LATE ANTIQUITY

A GUIDE TO THE POSTCLASSICAL WORLD

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70. S. H. Griffith, "The First Christian *Summa Theologiae* in Arabic: Christian *Kalām* in Ninth-Century Palestine," in Gervers and Bikhazi, eds., *Conversion and Continuity*, 15–31.

71. *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, ed. and trans. B. Evetts, *PO* 1(2,4), 5(1), 10(5). See also H. Kennedy, "The Melkite Church from the Islamic Conquest to the Crusades: Continuity and Adaptation in the Byzantine Legacy," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1986), 325–343.

72. See also J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung, und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich, 1992), 16: "In the Seder celebration the child learns to say 'we,' as he becomes part of a history and a memory that creates and constitutes this 'we.' This problem and process is basic to every culture, although seldom so clearly visible."

73. D. G. Hogarth, *A Wandering Scholar in the Levant* (London, 1896), 84.

74. J. du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford, 1974; corrected repr. Limni, 1994), 42.

75. E.g. Morony, *Iraq*, 524.

76. See also Goitein, *Mediterranean Society*, 2:277.

77. See al-Shahrastānī, *al-mital wa'l-niḥal*, trans. D. Gimaret, G. Monnot, and J. Jolivet, *Livre des religions et des sectes* (Leuven, 1986–93).

BARBARIANS AND ETHNICITY

Patrick J. Geary

The concept of "barbarian" was an invention of the Graeco-Roman world, projected onto a whole spectrum of peoples living beyond the frontier of the empire. Except for the Persians, whose cultural and political equality the Roman world begrudgingly recognized, Romans perceived all other societies through generalized and stereotypical categories inherited from centuries of Greek and Roman ethnographic writings. Each people's complex of traits, along with geographical boundaries, became the determining factors in Roman ethnic classification.

If barbarians were a Roman invention, ethnogenesis, or ethnic formation and transformation, was emphatically not. Classical systems of territorialization and classification, typical of Roman concerns for precision and order, objectified and externalized the identity of peoples, relegating them to an eternal present. Geographers such as Pliny delighted in combining as many sources as possible, mixing peoples long disappeared with contemporary ethnic groups in his *Natural History*. The result was a sort of law of conservation of peoples: no people ever disappeared, no trait ever changed. At best, a group might acquire a new name and novel, even contradictory customs and characteristics. Moreover, the geographical location of peoples took on increasing importance as Roman contact with barbarians increased. The maps of the Roman world became crowded as their compilers sought to fill their land masses with as many peoples as possible. These peoples, like other natural phenomena, had no real history: they encountered history only when they entered the sphere of the civilized world. Thus the concept of ethnogenesis was alien to the Roman understanding of their neighbors. Typical of the Roman explanation of peoples is this account of the emergence of the Goths: "Now from this island of Scandza, as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name. As soon as they disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightway gave

their name to the place" (Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Mommsen [Berlin, 1882], 60).
Thus begins the 6th century account of Gothic origins by the Gotho-Roman
Jordanes, writing in the Constantinople of Justinian. The account reflects tradi-
tional concepts of Graeco-Roman ethnography more than Gothic oral tradi-
tions. The Goths (to Jordanes, equivalent to the Getae) are but one more of the
innumerable peoples who emerged from the north in a timeless "long ago" and
began their long migration toward Italy and thereby entered the sphere of
Roman civilization.

In contrast to this classical image of peoples as static, eternal, and without
history, an inscription erected by a Turkic Khagan presents an alternative un-
derstanding of the origin of a people: "My father, the khagan, went off with
seventeen men. Having heard the news that [he] was marching off, those who
were in the towns went up mountains and those who were on mountains came
down [from there]; thus they gathered and numbered seventy men. Due to the
fact that Heaven granted strength, the soldiers of my father, the khagan, were
like wolves, and his enemies were like sheep. Having gone on campaigns for-
ward and backward, he gathered together and collected men; and they all
numbered seven hundred men. After they had numbered seven hundred men,
[my father, the khagan] organized and ordered the people who had lost their
state and their khagan, the people who had turned slaves and servants, the
people who had lost the Turkish institutions, in accordance with the rules of my
ancestors" (Tariat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* [Bloomington, Ind.,
1968], 265). In this model of the origin of a people, one sees a new creation
brought about through military success: as a war leader is successful, he draws
more and more followers to himself, and they become a band and then an
army. This critical mass of warriors under a successful commander is converted
into a people through the imposition of a legal system. Peoplehood is the end of
a political process through which individuals with diverse backgrounds are
united by law. So conceived, a people is constitutional, not biological, and yet
the very imposition of law makes the opposite appeal: it is the law of the ances-
tors. The leader projects an antiquity and a genealogy onto this new creation.

In general, three models of barbarian ethnic formation can be discerned
among the peoples who came into contact with the late Roman empire. The
first and most closely studied is that which took its identity from a leading or
royal family. Among the Goths, the Longobards, the Salian Franks, and other
successful barbarian peoples, members of a successful family of warriors suc-
ceeded in attracting and controlling a following from disparate backgrounds
that adhered to the traditions of the family. In such peoples, the legendary
origins of the royal family became the legendary origins of the people that
coalesced around this "kernel of tradition." These traditions traced the origin
of the family or people to some distant, divine ancestor who led the people out
of their original territory, won a significant victory over another people or
peoples, and went on to find a place within the Roman world. The success of
such peoples depended on the ability of their leading family to destroy alterna-
tive claimants to leadership and to find a way of grafting onto the fluid barbar-
ian cultural and political tradition Roman institutions of law, polity, and or-

ganization. Thus, these barbarian peoples were dependent for their survival
on the cooperation and recognition, however grudgingly accorded, of the em-
perors.

The second model of ethnogenesis drew on traditions of Central Asian steppe
peoples for the charismatic leadership and organization necessary to create a
people from a diverse following. The primary model for such an ethnic forma-
tion was the Huns of Attila, although the Alans, the Avars, and later the
Magyars also were steppe empires. These polyethnic confederations were if
anything even more inclusive than the first model, being able to draw together
groups which maintained much of their traditional linguistic, cultural, and even
political organization under the generalship of a small body of steppe com-
manders. The economic basis of these steppe confederations was semi-nomadic
rather than sedentary. Territory and distance played little role in defining their
boundaries, although elements of the confederation might practice traditional
forms of agriculture and social organization quite different from those of the
steppe leadership. Thus the Goths in the kingdom of Attila and the Bulgars in
the kingdom of the Avars could not only maintain but even develop their own
traditions while remaining firmly attached to the central organization of the
empire. The survival of such confederations required constant military suc-
cesses to an even greater extent than did the first model. A combination of
terror and military victory held them together. The death of a leader or his
defeat at the hands of another barbarian or Roman army could lead to the
rapid disappearance of the mightiest of these empires. Reversals such as that of
the Huns following the death of Attila, or of the Avars following Charlemagne's
successful penetration of their kingdom in the late 700s, resulted in their rapid
and total disappearance. At the same time, the disintegration of these vast
steppe confederations generated new and transformed peoples. The Ostro-
goths, Gepids, and Longobards emerged from the empire of Attila; and the
Bulgars and other Slavic peoples emerged from the ruins of the Avar empire.

The last model, that of decentralized peoples such as the Alamanni, perhaps
the Bavarians, and certainly the Slavs, is perhaps the most difficult to under-
stand. In these configurations, whatever traditions may have informed the com-
munity were transmitted not by a central royal family but in a more communal
form. It is impossible to know to what extent such peoples had any conscious-
ness of communal identity at all. The Alamanni appear in Roman sources from
the 3rd century, but no evidence of any collective legends, traditions, or gene-
alogies has survived that would indicate the emergence of a common sense of
identity among the Germanic peoples living on the upper Rhine. In the case of
the Slavs, some have hypothesized that these peoples were the amalgamation of
the Germanic-Sarmatian peasant populations left behind in those regions from
which warrior bands and their leaders of the first type departed for the lure of
the Roman empire. This may be so, but whenever the Slavs appear in sources,
they do so not as peasants but as fierce warriors, loosely organized into short-
lived bands. Centralized leadership was not the norm and often came in the
form of outside elements, from nearby Germanic peoples such as the Franks, or
from Iranian Croats, Turkic Bulgars, or Scandinavian Rus'.

Regardless of the form of ethnogenesis, it must be understood as a continuing process rather than a historical event. Ancient names could and did come to designate very different groups of people. Alternatively, certain groups underwent repeated, profound social, cultural, and political transformations such that they became essentially different peoples even while maintaining venerable names. The only way to understand the varieties of ethnogenesis, then, is to observe the historical transformations of the most significant of these groups across late antiquity.

By the 5th century, Romans and barbarians had learned a great deal about each other, much of it through painful contact and all of it filtered through their own modes of understanding the world. Romans viewed barbarians through the inherited categories of classical ethnography stretching back over four centuries, but also with the more pragmatic eyes of conquerors and adversaries whose faith in Roman superiority had been severely shaken in the last quarter of the 4th century. Barbarians viewed the Roman empire as the home of the great king, as a source of inexhaustible wealth, and frequently as a powerful but treacherous ally. Still, this empire was deemed as essential to the barbarians as it was alien to the Romans. The Visigothic ruler Athaulf was said to have contemplated replacing the empire with his own, but abandoned the idea as a chimera. Four hundred years later another barbarian ruler, Charlemagne, absorbed the empire into his person, having himself acclaimed emperor on Christmas Day, 800.

Romans of the 5th century contemplated the barbarians of their own day from the perspective of almost a millennium of interaction with the barbarian world. These centuries of Roman presence had profoundly influenced the peoples living along the frontiers. Roman policy dictated the creation of client buffer states that could protect the empire from contact with hostile barbarians further afield; provide trading partners for the supply of cattle, raw materials, and slaves; and, increasingly from the 4th century, fill the ranks of the military with mercenary troops. Thus the empire supported friendly chieftains, supplying them with weapons, gold, and grain in order to strengthen the pro-Roman factions within the barbarian world. The effect on not only the barbarians living along the *limes* but also those further away was considerable. Roman economic and political power destabilized the rough balance of power within the barbarian world by enabling pro-Roman chieftains to accumulate wealth and power far in excess of what had been possible previously. These chieftains also gained both military and political experience by serving in the Roman military system with their troops as federates. At the same time, fear of the Romans and their allies drove anti-Roman factions into large, unstable, but occasionally mighty confederations that could inflict considerable damage on Roman interests on both sides of the borders. This had happened in the time of Caesar among the Gauls and at the end of the 1st century among the Britons. In the late 2nd century a broad confederacy known as the Marcomanni tested and temporarily broke the Danubian frontier. In the aftermath of the Marcoman-

nic wars, new barbarian peoples appeared along the Rhine-Danube frontiers in the course of the 3rd century. A loose confederation along the upper Rhine known as simply "the people" (Alamanni) appeared in the early 3rd century and a similar confederation on the lower Rhine, "the free" or "the fierce" (Franci), came to the attention of the Romans a generation later, as did a confederation of Germanic, Sarmatic, and even Roman warriors along the lower Danube under the generalship of the Goth Cniva. Behind these constellations on Rome's borders stood still other groups, such as Saxons beyond the Franks, Burgundians beyond the Alamanni, and Vandals beyond the Goths.

These confederations were in turn composed of small communities of farmers and herders living in villages along rivers, seacoasts, and clearings from the North and Baltic Seas to the Black Sea. Most members of the society were free men and women, organized in nuclear households governed by the husband or father. Status within the village depended on wealth, measured by the size of a family's cattle herd, and military prowess. Some wealthier individuals presided over households that included not only their wife or wives and children, but free dependents and slaves housed in outbuildings around the leader's home.

Households were in turn integrated into the larger kindred group known to scholars as the Sip (German: *Sippe*) or clan. This wider circle of kin included both agnatic and cognatic groups who shared a perception of common descent, reinforced by a special "peace" that made violent conflict within the clan a crime for which no compensation or atonement could be made, by an incest taboo, and possibly by some claims to inheritance. This wider kindred might also form the basis for mutual defense and for pursuit of feuds. However, membership in this larger circle was elastic. It provided the possibility but not the necessity of concerted action since individuals might select from a variety of possible broader kin affiliations depending on circumstances. The nuclear family, not the wider clan, was the primary unit of barbarian society.

Village life was directed by the assembly of free men under the leadership of a headman whose position may have come from a combination of factors including wealth, family influence, and connections with the leadership of the people beyond his village. Binding together this larger entity was a combination of religious, legal, and political traditions that imparted a strong if unstable sense of unity.

Members of a people shared ancestry myths, cultural traditions, a legal system, and leadership. However, all of these were flexible, multiple, and subject to negotiation and even dispute. Ancestry myths took the form of genealogies of heroic figures and their exploits. The founders of these genealogies were divine, and the chain of their descendants did not form a history in the Graeco-Roman sense of a structured narrative of events and their broader significance. Rather, these myths preserved an atemporal and apolitical account of individuals, woven together through ties of kinship and tales of revenge and blood feud, to which many individuals and families could claim ties. Other cultural traditions, too, such as dress, hairstyles, religious practices, weapons, and tactics provided strong bonds but also fluid and adaptable ways of creating unity or claiming difference. Legal traditions were an outgrowth of this religious and

cultural identity. In the absence of strong central authority, disputes were regulated through family leaders, village assemblies, and war leaders. Control was exerted to preserve peace or at least to set the rules for feuds to take place in a manner least destructive of the community. Finally, these religious and cultural groups were organized under political leadership, a leadership that underwent profound transformation in the early centuries of contact with Rome.

When the Romans first came into contact with the Celtic and Germanic peoples, these populations were largely governed by hereditary, sacral kings, who embodied the identity of their people by their sacred ancestry. This traditional type of king, termed *Thiudan* (from *thiuda,* "people" in east Germanic languages such as Gothic) or in Celtic languages *rhix,* continued among peoples far from the Roman *limes* in portions of the British Isles, in Scandinavia, and in the Elbe region. In the course of the 1st and 2nd centuries, those living in proximity to the Romans had largely abandoned their archaic sacral kings in favor of warrior leaders who might be selected from old royal families or, as frequently, from successful aristocratic fighters. This change favored the empire, since Rome could more easily influence new leaders emerging from oligarchic factions than heirs of ancient religious authority. These leaders were raised up by their heterogeneous armies and formed the centers around which new traditions of political and religious identity could develop and onto which, in some cases, older notions of sacro-social identity could be grafted. The legitimacy of these leaders (termed *duces, reges, regales* by different Roman sources; *kuning,* that is, leader of the family, in west Germanic languages; or in Gothic *reiks,* borrowed from the Celtic *rhix*) derived ultimately from their ability to lead their armies to victory. A victorious campaign confirmed their right to rule and drew to them an ever growing number of people who accepted and shared in their identity. Thus a charismatic leader could found a new people. In time, the leader and his descendants might identify themselves with an older tradition and claim divine sanction, proven by their fortunes in war, to embody and continue some ancient people. The constitutional integrity of these peoples then was dependent on warfare and conquest—they were armies, although their economies remained dependent on raiding and a combination of animal husbandry and slash-and-burn agriculture. Defeat, at the hand of either the Romans or other barbarians, could mean the end not only of a ruler but of a people, who might be absorbed into another, victorious confederation.

At any given time, therefore, within these broad confederations, a variety of individuals might claim some sort of kingship over portions of the people. The Alamannic confederation that fought the emperor Julian in 357, for example, was led by an uncle and nephew termed "the most outstanding in power before the other kings," five kings of second rank, ten *regales,* and a series of magnates. Although Roman sources termed all of these leaders "Alamanni," they also observed that the Alamanni were composed of such groups as the Bucinobantes, Lentienses, and Juthungi under the leadership of their own kings. These subgroups could be termed *gentes,* implying a social and political constitution, or *pagi,* suggesting that organization was at least in part territorial; or, as in the cases of the Lentienses, both. Similarly the early Franks were composed of

groups such as the Chamavi, Chattuarii, Bructeri, and Amsivari, and had numerous *regales* and *duces* who commanded portions of the collectivity and disputed among themselves for primacy. In the late 4th century, for example, the Frankish war leader Arbogast, although in Roman service, used his Roman position to pursue his feud with the Frankish *regales* Marcomer and Sunno in trans-Rhenian territory. Further to the east, the Gothic confederation with its military kingship splintered under Roman pressure. The most eastern portions of the Goths in modern Ukraine accepted the authority of the Amals, a royal family of the new type that nevertheless claimed ancient and divine legitimacy, while among the western Gothic groups numerous *reiks* shared and disputed an oligarchic control.

Warfare, whether large-scale attacks led by the *reiks* or *kuning* or small-scale cattle raids carried out by a few adventurous youths, was central to barbarian life. Warfare within the family was forbidden; within the people it was controlled by the conventions of the feud; but between peoples it was the normal state of affairs. Raiding was a normal way of acquiring wealth and prestige as well as of reestablishing the balance of honor within the community. Successful war leaders gathered around themselves elite groups of young warriors who devoted themselves to their commander in return for arms, protection, and a share of booty. These bands of retainers formed powerful military units that could be invaluable in war, but also, in tendency to fight each other and dispute over spoils, dangerous sources of instability. The following of a successful war leader could grow enormously, as young warriors from surrounding villages and even other peoples joined. In time the warrior band and its dependents could splinter off to create a new people.

For the most part, warfare was directed against neighboring barbarians, and raids and plundering maintained a relative equilibrium within the barbarian world. However, the presence of Roman merchants within this world and of the riches of the empire on its frontiers proved irresistible to barbarian leaders who needed to win glory in battle and to acquire iron, horses, slaves, and gold for their following. For as long as it existed, the empire could serve this purpose in one of two ways, either as the employer of barbarian military bands or as the victim of these same bands.

Until the last quarter of the 4th century, barbarians had found direct assaults on imperial armies less effective than service to them. Barbarian military successes against the empire tended to result from Roman disputes and weaknesses. Barbarian armies were never a match for a competent emperor at the head of his army. Sporadic raiding across the frontier, often carried out by isolated warrior bands, brought severe reprisals, at times through punitive expeditions into the barbarian world accompanied by thorough devastation in the Roman tradition. Large-scale raiding was possible only when the Roman frontier garrisons were withdrawn or weakened by urgent needs elsewhere in the empire. In the 250s, during the darkest hours of the 3rd century crisis for example, the Gothic King Cniva led his mixed confederation into the province of Dacia while Gothic pirates attacked the Black Sea coast from the mouth of the Danube. When legions from along the Rhine were shifted east to deal with

internal and external problems, barbarians took the opportunity to raid across the poorly defended frontier. Alamannic bands overran the Roman trans-Rhenian Decumatian territories and Frankish armies advanced deep into Gaul and even Spain. The actual identities of the peoples involved in these raids is difficult to ascertain. Often Roman sources speak of the barbarian inhabitants along the Rhine as simply "Germani." At other times, they tend to identify those on the upper Rhine as Alamanni, those on the lower as Franci, although the extent to which the raiders would have recognized such labels themselves is impossible to determine. Moreover, Romans were aware that other groups such as Burgundians and Vandals and Saxons participated in these raids as well.

However, although neither Dacia nor Decumania was entirely retaken by the empire, Emperor Gallienus (253–268) and his successors decisively defeated the Franks and the Alamanni, and Emperor Aurelian (270–275) crushed Goths in a series of campaigns that splintered their confederation. Raiding continued sporadically, but the frontiers were essentially secure for another century.

For some barbarian armies, defeat meant the destruction of their identity as a cohesive social unit. The devastation caused by barbarian raids into the empire paled in comparison with the wasting and slaughter meted out by Roman armies engaged in expeditions across the Rhine or Danube. A panegyric of the year 310 describes the treatment to which Constantine subjected the Bructeri after a punitive expedition he led against them: the barbarians were trapped in an area of impenetrable forest and swamp, where many were killed, their cattle confiscated, their villages burned, and all of the adults thrown to the beasts in the arena. The children were presumably sold into slavery. In other cases, surviving warriors were forced into the Roman army. These *dediticii* or *laeti*, following a ritual surrender in which they gave up their weapons and threw themselves on the mercy of their Roman conquerors, were spread throughout the empire in small units or settled in depopulated areas to provide military service and restore regions devastated by barbarian attacks and taxpayer flight. One such unit of Franks sent to the shores of the Black Sea managed a heroic escape, commandeering a ship and making their way across the Mediterranean, through the Straits of Gibraltar and ultimately home, but most served out their days in the melting pot of the Roman army.

Defeat also meant major changes for barbarian peoples on the frontiers of the empire not forced into service or sold into slavery. Deprived of the possibility of supporting their political and economic systems through raiding, the defeated barbarian military kings found an alternative in service to the Roman empire. After defeating a Vandal army in 270 Emperor Aurelian concluded a treaty with them as federates of the empire. Similar treaties with Franks and Goths followed before the end of the century. *Foederati* obligated themselves to respect the empire's frontiers, to provide troops to the imperial army, and in some cases to make additional payments in cattle or goods. Barbarian leaders favorable to Rome found that they could reach previously unimaginable heights of power and influence by fighting not against the empire, but for it.

In the course of the 4th century, internal conflict and pressure on the Persian frontier as well as a desire to minimize imperial expenses led to the progressive incorporation of these barbarian leaders and their followings into the Roman military system. Constantine I led the way, not only designating Frankish military units as auxiliary units of the imperial army but also promoting barbarians such as the Frank Bonitus to high military office. Bonitus was the first of a long series of Franks in Roman service. In 355 his son, the thoroughly Romanized Silvanus who was commander of the Roman garrison at Cologne, was proclaimed emperor by his troops. Although Silvanus was quickly assassinated by envoys of Emperor Constantius, subsequent barbarian commanders such as Malarich, Teutomeres, Mallobaudes, Laniogaisus, and Arbogast avoided usurpation but exercised enormous power within the western empire. Ultimately one of these Frankish Roman commanders, Clovis, would eliminate the remnants of the Roman state in Gaul and receive imperial recognition.

For the most part, these Roman generals maintained close ties with the members of their peoples outside the empire. Shortly after Silvanus's assassination, Franks sacked Cologne, possibly in revenge for his murder. Mallobaudes, who participated in Gratian's victory over the Alamanni in 378, was simultaneously termed *comes domesticorum* and *rex Francorum* by the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus. Others such as Arbogast used their position within the empire to attack their enemies across the Rhine. Still, their situation was extremely precarious both within the empire and without. Frequently they were the objects of suspicion to their Roman competitors, even though they generally were no less reliable than Romans in high command. At the same time, as Roman officials and as adherents of Roman religion, whether Christian or pagan, they were always targets for anti-Roman factions at home. Assumption of high Roman command generally meant forgoing the possibility of retaining a position at the head of a barbarian people outside of the empire.

Around the Black Sea, the Gothic confederation experienced a similarly ambiguous relationship with the eastern portions of the empire. By the 4th century the more eastern Gothic peoples, the Greuthungs or steppe peoples, had absorbed characteristics of the Scyths. In the western regions, the Tervingi or forest people had come under the greatest direct influence of Rome. Both were sedentary agrarian societies, although in the former the military elite was composed primarily of infantry while in the latter horsemen in the tradition of the ancient Scyths formed the core of the army. In the 4th century, the Tervingian Goths had expanded their lordship over a wide spectrum of peoples with different linguistic, cultic, and cultural traditions.

Settled in agricultural villages and governed by local assemblies of free men, the population of this Gothic confederation was nevertheless subject to the central authority of the oligarchic authority of Gothic military leaders under the authority of a nonroyal judge. In 332 Constantine and the Tervingian judge Ariaric concluded a treaty or *foedus*. Ariaric's son Aoric was raised in Constantinople and the emperor even raised a statue in the city in honor of the judge. Under Ariaric, Aoric, and his son Athanaric, these western Goths became progressively integrated into the Roman imperial system, providing auxiliary troops to the eastern region of the empire. One effect of this closer relationship with the empire was their implication in internal imperial politics. In 365

the usurper Procopius convinced the Tervingians to support him as the representative of the Constantinian dynasty in his opposition to Emperor Valens. After Procopius's execution, Valens launched a brutal punitive attack across the Danube that ended only in 369 with a treaty between Athanaric and the emperor.

Religion was a binding force in the Gothic confederation, but the heterogeneous constitution of the confederation created difficulties in maintaining this religious unity. Christians, large numbers of whom were incorporated into the Gothic world from the Crimea during the time of Cniva, and others who were carried off in trans-Danubian raids, proved the most difficult religious minority to assimilate, both because of the strong exclusivity of their monotheistic faith and because of the importance of Christianity in the political strategies of the Roman empire. Gothic Christians represented the spectrum of Christian beliefs, from orthodox Crimean Goths to the Audian sect that confessed the corporeality of God among the Tervingi, to various Arian or semi-Arian communities in the Gothic Balkans. The most influential Gothic Christian was Ulfila (whose Gothic name means "little wolf"), a third-generation Goth of relatively high social standing whose Christian ancestors had been captured in a raid on Cappadocia sometime in the 260s. In the 330s Ulfila came to Constantinople as part of a delegation, resided in the empire for some time, and in 341 was consecrated "bishop of the Christians in the Getic land" at the council of Antioch and sent to the Balkan Goths. Ulfila's consecration and his mission to the Goths and other peoples in the Gothic confederation were part of an imperial Gothic program, which may have precipitated the first persecution of Gothic Christians in 348 under Aoric and a second beginning in 369 under Athanaric. During the first persecution Ulfila and his followers were exiled to Roman Moesia, where he preached in Gothic, Latin, and Greek to his heterogeneous flock, wrote theological treatises, and translated the Bible into Gothic. Ulfila and his followers attempted to steer a middle course between the Catholic and Arian positions on the nature of the divine persons, a position that inevitably resulted in being labeled Arian by future generations of orthodox believers. In the short run, however, Athanaric's persecution was as ineffective as had been earlier persecutions of Christians by Rome. He succeeded only in badly dividing the Gothic peoples, creating an opportunity seized by the Gothic aristocrat Fritigern, who contacted the Roman emperor Valens and agreed to become an Arian Christian in return for support against Athanaric.

These political and religious tensions between and within the Roman and Gothic worlds were rendered suddenly beside the point by the arrival of the Huns, a steppe nomadic confederation under Central Asian leadership, in the area of the Black Sea in 375. These nomadic riders were like no people seen before by Romans or barbarians: everything from their physical appearance to their pastoral lifestyle to their mode of warfare was foreign and terrible to the old world. The Huns were never, except for the short period of the reign of Attila (444–453), a united, centralized people. Rather, the Huns, commonly referred to as Scyths by Roman sources, were disparate groups of warrior

bands sharing a common nomadic culture, a military tradition of mounted raiding, and an extraordinary ability to absorb the peoples they conquered into their confederations. Their startling military success was due to their superb cavalry tactics, their proficiency with short double-reflex bows that allowed them to launch a volley of arrows with deadly accuracy while riding, and their tactical knowledge of the steppes and plains of western Asia and Central Europe that allowed them to appear without warning, inflict tremendous damage, and disappear into the grasslands as quickly as they had come.

Within a generation, these nomadic warrior bands destroyed first the Alans and the Greuthung kingdom and then the Tervingian confederation. With the destruction of the authority of Gothic leadership, constituent groups of the old Gothic confederations had to decide whether to join the Hunnic bands or to petition the emperor to enter and settle in the Roman empire.

The semi-nomadic confederation known as the Huns provided a model for the enormous but fragile steppe confederations such as that of the later Avars. They easily absorbed a vast spectrum of other peoples and profited from their position between the eastern and western halves of the empire, but vanished when their leaders were no longer able to lead them to victories over their victims.

For most of the Goths defeated by the Huns, entering the confederation was an obvious choice. Although a Hunnic core of Central Asians provided central leadership to the Hunnic armies, the peoples they conquered were assimilated with ease. Good warriors, whether of Gothic, Vandal, Frankish, or even Roman origins, could rise rapidly within the Hunnic hierarchy. Even among the central leadership, this polyethnicity was obvious. The Hunnic leader Edika was simultaneously a Hun and a Scirian, and ruled the short-lived Scirian kingdom as king. The greatest of the Hunnic leaders, Attila, bore a Gothic name (or title): Attila means "little father." Gothic, Greek, and Latin were used alongside Hunnic in his court, and among his advisers were not only leaders of various barbarian peoples but even former Greek merchants. For a time the Italian aristocrat Orestes, father of the last Roman emperor in the west, Romulus Augustulus, served the Hunnic king.

To maintain the unity of this heterogeneous Hunnic confederation, its chieftains needed a constant flow of treasure, the principal source of which was the empire. Initially, raids on the Illyrian and Thracian borders of the empire provided the bulk of the booty, supplemented by annual subsidies from the emperors to prevent further incursions; thus the ability to conduct successful military operations was essential for the survival of Hunnic leaders. During the first decades of the Hunnic confederation leadership was shared by members of a royal family, but in 544 Attila eliminated his brother Bleda after Hunnic successes began to abate and unified the Huns under his command. Under Attila annual subsidies from the emperor increased from 350 pounds of gold to 700, and eventually to 2,100, an enormous amount to the barbarians but not a devastating burden on the empire. Theodosius found it easier to pay than to

defend against Hunnic raids. In addition to gold, Attila demanded that the empire cease harboring Hunnic refugees and return those who had fled his authority. Those who were returned were impaled or crucified.

After the death of Theodosius in 450, his successor Marcian refused to continue preferential treatment of the Huns. With this source of funding gone, Attila apparently considered himself too weak to extract adequate booty by raiding the eastern empire and turned his attention to the western empire of Valentinian III. He led his armies west in two long raids. The first in 451 reached far into Gaul before being stopped at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains between Troyes and Châlons-sur-Marne. There Attila's army, probably composed primarily of subject Germanic peoples from the western areas of his control—Suebi, Franks, and Burgundians in addition to Gepids, Ostrogoths, and Central Asian Huns—was stopped by an equally heterogeneous army of Goths, Franks, Bretons, Sarmatians, Burgundians, Saxons, Alans, and Romans under the command of the patrician Aetius. The second raid came the following year, when Attila led another army into Italy. Again, in keeping with Hunnic priorities the expedition was primarily undertaken for pillage, not for lasting political objectives, and ended at the gates of Rome when Pope Leo I paid off the Huns, who, weakened by disease and far from their accustomed terrain, were probably all too ready to return to the steppe.

The essential fragility of an empire such as Attila's was demonstrated by its rapid disintegration following his death. Steppe empires built on victory could not endure defeat. A separatist coalition under the leadership of the Gepid Ardaric revolted against Attila's sons. The rebels were victorious and the defeat of Attila's sons led to the splintering of the old confederation and new processes of ethnogenesis. In addition to the Gepid alliance emerged the Rugii, the Sciri, and the Sarmatians along the Danube, and the Ostrogoths, who gathered the remnants of the Greuthungs and entered Roman service as *foederati*. Some of Attila's sons continued to lead splinter groups, some apparently returning to Central Asia, others entering Roman service within the Roman military aristocracy. Within a few generations, they and their followers had become Ostrogoths, Gepids, or Bulgars.

A different fate met those barbarians who fled the Hunnic onslaught in 375. While the majority of the Greuthungs and Alans were absorbed into the new Hunnic confederation, a minority, augmented by deserting Huns, fled toward the *limes*. So too did most of the Tervingi, who abandoned Athanaric's leadership and fled with Fritigern across the Danube. The flight of the Tervingi into the empire set in motion a decisive transformation in the identity of this people. From the Roman perspective, they were but one more barbarian group of *dediticii*, received into the empire and allowed to settle in Thrace, where they were expected to support themselves through agriculture while supplying troops to the military. The reality was that in quality and quantity, the Tervingian refugees' situation was very different from that of earlier *dediticii*. First,

these Goths were far more numerous than earlier barbarian bands allowed into the empire, and they overwhelmed the Roman administrative abilities. Second, the Romans did not force them to surrender their arms as was the usual practice. When Roman mistreatment and Gothic hunger pushed the refugees to armed resistance, the result was a series of Gothic victories. Soon the refugee cavalry of the Greuthungs, Alans, and Huns joined the Tervingi, as did Gothic units already in the Roman army, Thracian miners, barbarian slaves, and the poor. The Gothic victories culminated in 378 with the annihilation of the imperial army and the death of Valens at Adrianople.

After Adrianople, Rome could no longer treat the Goths as *dediticii*. In a treaty concluded in 382, the Goths were recognized as a federated people but were allowed to settle between the Danube and the Balkan mountains with their own governors, creating in effect a state within a state. Tax revenues traditionally collected for the support of the military were redirected to the support of the barbarians. In return they were required to provide military support to the empire, but they did so under their own commanders, who were subordinated to Roman generals.

At the same time, the unprecedented success of the Tervingians and their allies led to a fundamental transformation of this disparate band of refugees into the Visigoths, a new people with a new cultural and political identity. The Visigoths quickly adapted the mounted tactics used so effectively by the Greuthungs, Alans, and Huns in the campaigns against Valens, in effect transforming themselves into a highly mobile cavalry on the Scythian model. For the next generation the Visigoths struggled to maintain themselves as a Gothic confederation and simultaneously as a Roman army. Their king Alaric, a member of the royal clan of the Balths, sought recognition and payments at once as ruler of a federated people and as a high-ranking general, or *magister militum*, in imperial service with de facto command of the civilian and military bureaucracies in the regions under his authority. He pursued both of these goals through alternate service to and expeditions against the eastern and western emperors and their imperial barbarian commanders.

Alaric's insistence on his dual role stood in contrast to an older model of imperial barbarian embodied by Stilicho, the supreme military commander in the west and intermittently Alaric's commander, ally, and bitter enemy. Stilicho was of Vandal birth, but he, like pagan Frankish and Alamannic Roman commanders before him, had entirely abandoned his ethnic barbarian ties. He was a Roman citizen, an orthodox Catholic, and operated entirely within the Roman tradition, alternately serving and manipulating both the imperial family (as guardian and later father-in-law of the emperor Honorius) and barbarian federates such as Alaric. Stilicho's path proved fatal when he was unable to maintain the integrity of the Rhone and Danube *limes*. On the last day of the year 406, bands of Vandals, Suebi, and Alans crossed the upper Rhine to ravage Gaul and penetrate as far as Spain unhindered. Around the same time, Gothic bands fleeing the Huns invaded Italy from Pannonia. In spite of Stilicho's ultimate success in defeating the Gothic invaders, these twin disasters played into

his enemies' hands. In 408 he was deposed and executed on orders of his son-in-law. Following his death, thousands of other assimilated barbarians living in Italy were likewise slaughtered.

Surviving barbarians in Italy rallied to Alaric, whose dual role as barbarian king and Roman commander offered a more durable model. His efforts to win recognition and payments to support his followers led to his invasion of Italy in 408. Botched negotiations led, after numerous feints, to the capture and pillage of Rome on August 24–26, 410. Although his subsequent attempt to lead his people to the fertile lands of Africa failed and he died in southern Italy, Alaric had established an enduring form of barbarian-Roman polity.

Alaric's successor and brother-in-law Athaulf led the Goths out of Italy and into Gaul. At Narbonne in the year 414 he married Galla Placidia, sister of the emperor Honorius captured in Rome, in the hope of entering the imperial family of Theodosius. The chimera of political advantage through marriage into the imperial family would recur over the next century, with Attila's claims to Honoria, the sister of Valentinian III, and with the marriage between the Vandal pretender Huneric and his hostage Eudocia, Valentinian's daughter. None of these attempts accomplished either peace or parity with the Roman empire.

Athaulf fell to an assassin and after futile attempts first to reenter Italy and then to reach North Africa, his successors accepted a new *foedus* with the mandate to clear Spain of rebel Bagaudae as well as of Vandals and Alans. Following their return to Toulouse in 418, the Visigoths began the form of political and social organization that would characterize their kingdom and those of other federated barbarians, notably the Burgundians and the Ostrogoths.

The barbarians, whatever their ethnic origins, formed a small but powerful military minority within a much larger Roman population. As mounted warriors, they tended to settle in strategic border areas of their territories or in the political capitols. Support of these barbarian armies was provided by the assignment of a portion of traditional tax revenues that had gone to the imperial fisc, thus minimizing the burden of the barbarian occupation on the land-owning Roman aristocracy and keeping these professional warriors free for military service. Collection and distribution of these taxes remained in the hands of the municipal *curiales*, likewise minimizing the effects on the landowning aristocracy that monopolized these offices. At least this seems to have been the arrangement with the Visigoths in 418, the Burgundians in 443, and the Ostrogoths in Italy during the 490s. In some other cases, such as that of a group of Alans settled around Valence in 440, the barbarians were assigned tax debts no longer being collected by imperial officials. Through these tax shares, barbarian kings were able to provide for their followers and keep them from dispersing into the countryside in order to supervise their estates. In the tradition of Alaric, barbarian kings were not only commanders of their people but simultaneously high-ranking Roman officials (*magister militum, patricius*, and so forth), who exercised supreme authority over the civilian administrative system in their territory, effectively governing the two elements of the Roman state that had been separate since the time of Diocletian.

The territorialization of barbarian armies within these terms set into motion a further ethnogenesis. Barbarian kings began the attempt to transform the culturally disparate members of their armies into a unified people with a common law and sense of identity while maintaining their distance from the majority Roman population of their kingdoms. This identity was drawn from vague family traditions reinterpreted and transformed by the new situations in which they found themselves. For the Visigoths, the Balth family provided the center of this tradition. For the Vandals, it was the Hasdings; for the Ostrogoths, the Amals. These royal families projected their imagined past onto the people as a whole, providing a common sense of origin to be shared by the whole of the military elite.

To a lesser extent, barbarian kings likewise used religion to found a common identity. The Gothic royal family, like those of the Vandals, Burgundians, and other peoples, were Arian, and the Arian faith became closely identified with the king and his people. Arianism was neither a proselytizing faith nor a persecuting one. At the most, Arians demanded the use of one or more churches for their worship. Otherwise, orthodox Christianity was not proscribed or persecuted. The exception appears to have been the Vandal kingdom of North Africa, but even here the persecutions and confiscations directed against the orthodox church seemed to have had more to do with confiscation of land and repression of political opponents than doctrinal differences.

Barbarian kings also relied on legal tradition to forge a new identity for their peoples. Nothing is known about barbarian law codes before the Visigothic Code of Euric, which dates from ca. 470–480. Although in general barbarian law codes appear to stand in sharp distinction to Roman law, with their system of tariffs for offenses *(Wergeld)*, the use of oaths, and formal oral procedure, such traditions may not have been much different from local vulgar legal practice in large areas of the west by the 5th century. The laws sought to delineate rights and responsibilities of barbarians and Romans and seem to have been territorial laws, intended to be applied to barbarians and Romans alike, although not to the exclusion of other Roman legal traditions alive in the territories granted to the barbarian armies.

Royal efforts to forge new and enduring ethnic and political identities within these dual kingdoms met with indifferent success. The distinction between the barbarian military and political minority on the one hand and the Roman population on the other remained most sharp in Vandal Africa. The Vandals, unlike most of the other barbarian peoples to create kingdoms within the empire, had done so without benefit of a treaty with the empire and had proceeded to confiscation of property on a wide scale. These confiscations won for them the enduring hatred of aristocratic landowners as well as that of the African orthodox church that had learned political activism during decades of opposition to Donatists. Many of the landowning aristocracy fled or were exiled, as were the Catholic bishops, who returned only in the 520s. Vandal

kings eventually won imperial recognition, but even then their rule remained tenuous. Hated and isolated from the rest of the population, the Vandals were easy prey for Justinian's army in 533. Two decisive battles broke the kingdom and the remaining Vandals were deported and dissolved into various federated barbarian armies in the eastern Mediterranean. Within less than a decade, the Vandals had entirely disappeared.

The Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy established by Theoderic the Great in the 490s began with greater prospects but likewise fell to Byzantine reconquest. The Ostrogoths emerged from the ruins of the Hunnic empire as one of the Germanic factions alternatively allying with and fighting against the eastern empire In 484 Theoderic, who claimed descent from the pre-Hunnic royal Amal family, united a number of these groups under his command and four years later led a polyethnic army into Italy on behalf of the emperor Zeno against Odoacer, a barbarian commander in the tradition of Stilicho who had made himself master of Italy In 493 Theoderic gained control of the peninsula, eliminated Odoacer, and took over the Roman fiscal and administrative system.

Theoderic sought to transform his heterogeneous, mobile barbarian army into a stable, settled, Gothic people capable of peaceful coexistence within Roman Italy. His goal for his Gothic following was to convince them to adopt *civilitas,* the Roman principles of the rule of law and the traditions of tolerance and consensus in civic society which they were to protect by their military valor. Nevertheless, he intended to maintain Goths and Romans as separate communities, one military, one civilian, living in mutual dependence under his supreme authority Thus, although Theoderic received the loyal support of Roman administrators and even of the close advisers of Odoacer such as the senator Cassiodorus, like other barbarian kings he sought to strengthen the Gothic element of his rule by appointing his personal agents or *comites* to supervise and intervene throughout the Roman bureaucracy He likewise privileged the Arian church as the *ecclesia legis Gothorum,* but he saw to it that it remained a minority church which he prohibited from proselytizing among the orthodox majority.

Theoderic's attempt to bring about a new Gothic ethnogenesis failed The boundaries between Ostrogothic warrior and Roman civilian blurred as many barbarians became landowners sharing the same economic and regional concerns as their Roman neighbors. Their children, educated in the traditions of the Roman elite, grew even further apart from the warrior culture At the same time, some Romans rose in the ranks of the military and adopted Gothic tradition, even to the extent of learning the Gothic language and marrying Gothic women In reaction to this loss of Gothic distinctiveness, an anti-Roman reaction set in among a portion of the military concerned about the rapid Romanization of many in their ranks. Tensions mounted following Theoderic's death and culminated in the murder of his daughter Amalasuntha in 535. Justinian took the murder as an excuse to refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Gothic king Theodehad, Theoderic's nephew, and to invade Italy. Unlike the reconquest of Africa, however, which was accomplished in two battles, the war lasted almost two decades and devastated Italy more profoundly than had all of

the barbarian invasions of the previous two centuries. The final result was, however, just as in North Africa: the total disappearance of the Ostrogoths.

In Gaul, the Gothic kingdom of Toulouse and the Burgundian kingdom met similar fates Both continued to serve as federates, participating for example in the defeat of the Huns in the battle of the Catalaunian Plains. They likewise profited from imperial weakness by expanding their territories. The Goths eventually extended their control north to the Loire and south through Spain, while the Burgundians expanded east until being driven back by the Gepids. Still, the Visigoths remained a small Arian minority and disappeared north of the Pyrenees after a single defeat at the hands of the Franks in 507. Their survival in Spain was due to the intervention of Theoderic, who assisted them in maintaining their independence in Spain Thereafter they retreated into Spain, where they abandoned their Arianism and thus their separate gentile identity only in 587. The Burgundians rapidly lost any cultural, religious, or genealogical identity they may have had, and by the 6th century "Burgundian" seems to have designated little more than the holder of what had originally been the military allotments first divided among the barbarians.

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The type of barbarian polity pioneered by the Visigoths and largely adopted by the Vandals and Ostrogoths—the creation and maintenance of two communities, one orthodox, Roman, and civilian, the other Arian, barbarian, and military, under the unified command of a barbarian king holding an imperial commission—ended in failure More enduring were the unitary kingdoms created by the Frankish king Clovis as well as by the petty kings of Britain The reasons for these successes are several. In part, their distance from the core of the Byzantine world meant that by the early 5th century these regions were already considered expendable by the empire, and in the 6th century they lay beyond the reach of Justinian. In part, too, the transformation of Roman civil administration may have been sufficiently advanced that little remained for barbarian kings to absorb: in the case of the Franks, this was only the individual *civitates;* in the case of the Saxons, not even that. Finally, the barbarians themselves were different Although the Franks and the Saxons initially served as federates of the empire, they had no direct experience of the Mediterranean world of Constantinople or even Italy They, like the provincial Romans they absorbed, were far removed from the cultural and administrative traditions of a Theoderic or a Cassiodorus. The result was a simpler but in the long run more thorough transformation of these peoples into new social and cultural forms

In the early 5th century Britain and northern Gaul, long peripheral to the concerns of Ravenna and Constantinople, were forced to look to their own protection and organization. In both areas, old Celtic regional affinities began to take precedence over more recent Roman organization, and new political constellations of Roman, Celtic, and Germanic elements emerged. In Britain, the Roman centralized government ceded to a plethora of small, mutually hostile kingdoms During the later 5th and 6th centuries, Germanic federates drawn from the Saxons, Frisians, Franks, and other coastal peoples came to

dominate many of these kingdoms, particularly in the southwest. Although migration from the coastal regions of the continent was significant, particularly in the 6th century, the frequent appearance of Celtic names in the genealogies of early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as well as the survival of Christian communities within these kingdoms indicates that the Anglo-Saxon ethnogenesis was the gradual fusion of indigenous populations and new arrivals under the political leadership of families that in time came to regard themselves as descended from mythical Germanic heroes. Indeed most Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies traced their ancestry back to the war god Woden.

Frankish society was the result of a similar fusion that took place in the northern portions of Gaul, those most removed from Mediterranean concern. In the course of the 5th century, a series of rival kingdoms emerged from the ruins of Roman provincial administration, each headed by a warlord or king. Some of these leaders were Frankish kings who commanded largely barbarian units and had ties on both sides of the Rhine. Others were members of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy and drew support from mixed Roman provincial and barbarian armies. Among the former were members of the Merovingian family, who commanded barbarian troops descended from Salian Franks probably settled within the empire in the late 4th century. Ethnic affiliation was much less significant in these constellations than political expediency: the Frankish followers of the Merovingian Childeric, who had grown wealthy and powerful in the service of the empire, temporarily transferred their allegiance to the *magister militum* Aegidius.

Beginning in 486 Childeric's son Clovis expanded his power south and east from his father's kingdom centered around Tournai. He captured Soissons, the administrative center of Belgica Secunda, temporarily dominated the Thuringians, and defeated the Alamanni between 496 and 506. In 507 he defeated and killed the Visigothic king Alaric II and began conquering the Visigothic kingdom north of the Pyrenees. None of his conquests appears to have been based on a commission or treaty with Constantinople, but following his victory over Alaric emissaries of Emperor Anastasius granted him some form of imperial recognition, probably an honorary consulship. He spent his final years, until his death around 511, eliminating other Frankish kings and rival members of his own family who ruled kingdoms in Cologne, Cambrai, and elsewhere.

Ethnogenesis proceeded differently in Clovis's Frankish kingdom from that in Ostrogothic Italy or Visigothic Aquitaine. He did not base his conquests on an imperial mandate nor did he attempt to create the sort of dual society erected by an earlier generation of barbarian kings. Salian Franks had been deeply involved in imperial and regional political struggles in Gaul for generations. Clovis's authority had been recognized by representatives of the Gallo-Roman aristocracy such as Bishop Remigius of Rheims since the death of his father in 486. His absorption of rival power centers caused much less dramatic change than had the conquests of earlier barbarian kings. He certainly took over the remnants of civil administration, but these probably were already in serious decay and in any case did not extend above the level of individual *civitates*.

Moreover, there is little evidence that the Franks had or attempted to create as strong a sense of identity distinct from the Roman population as had Theoderic or other Gothic commanders. Clovis's family apparently claimed some semi-divine descent and counted a minotaur-like beast among its ancestors, but no Frankish genealogical lore could rival the generations of heroes and gods in Gothic tradition. Already in the 6th century Franks may have claimed Trojan ancestry, thus connecting themselves genealogically to their Roman neighbors. Nor were the Franks long separated from their Gallo-Roman neighbors by religion. Prior to the 6th century some Franks had been Christian, whether Arian or orthodox, while others, including Clovis's family, had retained a pagan religious tradition. Clovis probably flirted with the Arianism of his great neighbor Theoderic, but ultimately accepted orthodox baptism, although when in his career this took place remains open to debate.

United by a common religion and a common legend of origin, Clovis's Franks and the Roman provincials of his kingdom found no obstacles to forging a common identity. This they did with considerable rapidity. Within only a few generations, the population north of the Loire had become uniformly Frankish and, although Roman legal traditions persisted in the south and Burgundian and Roman legal status endured in the old Burgundian kingdom conquered by Clovis's sons in the 530s, these differing legal traditions did not constitute the basis for a separate social or political identity. The great strength of the Frankish synthesis was the new creation, within the Roman world, of a unified society that drew without a sense of contradiction on both Roman and barbarian traditions.

As Frankish, Longobard, Anglo-Saxon, and Visigothic kingdoms assimilated surviving Roman political and cultural traditions, they became the center of post-Roman Europe, while new barbarian peoples, most notably the Saxons, Slavs, and Avars, replaced them on the periphery. Ethnic labels remained significant designations within the Romano-barbarian kingdoms, but they designated multiple and at times even contradictory aspects of social and political identity.

In Italy, the Longobards, a heterogeneous amalgam including Gepids, Herulians, Suebs, Alamans, Bulgarians, Saxons, Goths, and Romans who had arrived in Italy in 568 from Pannonia created a weak, decentralized union of rival military units of duchies. The duchies combined traditional military units or *farae* with the Gothic-Roman military and administrative tradition. Religious as well as political divisions ran deep in Longobard Italy: in the 6th century "Longobards" included pagans, Arians, schismatic Christians, and orthodox Christians. Some dukes allied themselves with the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna while others, particularly in the south, remained fiercely autonomous.

In the last decades of the 6th century, however, the constant challenges that the ambitious Longobard armies posed to the Byzantines to the east and the Franks to the west led these two powers to coordinate their attacks on the Longobards. Threatened with annihilation between these two foes, the Longo-

bard dukes restored the monarchy that they had abandoned shortly after their arrival in Italy. This kingship owed much to Gothic precedence, especially in the use of the name Flavius, which sought to connect the new Longobard identity with the imperial Flavian name and tradition, as a claim to universal recognition on the part of all inhabitants of the kingdom. Still, Longobard identity and organization remained porous. The great duchies of Beneventum and Spoleto remained essentially independent of the king throughout the entire history of the Longobard kingdom.

In the course of the 7th century, the Longobard kings solidified their position both externally and internally. They formed marriage alliances with Franks and especially the Bavarians, whose own Agilolfing dukes were closely related to Longobard kings. They strengthened the Arian party within the Longobard kingdom while maintaining a balance between orthodox and "Three Chapter" Christians, a tripartite Christian tradition that ended only around 700. Most important, beginning with Rothari (636–652) Longobard kings published legal codes for their kingdom, codes that enunciated a theory of cooperation between king and people, the former initiating and improving tradition, the latter, through the army and the magnates, accepting the code. The Edict of Rothari (643) also presents a reshaping of a Longobard ethnic myth, centered on the line of Longobard kings. Rothari styles himself the "seventeenth king of the Longobard people," a number meant to assimilate the Longobards to the Romans and the Goths (both Romulus and Theoderic the Great were held to be seventeenth in their lines). The very creation of this claim to an ancient royal history and ethnic identity is proof of the deep assimilation of Gothic and Roman values and identity.

Like the Longobard kingdom, the Frankish world remained divided in fundamental ways through the later 6th and 7th centuries. Core areas of the kingdom—Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy—often had their own kings, who drew their legitimacy through descent from Clovis. The peripheral areas of the Frankish kingdom—Aquitaine, Provence, Bavaria, Thuringia, and Frisia— were governed in the name of the Frankish kings by dukes or patricians, often men with central Frankish ties who rapidly integrated themselves into the local power structures.

The Frankish name came to designate the inhabitants of the core territories ruled by the Frankish kings and acquired increasingly a geographical rather than ethnic connotation. Legal codes for the Thuringians, Bavarians, and other peoples within the Frankish realm were essentially regional law codes, modeled on Salic law even while incorporating some local traditions and imposed on peripheral areas of the Frankish realm. In general the vocabulary of ethnic terminology occurs most frequently in the context of military organization, since contingents from different areas were mustered and led by their dukes and counts, the institutional descendants of late Roman military officers.

Merovingian kings of the 7th century, once characterized as incompetent if not mentally deficient, are now recognized to have been nothing of the sort. Still, from the early 7th century, when powerful leaders such as Chlothar II

(584–629) and Dagobert I (623–638) could exercise effective control over a unified Frankish kingdom, a gradual decline in royal authority worked to the benefit of regional aristocracies. However, this growth of regionalism was seldom if ever the result of deep ethnic or cultural differences. The leading families in Austria, Neustria, and Burgundy as well as in the peripheral duchies of the Frankish realm were generally themselves descendants of representatives of the Frankish monarchs with both central and regional ties that they used to their own advantage. The struggles between aristocratic factions that eventually led to the rise of the Carolingian dynasty are remarkable for their lack of ethnic overtones, in spite of the attempt by some modern historians to read ethnic conflict into these contests.

In the Visigothic kingdom, the integration of barbarian and Roman populations began with Leovigild (569–586) and his son Reccarid (586–601). Leovigild reunited a much divided Visigothic kingdom and expelled most of the remnants of Byzantine control from the peninsula. Once the orthodox Byzantine presence was eliminated, orthodox Christianity ceased to be the political threat that it had been, and Leovigild began to move his Arian elite toward orthodox Catholicism. His son brought this to completion at the council of Toledo in 589 that followed the conversion of Reccarid himself in 587.

The conversion of the Visigoths had fundamental consequences for the identity of the Visigothic people and kingdom. The Catholic hierarchy and the political and social leadership of the communities they represented became fully integrated into the Gothic state and people. The periodic councils of Toledo that began in the 630s developed into the fundamental institution unifying Visigothic Spain. These councils treated matters of faith, morals, and ritual, as well as politics and administration. Toledo became in time the preeminent metropolitan see of Spain, able both to extend its authority throughout the Spanish church and to define royal legitimacy not in terms of family, as in the case of the Merovingian family, but rather in terms of having received royal unction in the city. The extent of episcopal and royal cooperation in the transformation of the Visigothic kingdom and state was unprecedented in western Europe.

The British isles never knew the kind of unity of people and kingship known on the continent. In Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, as in England, a sense of identity never translated into a political structure. Through the 7th century, southeastern England was closely connected to the cultural and political world of Merovingian Gaul. Political unity was never an issue. At various times petty kings of southeastern England attempted to dominate their neighbors, and in the later 7th century some rulers of Northumbria temporarily managed to enforce some sort of lordship over other kingdoms. However, such claims never amounted to an institutionalized overlordship. The office of a high king, the so-called Bretwalda, is essentially a modern myth. Nevertheless, a *gens Anglorum* was perceived to exist, although it was largely defined by opposition to the British enemies to the west, south, and north. And yet membership in the *gens Anglorum*, through participation in one of the petty Anglo-Saxon king-

doms, was open to people of British and Germanic background alike. Once more, membership in the Anglo-Saxon people was a question of constitution, not simply of inheritance.

Although Roman sources often presented barbarian peoples' ethnic identities as fixed, we have seen that new identities were constantly being established and transformed through contacts with the Romans. The barbarian *gentes* in turn came to play an integral and transformative role in the later Roman empire.

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