave goods can be observed only at a regional level, but certainly not in general. Homogeneity seems totally absent.\footnote{Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen’, passim.}

This is not a distinctively late antique or early medieval phenomenon. Even the intact Roman Empire was characterized by a high degree of cultural diversity which nevertheless tends to be eclipsed by striking trans-regional similarities, especially with regard to public representation. For various reasons, Roman identity always remained ‘incomplete’.\footnote{Giardina, L’Italia romana; Pohl, ‘Regnum und gens’, pp. 439–40.} Provincial and regional characteristics remained strong under the cover of a unified and highly visible imperial culture. As Chris Wickham has shown, the post-imperial development of the different regions of the Empire had more to do with their specific pre-imperial history than with their fate in late Antiquity. Thus, North Africa experienced a different development than Italy, Gaul, or Britain: ‘Social change is overwhelmingly the result of internal factors, not external influences.’\footnote{Wickham, Framing the Early Middle Ages, p. 831. Cf. also Wickham, The Inheritance of Rome.}

If we assume that grave goods reflect forms of familial self-perception, the heterogeneity of the archaeological record fits well with the observation drawn from written sources that self-perception was differentiated and could emphasize a delimited place of origin (town or region) as well as broader claims to imperial or supra-ethnic rule.\footnote{Pohl, ‘Regnum und gens’.} The very heterogeneity of that which is labelled ‘Roman’ in the post-imperial era, as well as earlier, dooms to failure any attempt...
to define one single, specific form of Roman dress and burial. Until now, the response to this problem has consisted in describing and unifying this ‘Roman’ heterogeneity by defining it in contrast to the Other: the Germanic element, which was thought to be securely identifiable. Romanness, therefore, was defined by not being Germanic. This tactic of explaining one unknown by reference to another is, however, hardly satisfactory in the long term.

Fortunately, archaeology does offer an alternative to this uncomfortable situation. The nature of the material record allows archaeologists to determine communication networks and cultural-geographical contexts at a deeper, more focused level than is possible on the basis of surviving written sources. One can detect in many places the dissatisfaction among archaeologists who sense the impossibility of reconstructing a homogeneous concept of ‘Romanness’. Yet, there is no need for this dissatisfaction, which proceeds from a conception which ascribes to ‘the Romans’ a uniform way of behaving as a culturally homogeneous ethnic community. If we put aside this implicit conception of homogeneity, which is supported by neither the written nor the archaeological sources, a whole range of new interpretative possibilities is revealed. Thus the most important result of Ellen Riemer’s catalogue of ‘Roman’ grave goods is precisely her finding that individual regions, such as the district of Grosseto, stand out due to the highly idiosyncratic customs of dressing the dead for burial. An ‘archaeology of identity’ seems indeed possible, but ‘Romanness’, defined in an ethnic or linguistic sense, is a category much too imprecise to adequately describe these phenomena. Addressing regional phenomena, however, is still problematic, for the written sources provide hardly any concrete information on which to base identification, and the graves themselves, in the absence of inscriptions, do not provide appropriate evidence concerning the social identity of the deceased. Consequently, it remains unclear whether groups that are archaeologically visible represent emic groups, that is, whether they are meaningful points of reference to members of the social group, Wir-Gruppen, which can be described from the perspective of the members themselves. A priori assumptions about ethnic differentiation cannot serve as a basis of argument here. The etic perspective, that of the external observer, which modern archaeologists and historians are forced to take, also meets its limits when they attempt to label and interpret recognized phenomena and to integrate their findings with the written sources. This is especially true with regard to ethnic interpretation. Archaeological interpretations of ‘culture’ and their

78 Riemer, Romanische Grabfunde; Bierbrauer, ‘Christliche Jenseitsvorstellungen’, pp. 45–49.
incorporation into ‘culture models’ differentiated according to ethnicity cannot simply be based on the premise that these groups existed as recognizable entities. In these cases, early medieval archaeologists must consider the material evidence using methodologies for prehistoric archaeology, meaning that they should analyse temporal and spatial congruencies of a sum of features and finds, and classify the material according to prehistoric criteria.

This may sound disappointing if we consider the passage from Procopius cited earlier, who claims that Roman soldiers in Gaul retained the σχῆμα τῶν Ρωμαίων in every detail. If there was such a distinctly Roman appearance, this must have been more true in Italy than in Gaul. Yet it still awaits discovery there, despite the identification of so-called Lombard cemeteries. Not far from Rome, the centre of abstract Romanitas, there are cemeteries dating to the late sixth and seventh centuries, which, though they arguably demonstrate a degree of heterogeneity, are also very reminiscent of furnished row-grave cemeteries as are found in early medieval southern Germany, France, Spain, and along the Danube. These burials, accordingly, are usually identified as belonging to incoming ‘Germans’. Again, the argument in favour of this interpretation essentially consists of two parts: first, the custom of burying the dead richly furnished, for example with offerings of food and drink; second, the type of goods and their particular combination in costume, which point towards a northern origin. We have already seen the difficulties associated with the first aspect. But the second aspect is also hard to substantiate. Comparison between the finds from the monastic workshop in the Crypta Balbi in Rome with those of necropolises reveals that it is difficult to divide Italian craftwork of the seventh century into Roman and Lombard forms, while forms of clothing also defy grouping according to a distinct Roman-Germanic dichotomy. With regard to row-grave cemeteries, an increasing number of scholars are now arguing that the clothing and weapons which they preserve should no longer be regarded as

79 The term ‘cultural model’ ([Kulturmodell]) was first used in this context of funerary archaeology by Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen im fränkischen Siedelgebiet’.


82 Ricci, ‘Relazioni culturali e scambi commerciali’.

expressions of ethnic identity, but as evidence of social competition. There is no need to assume that the necropolises of Nocera Umbra, Castel Trosino, or Collegno stand out from their surroundings due to the ethnic differentiation.

84 The traditional interpretation of row graves was first suggested by Werner, 'Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation'. As to the recent discussion see amongst many others: Brather, *Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie*, passim; Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul*, pp. 91–197; Fehr, *Germanen und Romanen im Merowingreich*.
between Roman and barbarian culture, when there could be various other reasons for this difference. They could, for instance, indicate a process of social reorientation within which burials became one form of expressing social claims within a military group. To once again prevent a common misunderstanding: Supporting this view does not mean that there were no ‘barbarian’ groups on Roman soil, nor that they could not have been distinctive in their clothing and other strategies of identification. The reinterpretation proposed here merely addresses the question of why they might have differed. Clearly, this cannot be attributed to their being ‘alien’ to their immediate environment. The furnished burials of Italy, Gaul, or Spain all belong to a shared post-imperial ‘Roman’ world. These finds cannot be used to build a model which could then serve to define ‘Romanness’. Quite to the contrary, distribution maps of the so-called row-grave cemeteries show that the phenomenon was roughly coincident with the frontiers of the Roman Empire, and that the majority of cemeteries lay inside, not outside, the Empire.

To understand Procopius’s σχῆμα τῶν Ρωμαίων, we can take a look back into a time when Roman habitus was still represented with utter self-confidence. A statue from the forum baths in Ostia, dated to c. AD 400, depicts a man who is probably to be identified with the praefectus annonae Ragonius Vincentius Celsus (Fig. 5). Above his tunic, the man is wearing a toga with u-shaped umbo and equestrian calcei. His clothing embodies the Roman ideal. This ideal is emphasized by the bundle of scrolls, which often form the base of toga statues. On the one hand, the scrolls underline the role of the togatus as an office holder; on the other hand, they symbolize the education which was one of the defining features of the late Roman aristocracy. Παιδεία also provided the possibility of actively incorporating the topoi associated with the barbarians for centuries in literary and iconographic tradition into the conflict between the senatorial elite, with its civilian traditions, and those who had risen from imperial administration and the military. Whereas the Romanitas of the traditional elites was symbolized by the toga, the military uniform of their competitors could

85 As to Nocera Umbra and Castel Trosino, cf. n. 81; Collegno: Pejrani Baricco, ‘Longobardi da guerrieri a contadini’. Cf. also Irene Barbiera in this volume.
88 von Rummel, Habitus barbarus, pp. 83–96; Goette, Studien zu römischen Togadarstellungen.
89 Brown, Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity.
be placed firmly in the barbarian corner, whenever it seemed necessary. 90 The military-civilian conflict can also be detected in certain laws contained in the Codex Theodosianus, which forbade wearing elements of military costume in Rome. 91 In 1741, Jacques Godefroy, followed by dozens of scholars, described these elements as ‘barbarian’. And they were indeed barbarian, but only in the sense that they did not symbolize the civilian romanitas of the toga. 92 The civilian/military distinction and the blurring of ethnic differentiation is also evident in narratives about symbolic change of clothing. Olympiodorus, for example, writes that the Visigothic King Athaulf, who according to Orosius regarded himself as the preserver of Romanitas, 93 wore a chlamys at his wedding to Galla Placidia as an expressly Roman vestment. 94 The description functions like a painting. The husband of Galla Placidia, the emperor’s daughter (σχήματι βασιλικῷ), was naturally expected to wear a chlamys, just like the officer on the diptych of Monza (Fig. 6) or Justinian in San Vitale in Ravenna. The marriage between the Goth and the imperial princess, between the barbarian and Rome, was thus framed in a rhetorical image, without any intention to imply that Athaulf had not been wearing Roman military dress before the wedding as well. In a similar vein, Theoderic, who, according to Jordanes’s narrative, put aside the dress of his own people after the conquest of Italy and adopted regal costume as a ruler of both Goths and Romans. 95 In this case, too, the integration of new, barbarian aspects with Roman tradition is depicted in writing. Theoderic, who had previously spent some years in Byzantium, was not used to wearing non-Roman tribal dress. Still, he was recognizable as the leader of his troops, the Ostrogothic army, which was a necessary precondition to his rule. In Ravenna, the army general had to reinvent himself as the ruler of an entire region, one which also formed the centre of the old Roman Empire. The King adopted the insignia of his rule over Goths and Romans, thereby symbolizing

his position in between the competing civilian and military elites, a position formerly occupied by the Roman emperor. This did involve the continual negotiation of distinctions, but these were not necessarily ethnic differences. In all of these cases, clothing served as a convenient means of symbolically expressing the most pressing social conflicts of the time.

Two hundred years later, the situation had changed. While the senate in Constantinople continued to function, the senate of Rome, under Gothic rule, still embodied the antique traditions; one need only think of Boethius or Cassiodorus. This tradition, however, had disappeared by the second half of the sixth century. The senatorial class, as the bearers of Roman tradition par excellence, had been unable to sustain the conflict in which they had been so actively engaged around 400. The western Empire had ended, the last senatus consultum was issued in 533. With the exception of the prefect of the city in Rome, Justinian had abolished all senatorial officials in 554, and in 590, Pope Gregory could state that there was no longer a senate.96 Bishops such as Gregory of

Tours, Venantius Fortunatus, or Avitus of Vienne continued to be recruited from the circles of the senatorial aristocracy, but at the same time, a new form of rulership, based on military power, had asserted itself. ‘Romanness’ had to be reconceptualized, and the old senatorial elite needed to adapt itself to new circumstances.97 The toga and the chlamys could no longer function as a pair of opposites.

Yet elements of the old iconography survived, as illustrated by the silver plate from the treasure of Isola Rizza (Fig. 7), dating from the (later) sixth century.98 The central decoration of the plate shows a rider aiming a lance at a fleeing figure. The mounted warrior is wearing a helmet and plate armour fastened by a belt. The two figures attacked by the rider have beards and belted tunics with clavus and trousers. They are armed with shields, while the fallen figure holds a sword in his hand.99 According to iconographical convention, the two warriors on foot represent subjugated barbarians, whereas the rider would be identified as a triumphant Roman.100 One might think of a battle between Byzantines and Lombards, with the Byzantines continuing the iconographic traditions of ancient Rome. So far, so good. The problem is, however, that the rider’s weaponry is of the sort typically found in graves which are identified as burials of barbarian leaders. Examples include a grave from Niederstotzingen in modern Baden-Württemberg (Germany), or grave 119 from Castel Trosino (Ascoli Piceno, Marche, Italy).101 Segmented armour and helmets were used across Europe and as far as East Asia throughout a long period; they are characteristic pieces of equipment for mounted warriors.102 In Italy, it is above all Castel Trosino grave 119, which, like many graves from the necropolis with rich furnishings and military character, points towards a Lombard context. Even if the deceased was a Lombard, there is no doubt that his armour and helmet were of the type also worn by soldiers in the Byzantine army.103 Thus, it remains unclear

98 La Rocca, ‘Piatto di Isola Rizza’. For an earlier dating of the treasure and the plate, see Bolla, ‘Il “tesoro” di Isola Rizza: osservazioni’; Bolla, ‘Il tesoro di Isola Rizza’.
99 von Hessen, _I ritrovamenti barbarici_, pp. 68–70, with pl. 41–42.
100 Interpretation as barbarians: Volbach, ‘Il tesoro di Canoscio’; von Hessen, _I ritrovamenti barbarici_, p. 69.
101 Paulsen, _Alemannische Adelsgräber_, pp. 133–39; Paroli and Ricci, _La necropoli altomedievale di Castel Trosino_, pp. 79–86, pl. 83–110.
102 Kory, ‘Schuppen- und Lamellenpanzer’.
whether the mounted figure on the plate from Isola Rizza actually depicts a Byzantine or Lombard warrior. We certainly cannot rule out the possibility that he is a Lombard: the so-called ‘Plaque of Agilulf’ from the Val di Nievole in the Museo Bargello, Florence, depicts a ruler identified by embossed letters as Agilulf, flanked by two warriors wearing helmets and armour which closely resemble that of the rider of Isola Rizza. It is therefore conceivable that on the plate of Isola Rizza, Lombards are cast in the traditional role of the triumphant victor, while the barbarians have been depicted in a style similar to that seen on Theodosius’s obelisk in Constantinople. Yet, it is equally possible that the plate is a wholly conventional depiction of the victory of a Byzantine warrior over Lombards.

These difficulties of interpretation could hardly be more illustrative of our problem: with the old dualism between cultured civilization (Kulturwelt) and barbarians fading away, received images of this dichotomy have lost much of their power as interpretive models, for they had lost their univocal meaning. The plate from Isola Rizza shows that the images lived on, but the actors depicted had become interchangeable. Barbarians, within the same social milieu, could look like Romans, and Romans like barbarians. The σχῆμα τῶν Ρωμαίων was a recollection of the past rather than a depiction of the present, a fact that is also underlined by the passages from Procopius and Agathias quoted earlier. In the early medieval period, costume which we usually describe as Germanic or Roman was not a medium for expressing membership in a group defined by a common language. The structural changes which led to the end of imperial rule in the West in the fifth century meant that tools for ordering and categorizing which had still been meaningful in the fourth century could not be sustained two hundred years later.

5. The Faded Power of Roman Images: Other Ways of Explaining the Evidence

If we return with this discussion in mind to our original question about the power of images and the problem of ethnicity, and ask how far sources on dress and outward appearance can provide information about the role of ethnicity as a constituent part of early medieval societies, our conclusion is sobering. First of all, the evidence is too heterogeneous to allow the definition of clear archaeo-

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104 Bruns, Der Obelisk und seine Basis.
105 Halsall, Barbarian Migrations and the Late Roman West, pp. 499–518.
logical groups. This is, however, a prerequisite of archaeological interpretation. ‘Ethnicity without groups’, in Roger Brubaker’s words, cannot be traced by archaeology,\(^\text{106}\) even if it certainly existed. In the sixth and seventh centuries, the situation of confrontation depicted three hundred years earlier on the Ludovisi Sarcophagus simply did not exist anymore within the borders of the former Roman Empire; along with it any straightforward dichotomy which allowed certain cultural phenomena to be ascribed to one side or the other had vanished.

There is no archaeological means to distinguish ethnicity from other possible forms of expressing identity and of defining it apart from them. Archaeology can no longer work autonomously at this level of historical interpretation. The limits of plausible argumentation are defined not only by archaeological material, but as much by texts and images. Archaeology, in its attempt to address and describe the material evidence, has to rely on terminology derived from written sources; yet both historians and archaeologists need to acknowledge that developments which appear in their respective sources may follow different rhythms, even if they form part of a shared discourse. In the sixth and seventh centuries, Roman and non-Roman became increasingly ambiguous categories and are thus highly problematic as a starting point for archaeological explanation. This is not to say, however, that archaeology cannot contribute to the question of ethnic identification. On the contrary, archaeological sources can provide information about all three categories defined in Walter Pohl’s essay on strategies of identification in the companion to this volume. They can describe the individual act of expressing allegiance to a social group; they can give hints as to the collective self-representation of a group; and they sometimes provide insight into the classification of social groups by outsiders. The basis and the precondition for such studies have to be archaeological finds that clearly belong to a specific person or group. A grave, for example, is a deliberate statement made by the group burying the dead, and a cemetery is the sum of such specific statements. The finds can therefore be seen as traces of a ‘process of communication’, and a ‘body of social knowledge’.\(^\text{107}\) However, this raises other problems. In contrast to texts, archaeological finds offer insights into a process of communication that became completely silent with the death of the people involved. Whereas texts provide names of groups, and more or less clear hints to the rules of discourse and the grammar according to which a society communicates about these social groups, such information, in archaeology, is already the result of a complex process of interpretation. This begins with the classification, typo-

\(^{106}\) Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

logy, and the dating of finds — what belongs together and what not? — and it continues with the verbalization of these results. Until they can be understood as ‘repertoires’ for a symbolic language that allowed the negotiation of identity and difference among groups, archaeological finds have already been (silently) subjected to extensive interpretation. Archaeological methodology has always insisted on the necessity of separating purely archaeological work from historical interpretation. In Germany in particular, this claim is regularly combined with the famous directive voiced by General Helmuth von Moltke: ‘getrennt marschieren und vereint schlagen’, march separately, strike together. This is very true. What remains open to debate, however, is the starting point of the joint strike. Marking a fibula as Germanic, or a belt as a Roman, already ventures deep into the field of combined action.

Presumably, this is why archaeological discussion about ethnic interpretation has become quite polemical in recent years. This does not, however, absolve us from the duty to clarify the implicit foundations of our explicit concepts. The term ‘Roman’ in early medieval archaeology is in sore need of a phase of deconstruction. The material evidence should be evaluated in all its complexity, rather than forced into systems which do not suit the period we hope to explain. Archaeologists are in fact able to distinguish between different groups, and they can recapture some of the complexity and variety of the early medieval social world, but in doing so, they should respect the fact that the Roman images had, in both a material and a virtual sense, by then lost much of their ancient authority.

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Remembering the Warriors: Weapon Burials and Tombstones between Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Northern Italy

Irene Barbiera

1. Early Medieval Warriors and Idealized Masculinity

Funerary habits were supposed to have changed significantly in Italy between the end of the fifth and the middle of the sixth centuries. New types of objects began to be deposited in graves, brooches in those of females and weapons as symbols of warrior identity in those of males. Simultaneously, these graves began to be arranged in rows, a pattern documented in the northern European ‘Germanic’ tradition.¹ All these novelties are typically explained as the result of the immigration of barbarian groups into the peninsula. In this view, Goths and later Lombards invaded Italy and settled down, burying their dead as their ancestors in a Germanic manner, very differently from the Roman tradition. According to the traditional interpretations, Romans were buried without significant artefacts in general, such as weapons or brooches that were special symbols of identity. Germans, on the other hand, were warriors in death as in life, and their wives displayed the power of kin groups through wealthy and showy brooches. The idea that warrior identity was strictly linked to the ethnic

¹ The traditional interpretation of row graves as those of laeti was first suggested by Werner, ‘Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation’. For a second look at the interpretation of such cemeteries and for the impossibility of assigning them to ‘German’ immigrants, see Halsall, ‘The Origins of the Reihengräberzivilisation’.
identity of barbarians is modern,\(^2\) having clear roots in early twentieth-century archaeological studies and later being closely linked to the idea of masculinity developed between the two World Wars, particularly in Germany. The image of ancient warriors has often been used to create heroes and to promote a type of masculinity, particularly functional during time of war.

The emergence of a new ‘myth of war experience’ has been documented already from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From this time on the re-emergence of warrior values and the praising of warrior heroes became particularly important because in previous centuries soldiers were mercenaries with little interest in the cause they fought for, but from this time on wars were fought by citizen-armies mainly composed of large numbers of volunteers who were committed to the cause of war and were attached to their *patria*.\(^3\) In this context, the glorification of war and the celebration of warriors become particularly significant in justifying human sacrifice. The images of warriors were employed, quite universally, to personify ‘honour, loyalty, duty, obedience, endurance, strength, sexual potency, courage, and camaraderie’, and these attributes were also synonyms of manliness.\(^4\) Moreover, masculinity became a political instrument and warrior virility the symbol of the nation: male citizens were sacrificing themselves for their countries. The image of military masculinity was further strengthened during the First and particularly the Second World War, when the ‘real man’ was indissolubly linked to war; in fact ‘to the fascist there was no difference between a real man and a warrior’.\(^5\)

The archaeological interpretations of warrior graves of the past that developed between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries can be better understood in this context. Afterwards, archaeological discoveries of the past in general, and in particular warrior graves, became more common, and their interpretations were most often adapted to present concerns. Weapon burials, and the image of ancient warriors which they generated, were perceived as tangible proofs of glorious, warlike pasts.

The region of the Loire was especially richly endowed with a great number of early medieval cemeteries having such lavish grave goods. These were

\(^2\) For an analysis of the social and political context in which these ideas developed in the early twentieth century in Germany, see Fehr, *Volkstum as Paradigm*.

\(^3\) Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*; Mosse, *The Image of Man*; and Riall, ‘Eroi maschili, virilità e forme della guerra’.

\(^4\) Resic, ‘From Gilgamesh to Terminator’.

employed in order to reconstruct the national costume of ancient Germans, characterized by showy and wealthy dress elements, especially in shiny metal items: weapons for males and jewellery for females. In this frame, early medieval weapon graves were perceived as a sign of German masculinity: ‘Nordic man has always been, and always will be, led by his lust for competition, for culture, for leadership, and for distinction,’ writes Hans Gunter in 1927, and: ‘The Nordic race seems to show special aptitude in the domain of military science owing to its warlike spirit.’ In this perspective, it became a conviction that only Nordic men could be buried with weapons, the tangible proof of their warlike masculinity. Such studies served the Nazis’ expansionism well, since they could be used to prove that the lands which barbarians had occupied in the past ‘[...] are old German lands which were stolen from us and which we can rightfully demand to be given back to us,’ as Hitler claimed in May 1942 after reading archaeological reports.

In contrast to these idealizations of warrior graves that developed in Germany during the first half of the twentieth century, in Italy early medieval grave goods were negatively interpreted. Weapons and jewellery were also attributed to barbarians, but were presented as a sign of violence and barbarism. Such weapons were said to belong to the ‘fierce dominators of Italy’ who were ‘pagan and crudely savage.’ Their weaponry equipment was in fact not even developed enough: ‘From these poor finds we can deduce that barbarians were not using the helmet at the time of invasions.’ At that time, it was Roman soldiers who represented the model for Italian ideal masculinity. The glory of

6 Recently, the meaning of these cemeteries has been completely reviewed. The associated artefacts as well as the types of graves are now believed to date from the late antique local culture, rather than being an expression of the Germans. Also, grave goods are related to social changes rather than to mere ethnic identity. For a detailed study of these issues, see Halsall, ‘The Origins of the Reihengräberzivilisation’, pp. 196–207.
7 Gunter, The Racial Elements of European History, p. 51.
9 Fehr, Volksstum as Paradigm, p. 190.
10 Werner, Zur Entstehung der Reihengräberzivilisation, pp. 23–32.
11 Paribieni, La necropoli barbarica di Nocera Umbra, p. 351.
12 Moretti, Torricella Peligna (Chieti), p. 478.
imperial Rome was associated with Mussolini’s power, and at the same time it was also used to create an Italian shared identity, against regional and local particularism and free from foreign inspiration. Ancient Roman symbols, like the saluto romano, or the fasci littori, the Roman insignia of the public office, were used to connect fascism with imperial Rome. Mussolini himself was described as the ‘reincarnation of a Roman legionary’, since he owned a ‘wide Roman breast and the concise lucidity of the Latin mind’, representing all the power of the maschia romanità (manly Romanitas). Roman legionaries depicted on ancient monuments could show ‘the majestic posture, the severe tracts of the dominating race’, and through them ‘we can see again its [Rome’s] best sons carrying the worlds of justice and equality in faraway lands’. The ‘Roman soldier propaganda’ was perfectly suited to reinforce the ideal of masculinity which fascists were eager to promote as a national symbol, since ‘Mussolini’s new man was to be inspired by the war experience and indeed he lived in a state of permanent war’. The attributes of fascist virility were heroism, braveness, and courage, to be demonstrated not in ordinarily circumstances and everyday life but in war.

In the official propaganda, obesus Etruscus (the fat Etruscan) and the savage barbarian stand opposed to the Roman hero. The first was presented as a flabby man, who belonged to a decadent and sick race, annihilated by the Romans. The defeat of the Etruscans was an important step towards the unification of the peninsula under Roman power, dismantling the local separate autonomous areas that characterized ancient Italy. The second anti-hero, the barbarian, was more problematic: on the one hand, according to German historians, the barbarian invasions meant the end of the Roman Empire, and on the other hand they were heroes of the Germans, allies of Mussolini during World War II. In particular, although the myth of Rome functioned extremely well in the promotion of war, it became problematic when the Germans in 1935 initiated a research programme dedicated to the archaeology of the Ostrogoths and Lombards in Italy through the German Archaeological Institute of Rome. For

14 Sarfatti, Dux, p. 10.
this reason, while archaeological findings about the early Middle Ages were
described in negative terms as opposed to Roman ones during the first decades
of the twentieth century, after the thirties a diplomatic silence fell on barbarian
history and archaeology.20

Both German and Italian interpretations of ancient soldiers aimed to create
an ideal of warlike masculinity, a pointedly positive model that could be alter-
natively Roman or barbarian according to the context. These attitudes were
linked to three assumptions. The first, largely revised in the last few decades,
is that grave goods were employed to underscore ethnicity, and that weapons
deposited in graves made it a routine matter to identify barbarian warriors
as opposed to Romans. The second is that the weapons found in graves were
owned by the particular buried dead warrior. Closely tied to these two hypoth-
eses is a third one, currently supported by archaeologists, namely that weapon
burials were a novelty introduced into the Roman Empire by ancient German
warriors during their invasions. In Italy weapon burials are dated to the period
after the Lombard invasion in AD 569, since supposedly Goths did not bury
weapons in their graves.21

Halsall and Härke have recently critiqued the hypotheses that graves with
weapons strictly mirror warrior and barbarian identities, arguing that they
were rather employed by elite groups for social differentiation.22 Moreover, it
has been shown that such graves were more often present in areas and periods
which experienced substantial social change and stress.23

The following analyses of northern Italian cemeteries seem to confirm this
new hypothesis but also further complicate it. The most interesting conclusion
to be drawn from and about the data collected in this study is that weapon
burials did not represent a novelty introduced by the Lombards on their arrival
in Italy. The evidence suggests, I will show, that weapons were always deposited
in graves, even though fluctuations are visible across the centuries. During later
Antiquity, the identity of soldiers was just more stressed than during the early
Middle Ages, especially in the funerary inscriptions. Let us now consider the
evidence in more detail.

20 This silence was broken in Italy in the seventies; see Barbiera, ‘The Valorous Barbarian’.
21 For a specific study on Gothic funerary rituals, see Barbiera, ‘Le dame barbarè e i loro
invisibili mariti’.
22 Härke, Angelsächsische Waffengräber; Härke, “‘Warrior Graves’?; Härke, ‘The Circula-
tion of Weapons’; Halsall, Settlement and Social Organisation; Halsall, Warfare and Society in
the Barbarian West.
2. Weapon Burials in the Long Term

In order to better clarify the extent to which weapon burials represented a novelty in the funerary discourse and reflected social change, I started focusing on graves displaying warrior attributes over a significantly long time span and wide area. In particular, I have collected material from cemeteries excavated in northern Italy (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, also including western Slovenia, which was part of Italy at the time, Veneto, Trentino-Alto-Adige, Lombardy, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna regions have been considered here). I collected data from sixty-six cemeteries, dated from the first century BC until the ninth century AD, for a total of 6014 graves (Graph 1 below and Table 4 at the end of the article). The number of graves in each of the selected cemeteries varies from 19 to 550. The great variety in cemetery size reflects the fact that cemeteries were larger during Roman times, becoming smaller during later antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In general, I could include 1287 graves dated between the second century BC and the first century AD, and 1150 dated between the first and the fourth centuries AD. The time span between the fifth and the seventh century AD is represented in my sample by 2942 graves, and for the following period, including the eighth and ninth centuries, I have another 635 graves, but this is also a shorter time span than the others. The goal of future study is to go on collecting more material, particularly pre-fifth-century-AD-sites, so I will be able to amplify my conclusions in terms of a more balanced sample. It should also be stressed that most of the cemeteries discussed here were used for long time spans, often for centuries. Since a precise dating was not always defined for the excavated graves, the chronology of transformations here discussed are best estimates and should be taken as fluid.

I concentrated my investigation on trying to understand the transformations in the display of warrior and male identities in the context of cemeteries, and their problematic relation to ethnic issues. The initial puzzle to which I dedicated attention was how the identity of soldiers or warriors was expressed in cemeteries, and how it changed through time. The first observation which emerged after some extended fieldwork was that weapon burials in northern Italy were not a novelty of the early Middle Ages. In point of fact, weapons were always deposited in graves, even though the percentage of graves with such items varied, and often considerably, over time (Graph 1).

The highest concentration of such graves is to be found between the second century BC and the first century AD. The percentage of graves with weapons diminished during the third and fourth centuries, but from the sixth century it increased, reaching a new plateau during the end of the sixth century/begin-
ning of the seventh. However, at this time the frequency of weapons in graves is not as high as it was during the first century AD. Furthermore, Table 4 clearly shows that, over the entire time span under review, there were always cemeteries without weapon graves. It is noteworthy that when you take into account the entire sample of sites and graves I studied, the highest number of cemeteries without weapons dates to the sixth and seventh centuries. This may be related to a distortion in my collected sample, since it often happened that I could not include cemeteries with weapons because precise information on artefacts and grave findings is often unpublished, thus making it difficult to clarify precisely how many graves with weapons have been found.24 Contrarily, it was easy to include in my study information about cemeteries without weapons, or more generally without grave goods at all, since this information is usually included even in short reports about the findings.

However, bearing these limitations in mind, the percentage of cemeteries without weapons is temporally distributed as follows: during the first cen-

24 For example, this was the case for the cemetery of Leno in Lombardy, where several weapon graves have been found but not yet properly published. See De Marchi and Breda, ‘Il territorio Bresciano’.
Graphs 2a–2e. Types of Weapons Distributed in Northern Italy between the First Century BC and the Ninth Century AD. Only cemeteries with weapon graves have been included in these graphs.
tury BC and the first century AD, fourteen per cent of the cemeteries (one among eight) did not display weapons; between the first and the fourth centuries AD the percentage of cemeteries without weapons grew to sixty per cent of the available cemeteries. An even higher proportion of cemeteries occurs later, between the fifth and the eighth centuries AD, when sixty-seven per cent did not display weapons. However, since after the eighth century weapon graves are undocumented, if we exclude this time span and only consider the period between the sixth and the end of seventh centuries, when weapon graves are proportionally more numerous than either before or after, we find again that fifty-seven per cent of the cemeteries did not include weapon graves.

It is apparent that overall weapons never stopped being buried, and that this practice was simply less frequent during the third and fourth centuries. It is crucial to recognize the overriding fact that cemeteries without weapons represented more than half of the sample, almost constantly from the first century AD until the end of the seventh. These trends indicate that weapon burial rites were widely diffused during the early imperial period, and only became less frequent later on. It is important here to stress that the increase of weapon burials from the sixth century onwards was not an increase of cemeteries with weapons, but rather an increase of the number of graves with weapons within particular cemeteries.

If we consider the types of weapons (Graph 2) deposited through the centuries, we find that the sax was routinely present. However, its frequency increases during the seventh century. The lance almost disappeared from the fifth century, while the sword, the shield, and the axe were less evident between the second/third and the fourth/fifth centuries, when weapon graves become generally less frequent. Horses and horse equipment (bit and stirrups), arrows, and bows were found only sporadically in the considered sample, and thus are not included into the table.

Likewise, in this study I excluded belts for hanging the weapons though they are recurrent, particularly from the early Middle Ages. Another important element are brooches, which indeed were a symbol of warrior identity during Roman times and only became a female attribute from the fifth century AD onwards. As Mary Harlow and Dominic Janes have shown, crossbow brooches were used to fasten cloaks by soldiers until the third century.

25 For the recurrent presence of swords in graves from the late Bronze age in Italy, see Guaitoli, ‘La dimensione di guerriero’.

26 Harlow, ‘Clothes Maketh the Man’; Janes, ‘The Golden Clasp of the Late Roman State’.
cials began wearing them from the fourth century, and by the fifth century they became a symbol of imperial authority. It is possible that the change of value of these items, in particular their employment as symbols of a very high status, and thus their exclusive value, might have determined the disappearance of this specific type of brooches from male graves. A little bit later, from the fifth century AD, the ‘barbarian type’ of bow brooches started to appear in graves as an exclusive female attribute. Understanding these transformations in the social and gender meaning of such objects would require a long-term study.

Returning to weapons, regional differences are also visible in their distribution. For instance, in the Friuli region, weapons are totally missing during the first centuries AD, and appear later, from the sixth century, but only in the area located to the east of the river Tagliamento, while they are absent in the cemeteries found in the area western to the Tagliamento river. On the contrary, it seems that in Lombardy weapon graves were always present across the centuries, while in Piedmont and Veneto they were less frequent during the early Middle Ages as compared to Friuli and Lombardy. These observations on regional diversities are tentative, preliminary working hypotheses requiring further data.

Also the degree and nature of the difference between towns and countryside is difficult to define precisely. Roman period cemeteries in Aquileia do not display weapons, while few graves with weapons have been found near the basilica, dated to the sixth century AD. In contrast, in Ravenna weapon graves are not documented from any of the centuries in the collected sample. Christian cemeteries generally display a very low number of grave goods, particularly weapons, although a few weapon graves are also documented within churches.

28 For a study on Gothic brooches, see Barbiera, ‘Le dame barbarie e i loro invisibili mariti’, pp. 37–79. In general, see Meineke and others, ‘Fibel und Fibeltracht’. For a description of changes in the use of brooches, see Barbiera, Memorie sepolte, pp. 164–70.
29 For a discussion on this phenomenon and its possible relation to frontiers, see Barbiera, ‘La morte del guerriero’.
31 In most of such cases few graves interpreted as those of the church founders were buried inside the church. Given the fact that such burials represent isolated graves or very small clusters of graves, they have not been included in this study. For a consideration of such graves in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, see Barbiera, ‘La morte del guerriero’. For the presence of wealthy graves related to churches in the Piedmont region, see also Pantò and Pejrani Baricco, ‘Chiese nelle champagne del Piemonte’.
All these trends should be verified by further research. However, they are particularly interesting because they show that weapon graves were not a novelty introduced into northern Italy by barbarians during the ‘Great Migration Period’; to the contrary, they show that weapon graves were constantly displayed in cemeteries before the first century BC and that this ritual lasted until the end of the seventh century AD, becoming less frequent only between the third and fourth centuries.

The relative lack of weapons in cemeteries during this last time span seems particularly intriguing and it shifts the traditional question of ‘Why did weapon graves appear during the sixth century?’ to a set of new ones: ‘Why did weapon graves become so rare during the third and fourth centuries?’, and ‘Why did weapon burials disappear, after such a long recurrence, definitely during the eighth century, together with all the other grave goods?’ In this study I will deal with the first of these questions.

Some insights can be gathered when considering Roman period funerary monuments in stone. At this stage of my research, I have been able to carry out detailed work on funerary stone monuments from Aquileia and Concordia, which will be discussed in the following.

3. Soldiers on Stone

In Aquileia about four hundred of the four thousand inscriptions that have been discovered were funerary inscriptions. I collected and included in this study four hundred and eighteen funerary inscriptions. Of these, fifty are dated between the first century BC and the beginning of the first century AD, two hundred and ninety-seven are dated between the first and the second centuries AD, while seventy-one are dated between the third and the fourth centuries AD. Among the oldest funerary inscriptions, only two were dedicated to soldiers and neither bears any iconographical representation; later, between the first and the second centuries AD, just over ten per cent of the funerary monuments were dedicated to soldiers, among which just two displayed carved weapons (Graph 3).

32 Weapon graves are documented in Italy from the second millennium BC; see Guaitoli, ‘La dimensione di guerriero’, p. 19.

33 See Inscriptiones Aquileiae, ed. by Brusin. A wide sample is also published in Lettich, Itinerari epigrafici aquileiesi.
Many inscriptions in this period report in detail the soldier’s role and honours received. Graves of commanders were surmounted by big and sumptuous monuments, with divinities depicted.

During the third and fourth centuries, the number of funerary monuments found in Aquileia drastically decreased, and by contrast a much higher percentage of inscriptions were dedicated to males in the army (almost thirty per cent, see Graph 3). Half of these carried the portrait of the soldier or the horseman standing with his equipment; simple soldiers were also commemorated by these figurative monuments, suggesting they were not the sole prerogative of only the highest ranks. Horsemen and centurions were usually represented together with the horse and the groom, the inscription confirming their role in the army as raiders and leaders (Figure 8). According to Franzoni, the figurative composition of these funerary monuments reproduces late antique medallions where the emperors are depicted with a profiled horse in the background.34 This same composition, including the horse and the groom, is documented in Rome, on tombstones of *equites singulares*, and in Mainz.35 Simple soldiers were depicted standing with weaponry: shield, spear and sax (Figure 9). It is interesting to

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35 Hope, *Constructing Identity*, p. 43; see also Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis*. For an analysis of horse graves in southern Italy, probably connected to horse breeding in that area, see Provesi, ‘Uomini e cavalli in Italia meridionale’.
note that the posture and the placement of the weapons reflect once again coeval representations of highly ranked generals, the best known of which is the diptych of Stilicho.36

It is also interesting to note that portraits of the dead, depicting children, women, and civilian officers on stone monuments also appear in Aquileia during the first and second centuries.37 However, it is only from the third century onwards that portraits are mainly reserved for soldiers, with only very few exceptions. From the time inscribed stone monuments became rarer, a large percentage of them were dedicated to soldiers and half of these with warlike equipment.38

36 Franzoni, Habitus atque habitudo militis, p. 128.
37 Lettich, Itinerari epigraphici aquileiesi.
38 Franzoni, Habitus atque habitudo militis, pp. 133–34.
Franzoni, in a general study dedicated to the funerary monuments of soldiers in northern Italy, showed that similar trends as those noticed in Aquileia are reflected in his sample: portraits of soldiers become particularly frequent in the Padanian region from the third century AD, after being particularly scarce during the first and second centuries. However, differently than in Aquileia, the Franzoni sample shows that figurative tombstones were produced to commemorate mainly high rank soldiers. Unfortunately, most of such funerary monuments came from disparate sites in northern Italy and cannot be stud-

ied in situ where they were originally; in this way it is not possible to investigate their relation to the remaining graves within single contexts. Moreover, Franzoni underlines a fundamental point — that the tradition of portraying soldiers on stone monuments was most probably imported from Rome, where during the second century AD it was frequently used to commemorate soldiers belonging to the cohortes of Rome.

The cemetery of Concordia, dated from the end of the fourth century to the middle of the fifth, is called the cemetery of militia because a high percentage of the inscriptions was dedicated to soldiers. The sample discussed here represents the phase following that of Aquileia. Two hundred and seventy graves have been excavated in Concordia, most of which were in stone sarcophagi without any inscription.\(^{40}\) Out of the one hundred and two inscribed gravestones, one third was dedicated to soldiers (Graph 3) and none of these carried an iconographic representation of weapons or portraiture. So, if the epithet of cemetery of the soldiers is not appropriate for this cemetery because only fourteen per cent of the total graves were dedicated to soldiers, it is clearly still significant that more than one third of the more elaborate monuments carrying an inscription were dedicated to soldiers.

Both in Aquileia during the third and fourth centuries and in Concordia during the end of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries, one third of the dead commemorated by stone monuments and inscriptions were soldiers. Soldiers are distinguished in Aquileia by being portrayed with their equipment, while in Concordia they are remembered by an epitaph, when this practice is becoming rare. In general, the role of soldiers was particularly stressed on the stone monuments in Aquileia and Concordia, starting from the third century AD, a period when weapon depositions were especially infrequent. Weapon burials returned thereafter, but inscriptions no longer mentioned soldiers. The evidence is that from the fifth century onwards the number of inscriptions decreased in the entire peninsula.\(^{41}\) At this time epitaphs were mostly Christian, praising the spiritual merits of the dead rather than the details of career or social position.\(^{42}\)

Unfortunately, it was not possible to include in this study documentation of a properly excavated cemetery detailing complete graves, including bones, grave goods, and the associated funerary monuments. In some cases, subter-

\(^{40}\) Lettich, *Le iscrizioni sepolcrali tardo antiche*.

\(^{41}\) De Rubeis, ‘Rappresentatività sociale delle epigrafi’.

\(^{42}\) Petrucci, *Le scritture ultime*; Carletti, ‘Dalla pratica aperta alla pratica chiusa’.
ranean graves have been excavated, but grave stones were missing; they were probably robbed and reused in the past. In the case of Milan, for instance, it is well known that a vast quantity of funerary stones were employed in the construction of the town walls. In some other cases, like in Aquileia, gravestones were collected in the past without a proper excavation of the complete grave.

So, even if very limited in space, the epigraphic materials I have considered seem to indicate a relation between the use of depositing weapons in graves and the habit of funerary inscriptions. When stone monuments become popular, weapon graves happen to be particularly rare, becoming even rarer when equipped soldiers start to be portrayed on their tombstones. As soon as stone monuments are no longer widely employed for commemoration, grave goods (in our specific case weapons) become once again a tool for expressing identities in the context of cemeteries.

4. Discussion

The data here collected challenge the traditional interpretation of weapons in early medieval barbarian graves as an expression of their ethnic identity and warlike spirit. In fact, the identity of a warrior had always been clearly manifested through the centuries, although with different strategies. Apparently weapon burials became rare in northern Italy when stone monuments were substituted as enduring grave markers that, through inscriptions and portraits, could stress the status of military men, specify their rank, legions, and years of service. Why did stone monuments became common in northern Italy from the first century AD and portraits of the deceased soldier only later, from the third century? And why did they cease to be employed later on?

The hypothesis that weapon burials belonged to Germanic groups could explain why they become less frequent in north Italy, replaced by stone monuments as a result of Romanization which spread new funerary rituals. However, this account crumbles when one recognizes that the Romanization of the northern Italian areas was in fact a process that actually began in the first century BC, and that many equites (equestrians) and senators began to be recruited from the xth region (Venetia and Histria) from before the reign of Claudius. Consequently, the drastic decrease of weapon graves from the second century

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43 Sannazzaro, ‘Attestazioni di militari e militaria a Milano’.
44 Eck, ‘La riforma dei gruppi dirigenti’; Migliario, ‘Le Alpi nell’impero’.
AD does not seem directly linked to the conquest and the reorganization of northern Italian lands under the Romans.

An alternative explanation could be that the rise and abandonment of funerary inscriptions was related to economic changes. A broad study on funerary monuments in the western Empire, carried out by Sallers and Shaw, suggested that the erecting of stone inscribed monuments was quite cheap during the Principate, and therefore, even though it was mainly employed by the wealthiest groups, poorer members of society could also afford it. Towards the end of Antiquity the price charged for stone monuments may have increased because quarrying the stone and the manufacturing of the monuments was more expensive. This was possibly connected to the third-century crisis which saw a general rise of prices, but it can also be linked to changes in stone exploitation. Historians agree that Roman marble production increased in the late first century and early second century AD and then tapered off in the third century AD. These trends seem to be confirmed also by a study of statuary in the eastern Mediterranean: the volume of statues, and therefore the quantity of marble employed, was quite low from the Hellenistic period until the first century AD. It start to gradually increase and improve in the late first to early second century, with a peak in the Hadrianic period, decreasing throughout the Antonine period, and then returning to a lower level in the Severan period. These trends are consonant to the recurrence of tombstones recorded in Aquileia. An increase in the cost of funerary monuments is confirmed here, as five of the military monuments dated to the beginning of the fourth century were made from reused first century stone monuments. Besides, in one of the epitaphs (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, v. 895) the cost of the tombstone is clearly specified, showing on the one hand that the price deserved attention, and on the other that, according to Franzoni’s calculations, its cost was near the annual pay of an ordinary soldier. Moreover, in the sixth century, King

45 Sallers and Shaw, ‘Tombstones and Roman Family Relations’.
46 Lo Cascio, ‘Fra equilibrio e crisi’.
47 Fant, ‘The Roman Emperors in the Marble Business’. For a study of the Roman mentality behind the spread of inscriptions and their importance for political propaganda, especially in towns, see Cracco Ruggini, ‘La città imperiale’.
48 Kane and Carrier, ‘Relationship between Style and Size of Statuary’.
49 Franzoni, Habitus atque habitudo militis, pp. 135–36.
50 See Franzoni, Habitus atque habitudo militis, pp. 135–36. For more general considerations on the costs of tombstones in imperial Rome, see Duncan-Jones, The Economy of the Roman Empire, p. 130.
Remembering the Warriors

Theodoric complains about the high price grave cutters in Ravenna charged for the preparation of monuments, which citizens were often not able to afford, in a letter transmitted by Cassiodorus.  

It seems that the use of stone monuments to commemorate the dead grew in popularity in a directly symbiotic relationship to networks of both stone exploitation and transportation, allowing for distribution and thus availability. Before and after this phase of economic integration, when commemoration was not relying on engraved epitaphs and iconographic representations, identities were symbolized by grave goods.

It is, however, important to stress that when funerary monuments become rare, and probably unaffordable for low class civilians, members of the army were still able to produce distinguishing monuments, stressing their military career. This indicates once again that ‘military ranks and titles were special’. The presence of a collegium of veterans in Aquileia could effectively function as a social organization making provisions for burial; this of course testifies to the military’s unique sense of symbolic belonging and might explain the spread of standardized portraits on the tombstones. It has been revealed that military portraiture in Pannonia and Noricum recurred on monuments dedicated by brothers, companions in arms, freedman, heirs, or those left unmentioned, showing that kinship was not relevant. The emphasis on the dead as a single individual missing family connections, stressed by his portrait in military dress, contrasts data on civilian tombstones, where family bonds are normally highlighted through epitaphs and iconography. This differentiation among civilian and military, on the contrary, has not been noticed in other regions of the Empire such as northern Africa, where indeed monuments of soldiers as those of civilians did stress kin membership. The lack of family bonds on soldiers’ monuments of Pannonia and Noricum has been explained by peculiar patterns of distant postings and external recruitment of local garrisons; as a consequence, soldiers were detached from their kin of origin and did not create a new family during their service. The result was that their own career would

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51 Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, III. 19, p. 89; see the forthcoming Italian translation by Cristina la Rocca, to whom I am grateful for showing me this text.
52 Hope, *Constructing Identity*, p. 49.
53 Hope, *Constructing Identity*, p. 47.
be stressed in death. The same lack of family bonds in soldier tombstones can be generally found in the sample from Aquileia, though the origin of soldiers is not expressed in any of the monuments carrying military portraiture. In contrast, the names of soldiers written on the monuments dated to the first and second centuries indicate they were mainly of Italian origin. So, in the case of Aquileia as well, the emphasis of military status against that of civilian could be explained in terms of the special social role of this category. This pattern leads me finally to raise the following question: why was portraiture of the military so predominant in Aquileia and more generally in northern Italy from the third century onwards?

It is very tempting to argue that from the third century the spread of military portraiture on funerary monuments was closely tied to changes in the army and the relations between military ranks and both central and local power. Historians agree that from this period on senators lost the privilege of assuming positions of military command, and this increased the distance between military and civilian authority. During this period of civil wars and invasions, emperors became progressively more involved in the army, and ‘the military nature of the emperor’s position was now revealed much more starkly’. The growth in the role of the army and imperial guidance might well be reflected in the emphasis given to military members in the epigraphic material of Aquileia. However, it should be stressed that, while in northern Italy military portraiture became frequent from the third century AD, in other areas of the Empire such the Rhine region these monuments were already popular two centuries before. We need to learn more about the relationship between weapon burials and funerary monuments of soldiers also in these areas in order to better clarify the link between changing strategies of warrior commemoration and the social role of soldiers.

One possible and especially intriguing clue is that the emphasis on soldiers in Aquileia and Concordia, occurring from the third century, might be related to a change in troop locations. As Whitby pointed out, during the earlier centuries of the Empire most troops had been stationed in distant frontiers, and most military action occurred near the frontier zones. In the late Empire ‘a higher proportion of troops was located in internal provinces, and the location of conflict had changed with more fighting occurring inside the Empire, often

57 Hope, Constructing Identity, and Franzoni, Habitus atque habitudo militis.
deep inside it.’ 58 This shift might explain why the emphasis of military status on graves occurred first in the Rhine frontier and only later in north-east Italy. 59

Later on, the emergence of weapon graves from the sixth century has been explained with reference to the rise of a new aristocracy of warrior-landowners. A new military aristocracy of landowners emerged during this phase, displacing the older senatorial elite, which had possessed very large estates. The instability provoked by wars dismantled large properties scattered in different provinces of the Empire. This brought about the emergence of local elites who acquired military, civil, and religious power on a regional scale. 60 These changes led inevitably to a fundamental reorganization of the army. The large costs were no longer paid by the state through taxation, but ‘private’ bands of warriors who were paid through booty and newly conquered lands. 61 The weapons they used were no longer given by the state; soldiers themselves had to provide their equipment. 62 Some weaponry elements such as swords were routinely given as gifts to establish fidelity bonds between warriors and their leaders. 63 Weapons thereby became unique symbols of specific social links. While their display could thus express belonging to the category of warriors in general, it was also and perhaps mainly to underline the social role of that particular warrior in that particular social reality. In this way, the role of soldiers was transformed from a state career to a perceived privilege of rich people, which had multi-layered social implications. The means to mark this status changed during the early Middle Ages, becoming less standardized and more vague over the centu-

58 Whitby, ‘Army and Society in the Late Roman World’, p. 527; Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*.

59 For a discussion on troops stationed in Concordia and Aquileia, see Lettich, *Le iscrizioni sepolcrali tardo antiche*, pp. 35–36; Buora, ‘Le necropoli di Iutizzio’.


61 The matter of how soldiers were paid and settled during the early Middle Ages is however disputed; see Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*; Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West*, pp. 40–70; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 84–116; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, pp. 119–86.


Table 4. Specific Information Regarding the Cemeteries Surveyed in this Study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Cemetery</th>
<th>Chronology</th>
<th>Number of excavated graves/individuals</th>
<th>Number of graves with weapons</th>
<th>Percentage of weapon graves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VEN</td>
<td>Isola Rizza</td>
<td>2nd–1st BC</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEN</td>
<td>Valeggio</td>
<td>2nd–1st BC</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>S. Maria di Zevio, Mirandola (Vr)</td>
<td>2nd BC–1st AD</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Ornavasso, S. Bernardo</td>
<td>2nd BC–1st AD</td>
<td>158</td>
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<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>Nave</td>
<td>1st BC–1st AD</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>PIE</td>
<td>Ornavasso, Persona</td>
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<td>SVIZ</td>
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<td>VEN</td>
<td>Verona, Porta Palio</td>
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<td>EMR</td>
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</tr>
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<td>TAA</td>
<td>Tires</td>
<td>1st–3rd AD</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>EMR</td>
<td>Sarsina</td>
<td>1st–3rd AD</td>
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<td>EMR</td>
<td>Casalecchio di Reno (Bo)</td>
<td>1st–3rd AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Aquileia, Ponte Rosso</td>
<td>1st–3rd AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
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<td>1st–4th AD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
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<td>1st–4th AD</td>
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<td>FVG</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>FVG</td>
<td>Sclaunicco</td>
<td>1st–4th AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Aquileia, Colombara</td>
<td>1st–5th AD</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ravenna, Ca’ Lunga</td>
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<td>LOM</td>
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<td>2nd–5th AD</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>Milano, Cortili Università Cattolica 1</td>
<td>3rd AD</td>
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<td>FVG</td>
<td>Firmano</td>
<td>c, 3rd–b. 7th AD</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
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<td>EMR</td>
<td>Classe, vasche dello Zuccherificio</td>
<td>4th–5th AD</td>
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<td>Frascaro</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>Dravlje</td>
<td>5th AD</td>
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<td>5th–6th AD</td>
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<td>Oderzo, ex carceri</td>
<td>5th–7th AD</td>
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<td>0.00%</td>
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<td>Region</td>
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<td>Chronology</td>
<td>Number of excavated graves/individuals</td>
<td>Number of graves with weapons</td>
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<td>LIG</td>
<td>Savona, Primar</td>
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<td>Ravenna, via D’Azzeglio</td>
<td>6th–7th AD</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
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<td>h. 6th–7th AD</td>
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<td>Collegno</td>
<td>e. 6th–7th AD</td>
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<td>Sacca di Goito</td>
<td>e. 6th–7th AD</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Lariis</td>
<td>e. 6th–7th AD</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Buja</td>
<td>6th–8th AD</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>Guidizzolo</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>Casalmoro</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEN</td>
<td>Breda di Piave</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Carignano, Boatera</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Carignano, Fornace (To)</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>Montechiarea (Montichiari)</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Lovaria</td>
<td>7th AD</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5?</td>
<td>4.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Rivoli-Perosa</td>
<td>e. 7th AD</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Rivoli, corso primo levi</td>
<td>e. 7th AD</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Mombello</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>Santi di Sopra (Calvisano)</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Pacetto di Valenza (Al)</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Pradamano</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVG</td>
<td>Invillino, Colle Santino</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Gozzano</td>
<td>7th–8th AD</td>
<td>60?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO</td>
<td>Iskra</td>
<td>7th–9th AD</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOM</td>
<td>S. Giulia di Brescia</td>
<td>7th–9th AD</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Desana</td>
<td>7th–9th AD</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIE</td>
<td>Testona, S. Maria</td>
<td>7th–10th AD</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>Classe, S. Severo</td>
<td>7th–10th AD</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ries. Because of the lack of inscriptions, from this time on grave goods assumed a more important role in the expression of identities, but at the same time their message was much more fluid. Explicit written labels of the status of a warrior or horseman disappeared; weapon depositions were substituted, but their symbolic meaning seems less clear and normalized than before. This might be linked to a period of fluidity in the role of soldiers, whose status was mixed up with or superimposed on that of aristocrats.

In conclusion, there is still data to be collected and analysed (especially on grave stones), and there are still several open questions to be answered. At present, it seems legitimate to generalize about what we have learned in our work in progress: the data show that grave goods, especially weapons, became particularly rare when stone monuments became popular. This indicates that changing ways of commemoration were first of all conditioned by economic trends — in our case the cheap availability of stone as a consequence of quarrying organization during the imperial period seems to have been a precondition for the spread of stone funerary monuments. Even if the manner of arranging the tombs changed, the identity of soldier and warrior was constantly expressed in the context of surveyed cemeteries. However, that being said, the collected data also strongly indicate that in connection with the diverse social roles and power of soldiers, stress on military identity changed and evolved over time and across varying regions. In any case, this line of reasoning seems worth pursuing. It would be a mistake to cling to the myth that the visible changes in commemoration strategies, particularly striking from the sixth century, have been imported by immigrating foreigners. And even if early medieval grave assemblages appear showier to the eyes of the modern archaeologist than those of Antiquity, nevertheless in the context of cemeteries late Roman soldiers were more visible to the living community than early medieval warriors.
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The Vandal royal title Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum is known from the reign of King Huneric (477–84) from two decrees preserved in Victor of Vita’s History of the Vandal Persecution. This Catholic polemic pamphlet itself derives from the eighties or nineties of the fifth century. As traditional diplomatics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries considered these decrees as rather authentic, the title was seen as an important case to understand the transformation of the Roman world in the late antique Mediterranean via the ‘ethnic’ titles of its new rulers. Furthermore, there is a silver bowl bearing the same title for King Gelimer (531–33), the last Vandal king. This means that the title is comparatively well attested in our sources. But is it really possible to define Hasding royal titulature and especially the twofold title as a special and unique case, where the use of ethnic labels occurred at an earlier stage and more prominently than in any other kingdom emerging from Roman provinces throughout late Antiquity? The royal title ‘King of the Vandals and Alans’ was in use and implied certain political contexts. We do not know yet how exactly these backgrounds may be characterized. So the twofold

* Walter Pohl funded the research time for this article with his Wittgenstein award and provided for years an open and challenging ambience for young scholars. It was possible to write this text as part of a writing bursary funded by the Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung. Timothy Scott (Macquarie University, Sydney) assisted with the English and thus deserves many thanks for his dedicated work. Julia Ess (Wien) helped with the bibliography and proof reading. Andrew H. Merrills (Leicester) sent me his manuscripts and exchanged ideas. Philipp von Rummel (Roma), Guido M. Berndt (Erlangen), and Francesco Borri (Wien) helped enormously with many long discussions, by reading the text, giving ideas, and suggesting improvements.
Roland Steinacher

Some years ago, Andrew Gillett presented a study in which he asked whether ethnicity was politicized in the earliest medieval kingdoms. His results were based on a count of ethnic labels in royal titles in Italy, Spain, Gaul, and Africa. The clear minority of the titles used ethnic labels. This is true as well, as we will see, for the Vandal kingdom. ‘The question here is not whether ethnicity was innate or constructed, but whether it was a central and motivating political force’. At the same time, Gillett characterized the Vandal twofold title as a special case, exceptional for using strong ethnic markers.¹ But there have been other strong markers of ethnic affiliation in use as for example in the Burgundian and the Lombard case. Gillett is right in stressing the fact that this was not very frequently the case, and he is right to call into question the importance of ethnic titles, which older research has tended to overemphasize. But ethnic titles were in use for specific purposes: they have to be understood. Their backgrounds can be explained — at least in some cases. Walter Pohl has pointed out that the Lombard kings used the title *Flavius rex* in charters, and the contrast to the strong ethnic accentuation *Rex gentis Langobardorum* in the *Leges*. This hints at a situational use of such ethnic titles for a specific audience interested in a certain position within late Roman society.² Generally speaking, federate soldiers had taken over the political power in Roman provinces throughout Gaul, Spain, and Africa. Ethnicity, and in our case titles with an ethnic affiliation, might help us to understand the specific structures of these regions at the time.

Scyths or Goths? Roman Stereotypes on Barbarians in the Late Antique Mediterranean

Before we discuss specific sources attesting the royal titles from Vandal North Africa or try to understand how an ethnic name could have been used as part of a political identity, we have to summarize the Roman view on groups from

outside the Empire. Roman and Greek ethnography had built up certain stereotypes as well as literary patterns long before, Vandals, Goths, Burgundians, or Franks had entered the Empire in the fourth and fifth century as armed forces and built up new political entities in Gaul, Italy, Spain, and Africa.

At the end of the fifth century, sources use the term ‘Gothic’ to label peoples as different as the Goths in Gaul, Spain, and Italy, the Vandals in Africa, the Gepids and Heruli along the Tisza and the Danube, the Rugians, Sciri, and Burgundians, even the Sarmatians, and Iranian Alans. Greek and Latin authors had already used *Gothi*/*Gothoi*, or *gentes Gothicae* after the third century CE as a general term for peoples north of the Black Sea. These peoples were most often classified as Scyths using ethnographical basics dating back to the Greek ethnographers Hekataios, Herodotus, Erasthosthenes, and many others. Unlike the late antique sources, nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship included the so-called Gothic peoples within the idea of widespread Germanic unity. The Gothic peoples were classed as ‘East-Germanic’ peoples (*Ostgermanen*). The development of linguistics in the early nineteenth century had a deep impact on historical considerations and was one of the reasons for these assumptions. Another reason was the deeply rooted wish to trace national origins back into a past as ancient as possible. This suggested a uniformity of different barbarian groups which had never existed. No one in late Antiquity would have known what was meant.

Procopius’s introduction to his Vandal War is a good example of the Roman (or Rhomaian) ethnographical point of view. Even after a century of barbarian rule in Africa or Italy, a Roman intellectual classed kings and elites according to barbarian groupings. The Byzantine author described the biggest tribes of the Gothic peoples: the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, Alans, and Gepids. Long ago (*πάλαι*), all these peoples were, according to Procopius, called *Sauromatai* and *Melanchlainai*, or *Getae* all together (*Γετικά ἔθνη*). According to him, the Gothic peoples had different names but were similar in their habits and beliefs.

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4 A good example is the work of Ludwig Schmidt. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, 1: *Die Ostgermanen*; and 11: *Die Westgermanen*. In the second revised edition of his *Die Ostgermanen* of 1934, Schmidt changed parts of his classification data for the ‘East-Germanic’ peoples. He did not do so for the ‘West-Germanic’ peoples. Schmidt tried hard to apply ethnographic categories. Furthermore, he considered delineating ‘Germanic’ history together with Roman history as a handicap.

All Procopian Goths had white skin, blond hair, were tall and very good looking, had the same laws, and were Arians. They spoke one Gothic tongue. Initially, this united people settled at the Ister river, the lower Danube. The single peoples then separated, taking their new names from the names of their leaders.\(^6\)

The Sauromatai are known from Herodotus. He tells a story that made them descendants of Scythian men and Amazon women. According to Herodotus, the female fighters had been eagerly looking for strong fathers for their children. Melanchlainai could be translated as ‘those with black coats’. This ethnic name appears in Herodotus’s Histories and later in the Orationes of Dion Chrysostomos. Based on these Herodotean origin legends, ancient ethnographers defined Getae, Massagetae, Sakoi, Issedonoi, as well as the Gothic peoples mentioned above as the offspring of the Sauromatai and Melanchlainai. Most ancient ethnographers located these peoples near the Lake Mæotis (Sea of Azov) and the Tanaïs (Don).\(^7\) In the sixth century, such ethnographic knowledge became a basis for the Gothic/Getic history of Jordanes and Cassiodorus, so much discussed in modern scholarship.\(^8\) Did it also influence the ethnic royal titles discussed here?

In Italy, a new elite needed a political and historical identity and Cassiodorus was eager to create one. As the followers of Theoderic were confronted with strong traditional identities in the Roman centre, the intellectual frame had to be far reaching. In a complicated text, Cassiodorus or Jordanes managed to give the Goths an ancient and condign history using the literary motifs available. The Getic history was one tool to link a rather young confederation that had evolved at the Roman borders opposite the Dacian and Moesian provinces to the old Herodotean tales of origin for barbarians from the north. ‘The notion that the Goths were Getae gave the Romans a framework within which to respond to them’.\(^9\) One of the aims of this article will be to understand at least partly why the rulers of Africa had no similar origin legend created.

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Procopius explained the migration of the ‘Gothic’ Vandals too. As they were hungry, the Vandals and Alans moved to the Rhine and fought the Germanoi, who are called Franks in Procopius’s times.\(^\text{10}\) Germanoi is usually limited to the Rhine area and to Frankish ancestors. Procopius never would have thought that ‘Gothic peoples’ were Germanoi. Nor did he define the Franks of his days as such. Likewise neither Cassiodorus nor Jordanes knew Germani.\(^\text{11}\) Procopius knew and used Caesar’s term. He described the situation as follows: In old times, on both sides of the Rhine, different peoples had lived, all together named Germanoi ( gerçekten). The description of ancient Germans at both sides of the Rhine could be due to an attempt to explain the Frankish territory of the sixth century by historical considerations. Another possibility for understanding the passage is to think of the territorial name Germania used for the Roman provinces west and east of the Rhine. Be that as it may, this passage asserts that Procopius reduced the term Germanoi to the Franks and associated it with the Rhine area.\(^\text{12}\) Shortly afterwards, Agathias referred to Frankish barbarians formerly called.getViewImage(168,523,870,534) in a similar manner. These Franks inhabited Gaul in his lifetime.

The Franks (τὸ γένος τῶν Φράγγων) have a common frontier with Italy. They may reasonably be identified with the people who in ancient times were called Germanoi (нная), since they inhabit the banks of the Rhine and the surrounding territory, and though they occupy most of Gaul, it is a later acquisition since they did not previously live there; and the same is true of the city of Massilia, which was originally settled by Ionians.\(^\text{13}\)

Procopius located the Vandals’ place of origin around the Maeotian Lake, where already Herodotus had placed the encounter of the Scythians with the

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\(^\text{10}\) Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 3. 2, II, p. 23.


\(^\text{12}\) Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, v. 11. 29, III, p. 117: ‘After this he began to gather all the Goths from every side and to organize and equip them, duly distributing arms and horses to each one; and only the Goths who were engaged in garrison duty in Gaul he was unable to summon, through fear of the Franks. These Franks were called Germanoi in ancient times. And the manner in which they first got a foothold in Gaul, and where they had lived before that, and how they became hostile to the Goths, I shall now proceed to relate’. Cf. Pohl, ‘Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis 8. Jahrhundert’, p. 171.

\(^\text{13}\) Agathias, The Histories, trans. by Frendo, i. 2. 1, p. 10.
Amazons. Contrary to research opinions of the last two centuries, Procopius therefore defined the origin of the fifth- and sixth-century Vandals not at the Baltic Sea but exactly from where all Scythian nations were derived. It may be noted that the late antique historian could not see a difference between the Vandals and the Alans and therefore did not consider that the simultaneous action of the Vandals and Alans called for comment. Furthermore, in Procopius’s view Goths and Vandals were just the same: they were Scythian barbarians causing problems in the Roman West.

When Geiseric tried to secure his position in the Mediterranean in the second half of the fifth century, Vandal fleets annually attacked the Italian coasts. When spring came, strong Vandal naval formations (numerosa classis) attacked the Roman shores. Considering the political situation, the Gallic aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris saw the world order turned upside down. The Byrsa — the hill in Carthage where the proconsul’s palace was located, and therefore the political centre of the African provinces — was governed by the Caucasus. Once again Sidonius alluded to the Scythian as the barbarian identity of the Vandals.14

In 534, Justinian promulgated his Corpus Iuris Civilis. The opening sequence of this collection of laws lists the emperor’s titles. After the Vandal kingdom was destroyed by Belisarius in 534, Justinian used the triumphal titles Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus in various sections of the Digesta, the Novellae, the Institutiones, and the Codex Justinianus, as well as in inscriptions. The Emperor appeared as the vanquisher of different barbarian gentes, such as the Alamanni and Franks in the provinces of Germania prima and secunda at the Rhine, the Goths in Italy and Spain, the Antes at the Black Sea and, last but not least, the Alans and Vandals in the African provinces (‘Iustinianus Alamannicus Gothicus Francicus Germanicus Anticus Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus’).15


Since the time of Augustus, such language of power had been used when neighbouring groups acted against the centre’s wishes. Justinian wanted to make his fellow Romans believe that the world had returned to how it had been for centuries. Rome ruled the world and all the gentes were beaten and under control: even if these gentes had ruled Roman provinces for more than a century and in the end managed to keep up a Roman order in these parts of the West.

In this world view, gentes were bound to Rome by treaties and duties, and in some cases war was necessary to put things right again at the periphery. The world (orbis terrarum) and Rome (orbis romanus) were seen as one. The dependent client states or gentes were seen as part of the Empire, whether within or outside the Roman borders. The Laterculus Veronensis lists about hundred provinces and twelve dioceses trying to give an overview of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the fourth century. As a matter of course, this list also names thirty-five gentes at the Roman borders and even notes that these peoples were formed, or evolved, under Roman influence and reacted to Roman structures. In the eyes of the Roman elites in Ravenna and Constantinople, the Vandals and Alans in the African provinces never were more than barbarians under Roman rule. Whether in the provinces a different view existed or


16 Krierer, Antike Germanenbilder.


not is not totally clear. Nevertheless, both Romans and barbarians were part of a transforming Roman world.

After 533, the Vandals and Alans disappeared as a political and military power. What remained were uses and reuses of these ethnonyms throughout European history that are not easy to explain. The triumphal epithets Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus used by Justinian put the Vandals and Alans, former rulers of the Roman provinces Proconsularis, Byzacena, Numidia, Mauretania, and Tripolotana back into a barbarian context. They became simply gentes from the periphery beaten by a Roman emperor.

The literary statements discussed so far played an important role in the way late Antiquity has been seen in the Modern Age. The harsh antique images and stereotypes in use made it easier for scholars to use and abuse historical structures. Until the 1970s, scholarship put the story roughly like this: Roman inhabitants with a clear awareness of their identity resisted, or at best cooperated with, a culturally different and strongly separated group of conquerors from the north. Germanic barbarians settled in the countryside and had their problems with the alien yet sophisticated Roman culture. They used some Romans, who had to serve them and were supposed to take care for a working late Roman society, to acquire food and money, to be rich and powerful.

Was the social and political gap between so-called Romans and so-called barbarians as wide as some sources would have us believe? What was the role of ethnic labels in the organization of Roman provinces in the fifth and sixth centuries? Can we trace specific strategies for the use of ethnic labels in our sources? All this is being discussed in detail in recent research. In the following section, certain aspects of Vandal rule in the African provinces will be analysed against the background of ethnic labels appearing in the titles of the Vandal


20 For example Schmidt, Geschichte der Wandalen. Schmidt’s work has a remarkably high level of discussion of the sources, but sticks to a strong dichotomy between ‘Germans’ and ‘Romans’. Similarly the French tradition: Courtois, Les Vandales et l’Afrique. Cf. on recent critics of Courtois: Merrills, ‘Introduction: Vandals, Romans and Berbers’, pp. 7–8, and nn. 17–20; Steinacher, ‘Gruppen und Identitäten’, pp. 243–44. Recently, Maier, Amtsträger und Herrscher in der Romania Gothica, used such stereotypes again. A discussion of the same problems in archaeology can be found in Fehr, ‘Romanisch-germanische Sprachgrenze’; and Bierbrauer, ‘Romanen’. Cf. recently on the problem Fehr, Germanen und Romanen im Merowingerreich, and Halsall, Barbarian Migrations and the Late Roman West, pp. 35–62.
Who is the Barbarian? 445

kings to illustrate the great variety of possible political solutions in this age of Mediterranean history.

The Vandal Royal Title 1: Gelimer’s Basin and its Possible Background Compared to Similar Objects

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Vandal royal title Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum is known from two decrees preserved in Victor of Vita’s History of the Vandal Persecution written in the eighties or nineties of the fifth century. According to diplomatics, these decrees can be viewed as authentic and were defined as very close to Roman imperial decrees with regard to their language, style, and juridical background.

Some fifty years later, the last of the Hasding kings was celebrated as ‘Geilamir Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum’ in an inscription on a valuable silver basin found in 1875 in northern Italy in the ruins of the Castle of Artèn (Fonzaso, BL, Veneto). The round basin with a low base as a separate piece has an engraved rosette with an aperture of approximately twenty cm in its centre. Around this rosette, the inscription was engraved in between two striations. Together with this basin, a second one was found. It has an allegory with a woman, a man, and a child standing around an altar and is preserved today in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, like the bowl of Gelimer. The treasure included furthermore some copper fibules.

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23 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles et Antiques, no. BB 849. The basin weighs 3030 g, is 7 cm high, with an aperture of 49 cm. Cf. Morrisson, Brenot, and Barrandon, ‘L’Argent chez les Vandales’, with a detailed technical analysis; Erbelding, ‘Kat. no. 329’; Eger, ‘Silbergeschirr und goldene Fibeln’, pp. 72–73; Inschriftenammlung, ed. by Fiebiger and Schmidt, no. 51, p. 37; Maculevič, Byzantinische Antike, p. 52; Calvi, ‘Il piatto d’argento di Castelvint’; De Longpré, ‘Le missorium de Geilamir’; Fiocco, ‘Ultime voci della Via Altinate’, pp. 374, 376, and a picture of the second basin tab. i. Fiocco furthermore gives some considerations on when the silver objects could have come to the castle of Artèn, discussing also their modern history.
The basin of Gelimer is an example of antique ceremonial silver dishes labelled *missoria*. They were frequently used as gifts of largess (*largitio*) to persons close to the emperor or foreign ambassadors. Luxury articles (dishes, plates, cups, and bowls in silver) were prepared for imperial celebrations such as accession to the throne and anniversaries, and handed over by the emperor on these occasions to high-ranking dignitaries of the empire. A good example is the basin found in 1721 near Geneva which bears the inscription ‘Largitas D N Valentiniani Augusti’. On the engravings, the emperor appears in between six soldiers protecting him, wearing an armour and a *paludamentum* (a cloak or cape fastened at one shoulder, worn by commanders) to demonstrate his military power.\(^{24}\)

Concerning Gelimer’s basin, Andrew H. Merrills recently assumed that the piece could have been sent to the Ostrogothic court as a diplomatic gift. Other scholars have conjectured that the piece was Hasding royal property or a present prepared during the battle of Ad Decimum in 533 by Gelimer’s followers to be presented to victorious Vandal leaders. After their wishes remained unfulfilled due to Belisar’s victory, the piece may have come to Italy with Byzantine troops.\(^{25}\) A third possibility is that it was a gift handed to the Vandal king by foreign rulers to honour his position.

Be that as it may, the eye-catching inscription hints at a representative, official, or diplomatic use. Procopius’s description of Belisarius’s triumph in Constantinople in 533 points to the sheer quantity of maybe similar objects plundered by Byzantine troopers in Africa:

> For he [Belisarius] had the fortune to be advanced to the office of consul, and therefore was borne aloft by the captives, and as he was thus carried in his curule chair, he threw to the populace those very spoils of the Vandalic war. For the people


\(^{25}\) Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 96. Morrison, Brenot, and Barrandon, ‘L’Argent chez les Vandales’, pp. 126–27, and Calvi, ‘Il piatto d’argento di Castelvint’, pp. 353–416, mention other valuable objects (amongst them another silver bowl) and coins found in the near ambience. The last coin (an Ostrogothic tremissis) was struck between 555 and 565. All this hints to a possible concentration of armed forces in the area hiding their *donativa* from whatever enemy or comrade in arms.
carried off the silver plates (ἀργυρώμα) and golden girdles and a vast amount of the Vandals’ wealth of other sorts as a result of Belisarius’s consulsip.\textsuperscript{26}

Three more objects have to be discussed here, before the Vandal royal titles themselves can be considered. The first piece is a sapphire engraved ‘Alaricus Rex Gothorum’. The stone bears a stylized portrait and may have been used as a seal similar to the Merovingian signet rings. Most probably, the engraved stone is related to Alaric II (484–507). The reason why this inscription has been examined so carefully in research is that, in a similar way to the Vandal kingdom, the royal titulature in Visigothic Spain was normally used without any ethnic marker. Before the seventh century, the Visigothic kings used the royal epithet \textit{Flavius} introduced by Odovacar and Theoderic in Italy. Other possibilities have been a simple \textit{rex} combined with the ruler’s name, \textit{dominus} (\textit{noster, meus}), especially on coins, or \textit{princeps}. The famous Gothic King Alaric, who had conquered Rome in 410, had Roman military ranks (\textit{magister militum}) or was simply called \textit{rex}. Neither the rulers of the kingdom of Toulouse nor the law giver Euric (466–84) used ethnic labels in their own political statements. So, before the late sixth and the seventh centuries, an ethnic title is attested in Visigothic Spain in an engraved form only on this one piece.\textsuperscript{27}

The second object forms another exception and leads us back to a Roman environment. It is the only archaeological example we know for non-imperial \textit{largitio} in the form of silver basins or bowls and it is bigger than most of the other known objects. Flavius Ardaburius Aspar celebrated his consulsip with the basin, found near Orbetello (GR, Tuscany) in 1769 and kept today in Florence. No stamps or signs were found, but archaeologists suggested Carthage as the place of manufacture for stylistic reasons. Aspar was granted the consulsip of the year 434 in

\textsuperscript{26} Procopius, \textit{Bella}, ed. and trans. by Dewing, iv. 9. 15, ii, p. 283. The booty from Africa is described shortly before, explicitly naming the silver (iv. 9. 4–5, ii, pp. 279–81): ‘And there was booty — first of all, whatever articles are wont to be set apart for the royal service —, thrones of gold and carriages in which it is customary for a king’s consort to ride, and much jewelry made of precious stones, and golden drinking cups, and all the other things which are useful for the royal table. And there was also silver weighing many thousands of talents and all the royal treasure amounting to an exceedingly great sum (for Gizeric had despoiled the Palatium in Rome, as has been said in the preceding narrative).’ Cf. Berndt and Steinacher, ‘Minting in Vandal North Africa’, p. 260; Steinacher, ‘Gruppen und Identitäten’, p. 257.

Carthage, when he tried to defend the city against the Vandals and Alans in the African provinces. The inscription on the basin reads ‘Fl(avius) Ardabur Aspar vir inlustris com(es) et Mag(ister) Militum et Consul Ordinarius’.

The third object is only known from written sources. Gregory of Tours refers to an impressive basin made from gold and jewellery as heavy as fifty pounds. The Frankish King Chilperic I praises himself for having ordered the basin made to honour the Franks. According to Gregory, the piece had the inscription ‘I (Chilperic) made this to adorn and to ennoble the gens of the Franks’ (‘Ego haec ad exornandam atque nobilitandam Francorum gentem feci’). Immediately thereafter, Gregory describes another basin, in this case a gift of the Emperor Tiberius II Constantine (574–82) bearing the latter’s portrait and the inscription *Gloria Romanorum.*

Military leaders — be it a king with a barbarian background or a high ranking Roman officer of the same descent — had their new honorary positions celebrated with prestigious and valuable presents of largesse to their closest followers. On these objects is a title, which in the case of Aspar, according to written sources, equates to official use. In the case of Alaric and Gelimer, the royal title differs from what we know from coins, inscriptions, or official documents. Only in the Vandal case can some other supporting documents be discussed. How should Gelimer’s basin be interpreted? As a possibility, we could think of a person of high military rank acting closely around the Hasding king as the receiver of the basin. At least this was the purpose of the comparable objects discussed above. If this is the case, the engraved title was used in a special environment and forms only one possibility of political representation of a Vandal king. Why was the twofold ethnic royal title used and engraved in a valuable object deriving from the context described above? Was Gelimer wishing to stress a specific kind of political identity? We shall return to these questions in the conclusion.


The Vandal Royal Title 2: The Written Sources Apart from Victor of Vita

In the following, I will discuss other sources using either the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* or simply *rex Vandalorum*. The next step has to be to present the evidence for royal Vandal titles that do not include ethnic labels, and to compare them to the evidence from other former Roman provinces under barbarian rule in the fifth and sixth centuries. As Victor’s comparatively dense *History of the Vandal Persecution* needs detailed analysis, it will be discussed in a separate section.

Prosper’s chronicle normally calls King Geiseric simply ‘King of the Vandals’ (*Gisiricus rex Wandalorum*). The so-called *Laterculus Regum Wandalorum et Alanorum* uses an ethnic label for Geiseric (*Geisericus UUandalorum rex*) in the ninth-century manuscript deriving from the monastery of Reichenau. The thirteenth-century Madrid version, like the fifteenth-century version from Augsburg, label the Vandal kings just by their proper name and the title *rex*. Thrasamund appears as a king of the Vandals in the *Anonymous Valesianus* when he marries the Gothic princess Amalafrida. The same is true for the *Consularia Italica* in a passage where the King orders the closure of Catholic churches.

Sixth-century sources provide a similar picture. Jordanes names Geiseric frequently (and Thrasamund once) *rex Vandalorum*. The letters of Cassiodorus constantly use *rex Vandalorum* to address Thrasamund and Hilderic. It is, however, far from clear how near to the original text the headings in the *Variae*
are. This means that there remains the possibility that later scribes added them to give the different letters a clear geographical and dynastical structure. 35

The dual Vandal-Alan royal title is known from Victor, Procopius, and one Latin chronicle. Geiseric is labelled a ‘King of the Vandals and Alans’ (rex Wandalorum et Alanorum Geisericus) in an addition to Prosper’s chronicle deriving from the late fifth century, that is, in a text written about the same time when Victor composed his History. Maybe Victor of Vita’s History was known and used by the author or the authors of the Continuatio of the Codex Alobaciensis. Nevertheless, the text is not contemporary with Geiseric’s rule and it is possible that a Catholic writer labelled the famous founder of the Vandal kingdom in the same way Victor did with his son Huneric. Victor’s text was comparatively widespread. We know about forty manuscripts, and this makes it probable that the text was known and used in late fifth- or early sixth-century Italy or Spain.36 Be this as it may, the dual title was known and in use for Vandal kings also outside Africa.

Aside from Victor’s diplomas and Gelimer’s silver bowl, Procopius provides another attestation for the twofold royal Vandal title in our sources. Procopius used the title ‘King of the Vandals and Alans’ once. The title appears in an account of a letter sent by Tzazon, a Vandal general attacking the usurper Godas on the island of Sardinia, to his royal brother Gelimer. Reporting that the island was under control again and that Godas had been captured, Tzazon addressed his brother as ‘O King of the Vandals and Alani’ (ὦ Βανδίλων τε καὶ Ἀλανῶν βασιλεῦ).37 Herwig Wolfram considered the way in which Tzazon addressed his

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37 Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, iv. 24. 3, 11, pp. 196–97: ‘Ţῶδεν ἀπολωλέναι τὸν τύρανναν, ὕπο ταῖς ἡμετέραις γεγονότα χερσὶ, καὶ τὴν νήσον ἁθίς ὑπὸ τῇ σῆ βασιλείᾳ εἶναι, ὦ Βανδίλων τε καὶ Ἀλανῶν βασιλεῦ, ὑςὶ καὶ τὴν ἐπινίκιον ὑπὸ τὴν ἄγε. τῶν δὲ πολεμῶν, οἱ ἐτόλυμαν ἐς τὴν ἡμετέραν στρατευσθείαν, ἐπιτίμη τὴν πεῖραν ἐς τοῦτο ἀφιεθαί τῆς, ἐς δὲ καὶ πρότερον τοῖς ἐπὶ τοὺς προγόνους τοὺς ἡμετέρους στρατευσμένονις ἐχώρησε’ (‘Know, O King of the Vandals and Alani, that the tyrant Godas has perished, having fallen into our hands, and that the island is again under thy kingdom, and celebrate the festival of triumph. And as for the enemy who have
brother as a literary strategy chosen by Procopius to illustrate the ethnic (read barbarian) diversity in the Vandal realm. Africa was seen as the home of three kinds of barbarians: Vandals, Alans, and Moors. Justinian’s Novellae explicitly listed these three barbarian groups. At the same time, this direct translation to the Greek supports our evidence from the Latin sources concerning the use of the title as we know it.

Procopius frequently mentioned different barbarians in Africa. The major part of the third and fourth book of his History of the Wars deals with the Moors, not with the Vandals. Furthermore, he had an interesting idea concerning the identity of barbarians in Africa:

However, after that time by their natural increase among themselves and by associating other barbarians with them they came to be an exceedingly numerous people. But the names of the Alani and all the other barbarians, except the Moors, were united in the name of Vandals.

Together with a remark in the Life of Saint Augustine referring to the Vandals, Alans, and Goths, and other different persons fighting with them, this passage has often been seen as a proof for the mixed nature of late antique barbarian groups. Possidius puts it like this:

But a short time after this it came about, in accordance with the divine will and command, that a great host of savage foes, Vandals and Alans, with some of the Gothic tribe interspersed, and various other peoples, armed with all kinds of weapons and well trained in warfare, came by ship from the regions of Spain across the sea and overran it.

had the daring to march against our land, expect that their attempt will come to the same fate as that experienced by those who in former times marched against our ancestors’).


39 Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 5. 21, II. p. 53; Berndt, Konflikt und Anpassung, pp. 142–43.

Possidius wrote the *Life of Augustine* roughly hundred years before Procopius composed his *History of the Vandal War*. He intended to outline his and Augustine’s view. It was the way the Catholic church would have liked the political organization of the African provinces to be at the time when a new military elite took over and changed their structures. Augustine had been in contact with count Boniface, one of the big players in the first third of the fifth century in the western Roman Empire. It can be shown that Augustine had clear political aims and tried to influence the count. The arriving barbarians thwarted this attempt to offer guidance to the powerful in the African provinces as well as overseas. Moreover, the Vandal King Geiseric attracted Arian clergymen from all over the Roman Empire who tried to build up a new African church, a heretical one in Possidius’s eyes.  

As different as these two authors may be, they share similar views on barbarian soldiers. On the one hand, there is truth to what Procopius and Possidius tell us; the Roman army had always been open for many different peoples and individuals from diverse backgrounds fighting together. On the other hand, these remarks represent a kind of arrogance on Procopius’s and Possidius’s part towards the barbarians. In the end these had no specific political identity. Scythian soldiers had come to the African provinces. They were just subjects of Rome who had forgotten that. Having written his account as a member of Belisarius’s invasion force, Procopius needed to cast doubt on the political system of the African provinces before 533.  


42 Rodolfi, ‘Procopius and the Vandals’, demonstrates how Procopius created social and political realities: ‘What one has tried to show is nevertheless that, reading Procopius, one does not have to see a sudden and real crisis of identity in sixth century’s Vandal Africa, but instead a strenuous propagandistic effort of creating three African identities (friends, barbarians, Romans), each one aiming at satisfying different political and diplomatic needs of the Byzantine court. Among these needs, the necessity to answer to the preoccupation that Africa might be a difficult country to “recover”, or better to conquer, exactly because there appears to be many more social and cultural differences between African inhabitants and the Byzantine newcomers, than between those same Africans and their previous barbarian rulers, the Vandals’ (p. 242).
tried to put the emerging new elite of federate soldiers back to the social status they belonged to in his view.

Another letter can be found in Procopius’s *History of the Vandal War*. Justinian intervened against King Gelimer in the interest of Hilderic and the Vandal general Hoamer. After a coup bringing Gelimer to the throne, King Hilderic had been dethroned and imprisoned together with his cousin Hoamer. The Emperor in Constantinople defined this as an act of aggression as Hilderic was his ally. Interestingly enough, Justinian used, at least in Procopius’s account, Geiseric’s succession order as an argument. When Gelimer answered, he used the same title as the Emperor: ‘King Gelimer to the King Justinian (Βασιλεὺς Γελίμερ Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ)’.43 Yves Modéran indicated that the titles of rulers normally did not appear in letters in the sixth century.44 So it cannot be excluded that Procopius simply depicted the coup as a motive for attacking the Vandal King.45 Procopius aims at justifying Justinian’s wars, and an allegation seems likely. However, Gelimer was a kinsman of the Theodosian imperial house, and he may have alluded to this by putting himself on equal footing with the emperor in Constantinople. No Vandal king ever bore a Roman military title like so many other barbarian leaders.46 Whether Procopius imputed the barefacedness of claiming equal rank with the emperor to Gelimer or Gelimer deliberately did so himself is difficult to judge under these circumstances.


The Vandal Royal Title 3: Victor of Vita’s History of the Persecution in the African Provinces and the Depiction of the Vandal Kings

Victor of Vita’s History of the Persecution in the African Provinces provides the richest source that we have concerning fifth-century Africa. This fact makes it very difficult to put Victor’s view in context, let alone to confront his account with other evidence. The African Bishop outlined a longstanding religious conflict between barbarian Arians and Romano-African Catholics. He used every occasion to stress the strong and impregnable difference between these groups. Victor’s account can be understood as a nearly nostalgic attempt to reclaim a position of patient suffering for a Catholic church which, for roughly one and a half centuries, had not only been fully accepted by the Roman emperors, but which also become the main, leading, and powerful religious community in the Empire. His extremely hostile account not only attacked everybody cooperating with the Vandals severely, it also questioned the political system in Africa after 439 as a whole.47 And exactly this fundamental quest helps us to understand the basic conditions of Vandal North Africa as well as the use of the twofold royal title with a strong ethnic affiliation.

Whether the two edicts given in Victor’s account are fully authentic or not cannot be clarified as his text is our only source. Victor has the Überlieferungsboheit. The language used is pseudo-imperial. The Vandal King Huneric is styled as a ruler with divine legitimacy: ‘We do not wish for scandal in the provinces granted us by God!’ (‘provinciis a Deo nobis concessis scandalum esse nolumus’).48

Richard Heuberger argued in the 1920s that the notaries had been Romans who knew the set phrases necessary to promulgate edicts. Furthermore, he reasoned that the title Rex Hunirix Vandalorum et Alanorum has to be authentic as the correct Germanic wording Hunirix was used.49 But the core problem is whether Victor tried to denounce Huneric’s edict as an act of barbarism performed by a tyrant by styling the king’s title as a truly barbarian one, or whether this title was actually in use in official documents. As there are no coins or inscriptions for the reign of Huneric, let alone other documents, absolute

certainty about the issue cannot be attained.\textsuperscript{50} That the title existed and was in use remains a matter of fact. Gelimer’s basin together with what we know from Victor’s text hints to a use in certain circles and for certain circumstances. Apart from this, it remains a possibility that Huneric exploited the title in a heated situation to demonstrate Hasding power on a special occasion. Due to the long-standing discussions on religious practice in the Proconsular province, the king may have employed a title normally reserved for internal use in the inner circles of Hasding followers. It is difficult to judge how many persons belonged to this inner circle; maybe all soldiers labelled Vandals or only some very powerful men near to the king and the other Hasdings? Throughout his text, Victor gives a discussion of how the African provinces should be organized, especially concerning the role the Catholic church should have. Such discourses touched the core interests of the leading Vandals and the Hasding house. In such a situation, the twofold royal title could have been used willingly by Huneric to stress the right of federate soldiers — or their rich and privileged leaders — to get what they thought to be their right. Research has not yet been able to explain what happened under Geiseric in the first decades of the Vandal regime. But the imperial lands and vast parts of the senatorial property had been allocated amongst Geiseric, the Hasding family and their followers; this constituted the real basis of the system that the Vandals had established in the rich African provinces. As we still do not understand this system in detail, this is a risky argument. But we can observe that juridical power and possession rights in certain provinces, as well as an Arian religious creed, are the two basic principles needed to understand the title’s background.

This article is not the place to discuss in any detail the background of the Arian policy followed by the Vandal kings in the African provinces.\textsuperscript{51} Only one aspect has to be stressed. In the royal edict of 484 which concerns us here and which is transmitted only by Victor, King Huneric invoked the theological adjudications of the councils of Ariminum (Rimini) and Seleucia from the year 359 on the provinces under his rule.\textsuperscript{52} Doing this, the Arian church was seen as the only, holy, apostolic, and catholic (in the original sense of being universal) church with full legitimation. This reads as follows in the text of the royal edict of 484:

On the first day our venerable bishops proposed to them [i.e. the Catholics] that they prove the homousion in a proper fashion from the divine Scriptures, just as they had been asked to, failing which they would certainly condemn something which was done away with by a thousand and more bishops from the whole world at the council of Ariminum and Seleucia.  

Defending the only church, Huneric persecuted Manichaeans. For this he was even praised by Victor.  The fact that Victor relates King Huneric’s edict as promulgating a ban of Catholic liturgy in the so-called *sortes Vandalorum* in the Proconsular province has been discussed intensively for more than one hundred and fifty years. At the beginning of the edict, the King again alludes to the truth of Arian Christology:

> It is well known that not once but quite often your priests [Huneric addresses the Catholic clergy] have been forbidden to celebrate any liturgies at all in the territory of the Vandals (*in sortibus Vandalorum*), in case they seduce Christian souls and destroy them.

Whether these *sortes* can be seen as a territory of a Vandal settlement, however such may be defined, or whether the wording implies a certain juridical definition remains unclear. In any case, the text does not seem to refer to the entire territory of the kingdom. Different areas of jurisdiction may have existed in the African provinces. Maybe only in the territory of former imperial and senatorial *latifundia* of the Proconsular province now in the possession of the Hasdings did the king have full juridical power. At the same time, it was in the

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56 Cf. the chapter ‘Die *sortes Vandalorum/kleroi Bandilon* und die Organisation der Provinzen nun unter vandalischer Herrschaft’ in Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, I–II: *Die Vandalen*, pp. 189, 204–10 and n. 7, started the discussion in many aspects. From then on, the *sortes* were seen as the settlement grounds of a Vandal people by the majority of scholars. Recently, Modérán, ‘L’Établissement territorial des Vandales’, stressed this again. Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, p. 189, took an intermediate position, and Goffart, ‘The Technique of Barbarian Settlement’, pleaded for a term meaning a certain system of taxation only. Paolo Tedesco (Roma) is preparing an extensive article where he attempts to explain the African system in a broader context, which might contribute to a better solution.
Hasding’s interest to secure and prolong the possession and allotment rights they had achieved. Arianism may have been a central ideological strategy for achieving this end.

Like Constantius II, who intended to change the results of Nicaea, the Vandal King Huneric attempted this for the parts of the African provinces under his full control and, in some respects, also for the rest of the Empire. He acted like a Roman emperor and the edicts cited by Victor deploy a juridical terminology known from late antique imperial chancelleries. As Peter Heather explains:

Like many mainline Roman churchmen of the mid-fourth century, the fifth-century Vandals should be seen, therefore, as adherents of a more conservative theology, unhappy with the potentially embarrassing connotations of homoousios.57

That is to say, no rude barbarians tried to impose their strange and foreign religion on fettered Romans. The Vandal kings just had become patrons of followers of a certain Christology which was, after 381, no longer supported by other elites in Ravenna or Constantinople. Arians came from different social groups. Foederati, for example, were not subject to the religious laws issued by Theodosius on the accepted doctrine after 381. During the first two decades of the fifth century, the Gothic army acting in Illyricum, Italy, Gaul, and later in Spain became something like a role model for barbarian armed forces acting inside the borders of the Roman Empire. It can be observed that for decades the Vandals were in fierce rivalry with prestigious Gothic groups, but this only demonstrates that they struggled for prestige, power, and influence in the Roman world and that they developed a specific set of skills for their group identity. Becoming a barbarian soldier inside the imperial borders required specific ‘strategies of distinction’, and accepting the creed of Ariminium/Seleukia was one of them.58 After 439, remaining an Arian meant having used the opportunities of the Vandal realm. It was much harder to live and work in parts of the Roman Empire not dominated by a military-barbarian elite. Africa, Spain, parts of Gaul, and later Italy offered what was no longer possible outside these provinces.

Furthermore, Geiseric and Huneric performed policy to support Arian circles all over the Empire. When the Emperor Zeno tried to negotiate for the ordination of a new bishop in Carthage, Huneric had a condition:

57 Heather, ‘Christianity and the Vandals’, p. 138.
58 See the essays in Pohl and Reimitz, Strategies of Distinction.
The bishops of our religion who are at Constantinople and throughout the other provinces of the East are to have [...] the right to preach to the people in whatever language they wish in their churches and to practise the Christian religion, just as you will have this right, here [i.e. Carthage] 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.59

One of the claims brought forward to the emperor is free choice of language for the homily. It is likely that the Arian clergy in Africa used the Gothic idiom as the language of liturgy. One of the differences between Catholic and Arian liturgy was the possible use of a vernacular in church instead of Latin or Greek. The Gothic liturgy and the Gothic Bible should not be interpreted as conscious responses to the needs of a Germanic cultural context, but must rather be understood as consequences of the linguistic pluralism of the eastern churches. It remains one pattern of a military and barbarian identity to be Arian and to see Gothic as a language of church service.60

In general, Victor used two strategies to denounce the Vandal kings. First, he pictured them like Roman emperors persecuting the Christians. For example, two royal officials (comites) tried to convince Catholics to change their confession. The true Christians — according to Victor — claimed Christiani sumus and confessed the trinity according to Nicaea and Constantinople.61 This wording and the whole scene is reminiscent of the imperial persecutions during the third century, and the Vandal king appears as a cruel persecutor like Diocletian or other pagan emperors. This implied depicting the Vandals as tyrants, rul-


60 Cf. Brennecke, ‘Lateinischer oder germanischer “Arianismus”?’ , pp. 136–38; Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*, pp. 269–70; Mathisen, ‘Sigisvult the Patrician’, exemplifies such on a bishop called Maximinus acting in Geiseric’s environment. Before joining Geiseric, Maximinus had been with Sigisvult and his Gothic troops coming to North Africa to fight count Boniface. He was styled *episcopus Arianorum* and his function seems to have been to serve as a kind of high-ranking army chaplain. For the use of the Gothic idiom in the African provinces cf. Reichert, ‘Die Sprache der Wandalen in Afrika’.

ers without any legitimacy to wield power in a Christian world. At the same time, Victor styled the Vandal kings as *Ariani*, nearly denying that they were Christians at all. Now exactly these bad guys had — again according to Victor — the chutzpa to use laws rightful Christian emperors like Theodosius the Great had proclaimed to protect the Catholic church against Arians and other heretics. Victor is quite explicit in this:

They did not blush for shame in deploying against us a law which our Christian emperors, seeking to do honour to the Catholic church, had previously issued against them and other heretics, to which they added many things of their own, just as seemed good to their tyrannical power.

Like an emperor, Huneric dared to impose laws that had been created to protect the church against the African Catholics. Victor then goes on to cite the edict under discussion. This forms the background that we have to keep in mind while discussing the text presented by Victor. To sum up: the twofold title handed down by Victor may have been used by Huneric’s court to stress and to defend the basic interests of the Vandal elite in the African provinces. The conflicts with the Catholic clergy were a harsh quest for power. When the core interests of the former federates, their allotments and their payment were under question, one knew how to act: a Vandal identity was used as an expression of a strong political ‘strategy of distinction’. At the same time, the Vandal quest for power in the western Roman provinces changed the political language in use. After Huneric’s marriage with Eudocia, the possibilities of a Hasding king or prince as well as the chance for acceptance in the African provinces had changed dramatically. We shall return to this point in the conclusion of this paper.

The Vandal Royal Title 4: What Have the Moors Got To Do with This?

Procopius refers to fighting in the Aurès mountains at the end of Huneric’s reign. Moorish leaders are said to have feared Geiseric, but after his death they ‘both did much harm to the Vandals and suffered the same themselves’. After a short summary of Huneric’s cruel persecution of the Catholics, Procopius tells us that

[...] by that time the Moors dwelling on Mount Aurasium had revolted from the Vandals and were independent [...] ; and indeed they never came under the Vandals again, since the latter were unable to carry on a war against Moors on a mountain difficult of access and exceedingly steep.63

It is on the eastern foothills of the Aurès mountains that the Bir Trouch ostraka from the time of Gunthamund’s reign were found. This shows that the neighbouring regions of the Aurès had been under control from Carthage around the year 493. It seems likely that Procopius is trustworthy in his account and that the uplands of the Aurès after 484 developed their own political solutions as the lowlands still remained governed from Carthage. From the Aurès we know a late fifth-century inscription related to a dux and maybe later imperator Masties which reads:

I, Masties the dux am now in the age of sixty-seven years and imperator for ten years [or: ruled for ten years], never perjured myself nor broke faith with either the Romans or the Moors, and was prepared in both war and peace, and my deeds were such that God supported me well.

The problem with this inscription is that the characters IMPR could mean both, imperavit or imperator. Recent research, however, tends to accept the reading imperator.64 The inscription can be read as a very diplomatic act to cover

63 Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 8. 1–5, 11, pp. 72–75.

all possibilities available in the African provinces of the time. Classical Roman religion (*diis manibus*) is used side by side with Christian overtones, or with potentially Christian overtones at least, as also a pagan maybe liked the *deus* of the inscription. Masties tried to welcome all Romans, pagan and Catholic ones. Everybody not satisfied with the Vandal world order was addressed:

All this is a hint that Masties’s break from Vandal authority may well have been prompted by the onset of Huneric’s persecution. Faced with these horrors, the formerly loyal lieutenant in the south of Numidia revolted from the Vandals and permanently removed his territory from the control of the Arian Hasdings.65

But there are other possible interpretations, among them that rather poor herders in the mountains used every possible language of power they knew at the same time.

Be this as it may, Masties may have called himself *imperator*. This means that he did not any longer recognize any supraregional power. As small as his sphere of power may have been, it is worth looking at the possible backgrounds. To do this, a glimpse at another inscription from Altava in Mauretania is necessary. The stone celebrates a certain Masuna as the king of the Moors and the Romans (*rex Masuna gentium Maurorum et Romanorum*). The inscription is dated around 508, and is thus roughly twenty years later than the one of Masties.66

Yves Modéran confronted the twofold Vandal ethnic title with Masuna’s solution. His conclusion was to see the Vandal titulature as a sign of a severe separation of Vandal conquerors and conquered Romans in social and religious matters. In Modéran’s view, Vandals and Alans had become the new masters, while the so-called Romans had been excluded from the language of power. The king of the Vandals and Alans would have claimed power over the Romans, the latter not being included in the official title in use. Conversely, Masuna’s concept of political and social organization had included the Romans. Integrating the Romans in a similar manner in their royal title would have been a possibility for the Vandals in the core regions of Africa.67

first publication of the inscription Carcopino, ‘Un “empereur” maure inconnu’.

65 Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 127.

66 *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, viii. 9835; Marcillet-Jaubert, *Les inscriptions d’Altava*, no. 194, pp. 126–27 (with illustration): ‘Pro sa(lute) et incol(umitate) reg(is) Masunae gent(ium) Maur(oru)m et Romanor(um)’.

67 Cf. Modéran, ‘L’Établissement territorial des Vandalés’, p. 95: ‘Mais cette formule limitative avait plus pour fonction d’affirmer le maintien d’un strict cloisonnement ethnique et religieux entre conquérants et conquis que de témoigner d’une reconnaissance de la souveraineté
It remains a possibility that the two Moorish inscriptions hint to an alternative which had developed by the end of Huneric’s reign in the periphery of the Vandal realm. The political and cultural environment of these Moorish polities shared many similarities with the core regions of Africa. At the very least, Latin inscriptions were in use according to a traditional Roman way. However, they remained at the periphery, with much less resources and without the opportunities for Mediterranean politics that the Hasdings in Carthage possessed. If Huneric went too far in his measures for establishing an Arian region in the Proconsularis and supporting Arian circles not only throughout Africa but in the whole Mediterranean, Moorish rulers at the periphery may have developed solutions that were more open to accommodate all groups in the African provinces during a phase of dense conflict in the core regions. The importance of these alternatives for the African situation as a whole is difficult to judge. Their political language appears to be more in line with what a Catholic would have preferred of Vandal politics in the time of Huneric. Not only were the Romans explicitly included in the groups supporting Masties’s or Masuna’s rule; Masties furthermore used different religious and cultural elements to attract disappointed Africans. If this interpretation is correct, we can deduce that titles with an ethnic affiliation had their importance and signalled distinct possibilities to organize political systems in the African provinces of the fifth and sixth centuries. This would also affirm an interpretation of Victor’s text and the use of the twofold ethnic title Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum in a heated situation. Huneric’s successors looked for other solutions and went much further in their acceptance of the important role of the Catholic church in the late antique Mediterranean world. This change in Hasding church-policy may have affected the use of royal titles too.

impériale sur les Romains’. Similar arguments: Vössing, “‘Barbaren’ und Katholiken’, p. 180. Wolfram, Intitulatio i: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel, pp. 82–83 and nn. 39–40, interpreted Masuna’s title as an imitation of the Vandalic royal formula: ‘Die Römer werden zu einer gens wie jede andere’. Furthermore, he compares the formula with βασιλεὺς Βουλγάρων καὶ Ρωμαίων, a title used by the Bulgarian zar Simeon in 925. Recently, Herwig Wolfram expressed the idea during a talk with the author that Masuna might have been a Vandal dissident imitating the title of his Hasding king. This argument derived from Wolfram’s observation that the very name Masuna was in use in Visigothic Spain. A similar name is not enough but the idea of switching identities and a possible Vandal background of Masuna remains a possibility. For the Moorish polities on the periphery of Vandal North Africa cf. Courtois, Les Vandales et l’Afrique, pp. 333–49; Modéran, Les Maures et l’Afrique romaine, pp. 541–64; Rusworth, ‘From Arzuges to Rustamids’, pp. 86–88.
The Vandal Royal Title 5: Domnus noster rex
and Allusions to Imperial Status

An inscription from Henchir Koréiba near Ain Mlila in the province of Numidia labels Gelimer ‘Domn(us) Gei| lime| r’.\(^{68}\) This inscription represents the majority of titles used by Vandal kings in the available sources. No inscription, coin legend, or dating formula using an ethnic title is known.\(^{69}\) This is true for all the kingdoms in the transforming Roman West before the sixth century. The titulature of rulers in the former Roman provinces of the West used terms familiar from late imperial usage. As long as they were not named along with the emperor, kings of barbarian descent were labelled domini nostri. In the fifth century, even Ricimer could be a princeps, which shows a shift in terminology formerly reserved exclusively to the emperor. Later in the fifth century, Theoderic was addressed as a princeps Romanus too. He defined himself as the princeps of the West, fighting for the right of the res publica. At the same time he was entitled Flavius Theodericus rex as the ruler in Italy.\(^{70}\) Other possibilities to label a ruler in Italy, Spain, Gaul, or Africa were dominus with different attributes or — concerning the Gothic kings and Odacer — Flavius. Along with these late imperial terms rex was used frequently, often together with dominus. Most images depicting fifth- and sixth-century kings on material objects, such as the seal of Childeric, the medallion of Theoderic, or the visor of Agilulf carry inscriptions styling the kings simply rex. The engraved sapphire of Alaric and Gelimer’s basin do use ethnic terminology to specify the king’s background. There were thus different possibilities, different languages of power which may have been addressed to specific social groups.\(^{71}\)

\(^{68}\) Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, viii. 10862; viii. 19210 = Inschriftensammlung, ed. by Fiebiger and Schmidt, no. 50, p. 37; cf. Traube, Nomina sacra, p. 192. Cf. the commentaries on the use of dominus in Inschriftensammlung, ed. by Fiebiger and Schmidt, no. 42, p. 34.

\(^{69}\) Inschriftensammlung, ed. by Fiebiger and Schmidt, no. 42, p. 34 = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, viii. 2013 and viii. 16516: The date is followed by ‘do(mini) n(ostri) Trasamundi’; no. 48, p. 36 = viii. 10516: ‘anno IIII d(omini) n(ostri) regis Ildirix’.

\(^{70}\) Wolfram, Gotische Studien, pp. 160, 166 (Flavius rex), 141, 143, 163, 166, and n. 133 (patricius and magister militum); Wolfram, Die Goten, pp. 288–90 (theory and reality of Theoderic’s reign); Princeps: Werner, ‘Völker und regna’; Goffart, Barbarians and Romans, pp. 58–102 (Italy ruled by Theoderic); principalis potestas: Hauck, ‘Von einer spätan- tiken Randkultur’; Wolfram, Intitulatio i: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel, pp. 148–51 (Merovingian uses of princeps).

\(^{71}\) Wolfram, Intitulatio i: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel, pp. 56–75, especially pp. 69–70; Gillett, ‘Was Ethnicity Politicized’, pp. 90, 110–11; Schramm, Herrschaftszeichen
Not surprisingly, the Vandal kings used the portentous honorific *dominus* or *rex*. From Gunthamund’s reign onwards, *dominus* began to appear on silver coin issues, which is in itself an important ideological declaration. At the same time, no gold coins were issued in Africa, although the currency was based on the imperial solidus. Vandal coinage appears as a provincial issue: the emperor cared for the gold, the Vandal king guaranteed the silver and bronze issues used in daily life and economics.\(^{72}\)

One of the Tablettes Albertini has the title *rex invictissimus*. These tablets are, unlike Victor’s account, legal documents without any transformation due to literary aims.\(^{73}\) Furthermore, the acts of the council held in 525 at Carthage during Hilderic’s reign transmit a dating ‘anno secundo gloriosissimis regis Hilderic[i]’\(^{74}\). When Fulgentius of Ruspe had a theological dispute with king Thrasamund, he addressed the king as a ‘rex clementissimus’ or ‘piissimus’.\(^{75}\) The attributes *invictissimus*, *gloriosissimus*, *clementissimus*, and *piissimus* are known from the Roman senatorial order of rank or the imperial court as well as from other late Roman kingdoms with a barbarian elite. Late antique emperors were frequently addressed as *imperator* or *princeps*, and the title was often used in conjunction with attributes such as *piissimus*, *clementissimus*, *sapientissimus*, or *invictissimus*.\(^{76}\)


\(^{73}\) *Tablettes Albertini*, ed. by Courtois, t. 1, i, p. 215: [Ann]o nono d(omi)n(i) invictissimi regis xv k(ás)[(enda) octob(res) tab(ella)] [...]. Cf. the list ‘Titulature royale’ (1, p. 315). On all other tablets ‘domini (nostri) regis’ is used. The very name Gunthamund is written in several different ways. Only t. 1 has ‘invictissimi regis’.


\(^{76}\) Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommksen, t. 1. 1–2, pp. 10–11 (Theodoric to Anastasius clementissime and pissime imperator); x. 19. 3, p. 310 (Theodahad to Justinian pissime imperator); x. 9. 1, pp. 297–98 (Theodahad to Justinian sapientissime imperator); vii. 1. 1, p. 231 and x. 1. 1, p. 298 (Athalaric and Amalaswintha to Justin I. and Justinian clementissime principum).
Gloriosissimus was used initially during the time of Diocletian as a means to address a Roman emperor. In the course of the fourth century, it became a term for high-ranking magistrates or bishops. All persons who bore the right to be labelled gloria vestra were allowed to use the attribute gloriosissimus. Such titles were drawn from the senatorial order of rank, the cursus honorum. Roman citizens were divided into three classes, and for members of each class a distinct career path was available. The magistracies of the consulship, praetorship, plebeian tribunate, aedileship, quaestorship, and military tribunate were only available to citizens of the senatorial class. So a vir gloriosissimus and a vir excellentissimus were of the highest magisterial rank. The exarch in Italy was a vir excellentissimus in the Byzantine order of ranks. Barbarian kings or generals often held first ranks of the cursus honorum, like the office of a magister militum or even a consulship, and were thus entitled to the attributes gloriosus/issimus, excellentissimus, or praecellentissimus. Theoderic or Hilderic were gloriosissimus rex, like the Burgundian King Gundobad. The latter was Ricimer’s nephew and his successor as the patricius of Italy. Furthermore, he held the office of a magister utriusque militiae per Gallias. Yet, no Vandal king ever held a high ranking Roman office. It is noticeable that only after Huneric’s marriage with the imperial princess Eudocia there appears titulature known for barbarian kings and accepted by Roman authorities. This is not the case for Huneric, only for his nephews Gunthamund and Thrasamund and his son Hilderic.

Gunthamund appears as a rex invictissimus on one of the Tablettes Albertini. Invictissimus derives clearly from imperial terminology. What German scholarship called the ‘Invictie’, the distinction of a victorious commander, was a distinc-


tive rating frequently used by emperors in Antiquity. Commodus, furthermore, created the epithet of a *Hercules Romanus*. The god Mithras, so popular among the military in the Roman Empire, was also entitled as *invictus*. In the Greek East, emperors were celebrated as ἀνίκητος in inscriptions, the Greek equation of the Latin *invictus*. This Greek term is known since the rule of Emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE). It needs to be stressed that the epithet had not been in use in highly official bureaucratic texts such as Roman military diplomas. But we can find it frequently in inscriptions. Emperors from Septimius Severus up to Constantine I were labelled as the unbeaten sun god, the Ἡλιος ἀνίκητος. The emperor represented the victorious sun god as the sol invictus/helios aniketos. From the struggle with the powers of gloom the ruler emerged as the great victor. Leo Berlinger thus described the emperor as an ‘incarnated supreme stellar goddess’. 

One further title deserves consideration, since the mistaken assumption that it could have been an official royal Vandal title is still expressed in recent publications. Frequently, scholars considered the Vandal king a ‘King of Land and Sea’ (König des Landes und des Meeres). This originates from a misinterpretation of a passage from the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, a ninth-century Byzantine historian. Already in the eighteenth century, Conrad Mannert, the author of the first Vandal history in modern scholarship, assumed that Geiseric had styled himself as a ‘King of Land and Sea’ (Land- und Wasserkönig) after the conquest of Carthage in 439 CE. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Felix Dahn considered Geiseric a ‘King of the Sea’ (Meerkönig). The passage in Theophanes runs as follows:

> In the same year a certain Gizerich, who had become powerful amongst the Vandals, named himself rex. He took over land, sea, and many islands, previously paying tribute to the Romans. This grieved Theodosius.

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81 Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, a.m. 5941, p. 146: ‘Τῷ δ’ οὕτω ἔτει Πιζέριχος τῷ Οὐανάλικῳ πλήθει πολύς γενόμενος καὶ ῥήγα καλέσας ἑαυτόν γῆς τε καὶ θάλάσσης καὶ
Theophanes only tells us that Geiseric became king. The Byzantine chronicler refers to the Greek form of the Latin rex, nothing more. Turning this short passage into an official titulature remains a postulate of modern research.

There may be a different way to understand Theophanes’ allusion. In Roman literature and epigraphics, we can trace a certain tradition that focuses on mentioning both land and sea in order to stress the power of a ruler. Theophanes alludes, albeit indirectly and polemically, to an ancient and pagan praise of an emperor. Roman emperors were labelled ‘master of land and sea’. We know inscriptions celebrating, for example, Emperor Aurelian (r. 270–75) as the ‘ruler of the land, the sea and the whole ecumene’ (ὁ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης καὶ πάσες οἰκουμένης δεσπότες). A similar, but slightly shorter, wording is attested for Probus (276–82): ‘ruler of the land and the sea’ (ὁ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης δεσπότες). Vespasian (69–79) appears as ‘the deity of land and sea’ in an inscription. Ammianus Marcellinus reports a letter written by Constantius II (337–61) to the Persian Shah Shapur II (309–79), where Constantius is styled a victor terra marique: ‘I, Constantius, victor by land and sea, perpetual Augustus, to my brother King Sapor, offer most ample greeting’. Constantius II was the emperor supporting the Arian clergy and organizing the councils of Ariminium and Seleucia. Before he died, he was baptized but still styled divus Constantius after his death.

It is likely that Priscus was Theophanes’ source in this case. Priscus tended to show his knowledge of Latin by including Western terminology in his writings. Theophanes went one step further. Putting a barbarian rex, who had persecuted the rightful Catholic church in the North African provinces, near pagan Roman emperors was meant to convey a message. To be sure, it was an


82 İplıkçığloğu, ‘Zwei Statthalter vespasianischer Zeit’, pp. 75–76 and 80, published an inscription from Olympos (Lycia, near modern Kumluca in the south east of Turkey): ἐπιφανὴς θεὸς γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης (Vespasian appears as the epiphany of the god of land and sea).

indirect allusion, but it worked. The reader was reminded of pagan titles and he knew what was meant by a cruel, heretical barbarian king. Victor of Vita used similar tactics, as described above. On the one hand, the Vandal kings, like other barbarian rulers in the West, tried to act as ‘vice-emperors’ themselves in their provinces and were accepted by local societies as such. On the other hand, Catholic writers used this position at a time when Arianism was used to portray the kings in question as having acted like the pagan persecutor emperors.

But the situation is even more multi-faceted. We can compare Theophanes’ strategy to denounce Geiseric with a depiction of King Theoderic on a mosaic known to us only from a ninth-century description. The iconography from Ravenna could provide another example of the use of imperial signs of dignity by barbarian rulers. Agnellus in his Liber Pontificalis, a history of Ravenna’s diocese, describes the mosaic in the attic of Theoderic’s palace in Ravenna. In the gable above the main entrance the Gothic king appeared — according to Agnellus — on a high horse wearing his armour, shield, and lance. To the right and to the left, the impersonations of the cities of Rome and Ravenna appeared. Near this mosaic another picture is described in Agnellus’s text. On the apse behind the main entrance, the king was depicted again on a high horse. This time the patricius Theoderic has one leg over the sea and the other over land. This example illustrates the complexity of the problems discussed here quite well. In every case we have to distinguish carefully whether a Christian writer tried to depict a king, whom he believed to be a heretic, according to one of two particular traditions: that of the famous Roman imperial persecutors of the Christians or that of a ruler in the late antique Mediterranean who has adopted long-standing traditions and ancient symbols of power. In the case of the ‘ruler of the land and sea’, both is true.

84 Markschies, ‘The Religion of the Late Antiquity Vandals’, p. 93, points to Domitian (emperor between 81 and 96 CE). Christian writers frequently criticized his title ‘Dominus ac Deus’. The Book of Revelation was written with Domitian in the back of the author’s mind.

Conclusion: The Vandal Royal Title Understood in the Context of the Power Struggle in the Hasding Family

The strong ethnic marker as a self-assertion of a king, which appears on an engraved piece of self-representation, leads us into the question of transmission. Sources derived from the military environment of Vandal or Gothic rulers are rare, and it is therefore difficult to get a coherent picture of the exact role of titles with an ethnic label within these societies. If it were not for Victor of Vita, a letter given by Procopius and an entry in an edition of Prosper’s *Chronicle*, the situation for Vandal North Africa would be much more difficult.

The Vandal royal title with ethnic labels represents one possibility among the political terminology in use in the North African provinces ruled by the Hasdings. The Vandal kings did not act differently from other barbarian leaders who took over Roman provinces. Like Theoderic in Italy, they knew how to use Roman titles to express their power and position within late Roman society. The peripheral role played by the Vandals in the origin stories of Europe results in modern research seeing them as a unique case. Can we detect any ‘African’ reason for the different ways to express royal power?

In Africa, the top of the Roman senatorial elite lost their power after the changes of the first half of the fifth century. How Geiseric changed the system of land tenure and the basic economic and social conditions that were always a concern for the small ruling class remains a matter of debate. Victor of Vita and Procopius, our main sources concerning these changes, put them in a dark light and use the stereotypes of Roman versus barbarian. The bishop Victor did this in defence of the Catholic church, the Byzantine officer Procopius to justify Justinian’s war. As a matter of fact, Geiseric managed to concentrate enough property to enable his Hasding family to act as a ‘big player’ in the Mediterranean from the middle of the fifth century onwards. Geiseric was concerned to provide for all of his sons in organizing the newly acquired vast property. After the rebellion of 442, no threat to the Hasding power came from outside the royal family. Huneric had powerful rivals among his own relatives, and Hilderic’s reign saw the emerging of new alliances within the family. After Geiseric and Huneric had managed to get rid of their competitors within the army, who had prevailed in the complicated situation of the African provinces...

in the first half of the fifth century, the family itself became the battleground of power struggles in the African kingdom.

Huneric had a chance to be accepted into the kingdom, even by the Catholic church. The Nicene church welcomed a persecution of Manichaeans; it was, after all, what was expected from a rightful ruler. After twenty-four years a bishop was ordained in Carthage again. All this shows that Huneric tried several ways to organize his kingdom. Something went wrong, however. Victor relates murders in the royal family and the exile of others. Huneric’s brother Theoderic died in exile and his wife and son were killed. The Arian Patriarch Jucundus was burnt in public because he was an adviser of Theoderic at the latter’s court. Many counts and nobles close to Theoderic were persecuted. Huneric ordered to burn some of them and to execute others. Finally, King Huneric exiled Godagis, the son of his younger brother Genton. Mighty Vandals were tortured and removed from power as they were accused of participating in a plot against the ruling king. Victor reports that Huneric deprived of power Geiseric’s comitatus, a group of the latter’s closest advisers.87

Following this, Huneric tried to convince the African Catholic bishops to support a change in Geiseric’s succession order in favour of his son Hilderic. Victor stressed that the violence within the royal family and the leading circles of the Vandals was motivated by Huneric’s wish to secure the succession of his own son Hilderic to the Hasding throne. This would have violated the principle of agnatic seniority, which Geiseric had introduced. One interpretation suggests that Victor told the story this way in order to limit the King’s concern regarding resistance within the royal house against his own rule. Securing the position of his son would have been only of secondary importance in this reading. Victor’s interest in referring to the violence amongst the royal and other leading Vandals was intended to highlight the barbarity and cruelty of Huneric and his followers. By concentrating his coverage of the political action performed by Huneric on the dynastic pretensions against the constitutio of Geiseric, Victor managed to present the king as an illegitimate ruler according to his own Vandal standards.88


This fits well with Victor’s textual strategies. However, there remains the possibility that Huneric really intended to change the succession order in the interest of the new legitimacy which became possible for his son only if he were the son of an imperial princess. The high prestige of Huneric’s and Eudocia’s offspring made a major difference to Hasding possibilities before. At the same time, all this may have caused a need to address the ‘old Vandals’, the military leaders in Geiseric’s following who may have been disappointed with the power struggles and the executions amongst them. Huneric was in need to assert himself as the real Vandal king, the *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*. It may well be that Victor of Vita refers to a title with a political background from the time of Geiseric, which his son took up for specific purposes in his own reign to attract and convince the privileged Vandal land owners in the African provinces who had been upset by the new political solution developed by Geiseric’s son. What we can trace are the power struggles in the African elites of the time. The use of the strong ethnic title by Huneric testifies to these struggles. Victor did not invent or create a title; he gives, maybe unwillingly, a trace of the problems of his age inside the barbarian, military elite in Africa at the end of the fifth century.

Huneric did not prevail. After his death his nephew Gunthamund, our *rex invictissimus*, acceded to the Hasding throne. Other circles took over and followers of Huneric’s policy may have been persecuted themselves. The Latin poet Blossius Aemilius Dracontius was imprisoned for having supported the wrong ruler. For a long time, research defined Dracontius’s situation as being motivated by supporting the Roman emperor overseas. But the background of the *Satisfactio ad Gunthamundum Regem* fits all too well into the picture of a power struggle between members of the African elite. Dracontius had written for Huneric, and the new king did not like this. This was the reason for the poet’s imprisonment.89 We also find a deliberate analogy with the imperial position in the *Satisfactio*. Gunthamund is compared to Caesar, Augustus, and Titus, who are famous for their clemency.90

As we do not know much about Gunthamund’s reign, the situation after the end of Victor’s account is difficult to explain. What we do know is that the few sources we have did not use the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*. On the contrary, Gunthamund, Thrasamund, and Hilderic are labelled as rul-


ers in the western Roman Mediterranean with a political language comparable to what we know from Gaul, Spain, or Italy. But such a ‘Roman’ language of power was present in Huneric’s time too. It was Huneric who adopted an air of unmistakable imperial arrogance in renaming an African city in his own honour. Hadrumentum was known as Uniricopolis for the duration of his reign. After the end of the Vandal realm, the city was renamed as Justinianopolis. Huneric, Gunthamund, Thrasamund, and Hilderic all had panegyrics composed in their honour, as a Roman emperor would have.

Hilderic was a special case. The son of Valentinian’s daughter Eudocia and the Vandal King Huneric could claim direct descent from the imperial and prestigious Theodosian house. This lineage may have been stressed in the wall paintings of a new palace complex in the Carthaginian suburb of Anclae. The poet Luxorius celebrated Hilderic as the mighty Vandal king and offspring of the imperial house. This made him the heir of a twin crown (‘Vandalirice potens, gemini diadematis heres’). Valentinian’s victorious grandson had finally beaten all the enemies of Rome (hostes and gentes), at least in the described wall paintings of a palace near Carthage. The offspring of barbarian federates stresses his maternal Roman rights more than his barbarian roots. In Italy, Theoderic was labelled domitor gentium and victor gentium, which recalls the praise addressed to Hilderic. After Belisar’s victory, the Vandal King Gelimer and his followers were taken to Constantinople. In Procopius’s account the deposed King is clothed with a purple coat and treated as a relative of the great emperors of the Theodosian dynasty. Gelimer is offered a landed estate north of the capital where he could live in peace with his family. It is only because he does not convert to the Catholic faith that he cannot become a senator of

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Constantinople. One might expect a different treatment of a beaten and con-
quered barbarian king.  

The emphasis on imperial ideology that we find in Luxorius’s poem illustrates
the range of opportunity of Hasding policy after the marriage of 455 quite well.
The four sons of Geilarith, Tzazo, Gunthimer, Ammatas, and the later King
Gelimer were not, however, directly related to the imperial Theodosian house.
This made a difference, even if Gelimer was treated in the way it is reported
by Procopius in Constantinople. Hilderic’s propaganda may have indicated
the new direction he wished the Vandal monarchy to take. Hilderic’s obvious
attempts to reposition the Hasding monarchy along pseudo-imperial lines may
have caused Gelimer’s fear of disinherittance in favour of Hoamer or Hoageis,
Hilderic’s nephews. Hoamer was praised by Procopius as the Achilles of the
Vandals and appears to have been a distinguished military leader. This would
explain Gelimer’s usurpation and the harsh treatment of his relatives. Hilderic
was killed and Hoamer blinded. The fact that after the coup close relatives of
Gelimer, such as Tzazon and Ammatas, staffed important positions in the king-
dom and replaced the nephews of Hilderic strengthens this point of view.

There are similar structures behind the problems Huneric had with his family
and Gelimer’s usurpation. In both cases, the Theodosian lineage after Huneric’s
marriage with Eudocia could be the background. Two rulers saw murder and
heavy conflicts within the royal family: Huneric and Gelimer. As has been pro-
posed here, it seems likely that this had to do with the various claims to the
throne by different branches of the family. One part operated with the impe-
rial lineage and obviously preferred titles common to other provinces of the
transforming Roman West as a language of power. In opposition to this branch
of the family around Huneric and his lineage, a kind of ‘Vandalicity’ may have
been stressed by other Hasdings in order to convince certain Vandal circles of
the validity of their bid for power in the African provinces. At the same time,
Huneric would have been in need to stress his support of certain rich Vandals
and their interests by using the twofold title with its strong ethnic affiliation.
There are two supporting documents for the use of the title Rex Vandalorum et
Alanorum. Victor of Vita attests the use of the title for Huneric. Huneric may
have imposed such a title to emphasize his rigour in acting against the Catholic

94 Procopius, Bella, ed. and trans. by Dewing, iii. 9. 4–10, ii, pp. 85–87; Steinacher,
‘Gruppen und Identitaten,’ p. 257.
church. More likely, however, the ethnic title was intended to demonstrate to the Vandal elites that the son-in-law of an emperor knew how a true Vandal king should articulate his power. At the same time, Huneric’s church policy can be understood as an attempt to establish a strong Hasding rule with an Arian church in the interest of military circles around the Mediterranean.

A similar explanation is possible for Gelimer. When he took power, he had to stress certain aspects of Vandal identity once more. The silver bowl can be interpreted as part of a quest for power by groups in opposition to Hilderic’s policy. It reveals the situation: one branch of the royal family against the other, a power game within rather small cliques in the African provinces.

The title may have sparked memories of Geiseric and evoked feelings of glory and power in the hearts of certain privileged offspring of members of the Vandal-Alan army of the first half of the fifth century. Or it may have been an invention of Huneric’s advisers trying to convince followers of his brother, or other royals as mighty Vandals, that this king was also supporting them and their privileges. At the same time, Huneric had the ability to widen the Hasding circles of power beyond the African provinces, and to be accepted in these provinces as a ruler married to an emperor’s daughter. This in itself may have caused conflicts in the inner circles of Vandal power, who may have feared for their system of allotment and their privileged position as military leaders in a late Roman society. We lack detailed knowledge about this. The first half of the fifth century was an agitated period and identities emerged and disappeared quickly. The late Roman society in the African provinces between 439 and 533 had attenuated the harsh conflicts between military barbarian groups and other elites in the Western Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries. Much of Geiseric’s and Huneric’s reign was focused on solving problems related to these tensions. The history of the twofold Vandal royal title can be explained in such terms. No self-perpetuating memories of a glorious Vandal past are involved — rather, it should be viewed against the background of a struggle for power and wealth in the African provinces, most likely the disputes within a single royal family, whose different branches operated with two different languages of power.
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Die Wahrnehmung der nichtfränkischen Völker in der merowingerzeitlichen Historiographie

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Problemstellung

Dieser Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Wahrnehmung kollektiver und ethnischer Identitäten in fränkischen historiographischen Quellen der Merowingerzeit, die nicht mit dem Frankennamen verbunden sind oder neben diesen, teilweise in Verbindung mit ihm, teilweise in Abgrenzung zu ihm, gestellt werden.1 Die wichtigsten verwendeten Quellen sind die Historiae des Gregor von Tours (6. Jahrhundert), die Chronik des sogenannten Fredegar (7. Jahrhundert), der Liber Historiae Francorum und die Continuationes Fredegarii (jeweils 8. Jahrhundert).2 Nur ergänzend wird auf merowingerzeitliche bzw. zeitnahe


Quellen auch aus anderen Gebieten oder mit anderer Thematik zurückgegriffen. Untersuchungsgegenstand sind vor allem jene gentes, die in möglichst vielen der genannten Quellen behandelt werden. Von besonderem Interesse sind dabei ethnische, politische und soziale Prozesse und ihre Rezeption, wie die Abstammung, Verwandtschaft, Zusammensetzung, Identifikation, territoriale Verbreitung und politische Strukturierung der gentes, ihre Hintergründe und Auswirkungen, und die eventuell auftretenden Veränderungen in der Wahrnehmung dieser Faktoren in den jeweiligen Quellen.

**Die untersuchten Quellen und ihre Unterschiede**

Die *Historiae* des Gregor von Tours und die Fredegar-Chronik führen die Weltgeschichte auf Basis der christlichen Weltchronistik bis in ihre jeweilige Gegenwart fort. Der *Liber Historiae Francorum* beschäftigt sich primär mit fränkischer Geschichte, und die *Continuationes Fredegarii* setzen die Fredegar-Chronik bis zum Regierungsantritt von Karl d. Gr. und Karlmann fort. G Gregors *Historiae* dienten der Fredegar-Chronik und dem *Liber Historiae Francorum* als Quelle, die Fredegar-Chronik war dem Autor des *Liber Historiae Francorum* hingegen nicht bekannt. Die ersten zehn Kapitel der *Continuationes Fredegarii* sind vom *Liber Historiae Francorum* abhängig. Bei der Wahrnehmung fremder gentes in diesen Quellen gibt es, was Quantität und Qualität der überlieferten Informationen betrifft, gravierende Unterschiede. Dafür sind zum Teil die unterschiedlichen Zielsetzungen der Autoren verantwortlich. Weil Gregor von Tours und Fredegar die Geschichte der Welt von den Anfängen, wie sie im biblischen Weltbild grundgelegt sind, bis in ihre eigene Gegenwart behandeln, beinhalten ihre Werke die Namen vieler gentes, wobei die Informationen meist

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nichtfränkische Völker in der Merowingerzeitlichen Historiographie


Konstruierte Verwandtschaften: Die Franken als Verwandte fremder Völker

als dessen Enkel von Iuvan erscheint.\(^12\) Vom Japhet-Sohn Cetthin stammen im Liber Generationis die Macedones ab, Fredegar stellt ihnen die Wörter Trociane, Frigiae voran.\(^13\) Vom gleichnamigen Iuvan-Sohn stammen im Liber Generationis die Romani, qui et Latini sowie, in Verschreibung der biblischen Dodani, die Rodii ab, bei Fredegar wird aus Rodii Rodivivi und dazu et Priami ergänzt.\(^14\) Durch die gemeinsame Abstammung von Noahs Nachkommen Cetthin werden die Trociane, Frigiae, Macedones und die Romani, qui et Latini, Rodivivi et Priami miteinander verknüpft.\(^15\) Die biblische Völkergenealogie wird so mit der heidnisch-römischen Vorstellung einer Abstammung der Römer von den Trojanern, deren König Priamus war, verbunden.\(^16\) Die trojanische Herkunft der Römer ist für Fredegar deshalb wichtig, weil für ihn auch die Franken von den Trojanern abstammen, wofür er sich auf historiarum libri bzw. Hieronymus


20 Die Kapitelüberschrift dazu lautet „De captivitate Troge et inicium Francorum et Romanorum”, doch fehlt im Kapitel selbst jeder Hinweis auf die Römer; Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 4, p. 42; ii. 4, pp. 45–46.

21 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 4, p. 45 (Priamus erster Frankenkönig und Räuber der Helena); iii. 2, p. 93 (Priamus erster Frankenkönig).


23 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 4, pp. 45–46; iii. 2, p. 93.


25 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. Capitulatio (c. 8), p. 42; ii. 8, p. 47 (Friga und Aeneas Brüder); vgl. iii. 5, p. 94 (zweite Version der fränkischen Trojasage, wo erstmals eine genealogische Verbindung zwischen Priamus, Friga und Francio hergestellt wird).


Trotzdem kann die Erinnerung an eine Tradition einer Verbindung von Franken und Friesen zur Aufnahme der *Frigii* in die trojanische Genealogie geführt haben. Sprachlich wäre eine Gleichsetzung der *Frigii* mit den Friesen...

Von den Frigii spaltet sich in der Troyasage am Ufer der Donau zwischen dem Ozean und Thrakien eine weitere Gruppe ab, die nach ihrem König Torquotus/Torcoth als gens Torcorum, gens Turquorum bzw. Turci bezeichnet wird, während der verbliebene Rest der gens nach Frigas Nachfolger Francio Franci genannt wird. Torquotus/Torquatus wurde mit einem römischen Konsul Torquatus bei Hieronymus identifiziert, den auch Fredegar erwähnt.

33 Für die Friesen sind die Formen Frigones, Frigiones, Frisiones, und Frisii belegt, analog zu Frisiones = Frigiones müsste auch Frisi mit Frigii gleichzusetzen sein; Schnürer, Die Verfasser der sogenannten Fredegar-Chronik, p. 197. Obwohl Schnürer hier sprachlich für eine Gleichsetzung von Frigii mit Frisii argumentiert, identifiziert er die Frigii bei Fredegar nicht ausdrücklich mit den Friesen. Wagner, ‘Zum “g” in Frigones “Friesen”‘, pp. 230–32, macht eine bereits um 400 bei Vegetius Renatus, Digestorum Artis Mulomedicinae, hrsg. v. Lommatzsch, iii. 6, p. 249 im Wort Frigiscos feststellbare Alternanz von s(i) und g(i) für friesische Namensformen mit g verantwortlich, die auf romanischen Lautentwicklungen beruht. Auch Wolfgang Haubrichs bestätigt, wie er mir dankenswerterweise mitgeteilt hat, dass sich in einem lateinisch-romanischen Kontext (nicht im germanischen) die Möglichkeit eröffnet, Frigio als hyperkorrektes *Frisio und Frigii als hyperkorrektes *Frisii aufzufassen, obwohl auch die für ihn wahrscheinlichere Auflösung *Phrygio/*Phrygii weiterhin möglich bleibt. Zusammenfassend lässt sich also sagen, dass Friesen und Phryger beide als Frigii bezeichnet werden konnten. Beide Gruppen über die Gleichung Frisii = Frigii = Phrygii miteinander zu identifizieren, wäre also möglich gewesen.


35 Runde, Xanten im frühen und hohen Mittelalter, p. 147, Anm. 350.

36 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 6, p. 46 (gens Torcorum, gens Turquorum, Torquotus, Donau, Ozean, Thrakien); iii. 2, p. 93 (Turci, Torcoth, Donau). Die Ableitung des Frankennamens von einem Anführer findet sich bereits beim Oströmer Johannes Lydus (d. c. 570) und bei Isidor von Sevilla (d. 626); Johannes Lydus, De magistratibus populi Romani, hrsg. v. Wünsch, iii. 56, p. 145; Isidor von Sevilla, Etymologiae, hrsg. v. Lindsay, ix. 2. 101; Barlow, ‘Gregory of Tours‘, p. 92.

37 Konsul Torquatus: Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 28, p. 53; vgl. Hieronymus,
Ein anderes Vorbild könnte der türkischen Khagan Tourxanthos (Τούρξαθος/Türkshad) sein. 38

Die Turci/Torqui wurden mit den Türken identifiziert, einer mächtigen, im Altertum unbekannten gens, die im letzten Drittel des 6. Jahrhunderts mit Ostrom in Kontakt trat und von der die Franken über diplomatische Beziehungen zu den Byzantinern erfahren haben sollen, weshalb ihr Auftauchen in der Trojasage als spätere Zutat zu einem älteren Kern angesehen wurde. 39 Daneben gibt es Gleichsetzungen der Turci/Torqui mit den Teucri und den Thüringern. 40 Die Nachricht der Trojasage, dass die Franken, als sie sich am Rhein niedergelassen hatten, gegen Torquotus viele Kämpfe bestreiten mussten und dabei schwere Verluste erlitten, könnte eine Reminiszenz an Kriege zwi-


Warum aber gerade Friesen und Thüringer in die fränkische Trojasage aufgenommen worden sein sollen, ließe sich aus der politischen Situation des austrasischen Frankenreiches um 660, zur Zeit der Entstehung der Fredegar-Chronik, erklären. Fredegar selbst berichtet über die Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen des thüringischen *dux* Radulf, der eine eigenständige Politik betrieb, sich als König seines Landes betrachtete und nur eine formelle Oberherrschaft des Frankenkönigs anerkannte. Mit der Niederlage gegen Radulf wird auch das

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Ende der fränkischen Herrschaft über die Friesen in Zusammenhang gebracht, die damit verbundene friesische Expansion gegen die Franken kann durch das Abbrechen der fränkischen Münzprägung in Dorestad auf um 650 datiert werden. Es erscheint deshalb durchaus möglich, dass ein klassisch gebildeter und mit der aktuellen politischen Lage vertrauter Autor sein Wissen über die trojanische Herkunft der Phryger bei Vergil, die er womöglich ohnehin für die Friesen hielt, und über türkische Gruppen im Schwarzmeergebiet, die ihm vielleicht als Ebenbilder der Thüringer erschienen, in den Dienst der politischen Propaganda stellte, indem er diese Elemente in seine Version der Trojasage aufnahm und so über den Gleichklang der Namen das Ziel der Wiedereingliederung der Friesen und Thüringer in das Frankenreich auf Basis einer gemeinsamen Abstammung aus Troja und einer zumindest teilweise identischen Migrationsgeschichte ideologisch zu untermauern versuchte. Dieser Ansatz konnte nicht nur den fränkischen Herrschaftsanspruch über Friesen und Thüringer legitimieren, sondern diesen auch, nachdem sie militärisch unterworfen worden waren, ihre Reintegration in das Frankenreich erleichtern.

Abstammung als Element zur Abgrenzung —
die slawischen Wenden und die Awaren

Fredegar berichtet, dass die Awaren bei den auch Wenden genannten Slawen überwinterten und mit ihren Frauen und Töchtern schliefen; die Söhne aus diesen Verbindungen aber ertrugen die Unterdrückung nicht, erhoben sich gegen ihre Väter und machten 623/24 den tapferen fränkischen Kaufmann Samo zu ihrem König.


45 Ewig, *Die Merowinger und das Frankenreich*, pp. 143–44.
46 Nach Pohl, *Die Völkerwanderung*, p. 183 konnten sich die Franken durch die Trojasage wie andere gentes einer weiten Wanderung rühmen, deren verschiedene Stationen Gruppen anderer Herkunft die Möglichkeit gaben, sich ebenfalls zugehörig zu fühlen.
48 *Die altrussische Nestorchronik*, übers. v. Trautmann, p. 6 betont die besonders brutale Behandlung der Frauen der slawischen Dudleben durch die Awaren. Zur möglichen


49 Pohl, Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, p. 114; vgl. dazu auch Fritze, Untersuchungen zur frühslawischen und frühfränkischen Geschichte.


51 Pohl, Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, p. 218.


konnten, setzt militärische Kenntnisse und Fähigkeiten voraus, die angesichts der Schwierigkeiten der Oströmer und Franken mit den Awaren wohl nur in der awarischen Kampfweise selbst, also zu Pferd, bestanden haben können.54 Da die Ausrüstung eines Reiterkriegers kostenintensiv war und seine Ausbildung permanentes Training erforderte, muss es sich bei den Rebellen um Angehörige einer Elite gehandelt haben, die Zeit und Mittel dafür aufbringen konnten. Im Osten hatten Slawen als Reiterkrieger Erfolg, auch wenn ihre Abgrenzung von den Awaren in den byzantinischen Quellen nicht immer klar und sicher ist, und sie normalerweise mittelfristig die angesehenere awarische oder bulgarische Tradition übernahm.55 Eine solche lokale militärische Elite beanspruchte die Führung über die slawischen Wenden. Ihre angebliche Abstammung könnte diesen Anspruch ideologisch untermauert haben: Slawische Mütter verbanden sie mit der zu beherrschenden Gruppe, die angesehenere awarische Tradition ihrer angeblichen Väter hob sie, trotz der für die Begründung der Unabhängigkeit notwendigen Distanzierung davon, über das gewöhnliche Volk hinaus. Durch die Wahl Samos zum König der Wenden sicherten sich die Separatisten die Rückendeckung der Franken für ihre Unabhängigkeitsbewegung und vermieden zugleich Machtkämpfe in den eigenen Reihen.56

Die Vereinigung zweier gentes — Alemannen und Sueben

Gregor von Tours setzt im Kontext des Zuges der Vandalen nach Spanien (409) die ihnen folgenden und Galicen einnehmenden Sueben mit den Alemannen gleich.57 Ihr namentlich ungenannter Anführer trägt den Titel Alamannorum


57 Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 2, p. 39: „Suebi, id est Alamanni“.
rex, sein Vorschlag eines Zweikampfes beendet den Krieg mit den Vandalen, die unterliegen und Spanien deshalb verlassen.\textsuperscript{58} Bereits zuvor erwähnt Gregor Alemannen für die Zeit der Kaiser Valerian (253–60) und Gallienus (253–68), die unter dem Kommando des \textit{Alamannorum rex} Chrocus Gallien verwüsten.\textsuperscript{59} Wenn der Tyrann Eugenius an die Rheingrenze zieht, um mit den \textit{Alamannorum et Francorum reges} die alten Bündnisse (\textit{foedera}) wie gewöhnlich zu erneuern, wird die Herkunft der Alemannen aus dem rechtsrheinischen Germanien deutlich, sie erscheinen danach als Verbündete diverser römischer Prätendenten.\textsuperscript{60} Der Bericht über den Alemannenkrieg Chlodwigs I., bei dem der namentlich ungenannte \textit{rex Alamannorum} getötet und seine gens von den Franken unterworfen wird, sowie die Erklärung, der Franken König Sigibert „der Lähme“ habe seinen Beinamen aufgrund einer Verletzung erhalten, die er in einer Schlacht gegen die Alemannen bei Züllich erlitten hatte, sind ihre letzten Erwähnungen in den \textit{Historiae}.\textsuperscript{61} Im \textit{Liber Vitae Patrum} verwendet Gregor die geographischen Termini \textit{Alamannia, Alamanniae terminum} und \textit{Alamanniae regiones}.\textsuperscript{62} Die nach Spanien gezogenen Sueben werden später nicht mehr mit den Alemannen, sondern mit dem Königreich \textit{Gallicia} identifiziert, die direkte Verbindung als \textit{Suavi Galli} wird in den \textit{Virtutes sancti Martini} hergestellt.\textsuperscript{63} Ihre Könige, von denen Gregor Chararich, Miro, Eurich und Audica nennt, tragen nun den Titel \textit{rex Galliciensis} bzw. \textit{rex Galliciae}.\textsuperscript{64} Andere Sueben werden von Chlothar I. und Sigibert I. in Gebieten angesiedelt, die von nach Italien gezogenen Sachsen verlassen wurden, was zum Krieg zwischen beiden \textit{gentes} führt, als die Aus wanderer zurückkehren.\textsuperscript{65} Die politische


\textsuperscript{60} Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 9, pp. 55–56.

\textsuperscript{61} Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 30, pp. 75–76; ii. 37, pp. 87–88.

\textsuperscript{62} Gregor von Tours, \textit{Liber vitae patrum}, hrsg. v. Kursch, i. 1 \textit{(Alamannia)}, i. 2 \textit{(Alamanniae terminum)}, i. 3 \textit{(Alamanniae regiones)}, pp. 664–65.


\textsuperscript{65} Die Sueben besiegen die Sachsen dabei zweimal; Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v.


68 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 40, p. 64; ii. 41, p. 66; ii. 47, p. 68


70 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 60, p. 84.


72 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 51, pp. 72–73 (*rex Suaevorum*); ii. 55, p. 76 (*regnum Suaevorum*).


78 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 60, p. 84 (Thrasamund); iii. 21, p. 101 (Chlodwig); iv. 8, p. 125 (*dux Leudefred, dux Uncelenus*); iv. 68, p. 155 (*dux Chrodobert*), iv. 88, p. 165 (*dux Leutharius*).
Der *Liber Historiae Francorum* berichtet, dass Chlodwig I. gegen *Alamanni Suevique* Krieg führte, wobei deren *rex* getötet und die *gens* der Tributpflichtigkeit unterworfen wurde.\(^79\) Die Alemannen werden im *Liber Historiae Francorum* nicht mehr erwähnt, die Sueben werden einmal als Gegner Pippins II. genannt.\(^80\) Da Alemannen und Sueben im Krieg gegen Chlodwig gemeinsam genannt werden und unter der Herrschaft eines *rex* stehen, verstand sie der Autor wohl als politische Einheit, was vielleicht auf den synonymen Gebrauch beider Gentilnamen in seiner Zeit hinweist.\(^81\)

Die *Continuationes Fredegarii* lokalisieren die als treulose Feinde der Franken charakterisierten Alemannen und Sueben jenseits des Rheins und an der Donau; ein alemannischer *dux* wird, ohne Erwähnung seiner gentilen Zugehörigkeit, in den Alpen lokalisiert.\(^82\) Durch ihre gemeinsame Nennung wird die Synonymität der Begriffe *Alamanni* und *Suavi* greifbar, bestätigt wird sie anlässlich der Reichsteilung zwischen Karl Martells Söhnen, als Karllmann die *Suavia* erhält, ein Gebiet, das nun *Alamannia* genannt werde.\(^83\)

Die Gleichsetzung der Begriffe *Alamanni* und *Suavi* bezeugt wohl keine alte, auf eine Zeit vor dem Erscheinen der Alemannen am Rhein zurückgehende Identität beider *gentes*.\(^84\) Sie beruht eher auf einer Allianz von Alemannen und


\(^82\) *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 12, p. 175 (*Alamanni* und *Suavi* jenseits des Rhein und an der Donau); c. 25, p. 180 (Alemannen jenseits des Rhein und an der Donau); c. 27, pp. 180–81 (*Theudebald, Sohn des dux* Gottfried in den Alpen); c. 29, p. 181 (treulose Alemannen).

\(^83\) *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 23, p. 179: „Suavia, que nunc Alamannia dicitur“.


keinesfalls alle Sueben mit den Alemannen, wie nicht nur die Nordsueben bele-
suebischer Gruppen: Während er eine Gruppe geographisch in einem panno-
nischen Kontext lokalisiert, seien andere Sueben von den Franken unterjocht
worden.90 Weiters nennt er Sueben gemeinsam mit Alemannen als Nachbarn
der Thüringer.91 Beide Angaben stehen im Kontext der Lokalisierung verschiede-
dener gentes in der Frühphase des Gotenkrieges. Da Prokop Alemannen und
Sueben gemeinsam als Nachbarn der Thüringer nennt, ist es wahrscheinlich,
dass sich die Nachricht über die unterjochten Sueben auf die Unterwerfung
der Alemannen durch die Franken 496/506 bezieht. Diese beiden Nachrichten
belegen, dass, zumindest aus der Sicht der Oströmer, die Vereinigung der beiden
Gregor von Tours wird der Zusammenschluss beider gentes bekannt gewesen
sein, doch ordnete er ihn chronologisch zu früh 409 und territorial unrichtig
in Spanien ein, während ein Bezug zu den vereinigten Alemannen und Sueben
in Germanien in seinem Werk fehlt, was im Liber Historiae Francorum, viel-
leicht aufgrund der Kenntnis des Autors, korrigiert und in den Continuationes
Fredegarii übernommen wurde oder auch bekannt war.

Ethnographische Tradition — Hunnen und Awaren

Hunnen werden in den untersuchten Quellen bei Gregor von Tours, Fredegar
und im Liber Historiae Francorum erwähnt, Awaren werden nur bei Fredegar
namentlich genannt.

Gregor von Tours erwähnt aus Pannonien kommende Hunnen (Chuni)
unter Führung des rex Chunorum Attila erstmals anlässlich ihrer Angriffe auf
Gallien (451) und Italien (452).92 Fredegars Bericht über die Hunnenschlacht

ihre Traditionen in Zeiten politischer Unselbständigkeit erhalten und bei Gelegenheit auch
wieder reaktivieren können, unabhängig davon, ob die Unselbständigkeit nun unfreiwillig ist
oder, wie im Fall der zu den Alemannen gezogenen Sueben angenommen, freiwillig; Heather,
‘Disappearing and Reappearing Tribes’, pp. 100–02. Allerdings ist zu bedenken, dass der
Alemannenbegriff unter fränkischer Herrschaft keineswegs zugunsten des Suebenbegriffs aus
den Quellen verschwindet.

92 Gregor von Tours bezeichnet Attilas Hunnen als gens incredula und sieht in ihnen eine
Strafe Gottes, die er mit Verwüstung des Landes, Plünderung und Brandschatzung der Städte


Sigiberts Gefangennahme führte, war wohl die Scheinflucht, die als hunnische Taktik galt, obwohl sie auch von den Oströmern angewandt wurde, und deren Ziel die Umzingelung der Feinde war. Wenn Gregor erklärt, der Hunnenkönig werde *gaganus* genannt, denn alle Könige dieses Volkes würden mit diesem Namen bezeichnet, überliefert er den Titel des awariischen Herrschers, Khagan. Dass Gregor die Awaren als Hunnen bezeichnet, kann verschiedene Gründe haben. Die Gleichsetzung zeitgenössischer mit vergangenen Völkern entspricht den Vorstellungen der Bibel und der Tradition der antiken Ethnographie, beide gingen davon aus, dass es sich bei neuen Gruppen in bekannten Territorien nur um neue Namen, nicht um neue Populationen handelte, da aufgrund ihrer genealogischen Perspektive Völker nur zerstört werden, in weit entfernte Länder auswandern oder ihre Namen wechseln konnten, etwa um ihre Feinde zu täuschen. Die Gleichsetzung mit einem bekannten Volk beraubte einen unbekannten Angreifer seines schrecklichsten Aspekts, seiner Fremdheit, war er bekannt, brauchte er nicht gefürchtet zu werden. Der Hunnenname war seit dem Fall des Attila-Reiches und dem Abzug der Goten nach Westen zunehmend zum Synonym der alten Sammelbezeichnung „Skythen“ für die Steppenvölker geworden. Nach Agathias sind Skythen und Hunnen beides allgemeine Namen, zusammenfassende Bezeichnungen für die Kuttriguren, Utiguren, Ultizuren, Burugunden und andere. Das *Strategikon* des Maurikios, ein um 600 entstandenenes byzantinisches Militärhandbuch, betitelt ein Kapitel mit „Wie man sich den Skythen anpassen muss, d. h. den Awaren und Türken und den anderen hun-


100 Maenchen-Helfen, *Die Welt der Hunnen*, pp. 5–6.


Die in Byzanz bekannte Gleichsetzung von Hunnen und Awaren muss spätestens zwischen dem Tod Gregors 594/95 und der Fertigstellung der Fredegar-Chronik um 660 im Frankenreich bekannt geworden sein, denn Fredegar setzt beide Namen mehrmals gleich. Öfters erwähnt er nur Hunnen, aber auch

103 Maurikios, Strategikon, übers. v. Dennis, xi. 2, p. 360.
104 Theophanes, Chronographia, hrsg. v. de Boor, a.m. 6050, p. 232; Theophanes, Chronicle, übers. v. Mango, p. 232.
105 Theophanes, Chronographia, hrsg. v. de Boor, a.m. 6117, p. 315; Theophanes, Chronicle, übers. v. Mango, p. 315.

Hunnen: Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 48, p. 69 (Hunnen verwüsten Gotenland); ii. 51, p. 72 (Hunnen als römische Verbündete); ii. 53, pp. 73–75; iii. 1, p. 92 (Schlacht auf den Katalaunischen Feldern 451); iii. 11, p. 95 (Gefangenschaft Childerichs bei den Hunnen); iii. 55, p. 108; iii. 61, pp. 109–10 (Awarenkriege Sigiberts I., Awaren als Hunnen bezeichnet); iii. 65, p. 110 (Wanderung der Langobarden durch das Hunnenland). Awaren: Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 38, p. 63 (Awaren und Parther); ii. 57, p. 80 (Xerxer); iv. 58, p. 150.


zu Pferd und unter Anwendung der Scheinflucht besiegt, Schmeicheleien, Drohungen und Reichtümern widersteht und sich schließlich freiwillig Theoderich unterwirft.\textsuperscript{111} Bei der Darstellung der Awarenkriege Sigiberts I. nennt Fredegar die Gegner der Franken wie seine Vorlage Gregor nur \textit{Chuni}.\textsuperscript{112} In Fredegars Version der langobardischen Ursprungsgeschichte übernehmen die Hunnen die Rolle der Gegner der künftigen Langobarden, die in langobardischen Quellen den Vandalen zukommt, und erscheinen wie diese als Wodansverehrer.\textsuperscript{113} Da Fredegar die Hunnen bereits für die Zeit Theoderichs d. Gr. mit den Awaren assoziert, bedeuten diese Bezeichnungen keine Unkenntnis ihrer Identität, sondern können auch nur unkommmentierte Übernahmen aus den jeweiligen Quellen sein. In den Berichten über den Aufstieg des fränkischen Händlers Samo zum König der Wenden und über den Krieg zwischen Awaren und Bulgaren werden Awaren und Hunnen miteinander identifiziert: „Avari coinomento Chuni“; im Samo-Kapitel wird auch ihr König \textit{gaganus} genannt.\textsuperscript{114} Dieser Vorstellung einer Identität von Hunnen und Awaren entspricht die Vorstellung ihrer territorialen Kontinuität in Pannonien von der Zeit Attilas bis in die Gegenwart Fredegars.\textsuperscript{115} Anders als die byzantinischen


und langobardischen Quellen wusste Fredegar offenbar nicht, dass zuerst die Langobarden in Pannonien siedelten und dann erst die Awaren dorthin kamen, sondern ging davon aus, dass die Hunnen dort seit der Zeit Attilas ununterbrochen lebten, während die Langobarden in dieses Land der Hunnen für ihn nur kurz eindrangen, um sogleich nach Italien weiterzuziehen.116

Im Liber Historiae Francorum stehen die Hunnen (Chuni) zur Zeit Merowechs unter der Herrschaft ihres rex Attila.117 Zur Zeit Sigiberts I. ist Caganus der hunnische König, mit dem sich der Frankenfürst durch amicitia verbindet.118 Die beiden „hunnischen“ Angriffe bei Gregor werden im Liber Historiae Francorum zu einem Ereignis verbunden.

**Politische, sprachliche und regionale Identitäten — Römer und Griechen**

Während Gregor von Tours, der Liber Historiae Francorum und die Continuationes Fredegarii sich nicht damit beschäftigen, wird bei Fredegar die polyethnische Struktur der Römer deutlich119. Fredegar setzt, wie seine Vorlagen, mehrmals Römer und Latiner gleich und zählt als gentes et inhabitationes Romanorum die Etrusker, Aemiliane, Picener, Campanier, Apulier und Lucaner auf.120 Die Gleichsetzungen von Römern und Latinern stehen


bei Fredegar im Kontext der trojanischen Herkunft, sie haben aber auch Bezüge zur römischen Tradition und Geschichte.\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Romani, qui et Latini} bezieht sich auf den Ursprung Roms, das eine lateinische Stadt neben anderen war.\textsuperscript{122} Die Identifikationen „Latini, qui et Romani; Latini, qui et vocantur Romani“ und „Latini, qui et postea Romani nuncupati sunt“ kehren diese Zuordnung um, die Latiner werden zu Römern, beide Begriffe austauschbar.\textsuperscript{123} Durch die Bezeichnung der Etrusker, Aemilianer, Picener, Campanier, Apulier und Lucaner als „gentes et inhabitationes Romanorum“ drückt Fredegar die Zusammensetzung des römischen Volkes aus mehreren Einheiten aus und bildet, ohne näher darauf einzugehen, den Zustand des \textit{populus Romanus} nach Ende des Bundesgenossenkrieges (\textit{Bellum sociale}) von 91–89 v. Chr. ab, in dem die rebellierenden Bundesgenossen (\textit{socii}), alle bisher nicht eingebürgerten italischen Gemeinwesen, in der \textit{Lex Plautia Papiria} das römische Bürgerrecht, die \textit{civitas Romana}, erhalten hatten.\textsuperscript{124} Da diese \textit{gentes} keine Latiner, sondern Etrusker und Italiker sind, übernimmt Fredegar aus dem \textit{Liber Generationis} einen Beleg dafür, dass die römische Identität, was schon in der Gründungssage Roms grundgelegt ist, auf rechtlicher Zugehörigkeit und nicht auf biologischer Abstammung basierte, weshalb sie bereits in der Antike als Resultat eines kon-
tinuierlichen politischen Verschmelzungsprozesses betrachtet wurde.\textsuperscript{125} Die Einbürgerung der Italiker als Resultat des Bundesgenossenkrieges stellt eine wichtige Etappe in diesem Prozess dar. Mit der Ausdehnung des Imperium Romanum erfolgte auch eine Ausbreitung der Römer. Römische Bürger wanderten aus und gründeten Kolonien; lokale Eliten, verbündete ausländische Fürsten und ganze Städte oder gentile Gruppen erhielten in der Kaiserzeit ebenso das römische Bürgerrecht wie barbarische Krieger, die in den römischen Legionen dienten.\textsuperscript{126} Am Ende dieser Entwicklung stand die \textit{Constitutio Antoniniana} des Kaisers Caracalla, in der 212 allen freien Reichsbewohnern das römische Bürgerrecht verliehen wurde.\textsuperscript{127} Dieser Prozess förderte nicht nur die Ausbreitung des Römertums, er führte auch zur Entwicklung multipler städtischer, provinzialer und regionaler Identitäten, die einander nicht aus- schlossen, aber je nach Bedarf in den Vordergrund treten und auch (re-)ethnisierten konnten, d.h. man konnte Römer und Bürger seiner irgendwo im Imperium gelegenen Heimatstadt oder einer barbarischen gens zugleich sein.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{125}] \textit{Liber Generationis}, hrsg. v. Mommsen, c. 210, p. 109. Trotz seiner Gründung durch den vom Trojaner Aeneas abstammenden Latiner Romulus soll Rom der antiken Überlieferung nach von Anfang an auch für Zuwanderer anderer ethnischer Herkunft offen, also polyethnisch, gewesen sein; Livius, \textit{Ab urbe condita}, hrsg. und übers. v. Hillen, i. 7. 1–3, i, pp. 22 (Gründung Roms); i. 8. 1, i, pp. 26 (bei Stadtgründung anwesende Menge kann allein durch Gesetze zu einem Volk zusammenwachsen, Romulus stellt auf Versammlung Rechtsnormen auf); i. 8. 4–6, i, pp. 28 (asylum für Fremde); i. 11. 1–4, pp. 34 (Leute aus Caenina, Antemnae und Crustumeria eingebürgert); i. 13. 4–5, i, pp. 40 (Vereinigung mit Sabinern); iv. 3. 13–15, ii, p. 14 (Weil niemand wegen seiner Herkunft abgelehnt wurde, der tüchtig war, wuchs das Römische Reich, die sabinischen Claudier wurden sogar Patrizier und stellten Konsuln). Nach \textit{Romulus}, c. 15, in Plutarch, \textit{Vitae parallelae}, übers. v. Ziegler, i, pp. 95, hat nichts so zur Vergrößerung Roms beigetragen, wie die Sitte, Besiegte aufzunehmen und einzugliedern. Vgl. Geary, \textit{Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter}, p. 62.
\item[\textsuperscript{126}] Caesar verlieh die \textit{civitas Romana} den transpadanischen Kelten Oberitaliens und das latinsiche Recht an die romanisierten Provinzen Sizilien, Narbonensis und Südspanien, die Kaiser verliehen in der Regel die \textit{civitas Romana solvo iure gentis}, d.h. die Reichsangehörigen wurden staatsrechtlich Römer, blieben aber steuerpflichtig; Demandt, \textit{Antike Staatsformen}, pp. 405, 444, 465. Auf die Integration in das Römertum durch Kriegsdienstleistung für das Imperium kann jener Grabstein aus Aquinum verweisen, dessen Besitzer sich als Franke, Bürger und römischer Soldat unter Waffen bezeichnet; \textit{Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum}, III. 3576: „FRANCVS EGO CIVES ROMANVS MILES IN ARMIS“.
\item[\textsuperscript{127}] Hauptnutznießer dieser Reform waren der Fiskus und das Militär, denn nun konnte praktisch jeder Mann zum Militärdienst eingezogen werden und wurde steuerpflichtig, während das Bürgerrecht selbst dadurch erheblich an Bedeutung verlor; Geary, \textit{Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter}, pp. 77–78.
\item[\textsuperscript{128}] Geary, \textit{Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter}, pp. 77, 120, mit Beispielen; Pohl, \textit{Regnum und gens}, p. 435. Zu römischen Identitäten im frühmittelalterlichen Italien vgl. den
\end{enumerate}
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Gregor von Tours, der den bedeutenden überregionalen Identitäten im Gallien seiner Zeit generell wenig Raum gibt, und für den Gallia(s) auch nach dem Tod Chlodwigs I. der fundamentale Begriff bleibt, verbindet den Begriff der patria am ehesten mit den einzelnen civitates. Er ordnet die romanische Mehrheitsbevölkerung Galliens, zu der er ja selbst gehörte, präzise ihrer jeweili-

Beitrag von Maya Maskarinec in diesem Band.

Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, I. 41, p. 28 (Thrakien); II. 9, pp. 52–58 (am Rhein); II. 11–12, pp. 60–62, II. 18–19, p. 65, II. 27, p. 71 (Gallien); II. 33, p. 81 (Burgund); Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, II. 57, pp. 78–79, IV. 69, pp. 155–56 (Italien); III. 11–12, pp. 97–98, III. 15, p. 98, III. 18, p. 99, IV. 28, p. 132 (Gallien); IV. 33, p. 133 (Spanien); Liber Historiae Francorum, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 2, p. 242 (Maeotis), cc. 3–4, pp. 243–44 (Pannonien), cc. 5–6, pp. 246–47 (Gallien); Continuationes Fredegarii, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 25, p. 180 (südlich der Loire); c. 36, p. 183, c. 38, p. 185 (Rom).


Geary, Europäische Völker im frühen Mittelalter, pp. 120–21.

Ewig, Volkstum und Volksbewußtsein, pp. 3–4, 58.

gen *civitas* oder Region zu, was terminologisch oftmals einen Rückgriff auf den Namen einer keltischen Gruppe aus der Zeit vor der Eroberung des Landes durch Julius Caesar bedeutet, bezeichnet diese *cives* aber nicht kollektiv als *Romani*. Er verwendet die Bezeichnung *Romanus/Romani* und das Adjektiv *romanus/-a/-um* nur selten. Im Buch I der *Historiae* beruhen die Erwähnungen der *Romani* sämtlich auf der Darstellung der römischen Geschichte in der Chronik des Hieronymus, wobei Gregor die erwähnten Kaiser selten direkt mit dem


135 Vgl. dazu die Einleitung von Walter Pohl in diesem Band.


137 Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 9, pp. 52–58.


Die Romani grenzen an die Thoringi an und beherrschen das Gebiet bis zur Loire, Chlogio vertreibt sie aus der civitas Cambrai und aus dem Gebiet bis zur Somme; Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 9, p. 58. In dieser Konzeption Gregors sind die Romani eine
Romanus Aegidius von der res publica zum magister militum bestellt und nach Gallien gesandt, wo ihn auch die Franken während der Vertreibung Childerichs I. als ihren rex annehmen.\textsuperscript{140} Nach Aegidius’ Tod ist ein comes Paulus Anführer der Romani, nach dessen Tod wird Syagrius, der wie sein Vater Aegidius in der civitas Soissons residierende Romanorum rex, von Chlodwig besiegt, der die Nachfolge in seinem regnum antritt.\textsuperscript{141} Der zeitgleiche Burgunderkönig Gundobad erlässt ein Gesetz zum Schutz der Romani.\textsuperscript{142} Damit verschwinden Romani und imperium Romanorum/Romanum aus Gregors Historiae.\textsuperscript{143}

Für Gregor bedeutete die Machtübernahme Chlodwigs keinen Bruch in der Geschichte der Galliae. Er war, wie andere Frankenräte vor ihm, gentiler Fürst, römischer Offizier und auch Oberhaupt der römischen Zivilverwaltung in weiten Teilen Nordgalliens, dessen Herrschaft nach 508 von Kaiser Anastasius durch die Verleihung des Patriziats oder, wahrscheinlicher, (Ehren-)Konsulats legitimiert wurde, weshalb er von nun an consul aut augustus genannt worden sei.\textsuperscript{144} Dass Gregor die Römer nach dem Ende ihres rex und der Nachfolge des
gens, die mit Franci und Goti auf der gleichen kategoriellen Stufe stehen; Heinzelmann, ‘Die Franken und die fränkische Geschichte’, p. 342, mit Anm. 75.


\textsuperscript{142} Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 33, p. 81.


Frankenkönigs in ihrem regnum nicht mehr erwähnt, hat Parallelen bei anderen gentes, deren Herrscher von ihm als reges bezeichnet werden.\textsuperscript{145} Das Ende des rex wurde von Gregor offenbar mit dem Ende der gens assoziiert.\textsuperscript{146}

Obwohl Gregor auch über zeitgenössische Ereignisse im oströmischen Reich berichtet und dabei römische Terminologie gebraucht, vermeidet er konsequent das Attribut „römisch“.\textsuperscript{147} Die Herrschertitel sind imperator bzw. caesar, jedoch ohne begrifflichen Bezug zu Rom oder den Römern.\textsuperscript{148} Die zeitgenössi-


\textsuperscript{147} So nennt er den römischen Staat nach wie vor res publica und anstelle des für vergangene Zeiten gelegentlich gebrauchten imperium Romanum bzw. imperium Romanorum tritt nun ausschließlich imperium. Res publica: Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v. Krusch, i. 42, ii. 3, ii. 12, v. 19, vi. 30, x. 2, pp. 28, 45, 62, 225, 298, 483; Romanum imperium: i. 32, i. 35, ii. 11, pp. 24, 26, 60; Romanorum imperium: i. 36, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{148} Imperator für oströmische Kaiser nach Chlodwig I.: Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v. Krusch, iii. 32, p. 128; iv. 8–9, p. 140; iv. 40, p. 171; v. 19, p. 225; v. 30, pp. 235–36; vi. 2, p. 266; vi. 30, p. 298; vi. 42, p. 314; vi. 43, p. 314; vii. 36, p. 358; viii. 18, p. 384; viii. 28, p. 390; ix. 20, p. 440; ix. 25, 444; x. 1, p. 487; x. 2, pp. 482–83; x. 3, p. 485; x. 4, p. 487. Imperator ist der von Gregor am häufigsten gebrauchte Kaisertitel, er verwendet ihn auch schon vor bzw. während der Regentschaft Chlodwigs I. im Frankenreich für zahlreiche römische Kaiser: i. 18, p. 16; i. 21, p. 18; i. 25, p. 20; i. 28, p. 21; i. 30, p. 22; i. 42–43, p. 28; i. 45, p. 29; ii. \textit{Capitulatio} (c. 11), p. 35; ii. 8, p. 52; ii. 21, p. 67; ii. 38, p. 88. Den Titel Caesar verwendet Gregor für den von Justin II. zum Mitkaiser erhobenen Tiberius II. vor dessen Alleinherrschaft:
schen Träger des Römischen Imperiums bezeichnet Gregor dort, wo er einen Gentilnamen verwendet, als Griechen (Greci).

Auch Cartaginenses, bezogen auf die Einwohner der damals oströmischen Stadt Karthago, bezeichnet zeitgenössische Personen, die staatsrechtlich Römer sind. Wie die Bewohner der gallischen civitates im Frankenreich werden die Karthager von Gregor als regionale Identität aufgefasst. Die Bewohner des ostgotischen Italien nennt Gregor Itali, die zeitgenössischen Einwohner der Stadt Rom nur plebs und populus.

Die einzige Verwendung eines die Oströmer einschließenden Römer-Begriffes, seine einzige zeitgenössische Verwendung in den Historiae überhaupt,
ist die Beschreibung eines Aureus des Augustus Tiberius II. mit der Legende GLORIA ROMANORUM.154 Tiberius II. ist jener oströmische Kaiser, dessen Rechtgläubigkeit Gregor ausdrücklich lobt.155 Rom, das er einmal „Stadt der Städte und Haupt der ganzen Welt“ nennt, war für Gregor eine Stadt der heiligen Märtyrer und Päpste.156 Gregor bezeugt außerdem, dass die Goten die Rechtgläubigen Romani nennen.157 Gregor verwendet Latini, um die


Anhänger der römischen Kirche in einer umfassenden Weise zu bezeichnen.\textsuperscript{158} Mit \textit{Latinum} bezeichnet Gregor auch seine Sprache, das Lateinische.\textsuperscript{159} Die \textit{lingua Latinorum} stellt auch Gregors einzigen Hinweis für die Anwesenheit von Romanen im merowingerzeitlichen Gallien dar, als in Orléans auch auf Latein König Guntram bejubelt wird.\textsuperscript{160} Chilperich I. hatte dem in Gallien verwendeten Alphabet neben anderen Zeichen auch ein ω, wie es die \textit{Graeci} haben, hinzugefügt.\textsuperscript{161} Gregors Definition der Oströmer als Griechen basiert also auf ihrer anderen Schrift, dem griechischen Alphabet, und wohl auch darauf, dass sie Griechisch sprachen, und nicht die \textit{Lingua Latinorum} wie die Gallier. Dass die griechischsprachigen Oströmer die römische Identität verinnerlicht hatten, war für ihn nicht von Belang.\textsuperscript{162} Dagegen, dass Gregor mit der Bezeichnung \textit{Graeci} Zweifel an der Rechtgläubigkeit der Oströmer ausdrücken wollte, spricht, dass deren Unterstützung des rechtgläubigen Hermenegild in Spanien 580, in der Regierungszeit des rechtgläubigen Kaisers Tiberius II. begann.\textsuperscript{163} Dass Gregor weder die meisten heidnischen Kaiser noch alle byzantinischen außer Tiberius II. mit dem Attribut „römisch“ in Verbindung bringt, kann, ebenso wie die Vermeidung der Bezeichnung \textit{Romani} für die zeitgenössischen Bewohner Roms, darauf hinweisen, dass für ihn mit diesem Begriff eine gewisse sakrale Konnotation verbunden war, weshalb er ihn in der Gegenwart lieber vermied, auch wenn er sich seiner Bedeutung als Fremdbezeichnung

\textsuperscript{158} Gregor von Tours, \textit{Historiae}, hrsg. v. Krusch, x. 23, p. 515.


\textsuperscript{162} Vom 2. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert nannten sich die Griechen selbst Rhomäer — Römer; Dihle, \textit{Die Griechen und die Fremden}, pp. 52, 84.


164 Chlodwigs I. Brautwerber in Burgund, Aurelianus, ist ex Romanis ingenio, Claudius, der maiorum Theuderichs II., ist genere Romanus; Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, III. 18, p. 99 (Aurelianus); IV. 28, p. 132 (Claudius).
169 Liber Historiae Francorum, hrsg. v. Krusch, cc. 1–2, pp. 241–43.
Ansonsten stellt der *Liber Historiae Francorum* keine Verbindung zwischen Griechen und Römern her, auch Aeneas wird nicht mit Rom verbunden.

Die *Continuationes Fredegarii* bezeichnen mit Romani die Bewohner Roms und die Bewohner des jenseits der Loire gelegenen Aquitanien.\(^\text{170}\) Dabei erscheinen die Begriffe Romani und Wascones austauschbar: Als sich die „Wascones in regione Aquitania“ erheben, überschreiten Karlmann und Pippin mit ihrem Heer die Loire und werfen die Romani nieder.\(^\text{171}\) Das überrascht, weil die Wascones, die Basken, bei Gregor von Tours und Fredegar, der sie zu den Völkern Spaniens zählt, als untreue, plündernde, brandschatzende, alles verheerende Bergbewohner geschildert werden, typische Barbaren, die das genaue Gegenteil eines zivilisierten Römers darstellen.\(^\text{172}\) Die *Continuationes Fredegarii* überliefern außerdem, dass die Wascones, die jenseits der Garonne leben, in alten Zeiten Vaceti genannt wurden.\(^\text{173}\) Ebenfalls mit den Wascones werden zu der Zeit, als die Auvergne unter der Herrschaft Waifars steht, die Arverni, die Bewohner von Gregor von Tours Heimatstadt Clermont, gleichgesetzt.\(^\text{174}\) Arverni dient hier als Bezeichnung für eine lokale Gruppe der Wascones.

Die Gleichsetzung der Arverner mit den Wascones ist, neben ihrer Identifikation mit den Romani, ein Indiz dafür, dass Wascones eine pejorative Bezeichnung für die romanische Bevölkerung Südgalliens außerhalb der fränkischen Herrschaft war. Die Gleichsetzung der romanisierten Aquitani mit den als barbarisch bekannten Wascones in Quellen, die der fränkischen Zentralgewalt nahestehen, ist deshalb wohl gegen das sich in zahlreichen Aufständen manifestierende aquitanische Sonderbewusstsein gerichtet.\(^\text{175}\)

\(^{170}\) *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 25, p. 180 (Romani jenseits der Loire); c. 36, p. 183, c. 38, p. 185 (Romani in Rom).


\(^{173}\) *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 47, p. 189. Vaceti ist möglicherweise die Reminiszenz an eine frühere ethnische Differenzierung zwischen aquitanischen Romanen und Basken, wobei Vaceti eine Bezeichnung für die baskischen Bergbewohner sein könnte, im Gegensatz zur stärker romanisierten Bevölkerung zwischen Loire und Garonne.


\(^{175}\) Die Bezeichnung Aquitani kennen die *Continuationes Fredegarii* nicht, von ihnen ist erst
Territoriale und institutionelle Vielfalt — Sachsen

Die Sachsen sind Bewohner der *Germania* und leben jenseits des Rheins. Daneben werden in der merowingerzeitlichen fränkischen Historiographie mit *Saxones* aber auch verschiedene Gruppen in Gallien und Britannien bezeichnet.


Die nach Britannien ausgewanderten Sachsen erscheinen in der merowingerzeitlichen fränkischen Historiographie nur peripher. Von Angelsachsen verfasste Quellen unterscheiden deutlich zwischen kontinentalen und britannischen Sachsen, indem sie die kontinentalen Sachsen als *Antiqui Saxones* bzw. *Altsaxones* bezeichnen. Die angelsächsischen Quellen betonen, vor allem im


176 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, II. 6, p. 46 (*Germania*), IV. 38, p. 139 (Sachsen unter *gentes transrhenani* Theudeberts II.); *Liber Historiae Francorum*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 27, p. 286 (Sachsen von Weser durchflossen, Thüringen benachbart), c. 31, p. 292, c. 41, pp. 311–13 (Sachsen Heiden jenseits des Rheins, der Weser); *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 19, p. 177 (jenseits des Rheins).


Kontext von Heidenmission und Migrationsgeschichte, die Verwandtschaft der als einheitliche *gens* aufgefassten Angeln und Sachsen in Britannien mit den kontinentalen Sachsen, aber auch mit anderen *gentes* in der *Germania*.\(^{182}\) In den untersuchten fränkischen Quellen werden die Angelsachsen terminologisch nicht von den kontinentalen Sachsen unterschieden.\(^{183}\)

Die in Gallien lebenden Sachsen erscheinen nach der Niederlage des Adovacrius als treue Untertanen der fränkischen Könige.\(^{184}\) Die Sachsen in der *Germania* sind den Franken tributpflichtig, sie erscheinen als rebellische, treulose und beutegierige heidnische Plünderer, die Gebiete verwüsten, brandschatzen, Menschen und Tiere rauben, in der Niederlage aber furchtsam sind.\(^{185}\)


\(^{184}\) Springer, *Die Sachsen*, pp. 53, 100, 102, 120; Wolfram, *Die Germanen*, p. 112.

Die negative Charakterisierung der rechtsrheinischen Sachsen ist ein Fixpunkt der merowingerzeitlichen fränkischen Historiographie. Bei Fredegar findet sich allerdings auch eine Nachricht, die eine ambivalente Wahrnehmung der Sachsen widerspiegelt: Als Pompeius den Rhein überquert und die Germanen wie die Gallier unterwirft, erheben sich von den unterworfenen Völkern Germaniens nur die Franken und ihre Verbündeten (*amici*), die Sachsen, um ihre Freiheit zu bewahren.\(^{186}\) In dieser auf die Rheinübergänge von Pompeius’ Gegner Caesar anspielenden Legende, die Fredegar miteinander verwechselte, erscheinen die rechtsrheinischen Sachsen den Franken gleichgestellt, doch diese Gleichstellung ist singulär, es dominiert ein topisches Bild der rechtsrheinischen Sachsen als heidnische Barbaren.\(^{187}\)

Uneinheitlich sind auch die politischen Strukturen der verschiedenen sächsischen Gruppen. Die Loire-Sachsen sind ein Beispiel für die seit der Spätantike auf Gallien erfolgten Überfälle durch militärisch strukturierte Verbände; ihr Anführer Adovacrius trägt bei Gregor keinen Titel, bei Fredegar ist er *rex* und im *Liber Historiae Francorum dux*.\(^{188}\) Die Sachsen von Bayeux haben keinen eigenen Anführer, sie stehen unter dem direkten Befehl des Frankenkönigs Chilperich I. bzw. seiner Witwe Fredegunde.\(^{189}\) Der *dux* Chulderich ist der einzige Sachse, den Gregor von Tours mit einem Titel bezeichnet, er ist jedoch kein *dux* einer sächsischen Gruppe, sondern wird von Childebert II. im südlichen Aquitanien in dieses Amt eingesetzt.\(^{190}\)

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\(^{186}\) Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 6, p. 46; ii. 31, p. 55.


\(^{190}\) Chulderich tritt zuerst als Anführer einer Kriegergruppe in Gallien in Erscheinung, fällt bei König Guntram in Ungnade, geht zu Childebert II. über, der ihn zum *dux* über die Städte südlich der Garonne ernannt, und stirbt schließlich, nach vielen Morden und anderen Verbrechen, infolge übermäßigen Weingenusses nachts den Erstickungstod; Gregor von Tours, *Historiae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, vii. 3, p. 328 (erstmalige Erwähnung); viii. 18, p. 385 (fällt bei
Die Sachsen in der *Germania* schicken bei Gregor von Tours als Ganzes Gesandte, um mit Chlothar I. Frieden zu schließen.\(^{191}\) Die kollektiv erscheinenden Sachsen unterscheiden sich von den anderen *gentes* in Germanien, denn Alemannen, Thüringer und Dänen haben bei Gregor Könige.\(^{192}\) Auch bei Fredegar und in den *Continuationes Fredegarii* agieren die rechtsrheinischen Saxones ausschließlich kollektiv, ohne dass etwas über ihre politische Struktur gesagt würde.\(^{193}\) Im *Liber Historiae Francorum* wird Bertoald, der Anführer der rebellierenden rechtsrheinischen Sachsen, gegen den Chlothar II. und Dagobert I. an der Weser kämpfen, *dux* genannt, er kommandiert ein Heer, das aus „vielen Völkerschaften“ (*gentes plurima*) besteht, also polyethnisch ist.\(^{194}\) Wenn der um 623 datierte Bertoald eine historische Persönlichkeit ist, ist er der früheste namentlich belegte Anführer der rechtsrheinischen Sachsen in einer fränkischen historiographischen Quelle.\(^{195}\) Auch die gleichzeitige *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* des Angelsachsen Beda überliefert, dass die *antiqui Saxones* keine *reges* hatten, sondern viele gleichberechtigte *satrapae*, die an der Spitze ihrer jeweiligen *gens* standen und bei Kriegsausbruch durch das Los einen der ihren zum *dux* wählten, dem sie sich nur für die Dauer des Krieges unterstellten.\(^{196}\) Diese politische Zersplitterung der Sachsen wird als

Guntchramn in Ungnade, wird *dux* Childeberts II.); x. 22, p. 514 (Tod). Die späteren Quellen erwähnen Chulderich nicht mehr.


\(^{192}\) Zur politischen Struktur der rechtsrheinischen Sachsen vgl. Mohr, *Das Wissen über die Anderen*, pp. 284–90.

\(^{193}\) Fredegar, *Chronicae*, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 6, p. 46; iii. 51–52, p. 107; iii. 68, p. 111; iv. 38, p. 139; iv. 74, p. 158; *Continuationes Fredegarii*, hrsg. v. Krusch, c. 11, p. 175; c. 19, p. 177; c. 27, p. 180; c. 31, p. 181; c. 35, p. 182.


\(^{195}\) Allerdings liegen auch hier zwischen dem berichteten Ereignis und seiner Aufzeichnung 100 Jahre.


197 Becher, Rex, Dux und Gens, pp. 26–27.

198 Satrapae der Philister: Beda, In primam partem Samuei, hrsg. v. Hurst, i. 5. 11, pp. 50; i. 6. 16, pp. 54; i. 7. 7, pp. 61; iv. 29. 2, pp. 258; iv. 29. 6, pp. 259. Zum Begriff Satrap und seiner inhaltlichen Entwicklung vgl. Duchesne-Guillemin, ‚Satrap‘; Wood, The Missionary Life, p. 116.


201 Becher, ‚Verfassung und Ethnogenese‘, p. 15.

Politische Strukturen und ihre Wahrnehmung — Bretonen

Auch mit Britanni bezeichnet Gregor von Tours gentile Gruppen in verschiedenen Territorien, nämlich die Bretonen und einmal auch die Briten, ohne beide voneinander zu unterscheiden; Britannia ist dabei für ihn die Bretagne, das Land der Bretonen, nicht aber die Insel Britannien, die er nicht erwähnt. Zwischen den keltischen Briten und Bretonen bestand ein enger Zusammenhang, vom 4. bis zum 6. Jahrhundert wanderten Gruppen von Britannien nach Armorica, die spätere Bretagne, aus. Im 6. Jahrhundert wurden die Bretonen von mehreren Männern, zumindest teilweise Mitglieder derselben Dynastie, beherrscht, von denen Chanao und Macliav durch die Beseitigung ihrer Verwandten die Alleinherrschaft erringen wollten. Analog Konzentrationsprozesse überliefert Gregor für Franken, Burgunder und Thüringer. Im Unterschied zu diesen vergleichbar strukturierten gentes nennt Gregor die Herrscher der Bretonen aber nicht reges, sondern comites, was er damit begründet, dass die Bretonen seit Chlodwig I. immer unter der Oberherrschaft der Franken gestanden wären. Im Gegensatz zu Gregor


205 Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, IV. 4, pp. 137–38 (Comes Chanao tötet drei seiner Brüder, nur Macliav entkommt, flieht zu comes Chonomor, wird Kleryker, tritt aber nach Chanaos Tod dessen Nachfolger an); v. 16, p. 214 (Macliav vertreibt nach dem Tod seines Mitherrschers Bodich dessen Sohn Theoderich, der kehrt zurück, tötet Macliav und seinen Sohn Jacob und teilt mit Maciavs zweitem Sohn Waroch die Herrschaft).

206 Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, II. 28, p. 73 (Gundobad ermordet seinen Bruder Chilperich), II. 32, pp. 78–80 (Godegisel mit Chlodwig gegen seinen Bruder Gundobad), II. 33, pp. 80–81 (Gundobad siegt, Tod Godegisels); II. 40–42, pp. 89–93 (Chlodwig beseitigt Verwandte); III. 4, pp. 99–100 (Herminefred bekriegt seine Brüder, z. T. mit fränkischer Unterstützung). Im Gegensatz zu den bretonischen Prätendenten nehmen burgundische und thüringische Teilherrschere die letztlich fatale Hilfe der Franken in Anspruch, während der bretonische comes Chonoobener umgekehrt den fränkischen Prätendenten Chram gegen dessen Vater Chlothar I. unterstützt, was ihn allerdings das Leben kostet; Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, IV. 20, pp. 152–53.

207 Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, IV. 4, p. 137.
und den anderen fränkischen Historiographen, die nicht überliefern, wie die Bretonen unter fränkische Oberhoheit kamen, erwähnt der Byzantiner Prokop die Kämpfe der Franken gegen die Armorican, er nennt sie Arborycher (Ἀρβόρυχοι), und berichtet, dass beide gentes auf Vorschlag der Franken ein Bündnis und Blutsbruderschaft eingingen, sodass die beiden christlichen Völker durch ihre Vereinigung zu großer Macht gelangten.208 Das spricht eher für eine Vereinigung gleichberechtigter Partner als für eine Unterwerfung durch die Franken. Tatsächlich ist die Abhängigkeit der Bretagne vom Frankenreich meist recht lose.209 Die fehlende Kontrolle der Franken zeigt sich in den immer wieder aufflammmenden Konflikten mit den Bretonen, die dabei sehr destruktiv agieren, nächtliche Überfälle verüben, den offenen Kampf aber furchtsam vermeiden.210 Die bretonischen comites brechen ihr Wort, selbst wenn sie Geiseln stellen.211 Fränkische Strafaktionen rufen nur noch größere Wut der Bretonen hervor.212 Die Franken versuchten also immer wieder, den Frieden, den sie militärisch nicht durchsetzen konnten, durch Verträge mit den Bretonen zu erlangen. Das beinhalte wohl die formale Unterwerfung der bretonischen comites unter den Frankenkontig, hatte aber in der Praxis kaum Auswirkungen auf deren Handlungsfähigkeit. Über die Staatsform der Bretonen bevor sie unter fränkische Oberhoheit gelangten, sagt Gregor nichts, er berichtet nur, dass die Britann zuerst Childerichs I. von den Goten aus Bourges vertrieben wurden.213 Jordanes berichtet über dieselbe Schlacht, dass der Brittonum rex Riotimus für Kaiser Anthemius (467–72) mit 12,000 Mann gegen den Westgotenkönig Eurich kämpfte, jedoch unterlag.214 Die Stärke der Armee des Riotimus beweist, selbst wenn sie übertrieben ist, dass er ein machtvoller Herrscher war, der nicht nur von einem ostgotischen Geschichtsschreiber mit


dem Königstitel bezeichnet wurde, sondern ihn wohl auch selbst führte, was dann auch für seine Nachfolger gelten könnte. Das legt, ebenso wie das selbständige Agieren der Bretonen in den Kämpfen mit den Franken nahe, dass Gregor den Inhaber eines regnum, den er nicht als rex klassifizieren kann und möchte, comes nennt.215

Bei Fredegar sind die Bretonen Nachkommen Japhets, die auch Inseln bewohnen und eine eigene Sprache haben.216 Wo Fredegar Informationen von Gregor von Tours verarbeitet, behält er dessen Terminologie bei und bezeichnet die Herrscher der Bretonen als comites.217 Anlässlich der Unterwerfung des Judicaël unter Dagobert I. ändert Fredegar seine Terminologie. Judicaël kommt aus seinem regnum Britanniae und trägt den Titel rex Brittanorum, er weigert sich wegen seiner Frömmigkeit und Gottesfurcht mit Dagobert zu essen und wird trotzdem am nächsten Tag mit Geschenken entlassen und kehrt in das regnum Britanniae zurück.218 Die geänderte Terminologie beschreibt vielleicht eine Änderung des politischen Verhältnisses zwischen Franken und Bretonen, die vielleicht die Konflikte zwischen Chlothar II., Theudebert II. und Theuderich II. genutzt hatten, um sich aus ihrem Abhängigkeitsverhältnis zu befreien und auch formell ihre Unabhängigkeit, ausgedrückt durch den Titel rex, zu erringen. Dafür spricht neben der Betonung der Stellung des rex Brittanorum Judicaël in seinem regnum Britanniae auch die Nennung der „Grenze der Bretonen“ als Außengrenze des an Theuderich II. fallenden Gebietes.219 Möglicherweise brachte erst Dagoberts I. Abkommen mit Judicaël die Bretonen wieder stärker unter fränkischen Einfluss.220

216 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, i. 5, p. 21 (Nachkommen Japhets, wohnen auch auf Inseln); i. 6, p. 24 (Volk mit eigener Sprache).
217 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, iii. 12, pp. 97–98 (Goten vertreiben Bretonen aus Bourges); iii. 54, p. 107 (Chramn flieht zu comes Chonoober); iii. 77, pp. 113–14 (Kämpfe um Nachfolge comes Bodichs); iii. 80, p. 115 (Comes Waroch überfällt Sachsen von Bayeux); iv. 11, p. 127 (Krieg im 30. Jahr Guntchrams); iv. 12, p. 127 (Tod des Beppolenus); vgl. Gregor von Tours, Historiae, hrsg. v. Krusch, ii. 18, p. 65; iv. 20, pp. 152–53; v. 26, pp. 232–33; x. 9, pp. 491–94.
219 Fredegar, Chronicae, hrsg. v. Krusch, iv. 20, p. 128 (Britannorum limes).

Vergleichbare terminologische Abweichungen gibt es bei Römern, Loire-Sachsen, Bayern und Friesen. Syagrius wird bei Gregor von Tours als *rex Romanorum* bezeichnet, bei Fredegar als *patricius Romanorum*, sein Vater Aegidius ist bei Gregor von Tours *magister militum*, im *Liber Historiae Francorum* bei Fredegar bleibt er in den aus Gregor entlehnten Kapiteln ohne römischen Titel, in einem Exzerpt aus Hydatius wird allerdings der Tod eines zeitlich passenden *comes* Aegidius durch Gift gemeldet. Die Herrscher der Bayern werden in fränkischen und angelsächsischen Quellen als *duces* bezeichnet, bei Paulus Diaconus daneben aber teilweise auch als *reges* oder *principes*. Auch die Herrscher der Friesen sind, von einer Ausnahme


222 Smith, *Province and Empire*, p. 21.


abgesehen, in den fränkischen Quellen *duces*, während sie in angelsächsischen Quellen zumeist als *reges* bezeichnet werden.\textsuperscript{225}

**Schlussbemerkung**

Der Ursprung und die Herkunft von Völkern sind ein wichtiges Thema in der frühmittelalterlichen Historiographie. Ursprungs- und Migrationsgeschichten, Völkergenealogien, Verwandtschaften zwischen Völkern, die Identifikation verschiedener Völker miteinander und die damit oftmals in Zusammenhang stehende Änderung von politischen Strukturen sind altbekannte Elemente der antiken Ethnographie, die von frühmittelalterlichen Autoren aufgegriffen wurden, um ihre gentile Umwelt zu systematisieren und ins biblische Weltbild zu integrieren. Derartige ethnographische Informationen über fremde *gentes* in der fränkischen merowingerzeitlichen Historiographie können reale ethnische, politische oder soziale Prozesse abbilden oder auch nur biblisches Wissen oder gelehrte Konstruktionen ohne unmittelbaren Bezug zur Realität sein.

So beschreibt die Gleichsetzung von Alemannen und Sueben einen realen ethnischen Prozess, den Zusammenschluss zweier gentiler Gruppen, die zum


Auf die unterschiedliche Wahrnehmung von politischen Strukturen verweist das Beispiel der Bretonen. Dass Gregor von Tours ihre Herrscher *comites* und nicht *reges* nennt, hat ideologische Gründe und soll einen fränkischen

226 Ein vergleichbares Phänomen stellt die spätere Kategorisierung von Bayern, Thüringen usw. als Franken dar.

Die Wahrnehmung fremder gentes in merowingerzeitlichen Quellen erweist sich somit als ein überaus komplexes und uneinheitliches Konglomerat, das auf übernommenem alten Wissen biblischen oder heidnischen Ursprungs, neuen Informationen, eigener Anschauung und jeweiliger Intention basiert.

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I processi di trasformazione da scrittura di ceppo romano a scritture nazionali in ambito epigrafico sono accompagnati da un parallelo cambiamento sia in ambito testuale che nella pratica della trasmissione dei testi.1 Alla trasformazione scrittoria si affianca una nuova percezione dei contenuti e delle scritture che se da una parte creano una evidente cesura con quanto il mondo romano aveva coltivato nel corso dei secoli, dall’altra ne ricalcano le pratiche.2 Questo processo di trasformazione quindi porta in sé un bagaglio culturale imponente costituito da tendenze culturali ora in nitida opposizione fra di loro, ora in sintonia reciproca.3 Ed è da tale processo di fusione, differenziato per aree

1 Sulla trasformazione scrittoria e il particolarismo grafico v. Cencetti, ‘Dall’unità al particolarismo grafico’; sulle scritture nazionali v. De Rubeis, ‘Schriftkultur und Formen graphischer Vermittlung’; De Rubeis, ‘La produzione epigrafica’.

2 De Rubeis, ‘La scrittura delle élites tra crisi e rinnovamento’.

3 Cf. ad esempio la ritualità della memoria funeraria orale, gestuale e scritta, De Rubeis, ‘La memoria e la pietra’.
culturali e per cronologie, scaturiscono nel corso del primo medioevo le specificità nazionali in un movimento di continuo rinnovamento.

Questo modello interpretativo propone una ricostruzione che in realtà percorre non solo l’alto medioevo, ma attraversa buona parte del medioevo e presuppone da un lato una consapevole ripresa di costumi più o meno distanti nei secoli, dall’altro l’adattamento inconsapevole degli stessi schemi culturali a nuove esigenze o meglio, a vecchie esigenze riproposte in nuove vesti e matrici.

In questo panorama in trasformazione si colgono alcuni punti fermi, o diventati tali nella letteratura di settore. Fra questi, il motivo ricorrente della decrescita numerica della produzione epigrafica legata invariabilmente alle trasformazioni sociali e culturali sopravvenute nel corso dei secoli v–viii.

Traducendo in termini numerici il fenomeno, per la sola città di Roma Carlo Carletti propone c. 40,000 iscrizioni prodotte tra III e V secolo, a fronte delle 90,000 classiche contate da Werner Eck il quale ne annovera c. 35,000 per il periodo tardo antico sottolineando inoltre come il 94 percento di queste ultime siano funerarie — dato che peraltro è confrontabile con la produzione precedente con la medesima percentuale di iscrizioni funerarie. Per Luca Cardin la stima della produzione epigrafica romana legata ai cristiani si aggira intorno a 33,000 iscrizioni per l’arco cronologico compreso tra il IV e il X secolo. Nella città di Roma al dato numerico è possibile anche associare un dato distributivo per secoli, con una concentrazione massima nella metà del secolo IV e, proporzionalmente, un declino progressivo che raggiunge il punto critico verso il secolo VIII.

Spostando l’analisi numerica ad altre aree, Mark Handley, nel periodo compreso tra IV e VIII secolo e con riferimento alle epigrafi funerarie dei cristiani, annovera circa 1250 iscrizioni per la Spagna e circa 1500 per la Gallia.

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\[4\] De Rubeis, ‘La scrittura delle élites tra crisi e rinnovamento’. Sull’analfabetismo altomedievale e la sua analisi in seno alle sottoscritizioni dei documenti privati, si rinvia a Petrucci e Romeo, Scriptores in urbis, dove viene indagato sotto più profili, epigrafico, librario e documentario.


\[7\] Cardin, Epigrafia a Roma nel primo medioevo, p. 27.

\[8\] Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 14–17.

\[9\] Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 4–22.
All’interno di queste cifre, è possibile cogliere una più capillare distribuzione, come ad esempio la Gallia che dimostra un vero e proprio crollo circoscivibile entro gli inizi e la prima metà del VII secolo e, sotto il profilo distributivo per area geografica, dove la concentrazione epigrafica fino al secolo VIII riguarda principalmente le regioni della valle del Rodano, le aree di Marsiglia, Arles, Lyon, con una iniziale rarefazione epigrafica diffusa (sec. IV) cui si oppongono i secoli VI–VIII con una maggiore presenza epigrafica.\footnote{Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 184–85.} In opposizione, il caso di Trevi che conserva 921 epigrafi per il periodo tardo antico, ossia la massima concentrazione per la Gallia,\footnote{Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 4–5; Halsall, ‘Burial Writs’, pp. 225–26.} per declinare però immediatamente dopo. Si tratta complessivamente, per la Gallia e per il mondo merovingio, di una produzione relativamente contenuta e prevalentemente concentrata in area urbana, specie se posta in relazione con le vaste necropoli che risultano essere sostanzialmente anepigrafi, quali ad esempio quelle di La Turraque, La Grande Oye a Doubs, Frénouville, per citarne alcune. La necropoli di Luxeuil con 60 sepolture, reca meno di 10 iscrizioni e tutte relative solo a nomi per la fase merovingia; compatibilmente con i risultati degli scavi, allo stato attuale, per il periodo successivo ci si limita a tre casi della fine del secolo VIII più articolati e tutti in scrittura libraria.\footnote{Koch, Inschriftenpaläographie des abendländischen Mittelalters, pp. 61–64.}

In area visigota, il declino per la produzione latina inizia con il secolo V e subisce una sollecitazione in concomitanza con la conquista araba della penisola sebbene le avvisaglie di una differenziazione produttiva si possano già riscontrare per il secolo V (sebbene siano state espresse anche numerose perplessità circa la responsabilità assoluta della crisi epigrafica attribuita alla conquista araba e circa la attendibilità dei dati cronologici raccolti nei corpora epigrafici iberici).\footnote{Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 184–85.} Sarà con il VII secolo che il quadro muterà radicalmente quando, dopo una iniziale ripresa circoscrivibile tra gli inizi e la prima metà del VII secolo, seguirà un primo rallentamento, entro la fine di quel secolo e quindi un crollo deciso tra inizio e fine VIII, dati che sono stati criticamente affrontati e sui quali grava il sospetto di una attribuzione eccessivamente larga per il periodo antecedente il 711 e al contrario eccessivamente stretta per il periodo successivo.\footnote{Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 184–85.} Tenendo conto delle osservazioni di Mark Handley, in ogni caso una flessione generalizzata che coinvolge non solo la Spagna e la Gallia, ma
anche altre aree dell’Europa continentale ed insulare lascerebbero supporre in ogni caso una tendenza al basso. Oscillazioni che sia per la Gallia che per la Spagna trovano spiegazione nelle alternanze, specie nel passaggio tra **vii** e **viii** secolo, delle élites locali al potere. L’instabilità e il frequente avvicendamento dei ‘potenti’ su base locale determinerebbe così una ulteriore flessione della produzione epigrafica.\(^{15}\)

Per l’Italia il quadro complessivo, in termini numerici per la tarda antichità e con l’esclusione della città di Roma, appare vario.\(^{16}\) La cautela segnalata da Handley circa l’attendibilità complessiva dei dati offerti dai *corpora* epigrafici per la tarda antichità rimane valida, non essendo stato effettuato alcun censimento esaustivo dei materiali epigrafici italiani. Ciononostante, ad una analisi parziale, i materiali nella cronologia comprensiva tra periodo tardo antico e primo medioevo evidenziano la consueta concentrazione di iscrizioni per i grandi centri urbani e una rarefazione per le aree rurali. Un numero sostenuto di epigrafi tardo antiche appartiene ad Aquileia (410),\(^{17}\) dopo Roma la seconda — allo stato attuale delle ricerche — città italiana, seguita da Milano, Napoli, Concordia, Como e altre aree. I dati, sebbene non inclusi nel computo di Handley, indicano un netto declino per l’alto medioevo,\(^{18}\) con una flessione decisa a partire dalla fine del **vii** secolo fino al secolo **viii**. Con il secolo **viii** e poi il **ix** si assiste ad una inversione di tendenza (non diffusa in modo omogeneo sul territorio) anche se per questo periodo occorre sottolineare come la produzione complessiva sia da assegnare ai centri urbani (quali Pavia, Benevento, Como, Napoli, Salerno, Roma) con eccezioni nel territorio — quali i centri

\(^{15}\) Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, pp. 181–86.

\(^{16}\) Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, pp. 16–17.

\(^{17}\) Conto complessivo che annovera anche le iscrizioni musive dedicatrici; Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, pp. 16–17.

monastici di San Vincenzo al Volturno e Montecassino, o le chiese legate a piccoli centri nel territorio.

I dati qui presentati, corrispondenti allo stato attuale delle ricerche — e quindi suscettibili di eventuali oscillazioni —, non possono essere presi così come sono senza una riflessione critica. Ora se è vero che l’alfabetismo è stato più capillarmente diffuso nella società romana e che i primi secoli del medioevo conoscono un rallentamento e una mutazione profonda nell’ambito della produzione scrittoria e nella percezione di questa, è altrettanto vero però che il metro di giudizio attualmente applicato alla produzione epigrafica nel suo complesso deve tenere anche conto di fattori diversi non quelli esclusivamente legati all’alfabetismo stesso della società. Fra questi, a rendere il metro di giudizio poco preciso, o quanto meno poco definibile nei propri contorni, un ruolo importante lo ha svolto la distruzione dei materiali epigrafici avvenuta nel corso dei secoli. A questo processo sarà possibile applicare quello che è stato definito da Horst Bredekamp come ‘il principio della distruzione produttiva’,19 con riferimento all’operazione messa in atto da Bramante di distruzione della vecchia basilica costantiniana di San Pietro in Roma a favore di una nuova basilica, nascente quasi dalle rovine — provocate — della precedente.

In questo processo ben documentato e assai praticato di distruzioni e di ricostruzioni, diversi furono i manufatti destinati a subire misera sorte specialmente quando il loro destino era legato a strutture la cui funzione appariva in declino o già lo era: colonne, iscrizioni, altari, materiali distribuiti tra la tarda antichità e il primo medioevo non più utili o riutilizzabili e destinati ad una dispersione imponente. È il riflesso di un atteggiamento forse più diffuso di quanto non si possa pensare ed è un atteggiamento che ha le sue radici lontane nell’attitudine già romana e ancora prima proto-romana e già greca al riuso, o allo spoglio sistematico dei monumenti o delle strutture non più in uso.20

Un secondo elemento è quello relativo ai manufatti sui quali si trova con maggiore frequenza la scrittura esposta.

Ivan Di Stefano Manzella, nel capitolo dedicato alla classificazione dei reperti che possono essere corredati di epigrafi e su di una cronologia che arriva fino al tardo antico, dedica ben 30 pagine ai tipi di manufatti che

19 Dal titolo del libro di Bredekamp, La fabbrica di San Pietro.

20 Cf. la normativa in uso: Codex Theodosianus, ed. Mommsen, ix . 17, pp. 463–66 (De sepulchri violati); Paulus, Sententiae, ed. Baviera, i . 21. 8, ii, p. 335: ‘Qui monumento inscriptos titulos eraserit vel statuam everterit vel quid ex eodem traxerit, lapidem columnamve sustulerit, sepulchrum violasse videtur’.
recano iscrizioni e individua 83 tipologie testuali epigrafiche collegate a questi manufatti.\textsuperscript{21}

Osservando i tipi di manufatti elencati e le varietà testuali individuate e ponendo a confronto l’insieme con la complessiva produzione altomedievale, è possibile una prima ed immediata considerazione: intere classi di manufatti e intere classi di tipologie testuali sono scomparse. Ad esempio, i cippi di acquedotti che ne indicano il tracciato e che ne seguono anche le sorti quando queste strutture cadono in abbandono o comunque non vengono più costruite \textit{ex novo}. I cippi segnaletici, ossia dedicati a rivendicare o a tutelare la proprietà, i quali con il venire meno delle strutture per le quali essi costituiscono il naturale corredo (quali ad esempio possedimenti terrieri, o monumenti familiari, tutelati da precise norme giuridiche) ne seguono la sorte cessando di essere prodotte. Questa classe documenta anche una prassi specifica, ossia la pratica di acquisto in vita delle sepolture per se stessi e per eventuali congiunti o appartenenti al proprio gruppo — tramite un formulario grosso modo fisso caratterizzato dal \textit{sibi fecit et suis}, o \textit{se vivente}, o nelle varianti \textit{se vivus}.\textsuperscript{22} Tale pratica di acquisto ‘se vivente’ della sepoltura non è comune in età precostantiniana, mentre lo diviene a partire dalla seconda metà del secolo \textbf{IV} per raggiungere con il secolo \textbf{V} e \textbf{VI} la massima diffusione, in coincidenza con il massimo sviluppo del culto martiriale nelle catacombe e della tendenza sempre più diffusa a farsi seppellire \textit{ad sanctos}:\textsuperscript{23} questo uso conosce una flessione numerica a partire dal secolo \textbf{VI} e sono rari i casi di sepolcreti familiari documentati per l’alto medioevo con l’esplicita menzione della proprietà o dell’acquisto della sepoltura stessa.

In seno ai monumenti funerari familiari poi, la prassi scrittoria nel medioevo viene ad occupare un posto secondario, quando non del tutto inesistente: veri mausolei visibili della memoria di un gruppo ristretto di persone, tali monumenti appaiono prevalentemente privi di memoria scritta, salvo casi particolari o iscrizioni celebrative di personaggi appartenenti alle \textit{élites}.\textsuperscript{24} Ricorderò l’esempio dell’Ipogeo dei Duni a Poitiers datato variamente tra \textbf{VII}–\textbf{VIII} secolo dove una \textit{élite} locale, recuperando e reinterpretando manufatti di età romana,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Di Stefano Manzella, \textit{Mestiere di epigrafista}, pp. 75–115.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Carletti, \textit{Epigrafia dei cristiani in occidente}, pp. 97–99.
\item \textsuperscript{24} De Rubeis, ‘La scrittura delle \textit{élites} tra crisi e rinnovamento’.
\end{itemize}
lascia memoria scritta di sé. Al contrario, quando in Italia settentrionale tra VIII e IX secolo Totone da Campione e il suo gruppo familiare realizzano per se stessi un mausoleo familiare, alla preoccupazione di redigere correttamente i testamenti per evitare confusioni nelle trasmissioni patrimoniali non affiancano la necessità di affidare alla memoria scritta epigrafica i propri defunti. Ma Totone non appartiene alla alta società longobarda dove al contrario già con la fine del secolo VII i vertici fanno redigere per se stessi, nei propri mausolei familiari, carmina funerari articolati e formalmente ben definiti sia sotto il profilo testuale che sotto il profilo formale — scrittura e apparato decorativo —, sia in Italia settentrionale sia in quello meridionale, come a Pavia, Salerno o a Benevento.

Di diversa natura è invece l’epigrafia che documenta la proprietà di un terreno, quale che sia la destinazione di uso del terreno medesimo e la sua estensione, o disposizioni relative a monumenti sepolcrali. Questa particolare tipologia testuale, volta alla esposizione di un titolo di proprietà diviene rara fino a quasi scomparire con l’alto medioevo: un esempio tardo di iscrizioni relative al possesso di un territorio, o di beni terrieri si trova oggi nel territorio veronese. Si tratta di due cippi segnaletici relativi ad un bosco di proprietà del monastero di San Pietro in Valle, con una datazione posta tra X e XI secolo. Da questa particolare classe epigrafica a carattere segnaletico e relativo ai titoli di proprietà si deve distinguere poi la donazione pro anima che non appartiene alla prassi tardo antica e che invece progressivamente conosce una certa diffusione, almeno a partire dal secolo VIII–IX, e che arriverà non solo a divenire consuetudine, ma consuetudine con proprie regole di ‘topografia’ epigrafica, ossia collocazione strategicamente mirata delle iscrizioni su luoghi deputati, quali i portali delle chiese e comunque all’esterno degli edifici.

Ora, senza proseguire nella esemplificazione delle classi di epigrafi scomparse o mutate nel corso dei secoli v–viii, vorrei solo sottolineare come nella valutazione del fenomeno di contrazione si debba tenere conto delle distruzioni intenzionali o casuali dei materiali epigrafici; e che tali variabili conseguentemente debbano indurre cautela nella interpretazione dei dati numerici e quantitativi, fermo restando che senza nessun dubbio la produzione epigrafica medievale se posta a confronto con quella di età romana risulta in ogni caso perdente, sotto il profilo quantitativo.

Tenuto conto di queste variabili, anticipo qui i risultati proposti.

Il confronto tra scritture e aree di insediamento di gruppi estesi dopo una iniziale fase di adattamento, cui corrisponde una linea evolutiva della prassi epigrafica sostanzialmente omogenea nelle forme e nei contenuti in ambito europeo (variabile per luoghi, gruppi e dinamiche di assorbimento delle culture scritte), permette di riconoscere aree scrittorie uniformi all’interno di territori definiti e riconoscibili come di pertinenza di gruppi specifici (merovingi, longobardi, visigoti, britanni e poi anglo-sassoni per macro aree scrittorie, con le rispettive scritture merovingiche, visigotiche, longobarde e insulari). Questo fenomeno trova poi assoluta corrispondenza con quanto si andava precisando, nelle medesime cronologie, in ambito librario.30

In queste macro aree scrittorie estese e omogenee al proprio interno (per i sistemi grafici li utilizzati) è possibile riconoscere un legame esistente tra gruppi sociali e scritture in uso. Tale legame, all’interno di una cronologia collocabile tra v e vii secolo (ma con dinamiche differenziate per aree come si vedrà qui di seguito), inizialmente appare instabile ma, con i successivi secoli tra viii–ix, si consolida fino a permettere il riconoscimento di dirette e precise relazioni tra gruppi sociali e iscrizioni appartenenti o prodotte nei loro territori.

Il riconoscimento del preciso legame élites/epigrafi permette di meglio comprendere i momenti e le modalità delle oscillazioni quantitative che interessano il periodo nel suo complesso, ossia v–ix secolo.

La rarefazione della produzione epigrafica, il cui picco al basso è generalmente circoscrivibile al secolo vii, si accompagna ad un parallelo fenomeno di differenziazione sociale degli individui presenti nelle epigrafi, fenomeno che è possibile seguire secondo uno schema evolutivo preciso. In particolare questa selezione ‘naturale’ dei committenti e dei gruppi sociali orienta progressivamente l’utilizzo della scrittura alle sole élites, indipendentemente dalla funzione, dalle forme e dai contenuti delle epigrafi medesime e, parallelamente,

elimina del tutto gli individui non ascrivibili a quei livelli sociali dal contesto della produzione epigrafica.

Questo processo di divaricazione della committenza alta da quella media o bassa inizia con il V secolo e sfocia nel VII con la totale scomparsa dei livelli sociali bassi dalla produzione epigrafica (si veda il caso di Roma con il massimo di produzione, in ambito funerario dei cristiani e relativamente a iscrizioni datate, nella metà del secolo IV, indipendentemente dal committente, dato che porterà alla scomparsa delle classi meno abbienti dalle testimonianze scritte a partire dal VII secolo).

In stretta corrispondenza con il legame stabilito tra committenza e produzione epigrafica la scrittura sembra infine arrivare, a partire dal secolo VII in poi (sempre per aree e con modalità differenziate), ad essere utilizzata in maniera consapevole per manifestare l’appartenenza dei committenti a precisi livelli sociali e sembra essere legata — in riferimento alla scrittura nella sua accezione morfologica — a esigenze di carattere ‘pubblicistico’.

In conseguenza di questo ultimo dato la scrittura appare direttamente legata a gruppi sociali specifici, finendo con l’indicare una corrispondenza tra produzione grafica e identità culturale, area per area e divenendo in tal modo un marcatore culturale.31

Da tale tendenza evolutiva del rapporto scrittura-società, è possibile poi identificare la presenza di fenomeni di instabilità grafica legati direttamente a episodi di ‘turbolenza’ sociale. In particolare, a periodi di maggiore instabilità socio-politica corrisponde una rarefazione nella produzione epigrafica e, in alcuni casi, anche di mutamenti grafici o cambiamenti — al basso — della qualità scrittoria.32

Esemplare sotto questo profilo è il territorio italiano (per la cronologia che partendo dal secolo VII arriva fino al secolo IX) al cui interno si distinguono differenti sistemi scrittori legati ai territori longobardi — o sottoposti all’influenza culturale di questi — o sottoposti all’influenza della cultura romana. In generale la distribuzione territoriale delle iscrizioni sembra indicare una maggiore concentrazione di epigrafi all’interno dei centri urbani rispetto alle aree rurali le quali generalmente risultano povere in fonti epigrafiche, salvo casi sporadici: ricordo ad esempio le iscrizioni di, o concentrazioni legate a, monasteri distribuiti in aree rurali (cito per esempio Montecassino, Bobbio o San Vincenzo al Volturno). All’interno di questo territorio, il quadro distributivo

31 De Rubeis, ‘La cultura per le élites’. Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 181–86.
32 De Rubeis, ‘Epigrafia femminile’.
delle epigrafi rivela delle oscillazioni legate a specifiche aree, in particolare il cosiddetto corridoio bizantino (ossia quella area che, attraversando diagonalmente l’Italia, congiunge Ravenna e Roma), e l’Italia meridionale longobarda e bizantina. Nel primo caso, ossia il corridoio bizantino, le instabilità e le oscillazioni scrittorie sono attestate quasi esclusivamente nella fascia di collegamento, mentre ne risultano quasi esenti le città alle estremità opposte. In area longobarda, ad una fase iniziale di adattamento della società longobarda alla cultura grafica romanica preesistente, si possono individuare aree di maggiore stabilità nella scrittura e nei formulari (corrispondenti generalmente ai grandi centri urbani quali ad esempio Pavia, Brescia, Benevento, Salerno), in opposizione ad aree di maggiore variabilità scrittoria (con una accentuazione per l’Italia centro-meridionale nel ducato di Spoleto e, per periodi specifici di crisi sociale, Benevento e Salerno) direttamente connessa con le instabilità sociali legate a quelle aree.

Il medesimo atteggiamento, ma con variazioni decisamente più evidenti, si può cogliere in seno alla produzione epigrafica nelle Isole Britanniche nel periodo tra V e VI secolo e, più tardi, fino al VII secolo. Qui il passaggio tra scritture di derivazione romana verso forme ibride (sia sotto il profilo grafico che impaginativo)33 assume dimensioni macroscopiche e il fenomeno poi assume maggiore peso se valutato in ordine alla distribuzione geografica delle epigrafi. Queste infatti risultano essere concentrate in quelle aree dove più lontana era stata la presenza romana e sono iscrizioni prevalentemente funerarie con un formulario ridotto ai soli dati biometrici dell’inumato: per queste specifiche caratteristiche e per la loro area di produzione il fenomeno è stato posto in collegamento con gli spostamenti massicci delle popolazioni sotto la pressione sassone verso aree prima scarsamente romanizzate.34

Oscillazioni nella produzione epigrafica poi sono state rilevate anche con riferimento alla complessiva produzione merovingia e visigota,35 laddove Handley analizzando le oscillazioni pone l’accento in particolare sulle committenze laiche ed ecclesiastiche e sulla loro capacità di intervenire sulla complessiva produzione epigrafica. Le tabelle riportate dallo studioso indicano in effetti una discrepanza oggettiva tra iscrizioni connesse con gli ambiti produttivi laici e quelli religiosi evidenziando anche, attraverso l’analisi delle titolature ripor-

35 Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, pp. 35–64, in particolare il capitolo 4 dedicato alla complessa relazione tra produzione epigrafica e aristocrazia, laica ed ecclesiastica.
tate dai materiali presi in esame, la linea di tendenza che vede progressivamente in ascesa le epigrafi legate alle élites laiche ed ecclesiastiche rispetto a quelle prive di qualifica sociale specifica. E in secondo luogo si possono rilevare con precisione all’interno di questo spostamento della produzione epigrafica verso la fascia alta della società lo stacco progressivo che indica per i laici una posizione numericamente ridotta rispetto a quella degli ecclesiastici (o comunque di individui di sesso maschile e femminile agenti nel quadro complessivo della sfera religiosa). Il quadro offerto da Handley volutamente non tiene conto delle qualità grafiche e scultoree delle iscrizioni riportate a campione, argomento che riveste tuttavia una precisa valenza sociale per le aree esaminate, come si vedrà qui di seguito.

Diversamente dalle tendenze evolutive che, come si è visto, indicano notevoli differenze tra le varie aree prese in esame, un elemento le accomuna tutte: lo spostamento da spazi aperti — di tradizione romana — verso spazi chiusi, secondo quel fenomeno che è stato definito da Armando Petrucci di ‘ecclesi-lizzazione’ della scrittura. 36

Il fenomeno dello spostamento degli spazi riveste un ruolo particolare e preciso in seno alle società che quelle epigrafi hanno prodotto.

Se, come è stato sostenuto, il processo di esposizione delle scritture tende a privilegiare, per l’alto medioevo, gli spazi chiusi e più in particolare le strutture ecclesiastiche (siano esse connesse con le chiese siano esse monastiche), tuttavia ritengo che questo processo sia legato non solo ad un fenomeno di alfabetismo sempre più vicino agli ecclesiastici e sempre più lontano dai laici. Ritengo infatti che lo spostamento sia da porre in stretta correlazione con il nuovo rapporto che nel corso del medioevo si andava instaurando tra Chiesa e poteri locali. E tra ecclesiastici e laici, dove lo spostamento dei centri di potere acquisisce all’epigrafia nuove topografie che non prevedono più un unico baricentro — sia esso laico sia esso ecclesiastico — dove collocare le scritture, quanto piuttosto differenti topografie epigrafiche strettamente correlate con il momento di produzione, l’autorità locale e i rapporti che questa o queste intrattengono fra di loro. Si assiste in questo caso ad una vera strategia topografica degli spazi delle scritte, una rappresentazione grafica voluta e non casuale.

Poiché esigenza prima di chi fa apporre un’iscrizione all’interno di determinati contesti non è tanto quella di celebrare la propria memoria o la memoria del proprio agire mediante iscrizioni poco visibili, o poco fruibili, quanto piuttosto rendere visibile ad altri il proprio operato, ne consegue che la collocazione

36 Petrucci, Le scritture ultime, p. 50.
assume un ruolo di primaria importanza: sotto tale aspetto la scelta del luogo dove apporre iscrizioni è fondamentale. In linea di massima le scritture compaiono laddove è più probabile che lettori occasionali, e non, possano accedere, almeno visivamente, come le recinzioni presbiteriali, le pergulae, per non parlare di portali e finestre, o programmi decorativi; più raramente altari, e ancora più raramente le iscrizioni dedicatorie apposte sugli altari stessi. In secondo luogo, tali scritture oscillano, nella presenza, tra periodi a maggiore concentrazione numerica e periodi dove le scritture sono quasi solo limitate alle iscrizioni didascaliche, con buona pace dei committenti.

Ora, mentre per le scritture didascaliche non si afferrano sensibili differenze con le eventuali collocazioni delle iscrizioni che compaiono all’interno delle strutture ecclesiastiche, per le due categorie successive (dedicatorie e commorative), al contrario, è possibile cogliere attraverso i secoli tendenze fra di loro differenti.

Le iscrizioni dedicatorie designano, per definizione, il committente, o i committenti, di un determinato altare o arredo ecclesiastico. Non è frequente per i secoli dell’alto medioevo avere notizia di committenti registrati su altari; al contrario, sarà con il secolo X, e con maggiore vigore a partire dal secolo XI, che si avrà una vera e propria impennata scrittoria, con un numero crescente di iscrizioni dedicatorie (ferma restando la cautela imposta dalle scomparse di manufatti), anche se occorre precisare che il luogo privilegiato per le iscrizioni dedicatorie rimane comunque quello più accessibile allo sguardo del lettore occasionale, generalmente individuabile in luoghi elevati tali da consentire una lettura a distanza del testo inciso, o in alternativa, una collocazione in posizione tale da rendere quasi obbligata alvisitatore (alfabeta, ovviamente), la lettura del testo.

Sotto questo profilo vorrei citare il caso del Santuario di Santa Maria in Vescovio, presso Farfa nel Lazio, in particolare l’area del presbiterio che ha subìto nel corso dei secoli vari rimaneggiamenti, a partire dal secolo VIII exequente. Conseguente uno dei rimaneggiamenti, al di sotto dell’altare, alla medesima quota della cripta anulare è visibile una iscrizione realizzata su materiale di reimpiego, inserita a ridosso delle reliquie dei martiri. Lungo il margine, in senso di lettura opposto rispetto al lettore occasionale, corre una iscrizione dedicatoria di un laico, un non identificato conte Giovanni. Sempre sul medesimo altare, ma questa volta nell’area del presbiterio, probabilmente esito di rimaneggiamenti dei secoli XI–XII, corrono altre iscrizioni, questa volta con sola funzione didascalica o esegetica lungo il lato destro dell’altare. Una terza iscrizione, rivolta verso la navata, anch’essa in origine probabilmente con medesima funzione esegetica sovrastava le due figure.
Nessuna iscrizione corre lungo il lato rivolto all’abside, rendendo così, di fatto, i testi visibili e destinati alla comunità.

Spostando l’attenzione invece sulle iscrizioni commemorative, il quadro diventa più complesso.

Esempi sotto questo profilo le iscrizioni legate agli altari.

Innanzitutto le scritture degli altari e per gli altari hanno due collocazioni fisiche diverse — e come tali anche le scritture sono profondamente differenti, come ho già ricordato in precedenza. Una prima tipologia epigrafica, normalmente residente internamente alle casse reliquiario, consiste nella maggior parte dei casi in tabelle plumbee, o comunque metalliche, atte a raccogliere la notizia del santo o dei santi li conservati in forma di reliquia. Raramente tali iscrizioni assurgono al rango delle iscrizioni lapidee e per morfologia scrittoria sono generalmente poco curate e in ogni caso assumendo la qualifica di iscrizioni ricognitive e chiuse con le reliquie stesse non sono destinate alla lettura pubblica; per questi manufatti sarà opportuno ricordare che una significativa impennata si ha a partire dal secolo x ma soprattutto dall’XI. Ricordo anche qui a titolo esemplificativo la memoria dei Santi Vittore e Corona presso l’omonimo santuario a Feltre (Belluno), una tabella di piombo eseguita nel secolo XI esente che riferisce della traslazione delle reliquie ad opera di Teodoro martire, nonché della deposizione ad opera del vescovo Solino, lamina eseguita con ogni probabilità per volere del vescovo Arpone. Sempre sul medesimo santuario, l’iscrizione commemorativa della consacrazione del santuario ai santi Vittore e Corona ad opera del vescovo Arpone e la ricognizione delle reliquie ad opera del vescovo di Feltre e Belluno, Iacobo giunta in copia del 1355, in veste epigrafica, di un testo del 1101. In questo caso, la volontà precisa da parte del vescovo è di dare visibilità completa alla propria opera e allo scopo l’iscrizione viene collocata all’esterno dell’altare (ritengo la collocazione attuale del manufatto identica a quella del perduto originale) e, perché possa essere letta da tutti, rivolta verso la navata.

I casi che ho citato qui a pura esemplificazione di altre realtà indagate per il territorio italiano indicano per gli altari una prudente campagna di scrittura, che vede comunque protagoniste assolute le iscrizioni esegetiche, quindi le iscrizioni didascaliche e in terza posizione, le iscrizioni legate ai committenti. E fra questi ultimi, una micro gerarchia, che vede i laici in netta minoranza rispetto agli ecclesiastici, a conferma che a poter agire nel cuore del sacro siano solo gli ecclesiastici e i laici possano intervenire, generalmente, solo in posi-

zione subordinata. Varrà la pena di rilevare come la presenza delle iscrizioni legate ai laici sia, di norma, su strutture di arredo ecclesiastico in posizione marginale rispetto a quelle degli ecclesiastici.

Una conferma, sotto questo specifico aspetto viene da una classe particolare di manufatti, le casse reliquiario e le mense di altare.

A Verona, presso S. Fermo e Rustico, è conservata la cassa reliquiario dei due martiri. La cassa, plumbea, reca lungo i lati esterni, la ricognizione delle reliquie e la data presumta di arrivo delle reliquie, ossia immediatamente a ridosso del 774, essendo nominati il re longobardo Desiderio e il figlio correggente. Unitamente alla ricognizione delle reliquie, compaiono firme, o meglio i nomi di numerosi personaggi, circa quaranta fra uomini e donne, i quali personaggi fanno incidere il proprio nome all’esterno della cassa; all’interno, a diretto contatto delle reliquie, la firma di un presbitero.38 Si tratta di un documento che assume quasi valore ufficiale, non la semplice ricognizione delle reliquie. Non è certamente una pratica devozionale, ma riproduce su scala decisamente ridotta la stessa dinamica di collocazione fisica delle scritture distinguendo quasi l’area dei laici (esterna al contatto con le reliquie dei martiri) rispetto a quella ecclesiastica (interna e a diretto contatto con le reliquie medesime). Un caso analogo è testimoniato in Francia per il X secolo a Vivès en Roussillon,39 dove sulla cassa in stucco si riscontra la medesima mappatura grafica di Verona: i presbiteri sono collocati internamente, mentre i laici compaiono, uomini e donne, ma anche presbiteri, all’esterno. Si registra una anteriorità della cassa di Verona rispetto alla cassa di Vivès en Roussillon, discrepanza confermata anche dalla documentazione che per le aree d’oltralpe, quali la Francia, registra tale pratica a partire dal secolo X o XI e con una concentrazione maggiore nell’area meridionale, in Catalogna e tenuto conto che il più antico testimone di questa pratica della registrazione su lipsanoteca è fatto risalire ad una datazione incerta tra VII e IX secolo, scoperta a Roc d’Enclar e conservata a Santa Colonna (Andorra)40 e reca non una sequenza di nomi bensì una citazione biblica.

E a stabilire una ulteriore differenza, i nomi incisi sulla cassa di Verona sembrano più legati, a mio parere, ad una documentazione relativa alla ricognizione


39 Treffort, Mémoires carolingiennes, pp. 50–52.

40 Treffort, Mémoires carolingiennes, pp. 50–51.
delle reliquie che non ad una pratica devozionale che vede coinvolti eventuali committenti, come sembrerebbero essere invece i casi francesi.

Un caso differente è costituito, come ho già richiamato in precedenza, dai graffi incisi o scritti a inchiostro, direttamente sulla mensa d’altare.

Questa pratica è nota anche al di là delle Alpi, come il caso scoperto nel 1978 a Reichenau-Niederzell, sul lago di Costanza, con incisi o scritti ad inchiostro, i nominativi di presbiteri a partire dal secolo IX, per citare uno fra i più noti. Alla medesima cronologia si deve legare ancora una volta il santuario di Santa Maria in Vescovio, dove sulla mensa d’altare sono registrati, scritti ad inchiostro, i nominativi di presbiteri in minuscola carolina.

La topografia delle testimonianze scritte sulla mensa d’altare del santuario di Vescovio appare analoga a quella della Reichenau: una maggiore concentrazione ai margini della mensa d’altare, presumibilmente intorno al calice o alla patena, zona privilegiata per accogliere tali registrazioni, come è stato rilevato da Cécile Treffort. La maggiore concentrazione dei nomi di Vescovio appare distribuita lungo il margine sinistro della mensa d’altare e un numero esiguo nel lato destro (tracce esigue), con una assenza totale nella area centrale della mensa. Questo uso sembrerebbe essere legato alla pratica memoratoria, con la recitazione delle preghiere per i presbiteri registrati sulla mensa d’altare al momento della liturgia, come è stato suggerito per le mense d’oltralpe.

Sembrerebbe così potersi ipotizzare una topografia delle scritture, legata di volta in volta ad esigenze differenti. Dalla pratica memoratoria delle mense d’altare, che sembrerebbe essere concentrata nei secoli IX–X per poi declinare progressivamente nei secoli successivi, si passa alla logica delle collocazioni che vedono una precisa mappatura legata alla sacralità del supporto scrittorio.

In questa topografia delle iscrizioni, il posto assegnato ai laici sembrerebbe essere di coronamento rispetto a quello pertinente l’area del sacro, intende con questo anche le iscrizioni esegetiche e didascaliche. Questa pratica dello scrivere sui manufatti, almeno per i secoli alti del medioevo, sembra inoltre preferire collocazioni visibili anche a distanza, mentre per gli altari tali prassi sembrerebbe essere meno praticata, ai fini della visibilità a distanza e conseguentemente trova maggiore spiegazione se ricondotta all’ambito strettamente ecclesiastico (ad esempio, con la pratica della lettura memoratoria, delle preghiere per i defunti).

41 Si veda Geuenich e Neumüllers-Klauser, Die Altarplatte.
42 Treffort, Mémoires carolingiennes, pp. 58–63.
Lo spostamento fisico delle scritture dei laici, come dimostrano gli esempi qui citati, prevede quindi una sorta di ‘area di rispetto’ per le iscrizioni legate agli ecclesiastici che, almeno in una cronologia collocabile per i primi secoli del medioevo, porta ad ampliare il concetto di ecclesializzazione della scrittura così come inteso da Armando Petrucci, introducendo al fianco dello spostamento fisico della scrittura all’interno degli spazi ecclesiastici, anche il concetto di scritture legate agli ecclesiastici e gli spazi ad essi dedicati — o riservati.

In questa ottica, gli spostamenti degli spazi dedicati ad accogliere le epigrafi se messi in stretta correlazione con i committenti delle epigrafi inoltre permettono di identificare aree geopolitiche piuttosto definite.

In Croazia e in Italia settentrionale alto-adriatica e poi, più in generale nell’Italia longobarda settentrionale e meridionale, è possibile osservare una significativa presenza laica attiva soprattutto nell’atto di dedica e di donazione di arredi ecclesiastici, se non di fondazione di strutture ecclesiastiche o monastiche. Tale presenza acquista proporzioni degne di essere ricordate. In particolare la produzione a cavallo tra IX e X secolo indica una consistente presenza di laici per l’area della Dalmazia, cui si devono numerosi elementi di arredo liturgico, con una presenza di iscrizioni dedicatrici attestata intorno al 70 percento della complessiva produzione tra IX e XI secolo,43 di queste, per il secolo IX, su 22 iscrizioni dedicatrici, ben 17 appartengono ai laici e sono eseguite all’interno di materiali destinati agli arredi liturgici.44 Fra i laici, una massiccia presenza di iscrizioni dedicatrici datanti all’era del sovrano (dux); alle élites appartengono le epigrafi con le menzioni anche del gruppo familiare (moglie, figli eventuali). Il numero maggiore delle epigrafi compare con la seconda metà del secolo IX, ossia successivo all’879, anno del riconoscimento del duca Branimiro da parte del papa Giovanni VIII e, come è stato suggerito da Vedrana Delonga, questa crescita e concentrazione tra IX e X secolo potrebbe essere l’esito di una strategia della visibilità da parte dell’appena riconosciuto sovrano croato.45

Alla medesima strategia si possono poi ascrivere le menzioni, in sede di datazione, dei sovrani sia in ambito merovingio, sia in ambito longobardo.

Un atteggiamento analogo si riscontra in Italia, dove però si può risalire già al secolo VIII per individuare laici attivi in ambito epigrafico. Alle attività del re Liutprando (713–44) e alla prolissa produzione epigrafica legata alla sua persona individuata da Nick Everett,46 sarà indispensabile affiancare ed esten-
dere a diverse epoche e a diversi sovrani e alle élites longobarde tale attitudine. A Cividale del Friuli, presso la basilica di Santa Maria Assunta, è conservato l’altare del duca Ratchis (737–44), sul quale compare una lunga iscrizione dedicatoria databile agli anni di ducato; sempre presso la medesima basilica è conservato il battistero del patriarca Callisto (737–56): gli evangelisti che vi compaiono, resi mediante simboli, recano codici aperti sui quali sono state incise delle citazioni dal Carmen paschale di Celio Sedulio; sempre sul medesimo manufatto compare l’iscrizione dedicatoria del patriarca Sigualdo (756–86). A Murano, presso la chiesa dei Santi Maria e Donato, un gruppo di iscrizioni risalenti ad una cronologia collocabile entro la prima metà del secolo IX ricorda le donazioni di arredi da parte di più gruppi familiari, fra i quali se ne riconosce uno, probabilmente da identificare con quello del tribuno Domenico e della moglie Costanza ricordati nell’iscrizione di una pergula parzialmente reimpiegata all’esterno dell’abside nel restauro del secolo XII. Ad una cronologia precedente si devono le epigrafi del gastaldo Radoald, vir magnificus, incisa su di una vasca di età romana e da questo stesso fatta riconvertire in vasca per la pubblica utilità attribuita al secolo VIII e coeva all’iscrizione dedicatoria dell’arredo liturgico di San Giorgio in Valpolicella del gastaldo Refol, opera del magister Ursus. Scendendo poi verso l’Italia centrale, si ricorderà la committenza del duca Ilderico registrata su di un pluteo in San Pietro in Valle a Ferentillo (Terni) della prima metà del secolo VIII. L’elenco potrebbe estendersi ulteriormente passando verso l’Italia meridionale. Per i territori fuori dalle due aree indicate, le testimonianze di manufatti da collegarsi all’evergetismo laico sono più rari. Situazione che appare confermata, sebbene in ambito differente, anche dalle iscrizioni funerarie presenti in Gallia e in Spagna dove il rapporto tra laici ed ecclesiastici appare in netto favore per questi ultimi: le tabelle di Handley indicano infatti per la Gallia tra tarda antichità e primo medioevo un rapporto di 152 iscrizioni che menzionano laici a fronte di 312 epigrafi per gli ecclesiastici; per la Spagna, a parità di cronologia, 60 laici e 390 ecclesiastici; tra VII secolo e prima metà del secolo VIII in Gallia si registrano 17 epigrafi con la esplicita

47 De Rubeis, ‘La scrittura epigrafica in età longobarda’; De Rubeis, ‘Le forme dell’epigrafia funeraria longobarda’.
48 Inscriptiones Medii Aevi Italiae, III: Veneto, Belluno, Treviso, Vicenza, ed. De Rubeis, no. 65.
menzione di laici a fronte di 44 epigrafi menzionanti ecclesiastici ed in Spagna, per la medesima cronologia si registrano 14 epigrafi per i laici contro 90 per gli ecclesiastici, secondo un rapporto percentuale che si mantiene stabile nel corso dei secoli. Le cifre riferite sono da collocarsi all’interno della produzione funeraria, ma se si sposta l’indagine sul profilo della produzione di altra categoria (dedicatoria in primo luogo), si noterà che l’epigrafia laica tende a scendere ulteriormente quasi alla scomparsa per il periodo che intercorre tra VII e VIII secolo per le aree indicate, mentre per l’Italia longobarda la presenza dei laici all’interno dell’epigrafia altra che non la funeraria appare rimanere piuttosto stabile (sebbene sia doveroso richiamare l’attenzione che rispetto alla complessiva produzione epigrafica per i secoli VII–VIII esiste il rapporto percentuale tra epigrafi funerarie ed epigrafi di altro contesto indica una netta superiorità per le prime sulle seconde).

Sempre rispetto al medesimo concetto di spazi aperti e spazi chiusi inoltre occorre una ulteriore precisazione, ossia verificare se sotto il profilo della produzione epigrafica sia lecito parlare di solo e semplice spostamento degli spazi e dei contenuti delle epigrafi, o se non sia più corretto pensare a piuttosto ai processi di diversificazione, di trasformazione o di adattamenti di modelli ‘epigrafici’ e ai moventi, ossia alla scelta selettiva degli spazi da occupare.

Come già sottolineato, sembrerebbe potersi individuare spazio connesso con il sacro — di norma occupato da ecclesiastici — e spazio connesso e concesso ai laici. L’esempio delle scritture collocate sulle casse reliquiario sembrano infatti riverberarsi su più ampia scala sugli edifici stessi delle chiese, laddove all’interno la presenza dei laici appare più rarefatta rispetto a quella degli ecclesiastici mentre, al contrario l’esterno delle chiese sembra porre a pari condizioni laici ed ecclesiastici. Dal piccolo spazio costituito dal reliquiario, si passa all’altare e quindi al ciborio. L’altare, come si è già visto, appare riservato agli ecclesiastici, mentre sui cibori visibili a distanza, sono possibili i nomi dei laici, come testimoniano le numerose iscrizioni apposte su pergulate e cibori in Croazia, nel corso del secolo IX, che sembrano costituire una eccezione quasi (per l’elevato numero), anche se occorre precisare come in Italia non manchino esempi di cibori recanti dediche dei laici. Il fenomeno non appare nei manufatti provenienti dalla Gallia e pochi sono quelli provenienti dalla Spagna, dove la collocazione cronologica deve essere fatta risalire ai secoli VI–VII.

Per l’Italia inoltre una particolare produzione isola la cultura grafica rispetto alle realtà qui prese in esame, una consuetudine legata ad una vera e propria

51 Handley, Death, Society and Culture, pp. 45–64.
strategia della visibilità. Mi riferisco in particolare all’uso delle iscrizioni monumentali apposte all’esterno degli edifici dove i committenti o i dedicatari possono appartenere ad entrambe le categorie — ecclesiastici e laici —, sempre rimanendo a livello di élites, beninteso.

Si tratta di tre iscrizioni monumentali, più una quarta andata probabilmente perduta nel corso del secolo XVI, attribuibili ai secoli VIII–IX (in almeno due casi una valenza fortemente ideologica, ossia le due iscrizioni dedicatorie di laici apposte su strutture ecclesiastiche, l’epigrafe dedicatoria del re Liutprando sul San Salvatore di Brescia e l’iscrizione del principe di Benevento Arechi II — 774/87 — a San Pietro a Corte a Salerno). Queste iscrizioni, caratterizzate da particolari tecniche di lavorazione di tradizione romana classica (lettere in bronzo dorato incastonate con perni di sostegno all’interno di solchi incisi a sezione rettangolare), non trovano riscontro in altre aree almeno fino al secolo IX, quando appariranno iscrizioni dedicatorie all’esterno dei monumenti prive della caratteristica della monumentalità delle iscrizioni longobarde e realizzate solo su lastre e non su fasce iscritte. Alla ripresa ideologica della monumentalità dell’epigrafe arriveranno i Carolingi in una epoca successiva cui affiancheranno anche l’uso della capitale epigrafica ripresa puntualmente dalla tradizione epigrafica imperiale romana. Si noterà tuttavia che l’uso delle iscrizioni monumentali, così come presso i Longobardi, non conoscerà presso i Carolingi la medesima filologica e puntuale ripresa dal mondo romano: l’unic iscrizione monumentale conosciuta allo stato attuale deve essere datata alla fine del secolo IX, proveniente da Corvey sul Weser, in bronzo dorato, probabilmente destinata alla chiesa abbaziale.

52 Tempietto al Clitunno (Spoleto), sec. VIII; San Vincenzo al Volturno (prov. Isernia), San Vincenzo maggiore, sec. IX in.; San Pietro a Corte (Salerno), sec. VIII ex.
Alla committenza dei laici, che, come si è visto, appare piuttosto articolata per luoghi e cronologie, si potrà poi affiancare la medesima presenza dei laici in un differente contesto, quello dei sistemi di datazione su usi locali, al sovrano. Il sistema, come è noto, ha sostituito il precedente sistema di datazione di età romana, andando ad affiancare l’indizione in sostituzione dell’età del conso- lato, sebbene con modalità e tempi differenziati.57

Come è stato sottolineato, a proposito dei committenti laici e della loro crescita in sede di produzione epigrafica in Croazia tra la fine del secolo IX e la prima metà del secolo X, la presenza dei laici nel corso dei secoli VII–VIII, in sede di datazione, assume anche questa una differente connotazione se vista nell’ottica della relazione tra cronologia, territorio e insediamenti.

Alle tipizzazioni sociali della produzione epigrafica infatti, si aggiungono usi localizzati testuali per i quali la mappatura, partendo da un terreno comune di formulari standardizzati e diffusi, assume una fisionomia variegata per aree e cronologie differenti, aderente alla distribuzione cronologica e topografica brevemente riassunta in precedenza.

Si prendano gli usi cronologici di datazione dove, come ha evidenziato Jean Durliat58 e dove è tornato Mark Handley,59 sono ben visibili tali localismi: Gallia e Spagna datano al sovrano locale già con la metà del secolo VI (per la Spagna al regno di Atanagildo a. 558,60 per la Gallia, al regno di Teuderico a. 511 o 526,61 o per Durliat già con il 496); in Italia le iscrizioni recanti la datazione al regno goto già con il 538 (iscrizioni dei re Teoderico, Atalarico ad esempio, realizzate su manufatti edilizi)62 e poi di età longobarda (iscrizione del re Agilulfo, a. 590–616).63 Il gruppo delle epigrafi datanti al sovrano, inoltre, sono generalmente iscrizioni dedicatorie e più raramente ritrova questo specifico sistema di datazione su iscrizioni funerarie. In Spagna su 19 epigrafi recanti

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60 Iscrizione proveniente da Asan, Tarragona, ed. Vives, no. 284.
61 Iscrizione proveniente da Coudes (Puy-de-Dôme), conservata attualmente presso il Museo Bargoin a Clermont-Ferrand: Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule VIII: Aquitaine première, ed. Prévot, no. VIII. 52, pp. 183–85.
l’era del sovrano, solo 7 sono funerarie; in Gallia le iscrizioni recanti la menzione del sovrano per la data sono invece tutte funerarie.\(^{64}\)

In Croazia le iscrizioni datanti all’era del sovrano partono dall’888 e si registra una netta crescita dell’uso dell’era del sovrano a partire da questa data.\(^{65}\) Delle 17 iscrizioni dedicatorie appartenenti a laici, ben 8 recano la datazione secondo l’era del sovrano, con una cronologia compresa tra 888 e fine del secolo IX. Poche le epigrafi funerarie recanti questo sistema di datazione.


All’era di Carlo Magno si farà risalire un frammento di arco di ciborio, conservato a Cortona e datato tradizionalmente sulla base testuale all’800–14:\(^ {67}\) ma si trattò di un manufatto eccezionale, sotto il profilo della datazione all’era del sovrano carolingio, così come lo saranno i manufatti datati all’era dei sovrani successivi.

Si dovrà aspettare il secolo IX perché un uso singolo torni ad essere diffuso al di sopra delle singole aree culturali, ossia l’anno della Natività,\(^ {68}\) criterio che riporterà con differenti tempi e modalità ad una unificazione formulare destinata a rimanere salda nel corso del medioevo. La consuetudine di datare all’anno della Natività in ambito epigrafico si diffuse, in realtà, solo a partire dal secolo IX per le aree d’oltralpe, mentre in Italia cominciò a divenire pratica comune con la metà del IX: risalgono a questo periodo infatti alcuni fra i più antichi testimoni, quali le iscrizioni di Pola (857), di Como (893), di Parma (895), Brescia (897), quindi Milano, a partire dal 900.\(^ {69}\) In Croazia, come già ricordato, si ha la prima attestazione all’anno della Natività con l’888 (Muc, Dalmazia centrale) in una epigrafe dedicatoria del duca Branimiro.\(^ {70}\)

\(^{64}\) Handley, *Death, Society and Culture*, p. 124.

\(^{65}\) Tratto i dati da Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*.

\(^{66}\) Ad esempio, Sirmione, Castello Scaligero, arco di ciborio con iscrizione, datato 756–74 all’era del sovrano Desiderio associato con Adelchi.

\(^{67}\) Cortona, Museo dell’Accademia Etrusca.


\(^{70}\) Delonga, *The Latin Epigraphic Monuments*, no. 91, pl. xlii, p. 133.
È evidente da questa esemplificazione, che l’era locale datante ai sovrani è direttamente collegata non tanto ai primi insediamenti nei territori romanizzati da parte di nuovi gruppi sociali, quanto piuttosto ad una fase di stabilizzazione di queste popolazioni nei nuovi territori e soprattutto al loro riconoscimento ‘ufficiale’ (si pensi al caso qui citato dell’epigrafe di Carlo Magno). Per le popolazioni romaniche l’utilizzo dell’età dell’impero non risultava possibile anche e soprattutto in riferimento ai nuovi gruppi che si andavano sostituendo ai Romani stessi. E del resto, come è stato sottolineato da Jean Durliat, una datazione all’era locale del sovrano sarebbe stata poco accorta in una fase di consolidamento dei nuovi poteri e di ricostruzione di nuovi equilibri e solo con il consolidamento e il riconoscimento ufficiale si arriva alla datazione secondo il nuovo sistema.71 Sotto questo profilo la tabella cronologica comparativa dello stesso Durliat dimostra inequivocabilmente la necessità di utilizzare un sistema di datazione legato all’autorità locale riconosciuta.72 Il dato poi assume maggiore significato se incrociato con i contenuti e si ricorderà che normalmente le epigrafi datanti all’era del sovrano rivestono carattere ufficiale (commemorative, dedicatorie), mentre le iscrizioni recanti menzione del sistema di datazione all’indizione sono normalmente funerarie (salvo il caso della Gallia che reca menzione del sovrano in contesti quasi esclusivamente funerari). Sotto questo profilo l’impiego delle epigrafi risponde pienamente e consapevolmente alla strategia della visibilità, sia nei contenuti sia nelle formule, mentre apparentemente sembrerebbe rispondere con minore vigore al ruolo di marcatore culturale data la diffusione della consuetudine epigrafica celebrativa. In realtà, proprio per questo ruolo così fortemente connotante le attività delle élites, le epigrafi ben presto appaiono connotate da impiego di scritture e impianti decorativi locali tali da renderle veri e propri marcatori culturali ed elementi di riconoscibilità sociale.73

Sempre con gli usi cronologici poi si possono avere delle differenziazioni che tuttavia non sembrano rivestire il carattere di marcatore culturale (sotto il profilo delle identità nazionali), quanto piuttosto sembrano potersi mettere in relazione — nel suo utilizzo più tardivo — con usi locali legati a particolari tipologie testuali o ambiti di impiego.

In particolare l’indicazione del giorno secondo il sistema delle idi, none e calende di tradizione romana viene sostituito progressivamente in tutta l’Europa. Ma tale cambiamento vede inizialmente Roma in prima posizione con una attestazione al 301 del giorno del mese secondo l’uso progressivo del com-

71 Durliat, ‘Épigraphie et société’, p. 175.
Scritture nazionali e aree culturali

puto; poi la Gallia e la Spagna con il corso del secolo VI e VII arriveranno alla sostituzione complessiva del sistema. Pur conoscendo tale consuetudine una frattura e pur adeguando il computo dei giorni a nuovi sistemi semplificati, non appare totalmente perduto come sembrano indicare soprattutto le iscrizioni graffite commemorative presenti in alcune aree, quali l’Italia settentrionale (il caso dei graffiti risalenti al secolo VIII–IX attestate sulle colonne dei Santi Felice e Fortunato di Vicenza74 — graffiti obituarì — e, per la medesima cronologia, quelli presenti nell’ipogeo di Santa Maria in Stelle in Valpantena presso Verona, dove l’uso compare in particolare per la memoria della consacrazione del sacello),75 anche se tale consuetudine appare in netto declino già con i secoli precedenti. La particolare localizzazione dei graffiti, ma soprattutto la natura del testo lascerebbero ipotizzare una continuità di uso per la memoria dei morti o per usi legati comunque alle pratiche religiose. Un esempio di graffiti funerario-commemorativi datanti con il sistema romano compare già a partire dal secolo VI a Parenzo, normale per il periodo. Lo stesso uso compare poi a distanza di circa due secoli a Vicenza, nelle già ricordate epigrafi graffite sanfeliciane. In questo caso non sembra potersi parlare di vero e proprio sistema di identificazione sociale, quanto piuttosto di ambito specifico di utilizzo, in seno all’epigrafia funeraria memoratoria. Ricorderò, ad esempio, il testo tardo dell’iscrizione funeraria Ermingarda, figlia di Lotario II, a Santa Giustina di Lucca o76 l’iscrizione funeraria di Dauferada, moglie di Roffredo, referendario di Sicario e gastaldo di Avellino, dell’849.77 Sempre al secolo IX appartengono, con la medesima tipologia testuale, le iscrizioni dei re carolingi conservate a Milano, iscrizioni di Pipino, figlio di Carlo, morto nell’anno 806, di Bernardo, re d’Italia, ucciso nell’anno 819, iscrizioni sulle quali però grava il sospetto di rifacimenti quattrocenteschi.78

Una continuità in questo specifico caso che travalica i confini territoriali e culturali e che sembra prassi legata quindi piuttosto a specifici ambiti di uso che non a peculiarità locali.

75 De Rubcis, ‘Il corpus dei graffiti in Santa Maria in Stelle (Verona)’.
**Conclusioni**

Il quadro riassuntivo qui esposto offre la possibilità di riflettere sulle possibilità che testi e contesti possono offrire in seno all’ipotesi iniziale di questo lavoro: la produzione epigrafica può essere considerata come un marcatore di identità culturale o è un fenomeno di più ampio respiro all’interno del quale i confini culturali possono essere coincidenti o meno con i confini socio-politici?

La risposta alla domanda si deve necessariamente articolare su più punti, riprendendo alcuni dei passaggi esposti e sui quali ho fermato l’attenzione per evidenziare affinità e diversità nelle consuetudini epigrafiche.

In primo luogo la questione, a mio parere, deve essere spostata dalla scarsità di fonti al piano della produzione epigrafica, ossia il progressivo declino e la parallela selezione dei tipi di epigrafi e dei committenti.

La progressiva selezione ha dimostrato come nel corso dei secoli VI–VIII il fenomeno di rarefazione sia un fenomeno legato da una parte a problemi di carattere più ampio (quali il collasso delle officine lapidarie, localizzabile in aree estese, ma articolato secondo tempi differenti, cui si deve però associare la scomparsa di intere classi di oggetti recanti, fino a quei secoli, epigrafi), legati però indissolubilmente ai mutamenti culturali generali (sociali quindi, quali le differenti prassi funerarie, ad esempio) che queste aree hanno attraversato.

L’Inghilterra dimostra, con lo spostamento di gruppi verso aree non romanizzate, il processo di trasferimento di consuetudini epigrafiche memoratorie. Parallelamente, la Gallia dimostra un declino della stessa pratica legata ad un differente sentire della memoria scritta, laddove le necropoli merovingiche appaiono povere di iscrizioni funerarie a fronte di ingenti quantità di inumati distribuiti in concentrazioni territoriali vaste. In Italia il declino si registra nei secoli VI–VII con un picco concentrato nel secolo VII, al pari della Spagna. Se per la seconda tradizionalmente il fenomeno appare legato ai rivolgimenti sociali profondi (l’arrivo degli Arabi coincidente in buona parte con la scomparsa della prassi epigrafica funeraria), per la prima, ossia per l’Italia, il quadro appare più articolato e vede un periodo di declino al di fuori della città di Roma imponente, coincidente con l’arrivo dei Goti prima e dei Longobardi dopo. Per i primi la consuetudine però si mantiene in linea con la prassi romana, anche se il declino numerico appare significativo. Con i Longobardi dopo una prima fase di assestamento, la consuetudine appare in ripresa già con i primi decenni del secolo VII.

Al di là dei dati numerici, però, e qui riprendendo un secondo punto trattato, con la ripresa della pratica memoratoria scritta si assiste generalmente in tutta l’area trattata ad una selezione verso l’alto dell’uso della scrittura. La consuetu-
dine infatti vede scomparire definitivamente le categorie dei meno abbienti in favore di una netta produzione legata quasi esclusivamente alle élites.

Il fenomeno appare più marcato nell’Italia longobarda e nei territori sottoposti direttamente o indirettamente all’influenza della cultura romana. Le testimonianze scritte infatti appaiono oramai modellate su un tipo preciso di pratica memoratoria, quella del carme celebrativo, cui si affiancano, ma prevalentemente in ambito ecclesiastico, le semplici iscrizioni con i soli dati biometrici del defunto. La divisione è significativa, laddove permane per i membri del clero e per i monaci una consuetudine ininterrotta con la pratica di tradizione romana tardo antica, in particolare con le epigrafi dei cristiani dei secoli III–V. Una eccezione appare Montecassino, dove al dato biometrico viene aggiunta poi anche la provenienza dei singoli defunti lungo il periodo che va dal secolo VIII al IX. Dato che letto sulle provenienze permette di identificare un numero piuttosto elevato di soggetti provenienti dall’Italia settentrionale, in coincidenza con il 774 e l’arrivo dei Franchi nella Langobardia maior. La differente pratica memoratoria induce a considerare il ruolo che l’epigrafia ha svolto in ambito longobardo e che altrove appare più sfumato, almeno fino al secolo IX quando la prassi diventa patrimonio più ampio esteso anche ai Franchi.79

La divisione tra laici ed ecclesiastici in seno alla complessiva prassi funeraria è confermata anche dai numeri offerti dalle indagini di Handley per la Gallia e per la Spagna e indica la medesima direzione sottolineata per l’Italia.

Diversamente però dalla produzione funeraria che appiattisce sul dato quantitativo il problema, i contenuti delle epigrafi offrono un quadro molto più articolato.

Le iscrizioni funerarie memoratorie, infatti, appaiono questa volta sì come connotanti un quadro culturale differente.

È stato sottolineato come la consuetudine longobarda abbia con una certa precocità fatto proprio il carmen celebrativo, inserendosi sulla falsariga della consuetudine ecclesiastica. E attraendo all’interno della propria pratica quello che già con il secolo V e VI gli ecclesiastici praticavano per i propri morti. Ma, a differenza di questi, la composizione funeraria amplia la memoria inserendovi dati legati all’agire in vita degli inumati e accogliendo eventualmente — in seno alle iscrizioni legate ai membri della Chiesa — le suggestioni provenienti dall’area della vita morale dei defunti. Le iscrizioni longobarde, connotate graficamente e testualmente appaiono così come un elemento di identificazione

79 Si rinvia a Treffort, Mémoires carolingiennes, e all’analisi della studiosa sul cambiamento di percezione in seno al mondo franco carolingio per i secoli VIII–XI.
preciso, sia sotto il profilo dell’appartenenza ai ranghi elevati della società (si ricorda che la produzione è legata direttamente con gli esponenti dell’alta società) sia sotto il profilo dell’appartenenza etnica, laddove il richiamo al ceppo familiare sottolinea l’origine sociale del defunto. Un atteggiamento peraltro che conosce sfumature e diversità per gli individui di sesso maschile e le figure femminili.

La diversità inoltre appare sostenuta fortemente anche dagli usi linguistici che, per i Longobardi, si possono ricondurre con frequenza al sistema ritmico testuale (il testo rispetta metricamente l’accentuazione naturale delle parole e non la quantità sillabica che spezza le parole in favore del verso). 80

E che la produzione longobarda sia stata legata direttamente, almeno per i secoli vii–viii in Italia settentrionale, ad un tipo specifico di testo/epigrafe lo dimostra il cambiamento sopravvenuto nel corso del secolo ix, quando il testo ritmico scompare radicalmente e viene sostituito dalla pratica del verso in seno alla cultura carolingia, non più ritmico ma esametrico. L’iscrizione del prete Tafo, datata all’anno 899 e conservata a Brescia, presso i Civici Musei, ne è eloquente esempio: non solo sotto il profilo strettamente grafico, che si dimostra ormai pienamente carolingio nell’acquisizione completa delle forme scrittorio, ma anche nei contenuti, laddove i richiami ad Alcuino e a Venzanzio Fortunato evocano inequivocabilmente una presenza culturale ormai consolidata. 81

Le élites così dimostrano di avere pienamente acquisito una vera e propria strategia della visibilità e mettono in pratica consapevolmente tali strategie. Sotto questo profilo le diversità indicano con precisione i confini e marcano allo stesso tempo l’appartenenza ad un comune ambito culturale.

Le consuetudini cronologiche vanno in questa direzione anche se, occorre sottolinearla, l’atteggiamento appare comune a tutte le aree prese in esame. L’uso dell’era locale del sovrano appare infatti ovunque non appena questo venga riconosciuto ufficialmente: la Croazia, la Francia merovingia, l’Italia longobarda. Il tempo così trova un punto di riferimento in ambito epigrafico nel sovrano riconosciuto, al pari della documentazione che scandisce il tempo sull’era locale. Sarà difficile in questo ambito preciso cogliere delle diversità su sede locale.

80 Rinvio sul tema agli atti del convegno Stella, Poesia dell’alto medioevo europeo.

81 De Rubeis, ‘La tradizione epigrafica in Paolo Diacono’, sui riferimenti testuali all’interno dell’epigrafia longobarda. Una panoramica sulle trasformazioni grafiche in Italia settentrionale è curata da Sannazzaro, ‘Epigrafia e chiese tra ix e x secolo’. 
Se le diversità e le affinità individuano quindi aree culturali e geo-politiche ben delineate su di un piano ideale orizzontale, si possono poi cogliere all’interno di questi dispiegamenti di atteggiamenti espressivi delle vere e proprie topografie sociali, delle micro aree distributive delle epigrafi.

Mi riferisco in particolare ad un punto preciso che ho individuato, ossia la diversa collocazione delle epigrafi legate ai laici e agli ecclesiastici.

Si è parlato di processo di ‘ecclesializzazione’ della produzione epigrafica con riferimento al passaggio da spazi aperti a spazi chiusi delle epigrafi e della produzione legata alle due diverse componenti dei committenti. Ho cercato di dimostrare che questo processo, peraltro concretamente tangibile nel corso dei secoli trattati, ha in realtà alle spalle anche un preciso disegno.

L’analisi della collocazione fisica delle epigrafi (ovviamente riferita ai materiali conservati in situ), sembra indicare l’esistenza di una distribuzione di aree riservate piuttosto definita.

Lo spazio riservato ai laici, infatti, appare legato a precise collocazioni in seno alle strutture ecclesiastiche, uno spazio fisico dove la visibilità diventa uno dei principali crucci dei committenti. La visibilità deve essere garantita, infatti, dalla possibilità della lettura a distanza, ossia da chi — laico — non poteva accedere all’area sacra della chiesa. La scrittura così viene rivolta verso i fedeli, collocata generalmente in luoghi di facile accesso visivo, ossia epigrafi posizionate alte. Questo atteggiamento è direttamente legato ai committenti laici appartenenti alle élites, i quali compaiono con le loro iscrizioni dedicate collocate generalmente lontane dallo spazio più sacro (l’altare), ma quando vicine a questo, elevate per la lettura a distanza. In tal modo è garantita la visibilità nel pieno rispetto però dell’area sacra generalmente riservata agli ecclesiastici. Una manifestazione anche di quella strategia della visibilità alla quale ho fatto riferimento per le iscrizioni funerarie. L’evergetismo così si traduce in forme di potere. E che lo spazio della visibilità sia lo spazio del potere, lo dimostrano anche le iscrizioni degli ecclesiastici in quelle aree dove il ruolo politico è delegato proprio a loro. I patriarchi di Grado, i pontefici a Roma, gli abati nei monasteri utilizzano i medesimi spazi dei laici per lasciare memoria delle proprie dediche (e donazioni). Il medesimo atteggiamento investe le chiese quando i sovrani longobardi fanno realizzare iscrizioni monumentali per l’esposizione esterna alle chiese, come a Salerno o a Brescia. Del pari gli abati a San Vincenzo al Volturno, senza che altra spiegazione possa essere a mio parere addotta se non questa, quando l’abate Giosuè fa incidere una iscrizione monumentale per essere collocata all’esterno della basilica di San Vincenzo Maggiore. Un medesimo atteggiamento che trova riscontro sul piano degli usi cronologici e che si riverbera nei committenti, laici o ecclesiastici che essi siano.
Sarà difficile individuare contesti specifici nelle topografie delle epigrafi e nei contenuti stessi di queste tali da indicare con precisione aree etno-culturali specifiche. Queste si possono ricondurre su piani differenti, quali le consuetudini funerarie. Una linea di demarcazione precisa, quindi, non potrà passare esclusivamente attraverso i testi e i formulari.

Il punto preciso che, al contrario, indica una demarcazione culturale, lo si deve individuare in seno agli atteggiamenti grafici, agli impianti decorativi, a prassi linguistiche. Dati dove non è un generico sentire a definire la diversità ma sono gli aspetti più tecnici, dove l’intervento del singolo riesce ad orientare una produzione complessiva e a definire quella che altrove ho indicato come strategia della visibilità. L’uso di scritture diverse, il ricorso a impaginazioni specifiche, ad elementi decorativi rendono i contenitori veri e propri marcatori culturali. Al contrario, i moventi che ne determinano la realizzazione (i committenti, la visibilità, l’appartenenza a determinati livelli sociali o gruppi socialmente riconoscibili — laici ed ecclesiastici —) sembrano rispondere ovunque e con coerenza alle medesime spinte sociali e alle medesime esigenze di rappresentatività.

Una volta individuati i due piani, sarebbe tuttavia un errore considerarli separatamente, poiché dall’uno scaturiscono come conseguenza gli atteggiamenti dell’altro.

Così, se nell’Ipogeo dei Duni a Poitiers le epigrafi ricordano il gruppo e i suoi componenti, inserendolo così su di un piano più vasto, parimenti la scrittura ne fornisce le coordinate e ne identifica con precisione il contesto culturale di appartenenza, l’epigrafia merovingia.

In tale ottica le iscrizioni costituiscono un marcatore culturale complessivo individuando nelle forme e talvolta anche nei contenuti gruppi estesi su macroaree coincidenti con gli assetti politico-amministrativi di riferimento (quali i Merovingi, i Longobardi, i Visigoti) all’interno delle quali agiscono però microaree. Queste ultime frammentano ulteriormente il quadro in gruppi che sembrano interagire fra di loro di concerto, secondo spazi marcati con precisione e ruoli definiti.

In altre parole, medesimi gli intenti, diverse le modalità di attuazione, risiedendo in questo il concetto di marcatori culturali.
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