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Barbarization: Change or Continuity in the Late Roman Empire?

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Barbarization: Change or Continuity in the Late Roman Empire?

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

The term 'barbarization' has been frequently used in scholarship to describe the admission of Germanic 'barbarians' into the Roman Empire and army in late antiquity, and their impact on the Roman military and society. Barbarization is even linked to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476. Despite its frequent usage, the term 'barbarization' is problematic. To start with, there is no single definition amongst modern scholars. Even the term 'barbarian' was not used in the same way throughout antiquity, nor was it applied exclusively to the Germanic tribes. Moreover, the term 'barbarian' itself carries negative connotations in both ancient and modern sources, which carry over into the term 'barbarization'. Furthermore, 'barbarization' isolates the integration of Germanic tribes in late antiquity from the integration of various other peoples, including other Germanic peoples, throughout the history of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire, and thus exaggerates the impact the Germanic peoples had.

When the relations between Romans and non-Romans from the different time periods are compared, there is far more continuity with the Roman Empire's policies than there is change. From the first to third centuries, Rome had integrated many of its neighbours into its empire, with Rome's *auxilia* being filled with soldiers from allied, annexed, and conquered people. Additionally, late antiquity was not the first time Rome was influenced by other cultures. Even the Roman military frequently adopted foreign ideas and technology. Moreover, when Rome's interactions with Germanic tribes are focused on specifically, its general policies towards the Germans had not changed significantly between the first and late fourth centuries. The term 'barbarization' has unintentionally separated the study of Classical and late antiquity in a way which exaggerates the impacts of Germanic immigrants on the Roman Empire.

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Introduction

‘Barbarians’ have always been front and center in modern scholarship about the fall of Rome. Gibbon wrote the following during the eighteenth century in his influential work *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

I. The first of these periods may be traced from the age of Trajan and the Antonines, when the Roman monarchy, having attained its full strength and maturity, began to verge towards its decline; and will extend to the subversion of the Western Empire, by the barbarians of Germany and Scythia, the rude ancestors of the most polished nations of modern Europe. This extraordinary revolution, which subjected Rome to the power of a Gothic conqueror, was completed about the beginning of the sixth century.¹

Gibbons’ work remains influential in modern scholarship, even if many of his ideas have fallen out of favour. It is safe to say that the idea of ‘barbarian’ hordes simply overwhelming and conquering the Roman empire is rarely argued in academia now. The fall of Rome was caused by many factors and finding a simple reason for its collapse is impossible. One major advancement since Gibbon’s time is the awareness that many of the ‘barbarian’ tribes had been admitted by the Roman empire. Modern scholars have created the term ‘barbarization’ to describe the Empire’s policies for admitting ‘barbarians’ into the Roman empire and army, integrating ‘barbarians’ into Roman society, and impacts from these policies during late antiquity. ‘Barbarization’ is purely a modern idea, and there was no equivalent term in the

¹ Edward Gibbon, “History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire,” in *Project Gutenberg*, ed. Rev. H. H. Milman, accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25717/25717-h/25717-h.htm#linknoteref->, preface.

ancient world. Some Roman authors complained about the presence of ‘barbarians’ within the Empire, but they did not create an equivalent term.² The definition and impact of ‘barbarization’ seems simple on a cursory inspection. Rome admitted unprecedented numbers of ‘barbarians’, with ‘barbarians’ almost always referring to Germanic peoples from outside of Roman control, into the Roman army and society. Rome was unable to ‘Romanize’ the ‘barbarians’ and ended up adopting ‘barbarian culture’. It has been argued that the effects of this weakened the Roman empire, especially the Roman army, and led to its collapse in the fifth century. However, this argument is still reliant on the theory of decline that was found in Gibbon’s work, including that the Roman world declined during late antiquity. In reality, ‘barbarization’ is an incredibly complicated process, and the nuances of everything encompassed by it are debated by scholars. Some scholars have debated when ‘barbarization’ happened and which emperor was responsible for it. Others have debated the impact or lack of impact ‘barbarization’ had on the Roman world.

Since ‘barbarization’ is reliant on our understanding of the term ‘barbarian’, it is imperative to understand both terms. As such, there are two main topics I have chosen to focus on for this thesis. The first is how the Romans used the term ‘barbarian’, who ‘barbarians’ were during the Roman period, and the Romans’ attitudes towards foreigners and ‘barbarians’. Central to this was the change in use of the term ‘barbarian’: Roman authors only used it inconsistently until late antiquity when it came to define nearly everyone who was not Roman.

The second topic is the modern appropriation of the term ‘barbarian’ and how the interpretation of ‘barbarian’ has been used to explain the decline of the Roman Empire and concept of ‘barbarization’. Because of the modern interpretation of ‘barbarian’, modern scholars

² ‘Barbarized’ appears in Zosimus’ *New History*, but this should not be linked to ‘barbarization’. Zosimus argued that the decline of the Roman Empire stemmed from the end of pagan rituals, specifically the secular games, and the adoption of Christianity. He is not discussing the admittance of ‘barbarians’ or the adoption of ‘barbarian’ culture. Zosimus, *New History*, 2.7.

frequently see 'barbarization' as an inherently negative trend and 'barbarization' is used as an excuse for the fall of Rome. To begin with, the ancient and modern definitions of 'barbarian' are not identical. The modern understanding of 'barbarian' usually is influenced more heavily by the Greeks' use of the term instead of the Latin and modern stereotypes instead of the Roman use of the term. Since the Romans' use changed over time to encompass a greater number of foreigners, this has skewed the modern perception to see many of the trends and policies in the late empire as new or different. The changes which happened during this time have been overshadowed by the continuities encompassed by 'barbarization' and not examined specifically. Taking this into consideration, I will argue that few of the trends and policies which existed during late antiquity and are encompassed by 'barbarization' were new, and most of these trends and policies originated in the Roman republic or early empire. This includes the integration of 'barbarians' into the Roman army. The term 'barbarization' has created a separation between both the early and high imperial periods and late imperial periods. Even the choice of the word 'barbarization' to describe the impact of the Germanic peoples on Rome implies that the integration of the foreigners in late antiquity had a negative impact on the empire. Once the modern ideological separation of early and late antiquity is removed, the continuity of these processes becomes apparent. I will admit that in the fifth century, the Western empire rapidly lost control of its territory. The repeated civil wars, fragmentation of its territory, and consistent political troubles led to Rome relying exclusively on 'barbarian' tribes to fight instead of its scattered army, which played a part in the collapse of the West. However, until this point the Eastern and Western empires were able to exert significant control over the Germanic auxiliaries as the entire Roman Empire had with its auxiliaries in the preceding centuries. Because of all the problems

surrounding ‘barbarization’, scholars should try to avoid or at the very least define how they will use the term so they can focus on specific changes happening within the Roman Empire.

There are five chapters for this thesis. The first chapter will begin with a discussion about the relevant written and material evidence. Much of the ancient material has simply been lost to time, such as the third century works of Dexippus. Further complicating matters, many of the surviving written sources contradict each other or the ancient authors simply have their own views on why something happened. This has led to scholars drawing very different conclusions about late antiquity and ‘barbarization’. It is impossible to give a thorough treatment of every source in antiquity in this thesis. Therefore, I will be concentrating on the difficulties from using the sources and why I have chosen to give more credit to certain sources than others.

In the second chapter, there will be an analysis of the terms ‘barbarian’ and ‘barbarization’, and the surrounding scholarship. The discussion of ‘barbarian’ will be focused on defining who the ‘barbarians’ were in antiquity. For this paper ‘barbarian’ will be used to refer to the Latin ‘*barbarus*’ and the Greek βάρβαρος from which it is derived. The meaning and use of the term ‘barbarian’ were not the same throughout all of antiquity. The term ‘barbarian’ first came into prevalence in fifth century Greece. It was used by the Greeks to separate the Greek population from everyone else and encompassed the stereotypes that the Greeks had for the populations around the Greek world. Rome adopted the term during the Roman republic, but they did not use it in the same way or as frequently as the Greeks did. The Romans’ use of ‘barbarian’ began to become increasingly similar to the original Greek usage over the centuries. Late Roman authors used the term far more frequently, and they used the term to separate Roman citizens inside the empire from the foreigners outside the empire. The change in the Romans’ usage of the term is important when discussing the modern ‘barbarization’, as modern

ideas surrounding 'barbarian' directly affects arguments about what impacts the 'barbarians' had on Rome. However, scholars do not all agree on all the precise trends and changes which the term encompasses, as already mentioned. Even the start date is not agreed upon, as some scholars argue that 'barbarization' began as early as the second century. This chapter will conclude with some sort of working definition for 'barbarization'.

The third chapter will be a description of Rome's history and methods of assimilation. Starting during the Republican period, Rome had been expanding its territory throughout the Mediterranean during this time and established itself as the strongest Mediterranean power. For example, it formed alliances with its neighbours throughout its history as a way to further its power. These alliances functioned more like client kingships than alliances, as Rome increasingly came to dominate its allies. Rome also had the ability to annex its allies, and it did so frequently during the late Republican and early imperial period. It ended up annexing most the allies it formed before the second century CE and turned them into Roman provinces. Rome continued to form alliances during late antiquity and had similar expectations for them, but it never annexed most kingdoms during late antiquity. Roman expansion also brought new populations into the Roman world. Many of these populations simply found themselves under new rulers; however, some prisoners of war came as slaves or settled people, and some people immigrated into Roman territory. Because of the conquest of new territories and the people living in them, Rome created common strategies in order to integrate new people into its empire and maintain control of its new territory. This included the use of non-citizens in its armies and *auxilia* and the blending of local cultures with Roman culture. Rome never expected its subjects to all adopt the same culture and way of life. Most of Rome's subjects adopted some aspects of Roman culture, such as the Latin language, but they still maintained many local practices.

Additionally, Rome was more than willing to adopt culture and ideas from its subjects, including adapting military technology and ideas and including them in its army.

The final two chapters will focus on explaining why Rome struggled militarily in late antiquity and examine whether this was caused by the ‘barbarization’ of the Roman army. Chapter four will be a discussion of the slowdown and end of Roman expansion which began during the latter half of the second century. Rome did not just decide to stop expanding; it became less successful in its wars and experienced significant internal struggles. This had led traditional scholars to argue that Rome declined after the Antonine period.³ However, the reality is far more complex than a simple decline. The last conquest to take direct control of new territory occurred under Severus when he expanded the Roman provinces of Mesopotamia. After this point, Rome lost and regained territory at the frontiers of its empire. During the imperial period, Rome also increasingly fought its wars defensively. The need for a defensive strategy came from the military problems Rome had after the second century. The internal struggles which occurred during the third century crisis prevented Rome from effectively defending its frontiers, which allowed devastating raids by the Germanic tribes and invasions from Sassanian Persia. To make matters worse, Rome was further weakened by the financial collapse during the third century. The emperors Aurelian, Diocletian, and Constantine were able to stabilize the empire and reform aspects of it. Rome was able to regain its position of power and dominate its neighbours, but it did not expand its control. Despite all of this, Rome’s issues stemmed from the changing circumstances of the Empire and not a simple decline. There were significant changes to Rome internally, including the regionalization of the empire and expansion of the imperial administration. Rome also faced increased foreign pressure from more dangerous enemies. New

³ Gibbon, *History of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, preface.

confederations formed amongst the Germanic tribes which were more dangerous than their predecessors had been. Additionally, the Parthian Arsacid dynasty was usurped and replaced by the Sasanian dynasty in Persia, the latter of which was more aggressive and successful at fighting the Romans.

Chapter 5 will use the information discussed in the previous chapters to argue that there were few significant changes caused by 'barbarization' from the second to fourth centuries, and that there was no political and military decline caused by 'barbarization'. To prove that there was no major change, there will be an analysis of Diocletian's and Constantine's reformed Roman army. There is a debate in modern scholarship about the effectiveness of the army and the impact 'barbarization' had on the army. Some scholars have argued that the impact of 'barbarization' was minimal, others that it caused the military decline, and some have argued it was a necessary response to the military decline. However, this army was not a worse version of the army which existed during the principate, as it was intended to be more effective in the circumstances of late antiquity. This army performed well throughout the fourth century against more dangerous opponents. Many of the issues this army faced, including recruitment issues after a defeat, already existed during the first and second centuries. Next, there will be a discussion on Rome's Germanic auxiliaries during the third and fourth centuries, and whether their numbers and proportion of army were significantly different than Rome's classical auxiliaries. Rome's recruitment and use of auxiliaries changed slowly throughout antiquity; however, the late antique auxiliaries were very similar to Rome's auxiliaries during the late Republican and early imperial period.

Chapter 1

Methodologies and Sources

Before analysing ‘barbarization’ some time must be spent looking at the historical sources that the topic is based on. I can only briefly discuss the sources as they are relevant to this thesis, as trying to write an in-depth analysis of all the sources is unfeasible. I will be giving the most attention to the problems and gaps in the source material. Neither material evidence nor the surviving literary sources can give the full picture, and scholars have had to fill in the gaps with the available information as best they can.

Literary Sources

One of the major challenges is that the surviving historical sources do not cover all time periods equally. There is very little information for certain imperial reigns, wars, or other events, as they fall in a time period which have few surviving contemporary sources. This is noticeable with Antoninus Pius’ reign, the third century crisis, and the reigns of the tetrarchs. Antoninus Pius’ reign sits in something of a gap between sources. Only a few lines from Cassius Dio’s book about him remain,⁴ and the other sources covering his reign were written a century later. The later sources did not provide a comprehensive account of his reign either. Even the author of the *Historia Augusta* only discussed Pius’ lifetime briefly, writing thirteen chapters for *The Life of Antoninus Pius*. He also only wrote two sentences about Pius’ foreign and internal conflicts. The author recorded that Pius relied on his generals to defeat several ‘barbarian’ groups and a rebellion in Egypt, but he gave no further information on the wars or interaction with Germanic

⁴ Book 69 of Cassius Dio was already lost by the 11th century. Anthony R. Birley, “Cassius Dio and the *Historia Augusta*,” in *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, ed, Marcel van Ackeren (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons LTD, 2012), 13-28, 13-14.

peoples.⁵ Marcus Aurelius' reign is better preserved, but his upbringing and first years as emperor still have significant gaps in what survives. Dio's account of Marcus Aurelius' early reign (book 71) is fragmentary, but more of book 72 survives. Herodian introduced his history with a brief overview of Marcus Aurelius' reign, but very quickly turned his attention to the aftermath of Marcus Aurelius' death and the accession of Commodus. Herodian acknowledged that other writers had written about Marcus Aurelius, but he preferred to focus on what he saw while in the imperial service.⁶ The lack of information about Marcus Aurelius' reign can be partly covered by the *Historia Augusta*. For example, Dio and Herodian have very little information about Lucius Verus' accession, which the *Historia Augusta* has more detail about.⁷ Their works then cover the rest of the second century and first decades of the third century in detail. Dio's work ended with the accession of Severus Alexander, while Herodian's ended with the accession of Gordian.

For the next fifty years, there are very few surviving contemporary sources. Dexippus wrote two works during this time, the *Scythia* and an annalistic source, but only a few fragments of his work survive.⁸ More sources survive from the fourth century, though some are more relevant to this thesis than others. For example, there are ecclesiastical sources from the early fourth century, but most of these did not focus on overall history of the Empire. Two early fourth century ecclesiastical writers were Lactantius and Eusebius. Lactantius was primarily focused on writing about the Church institutions and theology.⁹ The work which is most relevant to this

⁵ *Historia Augusta: Life of Antoninus Pius*, 5.4-5.5.

⁶ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 1.2.5.

⁷ Anthony R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2000), 166, 277 n1.

⁸ Christopher Mallan and Caillan Davenport, "Dexippus and the Gothic Invasions: Interpreting the New Vienna Fragment ("Codex Vindobonensis Hist. gr. 73: ff. 192 v-193r)," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 105 (2015): 203-226, 207.

⁹ Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, "Lactantius," in *Great Christian Jurists and Legal Collections in the First Millennium*, ed. Philip L. Reynolds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 239-251, 239-240.

thesis is the *De Mortibus Persecutorum* in which Lactantius focused on recording gruesome ways that the prosecuting emperors died. The text is primarily a consolation for the Christians who survived the persecution, not a historical text.¹⁰ The few references it has to foreigners are vague. For example, Lactantius mentions that the Carpi attacked Dacia and Moesia and killed Decius, but he does not elaborate further.¹¹ Eusebius' two famous works were the *History of the Church* and the *Life of Constantine*, but he also wrote shorter works such as his responses to Porphyry.¹² The *History of the Church* was not an attempt to record imperial history as a whole. The exact purpose of the *History of the Church* is debated, but it is not intended to discuss Rome's interactions with 'barbarians'.¹³

Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* is a very different source than his other works. It is a biography which was composed to praise the emperor Constantine, and functions more as a panegyric than a historical source. Panegyrics originated from the Hellenistic world, and they became prevalent in the Roman imperial court during late antiquity. Alongside Eusebius there are other late antique writers and orators who delivered panegyrics, such as Themistius, Libanius, Symmachus, Claudian, and even the emperor Julian.¹⁴ The use of panegyrics in academic work is complicated by the fact that panegyrics are frequently seen as deceitful or held in contempt by modern people. There were people throughout ancient Rome who had similar views of panegyrics, especially during classical antiquity.¹⁵ However, panegyrics can contain

¹⁰ Anthony P. Coleman, *Lactantius the Theologian: Lactantius and the Doctrine of Providence* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2017), 24-25.

¹¹ Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 4.

¹² James Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire: Constructing Church and Rome in the Ecclesiastical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 38-39, 67-69.

¹³ For more see, Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 13-53.

¹⁴ Roger Reese, "Panegyric," in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2018), 209-220, 209-210.

¹⁵ Roger Reese, "Panegyric," in *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, ed. William Dominik and Jon Hall (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 136-148, 136-137, 139.

valuable information. They are the main surviving source for information about ‘barbarian’ settlement in the Empire and immigration. It is necessary to use panegyrics carefully, as they are inherently triumphal, and they frequently exaggerate the emperor’s achievements to increase his glory.¹⁶

Other surviving sources from the fourth century include the annalistic accounts about the Empire’s existence, such as Aurelius Victor’s *Liber De Caesaribus*, Eutropius’ *Brevarium*, Festus’ *Brevarium*, and the *Epitome De Caesaribus*. Without much surviving material from the third century, these sources are incredibly useful when researching the third century. However, one of the first problems is that these sources are short and cover a long period of time. Both Eutropius and Festus began their works with the foundation of Rome and ended with Jovian’s reign. The *Liber De Caesaribus* and *Epitome De Caesaribus* cover the imperial period, and end with Constantius II and Theodosius respectively. Another issue is that each of these authors drew on the same sources, though exactly what source is unknown. Some scholars have theorized that the fourth century authors drew on one major source, which has been called the *Kaisergeschichte*, while others have theorized that the authors used the same sources. Whichever the case may be, the sources share many of the same inaccuracies and have their own individual inaccuracies as well.¹⁷ These annalistic sources are very important for the study of the third

¹⁶ C.R. Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire* (London: Routledge Publishing, 2004), 200-200-202. For alternative uses of panegyrics and their political content see, John Vanderspoel, “Imperial Panegyric: Hortatory or Deliberative Oratory?” in *The Emperor in the Byzantine World*, ed. Shaun Tougher (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2019), 199-215.

¹⁷ *Kaisergeschichte* as the main source: R.W. Burgess, “A Common Source for Jerome, Eutropius, Festus, Ammianus, and the Epitome de Caesaribus between 358 and 378, along with Further Thoughts on the Date and Nature of the Kaisergeschichte,” *Classical Philology* 100.2 (2005): 166-192; David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 44, 54, 60. Multiple sources: H.W. Bird, ed., *Sextus Aurelius Victor, A Historical Study* (Cambridge: Liverpool University Press, 1984), 16-18, quoting W. den Boer, *Some Minor Roman Historians* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1972); H.W. Bird, ed., *The Brevarium Ab Urbe Condita of Eutropius* (Cambridge: Liverpool University Press, 1993), iii.

century because the alternatives are written even later, but the lack of details makes it difficult to get much specific information.

More detailed works survive covering the fourth century, including the *Notitia Dignitatum* and Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*. The *Notitia Dignitatum* is a document which has been preserved in the *Codex Spirensis*.¹⁸ It is an outline of the Roman civil and military administrative hierarchies throughout both the Eastern and Western Roman Empires.¹⁹ The *Notitia* was completed around 386-394; however, there were further changes to the document's outline of the Western Empire's administration during the early fifth century. Multiple small changes were unsystematically made over the period of several years. This means there are many contradictions throughout the Western section, and it is impossible to find an accurate picture of the entire Western Roman Empire in the *Notitia*.²⁰ Since the Eastern *Notitia* gives a more reliable picture of the Eastern army, it allows scholars such as Treadgold to estimate the Eastern army's size in the late fourth century.²¹ Despite this, there are scholars who have argued against the *Notitia Dignitatum*'s veracity, which has led to academic work being done to compare its contents to surviving papyri from Egypt and archaeological research elsewhere. The current evidence demonstrates that the *Notitia Dignitatum* is accurate, although some of its information might have been outdated when it was compiled.²² Nonetheless, the

¹⁸ Anna Maria Kaiser, "Egyptian Units and The Reliability of the "Notitia Dignitatum, Pars Oriens,"" *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 64.2 (2015): 243-261, 243.

¹⁹ Michael Kulikowski, "The "Notitia Dignitatum" as a Historical Source," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 49.3 (2000): 358-377, 358.

²⁰ Kulikowski, "The "Notitia Dignitatum" as a Historical Source," 372, 375-376.

²¹ Patrick J. Roussel, "Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la "Barbarisation": réalité ou fiction?" *Millenium. Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.* 8 (2011) 175-221, 215-216; For a full calculation of the Eastern army see, Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081* (Stamford: Stamford University Press, 1995), 45-59.

²² Kaiser, "Egyptian Units and The Reliability of the "Notitia Dignitatum, Pars Oriens,"" 246; Everett L. Wheeler, "The Army and the *Limes* in the East," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 235-266, 255.

Notitia Dignitatum is incredibly important as the only example of a document which lays out the organization of the Empire.

Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* provides a more detailed account of the imperial history than Victor or Eutropius did. Though Marcellinus' work started with the reign of Nerva, books one to thirteen are lost.²³ Book fourteen starts after Constantius II's campaign against Magnentius and a discussion about Gallus' cruelty and execution. Despite this, Matthews argued that Marcellinus' early books functioned more as an introduction than as a thorough study of all of Roman history and that he did not write a separate work. There is a major difference in the time covered by the early and later books. Books one to thirteen would have covered the years 96 to 353, while his surviving books only cover 353 to 378. Marcellinus would have had to write far more generally in the first books than his later books.²⁴ Additionally, the details and references Marcellinus made in his surviving books suggest that he never studied certain events in great detail. For example, his summary of the history of the Goths and Romans in his final book contains chronological errors. Furthermore, Marcellinus' Latin in sections where he referenced earlier events further supports that his general history was not any more thorough than Aurelius Victor or Eutropius, and that he most likely used the same source(s) as they did.²⁵

Following Matthews' argument, Marcellinus devoted most of his effort towards events which occurred in his lifetime. He included events which he was personally involved in, including military campaigns he served in, since he was a military officer called a *protector*. Not

There is also some evidence that suggests the *Notitia Dignitatum*'s description of the two halves of the empire reflect different times of the Empire's existence, possibly being a couple decades apart. A.D. Lee, "The Army," in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 13: The Late Empire, AD 337–425*, ed. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 211-237, 212.

²³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 31.16.9; John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus: With a New Introduction* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Classical Press, 2007), 27.

²⁴ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 27-28.

²⁵ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 28-30.

only does he include specific battles and sieges, but also logistics and the career of his commander Ursicinus.²⁶ While Marcellinus' account provides scholars with a viewpoint from an officer instead of someone separate from the campaigns, his viewpoint must still be considered when using his *Res Gestae*. Marcellinus' position closer to the front with Ursicinus meant that he was not as aware of things happening around Constantius. When the war with Persia began, Constantius recalled Ursicinus then immediately sent him back to command small garrisons. Marcellinus felt that this was done to weaken Ursicinus' position, while Constantius' actions may actually reflect Constantius trying to react to the rapidly developing Eastern war.²⁷

Marcellinus' work also provides counterevidence against the argument that the battle of Adrianople was the beginning of the end for the Empire, argued by scholars such as Liebeschuetz.²⁸ Marcellinus had, to quote Roussel, an optimistic view during the immediate aftermath of the battle of Adrianople. While he acknowledged that this was a disaster, he argued that Rome had suffered major defeats before and had been able to recover in the past.²⁹ However, since Marcellinus' work ended with the immediate aftermath of Adrianople and he finished writing around the year 390 CE,³⁰ scholars have had to use later sources, such as Vegetius' *De*

²⁶ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 34; Ramsay MacMullen, "Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus," *The Art Bulletin* 46.4 (1964): 235-455, 235. Frank Trombley, "Ammianus Marcellinus and Fourth-Century Warfare: A Protector's approach to historical Narrative," in *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and David Hunt (London: Routledge Publishing, 1999), 17-28, 17.

²⁷ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 41.

²⁸ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 24-25. There will be further discussion on Liebeschuetz's arguments in chapters 2 and 5.

²⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 31.5.10-15; Roussel, "Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la "Barbarisation"", 205-206.

³⁰ Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 7. Before Theodosius died, the Empire was split, and 'barbarians' pushed past the frontiers.

Re Militari or Zosimus' *New History*, to try and understand the impact this defeat had on the Roman empire.³¹

Vegetius and Zosimus's works are useful sources for late antiquity, but these sources have issues that one must be aware of when using their work. Vegetius is commonly agreed to have written in the Western Empire in late antiquity.³² There is no scholarly consensus for exactly when Vegetius was writing, and the accepted timeframe is between 383 and 450 CE.³³ Vegetius did not name the emperor who he was addressing, nor did he state specific events which would definitively give the date of his work. The latest emperor whom he discussed by name is Gratian, and his use of *divus* meant that Gratian was already dead. As Gratian died in 383, the later part of the year was the earliest possible date for his work.³⁴ If Vegetius was writing around 383, he would be writing in the context of the battle of Adrianople, Theodosius' civil wars, and settlements with the Goths. If Vegetius wrote around 450, he would be writing after the Western empire had begun to lose control of its territory, the sack of Rome, and Attila's repeated attacks against both empires. Without a solid date, it is impossible to determine the state of the Roman army that he was criticizing.

Furthermore, Vegetius served in the administration but was never personally involved in military affairs, unlike Marcellinus. Vegetius never claimed that he had military knowledge, and instead wrote that his goal was to summarize what was said by previous historians.³⁵ His lack of

³¹ For example, Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and bishops*, 25-26. For an ancient source who argued for a military decline around the time of the battle see, Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, 1.20.

³² Micheal B. Charles, *Vegetius in Context: Establishing the Date of the Epitoma Rei Militaris* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 37; See also Walter Goffart, "The Date and Purpose of Vegetius 'De Re Militari,'" *Traditio* 33 (1977): 65-100, 84.

³³ For a discussion on scholarly research on the timeframe, see Michael B. Charles, *Vegetius in Context: Establishing the Date of the Epitoma Rei Militaris* (16-19, 184; See also Walter Goffart, "The Date and Purpose of Vegetius 'De Re Militari'.")

³⁴ Goffart, "The Date and Purpose of Vegetius 'De Re Militari,'" 76.

³⁵ Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, 1 preface; Pat Southern and Karen Ramsey Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 2; Charles, *Vegetius in Context*, 26.

military experience is compounded with his view that the practices of the old Roman legion should replace the contemporary military practices. However, Vegetius' legion never even existed. Instead of choosing a style of legion from a specific time period, he created his own ideal legion from sources from different time periods.³⁶ This means that he wanted to point out how the old Roman army was superior, despite not understanding how the current Roman army worked. At some points, Vegetius' attempt to praise the older practices meant that he exaggerated issues facing the current army. For one example, he stated that infantry had stopped using armour or training since the time of Gratian because of the Goths, Huns, and Alans in the army.³⁷ However, other sources from the late fourth century do not make the same claim. Notably, Marcellinus did not write about any change in the use of armour under Gratian or Valens, and the *Notitia Dignitatum* lists the *fabricae* still in existence at the end of the fourth century. Lee has argued that Vegetius was exaggerating a specific incident instead of giving an accurate change for the entire Roman army, but the lack of specific evidence makes the argument insecure.³⁸ Vegetius' lack of military knowledge means that not everything he claims may be accurate, and his information needs to be used cautiously.

Zosimus' *New History* is far more in depth than the works of Victor, Eutropius, or the *Epitome* are, which makes his information especially important when researching the third century. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that he wrote much later, most likely around the end of the fifth century.³⁹ He relied on the lost works of Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Photius, and most likely Dexippus as the basis for his own history. The mistakes and omissions in these authors' works ended up in his work. Additionally, his reliance on other sources has led to

³⁶ Charles, *Vegetius in Context*, 126, 126 fn3.

³⁷ Vegetius, *De Re Militari*, 1.20.

³⁸ Lee, "The Army," 232; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 110, 195.

³⁹ Warren Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 109.

contradictions or sudden changes when he changed which source he was using. For example, Zosimus was hostile towards Stilicho throughout most of book five. In chapter 34, he suddenly became less hostile towards Stilicho and starts using consular dates when he starts using a different source.⁴⁰

Zosimus' pagan beliefs and the fall of the Western Empire were both major influences in his writing. One of Zosimus' main goals was showing how Rome's adoption of Christianity and abandonment of traditional pagan practices led to its collapse.⁴¹ Constantine was one of Zosimus' main targets. He stated that the barbarizing and decline of the Empire happened because neither Constantine nor Licinius upheld the traditional pagan secular games.⁴² The *New History* is still a useful source, but one needs to be aware of the problems that occur when using this work.

The *New History* is not the sole relevant source which was written after the time period in question. For the purposes of this thesis, the later sources fall into two broad categories: those that record Roman history and those that do not. For the first category, there are authors such as Malalas, Jordanes, and Zonaras. Malalas and Jordanes were both writing at a similar time to Zosimus and relied on secondary sources. However, both authors are arguably more problematic than Zosimus is. Malalas' use of Domninos led to the inclusion of a non-existent Persian invasion during Trajan's reign in his work. Similar mistakes and confusion throughout his

⁴⁰ Ronald T. Ridley, ed. Zosimus, *New History* (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982), xii-xiii; Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 110.

⁴¹ Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, 109.

⁴² Zosimus, *New History*, 2.7. Zosimus may have received this idea from Eunapius who was opposed to Constantine, (Hugh Elton, *The Roman Empire in Late Antiquity: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 71), but Zosimus could have modified the story to favour Constantine if he wanted to. Zosimus' view is opposed by Lactantius, a Christian author, who blamed Diocletian for all the problems the Roman Empire faced. Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 7; Pat Southern and Karen R. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 3.

chronicle have led Croke to conclude that Malalas used his sources uncritically and never paid attention to the inscriptions around Antioch.⁴³

Jordanes' *Getica* is one of the few surviving literary sources not written by a Roman. He descended from the Goths, but the specifics of his heritage and upbringing are lost. It is known that he integrated into Roman culture, even leaving Arianism and converting to Catholicism. Unsurprisingly, his work favoured the Goths while still relying heavily on Greco-Roman writing conventions.⁴⁴ Like Malalas, Jordanes is not always well informed on certain things. He only had access to Cassiodorus' Gothic history, one of his main sources, for three days. Additionally, Jordanes also excerpted Cassiodorus' work, but used those excerpts in the way which suited his purpose.⁴⁵

When Jordanes was missing information from his sources, he would present something to favour the Amal government in Ostrogothic Italy.⁴⁶ An example of his Gothic bias and unreliability is the war between the Goths and Domitian. In this war the Goths defeated Domitian's army. He justified the Gothic attack by blaming Domitian, who was seen as a bad emperor by Jordanes' sixth century audience, for threatening the Goths and breaking the treaty. However, this war never happened in antiquity. Domitian did lose an army on the Danubian frontier to the Dacians, not the Goths.⁴⁷ In short, Jordanes misinterpreted or changed events to fit into his narrative.

⁴³ Brian Croke, "Malalas, the Man and His Work," in *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Brian Croke, and Roger Scott (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1990), 1-27, 6.

⁴⁴ Walter A. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 42-44.

⁴⁵ Jordanes, *Getica*, Preface; A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 105, 162

⁴⁶ Elton, *The Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, 222.

⁴⁷ Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, 75-77

Zonaras is one of the latest historical authors used for the study of late antiquity, as he was writing in the eleventh century. This meant that Zonaras was writing over five centuries after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and he would have relied almost exclusively on literary sources. It is known that Zonaras used Cassius Dio's history as the basis for his history up to Severus Alexander's reign, including sections which are now lost. This allows scholars to verify some of what Zonaras recorded. However, this luxury does not extend to his history of the third and fourth century, where his sources do not survive.⁴⁸ While this does not make Zonaras' history useless, his information must be used carefully and verified with other sources where possible.

In the second category, the major sources are Procopius' *History of the Wars*, *The Buildings*, and *Secret History*, and Maurice's *Strategikon*. Neither of these sources make any attempt to describe Roman history outside the scope of their work. Procopius solely focused on events in Justinian's reign, starting with Justinian's Persian war and building program. The *Strategikon* is a military handbook for commanders in the late sixth century, and it never made the attempt to describe Roman history. Because of the military focus of these works, both sources discuss formations and tactics of the Eastern Roman/Byzantine army. It is tempting to use the *Strategikon* or *History of the Wars* to fill in gaps from fourth and fifth century sources, but, to quote Southern and Dixon, this would be 'anachronistic.'⁴⁹ Since these sources make no attempt to record how the army they discussed differed from the fifth century, any information taken and applied to the fourth and fifth centuries requires justification.

Material Culture

⁴⁸ Zonaras, *The History of Zonaras* trans. Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane (London: Routledge Publishing, 2009).

⁴⁹ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 2.

Material sources are another incredibly important source for the research of late antiquity, including topics surrounding ‘barbarians’, ‘barbarization’. It was common for scholars before World War Two to try to use material goods, including goods found in burials, to determine the movement of peoples around the Roman world.⁵⁰ Belts and their accoutrements, brooches, female accoutrements, and weapons have all been found in Late Roman burials. However, scholars have traditionally classified burials with weapons and some styles of belts/belt accoutrements as Germanic burials, which they use as evidence for the settlement of *foederati*⁵¹ in Northern Gaul.⁵² Alternatively, the simplified decoration of burial goods have been used to demonstrate the disruption caused by ‘barbarian’ attacks in late antiquity.⁵³

However, the link between burial goods and different groups of people is not as clear cut as some scholars have assumed. Many belts which have been categorized as ‘Germanic’ were worn by Germanic and Roman soldiers alike.⁵⁴ One example are the late Roman belt with chip carved belt plates. which actually have rarely been found in *Germania Magna*.⁵⁵ Some scholars have linked belt styles to certain statuses in Roman society instead of trying to determine ethnicity of the wearer, but this is again not foolproof. However, belt styles could be adopted by people with different status throughout antiquity. For example, belt styles associated with the military also became common amongst the Roman administration as a status symbol in their burials.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West 376-568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25-26.

⁵¹ *Foederati* will be discussed further in chapter 2.

⁵² Simon Esmonde Cleary, *The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91.

⁵³ C.J. Simpson, “Belt-Buckles and Strap-Ends of the Later Roman Empire: A Preliminary Survey of Several New Groups,” *Brittania* 7 (1976): 192-223, 203, n22.

⁵⁴ Simpson, “Belt-Buckles and Strap-Ends of the Later Roman Empire,” 203-204.

⁵⁵ M.C. Bishop and J.C.N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment: From the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2006), 223-224

⁵⁶ Špela Tomažinčič, “Belt types, Identity, and Social Status in Late Antiquity: The Belt Set in *Emona*’s grave 18,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 31 (2018): 426-444, 438-439.

Additionally, burials found in Slovenia have shown that local non-military or administrative people sometimes were buried with belts styled like Roman military belts.⁵⁷ Belts in burials did not even guarantee a gender or age of the deceased either, as women and children have occasionally been found with military style belt buckles.⁵⁸ While belt accoutrements can certainly be an indicator of the status, if not necessarily the ethnicity, of the deceased, they do not guarantee the identity of their occupants.⁵⁹

Weapons in burials create many difficulties with interpretation as well. Scholars originally labelled weapon burials as ‘barbaric’ without much evidence actually determining that the arrival of Germanic peoples in the empire brought this practice with them. The main argument for this is that provincial Romans were not allowed to carry weapons, so it must have been Germanic ‘barbarians’ who were buried with weapons.⁶⁰ However, in more recent years some scholars have made counter arguments against this. One such argument is that there are few weapon burials which have actually been discovered in *Germania*. Moreover, weapon burials are most commonly found in Northern Gaul, which has led Halsall to conclude that the practice originated there.⁶¹ Spain for example, which was settled by the Visigoths, has had only one weapon burial found despite the Gothic kingdom established there.⁶² Further complicating matters, many of the discovered weapon burials may not actually contain weapons for war. Some

⁵⁷ Vyacheslav V. Masyakin, “Roman Fibulae and Parts of a Belt-Set from the Zavetnoe Necropolis,” *Anticent Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 15 (2009): 261-286, 277-278.

⁵⁸ Masyakin, “Roman Fibulae and Parts of a Belt-Set from the Zavetnoe Necropolis,” 265, 278, 280-281. Female belts are not limited to burials, as belts are seen on late antique representations of aristocratic women. Tomažinič, “Belt types, Identity, and Social Status in Late Antiquity,” 442. For an example see the Ivory Diptych of Stilicho.

⁵⁹ Isotope studies performed on discovered remains can give a better indication of where someone was raised, but this still only gives a general area. For an example of an isotope study see Hella Eckard, Gundula Müldner, and Greg Speed, “The Late Roman Field Army in Northern Britain? Mobility, Material Culture and Multi-Isotope Analysis at Scorton (N Yorks.),” *Britannia* 46 (2015) 191-223.

⁶⁰ Cleary, *The Roman West*, 82.

⁶¹ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 153-156.

⁶² Cleary, *The Roman West*, 371.

may have contained tools for work or hunting. Knives, arrows, and spears have often been recorded as ‘weapons’ in burials even though they were not necessarily used for military activity. A knife could serve many functions in the average person’s day to day life while arrows and spears could also be used for hunting.⁶³ The opposite happens as well, as some weapons found in ‘Roman’ graves were not recorded as weapons, to keep the graves separate from the ‘Germanic’ ones.⁶⁴ Burial goods can certainly be used to create a theory of the deceased’s social status, but care must still be taken when trying to do so.

Instead of trying to track groups with material culture, I will examine material culture through a military historian’s lens to try and see the impact that ‘barbarians’ had on the Roman Empire and Roman military throughout imperial history. I have chosen a few specific items to focus on where the Roman military changed because of their exposure, whether they were exposed as enemies, allies, or even indirectly exposure, to ‘barbarians’. To start with, Rome’s military system changed in response to its wars with ‘barbarians’ and how threatening the Romans perceived ‘barbarians’ to be. Changes to Roman fortifications and defences reflect this sort of impact, as the design of Roman forts changed in late antiquity to be more defensible. However, not all fortifications were designed in response to an imminent threat, as some were designed with a more political focus. Both types of fortifications must be considered when analyzing the threats that the ‘barbarians’ posed against the Roman Empire.⁶⁵

Rome also adopted military strategies and technologies from ‘barbarians’, which is also apparent in the material evidence. Some scholars have seen the Roman military’s adoption of

⁶³ Cleary, *The Roman West*, 242.

⁶⁴ Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout: Brepolis Publishers, 2013), 383-385.

⁶⁵ This will be discussed further in chapter 5.

certain weapons, notably the *spatha*, as a sign of ‘barbarization’.⁶⁶ There certainly were changes in Roman military doctrine and equipment in late antiquity, but these changes do not necessarily reflect a decline or ‘barbarization’ of the Roman army. Furthermore, the Roman army was not a static entity, and had undergone significant changes throughout Roman history. This included adopting things from Rome’s foreign opponents. Once the tendency of Rome’s army to adopt new ideas is examined, it becomes apparent that Rome adopted ideas from many of the peoples it encountered, including ‘barbarian’ peoples, and these adoptions did not cause the Roman army to deteriorate.⁶⁷

Time Period

It is worth briefly discussing the choice of time period for this dissertation. The second through fourth centuries at first come across as an odd choice, as ‘barbarization’ is usually applied to the fourth and fifth centuries. After all, the fourth and fifth centuries are seen as the start of the ‘Migration Age’ or ‘Barbarian Invasions.’⁶⁸ However focusing solely on the fourth and fifth centuries separates the policies and attitudes towards foreign groups in the late empire from the early and high Roman empire. Many of the policies of the late Roman empire have their roots in the centuries previous, even if some of the policies became more extreme in response to the circumstances of the time.

The late Roman empire’s issues already began to appear during the late second century and third centuries. During this time the Roman Empire’s supremacy of the Mediterranean began

⁶⁶ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 145. Quoting R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der Byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1920), 330. The *spatha* may have been more of a reaction to foreign cavalry. Bishop and Coulston theorized that this had more to do with the need to fight a greater number of mounted opponents. Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 268. See also Ian Haynes, *The Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 243, 246, 276.

⁶⁷ This will be discussed further in chapter 5.

⁶⁸ Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 13-14.

to be challenged. Foreign pressure increased on both the Western frontiers and the Eastern frontiers, and Rome was forced to adopt a more defensive strategy. Additionally, with the exception of *Germania Magna* during Augustus' reign, Rome lost territory which it was never able to regain. With the empire's struggles and military defeats, this is where one would expect to see trends leading into the fourth and fifth centuries that weakened its military power. If the admittance of barbarians into the army was a new idea that was not working or some other weakness of the Roman army occurred and was exploited, it would be apparent in this period.

The third century specifically is frequently overlooked, as it is often used in modern scholarship to divide the high Roman empire from the late Roman empire, with many scholars ending their research with the Severans or starting with the Tetrarchy or Constantine.⁶⁹ However, when the third century is brought into the analysis, there is far more continuity than change in regard to integrating foreign peoples into the empire and using them in the Roman army. The integration of German barbarians into the Roman Empire should not be taken as a sign of decline, as it instead reflected longstanding Roman policies and traditions. In fact, the same trends and policies in this period even carry on into the Byzantine period, as the Byzantine Empire integrated different cultures during the sixth century.

Furthermore, by the Third Century Rome had directly integrated most of its client kingdoms and allies that were visible during the principate. Kingdoms such as Thrace, Pergamon, and Judea were all integrated into the Roman Empire.⁷⁰ By the Third Century, the only important remaining client kingdom was Armenia, though Palmyra was a semi-independent region which dominated Rome's Eastern trade. The former remained independent, and a

⁶⁹ Roussel, "Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la "Barbarisation,"" 182.

⁷⁰ David C. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of Client Kingship* (London: Croom Helm LTD, 1984), 131. William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2010), 288

battleground between the Sassanid Persians and the Romans for the centuries that followed. The latter lost its status after taking over much of Rome's Eastern territories, then fighting and losing two wars against the Emperor Aurelian. By including the second and third centuries, it is possible to see the Roman methods of annexing client kingdoms and integrating their populations directly into the Roman state.

Chapter 2

Definitions: 'Barbarian' and 'Barbarization'

One of the main goals of this thesis is to reconcile Rome's integration of foreign peoples into its society and army during the early and high imperial periods and the 'barbarization' of the Roman military and society and during the late imperial period. Therefore, both the terms 'barbarian' and 'barbarization' must be discussed before analysis of the integration of 'barbarians' into the Roman Empire during late antiquity can happen. Neither term is as simple as they first appear, and both have scholarly discourse built around them.

Starting with 'barbarian', it is necessary to determine whom the Romans labelled as a 'barbarian' and what the term implied for a Roman. The concept of 'barbarian' did not originate in the Roman or Italian culture. The Latin '*barbarus*' was adopted from the Greek '*βάρβαρος*', bringing many connotations from the Greek world with it.⁷¹ While it is not possible to fully analyze the Greek 'barbarian' this paper due to time and length constrictions, a brief overview of current scholarship will show the consensus and debate surrounding the term and the original meaning the Romans inherited. Once a general definition for the Greek can be formed, this definition can be used as a baseline for Rome's use of it.

The Ancient 'Barbarian'

One of the most important works analyzing the Greek 'barbarian' is Hall's work *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy*. Before the Persian wars, 'barbarian' had originally referred simply to someone who spoke a different language without the negative connotations. Hall argued that the concept of 'barbarian' was formed by the end of

⁷¹ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 376-568, 45.

the Persian Wars, as a collective Hellenic identity and Greek ethnocentrism were formed in response to outside attack. 'Barbarian' came to stand for the opposite of Greek and was applied to everyone outside the Greek world. Hall's conclusions relied heavily on the Athenian playwrights who wrote in the aftermath of the Persian Wars, as they depicted foreign people and 'barbarians' in their plays.⁷²

Hall's work remains a discussion point of the topic of 'barbarian' to this day, often forming a baseline for discussions about the term. Her conclusion that 'barbarian' acted as the antithesis of 'Greek' is normally accepted; however, modern scholars debate the implications of the term. Cartledge, who wrote around the same time as Hall, came to the same conclusion about the binary use of Greek and 'barbarian' as Hall,⁷³ but he also argued that there was no single view of 'barbarian' people. Different ancient Greek authors had different upbringings which affected their views, including the culture of the city state they came from. For example, Xenophon used the Persian king Cyrus, a 'barbarian' to the Greeks, as an example of proper conduct.⁷⁴

Isaac took the concept of Greek ethnocentrism in a different direction from Hall and Cartledge, arguing that the ethnocentrism and xenophobia found in Greece and the Roman Empire were a form of 'proto-racism'. He argued that this 'proto-racism' eventually became a basis for the 'scientific' racism of the nineteenth century. Although he took an extreme stance on Greek and Roman ethnocentrism, Isaac retained the basic binary for the term argued by Hall.⁷⁵

⁷² Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9-10.

⁷³ Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: A portrait of Self & Others, 2nd edition*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13-14.

⁷⁴ Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 64-65.

⁷⁵ See Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Antiquity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-2, 5-6.

Another author who wrote about the Greek ‘barbarian’ was Coleman. While he agreed with the binary of Greek and ‘barbarian’ as established by Hall, he disagreed with some of her conclusions. He argued that Greek identity had already begun to form in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE, though the concept of ‘barbarian’ was not formed concurrently. Coleman used Homer’s *Iliad*, which was first written down at that time, as evidence. In the *Iliad*, the Greeks were depicted as a united group against their opponents of Troy and its allies.⁷⁶ Coleman also focused more on the divisions among the Greek *poleis* instead of unity in the face of foreign attacks and the different reactions that different Greeks had to ‘barbarians’. For example, the Greek city states did not all unite against the Persians during the Persian war. Many of the Greek city states simply accepted Persia’s conquest or even supported them in their war in Greece. Coleman further argued that there was even an awareness of the influence from other cultures on the Greeks amongst the Greek people. Herodotus wrote that Greece was impacted by foreign art and religious customs.⁷⁷ While maintaining the basic binary, Coleman argued for a softer binary than Hall previously had.

Not every scholar agreed that the Greek concept of ‘barbarian’ first appeared following the Persian Wars. For example, while Kim accepted that contact with the Persians led to the creation of the term ‘barbarian’ and the divide between ‘barbarian’ and Greek, he argued that it happened a few decades before the onset of the Persian Wars. Kim argued that contact with the Persians during the Ionian revolt is where the mindset began to appear, as the Persian political, cultural, and social structures differed greatly from those of the Greeks.⁷⁸ Aside from the slight

⁷⁶ John E. Coleman, “Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. John E. Coleman and Clark A. Walz (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1997), 175-220, 178.

⁷⁷ Coleman, “Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism, 195-196.

⁷⁸ Hyun Jin Kim, “The Invention of the ‘Barbarian’ in Late Sixth-Century Ionia,” in *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches*, ed. Eran Almagor and Joseph Skinner (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 25-48, 26-27.

date change, Kim's conclusions nonetheless coincide with what Hall says, which is not true of all scholars.

Vlassapolous broke away from the traditional narrative for the Greek 'barbarian' and binary. He agreed with Kim and Coleman on a couple of changes to Hall's basic thesis. He dated the inception of the concept to before the Persian Wars. He also argued that the boundary between Greek and 'barbarian' was less rigid than the binary implied. Vlassapolous further argued that the ancient binary of Greek and 'barbarian' created a paradox within the Greek mindset. For starters, he argued that Greeks were able to acknowledge that they benefitted from what Momigliano called 'alien wisdom'⁷⁹ for many aspects of Greek thought. The Greeks, as Herodotus stated, had even adopted their alphabet from the Phoenicians.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Greeks never fully isolated themselves within Greece, as they interacted with the larger world. The Greeks traded with other people and even neighbored with other cultural communities. This interaction is demonstrated very well in Egypt, where a variety of different cultural communities existed. The Greek communities coexisted with other cultures while still maintaining a sense of community with the rest of the Greeks.⁸¹

The debate around the Greek 'barbarian' continues to this day⁸²; however, the core definition of the term remains constant in all the scholarship. By the fifth century BCE, the Greeks had created a concept where the Greeks, representing proper conduct, morals, and way of life, were opposed by 'barbarians', all the non-Greek peoples, who represented the opposite. This also led to the belief that the Greek world was surrounded by 'barbarians'. This is the term that

⁷⁹ A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom. The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁸⁰ Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10-11, 29.

⁸¹ Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians*, 15, 19-20.

⁸² See Thomas Harrison, "Reinventing the Barbarian," *Classical Philology* 115 (2020): 139-163, for a further look on the scholarship surrounding the Greek 'barbarian'.

the Romans were exposed to, but the use of ‘barbarian’ to refer to everyone around the Roman world did not appear right away. The Romans had to fit ‘barbarian’ into their own culture. An example of changing ‘barbarian’ to fit into Roman culture, with which Halsall began his own analysis of ‘barbarian’ in late antiquity, is a dialogue between Scipio and Laelius from Cicero. In this dialogue, Scipio and Laelius were in conversation when the question of whether Romulus was a king of barbarians arose. Laelius noted that in the Greek sense of the word he would count as a king of the barbarians, but he felt that behaviour not language should determine who was a ‘barbarian’.⁸³ Laelius’ differentiation between the Greek and Latin definition shows that at least some of the Romans during Cicero’s time did not believe in the same binary that the Greeks had.

One major reason that Rome had to change the definition of ‘barbarian’ was that the Roman Empire was expanding during the Republican and early/high imperial period. As such, it integrated people into its growing Empire and even the city of Rome itself. By the time Cicero was writing, Rome had gained control of much of the Mediterranean and Western Europe. Some people were given citizenship, but Rome also had a large free non-citizen population until the third century CE.

Rome had a more accommodating attitude towards its free non-citizen population (*peregrini*) than the Greeks had towards their free populations. For example, Athens had a population identified as *metics*, who were resident foreigners and freed slaves. While the *metics* do add another category into the Greek/‘barbarian’ divide, they remained a distinct group from Athenian citizens. Athens categorized them based on their ancestry, and it was almost impossible

⁸³ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 45; Cicero, *De Re Publica*, 1.58.

for *metics* to gain citizenship. *Metics* also had to pay a fee to remain in Athens, and they could even fall into slavery.⁸⁴

While the *peregrini* were at a similar level of society as the *metics* were, the *peregrini* were generally treated better than their Greek counterparts. The *peregrini* were frequently allowed to maintain their own laws and self governance within their own communities, if they did not cause any issues for the state.⁸⁵ Citizenship was sometimes granted during the Roman Republic, but there was never a formal system put in place. It was not until the imperial period under Augustus that a system was put in place. The most common ways for *peregrini* to gain citizenship was through service in the *auxilia* or serving on a city council.⁸⁶ The Empire continued to grant citizenship to its denizens in these ways until 212 CE when Caracalla issued the *Constitutio Antoniniana*. This decree granted citizenship to all free citizens of the empire, except recently defeated and settled populations called *dediticii*. Though the *peregrini* were treated better than the Greeks' free populations, they were still second-class citizens. Sometimes the rights of *peregrini* were debated among the Roman Elite. For example, the Romans would occasionally expel *peregrini* from the city of Rome, such as a law passed in 65 BCE by Papius. Not all of the Roman senate supported these laws. Cicero was sympathetic towards the *peregrini* and opposed the laws which expelled them.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ There were both non-Athenian Greeks and freed foreign slaves residing in Athens as *Metics*. There is very little information in the proportion of the different groups. Demetra Kasimis, *The Perpetual Immigrant and the Limits of Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 5-6, n8. See also David Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica, 508/7–ca.250 B.C.: A Political and Social Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Joshua D. Sosin, "A Metic was a Metic," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 65.1 (2016): 2-13.

⁸⁵ Ralph W. Mathisen, "*Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani*: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 111, No. 4 (2006): 1011-1040, 1013.

⁸⁶ Mathisen, "*Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani*, 1104. The ability to gain citizenship in Rome can be compared to Athens, where citizenship was sometimes only given to people who had two citizen parents. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "*Civitas Romana*: the Fluidity of an Ideal," *Al-Masaq*, 32.1 (2020): 18-33, 19-20.

⁸⁷ David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Gerald Duckworth and co. LTD., 2000), 38.

Rome was also willing to integrate slaves into its empire from Republican times. Manumitted slaves became freedmen and received a form of citizenship. The freedmen still carried some stigma from being a former slave, could not serve in the army, and could not become magistrates, but they received many of the other benefits of citizenship.⁸⁸ The manumission of slaves was actually more common than the granting of citizenship to *peregrini*.⁸⁹ Many of the freedmen married into Roman households and had citizen descendants. During the imperial period, a large proportion of the *plebs* in Rome had freedmen ancestors. Some modern estimates estimate that up to 90% of them had a slave ancestor somewhere in their family tree. Because of this, manumission became a way to mix different groups of people together and expand Roman citizenship to foreign peoples.⁹⁰

This expansion of citizenship throughout the Empire even allowed individuals from these regions to reach the highest levels of the aristocracy and the position of emperor. During the first century, the Julio-Claudians were from the city of Rome. Their successors, the Flavians, were Italian. From the second century onwards, emperors almost always came from outside Italy. Trajan and Hadrian both were born in Iberia. Septimius Severus was from North Africa, and his wife Julia Domna was from Syria. With the death of Caracalla, Domna's great-nephews came to power, meaning that the emperors were Syrian in descent. In the third century, the tendency of emperors to come from outside Rome continued. Philip from Arabia and several of the soldier emperors, such as Maximinus Thrax and Aurelian, came from the Balkans.⁹¹ There were

⁸⁸ Rose MacLean, *Freed Slaves and Roman Imperial Culture: Social Integration and the Transformation of Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

⁸⁹ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 24-25.

⁹⁰ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 11-12. See also Peter Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons inc., 2018), 117-135.

⁹¹ Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 189-190.

examples of exceptions to this trend, such as Valerian and Gallienus, but by the third and fourth centuries emperors usually came from outside Italy.⁹²

While *peregrini* were a distinct social class from the Roman citizens, they were not regarded as ‘barbarians’ during the Roman Republic and Early Empire despite their foreign origins. This leads to the question of whom the Romans referred to as a ‘barbarian’. Roman authors did not even always apply it to their opponents. While Cicero’s definition gives some insight for a possible Roman definition, there is no simple answer for this time period.

‘Barbarian’ was not an especially common term. Every Roman author used the term as they saw fit, and none of them used it consistently.⁹³

This inconsistency can be seen with how the late Republican and early imperial sources discussed the Gauls and the Germans. James has argued that the Celts/Gauls were the definitive ‘barbarians’ for the Greeks and Romans, and the ideas about the Celts found in Polybius became stereotypes for the Gauls and Germans.⁹⁴ The historical sources do not support James’ argument. Caesar rarely used the term to describe the Gauls. He only referred to Gallic groups as ‘barbarians’ three times in the *Gallic War* and *Civil War*,⁹⁵ and he wrote once that the barbarous arrogance of two Allobrogian chiefs caused them to raid their own territory and siphon money from the army.⁹⁶ The rest of the times ‘barbarian’ was used in the *Gallic War* it referred to the

⁹² George C. Brauer Jr., *The Age of the Soldier Emperors: Imperial Rome A.D. 244-284* (New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1975), 68.

⁹³ See now Alexander Rubel, “What the Romans really meant when using the word ‘Barbarian’. Some thoughts on ‘Romans and Barbarians,’” in *Rome and Barbaricum: Contributions to the Archaeology and History of Interaction in European Protohistory*, ed. Roxana-Gabriela Curcă, Alexander Rubel, Robin P. Symonds, and Hans-Ulrich Voß (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020), 1-21.

⁹⁴ Edward James, *Europe’s Barbarians: Ad 200-600* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2009), 21-22.

⁹⁵ Aulus Hirtius, who wrote book 8 of the Gallic war, referred to the Treveri as differing little from the *Germani* in their habits of barbarity. Even so, he stated that the Bellovaci, another Gallic tribe, were far more prudent than reckless barbarians. Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 4.22, 8.8, 8.25. Caesar referred to the Albici as a ‘barbarian’ tribe when they joined Massilia and Pompey against him. Julius Caesar, *Civil War*, 1.25.

⁹⁶ Julius Caesar, *Civil War*, 3.59.

Germanic tribes, except it is used once to describe Illyrian bandits.⁹⁷ Caesar referred to more groups of people as ‘barbarians’ in the *Civil War*, as he used the term as an attack on Pompey’s allies.⁹⁸ Livy referred to Gauls as ‘barbarians’, but only did so for Gauls fighting the Romans. The Gauls who attacked and sacked Rome in 390 BCE were referred to as ‘barbarians’ but the Gauls fighting against the Carthaginians were not.⁹⁹ Contrary to Caesar and Livy, Sallust did not once refer to the Allobroges as ‘barbarians.’ He only used the term a few times in his work to refer to the Iberians¹⁰⁰ and the North Africans.¹⁰¹

The Germanic tribes are not consistently referred to as ‘barbarians’ during this time either. While Caesar described the Germani as ‘barbarians,’ neither Pliny in his *Natural History* nor Augustus in his *Res Gestae* referred to them as such. Pliny briefly described the Germanic tribes but did not call them ‘barbarians’.¹⁰² He was aware of the term and did use it in his work to describe other peoples. For example, he used it in his description of the Thracians, where he linked the term to the old belief that the mythological pygmies lived in Thrace before being driven away by the cranes.¹⁰³ Augustus’ *Res Gestae* is probably the most surprising example of ‘barbarian’ not being used. His *Res Gestae* was written in Latin and Greek, which means that he could have used ‘barbarian’ to link to the Greek binary view. The inconsistency and limited use of the term ‘barbarian’ means that scholars must be careful not to overapply the concept onto Roman thinking, as *barbarus* had not yet come to stand for the Germanic tribes or foreigners to the Roman Empire in general.

⁹⁷ Germanic tribes: Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.31, 1.33, 1.40, 1.44, 4.10, 6.35, 6.37, Illyrian bandits (8.24).

⁹⁸ Albici: Julius Caesar, *Civil War*, 1.34. Iberians: 1.38, 1.44, 1.60, 1.75. Numidians: 2.38. Dalmatians and other ‘barbarians’: 3.9. Thracians and other ‘barbarians’: 3.82.

⁹⁹ Livy, *History of Rome*, 5.36, 5.38. 10.26-28.

¹⁰⁰ Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, 19.

¹⁰¹ Sallust, *Bellum Jugurthinum*, 18, 98, 101-103.

¹⁰² Pliny, *Natural History*, 4.28.

¹⁰³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 4.18. For an examination on the pygmies and Roman monsters, see, Rhiannon Evans “Ethnography’s Freak Show: The Grotesques at the Edge of The Roman Earth,” *Ramus* 28.1 (1999): 54-73

During the High and Late Empires, the usage of ‘barbarian’ changed, as Roman authors began to use the term more frequently. Additionally, the Roman concept of Roman and non-Roman became increasingly similar to the Greeks’. The Romans began to consistently label people outside of their direct control as ‘barbarians’ and developed the idea that they were surrounded by barbarians. The Romans adopted a Greek ideology to justify this thought process: peoples further away from the Mediterranean acted wilder than those closer to it due to the climate they were raised in. Since the Greeks and Romans were in the centre of the Mediterranean world, their climate caused them to behave in the most civilized and least barbaric manner.¹⁰⁴

In later Roman literature, the term ‘barbarian’ was used to describe all of Rome’s opponents. There are examples of the term being used to describe Germanic,¹⁰⁵ Scythian¹⁰⁶, Saracen¹⁰⁷, and African¹⁰⁸ tribes. Sometimes, Roman authors used the term vaguely to refer to raiders or attackers of the Empire without identifying what ethnicity the raiders were.¹⁰⁹ The Parthians and Persians were occasionally referred to as ‘barbarians’ as well, but this was rare.¹¹⁰ James has argued that Roman authors had more respect for the Persians than the other populations in the Roman East due to their possession of their own powerful Empire and military.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, the term ‘barbarian’ served as an easy way for the Roman authorities to

¹⁰⁴ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 46.

¹⁰⁵ See Tacitus, “Germany and its Tribes,” 28. for a Roman view on the German tribes. The term ‘Germani’ became rarer in late antiquity, as ‘barbarian’ was commonly used at this time instead. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Zonaras did not call the attackers Scythians or Goths, and simply chooses to refer to them as ‘barbarians’. Zonaras, *The History of Zonaras: Alexander Septimius Severus to the Death of Theodosius the Great*, trans. Thomas M. Banchich and Eugene N. Lane, ed. Thomas M. Banchich (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2009), 12.20.

¹⁰⁷ Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 6.42; G.W. Clarke, “Barbarian Disturbances in North Africa in the Mid-Third Century,” *Antichthon* 4 (1970): 78-85, 79.

¹⁰⁸ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 3.3, 7.9.

¹⁰⁹ Zonaras, *The History of Zonaras*, 12.20; Cyprian, *Letters (1-81)*, trans. Sister Rose Bernard Donna, C.S.J. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 62.2.

¹¹⁰ Julian, *Caesars*, 329; Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 6.3-6.4; Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 5.

¹¹¹ James, *Europe’s Barbarians*, 12-13; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 52.

quickly distance themselves and proper Roman behaviour from foreign populations beyond their direct control.

To further complicate matters, Romans referred to certain groups of people or individuals within their Empire as ‘barbarians’. These groups were treated much the same as the foreign ‘barbarians’ were in the literature. One of the best examples for this is the Isaurians. The Isaurian rebellion under Trebellianus and their general reputation for banditry forced the Imperial government to form a frontier army inside the Empire to defend against them. Since Rome was unable to effectively govern the region, the Isaurians became a ‘barbarian’ tribe within the Roman Empire.¹¹²

Just as groups could be referred to as ‘barbarians’ by the Romans, individuals could be as well. Common examples of this are usurpers or people who challenged central power. One individual who was referred to as a ‘barbarian’ was Maximinus Thrax. None of the historical sources portrayed him positively. The most contemporary writer was Herodian, who stated that not only was Maximinus naturally barbaric, but his race was also barbaric. He also claimed that Maximinus was a herdsman before joining the army, with herdsmen frequently linked to bandits and general troublemakers in antiquity.¹¹³ The *Historia Augusta* took its descriptions of Maximinus’ barbarian heritage further. Its author went so far as give the exact tribes of Maximinus’ parentage, which he claimed were the Goths and Alans.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Historia Augusta, the Thirty Pretenders*, 26. Brent D. Shaw, “Bandit Highlands and Lowland Peace: The Mountains of Isauria-Cilicia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*; Vol. 33 (1990): 237-336, 2. Hugh Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (London: B.T. Batsford LTD, 1996) 63.

¹¹³ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire* 7.1-2; Thomas Grunewald and John Drinkwater, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality* (London: Routledge Publishing, 2004), 36.

¹¹⁴ *Historia Augusta, The Two Maximini* 1-3.

While some modern authors take Maximinus' heritage recorded in the *Historia Augusta* as fact¹¹⁵, there are counter arguments, notably by Syme, that these portrayals were slander. After all, Maximinus did not have the support of the senate, which was still powerful at the time. Additionally, Maximinus had been usurped by Gordian, Pupienus, and Balbinus, who had to legitimize themselves once they had come to power. Syme argued that it was likely that Maximinus was a Roman citizen without the Alanic and Gothic parentage assigned to him in the *Historia Augusta*.¹¹⁶ Even if Maximinus Thrax had not descended from Germanic tribes, his Thracian origin would still allow people to slander him as a 'barbarian'.

Similarly to Maximinus, the later *magister militum* Silvanus' Frankish ancestry was emphasized after his short-lived usurpation. At this point in imperial history, the Franks were seen as a 'barbarian' people by the Romans.¹¹⁷ While Marcellinus avoided the term 'barbarian' and portrayed Silvanus positively, Aurelius Victor simply stated that Silvanus' parents were 'barbarians' and did not feel the need to elaborate on which group Silvanus descended from.¹¹⁸ Halsall argued that Silvanus' ancestry would not have been a significant issue if he had not ended up on the wrong side of the imperial authorities.¹¹⁹ Maximinus Thrax and Silvanus demonstrated that if someone had some sort of 'barbarian' ancestry, they were open to being slandered as 'barbarians' by other Romans.

With groups being labelled as 'barbarians' by the Romans, how easy would it have been for someone to distinguish between a 'barbarian', a foreigner, or a citizen? Noy and Roussel

¹¹⁵ Bernard S. Bachrach, *History of the Alans in the West: From Their First Appearance in the Sources of Classical Antiquity through the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1973), 13.

¹¹⁶ Ronald Syme, *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 186. Ronald Syme, "Danubian and Balkan Emperors," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 22 (1973), 310-316. Paul N. Pearson, *Maximinus Thrax: From Common Soldier to Emperor of Rome* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Books LTD, 2016), 234-235, n 6.

¹¹⁷ Edward James, *The Franks* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1988), 34.

¹¹⁸ Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 15.5; Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus*, 42.

¹¹⁹ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 153.

argued that it would have been incredibly difficult for an average Roman to recognize who fell into these different groups due to the multi-ethnic nature of the Roman Empire. Noy examined the ability of *peregrini* to blend into Roman society during the late Republic and early empire, and how it is incredibly difficult for modern scholars to distinguish them from Roman citizens. Many *peregrini* adopted Roman customs and names. Some even pretended to be Roman citizens, which the limited evidence suggests they were generally able to get away with. The false claims of citizenship became enough of a problem that Claudius decreed that anyone caught doing this would be put to death.¹²⁰ The need for such a law shows the difficulties Romans had in distinguishing people claiming citizenship from those who possessed it. If it were easy for Roman citizens to determine who was a citizen and who was not, Claudius would not have needed to enact such a law to prevent such behaviour.

Caracalla's *Constitutio Antoniniana* granted citizenship to peoples from a vast array of different cultures who resided within the Roman Empire. Roussel argued that because of this variety of populations who were now Roman citizens, it would be next to impossible to differentiate between a 'barbarian' and a Roman citizen. People could probably only determine who was foreign to their own region, not to the Empire as a whole.¹²¹

To make it even harder to differentiate between 'barbarians' and Romans, there is evidence to suggest that people began to wear clothes worn by the other group. This change was limited to the army at first. By the third century, soldiers were wearing trousers, which were seen as a foreign type of dress.¹²² However, in the fourth and fifth centuries, residents of major Italian and Greek cities began to wear 'barbarian' style clothing. The Eastern and Western governments

¹²⁰ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 24.

¹²¹ Roussel, "Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la "Barbarisation,"" 195-196.

¹²² Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 145.

implemented laws to try and prevent Romans from wearing stereotypical ‘barbarian’ clothing in response. For example, Honorius enacted a law banning Roman residents and slaves from wearing trousers, boots, animal skins, and even long hair.¹²³ These laws were only enacted in major cities, as trying to enforce the laws throughout the Roman world would be hopeless. Many of the cultures adapted clothing styles from each other along with other cultural practices.¹²⁴ These laws demonstrate that the ability to differentiate people based on clothing was becoming increasingly difficult in Late Antiquity. The laws also show that the Roman government was trying to find a way to distinguish different groups and maintain proper Roman conduct in the face of the changing world.

Though the Romans used the term ‘barbarian’ to describe many different groups of people over a long period of time, ‘barbarian’ usually refers to Germanic and ‘Scythian’ peoples in modern scholarship. Both terms are blanket terms which encompass a large group of different peoples. The Germanic peoples were various settled peoples who spoke Germanic languages. This included groups such as the Chatti and Alamanni. Even though the ancient ‘Scythians’ that the Greeks had encountered had disappeared, the Romans continued to use the term. Some trans-Danubian groups such as the Goths and Juthungi were sometimes included in the term ‘Scythian’, but I will be including them with the Germanic tribes. The Goths and Juthungi were semi-settled and Germanic speaking peoples who lived beyond the Danubian frontier. Similarly to the Germanic tribes on the Rhine, these tribes had frequent interactions and conflicts with Rome after arriving on the Roman frontier. Roman authors also used the term ‘Scythians’ to refer to the nomadic steppe tribes, most notably the Alans, Sarmatians, and Huns. These tribes

¹²³ *Codex Theodosianus*, 14.10.4.

¹²⁴ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 145; Thomas R. Martin, *Ancient Rome: From Romulus to Justinian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 198, 203.

were further away from Rome's frontiers, but they were still able to interact with the Roman empire.¹²⁵ I will be using the term 'Scythian' to refer specifically to the steppe peoples, as their distance and nomadic society meant they had different relations with Rome. The Germanic and 'Scythian' tribes were the groups who took over Western Roman territory after the fall of Rome, and the groups which some scholars have claimed 'barbarized' the Roman Empire.

To conclude briefly, the Romans did not use the term 'barbarian' the same way throughout antiquity. This means that foreign people in the Empire would generally not be referred to as 'barbarians' in the Early Empire. It is not until late antiquity that the Roman 'barbarian' became similar to the Greek one, and Rome used the term to refer to all of its opponents. However, the size and multi-ethnic nature of Rome's Empire meant that it would be incredibly difficult for Romans to discern who was a 'barbarian' and who was a Roman, even during late antiquity. The changing definition and use of the term 'barbarian' in antiquity demonstrates the problems between it and the 'barbarian' used by many modern scholars. There was never a clear divide between who was a 'barbarian' and who was a Roman in antiquity, even when they believed in a binary between the two groups. As such, the increased use and different use of the term in late antiquity should be kept in mind by scholars to prevent the skewing of data to make it seem like Rome was suddenly interacting with a far greater number of 'barbarians' than it had in earlier centuries.

Definition of 'Barbarization'

Unlike 'barbarian', 'barbarization' is very much a modern concept, as the use of the term began around the twentieth century. During the first decades of that century, some scholars continued to follow the traditional view of the Roman Empire's collapse, and they did not pay

¹²⁵ Bachrach, *History of the Alans in the West*, 5; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 51-52; James, *Europe's Barbarians*, 33-34.

attention to the influence that ‘barbarians’ had on the Roman Empire. Only the reverse, Roman influence on ‘barbarians’ in the centuries prior to the late empire, was discussed, with the belief that it had a positive effect. At the same time, the argument was that the Romans in Italy had become too ‘civilized’ to fight the ‘barbarians’ which necessitated the use of ‘barbarians’ in the Roman army.

While these ideas persisted, some scholars began to discuss the influence of the ‘barbarians’ on the Roman world. One of the notable discussions of the term barbarization was that of Rostovtzeff in 1926. For him, ‘barbarization’ consisted of two parts. One was the displacement of the Roman denizens of the Empire by incoming ‘barbarians’ through the army. ‘Barbarization’ occurred slowly over the centuries, beginning during the reign of Septimius Severus, as the army drew increasingly from its frontiers and became less representative of civilized Romans. He further argued that Septimius Severus began the process of ‘barbarizing’ the Roman military and political leadership as well. Septimius Severus allowed more of the common soldiers into the equestrian class, and the militarization of the administration by allowing these equestrians to take administrative roles. Rostovtzeff concluded that Septimius Severus intended to open the highest administrative positions to the common soldiers.¹²⁶ His argument that the common person entering the aristocracy caused a deterioration is also noticeable in the second part of his definition of ‘barbarization’, where it also referred to the simplification of the Roman political, social, economic, and intellectual systems. He claimed that this simplification was caused by the absorption of the educated elite by the masses, which meant there was no longer a sophisticated ruling class to govern the Roman world.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 124, 353-354, 478. Rostovtzeff relied on Cassius Dio’s claim that the Italian youth turned to brigandage and gladiatorial fighting during Severus’ reign to defend his point. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 74.2.

¹²⁷ Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 478, 486-487.

For his latter point on ‘barbarization’ Rostovtzeff was heavily impacted by the Communist Revolution in Russia, which forced him to flee the country. He relied on Marxist ideas, such as class struggle and the mutual ruin of the different social classes, despite being firmly anti-Marxist, to envision the Roman Empire in late antiquity.¹²⁸ Obviously, no historical author, even in late antiquity, has the same view. Pacatus described a very quick process for admitting the Goths by Theodosius, where the Goths were basically just welcomed into Roman territory as Romans.¹²⁹ One could argue this sort of policy could have impacted Roman society, even if not in a way as cataclysmic as what Rostovtzeff argued; however, Pacatus had a positive view of this event. Theodosius won a victory without a battle, had more soldiers for his army, and was celebrated in Emesa for ending the war. Pacatus did not record any sort of corruption of Roman society.¹³⁰ Even Synesius, who opposed the use of ‘barbarians’ in the army, did not argue that ‘barbarians’ caused a cultural decline. He believed that the ‘barbarians’ were disloyal and cowardly soldiers, which meant they would be worse soldiers and officers than Romans would be.¹³¹ While Rostovtzeff’s conclusions were heavily criticized because of their use of anachronistic terminology and concepts, he remained heavily influential during the first half of the twentieth century and beyond.¹³²

One of the major developments in the use of ‘barbarization’ began with A.H.M. Jones, whose work has become something of a baseline for modern discourse on ‘barbarization’. Jones is credited with removing much of the ‘anachronistic’ language from the discussion of late

¹²⁸ Meyer Reinhold, “Historian of the Classic World: A Critique of Rostovtzeff,” *Science and Society* 10.4 (1946): 361-391, 388-389.

¹²⁹ Pacatus, *Panegyrici Latini*, 36.4-36.5.

¹³⁰ Pacatus, *Panegyrici Latini*, 40.2-40.4.

¹³¹ Synesius, *De Regno*, 14.6-14.7, 15.4-15.7.

¹³² Averil Cameron, “A.H.M. Jones and the End of the Ancient World,” in *A.H.M Jones and the Later Roman Empire*, ed. David M. Gwynn (London: Brill Publishing, 2008), 231-249, 236.

antiquity, including Rostovtzeff's version of 'barbarization'.¹³³ Nonetheless, Jones maintained that 'barbarization' had a negative impact on the Roman Empire. While Jones does not give a precise definition of 'barbarization'¹³⁴, it is possible to see how he used the term. To start with, instead of applying 'barbarization' to all of Roman society he almost exclusively applied it to 'barbarians' entering and influencing the Roman army and Rome's highest military and political offices. Jones also specifically blamed Theodosius, and to some extent his Western counterparts, for 'barbarizing the army to the point of no return. He acknowledged that Diocletian and Constantine recruited Germanic auxiliaries but stated that neither recruited more significant numbers than was normal. Constantine may have shown more favour to his Germanic troops than other soldiers and allowed 'barbarians' into higher offices; however, Jones concluded that he was not responsible for 'barbarizing' the army.¹³⁵ Some decades later, Theodosius created and relied on the *foederati*,¹³⁶ which Jones did see as a problem. He argued that the *foederati* allowed greater numbers of 'barbarians' to serve in the Roman army. *Foederati* were settled in large groups in Moesia and Thrace and maintained their own unified leadership instead of being broken up into groups of *laeti*¹³⁷ or placed in small groups under Roman landowners. This meant that the *foederati* were able to subvert Roman authority. Jones does concede that Theodosius probably could not have foreseen the long-term decline of the army, especially in the

¹³³ Bryan Ward-Perkins "Jones and the Late Roman Economy," in *A.H.M Jones and the Later Roman Empire*, ed. David M. Gwynn (London: Brill Publishing, 2008), 193-212, 195.

¹³⁴ Jones did not use the term 'barbarization', but he used its verbal form 'barbarised'. He still discussed the integration of 'barbarians' into the Roman World which other authors applied to their discussion of 'barbarization'. A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social Economic and Administrative Survey 3 vols* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 98, 612.

¹³⁵ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 60, 98.

¹³⁶ *Foederati* were tribal groups of volunteer 'barbarians' who fought under their own leaders for the Romans. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 157, 200. Some care has to be given when using this term, as its meaning changed during antiquity, though most modern scholarship uses the term to describe 'barbarian' groups on Roman soil. Walter Pohl, "Introduction: The Empire and the Integration of Barbarians," in *Kingdoms of the Empire: the Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, ed. Walter Pohl (Leiden: Brill publishing, 1997), 1-11, 8.

¹³⁷ *Laeti* were groups of 'barbarian' refugees and prisoners who were settled under Roman leadership and expected to provide soldiers for the army. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 157.

West, and was responding to a difficult situation following the battle of Adrianople and years of war. Nonetheless, Jones placed responsibility for the ‘barbarization’ of the military on Theodosius.¹³⁸

Around the time Jones was writing, there were other authors who also thought that ‘barbarization’ caused a decline in the Roman army. One major example is MacMullen, though he felt that the term ‘un-Romanized’ better described the situation.¹³⁹ He argued that Rome turned to ‘barbarians’ because late Roman recruits were ineffective soldiers.¹⁴⁰ MacMullen further argued that the ‘barbarian’ soldiers composed around half the army during the early fourth century and a majority by the late fourth century, but he does not have solid evidence to support this argument. His main arguments supporting this were the changes in equipment and military dress which occurred in Late Antiquity¹⁴¹ and some Roman authors’ claims that the soldiers were undisciplined.¹⁴² Despite arguing that the ‘barbarian’ soldiers were superior to their Roman counterparts, MacMullen did not feel that the ‘barbarian’ army was effective. The ‘barbarian’ armies had proven inadequate to defend the maritime forts in Gaul during the late third and fourth century, and Rome’s fifth century defence was weak.¹⁴³ He also believed that the ‘barbarian’ leadership was ineffective, and he used the behaviour of the ‘barbarian’ commander

¹³⁸ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 157.

¹³⁹ Ramsay MacMullen, “Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus,” *The Art Bulletin* 46.4 (1964): 435-455, 446.

¹⁴⁰ MacMullen argued that the Roman soldiers performed worse because they were farmer soldiers or were garrisoned in cities and became undisciplined. Ramsey MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 174-176. MacMullen believed that the creation of farmer soldiers may have occurred during Severus Alexander’s reign, which is claimed in the *Historia Augusta*. *Historia Augusta: Life of Severus Alexander*, 58.4 Marcellinus provides counterevidence to this argument. When describing Constantius’ levy of troops from Rome’s provinces for his Persian campaign, Marcellinus never recorded any sort of complaint about the use of Roman troops, and he praised the performance of the troops’ success in Eastern campaigns. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 20.8.1, 21.6.6.

¹⁴¹ MacMullen, “Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus,” 446.

¹⁴² MacMullen downplayed Marcellinus’ claims of the effectiveness of Roman legions as ‘rhetorical exaggeration’ and focused on Marcellinus’ records of when the army performed poorly. MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 174-175. Matthews argued against the theory that Marcellinus’ rhetoric made the *Res Gestae*’s descriptions inaccurate. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 286-287, 296.

¹⁴³ MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 23, 191.

Count Arbazacius, who chose to use his position to get wealth and luxury instead of following up on his victories, to support his point.¹⁴⁴

Other authors drew on MacMullen's and Jones' ideas. One such author is Ferrill, who agreed with most of Jones' findings. He defined 'barbarization' as the large-scale use of 'barbarians', and he agreed with Jones' argument that this began under Theodosius, whose use of *foederati* is again used to demonstrate the break in imperial policy. He went as far as to argue that the impact of barbarization meant that the Roman army became German instead of Roman under Theodosius.¹⁴⁵

Liebeshuetz also mostly agreed with the traditional narrative found in works by authors such as Jones and MacMullen, but he furthered the research in a couple of places. Liebeschuetz agreed that Theodosius 'barbarized' the Roman army, and that the Roman army needed Germanic soldiers. Unlike MacMullen, he argued that this was caused by the social 'demilitarization' of Roman society and the inability of Rome to recruit enough soldiers, instead of Roman soldiers being incompetent.¹⁴⁶ However, he paid more attention to the unequal scale of the 'barbarization' throughout the Empire. The Western army, the field armies, and elite units were more 'barbarized' than the Eastern armies and older preestablished units, which remained more Roman.¹⁴⁷ Liebeschuetz also argued that the process of 'barbarization' was longer than what Jones and MacMullen argued. Instead of blaming Theodosius exclusively, Liebeschuetz argued that Constantine's use of Germanic people in his bodyguard and its commanders was the first step of 'barbarization'. As the century progressed, Germanic peoples were able to access

¹⁴⁴ MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 182-183.

¹⁴⁵ See Arther Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (New York: Thames and Hudson LTD., 1986), 84, 89.

¹⁴⁶ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 18.

¹⁴⁷ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 15.

significant military positions. Even the position of *magister militum* was frequently held by Germans, such as Silvanus, Agilo, and Arinthaëus, instead of Romans. The increased use of ‘barbarians’ in the army and military positions during the fourth century led to the ‘barbarization’ of the army.¹⁴⁸

Despite some authors being satisfied with the narrative of decline of the Roman military through ‘barbarization’, towards the end of the twentieth century other scholars have challenged the traditional ideas about ‘barbarization’ and its impact. Elton was one such scholar who argued, against MacMullen in particular, that ‘barbarization’ did not have a significant negative impact on the Roman army. Furthermore, Elton identified several of the weaknesses of the argument on why ‘barbarization’ happened. He argued that the use of allies as temporary forces and the increasing recruitment of ‘barbarians’ into the field armies have to be viewed separately. He further argued that while there are sources hostile to the use of barbarians, none of the sources written by soldiers or military commentators are. His final argument is that the descriptions of ‘barbarians’ and the use of ‘barbarian’ names stand out more in the sources and exaggerate their involvement in the army.¹⁴⁹

A second author to argue against the negative impact of ‘barbarization’ was A.D. Lee. Lee defined ‘barbarization’ as a term to sum up developments in the fourth century. Despite the definition, Lee felt that the term was too pejorative a term to describe what was happening at the time. He had two main points against the term ‘barbarization’ and the negative impact associated with it. The first is the lack of evidence that the ‘barbarian’ soldiers wavered in battle, even when German tribes in Roman service were pitted against other German tribes. The second point is that ‘barbarization’ entailed that the German tribes had a strong self-identity which formed

¹⁴⁸ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 7-10.

¹⁴⁹ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 137, 144. On the origins of officers see, 272-277.

strong ties with one another. However, the ‘Germans’ were made up of loose confederations. These confederations in turn were made up of smaller tribes that did not always cooperate with other tribes, and members of specific confederations could even become isolated from the group.¹⁵⁰

Another scholar, Roussel, took a very strong stance against the traditional version of ‘barbarization’. His argument challenges the view that there was a major impact from ‘barbarization’ caused by Theodosius’ policies, and by extension, the emperors before him. He argued that there would not have been an obvious difference between all ‘barbarians’ and all ‘Romans’ because the Roman Empire encompassed many different cultures.¹⁵¹ He further argued that it is impossible to tell whether Theodosius created the first *foederati* because this term only appears in Jordanes.¹⁵² He also looked at calculations of the Roman armies’ size, and he argued that the ‘barbarians’ would have only made up 30% at most of the Roman armies’ total size.¹⁵³

Despite the debate about the impact of ‘barbarization’, some scholars, such as Stickler, have chosen to argue a middle ground. Stickler defined ‘barbarization’ as a term to denote change in the Principate’s army. He goes on to identify how the traditional view of ‘barbarization’ was that it led to the collapse of the frontiers while the newer view was that there was no serious decline. He felt that it was more important to recognize that there were developments in both the ‘barbarian’ and Roman world. One major example was the ability of some ‘barbarian’ chieftains or kings to move between the Roman and ‘barbarian’ worlds and even influence the Roman Empire. For example, one Alammanic king Crocus was involved in

¹⁵⁰ Lee, “The Army,” 223-224. The Frankish confederation consisted of, or was said to by the Romans, the Chamavi, Bructeri, Chattuari, Tubante, and Salian tribes. The Frisians and Herules may sometimes have been counted as Franks too. James, *The Franks*, 35. An example of someone being opposed by his confederation is Silvanus, who was unable to turn to the Franks for support without being killed by them. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 5.16.

¹⁵¹ Roussel, “Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la “Barbarisation,”” 194. See also the discussion on page 35.

¹⁵² Roussel, “Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la “Barbarisation,”” 202-203.

¹⁵³ Roussel, “Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la “Barbarisation,”” 217.

Constantine's rise to power.¹⁵⁴ Crocus was a member of Constantius' court, and *Epitome de Caesaribus* claimed that he was one of the main people to encourage Constantine to seize power without being appointed by the Tetrarchy.¹⁵⁵ Though Stickler does not take the hardline stance, he does not argue that there was a major decline in Rome's military power in Late Antiquity.

The debate around the term 'barbarization' is certain to continue in modern scholarship, especially since every scholar has a different version of the concept. Scholars' versions of 'barbarization' are also heavily impacted by the environment and society they are writing in, with Rostovtzeff's being the most obvious. The inconsistency surrounding the term demonstrates that the concept itself is an issue, as there is no clear impact of the 'barbarians' on the Roman empire and army, especially since foreigners and 'barbarians' were present within the empire throughout imperial history. Foreign influence on Rome had never been a bad thing either, as will be discussed in the following chapters. The idea of 'barbarization' is also purely modern, as it was not a concept found in the ancient authors. Some ancient people did want to kick out or exterminate the 'barbarians' while others did not, but they still did not have any concept of 'barbarization' like what is found in modern scholarship.

¹⁵⁴ Timo Stickler, "The Foederati," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 495-514, 497-499.

¹⁵⁵ *Epitome de Caesaribus*, 41.3; John Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213-496: Caracalla to Clovis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 146.

Chapter 3

Rome's Background of Assimilating Foreign peoples

Strategies of Expanding Roman Power

Rome expanded its territory and brought new people into its empire throughout Republican and imperial history. Although Rome is famous for conquering territory, making provinces, and making its opponents slaves and provincials, direct conquest was not the only way that it assimilated people into its society. Instead, the Roman senate and emperors frequently formed alliances and client kingships, which became a strategy to expand Roman domination and eventually direct rule. At first, these alliances were created to provide military support in wars and for the Roman army; however, as Rome's power increased it began to dominate then annex its allies.

Rome's expansion throughout Italy during the Roman Republic demonstrates this strategy. The Roman leaders chose to focus on creating alliances with neighbouring Italian groups instead of taking direct control over them. The cities were still allowed to maintain local autonomy. Even so, Rome was the leader of these alliances and punished any attempts to break away from its control. The Italian allies were expected to contribute troops to the Roman war effort when Rome requested it, and these foreign soldiers were a major part of the Republican Roman army. There is very little known about these forces. What is known is that Italian units were allowed to have their own officers, and that they most likely fought very similarly to the Romans.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Louis Rawling, "Army and Battle During the Conquest of Italy (350-264 BC)," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 45-62, 52-4

Despite the importance of the Italian allies, Rome did not give them Roman citizenship and treated them as second-class citizens. Italian cities didn't receive funds from Rome's harbour dues or provincial taxes, Italian people received less military spoils, and Italian people sometimes had Rome's usury or religious laws imposed on them. Some Italians did settle in Rome and obtain citizenship, but they only held citizenship for a short time. The Roman senate removed 12,000 men from its census and expelled them from its city in 187 BCE, then again in 172, though this was done in response to the complaints from allies that many of their townspeople had been moving to Rome. Italian *peregrini* were allowed to stay at Rome for the most part, as the full-scale expulsion of Italians, and other foreigners, occurred only once in 126. Even so, the Italians were clearly second-class citizens. Eventually, but not until the aftermath of the Social War, the Rome granted the Italians citizenship; this put them legally on the same ground as Roman populations.¹⁵⁷ The process of integrating the Italians directly into Rome took several centuries, but it shows that Rome was willing to integrate allied people into its society and empire.

Rome's victories during the Punic Wars were the first time Roman power began to be felt outside of the Italian peninsula. While the first conflict started over control of Sicily, the Roman victory allowed Rome to dictate a favourable peace. After the first Punic War, Carthage was forced to pay an indemnity and was not allowed to interfere with Rome's allies. Rome did not make any attempt to garrison or colonize Carthage.¹⁵⁸ The aftermath of the second Punic war was similar to the first. Carthage was forced to pay indemnities again and was unable to start

¹⁵⁷ H.H. Scullard, *A History of the Roman World 753 to 146 BC*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge Publishing, 1980), 321-323.

¹⁵⁸ Boris Rankov, "A War of Phases: Strategies and Stalemates 264-241 BCE," in *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, ed. Dexter Hoyos (Malden: Blackwell Publishing LTD., 2011), 149-166, 163-164

wars without Rome's approval.¹⁵⁹ The third Punic War was a change in Roman policy, as the Romans chose to raze Carthage. Even though Rome did not conquer Carthage during the first two Punic Wars, this was also first time that Rome began to take direct control of territory. Rome took control of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica after the first war; Spain after the second; and Carthage and parts of North Africa after the final war. These regions became the first provinces and were placed under the direct control of Roman consuls and praetors instead of being left as allies.¹⁶⁰

Taking direct control of territory through military conquest remained unusual for Rome during the second century BCE. As Roman power expanded outside of Italy, Rome began to form alliances with people around the Mediterranean. One such alliance was with the Numidians. The Numidians were incredibly important for Rome during the second Punic War, when Scipio Africanus was able to convince the Numidian king Massinissa to break his alliance with Carthage and fight with Rome instead.¹⁶¹

Braud's work, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of Client Kingship*, provides an excellent overview of the relation between Rome and its allies around the Mediterranean world.¹⁶² Rome generally attempted to form alliances with kings surrounding its frontiers. Rome described kingdoms that aligned themselves with it as allies and friends (*rex sociusque et amicus*, in the singular). Even so, its treatment of many of these kingdoms is more similar to a patron-client relationship than to an alliance, which has caused many modern scholars to refer to

¹⁵⁹ Claudia Kunz, "Carthage and Numidia, 201-149 BC," in *A Companion to the Punic Wars*, ed. Dexter Hoyos (Malden: Blackwell Publishing LTD., 2011), 395-411, 395.

¹⁶⁰ *Provinciae* at this point referred to the assignment and powers of a magistrate instead of a territory itself, but its meaning began to shift once these regions came under direct Roman rule. Daniel J. Gargola, "The Mediterranean Empire (264-134)," in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (Malden: Blackwell Publishing LTD. 2006), 147-166, 155.

¹⁶¹ Claudia Kunz, "Carthage and Numidia, 201-149 BC," 397

¹⁶² See also Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 29-39.

the allies as ‘client kingdoms’.¹⁶³ From the Roman view, these kingdoms were under Roman domination, and sometimes even Roman control, but they were not part of Roman territory yet. Rome allowed these dominated kingdoms to be semi-autonomous as long as they did not cause issues. The kingdoms were allowed to handle their own internal affairs and could request Rome’s assistance if required. Client rulers, drawn from the local population,¹⁶⁴ were able to maintain their own foreign policies, and sometimes even served as diplomatic intermediaries between Rome and the populations beyond the frontier. The caveat was that the kingdoms were expected not to attack Rome or other Roman allies.¹⁶⁵ These kings also maintained their own armies, which could assist the Romans as auxiliaries in Rome’s wars or could simply maintain the defence and stability of their own region. These armies were not usually removed from their local regions, except when they were summoned to join a Roman military expedition. Even in this case, the units usually remained under the king’s leadership. These forces were expected to be the first line of defence against invasion and handle bandits in their region.¹⁶⁶ Rome generally only moved client armies and replaced their native officers with Italian ones if the kingdom revolted against Roman rule.¹⁶⁷ The royal armies were not left entirely on their own either; if a king needed military support, the Romans usually would send forces to support him.¹⁶⁸ Client kings had access to personal benefits as well. They often received a Roman education, were allowed to move around the Empire, and could even become governors of Roman provinces.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶³ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 23-25.

¹⁶⁴ Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 95.

¹⁶⁶ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 91-92.

¹⁶⁷ Vespasian’s response to the Batavian revolt is a good example of this policy. Johan Nicolay, *Armed Batavians: Use and Significance of Weaponry and Horse Gear from Non-Military Contexts in the Rhine Delta (50 BC to AD 450)*, trans. Annette Visser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 252-254.

¹⁶⁸ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ The Jewish kings, in particular king Herod, are excellent examples of receiving a Roman education and moving around the Roman world. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 10, 75-77, 86.

The reason that these kingdoms are better described as client kingdoms than simply allies is because of Rome's ability to exert control over them. As mentioned, Rome frequently left client kingdoms alone, but when it chose to exert control the client kingdoms rarely had the ability to resist its decision. First, Rome had the ability to appoint or remove kings of the client kingdoms. In cases of succession, the Romans sometimes even chose the new king at the behest of the dying one.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, when young kings gained the throne, Rome would frequently send an aristocratic Roman to act as a tutor instead of allowing the kingdoms to select a tutor from their own population.¹⁷¹ If kings were troublesome or threatening, Rome would purposely separate them from their regions by moving them to places far away from their native lands and support bases.¹⁷² Rome could even go as far as to execute kings, especially those who tried to retake power without Rome's consent.¹⁷³ To try and ensure the loyalty of allied kings, Rome frequently took a king's children as hostages to Italy. Hostages were usually treated well and given access to amenities such as education. Royal hostage children were often allowed to return to take over their parents' throne.¹⁷⁴

Since most of these client kingdoms eventually came under Roman control, some analysis of this process must occur. As previously mentioned, some of them were conquered following rebellion against Roman domination, but not all kingdoms came under Roman control through military force. Sometimes, Rome would annex a kingdom, usually on the death of its king, and there would not be a significant conflict over it. Some kings even willed their lands to the Roman Senate or Roman emperors. The choice for Rome to annex kingdoms had more to do

¹⁷⁰ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 138-139.

¹⁷¹ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 147.

¹⁷² Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 172.

¹⁷³ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 166-167.

¹⁷⁴ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 14-15.

with Rome's needs at the time than the desires of the client kings. For example, when King Ptolemy Apion died without an heir, he willed his kingdom, Cyrenaica, to the Romans. Instead of following through with Apion's request, the Romans declared the cities free in 96 BCE. Cyrenaica remained independent until Rome reversed its decision and annexed the region in 75 BCE, as they felt that they needed the grain and wealth of Cyrenaica.¹⁷⁵ The authority that Rome had over its client kingdoms meant that it could annex territory if it felt that it would benefit Rome.

When Rome decided to annex a kingdom, its army became enrolled in the auxiliaries. This practice makes sense, since most of the residents of kingdoms lacked citizenship and were not qualified to join the legions.¹⁷⁶ There is one exception to this rule, which is the Galatian legion. Before it was annexed, the king of Galatia, Deiotarus, had established two legions of troops equipped in the same way as the Roman legions. By the time of his death, the number of soldiers had declined, and the legions were combined into a single legion. He bequeathed this legion to Rome, which Rome used to form the *legio XXII Deiotariana*. This is the only known example of a royal army being integrated into the legions, and the evidence for Rome's decision on the matter is scarce. Mann argued that the soldiers for this legion were raised from Anatolia or the regions surrounding it,¹⁷⁷ but there is simply very little on whether the legion was one full of *peregrini* soldiers or citizens from Rome's Eastern territories. As the Galatian legion is the only example of a unit being integrated into the legions instead of the *auxilia*, Rome must have been satisfied with their procedure of integrating annexed royal armies.

¹⁷⁵ Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 133-134.

¹⁷⁶ One of the best attested to examples of this is Trajan's absorption of the Nabataean royal army into the *auxilia*. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 66.

¹⁷⁷ J.C. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement During the Principate*, ed. M.M. Roxan (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1983), 52-53; Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 91, 99 n.5.

The most notable failure of the system of client kingship was Arminius and the ambush of Teutoburg Forest. Arminius annihilated an entire Roman army and permanently ended Roman rule over *Magna Germania*, though Rome still tried to dominate the area through client kingdoms. Arminius was able to use the benefits of Roman client kingship to give him an advantage over the Romans. He had served in the Roman army and had been able to become an equestrian and military officer. He had used his time as an officer to learn the Roman military's strategies and abilities, which allowed him to figure out ways to outmanoeuvre the Roman army. Once he returned to rule the *Cherusci*, Arminius united the Germanic tribes and destroyed the Roman army.¹⁷⁸ Even though this was a massive victory, Rome was able to recover. Arminius was never able to threaten Rome's control over its other territories, its domination of its allies, or Rome itself, and was unable to replicate his success in battle. A few years later after Tiberius came to power, Germanicus was able to defeat Arminius.¹⁷⁹ Despite the Roman defeat at Teutoburg Forest, Arminius' rebellion is the exception which proved the rule. The alliances which Rome created provided it with an effective way to extend its power throughout the Mediterranean.

Rome annexed many of its allied kingdoms by the second century CE. Armenia and Palmyra avoided complete annexation longer than most of Rome's other client kingdoms. Armenia remained independent because it existed at the edge of the Roman Empire and Parthian/Persian kingdom. The two empires consistently fought over it, and neither was able to maintain uncontested control over the region.¹⁸⁰ Even so, the Romans expected Armenia to

¹⁷⁸ Rose Mary Sheldon, "Insurgency in Germany: The Slaughter of Varus in the Teutoburger Wald," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31.5 (2020): 1010-1043, 1011-1012.

¹⁷⁹ For an account of Germanicus' German campaign, see Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.55-1.71, 2.1-2.26.

¹⁸⁰ C.S. Lightfoot, "Armenia and the Eastern Marches, 484; David M. Lang, "Iran, Armenia, and Georgia," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 3: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid Periods*, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 505- 536, 505.

contribute soldiers to Rome's war efforts when they dominated Armenia as a client kingdom.¹⁸¹

Unlike Armenia, Palmyra existed as something in between an autonomous client kingdom and annexed Roman territory. Palmyra had been garrisoned by Roman soldiers since the second century and incorporated into Roman Syria by Septimius Severus.¹⁸² Palmyran residents were also granted citizenship by Septimius Severus and Caracalla,¹⁸³ and the Palmyran militia was integrated into Rome's Eastern army.¹⁸⁴ Despite this, Palmyra still maintained some levels of autonomy for handling local affairs, trade, and military actions against raiders.¹⁸⁵ Palmyra was also able to exert significant power over the Roman East during the third century crisis.

Odenathus used Palmyra's militia and rallied Rome's Eastern army to push the Persians out of the Roman East, then he supported emperor Gallienus in a civil war against the Macriani.

Because of his success and loyalty, Gallienus gave him the position of *Corrector Orientis*.¹⁸⁶ The *Historia Augusta* recorded that Odenathus was also given the title 'imperator',¹⁸⁷ but no other source supports this claim.¹⁸⁸ After Odenathus died, his wife Zenobia, ruling through their son Vallabathus, commanded the short-lived autonomous Palmyran Empire. Zenobia was able to use the power Odenathus had gained to maintain and even expand Palmyran control over Rome's

¹⁸¹ Leadbetter theorized that the royal Armenian army was involved in the tetrarchy's wars against Narses. Bill Leadbetter, *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian* (London: Routledge Publishing 2009), 91. Julian ordered Armenians to get ready for the Persian War. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 23.2.

¹⁸² Pat Southern, *Empress Zenobia: Palmyra's Rebel Queen* (London: Continuum UK, 2008), 25, 37-38; Peter M. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia: The Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia, and Palmyra under Roman Control* (New York: Routledge Publishing 2008), 50-51, 59-60.

¹⁸³ Southern, *Empress Zenobia*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ Southern, *Empress Zenobia*, 37-38; Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 59-60.

¹⁸⁵ Southern, *Empress Zenobia*, 1, 26, 104.

¹⁸⁶ Alaric Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1999), 31-32. This title was not recorded in any source except the *Historia Augusta*. There is a Palmyran inscription which has been used to argue that Odenathus had this title, but Southern argued that the title was more likely *restitutor totius orientis*. Southern, *Empress Zenobia*, 68. In any case, Gallienus gave Odenathus a position of significant power.

¹⁸⁷ *Historia Augusta: The Two Gallieni*, 3.3.

¹⁸⁸ Southern, *Empress Zenobia*, 67.

Eastern territories. However, Palmyra's power ended when Aurelian defeated the Palmyrans in two wars, reconquered its territory, and moved Rome's trade routes away from Palmyra.¹⁸⁹

Rome continued to create new client kingdoms beyond its frontier during the high and late imperial periods, including in North Africa, Arabia, and *Germania*. There is very little known about the Arabian and North African client kingdoms. Despite this, we know that Rome formed these alliances for military support, just as they had their older client kingdoms. These alliances were created in the fourth and fifth centuries and the kingdoms were expected to protect Rome's frontiers. Some of their kings also were involved in the Roman army as officers, such as the North African king Nubel.¹⁹⁰

Since Rome made client kingships on all of its frontiers throughout antiquity, the creation of client kingships with Germanic tribes and use of them for military support was not exceptional. Rome's policies towards the Germanic client kingdoms during late antiquity were similar to its policies for other client kingdoms.¹⁹¹ Rome expected military support from the Germanic kingdoms, including soldiers to fight in the *auxilia* or irregular military forces led by Germanic commanders.¹⁹² When a kingdom refused to support Rome or supported a losing

¹⁸⁹ De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 3; Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 59, 81-82.

¹⁹⁰ Maurice Sartre, "The Arabs and the desert peoples," in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 12: The Crisis of Empire*, 2nd edition, ed. Alan Bowman Averil Cameron, and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 498-520, 517-519; Isabel Toral-Niehof, "Imperial Contests and the Arabs: The World of Late Antiquity on the Eve of Islam," in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Armando Salvatore and others (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons LTD., 2018), 59-76, 61-64; Wolf Liebeschuetz, "Warlord and Landlords," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. by Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 479-494, 480.

¹⁹¹ It is incredibly difficult to determine which Germanic kingdoms were Roman allies/ clients and with which Rome merely had a peace treaty. Even so, Rome did not feel that its frontiers were the end of its power, and still considered people beyond its frontiers to be part of its sphere of domination. Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 36; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 142. As discussed, Rome frequently did try to form client kingships with many of the Germanic tribes, but it was not always able to control the Germanic tribes as it had its other allies. This included the Quadi, with whom the Flavians tried to form alliances. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 136-137, 151-153.

¹⁹² The number of 'barbarian' soldiers in the army and their use compared to the Roman recruits will be discussed in chapter 5.

candidate in a civil war, Rome launched punitive attacks on Germanic kingdoms.¹⁹³ The Romans also felt that they had authority over their client kingdoms, including the right to appoint Germanic kings. One example of this was Constantius' client king Vadomarius. Vadomarius' loyalty to Constantius caused tension between him and Julian, which eventually led to Julian deposing and replacing him.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, some Roman emperors may have intended to use client kingships as a way to expand imperial power. Pabst argued that Valentinian's decision to build forts in Quadian territory reflected his attempts to extend imperial power;¹⁹⁵ however, if Valentinian did intend to extend imperial power over the Quadi, his death and the Western Empire's military and political struggles in the following decades prevented this from happening.

One of the causes for Rome's diplomatic problems with Germanic client kingdoms may have been its reliance on traditional diplomatic strategies. Rome usually tried to interact with one leader when conducting diplomacy and creating client kingships. Loyal kings were often given wealth as a reward for their service. Rome may have unintentionally strengthened Germanic leaders by interacting in this way with the Germanic tribes, as this allowed a few Germanic families to accumulate more wealth and power.¹⁹⁶ Rome's alliances with individual kings over others could also cause tension between the kings Rome supported and those whom it didn't, which could lead to Rome having to respond to more conflicts in *Germania*.¹⁹⁷

It could be argued that the Germanic client kingdoms were exceptional on the Western frontier, as Rome formed fewer client kingdoms in the West. However, not all of Rome's allies during the late Republic and early empire were entire kingdoms, especially in the West where

¹⁹³ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 151-153; Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 98, 111.

¹⁹⁴ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 149-150, 155.

¹⁹⁵ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 300-301. Referencing Angela Pabst's commentary in, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, *Reden*, trans. Angela Pabst (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), 332

¹⁹⁶ Pat Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine* (London: Routledge Publishing, 2001) 206.

¹⁹⁷ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 149.

there were fewer existing large kingdoms than in the East. When Rome expanded its power in the West, these allies became semi-independent towns referred to as *civitas* centres. A *civitas* centre was seen as the major town of a certain population, and sometimes had power over the region this population inhabited. *Civitas* centres maintained their own laws and leaders and maintained some independence from the Roman government as long as they did not cause trouble for the Roman authorities.¹⁹⁸ Despite the autonomy given to *civitates*, when they were encompassed by a Roman province the *civitas* centres had a lower status than the *municipii* and *coloniae*. Residents of *coloniae* were usually veterans with citizenship and often were established to punish local populations, frequently relegating the local population to a second-class citizen. While not all the residents of *municipii* were citizens, their magistrates had the ability to gain citizenship. *Civitas* centres were not permanently relegated to their status, as successful ones were able to integrate with Roman culture and become *municipii* or *coloniae*.¹⁹⁹ As Rome expanded its power and influence, new peoples were brought under its domination and eventually its control. Many of the methods which Rome used to assimilate people remained the same throughout Roman history, including the use of foreign soldiers in its army.

Settlement of Foreign Peoples

While Rome was expanding its Empire and conquering its neighbours, it was also admitting foreigners into its territory. As earlier discussed, slaves were a large population within Rome, as were freedmen. However, Rome settled large groups of people within its territory,

¹⁹⁸ Penelope Goodman, *The Roman City and Its Periphery: From Rome to Gaul* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2007), 82.

¹⁹⁹ David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 54 BC- AD 409* (London: Penguin Books LTD., 2007), 260-261.

especially people from *Germania*, as refugees,²⁰⁰ prisoners of war,²⁰¹ or surrendered and negotiated populations. Scholars need to be careful when trying to identify the groups, as the terms overlapped and are frequently unclear in Roman sources.²⁰²

The first recorded numbers of settlers are from the Julio-Claudian period. Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero were all reported to have settled tens of thousands of Germanic peoples within Roman territory. There is a gap in the records in regard to settlements between Nero's and Marcus Aurelius' reigns.²⁰³ The only exception was Trajan's decision to move conquered Dacians into Roman territory.²⁰⁴ Settlements continued to be recorded during the third century, but there are no precise numbers of settlers except for Probus' settlement of Bastarnae.²⁰⁵ The largest number of settled 'barbarians' appears in the *Origo Constantini*, which claimed that Constantine settled 300,000 Sarmatians, though it is likely that the numbers were exaggerated. This still means that there was a significant number of foreigners settled in one location at once. Similarly to the third century, foreign settlement continues to be attested in the fourth century, but there were few precise numbers.²⁰⁶ Much of the information about foreign settlement during late antiquity derives from panegyrics, which exaggerated the surrendered opponents and

²⁰⁰ Ladner claimed that Rome did not settle foreign refugees who were not its subjects. Gerhart B. Ladner, "On Roman Attitudes towards Barbarians in Late Antiquity," *Viator* 7 (1976): 1-58, 6. However, there are examples of Rome accepting foreign refugees, especially those with refugee kings. Tiberius settled some refugees under king Marbodius beyond the Danube. This group was later settled in Pannonia by Claudius. Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King*, 165-166; Stickler, "The Foederati," 496-497. Additionally, Jews sometimes entered or fled the Roman Empire as refugees. Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 100.

²⁰¹ Many of the *laeti* were prisoners of war. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 152

²⁰² Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers* 202.

²⁰³ The accounts state that Augustus settled 50,000 Getae in Thrace, Tiberius settled 40,000 Germans on the Rhine frontier and in Gaul, and Nero settled 100,000 trans-Danubians settled in Moesia. Ramsey MacMullen, "Barbarian Enclaves in the Northern Roman Empire," *L'Antiquité Classique* 32.2 (1963), 552-561, 553-554.

²⁰⁴ Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 8.6; Hirt, "Dalmations and Dacians," 5.

²⁰⁵ MacMullen, "Barbarian Enclaves in the Northern Roman Empire," 553; G.E.M De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 510-513. Ste. Croix did not include Trajan's settlement/ movement of conquered Dacians in his list of Germanic settlements.

²⁰⁶ Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, 513-518.

imperial accomplishments.²⁰⁷ This means that scholars must be careful not to overly inflate their own estimates of ‘barbarian’ migration into Roman territory, which would skew their perspectives about the impact of these settlements.

Despite the lack of precise numbers and possibility of exaggeration, many scholars, such as Modéran, Liebeschuetz, Goffart, and Whittaker, have argued that Rome settled more ‘barbarians’ in late antiquity than classical antiquity because there is more surviving Roman literature on the topic.²⁰⁸ Whittaker estimated that there could have been a million foreigners settled in the fourth century, though the total may have been as high as two million. He also added that there were additional foreigners admitted during this time as *foederati*. Even with these high numbers, the impact on Roman society and displacement of Roman denizens was probably minimal. Over the course of the fourth century, the one million settled Germanic peoples would only have increased the Roman Empire’s population by 1.6%.²⁰⁹ This number is not insignificant, but it is not a mass displacement. Be that as it may, Rome was willing to admit new people into its territory and integrate them into its society throughout the imperial period. Moreover, the gaps and problems with the source material makes it impossible to conclusively prove that foreign immigration was greater in late antiquity than it was previously.

Imperial Horseguard

Auxiliary units drawn from provincials, settled peoples, and foreign allies were able to become important in the early imperial army. The most notable was most likely the Germanic horseguard. This unit is not well attested, but it was formally established by Augustus and

²⁰⁷ Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers*, 201-202.

²⁰⁸ C.R. Whittaker, *Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 231; Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers*, 202; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 11; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, 188; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 456. Halsall is quoting Y. Modéran, “L’Etablissement de Barbares sur le Territoire Romain à l’Epoque Imperial,” in *La Mobilité de l’Antiquité à l’Epoque Moderne*, ed. C. Moatti (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004), 337-397.

²⁰⁹ Whittaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers*, 202.

inspired by Julius Caesar's cavalry units.²¹⁰ The unit was primarily recruited from Batavians, a Germanic people inside Roman territory, Gauls, and even some recruits from beyond the Rhine.²¹¹ The horseguard was given its own fort outside of the city of Rome and accompanied the emperors on their campaigns. It also served as a balance to the Praetorian guard's power. If the Praetorian guard turned against the emperor, the horseguard provided a force for the emperor to defend himself.

The horseguard unit did not behave perfectly and caused issues for the Roman commander. The *Germani* frequently brawled with other soldiers²¹² and sometimes simply upset the Roman population.²¹³ Despite the issues, the bodyguard was still usually a loyal force. The loyalty that this unit exhibited drew praise from Roman sources, including from Suetonius who stated that they had remained faithful while in service.²¹⁴ Nonetheless, it is certain that by having foreign soldiers drawn from the auxiliaries in a position as important as bodyguard to the emperor, the early emperors set a precedent for the emperors of later centuries.

Despite their position as the emperor's bodyguards, the unit was disbanded several times. The first time was by Augustus, who disbanded it in response to the defeat at Teutoberg Forest. It was quickly re-established by Tiberius, and it was in service until it was disbanded by Galba. The Flavians used a force of Eastern cavalry, which they called the *singulares Augusti*, instead of the Germanic horseguard.²¹⁵ There is no surviving evidence for the continued existence of an imperial Germanic horseguard from the Flavian period until Trajan came to power. Trajan had

²¹⁰ Michael P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar: The Roman Empire's Horseguard* (London: BT Batsford LTD, 1994), 1-2, 5.

²¹¹ The Ubians were some of the most common to enroll from outside of the Empire. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 2, 4-5.

²¹² Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 29.

²¹³ This was not limited solely to this unit. Septimius Severus' forces in Rome were seen as terrifying and boorish by the residents of the city of Rome. Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 75.2.

²¹⁴ Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Life of Galba*, 12. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 7, 15-16, 25.

²¹⁵ Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 17, 23-24.

been using Germanic auxiliaries as the basis for his bodyguard before he had become emperor, so he used them as the basis for his imperial bodyguard once he was proclaimed emperor. Even though he drew most of his bodyguard from *Germania* instead of the East, he continued to use the title *singulares Augusti*.²¹⁶ This unit would continue to serve emperors continuously until the reign of Constantine, even if it is difficult to find information on the unit in the third century.²¹⁷ Once he had gained control of the entire empire, Constantine disbanded the Praetorian guard and *singulares Augusti* and replaced them with a new bodyguard called the *scholae*.²¹⁸ The importance that the Germanic horseguard held in early antiquity demonstrates that some auxiliaries had been able to hold important positions in the Roman military, and they did not simply subvert elite Roman units in late antiquity.

Adoption of Foreign Military Strategies

Rome's military is famous amongst modern scholars; however, the Roman military was not created in a vacuum. Rome adopted foreign practices and integrated them into its military throughout its history. The famous Roman *gladius* was not even a Roman invention. This weapon was and still is synonymous with Rome. The first versions of *gladii* were Roman copies of the sword that they had encountered in Spain. The adoption of the *gladius* further suggests that the Romans adopted a different fighting style, which involved fighting in closer order than one would with a longer sword.²¹⁹ Similarly, though Rome is known for its siege equipment, they did not invent much of their siege equipment. Rome's first pieces of siege equipment were copied from the Greeks, including the Syracusans' first forms of *catapultae*.²²⁰ While Rome's

²¹⁶ Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 24-25.

²¹⁷ Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 42.

²¹⁸ Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 59.

²¹⁹ Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 55-56.

²²⁰ John W. Humphrey, *Ancient Technology* (Westport: Greenwood, 2006), 65.

famous segmented armour (*lorica segmentata*) was a Roman creation, it was only used during the first through third centuries CE. Scale armour (*lorica squamata*) and chainmail armour (*lorica hamata*) were popular throughout Roman history. Chainmail had been introduced to the Roman army through the Celtic peoples that Rome was in contact and conflict with in the second century BCE. The poorer legionaries were unable to afford chainmail at this time, as they supplied their own equipment, but it became the standard armour for those who could afford it and continued to be used throughout Roman history. Rome later adopted lamellar armour from one of the steppe populations during the first or second century CE.²²¹ Rome's navy was also completely reliant on foreign ideas. In the years preceding the first Punic war against the naval power Carthage, Rome had never needed a navy and had not created significant numbers of warships before. Once the war began, the Romans quickly reverse-engineered captured Carthaginian ships and used the same designs of ships against the Carthaginians. The ships both sides fielded included the trireme and the larger quinquereme.²²² The main development the Romans made was the addition of a boarding ramp called the *corvus* to their warships.²²³ Otherwise, the Roman navy remained practically unchanged until the early Byzantine period when the *dromōn* became the primary warship.²²⁴

The Roman legions were primarily infantry during the Republican and early imperial period, which meant that Rome relied on *auxilia* to provide other types of soldiers.²²⁵

Unsurprisingly, this led to Rome adopting foreign ideas for archers and cavalry when it created

²²¹ For more on the evolution of armour throughout Roman history see Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 63-66, 95-100, 139-142, 170-173.

²²² J.F. Lazenby, *The First Punic War* (Abington: Routledge Publishing, 1996), 28.

²²³ Lazenby, *The First Punic War*, 68.

²²⁴ Hugh Elton, *Army and Battle in the Age of Justinian (527-65)*, in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 532-550, 537; John H. Pryor, "The Dromōn and the Byzantine navy," in *The Sea in History: The Medieval World*, ed. Christian Buchet and Michel Balard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 401-411, 401-403.

²²⁵ Auxiliaries could still function as heavy infantry. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 273-274.

its own units. The main inspiration for Roman archers were the Eastern archer auxiliaries. These units used a different style of bow than Western Europeans did, and it obviously impressed the Romans. The Roman military adopted the weapon and then issued it to all of the archer units that they raised regardless of where the archers were recruited.²²⁶ Similarly, Roman cavalry had adopted methods and technologies from various different cultures. The culture Rome first adapted cavalry equipment and strategy from was the Greeks, who had learned cavalry from the Thracians and Scythians.²²⁷ Rome had also adopted equipment, terminology, and tactics from the Iberians and Celts and integrated them into the Roman cavalry.²²⁸ Rome drew from two primary inspirations: the Sarmatians/Alans, or ‘Scythians’, and the Persian Empire specifically for its new imperial heavy cavalry. Rome adopted the *contus* lance and a style of heavy cavalry lancer from the Alans and Sarmatians, which Rome referred to as *contarii*.²²⁹ Rome adopted the use of fully armoured cavalry soldiers and cavalry barding from the Persians, which became the inspiration for Rome’s cataphracts and *clibanarii*. Despite the Persian influence, these units still used the *contus* lance wielded by Rome’s other heavy cavalry.²³⁰ Foreign influence on Rome, even by peoples who eventually were referred to as ‘barbarians’, was not limited to late antiquity, as the Roman military was willing to adopt foreign ideas throughout its history.

Rome’s New Defensive Strategy

During the late first and second centuries, Rome began to experience changes. From a military perspective, the Roman Empire continued to remain the dominant power in the

²²⁶ Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 275-276.

²²⁷ Arrian, *Ars Tactica*, 16.1; Polybius, *Histories*, 6.25; Bishop and Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment*, 54; Ann Hyland, *Training the Roman Cavalry: From Arrian’s Ars Tactica* (London: Grange Books, 1993), 70-71.

²²⁸ This includes equipment such spurs, straps, and saddle harnesses. Hyland, *Training the Roman Cavalry*, 72; Karen R. Dixon and Pat Southern, *The Roman Cavalry* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1992), 58, 63, 67, 75.

²²⁹ Arrian, *Ars Tactica*, 4,1, 44.1; Hyland, *Training the Roman Cavalry*, 70; Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, 50, 75-76.

²³⁰ Hyland, *Training the Roman Cavalry*, 83-84; Dixon and Southern, *The Roman Cavalry*, 76-77.

Mediterranean world and experience consistent military success, but Rome was no longer able to expand as it once had. At the same time, the Roman frontier became stationary and defined than it had been previously. The ideal of conquest and successful military campaigns led by emperors remained, but the emperors began to focus more on defence and consolidation instead of expansion. Trajan's conquests in the first years of the second century are the exception to these developments, as he expanded the Roman Empire to its maximum geographical size. After successful wars against Dacia and Parthia, Trajan was able to establish the provinces of Dacia and Mesopotamia. At the same time, Trajan incorporated the kingdom of Nabataea into the province of *Arabia* without significant resistance from the Nabataeans.²³¹ Trajan's forces made it all the way to the Persian Gulf, which no future emperor was able to do. Edwell theorized that Trajan's success was one of the reasons that Palmyra became powerful in the East, as it was able to take advantage of a power vacuum left by the weakened Parthia and create trade links with kingdoms with which Trajan had made contact.²³² When it came to handling the surrendered populations, Trajan followed the example of the Julio-Claudians; he settled the captured Dacians into Roman territory, in this case the provinces of Thrace and Moesia. Some of the defeated Dacians even ended up in Trajan's horseguard unit.²³³

Despite Trajan's success in wars, his conquests demonstrate the limitations on Rome's ability to expand. During the late Republic, commanders such as Julius Caesar and Pompey were able to spread Roman control over larger territories in a period of rapid expansion. To use Caesar as an example, he famously conquered all of Trans-Alpine Gaul and led attacks against Britain and Germany. In comparison, the only new territories permanently brought under Roman control

²³¹ Martin Goodman, *The Roman World: 44BC-AD 180*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge Publishing, 2012), 74-5.

²³² Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 20-23.

²³³ Eutropius, *Brevarium*, 8.6.2. Alfred Hirt, "Dalmations and Dacians – Forms of Belonging and Displacement in the Roman Empire," *Humanities* 8.1 (2019): 1-25, 13-14.

during Trajan's reign were Dacia and Nabataea. While Rome had been unable to dominate Dacia, Nabataea had been a client kingdom under Roman domination before its annexation, unlike Gaul. Therefore, Trajan strengthened Rome's position in the East, but he was unable to solidify its rule over all the territory he had taken from the Parthians. Even under a skilled commander and expansionist emperor like Trajan, Rome had an increasingly difficult time expanding as the principate's existence continued.

Breeze and Dobson argue that the first noticeable shift towards a defensive strategy by Rome, at least for the western frontiers, was under Domitian, whose reign started with attempts at expansion. Agricola was invading Northern Britain, but this campaign was stopped and the conquered territory was abandoned so one of the British legions could be moved to a field army forming on the Danube.²³⁴ Domitian used this army to launch an attack against the Chatti in 82 but quickly ended the war and claimed victory.²³⁵

After these two offensive military campaigns, Domitian put effort into solidifying Rome's controls on its frontiers. To start with, a system of roadworks and improvements of fortifications on the Rhine, established following the first war with the Chatti, allowed Rome to dominate the Germanic populations more effectively and allowed quicker troop movement between the Danubian frontier and Mainz.²³⁶ Forts and colonies were also established in Roman Africa, in order to help control the population of the region.²³⁷ Much of Domitian's attention was

²³⁴ Some fortifications established in Agricola's campaign were also abandoned because Rome no longer had the manpower to garrison them. Brian W. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1992), 132-133.

²³⁵ David J. Breeze and Brian Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books LTD., 1978), 16-17. The exact year of Domitian's campaign is debated. Domitian was near the frontiers and oversaw what was happening, but he relied on commanders to lead the army. Domitian launched some sort of attack and built a road network in Chatti territory, but the lack of any significant victory led to Domitian being seen as receiving an undeserved triumph. Domitian launched a second campaign against the Chatti later in which Domitian's general Lappius forced them to surrender, but Rome did not establish control over the region. Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 128, 150.

²³⁶ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 133.

²³⁷ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 140-141.

given to the Danubian frontier, and he continued his father's work on the frontier. Vespasian had reorganized and built forts along the Danube and developed client-kingdom relations with the Marcomanni, Quadi, and Suebi during his reign, but he had not increased the number of troops for the frontier. Domitian both reinforced the region with troops from Britain and improved Rome's naval abilities on the river.²³⁸

Around three years after Domitian's war against the Chatti, the Dacians attacked the Danubian frontier. The Dacians overcame the Roman defences and pillaged the Moesian countryside. They managed to kill the Moesian governor and possibly destroyed a Roman legion²³⁹, then the Dacians managed to defeat Domitian's commander Fuscus.²⁴⁰ Once Rome began to stabilize the frontiers, Domitian was forced to leave the war unfinished and deal with a usurper.²⁴¹ After he had dealt with the usurper and managed to push the Dacians out of Roman territory, he started punitive wars against the Suebi and Marcomanni. These tribes were supposed to be imperial clients since Vespasian's reign; however, they had not aided Rome against the other trans-Danubian tribes. Punitive strikes against allies who did not join Rome was standard practice, and Domitian supported other allies in the region who had previously supported Rome.²⁴² The wars continued throughout Domitian's reign, but the frontier was not fully stabilized until Trajan conquered Dacia.

While Trajan expanded Roman control in Dacia and the East, he also continued what Domitian had been doing and further established defences in Britain and the upper Rhine. Unfortunately, it is incredibly difficult to know which fortifications were built during Trajan's

²³⁸ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 136-137; Barbara Levick, *Vespasian*, 2nd edition (London, Routledge Publishing, 2017), 179.

²³⁹ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 137.

²⁴⁰ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 143-145.

²⁴¹ Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 143-145.

²⁴² Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 151-153.

reign. Many of the fortifications discovered can only be dated generally, so they could belong to Domitian, Trajan, or Hadrian.²⁴³ Whoever these fortifications belonged to, neither Domitian nor Trajan gave as much attention to all the Empire's frontiers as Hadrian.

Hadrian's defensive policy became Rome's general strategy after his reign. Unlike Trajan, Hadrian did not make any attempt to expand Rome's frontiers, and actually reduced Rome's territory. Immediately upon the death of Trajan, Hadrian abandoned the province of Mesopotamia, as it was not feasible for the Romans to garrison the region. The abandonment of Mesopotamia was the first time Rome had willingly given up territory.²⁴⁴ Hadrian then toured around the Roman Empire's frontiers and reorganized the frontiers into a system of *limes*, which was a series of fortifications around the empire. The purpose of the fortifications around the empire has been debated; however, the consensus is that these fortifications were not intended to stop an invading army. They simply did not have the manpower to stop a significant force. Breeze and Dobson argued that they were intended to control migratory/ nomadic populations, while Isaac argued that they were meant to be a deterrent to show invaders that an attack on the fortifications was an attack on the Roman army.²⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the focus on fortifications and consolidation around the frontier reflect Rome's change towards a defensive position. The defensive policies meant that Rome no longer was able to bring in new territory and people, which had ramifications on imperial society and forced the Empire to change its army.

²⁴³ Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, 25-26.

²⁴⁴ Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 22-23. The only other significant territorial loss was the loss of *Germania*. The only example of a previous emperor possibly considering losing territory is a claim made by Suetonius. Suetonius stated that Nero considered abandoning Britain but chose not to because he did not want to belittle his father's glory. Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Life of Nero*, 18.

²⁴⁵ Hadrian's wall as a method to control the population: Breeze and Dobson, *Hadrian's Wall*, 37-38. Hadrian's wall as a visual deterrent: Isaac, *The Limits of the Empire*, 414-415. For the older argument that the *limes* was intended to be used to defend the frontier see Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century to the Third* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 88-89.

Chapter 4

The End of Roman Expansion and the Question of Decline

As discussed previously, during the first century the Roman Empire continuously expanded. However, imperial expansion began to slow down from the latter half of the first century. The causes of the end of Roman expansion and military struggle are not simple. Traditional scholars have frequently argued that the Roman army performed worse in late antiquity, and that this either caused or was caused by the ‘barbarization’ of the army during late antiquity. However, the underlying causes for Rome’s military struggles began during the high empire and continued throughout the rest of its existence.

Beginning of Military Struggles

While Trajan was able to successfully expand, Domitian had been stuck fighting wars on the frontier and Hadrian reorganized the Empire’s army to be better able to defend the Empire. By the late second century, the Empire was not only fighting wars more defensively, but was increasingly unable to decisively defeat its opponents. One of the consequences of Rome’s lack of expansion was that it no longer drew in new populations to be auxiliaries. In addition, all Roman residents were eligible for the legions and not the auxiliaries after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* was decreed. Because of this, Rome recruited all of its auxiliaries from beyond its frontiers or from recently settled people.

Rome’s military was less successful after the late second century as well. Rome’s Eastern and Western frontiers were frequently penetrated by foreign attacks during the third century crisis. Furthermore, Rome lost major battles to the Persians and Germanic tribes, which was a rarity in the previous centuries. Rome’s military was reformed at the start of the fourth century,

but it continued to struggle with Persian and Germanic attacks and lost major battles and wars. To make matters worse, Rome experienced significant internal political and military struggle throughout the third century. Though the fourth century was more stable than the third, there were still repeated civil wars and military mutinies. The military's inability to defend the frontiers and its role in the usurpation has led to the argument that the military declined in late antiquity, with the Germanic soldiers frequently being blamed for this decline. However, the reality is far more complex than a simple military decline.

Starting with Antoninus Pius' reign in the mid second century, the defensive strategy established by Hadrian appears to have continued working. There are no significant attacks recorded in any of the sources. The only significant change Pius made to the frontiers was in Britain, where he established the Antonine wall in Southern Scotland. Due to the lack of surviving information from this time, it is almost impossible to determine exactly what Pius' goal was and modern scholars have created theories as to why the wall was built. Birley's theory is that Pius built the wall as part of a response to disturbances from the Picts.²⁴⁶ Hayne's theory was that this wall was part of a consolidation effort.²⁴⁷ Whatever the case is, the establishment of the Antonine wall demonstrates that Rome had the ability to extend the frontier and campaign outside its borders, even if only to a lesser degree than the previous century.

The weaknesses in the Roman military began to be exposed between Pius' reign and the third century crisis. When Marcus Aurelius and his co-emperor Lucius Verus came to power, they immediately were forced to defend against Parthian attack. In the East, the Persians installed their client king in Armenia, removing the king they had agreed with the Romans on, and invaded Roman Syria. In response to the external threats, Lucius Verus went to the East while

²⁴⁶ Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 60.

²⁴⁷ Haynes, *The Blood of the Provinces*, 78.

Aurelius remained in the West. Lucius Verus did not command the battles in person, as he left command of the field army to Statius Priscus, but he oversaw the retraining of Rome's army in Syria and the war from Antioch.²⁴⁸ Once the Parthian war had ended, Lucius Verus and some of the forces returned and responded to the Germanic attack against Pannonia. Tension had been brewing on the Danubian frontier since Aurelius' and Lucius Verus' accession, but the first attack and start of the Marcomannic Wars did not occur until 166.²⁴⁹ The military response was hampered by the Antonine plague. The plague first appeared in the Eastern armies and was brought West by returning forces from the East. It swept through the Empire, killing many imperial residents and emperor Lucius Verus. The plague hit cities especially hard, terrified the Roman citizens, and drew some of the attention away from the conflicts. The emperors tried to do something to help their people against the plague, including summoning priests to Rome to perform special rituals to appease Apollo. At the same time, the plague killed soldiers in the Roman military camps, which further weakened the Roman war effort.²⁵⁰ While Rome was weakened by the plague, the foreign attacks were undeterred, and Rome was forced to fight on both frontiers.

The military's fortunes were very different on the two frontiers. The war in the East was highly successful for Rome. Within a couple of years, Rome had pushed the Parthians out of Roman Syria and counter attacked into Armenia and Mesopotamia. The Romans were able to place kings favourable to Rome in Armenia and Osroene, sack Ctesiphon, and extend their frontier further beyond the Euphrates.²⁵¹ The extension of direct control was not that significant.

²⁴⁸ Anthony R. Birley, "The Wars and Revolts," in *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, ed. Marcel van Ackeren (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons LTD, 2012), 217-233, 217-218.

²⁴⁹ While it is called the 'Marcomannic' wars, the Marcomanni were only one of the tribes attacking Rome at this time. Péter Kovács, *Marcus Aurelius' Rain Miracle and the Marcomannic Wars* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2009), 201-202.

²⁵⁰ Birley, "The Wars and Revolts," 222-223.

²⁵¹ Haynes, *The Blood of the Provinces*, 78; Birley, "The Wars and Revolts," 220-222.

There was a greater concentration of troops on the Euphrates, but more importantly Rome's influence over the kingdom of Armenia was increased and the kingdom of Osroene became a dependant of Rome.²⁵² At the end of the war, Rome was able to maintain the same position of superiority in the East as it had for the past century.

In the West, the Roman Empire was unable to strike a quick and decisive victory as it had in the East. To make matters worse, the attackers were able to push deep into Roman lands. Roman frontier settlements had been attacked in the past, but the damage attackers inflicted had been contained to the frontier regions. In the Marcomannic wars, raiders were able to avoid the Roman legions and move deep into Roman territory. Some raiders even made into Italy and Greece.²⁵³ These raids were not as catastrophic as the attacks in the third century nor the fifth century attacks and the sacks of Rome, but they were a sign of things to come. The raids were the first time Italy had been threatened by foreign attack since the Republican period and demonstrate that the Roman legions struggled to catch the small bands of raiders.

The Marcomannic wars finally ended once Commodus, Aurelius' successor, paid off the Marcomanni and Quadi instead of defeating them by military action. This was not received well by contemporaries, who used this as an example of Commodus' abuses and a way to demonstrate his inferiority to Aurelius. They argued that if Marcus Aurelius had survived, he would have maintained the war and defeated the Germanic tribes. Despite the contemporary reaction, Commodus' payments worked. The Danubian frontier was stable throughout Commodus' reign, which gave time for Rome to recover from the wars of Marcus Aurelius and the plague.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 24-26.

²⁵³ Haynes, *The Blood of the Provinces*, 78.

²⁵⁴ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 73.1; Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 1.68-9; *Historia Augusta: The Life of Commodus*, 3. Olivier Hekster, *Commodus, An Emperor at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 2002), 41-42.

The expansionist policy of Septimius Severus, who became emperor following Commodus' assassination, the short reigns of Pertinax and Didius Julianus, and ensuing civil war, is the exception to the increasingly defensive policy that almost all emperors after Hadrian followed. Septimius Severus personally led a Roman invasion against the Parthians once he had taken control of the entire empire and solidified his rule. The war went very well for Rome. As Septimius Severus moved through Roman Syria towards Parthia, the kingdoms between Rome and Parthia immediately surrendered to Rome. Armenia and Edessa both sent hostages, gifts, and soldiers to Rome to try to avoid conflict with it.²⁵⁵ After finding very little Parthian resistance in his first campaign, Septimius Severus returned to Syria to prepare for a second invasion. Septimius Severus was able to sack Ctesiphon, and the Parthians were unable to create any significant resistance. With the power he held in the East, Septimius Severus annexed the kingdom of Osroene into the Empire as the province of Mesopotamia.²⁵⁶ Unlike Trajan's Mesopotamia, Rome held Mesopotamia until the Persian attacks in 238 and the territory was formally surrendered by Philip in 244.²⁵⁷ The only setback for Septimius Severus was Hatra. Septimius Severus wanted to punish Hatra for supporting Pescennius Niger against him, but it withstood three sieges. Nonetheless, Septimius Severus eventually forced Hatra to surrender and imposed a garrison on it.²⁵⁸

Septimius Severus attempted to expand Roman power again towards the end of his reign and life. With his sons Caracalla and Geta, he invaded Northern Britain in response to problems on the frontier, but he was unable to take control of the region before his death. Septimius

²⁵⁵ Anthony R. Birley, *Septimius Severus: The African Emperor* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1999), 128-129.

²⁵⁶ Septimius Severus may have considered taking control of Ctesiphon and the Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian Gulf before logistical problems forced him to limit Roman expansion. Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 130.

²⁵⁷ Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 168, 175. Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 133.

²⁵⁸ Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 130-131.

Severus rebuilt some of the fortifications beyond Hadrian's wall, but he was unable to subjugate the population.²⁵⁹ His sons, who were joint successors, did not continue the war after their father's death. Instead, they made peace with the Britons and withdrew to the continent. There, Geta was assassinated on the orders of Caracalla, who moved to secure his position in Rome. Despite the failed conquest of Northern Britain, Septimius Severus was able to expand Roman power in the East. Even if Roman power still expanded during the high imperial period, the first evidence at the problems which would plague the Empire began to emerge. At the end of the third century, the evolving situation of the Roman Empire aggravated these problems and necessitated change.

The Third Century and Late Antiquity

After Septimius Severus' death Rome never expanded its territory beyond what he and Trajan had added. The rest of the Severan dynasty was unable to extend the frontiers, and the third century crisis began after the death of Severus Alexander. During the crisis, Rome's military struggled to defend its frontiers or maintain internal stability, especially before Aurelian's reign. Emperors faced military mutinies and civil wars, which meant the frontiers were ignored. The Germanic tribes used Rome's military and political turmoil as an opportunity to raid the Roman Empire, and they were able to move deep into Roman territory. In the midst of this unrest, Decius was killed in battle against the Goths, which was the first time that an emperor was killed in battle.²⁶⁰ In the East, the Sassanids proved to be far more dangerous to Rome than the Parthians had been. Though the first king Ardashir's war against Severus Alexander ended in a stalemate, Ardashir's son Shapur repeatedly bested the Roman army.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Birley, *Septimius Severus*, 179, 181-182, 184-185.

²⁶⁰ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 74-75.

²⁶¹ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 61-62. For a full account of Rome and Persia's wars during the third century see, Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 149-200.

When emperor Valerian tried to launch a counterattack against the Persians, he ended up being defeated and captured.²⁶² Following Valerian's capture, his son and co-emperor was unable to maintain control over the entire Roman Empire, which actually broke into three parts: the Gallic Empire, the Central Empire, and Palmyra.²⁶³

With all the military issues occurring during the third century crisis, it is unsurprising that Rome was unable to expand until the crisis ended nearly a century later.²⁶⁴ This is not to say that emperors did not try to launch offensive attacks or consider expanding territory, just that no one was able to during this period. Maximinus Thrax, Probus, and Carus all launched attacks beyond the frontiers. In the case of Maximinus, Herodian claimed that his goal was to conquer all the German tribes from Pannonia to the ocean. Despite successful campaigns against the German tribes, a civil war forced Maximinus to change his attention towards his internal opponents and abort any further foreign campaigns.²⁶⁵ After Gordian III emerged as emperor from the civil war, he campaigned in the East in response to Persian aggression in the region. However, Gordian was killed during this campaign, which led to further internal unrest.

Once Aurelian had reunited the fragmented Empire, Rome was able to go on the offensive again despite the remaining internal problems. Probus and Carus were able to launch their campaigns because of Aurelian's success. Although both of their reigns were short, they were able to achieve successes. Probus defeated the Longiones and Franks on the Rhine, before launching an attack across the Rhine against the Vandals and Burgundians. Probus also refurbished the defences of the region: he restored and established some forts on both sides of the

²⁶² Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 185.

²⁶³ Lukas De Blois, *The Policy of Emperor Gallienus* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1976), 2-3, 6; Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 35-36, 59-60.

²⁶⁴ Even then, the Roman empire only expanded into territory that it had once held during the fourth century.

²⁶⁵ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire*, 7.2.9-7.3.1; Pearson, *Maximinus Thrax*, 107-108.

Rhine, in Roman and ‘barbarian’ territory.²⁶⁶ Probus’ successes in the West stabilized the Western frontiers enough for Carus to launch an attack against Persia. The attack into Persia came when Persia was having its own internal difficulties: Bahram II had just come to power, and he was still in the process of consolidating his rule over his empire. Carus’ campaign against the Persians was going well until his sudden death halted his campaign.²⁶⁷ The first successful expansion of the Empire only happened after Diocletian and his Tetrarchy came to power.

During the third century crisis the Empire lost territory for the first time since the loss of *Germania*. Though Trajan’s Mesopotamia had been abandoned in an earlier period,²⁶⁸ its immediate abandonment shows that Rome never had a firm grasp on the region. The territory lost by the Empire in the third century had been under Roman control far longer than *Germania* or Trajan’s Mesopotamia; even Septimius Severus’ Mesopotamia had been under Roman rule for about half a century when it was surrendered to the Sasanians in 244. The region remained an area of contention between the Romans and Persians. During the late third century, Galerius defeated the Sasanian king Narses and took control of the region back. However, Mesopotamia was lost following Julian’s failed Persian campaign and Jovian’s surrender of the region back to the Sasanians.²⁶⁹ While Rome fought back and forth over the territory it lost in the East, the Western losses during this time were never recaptured.

One of the Western provinces lost under the Emperor Gallienus at the height of the Third Century Crisis was the *Agri Decumates*. When the Empire broke apart into three states following Valerian’s capture, the *Agri Decumates* was left in an awkward position between the Gallic Empire and the Central Empire. Neither Gallienus nor his Gallic counterpart Postumus could

²⁶⁶ Zosimus, *New History*, 1.67-70; Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 127-129.

²⁶⁷ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 132.

²⁶⁸ See discussion on page 65.

²⁶⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 25.7.

garrison the region without exposing themselves to an attack by the other. During this time, the Alamanni took control of the area, and Rome never dislodged them or regained direct control.²⁷⁰ The second province lost was Dacia, which was abandoned in two stages. The first was under Gallienus who withdrew the Roman population from Dacia Inferior. Dacia Superior was less heavily impacted by Germanic attacks.²⁷¹ A few years later, Aurelian withdrew from Dacia Superior, which never again came under direct Roman rule. As the Romans withdrew, the Goths moved into the region. With that said, once Rome had regained its footing in the fourth century, they did try to regain indirect control in the region through treaties, which bound the Goths to supply auxiliaries to the Roman Empire in the years between 332 until the mid 360's, when the Goths supported Procopius' failed usurpation against Valens.²⁷²

Roman expansion, even if only into territory previously held, finally happened again under Carus' successor Diocletian. Once Diocletian had defeated Carus' surviving son Carinus, he was left in charge of the entire Empire. The pressure on the frontiers and internal difficulties, usurpations and rebellions, did not abate, and Diocletian decided the governance of the Empire was too much for one person. In 285, Diocletian appointed Maximian as co-emperor and a year later made him co-Augustus.²⁷³ In 293, Diocletian appointed Galerius and Constantius as Caesars under himself and Maximian. The Tetrarchs were able to retake territory in the East, but importantly there was no attempt to expand direct control in the West except for Raetia.²⁷⁴ In the

²⁷⁰ De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 5, 28.

²⁷¹ De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 5. This is contrary to some of the ancient sources, who pin the complete loss of Dacia on Gallienus. Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 9.8; Aurelius Victor, *Liber De Caesaribus*, 33.

²⁷² Noel Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), 98-99 116.

²⁷³ Alan Bowman, "Diocletian and the first tetrarchy, A.D. 284-305," in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 12: The Crisis of Empire, AD 193-337*, 2nd edition. ed., Alan Bowman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 69.

²⁷⁴ Diocletian retook Raetia from the Alamanni and restored the *limes*, but he did not expand into other lost territories. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 182-183.

West, the Tetrarchs used a scorched earth policy. They targeted the food supplies of the Germanic tribes without making an attempt to rule the areas. One area where the Tetrarchs were especially brutal was the former province of *Agri Decumates*. The Tetrarchs depopulated the region in this war; however, they did not attempt to re-establish direct overlordship of the area.²⁷⁵ Rome did not settle Roman citizens in the region, as was their traditional tendency to do in new lands.²⁷⁶

With the Empire more stable than it had been in the past century, Diocletian and the Tetrarchy had the time to institute a series of reforms over many aspects of the Empire. After a period of civil war, further reforms occurred under Constantine. Their reforms will be discussed further in the following chapter. From the Tetrarchs' reigns until the fall of the Western Empire in 476, Rome never expanded its direct control again. Rome still launched attacks into their opponents' territory, but never formed new provinces when it defeated opponents. Additionally, Rome's military actions beyond its frontiers were cut short by continued internal problems which forced emperors to move their focus away from the frontiers. To start with, Constantine successfully campaigned across the Rhine from late 306 to 310 CE. By doing this, Constantine was able to stabilize the frontier and get a substantial force of Germanic auxiliaries into his army.²⁷⁷ Despite Constantine's success, he did not expand Roman power further. In 310, Constantine moved into Italy to fight the first of a series of civil wars that led to his rise to sole power, causing the Rhine frontier to become a secondary focus.²⁷⁸ The Franks and Alamanni

²⁷⁵ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 143.

²⁷⁶ *Coloniae* used this way in Britain: Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire, 260-261*. *Coloniae* used to control Africa: Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, 140-141. *Coloniae* in Dacia: Julian Bennett, *Trajan: Optimus Princeps* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1997), 165, 171.

²⁷⁷ Constantine had notable victories against the *Bructeri* and Franks in 306 and 310. Michael Kulikowski, "Constantine and the Northern Barbarians," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 347-376, 357-359.

²⁷⁸ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 170-172.

took advantage of Constantine's absence, and Constantine returned to the Rhine frontier in 312 when he had finished his civil war against Maxentius and made a truce with Licinius.

Constantine left the region in 316 to fight the first war with Licinius, but he sent Crispus back to the Rhine during a lull in the fighting in 317.²⁷⁹ The defence of the frontier was Constantine's secondary concern in comparison to the civil wars, which meant that the frontier never had the resources to expand into *Germania*.

The wars across the Rhine during Constantius II's and Julian's reign follow a similar pattern. The Franks and Alamanni took advantage of the civil war between Constantius and Magnentius to move past the Rhine frontier and raid Roman Gaul. After the civil war was finished, Constantius fought along the Rhine in 354 and 355. In 356, he appointed Julian as Caesar, and they launched a joint campaign against the Alamanni. Constantius then left Julian to continue to fight on the Rhine frontier while he briefly returned to Italy and then fought against trans-Danubian tribes, including the Sarmatians and Quadi, until 359.²⁸⁰ Marcellinus stated that several Sarmatian kings were willing to surrender themselves, their families, and all of their land to the Romans when the kings sued for peace; however, the Romans made no attempt to expand and simply demanded that Roman prisoners were returned.²⁸¹ As these wars were concluding, Shapur II attacked the Roman Empire and captured Amida.²⁸² Constantius went to Constantinople to prepare to engage the Persians, but he was forced to respond to Julian's usurpation in Gaul. Likewise, Julian's attention was redirected to the impending civil war with Constantius II. Nevertheless, he launched a brief campaign against the Franks on his way to

²⁷⁹ Kulikowski, "Constantine and the Northern Barbarians," 359.

²⁸⁰ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 1-2.

²⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 17.12.11.

²⁸² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 19.8.1-4.

Southern Gaul and defended against Alamannic raids. Even so, the civil war meant that resources were redirected and prevented any expansion in the region.²⁸³

Julian was able to get control of both his and Constantius' armies when Constantius died en route to fight Julian. With the united army, Julian launched a campaign into Persia. If Rome was going to expand, this would be the ideal time. However, this campaign ended in disaster. Not only was Julian killed, but his successor Jovian was forced to surrender territory to the Persians to save the army.²⁸⁴ Jovian soon died, allowing the Valentinians to come to power.

Valentinian's trans-Danubian policies were the closest thing to expansion in the West, as he established forts across the Danube in 'barbarian' territory. These forts were not set up with the consent of the tribes living in the territory. This is demonstrated by the Quadi's negotiations with Rome. One of the kings of the Quadi, Gabinius, was murdered by the Roman commander Marcellianus because he requested that the Romans not build a fort in the area. Valentinian never punished him for doing this.²⁸⁵ This led to a war between the Quadi and Romans, and eventually the Quadi sent a peace delegation in 375. The delegation claimed that the war was fought by bandits and not all the chieftains, but they argued that Rome's fortifications justified the war. Valentinian obviously considered that it was his right to put forts in foreign territory, as the complaint infuriated him so much that it caused him to die of apoplexy.²⁸⁶

After Valentinian had died, Rome was unable to effectively defend its frontiers much less expand. His brother, the Eastern Emperor Valens was killed a few years later in the battle of Adrianople while trying to handle the rebelling Goths.²⁸⁷ Gratian, the older son of Valentinian

²⁸³ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 2-3.

²⁸⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 25.7; Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 10.17.

²⁸⁵ Marcellinus stated that Rome was building fortifications as if it already held the area. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 29.6, 30.5.

²⁸⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 30.6. Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 142-143, 145 n. 173.

²⁸⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 31.13; Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 339-340.

and Emperor since 368, was assassinated in a military mutiny instigated by Magnus Maximus, who took the throne alongside Valentinian's younger son Valentinian II, emperor with his half-brother Gratian since 375.²⁸⁸ Theodosius came to power in 379 and managed to reunite the Empire, but it was split between his two sons Honorius and Arcadius when he died in 395. Once Honorius had come to power, the Western Empire began a downward spiral. The Western Empire fell apart piece by piece, starting with Britain in 409.²⁸⁹ The Western Empire did try to regain the lost territory, but was plagued by foreign attacks, civil wars, and military mutinies. Despite some internal problems from time to time and foreign pressure, the East fared better than the West during the next several decades.

A Military Decline?

Given the discussion above, it is easy to see why the beginning of the Roman decline was traditionally placed at the end of the second century. Septimius Severus is frequently blamed for causing the decline, which is supported by Herodian's claims.²⁹⁰ It has been argued that serious issues with the Roman army, which caused internal problems, began in the late second and third centuries. To paraphrase Brauer, the army was undisciplined and selfish; it was only loyal to the person who paid it and had no problems supporting usurpers, who regularly took advantage of the army's discontent.²⁹¹ Entwined with this is the question of whether the Roman army performed worse, as it struggled to defend the frontiers and sustained significant defeats on both

²⁸⁸ Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1998), 21; Valens did fight an earlier war against the Goths, but this ended in a stalemate. Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 111-112, 280-281.

²⁸⁹ Honorius' young age no doubt played a factor in the West's struggles. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 187-188. The letter often used to show that Honorius told the Britons that they would have to fend for themselves has been argued to be referring to the towns in *Bruttium*. Nonetheless, Honorius did not make an effort to recapture Britain. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 530.

²⁹⁰ Herodian. *History of the Roman Empire*, 3.8. Nicholas Higham, *Rome, Britain, and the Anglo-Saxons* (London: Seaby, 1992), 44-45; Rostovtzeff, *The Social & Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 124, 353-354, 478; Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier Emperors*, 6; MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 23.

²⁹¹ Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier Emperors*, 6.

the Eastern and Western frontiers. The situation was so bad that Emperor Decius was killed and Valerian was captured in battle. The internal and external military problems led to the collapse of the principate's style of army in the late third century, which meant that the army needed to be reformed by Diocletian and Constantine.²⁹² Despite the Roman Empire's struggles, its army's capabilities did not suddenly become worse because the citizenry became less capable soldiers or its army 'barbarized'. There are other reasons why the army struggled in late antiquity, and why it needed to be changed and adapted to its new circumstances.

The late Roman army's discipline problems have been frequently discussed by modern scholars, even if they sometimes dispute whether the problems were caused by a decline in the military or caused by 'barbarian' recruits.²⁹³ The argument that the Roman army slowly became less disciplined has the problem that the principate's military never was substantially better disciplined than its late antique counterpart. Military mutinies occurred frequently in the past centuries, even if they did not have the same catastrophic effects that they did later. One of the first known threats of military mutiny occurred during the second Punic war. During this time, Scipio was campaigning in Spain when his soldiers mutinied. His soldiers had four main complaints: pay delays, dissatisfaction with the division of loot, length of service, and supply shortages. Scipio was able to settle the mutiny by addressing the soldiers' concerns.²⁹⁴ Military

²⁹² Karl Strobel, "Strategy and Army Structure Between Septimius Severus and Constantine the Great," in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 267-285.

²⁶⁷ Strobel does not agree with this narrative, but he is quoting the traditional view.

²⁹³ MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 174-176; Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 170-175.

²⁹⁴ Cameron compares Scipio and Maximinus Thrax's reaction to soldiers' concerns over the lack of supplies and food. Scipio avoided a military mutiny by quickly getting more supplies distributed to them, while Maximinus was killed because he was unable to. Averil Cameron, "Food Supply and Military Mutiny in the Late Roman Empire," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12.2 (2019): 277-297, 280-281. Polybius stated that inactivity caused the mutiny, though the previous chapter is fragmentary. Polybius spent a couple of sentences comparing military mutinies to growths and abscesses inside the body, as both could appear without warning. This suggests that there was an awareness in antiquity of the danger that military mutinies posed, even if it does not give us a clue to their frequency. Polybius, *Histories*, 24-25. Livy stated that inactivity and rumours about Scipio's health demoralized the army. Livy, *The*

unrest continued after the Marian reforms created a professional army and during the principate. For example, Tiberius was faced with a mutiny by the legions along the Rhine and in Pannonia immediately upon his accession. One of the main complaints amongst the Pannonian legions was the limited pay, which they demanded be increased to one *denarius* a day. Payments were also in contention to the forces at the Rhine, who demanded that Tiberius pay legacies promised by Augustus.²⁹⁵

As is well known, the second century was a remarkably stable period for the Empire. During the reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus Pius, there were no significant military revolts or political assassinations. This stability is an exception, as never before and never again was the Empire this stable. Even so, discipline problems do appear during Marcus Aurelius' reign, as the Eastern army was thought to have become slack after years of peace and to have spent more time lounging in Antioch than training. Lucius Verus had to oversee the troops' retraining in preparation for war and the *comes Augustorum* Laelianus cracked down on gambling and drinking within the Syrian army.²⁹⁶ While this event is not as serious as a full military mutiny, it demonstrates that the Roman army never behaved perfectly. Nonetheless, mutinies existed throughout the entirety of Rome's existence and did not simply appear in the third century due to a decline in military discipline.

If the army's discipline was not the cause of the increased military unrest in the third century and after, what was? There is no simple explanation for the constant internal struggle, but there are many factors that played a role. Increased foreign pressure acted as something of a

History of Rome, 28.24. Appian attributed the rebellion to specific soldiers who squandered their money. Appian, *The Spanish Wars*, 34. Neither Polybius nor Appian described this mutiny as exceptional. Livy alludes to this incident being somewhat exceptional as he stated that the soldiers were not behaving customary to military conduct.

²⁹⁵ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 57.4-5; Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Life of Tiberius*, 35; Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.17, 1.26, 1.28, 1.35; Seager, *Tiberius*, 50-52.

²⁹⁶ Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 129.

catalyst for the third century crisis. The prolonged periods of warfare on Rome's frontiers destabilized many of Rome's political and military systems, which led to the crisis. During the crisis Rome's financial system collapsed, the role of the emperor was militarized, imperial power was separated from Rome, and the Empire became more regionalized. Together, these issues caused the Roman army to be disloyal and prone to proclaiming their commanders as emperor instead of simply being undisciplined.

The Roman Economy and Monetary system

Payment in precious metals was always required to maintain the soldiers' loyalty. Even a momentary inability to pay soldiers could lead to disaster. The Roman soldiers were likely to revolt if they felt that they were not being paid properly, as the aforementioned examples of the mutinies under Scipio and Tiberius demonstrate. The Roman Empire had been able to pay its soldiers without any major rebellions until the third century, but it strained its financial system to do so. Rome began to lighten and debase the *denarius* in order to pay its expenses.²⁹⁷ The process was slow, but continuous throughout the Empire's existence. Meanwhile, the soldiers received wage increases in the reigns of Domitian, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Maximinus Thrax,²⁹⁸ and five new legions were recruited by Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus.²⁹⁹

Since the army became considerably more expensive in the late second and early third century, debasement quickly went out of control.³⁰⁰ This soon led to runaway inflation,³⁰¹ as the

²⁹⁷ Tiberius lightened the *denarius* for the first time, and then Nero debased it. Richard Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 223-224, 227.

²⁹⁸ Domitian's increase is estimated around 33%, Septimius Severus 100%, Caracalla 50%, and Maximinus Thrax an additional 100%. Speidel, "Roman Army Pay Scales," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992): 87-106. 88.

²⁹⁹ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 8.

³⁰⁰ The *denarius*' silver content was around 88% in Marcus Aurelius' reign. It fell to 73% in Commodus' reign, and to 45% in Alexander Septimius Severus' reign. Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire*, 226-227.

³⁰¹ Duncan-Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire*, 223-224, 227.

silver content continued to decline during the third century.³⁰² When Gallienus came to power, the silver coins were no longer valuable enough to guarantee the soldiers' loyalty. Unable to do anything about the silver content, Gallienus relied on gold medallions as gifts.³⁰³ It is unsurprising that the Empire's struggle to pay its soldiers caused frequent military revolts and weakened the soldiers' loyalty to the Roman central authorities.

Aurelian and Diocletian attempted to solve the financial issues that plagued the Empire during the second half of the third century. In 273/274, Aurelian turned his attention to the debased *denarii* and raised the silver content to 5%.³⁰⁴ Diocletian further restored the coins at the end of the third century and issued a price edict, which was quickly abandoned because it ended up creating a black market of products instead of controlling prices.³⁰⁵ One final major change was implemented by Constantine and cemented by the Valentinians. Constantine based the economy around the new gold *solidus*. Since taxes were now based on the less debased *solidus* instead of the *denarius*, the Roman Empire was able to manage inflation in the fourth century. Financial issues were never eliminated, but the empire was in a better financial position in the fourth century.³⁰⁶ While military dissension caused by payment problems was not exclusive to late antiquity, the collapse of the Roman economic system led to being soldiers paid less and more open to rebellion or exploitation by a usurper.

Military Tension and Regionalization

³⁰² When Aurelian took power, the silver content was 1.5%. Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 125-126.

³⁰³ De Blois, *The Policy of Emperor Gallienus*, 90.

³⁰⁴ Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 52-53, 128, 131-133

³⁰⁵ Kenneth W. Harl, "From Aurelian to Diocletian: Financing Imperial Recovery by Coinage Debasements and Fiduciary Currencies," in *Money in the Pre-Industrial World: Bullion, Debasements and Coin Substitutes*, ed. John H. Munro (London: Routledge Publishing, 2016), 33-43, 39-41. The *solidus* was in existence in Diocletian's time, but was a larger coin than the Constantinian one. Mireille Corbier, "Coinage and Taxation: the State's Point of View, A.D. 193-337," in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 12: The Crisis of Empire*, 2nd edition, ed. Alan Bowman Averil Cameron, and Peter Garnsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 327-392, 329, 335-337.

³⁰⁶ Corbier, "Coinage and Taxation," 355; Harl, "From Aurelian to Diocletian," 41-43.

The third century was also a period of military tension, which led to changes in the Roman political system and society. Some of these changes gave more opportunities for ambitious military commanders to usurp and take control of the Empire. As mentioned earlier, foreign pressure on the frontiers had been increasing since Domitian's reign. As the emperors became more focused on the wars around the empire, they surrounded themselves with a greater number of equestrian military officers. This led to Septimius Severus's decision to appoint equestrians to positions which were previously senatorial offices. His Mesopotamian governor and commanders of his three new legions were all equestrians.³⁰⁷ With all the military problems happening during the third century crisis, senatorial military positions disappeared and were replaced by equestrian ones. For example, the senatorial *legati legionis* were replaced by the equestrian *praefecti legionis*. Equestrians also replaced senators as governors for provinces with military problems, though senators were still allowed to hold the office in areas away from conflict.³⁰⁸

Emperors also had expectations for military success placed on them by the soldiers and officers who surrounded them. Ziolkowski argued that the root cause of the military rebellions during the crisis was the emperors' inability to handle the growing pressure along the Rhine and Danubian frontiers, which resulted in the military officers becoming frustrated with their leadership.³⁰⁹ Emperors who chose to pay off the barbarians instead of defeating them were

³⁰⁷ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 7-9.

³⁰⁸ De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 39-40.

³⁰⁹ Ziolkowski argued that the Roman commanders were aware of the growing threat from a 'barbarian' population boom and formation of alliances between tribes. However, there is no surviving evidence which definitively shows the Romans considered the Germanic tribes a greater threat than they had in earlier periods. Adam Ziolkowski, "The Background to the to the Third-Century Crisis of the Roman Empire," in *The Roman Empire in Context*, ed. Johann P. Arnason and Kurt A. Raaflaub (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, LTD., 2011), 113-133, 121-123.

universally reviled.³¹⁰ While I do not agree that the struggles on the frontier were the only reason that the army rebelled, an emperor being perceived as a bad military commander certainly caused discontent. Severus Alexander is one of the best examples of this, as frustrations from his conduct during the Persian war and peace negotiations with the Germanic tribes caused his army to mutiny and proclaim Maximinus Thrax as emperor.³¹¹

Another consequence of the imperial focus on wars around the empire was a gradual regionalization of its territory, and the weakening of centralized power at the city of Rome. One of the first changes towards regionalization was Hadrian's establishment of the *limes*. In the *limes* system, soldiers were frequently permanently stationed at their frontier posts to oversee the frontier. Since the soldiers were stationary, they were able to integrate into local communities, which flourished around the military camps. Legionaries and auxiliaries even had families outside of the forts, even though the marriages and children were not seen as legitimate by the imperial authorities. Hadrian did not try to discourage the practice, and imperial policy became more accommodating to military families. For example, an illegitimate child could inherit their father's estate if their father died while in service, which helped support the children and encouraged them to enlist.³¹² At the same time, Rome began to increasingly recruit troops from

³¹⁰ Ziolkowski, "The Background to the Third-Century Crisis of the Roman Empire," 123-124. Ziolkowski stated that the emperors who bought peace from the 'barbarians' were considered as traitors by the army. However, the contemporary sources reflect that emperor who did this were reviled or seen as weak, not necessarily as traitors. Herodian described Commodus as being manipulated towards a life of luxury by his companions, while Dio simply stated that he wanted to end the war to avoid exertion and live in luxury. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire* 1.6.2-1.6.9; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 73.2. Both Herodian and Dio agreed that Caracalla ended the war because he was violent and wanted to kill his brother to become sole emperor. Herodian added that Caracalla was unable to convince the army to recognize him as sole emperor, as they believed he and Geta were raised to be co-emperors. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire* 3.15.1-8, 4.3.4; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 78.1-2. Herodian described Severus Alexander as being seen as cowardly and weak by his soldiers. Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire* 6.5.9, 6.7.3, 6.7.10.

³¹¹ Herodian, *History of the Roman Empire* 6.5.9, 6.7.3, 6.7.10. Southern disagreed with the argument that Rome's inability to deal with the invasions was the main cause of imperial instability. Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 282-3.

³¹² Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 77.

nearby convenient sources, including the local military communities, instead of intentionally mixing different ethnicities throughout its entire army.³¹³ Because of this integration with and recruitment from the local community, military units were tied to the local communities far more than they ever had been previously.

The increasing ties of the military to local communities did not cause serious problems until the third century crisis when other issues arose. As mentioned, emperors struggled to contain foreign attacks on multiple frontiers at the same time as usurpers fought for legitimacy. The Empire's instability allowed foreign raiders and armies to sack Roman cities, inflict significant damage to the frontier regions, and even penetrate deep into the Roman interior. The emperor's inability to defend all the frontiers exacerbated the issues. The frontier populations were primarily concerned with their own region, and rarely cared about the larger military situation. Someone in Syria would most likely not be particularly concerned with what was happening on the Rhine, especially if Syria was threatened by Persia. Only the emperors and their courts would have paid attention to the entire Empire.³¹⁴ If the emperor was not there to protect them, people in the frontier regions, including the soldiers stationed there, would rely on local commanders to defend them. These commanders could be regional governors or could be someone appointed to military command over several provinces. These commanders were usually loyal to the emperor,³¹⁵ but the power they commanded and loyalty from the local populace meant that they had significant power and a support base if they chose to revolt. In short, because the city of Rome no longer had as much influence as it once had over the entire

³¹³ J.C. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement During the Principate*, ed., M.M. Roxan (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1983), 55; Hekster and Zair, *Rome and Its Empire*, 40-42; Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 77.

³¹⁴ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 282-3.

³¹⁵ Hekster and Zair, *Rome and Its Empire*, 42; Michael Whitby, "Army and Society in the Late Roman World: A Context for Decline?" in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. by Paul Erdkamp (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 515-531, 518-519, 525

Empire, emperors necessarily moved closer to problematic areas. Alternatively, an emperor could appoint commanders or co-emperors to handle sections of the Empire he was unable to handle personally, even if this gave significant power to potential usurpers.

While the Roman Empire certainly did stop expanding and experience greater internal and external military struggles, this was not caused by a military decline or the ‘barbarization’ of the Roman army. The military system established by Augustus now found itself in very different circumstances, and it was no longer suited to effectively deal with the threats the Empire faced. These circumstances necessitated changes for the nature and composition of Rome’s military, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

‘Barbarization’ and decline of the Roman army or changing strategies and doctrine in Late Antiquity?

It is incredibly difficult to pinpoint a single reason that the Empire became increasingly plagued with usurpation, military mutinies, and rebellions in late antiquity, but the reality is far more complex than the army simply becoming undisciplined and greedy. Likewise, Rome’s increasing difficulties with foreign opponents were not simply caused by the Roman army becoming worse because of poor discipline or ‘barbarians’ being admitted during late antiquity, as has been argued by some scholars. One of the main reasons for Rome’s struggles was that the populations on the Western and Eastern frontier became a greater threat to Rome than they had been previously. The major difference between the Principate’s enemies and the late empire’s enemies is that Rome’s enemies in late antiquity were more capable at launching offensive attacks and could inflict significant damage on the Roman Empire. Even after the Marian and Augustan military reforms, the Roman army lost battles. However, even if Rome sustained a catastrophic defeat, it was rare for the enemy to do any significant damage to the Empire. During late antiquity, not only were Rome’s opponents able to inflict significant defeats on Rome, but they were able to follow their victories with raids or invasions into Roman territory. In response to this new danger, the Late Empire’s army adapted to better combat its opponents, even if they were unable to achieve the same success as the principates.

The Eastern Frontier

Changes within the Roman Empire and outside its frontiers made opponents more dangerous. In the East, the Parthians established themselves as capable opponents to Rome

during the late Republic when they defeated Crassus and Mark Antony.³¹⁶ However, as the centuries progressed Rome slowly became the stronger of the two powers. Once Augustus came to power, neither empire was able to get the advantage over the other. Rome and Parthia usually concluded their wars with the reestablishment of the *status quo*.³¹⁷ Rome became far more successful in its wars against Parthia during the high imperial period. As discussed, Trajan's and Septimius Severus' Parthian campaigns left Rome in a superior position to Parthia, and Severus was able to expand Rome's province of Mesopotamia into Parthian territory.

An unintended consequence of Septimius Severus' campaign was the weakening of the Parthian dynasty. The Parthian dynasty lost prestige in their kingdom from their defeat, and the Parthian king Artabanus was unable to defeat the usurper Ardashir. The newly established Sasanian dynasty was far more aggressive than the Parthian dynasty. Ardashir claimed all the territory which the ancient Achaemenid dynasty had ruled, including the territory that Rome held. Once he had secured his power, Ardashir invaded Roman territory. Severus Alexander responded with a counterattack. Neither side was able to gain the advantage, and the war ended when Severus Alexander left Rome's Eastern frontier to deal with the Germanic threat.³¹⁸ Though the first Persian campaign ended with the continuation of the *status quo*, Ardashir's successor Shapur was more successful in attacking Rome. He launched two major campaigns against Rome and defeated Rome's armies. In his first campaign, Shapur was able to push deep into Roman territory and forced Philip to cede control of Armenia when he defeated Gordian's counterattack.³¹⁹ Philip tried and failed to regain control of Armenia after surrendering it, though

³¹⁶ Brian Campbell, "War and Diplomacy: Rome and Parthia, 31BC- AD 235," in *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley (London: Routledge Publishing, 1993), 213-240, 219, 226.

³¹⁷ Campbell, "War and Diplomacy: Rome and Parthia," 225, 229-231.

³¹⁸ Inge Mennen, *Power and Status in the Roman Empire, AD 193-284* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2007); Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 156-158.

³¹⁹ Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 169-170, 172-174.

exactly what he did has been lost. Shapur then started another war with Rome, in which he was able to overrun Syria and sack Antioch. Valerian eventually launched a counterattack in response, but he was defeated and captured by Shapur. At this point, Shapur's success against Rome ended. As Shapur's army withdrew, Roman commanders and Odenathus rallied Rome's Eastern forces and attacked the Persian army.³²⁰ After Shapur's withdrawal, Persia became embroiled with its own internal struggles and wars on its other frontiers. Rome had the time to recover from some of its internal struggles by the late third century and was better able to fight Persia. The balance of power between the two empires shifted back and forth over the next three centuries. The two powers fought back and forth until the Muslim conquest, in which the new Muslim Caliphate conquered Persia and most of the Byzantine world. Nonetheless, the Sassanid Persians proved to be a more dangerous opponent for the Romans than the Parthians had been, which strained Rome's Eastern defences. This meant that Rome needed to spend resources and attention on the Eastern frontier, which weakened Rome's Western defences and gave more opportunities for Germanic and 'Scythian' attacks.

The Western Frontier

In the West the issue is somewhat more complex since the modern debate around whether the Germanic tribes were able to pose a threat to Rome must be addressed. Two prominent scholars who have debated on the topic are Elton and Drinkwater. Elton argued that the main purpose of the Roman army was to keep opponents outside of Rome's frontiers. The army may have spent much of its time doing other things, such as dealing with bandits, but it was concentrated to pacify a region or defend it from enemies. The continuous concentration of troops on the Western frontier demonstrates the danger that the Germanic tribes posed. In other

³²⁰ See Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 184-200 for a more detailed account of this war.

conquered regions, such as Spain and Egypt, Rome reduced the numbers of troops as soon as they had solidified their control over the region.³²¹ Furthermore, the way the troops on the Western frontiers were organized demonstrated that they were ready to handle significant attacks or launch campaigns. Some of the legionary fortresses contained two legions. Concentrating troops in such numbers was not a common practice, and it only happened in the West during the early and high empire. The forces on the Eastern frontier were less concentrated, as there was less frequent conflict there. There were good reasons for keeping the soldiers dispersed. Aside from the need to supply them, concentrated units could give significant power to a would-be usurper and be difficult to control.³²²

Before looking at Drinkwater's argument, it must be acknowledged that most modern scholars believe that Rome had superior access to manpower than the Germanic tribes did. When Roman authors claimed that 'barbarian' hordes were tens of thousands strong, they were not trying to give an accurate number. They simply were trying to demonstrate that Rome was facing a great number of opponents. This did not mean that the Germanic tribes were not a threat, especially when Rome was occupied with multiple frontiers simultaneously. However, Rome should have been able to replenish its armies more easily than its Western opponents.³²³

Drinkwater's stance is more extreme than many of the other authors. Drinkwater argued that the Germanic tribes were not a significant threat to Rome from the first to fourth century. Instead, he argued that the concept of a Germanic threat was cultivated by Roman emperors for political purposes. This idea justified the existence of the army and emperor to defend the frontiers. The

³²¹ Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 59, 111.

³²² Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 59-61, 66-67.

³²³ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations in the Roman West*, 144-145. Alternatively, it has been argued that the Roman Empire should have had access to greater manpower but was unable to draw on its population. Whitby, "Army and Society in the Late Roman World," 517-518; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, "The End of the Roman Army in Western Europe," in *War and Society in the Roman World*, ed. John Rich and Graham Shipley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 265-276, 266. Elton argued against this theory. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 152-154.

Germanic tribes also provided an excellent target for foreign campaigns, which legitimized emperors in the eyes of their subjects.³²⁴ Drinkwater defended this argument with the fact that *Germani* almost always raided the Roman Empire but rarely threatened significant Roman cities. Imperial propaganda then exaggerated the conflicts to make it seem like the Romans were heavily outnumbered by the *Germani*, while the raids were actually only a nuisance to Rome.³²⁵ Even when Rome was occupied by civil war, it was rare for Germanic tribes to take advantage and attack Rome.³²⁶ At the same time, Roman military action displays a lack of interest in the region. After Augustan and Tiberian campaigns into *Germania*, the Romans only conducted small scale military and policing actions.³²⁷ One of the major reasons for the inability of the *Germani* to launch significant invasions was the limited population density. None of the tribes had a population base large enough to field forces which could significantly threaten Roman territory.³²⁸

Drinkwater had to reconcile his argument that the *Germani* were more of a nuisance to Rome than a threat with the fact that they were able to defeat Roman armies and take Roman territory. Drinkwater argued that the military reversals were due to Roman incompetence.³²⁹ Furthermore, the territory lost to the *Germani* was only lightly populated, and it was left undefended or abandoned while the Roman army was occupied by civil wars. For example, Drinkwater argued that *Agri Decumates* was abandoned by the imperial military, leaving much of the poor populace there. With no military protection, the Alamanni were able to settle and

³²⁴ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 11-12. See also T.S. Burns, *Barbarians Within the Gates of Rome* (Indianapolis: Bloomington, 1994).

³²⁵ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 13-14, 30.

³²⁶ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 14, 26.

³²⁷ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 21.

³²⁸ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 77-79

³²⁹ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 18-19,

coexist with the Roman population who adopted Germanic material culture as it was more convenient.³³⁰

While Drinkwater's arguments have merit, there are weaknesses in his argument that the *Germani* never posed a significant threat to Rome during the first to fourth centuries. To start with, leaving armies on the frontiers purely to create the fear of an enemy was a risky and expensive decision. The concentration of troops gave potential usurping governors significant military forces.³³¹ The army was also incredibly expensive to Rome, and its cost grew as soldiers' pay was increased and the army grew. If Rome was not facing a threat from beyond the Germanic frontier, Marcus Aurelius and Severus would not have needed to recruit new legions. If the emperors were creating an imagined Germanic threat purely for political reasons, at least one of them must have been aware that a financial collapse would lead to military rebellion. Additionally, it would have required consistent effort from emperors to create the idea that the *Germani* were a significant threat if they were only a nuisance. At least some of the frontier military commanders and soldiers would surely have noticed that they were fighting a few raiding bands instead of entire armies. The Germanic tribes were not the endless threat that ancient sources claim but relegating them to merely a nuisance is shifting too far in the opposite direction.

Drinkwater's argument is too extreme a stance to describe the Western frontier, as the ancient source material portrays the Germanic tribes as a threat to Rome. Even Tacitus, who believed that the senate, not emperors, should rule Rome,³³² made no such claim. He stated the role of the Roman commanders on the Rhine frontier had changed by Nero's reign, as they were

³³⁰ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 126-128.

³³¹ Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, 59.

³³² See Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1-1.5 for his portrayal of Julius Caesar and Augustus.

now expected to maintain peace along the Roman frontier.³³³ However, Tacitus gives no indication that he believed the garrison was unnecessary or that it should have been reduced during this period of peace. Despite this, many of Drinkwater's points are relevant. Rome was in a superior position to the Germanic tribes, especially when they were not united. They simply lacked the manpower to resist full Roman armies. The campaigns by Caesar and Tiberius were both decisive victories for Rome.³³⁴ During the rare instances that some tribes did unite, they could pose a serious threat. However, the tribes were unable to maintain a united force for extended periods or launch campaigns into Roman territory, even when Rome was at a disadvantage. For example, Arminius was able to lead the Romans into an ambush where warriors from several tribes were able to annihilate the Roman army. The Romans lost three of their legions, which took decades to be replaced.³³⁵ If Arminius could have maintained his army and attacked Rome, he had the opportunity to do so while their frontier forces were weakened. However, Arminius never launched an attack, and gave Rome time to recover. By the time that Tiberius came to power, Rome had been able to recover enough to launch a counterattack.³³⁶ The Germanic tribes could be a significant threat in the first and second centuries, but they were not able to launch a significant campaign into Roman territory.

The Germanic tribes became a greater threat to Rome in the second century and later.

One of the first major developments was that the Germanic tribes began to cooperate in their

³³³ Tacitus, *Annals*, 53.1.

³³⁴ Julius Caesar, *Gallic War*, 1.49-1.52. 4.15-19; Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.104-106; Cassius Dio: *Roman History* 55.13. Drinkwater is dismissive of Caesar's account, as he believed that Caesar exaggerated the Germanic threat so he could remain in Gaul longer. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 12-14, 18. However, Caesar did not describe the battles in the same way. In the first battle, the *Germani* were able to hold the right flank until they were overwhelmed by the loss of the left flank. In the second battle, most of the Germanic army broke before the battle started. If the idea of a Germanic threat was purely created by Caesar, one would expect Caesar to describe the tribes in a way to make them more threatening.

³³⁵ Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army: From Republic to Empire* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1998), 168-169.

³³⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.47, 1.51, 1.55-1.71; Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 20-21.

wars and maintain cohesion when launching attacks against the Roman frontiers instead of being limited to small warbands. Alliances could even form between multiple tribes from different ethnic groupings. While these alliances were uncommon, they were dangerous for Rome when they did form.³³⁷ Additionally, new tribal groupings appeared in the aftermath of the Marcommanic Wars, such as the Alamanni,³³⁸ Franks, and Goths. These groups were larger and more dangerous than their predecessors had been. They were formed from confederations of smaller pre-existing tribes³³⁹ or when several populations had migrated towards Rome's frontier over time.³⁴⁰ The Goths were especially dangerous in the third century. Not only did the Goths raid in the Roman Balkans, but they were also able to launch naval expeditions and attack Asia Minor.³⁴¹ Additional Germanic groups began press against Rome's frontiers during the fourth and fifth centuries. One of the most important of these group was the Vandals, who would settle in Roman Africa and sack the city of Rome in the mid fifth century.³⁴² The Romans were aware of a group called 'Vandals' since the first century, but the Vandals' history is nebulous until they moved closer to Rome's borders.³⁴³ The new pressure from fourth century tribal groups added to the issue Rome was facing with Germanic tribes on its frontiers.

While new Germanic groups appeared on the frontiers, the 'Scythian' peoples became a greater threat as well. Though the Alans and Sarmatians were known to the Romans since the

³³⁷ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 38-41.

³³⁸ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 43-44.

³³⁹ The Franks are an example of this. James, *The Franks*, 35-38.

³⁴⁰ The Goths are an example of this. Malcolm Todd, "The Germanic peoples and Germanic society," in *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 12: The Crisis of Empire, AD 193-337*, 2nd edition. ed., Alan Bowman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 440-460, 445-446; Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 220-222.

³⁴¹ Todd, "The Germanic peoples and Germanic society," 445-446.

³⁴² Andrew Merrills, *Vandals, Romans and Berbers: New Perspectives on Late Antique North Africa* (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2004), 39-40.

³⁴³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 4.28; Merrills, *Vandals, Romans and Berbers*, 30-32.

first century, they became a much more serious threat in the mid second and third centuries.³⁴⁴

The Flavians attempted to ally with the Quadi and Dacians against the ‘Scythians’, but they were unable to maintain the alliance. In fact, the Danubian tribes frequently allied with the Alans against Rome, which created a stronger force opposing Rome.³⁴⁵ The Huns became a threat to Rome at the end of the fourth century. At first, the Huns’ impact on the Roman borders was indirect. The Huns and their Alanic allies destabilized the area beyond Rome’s Danubian frontier.³⁴⁶ The destabilization led to the *Terevingi* and *Greuthungi*, along with members of other tribes, seeking asylum within Rome’s territories. This was the first in a series of events which led to Rome’s defeat at the battle of Adrianople.³⁴⁷ The Huns were the most dangerous during the fifth century, especially under Attila’s leadership. Under his leadership the Huns were able to ransack both the Eastern and Western Empire. Even when Rome and its allies defeated Attila in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, he was still able to invade Italy. The threat that the Huns posed dissipated in 452 when Attila died on his wedding night. Without his leadership, the Huns never again were the threat they had been.³⁴⁸ From the fourth century onwards, the Germanic and ‘Scythian’ tribes became increasingly dangerous opponents for Rome to handle.

There are multiple ways that the Germanic and ‘Scythian’ tribes became more dangerous from the second century onward. One is that the tribes also simply became familiar with the Roman army and its weaknesses. The Germanic tribes during this time still primarily raided Roman territory with warbands of 600, but they were able to get around Rome’s frontier

³⁴⁴ Bachrach, *History of the Alans in the West*, 3, 12, 14-15.

³⁴⁵ Jones, *Domitian*, 135-137; Bachrach, *History of the Alans in the West*, 13-14.

³⁴⁶ James, *Europe’s Barbarians*, 45-46; Lenksi, *Failure of Empire*, 322-323; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 6. If the Huns had not destabilized the region, the region may have remained stable during Valens’ reign. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 175.

³⁴⁷ James, *Europe’s Barbarians*, 50-51.

³⁴⁸ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 247, 251; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 50, 218; James, *Europe’s Barbarians*, 67-68.

defenses. The Roman legions were extremely powerful when rallied but were slow to move and react to the fast-moving warbands.³⁴⁹ Roman forces were more successful at catching the warbands who were returning to their land, as the warbands were slowed down with the loot from raiding.³⁵⁰ Even so, the warbands were better able to outmaneuver the Romans during this time.

While the warbands were not a threat to full Roman armies, Germanic and Scythian groups in the second, third, and fourth centuries were able to form armies which could fight Roman armies. It was rare for tribes to rally a united army and fight the Romans in a field battle, as it was a major risk for them to do so. Roman armies usually overcame their opponents in battle, even in the late fourth and fifth century after Adrianople.³⁵¹ Nevertheless, Germanic armies, especially Gothic armies, were still able to inflict significant defeats to Rome occasionally despite Rome's advantage. Two of the most famous Roman defeats were the battle of Abrittus and the battle of Adrianople during which the Gothic armies defeated the Roman army and killed the Roman emperor.³⁵² Even successful Roman commanders were not invincible. When Aurelian had taken power and gained control of Italy, he fought and lost a battle against the Juthungi. The defeat was not decisive, and Aurelian was able to rally his soldiers and defeat the Juthungi in a second battle.³⁵³ The ability of tribes to rally together also meant that they were able to threaten and sack Roman towns, which had never happened in the first century. Though Germanic tribes generally avoided long-term sieges, they occasionally used

³⁴⁹ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 145.

³⁵⁰ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 52-53.

³⁵¹ The Roman armies were almost always better equipped and armoured than their Germanic counterparts, even after Adrianople. See, Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 57-64.

³⁵² Battle of Abrittus: Brauer, *The Age of the Soldier Emperors*, 54-56; Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Rome*, 74-75. Battle of Adrianople: Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 339-340,

³⁵³ Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 50-52.

siege towers to attack fortified cities.³⁵⁴ A couple of the notable cities that were sacked were Philippopolis and Mainz, the latter of which had been a legionary fortress and was used as a staging ground for Roman armies forming on the Western frontier³⁵⁵.

Once Rome fully committed itself to a full-scale war under the leadership of a capable commander, it almost always was able to overpower the Germanic tribes it met. For example, emperors such as Maximinus Thrax, Probus, Constantine, Constantius II, and Julian were all able to successfully campaign into *Germania*. Though rallied Germanic tribes could resist Roman attacks, they almost always needed something, such as a civil war or attack on another frontier, to weaken the Roman Empire to successfully defend against a campaign. This had happened in previous centuries, as the drawn-out wars led by Domitian and Marcus Aurelius show.³⁵⁶ The third century crisis is another example of this. Rome was not able to launch many significant attacks against the Germanic tribes, as its commanders were busy fighting each other and Shapur. Even Valens' disaster at Adrianople was partly due to the situation of the empire around it. During the months before the war, Valens had been occupied in a war against Persia over Armenia. When the Goths rebelled, Valens was still in Antioch and his army in the East. He had to make peace with Persia and bring his army to the Balkans to fight the Goths and requested reinforcements from Gratian.³⁵⁷ Gratian did not send reinforcements immediately, as he launched a campaign against the Lentiensian Alamanni. According to Marcellinus, once Gratian had finished his war with the Alamanni, he sent a letter, which stated that he had defeated the

³⁵⁴ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 83.

³⁵⁵ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 83; Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 74-75, 141-142, 223-224; John Drinkwater, *Roman Gaul: The Three Gauls, 58BC- 280AD*, Routledge Revival (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2014), 54, 66, 87. Mainz was repaired and housed military units again. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213-496*, 181, 201, 217-218.

³⁵⁶ See discussions on pages 68 and 72.

³⁵⁷ Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 173, 329-330,

Alamanni and his army would arrive at Adrianople soon, to his uncle Valens.³⁵⁸ However, Valens chose not to wait for Gratian's reinforcements because he wanted to win a victory equal to Gratian's Alamannic victory and was manipulated into bringing his army to the entrenched Goths by Fritigern.³⁵⁹

Even though the Germanic tribes were more successful at attacking Rome after the second century, they fought similarly to their first and second century predecessors. In the third and fourth century, the Germanic tribes adopted some Roman military technology. However, they still primarily fought as infantry and rarely wore armour. The biggest change was the increased use of cavalry during the fourth century, which the Germanic tribes were exposed to through 'Scythian' attacks. Some groups eventually became renowned for their horsemanship, notably the Alamanni.³⁶⁰ However, this did not mean that every Germanic group had substantial numbers of cavalry. The terrain that a group lived in determined how large a cavalry force they could field. Germanic tribes in dense forests were simply unable to supply as many horses for cavalry as those outside of the dense forests.³⁶¹

While Rome's enemies could threaten Roman territory, it became common during the third century for Rome to be attacked on multiple frontiers at the same time. It was difficult for Rome to deal with attacks on multiple frontiers. Until the fourth century, Rome generally only was capable of launching one major campaign at a time. These campaigns could be led by the emperor personally, or a commander appointed by the emperor.³⁶² Since Rome did not have a

³⁵⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 31.11.6, 31.12.4-5.

³⁵⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 31.12. Lenski has argued that a political struggle between the two emperors caused Valens to attack early, and he placed more blame on Gratian. See Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 356-359, 365-367.

³⁶⁰ Some Germanic tribes used cavalry previously, notably the Batavians. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar*, 2, 5.

³⁶¹ Todd, "The Germanic peoples and Germanic society," 451; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 57-58. Drinkwater felt that the skill of the Alamannic horsemen was exaggerated by Rome. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 141.

³⁶² Pearson, *Maximinus Thrax*, 7-8, 105-106.

standing field army for these campaigns, Rome needed to transfer forces from other frontiers where it planned to campaign. This meant that the areas where troops were removed would not have the manpower to campaign and would be more vulnerable. For example, when Domitian rallied troops for his Danubian campaign, he ordered Agricola to withdraw from his conquests in Northern Britain.³⁶³ If Rome happened to be conducting a campaign and was threatened elsewhere, Rome usually finished one campaign before embarking on another. Some of the troops who participated in the first campaign would be brought to the second campaign as well. This happened during Marcus Aurelius' reign, as Aurelius did not begin fighting on the Western frontier until Lucius Verus returned from the East.³⁶⁴ The same thing occurred during Severus Alexander's reign. After receiving heavy casualties from his campaign against the Persians, Alexander had to bring his battered army to the West to respond to threats on the Rhine and Danube.³⁶⁵ Since the Roman military primarily fought one significant enemy at a time, the simultaneous attacks on both its frontiers was incredibly difficult for Rome to handle. There were occasions where Rome tried to launch campaigns in the East and West simultaneously, which usually occurred when multiple emperors from the same dynasty reigned. Launching multiple campaigns had mixed results for Rome. For example, both Carus and Valerian launched campaigns against Persia while their sons fought Germanic peoples in the West. While Carus was successful until his sudden death, Valerian was defeated and captured.³⁶⁶ Though Rome was in an advantageous position to its opponents on the Western frontier, it was not invincible. Even

³⁶³ Domitian took forces from Britain for his German Campaigns. Jones, *Domitian*, 130-131.

³⁶⁴ The soldiers returning from the East played a major role in spreading the plague to Rome. Birley, "The Wars and Revolts," 220-221.

³⁶⁵ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 61-63.

³⁶⁶ Carus' success can be partly attributed to the fact the Persians had their own political issues when he launched his campaign, which may explain why Rome was able to fight on two fronts. In contrast, Valerian had to fight Persia while Persia was able to be fully committed to its war with Rome. Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 78-79, 132-133; Leadbetter, *Galerius and the Will of Diocletian*, 37-38.

when Rome's frontiers remained stable at the Rhine and Danube, the Germanic tribes interacted with and fought against their Roman opponents, leading to a greater familiarity with Roman strategies. This made them more capable of combating Rome, especially once the tribes used a greater number of cavalry. Rome still usually emerged victorious when its focus was on the Western frontier, but internal struggles and the Eastern frontier gave the tribes opportunities to launch devastating attacks against Rome.

A Changed Roman Army

As Rome struggled to defend all its frontiers and with internal problems, it needed to adapt its army to be more effective against its more dangerous opponents. The adaptations were a reaction to the Germanic and Sasanian attacks and strategies. They did not occur because the army was 'barbarized' or significantly worse than it had been during the first century. The first changes made to the army in the third century were not intended to be long-term or permanent. They were short term solutions to respond to specific circumstances. These short-term changes eventually culminated in the reforms of Diocletian, Constantine, and to a lesser extent their successors,³⁶⁷ as circumstances the late empire was in necessitated a different army structure.

Focusing on the short term third century changes, one of the major changes to the Roman army was the reorganization of the military to make the army more mobile and flexible. This was done by making units smaller, detaching cavalry units from infantry ones, and creating mobile units which were not tied to a specific area. One of the first changes was the creation of *vexillationes*. A *vexillatio* was a unit of soldiers which was detached from its legion so it could be moved elsewhere in the Empire without moving an entire legion. This was done to reinforce garrisons or to concentrate units for a field army without completely exposing a frontier. A

³⁶⁷ It is hard to separate Diocletian's military reforms from Constantine's. Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 15-20. For the purposes of this thesis, their reforms will be looked at together.

vexillatio was intended to be temporary and the unit was supposed to return to its main legions eventually. However, they frequently ended up permanently stationed in other locations instead of being returned to their main legions. By the reign of Gallienus, *vexillationes* had become so commonplace that his field army was most likely made up almost exclusively of *vexillationes* from various legions around the Empire instead of full legions.³⁶⁸ While this worked to move troops around the Empire, it did lead to portions of many of Rome's legions being scattered around the Empire.³⁶⁹ Rome's need to move soldiers is clear, but there was no fully organized system in place to move soldiers until the fourth century.

Another change was the separation of legionary cavalry from the legionary infantry around the time of Gallienus' reign. Legionary cavalry had been attached to its parent legion until this time, though auxiliary *alae* were already separate units.³⁷⁰ The separation of the legionary cavalry allowed the units to move and react faster without being slowed down by the several thousand infantry members of a legion. Gallienus also increased the number of legionary cavalry in the units from 120 to 700 soldiers, though cavalry *vexillationes* eventually settled at 500 soldiers.³⁷¹ The larger number of troops in these units meant that they had around the same manpower as the roughly 600 strong warbands, which meant that the cavalry units could conceivably fight the warbands themselves. Gallienus also famously created a cavalry army, which was placed under Aureolus and based in Milan. Zosimus stated that this force was intended to prevent Postumus from invading Italy.³⁷² However, the cavalry force was probably

³⁶⁸ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 83. In the fourth century, '*vexillatio*' became one of the terms used to refer to a cavalry unit. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 89.

³⁶⁹ Southern, *The Roman Empire from Septimius Severus to Constantine*, 275-276; Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 22-23; Paul Elliott, *Legions in Crisis: Transformation of the Roman Soldier AD 192-284* (Oxford; Fonthill Media, 2014), 24-25, 140.

³⁷⁰ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 6, 30.

³⁷¹ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 12, 30.

³⁷² Zosimus, *New History*, 1.40.

first intended as a response to the threat the Alamanni posed. The Alamanni had settled in the *Agri Decumates*, which meant that they could quickly attack or raid Northern Italy.³⁷³ The cavalry force was more mobile than the Alamannic raiding parties, which made it a far more effective response than infantry-based legions would be.

Once the Empire had stabilized from the third century crisis, Diocletian and Constantine reformed the entire military. First, the late Roman army was broken into two main groups of soldiers in order to provide a mobile field army while retaining frontier defences. The *comitatenses* were the soldiers who composed the mobile field armies, and the *limitanei* were soldiers/farmers placed on Rome's frontiers. Despite the separation of the two soldier types, detachments of *limitanei* were sometimes brought into field armies as *pseudocomitatenses*.³⁷⁴ The other major change was the emphasis on smaller unit sizes. This is most notable with the reduction of the standard unit size, which was reduced from 6000 soldiers to around 1000 soldiers for legions in both the *limitanei* and *comitatenses*. Nevertheless, auxiliary³⁷⁵ infantry units were around the same size as the predecessors had been.³⁷⁶ Most other unit types were around 600 strong.³⁷⁷ The reorganization of the army in this way most likely reflects the acceptance of the need for smaller units by Diocletian and Constantine. If the older military model had been more effective, most likely the emperors or their successors would have returned to it. Instead, the system implemented by Diocletian and Constantine remained the standard in

³⁷³ De Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus*, 26-28; Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 11-12.

³⁷⁴ There were many specialized categories of soldiers, such as *palatini*, *sagittari*, and *cataphracti*, but they were placed in the two general groups. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 94-5, 104, 106.

³⁷⁵ After the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, auxiliary units referred to foreign troops instead of non-citizen troops. Hugh Elton, "Warfare and the Military," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 325-346, 329.

³⁷⁶ Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 31- 32; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 89.

³⁷⁷ There are multiple different unit names which appear in late antiquity, but the precise differences between the units are unknown. The precise sizes of units are difficult to determine, and there was most likely variation of unit sizes throughout late antiquity. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 89-90, 99-100.

both the Eastern and Western Empires for the duration of antiquity. The changes to the Roman army during the third and fourth centuries did not happen because the Roman soldiers within it performed worse or ‘barbarian’ recruits ‘barbarized’ it. The changing circumstances of the Roman world forced the Roman authorities to adapt their army to be more capable to handle the threats it would encounter.

Recruitment of Roman and ‘Barbarian’ Soldiers

As the Roman army’s organization and strategies adapted, a conscription system was formalized by the emperor Diocletian. The need to create a conscription system has sometimes been used by scholars to argue that the Empire found it increasingly difficult to recruit soldiers and turned to ‘barbarian’ recruits, who ‘barbarized’ the Roman army, to replenish its depleting army. Until the third century, conscription of legionaries had been incredibly rare. Most legionary recruitment was voluntary, and conscription was used as a last resort. Emperors tried to find other possible solutions before resorting to conscription. For example, Augustus allowed freedmen to join the legions instead of relying on conscription.³⁷⁸ Conscription usually only occurred after significant crisis such as the defeat at Teutoberg Forest or a civil war. When emperors did conscribe soldiers, they usually selectively drafted provincials instead of Italians.³⁷⁹ The system remained basically the same in the second century. The biggest change was that forces began to be drawn increasingly from nearby sources. Many recruits were descendants of veterans who had settled around legionary forts or pre-existing *colonia*.³⁸⁰ Since troops were being recruited closer to military bases, Italians became a decreasing proportion of the Roman legions; however, new legions were primarily made up of Italians until the third century.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 49.

³⁷⁹ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 50.

³⁸⁰ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 61-63.

³⁸¹ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 63-64.

Despite emperors avoiding conscription, it became a necessity during the third century. Due to the instability during the crisis, no Empire-wide recruitment system was established. Emperors conscribed recruits from wherever the emperor happened to be on an *ad hoc* basis. The one formal policy created during this time was compulsory enrollment of veterans' sons into the army. This policy survived into the fourth and fifth centuries and the imperial government created punishments for those who tried to avoid recruitment.³⁸²

A conscription system was created after the third century crisis by Diocletian. After Diocletian's abdication, Constantine and his successors maintained the conscription system without many significant changes.³⁸³ The necessity of conscription has led scholars to generally believe there were recruitment difficulties as they could no longer rely on volunteers, but the causes of the difficulties, how severe the difficulties were, and whether recruitment difficulties led to Rome's reliance on 'barbarian' soldiers are all debated. How severe the recruitment difficulties were is difficult to gauge, as the primary sources rarely discussed this. The *Codex Theodosianus* contains a law passed by Constantine which decreed that soldiers' sons who cut off their fingers to avoid military service had to perform compulsory public service.³⁸⁴ Similar laws were not passed again until the reigns of Valentinian and Valens,³⁸⁵ who took power in the aftermath of Julian's disastrous Persian campaign. Marcellinus, writing after the law was passed, once mentioned that the provinces preferred to pay gold instead of sending soldiers,³⁸⁶ but recorded no issue in the following books when Constantius levied provincials for his army.³⁸⁷

³⁸² Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 67-68.

³⁸³ Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 615-616; Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement During the Principate*, 67; Brian Campbell, "The Army," *The Cambridge Ancient History Volume 12: The Crisis of Empire, AD 193-337*, 2nd edition, ed. Alan Bowman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110-130, 126.

³⁸⁴ *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.22.1.

³⁸⁵ *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.22.7.

³⁸⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 19.11.7.

³⁸⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, 20.8.1, 21.6.6.

Because of this, scholars have had to create their arguments with limited evidence. The traditional argument for these recruiting difficulties of Italians and later provincial Romans was the ‘demilitarization’ of Roman society starting in the second century. Rome’s population became less warlike, and no longer willing to become soldiers. The population’s ‘demilitarization’ started first in the core provinces, then in all the provinces around the Empire. Liebeschuetz added that recruitment difficulties were not simply regionalization, as the population did not try to defend their own territories. The recruiting problems were intensified by the rise of large landowners, who were able to use their wealth to prevent the conscription of their workers. Further issues stemmed from the destruction and abandonment of land on the frontiers, though this was not an issue everywhere in the Empire. Some areas were depopulated while others, such as Spain and North Africa, were hardly impacted at all. Because of this, Rome was forced to draw on the more warlike Germanic tribes, Isaurians, and Armenians in order to maintain its army size.³⁸⁸ As argued by Liebeschuetz, the Roman army became ‘barbarized’ as a result, and Romans became the minority in their own army. The ‘barbarization’ led to the army becoming less reliable, less disciplined, and more prone to usurpation and mutiny. In Liebeschuetz’s argument it became impossible for the Empire to recruit enough troops from its own population to maintain its army.³⁸⁹

In more recent years, scholars have moved away from the traditional interpretations. One such scholar is Whitby, who argued against the traditional concepts of demilitarization, a significant population decline, and significant land destruction. Scholars have argued that there were several possible reasons which led to the recruitment difficulties. One reason is that recruiting difficulties were caused by imperial regionalization and weak imperial authority,

³⁸⁸ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 18.

³⁸⁹ Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 18-20.

especially in the West, which led to a lack of loyalty from imperial subjects.³⁹⁰ Another possible reason is that military service became less enticing, especially for Italians, starting in the Julio-Claudian period. One of the main reasons for this was the conditions of service and military pay. One of the biggest drawbacks was the length of service and lack of rewards for regular units.³⁹¹ For example, land grants at the end of service became less common as the Empire simply ran out of available land. Augustus had been able to cheaply get land to give to his soldiers at the start of his reign because of the civil wars and proscriptions, but he had less land available as he settled veterans on it. More land became available in conquered or revolting areas, but this land was less popular with the Italian veterans who would have rather returned to Italy. Taking land from conquered peoples could backfire, as it could cause the local population to revolt. Furthermore, as the Empire's expansion slowed, less new land became available.³⁹² At the same time, military pay became worth less as inflation occurred. Emperors tried to remedy this by increasing soldiers' pay and increased service benefits,³⁹³ but the rapid inflation of the third century meant that the soldiers' pay continued to decrease. Moving into late antiquity, the service became more dangerous. Military units faced greater dangers in the conflicts on the frontier wars, and there was the threat of civil war as well. The resistance to serving increased in times of crisis, as the loss of prestige and reputation from a defeat meant people wanted to serve less and caused increased desertion. There were benefits, such as tax breaks and a higher status, especially for the

³⁹⁰ Whitby, "Army and Society in the Late Roman World," 518-519, 525. Liebeschuetz acknowledged the difficulty in enticing people to move around the empire, but he placed more emphasis on an empire-wide demilitarization. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 17-18.

³⁹¹ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 49.

³⁹² Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 60-61, 65.

³⁹³ Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 64, 66.

rural poor, but these benefits were not enough to entice everyone into military service around the Empire.³⁹⁴

Whitby argued against the idea that Rome was unable to maintain its army through Roman recruits. He asserted that Diocletian's recruitment system was still capable of delivering enough troops to sustain the army. However, the need for new recruits during a military crisis could overwhelm the system.³⁹⁵ Rome's struggle to rebuild its forces immediately after a disaster is not new: Augustus never restored the lost legions during the early imperial period. However, the impact appears more extreme in late antiquity. Since the late Germanic tribes and Sasanians were more aggressive, Rome would not have time to recover over several years. Following the battle of Teutoburg, there was no significant conflict until the German campaigns in Tiberius' reign. Following the battle at Adrianople, Valens' successor Theodosius was immediately faced with the problems of handling the Goths in the Empire, soon followed by civil wars with Magnus Maximus and Eugenius. Despite this, Roman recruits were still most likely the majority of the army. Recent scholarly estimates of the total percentage of Germanic soldiers in the Eastern army are around thirty percent in 395. Therefore, Romans were still the majority of the army.³⁹⁶ Though a significant number of soldiers were foreigners, this percentage was not unprecedented. During the Early Empire, the non-citizen auxiliaries were most likely fifty percent of Rome's army.³⁹⁷

It must be admitted that the Western Empire's military and political situation rapidly became out of control. During the first few years Honorius received power after Theodosius'

³⁹⁴ Whitby, "Army and Society in the Late Roman World," 518-519. Land grants occurred only rarely in late antiquity. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement*, 67.

³⁹⁵ Michael Whitby, "Army and Society in the Late Roman World," 518-519.

³⁹⁶ Roussel, "Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la "Barbarisation,"" 215-216.

³⁹⁷ Hekster and Zair, *Rome and Its Empire*, 39.

death, his guardian and top military commander Stilicho fought a war with the Eastern Empire, sent troops to suppress a rebellion in Africa, fought against ‘barbarian’ attacks into Raetia, and defended against Alaric’s and Radagaisus’ invasions of Italy.³⁹⁸ Stilicho drew on troops from the Gallic and British frontiers for these wars, which weakened these already depleted frontiers.³⁹⁹ Stilicho then had to deal with the usurpation of Constantine III, who had the support of Spain, Gaul, and Britain. After Stilicho had failed to defeat Constantine and instead tried to convince Alaric to fight Constantine while he went East to claim guardianship over Theodosius II, political intrigue led to his execution in 408.⁴⁰⁰ Honorius and his court were now in charge of the Western empire, but they were unable to rectify the situation. Continued foreign pressure occurred during this time too, as ‘barbarian’ troops were able to use imperial disorder to move beyond the frontiers as far as Spain.⁴⁰¹ Stilicho and then Honorius were not able to quickly recruit enough Roman soldiers to replenish their armies fighting in all these wars, and they were both forced to use defeated ‘barbarians’ in his army.⁴⁰² This is unsurprising. The Western empire had lost two civil wars against Theodosius, and it was thrust into multiple wars at the same time after Theodosius’ death. Additionally, Honorius’ access to Roman manpower was limited. Constantine was certainly not going to help Honorius raise soldiers, nor were areas under other usurpers’ or ‘barbarian’ control. New soldiers also needed to be trained, which was expensive and time consuming. The Western empire did not have the time nor the finances to train new

³⁹⁸ This was Alaric’s first invasion of Italy, as Alaric continued to attack Italy after Stilicho’s death. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 189, 200-201, 206-208.

³⁹⁹ Magnus Maximus and Arbogast had drawn troops from these frontiers during their civil wars with Theodosius. Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 195-196; Liebeschuetz, “The End of the Roman Army in the West,” 266.

⁴⁰⁰ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 211-212. Constantine did not control the whole territory for long, as it quickly revolted against him. Halsall, 220.

⁴⁰¹ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 221.

⁴⁰² Liebeschuetz, “The End of the Roman Army in the West,” 266.

forces from scratch.⁴⁰³ It was quicker, easier, and cheaper to use Germanic soldiers in times of crisis, then dismiss them when they were no longer needed.⁴⁰⁴ The repeated foreign and civil wars during the early fifth century forced Rome to rely more on foreign tribes, but Rome had been able to sustain its armies until this point.⁴⁰⁵ Even so, until the fifth century ‘barbarians’ never were at an unprecedented proportion of the army when compared to the foreigners in the Principate’s army. At the same time, the conscription system was a response to a gradual change in how Rome recruited its soldiers and the increased military pressure Rome was under instead of a demonstration of a Roman decline.

Fortifications

Returning to the third and fourth centuries, another change for the late Roman army was the greater emphasis on fortifications than in the early and high period. The use of fortifications by the military was not a new phenomenon. The Roman army famously used temporary marching and permanent forts throughout its existence, and Rome’s frontiers were protected by fortifications. Despite this, there were two major changes in Roman fortifications. One was the use of circuit walls and fortifications around interior Roman cities and towns. The other is the implementation of new designs for Roman military forts, which gave the defenders a greater advantage against attacks.

The intended use of the new city circuit walls has generated debate amongst modern scholars. On the one hand, there is the obvious argument that the walls were for defence. Since towns further inside imperial territory were threatened by Germanic and ‘Scythian’ groups, Rome needed to build walls quickly to defend them.⁴⁰⁶ There are some walls built hastily in

⁴⁰³ Whitby, “Army and Society in the Late Roman World,” 519.

⁴⁰⁴ Stickler, “The Foederati,” 506.

⁴⁰⁵ The ‘barbarian’ groups who were in treaties with Rome in the fifth century were usually loyal. Stickler, “The Foederati,” 508-509.

⁴⁰⁶ Cleary, *The Roman West*, 129.

response to immediate danger, such as the wall built in Athens.⁴⁰⁷ On the other hand, some walls were not built quickly and considerable effort was given to make them look impressive, instead of simply being a crude, quickly created, and purely functional barrier. These walls could serve as a form of monumental architecture or a political statement instead of being intended for defence. For example, the outside layer of some walls was designed to look like quarried stone. Attention to colour was also commonplace, with builders placing stones to create polychrome patterns. Some of the gates may have been designed with the *adventus* ceremony in mind, but this theory is limited by the lack of evidence from the time.⁴⁰⁸ Examples of these sort of walls can be found in the interior of Gaul and Spain. Additionally, many of the city walls encompassed too large a space to be defended well. The Aurelian Walls are a particular example of this. Though the walls did not encompass the entire city of Rome, which was too large to effectively wall entirely, the Aurelian Walls were nineteen kilometers long and had twenty-nine entrances.⁴⁰⁹ Even if walls served other functions, they still would have provided protection against attacks. This would be especially true in the West as the Germanic tribes were not usually equipped to or skilled at attacking fortifications. The presence of walls often deterred them from attacking.⁴¹⁰ If the Romans were concerned about the walls not functioning effectively, they also could upgrade the walls. The Aurelian Walls were upgraded in the fifth century to better withstand attack. The walls proved to be capable, as they allowed Rome's defenders to resist two sieges from Alaric's Goths.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ Cleary, *The Roman West*, 124.

⁴⁰⁸ Cleary, *The Roman West*, 122-126.

⁴⁰⁹ Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century*, 145, 148.

⁴¹⁰ There are some exceptions where the Goths and Huns are attested to have used siege equipment, but it was irregular. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 82-84.

⁴¹¹ Rome's port, *Portus*, was vulnerable, and Alaric targeted it to cut off Rome's food supply and force it to surrender instead of attacking the city walls. Watson, *Aurelian*, 151-152; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West*, 215-216.

Roman forts in the fourth and fifth centuries also underwent design changes. These changes reflected the greater possibility that defenders within the fort would need to be able to fight off an attack. Late Roman forts had thicker walls, fewer entrances, rounded corners, and more defensive towers than previous Roman forts had possessed. At the same time, some older forts were reinforced to be more defensive. During the early and high imperial period, Roman forts were built with four gates. This meant that there were four weak points for attackers to target. During late antiquity, the Roman army blocked off some of the extra gates to reduce the weak points and make the fort more defensible.⁴¹² The increased construction of circuit walls and design change to forts demonstrates the threat external enemies posed to Rome. Rome would not have invested significant resources in circuit walls if there was no concern about foreign attack nor would it have changed its fort designs to be more defensive if there was no threat.

Conclusion

The Roman army was not weaker in late antiquity than it had been in classical antiquity. Rome's enemies were far more aggressive and dangerous than they had been in previous centuries, which forced Rome to adopt defensive policies to defend itself. At the same time, the decentralization of power and financial struggles caused internal unrest and civil war, which drew much of the imperial government's attention. In this environment, it is unsurprising that more disasters occurred. At the same time, Rome's institutions had never been intended to handle disasters. Whenever a significant military defeat occurred, it took decades for the Empire to regain its full strength. The Roman army's difficulties stemmed from many reasons, and it was not simply 'barbarized' by foreign recruits.

⁴¹² Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 132-136.

Conclusions

The debate around ‘barbarization’ is not going to go away anytime soon. Just as governmental policies towards the treatment and integration of foreigners are debated in modern times, so too were they debated in antiquity. Even though it is impossible to determine what everyone in the Roman empire thought, different viewpoints have been preserved in the surviving sources. The debate in antiquity was not limited to just Germanic peoples either. There was a debate amongst the Roman aristocrats about whether to allow *peregrini* to reside inside the city. The Roman senate occasionally passed laws to evict all *peregrini* from the city of Rome, which meant there was enough support amongst the aristocrats to pass the laws. However, there was no unanimous agreement amongst all the senators. Cicero opposed these laws, as he felt they were inhumane.⁴¹³ Similarly, emperor Claudius was involved in a debate about whether members of the Gallic elite should be admitted into the senate. Some senators argued that the Gauls should not be admitted into the senate or magisterial positions, but Claudius decreed that the Gauls would be allowed to because they had assimilated into Roman culture.⁴¹⁴ However, Claudius did not believe that all provincials should be allowed into the senate or even granted citizenship, and he tried to maintain some distinction between citizens and non-citizens. Claudius imposed the death penalty on anyone who pretended to be a citizen.⁴¹⁵

Even in late antiquity, when the Romans began to use the term ‘barbarian’ to refer to foreigners more frequently, surviving Roman literature demonstrates that different viewpoints about integrating foreign people/‘barbarians’ remained. Two frequent points of contention were

⁴¹³ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 38.

⁴¹⁴ Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.23-24; Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 56-57.

⁴¹⁵ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 24.

the use of ‘barbarians’ in the army and ‘barbarian’ settlement within Rome’s frontiers. There is a clear divide between the viewpoints of civilian authors who were writing at the imperial court, and those of soldier and theoretical military writers about ‘barbarians’ in the army. The civilian writers were hostile to the ‘barbarians’ in the army and felt that they should be removed.⁴¹⁶ In contrast, soldier and theoretical military writers never claimed that ‘barbarian’ soldiers had a negative impact on military performance.⁴¹⁷ ‘Barbarian’ settlement was also debated in the imperial court, especially after the battle of Adrianople. Some members of the imperial court felt that ‘barbarians’ should be allowed to settle on Roman land because they would benefit Rome. For example, Themistius, writing during the reign of Theodosius, suggested that it would be better to fill Thrace with farmers (settled Goths) than with corpses.⁴¹⁸ Other people felt that Rome should not allow ‘barbarians’ to settle in its territory, as it would make a precarious situation worse. Synesius, writing after Theodosius’ death, argued the ‘barbarians’ would interpret Rome’s willingness to settle them as a sign of weakness instead of nobility and generosity.⁴¹⁹

With all the different viewpoints, it is unsurprising that there is no consensus about the impact of ‘barbarians’ on Rome and its army by ancient or modern writers. Even so, some conclusions can be drawn about ‘barbarians’ and ‘barbarization’. The first main focus of this thesis was the examination of the Roman term ‘barbarian’ and who ancient ‘barbarians’ were. What can be concluded is that Roman authors used the term differently, and late antique authors

⁴¹⁶ Synesius was one of the major proponents for removing ‘barbarians’ from the army during the early fifth century. Synesius, *De Regno*, 14-15; Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 51; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 137.

⁴¹⁷ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 137.

⁴¹⁸ Vanderspoel, “Imperial Panegyric: Hortatory or Deliberative Oratory?” 204-206, Roussel, “Théodose Ier, le Grand Responsable de la “Barbarisation,”” 179.

⁴¹⁹ Synesius also criticized Theodosius’ Gothic settlement, as he believed that Theodosius had treated the Goths too softly by making peace with them and allowing them to settle in Thrace as allies. Synesius, *De Regno*, 14-15; Southern and Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, 46.

referred to a far greater number of people inside and outside the Empire as ‘barbarians’ than their predecessors had. Even though many of Rome’s policies towards foreigners remained the same, the language used to discuss these peoples had changed.

The second focus of this thesis was to analyze the modern appropriation of ‘barbarian’ and its role in the discussion of ‘barbarization’ and the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The modern interpretation of ‘barbarian’ and creation of the term ‘barbarization’ has created a dichotomy in the research of the early and high imperial periods and the late imperial period. When the changing use of the term ‘barbarian’ by Romans is considered, there is significant continuity between Rome’s policies towards foreigners and conquered peoples in Classical antiquity and Rome’s policies towards ‘barbarians’ in late antiquity. The Germanic tribes were never conquered by Rome and directly ruled, but this did not mean that Rome accepted that they were free from Roman control. The Romans tried to rule the Germanic peoples through alliances, which frequently functioned as client kingships, and expected nearly the same things from their Germanic allies as they had their previous allies. One of the main expectations was the enrollment in the Roman army as auxiliaries. Germanic soldiers did make up a large proportion of the Roman army, but recent work by Elton and Treadgold has demonstrated that the Germanic soldiers probably composed around one quarter of the army during the late fourth century.⁴²⁰ While this is not an insignificant proportion, it is certainly not enough to claim that the Romans no longer recruited citizen soldiers. Additionally, Rome used a greater proportion of auxiliaries in the early imperial period, and auxiliaries may thus have made up around half the Roman army at the time. Some of these soldiers would have been provincials under Roman control, but many of them would have been from client kingdoms. In summary, the trends which ‘barbarization’

⁴²⁰ For more information see, Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284-1081*, 45-59; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, 272-277*.

encompassed were not exclusive to late antiquity; therefore, the impacts of these on the late Roman Empire and army was not as great as some scholars have claimed. Because of all the issues 'barbarization' causes, it may well be better for scholars to avoid the term and instead define the exact topic they are focusing on.

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