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ROMANS AND GOTHs IN LATE ANTIQUE GAUL:  
ASPECTS OF POLITICAL AND CULTURAL  
ASSIMILATION IN THE FIFTH CENTURY AD

Julia Margareta Maria Rückert

University College, Durham

Submitted for the degree of MLitt

Department of Classics and Ancient History

University of Durham

2011

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116 ABSTRACT:

117

118 The thesis focuses on the socio-cultural interaction between Gallo-Romans and  
119 barbarians in fifth century Gaul. Its aim is to investigate how both Romans and  
120 barbarians, particularly the Gothic people, shared a common living space within  
121 imperial territory, how this space was created, and to which extent both sides  
122 assimilated with each other in terms of their cultural and political understanding. By  
123 moving away from the argument of brutal warfare as the main means of contact, I am  
124 trying instead to look more at the changes of their cultural understanding which  
125 eventually would lead to the world of the Middle Ages. The slow emergence of  
126 barbarian powerbases created a political world that was different from the Roman  
127 empire. The Gallo-Romans had to accept a new political order in which they not only  
128 faced the gradual loss of their former positions of political/military superiority but  
129 which also challenged their previously undisputed concept of cultural understanding;  
130 violent occupation of Roman territory was only one part of this process as there was  
131 simultaneously a continuation of Roman literature and culture in general possible.  
132 Gradual attempts at assimilation can be seen for example in the continuation of  
133 Gallo-Roman aristocratic involvement in the political establishment of the Gothic  
134 court, and the increasing role of the Gallo-Roman nobility in the church in general  
135 and in the Episcopate in particular. Equally the Gothic side had to adapt their  
136 political and cultural understanding to a new concept which was compatible with the  
137 Roman administration if they wanted to survive as ethnic communities within the  
138 empire; such political/military assimilation not only with the Roman empire but  
139 especially with the Gallo-Roman aristocracy was even more important when it came  
140 to the establishment of an independent Gothic settlement and eventually a Gothic  
141 kingdom in Gaul.

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143

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151 thank Prof Peter Rhodes for all his sterling support and time, invaluable comments  
152 and suggestions. My most heartfelt thanks and a gratitude deeper than words can  
153 express I owe to my parents and my grandmother – without their love,  
154 encouragement and unfailing support I could never have written this work.



155 LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

156

157 Map 1: *Campaigns of Alaric and Athaulf*, in Heather, P., 1996, *The Goths*

158 (Oxford), 140.

159 Map 2: *Gaul in the fifth century*, in Drinkwater, J. & Elton, H. (eds.), 1992,160 *Fifth century Gaul: a crisis of identity?* (Cambridge), xxi.

161 ABBREVIATIONS:

162

163 A.M. *Ammianus Marcellinus*164 Pan.Lat. *Panegyrici Latini*165 PLRE *Prosopography of the later Roman empire*, Jones, A.H.M., Martindale,

166 J.R., Morris, J. (eds.), 1971-92 (Cambridge).

167 Sid.Ap. Sidonius Apollinaris

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2 INTRODUCTION

3

4 From the fifth century AD onwards, the history of the Roman empire is often  
5 associated with the so-called 'barbarian invasions'. It is an image of wild hordes of  
6 savage brutes fighting against the world of ancient civilisation, conquering and  
7 destroying it simultaneously. It is an image of the Roman empire being weakened in  
8 its defences and therefore lying itself open to be subsequently swamped with  
9 countless barbarians, all eager to get a share of the riches of the empire.<sup>1</sup> It is an  
10 image of Roman cultural superiority desperately fighting against the culturally  
11 inferior but military stronger barbarians. Yet such an approach to the history of the  
12 later Roman empire poses problems.

13 Firstly it continues many of the prejudices of the ancient world on the nature of  
14 foreign, that is to say non-Roman peoples from outside the empire; indeed the very  
15 term 'barbarian' is a prime example for such xenophobia. Secondly, it bears the  
16 danger of regarding the increasingly frequent appearance of non-Roman peoples  
17 within imperial borders as a threat to the continuity of the empire as a whole, thus  
18 perpetuating a notion that peoples from outside posed in general a threat to the  
19 stability of the empire. Furthermore, it implies that the subsequent settlement of such  
20 peoples on imperial soil presented a danger to the Roman state by undermining its  
21 political and cultural existence. In fact, by asking about the extent of socio-cultural  
22 interaction between Rome and peoples from outside the empire, one assumes a  
23 concept of juxtaposition between the two sides. Traditionally this has implied a  
24 superior status of the Roman side into which the inferior non-Roman side had to be  
25 integrated. Following this argument, the slow emergence of the political power of  
26 these peoples could then be nothing else than a prelude to an inevitable clash of the

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example Drinkwater (1996), 20-21.

27 two in which the barbarian side managed to defeat the imperial government  
28 sufficiently to gain eventually supreme political power.<sup>2</sup> Such images are certainly  
29 quite dramatic and highly imaginative but they have little to do with reality.

30 It is true that there was a great deal of warfare in the later Roman empire as well as  
31 serious and prolonged problems with the defence and security of the imperial  
32 frontiers. It is also true that the increasingly frequent occurrence of foreign peoples  
33 within imperial territory was posing both an administrative as well as military  
34 problem for the empire. However, the relationship between Rome and its neighbours  
35 was far more complex than to be explained as a fight of civilisation versus  
36 uncultivated brutality. Indeed the question how the Roman and non-Roman  
37 population lived together in the empire, how processes of assimilation and  
38 interaction were working or if such concepts were at all possible, cannot be answered  
39 in a straightforward manner.

40 Any research on that period lacks to a large extent the barbarian viewpoint as the  
41 vast majority of the ancient texts were addressed to the Roman audience and as such  
42 had been written in a way which suited best the political and/or religious convictions  
43 of this audience; hence the image of the barbarians is inevitably heavily biased and in  
44 most cases distorted. To establish the barbarian side one has to try to read between  
45 the lines, and even modern scholarly discussions are therefore prone to absorb some  
46 of the ancient perceptions of regarding specific authors and their opinion as the  
47 authoritative text on which to base their analysis of historical events.<sup>3</sup> Besides many  
48 of the contemporary authors also belonged to specific social groups such as the

---

<sup>2</sup> See Díaz (1999), 321: for an excellent definition of the meaning of *polity*, *politics*, and *political*.

<sup>3</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 43-9 for the development of this idea among some German scholars into a total overemphasis of the importance of various Germanic peoples, culminating especially in the twentieth century in the political and ideological exploitations of various political regimes, mainly the Nazis and their racial ideology. Tacitus' *Germania* has often been misused to form claims of a common Germanic identity, although there is absolutely no evidence for such a notion; there were some attempts in the ninth century made by Carolingian scholars to establish a kind of common Germanic consciousness but that remained a theoretical approach created for political reasons, see Goffart (1981), 279.

49 church or the aristocracy; as such their portrayal of foreign peoples and their political  
50 struggles within the empire heavily reflected their own social, political and religious  
51 opinions and therefore presents a rather restrictive, if not one-sided narrative.

52 This thesis will look in particular at the emergence of the Goths; the reason for  
53 choosing them lies in the amount of material we have about their political rise as  
54 well as in the reaction of the Roman side to this phenomenon. The emergence of the  
55 Goths as a formidable power in the late fourth century had fostered political and  
56 economic problems in the empire, which the imperial authorities were increasingly  
57 unable to control. The arrival or perhaps better the pressure the presence of various  
58 different people created in the empire led leaders like Alaric and Athaulf to exploit  
59 this weakness in order to maximise their own political agenda and military strength.

60 The Goths had in no way a military strength comparable to the empire, nor indeed  
61 any internal organisation equivalent to the imperial administration; furthermore,  
62 continuous differences about leadership or a coherent political programme made it  
63 difficult to combat the empire effectively, and even the establishment of one leader  
64 in the fifth century had not necessarily eased such problems. Yet precisely this lack  
65 of military organisation and this continuity of rifts between various political factions,  
66 indeed the very nature of being fragmented and not being one united people let alone  
67 a state as Rome was, is a testament to their enormous political/military persistence  
68 and strength. Throughout the military encounters with the Gothic side, the empire  
69 had tried to subdue them and to incorporate them into the imperial system, but had  
70 continued to fail. The Gothic development from a loose conglomeration of various  
71 Gothic groups with their own agenda in the fourth century, to a coherent group with  
72 a political concept in the fifth century was an exemplary process of assimilation with  
73 the mechanisms of the imperial system. The realisation that their only way to gain  
74 political recognition from the empire, and indeed to enhance their prospects of

75 fighting the empire effectively lay in the establishment of one ruler and a widely  
76 accepted political agenda, was the result of an understanding of the functioning of  
77 Rome as a state and its political/military system. Such a process went far beyond the  
78 concept of adopting Roman goods as status symbols, since to understand the  
79 functioning of the empire as a state and to turn this knowledge into a strategic  
80 advantage for one's own political advancement is to have become part of that very  
81 system. The same could also be said about the Franks although in their case it was  
82 less a question of fighting the Roman empire in its strength but rather of establishing  
83 themselves against other barbarian powers such as the Goths.

84

85 Part I will look at the very complex debate of ethnogenesis and ethnic development  
86 of non-Roman peoples, which has tried to find some answers to the vagueness of  
87 broad terminology such as 'barbarian', 'peoples', 'nation' or 'Goths' though this  
88 remains a highly difficult process; moreover the term 'barbarian' might even be  
89 preferred as it contains a certain neutrality denoting the difference from the Roman  
90 population whereas terms such as 'Goths' can pose serious problems by making  
91 statements about the ethnic formation of such peoples which might not be accurate. It  
92 will discuss some aspects of the debate on ethnogenesis, and especially its meaning  
93 for the ethnic development of the Goths. It will also look at aspects of Roman  
94 xenophobia and attitudes towards non-Roman peoples. From the Roman perspective,  
95 the outside, barbarian, world presented by its very nature a permanent threat to  
96 Roman civilisation.

97 Part II will look at the rise of the Gothic peoples and their gradual political  
98 emancipation into a single nation. This development was closely connected with a  
99 change in internal power structures, culminating in the establishment and acceptance  
100 of one leader, notably Alaric and his successors. The previous concept of multiple

101 leaders had resulted in a tendency to overt fragmentation, especially when it came to  
102 the extent of Gothic involvement in imperial politics and the precise nature of  
103 payment for this. Alaric's rise to power altered that system and it was under his  
104 leadership that members of various different groups created a people who then  
105 became known as 'the Goths'. This made Gothic politics towards the empire much  
106 more effective, though their eventual political independence and the establishment of  
107 their own kingdom on Roman soil only happened under Alaric's successors. The  
108 gradual establishment of large barbarian groups within imperial territory created a  
109 very complex if not at times dangerous situation. Their immediate impact in a  
110 province could be, and indeed often was, violent or at least seriously interrupting  
111 Roman life. However one ought to distance oneself from the almost hysterical  
112 accounts by some of the contemporaries as such narratives were often written for a  
113 specific audience with a specific target, and had less to do with historical reality.

114 Parts III and IV will look in greater detail at the extent of the barbarian interference,  
115 not only in terms of actual material destruction but also in terms of their impact on  
116 the Roman population. The lives of contemporaries such as Paulinus of Pella or  
117 Rutilius Namatianus provide vivid accounts of the potential dangers and subsequent  
118 struggles a Roman aristocrat could face if the barbarian impact was strong enough to  
119 disturb the standard concepts of living in such a profound way that a continuation of  
120 the said standard was no longer guaranteed. They will look at the increasingly  
121 difficult process of continuing former structures of holding political offices, and the  
122 need to assimilate with the new barbarian establishments. This of course created  
123 problems of concepts of political loyalty, which in itself had continuously posed  
124 problems in Gaul, which was apparent in treason trials such as the cases of Arvandus  
125 and Seronatus. They will examine the various ways in which a political as well as  
126 social acculturation between foreign peoples and Roman population was possible, by



127 looking in particular at the Gallic population. The Roman aristocracy in Gaul  
128 (although similar problems were faced in other provinces too) had to accept that their  
129 previous unchallenged political dominion had given way to being the subject of  
130 barbarian kings. Many of them found ways to arrange themselves with the new  
131 political regimes though it did not automatically mean a different ideological  
132 approach towards these new rulers. Political assimilation with the barbarians and an  
133 active role at their courts could very easily lead to questions of political loyalty and  
134 treason against the Roman state. The cases of Attalus, Arvandus, Seronatus and  
135 Sidonius Apollinaris, to name but a few, present excellent examples of the dilemma  
136 between active cooperation with the new barbarian rulers as the only way to a  
137 political future, and the fact that any such cooperation was theoretically regarded as  
138 treason against the Roman state. Increasingly people like these were actively  
139 employed by the new powers and came to play important roles at their courts  
140 although the acceptance of political reality had not automatically brought a change in  
141 the perception of the new rulers. With the political sphere being more and more  
142 dominated and controlled by the barbarian rulers, the traditional bastion of power of  
143 a Roman aristocrat was gone. The only way in which something of a substitute for  
144 this loss could be found was devotion to classical literature and learning; literature  
145 had always been part of the aristocratic lifestyle and the continuous pursuit of it  
146 within a circle of likeminded friends from the same social stratum became then a  
147 way to preserve part of aristocratic values. It enabled the Roman aristocracy to  
148 regard themselves as having remained culturally wholly Roman even if the actual  
149 reality had become a new world where both Roman and barbarian concepts of  
150 culture and politics were mixed.

151 Part V will then look at the role of the church, both in terms of providing a different  
152 concept for the Gallic aristocracy to continue previous political power, albeit in a

153 different way, but also at the role of religion as an ethnic tool of distinction and  
154 identity; especially the question of Arianism versus Catholicism was an interesting  
155 aspect in the relationship between Goths and Romans, and certainly had an impact on  
156 the eventual success of the Franks, contrasting them with the ultimate failure of the  
157 Goths.  
158

## 1 Part I. The question of Gothic identity

2

3

4 There has been a very complex debate about the ethnic development of the Goths,  
5 focusing on questions whether they were one people, a nation, a tribal confederation  
6 made of various different groups which had their own ethnic origins and customs, or  
7 rather a mobile army consisting of mercenaries in Roman service. Equally questions  
8 concerning the ethnic identity of the Goths have been discussed at length: how these  
9 people viewed their own identity, which aspects created such an identity, and how  
10 flexible and adaptable this concept was. Relevant in this debate is also the Roman  
11 view on foreign peoples such as the Goths and other peoples, as it will help to  
12 understand their impact on imperial ideology and political as well as military actions  
13 towards them. This concept of identity is very important in connection with the  
14 question of the political development of the Goths in general and with the  
15 development of their concept of leadership in particular, as well as their eventual  
16 establishment of an independent kingdom in Gaul. It is therefore this idea of ethnic  
17 formation and identity one must examine first; this is by no means a decisive answer  
18 to the various questions ethnogenesis poses, nor indeed is it an exhaustive overview  
19 of the ethnic development of foreign peoples within Roman territory. It will focus  
20 primarily on the development of the Goths from the fourth century AD onwards.

## 21 1. Ethnicity and ethnogenesis

22

23 To ask about the exact mechanisms of the development of ethnic identity and its  
24 various processes is far too great a topic for the scope of this chapter. The following  
25 discussion aims more to look at some of the most common concepts of the  
26 ethnogenetic process of barbarian groups. This is important in order to understand  
27 the changing nature of the political and military relationship between the Goths and  
28 the empire, as well as the development of a socio-political concept among them,  
29 which was to lead to their settlement and eventual establishment of a Gothic  
30 kingdom in Aquitaine in 416 AD. To start with there is the fundamental question  
31 whether one can even label groups of people as ‘Goths’, ‘Vandals’ or ‘Franks’;  
32 naming such a group ‘the Goths’ would imply the concept of a homogenous group,  
33 very much a nation or at least a united people with fixed social rules and a common  
34 ethnic origin which modern scholarship concerned with ethnogenesis has vehemently  
35 argued against. However, to label them as ‘barbarians’ equally poses problems as  
36 this term can be too general and oversimplifying or if one follows its Greek meaning,  
37 downright degrading.<sup>1</sup> The term ‘barbarian’ does in fact already in itself refer to a  
38 specific concept of viewing foreigners in the ancient world; most of the Roman  
39 descriptions of foreigners were by their very nature a continuation of the standard  
40 ancient xenophobia, already found in much older cultures like Egypt and China,  
41 which had later been adopted by Greek and subsequently Roman ideology. Negative  
42 images of foreigners who did not fit into the cultural picture of the society from  
43 where the source came are a very old phenomenon. The foreigner is turned into the  
44 antagonist of civilisation, contrasting him and his supposedly inferior status with the  
45 supposedly higher standard of culture and morality of the civilised person; thus it

---

<sup>1</sup> See p.11.

46 emphasised the alleged superiority of the civilised person as well as using such a  
47 view as an excuse for aggression and political expansion against the foreigner.<sup>2</sup>  
48 Adopted from Greek ideology, in Roman opinion barbarians were all, without  
49 distinguishing between their various ethnic origins, regarded as being the  
50 quintessential opposite of what civilisation and culture stood for. The term *barbarian*  
51 itself is the Greek expression for describing the incomprehensible sound of the  
52 barbarian languages; very soon, though, the mastery of proper language was  
53 regarded as a purely Greek, hence civilised, prerogative, and the term *barbarian*  
54 came to imply inferiority. It turned into a byword for anybody who did not comply  
55 with Greek standards of political organisation, language or culture, although there  
56 were people from literary and philosophical quarters who argued in favour of a  
57 natural equality between men and admired the achievements of other, non-Greek  
58 civilisations.<sup>3</sup> Sources by venerated authors like Herodotus, which were thus copied  
59 by subsequent generations of writers, created a perpetual image of the stereotypical  
60 barbarian as the crude, uncultivated brute who dressed in funny ways, had exotic,  
61 mostly cruel customs and was only interested in fighting and destroying civilisation  
62 by terror for the sake of looting its riches.<sup>4</sup> In fact, this standardised picture was so  
63 influential that it became a model of writing historical accounts to such an extent that  
64 most authors of the Greco-Roman world copied its rhetorical style and vocabulary.  
65 Most of the ancient authors not only followed certain standardised literary models of  
66 stereotypical representations of foreigners, but also incorporated moral, philosophical  
67 and religious ideologies in their accounts, which led to a biased, if not distorted

---

<sup>2</sup> See for example article by Jones, W. (1971). In Drinkwater's opinion, the 'Germanic threat' was such an artificial construct, further exploited by contemporary writers (like Ammianus), which allowed the Roman state to justify its administration of and presence in the Germanic world, see Drinkwater (1997);(2007), 360.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, W. (1971), 376-407.

<sup>4</sup> However, Herodotus was regarded by Plutarch as too barbarian-friendly: *philobarbaros*; Plutarch, *de Her. mal.* 857A- 858F.

68 picture of presenting these foreign peoples; despite the fact of their using criteria  
 69 such as language, religion, armoury/ways of fighting and dress to describe  
 70 differences between various barbarian people but also to contrast them with the  
 71 Romans in general, these largely remained stereotypical concepts and failed to be  
 72 analysed as an indicator of individual ethnicity of the people involved.<sup>5</sup> Tacitus for  
 73 example famously applied concepts such as overall culture, customs, religion,  
 74 language and weapons to provide distinctions between the various people he was  
 75 describing in his *Germania* and compared these criteria in order to see which groups  
 76 belonged together; although his system of classification has its problems and should  
 77 be used with caution as an accurate ethnographical model, it is nevertheless  
 78 remarkable that Tacitus went further than most Roman authors in the way in which  
 79 he described foreign people.<sup>6</sup> To describe foreign peoples as ‘barbarians’ then is to  
 80 follow ancient traditions of xenophobia and a standardisation of foreign customs and  
 81 behaviour. According to Kulikowski, though, and I agree with him in this matter, the  
 82 term *barbarian* is nevertheless to be preferred in its general approach when talking  
 83 about foreign peoples as it avoids the trap of applying names such as *Vandals* or  
 84 *Goths* to groups of people whose ethnic identity is far from established; indeed this  
 85 ‘labelling’ with precise names is something the debate on ethnogenesis has tried to  
 86 end or at least to clarify.<sup>7</sup>

87 One of the problems with groups which have been given specific names is the nature  
 88 of the sources: information about them stems almost exclusively from works of

---

<sup>5</sup> For example to name but a few of the authors of the late Roman empire: Ausonius, III.5.34-40; XII.10.21-4. Ammianus Marcellinus (from now on abbreviated as A.M.), 15.12: on the character of the Gallic people; 31.2: for a description of the Huns and Alans featuring a famously stereotypical account of ‘foreign/barbarian’ customs and appearance. Zosimus, V.31. Sidonius Apollinaris (from now on abbreviated as Sid. Ap.), *Ep.* IV.1.4; 12; VI.6.1; VII.14. 10; VIII.2.2; 3.2; 6.13-5; 9; *Carm.* XII, 10,3-7. Salvian, *de gub.dei* IV.14; VII.8, 15. Claudian, *con. Hon.* vv.27. *Pan.* VII.18-28. Brodersen (2005), 32-3. Kulikowski (2007), 15, 56-60, 124-5. Pohl (1998c): for terms such as language armoury, dress/appearance authors used to describe and identify foreign people.

<sup>6</sup> See also Pohl (1998c).

<sup>7</sup> Kulikowski (2002), 69-70, 82. Pohl (2005), 18-21.

89 Greco-Roman authors who mentioned foreign groups only when these peoples  
90 appeared within the imperial radar and became noticeable enough for imperial  
91 politics to be worth mentioning; to view them from an ethno-anthropological point  
92 for the sake of researching their customs was not of interest to contemporary writers  
93 though they did apply ethnic or racial concepts in their descriptions but this was only  
94 done to differentiate them from the Roman audience. Descriptions of different  
95 languages, religion, dress and customs have been suggested also in modern  
96 scholarship as indicators of belonging to certain ethnic groups but none of these  
97 elements have been wholly sufficient in their own right; certainly for the Romans,  
98 though, dress/appearance was a way in which barbarians were identified (the Celtic  
99 trousers or the Phrygian cap are famous examples) but such aspects served more to  
100 identify the barbarians in general and to contrast them with the Romans than to  
101 indicate any specific ethnic differences between various groups of the same people.<sup>8</sup>  
102 Yet ethnic identity is only one of many ways to identify a people and already in the  
103 ancient world there were debates which barbarian belonged to which group. Often  
104 people were put together under a collective name, as Tacitus did with the term  
105 *Germani*, although the reality of group formation and social structures was far more  
106 complex than such collective terms suggest. Indeed it was predominantly the  
107 Romans who used such terms whereas the people under this name identified  
108 themselves rather under individual ethnic terms as belonging to specific groups.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Even Sidonius continued such standardised descriptions of barbarians when he depicted a barbarian prince, Sigimer, in his clothing and appearance that contrasted sharply with Roman attire, see Sid. Ap., Ep. IV. 20; when he presented the Gothic king Theoderic in an almost Roman fashion, both in appearance and character, he did so to highlight the king's favourable relationship with the Romans – the king's appearance had to comply to Roman standards, as a barbarian attire would have made any amicable relationship with the Roman side less credible, see also Part IV.3c. See for example Pohl (1998 c) for a thorough discussion of the usage of dress/appearance, weaponry, and language by ancient authors to describe ethnic identities.

<sup>9</sup> Archaeological material found in graves has often been used to interpret individual concepts of ethnic identity, see further below, pp. 16-9.

109 Modern scholarship has moved in various directions in analysing the ethnic  
 110 development of barbarian peoples – known as ethnogenesis, the debate on the origins  
 111 and ethnic development of barbarian groups. One of the most famous is the Viennese  
 112 school and the highly influential work by R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und*  
 113 *Verfassung* with its concepts of the *Traditionskern* and the *Heerkönigtum*.<sup>10</sup> Wenskus  
 114 explains ethnogenesis in this way: ‘barbarian groups [are] more or less  
 115 heterogeneous save for a small, though always unspecified, number of elite families  
 116 who bear the *Traditionskern* of a genuine ethnic memory. Successful military  
 117 leadership on the part of these noble lineages attracts followers like a snowball  
 118 rolling down a hillside, until under the right circumstances, usually those of  
 119 settlement, there takes place an ethnogenesis in which the core of tradition carried by  
 120 its noble bearers is widely adopted and subsumes the previously heterogeneous  
 121 identities of the non-noble following.’<sup>11</sup> In Wenskus’ understanding, the Roman  
 122 world was overcome by the stronger political concept of the Germanic *gentes*, which  
 123 reached way back into pre-Roman times.<sup>12</sup> Although Wenskus’ concept has widely  
 124 resonated throughout this debate, it has not been universally accepted and has been  
 125 regarded by many as containing serious faults. One of the problems is in some  
 126 scholars’ opinion (notably M. Kulikowski, A. Murray and W. Goffart among others)  
 127 the acceptance of topics such as a migration mythology from Scandinavia as the  
 128 *Urheimat* of the Germanic *gentes*; another problem is to tailor material found in later  
 129 sources into material which is then used as hard-core evidence to create a concept of  
 130 ancestral myths directly linked to the ethnic origins of the peoples under

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<sup>10</sup> For the application of the Viennese concept to analyse Gothic ethnicity, see further below. Also Pohl (2000).

<sup>11</sup> For Wenskus the *Traditionskern* was: ‘ein kleiner traditionstragender Kern, [der] zum Kristallisationspunkt einer Großstammesbildung wurde.’, Wenskus (1961), 75; for his definition of the *Heerkönigtum*, see Wenskus (1961), 319, 576-82. Also Kulikowski (2002), 72-4; (2007), 52-4.

<sup>12</sup> Murray (2002), 45: article as summary of the problems arising from Wenskus’ concept in his *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*. Also Garipzanov (2008), 1-17.



131 discussion.<sup>13</sup> Others, like H. Wolfram or W. Pohl, have partly accepted Wenskus'  
132 approach and developed it further: Pohl for example, though he rejects part of  
133 Wenskus' analysis, nevertheless relies in his concept and definition of ethnogenesis  
134 in many ways on Wenskus' idea of the *Traditionskern*; he also accepts H. Wolfram's  
135 concept of connecting place-names/names of peoples with the development of their  
136 ethnic identity and to indicate their movements across the whole of Europe.<sup>14</sup> In  
137 Pohl's opinion some of such connections between places and peoples' names cannot  
138 have been a mere coincidence or invention of the Roman authors writing about them.  
139 Furthermore, for him Gothic stories of their origin, for example, must have had some  
140 impact on their formation as a people as they carried some information about their  
141 past, although they were in most cases rather difficult to read because of the way in  
142 which they were created and transmitted: 'There were all sorts of stories around,  
143 some of them also derogatory, and the tensions in our sources seem to be traces of a  
144 constant renegotiation of identity.'<sup>15</sup> Such stories might often occur in a rather  
145 disorderly fashion in Roman sources but then they would have appeared in a very  
146 similar way in the societies from which they originated as most of these stories  
147 would have been orally transmitted; in Pohl's opinion such stories served as an oral  
148 memory of traditions and therefore had to incorporate various different narratives but  
149 always contained a core of some vital information about the past of the people in  
150 question.<sup>16</sup> Other scholars found these concepts far too strict and argued for another  
151 approach to ethnogenesis, which regards the ethnicity of foreign peoples as so loose

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<sup>13</sup> Goffart (2002), 21-3 rejecting Wolfram's concept of ethnogenesis; 32-5: Wolfram was following Wenskus in linking the *Traditionskern* to origin-stories such as found in the [now lost] works by Jordanes, Paul the Deacon and others.

<sup>14</sup> Murray (2002), 39-41. For the use of source-material and its interpretation, which was at times totally different to the original expression of the ancient sources, see for example the interpretation of Olympiodorus, frg. 29.1. Wolfram (1979), 19-35. Matthews (1970), 85-6. Thompson (1944). Gillett (2002), 1-3. Pohl (2005), 43-5.

<sup>15</sup> Pohl (2002), 227-9.

<sup>16</sup> Pohl (2002), 231-3; Pohl (2005), 24-36.

152 a terminology that it can be used in whatever way seems most acceptable.<sup>17</sup> Yet  
153 whatever concept one accepts, there is in fact very little known hard evidence about  
154 foreign peoples other than what the Roman authors were interested in reporting; that  
155 means that especially the origins and early social, political and military development  
156 of such peoples are very much open to debate. Archaeology has undoubtedly helped  
157 us to understand such developments per se but it fails to explain peoples in regard to  
158 their diplomatic relationship with Rome, their internal social structures, their  
159 concepts of leadership or cultural customs – in short, the ethnic interpretation of  
160 archaeological material poses serious problems: grave goods might indicate concepts  
161 of ethnic identity, although there is the problem that modern archaeological concepts  
162 of ethnicity might not necessarily be compatible with ancient criteria of ethnic  
163 identity, especially when the adapting to new living conditions and adopting of  
164 different cultural aspects is a highly individual process and does not automatically  
165 become instantaneously visible in material culture. Besides, descriptions of specific  
166 customs by ancient authors do not always agree, let alone agree with material finds,  
167 thus highlighting even more the individuality of such criteria, and the difficulty of  
168 using them as an explanation for a universally applicable concept in terms of  
169 archaeological data; furthermore, symbols and/or artefacts, which were regarded by  
170 the Roman side as indicators of specific ethnic origins or identity, may not  
171 necessarily have been viewed by the people themselves as conveying the same  
172 message of self-identity.<sup>18</sup>

173 Another way of interpreting models of ethnogenesis is the concept of linking  
174 archaeological and historical evidence to the extent that archaeological material is  
175 ethnologically interpreted; this has been rejected by some scholars on the basis that

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<sup>17</sup> Wolfram (1995), 10-1. Pohl (2002), 221-39.

<sup>18</sup> Kulikowski for example has largely rejected any such notions of compatibility between ethnogenetic methods and archaeology, whereas many others, for example Bierbrauer, Pohl or Heather, have partly accepted them.

176 archaeological finds cannot be connected with defining ethnic origins of specific  
 177 peoples;<sup>19</sup> thus objects decorated with similar patterns and occurring in a specific  
 178 area cannot automatically be classified as the identification of the ethnic origins of  
 179 the people living in that area or as the proof for the assumption that wherever such  
 180 patterns of decorations are found, the same people could be found. On the basis of  
 181 the concept of G. Kossinna's *Siedlungsarchäologie*, at times archaeology has been  
 182 used as an indicator of ethnic origins of specific people: thus archaeological finds  
 183 were directly linked with ethnic groups, indicating where specific peoples settled in  
 184 the empire, according to the spread of these artefacts<sup>20</sup>. If this approach is taken  
 185 further, specific material finds can be interpreted to stand in direct connection with  
 186 specific peoples found in written ancient sources. Kulikowski rejects that approach  
 187 but does accept the fact that artefacts do certainly demonstrate levels of social  
 188 hierarchy. It is possible that dress, weapons and jewellery did indeed indicate ethnic  
 189 identity too but, if they did, we do not know in what way they did so. When this  
 190 concept is applied to the Goths, Kulikowski is willing to accept the idea that the  
 191 material culture known as the Sântana-de-Mureş/Černjachov culture in the area  
 192 between Danube, Black Sea and the Carpathians which can be found from the third  
 193 to the fifth century, precisely the time when the Goths were found in that area as the  
 194 predominant political power, certainly can be used to identify Gothic social

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<sup>19</sup> For example Theuvs & Hiddink (1996), 69-71 on the process of 'Entromanisierung' and 'Germanisierung', which, described, though, as a mental and social process, is made tangible in archaeological records, although this very process is slow to appear in the aforementioned archaeological material; they warn, though, of using the archaeological data by applying a too static approach to ethnicity and not leaving enough space for the recognition of individual adaptations of cultural elements. See also Pohl (1998 c), 41-2. Pohl (2000), 47-9. Van Ossel (1996), Bierbrauer (1996), Böhme (1996), Périn (1996), Wieczorek (1996 a, b): for the identification of specific ethnic groups via different forms of burial rituals in general and the finds of goods such as jewellery, weaponry and other items (or lack thereof) found in graves in particular, which were distinctly different according to each population. Carroll (2003), 143-4: archaeological evidence suggests that the individual displayed his ethnic origins with specific items put in the grave. Also Pohl (1998 c), 60, 63-4, 67-8 although he warns of using grave-goods as a tool for ethnic identification, especially as modern archaeological interpretation does not necessarily need to be compatible with contemporary concepts of ethnic identification.

<sup>20</sup> For example Heather (2008), 23-6 for the historical problems and scholarly discussions Kossina's approach has created.

195 structures; in other words, he is willing to accept a concept he previously rejected.  
196 Other scholars, for example V. Bierbrauer, have taken the link between material  
197 culture and Gothic ethnicity further and have argued that as the Sântana-de-  
198 Mureş/Černjachov culture was Gothic, an archaeological culture that shares similar  
199 characteristics with the Wielbark culture must therefore also be Gothic. Heather  
200 accepts the Sântana-de-Mureş /Černjachov culture of the late third century/fourth  
201 century AD as directly linked with the rise of Gothic power before the expansion of  
202 the Hunnic empire, but is aware of the difficulties of identifying ethnic identities  
203 through material objects, although he does link such material cultures with possible  
204 migration movements of the Goths (he interprets Jordanes' migration story of one  
205 people under one king as doubtful and argues in favour of large, mixed population  
206 groups); in his opinion there were links with the Wielbark culture but this culture  
207 was perhaps more a cult league where more than just the Goths participated.<sup>21</sup> There  
208 are serious difficulties with such an approach, not only because such cultures are not  
209 automatically compatible, as for example the meaning of material items can change  
210 when transported to different areas, but also because often archaeological evidence  
211 was/is used to provide material evidence for the interpretation of textual evidence  
212 about Gothic history, mainly based once again on the basis of Jordanes' migration  
213 story.<sup>22</sup> Although I do not follow Kulikowski's absolute rejection of this approach  
214 (because I do not accept his approach regarding the Goths as a Roman product of the  
215 third/fourth century, but believe in a Gothic history before they came in contact with  
216 the Roman empire – see further below), nevertheless I do agree with his warning

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion on the Sântana-de-Mureş/Černjachov culture, see Heather (1991), 47-95. The culture had also been used to explain identification with the Taifali, Heather (1991), 60 contra Diaconu (1963). Heather argues that 'the Sântana-de-Mureş/Černjachov culture was both homogeneous, and at the same time the product of a number of different ethnic and cultural strands', 92. For possible links between Sântana-de-Mureş/Černjachov culture and Wielbark culture, and their connection with Gothic migration, see also Heather (1996), 21- 5, 43- 50, 84-6.

<sup>22</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 59-70, 88-99.

217 against linking archaeological material with literary evidence in order to provide  
218 each with a direct proof only. Archaeology does indeed offer very valuable  
219 contributions to the overall debate, but it cannot resolve it on its own, nor can literary  
220 evidence do this; it seems then that both methods are to a large extent incompatible,  
221 although they can and indeed do complement each other to a certain extent. As  
222 Mathisen has said: 'the very inability of archaeology to provide precise ethnic  
223 identification is in itself indicative of the degree of interaction and adaptation...The  
224 picture that emerges [in relationship to the Sântana-de-Mureş/Černjachov culture and  
225 its connection with the emergence of Gothic identity/ethnicity] is one of a mixture of  
226 cultures in which no specific ethnicity can be identified.'<sup>23</sup> Although the tradition of  
227 linking archaeological finds or place names with the ethnic development and origins  
228 of foreign peoples is surely a very debatable concept, the idea of regarding the  
229 concept of ethnogenesis as an open approach by completely neglecting any  
230 archaeological evidence or any textual material is in my opinion prone to fail as it  
231 leaves the discussion open to the very problem which the entire debate has tried to  
232 end. To label certain peoples and their ethnic development as is most suitable for the  
233 respective concept of analysis of the author is surely equally prone to be a step  
234 backwards as it could fail to take into account the level of knowledge (based on a  
235 mixture of different disciplines) available about the development of these peoples.

236

237 Archaeology is most certainly a very important contributing factor in the debate on  
238 ethnogenesis. One of the most important elements of archaeological records in  
239 connection with ethnological issues is their ability to provide possible geographical  
240 frameworks of the spread/trade of specific goods; they can also offer a basis with  
241 which literary data can be compared, and thus they can offer a certain element of

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<sup>23</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 2.

242 precaution against taking literary evidence at face value. Considering the somewhat  
243 problematic nature of many of the contemporary sources, an element of comparison  
244 is certainly very useful. However, as said before, material objects are not  
245 automatically correct indicators of ethnicity of specific people due to questions of  
246 trade or exchange;<sup>24</sup> production and decoration of objects are perhaps closer to help  
247 identifying shared elements of ethnicity, although once again one should be careful  
248 to regard the appearance of specific material in certain geographical areas as an  
249 absolute proof for the appearance of ethnically identical people. However, neither  
250 archaeological material or socio-ethnic studies on their own can work as exclusive  
251 tools to explain fully the ethnic, social and political development of certain peoples;  
252 any analysis of ethnogenetical processes should therefore be based on material taken  
253 from as many sources, including literary as well as archaeological evidence, as  
254 possible in order to provide as many ways as possible to analyse the available  
255 material.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Also Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 2 n.3.

<sup>25</sup> For example pp. 21, 29-30.

## 256 2. The Romans and their views of the Goths

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258 Again as with the discussion on ethnogenesis, this chapter is by no means an  
259 exhaustive interpretation over the various aspects of the treatment of foreigners by  
260 the Romans, nor is this its aim; the main purpose is to provide an overview of the  
261 relationship between the imperial government and the various Gothic groups –  
262 besides, much of the direct relationship between the two sides in the fourth/fifth  
263 century will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. The reason for this is that the  
264 development of Gothic leadership was intrinsically linked with Gothic service within  
265 the imperial army; furthermore, in particular Alaric's rise to power was closely  
266 connected with the position the imperial authorities were willing to grant to him and  
267 his followers. Besides, the influence Rome had on the socio-cultural development of  
268 its barbarian neighbours should not be underestimated as it had indirectly also an  
269 impact on their political understanding.

270 The annexation of the Balkan and Danubian provinces and the creation of the Dacian  
271 province under Trajan in 107 had created a growth of culture and social organisation  
272 among its inhabitants, which had a direct impact on the people beyond these borders,  
273 including the Goths. However, this extended influence of Roman artefacts and  
274 Roman culture was not something Trajan had invented and indeed its principle,  
275 which was generally applicable across the imperial provinces, had a strong impact on  
276 the people beyond the imperial frontiers; in Kulikowski's words: 'two or three  
277 generations after Roman provincial culture began to develop inside the frontier, new  
278 and more sophisticated barbarian polities appeared along the periphery, prompted by  
279 both the example of Roman provincial life and the threat of the Roman army.'<sup>26</sup>  
280 Indeed for people outside the empire the attractions to life close to or even within the

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<sup>26</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 41.

281 imperial sphere were manifold. In the earlier empire Roman law had forbidden  
 282 marriage between Roman citizens and foreigners – any children from such unions  
 283 were regarded as illegitimate and could not inherit, whereas with the acceptance of  
 284 Roman citizenship the person ceased to be legally part of his family by birth. With  
 285 the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 Roman citizenship was granted to all freeborn  
 286 inhabitants of the empire and with this lost most of its former prestige. In the later  
 287 empire, Roman law distinguished between various groups holding different social  
 288 status, but the real difference between them, or between barbarian and Roman, lay in  
 289 their cultural understanding and their literary education.<sup>27</sup> The mobility of the  
 290 imperial troops led to an increase of people from all across the empire who ended  
 291 their lives as inhabitants of provinces that were often geographically distant from  
 292 their own native provinces. Furthermore, the frequent employment in the imperial  
 293 army and also in many cases a close proximity to the imperial frontiers meant that  
 294 many of these barbarian groups had been exposed to imperial goods, customs and  
 295 administration for a considerable amount of time; this had had a profound impact on  
 296 their own societies as they brought Roman customs with them when they returned to  
 297 their own people.<sup>28</sup> This process of Romanisation was a process that was deliberately  
 298 encouraged by the empire in order to enhance a concept of an empire bound together  
 299 by cultural understanding as this process gradually diminished sharp boundaries  
 300 between Roman and non-Roman sphere.

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<sup>27</sup> A real sense of political identity and civic obligations for the causes of the empire were largely lacking. See also Liebeschuetz (2001), 343-5, 350-2.

<sup>28</sup> Böhme (1996), 92- for graves in the areas around the Rhine, Belgium and Northern France where grave-goods serve as an indicators for communities, which were essentially non-Roman in their ethnic origins (as the clothing and weaponry found is of non-Roman origin both in style and usage) but had adopted, at least in part, aspects and material goods from the Roman sphere (weapons manufactured in Roman territory, jewellery, Roman coinage); some of the grave-goods, especially those linked with clothing such as *fibulae*, and the spread of their occurrence also indicate the appearance of specific groups of non-Roman origin in certain areas. As these graves were located nearby Roman garrisons, there is a strong likelihood that these people had been serving in the imperial army or were at least closely linked with this military presence; furthermore, as an equally large part of the people buried there were women and children, there is a strong indication that these graves were not only linked with non-Roman troops in imperial military service but that there were entire groups of people as ethnic units.



301 The most common method of imperial administration of a conquered territory was to  
302 use its native population and to establish a governing body based on the already  
303 existing power structures with a strong focus on already existing or newly set up  
304 urban centres (in case of Gaul, the obvious choice was the *civitas*). This in turn  
305 would have further fostered local interest in Roman goods and culture, as the power-  
306 holding groups of the native population propagated these and Rome apparently  
307 deliberately fostered such processes through urbanisation, loan-provisions, the  
308 granting of citizenship (certainly an important point before 212) as a privileged  
309 award for services towards Rome; the promotion of the imperial cult with the local  
310 leaders very often incorporated as its priests as well as through education.<sup>29</sup> A strong  
311 market for Roman goods was therefore to be found among the people living close to  
312 imperial frontiers; in fact the peoples living closest to the borders were often almost  
313 indistinguishable from their Roman neighbours. Besides, the imperial borders had to  
314 be flexible enough to allow Roman expansion yet at the same time prevent barbarian  
315 incursions; any concept of strictly defined frontiers as it is understood today was not  
316 to be found in imperial ideology. There were some natural boundaries like rivers or  
317 military fortifications like the *Limes*, but in many cases these frontiers seem to have  
318 been defined as the answer to specific problems rather than to mark specific  
319 territories in the first place.<sup>30</sup> Imperial frontiers were quite permeable, allowing for a  
320 fluid exchange of ideas and culture, which opposes ideas of a Roman 'block' versus  
321 the outside barbarian world, although such concepts were undoubtedly valid when it  
322 came to Roman self-perception of cultural superiority over all non-Romans;<sup>31</sup> indeed  
323 the political concept of a 'Germanic threat' has been rejected by Drinkwater as an

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<sup>29</sup> Hanson (1997), 72-8.

<sup>30</sup> Geary (2001), 107 . Olster (1996), 94-7. Noy (2000), 2. Elton (1996), 127. Carroll (2001), 31-48. Pohl (2000), 98-9.

<sup>31</sup> A.M. 26.4.5. Ammianus for example described the arrival of the Gothic groups like water bursting a dam and pouring into the empire, thus highlighting even more the danger of such invaders and the ultimate failure of an emperor like Valens to stop them.

324 'artefact, because most of the barbarian groups posed little danger to the empire  
 325 unless it was distracted by other threats to its stability such as civil war'.<sup>32</sup>  
 326 Undoubtedly the idea of a permanent barbarian 'threat' was far more an aspect of  
 327 imperial propaganda, intrinsically linked with the Roman perception of foreigners in  
 328 general, which allowed for ideological concepts such as the acquisition of military  
 329 glory, the enhancing of the status of the emperor, the justification for imperial  
 330 expansion linked with the provision of fighting in order to occupy but also train  
 331 troops. Besides, the empire was, in contrast to its outside neighbours, militarily in an  
 332 absolutely dominant position, and almost all military encounters between barbarian  
 333 and imperial forces tended to bring defeat for the less equipped, less-trained  
 334 barbarian forces.

335 Rome's expansionistic policy had always demanded a careful management of its  
 336 growing frontiers; imperial borders were in fact both too extensive for the relatively  
 337 small amount of military forces to offer serious long-term protection without  
 338 draining other parts of the empire of manpower (and thus weakening defences there)  
 339 as well as too demanding for the fiscal budget.<sup>33</sup> A strict polarisation between  
 340 Romans and peoples outside imperial frontiers was therefore much more a  
 341 theoretical attitude, usually employed in imperial ideology, whereas realistic political  
 342 diplomacy often demanded quite a different, much subtler approach than many of the  
 343 contemporary sources would like us to believe. Court propaganda demanded from

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<sup>32</sup> Drinkwater (2007), 360, 362. Pohl (2000), 35. Wells (1999), 102-4, 126-32. Millar (1982), 19-20. Pohl (2000), 53-4. Noy (2000 a), 213: the people from the Germanic and Danubian provinces were always regarded more as the stereotypical barbarian than foreigners from geographically more distant provinces. See also Whittaker (1994), 26-7, 31-60, 194-8. Indeed the continuous process of assimilation in the frontier zones is further indicator for the absence of a strict or impermeable frontier as otherwise the development of a society which incorporated both indigenous and Roman culture would not have been possible.

<sup>33</sup> Goffart (1981), 283: he argues that the imperial administration was chiefly concerned with this overstretching of both military and financial resources as well as constant internal power struggles which left the barbarian appearance, at least in the beginning, as a marginal problem; this in turn totally underestimated the real danger these peoples were causing to the entire imperial administration.

344 the emperor to keep foreign peoples under control, moreover to remind them  
 345 constantly of their inferior, barbarian status, although that did not necessarily exclude  
 346 the simultaneous existence of diplomatic negotiations. It is this ideological spin,  
 347 written for the Roman audience, which forms a very large part of contemporary  
 348 accounts, thus making it at times difficult to see the real politics behind such rhetoric,  
 349 and furthermore complicated by the fact that the foreign peoples described in such  
 350 sources formed the elite of their groups which were prone to have assimilated with  
 351 Roman culture.<sup>34</sup> In order to maintain a certain level of stability alongside its  
 352 frontiers, something very important considering the vast geographical expansion of  
 353 the imperial borders, it had always been a deliberate political concept to affiliate  
 354 foreign nations, especially peoples which could not be conquered, with Roman ideals  
 355 and incorporate them into the imperial system by turning them into client kingdoms.  
 356 Although theoretically everybody in the empire, and that included foreign peoples,  
 357 had the possibility to assimilate with Roman culture, in Roman ideology it was the  
 358 notion of life according to the *mos maiorum* which could not be adopted but  
 359 someone had to be born into it to understand its concept; hence foreign, barbarian  
 360 peoples were by their nature excluded from understanding any such concepts and  
 361 could therefore never adopt the full range of Roman civilisation.<sup>35</sup> The more such  
 362 kingdoms merged with Roman culture and its political as well as military interests,  
 363 the less likely they were to fight against the empire: to become *amicus et socius* of  
 364 the empire carried considerable advantages which culminated very often in the total  
 365 assimilation with Roman ideas of the ruling group of the foreign peoples in question.

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<sup>34</sup> Heather (2001), 49-56. Wells, 95, 191-3.

<sup>35</sup> Unruh (1991), 135-6. However assimilation was not necessarily equal with acceptance and Roman prejudice against foreign peoples continued to exist. This can be found for example in Cicero: he had noticed the difference between the ideology of Roman superiority and the political necessity of assimilation, between proclaiming unchallenged Roman power yet accepting the limitations of Roman culture (especially in comparison with Greek culture). Thus he argued for a policy of assimilation, for example *de re publ.* I.37.58, *in Ver.* 2.5, 166. Sallust moreover propagated the idea of Rome as the leader of all peoples as the Romans were born to be rulers, for example *bel. Iug.* 31.11.

366 However, the process of becoming a client of Rome always meant the acceptance of  
367 Roman superiority to which the client aspired, whereas in the later empire the  
368 establishment of barbarians within the imperial system often lacked the acceptance  
369 of such a concept. The empire had to learn that any process of assimilation between  
370 barbarian establishments and the Roman state was increasingly based less on  
371 concepts of client kingdoms but much more on diplomatic compromises which often  
372 meant the acceptance of a large degree of military freedom of the foreign peoples in  
373 question, especially when they proved to be too strong to be treated in the usual way  
374 of subduing them and forcefully removing any political and/or military  
375 independence. This did not mean an alteration of Roman views or prejudices about  
376 such peoples. The various internal problems of the later empire, and the increasing  
377 strength of foreign peoples from outside was one of these factors, had created a  
378 climate of instability which left enough space for these foreign peoples to develop  
379 their own establishments, thus creating a powerbase which the empire was  
380 increasingly unable to counteract. Traditionally Roman perceptions of foreign  
381 peoples had followed concepts of strict distinctions between brute barbarian and  
382 cultured Roman, and the world of late antiquity made no exception in that; Romans  
383 and foreigners were separated by military as well as ideological frontiers. Despite the  
384 existence and indeed acceptance of necessary acculturation between the two,  
385 certainly Roman ideology had to ensure the continuous existence of this separation  
386 through propaganda and rhetoric – even if it was found much more in theoretical,  
387 literary accounts than in actual politics. Yet, one should be careful not to over-  
388 emphasise the expressions of eternal Roman success over its neighbours as mere  
389 concepts of imperial propaganda when there were times when the perception of a  
390 ‘barbarian threat’ became a dangerous reality and was to increase in being so in the  
391 late empire, especially when the imperial system was weakened. The Gothic crossing

392 of the Danube is an excellent example of this: a situation which was in no way  
393 unprecedented quickly got out of hand and created a ‘threat’ to Roman control,  
394 which remained uncontrollable and effectively became the foundation for the Gothic  
395 success.<sup>36</sup>

396 Rome tended to annex states nearest to its borders as client kingdoms, which acted as  
397 buffer zones against incursions from further afield. Client kings thus provided  
398 another aspect of imperial administration, especially when a conquest of the territory  
399 in question would have been difficult, but the successful relationship between the  
400 two depended on the benefits both sides gained from the deal; although the kings  
401 ruled their area as if there was no Roman presence, their power depended to a large  
402 extent on Rome as the imperial administration was always ready to interfere. A  
403 similar relationship could also be conducted with independent leaders of foreign  
404 people; however, such relationships should perhaps be better described as diplomatic  
405 connections rather than client relationships.<sup>37</sup> In many cases the giving of hostages  
406 not only ensured a certain stability of the treaty but also further aided the process of  
407 interaction and assimilation of the ruling family of these client kingdoms with  
408 Roman culture. However, the relationship between Rome and her neighbours cannot  
409 always be fairly described as the forceful imposition of Roman culture onto non-  
410 Roman foreigners. Indeed the process of Romanisation was largely dependent on the  
411 geographical location of the territory in question, which had a direct impact in the  
412 extent of the adoption of and assimilation with Roman culture; whereas in the  
413 Western territories Rome met groups of people with cultures they regarded as  
414 barbarian, the Eastern expansion meant that it collided with people whose culture  
415 had been an inspiration to Rome itself and who were largely keeping their own

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<sup>36</sup> See Part II. 2,3.

<sup>37</sup> Hanson (1997), 69-72. There are several examples mentioned in Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.63; *Germ.* 41, 42. See also articles by Pitts (1989) and Heather (2001).

416 cultures intact; furthermore, the extent to which the acculturation with the Roman  
 417 sphere happened was highly individual, and not always a process of exchange  
 418 between separate groups of different societies.<sup>38</sup> Besides, this spread of imperial  
 419 culture was not only an aspect that influenced the world beyond the frontier-zones, as  
 420 it was a process that was also happening within Roman society. The adoption of  
 421 Roman culture by barbarians into their own cultural understanding encouraged the  
 422 creation of a new culture in which Roman and barbarian cultures experienced mutual  
 423 assimilation; this process is in German quite aptly called ‘Mischzivilisation’.<sup>39</sup> In  
 424 northern Gaul for example, in the late third/early fourth century this  
 425 ‘Mischzivilisation’ created a new Gallo-Germanic culture, which was responsible for  
 426 the later Frankish success when it was the foundation that introduced and bound the  
 427 Franks to Roman culture; although they were to clash with the Roman empire on  
 428 military/politically inspired levels, culturally they had adopted so much from the  
 429 Roman side that it effectively came to a ‘Gallisierung’ of the Franks instead of a  
 430 ‘Fränkisierung’ of Gaul, thus eventually enabling them to incorporate and  
 431 successfully adopt the Roman system of administration, taxation and ecclesiastical  
 432 organisation under Childeric’s and Chlodwig’s leadership.<sup>40</sup>

433 This adoption of Roman culture by Rome’s neighbours, conquered enemies or  
 434 barbarians living within the Roman sphere was largely a voluntary process, although  
 435 undoubtedly fostered by the empire and often even wanted as a way to gain access to

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<sup>38</sup> Krausse (2005), 56-8.

<sup>39</sup> Reuter (2005): the example given here is the migration of soldiers from across the empire to the southwest province of Germany. Böhme (1996), 92. There are numerous examples of barbarians (Arbogast, Bauto, Richomer, Fritigern, Gainas to name but a few) who entered Roman military offices and rose high in the ranks, either making a career in Roman services at the imperial court, or in some cases returned to their native homeland and influencing politics there; they were aptly described by A. Demandt as ‘Militäraristokratie’. See also Van Ossel (1996), 102-3 pointing out the long-lasting continuation of Roman culture and buildings into the sixth century. Barrett (1997), 51-3, 59, 63. See also Whittaker (1997), 152, 159. Hanson (1997), 67. Geary (2001), 110. Noy (2000 a), 10; (2000 b), 15-31 for issues of immigration into the empire in terms of its demographic implications and its research methods.

<sup>40</sup> Drinkwater (2007), 349, 351-4: on the difficulty of assessing the construction and ethnic structures of the population in northern Gaul and the status of the Frankish settlers there. Pohl (1998 a) 643, 646-7, 649-50; (2000), 107-14.

436 wealth; however Geary's arguments that 'Die germanische Welt [war] vielleicht die  
437 großartigste und dauerhafteste Schöpfung des politischen und militärischen Genies  
438 der Römer' is surely an exaggeration as it regards the world of non-Roman peoples  
439 almost as a Roman invention, though without doubt the world outside imperial  
440 territory benefitted greatly from its continuous contact with the Roman world.<sup>41</sup>  
441 Miller warns against an over-emphasis on the influence of Roman culture on the  
442 social structures of the peoples beyond imperial borders when he argues that the  
443 cultures and societies emerging from this were in fact the result of a very long  
444 process of interaction between the Mediterranean world and northern Europe, and  
445 thus were not simply 'Romanised' because this process had started way earlier  
446 before the Roman empire had become the dominant factor in the Mediterranean.<sup>42</sup>  
447 Barrett, too, warns that the concept of transporting Roman culture, especially  
448 material goods, across its borders indicates a general idea of a common Roman  
449 identity, which might not have been the case in this universal sense; thus for him the  
450 term Romanisation carries its own difficulties, and is more applicable in terms of a  
451 cultural concept/ideas, a 'form of understanding', than in terms of material culture,  
452 especially when the Roman empire itself was a construct, not a 'single reality'.<sup>43</sup>  
453 Although Barrett has a point in arguing that one should refrain from using the Roman  
454 empire as a struggle of Roman versus barbarian and instead should regard the Roman  
455 culture as being open to change and individual interpretation, his argument goes  
456 perhaps slightly too far as it regards the Roman culture as essentially unstable and  
457 prone to individual interpretation. Whereas he is undoubtedly correct that the people  
458 who adopted Roman culture into their own interpreted it in different ways from its  
459 original purpose or meaning in the Roman sphere, and moreover that even people

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<sup>41</sup> Geary (1996), 7. Wells (1999), 128-32.

<sup>42</sup> Miller (1996), 167-9.

<sup>43</sup> Barrett (1997).

460 within the empire interpreted cultural aspects individually, this does not mean that  
461 there were not universally accepted concepts within the imperial sphere and culture  
462 which were imposed on the inhabitants of the empire.

463 To be someone of a certain social standing one had to adopt the trappings of Roman  
464 culture – which was also seen by various barbarian rulers who started to surround  
465 themselves with at least rudimentary elements of Roman education. Thompson  
466 argued that for the few prominent leaders among the Goths such a close relationship  
467 and the diplomatic exchange with Rome had its advantages for their own power  
468 positions: this altered the entire social structure of Gothic society when the leaders  
469 received subsidies which they in turn used to extend their power of patronage and  
470 social control, thus enabling them to set themselves apart from the rest of their  
471 followers. The possession of Roman luxury goods, especially jewellery, weapons but  
472 also money, thus could function as an indicator of a certain position within the  
473 barbarian society and could therefore gradually change traditional social structures.<sup>44</sup>

474 The payment of imperial subsidies and their wider distribution could also serve as a  
475 deliberate diplomatic tool, used to establish and to foster relationships between the  
476 empire and the barbarian group.<sup>45</sup> Considering the extent and length of time of  
477 exposure to the Roman sphere, though, one could argue that subsidies as part of a  
478 treaty were perhaps less substantial in their impact on barbarian social structures.  
479 Krause for example argues that among the Celts even the import of Roman goods or  
480 the adaption of the Celtic monetary system to the Roman system led to little  
481 profound change in their cultural understanding; only when the occupation of a  
482 territory continued, the pressure onto the existing population to adopt ‘foreign’

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<sup>44</sup> Thompson (1963), 107-9. Heather (1991), 21-3, 189-90. Wells (1999), 192-3, 229, 252-6. Shaw (2001), 145. Geary (2001), 110. For barbarian economy, see for example Elton (1996 b), 22-30; the Goths were described by Elton as a semi-sedentary society as long as they were in the Danube area, and turned into permanent settlers once they were in Gaul. Also Díaz (1999), 326. Whittaker (1994), 222-240.

<sup>45</sup> See Hanson (1997), 71-2. Elton (1996 b), 36.



483 customs continuously grew, which in turn created tendencies among the native  
484 population to revolt with the aim to remove any of these ‘foreign’ customs.<sup>46</sup> Heather  
485 too doubts that Roman benefits had a great influence on the development of Gothic  
486 society and interprets internal power struggles more as results of already existing  
487 internal power-feuds.<sup>47</sup> Yet there are examples of a direct link between the outbreak  
488 of warfare and the lack of payment of imperial gifts. The Tervingi, for example,  
489 started their revolt after the Danube-crossing when the promised supplies failed to  
490 materialise, and even as late as the fifth century negotiations between the Goths and  
491 the empire were frequently hindered by the lack of the said subsidies.

492

493 Yet the Roman definition of the Gothic peoples and their ethnic origins and  
494 dynamics remains difficult to establish as it largely fitted into the standardised  
495 pattern by which any non-Roman peoples were described with. Alaric’s or Athaulf’s  
496 Goths were by no means the first Goths the empire had encountered, nor was the  
497 trouble the Goths created in the late fourth century something completely new. The  
498 Romans had been in contact with various Gothic groups already long before the  
499 fourth century AD, and it was in the civil wars of the third century that the Romans  
500 encountered Gothic groups as part of large-scale movements into the Eastern  
501 provinces of the empire: 249 had brought the sack of Marcianople near the Black  
502 Sea; the 250s saw the powerful king Cniva, who not only devastated large parts of

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<sup>46</sup> Krausse (2005), 57-61. He argues that in case of Gaul, the already existing infrastructure as well as a certain extent of cultural compatibility for example in terms of religious aspects but also road systems and urban structures helped the process of Romanisation. In contrast to this stands the less developed infrastructure in the Germanic territories and to a large extent a lack of cultural and/or religious compatibility, which then meant that the process of acculturation with the Roman sphere took longer and encompassed a more radical change for the native population. Also Frank (2005), 143-4 for the simultaneous existence of Roman goods in Germanic settlements in the otherwise unchanged Germanic culture of the Tauber and Main area in the second/third century, which indicates a strong trade-based relationship; otherwise, though, the adoption of Roman customs seems to be lacking.

<sup>47</sup> Heather (2001), 26-7: he argues that the provision of imperial gifts was a longstanding tradition but was more a diplomatic tool than an imperial measure to buy peace from the barbarians. In 441 the failure of the empire to pay subsidies to Attila was used by him as the reason for the outbreak of warfare, although in this case subsidies had become a way to buy peace.

503 Roman territory there but also defeated and killed the emperor Decius in 251, and  
504 further raids in Thrace and piracy along the coast of Asia Minor continued until 268-  
505 70<sup>48</sup>. The 280s and 290s saw more successful campaigns against various Gothic  
506 groups, with Diocletian fighting against the Tervingi and Taifali – the first mention  
507 of the Tervingi as a subgroup of the Goths<sup>49</sup>. Diocletian’s reorganisation of the  
508 administrative and military structures of the empire under the tetrarchy system  
509 renewed imperial strength, creating a hold on imperial power, which had serious  
510 consequences for the Gothic groups as it substantially altered the relationship  
511 between empire and frontier zones. Within a short time, there was a certain degree of  
512 cooperation between both sides, with the empire even allowing the expansion of  
513 power of certain groups like the Tervingi as a way to control parts of the Danube  
514 provinces through them. Their status as a buffer between the imperial frontiers and  
515 other barbarian groups strengthened once more their force; more warfare followed  
516 under Diocletian’s successors, for example Constantine’s campaigns in the 330s, and  
517 proved to remain a constant pattern until the time of Alaric.<sup>50</sup>

518 The Roman view on ethnic dynamics was mainly to stop any attempt at a  
519 continuation or preservation of ethnic identity among conquered foreign peoples in  
520 order to ensure Roman supremacy.<sup>51</sup> For the Romans ethnic identity went very  
521 closely with political identity and independence: to allow barbarian groups access to  
522 a communal area of settlement would further encourage or even create political  
523 formations which in turn could foster resistance against Rome. Valens’ decision to  
524 allow the Tervingi to retain their weapons when crossing the Danube was blamed by  
525 contemporaries as part of the reason for the outbreak of violence, and the decision to

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<sup>48</sup> Zosimus, I.31-5, 45. Kulikowski (2007), 18-21, 28-33.

<sup>49</sup> *Pan. Lat.* II.17.1. Kulikowski (2007), 31.

<sup>50</sup> For detailed history of earlier treaties see Collins (2006). Heather (1991a); (1991b); (1996). Kulikowski (2007).

<sup>51</sup> Ferris (2000), 180: portraits of barbarians in visual art were always exclusively depicting them in defeat regardless how detailed the individuals were presented.

526 ban the Greuthungi from crossing the Danube too may have been an attempt to  
 527 interrupt existing political alliances with the Tervingi, and thus to minimise the  
 528 potential danger for the imperial side; besides, the massacres of various Goths in  
 529 Constantinople and Thessalonica after the battle of Adrianople or after the revolt of  
 530 Gainas clearly suggests that the very existence of a Gothic population in the cities or  
 531 as soldiers within the army was seen as a potential hotbed for revolutionary  
 532 movements which were threatening imperial interests and thus had to be  
 533 eliminated.<sup>52</sup> The usual treatment of such groups therefore meant the dispersal of its  
 534 people as *coloni* across a province (at the same time controlling their movements  
 535 even then as they were tied to the land), and in some cases prohibited them from  
 536 providing recruits or federate contingents for the imperial army. This implies that  
 537 Rome feared that groups of foreign peoples, despite being conquered, would not lose  
 538 their claim to their ethnic identity and subsequently political identity, which was  
 539 based on the concept of living in a group consisting of people with the same claim.  
 540 In contrast to modern scholarship, Roman writers were not interested in recording  
 541 ethnographic details and providing a scientific analysis of the cultural habits of non-  
 542 Roman people. Any notion to research into foreign peoples for their own sake was an  
 543 alien concept in Roman literature, as any foreign peoples, including the Gothic  
 544 groups only captured Roman interest once they had entered imperial frontiers or had  
 545 become a noticeable opponent to Roman expansion or influence. Roman ideology  
 546 was not engaged in concepts of ethnogenesis, socio-cultural assimilation or regarding  
 547 them as individual people with their own history, as such concepts are very much  
 548 modern perceptions; they have nothing to do with the way in which peoples like the  
 549 Gothic groups were viewed by their contemporaries as they were evaluated far more

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<sup>52</sup> Zosimus, IV.40.5 for incident in Tomi; Libanius, *Or.* 19.22, 20.14 for the lynching in Constantinople; Synesius' writings in general portray such anti-Gothic feelings and were calling for the expulsion of the Gothic population in Constantinople, especially in connection with the revolt of Gainas. Cameron & Long (1993), 107-9.

550 in the context of their geographical location, their nuisance as an imperial opponent,  
551 or at best as their relative value as buffer zones or traders of foreign goods. This does  
552 not mean that the Romans had no knowledge about the various different customs and  
553 habits of the people they encountered, but such ethnographical issues were rather put  
554 into specific categories of barbarian behaviour; indeed they were largely recorded to  
555 demonstrate a general barbarian ‘other’ in contrast to the civilised Roman world: the  
556 barbarian had to be put into such categories so as to provide a background from  
557 which Roman values could be reflected; often a generic barbarian had to be invented  
558 as a necessary counterpart to Roman self-definition and as a tool to highlight Roman  
559 values and culture.<sup>53</sup> This concept was also used by Christian writers who employed  
560 the barbarians in their eschatological arguments as a mirror to highlight and/or  
561 explain a lack of proper Christian faith and morale among the Romans; once again,  
562 the individual barbarian was not so much described for ethnographical reasons but  
563 served as a standardised image, which served as an antithesis to the Roman sphere.<sup>54</sup>

564

565 There is a very interesting comparison in some contemporary Christian literature  
566 which connected the Goths with a legend from the Old Testament, regarding them as  
567 the incarnation of Evil, as the diametrically opposite to all Roman culture and  
568 understanding. Bearing in mind the continuous presence of the Gothic cause in  
569 imperial politics and increasingly successful attempts of assimilation between the  
570 two sides, this negative image is certainly interesting. To digress here briefly: the  
571 relationship Christian ideology had with the portrayal of barbarians in general was  
572 certainly complex. In contemporary writing, the barbarian was often a generalised  
573 figure, used as a moral stick to beat the Roman people with and to explain the  
574 decline of Roman military power and political influence in terms of portraying him

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<sup>53</sup> Ferris (2000), 3-4, 184-186.

<sup>54</sup> See also Part III. 2 c.

575 as God's scourge sent to punish the lapsing moral of the Romans. However, the  
576 barbarians were primarily used as a vehicle for conveying a theological message of  
577 the final triumph of true faith and ultimate salvation; like worldly texts, these sources  
578 were very rarely, if at all, concerned with providing an analytical account of  
579 historical events. Jerome's vast correspondence with many of his disciples, for  
580 example, did mention the effect the Gothic sack of Rome had on friends like  
581 Marcella, but personal sufferings as a result of this were analysed rather as a useful  
582 reminder of the vanity of all earthly things and to focus therefore on heavenly things  
583 instead.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, for many of the Christian writers the arrival of the barbarians  
584 in the heartland of the empire and their increasing political and military power was  
585 regarded as a significant portent of the imminent end of the world, turning the  
586 barbarians into the forbearers of the Apocalypse. For the few pagan writers the lack  
587 of the traditional Roman *mos maiorum*, or for the Christian writers a lack of proper  
588 faith and the subsequent growth of sin, was regarded as one of the main reasons for  
589 the increasing weakness of the Roman empire. Setting Christianity equal with  
590 *Romanitas*, any event that seriously threatened the existence and continuation of the  
591 empire was explained as a punishment sent by God for lapsing Christian belief.<sup>56</sup>  
592 Increasingly Christian authors linked the barbarian incursions with a lamentable lack  
593 of Christian moral values, creating the idea of regarding the resulting damage as a  
594 deserved expression of God's wrath against His unruly flock. Especially barbarians  
595 of Germanic origin, although this did apply to other barbarian groups too, were  
596 portrayed in such terms; for example Attila was frequently described as God's  
597 scourge. *Ezekiel*, *Revelation* and other Jewish and Christian texts, especially those  
598 concerned with eschatological messages in general and the last day of Judgement in  
599 particular, linked some barbarian tribes with the legend of Gog and Magog. Although

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<sup>55</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 40, 127.

<sup>56</sup> Olster (1996), 95-6.

600 the exact meaning of what Gog/Magog stood for cannot be established for certain,  
 601 they did represent the embodiment of personified Evil, sent by God as a form of  
 602 judgement; often the battle of mankind against them was regarded as a necessary  
 603 event before the beginning of a new age. Depending on the author, various forms of  
 604 this legend, including the text on *Alexander's Wall*, existed in Syriac, Greek and  
 605 Latin and several different barbarian groups were brought into connection with  
 606 them<sup>57</sup>. Until Augustine, the text of *Revelation* 20 analysed the events concerning the  
 607 occurrence of Gog as an event before the final Judgement, whereas after Augustine's  
 608 writing, Gog's attack became increasingly linked with Antichrist's war against the  
 609 Faithful. Writers like Justin, Irenaeus and Origen all used *Ezekiel* in their own texts  
 610 although they did not make any direct connection between Gog and any of the  
 611 barbarian people in the empire. However, Gog/Magog was often identified as having  
 612 personified itself in particularly troublesome people like the Huns, the Alans or the  
 613 Scythians, which in turn were often used as a synonym for the Goths. Jerome,  
 614 though, rejected the link between the Scythians and the Goths of his time; Indeed  
 615 Augustine firmly opposed the frequent tendency to link Gog with contemporary  
 616 enemies, and in particular with the Goths, although this concept continued; even  
 617 Eucherius of Lyons mentioned the traditional linking of the Gog/Magog legend with  
 618 the Goths in his *Instructionum Libri Duo*.<sup>58</sup> A direct connection between the Gog-  
 619 legend and contemporary historical writing is rare although there are exceptions:

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<sup>57</sup> There is an example where the term 'Scythian' was not used in connection with the Goths but somewhat indirectly with the Alans, a people who appeared within imperial territory together with the Vandals and Suebes only after the Gothic arrival in the fourth century. Far earlier Josephus had somehow linked the Scythians with Magog, the personified evil, who had been shut away from civilisation by a wall erected by Alexander the Great around the edges of the world in order to protect the civilised world against evil: according to Josephus, the Greeks called the people of Magog Scythians. In a later passage, he describes the Alans as a 'Scythian race', although he does not make the connection between the Alans being a personification of Magog: see Josephus, *Antiquities* I. 122-3, 244-5, and 246-51.

<sup>58</sup> *Ezekiel*, 38.2-39.16. *Revelation* 20.9. Augustine, *de civ. dei*, XX.11. Jerome, *Ep.ad oceanum* 77.8. Jones, W. (1971), 398-400. Chadwick (1955), 156-7. See also Fitzpatrick (2004). Bøe (2001), 95-6, 184-6. Christensen (2002), 44-53.

620 Socrates mentioned the positive effect of a sermon on his congregation which had  
621 focused on the prophecies of Ezekiel that God would finally deliver His people from  
622 evils like Gog in connection with an attack on Theodosius by the Goths; more direct  
623 is a treatise by Ambrose to Gratian where he linked Gog directly with the Goths:  
624 ‘Gog iste Gothus est’, firmly emphasising the eventual victory of the empire as  
625 already prophesied by Ezekiel, which was further fostered by the continuous  
626 steadfast faith of Gratian.<sup>59</sup> However, overall the deliberate link between Gog/Magog  
627 and the Goths, between personified evil that was embodied in the Goths, occurred far  
628 less frequently and was less directly exploited in terms of political propaganda than  
629 one could have expected. Bearing in mind the continuous presence of the Gothic  
630 cause in imperial politics and increasingly successful attempts of assimilating with  
631 them from a Roman viewpoint, this double standard is certainly revealing in terms of  
632 a deep-seated suspicion or at least unease with the barbarian presence in general but  
633 particularly with the Goths.

634

635 To sum up here, ‘Romanisation’ beyond the imperial frontiers, and  
636 ‘Mischcivilisation’ within the empire created a different world as Roman and  
637 barbarian cultures underwent a process of mutual assimilation. However, Roman  
638 culture and ideology largely prevented the empire from accepting and operating  
639 effectively within this new framework of conditions – at least on a political level.  
640 Although it could work well enough with its neighbours on a daily basis, the  
641 insistence on Roman superiority prevented any major long-term diplomatic  
642 interaction. Roman failure to come fully to terms with this created socio-political  
643 weaknesses that allowed the barbarians, particularly the Goths, to establish  
644 themselves within the empire. Although not created by Rome, the Goths were very

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<sup>59</sup> Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* VII.43.6. Ambrose, *de fide* II.16.138: this letter was written in 378 in response to Gratian.

645 much influenced politically by Rome. The essential weakness of the empire lay in its  
646 failure to recognise this and to stick to a rigid concept of barbarian stereotype that for  
647 a long time did not allow for a process of real ethnography or assimilation. This can  
648 be seen in imperial as well as Christian rhetoric, casting barbarians as the instrument  
649 of divine wrath or as mentioned before as embodiments of evil like the Gog/Magog  
650 legends exemplify.



651 3. The Goths and the concept of ethnogenesis

652

653 Who then were the Goths, apart from the image of a people from the edge of  
 654 civilisation and beyond, that Roman ideology created? Can we indeed talk about the  
 655 Goths as a people or were they a pure Roman invention, a collection of various  
 656 groups with no ethnic identity apart from the identity Rome was willing to give  
 657 them? If the concept of ethnogenesis on the basis of the Viennese school is applied to  
 658 the development of the Gothic peoples, one can see how difficult this system is and  
 659 how open to debate it remains; it does answer some of the questions the development  
 660 of the barbarian peoples such as the Goths poses, though it fails to provide an  
 661 entirely satisfactory answer.

662 Ancient authors like Zosimus, Ammianus Marcellinus, Olympiodorus to name but a  
 663 few, labelled various different groups with individual names such as the Taifali,  
 664 Greuthungi or Tervingi but equally called them Goths, Scythians or even more  
 665 generally barbarians.<sup>60</sup> This clearly shows not only that the ancient authors had little  
 666 information who belonged to which group, but also that there was no such thing as  
 667 ‘the Goths’ as a unified, homogenous group or nation but rather several groups with  
 668 their own military organisation which occasionally cooperated, presumably in times  
 669 of warfare, but were otherwise independent from each other. How far they were

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<sup>60</sup> Zosimus often called them Scythians or Goths: I.23, 27, 28, 63-4, IV.7, 10-1, 20-4, 34; the groups of Fritigern, Alatheus and Saphrax he labelled as German peoples, whereas Alaric’s group was described as barbarians. Ammianus is slightly more precise and labelled them as Tervingi and Greuthungi, but he also used the term Goths generically and in the context of Decius’ defeat, the term Scythians, A.M.,31.4, 5. Olympiodorus gave various versions of labelling the Goths in his accounts: he said the Vandals used the term *trouli* to describe the Goths (probably in a derogatory fashion in the aftermath of the Danube-crossing), frg.29 (on the later resonance of the interpretation of this term, see p.14, fn.14); he used the term *bucellarius* to describe certain Goths without making further comments on the exact origins of these Goths, frg. 7.4; he calls Alaric’s troops Goths, frg.6, 7.5, but Galla Placidia’s Gothic bodyguards barbarians, frg. 38; Wallia is described as leader of the Goths, frg. 30. Eunapius used the terms barbarian (for example in connection with the Maximus rebellion, frg.55) and Scythian (for example describing the Goths during the Danube crossing, frg. 41-2; mentioning Fravittas’ career, frg.59; describing Gainas, frg.60). For a more detailed discussion of names for the Goths, see for example Christensen (2002), 21-43,197-219.

670 ethnically of different origin is another matter, and was certainly of no interest to  
671 contemporary writers. Although the practice of labelling a whole group under one  
672 name, regardless of their nature and origins as individual groups, is very much  
673 debatable, I would nevertheless suggest calling 'Goths' for the time being those who  
674 are referred to as Goths by our sources. The sources talk frequently about the various  
675 Gothic groups, which were large and powerful enough to withstand the imperial  
676 army for several decades despite occasional defeats. Yet we know little about the  
677 precise size of such groups, especially as numbers of military units were prone to be  
678 exaggerated by contemporary authors, though their numbers must have fluctuated  
679 over the years. Equally there is little information about the actual formation of these  
680 groups: the ancient sources describe them as warrior bands under various leaders, at  
681 times cooperating with each other.<sup>61</sup> It is not within the scope of this work to analyse  
682 the early development of the various Gothic groups before they became part of  
683 Roman society but rather to look at their development in the fourth century from  
684 these multiple groups into a political unit, which eventually settled in Aquitaine in  
685 416 AD. Indeed the nature of their military and social organisation has been open to  
686 question: the interpretation of the nature of Alaric's group has ranged from a group  
687 of Gothic mercenaries in Roman service to an entire nation on the move; the next  
688 chapters of this thesis will look in more detail at the development of Alaric's  
689 followers.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Zosimus, V.42. A.M., 31.6.4-7, 15.2: various other people usually from the fringes of Roman society such as slaves or poor people joined these Gothic groups thus creating multi-ethnic communities.

<sup>62</sup> Liebeschuetz (1992), 75-84. For more information about the early history of the Goths and their various social customs see for example the works by P. Heather, M. Kulikowski (2007). See also Collins (2006), 15-26.

690 a) The *Traditionskern*

691

692 One of the essential features of the Viennese school is its concept (which some  
 693 scholars have questioned) of *Traditionsträger/Traditionskern* as a specific group of  
 694 warriors, the *Traditionsträger* who ensured not only the continuation of the  
 695 *Traditionskern* but also its transmission onto all followers under the overall  
 696 leadership of the *Heerkönig*.<sup>63</sup> Let us turn first to the concept of the *Traditionsträger*  
 697 as an elite group who upheld the *Traditionskern*, who shared a mythic narrative of  
 698 their past (with a divine descent of their rulers) and who shared their ethnic identity  
 699 through such migration-myths from Scandinavia in search for a new homeland to  
 700 settle. Indeed the history of the Goths has very often been connected with the term  
 701 *Völkerwanderung* or migration of peoples from a northern country somewhere in  
 702 Scandinavia or Poland as their *Urheimat*. As has been said before, there are scholars,  
 703 for example H. Wolfram and W. Pohl, who have connected the occurrence of place-  
 704 names with the ethnic development of specific people. However, there are serious  
 705 problems with such an approach, not least because the only source on which this is  
 706 based, Jordanes, is certainly very difficult to use, but also for the way in which this  
 707 approach was later used in politics, mainly in twentieth century nationalistic  
 708 propaganda.<sup>64</sup> Although the ancient sources had never put the Goths in the same  
 709 league as the Germanic groups (for the ancient sources, the Goths were far more a  
 710 successor of the Scythians), it was the exploitation or rather invention of a Germanic  
 711 past in the nineteenth century that linked the Goths with the Germans.<sup>65</sup> Especially

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<sup>63</sup> Mainly Kulikowski (2002), Gillett (2002), Bowlus (2002), 244-6. See also Elton (1996 b), 32-41. Heather (2008).

<sup>64</sup> To regard the Goths as another part of the German peoples and to give them as their *Urheimat* Poland and the Nordic countries was to prove fatal in recent history: the idea of regaining these places of *Urheimat* in order to expand German territory under the politically inspired propaganda concept of *Nazi-Lebensraum* was part of a policy which led to the Second World War and the Holocaust.

<sup>65</sup> I deeply reject the concepts of ethnogenetic processes of 'ethnic/racial purity of the German race' or its alleged Scandinavian origins German historians such as O. Höfler propagated in the 1930s on the

712 the *Getica* by Jordanes became the source on which the pre-Roman past of the Goths  
 713 has often been placed; in Kulikowski's words it was the basis from which a non-  
 714 Roman past was invented for these peoples as their history before their contact with  
 715 Rome would have been very blurred. Besides, in his opinion, although the  
 716 ethnogenesis debate managed to question the tribal identity of barbarian groups,  
 717 when it is applied to the Goths it did not do away with the idea of an ethnic memory  
 718 held by a small group of nobles.<sup>66</sup>

719 The idea of the *Traditionsträger* as a small band of people sharing the same ethnic  
 720 memory poses in my opinion serious problems. I do accept that various Gothic  
 721 groups came to share some common aims – which could be called a *Traditionskern*-  
 722 which were most likely militarily inspired and would have served to link them  
 723 together, especially when they became noticeable within the Roman sphere and  
 724 started to press the empire for the realisation and acceptance of their own  
 725 political/military aims. Such aims could have been a reason why different groups  
 726 acted together in the first place – albeit in many cases on a temporary basis only;  
 727 such links could have been formed already before a group came within the radar of  
 728 Roman interest. Equally these links could have developed out of their exposure to  
 729 imperial interference as a way to counteract the enormous military pressure of the  
 730 empire, or gradually developed out of group dynamics. Hence, such shared interests  
 731 were not a *Traditionskern* composed by a selected few of common ethnic origin, but  
 732 could be shared by many groups; indeed such links were not necessarily ethnically or  
 733 socially defined at all but were far likelier inspired by mercenary/military aspects and  
 734 only later by political aims. Liebeschuetz argues that the exceptional military success

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basis of a politically-inspired nationalistic ideology; some aspects of such interpretations were partly retained by R. Wenskus, see W. Pohl (2002) and Murray (2002), 55-7. Pohl (2005), 17-8. Kulikowski (2007), 14-5, 43-9. For comparison of the 'use' of the Franks in shaping/creating French and/or Gallic identity, see James (1988), 235-43.

<sup>66</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 49, 53, 54-6 for problems Jordanes' *Getica* and its use poses; also Christensen (2002), especially 84-124, 318-43.

735 of Alaric's group, which had started as a band of mercenaries, attracted other people  
736 from outside and turned them into a nation: this group shared original Gothic aspects  
737 such as language and religion but was essentially a new people.<sup>67</sup> Liebeschuetz is  
738 surely correct that the mercenary aspect as the starting point for his group makes  
739 sense especially when considering Alaric's aims in the various negotiations with the  
740 empire: throughout the main points remained supplies and a military title as a reward  
741 for Alaric. Land for settlement did feature but the long time it took from the 370s to  
742 418 AD to reach its conclusion questions the immediate urgency of such a request,  
743 especially when the empire was by no means unfamiliar with the concept of settling  
744 barbarian groups on imperial soil. Only when this multi-ethnic warrior band gained  
745 success over a prolonged time, the question of a permanent settlement became more  
746 important because by then this mercenary band had started to transform itself into a  
747 people, including women and children, by absorbing other people from outside into  
748 the group.<sup>68</sup> Thus any common aims such groups shared were subject to change over  
749 the years as well as being frequently redefined by those who supported these aims;  
750 furthermore, the extent to which the adaption to and adoption of cultural elements  
751 from outside happened was also an individual process, although it was partly  
752 influenced by the group of which the individual was part.<sup>69</sup> This can perhaps be seen  
753 in the continuous quarrels between various leaders over a plan of action in regard to  
754 their military support for the empire. That brings us to the question of the *Heerkönig*.

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<sup>67</sup> Liebeschuetz (1992), 75.

<sup>68</sup> Liebeschuetz (1992), 80; (2001), 366.

<sup>69</sup> Theuws & Hiddink (1996), 69-70.

759 b) The *Heerkönig*

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761 The nature of leadership among the Gothic groups is open to debate although it is  
 762 clear that it changed from multiple leaders to the acceptance of a single leader  
 763 (although this is intrinsically linked with the development of the Goths as one  
 764 people). Judging from the frequently appearing feuds for political/military  
 765 leadership, the concept of a sole leader or king, not to speak of a united political  
 766 programme was not automatically accepted by the people forming these various  
 767 Gothic groups. There is no evidence precisely which qualities this leader had to  
 768 encompass as even obvious aspects such as a large entourage and military prowess  
 769 do not explain the fact that even leaders who fulfilled such prerequisites lost their bid  
 770 for power.<sup>70</sup> A group like the one Alaric was leading certainly had a strong military  
 771 aspect: the constant payments of supplies by the empire, as well as Alaric's frequent  
 772 demands of a military command appear very much like a mercenary unit being paid  
 773 for their services. If one takes Alaric as a leader, he was certainly a leader of a  
 774 military-based group, thus the *Heerkönig* does make sense in terms of a military  
 775 leader as the leader of a *Heer* or an army.<sup>71</sup> However, the term *König* does pose  
 776 problems. Normally the title *König*, king, refers to one leader of a people, or even to  
 777 the head of a state in the sense of a monarch. It is true that the Gothic groups  
 778 accepted the idea of a king, but these were rather leaders of small groups with their  
 779 own retinue but not one overall leader over all Gothic groups in one united political  
 780 system; when this term is for example applied to Alaric the same pattern emerges as

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<sup>70</sup> Kulikowski (2002), 79. Elton (1996 b), 32-7. See also Maier (2005), 69-120 for the subsequent development of the royal office.

<sup>71</sup> Pohl (2000), 67-8. On the concept of the *reiks* or *rex*, and *iudex* as leaders of military subdivisions within larger groups of people, see Díaz (1999), 323-4. Heather (1996). Ammianus states the Greuthungi were led by a king whereas the Tervingi in contrast by a chief/leader, A.M. 25.5; 31.3, although Zosimus talked of a royal clan and regarded Athanaric as the head of this clan, Zosimus, IV.25, 34.

781 he was the leader of his group, even regarded as king by his own people, but he was  
 782 not a king in the sense of a ruler over a nation with its own state. Also the idea of the  
 783 *Heerkönig* as the descendant of a noble lineage, fostered by myths of divine ancestry,  
 784 destined to rule, is surely very problematic, especially when applied to Alaric's or  
 785 Athaulf's position; they might have come from a noble family but there is no  
 786 information if they ever supported a divine descent of their families. This of course  
 787 does not rule out that subsequent kings would have invented a divine ancestry for  
 788 themselves, which encompassed earlier rulers, in order to manifest and/or justify  
 789 their own power.

790 Hence the most likely candidates for leadership were those who had a strong military  
 791 power and were able to unite most of the various political, military and mercenary  
 792 aims of their group; thus a royal dynasty with its implications of direct succession  
 793 might have been far too rigid a system to respond to these requirements. Although  
 794 Gothic society accepted the concept of a sole leader or king, it does not automatically  
 795 follow that Alaric and Athaulf were the descendants of a long line of undisputed  
 796 autocrats; besides Athaulf's successor Wallia was not part of the same family at all  
 797 but was, at least according to Orosius, elected because of his political programme,  
 798 which differed from Athaulf's aims.<sup>72</sup> Indeed the position of a sole leader was  
 799 frequently challenged because he had to present but also to create as well as maintain  
 800 aims that would appeal to the majority of his followers and would keep them as his  
 801 entourage.<sup>73</sup> The idea of a divine descent and mythological ancestry was thus surely  
 802 only a secondary point: it was applied once such a leader had established himself and

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<sup>72</sup> Orosius, VII.43; see also Part II.3.

<sup>73</sup> On the question if titles or rulers carried any ethnological meaning, see Gillett (2002), 89, 105, 108-15, 120-1: from his studies it is clear that titles such as *rex Francorum* or *rex Gothorum* do appear very sparsely and usually the title only without any ethnic prefix is the common standard found on coinage or public inscriptions (the usual medium to convey imperial ideology and thus later adopted by the post-Roman rulers). He concludes that '...coins and inscriptions [are] devoid of ethnic messages' and if employed reflected more on the internal politically fragmented structures of kingdoms like the Franks or the Lombards where ethnicity could serve as a unifying element; judging from public propaganda material ethnicity as a political programme was not evident.

803 needed such a divine ancestry to give himself and his rule even more legitimacy, a  
804 concept that undoubtedly became far more important once the mercenary, temporary  
805 aspect of such group-formations had been replaced by a more permanent concept of  
806 a settlement, leading to the eventual development of a nation. Heather proposed that  
807 Alaric was a nobleman who became king and led a mass revolt of Gothic settlers  
808 (settled under the 382 AD treaty).<sup>74</sup> There is a lot to be said for this approach – but  
809 Alaric’s early appearance was undoubtedly as a leader of a mercenary band who  
810 subsequently became king. That is not to say that Alaric was just a commander of a  
811 military contingent consisting entirely of male warriors, but rather that his rise to  
812 power derived from his military leadership and his followers who served as  
813 mercenaries within the Roman army. There were numerous candidates for  
814 leadership, each with their own military programme, who were at times supported  
815 but until Alaric never achieved a universally accepted role as overall leader. That  
816 however did not mean that the group as such ceased to exist but rather that it came to  
817 support someone else whose aims corresponded more with the political and military  
818 ideas of the majority or split up as was the case with Athanaric’s followers. Whether  
819 Alaric was from the beginning widely supported by all Gothic groups as their leader  
820 or only became *the* overall Gothic leader because Rome regarded him as such and  
821 other Gothic groups subsequently joined him because he had proven himself to be  
822 the most prolific and successful, is very difficult to answer. However, he was  
823 certainly regarded as the leader and/or king by his own group of followers and  
824 managed to establish a line of succession when his brother-in-law Athaulf succeeded  
825 him; besides the establishment of a close family-member as the heir and successor of  
826 a leader is a strong indicator for a monarchical system. Furthermore, from Alaric  
827 onwards, the concept of one Gothic leader became an established idea. That does not

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<sup>74</sup> Heather (1996), 172.



828 mean that this leader was therefore automatically without fierce competition from  
829 equally able and established men – far from it as internal feuds for power continued  
830 to feature, but the leadership of one man was no longer questioned in its theory.

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854 c) The *Traditionsträger*

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856 The idea of the *Traditionsträger* creates problems when applied to the concept of  
 857 ethnic self-definition of the Goths: we do not know how the peoples whom the  
 858 Romans described as Goths would have described themselves nor is there a definite  
 859 concept how the followers of Alaric or Athaulf were ethnically defining themselves.  
 860 Liebeschuetz has brought another element into the ethnogenesis-debate by arguing in  
 861 favour of a strong military aspect of the formation of barbarian groups. When this is  
 862 applied to the Goths, he argues that Alaric's followers already as a mercenary band  
 863 undoubtedly had a concept of ethnic unity and regarded themselves as Goths, a  
 864 concept which was carefully cultivated among them – a definition with which I  
 865 principally agree.<sup>75</sup> If the concept of the *Traditionsträger* is applied to this, then  
 866 undoubtedly the *Traditionsträger* can only be seen as the people who shared this  
 867 concept of ethnic unity. However, the idea of the *Traditionsträger* as a limited or  
 868 fixed number of people should be rejected, as well as the notion to regard this  
 869 concept of shared ethnicity as an exclusive idea, which was only accessible to a  
 870 selected group. Indeed judging from the fluctuating size of such groups, concepts and  
 871 definitions of ethnic belonging must have been flexible enough to absorb people  
 872 from outside and to allow them to become permanent members of the group.<sup>76</sup> This  
 873 meant that various people with different ideas of what identity, political and military  
 874 aims meant for them joined together and therefore would have added these  
 875 definitions to the already existing concepts; I agree with Heather that it was the bulk  
 876 of the population which carried and in my opinion created the definition of ethnic  
 877 identity and it was not restricted to a small elite ruling group as the idea of the

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<sup>75</sup> Liebeschuetz (1992), 81-2.

<sup>76</sup> Heather (1996), 88 does accept the approach of the *Traditionskern*-model in its broad sense but rejects it when it is applied to the fourth century Gothic kingdoms as he regards it as too narrow in its idea of noble groups.

878 *Traditionsträger* implies.<sup>77</sup> Against the idea of an entirely ethnic-based bond stands  
879 the absorption of various other people into the groups. Had it been strictly based on  
880 ethnicity, these groups would not have accepted people from outside on a prolonged  
881 basis. Unless outsiders could adopt the ethnic identity of the group they had joined,  
882 for example through intermarriage, most likely the numbers of the original group  
883 would have grown smaller over the years. Zosimus mentions slaves and other  
884 outcasts of Roman society as the majority of the people joining Alaric's group, and  
885 there is no evidence that Alaric's group continued to regard them as such; it is far  
886 more likely that these people were in fact incorporated into the group and must have  
887 been allowed to join the fighting ranks in order to provide Alaric with a fairly  
888 constant number of soldiers.<sup>78</sup> Their desire to flee their own social background and  
889 join Alaric in order to gain a better living would make the absorption of them into his  
890 group a prerequisite for their joining – otherwise their deserting their own society  
891 would make little sense. This leads to the conclusion that any previous social  
892 position or their ethnic background was of little if any importance (further supporting  
893 the thesis that Alaric's group started far more as a band of mercenaries than a people  
894 or even a nation, as ethnic or social background played a very small part in recruiting  
895 mercenaries), although there is no information whether they received the same rights  
896 and social position as the men who had followed Alaric in the first place; whatever  
897 the social structure of such a group was, it was certainly a multi-ethnic community.  
898 The aspects which eventually create a new identity are usually taken from various  
899 cultural backgrounds and are flexible enough to offer a sense of belonging to a  
900 group; thus elements from the culture surrounding this group are adopted, although

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<sup>77</sup> See also Heather (1996), 6-7, 84, 88, 301-3.

<sup>78</sup> Zosimus, V.42.

901 they are partly subject to individual choice and interpretation, and mixed with  
902 already existing concepts of social and cultural understanding.<sup>79</sup>

903 Heather for example talks of hierarchical differences in such groups (a small group  
904 of a social elite, as well as groups of freed and slaves), which led to a social  
905 separation among them, so people joining from outside could easily have been  
906 absorbed into Gothic society but would only have achieved a subordinate position  
907 within. Furthermore, in his opinion, there was a core-group, which was set apart  
908 from the rest of the followers by its elite status, which in turn exclusively defined  
909 ‘Gothicness’. However this approach is perhaps following too closely the concept of  
910 the *Traditionsträger* as a social elite; also his distinction between social elite, freed  
911 and slaves is perhaps too much pointing towards medieval structures as a system to  
912 be applied to the fourth century, especially when he himself admits that such  
913 distinctions only appeared from the sixth century onwards.<sup>80</sup> I view this concept as  
914 having serious faults, especially as it is too final in its approach for a society which  
915 was still in the making; thus groups like Alaric’s had to be flexible enough to  
916 accommodate other, non-Gothic people from outside within Gothic society and to  
917 allow the granting of equal social position (and subsequently political influence)  
918 within the group. If the mercenary aspect of a group like Alaric’s is correct, then, as  
919 said above, people from outside could indeed have joined the fighting ranks and as  
920 those formed the very basis for these groups, these people could have won political  
921 influence over the years, even more so if they had broken with their previous social  
922 background. Thus, the *Traditionsträger* were not so much a small social elite but  
923 rather the group as a whole. The fact that the Gothic groups were very often joined  
924 by other peoples, such as Alanic or Hunnic contingents, indeed suggests a certain  
925 degree of ethnic permeability; although such alliances were often on a temporary

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<sup>79</sup> Theuws & Hiddink (1996), 69-70.

<sup>80</sup> Heather (1996), 90-3, 169, 176, 301-3.

926 basis only and did not automatically guarantee complete political/military loyalty  
927 between these groups, ethnic definitions seem to have been flexible enough as some  
928 of their members might have joined the Gothic groups for good.<sup>81</sup> P. Amory's  
929 argument however (which has been criticised by M. Kulikowski) that identity could  
930 even be a mere ideology as was later the case in the Ostrogothic kingdom, is rather  
931 too evasive to be applied to Alaric's Goths.<sup>82</sup> It would have been extremely difficult  
932 to retain enough followers to fight the Roman armies on the basis of a mere  
933 ideological concept of community – especially when the said community was  
934 spending a long time wandering through the Mediterranean whereas the Ostrogoths  
935 in contrast had established themselves as a kingdom in Italy. The idea of identity as  
936 an ideological concept might partly explain a reason for the fluctuation in numbers of  
937 followers, as people would have had no real concept of feeling any attachment to the  
938 group they had joined; yet it fails to explain how enough people could build a stable  
939 community to develop into a politically cohesive unit. In my opinion, the making of  
940 groups like Alaric's needed a stronger dynamic than pure ideology to keep them  
941 together, especially when the concept of leadership was not fully established;  
942 however I do accept the concept of abstract ideology as a factor, a *Traditionskern*,  
943 once a group had established itself. M. Kulikowski has recently argued even that the  
944 Goths themselves did not have any kind of self-identity before the third century but  
945 were in fact the product of the Roman frontier-systems; furthermore, it was the  
946 Roman perception of the Goths which in turn created an understanding of Gothic  
947 identity among them.<sup>83</sup> It is true that later the Goths as a people were the product of  
948 their dealings with the empire as only then they started to form a political unity, and

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<sup>81</sup> Paulinus of Pella, *Euch.* 379-85.

<sup>82</sup> Pohl (2002), 225. Gillett (2002), 86-7: states that the concept of ethnicity as an ideology similar to other state-ideologies such as Christianity is far less obvious although ethnic identities did play a role in the formation of Rome's successor states if only for the fact that these were labelled by their ethnic identity.

<sup>83</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 55, 67-70.

949 that the Goths mentioned in the Roman sources not only included ‘Gothic’ people  
950 but also members from various other people, including parts of the Roman  
951 population, too; all these came to form gradually a multi-ethnic community from  
952 which the Goths as a political nation under Alaric and his successors were to emerge.  
953 Kulikowski rejects this idea of a poly-ethnic community because in his opinion, as  
954 the Goths did not ‘come’ from somewhere but were rather a Roman invention, they  
955 could not start to head a poly-ethnic community.<sup>84</sup> Although this approach can be  
956 accepted insofar as the idea of a migration myth based on Jordanes’ *Getica* or of the  
957 Goths suddenly coming from outside the empire into imperial territory as one  
958 people/nation is to be rejected, Kulikowski’s argument is surely incomplete as the  
959 question of a possible Gothic migration has very little to do with the Goths being part  
960 of a poly-ethnic community. In fact I would like to regard the term of a poly-ethnic  
961 community as being applied to the Goths in terms of their ability to absorb other  
962 people, which did not share aspects of Gothic identity, into their own groups. This is  
963 not to deny the immense influence Rome had on the people beyond its frontiers. The  
964 prolonged Roman interference in the political/military and subsequently social  
965 organisation of foreign peoples across imperial borders, and Rome’s active  
966 arrangement of political units among these people, undoubtedly had a profound  
967 influence on the ethnic understanding and organisation of the various groups  
968 concerned.<sup>85</sup> However, interference in such matters does not automatically mean the  
969 creation of them in the first place: in fact, to interfere in the socio-political fabric of  
970 peoples across imperial borders implies that there was already a profound  
971 organisation of concepts of socio-political identification existing and that precisely  
972 such concepts were considered important enough for imperial interests to allow and  
973 justify Roman interference. Kulikowski’s argument thus fails to take into account

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<sup>84</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 98-99.

<sup>85</sup> Carroll (2001), 145, 147.

974 that despite the discouragement from the Roman side, peoples from various  
975 backgrounds were able to form a coherent group under Alaric, which must have  
976 developed its own identity – even if, as said previously, this identity was created in  
977 the beginning out of numerous, different and individual concepts. Kulikowski's  
978 argument also cannot explain the fact that Alaric, as well as leaders before him, was  
979 consistently opposing the Roman authorities in search of imperial acceptance of his  
980 group, which implies that his followers had perceptions of an identity different  
981 enough from that of the Romans to insist on preserving it by remaining separate from  
982 the empire. Furthermore, Kulikowski's point regards peoples outside imperial  
983 borders as having no identity and existence in their own right apart from what Rome  
984 was willing to give them. Such a point makes one wonder if Kulikowski has  
985 followed Roman ideas of regarding those outside imperial territory as people who,  
986 without Roman interference to turn them into civilised beings, were simply  
987 barbarians. Heather's argument that it was the threat of Roman power which forced  
988 various Gothic groups to cooperate, which otherwise would not have done so as their  
989 differences over leadership were normally too big to overcome, is to me much closer  
990 to the point than Kulikowski's idea.<sup>86</sup>

991 However, it is important to stress that there is a fine line between the empire creating  
992 such groups in the first place, and these groups establishing more coherent concepts  
993 of their ethnic and political understanding in the face of Roman interference. Ethnic  
994 identity does not necessarily need a firm political establishment for self-definition;  
995 even as the early history of the Gothic peoples presumably lacked a coherent  
996 political programme, there were other devices, mainly in the religious sphere, which  
997 served to focus questions of ethnic definitions.<sup>87</sup> Even if one rejects the idea of large-  
998 scale migrations of the Goths, or the link between archaeologically defined cultures

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<sup>86</sup> Heather (1996), 177.

<sup>87</sup> Heather (1996), 303 refers to cult-leagues also as a vehicle for political identity.

999 and socio-political groups, the need to have other, non-political, vehicles to convey  
1000 aspects of ethnic identification becomes even more important. Thus, Rome as the  
1001 possible creator of political identification among the Gothic groups was not  
1002 automatically needed to serve also as the creator of their ethnic identification. Based  
1003 on archaeological records, Elton also argued that barbarian society was far more  
1004 uniform than some scholars have argued, and that there was little difference between  
1005 various groups regarding their material culture or their socio-political understanding;  
1006 there were some local/regional differences in customs but even these do no amount  
1007 to profound distinctions between barbarian groups. Furthermore, for him the relative  
1008 ease with which different barbarian groups assimilated with each other or indeed  
1009 absorbed outsiders is itself a proof of the lack of any profound differences between  
1010 these barbarian groups. Elton accepts that there would have been differences, albeit  
1011 subtle ones, and that contemporaries were presumably aware of them, but any such  
1012 notions are lost today.<sup>88</sup> He surely has a point that almost all of the contemporary  
1013 understanding of the occurrence and meanings of such differences are lost to us, and  
1014 that archaeological data should be used with caution when making allusions to socio-  
1015 political and/or ethnical analyses of the people in question. However, socio-political  
1016 concepts or aspects of ethnic identity might not have been necessarily expressed in  
1017 material culture only, to the exclusion of every other way of conveying such  
1018 messages to outsiders; hence a lack of evidence for profound differences between  
1019 various barbarian people within the archaeological records does not automatically  
1020 mean an absence of such concepts. Indeed he accepts the notion that the relatively  
1021 stereotypical uniformity of describing barbarians and their actions in contemporary  
1022 sources was a result of literary aspects and was perhaps not a true reflexion of reality.  
1023 Again, if one is prepared to accept that contemporary literature should not be taken at

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<sup>88</sup> Elton (1996 b), 15-9, 41.



1024 face value in terms of providing accurate ethnographical descriptions of barbarian  
1025 people, one should also be prepared to accept archaeological records as part of a  
1026 wider picture but not as a decisive answer for the ethnic understanding barbarian  
1027 people had of themselves.

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1050 d) The concept of ethnic self-definition

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1052 There is of course the question what happened to the concepts of ethnic self-  
1053 definition as barbarian groups merged together or accepted members from outside  
1054 which were not necessarily barbarian in their background (as was the case with  
1055 people joining Alaric's group).<sup>89</sup> Similar problems were posed by entry into the  
1056 empire as the imperial authorities normally did not allow the existence of total ethnic  
1057 independence in the sense of representing political independence of barbarian  
1058 groups; it is open to debate how the individual defined his ethnicity once he was  
1059 living within Roman territory – if he regarded himself as Roman or still as belonging  
1060 to the ethnic group of his own people. It seems that this largely depended on the  
1061 actual process of joining the empire, whether it had been voluntarily or involuntarily:  
1062 there are enough examples of barbarians who joined the Roman army and totally  
1063 assimilated with Roman culture, which would lead to the conclusion that they  
1064 regarded themselves more as Roman and lost their identification with their own  
1065 ethnic origins; there is the example of the usurper Silvanus who had to flee from  
1066 imperial officials but could not return to his own people because they would kill him  
1067 too.<sup>90</sup> However there are also counter examples like Alaric: he had been in Roman  
1068 service for a number of years, and although he frequently demanded a Roman  
1069 military rank for himself, he nevertheless retained his own ethnic identity as a Goth.  
1070 Another obvious form of creating and preserving ethnic identity is religion; yet  
1071 before the adoption of Arianism by the Goths in the 370s AD and Ulfila's translation  
1072 of the bible into Gothic, it is impossible to state in which way religious practices  
1073 shaped or created concepts of ethnic self-definition among the Gothic peoples– apart  
1074 from the assumption that religion played an influential role in the creation and

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<sup>89</sup> See also Part II.1b.

<sup>90</sup> A.M., 15.5.

1075 formation of ethnicity among the Gothic peoples. The passion of St Saba, the story of  
1076 a Gothic Christian martyr in the fourth century, for example, indicates that belonging  
1077 either to Christianity or pagan Gothic religion had served as a decisive factor in  
1078 establishing Gothic identity and/or support for Gothic politics. Again, archaeological  
1079 evidence (for example burial practices) can help in identifying certain patterns but  
1080 that does not mean that these patterns and their meanings can be automatically  
1081 interpreted. Heather has argued in favour of certain cult-leagues which in turn  
1082 created political bonds, but that does not help to identify any specific pre-Arian  
1083 religious patterns and their influence on the understanding or identification of ethnic  
1084 concepts among the Gothic groups. Arianism itself was not a Gothic invention; it had  
1085 been a specific form of Christian belief but was later rejected at the council of Nicaea  
1086 in 325 AD and declared to be a heretical doctrine; in terms of serving as a specific  
1087 ethnic distinction, however, it only worked as a deliberate factor of distinction when  
1088 the Goths were directly compared with their orthodox Roman neighbours and when  
1089 they insisted on continuing to practise this form of Christianity whereas the rest of  
1090 the empire had become orthodox.<sup>91</sup> That this insistence might have become a serious  
1091 hindrance for long-term political success (when compared with the Franks who  
1092 immediately adopted orthodox Christianity) is another matter.<sup>92</sup>

1093 Not only religious practice but also social customs can serve as an indicator of ethnic  
1094 concepts. Another form of socio-ethnic distinction can be observed in legal matters:  
1095 some Visigothic laws and customs such as forbidding intermarriage between  
1096 Visigoths and Romans have been interpreted as a Gothic attempt to preserve their  
1097 ethnic distinction from too much Roman interference. However, all Visigothic law-  
1098 codes demonstrate substantial influence of Roman law and were most likely  
1099 applicable to the entire population. Indeed the mentioning of pure Gothic laws and

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<sup>91</sup> Heather (1996), 302-3, 313-6.

<sup>92</sup> See also Part V.2.

1100 customs is so infrequent that it not only points towards the application of the laws to  
1101 the entire population in general without making ethnic distinctions but it is also very  
1102 difficult to establish who actually constituted a Goth. Even the ban on intermarriage  
1103 was perhaps far less compulsory than previously thought, and once the Visigoths had  
1104 adopted Catholic orthodoxy there were hardly any distinctions between Visigoths  
1105 and Romans left. Yet despite so much integration some aspects of Visigothic culture  
1106 remained distinctly Gothic: only a Goth could become king, his title was that of King  
1107 of the Goths, treason was committed against the Gothic people and all the king's  
1108 advisers, the *seniores Gothorum* as well as large numbers of the clergy carried  
1109 Gothic names.<sup>93</sup> Whether that implies that all these people were ethnically of Gothic  
1110 origin or if Gothic names could also be adopted by people of different ethnic  
1111 backgrounds is open to question: judging from the evidence from the Frankish  
1112 kingdom, the latter was undoubtedly a feasible possibility.<sup>94</sup> A shared language is  
1113 also an indicator of a shared identity, but barbarian dialects were often too  
1114 compatible with each other to offer any real factor of distinction; equally dress,  
1115 weaponry and jewellery can serve as indicators of concepts of identity and ethnic  
1116 origin, but again there is either not enough tangible evidence or it involves the  
1117 complex and difficult aspect of using archaeological material in the ethnogenesis-  
1118 debate.<sup>95</sup> The same process is more difficult to assess, though, when it comes to  
1119 submergence into another barbarian group, as it could be a temporary measure like a  
1120 political alliance and was not automatically linked with the loss of ethnic identity.  
1121 The preservation of ethnic identity could theoretically be enforced by a voluntary and

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<sup>93</sup> Heather (1996), 284.

<sup>94</sup> Liebeschuetz (2001), 355, 357-61.

<sup>95</sup> See Gillett (2002), 120: any Roman usage of ethnologically defined titles for barbarian rulers is merely for reasons of labelling and would have had very little, if anything to do with barbarian self-identification. There are equal problems for the application of Wenskus' ethnogenesis model to explore the origins of the Franks, see Murray (2002), 63-7. Heather (1996), 84.

1122 deliberate upkeep of the community and its ethnic concept, for example by marriage  
1123 laws which banned marriages with other ethnic groups, religious practices or a  
1124 deliberate separation of settlements.

1125 The other side of this process, though, is the involuntary process of a group being  
1126 absorbed by force into a different ethnic, political and/or military system (be that the  
1127 Roman empire or another barbarian group), but even that did not necessarily result in  
1128 a total loss of ethnic identity. For example, various different peoples like Goths,  
1129 Suebes and others became subject to Hunnic dominion but re-emerged after the  
1130 collapse of the Hunnic empire in much the same way as before; this indicates that  
1131 despite having been forced to give up their political/military independence, their  
1132 ethnic identity had been left untouched and was therefore not connected with their  
1133 political or military power.<sup>96</sup> That process would therefore imply that military  
1134 dominant groups considered political power as separate from ethnic definitions.  
1135 Much of this, though, involved the relationship between barbarian groups where the  
1136 predominant factor was more the question of political hegemony over certain groups  
1137 than the preservation of ethnic identity; to change identity would have meant a  
1138 deliberate re-organisation of social strata which in turn would have asked for a far  
1139 stricter social as well as military control than was the case among barbarian peoples.  
1140 To come back to the example of the Hunnic empire - the Huns cared more for their  
1141 supreme military dominance and were little concerned with the ethnic identity of the  
1142 peoples under their control, at least as long as this ethnic identity did not threaten  
1143 Hunnic supremacy. Nevertheless, the absorption of a people into another did have  
1144 some effect on the conquered group's social and political structures: only a certain  
1145 amount of adaptation to the structures of the dominant group could ensure a  
1146 continuation and moreover a certain degree of preservation of former social, political

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<sup>96</sup> Heather (1996), 91; (1998), 99-101.

1147 and military structures as well as the ethnic identity of the conquered group;  
1148 precisely this preservation of former structures was important if the group wanted to  
1149 continue as an independent unit after the defeat of the former dominant group. In  
1150 fact, the process of adaptation could go so far that even groups with a strong sense of  
1151 ethnic identity could be separated into splinter groups, or even dissolved by being  
1152 totally absorbed into the structures of the dominant group. It is important to bear in  
1153 mind that social absorption, group identity and social adaption largely depended on  
1154 the actual peoples involved and were by no means a standardised pattern that applied  
1155 to all barbarian peoples.<sup>97</sup> In the case of Alaric's group, it seems to have managed to  
1156 absorb other people from outside who were willing to adopt Gothic concepts of  
1157 identity as all the ancient sources call Alaric's group Gothic; this leads to the  
1158 conclusion that either the ethnic identities of the people joining them were not taken  
1159 into account (which would then question the extent to which they were actually  
1160 incorporated into Alaric's group) or they were willing to adopt Gothic identity.  
1161 Furthermore, Athaulf's group equally absorbed people from outside and these  
1162 included, as had been the case with Alaric's followers, people who seem to have  
1163 adopted aspects of Gothic lifestyle or 'Gothicness' or belonged already to other  
1164 Gothic units.<sup>98</sup> However, what precisely symbolised this 'Gothicness' is very  
1165 difficult to assess and even could have been subject to change over the years. Of  
1166 course the approach of linking ethnic units to specific archaeological patterns would  
1167 explain such symbols by the presence or absence of weapons, jewellery, personal  
1168 items such as combs, especially in the context of specific burial customs; besides,  
1169 this method is by no means decisive and there could have been patterns or customs  
1170 which were either not expressed in terms of material culture, and thus are not evident

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<sup>97</sup> Heather (1998), 103-9: for example the treatment of the Sciri by the Eastern government, or the fate of the Heruli where Hunnic dominion seems to have changed their tribal structures in such a way that their future and survival as a homogenous group was severely affected.

<sup>98</sup> Heather (1996), 176.

1171 in archaeological records, or modern historians are not able to read these  
1172 archaeological records and the entirety of existing symbols and their precise  
1173 meaning. That is not to say that archaeological records are completely unable to  
1174 serve the purpose of identifying social customs and to derive ethnic symbolism from  
1175 that, but they do not serve as the one and only method of doing so, although it has to  
1176 be admitted that in the absence of written records from the Gothic side, other means  
1177 to identify and to analyse ethnic symbols are very difficult or altogether impossible  
1178 to find. Equally the question who was deciding on such matters, indeed if anyone had  
1179 in fact any direct influence on the process of ethnic symbolism, is open to question;  
1180 Heather, following his concept of an elite group as the *Traditionsträger*, argues that  
1181 it was possible that there was some royal influence on such symbolism as the award  
1182 of specific items such as jewellery as a royal gift would have created a specific social  
1183 position for the person receiving these gifts.<sup>99</sup>

1184

1185 So what is to be made of the peoples around Alaric? Can we call them Goths after  
1186 all, and if so, when did they become *the* Goths? Earlier I proposed to describe them  
1187 as Goths although in doing so one always has to be aware that they originally  
1188 consisted of different groups with their own names, presumably with some shared  
1189 but also some individual social customs and maybe in some cases also a different  
1190 ethnic aspect; these various groups formed a polyethnic community of Gothic and  
1191 other barbarian peoples such as the alliances with Alans or Huns, which could  
1192 cooperate at times, especially when confronted with severe military pressure. Only  
1193 under Alaric and then under Athaulf did some of these Gothic groups start to  
1194 cooperate together on a prolonged basis and absorbed people from outside which  
1195 eventually led to the formation of a political unit or nation; this process is the main

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<sup>99</sup> Heather (1996), 309-21.

1196 concern of the following chapter. It will look at the changing nature of Gothic  
1197 leadership until the establishment of Alaric. Alaric and his successor Athaulf  
1198 inherited a truly complex political relationship with Rome and many of their actions  
1199 were largely influenced or dictated by this. It was in the context of this constant  
1200 relationship with the imperial authorities that contemporary sources began to talk  
1201 about *the Goths* as a major, solid counterpart to the empire.



1 Part II. Goths and Romans

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3 'He [Athaulf] at first was eager to blot out the Roman name and to make the entire  
4 Roman empire that of the Goths alone, and to call it and to make it Gothia instead of  
5 Romania, and that he become what Caesar Augustus had once been...When he  
6 discovered from long experience that the Goths by reason of their unbridled  
7 barbarism could not by any means obey laws...he chose to seek for himself the glory  
8 of completely restoring and increasing the Roman name by the forces of the Goths,  
9 and to be held by posterity as the author of the restoration of Rome, since he had  
10 been unable to be its transformer.'<sup>1</sup>

11 Orosius' comment about Athaulf's alleged political revelation is in many ways  
12 remarkable and there are a number of possibilities of interpreting it. One is the  
13 ecclesiastical aspect of Orosius' writings as he used it most likely as part of a  
14 religiously influenced statement: already in his description of Gothic actions during  
15 the sack of Rome, Alaric's troops had demonstrated an avoidance of violence and  
16 plunder of the holy places<sup>2</sup>. To present Athaulf and his Goths as peace-seeking  
17 people under a leader striving to restore imperial prosperity undoubtedly fitted into  
18 this picture, although it might have had very little to do with Athaulf's actual  
19 political/military programme or his overall opinion about the Roman state. However,  
20 there is perhaps more to this statement, and there could have been aspects of  
21 Athaulf's political/military actions that could have made Orosius' comment more  
22 than being inspired by religious apologetics alone. It presents the Gothic leader as a

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<sup>1</sup> Orosius, VII.43.

<sup>2</sup> Orosius, VII. 39. See also Sivan (2003), 110: she argues that Orosius might have presented Alaric's apparent respect for the holy places as part of a pro-Anician propaganda which aimed to minimise attempts of accusing the Anicii of cooperation with the Goths. However, her argument that the Gothic procession with the holy vessels to the church St Peter presented an attempt to create a new form of Gothic royalty (p.120) has to be treated with precaution as it relies slightly too much on taking Orosius' account as a real representation of actual events. In the light of Orosius' intentions of using the Goths as a religious vehicle, Sivan's argument is perhaps somewhat one-sided.

23 man who had recognised and accepted the ultimate superiority of Roman culture,  
24 which inspired him to save it by providing it with the military strength it lacked; it  
25 also demonstrated a fundamental understanding of what Rome stood for, and a  
26 willingness not only to assimilate with it but to forgo his own political aims as  
27 Gothic leader.

28 The aim of the following chapter is to investigate how far such a comment could  
29 have become a real political programme of Athaulf and his Gothic followers,  
30 whether it was more a theoretical and abstract approach which had little if anything  
31 to do with the political reality of both Goths and Romans, or whether it was the mere  
32 expression of wishful Roman ideology. In the previous chapter we have seen how  
33 complex it is to find an answer to the question of Gothic identity; a large part of this  
34 complex process was directly interlinked with imperial politics, and it was this  
35 relationship between the two that shaped the people around Alaric and his successor  
36 Athaulf. The aim is to see how far Alaric and Athaulf and their followers were able  
37 and willing to assimilate with the Roman empire, how far they retained their own  
38 identity and separation from imperial influences, and to what extent such processes  
39 altered their political and social organisation. This would then enable us to see how  
40 far a comment such as Orosius' was in fact possible at all. Even if Athaulf never  
41 thought in such a way, the various Gothic groups underwent substantial changes  
42 from their first contact with the Roman empire to their final settlement in Aquitaine.  
43 It had been Alaric who had started this process of change, and it was his diplomatic  
44 and military dealings with the empire which led not only to a socio-political  
45 transformation of the Gothic groups but also a gradual alteration of the Roman view  
46 of them. Yet Alaric's own position within Gothic society was the result of a  
47 development of the concept of leadership and ultimately how Gothic groups  
48 cooperated with each other. The prolonged contact with the empire and the various

49 treaties had created tensions about the nature of leadership and about their formation  
50 as a people; the constant latent warfare with the empire had shown that their previous  
51 fragmentation into different groups with their own socio-political concepts was to  
52 become a real danger for a guaranteed survival of their individual groups. There were  
53 several leaders who attempted to avert the danger by trying to achieve overall power  
54 and thus to create a unified Gothic front against imperial power and interference. The  
55 acceptance of a common leader like Alaric not only altered their social structures but  
56 also helped to deal more effectively with the empire, thus enabling the majority of  
57 the Gothic groups to withstand imperial attempts to conquer them; however, it is  
58 extremely difficult to find out if all Gothic groups in fact supported Alaric and  
59 became part of his followers or if they lost their own fight against the empire and  
60 were submerged into the imperial machinery dealing with conquered barbarians  
61 (certainly for the Roman sources, Alaric became *the* Gothic leader of *the Goths*,  
62 which left little room in contemporary writings for other, less important groups).  
63 Orosius' comment implied that there had been previous attempts by the Gothic  
64 groups to overrun the empire and to replace it with a Gothic nation: to 'become  
65 Caesar Augustus' was a direct challenge by Athaulf to Honorius' position as  
66 emperor, although Gothic military power was in fact never sufficient enough to  
67 justify it as a serious claim. It is this changing nature of Gothic leadership one ought  
68 to examine first as it formed part of Athaulf's military and political heritage.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a overview of imperial politics and military manoeuvres in the empire, see for example Elton (1996 b), 1-13. Brown (1971), 22-34,115-50. Kulikowski (2007).

## 73 1. Questions of leadership among the Goths

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75 For the Gothic groups involved in the treaty of 382, this had marked a change in their  
76 internal power structures. The ancient sources offer very little information about the  
77 exact conditions of the treaty: Synesius talked of land given to the Gothic groups,  
78 Themistius used the phrase of them having turned their swords into ploughshares and  
79 having turned to live in Thrace, something which is echoed by Pacatus, who  
80 described them as farmers<sup>4</sup>. However, such language is fairly common and does not  
81 state whether or not the Gothic groups did indeed receive land for settlement or had  
82 asked for land; there was also no information on the obligations of the treaty in terms  
83 of taxation and/or the provision of military recruits for the Roman army, but we do  
84 know that the treaty failed to recognise any overall Gothic leader.

85 For a long time the political conduct of the various Gothic groups against Rome had  
86 been dominated by different opinions of various leaders with their own groups of  
87 followers who were often more or less equally powerful; internal controversies and  
88 the tendency to split into multiple subgroups as a result was a common occurrence.  
89 Gothic politics against the empire were to a large extent seesawing between  
90 uncompromising warfare and solidarity with the empire as being in active military  
91 and/or political service. Even such grand military successes as Adrianople could not  
92 disguise the fact that this fragmentation, indeed the very structure of how these  
93 groups operated, posed a serious threat to their withstanding the empire for a long  
94 time; only negotiation to find a *modus vivendi* with the empire was a way to prevent  
95 the long term loss of manpower and their own identity. Effectively a different type of  
96 warfare was needed as the imperial government and army was in no way structured  
97 like fellow barbarian groups when a simple decisive battle or personal combat

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<sup>4</sup> Synesius, *de reg.* 21. Themistius, *Or.* 16. Pacatus, *Pan.* II.22.

98 between two leaders was enough to decide the political supremacy between the two.  
99 Successful diplomatic dealings with the empire required the continuous existence of  
100 a politically united line accepted by the majority of the people, but precisely the  
101 nature of these various peoples made that very difficult. Even Athaulf was later  
102 facing the delicate task of balancing the various leaders of subgroups and allies with  
103 his own political aims and eventually became a victim of it. Furthermore, as the  
104 events immediately before the battle of Adrianople had demonstrated, mutual distrust  
105 between Rome and the various leaders of the Gothic and other contingents was deep,  
106 and frequent open warfare had given both sides more than ample opportunity to  
107 distrust the other side. Before Alaric the various Gothic groups existed most likely  
108 independently of each other – even when they temporarily formed larger groups,  
109 which operated together; yet even such co-operations could not deflect from the  
110 problem that each of these groups had very much their own *agenda*. Alaric was the  
111 first one who would manage to unite a large group of followers under one political  
112 system and furthermore managed to pass this on as a military and political legacy to  
113 his successor Athaulf. From the imperial point of view this served Rome's concept of  
114 *divide et impera* as a united Gothic front could prove to be extremely difficult to  
115 counteract (for example the later barbarian 'superpowers' like the Vandals were  
116 impossible to stop); the failure of the treaty of 382 to recognise an overall leader,  
117 which had been a point of discussion between Fritigern and Valens, was perhaps part  
118 of this imperial agenda.<sup>5</sup> However, the problem of fragmentation was perhaps also to  
119 blame for this – although imperial propaganda had styled Athanaric as the overall  
120 Gothic king, this claim better suited court politics than it had anything to do with the  
121 realities of Gothic leadership, as there was most likely no candidate who would have  
122 been widely accepted as such. The claim to power rested to a large extent on the

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<sup>5</sup> Themistius, *Or.* 16

123 military capacity and the ability to attract and lead a large number of followers who  
124 had to be kept in alliance through the distribution of booty; if this military supremacy  
125 failed, as was the case with Athanaric, the unsuccessful leader was replaced by  
126 another, which in some cases meant that the people which had lost their leader lost  
127 their own individual position too and were absorbed into the new group of the new  
128 leader.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Geary (2001), 111-3. Whether absorbing into a different group also meant the loss of the individual ethnic identity of the group is very difficult to assess as it depended on the nature of this process and on the composition of the groups involved, see Part I.1.

147 a) Athanaric

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149 Athanaric was one of the very first leaders who rose to widespread prominence as a  
150 Gothic leader in the 360s and is a prime example of the difficulty of maintaining this  
151 status;<sup>7</sup> he is also a good example of the application of imperial propaganda and the  
152 difficulties the contact with Rome posed for the survival of identity and military as  
153 well as political independence. Athanaric lost his power over the question of  
154 Tervingian admittance into the empire and the extent to which they should become  
155 involved in political affairs of the empire as federate troops. There were several  
156 reasons why various Gothic groups wanted to be admitted officially into the empire,  
157 the increasing pressure from the expanding Hunnic empire and the difficulty if not  
158 failure of these Gothic groups to counteract that being one of them. Quarrels about  
159 the efficiency of Athanaric's defence politics and the subsequent ousting of him and  
160 his followers demonstrate that various opinions about the political future of these  
161 Gothic groups existed.<sup>8</sup> Although the extent to which Hunnic expansion already  
162 posed a serious threat in the 380s has been debated, it would not be surprising had  
163 their expansionist policy upset already existing power structures and by doing so,  
164 jeopardised the acceptance of leaders like Athanaric. According to Ammianus, the  
165 question how to counteract the Hunnic threat had led to Athanaric's deposition and a  
166 political conflict when the majority of the Tervingi and Greuthungi refused to  
167 support his idea of resistance and opted instead to move their settlements into Thrace  
168 by asking the empire for asylum; part of the plan might have been to become  
169 employed as auxiliary troops in imperial service and to avoid even further conflict,  
170 both internally as well as facing the Huns. According to Zosimus, Athanaric had  
171 stood in the way of the plans of Fritigern, Alatheus and Saphrax, which forced them

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<sup>7</sup> A.M., 31.3. Heather (1996), 57-8.

<sup>8</sup> A.M., 27.5; 31.3.

172 to remove him from power and to replace his rule with their own, joint, rulership.<sup>9</sup>  
 173 The Tervingi then supported two leaders, Alavivus and Fritigern, the Greuthungi  
 174 Alatheus and Saphrax, although Saphrax himself might have been a leader of an  
 175 Alanic contingent which at that time was in alliance with the Greuthungi.<sup>10</sup>  
 176 Athanaric's previous policy towards Rome has been described as unforgiving, he  
 177 himself as a person who had sworn never to set his foot onto Roman soil, which  
 178 makes any ideas of assimilation with the empire very unlikely. Three years of  
 179 aggressive warfare with Valens had eventually led to the conclusion of a treaty in  
 180 369, leaving both sides in need of a decisive victory, yet it established a status quo  
 181 with Rome which accepted the relatively strong position of Athanaric.<sup>11</sup> In fact, his  
 182 successful insistence on concluding this treaty with Valens in the middle of the  
 183 Danube was a strong assertiveness of his own perception of his power but also of the  
 184 Tervingian position in general; in Heather's opinion this stance demonstrates a firm  
 185 understanding of what was Roman territory and what was Gothic territory, but such a  
 186 perception was not only shared by Gothic groups but also by the Alamanni who also  
 187 concluded treaties in the middle of the Danube.<sup>12</sup> One should not so much regard  
 188 such behaviour as the expression of a concept of an actual territorial Gothic realm, as  
 189 this would require the concept of a territory in the sense of a state/nation which was  
 190 not apparent yet, but rather more as an affirmation or indeed understanding of Gothic  
 191 strength and success. Heather has argued that in the face of increasing Roman  
 192 pressure on them the Gothic groups started to operate much more aggressively than

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<sup>9</sup> A.M., 27.5 and Zosimus, IV.34 state that Athanaric was driven from his territory by a domestic conspiracy. Neither Orosius nor Themistius provide any detail of Athanaric's personal motives.

<sup>10</sup> A.M., 31.4. Kulikowski (2007), 128. Heather (1991), 136-7. There were also other groups like the Taifali and Greuthungi involved which would eventually conclude separate treaties with the empire or were conquered and lost their independence. See also pp. 73, 80.

<sup>11</sup> For the reasons of the outbreak of the war and the spectacular conclusion of the treaty in the middle of the Danube, see Eunapius, frg. 37. Zosimus, IV.10. Libanius, *Or.* 12.78. Themistius, *Or.* 8, 10. A.M., 26.10, 27.5, 31-4. Kulikowski (2007), 105-6, 114-6. For the consequences of the treaty, see Heather (1991), 116, 118-9, 120-1; (1997), 67.

<sup>12</sup> A.M., 28.2-5, 30.3.4-6. Heather (1996), 85.



193 their predecessors.<sup>13</sup> It is undoubtedly true that with increasing Roman interference  
194 Gothic attitudes to concepts of leadership and political programmes had to change,  
195 but it is also important to bear in mind that we only know of allegedly increasing  
196 Gothic aggressiveness because both sides came into much more frequent contact  
197 with each other than ever before. In fact there is no way to know how aggressive  
198 Gothic politics/military campaigns were before they had firmly gained Roman  
199 attention and were thus featured in Roman records, as these groups themselves did  
200 not record their early history. Once again, just because the contact with Rome had a  
201 strong impact on the political/military formation of the Gothic peoples, it does not  
202 automatically mean that Rome had created the foundation of such formations in the  
203 first place.<sup>14</sup>

204 Athanaric's eventual move to seek asylum in Constantinople then must have meant  
205 an enormous change of Athanaric's previous opinion towards the empire. As Sivan  
206 rightly observed, his travels from his exile through hostile territory and his asylum  
207 together with his friendly reception and eventual lavish burial in Constantinople  
208 strongly suggest that he must have been in some contact with the Romans before;  
209 otherwise such a move seems more than surprising.<sup>15</sup> Whether Athanaric himself had  
210 hoped to gain some military position by joining the Roman side after he had lost his  
211 power among his own people, is impossible to say; certainly there were many  
212 barbarian leaders before and after him who sought access to power by entering  
213 Roman service when they had failed to gain or retain power among their own people.  
214 Athanaric could have tried to follow them, though his death shortly afterwards put an

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<sup>13</sup> Heather (1996), 304.

<sup>14</sup> See Part I, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Zosimus, IV. 34. Sivan (2003), 114-5. His own father had received a statue in his honour behind the senate in Constantinople, which implies a somewhat close relationship between the Tervingi and the empire. Therefore his move to Constantinople was perhaps not that surprising as Athanaric would have been familiar with Roman politics/diplomacy for a long time, despite his own anti-Roman politics earlier on. Themistius, *Or.* 15; *Or.* 10: for the annual receipt of gifts, which indicates an ongoing diplomatic exchange between the two. See also Heather (1996), 57-63.

215 end to any such ambitions, if he had harboured any such at all. If he had hoped to  
216 gain a military position within the imperial army, it would certainly have meant a  
217 radical change of his previous hostile opinion towards an attempt to gain  
218 reconciliation with the empire, although it might be too farfetched to call this a  
219 deliberate move actively to support the empire. One point in support of his change of  
220 attitude is that he had previously withdrawn with a small entourage to a different  
221 location;<sup>16</sup> this means that Athanaric had not become a total outcast within his own  
222 social group when he managed to retain a small group of followers, yet seems to  
223 have preferred to enter into a relationship with the empire. Ultimately the question  
224 refers back to how Gothic identity was formed and whether someone of non-Roman  
225 origins entering Roman service would assimilate with Roman culture to the extent of  
226 forgetting or even rejecting his own ethnic identity. Judging from the behaviour of  
227 many Gothic generals, it was possible to completely assimilate with the Roman  
228 sphere, but there were equally some who rejected their new life among Roman  
229 culture and returned to their own origins; whether, though, that was an expression of  
230 returning to their ethnic roots because they had ultimately failed to come to terms  
231 with the Roman world, or whether it was a concept of trading alliances with the  
232 system which offered better political/military chances (in a reverse action of joining  
233 the Roman side in the first place), is open to question and undoubtedly largely  
234 depended on the individual.

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236 Unsurprisingly the imperial propaganda made much of Athanaric's appearance in  
237 Constantinople when this was the same man who had once sworn never to set foot on  
238 imperial soil; without any major imperial success against the Gothic groups,  
239 Theodosius engaged heavily in propaganda to gloss over this problem and to justify

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<sup>16</sup> A.M.,31.4. Kulikowski (2007), 127-8.

240 his own politics. To grant Athanaric asylum and to give him a state burial in 381  
 241 when he died shortly afterwards certainly served this purpose. Yet Heather's  
 242 argument that this is demonstrated in Themistius' oration as Theodosius' 'love of  
 243 mankind' is not totally convincing: the emperor is presented by Theodosius in the  
 244 guise of a philanthropist mainly to disguise the chaos regarding the Gothic wars,  
 245 though Theodosius would surely have been acting differently if the situation would  
 246 have allowed it.<sup>17</sup> Surely there was no need for the emperor to receive Athanaric in  
 247 this way – apart from propaganda reasons – unless he wanted to attempt to pacify  
 248 doubts among the Gothic population about imperial politics. That however would  
 249 have needed a certain amount of knowledge of Gothic politics in imperial circles in  
 250 order to address Athanaric as a key figure. Athanaric, though, had lost any prominent  
 251 or influential position among his own people, which would lead to the conclusion  
 252 that the imperial officials were not necessarily up to date with Gothic power  
 253 structures and the recent changes of leadership when they continued to style  
 254 Athanaric as the overall king of the Gothic peoples.<sup>18</sup> Judging from the frequent and  
 255 extensive contact Rome had with the world outside its borders, this makes the total  
 256 ignorance of Gothic affairs on the imperial side somewhat difficult to believe. The  
 257 display of philanthropist feelings makes more sense because to show *clementia*  
 258 towards one's enemy was one of the essential virtues of an emperor and essentially  
 259 highlighted his ultimate power over life and death. To demonstrate *clementia*  
 260 towards Athanaric only emphasised Theodosius' absolute power over his former  
 261 enemy and thus helped his presentation in terms of imperial propaganda. How the  
 262 overall Gothic population in Constantinople reacted to this is impossible to judge,  
 263 especially as there is no information to what extent they were integrated in  
 264 Constantinopolitan life, how they reacted to imperial propaganda, or how much

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<sup>17</sup> Heather (1991), 177. Themistius, *Or.* 15.190-1. Kulikowski (2007), 155.

<sup>18</sup> A.M., 27.5. Zosimus, IV.34.4-5. Orosius, VII.34.6-7.

265 affiliation they held with Gothic groups outside the empire, and hence what their  
266 opinion of Athanaric was. In regard to their ethnic integration it is telling that the  
267 revolt of Gainas was to create a witch-hunt against the Gothic population and writers  
268 like Synesius were more than ready to style their large numbers as a permanently  
269 underlying danger for the security of the state. Whether this means that they stood  
270 out as a separate minority among the city's population and emphasised their  
271 separatism (thus giving opportunity for accusations such as those Synesius voiced),  
272 or whether they were in fact following a Roman lifestyle yet were still perceived as a  
273 separate minority by the Romans, is impossible to tell.

274 For the imperial authorities, the lack of a defined Gothic leader and the continuous  
275 fragmentation into various groups presented advantages; as will be seen in the case  
276 of Fritigern, imperial propaganda was perfectly ready to style a Gothic leader as  
277 overall king when it suited court politics but in fact refused to grant the political  
278 acceptance of any such title or influence to any Gothic leader.

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291 b) Fritigern

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293 If already Athanaric's move to Constantinople was a gradual move to find some  
 294 reconciliation with the empire, certainly his successor Fritigern took this attempt  
 295 even further. Fritigern was yet another leader over some Gothic groups who  
 296 attempted to gain a large power base but he too remained far more a *princeps inter*  
 297 *pares* than to set himself apart as Alaric was later able to do. As mentioned before,  
 298 Fritigern had replaced Athanaric together with Alavivus as leader of the Tervingi  
 299 presumably sometimes in the 370s as he was one of the leaders in the crossing of the  
 300 Danube in 376; although Alavivus did play a role in the political negotiations, it was  
 301 Fritigern, who seems to have been in overall military command in 377 and it was he  
 302 who directly negotiated with Valens before the battle of Adrianople and his advisers  
 303 as being recognised *rex socius et amicus*, as client king of Rome.<sup>19</sup> In fact the  
 304 conditions of the treaty the Tervingi had been given after their entry in the empire  
 305 were so favourable that it has been argued that Valens might eventually have allowed  
 306 the creation of a Gothic or Tervingian kingdom within the imperial borders though  
 307 the ancient sources only mentioned a mutual agreement.<sup>20</sup> This request demonstrates  
 308 that leading people among the Gothic groups were undoubtedly familiar with the  
 309 governmental and administrative structures of the empire, and Fritigern was fully  
 310 aware of the internal workings of the empire and wanted to use them for his own  
 311 means. Although there is no information about his personal motives and how he  
 312 wanted to use such a title, judging from the role of a client, Fritigern seems to have  
 313 envisaged remaining a Gothic leader yet being in Roman service (and effectually

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<sup>19</sup> A.M., 31.4-5. Zosimus, IV.34. Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* IV.33-4, described Fritigern's conversion to Christianity. See Part V,2. Also Kulikowski (2007), 128.

<sup>20</sup> Orosius, VII.33.10. A.M., 31.4.4. Eunapius, frg. 42. Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* VI.37. Heather (1991), 128, 130,133; (2001), 200. For imperial politics and military manoeuvres across the provinces see for example Elton (1996 b), 1-6. Kulikowski (2007), 123-44.

314 under Roman control) – something Alaric would later try to achieve although Alaric  
315 himself certainly wanted independence from Roman control.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not  
316 Fritigern's request also meant a deliberate move on his part to a more profound  
317 consolidation and assimilation with the empire is impossible to say, though he must  
318 have been aware of the implications a client kingship would have had for him and his  
319 followers. Had his request been successful, Fritigern would have preceded Athaulf's  
320 plan of restoring the empire as he had been unable to oppose it.

321 Unsurprisingly however Rome neither granted Fritigern his request nor contemplated  
322 any such notion as the establishment of a Gothic autonomous state on imperial soil,  
323 as this would have stood in complete opposition to the very structure and ideology of  
324 the empire.<sup>22</sup> As Ammianus and other writers confirm, Valens did welcome the  
325 Tervingi as a new source of recruits and money (which in light of his Persian  
326 campaign he needed), hence also allowed them to retain their weapons; yet the  
327 uncontrolled immigration of other groups like the Greuthungi and Taifali plus the  
328 general favourable terms of the treaty were already posing serious problems in the  
329 provinces, so that the idea of deliberately allowing the autonomous establishment of  
330 a Gothic settlement is more than unlikely. Valens even tried to reduce the number of  
331 immigrants (and that meant the reduction of potential recruits and money) by  
332 allowing only the Tervingi (excluding the Greuthungi) to cross the Danube plus  
333 having further measures in place to keep them under control. Yet the imperial army  
334 was unable to check the revolting Tervingi and prevent the Greuthungi from crossing  
335 into the empire too; in Ammianus' words, 'this request [of being allowed to cross the  
336 Danube] was rejected as not being in the public interest'.<sup>23</sup> This reaction by the

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<sup>21</sup> For client kings, see for example Heather (2001), 15-69.

<sup>22</sup> Heather (1991), 174: on the nature of Gothic leadership for military campaigns.

<sup>23</sup> The Greuthungi under Alatheus and Saphrax had retreated into the background but resurfaced in the political quarrel which ensued over the crossing of the Danube in 376-7, A.M., 31.3,4. Themistius, *Or.* 7.33. See also Kulikowski (2007), 131-2. Heather & Moncur (2001), 201-2. Wirth (1997), 47-8.

337 imperial authorities was to repeat itself when it dealt with Alaric and Athaulf: foreign  
338 peoples were welcome as sources of recruits but any such negotiations had to be  
339 entirely under imperial conditions which did not take into account any independent  
340 barbarian, or for that matter Gothic, aims.

341 There was another event which indicates that the imperial officials were by no means  
342 willing to accept Fritigern's request of political advancement: Lupicinus, commander  
343 of Thrace and the officer in charge of the Danubian operation invited both Alavivus  
344 and Fritigern to dinner at Macrianople with the intention to capture and kill them.<sup>24</sup>  
345 The attempt failed and caused not only much bloodshed, but gave Fritigern and his  
346 followers even more reason to doubt the sincerity of the Roman commitment to any  
347 serious negotiation. Although Lupicinus was portrayed by Ammianus as scapegoat  
348 for the disastrous result of this plan, and the coup was clearly an attempt to curb the  
349 Gothic problem in general and Fritigern's request for personal power in particular, it  
350 is not clear whether or not Lupicinus acted on his own account or had followed  
351 imperial orders. Judging from Ammianus' account, it seems, though, that Lupicinus  
352 had acted on his own or was at least left to deal with the situation as best as he could,  
353 since he had already tried to keep the Gothic problem under control by calling in  
354 more troops to disperse the Goths and to stop further attempts of revolting. If  
355 Ammianus' statement of the commander's greed is correct, and the mismanagement  
356 of the promised food supplies was not a deliberate imperial policy to undermine  
357 Gothic strength, then the attempted murder at the murder appears to have been a  
358 desperate measure: Lupicinus was trying to stamp out a situation which threatened to

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<sup>24</sup> A.M., 31.4, 5. Alavivus disappeared after the banquet of Lupicinus: whether Lupicinus' attempt to kill both of the Tervingian leaders provided an opportunity for Fritigern to depose an opponent without being accused of murder, or if Alavivus was held hostage and killed by the Romans, or simply lost his power, cannot be known. Kulikowski (2007), 132-4: argues that Lupicinus had not plotted the murder from the beginning but was overwhelmed by events and as skirmishes between Gothic and Roman contingents spread, he panicked which in turn convinced Fritigern that his only chance lay in rebellion. Heather (1991), 141: for him Lupicinus most likely acted with some sanctioning by the imperial authorities.

359 become uncontrollable. Had Lupicinus acted directly on behalf of imperial orders,  
 360 Ammianus would surely have mentioned it, even more so since the outcome of this  
 361 was open revolt which would have provided yet another point to blame Valens for  
 362 political incapacity and the utter failure of his Gothic policy. Even if Ammianus did  
 363 not mention the imperial involvement in Lupicinus' plan, it does not follow that it  
 364 was not the case; indeed the employment of someone like the Thracian commander  
 365 who was clearly not capable of the task given to him, presented enough material to  
 366 blame the imperial authorities and Valens' government in particular for mishandling  
 367 the situation. The result was the battle at Macrianople in which Lupicinus and his  
 368 army were severely defeated; Fritigern's group was subsequently joined by other  
 369 Gothic contingents including slaves and other members of socially weak/oppressed  
 370 groups, and turned itself very quickly into a highly successful fighting group – a  
 371 strong similarity to the composition of Alaric's followers later on.<sup>25</sup>

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373 There is a further problem to the establishment of Fritigern as a client king, as  
 374 acceptance by Rome was one thing, but to be accepted as such by his own followers  
 375 quite another. The fragmented nature of the Gothic groups would have stood in the

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<sup>25</sup> A.M., 31.5-6. There were other revolts in Thrace, for example the Gothic contingents under Sueridus and Colias in the garrison in Adrianople. Interestingly, though, these Goths had shown no interest in Fritigern's rebellion or the entire Gothic 'problem' which would suggest that they had little if any feelings of close association with the Gothic cause or even with a common Gothic identity. However, a quarrel broke out over the supply of food and money that both commanders had demanded for their journey to join Valens' Persian campaign on the Eastern frontier. When the local city council refused and brought in troops the situation escalated and violence broke out. Sueridus and Colias' soldiers succeeded in the subsequent fight and eventually joined Fritigern's troops. What is interesting here is that there were Gothic commanders (like Sueridus and Colias) in the imperial army who had originally no inclination whatsoever to support Fritigern's plans and ideas; in fact they appear to be Gothic in nothing but name. It was the Roman side, though, which treated them as if they were supporters of treacherous plans, thus effectively making them more 'Gothic' – at least in political terms – than they originally were. Whether or not commanders like Sueridus and Colias regarded themselves ethnically as Goths whilst being in the Roman army, or acquired such an identity only once they had joined Fritigern has to remain open. If one wants to compare them with other Goths in imperial services, these men seem to have been loyal to the Roman state alone, regardless of their ethnic origins; Fravittas for example, despite his earlier involvement in Gothic politics, was perfectly willing to fight against a fellow-Goth, Gainas, which suggests that feelings of ethnic identity were not a fixed concept (on Fravittas, see p. 93).



376 way of creating a united Gothic kingdom as any such concept would have called for  
377 the widespread acceptance and support of one leader only. As the subsequent events  
378 demonstrate, any such notion was still under-developed and the consolidation of  
379 power in the hands of a single leader was still unacceptable for many. Furthermore, if  
380 the Tervingi on their own would have been too small to make such a concept  
381 feasible, a Gothic kingdom would have meant the formation of a Gothic nation and  
382 the merging of various groups into one – again something which was yet unaccepted.  
383 Temporary cooperation for military purposes was an accepted custom yet the making  
384 of a kingdom by demoting individual power bases and group structures for the sake  
385 of creating a political unit was not an option. It is however worth mentioning that the  
386 treaty concerning the Tervingi also featured the request for land in Thrace as an area  
387 for settlement. Judging how long it took for Alaric's/Athaulf's group to gain land in  
388 Aquitaine, one can wonder if the Tervingi had developed their internal socio-political  
389 structures further and were already on the way to creating a coherent people. For  
390 Fritigern to be accepted as *rex socius et amicus* would have given him precedence  
391 over other leaders and could in turn have helped to restructure the group dynamics of  
392 the Tervingi. In a letter to Valens Fritigern hinted that the idea of demanding Thrace  
393 as settlement had been forced upon him by his followers. Whether that was an  
394 attempt of his to represent himself as Roman-friendly in order to increase his chances  
395 of becoming client king, or if it was the truth, cannot be known; the failure of siege  
396 warfare against Adrianople and Constantinople, though, was also the result of  
397 colliding opinions among the various leaders and their failure to listen to Fritigern's  
398 advice.<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly then Fritigern still had to reckon with the opinion of other  
399 leaders around him if he wanted to remain in power. The lack of any more  
400 information about his later life supports the idea that Fritigern also failed to find any

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<sup>26</sup> A.M., 31.6.

401 lasting power position among the Tervingi, despite his military leadership at  
402 Macrianople in 377 and his victory at Adrianople in 378.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A.M., 31.6, 31.12, 31.15, 31.16.

426 c) Eriulf and Fravittas

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428 The quarrel about the extent of involvement as recruits and their interference in  
 429 Roman politics continued to foster fragmentation among the various Gothic groups  
 430 in the late fourth/early fifth century and highlights the fact that questions of  
 431 assimilation with Rome were far from solved.<sup>28</sup> In 392 during a banquet given by  
 432 Theodosius for two Gothic leaders, Eriulf and Fravittas, a deadly quarrel about the  
 433 extent of Gothic involvement broke out where Fravittas killed his opponent Eriulf.<sup>29</sup>  
 434 Theodosius had planned to use Gothic warriors as auxiliary troops in his fight against  
 435 the usurper Eugenius yet both Gothic leaders could not agree to what extent, if at all,  
 436 Gothic troops should be involved in imperial politics. Eriulf had argued that the only  
 437 way to survive as an intact group and to preserve their independence was to keep out  
 438 of imperial business. Only a strong solidarity between the various Gothic groups  
 439 could ensure their future strength; this argument was further supported by their  
 440 successful negotiations of the treaty of 382, giving them a semi-independent status,  
 441 which had been based on precisely this military strength. How lasting any such  
 442 military alliances were was a different matter, but Eriulf's fear of Gothic troops  
 443 being destroyed between two Roman armies was undoubtedly a real threat;  
 444 moreover, recent engagements in Roman battles had resulted in heavy losses on the  
 445 Gothic side and had undoubtedly fostered suspicions that the empire was using  
 446 Gothic contingents deliberately in the worst fighting to reduce them.<sup>30</sup>

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448 Fravittas' argument – according to Eunapius supported only by very few of his  
 449 followers – stood in sharp contrast to this as he regarded the conditions of the treaty

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<sup>28</sup> Heather (1991), 179-81.

<sup>29</sup> Zosimus, IV.56; V, 20-2 on Fravittas' later career at the Eastern court.

<sup>30</sup> Eunapius, frg. 59. Zosimus, IV.56-7. Orosius, VII.35. Shaw (2001), 150-2.

450 of 382 to provide recruits for the imperial army as binding and argued in favour of  
 451 fighting for Theodosius.<sup>31</sup> Fravittas' later pursuit of personal assimilation with  
 452 Roman culture, by entering a military and political career in the Eastern empire and  
 453 marrying a Roman wife, would certainly make a pro-Roman policy of his plausible.  
 454 However, Fravittas failed to gain any lasting power among his own people;  
 455 presumably his deadly fight with Eriulf would have endangered his role among his  
 456 Gothic followers as it would have created a feud. Thus it could be that his subsequent  
 457 life in Roman service had been a way to escape this feud and to find power  
 458 elsewhere. Presumably Fravittas joined the Roman forces with his group of  
 459 followers, which would strengthen the argument that these groups were  
 460 predominantly mercenary in their structure. In contrast to Fritigern or Alaric, he was  
 461 ready to grasp the opportunities of gaining power that the imperial army offered him,  
 462 but had no wish to retain links with his own people or to exploit the opportunities the  
 463 imperial offices presented to foster his power-bid among the Gothic groups.  
 464 This open controversy between Eriulf and Fravittas was in fact nothing new and  
 465 internal feuds were to remain a constant problem among leading Gothic individuals;  
 466 later Alaric faced some competition from individuals who had their own band of  
 467 followers, as did Athaulf – indeed his murder was the result of a feud.<sup>32</sup> In P.  
 468 Heather's opinion these different political sides can be interpreted as an indicator for  
 469 the survival of Gothic tribal structures, especially when groups like the Tervingi,  
 470 Greuthungi or Taifali can be found as separate units in the events in the 380s; from

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<sup>31</sup> Eunapius, frg. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Harries (1994), 57-9: there is also the question whether people like Sigeric or Sarus acted more like ancient *condottieri* than had any serious ambitions to gain political leadership. See p.107 and Part II.3: Sigeric's treatment of Placidia would suggest, though, that he had at least some interest in politics and/or issues concerning the Gothic leadership as his action stood in remarkable contrast to Athaulf's pro-Roman politics (the appalling treatment of Placidia was a public rejection of her dead husband and thus – at least indirectly – of his politics). Heather (1996), 143 has argued that both Sarus and Sigeric were in fact members of a rival dynasty and contenders for overall Gothic power, and thus serious opponents to both Alaric and Athaulf; Sarus, similarly to Fravittas, entered Roman services to pursue his ambitions there. See p.92 for Fravittas' later career at the Constantinopolitan court.

471 the treaty of 382 onwards, the distinction between Tervingi and Greuthungi started to  
472 fade, and by the time of Alaric their original distinction was no longer apparent.<sup>33</sup>  
473 Eriulf's concerns about the dangers the involvement in imperial politics posed for the  
474 Gothic groups proved to be correct and it was in the aftermath of the campaign  
475 against Maximus that Alaric became noticeable.

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<sup>33</sup> Heather (1991), 153, 157, 190-2. Geary (2001), 108-9. Kulikowski (2007), 139-43. Wolfram (1997), 88. The Greuthungi might have concluded a separate treaty with Gratian, which granted them settlement in Pannonia.

## 495 2. Alaric

496

497 Alaric is perhaps the most famous of the Gothic leaders: it was he who became one  
498 of the strongest opponents of the empire in the fifth century, it was he who sacked  
499 Rome centuries after the first sack by Celtic troops, it was he under whose leadership  
500 the Gothic groups gradually transformed into a people, and it was as leader of a band  
501 of Gothic warriors that Alaric rose to prominence. Mathisen has argued that it was  
502 during the process of Alaric's rise to power, connected with a change in the concept  
503 of Gothic leadership, that Gothic society underwent a gradual but dramatic change in  
504 its nature. Furthermore, it was during the process of Alaric's rise to power that the  
505 question of land for settlement became an increasingly important point, which was  
506 closely connected with the socio-political development of the Gothic people towards  
507 a political nation as well as their concept of leadership in general.<sup>34</sup> The subsequent  
508 chapter will try to investigate this further.

509 Despite the ongoing debates about Gothic involvement in Roman politics, Gothic  
510 groups continued to lend their military support to the imperial army as part of the  
511 treaty of 382; for example Gothic troops fought in the campaigns against the  
512 usurpers Magnus Maximus in the late 380s and Eugenius in 394. These contingents  
513 were only paid for the duration of the campaign and tended to swear their loyalty to  
514 their own chiefs under whose command they stood rather than to the emperor  
515 himself. Arrangements like these pointed towards a mercenary aspect as the main  
516 dynamic of such groups. Whether the members of such groups shared the same  
517 ethnic origins or tended to be a collection of the best fighters with different ethnic  
518 backgrounds, is impossible to answer. Also it is impossible to answer whether they  
519 followed their leader because they shared the same ethnic origin or had family ties

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<sup>34</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 3-4.

520 with him or because he promised the highest reward. Zosimus reports attempts at  
 521 treason among some of these auxiliary troops when Maximus had allegedly promised  
 522 them a greater reward than the empire would pay for their service; Maximus' defeat  
 523 caused these troops to seek refuge in Macedonia where they started a revolt, which  
 524 soon spread into Thessaly, and it was in this rebellion that Alaric first came to  
 525 prominence.<sup>35</sup> Another motive for the uprising could have been a renewed argument  
 526 about the extent of Gothic involvement in such battles, especially when losses of  
 527 manpower had been very high, especially in the battle of the Frigidus and  
 528 presumably against Maximus too, even if the sources do not record this.

529 This rebellion has been interpreted at times as an uprising of the Tervingi who had  
 530 concluded the treaty in 382, but Liebeschuetz argues that this group was a band of  
 531 mutinous mercenaries under the leadership of Alaric who were looking for payment  
 532 and military recognition rather than the uprising of an entire people or even a nation;  
 533 the sources nowhere regarded this rebellion as a breach of the treaty of 382, which  
 534 makes it very unlikely that the entirety of the Tervingi were involved.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore,  
 535 as seen in the previous section, the various Gothic groups had serious difficulties in  
 536 agreeing on an overall political/military concept let alone on one accepted leader, so  
 537 to regard Alaric already as the leader of an entire nation is somewhat farfetched – at  
 538 least at that time.

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<sup>35</sup> Zosimus, IV.45.3, 4.48. Claudian, *con. Stil.* I.94-115. Maximus had killed Gratian before establishing himself as emperor. Eugenius came to power after Maximus' revolt. Maximus had left the young Valentinian II (son of Valentinian I, Valens' brother) in control of Italy and Africa but invaded these regions in 387, forcing Theodosius to embark on a military campaign when Valentinian and his mother Justina fled to Constantinople, urging him to restore the dynasty which had raised Theodosius to the throne. After the revolt, Valentinian was sent to Gaul in the care of Arbogast; the relationship between the two became unbearable with Arbogast openly refusing to obey the young emperor, which prompted Valentinian to hang himself. Arbogast revolted and proclaimed Eugenius, a Roman aristocrat, as emperor. Theodosius crushed this revolt in 394 at the battle of the Frigidus. Heather (1991), 195-9. Kulikowski (2007), 161. Elton (1996 b), 6-8.

<sup>36</sup> Liebeschuetz (1992), 75, 79-82. Heather (1991), 193-5. Kulikowski (2007), 165. Claudian, *in Ruf.* 2.36-8; *de bel. Get.* 166 ff., 610 ff.; *con. Stil.* 1.83-5, 94-6. Synesius, *de reg.* 19.2. See discussion in Part I.1.3 for the nature of such groups.

539 How many people were part of this group is not entirely clear though its numbers  
540 seem to have fluctuated and remained open to change over the subsequent years.  
541 Claudian's account of a vast amount of men is most likely an exaggeration in order  
542 to enhance the achievements of his patron Stilicho against them. Yet Alaric's group  
543 was large and well enough organised for Stilicho to be unable to defeat him in open  
544 battle in both 395 and 397.<sup>37</sup> As said in Chapter I, undoubtedly Alaric's group also  
545 came to include other people apart from his Gothic followers, thus gradually  
546 developing into a poly-ethnic community bound together by the nature of Alaric's  
547 successful leadership and the promise of imperial supplies. Often such groups would  
548 exist as a unity as long as military success and booty were guaranteed by its leader,  
549 but would disperse again as soon as this success failed to materialise; it was a credit  
550 to Alaric's personality to have kept most of his followers despite his frequent  
551 political failures.<sup>38</sup> I would like to argue that this willingness to remain together as a  
552 group (although numbers undoubtedly continued to fluctuate) formed part of a  
553 process of ethnogenesis: various people from different ethnic backgrounds and with  
554 different reasons for joining became part of Alaric's group which then gradually  
555 developed into a new people.

556 Alaric appeared again in 394, this time in the service of Theodosius as part of the  
557 emperor's troops in his fight against Eugenius; most likely he was the leader of a  
558 band of Gothic federates; the relationship with the imperial officials remained  
559 strained as Alaric felt dissatisfied with the payment and the lack of a  
560 personal/military reward for participating in the campaign. Theodosius' death in  
561 January 395 and the subsequent questions of imperial authority between the two

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<sup>37</sup> The failure to defeat Alaric despite having both imperial armies under his command had quickly led to accusations by Stilicho's enemies that he entered into a secret pact with Alaric; however, most likely the lack of control over the imperial troops accounted for parts of his failure (large parts of the imperial army had been lost at Adrianople which had taken a toll on the recruitment and training of new troops).

<sup>38</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 8-9, 17. Shaw (2001), 158-61.



562 imperial courts did nothing to ease these tensions; according to Jordanes, it was after  
563 Theodosius' death that Alaric's followers declared him king, because in their opinion  
564 Theodosius' successors spent no money on Gothic supplies and too long a peace was  
565 depriving the Goths of their fighting power.<sup>39</sup> Two recurring themes are featured in  
566 this statement: supplies or their lack, and the underlying importance of the support of  
567 Alaric's followers for his political career; supplies remained a constant factor of  
568 political negotiations until the Gothic settlement in Aquitaine. The support of the  
569 followers of the Gothic leader equally continued to play an important role, not only  
570 under Alaric but also under Athaulf; even in the Ostrogothic kingdom, the role of  
571 Gothic followers in their support of the king was still a necessity for the ruler to  
572 remain in power.

573 Supplies were indeed a core-aspect in the subsequent events, when Alaric's group  
574 started to raid Thrace to help themselves to subsidies which the imperial authorities  
575 failed to provide. This was to become a very familiar strategy of Alaric although this  
576 tactic was and was to remain only partly successful. What followed was constant  
577 fighting on Alaric's side to gain a military title and the official recognition of his  
578 position and his group's autonomy by the imperial authorities. Athaulf's later remark  
579 talked about his earlier aim of overrunning the empire although he was later to  
580 recognise its impossibility; whether Alaric ever planned to overrun the empire and to  
581 replace it with *Gothia* is very difficult to say. I would like to argue that Alaric's main  
582 aim was far more the achievement of his personal ambitions and to secure the  
583 recognition of his group as an independent people within imperial territory, than to  
584 replace the emperor as Odoacer was later to do. Furthermore, despite several years of  
585 raiding and the occasional battle, Alaric never fully succeeded in pressuring the

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<sup>39</sup> Jordanes, *Get.* 146.

586 empire into his own terms; it must have been clear to him that it was impossible for  
587 him or his group to replace the empire with a Gothic nation.

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612 a) Alaric and the relationship with the Eastern court

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614 After Theodosius' death, Alaric's troops had started to revolt openly and rapidly to  
 615 develop their own agenda. Interestingly the motive of personal dissatisfaction at  
 616 having missed out on rewards was later blamed for the outbreak of another Gothic  
 617 revolt, that of Tribigild and Gainas.<sup>40</sup> Alaric's main aim was to win recognition for  
 618 himself and his followers, yet he lacked the military strength to do so. In spring 395  
 619 Alaric moved his group towards Constantinople, hoping to materialise his ambitions  
 620 there; in Claudian's account, which was undoubtedly biased, Rufinus entered into an  
 621 alliance with Alaric, allowing him to raid Macedonia and Thessaly. Most likely  
 622 Alaric plundered these provinces in order to provide supplies for his followers but  
 623 also to force the prefect into negotiations, a tactic he was to employ frequently.<sup>41</sup> In  
 624 summer 396 Stilicho moved with both imperial armies from Italy against Alaric, but  
 625 also to interfere in Eastern politics and to affirm his influence there. Before any  
 626 confrontation with Alaric happened, though, Stilicho withdrew; presumably this had  
 627 more to do with continuous problems in controlling the imperial armies, as well as  
 628 part of a strategy of employing Alaric's group in later warfare, than with Rufinus'  
 629 treacherous interference. Alaric continued his raiding campaigns in Greece between

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<sup>40</sup> Zosimus, V.5.13,17. Claudian, in *Eutr.* II.153-4,178-9,189-90, 318-21. Liebeschuetz (1990), 100-3.

<sup>41</sup> Claudian, in *Ruf.* II. 28-36, 54-6,100-2, 270-1. Claudian's accusations are most likely part of his extreme hatred for Rufinus and his aim to present his patron Stilicho in the best possible way. Theodosius' death left Stilicho and Rufinus, the *praefectus praetorio orientis* as bitter rivals over the guardianship of Theodosius' sons Honorius and Arcadius and the political supremacy at the Eastern court. Rufinus had been one of Theodosius' closest advisers and had become de facto ruler of the East as Arcadius' guardian. Due to several rival competitors especially among the leading generals, his position was difficult to maintain, and without any major military support, his main political weapon was diplomacy. Born in Gaul his politics stood in sharp contrast to the ambitions of the Constantinopolitan aristocracy and gave reason to intervene in Western politics. Contemporaries like Zosimus and Claudian interpreted Rufinus's actions as prone to treason and blamed him for the eruption of Gothic violence, or in Sozomen's and Socrates' opinion, even for the arrival of the Huns (an accusation perhaps based on Rufinus' largely Hunnic bodyguard). Zosimus,4.51,5.5.4. Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* VI.2. Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* VIII.1. Lütkenhaus (1998),10. Liebeschuetz (1990), 91. Heather (1991), 201. Kulikowski (2007),165. Williams & Friell (1994),139.

630 395 and early 397, still aiming to pressure Rufinus into negotiations.<sup>42</sup> This whole  
631 series of raids clearly demonstrates the limits of Alaric's actual power in relationship  
632 to imperial politics: looting was to a certain extent a useful weapon as it severely  
633 damaged the infrastructure of these provinces and thus had a lasting effect on  
634 taxation, eventually forcing the imperial administration to react to Alaric's demands;  
635 besides, Alaric had nothing more in hand to pressure the empire to agree to his plans  
636 than to wait for when and in what way the empire chose to react. In fact, this  
637 dilemma remained the same under Athaulf's leadership, which makes his remark that  
638 he wanted to replace the empire with *Gothia* somewhat doubtful, especially when  
639 neither Alaric nor indeed Athaulf had the military strength to encounter the imperial  
640 troops in several open battles.

641 Rufinus was assassinated in 395 and his successor Eutropius entered into a pact with  
642 Stilicho which left him to pursue Alaric's group for the second time in summer 397  
643 and force them north to Epirus, but as before, no decision was taken and Stilicho  
644 withdrew for the second time; again it was most likely the result of failing military  
645 discipline and possible bribery. Subsequently Eutropius surprisingly entered into a  
646 treaty with Alaric in 397. In fact Eutropius had little choice other than to conclude  
647 this treaty, which left him politically vulnerable (his own troops were still employed  
648 against the Huns in the Caucasus), or to accept Stilicho's further political  
649 interference, although it was a decision which caused serious resentment among  
650 Constantinopolitan politicians; certainly this treaty did not mean any change in the  
651 Roman perspective towards Alaric or a general pro-Gothic policy of Eutropius.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Claudian, *in Ruf.* II.130-68,195-201. Zosimus, V.5.6-8, 5.6.

<sup>43</sup> Eutropius was a former slave and eunuch who held the position of *praepositus sacri cubiculi*; having arranged Arcadius' marriage with Eudoxia, he was head of the imperial household and clearly one of the people who had benefitted from Rufinus' assassination. Managing to secure for himself the patrician title and the consulate, he was regarded by Claudian as yet another obstacle for Stilicho to gain power in the East. If Stilicho had initially hoped to gain control by removing his rival is open to question but it is very doubtful that his influence was ever extensive enough to have succeeded in ordering Rufinus' murder. Certainly Stilicho's hopes came to nothing and also Gainas' troops who

652 Ironically it was the rivalries between two Roman generals which had brought this  
 653 treaty along, rather than Alaric's strategy of raiding. Alaric's strategy had worked  
 654 insofar as he was able to exploit the internal rifts in imperial politics to gain a new  
 655 treaty.

656 Not much is known about the precise conditions of this treaty other than the  
 657 fulfilment of most of Alaric's aims. Interestingly an area for settlement in Macedonia  
 658 and Dacia formed part of it, though whether Alaric had any intention of permanently  
 659 settling his group or not is hard to tell. Questions over land were important insofar as  
 660 they addressed concerns about the accommodation of and supply for his followers,  
 661 though a territory for permanent settlement is something quite different. According  
 662 to Paulinus of Pella, Athaulf's group was accommodated on the basis of *hospitalitas*  
 663 and there was no mentioning of them as being permanently settled. Precisely this  
 664 lack of interest in getting land for a permanent settlement is in Liebeschuetz's  
 665 opinion a further proof that Alaric's followers were still much more inclined to earn  
 666 their living with the sword. Presumably the area for settlement featured more as an  
 667 area for providing supplies for Alaric's followers, although it could be that his group  
 668 already contained contingents that were either not fit for fighting (women and  
 669 children) or too old to do so. The other main feature of this treaty was a military title  
 670 for Alaric though there is some debate whether or not he actually received the title of  
 671 *magister militum per Illyricum* already in 397 AD (the same demand reappeared in  
 672 405 AD when he received it (again?) from Stilicho and it remained a topic of  
 673 negotiation with Honorius); according to Claudian he did whereas for Synesius this

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had committed the deed got no reward. Eutropius had declared Stilicho *hostis publicus* and his politics against the *magister militum* were further aided by the revolt of Gildo in Africa as Gildo had transferred his loyalty to the East; this forced Stilicho to return to Rome, as he had to secure Rome's corn supply. Synesius exaggerated Eutropius' political weakness as much as possible in order to promote his own patron Aurelianus. Claudian, in *Eutr.* II. 194-6, 226-8. Cameron & Long (1993), 118-9. Liebeschuetz (1990), 58, 91-3, 98. Kulikowski (2007), 166-9. Heather (1988), 166-9; (1991), 202-4, 207.

674 was only a mere possibility. Despite Synesius' doubts, it is quite likely that Alaric  
 675 did receive this position, which gave him some judicial power, and according to  
 676 Claudian even access to armament factories, although that was perhaps yet another  
 677 exaggeration. When Synesius bitterly complained in the *de regno* about the  
 678 possibility of a Goth dressed in his native dress and yet being able to attend the  
 679 senate in a toga, he obviously referred to a person of the highest rank; attending  
 680 senatorial meetings was only allowed to persons holding highest offices and required  
 681 the status of *illustris* which a title such as *magister militum* would have granted. By  
 682 the time Synesius was composing his speech, neither Tribigild nor Gainas were  
 683 counted among the *illustri*, although Gainas has often been regarded as the main  
 684 target of Synesius' text.<sup>44</sup> However, Alaric's demand to become *magister militum*  
 685 would have been far more obvious (or in case Claudian is correct, he would have  
 686 received the rank already): he would not only have been holding supreme military  
 687 command as a Roman general, but he would have also been granted the title of  
 688 *illustris* and thus being ranked beside the consul with the possibility of access to the  
 689 Constantinopolitan senate. Regardless whether or not Alaric had already received  
 690 this rank, for Synesius it was the mere possibility alone of Alaric gaining this power,  
 691 which posed a serious threat to the security of the Eastern government.<sup>45</sup>  
 692 For P. Heather, Alaric's continuous request to be granted some military command  
 693 was a very important political factor in maintaining his own position; it would have  
 694 given him more official recognition from the Roman side and access to larger

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<sup>44</sup> Synesius, *de reg.* 19-21. Tribigild only held a minor rank at that time, and Gainas, although he held a higher military rank, received the title of *magister militum* only at the outbreak of Tribigild's revolt in 399. Synesius wrote his speech presumably in late 388/early 399, most likely before the fall of Eutropius and either shortly before or after Tribigild's rebellion, Heather (1988), 160; (1991), 207. The time of the composition of the speech would certainly allow for Gainas to be a target for Synesius, but Alaric was far more in the foreground of political negotiations and presumably would have been considered to pose the more serious threat.

<sup>45</sup> The picture of an imminent barbarian threat led by a barbarian general who had been granted the right to exercise Roman power made a very useful topic to raise political tensions and to blackmail Eutropius' government, especially when Synesius was writing for his patron Aurelianus. Liebeschuetz (1990), 106-7. Heather (1988), 163-5.

695 subsidies, as well as securing him direct access to imperial politics thus enhancing  
 696 the Gothic position at the imperial court with Alaric as its agent. Furthermore, it  
 697 would have strengthened his power among other Gothic nobles, especially when he  
 698 was not without rivals for the position of leader.<sup>46</sup> Yet to hold an imperial military  
 699 title did not automatically transform Alaric into another barbarian general in Roman  
 700 service because he wanted to retain simultaneously his leadership over his own  
 701 group. Alaric was the only one of the barbarian generals who did achieve a high  
 702 Roman command and yet remained ultimately the leader of his own people; in other  
 703 words, he was *magister militum* but also conquered Rome as the leader of a Gothic  
 704 army, which was fighting against the empire. Athaulf's remark allegedly showed him  
 705 as directly challenging the position of the emperor himself whereas Alaric wanted to  
 706 gain only a military title for the advancement of his own Gothic interests. Indeed  
 707 Alaric's position to consolidate a military power-position within the imperial system  
 708 with his Gothic leadership was seemingly an attempt to create a new definition of the  
 709 Gothic leadership<sup>47</sup>. All Gothic leaders before him had been a Gothic leader or  
 710 king/judge or had changed sides and had made a career within the imperial troops;  
 711 this was either the result of them having lost their bid for power among their own  
 712 people or having entered the imperial sphere from the beginning without even  
 713 attempting to gain any leading position among the Goths. Athaulf of course took this  
 714 even further by attempting to connect the concept of Gothic leadership directly with  
 715 imperial authority, although he too failed to be successful. Kulikowski argued that  
 716 Alaric himself wanted to hold this military title for its own sake though he fails to

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<sup>46</sup> Claudian, *de bel. Get.* 535-6; in *Eutr.* II.211-3, 216. Synesius, *de reg.* 19-21- this description of Alaric is regarded by Heather as an example of Alaric's potential future power, a picture Synesius used to blame Eutropius for bad politics. See also Heather (1988), 163-7; (1991), 199-205; (1992), 87-9. Liebeschuetz (1992), 77-81. Kulikowski (2007), 167-8. Matthews (1975), 271-2. Elton (1992), 172. See also Díaz (1999), 321-30. Cameron & Long (1993), 129-39.

<sup>47</sup> Sivan (2003), 112 for the complexity of Alaric's model of leadership: 'Neither the ideological nor the actual genesis of Alaric's kingship can be traced with precision. Nor does it appear to conform to a specific Gothic form of enunciating power.' See also pp.116-8.

717 take into account that Alaric surely wanted this title also in order to promote Gothic  
 718 aims.<sup>48</sup> Nothing would have been easier for Alaric and his followers than to become  
 719 absorbed into Roman culture like for example Fravittas, who had assimilated himself  
 720 with the Roman sphere to the exclusion of his Gothic origins. Yet Alaric refused any  
 721 such attempts from the imperial side, suggesting that his aim to gain a military title  
 722 was connected with more than mere personal motives.

723 Alaric must have been aware of the real political factors behind the conclusion of this  
 724 treaty and must have known that, despite its favourable conditions, the overall  
 725 Roman opinion towards him largely depended on the current courtier in power.  
 726 Perhaps it was this knowledge that made him decide to break with the Eastern  
 727 government and to move to Italy in 401. A full explanation for this step is impossible  
 728 to provide but it was to a large extent due to the rapid changes of politics at the  
 729 Eastern court: Eutropius was deposed in August 399 and his successor Aurelianus  
 730 used the alleged pro-Gothic policy of Eutropius to blame him for an unsuccessful  
 731 policy, promising in his turn to throw out Alaric's group.<sup>49</sup> Aurelianus however had  
 732 succeeded with Gainas' help – that is with Gothic troops – which makes a strict anti-  
 733 barbarian policy unlikely. However, none of these courtiers had a particularly strong  
 734 anti- or pro-Gothic policy, but the entire Gothic cause made an excellent topic in  
 735 political argumentation as it could be used either to pacify the barbarian contingents  
 736 or to destroy political enemies by strictly promoting a fight for Roman interests.  
 737 Perhaps also the elevated position of Gainas and Fravittas might have encouraged

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<sup>48</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 1,157.

<sup>49</sup> Aurelianus was the former prefect of the city and a close ally of the senate; he became praetorian prefect in summer 399 and designated consul for 400. His succession has been at time interpreted as a victory of the anti-barbarian or for that matter anti-Gothic party in Constantinopolitan politics with the aim to clear the army from any barbarian element and to set up a national feeling which put the stability of the East above everything, even at the cost of the Western government. Several scholars, however, see this approach as mainly based on a misinterpretation of Synesius' works and a modern invention of Eastern nationalism, see Liebeschuetz (1990), 105; Heather (1988), 152-3.



738 Alaric to stay in the East and wait for similar honours, especially when both Goths  
 739 had started their careers just like Alaric.

740 To digress here for a moment: there is an interesting comparison between Alaric and  
 741 Fravittas, as Fravittas succeeded to highest honours in the Eastern government.  
 742 Ironically it was the question of Alaric's involvement in Roman politics which  
 743 caused Fravittas' own downfall. He had been appointed to end Gainas' revolt and  
 744 had received access to all military as well as naval units to do so. Considering  
 745 Synesius' anti-Gothic feelings, not surprisingly he failed to record that it was a Goth  
 746 who was employed by the state to defeat another Goth. As reward for ending Gainas'  
 747 revolt, Fravittas received the consulate, a triumphant entry into Constantinople and a  
 748 column dedicated to his sea-victory; shortly afterwards, though, he fell from power,  
 749 but not as a result of anti-Gothic feelings but rather as victim to court intrigues. Part  
 750 of the reason for this was a quarrel he had with Count John about the political  
 751 conduct against Alaric, which was made even worse when Stilicho had failed to  
 752 recognise the Eastern consuls of 404/5, and had entered into an alliance with Alaric  
 753 in 405. The difference between Alaric and Fravittas lay not so much in the question  
 754 which government was readier to accept a Goth to occupy a high imperial office, but  
 755 in the fact that Alaric was not prepared to relinquish his position as leader of a  
 756 Gothic group. Alaric might have hoped to convince the Eastern court that he was  
 757 able to fulfil both roles, as Gainas had done.<sup>50</sup> However, the subsequent crushing of

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<sup>50</sup>Count John (a close friend of the empress Eudoxia) had been previously tried by Gainas and sent into exile but was later recalled and resumed his political position. Aside from the business over Alaric, Fravittas had accused John of his conduct in military matters and his opposition against imperial unity. Influential courtiers like Hierax and others managed to overthrow Fravittas' arguments and it seems that he was either tried for treason and executed or assassinated which is more likely. The sources mention his honours but none of them accused him of treachery; indeed accusations of treason presumably would have resulted in the *damnatio memoriae* and that was apparently not the case. The date of Fravittas' death is not entirely clear: after Gainas' defeat he continued campaigning in Thrace but could have been killed as early as 401. Cameron doubts this and places it not earlier than 405. Indeed Fravittas' accusations against John that he jeopardised the political harmony between the two imperial governments, places his death more likely into the years 404/5 as John had not reached any political influence before 404, and relations between the two courts had not deteriorated before 404.

758 the Tribigild/Gainas revolt and the refusal of Aurelianus' successor Caesarius to  
 759 enter into a new alliance must have shown Alaric that his options to gain an elevated  
 760 position in the Eastern government were seriously limited; furthermore, if Alaric had  
 761 been made *magister militum per Illyricum*, the strong anti-Gothic feelings both  
 762 among the Constantinopolitan population as well as among the leading courtiers  
 763 would have threatened his position, and perhaps he thought it wise to retreat with his  
 764 followers to the West before he was entangled in the aftermath of the Gainas-  
 765 revolt.<sup>51</sup> This political instability probably resulted in a lack of imperial supplies for  
 766 Alaric, perhaps further aggravated by Hunnic movements in the Balkans, which  
 767 disturbed Gothic settlers there.<sup>52</sup> Alaric must have been aware that his success and  
 768 ultimately the survival of his group depended on the way in which he was able to  
 769 manipulate both imperial governments by using political/military difficulties by  
 770 causing them in the first place or exploiting them. Although this treaty had been a  
 771 political success, Alaric's group was by no means in any position to dictate its terms  
 772 to the empire let alone to justify any claims of overrunning the empire and, as will be  
 773 seen in the subsequent events, this situation was to change very little.

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Zosimus, V.22. Eunapius, frg. 69.4, 71.2-4. Cameron & Long (1993), 233-50. Liebeschuetz (1990), 124.

<sup>51</sup> The Constantinopolitan mob had started a witch-hunt of the Gothic population in the city although it was mainly targeted at the followers of Gainas; it was even rejected by some imperial officials especially when it involved the burning of a church, although the official condemnation of such an action was presumably closer linked with the burning of the church than the killing of part of the Gothic population of the city. See Synesius, *de prov.* II.117 A-120 C; Liebeschuetz (1990), 114-5, 119-22. Cameron & Long (1993), 223, 333.

<sup>52</sup> Heather (1988), 171; (1991), 206-8. Liebeschuetz (1992), 80.

780 b) Alaric and the West

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782 The unstable situation at the Eastern court had brought Alaric once more to the West,  
783 hoping to get there what he had ultimately failed to gain or was fearing to lose in the  
784 East. As had been the case in his dealings with the Eastern government, his aim to  
785 use continuous raids to force the imperial government into negotiations in most cases  
786 failed to materialise. Even if he planned to pressure the empire to its utmost limits, it  
787 cannot have included any notion of conquering the entire empire and replacing it  
788 with a Gothic kingdom; as will be seen later even the conquest of Rome was in  
789 strategic terms far more a psychological victory than a real political advantage.  
790 Liebeschuetz argues that Valens and Theodosius had been engaged predominantly to  
791 settle the various Gothic groups according to traditional diplomatic procedures; there  
792 had been frequent demands on the Gothic side to be accepted as independent allies  
793 and Fritigern's request had tried to establish a client relationship with the empire, but  
794 this had been refused. Alaric was pressuring Honorius to accept his group as  
795 *foederati*, as independent allies with the right to keep their weapons; effectively  
796 Honorius was asked to accept a group which was as willing to fight for the empire as  
797 it was willing to fight against it.<sup>53</sup> What had changed, though, was not only the  
798 military strength of the Gothic group under Alaric, which proved effective enough to  
799 pressure Honorius continuously, but also that Alaric remained its leader despite  
800 frequent setbacks.

801 Although the political landscape was less fragmented in the West than it was in the  
802 East, Honorius' personal weakness had fostered numerous rival groups at the court,  
803 each with their own political agenda. Potentially this could have enabled Alaric to  
804 exploit the intrigues of the various influential courtiers for his own demands, but it

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<sup>53</sup> Liebeschuetz (1990), 72. Heather (1991), 196, 208, 210.

805 failed. Aside from Ravenna, the senators in Rome too had their own political  
 806 ambitions, and although they were involved in imperial politics to a far lesser extent  
 807 than in previous centuries, their political movements nevertheless played a part. It is  
 808 interesting that Galla Placidia as Honorius' half-sister had opted to remain in Rome,  
 809 with her claims to the Theodosian heritage, which theoretically stood higher than  
 810 those of Honorius, and thus distanced herself from her brother and became part of a  
 811 set of politicians with their own political agenda. One can wonder if already before  
 812 her capture by the Goths she actively harboured political ambitions and objectives,  
 813 which stood in contrast to Honorius and if this was the case, how far she influenced  
 814 Athaulf to 'challenge' Honorius' position both before their marriage and by marrying  
 815 him later.<sup>54</sup>

816 Two major military confrontations between Stilicho and Alaric had gained neither  
 817 side any success, and for some time Stilicho refused to enter into any negotiations  
 818 with Alaric.<sup>55</sup> However in 404/5 a new alliance between the two was formed, which  
 819 renewed the appointment of Alaric as *magister militum*. Stilicho's motives for this  
 820 are far from clear, but it was much more an answer to the political circumstances the  
 821 empire (and Stilicho) faced than a change in the perception of Alaric or his plans; the  
 822 idea was that his appointment would pacify Alaric's continuous grievance of neglect  
 823 by the imperial officials, thus giving Stilicho space to deal with the Eastern  
 824 government, as well as counteract the recruitment problem Stilicho faced.

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<sup>54</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 20-1.

<sup>55</sup> Claudian, *VI con. Hon.* 229-31, 239-69. Zosimus, V.48.4. Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* VIII.25.3-4, 9.4.2-4. Heather (1991), 209-12. Kulikowski (2007), 170-1. Liebeschuetz (1990), 64-5.

829 c) The sack of Rome

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831 When military pressure forced Stilicho to abandon his negotiations with Alaric in  
 832 406, Alaric returned to Italy in 407 to demand 4,000 lb of gold as payment for his  
 833 military services in Epirus (another reminder of the mercenary aspect of Alaric's  
 834 group), which Stilicho succeeded in paying. Stilicho's murder in August 408,  
 835 though, created a similar situation to the one Alaric had already faced in the East, as  
 836 both his wish for an appointment and his demands for payment and supplies had  
 837 once more been left unfulfilled; any hopes on Alaric's side to exploit the unstable  
 838 situation in Ravenna failed as Honorius refused to pay Alaric.<sup>56</sup> As negotiations once  
 839 more deteriorated, Alaric tried to pressure Honorius into a treaty by besieging Rome  
 840 in winter 408/9, starting a game that was as effective as disastrous. The decision to  
 841 use Rome as the pawn was politically a very shrewd move as it provided him with a  
 842 psychological tool by threatening the ancient heart of the empire; at the same time,  
 843 though, it was a desperate move as the city only served this purpose while it was  
 844 threatened whereas a continuous refusal on Honorius' side would mean its eventual  
 845 sack and the open admission of his political failure.

846 Whether or not Alaric or some of his followers regarded the fact of using Rome as a  
 847 'hostage' as an expression of directly challenging the empire (by regarding Rome as  
 848 the 'mother' and origin of the empire) cannot be established. I would regard it more  
 849 as a difficult measure to force the empire into paying Alaric's demands than an  
 850 actual plan of dominating the empire, although one cannot rule out that Alaric  
 851 regarded it as an ideological challenge. It certainly showed an understanding on

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<sup>56</sup> Zosimus, V.29.5-9, 5.30.1-34. Stilicho had faced the pressure of the migration of Vandals, Alans and Suebes in 406 and the usurpation of Constantine III in Britain and Gaul. His success in paying Alaric's demands had led to open accusation of treason against him and had led to his murder. His successor Olympius refused a continuation of a lenient Gothic policy. Matthews (1975), 308-12. Lütkenhaus (1998), 24-7. See Collins (2006), 12-5 for the moves of Vandals, Alans and Suebes.

852 Alaric's side of the somewhat complicated communication between Rome and  
 853 Ravenna, and an awareness of its fragmented political landscape. Furthermore,  
 854 Alaric opened his own negotiations with the Roman aristocracy, aside from his  
 855 dealings with Honorius, which saw a group of senators travelling to Ravenna to open  
 856 talks with the imperial court although any such attempts ultimately failed<sup>57</sup>. Alaric's  
 857 calculations proved correct insofar as Honorius was prepared to pay for supplies but  
 858 continued to refuse to grant Alaric a military title.<sup>58</sup> The fact that he had opened talks  
 859 with the senate whilst still negotiating with Honorius is indeed not only an  
 860 affirmation of the continuous political involvement of the Roman nobility in politics,  
 861 but also of Alaric's perception of his own power.<sup>59</sup> Besides, his reaction to Honorius'  
 862 refusal to accept his demands was as bold as it was dangerous when he appointed the  
 863 Roman senator Priscus Attalus as his own emperor in December 409, thus effectively  
 864 demonstrating that he regarded himself to stand equal or even above Honorius'  
 865 position and power as emperor when he acted as king maker.

866 Why Alaric still wanted to receive a military title and honours from an institution  
 867 whose leader he now openly challenged and even refused to recognise, is very  
 868 difficult to answer. To appoint a counter-emperor instead of merely supporting or  
 869 promoting a Roman usurper (like Constantine III) suggests that Alaric regarded his  
 870 own power as far greater than that of a mere leader of a band of Gothic auxiliary

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<sup>57</sup> Zosimus, V, 36-8.

<sup>58</sup> Zosimus, V.36.1-44, 5.45-56. Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* IX.6-7. Kulikowski (2007), 8-9: the aim was that the broad Roman population would be the first to feel the enormous pressure of food-shortages and impending starvation due to the Gothic blockade and would revolt against the senatorial families which were less prone to suffer from the siege. The threat of revolt would prompt them to urge Honorius to find some agreement with Alaric. Indeed the deteriorating hygienic conditions and lack of food supplies forced Honorius to re-open talks. There were also some Roman senators, among them Priscus Attalus (see further below), who opposed Honorius and were willing to cooperate with Alaric. Shaw (2001), 151 argues, though, that by and large the Roman aristocracy and the imperial government had failed to recognise Alaric's demands and to understand his position. Considering the long time it took the imperial side to accept a solution to the Gothic 'problem' which was accepted by both sides, Shaw's comment is undoubtedly correct.

<sup>59</sup> Sivan (2003), 119-21: for the eventual failure of the cooperation between Attalus/the senate and Alaric, due to Attalus' miscalculations of the political situation, and underlying tendencies of contempt for a barbarian ruler which could be found among the Roman aristocracy despite their ideas of using the same barbarian ruler for their own political machinations with Ravenna.

871 troops; Alaric effectively portrayed himself to stand above Honorius' authority by  
872 appointing an emperor himself, thus directly challenging Honorius' right as emperor.  
873 This leads to the question whether Alaric saw himself as the leader not of a Gothic  
874 group but of a new nation, which stood equal to the Roman empire, thus giving him  
875 the position to appoint an alternative for Honorius, rather than to support another  
876 Roman supporter with Gothic military help. Alaric's refusal to accept the subsidies  
877 Honorius was prepared to supply could suggest that he regarded his followers as  
878 standing above a band of mercenaries who demanded their payment for their military  
879 employment, and wanted more for them than mere payment. However, Alaric had  
880 not appointed himself as counter-emperor but had chosen Attalus, which would  
881 suggest that he had no desire to replace *Romania* with *Gothia* by setting himself up  
882 as Caesar as Athaulf would later claim he had wanted to do. The danger lay in the  
883 refusal to accept Honorius' position as it would only harden Honorius' refusal to  
884 enter into serious negotiations but also because Alaric allowed himself to become, at  
885 least partly, a tool of Roman politics, especially when there was a faction of Roman  
886 senators, among them Attalus, who opposed Honorius;<sup>60</sup> besides, their willingness to  
887 cooperate with Alaric was as much –if not more – due to the pursuit of their own  
888 political aims as it was an expression of believing in joint Gothic-Roman politics.  
889 Thus a likely possibility for Alaric choosing Attalus could have been an attempt of  
890 his to exploit certain court intrigues at Ravenna, which aimed to replace Honorius  
891 thus hoping to gain advantages by supporting a candidate a faction at court was  
892 likely to back. According to Paulinus of Pella, Attalus himself regarded his  
893 appointment as a political charade, though from the Gothic viewpoint a connection

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<sup>60</sup> Part of the problem were religious differences as some of these Roman families had kept their pagan beliefs and promoted themselves as guardians of traditional Roman values, and opposed the strong Christian emphasis of the Theodosian dynasty, see Kulikowski (2007), 9, 174-6. In the light of this argument it is surprising that Placidia not only remained in Rome and fostered a different political line to Ravenna, but that she promoted her Theodosian heritage.

894 with the Roman aristocracy could only be in their interest, especially when these  
 895 aristocrats had access to resources as well as a certain level of influence in the  
 896 imperial administration.<sup>61</sup> For the senators, although they were by no means a  
 897 homogenous group, the inability of Ravenna to reach any lasting conclusion with  
 898 Alaric was aggravating their own position, as Alaric was quick in using Rome as the  
 899 ‘battlefield’ to press for his own interests. An alliance with Alaric could then be used  
 900 as a tool to remove the politically intolerable Honorius. The current successor of  
 901 Stilicho was Jovinus who later indeed supported Attalus and was to receive military  
 902 help from Athaulf too; furthermore, it does demonstrate that Attalus was by no  
 903 means the weak Gothic puppet Paulinus portrays, but someone influential courtiers  
 904 regarded as a feasible candidate not only to replace Honorius but also to rescue the  
 905 political situation in the West.<sup>62</sup>

906 Kulikowski recently argued that it had been Alaric’s almost inborn loyalty to  
 907 Honorius as the emperor that had prevented him from sacking Rome far earlier.<sup>63</sup>  
 908 Taken further, this would mean that Alaric did not create himself to be emperor but  
 909 rather chose Attalus, because he felt too much reverence for Honorius to replace him  
 910 himself. Yet this argument is based on the assumption that, because Alaric  
 911 supposedly had been born inside imperial territory, he naturally shared the Roman  
 912 concept of loyalty towards the imperial dynasty. First of all, there is no evidence

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<sup>61</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 293-301. Lütkenhaus (1998), 33-5.

<sup>62</sup> Priscus Attalus had previously been *comes sacrarum largitionem* in 409 at Honorius’ court and *praefectus urbis* in Rome, thus being directly involved in court politics. Attalus’ eventual failure was due not so much to a general political miscalculation or personal inability but the stout loyalty of other courtiers for Honorius, most notably Heraclius, *comes Africae*, which hindered any serious support for Attalus. Heraclius created a severe shortage of supplies for Rome which in turn questioned Attalus’ usefulness for the Goths; as any movements out of Italy were too dangerous at that point, the only way was to re-open talks with Honorius. Furthermore, Constantine III was yet another counter-emperor who had widespread support among the Gallic aristocracy, which created some kind of unifying element between them and the Roman aristocracy as both supported candidates who stood in opposition to Honorius. The Gothic position in this was difficult as they played an active role in promoting Attalus yet at the same time served as a tool for both these Gallic and Roman aristocrats to work for their own political aims, namely the disposition of Honorius, but not necessarily to promote Gothic aims. Harries (1994), 60-2. Lütkenhaus (1998), 27-8, 33-8, 69-75. McLynn (1995), 470-1. Heather (2005), 226-7, 239, 248-9. For Attalus’ later life, see Olympiodorus, fr. 13. Orosius, VII.42.9.

<sup>63</sup> Kulikowski (2007), 4.



913 what Alaric really thought of Honorius, and judging from Attalus' appointment he  
914 certainly felt no loyalty towards the emperor, nor can one assume that just because a  
915 non-Roman had been born inside the empire, he naturally had a sense of loyalty  
916 towards the imperial institution; judging from the many Roman usurpers, there was  
917 no guarantee whatsoever that even Romans would be naturally loyal towards the  
918 current imperial dynasty. Such a concept would imply that imperial frontiers were  
919 automatically creating some kind of inclusive boundaries with a common cultural  
920 understanding that all residents of the empire shared, based on the fact that they all  
921 lived inside these borders. It is true that Alaric tried to avoid conquering Rome as  
922 long as possible, yet that had less to do with loyalty and more to do with the ultimate  
923 admission of his failure to negotiate with Honorius; but that does not allow for the  
924 assumption of an inborn loyalty towards Rome. Had Alaric felt this loyalty as  
925 Kulikowski is arguing, most likely he would have joined the Roman army, like so  
926 many other barbarian generals, and would have risen high in the ranks there, yet he  
927 proved himself to be as ready fighting for the empire as against it. Therefore Alaric's  
928 loyalty was primarily towards his followers and his interests in establishing this  
929 group rather than to promote the interests of the Theodosian dynasty. Another point  
930 for promoting Attalus could have been an attempt to create a situation that would  
931 finally force Honorius to react: Attalus thus served the same purpose as the siege of  
932 Rome. I would argue that it was most likely a mixture of the above and its overall  
933 effect was to be as successful as Athaulf's later marriage to Placidia: it demonstrated  
934 the growth of Gothic power but it failed to alter dramatically their political/military  
935 position. If Attalus' appointment had been intended to pressure Honorius, it failed;  
936 Alaric reduced his demands once again to a level which was suitable for auxiliary  
937 troops: '[Alaric] did not want office or honour, nor did he wish to settle in the  
938 provinces previously specified, but only the two Noricums which are on the far

939 reaches of the Danube, are subject to continual incursions, and pay little tax to the  
940 treasury. Moreover, he would be satisfied with as much corn each year as the  
941 emperor thought sufficient, and forget about the gold. Thus there could be friendship  
942 and alliance between him and the Romans against everyone who took up arms and  
943 was roused to war against the emperor.’<sup>64</sup> Yet even these reduced demands came to  
944 nothing and Alaric finally marched on Rome, which fell on 24 August 410 AD. The  
945 sack of Rome and the capture of Galla Placidia looked at first sight like the final  
946 culmination of Gothic power but in fact it was the failure of Alaric’s politics as it had  
947 deprived him of the only really successful tool to pressure Honorius and he was still  
948 without a treaty with the empire. The only short-term positive effect was that it had  
949 provided him with an enormous amount of booty and had occupied his soldiers –  
950 indeed an important factor as his troops had not been engaged in any serious warfare  
951 since the Balkan campaigns, which could potentially create a climate of treason and  
952 mutiny among them; any victory, however small, was essential in such a climate.<sup>65</sup>  
953 The main problem Alaric faced was the lack of steady supplies without which his  
954 followers were unable to continue as a large group or indeed to gain any strong  
955 power-base from which they could further develop their political establishment;  
956 indeed both Alaric and Athaulf were trying to find ways to end their dependence on  
957 imperial supplies. This implies that the people around Alaric was rapidly developing  
958 into much more than just being a relatively small band of mercenaries, and therefore  
959 needed much more than mere payments for military services but a steady, large  
960 income of food supplies; this matter is also closely connected with the increasingly  
961 important question of a permanent Gothic settlement within Roman territory. This  
962 question of land is an indicator that Alaric’s followers had developed from a band of

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<sup>64</sup> Zosimus, V.50.3.

<sup>65</sup> Zosimus, VI.7.11-2. Olympiodorus, fr.30. Orosius, VII.43. Rutilius, II.59-60. Augustine’s *de civitate dei* was a direct moral and theological answer to the destruction of Rome. Lançon, (2000), 39. Kulikowski (2007), 5.

963 mercenaries to a much larger group, as mercenaries would have been able to exist on  
964 a much smaller scale of supplies. Alaric's aim to cross to Africa via Sicily, and  
965 Wallia's later attempt in 416 AD to achieve the same, must have been an attempt to  
966 counteract the permanent food shortage by moving into the province from where  
967 most of the grain supplies came. Alaric's demands throughout had included secure  
968 subsidies, although by now it must have become more apparent that even guaranteed  
969 supplies were not a long-term alternative to an area of settlement where arable land  
970 would have maintained a large group for much longer.<sup>66</sup> Athaulf too, continued to  
971 struggle with the difficulty in finding enough supplies for his group, and it is to his  
972 leadership we must turn next.

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<sup>66</sup> Orosius, VII.43.2. Olympiodorus, fr. 22.1-2. Liebeschuetz (1990), 72, provides another argument for Alaric's attempt to cross into Africa as a possible punishment of the *comes Africae* Heraclius who had fiercely opposed him and Attalus. See also Collins (2006), 26-37 for further Gothic history.

## 994 3. Athaulf

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Succeeding Alaric in 411 AD, it was left to Athaulf to deal with the continuous

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problem of guaranteed supplies and the increasing difficulty questions over an area

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of settlement posed. Athaulf was Alaric's political successor when he was able to

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finalise the question of a Gothic settlement that had formed an increasingly essential

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part of Alaric's political/military agenda. The difference to Alaric was that Athaulf

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had to deal with a subsequently different concept of leadership which had to

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accommodate the issues of a settled barbarian people in immediate proximity to the

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Roman population. Thus his political concept of supporting the Roman empire with

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Gothic power can also be interpreted as an answer to create a *modus vivendi* with the

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Romans but also as an attempt to define the concept of Gothic leadership in a new

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way which was suitable to a settled people. Thus a prerequisite for Athaulf's plan to

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replace *Romania* with *Gothia* in Gaul would have been a strong Gothic position both

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militarily as well as politically, and as the subsequent events showed this was not the

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case. Neither questions over a territory for settlement nor over complete

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independence from the empire in terms of supplies, had been successfully resolved –

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in fact these issues continued to dictate Gothic movements in Gaul (and for some

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time in Spain) to a large extent.

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To turn to the problems of territorial settlement and guaranteed supplies: both were

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linked and had a direct influence on the development of Athaulf's group as well as

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on the intention to become wholly independent from the empire. If one accepts the

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notion that Alaric's group at the beginning of his career was indeed a band of

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mercenaries as has been previously discussed, the question of supplies then had been

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largely a question of payment for military support for the empire.<sup>67</sup> However, as this

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<sup>67</sup> See Part I.2.

1020 mercenary band started to absorb other people from outside and grew in size  
1021 (absorbing not only men fit for military service but also women and children), it  
1022 needed much more than mere payment for military campaigns, and the demand for  
1023 actual food supplies became therefore an increasingly important issue; indeed  
1024 Alaric's request shortly before the sack of Rome referred to corn supplies rather than  
1025 money. As Alaric had not managed to establish a lasting agreement with Honorius,  
1026 and attempts to gain access to Africa had failed, Athaulf was forced to continue the  
1027 policy of moving and plundering to access these supplies; but as Italy had soon lost  
1028 its value of providing the required resources, Athaulf moved into Gaul. Even if one  
1029 debates the mercenary aspect of the original composition of Alaric's group and  
1030 rejects the earlier payments as a form of military wages, certainly by now it had  
1031 developed into a conformation which was nothing short of a new people and  
1032 therefore required far more supplies than a relatively small group of soldiers.  
1033 Whether one can label Athaulf's group already a nation as it contained by now more  
1034 than just a warrior-dominated group, or whether one reserves such a definition for  
1035 the time when this people established themselves in Aquitaine in 416, or even as late  
1036 as their kingdom in Spain when the Gothic court issued laws, is open to debate.  
1037 Certainly in the ancient sources there was no distinction any more between various  
1038 different Gothic groups, but already Alaric and even more Athaulf were regarded as  
1039 the leader or king of the Goths, very much implying one homogenous group under  
1040 one established leader. Even if one does not accept the idea that this group was a  
1041 nation yet, it was certainly a 'nation in the making'. It had lost its pure mercenary  
1042 aspect, it had grown in size, it had started itself to absorb people rather than being  
1043 absorbed into the imperial system, and its leadership under one leader had become an  
1044 established fact (even if there were still internal feuds about it, although they were  
1045 more concerned with the actual person holding power rather than with the concept as

1046 such). Athaulf's later comments on adopting and supporting Roman law have been  
1047 interpreted as a step beyond the Gothic request for a settlement and have been  
1048 regarded as a sign towards their emancipation as a nation or state; this is based on  
1049 arguments that the Goths still regarded themselves more as Roman magistrates or as  
1050 heirs to Roman power, thus still being subject to overall Roman authority (based  
1051 partly on the interpretation of their Law Codes as a continuation of Roman edicts  
1052 rather than completely new legal creations).<sup>68</sup> Yet such an interpretation regards the  
1053 Goths as a nation only when they had adopted Roman law, which implies that  
1054 without this Roman law there was no possibility for a non-Roman people to become  
1055 a nation or a state in their own right, or that their own laws were not sufficient  
1056 enough for them to form a nation. Surely the acceptance and assimilation with  
1057 Roman law had nothing to do with the development of a barbarian group into a  
1058 political/military unit, nor into a new people or even a state/nation.<sup>69</sup> Athaulf's idea  
1059 of incorporating Roman law into Gothic structures could have been an attempt to  
1060 find an easier *modus vivendi* with the empire but this does not exclude the notion that  
1061 already before this the various Gothic groups or Alaric's followers had had their own  
1062 concepts of legal matters.

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1064 However as Alaric before him, Athaulf was to become trapped in the turmoil of the  
1065 imperial administration: as supplies remained a crucial part of any negotiation,  
1066 Heraclian's revolt in Africa had delayed grain supplies and made this topic even  
1067 more pressing. Furthermore Flavius Constantius' rise to power in Ravenna had  
1068 seriously altered the political balance and had upset Jovinus and his supporters.

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<sup>68</sup> Barnwell (1992), 74-5. Harries (1994), 61-3.

<sup>69</sup> The Visigothic law collection of the *Breviarum* of Alaric II in the sixth century is based on Roman interpretations of law and written from a Roman perspective. The question remains to whom this law code was applied, and if it concerned Goths and Romans alike or only one of the two; it seems, though, that the Goths were expected to fall under the jurisdiction of the Gothic king whereas the Roman population was tried under Roman law. Matthews (2000), 32-3, 37-9. See also Part I.3.

1069 Athaulf himself had originally supported Jovinus but soon fell out with him and was  
1070 willing to hand over Jovinus to Ravenna in exchange for a new treaty. The  
1071 subsequent harsh treatment of Jovinus' followers by Constantius led to considerable  
1072 misgivings among the Gallic aristocracy, and as Constantius was trying to reaffirm  
1073 imperial power in Gaul he had to pacify Gallic interests in the long term. Questions  
1074 over a permanent Gothic settlement on imperial soil were still an awkward problem  
1075 and were made even more complex as negotiations with Athaulf had to avoid any  
1076 serious impact on the Gallic aristocracy and their social as well as political sphere in  
1077 order to regain support among them. Furthermore Constantius' increasing military  
1078 defence left increasingly little space for Athaulf to manoeuvre. The situation was  
1079 complicated by the fact that Athaulf's own position among his Gothic followers was  
1080 not without its challenges. Although his leadership was widely accepted, his feud  
1081 with Sarus demonstrated that despite the acceptance of a single leader the person to  
1082 hold this position was subject to challenge by men with a similar background. It was  
1083 the respective leader who defined the military/political programme of the Goths, and  
1084 in an episode concerning Paulinus of Pella Athaulf himself admitted that he and his  
1085 decisions were in fact far from being wholly independent from his followers whose  
1086 opinions he had to take into account.<sup>70</sup>

1087 Although the move into Gaul had created a very difficult position for Athaulf, it was  
1088 perhaps less surprising if one considers that many of the major players in this  
1089 political game were somewhat connected with each other and had numerous  
1090 connections with Gaul: one of them was Galla Placidia who had been part of the  
1091 political establishment in Rome with which Attalus was connected. Furthermore,  
1092 Placidia was to prove a potentially dangerous 'weapon' in Athaulf's hands:  
1093 Placidia's relationship to Valentinian I through her mother gave her a stronger link

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<sup>70</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 357-63. See also Nixon (1992).

1094 with the Theodosian dynasty than Honorius could claim and presented potentially a  
 1095 different political view from Honorius. Already during her time in Rome, Placidia  
 1096 had proved an opponent of Honorius or, if one believes the weak character of  
 1097 Honorius himself, at least of the ruling faction at Ravenna – in fact her remaining in  
 1098 Rome instead of fleeing to Ravenna when the Gothic invasion became imminent  
 1099 suggests a certain distance from the imperial court; at least factions which stood  
 1100 against Honorius could have used her distance from her half-brother in order to  
 1101 exploit their own claims of anti-Honorian policies. This distance from Honorius was  
 1102 already apparent in her role in the trial against Serena: according to Zosimus, she  
 1103 was involved in the political establishment in Rome and played a role together with  
 1104 some parts of the senate in convicting Serena.<sup>71</sup> Lütkenhaus also argues that Placidia  
 1105 seems to have left Rome without any violent attempts on the Gothic side, and  
 1106 concludes that this could be an indication that she was already in contact with those  
 1107 senatorial circles which supported Attalus, and thus indirectly the Goths.<sup>72</sup> Another  
 1108 major player was Jovinus, a Gallic noble who had started a rebellion in Gaul in 411  
 1109 and in turn was promoted by a large group of the Gallic aristocracy as part of a  
 1110 strategy to alter the situation in Ravenna to their own political advantage. According  
 1111 to Wolfram, Jovinus was also keen to establish a basis for cooperation with Athaulf  
 1112 when Athaulf's position in Italy posed the chance to transport the usurpation from  
 1113 Gaul into Italy and to boost its potential success through Gothic military help; but

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<sup>71</sup> Zosimus, V.28, 34, 38-9. The fact that Serena was Stilicho's widow and their two daughters had been married to Honorius, and that Stilicho had been Honorius' chief adviser and military leader for some time, undoubtedly added to the somewhat strained situation between Honorius and Placidia. Due to the absence of the emperor, Rome had lost its status as the political centre of the empire, but it had allowed for the rising influence of the senate and the continuity of Rome as a cultural centre, which remained intact despite serious political/military/social unrest and instability, see for example Alföldi (2001), 4-5. See article by Alföldi (2001) for senatorial pride and continuity of influence in Rome, despite profound difficulties in the political and social sector (misuse of offices, food shortages, dilapidation of public buildings etc); the inscriptions continue a message of general aristocratic pride in Rome's culture and aristocratic commitment to the upkeep and restoration of the eternal glory of Rome, regardless of their background or religious conviction.

<sup>72</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 72-5: he argues that Constantius' insistence to get Placidia back from the Goths was also directly linked with his own attempts to secure further his political bid, not only in terms of gaining a family relationship with Honorius but also to secure the support of senatorial circles.



1114 aside from Jovinus' connection with Sarus, an enemy of Athaulf, Jovinus' promotion  
1115 of his brother to the purple without Athaulf's consent had further strained their  
1116 relationship and made Athaulf hand over Jovinus to Ravenna.<sup>73</sup> Jovinus stood in  
1117 connection with Attalus, who was himself supported by Athaulf.

1118 After the end of this revolt, Athaulf must have known about the tensions between  
1119 Constantius and the Gallic aristocracy, especially when he saw the drastic measures  
1120 against the Jovinus-supporters; any attempt on their side to fight for their own  
1121 political aims without consent from Ravenna could have been hardly surprising. In  
1122 the light of Athaulf's break with Jovinus, support among the Gallic aristocrats for the  
1123 Gothic cause in order to ensure their access to supplies was essential. Placidia could  
1124 not only present a pawn to pressure Ravenna, especially when Constantius was more  
1125 than keen to have her back, but she as a member of the imperial house and known to  
1126 pose a different line from Honorius could also serve to convince the Gallic  
1127 aristocrats to support the Gothic cause, which was vital to gain access to continuous  
1128 supplies. Besides, there were some Gallic aristocrats, who were willing to support  
1129 Athaulf and his aims, which raises the question whether his policy already before his  
1130 marriage with Placidia was showing signs of supporting the restoration of Roman  
1131 interests, as he was to claim at his wedding. Orosius talked of the influence Placidia  
1132 had over Athaulf, and as she was with the Goths already since 410 it could certainly  
1133 be that her presence and undoubted political insight had a certain impact on  
1134 Athaulf's decisions to favour increasingly a policy of restoration; in the light of this  
1135 argument, the wedding in 415 would have been then just the manifestation of this  
1136 policy. Attalus was re-appointed emperor with various Gallic aristocrats (among

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<sup>73</sup> Olympiodorus, fr. 18, 20. Orosius, VII.42.6. Sarus was a former commander under Honorius, promoted by his patron Stilicho, and had become an influential imperial agent. He was also a mortal enemy of Athaulf who quickly killed him though this feud was later to be responsible for Athaulf's own murder; Sarus' brother Sigeric continued this feud and eventually became for a very brief time Athaulf's successor. Elton (1996 b), 34-5. Matthews (1975), 314-5. Heather (1991), 197-8. Burns (1992), 53. Lütkenhaus (1998), 76. Wolfram (1997), 146.

1137 them Paulinus of Pella) as members of the new government and Athaulf himself  
1138 married Placidia in a Roman-style ceremony in Narbonne.  
1139 Some contemporaries regarded this marriage as the fulfilment of a prophecy in the  
1140 Book of Daniel of the marriage between the daughter of the king of the South and the  
1141 son of the king of the North.<sup>74</sup> Orosius was undoubtedly aware of this interpretation,  
1142 and as he was writing his history from an ecclesiastical standpoint it was very  
1143 important for him that it was not the Christians who were responsible for the gradual  
1144 breakdown of imperial structures. Yet there was a problem with this interpretation:  
1145 the Goths had become major players in political and military matters, but as Arians  
1146 they belonged to a heretical group and posed a problem for this concept; the marriage  
1147 of their leader with a daughter of the imperial house added a further element of  
1148 complexity to this, especially when it had posed an obvious defiance of imperial  
1149 orders. A way for Orosius to interpret this problem could have been to present the  
1150 Goths and especially their leader as wanting to preserve peace and being interested in  
1151 using their military power for the restoration and continuation of the Roman empire.  
1152 Besides, imperial ideology dictated that there was only one empire, namely a Roman  
1153 and Christian one, hence Orosius almost had no other choice than to present Athaulf  
1154 as engaging in preserving *Romania* with Gothic power. Also Placidia's presentation  
1155 as having a profound impact on Athaulf would certainly fit into this picture: Placidia  
1156 as an orthodox Christian could not only be seen as influencing Athaulf in the  
1157 religious sphere, but also to fight for the imperial house, whose representative she  
1158 was. Orosius might also have used Athaulf and his representation in his histories in  
1159 much the same way as Salvian used the barbarians: to depict the Gothic leader as  
1160 having the wellbeing of the Roman state more in his heart, despite not being a  
1161 Roman himself, than the emperor or his courtiers, would have served as a mirror to

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<sup>74</sup> Book of Daniel, 11, 5. Orosius, VII.40, 43. Lütkenhaus (1998), 77-80. Goetz (2000), 75-6. Barnwell (1992), 71.

1162 demonstrate the lack of morale and values among the Romans. Considering all these  
1163 possible interpretations, there is ample scope to doubt Athaulf ever having made  
1164 such a statement about his political intentions, and even if he hinted at some such  
1165 view, how much was later the expression of Orosius' writings. Lütkenhaus for one  
1166 doubts that contemporaries believed in any attempts to turn such rhetoric into a  
1167 serious political programme. However, I do believe that there was indeed more to  
1168 Athaulf's statement than the mere expressions of contemporary writings or  
1169 ecclesiastically inspired interpretations. The fact that the Goths were to a large extent  
1170 dependent on the help of the Gallic aristocracy for accessing supplies would have  
1171 turned Athaulf's statement into a shrewd political move to convince influential  
1172 aristocrats to lend their support to the Gothic cause. In an interesting analogy, Alaric  
1173 had already made a similar statement shortly before his final attack on Rome, when  
1174 he promised to use Gothic strength to fight for Roman interests and to regard Rome's  
1175 enemies as a common enemy.<sup>75</sup> Of course Alaric had proved ready to issue such  
1176 statements yet remaining essentially hostile to Rome in order to gain maximum  
1177 advantage for Gothic interests, and perhaps such a comment should not be taken as a  
1178 serious political programme, especially when he tried to gain access to larger  
1179 supplies; however, it is interesting that a very similar concept was to emerge under  
1180 Athaulf in what was essentially the same situation when he largely relied on the  
1181 support of the Gallo-Romans. Whether that was a sign of a political concept, though,  
1182 which had started already under Alaric and resurfaced under Athaulf, yet was never  
1183 taken seriously by the Roman side, is impossible to say. Furthermore, the aristocrats  
1184 who attended the wedding in Narbonne belonged to a group of Gallic nobles whose  
1185 relationship with Ravenna was more than strained after the Jovinus-episode; for  
1186 example the family of one of the attendants, Rusticus, had suffered badly as a result

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<sup>75</sup> Zosimus, V.50. See also Díaz (1999), 329.

1187 of the prosecution of Jovinus' followers. These people would have looked for a  
 1188 political alternative to the present regime in Ravenna and for Athaulf to exploit these  
 1189 rifts by helping them to fight this faction at Ravenna, as well as restoring Roman  
 1190 strength, would have made ample sense.

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1192 Athaulf's earlier claims to replace *Romania* with *Gothia* and *to become what Caesar*  
 1193 *Augustus had been* had been a direct challenge to Honorius' position as emperor. To  
 1194 digress here briefly: increasingly barbarian kings were to start adopting the imperial  
 1195 trappings of presenting a ruler on coinage and other objects not only as a way to  
 1196 imitate Roman culture, but as these visual images conveyed a message of imperial  
 1197 unity and power, so representing themselves in the same way was an attempt to  
 1198 transfer the same political message. In Elsner's words, the 'emperor's image...gave  
 1199 access [through viewing and ritual] to the holy presence of a living god, or in  
 1200 Christian times to the chosen representative of God, under whose protection the  
 1201 civilised world had been placed' as the emperor 'was not merely a person, he was the  
 1202 definition and symbol of the nature of the Roman state.'<sup>76</sup> For a barbarian king to use  
 1203 such imagery and propaganda such as the concept of restoring Roman interests and  
 1204 values as Athaulf did was not only meant as an open appreciation of Roman culture  
 1205 but far more that he understood himself to be the rightful successor to the message  
 1206 this imperial imagery carried and ultimately to imperial authority. Athaulf's use of a  
 1207 language of 'restoring' Roman order goes as far back as Augustus' concept of  
 1208 'restoring republican values' and clearly demonstrates a far more ambitious political

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<sup>76</sup> Ammianus described the entrance of Constantius into Rome, giving a striking image of this power personified in the emperor, A.M.,16.10 (for the city of Rome in late antiquity, see for example Alföldi (2001)). Carolingian architecture for example deliberately evoked comparisons with imperial buildings in Rome. Furthermore Charlemagne crowned himself emperor at Rome in 800 and presented himself not only as a Frankish king but also as the continuator and successor of the old Roman empire. The process of merging Roman imagery and mythology with barbarian art was very longstanding as for example Lucian's comment in the second century on Celtic representations of Heracles demonstrates. Wood (1997), 116-22. Elsner (1998), 27-30, 53-87, 136-8. Kelly (2001), 171-6,182. Millar (1967). Ferris (2000), 176-7.

1209 concept than a mere challenge to replace Honorius as the dominant military power;  
1210 thus Athaulf put himself as a rightful claimant of imperial power and its message of  
1211 preserving and enhancing Roman values; thus in championing a political concept  
1212 based on Augustan precedent, his political agenda would allow him to be portrayed  
1213 as a second Augustus, and therefore as a new saviour-like figure to restore Rome to  
1214 its glory and to lead it to a second Golden Age.

1215 His marriage with Placidia added dynastical claim to this as he entered into a  
1216 marriage alliance with the imperial house, and with this he could potentially claim  
1217 access to the imperial throne; after all, Constantius' later marriage to Placidia made  
1218 him eventually co-emperor with Honorius. It is interesting then that Athaulf decided  
1219 to marry Placidia as he must have been aware of these dynastic implications, but also  
1220 that their child was named Theodosius, thus demonstrating the hope to unite Gothic  
1221 and Roman power in one person.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, if one takes the approach that  
1222 Placidia served much the same purpose as Alaric's siege of Rome Athaulf  
1223 deliberately rejected her value as a pawn by marrying her because her exchange in  
1224 return for grain had been part of any further negotiations with Ravenna. Considering  
1225 how important access to supplies was for his group, Placidia thus must have had a  
1226 strong impact on Athaulf, which would make her political influence on him  
1227 plausible. Another indication that there must have been more to Athaulf's remark  
1228 than mere ideological interpretation from Orosius is the fact that coinage issued by  
1229 Attalus around the same time talked about a *restitutio rei publicae* which was (in  
1230 terms of coinage) a unique occurrence at that specific time; the fact that Attalus was  
1231 entirely dependent on Gothic military power must have meant that his political  
1232 programme of restoration was equally dependent on Gothic help and thus directly

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<sup>77</sup> Honorius was childless despite being married twice, so any of Placidia's children were the obvious heirs to the Western throne; the baby Theodosius, though, died shortly after his birth. In Heather's opinion, the choice of the baby's name indicates that Athaulf himself wanted to become the power behind the throne, Heather (1996), 149.

1233 supported by Athaulf.<sup>78</sup> How Athaulf's followers regarded his political concept  
1234 cannot be established; later his short-lived successor Sigeric (Sarus' brother) would  
1235 openly distance himself from him when he murdered Athaulf's children from his first  
1236 marriage to a Gothic woman, and forced his widow Placidia to walk some miles in  
1237 front of his horse; such an open humiliation of someone who represented both  
1238 Athaulf's politics and imperial links was clearly an indicator that he distanced  
1239 himself from Athaulf's policy; whether, though, that was just an expression of a  
1240 personal feud or indeed a public rejection of the political programme of his  
1241 predecessor is impossible to say. Much later in the Ostrogothic kingdom, some of the  
1242 nobles were to regard Amalasantha's classical education and her contact with the  
1243 Eastern court as a severe threat to Ostrogothic culture and political interests, which  
1244 eventually led to her assassination. Whether a similar faction was present among  
1245 Athaulf's followers, who regarded a pro-Roman policy as threatening Gothic  
1246 interests, and perhaps found its expression in Sarus' and Sigeric's opposition, cannot  
1247 be established.

1248 If some of his followers harboured misgivings about Athaulf's policy of a connection  
1249 with the Gallic nobles, they soon found support for their opinion as the much-desired  
1250 connection with the Gallic aristocracy soon came to an end. The reason was not so  
1251 much a lack of commitment on both sides but Constantius' continuous pressure on  
1252 Gaul which broke the connection between parts of the Gallic nobility and the Goths.  
1253 414 saw a famine, which made the consistent food supplies for the Goths very  
1254 problematic and increased the burden on the *civitates* although there was no open  
1255 revolt against the Goths. Constantius' decision to blockade the trade seriously  
1256 threatened further supplies and was the main reason for Athaulf to retreat to Spain at  
1257 the end of 414. During this move not only some of the Goths but also members of the

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<sup>78</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 80-2: the inscription on the coinage was deliberately used by Attalus to promote his political programme.

1258 Roman population rioted against Attalus' officials for their incompetence in dealing  
 1259 with this crisis, which was further complicated by the deserting of Alanic troops who  
 1260 had been fighting with the Goths.<sup>79</sup> Overall Athaulf's politics had failed, as the  
 1261 alliance with the Gallic nobles had not been strong enough to endure Constantius'  
 1262 pressure and the fragmentation of Gallic interests. There were still no guaranteed  
 1263 supplies or a territory for settlement; Athaulf could not return Placidia without losing  
 1264 face, and as Ravenna regarded her return as an essential part of the negotiations any  
 1265 further exchange with the court was severed. In summer 415, though, Athaulf was  
 1266 killed in Barcelona.<sup>80</sup> Considering the fact that Athaulf had faced the problems of  
 1267 supplies and a settlement already at the time of his succession to power, his rule had  
 1268 failed. However, it was under his rule that the Goths had increasingly developed into  
 1269 a coherent group, indeed became a people who were to settle in Aquitaine under his  
 1270 successor Wallia in 418.

1271

1272 Whatever Alaric's aim had been when he had so fiercely demanded a military title  
 1273 from the Roman authorities, whether he had entered the army already with the aim to  
 1274 gain power among his Gothic followers, whether he intended to use a military title to  
 1275 affirm his power-position among his own people against other contenders, or  
 1276 whether he hoped to use it as a form of assimilating barbarian power with Roman  
 1277 authority, is open to question. Alaric's start as the leader of an auxiliary contingent  
 1278 within the imperial army does not mean that the group around him represented a  
 1279 band of troops revolting against the empire or that Alaric's position is a choice

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<sup>79</sup> The presence of these Alanic contingents is an indicator of how fluent these groups still were in terms of temporarily or permanently absorbing people from outside their group. Constantius also blocked the Pyrenean passes which stopped the Goths from moving back into Gaul when their raids in Spain had met with little success. Paulinus of Pella himself got entangled in this resistance near Bazas. Paulinus, *Euch.* 285-8, 330-40. Orosius, VII.43. Olympiodorus, frs. 22.1-1, 24. Liebeschuetz (1990), 73. Lütkenhaus (1998), 83-6. Matthews (1975), 316 for unrest in Africa.

<sup>80</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 291-3. Heather (1991), 221. Matthews (1975), 317.

1280 between presenting him either as a military leader or a Gothic king.<sup>81</sup> The service  
1281 within the imperial army gave Alaric a basis from which he could develop his own  
1282 power, a fact also highlighted by his continuous request for a Roman military title.  
1283 As he started his career within the imperial army, he was certainly a military leader,  
1284 not least in the Roman view, but there is no information whether or not this included  
1285 an already existing leading position among his own people. Thus, Alaric should be  
1286 seen as a military leader who eventually became the leader of a group that was  
1287 gradually to develop into a nation; it is not so much a question of regarding Alaric  
1288 and his group either as a nation or an army (to borrow here the term from  
1289 Liebeschuetz), but rather to see this group developing from a strong military starting  
1290 point into a nation. Alaric, regardless of what his social position among his people  
1291 encompassed before he entered the Roman sphere, was the dynamic force behind this  
1292 development. Yet it does not follow that he 'created' the Goths as a people – his was  
1293 a group which was transformed under his and Athaulf's leadership into one of the  
1294 first barbarian 'superpowers' and became successful enough to withstand Roman  
1295 resistance and thus to develop further. Athaulf certainly had taken a firm step  
1296 towards connecting concepts of Gothic leadership with Roman imperial power,  
1297 hoping to consolidate such a programme not only by his marriage to Placidia but  
1298 even in the future of his and Placidia's so poignantly named son Theodosius; it was  
1299 only under Theoderic II and especially under Euric that the concept of understanding  
1300 Gothic kingship merged firmly with Roman concepts of power and authority.<sup>82</sup>  
1301 Interestingly Theoderic II continued the link between the Gothic court and the Gallic  
1302 aristocracy Athaulf had created, when he supported the Gallic nobles in their choice  
1303 to make Avitus emperor (the Gallic nobility needed the military support of the Goths

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<sup>81</sup> Díaz (1999), 327-9.

<sup>82</sup> See Díaz (1999), 330-5 for the further development of Gothic understanding of royal power. See also Part II.1.



1304 as did Avitus). According to Sidonius, there is also an echo to Athaulf's earlier  
1305 political programme when Theoderic says of Avitus that he had helped him to  
1306 understand that Roman laws are pleasing to him as is peace<sup>83</sup>. Sidonius' audience in  
1307 Rome did not favourably regard such a strong connection between the emperor and  
1308 the Goths, and Avitus fell from power within a year when he lacked the Italian  
1309 support.<sup>84</sup> However, Sidonius' praise of the Gothic king formed part of his overall  
1310 pro-Roman treatment of Theoderic II, a concept that was connected to Sidonius' own  
1311 close relationship with Avitus and support of the Gallic cause;<sup>85</sup> thus the extent to  
1312 which Theoderic made such comments as part of his own political conviction or to  
1313 regard himself as a political successor of Athaulf, has to remain open.

1314 As has been seen, the development of the Goths under Athaulf was intrinsically  
1315 linked with Gaul and the Gallic aristocracy. Athaulf's intended political programme,  
1316 already supported by a group of aristocrats, had further fostered a need among the  
1317 Gallic nobility in general to start to assimilate with the Gothic establishment. The  
1318 next part of the thesis will look in more detail at this relationship, and how the Gallo-  
1319 Romans regarded their socio-political position in a changing world.

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<sup>83</sup> Sid. Ap., *Carm.*7.498.

<sup>84</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 17-9: there is an inscription existing which is dated to the reign of king Thorismund (451-53), addressing him as *dominus noster* which for Mathisen & Sivan indicates that the Gothic kings regarded themselves now as equal in status to the Roman emperor.

<sup>85</sup> See also pp.183-4.

### 1 Part III. The Gallo-Romans and the Goths

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3 Contemporary Roman writers often talked of a disruption and subsequent decline of  
4 Roman lifestyle and culture once the barbarian peoples had moved into the empire  
5 for good. This part of the thesis will examine whether the Roman population really  
6 seriously suffered from the settlement of non-Roman peoples on their land, what it  
7 meant in terms of disruption or even extinction of Roman lifestyle, or whether such  
8 statements were more the expressions of specific intentions of the authors expressed  
9 in literature, which had little resemblance with actual reality. There is a lot to be said  
10 for both sides, and to an extent integration between the new peoples and the Roman  
11 population was not possible without some disruption or at least alterations of former  
12 concepts of lifestyle and culture; in fact it was this process of alteration and  
13 adaptation to a different world which created the basis for integration and  
14 assimilation between the two sides.

15 The first chapter will look at the actual settlement of the Goths in Aquitaine since  
16 this formed the basis from which any further development of either rejection or  
17 integration stemmed, as the Gothic settlement was a political fact which the Roman  
18 population had to come to terms with. The second chapter will then look at questions  
19 of disruptions of Roman culture due to an unprecedented barbarian presence and  
20 interference in Roman lifestyle and how the Roman population reacted to this. The  
21 third chapter will look at specific aspects of integration and indeed absorption into  
22 Gothic rule as another way to establish a common basis for living. Finally it will  
23 glance at a specific way of adaptation with the new political system, that is the world  
24 of the bishop, as an alternative to Roman or Gothic rule.

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26 1. Athaulf's succession

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28 a) Wallia and the question of settlement

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30 Let us turn then to the eventual Gothic settlement in Aquitaine and its significance  
31 for the development of concepts of adaptation to a new lifestyle. Athaulf's eventual  
32 successor Wallia stood in no family connection with Alaric or Athaulf, as Athaulf's  
33 murder by some opponents, perhaps including Sigeric, had disrupted any dynastic  
34 hereditary system. Only Theoderic was to establish a dynasty with a succession-line,  
35 and although he was married to a daughter or sister of Alaric there is no reason to  
36 believe that he was elected on the basis of being a relative of Alaric.<sup>1</sup> Orosius  
37 reported that Wallia was elected as Athaulf's successor due to his promise to pursue  
38 a strict policy of anti-Roman politics.<sup>2</sup> Whether such a promise really demonstrated a  
39 true intention of reversing previous ideas of restoring *Romanitas* with Gothic help  
40 and to stop further steps towards assimilation with the Roman world, or more a  
41 desperate attempt of Wallia to find another way to establish Gothic success, is  
42 impossible to say. Furthermore, as said before, there is of course the difficulty of  
43 how far Athaulf's comment on restoration can be taken seriously and thus how far  
44 Orosius had to create this dichotomy between him and his successor. However, as  
45 discussed in the previous chapter, there is much to be said for taking Athaulf's  
46 remark of restoration as a serious political programme. Yet Athaulf's politics had not  
47 gained the desired independence for the Goths and thus it would have made sense for  
48 Wallia to distance himself from the politics of his predecessor. However Wallia's

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<sup>1</sup> Orosius, VII.40 described Athaulf only as a kinsman of Alaric without giving any more detail about the family relationship between the two. Zosimus stated Athaulf as Alaric's brother-in-law, V.37. See also Heather (1992), 87. Wolfram (1990), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Orosius, VII. 43.

49 attempt to cross into Africa as a way to secure guaranteed grain supplies without  
50 imperial interference failed, and Constantius' blockade made a return to Gaul and  
51 perhaps a plan to renew cooperation with the Gallic aristocracy futile. Eventually  
52 Wallia concluded a treaty with the empire in 416 AD, and in contrast to Athaulf he  
53 was able to return Placidia without losing face – thus fulfilling one of the obligations  
54 of renewed contacts with Ravenna. In Lütkenhaus' opinion, Wallia could even  
55 strengthen his position with this treaty, and if one accepts Wallia's earlier political  
56 plans as anti-Roman, this treaty was indeed improving Wallia's position, when his  
57 previous political programme had gained nothing to support the Gothic population in  
58 terms of supplies, which were badly needed.<sup>3</sup>

59 With the Gothic population numbering between 80,000-100,000 people, a guaranteed  
60 grain supply continued to be of vital importance and Placidia's return to Ravenna  
61 brought 600,000 *modii* of grain for the Goths; in return the Goths had to provide  
62 military support for the imperial army.<sup>4</sup> That formula would have pointed more  
63 towards the normal treatment of mercenaries, who received payment in return for  
64 military service, and thus would have stood in the traditional way in which previous  
65 negotiations between Goths and Romans had been concluded. However, this time it  
66 also explicitly featured land for farming, thus land for a permanent settlement.<sup>5</sup>  
67 Although Alaric had already demanded land as part of his negotiations, the factor of  
68 a permanent settlement now points towards a much more established form of  
69 political and social unity among the Goths; this in turn leads to the question whether  
70 the Goths had now become a nation or were still a conglomerate of various different

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<sup>3</sup> Orosius, VII.43.10. Lütkenhaus (1998), 88-90: there is a debate whether the crossing to Africa was a mere plan or in fact an actual failed attempt. Be that as it may, the fact alone that Wallia was contemplating such a move is surely reason enough to see how important the grain supplies were for the Gothic population.

<sup>4</sup> Precise numbers for the Gothic population are difficult to establish with numbers fluctuating due to military defeat or diseases, though presumably numbers would have kept fairly high by people joining the Goths from outside. Nixon (1992), 65-8.

<sup>5</sup> Olympiodorus, fr.26.2, 29.1. Orosius, VII.43.10-3. Hydatius, 62-3, 67. Liebeschuetz (1990), 74. Matthews (1975), 307. Lütkenhaus (1998), 90-3.

71 groups cooperating only for their political advantage against Rome. It is true that the  
72 Goths continued to cooperate with various other, different ethnic groups,  
73 undoubtedly for their mutual political advantage, and that these alliances were at  
74 times prone to break; I would argue, though, that the granting of a specific territory  
75 for permanent settlement was an expression of imperial acceptance of Gothic  
76 independence and their status as a nation, albeit without an actual country of their  
77 own. Even the subsequent Gothic employment in imperial service to fight the  
78 Vandals and Alans on the Iberian Peninsula did not diminish the empire's acceptance  
79 of Gothic strength as a fact. Indeed their employment against the new barbarian  
80 groups in Spain suggests that Ravenna was happier to accept Gothic power and to  
81 find a *modus vivendi* with them than to make arrangements with the Vandals and  
82 their allies.<sup>6</sup> In 418 the Goths under Wallia's successor Theoderic I moved back to  
83 Gaul and finally settled in Aquitaine.

84 Although the Gothic position was one of relative weakness, there was no reason on  
85 the Roman side to doubt Gothic strength or their existence as an independent people.  
86 In fact part of the reason why the empire had settled them in Gaul was to provide a  
87 higher degree of stability in an area that had suffered from recurring tendencies of  
88 internal unrest, large-scale devastations due to the movements of the Alans, Vandals  
89 and Suebes.<sup>7</sup> The Goths were a welcome military help as long as they continued to  
90 serve the Roman cause, in much the same way as Athaulf's statement of preserving  
91 Roman strength through Gothic power had dreamt of. Mathisen has argued that  
92 Constantius' decision to move the Goths into Aquitaine was effectively a  
93 confirmation that both the Rhine and Britain had ceased to be under Roman rule; the

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<sup>6</sup> If the decision to have the Goths fighting in Spain was an attempt to diminish their power it failed nor did it stop the emergence of a new barbarian superpower, namely that of the Vandals. Burns (1992), 53-6. Bachrach (1969), 355-7. See also Collins (2006), 26-37 and Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfram (1997), 147.

94 area given to the Goths as a settlement served as a buffer-zone designed by  
95 Constantius to protect Italy and the Mediterranean; furthermore, it meant that  
96 Aquitaine was by now considered by the imperial authorities as a marginalised area,  
97 good enough to help serve imperial interest but not important enough any more to be  
98 taken into serious consideration for continued imperial protection.<sup>8</sup> Bearing in mind  
99 the recurring differences many members of the Gallic nobility had with the imperial  
100 administration (see below), such a territorial reorganisation by Constantius would  
101 undoubtedly have been viewed with suspicion by them, and may have made some of  
102 them even more perceptible to support Athaulf's attempts to create a political  
103 cooperation with the Gallic aristocracy, or at least to use the Goths as a vehicle to  
104 oppose the government in Ravenna because of its treatment of Gallic interests.

105 Yet even the eventual settlement should not be seen as a sign that differences within  
106 Gothic society about succession to the leadership were entirely solved, or that the  
107 Goths were operating entirely on their own. Their alliances with other barbarian  
108 peoples continued, for example Paulinus of Pella mentioned a group of Alans who  
109 acted as allies although they were to break this bond during the siege of Bazas. The  
110 successor of Theoderic I, Theoderic II, incorporated some, though not all, of his  
111 brothers into his administration on the basis of a power-share; indeed one of them  
112 left out was Euric, who promptly killed his brother Theoderic II to succeed him. Not  
113 all of this was entirely due to brotherly rivalry, but underlying problems with nobles  
114 who played an important role in the exercise and distribution of power were still  
115 found as late as the fifth century. Paulinus mentioned Athaulf's concern over the  
116 consultation of his advisors whose ideas he had to incorporate in his politics in order

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<sup>8</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 6-7, 8-10.

117 to pacify them; also Sidonius talked of Gothic elders or nobles sitting in a council as  
 118 advisors to the king.<sup>9</sup>

119 Any Gothic settlement in Gaul had to be as little disruptive to Gallo-Roman life as  
 120 possible to avoid unrest. Indeed the Goths had already had some sort of cooperation  
 121 with the Gallo-Roman aristocracy under Athaulf, but then there had been no question  
 122 of a permanent settlement and ultimately the burden on the Gallic administration had  
 123 proven to be too heavy to sustain any cooperation between the two sides. This time,  
 124 Gaul had already suffered from the serious disruptions because of the movements of  
 125 the Vandals, Alans and Suebes to Spain, and it faced further serious trouble with the  
 126 revolt of the *Bacaudae*. It could be that Constantius now tried to settle the Goths in  
 127 order to stop any further spread of the *Bacaudic* revolts as the Goths would fight to  
 128 preserve their own territory, and thus automatically defend the Roman landowners  
 129 too. Bachrach, however, regards the idea of the imperial government using the Goths  
 130 to control the *Bacaudae* as seriously doubtful and argues that this would portray the  
 131 imperial government in a much stronger position in terms of having retained  
 132 administrative influence in Gaul than was actually the case.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the Gallo-  
 133 Roman communities presumably had already suffered too much from the Vandal  
 134 movements in order to stage any serious opposition to the Gothic settlement. As will  
 135 be seen further below, there was in fact very little active resistance from the Gallo-  
 136 Roman population against the new settlers.

137 Although the exact terms of the settlement are somewhat ambiguous, it seems that  
 138 the Goths received payment only in return for military assistance, which was most  
 139 likely negotiated individually on each occasion; the actual land for settlement in the

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<sup>9</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 357-63, 377-99. Sid. Ap., *Carm.* VI. 451-7; *Ep.* I. 2. 4. See also Heather (1992), 87-9.

<sup>10</sup> Liebeschuetz (1990), 74. Matthews (1975), 307, 320. Nixon (1992), 70-1. Thompson (1956), 66-9. Bachrach (1969), 354. For the activities of the *Bacaudae*, their origins and the meanings of their revolts, see Drinkwater (1984), 349-71; (1989), 189-203; (1992), 208-17. Van Dam (1985). Rubin (1995). See also further below.

140 Garonne valley from Toulouse to Bordeaux was presumably managed on the basis of  
141 the *hospitalitas* system.<sup>11</sup> As will be discussed in the next chapter, this process of  
142 accommodating the Goths on Roman soil had a dramatic impact on the traditional  
143 culture of the Roman population and brought on serious changes, whatever the  
144 intrinsic details of the actual workings of the settlement were.

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<sup>11</sup> Hydatius, 69. Philostorgius, 12.4. Burns (1992), 58, 60. Heather (1991), 221. Nixon (1992), 71. Barnish (1986). The term *hospitalitas* was originally used in connection with the billeting of soldiers, describing a temporary method by which mobile military units were housed; soldiers billeted on private estates could receive up to one-third of the house for their use. In the nineteenth century E. Gaupp based his theory of the accommodation of barbarians on this system, arguing that the Roman estates were divided into fractions of a third between Roman owner and barbarian host who would then gradually gain full legal power of his allotted part. How the *hospitalitas*-system changed from a temporary arrangement of military billeting into a term for permanent land tenure is unclear, see also Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 12.



162 b) The question of *hospitalitas*

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164 There are numerous arguments about the exact details of how the *hospitalitas* system  
165 worked, whether it implied divisions of land and/or revenues or both, and the extent  
166 of the share the Goths received; it is outside the scope of this chapter to discuss the  
167 full arguments on this controversial topic but it is important to investigate its overall  
168 pattern in order to understand the consequences for the way in which Romans and  
169 Goths had to live together. Goffart's interpretation of this system was based on the  
170 division of tax-revenues rather than land: two-thirds were given to the barbarians  
171 (one-third to the king, one-third to his followers), the remaining third stayed with the  
172 Romans; in terms of accommodation, the barbarians were allowed the use of one-  
173 third of the house of the Roman owner.<sup>12</sup> Wolfram agreed with the argument of tax-  
174 divisions, as did Durliat who argued that the imperial administration redirected the  
175 tax income of the barbarian settlements to the new inhabitants, which therefore  
176 meant not the expropriation of existing ownership but the transfer of taxes. In his  
177 opinion the cities came to play an important part in transferring the taxes, paying  
178 two-thirds of the tax revenues directly to the barbarians who were responsible for the  
179 administration and defence of their settlement areas, and retaining one-third for  
180 urban expenses. Liebeschuetz rejects this idea on the basis that cities did not share  
181 one-third of the imperial tax income but one-third of their own customs.  
182 Furthermore, the idea of tax-divisions does not work for him, on the basis of a  
183 Visigothic law which stated that the Goths were to receive a share of the land and not  
184 of revenues, even if contemporary sources failed to declare the explicit use of land  
185 for farming; equally difficult for him is Goffart's failure to distinguish between  
186 temporary settlements and settlements designed to be permanent as well as his

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<sup>12</sup> Goffart (1980). Heather (1991), 221-2. Liebeschuetz (1990), 74. Durliat (1988), 40, 55-60. See also Goffart (1988), 73-7.

187 assumption that all settlements worked in the same way as such terms varied  
188 according to the political circumstances.<sup>13</sup> Heather regards Goffart's idea as 'partly  
189 convincing' but for the settlement of 418 he argues that land division remained the  
190 central question.<sup>14</sup> Indeed Philostorgius explicitly referred to land that was given to  
191 the Goths, and does not mention any sharing of tax-revenues. However, there is a  
192 problem with this passage: as the Goths received the grain supplies in exchange for  
193 Placidia already in 416 AD and the settlement in Aquitaine took place two years  
194 later, Philostorgius perhaps merged the two treaties into one event.<sup>15</sup> Nixon too  
195 rejects Goffart's idea on the basis that it is not only in contradiction to the sources  
196 but also that in his opinion there was enough land available to accommodate foreign  
197 settlers as well as an urgent need for agricultural cultivation. In his opinion, the  
198 movements of the Vandals and Alans as well as the previous Gothic wanderings had  
199 undoubtedly caused some degree of devastation in Gaul, which meant that the  
200 southern parts and especially Aquitaine suffered from *agri deserti* as many  
201 landowners had been killed or would have fled the area; the imperial government  
202 could then settle the Goths in this area, fulfilling their request for a territory for  
203 settlement and at the same time using them to restore the economic profit of the  
204 Aquitaine territory.<sup>16</sup> According to Burns, farming of this area also reduced the costs  
205 for the upkeep of the *limes*. Due to its unstable political situation, Gaul required a  
206 certain military presence but the imperial administration was unable to change the  
207 usual division of tax-revenues the regular Roman troops received; what was  
208 therefore needed were low-maintenance troops, and thus the Goths could be

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<sup>13</sup> Wolfram (1997), 113. Liebeschuetz (1997), 135-40, 147. Liebeschuetz (1990), 74-5, citing *C.Euric* 227, *L. Visig.* 10.1.8.

<sup>14</sup> Heather (1991), 222, n.83; (1996), 182.

<sup>15</sup> Philostorgius, 12.4-5=Olympiodorus, fr. 26.2.

<sup>16</sup> Nixon (1992), 70-1. Liebeschuetz (1997), 147. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 13-4.

209 employed for precisely this scheme as they would receive land as well as benefits in  
210 return for their military service.<sup>17</sup>

211 Another question the *hospitalitas* system posed is whether barbarian landowners  
212 were liable to pay taxes or not. Wolfram argues that barbarian settlers were liable to  
213 taxation like their Roman counterparts as theoretically anyone holding property was  
214 subject to taxation; according to Nixon, though, it is unlikely that the Goths paid any  
215 taxes to the Roman government and any taxes levied in Gothic territory went to its  
216 own court. Furthermore, the Goths maintained a standing army, which had to be paid  
217 presumably from tax-money. The Roman landowners as taxpayers therefore  
218 provided the means for this money and were thus enormously important for the  
219 Gothic establishment both economically as well as militarily. Hence as long as  
220 Roman interests did not question Gothic dominance, there was no reason whatsoever  
221 on the Gothic side to oppose the Roman population and thus there was relatively  
222 little serious resistance on the Roman side against the new political regime. Besides,  
223 Wolfram argued that the *hospitalitas* system fails to account for the fact that the  
224 Roman population lacked any serious resistance against giving up as much as two-  
225 thirds of their property to the barbarian newcomers; for Wolfram and Collins the  
226 system thus must have employed an accepted and familiar system of accommodating  
227 the Goths, particularly since the sources fail to record it as outstanding and the  
228 Roman population offered so little opposition to it.<sup>18</sup> Considering the recurring  
229 tensions and accusations by the Gallo-Roman aristocracy of a lack of interest in  
230 Gallic matters by the imperial government on the part of the imperial system, a

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<sup>17</sup> Burns (1992), 57-63.

<sup>18</sup> Wolfram (1997), 112-5. The case of the Ostrogoths demonstrates that, depending on their individual status, they were assigned to certain *civitates* alongside the Roman population and were granted accommodation as well as a share in the tax-exemption (*sors*) of the third (*tertia*) of the regular land tax (*annona*). According to Barnish (1986), 192-3, the Vandal *sortes* were tax-exempt too, and tax-*sortes* could be turned into land-holdings, which consequently meant that the imperial administration lost any claim on them. Barnish (1986), 176-7. Liebeschuetz (1997), 144-7. Collins (2006), 34-5. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 12-5.

231 *hospitalitas* system which inflicted too much damage on the aristocracy, especially  
232 concerning their interests in agriculture and real estate, is unlikely. Mathisen's  
233 argument that the choice of Aquitaine for the Gothic settlement was part of  
234 Constantius' reorganisation of imperial territory in the West, which thus  
235 marginalised this part of Gaul, is also interesting in this context. Constantius'  
236 concept would undoubtedly have angered at least some of the Gallic aristocracy as  
237 being treated in this negligent way by the imperial authorities; thus the disruptive  
238 nature of the terms of the *hospitalitas*-system must have been kept to a minimum as  
239 any serious damage to their financial and agricultural interests due to the *hospitalitas*  
240 offered to the Goths would have further aggravated the Gallic aristocracy and would  
241 have undermined any support on their side for Constantius.

242 Whatever system was therefore employed must have been designed to cause as little  
243 disturbance as possible. For example Paulinus of Pella suffered more loss of property  
244 because he had no Gothic lodgers on his estate, which implies that the Gothic settlers  
245 were not necessarily perceived as a cause of great damage to the running of the  
246 estate.<sup>19</sup> As said above, Philostorgius explicitly mentioned land in connection with  
247 the settlement of 418, which was echoed in a sixth century law-code of Leovigild's,  
248 and it would have made little sense for the sixth century law to refer back to the  
249 original setup and to ask those who had taken more than their two-third share to  
250 return the surplus.<sup>20</sup> Although it is certainly possible that a redistribution of land was  
251 part of the arrangement, Collins argues that this would have been totally  
252 unprecedented, although of course this does not exclude its invention; as said before,  
253 expropriation of arable land would have potentially harmed aristocratic interests –

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<sup>19</sup> Another reason for Paulinus' loss of property was the interference of members of his own family; see also Part III.2.

<sup>20</sup> Heather (1996), 182, 284. See also Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 23-7 for the recurring issue of land tenure found in the *C. Euric.* in the 470s: any property transactions under Roman rule before the Gothic settlement were to remain in power; another aspect was to do with claims resulting from the division of land.

254 judging from Paulinus of Pella, though, there were Gothic settlers on Roman estates,  
255 but these were not perceived as a serious problem. As the sources state explicitly the  
256 use of land-distribution, there is no reason to doubt them: as Mathisen & Sivan have  
257 rightly stated: ‘If the Goths were banned from land tenure...where did they actually  
258 live?’<sup>21</sup>

259 Nixon’s and Burns’ proposal (see above) is certainly convincing, especially when  
260 this meant the ultimate preservation of aristocratic interests in agricultural  
261 production. I would argue that there was indeed a re-distribution of land (the  
262 incorporation of deserted territory given to Gothic settlers for farming), which was  
263 designed to create as little disruption as possible to Gallo-Roman interests, although  
264 for me the question of taxation has to remain open; presumably there was a different  
265 distribution of tax, which as Collins suggested, might have incorporated some part of  
266 tax payments going to Gothic settlers instead of an increasingly inefficient imperial  
267 administration.<sup>22</sup> If the Goths indeed received deserted land to settle, I would suggest  
268 that they paid tax from this land as they were landholders and thus liable to pay  
269 taxation. Part of this money then would have gone to the Romans, which thus  
270 preserved aristocratic interests, because, although they had lost the land as  
271 possession, the nobility still gained some profit from it in terms of tax income; this  
272 would have given them little reason to complain as the Goths were re-cultivating  
273 land, which meant no extra work for the Roman side whilst gaining financial benefit  
274 from it.

275 Whatever then the real workings of the system were which was used to  
276 accommodate the Goths in Aquitaine, it was certainly more complex than a mere  
277 question of open rejection or acceptance. The lack of recorded active resistance does  
278 not automatically mean that the Goths were completely accepted as the new political

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<sup>21</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 13. See also Chrysos (1989 b).

<sup>22</sup> Collins (2006), 34-5, following Goffart and Durliat.

279 regime, or that the Roman population did not offer some rejection of their rule, be  
280 that either direct or indirect opposition. As will be seen in the next chapter, there  
281 were many ways in which both sides came to accept each other or at least to find  
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## 302 2. The Gallo-Romans

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304 As could be seen in the previous chapter, the way in which barbarian newcomers  
 305 came to be settled on Roman soil poses serious questions about its exact  
 306 mechanisms. Particularly questions of property and possession of land and its  
 307 management, but also its further consequences such as the extent and /or  
 308 continuation of political influence, pose profound problems. Whichever system was  
 309 eventually applied to accommodate the Goths in Aquitaine, it meant some sort of  
 310 change for the Roman landowner and the way in which he had to manage his own  
 311 property.<sup>23</sup> R. Mathisen is surely right in saying that contemporary accounts only  
 312 present the ‘tip of the iceberg’ and that there were very few indeed who were not  
 313 affected by these complex changes.<sup>24</sup> This close proximity with the Goths and other  
 314 barbarians caused some friction, especially when the barbarian establishments gained  
 315 much more political and military strength. Besides, as soon as the imperial  
 316 administration was no longer able to impose its control in the traditional way, Roman  
 317 provincial life and order was in danger of suffering from mismanagement, political  
 318 unrest and uprisings, but above all the Roman population was left to deal alone with  
 319 the new political situation: as will be seen later, there were several difficulties with  
 320 this. One was that some provinces, indeed especially Gaul, were already prone to feel

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<sup>23</sup> John Chrysostom as bishop of Constantinople gave a satirical account of the super-rich of the empire: see Maguire (2001), 238-58; also D’Alton (1940), 218-32. The account of the life of St Melania provides another striking example of this extreme wealth with properties across the entire empire, vast amounts of slaves and a wealth that was potentially even grander than that of the imperial family. However, there could be a problem with the real extent of Melania’s wealth as her *Vita* perhaps reflects more the hagiographer’s (obvious) interest to exaggerate her wealth in order to glorify her renunciation of the same and hence to enhance her new ascetic saintliness, see Clark (1986), 61-94. Also Alaric’s demands for money to lift the siege of Rome were largely met by the wealth of the senatorial families in Rome: Zosimus, V.41.4-7: gives the total amount of 5000 pounds of gold, 30,000 pounds of silver, 4000 silk garments etc, including jewels and molten gold from various cult statues to make up the total sum, as the avarice (or more unlikely poverty) of the senators prevented them from providing the requested sum. For size of Roman villas in the provinces and lifestyle associated with it, see for example Sid. Ap., *Ep.* II.9, 12, V.14.1, VIII.4.1, also *Burgus Leontii*, 120-2, *Carm.*, XXII, 8.12.5-8. Acre (1997), 19, 22. Stirling (2006), 50, 174-5.

<sup>24</sup> Mathisen (1984), 166.

321 neglected by the imperial government, which in turn created a frequently occurring  
322 political instability in this region; the establishment of Gothic power there only  
323 added to this rather unbalanced state. Furthermore, when left alone, some members  
324 of the Roman aristocracy developed a level of assimilation with the new forces  
325 which stood in sharp contrast to their loyalty to the Roman state; indeed active  
326 cooperation with the new government was effectively treason against the imperial  
327 government – even if it had become a necessary and often vitally important matter to  
328 find a level of active interaction with the barbarian kingdoms. But what was perhaps  
329 the most worrying aspect of such concepts of political and to some extent cultural  
330 assimilation for many Romans was the fact that many aristocrats involved  
331 increasingly regarded such matters far less as treason than as a form of political  
332 advancement or preservation of their socio-political position. Overall it was a long-  
333 term process for both sides but perhaps it was not so much a question of how much  
334 the Romans lost and how much the barbarians gained, but rather how much the  
335 distinct diversities between them gave way to the formation of a new society and a  
336 new political order. On the basis that many of the great Gallic families were able to  
337 continue their traditional lifestyle or at least to assimilate with the new regimes, J.  
338 Matthews has argued that the impact the new barbarian establishments had on  
339 provincial life was often far less destructive than some of the contemporary sources  
340 want us to believe.<sup>25</sup> I agree with Matthews' statement, although I do not completely  
341 reject the notion of violent clashes between Romans and barbarians; yet one ought to  
342 be wary of the idea of big battles between two gigantic forces as the only decisive  
343 form of contact. When confrontations happened, they happened on various levels and  
344 it was not only Roman versus barbarian, but also Roman versus Roman and  
345 barbarian against barbarian; indeed the concept of confrontation between Romans

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<sup>25</sup> Matthews (1975), 342. Mathisen (1984), 160-3.



346 and barbarians should be interpreted more in terms of a process of not only accepting  
347 or rejecting changes in the social, cultural and political landscape but also actively  
348 participating in a changing world. Clashes occurred when this process was not  
349 accepted or no common denominator could be found.

350 The following examples of Gallic aristocrats and other Roman fugitives by no means  
351 provide an exhaustive overview but they highlight some specific cases of direct  
352 Roman-Gothic (or other barbarian) contact before the firmer establishment of mutual  
353 consent or at least acceptance. They also emphasise the highly individual responses  
354 to the political climate in Gaul, which varied from resignation or withdrawal from  
355 political involvement to active personal resistance or the promotion of Roman  
356 interests.

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372 a) Paulinus of Pella

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374 There are numerous examples of people whose life was directly or indirectly affected  
375 by the Gothic settlement in Aquitaine or by the establishment of barbarian power in  
376 general. Paulinus of Pella wrote a personal account of his turbulent life, the  
377 *Eucharisticon*, spanning from his wealthy youth to the loss of his property to the  
378 Goths in his later life, reducing the scion of a wealthy Roman family to unfamiliar  
379 levels of poverty. Yet the *Eucharisticon* is more than a mere description of political  
380 events affecting an individual, as Paulinus wrote it at the end of his life when he had  
381 tried to convert to a religious lifestyle; like so many things he tried, he did not quite  
382 succeed in keeping to a strict monastic life but it does highlight an interesting fact –  
383 that of entering religious orders. As will be discussed in a later chapter, the concept  
384 of entering monastic orders, either as a way to renounce or escape complicated or  
385 even dangerous socio-political events, or to replace the potential or actual loss of  
386 worldly social status and political influence by gaining ecclesiastical positions,  
387 became an important feature of late antique lifestyle among the aristocracy.  
388 Moreover Paulinus' attempts to regain some of his lost property and to try to re-  
389 establish himself can also be found in other accounts of contemporaries. Paulinus'  
390 life is a very good example not only of the disruption of former Roman life many of  
391 the Gallic aristocrats had to face but also of the complex and even at times awkward  
392 attempts to assimilate with the barbarians.

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394 Paulinus had been born at Pella in Macedonia in 376 AD as the son of the *vicarius* of  
395 Macedonia and sometime proconsul of Africa.<sup>26</sup> Sent to the vast country estate of his  
396 family in Bordeaux in Gaul when he was two years old, he grew up in the

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<sup>26</sup> Sivan (1993), 49-73.

397 comfortable yet modest lifestyle in the countryside the provincial Roman aristocracy  
 398 enjoyed: ‘a house equipped with spacious apartments and at all times suited to meet  
 399 the varying seasons of the year, my table lavish and attractive, my servants  
 400 many...the furniture abundant...plate more preeminent in price than poundage,  
 401 workmen of divers crafts trained promptly to fulfil my behests, my stables filled with  
 402 well-conditioned beasts...state carriages to convey me safe abroad’.<sup>27</sup> The  
 403 movements of Athaulf’s Goths into Gaul in 411, their involvement in Jovinus’  
 404 uprising and Gallic affairs in general put an end to this prosperous lifestyle. As  
 405 previously seen, the mechanisms of the accommodation of barbarians under the  
 406 *hospitalitas* are these days widely disputed; according to Paulinus, though, this  
 407 system had its advantages in serving as a certain level of protection for the Roman  
 408 owner against potential plunder because the Gothic lodgers too depended on the  
 409 economic prosperity and continuation of the Roman estate. Unfortunately for him,  
 410 Paulinus did not have such lodgers – presumably his involvement in Gotho-Roman  
 411 politics as a member of Attalus’ court had granted him exemption from that – which  
 412 resulted in 414 in the loss of a substantial part of his inherited estate and of his  
 413 mother’s property in Bordeaux to Gothic looting.<sup>28</sup> Although the loss of property  
 414 cost Paulinus dearly, none of the members of his household suffered any injury,  
 415 deportation or got killed; though Paulinus’ account is by no means the only decisive  
 416 account of the nature of Gothic looting, there was far less open bloodshed than some  
 417 of the other contemporary accounts make us believe. There were undoubtedly several  
 418 cases of imprisonment and at times deaths of aristocratic landowners, yet most of  
 419 these fatalities were often the bitter result of failed political ambitions and  
 420 involvement on the wrong side rather than the result of any sort of deliberate Gothic

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<sup>27</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 72-80, 114-7, 143-8, 194-201, 205-12, 413-9, 435-7. For comparison with other Gallic aristocrats’ lifestyle, see for example Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.6.2, II.9, 12.1.

<sup>28</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 239-41, 286-90, 316-9, 329-31. McLynn (1995), 468-9, 473.

421 policy to kill as many Romans as possible. One of Paulinus' two sons did die from  
 422 his active involvement at the Gothic court but Paulinus himself did not blame the  
 423 Gothic authorities for this but rather his son's failed political ambitions.<sup>29</sup>  
 424 Furthermore, as previously discussed looting had been part of Gothic strategy for  
 425 some time as a tool to pressure the imperial government into negotiations and to gain  
 426 access to supplies; it would be foolish to minimise or neglect its impact on the  
 427 Roman population (both poor as well as aristocratic) yet it is important to distinguish  
 428 between a policy of raiding with the deliberate aim of destroying Roman culture, and  
 429 looting as an inevitable side-effect of politics. The notion of a deliberate motive on  
 430 the Gothic side to enter the empire only for plunder and killing is a distorted if not  
 431 altogether wrong picture; it is based very much on the accounts of contemporaries  
 432 like Hydatius or Victor of Vita who were writing in general from an ecclesiastical  
 433 point of view and were thus interpreting contemporary events with specific religious  
 434 motives in mind which might have had very little to do with actual political reality.  
 435 The Goths fought with the empire for the recognition of their political independence  
 436 and in that process raiding became a tool to pressure the imperial government,  
 437 precisely because of its effect on the Roman population, which in turn could move  
 438 the imperial authorities to counteract this impact by entering into negotiations; thus  
 439 the disruption of provincial life by barbarian raiding was the inevitable result of the  
 440 establishment of Gothic independence.

441

442 From his account it would be easy to portray Paulinus as the innocent victim of  
 443 Gothic vandalism who had nothing to do with them and who lost everything to the  
 444 machinations of Gothic politics; however, Paulinus' involvement with the Goths was

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<sup>29</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 512-5. Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III. 8, VII.9.20. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.20. Orosius' description of the sack of Rome and the civil behaviour of the Goths especially in regards to the Roman churches (echoed in one of St Jerome's letters to Marcella, *Ep.* 127) should be treated with caution though as it was most likely inspired by religious argumentation.

445 certainly more complex than that. The loss of his property was by no means only the  
 446 result of Gothic looting but was the outcome of a feud between him and various  
 447 members of his family, among them his brother, over the inheritance of his father  
 448 and the grant of annual income to his mother. It seems that some of his relatives had  
 449 used the political turmoil to help themselves to parts of Paulinus' possessions, which  
 450 left him unable to reclaim them – a phenomenon which seems to have been common  
 451 practice for some time.<sup>30</sup> McLynn argues that Paulinus' sons might have persuaded  
 452 their father to give them his Gallic estates and in return would have offered him a  
 453 revenue from some of the income from these estates; but the sudden death of one of  
 454 them and the ultimate death of the other due to his involvement at the Gothic court in  
 455 Bordeaux left Paulinus' former properties in the possession of his relatives.<sup>31</sup> Equally  
 456 the loss of his property in Marseilles was not the result of a deliberate Gothic looting,  
 457 but Paulinus' endeavour to find a new means of income had failed and he himself  
 458 had sold it to a Goth; although the offered price for this property was in Paulinus'  
 459 words inadequate, it was nevertheless accepted by him, and there is nothing in this  
 460 transaction which would have suggested a form of force or threat on the Gothic side.  
 461 The inadequacy of the price seems to imply that the market at that point was  
 462 swamped with too many similar properties – perhaps a sign that there will have been  
 463 many more people like Paulinus who had suffered from the difficult social/political  
 464 situation and had lost possessions or were forced to sell them in order to counteract  
 465 poverty; the other possibility is that Paulinus desperately needed the money and was  
 466 selling his property for an inadequate price rather than waiting for another buyer.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Informers who exploited the prevalent political instability between various barbarian kingdoms and the empire continued to exist even into Sidonius' times, see for example Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.7. In Paulinus' case the situation was rather a family quarrel than a case of courtly interference.

<sup>31</sup> Added to this was his failure to go to his Greek properties in Epirus as well as the demands of parts of his family to maintain them. Paulinus, *Euch.* 246-70, 422-30, 459-62, 482-95, 500-7, 512-5. McLynn (1995), 469-70, 475-7.

<sup>32</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 422-4, 502, 552-3, 556-60, 575-81. McLynn (1995), 478-81. His mother's property in Epirus is not mentioned again and must have passed to another relative after her death as he would

467 Paulinus' problems with retaining a continuous income based on his real estate were  
 468 therefore as much part of the interference of his relatives as part of Gothic looting;  
 469 the Gothic presence in Gaul played a disruptive role in Paulinus' life but not  
 470 necessarily a purely destructive one.

471 Although he does not mention it in any great detail, Paulinus was in fact by no means  
 472 completely unacquainted with Gothic politics and the Gothic relationship with the  
 473 Gallic aristocracy or with politics in general. Even if Paulinus' own description of his  
 474 upbringing and youth in the *Eucharisticon* gives the impression that he had never  
 475 displayed any political ambitions nor that had he been groomed or pushed to enter  
 476 any imperial office as his father and grandfather had done but had rather preferred to  
 477 spend his youth in pursuit of luxurious leisure, he was nevertheless not completely  
 478 unacquainted with the political world. Indeed he later became one of the ministers of  
 479 Attalus' government, which certainly confirms that Paulinus was directly involved in  
 480 Gallic politics and had moreover a very close relationship with Attalus and thus  
 481 ultimately with Athaulf.<sup>33</sup> The reason for Paulinus' lack of holding public offices or  
 482 any serious education had been ill health in his youth, which was cured by a vigorous  
 483 devotion to hunting although he returned to literature in old age. Yet the pursuit of  
 484 hunting and other matters related to the countryside and the management of his  
 485 estates were not a negative activity as Paulinus effectively worked to improve the  
 486 estates, which essentially provided him and his family with food and above all with

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have been solely dependent on his Gallic properties; the mentioning of his sons ('*nati*') in this context is difficult as both his sons were already dead, so either he had more sons who were never mentioned in the text or he was referring to other relatives as '*nati*' as the term can also mean offspring and could therefore refer to other male relatives. There is also the possibility that the loss of Paulinus' property was due to Paulinus' support of Attalus, and that the imperial authorities had confiscated his property as a subsequent punishment, which left his land/property even readier for distribution among Gothic settlers; this could also explain the involvement of the Goth in the payment for the remaining interest of Paulinus' former Aquitanian properties (his two sons had tried to reclaim part of the lost property but there was also a Gothic claimant to this, who might have been interested in buying the rest once Paulinus' sons had died), see Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 26-7.

<sup>33</sup> See p. 20.

487 his wealth.<sup>34</sup> Besides, it was an activity that could be linked back as far as republican  
488 traditions of Roman values with the concept that aristocratic wealth had to be based  
489 on the possession and subsequently management of land. As will be seen further  
490 below, engagement in farming remained attractive for many members of the  
491 aristocracy: Sidonius had to remind some of his friends that they owed it to their  
492 ancient name and family to get involved in politics and to leave the countryside at  
493 least for some time.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, as a landowner and active manager of his estates,  
494 Paulinus would have been closely involved in the workings of the *civitas* and local  
495 networks which would have meant at least a minimal exposure to politics, which  
496 most likely would have grown with the pressure the Gothic arrival added to these  
497 networks and local administration and could have been part of his desire to work for  
498 peace. Although Paulinus does not mention in the *Eucharisticon* how he met Attalus,  
499 even before Attalus appointed him as part of his administrative team the two must  
500 have been sufficiently acquainted with each other for Paulinus to receive this  
501 position and Paulinus must have had serious political and/or local connections to  
502 make him a valuable choice; furthermore, Paulinus was ambitious enough to become  
503 involved in the regime of a usurper against Honorius; he himself admitted that he  
504 entered into cooperation with the Goths because he wanted peace.<sup>36</sup> Besides, it is  
505 somewhat unlikely that Attalus would have appointed a complete political novice for  
506 an office in the inner circle around an emperor, especially in a counter-regime, which  
507 needed all the political support possible to survive. Yet even if Paulinus had never  
508 been active in political circles before Attalus, his close family-relationship with such  
509 eminent people like Ausonius surely would have counted in his favour in terms of

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<sup>34</sup> Paulinus was very keen on estate-management and farming; even when living in reduced circumstances in Marseilles he tried to turn a plot of land into a productive arable farm. See also Drinkwater (2001).

<sup>35</sup> Sid. Apoll., V.14; VIII.8.

<sup>36</sup> McLynn (1995), 470-1. Paulinus, *Euch.* 302-5.

510 establishing and maintaining local networks and as such would have been of value  
511 for Attalus.

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513 Although Paulinus belittles his appointment as *comes sacrarum largitionum*, as an  
514 office granted by an ‘operetta’-emperor whose puppet regime was entirely dependent  
515 on Gothic power, it nevertheless meant that he had direct access to Gothic politics:  
516 ‘The tyrant Attalus burdened me in my absence with an empty title of distinction,  
517 making me *comes sacrarum largitionum*, although he knew that this office was  
518 sustained by no revenue, and even himself had now ceased to believe in his own  
519 royalty, dependent as he was upon the Goths with whom he was finding protection of  
520 his life but not of his authority, while of himself he was supported neither by  
521 resources of his own nor by any soldiery.’<sup>37</sup> This statement of Attalus’ dependence  
522 on Gothic military strength suggests that nothing that Attalus was doing was without  
523 explicit Gothic consent – thus Paulinus’ own office must therefore have met with  
524 Gothic approval too. One of his attempts to regain part of his lost property and to  
525 secure safety for his family was by directly appealing to Athaulf himself – again a  
526 sign of Paulinus’ direct contact with the Goths.<sup>38</sup> Athaulf was unable to grant his  
527 request, in Paulinus’ words because he was pressured by his followers’ contrasting  
528 political aims; whether that can be seen as a further hint of ongoing debates about  
529 political conduct and leadership among the Goths, or whether it was Paulinus’  
530 deliberate phrasing in order to gloss over his personal political failure, cannot be  
531 answered. Of course it should be remembered that Athaulf was by then by and large  
532 dependent on the distribution of supplies to which he had gained access through his  
533 cooperation with the Gallic aristocracy; the full burden of providing these supplies,  
534 however, rested on the *civitates* and unsurprisingly there was discontent against both

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<sup>37</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 293-301.

<sup>38</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 347, 355-72. Nixon (1992), 68-9.



535 the Goths and also some of the Gallic nobles and their political mingling with  
536 Athaulf. Paulinus was certainly caught up in this and his earlier involvement with  
537 Attalus would have added to this. Bearing in mind that, despite his direct  
538 involvement in Gothic-Gallic politics and the court of Attalus, Paulinus had suffered  
539 from Gothic looting, a personal failure of his political conduct, which subsequently  
540 left him exposed to Gothic incursions, could also be partly responsible. Besides, he  
541 was directly involved in the turmoil surrounding the siege of Bazas where the Alanic  
542 contingent, which until then had been in alliance with the Goths, eventually changed  
543 over to the Roman side; Paulinus managed to extract himself from Bazas, although  
544 he was threatened with death, but afterwards does not mention any further serious  
545 involvement with Athaulf or Attalus, nor did he gain any advantages from the  
546 turmoil surrounding the movement of the Goths across Gaul. Judging from this, his  
547 involvement and cooperation with them was by no means straightforward and  
548 perhaps had even suffered strains, as Paulinus gives the impression that he was never  
549 really a firm supporter of Attalus or indeed the Goths. Paulinus gives the impression  
550 that he was rather forced into cooperation by circumstances without having any  
551 serious ambitions and that he personally had overall little political interest or even  
552 the ability for diplomacy.<sup>39</sup> Besides, after Attalus had been deposed, Paulinus was  
553 apparently no longer interested in politics – at least the *Eucharisticon* does not  
554 mention the holding of any further political offices or any involvement in imperial  
555 affairs. Considering though how active the Gallic nobility generally was to promote  
556 its own political interests, and furthermore its commitment and firm belief in the  
557 essential necessity of the aristocracy to enter political offices, this is surprising; yet  
558 Paulinus' lack of any financial means could have been a serious obstacle to any  
559 further political endeavours; also the fatal outcome of his son's attempts at a political

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<sup>39</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 81-4, 258-70.

560 career at the Gothic court might have added a component of reluctance to pursue any  
561 further political involvement. It could also be that his only political ambition had in  
562 fact been with Attalus and he had believed in cooperating with Athaulf (hence his  
563 close connection with him), but that after that regime collapsed he had not harboured  
564 any further political interest. The only problem with this is Paulinus' own negative  
565 account of Attalus' politics. Yet there is another possibility for Paulinus' behaviour  
566 and that was the intention of writing the *Eucharisticon*: he wrote it as a religiously  
567 inspired treatise, as the account of someone who had managed to overcome his  
568 troubled life by devoting himself to a religiously inspired lifestyle. Worldly  
569 ambitions stood in the way of achieving such religious devotion which had at its core  
570 the belief in withdrawing from the world in order to devote the soul to heavenly  
571 things, and therefore it could well be that Paulinus deliberately minimised his  
572 political career and involvement with Attalus in order to highlight his 'conversion'  
573 and his attempt at renouncing his former life.<sup>40</sup> As will be discussed later, the  
574 decision to enter ecclesiastical orders or the aspiration to follow a religious lifestyle  
575 was a serious phenomenon at that time; Paulinus' decision to try to enter some sort  
576 of monastic order or at least alter his previous lifestyle in order to comply with semi-  
577 monastic patterns was therefore perfectly acceptable.

578 Ultimately Paulinus' numerous attempts to find a new way of living under Gothic  
579 rule failed; his life is an excellent example of the potential limits of assimilation  
580 between Roman population and the barbarian newcomers: that is not to say that he  
581 did not try to find a level of cooperation or that assimilation was not at all possible  
582 for him but rather that he personally failed in achieving any lasting success. Yet  
583 Paulinus was not the only one of his family whose life had been altered by the Gothic  
584 presence. If the identification of several of his family members is correct, then there

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<sup>40</sup> Paulinus, *Euch. praefatio*, 468-78, 573-81, 592-616.

585 were some other of his relatives who had lost their properties due to Gothic impact  
586 but had resettled elsewhere: Jerome wrote of a certain Julianus, perhaps a brother of  
587 Paulinus, who had lost his Gallic property due to Gothic impact and had  
588 subsequently resettled in Dalmatia where he supported monastic settlements.  
589 Unfortunately there is no information whether his estate had been looted or whether  
590 he had sold it to others much as Paulinus himself had done, and if he had sold it what  
591 the precise reason for this was; an exchange of letters with someone as eminent in  
592 ecclesiastical circles as Jerome would suggest that Julianus had somehow become  
593 involved in religious circles.<sup>41</sup> Whether that was a result of his intention to withdraw  
594 from a worldly career due to Gothic impact and to enter a religiously orientated life,  
595 or mere coincidence is impossible to say. There is also no information whether  
596 Julianus was involved in current political affairs, and how far that might have  
597 influenced his life.

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599 In the light of the effect the weakening of imperial affairs had on many Romans and  
600 their conduct towards politics, it is surprising that Athaulf's insistence on restoring  
601 Rome's former strength through Gothic power found so little resonance among them.  
602 Of course it could well be that Athaulf's alleged comment was taken far more  
603 seriously as an actual political programme of the Goths than had ever been intended,  
604 and that more historical weight has been put upon Orosius' statement than it can  
605 actually bear; as previously said, it has to be taken into consideration that Orosius'  
606 writings were ecclesiastical texts and therefore written with a certain intention which  
607 might have had little if anything to do with politics. It could also be that many Gallic  
608 aristocrats, perhaps even some of those who were directly involved in Attalus'  
609 regime and thus directly in contact with Athaulf, were simply not ready yet to accept

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<sup>41</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 118, 122, 123. Paulinus, *Euch.* 410-1, 522-44, 557-60. Mathisen (1984), 163-4.

610 a direct Gothic interference in imperial affairs or their complete political and military  
611 independence. Even people like Sidonius Apollinaris, who was younger than  
612 Paulinus of Pella and therefore had been much more exposed to Gothic power as an  
613 established fact, still felt an enormous unease about the new Gothic lords, although  
614 he came to accept their strength and cooperated with them. How much more difficult  
615 the same process must have appeared then to Paulinus and his contemporaries, which  
616 makes their unease to adopt Athaulf's suggestion all the more more understandable.  
617 Certainly Paulinus does not seem to have believed in any lasting strength of  
618 Athaulf's power although he must have been supportive enough of him to enter into  
619 any cooperation with Attalus' regime. Perhaps his decision to work with Attalus was  
620 part of a general involvement in political affairs, in which many Gallic nobles took  
621 an active interest, and Paulinus just followed this, but never pursued it as a serious  
622 personal ambition.

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636 b) Rutilius Namatianus

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638 Paulinus' life may have become an example of the turmoil many of the Gallic  
639 aristocrats were subjected to by the Gothic establishment, but his later withdrawal  
640 from any involvement in current affairs was an individual choice. Furthermore,  
641 whereas Paulinus' life can be regarded as an example of the beginning of a process  
642 of assimilation between Gallic nobles and the Goths, Rutilius seems to have followed  
643 a different way insofar as it appears that he did not opt for collaboration with the  
644 Goths but rather advocated the programme of renewed imperial strength under  
645 Flavius Constantius against an establishment of Gothic power. The reason to include  
646 Rutilius as an example is that he was a Gallic aristocrat and contemporary of  
647 Paulinus but, instead of following a policy of cooperation in order to preserve Gallic  
648 and local interests as so many others of his fellow countrymen did, he opted instead  
649 for opposition against the Goths. This makes it all the more interesting for this  
650 discussion, as he seems to have been nevertheless intent on promoting his Gallic  
651 interests. This of course leads to the question to what extent it was necessary for the  
652 Gallic nobility to engage in assimilation with the Gothic court in order to preserve  
653 their political ambitions, or whether it was just a choice made by individuals on an  
654 individual basis.

655 Rutilius, in contrast to Paulinus, was certainly much more involved in political  
656 endeavours. Like his father, Claudius Rutilius Namatianus was one of the relatively  
657 few Gallic aristocrats who had risen to a high-profile career in Rome: he had been  
658 *magister officiorum* and *praefectus urbis* in 413/4 under Honorius, an interesting fact  
659 as the majority of such positions were firmly in the hands of Roman senatorial  
660 families, apart from the Gallic praetorian prefecture which was predominantly

661 occupied by Gallic nobles.<sup>42</sup> Rutilius had left Rome and his official position there in  
662 order to return to his homeland and to care for matters concerning Gallic affairs.  
663 Considering the prolific positions he held in Rome, the decision to leave, regardless  
664 of the envisaged time-frame, was remarkable, all the more so since Gaul had suffered  
665 from severe political turmoil since the arrival of the Goths (although that would  
666 certainly apply to Rome too as we will see later); hence there must have been serious  
667 reasons for Rutilius to do so.

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669 Part of it could have had something to do with his links with Gaul as a native of this  
670 province. As discussed earlier, the Gallic nobles in general cared very passionately  
671 about their home country and retained close links with their *civitates* and local  
672 networks.<sup>43</sup> As a native of Gaul, most probably of Toulouse, this would certainly  
673 have meant that Rutilius still retained links with his Gallic estates as his ancestral  
674 home, if only on the basis that these country estates provided the main source of  
675 income for his aristocratic lifestyle; a certain extent of control of and interest in the  
676 management of these estates was therefore vital for the preservation and continuation  
677 of the family wealth. The arrival of the Goths in general but especially any questions  
678 concerning their accommodation on Roman estates would have had an impact on the  
679 overall management but also the efficiency of these estates. Rutilius could therefore  
680 have returned to Gaul precisely because of the Gothic presence in order to preserve  
681 his ancestral lands and to oversee any future alterations regarding his estates.<sup>44</sup>  
682 Although Athaulf had moved the Goths into Gaul in 412/3AD, three years later,  
683 when Rutilius was travelling to Gaul, Italy was still suffering from the devastations:  
684 ‘Since Tuscany and since the Aurelian highway, after suffering from the outrages of

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<sup>42</sup> *PLRE*, *Rutilius Claudius Namatianus*, 770-1. Sivan (1993), 145-6.

<sup>43</sup> Sivonen (2006), 11, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Rutilius, *de red. suo*, I. 20-2.

685 Goths with fire and sword, can no longer control forest with homestead or river with  
 686 bridge, it is better to entrust my sails to the wayward sea'.<sup>45</sup> Whether or not Rutilius  
 687 had owned property in Italy, and if it had been damaged or lost during the Italian stay  
 688 of Alaric's troops and the sack of Rome in 410, is not known. To a certain extent a  
 689 similar picture of damage would have been prevalent in Gaul although Gaul had not  
 690 been used by the Goths as a territory for substantial looting as the Italian countryside  
 691 and especially the wider area around Rome had become. Destructions in Gaul then  
 692 would have been on a slightly smaller scale but nevertheless frightening; however,  
 693 Gaul was to be used for the eventual settlement of Athaulf's Goths, which carried its  
 694 own disruptions and problems for the Gallic landowner. There is no information  
 695 whether Rutilius' estates in Gaul had been affected by the Gothic arrival as we know  
 696 nothing about their extent or location (apart from the assumption that they would  
 697 have been located near Toulouse as Rutilius was most probably born there) but it is  
 698 certainly a possibility. Rutilius' return to Gaul as a precautionary measure to  
 699 investigate any damage or prevent future damage to his Gallic estates would have  
 700 made perfect sense and would have explained the urgent speed for travelling in  
 701 winter despite the unsuitability for travel during this time of the year.<sup>46</sup>

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703 However, Rutilius' decision to move to Gaul was nevertheless at least partly  
 704 independent of personal interests in his Gallic business as it was also most likely a  
 705 response to the temporary recovery of Roman strength under Constantius; his writing  
 706 was a carefully composed script to demonstrate his support for Constantius.<sup>47</sup> In

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<sup>45</sup> Rutilius, *de red. suo*, I. 37-42, 325, 331-6. Noy (2000), 15: Rome's population after the sack of the city declined from approximately 1,000,000 to 300,000.

<sup>46</sup> See Sivan (1986), also for a discussion of Rutilius' journey based on the severe fragmentation of the second book. For a date of Rutilius' journey, she gives the year 417 as the most likely date.

<sup>47</sup> Sivan (1986), 527-32. The praise of Constantius might have formed a passage which had been prefaced by a section on Gaul and Arles which had been closely connected with Constantius' military campaign. Also there were further links between Arles (now the capital of the Gallic provinces) and Constantius due to namesake.

707 sharp contrast with Paulinus, Rutilius had a strong political interest, a close  
708 connection with Ravenna and especially Flavius Constantius: bearing in mind  
709 Constantius' anti-Gothic policy, this effectively suggests a rejection of  
710 Athaulf's/Attalus' political programme in particular and of any concept of  
711 cooperation between Goths and the empire in general. The partial regaining of  
712 Roman control under Flavius Constantius and his firm grip on Gaul, in regard to both  
713 the Gallic aristocracy and the imperial dealings with Athaulf, gave rise to more  
714 ambitious endeavours among some Romans to restore Gallic strength. Yet as will be  
715 seen further below, the relationship between Constantius and the Gallic nobility was  
716 certainly in the beginning a rather strained one. A strengthening of Roman interests  
717 in Gaul was surely welcome but the killing of several of the Gallic nobles who had  
718 supported Jovinus had created deep mistrust against him, although Constantius could  
719 hope that a policy of enforcing Roman rule in Gaul against the Goths was to be  
720 regarded as more positive than his negative impact over the Jovinus affair. Being a  
721 Gallic noble one could have expected Rutilius to have similar problems with  
722 Constantius' conduct and his decision to return to Gaul could have created some  
723 difficulty. There is nothing in his career to suggest that Rutilius ever played with the  
724 idea of joining Jovinus and so undoubtedly he had remained loyal to Honorius; thus  
725 there was no problem for him in dealing with Constantius' politics in regard to the  
726 Gallic nobility and he could embrace Constantius' message of renewed imperial  
727 strength without any misgivings. Just as Rutilius' prefecture in Rome could have  
728 been a reward for this loyalty so his continuous political support for Constantius  
729 could have meant that he received an official appointment in Gaul from Constantius.  
730 Besides, having been involved in a high-profile career not in Gaul but in Rome,  
731 Rutilius was perhaps much more a Roman who happened to come from Gaul but was  
732 involved in imperial politics than a Gallic noble who had taken up some position



733 within the imperial administration. Paulinus in contrast was certainly more the Gallic  
 734 noble, devoted to his local interests and estates, who somehow got involved in  
 735 politics.

736 Certainly in his writing Rutilius propagated a patriotic message of the need to return  
 737 to Gaul in order to restore Roman power – despite being deeply distressed to leave  
 738 Rome: ‘The fields of Gaul summon home their native. Disfigured they are by wars  
 739 immeasurably long, yet the less their charm, the more they earn pity. It is a lighter  
 740 crime to neglect our countrymen when at their ease: our common losses call for each  
 741 man’s loyalty. Our presence and our tears are what we owe to the ancestral home...  
 742 now is the time after cruel fires on ravaged farms to rebuild, if it be but shepherds’  
 743 huts’.<sup>48</sup> This almost patriotic spirit contained a political message, a call for resistance  
 744 against the growing pressure of Gothic power and against any cooperation with  
 745 them, as well as an urge to rebuild both material loss as well as political strength:  
 746 ‘Things which cannot be sunk rise again with greater energy, sped higher in their  
 747 rebound from lowest depths...The span [of Rome’s life] which does remain is  
 748 subject to no bounds, so long as earth shall stand firm and heaven upholds the stars  
 749 ...Let the impious race [the Goths] fall in sacrifice at last: let the Goths in panic  
 750 abase their forsworn necks. Let lands be reduced to peace pay rich tribute and  
 751 barbarian booty fill their majestic lap.’<sup>49</sup> Such passages contain the kind of political  
 752 call that the recent successes of Constantius’ blockade of Gaul justified, as well as  
 753 being simultaneously a reflection on Rome’s enduring glory in the traditional style of  
 754 Virgil and Horace.

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756 In the light of renewed political strength for the imperial administration under  
 757 Constantius, Rutilius’ decision to opt against any collaboration with the Goths made

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<sup>48</sup> Rutilius, *de red. suo*, I. 19-30, 35-6, 43-6.

<sup>49</sup> Rutilius, *de red. suo*, I. 129-45, 161-4. Sivonen (2006), 130-1.

758 sense, though the gradual increase in Gothic strength would have made it short-lived  
 759 in its effectiveness. As his poem ends abruptly at the beginning of the second book,  
 760 there is sadly no further information available about Rutilius' travel to Gaul and  
 761 especially about his future personal and political conduct.<sup>50</sup> Hence we cannot know if  
 762 Rutilius was nevertheless forced later on to find a certain degree of assimilation with  
 763 the Goths necessary to preserve his Gallic interests.

764 Interestingly two of Rutilius' friends had opted to move to Italy although both were  
 765 members of the Gallic nobility: Protadius, a former prefect of Rome, stayed on an  
 766 estate in Umbria; Victorinus, *comes illustris* and like Rutilius a native of Toulouse,  
 767 had moved to Tuscany after the Goths had captured the city in 413.<sup>51</sup> Nixon has  
 768 argued that the devastations in Gaul due to Gothic impact must have been enormous  
 769 if both were willing to live in Italy which was still suffering from the aftermath of the  
 770 looting of the same Gothic troops a couple of years earlier (which Rutilius had aptly  
 771 described). Lütkenhaus, however, states that none of them were actual refugees but  
 772 had declined to accept any further official appointments by Constantius, although  
 773 both had previously played an active role in his regime, and had subsequently left  
 774 Gaul for Italy – thus a reverse of Rutilius' own decision, if his return to Gaul had  
 775 anything to do with an appointment by Constantius.<sup>52</sup> Whether that is an implication  
 776 that they had fallen out with Constantius or had moved to Italy hoping to gain  
 777 political offices there, is impossible to answer. Heather argues in a different way and  
 778 thinks that the main reason for them leaving Gaul was their refusal to enter into any  
 779 cooperation with the Gothic court but they rather accepted a lifestyle in reduced  
 780 circumstances.<sup>53</sup> Considering the usually strong links the Gallic nobility had with its

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<sup>50</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 66, 85, 110-1, 132. Paulinus' office in Attalus' or Athaulf's regime stood by its nature in opposition to Constantius.

<sup>51</sup> Rutilius, *de red. suo*, I. 493-6, 542-51.

<sup>52</sup> Nixon (1992), 69. Lütkenhaus (1998), 111-2.

<sup>53</sup> Heather (1992), 93. Muhlberger (1992), 229-30.

781 ancestral territory, such a decision was indeed a serious one, although of course one  
782 should not assume that every individual Gallic aristocrat had a strong connection  
783 with his home or estate which stood above any political ideas. Nevertheless  
784 Protadius' and Victorinus' decision to leave suggests that for some the mere thought  
785 of cooperation with the Goths was more than their political convictions would allow.  
786 It will be seen further below that this refusal to cooperate with the barbarian courts  
787 was something which remained a factor even half a century later.

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789 There is another contrast to Paulinus and that involves the question of religion, as  
790 Rutilius' Christian belief has been subject to debate. Despite the fact that the  
791 majority of the Roman population was Christian, paganism continued to be found  
792 among some members of the Roman aristocracy although from 416 onwards any  
793 pagan was officially banned from holding any public office. Rutilius has been  
794 regarded as a pagan because of his attacks on ascetic monks: however, that does not  
795 exclude the possibility of him being a Christian as criticism of the ultra-ascetic  
796 movements of the church was widespread even among Christian believers as a too  
797 extreme form of belief; regardless whether or not Rutilius was a Christian, his  
798 account was certainly by no means religiously inspired as Paulinus' *Eucharisticon*  
799 had been.<sup>54</sup> Therefore it is perhaps less surprising that Rutilius' text contains a much  
800 stronger political message than Paulinus was ever concerned with. In contrast to  
801 Paulinus, Rutilius was not so much concerned with offering an account of his life as  
802 a form of thanksgiving to God for his rescue or to demonstrate his personal change  
803 from aristocrat to a believer devoted to heavenly things. Rutilius was writing from a  
804 Gallic, aristocratic viewpoint and was concerned with the political restoration of

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<sup>54</sup> Sivonen (2006), 140-1.

805 Roman power in Gaul, and the recovery of its Roman morale, its belief in Rome's  
806 enduring greatness and success.

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831 c) Prosper of Aquitaine

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833 A very similar message of a hope in a brighter future and a call for a renewed  
 834 political spirit or even resistance to Gothic expansion as was apparent in Rutilius'  
 835 writings can also be found in religious texts of younger contemporaries of Rutilius.  
 836 Apart from Paulinus' *Eucharisticon*, poems like the *de providentia dei*, the *Carmen*  
 837 *coniugis ad uxorem* and the *Epigramma Paulini* were written in a similar social  
 838 context and for a similar audience.<sup>55</sup> Although these poems come from an entirely  
 839 religious background and focus predominantly on questions of divine intervention  
 840 and man's faith, they nevertheless contain an aspect of politically inspired views  
 841 albeit in a far more indirect way.

842 Prosper of Aquitaine, like Rutilius and Paulinus a Gaul, the author of the *Carmen*  
 843 *coniugis ad uxorem* and perhaps also of the *de providentia dei*, included a similar  
 844 message of renewed hope in imperial strength; although the authorship of the *de*  
 845 *providentia dei* is still debated, the contents of both poems are so similar that it is  
 846 legitimate to mention both texts in the same context.<sup>56</sup> Written around the year 416/7,  
 847 the *de providentia dei* used contemporary events far more as background to focus on

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<sup>55</sup> The *Epigramma Paulini*, written around 406, incorporated the Vandal arrival in Gaul and contrasted the fight against the invading barbarians with the spiritual fight of every Christian against sin. The damage caused by the Vandals and Alans by devastating the countryside was regarded only as a temporary event whereas the lapse of Christian morale is regarded as far longer lasting. Attempts to repair the damage in Gaul are seen as yet another aspect of a desire for worldly things instead of a desire for heavenly salvation. Thus the barbarians served the purpose of showing man the vanity of earthly matters, serving as a trigger to point man towards a much-needed moral reform; in the writer's opinion proper morality and faith would help to fight them, as it would deprive the violent impact of its fearful reality. Its overall message is thus predominantly religious, though; it does incorporate some political meaning too in terms of using the barbarians as a tool for the discussion of Christian morality. See Roberts (1992), 97-9. McLynn (2008), 45-52.

<sup>56</sup> Marcovich (1989) argues in favour of Prosper's authorship of the text. Heather (2005), 235, states the author as 'anonymous'. Green (1971), 131-2, doubts Paulinus as author and refers to its allocation to Prosper. The *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, 550, refers to the question as unsolved whereas the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 878, rejects Prosper's authorship as the poem was written too early (around 417). Chadwick (1955), 122, refers to the authorship as disputed but credits Prosper with it as the poem is very similar to his writing and was cited under his name by Hincmar of Reims in the ninth century. Indeed Prosper was already born in 395 so was theoretically able to have written the poem in his early twenties. Thus I do follow Marcovich's interpretation of regarding the *de providentia dei* as Prosper's work.

848 questions concerning Christian morality and belief; the barbarian destructions in  
849 Gaul were described very much in the style of martyr stories, almost styled as a  
850 metaphor for the general sufferings of Christians against the assaults of the devil.  
851 Thus temporary political events served as a literary vehicle for theological writings.  
852 The descriptions of the actual destruction caused by both Goths and Vandals are  
853 quite dramatic: 'Who is not shaken by the heap of ruins all around him, remaining  
854 intrepid amidst the flames and flood...each time the image of our fatherland, all in  
855 smoke, comes to our mind, and the whole range of destruction stands before our  
856 eyes...if the entire ocean had poured over the fields of Gaul, more creatures would  
857 have survived the vast waters...for ten years of slaughter we have been cut down by  
858 the swords of the Goths and Vandals...we have suffered all a man can take'.<sup>57</sup> Worse  
859 for the author than the actual material damage was the havoc the barbarians caused  
860 with the souls of faithful Christians when the extent of the material damage inflicted  
861 on the Gallic population not only affected people who were regarded as sinners but  
862 failed to spare even innocent children and members of the church: 'The same  
863 whirlwind took away both the wicked and the good'.<sup>58</sup> Thus the very social  
864 structures as well as concepts of ecclesiastical teaching were suddenly questioned;  
865 hence the author urged his audience to resist this chaos because in his opinion the  
866 spiritual battle for the salvation of the soul and the political/military battle against  
867 these barbarians was one and the same: 'Even if you are stricken with the wounds of  
868 a shattered world...still you should keep your strength [...] Stop violating the high  
869 honours allotted to an everlasting race with your ignoble fears. Conquer the heaven  
870 instead and seize the immortal glory which has been reserved for you.'<sup>59</sup> For the  
871 author the real, and much weightier danger of the barbarian arrival in Gaul lay not so

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<sup>57</sup> Prosper, *de prov. dei* I.13-9, 27-8, 33-8.

<sup>58</sup> Prosper, *de prov. dei* I.43-52, 57-60.

<sup>59</sup> Prosper, *de prov. dei* I. 7-10, 203-5.

872 much in the material damage they caused, but rather in the threat to the belief in the  
 873 teachings of the church when the violent barbarian actions not only killed innocents  
 874 but increasingly expanded their military/political influence, thus questioning God's  
 875 care for His people. Wallace-Hadrill argued that contemporaries linked the  
 876 destruction caused by the Goths with the Goths being Arians, and thus belonging to a  
 877 heretical group.<sup>60</sup> Political resistance against the advances of barbarian power was  
 878 therefore desirable because it was hoped it would end any further intrusions, thus  
 879 preventing further opportunities to damage the belief in divine interference.  
 880 Furthermore, as Catholicism was directly linked with the concept of the empire as a  
 881 unity between religion and state, the fight against a heresy was even more  
 882 important.<sup>61</sup> Any true Christian therefore had to engage in active resistance against  
 883 the Gothic expansion in order to prevent them from damaging the belief in  
 884 theological doctrines by undermining the trust people put in the teachings of the  
 885 church; material damage and the suffering of innocents on a large scale could lead  
 886 people to question divine providence and thus endanger the teachings of the church  
 887 as well, at least from a theological viewpoint, as the salvation of their souls, hence  
 888 these destructions had to be stopped.<sup>62</sup> That there had always been and still were  
 889 tendencies in Gaul for political resistance against the imperial government,

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<sup>60</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 29.

<sup>61</sup> For the concept of Arianism and its differences from Catholicism see Part V, Ch.2.

<sup>62</sup> Most of Prosper's writings were devoted to the defence of Augustine of Hippo's doctrine of predestination as well as writing a continuation of Jerome's Chronicle. Augustine himself, despite having been an eyewitness to the Vandal conquest of Africa and being bishop of Hippo during the Vandal siege of the city, did not comment much on their presence or the damage they caused. Their success was interpreted as a divine punishment for sins, although he did believe in the ultimate success of the empire by its conversion to proper faith. See Allo Isichei (1964), 91-2. Lambert (1999). Salvian used one of his most influential works, the *de gubernatione dei*, written after the sack of Carthage by the Vandals in 439, as an address to contemporary questions on divine providence/justice and why God allowed the prosperous state of the barbarians and the sufferings of the Romans. For Salvian the answer was in the desolate state of the empire, enforced by the lack of faith of its inhabitants, which called for God's punishment and the divine judgement of their sins. The barbarians were used as a morally superior antagonist to the lacking morale of the Romans, and furthermore portrayed as God's instrument of vengeance whose presence and actions ought to act as a warning for the Romans. See for example Allo Isichei (1964). Chadwick (1955). Van Dam (1985). Maas (1992). Lambert (1999); (2000): for similarities /differences between Augustine's and Salvian's interpretation of contemporary events in relationship to their theological writing.

890 especially when its performance raised questions about its care of Gallic interests,  
 891 only added to such a call. Furthermore, as the Goths were Arians, it was the duty of  
 892 every Catholic Christian to fight the followers of a heretical church. The similarity  
 893 between Prosper's writing and Rutilius' message is this call for resistance as in  
 894 Rutilius' opinion too the real danger the Goths posed was the damage they could do  
 895 to undermine Roman morale and the continuation of the belief in lasting Roman  
 896 success; the only obvious contrast between the two authors lies in the form of belief  
 897 which it was worth fighting for. For Prosper it was the Christian doctrine of eternal  
 898 salvation, while for Rutilius it was the traditional Roman trust in its eternal  
 899 domination and greatness.

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901 This very dramatic, almost overtly exaggerated, account of Gothic/Vandalic looting  
 902 in Prosper's poems was certainly used to emphasise a theological message, almost  
 903 forcing the reader to carefully examine the strength of his own belief in the ultimate  
 904 salvation of God's people despite large-scale material damage. The destruction the  
 905 Goths caused in Gaul was like the cruel tortures a martyr had to face at the hands of  
 906 his prosecutors, and only his steadfast belief in his salvation by God and the ultimate  
 907 victory of this belief would lead him to achieve the martyr's crown, the *corona*. For  
 908 Prosper the events in Gaul were a test for spiritual renewal, which would eventually  
 909 be rewarded in heaven (again the parallel to the martyr's reward is used).<sup>63</sup> Some  
 910 ecclesiastical writers took the expansion of Gothic or Vandalic power even further  
 911 and regarded it as the fulfilment of prophecies concerning the last Day of Judgement:

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<sup>63</sup> Muhlberger (1992), 29-31. Chadwick (1955), 170-3, 179, 248-50. Roberts (1992), 99-102, 106. Chromatius of Aquileia (Aquileia was to an extent in the frontline in the constant tug-of-war between Alaric and Honorius) at the very end of the fourth century argued similarly when he compared the Romans captured by the success of the barbarians with the yoke the Israelites had to bear in Egypt; for him prayer and a strong faith would deliver Rome from the barbarians as God would fight for the Romans, although he did not live to see Rome's capture by Alaric as he had died already in 407 AD: see *Sermones* 16.4.



912 for example Hydatius interpreted the barbarian arrival and subsequent damage as a  
 913 sign of the imminent apocalypse, linking it with prophecies found in passages from  
 914 Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation.<sup>64</sup> Also Orosius had connected the marriage between  
 915 Athaulf and Galla Placidia with a prophecy in the book of Daniel; although Orosius  
 916 was not as ‘hysterical’ as Hydatius in his description of Gothic actions, and this  
 917 strong message of the impending end of the world cannot be found in his writing,  
 918 perhaps he assumed that a theologically trained reader of his account would  
 919 nevertheless be able to read this marriage as yet another sign of the imminent end of  
 920 the world. Indeed he himself had fled his native Spain in order to avoid the  
 921 interruptions caused by the Vandal arrival – in his own words having been warned by  
 922 the prophecies in the Gospel about the imminent danger.<sup>65</sup>

923 In contrast to Prosper’s focus on large-scale damage of Gaul by the Goths, which  
 924 included even the looting of the sacred places and members of the church, Orosius’  
 925 and Jerome’s account of Gothic behaviour during the sack of Rome made much of  
 926 their open reverence for the Christian churches, though again their texts were equally  
 927 written with a religious intention in mind, and thus cannot be taken as a completely  
 928 accurate account; indeed the Goths in these accounts were used to highlight the lack  
 929 of morale the Roman population had displayed by portraying savage barbarians like  
 930 the Goths as having more reverence for the Christian faith than the Romans.<sup>66</sup>

931 However, despite the obvious and frequent use of the Goths and other barbarians in

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<sup>64</sup> Hydatius, bishop of Aquae Flaviae in Gallaecia in Spain, wrote in the mid fifth century a striking account of the devastating effects on the Spanish countryside caused by the Vandals, similar to the *de providentia dei*. See for example Burgess (1996), Thompson (1976), Ripoll López (1998) for the archaeological records found in Spain which stand in contrast to Hydatius’ accounts in terms of large-scale destructions. See also Martin (1997) for the interpretation of archaeological records in connection with contemporary events.

<sup>65</sup> The reason to consult eminent theologians elsewhere could have been another reason for Orosius’ departure from Spain as he went to Augustine in Hippo as well as Jerome in the Holy Land. Matthews (1975), 286, 300. Hunt (1992), 271-4 for Gallic refugees to the Holy Land. Goffart (1981), 283-4. Heather (2005), 209.

<sup>66</sup> Orosius, VII.39. Jerome, *Ep.* 127 was writing to Marcella about the Gothic display of piety; he was based in the Holy Land and had heard accounts of the sack of Rome via fugitives; Orosius was one who provided such an account for Jerome. However, Orosius came from Augustine as one of Jerome’s visitors, and it could be that both adopted a similar account from each other.

932 contemporary ecclesiastical writings to convey religious messages, Paulinus of  
933 Pella's description of the Gothic impact on his own family explicitly stated the lack  
934 of any harm suffered by any member of his family, although he did suffer material  
935 loss of property. Although one could argue that Paulinus' text likewise tried to  
936 convey a religious idea and was therefore portraying Gothic action in a better light,  
937 the *Eucharisticon* was far less clearly structured in its religious message than the  
938 texts by Jerome, Orosius or Prosper; furthermore, as discussed above, Paulinus was a  
939 direct witness of Gothic incursion and had direct contacts with the Goths and  
940 Athaulf, so his account of Gothic behaviour in Gaul should not be completely  
941 dismissed when being compared with Prosper's account. McLynn's interpretation  
942 that Prosper's texts also contained strong references to Roman politics in Gaul also  
943 found a link with Paulinus' description.<sup>67</sup> In his *Eucharisticon* the loss of his  
944 properties was for him as much the result of Gothic looting as it was of the  
945 mismanagement and injustice of the Roman judicial system when he had to fight for  
946 his inheritance against some of his close relatives in court; not only had the Gothic  
947 incursions destroyed part of his property but to some extent it was the exploitation of  
948 a faltering imperial administration, which had robbed him from recovering some of  
949 his income. Also Salvian accused the mismanagement and exploitation of the  
950 administrative system by the Romans as being one of the reasons for the upheaval  
951 and dissolution of society in Gaul when the corruption of the Roman system forced  
952 the poor population to seek justice among the barbarians; again, the barbarians and  
953 their actions serve more as a catalyst, emphasising the already underlying problems  
954 within the Roman system, without being the sole reason for Gaul's instability.  
955 Salvian portrayed the failure of the Roman state as a failure to include all its citizens  
956 within its community, because it is exploited by the self-interest of those who hold

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<sup>67</sup> See pp.143-5.

957 power, and to control those in power; in his argumentation barbarians damaging  
958 Roman interests should therefore hold no surprise as this was precisely what the  
959 Romans were doing to their own people.<sup>68</sup>

960

961 Prosper's *Carmen coniugis ad uxorem* likewise was primarily concerned with the  
962 impact of contemporary events on the spiritual life and belief of his fellow Gallic  
963 Christians. Although the text does provide references to the current devastations in  
964 Gaul, these are less dramatic than the accounts in the *de providentia dei*: 'He who  
965 often rode in covered carriages through splendid cities now walks into the deserted  
966 countryside suffering on his weary feet...neither are the fields in the same condition,  
967 nor any cities, and everything rushes headlong towards the end'; Gaul has become a  
968 desolate place from where peace had departed.<sup>69</sup> But as the last few words state,  
969 Prosper's main focus was that these devastations were a clear sign of the imminent  
970 end of the world; thus the contemporary events were necessary to prompt man to  
971 focus his faith on heavenly things in order to gain eternal life: 'Therefore it is not in  
972 vain that we are born in these times, which perish to us and in which we perish but in  
973 order that we might in this life earn eternal life'.<sup>70</sup> The effect on Prosper was to  
974 dedicate his life to his Christian belief and he urged his wife to join him in this  
975 exercise. Once again the barbarians, although there is no detailed reference to them,  
976 or rather the effect their actions had on contemporaries' minds, were used as a  
977 vehicle to convey a religious message; Prosper does cite 'kings fall on kings with  
978 countless arms', which might be a reference to the various rival barbarian groups in  
979 Gaul, but there is no direct discussion of Gothic actions or Vandal devastations as  
980 had been the case in the *de providentia dei*. In McLynn's opinion, though, the

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<sup>68</sup> Lambert (1999), 126.

<sup>69</sup> Prosper, *Carmen*, 17-29. Translation due to courtesy of Dr Roberto Chiappiniello. McLynn (2008), 46.

<sup>70</sup> Prosper, *Carmen*, 41-3; also 30-1, 65-8, 71-3.

981 passage of ‘kings fall[ing] on kings’ is far more a reference to the problems various  
982 Roman usurpers such as Maximus, Attalus or Jovinus were causing in Gaul; thus a  
983 large part of the damage in Gaul was not committed by the barbarians but by the  
984 various contenders for the imperial throne and the subsequent fighting.<sup>71</sup> Although  
985 this interpretation is undoubtedly a possibility, it might still contain a hidden  
986 reference to Gothic interference in the resulting chaos, especially when Athaulf was  
987 directly involved with Attalus and Jovinus, using both for his own politics with the  
988 imperial authorities. Although Prosper might not have been aware of the intrinsic  
989 details of the relationship between Attalus, Jovinus and Athaulf, he was undoubtedly  
990 aware of the fact that Athaulf stood in close contact with these men and furthermore  
991 with the Gallo-Roman aristocracy too. Thus, if the passage is referring to the impact  
992 of imperial politics on the Gallic population, it was perhaps more complex than a  
993 mere pointing towards imperial usurpers but incorporated also the Goths as well as  
994 the Gallo-Roman nobles as all three parties were intrinsically linked with each other.  
995

996 Although Prosper’s texts were primarily religious texts, focusing on aspects of divine  
997 providence and eternal salvation, contemporary politics and the barbarian actions in  
998 Gaul did play a certain role in these writings, as they had indirectly influenced if not  
999 inspired these texts. That their theological message was mixed with a call for  
1000 political resistance against the barbarians was not surprising, particularly since  
1001 Constantius’ increasing political dominance offered hopes in the recovery of imperial  
1002 strength. Constantius’ arrival as the new dominant figure in Roman politics would  
1003 have also been harboured as a sign of the ending of the recurring problem of  
1004 usurpers, which, if one follows McLynn’s interpretation of Prosper’s poems, was  
1005 perhaps as much to blame for the chaos in Gaul as the barbarians.

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<sup>71</sup> Prosper, *Carmen*, 27-8. McLynn (2008), 53-4.

1 Part IV. Gaul and Rome

2

3 Although the previous chapter showed that there were calls for resistance against the  
 4 Gothic establishment, the reaction of the Roman population to the Gothic presence in  
 5 Gaul was diverse, and their interaction with contemporary politics of both the empire  
 6 and the Goths was not always straightforward. Reasons to stay or leave a province, to  
 7 get involved in politics or to withdraw, were largely a matter of personal choice,  
 8 wealth and social position – dependent as much on a belief in the unchangeable  
 9 strength of the empire on the one hand as on a recognition of Gothic power and a  
 10 wish for future cooperation and integration with a new political power on the other.  
 11 However, increasingly this personal choice was driven by political and economic  
 12 necessity and many Gallic landowners had little option other than to enter into  
 13 collaboration with the Goths in order to preserve their local interests.

14 Even as late as the fifth century, Sidonius continued to mention refugees and people  
 15 whose lifestyle had been seriously affected by the expansion of the Gothic kingdom.  
 16 Talking to his friend Constantius, he describes the effects of destroyed landscape:  
 17 ‘What tears you [Constantius] shed...over buildings levelled by fire and houses half-  
 18 burnt. How you lamented the fields buried under the bones of the unburied’.<sup>1</sup> In fact,  
 19 Sidonius himself, as well as members of his family, was directly affected by the  
 20 Gothic court: some had fled Gaul, like his brother-in-law Ecdicius with his sons who  
 21 left for Rome in 475 AD in fear for their safety; others had lost their property and  
 22 had been reduced to poverty.<sup>2</sup> One has to be careful with such accounts and not to  
 23 blame the destruction the Gothic establishment created as the only reason for  
 24 personal hardship or exile; furthermore, some Gallic aristocrats had left Gaul on a

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<sup>1</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.2.

<sup>2</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VI.10. Mathisen (1984), 161-66.

25 temporary basis to conduct official business elsewhere and had gone to places like  
26 Rome.<sup>3</sup> By Sidonius' time in the later fifth century, many members of his circle,  
27 including him, had become actively involved in political offices at the Gothic court.  
28 Furthermore by his time the relationship with the Goths had seriously altered and, as  
29 will be seen below, the cooperation of his contemporaries with the Goths was a  
30 complex process. Losing property or seeking refuge out of fear for personal safety  
31 was to a large extent part of the risk the involvement at the various barbarian courts  
32 brought with it, and would have been the negative outcome of political alliances  
33 gone wrong; already in the beginning of the fifth century one of Paulinus' sons had  
34 suffered from such circumstances and had eventually been killed. Sidonius' own  
35 exile was the result of his active political role and not the outcome of random Gothic  
36 looting which had forced him to flee: Sidonius, by then bishop of Clermont, was sent  
37 into exile as part of his active role in the resistance of the city against the  
38 expansionist policy of the Gothic king Euric: 'For the armed bands of the tribes that  
39 surround us are terrifying our town [Clermont], which they regard as a sort of barrier  
40 restricting their frontiers. So we are set in the midst of two rival peoples and are  
41 become the pitiable prey of both; suspected by the Burgundians, and next neighbours  
42 of the Goths, we are spared neither the fury of our invaders [i.e. the Goths], nor the  
43 malignity of our protectors [i.e. the Burgundians]'; as a result he lost his property and  
44 suffered from all sorts of hardship: 'We ourselves are being visited with glaring  
45 penalties for obscure offences'.<sup>4</sup> After two years in exile Sidonius managed to get  
46 recalled to Euric's court and his property was restored to him. All this indicates that  
47 by the end of the fifth century the barbarian courts had become very similar to the  
48 imperial court and that political alliances and offices carried a certain risk of  
49 supporting the wrong side; to lose property and/or status was no longer a question of

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<sup>3</sup> Mathisen (1992), 230-2.

<sup>4</sup> Sid.Ap., *Ep.* III.4.1-2.

50 a group of barbarians looting a province in order to access supplies, but far more the  
51 outcome of political machinations. Reasons for getting involved with the barbarian  
52 courts in the first place were numerous; an important part was played by the fact that  
53 Rome became increasingly unable to support or to maintain imperial interests in  
54 Gaul as a successful policy such as Constantius had been able to pursue. Tendencies  
55 to care for Gallic interests in their own way were a widespread phenomenon among  
56 the Gallic aristocracy as were voices of discontent with the extent and efficiency of  
57 the imperial administration in Gaul as will be seen in the next chapter. The fact that  
58 many Roman aristocrats stayed in Gaul and tried to find some level of cooperation  
59 with the Goths, whereas others opted to withdraw or even leave the province to find  
60 refuge elsewhere, created a very fragmented picture. Besides, it does raise the  
61 question how contemporary aristocrats in fact viewed the social, political and  
62 military future of Gaul. Discontent with the imperial authorities on the grounds of  
63 neglecting Gallic interests or interfering too much in Gallic affairs was a recurring  
64 problem; the Gothic settlement in 418 had done nothing to ease such tensions, which  
65 were to culminate in serious rifts over the extent of both the aristocratic involvement  
66 at the newly established Gothic court as well as Gallic loyalty towards the imperial  
67 establishment.

68

69 It has been argued by some scholars that the decision of some Gallic aristocrats to  
70 leave Gaul and to resettle elsewhere in the empire raises questions about the extent to  
71 which these nobles still believed in the continuation of Gaul as an integrated part of  
72 the Roman empire or at least considered it to be under imperial administration and  
73 control.<sup>5</sup> I would add to this that the decision of other Gallic nobles to seek instead a  
74 basis for cooperation with the Gothic and other barbarian kingdoms, and to take this

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<sup>5</sup> Mathisen (1992), 228-30. Harries (1992), 303-6.

75 cooperation even further by trying to assimilate with the new political regimes, can  
76 equally be regarded as raising questions about a genuine belief in a continuation of  
77 Roman life in Gaul. Even the consideration of working under let alone actively  
78 participating in a regime other than the imperial government poses serious questions  
79 of loyalty to the empire or at least casts doubts on the effectiveness of imperial  
80 interference. Gallic tendencies to propagate a certain degree of neglect of their  
81 interests at the imperial court might have helped people to consider the prospect of  
82 cooperation with the Goths as something less than treason but rather more as a  
83 political necessity. Hence such endeavours of Gallic nobles were more the result of  
84 their shrewd political thinking, which recognised the need to find some level of  
85 integration with the Goths, than a complete change of understanding of their own  
86 social background. Furthermore assimilation with the Goths or with other barbarian  
87 courts could be and indeed often was regarded as posing serious questions about  
88 their political loyalty towards the empire, but as having little to do with their loyalty  
89 to Roman culture; to hold an official position at the Gothic court did not  
90 automatically make these Gallic aristocrats Gothic – in fact almost all of them  
91 fiercely insisted with a certain amount of nostalgia on the preservation of their  
92 Roman upbringing and their taste for its culture. Muhlberger's argument that  
93 contemporaries had little interest in the general political and military situation of the  
94 empire or how their province fitted into the wider administrative system is in my  
95 opinion slightly too broad – especially in regard to the Gallic aristocracy.<sup>6</sup> It is true  
96 that contemporary authors might not have been interested in linking recent political  
97 events with a wider historical picture and that contemporary accounts were in almost  
98 all cases written from a specific standpoint; it is also true that there was perhaps little  
99 general political awareness outside the circle of those who were immediately

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<sup>6</sup> Muhlberger (1992), 28, 37.



100 involved in political/military matters. When one looks at many Gallic nobles, though,  
101 this general lack of interest in politics was not the case. These people might have  
102 been little interested in a historical or sociological analysis of the underlying  
103 problems and reasons for the gradual change of their lifestyle and the establishment  
104 of the Gothic and other barbarian kingdoms. Yet they were very much aware of these  
105 changes and were very often actively involved in endeavours that led them to the  
106 heart of political and military matters. In fact, the political and cultural future of Gaul  
107 was one of their most important interests and led them in many ways back into active  
108 political service, albeit often in the form of being employed at the barbarian courts.  
109 Lack of analysis, especially in the sense of modern historical writing, was not  
110 automatically a lack of interest. Besides, many of the ecclesiastical writers provided  
111 a great deal of analysis of the reasons of this change – although it was solely based  
112 on religious doctrine.

113 The first part will deal with the relationship between the Gallic aristocracy and the  
114 Roman empire, as this provides the background for the frequently occurring  
115 usurpations and the tendency of the Gallic nobles to care for their own aims.  
116 Furthermore, it also explains why some Gallic aristocrats were quickly seeking  
117 various forms of employment with the various barbarian groups in order to secure  
118 their own interests without waiting for the empire to fulfil them.

119 Such attempts at collaboration with the barbarian courts were not automatically part  
120 of an acceptable political conduct. Despite the increasing political and military power  
121 of the Gothic kingdom, most of the Roman nobles were still able to fulfil their  
122 political and cultural expectations, from their public role in holding official positions  
123 to their devotion to classical education with all its wider implications of culture and  
124 art. At the beginning of the fifth century, though, the neglect of a devotion to the  
125 preservation or even restoration of Roman traditions and power was met with

126 suspicion, ranging from admonishing letters to open accusations of treason against  
127 the imperial state. The sheer necessity to find a level of integration, though, made  
128 any such suspicions increasingly artificial, and by the end of the century these had  
129 become more or less confined to the cultural sphere. Assimilation with the Goths  
130 could take many forms, although active involvement in Gothic service was perhaps  
131 the most challenging and complex one.

132 Traditionally members of the Roman aristocracy had occupied juridical and  
133 administrative positions within the government and had come to regard this as an  
134 integrated, defining part of their life and identity as a Roman aristocrat. The  
135 establishment of the barbarian courts and the subsequent decline or adoption of the  
136 former imperial administrative positions through these new regimes created an  
137 increasing lack of opportunity for such positions.<sup>7</sup> Not only did this gradually replace  
138 the imperial administration or at least heavily change it to adapt to barbarian needs,  
139 but it also deprived the Roman aristocracy of one of their most important  
140 occupations since republican times as the holding of public offices was in fact the  
141 very definition of their role as an aristocrat. Thus one of the most prominent features  
142 of their self-definitions broke away and forced them to find new ways to establish  
143 themselves in a public role as well as to demonstrate their cultural understanding.  
144 Alliances with the Gothic court provided replacements for the lost positions within  
145 the imperial system, although political assimilation did not automatically mean  
146 cultural integration too. The Gallic nobles had come to realise that the political and  
147 military future of Gaul lay with the various barbarian establishments; influential  
148 positions in their governments not only provided a continuation of their former  
149 public positions but also could enhance or restore personal safety and wealth. The  
150 second chapter will therefore deal with those Romans who were willing to gain

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<sup>7</sup> Sirks (1996), 151-5.

151 access to prestigious employment at the Gothic court and who regarded such  
152 endeavours as in no way endangering their definition of being Roman. In fact an  
153 efficient relationship with the Gothic and other barbarian kings had often become  
154 much more important for the continuation of their aristocratic lifestyle than a  
155 nominal loyalty to the emperor – and at times gave the aristocrats involved more  
156 personal freedom to promote their own individual political and economic interests.  
157 The world in which the barbarian courts were operating was restricted and therefore  
158 often more direct in its control than the imperial court with its vast administrative  
159 machinery. In remoter provinces the local aristocracy was then to a larger extent able  
160 to pursue its own businesses without too much direct official interference; the sheer  
161 geographical distance from the imperial court and the restricted power of the  
162 barbarians provided ample opportunities to channel potentially disturbing news in  
163 their best interests.<sup>8</sup>

164 Political endeavours at the Gothic court were not the only possibility of restoring  
165 former positions of social prestige and influence. Increasingly members of the Gallic  
166 aristocracy opted to join the church and to gain positions of power in the religious  
167 sphere – in most cases they became bishops. The third chapter will look what  
168 involvement in the religious sphere meant for many of the Gallic nobility.  
169 Ecclesiastical offices offered a social prestige very few if any worldly offices could  
170 ever bestow. This enabled members of the aristocracy to continue their former  
171 lifestyle of wealth and social prestige as well as regaining an indirect but  
172 nevertheless very important administrative as well as political influence.

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<sup>8</sup> Heather (2005), 100-10.

176 1. The concept of political loyalty

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178 Before one can examine any process of assimilation between Gallic aristocrats and  
179 the Gothic kingdom or what precisely this assimilation encompassed, it is important  
180 to look first at the relationship between the Gallic nobility and the imperial court.

181 The following is by no means an exhaustive survey of the historical complexity of  
182 this relationship nor is it intended to be, but it is investigated in order to give an  
183 overview of how multi-layered the connections between Gaul and the empire were.

184 This will be important in regard to the subsequent question of any process of  
185 assimilation of the Gallic nobility with the Gothic court and especially in connection  
186 with accusations of betraying Roman values by doing so. I would even argue that  
187 many of the later accusations of treason against the empire were in fact expressions  
188 of promoting and securing local Gallic political and military interests; although it  
189 cannot be denied that the extent of collaboration some Gallic nobles engaged in was  
190 undoubtedly favouring the Gothic or other barbarian courts, and therefore at least  
191 questioned their devotion to the prosperity of the empire.

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202 a) Aspects of political instability in Gaul

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204 Gaul had a long history as a notorious place for political unrest, with a high number  
 205 of usurpers with the tendency to either care for its own needs without waiting or  
 206 accepting imperial intervention or to revolt when the emperor had seemingly lost  
 207 interest in Gallic matters. Ideas of political unpredictability and an almost ingrained  
 208 tendency to revolt within the Gallic peoples, known as the *terror Gallicus*, formed  
 209 part of a longstanding stereotypical picture of the Gallic population, and could be  
 210 found in almost the entire Roman literature dealing with Gaul from Caesar to  
 211 Tacitus, the *Historia Augusta* and Ammianus.<sup>9</sup> Caesar's attempt to seek senatorial  
 212 rank for some members of the Gallo-Celtic nobility was regarded as a serious break  
 213 with tradition, and Claudius' decision in 48 AD to admit Gallic aristocrats into the  
 214 Roman senate equally met with a certain amount of resistance on the Roman side, on  
 215 the basis that these Gallic nobles were little more than barbarians and thus  
 216 incompatible with becoming part of the constitutional heart of imperial  
 217 administration.<sup>10</sup> The revolts of Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir in 21 AD, Julius  
 218 Vindex in 68, as well as Julius Civilis and the rebellion of the Batavi in 69-70,  
 219 fostered the image of Gaul as a consistent hotspot for unrest, and certainly in the later  
 220 empire notions of opposing the political establishment of the empire were a recurring  
 221 problem. The 'Gallic empire' of Postumus from 260-74 is perhaps the most famous  
 222 result of such opposition, which showed both the seriousness and also the limitations  
 223 of such usurpations. It would be wrong to regard these revolts as recurring separatist  
 224 attempts to create complete Gallic independence from the empire. Most of the

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<sup>9</sup> Drinkwater (1983), 22-8 on the link between *terror Gallicus* and *terror Germanicus* and the justification this gave to Roman politics as well as to Caesar's conquest of Gaul in the first place; also 40-9, 80-2; also (1997). Sivonen (2006) 26-8, 131. Stroheker (1948), 5-9. See especially Urban (1999).

<sup>10</sup> Suet. *Jul. Caesar* 76.3. Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.23.

225 usurpations throughout Gallic history in fact had happened in direct relationship to  
226 the political events of the wider empire and were a response to these (this also  
227 included the self-representation and propaganda of the rebels).<sup>11</sup> For example the  
228 rebellion of Florus and Sacrovir in 21 was the result of social unrest and complaints  
229 about the burden of increased taxation and mismanagement of the Roman  
230 governors;<sup>12</sup> equally the rebellion of Vindex in 68 and the subsequent uprising of the  
231 Batavi and Treveri in 69/70 happened in the year of the four emperors and were a  
232 direct response to the challenges of the succession of Nero. Vindex' motive was  
233 again based on complaints about the imperial administration in Gaul and, although  
234 he tried to convince the *civitates* to fall away from Rome and to proclaim an  
235 *imperium Galliarum*, he was by no means ubiquitously supported, not even among  
236 his own people, and finally failed.<sup>13</sup> Also the revolt of Albinus against Septimius  
237 Severus in 196-7 was part of a fight for the imperial throne in years of civil war, and,  
238 although these revolts originated in Gaul, they were much more part of a wider  
239 political and military response to the rows over the imperial succession than an  
240 expression of the Tacitean idea of perennial Gallic restlessness. Ideas of separatism  
241 became more apparent in the third century crisis, culminating in 260-74 with the  
242 emergence of the 'Gallic empire' under Postumus, yet he was a high-ranking Roman  
243 officer in Gallienus' administration with whom he fell out and declared himself as  
244 counter-emperor; again it did not mean a complete break with Rome out of  
245 nationalistic or separatist ideas but was an answer to the wider political  
246 circumstances of the imperial government and its effects on the Gallic provinces –  
247 even if it went clearly against the imperial system by the very appointment of a

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<sup>11</sup> Urban (1999), 120-30, 135-43.

<sup>12</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* III.43.

<sup>13</sup> Carroll (2001), 148-9. Heinen (1989), 187-94. Urban (1999), 135-43 on recurring characteristics many of the Gallic 'rebels' shared in contemporary presentation, such as 'love of freedom', a Gallic 'tendency' to be disloyal and prone to revolt.

248 counter-emperor.<sup>14</sup> The fourth century saw the continuation of such revolts, and as  
249 was previously the case they were intrinsically linked with the wider  
250 political/military picture of the imperial government: 350 saw the usurpation of  
251 Magnentius, 355 that of Silvanus, 360 the revolt of Julian, which was followed by  
252 Magnus Maximus in 383 and Eugenius in 392. Ammianus reported previous Gallic  
253 resentment in connection with Julian's revolt although this served Ammianus with a  
254 perfect opportunity to present Julian as a saviour-like figure whose presence alone  
255 was regarded as a sure guarantee of better political conditions in Gaul.<sup>15</sup> Although  
256 Ammianus' hero-worship of Julian should lead one to treat this account with caution,  
257 there were other writers who also report similar incidents. In 389 after the victory  
258 over Magnus Maximus, Pacatus voiced Gallic resentment against Theodosius as in  
259 their opinion the distant military campaigns of the emperor had led to Maximus'  
260 usurpation as an attempt to promote Gallic interests.<sup>16</sup>

261 The fifth century made no exception in this and, if the relationship between the  
262 Gallic population and the imperial establishment was already complex before the  
263 arrival of the Goths, the movement of Athaulf's Goths into Gaul and his political  
264 attempts at cooperation with the aristocracy only added to this complexity; it was  
265 further highlighted by the final establishment of the Goths in Aquitaine in 418 as this  
266 added the point of collaboration with another political group to the question of  
267 promoting Gallic aims. The usurpations of Constantine III in 407 and Jovinus which  
268 had received widespread support among the Gallic aristocracy were again more  
269 expressions of self-help and a rejection of specific imperial politics than attempts to  
270 renounce being part of the empire or belonging to the Roman world; another  
271 indication that all these contenders remained a firm part of the Roman establishment

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<sup>14</sup> For the effects of the third century crisis on the Germanic provinces, see for example Nuber (2005), 442-3, 446-50 and Fingerling (2005), 452-3, 456-7.

<sup>15</sup> A.M., 15.5.2.

<sup>16</sup> Pacatus, *Pan.* 23, 1, 47.5. Sivan (1993), 14, 97-8. Drinkwater (1986), 136-41.

272 is the fact that all the contenders for imperial power proclaimed themselves as  
273 ‘Roman’ emperors and not as ‘Gallic’ emperors – thus the challenge was against the  
274 present holder of the imperial throne and not against the office or Rome as such.<sup>17</sup>  
275 Constantine had gained his followers after the devastations of the Danube crossing  
276 by the Alans, Suebes and Vandals in 406 and the relative lack of imperial response to  
277 the subsequent crisis. Important for the inhabitants of Gaul was a continuation of the  
278 security the imperial presence conveyed, and if this continuation was threatened, as it  
279 would have been in times of civil war or dramatic changes in the imperial  
280 succession, a usurper had to adopt the coverings of providing this security. In his aim  
281 to re-establish imperial strength in Gaul and to avoid further unrest in the form of yet  
282 another usurper, Flavius Constantius had to regain support among the Gallic nobles  
283 after the killing of a number of them in the aftermath of Jovinus’ uprising if his  
284 political reorganisation of Gaul and his fight against Athaulf were to be successful. It  
285 is therefore no surprise that he distanced himself from Dardanus, once Praetorian  
286 Prefect of Gaul, whose direct involvement in Jovinus’ assassination and the  
287 subsequent murder of his followers had caused widespread hatred among many of  
288 the Gallic nobles who had supported him. Sidonius listed a whole number of  
289 prominent contenders for power and their individual vices, and claimed that for his  
290 grandfather Apollinaris, once Praetorian Prefect of Gaul under the usurper  
291 Constantine III, Dardanus had been worse than all those vices taken together.<sup>18</sup> Also  
292 the strong connection of the Gallic aristocracy with the *civitates* and their continuous  
293 ability to retain their political activity was something Constantius had to reckon with;  
294 if he wanted their support, he had to prevent too much pressure on the *civitates*,

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<sup>17</sup> Stroheker (1948), 53-5.

<sup>18</sup> Zosimus, VI.1, 4. Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.9.1. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.9.



295 especially in terms of the Gothic settlement.<sup>19</sup> For the Gallic nobles a close  
 296 cooperation with Constantius was helpful insofar as it gave them some influence  
 297 through him at Ravenna whereas they themselves had overall far too few  
 298 representatives at court to play any active role in influencing imperial politics; the  
 299 few Gallic nobles at court belonged to a circle which had remained loyal to the  
 300 imperial government, although eventually even members of families which had  
 301 supported the usurpers would join this group.<sup>20</sup> A lack of Gallic presence at the  
 302 imperial court was nothing new; there had been few Gallic senators and equestrians  
 303 in the early empire, and in contrast to other provinces there was no member of the  
 304 Gallic aristocracy who became emperor until Avitus.<sup>21</sup> After Avitus' fall, Sidonius  
 305 continued to voice similar resentments in his panegyric to Majorian in 458 and  
 306 indirectly warned him about the continuation of Gallic feelings of neglect by the  
 307 imperial government, especially after the attempt of the Gallic aristocracy to promote  
 308 their own emperor Avitus in 455-6 had failed; although Sidonius' personal  
 309 relationship with Avitus certainly made his comment somewhat biased, it  
 310 nevertheless demonstrates the continuation of such concepts.<sup>22</sup> In fact, there seems to  
 311 have been another attempt by a certain Marcellus, another Gallic noble, to become  
 312 emperor after Avitus' regime had failed; although Sidonius is very vague about the  
 313 whole affair and does not provide any great detail or explanation. Despite doubts  
 314 about his identity, Marcellus was most likely himself a member of the Gallic  
 315 nobility, perhaps from Narbonne, where in the 440s a Marcellus was serving as

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<sup>19</sup> Lütkenhaus (1998), 113-21: on the establishment of the *concilium septem provinciarum* in Arles as a way to distribute the pressure on the *civitas*.

<sup>20</sup> Van Dam (1985), 24. Lütkenhaus (1998), 52-6, 59-61, 67, 78-9, 85, 94-101, 110-3. Stroheker (1948), 45-7.

<sup>21</sup> Van Dam (1985), 12-3, 21. Lewis (2001), 91-3. The movement of the imperial capital from Trier to Arles in 395 had further removed the centre of Roman control from the northern sphere and increasingly had focused Gallo-Roman attention to the southern part of Gaul.

<sup>22</sup> Sid. Ap., *Carm.* V. 353-63. Indeed after Avitus' fall, Sidonius was very elusive in his writings to reveal any precise details about his relationship with Avitus, as too outspoken political statements could be potentially fatal, see Mathisen (1979 b).

316 Praetorian Prefect of Gaul.<sup>23</sup> Sidonius was not the only one who raised underlying  
317 aspects of dissatisfaction with the imperial administration. A chronicle of the  
318 invasion of Gaul in the 410s, written in 452 by an anonymous author from around  
319 Marseilles, exactly reflects the bitter disappointment with the imperial government  
320 and feelings of deliberate neglect of the Gallic situation. For him the dramatic  
321 destruction of Roman life was to be blamed on the mismanagement of the Roman  
322 state and a weak and ineffective administration under a corrupt imperial dynasty  
323 which was not only incapable of restricting the various barbarian groups but even  
324 actively invited them to gain a share in imperial territory. The ‘hero’ of his account is  
325 Magnus Maximus (382-388), who in his opinion had vigorously defended Gaul  
326 against the barbarian and, although he was an illegitimate ruler, was nevertheless to  
327 be preferred to an imperial house that actively damaged Roman culture. There are  
328 some problems with this text, though: the author was writing half a century after the  
329 events he was describing and most likely transferred his views on current politics  
330 into his account; moreover there was little mention of recent events and many of his  
331 arguments were based on gossip-style accounts, for example that Galla Placidia’s  
332 daughter Honoria had invited the Huns to enter the empire.<sup>24</sup> Yet if one compares  
333 this account with the previous accounts, his opinion is hardly surprising and stands in  
334 a long tradition of Gallic opinion towards the Roman administration.

335 Also in religious writings accusations of imperial mismanagement and exploitation  
336 could be found. In his *de gubernatione dei*, Salvian severely criticised social  
337 problems like social divisions and the effects of crippling taxation on the poor  
338 population by putting the blame not only on the failings of the imperial  
339 administration but also on the Gallic aristocracy. The exploitation of the poor forced  
340 them to seek refuge from tax prosecution even in barbarian territory, thus turning

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<sup>23</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.11.6. Mathisen (1979b), 597-627.

<sup>24</sup> Muhlberger (1992), 32-6.

341 these originally Roman people into barbarians themselves: ‘They seek among the  
342 barbarians the dignity of the Roman because they cannot bear barbarous indignity  
343 among the Romans...they migrate either to the Goths or the Bacaudae, or to other  
344 barbarians everywhere in power; they prefer to live as freemen under an outward  
345 form of captivity than as captives under an appearance of liberty [...] thus men began  
346 to live as barbarians because they were not permitted to be Romans’.<sup>25</sup> A very  
347 similar argument was voiced by Orosius who equally accused the imperial  
348 administration of mismanagement: ‘Also the barbarians detesting their swords,  
349 turned to their ploughs [...] so that there be found among them certain Romans who  
350 prefer poverty with freedom among the barbarians, then paying tribute with anxiety  
351 among the Romans’.<sup>26</sup> Salvian’s reason for this argumentation was not to provide a  
352 social analysis but an answer to the problem theological doctrine faced when evil  
353 people such as the barbarians were allowed to gain power at the cost of the Roman  
354 people. He not only blamed the imperial house for a lack of compassionate  
355 interference in social problems as for example the Gallic chronicler had done, but the  
356 Gallic aristocracy in general by arguing that it was their abuse of power, by  
357 exploiting the prevalent social and economic difficulties, which had prompted  
358 Romans to seek their lost liberty in rebellion or by joining the barbarians. This was  
359 perhaps less an open attempt by some Romans to become part of the Gothic or other  
360 barbarian peoples by actively adopting their customs or even joining their political  
361 realms, than an accusation against the Romans in charge that there was increasingly  
362 hardly any distinction between Romans and barbarians possible. Salvian was not  
363 against the Gallic aristocracy in general, but he rejected their lack of providing social

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<sup>25</sup> Salvian, *de gub. dei*, V.5-6.

<sup>26</sup> Orosius, VII.41. The image of swords turned into ploughs and spears into pruning hooks already appeared in Isaiah 2.4 containing prophecies on the coming of the Day of Judgement. Again, an interesting link contemporary theology made between apocalyptic texts and contemporary events, something, which can also be found in the texts of Rutilius or Prosper, see Part III.2 c.

364 security.<sup>27</sup> The problem for Salvian was not so much the attempt of the Gallic  
365 aristocracy to care for Gaul by itself but rather that the nobles in charge continued  
366 the mismanagement of the imperial side in much the same way, thus further forcing  
367 the poor population into the arms of the barbarians. In a time when the Gallic  
368 aristocracy felt a strong and recurrent need to set itself apart from the imperial  
369 administration in order to provide for its own needs, Salvian's opinion was thus  
370 contrary to the argument that it was the imperial government alone which was  
371 responsible for the instable situation in Gaul.

372 In H. Heinen's opinion, these rebellions in Gaul demonstrated the close  
373 administrative and military connections of the Western provinces, but geographical  
374 connections did not necessarily always culminate in united political/military aims;  
375 none of these uprisings should be interpreted as a sign of a united Gallic or Western  
376 political agenda of a strict separatism from Rome. Had there ever been a strong  
377 united belief in a Gallic nation, surely one of these revolts would have succeeded in  
378 creating a Gallic state for some time. As Carroll has suggested, there were recurring  
379 violent expressions of discontent with the Roman administration but they were short-  
380 lived; besides, none of the various Gallic groups shared a united political front but  
381 were far more interested in individual perspectives as their own definition of identity  
382 was far more based on tribal units, which made a belief in a political nation  
383 impossible.<sup>28</sup> The frequent demands of the Gallic nobility to have their political aims  
384 recognised by the empire were undoubtedly not a sign of separatist movements  
385 against the empire but on the contrary an expression of being involved in the  
386 imperial system; only a degree of direct involvement in imperial politics would have

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<sup>27</sup> Although Salvian himself was not a native of Gaul (he was perhaps born in Trier), he nevertheless sought refuge in Gaul and became a priest in Marseilles. See Maas (1992), 276-7. Chadwick (1955), 164. Lambert (2000), 103. Sivonen (2006), 144-9. Van Dam (1985), 42-5.

<sup>28</sup> Carroll (2001), 149. See for example Theuvs & Hiddink (1996), 66-9, 79-80 on the peripheral structure of the Northern part of Gaul in the fifth and sixth and seventh century.

387 enabled them to recognise signs on the imperial side of neglecting Gallic interests.  
388 Political resentment was more directed against specific points within the imperial  
389 administration but never against Rome itself or the concept of the emperor as the  
390 head of the Roman state, and never in any way questioned their *Romanitas*.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sivonen (2006), 106, 114.

412 b) The *civitas*

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414 The Gallic nobles were usually far more engaged in the business concerning the  
415 *civitas* and an active involvement in imperial affairs was rather confined to the  
416 religious sphere of the Roman priesthoods. The main focus of the Gallic landowner,  
417 which connected him effectively with the Gallic countryside, was the *civitas*,  
418 originally the traditional Gallic nations which Rome had kept and developed further  
419 with their own capitals and a Roman constitution, and even more so on a local level  
420 the *pagus*, originally the tribal organisation of Gaul. Mentioned in Caesar, the  
421 structures of the *civitates* were undoubtedly older, though, and the subsequent  
422 Roman administration left these structures by and large intact, which further eased  
423 the acceptance of the Roman presence in Gaul. As Lewis has observed, their strength  
424 lay in them being based on the ‘socio-political regions of Gaul’, and although their  
425 power was greatly diminished with the Roman conquest, the local aristocracy  
426 remained an important factor in running these communities, which perpetuated itself  
427 in the link the Gallo-Roman aristocracy was to have with the *civitates*.<sup>30</sup> This created  
428 a strong sense of identification with Gallic matters and was expressed in a close tie  
429 with local networks and patronage.<sup>31</sup>

430 The *civitas* was the focal point of local administration and religion as well as a centre  
431 from which aristocratic pride in and attachment to their Gallic homeland stemmed.  
432 Paulinus of Pella for example talked about his strong involvement in local networks  
433 and Sidonius stressed his deep connection with his Avernian roots, which he placed  
434 above his connection with Rome, when he begged Euric to restore him to his former

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<sup>30</sup> Lewis (2001), 70-1. For details of the structures and development of the local governments, see Drinkwater (1983).

<sup>31</sup> Drinkwater (1989), 191-2.

435 position.<sup>32</sup> Although the presence of the imperial court in Gaul provided a distraction  
 436 from these links, it never managed to sever them completely and it was these  
 437 connections, perhaps more than connections with the imperial court or the Roman  
 438 government, which remained the main focus for identity for the Gallic aristocrat.<sup>33</sup>  
 439 Any Gallic identity was therefore more connected with the *civitas* or with the area  
 440 where the aristocrat came from (apart from the strong emphasis on family and rank)  
 441 and not necessarily with the whole of Gaul; Gaul was indeed a geographical  
 442 construction but not a united political unit.<sup>34</sup> This strong link with the affairs of the  
 443 Gallic countryside and its population certainly goes a long way in explaining the  
 444 fierce insistence of the Gallic aristocracy on having their interests recognised by the  
 445 imperial court and if necessary on using force to achieve this aim. The close  
 446 connection of the aristocracy with their local communities could also be seen in their  
 447 ability to raise their own armed forces, although changes in the military organisation  
 448 of the imperial army after the frequent interference of Gallic auxiliary commanders  
 449 in imperial politics put an end to this; again in the fifth and sixth century there were  
 450 some Gallic nobles who levied their own troops. For Van Dam, the strong dynamics  
 451 between landlords and peasants through a system of patronage and dependence and  
 452 the link with local networks became all the more apparent when the imperial  
 453 administration was weakened; he regards the case of the *Bacaudae* as an example of  
 454 this connection. Also Sivonen saw this phenomenon as an expression of local  
 455 attempts to solve socio-political problems with which the imperial administration  
 456 was unable to deal. Drinkwater, however, doubts these explanations on the basis of

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<sup>32</sup> Paulinus, *Euch.* 435-7. Sid. Ap., *Carm.* VII. 585-90. Of course Sidonius was trying to regain his position after his exile, and the emphasis on his Gallic roots made sense, especially when Euric had effectively replaced Roman rule in Gaul.

<sup>33</sup> Van Dam (1985), 15-6, 28-9, 33. For the organisation/administration of the *civitas*, see Sivonen (2006), 103-14, 137, 141-3, 158.

<sup>34</sup> Stroheker (1948), 11-2. Sivonen (2996), 16-7, 68. Lewis (2001), 72: Gaul was largely a construction, thus Rome had to create a unifying identity, which included the entirety of Gaul and not just the links with the *civitates*; the Altar in Lyon as a meeting point for the *Concilium Galliarum* served such a purpose.

457 severe recurring disruptions of the continuity of the Gallic aristocracy, which would  
 458 have made concepts of continuous local leadership unlikely; he also rejects the idea  
 459 of this uprising as a fight between different social strata. For him the *Bacaudae* were  
 460 a product of and an answer to the crisis the Gallic aristocracy faced in the third  
 461 century after the end of the ‘Gallic empire’; their reappearance in the fifth century is  
 462 in his opinion not a sign for a continuous movement although it was most likely  
 463 caused again by the disorder of local administration.<sup>35</sup> Drinkwater argues that after  
 464 the collapse of the ‘Gallic empire’ there were hardly any prominent Gallic politicians  
 465 on the political stage of the fourth century and those involved in imperial politics like  
 466 Ausonius were people who had risen to wealth and influence through their  
 467 occupation as rhetors, lawyers and officers in the new imperial administration after  
 468 the crisis of the third century, or had gained their power through the exploitation of  
 469 the aftermath of this crisis. Only under Julian were there more Gallic nobles found in  
 470 the military and political sphere although their family background was often obscure.  
 471 Besides, the great families of the earlier empire had disappeared with the end of the  
 472 ‘Gallic empire’ and it has been argued that even if those newcomers had inherited all  
 473 the previous aristocratic attitudes towards the empire, it took half a century before  
 474 these people once more became noticeable in politics and even then they remained a  
 475 limited number.<sup>36</sup> Although the Gallic nobility in the fourth century was perhaps a  
 476 new creation as it had very few links with the previous aristocracy and had risen to  
 477 its status due to its own office-holding rather than long-standing family connections  
 478 and family traditions, there was one thing I would argue which had continued to be

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<sup>35</sup> Drinkwater (1984), (1992); (1989), 191-9, he partly accepts Van Dam’s argument. Van Dam (1985), Ch. I. See also Thompson (1956).

<sup>36</sup> Drinkwater (1986), 142-50, against Stroheker and Matthews. Sivonen (2006), 15. Sivan (1993), 17-8, 21-2, 65, 99-100. During the crisis of Valentinian’s severe illness, questions of succession were raised and there must have been a strong enough Gallic faction at court to promote a fellow-Gaul, Sextius Rusticus Iulianus, as possible candidate; Valentinian, though, appointed his son Gratian instead and Iulianus reversed his alliance back to the emperor.



479 of importance throughout: the link with Gaul as a country, as a native province, as  
480 the land from which a person came. Even if one argues that the attachment to the  
481 Gallic countryside, and in a wider sense, the *civitas*, was something these ‘new’  
482 aristocrats had adopted like their status as it was an aspect of Gallic aristocratic  
483 bearing, it cannot be denied that this attachment had continued to be of importance;<sup>37</sup>  
484 otherwise it would have made little sense to perpetuate this aspect. This would be  
485 proof of how important this link with the Gallic provinces was. Thus, I would  
486 propose that even if the actual aristocratic families were subject to change and their  
487 presence in the fourth century was less prominent than before, essential values,  
488 whether inherited or newly adopted, such as a strong attachment to their native  
489 provinces and their *civitas* remained an important factor of continuity among the  
490 Gallo-Roman aristocracy.

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492 How does this close link with the *civitas* and with local Gallic networks work then in  
493 regard to the concept of holding office within the empire? As said before, public  
494 offices formed part of the self-definition of any Roman aristocrat and were regarded  
495 as an aspect of duty towards personal ambition, especially in relationship to the  
496 continuation of traditional careers of the family;<sup>38</sup> hence it must have been essential  
497 for any Gallic noble to enter some kind of office within the imperial administration  
498 or the military. As these tensions with the imperial government were so persistent, a  
499 certain reluctance to gain offices at court would be understandable; however, as  
500 almost all of the Gallic revolts stood in relation to the political events in the empire  
501 and at the imperial court, the Gallic aristocracy must have been directly involved in  
502 imperial politics. Mathisen argued that it must have been clear to the Gallic

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<sup>37</sup> For example Ausonius in his poem on his inheritance in Aquitaine praised his ancestral estate: III.1. *de herediolo*, and continued to stress his family’s Gallic background: IV.2.,2; IV.3.12; IV.4.1-7.

<sup>38</sup> Mathisen (1992), 231-7. Matthews (1975), 349-50. Harries (1994), 79-81. Lewis (2000), 72-3,76. Sivonen (2006), 46, 60-4, 131-2.

503 aristocracy that, even if it resented imperial politics, a continuation of their lifestyle  
504 was only possible with the continuous support of the imperial government.<sup>39</sup> In  
505 Drinkwater's opinion the Gallic nobility sought public offices as part of their  
506 political careers and they were not Gallic aristocrats who had temporarily entered  
507 imperial offices but they were imperial officials who happened to be from Gaul.<sup>40</sup> In  
508 the light of his argument stated above that there were several disruptions the Gallic  
509 aristocracy faced after the third century, any connection with the *civitas* in the way  
510 the aristocracy had felt before would have equally suffered severe strains. I would  
511 like to propose, though, that the successors of the old families in the fourth century  
512 had indeed adopted the concept of strong links with local networks and at the same  
513 time continued to strive for public offices. Thus they could promote their Gallic  
514 interests but simultaneously also seek imperial offices; but as previously said, there  
515 were few Gallic aristocrats found in imperial offices, perhaps an indicator that  
516 overall their political ambitions lay more within Gaul than with the wider empire.  
517 Yet, as will be discussed below, with the Gothic settlement in 418, at least for the  
518 Roman aristocracy in Aquitaine but increasingly in other territories too, once the  
519 Gothic court started to expand, there was a necessity to cooperate with the Goths;  
520 thus the preservation of local interests would also have prevented a more active role  
521 at the imperial court – at least to a certain extent.

522 Sidonius surely is an excellent example of this phenomenon: as Avitus' son-in-law  
523 he had accompanied the emperor to Rome where he delivered a panegyric in Avitus'  
524 honour and had been rewarded with a bronze statue in the forum of Trajan. Already  
525 in his panegyric to Avitus, Sidonius stressed his Roman as well as his Gallic and  
526 even Avernian roots, hence clearly stressing his Gallic link although he also  
527 emphasises the fact that despite Avitus' Gallic origin, he is made emperor to preserve

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<sup>39</sup> Mathisen (1979a), 193.

<sup>40</sup> Drinkwater (1989a), 150-1 against Matthews; also (1998).

528 the Roman state; thus Gaul is not acting for its own good but for that of the empire.<sup>41</sup>  
 529 Fallen into disgrace after Avitus' fall, he sought pardon from Majorian. Yet as stated  
 530 before, in the panegyric to Majorian Sidonius once more stressed his Gallic roots and  
 531 voiced the danger of recurring Gallic resentments against the empire; bearing in  
 532 mind his relationship with Avitus, there must have been a reason for Sidonius to  
 533 raise such a sensitive topic, especially when he tried to gain favour with the new  
 534 emperor. Surely only a firm personal belief in the securing of Gallic interests would  
 535 have made him mention this in public praise of the new emperor.<sup>42</sup> At the same time,  
 536 Sidonius was certainly also keen to promote holding offices within the imperial  
 537 administration: he himself became *praefectus urbis* in Rome and a patrician, and  
 538 tried to motivate his friends too to enter into offices as soon as the opportunity  
 539 presented itself.<sup>43</sup> In a letter to his friend Syagrius he urged him to leave the  
 540 countryside and to become involved in public offices: 'How long are you going to  
 541 busy yourself with rustic activities and disdain those of the town...do not bring a slur  
 542 on the nobility by staying so constantly in the country...give yourself back to your  
 543 father, to your fatherland'; in another letter to Eutropius he urges him to forget his  
 544 over-zealous devotion to the countryside and to follow his ancestors in taking up  
 545 public offices.<sup>44</sup> However, one ought not to regard these people as mere countrymen  
 546 whose only difference from the poor farm-workers was their noble name. As  
 547 Drinkwater suggested, the danger was not so much in their devotion to the

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<sup>41</sup> Sid. Ap., *Carm.* VII.585-90.

<sup>42</sup> Sid. Ap., *Carm.* V. 353-63. In his writings he rarely referred to his relationship with Avitus or to his reign, not only a sign of Sidonius' ambiguous style of writing but also a sign of avoiding potential trouble from subsequent politics. See also Mathisen (1979a), 165-71.

<sup>43</sup> He had also received a statue in his honour, Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.9.6-8; V.16; IX.16.3. Interestingly it was Sidonius as a noble of Gallic descent who held this prestigious office in Rome; whether that was an attempt by Anthemius to promote a Gallic 'faction' at the imperial court or rather a Gallic presence in the political circles in Rome, or a mere coincidence after Sidonius had delivered a panegyric to Anthemius, is open to question; but *Ep.* I.9 shows that Sidonius was involved in political talks and his appointment was presumably more than mere coincidence.

<sup>44</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VIII.8 for Syagrius whom he also praised for his later devotion to learning barbarian dialects, although this extent of assimilation was going somewhat too far for Sidonius to understand; *Epist.* I.6 for Eutropius.

548 management of their country-estates and a keen interest in hunting and farm-  
 549 management but in being overtly exposed to the latent uncultivated savagery of the  
 550 countryside, which would then turn the previously cultivated person into a similar  
 551 brute.<sup>45</sup> The enjoyment of a certain amount of bucolic pleasures was acceptable but  
 552 the high culture of the town was not to be forgotten over them. For Sidonius, then,  
 553 the pursuit of the traditional Roman devotion to holding public offices was by no  
 554 means applied to the exclusion of the devotion to Gallic interests. As will be seen  
 555 later on, this interest in Gallic matters became even more apparent in Sidonius' later  
 556 life when he fought for the preservation of Roman territory (albeit as bishop) but it  
 557 did not stop him from feeling bitter resentment against the imperial government and  
 558 its lack of support in this matter. Besides, Majorian not only tried hard to avoid  
 559 further estrangement from the Italian nobility but also to incorporate the Gallic  
 560 aristocracy into his regime to secure their support by appointing people who had  
 561 family connections in both regions;<sup>46</sup> had these nobles only been interested in  
 562 keeping access to imperial offices, surely then there would have been less reason for  
 563 Majorian to do so as they would have supported him out of sheer personal ambition.  
 564 Therefore these aristocrats must have continued to support their Gallic links and  
 565 these links Majorian wanted to secure for himself. For example as his *magister*  
 566 *militum* he appointed Aegidius, who stood in close relationship with some of the  
 567 oldest and most influential aristocratic families in Gaul and also had widespread  
 568 links with various barbarian groups.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Drinkwater (2001), 138-9: proposing that the difference between countryside and town was largely a mental frontier rather than an actual barrier.

<sup>46</sup> Mathisen (1991a), 172, 177-94. Correspondence and family ties with Italy were on a rather small scale though.

<sup>47</sup> After Majorian's murder, Aegidius refused to support Ricimer but established his own power-base. Aegidius was described as 'king' of the Franks, see Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.12. See also further below, p.189.

569 Thus even when the Gallic aristocracy had faced serious alterations in the aftermath  
570 of the third century, the new noble families continued close links with Gallic  
571 interests or such links quickly resurfaced; hence the Gallic nobility from the fourth  
572 century onwards came to seek political careers in imperial service yet at the same  
573 time firmly promoted their Gallic interests. Furthermore, even these strong links with  
574 the *civitas* and with Gallic networking did not exclude a concept of Roman identity;  
575 the aristocratic values of its nobility and self-definition were based on the sharing of  
576 Roman culture and Roman identity.<sup>48</sup> A Gallic aristocrat from the fourth century  
577 onwards was in my opinion both Gallic and Roman at the same time; any problems  
578 with loyalty to the imperial government were entirely politically based and not  
579 culturally inspired. This enabled Gallic nobles like Sidonius to strive to preserve  
580 Roman culture, despite being employed at the Gothic and other barbarian courts. The  
581 alterations in the political sphere in the empire gradually split up the previously  
582 connected idea of political and cultural unity under overall Roman rule. The  
583 aristocratic families continued their Roman way of life albeit now confined to the  
584 cultural sphere of literature and education, but politically speaking they were  
585 increasingly employed at the barbarian courts. By the fifth century earlier tendencies  
586 to seek imperial employment became increasingly difficult to sustain, although they  
587 were still valued, not least when the imperial court moved southwards, which would  
588 have increased the already important focus on local networks although this did not  
589 automatically exclude the concept of holding office in imperial service as such;  
590 furthermore the establishment of the various barbarian kingdoms soon involved the  
591 difficult decision of balancing the necessity to preserve these local links and political

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<sup>48</sup> Sivonen (2006), 72-3, 104. Lewis (2001), 72-3: the *Concilium Galliarum*, the Council of the Gauls, met at the Altar at Lyon, and although the original purpose of the altar was purely religious, the gathering of the leading men of the *civitates* had created a floor for shaping and demonstrating affinity with the Roman sphere; considering the fact that Gaul was more a geographical construction, this had been an important step in creating Gallo-Roman identity in the early empire.

592 loyalty to the empire.<sup>49</sup> It was precisely this seesawing between loyalty to the  
593 emperor on the one side and to counteract the increasing pressure of the barbarian  
594 courts onto the *civitas* that created the complex position of people like Arvandus and  
595 Seronatus.<sup>50</sup> Strict obedience to the imperial administration was highly dangerous,  
596 especially in territories where there was a predominant barbarian presence; equally  
597 the transfer of political alliances to the new barbarian ruler was potentially a fatal  
598 move as it was regarded on the Roman side as treason, which was, as long as the  
599 imperial juridical system was in place, potentially punishable with death. As will be  
600 seen, there were cases where this process of assimilation came almost at the cost of  
601 losing Roman identity completely to the promotion of barbarian interests.  
602 Let us then turn to this process of assimilation or rather to the process of striking a  
603 balance between cooperation with the empire, an avoidance of accusations of treason  
604 and a seeking of political advancement at the barbarian courts.

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<sup>49</sup> See also Sivan (1993), 14, 138-41.

<sup>50</sup> See Part IV.2 a, b.

617 2. Assimilation with the Gothic court

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619 How then did this process of political assimilation between Gallic aristocracy and the  
620 Gothic court work in terms of unifying political ambitions with traditional concepts  
621 of loyalty to the state? Furthermore, what did this encompass for the individual  
622 Gallic aristocrat? First of all, it is important to find a definition for this process of  
623 assimilation – what is meant by the term ‘assimilation’? Taken from the Latin  
624 *similis: like, resembling*, it can mean: a) to take in and understand, b) absorb and  
625 integrate into a people or culture, c) absorb and digest, d) regard as or make similar.<sup>51</sup>  
626 Certainly the second definition is of interest here as the relationship between Gothic  
627 people and Gallo-Roman population was a process of integrations and absorption  
628 into each other.

629 For the purpose of my argument I would like to define this term as a two-fold  
630 concept: in regard to the barbarian side, it was the establishment and ramification of  
631 their military and subsequently political power in a Roman province. Above all,  
632 though, it was their acceptance of Romans into their political and administrative  
633 system as active members in an advisory and administrative capacity and into their  
634 military units as leaders, by regarding their individual strength as an asset to boost  
635 barbarian interests instead of seeing them as an enemy to the same interests. On the  
636 Roman side, it was the acceptance of this barbarian power and its direct impact on  
637 traditional Roman life, society and culture in the province in which this barbarian  
638 regime had been set up. Added to this was an active attempt on the side of the  
639 aristocrats to regard the barbarian kingdoms as political and military successors of  
640 the imperial system and to seek employment there in much the same way as they had  
641 previously done at the imperial court. Overall it meant an attempt at serious

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<sup>51</sup> *The shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1973), 119.

642 cooperation to utilise the respective strengths of both sides in order to create a new  
643 political/military/economic and social order. Whether or not that automatically  
644 extended to the cultural sphere and regarded an exchange of socio-cultural customs  
645 as a prerequisite for political assimilation is very much open to question. I would  
646 propose that cultural assimilation was very often the by-product of political  
647 assimilation but that the former was not a necessary aspect of the latter. Attempts to  
648 engage in this process of assimilation could be a conscious decision as the result of a  
649 serious belief in establishing a new political order and to develop the strengths of  
650 both sides further; yet it could also be the result of the sheer need to survive in an  
651 altered world without any change of a belief in the superiority of Roman culture, an  
652 aspect which is obviously much more applicable to the Roman side.<sup>52</sup> Collaboration  
653 with the various barbarian courts was potentially regarded as active treason against  
654 the Roman empire although it became increasingly a political and social fact. As  
655 Heather observed, with the Gothic settlement in 418, it became more or less an  
656 economic necessity for any landholder in Aquitaine to enter into some form of  
657 collaboration with them. Once Gothic power increased, motives concerning the  
658 political necessity of this process were added to this. Employment at the Gothic court  
659 gradually developed over the next fifty years: from a small number of individuals,  
660 their number increased until Gallic aristocrats were eventually being employed in  
661 both administrative and military positions in the Gothic system.<sup>53</sup> This reflected not  
662 only the growing acceptance of the Gothic presence which led to a higher proportion  
663 of Romans willing to assimilate with them but also the fact that the imperial  
664 government came more and more to be replaced by Gothic power.

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<sup>52</sup> See Bierbrauer (1996) for the continuation of the *Romanitas* in Frankish areas of settlement in terms of archaeological records and material culture. See also Part I.1.

<sup>53</sup> Heather (1992), 90-1.



665 Sidonius is one of the best sources for his descriptions of various Gallic aristocrats  
666 who were actively working at the Gothic court; perhaps two of the most notorious  
667 cases Sidonius described were the treason trials against Arvandus and Seronatus, as  
668 they vividly demonstrate the complexity of assimilation or rather political  
669 cooperation with the Gothic kingdom posed for a Gallic aristocrat.<sup>54</sup> But also his own  
670 relationship with the Gothic court demonstrates vividly the complexity of this  
671 process and highlights the ambiguity of a belief in any assimilation between the two  
672 systems.

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<sup>54</sup> Harries (1992), 307; (1994), 160-6. Teitler (1992), 309-17.

690 a) Arvandus

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692 Arvandus, twice Praetorian Prefect of Gaul and thus a high-ranking Roman officer,  
693 had been accused of open collaboration with the Goths against the empire in 470:  
694 ‘Amongst other pleas which the provincials had instructed them to urge [a reference  
695 to accusations of financial extortion], they were bringing against him an intercepted  
696 letter which Arvandus’ secretary admitted to have written at his master’s dictation. It  
697 appeared to be a message to the king of the Goths [Euric], dissuading him from  
698 peace with the emperor [Anthemius]...declaring that the Gallic provinces ought  
699 according to the law of nations to be divided up with the Burgundians...the opinion  
700 of the lawyers was that this letter was red-hot treason’.<sup>55</sup> Arvandus was clearly taking  
701 steps to enter into a political cooperation with the Gothic court. Furthermore, he was  
702 apparently openly supporting Euric’s ideas of expansionism and certainly seems to  
703 have tried to convince him not to continue the relationship between the Goths and the  
704 empire as outlined in the 418 treaty, by urging him not to enter into peace  
705 negotiations with the emperor. Another part of his actions could have been linked to  
706 the attachment of the Gallic aristocracy to their local networks and the preservation  
707 of local interests. His collaboration with Euric was perhaps partly based on his wish  
708 to foster and secure Gallic interests, which were increasingly dependent on the  
709 goodwill of the Goths.

710 Considering Euric’s inclination towards an anti-Roman policy when he aimed for a  
711 serious programme of territorial expansion, attempts such as Arvandus made to  
712 secure favours with the predominant military power in Gaul certainly made sense. In  
713 466 Euric had murdered his brother and predecessor Theoderic II and had stopped  
714 following the outlines of the treaty established in 418 which had by and large

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<sup>55</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.7.5.

715 continued until then to help support Roman interests and to provide a degree of  
716 stability in Gaul. The Goths ceased to be available as federate troops for the empire,  
717 which meant a rapid decline of Roman influence in Gaul and effectively showed that  
718 the Goths had come to push relentlessly for their own aims without any need to  
719 consider imperial attitudes. Euric strove for aggressive campaigns to gain territory: in  
720 Gaul he wanted the land between the Atlantic, the Loire and the Rhone, and to  
721 establish Gothic dominance in Spain, and despite some resistance (Sidonius' fight for  
722 Clermont is an example of this), by 475 he was to have annexed most of these areas  
723 (except for the Suebian kingdom in the north-west).<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the disastrous  
724 result of the expedition to end Vandal rule in 467, which had ended with a major  
725 defeat of the Roman fleet, had drained the empire of vital resources for years to come  
726 and had brought it to the brink of bankruptcy; Rome was therefore in no position to  
727 enforce its rule in Gaul against Euric's expansionism, which effectively left the  
728 Gothic king to his own devices.<sup>57</sup> Bearing in mind the extraordinary skills of Euric as  
729 a leader and his aggressive policy, this was proving to be fatal. Arvandus must have  
730 known that there was very little interference from imperial authorities to be expected  
731 and that any future continuation of Gallic or Roman aims was to be upheld by Gothic  
732 goodwill. Arvandus' involvement with Euric was therefore in accordance with  
733 promoting his Gallic but also his personal interests as he had realised that imperial  
734 power in Gaul was rapidly diminishing; he therefore opted to gain support from the  
735 stronger military and political side and hoped to be pardoned by the Romans on  
736 account of trying to preserve Roman/Gallic interests.

737 Arvandus' office-holding in Roman service, though, posed a serious problem as any  
738 active promotion of Gothic aims, especially against Roman interests, counted as

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<sup>56</sup> Wolfram (1997), 153. Bury (1889), 341-7. For Gothic activities from 418 until Euric see for example Heather (1992), 84-93.

<sup>57</sup> Heather (2005), 415-9. Harries (1992), 298-308; (1996), 32-3. Bury (1889), 335-7.

739 treason. Any Roman who actively helped Euric to realise his plans was therefore  
740 seriously opposing Roman interests. Thus the problem of this trial was the difficulty  
741 of establishing what precisely benefited imperial attempts at preserving Roman or  
742 local interests in Gaul and what counted as treason. That Arvandus was partly also  
743 seeking personal favours and had come into trouble for alleged financial extortion  
744 and administrative mismanagement in Gaul only added to the complexity. That some  
745 fellow Gallic aristocrats accused him of misconduct was not surprising. Their  
746 motives were either inspired by a still predominant devotion to the Roman cause,  
747 which excluded any serious attempts at assimilation with the Goths and regarded  
748 Arvandus as committing treason, or were part of wider political intrigues which  
749 offered huge profits out of the relative instability of the new political order and  
750 exploited questions of loyalty and political conduct for their own advancement.<sup>58</sup> In  
751 Sidonius' view Arvandus had been caught in this and had fallen foul of correctly  
752 interpreting Roman law as he seems to have been unaware that any action that  
753 endangered the Roman people and threatened its security was counted as treason.  
754 Yet in the light of Arvandus' high office in the Roman administration this is  
755 surprising as he must have been familiar with the workings of the law. Thus it has  
756 been argued that Arvandus must have counted on the support of the imperial  
757 government, especially of Ricimer, Anthemius' son-in-law, and the real power  
758 behind the throne, to back up his cooperation with Euric.<sup>59</sup> There is no evidence  
759 about Ricimer's involvement with Arvandus, but in the light of his subsequent trial,  
760 any support on Ricimer's side, if it was ever seriously considered, was quickly

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<sup>58</sup> Informers and political spies were nothing new, but the instability of the imperial administration lent itself to being exploited. For example Paulinus of Pella was embittered by the fact that even members of his own family and friends were willing to make a profit through such activities.

<sup>59</sup> Ricimer was a grandson of Wallia (Sid. Ap., *Carm.* II.360-5); he had been appointed *magister militum* by Avitus and effectively became kingmaker by promoting Majorian, Libius Severus and eventually Anthemius (467-72) as emperors in order to preserve his own power. Ricimer married Alypia, Anthemius' daughter to cement this alliance. See Bury (1889), 327-41. Harries (1992), 306-7. Heather (1992), 92.

761 withdrawn. One could take this even further by arguing that if Arvandus did trust in  
762 Ricimer's support for his pro-Gothic policy, it might have been based on an  
763 assumption that because Ricimer was himself of Gothic descent, he would have had  
764 an interest in promoting Gothic interests; but this was obviously a severe  
765 miscalculation on Arvandus' side. Teitler even argues that Sidonius' account of  
766 Arvandus being ignorant of the fact that a man could be accused of treason even if he  
767 never aspired to the throne could hint towards a possible ambition of Arvandus to  
768 take his political game much further and to become emperor himself.<sup>60</sup> It is true that  
769 the initial charge against him was financial extortion, for which he had been arrested  
770 and sent to Rome for trial; it was only the Gallic delegation headed by Tonantius  
771 Ferreolus, Praetorian Prefect of Gaul in 451, which had brought forward the far more  
772 serious accusation of conspiracy with Euric. Nevertheless I would still argue that the  
773 major problem of Arvandus was his interpretation of securing his Gallic interests and  
774 the subsequent mishandling of it, and that one should not read too much into  
775 Sidonius' remark about the purple. The conspicuous letter had more to do with  
776 disrupting peace between Euric and Anthemius and a new organisation of the Gallic  
777 provinces, but it did not mention any ambition on Arvandus' side to gain more  
778 personal power; it is true, though, that Sidonius chose not to elaborate on other  
779 charges mentioned in this letter and thus there is no further information on other  
780 motives.

781 The problem with the whole account of this court-case is that Arvandus was a friend  
782 of Sidonius who was not prepared to condemn Arvandus for a crime for which he  
783 was later more than ready to condemn Seronatus. Furthermore, Sidonius is almost  
784 the only extensive source on both cases and his letters were written with the intention

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<sup>60</sup> Anthemius presumably turned Arvandus' death penalty into exile. If this was the case, it could be an indicator that the official Roman interpretation of Arvandus' motives regarded them as promoting Gallic interests and less as an attempt of treason against the Roman state. See Teitler (1992), 310-2 based on Sid. Ap., *Ep.I.7.11*.

785 of having them published; thus a certain bias or at least ambiguity is inevitably  
 786 unavoidable.<sup>61</sup> Sidonius was even willing to risk partial social ostracism by  
 787 remaining loyal to him: ‘I am distressed by the fall of Arvandus and do not conceal  
 788 my distress...I have shown myself this man’s friend even more than his easy-going  
 789 and unstable character justified, as is proved by the disfavour which has lately flared  
 790 up against me on his account...I will give the facts whilst paying all respect to the  
 791 loyalty which is due even to a fallen friend’; Sidonius’ own serious defence of  
 792 Arvandus led some fellow aristocrats (like Magnus Felix) to doubt Sidonius’ own  
 793 political loyalty (this was before Sidonius became bishop and played an active role in  
 794 defending Clermont against Euric) and prompted some of them to withdraw their  
 795 friendship.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as Sidonius was *Praefectus urbis* at that time, he should  
 796 have been presiding over the *iudicium quinquevirale*, the panel of five senators  
 797 chosen to investigate serious allegations against senators, and thus have been in  
 798 charge of judging Arvandus. Sidonius was not presiding over this panel as either his  
 799 term of office had expired by the time the case reached Rome, or, more likely, he had  
 800 deliberately been absent from Rome in order to avoid having to judge his friend. He  
 801 went even further by explaining Arvandus’ actions as the result of a misinterpretation  
 802 of the laws against the opinion of the imperial lawyers, and offered him active help,  
 803 although Arvandus rejected this.<sup>63</sup>

804 Just as Sidonius was willing to support Arvandus, in contrast part of his family was  
 805 acting as his prosecutors with Tonantius Ferreolus, who was related to Sidonius  
 806 through his wife Papianilla (Sidonius’ wife was also a Papianilla) and his paternal  
 807 uncle Thaumastus; such differences about political loyalty continued in Sidonius’

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<sup>61</sup> See Harries (1994), 18-9.

<sup>62</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I. 7.1-3, IV.10. Harries (1994), 159-66, 177-9. Magnus Felix and others refused to continue their correspondence with Sidonius although they had been friends since childhood – in the light of the importance placed upon correspondence, this was a serious break with ties of friendship and social networking.

<sup>63</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.7.6-7. Teitler (1992), 313.

808 family with his brother-in-law Ecdicius fighting against the Goths and Euric in  
809 particular, and his own son Apollinaris being employed at the Gothic court as a  
810 military leader who eventually fought with Alaric II against the Franks at the battle  
811 of Vouillé in 507.<sup>64</sup> As will be seen later on, in fact Sidonius' own involvement with  
812 Euric and the Gothic establishment in general was more than complex, as he came to  
813 accept the political and military necessity of cooperating with Euric and finding  
814 employment with the Goths, but simultaneously despised the Goths in the traditional  
815 sense of regarding them as brute barbarians. Arvandus' case in court revealed how  
816 difficult this whole concept of active cooperation with the Goths still was despite the  
817 establishment of the Gothic court several decades earlier. Looking at Arvandus as an  
818 individual participating in this process of assimilation, there were certainly  
819 individuals who made a conscious choice of cooperating with the Goths and were  
820 perhaps even prepared to run the risk of being accused of treason (despite Sidonius'  
821 denial that Arvandus knew what his actions encompassed). His motives were a  
822 mixture of gaining personal advantages, perhaps already apparent in his financial  
823 endeavours, which had led to him being accused in the first place. Whether he had  
824 hoped also to gain an official position at Euric's court or only planned to get his  
825 personal and local interests recognised, cannot be answered as his process of  
826 assimilation was effectively stopped before it could take off.

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<sup>64</sup> Such rifts were also found in other families and at times affected bonds of friendship: a certain Eucherius (recipient of letter III.8) had offered Sidonius help against Euric whereas his son Calminius, a friend of Sidonius (recipient of letter V.12) had fought for the Gothic king against Sidonius during the siege of Clermont. Sid. Ap., *Propempticon ad libellum*, Carm. XXIV; Ep. III.3. Heather (2005), 419-20. Harries (1994), 13-4; (1996), 37, 39. Teitler (1992), 313. Claude (1998), 124-5.

831 b) Seronatus

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833 Considering how far Sidonius went to defend Arvandus' undoubted political  
 834 cooperation with Euric, it is surprising how ready he was to condemn Seronatus for  
 835 the same behaviour. However, by 475, the year of Seronatus' trial, Sidonius' own  
 836 situation had dramatically changed and as bishop of Clermont he had become  
 837 personally involved in a direct confrontation with Euric's politics. This experience  
 838 was certainly reflected in his writing about Seronatus' trial. Seronatus, much like  
 839 Arvandus, was intent on having his personal ambitions recognised and he was  
 840 prepared to participate fully in Gothic politics, even at the cost of betraying Roman  
 841 interests. Seronatus too had held important public offices and was employed by  
 842 Euric.<sup>65</sup> He was enforcing control in the local area in Euric's favour with the  
 843 apparent support of the Gothic king and apparently played an active role in Euric's  
 844 aggressive expansionism. Sidonius warned his friend Pannychius of Seronatus'  
 845 widespread power and urged him to avoid the danger Seronatus' presence alone  
 846 created; in his words, Seronatus was nothing short of a monster whose financial  
 847 problems and personal greed drove him to extreme measures by exploiting the  
 848 increasing Gothic dominance: 'This very Catiline of our age returned lately from  
 849 Aire to make here one big draught of blood and the fortunes of the wretched  
 850 inhabitants...in his case a long-concealed spirit of brutality is being revealed more  
 851 fully every day. His is openly malignant and basely deceitful; he...exacts like a  
 852 despot, condemns like a judge, accuses falsely like a barbarian...he is ceaselessly  
 853 busy either in punishing thefts or in committing them...he crowds the woods with  
 854 fugitives, the farms with barbarian occupants...he brags to the Goths and insults the  
 855 Romans; he tramples the law of Theodosius [i.e. Roman law] and issues laws of

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<sup>65</sup> There is very little information on Seronatus' actual political career; perhaps he had been *vicarius septem provinciarum*, see Sid. Ap., *Ep.* II.1.3, VII, 7.2. *PLRE, Seronatus*, 995-6. Teitler (1992), 310.



856 Theoderic [i.e. Gothic law].<sup>66</sup> In contrast to Arvandus, Sidonius never mentioned  
 857 anything regarding Seronatus' own opinion about his assimilation with the Goths and  
 858 whether or not he was aware that his actions equalled treason. It could be that there  
 859 was nothing known about Seronatus' personal motives or that Sidonius never  
 860 bothered to report them because of his hostile attitude towards him. But just as in the  
 861 case of Arvandus, his status as a high-profile Roman officer would have meant that  
 862 he had a certain level of understanding of Roman law. Hence it is likely that  
 863 Seronatus would have known about the dangerous position he was in. Although  
 864 Seronatus was eventually executed for his actions, Sidonius remained bitter about  
 865 this whole episode as in his opinion the imperial administration had been barely  
 866 willing to put him on trial or to execute him. In the light of the desperate situation  
 867 Sidonius (together with Ecdicius) faced in trying to protect Roman interests against  
 868 the Goths, particularly in defending Clermont against Euric, a fight which was  
 869 eventually lost in 475 when the emperor Julius Nepos ceded the Auvergne to the  
 870 Goths, this bitterness makes sense; for him Seronatus was a Roman whose disloyalty  
 871 to Rome had helped Euric to gain the Auvergne and was thus indirectly responsible  
 872 for the hardship Sidonius and his charges had suffered during the siege of Clermont.  
 873 Although Sidonius made much of this defence and presented Clermont as a bulwark  
 874 of Roman strength (something we will return to later on), he himself admitted that  
 875 Clermont was in fact very much under Burgundian protection and thus torn between  
 876 two rival barbarian powers.<sup>67</sup> Sidonius was undoubtedly aware that the ceding of the  
 877 Auvergne was a desperate attempt by the imperial side to pacify Euric as it was

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<sup>66</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* II.1; also I.7.3, V.13.1-4 and VII.7.2. Interestingly Sidonius compared Seronatus with Catiline, a figure of the distant Roman republic, and not with somebody more contemporary; this is a good indicator for the strong continuation of classical education (Sallust and Cicero were still part of the curriculum of an aristocratic education) and its active usage in rhetoric and literature. Whether or not Sidonius also chose the comparison with Catiline to imply a politically more sinister motive of Seronatus' involvement with Euric has to remain open.

<sup>67</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III. 4.1.,VII.1.1. Harries (1996), 32-3. Elton (1992), 172-3.

878 hardly in a position to enforce Roman rule: Majorian's murder in 461 has been  
 879 regarded as the starting point of the end of Roman control in Gaul; the *magister*  
 880 *militum per Gallias*, Aegidius, refused to accept the new emperor Libius Severus,  
 881 especially as Aegidius had been a friend of Majorian. Severus lacked military  
 882 support and called the Burgundians and Goths for help against Aegidius. For the  
 883 support of Severus the Goths under Theoderic II had gained Narbonne in 462/3,  
 884 which prompted Aegidius (who died in 465) to rebel, which gave more opportunity  
 885 to the Goths to interfere; although there was still a degree of imperial administration  
 886 left in the southern part, it was not sufficient and Julius Nepos finally had to hand  
 887 over the Auvergne to Euric.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless this did not stop Sidonius from feeling  
 888 betrayed by people like Seronatus and the imperial administration in general, which  
 889 seemingly could not care less about the sufferings of fellow Romans defending  
 890 Roman rights by not even acknowledging the treason of Seronatus: 'The state in its  
 891 turn scarcely had the courage to put him to death after his conviction. Is this our due  
 892 reward for enduring want and fire and sword and pestilence [during the siege of  
 893 Clermont]...was it for this famous peace [the handing over of the Auvergne with its  
 894 capital Clermont] that we ripped the herbage from the cracks in our walls and took it  
 895 away for food?'<sup>69</sup> Apart from his damning portrayal by Sidonius, Seronatus  
 896 seemingly followed a path Arvandus had already started to pursue, but in a more  
 897 aggressive and open fashion; whether or not Sidonius' comparison of Seronatus with

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<sup>68</sup> Bury (1889), 333. Burgess (1992), 26-7. Heather (1992), 85. Elton (1992), 172 states that it was surprising for Aegidius, who had the military support, not to have himself or anyone else declared emperor. According to Fanning, though, Aegidius and his son Syagrius had established some sort of independent authority. Syagrius inherited his father's political establishment and became known as 'rex Romanorum', see Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II, 18,27. At times both were styled as king of the Franks or have even been called 'king of the Romans'; considering the general Roman hostility to this title, there has been some considerable debate about the real meaning of Aegidius' and Syagrius' title, although the title *rex* seems to have appeared as an official title more often than the Roman associations with it would suggest, see Fanning (1992), 289-97. Geary (1988), 81-2: according to him, the title 'king' is debatable, although presumably Syagrius had held some Roman title whereas his power relied largely on his barbarian troops.

<sup>69</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.4, VII.1,6, VII.7.2-3.

898 Catiline is a hidden reverence to an ambition to rise to the purple, similarly perhaps  
899 to Arvandus, or was just a suitable comparison to demonstrate his knowledge of the  
900 venerated traditional authors of Latin literature, is impossible to judge.<sup>70</sup> I would  
901 argue that Seronatus' actions were attempts to secure interests that were both for  
902 personal advancement as well as linked to his local Gallic interests, and as Euric was  
903 by now the predominant political and military figure in Gaul, a more serious  
904 cooperation with him made sense.<sup>71</sup> Thus Seronatus regarded his assimilation with  
905 the Gothic cause as a necessity to secure personal and perhaps also local interests.  
906 But it has to be considered that there were enough instances where Roman officials  
907 had used cooperation with barbarian forces to secure enough strength to bid for the  
908 throne, and thus this concept cannot be completely excluded for both Arvandus and  
909 Seronatus. However, Seronatus was perhaps not in a powerful enough position as a  
910 Roman officer to have had any real chance to stage a rebellion; Arvandus as  
911 Praetorian Prefect certainly had the more distinguished career and presumably would  
912 have had more support, but as mentioned earlier, the whole idea of them bidding for  
913 the imperial throne is very much based on speculation.

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<sup>70</sup> Teitler (1992), 317.

<sup>71</sup> Bury (1889), 342-4.

923 c) Sidonius and other Gallic nobles

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925 There were more Gallic nobles actively employed at the Gothic court, and not all of  
926 them were condemned for treason or harboured higher ambitions of gaining imperial  
927 power.<sup>72</sup> Considering the earlier discussed tendency of the Gallic nobility to promote  
928 its own interests, even at the cost of supporting usurpations, such an active  
929 assimilation with the Goths (and other barbarian courts such as the Burgundians)  
930 should be hardly surprising. As said earlier, part of the self-definition of a Roman  
931 aristocrat was the holding of public offices; when the imperial government could no  
932 longer provide this, it was increasingly the barbarian courts that started to replace the  
933 basis for this. Above all it was the expansion of Gothic power, and the replacement  
934 of previously Roman spheres of influence that drove increasing numbers of Gallic  
935 aristocrats to enter Gothic employment. A large part in this rise in collaboration with  
936 the Goths had been played by Avitus, whose connection with the Goths had started  
937 to foster this relationship from the 450s onwards: he was first proclaimed emperor  
938 whilst being at the Gothic court where he had sought to recruit help for Petronius  
939 Maximus, and was then confirmed by the Romans in Arles. Since he was a scion of  
940 the Gallic nobility himself, this certainly encouraged other Gallic aristocrats to  
941 follow into Gothic employment.

942 It was against this background that Sidonius wrote the description of Theoderic II,  
943 praising his leadership and even styling the Gothic king as a quasi-Roman: '[At his  
944 court] you can find there Greek elegance, Gallic plenty, Italian briskness', and went  
945 as far as to call Theoderic the preserver of the Roman people.<sup>73</sup> Sidonius' favourable

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<sup>72</sup> See Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 31-3.

<sup>73</sup> Sid Ap., *Carm.* XXIII.71-3; *Epist.*I.2.1, 6. Theoderic's portrayal bears some resemblance to standard descriptions of other emperors as found in Suetonius and an even closer parallel to Cassius Dio's account of Severus. Bearing in mind Sidonius' ambiguous writings, it is very difficult to see

946 portrait of Theoderic II makes even more sense when Avitus, his father-in-law, had  
 947 been the tutor of this Gothic king and had been made emperor with the active support  
 948 of Theoderic in 455.<sup>74</sup> Sidonius was willing to accept Gothic power only as long as it  
 949 was in accordance with imperial backing; hence a Goth like Theoderic II who had  
 950 been supporting the Romans in general and Avitus in particular could be portrayed in  
 951 a favourable light, whereas a king like Euric who was determined and indeed able to  
 952 enforce his own political plans, which went against Roman interests, was not  
 953 acceptable. Sidonius even went as far as to accept Theoderic II's taking of Narbonne  
 954 in 462/3 without any comment, although this clearly meant the loss of a famous  
 955 Roman bastion in southern Gaul, whereas he actively fought against Euric in  
 956 Clermont and saw him as a predator for Roman territory.<sup>75</sup> Sidonius' obvious  
 957 difficulties in coming to terms with Arvandus and his rejection of Seronatus were  
 958 linked more with the fact that the Gothic king in question was Euric and not the more  
 959 acceptable Theoderic II. Nevertheless, this compares oddly with Sidonius' own  
 960 actions regarding Euric's court and his dealings with people working there. It is true  
 961 that he with many other Gallic nobles had to realise that the Gothic court was  
 962 gradually taking over a number of formerly Roman aspects of bestowing promotions,  
 963 both in the employment of officials at court and also as patrons of art and political  
 964 favours, and to find an arrangement with this; they were perfectly aware of the fact  
 965 that the political and cultural future of the Gallic nobility lay with the barbarian  
 966 courts and that they had to join these establishments in order to preserve their  
 967 properties and privileges but also to secure their political ambitions. In contrast to  
 968 Teitler, though, I would not describe this cooperation as a sign of treasonable  
 969 behaviour but as a working assimilation between Gallic nobles and the Gothic king;

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what was literary imitation and what was actual fact. In contrast Sidonius' other description of a barbarian leader (*Ep.* IV.20) emphasises far more the barbarian nature of the prince.

<sup>74</sup> Wolfram (1997), 152. Heather (1992), 92-3.

<sup>75</sup> Harries (1992), 299.

970 the recognition of the necessity of having the military support of the various  
971 barbarian courts in Gaul in order to secure Roman interests had by now led to an  
972 active political cooperation and Sidonius was no exception in this.<sup>76</sup>  
973 Wolfram, though, warns us against regarding Euric's expansionism as an attempt to  
974 gain a 'universal monarchy, the realisation, so to speak, of Athaulf's dream', and  
975 claims that a more profound structuring of the Gothic kingdom in terms of religious  
976 and legal aspects only happened under Euric's successor Alaric II<sup>77</sup>. In comparison  
977 to Athaulf's time, there was perhaps less need to aim for such a concept: Athaulf's  
978 aim to connect Gothic with Roman strength had lost much of its former dynamic  
979 because the Roman empire of Athaulf's time had dramatically changed to the point  
980 of extinction. Euric's expansionism was therefore based on the aim to enlarge Gothic  
981 territory and power, for which he did no longer need the cooperation with the empire  
982 to the extent Athaulf had needed. Mathisen & Sivan, however, have argued more in  
983 favour of a realisation of this 'universal monarchy' under Euric who tried to create a  
984 nation, a successor-state to Rome, and to represent/conduct himself like an emperor,  
985 even using the Gothic language instead of Latin during negotiations.<sup>78</sup> Yet Euric did  
986 continue links with the Roman side when he had taken over many of the former  
987 imperial attributes, and the political and social future of the Roman inhabitants  
988 largely depended on his goodwill. Moreover, the administrative and judicial side of  
989 the Gothic kingdom functioned according to the established Roman system and for  
990 that there were Roman officers employed.<sup>79</sup> To speak then of a fierce anti-Roman  
991 policy in terms of describing Euric's politics is perhaps too one-sided; it was anti-  
992 Roman insofar as it annexed former Roman territory under Gothic rule and further  
993 annihilated Roman structures in those areas (it seriously damaged the relationship

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<sup>76</sup> Contra Teitler (1992), 317.

<sup>77</sup> Wolfram (1990), 154-5.

<sup>78</sup> Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 22-3. Ennodius, *Vita Epifani* 90.

<sup>79</sup> Harries (1994), 241. Heather (1992), 86.

994 between the imperial authorities and the Gothic court), but it was not an anti-Roman  
995 policy to the exclusion of Roman expertise in terms of judicial and administrative  
996 aspects as well as Roman culture in terms of literature and panegyrics or indeed to  
997 preserve certain aspects of land-tenure which were of interest to the Gallic  
998 aristocracy.<sup>80</sup> The number of Gallic nobles in active Gothic service was relatively  
999 small in the beginning and then still treated with suspicion (as the cases of Arvandus  
1000 and Seronatus demonstrate). In Heather's opinion part of the reason for this was  
1001 perhaps linked to the continuation of the Council of the Gauls in Arles (the  
1002 *Concilium Septem Provinciarum*), which had been instituted in 418, primarily as a  
1003 body to ensure Gallo-Roman loyalty towards the empire and to counterbalance any  
1004 underlying currents of potential usurpations; as it was established in the same year as  
1005 the Gothic settlement in Aquitaine, it was also considered as an attempt to keep the  
1006 Gallo-Roman nobility from forming alliances with the Goths and exploiting their  
1007 military strength to form rebellions.<sup>81</sup> Especially in regard to Athaulf's support for  
1008 Jovinus (as well as the relationship between Attalus and Alaric/Athaulf, although  
1009 Attalus was not a Gallic noble but nevertheless a Roman usurper) this certainly made  
1010 sense. But as mentioned in the case of Arvandus and Seronatus, there might even  
1011 have been underlying ideas of using their collaborations with the Goths to stage a  
1012 revolt.

1013 By the end of the fifth century, this somewhat uneasy concept of cooperation was  
1014 changing and Gallic aristocrats became increasingly involved in both administrative  
1015 and also military positions at the Gothic court: for example Avitus, a relative of both  
1016 Sidonius and the former emperor Avitus, was involved in negotiating peace treaties  
1017 with Euric; Victorinus was Euric's governor of the Auvergne, and Vincentius, who

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<sup>80</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.1.4-5; VII.6.4: for comment on Euric advancing Gothic power. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 34.

<sup>81</sup> Heather (1992), 91. Wood (1992), 15. Heinzelmann (1992), 245.

1018 was made Euric's *magister militum* in 465, commanded the king's troops in Spain in  
 1019 473; according to Gregory of Tours he was made *dux Hispaniae* by Euric as a result  
 1020 of it, although Sidonius only called him a count. Other Romans like Nepotianus and  
 1021 his successor Arborius were employed to fight the Suebes.<sup>82</sup> Sidonius talked about  
 1022 the work of his friend Leo, who had become a minister of Euric and was directly  
 1023 involved in the diplomatic affairs of the Gothic court: 'For every day in the councils  
 1024 of the most powerful king [Euric] you [Leo] meticulously gather information about  
 1025 the whole world's affairs and rights, treaties and wars...the man [Leo] who by  
 1026 common consent has acquainted himself with the movements of nations, the  
 1027 diversities of embassies...being placed in a position for the greatest eminence'.<sup>83</sup>  
 1028 Interestingly, though, despite this obvious process of assimilation between the two  
 1029 sides, there were still certain positions which on the Gothic side were linked with  
 1030 aspects of ethnic identity and thus barred for Romans; especially with regard to the  
 1031 kingship and the position of Gothic leader, the Goths were not willing to accept any  
 1032 non-Goth in this position.<sup>84</sup>

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1034 So far these were only examples of people who regarded assimilation with the  
 1035 barbarian courts as a process directly linked to political/military circumstances.  
 1036 Some Romans, however, seem to have taken this political assimilation further, and  
 1037 the example of Syagrius certainly hints at the idea that he was an individual who had  
 1038 extended his assimilation with the barbarians also into the cultural sphere. He was  
 1039 employed as an official at the Burgundian court, and Sidonius' letter to him reveals  
 1040 that Syagrius had made the effort to learn the Burgundian language, although this  
 1041 extent of assimilation, praiseworthy as it was, was for Sidonius dangerously close to

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<sup>82</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.1.4-5. *PLRE* II, *Arborius*, 129; *Nepotianus*, 778. Heather (1992), 92-3; (2005), 420. Barnwell (1992), 78-81.

<sup>83</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* IV.22.3.

<sup>84</sup> Claude (1998), 126-30.



1042 losing all Roman culture and identity: ‘You are the great-grandson of a consul...I  
 1043 should like you to tell me how you have managed to absorb so swiftly into your inner  
 1044 being the exact sounds of an alien race...I hear that in your presence the barbarian is  
 1045 afraid to perpetrate a barbarism in his own language. The bent elders of the Germans  
 1046 are astounded at you when you translate letters, and they adopt you as arbitrator in  
 1047 their mutual dealings...you decide issues and are listened to’.<sup>85</sup> Thus assimilation  
 1048 with the barbarians gradually started to incorporate cultural concepts, which ranged  
 1049 from learning a barbarian language to the usage of panegyrics and poems. Their  
 1050 function as a means to gain favour by praising the ruler remained much the same as it  
 1051 had been at the imperial court. A friend of Sidonius had asked him to provide him  
 1052 with a poem which he could inscribe on a silver basin as a present to Euric’s queen  
 1053 Ragnahild, and Sidonius was perfectly willing to do so: ‘You [Euodius, Sidonius’  
 1054 friend] were soon going to start for Tolosa at the bidding of the king [Euric]...I  
 1055 suppose you plan to offer the basin thus embellished to Queen Ragnahild in the hope,  
 1056 no doubt, of securing beforehand an invincible support for your ambitions and for  
 1057 your actions’.<sup>86</sup> Obviously the world of royal panegyrics and their purpose of gaining  
 1058 favour and influence had not changed, only the recipient was no longer the Roman  
 1059 emperor but a barbarian king or queen. Furthermore Sidonius himself employed the  
 1060 services of another friend, Lampridius, who was a courtier of Euric, to regain Euric’s  
 1061 favour after having been sent into exile for his role in the defence of Clermont; he  
 1062 sent a poem to Lampridius to pass on to Euric, and as a result of the open flattery of

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<sup>85</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.5.1. Syagrius was a great-grandson of Flavius Afranius Syagrius, consul in 382; interestingly Tonantius Ferreolus who had been one of Arvandus’ persecutors was Flavius Afranius grandson and thus very closely related to Syagrius – an excellent indicator of how much times had changed in regards to how assimilation with the barbarian courts was seen.

<sup>86</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* IV.8.1, 4-5.

1063 the king Sidonius' confiscated properties were returned to him.<sup>87</sup> Once again it was  
1064 the Gothic king on whose favour the public position of the aristocracy depended.  
1065 Bearing in mind Sidonius' earlier condemnation of Seronatus and his own active  
1066 resistance against Euric and his politics, this was a remarkable turn. Sidonius' role at  
1067 the Gothic court, and especially his personal opinion about the Goths, is difficult to  
1068 analyse as his writings are highly ambiguous and try hard to conceal as much as  
1069 possible about the author's real attitudes. He was deliberately avoiding any precise  
1070 statement about his political opinion in regard to the Gothic court, partly perhaps to  
1071 protect himself, especially when he had already been punished with exile because he  
1072 had opposed Euric's political endeavours; the more cynical approach would be that  
1073 Sidonius was a classical survivor of adverse political circumstances and applied his  
1074 loyalty to whatever establishment was best for his own personal advantage.  
1075 However, there were some principles he did follow throughout: mainly his belief in  
1076 the ideal of Rome as a synonym for his own identity as an aristocrat. This was  
1077 expressed both by Rome's connection with literary culture, hence his own devotion  
1078 to literature, and by the pursuit of imperial offices, apparent in his own political  
1079 ambitions to hold office at the imperial court. Another principle was that the  
1080 relationship between barbarians and Romans should be based on treaties; his role in  
1081 the Arvandus trial is a testimony to Sidonius' ambiguity when he continued to  
1082 support the same man who had actively urged Euric not to make peace with the  
1083 emperor, thus effectively supporting him in Euric's ambitions to pursue Gothic  
1084 interests alone and not to continue the 418 treaty; a similar situation was to occur in  
1085 474 with the Burgundians and the aftermath of Anthemius' and Ricimer's death and  
1086 Nepos' appointment, where Sidonius' allegiance changed from support for Nepos to

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<sup>87</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VIII.9. Heather (2005), 423.

1087 praise for the Burgundian Chilperic.<sup>88</sup> One ought to be careful therefore not to  
 1088 overestimate Sidonius as a champion for the Roman cause whose real loyalty was  
 1089 never altered by any cooperation with the Goths, as it had been forced upon him. It is  
 1090 true that he had defended Clermont against Euric and had even styled it as a fight of  
 1091 the Catholic, orthodox, church against the heretic Arian Euric (unsurprisingly  
 1092 Theoderic's Arianism had been elegantly avoided), but, as said before, he had  
 1093 admitted himself that Clermont and its bishop was far from being this bastion of  
 1094 Roman values he wanted his readers to believe.<sup>89</sup> In fact Sidonius was quick to  
 1095 change from regarding Euric as the leader of a 'race of treaty-breakers' to styling the  
 1096 very same king as the rescuer of the Roman people once political circumstances  
 1097 dictated it.<sup>90</sup> Having suffered from the reduced lifestyle and the exclusion from his  
 1098 friends, Sidonius had heavily exploited panegyrics and open flattery in order to be  
 1099 restored to his former position.<sup>91</sup> Above all Sidonius was willing to accept the fact  
 1100 that the only way to preserve his aristocratic lifestyle and properties, even when he  
 1101 had become bishop, was to have the favour of the Gothic king, but he remained  
 1102 reluctant to take his political assimilation into a cultural context. As already  
 1103 mentioned, Sidonius was happy to praise Syagrius for his efforts to gain a powerful  
 1104 position at the Burgundian court; the fact that the great-grandson of a Roman consul  
 1105 was prepared to learn the dialect of a barbarian people was enough for him to remind  
 1106 Syagrius of his aristocratic Roman roots but above all, not to lose his Roman identity  
 1107 by keeping his Latin education: 'Continue with undiminished zeal...to devote some  
 1108 attention to reading...observe a just balance between the two languages: retain our  
 1109 grasp of Latin, lest you be laughed at, and practise the other, in order to have the

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<sup>88</sup> Harries (1992), 300-6.

<sup>89</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII.6.4-6.

<sup>90</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VI.6.1, VIII.9.

<sup>91</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.3.3; VII.16.1; VIII.3, 9.3; IX.3.3, 10.1.

1110 laugh of them'.<sup>92</sup> There is a parallel here with him urging some friends to leave their  
 1111 over-devotion to the countryside behind and to enter public offices in order to do  
 1112 honour to their family name: to learn a barbarian language in order to assimilate with  
 1113 the barbarian court in question was acceptable as long as it fostered political  
 1114 interests. Yet too much exposure to such non-Roman languages and practices bore  
 1115 the danger of turning the previous educated, cultivated Roman into a barbarian  
 1116 himself: in Sidonius' opinion, for the scion of a consular family that was something  
 1117 which was to be avoided at any cost.

1118 In fact, Sidonius seems never to have changed his opinion regarding the barbarians in  
 1119 general, and he retained the traditional Roman disdain for them as brutes, as a letter  
 1120 to his friend Philagrius demonstrates: 'You [Philagrius] shun barbarians because they  
 1121 are reputed bad; I shun them even if they are good', and in another letter '...that dull  
 1122 ferocity of theirs, senseless and stupid and inflammable like that of wild beasts'; his  
 1123 description of two Gothic women he had to encounter during his exile was scarcely  
 1124 better: '...two Gothic women...the most quarrelsome, drunken, vomiting creatures  
 1125 the world will ever see'.<sup>93</sup> Politically Sidonius had accepted the necessity of  
 1126 cooperation and assimilation with the Goths, a move which meant that by the sixth  
 1127 century the Roman aristocracy had become virtually indistinguishable from their  
 1128 Gothic (and other barbarian) counterparts; although some former Roman titles  
 1129 continued to exist and to convey a special status for the title-holder, the political and  
 1130 increasingly also the social and cultural separation between barbarian rulers/nobles  
 1131 and Roman aristocrats had vanished. The only tangible difference between the two  
 1132 was the insistence of many Roman aristocrats on cherishing and continuing the  
 1133 literary tradition.<sup>94</sup> For Sidonius the only way to preserve Roman identity and

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<sup>92</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.5.4.

<sup>93</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VI.6.1; VII.14.10; VIII.3.2, 6.13-6.

<sup>94</sup> Harries (1996), 33. Stroheker (1948), 3-4. Van Dam (1985), 164.

1134 aristocratic status was the pursuit of literature and the rigorous devotion to classical  
1135 education. Culturally Sidonius remained focused on Roman traditions with a strong  
1136 emphasis on the distinction a devotion to classical literature provided to separate  
1137 himself from his barbarian surroundings. Interestingly, though, it was the  
1138 identification with his Avernian roots and his Gallic identity that Sidonius stressed,  
1139 when he begged Euric to be restored to his Gallic possessions as his Roman roots  
1140 had been destroyed by the advances of the Goths.<sup>95</sup> Bearing in mind his devotion to  
1141 Rome as a concept, this is a surprising statement. It could be, though, that Sidonius  
1142 used this as an expression of avoiding too obvious connections with Roman interests,  
1143 which could have stood in the way of a rehabilitation with Euric; another possibility  
1144 is that he regarded his Gallic roots as his ancestral identity and as the Roman  
1145 aristocracy had always treasured their connection with their ancestors, it was perhaps  
1146 a clever hiding of his true Roman identity. Besides, it was his native Gallic/Avernian  
1147 roots and his identification with this background which had remained a focus and  
1148 was to provide the basis for Sidonius from where he was able to continue his Roman  
1149 lifestyle; considering the strong emphasis he had put into his earlier career with its  
1150 nearness to the imperial court and its offices, this continuous focus on his Gallic  
1151 identity is a testimony to the strong connection of a Gallic aristocrat to his ancestral  
1152 land.

1153 Assimilation with the barbarians, then, was certainly by no means a straightforward  
1154 process for Sidonius. However, he is perhaps the best example for this entire  
1155 phenomenon precisely because of his ambiguity and his changes in opinion. It shows  
1156 how complex any relationship between barbarians and Romans could be and how  
1157 much had to change for the Roman aristocrat in terms of overall thinking and  
1158 perception, both politically and culturally to form a new society.

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<sup>95</sup> Sid. *Ap., Ep.* V.3.3; VII.16.1; VIII.3.1, 9.1; IX.3.3. Sivonen (2006), 154, 156-7.

1159 3. The role of literacy

1160

1161 a) The Roman devotion to classical literature

1162

1163 The devotion to and continuation of literature but also its wider context of education  
1164 and appreciation of classical arts belongs more to the socio-cultural sphere of the  
1165 Roman world; yet literature and the dominant focus on it found in many  
1166 contemporary writings was intrinsically linked with the political world and the  
1167 understanding of how the aristocracy viewed itself. Sidonius' insistence on the  
1168 devotion to and preservation of classical literature among his fellow Gallic  
1169 aristocrats demonstrates not only an insistence on continuing with a traditional  
1170 Roman pastime but also how much the political sphere and the aristocratic influence  
1171 within had changed in Gaul. As said previously, when the aristocracy had lost much  
1172 if not all of its political role in the previous Roman tradition and had applied for  
1173 positions at the barbarian courts, the way in which the aristocracy now tended to  
1174 define itself as Romans, and moreover to separate itself from the barbarian world,  
1175 was through this devotion to literature. The thorough training in ancient poetry and  
1176 literature, together with the extreme skills with which these could be applied to their  
1177 own correspondence, enabled people like Sidonius to hide behind such literary  
1178 concepts, allowing them to foster bonds of friendship across political lines, but  
1179 simultaneously shielded them from inappropriate and awkward confessions of their  
1180 real political conviction or employment. Bearing in mind the relatively fragmented  
1181 situation the existence of different barbarian courts within the former Gallic  
1182 provinces presented, friends could work in different realms whose politics were not  
1183 necessarily friendly towards each other, making the cultivation but above all  
1184 continuation of friendships through mutual visits often difficult if not impossible. For

1185 many of the Gallic aristocrats keeping these friendships through correspondence was  
1186 therefore vital to remain in contact with their peers; such contact was not only  
1187 important for their own cultural understanding but often also for their political and  
1188 ecclesiastical careers; again Sidonius' own life is a good example of this. The  
1189 exchange of letters and an overall zealous attention to classical literature made it  
1190 possible for them to declare themselves as cherishing Roman culture even if they had  
1191 become part of the political establishment of the new barbarian realms. Moreover,  
1192 the appreciation of classical literature and its value as a denominative factor to  
1193 indicate education and social status was increasingly adopted by the barbarian rulers  
1194 too, and was employed at their courts in much the same ways as it had been at the  
1195 imperial court, another indicator for the gradual process of assimilation between  
1196 Romans and barbarians.

1197

1198 The extensive body of contemporary correspondence (about 475 letters from circa 45  
1199 authors) both secular and ecclesiastical is one of the most striking examples of the  
1200 continuation of close-knit family connections and links of friendship, which were  
1201 often based on a sharing of literary interests and a common aristocratic  
1202 background.<sup>96</sup> The existence of this correspondence is also an excellent example that,  
1203 despite the frequently found lamentations of a general decline of the appreciation and  
1204 availability of classical education, the Roman aristocracy was still able to spend a  
1205 considerable amount of time on the active pursuit of traditional Roman pastimes.  
1206 Above all, though, it is a testament to the continuous importance literacy played; in  
1207 Heather's words, it became 'the cornerstone of the social fabric of the late empire'.<sup>97</sup>  
1208 The establishment of the barbarian powerbases effectively replaced the old  
1209 aristocratic positions of holding office and their public profile. The pursuit of

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<sup>96</sup> Mathisen (1981a), 95-109, see also (1991b).

<sup>97</sup> Heather (1994), 182-5.

1210 literature became one of the most important vehicles for the aristocracy to represent  
1211 itself as still being part of a Roman world, regardless of the real political  
1212 circumstances; it also helped them to maintain links of friendship and client  
1213 relationships which continued to be of importance, even at the barbarian courts.  
1214 Many members of the aristocracy either were forced or opted to retreat into private  
1215 life or at least to leave their previously dominant public/political life, whereas the  
1216 pursuit of literature and correspondence allowed them to foster networks of personal  
1217 friendship and political connections and alliances. Furthermore, the continuation of  
1218 such networks remained a vital means to secure and maintain friendship but also  
1219 political ambitions and offices, and remained an essential part of any aristocratic  
1220 lifestyle, even if the writer had entered ecclesiastical offices; these literary circles  
1221 were relatively small in comparison to the vast quantity of the written material,  
1222 which made belonging to such circles all the more exclusive. The exchange of letters  
1223 became one of the most important ways to keep up family ties and friendships,  
1224 especially when the new political situation in Gaul complicated travelling between  
1225 different barbarian realms; besides, private correspondence was regarded as a duty of  
1226 friendship. Sidonius wrote to his friend Auspicius: 'If the times and the places in  
1227 which we live allowed it I should be taking good care to cultivate our  
1228 friendship...not merely by the courtesy of correspondence; but since the tempest of  
1229 battling kingdoms breaks noisily upon our desire for quiet brotherly communion, this  
1230 custom of epistolary converse will rightly be maintained...it was deservedly  
1231 introduced long ago for reasons of friendship'.<sup>98</sup> Failure to write to friends was  
1232 frowned upon and could lead to complaints as it was regarded as a breach of  
1233 friendship. Sidonius himself was the unfortunate recipient of such broken friendships  
1234 when Magnus Felix and Polemius stopped any correspondence with him after the

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<sup>98</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* II.11.1; VII.11.1.



1235 Arvandus trial on the basis of Sidonius' seemingly dubious behaviour against his  
1236 fellow Gallic nobles through his controversial support of Arvandus; Sidonius'  
1237 frequent attempts to break their silence were met with silence, a fact he severely  
1238 lamented.<sup>99</sup> Here politics were intrinsically linked with literary pursuits, when  
1239 Sidonius' behaviour during Arvandus' trial had been regarded as dubious or was  
1240 even seen as a confirmation of his own treacherous tendencies against the Roman  
1241 state. Although they did not openly accuse him of treason, Magnus Felix and  
1242 Polemius felt it necessary to withdraw from any close links with someone they could  
1243 not regard as politically unblemished; that Sidonius himself had felt certain  
1244 misgivings about Arvandus but had opted to support him precisely because of his  
1245 own link of friendship with him, and had lost other friends over this, just  
1246 demonstrates how importantly such bonds of friendships were regarded and how  
1247 intrinsically linked these could be with the political world. Yet not only personal  
1248 quarrels but also large-scale political crises between various kingdoms could  
1249 interrupt the usual flow of correspondence between friends. Warfare not only  
1250 hindered travel and thus the frequent visits of likeminded friends, but at times placed  
1251 people in awkward positions as they belonged to different political establishments  
1252 and any kind of correspondence with people who did not belong to the same circle  
1253 could have been regarded as treason; the fragmentary situation which the  
1254 establishment of various barbarian kingdoms had created also had a deep impact on  
1255 the continuation of pen-friendship. As Sidonius himself admitted, the ceasing of any  
1256 exchange of letters was necessary to preserve their political position at the various  
1257 barbarian courts: 'We [he and his friend Bishop Julianus] live in different realms and  
1258 are thus prevented from more frequent contact by the rights of conflicting  
1259 governments [Rome and Euric]. But now on the conclusion of the peace-treaty

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<sup>99</sup> See Part IV.2 a, b. Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.4, IV.5,10,14. Harries (1994), 177-9.

1260 [between Julius Nepos and Euric]...our letters will begin to pass in quick succession,  
 1261 seeing that they cease to be under suspicion'; in a similar way he told his friend  
 1262 Faustus: 'our cities, far separated as they are, with the roads rendered insecure by the  
 1263 commotion of people...put off our diligent exchange of letters and concern ourselves  
 1264 rather with silence'.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, during the siege of Clermont and his subsequent  
 1265 exile, Sidonius' correspondence with various friends such as Leo ceased, only to be  
 1266 renewed once Sidonius was reinstated in his position at Euric's court. That Leo  
 1267 himself had actively helped to support Sidonius' claims to political pardon is a  
 1268 confirmation of the strong bonds of friendship these men shared. The fact that Leo  
 1269 was a leading minister of the very same Gothic king whom Sidonius had openly  
 1270 opposed and who had sent Sidonius into exile was politically a somewhat delicate  
 1271 situation but it did not matter personally. Although the art of correspondence was at  
 1272 times practised just for its own sake as a demonstration of education and knowledge,  
 1273 the exchange of letters also helped to preserve personal links of friendship and client-  
 1274 relationships;<sup>101</sup> in times of potential political trouble, such links were crucial as  
 1275 Sidonius' own attempt to re-establish himself at Euric's court demonstrates: without  
 1276 Leo's help and his position as a leading minister at the Gothic court, Sidonius might  
 1277 not have been able to return to his bishopric. Literature in the sense of  
 1278 correspondence served a political aim here and demonstrated that at times it served  
 1279 as a tool to denote political convictions, as the example of Magnus Felix's behaviour  
 1280 against Sidonius shows, or to maintain links of friendship which stood above  
 1281 political obstacles.

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1283 As seen in the previous examples, literature was intrinsically linked with politics.

1284 Once political and military boundaries were too unstable to function as separation

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<sup>100</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* IX.3.1 (to Faustus), 5.1 (to Julianus).

<sup>101</sup> Harries (1996), 42-3.

1285 between Romans and barbarians, especially when barbarian kings came to regard the  
1286 command of poetry and literature as a sign of cultural standing, these boundaries  
1287 became newly defined in cultural terms. In the third century the traditional Gallic  
1288 aristocracy had largely been lost and was to be replaced by people who gained access  
1289 to important court positions due to their merits which often included education;  
1290 rhetoric and oratory helped to achieve important offices at the imperial court, which  
1291 in turn helped to create a new nobility who had risen to their influential positions  
1292 through their own knowledge – Ausonius is a good example of this.<sup>102</sup> Whereas in  
1293 Ausonius' times education and the command of classical art and poetry had helped to  
1294 achieve political positions at the imperial court, in Sidonius' times literacy was  
1295 regarded by him and many of his fellow aristocrats as the last thing which separated  
1296 them from complete political assimilation with barbarian rulers like Euric. The  
1297 pursuit of literature and the exchange of letters came to act as a cultural definition  
1298 which separated Romans, at least educated ones, from barbarians, as the latter had  
1299 generally no access to, and in Roman opinion also no capacity for, such matters; in  
1300 short, literacy came to be regarded by many aristocrats as a synonym for Roman  
1301 culture, a last bastion of *Romanitas* especially when political assimilation with the  
1302 barbarian kingdoms increasingly became the norm.<sup>103</sup> Classical education with its  
1303 strict regime of literature and oratory was conveying an exclusive status, accessible  
1304 only for those few who shared noble birth and wealth, thus all the more emphasising  
1305 the elite status of these aristocratic circles; even if a barbarian leader ever tried to  
1306 achieve such a level of education, for people like Sidonius this would have remained  
1307 an empty concept or a bad imitation, as in their opinion only a Roman could fully  
1308 appreciate the intrinsic links between classical education, art and the role of the

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<sup>102</sup> Sivan (1993), Ch. 5.

<sup>103</sup> Harries (1996), 34-5. Brown (1971), 116-8, 120-2. Liebeschuetz (1998), 151; (2001), 318-9. Mathisen (1988), 49-50; (1993), 110-1. Marrou (1964), 412-4.

1309 Roman nobility as their only true connoisseur. The earlier citation of Sidonius’  
1310 warning to his friend Syagrius not to lose his classical education over his serious  
1311 attempts to assimilate with the Burgundians by learning their language is a prime  
1312 example of this concept; even the necessity for Syagrius to aspire to political  
1313 advancement at the Burgundian court by wholly submerging himself into their  
1314 culture was in Sidonius’ opinion barely an excuse to justify this extent of  
1315 assimilation by the great-grandson of a Roman consul: ‘Contemporaries and  
1316 posterity alike...have been trained by your [Sidonius to his friend Johannes] teaching  
1317 that, though now in the very midst of an unconquerable and alien race, they will  
1318 preserve the signs of their ancient birthright; for now that the old degrees of official  
1319 rank are swept away, those degrees by which the highest in the land used to be  
1320 distinguished from the lowest, the only token of nobility will henceforth be by a  
1321 knowledge of letters’.<sup>104</sup> Although office-holding at the various barbarian courts  
1322 increasingly became the norm and was largely accepted, the recognition of literary  
1323 works especially by the circle of friends and aristocratic peers remained an important  
1324 factor for the self-definition of people like Sidonius and his friends. Despite his own  
1325 position at Euric’s court and the active political role many of his friends played there  
1326 too, it was the praise of their peers for a piece of literary interpretation or  
1327 composition which counted as a quasi-public recognition of their status as an  
1328 aristocrat: ‘For your [Sidonius to his friend Fortunalis] familiarity with letters is not  
1329 so small that it would be wrong for you to have some degree of immortality by these  
1330 letters. So you see the glory of your name shall live on for ages to come’.<sup>105</sup> Whereas  
1331 formerly it had been the achievement of public political and military offices that had  
1332 served solely to exemplify the position of the aristocrat in Roman society and to

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<sup>104</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* V.5.1; VIII.2.2. Also Ruricius of Limoges to his friend Hesperius, *Letters*, I.3. For a detailed discussion of the curriculum and subjects studied, for example Marrou (1964), Robert (1989).

<sup>105</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VIII.5.

1333 ensure the lasting glory of his family's achievements, it was now the pursuit of a  
1334 private interest which served the same purpose.

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1336 In fact this omnipresent pursuit of literature as a means of cultivating and preserving  
1337 aristocratic values of self-definition and identification led to a rather rigid if not static  
1338 concept of literature with very little dynamics; those who shared this concept almost  
1339 lived in a nostalgic pseudo-world, jealously guarding this nostalgia against any  
1340 outside influence or change. By regarding literacy as the sole indicator for a noble  
1341 status, literacy could not change without endangering the self-definition of those who  
1342 preserved it; hence the increased dilution of Latin with barbarian words was  
1343 vehemently rejected (although increasingly practised) and feared.<sup>106</sup> So important  
1344 was the pursuit of poetry and literature that Sidonius regarded it as a severe break  
1345 with his former worldly lifestyle and a sign of his new devotion to the more ascetic  
1346 life of the church and his being a bishop when he stopped composing poetry.  
1347 Furthermore Sidonius and his friends lamented the loss of this very world of  
1348 literature and classical education and regarded themselves therefore as the last  
1349 guardians and custodians of a cultural heritage which defined Roman identity, thus  
1350 forbidding any outside influence which could potentially threaten this world; equally  
1351 their own, even eccentric style of writing, often criticised as excessively complicated,  
1352 was mainly due to their attempts to imitate but also to conserve the classical past,  
1353 although the standards of knowledge of classical Latin and literature were rapidly  
1354 declining. This overt emphasis on a decline of literacy and the intentions of *very few*  
1355 to preserve this literacy only stressed once more their superiority both in being  
1356 members of a small, exclusive circle and also their elite education in having the  
1357 ability to do so. Even Gregory of Tours, although he himself had received only a

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<sup>106</sup> Sid. Ap., Ep. II.10.1; V.10, VIII.6.3. Mathisen (1991), 46-8; (1993), 108. Heather (1994), 193.

1358 rudimentary education in classical Latin and literature and lived in a world where the  
1359 former Roman sphere was politically a long-gone past, cherished the classical arts  
1360 with the same heavy nostalgia as Sidonius and regarded their knowledge as an  
1361 exclusive right of a Roman only; the attempt of a Frankish king like Chilperic to  
1362 compose poetry in the classical style was therefore seen by him as something outside  
1363 the king's sphere as he tried to imitate a world to which he had no right of access.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Van Dam (1985), 163-4, 224-5.

1383 b) The barbarian pursuit of literature

1384

1385 The barbarian interest in literature and its impact on the continuation of classical  
1386 education is generally difficult to assess. Their political expansionism had created a  
1387 certain level of destruction of the Roman infrastructure, which had had a negative  
1388 impact on the extent of public education and schools run by local authorities. The  
1389 barbarian take on the Roman administration of such institutions was not as devoted  
1390 to a general pursuit of at least a rudimentary education of the population; education  
1391 became thus almost entirely dependent on either the aristocracy or the church. For  
1392 example, in Visigothic Spain the former Roman lifestyle was so severely interrupted  
1393 that classical education in the traditional sense virtually ceased to exist on a broad  
1394 level but nevertheless continued to be found in the albeit small ecclesiastical  
1395 circles.<sup>108</sup>

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1397 Many of the barbarian rulers in fact themselves became very interested in literacy for  
1398 the sake of royal panegyrics to foster their own imagery and in imitation of their  
1399 Roman counterparts; some also found a devotion to literature an enjoyable art in  
1400 their spare time. It would be wrong to argue that the barbarian kingdoms generally  
1401 opposed classical learning or a continuation of literacy. It is true that the military-  
1402 oriented society and especially the nobility of the barbarian establishments did not  
1403 require a command of literacy and education in the classical arts as a means of  
1404 aristocratic self-definition as was the case in the Roman world; unsurprisingly then  
1405 the strong focus on a broad availability of education, supported by the government,  
1406 was in decline under their rule although they had adopted much of the formerly  
1407 imperial administrative measures. This in turn pushed the pursuit of classical

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<sup>108</sup> Marrou (1964), 457-8. Keay (1988), 181-3, 198.

1408 education into the hands of the aristocracy and increasingly of the church with its  
1409 monastic establishments; schools were to be predominantly attached to monastic  
1410 foundations with the majority of the children trained there entering ecclesiastical  
1411 offices. However, although these institutions gradually moved away from the  
1412 classical tradition of education and instead were to focus much more on theological  
1413 training and a thorough knowledge of the biblical texts, this did not exclude a  
1414 preservation of classical texts too. The majority of the literature produced in seventh  
1415 century Visigothic Spain for example was produced in the ecclesiastical sphere, with  
1416 Isidore of Seville as perhaps its most prominent writer.<sup>109</sup> However, a lack of  
1417 governmental funding of education or its gradual association with religious training  
1418 did not automatically exclude an appreciation of classical literature and panegyrics at  
1419 the barbarian courts, as panegyrics and poems especially could be effectively used  
1420 for propaganda purposes, especially when such works were dedicated to emphasising  
1421 royal greatness and ancestral achievements. Literature in its role as a politically  
1422 inspired medium continued to exist; the only difference was that it was now a  
1423 barbarian king who was the recipient of such literary works and official panegyrics,  
1424 and not the emperor as had previously been the case. Sidonius and his circle of  
1425 friends such as Lampridius and Euodius at Euric's court in Gaul or Venantius  
1426 Fortunatus at the Frankish court provide good examples of the practice of employing  
1427 educated Romans as court writers and panegyrists. The fact that Venantius  
1428 Fortunatus was employed by the Frankish court as a poet who dedicated his works to

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<sup>109</sup> Exact numbers for the percentage of clergy/laymen among literate people or for an exact extent of literacy in general are very difficult if not impossible to establish. In Vandal Africa the classical teaching-tradition with its pagan themes was heavily mixed with Christian elements, as can be seen for example in the works of Dracontius and Macrobius; after the Arab conquest, literacy in its Latin form continued solely in a Christian context. Marrou (1964), 458-9. Liebeschuetz (2001), 318-9, 322-34, 336-40.



1429 the kings and other Frankish nobles shows that there must have been enough people  
 1430 who had been trained in classical literature and its style to appreciate his works.<sup>110</sup>  
 1431  
 1432 Although literacy never came to play the ultra-significant role among barbarian  
 1433 societies that it had and was still playing within Roman aristocratic circles, it was  
 1434 nevertheless an art many of the leading barbarians had learned and acquired a taste  
 1435 for as soon as they had come into a lasting contact with Rome. A command of  
 1436 education and literacy as well as its wider context of record-keeping and legal  
 1437 writings played some role in claiming and manifesting power among equal noble  
 1438 families in much the same way as within Roman society; a higher level of education  
 1439 seems to have acted as a measure to indicate the elevated social position of the  
 1440 educated, especially when it was only accessible to the wealthy. Sidonius wrote to  
 1441 his brother-in-law who had been closely involved in a cultural exchange with some  
 1442 leading Gothic families in Gaul: ‘It was due to you that the leading families, in their  
 1443 efforts to throw off the scurf of Celtic speech, were initiated now into oratorical style  
 1444 and into the measures of the Muses...after first requiring them to become Latins you  
 1445 next prevented them from becoming barbarians’.<sup>111</sup> Of course Sidonius was quick in  
 1446 emphasising that it was only with the help of Roman education that barbarians could  
 1447 be turned into civilised beings and that only the contact with someone like his  
 1448 brother-in-law and his extensive educational training and knowledge was able to do  
 1449 this; but the fact remains that these Gothic families had a strong enough interest in  
 1450 classical arts and literature beyond the simple understanding of an officially spoken  
 1451 language to engage with someone like Ecdicius and to value his extensive  
 1452 knowledge. There is a difference between the ability of someone to speak and/or

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<sup>110</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* IV.8.1 for example. Heather (1994), 188. Liebeschuetz (2001), 322, 334. Stroheker (1948), 130-1. See also Part V.2.

<sup>111</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.3.2-3. Heather (1994), 177-81. Elton (1996), 128-9.

1453 understand a language because it was the official language of the state or community  
1454 the person lived in, and taking an active interest in the finer details of this language  
1455 such as literature, poetry and correspondence and to study it for the sake of attaining  
1456 this higher level. Certainly the former was the case with many barbarians who served  
1457 in great numbers in the Roman army or stood in other forms of contact with the  
1458 Roman empire and thus had to have at least a rudimentary understanding of Latin.  
1459 However, the number of barbarians who took an interest in Latin literature was to  
1460 start with fairly small but became increasingly important as literary pursuits were a  
1461 way to present themselves as true successors of the Roman heritage. The example of  
1462 the Gothic families who stood in close contact with Sidonius' brother-in-law can  
1463 show that it was presumably prestigious for them to have an avid exchange of  
1464 literary interests with a son of a Roman emperor. Bearing in mind the pride Sidonius  
1465 and his friends placed in the social connections of all those with whom they  
1466 corresponded, to count a member of an imperial family, even a very short-lived one,  
1467 as an instructor of literary pursuits was certainly something to be proud of. Thus  
1468 these Goths had taken steps to enter a world that had previously been accessible only  
1469 to a circle of like-minded aristocrats who zealously guarded the exclusiveness of  
1470 their small circles. Some of those barbarians appear to have managed to get accepted  
1471 by the Roman aristocracy and even by someone as seemingly narrow-minded as  
1472 Sidonius when it came to adopting Roman values by outsiders; in a letter to  
1473 Arbogast, Sidonius praised him for this complete absorption of Roman literacy and  
1474 the wider moral and social values attached to this: 'You have drunk deep from the  
1475 spring of Roman eloquence, and, dwelling by the Moselle, you speak the true Latin  
1476 of the Tiber: you are intimate with the barbarians but are innocent of barbarisms, and  
1477 are equal in tongue as also in strength of arm to the leaders of old; I mean those who  
1478 were wont to handle the pen no less than the sword...with you and your eloquence

1479 surviving, even though Roman law has ceased at our border, the Roman speech does  
1480 not falter'.<sup>112</sup> Considering how uneasy Sidonius felt about Syagrius learning the  
1481 Burgundian language and just how much nostalgic value he attached to a proper  
1482 command of Latin, this praise of someone of barbarian descent is certainly  
1483 remarkable. It shows that Arbogast, despite this barbarian background, had achieved  
1484 a complete assimilation with Roman culture through literacy, even to the extent that  
1485 Sidonius was perfectly willing to see his efforts as a way of preserving Latin despite  
1486 the altered political situation. Yet this praise from a Roman aristocrat did not always  
1487 apply to every barbarian trying to learn Latin and to use its literature in a similar  
1488 fashion to the Roman aristocracy; as previously said, Gregory of Tours despised the  
1489 Frankish king Chilperic for his attempts to compose poetry in a classical style and  
1490 Charibert I's poetic compositions will hardly have fared better. The Frankish kings  
1491 were not the only barbarian rulers who adopted this interest in classical literature;  
1492 also among the Visigothic kings there were some who composed poems such as king  
1493 Sisebut, who wrote a saint's life and several poems as well as letters in a complex  
1494 rhetorical style. If in comparison with the Visigoths the Franks are considered to  
1495 have been ultimately the more successful successors of the Roman establishment,  
1496 certainly in terms of adopting classical literature the Goths engaged in this as much  
1497 as their Frankish counterparts; indeed the Visigothic revival of literature in the  
1498 seventh century was highly important, although it perhaps had a less lasting or  
1499 widespread impact on the future development of European history than  
1500 Charlemagne's Carolingian Renaissance. Theoderic not only adopted Roman  
1501 bureaucracy for running the administration of his Ostrogothic kingdom but he also  
1502 fostered the traditional classical education; his daughter Amalasantha received a  
1503 thorough training in Latin and Greek which she passed on to her son Athalaric.

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<sup>112</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* IV.17.2. Marrou (1964), 459.

1504 However in her case this devotion to classical literature and language, which  
1505 previously had been readily adopted by other barbarian rulers as a sign of their  
1506 enlightenment, was rejected as threatening Ostrogothic values and questioning her  
1507 own self-definition as a Goth. Much in the same way as Gregory of Tours had  
1508 sneered at Chilperic for being completely out of his depth in learning a Roman  
1509 aristocratic art, some of the Gothic courtiers regarded her command of Latin and  
1510 Greek as endangering Gothic interests and unfit for a Gothic queen. The result was a  
1511 strong anti-Roman opposition against Amalasantha, accusing her of weakening the  
1512 young king with unnecessary ideas, which made him effeminate and unfit for proper  
1513 warfare; she was eventually murdered in 535 on account of having betrayed Gothic  
1514 values and political interests. There are some interesting parallels between the  
1515 attitudes of Amalasantha's courtiers and those of the followers of earlier Gothic  
1516 leaders: Athaulf for example revealed to Paulinus of Pella that he as a leader was to a  
1517 large extent dependent on the consent and support of his followers; earlier Fritigern  
1518 argued that the opinions of his retinue, which stood in contrast to his own ideas,  
1519 stood against a peaceful solution of the Gothic relationship with the empire.<sup>113</sup> Of  
1520 course it should not be forgotten that the idea of presenting themselves as pro-Roman  
1521 certainly suited the political aims of both Fritigern and Athaulf at times, and might  
1522 not have been necessarily an accurate reflexion of a continuous or rather recurring  
1523 pattern of a pro-Roman leader versus his pro-Gothic retinue. As discussed in Chapter  
1524 I, questions of ethnic identity were intrinsically linked with the political development  
1525 of the Goths, and at times a too close relationship with the empire was treated with  
1526 suspicion, not least out of fear for its power to undermine Gothic interests.<sup>114</sup>  
1527 However, one should not forget that a large part of this resentment against

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<sup>113</sup> See Part II.1 b; Part III.2 a.

<sup>114</sup> The persecutions of Christians under Athanaric are another example of social customs that were treated with suspicion of threatening Gothic interests, as these very customs were closely associated with the empire; see Part V.2.

1528 Amalasantha was directly linked with her relationship with the Eastern court –  
1529 undoubtedly fostered by her interest in Greek culture – and had perhaps less to do  
1530 with the learning of classical literacy in general.<sup>115</sup> Such resentments against classical  
1531 education and literacy remained rare. The barbarian interest in it continued as late as  
1532 Charlemagne: he set up a literary circle at his court where each participant was given  
1533 the name of a famous classical author, in an attempt to imitate a kind of Greek  
1534 symposion or to copy Plato's academy; Charlemagne's support of classical literature  
1535 and the fostering of scholarship was so influential that it became known as the  
1536 Carolingian Renaissance.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Amalasantha's devotion to Roman/Greek education undoubtedly left her even more open to the Byzantine court and its subsequent political interference in Gothic politics; Justinian used her murder as a justification to invade Italy (Amalasantha's affinity with the Greek world was certainly a very convenient political/diplomatic 'reason' which Justinian could exploit, regardless how close the queen really stood with Byzantine interests). Thus from the Gothic perspective, the queen's proximity with Constantinople had not only 'endangered' Gothic social values but was eventually also – at least partly – responsible for the war with Justinian. Geary (2001), 122. Bury (1923), 159-67. Maier (2005), 61.

<sup>116</sup> The Carolingian interest in classical scholarship is to a large extent responsible for the survival of classical texts and the transmission of ancient ideas into the Middle Ages. See for example Wood (1997).

#### 1548 4. Roman-barbarian intermarriage as an aspect of assimilation

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1550 Assimilation between Romans and members of various barbarian peoples did not  
1551 happen only on a political level but also on a basis involving social customs such as  
1552 intermarriage. Although this thesis is looking foremost at aspects of political  
1553 assimilation, and intermarriage belongs more to the sphere of socio-cultural  
1554 interaction, it is nevertheless included here because intermarriages between high-  
1555 profile members of the Roman aristocracy or the imperial family and members of the  
1556 royal families of the various barbarian courts were very often concluded for political  
1557 reasons as forms of appeasement and diplomatic alliance. Such marriages were by  
1558 their very existence an expression of a process of political assimilation because they  
1559 exemplified the Roman acceptance of the significant position the various barbarian  
1560 courts had achieved as major political players with whom it was necessary to  
1561 conclude political alliances. Although the following examples have not that much to  
1562 do with Gaul per se, nevertheless a law of Valentinian in 373 as well as its later  
1563 Visigothic form regarding intermarriage between Romans and Goths has often been  
1564 quoted as an example of a deliberate prohibition of this process in order to stop or at  
1565 least control social assimilation between Goths and Romans; reasons for this have  
1566 been interpreted as conscious attempts to preserve ethnic or religious identity and  
1567 separation, or in contrast as a legal answer to target specific political unrest without  
1568 any implication for a general prohibition of intermarriage.

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1570 A law issued by Valentinian I in 373, forbidding intermarriage between *gentiles* and  
1571 *provinciales* with capital punishment, has often been regarded as proof that attempts  
1572 at political alliances between Romans and barbarians through social assimilation had  
1573 been deeply rejected. Originally marriage between Roman citizens and foreigners

1574 were not recognised, as a legally accepted Roman marriage could only be concluded  
1575 between Roman citizens as any children born of a relationship between citizen and  
1576 foreigner were considered illegitimate. However, with the establishment of  
1577 Caracalla's *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212 this rather strict distinction between  
1578 Roman citizen and foreigner as well as the privileges attached to Roman citizenship  
1579 were to become increasingly an empty status, which had lost most of its former  
1580 power.<sup>117</sup> The law of 373 stated the following: 'No provincial, of whatever rank or  
1581 position he may be, shall enter in matrimony with a barbarian wife, nor shall any  
1582 provincial woman be united with any gentile. Though such alliances, based on  
1583 marriages of this sort, might exist between provincials and gentiles, should  
1584 something suspect or criminal be detected in them, it shall be expiated by capital  
1585 punishment.'<sup>118</sup> Bearing in mind that the formerly sharp distinction between Roman  
1586 citizen and foreigner had lost much of its relevance, and that intermarriage between  
1587 Romans and foreigners was a common occurrence, this law is somewhat surprising.  
1588 Indeed it is controversial in its interpretation, and as subsequent examples  
1589 demonstrate, this law had very little impact on the usage of marriage as a tool for  
1590 establishing political alliances. Besides there have been arguments that the law was  
1591 by no means generally applicable to the process of intermarriage as such but had  
1592 been invented to address a specific political situation; in fact the extent of its  
1593 effectiveness on actual reality is more than debatable because intermarriage was  
1594 increasingly practised. Reasons for this argumentation are numerous: the law was  
1595 addressed to the *magister militum* Theodosius and not to the civil administrative  
1596 bodies which were normally the recipients of such laws, which could point to a  
1597 specific address for the law and not to its universal application. Also the term

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<sup>117</sup> The distinction between slave and freeborn citizen remained, though, despite the law of 212 AD; its sociological impact was to increase in the late empire even more. Liebeschuetz (1998), 132-5, 138.

<sup>118</sup> *C. Theod.* 3.14.1; translation taken from Sivan (1996), 136.

1598 *coniugium* seems to have been a strange choice of terminology, although in the  
1599 fourth century this term was used equally with *matrimonium* and was thus a proper  
1600 legal term; furthermore the law was not transferred into the *Codex Iustinianus*, thus  
1601 again stressing a more locally confined meaning.<sup>119</sup> According to Sivan, the real  
1602 concern of this law was then not so much forbidding actual marriages between  
1603 Romans and barbarians, but far more to stop potential criminal activities between  
1604 Romans and natives in specific provinces. These could be the result of close bonds  
1605 between Romans and non-Romans, although there is no reason given why such  
1606 marriages in particular could threaten political stability; presumably mixed marriages  
1607 were regarded as particularly prone to create trouble over questions of loyalty as the  
1608 partners had bonds of friendship and family connections including political alliances  
1609 on both sides. Sivan places this law in the context of Firmus' African revolt, an  
1610 argument which is supported by the fact that the recipient of the law was Theodosius,  
1611 who was sent to Africa in the 370s in order to suppress Firmus' rebellion; she  
1612 regards this law therefore as the imperial answer to the political unrest in this region  
1613 by trying to stop any sort of social alliances, including marriage, when potential  
1614 revolts against authorities could be the result of such interactions.<sup>120</sup> In other words,  
1615 the law was a measure to avoid similar trouble in the future.

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1617 Of course intermarriage between Romans and barbarians did occur and none of the  
1618 high-profile marriages were regarded as a breach of this law. Bearing in mind the  
1619 deep suspicion of the rising barbarian power, as well as attempts from the Roman

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<sup>119</sup> Sivan (1996), 137-9. Liebeschuetz (1998), 139-40. Demandt (1989), 77-8. Laws against marriage between Romans and barbarians continued to be issued, for example by Justinian in 535, but this seems to have been targeted at the province of Mesopotamia as a reaction to potential political alliances between Romans and natives.

<sup>120</sup> Sivan (1996), 139-45; (1998), 192. Firmus' revolt included followers not only among the barbarian side but also among the Roman population; a distinction between the two sides was therefore not as clear-cut as the law wants to have it. There were thus people who belonged to both Roman and native population, further enhanced by intermarriage, who had alliances on both sides which could lead to problems of conflicting loyalty.



1620 side to assimilate politically with the new forces, created among the Roman  
1621 population and especially among the aristocracy, the failure to regard such marriages  
1622 as illegal or as neglecting Roman law is telling; had the law of 373 been generally  
1623 applicable, there would have been accusations of deliberate misuse of legal  
1624 requirements in contemporary writings concerning such Roman-barbarian marriages.  
1625 The most famous of these intermarriages concerning Goths and Romans, and further  
1626 a strong significance for Gallic politics, was the marriage between Athaulf and Galla  
1627 Placidia, which has been discussed previously.<sup>121</sup> Athaulf's action was regarded at  
1628 the time as an impertinent and unacceptable move against the imperial court: not  
1629 only did it violate the position of the august person of Galla Placidia as an imperial  
1630 princess and the half-sister of the emperor, who stood above any marriage-prospect  
1631 to a mere Gothic king; it was also politically rejected on the grounds of a direct  
1632 attempt on Athaulf's side to connect himself with the reigning imperial house and  
1633 thus to manoeuvre himself into a power-position around the throne. Any marriage-  
1634 alliance with an imperial princess provided direct access to privileges and even direct  
1635 political power for her husband (Constantius' marriage to Placidia was undoubtedly  
1636 following this concept) and Athaulf was certainly keen to exploit this. Bearing in  
1637 mind that Honorius was childless, and the significant position any future child of  
1638 Placidia and Athaulf would therefore have in the imperial succession, Athaulf's plan  
1639 to marry Placidia certainly made sense; he would have hoped for the future to act as  
1640 the power behind the throne with his son as Honorius' successor. The refusal by the  
1641 imperial officials in Ravenna to accept the challenge this marriage posed to  
1642 Honorius' authority (he had opposed the marriage) and to allow or even support a  
1643 Gothic king to become kingmaker was equally understandable. Significant, though,  
1644 is that both Attalus and some Gallic aristocrats were indeed willing to support

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<sup>121</sup> See Part II.3.

1645 Athaulf's move. As Alaric's and later Athaulf's appointed emperor, Attalus' consent  
1646 was less surprising than the support of the Gallic aristocracy. Whether, though, these  
1647 aristocrats supported this marriage as an expression and manifestation of a new level  
1648 of political and cultural assimilation between Goths and Romans (in a similar fashion  
1649 to Athaulf's aims in his speech during the celebrations), or explained their support as  
1650 a temporary move to gain military support in order to press for their own Gallic  
1651 interests without really accepting this marriage as an expression of Athaulf's aim to  
1652 support the imperial throne with Gothic military power, is open to debate.<sup>122</sup>  
1653 Interesting, though, is that despite their rejection of his actions, none of the members  
1654 of the imperial circle called for Athaulf to be punished with the death penalty –  
1655 something the literal application of the law would have justified. Although the Goths  
1656 had become a constant factor in Roman affairs, they were nevertheless not  
1657 automatically Roman citizens: the strict interpretation of Valentinian's law would  
1658 have regarded this marriage as a union between a barbarian and a Roman citizen and  
1659 thus would have forbidden it. Bearing in mind the open challenge this marriage  
1660 posed, the lack of a call by the imperial authorities to hunt down and punish Athaulf  
1661 is another supporting indicator for Sivan's interpretation of reading Valentinian's law  
1662 as an answer to a temporary, geographically defined crisis and not as a generally  
1663 applicable measure. Of course the Roman officials were militarily in far too weak a  
1664 position to contemplate seriously the capture of the Gothic king, but not even  
1665 imperial rhetoric discussed the breach of this law. Indeed resentments against this  
1666 marriage in general and its political implications in particular were based on  
1667 Athaulf's challenge to Honorius' authority and position, and were thus politically  
1668 motivated and not concerned about the marriage between a Gothic barbarian and a  
1669 Roman citizen. This could be another indicator that the law of 373 was primarily

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<sup>122</sup> See Part II.3.

1670 concerned with the potential danger marriage could pose as a way to create and/or  
1671 cement political alliances but had nothing to do with specific ethnic issues.  
1672 Nevertheless, if the law had indeed been created to stop potential political unrest in a  
1673 province in general, the lack of invoking it in the Athaulf/Placidia case is perhaps  
1674 surprising because Athaulf's connection with Placidia, who presented a somewhat  
1675 different political line from Honorius, as well as the support of the Gallic aristocracy  
1676 for Athaulf, certainly intensified political tensions with Ravenna in general and in the  
1677 Gallic province in particular. It must be then that Valentinian's law had been indeed  
1678 a very specific legal creation, addressing a political situation in a geographically  
1679 confined area without any wider implication, which would also explain its failure to  
1680 reappear in the *Codex Iustinianus*.

1681

1682 Although this marriage was rejected by Ravenna, it was by no means to remain a  
1683 singular phenomenon, as several other examples demonstrate: already one of  
1684 Athaulf's predecessors, Fravittas, had married a noble Roman woman, although in  
1685 his case it had not been so much the outcome of diplomatic/political endeavours as a  
1686 serious attempt to assimilate with the Roman sphere where he had started to build a  
1687 political career for himself after he had left his Gothic life behind him. Yet Fravittas'  
1688 wife was not a member of the imperial dynasty, and thus their marriage was far less  
1689 politically explosive than that of Athaulf and Placidia would be; whether there was  
1690 any resentment on the Roman side against Fravittas as an ex-barbarian leader trying  
1691 to gain a leading position among Roman authorities by cementing his ambitions  
1692 through marriage is not known. Furthermore, most likely Fravittas saw this marriage  
1693 as a way to place him even firmer into the Roman system and obviously had not used  
1694 it as a way to create a political alliance between Goths and Romans as Athaulf would  
1695 later do, because Fravittas had forfeited any previous political positions among the

1696 Goths before he had entered Roman service. In fact, there were numerous other  
1697 marriages of military leaders of barbarian origin with Roman women that were not  
1698 regarded as breaking Roman law. Any rejection of these officers or the children  
1699 (Stilicho is a famous example) of such mixed marriages was more racially inspired  
1700 and based on their ethnic background as barbarians, but not on the practice of such  
1701 marriages.

1702 Another marriage involving an imperial princess was that of Anthemius' daughter  
1703 Alypia and Ricimer as a way of guaranteeing Ricimer's eminent position at court;  
1704 there is a strong resemblance of this marriage to Athaulf's ultimate aim, though in  
1705 contrast to the Gothic king Ricimer was not the leader of a barbarian establishment  
1706 and was already set up at court as a powerful courtier. In fact Sidonius regarded the  
1707 marriage as a hopeful sign for peace, although ultimately this was not achieved. Any  
1708 resentment Sidonius could have had against Ricimer, as a barbarian who further  
1709 established his power at the imperial court through this marriage, is not known;  
1710 bearing in mind Sidonius' already discussed unease with the extent to which some  
1711 Roman aristocrats took their assimilation with the barbarian court, hidden  
1712 resentments against a man of barbarian origin or even a subtle reference to  
1713 Valentinian's law would not have been surprising. Again the lack of such  
1714 resentments could imply that the law of 373 was not generally enforced or had no  
1715 general implication. However, Sidonius was always ready to allow for assimilation  
1716 with the barbarians in order to foster political concepts, and his hope for peace could  
1717 be interpreted as a sign that he was willing to regard this marriage in such a manner.  
1718 As had been seen in the Arvandus case, Sidonius had no qualms in accepting the  
1719 very open interpretation of Roman law if it interfered with friendship or personal  
1720 political conviction; his hope in Ricimer therefore could have justified his neglect of  
1721 a specific law. The betrothal of Galla Placidia's granddaughter Eudocia with Huneric,

1722 Geiseric's son, is another example. In contrast to Placidia's marriage, which had  
1723 never been recognised by the imperial court, this alliance was accepted as a formal  
1724 diplomatic treaty. Although the Vandals had never played the militarily supportive  
1725 role the Goths had played for the Romans, and the Vandals continued often to be  
1726 regarded as stereotypical barbarians, it is worth bearing in mind that at the time of  
1727 this betrothal Geiseric was regarded as *rex socius et amicus* and was in any case  
1728 politically so dominant that this marriage had more or less been forced on to the  
1729 Western government; any attempt to quote the law of 373, if indeed anybody ever  
1730 seriously attempted to invoke it in this context, would have lost its effectiveness as  
1731 alliances with client kings were a staple part of imperial diplomacy.

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1733 Despite political and military necessities, which often dictated such marriages, and  
1734 an increasing general practice of concluding mixed marriages among the broad  
1735 population, some resentment undoubtedly remained among some Roman circles and  
1736 was in most cases based on racial prejudices, which went back as far as Martial and  
1737 Juvenal, as well as an unchanged belief in the cultural superiority of Rome.<sup>123</sup>  
1738 Presumably the increasing usage of marriage between the imperial dynasty and  
1739 various barbarian courts and its acceptance as a political necessity in order to 'buy'  
1740 stability for the empire would have helped slowly to erase motives of rejection. As  
1741 Demandt puts it, the rather frequent occurrence of such intermarriages therefore  
1742 resulted in the relatively quick disappearance of the typical barbarian from the  
1743 political scenery as it turned children of such marriages effectively into Romans.  
1744 This of course would have helped to reduce arguments of cultural rejection even  
1745 further. In fact the increasing occurrence of such marriages is another indicator for

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<sup>123</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* I.5.10; *Carm.* 2, 484-6. For similar marriages at the Eastern court, for example Olympias, daughter of the *praefectus praetorio* Ablabius, who married the Armenian king Arsaces III, see A.M., 20.11.3; 26.8.12. Demandt (1989), 77-9, 80-4.

1746 the validity of Sivan's interpretation of the law of 373. As a result many of the  
1747 reigning barbarian houses of the late empire came to be related to the imperial house  
1748 and Roman aristocratic families: for example the royal Ostrogothic Amali were  
1749 related not only to the imperial house but also to other barbarian dynasties such as  
1750 the Visigoths, the Franks, the Langobards and even the Huns. Also some Roman  
1751 aristocratic houses married into ruling barbarian families such as the Baiuvarian  
1752 house of the Agilolfings, or the Anicii, a family to which Sidonius belonged, who  
1753 were related to the Gothic Amali.<sup>124</sup> The result was that a Frankish king like  
1754 Charlemagne could trace his ancestral lineage as far back as the Roman emperor  
1755 Diocletian, although not in a direct line but at least without any disruption. Indeed  
1756 these high-profile marriages were almost always deliberate political tools used  
1757 especially by the imperial house to create bonds of family relationships between the  
1758 empire and barbarian dynasties, which, by accepting these barbarian dynasties as  
1759 equal partners, were supposed to ensure political stability. Claude argues that  
1760 certainly for the barbarian side such family ties with the imperial dynasty were  
1761 regarded as high honours, especially when such marriages were overall still an  
1762 exception; indeed at the Eastern court any such marriage alliances were deliberately  
1763 excluded from imperial politics as the barbarian husbands of the imperial princesses  
1764 could otherwise have claimed shares in the political and territorial power of the  
1765 imperial court – a sharp contrast with the Western court where marriages, as  
1766 discussed above, offered access to power.<sup>125</sup>

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1768 The later usage of the Valentinian law in its Visigothic context is even more  
1769 interesting when it was taken into the *Breviarum Alaricianum*, although the original

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<sup>124</sup> Demandt (1989), 76, 81-4. Anicius Olybrius' daughter Anicia for example was betrothed to Theoderic the Great.

<sup>125</sup> Claude (1989), 25-39. Another form of strengthening alliances between imperial house and barbarian rulers was the practice of adoption.

1770 meaning of the law was seemingly removed in the Gothic interpretation. Adopting  
1771 and copying Roman laws into barbarian jurisdiction and law codes became an  
1772 increasing practice, effectively creating a mixture of barbarian customs and laws  
1773 with Roman traditions of jurisprudence. The continuity and validity of Roman laws  
1774 in barbarian jurisdiction as well as the application of these laws to each group has  
1775 been frequently debated and to a certain extent depended on the survival of Roman  
1776 influence in the barbarian realm concerned; overall, though, Roman legislation  
1777 remained a dominant factor in the organisation and interpretation of barbarian law.<sup>126</sup>  
1778 The occurrence of the law of 373 in the Visigothic sphere is therefore not surprising.  
1779 What is more surprising is the far stricter interpretation than its original Valentinian  
1780 version: *gentiles* and *provinciales* were replaced by *Romani* and *barbari*, explicitly  
1781 forbidding any marriage between Romans and barbarians with capital punishment,  
1782 although it was later revised under king Leovigild who allowed such marriages; its  
1783 original purpose of dealing with alliances between Romans and the native population  
1784 within a province was thus removed and it was now concerned with the Roman and  
1785 Gothic population in general. Bearing in mind the frequency of marriages between  
1786 Goths and Romans and the close proximity of the two groups overall, such a legal  
1787 restriction is surprising. Part of the reason why Alaric II had created the *Breviarum*  
1788 was the idea to create an element of unity in his realm in order to balance possible  
1789 attempts by the Frankish court to undermine Visigothic authority; a law which  
1790 strictly forbade any marriage between Goths and Romans was surely  
1791 counterproductive to the aim of promoting unity among the population.<sup>127</sup>  
1792 Problems of interpreting the Visigothic version of this law remain: although the term  
1793 *Romani* was surely targeted at the Gallo-Romans, the term *barbari* in that context

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<sup>126</sup> See for example article by Liebeschuetz (1998).

<sup>127</sup> See Part V.2.

1794 made little sense as the Visigoths never referred to themselves as barbarians.<sup>128</sup>  
1795 Therefore there have been arguments to interpret *barbari* as a term for describing  
1796 Arians, but that is based on the assumption of regarding all Goths as Arians. If there  
1797 was any aspect which would have complicated intermarriage between Romans and  
1798 Visigoths and would have complicated a deeper level of assimilation in general, it  
1799 would have been the difference of religion: the Goths were predominantly Arians  
1800 whereas the majority of the Roman population was Catholic; from the Catholic  
1801 viewpoint any marriage with a member of a heretical group such as the Arian sect  
1802 had been forbidden by Canon law since the fourth century.<sup>129</sup> However attractive this  
1803 explanation is, the choice of terminology by the Goths to regard Arian believers as  
1804 *barbari*, remains odd as this comes back to calling themselves *barbari*, and, as seen  
1805 before, this was more than doubtful. Furthermore marriage between the Roman and  
1806 Gothic population was already hindered by religious concerns, which would have  
1807 made a religiously inspired intention of this law superfluous. Sivan therefore sees the  
1808 law in its Visigothic context again as an answer to political tensions, this time  
1809 between Goths and Franks, thus reflecting back on its original meaning in  
1810 Valentinian's intention; hence for her the term *barbari* referred to any nation other  
1811 than Gothic. Indeed in the light of the aim of the *Breviarum*, and the otherwise  
1812 awkward terminology of *barbari*, this interpretation certainly makes sense.  
1813 Liebeschuetz however rejects this politically tendentious interpretation, as in his  
1814 opinion the law was deliberately used by the Visigoths to foster their ethnic  
1815 separation from the Roman population as well as to guarantee their own military  
1816 power despite years of living within the empire; the law was then an attempt to

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<sup>128</sup> Sivan (1998), 200-3. Demandt (1989), 80. Ripoll López (1998), 165. Liebeschuetz (1998), 140: in Ostrogothic Italy jurisdiction was mainly in the hands of Gothic officials who were appointed by the king although there were still Romans sitting in the council of the *comes civitatis*, the royal representative in each city.

<sup>129</sup> Claude (1998), 123. Pohl (2005), 67-8. Furthermore, there are problems in terms of distinction between Arians and Catholics, see Part V.2.



1817 preserve some kind of ethnic identity among the Gothic population against the  
1818 increasing pressure of assimilation with the Roman side.<sup>130</sup> However, the use of  
1819 terminology makes this somewhat doubtful –this interpretation still fails to explain  
1820 the Gothic choice of addressing themselves as barbarians – although attempts on  
1821 both the Roman and the Gothic side to preserve some cultural identity which was  
1822 inaccessible for the other side were undoubtedly made. A ban on marriage would  
1823 have enforced ethnic separation and if there was any intention to keep the two sides  
1824 apart, such a law would have made sense from the Gothic viewpoint. Its enforcement  
1825 would have fostered underlying tensions between Romans and Goths, which could  
1826 have added another aspect for the ultimate failure of the Visigothic kingdom in  
1827 establishing a lasting power-base.

1828 In contrast to the Goths, the Burgundians and the Franks did allow marriages with  
1829 the Roman population and in case of the Franks this would have fostered the already  
1830 strong process of assimilation with the Roman sphere.<sup>131</sup> However, Goths as  
1831 members of the royal and aristocratic families either disregarded this law or did not  
1832 see it as applicable to them, when for example the Visigothic king Theudis married a  
1833 wealthy Romano-Hispanic woman; whether this indicates that this particular law was  
1834 never fully enforced, that it did not apply to the aristocracy/royal family in general or  
1835 that this group was regarded as being occasionally exempt on the basis of allowing  
1836 important alliances to strengthen Gothic interests, is open to question. Bearing in  
1837 mind the problem of attaching the label *barbari* to the Visigoths themselves and the  
1838 continued practice of such mixed marriages contrary to this very law, Sivan's  
1839 interpretation, to read this law as a temporary answer to specific political situations

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<sup>130</sup> Liebeschuetz (1998), 140; (2001), 355, 361: concerning attempts of ethnic separation raises the question if the almost exclusive existence of Gothic names among the secular leaders can be used as an indicator for their Gothic origins or if it rather reflects the custom to adopt Gothic names regardless of ethnic descent as was the case in the Frankish kingdom. Demandt (1989), 79-80. Sivan (1998), 190, 194-5, 198-9. Claude (1998), 139-40. Pohl (2005), 67-8.

<sup>131</sup> Stroheker (1948), 97, 107.

1840 rather than a universal law against any Roman-barbarian marriage, which the  
1841 Visigoths adopted with an even narrower interpretation but kept its political aspect,  
1842 appears as the far more likely one.

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## 1 Part V. The impact of the Christian Church

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### 3 1. The Gallic aristocracy and the episcopate

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5 The relationship Christian ideology had with the barbarians was certainly complex.

6 As already described before, in contemporary writing the barbarian was often a

7 generalised figure, used as a moral stick to beat the Roman people with and to

8 explain the decline of Roman military power and political influence in terms of

9 portraying him as God's scourge sent to punish the lapsing morals of the Romans.

10 Yet despite such generalisations in theological writing, the church in general and the

11 office of the bishop in particular came to occupy a very prominent position within

12 the new barbarian establishments and their administration. The church came to offer

13 a career option for many members of the Gallic aristocracy, which the altered

14 political setup in Gaul had increasingly blocked; due to the exceptional spiritual but

15 also worldly position the higher church offices incorporated, it is of little surprise

16 that it formed an attractive alternative for the aristocracy to their public offices. For

17 then assimilation with the new barbarian establishment meant to find ways to secure

18 their political and social future: as the barbarian courts not always offered the

19 possibility to continue their political positions, or many aristocrats themselves

20 refused to accept offices as courtiers of a barbarian king due to a reluctance based on

21 issues of xenophobia to accept barbarian power, the church came to offer a

22 significant alternative. Furthermore, the role of religion and different doctrines has

23 often been cited in connection with the eventual Gothic failure and the long-lasting

24 Frankish success. Of course there is much more to the influence of Christianity –

25 monasticism or various different types of Christian doctrine to name but a few in this

26 period – and this chapter will focus albeit briefly on the role of the church in  
27 connection with the Gallic aristocracy as a means of retaining their former lifestyle.  
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29 Since Constantine the connection between church and empire had become all the  
30 more important. Constantine not only became the first Christian emperor, but his  
31 continuous interference in ecclesiastical disputes, most notably in the Donatist  
32 Schism in the 310s and the Arian controversy, which he tried to settle in the Council  
33 of Nicaea in 325, formed a connection between church and monarch which remained  
34 vital for the future. As will be seen further below, both the Visigothic and Frankish  
35 kings formed a close relationship with their bishops, the Franks as Catholics even  
36 more so, although even the Arian Gothic king regarded himself as having the duty to  
37 interfere in ecclesiastical matters as a form of continuing this imperial link of church  
38 and state. The development of Christianity in Gaul was intrinsically linked with the  
39 rise of monasticism and subsequently of the socio-political importance of  
40 ecclesiastical offices. Originally a movement from the Eastern sphere of the empire,  
41 monasticism was regarded as a way to renounce the world in order to get closer to  
42 God through prayer and asceticism, especially when a lack of persecutions meant not  
43 only a lapse of true belief but also a lack of opportunity to prove one's true faith. For  
44 Gaul, one of the most influential characters in developing monasticism as well as the  
45 role of the church and the bishop was Martin, with his monastic foundation at  
46 Marmoutier but even more in his role as bishop of Tours, although there were other,  
47 equally important men like Hilary of Poitiers under whose influence Martin had  
48 stood.<sup>1</sup> Equally important was the monastery of Lérins on the Mediterranean coast,

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<sup>1</sup> Van Dam (1998), 120-2, 124: argues that there has been a danger of putting too much weight on the role of Martin in the Christianisation of Gaul and on the idea of converting a pagan society to Christianity, without taking into account the change in understandings of authority and community in Gaul, especially when Martin was not native to Gaul. For an excellent study on the importance of St Martin for the monastic development in Gaul, see Prinz (1965), especially 19-46, 481-5. Sidonius for

49 founded by Honoratus of Arles between 400-10, which rapidly became a centre for  
50 spirituality and learning, with eminent pupils such as Hilary of Arles, Faustus of  
51 Riez, Eucherius of Lyon, Lupus of Troyes, Caesarius of Arles; Prinz has argued that  
52 Lérins, in contrast to Martin's foundations, came much under the influence of  
53 northern Gallic aristocrats due to the move of the imperial administration from Trier  
54 to Arles, which caused a move of many of these nobles to the south of Gaul.<sup>2</sup>  
55 However, people joining ecclesiastical orders in the fourth century did so  
56 predominantly because of religious inspiration, and as Lewis has observed, the  
57 majority of the bishops were in fact drawn from the *curiales* and not from the Gallic  
58 aristocracy; aside from religious inspiration, part of the reason was that the members  
59 of this social group thus avoided financial burdens of municipal magistracies  
60 whereas the aristocracy still had access to public offices within the imperial  
61 administration.<sup>3</sup> The merging of aristocratic lifestyle with ecclesiastical offices, and  
62 the high-profile status the episcopacy was to gain among the Gallo-Roman  
63 aristocracy in the fifth century, had not yet been fully established, and the devotion to  
64 an ascetic lifestyle, which meant theologically speaking a complete renunciation of  
65 worldly goods and offices, was still regarded with suspicion. A famous example is  
66 the case of Paulinus of Nola who, as a member of the Pontii family in Aquitania, had  
67 been destined for an aristocratic life of public offices and land-management; he had  
68 rejected his worldly career and under the influence of St Martin of Tours had joined  
69 religious orders and eventually became bishop of Nola in Campania in Italy.  
70 Although for contemporaries this renunciation of his worldly career was already  
71 considered a grave problem, especially for a scion of a famous aristocratic family,

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example expressed his admiration for the saint and composed an epigram about St Martin, which was supposed to be decorating part of the church of St Martin, see *Ep.* IV.18.

<sup>2</sup> A fairly large proportion of pupils of Lérins came from an aristocratic background, see Prinz (1965), 47-88, 470-81; (1996), 448-9. Brown, P. (1971), 96-113, 172-87.

<sup>3</sup> Heinzelmann (1992), 244. Lewis (2001), 81-2.

72 Paulinus' most shocking move was his breaking of all links of correspondence and  
73 friendship, and eventually even leaving his own native country – in the eyes of his  
74 fellow-nobles any such action was more degrading than they could imagine. As has  
75 been discussed before, the breach of friendship by a decline of continuing  
76 correspondence was already considered a serious 'offence' as it rejected social  
77 networks, which was an essential part of aristocratic life; to reject a political career  
78 and thus his ancestral rights was even worse. To leave Gaul for Italy and to renounce  
79 any further connection with the very same ancestral links was beyond most  
80 aristocratic comprehension. His friend and former teacher Ausonius was obviously  
81 truly horrified by Paulinus' strict intentions but despite his ardent attempts to revoke  
82 the glorious world of shared literature and friendship, Paulinus rejected such  
83 memories as things past because in his new life there could only be his devotion to  
84 Christ and not to pagan literature.<sup>4</sup> However, Paulinus' zeal in renouncing his  
85 worldly life was extreme; certainly for Ausonius and other contemporaries there was  
86 no problem in combining classical mythology and Christian ideology as in his, and in  
87 many contemporaries' opinion, a Roman aristocrat had to continue the traditional  
88 literature and the devotion to classical culture. Sidonius too saw no problem in  
89 combining his ecclesiastical office with his aristocratic pastimes and values, although  
90 he did try to refrain from too much engagement with classical texts and opted to stop  
91 composing classical poetry as a sign of having ended his worldly life. For someone  
92 who had used classical literature as extensively as Sidonius, both in his pastime but

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<sup>4</sup> Ausonius, *Ep.* 20-2, 25-9. Paulinus of Nola, *Carm.* 10. Van Dam (1985), 304-6. However, Paulinus' exceptional lifestyle later gained him a position in the social/religious understanding of his contemporaries which Ausonius never achieved, and his subsequent sainthood helped Paulinus' family to receive a privileged position, which in the sixth century was held in very high esteem, indeed rivalled that of an aristocratic background. Also Gregory of Tours was very proud to trace his ancestry back to the earliest bishops of Tours, which ultimately put him into close proximity with St Martin himself, which was an important aspect of consolidating his own Episcopal power even further. The importance of claiming saints as part of the family remained an important concept, which was also heavily exploited in the Merovingian kingdom (for example St Radegundis and St Balthildis in the royal family) as it added further claims to power to this family, see Helvétius (1996), 403-4.

93 also in his political career (panegyrics for Avitus and Majorian to name but a few  
94 occasions), this was indeed a serious step, and reflects the fact that even Sidonius,  
95 who had received very little if any training for the church, regarded ecclesiastical  
96 offices as more than a mere career change; by the time of Gregory of Tours, the texts  
97 of classical Roman literature were already a highly regarded, albeit distant, idiom,  
98 which were preserved alongside the venerated texts of the early Christian writers and  
99 saints.<sup>5</sup> The difficulty with Paulinus' decision therefore lay not only in his decision to  
100 enter ecclesiastical orders, despite having access to public, imperial positions, but  
101 above all his unwillingness to combine his church office with aristocratic values; it  
102 would take a few more decades before this merging of the powers of the nobility  
103 with the office of the episcopate was complete.

104

105 Once the political situation in Gaul had changed and the holding of secular  
106 administrative positions was not automatically guaranteed any more, in the fifth  
107 century the ecclesiastical sphere and the episcopacy in particular became an  
108 attractive option for the Gallo-Roman aristocracy. By providing a serious alternative  
109 to political offices (although in due course the role of important ecclesiastical  
110 officers did indeed often include a role at the barbarian courts), ecclesiastical  
111 positions became another aspect of assimilation of the Gallic aristocracy within the  
112 altered political atmosphere. Furthermore, by entering monastic orders or other  
113 ecclesiastical offices, the now increasingly necessary assimilation with the barbarian  
114 powers could be to some extent avoided or the loss of property and privileges  
115 justified: Paulinus of Pella for example had tried to become a member of a religious  
116 congregation when the Gothic arrival in Gaul had severely hindered the continuation

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<sup>5</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII.9, IX: Sidonius continued to use classical forms of speech-writing despite his office as bishop – and despite his ‘promise’ to avoid classical literacy as part of his new devotion to an ecclesiastical lifestyle. Brown, P. (1971), 175-6. See also Part IV.3 a.

117 of his former lifestyle, although he eventually failed to live as a monk; some decades  
118 later Sidonius expressed the opinion that a place in the church was the only real  
119 alternative to leaving the country, that is Gaul, altogether.<sup>6</sup> Although religious  
120 motives undoubtedly continued to form the basis for many a decision to enter church  
121 orders, the hierarchical structure of the church with its own concept of wielding  
122 power appealed to the aristocratic sense of issuing power and influence; many of  
123 them entered the episcopacy from having held offices within the imperial sphere,  
124 without having received any real theological training or having started in lower  
125 offices within the church. Although to enter monastic orders theoretically meant a  
126 renunciation of worldly conventions and privileges and thus a rejection of  
127 aristocratic values and pastimes, the role of the bishop incorporated a large amount  
128 of public and political power in much the same way as the former public political  
129 offices of an aristocrat had carried.<sup>7</sup> In regards to the church, the question of  
130 assimilation for the Gallic aristocracy now was not so much about the concept of  
131 finding a political status quo with the new barbarian rulers, but to find a different  
132 way to preserve their endangered socio-political privileges aside from them joining  
133 the barbarian king as his courtiers. In their quest to find another alternative to their  
134 increasingly endangered public position, the church, and especially the Episcopal  
135 office, offered a very attractive solution for the Gallic aristocracy because of the  
136 enormous social and subsequently political prestige it carried, based on the spiritual  
137 power the bishop was invested with.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the time of Paulinus of Nola, for  
138 the aristocrats now joining the church the bishopric was regarded as a culmination of  
139 their worldly honours or perhaps more likely as a substitute for the same:  
140 ecclesiastical offices, and especially the episcopate, with both their spiritual as well

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<sup>6</sup> Paulinus of Pella, *Euch.* 410-57. Sid. Ap., *Ep.* II.1.4.

<sup>7</sup> Wes (1992), 252-63. Brown, P. (1971), 96-112. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 37. Stroheker (1948), 92-4. Prinz (1965), 59-62.

<sup>8</sup> See further below for the prestige/power the Episcopate carried.



141 as their worldly powers and privileges, including the holding of extensive properties  
 142 and land, allowed for the continuation of the aristocratic position in society in much  
 143 the same way as had been the case before the political establishment of the various  
 144 barbarian states; furthermore, the spiritual element carried not only a certain  
 145 guarantee of personal safety for every member of the clergy, which the worldly  
 146 status of a nobleman lacked (although it did not always protect against political  
 147 exile), but also enhanced the already exalted status of the bishop even further.<sup>9</sup> By  
 148 now the holding of ecclesiastical offices did not interrupt a continuous belief in  
 149 aristocratic values of pride of ancestry; Gregory of Tours for example was very  
 150 proud of his illustrious ancestors and was happy to promote his own relatives to  
 151 equally important offices within the church in much the same way as previously  
 152 aristocratic patron-client relationships and family connections had played a role in  
 153 securing important public offices within the imperial administration; furthermore, in  
 154 Gregory's case, to boast of an ancestry of eminent men in church offices was now  
 155 regarded as important in demonstrating a noble lineage as was the pure worldly  
 156 aristocratic ancestry – yet another sign of the significant status ecclesiastical  
 157 positions had reached.<sup>10</sup> To occupy an ecclesiastical office became as much if not  
 158 more a symbol of status and privilege for a noble family than had been the holding of  
 159 offices within the imperial public sphere; increasingly it was regarded as so  
 160 important for a family to gain success and to fulfil political ambitions that in some  
 161 families certain members were assigned from birth to enter the church to make their

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<sup>9</sup> Euric for example forbade the ordination of bishops in Gaul for some time and sent others into exile for political reasons, among them also Sidonius, see *Sid. Ap., Ep.* IV.10.1; VIII.9.3; IX.3.3. Likewise Simplicius of Bourges, Crocus of Nimes and Faustus of Riez were forced into exile: *Sid. Ap., Ep.* VII.6.9. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.26, III.2,10, 31; *Vit. Pat.*4. equally mentioned other prominent members of the church in exile, such as Volusianus of Tours and his successor Verus, Caesarius of Arles or Quintianus of Rodez who was twice exiled. See below pp.258-66.

<sup>10</sup> Already Sidonius felt the need to comment on the aristocratic ancestry of Episcopal candidates and their relatives: *Sid. Ap., Ep.* VII.9.24 stating the noble lineage of the wife of a candidate for the bishopric of Bourges. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* I.29, 31; III.15; V.5. Heinzelmann (1996),381-3. For the claim to connect one's ancestry with saints or to boost saints as family members, see further above.

162 career. This meant a gradual monopolising of the episcopate by the aristocracy,  
163 which went as far as to regard ecclesiastical offices as part of the aristocratic *cursus*  
164 *honorum* or to limit the episcopacy to members of the nobility only; indeed the  
165 majority of the leading bishops of the fifth century, such as Hilary of Arles,  
166 Germanus of Auxerre, Eucherius of Lyon or Caesarius of Arles (to name but a few)  
167 came from an aristocratic background with few exceptions.<sup>11</sup>

168 As Christianity became an integrated part of the barbarian courts, the role of the  
169 bishop also became part of the courtly establishment. Thus the Gallic aristocrats  
170 were able to assimilate with the new barbarian courts in a political way without being  
171 forced to join the political setup of the barbarian ruler. Considering the feelings of  
172 Roman cultural superiority, which could still be found among some of the Gallic  
173 aristocrats (for example Sidonius), the concept of entering an office that continued  
174 and even enhanced their lost socio-political privileges yet at the same time allowed  
175 for a necessary assimilation with the barbarian courts was undoubtedly more than  
176 inspiring. Furthermore, the spiritual power and the role as an intermediary between  
177 God and mankind associated with the bishop allowed for a truly exalted personal  
178 status beyond that of a normal aristocratic courtier – again an important issue for any  
179 aristocrat who was still somewhat reluctant to accept the altered political situation  
180 and the power of the barbarian courts. In regards to the Episcopate, the process of  
181 assimilation for the Gallic aristocracy meant their adaptation to and adoption of a  
182 lifestyle which previously had been largely unknown to them; by recognising the  
183 socio-political potential this position offered to them, the Gallic nobles increasingly

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<sup>11</sup> Van Dam (1985), 203, 210, 217. Anton (1996), 373. Mathisen (1993), 90-2. Beside the fact that many members of the nobility were already interrelated with each other through family connections, the church added yet another dimension to such relationships when it made its members ‘brothers in Christ’, thus adding a further component to promote aristocratic social networks, which was unbreakable and thus stood above worldly connections which could be severed by adverse politics.

184 monopolised it, and thus created a basis from which they were able to continue their  
 185 elevated social position beyond the Roman system, albeit in a different way.  
 186

187 Let us now turn to the office of the bishop as such and examine briefly some aspects  
 188 of his power, in order to understand the exalted position he gained within society.  
 189 From the beginning, bishops had played an increasingly important role in the  
 190 imperial administration and had come to represent a symbol of stability and moral  
 191 focus, dispensing spiritual help and mediating in politically difficult circumstances;<sup>12</sup>  
 192 as Sidonius described the influence of his fellow-bishop, Fonteius of Vason: ‘...great  
 193 as you are in reputation and very great in rank, you are as much to be praised for  
 194 your condescension as for your lofty position...through your constant intercession  
 195 you bestow in abundance the blessing of your apostolic protection upon...Simplicius  
 196 and Apollinaris [relatives of Sidonius]’.<sup>13</sup> One elemental aspect of this office though  
 197 stood above all worldly power, and that was the bishop’s connection with the  
 198 spiritual, religious sphere. The influence someone held who was regarded as God’s  
 199 chosen intermediary on earth by the people under his charge added an aspect of  
 200 power which no other imperial or worldly office could ever bestow. In Sidonius’  
 201 words, every member of religious orders, even the lowest, was regarded as being of  
 202 higher status than any worldly magnate could be as it was only the church through  
 203 which people could obtain the eternal salvation of their souls.<sup>14</sup> Due to the  
 204 aristocratic background of most of the bishops, most of them had received an  
 205 education that enabled them to read and interpret the Holy Scriptures and thus to  
 206 function as a mediator between his flock and God, an element which became

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<sup>12</sup> See also James (1988), 183-4 for the role of the Frankish bishops.

<sup>13</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII.4; VII.5, VII.8 and VII. 9 for Sidonius’ own involvement in mediating in the difficult election of a new pontiff for the church at Bourges, for which he asked another bishop, Agroecius of Sens, for further support in calming the situation; also VII.6.10; VII.9.18-9.

<sup>14</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII.12.4. Van Dam (1985), 133-4, 153-5. Sivonen (2006), 142. Stroheker (1948), 72-5, 92-4. Liebeschuetz (2001), 159, 164-5.

207 apparent in their role in the administration and maintenance, but especially in their  
208 promotion of saints' cults. It was this relationship the bishop had with the saints' cult  
209 in his city that formed a large part in manifesting his power and prominent position  
210 as a leader of the people under his charge. The saints and the miracles ascribed to the  
211 their cults, but especially the belief in their continuous presence at their shrines and  
212 their help as God's intermediaries, had in many ways taken over the presence of the  
213 Roman administration when the pomp of the religious ceremonies and the building  
214 programmes to enhance the shrines reflected the grandeur of the imperial court;  
215 besides, the writing of a saint's *vita* allowed for the continuation of classical  
216 education and the tradition of panegyrics. In channelling access to the shrine and  
217 conducting these rituals, the church and its bishops acted like imperial magistrates in  
218 the imperial administration. Gregory of Tours gave a good example of the power a  
219 bishop could obtain from maintaining access to a shrine like St Martin's in Tours as  
220 the possession of such a cult enhanced the prestige of both city and bishop.  
221 Furthermore, it cast the bishop in a unique role of exercising moral power over  
222 worldly magnates as they were all subject to God's will with the bishop as His  
223 instrument; within this ideology at times even a king had to be submissive to the  
224 saints' powers as well as to their representative on earth, the church, because his  
225 power was ultimately God-given too – the divine aspect of a monarch as having  
226 received his power directly from God was something to develop in the future. As  
227 Van Dam observed, 'holiness was power' and so therefore were miracles which  
228 occurred at the saint's shrine, as they showed the exceptional life the saint had lived  
229 and had been chosen by God as a result of this; hence the person who administered  
230 the place where such a demonstration of God's will took place, and that meant the  
231 bishop, equally held power. In fact the bishop was regarded as sharing a relationship  
232 with the saint, allowing him to ask for divine intervention on behalf of his people by

233 praying to the saint, and thus being able to offer aid by curing people from illnesses  
234 and demons; again, the direct access to the holy shrines and this personal relationship  
235 with the saint would have further enhanced the authority of the bishop. For example  
236 Germanus of Auxerre was not only respected for his wide-ranging authority in terms  
237 of interfering in imperial administration, but also because of his spiritual powers,  
238 which enabled him to cure people.<sup>15</sup> Besides, there was a popular belief that only  
239 those with a sin-free life were granted access to the shrines by the saints themselves  
240 and thus the bishop who daily officiated at those shrines had to be blameless; this  
241 gradually turned him into a sacrosanct figure who, appointed for life, increasingly  
242 stood above worldly law as he was ultimately accountable to God alone. Also in the  
243 fight against heresy the saints' cults could play an important role in manifesting  
244 Episcopal power as a belief in divine intervention formed part of the orthodox faith  
245 whereas for example Arianism rejected this.<sup>16</sup> Bearing in mind the enormous  
246 influence and importance these cults had on the population but above all in the role  
247 of the bishop, a rejection of this by an Arian government would certainly have had  
248 some serious impact on the stability of its rule. In case of the Visigoths who were  
249 Arians such veneration would have met with obstacles from a religious viewpoint,  
250 which could have played a negative role in the long-term acceptance of Visigothic  
251 rule (from the aristocratic viewpoint, the Arian church in the Gothic kingdom offered  
252 less attractive 'career' options than the Frankish realm). In contrast, though, the  
253 Franks as orthodox Christians not only accepted such cults but even supported the  
254 most important shrines such as the tomb of St Martin with royal donations; not only  
255 did this cement the increasing power positions of their bishops (which would have  
256 been of interest for the Gallo-Roman aristocrats as the majority of the holders of  
257 these positions) but also strengthened the royal authority of their kings.

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<sup>15</sup> See Van Dam (1985), 143, 237, 256-77.

<sup>16</sup> For example Van Dam (1985), 168-71, 189-97 for importance of saints' cults in Gaul.

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259 Another, perhaps more obvious role of the bishop was his influence in worldly  
260 administration, although from a strictly theological viewpoint he had no place in  
261 worldly affairs. It was not only the spiritual side of the Episcopate that was appealing  
262 to an aristocrat: also the involvement of the bishop in administrative matters,  
263 jurisdiction and political aspects was certainly of interest to the Gallic aristocracy,  
264 even more so if one considers their continuously close association with the *civitates*  
265 and the local administrative networking within Gaul. Maybe it was this link with the  
266 administrative/political world which was above all of real interest to many of the  
267 Gallic nobles who joined the Episcopate. Within the Western sphere the bishop  
268 achieved a position of lordship which set him equal to the worldly leaders and  
269 enabled him to engage in jurisdiction, to intervene in cases of war or civil matters  
270 such as taxation (from which he was exempt), to care for charity and to engage in  
271 public building programmes, as well as to sponsor and build churches and  
272 monasteries within his diocese and his Episcopal city. Already since Constantine it  
273 had been the church which cared for the poor and was granted financial help,  
274 privileges and patronage by the emperors to support its charitable work; in return the  
275 bishops were supposed to pray for the common good of the emperor and his realm, a  
276 concept which continued in the barbarian kingdoms too. It was this sphere of  
277 charitable works, which was also supported by donations from wealthy aristocrats,  
278 which created a wide following among the population and further supported the  
279 public profile of the bishop.<sup>17</sup> Effectively it meant that the bishop took over many of  
280 the former imperial administrative tasks, which enhanced his power, especially when  
281 the former imperial administrative structures within the cities increasingly declined;  
282 laymen did play a role in the administrative running of the barbarian governments

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<sup>17</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* III.1.2 for donations of a farm and its revenues his relative Avitus (not the emperor) had made to the church in Clermont-Ferrand.

283 although the proportion of members of the clergy was undoubtedly high, due to the  
284 increasingly strong impact of monastic training in terms of education. Being publicly  
285 acclaimed after his election by the inhabitants of the city, the bishop ultimately  
286 became the leading man of his city, who was not only involved in its administrative,  
287 charitable and religious work but also able to control and use the population as a  
288 further outward sign of his authority.<sup>18</sup> As the *civitas* was the central point of local  
289 administration in Gaul, the imperial government used the bishops, the central figures  
290 in their towns/dioceses, as a vital link between imperial government and *civitas*: as  
291 discussed above, the bishops were not only engaged in the spiritual leadership of  
292 their subjects but were directly involved in the urban administrative and political  
293 business, thus gaining a status of quasi-leaders of their cities and dioceses, which  
294 was further highlighted by certain immunities in terms of taxation and jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup>  
295 Furthermore, as it had traditionally been the nobility which had governed the *civitas*,  
296 this connection between aristocracy and bishopric would have further helped the said  
297 nobility to continue its links with local administration and authority, albeit now  
298 through ecclesiastical offices; such links were even fostered by the phenomenon of  
299 entire Episcopal dynasties – Gregory of Tours is a prime example – which further  
300 monopolised the bishopric for the aristocracy. The Frankish concept of adopting and  
301 incorporating the *civitates* into their own administrative system was not only a sign  
302 of them adopting the Roman system but also added to their future political success  
303 because it closely bound the Gallic episcopate to the monarchy.<sup>20</sup> As Van Dam  
304 observed, the conversion of the Gallic aristocracy to Christianity and their adoption

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<sup>18</sup> Van Ossel (1996), 103-5 on the question of the continuation and preservation of urban life and structures in the late empire.

<sup>19</sup> The bishop was lord over the ecclesiastical finances and income in his diocese as well as over the monasteries and other ecclesiastical institutions, see Anton (1996), 373-6.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis (2001), 75, 84-6: not all bishops were linked with their native *civitas*, which was also in part a result of strong competition for these sees: Sidonius for example became bishop of Clermont-Ferrand although he was a native of Lyon, whereas others like Faustus of Riez became bishop of their native *civitas*. Van Dam (1985), 203-12. Heinzelmann (1992), 243-5; (1996), 387. Schneider (1996), 394. Anton (1996), 374. Drinkwater (2007), 348.

305 of ecclesiastical offices was not so much a transformation of the same aristocracy but  
306 far more a transformation of Christianity to incorporate aristocratic values. Yet Van  
307 Dam's argument should be treated with caution because the realisation of the socio-  
308 political opportunities the Episcopate offered, was surely a result of a profound  
309 change to the world of the Gallic aristocracy; he is correct in that way that many of  
310 the core values of the aristocracy, such as their political/public role, their devotion to  
311 literature and the maintenance of social networks, were indeed preserved or even  
312 transmitted into the office of the bishop. What had changed however was the fact  
313 that the nobility now made a sphere their own that they had not previously occupied;  
314 their willingness to assimilate with the new political sphere by entering ecclesiastical  
315 offices, is a sign that the previous aristocratic world had undergone serious changes.  
316 Liebeschuetz, though, warns against the concept of a 'revolutionary rise' of the  
317 bishop to this position as in his opinion it was much more the natural outcome of the  
318 decline of the civil administration, thus of the *civitas*, which left a vacuum to be  
319 filled; furthermore the roots of Episcopal power lay in the bishop's moral authority  
320 over questions of faith, discipline and entry into church offices as well as his role as  
321 a public leader of the Christian community.<sup>21</sup> Thus effectively the bishop came to  
322 adopt a public position of worldly power because the former imperial system of civic  
323 administration declined, which enabled him to continue his aristocratic  
324 understanding of office-holding whilst enhancing this through his spiritual  
325 dominance. Thus the increasingly high proportion of Gallic aristocrats occupying  
326 Episcopal seats was a result of a form of socio-political assimilation of the Gallic  
327 nobility in much the same way as other Gallic nobles had opted to pursue worldly  
328 careers at the barbarian courts.

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<sup>21</sup> Constantine's conversion and the Christian faith of all subsequent emperors, apart from Julian, as well as Constantine's encouragement to organise the dioceses and ecclesiastical organisation parallel to the administrative structures of the empire, only supported the increasing power-position of the bishop. Van Dam (1985), 141-9. Liebeschuetz (2001), 89, 124, 130, 137-9, 141, 155-9, 162-4.



329 There was yet another aspect of the Episcopate that appealed to many members of  
330 the aristocracy to enter said office and that was the close connection between the  
331 church, especially religious orders, and the preservation and continuation of learning  
332 and literature. However, as the traditional system of education declined, it was the  
333 church and the monasteries that took over the preservation and development of  
334 learning, not only in literary aspects but also in the legal tradition, although the  
335 classical texts became increasingly rudimentary as the main focus of education was  
336 on the best possible knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. As the devotion to literature  
337 formed an essential part of the aristocratic lifestyle, this would have added another  
338 aspect of interest to join ecclesiastical offices.<sup>22</sup> Again, the office of the bishop  
339 enabled the Gallic aristocrat to continue his former lifestyle not only in terms of  
340 enabling him to pursue this devotion to classical literature but also to maintain the  
341 important social network through correspondence. Although Sidonius claimed that  
342 he had to discontinue his former devotion to classical aspects of literature, as these  
343 were incompatible with the teachings of the church because of their pagan nature, he  
344 nevertheless continued to devote a large part of his time to his beloved literature and  
345 to a vast correspondence with his fellow-bishops/aristocrats. Biblical studies became  
346 the predominant factor in the literary education of the church, which meant that  
347 many of the bishops only had a fairly basic understanding of the texts of classical  
348 literature: for example Gregory of Tours was the scion of a Gallic aristocratic family,  
349 which in earlier Roman times would have meant for him a thorough training in the  
350 classical arts, yet his knowledge of Latin was rather crude and his writings centred  
351 overall on biblical knowledge. However, it should not be forgotten that despite the  
352 lack of a proper education in the traditional Roman sense, Gregory had still retained  
353 the old Roman pride in a command of Latin and its literature when he sneered at the

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<sup>22</sup> See Part IV.3 a.

354 attempts of a Frankish king to compose poetry in Roman fashion.<sup>23</sup> In comparison,  
355 his friend Venantius Fortunatus had received a more traditional education and was  
356 far more schooled in classical literature and poetry than Gregory. Despite their  
357 services at the Frankish court and their lifestyle in which traditional Roman values  
358 and concepts of education increasingly became an echo of a venerated past, parts of  
359 an aristocratic understanding of their exalted status as members of Rome's former  
360 ruling class could still be found among these Gallic nobles.

361

362 The traditional aristocratic education and the familiarity with the cultural and  
363 political sphere of the respective government thus formed a perfect basis for the  
364 highly influential position of a bishop and became therefore extremely attractive to  
365 many Gallic aristocrats who could not fulfil their public role in the political arena.  
366 Thus the church offered the continuation of a career and a position within the social  
367 hierarchy, which lay society could not automatically guarantee any more. Thus the  
368 position of the bishop was not something that the establishment of barbarian  
369 kingdoms and the decline of former imperial structures had solely created, but was in  
370 part based on a development which had already started in the empire. The lack of  
371 available public offices had urged aristocratic families in Gaul to seek other means to  
372 find substitutes for the same and the church offered an excellent way to combine a  
373 public office with aristocratic values.

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<sup>23</sup> See Part IV.3 b. In Visigothic Spain it was the church which established a revival of literature in the middle of the sixth century in an attempt to provide a unifying aspect for the country. Although they were few people as authors involved, the literature produced had widespread influence. Liebeschuetz (2001), 319, 333-40. See also Collins (2006).

## 377 2. The Goths, the Franks and the question of Arianism

378

379 When comparing the long-term effects of the success of the Gothic kingdom with the  
380 Franks, the role of religion has been often cited as a decisive factor why the Goths  
381 were eventually losing their power whereas the Franks managed to retain it into the  
382 Middle Ages. Religion, or disputes over its practices and rituals, is a decisive factor  
383 in the process of assimilation between peoples and cultures. The Goths, like many  
384 other barbarian groups such as the Vandals, the Suebes, the Burgundians and others,  
385 had adopted the teachings of Arius when they had converted to Christianity, and their  
386 decision to keep this form of Christian faith, although it was later officially declared  
387 a heresy, has sometimes been interpreted as one of the main reasons why the Goths,  
388 in contrast to the Franks, who had adopted Catholicism like the majority of the  
389 Roman population, failed to achieve any long-lasting success. However, as will be  
390 seen below, the concept of Arianism per se was perhaps far less a decisive factor  
391 than sometimes thought.

392

393 Why the Goths kept the Arian faith despite its rejection by the Catholic Church is  
394 difficult to answer, but it has often been interpreted as a deliberate move, perhaps  
395 envisaged to provide a form of ethnic boundary to the predominantly orthodox  
396 Roman population. However, if Arianism was indeed used by the Goths as an  
397 attempt to create an ethnic or complete religious separation, it succeeded only  
398 partially as both Arianism and Orthodoxy were just different branches of the same  
399 religion. By following a Christian sect, the Goths remained at least technically  
400 members of the empire because the empire was officially Christian too. If they had  
401 wanted to separate themselves completely from the imperial context via the religious  
402 sphere, the adoption of a specific Christian sect, albeit a heretical one, ultimately

403 failed to be successful. The adoption of Christianity occurred at a time when the  
404 Goths tried to assimilate with the empire themselves. Ulfila's teaching was in  
405 conformity with the official religion of the empire, so when part of the Goths  
406 adopted Arianism or rather the *Homoean* version already in the 340s they did so in  
407 order to become part of the empire and to justify their claims to be admitted into the  
408 empire, rather than to create a deliberate separation.<sup>24</sup> Thus instead of establishing a  
409 religious boundary to the Roman population, the Goths had in fact tried to assimilate  
410 with the imperial system by following its official religion. If Sozomen's argument is  
411 correct that Fritigern had indeed converted around 376 when a new treaty with the  
412 empire was established, then this decision was undoubtedly politically inspired:  
413 Fritigern's attempts to receive the status of *rex socius et amicus* would have further  
414 encouraged him to adopt a similar line in the religious sphere to that of the  
415 emperor.<sup>25</sup> Although Fritigern failed to achieve his aim, the concept of sharing the  
416 same Christian faith with the empire might have been a factor which appealed to the  
417 Goths from a diplomatic viewpoint, especially when it came to peace negotiations, as  
418 it might have presented them as being less 'barbarian' (and thus more agreeable to  
419 the Romans) than they would have been if they had retained their pagan religion.  
420 Therefore the question over religion as an ethnically defining element came into  
421 being only when Arius' rule was denounced as heresy, which complicated matters  
422 because the Goths failed to revoke their Arian belief. Arianism was rejected as early  
423 as 325 at the Council of Nicaea when the Council defined the Trinity as *Homoousios*,

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<sup>24</sup> Ulfila's Christian teaching as well as his translation of the bible into the Gothic language in the 340s had started the Gothic conversion to Christianity, albeit to the Arian brand, although at that time it was the official religion supported by Constantius. However, Christianity was already attested among the Goths before Ulfila, as mentioned by Athanasius, *de incarnatione verbi* 51. Part of the treaty to cross the Danube in 376 might have encompassed their conversion to the then prevailing brand of Christianity, that is the *Homoean* version, accepted until 380. Schwarcz (1999), 451-2, 453-5, based on Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* IV.33; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* VI.37 argues that Fritigern could have converted in 376 out of gratitude, due to the support he received from the emperor against Athanasius, which would explain the adoption of the Arian faith, although it has to be remembered that at the time the distinction with the Catholics was not yet that apparent.

<sup>25</sup> See Part II.1 b.

424 thus declaring the *Homoean* belief heretical. Arius' doctrine continued its influence,  
425 especially when the emperor Constantius openly supported Arianism; his death  
426 deprived the Arian church of one of its chief supporters and it was officially declared  
427 a heresy at the Council of Constantinople in 381. The Goths were therefore not  
428 originally followers of a heretical group, although their *Homoean* version had  
429 become heretical, but were declared as such when Ulfila's teachings failed to  
430 exclude Arius' theory.<sup>26</sup> Whether the Gothic decision to keep the Arian faith was  
431 now corresponding with their increasing political power is open to question: it could  
432 have been regarded as a way to create a deliberate distinction between themselves  
433 and the empire, perhaps for reasons of preserving or even creating a different identity  
434 once they had become part of the empire, but remaining simultaneously part of its  
435 overall Christian tradition in order to maintain levels of assimilation with the  
436 Romans.

437 It is debatable whether different religious practices were even needed to act as an  
438 ethnic boundary to prevent too much assimilation between the Gothic and Roman  
439 population. As discussed before, in the fourth and to some extent even in the fifth  
440 century assimilation between the Gothic and Roman population was still a process in  
441 the making. Ethnic boundaries as well as different social and cultural concepts still  
442 existed between Goths and Romans, especially among the Roman aristocracy,  
443 despite an increasing level of political cooperation; social boundaries between  
444 Romans and Goths continued to be upheld especially on the Roman side despite their  
445 understanding of a necessary political assimilation with the Goths. Sidonius, among  
446 others, was famously reluctant to accept the Goths as his equals regardless of his  
447 political dealings with them.<sup>27</sup> Whether the choice of religion had been a deliberate  
448 Gothic move to create some form of ethnic separation from the Romans is therefore

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<sup>26</sup> Heather (1999), 90, 470; (1996), 131.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Part IV.2.c. See also Collins (1980), 202.

449 somewhat unlikely, especially when the majority of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy,  
450 such as Sidonius and most of his peers, did everything to preserve their own Roman  
451 background and culture, despite their dealings with the Goths. Certainly from the  
452 Roman side, there was less threat to Gothic identity than a deliberate choice on the  
453 Gothic side over a specific religion, as a barrier would warrant. Besides, there was  
454 perhaps a less clear distinction between the two groups in terms of popular opinion,  
455 especially when as late as the fifth century there were still Arians to be found among  
456 some of the Romans too, so a religious separation only applied between Goths who  
457 were Arians and those Romans who followed the Nicene Creed and were thus  
458 Catholic anyway.<sup>28</sup> Collins has argued that in the fourth century there was no  
459 distinction made of Arianism as a specific group anyway, as it was only in the fifth  
460 century that different groups which did not conform with orthodoxy, were described  
461 as heretical in theological sources. In his opinion Arianism became an ethnically  
462 defining aspect for the majority of the Visigoths only in the sixth century, but he also  
463 stated that it must have lost its purpose of creating ethnic boundaries when Leovigild  
464 tried to impose a conversion of the Romans to Arianism at the Arian synod in Toledo  
465 in 580.<sup>29</sup>

466 However, a strict observation of religious practice from an ecclesiastical viewpoint,  
467 as well as an increasing ostracism of the Arian belief, would have separated the  
468 Arian Goths and the Catholic Romans already in the fourth century in terms of ritual  
469 by providing an almost daily and certainly obvious distinction; also in terms of actual

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<sup>28</sup> Van Dam (1985), 110-2: Manichaeism and Priscillianism are other examples for the potential social and political exploitation of heretical beliefs; certainly contemporaries within the ecclesiastical sphere regarded those two heresies with particular anxiety. Heather (1996), 313-5.

<sup>29</sup> Collins (2006) 65, 158-9, 160: issues of religious division between Arians and Catholics within the Gothic realm became only really apparent during Leovigild's reign in the sixth century when he tried to enforce Arian rule as a way to unify Spain; thus theological questions over the nature of the Trinity were only addressed at the Arian synod of Toledo in 580. In Collins' opinion it is difficult to understand why there were no members of the Catholic church who had tried to convert the Arian Goths to the orthodox faith as had happened in other barbarian kingdoms, which he explains with a lack of intellectual stimuli within the Spanish Church at that time. See also Heather (1996), 281. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 38-9.

470 language it created a certain boundary when the Gothic Arian Church used and  
471 fostered the Gothic language in contrast to Latin; moreover most major towns would  
472 have had two religious communities with their own leaders, in some cases even two  
473 bishops, which would have further highlighted religious separation among the  
474 population.<sup>30</sup> On the basis of these different religious practices, Wallace-Hadrill has  
475 argued in favour of Arianism as the only real ethnically defining element when the  
476 Goths had already adopted Roman customs.<sup>31</sup> To belong to a different religion from  
477 the majority of the population could thus indeed function as a tool to preserve or  
478 even to cultivate a different identity from this majority by focusing on different  
479 rituals or even a different language. The use of a different language/dialect as such,  
480 especially when embedded in specific rituals such as religious practices, can be a  
481 powerful tool to create and maintain ethnic diversity: Ulfila's translation of the bible  
482 into the Gothic language thus served at least theoretically as a tool to assert Gothic  
483 self-identification and perhaps even as a form of ethnic self-understanding; but the  
484 extent of its impact on the overall development of the Gothic peoples and their  
485 ethnicity or the Germanic language is open to question, especially when language  
486 used in or created for a sacred context tends to hinder its overall linguistic  
487 development.<sup>32</sup> Whether then the concept of using the Gothic language within a  
488 religious context was strong enough to act as a defining factor of ethnic self-identity  
489 as Gothic among the Gothic Arians is open to question. Collins' argument that there  
490 was no real distinction between Arians and Catholics in the fourth century would  
491 have made the continuation of the Arian faith even less attractive as an instrument of  
492 maintaining ethnic or social boundaries. However, this is surely too general a

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<sup>30</sup> Liebeschuetz (1990), 49-50; (1991), 186-7; (2001), 354-5. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 40. See pp. 49, 51 for a possible link between cult leagues and a potential fostering of political alliances via such leagues; if this was the case in earlier Gothic history, then there might have been an attempt to continue such connections between religious aspects and political identity.

<sup>31</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 26. Collins (2006), 64.

<sup>32</sup> Heather (1996), 85. Wolfram (1990), 76-7.

493 statement, especially when there were distinctly different rituals (a different ritual  
494 concerning the person of the king, or the refusal to accept miracles as a  
495 demonstration of divine interference) between Arian and Catholic practice, which  
496 would have created at least some impact on the population on a more or less daily  
497 basis; especially the refusal of the Arian doctrine to accept the power of miracles via  
498 the saints' cults would have had a strong impact on the population, not to mention  
499 the role of the bishop and the way in which he could assert his power, especially  
500 when the role of these saints' cults was a vitally important aspect of religious  
501 practice at that time.<sup>33</sup> Collins might be right, though, that the difference between the  
502 two became exploited only later on and that the finer differences of theological  
503 doctrine would have been lost on the majority of the population. This means that  
504 there was certainly a formally theological separation between orthodox and heretical  
505 groups already in the fourth century, although differences between Catholics and  
506 Arians might have varied in different realms, and differed in the way in which people  
507 interpreted this theological separation. The Visigoths remained Arians until the Third  
508 Council of Toledo in 589, when they converted to Catholicism, and Collins could be  
509 right that within the Visigothic kingdom there was less profound separation between  
510 Arians and Catholics.

511

512 Despite this religious separation and a certain tension between the two on this  
513 ground, there was never a direct persecution of Catholic Christians as part of a  
514 deliberate religiously inspired policy by the Goths. At times, though, differences  
515 between the Gothic king and the Catholic bishops in the fifth century were  
516 interpreted by some bishops such as Sidonius as an attempt to prohibit or even  
517 annihilate the proper faith: 'I dread less his [Euric's] designs against our Roman city-

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<sup>33</sup> Van Dam (1985), 187-90, 258. See above.



518 walls than against our Christian laws. So repugnant is the word “catholic” to his  
 519 mouth and his heart that one doubts whether he is more the ruler of his nation or of  
 520 his sect [Arianism]’.<sup>34</sup> However, any such sanctions were far more the result of  
 521 political interference on the side of the bishops and had little if anything to do with a  
 522 persecution of the Catholics<sup>35</sup>. Later Gregory of Tours continued this theme of  
 523 Catholic persecutions when he accused both Euric and Alaric II of such actions.  
 524 However these persecutions had not been based on a religious conflict and the  
 525 punishment of a specific form of belief, but were far more the result of religion  
 526 interfering in political interests of the Goths.<sup>36</sup> Athanaric’s persecutions of Christians  
 527 are documented in the passion of St Saba, but these were not so much theologically  
 528 inspired, but rather were the result of political circumstances since these Christians  
 529 were regarded as potential spies of the Roman emperor and as such posed a threat to  
 530 Gothic political interests as well as the traditional Gothic religion because of  
 531 potential attempts on their side to proselytise the Gothic people; as Schwarcz has

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<sup>34</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII.6.4, 6-10.

<sup>35</sup> See also Sivan (2003), 110-1 for Alaric’s interference in religious matters during the sack of Rome, where he acted as a promotor of religious unity.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson (1980), 77-81, 83: likewise the Suebes were not practising the persecution of Christians, neither as pagans nor as Arians. The damage inflicted on the Roman population, mentioned for example in Hydatius’ chronicle, was due to them owning property but not their different religion. Hydatius moreover mentioned explicitly the Catholic, orthodox faith of one of their kings, Rechiarus, although the Suebes as a people converted to Arianism (introduced by Ajax, an Arian priest of the Arian Gallic church with the help of the Gothic king Theoderic II) before their eventual conversion to Catholicism in the mid sixth century (as recorded in Gregory of Tours). In Vandal Africa, tensions between the Arian Vandals and the Catholic Romans were exaggerated and exploited by ecclesiastical writers like Victor of Vita to portray the Vandals as persecutors of the true faith, deliberately annihilating anything Christian as well as Roman, thus leading to the extremely negative picture about Vandal rule in Africa. Although under Gaiseric’s reign Arianism was a requirement to enter official positions at the royal court, the predominant reason for the tensions between Romans and Vandals was not so much a different religion but some of the administrative measures by Gaiseric such as the confiscation of church property; the church owned extensive land and properties, thus making it an obvious target for Gaiseric to redistribute this wealth among his followers. The Vandals had inherited a religiously/politically situation in Africa, which had been unstable since the Donatist schism, and their Arian faith had only aggravated matters but not created them in the first place. Thus some of the persecutions and outbreaks of violence against rich Roman landowners were more the result of Donatist followers taking revenge on their Roman opponents, and the Vandal arrival provided a cover for this. More direct prosecutions of Catholic Christians happened under Gaiseric’s son Huneric. The Vandal conquest and looting of Rome in 455, as well as the general lack of Vandal support for the empire in its fight against other barbarian people, only added to this negative picture. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II. 2, 3. See also Pohl (2005), 82-6, 141-4. Geary (2001), 121-2. Cameron, Av. (1993), 28, 37. Heather (2005), 263-72, 292-9, 382, 395-6. Shaw (2001), 141-2. Clover (1989), 57-60. Raven, 196-8, 206. Lambert (2000), 109-10. Maier (2005), 64-5.

532 argued, this was closely related to the strengthening of Athanaric's role as leader,  
533 who regarded the Christians as potential Roman partisans. As the imperial  
534 government used Christianity as a tool to strengthen its claim of absolute power  
535 because it provided a direct link between imperial rule and divine power, Gothic  
536 suspicions concerning of how far any Christian mission was also an indirect attack  
537 on Gothic politics and its authority were therefore not that far-fetched. The imperial  
538 administration actively supported missionaries like Ulfila in an attempt to bring them  
539 closer to the imperial sphere; thus the Goths had every reason to doubt the influence  
540 of Christianity on them.<sup>37</sup> According to Wolfram, the adoption of Arianism by the  
541 Goths acted in many ways as a replacement of their old pagan religion, thus  
542 preserving an element of separation between Romans and Goths although it did  
543 allow for religious tolerance.<sup>38</sup> In this context religion did serve as an ethnically  
544 defining element, as following the pre-Christian Gothic religion was used to create  
545 an ethnic boundary against the Christians, who were associated with the empire.<sup>39</sup>  
546 When the Goths eventually adopted Christianity, they converted to the prevalent  
547 form propagated by the emperor himself, as a sign of conforming to imperial ideas in  
548 order to assimilate with them. Once Arianism had become a heresy, it could serve the  
549 same purpose of creating or protecting Gothic interests when it acted as a boundary  
550 against those Romans who followed orthodoxy. Religion per se was thus not  
551 automatically a tool to create ethnic boundaries, but could be exploited as such. Yet  
552 the contrast between Arianism and Catholicism and thus between Goths and Franks  
553 was on a political level far less apparent than it was from an ecclesiastical/doctrinal

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<sup>37</sup> There is little evidence for the early history of their religious belief; some information can be extracted from archaeological studies, see Schwarcz (1999), 447-50, 452-4. Heather (1996), 60-1.

<sup>38</sup> Wolfram (1990), 209-10. Hillgarth (1980), 8-9, 45.

<sup>39</sup> Ulfila was one of the most famous victims of these persecutions. Kulikowski (2007), 117-22. Heather (1996), 61, 315; (2001), 25. Wolfram (1990), 78-9. Also Sivan (2003), 109-10: the fact that St Saba had survived several Christian persecutions while he was living among a pagan majority, suggests that it was less religion which was perceived as an indicator of socio-ethnic boundaries among the Goths, but rather social class and rank which acted as creators of social boundaries.

554 viewpoint, although of course the religious aspect could be exploited for political  
 555 reasons.<sup>40</sup>

556 Euric's and Alaric II's alleged persecutions against some prominent Gallic bishops  
 557 were predominantly politically inspired. It is true that Euric had forbidden the  
 558 ordination or investiture of some bishops but this was a political decision because of  
 559 the political interference of some of these bishops and the potential danger which  
 560 stemmed from their high spiritual power and status among their followers; it was not  
 561 based on religious matters over the difference between Catholic bishops and Arian  
 562 Goths. Sidonius made much of Euric's intervention in ecclesiastical appointments  
 563 (Euric refused to accept the elections for the sees of Bordeaux, Périgueux, Rodez,  
 564 Limoges, Bazas, Auch and others) and described them as Euric's attempt to  
 565 annihilate any proper faith because of the lack of any Catholic representatives in  
 566 ecclesiastical offices and the consequences of lacking congregations in the  
 567 churches.<sup>41</sup> However, Sidonius himself had been exiled to Bordeaux for his active  
 568 role against Euric in the siege of Clermont – again a decision on Euric's side to  
 569 eliminate any further negative political interference from a well-connected Gallic  
 570 aristocrat, and not to persecute a Catholic bishop for his faith. As previously  
 571 discussed, Sidonius was never intending to state clearly his political convictions. His  
 572 aim to be reinstated in his bishopric and to regain access to his properties as well as  
 573 his former influential position meant that he could not be explicit about Euric's  
 574 politics and thus had to find a way to explain his exile; a religious motive was  
 575 perhaps easier to create than to admit a deep political controversy, especially when it

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<sup>40</sup> Even Justinian used the same precept of fighting for a restoration of the true faith for his re-conquest of Africa by presenting the Vandals as a threat to Christendom. Cassiodorus, *Var.* III. 17, 43; IV. 39. Salvian in contrast regarded the Vandal arrival in Africa as a way for Africa to return to proper Christianity. Furthermore, when the Vandals issued laws based on Christian morality, they established a superior social concept of society: the Vandals were thus presented as God's tool, and the destruction they caused was a rightful punishment of the Romans and their lack of morale and true faith, Salvian, *de gub.dei* VI.11,13, 22. Unruh (1991), 385. Lambert (2000), 109, 111-2. Allo Isichei (1964), 104.

<sup>41</sup> Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII. 5.3-4; VII.6.4-10. Also Dill (1998), 304-5. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 42-4.

576 was the same king who had imposed this exile but on whom Sidonius' restoration  
577 depended. As the role of the bishop encompassed a highly prolific public as well as  
578 political role, occasional clashes with the Gothic king were inevitably recurring. In  
579 488 Alaric II recalled Faustus of Riez after Euric had exiled him, although in the  
580 490s he himself exiled Volusianus of Tours on account of political treason, a fate  
581 Caesarius of Arles was to share shortly afterwards. But Alaric II was in no way as  
582 anti-Catholic as Gregory liked to portray him and his relationship with the Gallo-  
583 Roman bishops was equally based on the preservation of Gothic politics and interests  
584 as had been the case with Euric. Alaric II's decisions regarding some of these  
585 Catholic bishops might have been influenced by Chlodwig's interference in Gothic  
586 interests. Chlodwig's fight against the Goths under Alaric II at Vouillé in 507 was  
587 interpreted by Gregory of Tours as a religious war of Catholicism against Arian  
588 heretics and the subsequent Frankish success as a victory of the true faith. However  
589 such a picture seems to have been a deliberate invention of Gregory in much the  
590 same way as he had depicted Chlodwig as a new Constantine and God's messenger  
591 on earth<sup>42</sup>. It is true that Chlodwig's acceptance of Catholicism had avoided the  
592 conflict with the Catholic Church, in fact it bound the church and the Merovingian  
593 kingdom closely together, and it had allowed for an even closer relationship between  
594 the Roman population and the Franks; thus it enabled a level of interaction between  
595 the two based on religious unity, which was not always possible in the Visigothic  
596 kingdom.<sup>43</sup> Yet Chlodwig's policy was not as universally welcome as Gregory  
597 portrayed it, and as discussed above the Catholic Roman population continued to  
598 follow its Arian rulers for some time. Moreover, neither Alaric II was as anti-  
599 Catholic nor was Chlodwig as ardently Catholic as Gregory wanted his readers to  
600 believe: although Gregory presented Chlodwig as a defender of the true faith, the

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<sup>42</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II. 31. Heinzelmann (1996), 386.

<sup>43</sup> Bury (1889), 347. Drinkwater (2007), 348.

601 Frankish king had earlier concluded a treaty with the Arian Alaric II, and had  
 602 enlisted the help of the equally Arian Burgundians against the Goths, which strongly  
 603 suggests that the later conflict between the two was politically inspired and not a  
 604 kind of ‘crusade’ against Gothic heretics. Gregory of Tours most likely pre-dated  
 605 Chlodwig’s conversion in order to argue that many Gallo-Romans were trying to  
 606 enter Frankish service to be ruled by a Catholic king; in Wallace-Hadrill’s opinion it  
 607 also served Gregory as a tool to justify Chlodwig’s aggressive expansionism in Gaul  
 608 as from an ecclesiastical viewpoint a Catholic king could not merely engage in  
 609 warfare for its own sake.<sup>44</sup> Although the date of Chlodwig’s conversion is open to  
 610 debate (Chlodwig presumably converted only after Vouillé) and his aim to  
 611 undermine Gothic interests had nothing to do with his conversion, Chlodwig did try  
 612 to interfere in the Gothic kingdom by undermining Catholic support for an Arian  
 613 king; however, tendencies of certain factions at the Frankish court to convert  
 614 Chlodwig to Catholicism would have given his interference in Gothic interests an  
 615 edge which was for Alaric impossible to ignore, especially when there were  
 616 underlying tensions between Arians and Catholics, which could be exploited for  
 617 Frankish interests.<sup>45</sup> Alaric II’s response was far from persecuting his Catholic  
 618 subjects but rather to seek unity among his subjects: he issued his *Breviary*, which  
 619 aimed among other points to provide even greater stability in regard to Roman rights

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<sup>44</sup> For the ecclesiastically inspired tendencies of Gregory’s writings, see for example Van Dam (1985), 182-3, 186-7. Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 69. Heinzelmann (1996), 382-6.

<sup>45</sup> For the debate on the exact date of Chlodwig’s conversion, see for example Dierkens (1996), 186-88, 189; a very likely date is Christmas Day 508. Wolfram (1997), 210. Rouché (1996). Pohl (1998b), 640. Geary (1988), 85-7. James (1988), 121-4. Geuenich (1998), 425-8, 432-4: Chlodwig’s conversion might have happened after a battle against the Alamanni, and not against the Goths; crucial instruments in his conversion were Remigius as bishop of Reims, and to a lesser extent his wife Chrodechildis, who, according to Gregory, had tried for a long time to convert the king; indeed both her sons had been baptised – undoubtedly with Chlodwig’s consent, which makes any notion of a sudden decision to convert all the more unlikely – although the subsequent death of one of the boys had led to serious misgivings on the king’s side. Thus Catholicism was not as unfamiliar to the king as Gregory’s jubilant note on Chlodwig’s conversion would indicate. Of course a vow in a battle against pagans like the Alamanni (or the Arian that is heretical Goths) would have highlighted Gregory’s image of Chlodwig as the new Constantine, which was perhaps one of the reasons why the two aspects were linked. See also below.

620 of holding and inheriting property (aimed especially at the Roman aristocracy as  
621 landowners), as well as instigating the synod of Gallic bishops at Agde in 506 and  
622 the planning of a nationwide council of Gallic and Spanish bishops for 507.<sup>46</sup>  
623 Although Alaric did exile Caesarius as his Episcopal power extended outside Gothic  
624 borders and he was seen as directly interfering in or even supporting Frankish  
625 interests, he was soon recalled; Caesarius might have preached against the Gothic  
626 king on account of his heretical belief during his time in exile, but that did not mean  
627 an attempt on Caesarius' side to undermine royal power as he accepted the idea of  
628 monarchical rule as God-given. Besides, the differences between the Catholic  
629 bishops and the Arian Gothic king seem to have been far less pronounced than  
630 Sidonius or Gregory portray them: in fact, the majority of the predominantly  
631 Catholic Gallo-Roman aristocrats, among them for example Sidonius' son  
632 Apollinaris, supported and died for Alaric II at Vouillé, which is in itself a testimony  
633 to the strength of assimilation between Goths and Gallo-Romans, regardless of their  
634 religious convictions.<sup>47</sup>

635 Similar tensions between the Catholic bishops and the Gothic king erupted again in  
636 the sixth century when Leovigild tried to assert his power by meddling in the  
637 religious set-up of his kingdom, and again it had largely to do with attempts of  
638 asserting political/royal influence: for example bishop Masona of Mérida refused to  
639 accept the attempts at the king to reassert royal power in his diocese and especially in  
640 the city of Mérida; Masona's refusal to accept the king's interference led to his  
641 replacement with another Catholic bishop who was more acceptable to the king's

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<sup>46</sup> Heather (1996), 214. Lewis (2001), 65.

<sup>47</sup> Heather (1996), 213-5. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.37. The subsequent difficulties the Gothic kingdom had to face were not so much the result of religious differences but the lack of political power/organisation due to the death of Alaric II, which led to dynastic struggles. See also Díaz (1999), 335-47.

642 schemes than Masona.<sup>48</sup> Yet Masona had been replaced not because he was Catholic  
 643 but because he had offered resistance to the king who tried to enhance the power of  
 644 the Arian church.<sup>49</sup> Equally Leovigild's intention to smooth out the tensions based on  
 645 religious differences among the ruling group within Visigothic society was well  
 646 intended as a means to create a common identity though Leovigild's insistence on  
 647 using Arianism for this failed to be successful.<sup>50</sup> Even possible attempts to promote  
 648 Catholicism as a way to create a greater element of unity among the ruling factions  
 649 would have failed as the majority of the Arian bishops, like their Catholic  
 650 counterparts, came from the Gothic nobility and a move away from Arianism would  
 651 have endangered their power-positions.<sup>51</sup> These bishops undoubtedly would have  
 652 kept their influence, as they would have remained in ecclesiastical offices. The  
 653 danger of switching to Catholicism was not so much a danger of losing Episcopal

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<sup>48</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 119: Leovigild did not prosecute the Suebic Catholics when he engaged in warfare against them- the campaign against them was politically inspired and not a religious crusade.

<sup>49</sup> Collins (1980), 194-9, 201, 207-12, 215-8: Masona of Mérida had become the dominant source of power in the city, whose authority rested on his connection with the local saint, St Eulalia, and the direct involvement in her cult. Furthermore, the royal interference in the life of Spanish towns seems to have been remote, thus the cities were economically and politically largely self-reliant, which therefore meant that the bishop in such a town, even if he had been elected by his king, had much more scope to develop his own power in this urban space than his dependence on the king would theoretically suggest. Leovigild attempted to force Masona to hand over the relics of St Eulalia to the Arian church as a way for them to gain spiritual control over the population by administering access to the martyr's relics, though this attempt failed. Yet the Arian church did not accept the power of miracles/relics as a sign of direct divine interference, see Van Dam (1985), 189. Hence Leovigild's attempt to hand over relics to the Arian church would have been pointless from a theological viewpoint, though, it could have been useful from the point of gaining followers from the Catholic subjects.

<sup>50</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II.25, 26, 37; V. 38. Sid. Ap., *Ep.* VII. 6. Dierkens (1996), 186-9. Harries (1994), 234-5; (2006), 61, 65: The revolt of Hermenegild has been regarded as the reason for Leovigild's insistence on his Arian faith, instead of converting to Catholicism, though, this notion is rejected by Collins on the ground that the revolt was not a religious warfare: the main problem with Leovigild's Arianism was not the religious doctrine per se but what the king used it for in his attempts to assert his own power. Heather (1996), 280-3: argued that religious issues did play a role in Hermenegild's revolt insofar as Leovigild's attempts to create religious unity by enforcing Arianism had created tensions, which Hermenegild was ready to exploit by using his conversion to Catholicism as an argument against his father.

<sup>51</sup> Collins (2006), 66-9, 73. Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 122-3. Heather (1996), 282-3. Several revolts broke out under Leovigild's son Reccared who had adopted Catholicism in 587, which in turn threatened the former powers of both Arian courtiers, but also members of the Arian church (although a number of Arian bishops had converted to Catholicism at the Third Council of Toledo). Presumably Reccared would have anticipated these signs of resistance although his aim to achieve greater unity was certainly fulfilled, and allowed for Reccared to present himself as a new Constantine (a similarity with Chlodwig's presentation) when he instigated the Councils of Toledo, with the aim to strengthen royal influence over the church.

654 power due to the acceptance of a different doctrine but due to having too many  
655 bishops in the same town or diocese, as the formerly Arian bishops would have been  
656 added to the Catholic bishops already in charge of their flock in their parts of a  
657 town/diocese, which would have created tensions over precedence and influence. A  
658 move to Catholicism was thus surely less opposed on the premise of theological  
659 doctrines than over the question of continuing to hold their power-position. If the  
660 religious aspect was indeed preventing any long-term success of the Goths, it was  
661 more indirect as it could be an obstacle to the complete assimilation between  
662 ecclesiastical officers, mainly between the Roman aristocratic Catholic bishops, and  
663 the Arian bishops as well as the royal court with the king himself; furthermore, as  
664 most large towns would have had two bishops, there would have been a tendency to  
665 rivalry over questions of influence in both the religious as well as the social sphere  
666 within the town.

667

668 In contrast to such occasional frictions stands the close bond which connected the  
669 church and the Frankish monarchy; in Liebeschuetz' words, the 'Frankish monarchy  
670 was based on an alliance with the church', which created a bond between king and  
671 bishops that was to some extent missing within the Gothic kingdom.<sup>52</sup> For example  
672 Remigius of Reims played an important part in eventually convincing Chlodwig to  
673 be baptised in the Catholic Church though he had been in close contact with  
674 Chlodwig from the beginning of his reign as one of his advisers. Besides, the lives of  
675 many of the famous bishops of that time, for example Caesarius of Arles or Gregory  
676 of Tours, clearly demonstrate the difficult balance between maintaining royal support  
677 as a courtier (which was important both for keeping as well as enhancing personal  
678 influence and for receiving royal donations to support the charitable work of the

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<sup>52</sup> Liebeschuetz (2001), 161, 163-7.



679 church) and displaying their role as pastoral leaders. Many bishops in the Frankish  
680 realm, though, saw their main duty not so much as to act as courtiers but rather to be  
681 spiritual leaders first and to be politicians only second. Perhaps this was one of the  
682 more profound differences with the Gothic kingdom that the Gallic bishops instead  
683 tried to continue their political influence in much the same way as they had done as  
684 lay aristocrats, which would have brought them into conflict with Gothic politics.  
685 Besides, when the Goths established their power, the role of the aristocratic bishop in  
686 Gaul was still in its early stages and therefore more prone to suffer from different  
687 ideas of definition of his power, which would have brought them into conflict with  
688 the Gothic king; whereas when the Franks set up their kingdom, the role of the  
689 bishop in his worldly and spiritual powers had by now been established and therefore  
690 provided far less reason for tension. Furthermore, Chlodwig's acceptance of the  
691 Catholic faith meant the establishment of a kingdom in which both state/king and  
692 church became united in an equal position though each maintained its autonomous  
693 sphere.<sup>53</sup> It was this unity under one faith which was lacking in the Gothic kingdom,  
694 as theological dogmata forbade the support of a heretical sect such as the Arians,  
695 which meant that from the establishment of Gothic rule onwards the Catholic Church  
696 in Gaul could not fully support the Gothic king in the way in which the same church  
697 could support the Frankish monarch.

698

699 However, the Gothic kings, despite their non-Catholic conviction, nevertheless did  
700 try to interfere in the organisation of the Catholic church in their realm as the Gothic  
701 kingship aimed to continue the link between church and state as had been the case in  
702 the empire; leaving aside Sidonius' interpretation of persecution, Euric's interference  
703 in the appointments of ecclesiastical offices demonstrated an active engagement on

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<sup>53</sup> Dierkens (1996), 188. Rouche (1996), 197-8.

704 the king's side in the links between the Episcopal sees and Gothic politics by trying  
705 to protect Gothic interests.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it could have been precisely this  
706 interference of the Gothic king in ecclesiastical matters that would have had an  
707 impact on the understanding of holding power of the Gallic bishops. To a certain  
708 extent then, the differences between the predominantly Romano-Gallic bishops and  
709 the Gothic courtiers were not solved, as religious doctrine would have forbidden a  
710 complete acceptance of a heretical king; that personal assimilation could, and often  
711 did, go much further than theological statements is a different matter. Sidonius for  
712 example had been a courtier at Euric's court although he had been banished by him  
713 for his political resistance against Gothic expansion; Sidonius returned in due course  
714 to his bishopric and thus to his socio-politically influential position but Euric's  
715 politically inspired interference in ecclesiastical appointments provided ample  
716 opportunity for Sidonius to justify his misgivings about the entire establishment of  
717 Gothic power.

718 The adoption of Catholicism by the Frankish king put these Gallic bishops in an  
719 increasingly difficult position, especially when the differences between the two royal  
720 courts ended in open warfare. As part of the royal Gothic administration, they had to  
721 remain loyal to their king although from a theological point of view their loyalty  
722 could only be with the Frankish king (in that case Chlodwig) as the Catholic king.<sup>55</sup>  
723 Furthermore, in the Arian church with a predominant role designated to the king, the  
724 bishops, who were elected by the king, played a much less prominent or even  
725 dominant role than they were to play in the Frankish kingdom. Furthermore, the

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<sup>54</sup> Heather (1996), 198.

<sup>55</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II, 25. Stroheker (1948), 94-6, 100-4. Liebeschuetz (2001), 160-1. In Visigothic Spain the Catholic bishops remained rather anonymous figures although they played an important role in the royal administration. In the Burgundian kingdom the relationship between Catholic bishops and the Arian king seems to have been more open and eventually culminated in the conversion of king Sigismund. In the Vandal kingdom, the rather strict enforcement of opposition against members of the Catholic Church by Huniric and his successors fostered tendencies of separation between the two groups, which added to the eventual Vandal decline, see Wolfram (1990), 174-5. Maier (2005), 78-83.

726 exalted status of the king in the Arian Church stood much closer to the understanding  
 727 of the nature of the position and power of a Germanic king than the Catholic doctrine  
 728 with its message of equality of every man before God; perhaps unsurprisingly then  
 729 members of Chlodwig's own family as well as factions at court were Arians and he  
 730 himself took a long time to convert officially to Catholicism, although the baptism of  
 731 his two sons, according to Gregory the result of Chrodechildis' intervention, surely  
 732 indicates that Chlodwig was by no means against the Catholic faith and in fact  
 733 propagated it himself when he baptised his future successor Chlodomer (his elder  
 734 brother Ingomer had died in infancy).<sup>56</sup> In Wolfram's words, the 'king was [...] the  
 735 heart of the Arian church', which was much apparent in his separate role within  
 736 church ritual, which separated the king even further from his followers, both from his  
 737 aristocratic courtiers and from the ordinary population.<sup>57</sup> This elevated royal position  
 738 could have created an element of separation between the king and the aristocracy as  
 739 well as the church; furthermore, it would have diminished, at least partly, the  
 740 extensive rights and spiritual power of the bishops, which again would have  
 741 impinged on the aristocracy and their proactive adoption of ecclesiastical offices. In  
 742 contrast to the Arian church, the Catholic church did not grant that special status to  
 743 the Frankish king, which left the bishop to gain his outstanding position of power,  
 744 enabling the aristocracy to enter the Frankish church with the possibility to continue  
 745 their former elevated position; this in turn could bind the two together in a way

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<sup>56</sup> Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* II. 29-31, 35, 37. Chlodwig's sister Lantechildis was an Arian and presumably a member of a whole court faction, which tried to convince the king to adopt the Arian faith. In contrast to this group stood the intellectual heritage of St Genoveva, propagated and supported by Chlodwig's queen Chrodechildis and Remigius of Reims, which eventually won over the king. Dierkens (1996), 183, 186-7. Wood (1996), 360, 362. Wolfram (1990), 211-2. Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 75. Geuenich (1998), 433-4. See also above, p.245.

<sup>57</sup> For example the king had his own church vessels, which highlighted his special status by separating him from the rest of the communicants; in contrast the Catholic Eucharist included everybody and made no social distinction within the congregation who took communion, thus emphasising the idea of all Catholic believers as the body of Christ's church united in communion. Van Dam (1985), 281. Wolfram (1990), 207-10. Díaz (1999), 341-2: for the custom of royal unction as a Visigothic creation, based on precedents in the Old Testament, which further highlighted the powerful position of the Episcopate. See for example Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 39-44 for the organisation of the Arian church.

746 which was impossible in the Gothic kingdom and thus would have helped the  
747 Frankish kingdom to establish its rule in a much firmer way than the Goths were ever  
748 able to do in Gaul and Spain. However the argument that it was the Franks who were  
749 the first of the barbarian people to allow for a communication between church and  
750 state in post-Roman times is surely too restricted a view.<sup>58</sup> It is true that the adoption  
751 of Catholicism by the Frankish king made a communication with the Catholic Gallo-  
752 Roman bishops overall easier than it was at times the case for the Arian king, as it  
753 avoided the issue of heresy. Yet, as discussed before, this issue of heresy was  
754 perhaps less tangible in everyday business than some of the theological writings  
755 imply; furthermore, also the Gothic king, despite being Arian, did in fact interfere in  
756 ecclesiastical matters. Communication between the Gothic king and his Gallo-  
757 Roman bishops was thus certainly happening although the Franks undoubtedly took  
758 this connection between church and state even further. From the viewpoint of a  
759 Gallic aristocrat who had entered ecclesiastical offices as a way to re-establish his  
760 former secular power-position, the concept of being a complete subject to the king  
761 also in the religious sphere was thus far less appealing than the same position would  
762 have been in the Catholic Frankish kingdom. If the Arian creed did indeed play any  
763 decisive role in the long-term failure of the Goths to firmly establish themselves, this  
764 lack of a sphere of influence in politics which the bishops had in the Arian Gothic  
765 church could have been a factor, because it would have prevented an assimilation  
766 between church and crown in the way in which this was possible in the Frankish  
767 realm. Overall one should perhaps be careful, though, not to put too much weight  
768 onto the issue of religion as the decisive factor that determined the future fate of the  
769 Gothic and the Frankish kingdoms. At the time Choldwig's conversion was no  
770 automatic guarantee for the eventual Frankish success, and at the time of the

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<sup>58</sup> Lewis (2001), 90-1.

771 Visigothic conversion to Catholicism there was no reason to believe in the eventual  
772 ending of Gothic rule; Chlodwig's adoption of Catholicism rather created a starting  
773 point for this success as it enabled the Frankish kingdom to form a working  
774 relationship with the church from the beginning of any process of assimilation with  
775 the Roman population without having the issue of heresy interfering. The defeat at  
776 Vouillé did not immediately end the Visigothic kingdom, even if its survival  
777 afterwards was at least in part a result of Ostrogothic interference, which stopped  
778 Frankish expansion; thus, the problem the Visigothic kingdom faced was far more a  
779 matter of leadership than a question of religious doctrine.<sup>59</sup> However, the ultimate  
780 factor that decided the political future of both the Gothic and Frankish realms was  
781 surely far more a question of political/military/diplomatic matters – religion was  
782 perhaps a factor in these matters but not the sole reason.

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<sup>59</sup> For the further development of the Visigothic kingdom from 507 onwards, see for example Collins (2006), 38-130. Heather (1996), 259-99. Wallace-Hadrill (1985), 115-40.

## 1 Conclusion

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3 It is very difficult to find one concluding answer to the question to what extent  
4 Romans and Goths assimilated with each other, and how far this process was  
5 universally accepted on the Gallo-Roman side. As has been seen, it was a profoundly  
6 complex process that was by no means finished by the fifth century. Furthermore, it  
7 was a process which had as much an impact on the Gallic aristocracy as it had on the  
8 Goths and other barbarian people. When talking about the development of the Goths  
9 in the fifth century, one of the most important and intriguing questions is concerned  
10 with their rise to enormous power, indeed they presented one of the first barbarian  
11 'superpowers' (the Vandals were another example), but also with their ultimate  
12 failure to sustain this power into the middle ages.

13 The questions why it was the Franks and not the Goths, who ultimately succeeded as  
14 the most powerful barbarian kingdom is difficult to answer. Very often it has been  
15 put down to matters of religion or the ability to adapt to, assimilate with and continue  
16 the Roman administration and jurisdiction; yet all of these factors were in themselves  
17 not answer enough to explain the Frankish success, especially when the Goths had  
18 shown very much the same pattern of behaviour towards the Roman sphere. In  
19 contrast to the Goths, originally the Franks had not been a group which had so  
20 openly and directly challenged the empire; they had not created one of those  
21 barbarian 'superpowers' as the confederation of Vandals, Alans and Suebes had been  
22 or had been wandering through half of the empire before forcing their permanent  
23 settlement onto the empire. They had primarily lived along the fringes of the Western  
24 frontiers and were perhaps more Romanised than other barbarian tribes, which was  
25 also reflected in the relatively large number of Franks in imperial service both within

26 the administrative and the military sphere.<sup>1</sup> Most of them had entered imperial  
27 service with their own contingents of followers and in the various political tensions  
28 in Gaul they had managed to secure for themselves some political advantages.  
29 Chlodwig's victory over the Alamanni at Zülpich (which allegedly was the reason  
30 for his subsequent conversion) in 497 had confirmed the establishment of the  
31 eventual Frankish success, which had been completely unimaginable by the fourth  
32 century; it had been the Goths and the Burgundians, with their closeness to the  
33 Roman sphere and their long-standing relationship with the empire, who had seemed  
34 to be the natural successors of Rome; as Drinkwater said: 'Merovingian dominance  
35 of the west was not fated. Things might have turned out very differently if the  
36 Visigoths had won at "Vouillé"'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the rapid Frankish expansion meant that  
37 the next power in its way was the Gothic kingdom which suffered a severe defeat at  
38 the battle of Vouillé in 507, and it was only the intervention of the Ostrogothic  
39 kingdom under Theoderic, who did not care for any further Frankish expansion  
40 towards the Mediterranean, which forced Chlodwig to retreat, leaving Septimania as  
41 the last Gothic stronghold. Although the battle itself did little to destroy the Gothic  
42 kingdom as such, the death of Alaric II resulted in a temporary confusion over  
43 leadership, further weakening Gothic strength, as well as in the loss of much of the  
44 Gallic territory, forcing the Goths to retreat to and focus on Spain where they created  
45 the Kingdom of Toledo which lasted until the eighth century.<sup>3</sup> However, one battle

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<sup>1</sup> The myth of a Trojan origin of the Franks is another indication for this closeness with the Roman sphere, although this myth seems to have developed out of Gallic traditions, Sidonius mentioned the Avernians regarded themselves as having a blood-link with the Trojans, *Sid. Ap., Ep. II.2.19, VII.7.2*. See Ewig (1998), 1-28 for a thorough discussion of this idea. Pohl (1998b), 638, 643,646; Pohl (2000), 35-7. Geary (1988), 77-117. James (1988), 235-8.

<sup>2</sup> Drinkwater (2007), 355, 357.

<sup>3</sup> Drinkwater (2007), 347. Pohl (2005),176-85. Collins (2006), 36-41: although the defeat at Vouillé was a severe moral setback, it did not mean the immediate end of the Gothic kingdom; Theoderic's military support provided a much-needed boost of stability in the aftermath of Vouillé. For the subsequent Gothic history in the Iberian Peninsula, see for example Collins (2006), 38-130. Díaz (1999), 335. Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 51,52-62 on the misapprehension of an allegedly weak character of Alaric II in comparison to the strength of Clovis. James (1988), 86-8.

46 alone, regardless how damaging it was to Gothic morale, was not the decisive factor  
47 in securing future Frankish success. Lewis argued that it was the seesawing of the  
48 Goths between being loyal and disloyal to the empire, making it difficult for the  
49 imperial authorities to settle them, which was part of the reason why they never  
50 became powerful enough to offer an acceptable alternative to imperial rule. The  
51 Franks in contrast were still in a process of assimilation with the Romans, which  
52 allowed them to absorb concepts of power and to accommodate the already  
53 established Gallo-Roman aristocracy as well as Catholicism, thus helping them to  
54 turn society into a Gallo-Frankish concept. Furthermore, for her, Chlodwig's  
55 recognition by the Eastern emperor as a Roman official, as well as a long series of  
56 Frankish soldiers in the imperial forces, supporting Rome against other barbarian  
57 threats such as the Huns, helped the Roman side to accept the Franks all the more as  
58 allies.<sup>4</sup> Lewis is to this extent right that the readiness of the Goths to fight for as well  
59 as against the empire but above all for their own interests had posed a certain  
60 hindrance to their full absorption into the empire, and had resulted in recurring  
61 tendencies of the Gallo-Roman aristocrats to doubt the sincerity of Gothic motives to  
62 continue and promote Roman interests. However, to take this as an argument for the  
63 ultimate failure of the Gothic kingdom in comparison to the Frankish realm is taking  
64 the point slightly too far. After all, from a Roman viewpoint the Franks were as  
65 much non-Roman as their Gothic counterparts, regardless of their support for the  
66 Roman cause as auxiliaries and commanders in the imperial army; Alaric had risen  
67 to prominence whilst being part of an auxiliary contingent in the imperial army, thus  
68 continuing military support as an aspect of several treaties the Goths had been  
69 engaged in with the empire since the early fourth century. Furthermore, the  
70 bestowing of the rank of consul on Chlodwig in 508 by the Eastern emperor

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis (2001), 113, 124, 133, 136, 142, 278.



71 Anastasius, or the Frankish support against other barbarian incursions, would have  
72 done nothing per se to endear the Franks more to the Romans than the Goths.<sup>5</sup> Again,  
73 Alaric likewise had been given a military title by the empire, but that had not helped  
74 to ease the tensions between the Goths and the imperial administration. In fact  
75 Athaulf had tried to win vital support from the Roman side by having recognised the  
76 need to assimilate with Roman power through Gothic strength, when he talked of a  
77 restoration of imperial power; yet even this programme of active political  
78 cooperation had done nothing to avoid tensions between the Goths and the Gallo-  
79 Romans. The only difference with Chlodwig receiving some recognition by the  
80 Eastern empire was that by now the Western Roman throne had ceased to exist; thus  
81 the Gallo-Romans were perhaps readier to accept the Frankish king as a successor to  
82 Roman interests and Chlodwig himself was able to assert his power among his  
83 followers in a much more elevated way than Alaric or Athaulf had been able to do.  
84 Whereas when Alaric or Athaulf had tried to gain an official imperial title, there was  
85 still a Western emperor existing as well as, albeit temporary, tendencies of a  
86 substantial recovery of imperial strength; hence any attempt on their side to win  
87 Roman recognition would not have altered the view of the majority of the Roman  
88 aristocracy that the Goths ultimately aspired to seize power to replace the said  
89 emperor and thus tried to commit treason against the empire. It was only from the  
90 middle of the fifth century that the Gallo-Romans realised the necessity to assimilate  
91 with the Goths when there was no hope of ever regaining imperial strength to the  
92 extent of ending Gothic hegemony. What was indeed fundamentally different  
93 between Franks and Goths, and what was perhaps the key for the long-term Frankish  
94 success, was the fact that the Franks started to consolidate their power after the  
95 Visigoths had established their kingdom and had started a process of assimilation

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<sup>5</sup> Dierkens (1996), 186. Sansterre (1996), 396. Also Mathisen & Sivan (1999 c), 53-62.

96 with the Roman population, and that by now the Gallic aristocracy was far readier to  
97 accept barbarian rule than it had been a century before. By the time Chlodwig  
98 actively entered the political stage, the Roman side had more or less already come to  
99 terms with the concept of non-Roman kingdoms as a replacement of former imperial  
100 power, and had found their own ways to assimilate with this.

101 Another part of the Frankish success was their appreciation of and assimilation with  
102 Roman practices and customs, especially in terms of continuing and incorporating  
103 Roman structures of jurisdiction and administration into their own system, such as  
104 the structure of the *civitas*, to savour the typical Roman entertainment of horse-races  
105 and poetry, or to have Latin as the official language; all this led to a constant  
106 development of the amalgamation of Roman and barbarian customs. The adoption of  
107 Roman customs went as far as the attempt to create a mythological Frankish past by  
108 tracing back their ancestry to the Trojans, which stood in contrast to ideas of a  
109 Scandinavian origin more commonly found among Gothic stories of origin.<sup>6</sup> The  
110 adoption of and continuation of the *civitas*-system by the Franks was certainly a  
111 point which helped the Gallo-Romans to accept Frankish rule, especially when the  
112 *civitates*, essentially forming the backbone of the functioning of Gallic society, had  
113 been in place for a very long time; thus the transition to Frankish rule would have  
114 been easier for the Gallo-Romans to accept when they left local structures intact.<sup>7</sup>  
115 During the rise of Gothic power in contrast, the Council of the Gallic provinces was  
116 reinstated by the imperial government precisely at the time of the Gothic settlement

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<sup>6</sup> The Franks also used other non-Frankish people around them, mainly Thuringians and people from the Chattian regions, which seems to have taken a similar status of that to the *foederati* in the Roman system, thus adopting yet another aspect of Roman administration into their own system; their presence can be found in the expanding settlements, which coincided with the further establishment of Frankish power: see Wiczorek (1996 a), 258-9; (1996 b), 354-5. Another example for the increasing adoption of Roman customs is the change in burial practice: the previously common custom of grave-goods such as weaponry declined as a sign of adopting Roman practises of burial customs. Bierbrauer (1996), 110-1, 119-20. Stroheker (1948), 2. Wood (1996), 358, 360,364. Van Dam (1985), 221-3. Pohl (2005), 182. For the origins of the Goths, see Part I.1,3.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis (2001), 162, 176.

117 in Aquitaine in 418, presumably as a counter-measure to prevent further political  
118 alliances between Romans and Goths. Yet the Goths eventually closely followed  
119 Roman concepts of administration, keeping as well as adapting for example the  
120 office of Praetorian Prefect for the provincial administration as well as the taxation  
121 and legal system.<sup>8</sup> Again, to regard the adoption of and continuation of Roman  
122 structures of civil administration as one of the main reasons for the Frankish success  
123 is perhaps too one-sided, although it did undoubtedly contribute to it. Once again, it  
124 was more a question of time and development, which made the Franks understand  
125 the necessity to continue Roman structures, and the Romans accept the end of  
126 Roman rule in the West. Besides, Drinkwater has argued that the Franks were in fact  
127 free from aspects such as imperial concepts of its relationship with its neighbours,  
128 especially ideas of a permanent ‘threat’ by Germanic peoples (especially as they  
129 were Germanic themselves), serving as a justification for imperial expansion and for  
130 their political position in general which allowed them to trust in their own strength of  
131 conquering.<sup>9</sup> This was one aspect of cultural understanding the Franks did not adopt  
132 from the Romans, which leads us back to Athaulf’s remark of ‘restoring’ Roman  
133 strength with Gothic power; Athaulf’s concept in contrast was essentially the attempt  
134 to adopt the imperial system and its understanding of the position of Rome in a  
135 universal structure and mixing it with Gothic power. Thus effectively the Goths  
136 aimed to become Rome’s heirs in a far stricter sense than the Franks, and perhaps it  
137 was this position of being too close to Roman imperialism and self-perception, yet at  
138 the same time trying to consolidate this with Gothic concepts of identity and  
139 authority, which created another obstacle to the ultimate Gothic success. The Franks  
140 in contrast were free of such an ideological burden: Drinkwater has described both  
141 Chilperic and Chlodwig as the ‘detonators who released whatever explosive force

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<sup>8</sup> Heather (1996), 192-7.

<sup>9</sup> Drinkwater (2007), 362-3.

142 there was in Gallic “Mischzivilisation”<sup>10</sup>. Thus the Franks were able to continue and  
143 develop the power that was contained in this Gallic ‘Mischzivilisation’ further,  
144 whereas the Goths had rather formed part of this but had not used its potential for  
145 their own socio-political advantage as the Franks did.

146 However, the closeness to Roman culture and practices was something the Goths  
147 equally had adopted, and thus it cannot really stand as an explanation for the lasting  
148 success of the Franks in contrast to the Goths. It has been argued that Gallic identity  
149 was a Gallo-Roman identity and, since the empire had eventually disappeared in the  
150 West, it came to rest on the *civitates* as the local power-basis; taken further, when the  
151 Franks continued the structures of the *civitates*, they effectively adopted this basis for  
152 Gallic identity, and thus allowed the Roman side to accept Frankish rule.<sup>11</sup> This is a  
153 fair point, especially when the *civitates* had always been essential in the local  
154 organisation and administration of Gaul, and there had always been a strong link  
155 between Gallo-Romans and their land; one ought to be careful, though, not to place  
156 the weight of the basis of Gallic identity solely onto political structures, especially  
157 when these structures were subject to alterations due to the ever decreasing Roman  
158 influence, as a substantial part of defining Roman identity was equally based on  
159 cultural understanding.

160 The only element of the Frankish assimilation with the Roman sphere that was  
161 profoundly different from the Goths was their adoption of Catholicism in contrast to  
162 the Arian faith of the Goths.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as discussed before, even the point of religion, at  
163 least on a purely theological basis, was far less decisive in terms of Frankish success  
164 than sometimes argued. What was important was the fact that the predominantly  
165 aristocratic Gallo-Roman bishops could continue their concepts of holding power in

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<sup>10</sup> Pohl (1998 a), 643. Drinkwater (2007), 354-5. See also pp.21-2.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis (2001), 270-2.

<sup>12</sup> Dierkens (1996), 183. Wood (1996), 362.

166 a more accessible way in the Catholic Frankish realm than perhaps they could have  
167 done in the Arian Gothic kingdom; the Frankish adoption of Catholicism allowed for  
168 a stronger amalgamation with the Gallo-Roman bishops and thus with the Gallo-  
169 Roman aristocracy than might have been possible in the Gothic kingdom, which  
170 could have helped the acceptance of the Franks from a Roman viewpoint.<sup>13</sup> The  
171 Franks were perhaps ultimately more successful than the Visigoths because they  
172 managed to learn from mistakes the Goths had made earlier on; furthermore, the  
173 influence or interference of the empire was hardly existent any more by the time of  
174 Chlodwig's rise to power (leaving aside the Eastern empire) and the Franks were far  
175 more able to develop their own strategies without getting entangled in imperial  
176 politics as the Goths had been. Indeed in order to establish and extend their power,  
177 the Franks had to conquer or win over other barbarian kingdoms such as the Goths or  
178 the Burgundians, but not to find a delicate balance with imperial interests, as the  
179 Goths had had to do. I would regard both Franks and Goths as heirs to the imperial  
180 heritage, as both had adopted much of the imperial ideology and had effectively  
181 replaced imperial authority with their own political establishment. It was therefore  
182 not so much a question of one of them being Rome's successor but rather which of  
183 the two managed to sustain this power. It is the Franks, who are regarded as Rome's  
184 successors in the West, although it had been the Goths who had managed to establish  
185 the first independent barbarian kingdom and that they continued to be present in the  
186 West, albeit in a different way: the Gothic Kingdom of Toledo lasted until the Arab  
187 conquest in 711.

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189 This process of assimilation and development was equally complex when it came to  
190 its application to the Gallo-Roman aristocracy. By the fifth century, the political

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<sup>13</sup> See Part V.2.

191 reality increasingly offered ample opportunity for the nobility to notice that the  
192 traditional concept of Rome's unquestioned authority and superiority, expressed in  
193 their socio-political position, was not sustainable; the concept of Rome's invincible  
194 might had been based on an ideological idea, which had been supported by its  
195 supreme military power and political establishment. At least for many of the  
196 aristocracy, ideologies like Virgil's praise of an eternal Rome, envisaged by the gods  
197 or within the Christian context, protected by God, had undoubtedly shaped their  
198 perception of their own position in the socio-political framework. Hence when  
199 assimilation with foreigners happened – and it had happened from an early stage  
200 onwards when more and more foreign cultures were incorporated into the Roman  
201 state as client kingdoms or as auxiliary troops within the imperial army, culminating  
202 eventually in the *Constitutio Antoniniana* – it had never been anything other than a  
203 process which was entirely subject to Roman authority and ideology. Part of this  
204 concept was a tendency to create an image of a barbarian 'threat' along the frontiers,  
205 which provided a background against which aspects of imperial self-definition and  
206 troop-movements were justified. If barbarians assimilated with Roman culture, they  
207 adopted Roman dress, culture, and used Roman artefacts; but ideas of assimilation  
208 with the barbarian side were a very difficult concept for the Roman aristocracy and  
209 when it happened, ultimately it continued to include aspects of Roman xenophobia or  
210 more specifically barbaro-phobia, even if such notions of ultimate cultural  
211 superiority became predominantly confined to the sphere of literature – as we have  
212 seen, Sidonius' life is perhaps one of the best cases to exemplify such thinking. That  
213 does not exclude the notion that many of the aristocrats did take up political offices  
214 within the barbarian establishments and were willing to trade their Roman loyalty for  
215 a personal advancement at the barbarian court; as discussed before, Arvandus and  
216 Seronatus are excellent examples of such behaviour, but their trials also highlight the

217 continuous unease with which such cooperation was still regarded by many of the  
218 aristocracy, including members of the Gallic nobility. From the Roman viewpoint,  
219 assimilation with the barbarians did happen on many different levels and to various  
220 degrees, ranging from an acceptance of political realities to actively seeking political  
221 offices; but a deliberate attempt to understand barbarian culture and politics was  
222 rarely made. Roman cooperation with the Goths in Gaul was based, at least in the  
223 beginning, on the necessity to preserve Gallo-Roman aristocratic interests, and thus  
224 tended to incorporate more the political sphere than the cultural. This cultural sphere  
225 was zealously guarded against barbarian influence, as it was seen as one of the last  
226 ways to preserve and demonstrate Roman culture and learning, thus in many cases  
227 acting as a substitute for the loss of public status and political offices within the  
228 imperial administration in terms of self-presentation and social position. When the  
229 Gallo-Roman aristocracy started to enter ecclesiastical offices and increasingly  
230 occupied the most important episcopates in Gaul, they regained much of their former  
231 socio-political status, albeit in a different way; yet even in this sphere, the emphasis  
232 on traditional Roman literature remained and was still regarded as a sign of a true  
233 Roman aristocrat, even when barbarian kings started to adopt the pursuit of literature  
234 and used panegyrics for their own self-presentation. Certainly in the sphere of  
235 adopting classical literature there was hardly any difference between Goths and  
236 Franks, as on both sides kings engaged in literature as a form of entertainment and  
237 used panegyrics; nevertheless even as late as the sixth century, Gregory of Tours,  
238 who had by no means received the thoroughness of education his ancestors had, was  
239 still excessively proud of his Roman heritage as well as his education, and  
240 considered himself to be culturally in a superior enough position to sneer at the  
241 literary attempts of his Frankish king as a pastime not fit for a barbarian king. In  
242 terms of political assimilation the Gallo-Roman aristocracy had come a long way,

243 not only as courtiers at the various barbarian courts, but also as officials within the  
244 church; yet this assimilation did for a long time resist being adopted into the cultural  
245 sphere as well. Thus, even when the Gallo-Roman nobles adapted their lifestyle to  
246 the pursuit of a political career at the barbarian courts, such a socio-political  
247 assimilation did not automatically include a socio-cultural assimilation too – again,  
248 Sidonius is an excellent example for this; cultural resentments against non-Romans  
249 continued for a long time and it took much longer for the aristocracy to accept the  
250 new rulers socially and culturally as equals. The Episcopate was therefore an  
251 excellent way to overcome this disparity as it allowed for a continuation of public  
252 influence and power, which very often formed part of the political sphere too but was  
253 not exclusively defined to the barbarian courts as most worldly political offices were,  
254 and of the pursuit of culture in general and in an indulgence in literature and learning  
255 in particular; hence the particularly high number of Gallo-Roman aristocrats in  
256 ecclesiastical offices from the fifth century onwards is hardly surprising.

257 If there was one side that actively pursued the adoption of cultural and political  
258 elements different from their own, it was the barbarians, regardless of whether this  
259 refers to the Goths or the Franks. The Roman aristocracy only adapted itself to the  
260 different political landscape out of necessity in order to allow for a continuation of  
261 their socio-political status, which of course altered their own political understanding  
262 over time. The Gallic aristocracy did so largely in order to continue or preserve its  
263 privileged position, whereas the Goths (and Franks for that matter) incorporated the  
264 imperial system into their own administration and jurisdiction in order to create,  
265 strengthen and consolidate their own power. Thus ultimately Athaulf's aim to replace  
266 *Romania* with *Gothia* was fulfilled although perhaps in a different way from what  
267 Athaulf had envisaged. As discussed before, it is debatable whether he had ever  
268 wanted to go as far and replace the emperor with a Gothic king, or whether he



269 wanted to support the Roman system with Gothic help while simultaneously  
270 preserving and enhancing Gothic interests. The development of Gothic independence  
271 towards a people with a state had started before Athaulf but he had proven to be a  
272 true successor of the foundation of the Gothic success Alaric had created. Eventually  
273 a Gothic king like Euric was able to take the level of cooperation with the Gallo-  
274 Roman aristocracy further, a link that Athaulf had fostered because he had perceived  
275 it to be very important for the future success of the Goths. Euric was able to absorb  
276 fully the advantages of Roman civil administration and legislation (which included  
277 the services of Gallo-Roman aristocrats) in order to enhance Gothic structures but it  
278 would not prevent him from fighting the Roman system as being an obstacle to  
279 Gothic interests of expanding their power. Athaulf's legacy was the recognition of  
280 the necessity of cooperation with the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and the incorporation  
281 of the Roman administrative mechanisms into the Gothic system, as this was to form  
282 the basis on which a king like Euric could base and enhance Gothic power. It was  
283 this process of creating a 'new world' through political cooperation and socio-  
284 cultural assimilation between barbarian rulers and the Gallo-Roman aristocrats,  
285 which shaped the success of both the Goths and even more of the Franks.

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