

DIE BAIRISCH-KARANTANISCHEN OSTALPEN – HISTORISCH UND ARCHÄOLOGISCH

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Noricum and Pannonia during the 5th and 6th Centuries. The Eastern Alps as a Recruitment Ground¹

During the later Roman Empire, the territory of the Eastern Alps was a frontier region: it had the virtue of opening the gates to the routes leading to Italy.² The area comprised the provinces of Raetia I and II, Noricum Ripense and Noricum Mediterraneum, and finally the two Pannoniae, as well as Savia. According to the Western section of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, those provinces were part of the dioceses of Italy (those of the two Raetiae), and that of Illyricum (Pannonia Prima and Secundae, and the two Norici), during the fifth century.³ In modern days, the territory of these dioceses comprises Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, a part of southern Germany, the north-eastern area of Italy, Slovenia, and Hungary. As we can see, the mountain range covers a wide variety of territories, cultures and languages, which are interconnected with each other, as a result of trade and cultural exchange between these countries. Most of these traits were already present during the period of Late Antiquity, and many of the contacts and relations became fluent during this time.

Due to its aforementioned character of frontier zone, the Eastern Alps experienced the arrival and influence of various different cultures, particularly during the last decades of Western Roman rule, in the fifth century. In this regard, the local population of this region and its periphery witnessed the passing of many barbarian armies during the fifth and sixth centuries:⁴ for example, its dwellers had to endure the invasions and the raids of different barbarian *gentes*, both of those who sought to settle there and of those who were on their way to the Roman Empire (particularly Italy). As a result, many local groups decided to abandon the large settlement areas, in order to move to the alpine hillforts, as archaeological research in the region has demonstrated.⁵ Some even argue that this process began at a certain point

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² Tina Milavec/Zvezdana Modrić, The Transition between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages in Western Slovenia and Friuli, in: *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 20/1 (2014) 260–271.

260. On the image of the Alps as a gate to Italy being a *topos* since classical Antiquity, see: Katharina Winckler, Die Alpen, 62, 67–69. In this regard, Winckler suggests that most of the Late Antique and Early Medieval authors were not fully aware of the topographical details of the Alps.

³ *Notitia Dignitatum accedunt Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculum Prouinciarum* (ed. Otto Seeck, Berlin/Weimar 1876) 107–110.

⁴ Walter Pohl, Die Gepiden und die Gentes an der mittleren Donau nach dem Zerfall des Attilasreiches, in: *Die Völker an der mittleren und unteren Donau im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herwig Wolfram/Falko Daim (Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 145, Wien 1980) 240–305, at 280–283.

⁵ Slavko Ciglenečki, Romani e Langobardi in Slovenia nel VI Secolo, in: *Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale* (secc. VI–X), 2 Volumes, *Atti del XIV Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'alto Medioevo*, Fondazione del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (Spoleto 2001) 179–200, at 181. See also the articles on this topic in the archeological part of this volume.

during the fourth century.⁶ If we consider the many times the region saw migration activity from visitors coming from the far Eastern regions of Scythia, the measures they took seem reasonable enough to avoid conflict with the various newcomers. A brief summary of the political and military history of the region would help us to comprehend this: in the fifth century, for example, the region witnessed the march of Alaric's Goths towards the West, as well as the failed attempt of the invasion of Radagaisus to Italy.⁷ Moreover, the territory came under the domination of the Huns during the rise of Attila.⁸ After the end of their hegemony, the territory was controlled briefly and loosely by Gepids and Ostrogoths, and then by the forces of Odovacer.⁹ Finally, Theoderic the Great (493–526) governed the area from his power-base in Italy at the end of the fifth century.¹⁰ His actions demonstrated the interest the region had for the regime of Italy at the beginning of the sixth century, manifested especially in the appointment of military and civil officers, as well as the securing of this frontier.¹¹ After the defeat of the Ostrogothic kingdom, during the campaigns of Emperor Justinian (527–565), the territory came under the twofold influence of the Gepids and Lombards.¹² In addition, the western part of the region, that is the fringes of Noricum, was absorbed into the dominion of the Merovingian Franks, which represents the end of the continuity between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, according to Štih's view.¹³ By the end of the sixth century, the Eastern Alps were occupied by the early Slavs.¹⁴ As we can see, the list of guests is long enough to give us some idea of what the multi-ethnic character of the region would have been.

From these remarks, it is possible to suggest that the region presented a multi-cultural mosaic of peoples and communities whose identities often had to be re-shaped, possibly after the arrival of every aforementioned group. In this regard, I believe this affected mainly the local Roman provincials, who were Catholic Christians. This can also be seen in the archaeological evidence found in the site of Tonovcov Grad in modern Slovenia.¹⁵ In relation to the process of re-constructing identities in such short periods, the ties between the authorities and the ruled population had to be re-organized each time the region passed from the rule or control of one group to another.

In this paper I intend to analyse the processes involved in the formation of new elites, and the manner in which such processes affected and shaped the character of the local population, as well as its patterns of behaviour. Moreover, I intend to throw some light on the military activities developed within the territories of Noricum and Pannonia, and how these activities influenced the ways of life of the Roman provincials and the non-Roman inhabitants of the region.¹⁶ Finally, I will attempt to interpret the image of the region conveyed by the written sources. Concerning this last point, I will propose that the Eastern Alps became a *recruitment ground* during the fifth and sixth centuries, both for the Eastern emperors and for the barbarian leaders. In order to do so, I will rely on the testimonies written by witnesses and historians during the end of fifth century and through the sixth. I will resort to the archaeological evidence as well in some particular cases, precisely due to the scant nature of the literary sources of the

⁶ Slavko Ciglenečki, The Basic Characteristics of the Late Antique Settlement Pattern within the Eastern Alpine Region and Dalmatia, in: *Histria Antiqua* 11 (2003) 263–281, at 266.

⁷ Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Los Angeles 1990) 153; Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford 2006) 194; Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele, Stilicho, Radagaisus, and the So-Called “Battle of Faesulae” (406 CE), in: *Journal of Late Antiquity* 9/1 (2016) 267–284, at 278.

⁸ Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns. Studies in their History and Culture* (Los Angeles 1973) 107.

⁹ Pohl, Gepiden 264–268.

¹⁰ Theoderic appointed officers with civil and military attributions such as Colosseus to Pannonia and Servatus as *dux Raetiarum*. See: John Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford 1992) 72.

¹¹ Jonathan J. Arnold/M. Shane Bjornlie/Kristina Sessa, *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy* (Leiden 2016) 78–83.

¹² Winckler, *Die Alpen* 320.

¹³ Peter Štih, The Middle Ages between the Eastern Alps and the Northern Adriatic. *Select Papers on Slovene Historiography and Medieval History* (Leiden 2010) 91.

¹⁴ Štih, *The Middle Ages* 100f.; Walter Pohl, *Die Awaren. Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa 567–822* (München 1988) 149. For a summary on the activities of some of these groups before their settlement within the Eastern Alps (particularly, the Sklavenes), see: Florin Curta, *Frontier Ethnogenesis in Late Antiquity: The Danube, the Tervingi, and the Slavs*, in: *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Turnhout 2005) 173–204, at 184f.

¹⁵ Milavec/Modrijan, *The Transition* 260–271.

¹⁶ I will employ the term “non-Roman” as an alternative to that of “barbarian” to refer to the *gentes* that settled in the Eastern Alps as well as those who dwelled in the proximities of that region.

period. Given that many of the processes analysed are complex, I will provide brief summaries of the political and military history of the region, since they will help with understanding of my arguments.

The timeframe chosen for this work begins with the year 476, more precisely, the date of the deposition of Romulus Augustulus by Odovacer, and ends with the arrival of the Slavs in the last decade of the sixth century, when part of the territory started to receive some attention under the name of *Sclaborum provincia*.¹⁷ The period is characterized by the effective disappearance of most of the Roman structures of administration in the region and its replacement by other mechanisms of control, based on the use of military manpower and, in many cases, violence. In the broad context, this time span offers us an ample variety of events: for the end of the fifth century, the takeover of Odovacer in Italy; the migration of Theoderic's Goths to Italy and the defeat of Odovacer. In the sixth century, we witness the Ostrogothic rule and its involvement in diplomatic relations with the rest of the *barbarian kingdoms* in the West, and Justinian's military campaigns, intended to recover key territories for the Eastern Empire. During such campaigns, the Eastern Alps saw military activity, and were probably affected. In the same manner, at the end of the *Gothic Wars*, the zone was part of the broader scene of military conflicts related to the Gepid-Lombard wars, in which Constantinople involved herself in the internal conflicts between both *gentes*, supporting the Lombards against the Gepids. Finally, we see the appearance of the Slavs in the Eastern Alps at the end of the sixth century. Jordanes and Procopius, for example, give these groups the names of Sklavenes and Antes.¹⁸ The traditional view regarding the appearance of the Slavs states that the already loose political structures of the Eastern Alps basically vanished, something that is reflected in the astonishing silence presented by our literary evidence.¹⁹

THE REGION AT THE END OF THE FIFTH CENTURY: CHANGES IN THE SOCIETY

Being a frontier region, as I mentioned above, the Eastern Alps were occupied and settled by many communities, especially during the second half of the fifth century.²⁰ For example, one of the territories which was part of this region, Pannonia, became the centre of Hun power for the Upper and Middle Danube during this time. The *Getica* is one of the few literary sources which describes some of the processes that took place in this area, although it was composed in the middle of the sixth century. In this regard, Jordanes asserts that, after the Battle of Nedao (454) and the subsequent dissolution of the Hunnic Empire, a portion of the territory came under the control of the Gepids, while the rest was destined for settlement by the Ostrogoths after they negotiated with Constantinople.²¹ Jordanes also attests that some of the other armies that fought for the Huns in Nedao (i.e., that of the Rugians) settled around this area, but beyond the *limes* of the empire.²²

¹⁷ Pauli Historia Langobardorum IV.7 (ed. L. Bethmann/G. Waitz, MGH SS rer. Langob., Hannover 1878). See also: Otto Luthar et. al., *The Land Between. A History of Slovenia* (Frankfurt 2013) 83.

¹⁸ Jordanes, *Getica* 34, 119 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 5/1, Berlin/Weimar 1882) 62, 88f.; Procopius, *History of the Wars* III, 14 (ed. H. B. Dewing, London 1919) 402–413. Regarding these names and the problem of the Slavic identity, Curta asserted that “Sklavenes” and “Antes” were names used by the Byzantine authors in order to classify these groups which were north of the Danube frontier. See: Curta, *Slavic Ethnogenesis*, 277–278, 292–293. Moreover, the same author states that the argument of Jordanes regarding the origins of the Sklavenes and Antes was a response to Procopius' view. For this analysis and the possible sources employed by both authors, see: Curta, *The Making* 37–43.

¹⁹ Štih, *The Middle Ages* 88f.

²⁰ Jaroslav Šašel, *Antiqui Barbari: Zur Besiedlungsgeschichte Ostnoricums und Pannoniens im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert nach den Schriftquellen*, in: *Von der Spätantike zum frühen Mittelalter: Aktuelle Probleme in historischer und archäologischer Sicht*, ed. Joachim Werner/Eugen Ewig (Vorträge und Forschungen 25, Sigmaringen 1979) 134–136, 128–131.

²¹ *Nam Gepidi Hunnorum sibi sedes viribus vindicantes totius Daciae fines velut victores potiti nihil aliud a Romano imperio, nisi pacem et annua sollemnia, ut strenui viri, amica pactione postulaverunt. Quod et libens tunc annuit imperator et usque nunc consuetum donum gens ipsa a Romano suscipit principe. Gothi vero cernentes Gepidas Hunnorum sedes sibi defendere Hunnorumque populum suis antiquis sedibus occupare, maluerunt a Romano regno terras petere quam cum discrimine suo invadere alienas, accipientesque Pannoniam, quae in longo porrecta planitiae habet ab oriente Moesiam superiorem, a meridie Dalmatiam, ab occasu Noricum, a septentrione Danubium. Ornata patria civitatibus plurimis, quarum prima Syrmis, extrema Vindomina.* Jordanes, *Getica* 264, ed. Mommsen 126.

²² *Rugi vero aliaeque nationes nonnullae Bizzim et Arcadiopolim ut incolerent, petiverunt.* Jordanes, *Getica* 266, ed. Mommsen 126f.

Some of the features of the arrangement negotiated between the Ostrogoths and Emperor Marcian (450–457), for which the former were settled in Pannonia (Pannonia I and II, as well as Noricum Ripense), had an exclusively defensive nature in order to prevent other groups reaching Dalmacia and Upper Moesia.²³ In this manner, their settlement would function as a buffer zone in order to hamper the passage of other *gentes*, a strategy of old perhaps, since it was used by the Western Empire at the beginning of the fifth century on various occasions.²⁴ As a result, the sphere of influence of the Ostrogoths reached as far as the Moesian–Serbian valley.²⁵ As a part of the treaty, their sustenance depended almost exclusively on the envoys made by Constantinople.²⁶ This would make sense, since there are no traces of survival of tax structures for Pannonia during this time, something that would have facilitated acquiring the wherewithal to pay the Ostrogothic warriors, (and this could also be applied for any other kind of Roman administration or institution in the region during this period).²⁷ Nevertheless, the relationship between the Ostrogoths and the Eastern court was far from being simple. Jordanes explains that shortly after the settlement of the Goths, Marcian had to re-negotiate the treaty since the Ostrogoths resumed the attacks and raids in Illyricum, supposedly motivated by the favouritism shown by Marcian to Theoderic Strabo and his army of Goths.²⁸ Naturally, it is only possible to conclude that, as the result of these negotiations, the local population of the territories under attack had to endure the worst part.

From this point onwards, the sources describe a state of almost-continuous warfare in the Eastern Alps. In Pannonia, for example, turmoil was far from ending: some of the barbarian groups which dwelt within this territory united their banners to fight against the Ostrogothic confederacy and its leaders Valamir and Theodemir. In this regard, Priscus recounts that a war between the Sciri and the Goths took place, and that Emperor Leo (457–474) wished to support the Sciri (something that his general, Aspar, did not recommend).²⁹ In some cases, the authorities of the East involved themselves in this kind of episodes, supporting one group over others, in a similar manner to what the authorities of the West did during the first decades of the fifth century.³⁰ As a result, the Sciri gathered a coalition of *gentes* to fight against the Ostrogoths: Rugii, Heruli, Gepids, and other scattered contingents were led by Edica and Onoulf, the father and brother of Odovacer respectively.³¹ In relation to this episode, Jordanes mentions that the Goths were victorious and many of the defeated groups returned to their homes.³² Similarly,

²³ Wolfram, *Goths* 260f.

²⁴ The example of the relations between Stilicho and Alaric, for the defence of the Balkans in 405. On the other hand, there is the case of the settlement of the Visigoths in Aquitaine: among the various objectives of this measure (i.e. to control the internal conflicts such as the *baquadae*), there was probably also that of preventing the entry of Vandals, Sueves, and Alans, from Spain to southern Gaul. See: E. A. Thompson, *The Settlement of the Barbarians in Southern Gaul*, in: *The Journal of Roman Studies* 46 (1956) 65–75, at 74; Vincent Burns, *The Visigothic Settlement in Aquitania: Imperial Motives*, in: *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 41/3 (1992) 362–373, at 367; 369.

²⁵ Wolfram, *Goths* 259f. See especially note 94.

²⁶ Thomas Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths* (Indiana 1984) 53; Wolfram, *Goths* 261.

²⁷ Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans. A.D. 418–584. The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton 1980) 10.

²⁸ *Post tempus ergo non multum rex Valamir eiusque germani Thiudemir et Vidimir, consueta dum tardarent dona a principe Marciano, quae ad instar strenuae acciperent et pacis foedera custodirent, missa legatione ad imperatorem vident Theodericum Triarii filium, et hunc genere Gothico, alia tamen stirpe, non Amala procreatum, omnino florentem cum suis, Romanorumque amicitia iunctum et annua sollemnia consequentem, et se tantum despici.* Jordanes, *Getica* 270, ed. Mommsen 128. See also: Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans 332–489* (Oxford 1991) 248.

²⁹ Ὅτι Σκίροι καὶ Γότθοι ἐς πόλεμον συνελθόντες καὶ διαχωρισθέντες ἀμφοτέροι πρὸς συμμάχων μετάκλησιν παρεσκευάζοντο· ἐν οἷς καὶ παρὰ τοὺς ἐφ' οὓς Ῥωμαῖους ἦλθον. καὶ Ἀσπαρ μὲν ἡγεῖτο μηδετέροις συμμαχεῖν. ὁ δὲ αὐτοκράτωρ λέων ἐβούλετο Σκίροις ἐπικουρεῖν. καὶ δὴ γράμματα πρὸς τὸν ἐν Ἑλλυριοῖς στρατηγὸν ἔπεμπεν ἐντελλόμενος σφίσι κατὰ τῶν Γότθων βοήθειαν τὴν προσήκουσαν πέμπειν. Priscus, fr. 45, in: *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*. Eusebius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus (ed. R. C. Blockley, Liverpool 1983) 47.

³⁰ Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376–568* (Cambridge 2007) 229; 286. In some circumstances, the Eastern Empire sought to control some territories close to the Danube frontier by means of treaties with some of the *gentes* that formerly belonged to the Hun Empire. See: Burns, *Ostrogoths* 55.

³¹ *Quorum exitio Suavorum reges Hunimundus et Halaricus vereti, in Gothos arma moverunt freti auxilio Sarmatarum, qui cum Beuca et Babai regibus suis auxiliarii ei advenissent, ipsasque Scirorum reliquias quasi ad ultionem suam acrius pugnatueros accersientes cum Edica et Hunuulfo eorum primatibus habuerunt simul secum tam Gepidas quam ex gente Rugorum non parva solacia, ceterisque hinc inde collectis ingentem multitudinem adgregantes ad amnem Bolia in Pannoniis castra metatisunt.* Jordanes, *Getica* 277.

³² Jordanes, *Getica* 279, ed. Mommsen 130.

the next step for the Ostrogoths was to subdue other groups such as the Suebi and the Alamanni. In this regard, Jordanes vividly describes how Theodemir took advantage of the winter season in order to cross the Danube (now frozen) and attack the Suebi and Alamanni, succeeding in overcoming them (*devicit, vastavit et pene subegit*).³³

Finally, the Ostrogoths left Pannonia and marched to Illyricum in 473 (probably being severely affected by famine), in order to settle in some towns of Macedonia as part of a treaty established with Emperor Leo.³⁴ The Ostrogoths were then occupied with dealing with Emperor Zeno (474–491) as well as with Theoderic Triarius for a number of years.³⁵ Their departure left a power vacuum in the Upper Danube area which was exploited by Odovacer, who was, by then, ruling Italy.

Thus, considering all these confrontations between barbarian groups that took place in Pannonia, perhaps the result of two mayor events in the history of fifth century (the abandonment of the Roman government and the loss of power by the Huns in the 450s), we should ask ourselves: which were the characteristics of the processes that affected the province of Pannonia during the last two decades of the fifth century? In some ways, this question will be hard to answer with any degree of certainty due to the laconic character of the literary sources. What we are able to assert is that one gets the impression that this province became the centre of a dispute for territorial control by the various *gentes* that were part of the former Hunnic Empire.³⁶ In my view, this represented a form of competition between erstwhile partners of the Hunnic Empire for the domination of a rich land that also possessed strategic importance. A good example of such importance is reflected in its proximity to Italy as well as the possibilities it offered for the control of the trade routes connecting the East and the West.³⁷ But the barbarian *gentes* were not the only ones trying to obtain their share of the contested territory: for the Eastern Empire, for example, involvement in these conflicts represented an opportunity to grasp a territory which could allow it to reach Italy, and possibly, the Western dioceses which were under the control of other non-Roman contingents at this time (Franks in the northern area of Gaul and, most importantly, Visigoths and Burgundians in southern Gaul and Hispania).³⁸

At this point, one could only suppose that the local Roman inhabitants of Pannonia were absorbed first into the Hunnic Empire. In a second period, the surviving population would have been integrated into the dominion of the Gepids, and finally, to that of the Ostrogoths. Since the sources do not present a detailed image of the provincials during this stage, it is only possible to infer two results: firstly, that the remaining population could have served to maintain the barbarian guests in some way (possibly providing supplies through land-working).³⁹ And secondly, that the inhabitants would have joined the contingents of the newcomers after the dissolution of the Hunnic Empire, probably increasing the numbers of combatants of such groups (be they Gepids or Sciri), and adopting their warrior culture. From my point of view, this second alternative is more plausible, since it would otherwise have been hard for the provincials to maintain the barbarians with the produce of their fieldwork due to the constant raids and incursions, as well as the frequent confrontations that took place between Nedao and those battles fought against the Sueves and Alamanni.

In this manner, it is possible to suggest that the integration between local Roman landowners and barbarian aristocracies in the Eastern Alps had a different character to other areas of the Empire, such as Gaul or Hispania. Such a distinct nature should be sought in the customs of the *gentes* that were competing for the territory: their degree of Romanness would have been less than that of the *gentes* who

³³ *quibus Suavis tunc iuncti aderant etiam Alamanni ipsique Alpes erectos omnino regents, unde nonnulla fluenta Danubium influent nimio cum sonu vergentia [...] et tam Suavorum gente quam etiam Alamannorum, utrasque ad invicem foederatas, devicit, vastavit et pene subegit.* Jordanes, *Getica* 281, ed. Mommsen 130.

³⁴ Burns, *Ostrogoths* 56–57; Jordanes, *Getica* 283, ed. Mommsen 131.

³⁵ Malchus, fr. 18, in: *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*. Eneuapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus (ed. R. C. Blockley, Liverpool 1983) 427–435; Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* 15; Burns, *Ostrogoths* 59; 63.

³⁶ Christopher Kelly, *Attila the Hun. Barbarian Terror and the Fall of the Roman Empire* (London 2009) 212.

³⁷ These routes were considered very important by the authorities of Constantinople. See: Heather, *Goths* 248.

³⁸ Franks in Northern Gaul: Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* 303–305. Visigoths: Wolfram, *Goths* 222–231; Javier Arce, *Bárbaros y Romanos en Hispania 400–507 A.D.* (Madrid 2007) 87–90; Rosa Sanz Serrano, *Historia de los godos. Una epopeya histórica de Escandinavia a Toledo* (Madrid 2009) 143–145. On Burgundians, see: Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* 300–303; Reinhold Kaiser, *Die Burgunder* (Stuttgart 2004) 53–57.

³⁹ Based on the arguments of Pohl regarding the changes within their economy of subsistence. See: Pohl, *Gepiden* 285.

settled in the provinces of the Western Empire (i.e. Visigoths or Burgundians). Therefore, the contacts between provincials and these barbarian armies would have been more violent.

In this regard, the process of construction of authority in the region towards the end of the fifth century and the formation of new dominion structures in Pannonia were influenced by the struggle between those armies of barbarians that were part of the empire of Attila. Thus, the process of gathering an armed force to control and secure the territory was a common procedure, and hints about this could be found, for example, through the quoted fragments of the *Getica*: that of the reunion of different ethnic groups under the leadership of the Sciri, who were perhaps the most powerful war band after the Ostrogoths, and possibly the ones who had enough skill to control a portion of Pannonia, especially once the Gepids moved far to the East. In a context such as that, the creation of a new warrior elite rested on various pillars, one of the most important being that of the gathering of an armed force, such as the example of the Sciri. In most of the descriptions presented by the sources of the period, however, the precise details regarding the mechanisms employed to achieve this are not clear. In relation to this, there is a similar example of the process of gathering followers in the description of the return of Theoderic from Constantinople. Jordanes tells us that his objective was to overcome some Sarmatian groups who were ruled by a certain Babai.⁴⁰ In order to muster his army, Theoderic visited many of the Ostrogothic nobles as well as his father's confidants, and other clients (*ascites certis ex satellitibus patris et ex populo amatores sibi clientesque consocians*). Jordanes used *satellitibus*, which could refer to some kind of relation between a man at arms and his patron similar to those of the *bucellarii* of the later Roman Empire, probably based on loyalty generated through continuous private service.⁴¹

In a second step, after the construction of a base coalition, the leaders had to maintain it, and for this reason the contacts with a legitimate source of government, as well as subsidies, were necessary. At this point, the negotiations with Constantinople gain relevance, as they were mentioned both by Priscus (who wrote from a temporal proximity) and Jordanes. In the case of the Sciri, they also had another advantage over the rest of the *gentes*: both Edica and Onoulf held important military positions in the Empire of Attila, so it is possible to suggest that they were more experienced than the rest of the members of the barbarian elites.

The territory of Noricum shows a different story for the final decades of the fifth century. Nevertheless, although a distinct picture can be reconstructed due to the nature of the evidence, we are forced to depend on very few sources as in the case of Pannonia. In this regard, one of the best accounts for details concerning the structures of dominion in this Roman province during the last decades of the fifth century is the *Vita Sancti Severini*, composed by Eugippius at the beginning of the sixth century. The *Vita* contains much information regarding the relations between the Christian communities of Noricum with the Rugii as well as with other *gentes*.⁴² Since the province was inhabited by different barbarian groups, as Eugippius describes, a practice that was becoming habitual as a means to mediate social relations was that of the use of oaths. Moreover, it was a custom that also had a role in the formation of new elites, as a mechanism for securing loyalty through the maintenance of bonds. This was also particular

⁴⁰ *qui Theodoricus iam adulescentiae annos contingens expleta pueritia, decem et octo annos peragens, ascites certis ex satellitibus patris et ex populo amatores sibi clientesque consocians, paene sex milia viros, cum quibus inconscio patre emenso Danubio super Babai Sarmatarum rege discurrit, qui tunc de Camundo duce Romanorum victoria potitus superbiae tumour regnabat.* Jordanes, *Getica* 282, ed. Mommsen 130–131.

⁴¹ *Satellites* was the term employed by the sixth century chronicler Marcellinus to refer to the retainers of Aetius. The word could refer to one of the institutions which originated the *bucellarii*. According to C. Lewis and C. Short, the term *satelles* has the meaning of assistant or escort, while *satellitium* has the meaning of a guard. In relation to this, Niermeyer suggests armed retainer for *satelles*. On *Satellites* see: C. T. Lewis/C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary*. Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary (Oxford 1958) 1632; J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden 1976) 939. On the *bucellarii*, see: Hans-Joachim Diesner, *Das Buccellariertum von Stilicho und Sarus bis auf Aetius (454/455)*, in: *Klio. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte* 54 (1972) 321–350, at 323; 331; Oliver Schmitt, *Die Buccellarii. Eine Studie zum militärischen Gefolgschaftswesen in der Spätantike*, in: *Tyche. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 9 (1994) 147–174, at 151; Pat Southern/Karen Ramsay Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (London 1996) 49f.; A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford 1964) 666f. See also: Fernando Ruchesi, *Los bucellarii y el Imperio romano tardío: sus orígenes, empleo y la cuestión de la cohesión social de sus componentes*, in: *Studia Historica Historia Antigua* 34 (2016) 167–188, at 184; 186.

⁴² Elena Gritti, *Eugippii Vita sancti Seuerini* (BHL 7656). *Dal testo territorio: il Norico tardoantico* (PhD Thesis, Verona 2014) 295–358.

to some areas of the former Western Empire. Thus, sometimes promissory oaths were the cornerstone of such relations, especially those involving the resolution of problems related to the authorities of the territory concerned.⁴³ In the case of the *Vita*, for example, one of the episodes described involves the strained relations between Queen Giso and the king of the Rugii, Feletheus (453/482–487), with the Roman Catholic population of the area, as well as the freedmen belonging to non-Roman communities. It is interesting, for example, how Eugippius portrays the resolution of a conflict which emanated from the condition of some barbarian goldsmiths (whose ethnicity or group name are not mentioned). In the fragment, these goldsmiths took Fredericus, the son of the king, as a hostage, and the only way the captors would agree to release the king's son was in exchange for their freedom and it being guaranteed by the swearing of an oath.⁴⁴ The passage ends with such an oath being sworn by Queen Giso, the child being released, and the artisans having recovered their freedom. This example illustrates what could have been the steps following the resolution of conflict in some of the barbarian communities that inhabited the Eastern Alps. In a similar manner, it shows the contacts between a non-Roman aristocracy (i.e. the ruling class of the Rugii) with men belonging to a lower social rank; in fact, they are described as “barbarian goldsmiths” (“aurifices barbaros fabricandis”), their status being that of “slaves” or “servants” (“servientes cogeretur reddere libertati”), which could lead us to presuppose that they were part of another *gens* that was defeated by the Rugii. Therefore, some of their members had to join the latter by force, and hence, their position within the society of the Rugii was not that of freedmen or warriors. Here, the conviction in the use of an oath (*iuramentum* and *sacramentum* in the text) to guarantee the fulfilment of a promise could be interpreted as a social instrument that these communities implemented, which, in turn, was probably derived from mechanisms of loyalty.

At the beginning of chapter VIII, Queen Giso is described trying to re-baptize Catholics (probably to the Arian creed). Feletheus did not agree with this, and while Giso ceased her attempt, she expelled some of these Roman Catholics. If these Catholics were in fact the administrative elite of priests, it would be possible that the rejection made by Queen Giso can be interpreted as an attempt to control the administrative functions that were previously fulfilled by the bishops and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁴⁵ Therefore, it could be argued that on some occasions, construction of authority resorted to mechanisms such as religious segregation. Perhaps the Rugii could take captives among provincial farmers easily without the presence of a Catholic hierarchy who could protect the latter.

Regarding military matters, as I mentioned earlier, the region of the Eastern Alps was characterized by the almost complete absence of any authority in charge of the defence of the territory. This situation was particularly unusual during the last decades of the fifth century in Noricum. The context and clues provided by Eugippius in some chapters of his *Vita Sancti Severini* allow us to supply some additional information on the matter. There are examples involving raids by the Alamanni, Rugii and Goths, among other groups in the region. It would seem that this was a common practice in these communities, in which taking captives was one of their main objectives:⁴⁶ some of these groups sought to take captives from the local population, as is described in chapter XIX, where the king of the Alamanni, Gibuldus, negotiates with Severinus regarding this matter.⁴⁷ Another similar example involves the intervention of Severinus

⁴³ Stefan Esders, Faithful Believers ‘Faithful Believers’: Oaths of Allegiance in Post-Roman Societies as Evidence for Eastern and Western ‘Visions of Community’, in: *Visions of Community in the Post-Roman World. The West, Byzantium and the Islamic World, 300–1100*, ed. Walter Pohl/Clemens Gantner/Richard Payne (Farnham 2012) 357–373, at 357f.

⁴⁴ *Tunc aurifices infantis pectori gladium imposuere dicentes, quod, si quis ad eos absque iuramenti praesidio ingredi conaretur, parvulum regium primitus transfigentes semetipsos postea trucidarent, quippe cum sibi nullam spem promitterent, macerati diuturnis ergastulis.* Eugippius, *Vita Sancti Severini VIII* (ed. Hermann Sauppe, MGH AA 1.2, Berlin/Weimar 1877) 11f.

⁴⁵ Here I follow Amory on the Romans who were conducted to Italy by Odovacer. Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge 1997) 122.

⁴⁶ The Ostrogoths also participated in this kind of activity, especially against neighbouring peoples, during their stay in Pannonia. For example, they fought against the Sadagi, the Suebi, the Sciri, and other communities who united themselves around the Huns led by Dengizich, and by Hunimund in the case of the Suebi. After these battles, the Goths enslaved most of the defeated warriors of these contingents. See: Jordanes, *Getica* 272–276, ed. Mommsen 35f.

⁴⁷ *Cumque dei famulo daret optionem imperandi, quae vellet, rogavit doctor piissimus, ut, sibi potius praestaturus, gentem suam a romana vastatio ne cohiberet et captivos, quos sui tenuerant, gratanter absolveret.* Eugippius, *Severini XIX.3*, ed. Sauppe 18.

after the arrival of the aforementioned king, Feletheus, in Lauriacum with an army. Since many of the Romans who dwelled in the towns that were under the dominion of the Rugii decided to leave (perhaps to avoid the payment of tributes to them?), asking Severinus for his help, Feletheus arrived with an army and tried to force them to return. In this regard, Severinus had to fulfil the role of negotiator once again, guaranteeing the safety of the Roman population, now under his care, to be settled in the nearby towns, as well as the non-aggression and friendship of the Rugii.⁴⁸ In this sense, Severinus being a representative of the Catholic authority, it is not surprising that he is described helping the Roman population and trying to administer what was left of the imperial structures in the *diocesis* of Noricum.

There were also more raids made by the Alamanni, as described in chapter XXVII. The population took refuge in Batavis, although it was driven to Lauriacum by Severinus, in order to escape more attacks. The passage ends with the arrival of a group of Thuringians in Batavis, taking captives from the few who decided to stay.⁴⁹ Finally, there is also the description of an attack led by the Heruli to the town of Joviaco (identified with the site of Schlügen, modern Austria).⁵⁰ According to Eugippius, Severinus sent a messenger to advise the inhabitants of Joviaco to leave before the arrival of the Heruli. Similarly to the coming of the Thuringians, those who remained in Joviaco were captured and enslaved by the newcomers.⁵¹ According to Roland Steinacher, this event was probably part of a plan to enlarge the territorial dominions of the Heruli, since many of their neighbouring rivals had already been defeated by them c. 480, probably taking advantage of the fact that the Ostrogoths had already left for Illyricum.⁵² Furthermore, chapter XX asserts that once Roman control over the zone ended, local Roman soldiers could no longer be maintained from public expenses. Nevertheless, the chapter recounts that there were still some soldiers in the town of Batavis (modern Passau) who kept working voluntarily for the defence of the city. The chapter is also interesting since it describes how a group of these men departed to Italy, to collect their final payment, but they were found on their way and were assassinated by a contingent of barbarians.⁵³ The description of the soldiers willing to travel to Italy to return with the payment for both themselves and their comrades in arms, in a context in which life was becoming harsh and possibly more violent due to the abandonment of the province by a central authority, could provide some insights into the functioning of cohesion and solidarity among them.

Indeed, there were some cases in which social cohesion was manifested in Noricum, through help and care between those who represented the power in the region in the absence of the Roman State (this means those who could exert some kind of military or administrative power) and those who were affected by the raids of the barbarians as described above, as well as the hardships of a post-Roman region (characterized by famine, among other things). For example, with the rise of Odovacer in Italy,

⁴⁸ *His auditis rex modestis allegationibus mitigatus cum suo protinus remeavit exercitu. Igitur Romani, quos in sua S. Severinus fide suscepit, de Lauriaci discedentes pacificis dispositionibus in oppidis ordinati benivola cum Rugii societate vixerunt.* Eugippius, Severini XXXI.6, ed. Sauppe 24.

⁴⁹ *Eodem tempore mansores oppidi quintanensis, creberrimis Alamannorum incursionibus iam defessi, sedes proprias relinquentes in Batavis oppidum migraverunt. Quicumque enim ibidem contra hominis dei interdicta manserunt, Thoringis irruentibus in eadem hebdomada alii quidem trucidati, alii in captivitate deducti poenas dedere contemptui.* Eugippius, Severini XXVII.1, XXVII.3, ed. Sauppe 2.

⁵⁰ There is not so much information on the precise location of Joviaco. In 1906, Wilhelm Kubitschek suggested that Joviaco was located near Aschach, modern Austria, based on a sixteenth century inscription found with the text “A BOIODURO-SALOATO”. On the other hand, Eduard Novotny argued that there were no proofs of Roman settlements in the proximity of Aschach, although in Eferding he outlined what could be considered as the remains of a Roman *castellum* capable of garrisoning 1000 cavalry units. See: Johanna Haberl, Favianis, Vindobona und Wien. Eine archäologische-historische Illustration der Vita S. Severini des Eugippius (Leiden 1976) 71f.

⁵¹ *Praedictus itaque pergens imperata supplevit, sed presbitero et reliquis incredulitate nutantibus nuntius viri dei presbitero retinenti se atque hospitalitatis gratiam praebere cupienti nullatenus acquievit. Qua nocte Heruli insperate protinus irruentes oppidumque vastantes plurimos duxere captivos, presbyterum memoratum patibulo suspendentes.* Eugippius, Severini XXIV.3, ed. Sauppe 20.

⁵² Roland Steinacher, The Herules: Fragment of a History, in: Neglected Barbarians, ed. Florin Curta (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 32, Turnhout 2010) 341.

⁵³ *Per id tempus, quo romanum constabat imperium, multorum milites oppidorum pro custodia limitis publicis stipendiis aiebantur. Qua consuetudine desinente simul militares turmae sunt deletae, cum limite batavino utcumque numero perdurante, ex quo perrexerant quidam ad Italiam extremum stipendium commilitonibus allaturi, quos in itinere preemptos a barbaris nullus agnoverat.* Eugippius, Severini XX.1, ed. Sauppe 18.

social cohesion was manifested through some of his measures regarding the population of Noricum. Odovacer ordered both his brother Onouolf and his *comes domesticorum* Pierius to withdraw the Roman population of the territory to Italy, in order to rescue the provincials from the continuous attacks of the non-Roman communities in the area.⁵⁴ Eugippius does not mention which barbarians were those attacking the provincials at this time, but one can assume that they were the remnants of those Rugii who survived the expedition carried out by Onoulf on the orders of Odovacer.⁵⁵ Therefore, Odovacer tried to help the local population by means of re-settling them inside Italy, a region in which he obviously had more control and that was more secure thanks to the maintenance of the Roman imperial structures as well as the armies garrisoned there.

NORICUM AND PANNONIA IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

As I already mentioned, the region experienced the slow abandonment of administrative and military structures of the Empire from c. 450 on and, especially, from 488 onwards, when Odovacer decided to move part of the local population of Noricum to Italy as a result of the continuous raids by the barbarians.⁵⁶ Some of these movements of peoples were surely influenced by the departure of the Ostrogoths during the last decades of the fifth century. In this manner, some areas of the region were occupied by other *gentes*, perhaps taking advantage of the situation. In this regard, we should remember the prevalence and migrations of the Rugi, the Heruli, and the Gepids, among other contingents. Most of them regularly plundered the former territories of Noricum and Pannonia at the end of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth. This situation prevailed in the region until security measures for the local population were instigated as a part of the set of decisions taken by the Ostrogoths, now with their seat in Italy.⁵⁷ Hence, it is possible to suggest that the Roman inhabitants may have diminished in numbers, the greater part perhaps being affected by the practice of taking slaves (a practice so often depicted as a part of the habits of the *gentes* that were subjected to the empire of Attila), but others surely would have decided to join the warrior communities and participate in their activities.⁵⁸ On the other hand, there is no doubt that a portion of the Roman population remained there and intensified their links with the various *gentes* that settled in the neighbouring areas. This was probably the state of the provincials that inhabited those lands towards the end of the fifth century and the beginnings of the sixth. Whatever the nature of such contacts was, one gets the impression that violence and the use of arms to solve daily matters became common traits of civil life within this region at the beginning of the sixth century. I shall return to this point later.

⁵⁴ *Onoulfus vero praecepto fratris admonitus universos iussit ad Italiam migrare Romanos. Tunc omnes incolae tanquam de domo servitutis aegyptiae, ita de quotidiana barbarie frequentissimae depredationis educti S. Severini oracular cognoverunt. Cuius praecepti non immemor venerabilis noster presbyter tunc Lucillus, dum universo per comitem Pierium compellerentur exire, praemissa cum monachis vespere psalmodia sepulturae locum imperat aperiri.* Eugippius, Severinus XLIV.5, ed. Sauppe 29.

⁵⁵ *Qua propter rex Odoacer Rugis intulit bellum. Quibus etiam devictis et Frederico fugato, patre quoque Feva capto atque ad Italiam cum noxia coniuge transmigrato, post audiens idem Odoacer Fredericum ad propria revertisse statim fratrem suum misit cum multis exercitibus Onoulfum, ante quem denuo fugiens Fredericus ad Theodericum regem, qui tunc apud Novas, civitatem provinciae Moesiae, morabatur, profectusest.* Eugippius, Severinus XLIV.5, ed. Sauppe 29.

⁵⁶ Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 246; Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* 10f.

⁵⁷ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* 288; Arnold, *Ostrogothic Provinces* 78f.; Šašel, *Antiqui Barbari* 134.

⁵⁸ No doubt there would have been cases similar to that of the Greek merchant that was captured as a slave by the Huns, which is described by Priscus. The Greek gained this freedom through his deeds in battle, as well as by sharing his loot with his master: ἀριστεύσαντα δὲ ἐν ταῖς ὕστερον πρὸς Ῥωμαίων μάχαις καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἀκατίρων ἔθνος, δόντα τῷ βαρβάρῳ δεσπότη κατὰ τὸν παρὰ Σκύθαι νόμον τὰ κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον αὐτῷ κτηθέντα, ἐλευθερίας τυχεῖν. γυναῖκα δὲ γήμασθαι βάρβαρον, εἶναι τε αὐτῷ παῖδας· καὶ Ὀνηγησίῳ τραπέζης κοινωνοῦντα ἀμεινοῦντα τοῦ προτέρου τὸν παρόντα βίον ἡγεῖσθαι. Priscus, fr. 11.2, ed. Blockley 269.

The motives behind Theoderic the Great's policy of sending military units and trying to fortify the defences of this territory during his rule are probably related to its features as a frontier region.⁵⁹ Some of these military and administrative measures are known to us via the *Variae* of Cassiodorus: for example, the Ostrogothic king appointed Count Colosseus as *illustris* to operate in the province of Pannonia Sirmiensis, former seat of the Goths (*quondam sedem Gothorum*).⁶⁰ The letter addressed to Colosseus is also interesting since it depicts some of the customs of the local population of Pannonia, as described by Cassiodorus. Colosseus would have to stop biased civil lawsuits influenced by the use of weapons (*verbis ibi potius, non armis causa tractetur*), as well as death as a way of dealing with land thefts (*abiurator alieni furtum, non animam reddat*), among other crude ways of solving problems.⁶¹ Therefore, the task of this officer was not a simple one, namely, to represent the authority of the Ostrogothic king in Pannonia in order to re-construct a more "civil" way of life within the territory (*si civile ibi potueris plantare propositum... ut vitam periturus adquirat*).⁶² This was probably part of the package of measures (both civil and military) implemented by Theoderic in order to bring some regularity to the regions under his government, which is described by Cassiodorus in his chronicle (*munitissima castella conduntur*).⁶³ In a similar manner, Theoderic appointed a certain Servatus as *dux Raetiarum*, who, it seems, had to fulfil some analogous functions in that province, i.e., to suppress the theft of captives, in this particular case, the taking of slaves belonging to another man, as well as to stop all the activities involving the use of violence (*ut per provinciam, cui praesides, nulla fieri violenta patiaris*).⁶⁴

Within this context, the portrayal of Pannonia made by Cassiodorus on the occasion of the appointment of Colosseus does not seem inaccurate. This depiction, which included "violence" as a normal part of life c. 500, would be better understood if we keep in mind that groups of provincials were integrated into the aforesaid *gentes* of the Heruli, Rugii, and Gepids during their various raids, as I mentioned earlier. In this manner, it is not difficult to think of the provincials and other groups of non-Roman farmers settled in the area as being influenced by the customs of the barbarian groups, which, it seems, were more inclined to activities related to war, and pillaging than to working the land.⁶⁵ Perhaps it is possible to speak of a "becoming-warrior" process that affected some of the provincials, as a strategic adaptation to those hard times, something that makes considerable sense in the context described. Moreover, some of these traits are reflected in the archaeological evidence: the use of fibulae and the adoption of military insignia by the civil population were probably the result of the contacts between the provincials and the barbarian armies.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge 2014) 232f.; Tina Milavec, *Late Antique Glass in Slovenia*, in *Annales du 19e Congrès de l'Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre*, Piran, 2012, ed. Irena Lazar (Koper 2015) 277–285, at 277; Ciglenečki, *Archaeological Investigations of the Decline of Antiquity in Slovenia*, in: *Slovenija in sosednje dežele med antiko in karolinško dobo: začetki slovenske etnogeneze*, ed. Rajko Bratož (*Anfänge der slowenischen Ethnogenese*, Situla, 39, *Razprave* 18, Ljubljana 2000) 119–139, at 124; 128.

⁶⁰ *Pro inde prosperis initiatus auspiciis ad Sirmiensem Pannoniam, quondam sedem Gothorum, proficiscere inlustris cinguli dignitati praecinctus commissamque tibi provinciam armis protege, iure compone, ut antiquos defensores recipere laeta possit, quae se nostris parentibus feliciter paruisse cognoscit*. Cassiodorus Senatoris *Variae* III.23.2 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, *MGH AA* 12, Berlin/Weimar 1894) 91. On Colosseus, see: *PLRE* II 305.

⁶¹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* III.23.3, ed. Mommsen 91.

⁶² Cassiodorus, *Variae* III.23.4, ed. Mommsen 91.

⁶³ *Sub cuius felici imperio plurimae renovantur urbes, munitissima castella conduntur, consurgunt admiranda plataia, magnisque eius operibus antiqua miracula superantur* Cassiodorus Senatoris *Chronica* 1339 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, *MGH AA* 11, Berlin/Weimar 1894) 160.

⁶⁴ *Decet et honorem, quem geris nomine, moribus exhibere, ut per provinciam, cui praesides, nulla fieri violenta patiaris, sed totum cogatur ad iustum, unde nostrum floret imperium. Quapropter Moniarii supplicatione commoti praesentibus te affamur oraculis, ut, si re vera mancipia eius Breones irrationabiliter cognoveris abstulisse, qui militaribus officiis assueti civilitatem premere dicuntur armati et ob hoc iustitiae parere despiciunt, quoniam ad bella Martia semper intendunt, dum nescio quo pacto assidue dimicantibus difficilie est morum custodire mensuram. Quapropter omni protervia remota, quae de praesumptione potest virtutis assume, postulata facies sine intermissione restitui: ne per dilationis incommode eorum videatur supplex odisse victoriam*. Cassiodori, *Variae* I.11, ed. Mommsen 20.

⁶⁵ Pohl, *Gepiden* 285.

⁶⁶ Tina Milavec, *Crossbow Fibulae of the 5th and 6th Centuries in the Southeastern Alps*, in: *Arheološki Vestnik* 60 (2009) 223–248, at 237. She also states that the fashion of wearing crossbow fibulae was adopted by both males and females, a practice that derived from the imitation of Germanic fibulae that began during the last decades of the fifth century.

In view of the character of this frontier zone, as well as the possible changes experienced by its inhabitants, who had to adapt to changing situations in most cases, it would not have been simple to exert authority in a territory like this. In this regard, I believe that the construction of authority by means of creating a new elite in the Eastern Alps during the first half of the sixth century followed similar patterns to those implemented during the later Roman Empire, despite the possible difficulties that may occur with the local inhabitants. Authority was declared by means of placing a representative of the Ostrogothic government in the region (i.e. the already mentioned Colosseus), as well as military detachments. These officers had to regulate the local conflicts as well as to exert some military vigilance over the main roads that connected the Eastern Alps with the main routes of northern Italy. Hence, one might be able to re-construct the stages of this process: these military and civil officers sent by Theoderic mingled with the local population, creating new local *milieux* and forcing the inhabitants to negotiate and re-create their places in a new hierarchy, establishing or renewing their ties with a central authority.⁶⁷ In this regard, there is also the well-known case of the *antiqui barbari* from Pannonia, as also depicted by Cassiodorus in one of his letters.⁶⁸ Therefore, it is possible to suggest that many of these men would have relied on Latin and Greek knowledge, that is, part of the classical Roman education, as a strategy for imitating the Roman aristocracy of Italy, as Arnold suggests.⁶⁹ Such knowledge would have allowed them to insert themselves in the communities of Noricum and Pannonia through negotiations with the local elites in an easier manner. Hence, this is one example of the multiculturalism of Theoderic's empire.⁷⁰ Moreover, examples of such aristocracies are also reflected in the archaeological finds: this is the case of the paleochristian sanctuary of the Hemmaberg, at Globasnitz, where 65 individuals with high social status were buried, differentiated from the rest of the population buried at the site.⁷¹

Examples of the influence of militarised or Romanised barbarian elites upon the Roman or non-militarized population are provided by the findings of the small necropolis of Dravlje, in the periphery of Ljubljana. The skeletons found present cranial deformation, although they are buried without objects, which makes them extremely difficult to identify.⁷² What did it mean for the local inhabitants to carry on such practices? One gets the impression that it was a means of re-asserting their identity, or perhaps demonstrating their adscription to a particular non-Roman group. Depending on the context, some of these kinds of practices would have been common in a region which was surrounded and inhabited by various non-Roman groups who were constantly fighting each other for status as well as territorial power, as I mentioned above. Thus, the continuity of this custom shows that status, reflected by external traits, was a matter of utter importance in the Eastern Alps during the first half of the sixth century, a hypothesis that could also be supported if we keep in mind the existence of other groups in the vicinity of the area (mainly the Gepids and the Lombards, as well as the Avars, who arrived in the proximities of this region some decades later) who, in all probability, resorted to similar strategies.

But in this period when the re-configuration of loyalties and political strategies were shaping the society of the region, there were other groups of Roman provincials as well as non-Roman farmers who, it seems, were able to retain some of their customs, or preferred to do so. Once again, due to the laconic character of our literary sources, the archaeological work could help us to reinforce our arguments. In this regard, such customs, it seems, were derived from Roman traditions, which were reflected in the architecture employed in many of the hilltop settlements of modern-day Slovenia. The features of these buildings reflect a continuity with the uses of the previous period: for example, remnants of central heating were found in such buildings.⁷³ Moreover, Roman traditions are also manifested in buildings associated with Catholicism, since many of the hilltop settlements include churches within the fortified

⁶⁷ Amory, *People and Identity* 93.

⁶⁸ *Antiqui barbari, qui Romanis mulieribus elegerunt nuptial foedere sociari, quolibet titulo praedia quaesi verunt, fiscum possessi cespitis persolvere ac super indicticiis oneribus pare recogantur.* Cassiodorus, *Variae* V.14.6, ed. Mommsen 151. See also: Šašel, *Antiqui Barbari* 135.

⁶⁹ Arnold, *Theoderic and the Restoration* 139.

⁷⁰ Wolfram, *Goths* 300.

⁷¹ According to F. Glaser, they were buried *ad sanctos*. For more details on the site of the twin churches of the Hemmaberg paleochristian complex, see: Glaser, *Continuità e Discontinuità* 150–151.

⁷² Ciglencčki, *Romani e Langobardi* 185.

⁷³ Ciglencčki, *Romani e Langobardi* 181.

walls, which denote Roman influence in their construction patterns. This could be appreciated in the findings of Korinjski hrib, as Ciglencečki has shown.⁷⁴

That some communities were able to retain some of their traditions, including those related to Catholicism, can help us to make some reflections on the Christian aristocracy. As I mentioned above, most of the hilltop complexes located in the Eastern Alps reveal the existence of church buildings. No doubt the Church served as a continuator of the Roman government in the absence of the imperial civil officers. In this regard, church members often assumed the tasks of the former Roman governors (especially in the case of bishops).⁷⁵ Proof of the activities and economic importance of the Church clergy in the Eastern Alps lies, for example, in the excavations conducted in Tonovcov grad near Kobarid, in modern-day Slovenia, which demonstrated that glass was still being imported for church ornamentation, as well as for use in windows.⁷⁶ Thus, according to Milavec, the members of the church were the main consumers of glass during the sixth century.⁷⁷ In what is now Austria, church presence was attested in the fortified towns located in the Hemmaberg, in Carinthia, where ecclesiastical buildings dated to the sixth century were uncovered.⁷⁸ There are similar findings at the site of late antique Teurnia and the Lavanter Kirchbichl in Eastern Tyrol and, finally, the discovery of residents in the refuge of Aguntum.⁷⁹ These examples show not only that the clergy could have exerted some influence on this new configuration of loyalties at the beginning of the sixth century, but also that they still held some positions of power, which one can interpret based on their ability to arrange and organize the supply of some valuable items destined for everyday use (i.e., the commerce of glass).

While the ecclesiastical elite would have had some influence on local politics, most of the population was effectively ruled by a small foreign or non-Roman elite who could exert power through coercive force. I already described the example of the appointment of Count Colosseus to Pannonia by Theoderic the Great. Some of these features are reflected in the archaeological finds of the sites in what is now western Slovenia. The excavations revealed that in some habitation complexes the inhabitants were differentiated by status, which is reflected in the disposition of such complexes. The local ruling elites, in most cases, were separated from the rest of the local dwellers, since it seems that the new aristocracies tended to occupy the most important buildings in such sites. According to Ciglencečki, this could be applied both to the Ostrogothic as well as to the Lombard settlements in the area.⁸⁰ In the case of the occupation of the Lombards, there are examples of this pattern in the sites of Rifnik, Ajdovski Gradec nad Vranjem, and Tinje, where tombs that could be ascribed to a local Lombard ruling class were found in the proximity of the most important buildings. Moreover, all the tombs of the aforementioned sites present complete or partially complete vessels that are normally identified with Lombard pottery.⁸¹

In this manner, it is possible to interpret the context of the first half of the sixth century in the Eastern Alps as a mosaic of cultures and practices that, while it already existed during the fifth century, was strengthened due to the military and administrative processes that influenced the region. This was probably the result of the power vacuum experienced by the Imperial administration, as well as the attempt of a new government (the Ostrogothic rule) to integrate these territories into its dominion.

CONFLICTS AND MILITARY SITUATIONS IN THE MAKING OF ELITES

As I mentioned earlier, Noricum experienced a brief power vacuum regarding military and administrative matters, especially after Odovacer decided to move part of the Roman population to Italy at the end of fifth century, also retiring his military units.⁸² Similarly, after the departure of the Ostrogoths during the last decades of the fifth century, the territory of Pannonia was basically occupied by three *gentes*:

⁷⁴ Ciglencečki, *Romani e Langobardi* 183; Ciglencečki, *Archaeological Investigations* 123f.

⁷⁵ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms* 75.

⁷⁶ Milavec, *Glass in Slovenia* 278.

⁷⁷ Milavec, *Glass in Slovenia* 280.

⁷⁸ Glaser, *Kirchen in Noricum* 95–97.

⁷⁹ Pohl, *Awaren* 119.

⁸⁰ Ciglencečki, *Archaeological Investigations* 128.

⁸¹ Ciglencečki, *Romani e Langobardi* 187–188.

⁸² Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides. The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 2006) 219.

the recently arrived Lombards, who were settled in the westernmost area; those Heruli who did not follow Odovacer to Italy, and, finally, the Gepids, whose seat was in the Eastern part of the province.⁸³ As we will see in the next pages, the contacts and relations between these groups were characterized by an almost continuous conflict. Most of the time, violence and confrontations were the result of a broader picture in which attempts to seize the lands, cattle, and population (captives) of one group by another when an opportunity arose were becoming the rule.⁸⁴ I believe that the continuity of these traits (violence and competition for resources) made the consolidation of authority a very difficult task. In this regard, the construction and maintenance of local ruling elites by certain factions (be they the Ostrogoths, the Gepids, or the Lombards, for example) was not always possible. Hence, I would propose, not without some risk, that this general situation that prevailed in Noricum and Pannonia during the sixth century (especially during its second half) triggered competition for the resources mentioned (lands, cattle, and manpower), and most of the peoples who were sharing these territories were involved in this process. These assumptions can be supported through some of the examples presented in our sources. For example, in the case of the Heruli, it could be argued that they apparently served as a buffer zone between the aforementioned major groups (Lombards and Gepids). At the beginning of the sixth century, the three *gentes* experienced some peace during three years, according to what Procopius says.⁸⁵ This situation, the historian continues, infuriated the followers of Rodulf (507–512), the king of the Heruli, who wished to confront the Lombards in combat. As a result, they demanded their king attack the latter, and convinced him to do so.⁸⁶ Finally, both groups faced each other on the battlefield but the Heruli were defeated.⁸⁷ As a consequence, the Lombards decided to wipe them out in 508.⁸⁸ The actions and decisions of the Heruli, as described by Procopius, perhaps represent what we could consider some of the warrior traditions of these peoples.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, we need to be aware that this is the view of Procopius who, in all probability, was writing for a public who wished to read this kind of ethnographic discourse based on the traits of the different barbarian peoples inhabiting the borders of the Empire.

Be that as it may, from this moment, the Heruli split into various groups and thus ceased to represent a threat for the other communities or for the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, some of the Heruli who survived the battle moved to Italy to serve under Theoderic the Great, while others re-settled in the vicinity of the Gepids, more precisely after they marched through the territory of Noricum, which had been occupied by the Rugi some decades earlier. With time, Procopius lets us know that the contacts between Heruli and Gepids developed into a relationship that was not free from conflicts. This was the result of the attitudes of the Gepids, who carried out raids on those Heruli, including theft of their cattle, among other things.⁹⁰ All of this finally led to a more serious attack launched by the Gepids, which resulted in a further group division of these Heruli. In such a manner, the remnants of the contingent turned to the Eastern Romans, offering them military service in exchange for settlement.⁹¹

In the meantime, our sources throw some light on the construction of relations between the court of Theoderic the Great and some of the powers in the northern frontier, more precisely, with those

⁸³ Alexander Sarantis, The Justinianic Herules: From Allied Barbarians to Roman Provincials, in: *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. Florin Curta (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 32, Turnhout 2010) 361–402, at 370.

⁸⁴ Pohl, *Gepiden* 285.

⁸⁵ χρόνος τε αὐτοῖς ἐνιαυτῶν τριῶν ἐν ταύτῃ δὴ τῇ εἰρήνῃ ἐπίβη. Procopius, *Gothic War* II.14.10, ed. Dewing 404.

⁸⁶ On Rodulf, see: PLRE II 946.

⁸⁷ Ῥοδοῦλφος τε τὴν ὕβριν ὥς ἤκιστα φέρων ἐπὶ Λαγγοβάρδας οὐδὲν ἀδικοῦντας ἐστράτευσεν, οὔτε τινὰ σφίσιν ἀμαρτάδα ἐπενεγκὼν οὔτε λύσιν τινὰ τῶν ζυγκειμένων σκηπνέμενος, ἀλλὰ πόλεμον ἐπιφέρων αἰτίαν οὐκ ἔχοντα; “ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ μάχη ἐν χερσὶ γέγονε, θνήσκουσι μὲν τῶν Ἑρούλων πολλοὶ, θνήσκει δὲ καὶ Ῥοδοῦλφος αὐτός, οἱ τε ἄλλοι πάντες φεύγουσιν ἀνὰ κράτος, οὐδεμιᾷς ἀλκῆς μεμνημένοι. καὶ τῶν πολεμίων σφίσιν ἐπὶ σπομένων οἱ μὲν πλεῖστοι αὐτοῦ ἔπessον, ὀλίγοι δὲ τινες διεσώθησαν. Procopius, *Gothic War* II.14.12, 21–22, ed. Dewing 406, 408.

⁸⁸ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides* 202.

⁸⁹ Perhaps this story of the Herul warriors demanding their King go to war against the Lombards could be read as one of those cases which were used to motivate a certain audience or group of people during the Migration period, as Pohl suggests. See: Pohl, *Ethnicity, Theory and Tradition: A Response in: On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnogenesis Theory*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout 2002) 221–240, at 229–230.

⁹⁰ ἔπειτα δὲ ἤρξαντο ἐξ αἰτίας οὐδεμιᾷς ἀνόσια ἔργα ἐς αὐτοὺς ἐνδείκνυσθαι. γυναικᾶς τε γὰρ ἐβιάζοντο καὶ βοῦς τε καὶ ἄλλα χρήματα ἤρπαζον, καὶ ἀδικίας οὐδ’ ὅτι οὐκ ὑπελείποντο, καὶ τελευτῶντες ἀδίκων χειρῶν ἐς αὐτοὺς ἤρχον. Procopius, *Gothic War* II.14.27, ed. Dewing 410.

⁹¹ Sarantis, *Justinianic Herules* 369.

Heruli who decided to remain in Pannonia. In this regard, there is a letter from Cassiodorus addressed to the officers of Pavia, in which it is ordered that they should help the envoys of the Heruli, providing them with supplies.⁹² While the passage does not furnish us with more details, it could nevertheless be interpreted as portraying part of the good relations established between the Kingdom of Italy and their neighbours in the northern frontier. In a similar manner, the Heruli would have sought to stretch ties with the Ostrogoths, perhaps in order to count on some kind of support, if we bear in mind that the seat of the Gepids was located in close proximity to their territory, and that the latter had already demonstrated their interest in the lands of the Heruli.⁹³ The case of the Heruli, in this manner, could be considered as a variation of the old pattern of recruitment or use of barbarian soldiers (i.e., through the establishment of *foedera* between two factions), although the sources do not provide more details regarding payments or where those Heruli were to be stationed.

After these events, it seems that things remained calm in the region, at least, for a short interval. This brief period mainly coincides with the final days of stable rule by the Ostrogoths and the progress of the campaigns of the Byzantines within the Mediterranean region. However, once the Gothic wars began, conflicts between Lombards and Gepids started in the region during 550, which escalated up to a certain point.⁹⁴ Our main source for these events is Procopius' Gothic War, in which he mentions that the Lombards were settled in Pannonia, since Emperor Justinian granted them this land, as well as the "city" of Noricum ("Ιουστινιανὸς ἐδωρήσατο Νωρικῶ τε πόλει"). What the reasons behind such land concession by Justinian were is, however, not clear in the fragment.⁹⁵ The description of the hostilities between both peoples (as well as the reception of the embassies of both groups in Constantinople) continues through chapter 34. In this chapter, Justinian finally decides to make a treaty with the Lombards, thus granting them help against the Gepids. The passage also states that the Emperor resorted to an oath as a means to seal this alliance, an element that was perhaps part of the culture of the Lombards (similar in a way to the case of the goldsmiths which is described in the *Vita Sancti Severini*, analysed above).⁹⁶ Finally, the alliance between Lombards and Byzantines continued, and this was reflected in the help sent by Audoin for the army of Narses, manifested in the Lombard warriors who would join Narses, as described by Procopius (Procopius only asserts that Narses offered Audoin a significant sum of money).⁹⁷

While cases such as this on the role of the provinces as a recruitment ground remind us of the situation in Illyricum at the beginning of the fifth century, most of the details on how the recruitment procedures were organized are lacking.⁹⁸ In this regard, one could conclude that what we consider an enrolment process was, in fact, the gathering of followers belonging to different *gentes* as well as Roman provincials through the territory.

But there are other sources which mention the military (or, perhaps, warrior) condition of the region during the sixth century as well. For example, writing his chronicle in the seventh century from southern Hispania, Isidore of Seville reports that Emperor Justin II (565–578) bestowed the lands of Pannonia

⁹² *Ad comitatum supplices Erulos auctore deo nostris venire iussimus constitutis, quibus navis est praebenda subvectio, ne in patria nostra adhuc provinciae suae laborare videantur inopia. Itaque praesenti iussione commoniti et navis eis usum usque ad Ravennatem urbem et annonae dierum quinque sine aliqua dilatione praeparate nec aliquid eis necessarium deesse faciatis, quatenus provinciam se deseruisse ieiunam de copiae inventione cognoscant sitque illis uberior peregrina terra quam patria.* Cassiodorus, *Variae* IV.45, ed. Mommsen 134–135.

⁹³ Pohl, Gepiden 297.

⁹⁴ Walter Pohl, *Langobarden in Pannonien und Justinians Gotenkrieg*, in: *Ethnische und kulturelle Verhältnisse an der mittleren Donau vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. D. Baialeková/J. Zábojník (Bratislava 1996) 27–35, at 32.

⁹⁵ Λαγγοβάρδας δὲ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς ἐδωρήσατο Νωρικῶ τε πόλει καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ Πννονίας ὀχυρώμασί τε καὶ ἄλλοις χωρίοις πολλοῖς καὶ χρήμασι μεγάλοις ἄγαν. Procopius, *Gothic War* III.33.10, ed. Dewing 440.

⁹⁶ Βουλευσάμενος δὲ πολλὰ Ἰουστινινὸς Βασιλεὺς αὐτοὺς μὲν ἀποπέμψασθαι ἀπράκτους ἔγνω, ὁμαιχμίαν δὲ πρὸς Λαγγοβάρδας διώμοτον πεποιημένους πλέον αὐτοῖς ἢ ἐς μυρίους ἱππεῖς ἐπεμψεν, ὧν δὲ Κωνσταντιανὸς καὶ Βούζης καὶ Ἀράτιος ἦρχον. Procopius, *Gothic War* III.34.40, ed. Dewing 454.

⁹⁷ For the episode of Narses and the Lombards sent to his army by Audoin: καὶ Αὐδοῖν, ὁ Λαγγοβαρδῶν ἡγούμενος, χρήμασι πολλοῖς ἀναπεισθεὶς Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ καὶ τῇ τῆς ὁμαιχμίας ξυνθήκῃ, πεντακοσίους τε καὶ δισχιλίους τῶν οἱ ἐπομένων ἀπολεξάμενος ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς τὰ πολέμια ἐς ζυμμαχίαν αὐτῷ ἐπεμψεν, οἷς δὲ καὶ θεραπεία εἶπετο μαχίμων ἀνδρῶν πλέον ἢ τρισχιλίων. Procopius, *Gothic War* IV.26.12, ed. Dewing 330.

⁹⁸ For Illyricum as a recruitment ground at the beginning of fifth century: Heather, *Goths and Romans* 211–212.

on the Lombards. Moreover, the section also stresses that Narses “invited” the Lombards to Italy.⁹⁹ On the other hand, the *Historia Langobardorum* depicts Noricum and Pannonia in some of the three manners I described above as well. While it was composed almost two hundred years later by Paul the Deacon, it could allow us to furnish some details on the heterogeneous force the Lombards gathered in Pannonia and Noricum. Chapter XXX of the third book describes, for example, how King Authari (584–590) impressed the Bavarians who were escorting him.¹⁰⁰ In this manner, King Authari gained the confidence of the group of Bavarians by demonstrating to them some of his abilities in what we could label as martial arts (“erexit se quantum super equum cui praesidebat potuit et toto adnisi securiculam, qua manu gestabat, in arborem...”).¹⁰¹ In addition, the passage is also interesting since it explains that Noricum was the land inhabited by the Bavarians, also providing some information on the geographic location of the territory (“Noricorum siquidem provincial, quam Baioariorum populosa inhabitat, habet ab oriente Pannoniam, ab occidente Suaviam...”). In this regard, it would be possible to identify this territory as belonging to another *gens*, in this case, the Bavarians. The problem here is that our sources do not allow us to furnish more information concerning the way these Bavarians settled in Noricum and its respective details, or at what precise time they did so (one of the earliest references to them is Jordanes, who depicts them in proximity with the Suebi).¹⁰² What we could argue is that they became closely related to the Lombards, who were, by that time, already dwelling in Italy.

Here the point is related to our argument: while both of the last sources were written in different geographical and historical contexts, the construction of the image of the territories of the Eastern Alps, in this case, Noricum and Pannonia, served to show a place where manpower was not so hard to recruit. There, men who were willing to follow the elites to battle could be found, perhaps in order to obtain more benefits. In this sense, it seems that money, lands, and loyalties (created by the demonstration of abilities related to the battlefield as well as by means of oaths) were some of the key factors used by the leaders of the many different groups who inhabited the Eastern Alps during the sixth century to create new elites. They also resorted to these methods to support such elites (bearing in mind that Constantinople also played an important role in the construction of these ruling classes). Nevertheless, we should not forget that what these sources describe could be a strategy to create an ideology regarding the importance of some of the former territories of the Empire.

As we have already seen from the examples analysed, the few literary sources which cover the events of the sixth century offer other good examples which portray the image of both territories, i.e., as a seat to various barbarian *gentes*; as a place to gather military manpower; and lastly, as a portion of land that could be handed over to one group or another depending on the circumstances or the services such a group provided to Constantinople. I believe that this last option was related to some of the policies of the Byzantine Empire during the reign of Justinian, when the authorities of Constantinople tried to utilize the *gentes* settled in Pannonia against other possible foes or rivals of the Empire depending on the circumstances, hence resorting to old strategies similar to those developed by the Empire during the times of Theodosius, and Stilicho.

⁹⁹ *Narsis patricius postquam sub Iustiniano Augusto Totilanem Gothorum regem in Italia superavit, Sofiae Augustae Iustini coniugis minis perterritus Longobardos a Pannoniis invitavit eosque in Italiam introducit.* Isidori Iunioris episcopi Hispalensis chronica, 402 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 11, Berlin 1894) 476.

¹⁰⁰ *Igitur Authari cum iam prope Italiae fines venisset secumque adhuc qui eum deducebant Baioarios haberet, erexit se quantum super equum cui praesidebat potuit de toto adnisi securiculam, qua manu gestabat, in arborem quae proximior aderat fixit camque fixam reliquit, adiciens haec insuper verbis: ‘Talem Authari feritam facere solet’. Cumque haec dixisset, tunc intellexerunt Baioarii qui cum eo comitabantur, eum ipsum regem Authari esse.* Pauli Historia Langobardorum III.30, ed. Waitz 109f.

¹⁰¹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* III.30, ed. Waitz 109f. While the story and the context were different, the display of abilities shown by Authari remind us of the speech of Totila and the demonstration of his abilities in front of his army, as recorded by Procopius, *Gothic War* IV.32. See also: Walter Pohl, *I Goti d’Italia e le Tradizioni delle Steppe*, in: Teodorico il Grande e i Goti d’Italia (Atti del XIII Congresso internazionale di studi sull’Alto Medioevo, Spoleto 1993) 227–251, at 227.

¹⁰² On the mention of the *Baibaros*, see: Jordanes, *Getica* 280, ed. Mommsen 130. See also: Matthias Hardt, *The Bavarians*, in: *Regna and Gentes. The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. H. W. Goetz/ J. Jarnut/W. Pohl (Leiden 2003) 429–461. For a brief summary: Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* 403–405.

From all the examples analysed, it would be possible to suggest that, during certain periods of time, the territory of the Eastern Alps served as some kind of recruitment ground. And by recruitment, I am referring to the wide sense in which an army – barbarian or Roman; both organized and institutionalised as well as unorganized – serves itself from a place to gather manpower for warlike purposes. In my view, this will be one of the most visible traits of the Eastern Alps during the fifth and sixth centuries (most notoriously, during the second half of the sixth). Finally – and, in a similar manner –, the region itself would repeatedly serve as a *reward* element, passing from hand to hand, particularly in the case of its Eastern portion, that is, Pannonia.

CONCLUSIONS

During Late Antiquity, the territory of the Eastern Alps had a particular character, which was perhaps reflected in the wide variety of images that were composed by contemporaries to inform audiences about this area both as a frontier zone regarding the limits of the Western Empire (during the fifth century), and as a remote land which served to keep foreign peoples at bay, in the cases of both Italy under the rule of the Ostrogoths and the Eastern Empire during the sixth century. In connection with this last point, the region slowly became a “barbarian” ground, partially ignored by the majority of the contemporary commentators on most occasions, except when these lands had a particular interest for their narratives. In some cases, one can resort to archaeology in order to make an attempt to improve the interpretation of certain processes, i.e., in our case, the integration and creation of new ruling elites in certain places.

In relation to this, one aspect that still grabs the attention of most scholars is the question of the continuity of Roman culture and society in the Eastern Alps between the end of the fifth century and the end of the sixth. From the few sources which make reference to the region and its changes, together with the archaeological finds, one is left with more questions than answers in most cases. But despite these setbacks, we are able to categorise the question of continuity and change in the Eastern Alps by establishing a typology on the matter. In the first place, it is possible to make inferences about the traces of Roman institutions that remained, perhaps in a different form. This is reflected in some of the hilltop sites, both in modern-day Slovenia and in Austria, and in the various church buildings. Moreover, archaeology also demonstrated the strong presence of the Church in the Alps, represented by the notorious quantities of glass finds for liturgical uses, which can lead us to consider the degree of the organizational role held by the Catholic hierarchy once the Roman State withdrew its activities from this region. In addition, regarding administrative matters, it is also possible to argue that continuity in this aspect prevailed, and was shown, for example, in the measures taken by some of the successive powers that were established in the region after 476. Our most well-represented case in this sense is that of the Ostrogoths: we have already seen how Theoderic the Great was concerned with the strategic importance of the region, hence he compromised, sending military representatives of the Kingdom of Italy in order to bring back stability in Pannonia and Raetia. Nevertheless, our knowledge of such processes is limited to the Kingdom of Italy, since other sources contain virtually no descriptions regarding this kind of procedure by the other powers established in the region or in its surroundings (i.e. the Byzantines, Gepids, Lombards, or Avars).

What perhaps indicates a discontinuity with the Ancient World is the character of administration and control implemented by the sixth-century powers (Ostrogoths, Byzantines, and, possibly, Lombards) in order to exert some kind of authority in the region. In this manner, while some attempts to rule the area – perhaps in an improvised way – were represented by the military and ecclesiastical elites which remained, the character of the region on these matters was, in general, very loose in nature, hence the possibility for so many different *gentes* to settle in this territory and the subsequent disputes that were generated between the different newcomers.

Another topic which generates questions is that of the nature of the population of the Eastern Alps during this period. Here the dwellers participated in a process of change which involved different patterns and was slightly different depending on the province they inhabited. For example, there are cases in which the sources document the exodus of Roman provincials from Noricum, a case that is described in the *Vita Sancti Severini*. Given the few details that exist on the province of Noricum after this episode, it is probable that there might have been some remnants of the Roman population who stayed in the

territory. In this case, only one scenario is possible, i.e., the integration of such a population with the newcomers. Nevertheless, the problem with this assertion lies in the following question: who were these newcomers? On the basis of the narrative by Eugippius, we could only suggest that there were groups of Suebi as well as remains of other groups such as Alamanni, Thuringii, and Rugii.¹⁰³ We lack the precise details on the elements that shaped this integration, that is, if there were episodes of violence that affected the provincials in different ways such as being taken captive by the different contingents (which was one of the most common raid modalities described by Eugippius). What can be asserted is that our sources show the appearance of another *gens* in Noricum during the sixth century: the Bavarians, who are also surrounded by a dark mist concerning their precise origins.

In the case of Pannonia, we are slightly better informed regarding who settled there during this period. Pannonia was visited by many peoples as a result of the fragmentation of the Empire of Attila, as I mentioned in the first part of this work. In this context, the descriptions regarding Roman provincials are lacking. We only hear about the roaming of different *gentes* in what could be called a competition for the land, most of them being defeated by the Ostrogoths in various encounters within the last quarter of the fifth century. Then, we hear again of Pannonia from the official Ostrogothic correspondence of the court of Theoderic the Great in relation to administrative and military matters. Our last mentions of Pannonia come from a variety of sources (such as Procopius, Jordanes, and Paul the Deacon), where it is only possible to glean that the region became some sort of training or recruiting ground, a resource which was available in some ways for the Eastern Empire, as well as for some of the *gentes*, most notably, the Lombards.

I have mentioned the point at which Pannonia was transformed into a recruitment ground. The situation can be compared on some points to Illyricum at the beginning of the fifth century. The most notable difference, nevertheless, is that the Byzantines were not always the recruitment agent par excellence, as was the Western Roman Empire in the times of Stilicho and the *comes et magister utriusque militiae* Constantius.

Thus, the image of the region constructed during Late Antiquity presented a particularity. The picture offered by sixth, and even eighth-century sources is that of a transient area, especially for *gentes* which belonged to the Empire of Attila as well as others who arrived from the areas situated to the north and northeast of Constantinople. Here, the Eastern Alps are depicted as a vast territory which could pass to one hand or another, depending on the events and circumstances. Sometimes Constantinople was the official agent which allowed the newcomers to settle in the region. By contrast, in some circumstances the ones who took control and settled in the Eastern Alps were the *gentes* themselves, sometimes by the use of force, at other times by arranging the terms of settlement between each other. Therefore, the historical processes of the Eastern Alps during Late Antiquity allow us to understand the territory as a place where negotiations and an almost continuous configuration and re-configuration of identities took place. Such mechanisms became an essential part of the daily life of local milieus, a strategy that involved not only the dwellers of the region but also the newcomers, and it had to be re-started over and over again, each time the Eastern Alps received new communities.

¹⁰³ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides* 220.

