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Danuta Shanzer (Hg.)

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Rereading the Rhine-Danube *Limes*
and the End of the Roman Empire

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'Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik': Events, Resonances, and Contributions
Introduction

Alexander Demandt

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By way of an Afterword

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DANUTA SHANZER

‘Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik’: Events, Resonances, and Contributions

Introduction¹

The publication history of Alexander Demandt’s work on “Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik” reflects our continuing fascination with the end of the Roman Empire, a topic with rich literary sources and an inherent capacity to hold up a mirror to its historians. All explanations reflect their authors’ own times and troubles. The original core of Demandt’s contribution became controversial in 2015, but is arguably even more so now in 2024. His “mover” approach emphasized barbarian invasions and the transgression of borders. After invoking a sample of modern literary and scholarly imaginings of the northwestern *limes*, the introduction revisits some of Demandt’s themes, including Roman and the barbarian birthrates, walls, and the role of Christianity. The contributors’ articles are then contextualized and discussed individually. They concentrate on the Upper-Rhine *limes* (Hächler), client kings among the Alemanni (Mathisen), a case for the good faith of barbarians (Wijnendaele), the vulnerabilities of narratives (Liccardo), the quite different situation on the eastern frontier (Sarantis), and the embedding of Demandt’s work in the contemporary politics of migration in Germany (Afsah).

Keywords: end of the Roman Empire / borders / barbarians / historiography / literary reception

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¹ “It takes a village ...” Many people contributed to this themed issue in different ways. I would like to thank Oliver Jens Schmitt for entrusting the original assignment to me. I am grateful to all the contributors for their openness and professionalism and to the colleagues at the ÖAW Verlag and Administration (Thomas Jentzsch, Ingeborg Lux, and our keen-sighted and upbeat hands-on editor Stefan Winterstein) for their patience and helpfulness, especially during the final stages of production. Discussions with friends are one of the great joys of the academic life. I owe special thanks to Ebrahim Afsah, Rainer Bauböck, Giovanni Cecconi, Florin Curta, Carlo Ferrari, and Roger Tomlin. Members of my online *Privatissimum* acted as critical sounding-boards for drafts of my own contributions. And Nikolas Hächler both drew me a map and taught me how to use some of the online resources for historical cartography.

I. Essay, Author, and Themes

This second themed issue of the *Anzeiger Neu* has been built around Alexander Demandt's stimulating essay "Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik".² Demandt's title undershoots his actual reach – nothing less than the fall and transformation of the Roman Empire, a commanding and perennial historiographical theme. Such a topic can be approached from many angles, and, in this case, the focus is on one key border region that includes the seat of the Austrian Academy itself.

As editor of the volume, I assembled an international team of scholars at different career stages, five Later Roman historians and a specialist in modern constitutional, international, and Islamic law. I use this Foreword first to react critically to selected topics from Professor Demandt's paper and to get the juices flowing. These remarks are in some cases critical. I then summarize and contextualize the responses of the other contributors. As a philologist with interests in literary, cultural, and political history, I use the Afterword to develop some general reflections about walls, boundaries, frontiers, and borders. The poet, teacher, and propagandist Ausonius then serves to flesh out some of these thoughts. They will bring me to rivers, the Rhine and Danube, the northwestern frontier, and eventually to the historiography of the Battle of Adrianople (378 CE). I will provide some new readings of long familiar texts of Ausonius, question the Emperor Gratian's motivation and actions, and argue for a dark interpretation of Ammianus on Adrianople.

Professor Demandt, an authority on the Later Roman Empire,³ takes his readers on a thrilling journey, exploring the history of the Romano-Germanic *limes*, namely the Rhine and the Danube. He covers the many centuries between Rome's legendary foundation on 21 April 753 BCE and the eventual establishment of the barbarian successor kingdoms in the West, when the Western Empire succumbed to different *Germanen* in the 5th c. CE. Hats are elegantly doffed to Austrian local interests when we encounter Marcus Aurelius at Carnuntum or hear of the twilight world of Eugippius' *Vita Severini*. We follow Rome's trajectory from asylum⁴ to alarming neighbor, to world power, and to empire – split, at bay, and disintegrating.

² The text was not delivered orally, but read by title and circulated to the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences of the ÖAW on 2 December 2021 during the COVID pandemic.

³ DEMANDT 2008.

⁴ On the asylum-legend, see DENCH 2005. Versions are to be found in Plutarch, "Romulus" 9; Livy 1.8.5-6 and 2.1.4; seen positively in Augustine *CD* 1.34, where it is read (backhandedly) as a prefiguration of the asylum provided by Christian churches during the Sack of 410, but for a selfish end – manpower.

Professor Demandt has long been interested in borders. He is the author of a penetrating as well as imaginative introduction to *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte*. In it he problematized the term “Deutschland”, but also provided help with the classical cultural history of the word “Grenze”.⁵ His contribution to the *Anzeiger* seems, at first glance, to be an accessible essay in the area of *Limes-Studien*, focusing on *Grenzpolitik*. It is a tale about one of Rome’s many borders, a fast-paced narrative about expansion, maintenance, breaches, decline, and loss. In the end, the north-western *Limes* would prove undefendable. And divers barbarians, a crude collective whom at least one later Roman had imagined baying like dogs beyond the borders,⁶ became rulers of a hybrid society in the West. But it is also an essay about political and strategic failure.

II. Historiography: Mirroring and Presentism

Debates about change vs. continuity and destruction vs. transformation are endemic in Roman history. Scholars mirror themselves and their times and fall into schools. As Reinhart Herzog memorably reminded us, “Wir leben in der Spätantike.”⁷ This has always been true. No one studies this period without importing subjective baggage from his or her own present and seeing both at once.⁸ Consider Peter Brown on Shapur’s victories and the sites of Naqsh-e Rostam and Bishapur: “I would be at *the ground zero of the explosion of energy* [italics mine] by which the Sasanian Empire came to dominate half of the Middle East throughout late antiquity.”⁹

A built-in presentism haunts the fate of the Roman Empire.¹⁰ Demandt himself quite literally wrote the book on the historiography of its demise.¹¹ The scholarship is inevitably polarized.¹² Guy Halsall, for example, distinguished “movers”, who saw the great migrations as the crucial element in the Western Empire’s fall, from “shakers”, who pointed to internal factors

⁵ DEMANDT 1990, 19-22.

⁶ *Anonymous de rebus bellicis* 6.1 *in primis sciendum est quod imperium Romanum circumlatrantium ubique nationum perstringat insania et omne latus limitum tecta naturalibus locis appetat dolosa barbaries.*

⁷ Alluding to HERZOG 1987.

⁸ COLLINGWOOD 1946, 39 and 202 and GADDIS 2002, 41 on the inseparability of the past from the historian’s present.

⁹ BROWN 2023, 423-424.

¹⁰ See LICCARDO, below, p. 96, n. 26 on TikTok discussions of how often men think about the Roman Empire daily and how the *New York Times* picked up the trend to discuss gendering too.

¹¹ DEMANDT 2014 and 1997.

¹² See LICCARDO, below, p. 92.

that weakened the core and caused it to falter.¹³ At different times different nationalisms emerge. Peter Brown compares Piganiol's assassination of the Roman Empire model¹⁴ with Seeck's decadence theory.¹⁵ Many modern scholars prefer to see transformation, which some intend as a purely neutral term, not as a euphemism.¹⁶ Walter Goffart, ever provocative (or should one say "contrarian?"), would have us see the barbarians as "Rome's final conquest."¹⁷ They wanted *Romanitas* and, in the end, assimilated.

The world has accelerated. Attitudes change rapidly in response to current events. And things have now gone further: those who write about this period must, as we shall see, worry about where their contemporaries will place them on the historiographical spectrum and what their present and future readers may insinuate about their political motives.

III. Demandt's Empire

Demandt's reading is on the whole a more traditional "mover" one, strongly colored by its Roman literary sources, but he adduces multiple (f)actors that led to the end of Roman rule in the West, including those favored by "shakers". His narrative openly takes sides, namely the Romans', and recounts the rise of the Roman state and the end of the Western Empire through the lens of the Rhine-Danube *limes* and relations with the Germans beyond its borders. His *Pax Romana* clearly was a glorious thing. I might remind us of other perspectives.¹⁸ Matters might look different to people who had been *pacificati* or *debellati*, the other voices that sometimes can be overheard or instrumentalized in ancient literature.¹⁹ Consider the epigram put in the British tribesman, Calgacus' mouth by Tacitus, *Agriicola* 30.3-4: "they create a wasteland and call it 'peace.'"²⁰

¹³ HALSALL 1999.

¹⁴ See BROWN 2023, 173-174.

¹⁵ BROWN (2023, 176-178) finds Seeck and his social Darwinism unacceptable. At p. 177: "I had read enough. Such odious pronouncements were not for me."

¹⁶ For the European Science Foundation's now famous project (1992-1997) see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transformation_of_the_Roman_World

¹⁷ GOFFART 2008.

¹⁸ On the historiography of Romanization see CECCONI 2018.

¹⁹ See PARRY 1963 for a classic Harvard School study of the *Aeneid*.

²⁰ *Nos terrarum ac libertatis extremos recessus ipse ac sinus famae in hunc diem defendit; nunc terminus Britanniae patet, atque polymath omne ignotum pro magnifico est; sed nulla iam ultra gens, nihil nisi fluctus ac saxa, et infestiores Romani, quorum superbiam frustra per obsequium ac modestiam effugias. raptore orbis, postquam cuncta vastantibus defuere terrae, mare scrutantur; si locuples hostis est, avari, si pauper, ambitiosi, quos non Oriens, non Occidens satiaverit; soli omnium opes atque inopiam pari adfectu concupiscunt. auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*

IV. Demandt’s Narrative

Just as “something there is that doesn’t love a wall”,²¹ so do prosperity and riches (or employment) within a border automatically attract or lure outsiders in.²² One might ask oneself whether modern insiders would have different attitudes towards immigration if their states provided few or no social services.²³ Demandt emphasizes enticements rather than distant push-factors, such as the Huns, that set barbarian peoples in motion.²⁴ Rome’s very success created envy beyond her borders. The *Germanen* lacked good faith.²⁵ Then came internal luxury and moral decline (almost Sallustian).²⁶ Rome’s changed from a society that had conscripted its own citizens to one that was dependent on mercenaries. Demilitarization was thus to blame.²⁷ These are some of the points that would be raised in the Monday morning quarterbacking session.²⁸

From Pomerium to Limes

At the center of Demandt’s piece stands the *limes*, hence a few words on the continuing role of walls, limits, boundaries, and borders in Roman thought and the modern *imaginaire*. Early Rome beheld Remus’ Ur-transgression of Romulus’ wall. Rome’s own *pomerium* is said to have started as a sacral furrow ploughed by Romulus.²⁹ And Rome grew from infant city to an empire whose borders would eventually measure more than 3000 miles.³⁰ The Roman *limes*, a border-line both real and imaginary, took many different forms: a wall in Britain, an earthwork and ditch in Scotland, and the *Pfahlgraben* on the Rhine-Danube frontier. It incorporated great rivers such as the Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates, but in the Sahara in the south

²¹ FROST 1971, 33.

²² ROSTOVITZ (1957, vol. 1, 355) speaks of the Germans’, “Rome’s nearest neighbours”’ reaction to the wealth and prosperity of the provincial cities and how they were “eager to participate in the civilized life of the Empire”. See AFSAH, below, p. 126.

²³ One could also consider the political dilemmas of democratic mayors in the USA. FITZSIMMONS 2023 and WEISMAN & FANDOS 2023; see AFSAH, below, p. 129 on the levels of trust required for integration in a welfare state.

²⁴ This was already picked up on by GOFFART (2002, 27-28), discussing DEMANDT 2014, 588-589.

²⁵ WIJNENDAELE turns the tables on this discourse, below, pp. 78-88.

²⁶ See, for example, *Cat.* 2, 7, 10-13.

²⁷ DEMANDT (2008, 230) says that there has scarcely ever been a state that was as demilitarized as Rome. Fewer than 1% were armed.

²⁸ One can contrast Seeck’s virulent criticism of the Romans for laziness, lack of mental energy, for lopping off or disabling their best heads, and for letting their birthrate slide. Esp. SEECK 1910a, 269-289.

²⁹ *Tac. Ann.* 12.24.1; *Aul. Gell.* 13.14.2.

³⁰ *Amm. Marc.* 14.6.3-6 for Rome’s organic life.

it was an imaginary line in the sand.³¹ It could be policed by series of forts with watchtowers or lie open like modern frontier borders.³²

Borders in the Literary Mind's Eye

Demandt concentrates on one section of this system, the Romano-Germanic *limes*. One could imagine many sorts of responses, including the literary and imaginative, so potent is the symbolism and so pressing the political and military issues. One cannot but be struck by the feelings the *limes* aroused in writers of many stripes. One can easily put together a small collection of ambitious and exciting sentences from both scholars and men of letters.

On the frontier in Britannia, Rudyard Kipling's Parnesius, a fictional centurion of the 30th Legion,³³ told the children Dan and Una about Hadrian's Wall.³⁴ In this description Kipling anticipated some of our contributors who prefer to see the *limes* as a zone of encounter and was anticipated by Jacob Grimm who noted how borders can join.³⁵

But the Wall itself is not more wonderful than the town behind it. Long ago there were great ramparts and ditches on the South side, and no one was allowed to build there. Now the ramparts are partly pulled down and built over, from end to end of the Wall, making a thin town eight miles long! Think of it! One roaring, rioting, cock-fighting, wolf-baiting, horse-racing town, from Ituna on the West to Segedunum on the cold eastern beach! On one side heather, woods and ruins where Picts hide, and on the other, a vast town – long like a snake, and wicked like a snake. Yes, a snake basking beside a warm wall.³⁶

John Matthews hinted at how the *limes* fortifications were themselves signs for what they protected.

³¹ LUTTWAK (2016, 98) mentions the use of rainfall to define borders in arid zones.

³² For an older encyclopedic treatment, see FABRICIUS 1994. "Frontier borders" is my working translation of "Niemandsländergrenzen", for which see MAU 2021, 55. It is the weakest type of border.

³³ *Sic*, for this is an error of Kipling's for the XXth Legion Valeria Victrix. See TOMLIN 2018, xiii.

³⁴ WHITTAKER (1994, 1-3) bounces off *Puck of Pook's Hill* to delineate British Victorian attitudes.

³⁵ GRIMM 1845, 110: "Sie [sc. die Grenze] muß nicht bloß als trennendes, sondern zugleich als einigendes princip behandelt werden, aus welchem neben der nothwendigen scheide ein band der nachbarschaft und gemeinschaft sich entfaltete, dessen heiligung und weihe unserm alterthum aufs höchste angelegen war." Very recently likewise MAU 2021, 33: Borders create neighbors, relations, and exchanges. He emphasises *how* a border goes, rather than *where*. LUTTWAK (2016, 100) notes that terrain around a frontier zone had to be suitable for "self-Romanization". Hadrian's Wall was.

³⁶ KIPLING 1964, 128.

The Rhine-Danube frontier, the so-called ‘Pfahlgraben’ or ‘palisaded ditches’ [*sic*], which enclosed Agri Decumates on their eastern side, could hardly match the ruins of Bath or the great walls of northern Britain for monumental grandeur, but must still have been an imposing and mysterious physical feature to barbarian onlookers, implying resources and techniques beyond their imaginations, as it sped on its direct line across the Odenwald and south, before swinging east to reach the Danube at Eining.³⁷

And most exuberant and exciting of all was “the polymath” at the Inn at Persenbeug (Lower Austria) who lectured the young Patrick Leigh Fermor on the history of the Roman Empire in 1933. He improvised this war-game on a table with a piece of paper and buns (“Semmeln”, I assume). Fermor narrated this unforgettable encounter in flashback from the heights of the citadel at Aggstein on the Danube:

An enormous arrow entered the picture on the right, and bore down on the river-side buns. “The Huns arrive! Everything starts changing place at full speed!” His pencil leaped feverishly into action. The buns put forth their own arrows of migration and began coiling sinuously about the paper till Mitteleuropa and the Balkans were alive with demons’ tails. “Chaos! The Visigoths take shelter south of the lower Danube, and defeat the Emperor Valens at Adrianople, *here!*,” he twisted the lead on the paper – “in 476 [*sic*]. Then – in only a couple of decades” – a great loop of pencil swept round the tip of the Adriatic and descended a swiftly-outlined Italy “– we get Alaric! Rome is captured! The Empire splits in two –” the pace of his delivery reminded me of a sports commentator “– and the West totters on for half a century or so. But the Visigoths are heading westwards,” an arrow curved to the left and looped into France, which rapidly took shape, followed by the Iberian peninsula. “Go West, young Goth!,” he murmured as his pencil threw off Visigothic kingdoms across France and Spain at a dizzy speed. “There we are!” he said; then, as an afterthought, he absentmindedly pencilled in an oval across northern Portugal and Galicia, and I asked him what it was. “The Suevi, same as the Swabians, more or less: part of the whole movement. But *now*,” he went on, “*here go the Vandals!*” A few vague lines from what looked like Slovakia and Hungary joined together and then swept west in a broad bar that mounted the Danube and advanced into Germany. “Over the Rhine in 406: then clean across Gaul –” here the speed of his pencil tore a ragged furrow across the paper “– through the Pyrenees three years later – here they come! – then down into Andalusia – hence the name – and *hop!* –” the pencil skipped the imaginary straits of Gibraltar and began rippling eastwards again “– along the north African coast to” – he improvised the coast as he went, then stopped with a large black blob – “*Carthage!* And all in thirty-three years from start to finish!” His pencil was busy again, so I asked him the meaning of all the dotted lines he had started sending out from Carthage into the Mediterranean. “Those are Genseric’s fleets, making a nuisance of themselves. Here he goes, sacking Rome in 455!”³⁸

Such dramatic visualizations with animated and agitating arrows originated in the early 19th c. and, according to Walter Goffart, did much to

³⁷ MATTHEWS 1989, 309.

³⁸ FERMOR 1977, 160-161.

promote classic “mover” hypotheses.³⁹ They proved quite as effective as computer animations in capturing imaginations past.⁴⁰ But fashions have changed, and we should now move beyond relishing bloodlust or quaking like alarmed jellies.

V. Presentism and Resonances

This brings me to presentism, the plight of the public intellectual, and the back-story of Professor Demandt’s essay. We have seen how all who study Roman history inevitably mirror and reflect upon their own present and must also reckon with such reflections among their readers. The end of the Roman Empire echoes down to the present.⁴¹ Themes in Demandt’s paper, as we shall see, have uncomfortable resonances in contemporary Europe. This is no surprise, when we consider its publication history.

L’Affaire Demandt: Syria

The Fall of the Roman Empire resonates in the collective and individual *imaginaire*. Male humans think about it daily,⁴² but likewise – on occasion – modern think-tanks. Professor Demandt had been asked by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung to look for *comparanda* and wisdom in the past, when mass migration from Syria in 2015 (the *Flüchtlingskrise*) was making headlines in Germany and Europe. In his submission, he mentioned failure of integration as a factor.⁴³ Bernd Löhmann, then editor of the Christian Democratic Party’s official organ, *Die politische Meinung*, subsequently rejected Demandt’s essay on the grounds that it could be “subject to misinterpretation”⁴⁴ in the contemporary political situation. It nonetheless saw the light of day – but in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁴⁵

A contemporary periodical retroactively decided not to print work it had itself commissioned because it was concerned about its political image at points further left on the political spectrum, Demandt being perceived

³⁹ GOFFART 2013, 1-3.

⁴⁰ GOFFART 2002, 27 on outward pointing arrows radiating from the Pripet Marshes. “The silliness of the image does not keep it from being unforgettable.”

⁴¹ DEMANDT 1997.

⁴² See LICCARDO, below, p. 96, n. 26.

⁴³ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Demandt.

⁴⁴ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Demandt. See AFSAH, below, pp. 123-124 on the political strategy.

⁴⁵ DEMANDT 2016; sections of it are related to this paper, e.g. the lead-up to the Battle of Adrianople.

as an author who represented more right-wing conservative politics.⁴⁶ This *affaire* shows us clearly how, as Collingwood and Gaddis note, current events vibrate in the historian’s mind,⁴⁷ but it also provides us with an opportunity to take another snapshot of similar material several years later.

Newer Topicalities?

The piece on which Demandt’s lecture is based thus seemed urgently topical in 2015. It may have subsequently developed a different topicality after the war in Ukraine of February 2022 left many thinking hard about buffers⁴⁸ and neutrality in addition to hard boundaries. Caesar credited the Germans with liking deep uninhabited borders as testimony to their might.⁴⁹ Demandt wrote of Marcus Aurelius’ desire to create a new province on the left bank of the Danube, by extending the boundary, creating a bulge into *barbaricum*.⁵⁰ He notes that scholars have often denied that such a level-headed emperor could have supported such a project, but connects an inscription from Trenčín.⁵¹ There follows one of Demandt’s most amusing and bitter *obiter dicta* – that a senseless project doesn’t *ipso facto* have to be unhistorical! This double perspective is nothing new for Demandt. His work on borders of the late 1980s was likewise caught up in living history, for the Berlin Wall fell between the time the paper was presented and its publication.⁵²

⁴⁶ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Demandt. “Auch darüber hinaus betätigt er sich als politisch-historischer Kommentator für rechtskonservative Medien.” DEMANDT (2016) cites the words “fremdenfreundlich” and “integrieren” and mentions the need to keep an eye on the long-term consequences of immigration and limit influx. At the end he notes that the Roman Empire must have reached a tipping-point.

⁴⁷ See above, p. 7, n. 8 on the inseparability of the past from the historian’s present.

⁴⁸ DEMANDT, below, p. 37: “Man kennt das.”

⁴⁹ Caesar, *BG* 4.3.1-3 *Publice maximam putant esse laudem quam latissime a suis finibus vacare agros. hac re significari magnum numerum civitatum suam vim sustinere non potuisse. itaque una ex parte a Suebis circiter milia passuum sescenta agri vacare dicuntur. ad alteram partem succedunt Ubii, quorum fuit civitas ampla atque florens, ut est captus Germanorum. et paulo sunt quam eiusdem generis ceteri humaniores, propterea quod Rhenum attingunt multum que ad eos mercatores ventitant et ipsi propter propinquitatem [quod] Gallicis sunt moribus adsuefacti.*

⁵⁰ HA “Marcus Aurelius” 24.5 *Voluit Marcomanniam provinciam, voluit etiam Sarmatiam facere, et fecisset, nisi Avidius Cassius rebellasset sub eodem in oriente* (in 171 CE); also 27.10. MOMMSEN 1968, 247.

⁵¹ CIL iii 13439 = ILS 9122: VICTORIAE/AVGVSTORV(M)/EXERCITVS/CVI (i.e. QVI) LAV-/GARI-CIONE SEDIT MIL(ITES)/L(EGIONARI) II (milia) DCCCLV/[M(ARCVS) VAL(ERIVS) MAXIMI] AN(V)S LEG(ATVS) LEG(IONIS) II AD(IVTRICIS) CVR(AVIT). See: [https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/bilder.php?s_language=de&bild=\\$CIL_03_13439.jpg;\\$D_09122.jpg;PH0000153;pp](https://db.edcs.eu/epigr/bilder.php?s_language=de&bild=$CIL_03_13439.jpg;$D_09122.jpg;PH0000153;pp)

⁵² DEMANDT 1990, 7.

VI. Unmentionable Resonances: Birthrates and Walls

Birthrates

Demandt neutrally mentions German “Kinderreichtum” and Roman “Kinderlosigkeit” with reference to ancient authors.⁵³ Roman sources supposedly contrasted the fertility of the Germans with the falling birthrate of the Romans.⁵⁴ Otto Seeck warmed to this theme,⁵⁵ as would German authors of the 1940s.⁵⁶ Looking back, however, Kudlien noted the logical contradiction between Nazi worries about depopulation and their alleged need for more *Lebensraum*.⁵⁷ These demographic worries have not gone away, for Renaud Camus now speaks of the “grand replacement” in Europe.⁵⁸ Ancient sources attest problems with the Roman birthrate and with manpower.⁵⁹

But what was the actual situation? The economic historian and demographer Walter Scheidel did not discuss the population of the Western Empire in Late Antiquity, aside from saying that there was no reason to see it as significantly smaller in the 4th c. than in the 2nd c. In addition, he did not think it obvious that any population crisis contributed to its fall in the 5th c.⁶⁰ He discussed some of the modern historiography on the problem and the reach of the ancient testimonia that underpin it, particularly on questions of fertility and birthrate.⁶¹ “We would do well to stop discovering the present in the past”, he warned in 2001. A generation ago he presciently

⁵³ DEMANDT, below, p. 37.

⁵⁴ SEECK 1910a, 352: a falling birthrate forced the Romans to recruit from “kinderreiche Germanen”. For an example from F.J. Dölger, see SHANZER 2009, 354-355. The passage discussed there is DÖLGER 1934, 1-2.

⁵⁵ SEECK 1910a, 337-390.

⁵⁶ See for example LUND 1995, 12 who cites work from the 1940s stating that purely peasant societies, such as the Slavs have the most children, whereas Romans and Germans had a lower birthrate the more urbanized and industrialized they became. The Germans up to the middle of the 19th c. emerge as a “kinderfrohes” and “kinderreiches” people. At pp. 56-57 he introduces us to Rose Woldstedt-Lauth’s (inaccurate) paraphrastic cadenzas on the *Germania* and how the German *Mädel* wanted to give children to her people to be heirs to her health, strength, and life-force, to propagate it across time.

⁵⁷ KUDLIEN 1990.

⁵⁸ CAMUS 2011.

⁵⁹ See BRUNT 1971, 5; also ROSTOVITZ 1957, vol. 2. In the latter work one needs to search the index for terms such as “depopulation”.

⁶⁰ SCHEIDEL 2001, 69.

⁶¹ See SCHEIDEL 2001, 3, 5, 13 and 37-44. SEECK (1910b, 559-575) cites a great many Latin testimonia about depopulation and birthrate. Oddly enough Scheidel does not mention Seeck’s (partially demented, but immensely learned) book at all.

suggested that western population decline might trigger antipathy to fertility control.⁶²

But when one tries to track down classical sources on the alleged high birthrate and love of children (in a positive sense) of barbarians (as one does), one runs into trouble. There is a lack-luster example in Tacitus, *Germania* 19.2 *numerus liberorum finire ... flagitium habetur* that alludes to the prohibition of abortion and exposure.⁶³ This is the foundational passage cited by Dölger in 1934.⁶⁴ In the 6th c., however, one can find what is perhaps too readily seen as a very negative formulation in Jordanes, *Get.* 3.26 on *Scandia insula, quasi officina (“workshop”) gentium* and *certe velut vagina (“conduit”, “sheath”, “womb”) nationum*.⁶⁵ In the 8th c. Paul the Deacon saw a question of *clima* (latitude) and health: the north was better for producing people than the torrid and disease-ridden south.⁶⁶ The ebullient and imaginative Herwig Wolfram emphasized the contribution of long winter nights to production.⁶⁷ Could this supposed attribute of the Germans be an ancient urban legend, its other darker side being a probably universal human fear about others proliferating? Here the Judeo-Christian tradition must have helped.⁶⁸ Jews were unusually concerned about bloodlineage as a criterion for membership in the community. One has only to consider the provisions for the levirate.⁶⁹ In the Old Testament, the Israelites had been threatened by their prophets with an increase among the num-

⁶² SCHEIDEL 2001, 43. The USA Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade* on 24 June, 2022 is an example. I say “might”, because it is not completely clear to me that the main motivation is a concern about falling birth-rates.

⁶³ LUND (1988, 166) claims that Tacitus was, in fact, wrong about this. Tacitus’ eye is, of course, at all points trained on Rome’s sins. The Germans are a stick with which to beat the Romans.

⁶⁴ DÖLGER 1934, 1.

⁶⁵ Jordanes seems to be thinking aloud about made vs. born. I note that there is no pejorative vocabulary in the passage’s neighborhood. One can contrast *Get.* 5.37 on the Huns who *pullularunt*. Also, Gildas, *De excidio* 19 for the hated worm-like Picts and Scots. Paulus Diaconus, *History Langobardorum* 2 also uses *pullulassent* for demographic pressure to migrate.

⁶⁶ *Historia Langobardorum* 1.1 *Septemtrionalis plaga quanto magis ab aestu solis remota est et nivali frigore gelida, tanto salubrior corporibus hominum et propagandis est gentibus coaptata; sicut econtra omnis meridiana regio, quo solis est fervori vicinior, eo semper morbis habundat et educandis minus est apta mortalibus*. It all was *populosa Germania* and a source of captives and slaves for Romans.

⁶⁷ WOLFRAM 1994, 27: “The northern climate of the barbarians’ native land, with its long winter nights, favours their fantastic urge to procreate. And where is the very best place for such activity, with the longest winter nights or even a single winter night that lasts almost half a year? Naturally, in Scandinavia.”

⁶⁸ See KLEJWEGT 2001, esp. 893-895 on children and sons in Judaism.

⁶⁹ Deut. 25.5-10. 25.6 specifies the purpose, that the dead man’s name not be erased from Israel.

bers of their enemies.⁷⁰ Nothing, however, prevented such worries from underpinning the ideology of the Third Reich or of conservative Christians (*Kinder, Küche, [Kirche]*)⁷¹ or from generating both conspiracy-theories and anxieties about western cultural continuity today.

Walls

So far fertility, procreation, and proliferation. Now a word or two about disgust and walls. One, initially dominant ancient prophetic tradition in Judaism localized evil in the north: Jeremiah 1.14 is the most explicit. “Out of the north the evil shall break forth.”⁷² Christian apocalyptic sought to identify Ezechiel 38.2’s Gog and Magog with contemporary threats.⁷³ Chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* told how Alexander the Great walled off the “unclean and ugly” peoples behind the Caspian Gates. The Lord helped by moving two mountains, “the breasts of the North”,⁷⁴ closer together, so that Alexander could erect a gate of adamant to span it.⁷⁵ In Chapter 13.19 however, all hell breaks loose as the force of the nations is unleashed. These are the Ishmaelites or Arabs.⁷⁶ This ultimately Syriac Christian tradition then jumped host onto the Byzantine Alexander-Romances.⁷⁷ OT prophetic passages such as Joel 1.4 had described contemporary horrors: “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.” Pseudo-Methodius knew his OT plagues and entomology and liberally used its discourse of disgust to describe what worried him.⁷⁸ Benjamin Garstad

⁷⁰ E.g. Isaiah 2.6: “They teem with the children of foreigners.” See BLENKINSOPP 2000, 7 and 193.

⁷¹ Rainer Bauböck kindly reminds me that the full slogan was generally not associated with Nazi ideology (because the “Kirche” component would not fit). It was occasionally used in the early 20th c. by Christian conservatives but became popular only in the 1970s as a target for feminist critique.

⁷² See SARIG 2016, 4-7 and 11-12 on various passages, including Ezechiel 38.

⁷³ Pseudo-Methodius, *Apoc.* 8.10.

⁷⁴ Pseudo-Methodius, *Apoc.* 8.7 Μαζοὶ τοῦ Βορρᾶ or the *ubera Aquilonis*. Is the North, whence bad things come, here envisaged as having not just a womb (see above, p. 15), but also breasts?

⁷⁵ GARSTAD 2012, 22-25.

⁷⁶ They would later be re-identified as the Mongols. See GARSTAD 2012, x.

⁷⁷ GARSTAD 2012, xii. For the passage in question, see PARTHE 1969, 402-408. See STONE-MAN 1991, 28-29 for a helpful stemma of the recensions, including γ. He translates our passage at *ibid.*, 185-187.

⁷⁸ For locusts and grasshoppers, see e.g. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse* 5.3 Ishmaelites like locusts “And [the land] was filled with them and with their encampment. They were like locusts” and 11.13 “And the Promised Land will be filled by men from the four winds which are under heaven and they will be ‘like locusts for multitude’” (ὥς

noted how Alexander’s image changed in the 7th c. at the time of the Arab invasions and how he became a wall-builder.⁷⁹ Walls are now a very real and divisive topic in the USA and in Europe.⁸⁰

VII. Christianity

Demandt mentioned the initially distanced stance of Christians towards the *Pax Romana* and their refusal to swear oaths of loyalty to the emperor. These would have obtained in the period prior to the Peace of the Church of the 4th c. He ended his piece by saying that the Church Fathers had no problems with barbarians, for Christians after all were also strangers on earth.⁸¹ He cited Orosius, Salvian, and Augustine. Here I would introduce a nuance. All three of these figures either *had* to engage in special pleading (Augustine, a bishop), *wanted* to (Salvian, an ascetic), or were *commissioned* to (Orosius, a priest). Augustine’s problem was both to defend Christianity against pagan accusations that Rome fell because the *pax deorum* had been neglected under the Christian Empire *and* to justify God’s theodicy to an audience whose world had come apart with the Sack of Rome in 410, *in temporibus Christianis*.⁸² He handed on the baton in the relay to the Spanish priest Orosius. The Lord had not allowed Rome to be taken by the pagan Radagaisus.⁸³ Augustine said nothing about Alaric I’s religion,⁸⁴ Orosius did not say explicitly that he was an Arian.⁸⁵ The Sack had its positive sides (the merciful barbarians),⁸⁶ if nuns were raped and committed suicide, they must have “wanted it” or “assented to it” and been overcome by guilt, or been *about* to be proud of their chastity.⁸⁷ In short, no big deal. Salvian’s *De gubernatione* dates from after 439 and, like Tacitus, used barbarians as foils for Roman decadence. It represents an extreme and strategically oikophobic view of the Romans – they had it coming, they

ἀκρις τὸ πλῆθος). French has the wonderful verb “fourmiller” for “to crawl with” or “to swarm”.

⁷⁹ GARSTAD 2016, 9 on Alexander the integrator vs. Alexander the wall builder. See *ibid.*, 11 on the Other as a threat of contamination and subversion.

⁸⁰ See Afterword, below, p. 160.

⁸¹ The formulation made me smile, for I couldn’t help thinking of the advice for dealing with obscene callers. “Are you alone?” – A clerically colored, “Aren’t we *all* alone?”

⁸² BARNES 1982.

⁸³ CD 5.23 discusses his quasi-miraculous almost bloodless defeat in what is virtually a pagan-Christian ordeal-by-battle. Stilicho might have viewed matters differently.

⁸⁴ He alluded to him in *Retract.* 2.43.1 alone.

⁸⁵ Orosius, *Historia* 7.37.9: *unus Christianus propriorque Romano et, ut res docuit, timore dei mitis in caede, alius paganus barbarous et vere Scythia.*

⁸⁶ CLARK 2011.

⁸⁷ Augustine at his worst in CD 1.16-28. I discuss this question in SHANZER 2025a.

only had themselves to blame.⁸⁸ Salvian wrote as an ascetic from Lérins, but came from Trier. His views are not representative and highly unlikely to be accurate: his is a “shaker” thesis of a people who earned an invasion, whose “movers” put them to rights.⁸⁹ His is ugly Christian *Schadenfreude*.

All of these three authors are disingenuous in different ways. One would get a more balanced impression from the texts and voices used by Pierre Courcelle in his *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions germaniques*.⁹⁰ Orientius was every inch the Christian moralist, yet his description of conditions in Gaul under the barbarians ends with the unforgettable tragic pentameter: *uno fumavit Gallia tota rogo*.⁹¹

It might be interesting to compare Demandt’s trio of Christian apologists with modern left-wing intellectuals functioning like fifth columnists.⁹² More conventionally, of course, the barbarians were souls to gain for orthodoxy or for Christ. But that drive would come *later*, at the beginning of the 6th c. Avitus, *Ep.* 46, may be the first documentary expression of outward-bound missionary theology.⁹³ The aristocratic bishops who stepped in to fill a political vacuum by cooperating with barbarians as best they could and, by eventually assimilating them, carried on the business of the earlier firms in the early Middle Ages.⁹⁴

VIII. Overview of the Contributions

Our respondents come from different countries and are almost all ancient historians. Three of them, Hächler, Mathisen, and Wijnendaele, all concentrate on roughly the same geographical territory covered by Demandt. Liccardo is interested in historiography and mentions the Eastern Empire too. Sarantis, as was important, focuses on the Eastern Empire, to show how things were different there. Our topic’s reach extends to the present, so one contributor, Afsah’s expertise is contemporary and legal and relevant to the original commissioning of Demandt’s piece. His response, *fachfremd* as it is, is particularly important for analysing presentist perspectives.

⁸⁸ At *Gub.* 6.8.39 he rejoices at the edifying destruction of Roman cities by barbarians.

⁸⁹ Fine overview at COURCELLE 1964, 146-155.

⁹⁰ COURCELLE 1964b.

⁹¹ That epigram crowns *Comm.* 2.165-84.

⁹² I hint at this in SHANZER 2025a.

⁹³ SHANZER & WOOD 2002, 362-369.

⁹⁴ HEINZELMANN 1976.

The Upper Rhine Limes

Nikolas Hächler starts us off with a case study of the Upper Rhine *limes*, between Basel and Lake Konstanz in modern Switzerland. He takes us from its development in the later 3rd c. to its Christian future in the early Middle Ages. Steering clear of “hot spots” and “grand strategies”, his viewpoint is that of the provincials. Different *limites* had different characters. No Hadrian’s Wall, Hächler’s *limes* had a quite deep inhabited zone on the Roman side. This border was also a showplace for those inside it: it could both pacify them and reassure, keep them feeling appreciated and protected. It contributed to Roman resilience in the region. Hächler emphasizes Roman construction and evidence that is archaeologically visible, such as the fort at Kaiseraugst. He contrasts the respective defensive and aggressive stances of Constantius II and Julian, the latter of whom both campaigned against the Alemanni from this *limes* and launched a defiant civil war against Constantius II. Hächler, interestingly, sees Kaiseraugst as the venue for Julian’s launch in Amm. Marc. 21.5.⁹⁵ The Upper Rhine *limes* was an area of interest to Julian’s successor, the similarly warlike Valentinian I, who developed it and strengthened it, with an eye pointed very much downstream to the whole length of the Rhine.⁹⁶ Hächler uses the spectacular finds from Kaiseraugst to flesh out a highpoint of a *limes* culture that was ethnically mixed. After 375, the Upper Rhine *limes* ceased to function. We see the rise of *castra* in Basel and Windisch that were inhabited by barbarian *foederati*. Eventually *hospitalitas* (“quartering”) for barbarians would assure the establishment of the Second Burgundian Kingdom as of 443. At the end, Hächler points to the rise of a new power in the region, the Christian Church. Even if material well-being declined, barbarian-Roman-Christian interchange led to the emergence of the early Middle Ages. This was not a desolation or a landscape of ruins (contrast northern Britain), but one with new centers of power dedicated to the saints.

Client Kingship among the Alemanni

Ralph Mathisen’s contribution can be linked directly to Hächler’s for its regional focus. He investigates client kingship, a politico-military topic that is mentioned in Demandt’s contribution, but not discussed in detail.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ This is not entirely clear to me since the last place that Kaiseraugst was mentioned was Amm. Marc. 20.10.3, where Julian headed back to winter at Vienne. Amm. Marc 21.8.1 has him setting out from Kaiseraugst. Libanius, *Or.* 18.108 has him on a high tribunal in the middle of *barbaricum*: ἐπὶ βῆμα ὑψηλὸν ἐν μέσῃ τῇ βαρβάρῳ.

⁹⁶ On his activities and propagandistic discourse, see SHANZER 1998a and 1998b.

⁹⁷ DEMANDT, below, p. 37: “Durch Verträge mit den germanischen Grenznachbarn suchten die Kaiser den Frieden und den Wohlstand im Reich zu sichern” and “durch [...] enorme

Demandt concentrated on the Romans as makers of puppet-kings rather than as politicians who pacified defeated enemies by singling them out for employment and a closer relationship. Mathisen works within Demandt's geographical purview and discusses client kings in the later 4th c. and among the Alemanni in particular. He shows how the Romans' policy – and policy it was – of client kingship worked. We hear of how the *foedera* (always with individuals) were struck and what kind of work the (defeated) barbarians were expected to do and what they were expected to provide (e.g. provender, building materials, labor, recruits). Much, it is clear, was expected of the Alemanni. Mathisen emphasizes how client kingship projected Roman power across the *limes* through diplomatic protocols. Confession of delicts was involved, remission, connection, and, in the end, special status, which could be conveyed by gifts of valuable jewelry. The Alemanni were offered subsidies and recompensed for restraining yet other chieftains. All of this eventually became normalized, a relationship that made such barbarians eventually (so Mathisen) more “us” than “them”. Mathisen emphasizes that the agreements were always made with individual leaders not with a whole people, suggesting that the Romans were thereby using a “divide and rule” strategy.⁹⁸

Roman Perfidia

Jeroen Wijnendaele explores a modern Belgian adage, that “good agreements make for good friends”, and invites us to use the word “neighbours” for Romans and barbarians. His contribution studies good faith in Roman-Barbarian relations, taking issue with Demandt's view that it was generally the *Germanen* who broke treaties rather than the Romans. Now even ancient historians who are not nationalistic often end up being Romanocentric, as naturally happens when one is dependent on Roman sources. Reading sources against the grain is thus important, for what they don't say and for what is not foregrounded, but there to be seen by those who look. Wijnendaele highlights details in plain sight from within the Roman sources. These he carefully assembles to show us a different cumulative picture. He re-litigates various questions and re-assigns blame. His Romans emerge as less sinned against than sinning in their interactions with their barbarian neighbours, and, as Wijnendaele would eventually see them, allies. His two case-studies involve the Danube and the Rhine in ca. 285-395 and the Goths inside the empire after the Battle of Adrianople in 378.

Wijnendaele sees the faithlessness of the barbarian as a trope that developed in Late Antiquity and not as a standard and age-old complaint or ste-

Subsidien in Gold” on the Danube *limes*.

⁹⁸ The “homeopathic medicine” of DEMANDT 2016.

reotype that was regularly applied to one’s enemies (including Romans).⁹⁹ His Romans blame *barbarica fides* precisely when their own was questionable. Wijnendaele aims to set the record straight. We are reminded that barbarians were far from the only perfidious actors and that they too were maltreated and let down by treacherous Romans.¹⁰⁰ He provides us with an interesting Goth’s eye view of, among other events, the Sack of Rome. He shows how atrocities against Gainas’ Goths in asylum at Constantinople can be paralleled in Italy by pogroms of Stilicho’s barbarian auxiliaries’ families. One is, inevitably, left wondering whether there could have been different, good outcomes. Wijnendaele suggests a model like Roman *socii* in the Italian peninsula during the Republic. Nonetheless, one is left fearing that the wounds cut too deep, and that barbarians like the Aquitainian Goths in the 5th c. would have been unable to set aside their mistrust of *fides Romana*.

Narratives and Agency

Salvatore Liccardo begins with an historiographical point, emphasizing both the power of a sequential narrative and the vulnerability of any lecture to accusations of oversimplification, e.g. lumping different barbarian peoples as “Germanen”. He takes selective issue with Professor Demandt about the latter’s emphasis on the damaging effects of wealth and ease that led to moral failure and on a monochromatic representation of barbarians as violent.¹⁰¹ Rather than seeing barbarians as either enemies or conquered subjects, he seeks to reclaim agency for them, even if as bad actors. Like Wijnendaele, he reminds us of Roman treachery. Liccardo notes that if one reads many narrative sources and directs one’s eye away from the main rhetorical focus, one cannot help noticing that barbarians are fully integrated players.¹⁰² He draws attention to what imitation Roman coinage has to tell us about how the barbarians got ideas from Rome. Like other contributors, he contests Demandt’s view of the northwestern *limes* as a linear border. Like Sarantis,¹⁰³ he notes that it is the eastern *limes* that provides the better analogy to the modern border intended to regulate.¹⁰⁴ He discusses a

⁹⁹ ISAAC 2013, 328-332 discusses *Punica fides*. At p. 331, esp. with n. 44 he notes that there is no fixed term *Germanica fides*, but that *Germani* emerge in sources as untrustworthy in the wake of the battle of the Teutoburger Wald (9 CE).

¹⁰⁰ DEMANDT (2016) is not unaware of the Roman’s “homeopathy”, in playing barbarians off against one another.

¹⁰¹ For an instructive counterweight showing how they had no monopoly, see VOISIN 1984.

¹⁰² As a different example, I could mention the principals in the Silvanus affair, for which see SHANZER 2022, 86-89.

¹⁰³ See below, p. 107.

¹⁰⁴ MAU 2021.

series of relevant travelers' case-studies and draws attention to the explicit demarcation of the eastern frontier in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Liccardo concludes with some of the historiographical recursions to the immortal question. These range from the European to the American, and from the sublime (the humanists and Gibbon) to the ridiculous (TikTok and X).

The Eastern Frontier

The story that seems fated in the West looks different in the East. Rome was a multi-ethnic empire with many different (and differently trying) neighbors on its borders. Many, but not all, were unfriendly. Their cultural *niveaux* varied considerably. Roman sources however regularly blur them into a collective outgroup (what was not Roman) viewed from some imagined center.

Alexander Sarantis discusses the diversity of borders and outcomes. Demandt emphasized the economic disparity between *Germania* and the Roman provinces. Sarantis sets the balance straight by concentrating on how the barbarians were a resource for the Romans (as slaves and *coloni*), but also eventually as trading-partners. They provided not just manpower, but also commodities such as fur and amber. Demandt's barbarians break in or flood in or, at the very least, have their metaphorical noses to the window. Sarantis notes that "Not all barbarians would necessarily have been desperate to emigrate." He explores the eastern border with the Sassanids for there the economic imbalance would not have been paramount. Political prestige depended on raiding and showing who was whose boss. And barbarian politics played a role on the northwestern frontier too: the Huns' followers were sustained with Roman booty. Sarantis emphasizes the agency and also moral responsibility of emperors who practiced "Divide and Rule" politics. Some borders could be truly open or easily crossed. In the East, the *limes* is now often conceptualized as a "deep zone" policed from a distance. And in such areas distinctive *Mischkulturen* developed. Sarantis distinguishes between intended migration, raiding, and conquest with a view to annexation. He concludes that the Western Empire lost the northwestern *limes* because its center collapsed and it could no longer provide what the outsiders required to keep them under control. External peoples on the *limes*, when forced to look out for themselves, crossed into the empire. The Eastern Empire was famously different. It was able to absorb migrants and also sometimes pack hot potatoes off to the West. However, it suffered worse raiding than the West since its dangerous neighbors did not want in.

21st C. Problems

Bernd Löhmann had been worried about how Demandt’s essay could be interpreted by presentists, namely that Muslim immigrants from the Middle East might be seen as playing the role associated with the barbarians of the Later Roman Empire.¹⁰⁵ Like Tacitus’ *Germania*, Demandt’s writing could be dangerous, if abused.¹⁰⁶ Was modern Europe, in part a successor of the Roman Empire, now endangered not by invasion but by immigration and migration? Was Angela Merkel mistaken in thinking that Germany could handle mass migration? Demandt had spoken out against her unilateral decision to leave Germany’s internal Schengen borders open.

To what extent can the Fall of the Roman Empire elucidate the present or suggest remedies? Or is it just a Menetekel? Our one modernist, **Ebrahim Afsah**, examines Demandt’s original assignment, the current essay, and their embedding in contemporary European politics and shows us some ways – primarily by contrast-imitation – how the Fall of the Roman Empire may still be “good to think with”.¹⁰⁷

Only limited comparisons are possible, because the situation in contemporary Europe emerges as very different from that in the Later Roman Empire.¹⁰⁸ Afsah carefully compares five main areas: first, demography, second, economics, third, the politics of failed states in the migrants’ homelands, fourth, environmental factors, and fifth, culture. He begins by emphasizing that current migration is not an isolated episode, one single *Krise*, but a situation that could continue indefinitely. Furthermore, there is no longer a demographical need to populate tracts of underused land with settlers; modern workers need to be qualified and literate; welfare states may require an unrealistically altruistic degree of solidarity of care; the military is not a viable destination or path of promotion for immigrants;¹⁰⁹ and the zones of contact are not just organic ones of mixed culture at borders,¹¹⁰ but Europe’s major urban centers and capitals. One could imagine what Rutilius Namatianus would have said about modern Europe, given that he saw in Stilicho’s (loyal) barbarian auxiliaries a Trojan Horse in Rome.¹¹¹ But the Romans arguably had it easier, according to Afsah.

¹⁰⁵ See above, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ KREBS 2011.

¹⁰⁷ LÉVI-STRAUSS 1963, 89 of animals. The French had “bons à penser”, which is often cited as “good to think with”.

¹⁰⁸ See ISAAC 1992, 1-2 for some of the obvious differences between the entities involved.

¹⁰⁹ Contrast Rome’s practice and the road to citizenship: BALSDON 1979, 85-86. The famous Francus inscription commemorates a man who identified himself as a Frank, a Roman citizen, and a Roman soldier: RIGSBY 1999.

¹¹⁰ The zones of contact of pp. 10, 17 and 10.

¹¹¹ Rut. Nam. *De reditu* 2.41-60.

Living According to Common Host Norms

At the Roman end, I would like to mention two radically different cultural artefacts: the first a moral commonplace mentioned by a famous philosopher, the second an archaeological site in Gaul. I'll begin with Late Antique conventional wisdom. In Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, first Lady Fortune rebuked the Boethius, who had been imprisoned by the Ostrogothic King Theoderic, for (figuratively) longing to live independently according to his own law in a kingdom common to all.¹¹² One could not pick and choose. Then Lady Philosophy rebuked him (Cons. 2.4.17) for complaining: *hic ipse locus quem tu exsilium vocas incolentibus patria est*. "This very place that you call exile is a homeland to its inhabitants." How might these ancient saws apply to our modern context? One might be compelled to live somewhere where one did not want to live, but should remember how that place is home to its natives. One should also remember that one should not want or expect to live abroad under one's native land's terms.

Living According to the Norms of One's Own Identity

This situation would change in the early Middle Ages when eventually personality of the law could apply to different communities, depending on whether one was a Roman or a barbarian. Agobard of Lyon, a Visigoth in Francia, would eventually condemn Burgundian trial by combat.¹¹³ And the question of parallel Sharia law was raised in the United Kingdom and supported (if one can call it that) by a former Archbishop of Canterbury.¹¹⁴ That may sound outré, but, as Rainer Bauböck kindly reminds me, was implemented by the Ottomans and is known from other modern democracies.¹¹⁵ Law was the written, hard, normative, top-down side of things.

¹¹² Cons. 2.2.14. *Quid si uberius de bonorum parte sumpsisti? Quid si a te non tota discessi? Quid si haec ipsa mei mutabilitas iusta tibi causa est sperandi Meliora? Tamen – ne animo contabescas et intra commune omnibus regnum locatus proprio uiuere iure desideres*. "What if you have received more of my favors? What if I haven't completely abandoned you? What if my very changeability is a sound reason for you to hope for better things? Nonetheless – don't eat your heart out and, since you dwell in a kingdom that is common to all, don't long to live under your own jurisdiction." My own punctuation and translation. Those who want to read *tamenne* run afoul of the subjunctives, *tabescas* and *desideres*, which must be jussive. See GRUBER 2006, 182–183 for sources.

¹¹³ Agobard of Lyon, *Contra iudicium dei* and *Adversus legem Gundobadi*.

¹¹⁴ BUTT 2008.

¹¹⁵ He drew my attention to, as he put it, "the legal pluralism perfected by the late Ottoman millet system and to some degree still present in today's Israel and India where religious authorities enjoy powers of adjudication in matters of family law that are recognized by the state. Another way in which legal pluralism is now widely recognized in western democracies is through private international law, which requires courts to take into ac-

Geographical boundaries and laws are well and good, but other *limites*, those of *tolerance*, also come into play: what went on, how it was received, and how change could occur from the bottom up – in short, what the market could bear or what could be normalized in a given context. Boethius presents us with the moral regulations for those living abroad.

A Surprising Site

But an archaeological find promises a different story. In the later 4th c. at a Roman legionary castrum in Gallo-Roman Nemetacum (Arras in Northern France),¹¹⁶ almost 500 km away from the Rhine *limes*, Germanic auxiliaries engaged in rituals that involved excarnation of humans (including children) and animals in the ground, collection and manipulation of their bones, and re-interment. The site had previously been used for the cult of Cybele and would soon be re-purposed as cavalry barracks in the 390s through the early 5th c.¹¹⁷

Carlo Ferrari devotes a chapter of his recent book on Later Roman Gaul to the ritual at Arras.¹¹⁸ He carefully points out certain parallels to rather gruesome pre-Roman Gallic practices attested at Gournay and Ribemont.¹¹⁹ He ends up positing a three-way encounter between a Celtic substrate and a Germanic adstrate on Roman territory.¹²⁰ Human sacrifice may have been involved, but did not have to be.¹²¹ But even without that sensational practice,¹²² what the site reveals is astonishing in light of Roman (intramural) burial customs, let alone Christian norms. Relevant to our discussion about toleration is the following key point of Ferrari's. The victims or deceased may have died natural deaths, but the un-Roman manipulation of their remains shows that the practice was non-negotiable for a group that *was granted considerable autonomy in return for military service*.¹²³

The archaeological record cannot provide a narrative or commentary, so one must imagine the cohabitation of different communities in the Roman military. Many armies, even modern ones, use quaintly archaic guards

count the law of immigrants' countries of nationality, especially in matters of family law."

¹¹⁶ JACQUES 1993 and 2007; PÉRIN & KAZANSKI 2011, 312-313.

¹¹⁷ The horsemen probably came from Northern Germany. For the details, see JACQUES 1993, 195-198.

¹¹⁸ FERRARI 2022, 49-91.

¹¹⁹ FERRARI 2022, 73-78.

¹²⁰ FERRARI 2022, 90.

¹²¹ While there is no evidence of violence on the skeletons, suffocation, strangling, or poison cannot be ruled out.

¹²² See BALSDON 1979, 245-248 for Roman views about ritual murder.

¹²³ FERRARI 2022, 89.

or exotic mercenaries.¹²⁴ Such warriors made a good show or shamed the locals with their valor and professionalism (or ruthlessness). Now, while there is no textual evidence that the Roman army intended its auxiliaries for any sort of multi-cultural theater, one can be forgiven for imagining the (homesick?) Syrians and the Batavians who served together on Hadrian's Wall, or for wondering about what was happening in Arras and what sort of negotiations went on behind the scenes.

I have pointed to some extremely divergent evidence for behavior expected from hosts and guests in the Later Roman Empire. Afsah sees the greatest difficulties in modern political attitudes that must balance both freedom ("to" or "of action") and concerns about security (Aunt Lydia's "freedom from" in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*).¹²⁵ These clash when "freedoms to" for migrants come into conflict with broadly held European societal norms and even laws, e.g. French *laïcité*. Rome, at Arras at least, emerges as very unaware, very tolerant or very intimidated. The level of *convivencia* required at Arras puts modern debates about pronouns and headscarves into perspective.

Afsah's other major topic is assimilation and integration, for the American melting-pot is out of fashion, and multi-cultural parallel societies seem to be emerging in Europe.¹²⁶ In antiquity, geography mattered, and most mortals could only be in one place at a time: most were perforce *Somewheres*.¹²⁷ At the same time, the Roman intellectual classes shared a *lingua franca* and a common culture that permitted them to exchange ideas and eventually made them indispensable for their new barbarian masters. They lived in an interchangeable *Anywhere* of letters.

Now, by contrast, we are in a situation where the internet and social media permit immigrants never, in some intellectual sense, to leave their homelands, and to be in constant contact with their mother-tongues and home politics. This of course impedes the organic assimilation that used simply to happen of necessity when one could not yet engage in mental bilocation in quite the way one now can.

Afsah emphasizes Böckenförde's point that the modern constitutional state cannot itself guarantee the prerequisites for its own existence and survival, to wit: broad communal consensus and trust in an open society. None of this can be legislated or enforced. It must be elicited. Demandt had noted how in many areas of the Mediterranean assimilation had worked

¹²⁴ KEEGAN 1994, 230-231: Gurkhas, Swiss Guards, and Zouaves, for example.

¹²⁵ ATWOOD 1986, 33: "There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don't underrate it."

¹²⁶ BAWER 2006.

¹²⁷ Terminology borrowed from GOODHART 2017.

to produce rich, “hyphenated” Roman cultures. Syria, North Africa, Gaul, and Egypt all come to mind. The later integration of the Germanic peoples did not go quite so smoothly. They were not able to sustain the culture that they had joined at its former level.¹²⁸ But there is no doubt that they wanted to. Things may be different now.

Islam, according to Afsah, poses special difficulties for Europe. Western Europe has not had a long-lasting historical co-habitation with Muslims inside its borders, the way the Romans had with the Gauls and Germans. Neither have Muslims lived as ordinary citizens there. Initially they were conquerors. Since the 1960s, they have largely consisted of (to some undesirable) citizens of former colonies, guest-workers, and refugees. This may explain some aspects of Western hostility. There is also the question of mental furniture. It is clear that ancient barbarians on the whole “wanted in” and were eager to accommodate and to assimilate.¹²⁹ At the moment trends indicate failure to integrate, demands for different regulations, and resulting parallel societies among many Muslim immigrants. The current social polarization has eroded the European *Sicherheitsgemeinschaft*, and the politics of social justice have rendered it politically toxic to ask, for example, in what sense Islam belongs to Germany. Scholars such as Ralf Michaels find any discussion of “we’s” abhorrent. On the other side are those such as Tilman Nagel who presumably feel that Europe is behaving like the Biedermanns in Max Frisch’s *Biedermann und die Brandstifter* (1958).¹³⁰ While reminding us that history cannot provide answers like a scientific experiment with clear independent variables,¹³¹ Afsah hopes that studying history and the history of scholarship can at the least help relieve some of our cognitive distaste for, and inhibitions about, discussing migration.

¹²⁸ Whatever that level was, of course. While things were always either being reborn or going to the dogs in Roman literature, there is no doubt that there was tremendous cultural loss between the late 5th and the 8th c. See my forthcoming chapters: SHANZER 2025b and 2025c.

¹²⁹ See MATHISEN 1997.

¹³⁰ For a fine Austrian film version from 1963, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrGmNXjjDNk&t=111s> (last access: 2 May 2024). Both the semi-popular BAWER (2006) and MURRAY (2017) channel this anxiety. HANSON (2024) warns us with various ancient and early modern military annihilations that ended the conquered’s political existence.

¹³¹ GADDIS 2002.

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ALEXANDER DEMANDT

Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik¹

The problem of borders began with Romulus' murder of Remus. Numa created Rome's 'sacred boundary'. Her borders then shifted outwards in all directions. After the victories over the Cimbri and Teutones and then over the Gauls, Caesar reached the Rhine; after Varus's defeat at the hands of Arminius (9 CE), the *Limes* stabilised the northern border. The Danube border remained permeable from the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE) onwards. Germanic tribes were increasingly enlisted in the Roman army. Restive populations in the north, on the one hand, and the wealth of the south, on the other, resulted in border-crossings by migrating peoples after the Battle of Adrianople in 378. The ensuing conflicts could not be resolved either by military or political means.

Keywords: Fall of Rome / borders / defence vs. integration / love of peace vs. willingness to fight / population growth vs. prosperity

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Grenzen dienen dem Frieden. Schon das Wort Frieden erinnert durch seinen Ursprung in der „Einfriedung“, im „umfriedeten Raum“ an das Erfordernis von Grenzen, in denen allein die Gewalt des Hausherrn rechtens ist. Grenzen regeln Besitzansprüche von Einzelnen und Hoheitsrechte von Gruppen, zumal von Staaten. Sie sollen Streit vermeiden, und doch wird über nichts häufiger und heftiger gestritten als über Grenzen. Das scheint unvermeidlich. Aggressivität ist eine Naturkonstante bei Menschen und Tieren. Anthropologisch beruht Krieg auf gleichem und daher widerstreitendem Interesse an Raum und an Gütern sowie auf gleicher Bereitschaft, dafür Gewalt anzuwenden oder abzuwehren, damit auf dem Bestreben, Grenzen nach eigenem Gutdünken zu setzen oder zu überschreiten. Grenzen beschränken Unbefugten die Freiheit, die ja allererst Bewegungsfreiheit ist. Sie sind zwar ärgerliches Hindernis für Kaufleute und Wanderer, aber erforderliche Sperre für Räuber und Feinde.²

¹ Vortrag an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, am 2. Dezember 2021.

² DEMANDT 2020a, 539ff.

Denn Grenzen verlocken zur Überschreitung. Dies geschieht in friedlicher wie in kriegesischer Absicht nach Maßgabe der eigenen Macht, der Einschätzung des Erfolgs und der Risikobereitschaft, die wie bei Einzelnen so bei Gruppen sehr unterschiedlich ausgeprägt ist. Und eben diese Unterschiede stellen die Frieden stiftende Aufgabe von Grenzen auf die Bewährungsprobe. Der Mutige – oder Übermütige – meint: Frieden ist zwar besser als Krieg, aber Sieg ist besser als Frieden.

Nutzen und Notwendigkeit von Grenzen zeigt beispielhaft die römische Geschichte. Der Gedanke der Abwehr, der Verteidigung steht am Anfang und reicht zurück bis in die mythische Vorzeit. Als Romulus die *Roma Quadrata* auf dem Palatin gründete und mit einer Mauer umgab, spottete sein Bruder Remus. Er sprang über die Mauer und wurde für diese Tabuverletzung von Romulus erschlagen. „So soll es jedem ergehen, der Roms Grenzen missachtet.“³ Romulus umschloss dann auch die Stadt mit einer Ringmauer, dem *pomerium*. Diese hatte bis in die Kaiserzeit sakrale Bedeutung als Spiegel der Reichsgrenze. Wer diese in Feindesland vorschob, durfte auch das *pomerium* ausweiten, so Sulla und Caesar, Augustus und Claudius.⁴

Roms zweiter König Numa schuf den Kult des Grenzgottes Terminus. Er hütete die Grenzsteine in der Feldflur, sicherte das Privateigentum am Boden.⁵ Grenzverletzung war ein Sakrileg. Geschah sie durch Feinde, war das staatsrechtlich ein Grund für *bellum iustum*, für gerechten Krieg. Das so geschützte Territorium wurde erweitert, indem die Römer ihre Nachbarn zu Bundesgenossen machten, damit auch deren Grenzen ihrer Obhut unterstellten. So entstand eine dritte Grenze: nach der Stadtgrenze die Reichsgrenze und weiter die Außengrenze der italischen Wehrgemeinschaft, einer hegemonialen Symmachie. Die *socii* mussten keine Tribute, wohl aber Kriegsfolge leisten, besaßen allerdings nur ein vermindertes Bürgerrecht. Das führte 91 bis 88 v. Chr. zu deren Erhebung, zum *bellum sociale*, bei dem es nicht um eine Lösung von Rom ging, sondern um Gleichberechtigung im Reich. Den Krieg verloren sie, aber das Bürgerrecht wurde ihnen gewährt.⁶

Aufnahme und Einbürgerung von Fremden galt bis in die Spätantike als ein Grund für den Bestand und das Wachstum des Reiches. Lapidar betonte das noch aus gegebenem Anlass der letzte große römische Historiker Ammianus Marcellinus, Offizier und Grieche aus Syrien. Er schrieb um 390, dass ohne die Fremden aus den Römern nichts geworden, nichts von

³ Livius I 7,2; Plutarch, „Romulus“ 10.

⁴ Plutarch, „Romulus“ 11.

⁵ Plutarch, „Numa“ 16.

⁶ Appian, *Bellum Civile*.

ihnen geblieben wäre.⁷ Nach der legendären Tradition bestand der historische Kern des römischen Volkes aus den zusammengelaufenen Männern, die Romulus in sein Asyl auf dem Palatin aufgenommen hatte. Frauen beschaffte er durch den Raub der Sabinerinnen. Anders als alle anderen Völker der Alten Welt war der *populus Romanus* nach seinem Selbstverständnis keine Abstammungsgemeinschaft, sondern von Anbeginn ein militärpolitischer Verband.

Im Jahre 504 kam aus dem Sabinerland das große Geschlecht der Claudier, die Vorfahren der vier julisch-claudischen Kaiser Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius und Nero, nach Rom. In den folgenden Jahrhunderten wurden Tausende freigelassener Sklaven, meist keltische oder griechische Kriegsgefangene, römische Bürger. Caesar verlieh den reichsangehörigen Kelten in ganz Oberitalien die *civitas Romana* und rekrutierte hier Legionen. Seine Reiterei bestand aus angeworbenen reichsfremden Germanen,⁸ allzeit bereit!

Der dann von Augustus geschaffene, zuvor nie und auch später kaum je erreichte großflächige Zustand an Rechts- und Verkehrssicherheit, an materiellem Wohlergehen, ethnischer Vielfalt, philosophischer und religiöser Toleranz beruhte auf der PAX ROMANA in dem von den Legionen und dem Limes geschützten Raum zwischen Atlantik und Rotem Meer mit Hunderten von Städten, mit Villen, Straßen und Wasserleitungen, Theatern, Thermen und Tempeln. Die allgemeine Loyalität gegenüber dem Kaiser verweigerten nur die Christen. Sie lebten in exklusiven Gemeinden, erwarteten das Himmelreich, erklärten alle Götter der Römer für Trabanten des Teufels und zogen durch diese Selbstaussgrenzung Unwillen auf sich.⁹

Die enorme zivilisatorische Entwicklung im Reich war eine großartige politische Leistung, aber hatte zwei bedenkliche Nebenfolgen. Sie vergrößerte mit dem Wohlstand im Inneren den Abstand zum ärmeren Barbaricum jenseits der Grenzen, weckte Neid und Begehren und verlockte zu Raubzügen. Zugleich verminderte das angenehme Leben die Bereitschaft der Römer, dafür mit der Waffe einzustehen. Für die hohe Summe von 25, später von 30 Goldstücken konnte man sich von der Wehrpflicht freikaufen.¹⁰ Die Provinzialen machten zunehmend Gebrauch davon, und die Kaiser bezahlten damit eine wachsende Zahl von – überwiegend germanischen – Söldnern. Zeitgenossen haben das offen beklagt, sie sprechen von Erschlaffung im Luxus.

Wehrunwilligkeit zeigte sich in allen sozialen Schichten bereits unter Augustus, dessen Grenz-, Friedens- und Fremdenpolitik wegweisend

⁷ Ammian XXVIII 4,32.

⁸ Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* VII 13,1; 67,5; 70,2; 80,6.

⁹ GRABNER-HAIDER / MAIER 2008, 72ff.

¹⁰ DEMANDT 2007, 319.

wurde. Als er am 30. Januar 9 v. Chr. die *Ara Pacis* einweihete, den monumentalen Friedensaltar auf dem Marsfeld, war das Imperium Romanum im Wesentlichen arrondiert.¹¹ Beim Tode des Kaisers 14 n. Chr. umfasste es den gesamten Mittelmeerraum und vereinte unter der römischen Herrschaft Dutzende von Völkern und Hunderte von Städten mit sorgsam abgestuften politischen Rechten. Instrumente der Integration waren das Latein als Staats- und Weltsprache und der Heeresdienst, der einen Zugang zum vollen Bürgerrecht und allen politischen Ämtern eröffnete, selbst zum Kaisertum. Nach Nero kamen die Kaiser nicht mehr aus Rom, sondern aus immer entfernteren Provinzen.

Die naturgegebene Grenze des Reiches war seit Augustus im Süden die Sahara, im Osten und Norden waren es Flüsse. Die Grenze gegen die Parther bildete der Euphrat. Im Jahre 1 v. Chr. schloss Augustus mit dem Partherkönig Phraates V einen Grenzfrieden, vollzogen mit diesem durch seinen ältesten Enkel Gaius Caesar auf einer Insel mitten im Fluss.¹² Die Grenze gegen die sarmatischen und germanischen Stämme Mitteleuropas wurde die Donau vom Schwarzen Meer bis zum Schwarzwald. Diese fast 3000 km lange Grenze hielt, trotz vieler Konflikte, wohlbefestigt durch eine Kette von Kastellen, geschützt durch die Donauflotte, fünfhundert Jahre, länger als irgendeine andere Grenze der europäischen Geschichte.

Mit der von Caesar erreichten Rheingrenze gegen die Westgermanen gab sich Augustus nicht zufrieden. Er hatte Grund dazu. Im Jahre 16 v. Chr. waren die Sugambrier über den Fluss gekommen und hatten den Legaten Lollius geschlagen und das Legionslager bei Aachen erstürmt. Daraufhin ging Augustus für drei Jahre nach Gallien und bereitete den Angriff auf die rechtsrheinischen Germanen vor. 12 v. Chr. überschritt sein Stiefsohn Drusus zum ersten Mal den Strom.¹³ Zeitweilig hielt ein Drittel der gesamten Reichsarmee die Wacht am Rhein, acht Legionen mit Hilfstruppen, etwa 80.000 Mann. Als Einfallsschneisen für die Invasion dienten die vom Osten kommenden Nebenflüsse Lippe, Lahn und Main. Zur Vorbereitung für den Einmarsch wurden Lager gebaut, so bei Marktbreit am mittleren Main. An der Lippe entstanden die Lager Haltern, Oberaden und Anreppen, in Waldgirmes bei Wetzlar an der Lahn sogar das Forum für eine Stadt, entdeckt 1996.¹⁴

Augustus behauptete in seinem testamentarischen Tatenbericht, auch die Elbgrenze erreicht zu haben.¹⁵ Tatsächlich gab es mehrere Vorstöße bis an und über den Strom, doch letztlich scheiterten sie durch die verlust-

¹¹ Ovid, *Fasten* I 710.

¹² Velleius Paterculus II 101.

¹³ Dio LIV 32,1f.

¹⁴ BECKER / RASBACH 2015.

¹⁵ Augustus, *Res gestae* 26.

reiche Niederlage des Quintilius Varus gegen Arminius 9 n. Chr. im Teutoburger Wald¹⁶ und die erfolglosen Rachefeldzüge des Germanicus 15 und 16 n. Chr. Daraufhin wurde der Rhein doch die Reichsgrenze, die immerhin vierhundert Jahre gehalten hat. Im südlichen Teil sicherte Domitian 83 n. Chr. das Vorfeld im heutigen Südwestdeutschland durch die Anlage des Limes, einer stark befestigten Militärgrenze, gesichert durch Palisaden und Gräben und eine dichte Reihe von Kastellen und Wachtürmen.¹⁷ Es gab Durchlässe und einen grenzübergreifenden Handel an der gesamten Reichsgrenze, der aber streng kontrolliert wurde, um das Eindringen von Bewaffneten und die Ausfuhr von Waffen zu verhindern.

Denn die grenznahen Germanen bildeten eine dauernde Bedrohung für das Reich. Antike Autoren betonten durch die Jahrhunderte den Kriegesgeist dieser *laeta bello gens*,¹⁸ ihre Wikingermentalität und ihren Kinderreichtum, beides im Unterschied zur friedliebenden, kinderärmeren Reichsbevölkerung. Die Kinderlosigkeit der Wohlhabenden war ein Grund der römischen Zeitkritik.¹⁹ Durch Verträge mit den germanischen Grenz-nachbarn suchten die Kaiser den Frieden und den Wohlstand im Reich zu sichern. Bei der losen Stammesstruktur der Germanen, wo es kein Waffenmonopol gab, fehlte ein verlässlicher Vertragspartner für die Römer. Mehrfach gaben sie den Germanen einen romfreundlichen König und verkündeten auf den Münzen REX QUADIS DATUS oder so ähnlich. Diese Herrscher von Roms Gnaden wurden dann aber bald durch einen kriegswilligen Kandidaten ersetzt. Von außen gestützte Regenten halten sich selten.

Den Wunsch nach Grenzfrieden unterstützten die Römer von Augustus bis Justinian durch schließlich enorme Subsidien in Gold, durch Stillhaltelgelder von gleichwohl immer nur vorübergehender Wirkung. Dies tat selbst ein militärisch so aktiver Kaiser wie Marc Aurel. Er verbrachte praktisch seine gesamte Regierungszeit im Feldlager an der Grenze gegen Markomannen, Quaden und Sarmaten. Siebenmal schloss er Frieden mit ihnen, ehe er im Jahr 180 in Wien verstarb.²⁰ Mehrfach verordnete er vertraglich eine römische Marktaufsicht bei ihnen und einen Ödlandstreifen jenseits der Donau, genau abgemessen, eine wohlgemeinte Schutzbestimmung, deren Einhaltung er aus Personalmangel nicht kontrollieren konnte. Man kennt das. Die seit Augustus üblichen Strafexpeditionen brachten den Kaisern nur rühmende Siegerbeinamen wie GERMANICUS, SARMATICUS, PERSICUS ohne nachhaltige Waffenruhe.

¹⁶ Dio LVI 18ff.

¹⁷ E. Fabricius, *RE*. XIII, 1926, 572ff.

¹⁸ Tacitus, *Historien* IV 16,1.

¹⁹ Ammian XIV 6,20.

²⁰ DEMANDT 2020b, 401ff.

Um die wiederholten An- und Übergriffe der Donaubarbaren zu unterbinden, entschloss sich Marc Aurel, wie es scheint, die Grenze vorzulegen und das Vorfeld nördlich und östlich von Wien zu annektieren. Wir hören von einem Plan zweier Provinzen links der Donau, Marcomannia und Sarmatia.²¹ Wichtiges Indiz ist eine Felsinschrift von der Burg in Trentschin, am Oberlauf der Waag, die als Einfallsschneise diente. Der Ort liegt in der westlichen Slowakei, etwa 120 km nördlich von Pressburg und der Donau. Hier überwinterte 179/180 eine starke Heeresabteilung, das war gewöhnlich die Vorstufe zu einer Annexion des Umlands. Der Tod des Kaisers 180 beendete den Plan, sein Sohn Commodus ging wieder auf die Donaugrenze zurück.²² Die mit den neuen Provinzen verbundene Ausbeulung des Reichsgebiets hätte durch die sich daraus ergebende Verlängerung der Militärgrenze erhebliche Probleme aufgeworfen. Daher wurde dem sonst so besonnenen Kaiserphilosophen ein solches Vorhaben oft abgesprochen. Aber ein unsinniges Projekt muss ja deswegen nicht auch unhistorisch sein.

Im 3. Jahrhundert brachen die Grenzen überall. Im Jahre 213 erschienen aus dem Elbgebiet die ersten Alamannen an der Rheingrenze.²³ Gegen sie unternahm Maximinus Thrax 236 einen Feldzug, von dem seit 2008 die spektakulären Funde der Schlacht am Harzhorn Zeugnis ablegen. 257 erreichte ein Raubzug von Franken Tarragona und Nordafrika. 260 musste der von den Alamannen mehrfach durchbrochene Limes aufgegeben, die Grenze an den Rhein und die obere Donau zurückgenommen werden. Die untere Donau erlebte seit 250 schwere Einbrüche. Kaiser Decius fiel 251 im Kampf gegen die Goten, unter Gallienus erschienen seit 262 Germanen zu Land und zur See in Griechenland und Kleinasien.

Beutezüge verheerten das ganze Reich; die Städte mussten ummauert werden, selbst Rom erhielt die noch vorhandene Aurelianische Mauer.²⁴ Am Rhein und im Orient machten sich römische Feldherren als Gegenkaiser selbständig. Erst Diokletian um 300 gelang es, die Grenzen nochmals zu sichern, indem er ein legales Mehrkaisertum schuf.²⁵ Ein kompetentes Kommando war vor Ort erforderlich. Die Grenztruppen wurden teilweise zurückgenommen und in gewissen Abständen von der Front massiert. Von hier aus konnten sie gegen die eindringenden Germanenscharen vorgehen, ohne dass Militär zusammengezogen werden musste. Der Krieg fand längst nahezu ausschließlich innerhalb der Reichsgrenzen statt.

²¹ *Historia Augusta*, ‚Marcus‘ 24,5.

²² *Historia Augusta*, ‚Commodus‘ 3,5.

²³ Dio LXXVIII 13,4ff.

²⁴ Aurelius Victor 35,7.

²⁵ Lactanz, *De mortibus persecutorum* 18,5.

Um den wachsenden Bevölkerungsdruck von außen abzumildern, gingen die Kaiser seit Augustus dazu über, größere Gruppen von Germanen, ja ganze Stämme im Inneren anzusiedeln. Den Anfang der Aufnahmepolitik machte sein Freund und späterer Schwiegersohn Agrippa, als er schon 38 v. Chr. die von den Sweben bedrängten Ubier auf das linke Rheinufer übernahm, wo aus der *civitas Ubiorum* dann die Stadt Köln wurde.²⁶ Auf Reichsboden romanisierten sich die Germanen in der zweiten und dritten Generation und waren als Hilfstruppen hoch geschätzt. Der Bruder des Arminius, Flavus, trug einen lateinischen Namen, „der Blonde“, und kämpfte auf römischer Seite. Augustus hatte 40.000 Sweben und Sugambrier ins Reich geholt. Nero gestattete mehr als angeblich 100.000 Donaugermanen die Einwanderung. Er hielt sich so wie seine Vorgänger eine germanische Leibwache, überwiegend aus Batavern vom Niederrhein. Wir kennen ihre Grabsteine in Rom. Caracalla nannte seine germanische Garde seine *leones*, seine „Löwen“.

In großem Stil kaufte Marc Aurel germanische Söldner zum Kampf gegen Germanen, verwendete dafür auch Kriegsgefangene. Germanen kämpften gegen jeden Feind, für jeden Kaiser, der sie bezahlte, auch gegen ihresgleichen,²⁷ so wie die Landsknechte im 16. Jahrhundert und die Militärsoldaten im 17. Noch im amerikanischen Unabhängigkeitskrieg nach 1774 standen deutsche Truppen auf beiden Seiten. Gemäß Tacitus war der Kriegszustand im Innern Germaniens Normalität. Die Geschichte kennt nach der *Pax Romana* eine *Pax Britannica*, eine *Pax Americana* und sogar eine „*Pax Sovietica*“, aber keine *Pax Germanica*.

Im späteren 3. Jahrhundert verschwanden die Senatoren aus der militärischen Führungsschicht, germanische Offiziere erschienen und errangen unter und nach Constantin höchste Kommandoposten als Heermeister, *magistri militum*. Sie gewannen zunehmend Einfluss und Ehrenstellen. Männer wie Merobaudes und Arbogast, Bauto, Stilicho und Rikimer bestimmten die Politik der letzten hundert Jahre des Imperiums.²⁸ Sie verschwägerten sich seit dem ausgehenden 4. Jahrhundert gar mit dem Kaiserhaus und bestätigten so, dass die Germanen als Barbaren keineswegs grundsätzlich Erz- oder Erbfeinde der Römer waren.

Übernahme von Germanen ins Reich gab es sogar im kriegerischen 3. Jahrhundert. Kaiser Probus siedelte um 280 fränkische Kriegsgefangene möglichst fern der Heimat an der unteren Donau an. Die Franken aber wollten zurück. In ihrer „unerhörten Verwegenheit und ihrem unverdienten Glück“ kaperten sie Schiffe an der Schwarzmeerküste, beluden und bestiegen sie, durchquerten die Meerengen, räuberten in Kleinasien,

²⁶ Dio XLVIII 49; Strabon IV 3,4.

²⁷ *Historia Augusta*, ‚Marcus‘ 21,7.

²⁸ A. Demandt, *RE. Suppl.* XII, 1970, 553ff.

Griechenland und Nordafrika, plünderten Syrakus, fuhren hinaus in den Atlantik und landeten wohlbehalten in ihrer belgischen Heimat.²⁹ Das gab ein Wiedersehen! Ein archäologisches Dokument römischer Grenzpolitik ist das Bleimedaillon aus Lyon.³⁰ Es zeigt die Rheinbrücke von Castel nach Mainz, über die Soldaten hilfeschuchende Familien bringen, die auf der römischen Seite im Jahr 295 von den Kaisern Maximian und Constantius begrüßt werden.

Im 4. Jahrhundert wechseln legale Landzuweisung und illegale Landnahme. Als Julian 355 nach Gallien kam und dann beiderseits des Rheins tatkräftig und erfolgreich gegen die Germanen kämpfte, hatten sich im Elsass Alamannen niedergelassen und die Zugänge zu dem okkupierten Gebiet durch Straßensperren barrikadiert. Sie handelten auf eigene Faust. Wenn die römisch-germanischen Grenz- und Friedensverträge ebenso oft wie geschlossen auch gebrochen wurden, war das zumeist die Schuld der Germanen. Aber nicht immer. In Toxiandrien, dem ehemaligen Bataverland, hatten sich die Salfranken festgesetzt. Sie schickten 358 Julian eine Gesandtschaft entgegen mit der Bitte um Bleibe. Der Kaiser gewährte das und verabschiedete sie mit Geschenken. Dann zog er hinter ihnen her, brachte ihnen eine Niederlage bei und beließ sie als „Bundesgenossen“ im Reich. Mit den Alamannen hatte Valentinian den Rhein als Grenze vereinbart. Dennoch ließ er 369 bei Mons Piri nahe Heidelberg auf alamannischem Boden einen Brückenkopf befestigen. Die Alamannen beschwerten sich über den Vertragsbruch, wurden aber schnöde abgewiesen. Daraufhin erstürmten sie den Brückenkopf, töteten die Besatzung und fürchteten nun um das Leben der Geiseln, die sie Valentinian gestellt hatten.³¹

Fatal wurde das römisch-germanische Verhältnis an der Donau, wo schon Diokletian und Constantin kämpfen mussten. Der neue Feind waren die Goten. Im Zuge der großen Nord-Süd-Wanderungen waren die Westgoten aus Schweden an die Donau gekommen. Es gab Kämpfe mal rechts, mal links des Stroms. Die römischen Quellen sprechen von Versorgungsproblemen der Goten und von Friedensgesuchen, denen der Kaiser schließlich stattgegeben habe. Nach Vorverhandlungen mit den Heermeistern traf Valens mit seinem Dolmetscher den Gotenkönig Athanarich im September 369 bei Noviodunum nahe dem Delta mitten auf der Donau, also paritätisch im Niemandsland, jeder mit seinem Gefolge auf einem Schiff. Der mit diesem Entgegenkommen des Kaisers verbundene Verzicht auf seine Superiorität wurde etwas hilflos erklärt mit seiner Rücksicht auf den angeblichen Eid, den Athanarich seinem Vater geleistet habe, niemals römischen

²⁹ *Panegyrici Latini* VIII 18,3.

³⁰ R.-ALFÖLDI 2001, 167ff.

³¹ Ammian XVII 8,3f.; XXVIII 2,5.

Boden zu betreten. Für Valens wäre es unwürdig und erniedrigend, *indecorum et vile*, gewesen, sich über die Donau zu Athanarich zu begeben.³²

Der Redner Themistios,³³ der dabei war, preist die schwächebedingte protokollwidrige Nachgiebigkeit des Kaisers mit dessen Friedens- und Menschenliebe. Er machte aus der Not eine Tugend. Dem römischen Kaiser obliege auch die Fürsorge für die Nichtrömer jenseits wie diesseits der Grenzen. Das ergab sich aus dem traditionellen Weltherrschaftsanspruch Roms, aus dem Reich ohne Grenzen, dem *imperium sine fine*, das laut Vergil³⁴ Juppiter den Nachkommen des Aeneas verheißen hatte. Athanarich hielt den Frieden, aber die Goten vertrieben ihn. Athanarich ging, seinem „Schwur“ zum Trotz, nach Konstantinopel, wo er später in Ehren verstarb.³⁵

Im Jahr 376 gab es eine neue Situation. Während der zweiten großen Völkerbewegung von Ost nach West hatten die zentralasiatischen Hunnen weitere Goten an die Donau gedrängt. Nun in Masse an der Donau stehend, baten sie um Aufnahme ins Reich.³⁶ Der örtliche Statthalter konsultierte Kaiser Valens. Die Einbürgerung von Fremden war rühmlich, war nützlich und alte Tradition. Freilich war es zuvor immer nur um überschaubare Mengen gegangen, und dies war jetzt der kritische Punkt. Die Goten hatten ihre Anzahl verkleinert und durften kommen.

Sie kamen, in Waffen, zu Tausenden. Die römischen Grenzwachen verloren die Übersicht, tagelang pendelten die Fährschiffe. Die Versorgung versagte, es wurde geplündert, Militär griff ein. Als der Kaiser mit dem Reichsheer erschien, wurde er von den Goten am 9. August 378 bei Adrianopel, dem türkischen Edirne, vernichtend geschlagen und fiel.³⁷ Seitdem war die Grenze offen, der Feind im Land. Der verstatteten Aufnahme durch Rom folgte die eigenmächtige Landnahme durch die Zuwanderer. Theodosius musste als „Freund des Friedens und der Goten“ ihnen 382 *nolens volens* Territorium einräumen, wo sie nach eigenem Recht unter eigenen Anführern lebten. Goten kämpften seitdem auf Reichsboden bald für den Kaiser, bald gegen ihn. Alarich, der als Gotenkönig für Theodosius im September 394 den Gegenkaiser Eugenius besiegt hatte,³⁸ wollte römischer Heermeister werden. Als das abgelehnt wurde, erhob er einen neuen Gegenkaiser und eroberte 410 Rom.³⁹

³² Ammian XXVII 5,9.

³³ Themistios *or.* 10, 136a.

³⁴ Vergil, *Aeneis* I 279.

³⁵ Jordanes, *Getica* 142ff.

³⁶ Ammian XXXI 4.

³⁷ Ammian XXXI 13.

³⁸ *Epitome de Caesaribus* 48,7.

³⁹ Sozomenos IX 9.

Die Truppen der Rheingrenze hatte Stilicho zum Schutz Italiens abgezogen. Nun überschritten im Jahre 407 einige Tausend Vandalen und Alanen die Rheinbrücke bei Mainz und zogen nach Spanien. Südgallien okkupierten die Westgoten, Nordgallien die Franken. Der Rhein war keine Grenze mehr. Stattdessen wurden die Alpenpässe befestigt. Es entstanden militärische Binnengrenzen im Reich, ebenso unwirksam wie die Außengrenzen. Über das Ende der Donaugrenze zwischen Passau und Wien, in Ufernoricum, belehrt uns Eugipps zeitgenössische *Vita* des heiligen Severinus, der als Einsiedler bei den Romanen diesseits und den Germanen jenseits des Stroms hohes Ansehen genoss. Gleichwohl erschienen sie immer wieder zu Plünderungszügen. Um 470 besuchte der Thüringer Odovacar mit kleinem Gefolge den Klausner,⁴⁰ ging nach Italien und stieg in der Kaisergarde auf. Als 476 die römischen Truppen germanischer Herkunft in Italien Land forderten und abgelehnt wurden, erhoben sie Odovacar zum König. Er schickte den Knabenkaiser Romulus in den Ruhestand und beendete so am 4. September 476 die römische Herrschaft im Westen.⁴¹ Infolgedessen kam kein Sold mehr für die Grenztruppen an die Donau, die Besatzung von Batava/Passau hielt sich noch eine Weile, dann zerstreuten sich die Bataver. Die wiederholt geplünderte Stadt wurde von Alamannen und Thüringern wie alle von den Germanen erreichten Städte zerstört.⁴² Im Jahre 482 gab es einen Exitus der Romanen von Ufernoricum nach Italien.⁴³ Hier gerieten sie unter die Herrschaft Odovacars, 493 unter die der Goten, 568 unter die der Langobarden. Die Italiker lebten, so wie zuvor die Fellachen Ägyptens unter den Römern, als Bauern unter den Germanen. Diese hatten im gesamten Westen das Sagen.

Fazit: Seit das Reich im 5. Jahrhundert keine sichere räumliche Grenze mehr besaß, war seine zeitliche Grenze erreicht. Der *Pax Romana* folgte die etwas andersartige *Pax Gothica*.⁴⁴ Die Kaiser waren an den Germanen gescheitert. Die Kirchenväter hatten mit ihnen kein Problem. Sind doch die Christen selbst Fremde auf Erden! Orosius begrüßte die Germanen. Zwar hätten sie den Römern das Gold genommen, aber bei ihnen den wahren katholischen Glauben gefunden. Salvian sah in ihren Siegen die gerechte Strafe Gottes für die Sittenlosigkeit der verderbten Römer. Augustinus nahm den Fall Roms gelassen. Ihm ging es nicht um Politik, sondern um die Einheit der Kirche, die Reinheit des Glaubens, um die Rettung der Seele. Vergils Formel vom *imperium sine fine* übertrug er vom irdi-

⁴⁰ Eugipp, *Vita* 7,1.

⁴¹ *Anonymus Valesianus* 10,45.

⁴² Eugipp, *Vita* 20,1; 22,4; 27,3.

⁴³ Eugipp, *Vita* 40,4ff.; 44,5ff.

⁴⁴ Paulinus Pellaeus 303.

schen Reich Roms auf das bevorstehende himmlische Reich Gottes, auf die grenzenlose Ewigkeit.⁴⁵

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⁴⁵ Augustinus, *Civitas Dei* XXII 33.

NIKOLAS HÄCHLER

Formen und Auswirkungen römisch-germanischer Grenzpolitik am spätrömischen Hochrheinlimes¹

This article examines the later Roman Upper Rhine *Limes* between Lake Constance and Basel as a borderline region with a liminal character situated between the centres of power of Rome and *Barbaricum*. As a border defence system, the section of the *Limes* examined here served both to keep the peace and to wage war, as a study of imperial activities in the 4th and 5th centuries shows. Taking literary and documentary evidence into account, it becomes clear that the living environment of the local population changed fundamentally over the course of time. Roman administration, Christian religion and church structures as well as Gallo-Roman and Germanic culture subsequently formed the basis for new ways of life in the early medieval societies of what is now Switzerland.

Keywords: Alamanni / Constantine I / Constantius II / Julian / Valentinian I / Burgundians

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Die räumlichen und zeitlichen Grenzen des *Imperium Romanum* erfahren aktuell große Aufmerksamkeit.² Oftmals stehen dabei Fragen nach der strukturellen Verfassung des Reiches, nach dem Austausch zwischen Rom und unterschiedlichen (germanischen) Völkerschaften sowie nach der Lebenswelt der an der Grenze lebenden Menschen unter Berücksichtigung der literarischen und dokumentarischen Überlieferung im Zentrum der Betrachtung. Teilweise ist dieses große Interesse der Tatsache geschuldet, dass die Geschichte des Römischen Reiches beispielhaft dazu einlädt, über „Nutzen und Notwendigkeit von Grenzen“ gerade vor dem Hintergrund gegenwärtiger Ereignisse nachzudenken, wie Alexander Demandt zu

¹ Ich danke Danuta Shanzer, Benjamin Straumann sowie den anonymen Gutachtern vielmals für hilfreiche Anmerkungen zum vorliegenden Beitrag.

² Davon zeugen eindrücklich die Landesausstellung „Der Untergang des Römischen Reiches“ vom 25. Juni bis 27. November 2022 in Trier im Rheinischen Landesmuseum, im Museum am Dom und im Stadtmuseum Simeonstift sowie die positive Rezeption von MEIER 2019.

Recht betont. Ich freue mich deswegen sehr, seinen Ausführungen weitere Beobachtungen und Gedanken hinzufügen zu dürfen.

Die ungeheure Größe des *Imperium Romanum* sowie die schiere Anzahl unterschiedlicher Völker, die von ihm geprägt waren, führten zur Ausbildung zahlreicher eigenständiger Grenzgebiete, die sowohl untereinander als auch mit den spätrömischen Reichszentren und den Bewohnern des *Barbaricum* in fortlaufendem Austausch standen. Roms Umgang mit diesen Zonen wurde situativ an lokal-regional bestehende Gefahrenherde und an eigene, sich fortwährend ändernde politische Zielsetzungen angepasst. Einer alles übergreifenden und langfristig stabilen *grand strategy* jenseits von Pauschalversuchen, Grenzen zu sichern, folgte sie aus heutiger Perspektive nicht, obschon ein kursorischer Blick über die politischen und militärischen Entwicklungen an den Reichsgrenzen einen entsprechenden Eindruck erwecken mag.³

Im vorliegenden Beitrag sollen unterschiedliche Funktionen von Roms Grenzen in der Spätantike näher untersucht werden, um dadurch Demandts Darstellungen punktuell einer vertiefenden Betrachtung zu unterziehen. Zu diesem Zweck stehen der durch den sogenannten spätrömischen Hochrheinlimes konstituierte Raum auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz zwischen Bodensee und Basel und die in diesem lebenden Menschen im Zentrum der Aufmerksamkeit. Dadurch sollen sowohl Aspekte der kaiserlichen Grenzpolitik als auch deren Auswirkungen auf die lokale Bevölkerung im Detail ausgeleuchtet werden. Als liminale Zone stand dieser Limesabschnitt im Westen mit dem Gebiet der heutigen Franche-Comté samt den Flüssen Saône und Doubs, im Norden mit dem Regierungsbezirk Freiburg und im Süden mit dem Alpenraum stets in Kontakt (Abb. 1).⁴

Zu Beginn seiner Ausführungen verweist Demandt auf die Bedeutung der Sprache für das Verständnis der Funktionen von Grenzen, wobei er dazu von deutschen Termini ausgeht: „Grenzen dienen dem Frieden. Schon das Wort erinnert durch seinen Ursprung in der ‚Einfriedung‘, im ‚umfriedeten Raum‘ an das Erfordernis von Grenzen, [...]. Grenzen regeln Besitzansprüche von Einzelnen und Hoheitsrechte von Gruppen, zumal von Staaten.“ Die Römer selbst bezeichneten das Ende ihres Reiches auf Latein mit dem Begriff *limes*. Dieser Terminus umfasste ein breites

³ Vgl. LUTTWAK 2016. Freilich bauten die Herrscher zusammen mit ihren Beratern auf den Entscheidungen und Vorgaben ihrer Vorgänger auf und führten deren Herrschaftsprogramm, gerade wenn es Erfolg versprach, zum Teil weiter.

⁴ Zur Forschung siehe STAEHELIN 1948, 316–333; DRACK / FELLMANN 1988, 276–315; DRACK 1993; FURGER u. a. 1996; BERGER 2012, 24–33; AMT FÜR ARCHÄOLOGIE DES KANTONS THURGAU 2013; SCHWARZ 2019, 28–43; STEINER / FAVROD 2019; HÄCHLER u. a. 2020.

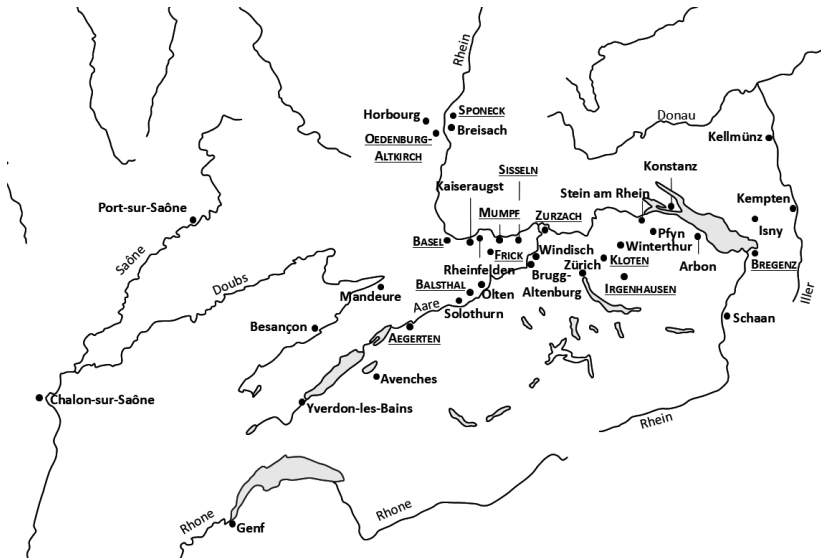


Abb. 1: Schematische Darstellung spätrömischer Befestigungen am Hochrheinlimes unter Kaiser Valentinian I. (364–375). In Kapitälchen und unterstrichen dargestellte Namen zeigen Ortschaften an, die in valentinianischer Zeit neu bzw. erneut befestigt wurden

Bedeutungsspektrum.⁵ Im Deutschen wird er vielfach mit „Grenze/Grenzlinie“, „Schranke“, „Schneise“ oder „(Grenz-)Weg“ übersetzt. Sowohl im militärischen als auch im politischen, wirtschaftlichen und kulturellen Bereich spielten *limites* als multifunktionale (Grenz-)Sicherungssysteme und Transportrouten eine herausragende Rolle. Sie markierten römische Präsenz in politischer und kultureller Hinsicht, erlaubten den Herrschern des Reiches, persönliche Sieghaftigkeit zu demonstrieren, organisierten den ökonomischen Austausch dies- und jenseits des Reiches und fungierten als militärische Organisations- und Sammlungspunkte. Sie waren damit nicht allein Bollwerk gegen angreifende Barbaren, sondern dienten auch der Kontrolle der Provinzbevölkerung und damit der Festigung römischer Herrschaft in den Peripherien. Von derartigen Grenzen aus wurden germanische Söldner und Soldaten für den römischen Heeresdienst angeworben,

⁵ ThLL 7,2,1409,57–1417,15. Der Ausdruck hängt etymologisch mit *limus* (schief, quer) und *limen* (Schwelle, Schranke) zusammen. Ursprünglich benannte er jenen Raum, der durch deutlich erkennbare (Land-)Markierungen eingefasst wurde, mithin einen (Grenz-)Weg zwischen Grundstücken, woraus sich nach und nach die Bedeutung einer mittels Militäranlagen abgesicherten (Reichs-)Grenze entwickelte. Ob die Römer eine Staatsgrenze im modernen Sinn kannten, ist in der Forschung umstritten. Den sogenannten „nassen Limes“ am Rhein und an der Donau bezeichneten die Römer auch als *ripa*.

Bündnisverträge mit fremden Fürsten geschlossen, militärische Expeditionen vorbereitet und kaiserliche Strafexpeditionen lanciert.

Darüber hinaus trugen *limites* zur Ausbildung unscharf umrissener und oftmals umkämpfter liminaler Zonen mit Schwellencharakter bei.⁶ Zu Recht spricht Walter Pohl vor diesem Hintergrund vom Limes als einer Grenze und Begegnungszone,⁷ die vom jenseitigen *Barbaricum*, aber auch von den römischen Reichszentren klar zu unterscheiden ist. Grenzräume sind als Orte des Übergangs anzusehen, wo Gegensätze miteinander in Bezug gesetzt und neue Identitäten und Strukturen erprobt wurden. Kaiserliche Entscheidungen im Rahmen der römisch-germanischen Grenzpolitik hatten Auswirkungen auf Menschen, die in betroffenen Grenzgebieten lebten; dies sowohl mit Blick auf politische und militärische Einzelereignisse als auch auf langfristig prägende Herrschafts- und Verwaltungsstrukturen, welche das alltägliche Zusammenleben prägten. Der *limes* als römisches Grenzsystem diente aus heutiger Perspektive damit sowohl der punktuell-situativen Kriegsführung gegen Feinde des Reiches als auch der langfristigen Friedenssicherung. Er brachte für einige Zeit Stabilitäten in Phasen umfassender Herausforderungen und trug damit zur Resilienz des Römischen Reiches bei, wenngleich er dazu fortwährend erneuert und verteidigt werden musste.

Diese Ausführungen sollen im Nachfolgenden mit Blick auf das Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz in spätrömischer Zeit vertieft werden. Obschon Ziel der römischen Grenzsicherung sicherlich die Etablierung friedlicher Verhältnisse war, unterscheiden sich die gewählten Mittel sowie die konkreten Umsetzungen je nach Raum und Zeit deutlich voneinander. Nach der Reichskrise des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. musste der ursprünglich das Dekumatenland umfassende Obergermanisch-Raetische Limes aufgrund alamannischer Vorstöße zwischen 260 und 270 aufgegeben und an den Rhein rückverlegt werden.⁸ Unter den Kaisern Diokletian und Konstantin I. wurden entlang der Nordgrenzen der neu eingerichteten Provinzen *Maxima Sequanorum* (mit Vesontio, heute Besançon) und *Raetia prima* (mit

⁶ Zu der auf das mittelhochdeutsche Wort *swelle* (Türschwellenbalken) zurückgehenden „Schwelle“, die unterschiedliche Räume sowohl voneinander trennt als auch miteinander verbindet, auch mit Blick auf ihr Verhältnis zur „Grenze“, siehe VAN GENNEP 1986, 25; SAEVERIN 2002, 31–34; BENJAMIN 2020, I 618.

⁷ POHL 2021, 55–58.

⁸ Zur Forschungsgeschichte, Situation und einzelnen exemplarischen Stationen des obergermanisch-raetischen Limes sowie des niedergermanischen Limes, der seit 2021 zum UNESCO-Weltkulturerbe gehört, siehe RABOLD u. a. 2000; SCHALLMAYER 2007; MOSCHEK 2011, 40–101; REUTER / THIEL 2019. Zur Situation des norisch-pannonischen Limes siehe GASSNER / PÜLZ 2018. Einzelne (und zum Teil modern rekonstruierte) Limesstationen dienen heute als beliebte Ausflugsziele und touristische Attraktionen, siehe dazu www.limesstrasse.de/deutsche-limes-strasse/home/ (25.8.2024).

Curia Raetorum, heute Chur) in regelmäßigen Abständen Wachtürme und Grenzkastelle errichtet. Des Weiteren befestigte man einzelne bedeutende Siedlungen neu.⁹ Damit zusammenhängend wurden Brückenkopfkastelle erbaut, die einerseits als Kommunikations- und Handelsverbindungen dienten, andererseits ein aktives militärisches Vorgehen auf der jenseits gelegenen Flussseite erlaubten. Auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz war dies beim *castrum Rauracense*, dem heutigen Kaiseraugst, der Fall, das als wichtiger Sammlungspunkt für die spätrömische Heeresmacht in der Region diente. Mit seinen 36.000 m² umbauter Fläche stellt es ein eindrucksvolles Beispiel spätrömischer Festungstechnik dar. Seine bis zu vier Meter starken Mauern ruhen an manchen Stellen auf Spoliensteinen, die aus der teilweise in Trümmern liegenden Koloniestadt Augusta Raurica herbeitransportiert worden waren. Im Umfeld von Kastellen entwickelten sich häufig zivile Siedlungen (*vici*), in denen Angehörige der Dienstleistenden lebten. Versorgt wurden Heeresabteilungen durch die umliegenden Gutshöfe (*villae rusticae*), wodurch ein eigenständiges, lokal-regional ausgeprägtes Wirtschaftsnetzwerk erwuchs, das gerade im 4. Jahrhundert florierte. In den anonym verfassten Panegyriken des Jahres 310 wurde Konstantin I. für seine Bemühungen zur Verteidigung des Rheins gelobt, die, so hat es den Anschein, von Erfolg gekrönt waren: „(4) Wo ist nun jener wilde Trotz, wo der stets treulose Wankelmut? Jetzt wagt ihr nicht einmal mehr, in einer größeren Entfernung vom Rhein zu wohnen, und trinkt kaum noch in Sicherheit das Wasser der Flüsse landeinwärts. (5) Dagegen stellen die diesseits in regelmäßigen Abständen errichteten Kastelle für die Grenzlinie eher eine Zierde als einen Schutz dar. Unbewaffnet pflügt jenes einstmals schreckliche Ufer der Bauer, und es baden unsere Herden an jeder Stelle des zweiarmig mündenden Stromes.“¹⁰

Dass dieser militärische und politische Erfolg tatsächlich aber begrenzt war, zeigt sich bereits unter Konstantins I. Nachfolgern. Diese waren erneut zu Kampagnen am Hochrheinlimes gezwungen, um Roms Herrschaftsansprüche vor Ort zu sichern. Dabei agierten sie je nach Kontext und Zielsetzungen sehr unterschiedlich. 354 bereitete Constantius II. (337–361) einen Feldzug gegen die Alamannenkönige Gundomad und Vadomar vor, die jenseits des *castrum Rauracense* auf dem Gebiet des

⁹ Von diesen Bautätigkeiten zeugt eine Inschrift aus Tasgetium (heute Stein am Rhein) aus dem Jahr 294, siehe dazu CIL XIII 5256 = RISch II 199. Auch die Stadtmauern von Vitudurum (heute Winterthur) wurden 293/294 verstärkt, siehe dazu CIL XIII 5249 = RISch II 197.

¹⁰ Pan. Lat. VI/VII 11,4–5: (4) *Ubi nunc illa ferocia, ubi semper infida mobilitas? Iam ne procul quidem Rhenum audetis accollere, et vix securi flumina interiora potatis.* (5) *Contra hinc per intervalla disposita magis ornant litem castella quam protegent. Arat illam terribilem aliquando ripam inermis agricola, et toto nostri greges bicornes mersantur.* Übersetzung nach MÜLLER-RETTIG 2008, I 139.

heutigen Breisgau herrschten und wiederholt Plünderungszüge zu verantworten hatten. Bevor es aber zu einer Schlacht kam, konnten Friedensvereinbarungen zwischen den Konfliktparteien ausgehandelt werden. In einer öffentlichen Ansprache vor dem Heer im *castrum Rauracense*, von welcher der Historiograph Ammianus Marcellinus berichtet,¹¹ erklärte und rechtfertigte Constantius II. sein Vorgehen.¹² Frieden sei besser als Krieg, insbesondere wenn er ohne Blutvergießen zustande komme. Darüber hinaus seien die noch unverbrauchten Ressourcen des Reiches für künftige Auseinandersetzungen zu nutzen, was nur zum Vorteil Roms sein könne. Womöglich dachte der Kaiser dabei an die zwischen Rom und den Sasaniden umkämpfte Front im Osten.

Constantius' II. Mitkaiser und Nachfolger Julian verfolgte eine andere Strategie. Nachdem er 355 zum Caesar für Gallien erhoben worden war, führte er 356 zusammen mit Constantius II. einen ersten erfolgreichen Feldzug gegen die Alamannen durch. Bereits 357 war jedoch ein weiteres militärisches Unterfangen nötig, das allerdings aufgrund fehlgeleiteter Kommunikation zwischen dem Caesar und dem Heermeister Barbatio beinahe gescheitert wäre. Einzig Julians aggressives Vorgehen gegen eine alamannische Koalition unter dem Gaukönig Chnodomar bei Argentoratum, dem heutigen Straßburg, entschied die Situation am Rheinlimes zugunsten Roms. Im Anschluss daran gestand der Sieger den Alamannen Waffenruhe unter der Bedingung zu, dass sie sich umfassenden Tributforderungen beugten – im Falle der Weigerung wurden brutale Strafexpeditionen jenseits des Rheins lanciert. Mit den von den Besiegten erhaltenen Mitteln ließ der Kaiser Städte und Kastelle bis Mainz befestigen. Dieses Bauprogramm am Rhein setzte er im Jahr 359 fort. Seine Erfolge und seine daraus resultierende Beliebtheit beim Heer ließen Julian für Constantius II. allerdings zusehends zur Gefahr werden – immer häufiger sind in der Folge Spannungen zwischen den beiden Regenten auszumachen. Nachdem er in seinem Winterquartier Paris von seinen Soldaten zum Augustus ausgerufen worden war, begab sich Julian in das *castrum Rauracense*. Dort richtete er das Wort an seine Soldaten und überzeugte sie von der Notwendigkeit eines

¹¹ Amm. 15, 8, 5–8. Ein neu entdecktes Amphitheater in Kaiseraugst, das im 4. Jahrhundert errichtet wurde und bei der archäologischen Begleitung von Bauarbeiten für ein neues Bootshaus des Basler Ruderclubs im Dezember 2021 entdeckt wurde, zeugt von der Bedeutung des Militärstützpunkts in der Spätantike, siehe dazu die Medienmitteilung des Kantons Aargau vom 19.1.2022 unter www.ag.ch/de/verwaltung/bks/kultur?mm=roemisches-amphitheater-in-kaiseraugst-entdeckt-41e6c211-22d9-46af-9992-68665b33db69_de (25.8.2024).

¹² Zur literarischen Qualität derartiger Ansprachen in der antiken Historiographie siehe HANSEN 1993, 172; KENDRICK PRITCHETT 2002; IGLESIAS ZOIDO 2007, 141–158; WHATLEY 2013, 122–126; McGRATH 2018, 160–195.

Kriege gegen Constantius II.¹³ Kaiseraugst war damit sowohl Schauplatz für Friedensverhandlungen als auch für (Bürger-)Kriegsvorbereitungen. Es wird deutlich, dass die Infrastruktur des Rheinlimes durchaus auch der Planung innerrömischer Konflikte diene – sie brachte dem Reich damit auch intern nicht notwendigerweise ausschließlich friedliche Verhältnisse.¹⁴

Vor dem Ausbruch größerer Kampfhandlungen verstarb Constantius II. überraschend. Nach Julians kurzlebiger Alleinherrschaft erwies sich die Regierung Valentinians I. als Nachfolgers Jovians ab 364 für die Geschicke des Hochrheinlimes als bedeutsam. Die erfolgreiche Militär- und Baupolitik seines Vorgängers setzte er fort, was sich an rund 500 unter ihm erlassenen Gesetzesbestimmungen zeigt.¹⁵ Maßnahmen zur Heeresorganisation betrafen die Rekrutierung sowie die Wahrung der Disziplin bei den Grenztruppen – zum Teil mit durchaus rabiaten Mitteln – und umfassten Bestimmungen zugunsten von Veteranen. Auch der Ausbau von Limesbefestigungen ist bezeugt: „Valentinian schmiedete bedeutende und nutzbringende Pläne. Den ganzen Rhein, angefangen von Rätien bis zur Meerenge des Ozeans, ließ er mit großen Dämmen befestigen und auf der Höhe Militärlager und Kastele, ferner in dichten Abständen an geeigneten und günstigen Stellen Türme errichten, soweit sich die gallischen Länder erstreckten. Zuweilen wurden auch Gebäude jenseits des Stroms angelegt, wo er das Land der Barbaren berührt.“¹⁶ Beim heutigen Basel habe der Kaiser ein neues *munimentum* mit dem Namen Robur errichten lassen.¹⁷ Von Valentinians I. Bauaktivitäten am Hochrhein zeugen des Weiteren Inschriften.¹⁸

Wie wirkte sich die spätrömische Grenzpolitik nun auf das Leben der Menschen am Hochrheinlimes aus? Die erhaltenen Quellen erlauben dazu keine pauschalen Aussagen. Der zwischen 1951/52 und 1995 gemachte aufsehenerregende Fund des um 351 verborgenen Silberschatzes von Kaiser-

¹³ Amm. 21,5,1–12.

¹⁴ Zur Vorstellung, dass wiederholte Bürgerkriege das Reich derart schwächten, dass es letztlich unterging, siehe aktuell die Positionen von Guy Halsall, Henning Börm sowie Christian Witschel.

¹⁵ PERGAMI 1993; SCHMIDT-HOFNER 2008, 167–178.

¹⁶ Amm. 28,2,1: *At Valentinianus magna animo concipiens et utilia, Rhenum omnem a Raetiarum exordio ad usque fretalem Oceanum magnis molibus communiebat, castra extollens altius et castella turresque adsiduas per habiles locos et oportunos, qua Galliarum extenditur longitudo: non numquam etiam ultra flumen aedificiis positos subradens barbaros fines.* Übersetzung nach SEYFARTH 1986, 113.

¹⁷ Amm. 30,3,1. Siehe dazu HENNING 2017.

¹⁸ Siehe dazu Bauinschriften aus Koblenz und Etzgen aus dem Jahr 371: CIL XIII 11537 = RISch II 201 = AE 1908, 142; CIL XIII 11538 = ILS 8949 = RISch II 202 = AE 1893, 114 = AE 2002, 1051.



Abb. 2: Der Silberschatz von Kaiseraugst

augst gewährt in diesem Zusammenhang allerdings wertvolle Einblicke in die Lebenswelt von zur reichsweit vernetzten militärischen Führungselite des Reiches zählenden Personen, die im gallischen Raum wirkten (Abb. 2).¹⁹ Nebst dem immensen materiellen Wert der 270 erhaltenen Silberobjekte zeugt der Schatzfund von einer reichhaltigen Bildungslandschaft, die – auch im Rahmen der kaiserlichen Selbstrepräsentation (Achillesplatte) und traditionellen Bankettkultur (Ariadnetablett) – traditionsreiche mythologische Erzählungen umfasst. Die sogenannte Meerstadtplatte, welche eine eindruckliche Villenanlage/Meeresstadt an einem Gewässer mit reger Fischereitätigkeit zeigt, gewährt Einblicke in Idealvorstellungen eines spätrömischen *locus amoenus*, in dem die Realisierung kontemplativer Muße (*otium*) durch unterwerfende Gestaltung der Natur im Rahmen römisch-zivilisatorischer Kulturleistungen möglich scheint. Zur Reichselite zählte, wer mit diesen Motiven – möglicherweise auch im Kontext von Gastmählern – etwas anzufangen wusste und damit

¹⁹ CAHN / KAUFMANN-HEINIMANN 1984; GUGGISBERG / KAUFMANN-HEINIMANN 2003. Einzelne Silberobjekte, die aus Mainz, Nîs und Thessaloniki stammten, kamen durch kaiserliche Schenkungen (*largitiones*), wie die Decennalienplatte des Constans, sowie individuelle Ankäufe über mehrere Besitzer hinweg nach Kaiseraugst. Daneben fanden sich zahlreiche Silbermünzen und Barren, die in unterschiedlichen Prägestätten des Reiches geprägt worden waren.

über Geschichte, Politik und griechisch-römische Kultur im Allgemeinen (mit-)diskutieren konnte.²⁰

Über die Lebenswelt der nicht zur Elite zählenden Bevölkerung am Hochrheinlimes wissen wir wenig. Klar ist, dass sie weiterhin von der römischen Verwaltung vor Ort gerade mit Blick auf jurisdiktionelle und fiskalische Strukturen geprägt war. Hinzu traten Aspekte einer gallo-römischen/germanischen Mischkultur, die sich zusehends in der gesprochenen Alltagssprache und in der Namensgebung manifestierte,²¹ sowie die christliche Religion und Kirche. In wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht stand die Grenzregion noch immer im Austausch mit unterschiedlichen Gebieten der römischen Welt.²²

Valentinians I. Tod im Jahr 375, die verheerende Niederlage Gratians bei Adrianopel 378, die Usurpationen des Magnus Maximus (383–388) sowie des Eugenius (392–394) in Gallien und der Übertritt der Völker bei Mainz 406/407 destabilisierten die Rheingrenzen, was sich in einer Nivellierung des Fundgutes zu beiden Seiten des Flusses deutlich zeigt. „Der Rhein war [damit] keine Grenze mehr“, wie Alexander Demandt zu Recht konstatiert. Gebiete der heutigen Nordwestschweiz erscheinen in der Folge weitgehend isoliert. In der Westschweiz sowie im Alpenraum blieb römische Kontrolle vorerst noch stärker ausgeprägt. In dieser Zeit tritt auf dem Gebiet der heutigen Schweiz die *civitas Basiliensium* in den Vordergrund. Kaiseraugst und Vindonissa, das heutige Windisch/Brugg, sind beide (noch) als *castra* greifbar. In ihnen waren auch Germanen als *foederati* anzutreffen, wie entsprechenden Grabfunden abzulesen ist. Dabei handelt es sich um eine Folge der angepassten Grenzpolitik: Bereits 395 wurde ein Gesetz über die sogenannte *hospitalitas* erlassen, in dem Bedingungen, unter denen Barbaren im Reich angesiedelt werden konnten, geregelt wurden. Stilicho schloss im selben Jahr mit Germanen Verträge, um die geschwächten Grenzregionen zu schützen. 443 siedelte der Heermeister Aëtius die Burgunder in der *Sapaudia* in der heutigen Westschweiz und angrenzenden Gebieten an, nachdem ihr erstes Reich im Kampf gegen die Hunnen untergegangen war. Nach seinem Tod 445 wurde das Einflussgebiet dieses zweiten burgundischen Reiches, unter dessen Schutz die Bevölkerung der heutigen Westschweiz und des Wallis bis zum Einfall der Langobarden 574 in der Folge standen, dann wesentlich erweitert. In Rä-

²⁰ Siehe dazu auch HÄCHLER 2023.

²¹ HAUBRICHS 2022, 205–209.

²² DRACK / FELLMANN 1988, 285–288. So gewann gemäß archäologischen Funden die Produktion von gedrechselten Specksteingefäßen, die bis an den Donau-Ille-Limes gehandelt wurden, große Bedeutung. Man importierte oft sogenannte Rädchensigillata aus dem Gebiet der Argonnen am Oberlauf der Maas. Aus Nordafrika führte man Mittelmeersigillata ein, aus der Region von Mülhausen-Illzach und Poitiers Glasurkeramik, deren Überzug teilweise mit einem Schwamm aufgetragen worden war.

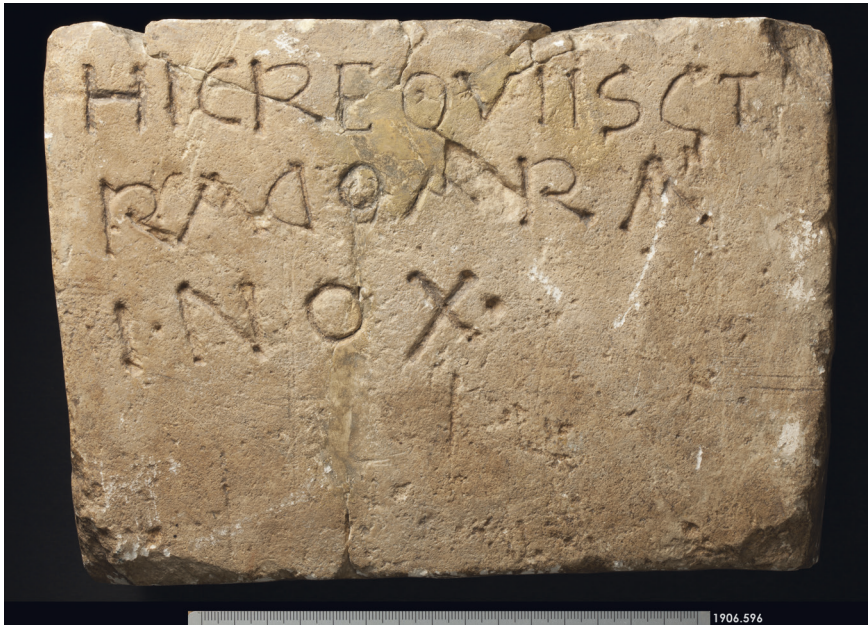


Abb. 3: CIL XIII 5309 = RISch II 227: *Hic requi<e>sc(i)t / Radoara / in(n)ox* („Hier ruht die unschuldige Radoara“).

Interessant ist am vorliegenden Zeugnis nicht allein die Machart mit klarer Alinierung und im Vergleich zu kaiserzeitlichen Inschriften unbeholfen wirkenden Buchstabenformen, sondern auch der germanische Name „Radoara“

tien zogen sich die Menschen dagegen vermehrt in den Schutz von Fluchtburgen zurück. Im zentralen Mittelland bestanden Kontakte zwischen der gallo-römischen Bevölkerung mit Alamannen rechts des Rheins fort, so exemplarisch mit den Bewohnern des Zähringer Burgbergs bei Gundelfingen in der Nähe von Freiburg im Breisgau.

Wie Demandt vermerkt, waren die Kaiser damit „an den Germanen gescheitert“; ihre Vorhaben ließen sich nicht wie geplant realisieren. Anders verhielt es sich mit kirchlichen Strukturen. Vor dem Hintergrund der turbulenten Ereignisse und des schrittweise erfolgten Rückzugs des römischen Staates fanden viele Personen Schutz und Trost innerhalb kirchlicher Institutionen. Bischöfe traten vermehrt an die Stelle der an Bedeutung verlierenden römischen Verwaltung und unterstützten Bedürftige im Rahmen christlicher Nächstenliebe mit karitativen Werken. Heilige vermittelten durch ihr als vorbildlich empfundenes Leben Beispiele (*exempla*) zur Christusbefolgung. Um sie entstanden Kulte, an ihren Bestattungsorten Gräberbezirke, wie es in Sous le Scex und unter der Kirche St-Théodule in Sion/Sitten, im spätrömischen Gräberfeld von Kaiseraugst, unter der Kirche St. Stephan in Chur oder auf dem Gelände der Abtei von Acaunum/



Abb. 4: NESSELHAUF / LIEB (1959/60) = RISch II 243: *D(is) M(anibus) / et memori(ae) ae/tern(ae) Eusstat(ae) (sic!) / coniugi dulci/ssim(ae) qui (sic!) visit (sic!) / ann[os] LXV / Amatus / posuit* („Den Totengöttern und der ewigen Erinnerung der Eusstata, der lieblichsten Gattin, die 65 Jahre gelebt hat. Amatus hat es [das Grabmal] aufgestellt“). Bemerkenswert ist hier die traditionelle Verwendung der nicht-christlichen Formel „D(is) M(anibus)“ in Verbindung mit dem christlichen Symbol des Ankers

Saint-Maurice der Fall war.²³

Tatsächlich sind einzelne Personen der Zivilbevölkerung im Untersuchungszeitraum auch über Grabinschriften belegt (Abb. 3–5). Auch diese Zeugnisse zeigen die wachsende Bedeutung des Christentums. Gleichzeitig sind sie Beleg für Veränderungen des spätrömischen *epigraphic habit* in den Reichsperipherien,²⁴ der im Vergleich mit kaiserzeitlichen Zeugnissen oftmals einfacher in der gestalterischen Ausführung anmutet, für die nach wie vor wichtige Stellung des Lateinischen sowie für die fortschreitende Ausbreitung germanischer Namen.

Die epigraphischen Zeugnisse lassen oft eine Verschlechterung der materiellen Lebensumstände im Laufe der Spätantike erahnen, die auch durch weitere archäologische Untersuchungen nahegelegt wird.²⁵ Aus heutiger Perspektive führte die Errichtung und Unterhaltung des spätrömischen Hochrheinlimes damit tatsächlich nicht dazu, dass die Völkerwanderung oder deren Folgen aufgehalten worden wären. Sie verschaffte indes Zeit, um Neuankömmlinge mit römischen Herrschafts- und Verwaltungsstrukturen sowie wichtigen As-

²³ NÄF 2011, 88–103.

²⁴ Zum kaiserzeitlichen *epigraphic habit* in der Spätantike siehe BOLLE 2019.

²⁵ Zum als Katastrophe verstandenen Niedergang der römischen Zivilisation nach der Völkerwanderung siehe WARD-PERKINS 2005 sowie Arbeiten von Peter Heather. Verschiedene Deutungstraditionen des Niedergangs des Römischen Reiches präsentiert DEMANDT 2014.

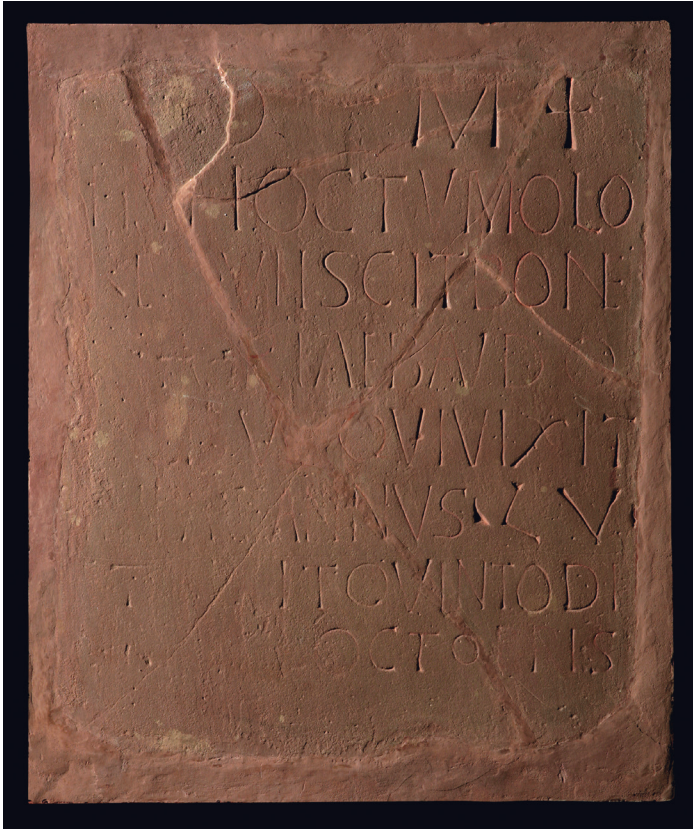


Abb. 5: CIL XIII 5308 = RISch II 226 = AE 2000, 1034: *D(is) M(anibus) + / in hoc tum<u>lo / requi<e>scit bon(a)e / memoriae Baudo/aldus qui vixit / in pace ann<o>s LV / et [obi]it quinto de/[cimo] K(a)l(endas) Octobr<e>s* („Den Totengöttern. In diesem Grab ruht in guter Erinnerung Baudoaldus, der 55 Jahre in Frieden gelebt hat und am 15. Tag vor den Kalenden des Oktober (17. September) verstorben ist“). Auffallend sind erneut die traditionelle Verwendung der nicht-christlichen Formel „D(is) M(anibus)“ zusammen mit der Abbildung eines christlichen Kreuzes sowie der germanische Name „Baudoaldus“

pekten römisch-griechischer Kultur vertraut zu machen. Als vielfach durchlässiger liminaler Raum, in dem politische und kulturelle Gegensätze wiederholt aufeinandertrafen, war die Region Entstehungsort einer neuen, aus heutiger Sicht frühmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft. Nach dem Untergang des Reiches im Westen blieben in den ehemaligen Randgebieten damit nicht nur Ruinen zurück. Stattdessen etablierte sich eine Vielzahl kleinerer und später größerer Herrschaftszentren, welche ihre Geschichte in administrativer, jurisdiktioneller und ökonomischer Hinsicht zum Teil auch in Erinnerung an Rom fortschrieben. Rom war ihnen ein wichtiges

Vorbild, dem man beispielsweise aus Prestige Gründen, aber auch mit Blick auf praktische Vorteile nacheiferte.²⁶ Spätantik-frühmittelalterliche Transformationsprozesse sind dabei nicht allein von simpler Nachahmung des Vergangenen, sondern auch von durchaus kreativen Aneignungen und Anpassungsversuchen sowie Missverständnissen und Prozessen des Vergessens gekennzeichnet.

Selbst in ihrem retrospektiv wohl unvermeidlich anmutenden Scheitern legte die römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik wichtige Grundlagen für die Geschehnisse der germanischen Nachfolgereiche und somit für die Geschichte Europas insgesamt. Zumindest in ideeller Hinsicht war das *Imperium Romanum* damit tatsächlich an keine zeitlichen oder räumlichen Grenzen gebunden. Selbst heute noch dient es als wichtiger Reflexionspunkt in der Geschichte und zur Verortung eigener Identitäten insbesondere in Zeiten umfassender Umbrüche und beschleunigter Transformationen. Gleichzeitig sind aus dem Studium der Geschichte von Roms Grenzen allein nur bedingt handlungsanleitende Schlüsse für unsere Gegenwart zu ziehen. Zu anders mutet das Römische Reich im Vergleich zu unserer heutigen Welt an. Freilich kann das Nachdenken über Roms Grenzen helfen, eigene Entscheidungen in der Gegenwart wohlüberlegt zu treffen, sodass sie zur Festigung von modernen Identitäten und zugleich zum Nutzen gerade der in Grenzräumen lebenden Menschen beitragen können.

²⁶ Zur Vorstellung einer umfassenden Transformation des Römischen Reiches, dessen Niedergang nicht notwendigerweise nur als Katastrophe anzusehen ist, siehe die Positionen von Peter Brown, Walter A. Goffart und Averil Cameron.

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RALPH W. MATHISEN

Managing Barbarian Clients in the Later Fourth Century (ca. 350-375 CE) The Case of the Alamanni

Grenzen – borders – can be viewed from many perspectives. Alexander Demandt subscribes to a model where borders are well defined geographical entities, with “Römer” on one side and “Germanen” on the other. In this view, Romans and Germans engaged in an epochal conflict in which the Germans eventually broke through and ultimately emerged victorious. This contribution, however, considers another view of the frontier, in which Roman authority was regularly projected into *barbaricum* in many ways – political, military, social, and economic. Based on not only traditional textual sources but also material culture and visual evidence, this study suggests that by utilizing the Roman institution of client kingship, which itself was based on that most characteristic of Roman institutions, *clientela*, the government sponsored massive barbarian immigration into the empire and was able to engage large numbers of barbarians in Roman military service. Barbarian populations on the other side of the *Grenzen* were incorporated into the Roman system in the same way that first Italians and then provincials had been assimilated into the Roman world. As a result, in the late empire, an increasingly homogeneous society was created that encompassed populations on both sides of the “frontier”.

Keywords: client kings / frontiers / barbaricum / Alamanni / barbarian auxiliaries

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“Grenzen dienen dem Frieden”, that is to say, “borders preserve the peace”. Thus Alexander Demandt opens his study of “Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik”, the point of departure for these collected studies. *Grenzen* – borders – can be viewed from many perspectives, as “lines in the sand” demarcating fixed boundaries separating territory that is laid claim to from foreign territory, as rather fuzzier zones of influence, or as purely notional, to be defined as one saw fit. In the study presented here, Demandt subscribes to the first of these models, where borders are well defined geographical entities, with “Römer”, variations of which word appear in Demandt’s study thirty-five times, on one side, and “Germanen”, a word that appears no fewer than forty times, on the other. In this view of the

frontier, Romans and Germans engaged in an epochal conflict in which the Germans eventually broke through the frontier and ultimately emerged victorious.

But another view of the border is that it was not a line in the sand. Roman influence regularly extended across the notional frontier in many ways – political, military, social, and economic. By sponsoring massive barbarian immigration into the empire and by engaging large numbers of barbarians in Roman military service, barbarian populations on the other side of the border were incorporated into the Roman system in the same way that first Italians and then provincials had been assimilated. In the late empire, an increasingly homogeneous society was created that encompassed populations on both sides of the “border”. These kinds of interactions are admirably illustrated by the Roman institution of client kingship, which itself was based on that most characteristic of Roman traditions, the institution of *clientela*.

Roman emperors had a long tradition of maintaining barbarian clients along the frontier. Doing so allowed Rome’s emperors to project their authority into *barbaricum*, to maintain peace on the frontier, and to gain access to a ready supply of military recruits. Thus, Dexippus reports how in 271 the emperor Aurelian (270-275) made an agreement with the Vandals: “The kings and chieftains of the barbarians gave hostages not inferior to themselves in rank. Two thousand Vandal cavalymen would serve with the Romans, part of them enrolled in the allied force, the rest volunteers undertaking military service of their own accord”.¹ Supplying hostages, auxiliaries, and men in the ranks was a standard provision of such agreements, and resulted in an increasing integration of barbarian populations into Roman military society.

In the fourth century, the Roman government remained very committed to maintaining a system of barbarian clients, especially on the northern frontier (Fig. 1).² Eusebius of Caesarea discussed his personal experiences with the constant negotiations between barbarian chieftains and the emperor Constantine I (306-337): “Ambassadors were continually arriving from all nations. I myself have sometimes stood near the entrance of the imperial palace and observed a noticeable array of barbarians in attendance with shields and long spears, with arrows and bows thereby offering their services and alliance for the emperor’s acceptance. He also honored the noblest among them with Roman offices of dignity”.³ The recruitment of barbarian auxiliaries and the appointment of barbarian clients to positions of command in the Roman army were just a few of the ways in which

¹ Dexippus fr.7: LEWIS & REINHOLD 1990, 394.

² For client rulers, see BRAUND 1984; ROLLER 2003, HEKSTER 2010.

³ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.6: MCGIFFERT 1890, 820.

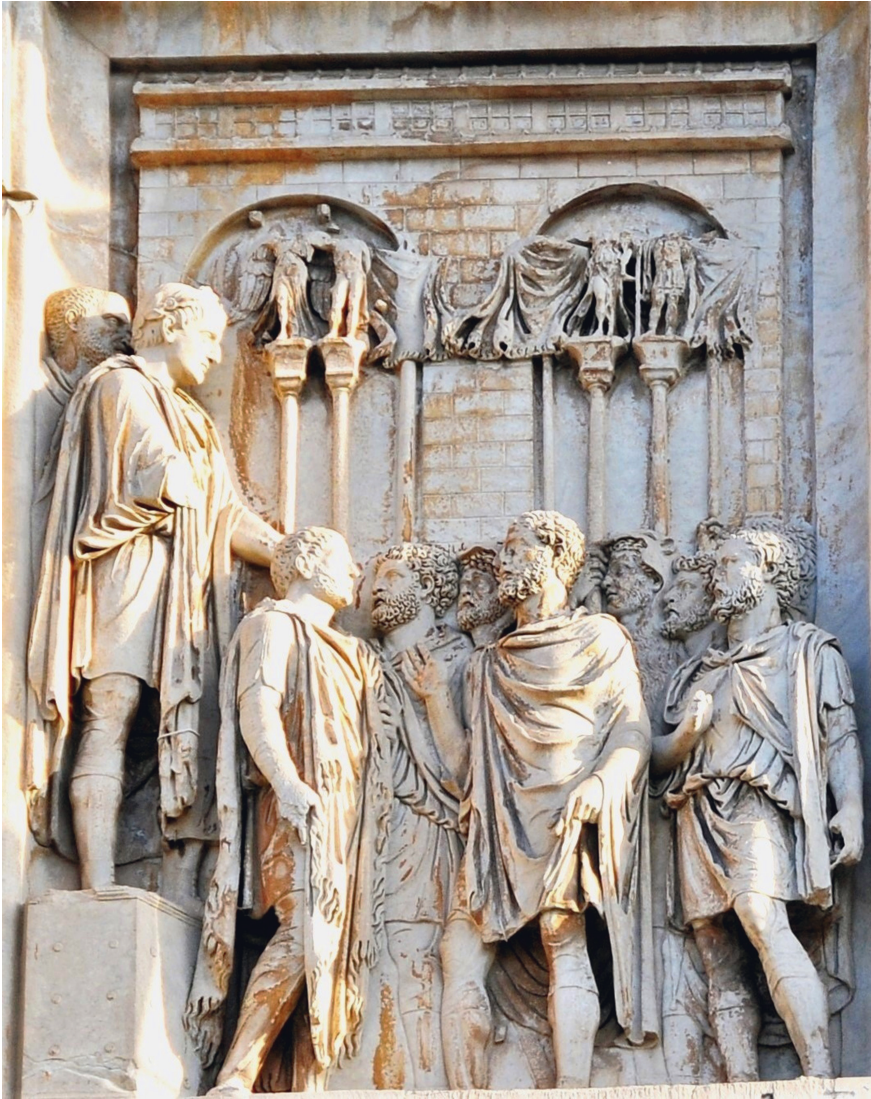


Fig. 1. On a panel from the Arch of Constantine in 315 CE, a second-century emperor at left, perhaps Trajan (98-117), invests a bearded and ceremonially dressed barbarian client king in just the same manner that Constantine managed his own barbarian clients (Photo: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rome_-_Arch_of_Constantine_\(5178424230\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rome_-_Arch_of_Constantine_(5178424230).jpg) licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license)

emperors and clients interacted with each other.⁴ In this way, the ancient Roman *clientela* system was maintained.

⁴ For barbarian auxiliaries, see MATHISEN 2019.

This is not to say, of course, that the Roman government exercised total control over its clients. Far from it. Barbarian chieftains, known variously as *reges*, *regales*, *reguli*, *subreguli*, *duces*, *primates*, and *optimates*, were ever fractious, always looking to their own advantage.⁵ But what was important was that there was an overarching framework for dealing with one another that both Romans and barbarians acknowledged, a patron-client relationship with the Roman government always the superior partner. In most cases, moreover, Roman agreements were made with individual chieftains, not, as we shall see, with peoples or nations. Dealing with individual chieftains was also a way to ensure that initially small barbarian bands did not merge into even larger coalitions.

The Alamanni as Roman Clients

Some examples involving the Alamanni from the third quarter of the fourth century illustrate how Roman emperors dealt with and managed barbarian clients. In the Agri Decumates, the portion of Germania Prima and Raetia located on the far side of the Rhine and Danube, Roman life continued until ca. 260.⁶ But after that, silence. As a result of barbarian incursions, the frontier was withdrawn to the Rhine and Danube, urban life collapsed, and the Roman government withdrew from the area.⁷ But Alamannia, as the Agri Decumates came to be called, continued to be a Roman dependency, and Alamannic kings such as Crocus, who as a barbarian auxiliary supported Constantine I in his bid to become emperor in 306, remained Roman clients.⁸

In 354, after the defeat of Magnentius (350-353), Constantius II (337-361) undertook a campaign “to make war upon the brothers Gundomadus and Vadomarius, *reges* of the Alamanni, whose frequent raids were devastating the part of Gaul that adjoined their frontiers”.⁹ In due course, “the barbarians [...] sent *optimates* to seek pardon for their transgressions and sue for peace. Thus, with the legates of both kings detained and with the business weighed secretly for a long time, they thought it best to grant a peace that was sought on fair conditions. After this, an agreement was

⁵ See, e.g., Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17.12.9-11; also FANNING 2011. Translations of Ammianus are sometimes based on YONGE 1887, and sometimes ROLFE 1963, but are frequently tweaked for accuracy.

⁶ Note, e.g., *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* 13.9111; FISCHER 1962.

⁷ See OKAMURA 1996.

⁸ *Epitome de caesaribus* 41.3: *Cunctis, qui aderant, annitentibus, sed praecipue Croco, Alamannorum rege, auxilii gratia Constantium comitato imperium capit.*

⁹ Amm. 14.10.1: *In Gundomadum et Vadomarium fratres Alamannorum reges arma moturus, quorum crebris excursibus vastabantur confines limitibus terrae Gallorum.* See ENJUTO SÁNCHEZ 2003; also PLRE I, 928.

made according to the rite of the barbarians".¹⁰ The terms of the pact by which Gundomadus and Vadamarius became Roman clients are not specified, and later evidence will show that the "rite of the *gentes*" involved oaths being sworn by the barbarians but not by the Roman emperor.

A year later, Constantius appointed his younger cousin Julian (355-363) as Caesar in Gaul with the responsibility for dealing with the Alamanni. The new emperor's first order of business was to recruit more barbarian auxiliaries: "He enlisted as many more as he could into the ranks and also a great number of volunteers".¹¹ Two years later Julian confronted a coalition of at least seven Alamannic chieftains near Strasbourg.¹² The Roman clients Gundomadus and Vadamarius, however, remained loyal. Ammianus reports, "The two royal brothers, bound by the restrictions of the peace that the year before they had obtained from Constantius, dared neither to undertake a rebellion nor to become stirred up".¹³ But the two paid a price for their loyalty. Ammianus continues, "A little later, Gundomadus, who was more resolute in his good faith, was killed in an ambush when his entire people conspired with our enemies, and the people of Vadamarius, although he himself was unwilling, as he claimed, immediately joined themselves with the columns of barbarians clamoring for war".¹⁴ Being a dutiful client thus could put one at odds with one's own people.

After Julian's ensuing victory, the surviving Alamanni fled across the Rhine. Julian sent Vadamarius to Constantius to report the victory.¹⁵ Ammianus reports that two years later, "King Vadamarius returned with letters of the emperor Constantius, in which he was enthusiastically commended. He was kindly received, as was fitting, having previously been received by the emperor into the *clientela* of the Roman Republic".¹⁶ Meanwhile, Julian followed up on his victory by crossing the Rhine and ravaging Alamannic territory. Soon, three unnamed "most savage kings" appeared, "swearing an oath in words conceived according to their native ritual that

¹⁰ Amm. 14.10.9-16: *Barbari ... optimates misere delictorum veniam petituos et pacem. tentis igitur regis utriusque legatis et negotio tectius diu pensato cum pacem oportere tribui, quae iustis condicionibus petebatur ... icto post haec foedere gentium ritu.*

¹¹ Zos. *HN* 3.3.1-2. Translations from Zosimus based on DAVIS 1814.

¹² Amm. 16.1.

¹³ Amm. 16.12.17: *Regii duo fratres vinculo pacis adstricti, quam anno praeterito impreteraverant a Constantio, nec tumultuare nec commoveri sunt ausi.*

¹⁴ Amm. 16.12.17: *Paulo postea uno ex his Gundomado, qui potior erat fideique firmioris, per insidias inerempto omnis eius populus cum nostris hostibus conspiravit et confestim Vadamarii plebs ipso invito, ut adserebat, agminibus bella cientium barbarorum sese coniunxit.*

¹⁵ Zosimus, *Historia nova* 3.4.3.

¹⁶ Amm. 18.2.16 (Julian, 359): *Rex quoque Vadamarius venit ... scriptisque Constanti principis, quibus commendatus est artius, allegatis leniter susceptus est, ut decebat, olim ab Augusto in clientelam rei Romanae susceptus.*

they would do nothing unpeaceful but would preserve the agreements and would transport grain on their shoulders”.¹⁷ This account illustrates again the personal, verbal, and informal nature of *foedera* struck with northern barbarian chieftains. It also introduces a new twist, with the Alamanni providing supplies for the Roman army, almost as if they were taxpaying provincials.

A similar agreement obtained a year later, in 358, when the Alamannic *rex* Suomarius was granted similar terms:

His appearance and gait indicated that he was a suppliant [...] he begged for peace on bended knee. And he was granted pardon for his past crimes on this condition, that he return our captives, and that, however often was necessary, he would provide supplies for the soldiers, receiving *securitates* [that is, “receipts”] for what he brought in the manner of ordinary military contractors.¹⁸

In this case, the supplies that the client Suomarius provided were to be purchased from the military budget.

Later the same year, the *rex* Hortarius “also begged for pardon and promised, swearing a solemn oath, that he would do all that he was ordered and that he would restore all the captives”.¹⁹ Julian also specified that Hortarius “should furnish carts and timber from his own supplies and those of his subjects. And, when he had promised this and invoked sanctions upon himself, he was allowed to return to his own domains”.²⁰ But, ever the dealmaker, Hortarius also was able to negotiate an exemption: “As for paying the *annona*, as Suomarius did, he could not be compelled to do this given that his territory had been devastated to the point of extermination and nothing could be found to give”.²¹ The reference to payment of the *annona* could suggest that these barbarian clients were being treated like provincials. Ammianus concludes this section, “Thus those *reges* put their necks, now bowed down, under the yoke of Roman dominion, and ungrudgingly

¹⁷ Amm. 17.1.13: *Hac fiducia tres inmanissimi reges venerunt tandem... iurantes conceptis ritu patrio verbis nihil inquietum acturos sed foedera ... frugesque portaturos humeris.*

¹⁸ Amm. 17.10.3-4: *Quia vultus incessusque supplicem indicabat ... pacem genibus curvatis oravit. et eam cum concessione praeteritorum sub hac meruit lege, ut captivos redderet nostros et, quotiens sit necesse, militibus alimenta praeberet, susceptorum vilium more securitates accipiens pro inlatis.*

¹⁹ Amm. 17.10.5-7: *Hortari nomine petendus erat regis alterius pagus ... vicorumque reliquias cerneret exustorum ... oravit ipse quoque veniam, facturum se imperanda iurandi execratione restituere universos promisit, id enim cura agebatur in pensiore.*

²⁰ Amm. 17.10.9: *Carpenta et materias ex opibus suis suorumque praeberet: et haec pollicitus inprecatusque si perfidum quicquam egisset, luenda sibi cruore supplicia, ad propria remeare permissus est.*

²¹ Amm. 17.10.9: *Annonam enim transferre, ita ut Suomarius, ea re compelli non potuit, quod ad internicionem regione eius vastata nihil inveniri poterat quod daretur.*

obeyed our commander, as if born and brought up among our tax payers [*tributarii*].”²²

In general, these *ad hoc* agreements, even if sometimes called “treaties” (*foedera*) in the sources, were personal agreements made between individual emperors and individual barbarian chieftains, and should not be envisaged as being the same as the formal mutual-defense treaties crafted between the Romans and independent foreign states during the Roman Republic. They followed a fairly standard pattern. After a raid or just a threat of a raid by the Alamanni, the emperor would mount a punitive expedition across the river, either the Rhine or the Danube, in which the Alamanni would be soundly defeated, their villages burned, and captives taken.²³ Then, after the defeated chieftains had demonstrated sufficient servility in a ritualized submission performance, they swore oaths “in the barbarian manner” to remain loyal and preserve the peace, to provide hostages, to return Roman captives, and to provide supplies, including foodstuffs, building materials and labor, and army recruits. This, we are rather dubiously told in the *Augustan History*, had been going on as early as the reign of Probus (276-282), who was said to have recruited 16,000 Alamannic auxiliaries into the Roman army.²⁴

Especially striking is the extent to which Alamannic clients were put to work providing provisions and building materials. The latter practices are attested by stone quarries in Alamannia that continued to operate in the fourth century: large granite columns used for Constantine’s cathedral in Trier came from the Felsenmeer in Alamannia, and one remains in situ (Fig. 2).²⁵ Moreover, Libanius reports that in 358 the Alamanni were required to supply not only timber but also iron for the reconstruction of destroyed Roman towns.²⁶ The Alamanni even constructed Roman fortifications. In 369, Symmachus reported, “Hear what marvels I tell of, the barbarian freely offered the things to be torn down and assisted in the creation of new construction”.²⁷ One of these fortifications was built at Lopodunum (Fig. 3). Originally constructed by Julian, it later was restored by Valentin-

²² Amm. 17.10.10: *Ita reges ... adsueta nostrorum Romanae potentiae iugo subdidere colla iam domita et velut inter tributarios nati et educati obsecundabant imperiis ingravate*. The same word, *tributarii*, was used to describe the Limigantes (Amm. 19.11.6).

²³ E.g., Amm. 17.1.1-7.

²⁴ *Historia Augusta*, ‘Probus’ 14.7: *Accepit praeterea sedecim milia tyronum ... cum auxiliariis barbaris*.

²⁵ See GÖLDNER & WEYRAUCH 1989.

²⁶ Libanius, *Oratio* 18.78.

²⁷ Symmachus, *Laudatio in Valentinianum* 2.15 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 6.1.326): *Audite, quam mira adseram ... sponte obtulit barbarus diruenda et novae constructionis adiuvit effectum*.



Fig. 2. An unfinished column lies in the Alamannic stone quarry in the Felsenmeer in Germany (Photo: author)

ian I (364-375), attesting to the Roman desire to retain a physical presence in the territory of their Alamannic clients.²⁸

The conditions imposed on Alamannic clients thus often were rather more demanding than those the Romans imposed on other barbarian clients, which usually involved no more than protestations of loyalty, provision of hostages, and the return of any Roman captives.²⁹ Indeed, it is difficult to think of any foreign territory that was so tightly bound to Rome. Alamannia was closer than a client-kingdom, almost a pseudo-province, a term that acknowledges on the one hand its former status as a full-fledged province and on the other its new quasi-independent status.³⁰ But this dynamic in fact was nothing new. Nearly two centuries earlier, Roman relations with some barbarian clients were so close, and the Roman govern-

²⁸ Amm. 17.1.11 (Julian): *Et dum nullus obsisteret, munimentum, quod in Alamannorum solo conditum Traianus, suo nomine voluit appellari, dudum violentius oppugnatum, tumultuario studio reparatum est; locatisque ibi pro tempore defensoribus, ex barbarorum visceribus alimenta congesta sunt*; Ausonius, Mosella 422-4: *Hostibus exactis Nicrum super et Lupodunum / et fontem ... Histri*; see HEUKEMES 1981.

²⁹ See, e.g., Amm. 17.12.11-20.

³⁰ See MATHISEN 2012.

ment so intrusive, that client kingdoms could be treated as virtual proxy provinces. Thus, Dio Cassius reported with regard to the Danubian campaigns of Marcus Aurelius (161-180), “Marcus gave audience to those who came as envoys from outside nations, but did not receive them all on the same footing; for this varied according as the several states were worthy to receive citizenship, or freedom from taxes, or perpetual or temporary exemption from the tribute, or even to enjoy permanent support”.³¹ These privileges, ranging from grants of citizenship to tax exemptions were precisely the kinds of privileges available to Roman provincials.

Recruitment of Client Peoples

Barbarian clients were key to Roman military recruitment.³² Zosimus, for example, reports that in 367, after settling affairs with the Alamanni, Valentinian “made provisions for the future security of the Celtic peoples”.³³ In the process of doing so, “having mustered as many young men as possible from among the barbarians near the Rhine and the peasants among the Roman peoples, he incorporated them among the legionary soldiers and made them so war ready that for nine years, none of those across the Rhine troubled the Roman cities”.³⁴ In this case, barbarians were recruited into the Roman military not just as temporary auxiliaries but also as members of the standing army.

At the same time, Alamannic client chieftains were appointed to high-ranking positions in the Roman army. In the mid 360s, the aforementioned Vadomarius continued to serve as a Roman client under Jovian (363-364) and Valens (364-378) as *Dux Foenicis*, in which capacity he may have commanded units of Alamannic auxiliaries.³⁵ And Valentinian named a certain Fraomarius as client king of the Bucinobantes, a separate warband of the Alamanni.³⁶ Fraomarius then, having been “transferred to Britain with the power of a Tribune, was put in command of a unit (*numerus*) of Alamanni that at that time was outstanding in its numbers and its strength”.³⁷ One

³¹ Cassius Dio, *Historia romana* 72.19.2 Translation from CARY 1924, 59.

³² See HOFFMANN 1978.

³³ Zos. *HN* 4.12.1, dated to 367.

³⁴ Zos. *HN* 4.12.1.

³⁵ Amm. 21.3.5: *Obtemperans Vadomarius haec et similia perpetrabat, ad perstringendum fallendumque miris modis ab aetatis primitiis callens, ut postea quoque ducatum per Phoenicem regens ostendit; Notitia dignitatum orientis 33: Dux Foenicis. Ala prima Alamannorum, Neia. Cohors quinta pacta Alamannorum, Onevatha; PLRE I, 928.*

³⁶ Amm 29.4.7: *Dum hostium disiecta frangeret timor, in Macriani locum Bucinobantibus, quae contra Mogontiacum gens est Alamanna, regem Fraomarium ordinavit.*

³⁷ Amm 29.4.7: *In Brittannos translatus potestate tribuni Alamannorum praefecerat numero, multitudine viribusque ea tempestate florenti.* In the *Notitia dignitatum*, a unit of

wonders whether these Alamanni comprised Fraomarius' own warband. Valentinian also "promoted Bitheridus and Hortarius, *primates* of this same nation, to military command".³⁸ These examples provide some rare occasions when insight is provided into the process by which so many barbarian chieftains came to be appointed to commands in the Roman army.

Other Alamanni also served as Roman military officers, although their status in their homeland is unknown.³⁹ In 354, for example, during an attempt by Constantius II to make a secret attack on the Alamanni, "a few from the same people, to whom the care of a senior military rank had been committed, informed their countrymen through secret messengers. Suspicion fell upon Latinus, Count of the Domestics; Agilo, Tribune of the Stable; and Scudilo, *Rector* ('Tribune') of the Scutarii, who then guarded the Republic as if they bore it in their right hands".⁴⁰ An investigation was only averted by the surrender of the Alamannic optimates, and Agilo went on to be promoted to *Magister peditum* ("Master of Foot") in 360.⁴¹ Five years later, a *Tribunus vacans* ("Tribune without Posting") Hariobaudus, apparently not the same as the Alamannic king, was sent as envoy to king Hortarius because "he was thoroughly familiar with barbarian speech", indicating that he was himself of barbarian origin.⁴²

Managing Barbarian Clients: General Principles

The institution of client rulership was one of the primary means by which Roman authority was projected beyond the frontiers, and these accounts of the Alamanni reveal a standard pattern for how the Roman government managed barbarian clients writ large. A military encounter in which the Romans were victorious would be followed by a ceremonial gathering in

Bucinobantes appears among the "Auxilia palatina", elite troops under the command of the eastern *Magister militum praesentalis* (*Not.dig.or.* 6).

³⁸ Amm 29.4.7: *Bitheridum vero et Hortarium nationis eiusdem primates item regere milites iussit*. Bitheridus: *PLRE* I, 162, s.v. "Bitheridus", "possibly a tribune"; otherwise unknown. Hortarius: *PLRE* I, 444, s.v. "Hortarius 2", "possibly a son of Hortarius 1".

³⁹ See STROHEKER 1963. Here, when attributing barbarian identity to Roman officers, only explicit statements in the sources are used, not assumptions made on the basis of nomenclature, as often done, e.g., in *PLRE*.

⁴⁰ Amm. 14.10.7-8: *Pauci ex eadem gente, quibus erat honoratoris militiae cura commissa, populares suos haec per nuntios docuissent occultos, ut quidam existimabant. infamabat autem haec suspicio Latinum domesticorum comitem et Agilonem tribunum stabuli atque Scudilonem Scutariorum rectorem, qui tunc ut dextris suis gestantes rem publicam colebantur*.

⁴¹ Amm. 20.2.5: *Agilone ad eius [sc. Ursicini] locum inmodico saltu promotus ex Gentilium et Scutariorum tribunus*.

⁴² Amm 18.2.2: *Hariobaudem vacantem tribunum ... ad Hortarium miserat regem iam pacatum ... sermonis barbarici perquam gnarus*.



Fig. 3. A surviving wall of the fort built in Alamannia at Lopodunum (Ladenburg) by Julian and then expanded ca. 370 by Valentinian I, probably with the assistance of the Alamanni (Photo: author)

which barbarian chieftains acknowledged their delicts. Their client status then was renewed contingent on the performance of certain standard *munera*, or duties, such as providing hostages and, in particular, returning any Roman captives. In the case of the Alamanni, the duties also extended to providing foodstuffs, building supplies, and labor. In most cases, moreover, agreements negotiated between emperors and barbarian chieftains were very personal, *mano a mano*, meaning that whenever there was a leadership change on either side, an agreement would need to be renewed. These clients, such as the Alamans Fraomarius and Vadomarius, then often appeared in Roman service, in the same leadership capacity that they exercised back home, exemplifying the intertwined relationships that united barbarian clients with Rome.

Roman agendas were further pursued by actively encouraging a fragmentation of barbarian leadership, which prevented the formation of larger coalitions, something that the Roman government feared but was profi-



Fig. 4. Prestigious items of jewelry, such as this elaborate gold and onyx fibula from the Ostrovany (Slovakia) Hoard, were lavished on barbarian clients. Now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Photo: author)

cient at preventing.⁴³ Peoples such as the Alamanni, not to mention the Franks and Goths, actually comprised many smaller groups let by individual chieftains (referred to variously as *reges*, *regales*, *reguli*,⁴⁴ *subreguli*,

⁴³ For a threat from coalitions of Franks, Alamanni, and Goths as of the third century, see, e.g., MAIER 2018.

⁴⁴ See FANNING 2011.

duces,⁴⁵ *optimates*) who might have represented no more than a single *pagus*. Indeed, the great variety in the nomenclature indicates the largely ad hoc nature of these local leaders.

Barbarian clients were kept tractable by the provision of subsidies, gifts, and rewards; the use of military force to keep barbarian clients in line was a last resort. Thus, Tacitus reports that the Germans “rarely are assisted with our arms, more often with money”.⁴⁶ Cassius Dio notes that Domitian (81-96) “had given large sums of money to Decebalus [...] and had promised to keep on giving large sums in the future”.⁴⁷ And, regarding Hadrian (117-138), Dio relates, “He lived for the most part at peace with foreign nations; for as they were themselves not only free from Roman aggression but received money besides, they made no uprising”.⁴⁸ The *Augustan History* adds, “He gave much to many kings; he even purchased peace from some”. Marcus Aurelius likewise made deals with barbarian clients: Dio also reports, “The Astingi, led by their chieftains Raüs and Raptus, came into Dacia with their entire households, hoping to secure both money and land in return for their alliance. They received from Marcus both money and the privilege of asking for land should they succeed in inflicting some injury upon those who then were fighting against him”.⁴⁹

This last account shows how emperors were adept at using barbarian clients to restrain other yet more problematic barbarian chieftains. Dio also recounted, “Marcus Antoninus remained in Pannonia in order to give audience to the embassies of the barbarians. Some of them, under the leadership of Battarius, a boy twelve years old, promised an alliance; these received a gift of money and succeeded in restraining Tarbus, a neighbouring chieftain, who had come into Dacia and was demanding money and threatening to make war if he should fail to get it”.⁵⁰

In the third century, barbarian peoples continued to importune emperors for subsidies. When Caracalla was campaigning on the upper Rhine in 213, Dio recounts, “Many also of the people living near the mouths of the Albis [Elbe] sent envoys to him asking for his friendship, though their real purpose was to get money. Even though the terms proposed were contrary to their wishes, yet when they saw the gold pieces they were captivated”.⁵¹

⁴⁵ As noted by Gregory of Tours, *DLH* 2.9: *Nam cum multa de eis Sulpicii Alexandri narret Historia, non tamen regem primum eorum ullatenus nominat, sed duces eos habuisse dicit.*

⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Germania* 42: *Raro armis nostris, saepius pecunia iuvantur.*

⁴⁷ Cass. Dio, *Hist.Rom.* 67.7; tr. CARY 1924, 8.333.

⁴⁸ *HA* ‘Hadrian’ 17.10: *Regibus multis plurimum detulit, a plerisque vero etiam pacem redemit;* Cass. Dio, *Hist.Rom.* 69.9.5.

⁴⁹ Cass. Dio, *Hist.Rom.* 72.12.1; tr. CARY 1924, 9.15.

⁵⁰ Cass. Dio, *Hist.Rom.* 72.11.1; tr. CARY 1924, 9.13.

⁵¹ Cass. Dio, *Hist.Rom.* 78.14.3; tr. CARY 1924, 9.315.

By the middle of the century, the Goths were receiving annual stipends. According to Peter the Patrician, ca. 240, the Carpi “envied the subsidies paid annually to the Goths”,⁵² and the Gothic historian Jordanes notes, “Although they lived far away under their own kings, nevertheless they were allied to the Roman Republic and received annual gifts”.⁵³ Eusebius of Caesarea likewise acknowledged that in the third century, “the emperors had actually rendered tribute to the Scythians [Goths] by an annual payment”.⁵⁴ Very often, moreover, the personal tie between a barbarian client and an emperor was cemented by the provision of lavish gifts, ranging from massive gold medallions to elaborate golden fibulae (Fig. 4).⁵⁵

The failure to provide sufficient rewards could lead to pushback from barbarian chieftains. In 358, a reduction in the subsidies paid to the Alamanni by Julian had unfortunate but not unexpected consequences: “The Alamanni broke through the frontier of Germany, aroused to hostility solely for this reason: when their legates were sent to the court and they ought to have been offered fixed and established subsidies according to custom, lesser and baser ones were bestowed”.⁵⁶ Regardless of how one spun the nature and significance of the subsidies, Roman emperors clearly saw large regular payments as an effective means of influencing client rulers in *barbaricum* and as a sound alternative to risking the use of military force.

Barbarian clients thus had an established place in the Roman military, administrative, and social system. But there always was give-and-take, an underlying tension, between the Roman government and its barbarian clients. The clients constantly attempted to get better deals, or resented it when subsidies were not forthcoming. They continually tested the limits of the relationship to see how far they could go before they elicited a government response. When diplomacy failed as a means of extracting suitable remuneration for their services, the only means that barbarian clients had of making up the difference was to conduct raids into the Roman Empire. But that was all part of the standardized ritual performance of bilateral, one-on-one creations or renewals of clientship ties between individual chieftains and Roman emperors that spawned a barbarian leadership struc-

⁵² Peter the Patrician fr.170 = fr.8 in *FHG* 4.186-187.

⁵³ Jordanes, *Getica* 16 (89): *Quamvis remoti sub regibus viverent suis, rei publicae tamen Romanae foederati erant et annua munera percipiebant.*

⁵⁴ Eus. *Vit. Const.* 4.5.

⁵⁵ Note BURSCHÉ 2000.

⁵⁶ Amm. 26.5.7: *Alamanni enim perrupere Germaniae limites, hac ex causa solito infestius moti. cum legatis eorum missis ad comitatum certa et praestituta ex more munera praebere deberent, minora et vilia sunt adtributa, quae illi suscepta furenter agentes ut indignissima proiecere.*

ture that by the late fourth century had gained a life of its own and was intimately intertwined with the Roman government.⁵⁷

Barbarian warlords, as the leaders of autonomous mercenary brigades seeking service with the Roman military, were an integral and accepted part of the Roman military establishment. But this was a tradition of very long standing, and was not seen as anything to fear by the Roman government. Indeed, it was something to be sought and perpetuated. The leaders of barbarian contingents had an accepted place at the Roman military table. They were not “raiders”, “invaders”, or “the others”, but they were part of “us”.

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JEROEN W.P. WIJNENDAELE

Perfidious Rome and Its Barbarian Victims

This essay responds to Alexander Demandt's central contention that *die grenznahen Germanen bildeten eine dauernde Bedrohung für das Reich* (=“the neighbouring Germanic peoples posed an enduring threat to the Empire”). It will especially zoom in on the claim that *[w]enn die römisch-germanischen Grenz- und Friedensverträge ebenso oft wie geschlossen auch gebrochen wurden, war das zumeist die Schuld der Germanen* (=“If Roman-Germanic border and peace treaties were broken as often as they were struck, it was mostly the fault of the Germanic peoples”).¹ It will focus primarily on two cases: the peoples bordering the Danube and Rhine ‘outside the Empire’ from Maximian to the death of Theodosius I (ca. 285-395), and the Goths ‘inside the Empire’ from Valens to Valentinian III (ca. 365-455). The present author will argue the opposite, demonstrating that from the late third to the early fifth century the Roman Empire was just as much – if not even more – at fault for break-downs in relations with its barbarian neighbours.

Keywords: barbarians / frontiers / Goths / Late Roman Empire / treaties

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The Eternal Yet Ever Evolving Barbarian

Alexander Demandt rightly points out the importance of borders, not just in the Ancient World, but also in our contemporary one.² Borders imply neighbours. And, then, as now, one rarely can choose the latter. One can, however, choose *how* to interact with neighbours. A popular saying among contemporary Germanic-speaking descendants of the Franks in the Low

¹ DEMANDT, above, p. 37 and 40.

² The late Mike Clover once told me that “disagreement is the spice of life”. This essay is very much written in this spirit, without forgetting the intellectual debt the scholarly community owes to Professor Demandt, for his myriad studies that have advanced the field of Late Antiquity over more than half a century now. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Universities of Bonn and Düsseldorf and at the Danish Institute in Rome, which led to stimulating debates with the audiences. I also wish to thank Alexander Sarantis, Danuta Shanzer, and Conor Whately for their astute feedback on the current article.

Countries, maintains that *goede afspraken maken goede vrienden* (= “good agreements make for good friends”). The crux here is that agreements matter, and for agreements to matter, both participants have to honour them. The treacherousness of “the barbarian” was a common trope in Late Antique authors. Latin panegyrics for Tetrarchic and Constantinian emperors residing in Trier, repeatedly lambasted neighbouring Frankish communities for their faithlessness.³ This was not an exclusively Frankish trait. Ammianus remarks how three Alamannic *reges*, in the aftermath of Julian’s victory at Strasbourg in 357, struck a treaty with the Empire and actually maintained its terms out of fear, “despite their treacherous disposition”.⁴ Similarly, a fragment attributed to Eunapius’ contemporary history, describes how leaders of the Goths deserted to the Romans in the early years of Theodosius I’s reign. Yet among these, there were several who allegedly had sworn “a most unholy [oath] that went beyond the normal savagery of the barbarians [to] use every treacherous device to harm [the Romans] who had taken them in”.⁵ Writing a century-and-a-half later, Procopius drew attention to the exemplary conduct of the Herulic commander Pharas by pointing out that he was energetic, serious, and virtuous in every way, although for his people “it is hard not to be treacherous and drunk”.⁶

The remarkable thing about attributing faithlessness to barbarians, whether in general or in a specific context, was that the trait had not always been part and parcel of the standard repertoire of ethnographic clichés deployed by Graeco-Roman authors. The concept of the ‘barbarian’, and its significance, constantly evolved from the hapax βαρβαρόφωνος in Homer’s *Iliad* to denote the gobbledygook of the Carians, to Tacitus’ eventual dedication of an entire treatise to the peoples of *Germania*.⁷ Attitudes could vary wildly among individual authors. Plutarch went as far as to denounce Herodotos as a φιλοβάρβαρος for being too sympathetic towards barbarians (in this case the Persians).⁸ Yet a fellow *Graecus*, Ammianus Marcellinus, had plenty to say about all kinds of barbarians, but never designated the Persians as such.⁹ After the transformation of the Roman Empire in the third century, barbarian treachery increasingly became an ingredient that Roman authors sprinkled into their accounts of their neighbours across the border. But when we leave individual authors’ discourses and imperial

³ E.g. *Pan. Lat.* 10.11.4; 7.4.2; 6.11.4.

⁴ *Amm.* 17.1.13.

⁵ *Eun. Fr.* 59 (BLOCKLEY 1983).

⁶ *Procop. Bell.* 4.4.29–30.

⁷ ISAAC 2014.

⁸ *Plut. Herod. Malign.* 857a.

⁹ DRIJVERS 2011, 70.

propaganda aside, how treacherous were these neighbours in practice? And more importantly: how dangerous were they?

Barbarians as the Punching Bags of the Late Roman Empire

Together with Alamanni and Goths, the Franks loom large in scholarship on the ‘crisis of the third century’.¹⁰ They conducted some of the most spectacular raids on Roman provinces, as Professor Demandt points out: their alleged piracy affected the Aegean, Sicily, and North Africa. Yet we have to wait until the Tetrarchy to get a clearer picture of their interactions with the Empire. Panegyrics written for Maximian, Constantius I, and Constantine I, reveal that there was no such thing as a unified Frankish people, but rather a collection of individual communities, such as (Ch)Attuatari, Bructeri, Chamavi, Salians, and so on. The record of the Tetrarchic and Constantinian emperors until 350 is highly consistent: every raid that Franks dared to undertake on Roman soil, met with brutal reprisals. These wars were certainly not confined to within Roman borders (“fand längst nahezu ausschließlich innerhalb der Reichsgrenzen statt.”) From Maximian in 286 to Arbogastes in 390, imperial armies regularly conducted campaigns across the Rhine. Accounts of such special operations leave little to the imagination: villages were burned down, cattle and people (including women and children) slaughtered, and survivors deported to Gaul.¹¹ One panegyric went so far as to celebrate how these raids provided valuable human resources for the Empire: “the Franks, admitted to our laws, have cultivated the empty fields of the Arvii and the Treveri, so now through [Constantius I’s] victories, ... whatever land remained abandoned in the territory of [Amiens, Beauvais, Troyes, and Langres] turns green again under the cultivation by the barbarian”.¹² If one wishes to assess the threat the Franks posed from the time of the Tetrarchy to that of Theodosius, then the tally is less than impressive: only once did they ever defeat an imperial army, and that was during Magnus Maximus’ civil war of 388 when some of his Gallic troops ran into an ambush across the Rhine.¹³

This should serve as a needed reminder that the damage the Late Roman Empire was able to inflict on Transrhenan or Transdanubian communities was far greater than what it suffered at barbarian hands. Indeed, it

¹⁰ For the Alamanni see Ralph W. MATHISEN’s contribution in this collection.

¹¹ E.g. *Pan. Lat.* 8.2.1; *Amm.* 16.11.9.

¹² *Pan. Lat.* 8.21.1.

¹³ Greg. Tur. *DLH* 2.9 (based on the contemporary history of Sulpicius Alexander). On this Frankish victory, see WIJNENDAELE 2022, 217-218. DRINKWATER (2007) makes the most exhaustive case for the same lack of threat the Alamanni represented to the Late Roman Empire.

could take an entire generation before raids were recorded again, probably because affected communities needed that much time to recover. When Valens went to war with the Goths in the later 360s, he did so because they had sent auxiliaries to help the usurper Procopius. In their defense, however, the Goths claimed that Procopius had presented himself as a legitimate emperor because of his Constantinian credentials.¹⁴ It is significant that this was the very first time the Goths appeared in the context of a conflict in Ammianus' surviving narrative, despite his having covered the events of the previous twelve years. There would have been ample opportunities to raid Thrace during or after the civil wars between Constantius II and Magnentius (as had happened on the Rhine frontier), or during the showdown between Constantius II and Julian. Even as late as the early 360s, the Goths had probably still not fully recovered from the defeat inflicted and treaty imposed on them by Constantine in 332. Another noteworthy feature is that nearly every Late Roman emperor, from the Tetrarchs to Theodosius, tried to bolster his regime in its early stages through victories over barbarians. The reasons for this could be flimsy at best, and the results mixed, as evidenced by Valens' first Gothic wars, which yielded hardly any victories on the battlefield and ended in a truce (as noted by Professor Demandt). Yet Gratian exploited a raid by the Alamannic Lentienses in 378, to conduct an aggressive campaign on their home territories in order to win laurels.¹⁵ As Ammianus makes clear, this delay would contribute dramatically to Valens' defeat.¹⁶ But for a very young and new emperor such as Gratian, it was an opportunity too tempting not to exploit. Here as well we should note that the Lentienses had not been heard of since 354, after being dealt with by Constantius II.¹⁷ And they must have been properly dealt with, because they did not even contribute forces to the grand Alamannic coalition Julian faced three years later at Strasbourg. Hence the peoples of *Barbaricum* served as punching bags, which new and aspiring emperors could batter as initiatory practice.

Furthermore, emperors were not above arbitrary behaviour in dealing with individual communities of 'Goths', 'Franks' or 'Alamanni'. When Julian campaigned in Gaul, he briefly resided in Cologne and immediately came to a peaceful agreement with the neighbouring Frankish kings.¹⁸ However, he was later approached by envoys of Salian Franks, who had

¹⁴ It is interesting that the Goths had also supported Licinius during his final stance against Constantine (Anon. Vales. I.5.27). While Licinius was later branded a usurper, he was unquestionably an emperor who had been legitimately appointed by the senior Augustus Galerius.

¹⁵ Amm. 31.10. Discussed by SHANZER, below, pp. 169-171.

¹⁶ DRIJVERS & TEITLER 2019.

¹⁷ Amm. 15.4.

¹⁸ Amm. 16.3.

settled in Toxandria and now also asked the emperor to come to a peaceful agreement.¹⁹ As Professor Demandt acknowledges, Julian pretended to accept this proposal only to have his cavalry subsequently charge into the Salians until they were brutally subdued. Why the Salians were less worthy of Julian's magnanimity than the transrhenan Franks in the vicinity of Cologne is unclear. It is here that we are justified in asking whether treachery was just as much a standard weapon in the empire's arsenal for dealing with its neighbours. Sometimes, as we shall see, Romans even admitted as much.

When a group of Saxons raided northern Gaul in 370, the regional commander Nannienus first tried halting them in battle, but eventually came to a parley.²⁰ It was agreed that the Saxons could retreat on condition that they supplied recruits for the Imperial army. After this exchange, however, Nannienus organized an ambush – that nearly went awry – but he eventually succeeded in slaughtering the rest of the Saxon host. Ammianus himself admitted that this entire affair could have “been condemned as treacherous and hateful”, but concluded that it would have been a shame not to exploit the opportunity. None other than Julian, when delivering his first panegyric for Constantius II, claimed that Constantine I had worked towards peace with neighbouring barbarian communities because he was concerned about the youth of his sons. Yet he then sowed strife among them so they would wage war upon one another.²¹ To these verdicts, we could add other examples of the Empire pre-emptively orchestrating the elimination of barbarian leaders, such as Julian having the Alamannic *rex* Vadomarius abducted, or the Imperial commander Marcellianus having the Quadian king Gabinius assassinated. Both events took place during banquets in times of peace.²² There is a correlation here that is too neat to be coincidence: precisely when Roman authors started attributing more and more perfidy to barbarians, Roman leaders also increased their own use of subterfuge when dealing with aforesaid peoples.²³ It would be naïve to suppose that the peoples of *Barbaricum* were unaware of this. If anything, the case of the Goths inside the Empire suggests that it was best to be vigilant when dealing with Imperial authorities.

¹⁹ Amm. 17.8. For the mechanisms of such ‘agreements’, see Ralph W. MATHISEN’s contribution in this collection.

²⁰ Amm. 28.5.1-7.

²¹ Jul. *Orat.* I.12-13.

²² LEE 2009 for more cases and analysis.

²³ For a similar analysis of sixth-century interactions between the Empire and barbarians, see SARANTIS 2018. Tang China, which has recently been incorporated in global studies of Late Antiquity, also witnessed the same dichotomy between discourse and praxis, see YANG 2013.

The Aquitanian Goths: From Betrayal to Betrayal to People

There is no need – nor space – to reiterate the road from Adrianople in the late 370s to Aquitaine in the late 410s, that led to the accidental creation of a regional army with substantial political autonomy that became known by the sixth century as ‘the Visigoths’. It was a tragedy, at times even a farce, that could have been avoided at many junctures. Let us look instead at various moments when it was the Empire that either violated agreements with Gothic groups, or deceived them. Between 376 and 410, the original Gothic communities of 376 and those subsequently associated with their leaders suffered indignity after indignity, betrayal after betrayal. The most conspicuous and extreme manifestation of this were, as we shall see, the massacres of 378 in *Oriens*, 400 in Constantinople, and 408 in Italy. Just as before, in all of this we should remember that we only hear the Roman perspective – Jordanes hardly counts as an authentic Gothic voice, let alone a contemporary one.

Ammianus’ final book highlights several incidents that show that Imperial authorities were either corrupt or incompetent, if not both, in their dealing with the Goths who had requested asylum in 376.²⁴ The great historian loathed the Goths, but even he disapproved of the inadequate provisioning of the new recruits, with the damning allegation that they were forced to sell their own children into slavery in return for dogs as food.²⁵ When the Goths finally revolted, it happened after the regional commander Lupicinus had ordered the bodyguards of two Gothic leaders whom he had invited for a dinner to be murdered.²⁶ Again it speaks volumes about Roman ineptitude that they managed to drive Goths serving in the Imperial army to defect to the cause of the rebels, such as the troops of Colias and Sueridus at Adrianople, despite the fact that they had not originally been affiliated with them.²⁷ Yet on the very eve of the battle of Adrianople, Fritigern sought to negotiate an agreement with Valens.²⁸ It was not to be, and the result was an omnishambles of epic proportions.

It is telling, however, that it was not with Adrianople that Ammianus decided to end his history. His final passage recounts how Julius (*magister*

²⁴ Much harder to gauge is the question whether those Goths who were allowed to cross the Danube should have been disarmed (Eunap. *Fr.* 42). This was standard practice for surrendered barbarians. But in this case the sheer scale of the operation, combined with the fact that those Goths would soon depart for Oriens to fight the Persians, may have inspired local Imperial commanders to let the matter rest. This certainly added a lethal ingredient to an already volatile cocktail once the abuse kicked in.

²⁵ Amm. 31.4.11.

²⁶ Amm. 31.5.6

²⁷ Amm. 31.6.

²⁸ Amm. 31.12.8

militum per Orientem) sent messengers to all the local commanders under his jurisdiction when news came to him of the defeat at Adrianople.²⁹ On one and the same day, they were to gather all their Gothic recruits under the pretext of having their salaries paid. Once these had gathered from everywhere, they were slaughtered on the spot. Ammianus himself made little effort to conceal his approval and saw this slaughter as the salvation of the eastern provinces. The most striking aspect of this incident, however, is that these were not adult soldiers, but young prisoners of war who had been retained as hostages.³⁰ On the eastern side of the Taurus Mountains, they could not possibly have posed a threat, let alone supported the Gothic rebels in Thrace. That day of the long knives was nothing less than pure revenge for the Roman defeat. A similar incident may have occurred in 386. A few sources report how the *magister militum* Promotus scored a victory over Goths under the command of a certain Odetheus.³¹ Yet it happened at a river crossing, in a context where it is unclear whether Odetheus' men would have been assembled for a *receptio* as future recruits and run into an organized massacre, rather than attempting a straightforward raid.³²

It is important here to remind ourselves that this did not mean that Emperors – at least the more astute ones – were hellbent on trying to eradicate every Goth on Imperial soil. Yet many authors believed that they should. The Goths who remained in Eastern Roman service contributed decisively to Theodosius' victory over Eugenius at the Frigidus in 394, yet suffered severe casualties in the process. Orosius infamously claimed that the emperor had needlessly expended 10,000 of them as, in effect, ballista-folder on the first day's assaults against Arbogastes's defenses, thus ensuring a double victory for the Empire.³³ As is often the case, we should think twice before believing Orosius. Among those left on the battlefield will have been many veterans of Adrianople, good soldiers whom Theodosius did not wish to squander but had employed to break his opponent's battle-formation. Even his own commander Bacurius had gone down with them.³⁴ Yet Orosius' sentiments were widely shared by contemporary peers. They resonate in Synesius' writings about "solving" the Gothic question that dominated Constantinopolitan politics in the late 390s, and they are fundamental for understanding Alaric's constraints.

²⁹ Amm. 31.16.8.

³⁰ SPEIDEL 1998.

³¹ Claud. *IV cons. Hon.*, 619-637; Zos. IV.35.1.

³² BURNS 1994, 89-91.

³³ Oros. 7.5.19. Not much credence should be given to the number, given Orosius uses it liberally as a number for war-casualties throughout his history (e.g. 3.16.7; 4.20.15; 5.20.8; 5.23.11).

³⁴ Zos. 5.38.3.

There is no need to play devil's advocate when analyzing Alaric's career, which was marked by a willingness to use (the threat) of violence to advance his goals. Whether it was the inhabitants of the Greek provinces in 395-397, or various Italic communities in 408-410, ordinary people suffered the consequences of his warlordism. Yet Alaric also functioned as the champion of men who had shed their blood in the service of the Empire. How should we conceive of the Goths following Alaric, some of whom eventually settled in Aquitaine? Professor Demandt refers to such men as mercenaries, and this is definitely an advance over older visions of wandering or marauding tribes in a quest to carve out kingdoms. Yet the 'mercenary' label obscures more than it explains. Mercenaries were a reality in Antiquity, especially during the Classical Greek and Hellenistic eras when there were many competing city-states, kingdoms, and even empires to whom soldiers-of-fortune could sell their services.³⁵ It is much harder to discern true forms of mercenaries in Late Antiquity. Alaric clearly sought gainful (i.e. permanent) employment for himself and his men within the regular forces of the Empire. A conspicuous exception may be the Huns in Europe, who are noted for supporting various causes and then withdrawing after being paid, before Attila's consolidation of autocracy.³⁶

Christine Delaplace suggests in her seminal account on the Gothic *regnum* of Aquitaine, that as far as the Empire was concerned, the Goths never constituted an independent nation on Roman soil.³⁷ Though she is also willing to use labels such as *condottieri* and 'mercenaries', a far more useful analogy she offers for understanding the interaction between Gothic leaders and Imperial courts, is that of the Roman Republic and the Italic *socii* (the latter relationship rightly categorized by Professor Demandt as a hegemonic symmachy). From the 380s to the 470s, the Goths essentially acted as allies and clients of a government that needed their military aid, but was generally unwilling to grant them the status that would have allowed them to participate in affairs of state. This becomes abundantly clear in Alaric's negotiations with Honorius (408-410), a rare case where the sources delineate various conditions, and where the former was much more concerned with becoming *magister militum* than with gaining land to farm. To pursue this line of thought further, it is much more profitable to regard the military conflicts between the western Roman government and

³⁵ TRUNDLE 2004; ROP 2019.

³⁶ Examples include the Hunnic leader Uldin who eliminated Gainas and his last supporters for Constantinople ca. 400 (Zos. 5.22.1-3) and whose services were requested by Stilicho in the war against Radagaisus in 406 (Oros. 7.37.12). Similarly, Aëtius hired Hunnic mercenaries for the cause of the usurper Ioannes in 425. The majority of these he later sent back to their lands across the Danube, after striking a deal with the Eastern Roman command that had brought down Ioannes (Philost. *HE* 12.14).

³⁷ DELAPLACE 2015.

the various *regna* in Gaul, Spain, and Africa during the fifth century, as provincial civil wars (*pace* Henning Börm) rather than as wars against external invaders.³⁸ But just as at Adrianople, it did not have to come to this.

When Alaric revolted in 395, he was an officer (of unclear rank but high enough that he believed it sufficed for eventual promotion to MVM), using the death of Theodosius I as an opportunity to exploit the grievances of several Gothic regiments that had suffered grave losses at the Frigidus the previous year. The looting they carried out in Thessaly has often been regarded as typical barbarian conduct. But one could go back as far as the mutiny of the Pannonian legions, at the time of Augustus' death in 14, to see similar behaviour by troops in similar circumstances.³⁹ Throughout the following years, we should also remember that Alaric's course was not the only path for Goths, let alone the default one, as evidenced by the careers of Fravitta, Modares, and Munderic, who all continued to serve in the Imperial army. At times, such as between 397 and 400 in the East and again between 403 (or 405 at the latest) and 408 in the West, Alaric too held a regular Imperial command.⁴⁰ But, just as it is important not to forget that Alaric's rise to power was born out of violence, we should be equally mindful of the Imperial violence that caused him to cease to be cooperative and loyal. While no source explains why Alaric left his eastern command and marched on Italy in 401, his decision was probably linked to the pogroms unleashed on Goths in Constantinople a year earlier. At its nadir, a church was torched where Goths had sought sanctuary. The targeted Goths were soldiers, and their families related to the aspiring generalissimo Gainas (at that point not yet a renegade).⁴¹ In the fallout from Gainas' conflict – resolved *nota bene* by the Goth Fravitta – Alaric may have either lost his command, or been subject to immense pressure by his followers to find a better deal elsewhere.

Such dynamics are explicitly recorded in 408, when the cabal at Honorius' court that brought down Stilicho, organized across Italy a similar massacre of families belonging to his barbarian auxiliaries.⁴² The surviving soldiers, justifiably incensed flocked *en masse* to Alaric's banner. It is, however, often forgotten that, despite intense pressure from his new troops, Alaric at this point petitioned Honorius' court to keep the peace by simply honouring the agreements Stilicho had made with him.⁴³ Only when the junta rejected this, ridiculously believing they had taken back control,

³⁸ BÖRM 2017.

³⁹ Tacit. *Ann.* 1.16-30.

⁴⁰ For Alaric's imperial commands, see *PLRE* 2: 'Alaricus 1', 44-46.

⁴¹ CAMERON & LONG 1993, chapter 6.

⁴² WIJNENDAELE 2018a, 270-272.

⁴³ Zos. 5.36.1-2.

did Alaric cast the die. He crossed into Italy with his forces, and mayhem ensued. No longer on the Empire's payroll, Alaric once again turned to extorting and pillaging local towns to supply his followers. Yet for a year-and-a-half, he kept negotiating in vain with Honorius' government to find a solution. During his final attempt to come to a diplomatic solution he was ambushed by Sarus, the nemesis of his brother-in-law Athaulf. Given the Empire's penchant for underhand tactics, Honorius' court may have orchestrated this attempt to assassinate Alaric.⁴⁴ Only then was Rome finally sacked in 410. It would take another decade till an agreement was finally reached that saw the core of Alaric's host settled in Aquitaine.

Yet Gothic misgivings about Imperial authorities never went away. Consider Athaulf's perspective when he finally pledged his sword to Honorius' cause in 413, and had the Gallic usurpers Jovinus and Sebastianus crushed in exchange for food to feed his people.⁴⁵ The *magister militum* Constantius was unable to meet his end of the bargain, however, because his rival Heraclianus thwarted the delivery of African grain.⁴⁶ Constantius could hardly be blamed for this, yet Athaulf must have interpreted it as the umpteenth example of how the Empire could never be fully trusted. Similar tensions may explain Gothic attitudes, when in 422 the *magister militum* Castinus campaigned against the Vandals in Spain. Castinus' army was supported by Gothic auxiliaries, and managed to have the Vandals surrounded, starved into submission, and reduced to pleading for surrender. Yet Castinus insisted on giving battle regardless, which prompted the Gothic auxiliaries to desert.⁴⁷ They may have honestly wondered how wise it was to follow a man who had no interest in letting other barbarians survive who were prepared to surrender. Castinus was resoundingly defeated, which shattered Constantius III's fragile restoration of Imperial security in Spain.⁴⁸ Unlike the Goths, who received an imperially sanctioned settlement in Aquitaine, the Vandals had been on the receiving end of no fewer than three Imperial campaigns in the course of five years (at least one of which had decimated Alani and Siling Vandals). Small wonder they radicalized to such an extent that they adopted a militant brand of Arianism, allowing them to commandeer the wealth of Catholic bishops.⁴⁹ Geiseric

⁴⁴ WIJNENDAELE 2019, 479-484.

⁴⁵ Olympiod. *Fr.* 22 (BLOCKLEY 1983).

⁴⁶ WIJNENDAELE 2017, 146-147.

⁴⁷ Hyd. 69 [77 BURGESS 1993].

⁴⁸ WIJNENDAELE 2015, 43-46; STEINACHER 2017, 78-83; ROBERTO 2020, 45-49.

⁴⁹ For the suggestion of a new Vandal 'identity', and conversion to Arianism, as a result of Imperial-Gothic campaigns in Spain during the later 410s, see MODÉRAN 2014, 86-91.

took the fight to Africa where he used every future opportunity to exploit western Roman weakness to ensure the survival of his people.⁵⁰

Internal Borders and the Unravelling of Empire

For the rest of the fifth century, Aquitanian Goths would lend troops for the western Roman cause, or against it, depending on which powerbroker was steering the imperial government. They were keenly aware that they should never let their guard down. The Burgundians, who in 413 had received permission to settle along the Rhine, were nearly exterminated by Aëtius and his Hunnic allies in the mid-430s.⁵¹ This was probably as recompense to Attila and Bleda, who had sponsored Aëtius' return to power at Ravenna in 433, and who had lost their uncle Octar to the Burgundians in 430.⁵² The Aquitanian Goths resisted similar attempts by Aëtius' subordinate Litorius, who also used Hunnic mercenaries to fight his way to Toulouse, where he was ignominiously captured and died. At this point, Professor Demandt is right that, since the Imperial West had no secure geographical borders in the fifth century, it had reached its own temporal limit.⁵³ The presence of various armed communities with considerable autonomy inside the Transalpine provinces, taxed the Imperial West's energies to enforce borders on them from Italy – especially once Geiseric moved his forces to the Maghreb and conquered Africa Proconsularis. And yet the peoples living inside the Western Empire in the fifth century were not the same as those living across the Rhine before 405, or across the Danube before 375. They were products of Late Roman Imperialism, moulded by processes of violence, deception and exploitation. When they were finally settled, they became a new provincial military elite, who in effect functioned as the *Socii* of the Fifth Century Imperial West, supplying it with troops, but without enjoying political equity. It was a system that need not necessarily have led to the end of empire in the West. Indeed, at its finest hour in 451 it halted Attila – hitherto *Invictus* – during his invasion of Gaul, in the most momentous land battle of that century which saw communities pitted against one another all the way from Armorica to Crimea.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ CLOVER (1966) demonstrated that Geiseric's aggressive foreign policy was primarily devoted to the survival of his *regnum*. In both this study and the previously mentioned one of Modéran, we still feel the loss of these scholars and their finalized book-projects.

⁵¹ Prosper *s.a.* 435.2.

⁵² Socrat. *HE* 7.30.6.

⁵³ "Seit das Reich im 5. Jahrhundert keine sichere räumliche Grenze mehr besaß, war seine zeitliche Grenze erreicht." DEMANDT, above, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Jord. *Get.* 191.

Here I wish to conclude and add an alternative to professor Demandt's thesis. Just as Alaric's career would have been impossible without the Cold War between the powerbrokers of Arcadius and Honorius' courts, so too I believe a range of other internal factors contributed decisively to the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire: institutionalized child-emperorship, the warlordism of western Roman officers, and an extremely rich senatorial aristocracy that shamelessly refused to contribute to the taxation necessary to support its own army.⁵⁵ Without these three elements, one can ask whether there would have been any internal borders at all that Constantius III had to impose on the settlements of ca. 420, let alone those eventually resulting in the *Regna* of Gaul, Spain, and Africa. Could it be that the Western Empire mainly had itself to blame for its own demise?

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⁵⁵ WIJNENDAELE 2018b.

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SALVATORE LICCARDO

Corsi e ricorsi storici or Why We Can't Stop Obsessing About the Fall of Rome

By presenting a 'traditional' interpretation of the role of barbarians and imperial borders, the lecture of Alexander Demandt entitled "Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik" provides a learned, attractive, and quite convincing narrative of the fall of the Roman Empire. My contribution expands on a few aspects of Demandt's lecture and aims to highlight how the historian's interpretation of the fall of Rome fits within the contemporary academic and public debates about borders and migration.

Keywords: the fall of Rome / Late Antiquity / barbarian migrations / historiography / uses of the past

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Alexander Demandt is one of the most influential late antique historians of the last forty years.¹ In his short but dense essay, Demandt showcases his profound understanding of the sources and his undeniable capacity to formulate an argument in a captivating manner, a quality not always shared by many of his colleagues.

In the last fifty years² a widespread and renewed interest in Late Antiquity³ has recognized the period as an independent subject of historical research and challenged once dominant interpretations that characterized it as culturally stagnant, economically depressed, and politically in disarray. Today, even though historians are far from reaching an agreement on how traumatic the transition between the Roman and Medieval world was, or even from establishing when and where Late Antiquity started and ended, the implementation and further refining of old and new research methods,

¹ I wish to thank Danuta Shanzer for her invaluable feedback and the members of her *Privatissimum* for their advice.

² A most influential publication for the following debates was Peter Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity*, BROWN 1971.

³ A scholarly phenomenon defined as an 'esplosione di tardoantico' in GIARDINA 1999.

as well the intensive collaboration of experts across national and disciplinary boundaries, have greatly improved our understanding of this period.

In the on-going debate between historians who see Late Antiquity mostly in terms of ‘transformation’ and ‘change’, and those who cling to the analytical categories of ‘decline and fall’, Alexander Demandt has played a key role, especially when it comes to understanding the political events and institutional developments. He clearly enters the fray on the side of ‘decline and fall’ by highlighting the inability of the Roman authorities to adapt their policies to the new socio-economic circumstances they faced and by stressing the importance of phenomena of a military nature, such as the ‘barbarization’ of the Roman army, the creation of a ‘military nobility’,⁴ and the development of ‘personal armies’ in defiance of the Roman imperial aspiration to a monopoly of violence.

The paper in question, the written version of a lecture that was to have been delivered at the ÖAW in Vienna in December 2, 2021, is another work in which Demandt demonstrates his mastery of narrative. By presenting the fall of the Western Roman Empire as an event that developed in a linear pattern, he offers a clear, almost reassuringly inevitable explanation. He sketches the main factors behind this political collapse using a simple dichotomy of Rome versus barbarians. Thus, he offers a grand narrative, a *Meistererzählung* of events,⁵ that abounds with historical data and provides a generally plausible answer both for scholars and for the general public as to how and why Rome fell.

In this response, I will focus on a few aspects of Demandt’s lecture that merit particular attention and might spark further discussion. Overall, my take is that the main strength of this paper, how it explains the end of the Roman Empire in a clear and persuasive manner, is simultaneously its main weakness. First, as a written version of a lecture, the text does not contain the caveats that a different format would have allowed. For instance, the ethnonym ‘*Germanen*’ is used as a collective term for describing what are in fact very different groups of barbarians. With this terminology the lecture makes the subject matter accessible, but risks papering over the complexity of the events.⁶

Second, Demandt’s analysis seems to imply that morality, or better, the lack thereof, played a significant role in the outcome of historical processes. Thus, the negative impact of wealth on the military preparedness of the Romans and the alleged proclivity of the *Germanen* for violence are presented as self-evident. Such arguments are not necessarily, or even

⁴ DEMANDT 1980.

⁵ REXROTH 2007.

⁶ On the meanings of this ethnic name and category, WOLTERS 2020.

totally, unfounded, but the essay does not problematize them nor does it recognize the many exceptions to these supposed rules.⁷

If these aspects are perhaps only a consequence of the format – after all such lectures should provide a general picture and a straightforward argument, aims perfectly achieved by Demandt – there are two specific points that merit further investigation. First, Demandt tends to present the barbarians exclusively as military enemies of the empire or at the receiving end of imperial policy, i.e., as subjects to be chastised. Thus, for instance, while he rightly highlights the importance of deportations of non-Roman populations in both the early and the later empire, he downplays the agency of barbarians in resisting, adapting, or benefiting from Roman policies. Barbarians were not always purely external forces, but could shrewdly engage with Roman political actors and instrumentalize imperial internal strife for their own benefit. In particular, barbarian leaders could exploit the divergence of interests between the two halves of the empire in order to foster their own political and military agendas. For example, Alaric was twice let off the hook (in 395 and 397), when his army could have faced total annihilation, thanks to antagonisms between the Roman authorities,⁸ and Attila exploited a court scandal, the so-called ‘Honorius affair’, to legitimize his attack to the Western Roman Empire.⁹

This ability to infiltrate the Roman political arena is mirrored by the narratives presenting barbarian movements not as invasions of unstoppable hordes, but as the consequences of Roman treason. The Greek and Latin authors who describe the generals Bonifatius and Narses inviting the Vandals into Africa and the Lombards into Italy out of fear of the Roman central authorities, portray military campaigns and political conflicts as personal vendettas and failures of integrity.¹⁰ Although such texts fulfil the primary rhetorical purpose of using the past to preach morals – the main villains in these narratives are women, Roman empresses envious of generals’ successes – there is no escaping the fact that they depict barbarians as ‘playing grown-up games’, that is to say, as being fully integrated into the power dynamics of the time. Add to these the series of Roman military officials of barbarian origins, such as Bauto, Stilicho, and Ricimer, whose

⁷ For example, barbarian invasions could be repelled by defences mustered on a local level. See the Augsburg Victory Altar, attesting a victory over the Juthungi in 260, and the Athenian militia that fought against the Heruli in 267. For the text, photos, and a large bibliography on the Victory Altar, <http://lupa.at/6338>; on the Herulian invasion in Attica, CHIOTI 2021. In general, on the role of local militias, BRUNT 1975.

⁸ See the overview in HUGHES 2010, 81–87. For the campaign in 397, BURRELL 2004.

⁹ See the reflections in MEIER 2017.

¹⁰ On Bonifatius and the Vandals, WIJENDAELE 2015, esp. 74–78. On Narses and the Lombards, and a possible interpretation of the ‘invitation narrative’ within a Byzantine policy against the Frankish threat, MARAZZI 2019.

biographies make it difficult to draw a hard boundary between Roman and barbarian identities. These narratives and historical figures suggest that it is best to analyse developments in both worlds as densely interlocked, rather than as frozen in a unidirectional cause-effect relationship.

A new body of numismatic evidence confirms this proactive role of barbarians in Roman politics and suggests considerable and sophisticated economic integration between the empire and *Barbaricum*.¹¹ The wealth of coins found in *Barbaricum* challenges the idea of any clear-cut distinction between the prosperous empire and a starving barbarian world. In particular, the numerous imitations of Roman coins struck by barbarian elites in Central and Eastern Europe reveal the entrepreneurship of barbarian aristocracies in matters of economic policy and their integration into super-regional networks. The capture of the imperial treasure at the battle of Abritus in 251 and of the local mint of Alexandria Troas in 262, connected with the deportation of craftsman with invaluable know-how, sparked Gothic production of imitative coins on a large scale, that would later spread across *Barbaricum*.¹² If imitations of gold coins have commonly been interpreted as ritual or prestige objects, silver imitations, which were often not pierced nor provided with a loop, could serve as means of payment or for hoarding and are therefore a symptom of a society highly receptive of technological and economic developments.¹³

Another feature that I would like to focus on is Demandt's representation of Roman frontiers. Roman borders are essentially presented as linear barriers. However, this mental image of a frontier mirrors the reality of modern national borders rather than the *limes* of the Roman Empire.¹⁴ This is not to say that the Roman Empire knew no borders, as vaunted by the idea of an *imperium sine fine*, but to highlight that Roman authorities did not exercise a level of control over transregional population movements and commercial activities comparable to that of modern states. Even though the state bureaucracy expanded in Late Antiquity, it remained small and underequipped and hence unequal to regulating movements of peoples, given the vast territorial extension and the population of the empire.¹⁵ Furthermore, the European borders of the empire, as embodied in the rivers

¹¹ I am referring in particular to the results produced by the project 'IMAGMA: Imagines Maiestatis. Barbarian Coins, Elite Identities and the Birth of Europe'. On this, see the site, www.imagma.eu.

¹² BURSCHE & MYZGIN 2015 and 2020.

¹³ DYMOWSKI 2019; MYZGIN et al. 2020.

¹⁴ Specifically on Roman frontiers, fundamental studies published in the 1990s are ISAAC 1990; LEE 1993; WHITTAKER 1994; ELTON 1996. On the role played by frontiers in the development of late and post-Roman ethnic identities, POHL et al. 2001; CURTA 2005. See also GRAHAM 2006; HEKSTER & KAIZER 2011.

¹⁵ EICH 2011.

Rhine and Danube, two great recognizable dividing physical barriers, adjoined a mosaic of polities that were often instable and whose own boundaries frequently changed.

In fact, if there was ever any sort of linear frontier, the kind of boundary sketched out by Demandt, it might have been the Roman-Persian border, which however is not discussed.¹⁶ Both literary, epigraphic, and legal evidence attests the presence of custom houses (*telonea*) in the border cities of this frontier. On the Roman-Persian frontier, the movement of persons could be regulated, even if not prevented. In his *Vita Malchi*, for example, Jerome recounts the life of Malchus, a *colonus* from Nisibis, who, having decided to leave his paternal home to avoid an unwanted marriage, had to travel to the West, because the tense situation on the frontier with Persia prevented him from journeying East.¹⁷ Similarly, Egeria, the female pilgrim who wrote a justly famous account of her journey to the Holy Land, was unable to visit Ur, the hometown of Abraham, because it was governed by the Persians: no Roman was allowed access.¹⁸ The circulation of individuals who could be in possession of sensitive information, such as imperial officers or soldiers, was even more strictly regulated, and their departure for Persia could be considered an act of treason.¹⁹ Precisely the breach of security that such movements could cause is behind a law dating back to 408/409 that establishes Nisibis, Callinicum, and Artaxata as the only places where commercial transactions between subjects of the two empires were permitted.²⁰ Finally, the depiction of this frontier on the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, which, regardless of its much-debated date and origins, went through its final editorial phase at the beginning of the 5th c.²¹ seems to demonstrate that the Roman-Persian border was the only one intended to be conceptualized as a line that functioned as a barrier. This is, in fact, the sole border to be explicitly marked on the *Tabula*. In a heavily ideologically charged picture of the world, with Rome literally seated at its centre and no line marking the European and African borders, the captions *Are(a)e fines romanorvm* and *Fines exercitus syriatic(a)e et conmertivm Barbaror(vm)* are the only labels that came to terms with the unique nature

¹⁶ On this, SARANTIS, below, pp. 101-116.

¹⁷ Jerome, *Vita Malchi* 3.2.

¹⁸ *Itinerarium Egeriae* 20.12.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the case of a certain Antoninus, a merchant and financial officer, who defected to the Persians crossing the Tigris at night in 359, Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 18.5. On such cases, NECHAEVA 2014.

²⁰ *Codex Iustinianus* IV, 63, 4.

²¹ The bibliography is immense and not all scholars agree on the nature of the map and the date of its archetype. However, the majority does agree on this chronology for the last editorial work, RATHMANN 2016; WEBER 2016.

of the Persian frontier, without disrupting the overall image of a Roman universal dominion.²²

Overall, Professor Demandt's lecture compels us to tackle the eternal question of why Rome fell head-on. In the cyclical process of revision and counter-revision, which is inherent in all historical research, Demandt's reflections centre upon military events and political struggles. By focusing on the military feats of the *Germanen* and on the Romans' inability to secure their imperial borders, Demandt reminds us that Rome's fall was not a "tea party at the Roman vicarage",²³ and warns disciples of the theory of the 'Transformation of the Roman World'²⁴ not to forget or ignore the role of politics and military force in historical developments.

However, beyond this somewhat general point, and perhaps even more importantly, the lecture encourages us to understand the importance of offering an overarching narrative of the fall of Rome and the fascination that such a tale continues to exercise. Many of Demandt's reflections sound convincing not only because they are based on an exceptional knowledge of the sources, but also because they mirror our profound and enduring fascination with the concept of crisis.²⁵ No one, whether scholar or layperson, is immune from such sentiments when it comes to imagining how Rome could have fallen. There is perhaps no historical matter that has intrigued western intellectuals more and, as a recent social media trend claims to show, the Roman Empire continues to be an obsession for 21st-c. men.²⁶ Central to the political and philosophical lucubrations of humanist thinkers such as Flavio Biondo and Machiavelli,²⁷ the fall of Rome has constituted an ever-recurring archetype for European scholars intent on understanding characteristics and possible developments of the empires of their own times. Edward Gibbon published the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in 1776, the year the thirteen American

²² For a more detailed analysis, LICCARDO 2023, 228-233.

²³ Expression used by Bryan Ward-Perkins for criticizing the supporters of a 'sunny view' of the fall of the Roman Empire, see WARD-PERKINS 2005, 82.

²⁴ Between 1993 and 1998, the European Science Foundation funded a large project called 'The Transformation of the Roman World', which resulted in fourteen edited volumes that had a significant impact on the scholarly debate on Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. For some reflections on this project and a summary of the outcomes, POHL 2002.

²⁵ "Crisis" was the Special Thematic Strand for the International Medieval Congress at Leeds, 2024.

²⁶ The Roman Empire went viral on TikTok and X, formerly known as Twitter, in 2023, when thousands of videos and posts featured men reacting to the question "how often do you think about the Roman Empire" with replies such as "constantly", "every day" or similar. On this, the New York Times article, HOLTERMANN & ROJAS 2023.

²⁷ On how Italian humanists advocated leaving behind the scheme of *translatio imperii* and created the "myth" of decline and fall of Rome, POCKOCK 2003, 151-236.

colonies declared independence, at a time when the British Empire was first faced with the concrete possibility of losing overseas possessions. Even if Gibbon himself was rather hesitant about making direct comparisons,²⁸ in the 19th c. the parallel between imperial Rome and the British Empire permeated the thinking of many classically educated politicians.²⁹ In recent decades, historians and political scientists have again resorted to the Roman analogy in discussing the crisis of the American global hegemony.³⁰ More broadly, the fall of Rome continues to represent, at least for some, the paradigmatic example of what happens when “civilizations” decay. A recent book by another leading historian of the Roman Empire, Peter Heather, revolves around this very perspective, highlighting how much the economic and political evolution of the modern Western world followed in Rome’s footsteps and how the factors that caused the collapse of Rome may still be at play in the current decline of Western civilization.³¹

If the memory of the Roman Empire, constantly re-created both in academia and outside, influences scholars’ understanding of contemporary empires, the opposite is equally true. All historians’ quests to interpret the past are informed by the needs of their own times,³² and even when they exercise extreme caution and refuse to provide totalizing explanations, their interpretations will inevitably be read by their audiences against their respective contemporary backdrops. As vividly set out by Alexander Demandt himself in his *Der Fall Roms*,³³ the factors that historians have adduced over the centuries as causing the end of the Roman Empire tell us as much about the historians that proposed them, as about the actual historical phenomena. The social and political turmoil of the historian’s time leave their mark on his or her work. To cite one of many possible examples, it is difficult not to see the impact that the unfolding Russian revolution had on the work of Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtzeff.³⁴ The latter, one of the most prominent scholars of the 20th c., interpreted the crisis of the 3rd c. as a war between the peasant masses and the army against the urban classes, which eventually caused the destruction of civic life and culture. Rostovtzeff had fled from Saint Petersburg in 1918 and sought refuge in western Europe and later the United States of America. One cannot avoid seeing this event behind his description of the fall of the Roman urban bourgeoisie.³⁵

²⁸ LOUIS 1999, 3.

²⁹ HINGLEY 2000, 25-37, 157-159.

³⁰ See for example, TODD 2002, 75-96.

³¹ HEATHER & RAPLEY 2023.

³² A concept most clearly expressed by Benedetto Croce, for example in CROCE 1938.

³³ DEMANDT 1984, 695. Demandt lists 210 causes. Among the most imaginary ones, we find “culinary excess”, “enervation”, and “soil erosion”.

³⁴ See the reflections of SHAW 1992.

³⁵ BOWERSOCK 1974.

For his part, Demandt does not shy away from active engagement with current events. He has even embraced a public intellectual commitment. As most clearly expressed in the article “Das Ende der alten Ordnung” for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*,³⁶ Demandt presented his theses on the barbarian invasions while discussing the 2015 European migration crisis.³⁷ By offering such comparison, he has provided the general public with something worth thinking about seriously. In particular, he has offered a detailed description of the possible catastrophic consequences that political short-sightedness can cause. Regardless of the dissimilarities between these historical events and the limits of the adage *historia magistra vitae*, spreading the knowledge of the past in a clear and easily-accessible manner is a fundamental duty of an historian and intellectual. Thus, if today researchers often tend to prefer abstract and structural concepts that allow for the possibility of different explanations, Demandt’s lecture reminds us of the importance of creating a *story* when writing history, an account that can identify the general forces behind historical developments, as well as the centrality of personal involvement in historical research.

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³⁶ For the article, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/staat-und-recht/untergang-des-roemischen-reichs-das-ende-der-alten-ordnung-14024912.html.

³⁷ On November 16, 2015, the historian Niall Ferguson published an article that caused just as much of a stir, if not more, invoking the fall of Rome as a comparable example to understand the significance of the Paris attacks, www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/11/16/paris-and-fall-rome/ErlRjkQMGXhvDarTlxXpdK/story.html.

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ALEXANDER SARANTIS

‘Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik’: A Response from an Eastern Roman Perspective, 4th-7th Centuries

This essay responds to three points made by Alexander Demandt’s lecture on Roman-Germanic frontier relations: that an imbalance between economically weaker Germanic groups and the wealthier Roman Empire underpinned the dynamics of frontier politics; that the frontiers were linear barriers to movement; that the Germans ultimately defeated the Roman emperors and brought down the western Roman Empire. It draws on examples from the eastern Roman Empire to argue that the Romans also benefitted from and exploited the resources of the barbarian world, that frontiers were multi-cultural and syncretic zones of interaction; and that the northern frontiers of the Western and Eastern Empires ultimately collapsed because the imperial governments withdrew from these regions to focus their efforts on military threats and political crises in other areas.

Keywords: Rome / frontiers / barbarians / Persia / warfare / diplomacy

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The main thrust of Professor Demandt’s paper is that the northern riverine frontiers of the Roman Empire were designed primarily to keep out barbarians, whom he refers to in the main as ‘Germans’. These ‘Germans’ were warlike and adventurous as opposed to the increasingly complacent, peace-loving, war-shy Romans. The ‘Germans’ were drawn to the empire by its wealth, which contrasted with the poverty in Germanic-occupied regions beyond the frontiers. The permanent pressure from these groups meant that frontiers were the focal point of violent Roman-Germanic competition. Roman emperors and generals needed to deploy a series of time-honoured diplomatic and military policies to contain the German threat. Ultimately, however, the Germans defeated the Roman emperors by taking over the Roman army from within from the 3rd c. onwards, by their mass migrations from the 4th c. and by eventually replacing the Western Empire with a series of successor kingdoms in the 5th c. This essay will respond to these points mainly by drawing on comparative examples from the 4th- to 7th-c. eastern Roman Empire.

The Roman-Barbarian Economic ‘Imbalance’ and Frontier Dynamics

There can be no doubt that the wealth of the empire attracted so-called barbarians from northern and eastern Europe and the Eurasian Steppe to its frontier regions. However, this did not always provoke violent raiding and or seizures of territory, but, equally, resulted in outsiders’ peaceful settlement of Roman land under imperial supervision, and job opportunities for the immigrants, mainly in the imperial army. Indeed, Professor Demandt makes clear that the settlement of large numbers of immigrants on imperial soil had been a constant in the history of the frontiers since the Augustan era. A related factor in the decision of barbarian groups to attempt to cross the frontiers was the security provided by the imperial authorities and the communications infrastructure in the imperial provinces. Both guaranteed ease of movement and offered assurances of economic rewards at the place of destination. When the imperial authorities failed to uphold their end of the bargain, as with the chaotic reception of the Tervingian Goths in 376, trouble occurred, such damaging events being regularly highlighted by the sources.¹ But, for the most part, barbarian groups were settled in various imperial borderland regions with little fuss. Communication streams between those settled in the empire and their original communities would have made further movements more likely, ‘chain migrations’ in modern migration theory parlance.²

It was not just the barbarians who profited from these borderland interactions. The empire benefitted equally by exploiting the manpower resources of the areas beyond the frontier. These were not only valuable for military recruitment, but also as a vital source of agricultural labour. Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner has cited this as an important reason for the settlements of barbarians in the 4th- and 5th-c. West.³ In a recent conference paper, Philip Rance, similarly, highlighted the references to Gothic slaves and peasant *coloni* already inhabiting the Balkans in Ammianus’ accounts of the Gothic wars in the region from 376-382.⁴

The Romans also benefitted from the material resources of the barbarian world. Inscriptions from 5th- to 6th-c. Black Sea ports refer to the presence of ‘furriers’, believed to have been traders bringing fur from the north.⁵ Commodities such as amber were also imported across the Roman

¹ Amm. Marc. 31.5.

² LEE 1966, 54-55.

³ SCHMIDT-HOFNER 2017.

⁴ Philip RANCE, “Treason and Collaboration in Roman-Gothic Conflict in the 370s”, 25th August 2022 at the 24th International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Padua. E.g. Amm. Marc. 31.6.5.

⁵ BEŠEVLIJEV 1964, 69-73.

frontiers, especially from the Baltic coastal regions. Florin Curta has, additionally, highlighted Roman reliance on agricultural supplies from regions occupied by Sklaveni, just north of the Lower Danube in the 6th c.⁶ Indeed, Roman treaties with neighbouring polities usually included references to designated trading locations, as Demandt notes. Along with the regulation of population movements, these were at the heart of discussions between the eastern Romans and Attila in the late 440s.⁷ They also featured in Roman-Sassanid Persian peace treaties, as in 561.⁸ Both the Romans and their neighbours, therefore, took advantage of economic opportunities in borderland regions.

The idea of a major economic imbalance between the empire and its barbarian neighbours has been further nuanced in recent years by archaeological work in formerly ‘barbarian’-occupied areas outside the empire. This has shown the increasing political centralisation and economic organisation of groups in northern Europe, the Carpathian Basin, the forested regions of Russia, and the steppe regions north-east of the Lower Danube across the 4th to 7th c. While lacking the cities, monumental fortresses, and monetary economies of the empire, these regions nevertheless had centres of industrial production, agricultural output, and elites who accumulated impressive material wealth, displayed ostentatiously through weaponry, clothing, and dress accessories, worn on ceremonial occasions.⁹ Although economies in these areas were smaller in scale than those in the empire, it is clear that not all barbarians would necessarily have been desperate to emigrate.

That cross-frontier migrations and raids along the northern riverine frontiers were not driven primarily by an economic imbalance is supported by the example of the eastern Roman-Sassanid Persian frontier from the 3rd to the early 7th c. (see Map 1). During long periods of Roman-Persian warfare in the 3rd, 4th, and 6th c. both sides repeatedly raided one another’s territories for monetary, agricultural and manpower resources.¹⁰ And yet most would agree that the two superpowers of Late Antiquity were equals politically, economically, and militarily.¹¹ Some have suggested that the Sassanid Empire was in a stronger position than the supposedly declining eastern Roman state.¹² This did not deter Sassanid kings from exploiting Roman resources during their invasions. Khusro I not only carried off

⁶ CURTA 2021, 50; e.g. *Strategikon* XI.4.

⁷ Priscus 11.1.

⁸ Menander 6.1 provision 3.

⁹ E.g. CURTA 2021; GÂNDILĂ 2018.

¹⁰ SARANTIS 2020.

¹¹ HOWARD-JOHNSTON 1995.

¹² SAUER et al. 2017.



Map 1: The Eastern Roman-Sassanid Persian frontier

prisoners, gold, and silver, he even endeavoured to relocate entire cities to Persian territory as in the case of Antioch in 540.¹³ As well as material incentives, these examples highlight that cross-frontier raiding had a political purpose, to damage the prestige of political neighbours and rivals, and to bolster the domestic legitimacy of the Persian kings leading successful raiding expeditions.¹⁴

Political motives, similarly, explain barbarian groups' raids and migrations across the Rhine and Danube frontiers. Hunnic leaders, in particular, ensured the support of their retainers with successful raiding expeditions.¹⁵

¹³ Procop. *Pers.* 2.14.1-4.

¹⁴ Börm 2007, 93-97.

¹⁵ Thompson 1996, 50-51.



Map 2: The Eastern Roman Empire and the northern world in the mid-6th c.

At the same time, warlords and their followers of various backgrounds were compelled to raid or move into Roman territory by political exile and or military defeat beyond the frontiers. This was the case with all of the later 5th- to 6th-c. barbarian migrations across the Lower Danube for which a motive was provided in contemporary sources. The Heruls, for example, moved into the Lower Danubian province of Moesia Prima in ca. 512 following earlier defeats by rival groups in Pannonia, including one to the Lombards in ca. 507 and another to the Gepids nearer the time of their migration into the empire (see Map 2).¹⁶

The political circumstances which prompted the exile of barbarian groups were often the result of Roman diplomatic and military aggression beyond the frontiers. Demandt makes the persuasive argument that Germanic groups were politically decentralised and thus lacked a single powerful ruler with whom the Romans could negotiate a reliable, lasting alliance. However, it was also easier for the Roman authorities to divide and rule in such situations, making alliances with all sides and usually supporting the weaker ones when conflicts broke out. This was to ensure that no major power emerged beyond the frontiers who might pose an ex-

¹⁶ Procop. *Goth.* 6.14.13-29.

istential threat to the frontier region. The emperor Justinian was one of the great exponents of this canny diplomatic approach, maintaining a balance of power along the Danube frontier by carefully playing off against one another Gepids, Lombards and Heruls in Pannonia, Sklaveni and Antae in Wallachia, and Kutrigur and Utigur Huns north of the Black Sea (see Map 2).¹⁷ He thus continued a time-honoured policy in frontier regions, seen also during the reign of his predecessor, Anastasius I (491-518), who in 505, for example, turned the Bulgars against the Gepid warlord, Mundo, based in Moesia Prima.¹⁸ In the East, Justinian supported client states to rival those sponsored by the Sassanid Persian Empire: the kingdom of Lazica against the Iberian kingdom south of the Caucasus; the Ghassanid as opposed to the Lakhmid confederation in the Syrian and Arabian deserts; and the Axumite kingdom in eastern Africa against the Himyarite state in Yemen.¹⁹

The Romans deployed military resources to maintain these favourable political conditions in the frontier zones. As well as raiding the Persian provinces, they launched incursions into areas beyond the Rhine and Danube frontiers. Professor Demandt provided some examples of this sort of aggression along the Rhine in the 4th c.²⁰ In the 6th c., Roman forces attacked Hun-held areas in the vicinity of the Crimean city, Bosphorus, likewise Sklaveni groups in Wallachia, and then Gepids, and, later, Avars in the Carpathian basin.²¹ While many barbarian groups were militarily able, they by no means had a monopoly on militarisation and violence. Indeed, the Romans were far more powerful than most groups along the northern frontiers and outlasted them all across many centuries as Demandt points out. This was ultimately a mismatch given the size and resources of the Roman Empire and its army which was far superior to those of the majority of its northern neighbours. The notion that some sort of 'barbarisation' of the army resulted in its decline in Late Antiquity has been effectively refuted by numerous works on the topic in recent decades.²² These stress that the Romans' ability to integrate and draw on diverse fighting units from all areas of the empire was a major *advantage*, making it more tactically flexible than it had ever been.

The story of Rome and her frontiers is thus one of centuries of successful imperial management and exploitation, often brutal, of the populations in the borderlands and areas beyond them. The integration of diverse

¹⁷ SARANTIS 2016, esp. chapters 1 and 3.

¹⁸ Marcell. Com 505.

¹⁹ E.g. GREATREX 1998, 225-240.

²⁰ See DEMANDT, above, p. 40.

²¹ Malalas 18.14; Procop. *Goth.* 7.14.3-5 and 8.25.10-15; Theoph. Sim. 8.1.11-4.2.

²² E.g. SABIN et al. 2007, Part II; LEE 2007.

peoples and their cultures and resources from these areas was essential to the survival and evolution of the Roman state over such a long period. Barbarian groups in the north, and the Persians and members of client states in the East naturally benefitted from relations within and across these frontiers. But these groups were not applying continuous parasitic pressure on frontiers which the Romans were merely trying desperately to shore up.

Roman Frontiers as Zones of Cultural Interaction: A Bottom-up View

Roman frontier politics were not just a matter of top-down great power diplomacy and military competition between the empire and barbarian political leaders. It is important to take into account the interests and agency of local individuals and communities in defining these borderland regions. First, these populations were not rigidly segregated by near impenetrable linear borders, even if the empire endeavoured to funnel exchange and movement via specific frontier settlements or crossings as discussed above (p. 103). In the Balkans, movement across the Lower Danube frontier east of Singidunum was effectively restricted by the imperial authorities for certain periods, from the 530s-550s, for example.²³

But the unregulated movement of peoples and goods in both directions also characterised Roman frontiers. Even when the Lower Danube was heavily defended in the mid-6th c., Sklaveni and Hun raiders found a way to enter the Balkans via Gepid territory in southern Pannonia (see Map 3). They paid the Gepids to ferry them across the Middle Danube and Sava rivers, thus bypassing the Lower Danube east of Singidunum (see Map 4).²⁴ Migrants also arrived who had not necessarily been invited by the imperial authorities. For example, after having been defeated by the Lombards in Pannonia, the Heruls moved into Moesia Prima, where their settlement was only subsequently ratified by the emperor Anastasius in 512.²⁵ Either defectors or prisoners of war from the Roman provinces also ended up in barbarian areas north of the Danube. Examples include the merchant from Viminacium whom Priscus met on his embassy to Attila in ca. 449, Ante and Roman prisoners who, in the 440s, ended up in Sklavenian and Antae lands, respectively, according to Procopius' *Wars*, and the siege engineer Busas, taken captive by the Avars from Appiaria in 587.²⁶

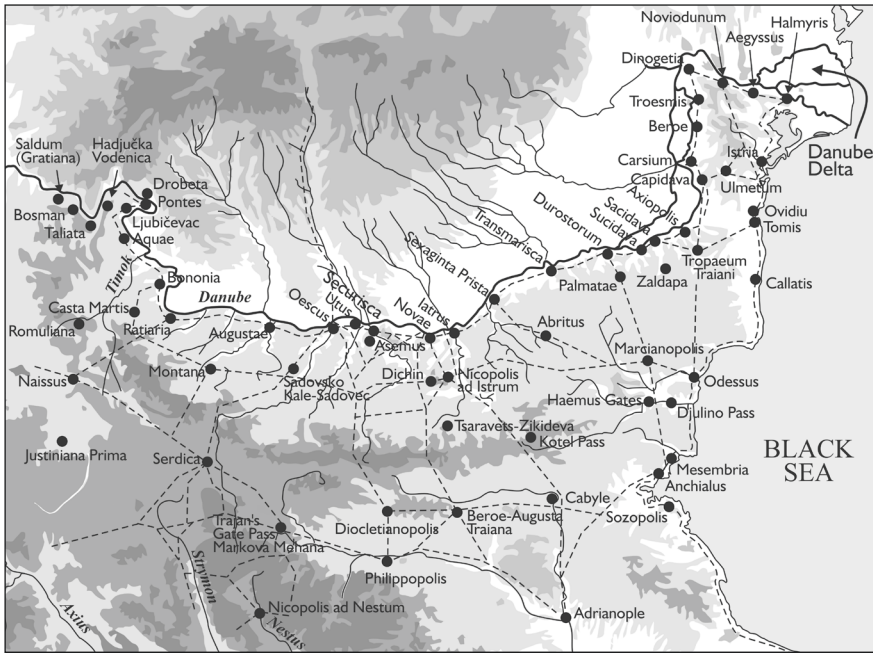
It was much easier to move between Sassanid and Roman territory in the East where the frontier did not follow physical barriers such as rivers

²³ CURTA 2005, 186-196.

²⁴ E.g. Procop. *Goth.* 8.25.5.

²⁵ Procop. *Goth.* 6.14.23-27. Modern discussion: SARANTIS 2010, esp. 370.

²⁶ Priscus 11.2, lines 406-510; Procop. *Goth.* 7.14.7-21. Busas: Theoph. Sim. 2.16.1-11.



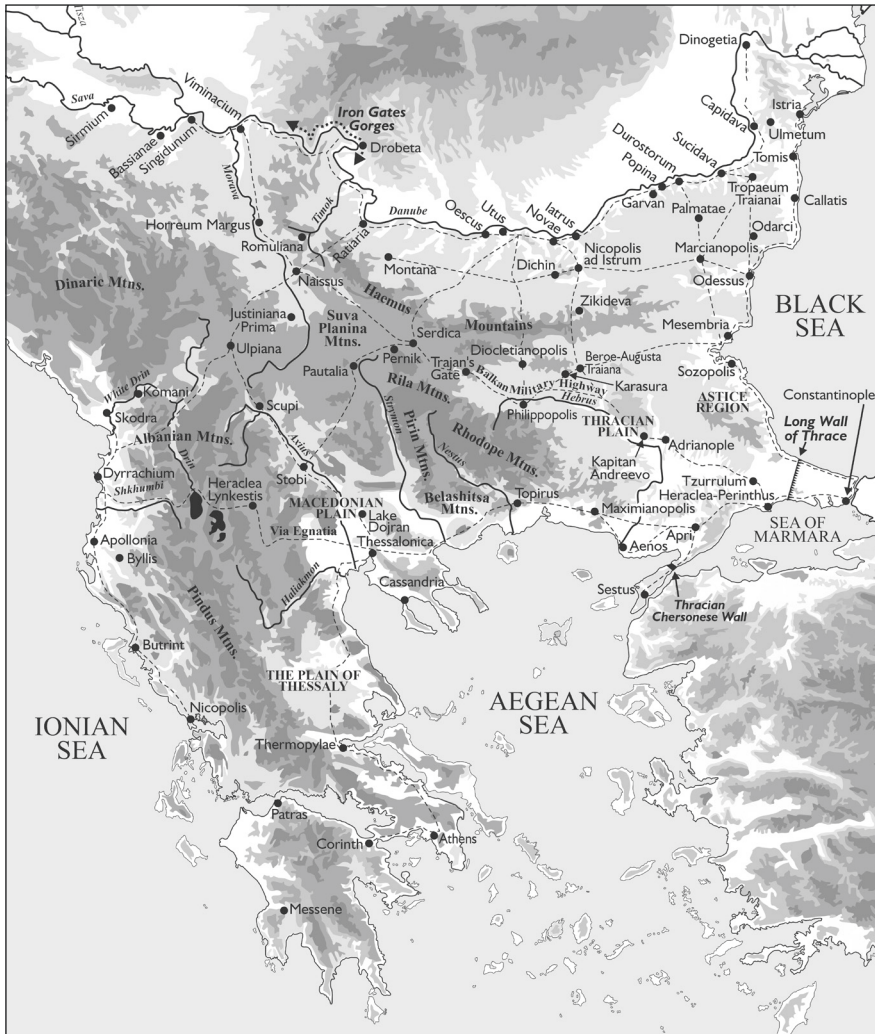
Map 3: The Lower Danube frontier

or mountains (see Map 1). In Mesopotamia it transected low-lying lands north and south of the hilly Tur Abdin region, and a steppe landscape just north of the Middle Euphrates. In the Armenian regions north of the Tur Abdin, mountains ran east to west, which meant that it was easier to move between Persian and Roman territories along rivers such as the Tigris, than north to south within the two empires' frontier provinces.²⁷ To the south of the Middle Euphrates, the frontier ran through the steppe landscapes of Syria and Arabia. In these regions at least, networks of fortifications were situated along roads, the *Strata Diocletiana* and the *Via Nova Traiana* in particular.²⁸ But these could easily be bypassed by nomadic raiders or seasonal migrants from the desert. From the mid-6th c. this defensive system was no longer maintained, and the desert regions were defended solely by the Ghassanid Arab federates. For these reasons, some have argued that there was no real conception of linear frontiers in the Late Roman East, frontiers being instead conceived of as deep zones, policed from fortified settlements.²⁹

²⁷ HOWARD-JOHNSTON 2013, 856-861.

²⁸ E.g. el-Lejjūn: PARKER & BETLYON 2006.

²⁹ ISAAC 1988.



Map 4: The Balkan provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire

Whatever the case, it is clear that there was no physical obstacle to prevent Persian and Lakhmid Arab armies from launching campaigns into Roman territory. Merchants, churchmen, and migrants also criss-crossed the frontier regions: the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* provide examples of trading families in cities such as Amida, while Roman-Persian treaties allude to regular interactions between communities in Mesopotamia on both sides of the frontier.³⁰ Military men and aristocrats also defected from one

³⁰ Joh. Eph. *Vit. Sanct.* 31, pp. 575-585, on the lives and careers of the merchant brothers, Elijah and Theodore. Menander 6.1, provisions 3, 6, and 7 for references to cross-

side to the other as they did in the Rhine and Danube borderlands. The Persian generals Narses and Aratius are prominent examples from the Justinianic era, while Antoninus, a merchant and administrator, is singled out for defecting to the Persians in 359 by Ammianus, as is the Persian prince, Hormizd, who defected to the Romans in 323.³¹

Instead of viewing them merely as physical barriers, frontiers can thus be conceptualized as zones of cultural and economic interaction.³² One long-term consequence was the formation of unique borderland cultures which straddled frontiers and were in some cases or ways significantly different from those of the central authorities in their respective imperial capital or capitals. In Europe, archaeological evidence has shed light on weapon- and jewellery-based material cultures and burial patterns unique to borderland regions, the so-called Danube military culture spanning areas north of the Black Sea and along the Danube and Rhine rivers, and the *Reihengräber* burial cultures in northern Gaul.³³ Elsewhere, cross-frontier cultures pre-dated and were thus artificially bisected by the frontiers. Good examples in the East include the Syriac-speaking Christian communities in Mesopotamia, Arabs in Syria, and Armenians north of the Tur Abdin.³⁴

In short, frontier regions were culturally complex regions, with multiple and sometimes overlapping or syncretic ethnicities. They were not linear barriers between 'Roman' and 'non-Roman' populations, even if conceptualised as such by Roman authors.³⁵ The combination between cultural fluidity and rival political interests meant that borderlands were full of economic and professional opportunities. Hence the mercenary behaviour of warlords and their followers mentioned by Demandt. In the 6th c., military men such as the Gepid, Mundo, or the Lombard, Ildiges, ended up fighting for multiple sides during their illustrious and colourful careers.³⁶

The Collapse of Frontiers in the West and the East

As long as the empire provided the structures and resources needed to co-opt these individuals and communities, whether already present or newly arrived, it continued to exist. This meant the ability to securely provide land and political asylum or official roles and salaries in the army, secu-

frontier community interactions in the 561-peace treaty.

³¹ MARTINDALE 1992 on Narses 2: pp. 928-930, and Aratius: pp. 103-104. Antoninus: Amm. Marc. 18.5. Hormizd: Amm. Marc. 16.10.16.

³² E.g. WHITTAKER 1994.

³³ The Lower Danube: GÂNDILĂ 2018, chapter 2. Northern Gaul: THEUWS 2009.

³⁴ WOOD 2010.

³⁵ E.g. descriptions of the Lower Danube in Procop. *Aed.* 4.5.9-11.

³⁶ CROKE 1982.

lar administration, or the Church. However, when these opportunities and benefits ceased to exist, following political collapse or crisis at the centre of the empire, borderland populations quickly started looking to their own interests, and the frontiers broke down.

The Western Empire thus did not disintegrate politically because the Germans defeated its emperors. It ceased to exist because for a number of structural political, economic, and strategic reasons it was unable to cope with a series of stressors, including what are now known as the migrations (formerly “great invasions”) of 406/407 and thus to continue devoting the resources necessary to keep control over its provinces, especially on the periphery.³⁷

This picture is best supported by the survival of the Eastern Empire which was able to continue carrying out its basic administrative and economic functions despite having to weather similar crises. Unlike the Western Empire, it had the resources and infrastructure and sufficiently stable government to absorb large numbers of barbarian migrants. These included Goths, Huns and Alans between 376 and 382, and a variety of Goths, Scirians, Huns, Sarmatians, and others, who had been part of Attila’s empire, which disintegrated following his death in 453.³⁸ It was also able to play off effectively the leaders of ‘barbarian’ federate armies, for example, the two Theoderics during the 470s and early 480s.³⁹ Although Alaric and Theoderic the Amal led migrations of Gothic armies from the Balkans to Italy in 401 and 488, many Goths remained in the Balkans. In the 6th c., thousands of Bulgars, Heruls, and Kutrigur Huns also settled in the frontier provinces.⁴⁰ While there were occasional rebellions by federate troops in the late 370s, 390s, 470s, and 510s, in the long-term, these groups were integrated into the agricultural tax base and military administration of the central and northern Balkans. In fact, they came to be the main source of manpower for the eastern imperial armies. Justinian’s wars of conquest in the West and against the Sassanids in the East were fought largely by soldiers recruited from the northern Balkans as well as from allied barbarian groups on the other side of the Danube (see Map 5).⁴¹

Although the Eastern Empire continued to control and benefit from the manpower resources of the Lower Danube frontier, it experienced more violent raiding warfare than the Western Empire. This is because, during

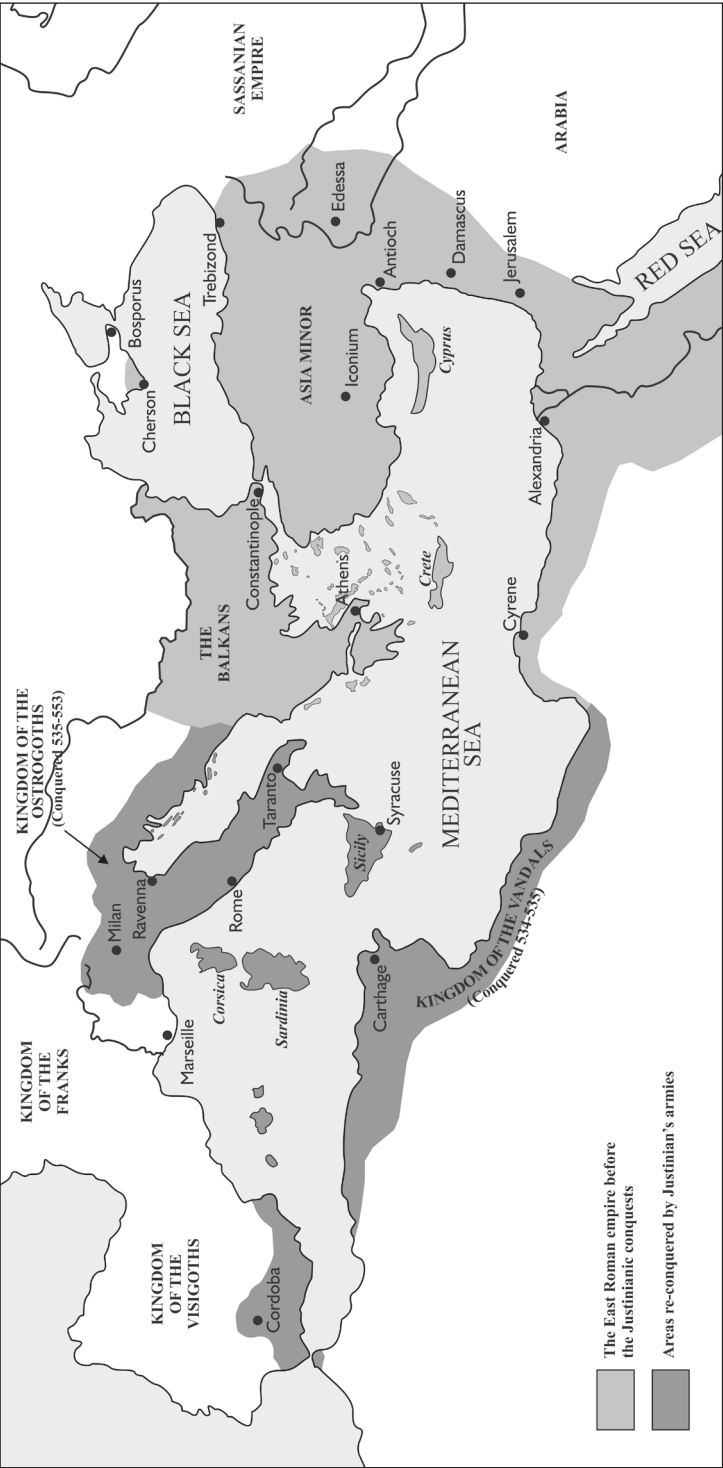
³⁷ As argued by historians such as HALSALL 2007, e.g. 282-283.

³⁸ Post-Attila migrations: Jord. *Get.* 265-267. Modern discussion of migrations into the Balkans, 4th-5th c.: HEATHER 1991. For the fascinating case of the Sciri, who were resettled in Asia Minor ca. 409: *Cod. Theod.* 5.6.3.

³⁹ HEATHER 1991, 240-308.

⁴⁰ Bulgars: Marcell. *Com.* 505. Heruls: Procop. *Goth.* 7.35.42-43. Kutrigur Huns: Procop. *Goth.* 8.18.15 and 19.6.

⁴¹ On the Heruls’ service in the eastern Roman armies: SARANTIS 2010, 381-393.



Map 5: The Eastern Roman Empire in the Age of Justinian

certain periods, it faced aggressive neighbouring powers happy to remain outside the empire and plunder provinces south of the Danube. Attila's empire in the mid-5th c. and the Avar khaganate in the later 6th to early 7th c. were, along with the Sassanid Persians, the greatest military opponents the empire had ever faced.⁴² While the Gallic provinces were raided by groups such as the Alamanni in the mid-4th c., the Western Empire probably experienced worse raiding warfare across the Rhine frontier in the 3rd c. than in the 4th to 5th centuries.⁴³

It is important here to distinguish raiding from migration or even military invasion with a view to a permanent settlement. Raiding was a fundamentally destructive activity, raiders seeking to plunder and or destroy a region's material and human resources before heading back to their side of the frontier. Raiders thus differed fundamentally in their aims from migrants or indeed conquerors, who set out to settle in and benefit from a region's resources. Although the barbarians' crossing of the Rhine in 406/407 was disruptive and portentous for the western provinces, the new arrivals did not burn or carry off the empire's agricultural, monetary or manpower resources; instead, they sought to exploit these medium- and long-term, whether as imperial employees or rulers of successor states. This would explain why there are few signs of widespread destruction in the archaeological record of regions such as southern Gaul in the 5th c.⁴⁴ By contrast, the impact on the northern Balkan region of Hun and Avar incursions is clear from archaeological evidence for widespread destruction, abandoned hoards of coins and valuables, and periods of economic rupture in the mid-5th and late 6th to early 7th c.⁴⁵

Anastasius and Justinian funded reconstruction projects and reimplemented central control in the early 6th c., but their 7th-c. successors were unable to do this subsequently because they had to divert their resources to the wars with Sassanid Persia and the Muslim Arabs in the East. The result was the collapse of the Lower Danube frontier and eastern Roman control over most of the Balkans, bar a handful of Aegean, Ionian and Black Sea coastal cities. Like the northern frontiers of the Western Empire, the Lower Danube, therefore, did not collapse because enemy powers invaded across it, defeated the Roman emperors, and annexed their territories. Instead, it ceased to exist because it was abandoned by the imperial authorities.

⁴² On the Huns: e.g. KELLY 2014. On the Avars: POHL 2018.

⁴³ KULIKOWSKI 2013, 684. On long-term damage caused by the 3rd-c. invasions: ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, esp. 18-41.

⁴⁴ Structural changes relating to the end of the Roman state and the emergence of new cultures notwithstanding: ESMONDE CLEARY 2013, chapters 8-9.

⁴⁵ 5th-c. destruction in the Lower Danube frontier region: POULTER 2004. 6th-c. coin hoards: MORRISSON et al. 2006, 75-94.

However, unlike the western provinces, the Balkans were reeling from a period of endemic raiding warfare when the Roman administration withdrew from the region. With most Balkan provinces experiencing an economic collapse from the 7th c., the material incentives, imperial government guarantees, and well-maintained communications which originally attracted barbarians to the frontier no longer existed. At the same time, there is no sign of depopulation or economic crisis in barbarian regions north of the Danube. There is thus, unsurprisingly, little evidence that barbarian raiding and migration increased in scale following the collapse of the frontier.⁴⁶

The dire state of the Balkan economy would also explain why no major successor states staffed by Romans and ruled by ‘barbarians’ replaced the Roman Empire in the region as they did in the western provinces. The Bulgar Empire was not formed until the early 680s and, in its first century or so of existence was a small regional polity confined to what had been the north-eastern part of the diocese of Thrace.⁴⁷ Slavic groups had settled various parts of the Balkans by the 9th c. but little is known of their migrations to the region.

The lack of a successor state meant there was no immediate threat to surviving enclaves of eastern Roman control, for example at Thessaloniki or south-eastern Thrace. New multi-ethnic frontier zones between these enclaves and a landscape of local warlords emerged along the Haemus Mountains and the Via Egnatia, the main road connecting Constantinople and Dyrrachium.⁴⁸ These enclaves offered platforms for later imperial expansion into interior regions in the Middle Byzantine period.

Unlike the northern frontiers, those in the East did collapse under the weight of invasions and conquests, by the Sassanid Persians and then the Muslim Arabs in the 7th c. Thereafter, former Mesopotamian and Arab frontier communities found themselves at the heart of the Muslim Caliphates. What remained of the Eastern Empire survived thanks to the strategic geography and loyalty and resilience of the populations of Anatolia.⁴⁹ The new Byzantine-Arabic frontier was established along the Taurus and anti-Taurus ranges by the second half of the 8th c.⁵⁰ This was again characterised by cross frontier raiding, economic exchanges, and, by the Middle Byz-

⁴⁶ A similar argument has been made for the western imperial frontiers: G. HALSALL, Reconsidering the mechanics of migration: information and logistics [<https://600transformer.blogspot.com/2019/07/reconsidering-mechanics-of-migration.html>].

⁴⁷ SOPHOULIS 2012, 105-142.

⁴⁸ On the ‘borderlands’ of southern Macedonia: *The Miracles of Saint Demetrius*, II.4-5 (LEMERLE 1979, 198-234).

⁴⁹ HALDON 2016.

⁵⁰ EGER 2015.

antine period, a distinctive Byzantine-Arab borderland culture typified by texts such as the epic poem of Digenis Akrites.⁵¹

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⁵¹ JEFFREYS 1998.

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EBRAHIM AFSAH

Grenzen und Migration im heutigen Europa

Conditions existing towards the end of the Roman Empire differ fundamentally from those characterising the contemporary challenge of mass migration, encumbering historical analogies. Major differences in at least five crucial areas (demography, economy, participation, military, and zones of contact) make it apparent that today's Europe is not Rome. But the warning posed by the Empire's eventual inability to integrate Germanic tribal migrants appears timely with respect to the inability of contemporary liberal welfare states to integrate ever larger numbers of particularly Muslim migrants. Imported cultural and religious notions at odds with the liberal constitutional *acquis* necessitate uncomfortable ideational and practical responses, instead of wishful thinking. The value of history in this debate is to highlight self-deception and the dangers of complacency.

Keywords: migration / Islam / integration / liberalism / militant democracy

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„Ich will keine Führung, die im Kreml sitzt
 Ich will keine BRD, die nur russisch spricht
 Ich will eine Mauer, die uns davor schützt
 Ich will eine Mauer, die dem Westen nützt.“¹

„Zweimal drei macht vier, widewidewitt
 und drei macht neune!
 Wir machen uns die Welt,
 widewide, wie sie uns gefällt. [...]
 Hey, Pippi Langstrumpf,
 die macht, was ihr gefällt. [...]
 Alle, groß und klein,
 tralalala, lad' ich zu uns ein.“²

Kontinuität und Vergänglichkeit Europas

Der vorliegende Themenband beschäftigt sich kritisch mit dem Versuch eines prominenten Historikers, aus seiner fachlichen Expertise Lehren für die heutige Politik zu ziehen. Gibt es Parallelen zwischen dem Untergang des Römischen Reiches in den Wirren der Völkerwanderungszeit und den Herausforderungen der heutigen Massenmigration? Können wir aus den Erfahrungen der Römer mit den letztlich nicht integrierbaren Germanen etwas für unseren heutigen Umgang mit den in immer größeren Mengen nach Europa drängenden Menschen lernen? Sollte Abwehr oder freundliche Einladung unser Handeln lenken; ist unsere Lebensart letztlich so gefestigt und attraktiv, dass die Neuankömmlinge sie sich zu eigen machen werden, oder ist der Unterschied zwischen uns und ihnen so groß, wie Prudentius ihn einst zwischen Römern und Barbaren sah?³ Ist die gegenwärtige Völkerwanderung ein Menetekel des Untergangs eines selbstzufriedenen Europas oder Ausdruck seiner normativen wie materiellen Anziehungs-

¹ Aus dem Lied „Der Osten“ der westdeutschen Hardcore-Punkband OHL (Oberste Heeresleitung), frühe 1980er, herausgegeben auf dem Album *Die Auferstehung* (1993) und wieder auf *Im Westen nichts Neues* (2007), Text und Lied verfügbar auf: <https://genius.com/Ohl-der-osten-lyrics>. Ich danke meinem Freund Peter Peach Knies, der mich mit ihrer Musik in Kontakt gebracht hat.

² Lose deutsche Übersetzung des von der Autorin Astrid Lindgren getexteten Liedes der gleichnamigen Kinderbuchfigur, siehe www.astridlindgren.com/sv/karaktererna/pippi-langstrump.

³ „Sed tantum distant Romana et barbara, quantum / quadrupes abiuncta est bipedi vel muta loquenti.“ („Römer und Barbar sind so weit von einander entfernt wie der Vierfüßler vom Zweibeiner, oder wie die stumme von der sprechenden Kreatur.“) Dieser wenig schmeichelhafte Vergleich stammt von Prudentius in *Contra Symmachum* 2.816-17, zit. n. Danuta SHANZER: *Literature and Romanitas in the post-Roman West*. Kapitel 49 in: Gavin KELLY / Aaron PELTTARI (Hg.): *The Cambridge History of Later Latin Literature*. Cambridge 2025 (im Druck).

kraft? Bedarf es der Abschottung vor einer von außen kommenden Gefahr, einer „Mauer, die uns davor schützt, die dem Westen nützt“, wie es die eingangs zitierte Punkband OHL ausdrückt? Oder sollten wir unseren Umgang mit den Fremden an der Sorglosigkeit Pippi Langstrumpfs ausrichten: ‚machen, was uns gefällt, und alle zu uns einladen‘?

Das Ende des Römischen Reiches ist fraglos eine der großen Fragen der Menschheitsgeschichte, ganz unabhängig von unserer Bewertung seiner Entstehung und Expansion. Ein vielschichtiges Phänomen wie Entstehung und Untergang eines solch bedeutenden Reiches wirft eine Vielzahl schwieriger, auch moralischer Fragen auf. So kommentiert Hans Ruin beispielsweise Nietzsches berühmtes Diktum einer ‚nützlichen Geschichte‘, also einer kritischen moralischen Beurteilung des Gewesenen mit Sicht auf *heutigen* Nutzen: “But to really confront the past, to engage in what has been, is to force oneself to confront what is difficult and demanding, both psychologically and morally.”⁴

Ohne seinen Charakter also glorifizieren, dämonisieren oder gar trivialisieren zu wollen,⁵ erscheint uns Heutigen das Ende des Reichs erklärungsbedürftig, weil mit ihm ein großes kulturelles Erbe unterging, die Erinnerung daran aber bestehen und *Ansporn* blieb.⁶ Dieses Erbe gibt bis in neueste Zeit Anlass für heftigste Kontroversen.⁷ Nicht zuletzt aber bedeutete die Beschäftigung mit dem Ende des Römischen Reiches auch immer die Auseinandersetzung mit der Endlichkeit der eigenen Lebensform, wie Demandt es bereits vor einem halben Jahrhundert treffend zum Ausdruck brachte:

Eine erklärende Aussage über den Zusammenbruch der antiken Zivilisation wurde unweigerlich zu einer prognostischen Aussage über die europäische Kultur, nicht zwingend eine apodiktische, aber allemal eine hypothetische Prognose von der

⁴ “The core of his critical challenge lies in what he has to say about the relation between historical truth and justice. History can be reduced to the learning and remembrance of stories, for the sake of knowledge and education. But then it is no longer operative, since it ceases to have a connection to the capacity to exist and act in the present. It is, as he writes, as if ‘the task were to guard history so that nothing could come of it but stories’ (29/280).” RUIN 2019, 804f.

⁵ Siehe hierzu ausführlich und weit befugter DEMANDT 2015.

⁶ Statt vieler sei auf die einflussreiche These Bermans verwiesen, der den Aufstieg moderner Rechts- und Staatsvorstellungen und der modernen skeptischen Wissenschaft schlechthin mit der Wiederentdeckung und Weiterentwicklung römischen Rechts im 11. Jahrhundert erklärt: “In contrast not only to the earlier Western folklaw but also to Roman law both before and after Justinian, law in the West in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and thereafter, was conceived to be an organically developing system, an ongoing, growing body of principles and procedures, constructed – like the cathedrals – over generations and centuries.” BERMAN 1983, 119. Siehe auch HUFF 2017 und 2010; SCHLUCHTER 1979 und 1987.

⁷ MCWORTHER 2021; WEST / TATE 2021; PHILLIPS 2021; POSER 2021.

Form: Wenn wir so handeln wie die Römer, dann blüht uns dasselbe Schicksal. So wurde der Untergang Roms tausend Jahre nach dem Ereignis selbst zum Menetekel.⁸

Die Erinnerung an das *gemeinsame* Erbe schuf einen *kulturell* relativ einheitlichen, *politisch* aber zerfaserten Raum, in dem Ideen und Menschen sich relativ leicht bewegen und sich dadurch politisch-sozialer Unterdrückung entziehen konnten. Es ist gerade diese politisch-soziale Fragmentierung, bei gleichzeitiger relativer kultureller Einheit, die die Bedingungen für die Ausbildung freien und schließlich wissenschaftlichen Denkens und damit der Aufklärung ermöglichte.⁹ Wenn also paradoxerweise gerade der Untergang des Reiches die Grundlage für die spätere Größe Europas war, so blieb er dennoch stets mahnende Warnung.

Rom als Menetekel

Es ist gut möglich, dass ohne den Untergang des Reiches, wenn also eine zentralisierte Reichsherrschaft fortbestanden hätte, die Grundlagen für das heutige Europa und die hier und *nur hier* entstandene Moderne gefehlt hätten.¹⁰ Wenn der Untergang und die sich anschließende Fragmentierung

⁸ DEMANDT 1997, 40.

⁹ Siehe hierzu ausführlich LANDES 2002. Das Argument durchzieht sein Werk, beispielsweise sei seine Erklärung genannt, warum der Buchdruck oder die planmäßige Einteilung des Lebens durch die (mechanische) Uhr sich in Europa, nicht aber in China oder der islamischen Welt durchsetzen konnte: „In Europa hingegen vermochte niemand der neuen Technik Einhalt zu gebieten. Die politische Macht war zu fragmentiert.“ (S. 69) Landes bezieht sich ausdrücklich auf WITTFOGEL 1957. — Mit Bezug auf die Ausbildung gemeinsamer, vom jeweiligen Souverän losgelöster Rechts- und Moralvorstellungen als Grundlage für die Entwicklung kapitalistischer Wirtschaftsweise siehe sehr ausführlich BERMAN 1983, 339ff. “To say that the basic concepts and institutions of modern Western commercial law were formed in the period of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries does not ignore the debt which the creators of those concepts and institutions owed to the Roman law as it was reflected in the newly discovered texts of Justinian.” (ebd., 339) Siehe auch CRONE 1987.

¹⁰ Dass die Moderne *nur* in Europa entstanden ist und *nur hier* entstehen konnte, liegt im Zentrum von Webers Denken. Siehe beispielsweise, hinsichtlich der von Berman eben beschriebenen Entwicklung des Handelsrechts, WEBER 1980, 139, 212, 492 u. 543. Besonders eindrücklich ist diese Sonderstellung aber in der Entwicklung des öffentlichen Rechts: „Eine wissenschaftliche Lehre vom öffentlichen Recht *hat nur der Okzident entwickelt*, weil *nur hier* der politische Verband ganz den Charakter der Anstalt mit *rational gegliederten Kompetenzen und Gewaltenteilung* angenommen hat. Die Antike kennt genau so viel von wissenschaftlichem Staatsrecht, als rationale Gewaltenteilung vorhanden war: die Lehre von den imperia der einzelnen römischen Beamten ist wissenschaftlich gepflegt worden. Alles andere war wesentlich Staatsphilosophie, nicht Staatsrecht. Das Mittelalter kennt die Gewaltenteilung nur als Konkurrenz subjektiver Rechte (Privilegien oder feudaler Ansprüche) und daher keine gesonderte Behandlung

politischer Macht also ein *blessing in disguise* gewesen sein mögen, so ist dennoch der Zusammenbruch der rechtlich-politisch-sozialen Stabilität des Reiches damals wie heute als Katastrophe wahrgenommen worden. Bereits die von den Folgen dieses Niedergangs direkt betroffenen Zeitgenossen fragten sich, warum eine solch überlegene Kultur sich als nicht widerstandsfähig gegenüber ärmeren, schlechter organisierten Gemeinwesen zeigte.¹¹ Nachfolgende Generationen haben buchstäblich hunderte von Gründen für den Zusammenbruch des Reiches identifiziert.¹² Solche Erklärungsversuche eines so zentralen welthistorischen Ereignisses waren immer *auch* eine implizierte Kritik der später vorherrschenden Gesellschaftsverhältnisse: Rom als Menetekel, den Nachgeborenen warnendes Beispiel selbstzerstörerischer Fehler. Eine gewisse Skepsis ist daher angebracht, da diese Narrative nicht ausschließlich von historischem Erkenntnisinteresse geleitet, sondern stets auch Polemik gegen die zeitgenössischen Verhältnisse sind.¹³

Die rhetorische Wirksamkeit solcher Vergleiche sollte jedenfalls nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass die Antike keine Blaupausen für heutiges politisches Handeln liefern kann. Wie Demandt hervorhebt, kann dies kein realistisches Desiderat historischer Forschung sein. Diese dient primär dem Aufzeigen der Grenzen des Möglichen sowie als Gegengewicht politischen *Wunschdenkens*:

Etutrop und die übrigen römischen Historiker waren im Irrtum, wenn sie meinten, historische Beispiele böten unmittelbare Handlungsmuster. Kenntnis der Geschichte ist für die politische Vernunft notwendig, aber nicht hinreichend. Notwendig ist sie insofern, als sie uns verrät, *was wir erwarten dürfen und was wir befürchten müssen*. Das Imperium Romanum hat für die Integration von Fremden mehr geleistet als die meisten anderen Großstaaten der vorindustriellen Zeit. Gleichwohl hat es die Germanen nicht mehr verkraftet, mag dies an der mangelnden Integrationsbereitschaft der Römer oder an der ungenügenden Integrationsfähigkeit der Germanen gelegen haben. *Vielleicht waren es auch einfach zu viele*. Eine

eines Staatsrechts“ (ebd., 393, meine Hervorhebung). Siehe hierzu ausführlich: ANTER 2016 und 2014.

¹¹ Die bloße Feststellung, dass eine Bevölkerungsgruppe weniger hoch entwickelt ist als eine andere, ruft heute in weiten, gerade akademischen Kreisen starken Widerspruch hervor. Besonders die Annahme wirtschaftlichen und institutionellen Entwicklungsunterschieds als Gradmesser von, auch moralischer, Zivilisation wird häufig heftig abgelehnt. Siehe hierzu unter anderem YAMAUCHI 1996; FERGUSON 2011; SHAHABUDDIN 2018.

¹² DEMANDT 2015. Auf S. 695 in der Erstausgabe listet er fein säuberlich 210 Gründe auf, die in der Literatur für den Untergang Roms genannt worden sind, alphabetisch sortiert und im Register eingetragen. In der Neuauflage von 2015 addiert er hierzu nochmals 17 weitere Faktoren, „macht summa summarum 227“, wie er süffisant und korrekt addiert. Die ursprünglichen 210 sind hier zugänglich: <https://courses.washington.edu/rom/e250/gallery/ROME%20250/210%20Reasons.htm>.

¹³ Siehe hierzu allgemein MAY 1973.

inhumane Realpolitik muß ebenso scheitern wie *unrealistische Philanthropie*. Politik ist die Kunst des Ausgleichs, des Mittelwegs und wird, wo sie nicht zum Zweck führt, von beiden Seiten angegriffen. Aber nicht jedes Ziel ist erreichbar.¹⁴

Demandt schreibt weiter, dass es gerade die Möglichkeit unterschiedlicher Interpretationen historischer Ereignisse ist, ebenso wie die notwendigerweise lückenhafte Überlieferung der Fakten und Möglichkeiten sowie der inhärente Drang, Ungenügendes durch Neues zu ersetzen, die eine linear-kausale Projektion geschichtlichen Wissens in heute Politiken verhindern. Er ist sich bewusst, dass es nicht *die eine*, richtige Interpretation des Niedergangs des Römischen Reiches geben kann, insbesondere, dass es unbedingt an den germanischen Fremden gelegen habe. Bevor wir uns aber der Kontroverse um seine im Zusammenhang mit der gegenwärtigen Migrationskrise erschienenen Kommentare zuwenden, ist es hilfreich, den Ursprung seines wissenschaftlichen Interesses zu beleuchten. In einem bereits vor dreißig Jahren erschienenen Text schreibt er:

Die Geschichte der Germanen im Römischen Reich ist die Geschichte einer *misslungenen Integration*. Weder konnten die Römer mit, noch ohne die Germanen leben, während die Germanen weder in ihren Stammsitzen noch auf Reichsboden glücklich waren: Jahrhundertlang drängten sie ins Imperium hinein, und als sie schließlich die Grenzwehr bezwungen hatten, erwiesen sie sich *außerstande, die Zivilisation fortzuführen, die sie angelockt hatte*. Die Bäder und Theater zerfielen, die Brücken stürzten ein, die Wasserleitungen und Straßen wurden nicht ausgebessert. An die Stelle des Steinbaus traten primitive Holzkonstruktionen, die Kunst wurde so barbarisch wie die Sprache. Lesen und Schreiben lernte nur noch die Geistlichkeit.

Zu den großen Fragen der Geschichte gehört die nach den Gründen für das Mißlingen. *Warum hat die römisch-germanische Symbiose nicht funktioniert?* Warum gelang das Zusammenleben nicht so, wie es mit den Griechen, Syrern und Ägyptern, mit den Thrakern und Illyrern, mit den Galliern, den Keltiberern und selbst mit den Numidiern geglückt war? Sie alle konnten überwunden werden und haben sich in die *Pax Romana* eingefügt, aber die Germanen blieben zunächst außen vor und haben zuletzt das System gesprengt. War diese Entwicklung zwangsläufig?¹⁵

Die Namen bzw. unsere Einschätzung derer, die sie heute tragen,¹⁶ haben sich geändert, aber das beschriebene Phänomen ist erstaunlich aktuell. Warum lassen sich manche Gruppen gut integrieren und werden zur Bereicherung,¹⁷ während sich andere Gruppen einer Integration widersetzen,

¹⁴ DEMANDT 1995, 80, meine Hervorhebung.

¹⁵ DEMANDT 1995, 78, meine Hervorhebung.

¹⁶ Angenommene Unvereinbarkeiten im Rechtsverständnis der aus dem Nahen Osten nach Europa strebenden Menschen werden heute als starkes Hindernis einer Integration, geschweige denn Symbiose angesehen. Siehe unter anderem YASSARI; AFSAH 2020b.

¹⁷ HSU 2015; WU 2013.

bisweilen gar in offene Feindschaft zum Gastland treten?¹⁸ Gibt es etwas, das dagegen unternommen werden könnte, und was könnten die Folgen sein, wenn es so weitergeht wie bisher?

Wunschdenken und Geschichtsschreibung

Da diese Fragen große Teile der Bevölkerung bewegen, ist es nicht erstaunlich, dass man im Nachgang der Flüchtlingskrise 2015 Alexander Demandt bat, sich konkret Gedanken darüber zu machen, ob die das Ende des Römischen Reiches zumindest beschleunigende Völkerwanderung in irgendeiner Weise mit den heutigen Migrationsbewegungen vergleichbar wäre. Bereits in seinen früheren Schriften war deutlich geworden, dass er die heutige Politik für verfehlt und deren Auswirkungen für gefährlich hält. Was wiederum die grundsätzliche Frage aufwirft, welche Rolle das Studium der Geschichte für politische Entscheidungen haben kann oder soll.¹⁹

In seinem Buch *Grenzen* erklärt er, dass er speziell die Grenzöffnung 2015, eigenmächtig von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel entschieden, entgegen ihrem damals so vollmundig zelebrierten Zweckoptimismus, für unverantwortlich und unverdaut hält.²⁰ Dass deren Folgen bis heute weder ‚geschafft‘ sind noch auf eine befriedigende, d.h. gesellschaftlich breit akzeptierte Weise auf absehbare Zeit gelöst werden können, gibt dieser Problematik eine ungebrochene Brisanz.

„Das Ende der alten Ordnung“, so betitelte die *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* den von ihr letztlich abgedruckten Beitrag Demandts, den ein anderes wichtiges bürgerliches Medium erst in Auftrag gegeben, dann aber abgelehnt hatte: Die von der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung herausgegebene Zeitschrift *Die politische Meinung*²¹ hatte Demandt eigens gebeten, die anhaltende Flüchtlingskrise aus dem Blickwinkel der ersten Völkerwanderung und ihrer Folgen für das Römische Reich zu untersuchen. Professor Demandt verglich als Gelehrter, mit seiner üblichen Quellen- und Sachkenntnis, und kam zu dem Schluss, dass die Fremdenfreundlichkeit und offenen Grenzen des Römischen Reiches letztlich zu seinem Untergang beigetragen haben.

Das erschien den Herausgebern dann doch zu kontrovers: Sie nahmen ihren Auftrag zurück und lehnten eine Veröffentlichung ab. Chefredakteur

¹⁸ AFSAH 2021a.

¹⁹ Hierzu hilfreich: NEUSTADT / MAY 1986; GADDIS 1987 und 2005.

²⁰ Siehe nicht zuletzt DEMANDT 2020. Rezensenten haben dieses Werk ausnahmslos gelobt, wenn auch manche mit der Detailfülle zu kämpfen hatten und es wiederholt als „Kompendium“ bezeichneten, so Johan Schloemann am 12. Oktober 2020 in der *Süd-deutschen Zeitung* oder Rolf Parr auf *Literaturkritik.de*.

²¹ Siehe www.kas.de/de/web/die-politische-meinung/ueber-uns.

Bernd Löhmann verwies hierbei ausdrücklich auf die massenhaften sexuellen Übergriffe der Sylvesternacht 2015 in Köln und anderen Städten, bei denen meist muslimische, meist frisch ins Land gekommene junge Männer sich an deutschen Frauen vergangen hatten. Er war der Auffassung, dass „von böswilliger Seite“ Demandts Analysen römisch-germanischer Grenzpolitik „missbräuchlich herangezogen werden könnten, um allzu einfache Parallelitäten zur aktuellen Lage zu konstruieren, die wir uns nicht wünschen können“.²²

Löhmann hatte kurz zuvor das Selbstverständnis seiner Zeitschrift programmatisch dargelegt: Man wolle „ein politisch-theoretisches Publikumsorgan [sein], das aktuelle Fragen der Politik aus einer grundsätzlichen Perspektive, aus der Perspektive des christlichen Menschenbildes ausleuchtet“. Das Selbstverständnis der Merkel'schen Christdemokratie widerspiegelnd, hebt der *Deutschlandfunk* hinsichtlich Chefredakteur und Zeitschrift die Ambition hervor, klassische konservative Standpunkte zur Disposition zu stellen, da „Brückenschläge in neue gesellschaftliche Milieus angesagt [seien], um breitere Diskussionen anzuregen [und] die Zeitschrift zum intellektuellen Flaggschiff im christlich-demokratischen Umfeld auszubauen“.²³

Offensichtlich glaubte der Chefredakteur also, dass der von ihm durchaus als „sachlicher geschichtswissenschaftlicher Text“²⁴ erkannte Beitrag ihm bei seinem „vorrangigen Ziel[], an eine Leserschicht heranzukommen, die Führungsschichten, angehende Führungspersönlichkeiten und Referenten in Ministerien“ stellt, nicht behilflich sein würde. Demandts Bewertung dieser Entscheidung als „einer kapitale[n] Dummheit“ ist beizupflichten. Ebenso seiner Antwort auf die direkte Frage des Journalisten Reinhard Müller von der *FAZ*, was denn aus dem Untergang Roms für heutige Entscheidungsträger zu lernen sei:

Dass wir eine weitsichtige Politik mit Augenmaß betreiben und auf die langfristigen Folgen von Einwanderung achten müssen. [...] Wir müssen den Zustrom begrenzen. Das weiß im Grunde auch jeder. Dazu muss man Härten in Kauf nehmen. Denn es muss sich erst herumsprechen, dass es sich nicht lohnt, nach Deutschland zu kommen. Wir dürfen unsere Souveränität nicht aufgeben. Frau Merkel darf nicht zum Wohle fremder Regierungen und auf Kosten des deutschen Volkes handeln. Ihr Amtseid sieht das Gegenteil vor. Hier schwingt ein moralisches Überheblichkeitsgefühl mit. Man muss sich für das eigene Volk einsetzen – und nicht davonlaufen.²⁵

²² Zit. n. DEMANDT 2016.

²³ SEITZ 2014.

²⁴ Zit. n. DEMANDT 2016.

²⁵ DEMANDT 2016. Die Fragen stellte Reinhard Müller.

Migration als praktische wie ideelle Herausforderung

Ein kurzes Kapitel in einem überwiegend historiographischen Band kann die enormen demographischen und kulturellen Herausforderungen der *anhaltenden* Migrationskrise²⁶ nur skizzenhaft anreißen. In einem Punkt muss man den linksliberalen Kritikern des Begriffs ‚Krise‘ jedenfalls recht geben: Er gaukelt eine vorübergehende Ausnahmesituation vor und verschleiern, dass das Phänomen durch Menschen verursacht wird, deren Drang nach Europa rational und menschlich nachvollziehbar ist.

There is no reason to believe that 2015, a year in which Germany alone admitted over one million strangers, will prove to have been the high-water mark of migration from the Global South into the wealthy and comparatively well-ordered countries of the North. Potentially tens of millions more, many not yet born, will attempt to follow, pushed by the economic, social, and political pathologies of the lands of their birth and pulled by visions of affluence and security. They will go North toward hope.²⁷

Auch wenn die Hoffnung der Migranten nachvollziehbar ist, kann ihre massenhafte Realisierung ein ernsthaftes Problem darstellen.²⁸ Hierbei ist besonders zu beachten, dass die konstatierten Wanderungsbewegungen gerade *keine* isolierten, durch einzelne Kriege oder Naturkatastrophen hervorgerufenen Ausnahmereischeinungen, sondern strukturell bedingt sind. Sie werden daher auf sehr lange Zeit nicht abebben. Mindestens fünf anhaltende Ursachen für Migration und die zunehmend schwierigere Integration können genannt werden:

1. *Demographie*: Enorme Unterschiede in den Geburtenraten westlicher und südlicher Gesellschaften führen zu einem immer stärkeren relativen Ungleichgewicht, das Migrationsanreize bietet. Während westliche Gesellschaften stagnieren oder schrumpfen, wachsen die südlichen Länder stark.²⁹ Deren demographische Entwicklung ist das Resultat durchaus

²⁶ Es besteht die weitverbreitete Annahme, dass der Ansturm von Asylbewerbern und anderen Migranten 2015 eine einmalige Ausnahmereischeinung gewesen sei. Richtig ist, dass die Zahlen in diesem Jahr zwar *besonders* hoch waren, aber in anderen Jahren nicht wesentlich geringer waren oder sind. Nachdem die Zahlen durch die Pandemie kurzfristig zurückgegangen waren, haben im letzten Jahr *mehr Menschen als 2015* in der EU Schutz gesucht: “In fact, by the end of 2023, some 1.1 million applications had been lodged in the EU+ marking an 18% increase from the previous year, and the most for seven years. In addition to these new asylum applications, in February 2024 around 4.4 million displaced persons from Ukraine were receiving Temporary Protection, thereby adding a significant layer to the overall count of individuals arriving in the EU+ with protection needs.” European Union Agency for Asylum, <https://euaa.europa.eu/lat-est-asylum-trends-asylum>, aufgerufen: 28. April 2024.

²⁷ FARER 2020, 1f.

²⁸ Siehe beispielsweise Kapitel 1 “The Looming Wave” in FARER 2020, 17–26.

²⁹ Siehe u. a. BENNER 2020; MIRKIN 2013; LAGRAFFE 2012.

wünschenswerten Fortschritts in Gesundheitswesen und Lebensmittelversorgung.³⁰ Sie wird mit wachsendem Wohlstand abflauen, aber bis das in etwa 50–80 Jahren geschehen sein wird, werden sich die globalen Verhältnisse dramatisch verändert haben.³¹ In den nächsten Jahrzehnten wird die Weltbevölkerung um drei Milliarden Menschen wachsen; dieses Wachstum entstammt *ausschließlich* Afrika, dem Nahen Osten und Teilen Asiens, während Nord- und Südamerika, Europa, Australien und China stagnieren.³²

2. *Wirtschaft*: Im Prinzip könnten solch sehr junge Gesellschaften von starkem Wirtschaftswachstum profitieren, allerdings sind die Arbeitsmärkte und Ausbildungssysteme in den meisten südlichen Ländern nicht wettbewerbsfähig, was zu endemisch hoher Jugendarbeitslosigkeit, Hoffnungslosigkeit und oft gewalttätigen Konflikten führt.³³ Junge Menschen, insbesondere junge Männer sehen daher Emigration als einzige realistische Chance auf wirtschaftliche Teilhabe und sozialen Aufstieg.³⁴

3. *Staatlichkeit*: Der Drang zur Auswanderung wird verstärkt durch die schlechte Regierungsführung in den meisten der Entsendestaaten,³⁵ die dem demographisch stark wachsenden Bedarf an staatlichen Leistungen selbst dort, wo die *absoluten* Makroindikatoren durchaus positiv scheinen, nicht nachkommen können.³⁶

4. *Umwelt*: Schlechte Regierungsführung und starkes Bevölkerungswachstum verstärken wiederum die Bedrohung durch Klimawandel, Umweltzerstörung und sich häufende extreme Wettervorfälle, wie Dür-

³⁰ “The population throughout the first three-quarters of the twentieth century was about twelve million [...] This lack of growth is simple to explain. Afghanistan had a demographic profile typical of a premodern society in which a high birthrate was matched by a high death rate.” BARFIELD 2022, 32. Da die Sterberate durch sehr viel bessere Ernährung und medizinische Versorgung dramatisch zurückgegangen ist, die Geburtenrate aber erst langsam fällt, haben die vergangenen Jahrzehnte – trotz Krieg – zu einer Verdreifachung der Bevölkerung geführt: Heute leben dort etwa 42 Millionen Menschen, mit einer jährlichen Wachstumsrate von etwa 2,5 %, einer der höchsten der Welt, was einer Verdoppelung der Bevölkerung in den nächsten etwa 25 Jahren entspricht. Quelle: <https://data.worldbank.org/> — Siehe auch die Erläuterungen in World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision. Key Findings and Advance Tables, ESA/P/WP241, New York, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/Key_Findings_WPP_2015.pdf.

³¹ Siehe hierzu die sehr eindrückliche Modellierung in SPEARS u. a. 2023.

³² KHOKHARHARUNA / KASHIWASE 2015.

³³ Siehe beispielsweise SAXENA 2013; MIRKIN 2013.

³⁴ ANON. 2018.

³⁵ WDR 2017; LANGE u. a. 2011.

³⁶ Siehe beispielsweise Kapitel 2 „The Origins of the Arab Spring“ in AMIN u. a. 2012, 31–53.

ren, Überschwemmungen und Erosion.³⁷ Der unwirtlicher werdende und schrumpfende Lebensraum führt sowohl direkt wie mittelbar durch Ressourcenkonflikte zu großen Wanderungsbewegungen.³⁸

5. *Kultur*: Unabhängig davon, wie man zum Islam und seiner Integrierbarkeit in die säkular-liberalen Gesellschaften des Westens steht,³⁹ ist zu konstatieren, dass die unser Zeitalter charakterisierenden Massenmigrationen zu starken kulturellen Spannungen geführt haben.⁴⁰ Die Ursachen hierfür sind vielfältig, aber zwei Faktoren sind hervorzuheben. Zum einen existiert seit der Dekolonialisierung auf beiden Seiten kein Konsens mehr hinsichtlich der Bewertung verschiedener Lebensentwürfe und kultureller Erfahrungshorizonte.⁴¹ Dies hat zu einer viel schwächeren Bereitschaft zur Anpassung und etwaiger Assimilation geführt, die zudem seitens der Mehrheitsgesellschaft weniger eingefordert wird.⁴² Verglichen mit früheren Migrationswellen führen heute bessere Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten und stärkere ethnisch-ideologische Mobilisierung zu stabileren religiös-kulturellen

³⁷ BÖGE 2023; SENGUPTA 2018; BOU-ZEID / EL-FADEL 2002.

³⁸ SCIACCALUGA 2020; WHITE 2019; BERCHIN u. a. 2017; BETTINI 2013; MCADAM 2009.

³⁹ Siehe hierzu unter anderem AL-AZM 1993b; TAŞPINAR 2014; MERNISSI 2009; WATERBURY 1994; MAKIYA 1993; NAGEL 2014, 1988 und 1979. Für eine dezidiert andere Sichtweise siehe u. a. MICHAELS 2018b.

⁴⁰ Siehe besonders Kapitel 2 „Integration and Cultural Difference: The Liberal’s Dilemma“ in FARER 2020, 49–78; BORG-BARTHET / LYONS 2016.

⁴¹ Siehe hierzu Böckenfördes auch weiterhin maßgebliche Diskussion der notwendigen politisch-normativen Homogenität und damit eines Mindestmaßes an Säkularität in einem liberalen Rechtsstaat in BÖCKENFÖRDE 2010, 2009 und 2006. Dieser von Böckenförde als unabdingbar angesehene normative Minimalkonsens wird allerdings zunehmend von weiten Teilen des Bürgertums als unhaltbarer ‚Zwang zur Leitkultur‘ abgelehnt, siehe z. B. MICHAELS 2018b.

⁴² So beispielsweise im kürzlich erschienenen „Expertenbericht“ der Bundesregierung: „Eine antirassistische Assimilationspolitik mag zwar Muslim*innen als gleichwertige Individuen vor dem deutschen Recht anerkennen, räumt ihren gruppenbezogenen Interessen aber wenig Raum ein. *Ähnlich verhält es sich mit engen Definitionen von Integration als Anpassung an eine ‚Leitkultur‘ oder Ähnliches.* In der liberalen Demokratie ist eine Integration nur in wenigen Bereichen zwingend erforderlich, etwa bei den politischen Grundwerten der Verfassungs- bzw. Rechtsstaatstreue oder bei der ökonomischen Solidarität wie zum Beispiel dem Zahlen von Steuern. *Alle anderen Forderungen an Muslim*innen sind politisch möglich, begrenzen aber den Raum der Entfaltung von ethnischen und religiösen Minderheiten und sprengen den säkularen Rahmen der liberalen Demokratie durch quasi-fundamentalistische Nationenbegriffe.*“ BMI 2023, 239, meine Hervorhebung, Verweise ausgelassen. Dass solch extrem einseitige ideologische Positionen durch Regierungsimprimatur Leitbild staatlicher Integrationspolitik werden, „macht schon etwas sprachlos“ (SCHWARTZ 2023b).

Identitäten⁴³ und engeren politischen Bindungen an die alte Heimat.⁴⁴ Diese starke und, im Gegensatz zu früheren Migrantengenerationen, dauerhafte Identifikation der Neuankömmlinge mit ihrer Herkunftskultur und ihren politisch-religiösen Institutionen⁴⁵ steht der Integration in die Empfangsgesellschaft entgegen und stößt bei dieser auf Widerstand.⁴⁶

Rom ist nicht Europa

Bereits eine solch schematische Aufzählung der die heutige Migration treibenden und Integration erschwerenden strukturellen Faktoren zeigt, dass ein Vergleich mit den Verhältnissen im Römischen Reich und insbesondere dessen Grenzpolitik gegenüber den Germanen nur sehr eingeschränkt möglich ist. Die anderen Beiträge dieses Themenbandes beschäftigen sich mit den Verhältnissen der damaligen Völkerwanderung und deren Auswirkungen auf das Römische Reich. Mir fehlt die Expertise, die dort vorgebrachten Argumente kommentieren zu können, aber folgende strukturellen Unterschiede zur heutigen Situation erscheinen mir bemerkenswert, wenig kontrovers und für die Einordnung des Phänomens hilfreich:

1. *Demographie*: Die Bevölkerungsdichte und damit der relative Wert von Arbeitskraft waren in der Antike dramatisch andere als im heutigen dichtbesiedelten Europa und seiner stark wachsenden Nachbarschaft. Anders als noch im Mittelalter gibt es heute keine Regionen mehr, die durch Ansiedlung von *coloni* abgesichert oder urbar gemacht werden müssten.⁴⁷ Selbstredend gäbe es auch im heutigen Europa strukturschwache Gebiete, die durch Abwanderung geprägt sind und in denen daher die Ansiedlung neuer Menschen begrüßenswert sein könnte. Leider erschweren sowohl

⁴³ Die Literatur ist auch hier unübersichtlich und sehr umfangreich, siehe u. a. MINARECI 2008; SEN 2006; GELLNER 1987; VON GRUNEBaum 1962.

⁴⁴ Die Literatur hierzu ist umfangreich; Untersuchungen zum relativ neuen Phänomen politischen Engagements der Diaspora in der *alten* Heimat sind beispielsweise PEARLMAN 2014; TSOURAPAS 2020; BASER, É. 2021; ROSCA 2019; LYONS / MANDAVILLE 2012; SKULTE-OUAÏSS / TABAR 2015; ØSTERGAARD-NIELSEN 2009.

⁴⁵ Viele Verfechter einer multikulturellen Vision des Zusammenlebens mögen hierin nichts Problematisches erkennen und weisen der Mehrheitsgesellschaft eine Bringschuld der Aufnahmebereitschaft zu: „Alles wäre gut, wären da nur nicht die Deutschen. [...] Die Studienmacher glauben, diese Religiosität und die enge Beziehung vieler Muslime zu ihren Herkunftsländern lösten bei den Einheimischen ‚Unbehagen‘ aus. [...] Bei genauerer Betrachtung fällt aber auf, dass die Studie einseitig gemacht und das Bild auf die Integration der Muslime geschönt ist.“ NEFF 2017.

⁴⁶ ZUCCHINO 2016; POLZIN 2017; ØSTERGÅRD 2000.

⁴⁷ Israel ist das einzige westliche Land, in dem Siedlungspolitik auch Sicherheitspolitik ist. ROBLIN 2021; SHULMAN 2017; SHAFIR 2017; SHKOLNIK 2016; HOLZMAN-GAZIT 2016.

die Rechtslage als auch die mangelnden wirtschaftlichen Möglichkeiten⁴⁸ die Realisierung dieses letztlich hypothetischen Potentials.⁴⁹

2. *Wirtschaft*: Arbeitsmärkte, speziell in Europa, verlangen zunehmend qualifizierte Arbeitnehmer, wohingegen gering qualifizierte schlecht bis gar nicht einsetzbar sind, selbst bei nominell starker Nachfrage, d. h. geringer allgemeiner Arbeitslosenrate.⁵⁰ Lokale Sprachkenntnisse und formelle Qualifikationsnachweise sind zudem heute sehr viel wichtiger als in der Antike.⁵¹

3. *Teilhabe*: Transferleistungen und der Wohlfahrtsstaat generell verlangen nach einer sehr viel stärkeren gesamtgesellschaftlichen Solidarität und damit Akzeptanz des Fremden als nicht nur in der Antike,⁵² sondern auch in der für klassische Einwanderungsländer typischen Selbsthilfesituation.⁵³ Der Wohlfahrtsstaat ist für die Integration von Fremden hierbei doppelt hinderlich. Zum einen müssen Steuerzahler Leistungsempfänger als Mitglieder einer Solidargemeinschaft akzeptieren, was bei neu Zugezogenen nicht selbstverständlich ist. Zum andern verhindern dessen Leistungen, dass der Zugezogene sich durch Arbeit integrieren und seinen Platz in besagter Solidargemeinschaft verdienen kann.⁵⁴

Das durch Transferleistungen strukturell verschobene Lohnniveau macht gering qualifizierte Arbeit künstlich teurer, häufig zu teuer relativ zu ihrer geringen Produktivität; wobei gleichzeitig der Anreiz zu arbeiten angesichts der alternativen Grundsicherung sinkt.⁵⁵ Das kürzlich eingeführte bedingungslose Bürgergeld in Deutschland muss daher als problematisch angesehen werden, weil es nicht nur den Zuzug attraktiver macht, sondern Integration durch Arbeit erschwert.⁵⁶ Eine nicht erfolgte Integration durch

⁴⁸ MAANI 2016.

⁴⁹ NIGGEMANN 2015; GLICK SCHILLER 2007; LEHMANN / NAGL 2012.

⁵⁰ „Deutschland befindet sich in einem harten internationalen Wettbewerb um qualifizierte Arbeitskräfte. Dabei steht der *aktuelle Fachkräftemangel nur scheinbar im Gegensatz zu einer anhaltend hohen Arbeitslosigkeit von Geringqualifizierten*. Gewichtige demographische Argumente sprechen für eine gezielte Auswahl von Zuwanderern anhand arbeitsmarktbezogener Kriterien. Dieser Konstellation kann die Politik ohne eine ökonomischen Regeln gehorchende Steuerung der Zuwanderung nicht gerecht werden.“ ZIMMERMANN u. a. 2013, Abstract, meine Hervorhebung.

⁵¹ „Dieser positive Effekt ist allerdings bedroht, wenn die Arbeitslosenquote der Immigranten zu hoch ist oder wenn zu viele von ihnen niedrigqualifiziert sind.“ BATTISTI u. a. 2015, 11; CHRISTENSEN 2001; REINBERG / HUMMEL 2007.

⁵² SVENDSEN / SVENDSEN 2015; LEE 2013; HEDETOFT 2006.

⁵³ Siehe die wichtige Unterscheidung zwischen Europa und den klassischen Einwanderungsländern USA, Kanada, Australien in FARER 2020, 9–11.

⁵⁴ BOTHE / WOLF 2021; DAVID u. a. 2019.

⁵⁵ POLLMANN-SCHULT 2005; VAN OORSCHOT / ARTS 2005.

⁵⁶ „Dass das Bürgergeld überwiegend von Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund beansprucht wird, wie Wolfram Weimer mit der Formulierung ‚Migrantengeld‘ nahelegte,

erleichterte Einbürgerung *per fiat* als abgeschlossen zu erklären, ist eine gravierende Fehlentwicklung.⁵⁷

4. *Militär*: Die in der Antike große und in der römisch-germanischen Interaktion zentrale Bedeutung militärischer Dienstleistungen der Neuankömmlinge spielt heute keine Rolle mehr. Zwar sind in den heute im Westen vorherrschenden Freiwilligenarmeen Minderheiten relativ stark vertreten, ebenso wie weiterhin manche Staaten reine Fremdenlegionen unterhalten.⁵⁸ Eine Parallele zu den römischen Verhältnissen kann jedoch höchstens in den verschiedenen Überseeinterventionen besonders der US-amerikanischen Armee gesehen werden. Anders als dem Römischen Reich und den europäischen Kolonialmächten⁵⁹ ist es den Vereinigten Staaten und ihren Alliierten in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten allerdings nie gelungen, verlässliche, kampfkraftige Hilfstruppen auszuheben und auszubilden.⁶⁰

Migration spielt also im Sinne der Stärkung militärischen Potentials höchstens eine untergeordnete Rolle, ebenso wie die Notwendigkeit der Ansiedlung zur Sicherung eroberten Neulands im Grenzgebiet heute keine Rolle mehr spielt. Hingegen setzen immer mehr Staaten Migration als Druckmittel ein, ein Phänomen, das als sogenannte „weapons of mass migration“ bezeichnet worden ist.⁶¹ Hiermit ist der erzwungene oder ermöglichte Zugang von meist armen Drittstaatsangehörigen als strategisches Druckmittel gegen meist liberal-demokratische Staaten gemeint. Deren individualrechtliche Asyl- und Versorgungsansprüche erschweren Gegenmaßnahmen und provozieren interne gesellschaftliche Spannungen.⁶²

ist durch aktuelle Zahlen belegt. 62 Prozent der erwerbsfähigen Bürgergeldempfänger haben demnach einen Migrationshintergrund.“ BERRESSEM 2023; RASCH 2024; STOCK 2024.

⁵⁷ MAKSAN 2024; FEIK 2003.

⁵⁸ Es sei angemerkt, dass der Dienst in den britischen *Gurkhas*, nepalesischen Freiwilligenbataillonen, ebenso wie die französische Fremdenlegion mittlerweile einen Zugang zu Aufenthaltsrecht und Staatsbürgerschaft geben. Die spanische Fremdenlegion rekrutiert jedoch keine Ausländer mehr. Die von der Russischen Föderation im Ukrainekrieg eingesetzten indischen und anderen Fremdenbataillone sind neue Ad-hoc-Schöpfungen, wobei nicht klar ist, in welchem Maße sie sich auf die spätere Migration ihrer Mitglieder auswirken.

⁵⁹ Siehe hierzu allgemein KEEGAN 1993.

⁶⁰ KARLIN 2017b und 2017a; MILES JOYCE 2023; KAVANAGH / FREDERICK 2023.

⁶¹ GREENHILL 2022; PETTY 2022; GREENHILL 2016 und 2010. Manche stoßen sich an dem vermeintlich problematischen Begriff, ohne die damit beschriebene Realität aber leugnen zu können, siehe beispielsweise MARDER 2018.

⁶² Beispiele aus der jüngeren Vergangenheit sind Weißrusslands ‚Entsendung‘ nahöstlicher, meist irakischer Flüchtlinge an die polnische Grenze, Russlands gleiches Vorgehen gegen Finnland; entsprechende Drohungen der türkischen, marokkanischen und tunesischen Regierungen sind ebenfalls immer wieder durch konkrete Handlungen oder Unterlassungen unterstrichen worden. Für weitere Beispiele und Belege siehe GREENHILL 2022; PETTY 2022; KOTOULAS / PUSZTAI 2020.

5. *Kontaktzonen*: Der geographische Schauplatz des Zusammentreffens hat sich dramatisch verändert. Wie in mehreren Beiträgen in diesem Band ausführlicher besprochen, war das römisch-germanische Grenzgebiet, wie auch die anderen Grenzgebiete des Reiches, nicht *nur* geprägt vom *Limes* als einer sowohl gedachten wie materiellen *Abgrenzung*. Vielmehr umgaben diese Grenze nach beiden Seiten weitreichende *Begegnungszonen*, in denen Kontakte wirtschaftlicher, ideeller und militärischer Art bestanden. Diese Kontaktzonen sind jedoch zunehmend rar geworden, wie ein Rezensent von Demandts *Grenzen* anmerkt:

Allerdings scheint es so, als seien neutrale Zonen, die sich zwischen soziale Gruppen (Nationen, Kulturen, Klassen) schieben, in einer einerseits nationalstaatlich territorialisierten, andererseits aber zugleich auch globalisierten Welt (Beispiel ‚Schengen-Raum‘ mit seinen ‚Außengrenzen‘) rar geworden. Die Geschichte der Modernisierung ließe sich daher einerseits als eine des Verschwindens von Übergangszonen beschreiben, also als sukzessive Ersetzung liminaler Räume durch abstrakte Grenzlinien, welche die Territorien scharf voneinander sondern. Andererseits kann sie aber auch als die Geschichte der Entstehung neuer Übergangsräume erzählt werden, die bislang unbekannte Möglichkeiten des Konflikts, aber eben auch der Begegnung eröffnen.⁶³

Die zentralen Probleme der gegenwärtigen Migrationskrise liegen geographisch breit verteilt in den *urbanen* Zentren der wohlhabenderen Mitgliedsländer, unabhängig davon, wie stark die mediale Berichterstattung Boote im Mittelmeer, Auffanglager auf griechischen Inseln oder Absperrenzäune in der nordafrikanischen spanischen Exklave Melilla in die kollektive Wahrnehmung rücken. Die heutigen sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und sicherheitsrelevanten Herausforderungen liegen im Herzen Europas, in seinen Großstädten, und zunehmend in seinen mittleren Zentren wie Bradford, Malmö oder Giessen – *nicht* an seinen Außengrenzen. Ebenso kommen die Menschen, die diese Herausforderungen mit sich bringen, nur in seltenen Fällen als bewaffnete Barbaren über die *limites* der heutigen Union, sondern durch unzählige, häufig legale und schlecht lokalisier- oder verschließbare Kanäle, als Asylanten, Familiennachzügler, Geduldete, Kontingentflüchtlinge, Studenten etc.

Lehren der Geschichte

Diese, wiederum nur schematische Aufzählung der strukturellen Unterschiede zwischen der antiken und heutigen Völkerwanderung zeigt, dass historische Vergleiche mit Vorsicht zu genießen sind. Das betrifft insbesondere die historische Ableitung von zu ergreifenden Maßnahmen. Der Wert einer dezidiert historischen Herangehensweise scheint mir vielmehr

⁶³ PARR 2020.

in der Perspektivierung gegenwärtiger Sichtweisen zu liegen.⁶⁴ Eine solche *longue durée* im Sinne Fernand Braudels hilft, Vorläufer und Konsequenzen über die akute Gegenwärtigkeit hinaus zu erkennen.⁶⁵ Die Beschäftigung mit der Geschichte erlaubt es uns, jenseits des undurchdringlich scheinenden Dickichts europäisch, menschenrechtlich und verfassungsrechtlich normierten Asyl- und Fremdenrechts – und anders als die über diese Bereiche Definitionshoheit beanspruchenden Juristen mit ihrer fachspezifischen Kurzsichtigkeit⁶⁶ – grundsätzlichere Überlegungen anzustellen.

Wie die kritischen Beiträge anderer Experten in diesem Band zeigen, eignet sich die Geschichte – ebenso wie viele andere (Natur-)Wissenschaften – nicht für die von manchen Sozialwissenschaftlern (zu denen ich hier die Vertreter der Rechtswissenschaften hinzugeselle) betriebene Suche nach ‚unabhängigen Variablen‘, die durch hypothetisch aufgestellte Kausalketten das jeweils Folgende erschöpfend erklären sollen. John Lewis Gaddis hebt in einer grundsätzlichen Abhandlung über den Wert der Geschichtsschreibung hervor:

this specific difference in how historians and political scientists operate might reflect a larger divergence in method of inquiry that separates history from the social sciences generally. It is, most fundamentally, the distinction between a *reductionist* and an *ecological* view of reality. [...] I take reductionism to be the belief that you can best understand reality by breaking it up into its various parts. [...] It's critical to reductionism that causes be ranked hierarchically. To invoke a democracy of causes – to suggest that an event may have had many antecedents – is considered to be, well, mushy. [...]

But when you're accounting for the evolution of life forms, or the drifting of continents, or the formation of galaxies, you can hardly break things up into their component parts, because so much depends on so much else. [...] Reductionism, then, is hardly the only mode of scientific investigation. For while the ecological

⁶⁴ Hierbei ist es wichtig, *nicht* Fischers „fallacy of presentism“ zu verfallen, wenn „the antecedent [...] is falsified by being defined or interpreted in terms of the consequent“. FISCHER 1970, 135, zitiert und besprochen in GADDIS 1987, 12.

⁶⁵ BRAUDEL 1958. Englische Übersetzung: BRAUDEL 1980, 25–54. Für ein Beispiel der von ihm propagierten Arbeitsweise siehe BRAUDEL 1972.

⁶⁶ Siehe beispielsweise die berühmte Ablehnung konsequentialistischer Erwägungen durch den britischen Appellationsrichter Lord Denning: “I must say this: if a local authority does not fulfil the requirements of the law, this court will see that it does fulfil them. It will not listen readily to suggestions of ‘chaos’. The department of education and the council are subject to the rule of law and must comply with, just like everyone else. *Even if chaos should result, still the law must be obeyed*; but I do not think that chaos will result. The evidence convinces me that the ‘chaos’ is much over-stated.” *Bradbury v. Enfield London Borough Council* [1967] 1 WLR 1311, meine Hervorhebung; siehe ausführlicher STEPHENS 2009, 110–114. Für eine dem hiesigen Untersuchungsgegenstand nähere Diskussion der juristischen Arbeitsweise siehe unter anderem FEIK 2003.

approach also values the specification of single components, it does not stop with that: it considers how components interact to become systems whose nature can't be defined merely by calculating the sum of their parts.⁶⁷

Wir müssen also bei der Bewertung (nicht nur) der römischen Geschichte der Versuchung eines reduktionistischen Erklärungsmodells widerstehen. Sowohl Fürsprecher wie Skeptiker starker Einwanderung gründen ihre jeweiligen Argumente auf der Analyse weniger, als besonders wichtig erachteter Parameter. Deren Auswahl entspringt hierbei meist einem absichtlichen oder unbewussten *confirmation bias* der eigenen normativen Präferenzen, nicht unbedingt einer stringenten Theoriebildung.⁶⁸ Zwischen Befürwortern und Skeptikern der Masseneinwanderung hat sich ein tiefer Graben gebildet, der die zunehmende Polarisierung westlicher Gesellschaften widerspiegelt.⁶⁹

Die wachsende Unwilligkeit in Teilen des demokratischen Diskurses, diesen Graben zu überbrücken und Masseneinwanderung rational, normen-, aber auch interessen­geleitet zu *steuern*, hat dem liberalen Charakter unserer politischen Systeme bleibenden Schaden zugefügt.⁷⁰ Die Unfähigkeit, einem von großen Teilen der Bevölkerung als bedrohlich empfundenen Phänomen Einhalt zu gebieten, verbunden mit zunehmend aggressiven Maßnahmen, schon die Benennung des Problems zu stigmatisieren,⁷¹ hat zum Erstarken einer in vielen Bereichen unverantwortlichen, in der Migrationsfrage aber zunehmend anschlussfähigen extremen Rechten geführt.⁷² Der bekannte jüdische Menschenrechtler Tom Farer bringt diesen intellektuellen, emotionalen und normativen Spagat sehr treffend auf den Punkt:

Most of my life, like any person who writes about policy, I have oscillated between these viewpoints. If you are not necessarily a liberal, if you are just any comfortable middle-class person who does not have a heart of stone, you end up saying, 'Yes, something must be done, people are not interchangeable units.' But to preserve liberal democracy in one of the few parts of today's world where it still flourishes, it may be necessary to see the larger picture. It may be necessary for governments not to suspend but to restrain the humanitarian impulse; to open

⁶⁷ GADDIS 2002, 54f.

⁶⁸ Siehe hierzu grundsätzlich VAN EVERA 1997; KING u. a. 1994.

⁶⁹ "If ancient rhetoricians listened to some of our public disputes these days, they would think we had lost our minds, [...] when we cling like hell to our hermeneutic circle [i.e. our basic predispositions and predilections] it forces us to hide from ourselves the places where our perceptions might just be wrong." REAMES 2024, 3.

⁷⁰ Migration ist hierbei ein wichtiger, aber natürlich nicht der einzige Treiber; siehe hierzu grundsätzlich BOYLE 2016; ZAKARIA 2003.

⁷¹ RAUCH 2021; VIDINO 2022.

⁷² Die französische rechtsextreme Politikerin Marion Maréchal fasste es wie folgt zusammen: "There's just one question on voting day. Do you want an Islamized Europe or a European Europe?" BRODER 2024.

the door, but not too widely; to be generous, yet not too generous; to appeal to the electorate's better angels, while acknowledging its attachment to the idea of a community less broad than the world, *a bounded space*.

Given my fear for the future of liberal democracy, I have written this book with one question foremost in my mind: What grand strategy for managing migration and integrating migrant families into the economic and social order is most likely to enable the defenders of liberal democracy to defeat the authoritarian right with the least possible compromise on human rights norms?⁷³

Der besondere Wert einer langfristigen, geschult historischen Perspektive und der bewusste Vergleich mit früheren Epochen und deren Erfahrungen, wie sie Demandt vorgelegt hat, scheint mir daher gerade in der Erinnerung an die Notwendigkeit der von Gaddis propagierten *ökologischen*, d. h. ganzheitlicheren, multikausaleren Sichtweise zu liegen. Der gegenwärtige Migrationsdiskurs ist symptomatisch für einige der kognitiven Probleme, die eine ernsthaftere Beschäftigung mit Geschichte und ihrer Wissenschaft zumindest abmildern kann.

Gesinnungs- oder Verantwortungsethik

Die deutsche politische Landschaft ist heute geprägt von der unter Kanzlerin Merkel durchgeführten Annäherung bürgerlich-konservativer Wählerschichten an ursprünglich links-liberale Positionen.⁷⁴ Ihre im Schicksalsommer von 2015 gesinnungsethisch begründete und auf realitätsfernem Zweckoptimismus gegründete Staatsdoktrin der buchstäblich unbegrenzten Aufnahme Fremder („Wir schaffen das!“) ist auch weiterhin Leitlinie der Folgerregierung.⁷⁵ Während der langwierigen Verhandlungen des Vertrags von Schengen zur Aufhebung *interner* Grenzkontrollen war es noch notwendig gewesen, der Bevölkerung den Schutz der Außengrenzen dieses Raums der inneren Freizügigkeit glaubhaft zu versichern und Grenzübertritte entsprechend streng zu reglementieren.⁷⁶

Personenfreizügigkeit *innerhalb* der Europäischen Union⁷⁷ hängt auch weiterhin vom *gemeinsamen* Schutz der Außengrenzen und der Regulierung von Drittstaatsangehörigen ab, auch wenn dies von einer Vielzahl von Europa- und Menschenrechtlern mittlerweile als normativ unerwünscht abgelehnt wird.⁷⁸ Solchen Einwänden zum Trotz hat die Unzulänglichkeit

⁷³ FARER 2020, 7, meine Hervorhebung.

⁷⁴ MANOW 2018.

⁷⁵ ANON. 2023; DEUTSCHES INSTITUT FÜR MENSCHENRECHTE 2015; VORREYER 2023.

⁷⁶ Die Entstehungsgeschichte ist übersichtlich dargelegt in OLTMER 2023, 7–18. Ein ausführlicher rechtlicher Kommentar des existierenden *acquis* einschließlich seines Zustandekommens findet sich in THYM 2016.

⁷⁷ SCHIMMELFENNIG 2018.

⁷⁸ Siehe beispielsweise SALOMON / RIJPMAN 2023; MAAS 2005.

des existierenden europäischen Grenzschutzes und Migrationsregimes zu einer teilweisen Re-Nationalisierung staatlicher Maßnahmen⁷⁹ und beträchtlichen Legitimitätseinbußen des europäischen Projektes geführt,⁸⁰ nicht zuletzt aufgrund europaweiter Kosten gesinnungsethisch motivierter nationaler Alleingänge.⁸¹

Die Reaktion der deutschen Bevölkerung auf die von Merkel veranlasste Grenzöffnung war lange Zeit überraschend positiv.⁸² Ebenso überraschend war das anscheinend von einem moralischen Überlegenheitsgefühl getragene Desinteresse an den politischen Einwänden der europäischen Nachbarn. Die tief in die bürgerliche Mitte reichende, neu entdeckte Xenophilie wurde im restlichen Europa auch als Form des deutschen Sonderwegs wahrgenommen.⁸³ Zwar mit umgekehrten moralischen Vorzeichen, aber für unsere Nachbarn bisweilen so unverständlich wie der frühere militärisch-aggressive.⁸⁴

Realitätsverweigerung

Generationen von Westdeutschen sind im ordnungsskeptischen Ethos à la Pippi Langstrumpf erzogen worden, und sie schienen plötzlich ihrer Regierung zu glauben, dass *jegliche* Begrenzung des Zuzugs Fremder einen Affront gegen die Menschlichkeit darstelle. So wie Pippi störende Fakten einfach ignorieren kann, nur „das macht, worauf sie Lust hat“, nur „Dingen und Personen Respekt zollt, die das verdienen“,⁸⁵ und im Zweifelsfall einfach alles mit „einem Rucksack voll Geld“⁸⁶ lösen kann, so scheint im gegenwärtigen Migrationsdiskurs die Verkennung unangenehmer Tatsachen – nicht zuletzt notwendiger finanzieller und institutioneller Ab-

⁷⁹ “Data on the reinstatement of checks at the internal borders illustrate the increase of border controls as an instrument to respond to perceived security threats in the Schengen area. In the nine years preceding September 2015, Member States reintroduced border controls a total of 40 times, while in the following five years – September 2015 - October 2020 – this number rose to 237.” SALOMON / RIJPM 2023, 282.

⁸⁰ PETERSSON FÜRST 2024.

⁸¹ SARACINO 2019.

⁸² KROPP / MINATTI 2024.

⁸³ Hierzu grundsätzlich LANGEWIESCHE 2007; EIBEN 1989.

⁸⁴ RITTER 1954a und 1954b; JENKINS 1989; AFSAH 2008.

⁸⁵ Siehe die Beschreibung der Autorin und ihrer Nachlassverwalter: „Pippi är oberoende av vuxna, hon klarar sig utmärkt själv. Hon behöver aldrig göra något hon inte vill, bara för att andra säger åt henne att göra det, och hon visar ingen respekt för saker och personer som hon inte tycker förtjänar det. Pippi är fri.“ www.astridlindgren.com/sv/ka-raktarena/pippi-langstrump.

⁸⁶ Wie es im Originallied der Autorin so treffend heißt: „Det är inte illa, / jag har apa häst och villa, / en kappsäck full med pengar / är det också bra att ha.“

wägungen – zur bestimmenden Methode geworden zu sein.⁸⁷ In einer vielbeachteten Rede behauptete 2015 die Grünen-Spitzenpolitikerin und jetzige Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Katrin Göring-Eckardt:

Deutschland wird bunter werden. Ja, wie toll ist das! Das haben wir uns immer gewünscht. Wahrscheinlich wird es auch religiöser werden. Na klar. Unser Land wird sich ändern, und zwar drastisch. Und ich sag euch eins: Ich freu mich drauf!⁸⁸

Hintergrund ihrer Aussage ist die Betrachtung des Phänomens Migration als ausschließlich individualrechtlicher Anspruch des Fremden, dem eine unbegrenzte, rechtlich und moralisch begründete und somit unabwägbare, absolute Aufnahmeverpflichtung des Staates gegenübersteht.⁸⁹ Einseitigkeit und Rigorismus dieser moralischen Rechnung werden rhetorisch kaschiert, indem unbewiesen behauptet wird, dass dieser Prozess ausschließlich positive Folgen für das Aufnahmeland haben werde. Strukturelle Faktoren wie der enorme, durch Demographie und Staatsversagen in den Herkunftsländern hervorgerufene und damit weit in die Zukunft anhaltende Migrationsdruck,⁹⁰ die unverkennbaren, besonders bei der muslimischen Diaspora offensichtlichen Integrationshürden⁹¹ ebenso wie das Unbehagen der europäischen Partner⁹² werden als unaussprechlich aus dem Diskurs verbannt⁹³ und ‚die Welt eben gemacht, wie sie uns gefällt‘.⁹⁴

Von besonderem Interesse scheint mir die nonchalante Akzeptanz, dass Deutschland also „auch religiöser werden [wird]“ und dass sich darauf zu freuen sei. Es ist offensichtlich, dass evangelische Politiker wie Göring-Eckhardt oder die ehemalige Bischöfin Margot Käßmann in ihrem Enthusiasmus für die eingewanderte neue Religiosität keine Buddhisten, Juden oder Jain meinen, sondern die Ankunft einer sehr großen Zahl von Muslimen als Bereicherung bezeichnen, weil sie unser Land „bunter“, d. h. vielfältiger, machen würden. Es wird hierbei impliziert, dass die traditionelle Zusammensetzung der deutschen und europäischen Bevölkerung irgendwie unzulänglich gewesen sei und dass die Überwindung dieser herkömmlichen, relativen Homogenität durch Vielfalt, insbesondere durch die Injektion islamischer Frömmigkeit, positive Resultate zeitigen werde. Es erscheint mir sinnvoll, diese Annahmen aus der Perspektive des ka-

⁸⁷ NEFF / SCHERRER 2022; LÓPEZ-SALA / GODENAU 2017.

⁸⁸ Zit. n. SCHULER 2023.

⁸⁹ Für eine programmatische, quasi-juristische Darlegung dieser Denkweise siehe u. a. DEUTSCHES INSTITUT FÜR MENSCHENRECHTE 2015.

⁹⁰ SENGUPTA 2018; SCHWARTZSTEIN 2017; HACKETT u. a. 2017.

⁹¹ FARER 2020.

⁹² GUJER 2023; OLTMER 2023.

⁹³ BMI 2023.

⁹⁴ SCHWARTZ 2023a; NEFF 2017.

tholischen Staatsrechtlers Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde und des jüdischen Politologen Karl Deutsch näher zu untersuchen.

Homogenität und Sicherheitsgemeinschaft

Die folgenden Gedanken basieren auf diesen Grundannahmen: Erstens ist der Islam in Westeuropa ein relativ neues, größtenteils durch ungeplante Migration nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg entstandenes Phänomen.⁹⁵ Es gibt also keinen Fundus historischer Erfahrung konstruktiven Zusammenlebens und gegenseitiger Anpassung; vielmehr kann die europäische Entwicklung geradezu als unbeabsichtigter Gegenentwurf zum islamischen Staatsverständnis angesehen werden.⁹⁶ Man kann *hoffen*, dass dieses Zusammenleben friedlich verlaufen wird, es gibt hierfür allerdings *keine* historischen Vorbilder.

Ungeachtet der vielschichtigen Ursachen kann, zweitens, konstatiert werden, dass ausnahmslos *alle* Heimatgesellschaften der hiesigen muslimischen Minderheit *keine* positive Erfahrung mit partizipativer, geschweige denn freiheitlicher politischer Kultur haben.⁹⁷ Seit spätestens 1979 dominieren allenthalben religiöse, oft ausgesprochen gewalttätige Formen politischer und gesellschaftlicher Organisation.⁹⁸

Drittens führen demographische Charakteristika, wie Bildungsferne und soziale Klasse, sowie die Natur des europäischen Arbeitsmarkts im Wohlfahrtsstaat ohne aktive Gegenmaßnahmen zwangsläufig zur Bildung von Parallelgesellschaften.⁹⁹ Daraus folgt, viertens, dass die wirtschaftlich-soziale Integration dieser großen und stark wachsenden Minderheit zunehmend fragwürdig geworden ist.¹⁰⁰ Dies nicht zuletzt, weil der *liberale* Verfassungsstaat und die ihn tragende bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit einem normativen Absolutismus¹⁰¹ verpflichtet zu sein scheinen, der effektive Gegenmaßnahmen verhindert.¹⁰²

Der liberale Verfassungsstaat beruht auf Vorbedingungen, die er selbst nicht garantieren kann, so das wohlbekannte Diktum des deutschen Ver-

⁹⁵ Es gibt ältere muslimische Minderheiten im Osten und Süden Europas. In dem für die Diskussion des *liberalen* Verfassungsstaats wesentlichen *westlichen* Teil Europas aber gab es bis in die 1950er Jahre so gut wie gar keine Muslime. AFSAH 2020a.

⁹⁶ Siehe zu Ersterem D'AMATO 2015. Zu Letzterem siehe NAGEL 1981a und 1981b.

⁹⁷ Siehe u. a. EL-AFFENDI 2011; EL-BADAWI / MAKDISI 2007.

⁹⁸ SALZMAN 2011; MELHEM 2014.

⁹⁹ Siehe u. a. D'AMATO 2015. Diese Probleme sind nicht ausschließlich europäisch, wie das Beispiel der größten muslimischen Minderheit (in Indien) zeigt, siehe HASAN 1988.

¹⁰⁰ ÅGERUP 2019; AFSAH 2016.

¹⁰¹ Im österreichischen Kontext hat diese Position eine selbstbewusste, auf Kelsen zurückgehende Tradition, siehe WAGRANDL 2019, 209–220.

¹⁰² Siehe u. a. NAGEL 2005, ebenso wie die anderen Beiträge in diesem Band.

fassungsrechtlers Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde.¹⁰³ Als freiheitlicher Staat hängt er von der inneren Zustimmung seiner Bürger zu einer offenen Gesellschaft ab. Allen durchaus gewollten Unterschieden zum Trotz sind sich die Bürger also in dieser Geisteshaltung der Akzeptanz der gegenwärtigen Ordnung und des friedlichen Zusammenlebens mit anderen *alle gleich*.

Aus dieser „moralischen Substanz des einzelnen und der Homogenität der Gesellschaft“ speist sich der freiheitliche Staat, kann sie aber nicht *erzwingen*, will er seine Freiheitlichkeit nicht aufgeben.¹⁰⁴ Karl Deutsch hat diesen unabdingbaren Minimalkonsens in anderem Kontext als „Sicherheitsgemeinschaft“ bezeichnet, also eine Gemeinschaft von Menschen, die sich alle in mindestens einem Punkt gleich sind, nämlich:

a belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least this one point: that common social problems must and can be resolved by processes of ‘peaceful change’ [defined as] the resolution of social problems, normally by institutionalized procedures, without resort to large-scale physical force.¹⁰⁵

Dieser Minimalkonsens ist in keinem einzigen mehrheitsmuslimischen Land gegenwärtig gegeben und hat auch historisch niemals existiert. Religiöses Dogma ebenso wie Staatsdoktrin haben die Anwendung von Gewalt zur Durchsetzung einer ‚richtigen‘ Lebensweise stets gutgeheißen und eingefordert.¹⁰⁶ Im vorliegenden Kontext geht es aber um den Umgang mit muslimischen *Minderheiten*, die freiwillig in die von Böckenförde beschriebenen liberalen Verfassungsstaaten Europas *eingewandert* sind, wo zwei weitere von Deutsch genannte Charakteristika zum Tragen kommen.

Dieser erklärt die Dauerhaftigkeit der gegenseitigen Erwartung *unbedingter Friedfertigkeit* aus einem Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl, einer ‚sense of community‘. Diese baut auf geteilten Werten und gegenseitigem Vertrauen, nämlich der Fähigkeit „to respond to each other’s needs, messages, and actions quickly, adequately, and without resort to violence“, sowie einer „compatibility of major values relevant to political decision-making“. ¹⁰⁷ Mit anderen Worten, einer geteilten „basic political ideology“¹⁰⁸ wie etwa Demokratie, Rechtsstaatlichkeit und einem Mindestmaß an Säkularisierung.¹⁰⁹ Es ist genau dieser politisch-ideelle Minimalkonsens,

¹⁰³ BÖCKENFÖRDE 2006, 112.

¹⁰⁴ BÖCKENFÖRDE 2006, 112.

¹⁰⁵ DEUTSCH 1957, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Siehe auch THIELMANN 2017; TYAN 2012; COOK 2003 und 2000.

¹⁰⁷ DEUTSCH 1957, 66.

¹⁰⁸ DEUTSCH 1957, 124.

¹⁰⁹ Zur Frage der unabdingbaren Säkularisierung eines freiheitlichen Staates siehe die verschiedenen Beiträge und insbesondere BÖCKENFÖRDE 2010.

den Böckenförde als die unabdingbare „Homogenität der Gesellschaft“ bezeichnet.¹¹⁰

Wie bereits Deutsch selber feststellte, ist es letztlich die wahrgenommene Interessenskonvergenz der Mitglieder,¹¹¹ die zur Bildung einer *dauerhaften* Sicherheitsgemeinschaft jenseits kurzfristiger, opportunistischer Allianzen¹¹² führt: “Without mutual needs and mutual concessions, even a high degree of similarity in institutions and of like-mindedness in outlook would not produce any particular progress toward either integration or amalgamation.”¹¹³ Ausschlaggebend sei weniger kulturelle Ähnlichkeit als schlicht „the increasing unattractiveness and improbability of war among the political units concerned“.¹¹⁴

Islam und Zugehörigkeit

Nach Karl Deutschs Definition teilen also Menschen in einer Sicherheitsgemeinschaft ein Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl, das auf Sympathie, Vertrauen und gemeinsamen Interessen beruht.¹¹⁵ Für Europa stellt sich nun verspätet die Frage, ob die hierher eingewanderten Muslime dazugehören wollen, sollen oder es überhaupt können. Bereits die Fragestellung wird mancherorts als diskriminierend abgelehnt:

Was soll das eigentlich heißen: der Islam gehört, oder gehört nicht, zu Deutschland? Dass der Islam nicht Staatsreligion ist, anders als in einigen anderen Ländern? Das versteht sich von selbst, gilt aber auch für andere Religionen wie das Christentum. Dass andererseits der Islam nicht ausgeübt werden darf? Auch das kann nicht gemeint sein; die Religionsfreiheit gilt auch für den Islam. [...] Nein, gemeint ist hier offenbar eine Leitkultur, wie sie zuletzt Thomas de Maizières vor einem Jahr formuliert hat, übrigens damals auch schon in der Bildzeitung. Diese Leitkultur ist vor allem dadurch gekennzeichnet ist [*sic*], was sie nicht ist. „Wir sind nicht Burka“, titelte die Bildzeitung, und auch sonst zog sich durch de Maizières Thesen vor allem eine Abgrenzung von einem stereotypischen Islam, mit Burka, Sharia-Recht und Ehrenmord – und eine explizite Berufung der christlichen Prägung des Landes.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ BÖCKENFÖRDE 2006, 112.

¹¹¹ Siehe hierzu ausführlicher TUSICISNY 2007.

¹¹² Ob dies ohne volle politische Integration, d. h. Staatsbildung, überhaupt möglich ist, wird von ‚harten‘ Realisten immer wieder in Frage gestellt, siehe z. B. WALT 1997 und 1990.

¹¹³ DEUTSCH 1957, 91.

¹¹⁴ DEUTSCH 1957, 115.

¹¹⁵ Siehe allgemein ADLER / BARNETT 1998; FUKUYAMA 1995.

¹¹⁶ MICHAELS 2018b.

Ralf Michaels findet daher bereits die Frage anstößig und staatliche Mittel wie Integrationsgesetze,¹¹⁷ die den Zuzüglern Pflichten auferlegen und einen verbindlichen Wertekanon festlegen wollen, unerträglich. Diese Maßnahmen seien Ausdruck „einer als Leitkultur verbrämten Islamophobie“.¹¹⁸ Michaels lehnt schon den Versuch einer Einigung auf gemeinsame Werte als inhärent ausgrenzend ab, insbesondere da es die eigentlich schwachen, schutzbedürftigen muslimischen Einwanderer als quintessenzielle ‚Andere‘ trifft, die zur Drohkulisse karikiert und instrumentalisiert werden:

Dieses „Wir-Gefühl“ als Grundlage der Nation ist nun aber seinerseits problematisch. Das Wir-Gefühl hat nämlich ein Inneres und ein äußeres [sic]: Es kreiert relative Homogenität nach innen, zusammen mit relativer Abgrenzung nach außen. [...] Die Position dieses Gegenüber des nationalen Wir-Gefühls füllt nun heute der Islam aus. Die aggressive Ablehnung und Feindlichkeit erlebt er ebenfalls. Was beunruhigt, ist, wie offenbar ein gewisses Maß an Islamophobie nicht nur kompatibel mit dem liberalen säkularisierten Staat Böckenförde'scher Prägung ist, sondern sogar notwendig, um die relative Homogenität hervorzu- bringen, die der Staat allein nicht schaffen kann, die aber auch die Gesellschaft nicht erreichen kann, ohne sich gegen ein Gegenüber abzugrenzen. Insofern, als Gegenüber, ist der Islam Teil Deutschlands geworden.¹¹⁹

Der liberale Staat wird in erste Linie als evolutionäre Beschränkung staatlicher Gewalt wahrgenommen. Den Staat begründenden¹²⁰ Machtmitteln wird als immerwährender Gefahr für die Freiheit des Einzelnen misstraut, auch wenn diese implizierte Antinomie zwischen Sicherheit und Freiheit und die darauf basierende Sicht von Rechtsstaatlichkeit primär als Staatsabwehr bisweilen „klischeehaft“ wirkt, wie der deutsche Staatsrechtler Isensee zu Beginn seiner Einforderung eines ‚Grundrechts auf Sicherheit‘ herausstreicht:

Bei Annahme eines solchen Widerspruchs der Werte stellt sich die Parteinahme für die Freiheit als ‚liberal‘ dar, während die für die Sicherheit den Stempel ‚konservativ‘ erhält. Das Motto einer ‚liberal‘ firmierenden Rechtspolitik lautet demgemäß ‚in dubio pro libertate‘. Es markiert den Vorrang der Selbstbestimmung des Bürgers vor der Fremdbestimmung des Staates. Doch es wird auch dort bemüht, wo der Private die rechtlichen Schranken seiner Selbstbestimmung durchbricht, die Rechte anderer gefährdet oder verletzt und seine Konflikte gewalttätig austrägt. [...]

¹¹⁷ So z. B. Bayerisches Integrationsgesetz (BayIntG) vom 13. Dezember 2016 (GVBl. S. 335), BayRS 26-6-I.

¹¹⁸ MICHAELS 2018b. Es sei dahingestellt, ob der Begriff ‚Islamophobie‘ angesichts seines ideologischen Charakters als Kampfbegriff analytisch sinnvoll ist. Siehe hierzu u. a. HEINISCH / SCHOLZ 2012, 17–28.

¹¹⁹ MICHAELS 2018a.

¹²⁰ Siehe zum Gewaltmonopol und staatlicher Legitimität näher ANTER 2014, 36–48 u. 59–75. Zum staatsbegründenden Aspekt der Gehorsamserwartung für öffentlichen Befehl siehe ANTER 2016, 42–46.

Die Rechtspolitik des ‚laissez faire, laissez passer‘ sieht sich bestätigt im Verfassungsrecht, und zwar in einer Deutung, die ich der Kürze halber die Staatsabwehrdoktrin nennen möchte. Die Rechtsstaatlichkeit des Grundgesetzes erscheint einzig als ein System von Vorkehrungen zur Abwehr staatlichen Handelns. Sie begrenzt die möglichen Maßnahmen des Staates zur Wahrung der Sicherheit, aber sie begründet und gewährleistet sie nicht. Die Sicherheit als staatsforderndes Prinzip erscheint geradezu als Gegensatz zu den staatsabweisenden Grundsätzen des Rechtsstaates, insbesondere zu den Grundrechten.¹²¹

Diese Sichtweise beschreibt treffend auch den Umgang mit der muslimischen Minderheit im gesamten Westen. Repressive Maßnahmen werden ausschließlich gegen gewaltbereite Extremisten akzeptiert, während andere Formen religiöser politisch-gesellschaftlicher Organisation nicht nur geduldet, sondern aktiv gefördert werden sollen.

Die unkritische Akzeptanz eines durchaus problematischen islamischen Erbes, dessen Erhalt und Pflege durch politisch motivierte Organisationen ausdrücklich gefordert und gefördert wird,¹²² wirft Fragen auf, wie der deutsche Islamwissenschaftler Tilmann Nagel zu bedenken gibt:

‚Der Islam gehört inzwischen auch zu Deutschland.‘ Mit Erstaunen las ich diesen Satz in einer Rede, die im Jahre 2010 der damalige Bundespräsident zum Tag der Deutschen Einheit gehalten hatte. Eine politisch-religiöse Heilsbotschaft, deren Vorschriften wesentliche Teile unserer deutschen Kultur als Unglauben verurteilen, nämlich die Musik, die Malerei, die Bildhauerei, desgleichen die Früchte unserer Wissenschaft, sofern sie nicht durch den Koran, eine Schrift aus dem frühen 7. Jahrhundert, gerechtfertigt werden, soll nun Teil unserer Geschichte sein! Eine Religion, die unsere Volkskultur als pures Teufelszeug verunglimpft, etwa den Karneval und das Oktoberfest! Wieso gehört diese Religion, deren eifrige Anhänger unseren Tageslauf ihren Ritualpflichten unterwerfen und ihren Töchtern den Umgang mit unseren Söhnen verbieten wollen, ‚inzwischen‘ zu Deutschland?

Haben die Wortführer dieser Religion auch nur in irgendeinem Punkte mit eindeutigen Äußerungen ein Abweichen von ihren sozialen Dogmen, eine Bereitschaft zum Überdenken ihrer diesbezüglichen Maximalforderungen zu erkennen gegeben, und zwar nicht nur vor Vertretern der deutschen Mehrheitsgesellschaft, sondern auch gegenüber ihren Glaubensbrüdern in der islamischen Welt? Nur dann wäre doch überhaupt von einer ‚inzwischen‘ erworbenen Zugehörigkeit zu reden oder wenigstens vom Willen, dazuzugehören!

Jene politisch-religiöse Heilslehre, deren Vordenker eine Grundfähigkeit der deutschen, ja der europäischen Kultur vermissen lassen, nämlich die Fähigkeit zur kritischen Selbstprüfung, die einen dazu drängt, die eigenen Gewißheiten wenigstens vorübergehend hintanzustellen und sich in den Anderen hineinzu-denken, soll nunmehr zu Deutschland gehören? Jene Heilslehre mit ihrem rücksichtslosen ‚sozialen Imperialismus‘ (Georges Anawati), ihrer Unterdrückung der Frau, ihrer Ablehnung der Religionsfreiheit, soll ein Teil unseres Landes und unserer Geschichte geworden sein, ohne daß ihre Wortführer die Prinzipien

¹²¹ ISENSEE 2012, 1f.

¹²² STEINHILBER 2018; NAGEL 1990.

unseres säkularen Gemeinwesens, zu denen jene Heilslehre in einem krassen Widerspruch steht, ausdrücklich, vollständig und in verbindlicher Form anerkannt hätten? Eine absurde Vorstellung, selbst wenn der höchste Vertreter der deutschen politischen Klasse sie vorträgt!¹²³

Es scheint, dass die Hoffnung, die muslimische Minderheit werde sich schon im aufgeklärten Sinn anpassen, auf den Erfahrungen mit dem vorkonziliaren¹²⁴ Katholizismus beruht.¹²⁵ Die liberale Einladung zur Teilhabe am öffentlichen Leben basiert auf einem doppelten Wagnis – dass der Eingeladene sie annehmen möchte und sich auch zu benehmen weiß:

Die Bürger – vor allem die religiösen – sollten den Mut haben, sich auf das Risiko eines freiheitlichen Staates einzulassen. Es führt allen, die sich gewissen ethischen Vorstellungen verschreiben – wie im Falle mancher Katholiken dem Naturrecht oder im Falle mancher Muslime der Scharia –, vor Augen, dass sie sich mit der Demokratie auf ein Wagnis einlassen. Gleichzeitig macht es aber auch deutlich, dass sie eben auch als freie und gleiche Bürger die Möglichkeit haben, nach ihren Idealen zu leben, solange das demokratische Grundethos von Freiheit und Gleichheit nicht verletzt wird.¹²⁶

Religion als *res publica*

Hieraus spricht die Überzeugung, das eigene offene Gesellschaftsmodell sei tradierten Wert- und Organisationsvorstellungen im direkten Vergleich überlegen und damit attraktiver. Daraus wird abgeleitet, dass der ‚Andere‘ diese Überlegenheit anerkennen und sich anpassen wollen wird. Die Aufgabe des liberalen Staates sei es, diesen unausweichlichen Anpassungsprozess nicht zu stören und gerade *durch* seine Tolerierung wesensfremden Verhaltens seine Akzeptanz beim ‚Anderen‘ zu erreichen:¹²⁷

¹²³ NAGEL 2014, 7f., Verweise ausgelassen.

¹²⁴ Siehe z. B. der von Böckenförde zitierte Kardinal Ottaviani, der noch 1960 wie ein Islamist sprach: „Du sagst vielleicht, die katholische Kirche braucht also zweierlei Maß und Gewicht. Denn wo sie selbst herrscht, will sie die Rechte der Andersgläubigen einschränken, wo sie aber eine Minderheit der Bürger bildet, verlangt sie gleiche Rechte wie die anderen. Darauf ist zu antworten: In der Tat, zweierlei Gewicht und Maß ist anzuwenden, das eine für die Wahrheit, das andere für den Irrtum.“ (Zit. n. BÖCKENFÖRDE 2007, 33, Fußnote 15.) Siehe hierzu die Ausführungen Sadiq al-Azms zum ‚vergleichenden Fundamentalismus‘, der die überraschenden Überschneidungen und gegenseitigen Entlehnungen des religiösen Anti-Modernismus hervorhebt. AL-AZM 1993a und 2008.

¹²⁵ Siehe hierzu ALTINORDU 2010; GROSS 2004; LAPPENKÜPER 2017. Für eine revisionistische, d. h. pro-katholische Darstellung siehe ROSS 1998.

¹²⁶ MÜLLER 2017.

¹²⁷ Siehe hierzu die wohlwollende, aber differenzierte Besprechung des gewährenden Urteils des deutschen Bundesverfassungsgerichts zum Kopftuch im Schuldienst in WENZEL 2015.

Damit ist ihnen auch die Möglichkeit geboten, Religion – so sie denn wollen – nicht als Privatsache, sondern als öffentlich sichtbare zu praktizieren: Andere Bürger mögen inspiriert werden oder zumindest für religiöse Überzeugungen, welche sie nicht teilen, mehr Respekt empfinden. Kein Wunder, dass sich Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde gegen Kopftuchverbote und für die Einführung eines muslimischen Feiertags in Deutschland ausgesprochen hat. Wobei auch dabei klar bleibt: Sogar die religionsfreundlichste Demokratie kann keine Garantien für ihr eigenes Fortbestehen bieten.¹²⁸

Es würde den Rahmen des vorliegenden Beitrags sprengen, zu erörtern, warum die moderne islamische Geschichte keine Säkularisierung ihrer politischen Gemeinwesen hervorgebracht hat, geschweige denn, ob verfassungsmäßige, d. h. in ihrer Gewaltanwendung selbstbeschränkende, rechtlich verantwortliche oder gar freiheitliche staatliche Ordnungen in diesem Kulturkreis überhaupt möglich sind.¹²⁹ Das Fehlen auch nur eines einzigen positiven Beispiels in Geschichte und Gegenwart lässt zumindest ernsthafte Zweifel an beidem aufkommen.¹³⁰ Es geht also nur vordergründig um Kopftücher, Gebetsräume, Speisevorschriften, Sportunterricht oder woran auch immer der Konflikt zwischen Zugewanderten und Mehrheitsgesellschaft sich manifestiert. Literatur und Rechtsprechung haben diese Konflikte in den letzten Jahrzehnten immer wieder kontrovers behandelt.

Die Behauptung, ein ‚Recht‘ zum Tragen eines Schleiers, zum Schwimmen in einem geschlechtssegregierten Schwimmbad, zu Gebetsräumen in öffentlichen Gebäuden, zu religiöser Ausbildung auf Staatskosten etc. zu haben, wird von manchen als „a uniquely significant claim against the moral legitimacy“ diesen Forderungen entgegenstehender Regeln angesehen.¹³¹ Eine liberale Gesellschaftsordnung zeichne sich in erster Linie durch *Toleranz* aus, diese könne aber nur durch die Hinnahme unerwünschten Verhaltens bewiesen werden. Daher sei das bewusste Sich-Absondern, hier der Muslime, ein willkommener *Test* der hiesigen Rechtsordnung und der eigenen Geisteshaltung.¹³²

¹²⁸ MÜLLER 2017.

¹²⁹ Diese Geschichte ist erschöpfend in Nagels zweibändigem Werk dargelegt, NAGEL 1981a und 1981b. Weitere gelehrte, wohlwollende Darstellungen sind unter anderem LAPIDUS 2014 und 2015; HOURANI 2005.

¹³⁰ Siehe statt vieler die von Böckenförde wohlwollend besprochene Übersichtsarbeit von WICK 2009; BÖCKENFÖRDE 2009. Eindringliche neuere interne Aufarbeitungen dieses problematischen Erbes sind u. a. ELBADAWI / MAKDISI 2011; KEDOURI 2013; MELHEM 2014.

¹³¹ COX 2019, 51.

¹³² FORST (2000) stellt fest, dass Toleranz nur jemandem gelten kann, dessen Verhalten man selber als falsch oder schlecht empfindet. Da Ablehnung also essenziell ist, kann Toleranz seiner Meinung nach weder vollständige Bejahung von etwas noch Gleichgültigkeit bedeuten, sondern nur widerstrebendes, aber bewusstes Hinnehmen.

Neville Cox steht jeglicher Einschränkung eines solchen ‚Rechts auf Andersartigkeit‘ skeptisch gegenüber. Vorgebliche Ziele wie die Bekämpfung des Terrorismus,¹³³ des Schutzes der Gleichheit von Mann und Frau,¹³⁴ der herrschenden Werteordnung¹³⁵ oder der Rechte anderer¹³⁶ seien allesamt letztlich wenig mehr als dünn verbrämte Auswüchse von Rechtspopulismus, Einwanderungsfeindlichkeit und der Ablehnung des Multikulturalismus.¹³⁷ Er schließt seine Diskussion der gesamteuropäischen Staatenpraxis mit dem zustimmenden Verweis auf Ralf Michaels’ Fazit,¹³⁸ dass all diese Versuche „entirely symbolic“ seien, nichts anderes als „a symbolic strike against the symbolic representation of a challenging ideological opponent“.¹³⁹

Symbole der Abgrenzung

Aber ist die symbolische Auseinandersetzung mit ihren ideologischen Gegnern nicht ein notwendiger Aspekt einer wehrhaften Demokratie?¹⁴⁰ Es ist davon auszugehen, dass weder Cox noch Michaels diese Frage vollständig verneinen, z. B. im Rahmen der in Österreich und Deutschland bestehenden Gesetze gegen nationalsozialistische Symbole.¹⁴¹ Sie argumentieren stattdessen, dass die eingewanderten Muslime schwach und daher zu schützen seien, die ideologische Herausforderung, die in ihrer andersartigen Lebensführung liegt, sei daher lediglich unangenehm, aber als Preis der Bestätigung der eigenen Freiheitsliebe zu ertragen:

But of course, rights provide negligible substantive benefits for people whose liberty is not actually being threatened. Rather the measure of whether a country or its people endorse a human rights vision is the extent to which it or they stand behind those who are vulnerable in the face of societal orthodoxy and wish to challenge it. Anti-veiling laws do the opposite – they stand behind the orthodoxy and behind those who gain from it and penalise the vulnerable, ideological

¹³³ Cox 2019, 98–138.

¹³⁴ Cox 2019, 139–183.

¹³⁵ Cox 2019, 184–225.

¹³⁶ Cox 2019, 226–247.

¹³⁷ Cox 2019, 51.

¹³⁸ MICHAELS 2018a.

¹³⁹ Cox 2019, 249.

¹⁴⁰ Die Notwendigkeit der aktiven Verteidigung des liberal-demokratischen Staates gegen seine inneren Feinde wurde programmatisch durch Karl LOEWENSTEIN (1937a und 1937b) im amerikanischen Exil dargelegt. Für eine Zusammenfassung im gegenwärtigen politischen wie verfassungsrechtlichen Diskurs siehe MÜLLER 2012. Eine sehr gute Anwendung dieses Ansatzes für die österreichische Rechtsordnung ist WAGRANDL 2019.

¹⁴¹ WAGRANDL 2019, 35–40 u. 160–186.

challenger. I have speculated that, far from being a by-product of such laws, this is precisely what they are intended to do.¹⁴²

Dies klingt vordergründig nobel und prinzipientreu, doch basiert dieses Denken eben auf der unbelegten Annahme, dass der Andersdenkende *verletzlich* und letztlich *ungefährlich* ist. Autoren wie Cox und Michaels, aber teilweise auch Böckenförde halten nicht offen gewaltbereite, ‚nur‘ anti-westliche Formen von Religiosität für etwas, das Staat und Mehrheitsgesellschaft als Preis der Freiheit und Einladung zu dieser hinzunehmen hätten.¹⁴³ Cox sieht daher die Hauptgefahr für die liberale Verfassungsordnung im Verhalten der *Mehrheit*, nicht der muslimischen Minderheit:

whereas the majority may well be becoming more entitled, populism and majoritarianism represent a fundamental threat to the operation of international human rights law because they involve a diminution of the value of the rights of the unorthodox, the vulnerable and the minority.¹⁴⁴

Nach dieser weitverbreiteten Sichtweise ist es hinzunehmen, ja sogar wünschenswert, wenn sich Muslime im Rahmen der existierenden politischen und gesellschaftlichen Gegebenheiten für eine Durchsetzung ihrer normativen Vorstellungen im öffentlichen Raum einsetzen. Die Bildung ethnisch oder religiös fundierter Gruppierungen, Parteien und Interessenverbände wird als positiver Ausdruck der Integration, nicht als Separatismus gesehen.¹⁴⁵ Die Islamisierung bestimmter Aspekte öffentlichen Lebens, nicht zuletzt im Bildungsbereich,¹⁴⁶ die mit einem ‚Marsch durch die Institutionen‘ versucht wird,¹⁴⁷ sei als Ausdruck demokratischer Teilhabe positiv zu bewerten.¹⁴⁸

Freiheit und ihre Feinde

Diese nonchalante Akzeptanz illiberalen und demokratiefeindlichen Denkens als vorgeblich notwendiger Preis der Freiheit ist vielerorts mittlerweile

¹⁴² COX 2019, 260.

¹⁴³ Hierzu ausführlich MANEA 2021, 138–166.

¹⁴⁴ COX 2019, 260.

¹⁴⁵ Frankreich ist momentan das einzige westeuropäische Land, das sich diesen Bestrebungen ausdrücklich widersetzt: „The French government says draft legislation aimed at combating the extremist ideology that has taken many lives on French soil in recent years is a ‘law of freedom’ necessary for peaceful coexistence.” COHEN 2020.

¹⁴⁶ Siehe „Sprachlosigkeit: Religiöser versus säkularer Fundamentalismus – religiöse versus säkulare Ordnungsideologie“, STEINHILBER 2018, 131–143; „Das Verbot radikal-islamistischer Propaganda“, WAGRANDL 2019, 186–190.

¹⁴⁷ So die ausdrückliche Strategie einflussreicher islamischer Theoretiker, siehe u. a. Kapitel 7 „The White Man’s Burden and the Mainstreaming of Islamism“ in MANEA 2021, 109–137.

¹⁴⁸ RAHNER 2018; ONISHI / MÉHEUT 2021.

zur ‚konventionellen Wahrheit‘ geworden, wird in breiten gesellschaftlichen Schichten widerspruchslös hingenommen und von den Feinden der Freiheit ausdrücklich eingefordert.¹⁴⁹ Der Ausdruck ‚konventionelle Wahrheit‘ geht auf den Ökonomen John Kenneth Galbraith zurück, für den ‚conventional wisdom‘ etwas anderes als ‚common sense‘ ist. Wie Galbraith in seinem Buch *The Affluent Society* ausführt, hängt das, was eine Gesellschaft für selbstverständlich hält, nur teilweise davon ab, ob es überprüfbar richtig und praktisch nützlich ist, sondern größtenteils davon, ob es ethisch und ontologisch bequem und akzeptabel ist:

As a consequence, in the interpretation of all social life, there is a persistent and never-ending competition between what is right and what is merely acceptable. In this competition, while a strategic advantage lies with what exists, all tactical advantage is with the acceptable. Audiences of all kinds most applaud what they like best. [...] Just as truth ultimately serves to create a consensus, so in the short run does acceptability. Ideas come to be organized around what the community as a whole or particular audiences find acceptable. [...] It will be convenient to have a name for the ideas which are esteemed at any time for their acceptability, and it should be a term that emphasizes this predictability. I shall refer to these ideas henceforth as the conventional wisdom.¹⁵⁰

‚Wahrheit‘ wird also nicht durch logische Schlüssigkeit begründet oder durch empirische Beobachtung bewiesen, sondern entsteht durch Wiederholung und sozialen Druck, der kritische Prüfung erschwert. Gerade im politischen Diskurs, aber auch in bestimmten akademischen Bereichen beobachtete Galbraith, dass Aussagen einfach behauptet werden, ohne sie empirisch oder logisch begründen zu können:

The wordfact makes words a precise substitute for reality. This is an enormous convenience. It means that to say that something exists is a substitute for its existence. And to say that something will happen is as good as having it happen. The saving in energy is nearly total. [...] Such is the service of wordfact in transforming misfortune into fortune.¹⁵¹

Angesichts des anhaltend starken Migrationsdrucks und damit einhergehender Sorgen um religiös motivierte Gewalt, Kriminalität und demographische Umwälzungen ist ein gewisses gesellschaftliches Unbehagen gegenüber dem Islam und seinen Anhängern zu erkennen. Dieses Unbehagen als unzulässig zu erklären und stattdessen zu behaupten, dass man sich auf die massiven Veränderungen durch die eingewanderte Religiosität „zu freuen“ habe, da uns nun „Menschen geschenkt“ würden, erinnert stark an Galbraiths Definition der Aufgabe solcher Worthülsen, nämlich „misfortune into fortune“ umzudeuten. Demandts Debattenbeitrag zu rö-

¹⁴⁹ Siehe hierzu „Grundrechtsmissbrauch als performativer Widerspruch“, WAGRANDL 2019, 45–47; VIDINO 2022; AFSAH 2021a.

¹⁵⁰ GALBRAITH 1958, 19–21.

¹⁵¹ GALBRAITH 1960.

misch-germanischer Grenzpolitik ist geeignet, die als angenehm und tröstlich angesehenen *wordfacts* einem kritischen *reality check* zu unterwerfen.

So wie der eingangs erwähnte Chefredakteur Löhmann Demandts Darstellung römisch-germanischer Grenzpolitik zwar als richtig, aber „von böswilliger Seite missbräuchlich“ verwendbar ansah,¹⁵² so wird in weiten Teilen der bürgerlichen Mitte die grundsätzliche *Vereinbarkeit* der Kerninhalte des islamischen Glaubens mit denen einer liberal-demokratischen Verfassungsordnung kurzerhand *behauptet*. Die Gefahr, die von einem unaufgeklärten Islam in der Mitte Europas ausgeht, wird ausgeblendet¹⁵³ und kritische Stimmen als illegitim abgewertet.¹⁵⁴ Dies geschieht aus der – empirisch nicht begründeten – Hoffnung, die eingewanderten Muslime würden sich mittelfristig der Attraktivität des europäischen Wertekanons nicht entziehen können und sich anpassen. Explizite Forderungen, geschweige denn repressive Maßnahmen würden diesen organischen, unabwendbaren Anpassungsprozess nur unnötig verzögern. Der Islamwissenschaftler und Historiker Tilmann Nagel hält diese Sichtweise für ahistorisch und verantwortungslos:

Indem sich die Mehrheit unserer politisch-medialen Klasse auf die politische Korrektheit beruft, verbittet sie sich die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Islam. Ein solcher Versuch der Einschränkung der Wissenschafts- und Meinungsfreiheit ist nur damit zu erklären, daß man sehr wohl weiß, daß die Kritiker einen wunden Punkt ansprechen. Doch um des lieben Friedens willen und wider besseres Wissen soll mit Bezug auf den Islam die Erinnerung an die Grundwerte unserer geistigen, politischen und sozialen Kultur unterbleiben, vor allem aber jeder Hinweis darauf, daß unsere Kultur es wert ist, gegen ihre frommen Verächter muslimischen Glaubens verteidigt zu werden. Freiheit und Rechtssicherheit sind nichts Selbstverständliches. Zuzuschauen, ob sie gleichsam von selbst den Attacken illiberaler Kräfte standhalten, das ist ein unverantwortbares Experiment!¹⁵⁵

Weite Teile der islamischen Welt sind geprägt von Staatsversagen und enormen gesellschaftlichen Spannungen,¹⁵⁶ was zu Entfremdung, Scham und Wut geführt hat.¹⁵⁷ Große Bevölkerungsteile schließen aus dieser Frustration, dass Gewalt nach innen wie außen ein adäquates Mittel zur Durchsetzung tradierter Normen sei, da diese als einziger Anker in einer

¹⁵² Zit. n. DEMANDT 2016.

¹⁵³ Siehe hierzu MANEA 2021, 82–108.

¹⁵⁴ Siehe hierzu die Diskussion zum Begriff der sogenannten ‚Islamophobie‘ in HEINISCH / SCHOLZ 2012.

¹⁵⁵ NAGEL 2014, 9f.

¹⁵⁶ “The rhythm of Arab life has yet to accommodate itself to the scientific age. Arabs import the fruits of science to increase their power, but the same machines increase their alienation. Others produce and they merely consume. They come in contact with the secondary products of science, but they are far removed from the social process that made scientific breakthroughs possible.” AJAMI 2007, 44.

¹⁵⁷ AFSAH 2021b.

feindlichen, unverständlichen Welt angesehen werden.¹⁵⁸ Mohammed Arkoun bezeichnete die hieraus erwachsende religiöse Renaissance bereits vor vierzig Jahren als eine „Selbstverstümmelung, die diese Gesellschaften unter dem Vorwand ihr Sein zu schützen sich selber zufügen.“¹⁵⁹ Der staatliche Kollaps in der islamischen Welt¹⁶⁰ und der damit einhergehende enorme Migrationsdruck in den Westen hat das Unwohlsein dieser Religion in der Moderne¹⁶¹ endgültig auch zu unserem Problem gemacht.

Was Demandt über die ins Römische Reich drängenden Germanen schrieb, scheint auch auf die gegenwärtige Masseneinwanderung nach Europa zuzutreffen: die „Symbiose funktioniert nicht“, und viele Muslime finden es schwierig, „die Zivilisation fortzuführen, die sie angelockt hatte“.¹⁶²

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¹⁵⁸ Beide Aspekte werden erhellend beschrieben in AL-AZM 2011.

¹⁵⁹ ARKOUN 1984, 218.

¹⁶⁰ MELHEM 2014.

¹⁶¹ AL-AZM 1993c.

¹⁶² DEMANDT 1995, 78.

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DANUTA SHANZER

Walls, Boundaries, Frontiers, and Borders: Ausonius, the Rhine-Danube *Limes*, and the Battle of Adrianople

By way of an Afterword

Walls, boundaries, frontiers, and borders are far more than neutral markers of territory. They differ from one another and are theorized and experienced differently and subjectively. This can clearly be seen if one compares, say, an early 19th c. border crossing with modern ones. Inspired by Alexander Demandt's "Römisch-germanische Grenzpolitik" and the questions it raises, this Afterword uses Ausonius, poet and politician, to reconsider the Rhine-Danube *limes*. The homecoming poet's wishes in the *Mosella* betray a Rhine *limes* that wasn't all it should be, despite the panegyric topoi of *Epigram* 28 of 369 CE. The Afterword ends with a detailed discussion of Gratian's march east to help Valens at the Battle of Adrianople in August 378. It argues that he took his time marching east, it clarifies some details of his itinerary in the Balkans, and questions whether he ever actually reached Adrianople or Constantinople. It uses Ausonius' *Gratiarum Actio* of September 379 and its emphasis on Gratian's quasi-miraculous celerity in returning West to argue for a "schönreden" of his ineffectual role at and after Adrianople. It ends with Ammianus Marcellinus' verdict on Adrianople arguing against those who want to read it positively as a recoverable situation. One has only to compare Rutilius Namatianus' discourse in 417 after the Fall of Rome to see that Ammianus was no optimist. The promises of Ausonius' *Epigrams* 28 and 31 that gave a triumphant and optimistic voice to the personified Danube promising success to Valens would be vain panegyric. The Goths were able to cross the Danube in 376 and defeat Valens in 378.

Keywords: walls / boundaries / borders / Rhine-Danube *limes* / homecoming / Ausonius' *Mosella* and *Gratiarum Actio* / Battle of Adrianople

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Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
[...]

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.¹

Old men who have followed the Eagles since boyhood
say nothing in the Empire is more wonderful
than the first sight of the Wall!²

Fest steht aber: Mauern liegen im Trend.³

I. Good Fences and Good Neighbors: from Boundary Wall to Border (via Frontier)

Boundary and Border

In “Mending Wall”, Robert Frost described how, after the ravages of winter frost-heave, he would engage in an atavistic ritual⁴ with his rural neighbor. The two would walk their boundary and replace the stones that had fallen out during the past year.⁵ Frost mischievously mused that there was no actual danger that his apple trees would cross the wall to consume his neighbor's pine-cones. But the neighbor would dourly insist, “Good fences make good neighbors.”

Caesar had asked the Sygambri to surrender other Germans, Usipetes and Tencteri, who had invaded Gaul.⁶ He reported their quite reasonable response. The Rhine was the border of Roman imperium, and, if he objected to Germans crossing into Gaul, why should he assume any jurisdiction or power across the Rhine?⁷ Tacitus began his *Germania* with a striking *paraprosdokian*: that Germania was separated from the Sarmatians *mutuo metu* (“by mutual fear”) *aut montibus* (“or by mountains”). The sentence has something of the zeugma (“in a huff and in a Cadillac”), but also contains a sinister Tacitean weighted alternative where we are left wondering which barrier (fear or mountains?) is, or should be, the more effective.

¹ FROST 1971, 33.

² KIPLING 1964, 128.

³ MAU 2021, 54.

⁴ One can compare GRIMM 1845, 132-133.

⁵ FROST 1971, 33.

⁶ BG 4.16.3 *Ad quos cum Caesar nuntios misisset, qui postularent eos qui sibi Galliaeque bellum intulissent sibi dederent.*

⁷ BG 4.16.3 *populi Romani imperium Rhenum finire; si se invito Germanos in Galliam transire non aequum existimaret, cur sui quicquam esse imperii aut potestatis trans Rhenum postularet?*

A border is ideally an acknowledged, accepted, and respected, consensual line of division between jurisdictions. But borders also entail pathologies. To take two obvious examples. A border can be experienced as permeable and ineffective from the insider's perspective, the border that one fears *for*. It can also be seen as a line that bulges or marches aggressively outwards to secure more territory for those inside it, the border that *others* fear, often a bridgehead.

Frontier

There is yet another relevant concept. In 1893, Frederick J. Turner delivered a famous lecture to the American Historical Association that tackles something quite different from the Roman *limes*, namely the American frontier.⁸ This was a line that marched westwards propelled by individuals. And the frontier, according to Turner, exercised a strong psychological effect that radiated eastwards to the Atlantic coast and to the Old World,⁹ enabled the melting pot,¹⁰ and indelibly marked the American character in ways that are quite recognizable today.¹¹ All of this was quite different from the ancient Roman Empire.¹² But the topic inspired many of the cadenzas and exciting sentences that the *limes* does,¹³ and at points Turner was clearly thinking of Rome.¹⁴ In the American schema, however, it was settlers from inside who risked turning into "English Tatars", if they were to rebel against regulation from home.¹⁵ Most intriguing is Turner's courage in thinking hard about how a frontier could affect not just politics, but psychology and culture. But the Roman *limes* was not like the American frontier.

⁸ TURNER 1940. My gratitude to Benjamin Garstad for bringing Turner to my attention.

⁹ TURNER 1940, 30: "Mobility of population is death to localism, and the western frontier worked irresistibly in unsettling population. The effect reached back from the frontier and affected profoundly the Atlantic coast and even the Old World."

¹⁰ TURNER 1940, 23: "In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics. The process has gone on from the early days to our own." Also *ibid.*, 28: "composite nationality".

¹¹ See TURNER 1940, 21, 30 and 37-38 on mobility, individualism, democracy, and more.

¹² TURNER 1940, 3.

¹³ E.g. TURNER 1940, 12, 14 and 19-21. See Introduction, above, pp. 10-12.

¹⁴ TURNER 1940, 34 citing Thomas Benton (1825) on erecting a statue of "the fabled god Terminus" on the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains.

¹⁵ TURNER 1940, 33 citing Edmund Burke.

Boundaries

German has one (originally Slavic) word, “Grenzen”, that covers two English lexemes, “borders” and “boundaries”. And a magical aura surrounds the latter, which can sometimes be seen as sacred. We know of Zeus Horios and Jupiter Terminalis.¹⁶ Famous legal historians tell us of gruesome late medieval punishments for *Grenzfrevel*.¹⁷ The whole subject is regularly mythologized to such an extent that one might wonder whether different peoples conceptualized boundaries differently. Perhaps Late Antique *Germanen* had more latitudinarian views? But the work of Harald Siems shows quite clearly that the early medieval barbarian law codes were actually quite mild and reasonable – and drew heavily on Roman law.¹⁸ Siems emphasizes the importance of not lumping sparse evidence and ending up with anachronistic composites.¹⁹ But these are all *boundaries*, related to possession, not *borders*. The latter are not just drawn, policed, and litigated by individuals, but also lived and experienced by travelers.

Coming Home

As a philologist and literary critic, I would like now to explore a series of subjective responses to legal border-crossings diachronically. I will work my way back to one special “home comer”, a later Roman witness to warfare on the Rhine-Neckar *limes* who functioned in part as a spin-doctor and panegyrist for Valentinian I and eventually for his own student Gratian: the poet Ausonius of Bordeaux. We will first experience his own homecoming from the *limes* to Trier in the *Mosella*. We will see him use fluminal propaganda to veil less than ideal events on the Rhine *limes*. We will conclude by examining the implications of a panegyric he delivered in thanks for his own consulship of 379, immediately after the Roman defeat at Adrianople. I hope to show that the text may indirectly be apologizing for a failure of alacrity on Gratian’s part in coming to Valens’ rescue. In line with Professor Demandt, I return to a dark reading of Ammianus on Adrianople. We can use Rutilius Namatianus who returned to his Gallic homeland in 417 as a control for the rhetoric of recovery.

¹⁶ GRIMM 1845, 127.

¹⁷ In the Middle Ages Germans (and what would be Austrians) certainly understood the importance of boundaries. AMIRA (1922, 127-128) documents how the punishment for violators of boundaries, *Grenzfrevel*, was to be buried in the earth and have their heads sheared off by ploughshares (“Abfahren” or “Abackern”). The topic had already been touched on by GRIMM (1845, 130-131).

¹⁸ SIEMS 1979, 268, 287, 288 and 291.

¹⁹ SIEMS 1979, 268-269.

Modern Experiences

Since the 19th c. all have had to suffer at the borders between national jurisdictions, where the official's eye moves coldly up and down between the travelers' documents and their faces. There is the degradation of searching, of course. Heine was memorable about its indignities:

Deutschland: ein Wintermärchen, Kaput II
 Während die Kleine von Himmelslust
 Getrillert und musiziert,
 Ward von den preußischen Douaniers
 Mein Koffer visitiert.
 Beschnüffelten alles, kramten herum
 In Hemden, Hosen, Schnupftüchern;
 Sie suchten nach Spitzen, nach Bijouterien,
 Auch nach verbotenen Büchern.
 Ihr Toren, die ihr im Koffer sucht!
 Hier werdet ihr nichts entdecken!
 Die Konterbande, die mit mir reist,
 Die hab ich im Kopfe stecken.
 Hier hab ich Spitzen, die feiner sind
 Als die von Brüssel und Mecheln,
 Und pack ich einst meine Spitzen aus,
 Sie werden euch sticheln und hecheln.
 Im Kopfe trage ich Bijouterien,
 Der Zukunft Krondiamanten,
 Die Tempelkleinodien des neuen Gotts,
 Des großen Unbekannten.
 Und viele Bücher trag ich im Kopf!
 Ich darf es euch versichern,
 Mein Kopf ist ein zwitscherndes Vogelnest
 Von konfiszierlichen Büchern.²⁰

He paid back the Prussians too: (Kaput III)

Sie stelzen noch immer so steif herum,
 So kerzengerade geschniegelt,
 Als hätten sie verschluckt den Stock,
 Womit man sie einst geprügelt.²¹

Some régimes were worse than others. "There wasn't much to be enjoyed about border crossing in old Eastern Europe, but one thing they always did well was make you feel alien."²² Things have gotten far worse now: X-rays, being "patted down", even stripped, etc. In the USA one must pay "Global Entry" fees for the privilege of coming home without standing for hours in an undifferentiated queue with the huddled non-citizen masses and being

²⁰ HEINE 1884, 195.

²¹ HEINE 1884, 197.

²² BARNES 1994, 46.

asked what the purpose of one's trip was.²³ Borders, as the sociologist Steffen Mau points out, now function primarily as *Sortiermaschinen* and far less frequently as disputed limits between jurisdictions.²⁴ But no one has yet solved the problem of the forbidden books in our brains.²⁵

II. A Later Roman Return

However difficult and unpleasant modern régimes make it, there is always a positive side to coming home. And, interestingly, three major Roman poets wrote *itineraria* that mixed the personal and the political in homecoming.²⁶ Horace described how from one point on his journey south to Brundisium in 40 BCE, Apulia began to show her familiar mountains to him,²⁷ scorched by the harsh native Scirocco, Atabulus. Centuries later, in magnificent orchestral fashion, as in Smetana's "Moldau", we can follow the introduction to Ausonius' *Mosella*. The poem is about a river and about the politics of rivers, the fierce Rhine vs. the peaceful Moselle, and dates from precisely the period in the later 4th c. when the Rhine-Danube *limes* was under threat.

Transieram celerem nebuloso flumine Navam
addita miratus veteri nova moenia Vingo,
aequavit Latias ubi quondam Gallia Cannas,
inflatæque iacent inopes super arva catervæ.
unde iter ingrediens nemorosa per avia solum
et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus
praetereo arentem sitientibus undique terris
Dumnissum riguasque perenni fonte Tabernas
arvaeque Sauromatum nuper metata colonis,
et tandem primis Belgarum conspicio oris
Noiomagum, divi castra inclita Constantini.
purior hic campis aer Phoebusque sereno
lumine purpureum reserat iam sudus Olympum,
nec iam consertis per mutua vincula ramis
quaeritur exclusum viridi caligine caelum,
sed liquidum iubar et rutilam visentibus aethram
libera perspicui non invidet aura diei.
in speciem tum me patriae cultumque nitentis

²³ This works in the USA on fingerprints and facial recognition. MAU 2021, 113 and 162 for the (ugly) business model and the future.

²⁴ MAU 2021, 15. Ukraine is now a glaring exception.

²⁵ In the late 1990s I was interrogated when flying home from Tel Aviv Airport for several hours in a way that forced me to prove my identity *as a professor of Classics* and not some imposter.

²⁶ The third, from whom I adduce *comparanda*, is Rutilius Namatianus, whose journey of *De reditu suo* can be dated to 417 CE.

²⁷ Sat. 5.77-78.

Burdigalae blando pepulerunt omnia visu:
 culmina villarum pendentibus edita ripis
 et virides baccho colles et amoena fluenta
 subterlabentis tacito rumore Mosellae.
 Salve amnis ...

I had crossed the swift-flowing **Nahe** with its misty waters and admired the new walls added to the old city of **Bingen**, where once upon a time Gaul equaled the battle of **Cannae** in Latium, and unwept hosts of the dead lie helpless on the fields. Starting my lonely journey from there through the trackless groves, and seeing no traces of human cultivation, I skip over dry **Dumnissus** with land that is parched on every side and **Tabernae** that is well watered by an ever-flowing spring and the fields that have recently been measured by Sarmatian tenant-farmers, and finally – at the very border of the Belgae – I behold **Neumagen**, the renowned camp of the deified Constantine. The atmosphere is purer in these fields and Phoebus, now clear, unlocks an Olympus brilliant with unclouded light. No longer must one seek a heaven excluded by a green cover of branches joined together in mutual fetters. Instead, the free breeze of a brilliant day doesn't begrudge the clear light and glowing empyrean to onlookers. Everything about this delightful sight then compelled me to think of the beauty and refinement of my homeland in shining **Bordeaux**. The roofs of the villas high on steep river-banks and the hills green with vineyards and the delightful waters of the Moselle that glides alone below soundlessly. Hail, O river! ...

Ausonius's magnificent proem most probably describes how he returned from campaign with Valentinian I to his adopted northern home in Trier.²⁸ He had crossed the Nahe and admired Bingen before heading west, cross country towards Dumnissus and eventually to Neumagen on the Moselle. The beauty of the northern river landscape reminds him of the place he was born, his true *patria*, Bordeaux at the estuary of the Garonne and Dordogne.²⁹

Transieram, "I had crossed" the Nahe. How many works begin with a pluperfect?³⁰ How many works begin *after* a completed crossing? The opening automatically poses the question of the author's starting-point. Yet Ausonius says not a word about the Rhine. He has turned his back on it. We catch him *in mediis rebus* very close to *barbaricum* and on the *limes*. He is thinking of a crossing, of a river, of new fortifications (359 CE or

²⁸ I see no reason to declare that the journey "should not be treated as a historical event", as does GREEN (1991, 456).

²⁹ The Gironde. The optical comparison to the Moselle seems to fit the green and winding Dordogne rather better than the great flat Garonne at Bordeaux, but things might have looked different in Late Antiquity.

³⁰ We see a sort of equivalent in Hor. *Sat.* 1.5.1 *egressum magna me accepit Aricia Roma*, which spans 25 km. GREEN (1991, 463) notes how "carefully calculated" the opening is. He cites Ovid, *Met.* 1.216 *Maenula transieram* as, I suspect, a possible source. It isn't strikingly parallel, being neither an opening of a work, nor a first word.

later),³¹ a skirmish of 71 CE blown up into a Gallic Cannae,³² whose dead are imagined as still lying unburied on the field.³³ Ausonius had his own late antique version of the “double vision” affecting historians of the Fall of the Roman Empire.

Ausonius then moves into what he describes as the pathless wilderness of the Hunsrück, but must have taken an attested Roman road. This landscape is devolving, being decivilized and abandoned. This is a journey that can be mapped, but it is also a journey in time where the past comes back to meet the present in the poet’s mind.³⁴

In the dry and the watered places, we see, I think, an homage to Horace, *Sat.* 1.5, where water is prominent in 88-89 and 97-98. Suddenly there is land measured by – Sarmatians! These ultimate outsiders from Scythia have now, pacified after a few generations, become farmers in the Rhineland.³⁵

At this point Ausonius crosses yet another border, a provincial one between Germania Superior and Gallia Belgica Prima. The sight of Neumagen on the Moselle is greeted with *Purior hic campis aer ... lumine purpureum*, a direct allusion to Vergil’s Elysian fields (*Aen.* 6.640 *largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit/purpureo*). Light, blessed light, after the entwined *selva oscura* of the Hunsrück! This escape from the hellish and dark stage of the journey to the heavenly one is evoked by a now destroyed monument, probably a magnificent construction like Trier’s Porta Nigra, whose remains were still visible in the 17th c. in Neumagen on the Moselle.³⁶ Ausonius channeled both Horace’s home-coming and Aeneas traversing the underworld. By this point we have heard *twice* about Roman fortifications and walls, which only become good things in a deteriorating world.³⁷ Writing after the Sack of Rome, Rutilius Namatianus would talk about how even in her distant past Rome had deserved to be girt by fortifications.³⁸

³¹ Amm. Marc. 28.2.1 and 30.7.6.

³² HOSIUS 1926, 25.

³³ There is troubled coloring from Vergil, *Aen.* 6.325 *inops inhumataque turba*.

³⁴ See Introduction, above, p. 13 for oscillation between past and present.

³⁵ They must be *laeti*. On six attested settlements of Sarmatians in Gaul, see BACHRACH 2008, 172.

³⁶ WYTTEBACH & TURNER 1839, 26-28.

³⁷ See BUTLER 1959, 29 for Neumagen on a map of places that were walled after 260 CE. MAU (2021, 20, 47 and 49-71) notes how globalization has now caused an increasing interest in wall-building. There is no discernible political affinity between wall-building states (*ibid.*, 58). All types are involved. For walls after barbarian invasions in the 3rd c., see FERRARI 2022, 52-55.

³⁸ *De reditu suo* 2.39-40 *iam turn multiplici meruit munimine cingi/ sollicitosque habuit Roma futura deos*.

III. Tum Verus Habebere Limes

I will continue to pursue this meditation on rivers and borders with Ausonius. He was very much a political poet, close to emperors (Valentinian I and Gratian) and to the court. He was in fact an *Anywhere* who wrote with great feeling and *Sehnsucht* about being a *Somewhere*.³⁹ He makes a good anchoring focalizer for examining the fate of northwestern *limes*. I will start with the Rhine in his *Mosella*, but will then end with his (veiled and implicit) treatment of the Danube in the *Gratiarum Actio*. I will introduce a few poorly understood passages in the latter to make some new suggestions about Gratian's journey eastwards to bring help to Valens at the Battle of Adrianople.

Ausonius started to perorate at *Mos.* 418, where the personified Rhine enters the virtual masque to join forces with the Moselle. Ausonius mentioned the Neckar too because it had been the location of a recent victory of Valentinian I's against the Alamanni.⁴⁰ Here the poet foretells a time when the Franks will tremble and the river god Rhine will be considered a *true limes*:

Accedent vires, quas Francia, quasque Chamaves,
Germanique tremant: tunc *verus habebere limes* (435).

The expression *verus limes* is virtually unparalleled and requires comment. I outlined three possible states for borders above.⁴¹ "Then you will be considered a *true limes*" makes clear that the Rhine was in some sense *not* a *true limes* at time of writing.⁴² It was experienced as permeable by the Romans, and would need to become the panegyric minatory *limes*, "with teeth" as it were, to make the barbarians tremble.⁴³ The *vires* ("Kräfte") were men, troops to defend the Rhine. "Dann wirst Du als wahrer Grenz-wall gelten."⁴⁴ It is not impossible that we hear a hidden word-play where *vires* make a *verus limes*. These bold prophetic lines constitute the climax of the *Mosella*, but not its end, which retreats from the thrust towards the Rhine frontier to the Garonne and is far more subdued (*Mos.* 438-483).

³⁹ Terminology borrowed from GOODHART 2017.

⁴⁰ SHANZER 1998a, 230-231 for the dating (after 369, 370, or 371) with edits from after 378; SHANZER 1998b. *Modo* is the "tell".

⁴¹ See above, p. 161.

⁴² The archaeology of the text makes it impossible to know for sure, but I would suspect that *Mos.* 435 fits the period after Ausonius' consulship in 379 better than ca. 369.

⁴³ I stand by my interpretation in SHANZER 1998b, 300.

⁴⁴ Translated by GRUBER 2013, 87.

Outre Rhin

The empire and its promoters intermittently spoke of expanding the *limes*, of bulging belligerently into *Barbaricum*. The panegyrist of 289 had expressed such sentiments: *quidquid ultra Rhenum prospicio, Romanum est*.⁴⁵ In 369 at Valentinian I's behest, Ausonius had made a joyful noise in *Epigram* 28.8 *nec Rhenum Gallis limitis esse loco* ("nor does the Rhine count as a frontier for the Gauls"), envisaging Roman expansionism beyond the border.⁴⁶

Trans Danubian

The other *limes*, starring in *Epigr.* 28 and its brother-poem (*Epigr.* 31), was the personified Danube; its news was that the Goths had been conquered (*victos*). The event referred to involved a treaty concluded by Valens in 367 – in the middle of the river "in no man's land" – with Athanaric that was recounted in *Amm. Marc.* 27.5.9.⁴⁷ Herwig Wolfram's reaction was deflationary and sober: "One can hardly speak of a Roman victory in this peace, or of a Gothic military defeat in the military sense."⁴⁸ We might also need to reconsider the river as "no man's land". For when the event was recalled in *Amm. Marc.* 31.4.13, it was presented not as a universal protocol, but as a controlling demand of Athanaric's that could plausibly have created strife (*simultas*).⁴⁹

IV. Revisiting Adrianople and Its Aftermath

Let us now fast forward to what is often seen as a *dies fatalis* for Rome, the Battle of Adrianople on the 9th of August, 378. This was a point of no return for Professor Demandt: "Seitdem war die Grenze offen, der Feind im Land."⁵⁰ I will begin with Valens' perilous situation in late 377 and then

⁴⁵ *Pan. Lat.* 289 7.7 *Licet Rhenus arescat tenuique lapsu uix leues calculos perspicuo uado pellat, nullus inde metus est: quidquid ultra Rhenum prospicio, Romanum est.*

⁴⁶ SHANZER 1998a, 209 for the dating.

⁴⁷ As DEMANDT (above, p. 40) puts it: "mitten auf der Donau, also paritätisch im Niemandsland, jeder mit seinem Gefolge auf einem Schiff".

⁴⁸ WOLFRAM 1988, 368.

⁴⁹ *Quibus, ut communi rei conducere uidebatur, repudiatis et, quid capesserent, anxii Athanaricus paria pertimescens abcessit, memor Valentem dudum, cum foederaretur concordia, despexisse affirmantem se religione deuinctum, ne calcaret solum aliquando Romanum, hacque causatione principem firmare pacem in medio flumine coegisse. Quam simultatem ueritus ut adhuc durantem ad Caucalandensem locum altitudine siluarum inaccessum et montium cum suis omnibus declinauit Sarmatis inde extrusis.*

⁵⁰ See DEMANDT, above, p. 41.

introduce evidence from Ausonius to try to put together a different composite narrative about Gratian's role in the battle and its aftermath.

En Route

Even after Diocletian's reforms and the establishment of mobile field armies there were constant problems in sending troops on time to where they were needed. Valens had to summon help from different parts of the empire against the Goths in 377 and 378.⁵¹ Gratian responded but was delayed and himself delayed.⁵² The Lentienses, when they heard that he was headed to Thrace, opportunistically seized the chance to attack Rhaetia in February 378. Ammianus (31.10.3 *loquendo effusior* and 31.10.20) knew that idle talk had cost lives.⁵³ But Gratian achieved a victory against them on his way east and followed up with an unnecessary (dilatory? distracting?) incursion across the Rhine.⁵⁴ *Nec Rhenum ...* The Rhine and Danube borders had both, so Ausonius, been subdued ("pacified") in one year.⁵⁵

Gratian, however, was still in Trier on 1 June 378.⁵⁶ He marched east towards the Norican-Pannonian *limes*.⁵⁷ Details of his itinerary are provided by Amm. Marc. 31.10.20: he made for Illyricum via Felix Arbor (Kastell Arbon in Switzerland, near Lake Konstanz) and Lauriacum on the Danube (Lorch). Then Amm. Marc. 31.11.6 picks up Gratian's route eastwards down the Danube from Lauriacum.⁵⁸

Dum haec aguntur in Thraciis, Gratianus docto litteris patruo, qua industria superaverit Alamanos, pedestri itinere praemissis impedimentis et sarcinis, ipse cum expeditiore militum manu, permeato Danubio, delatus **Bononiam**, Sirmium introiit, et quadriduum ibi moratus, **per idem flumen** ad Martis castra descendit, febribus intervallatis afflictus: in quo tractu Halanorum impetu repentino temptatus, amisit sequentium paucos.

While this was going on in Thrace, Gratian informed his uncle by letter of the energy with which he had overcome the Alamanni. He sent his bulky and heavy baggage ahead on foot, and himself, with a more lightly armed band of soldiers,

⁵¹ Including Armenia (Amm. Marc. 31.7.2).

⁵² FORTINA (1953, 61) speculates that matters might have been different had Gratian arrived on time. See also LENSKI 2002, 356 and 366.

⁵³ Compare DEMANDT 2008, 88 for the western barbarians taking advantage of Julian's Persian campaign to attack the whole western front and *ibid.*, 97 for the Lentienses' uprising in 378.

⁵⁴ Amm. Marc. 31.10.7-17.

⁵⁵ Ausonius, *Grat. Act.* 2.7 *Testis est uno pacatus in anno Danuvii limes et Rheni*. LENSKI (1997, 130-141) is rightly skeptical.

⁵⁶ FORTINA 1953, 69, n. 38 citing *CTh.* 1.15.9.

⁵⁷ See LENSKI 2002, 366 for "boats down the Danube".

⁵⁸ DRIJVERS & TEITLER (2019, 122-123) give 835 km and estimate a week's journey.

after traveling down the Danube⁵⁹ having been conveyed as far as **Bononia**, entered Sirmium and, having stayed there for four days, went downstream **on the same river** to Martis Castra, afflicted by intermittent bouts of fever. In that area he was put to the test by a sudden attack of Alans and lost a few of his soldiers.

In the interest of concision, I will summarize the problems related to this itinerary rather than reproduce a scholarly blow-by-blow of who got what wrong or failed to take account of what. First, Ammianus did not express himself as clearly as he might have done, for the phrase *per idem flumen* might lead one to think that he thought Sirmium lay on the Danube.⁶⁰ It does not, and there is no evidence in his corpus that he thought it did. Second, there are, confusingly, *two* places called Bononia in the area. The westernmost is on the Danube and corresponds to modern Banoštor (Serbia).⁶¹ The second Bononia lies to the east and is identified with modern Vidin in Bulgaria.⁶² We need to decide between the two, and, if we identify Bononia with modern Vidin, we would have to posit either an error of Ammianus' or a corruption in the transmission of his text.⁶³ The path of least resistance is to choose Banoštor as the point of disembarkation to march south: Ammianus had mentioned it and Sirmium in one breath in Book 21.⁶⁴ Gratian then delayed for four days in Sirmium on a pressing journey, and there is no evidence that he returned to Bononia-Banoštor.⁶⁵ We might then posit a stage on foot of at least a day from Sirmium to the Danube, say at Singidunum.⁶⁶ Thence Gratian would have travelled downstream to Viminacium and eventually to Bononia-Vidin in Bulgaria, and thence on foot to Castra Martis,⁶⁷ an intermediate stage, where he was attacked by Alans. The strangeness here is that, even if Bononia-Vidin is not explicitly mentioned,

⁵⁹ Ammianus uses the verb both for "to cross" or "traverse" (21.13.2; 26.8.4; 28.5.1) as well as for "to travel on or down" (22.8.13; 23.6.11; 24.2.22). He must intend the river-journey from Lauriacum to Bononia.

⁶⁰ DRIJVERS & TEITLER 2019, 122: "down the Danube to Sirmium" sounds vague, but at p. 123 they note that Gratian must have disembarked at the place they identify as "Bononia".

⁶¹ TALBERT (2000, 21B4) has it as "Malata".

⁶² LENSKI (2002, 366, n. 34) thought the sequence in Ammianus' geography confused, and that it should be Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia) and then, 342 km further east, Bononia (Vidin, Bulgaria) by boat, and then (on foot) as far as Martis Castra. He did not discuss Sirmium's location. FORTINA (1953, 62) cannily omitted Bononia.

⁶³ I had toyed with emending the text to read *dilata*, "postponing Bononia (sc. Vidin, his real destination), he entered Sirmium (instead)".

⁶⁴ Amm. Marc. 21.9.6 *cum uenisset Bononiam a Sirmio miliario nono disparatam*.

⁶⁵ Pace DRIJVERS & TEITLER 2019, 123.

⁶⁶ Would or could Gratian have sailed down the Sava? That would have required more organization.

⁶⁷ See HEATHER 1991, 143; TALBERT 2000, 21E6 and now: WILKES et al. 2024. LENSKI (2002, 334) identifying it with Kula in Dacia Ripensis, intends the same place.



© Nikolas Hächler. Information on the course of Roman roads was kindly provided by Anne Kolb and Ursula Kunnert

it seems nonetheless required as the closest disembarkation point for Castra Martis.⁶⁸ Ockham's razor warns us against multiplying entities, but in this case, it seems unavoidable.

Reaching Adrianople

But is this the default or even a reasonable itinerary for reaching Adrianople? As Nikolas Hächler's map above shows, one would have expected Gratian to disembark at Viminacium and march southeast on the Via Prima via Naissus, Serdica, and Philippopolis to Adrianople.

Instead he ended up in Castra Martis, right at the edge of highland that would have been difficult terrain for his army. I will return to this point later, but Castra Martis is the furthest east we can place Gratian, and there he was still about 450 km distant from Adrianople.⁶⁹ While Drijvers and Teitler make a convincing argument for a later absolute dating for Gratian's travel, they do not address the question of whether his itinerary as described by Ammianus is the itinerary of an emperor who wanted to come to

⁶⁸ This is what DRIJVERS & TEITLER (2019, 123) must do.

⁶⁹ DRIJVERS & TEITLER (2019, 123) agree.

the aid of his colleague as fast as possible.⁷⁰ Valens (fatally) did not await the arrival of Gratian with his Western army⁷¹ and perished with two-thirds of his soldiers at Adrianople.⁷²

Gratian's Western Panegyrist

Now Ausonius had been appointed consul for 379, the year after Adrianople (August 9, 378). So, when he delivered his delayed *Gratiarum Actio* before Gratian⁷³ in September, 379,⁷⁴ it was against the background of Valens' grim defeat in the East. Ausonius adverted to Gratian's troubles in late 378: he was *districtus maximo bello, adsultantibus tot milibus barbarorum, quot Danuvii ora praetexitur*.⁷⁵ But he minimized Adrianople with a vague allusion to *a contumelia belli patruus vindicatus*.⁷⁶ There is really no acknowledgement in this consular speech of that most inauspicious day of the Roman calendar.⁷⁷ 378 CE might seem not to have lived on in infamy.

While in line with Lenski's observations about early responses to Adrianople, Ausonius is extreme in his suppression and reduction of the defeat and in his boastful solipsism. Could nothing rain on his parade? Needily and endlessly grateful? Tone-deaf? Self-absorbed? Just poorly informed? Or is there some way of reading beneath the surface to help work out his limitations and intentions?

I will pull at a loose thread or two. The very beginning of the *Gratiarum Actio* (2.8-9) detailed the triumphal titles of Gratian that Ausonius did not need to expand on. Cascading *praeteritiones* about matters military ruled, and Ausonius used cryptic language to hive off what he proposed omitting: *sed alia est ista materia et suo parata secreto*. The latter phrase has proved

⁷⁰ Their primary interest is chronology, not geography. DRIJVERS & TEITLER (2019, 124) keep Gratian in Trier through 1 June 378 and have him resuming his journey to Thrace in early July. They place him in Castra Martis on 2/3 August 378, 18-19 days away from Adrianople.

⁷¹ Amm. Marc. 31.12.4-7.

⁷² Amm. Marc. 31.13.18; DEMANDT, above, p. 41: "vernichtend geschlagen und fiel".

⁷³ I see no reason to assume that Gratian was not present, as does SIVAN (1993, 119), citing PEIPER (1886, ciii), who says that Gratian had entered Gaul, but hadn't reached Trier. Peiper was over-reading the *mox* of *Grat. Act. 7.34 sed Treveri principis beneficio et mox cum ipso auctore beneficia*. Why not just an allusion to a celebration following the speech? PASTORINO (1971, 341) disambiguates by translating *mox* as "oggi".

⁷⁴ BAGNALL et al. 1987, 20-21. Gratian was back in Trier by the 14 September 379: SEECK 1919, 252.

⁷⁵ *Grat. Act. 9.42*. Elections for consulship held in Sirmium "while Gratian was busy with a major war, with as many thousands of barbarians attacking, as adorn the shore of the Danube." GREEN (1991, 538) notes that this is the one reference to the barbarian threat.

⁷⁶ *Grat. Act. 2.7*: "His paternal uncle avenged of the insult he suffered in war." LENSKI (1997, 146) saw here an allusion to an historiographical tradition that blamed Valens.

⁷⁷ GIBBON 1907, 312. Amm. Marc. 31.12.10 noted the date.

hard to translate and to unpack.⁷⁸ Let us hold on to the military *alia materia* and introduce a second passage.

Ausonius ended his speech on a high note with rhetorical pyrotechnics that repay closer attention. He began with mythically swift steeds such as Pegasus and Cyllarus in *Grat. Act.* 18.81. He then addressed Gratian:

Tu, Gratiane, tot Romani imperii limites, tot flumina et lacus, tot ueterum intersaepta regnorum ab usque Thracia per totum, quam longum est, latus Illyrici, Venetiam Liguriamque et Galliam ueterem, insuperabilia Rhaetiae, Rheni imperia,⁷⁹ Sequanorum inuia, porrecta Germaniae, celeriore transcurso, quam est properatio nostri sermonis, euoluis, nulla requie otii, ne somni quidem aut cibi munere liberali, ut Gallias tuas inopinatus illustres, ut consulem tuum, quamuis desideratus, anticipes, ut illam ipsam, quae auras praecedere solet, famam facias tardiozem. hoc senectuti meae, hoc honori a te datum. *Gratiarum Actio* 18.82 (Prete 1978 Teubner)

You, Gratian, unroll more swiftly than I can rush in my speech, so many boundaries of the Roman Empire, so many rivers and lakes, so many borders of ancient kingdoms, all the way from Thrace, through the whole length of the coast of Illyricum, Venetia, Liguria, and ancient (= Cisalpine) Gaul, the unconquerable peaks of Rhaetia, the inaccessible regions of the Rhine, the uncharted lands of the Sequani,⁸⁰ the broad plains of Germania. All with no rest or relaxation, not even to sleep,⁸¹ nor enjoyment of the bounty of food, so as unexpectedly to brighten your own Gallic provinces, so as to anticipate your consul, however much you were longed for, so that you could render Rumor herself a bit of a laggard, she who normally out-speeds the breezes.

He accelerated towards his finish line as if – in sympathetic mimicry – time were short. The conceit is that Gratian's travel was as fast as Ausonius' speech. We have mentioned the intellectual seductions of maps and swoop-

⁷⁸ *Grat. Act.* 2.9 *sed alia est ista materia et suo parata secreto, cum placuerit signanter et breuiter omnia quae novimus indicare, nec persequi, ut qui terrarum orbem unius tabulae ambitu circumscribunt aliquanto detrimenti magnitudinis, nullo dispendio veritatis.* The image is of a map. PASTORINO (1971, 331) annoyingly skips “et suo parata secreto.” EVELYN-WHITE (1921, 225) tries: “but that is another theme and one which will be treated in its own separate place.” This excessively flat and literal interpretation of *secerno* seems implausible. The expression regularly overwhelmingly refers to a private or secret place. SIVAN (1993, 122) follows Evelyn-White and sees the promise of a separate work. GREEN (1991, 541) suggests “in private”. The expression recurs in *Grat. Act.* 3.12 *sui muneris peculiare secretum.* The running *praeteritio* continues at *Grat. Act.* 13.62 *quamquam me istam dixerim seposuisse materiam et in tempus aliud reservare.*

⁷⁹ *Acclivia* PASTORINO 1971, 364; *vadosa* PEIPER 1886 and EVELYN-WHITE 1921, 268; SCHENKL (1883, 29) rightly daggars *accolas*, but mentions *aquosa* [banal and not an impediment] and suggests *fortasse acclivia*.

⁸⁰ Around Besançon? A way of talking about “Provincia Maxima Sequanorum”.

⁸¹ Compare Mamertinus, *Pan.* 362.13.3 and 14.3 for the sleeplessness and reduced *otium* of the emperor.

ing arrows above.⁸² This bravura sentence is a textual equivalent of such modern images. The verb *evolves*, which means “to unroll” or “unfurl”, is a metaphor that suggests that Ausonius was imagining the unfurling of a map. Let’s read this passage with *Grat. Act.* 2.9 on Gratian’s military achievements:

sed alia est ista materia et suo parata secreto, cum placuerit signanter et breviter omnia quae novimus indicare, nec persequi, ut qui terrarum orbem unius tabulae ambitu circumscribunt aliquanto detrimenti magnitudinis, nullo dispendio veritatis.

But that is different material and ready for separate [or “secret”] treatment, when it will be our pleasure to note clearly and briefly all that we know, but not to pursue it in detail – like those who compass the orb of the earth within the confines of one picture⁸³ with some loss of impressive scale, but with none of truth.

The imperial progress is a rhetorical theme familiar from historiography and panegyric. Julian’s almost supernaturally swift journey to Constantinople upon the death of Constantius II in *Amm. Marc.* 22.2 is an excellent parallel. *Ammianus* compared the magical winged chariot of *Triptolemus* (22.2.3) and, like Ausonius, included an allusion to *fama*, rumor, speech.

qua re cognita post exemptos periculorum aestus et bellicarum sollicitudinum turbas in immensum elatus iamque uaticiniis credens et celeritatem negotiis suis aliquotiens profuisse expertus edixit iter in Thracias motisque propere signis emensa decliuitate Succorum Philippopolim petit, Eumolpiada ueterem, alacri gradu sequentibus, quos duxerat, cunctis. 3 aduertebant enim imperium, quod ereptum ibant cum ultimorum metu discriminum, praeter spem ordinario iure concessum. utque solet **fama** nouitates augere, properabat exinde sublimior uti quodam **Triptolemi curru**, quem ob rapidos circumgressus | aeriis serpentibus et pinnigeris fabulosa uetustas imponit, perque terras et maria formidatus nullis obstantibus moris Heracleam ingressus est Perinthum. 4 quo apud Constantinopolim mox comperto | effundebatur aetas omnis et sexus tamquam demissum aliquem uisura de caelo.

On learning this, and being now saved from the fret of dangers and the throes of war’s anxieties, he was hugely elated. And now believing in the prophecies, and knowing by experience that speed had often been helpful to his enterprises, he ordered a march into Thrace, quickly broke camp, and passing the slope of Succii, made for Philippopolis, the ancient Eumolpias, followed with eager step by all who were under his command. 3. For they perceived that the throne, which they were on their way to usurp in the face of the greatest dangers, had beyond their hope been granted to him by the ordinary course of law. And as rumour is wont to exaggerate all novelties, he hastened on from there, now raised still higher, as though in some chariot of *Triptolemus*, which the poets of old, because of its swift

⁸² See Introduction, above, pp. 11-12. For a nice example, see CORNELL & MATTHEWS 1982, 209.

⁸³ Same idea in Jerome, *Ep.* 123.13.1 *Quasi in brevi tabella latissimos terrarum situs ostendere volui.*

turnings, represented as drawn through the air by winged dragons; and dreaded by land and sea and opposed by no delays, he entered Heraclea, also called Perinthus. 4. When this was presently known at Constantinople, all ages and sexes poured forth, as if to look upon someone sent down from heaven.⁸⁴

Mamertinus' *Gratiarum Actio* to Julian also featured similar and even more extravagant material in a different context.⁸⁵

Ausonius' conceit was that Gratian had come flying back from the East for his consular speech in Gaul.⁸⁶ The emperor is imagined as speeding from the confines of the empire, over its borders, rushing as fast as Rumor itself, all the way from Thrace to visit Gaul (Trier). The journey was more than mythological and also magically swift. Was it here that Ausonius perhaps discreetly accommodated his separate and perhaps secret (*suo secreto*) treatment of Gratian's military successes?⁸⁷

Ab usque Thracia

It is worth examining the virtual *itinerarium*.⁸⁸ Seeck envisaged a route over the Splügen Pass and the Upper Rhine to Basel and thence into Alsace's Rhine Valley.⁸⁹ Fortina recommended caution about Seeck's reconstructed details, but noted that Gratian had been in Sirmium (Pannonia Inferior) in February before returning to Gaul and to Trier by September.⁹⁰ I, however, am more interested in the *starting point*, namely the phrase *ab usque Thracia*. What precisely is intended? Roger Green saw a reference to Constantinople, whither Gratian supposedly continued "after Adrianople".⁹¹ But the source cited simply has Gratian setting out for Eastern Rome.⁹² As far as I can see, there is no unambiguous, non-circular evidence that Gratian ever travelled further east than *Martis Castra*, which

⁸⁴ ROLFE 1982, vol. 2, 189 and 191.

⁸⁵ Mamertinus, *Pan.* 362. 6.2-8.3 with translation and commentary of NIXON & RODGERS 1994, 403-407. 8.2 alludes to Triptolemus' chariot: *Tu puerum, inuentorem serendi, draconum alitum curru uolantem semina in terras sparsisse iactasti*.

⁸⁶ See AUSONIUS 1886, civ.

⁸⁷ See above, p. 174.

⁸⁸ HEATHER (1991, 149) has no interest in Gratian's trip west. DEMANDT (2008, 100) elides Gratian's return to the West completely.

⁸⁹ SEECK 1919, 252.

⁹⁰ FORTINA 1953, 65.

⁹¹ GREEN 1991, 554. But John of Antioch Fr. 210 Mariev (= 185 Müller) in MARIEV 2008, 376-377 says nothing about visiting Adrianople. Green must have meant "after the *bat-tle* of Adrianople".

⁹² John of Antioch MARIEV 2008, 376-377 says that Gratian *set out for* Constantinople (italics mine) after he heard of Valens' death. SEECK (1919, 250) puts Gratian in Constantinople in Fall 378, but the evidence is circular, since the only other testimony beside John of Antioch is – Aus. *Grat. Act.* 18.82!

seems to be in Dacia Ripensis.⁹³ His location when he heard of Valens' death is unclear.⁹⁴ Thracia, of course, is an umbrella term that included where the Battle of Adrianople (Edirne) had been fought.⁹⁵ Did Ausonius, that most geographical and topographical thinker, wish to leave his audience with the impression that Gratian had visited Thrace⁹⁶ and attended to what needed to be attended to there? A panegyric gift of *suggestio falsi*? This area is a real historical lacuna.⁹⁷

Dying in Battle

That something needed attention was clear. Libanius said a thing or two about the *pax deorum* in his *Oratio 24 de ulciscendo Iuliano*. Emperors slain in battle needed to be avenged.⁹⁸ He would have despised the disloyal Christian *Schadenfreude* of *De mortibus persecutorum* 5.2.⁹⁹ Sivan thought that Ausonius elided the purpose of Gratian's mission in the East.¹⁰⁰ Not entirely, I insist. He initially reduced vengeance (which of course had not been properly exacted) to a minimizing and inaccurate *a contumelia belli patruus vindicatus*. Subsequently he (quite unjustifiably) praised Gratian's *pietas* in avenging Valens: *quam in ulciscendo patruo probas*.¹⁰¹

Responding to Adrianople

There is no single snapshot of the aftermath of Adrianople – only individual focalizers and first responders. As Lenski has carefully outlined for us, it took time for it to become fixed as the canonical catastrophe it even-

⁹³ See above, p. 171. I am grateful to Roger Tomlin for pointing me to MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1955, 389 and to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which places Bononia, Dorticum and Ratiaria, all in Dacia Ripensis (*Or.* 42, Dux Daciae Ripensis, 13, 14 and 38). They are on the Danube to Martis Castra's north and east. FORTINA (1953, 63) has Gratian far from the battle and then retreating to Sirmium.

⁹⁴ See HEATHER 1991, 149 for Victor's route to find Gratian in Zosimus 4.24.3: Macedonia, Thessaly, Moesia, Pannonia. DEMANDT (2008, 99) puts him in Sirmium.

⁹⁵ Also *Thraciae* in Ammianus, where it is used 32 times in the plural (LLTA). Amm. 27.4.12 includes Philippopolis, Eumolpias, and Beroea.

⁹⁶ The term is rather vague, for four Diocletianic Thracian provinces (Thracia, Rhodope, Haemimontus, and Europa) formed the diocese of Thraciae.

⁹⁷ It is covered in a few lines by HEATHER (1991, 149).

⁹⁸ *Or.* 24.8 Jovian did not avenge Julian; 24.10 neither did Valentinian and Valens, 24.27 (of Julian). WIJNENDAELE (above, p. 83) condemns Roman reprisals for Adrianople.

⁹⁹ The fate of Valerian when captured by Shapur. Both the author of the *Mort.* and Libanius (*Or.* 24.19) knew about distressing Persian depictions of defeated Roman emperors.

¹⁰⁰ SIVAN 1993, 120.

¹⁰¹ *Grat. Act.* 8.39: the first in a sequence that included *beneficia* to Valentinian II and to Ausonius himself!

tually became.¹⁰² Ausonius clearly fits in as a minimizer. Rufinus would subsequently see the battle as the beginning of future evil for the Roman Empire.¹⁰³ Gibbon, working from his faithful guide Ammianus, thought its “fatal consequences” far surpassed Cannae’s.¹⁰⁴ But this, as we shall see, is not the modern way of reading Ammianus’ verdict in 31.13.18.¹⁰⁵

constatque uix tertiam euasisse exercitus partem <Nec ulla>¹⁰⁶ annalibus praeter Cannensem pugnam ita ad internecionem res legitur gesta, quamquam Romani aliquotiens reflante Fortuna fallaciis lusi | bellorum iniquitati cesserunt ad tempus et certamina multa fabulosae neniae fleuere Graecorum. (ed. Seyfarth)¹⁰⁷ Periiit autem hoc exitu Valens ...

It is clear that barely one third of the army escaped. Nor is any battle¹⁰⁸ in the annals, aside from the fight at Cannae, said to have been fought to destruction in such a way, although the Romans sometimes, fooled by trickery when the winds of fortune blew in the wrong direction, retreated for a while from war against greater forces¹⁰⁹ and the mythical dirges of the Greeks have wept for many a military contest. Valens too perished in this disaster ...

So Ammianus. There is at least one patent lacuna in the text and some oddness about the logic of *quamquam* and what occasions were intended when the Romans were defeated and refrained for a while from fighting foes who outnumbered them.¹¹⁰ Wolfram tried to read Ammianus’ comparison to Cannae as signaling a “hope for recovery” that “was entirely justified”.¹¹¹

¹⁰² LENSKI 1997, 129-168.

¹⁰³ HE 11.13 *Quae pugna initium mali Romano imperio tunc et deinceps fuit.*

¹⁰⁴ GIBBON 1907, 314.

¹⁰⁵ WARD-PERKINS (2005, 38 and 40) may be an exception, but he does not address the question of recovery.

¹⁰⁶ AMMIANUS et al. (1978, 194) reports that the lacuna was noted by Clark; Accursius supplied a necessary *Nec ulla*, which was accepted by SABBAGH (2021, 558, n. 52).

¹⁰⁷ AMMIANUS et al. 1978, 194.

¹⁰⁸ LEWIS & SHORT 1879, s.v. ‘res’ G.

¹⁰⁹ I am not satisfied with ROLFE 1982, vol. 3, 483: “yielded for a time to ill success in their wars”. *Iniquitas* can have a numerical sense (like *inaequalis*, but verging into disadvantageous or adverse), which is how I take it here. The alternative is to read it in a moral sense (like *iniustus*). See SZANTYR. “inīquitās, -ātis f.” In: Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Online, vol. 7, 1, pp. 1636-1639. Berlin / New York 1955 [https://tll-degruyter-com.proxy2.library.illinois.edu/article/7_1_11_iniquitas_v2007].

¹¹⁰ The moral *iniquitas* of one’s enemies creates just wars (Aug. *Civ. Dei* 4.15), but wars are also unfair in their outcomes (Ps.-Quit. *Decl. Maior*. 13.8 for those enslaved). Ammianus here may intend the word more neutrally in the sense of a war in which the Romans were outnumbered by their foes. LENSKI (2002, 355) sees 200,000 Gothic men, women, and children as “not beyond reason”.

¹¹¹ WOLFRAM 1988, 128. The same line is followed by Jan DEN BOEFT, Daniël DEN HENGST, Hans C. TEITLER & Jan Willem DRIJVERS. Philological and Historical Commentary to Ammianus Marcellinus’ *Res Gestae* [http://dx-doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1163/2589-5877_stoa0023.stoa001.amo-eng2].

While I cannot assess whether the Roman Empire could have recovered, I find such optimistic readings of Ammianus' intent unsustainable. No unqualified allusion to *Cannae* ever leaves a good taste in readers' mouths.¹¹² I doubt that Wolfram and others¹¹³ are interpreting 31.13.19 correctly and I see no positives, even implicit ones, here: the whole paragraph is about how illustrious men perished.¹¹⁴

One has only to look at Ammianus' framing of Book 31 and use literary common sense. Ammianus had already foreshadowed Adrianople in 27.5.7 *rem publicam funeribus perpetuo deflendis affligeret*. He began his final book with portents (31.1.1-5), he adverted to the *orbis Romani perniciēs* (31.4.6), to the death-bearing torches of the Furies (31.5.4) and the *commune exitium*. It is true that he sets the record straight on the previous parallels (31.5.11-17), but he also noted that men had by his days become degenerate (31.5.14 *solutioris vitae mollitie*). Even though Spain had been recovered after a similar disaster during the Second Punic War (211 BCE), both Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio Calvus and Valens were burned and unburied (31.13.17).

As part of the aftermath of the battle, after failing to capture Adrianople (31.15) the Goths pushed ahead to Constantinople. There we hear (31.16.6) that a naked Saracen warrior clad only in a loincloth terrified them by jumping into their midst, killing a Goth and drinking his blood. This portent-like horror succeeded in discouraging the invaders and supposedly saved Constantinople. Ammianus had spoken of the horrors of barbarians drinking blood on previous occasions in the distant past.¹¹⁵ This episode doesn't display the Roman defenders in a particularly positive light, but it is a good example of Demandt's "homeopathy".¹¹⁶

Finally a philological argument *ex silentio*. Ammianus uses no consolatory topoi whatsoever at the end where they might be expected. When he compared Valens' and Decius' fates, he noted that even Marcus Aurelius would have had trouble relieving the woes of the state without assistance (31.13.12-13). He clearly said in 31.5.14 that the empire after Marcus Aurelius would be enervated by a soft lifestyle and moral degradation. At 31.5.17 he notes the Goths' long quiescence after Claudius Gothicus and Aurelian. Ammianus ended his *Res gestae* by hoping that his continuators would forge their tongues to (even) higher styles, implying that epic and

¹¹² See, for one, Ausonius, above, pp. 164-165.

¹¹³ Also DEMANDT 2008, 97: "auch Hoffnung".

¹¹⁴ LENSKI (1997, 162) believes that Ammianus implies that "Rome's recovery from Adrianople should be no less plausible than its recovery from Cannae. Ammianus' text is thus a palliative for the past."

¹¹⁵ Amm. Marc. 27.4.4. on drinking human blood from skulls; Amm. Marc. 4.9. the blood-thirsty Odrysae who knife one another for potable blood, if no convenient enemies are available.

¹¹⁶ See DEMANDT, 2016 and above, p. 21, n. 100.

tragedy might be required (31.16.9). None of this suggests anything less than an extremely bumpy future. When trying to pin down the point of view of a sophisticated author (if it isn't transparent), one adduces *comparanda* whose intention is clear. To hear the rhetoric of recovery, by contrast, one has only to go to Rutilius Namatianus, *De reditu* 1.115-140. Ammianus could have explicitly said that what did not kill one made one stronger.¹¹⁷ He did not. I rest my case.

Lenski noted how responses started out optimistic and how the first ones gloss over Adrianople until 382.¹¹⁸ Ausonius patterns as a particularly shameless suppressor of evidence. But I also wonder whether some sort of Easter egg may lie hidden in the virtual map of the *Gratiarum Actio*. The implications of "Thracia" as disinformation are clear. The other details of Gratian's return west might repay more expert attention than mine. What was happening the whole length of Illyricum, in Venetia, in Liguria, in Cisalpine Gaul, in Rhaetia, etc.? ¹¹⁹ Was this simply the standard route westwards, or was Gratian avoiding trouble? Green dismissed the possibility of campaigns.¹²⁰

Rutilius Namatianus began his *De Reditu in mediis rebus* ("mid-conversation") with *Velocem potius reditum mirabere, lector*, "You would do better, dear reader, to wonder instead at my swift return." Those words could apply (out of context!) to Gratian. Was there no political or military substrate, and was Ausonius simply showing that Gratian did not always have to set a record as a *cunctator maximus*? That he was capable of bestirring himself when required? Otherwise, one might be forgiven for thinking that Gratian had been doing his best to miss his appointment at Adrianople.

Demandt has outlined the long history of the Rhine-Danube *limes* for us in elegantly small compass. The wind in his sails and the swish of his narrative are infectious. Ammianus, the soldier-historian, left us, I argue, with a dark final frame.¹²¹ Ausonius, the poet-panegyrist, did not have that luxury. I hope to have brought Ammianus into a productive conversation with Ausonius.

¹¹⁷ E.g. Rut. Nam. *De red.* 1.129 *quae mergi nequeunt nisu maiore resurgunt* and 140 *ordo renascendi est crescere posse malis*.

¹¹⁸ Theodosius' Gothic Peace. See LENSKI 1997, 139-140 and 143-144. Themistius was very negative; likewise Pacatus, who "plays up the miserable state of the empire".

¹¹⁹ GREEN (1991, 554) notes laws that placed him in Thessalonica (*CTh.* 13.1.11), Aquileia (2 July: *CTh.* 10.1.12), and Milan (*CTh.* 16.5.5). The dates (from SEECK 1919, 250-252) are Tricciana (= Ságvár, Hungary, 5 April *CTh.* 11.36.26), Aquileia (2 July, 5 July), Milan (31 July, 3 August), Tres Tabernae (on the Via Appia, 4 August).

¹²⁰ GREEN 1991, 554.

¹²¹ Despite the relief that Julius' slaughter of other Gothic troops and settlers (31.16.8) might seem to bring. He was *salutaris* and *velox*, while Valens (31.14.7) was *cessator et piger*.

V. A River Runs through It: the Last Word with the Danube

Now Professor Demandt's topic, the politics of the Romano-German *limes*, is largely delineated by the Rhine and the Danube. So I will end with a set of poems that illustrate and exemplify tensions in politics and how they were geographically framed. While the Rhine-Danube *limes* faced northwards to *barbaricum* and can look unitary, it was defended by different emperors with different sets of interests, West and East. The Rhine was the West's problem, but the Danube concerned both colleagues.

In or soon after 369, Ausonius used his political imagination to evoke the thrilling image of Pater Danubius raising his happy head¹²² in Donauschingen to compliment Valentinian I and Gratian on their victories over the Suebi and on the right bank of the Rhine, and to convey the news to Valens, the *cura secunda* of the gods, downstream on the lower Danube frontier:

AD FONTEM DANVVII IVSSV VALENTINIANI AVGVSTI.

Illyricis regnator aquis, tibi, Nile, secundus

Danuuius laetum profero fonte caput.

saluere Augustos iubeo, natumque patremque,

armiferis alui quos ego Pannoniis.

nuntius Euxino iam nunc uolo currere ponto,

ut sciat hoc superum cura secunda Valens,

caede, fuga, flammis stratos periisse Suebos

nec Rhenum Gallis limitis esse loco.

quod si lege maris refluus mihi curreret amnis,

huc possem uictos inde referre Gothos. (Ausonius, *Epigram* 28 Peiper = 3 Green)

AT THE SOURCE OF THE DANUBE BY COMMAND OF THE AUGUSTUS VALENTINIAN

Monarch of the Illyrian waters, second only to you, O Nile,

I, the Danube, raise my happy head from my head-waters.

I send greetings to the *Augusti*, both son and father,

whom I raised among warlike Pannonians.

I now wish to run as a messenger to the Euxine Sea

so that the second [or "next"] protégé of the gods, Valens,

may know that the Suebi have been thrown headlong and perished

in battle, flight, and flames,

and that the Rhine now no longer serves the function of a *limes*.

If my stream could run in the opposite direction according to the law of the sea's tides,

here I would be able to tell how the Goths had been conquered there. (Ausonius, *Epigr.* 28 Peiper = 3 Green)

¹²² River gods emerge from their waters when they feel safe. See Claudian, *6 Cons. Hon.* 159-160 for the Eridanus (personified Po) raising his head to see Alaric off across the Julian Alps.

This triumphant poem celebrated a now supposedly aggressive Rhine border. The Danube is here a *messenger*. But this was not the end of the story. The ill-starred and insecure Valens might well have bridled at being called a *cura secunda*, Ammianus would paint an emperor consumed by rivalry who resented his nephew's military successes (31.12.1).

But Ausonius gave us a chance to imagine yet another Danubian bulletin, news from the East, in a second, obviously paired, epigram that responds in ring-composition:

XXXI AD FONTEM DANVVII IVSSV VALENTINIANI AVGVSTI.

Danuuius penitis caput occultatus in oris

totus sub uestra iam dicione fluo:

qua gelidum fontem mediis effundo Suebis,

imperiis grauidas qua seco Pannonias,

et qua diues aquis Scythico soluo ostia ponto,

omnia sub uestrum flumina mitto iugum.

Augusto dabitur sed proxima palma Valenti:

inueniet fontes hic quoque, Nile tuos. (Ausonius, *Epigr.* 31 Peiper = 4 Green)

I, the Danube, whose head was once hidden in the most remote regions,

now flow completely under the dominion of both of you –

where I pour forth my icy head-waters in the midst of the Suebi

and where I cut off the Pannonian provinces that are pregnant with emperors.

and where, rich in waters, I debouch into the Scythian Sea –

I subject all rivers to your yoke.

The next palm of victory, will however be given to Valens Augustus:

he will discover your sources too, O Nile!

The second poem begins in the West with an allusion to the formerly mysterious source of the Danube.¹²³ First the river is presented as the emperors' subject (2),¹²⁴ and then as bringing his own subjects (6) to the empire. Its fourth verse, however, needs attention. Green saw the Danube as splitting or dividing Pannonia Superior and Inferior and remarking that the confluence of the Danube and the Drava is "close to Sirmium". He seems to suggest conquests beyond the northern bank of the Danube, so that it was "no longer a boundary, and that Pannonia included its northern bank."¹²⁵ He thus read it as making a point like that about the Rhine's now aggressive border in *Epigr.* 28.8.

This cannot be right. The Danube does not actually split or divide Pannonia Superior and Inferior. It constitutes their northern boundary. *Secare* thus cannot mean "to divide" here, but rather "to split off".¹²⁶ The river seems to be seen as "cutting off" ("midwifing"?) Pannonian provinces that

¹²³ SHANZER 1998a, 206-207.

¹²⁴ Meaning that of the whole imperial college, West and East.

¹²⁵ GREEN 1991, 380.

¹²⁶ LEWIS & SHORT 1879, s.v. 'seco' B.

are pregnant with emperors, perhaps – dare I say? – in a sort of Later Roman Caesarian section.¹²⁷ It subjugates all its tributaries to the imperial yoke.¹²⁸ This Danube, head waters now Roman, is a *limes* that is steady in its course. At the end Ausonius depicts the river-god as vindicating the disrespected Valens¹²⁹ by promising him the discovery of the source of the Nile.

Both epigrams were composed by a poet who looked Rhine-wards from his post at Trier. Ausonius mentioned the Danube twice in his *Mosella*: home to the *mustela* in *Mos.* 106 and its heretofore unknown source in *Mos.* 424 in the peroration. He must have been aware of Valens' virtual ownership of its lower reaches and its folk and therefore concentrated on "his" Western emperors' own strategic Rhine.

The two epigrams make clear how the long Danubian *limes* was split between West and East. Ausonius knew this, for he paid some attention to his focalization and Valens' point of view. While the mighty Danube acknowledges his political subjection to all the *Augusti*, he condescends to address only the Nile, not the shorter Rhine. Some synergy might have been preferable to pure fluvial protocol!

Ausonius as panegyrist did his best to minimize Adrianople in 379. His Danubius of 369 should have functioned as a barrier, but after 376 broke under ineluctable pressure from the Goths in the East and would never really come under Roman control again.¹³⁰ Ausonius' hopes for the Rhine in *Mos.* 435 must be the last hurrah that doesn't ring blatantly hollow about Roman power on the Rhine, for he couldn't have known that Gratian in 378 would be the last Roman emperor to campaign across the Rhine.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Italy is described as *gravida imperiis* in Verg. *Aen.* 4.229, but Ausonius is doing far more with the imagery of birthing legitimate emperors. Compare Jerome, *Ep.* 133.9 for Britain as the *fertilis provincia tyrannorum*.

¹²⁸ A panegyric exaggeration. Slightly more of the tributaries (ca. 97) flowed in from the right bank (in Roman territory). About 94 flowed in from the left (*barbaricum*) and were certainly not aggressive campaign venues of Valens. See LENSKI 2002, 320 for Valens' campaigns of 367 and 369. The accounts in Amm. Marc. are worse than underwhelming. Amm. Marc. 27.5.2 Valens crossed the Danube in 367; 27.5.4 he achieved nothing. In Amm. Marc. 27.5.6 he crossed at Novodunum in 369 (= Noviodunum in TALBERT 2000, 22 F3 Noviodunum and <https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/216900>) and concluded a peace with Athanaric and exchanged hostages. Hardly a glorious victory. My fluvial figures come from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tributaries_of_the_Danube.

¹²⁹ I disagree with GREEN (1991, 379) who asserts that there is no condescension in *cura secunda. Sed dabitur proxima* is a clear riposte. All these attitudes originate with Ausonius.

¹³⁰ DEMANDT 2008, 98, citing Syme on the empire's geopolitical wasp-waist that lay between the Adriatic and the Danube.

¹³¹ DEMANDT 2008, 97.

And after the death of Theodosius in 395, relations between West and East would turn into the Cold War that enabled Alaric's Sack of Rome.¹³²

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¹³² Helpful term from WIJNENDAELE, above, p. 88.

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