Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of History

TOWARDS THE END OF AN EMPIRE: ROME IN THE WEST AND ATTILA (425-455 AD)

Tunç Türel

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2016

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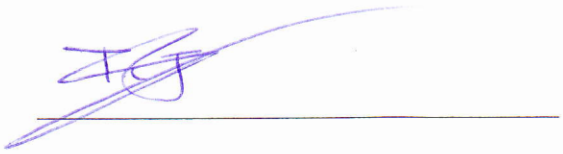

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ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, Tez Danışmanı Yrd. Doç. Dr. Selda Güner danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

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ABSTRACT

Türel, Tunç. *Towards the end of an Empire: Rome in the West and Attila (425-455 AD)* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2016.

In this thesis I argue, with the help of primary sources, archaeology, prosopography and philology, that the Western Roman Empire during the reign of Valentinian III (425-455) did not suffer its gravest catastrophe due to Attila and his Huns, but owing to the fall of its grain and tax basket Carthage in 439, which came to dictate every policy of the Roman court after it occurred. In fact, the Huns had been essential in the campaigns of Flavius Aetius, the most able general of Valentinian III and also the effective ruler of the West until his assassination at the hands of his emperor in 454. Aetius was twice able to assert his dominance over the last representative of the Theodosian dynasty in the West by the aid of Hunnic auxiliaries and without their assistance, neither Aetius' ascension nor his campaigns would have been realized. When Attila ceased to send further warriors to aid Aetius in 439, this came to be his most detrimental decision for the Western Romans, for they depended on the Hunnic federates (*foederati*) to undertake campaigns, while the soldiers of the regular Roman army became either garrison forces or expensive to maintain when contrasted with the rather cheaply employed *foederati*. Although Attila's western campaigns of 451 and 452 were successfully checked, as long as Carthage remained outside of the imperial control, there was no hope for the Western Romans to successfully recover from the setbacks of the 5th century. In this age, the Huns and Attila, who developed a symbiotic relationship with Germanic peoples, were nothing more than a nuisance for the Western Romans due to their grand incursions that aimed at nothing but Roman riches, and therefore their tie with the Western Romans can only be described as a parasitic relationship.

Key Words

Western Roman Empire, Aetius, Huns, Attila, Late Antiquity

ÖZET

TÜREL, Tunç. *Bir İmparatorluğun Sonuna Doğru: Batı Roma ve Attila (İ.S. 425-455)*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2016.

Bu çalışmada, birincil yazılı kaynaklar, arkeoloji, prosopografi ve filolojinin yardımıyla, imparator III. Valentinianus dönemindeki (İ.S. 425-455) Batı Roma İmparatorluğu'nun en büyük darbeyi Attila ve Hunlar tarafından değil, ekonomisinin omurgasını oluşturan Kuzey Afrika şehri Kartaca'nın 439 yılındaki kaybı dolayısıyla aldığı tartışılmaktadır. Bu tarihten sonra Batı Roma'nın tüm politikalarına bu kayıp yön vermiştir. Hunlar ise daha ziyade, III. Valentinianus'un en kabiliyetli generali ve 454 yılında imparatorun kendi eliyle düzenleyeceği suikasta kadar imparatorluğun gerçek yöneticisi olan Flavius Aetius'un düzenlediği askeri seferlerde önemli rol oynamıştır. Aetius, Hun askeri birlikleri sayesinde Theodosius hanedanının batıdaki son temsilcisi üzerinde iki defa iktidarını kurabilmeyi başarabilmiştir. Eğer Hun yardımı olmasaydı, Aetius'un ne bu yükselişi ne de askeri operasyonları gerçekleşmiş olurdu. Attila'nın Batı Roma'ya en büyük zararı, 439 yılında Aetius'a daha fazla Hun askeri (*foederati*) yollamama kararı almasıyla olmuştur. Bu Batı Roma için çok önemliydi, çünkü Batı Roma askeri seferleri için Hunlara ihtiyaç duyuyordu. Kendi ordusunun düzenli askeri birlikleri ise ya garnizon birliklerine dönüşmüş ya da silah altında tutulmaları imparatorluk için, özellikle de *foederati* birliklerinin oldukça ucuza gelmeleri göz önüne alındığında, ağır bir yük olmuştu. Attila'nın 451 ve 452 yıllarındaki batı seferleri her ne kadar başarılı bir şekilde geri püskürtülmüş olsa da, Kartaca imparatorluk kontrolü dışında kaldığı sürece, Batı Roma için 5. yüzyılda yaşadığı kayıpları tersine çevirebilmek için hiçbir umut yoktu. Bu dönem içerisinde, Cermen halklarıyla simbiyotik bir ilişki geliştiren Hunlar ve Attila, Batı Romalılar için, onların mal varlıklarını gasp etmekten başka bir şey amaçlamayan saldırılarıyla can sıkıcı bir asayiş ve güvenlik meselesinden öte bir şey olmamış ve bu yüzden de Romalılarla konak-parazit ilişkisinden öte bir ilişki geliştirememiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Batı Roma İmparatorluğu, Aetius, Hunlar, Attila, Geç Antikçağ

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ABBREVIATIONS

As most classical texts and authors have standart abbreviations, listed in the abbreviations list of Oxford Classical Dictionary, this thesis has also chosen to employ them. Below can be found all the primary sources that I have used in this study, both in abbreviated and in open form, besides some other general abbreviations.

AD – anno domini

Amb., *Ep*. – Ambrosius Mediolensis, *Epistulae*

Amm. Marc. – Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*

Anon. Val. – Anonymus Valesianus

Aug., *De Civ. Dei* – Aurelius Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei*

Aug., *Ep.* – Aurelius Augustinus, *Epistulae*

BC – before Christ

ca. – approximately

Cass., *Var*. – Cassiodorus, *Variae*

cm. – centimetre/s

Callin., V. Hyp. – Callinicus, Vita Hypatii

cf. – compare

Chron Gall. – Chronica Gallica a. CCCCLII

CJ – Codex Justinianus

Claud., *In Ruf.* – Claudius Claudianus, *In Rufinum*

Claud., *In Eut.* – Claudius Claudianus, *In Eutropium*

Cod. Theod. – Codex Theodosianus

Const., *Vit. Germ*. – Constantius, *Vita Germani*

ed. – editor, edited by

e.g. – for example

Epit. de Caes. – *Epitome de Caesaribus*

f., ff. – and following

fig. – figure

fr. – fragment

Fred. – Fredegar

Geron. *Vit. Mel*. – Gerontius, *Vita Melaniae*

Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc*. – Gregorius Turonensis, *Historia Francorum*

Gild., *de exc. Brit*. – Gildas, *de excidio Britanniae*

Hier. Ep. – *Hieronymus, Epistulae*

Hyd. – Hydatius Lemnicus, *Chronicon*

Hdt. – Herodotus

ibid. – ibidem, in the same work

Jer., *Ep*. – Jerome, *Epistulae*

Jer., *Contra Joan. Hier.* – Jerome, *Contra Joannem Hierosolymitanum*

Joh. Mal., *Chron*. – Johannes Malalas, *Chronographia*

Jord., *Get*. – Jordanes, *Getica*

Jord., *Rom*. – Jordanes, *Romana*

Juv. – Juvenal

ie. – that is

Isid., *Hist. Vand*. – Isidorus Hispalensis, *Historia Vandalorum*

Joh. Ant., *fr*. – Johannes Antiochenus, *Fragmenta*

km. – kilometre/s

Leo, *Ep*. – Leo I Magnus, *Epistulae*

Leo, *Pr*. – Leo, *Problemata*

Lex Burg. – *Lex Burgundionum*

m. – metre/s

Marc. Com. – Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*

Maur., *Strat*. – *Mauricii Strategicon*

Merobaud., *Carm.* – Merobaudes, *Carmina*

Merobaud., *Pan.* – Merobaudes, *Panegyrici*

MGHAA – Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores Antiquissimi

n. – note

Nest. *Heracl*. – Nestorius, *Heracleides*

NMaj. – *Novels of Majorian*

NTh. – *Novels of Theodosius*

NVal. – *Novels of Valentinian III*

Olymp., *fr*. – Olympiodorus, *fragmenta*

Oros. – Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VIII*

p. – page

pp. – pages

Pacat., *Paneg*. – Pacatus, *Panegyricus Latini Pacati Drepani dictus Theodosio*

Pan. Lat. – *XII Panegyrici Latini*

Paul. Diac., *Hist. Lang*. – Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*

Paul. Diac., *Hist. Rom.* – Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Romana*

Philost. – Philostorgius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*

PLRE – Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire

Poss. *Vit. Aug*. – Possidius, *Vita Augustini*

pr. – preface

Prisc., *fr*. – Priscus, *Fragmenta*

Procop., *Aed*. – Procopius, *De aedificiis*

Procop., *Goth*. – Procopius, *De bello Gothico*

Procop., *Vand*. – Procopius, *De bello Vandalico*

Prosp. – Prosper, *Epitoma Chronicon*

r. – reign

s.a. – in the year of

Sal., *de Gub*. – Salvianus, *de Gubernatione Dei*

Sid. Apol., *Carm*. – Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*

Sid. Apol., *Ep*. – Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*

Socr. – Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Soz. – Hermias Sozomenes, *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Sulp. Sev., *V. Mart*. – Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini*

Symm., *Ep*. – Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, *Epistulae*

Symm., *Rel.* – Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, *Relationes*

trans. – translation, translated by

Thuc. – Thucydides

Veg., *Mul.* – Vegetius, *Mulomedicana*

Vict. Vit. – Victor Vitensis

VDan. Styl. – Vita Danielis Stylitae

Zon. – Ioannes Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*

Zos. – Zosimos, *Historia*

MAPS

Map I: The Roman Empire and its dioceses at the time of Theodosius I's death (Ancient World Mapping Center, http://awmc.unc.edu/)

Map II: The Barbarian Invasions (Ancient World Mapping Center, http://awmc.unc.edu/)

FIGURES

Figure I: The Brescia Medallion. Possibly Galla Placidia, Valentinian III and Justa Grata Honoria (http://www.jasperburns.com/gasbresc.html).

Figure II: Solidus of Valentinian III. (Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http www.cngcoins.com)

Figure III: Solidus of Valentinian III on the front; on the back side Valentinian III, Theodosius II and Licina Eudoxia. Struck to commemorate the wedding of Valentinian III with the latter in 437-438 AD. Thessalonica mint. (Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com)

Figure IV: Solidus of Honoria. Struck ca. 430-445 AD. Ravenna mint. (Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. http://www.cngcoins.com)

Figure V: Possible relief of Flavius Aetius with his wife. In Museo della civiltà romana a Roma, in Rome, Italy. Photograph: Giovanni Dall'Orto.

INTRODUCTION

On September 7, 394,[1] the day after one of the most ferocious civil conflicts in the Roman history took place, the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius I became, the first representative of the house of Theodosius, the sole ruler of both halves of the empire. On the previous day, he had won a major victory over the usurper Eugenius of the Western Empire, who was vested with the purple by his Frankish *magister militum* (supreme commander of the imperial armies) Arbogast. However, it was Theodosius I's half-Roman half-Gothic army that had inflicted a crushing defeat on the Western Roman army.[2] This was the battle of the Frigidus that took place near a river which gave the battle its name, somewhere in modern Slovenia. The Eastern Roman Empire having emerged victorious, no one doubted anymore that Christianity was firmly established in the empire and the Theodosians asserted themselves as one of the most powerful dynasties of the era. It was also to this dynasty Valentinian III belonged who came to be the last representative of the house of Theodosius in the West.

When Valentinian III was installed on western throne by Theodosius II in 425, who had succeeded Arcadius in the East in 408, he was not even seven years old and he just became the ruler of the most troubled part of the empire. By 425, Gaul (*Gallia*) was still in the recovering process from the ravages caused by barbarian incursions and civil disturbances at the beginning of the century, while the control of Britain (*Britannia*) had already been given up to the locals. Spain (*Hispania*), meanwhile, turned out to be next destination of the Vandals,[3] the Alans[4] and the Suebi[5] after Gaul and in Italy (*Italia*) the emperor, whose authority was being challenged by his own generals, was a mere shadowy figure. Furthermore, the West not only had to deal with barbarian migrators and its own ambitious generals, but also face shortages at almost every level. Revenues from the

[1] All dates are in AD unless stated otherwise.
[2] This was the second decisive defeat for the Western Roman Empire in only six years. In 388, the Western armies led by another usurper, named superlatively Magnus Maximus, had been beaten, again by Theodosius I. Also, prior to this, the West had suffered another major defeat at the hands of Constantius II at the battle of Mursa in 353 where 2/3 of the Western Roman army had been annihilated (Zon. 13.8.7). In less than 50 years, the West lost thrice to the East. In light of these losses, the reluctance of the provincials to join the army and the increasing reliance on barbarian troops become more understandable.
[3] A northern Germanic group, that first appeared in history in the late 2nd century AD. Their initial settlement seems to have been in the Carpathian Basin, in northeastern modern day Hungary.
[4] An Iranian-speaking group of peoples that occupied north of the Black Sea before they were attacked by the Huns in the late 4th century.
[5] The Suebi (Sueves, Suevi) were also a Germanic group, who were first attested by Caesar in the 1st century BC during his Gallic campaigns (58-50 BC).

provinces were interrupted due to barbarian incursions and thus the empire's ability to recruit men for the army was undermined. For an empire of which continuity in far provinces depended entirely on the presence of its army to protect Roman landowners' posessions, to be deprived of its military muscle was nothing but bad news. It was only natural that such a dire situation gave birth to the ascension of the supreme commander Aetius, who would be the effective ruler of the West until his death in 454. His close friendship with the Huns would supply the imperial armies of the West with constant flow of Hunnic warriors and only then the empire would be able to undertake offensive campaigns. Aetius' strategy would work brilliantly until 439, a date, after which Attila and his brother Bleda would cease sending auxiliaries to the Roman general and most importantly, a year, in which the tax spine of the West would be broken following the fall of Carthage.

The first chapter of this study will deal with the reign of Honorius in the West between the years of 395-423, for without handling the preceding events to our period, the age of Aetius would be hard to grasp. The reign of Honorius was a period during which the Western Roman Empire (*Imperium Romanum occidentale*) was extremely exhausted through several civil wars and simultaneous invasions and hit by loss of land and revenue and faced shortages in manpower. In this chapter, readers will see the first steps taken by the Empire to adapt itself to the transforming conditions of late antiquity. The second chapter will focus solely on the Huns and their activities in Europe until 423, starting from their arrival in Europe and their eventual settlement in the Great Hungarian Plain.[6] Its subchapters will concern themselves with the origin theories of the Huns, their perception by the contemporaries, their abilities in warfare and glimpses of their daily life while drawing parallels with other nomadic societies of Central Asia. The scene for our period having been set by these two chapters, the third chapter and its subchapters will deal specifically with campaigns of Aetius and Attila. The rise of Aetius and how he turned his defeats into victories by the help of Hunnic warriors, his campaigns in Gaul, further settlements of barbarians within Roman lands, the fall of Carthage and its

[6] The Carpathian Basin housed various groups of people such as the Quadi, the Vandals, the Gepids, the Skirs, the Goths, the Sarmatians, the Alans, the Huns, the Langobards, the Avars, the Bulgars and the Hungarians. However, in terms of material culture, the region's history in the first millennium can be categorized as follows: the Sarmatian age between the 1st and 4th centuries; the Hunnic age between ca. 420-455; the era of the Gepids between the years of 455-567; the period of the early Avars in 568-670 and the late Avars in 670-895, and finally the Hungarian period starting with their arrival in 895 (Holló, Szathmáry, Marcsik, & Barta, 2008).

reflections, and the state of the Roman army during Aetius' age will be the main subjects of this chapter. The Western Romans' relation with the Huns and the court of Constantinople will also be handled in detail. Other subchapters will take the reader to the Hunnic camp in the Great Hungarian Plain and while their transformation from nomads to settlers will be told along the way, their gradual Germanization process will not be overlooked. Although the thesis is Western Roman Empire oriented, the Hunnic campaigns in the 440s against Constantinople will also be dealt attentively so the parasitic nature of the Hunnic Empire can be made clear to the observer. The fourth chapter will solely handle the Huns' hostility towards the Western Empire which reached its boiling point at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451, of which details will be presented to the reader with the help of recent research. The fifth chapter will take Attila's army from Gaul into Italy, where famine, plague and the Eastern Romans would play a larger role than Aetius and Attila himself. Finally, the sixth chapter will depict the demise of three most powerful men in the West, that is Aetius, Valentinian III and Attila, in three consecutive years, beginning from 453.

Although there have been works concerning themselves with the events surrounding Aetius, Attila and Valentinian III, such as A.H.M. Jones' monumental "*The Later Roman Empire, 284-602; A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*", J.B. Bury's "*History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*", Peter Heather's "*The Fall of the Roman Empire : A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*", Adrian Godlsworthy's "*How Rome Fell : Death of a Superpower*", Guy Halsall's "*Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376-568*", they are all general works of late Roman history and their scope is not limited by the years of 425-455. Christopher Kelly's "*The End of Empire: Attila the Hun and the Fall of Rome*" is at best an introductionary level work to Roman-Hunnic relations and it is rather Constantinople oriented. Ian Hughes' "*Aetius: Attila's Nemesis*" is a work besides the fact that it should have been undertaken a long time ago for such an important character as Aetius and the only work to date that exclusively deals with the life of the general, albeit at the expense of the Hunnic history. On the other hand, Otto Maenchen-Helfen's "*The World of the Huns: Studies in their History and Culture*", E.A. Thompson's "*The Huns*" and Hyun Jin Kim's "*The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*" are studies rather concentrated on the Huns. This thesis, in contrast, solely focuses itself on the reign of Valentinian III and from

a Western Roman perspective deals with the developments of the emperor's reign, while also drawing a picture of that how Attila's Hunnic Empire came to be. Although the period is beset by wars and thus the narrative, the reader will also be able to see a transformation on both camps taking place in the background. Whereas an inept emperor, a skilled general holding the effective power, an army depending on barbarians to fight other barbarians and a faltering society would take up much of the narrative in the Western Roman chapters, on the other side of the coin, nomads would turn into settlers, the Huns would adopt Germanic names and material culture while forming the most hazardous threat that had ever existed in *barbaricum* (barbarian lands beyond the Rhine and the Danube) against Rome, but would be content as long as their coffers are filled with gold from Rome or Constantinople.

Throughout the chapters it will be argued that the Huns were never a real threat to the existence of the Western Roman Empire, but at worst a nuisance, whose existence depended on Roman gold. In fact, it will be shown, far from being a threat, the Huns actually helped the Western Roman armies to emerge victorious from many encounters, whether civil or barbarian, especially in the 430s. Then, Attila's campaigns against the West will be seen as nothing more than a relatively organized grand barbarian incursion that only aimed at seizing the riches and not conquest. It will also be made clear that Attila was rather a successful opportunist than a good commander. In the end, it will be asserted that it was not the Huns or even Attila himself, but the fall of Carthage in 439 that did the Western Romans the gravest injury, a disaster which not only struck the Roman economy, but also had other important impacts ranging from military to foreign policy.

The Huns, therefore, will be presented as important allies to the Western Romans with whose help Aetius was able to campaign actively in the 430s. When they ceased to be their federates (*foederati*)[7] in 439, added to the loss of Carthage, the West now did not only have to face economic shortages, but also lost its military muscle, most of which had been composed of Huns. This thesis will also debunk the still in use picture of the Huns, which shows them as steppe hordes inflamed with the plans for the destruction of the Roman Empire and instead assert a much more securely based account, supported by primary texts, archaeology, philology and the most recent secondary sources, which will

[7] Irregular units of barbarian origin fighting for Rome in return for payment.

define them before everything as *foederati* of the Western Roman armies and only lastly as Attila's soldiers. Even then, it will be argued, that they only constituted a small part of the polyglot Hunnic Empire, which by the time of Atilla had been profoundly Germanized.

A CONSIDERATION OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Much of our information on the reign of Valentinian III (r. 425-455) is owed to various primary sources written during or shortly thereafter the events. The biggest handicap for historians who study the 5th century Roman West is no doubt that they have no detailed sources on a par with Tacitus of the early empire or Ammianus Marcellinus of the 4th century to turn to in order to construct a complete narrative of the events. Instead, the historians must familiarize themselves with chronicles, which, by their nature, prefer to refrain from giving much information and even refer to some major events with a couple of mere sentences. Similarly, ecclesiastical works, although their importance is undeniable, are documents of questionable objectivity often filled with religious rhetoric. When their scarce, obscure and sometimes contradictory nature is overcome and rhetoric[8] can be sorted out from the plausible. It is only then possible to depict the events in the 5th century in relatively safer terms. Therefore, although a detailed historiographical analysis of the period is not one of the main objectives of this thesis, this section will nevertheless focus on the main contemporary sources of the period, while excluding other contributors that could be regarded as supplementary.

For primary Latin authors such as Jordanes, Prosper of Aquitaine, Gregory of Tours, Hydatius, Marcellinus Comes, Sidonius Apollinaris and Gallic Chronicle, their *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* editions by Theodor Mommsen have been used, while their translations from Latin to English were done by the owner of the thesis unless otherwise stated. For Greek historians such as Priscus, Olympiodorus and John of Antioch, Blockley's translations in "The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire" were preferred. For other primary Latin and Greek sources such as the Theodosian Code, the Novels of Valentinian, Procopius and other minor authors, various modern translations have been of help and are included in full in the bibliography.

[8] Rhetoric has always been a part of classical history since Herodotus. In late antiquity, historians such as Ammianus Marcellinus, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Jordanes made great use of rhetoric in their histories as a way to prove their familiarity with the works of classic authors (Thucydides, Livy etc.). Although, use of rhetoric amplifies the dramatic effect of the events, the aim of historical works should not be to lead its readers to a path in search for catharsis.

1. AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS

Described by Rohrbacher as the "author of the most colorful, readable and elegant history of the 4th century" (Rohrbacher, 2002, p. 41), he is important to our study in one respect only, since his work covers the events preceding to our period.[9] The chapter 31.2 of his book is dedicated to the characteristics of the Huns, yet much of it should be read with a pinch of salt. Most of Ammianus' knowledge about the Huns derives from the barbarian descriptions of the historians Pompeius Trogus and Livy (ibid. p. 226) both of whom lived during the age of Augustus, almost 400 years ago before our period. According to Liebeschuetz, Ammianus owes much of his information on the Huns to a contemporary historian Eunapius (Liebeschuetz, 2003, p. 188). He probably passed down to us what he had heard from people active in military circles, since he was a soldier himself and would have accepted their accounts at face value. Whatever his sources might have been based on, Ammianus' account of the Huns is fraught with misinformation and hyperboles. Two such instances will suffice here. He asserts that the Huns would warm half-raw meat by placing it between their thighs and the backs of their horses before eating (Amm. Marc. 31.2.3), yet this was a Central Asian custom to reduce chafing of saddles (King, 1987, p. 80); he also claims that they would use bone arrowheads (Amm. Marc. 31.2.9), but there have been no discoveries made to associate their usage by the Huns (ibid. p. 82).

If we are to accept the mistakes Ammianus made in this chapter, and indeed we should, almost the whole part of the narrative of his section on the Huns carries little to no historical value. He was the first historian who left us a detailed report on the Huns as far as we know. However, if we seek to create a plausible picture of the early Huns, many of his claims should be ignored and instead of him we should turn to Priscus who actually met many Huns and Attila himself.

[9] Although his work originally spanned from the ascension of Nerva in 96 to the aftermath of the battle of Adrianople in 378, we only possess twenty years of his narrative stretching from 358 to 378, as out of total 31. His first 13 books are unfortunately lost to us.

2. PRISCUS

Our most trusted contemporary source on the Huns, Priscus, was a citizen of Panium[10] and a sophist. He was born sometime between 410-20 (Blockley, 2003, p. 293). The events of his age and the details of his visit to Attila's camp have been put down on paper by him, originally comprised of 8 books, but unfortunately reached to us only in fragments. Nevertheless, his history was so appreciated that parts of his work were able to find their way into the studies of later authors such as Jordanes, John of Antioch and Procopius.

His work *Ἱστορία Βυζαντιακή*, a title preferred for Priscus' history in the Byzantine encyclopedia Suda of the 10th century, covers the years between 434-474 and is an invaluable source for the reign of Attila (from mid-late 430s to 453). Although it primarily deals with the Huns and Attila from an Eastern Roman perspective, his meeting with a Western Roman embassy at the Hunnic camp is highly interesting, for it sheds a light on the Western Roman-Hunnic relations before the two sides open hostilities. In writing his history, his sources were people close to the court and himself, as he was a frequently travelling with a well connected man and had access to some official imperial documents (Rohrbacher, 2002, p. 92). Furthermore, even though a consensus has not yet been reached regarding his religious stance, he seems to have subscribed to no particular agenda either against or in favor of the followers of the old Roman religion or the Christians (Baldwin, 1980, pp. 43-47; Blockley, 1981, pp. 59-60) which renders his work completely secular. He was also, other than John of Antioch, the only historian who concerned himself with Attila's campaign in Gaul in detail (Brodka, 2008, p. 228). However fragmentary, his narrative of the western campaign of Attila can be reconstructed to an extent by the inspection of works of other historians such as Jordanes, who accepted in his *Getica* openly that he drew some of his knowledge from Priscus.

Priscus wrote in classical style and it is easy to perceive his imitation of Herodotus and Thucydides in his narrative. In his description of the Hunnic siege of Naissus in 441 (Prisc. fr. 1b), he linguistically copied Thucydides' account of the siege of Plataea (Thuc. 2.75-8). However, there is no reason to believe that he was narrating a fictional siege

[10] Today in modern day Thrace.

which really did not take place.[11] Priscus also preferred to use anachronistic terms, in this case the Scythians, when it comes down to naming the Huns. Furthermore, his adoption of the Herodotan style of measurements (Rohrbacher, 2002, pp. 91-92); his analogies in the stories of sacred sword of the Huns and tribal movements from Eurasian steppes are also obvious borrowings from Herodotus (Blockley, 2003, p. 303). The classicizing terms have been heavily applied into his work. However, this is only limited to his language and style and did not interfere with the authenticity of the events (ibid. p. 303; Kim, 2015, p. 137). As Heather points out (2006, p. 302), ancient authors loved to show off their familiarity with the classics and these kind of analogies were a one way to prove it.

Even though his work is fragmentary, Priscus' importance cannot be stressed enough. As Bury (1919, p. 9) rightfully puts it, he was "the most accurately informed on all matters connected with the Huns." What is more, he did this without having been engrossed in any political disputes, thus left us a work as objective as could be for a 5th century historian. If a fairy-tale like description of the Huns is owed to Ammianus, we owe Priscus a lot for his eye witness account of the same people. Without him, what little we know about the Huns would have been close to nothing.

3. JORDANES

Another late antique historian who had much to say about the Huns of Attila and their adversaries Western Romans is Jordanes, originally a Goth who was a secretary (*notarius*) to a barbarian general named Baza in Constantinople in the 6th century (Jord., *Get.* 265-6). His *Getica,* or by its original name *De origine actibusque Getarum*, takes its readers to a long journey from the legendary exodus of the Goths from Scandinavia, to the Catalaunian Plains and eventually to Ostrogothic Italy. For our study, *Getica* is of utmost importance, as it includes otherwise lost information on the Huns and it is our sole authority for the narrative of the battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451.

Written in the 550s in Constantinople, Jordanes himself indicates that he made use of Cassiodorus' history of the Goths while writing *Getica*. Cassiodorus' work, which is now lost to us, was finished by 533 (Goffart, 1988, p. 28) and had been written in Ostrogothic

[11] See Blockley, 1972, pp. 18-27 whose argument I follow here.

Italy. Thus, it was probably written to serve the Ostrogothic king Theoderic's agenda. The fact that Jordanes exclusively tells his readers in the preface of his work (Jord., *Get*. 2), that he had only 3 days of access to read the history of Cassiodorus,[12] has been used as evidence to support the theory that Jordanes' Getica was all but an original work.[13]

For Jordanes, the Western Roman emperors such as Honorius and Valentinianus III paved the way for the fall of the West (Goffart, 1988, pp. 56-57) and with the death of "the last true Roman" Aetius, its demise was sealed. The only instance in which Jordanes treats the Western Roman Empire in a positive light was through Aetius during the narrative of the battle of the Catalaunian Plains. However, even then, the successful check of Attila was for him first and foremost a Visigothic achievement in his eyes.

The account of the famous battle, 213 lines long with its background and aftermath, takes up a great space in *Getica*. One reason for Jordanes' interest is probably to praise the part the Visigoths played in such an important battle. Another reason, suggested by Liebeschuetz (2011, p. 298, n. 35), might have been Jordanes' desire and intention to praise his origins, especially to the man he was working for, Baza, whose father was Andag and is said to have killed in that battle Theoderic, the king of the Visigoths. Whatever Jordanes' true aims were, we owe him a great deal for his narrative of the great battle in 451. Without him, we would have to settle with the unsatisfactorily short accounts of Hydatius and Prosper of Aquitaine. As much as his account is colored by Vergilian[14] and Herodotan allusions[15] and rhetoric, he continues to play the central part in every study of the famous battle.

[12] After he returned the books he even expresses that "Quorum quamvis verba non recolo, sensus tamen et res actas credo me integre retinere." (I do not remember the words, nevertheless, I believe that I maintain the deeds) (Jord., *Get.* 2).

[13] Since Cassiodorus' history is lost, we have no means to pass a final judgment on the nature of *Getica*. In any case, it should be noted that, although Jordanes claims that he drew from Cassiodorus' work, he also appears to have used what the oral tradition offered (Croke, 2003, p. 374). Moreover, as O'Donnell (1982) underlines in his article, Jordanes used many historians ranging from Livy, Tacitus, Ptolemy to Josephus, Deuxippus and Priscus. Today, *Getica* is believed to be mostly an original and independent work thanks to the recent scholarship. See Goffart, 1988, pp. 20–111 and Heather, 1991, p. 3-67.

[14] His Vergilian allusions are presented by Swain, 2010 and Whately, 2013. Swain takes his findings a step further by reaching a conclusion that Jordanes' Vergilian allusions were not limited to his style. According to him, Jordanes intentionlly took Trajans – Thracians conflict found in Aeneid and turned it in his history into a Roman – Getica/Gothic one.

[15] Like many late antique historians, Jordanes also did not abstain from imitating Herodotos. In fact, Kim asserts (2013, 2015) that the account of the battle was a re-telling of the battle of Marathon. Also see other authors claiming the same Herodotean allusion: Wallace-Hadrill, 1962, pp. 60-63 and Altheim, 1959, pp. 324-329.

4. OLYMPIODORUS

The historian from Egyptian Thebes, Olympiodorus, was not a contemporary to our period but his history is important in two respects. First, his work, as it cover the years 407-425, is wholly concentrated on the events that occurred in Italy, Gaul and Spain, lands which experienced many catastrophes stretching from the sack of Rome, to the devastations caused by multiple barbarian peoples, who were to continue to cause problems during Valentinian III's reign. Therefore, although he was an official of the Eastern Roman Empire, his work was actually written from the Western Roman perspective (J. Matthews, 1970, p. 91). Second, he ends his work just as the new emperor for the West, Valentinian III, was installed upon the defeat of the usurper Joannes, thus making him our primary source for the dawn of the era of Valentinian III.

Defined as a poet by the Byzantine historian Photius, Olympiodorus' work was originally in 21 books. Although now in fragmentary condition, historians such as Zosimus, Sozomen and Philostorgius drew upon his work in many instances (ibid. 1970, p. 82.)[16] and this helps us to an extent to recover Olympiodorus' narrative. In compiling his work, Olympiodorus owes much of his information to his contacts in the Western Roman Empire (Liebeschuetz, 2003, p. 204) and to his own eyes (Rohrbacher, 2002, p. 81). His history, published in the 440s (ibid. p. 76), was dedicated to the senior emperor of the Roman Empire, Theodosius II. (r. 408-450). He was also the first historian before Priscus who had had the chance of visiting the Huns. In 412, accompanied by his pet parrot, was included in an embassy mission to a Hunnic king named Donatus. This visit is handled in the respective chapter of this study.

5. PROSPER OF AQUITAINE

Prosper of Aquitaine is one of our most important contemporary sources for the events in our period. The fact that he was born c. 390 and died c. 455 makes his life a witness to everything that Aetius would have witnessed, since Aetius too was born and died around the same years. His *Epitoma Chronicon,* content of which he updated thrice in 433, 445 and 455, has unfortunately little to say even for most major events such as the battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Moreover, Prosper's perspective was church oriented and

[16] In Zosimus 5.26; 6.13 and Sozomen from 9.4 until the end of his history.

Zecchini (Zechhini, 2003, p. 339) points out that this even turned into a papal one after 440. This will be kept in mind when his narrative of the meeting between Attila and the bishop Leo in 452 is presented by him as a victory of the latter.

Prosper did not just duly take notes of the events and then add them to their corresponding years (ibid. pp. 338-9). Just as his advocacy is manifested through his narrative of the meeting of Attila and the bishop Leo, his personal opinions on the matters are offered openly to readers. A couple of instances where he squeezed his personal remarks into his account of the events will suffice here. He can be found applauding Aetius's foresight (*providentia*) in defense of Gaul against the Huns and then criticizing the cruel (*crudeliter*) assassination of Aetius at the hands of the emperor himself. However, he also seems to have not refrained from attacking Aetius when he found reason to do so. For instance, Aetius' deliberation about whether to leave Italy before Attila's arrival is openly revealed to the reader. Historians such as Maenchen-Helfen and St. Muhlberger have acknowledged him as anti-Aetius due to the treatment of his character in his chronicle. Conversly others, such as Molé and Zecchini see him as a supporter of Aetius (Zechhini, 2003, p. 339). I would argue, however, that Prosper was neither and he appears to have only cared about the reputation of the Roman Church throughout his chronicle.

6. GREGORY OF TOURS

He is the author of *Decem Libri Historiarum*, or with its more popular name *Historia Francorum*. He was the son of a wealthy Gallo-Roman family which had senatorial roots and ultimately became the bishop of Tours between 573-594 (Thorpe, 1974, p. 7ff). Out of ten books comprising his *magnum opus*, the second book is of a great interest to us, for this book covers Attila's invasion of Gaul and includes a borrowed account of Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, in which we come to read a highly detailed description of Aetius's character and skills.

The second book is described by Wynn (Wynn, 2001, p. 13) as a "historico-theological drama" in which the Huns play the central role. According to Wynn, Gregory took the Huns and made them one of the *noxiae gentes* (harmful nations) who are guilty in both legal and religious senses by spreading terror to the Church (ibid. p. 3). Attila's campaign

in Gaul is thus narrated by giving Gaul the status of the New Israel of the Old Testament which had also been punished by hordes of enemies owing to its sins (ibid. p. 5). Naturally, Gregory opted to choose the Hunnic invasion as a template to warn his contemporary Merovingian rulers of a similar punishment, if their decadence were to continue (ibid. p. 6). In another example of divine intervention, his narrative of the siege of Orléans by the Huns ends only with the withdrawal of the Huns thanks to the zealous prayers of the citizens led by the bishop of the city Anianus. Aetius's victory over the Huns was also made possible only by divine favor (ibid. p. 12).

While Attila and his Huns were given a role not very different from the one contemporary ecclesiastical historians tended to give them in the 5th century, Aetius' himself was praised through Xenophonean allusions. As Wynn brilliantly demonstrates, the praise of Aetius' military virtues in the second book draws its style from Xenophon's definitions in Cryopaedia (1.5.11; 2.3.13; 8.36) and Hellenica (5.1.15) Aetius' wife, Pelage, about whose life we know very little, appears in front of us as a devout wife who prays for her husband's success and she might have been modelled after the wife of the Merovingian king Clovis, Clotild, another woman who was known for her piety at the time (Wynn, 2001, p. 12).

Named by Ampère (1870, p. 8) as "l'Hérodote de la barbarie" Gregory is to an extent no different from his contemporary Jordanes. He also used the Huns for contemporary purposes. In his case, this was a call to the prominent figures of the Merovingian kingdom not to stray away from God's path. All the same, without Frigeridus's contribution, what we know about Aetius' personality would be much less and for the siege of Orléans, Jordanes would remain as our only source.

7. OTHER SOURCES

Other than the above mentioned prominent historians, we have many more names and documents from both halves of the empire that have left us obscure, yet plentiful information to reconstruct the period of 425-455. One of them was Marcellinus of Comes who recorded a chronicle of the years 378-534 in Constantinople in the 6th century. Although he was Constantinople oriented, he is our most valuable source for the Hunnic raids and invasions of 422, 441/442 and 447. Through his narrative of these campaigns,

our job becomes much easier to grasp the characteristics of Hunnic warfare and their strategic aims. Another chronicler, from northern Spain named Hydatius began and completed his work under the rule of the Suebi. Written with the intention of praising the Theodosian dynasty (379-455), his chronicle covers the years 379-469. As he was geographically close to Gaul, most of his account of Aetius' deeds can be considered trustworthy. Procopius, a contemporary of Jordanes and Gregory of Tours, who accompanied the eastern general Belisarius in his campaigns in the 6th century, did not only write the wars of Justinian, but also retold his readers the events of the 5th century. Nevertheless, his agenda forced him to make inexcusable errors such as putting Aetius' death before Attila's Italian campaign.

A 5th century poet Flavius Merobaudes, another native of Spain, saw activity during the reign of Valentinian III and his proximity to the court can be deduced from his panegyrics dedicated to the emperor and Aetius. Although panegyrics are basically written for praising their addressees and thus naturally full of exaggerations, they nevertheless include bits of truth and therefore carry a great value as contemporary documents. Another poet, initially an aristocrat and later a bishop, Sidonius Appolinaris is another prominent figure whose works related to his own times and may be our most important source for the events in 5th century Gaul. His letters moreover vividly illustrate the life of the aristocratic class in Gaul and neither the Huns nor the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains were themes that were left untouched by him.

We also have official imperial documents that help us enrich our knowledge on subjects such as the Western Roman army or the state of the Western Roman economy. *Notitia Dignitatum*, a document listing the administrative organizations and armies of both halves of the empire and kept updated for the west until the middle of the 420s, is a major source in helping us conjecture the state of the Western Roman army at least for the beginning of the reign of Valentinian III. The law compilations of the period, *Codex Theodosianus* and *Novellae Valentiniani*, are very valuable, for they include emperor's decrees and the latter is especially important in demonstrating the catastrophic effects of the fall of Carthage, as many laws related to it were promulgated after the loss took place in 439.

Historians, chroniclers and other sources who preserved information on this study's period are by no means limited with these, but they can be categorized as works of

secondary importance. Beset by constant barbarian incursions and civil wars, this period in the west drew a lot of attention. A detailed analysis of all the authors and their works that concerned themselves with the events lie outside the scope of this thesis and may be as big as a study that should be undertaken independently. Here, in lieu, a general picture of prominent historians who left us a considerable amount of information has been drawn first and then other comparatively minor, yet still important sources have been introduced to the reader. What other authors or documents have to say about *Imperium Romanum pars occidentalis* or Attila are reserved for their respective chapters.

CHAPTER 1

THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE BEFORE THE AGE OF AETIUS

> "How can you govern a country which has two hundred and forty-six varieties of cheese?"
>
> - Charles de Gaulle, on France, 1962

After a reign of sixteen years, Theodosius I died on January 17, 395. He left behind him an empire divided between his two sons,[17] giving his elder Arcadius the administration of the rich provinces of the east, which was roughly stretching from the Danube to Syria and Egypt. His younger son Honorius' share was the the battered west. He was only 10 years old at the time, a *Kinderkaiser*. The Western Roman Empire was still intact; Britain, Gaul, Spain, Africa and Illyria were still being illuminated with orders and edicts that were directly being issued from the palace of the Roman emperor in Italy. The free inhabitants of these regions were Romans by law since the famous edict of Caracalla in 212. Nevertheless, for a man in Britain and in African hinterland, the only thing they shared was indeed their Roman identity. In reality, the Roman Empire as a whole was a patchwork of different cultures and traditions, dominated by provincial differences. It was the empire's martial ability that allowed it to cement these contrasts under a single central authority.

During the crisis of the 3rd century (235-284), these regional distinctions had surfaced in the most severe way. For instance, in 260, Gaul declared its independence from the centre and joined by Spain and Britain under the charismatic Gallo-Roman leader Postumus. This example was quickly followed by Palmyra in the east, another independent Roman state led by queen Zenobia stretching from Syria to Egypt. Both had their own emperors and queens, and indeed, they were both independent of Rome, but they were continuing to perceive themselves as Romans. Admittedly, as in the case Roman citizen in Britian and Africa, both had their own particular characteristics. On one hand, there were warlike Gallo-Romans, some of them following their ancestry even back to the days of Caesar. On the other hand, Syrian Romans with an unmatched skill in archery and gift in trade.

[17] As this had come to be a custom since the late 3rd century. As the Roman Emperor grew and stretched from Britian to Syria, a single emperor had proved himself ineffective in answering to simultaneous threats on different frontiers. Starting from Diocletian (r. 284-305), at least two senior emperors ruled western and eastern parts of the empire.

The neutral ground on which they would have met was their shared Roman identity. As expected, both independent movements were eventually ended by the other Romans and the empire became once again a whole.[18] But both instances demonstrated that, if provincial Romans felt abandoned, they would not hesitate to set up their own Roman governments.

It was not as if the late Roman Empire was weak in contrast to that of Augustus or Trajan. Having survived a long and hard 3rd century beset with constant barbarian incursions, usurpations, civil wars, a new, a reformed empire emerged at the end of the 3rd century with an army the biggest in size to date,[19] a greater number of bureaucrats,[20] at least two senior emperors and even a new faith, Christianity, that began to be promoted as official imperial religion since the time of Constantine I (r. 306-337).

However, it was not only the Roman Empire that underwent a substantial change. The lands in *barbaricum*, specifically east of the Rhine had also changed. These changes were economic and social. We read that by the 4th century they discovered new methods in agriculture such as crop rotation and tilling equipment which resulted in a rise of population due to these new efficient innovations. This transformation was followed by an increase in political authority of which best examples we read in Ammianus when he relates kings and sub-kings of Alamanni that clearly demonstrates a rather complex system of politics among the barbarians in contrast to earlier centuries. (Amm. 16.12.26; Heather, 2006, pp. 84-94; Halsall, 2007, pp. 121-122, 131).

The identity of barbarians was also undergoing a perpetual change. A Hun, who would have been born in the steppes of Eurasia could become a Goth, both in material culture and in name upon joining them for any reason; perhaps for the sake of spoils, as it was the case when, although the Terving Gothsi[21] were fleeing towards the Roman lands from the Hunnic threat, some Huns decided to group up with them. Therefore, ethnicity was everything but not static. It was, first and foremost, situational. Just like the Hunnic example above, a Goth could also become a Roman, read favourite authors of the Roman

[18] It was the emperor Aurelian who both recovered the so-called Palmyrene Empire in 273 and the Gallic Empire in the following year.
[19] See below p. 143, n. 252.
[20] Estimated figure is somewhere between 25,000-35,000 (Halsall, 2007, p. 76).
[21] One of the Gothic groups of which name is known to us.

elite, enjoy baths, socialize with other Romans, while fighting against other Romans, as the king of the Ostrogoths Theodahad did in the 530s (Geary, 1983, pp. 15-26, 1999, pp. 107-129).

The Late Roman Empire, although it may appear to an outsider as a uniform entity, in fact, was all about contrasts. One could liken the empire to a Turkish carpet that has variously colored and shaped motifs which would give them their own characteristics, yet still are members of a single piece of work of a craftsman.

In order to grasp the events of the age of Aetius easily, we must take the day Theodosius I died as our starting point and do a sketch of the events up until Valentinian III was crowned *caesar* in 423 by Theodosius II. Only then, de Gaulle's remark that he made to describe France's nonuniformity will make sense. If a relative sized modern country in the 20th century was hard to govern, then to rule an ancient empire with all the benefits of technology absent during a chaotic period was a challenge that only the most gifted men could overcome.

1.1. THE EMPIRE OF HONORIUS (395-423)[22]

After their father's death, Honorius and Arcadius had been given the control of the Western and the Eastern Roman Empire, respectively. Multiple emperors to rule a single empire was not a novelty in Roman history. For instance, in 253, Valerianus had left the administration of western provinces to his son Galerius. However, only after Constantine I's reign the practice of at least two rulers became the norm. The empire was vast and a single emperor based in a city[23] away from areas that needed immediate attention could be of much assistance for the provincials, as a light bulb is unable to illuminate its peripheries (Halsall, 2007, pp. 110-111).

Nevertheless, given their minority, one must have not expected much from them except the continuous embodiment of the Theodosian dynasty. Therefore, as the contemporary

[22] Here, I will be following Börm's (2013) account of the events of these years.

[23] Rome at this time had long lost its sole capital of the West role. The capital was usually where the emperor was stationed and especially close to threat zones. Some late Roman West capitals were Augusta Treverorum near Rhine, where barbarian incursions were frequent; Mediolanum (Milan) in northern Italy between 286-402 and Ravenna, from 402 until 440s, when Rome came to be the favoured imperial residence of Valentinian III.

court poet Claudian relates (Claud., *In Ruf.* 5. 4-6), the effective power was culminated in the hands of Stilicho, the half-Roman half-Vandal *magister militum* of the West. He had already been married to Serena, the cousin of Honorius in 384, while Theodosius was still alive. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that he was a trusted Roman and, if we are to fully subscribe to the narrative of Olympiodorus, Theodosius might really have given the guardianship over his children to Stilicho, at least until they come of age. This seems much more feasible for the case of Honorius, who was aged only 10 years old at the time.

Besides the two child *augusti*, Stilicho and courtiers, there was another variable in the post-395 politics. That was Alaric, the Gothic chieftain, whose name automatically brings to minds the sack of Rome in 410. He was a member of the Gothic group settled by Theodosius I in 382 in Thrace by a treaty after the imperial defeat at Adrianople in 378.[24] He had fought at the battle of the Frigidus in 394 and his Goths suffered heavy casualties while sealing the victory for Theodosius I's Eastern Roman army. Feeling unrewarded despite his contribution, which I would presume had something to do with Theodosius I's untimely death, he rebelled (Bury, 1958, pp. 109-110; Seeck, 1913, pp. 273-275). Simultaneously, the Hunnic, Alan and Gothic *foederati* in Pannonia[25] seem to have either rebelled or neglected their duties, for the Quadi, Vandals, Marcomanni and Sarmatians crossed the Danube and raided the region unchallenged (Gračanin, 2006, p. 39; Lotter, 2003, pp. 87, 100). Upon the news of Alaric's rebellion, young Arcadius, or rather, the foremost figure in the eastern court Rufinus, *praefectus praetorio per orientem* (the praetorian prefect in the East), demanded the return of the troops originally belonging to the Eastern Roman army back to Constantinople.. The Western Romans, that is Stilicho, gave in and returned the soldiers with a Gothic commander named Gainas leading them to the capital of the East. However, having arrived in the capital, the soldiers killed

[24] Goths were a Germanic group of peoples, who were first recorded by Tacitus and Ptolemy in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Jordanes in the 6th century has claimed that they were originated from Scandinavia, however, archaeology proved otherwise and this story is now seen as a fabrication by the historian to give them an ancient outlook. Their origins, instead, seem to have laid in south of the Baltic, in modern day Poland. From there, part of them migrated towards Black Sea region in the 3rd century and settled there until the Huns appeared in the late 4th century. Nevertheless, this is only a simplification of the Gothic history before their entrance into the Roman Empire and therefore, their earlier history can only be defined as ambiguous (Bogucki & Crabtree, 2004, pp. 388-391). They were later divided in several Gothic groups, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths being the most known among the. The former had already entered the imperial lands and defeated a Roman army at Adrianople by 378. Before this, their ancestors had long been in contact with Rome, since they had already settled north of the Danube (ibid. pp. 419-422). The latter, the eastern Goths, following the same initial route with other Goths, came to settle modern day Ukraine, until the day they were pushed westwards by the Huns by the end of the 4th century (ibid. pp. 402-403).

[25] They had been settled in the region in 380 by Gratian.

Rufinus, the most influential man in Arcadius' court and no doubt Stilicho recommenced entertaining thoughts regarding the fate of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Nevertheless, the troops Stilicho sent back left the Western Roman army in a very precarious state. The wounds of the recent losses caused by civil wars were still fresh. To remedy this loss of manpower, now further intensified with the departure of the eastern contigent, he met Alaric. His meeting was immediately regarded as a hostile act against the Eastern Roman court by Arcadius and the supreme commander of the Western Roman armies was declared a public enemy (*hostis publicus*). Moreover, Constantinople bestowed Alaric with the rank of *magister militum per Illyricum* (master of soldiers in Illyria). This would mean a lot more than a simple title for Alaric, since now he had access to *annona* to feed and supply his followers. By doing so, Constantinople cleverly, although momentarily, both ended Alaric's rebellion and curbed Stilicho's ambitions.

Notwithstanding that Stilicho's plan to get rid of Rufinus was successful, he seems to have forgotten to include other ambitious courtiers in his calculations. In this case, Rufinus was succeeded by Eutropius, who, as soon as he was able to dominate young Arcadius, he first stirred up Gildo, *comes Africae* (count of Africa), against the imperial court, who promptly threatened Rome with cutting of corn supply, to weaken Stilicho's authority. Gildo's revolt proved to be short lived. He was defeated and executed in 398 and much vital grain continued to be supplied to Rome as before. In the meantime, in 399, Gainas, with the support of his soldiers revolted to assume more power for himself, by taking advantage of the absence of the main imperial army which had had to be sent to the Persian front, where a new war threatened Constantinople. Nevertheless, his plans came to naught, as the people of Constantinople ousted him from the city. He then made for the Danube, however, his arrival in the region disturbed a certain Uldin, a powerful Hunnic king like figure, who captured Gainas and after executing him, sent his head to Constantinople in 400 (Socr. 6. 6; Soz. 8. 4).

Meanwhile, Stilicho was trying to strengthen his position through new designs. While he was preparing for the last recorded mention of a campaign in Roman Britain in 399 (Claud., *In Ruf*. 22. 247-255) and was bolstering the Rhine frontier with new fortifications in 401, he was concurrently making arrangements to officialy unite his family with that of Honorius through a marriage. On the other hand, Alaric left Illyria in 401 through

Pannonia and decided to move against Stilicho in Italy (Bury, 1958, pp. 160-162; Seeck, 1913, pp. 328-334), which also seems to have had effects on the Hunnic *foederati* in the region, since many Huns joined Alaric's side, presumably for the promises of booty, although some Huns appear to have remained loyal to Stilicho (Gračanin, 2006, p. 42; Lotter, 2003, p. 89; Várady, 1969, pp. 210-213). Furthermore, Alaric's march forced Stilicho to call in additional reinforcements from both Britain and Gaul to meet the threat the Goths posed. Although this seems like a minor detail, as the later events would reveal, those provinces' defenses had thus been critically weakened by Stilicho. Back in Italy, Alaric caused so much fear in the West, that the imperial court have been moved from Mediolanum (Milan) to Ravenna in 402. Stilicho met Alaric in three successive battles all of which resulted undecided. In 405 or sometime later, Alaric was now made *magister militum*, this time by Ravenna.

Concurrently, the main body of the Huns had been on the move and were slowly pushing towards the Great Hungarian Plain since 395 which consequently led to the commotion of various group of peoples inhabiting the middle Danube region.[26] In fact, their appearance in the Middle Danube, to the west of the Carpathians, was so disturbing, that at least four groups, Uldin's Huns included, departed from the region in 405/6 (Heather, 2010, p. 177). Unlike the events of 376, however, this time it would be the Western Empire which had to bear the bulk of the barbarians. Yet, identical to the events of the same year, those barbarians would act exactly the same way as the Tervingi had done thirty decades earlier: rather than putting up a fight against the Huns, they would take their chances with the Roman Empire (ibid. p. 175; Heather, 1995).

Towards the end of 405, Radagaisus, a seemingly powerful Gothic chief with a substantial army of followers numbering allegedly hundreds of thousands of men, had been pushed by the Huns to the Roman frontier eventually and conveyed over the Danube and attacked northern Italy.[27] The Hunnic, the Ala and the Gothic *foederati* in Pannonia seem, once

[26] Sources arguing for the crisis of 405-8, which stirred up Radagaisus, the Vandals, the Alans, the Suebi, was caused due to the Huns are as follows: Altheim, 1951, p. 82; Courtois, 1955, pp. 39-40; Demougeot, 1979, p. 415; Heather, 1995, p. 228, 2006, p. 221; Kelly, 2009, pp. 53-56; Kim, 2013, p. 67; Lot, 1939, p. 39; Lotter, 2003, p. 90; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 61; Musset, 1965, pp. 103-104; Thompson, 1948, p. 28.

[27] According to Orosius (7.37.4) he had more than 200,000 men, while In Zosimus this figure doubles itself (5.26.3), obviously exaggerations. The ratio of warriors to civilians among barbarian groups was usually 1:4-5 (Heather, 2006, p. 199).

again, to have neglected their duties to defend the borders and given way to Radagaisus (Barkóczi, 1980, p. 119; Várady, 1969, pp. 20, 390). He, similar to those who had been or would be later in his position, possibly wanted to make a *tour de force* to come to some kind of terms with the Western Romans. Nevertheless, Stilicho had no intention of negotiating. Consequently, Radagaisus' armed followers were heavily defeated near Faesulae (modern Fiosele), but that could have been almost impossible without the Hunnic auxiliaries of Uldin and the remaining Hunnic *foederati* in Pannonia (Lotter, 2003, pp. 93-94). Stilicho had been able to secure Uldin's help in return for gold and promises of spoils. The Hunno-Roman victory was so complete that after the battle the Romans recruited 12,000 prisoners into their ranks (Olymp., fr. 9), while the rest were sold at markets as slaves (Oros. 7.37.16).

Shortly after the victory at Faesulae in 406/7, the Rhine witnessed the crossings[28] of the Alans, who seem to have broken their alliance with the Huns (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 72), the Vandals composed of two groups called Hasdings and Silings. They had recently raided Raetia in 401/2, attacking from their homes located in the middle or upper Danube. Lastly, there were the Suebi, who were presumably the descendants of Marcomanni and Quadi (Heather, 2006, p. 195). The Franks[29] on the Roman border and and the Sarmatian *laeti* (colonists) who had been settled in northern Gaul could not stop their incursion (Bachrach, 1973, p. 59). Moreover, as Stilicho was rather concentrated on the court, the Gallic provinces were virtually without a leader in the face of the barbarian incursion. Having crossed the Rhine, their first target was the city of Mainz that was thoroughly sacked. Indeed, there is no sound reason to dismiss the poet Orientus's (*Commonitorum*, 2.184) claim altogether who relates "All Gaul was filled with the smoke of a single funeral pyre." Around the same time as with the barbarian crossings, a soldier named Constantine III rebelled and usurped the purple in Britain.[30] The beginning of his story becomes almost too similar to that of another Constantine of the early 4th century, when he changed his sons' names to Julian and Constans II to further liken himself to

[28] In winter the Rhine is occasionally known to have frozen "… Rhenum gelu pervium pruinis Februario mense transire tentarunt." (Amm. 31.10.4).

[29] The Franks, just like the Goths, were a people of Germanic origin. They seem to have come into existence as the Franks, after small groups of peoples such as the Chamavi, the Chatuari and the Bructeri were united in the Lower Rhine in the 3rd century. (Bogucki & Crabtree, 2004, p. 396).

[30] That the crossing of the Rhine by barbarians and Constantine's usurpation took place almost simultaneously just as Stilicho was about to conclude his negotiation with Stilicho was simply an unfortunate coincidences to Olympiodorus who notes down the important role played by luck (Τύχη) in historical events (J. Matthews, 1970, p. 96).

Constantine I. His declaration quickly met with approval by the provinces of Gaul and Spain, two provinces which would bear the grunt of barbarian newcomers throughout the 5th century. After collecting whatever troops were left in Britain, he landed in Gaul and gained control of much of northern Gaul. In 410, not much later, after Constantine III left the island, the provincials allegedly expelled the Roman officials (Zos. 6.5.3). Heather (2006, p. 245) proposes that the Brito-Romans did so because they felt abandoned by Constantine III, whom they greeted as their savior shortly before. In Aremorica[31] too, the citizens followed the same suit and expelled the representatives of the Roman court (Zos. 6.5.3), although it would later be reclaimed by the empire through the efforts of a certain Exuperantius, a Roman commander, in 417. By 407, Honorius was left with the command of Italy, Africa, Spain, southern Gaul and western Balkans. This would not only mean further threats to be dealt with, but also less land, thus less revenue and subsequently a smaller regular army.[32]

Not surprisingly, as Stilicho's priorities lay elsewhere, like many other Romans of his age,[33] he ignored the barbarian incursions and instead sent one of his commanders, another Goth named Sarus, against Constantine III. Sarus' eventual defeat only helped the usurper to increase his authority. Meanwhile, the newly appointed western *magister militum* Alaric must have once again felt ignored or perhaps incited by Stilicho himself, for he started to plunder Epirus, which fell under the administration of Constantinople.

After signing a new *foedus* (treaty) with Alaric, Stilicho then married his daughter with the newly widowed Honorius. In 408, the Eastern Roman emperor Arcadius died, leaving

[31] The region between the Seine and the Loire in Gaul. Sometimes also spelled as Armorica.

[32] Honorius is said to have written to the citizens of Britian to fend for themselves (Zos. 6.10.2). Matthews (1975) on the other hand suggests that Honorius' letter was not aimed for Britannia, but for Brittia in southern Italy.

[33] For the Romans the internal affairs always came first than an inroad undertaken by barbarians. When there were no threats of usurpation, the Romans would send gifts, sign treaties and give subsidies to barbarians to keep them under their sphere of influence. This strategy had proved most of the time very effective, for it brought not only stability on the borders, but also enriched the barbarian chiefs and gradaually made them more friendly towards the Romans. However, when the Romans would later start to neglect them and concentrate on their own game of thrones, the barbarians would cross the borders with impunity to remind the Romans of themselves. In most dangerous situation, a new powerful chief/king/group could emerge in barbaricum and start to dominate others in the area, as this was the case with the rise of the Huns north of the Danube. The Romans' continous ignore of keeping the balance between these barbarian groups in barbaricum would eventually draw more and more barbarians into the empire, who, in the end would be a little too much and too late to send back to *barbaricum*. On this barbarian policy of the Romans see Halsall, 2007, p. 189. Halsall (ibid. p. 210) also argues that the chaos of 405-8, whilst it forced Stilicho to further deplete the manpower in northern provinces to bolster the defences of Italia, his sole focus, he completely neglected barbarian politics beyond Danube which caused strains in their relation with the empire and pushed them into the arms of the Huns, who, in the abscence of Roman gifts, subsidies and treaties, would reward their new subjects with golds flowing from Constantinople or Ravenna and spoils.

his throne to Theodosius II, aged only 7 years old. Although the western provinces were being ravaged by the barbarians and a usurper, Stilicho decided to act against Constantinople. It would appear that he was about to fulfill Theodosius I's so-called last wish by incorporating the eastern half of the empire to the west. Unfortunately for him, the enemies of Stilicho made their move first and after having persuaded Honorius, killed the supreme commander on August 22 408 in Ravenna.

With the death of Stilicho, Alaric, similar to what happened after the death of Theodosius I, was once again left out in the cold. His and his followers' fate was only of secondary importance to either imperial courts. The number of his followers had also grown after Stilicho's fall from power. Apparently, many *foederati* of Stilicho joined the ranks of the Gothic leader, since they now felt alienated by their commander's death. Yet, Alaric was still eager to reach an official agreement with the emperor to secure his and his followers' future within the imperial boundaries as peaceful settlers.[34] However, probably due to his connection to Stilicho, the anti-Stilicho stance at the court transformed itself into an anti-Alaric one and all demands of Alaric were met with prompt refusal.

In the meantime, one of the members of the anti-Stilicho faction, Olympius, employed 300 Huns to meet the threat of Athaulf, the brother of Alaric, who recently passed to the south of the Julian Alps, and whom the Gothic *foederati* of Pannonia might have joined in numbers (Gračanin, 2006, p. 44). The Huns of Olympius, however, saved the day once again for the Western Romans and killed 1100 of Athaulf's men, while losing only 17 (Zos. 5.45.6). Shortly after this Olympius died and was succeeded by Iovinus, who proposed Honorius to bestow on Alaric the rank of *magister militum* of the whole west to appease the Gothic leader. Fearing this would give uncontrollable power to Alaric, his suggestion was promptly refused. Since Alaric found itself in some kind of oblivion, he tried to solve his problem by declaring his own Roman emperor, a senator named Priscus Attalus. After his elevation, he quickly named Alaric *magister militum*, but his authority naturally remained unrecognized by Ravenna and his power did not exceed the boundaries of the city of Rome.

[34] The fact that Alaric reduced his demands only to land in Noricum (parts of modern Austria and Slovenia) and grain clearly supports this theory (Heather, 2006, p. 226).

To make matters worse for the Western Romans, the Alans, the Vandals and the Suebi, crossed into Spain in 409 after pillaging Gaul for 3 years. According to Jones (1964, p. 187), they were able to cross through the Pyrenees easily which was defended by barbarian federates who either neglected their duties or simply joined up with the newcomers. The devastation of Spain is claimed to have been so great, that the Hispano-Roman historian Hydatius was drawing a parallel between what had been told in the scriptures and what was going on in the province by drawing attention the catastrophes that was caused by pestilence, hunger, sword and plague – hardships that necessarily follow war – which forced mothers to eat their newborns in order to survive (Hyd. s.a. 410). The barbarians, no doubt suffering the same misfortunes, decided draw lots and share parts of Spain among themselves (Hyd. s.a. 411). Apparently, there was no objection from the Hispano-Roman provincials.[35] The Alans, at the time seemingly the most powerful of the lot, settled in Lusitania and Carthaginenses; the Hasding Vandals in Gallaecia, the Siling Vandals in Baetica and the Suebi in the northwest of the province (ibid).

Gerontius, a general of the usurper Constantine III in Spain, meanwhile, had rebelled and declared his son Maximus *augustus* in 409. Now there were four emperors in the west and various uncontrolled barbarians within the borders. Ravenna was in a precarious situation. In the summer of 409, Jovinus employed 10,000 Huns from beyond the Danube to secure the capital (Zos. 5.50.1), whose inactivity during Alaric's siege and sack of Rome in the subsequent year raises questions not about their existence,[36] but regarding their actual numbers.[37] All the same, after the Huns contributed significantly to the victory over Radagaisus, some Huns had already stayed in Italy, some to form the backbone of Stilicho's army with Goths (Zos. 5.34.1) and some even to serve in the personal bodyguard of Stilicho (Zos. 5.45.6). Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Africa was still under Roman control that kept Italy fed with its grain. On the order of Honorius, it was just at that moment Heraclianus, *comes Africae*, decided to cut the grain supply to Rome, that is to the usurper Attalus and Alaric, hence leaving the latter with no choice,

[35] Moreover, it has been put forward that this was a formal treaty between the barbarians and the usurper Maximus (Burns, 1992, pp. 58-59). However, Kulikowski strongly argues against it (Kulikowski, 2004, p. 165).
[36] Although, Sinor (Sinor, 1990, p. 185) disagrees by saying that the Hunnic contingent never reached Italy.
[37] Kelly, moreover, approaches the employment of Huns with caution since the empire was in a critical economic situation (Kelly, 2009, pp. 54-55).

but to dispose Attalus from his position and reopen negotiations with Honorius in much milder terms.[38]

Although Ravenna had emerged victorious from the encounter, what followed was a complete lack of competence in dealing with the Gothic leader. As Alaric found himself in another political deadlock, he besieged the eternal city for the third and the last time in 410. This time, he could not be bought off with 5000 pounds of gold, 30,000 pounds of silver, 4000 silk tunics, 3000 scarlet died skins and 3000 pounds of pepper either.[39] Rome finally opened its doors on August 24, 410 (Hyd. s.a. 409)[40] and was sacked for 3 days. Galla Placidia, the sister of Honorius, was one of the prizes that the Goths took with them before leaving the city (ibid.). That Stilicho's fall was quickly followed by a catastrophe showed everyone the bitter truth. The empire needed a strong military minded man on the field, if it wished to oppose the barbarians successfully, not a child emperor within the confines of his palace. But as Börm perfectly puts it, another Stilicho would always continue to have enemies, because "Wer kompetent war, war gefährlich; wer gefährlich war, nicht kompetent."[41]

1.2. THE GOTHIC SETTLEMENT OF 417/8 AND CONSTANTIUS III

While the news of this shocking sack was echoing far and wide across the Roman world, causing St. Augustine to write his *De Civitate Dei* (On the City of God) there kindled a new light in Ravenna as the new *magister militum*, Constantius III. He duly dealt with the rebellions of Constantine III and Gerontius (Soz. 9.13; Oros. 7.42.1-5). Meanwhile, Athaulf took the leadership role among the Goths since his older brother Alaric had died just before he was planning to cross over into Sicily (*Sicilia*). Athaulf then married Galla Placidia in Gaul and named their newborn son Theodosius. This marriage, nevertheless,

[38] Gračanin claims that the reason for Alaric's milder terms might have been the presence of the Hunnic warriors recently arrived in Ravenna and moreover, it was owing to these Huns, Alaric attacked Rome instead of Ravenna (Gračanin, 2006, p. 45).
[39] The valuables offered to Alaric to break his siege in the previous year.
[40] Contrary to what romantic paintings depict, it was, as Heather has recently argued, one of the most 'civilized sacks' in human history (Heather, 2006, p. 227) with minimal damage to Rome itself. The real damage was done to the prestige of the city. Yet, this was a hyperbole of mostly ecclesiastical writers, who considered all calamities coming from God to punish the Romans for their sins. Just as the frequent barbarian incursions and defeats they inflicted upon the imperial armies, Rome had been sacked (as early as 390 BC by the Celts) but always knew how to survive. Nevertheless, some modern historians still continue to subscribe to the former destructive sack story (Kelly, 2009, p. 55).
[41] "Who was competent, was dangerous; who was dangerous, was not competent" (Börm, 2013).

did not receive any positive response from Ravenna and the war dragged on until 414. The following year, Athaulf was succeeded by Vallia, after the former was assassinated in Spain.

Vallia knew how precarious the situation was the Goths found themselves in. Since the rebellion of Alaric in 395, they were on the move and travelled across great distances, from the Balkans into Italy and then Gaul. However, their presence within the Roman lands was unsanctioned. Moreover, there was a shortage of provisions. The Germanic peoples were agriculturalists as much as they were warriors. But in the last decades, the Goths came to wield spears more than their ploughs. Consequently, Vallia had not much of a choice other than to reconcile with Ravenna, if he wished to avoid the total annihilation of his followers due to war, famine and sickness. In 416, he surrendered both Galla Placidia and Priscus Attalus to Constantius III as gesture of goodwill. In 417/8 they received from the Roman authorities 600,000 measures of grain (Olymp., fr. 31) together with *Aquitania secunda* (Prosp. s.a. 419), a rich region in the Garonne valley between modern Toulouse and Bordeaux, in return for military support when Rome required. It should be kept in mind that in the eyes of contemporary Romans, this settlement was not seen permanent. For them, Ravenna was not surrendering the control of the region to the Goths, although, as later events would reveal, they were unintentionally sowing the seeds of a barbarian kingdom. All the same, in that year, the region was still a Roman province (Halsall, 2007, p. 232) and Valla was merely acting as a pseudo-Roman governor.

The possible reasons why that region was given to the Goths has been a subject of debate for quite some time. While Thompson offers the internal discord in Gaul as the reason, Wallace-Hadrill argues that it was because the empire intended to respond to threats of Saxon pirates ravaging the coastal settlements.[42] For Heather (2006, p. 243), it was a move of genius that both placed them far from Italy and as close as possible to turbulent Spain. On the other hand, Halsall proposes internal politics as the actuator and Kulikowski posits that the Gothic settlement was a deterrent, only loyal to Ravenna, to prevent potential usurpations similar to those of Constantine III and Gerontius shortly before (Halsall, 2007, p. 239; Kulikowski, 2001, pp. 33-34). All the same, their decades old wandering had finally come to an end. As part of their agreement, the Goths immediately

[42] See Thompson, 1956; Wallace-Hadrill, 1962.

marched under Roman standards and attacked the Alans and the Siling Vandals in northern Spain in 417/8 and also pacified the Bagaudae in a joint offensive with Roman commander Exuperantius in 417 to reestablish partial Roman control north of the Loire, the river almost separating Gaul horizontally in half with a turbulent north and a peaceful south.[43] In 418, they went so far as to kill the Alan king Addax on the battlefield and significantly reduced the Alans' numbers, rendering the Vandals as the leading group in the region. It seemed that the campaign would continue with Roman troops supporting the Goths from west, but Constantius III was content with the successful result, however limited it might have been. He ordered both the Romans and the Goths to cease operations in 419.

The crisis that had hit the West for almost two decades was now a part of history. The Western Empire had been on the verge of a premature fall, but it successfully recovered from the crisis through the hands of its able general Constantius III. Notwithstanding that stability was returned to the empire, between 395 and 417/8, Ravenna had lost its direct rule over Britain and parts of Spain, whereas northern Gaul resembled a gray zone more than anything else. The treasury also suffered due to these losses and barbarian incursions (*Cod. Theod*. 11.28.7 and 12). The regular Western Roman army, furthermore, had lost further irreplaceable blood by fighting barbarians and usurpers on multiple fronts (Jones, 1964, Appendix iii). Faced with such unfavorable odds, what Constantius III achieved should not be underestimated. Thanks to his energetic leadership, all the usurpers were killed, the Bagaudae in northern Gaul were pacified and the barbarians in Spain were at least momentarily paralyzed. More importantly, the Gothic problem that had been besetting both halves of the empire since the late 4th century was finally solved by a treaty. It was then only natural that the most influential man of his day, Constantius III received the title *patricius*.[44] On January 1, 417, he married Galla Placidia (Olymp., fr. 33.1) and became a member of the imperial family. From this marriage two children sprang to shape the future of the Western Roman Empire in the middle of the 5th century: first a daughter,

[43] In the 5th century comedy *Querolus* (2.29-34) the main character is told, if he wants to do whathever he pleases without being restricted by Roman law, then he should go near the Loire.

[44] The title of *patricius* (patrician) or *patricius noster* (Our patrician) was the shortened version of *comes et magister utriusque militiae et patricius* (count and master of both infantry and cavalry and patrician) and specifically belonged to the supreme commander of the armies (Barnes, 1975, pp. 157-158). He was the most influential figure and usually the effective ruler in the west in the 5th century.

Honoria, and then a son, born on July 2, 418, Valentinian (Prosp. s.a. 418). Furthermore, in February 421, Constantius III was made co-emperor by Honorius (Prosp. s.a. 420).[45]

Constantius III is said to have been planning to lead a campaign against the East to force Constantinople to recognize himself as a legitimate *augustus* (Olymp., fr. 33.1-2; Philost. 12.12). However, his death only seven months after his coronation (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 420-1) pulled Ravenna right back into disorder. Honorius, although now an adult, had grown up under others' influence, surrounded by the safe and mosaic covered walls of his palace in Ravenna. The union of the brother and the sister did not last long either after Placidia's nurse Elpidia, her steward Leontius and a certain Spadusa allegedly stirred up an enmity between the siblings, who are recorded to have become too intimate (Olymp., fr. 40).[46] Moreover, Placidia was not alone, for she was backed by Gothic *foederati*[47] and the *comes Africae*, Bonifatius, who had proved his skill by successfully defending Massalia (Marseilles) in 413 against the usurpers and then fought off the Moors in Africa, in 422. In the end, Honorius opt to banish his sister sometime in early 423 together with little Valentinian to Constantinople, to the palace of Theodosius II (*Chron Gall*. 452, 90; Olymp., *fr*. 38).

The emperor was undoubtedly *de iure* the most powerful man in the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, the formula of holding the effective power in the West had become clear for everyone with Stilicho, and then, by the example of Constantius III. The key was to obtain the rank of *magister militum*, and candidates had already began sharpening their knives for their roles in the next scene.

[45] His elevation was not recognized by Constantinople, for the Eastern court possibly feared another Stilicho scenario that might come to haunt the East.
[46] Olympiodorus notes that they were kissing each other on the lips. In agreement with Gibbon (1993, p. 370), I would argue that this was probably nothing more than an expression of childish affection. Nevertheless, their enemies seem to have succesfully used this against them.
[47] No doubt they felt their allegiance only to Placidia owing to her marriages first to Athaulf and then Constantius.

CHAPTER 2

THE HUNS BEFORE ATTILA

2.1. THE SEEDS AND THE ORIGINS

Ammianus (31.2) relates in his history that: "The seed and the origin of all the ruin and various disasters that the wrath of Mars aroused, putting in turmoil all places with unwonted fires, we have found to be this [the Huns]." In his narrative, the Huns were the perpetrators of the events of 376. The same can be said for the events in the early 5th century beleaguering the West. But first, before the narrative story of the pre-Attila Huns, it is necessary to examine some of the theories regarding the seeds and origins of the Huns, although it will be seen questions are more easily asked than answered.

We first come across their name[48] as *Χουνοί* and their dwellings are put somewhere in the Eurasian steppes between the Bastarnae and the Roxolani[49] in the geographical work of Claudius Ptolemy written in the 2nd century AD (Ptol. *Geog*. 3.5.10). The equation of the *Χουνοί* with the Huns of the 4th and 5th century has met with scepticism. Thompson and Maenchen-Helfen share the similar view that if the *Χουνοί* were indeed the Huns, then Ammianus had no reason to be surprised at their appearance in Europe, as if they had come out of nowhere, for Romans, especially those with military background such as Ammianus, would have surely heard of them before (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 451; Thompson, 1948, p. 21). Therefore, the theory connecting the 2nd century *Χουνοί* and 4th century Huns is a difficult one to defend (Sinor, 1990, p. 178.).[50]

On the other hand, the second mention of the name carries much more weight in Hunnic historiography. Approaching to the problem from a philological point of view, Henning (1948) argued in his research back in 1948 that the Huns mentioned in the Sogdian letters after the year 313 were none other than the Xiongnu.[51] According to his thesis, the

[48] In Latin, the name is known to have recorded as *Hunni*, *Huni* or *Chuni.*
[49] A Germanic and a Sarmatian group of peoples, respectively.
[50] Nonetheless, it has its followers such as Érdy (1995) who argues that the Huns indeed arrived in eastern Europe already in the 2nd century AD.
[51] These Xiongnu were a northern nomadic people from eastern Asian steppes whose superiority in cavalry warfare made them formidable enemies (Yü, 1990, p. 122). They frequently fought and even forced their biggest rival, the Han dynasty of China, to give them subsidies for a period of time. Much like the later Huns, their history is obscure and their rise and fall rather resembles a comet (Golden, 2011, p. 26). First mentioned in the 3rd century BC, they disappeared from the Chinese annals in the 1st century AD. It was pronounced, rather ironically, as 'Hun-nu' (ibid. p. 83).

merchant, named Nanaivande, the author of the letters, surely knew the name of the peoples (who are spelled as *Xwn* in them) who raided the rich towns of China. Nevertheless, Sinor (1990, pp. 178-179) argues that we have no means to prove that the Huns of Europe or at least the leading strata of them were connected to the Xiongnu, by pointing out the fact that the name was being used for all nomads, just like the Avars during the reign of Charlemagne were called anachronistically as the Huns by the author of *Vita Caroli Magni*, Einhard,[52] an approach rejected outright by de la Vaissière (2014, p. 181), who is firmly of the opinion that the word Hun came to be a generic term only after the 5th century AD.

Although a consensus has not been fully reached yet among the scholars on the connection between the Xiongnu and the Huns, recent studies seem to be in favor of a link between the two.[53] Golden (2011, p. 33), for one, asserts that after the fall of the Xiongnu Empire, mostly Turkic speaking nomadic groups found themselves being pushed into Kazakhstan, away from the borders of China and Mongolia. What happened was that those Turkic speaking peoples mixed themselves with the remnants of the Xiongnu, and upon having joined with other groups on the way, the Huns emerged. De la Vaissière, another supporter of the Xiongnu-the Hun connection, proposes that the Huns, once one of the subjugated groups under Xiongnu, pushed westward in the 4th century AD where they arrived beyond the Volga-Don region. That is, the Huns, having left the ranges of the Altai Mountains, they then crossed the Ural Mountains and finally arrived around the Volga river (De la Vaissière, 2014, pp. 176-178). A similar theory is presented by Hayashi who bases his view on the evolution of Hunnic bronze cauldrons. According to him (2014, p. 16), some of the Xiongnu in Mongolia first migrated to northern parts of Central Asia and after mixing up with other locals in the area, continued their movement westward.

Nevertheless, the two hundred year long gap between the end of the Xiongnu and the Hunnic invasions of the late 4th century continues to cause skepticism about forming a

[52] cf. Maenchen-Helfen "Pseudo-Huns" (1955).
[53] The refuters of connection between the two, on the other hand, are not few. Bailey refuses outright that the word *Xwn* has any link to the Huns. For him, it is rather a name for the Hyaona, who were described in the holy text of Avesta of Zoroastrianism as a hostile people (1954, pp. 12-21). Parlato suggests in her study that the word itself has "a literary, epic character" rather than signifying historical facts. For her, there was not a migration of the Huns after all, but only a migration of a generic name (Parlato, 1996, pp. 555-566).

perfect connection between the two. To Hodgkin (1892, p. 27), even though his work is now considerably outdated, this long silent period is the weakest link in constructing a connection with the Xiongnu and the Huns. However, he did not refrain from giving well-constructed reasons for this lull. In theories put forward by him (ibid. p. 30), the Xiongnu/the Huns waited for centuries quietly, because they either hoped to avenge themselves against China, or lost their unity after calamitous defeats or the Alans formed a strong barrier hindering their movement westward. Kim, goes one step further and tries to explain their inactivity by claiming that the Xiongnu/the Huns were in constant contact with their neighbors such as the Kangju and the Wusun that possessed a highly developed political structure, which in return quite likely influenced the structure of the Xiongnu/the Huns. That contact, according to Kim (2013, pp. 34-35), was in no way limited with one-way political influence. The Xiongnu/the Huns would later expand their territories first at the expense of the Kangju and the Wusun in south and later the Alans in west. Hayashi (2014, p. 16) asserts that they spent that time by merging with inhabitants in the region. I am of the opinion that this two hundred year old gap was spent on recuperating strength and adding other group of peoples to their entity. Once they felt powerful enough to retake the role of the aggressor, they decided that it was time to move, only this time, not eastwards but westwards.

In relation to the material culture of the Huns, we also seem to be surrounded by questions rather than answers. Therefore, the scarcity of the Hunnic archaeological remains in the Great Hungarian Plain and elsewhere in Europe should not surprise us. The findings of the Hunnic remains are limited to materials such as bronze cauldrons which seem to have used for funeral rites (Hayashi, 2014, p. 14; Masek, 2015, p. 4). Indeed, as far as archaeological remains concerned, cauldrons found in Europe are our best bet to tie the Xiongnu and the Huns together (De la Vaissière, 2014, p. 187; Hayashi, 2014, pp. 13-16).[54] Nevertheless, the archaeologists tend to find more Germanic items than those that can be associated with the Huns throughout the lands the Hunnic Empire once ruled. As Sinor suggests (1977b, pp. 225-227), this fact should tell us something very important. The Huns, by the time they arrived in the Great Hungarian Plain in the first half of the 5th

[54] For a recent Hunnic cauldron discovery made in Ócsa in Pest County in December, 2014 and other cauldrons attributed to the Huns found in modern Hungary, see Masek's "*HUN PERIOD CAULDRONS IN HUNGARY: Current Research in the Light of a New Find*" (2015).

century, had already been in contact with Germanic peoples, mainly the Goths, for some decades. During that time, they seem to have adopted not only Germanic names[55] but also their material culture. Just as the identity of a member of a Germanic group was multi-layered and changed, dropped or adopted according to various situation he found himself in, similarly, the identity of a Hun was also fluid. As Golden points out in the very first page of his introductory work to the world of Central Asia (2011, p. 1), "The ties of clan, tribe, status, locale, or religion were the primary components of Central Asian identities and these were often multi-layered." The reason for the scarcity of the Hunnic remains in Europe, then, can only be explained by this. It was not that the Huns did not leave much behind, indeed they did, but much of it can be only categorized under Germanic material culture.

All the same, in the light of archaeological and philological evidence, it can be safely said that the Huns were definitely an Asiatic *gens* (Hodgkin, 1892, p. 2), whose origins lay between the Altai Mountains and the Caspian Sea, in modern Kazakhstan and Southern Siberia. This means, as Kim asserts, that the Huns increasingly absorbed Turkic speaking peoples such as the Dingling and the Oghurs before the end of the 3rd century (Kelly, 2009, p. 45; Kim, 2013, p. 175, n. 85). This was followed by the conquest of the Kangju and the Wusun, peoples roughly inhabited the area of modern Uzbekistan and Ili Basin, respectively, in the middle of the 4th and of the Alans in the late 4th century, who lived around the Volga and whose conquest by the Huns came to be in Ammianus the starting point of his narrative in thirty-first book. The Huns, therefore, even before the moment they appeared in the Roman annals, seem to have always been heterogeneous, pretty much like all other nomadic empires which always possessed a multilingual nature.[56] After their absorption of Turkic elements, the Huns, as they continued to move westwards, eventually absorbed Iranian, Slavic, Baltic, Finno-Ugric and Germanic elements (Kim, 2013, p. 29). Hunnic names such as Attila, Bleda, Scottas, Onegesius and Edeco shows that the Hunnic Empire was a melting pot for different cultures (Sinor, 1977b, p. 225).

[55] According to Maenchen-Helfen, the Hunnic names were either Germanic or Germanized Turkic (1973, p. 389). The name of Attila derives from the Turkic word for the Volga River which was *atil*. Pritsak posits that Attila might have been more of a title than a real name (Golden, 1992; Pritsak, 1956, pp. 415-419). *–la* suffix was Germanic in origin and had dimunutive qualities. Bleda was a Turkic name which means *wise ruler* (Bóna, 1991).
[56] See Pritsak, 1976 for comparison.

Then, what was the reason that pushed them from their homeland towards the west? Bad summers, which might have had a terrible effect on pastoral nomadic ancient societies, whose survival naturally depended on the grazing and controlling of summer pastures may be the main culprit (Kelly, 2009, p. 40). Harsh winters, natural catastrophes and heavy defeats inflicted by other groups can be put forward as other possible reasons (ibid. p. 45; Golden, 2011, p. 33). Schlütz and Lehmkuhl explicitly base the cause for the Hunnic movement on the decline of the climatic conditions, a theory that is also found support in de la Vaissiere (De la Vaissière, 2014, p. 189; Schlütz & Lehmkuhl, 2007, p. 113). Conversely, Czegeldy (1983, pp. 34-35) claims that the Huns were put in motion by the arrival of the Avars in the 4th century. As has been pointed out by Khazanov (1984, pp. 93-94), there cannot be a single reason to put a group of peoples on the move. He suggests that increased population, wearied pasture zones and the need of staying close to agricultural civilizations, without which nomadic societies cannot survive, might have constituted excuses for such a major undertaking. Lastly, Heather (2010, p. 10) believes that their migration was calculated and might have been caused by the depletion of their grazing grounds.

It would perhaps be best to assume that each of these arguments played a part in the Huns' westward movement. All the same, the reason was definitely not, as Eunapius relates in the 4th century (Soz. 6.37), that the Huns were put in motion, because they followed an ox stung by a gadfly. Other contemporary Roman authors also claim to have known several reasons for their arrival. Philostorgius (9.17) thought that the Huns were Nebroi, whom Herodotus (4.17-105) mentioned as a mythical people living at the extreme edge of Scythia. Orosius (1.2.45) placed them in the Caucasus and portrayed them as the divine punishment for sinful Romans. For Jerome, they were the Scythians who held the east in their grasp and received tributes from Egypt and Ethiopia (Jer., *Ep*. 77.8). To Procopius, who was writing during the reign of Justinian, the Huns were simply Cimmerians. All the same, the most creative explanation seems to have been given by Jordanes, who traced back their origins to their intercourse with exiled Gothic witches in the swamps of southeastern Europe (Jord., *Get.* 121). For all these Romans, it would appear that the farther barbarians live, the more incomprehensible their origins would become.

2.2. THE SAVAGE HUN MYTH AND THE ROMAN PERCEPTION OF BARBARIANS

Despite their fabled portrayal by contemporaries, the Huns were not simple barbarians. Those who wrote about the Huns back then were instead victims of the "myth of the nomad" (Khazanov, 1984, p. 2). For Romans,[57] the term *barbarus* specifically included non-Latin speakers who lived outside the borders of *imperium*. Moreover, there were degrees of what made a person barbarian. As Herodotus relates, the more one moved away from the Mediterranean, the more savage the people were. This consequently rendered the Egyptians and the Scythians, who lived in the southernmost and northernmost regions, respectively, vulnerable to suffer the extreme conditions of their lands. On the other hand, for the Greeks, their peninsula was the perfect geographical zone in the world, placed just right about in the middle, therefore, it was only natural that the Greek states had the best warriors and politicians (Halsall, 2007, p. 46). There, everything and everyone was moderate and nothing was excessive.

The Romans later took over this Greek idea and applied it to their world (Halsall, 2007, p. 47). For them, Rome was the centre of the world and was a city where everything was done in moderation and by reason,[58] two traits the non-Mediterranean people lacked. Nevertheless, this did not mean that all *barbari* were incapable of reason and moderation in Roman eyes. Stilicho, the half-Vandal half-Roman general of the Western Roman Empire, whose career has been handled in detail above, and many other high ranked soldiers of Germanic background were just as effective as their Roman counterparts and there was nothing that made them visibly barbarian. They might have been born far from the Mediterranean, but in the end they successfully assimilated themselves to the world of the Romans. They adopted the language, dress, culture of the Romans and what mattered for the Romans was exactly this. To them it was the manners of the barbarians that mattered, not their ethnicity (Halsall, 2007, p. 47.).

[57] As well as the Greeks, for whom *barbaros* meant non-Greek speakers. The Romans simply adopted the usage of the term during their Mediterranean conquests (Halsall, 2007, p. 46). Ironically, Romans were barbarians to Greeks.
[58] Whereas barbarians are believed to have lacked both. We read in Ammianus (31.12.15) a certain Aquiuntus who once had been captured by the enemy and still fear their irrational mood.

However, this still did not stop the Romans from stereotyping all foreigners as *barbari sine ratione moderationeque*.[59] In the end, without the barbarian threat there would have been no need for collecting taxes, raising an army and eventually for the Roman Empire. It would have only been a matter of time before a farmer in North Africa started to question his obligation for paying taxes to a man vested in purple living in some far city living far from him, if there had been no barbarian threat. In short, the barbarian threat and "the myth of the nomad" were necessary to keep the empire functioning.

According to this world view of the Romans, therefore, the Huns would fall in the most savage category of all barbarians, as stories about their origin placed them near the Maeotian Lake (Amm. 31.1-2). In ancient view, the Don was the limit for Europe and as the Maeotian Lake lay beyond it, it was naturally a door, out of which only the most savage and wildest peoples could emerge. When we read Ammianus' record, it is clear that his description perfectly fits to this.[60] For him, the Huns would live in wagons, although we know that they used to live in tents or even in other type of buildings as Priscus relates (Prisc., fr. 8). Again, according to our 4th century former soldier, they would eat their meat raw (Amm. 31.1-2). Even Ammianus himself might have not wholly subscribed to everything he wrote or heard about the Huns, but writing on a newly met people coming from the farthest distances of the world, his hands were simply tied by the traditions of Roman historiography. Such colorful narratives were, after all, what a Roman would have liked to hear.

2.3. FEATURES OF NOMADIC SOCIETIES AND THE HUNS

In reality, material culture remains of nomads prove that they not only lived adequate lives, but also enjoyed wealth to some extent (Golden, 2011, p. 4). Their wealth, in contrast to a wealth of a Roman senator, whose time was usually spent in finding a balance between *negotium* (business) and *otium* (pleasure), was measured with how many horses and sheeps they owned, two kinds of animals required for the survival of a pastoral nomad. Whereas a sheep would provide food, hide and wool, horses would give the

[59] Without reason and moderation.
[60] For their physical descriptions see Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 358-375; Man, 2006, pp. 63-66; Thompson, 1996, pp. 56-59

nomad mobility, which was the most dreaded feature of nomadic warfare, besides milk and meat (ibid. p. 13; Khazanov, 1984, p. 47).

Ammianus informs us (31.2.7) that the leadership among the Huns depended on conditions and was usually improvised. The precision of this has been debated ever since. The reason why Ammianus thought so may lie in his lack of knowledge on the political structure of the nomads (Kim, 2013, pp. 59-60). Still, he might not have been wrong as one might assume. Now, before we move on to the specifics of the ruling strata of the Huns, to draw the outline features of the political organization of steppe peoples is necessary. Golden (2011, p. 15) enlightens us on the subject as follows: they would be grouped in clans or tribes, which actually appeared after the grouping of several clans, and all members would trace their lineage back to a single ancestor. Similarly, all clans would form a tribe, originating from a more distant but still common forefather. These tribes would then form confederations[61] and bear the name of the most dominant clan. Evans-Pritchard (1949, p. 142) points out that this system of tribes must have played some kind of equalizing role where it would have made difficult the rise of a single leader. His theory can be applied to the early Huns, before the time they moved their main body into the Great Hungarian Plain at the beginning of the 5th century and certainly before the age of Attila. All the same, once joined by multiple Germanic, Slavic and Turkic groups, the the clan type structure of the Huns must have been either modified or complicated in some ways.

Khazanov (1984, pp. 148-149), one of the supporters of the theory found in Ammianus, asserts that the leaders among the Huns truly appeared and disappeared as conditions, such as warfare, migration, pastures, changed. Heather argues that there had been not a single Hunnic leader among the late 4th century Huns by referring to the employment of Hunnic warriors by Vithimer of Greuthungi in 376 to face other Hunnic warbands (Amm. 31.3.3; Heather, 2006, p. 153). Indeed, we are unable to name of a king or of a king-like figure among the Huns until 395.[62] If we are to subscribe to what has been described

[61] The term "confederation" is opposed by Khazanov on the grounds that confederations are usually made up of members that willingly joined up with other tribes and this was hardly the case in nomadic empires (Khazanov, 1984, p. 152). Also cf. Kelly, 2009, p. 87. Therefore, in this study I refrained from naming the Hunnic Empire as a confederation, for none of its subjects seem to have accepted the Hunnic domination voluntarily. Otherwise, I would suspect that none of its Germanic subjects would go their own separate ways following the death of Attila.

[62] The same was true of many Germanic groups.

above, the Huns truly did not have a prominent figure leading them during their early years in Europe. Instead, they were probably led by numerous chiefs or petty kings who shared equal power whose names remained unrecorded. Nevertheless, this may also have to do with the fact that the main body of the Huns at that time (late 4th century) was still positioned in northeast of the Black Sea. The first Hunnic leaders we know their name of were Basikh in Koursikh who led the infamous campaign of 395 over the Caucasus. Even then, the sources describe them as military commanders (*arkhontes*) and neither as chiefs nor kings (Sinor, 1990, p. 182).

Besides *arkhontes*, there were *logades* that literally would have meant picked man who were responsible with the command of military units. They are described along similar lines by Kim (2013, p. 57) as the governors in the Xiongnu Empire whose duties consisted of administration of the provinces and regulations of the relations between the king and other leaders subjected to him. He further argues that there was even a hierarchy among *logades*, by basing his theory on the account of Priscus' banquet scene in the Hunnic camp (fr. 8), in which the historian describes the seating arrangements of the Huns (ibid. p. 58). Finally, in John of Antioch's account (fr. 187) we come across *phylarchoi*, again another Greek term, which would have meant leaders not bound to a single king. On the dawn of the 5th century, the Huns knew no mighty king ruling supreme all the Huns (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 51).

Lack of a prominent leader, on the other hand, does not necessarily mean lack of a political organization. Kim (2013, p. 20-21) believes that the political organization of the Huns originated itself from the Xiongnu. Even if one chooses to reject his theory, it is true that it would have been impossible to keep the Hunnic realm intact for almost a hundred year without possessing some sort of political organization. Regardless, after 395 the Hunnic history starts to have its own leader names starting with Basikh and Koursikh. We also have names such as Uldin, Charaton, Rua, Bleda and Attila whose influence and authority greatly varied from each other, but all managed to surround themselves with *logades* to some extent and entered into agreements with Rome. It should also be noted that whereas in the time of Olympiodorus, there had been multiple king-like figures, there was a single king in Priscus's time, that is Attila. The change the Huns had been

undergoing through since their arrival in the Great Hungarian Plain in the early 5th century was apparently still a perpetual process by the middle of the century.

Although the Hunnic Empire controlled many people from different ethnic backgrounds and stretched from the Volga to the Rhine at its apogee, it still was not an empire[63] that can be compared with those of the Romans or the Persians, for there was no such thing as Hunnic bureaucracy. No official would report and keep records anything about numerous subject nations. This is bccause the Huns had too few literate people and the need for bureaucracy was nonexistent for pastoral nomad societies. Even after they settled in the Great Hungarian Plain and began to lose their characteristics of pastoral society, the only known bureaucrat serving the Huns was a Roman *notarius* (secretary) sent to Attila by Aetius himself. His purpose was explicitly to serve the Hunnic king in his dealings with the Western Romans. Therefore, as Sinor says (1977b, pp. 228-233), the Hunnic Empire was only an empire in word. Since the reason has also been given above on why the term "confederation" is also not suitable for the Huns,[64] this study thus will use the Hunnic Empire designation in a looser sense. On the other hand, the political existence of the Huns can be basically described as a parasitic state, of which integrity and existence depended on the continuous flow of gold that was acquired through tributes from rich settled neighbors (Rome, Persia) or seized in raids. It was supported by a powerful mobile warrior class whose excellence in warfare enabled them to conquer new groups of peoples and control them through fear. The loyalty of the subjects was able to be only secured by distribution of enormous amounts of gold. In such an empire, there was no need for bureaucrats.

Pastoralism takes up the largest space in picturing the life of the nomads, but it was not like they were not interested in agriculture. The Xiongnu, for example, is known to have occupied with agriculture to some extent (Kim, 2013, p. 41; Taskin, 1968, pp. 24, 121.). Somewhat, the Huns might also have pursued agricultural interests, especially upon their arrival in the Great Hungarian Plain, once they came in contact with other Germanic

[63] According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary an empire is a (1): a major political unit having a territory of great extent or a number of territories or peoples under a single sovereign authority; especially: one having an emperor as chief of state (2): the territory of such a political unit *b*: something resembling a political empire; especially : an extensive territory or enterprise under single domination or control. The latter explanation would be the best description for the he empire of the Huns. (Definition of Empire. (2016, October 16). Retrieved from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/empire).

[64] See above p. 37, n. 61.

peoples who were wholly agriculturalists.[65] Heather (2010, p. 208) is also of the opinion that the Huns were familiar with agriculture. We should also note that the pastoral nomadism is a way of life determined by climatic conditions. If there is no soil fit for cultivating, what alternative one can have? It was, in Khazanov's words (1984, pp. 69, 117), "a different method of economic adaptation, the parameters of which are determined […] by ecology and level of technological development". The Huns were also craftsmen, since they are known to have used wagons like other nomadic societies while on the move and surround themselves with them when they feel threatened (Jord., *Get*. 210; Goldsworthy, 2009, p. 316). Moreover, manufacturing their famous weapon of choice, the composite bow, was an arduous work that required high level of craftsmanship and sometimes would take a year to complete (Klopsteg, 1947; Paterson, 1984, pp. 74-75; Ureche, 2013, p. 85).

Whether nomads in the end fully turn sedentary or not, they always have been in close contact with sedentary civilizations.[66] For economic exchanges, first of all, they depended on trade with settled civilizations (Heather, 2010, p. 208). World history is dotted with nomadic groups wreaking havoc on sedentaries, but the case was certainly not ubiquitous for all periods. A relationship between the two could even reach a level where it can be defined as symbiotic (Golden, 2011, p. 14). One can only need to take a look at the Germanic-Hunnic relations to realize how a symbiotic relationship existed between them. As Irons (1979, p. 362) asserts, they always have had more in common in terms of society and culture with agriculturalists than with other nomads. Nomads also needed to purchase and sell goods in order to survive besides pasturing. Differently from sedentary societies, however, the line between trading and raiding was a very thin one for them (Golden, 2011, p. 15). When there was peace and trade routes between the Huns and the Romans remained open, Hunnic exports must have included items such as horses and pelts. What the Huns imported from Rome must have been of great variety (Sinor, 1990, p. 205).

[65] For a pastoral nomad, a person who is busy with agriculture is unfree, a slave, bound to his soil, while a nomad enjoys absolute freedom (Khazanov, 1984, p. 160). Nomads around the world still perceive their way of life superior to those who are busy with cultivation of land (Golden, 2011, p. 6).

[66] Whereas a sedenteary society could survive without nomads, a nomadic society could not live without sedentaries. Also remember the saying of Mahmud Kashgari 'There is no Turk without a Tadjik [sedentary], there is no hat without a head' (Khazanov, 1984, p. 82 quoted in Barthold, 1963, p. 460).

After all, the Huns were located in the Great Hungarian Plain, in a perfect distance to the both halves of the Roman Empire, not only for raiding, but also for trading.

The Huns, from the moment they arrived in Europe, never aimed to conquer the *Imperium Romanum*, just like other nomadic empires, which by their natura, preferred to exploit their rich neighbors.[67] For the Huns, and any other nomadic peoples, as it were, conquering settled societies would be killing the goose laying golden eggs (Khazanov, 1984, p. 224). The Hunnic Empire, was ultimately, a parasitic state that knew how to exploit Roman weakness (Kelly, 2014, p. 195). The integrity of its heterogeneous subjects depended on the continuous flow of gold coming from the Roman Empire. Roman gold would then feed both the Huns and other peoples subject to them, and this way, the Hunnic war machine would be kept oiled. To obtain gold, raiding or only a threat of a raid was necessary. The Huns did not only fill wagons with gold and other valuables after successful raid, but also received gold as a result of treaties they signed with the empire.

Nomadic empires were also very open societies. They would change or adapt themselves as conditions differed (Khazanov, 1984, p. 151). This was probably what happened with the Huns after their subjugation of numerous Germanic groups. The fact that many Huns had Germanic names, the scarcity of Hunnic specific burials and material remains can only be explained by their socio-cultural enwinding with Germanic groups, foremost with the Goths.[68] We can even go further and claim that the Huns became Goths except their leading strata that still preferred to cling to their origins (Kelly, 2009, p. 60). This receptinvess on the part of the Huns, nevertheless, a trait that can be found nearly in all nomadic societies, had its disadvantages. It was useful, when a nomadic society such as the Huns arrived in Europe and mixed with the traditions and way of life of various Germanic groups without making any concessions regarding their leader status in that newly formed super-group.[69] On the other hand, it was dangerous, because, since the centre's authority depended on military and diplomatic successes, a setback suffered at one of these fronts would hazard the existence of the ruling strata or would even lead to

[67] See Barfield's "The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China" (1989) to see how the Xiongnu and China relations played out throughout the years, which highly resembled that of the Huns and the Romans in our period.
[68] Indeed, this close relationship between the two might have led to the common, yet highly legendary origin story found in Jordanes (Khazanov, 1984, p. 122). Kelly also asserts that the Gothic culture continued unbroken thanks to the fact that it was adopted by many Huns (Kelly, 2009, p. 62).
[69] A term favored by Heather (2006) *passim* in his work.

an armed internal strife, now composing the minority in that super-group (Golden, 2011, p. 31).

By conquering so many Germanic peoples, the Huns gradually began to absorb their traditions. With agriculturalist Germanic societies answering to the Huns, they had created the agricultural arm of their empire, which, in the end, made the Hunnic Empire less dependent on Rome, if we are to follow the argument of Khazanov (1984, p. 225).[70] The role that the Great Hungarian Plain should be also not forgotten. Much smaller in size when contrasted with the vastness of the Kazakh steppes,[71] the Great Hungarian Plain appears to have led to alterations in the foreign policy of the Huns upon their arrival in the area. The Huns, now, had abandoned their sack and destroy policy of pre-400 and started to offer their enemies two choices. If they wanted peace, they were to give tributes to the Huns or be destroyed (Kelly, 2009, p. 58). The Goths, excluding the ones led by Alaric and those who later were settled in Gaul, were the biggest victim of this Hunnic aggression. As Kelly eloquently puts it:

> "Once in permanent occupation of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Huns transformed themselves into an imperial power whose success relied on the systematic exploitation of existing Gothic society. The Hun Empire was, above all, a parasitic state, its success lay in its ability to mimic the culture of those it ruled, to cream off their wealth, and to consume the food they produced. […] By building an empire in Europe, the Huns ceased to be nomads." (Kelly, 2009, p. 58)

2.4. HUNNIC WARFARE

The reason that made the Huns so frightening adversaries and gave them a huge advantage against their enemies in the battlefield laid in their expertise in the handling of bow, which was supported by high mobility given them by their horses. When their precise shots and speed are combined with their lightning like incursions and feigned retreats, the Huns must have been a nightmare to meet on the battlefield (Amm. 31.2; Maur., *Strat*. 11.2). Just as warfare was the Xiongnu's business (Sima, 1993, pp. 129-143), the Huns' greatest strength also laid in their martial abilities. The favored weapon of choice of the Huns was the composite bow, the most popular type of bow among the people favoring archery

[70] Khazanov, 1984, p. 225
[71] Whereas the Great Hungarian Plain is 40,000 square miles, the Kazakh steppes in contrast are 300,000.

(Ureche, 2013, p. 185). [72] It would be made out of bone, horn, wood and animal sinew and was 150 cm long in length, 50 cm longer than other types of bows used by other steppe peoples (Heather, 2010, p. 216), but 30 cm shorter than simple bows (Ureche, 2013, p. 184). The fact that it was asymmetric would have made it more flexible to use and extend its reach (Heather, 2006, p. 156). Only darkness and heavy rain appear to have affected its handling negatively (Kaegi, 1964, p. 100). Experts differ on its reach and effective distance of shooting. In the Saracen manuals, it is claimed that a mounted archer could hit target from a distance of 70 m (Goldsworthy, 1996, p. 184; Ureche, 2008, p. 334). According to some, this distance was between 50-60 m. to hit a target precisely (Goldsworthy, 1996, p. 184). It should also be noted that the saddle was important to make a good shot, since the warrior would use his two hands to shoot.[73] All the same, it all depended on the archer's skill on the battlefield.[74]

Ammianus (31.2.8–31.2.10) claims that the Huns used arrowheads made out of bone that would have shattered on impact, but unfortunately none have survived that could be assigned directly to the Huns to support his argument. Still, 14 out of 125 arrowheads found in excavations in Nydam Mose, Denmark, are out of bone. This shows that barbarians, whether Hun or not, at least used bone arrowheads to some extent (Elton, 1996, p. 64). Strangely enough, we also do not possess direct evidence to document whether the Hunnic cavalry used bows. Nevertheless, we should not have any reasons to doubt that the Huns, included the Hunnic *foederati* served Rome, used bows on horseback which turned them into the most popular *foederati* choice in Roman armies (ibid. p. 68). The successes of Roman armies in 430s and the fear Aetius' Huns caused in both of his civil wars can also be presented to further strengthen this theory.[75]

Besides bow and arrow, the Huns are known to have used a kind of *lasso*, a net to capture their opponents (Soz. 7.26.) and we have no reason to deny that their nobles were heavily armored with iron or lamellar armors similar to the one in Panjikent wall painting and *Spangenhelm* style helmets (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 243ff). Nevertheless, many of

[72] Hdt. 1.73 on the Scythians using it.
[73] On saddles see Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 208-210
[74] For more to read on Hunnic archery, see Fields, 2006, pp. 30-32, 39-46; Heather, 2006, pp. 154-158; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 221-232
[75] For the technical details on bows wielded by the Huns see "Bows used by the Huns" by Boie & Bader, 1995, pp. 28-32

the Huns must have remained lightly armored throughout their presence in Europe. Contemporaries have also recorded some instances in which the Huns are portrayed wearing armor, such as the Huns in Theodosius I's army in 384 (Pacat., *Paneg*. 33.4) and the Hun dueling a Roman in Sidonius (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.289-292). Ancient authors also note that they made good use of captured Roman equipment, both from the battlefield and Roman workshops (*fabricae*), ranging from mail armors (Oros. 7.34.5) to shields (Soz. 7.26.8). They also seem to have not abstained from engaging in close quarters combat with swords or lances they would have carried (Amm. 31.2; Maur., *Strat*. 11.2).

10th century Byzantine historian Suda claims that the Huns were *akrosphaleis*, that is, they were so accustomed to do their business on horseback, that they would trip up when walking.[76] Ammianus says that they even would sleep on horseback (31.2.6). Priscus' account of how the Roman embassy felt necessary to negotiate on horseback after the Huns refused to dismount their horses is much cited (Prisc., *fr*. 1.1). For all that, other than these accounts, we are not much informed on the Hunnic horse. In fact, there has not been a single horse bone found in the Hunnic Empire that can be associated with the Huns (Bökönyi, 1974, p. 267). Nevertheless, it is known that they were smaller than the ones Romans would have had, but in contrast, much stronger (Veg., *Mul*. 3.6.1-7) However, they were apparently at their weakest during winter since (Leo, *Pr*. 7.9) recommends attacking peoples of the steppes especially during winter. They did not know of stirrups, but instead would use wooden saddles to steady their aim (Heather, 2006, p. 157). A string of horses, usually made up of 5 or 6, would accompany a single warrior who would mount them in turns in order not to exhaust them. With a single soldier was supported by that many horses,, enemy would also face difficulties in guessing their numbers (Golden, 2011, p. 11.). During the late 4th century raids and campaigns of the Huns, their horses must have mainly been of Central Asian origin. The raid of 395 is a perfect example of to what extent Hunnic light cavalry could penetrate deep and instill fear to the Romans. In this respect, the Hunnic cavalry is comparable to Stukas of Luftwaffe in 1939-40 campaigns of Germany.

Beginning with their arrival in the Middle Danube region, nevertheless, the Huns must have started equipping Gothic, Roman or any type of horse they could find, a theory also

[76] Maur., *Strat*. (11.2) claims the same.

supported by the contemporary Orosius (7.34.5). In any case, once the Huns arrived in the Great Hungarian Plain, the number of their horses must have substantially decreased. After all, as Lindner declares, Hungary was not on par with Mongolia in terms of size and to expect the continuation of their nomadic habits in the middle of Central Europe would be ignoring the role played by ecology that shapes the human history (1981, p. 14). Much smaller in size than the Kazakh steppes, their new base of operations could only sustain 150,000 horses in total (ibid. p.15). This figure should not create an image of a monstrous Hunnic army in the minds of the reader, similar to what romantic era paintings used to love to depict.

According to Heather (2010, p. 216), the Hunnic warbands of 370s consisted of hundreds of soldiers at best. Only post-400, their warbands turned into proper fighting forces ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 men strong armies. The warbands of the late 4th century, moreover, were acting independently from each other. While a group of Huns would fight against the Tervingi and Greuthingi, some would be employed by Tervingi to fight off other Huns or would even fight on the side of the Goths against Rome, as it was case at the battle of Adrianople (ibid. p. 213). This further demonstrates the lack of single leader among the early Huns. Just as a national sentiment or a common aim was nonexistent among Germanic peoples (Innes, 2004, p. 69), Huns also do not seem to have shared any bonds with other Huns.[77] Where there was opportunity for gold and spoils, the Huns would follow, whether they would face their own kinsmen or not.

Since they almost wholly relied on their mobility, they would usually avoid pitched battles. Instead, they would prefer hit and run tactics, which made them more successful in raid operations, rather than in battles. This had been their choice of warfare for a long time, until the ratio of Gothic warriors began to surpass that of the Huns. By Attila's time,

[77] Germanic groups, like Huns, were heterogeneous. So, when we say Franks, we mean a political group built on the identity of Franks, but not necessarily include solely Franks (Innes, 2004, p. 69). Moreover, even though more than a century old, de Coulanges (1872, p. 243) perfectly puts it that how *barbaricum* was anything but united by shared language or blood: "Entre ces peuples germains, on ne voit aucune entente, aucun mouvement concerté, aucun effort commun. Tout sentiment national est absolument absent. Il n'y a indice chez eux ni d'un amour pour la patrie, ni même d'une haine pour l'étranger. Se représenter la Germanie se précipitant sur l'empire romain est une illusion tout à fait contraire à la réalité des faits. De ces Germains dont parle l'histoire, la moitié au moins était à la solde de l'empire. Ils ne manifestaient aucune antipathie pour le nom romain ou pour le nom gaulois. Ils se combattaient les uns les autres plus volontiers qu'ils ne combattaient l'empire. Ce sont les Francs de Mellobaude qui ont la plus grande part à la bataille d'Argentaria, où sont écrasés les Alamans (377). Les Germains de Radagaise sont exterminés par une armée dont le chef est un Vandale, et dont la moitié est composée de Goths et de Huns. L'invasion des Huns et des Ostrogoths est arrêtée par une armée de Wisigoths, de Francs, de Burgondes, de Saxons et de Sarmates."

the days of Blitzkrieg-like raids of the Hunnic cavalry were long gone. Now, the Huns were heavily outnumbered by at least three groups of Goths, Sciri, Gepids, Alans, Sarmatians, Heruli, Rugi and Suebi, all under Attila's dominance. As a consequence, these groups replaced the main fighting arm of the Huns and thus their fighting style. The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451, which is handled in detail below, was a major pitched battle with heavy casualties on both sides. There was no contemporary mention of the dreadful Hunnic cavalry and Hunnic bow participating in that battle. Instead, we read Attila while he was encouraging his heterogenous followers with throwing the first spear against the enemy (Jord., *Get*. 206), the most popular weapon in Germanic armies (Elton, 1996, p. 57). With such a fundamental change, the Huns had lost their greatest advantage, their weapon of fear. Thus, they became a known enemy, which the Romans had been fighting for centuries.[78]

2.5. THE ADVENT OF THE HUNS

Due to several possible reasons we have briefly addressed above, the Huns left the Altai region, and arrived east of the Don in the middle of the 4th century, a region which had been inhabited by the Alans at that time. The Alans, renowned with their heavy cataphracts, could not resist the light horse of the Huns and many of them were either slaughtered or forced to join the Huns through treaties (Amm. 31.3.1; Heather, 2010, p. 215; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 193). Following their this success, the Huns, who were now composed of larger warbands and supported by some of the Alans, set their sights on the Greuthungi, a group of Goths living west of the Don (Heather, 2010, pp. 146-147). Although Ermanaric, the warlike king of the Greuthungi, tried to resist the coming tide for a while, he realized that his situation was hopeless and committed suicide (Amm. 31.3.2). Vithimiris succeeded him and to oppose the Huns he even employed some Huns (Amm. 31.3.3), whose aid did not seem to have contributed to anything significant and he died fighting. He was succeeded by his son Vidhericus, who, due to his young age, had to share authority with Alatheus and Saphrax, two generals of the Greuthungi. Both apparently did not wish to experience the same end of their predecessors and thus they

[78] The features of the Germanic warfare changed little over centuries. See Elton, 1996, pp. 57-69.

decided to withdraw near to the Dniester. Hearing this news, the Tervingi Goths and their king Athanaricus living west of the Greuthungi prepared to face the Huns. However, their efforts proved fruitless and the majority of the Tervingi abandoned their king Athanaricus in 376. They had concluded that their safest best would lie in the lands of the Romans, namely in Thrace, where the soil was known to have been fertile and was protected by the flowing waters of the Danube (Amm. 31.3.8).[79]

The Huns, in a very short time, upset the whole balance of *barbaricum* beyond the Danube. Even though the initial Hunnic victories over the Goths might have been cause of joy among some Romans, they never would have wished to see big groups of barbarians on the move, especially without their consent. Regardless, in this instance the arrival of the Tervingi into the Roman lands was accepted with cheers.[80] The permission was given them to cross the Danube on the grounds that the Eastern Empire was in dire needs of manpower. The emperor of the East, Valens, hoped that the new arrivals would be used as auxiliaries in the Roman armies (Amm. 31.4.4.) However, hope for a better future in both camps replaced by a disappointment very fast. Abused and mishandled by Eastern Roman officials charged with the settlement process of the Goths, the Tervingi found no other option but to revolt (Amm. 31.5). Subsequent to some skirmishes and small-scaled undecided battles, the Tervingi now joined forces with the Greuthungi, who had crossed the Danube without Roman permission,[81] and met the Roman army under Valens at Adrianople on August 9, 378. The *coup de main* was brought by the Gothic cavalry who might have also been supported by parts of the Hunnic cavalry, since the Tervingi quickly employed 1000-2000 Huns to strengthen their ranks as soon as they broke into open rebellion (Kelly, 2009, p. 20) and who are reported to have been in the region with the Goths after the battle for spoils of the battlefield (Amm. 31.16.3).[82] Apparently, the Huns also took part in the plundering of northern Balkans (*Pan. Lat*. 13 (2) 11.4; *Epit. de Caes.* 47.3; Philost. 11.8). However, Maenchen-Helfen (1973, p. 29) rejects the idea that the Huns were present at Adrianople and further argues that we have

[79] For history of the Goths until and after the arrival of the Huns see Schmidt, 1934; Wolfram, 1979; Heather, 1996.
[80] Heather (2006, p. 166) argues that Valens must have been hardly pleased by the arrival of the Tervingi whilst he was busy with the Sassanids on eastern front.
[81] While the Romans concentrated all their attention and their forces on the Tervingi, Greuthungi made use of the opportunity and seeing the Danube was lightly defended, commenced their crossing (Kelly, 2009, pp. 19-20).
[82] Another proof, after Vithimiris' example, that the Hunnic warbands of the late 4th century worked independetly from each other and responded to a no single leader.

no means to certainly say that Huns were active in the plundering of Thrace. If the Huns had really been present on the side of the Goths, this was the first time that they came in contact with the Romans, as has been asserted by some historians (Gračanin, 2006, p. 30). All the same, with the Gothic victory at Adrianople and the end of the 1st wave of movements stirred up by the Huns, the Goths became henceforth a people to be dealt with particulary within the imperial boundaries. North of the Danube, on the other hand, was now ripe for the taking if a new strong group could ever decide to fill the power vacuum that left by the Goths in the region.[83]

2.6. THE FIRST CONTACT WITH THE WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Two years after the catastrophe at Adrianople, in 380, Gratian, *augustus* of the West, signed a treaty with the Goths of Alatheus and Saphrax, the Alans and the Huns (Jord., *Get.*141, Zos. 4.34.2–4) and settled them in northern Pannonian provinces[84] of Pannonia Prima and Valeria Media[85] as *foederati*, soldiers who would receive Roman pay and supplies while protecting the lands that they had been settled and march with the Romans whenever they required their assistance (Lotter, 2003, pp. 72-74; Soproni, 1978, pp. 200, 206, 1985, pp. 86-93.).[86] Schmidt opposes against the idea that the Huns were included in the treaty, while Alföldi completely rejects that such a treaty ever existed, however, the archaeological finds support the notion that the Huns had really been settled in Pannonia at that time (Alföldi, 1924, pp. 67-68; Müller, 2002, pp. 7-8; Schmidt, 1934, p. 260; Straub, 2002, pp. 9-12). This was the first time that some Hunnic groups were settled within the Western Empire after their appearance in Europe and they would have a chance to prove their martial abilities very soon.

In the meantime, some of the Sciri and the Carpadocians mixed with Huns under Greuthungian leadership crossed the Danube in 381/2, but were promptly pushed back by the Romans (Zos. 4.34.6). Thrace was experiencing the fallout of the defeat of 378, but

[83] I am in agreement with Heather when he argues that there was no conquest of the Gothic groups in the region by the Huns ever took place. Rather, the Goths, at least a great part of them, simply left their homes and decided to try their luck within *Imperium Romanum* instead of staying in *Gothia*, which was now no longer safe to stay (Heather, 2006, p. 153).

[84] On the Roman Pannonia and its administration see Fitz, 1995.

[85] In 425, the original province Valeria had been abandoned and founded again as Valeria Media (Toth, 1989, pp. 197-226). Its purpose was to serve as a defensive line against hostile approaches to northeastern Italy (Gračanin, 2006, pp. 67-68).

[86] However, there are those who argues against this (Kovacs, 2004, pp. 120-121).

the Danube frontier seems to have been enough manned to repel small scaled barbarian threats on the river. In 382, Theodosius I, who succeeded Valens upon the latter's death at Adrianople, finally found a solution to the Gothic problem and settled them in the Balkans, if we are to believe Eunapius (fr. 43), that is bridging the Western and the Eastern halves of the Roman Empire (Heather, 2006, p. 170), to be used as a barrier against potential Hunnic incursions. We lack the details of the treaty of 382, if such a treaty ever existed, but for the first time in Rome's history a group of foreigners was settled without its members having been completely distributed across the different regions of the empire in order to prevent any potential revolts or rebellions.

In 384, the Hunnic *foederati* in Pannonia were called to arms by Bauto, *magister militum* of the West (Amb., *Ep*. 25-28, PL 16, 1081-82). In 383, a commander pompously named Magnus Maximus had declared himself emperor in Britain against Valentinian II, the child emperor of the Western Romans. In 384, in order to prevent a civil war, he was recognized by the senior emperor Theodosius I as *augustus* and besides Britain, he was given the administration of Gaul. Notwithstanding, his real intention was to be recognized the emperor of the whole west and to this end he resorted to a trick through which he hoped to gain a *casus belli* against Valentinian II. He stirred up the Juthungi, a Germanic people, who then had been inhabiting the area surrounding modern Bavaria, to raid Raetia. Bauto quickly summoned the Huns and the Alans of Pannonia to fight off the threat and his decision quickly proved itself successful, for the Juthungi were beaten back almost as quickly as they had begun their raid. Nevertheless, the Huns did not stop after their success, but continued their march westwards.[87] Bauto had to buy them off to stop their advance and only then they returned to their base in Pannonia (Amb., *Ep*. 24.8, PL 16, 1081-82). If they had reached Gallia, that would have meant the unsanctioned penetration of Gaul by units belonging to Valentinian II's court, the region de facto was under the administration of Magnus Maximus and therefore would have given him a pretext to march his armies into Italy to defend his rights.

The fact that St. Ambrose mentioned the name of the Huns first in his letter shows that the Huns were the leading part of the group (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 43). Again, just

[87] Lindner (1981, pp. 6-7) draws attention to the fact that there is no single contemporary mention of Hunnic horses accompanying them during their advance, nor during their employment by Theodosius I that will be handled below.

as Maenchen-Helfen points out, there must have already been a leader at the head of the employed Huns, because otherwise Bauto either had to buy off each Hun warrior separately, which, besides the fact that it seems impossible, it would also have cost him many more *solidi*, or the Huns themselves first had to select a leader among themselves before both undertaking the operation against the Juthungi or stopping their advance just before the entering Gaul. All the same, the Huns demonstrated themselves to be fierce warriors and from this date forward they would be regularly employed by Western Roman commanders.

It was not only the Western Romans that appreciated the abilities of the Huns. Even though Magnus Maximus' plans were foiled by Bauto, he did not stray from his ultimate aim and attacked the West anyway in 387, bringing himself in a conflict not only with Valentinian II but also with Theodosius I. In 388, the Eastern Roman army marched against the usurper supported not only by the Goths and the Alans but also by the Huns, who had joined the army of the emperor during the latter's march through Pannonia (Stein, 1959, p. 207; Várady, 1969, pp. 47-58):

> "O memorable thing, there marched under Roman leaders and banners as Romans those who before had been our enemies. Following the signs against which they had stood, and as soldiers filled the cities of Pannonia which they had emptied with fiendish devastation. Goths and Huns and Alans answered the roll call, changed guards and rarely feared to be reprimanded. There was no tumult, no confusion, no looting in the usual barbarian way." (Pacat., *Paneg*. 32.2)

Afterwards, the Goths, now presumably led by Alaric (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 46, n. 140) rebelled (Zos. 4.48-50) after signing a treaty with Theodosius I six years ago. In 392, they were joined by the Huns and the Balkan provinces once again became victim to the ravages of the barbarian warbands. *Magister militum* Stilicho put an end to their attacks, but let the Goths and their allies go free, much to the dislike of western court poet Claudian (*In Ruf*. 1.317; Zos. 4.51). Many Huns, who had participated in this revolt, were later settled by the eastern praetorian prefect Rufinus in Thrace (*In Ruf*. 1.320-22). Their numbers are claimed to have been in thousands (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 51). Apart from this, Rufinus is said to have had a bodyguard unit consisted solely of the Huns (Claud., *In Ruf*. 2.76f).

In 394, possibly also supported by those newly settled Huns, the Eastern Roman army marched once again under the command of Theodosius I against the West, this time to

remove the usurper Eugenius. Besides the Huns and the Goths of Alaric, other Huns came with their *phylarchoi* to support the army of Theodosius I (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 187). At the end of the 4th century, the Hunnic warband leaders seem to have been fully enjoying the fruits of not answering to a single king. As opportunities presented themselves, both in the East and in the West, they let themselves be employed by anyone as long as they were paid.

2.7. THE CAUCASIAN RAID OF 395

While those *phylarchoi* and their warriors were jubilant with the gold they were paid and the spoils they recovered from the battlefield, members of the main body of the Huns in east, who had been probably busy subjugating non-Roman powers in their periphery, were gradually moving against the northeastern borders of the empire in 395 (Claud., *In Rufin*. 2.28-35; Claud., *In Eut*. 1.16ff. 2. 569-75; Philost. 9.8; Soc. 6.1.7; Soz. 7.1.2; Jer., *Ep*. 60. 16, 77.8). Starting from the Caucasus, they crossed through Armenia, Asia Minor and Syria until they reached the gates of Ctesiphon. Reportedly, they left no field untouched, no valuable unmoved and took off as many cattle and slaves as they could. The number of captives is claimed to have been 18,000 (Jer. *Ep*. 60.16; Claud., *In Eut*. 1.242-51).

The success of their penetration deep into eastern lands of the Eastern Empire was owed not only to the mobility of the Hunnic cavalry, but also to the absence of the Eastern legions. Though victorious, they must have been utterly exhausted since they had offered two major field battles against the usurpers in the West in the last seven years. It also was an army that had lost most of its best officers and troops at Adrianople not long ago. As masters of seizing opportunities, the Huns continued their attacks unopposed in 396, but had to end it definitely before 398, after facing an Eastern Roman army led by the eunuch Eutropius (Sinor, 1990, pp. 183-184). In the end, the Huns had no knowledge of logistics and foraging and living off of the land would only assist invading armies to a limited degree.

Around the same time, some Hunnic warbands crossed the Danube and started pillaging the region (Claud., *In Rufin*. 2.26ff, 36; Philost. 11.8; Soz. 7.25.1). It is very attractive to view this incursion as an attack in coordination with the Caucasian raid, nevertheless, if we take the current political organization of the Huns into account, the most plausible answer would be that it was nothing more than a coincidence (Sinor, 1990, p. 184).

The reason urged the Huns to undertake such a huge raid requires a closer look. Claudian tells his audiance that it was caused by famine (Claud., *In Eut*.1.247-50), a theory which Maas and Maenchen-Helfen agree upon (Maas, 2014, p. 8; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 52). Heather (2010, pp. 213, 217) on the other hand, suggests the most attractive theory.

The raid of 395, according to him, was nothing more than a planned raid in order to survey the geography of the Roman Empire. By doing so, they gained the knowledge of what was laying behind the Caucasus Mountains. Then, when they contrasted their gains and losses upon the completion of their grand raid, they decided that a similar future campaign in the region would not be worth the risk. So, the main body agreed upon moving westwards, into the Great Hungarian Plain, where some of their kinsman had already settled. To Heather, what the Huns were doing was as exactly the same as the Goths had done in the 3rd century. Now it was the Huns' turn to move from the peripheries to the frontiers of the Roman Empire to enjoy the benefits of being a neighbor to the Romans.

2.8. THE HUNS NORTH OF THE DANUBE

In 399, a Gothic chieftain serving the Eastern emperor Arcadius, named Tribigild, broke out into open rebellion and started to plunder Asia Minor. Gainas, the *magister militum* of the East, also of Gothic descent, was immediately sent to put down the rebellion, but instead ended up joining him. Upon this, yet another Eastern Roman commander of Gothic origin, Fravitta, marched against both while they were crossing the Hellespont and inflicted a heavy damage to their hastily constructed fleet. Being left with no other choice, Gainas thought that his safest bet laid north of the Danube, but apparently he miscalculated the situation. At that time, a Hun called Uldin seemed to have gathered enough support to claim superiority over many of the Hunnic warbands and their leaders north of the Danube.[88] His zone of influence seemingly included the area from east of the Olt River to western banks of the Danube in Hungary (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 59). Since Gainas was approaching this region seeking for a refuge, Uldin suspected that the arrival of such a man who caused great trouble in Constantinople would pose a threat to his authority, so he did not hesitate to attack and immediately killed Gainas together with his remaining followers (Zos. 5.22.1-3).

Thompson argues (1996, p. 37), besides his main aim of not seeing a rival group in the proximity of his realm, that he also wanted to serve the empire and acted in the hope of a

[88] But not the leader of *all* Huns (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 61-62). Apart from those Huns, he also might have ruled over some of the Sciri (Soz. 9.5; Cod. Theod. 5.6.3). Regardless, he had no connection to the Huns that undertook the great raid of 395 (Kelly, 2009, p. 52).

possible reward that he might receive from the emperor. His wishes were realized and Constantinople concluded an alliance and agreed upon rewarding him with gold for his service to the empire (Zos. 5.22.1-3). After all, it was due to Uldin's efforts that the people of Constantinople beheld the lifeless head of Gainas in their streets.

The timing of Uldin's intervention could not have been better. The Goths' relations with the Eastern Romans since their entrance into the empire had been turbulent. Although many Goths were serving the emperor even as high ranked commanders and some would continue to do so, some Goths such as Gainas proved themselves to be at best unreliable. With the events of 399-400 and their previous contributions in civil wars, the popularity of the Huns seemed to have started to increase, while that of the Goths started to decrease. Nevertheless, if anyone hoped to see the men of the steppe replacing the Goths, he was about to be disappointed. In 404-5, Uldin's Huns had first attacked Thrace and ravaged the region (Soz. 8.25.1; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 62). Three years later, in 408, Uldin again crossed the Danube with his Hunnic and Sciri followers (*Cod. Theod*. 5.6.3) and captured the fortified Castra Martis in Dacia Ripensis by treachery (Procop., *Aed*. 4.6.33; Soz. 9.5.2), taking advantage of the absence of the Eastern Roman army. His warriors appear to have been in moderate numbers, perhaps in several thousands, for a greater force would have not bothered with a minor town and could not be easily dispersed later, as the following events would reveal (Heather, 2006, p. 198). All the same, the prefect of Thracia pleaded for peace, though was promptly refused by the Hunnic leader, who pointed to the sun and is claimed to have said "All that he shines upon I can conquer if I will" (Soz. 9.5). Uldin's threat continues to color history books, though what followed shows the bareness of his rhetoric. The Romans knew that if they could not come to terms with one Hun, there were always others, so they negotiated with other Huns serving under Uldin's colors. All accepted the Roman offers that included gold and switched sides. Abandoned by his men, Uldin fled and was never heard of him again.

Uldin's incursion is highly important in three respects. First, the Huns, true to their predatory nature, hit the moment they learned that the Eastern Roman legions were busy on another front. Second, contrary to what happened in the raid of 395, the Huns were not merely after of capturing slaves or seizing wealth, but of demanding tributes by means of showing of strength (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 66). Finally, the Huns were obviously

still suffering from a lack of single powerful figure. The first and second cases would continue to be two solid features of the Huns throughout the 5th century, whereas with Attila, the final argument would see some alterations.

2.9. THE HUNS IN THE GREAT HUNGARIAN PLAIN

While Uldin's embassy was on its way to Constantinople to proudly present Gainas' head to Arcadius, the main body of the Huns were still around the Pontic region, to the northeast of the Black Sea, still recovering from their great raid of 395 (Heather, 2006, p. 202, 2010, p. 165). Nevertheless, sometime between 400-405/6, they began to push slowly westwards. Heather offers three possible reasons for this sudden movement (Heather, 2010, pp. 211-212). Climate change, a popular theory also for their migration from the Altai region, is one of them. By 400, whereas Western Europe was enjoying perfect summers, Eastern Europe had not a single drop of rain which naturally affected the grazing grounds of the nomads negatively. Another reason may be that the Huns were forced to move by a pressure from another group in their rear, just like the Avars and the Magyars would find themselves on the move in later centuries. However, the third theory of Heather seems to be the most influential one to put them on the road, that is, they moved, because they also wanted to take part in the riches of the Roman world, either by cooperating with their armies or plundering their cities. After all, even though separated by a long distance, the exploits of the Hunnic warbands north of the Danube must have somehow reached north of the Black Sea.

The plan and the goal of their movement was not a haphazard one either. They chose the Middle Danube, which belonged to the Western Empire, not only because it was the most suitable place for themselves and their horses, but also due to its equal distance from either part of the Roman Empire (ibid. p. 215).[89] From there, the bands of Huns could go and assist the armies of the Romans as soon as the latter required it, or, if their military service was not needed, they could instead advertisetheir presence by raiding the nearest

[89] There was neither a Hunnic storm which swept away Europe and nations in one single stroke as Romantic paintings depict, nor there were such movements as school books loved to show with colored arrows on map, as if the Huns, or other groups of people, who definitely did not leave their homes as a single united band because they were pushed from rear by an another force, in reminiscence of billiard balls, with an ultimate aim such as to destroy the Roman Empire.

Roman towns. This second wave of Hunnic migration[90] was also much larger than that of 376 which caused the Tervingi to seek shelter in Eastern Roman lands. With their arrival, the Huns and their subjects did not only come in great numbers, but this time they brought a political revolution with them to present *barbaricum* with a new, Hunnic alternative (Sinor, 1977b, p. 218). From that point on, residents of *barbaricum* could choose between two superpowers: they could either try their luck in the Roman Empire and become a Roman, or they could join up and serve the Huns and share the spoils of war and wealth of raids, which the Hunnic kings would use to feed their Germanic subjects to ensure their unwavering loyalty.

By either 409 or 411 the majority of the main body of the Huns were finally in the Great Hungarian Plain (Heather, 2014, p. 217). By 425, they would have journeyed 1,700 km from their starting point, the Caucausus (Heather, 2006, p. 203). As has been told above, their arrival put the Alans, the Vandals, the Suebi and possibly even Uldin on the move. At any rate, the newcomers had again come in under different independent leaders (Maas, 2014, p. 7). Apart from Uldin's Huns, there were the Huns forming part of the Western Roman army in Italy in 408; allegedly 10,000 Huns responsible with the protection of Ravenna and Jovinus' 300 Huns against Athaulf in the first decade of the 5th century (Maenchen-Helfen, 1971, p. 71).

The 410s are indeed the darkest years for the Hunnic history (ibid. p. 73). Although it is impossible to construct a precise chronology of happenings, we have bits of information thanks to the account of Olympiodorus, who was sent by Honorius in late 412 or early 413 to meet Donatus in the Great Hungarian Plain. The events are unclear, but Olympiodorus records[91] that Donatus, the first of the kings in his narration, was killed by some trickery and was succeeded by Charaton, who was ready to open hostilities and could only then be appeased by gifts he received from the emperor (Olymp., *fr*. 18). Even though Donatus is titled the first of the kings, we have no evidence directly assigning him to the Hunnic kingship. Moreover, Donatus is surprisingly a Christian name. Basing his argument on this name, Sinor weighs in on the possibility that he was a Roman émigré

[90] Heather (2006, p. 204) distinguishes two phases of the Hunnic entrance into Europe. First phase was realized in 376 after the Huns invaded the Black Sea region, and the second phase took place when the Huns moved from the Caucasus region to the Great Hungarian Plain, ultimately causing the crisis of 405-8.
[91] According to Matthews (1970, p. 88) his narration of his visit highly likely included information on the habits of the Huns, but unfortunately for us, they are lost.

(Sinor, 1990, p. 186). If he were indeed so, then whom we are dealing with is a Roman who became influential enough to be surrounded or supported by barbarians, who, after his murder were ready to take up arms against the empire. But if he were truly a Hunnic king, then it seems that once again the Romans were utilizing one of their known foreign policy acts by replacing an unfavorable barbarian king with another one who would hope to stay on friendly terms with the Romans with the flow of Roman gold and gifts. Matthews (J. Matthews, 1970, p. 80) suggests that this was a planned assassination all along. Conversely, Liebeschuetz (2003, p. 74) rejects this claim by saying that if this were so, then "the historian would have described the murder as taking place ‘unlawfully’ as the result of the breaking of an oath.

By the second decade of the 5th century, it would appear that the Huns were ubiquitous: they were in the Great Hungarian Plain, fighting for Romans, subjugating neighboring peoples and raiding towns in close proximity thus consolidating their authority in the region. Some were also still in numbers in to the east, still hoping to profit from expeditions embarked against powerful sedentary civilizations. Everything they did was being done by a divided strata of leaders and their mounted Hunnic soldiers without any long term strategy or aim. With their arrival in the Great Hungarian Plain, all this was about to change. The Huns were about to become the leading actors in both Roman and barbarian politics.

CHAPTER 3

THE AGE OF AETIUS

3.1. THE CIVIL WARS

3.1.1. An Emperor, a Usurper and the Huns

After Galla Placidia and her children were exiled to Constantinople by Honorius, the emperor of the West shortly died thereafter in Ravenna of dropsy in August 27, 423, without naming any successor. When the news reached the Eastern Roman court, Theodosius II, as the senior emperor of the Roman world, also appointed no successor, although it seemed that it would have been best to name little Valentinian as *augustus* to guarantee the continuation of the Theodosian dynasty in the West. Instead, he ruled the empire alone for three months. His abstention presented the perfect opportunity for those who had their eyes on the diadem.

Actually the *primicerius notariarum* (principal secretary) at the court of Ravenna, a man named Joannes decided to pull the Western Empire out of the limbo it was in and claimed himself *augustus* (Olymp., *fr*. 41; Hyd. s.a. 423; Marc. Com. s.a. 424; Prosp. s.a. 423; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 423) with the support of *magister militum* Castinus[92], whom Joannes made consul for the year of 424 (Prosp. s.a. 424) and Flavius Aetius. Except his previous occupation and his reportedly mild character, we do not possess much information about the usurper himself. Initially, he had hoped to come to an agreement with Theodosius II without risking a civil war, but his wish would not be realized. Gregory of Tours notes that his embassy returned empty handed from Constantinople except bringing insults from Valentinian (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc*. 2.8). On Castinus, we read that he was *comes domesticorum* just before Honorius' death (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc*. 2.9).

On Flavius Aetius, who has been lauded by Edward Gibbon (Gibbon, 1993, p. 442) as the sole guardian of public safety, there is much to say. As he is described by Merobaudes (*Carm*. 4.42-43) an adolescent in 405, he must have been born around the year 390/391, in Durostorum (modern Silistra, Bulgaria). His father, Gaudentius,[93] had a military

[92] Prosper of Aquitaine notes that Castinus turned a blind eye to Joannes' usurpation (s.a. 423)
[93] We do not have any information regarding his date of birth, however, we know that he was killed in 432.

background and is claimed to have been descended from a leading family of the province of Scythia (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc*. 2.8; Zos. 5.36.1; Jord., *Get*. 176). His mother, whose name did not come down to us, was allegedly a rich noblewoman (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc*. 2.8). His father initially served in the East under Theodosius I and later, after the death of his emperor, went to the West, became *protector domestici* (an elite guard of the emperor), later *comes Africae* (count of Africa) under Stilicho (*Cod. Theod*. 9.17.3) and finally *magister militum per Gallias* (general of the Gallic army) under Joannes (*Merob. Pan. 2.110-114)* or *magister equitum* (master of the horses) (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc*. 2.8).

Aetius, in the footsteps of his father, had begun his career as *tribunus praetorianus* (military praetorian tribune) *(*Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc*. 2.8*)*, in the imperial court. He was gradually climbing the steps of the military hierarchy, yet the most important event of his early life was undoubtedly his hostage years among the Huns. In 405, during the years of crisis in the West, he had been first given as a hostage to Alaric (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Merobaud. *Carm*. 4.42-6) to secure the arrangement between Stilicho and the Gothic leader for the upcoming campaign of Stilicho to wrest Illyria from Eastern Roman control. Upon Stilicho's death in 408, he was returned, although Alaric seems to have asked him for a second time as a hostage (Zos. 5.36.1). In the same year, this time he found himself among the Huns as a guarantee for friendly Hunnic-Western Roman relations (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.1-4). He might have been a hostage of Uldin, but this is only a guess. All the same, he spent at least three years at the Hunnic camp. Historians posit various dates for his captivity, for instance, Sinor suggests the years 405-8, whereas many other scholars seem to have agreed on the date of 409/10 (Bóna, 1991, p. 47; Seeck, 1920, pp. 104-105; Sinor, 1990, p. 188; Stein, 1959, pp. 257, 283; Thompson, 1948, pp. 33-34). Maenchen-Helfen follows Alföldi and offers the year 406 or later (Alföldi, 1926, p. 87, n. 5; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 68, n. 266). All the same, his time spent among the Huns must have made Aetius familiar with the Hunnic language, their way of life and most importantly, Hunnic warfare.[94]

[94] "Aetius was often taught the art of the Scythian warfare" (Aetium interea, Scythico quia saepe duello est edoctus) (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.230-1).

In the second book of Gregory of Tours' history, it is possible to read a detailed description of Aetius' physical attributes together with the praise of his skills:

> "He was of medium height, manly in his habits and well-proportioned. He had no bodily infirmity and was spare in physique. He had a keen intelligence, full of energy, a superb horseman, a fine shot with an arrow, tireless with the lance. He was extremely able in military deeds and he was renowned in the arts of peace. He was not avaricious and a man of minimal cupidity. A man of good will, he never passed judgements by the words of unworthy counsellors. He was patient against inflicted injuries, ready for any labor, he scorned dangers and was most tolerant in the cases of any lack of water, food and sleep. It was clear from his youth that he was destined by fate to be known by his might and to be celebrated once his time and place came." (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc*. 2.8, citing from Renatus Profuturus Frigerudus' lost work. Trans. Tunç Türel)

When Joannes vested himself with the purple, Gaudentius and thus unsurprisingly his son Aetius threw their lots in with the usurper,[95] the former, as has been said above, was recently given the command of the Gallic army by Joannes, and the latter, was appointed to the post of *cura palatii* ([the one] in charge of the palace) (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Philost. 12.14). Meanwhile in Constantinople, Theodosius II was watching the developments with growing anxiety, who, if we are to believe the account of John of Antioch (*fr*. 194), was an unwarlike emperor acting under the influence of his ministers and rather preferring to solve problems with gold rather than iron. Indeed, without Bonifatius' support, who was then *comes Africae*, for the Theodosian dynasty, it would have been near impossible to defeat Joannes and his supporters, for he appears to have remained loyal to Galla Placidia and thus to the dynasty she was representing. In order to see the usurper defeated, he promptly cut off the shipment of corn from Africa to Italy. Joannes had no choice, but to send an army to Africa, if he wanted to enjoy the support of Italo-Romans for a long time. His expeditionary force included group of Huns[96] who probably had already been stationed in Italy, as calling in fresh warriors from Pannonia would have taken precious time (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 77). All the same, Bonifatius forces, most of which composed of Goths, proved themselves more than enough in repelling the invaders (Prosp. s.a. 424).[97]

As if the things were not bad enough for Joannes, the Goths of Aquitaine also seem to have not recognized Joannes' authority. After all, the Goths would have felt more

[95] Cleary (2013, p. 20) perfectly draws the difference between an usurper and an legitimate emperor, where the former was less successful, the latter was more successful in his bid to power.
[96] Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 76-77
[97] Although Matthews points out that the fate of this expedition remained unrecorded (Matthews, 1990, pp. 379f), the flow of events following the expedition obviously calls for an unsuccessful ending for Joannes.

allegiance to Galla Placidia, the widow of Constantius III and the former wife of Athaulf. In the meantime, Aetius' father, Gaudentius was killed by the soldiers of the Gallic army, who apparently chose to remain loyal to the Theodosian dynasty (Börm, 2013, p. 79). Encouraged by these events, Theodosius II named Valentinian as *caesar* on October 23, 424 in Thessalonica (Olymp., *fr*. 43; Hyd. s.a. 424; Prosp. s.a. 424) and his mother Galla Placidia *augusta* (Marc. Com. s.a. 424.), while they were on their way to Italy to be installed by the Eastern Roman army as the rightful rulers of the Western Empire. Moreover, Valentinian was betrothed to the daughter of Theodosius II, Licinia Eudoxia (ibid.). This must have been relatively unpleasant for Theodosius II, for with these acts he reversed his previous decision of not recognizing Constantius III as *augustus* in 421 (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Olymp., *fr*. 46; Marc. Com s.a. 424).

In 425, Theodosius II sent an army led by Candidianus, Ardaburius and his son Aspar. Whereas Ardaburius would move from Constantinople with infantry on board by sea, Aspar and Candidianus would march through land escorted by cavalry with Galla Placidia and Valentinia. Gračanin suggests that the reason for sending the main body of the army by sea laid in the fact that south Pannonia was threatened by the Huns (Gračanin, 2006, p. 46). I beg to differ, since Constantinople chose to send the *augusta* and little Valentinian, who were no doubt more important to Theodosius II for the continuity of his dynasty in the West, with the escort of cavalry by land through Dalmatia. All the same, with the populace of Rome ever growing resentful with hunger and the news of an approach of the Eastern Roman army, Joannes turned to Aetius:

> "… Joannes sent Aetius, who was the governor of the palace (*cura palatii*) laden with gold to the Huns, for they were well known to them from the days when he was their hostage and they still accepted him as their friend. As soon as the Huns entered Italy, they were to attack from the rear and he himself would come to meet them as they advanced." (Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.8)

While Aetius was negotiating with the Huns, the Eastern Roman army entered Italy. At first, Ardaburius had been blown off course and was captured by the troops of Joannes, but then was able to persuade the garrison of Ravenna to free himself and to turn them against the usurper (Oost, 1968, p. 188ff), which they did immediately and seized Joannes, putting a swift end to his reign (Hyd. s.a 424/425). At the same time, the land forces managed to capture Aquilea, an important city to the north of Ravenna. This time, there were no great pitched battles between a usurper and a legitimate emperor, as in the

days of Theodosius I. Joannes, unlike Magnus Maximus or Eugenius, did not go out with a bang, but a whimper. The Eastern Roman historian Marcellinus Comes draws attention to this fact by duly noting that Joannes was killed rather by trickery, more than the bravery of Ardaburius and Aspar (Marc. Com. s.a. 425).[98] Before his execution in the summer of 425, the right hand of Joannes was first cut off, then he was mounted on an ass so that the public crowding the circus of Aquilea could witness the fate of the usurper who dared to oppose the Theodosians (Procop., *Vand*. 3.3.9; Humphries, 2001, p. 525).

Aetius, meanwhile, unaware of what fate had befallen to Joannes, finally managed to come to an agreement with the Huns and left Pannonia with allegedly 60.000[99] Hunnic warriors to meet the Eastern Roman army (Philost. 12.14; Olymp., *fr*. 43.2; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 425). His plan to hit the enemy from the rear was on schedule, as the Eastern legions had already entered Italy, yet the plan had already lost one of its most important key elements, that is, the emperor Joannes himself. All the same, Aetius arrived three days too late. Still unaware of Joannes' death, he nevertheless commenced the battle against Aspar with heavy losses on both sides. Sometime during the fight, he was informed about Joannes and ordered his Huns to stop fighting. What happened was unprecedented in Roman history. A Roman commander belonging to the faction of the usurpers had lost his emperor, but he was still in charge of a substantial army to force a pyrrhic victory, or perhaps a major victory, for he forced the court to install himself as a comes in the new reign (Philost. 12.14; Hyd. s.a. 430; Prosp. s.a. 429).[100] As if nothing happened, Aetius was pardoned and his wish was granted to him. Only then, he dismissed the Huns back to Pannonia with gold and hostages as a payment for their services (Philost. 12.14; Prosp. s.a. 425; Jord., *Rom*. 328). Even other supporters of the usuper got off lightly. Castinus, *magister militum* of the usurper, was only sent into exile. It would appear that the nature of the civil wars was much changed in the 5th century Roman West. Theodosius II could have commanded the continuation of the battle by ignoring Aetius, but this would have caused the emperor more time, resources and manpower. Theodosius II only wanted to end the civil war as soon as possible and without much bloodshed. After Joannes had

[98] Strangely, Prosper of Aquitane preferred to use such a strong word as "crushing" (Prosp. s.a. 425).
[99] A number which Maenchen-Helfen (1973, p. 77) advises caution against by proposing that the real figure was not more than a tenth of this.
[100] An inscription from 437 calls Aetius *magister militum per Gallias* possibly due to his activity in Gaul between 425-9 (PLRE 2, p. 22 (Aetius 7)).

been disposed of, as far as he was concerned, a civil war was ended yet with another Eastern Roman victory.

3.1.2. The Empire of Valentinian III

On October, 23 425, exactly one year after his proclamation as *caesar*, Valentinian III was proclaimed *augustus* in Ravenna both by the decree of Theodosius II and by the consent of the army (Prosp. s.a. 425; Marc. Com. s.a. 425; Hyd. s.a. 424/425; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 426).[101] Since he was barely 7 years old at the time, the reigns of the empire fell naturally into the hands of his mother *augusta* Galla Placidia, who is said to have had the dominance over the empire until 437 (Sivan, 2011). Strangly enough, the Gallic chronicle's entry under the date of 428 records that Placidia finally received the power she had long sought for (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 428). Whether *augustae* did wield any effective power has been a subject of debate. Yet, after inspecting the deeds of the figures such as Placidia, it can be safely assumed that, in case emperors were too young to rule alone, their mothers, could indeed influence the direction the empire was steered into, especially if that empress was backed by significant men such as Bonifatius and Theodosius II.[102]

The new government having been installed, one of its first acts was to appoint a new and trusty man to be the supreme commander of the Western Roman army. To this end, Valentinian III, no doubt with the consent of his mother, chose Flavius Felix as the new *magister utriusque militae* (the master of the both soldiers [infantry and horse]) of the West in 425, granting him also the dignity of *patricius*,[103] (Hyd. s.a. 425) a rank that would usually accompany the supreme commander in the 5th century since Constantius in 415 (Jones, 1964, p. 175). The ardent supporter of Placidia, Bonifatius, was ordered to continue to hold the post of *comes Africae*, as the guardian of the Roman tax spine. To further bolster their reign among the Roman elite, *aurum oblaticium* was remitted in 426,

[101] Hydatius says the elevation of Valentinian happened in Rome, not in Ravenna, whereas Marcellinus Comes mentions Ravenna. Prosper of Aquitaine does not name any cities. Gallic Chronicle, on the other hand, dates the crowning to 426 and names Rome.

[102] Otherwise, imperial women in antiquity would usually be segregated from men, be absent from daily businesness and most public ceremonies. They would, instead, pass their time with other wives of the men belonging to the court (McCormick, 2000, p. 147). Names such as Galla Placidia, Pulcheria, Theodora and much later Eirene, however, proved themselves to be extraordinary exceptions.

[103] Prosper (s.a. 429) puts this in 429, but two inscriptions clearly show that Hydatius has the right year (PLRE 2, p. 461 (Felix 14)).

the obligatory payment senators were required to offer on the ascension of a new emperor (*Cod. Theod*. 6.2.25). It would appear that the Theodosian dynasty in the West was about bring prosperity and stability, but Valentinian III and Galla Placidia could only do so much to curb the enthusiasm of multiple men surrounding the court.

The most ambitious of them all, was undoubtedly Aetius. After regaining command as *comes* in 425, his first deed was breaking the Gothic siege of Arles. During the civil war between Joannes and Thedosius II, the Goths had chosen not to recognize the usurper and attacked Arles, the most important Roman city in southern Gaul.[104] Led by Anaulf, they besieged the city, but as soon as Aetius appeared on the horizon, they began retreating, albeit with heavy losses which was followed by their leader's capture (Prosp. s.a. 425; Hyd. s.a. 430; Chron. Gall. s.a. 427). The fall of Arles would have been a great catastrophe for the Western Empire, because, since 406, not Augusta Treverorum but Arles was the seat of Roman government in Gaul. *Praefectus praetorio Galliarum* and the majority of the Gallic aristocracy were inhabiting within confines of the city. Northern Gaul was not anymore a safe-zone to conduct daily imperial business uninterrupted, hence Arles in south was chosen. The loss of Arles might trigger the complete loss of Gaul together with the support of influential Gallic aristocracy.

Meanwhile *magister utriusque militae* Felix was sent to Pannonia to expel the Hunnic *foederati* in the region and Pannonia seems to have been returned back to the Western control (Marc. Com. s.a. 427; Jord., *Get*. 166).[105] It was probably due to his success that Felix was awarded with the next year's consulship. However, historians are divided among themselves and offer various theories regarding the Pannonian campaign of 427. While Seeck asserts that it was indeed Felix who expelled the Huns out of Pannonia, Bury argues that the Huns had already abandoned the region upon the agreement they signed with Ravenna in 425 (Bury, 1958, p. 272; Seeck, 1920, p. 106). On the other hand, Alföldi and Thompson are firmly of the opinion that the victors were the Eastern Romans and it was they who expelled the Huns out of Pannonia Secunda and Savia, from southern provinces of Pannonia (Alföldi, 1926, pp. 86-88, 94-85; Thompson, 1948, p. 64). Conversely, Maenchen-Helfen gives the credit to the Western Romans and assigns them

[104] After the crisis of 406, the seat of goverment in Gallia was now Arles (Arelate-Gallula, meaning little Gallic Rome), not Augusta Treverorum (modern day Trier).
[105] For the analysis of these sources see Nagy, 1967, pp. 159-186.

and Bona suggests that it was again the Eastern Romans who defeated the Huns in Pannonia after they had been given Pannonia Secunda by Ravenna (Bóna, 1991, p. 50; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 77-81). Another argument has been put forward by Lotter who believes that it was Aetius who had pushed the Hunnic *foederati* out of Pannonia (Lotter, 2003, pp. 33, 51, 98). Lastly, Gračanin offers the theory that the general leading the operation could not have been Aetius, since he would have been busy in Gaul against the Goths and the Franks, and instead it was highly likely Felix himself (Gračanin, 2006, p. 49). All the same, in 427, the Hunnic *foederati* presence in Pannonia seems to have definitely come to an end, after fourty-seven years since they had first been settled in the region by Gratian.

After repelling the Goths away from Arles, in the meantime, Aetius marched to check the Frankish expansion near the Rhine. The Franks had not moved into Roman territory during the crisis of 405-8, although they were the immediate neighbors of the Romans. This was because the Romans were regularly giving subsidies to Frankish chiefs (Heather, 2010, p. 182). Having received Roman gold and recognized by the emperor as legitimate rulers, they had had no reason after all to leave their homes and take their chances within the imperial boundaries. Nonetheless, this did not mean they could not take advantage of the Roman internal disturbances and refrain from raiding or even expanding their holding at the expense of the Romans. To this end, they met Aetius on the battlefield in 428 according to the chronicle of Prosper (Prosp. s.a. 428).[106] Aetius' campaign was short and decisive. The Franks were successfully pushed back. No doubt that his accomplishments in Gaul had now made him a man to be followed amid the circles of Gallic aristocracy and Aetius would spend much of his career defending Gaul against barbarians.[107]

[106] Or in the year of 432 as reported by Hydatius (s.a. 432). Whether the two chroniclers meant the same campaign with different dates or they were simply two separate events is extremely hard to figure out. As Halsall (2007, p. 237) states, to construct a healthy chronological timeline of Aetius' campaigns, is highly difficult. Whereas Drinkwater and Elton, 1992, p. xviii, Heather (2000) and Hughes (2012) propose two separate campaigns, Halsall (2007, p. 237), by pointing out the fact the different dating systems used by the two chroniclers and by putting Prosper's proximity to the events forward, recommends that the earlier date found in Prosper should be preferred. However, it should be pointed out that although Prosper was writing not long after the events, he had given the year of 427 for the arrival of the Vandals in Africa (Prosp. s.a. 427) and not the traditional 429. Hence I see no reason to believe that the campaigns of 428 and 432 were the same.

[107] For Aetius' early Gothic and Frank campaigns see also Schmidt 1934, pp. 463-464; Bury, 1958, pp. 242-244; Bona, 1991, p. 50.

The news of Aetius' success in northern Gaul quickly spread. In fact, even Britain, which had slipped out of imperial control sometime between the years 406-410, seem to have started to act as if it had rejoined the imperial system. At the time, a man named Agricola Pelagianus was allegedly corrupting the church of Britiain with a doctrine carrying his name, Pelagianism. The Catholic[108] Britons petitioned the bishop of Rome, Caelestinus, (Hyd. s.a. 426) for help and he entrusted the bishop of Auxerre, St. Germanus, also a former soldier, to resolve the dispute between the two groups. He did what he had been told and in Prosper's own words "steered the Britons back to the Catholic faith" (Const., *Vit. Germ*. 12-18; Prosp. s.a. 429). It would appear that although the island laid outside of direct imperial management, the inhabitants were still clinging to their *Romanitas* (Roman-ness).

With the end of the civil war against Joannes, the Romans could now finally start to find enough time and resources to deal with problems besetting their lands. Nevertheless, the game of thrones was far from over. In 427, Felix, now more confident with his recent victory, decided to eliminate Bonifatius. Fearing that the growing influence and authority of the count of Africa might pose a risk to his position (Prosp. s.a. 427),[109] he recalled him to Rome on the grounds of treason (Procop., *Vand*. 3.3.16-31) to answer these charges, but met with the latter's refusal. The reason for this was that Aetius warned Bonifatius that if he returned, then he would be killed. However, with staying in Africa, Bonifatius seemed as if he were guilty. Upon this, Felix sent three *comites*, Mavortius, Gallio and also Sanoeces[110] who led a contingent of Huns against Bonifatius. After their landing in Africa, Sanoeces switched sides and led Mavortius and Gallio to their deaths, he himself following them soon thereafter. Upon this debacle, the command to wage war against Bonifatius was transferred to Sigisvultus (Prosp. s.a. 427) who was sent to Africa with Gothic troops (Poss., *Vit. Aug.* 17) that were perhaps started to serve the empire after their defeat in 426 at the hands of Aetius (Halsall, 2007, p. 240). Galla Placidia no doubt must have been disappointed by his favorite Bonifatius' behavior which forced her to affirm the suspicions raised about him. Regardless, Sigisvultus seems to have found a peaceful solution by reconciling Bonifatius with the court of Ravenna. Meanwhile, Aetius

[108] The word Catholic for this age comprises everyone who follows the Nicene Creed which was established by the council of Nicea in 325.
[109] Halsall (2007, p. 240) says he might have been stirred up by Aetius himself.
[110] Sanoeces himself is said to have had Hunnic origins (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 419-420).

was made *magister militum* (Prosp. s.a. 429), although Felix remained as the senior supreme commander.

It was clear that the court was trying to please all three men –Felix, Bonifatius and Aetius– as much as it could to prevent another civil war. Nonetheless, whatever the court did, proved insufficient to appease their ambitions. Amid this fragile political situation, Aetius moved against Felix in 430 on the grounds that the latter was plotting against him and Aetius had him killed together with his wife Padusia and deacon Grunitus by inciting a military revolt in Ravenna (Prosper s.a. 430; Hyd. s.a. 430; Prisc. *fr*. 30.1, Marc. Com. s.a. 430; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 201)[111]. With Felix having been removed from the picture, Aetius thus attained the highest chain of command and became *magister utriusque militae praesentalis,* albeit minus the rank of *patricius.*

How a man such as Aetius, who not long ago resolutely fought against the Theodosian dynasty, could have been given the highest command in the Roman military hierarchy may naturally puzzle minds. The answer, it can be argued, may lay in the desperation of Galla Placidia. If she had bestowed the supreme command upon Bonifatius, who had been branded as traitor shortly before, this would have been met with nothing but enmity by Aetius, who could march on Ravenna with his Hunnic followers to forcefully meet his demands. By making Aetius *magister militum* and keeping Bonifatius in place in Africa, Placidia did allow the continuous sailing of Africa's grain to Rome under direct orders of Ravenna, thus eliminating any hope of Aetius in moving against the court. As long as Africa was held by Bonifatius, Aetius knew that he had no chance to force the limits of Valentinian III or Galla Placidia. In a sense, *augusta* has made a wise balancing move given the precarious situation the empire was in. Unfortunately for the Romans, a much neglected danger in Spain was about to inflict a great damage on Ravenna.

3.1.3. The King of the Vandals and Alans

The joint Roman-Goth offensive in Spain following the Gothic settlement of 417/8 had seen the Siling Vandals destroyed and the crippled Alans subjugated by the Hasding

[111] It should be pointed out that it is only Hydatius who says that Felix was killed during a mutiny.

Vandals. Now, the Hasding Vandals and the Suebi became the most powerful two groups in the province. The Romans were able to regain the control of Baetica, Lusitania and Carthagena, but, as long as these two barbarian groups roamed free, Spain was never completely secure. What is worse, the Vandals, now further strengthened by the Alans, decided that it was time to attack the Suebi in 419. To prevent the Vandals' undisputed hegemony in Spain, Ravenna had sent commander Asterius to break their attack. However, due to the untimely death of Constantius III in 421, the Roman campaign came to a halt. In 422, this time supported by the Goths, the Romans recommenced their operations led by Castinus and Bonifatius. However, the two quickly conflicted against each other with Prosper of Aquitaine blaming the former with being disagreeable and proud and praising the latter as famous in the arts of war (Prosp s.a. 422).[112] The reason for their animosity might have had something to do with the exile of Galla Placidia to Constantiople around the same time (Prosp. s.a. 423). Halsall (2007, p. 236) also proposes that Castinus might have wanted prove himself a resourceful commander. All the same, Bonifatius withdrew himself from the campaign and Castinus now had to continue the campaign in Baetica with his Gothic auxiliaries where previous commanders Maurocellus and Astirius left off. The expedition was about to end with a decisive Roman victory, however, purportedly due to the treachery of the Goths, the Romans were defeated and lost 20,000 men (Hyd. s.a. 422; Prosp. s.a. 422; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 430). The death of Honorius in the following year pulled Castinus back to Italy, so that he might support his candidate, Joannes. The events turned Ravenna into a political black hole that pulled everyone so strongly toward it that no one seemed to come out.

For the Vandals, this did not only create a much needed breathing space, but also gave them a complete liberty to act as they pleased. In 425, they plundered Carthagena, Hispalis (modern Seville) in Spain, Mauretania in Africa and after acquiring ships possibly stolen from or supplied by Romans, they even raided the Balearic Islands (Hyd. s.a. 425). In 428, their king Gunderic captured Hispalis, but died quickly afterwards allegedly due to a divine intervention according to Hydatius (Hyd. s.a. 428). He was succeeded by Geiseric who is said to have been initially a Catholic, but later became an Arian (ibid). Procopius (Procop., *Vand*. 13.24) describes the new king of the Vandals and

[112] Not surprising given the author of the chronicle had openly pro-Placidia and pro-Valentinian stance.

Alans (*rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*) as an outstanding warrior, while Jordanes informs us about his features and character:

> "Geiseric … was a man of moderate height and lame in consequence of a fall from his horse. He was a man of deep thought and few words, holding luxury in disdain, furious in his anger, greedy for gain, shrewd in winning over the barbarians and skilled in sowing the seeds of dissension to arouse enmity." (Jord., *Get.* 167) (Trans. Charles C. Mierow)

Geiseric knew that even though the Romans were presently occupied with internal matters (namely Felix, Bonifatius and Aetius), once they solved their problems, they would turn their eyes on Spain. Next time, the tragic end of the Siling Vandals could happen to Geiseric's Vandals. Furthermore, the Goths and the Suebi were also active in Spain and were clashing with the Vandals (Jord., *Get*. 166). Upon perceiving the dangers looming in the horizon, he decided that he could not find a more fitting time to leave Spain and to cross the Gibraltar over to Africa. 700 hundred years ago the Carthaginian general Hannibal had started his march from Spain to Italy to strike the Romans at their home. Now Geiseric and his followers, in reverse, were moving from Spain to Africa, in order to live free from Roman intervention. However, the future would show that Geiseric was no less dangerous than the Punic commander, since the Vandal king would soon conquer the grain and revenue basket of the Western Roman world, i.e. Carthage, the city, which ironically became essential for Rome's survival after it had been destroyed by the Romans themselves in the 2nd century BC for the threat it had posed to Rome's existence.

It was not only the political uncertainty in Spain that incited the Vandals to board their ships. Africa was the richest possession of Rome and despite this it was lightly defended (Gil Egea, 1998, pp. 186-189, 195-215). The contemporary Salvian describes Africa as a land "[…] so rich that the abundance of her commerce seems to have filled not only her own treasures, but those of the whole world as well." (Sal., *de Gub*. 7.14). Indeed, it was "a fertile land, so rich in all delicacies as to be almost intoxicating in its plenty." (ibid. 7.20). Thus, in May of either 427 or 429[113], Geiseric and his followers[114], totaling a number of allegedly 80.000[115] (Vict. Vit. 1.2), left Baetica and crossed the strait separating Spain from Africa by only 62 km. (Hyd. s.a. 429; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 430; Prosp.

[113] The date of the crossing is still a subject of debate. See Mathisen 1999, p. 177, n. 16.
[114] Not all of them were warriors of course, they were there with their wives and children. Approximately 15-20,000 of this figure must have consisted of fighters.
[115] On debates surrounding this figure see Courtois, 1955, pp. 215-217; Goffart, 1980, pp. 231-234; Heather, 2006, p. 268.

s.a. 427). According to the calculations of Heather (2006, p. 270), the figure given by Victor of Vita would have required 1000 ships to undertake the crossing. This is an astonishing number given the number of ships the Western Empire owned in the 460s did not exceed 300. This migration led by Geisceric apparently would not only hit the Roman economy hard, but also their hegemony over the *mare nostrum* (Our sea).

Procopius and Jordanes both assert that it was Bonifatius who invited the Vandals to Africa (Jord., *Get*. 167; Procop., *Vand*. 3.3.22-6) possibly in order to lay the blame of losing North Africa on a Roman officer rather than blaming the Roman emperor himself (Börm, 2013, p. 82). Nonetheless, their claim seems highly unlikely as Bonifatius would soon find himself fighting against the Vandals. What was happening was that the Vandals were simply seizing the opportunity, while the Romans had their hands full with court intrigues (Merrills & Miles, 2010, p. 53). Mathisen (1999, pp. 189-191), on the other hand, suggests that the Vandal crossing became only possible after Aetius had given them permission after the Roman operations in Spain met with disaster. Whether the Vandals moved of their own free will or on the orders of Aetius, they had completed their landing in Africa without any opposition. At the time, this seemed to have been another unsanctioned barbarian movement that could be pacified or even removed, if given time and resources.

3.1.4. The Master of the Soldiers and the Master of Africa

One would think that now with the unwelcome arrival of the Vandals in Africa, the new *magister militum* Aetius and *comes Africae* Bonifatius would immediately co-operate and unite their forces against the newcomers. However, it was Bonifatius who had to face the Vandals alone, not because Aetius intentionally refrained from helping his subordinate, but because other pressing matters required his attention elsewhere. In 430, the Juthungi, who had been used as pawns by Magnus Maximus towards the end of the 4th century in his bid for power, just invaded north of the Alps due to the political vacuum created in the region (Halsall, 2007, p. 241). In the same year, also the Nori of the province of Noricum (modern Austria and part of Slovenia) rebelled. Aetius defeated the Juthungi and suppressed the rebellious Nori (Hyd. s.a. 430; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 430; Sid. Apol. *Carm*.

7.230-240) and after subduing the Vindelici who were likely in Raetia (Sid. Apol. *Carm.* 7.230-240), he turned his attention without delay to the Suebi in Spain, who had been plundering the parts of Galleacia under their king Hermericus (Hyd. s.a. 430). The locals were at first successful in defending themselves by using the Roman forts in the region as a shield against the attacks and they even killed and captured many Suebi, which forced the barbarians to sue for peace (Hyd. s.a. 430). Nevertheless, the Suebi quickly broke the peace as soon as they signed it and recommenced their devastation of the region upon which, the bishop of Gallaecia and the author of one of our most important soures, Hydatius, sent an embassy to Gaul to ask Aetius for help (Hyd. s.a. 431).

The entries in Hydatius' chronicle clearly show how turbulent the situation in northern Spain must have been where the local Hispano-Romans were desperately alone in their resistance against the foreigners. The local Roman administration having been interrupted as Ravenna could spare no forces to defend the region, it was the local figures, in this case a single bishop, who had to play the role of a leader. Yet, they still turned their gazes upon the government for they were still its citizens and hoped for assistance. Aetius' responded positively to the plea of the Gallaecians, not before suppressing another rebellion of the Nori in 431 (Hyd. s.a. 431) but he too, could not spare any forces. Instead, he sent one of his officers, Censorius, to negotiate with the barbarians. He would return to the court a year later in 432 to bring the news that Hermericus agreed to make peace in return for hostages (Hyd. s.a. 432).[116]

In 431, after the situation in Gallaecia had been calmed through diplomacy, the Franks, this time different cantons of theirs than in 428, attacked Tournai and Cambrai (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.9) and captured them both. However, their success was short lived, as Aetius arrived in the region and took back the towns by defeating the Frankish forces (Merobaudes, 1971, p.43). Hardly two years having passed after the death of Castinus, Aetius was now made consul in 432. Whether his achievements and continuous rise were pleasing to Galla Placidia is debatable, but indeed it seemed that at that time no better man could have been found to be trusted with the safety of the empire.

[116] Hydatius also mentions a certain Vetto, who had been sent to Gallaecia just before the negotiations with a "Gothic deception", but returned to them empty handed. We do not know who this Vetto is, but we can guesstimate that he was a Goth in Roman service who tried to get rid of the king of the Suevs, but failed in his mission.

Bonifatius, on the other hand, was facing the Vandalic menace in Africa. At first, in 430, he tried to open negotiations with Geiseric and once this bore no fruit, he met them on the battlefield. He lost the encounter and retreated to the city of Hippo Regius (in modern Algeria), the home of St. Augustine. The Vandals commenced the siege of the city, but they were not able to capture it. As Hippo Regius was a coastal city, it might have been kept supplied by sea and thus resisted the besiegers. This naturally raises the question about the Vandal navy existence at the time. It would appear that the Vandals had abandoned their ships once they made their crossing. Only this way can we give a plausible explanation to the lack of their sea force. All the same, the Vandals, now affected by hunger, raised the siege after fourteen months, but continued on their devastation of Africa (Procop., *Vand*. 3.30-36.; Poss. *Vit. Aug*. 28). The city itself did not fall, but St. Augustinus had died during the siege (Marc. Com. s.a. 429; Prosp. s.a. 430).

Ravenna knew that Africa was not only important for the West, but also for the East. True, the impact of the fall of Africa would be devastating for Rome more than Constantinople, but who could guarantee the safety of Egypt after Africa's demise? To prevent even the possibility of such a scenario, Constantinople acted upon the unstoppable advance of the Vandals and the Alans. Aspar was sent from the city with Eastern legions supported by forces also from Ravenna. Heather (Heather, 2006, p. 285) suggests that this combined force took form thanks to Aetius. His influence was now greater than ever, Galla Placidia took action. Incited by her,, Bonifatius openly rebelled against Aetius (Marc. Com. s.a. 432; Prosp s.a. 432), whom, even the court of Theodosius II might have disregarded, since Aspar acted jointly with *comes Africae* (Halsall, 2007, p. 242). The joint operation led by two Theodosian dynasty approved commanders did not go the way they hoped though. The Vandals defeated the Romans in Africa for a second time and forced Aspar to return to Constantinople, whereas Bonifatius sought refuge at the palace of Galla Placidia (Procop., *Vand*. 3.35-36). In this battle, the Vandals also had captured a man named Marcian (r. 450-457), the future emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (Procop., *Vand*. 4.1-2). It would appear that the Vandals were in North Africa to stay.

Bonifatius, as soon as he departed from Africa, was made *magister militum* by Galla Placidia (Prosp. s.a. 432), causing Aetius to be deprived of his imperial command and its

benefits. It was time for another civil confrontation. Bonifatius' imperial army and soldiers still loyal to Aetius met near Rimini in 432. Bonifatius had emerged victorius, but died three months later due to the wounds he had received from the hands of Aetius himself in the battle. As reported by Marcellinus Comes, Aetius had mortally injured Bonifatius with a longer sword than that of Bonifatius (Marc. Com. s.a. 432; Hyd. s.a. 432; Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 432; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 203.1).[117] Ravenna was determined to give no imperial rank to Aetius whatsoever and the vacant command of the senior *magister militum* was quickly filled by Sebastianus, Bonifatius' son-in-law. Aetius, meanwhile, strangely enough, was let go to return and live in his estates in Italy,[118] where he was attacked by his enemies, probably acting on the orders of Ravenna, but luckily for him, he escaped the attempt unscathed (Prosp. s.a. 432). Realizing that his enemies would not rest until they see him dead, he first went to Rome, then by sea to Dalmatia and thence reached Pannonia where he found refuge among his Hunnic friends, highly likely the Hunnic warlord Rua (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 433).[119]

Aetius arrived in Rua's camp and struck a treaty with his friend, making the Huns imperial *foederati*, granting him also land to settle in Pannonia (Gračanin, 2006, p. 50). Gold must also have played a part in the deal. Whatever the exact conditions of the agreement, Aetius seems to have ceded the provinces of Pannonia Prima, Valeria and Pannonia Secunda to the Huns (Prisc., *fr*. 11-1, 2-5; Gračanin, 2006, pp. 52-53; Sinor, 1990, p. 187). The only province that remained under Roman control was Savia, as it was positioned in a strategically important crossroads between the West and the East. Nevertheless, there seems to be no consensus among scholars regarding which provinces were handed over to the Huns.[120] All the same, the Huns in these dioceses would prove a greater problem for the Eastern Romans, for the Western Empire relinquished its rights much over the eastern parts of the province to Constantinople in 437, apparently as the final step of a

[117] John of Antioch wrongly asserts that Aetius defeated Bonifatius.
[118] Hughes (2012) says that there were two reasons for this: first, if Aetius had been executed, his powerful friends, especially the ones in Gaul, would have reacted against Ravenna. Second, as the battle of Rimini had showed, even without imperial command, Aetius still had a substantial army, which could raise an usurper to throne once they lost their Aetius. He also points out that how strange it was that Aetius preferred to stay in Italy after having been branded as *persona non grata* by the government. I would suggest that this had everything to do with the confidence Aetius felt owing to his huge number of followers.
[119] Also see Bury, 1958, p. 248; Seeck, 1920, pp. 115-117; Stein, 1959, pp. 321-322.
[120] cf. Altheim, 1951, p. 84; Bóna, 1991, p. 52; Bury, 1958, p. 272; Lotter, 2003, p. 16; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 89-90; Schmidt, 1934, p. 262; Seeck, 1920, p. 115; Thompson, 1948, p. 64; Wirth, 1999, pp. 45-46.

deal that had initially been signed between Galla Placidia and Theodosius II back in 424 in return for the latter's aid against Joannes (Gračanin, 2006, pp. 54-68).

From the date of its ceding, Pannonia came under a Hunnic dominance of which effects are reflected on local graves in which artificially deformed skulls were found. Although the practice dates back before the Huns, they themselves and other Germanics also are known to have practiced it to some extent. It seems that with the transfer of the ownership of the province, many Romans abandoned their homes and the Huns filled the empty spaces both with their subjects and some of their own elite, the latter, especially near the forts of Valeria. Funerary sacrifices (Vida, 2007, pp. 322-323), belt buckles (Bóna, 1991, p. 201), a bronze cauldron and a *solidus* bearing the mint of Constantinople dated to 443 (ibid. p. 53) are few of the remains found in the region that can be assigned to the Huns.

According to Alföldi, Thompson, Stein and Varady, 433 was the year in which the treaty with the Huns was struck, whereas Bona suggests either 432/434 or 434/435 (Alföldi, 1926, p. 90; Bóna, 1991, p. 52; Stein, 1959, p. 322; Thompson, 1948, p. 64; Várady, 1969, pp. 303-309). Maenchen-Helfen, on the other hand, while offering no date, he says that the Hun who participated in the negotiations was not Rua, but Attila himself (1973, pp. 87, 89-90, 93). It is probable that the negotiations had began while Rua was still alive and were ratified by his successors Bleda and Attila (Gračanin, 2006, p. 51), for some time in 434/435 a Western Roman embassy consisting of Carpilio, Aetius' son and a senator named Cassiodorus was sent to the Hunnic brothers (Merobud., *Pan*. 2.55; Cass., *Var*. 1.4.11).[121] It was probably after this embassy, that Carpilio became a hostage among the Huns, just like his father had been before (Prisc., *fr*. 11.3).

Some modern historians assert that it was also mid 430s that Attila was made honorary *magister militum*.[122] If this had occurred in 434/435, then Bleda would also have demanded the same, since the two brothers ruled jointly (Gračanin, 2006, p. 51). Maenchen-Helfen and Bona base their opinion on Priscus' meeting with the Western Roman embassy in Attila's camp in 449, but as Blockey points out, Priscus might have very well meant Attila's rank of honorary supreme command given to him by the Eastern

[121] This visit did not take place, as Maenchen-Helfen (1973, pp. 105-107) suggests after 445, who omits the Romulus' embassy in 449 (Gračanin, 2006, p. 51, n. 86).
[122] cf. Lotter, 2003, pp. 17, 51; Šašel Kos, 1994, p. 106; Várady, 1969, pp. 308, 397; Wirth, 1999, p. 142

emperor Theodosius II sometime between 445-447 to whose court Priscus belonged, a stand that is supported by (Blockley, 1983, p. 387, n. 69; Demandt, 1989, p. 168; Gračanin, 2006, p. 52). It seems that no consensus on the matter has been reached yet, but a date subsequent to Bleda's death in 445 seems more plausible (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 107).

Aetius regained his old rank, the *magister utriusque militae*, after he had entered Ravenna backed with Hunnic soldiers and banished Sebastianus from the West (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 433). Galla Placidia and Valentinian III had had no hope of resisting the army standing before the city,[123] so they gave in, for the second time in ten years. Aetius finally became unrivalled in 434 (Prosp. s.a. 432; Marc. Com. s.a. 432; Hyd. s.a. 432; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 434; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 201). Shortly afterwards, he seems to have taken control of Bonifatius' estates, his *bucellarii* and also married his wife Pelagia, who is claimed to have had Gothic origins (Merobaud. *Carm*. 4.17) and whom Bonifatius encouraged shortly before his death to marry none other than Aetius (Prosp. s.a. 432).[124]

By 434, Aetius was the effective ruler of the west. After Joannes' death, he got rid of one by one all of his opponents by means of trickery and force, while he himself was becoming more and more indispensable to the *res publica* in the eyes of the Romans by the success he was achieving in Gaul. Nevertheless, the end, or rather the start of his story could not have been realized without the Hunnic help. He had first used them against the government as a bargaining chip to be accepted back in the chain of command in 425. With the impulse given to him by this success, he successfully started to deal with internal problems, i.e. with the barbarians in and out of Gaul, albeit minus Africa which was understandable given the scarcity of resources and the lack of sufficient manpower of the Western Empire.[125] As his rise continued, fear once again seized the *augusta* and forced her to move against him which ended quite oppositely than Ravenna wished for. However, without the wild card that was the Huns, Aetius might have never returned to his post. Years of captivity among the Huns had gained Aetius the most fearsome weapon

[123] An entry in Gallic chronicle refers to the Goths who were summoned to help the Romans (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 433). It does not specify who invited them and against whom, but one can guess that they were called against Aetius by Galla Placidia whose good relation with Goths was known.
[124] It must be noted that Bonifatius acted in this for he must have thought the future welfare of his wife more than anything. He must have foreseen that Aetius' power was now complete and became almost untouchable.
[125] cf. Bury, 1958, pp. 249-250; Schmidt, 1934, pp. 466-468; Stein, 1959, pp. 322-324

of the era: the Huns. As there were no rivals left and his authority having been cemented, Aetius now could turn his attention to deal with the barbarian problem.

3.2. THE MASTER OF THE WEST

By the 430s, the Bagaudae were restless, which came into existence with the receding imperial control in northwestern Gaul; to its' south, the Goths, although they supported or even led the Roman offensives in Spain, their assistance was far too inconsistent as their attacks on the neighboring Roman lands proved; the Franks, after having had a relatively calm beginning to the century in contrast to other Germanic peoples, had began their hostile activities in the 420s and from that time on, became almost too restless on the Rhine frontier; the Burgundians and the Alamanni had also been trying the Roman patience with their small-scaled raids. In Spain, although the Vandals and the Alans had left the Iberian Peninsula, the kings of the Suebi proved themselves dangerous adversaries by breaking the peace treaties at any time they wished. The island of Britain fell long ago out of the direct Roman administration. But probably the presence of the Vandals and the Alans in North Africa was the most threatening of them all. Only Italy, Gaul south of the Loire, the western Balkan provinces and the richest part of Africa (Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena) were stable. To contemporary Romans, the problems that beset their lands were all temporary intrusions and setbacks which would be dealt with in time. Unfortunately for them, the one luxury the Romans did not have, was time.

Despite all, it was still possible to recover from the crisis. After all, it was Rome that had pushed back Hannibal from the gates of the city in the 3rd century B.C. It was again the Roman commanders who had annihilated the Cimbri and Teutones that penetrated through the borders and even reached northern Italy in the 2nd century B.C. If they needed a more recent example, it was the late emperors of the 3rd century A.D. who faced the gravest dangers of them all and still managed to stand tall by the end of the century. The reasons that they were successful, however, lay in their ability to unite themselves on one front with a single aim: to remove the external threat as soon as possible. In Aetius' time things had been long changed. First of all, the civil wars became a chronic disease that had been sucking the blood of Rome, especially that of the Western Romans. Since Honorius's reign, the nature of the civil wars was also changed and turned into a race, not for the purple, but for the post of *magister militum*, with *de facto* powerless child emperors helplessly watching their commanders butchering each other while depleting the Roman manpower and other resources (Börm, 2013, p. 85). For those generals, to win the civil

war was always the first priority, no matter how grave other affairs were. It was the same for Stilicho, Constantius III and Aetius.

In 434, Aetius at last had his wish and now was unrivalled. Galla Placidia and Valentinian III had no option, but to accept him as he was, if they did not wish to see another Hunnic horde before the walls of Ravenna. With the Huns covering his back, Aetius did not only turn his defeats into victories both in 425 and 432, but also rose in popularity in Gaul by the laurels he won with the help of the Hunnic auxiliaries (Heather, 2001, p. 10). On one point, moreover, he was different from his predecessors. He never thought of becoming an emperor and also kept his relationship with Constantinople friendly, at least permanently after 434. By not having made the mistakes Stilicho and Constantius III had made, he actually guaranteed his long survival on his post and opened the way to receive help from Constantinople when it was needed and indeed it was needed, as the later events would reveal.

Since the political climate at Ravenna had become calmer, eyes once again turned to Africa. After the defeat of the combined Roman forces under Aspar and Bonifatius and the latter's departure, a Roman envoy named Tyrgatius sent by Valentinian III opened negotiations with Geiseric. At first, the hostilities ceased and then a treaty was signed on February 11, 435, which ceded the Mauretanian provinces and Numidia together with the city of Hippo Regius to the Vandals (Prosp. s.a. 435; Isid., *Hist. Vand*. 74). Again, this was only a temporary solution in the eyes of the Romans. Furthermore, the richest parts of North Africa, Byzacena and Africa Proconsularis, were still under Roman control.

Geiseric on the other hand, had already started to consolidate his kingship in Africa. In 437, he opened hostilities on the religious front where he commenced the exile of Catholic priests who had rejected becoming Arian bishops. The members of the Catholic clergy such as Posidus, Novatus and Severianus were some of his victims who found themselves banished from their cities (Prosp. s.a. 437). He pushed his Arian agenda insofar that he had later four bishops tortured and killed, whom he had had come to love back in Spain, after they rejected the king's orders to submit to his religious views (ibid.).

Aetius, meanwhile, was as it were crowned with,, with the rank of *patricius* on September 5, 435 (Hyd. s.a 434).[126] Although the rank itself was basically a pretty packaging in essence, it was the most illustrious one a man could ever reach and the post of *magister utriusque militae* was always accompanied by it. Aetius now became the most feared man in the Western Roman Empire and remained so until his death in 454 (Kelly, 2009, p. 94).

He then quickly turned to the middle Rhine frontier in 435/6 upon the news of the Burgundian warbands raiding the Belgic provinces had reached him. He was accompanied by a certain Avitus who would be emperor of the West in 455 (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.230-235). The Burgundians, who had rebelled as reported by Hydatius, were almost wholly defeated[127] with their king Gundicharius slain on the battlefield (Hyd. s.a 436; Prosp. s.a. 435; *Chron Gall*. s.a 436). If we are to believe Hydatius' report, the Burgundians might have become restless due to the interruption of the imperial subsidies. If that were the case, they met with the harshest consequence, for Aetius seemed to have not settled with their defeat on the battlefield, but wantedthe eradication of their kingdom. In 437, the Huns, highly likely roused by Aetius and also to avenge the death one of their leaders Octar (Uptaros), who died in 430 during the raid against the Burgundians (Soc. 7.30.1.6; Kelly, 2009, p. 86; Sinor, 1990, p. 189) they attacked the Burgundian kingdom and destroyed it. The destruction was so total, that the battle gave birth to the *Nibelungenlied* in the Middle Ages with Attila (as Etzel) and Gundarichus (as Gunther) starring as two of the actors.

Indeed, the Huns might have acted upon the request of Aetius, for in Priscus (*fr*. 11.1) we read that in 434-5 Pannonia Secunda and Valeria which were marginal lands along the borders to Huns were ceded to the Huns in return for further military support (Alföldi, 1926, pp. 89-91; Šašel Kos, 1994, p. 106; Várady, 1969, pp. 303-314). The date is important, since in 434-5 Bleda and Attila, after Rua's death (*Chron Gall*. s.a 434),[128] started their joint reign and were believed to have expected some kind of tribute from the master of the soldiers, since they recently helped Aetius in his campaign against the court. He had long perceived the necessity of using *foederati*, if the Western Roman Empire hoped to have any chance against barbarians on battlefield and the Huns, i.e. his friends,

[126] *Studi Romagnoli 3* (1952) pp. 6-7 cited in Barnes, 1975, p. 155.
[127] Hydatius notes 20,000 dead Burgundians, but places the battle in 437 (Hyd. s.a. 437)
[128] Strangely, Attila is not named in the entry.

would have to constitute a big part of its substance. Even though the Huns were on friendly terms with Aetius, they no doubt expected to be paid in gold or apparently, in land. The rise of new leaders among the Huns would have meant new subsidies and gifts were to be sent. By carefully balancing this political equation, Aetius managed to receive Hunnic aid to carry on with his campaigns in the West throughout the 430s.

In 435, Aremorica in farther Gaul was again restless due to the revolt of the Bagaudae, this time led by a man Tibatto, who declared his independence from Rome. The rebellion went on for two years with slaves everywhere from Gaul seeming to have swelled the ranks of the rebel army and only in 437, after the capture and execution of Tibatto himself did the region regain some sort of stability (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 435, 437). The man responsible for putting down the rebellion was the *comes* Litorius whose army had contingents of Huns (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.246-7). Aetius might also have supported Litorius.[129] As soon as he was done with Aremorica, he was informed that he was to lead the campaign against the Goths of Aquitaine II and Novempopulana and their king Theoderic, who was sieging Narbonne[130] (Gallia Narbonensis) in 436, which was situated in a very important crossroads connecting Gaul and Italy, after having broken the peace they signed with Aetius few years before (Prosp. s.a. 436; Hyd.sS.a 436). Halsall (2007, p. 244) suggests that this attack had the ultimate aim of becoming more involved in Roman politics, a theory demonstrating that, even after their settlement within Roman boundaries, the barbarians expected to be appeased by means of gifts, subsidies and other imperial rewards. All the same, Litorius, encouraged by his recent success, commenced his march south with his Hunnic warriors (Prosp. s.a 437), but on the way, he seems to have lost control over some of his Huns who began pillaging every stead they passed through. One victim of theirs was a servant of Avitus, now *magister militum per Gallias*, who stopped their raid somewhere near Clermont (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.244-71, 278-94). Then, having united his forces with Avitus, Litorius and his remaining loyal Huns arrived at Narbonne. It was the winter of 437 and the city was about surrender due to famine, if Litorius and the Hunnic cavalry had not secretly carried wheat into the city. Soon after,

[129] PLRE 2, p. 25 (Aetius 7)
[130] Arles and Narbonne, two southern Gallic cities were almost more Roman than Rome itself (Hodgkin, 1892, p. 102). Today both cities are still admired by many visitors for their numerous Roman sites.

the Gothic siege was broken and the Gothic king withdrew (Prosp. s.a. 437; Hyd. s.a. 437).

As the imperial armies were busy on the middle Rhine against the Burgundians and before the very gates of Narbonne against the Goths, the Suebi saw their chance and recommenced their attacks around Gallaecia, upon which Censorius, who meditated the previous peace between the locals and the king of the Suebi, and Fretimundus were sent to discuss terms with Hermericus (Hyd. s.a 437). In 438, Censorius and Fretimundus' embassy declared that another peace treaty was ratified in Gallaecia. However, given the frequency of breakdowns in peace agreements between the Suebi and the Romans, I am inclined to think that these must have been rather mere ceasefire agreements. Jordanes (Jord., *Get.* 176), on the other hand, relates that Aetius sent an army against the Suebi and successfully subdued them, although a local of the region, Hydatius, says nothing of the sort. Regardless, the Suebi were once again pacified and shortly after, their king Hermericus was struck by a deadly disease and gave up his kingdom to his son Rechila, whose first deed was to attack a Vandal leader in Baetica, Andevotus. He might have been one of the Vandals who chose to remain in Spain rather trying his luck in Africa. He was defeated near the river Singillio and his treasures were seized by Rechila (Hyd. s.a 438).

In 437, the emperor Valentinian III set out for Constantinople to receive the hand of Licina Eudoxia in marriage (Marc. Com. s.a 437; Prosp. s.a. 437). Aetius might also have accompanied his emperor on his journey (Barnes, 1975, pp. 166-189). After the two got married they spent the winter in Thessalonica before returning to Ravenna in 438 (Marc. Com. s.a 438). Possibly to celebrate the nuptial union of the two courts, both consulships of 437 were given to Western Roman candidates, as opposed to the tradition where each would be chosen from their respective halves. Thus, Aetius was named consul for the second time (Prosp. s.a. 437) and shared the honor with Sigisvultus.

As soon as Aetius returned to the West, he faced the Goths. Although their siege of Narbonne had been successfully repelled, the war did not end. In 438, he managed to defeat an enemy army with heavy casualties up to 8,000 on the Gothic side (Hyd. sa. 438; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 201.3;Prosp. s.a. 438). As the number of the fallen is so high, this might be the famous battle of Mons Colubrarius (somewhere in southern Gaul) found in

Merobaudes (*Pan*. 1, fr. 2B 11ff). Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, certain barbarian *foederati* are reported to have taken to piracy (Prosp. s.a. 437). In the following year, these pirates intensified their attacks especially against Sicily (Prosp. s.a. 438). The chronicle does not name explicitly who were they, but it would not be too inaccurate to give the credit to the Vandals who previously used similar naval attacks in the Mediterranean once they got acquainted with ships. Furthermore, sometime between the years 438-440, Cologne was attacked and destroyed by the Franks (Sal. *de Gub*. 6.8).

Litorius, on the other hand, thanks to his achievements on the field, was now made junior *magister militum* and thus became second in command after Aetius (Prosp. s.a. 439). Although some claim that he was second to Aetius only in Gaul and Sigisvultus was the second to none after Aetius was in power (PLRE 2, p. 685 (Litorius)). All the same, the limits of his authority having been expanded, he was determined to pacify the Gothic threat once and for all, since he must have believed that the time was especially ripe for such an endeavor after the latter's major defeat at the hands of Aetius the previous year. To this end, after consulting his soothsayers as a true follower of the traditional Roman religion, he ordered his Huns to attack the Goths near Toulouse, but acted rashly and met not only with defeat, but was also captured by the enemy. Shortly thereafter, he was put to death (Prosp. s.a. 439; Hyd. s.a. 439; Jord., *Get*. 177). With Litorius' army in shatters, Theoderic and his Goths could freely counterattack and threaten the safety of southern Gaul. It was then Avitus stepped on the scene. He was now not only *magister militum per Gallias*, but also *praefectus praetorio Galliarum*, the sole man responsible for military and civil matters concerning Gaul (Sid. Apol., Carm. 7.295-8). By utilizing his diplomatic skills, he persuaded the Goth to renew the peace treaty between the Goths and the Romans (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.297-311; Hyd. s.a. 439; Prosp. s.a. 439). Chronicles may note the treaty as if it were similar to others of the age, but Halsall (2007, pp. 246-247) suggests that it initially gave birth to the Gothic kingdom, since it was the first one that recognized a Gothic king. He further emphasizes that following the treaty the Goths started to pursue their own foreign policy. For instance, Theoderic married his daughter to Huneric, Geiseric's eldest son and heir.

Nevertheless, the propaganda machine of the Roman Empire was still functioning at full power. In his panegyric to Avitus from the time he was the emperor of the West, Sidonius

Apollinaris does not hesitate for a second to recall his emperor's success with the Gothic king by dismissing it as a mere treaty that put an end to a barbarian king's ambitions: "Will future races and peoples ever believe this? –a Roman's letter annulled a barbarian's conquests." (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.310-11).

3.2.1. The Fall of Carthage

The renewed peace treaty with the Goths had returned them to their original boundaries of 418/9 and also earned the Romans a future ally king who would stay on friendly terms until his death in 451. The Vandals had also been relatively calm since they were given lands to settle in North Africa in 435, if one could ignore their piratical activites and the king's persecution of the Catholic clergy. The Suebi in Spain, likewise, laid down their arms once again. The Burgundians in the middle Rhine were almost wholly destroyed and the Roman administration in the area functioned as previously. The Huns in the Great Hungarian Plain were still supplying Aetius with warriors, but the recent defeat of Litorius and Bleda and Attila's future plans would change that pretty soon. Aetius, on the other hand, returned to Italy from Gaul after he had pacified the disturbances in Gaul (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 440) and in his honor a statue of him was erected in Rome by the senate. It was a monument praising his achievements against the Burgundians and the Goths with the inscription "*ob Italiae securitatem quam procul domitis gentibus peremptisque Burgundionibus et Gotis oppressis vincendo praestitit*"[131] and "*donis militaribus donatus*"[132] The second inscription is apparently an ancient one, rather used in the early empire and now centuries later revived to honor Aetius himself (PLRE 2, p. 26 (Aetius 7)). Furthermore, Merobaudes wrote a panegyric dedicated to Aetius and praised his military skills in the battle of the Mons Colubrarius (Merobaud. *Pan*. 1). Altogether, at least on paper, everything was under control.

Suddenly in 439, Geiseric broke the treaty he had signed four years before and marched into Africa Proconsularis. By means of a trickery (Hyd. s.a. 439) he captured Carthage on October 19, 439, the most prized city after Rome in the West (Hyd. s.a. 439; Marc.

[131] "By conquering, he provided for the safety of Italy after subduing far living people, destroying the Burgundians and crushing the Goths."
[132] "Bestowed with martial gifts."

Com. s.a. 439; Prosp. s.a. 439; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 444). In constrast to Alaric's *civilized* sack of Rome, this was apparently a merciless one. Victor of Vita notes that basilicas, churches, monasteries were burned with a greater fire than that of they used to burn the city walls (Vict. Vit. 1.4); many known bishops and priests were put to death after various torments (ibid. 1.5); the city's odeon and theatre were levelled (ibid. 1.8). Moreover, the king of the Vandals captured not a few senators living in the city (ibid 1.13).[133]

The news of the fall of Carthage struck the court of Ravenna, but it could not send any force to reclaim it, for the current strength of the Western Roman army could not support operations on two fronts. In Ravenna's current status, furthermore, helping Africa would have meant leaving Gaul virtually defenseless, which would have annulled all the recent victories and their fruits, especially those of Aetius. There were simply not enough resources to undertake such a huge and important task. Moss blames Aetius *passim* in his article for not having acted upon the city's fall by pointing out that it was more important for Aetius to secure Gaul, i.e. Gallic aristocracy's lands and wealth, in return for their political support (Moss, 1973, pp. 711-731). It seems that he does not see that abandoning Gaul would have not only put Ravenna in a bad position, both in terms of military and politics (Heather, 2001, p. 10). The moment Aetius removed his protection from Gaul, it would only be a matter of time before a usurper rose backed by the Gallic elite. When the empire in 3rd century crisis paid no attention to Gaul while fighting the Sassanids and local revolts in Pannonia, Postumus was their solution as their emperor for the so-called Gallic empire which lasted for fourteen years before it came to an end in 274.

After seizing Carthage, Geiseric showed that he had no intention to stop there. In 440, he attacked Sicily and besieged Palermo where he was urged by a certain Arian priest named Maximinus to force the Catholic priests of the island to accept the teachings of Arius (Hyd. s.a 440). Around the same time, another group of Vandals raided Bruttium (Cass. Var. 1.14). In 441, he raised the siege and returned to Carthage (Prosp. s.a. 441). Mathisen posits that Geiseric had heard false reports about Sebastianus' arrival at Carthage and returned to the city (Mathisen, 1999, pp. 173-196). It was not only the West that felt the Vandalic pressure. The Vandals also attacked Rhodes (Stein, 1959, pp. 436-440) and

[133] Christie, 2011, pp. 1-3 draws another picture basing the evidences on archaeology and says the arrival of the Vandals was less disturbing than it was thought.

Geisereic is said to have threatened with an invasion of Egypt, the grain basket of Constantinople (*VDan. Styl.* 56). In the same year, Theodosius II, arranged a great army to recover Carthage by giving the command to Ariobindus, Ansila and Germanus. The Eastern Roman fleet assembled and headed for Sicily, from where they would attack Geiseric, but in the end they ended up being a burden on Sicilians with their inactive presence on the island (Prosp. s.a. 441). This was caused by the reports of a possible Persian campaign (Rubin, 1986, pp. 13-62) – a much more important front to Constantinople than Carthage – and because the Huns began raiding the Eastern Roman territories in 441 (Prosp. s.a. 442; Marc. Com. s.a. 441; Isid., *Hist. Vand*. 76). The hopes of an immediate recovery of Carthage having been thus foiled, the Western Roman court had little to do but to negotiate with Geiseric.

In 442, according to the peace made between Geiseric and Valentinian III, the Vandals received Africa Proconsularis together with its capital city Carthage, and the provinces of Byzacena and Numidia (Procop., Vand. 3.4.13-15; Prosp. s.a 442; Vict. Vit. 1.13). The Vandal king returned the Mauritanian regions, now in a devastated condition (Vict. Vit. 1.13), he had been given in 435. With this agreement, Geiseric found himself a place amid the very political centre of the empire, now called by Ravenna as *rex socius et amicus* (the allied and friend king) (*NVal*. 34). Geiseric also promised to keep supplying grain to Rome and he sent his son Huneric as a hostage to the capital, who, presumably around the same time of his arrival, was betrothed to the Roman princess Eudocia, the daughter of Valentinian III (Procop., Vand. 3.4.13-15; Merobaud. Pan. 2.28-29). As Pawlak (2009, p. 131) asserts, this marriage had two goals: first, to make an ally out of Geiseric and second, to break the Gothic-Vandalic alliance. Huneric had already been married to the daughter of the Gothic king, Theoderic, but Geiseric was keen enough to find an excuse to make his son available for a much more ambitious match. He blamed the Gothic princess for an attempt on his son's life and after cutting off her nose and mutilating her ears, he sent her back to her father in Gaul (Jord., *Get*. 184). Jordanes claims that this deed of Geiseric would later compel him to write a letter to Attila to stir him up against Theoderic, whose retaliation the Vandal king allegedly feared. All the same, this betrothal, which was later cemented with a marriage after 455[134] (Prisc., *fr*. 29.39;

[134] Eudocia would also bore him to a son, Hilderic (Vict. Vit. 3.19; Procop., *Vand*. 1.91.).

Procop., *Vand*. 1.5.6; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 204), was unprecedented in Roman history since an imperial princess married a barbarian with the consent of the Roman emperor.

Geiseric was supplying grain as if he were a Roman governor of the African province,[135] sending hostages as if he were vanquished and the Romans continued to view Africa as a Roman province (*NVal.* 12), but as Prosper of Aquitaine duly noted, the fall of Carthage was real and it took place 585 years after it had become Roman (Prosp. s.a. 439). As long as Africa was outside of Roman administration, there would be little chance to guarantee the survival of the Western Empire.

As all Roman attention was on the events surrounding the fall of Africa and Carthage, the recently crowned king of the Suebi, Rechila, took advantage of the situation and captured Emerita in middle Spain (Hyd. s.a 439). We read that Censorius, who had been sent to Spain to discuss a peace treaty, was besieged at Martylus on his way back home by Rechila's forces to whom he later surrendered himself peacefully (Hyd. s.a. 440)[136]. In 441, his father Hermericus died of the disease he had been first struck by seven years ago (Hyd. s.a. 441), and his son Rechila, all the more eager to expand the territory of the Suebi, marched against Hispalis and seized it together with the provinces of Baetica and Carthaginensis (Hyd. s.a. 441), thus becoming almost the ruler of whole Spain, as Tarraconensis on eastern coast was only under nominal Roman control. Halsall likens the region's situation to northern Gaul, where, although the Romans did not officially abandon it, it would still be very optimistic to claim that it was still Roman (Halsall, 2007, p. 245). Moreover, now it was Tarraconensis' turn to see the rise of the Bagauade that were agitated upon seeing the inactivity of Ravenna in protecting its Hispano-Roman territories. However, Ravenna had already acted and sent dux Astyrius to Tarraconensis where he was reported to have killed many rebels (Hyd. s.a. 441).[137]

It seemed that the victory of Astyrius was not conclusive though, for in 443 Merobaudes was sent to Spain to replace his father-in-law.[138] The orator and poet, who had recently

[135] On the continuous supply of African grain to Rome, albeit in amounts inferior to which had been sent from Roman Africa, see the recent research by Jason, 2013, pp. 298-321.
[136] He was later killed by a certain Agiulfus at Seville in 448 (Hyd. s.a. 448)
[137] On Spanish Bagauade see Kulikowski, 2004, pp. 182-183.
[138] Merobaudes, might have hold the title *patricius* (Barnes, 1975, pp. 159-163). Other *patricii* during Valentinian III's reign included Sigisvultus in 443, Petronius Maximus between 443-5, Albinus between 445-6, Firminus between 451-2. When there were other *patricii*, Aetius' seniority would be emphasized with the dignity of *magnificus vir parens patriciusque noster* (Our magnificent father and patrician) (*NVal.* 36; Barnes, 1975, pp. 165-166).

written a panegyric celebrating Aetius's victory over the Goths (Merobaud. *Pan.* 1) and who might have been of Germanic descent (PLRE 2, p. 758 (Merobaudes)), was in his very first year of at the post of junior *magister utriusque militiae*. As soon as he arrived in Tarraconensis, he defeated the Bagaudae, but soon afterwards was recalled to Rome by Valentinian III, apparently due to a court intrigue stemmed from jealousy (Hyd. s.a. 443).

Merobaudes' offensive in 443 was only possible due to the peace treaty that had been signed with Geiseric the previous year. With Geiseric now *socius amicusque*, he was ready to contribute to Roman offensives. Even only this part of the agreement between Valentinian III and Geiseric is enough to demonstrate that the Vandalic conquest of Africa was not a war to end the Roman Empire, but basically in order to find a good land to live free from Roman intervention. Otherwise, who else would assist his enemy, after he decisively defeated him? To honor this part of the agreement,[139] the Vandals suddenly landed on the Suebi controlled Turonium on the coast of Gallaecia and captured many families (Hyd. s.a. 445).

A year later, a new junior *magister utriusque militae* Vitus was sent to Spain with Gothic allies to lead the campaign against the Suebi. When he was campaigning in Carthaginensis and Baetica, Rechila caught up with him and inflicted a heavy defeat by dispersing his Goths, while Vitus was able to flee the battlefield. Now Rechila was once again free to conquer and plunder as he pleased (Hyd. s.a. 446). However, he suffered an unexpected death in August of 448 and was succeeded by his Catholic son Rechiarius. Hydatius reports that his ascension was at first met with opposition which he knew how to overcome (Hyd. s.a. 448). His first act was to bind his house with to that of Theoderic by marrying himself to the daughter of the latter in 449 (Hyd. s.a. 449). It is not known whether she was the former mutilated spouse of Huneric, whom he divorced in order to be betrothed to Eudocia. Regardless, the broken Gothic-Vandalic alliance now seemed to have been replaced by the Gothic-Suebi alliance after the Vandals had united with the Romans. After this marriage, Rechiarius started pillaging Vasconia in February of 449

[139] Halsall associates it with Huneric's betrothal to Eudocia (2007, p. 249).

(ibid.), just south of the Gothic lands in Aquitaine II and west of the Pyrenees, presumably a gray area for the Roman administration in any case.

The confusion among the Hispano-Romans must have been increasing daily, as the scales were daily tipping in the favor of the Suebi. The Bagaudae in Spain, were battered but still not wholly subdued and spawned another leader in 449, this time a certain Basilius. He, after having assembled his followers, gathered Roman federates in a church in Tarazona (in Zaragoza) and had them killed while he personally killed the bishop of the same church (Hyd. s.a. 449). Meanwhile, Rechiarius, after visiting Theoderic in Caesaraugusta, was joined by the leader of the Bagaudae and began to raid the neighboring regions. He then proceeded to capture Lleida by a trickery and carried off many people into slavery (ibid).

That Spain was increasingly becoming more of a Germanic land than that of a Roman one appears to have offered to a certain Roman exile a shelter, for Sebastianus, the son-in-law of Bonifatius, who had escaped to Constantinople in 434 after having been banished by Aetius from Ravenna, arrived in Spain to meet Theoderic in 444 (Hyd. s.a. 444). Apparently, he was declared a *hostis publicus* by both courts. After his landing, he seems to have captured Barcelona by force (ibid.), out of which he was expelled the following year and sought refuge among the Vandals of Africa (Hyd. s.a. 445). He first took the role of an advisor for the king, but was later killed in 450 on the orders of Geiseric (Hyd. s.a. 450; Vict. Vit. 1.19-21), highly likely for the latter feared that he might pose a danger to his reign by straining his good relations with Ravenna.

3.2.2. The Reflections of the Fall of Carthage

The fall of Africa was the most disastrous event of the reign of Valentinian III and in fact of the first half of the 5th century. In 439, the city of Carthage, the richest city in Africa, fell to Geiseric, the king of the Vandals and Alans. In 442, after an unsuccessful attempt by Constantinople to take back the city, a peace treaty between Geiseric and Valentinian III was signed and the provinces of Africa Proconsularis which included Carthage, Byzacena and Numidia were handed over to the Vandal control. Thus the Western Roman Empire lost “one of the most prosperous and urbanized Roman provinces” (Cameron,

2001, p. 552). As one of his acts as the king in Africa and of his *sortes Vandalorum* policy, Geiseric soon commenced land confiscations in Africa Proconsularis and banished many Roman landowners out of Africa.[140] Vandal Africa, or as Courtois called it, *l'empire du blé*,[141] prospered under its new masters, since from the moment of its capture, it did not pay anything to Rome (Fulford & Peacock, 1984; Wickham, 1994, pp. 252-262, pp. 95-96). In fact, when Belisarius ended the Vandalic kingdom in 534, the captured treasury of Gelimer was so great, that it astonished everyone (Procop., *Vand*. 4.4.33-41).

Before its capture by Geiseric, Roman Africa was truly the economic powerhouse of the Western Roman Empire. In a *novella* (*NVal*. 13) giving figures for the incomes of two African provinces before 429, we read that the annual revenue of Numidia was 33,600 *solidi* whereas that of Mauretania Stifensis was 40,000. No doubt, as the two richest provinces, Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena would have brought in higher numbers. Now, all this gold and wheat would fill the coffins and baskets of its Germanic kings. Indeed, Africa did not only feed Rome by its income, but also by its agrarian products of which scarcity could only mean a distressed city and an unpopular ruler (Wickham, 2007, p. 76). It was Africa Proconsularis that fed the city specifically with grain and Byzacena with oil, although the latter product was by no means an export only targeted for Rome, but was made available across the Italian coastline (ibid. p. 709, 729). After delivering its *annona* to Rome, the leftovers of African products would usually be sold elsewhere in the empire and contribute to the market economy (ibid. p. 711). Other African exports included the famous African red slip ware (ARS) which could be found everywhere in west, albeit in low numbers inland Spain and Gaul, where local products seem to have been preferred (ibid. p. 710). Clearly, although local goods were also in existence, the whole west was dominated by African products (ibid. p. 709). Therefore, Carthage and naturally Africa, formed the tax spine of the Western Empire and the Vandalic invasion in 439 broke this spine (ibid. p. 711), together with the African grain and ARS trade.

Following the treaty of 442, although Geiseric promised to continue to trade with Rome, archaeological remains demonstrate a sharp decline in African exports. For its agrarian

[140] Cameron, 2001, p. 554; Heather, 2006, p. 294. Byzacena and Numidia seem to have been untouched in this respect. All the same, his actions were against the influential Roman landowners, whom now replaced with his Vandal followers. Roman peasantry continued to till the land as usual. (Heather, 2006, p. 294).
[141] The empire of wheat (Courtois, 1955, p. 213).

needs, Rome now had to turn to Sicily and Sardinia, whereas inland Italy started to produce its own imitations of ARS. It was obvious that Italy now had solely depend on its own resources (Humphries, 2001, p. 527; Wickham, 2007, p. 711, 730). Nevertheless, no area other than the treasury seems to have been hit the severest blow. By 439, the Western Roman Empire had already lost Britain, parts of northern Gaul and Spain and thus their revenues, but as long as Africa remained under imperial authority, it could overcome any economic crisis. After the catastrophe of 439, as early as 440, fiscal privileges of classes were restricted and everyone ordered to pay taxes regardless of imperial favor (*NVal*. 4). Around the same time, Greek tradesmen (*pantapolae*) who had been barred from doing business within Rome were recalled to ease the financial situation (*NVal*. 5). In 441, it was decreed that no one, including the imperial household and the clergy, was now exempt from economically contributing to arms production, repairs of fortifications and roads (*sordida munera*) (*NVal*. 10.3). In 444-5, a tax was introduced which was called *siliquaticum* that aimed to collect taxes from every sale made across the empire (*NVal*. 15; Jones, 1964, p. 826). The activity regarding the Western Roman economy in the novels of Valentinian following the fall of Carthage is the greatest indicator of how deep the loss struck the empire.

Nevertheless, amidst such fiscal difficulties, the government seems to have not forgotten to aid those who had either lost their lands or been treated unjustly by tax collectors. In 440, due to the Vandal attacks on Sicily, a tax remission was granted for the landowners in Sicily, who now had to pay only a seventh part of the tax assessment (*NVal*. 1.2). Similarly, those in Numidia and Mauretania, two provinces the Vandals had returned to the Romans after the treaty of 442, were now expected to pay only one-eight of their tax obligations until they recuperated from their losses (*NVal*. 13). Upon receiving news that tax collectors extracted money for their own leisure from landowners, the government once again decreed on March 5, 450 a remission of delinquent taxes for those that had not been paid up to September 1, 447-September 1, 448 (*NVal*. 1.3) by underlining the importance of Roman landlords for the empire. However, nothing was important to the empire's survival as much as the army that was further crippled after the loss of Africa and the end of the Hunnic aid.

3.2.3. The Barbarians in Gaul

While the future of African and Spanish provinces looked bleak, Aetius was busy reintegrating whole of Gaul back to Rome. His campaigns in the 430s were mostly successful, because he had almost always been supported by the Hunnic *foederati*. However, following the defeat of Litorius in 439 the active Hunnic support for the West and Aetius seemed to have come to an end (Thompson, 1996, p. 79). The decision was probably taken to concentrate all forces under Bleda and Attila to make them available for their upcoming campaign against Constantinople in 441. Therefore, Aetius had to look elsewhere to rebuild his military muscle, i.e. create new alliances. To this end, he first[142] settled Alans led by their king Sambida on the abandoned country estates in Valence and in the Rhone valley in 440 (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 440; Const., *Vit. Germ*. 28). In June he had to return to Italy to get ready to defend it against an expected Vandal attack (*NVal*. 9). Geiseric was reported to have sailed from Carthage and Ravenna turned to its *patricius*. Sigisvultus was made responsible with the protection of shores and cities with soldiers including *foederati* under his command. In order to be ready against the Vandals, every free individual was given right to carry weapons to defend themselves (ibid). Nevertheless, the attack never came. In 441-2, Aetius returned to Gaul and settled another group of Alans and their king Goar, who might be Sambida's successor, to the settlements in farther Gaul, with the city of Aurelianum (Orléans) chosen as their headquarters (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 441-2).[143] These were the Alans who were present at the crossings of 406, but instead of continuing on the road with other Alans, Vandals and Suebi, they had chosen to fight under Roman standards (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.9; Bachrach, 1973, p. 60). Aetius specifically settled them in the aforesaid area, so that they might contain the Bagaudic revolts of northern Gaul and they seem to have been successful at this job (ibid; Const., *Vit. Germ*. 28; Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.8-15) and to prevent any Gothic aggression to north of the Loire (Bachrach, 1973, p. 63). It seems that at first their settlement was met with protest of locals (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 441-442), but in the end, Goar pacified them by

[142] But only after having been reconciled with *praefectus praetorio Galliarum* Albinus through the intervention of who was about to become the bishop and the pope of Rome, Leo (Prosp. s.a. 440).
[143] This settlement of the Alans in Gaul in late antiquity is still visible in modern names such as Alaincourt (Eure), Allainville aux Boix (Seine-et-Oise), Courtalain (Eure-et-Loir) (Bachrach, 1973, p. 63).

force and concluded the division of the land among his followers. In 446, the Bagaudae in Aremorica again rebelled and Aetius sent Goar to suppress it, who also was promised with spoils of war. The Alan king and his cavalry met St. Germanus on the road who pleaded them not to attack the Bagaudae and then went to Italy to reverse the decision of Aetius. He appears to have failed in his mission, for in 450 Goar resumed his march and defeated the rebels (Const. *Vit. Germ*. 28; Bachrach, 1973, pp. 64-65). Moreover, Aetius further fortified the security of Gaul by receiving the Burgundians who had survived the campaigns of 436-7 into alliance and gave them land to settle in Savoy in 443 (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 443).

In 446 Aetius was named consul for the third time (Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.13). In his second panegyric celebrating Aetius's third consulship, Merobaudes tells how peace returned to the Danube, the Rhine, to Aremorica (Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.1.9), whereas admitting that Spain was no longer under Roman control (Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.17-19). While Aetius' achievements were echoing through the corridors of the imperial palace, the last call for help came from Britain. The island had been overwhelmed with the Saxon raiders and fell into their hands in 440 (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 440). In 446, the Brito-Romans asked Aetius for help (Gild., *de exc. Brit*. 20), but their pleas remained unanswered. The status of the empire might have been stabilized, but it still did not have forces to spare to recover Britain. With no help coming from the mainland, some Brito-Romans took themselves to the sea, crossed the channel and arrived in Britanny (little Britain) in Aremorica. These refugees appear to have been received into alliance by Aetius, for Jordanes lists them as Roman allies at the battle of Catalaunian Plains in 451 (Jord., *Get*. 191).

In either 447 or 448, the inhabitants of Aremorica seem to have quarreled with the Alans in the region. We lack details, but the Gallic Chronicle mentions a physician of the name Eudoxius who escaped before the Alans and fled to Attila (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 448). Again around this time, Sidonius Apollinaris recounts a battle against the Franks under Chlogio in Vicus Helena (near Tours). This was a river-crossing battle and Aetius led his forces personally to victory (Sid. Apol., *Carm.* 5.212-54). The battle itself is ambiguous, but some figures assisted Aetius in this conflict are known to have been Majorian (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5.220-27), a future emperor and Ricimer (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5.266-268) the most influential *magister militum* after Aetius' death.

By the end of the 440s, the Western Roman Empire seems to have accepted the harsh truth of losing the control over Britain, most of Spain and northern Gaul.[144] The locals in these regions, in a desperate move to protect their livelihoods, either took up arms and were branded as Bagaudae by the Roman officials or turned to the barbarians who had arrived in their lands. If the emperor in a very far city was not able to protect them, why should they still have to pay taxes to him? Furthermore, what if those barbarian warlords appeased their pain, if they cooperated with them? Italy, the western Balkans and southern Gaul were the only regions that remained under direct Roman rule. The latter was thanks to the efforts of Aetius whose latest policy transferred the policing duty to various barbarian groups in the name of Rome. After the loss of Africa and the cessation of Hunnic help, Aetius' frequent campaigns on the frontier came to be a thing of the past. Now, he was fully on the defensive. The regular Western Roman army, or what was left of it, should be preserved for the worst. After all, the Hunnic brothers seemed to have been ambitious rulers and who could guarantee the safety of the West as long as they lingered near the Roman borders?

3.2.4. The Western Roman Army of Aetius: Neither Roman nor an Army

The late Roman army was exceptionally different from its predecessor in the early empire. After Diocletian's and Constantine's reforms in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, the army was now composed of *comitatenses* (mobile field armies) and *limitanei* (border troops). The latter were often based in forts and was responsible with delaying and disrupting enemy incursions on the borders while the former's primary duty was to meet and defeat its enemies on the battlefield. It was out of *comitatenses* the soldiers of the *palatini* (troops directly led by the emperor or *magister militum*) units were drawn, as the mobile field armies had the most trained and disciplined soldiers and officers, whereas border troops comprised mostly second rate troops with lower discipline and morale (Jones, 1964, p. 1037). Nevertheless, their importance should not be ignored, for without

[144] Sidonius calls Aetius "the Liberator of the Loire" in one of his letters written in 479, by which it is obvious to where the effective Roman administration was limited.

limitanei, barbarians could have easily conducted their raids over the Rhine[145] or the Danube.[146]

Infantry was still the backbone of the army, yet cavalry also seems to have gained greater importance in late antiquity. The emphasis on cavalry units had first been introduced to the army by Gallienus in the 3rd century and the following centuries have seen them further in use (Goldsworthy, 2011, p. 202). Late Roman Spain appears to have supplied Rhine armies with horses bred in Spain (Esmonde Cleary, 2013, p. 267). In 357, Julian's army had 10,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry, whereas the Eastern Roman army of 478 included 30,000 infantry and 8,000 cavalry. Mounted soldiers of *comitatenses* were shock troops that would break the enemy formation and morale with a thunderous strike, while utilizing their 2,5 m. long spears placed underarm[147] to kill their opponents. *Limitanei* must also have had light cavalry units for patrolling purposes (ibid. p. 106). As much as cavalry's contribution to the army was undeniable, their presence meant horses and horses needed fodder that no doubt turned out to be another burden when the government was having difficulties supplying even its soldiers with rations (Jones, 1964, p. 1035).

A late Roman legion would not exceed 1500 men on paper and usually have 1000-1200 men within its ranks,[148] a much lower figure when contrasted to legions of the principate that numbered somewhere around 5000. The reason was not that the army was reduced in size, if anything, armies of the previous centuries[149] were dwarfed by a figure of somewhere between 400,000-600,000 (Heather, 2006, p. 63). The type of warfare of the period was mostly defensive and harassing the enemy was preferred to risky pitched battles (Elton, 2014, p. 128). Moreover, starting from 406, the West was under constant simultaneous threats on different frontiers, so this would naturally have called the usage

[145] The Rhine was the natural barrier that separated the provinces of the Western Empire from *barbaricum*. Once breached, hostile armies were free to roam as they pleased without facing any other natural obstacle. The Eastern Empire, in contrast, had always Constantinople and the straits that proved themselves to be the most insurmountable barriers against enemies such as Alaric and Attila, who preferred to turn westwards when they realized that they could not go any further than Thrace (Jones, 1964, p. 1031).

[146] Jones, 1964, p. 1036-1037. The theory that *limitanei* were weak, part-time farmer, part-time soldiers is no longer applicable (cf. MacMullen, 1963). Moreover, if necessary, they would be drawn from their forts and combined with mobile field armies, which made them *pseudo-comitatenses* units, whose combat evidence is scarce, but is believed to have proved themselves successful additions (Elton, 1996, p. 206).

[147] A technique that rendered the absence of stirrups unimportant (Elton, 1996, p. 106).

[148] For guesstimates on the units strengths of the late Roman army see Elton, 1996, p. 89; Goldsworthy, 2011, p. 206.

[149] 3rd century army is said to have numbered 300,000 men and if we are to believe Agathias (5.13) the late Roman army of Justinian was 645,000 men strong (cf. Jones, 1964, pp. 418-460). Elton claims the Roman army at the start of the 5th century had 500,000 men (2014, p. 130). According to Jones (1964, pp. 196-199) on the other hand, by 425, the Western Roman army had ca. 250,000 soldiers.

of stratagems such as ambushes, sneak attacks and therefore would have required small fighting forces. Open field battles were only given when absolutely necessary and if the enemy were found concentrated, as its risks would usually outweigh its benefits (Elton, 1996, p. 216), as was the case in 451. Otherwise, sieges were frequent and their success mostly dependent on starving out the inhabitants.[150] As our narrative has demonstrated, the campaigns of Aetius included many small scaled battles, harassing operations, breaking sieges and only a single major battle.

This preference of small scaled battle over pitched battles brought over changes in preferred arms such as swords and shields. The long sword (*spatha*) replaced the classical *gladius* (short sword) and whereas *scutum* (oblong shield) was abandoned and *clipeus* (oval/round shield) was adopted. Cleary claims this was done on the purpose of adapting the soldiers to transforming ways of warfare and infantry formation which was now more relaxed (Esmonde Cleary, 2013, p. 57). The infantry was still armored and took advantage of missile weapons such as *plumbata* (throwing darts) to soften up the enemy before charging. There were specialist troop types such as *lanciarii* (lancers) and although no archaeological records remain, archers were a significant element of the armies (ibid. p. 57; Ureche, 2013, p. 184).

It was not only the structure of the equipment of the army that underwent a transformation. The Roman army of the 5th century, or rather, the army under the command of commanders who declared allegiance to Roman emperors, became increasingly heterogeneous. Most of its units were composed of *foederati* (federates), these being overwhelmingly comprised of the Huns. Apart from *foederati* and *bucellarii*, the little private armies of commanders, the government had no doubt regular Roman units still under its command, or at least what was left of them. *Placidi Valentinianici Felices*[151] might be one of those regular regiments we can name. No doubt the remnants of the Gallic field and other regular Roman units too still existed, but they are believed to have turned into garrison units (Liebeschuetz, 1993, pp. 267, 273). All the same, before the battle of the Catalaunian Plains the Western Roman army appears to have had only a

[150] Most major cities and the ones near the frontiers were given walls beginning in the 3rd century. (Southern & Dixon, 1996, p. 24).
[151] Late Roman Shield Patterns: Intra Italiam cum viri illustris magistri peditum. (2015, 16 December). Retrieved from http://lukeuedasarson.com/MagisterItalia.html

single major army and with that battle, that too, was destroyed, for we read no mention of any field armies opposing Attila during his descent on northern Italy (ibid. pp. 267, 273).

Probably the most striking feature of the Western Roman army in the age of Aetius was the increase of foreign soldiers fighting for Rome (*foederati*). In fact, the 5th century witnessed an heavy usage of federates. They were warriors of barbarian origin voluntarily serving Rome after signing a treaty or an agreement and were different to their predecessors in the 4th century, whom the empire recruited and wholly assimilated them into regular units, especially as *dediticii* (the surrendered ones), whereas those of the 5th preserved their identities and formed a separate arm than the regular army (Innes, 2004, p. 30). They would even fight against their own kin without feeling any sentiments and their warlike abilities have usually been praised by contemporaries (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5. 238–54, 518–32, 7. 235–40). The Hunnic *foederati*, as this thesis *passim* has demonstrated, have obviously been the most preferred foreign group which filled the ranks of Aetius' *foederati*. The Western Empire had first employed them against Juthungi in 384 and at the beginning of the 5th century against Radagaisus (Zos. 5.26; Oros. 7.37.13). Honorius allegedly summoned 10,000 Huns to Italy (Zos. 5.50). The usurper Joannes first sent an expedition force to Africa and later his general Aetius, on the orders of the usurper Joannes, went to Pannonia and returned to Ravenna with a huge Hunnic army to secure his own private army (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Philost. 12.14; Olymp., *fr*. 43.2; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 425) He once again requested aid from his Hunnic friends, when confronted by the anti-Aetius party in 432 (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 433). The destruction of the Burgundian kingdom in 436 (Hyd. s.a 436; Prosp. s.a. 435; *Chron Gall*. s.a 436) and Litorius's Huns (Prosp. s.a. 439) were other recorded instances where the Hunnic *foederati* saw action in west. Without a doubt, the Huns comprised the main military arm of the Western Roman armies until 439. After this date, the majority of the Roman army would continue to be composed of other foreign units (Liebeschuetz, 1993, p. 273ff).

The prime mover of the rise of the *foederati* was the gradual disappearance of the regular Roman army in the 5th century in which civil wars took no minor role. The major defeats of the Western usurpers Mangnentius in 351, Magnus Maximus in 388, Eugenius in 394

in the 4th century were followed by further civil discord between Gerontius, Jovinus, Maximus and Constantinus at the beginning of the 5th century and by the usurpation and eventual defeat of Joannes in 425. The fact that John sent Aetius to collect Hunnic troops demonstrate the miserable state the army was in. Indeed, as Jones and Heather argues, a close examination of *Notitia Dignitatum* demonstrates that between 395-420 the Western Roman army had had lost %50 of its fighting force (Heather, 2006, pp. 246-250; Jones, 1964, Appendix iii, Distributi Numerorum). Basing his calculation on Jones, Heather proposes that the estimated strength of the Western Roman army at the beginning of the 420s was numbered no more than 90,000, with the armies of Illyria, Gaul and Italy sharing the total figure amongst them in such a way that 13,500; 34,000 and 28,500 men are believed to have been assigned to them, respectively (Heather, 2006, p. 447). To keep the strength of an army totaling 90,000 an annual 4,500 recruits with 20 years of compulsory service were required and obviously the government was unable to meet even this low number. Moreover, landowners are known to have persistently opposed the government's levy of recruits from their lands that caused further complications in raising an army (*Cod. Theod*. 7. 13, 12-14; Symm., *Ep*. 6.8, 62, 64; *NVal.* 6.1; *NMaj*. 2.4) Amid such difficulties it should be no surprise that *foederati* came to be the direct answer to the problems in recruitment (Elton, 2014, p. 135).

With the flow of foreign warriors into the empire to act as its military arm, they gradually turned, not surprisingly, into the private armies of generals (Esmonde Cleary, 2013, pp. 342-344; Innes, 2004, p. 103). Innes, for one, asserts that Aetius' success on the battlefield had wholly depended on the loyalty of his troops, most of which composed of Huns (Innes, 2004, p. 107). In fact, Liebeschuetz asserts that without his Hunnic soldiers, Aetius would have been nowhere as successful as he had been with them (Liebeschuetz, 1993, p. 270). In the 5th century, these soldiers' loyalty was to their general, not to the court, for they were depended on them for supplies and payments. An earlier example is Stilicho, upon whose murder many of his *foederati* abandoned the Roman standards and joined Alaric's Goths. Although I suspect that there was never a clause in their agreement to give them such a right, it was perfectly natural for them to be alienated after their leader was murdered in cold blood.

Nevertheless, probably no unit was more of a private army than the *bucellarii*. They were highly likely mounted bodyguards of the generals and rarely saw action in the field (Elton, 1996, p. 102). The meaning of the word is literally biscuit-eaters and they would have wholly dependent on their generals for payment and supplies. Constantius had Gothic *bucellarii*, whom Galla Placidia inherited after his husband's death in 421 (Olymp. *fr*. 38). Similarly, Stilicho (Zos. 5.5), Bonifatius (Aug., *Ep*. 220.6) and Sebastianus (Prisc., *fr*. 4) were also surrounded by these soldiers. Aetius is known to have had *bucellarii* composed of Hunnic, and probably of Alan and Gothic origin who had sworn allegiance only to Aetius himself (Liebeschuetz, 1993, p. 269). Two of them, possibly Germanized Huns, Optila and Thraustila, had even gone so far to avenge their commander's death by killing Valentinian III in Rome. Besides payment and supplies, they would also expect to receive their share in loot. But before everything, it was the general's personal charisma that they seem to have followed (Esmonde Cleary, 2013, p. 351). With *foederati* and *bucellarii* becoming the standard units of the 5th century, the regular Roman army gradually disappeared.

Nevertheless, the end of the regular Roman army seems to have begun even before the invasions and settlements of the 5th century and in fact, intentionally. In 402, Arles, Lyon and Trier suddenly ceased to produce silver and base metal coinages. Coinage, of course, was mainly made to meet the needs of the regular Roman army. With no more coins, how could the army there be kept at strength? Apparently, this was nothing but a decision taken by the government itself since employing *foederati* in the 4th century came to be such a norm and preferred over the regular Roman regiments, that the centre decided to close their mint operations in Gaul. *Foederati* of the 5th century were not regular and standing units of the Roman army, so it was unnecessary to keep them functioning. To employ barbarians, the government instead preferred to impose conscription tax upon even those with imperial ranks and used the collected money to hire warriors (*Cod. Theod*. 11.18.1; *NVal*. 6.3; Liebeschuetz, 1993, p. 274). Only to Ravenna and Rome mints continued their operations. It would appear that coinage came to be only important for the heartland of the empire in the 5th century and Rome was content with not having

regular imperial forces outside of Italy, where it could turn to and employ barbarians more cheaply (Esmonde Cleary, 2013, p. 349-351).[152]

After the fall of Carthage in 439 the need for barbarian contribution to the army must have been felt in a way that had never been felt before. In the same year, the Hunnic warrior aid also came to a halt and Aetius was deprived of his military muscle. To replace this loss, he had to carve out new alliances by settling the Alans and Burgundians within Gaul. After the disastrous year of 439, the Western Roman government quickly set off to reconstruct its armed forces. As early as 20 March, 440, a law decreed that landowners must furnish the army with new recruits and return any deserters hiding in their estates (*NVal*. 6.1). Another decree dated to 25 May, 443 renewed the previous law's order by noting that anyone who fails to meet the demand of the government was actually not a Roman (*NVal*. 6.2). By July 14, 444 the economic and military situation of the West was so catastrophic, that it confessed the treasury was hardly filled to even arm and equip the current recruits and promulgated that henceforth high ranked officials were to contribute with money and recruits (*NVal*. 6.3). It would appear that Ravenna and Rome mints fell short in meeting the demands of a regular army even within Italy. The centre's incompetence, it seems, only fuelled the further privatization of armed forces to an extent that removed the regular Roman army from existence altogether by the end of Valentinian III's reign (Whitby, 2001a, p. 298).

3.3. THE MASTER OF THE NORTH

3.3.1 Rua and Octar

Besides securing the power of Aetius and supporting him in his campaigns, the Huns had also their hands full consolidating and expanding their power to the north of the Danube. This included not only their relations with other Germanic peoples, but the Eastern Romans as well. The Hunnic-Western Roman relations might have been on friendly

[152] Noricum also appears to have been grouped under areas where Italian mints stayed in military circulation, for money and *annona* (Aug. *De Civ. Dei.* 18.18) seems to have continued to flow to frontier troops stationed there even in the last decade of the Western Empire. We read in St. Severinus' life (Sulp. Sev., *V. Mart*. 20) that soldiers from *cohors nova Batavorum* regiment set out for Italy to collect their delayed payment without realizing that the last emperor in the West had already been deposed.

terms, but the same cannot be said for Hunnic-Constantinople relations. In 422, Thrace was ravaged by their warbands (Marc. Com. s.a. 422; Prisc., *fr*. 2).[153] Their leader is unknown, but Kelly (2009, p. 80) suggests that it was either Rua or his brother Octar. Thompson (1996, p. 69), moreover, asserts that power was shared between Rua and Octar in the 420s. At that time, they had a third brother named Mundiuch, the father of Bleda and Attila, but it seems that he was not allowed to share the same level of authority as they had. Regardless, all might have been responsible for the administration of different areas of their kingdom, for this was not unusual in history of the steppe empires.[154] All the same, when the news reached the emperor, the Eastern Roman forces were recalled from the Persian frontier to secure the safety of the imperial city. In the end, a peace treaty was signed according to which the Eastern Empire agreed to pay 350 pounds of gold per annum.[155]

Five years later after their aid to Aetius against Ravenna, the Huns are reported to have commenced raiding operations in the lands of the Burgundians in the middle Rhine. The effects of their raids were so devastating, that the Burgundians had turned to a bishop of a Roman city in Gaul and informed him of their decision that they wanted to become Christians since the God of the Romans was known to have assisted them in their defense. In seven days, they all became Christians and after Octar died one night from surfeit, they attacked the Huns and defeated them although they were greatly outnumbered (Soc. 7.30). Some historians have dismissed this narration of the events as they believe that it is void of any historical authenticity for no other source handles a Hunnic campaign in 430.[156] On the other hand, Maenchen-Helfen accepts Socrates's account as it is, since it is not outside the realms of the possibility to think that the Huns were capable of organizing a raid in the Burgundian territory (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 83-85). Moreover, Sidonius Apollinaris (Sid. Apol. *Carm*. 7.321-325) mentions that there were Burgundians in Attila's army in 451, who might have become subjects to the Huns after this campaign. I

[153] For the analysis of 422 campaign see Croke, 1977, pp. 347-367.
[154] Kim draws attention to the dualist reign in the Xiongnu Empire and says that the Huns inherited this feature and applied to their kingdom with Donatus (as the ruler of the West) and Charaton (as the ruler of the East); Octar (West) and Rua (East) and at last with Attila (West) Ellac (East). However, Maenchen-Helfen (1973, p. 85) dismisses the idea of a dual kingship. Still, both seem to have agreed on that just like there was a senior emperor in the Roman system, a Hunnic leader would hold the seniority in administration (Kim, 2013, pp. 56-57; Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 85).
[155] Which equals to 25,200 *solidi*.
[156] Bury (1958) and Seeck (1920) althogether skip mentioning the battle, whereas Thompson (1996) and Kelly (2009) wholeheartedly follow it.

am also inclined to believe the authenticity of the story as the Huns seem to have finished off what they had started and avenged themselves by eradicating the Burgundian kingdom. That their conversion only took seven days, however, should be taken with a pinch of salt, as Socrates was writing an ecclesiastical history and thus such exaggerations were nothing but ordinary.

3.3.2. The Peace of Margus and the Hunnic Empire

After Octar's death, Rua appears to have become the sole leader among the Huns in 430. In 432, he welcomed Aetius and sent him to Ravenna with warriors. In 434, he was threatening Constantinople with war if his demands were not met, while the Eastern Roman army was away in Africa in the absence of Bonifatius. Rua also demanded the return of Amilzuri, Itimari, Tunsures, Boisci and of others which were highly likely other Hunnic groups and steppe peoples that rejected serving him (Kelly, 2009, p. 87) and seems to have asked for Roman assistance. But Rua suddenly died during the negotiations, according to Socrates by a lightning strike in either 434 or 435 (Prisc., *fr*. 1; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 434; Soc. 7.43.3) and was eventually succeeded by his nephews Bleda and Attila (Prisc., *fr*. 1; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 434), apparently not before the two had to struggle with other contenders to gain power (ibid. p. 83). Texts give the year 434/5 for the ascension of the brothers, but as Heather claims, they might have come to power in late 430s or even in 440, for the first Roman embassy sent to them was recorded on 15 February 438 (Heather, 2006, p. 300). Hence the Huns might have gone through an interregnum for a short period of time with Bleda and Attila as the strongest contenders and seem to have influenced the Hunnic policies more than the others as there were no mentions of other Huns specifically. All the same, the negotiations that were interrupted continued and in 435 the treaty of Margus (*horreum Margi*) was signed between the Huns and the Eastern Romans who were represented by the *magister utriusque militiae* of the East, Plintha, who was a Goth (Prisc., *fr*. 1) and a relative of Aspar.

The conditions of this treaty were as follows:

- The Romans were to receive no further fugitives from the Hunnic lands,

- They were to return anyone whom they had admitted before,
- They were not to join in any alliances with the enemies of the Huns,
- They were to return any escaped Roman prisoners of war or pay 8 *solidi* for each,
- They Huns were to have the same trade rights as the Romans,
- The Romans were to pay 350 pounds of gold per annum.[157]

By closely analyzing the conditions of the treaty, it is partially possible to construct the internal affairs of the Huns and their expectations from Rome as neighbors. First of all, the fact that the Huns demanded the return of any Hunnic fugitives signifies that there were not few Huns who refused to submit to the authority of Rua and/or Bleda/Attila.[158] The current Hunnic leadership, therefore, had legitimate concerns about the dangers other challengers might pose. Two of such men were named, Mama and Atakam, who were relatives of Attila. In lieu of supporting their relatives, they fled to Constantinople after Bleda and Attila carved their way to the top. Unfortunately for them, Constantinople did not prove to be the refuge they hoped for. The two were surrendered after the treaty and were instantly executed by Attila (Prisc., *fr*. 1).

Second, that the Romans were to enter into no alliances with the enemies of the Huns proves that besides family feuds, other groups of people under or near Hunnic dominance were restless. This should not surprise us, as Sinor (1981, p. 228) has pointed out, for the Hunnic Empire extended its "borders" through conquest and fear. Neither the Alans nor the Goths in the late 4th century had joined the Huns willingly. They either joined them because they could not escape before their arrival, as some of the Goths successfully did in 376, or they had no other option but to submit themselves, as the physician Eudoxius did in 448 (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 448). Of course, there must have been kings and warlords who submitted themselves voluntarily to Hunnic warlords, after they had experienced the horrors of the Hunnic war machine at first hand and instead of taking their chances against it, hurried to join the alternative option.[159] It is known that Attila distributed enormous amounts of gold to his Germanic subjects in order to keep them in line which is

[157] Attila would later double this number.
[158] *Foederati* of Huns stayed to serve Rome in Italy, Gaul and Africa under their own chiefs before and after Attila's reign should also be included, since they were independently deployed by the Romans whenever their aid was required (Sinor, 1990, p. 189; Wolfram, 1997, p. 126).
[159] To become Hunno-Goth, instead of Romano-Goth (Wolfram, 1997, p. 124).

archaeologically supported by findings from the era (Sinor, 1981, p. 233). The dazzling Pietroasele treasure discovered in the 19th century in Romania offers us only a glimpse of how a Gothic settlement enjoyed objects of gold such as rings, fibulas and even belts in the style of Han Chinese. The Szilágysomlyo Treasure found in modern Simleu Silvaniei, Romania with golden fibulae, rings, bowls and amulets is also a testifying proof of the wealth that the Carpathian Basin enjoyed in the 5th century.[160] Bleda and Attila knew that only by perpetual flow of such riches could they secure the loyalty of their subjects

Lastly, the Hunnic intention clearly demonstrated itself limited by economic interest when it came to Rome. That the Huns demanded to have the same trade rights as the Romans may seem to the modern reader completely ordinary, yet trade in antiquity was nothing, but a simple transaction between individuals and empires. It was, most of all, a privilege and for the Romans in the 5th century it was still so. Its conditions would always be drawn by the Romans and be imposed on foreign peoples living on their borders. Moreover, the conditions would usually be limited for the barbarians and would mostly benefit the Romans. The trade with Romans would make the bordering Germanic chiefs wealthy and their wealth would make their rule unquestionable at home. Thus, other peoples would try to come into contact with Rome by attempting to settle on its borders through any means necessary. A hundred years before it would have been unimaginable to witness a barbarian imposing terms of trade on the Romans, but this was exactly what was happening in 435.

The Huns, furthermore, needed to trade. With their main body having settled in the Great Hungarian Plain and through their frequent contact with the Goths, they had already been going through a change and started to imitate their sedentary neighbors (Elton, 1996, pp. 26-28; Heather, 2006, pp. 326, 328; Lindner, 1981, pp. 16, 19). They were gradually losing their steppe characteristics and resembling more and more settled societies with their warrior strata mostly composed of Germanic subjects. This change was fueled by the ecological conditions of the region they found themselves in. A Germanic warrior would use his plough as much as his spear, for Germanic peoples were agriculturalists[161]

[160] Barbarian Jewellery and Roman Gold: The Szilágysomlyo Treasure. (2016, October 10). Retrieved from http://www.khm.at/en/visit/exhibitions/1999/barbarian-jewellery-and-roman-gold/).

[161] Upon seeing the arrival of the emperor Avitus, a Goth is said to have cried out “War is over, give me back the plough!” (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.416)

and this feature must evidently have been in the process of transferring to the Huns. Nevertheless, neither the Germanic peoples nor the Huns would have ever reached the production level of the Romans. Therefore, trade was vital and acquiring equal rights with the Romans was the crowning achievement of that treaty.

Popular media and some textbooks tirelessly continue to draw the picture of the Huns as bloodthirsty conquerors. This cannot be any further from the truth. The Huns, from the moment they arrive in Europe had always sought means to exploit their enemies. They forcefully absorbed the weak ones (Goths, Alans) into their group and the strong ones (Constantinople) were continually harassed by raids until an agreement that was economically advantageous to themselves was reached. The former they achieved by exploiting their manpower, thus the Hunnic war machine became in fact a Germanic army by the time of Attila. They fed them with gold, secured their loyalty, but they did not absorb them culturally. Instead, they were the ones who were absorbed. Sinor (1981, pp. 233-234) has suggested that the Germanic groups did not lose their identity, because the Huns lacked a bureaucratic system that could directly interfere with the daily lives. The ratio of the Goths subjected to *Hunnia*, was so in favor of the Goths, that even the Gothic language was the *lingua franca* in the Hunnic Empire and many Hunnic names, not least Attila or Bleda, had Germanic features.[162] The Hunnic Empire, therefore, was all about economic profit and not conquering. In the joint reigns of the brothers and later Attila's alone, their greatest source of gold was Constantinople which they attacked any time the imperial armies were sent elsewhere and Thrace had been left undefended.

Hunnia lacked the necessary bureaucratic system to be considered a state and a real empire, but in terms of its size it was huge. At the apogee of Attila, it was stretching from Scythia to the Scandinavian islands. A contemporary, Nestorius, in a rather dark tone, beautifully captures how out of independent warbands an empire was born:

> "The people of the Scythians were great and many, and formerly were divided into people and into kingdoms and were treated as robbers. They used not to do much wrong except through rapidity and through speed. Yet, later they were established in a kingdom, they grew very strong, so that they surpassed in their greatness all the forces of the Romans." (Nest. *Heracl.* 366)

[162] Heather, 2006, pp. 207-208

This does not necessarily mean that Attila ruled all parts of *Hunnia* directly though. As Hodgkin (1892, p. 43) has long pointed out, the Great Hungarian Plain, that is the modern Hungary and Transylvania, seems to have remained the extent of his direct authority. Elsewhere, he had to rely on local kings whose allegiance depended on the gold they would have been given. However, in some instances, Attila seems to have secured some parts of his empire by sending his relatives to manage them. In a way, it can be argued that he was assigning "fiefs" (Kim, 2013, p. 56).[163] When the Akatziri[164] to the north of the Black Sea revolted in 445 after a debacle in Eastern Roman foreign policy. Attila sent his son Ellac to oversee them after quelling their rebellion. According to Kim, this was an unknown custom among the Germanic peoples at that time and its roots may be followed back to the Xiongnu and other steppe empires (Kim, 2013, p. 56). All the same, Attila managed to bring almost the whole of *barbaricum* under his hegemony and presented the only alternative to its inhabitants on the other side of the Rhine and the Danube.

The treaty of the Margus having been signed, the Huns, that is Bleda and Attila seem to have concentrated on subjugating other peoples in Scythia, one of them being Sorosgi (Prisc., *fr*. 1), for the Romans did not record anything else regarding the Hunnic activity between the years 435-440, aside from the destruction of the Burgundian kingdom by the Huns. Bleda and Attila must have signed an alliance with Aetius, just like their uncle Rua, as soon as just after the latter's death, for we are still able to find Huns serving the Romans as late as 439 (Kelly, 2014, p. 198). But that date, as has been noted above, was the last the West Romans received aid from the Huns. The brothers were still not openly hostile to Ravenna, but apparently, Litorius's defeat at the hands of the Goths had given them an excuse to terminate their deal with Aetius. Soon, the Hun-driven currents of the Danube would flow in the direction of Constantinople.

3.3.3. The Hunnic Raids of 441 and 447

As Hodkgin has already noted in the 19th century, Ravenna and Constantinople were "so closely united, as well by the bonds of relationship as by the overwhelming sense of their

[163] Lat. *feudum*. The term came to define lands that were worked by peasents and ruled by lords in the Middle Ages. If we are to subscribe to Kim's theory, then the practice was already existed among the Huns and through them, Western Europe acquired its one of the most known traits of the Medieval times.
[164] The meaning of the word is *forest people* in old Turkic (Kim, 2013, p. 256, n. 47).

common danger" that in 441, Theodosius II sent the Eastern imperial army to recover Carthage. The navy and the soldiers were anxiously waiting to hear the trumpets signaling the attack, while the Sicilians had already begun to feel the burden of quartering the huge army. At that moment, Theodosius II ordered them to return Constantinople as quickly as they could. The fate of Carthage had suddenly become of secondary importance. What was the reason to end such an endeavor prematurely? The answer lays in the Danube frontier. In 441, the Huns led by Bleda and Attila crossed the Danube started a grand raid in the Eastern Roman lands (Marc. Com. s.a. 441). When the Romans demanded their reason for breaking the peace, the Huns pointed out to a certain bishop of the city of Margus, whom they blamed for stealing valuables from the royal tombs belonging to the Huns (Prisc., *fr*. 2) and the continuous existence of fugitives found in the Roman lands. Therefore, according to their version of events, it was the Romans who had broken the peace.

The first target of the Huns was the post of Constantia, a fortress on the other side of the Margus. From there, they rode through the Morava Valley and reached Naissus (Niš). The city was thoroughly sacked and the same fate befell to Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica),[165] Singidunum (Belgrade), Viminacium (Kostolac), Ratiaria (Archar) and Serdica (Sofia), the city only 500 km away from Constantinople, equaling roughly to a 13 days march (Marc. Com. s.a. 441; Prisc. *Exc*. 2). The Eastern mobile army returned and met the Hunnic brothers at Chersonese, but was defeated (Prisc., *fr*. 3, 5). The road to Constantinople was now open, but since the Huns lacked the required siege equipment to overcome the great walls, they did not attempt anything. Meanwhile, a group of Huns carrying spoils back to the Great Hungarian Plain were ambushed by the militia of the city of Asemus (Osma) and defeated by them. They did not only recover the valuables, but were also able to take some of the Huns captive.[166] However, such a surprising yet small victory could not have any negative impact on the Huns. The peace treaty came in 443 and with heavier conditions than the one before. According to the treaty of Anatolius, the Romans were again expected to return all fugitives and receive none in the future.

[165] The city of Sirmium was the centre of the Illyrian prefecture and thus the most important city in Pannonia Secunda (Gračanin, 2006, p. 62). Subsequently, its role was transferred to Thessalonica (ibid. p. 62; Bury, 1958, p. 276).

[166] Lindner suggests, that the victory won by a little band of fortress infantry over a group of Huns is a proof demonstrating that the Huns were no longer mounted warriors (Lindner, 1981, pp. 9-10). Otherwise, it seems, poor militia had no chance against the fearsome mobile warrior of the steppes.

They were from now on to pay 12 *solidi* instead of 8 if they wanted the release of Romans. The annual tribute the Huns were expected to be paid was increased to 2,100 pound of gold. But probably as Bayless suggests (1976, pp. 176-179) most astonishingly, Attila ordered the immediate payment of 6,000 pounds of gold as a punishment. Constantinople had no other options and ratified the treaty. The Eastern Romans had not only suffered these heavy conditions, but also had to accept that they had lost the control of Pannonia Secunda with its major city Sirmium.

Interestingly, the inhabitants of Asemus refused to surrender their Hunnic captives. Upon this, Scottas, the envoy of Attila arrived in Constantinople and demanded the immediate released their warriors, threatening a continuation of the hostilities. When Theodosius II informed the inhabitants about the situation, they replied that they had already executed all the prisoners save two and they would only exchange them in return for their missing children. Attila had allegedly the missing children searched for everywhere, but they were not found. Regardless, the two Huns were later released (Prisc., *fr*. 9.3).

The Huns once again truly demonstrated that they knew how to take advantage of the absence of the imperial army. The raid of 422 and that of 441 took a quick start as soon as the main Roman army was away. This seems to have been the main strategy of the Huns throughout their existence in Europe. No one could blame them for refusing to give open battle against the Romans, as the Romans excelled at defeating their enemies thanks to their discipline and tactical superiority.

Undoubtedly aroused by the victory he won over the emperor Theodosius II, Attila moved against his brother Bleda, and had him killed in 445-6 (Marc. Com. s.a. 445; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 446; Prosp. s.a. 444). It is highly likely that he acted out of lust for undisputed power (Wolfram, 1997, p. 128). All the same, by removing Bleda out of the picture, he also came to lead former subjects of Bleda and thus further increased his power (Prosp. s.a. 444). From that date on, he was the sole ruler of the Huns until his death.

Meanwhile, Attila, as he knew that Constantinople preferred diplomacy to war, was sending continued embassies to Constantinople and had them complain about the

fugitives the Romans continued to harbor.[167] As Hodgkin (1892, p. 54) has long before perceived, these were sent solely for the purpose of making his embassies to be showered with Roman gold, as it was the Roman custom to gift valuables to foreign envoys. Shortly after this in 447, Attila crossed the Danube and commenced plundering south of the river (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 447; Marc. Com. s.a. 447; Jord. *Rom*. 331). This time, he did not offer a pretext for his attack either. Instead, he seems to have based the timing of his campaign on a recent earthquake that shook Constantinople. In 445, the city was first struck by a plague and this was followed by a great famine in the following year (Marc. Com. s.a. 445, 446). In 447, eventually an earthquake hit the imperial city, leading to the collapse of some parts of the Theodosian Walls. In 441, those walls had forced the Huns to withdraw, but this time the Huns thought that they could enter the city through the newly formed gaps. In the meantime, in order to oppose the Huns, the imperial army was divided into three arms to cover all approaches to Constantinople, while the citizens of the city were busy repairing the walls. After only three months, under the supervision of the *praefectus praetorio*[168] Constantinus, the walls were repaired (Marc. Com. s.a. 447) and the Huns once again found themselves on the retreat. On their way back home, a Roman army led by Arnegisclus blocked them near the Utus River (in Bulgaria) and a battle took place that ultimately ended with victory for the Huns, albeit only after suffering heavy losses (ibid.). Still, the Hunnic campaign should be considered successful as they were also able to sack many cities,[169] reaching as far as Thermoplylae (ibid.) and Callipolis (Gelibolu). The destruction in Thrace was reported to have been so great, Callistinus claimed that repopulating the region was impossible (*Callin., V. Hyp*. 52.3-9).

Whereas Wolfram claims the battle near the Utus River earned Attila his greatest victory over the Romans, Thompson draws attention to the fact that that it was the last (Thompson, 1996, p. 101; Wolfram, 1997, p. 129). In either case, it revealed that if the Huns accept the offer of a pitched battle against the Romans, the best they could achieve was a pyrrhic victory. Attila had gambled and thought that he could sack Constantinople

[167] For the discussion of these embassies see Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 185; Thompson, 1996, pp. 95-97; Goldsworthy, 2009, p. 323.
[168] The praetorian prefect.
[169] Gallic Chronicle claims as many as 70 cities (Chron Gall. s.a. 447)

before the repairs were complete, but the citizens of the city proved him very wrong.[170] However, Attila was also far from being defeated. Two sides again commenced negotiations to reach a settlement and the Huns amplified the conditions of peace. In this second peace of Anatolius of 448, Attila, now at his apogee, demanded the evacuation of a broad strip of land calculated with a 5-days journey to the south of the Danube (Prisc., *Exc*. 7.2-4) This was roughly the equivalent of 500 km in width and 160 km in depth. What Attila was doing, was creating a buffer zone between himself and the Romans to prevent any Roman assault on his base (Thompson, 1996, pp. 101-102; Williams & Friell, 1999, p. 80).

Furthermore, Theodosius II was once again was forced to pay an annual sum of 2,100 pounds of gold.[171] Priscus (*fr*. 9. 3.22-33) famously noted that this treaty emptied the treasury of the Eastern Empire and led to suicides among senators. The gravity of this subsidy has been a subject of debate ever since. Kelly (Kelly, 2009, p. 126) argues that this tribute constituted only %3 of the annual revenues and has pointed out that at least some of the money given to the Huns eventually returned to the Romans by means of trade. According to Kim's analysis (2013, p. 72), taking Thompson' figure of 270,000 pounds of gold in annual revenues, he calculates that 45,000 of the total figure would have to be spent for the expenditures of the army and then arrives at the conclusion that 2,100 pounds of gold should have not affected the government that seriously. Wolfram (1997, p. 129) draws attention to the fact that even at his apogee, Attila's worth was no more than 2,100 pounds of gold, a mere figure, that was only a hundred pounds more than the Eastern emperor Leo would give to Theoderic in 473. Wickham (2007, p. 33), on the other hand, asserts that when other expenditures such as entertainment of foreign embassies, subsidies given to other peoples, levying new recruits and the restoration of fortresses and walls are added to the total, the money for Attila might really have pushed some senators to the edge as Priscus claims, especially if we consider that middle ranked senators usually earned 1,000-1,500 pounds of gold per annum. Lastly, Lenski (2014, pp. 237-238) is firmly of the opinion that, when that figure is contrasted with the entire

[170] Turkish historian Ahmetbeyoğlu erroneously claims in his recen work *Avrupa Hunları* (European Huns) that Attila was able to siege Constantinople (Ahmetbeyoğlu, 2013, p. 144). He also goes as far as to assert that the emperor Honorius was dethroned by Alaric (ibid. p. 77).

[171] 151, 200 *solidi*, since one pound was the equivalent of 72 *solidi*. To perceive the worth of *solidi*, Nessena documents dating to the 6th century notes that 1 *solidus* could buy you a donkey, 2 *solidi* a colt, 3 *solidi* a slave girl, 5 *solidi* a camel and 6 *solidi* a slave boy.

revenue of the Africa diocese, which was calculated to be 6,700 pounds of gold, the proposition that Attila hit the Eastern Roman treasury hard, is not far fetched. All the same, what the Eastern Roman Empire seems to have lost was rather its prestige, rather than its money, for the tributes given to Attila led to no halt in tax exemptions (Jones, 1964, p. 207). Furthermore, at the turn of the century the emperor Anastasius was able to leave behind a sizeable budget as his legacy at the time of his death (Treadgold, 2001, p. 57).

3.3.4. Peace on the Danube, Distress on the Rhine

After Bleda and Attila ceased feeding Aetius with Hunnic warriors, Aetius must have given thought to the possibility of a potential Hunnic grand raid in the West, similar to those of 441 and 447, especially as a new peace treaty was signed with the Huns and Eastern Romans. Theodosius II was able to buy the peace in 448, but not until 450 did the conditions of the treaty take effect, for in 449 the Romans still seemed not to have emptied the area south of the Danube as the treaty required.[172]

Maenchen-Helfen (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 102) argues that there were even some hostilities between the Western Romans and the Huns sometime between the years 437-446 basing his evidence on his analysis of the second panegyric written by Merobaudes. According to him, Merobaudes' phrase of "Caucasus granted leisure to the sword" refers to a battle, however small scaled, between the two sides. He further strengthens his thesis by pointing out two *novellae* (novels) of Valentinian III. In the first *novella* dated to July 14, 444 (*NVal*. 6.3), the emperor states that he was aware of the burden that fell on *vir illustres* (illustrious men) who were inactive and were forced to pay money for 3 recruits each, whereas counts of the imperial consistory, tribunes, imperial secretaries, governors of administrative officers in provinces were expected to pay for 1 recruit each on the grounds of securing the safety of the commonwealth.[173] The second *novella* is dated to a sometime between September 11, 444 and January 18, 445 (*NVal*. 15) and it introduced a new tax called the *siliquaticum*, which imposed a payment of one twenty-fourth on all

[172] In 449, Edeco, one of Attila's most trusted men, was sent to Constantinople in order to see the conditions of the treaty fulfilled (Thompson, 1996, p. 109).
[173] Africans were exempted from paying anything due to the effects of the Vandalic invasion.

sales of goods. According to the German historian, there cannot be other explanation for the enactment of these laws other than they refer to a preparation of war with the Huns. I am inclined to believe that two *novellae* do not necessarily hint at the same conclusion that Maenchen-Helfen made, for in July of 444, Valentinian III had to accept that the treasury was empty and (*NVal*. 6.3.1) therefore it was only natural to demand further monetary contributions from once exempted men and introduce new taxes. True, there must have been fear of hostilities with the Huns since the cessation of Hunnic *foederati* after 439, but the Western Romans had already other problems within their borders and the two aforementioned novellae should not be interpreted as if they were promulgated solely on the possibility of the Hunnic threat.

All the same, the tensions between Ravenna and Attila appear to have been relatively strained by the end of the 440s. Priscus relates the story of a *notarius* (secretary) in Attila's court, a Roman named Constantius sent by Aetius, and how he was crucified[174] by his master on the grounds of treachery after he had found out that some bowls were entrusted to Constantius by the bishop of the city of Sirmium during the city's siege by the Huns in 441 only to be used to ransom Roman prisoners and how Constantius instead later pawned them in Rome (Prisc., *fr*. 8). To discuss the matter, the *comes* Romulus, the *praefectus* of Noricus Promotus and a military commander Romanus were sent to Attila's headquarters in 449 (ibid),[175] as the latter threatened war unless his demands were met which was either the return of his valuables or the surrender of Silvanus, to whom Constantius had sold the bowls. In the meantime, the Western Romans probably realized how different the Huns in front of their eyes were to those Huns described by Ammianus, when they arrived at Attila's camp. They had baths, taste in food, wine, beer, jewelry and residences with boards and fences for aesthetical purposes (Prisc., *fr*. 8), just like any other sedentaries (Lindner, 1981, p. 10). Regardless, the Romans informed the Hunnic king regarding the refusal both of his demands; the valuables, by saying that they were not stolen properties, but instead items for religious purposes and Silvanus, by declaring that he had done nothing which conflicted with the law of business. Priscus does not tell how the story

[174] Our *terminus ante quem* for this event is 445.
[175] The exact location of his camp is unknown and the fact that Huns lived scattered does not help the issue. It was probably somewhere between the Danube, the Tisza and the Carpathian Mountians. For an attempt see Browning, 1953, pp. 143-145.

ended, but it is highly likely that Attila was compensated for his loss (Várady, 1969, p. 139). After all, the West could not risk a war caused by trivial matters such as these.

Truly, Romulus' remark (Prisc., *fr*. 3) that Attila was not content with his dominion stretching from Scythia to the Ocean, although he had pacified the (Eastern) Romans, is intriguing. Apparently, he also intended to attack the Sassanids in Persia.[176] Kelly (Kelly, 2009, p. 192) suggests a very attractive argument that this idea might have been instilled in him by Aetius himself. Apparently, he would attack them by taking the road the Huns had taken in 395 through the Caucasus and after subduing the traditional enemy of Rome, he would see himself equal to Roman emperors. Constantiolus, one of the participants in this conversation, added how the discovery of the lost sword of god of war gave him divine powers (Jord., *Get*. 183) and thanks to his comment we are able to see from what perspective Attila was viewed in the eyes of the contemporaries.

There were also other probabilities that laid outside of direct Roman interference. Jordanes (Jord., *Get*. 184), in fact, reports that Geiseric was the main reason that stirred up Attila against the West.[177] The Vandal king, according to the historian, had been bestowing gift after gift upon Attila to incite him to move against Theoderic, whom he feared, since he expected him to avenge himself for what had been done to his daughter.[178] The fact that their alliance was broken would have a great impact on the balance of battle agains the Huns in 451, for the Goths would choose to support the Romans. Nevertheless, it seems that Geiseric was only a passive spectator of the events unfolding to his north and did not actually stir up Attila, although he would hate to see a Romano-Gothic alliance (Clover, 1973, pp. 104-117).

Furthermore, Honoria, the sister of Valentinian III, was accused of adultery in 449, when she was caught with a man named Eugenius, the manager of her estates (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 199). Börm claims that Aetius might have had a finger in the expose of the affair, as he

[176] According Bormann (F. Bormann, Osservazioni sul testo dei framenti di Prisco, Maia 26, 1974, pp. 114-5 and Brodka (2008 p230, 244), Priscus likened here Attila to Xerxes of Herodotus, in whose work the latter is desirous of world domination.

[177] Altheim, 1959, p. 313; Diesner, 1964, p. 193; Täckholm, 1969, pp. 259-276; Thompson, 1948, pp. 131, 207 are firmly of the opinion that Geiseric had the role of an instigator. For opponents of this view see Bierbach, 1906, pp. 19-20; Courtois, 1955, p. 198, n. 2.

[178] Wolfram suggests that Geiseric might have feared a potential alliance between the Goths and Suebi (Wolfram, 1997, pp. 136-137). But we see him inactive both when Attila arrived in Gaul and later attacked Italy, which supports the idea that there was no Hunnic-Vandalic alliance. Hughes (2012, p. 252) asserts that the Vandals were enjoying their status quo with the Romans and they had no reason to incite Attila to move against the West to cause a disturbance.

might have seen Eugenius a potential contender to his power (Börm, 2013, p. 103). Afterwards, she was expelled from the palace,[179] put under surveillance, and then was betrothed to Herculanus, a wealthy senator. (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 199). At some point, she sent a letter to Attila through a eunuch named Hyacinthus, who also carried a ring of Honoria to prove the authenticity of the letter. (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 199; Jord., *Get*. 224) The letter was a cry for help that asked of him to avenge herself for the injustice she was exposed to and thus presented the Hunnic king with yet another excuse to bring war on the Western Empire. What followed constituted one of the most bizarre correspondences in late antiquity. As soon as the letter and ring arrived at Attila's court, he regarded her as his wife and sent two embassies to Ravenna, first in 450 and then in 451 to receive her in marriage and half of the West as his dowry (Prisc., *fr*. 17, 20.3, 22.1; Oost, 1968, pp. 282-285). When the Romans replied that no such marriage could ever take place, for Honoria had already been married to another man (Prisc., *fr*. 15) Attila's second embassy in January-February 451 advised Valentinian III to prepare the palace for Attila's arrival.

Bury (1919, p. 11) convincingly argues that Honoria's intention was not a marriage with the barbarian lord, but to use him as a step to rise in power, to become a dominant *augusta* in Ravenna just like her mother Galla Placidia had once been, or even to oust her brother Valentinian III from the empire. Indeed, it seems within the realm of possibilities that Honoria aimed at ultimate power and only after she had lost Eugenius, had to return to Attila to use him as her pawn. She obviously underestimated the threat Attila might pose and thought she could control him. After all, her mother also had been married to a barbarian and then accumulated so much influence that she came to play an influential role in Western Roman politics until the 430s. Attila, on the other hand, no doubt was only superficially interested in Honoria's welfare. Honoria was important to him so long as she supplied the king with an excuse to interfere in Roman politics.

In the meantime, Theodosius II had died in Constantinople and was replaced by a warlike emperor, Marcian (Marc. Com. s.a. 450; Prosp. s.a. 450; *Chron Gall*. s.a. 450; Hyd. s.a. 451) who offered Attila iron, instead of gold. As one of his first acts, Marcian ceased to pay tributes to Attila upon which the Hun sent an embassy to demand the immediate

[179] She was not, as Marcellinus Comes says, banished to Constantinople (PLRE 2, p. 568 (Iusta Grata honoria); Bury, 1919, pp. 1-13).

continuation of the payments (Prisc. *fr*. 17). Attila no doubt gave a thought to renewal of hostilities with Constantinople, but once the profits of such a campaign in east had been calculated, he must have seen that there was not much left to plunder in the Balkans after the exhaustive Hunnic campaigns of the previous years. Furthermore, the road into Constantinople and beyond had proved itself impenetrable. When these facts were combined with Marcian's martial stance, Attila probably decided that another campaign against Constantinople was not worth either his time or his resources.

While Attila had yet to reach a clear decision on where to attack next, a succession crisis came about in the aftermath of the death of Chlodio, the Frankish king, in 450. Apparently he had two sons, and the younger son, who might have been Meroveus (415-458),[180] had had been adopted by Aetius when he was a beardless youth with flowing hair and was promised Roman support when he was in Rome (Prisc., *fr*. 16; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7). When the king died, he claimed the kingship with Roman backing, whereas the elder son sought Hunnic help to oust his little brother (Prisc., *fr*. 20.3), upon which Attila gathered his polyglot army and marched into Gaul. Through his campaign in the west, Kim (Kim, 2015, p. 138) argues, he both planned to subject the Franks to himself and to destroy Aetius' army before undertaking an assault aimed at Italy itself. No doubt, to meet an understrength Western Roman army than a formidable Eastern Roman army at full-strength also helped him to make up his mind (Kelly, 2014, p. 201). According to Gibbon (1993, p. 437), this succession crisis was the justification of his march into Gaul. Kim asserts that, in a manner alluding to Heather's pure conquest ideology[181] of the Hun, Attila's intention of campaigning in Gaul had the aim of exacting tribute from Ravenna and not conquering its lands, for if he had solely aimed at conquest, he would have already put this into practice in his 447 Balkan campaign, during which he had captured many cities (Kelly, 2009, p. 79). Instead, he had chosen to make a vassal out of Constantinople by exacting annual tributes, just like the Xiongnu had done to the Han Chinese. Indeed, what the Hunnic Empire needed was not land, but gold. After all, as has been said above, Attila's subject nations were following him for the spoils of war the Hun promised to them, not for land to settle in. Since Attila wanted to subjugate and control all the groups

[180] Also spelled as Merovech, the legendary founder of the Merovingian dynasty (457-752).
[181] Heather (2006) lists the affair of Silvanus, Geiseric's letter, the Honoria affair and the crisis of the Frankish succession altogether as possible excuses, but asserts as his primary thesis that Attila was driven by pure conquest.

of peoples in *barbaricum* and he could only achieve this as long as he fed them with gold, the plea of the ousted Frankish brother presented him the perfect chance to refill the coffers of the Hunnic treasury.

The Western Empire, moreover, was not only geographically much more suitable for an aggressive campaign for Attila, but there was also the fact that the riches of Gaul were still unspoiled. For various barbarian groups inhabiting Gaul there should have been no plausible reason to join the Romans in its defense instead of siding with Attila with whom they could share its spoils. Therefore, the conditions for a campaign in west could not have been any more fitting. It was time for the Hunnic superstate to march into Gaul.

CHAPTER 4

THE WHOLE NORTH INTO GAUL

In his panegyric dedicated to the emperor Avitus, Sidonius Apollinaris says "Burst with a sudden uproar, the whole barbarian north poured into Gaul" (*Carm*. 7.319-321). However, there was nothing sudden about Attila's attack. The signs had been there, especially since 450[182] for those whose ears had no problem in hearing. The Hunnic king had now personally come to enforce his demands. It was not like he did not try to come to terms with the Romans, however insincere he was. Just before he set out for the campaign, in order to disrupt any alliance between the Romans and the Goths, he had sent a letter filled with flattering words to the capital, informing the court that he intended to march with his army into Gaul only to pacify the Gothic king Theoderic and not to wage war against the Romans (Jord., *Get*. 185; Prosp. s.a. 451). After all, he was an official Roman commander and there would be nothing extraordinary about him aiming to fight Rome's enemies. He also had sent a similar letter to the Goths and urged them to fight their old enemies Romans on his side (Jord., *Get*. 186).[183]

Attila probably had already left his headquarters for Gaul with his army when his letters reached their recipients. Jordanes numbers his army at 500,000, however, this is nothing but a mythical figure in order to overrate the Goths' success that he handles later in his narrative. Even when the emperor Julian had set out for his Persian campaign in 363, he led an army of 95,000 against the Sassanid Empire (Dupuy & Dupuy, 1993, p. 168). The only healthy figure regarding barbarian numbers in late antiquity comes from Victor of Vita's figure of 80,000 Vandal followers, their families included, who were about to cross into Africa in 429. As has been noted, at best, only 15-20,000 of that figure were probably warriors. Attila had various groups of followers, but as far as we know none brought their relatives with them; they were going to war (or rather, to raid); they were not migrating from one place to another. Therefore, in the light of no other source giving any numbers, we can only conjecture and guesstimate a force numbering 20-40,000.

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[182] After Attila had done with his campaign in 447 and received what he wanted from Constantinople, there was no reason for him to keep relations with the west at friendly terms (Gracanin, p. 51, n. 86).

[183] Jordanes (*Get*. 185) and the author of the 6th century eastern Roman military treatise Strategikon (11.2) both seem to share the same sentiment when assigning Attila and other steppe peoples the same qualities such as that they prefer defeating their enemies by trickery rather than strength.

What we know about Attila's army for certain was that it was heterogeneous.[184] Jordanes lists the Ostrogoths[185] and the Gepids as his primary allies and gives others subject nations' leaders no importance whatsoever (Jord., *Get*. 198, 199, 200). Sidonius, on the other hand, supplies us with more names (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.319-315) such as the Rugians, the Burgundians, the Scirians, the Gelonians, the Bellonotians, the Neurians, the Bastarnians, the Thuringians, the Bructerans and the Franks. While the Ostrogoths were led by Valamir, Theodemir, Videmir and the Gepids were under the command of their king Ardaric (Jord., *Get*. 199). The Rugians, the Scirians and the Thuringians were eastern Germanic peoples answering to Attila, whereas the Franks were led by the unnamed elder brother, who sought Attila's aid in the first place and it seems that he had managed to remove his younger brother from power, as otherwise pro-Roman Franks on Aetius' side would have been unable to meet their kinsman on the battlefield few months later. The Burgundians must have been the remaining survivors of the Burgundian kingdom east of the Rhine that fell to the Huns at the end of the 430s. The Gelonians, the Bellonotians, the Bastarnians and the Bructerans were Sidonius' way of spicing up his narrative, for these names had disappeared centuries ago (Thompson, 1996, p. 149).

To further strengthen his side, Attila also seems to have tried to urge the Alan king Sangiban, who had succeded Goar in 451, to join his side, but he failed to do so (Jord., *Get*. 194). The Bagaudae leader Eudoxius had fled to Attila in 448 (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 448) and it is possible that he promised the aid of his followers once the Hunnic army arrived in Gaul, even though the Bagaudae were known to have excelled at rebelling, rather than at open pitched battles. Although not noted by any sources, Attila might also have had warriors from the Alamanni, the Lombards, the Alans, the Heruli and the Suebi, for they were also under Hunnic dominance (Heather, 2010, p. 221).

When this polyglot Hunnic army crossed the Rhine with rafts built from the woods of the ancient Hercynian forest[186] (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.321-356) the Huns themselves were the

[184] The author of Strategikon also draws attention to the polyglot nature of steppe armies and says this could be used against them since they would lack *ésprit de corps*.
[185] The usage of Visigoths and Ostrogoths did not come into use before the end of the 5th century. Sidonius Apollinaris is known to have occasionaly used the term "Vesi" to refer to the Goths in Gaul (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.431). The term "Ostrogotha", on the other hand, seems to have been popular among the Italian Goths of the 6th century (Halsall, 2007, p. 258, n. 4).
[186] About which it is known that the Black Forest situated to its west.

minority in the grand army that they were leading (Sinor, 1990, p. 193). In fact, as Kim (2013, p. 74) draws attention, except for Attila and his inner circle, his army and commanders had dominantly the visage of a Caucasoid race. Furthermore, the fact that the Huns – besides the Ostrogoths, the Franks, the Alamanni and others who were in contact with Rome in some way or another) had been frequently raiding the Roman Balkans since the beginning of the century and this no doubt created a resemblance to the Roman army in terms of armor and weapons. A mounted Hunnic warrior equipped with a Roman ridge helmet or a noble (*optimas*) Ostrogoth fighting with a Roman sword (*spatha*) must have been ordinary scenes of battlefields in late antiquity. After all, it is known that barbarians made good use of Roman arms and armors (Oros. 7.34.5; Soz. 7.26.8) and Ammianus (18.2.17) notes that barbarians were not only amazed by the urban life of the Romans, but also by their martial life. All the same, the Hunnic army was now largely a Germanic army led by Attila which would have fought in Germanic fashion. This means that Attila's army was infantry based and mainly armed with shields and spears. Years of living under the Hunnic military dominance might have affected the popularity of bow among the Germanic foot archers to some extent, but this should not be overestimated. They would have also used javelins and throwing axes (*franciscae*) as throwing weapons (Elton, 1996, p. 57). Some of the Huns, whom Ammianus (31.2) brands as incapable of walking, would also have fought as light infantry when the condition in the battlefield required (Procop., *Goth.* 6.1.9-10).

The famous Hunnic cavalry on the other hand, would have maintained much of their steppe skills such as the Parthian shot[187] and their loose formation, although it is very doubtful whether they participated in the campaign in substantial numbers.[188] The reason that there is not a single mention of the famous feigned retreats of the Hunnic cavalry or the rain of Hunnic arrows blackening the sky in Jordanes, who would have loved to include them to further dramatize his narrative, is simple. Their numbers and actual contribution to the battle, when contrasted to that of the Germanic infantry, was so insignificant, that he did not see them worthy to put in his narrative, although he was

[187] Shooting at pursuing enemies while retreating at full gallop.
[188] The Great Hungarian Plains could feed 150,000 horses which in turn equaled to 15,000 mounted warriors (Lindner, 1981, pp. 3-19). Since Attila could not have possibly brought every single mounted soldier with himself into Gaul, lest he might jeopardize the security of his home region, their role on the battlefield was probably limited to support due to their low numbers.

writing in the 6th century, at a time when Justinian's armies were being supported by mounted archers.[189] Morover, the middle of Summer was not preferable for mounted nomads, as it would be a period in which forage was already yellowed (Lindner, 1981, p. 11; Sinor, 1977a, p. 182). The battle of the Catalaunian Plains was first and foremost an infantry battle.

On the Roman side, as soon as Aetius had received the news of Attila's approach, he left Italy with a small band of auxiliaries without being accompanied by legionaries (Sid. Apol., *Carm.* 7.328-331). It is highly likely that he had set out with a barbarian *foederati* and had to leave regular Roman soldiers in guarding of Italy. Regardless, he was no doubt escorted by his *bucellarii*, the troops under his direct pay and presumably mostly of Hunnic origin. One regular Roman unit we can name that was under his command seems to be the *Placidi Valentinianici felices,*[190] an elite unit that was formed in ca. 420 or sometime later. The state of the Gallic field army at this moment is not known, but we can guess that it was not at full-strength, given its frequent campaign activity in the previous decades and Aetius' increasing reliance on the barbarian federates. Unfortunately there is no way to fully reconstruct the Roman army at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains and we must settle for conjectures.

Nevertheless, Aetius' foresight had successfully earned him other allies. Jordanes' (Jord., *Get*. 191) list of auxiliaries includes the younger king of the Franks, who apparently had been forced to leave his kingdom before Attila's arrival; Sangiban and his Alans, whom Jordanes wrongly names as the Sarmatians; the Aremoricans, who were possibly composed of both the Bagaudae of the region and the remnants of the British field army (Scharf, 1999, pp. 1-11); the Burgundians in Gaul; the Saxon *foederati* north of the Loire and the Liticans and Olibriones about whom we know nothing.

[189] For instance, Belisarius' both wings at the battle of Dara in 530 against the Persians were consisted of Hunnic cavalry and later at the battle of Ad Decimum the Hunnic mounted archers successfully routed the Vandals (Procop., *Vand*. 3.18.18-20). Moreover, Belisarius' victory over the Ostrogoths was also praised for his use of mounted archers by Procopius (*Goth*. 5.27, 26-8).

[190] *Placidi Valentinianici felices* is otherwise unknown. Jones suggested that it was raised by Valentinian III in ca. 420 AD or later, and so not yet entered in the appropriate place in this list, or indeed entered at all in the list of units under his nominal command. However, it seems to me more likely they were simply recently transfered to the Italian command. (Late Roman Shield Patterns: Intra Italiam cum viri illustris magistri peditum. (2015, 16 December). Retrieved from http://lukeuedasarson.com/MagisterItalia.html).

There was another very important group of people in Gaul: the Visigoths[191] and their king Theoderic. The side Theoderic would choose was so important that, it would have a direct impact on the future of the whole of Gaul. Aetius, knowing that this was the case and losing Gaul would have eventually meant losing the support of his aristocratic backers, for whose possession he had fought so hard to protect in the 430s and the 440s, immediately acted. He summoned Avitus, the man who had negotiated the peace treaty with the Visigoths in 439 (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.297-311; Hyd. s.a. 439; Prosp. s.a. 439) and sent him to Toulouse to persuade Theoderic to take the Romans' side for the coming conflict. His influence must have been so high among the Visigoths, that Theoderic accepted his offer (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.318-20; 346-52; 547-9; Prosp. s.a. 451)[192] and marched from his base, accompanied by his son Thorismund and Theodericus II. (Jord., *Get*. 190) to join Aetius's army that was dominated by federates (Liebeschuetz, 1993, p. 272).

The real reason for Theoderic's contribution to the Roman cause, nevertheless, must be searched for elsewhere rather than in the rhetoric of contemporary writers. The Visigoths were at the time seemingly the most ambitious of the barbarians as they had been settled in Gaul with imperial consent. Attila's arrival and a potential Hunnic victory would have meant losing their advantage. Therefore, the Visigoths, were actually about to fight for themselves and their future in Gaul, not for Aetius or the Roman Empire. The same can be applied to the Bagaudae who presumably feared a gloomy fate under Attila. They were acting independently from the empire, but in the end, they were still Romans. The Alans and the Burgundians had only recently been settled by Aetius in Gaul, but they probably cared little for Rome. The Alan king Sangiban, moreover, was on the verge of handing the city of Aurelianum (Orléans) over to Attila, when he heard of the latter's arrival (Jord., *Get*. 194), if Aetius and Theoderic had not arrived before the Hun and secured the city together with the continuation of Sangiban's loyalty (Jord., *Get*. 195). The Burgundians, likewise, must have been in confusion, although they were now living in Roman lands, for their king and countless warriors had been killed by Aetius and the next year their kingdom would be destroyed by the Huns highly likely with permission from the imperial

[191] From now on, the Goths in Gaul will be referred as the Visigoths, while the Goths under Hunnic dominance as the Ostrogoths.
[192] cf. Jord., *Get*. 187-189

court. All these barbarian groups seem to have agreed to work together and with the Romans, only because they valued the status quo in Gaul. None of them would offer their assistance to the Romans when Attila descended upon Italy the next year.

The two armies, all the same, both heavily composed of Germanic warriors and looking very much the same in regards of arms and armor, commenced their marches. Soon after Attila had crossed the Rhine with boats, he must have split his armies into two columns to cover an extensive area both for raiding and foraging. Alexander the Great's veteran army was only able to carry 10-day supply of food at most when it was cut off from the sea (Engels, 1978), so in the case of Attila, whose army no doubt lacked the same level of logistic expertise, this number must have been much lower. Sooner or later his army had to live off the land. On the other hand, Aetius' army was in a much more advantageous position since it was operating within its own supply lines and the fact that Ferreolus, *praefectus praetorio Galliarum*, proved himself a champion at organizing supplies in Gaul (Sid. Apol., *Ep*. 7.12.3).

Many cities and towns seem to have fallen victim to the Huns (Hyd. s.a. 452), but apart from some major cities, we are unable to name many of them. The Huns had showed themselves more than capable of sacking numerous cities during their eastern campaigns, so what they were dealing with was nothing new to them. In contrast to other barbarian groups, the Huns appear to have been more knowledgeable at besieging cities through the help of Roman deserters and prisoners of war who helped them built engines of war such as battering rams (Whitby, 2001b, p. 709). Apart from scaling ladders, the Huns are known to have used shields to cover their archers and rams, yet their main strategy in capturing cities lay in starving them out (Elton, 1996, p. 83ff). Still, their knowledge of siege technology was not on par with the Romans. During their onslaught in Gaul, some cities must also have opened their doors for promises such as safe passage and some must have resisted, but fell eventually due to hunger.[193] On the other hand, we have plenty of narratives written by local ecclesiastics that deal with cities and towns saved by divine intervention and thanks to those we can name where the Huns attacked, but ultimately

[193] Other barbarians also seem to have suffered from the same problem. Apart from scaling ladders and battering rams, they lacked equipment and expertise. Ammianus tells us that Fritigern of the Goths was at peace with the walls (31.6.4). At the end of the 5th century, Theoderic would have to wait for three months before Ravenna fell into his hands in 493.

they offer not much except for religious rhetoric[194] and perhaps evidence of Hunnic failure at sacking them.

It seems certain that Metz was thoroughly destroyed except the oratory of St. Stephen on the Easter eve (Hyd. s.a. 452; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.6), after which Attila turned his army to besiege Reims, but had to cut it short for unknown reasons. It was definitely not because the head of the bishop of the city rolled down before the Hunnic army and spoke verses from the Bible (Kelly, 2009, p. 208). His chances of a successful campaign were based on speed, so he probably did not want to waste much time with the prolonged siege of Reims. In early June, he continued down to Aurelianum, but, according to the narrative of Jordanes, before he was able to commence its siege, he found the city had already been fortified with mounds. Aetius and Theoderic had arrived there before Attila and both secured the city and Sangiban's allegedly wavering loyalty (Jord., *Get*. 195).[195] Nevertheless, the city seems to have been suffered under a siege, as Sidonius (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.2.328ff; *Ep*. 8.15.1) asserts, whose account is neither pro-Gothic nor pro-Alan, that Aurelianum was about fall due to the delay of the Visigothic army (Bachrach, 1973, p. 66). All the same, Attila was also informed of the approach of Aetius to the city and seems to have lost heart, for the Hunnic trumpets sounded retreat.

4.1. THE LONGEST DAY: THE BATTLE OF THE CATALAUNIAN PLAINS (JUNE 20, 451)

Aetius' army having now been reinforced with Sangiban's Alans, they pursued Attila aggressively[196] until the latter decided to give battle somewhere in between Châlons-en-Champagne and Troyes. The exact location of the battlefield remains unknown, but we are informed on how it is called by the contemporaries. In Jordanes (*Get*. 191–192, 196–

[194] The legends of Servatius, the bishop of Tongeren; Nicasius, the bishop of Reims; St. Genovese of Paris; Lupus, the bishop of Troyes. For the stories see Kelly, 2009, p. 208ff.

[195] Gregory of Tours account of Aurelianum is substantially different (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7). According to him, the inhabitants turn to the bishop of the city, Anianus, for guidance, who recommends them to pray until Aetius' army arrives, whom he visited while *magister militum* was in Arles. Just as the city is about the fall, the Romano-Gothic army is seen on the horizon and Attila retreats. Since Gregory's account is influenced by supernatural elements, Jordanes' narrative should be preferred, although his should still be approached with caution due to its pro-Gothic nature.

[196] In constrast to the defensive nature of the late Roman army, Aetius always seems to have preferred attacking, no doubt a trait he had gained by the time he was a hostage among the Huns.

197) and in Hydatius we come across the name the Catalaunian Plains, whereas, Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franc.* 2.7) and Lex Burgundionum (*Lex Burg*. 17.1) addresses it as the Mauriac Plain. It is safe to say the all these sources point to the same place by using interchangeable names, as Jordanes seems to have done so.[197] In any case, this was a field almost completely flat.

Before the main phase of the battle, on the night of June 19th,[198] Aetius' vanguard composed of the Franks caught up with the rearguard of Attila, the Gepids, and a bloody skirmish took place, in which 15,000 men are said to have lost their lives (Jord., *Get*. 217). In the morning of June 20, Attila is reported to have consulted his soothsayers regarding the fate of the battle he was about to commit himself. The result was in favor of the Romans, yet the soothsayers told the Hun that the winning side would also lose their leader, by which Attila apparently understood Aetius and commenced the battle (Jord., *Get*. 195, 196).[199]

Two armies, thus, met on the battlefield, the Huns taking the east and the Romans the west side of the field (Jord., *Get*. 197; Hughes, 2012, p. 230). It was a terrain mostly dominated by plains, but an uneven ridge was separating the both armies from each other in the middle (Jord., *Get*. 197, 204).[200] It was at about three in the afternoon (Jord., *Get*. 196), so the battle would continue at least seven hours before the darkness sets in. Jordanes claims that Attila specifically chose to signal the attack as late as at three o'clock, so that he could retreat under the cover of darkness, should the tides of the battle turn against him (*Get*. 196). However, it should also be considered that it was summer season and fighting under the midday sun, when it is most parching, while wearing armor would effectively reduce the soldier's ability to fight.[201] Moreover, both armies were highly multilingual which could lead to confusions (Kelly, 2009, p. 198; Kim, 2013, p.

[197] Jord., *Get*. 192: *Convenitur itaque in campos Catalaunicos, qui et Mauriaci nominantur*.
[198] I follow the dating of Bury (Bury, 1958, p. 293). The reader should be aware that there are others who offer various dates such as Hodgkin, 1892 who places the battle in July.
[199] Attila is known to have been superstitious since he decided to give battle after the soothsayers' prediction and the later events in Italy would reveal later.
[200] The battlefield was not, as Gibbon (1993, pp. 443-444) suggests, completely flat with a single hill dominating the field on the right side (cf. Hughes, 2012, p. 229).
[201] The Battle of Adrianople took place on 9 August 378 at about two in the afternoon (Amm. 31.12.11), at a time when soldiers were most vulnerable to exhaustion by heat and thirst.

75) and deploying them and assigning their roles for the coming conflict must have taken considerable amount of time (Hughes, 2012, p. 233).

Attila drew his battle line in such a manner that he placed his strongest units, i.e. himself and his Huns with auxiliaries, in the centre, to inflict the severest damage to the enemy. He gave the command of his left wing to Valamir and the Ostrogoths, and his right to Ardaric and his Gepids (Jord., *Get*. 198, 199). Jordanes claims that the Gepids were innumerable (Jord., *Get*. 199), but it was he himself who had said that the Gepids and Franks fought a serious skirmish before the battle, so the Gepids could not have been at full strength at this part of the conflict. As Hughes posits, Attila's plan probably consisted of thus: after capturing the middle ground on the ridge, his Huns would pin the Aetius' infantry facing him in the centre with the sheer magnitude of their arrows, while his wings would attack and rout the weaker flanks of Aetius' upon which Attila would lead the charge against the immobile Romans and cause the flight of the whole army (Hughes, 2012, p. 231). Apparently, Attila thought he knew the mind of Aetius, but the deployment plan of Aetius would reveal otherwise.

On the other side of the ridge, Aetius deployment was far from that of those traditional Romans. The Romans, would customarily deploy their infantry in the middle and cover their flanks with auxiliaries and cavalry. Aetius, however, was not a traditional Roman. He deployed himself, the remnants of regular Roman army and probably the Franks, the Burgundians,[202] the Saxons, the Aremoricans and other auxiliaries on the left flank of his battle line, while the right flank was given to the command of Theoderic, the Visigothic king, with his son Thorismund to lead the Visigothic cavalry to his father's immediate left. Sangiban's Alans, who were renowned by their lance cavalry and horse archers, were put into the between these two wings, highly likely supported by Aetius' Hunnic *bucellarii*. The supreme commander's drawing of his battle line could not have been any cleverer. He knew the Hunnic tactics by heart; after all it was he who had lived among them and then fought with them on the same side for decades and now he had successfully anticipated Attila's formation which deployed itself on the presumption of meeting the Romans in the centre. Instead, Aetius placed the Alans there, in order to cancel out the

[202] Burgundian contingent might very well have been led by Ricimer, *magister utriusque militiae* Aetius (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5.266-8).

threat of the Hunnic cavalry. It seems that Aetius fully trusted them and did not deploy them between the Romans and the Visigoths to secure their loyalty as Jordanes claims (Jord., *Get*. 197-8; Bachrach, 1973, p. 66) The reason, in fact, was ompletely the opposite, for should the centre of any ancient army break, the wings would be open to piecemeal annihilation. What Jordanes was doing, was underplaying the role of the Alans in the battle, in order to overplay the role of the Visigoths.[203]

Moreover, Aetius was highly likely well read on the military treaties of his era. Although written in the 6th century, as a manual of late antique warfare, Strategikon offers some very interesting suggestions regarding on how to fight steppe peoples such as Avars and Turks whose warfare would have not very differed from that of the Huns (Hughes, 2012, p. 231).[204] It recommends commanders who are about to meet such armies to choose an open terrain for battle, since otherwise enemy could use trees for hiding his fast moving cavalry. It also warns that generals should furnish their army with food and water enough for a few days, for steppe armies are ruled not by love, but through fear, which enables them to endure the harshest conditions a battlefield can offer. Moving to deployment of armies, it advocates that wings should be composed of skillful infantry and advises against rash pursuits, as they are known to be persistent fighters even when cornered (Maur., *Strat*. 11. 2). Indeed, even if Aetius had not read a similar manual, he undeniably did everything according to the book throughout the ensuing chaos of the battle. He had resupplied his men before leaving Aurelianum, forced the enemy by his relentless chase to give battle on a suitable terrain for defense, drew up a line of battle of which flanks covered by competent infantry and as later events would reveal, he was extremely cautious before hastily running after the enemy.

Both sides' lines thus having been drawn in the manner described above, Aetius' army speedily dashed forth to gain the control of the ridge, which was strategically very important and Aetius, the Alans and Thorismund seized the control of it before Attila's

[203] However, even some modern accounts continue to ignore the important role played by the Alans (Tackhölm, 1969, pp. 259-276). Bachrach is one of those who believes that the Alans' major contribution to the battle (1973, p. 66). It cannot be stressed enough how caution is necessary when dealing with Jordanes' Getica. As Elton points out (1992, pp. 173-175) the Visigothic history in the 5th century rarely witnessed Gothic victories, but many defeats at the hands of the Romans and others. Jordanes, therefore, must have been more than determent to *prove* his 6th century contemporaries that the Gothic history was full of glories.

[204] There is no reason to dismiss the possibility that it might have drawn some of its content from earlier treatises, such as Vegetius' *De Re Militari*.

men (Jord., *Get*. 201). Then Attila was forced to make a speech to rouse his followers' hearts to renew attack (Jord., *Get*. 202). In the following lines of Jordanes' account, we read that, incited by their king's speech, the Hunnic army recommenced their attack and a close quarters combat began. As Jordanes asserts, this was a brutal and disordered fight (Jord., *Get*. 207). After all, the ground the clash was taking place was not completely flat; it was an uphill battle for the Huns, for they were trying to capture the heights and hills (Jord., *Get*. 204). One can also suppose that, based on Attila's speech to his man, while defending their positions, Aetius' men took *fulcum* formation, which was a defensive shield wall formation (Jord., *Get*. 204)[205] that rendered the Roman defense much tougher to crack. It would appear that once Aetius gained the possession of the strategically important parts of the ridge, he rationally preferred defense over offense.[206]

However, on the right wing of Aetius, Theoderic's Visigoths were in trouble. Valamir's Ostrogoths seem to have arrived at the ridge before them and in the ensuing battle Theoderic was killed (Jord., *Get*. 209; Hyd. s.a. 452; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7). Nevertheless, the rest of the Hunnic army's struggle for the ridge remained unsuccessful. Thorismund and his Visigoths separated from the Alans and directly attacked Attila who resorted to flee back into his camp (Jord., *Get*. 210). No doubt, seeing Attila's flight, many subjects of Attila lost their will to fight and began to worry about their own safety. It would not be surprising to learn that the Alan cavalry pursued the stragglers and captured many Huns and their subjects to be used and sold as slaves. In the meantime, the battle stopped as the darkness fell (Hyd. s.a 452). But as the turmoil surrounding the battlefield further increased, Aetius and Thorismund became disoriented on the battlefield and almost fell into the hands of the Huns (Jord., *Get*. 211, 212).

On the morning of June 21st, the Romans were still uncertain about the result of the battle,[207] although the Huns had retreated back to their camp (Jord., *Get*. 213). In the end, they decided to surround the Hun's camp to force him into surrender (Jord., *Get*. 214). At that moment, Aetius seems to have ordered to pitch a camp in a close proximity to Attila's, for Jordanes mentions how nearby Roman archers prevented any sally attempt

[205] On *fulcum* see Rance's *The Fulcum, the Late Roman and Byzantine Testudo: the Germanization of Roman Infantry Tactics?* in Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies (44) pp. 265-326.
[206] Parker (1995, p. 64) claims that it was Aetius' this defensive strategy that triumphed over Attila.
[207] Unsurprising, since, besides the carnage on the battlefield, both armies spoke very different languages, a fact, which further complicated things (Kelly, 2009, p. 198; Kim, 2013, p. 75).

that Attila might try (ibid.).[208] The confusion and bloodshed that had dominated the day before was now replaced by curiosity and relative calmness. At that time, the Visigoths began to question their king's whereabouts and discovered his lifeless body. After Thorismund was informed of his father's death, a royal burial under the gazing eyes of the Huns took place and then he consulted Aetius regarding what step he should take next (Jord., *Get*. 214-15). As reported by Jordanes, Aetius, because he feared lest the Visigoths fell on the Western Empire with the Huns momentarily out of the equation, sent Thorismund home to ensure his smooth ascension to the Visigothic throne (Jord., *Get*. 216).[209] A similar view has been put forward by Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franc.* 2.7), according to whom, Aetius warned Thorismund of his brothers' machinations in his absence and advised him to go home. Gregory also adds that Aetius likewise spoke to the Frankish king and sent him back to his kingdom to claim his place and thus became the sole collector of the spoils of the battlefield (ibid.). Attila, meanwhile, is reported to have departed from his camp and set out to his homebase in the Great Hungarian Plain, albeit allegedly with only a few of his men left (Jord., *Get*. 218; Greg. Tur. *Hist. Franc.* 2.7).

4.2. THE OUTCOME AND THE AFTERMATH

It is claimed that the battle was so brutal that the river next to the battlefield overflowed with the blood of the dead (Jord., *Get*. 208). Since we have no exact numbers of the participants, it is not possible to give an exact number regarding the losses on each side. Regardless, ancient and medieval authors offer various figures. While Jordanes strongly asserts that both sides left 165,000 dead on the battlefield (Jord., *Get*. 217), Hydatius, while saying nothing about who won or lost, notes that 300,000 men fell victim in the conflict (Hyd. s.a. 452). On the other hand, while Prosper of Aquitaine, just like Hydatius, naming no victors, he relates that "a mutual massacre that cannot be estimated took place" and emphasizes that "*it is reported* that the Huns were defeated there, because they lost the courage to fight and the survivors returned to their homes" (Prosp. s.a. 451). Writing

[208] cf. Kim (2013, p. 76) who argues that the fact that Jordanes mentions Roman archers firing missiles from within the Roman camp indicates a Roman withdrawal instead of a Hunnic one, since there also are Huns reported to have been outside of their camp. He seems to have forgotten that retreats in battles are rarely done in an orderly fashion and the Huns outside of the Hunnic camp were probably stragglers who could not have retired back to the camp in time.
[209] A theory seems to have been taken at face value by some modern historians such as Kelly (2009, pp. 197-8) and Thompson (1996, pp. 155-6).

in the 7th century, Fredegar offers a figure as high as 200,000 for the slain and claims that Aetius divided Gaul between the Huns and the Goths and in return received 10,000 *solidi* from both sides. He further adds that Aetius and his Frankish allies had chased the Huns until Thuringia. (Fred. 2.53). Lastly, as active participants in the battle, the Burgundians only deem to have seen necessary to record the numbers of the fallen as extreme (*Lex Burg*. 17.1).

All the same, the Huns retreated and the members of the Roman coalition returned to their homes: the Visigoths back to Toulouse, the Alans back to Aurelianum and Aetius back to Italy. To ease the wounds of Gaul that had suffered under the Hunnic incursion, a tax remission was quickly issued (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.12.3; 7.338ff.). Aetius' goal was from the beginning to return to the status quo and by expelling Attila out of Gaul, he managed to do exactly that (Täckholm, 1969, pp. 270-271). Nevertheless, the battle seems to have drained the last remnants of his military muscle, for after 451, we hear nothing of the Gallic field army, while primarily the Franks on the Rhine were expanding their power at the expense of the Romans in the region in the following decades. Nor do we read anything about an army led by Aetius confronting that of Attila's when the latter marched into northern Italy in 452. It would appear that Aetius won a pyrrhic victory just enough to secure Gaul, but not his future.

On the reasons proposed by historians there are different opinions for Aetius' reluctance to give a chase after Attila. Hughes (2012, pp. 238-239) suggests that Aetius did not do so, because he was not willing to risk the life of another important Roman ally, i.e. of Thorismund. His four brothers at the Visigothic capital could bear anti-Roman feelings and Aetius surely would not want to test them. Tackhölm, however, posits that Thorismund might have already made up his mind about heading home instead of waiting on the decision of Aetius, because a not decisively beaten Attila would have meant the continuation of his anti-Aetius stance, which then would have continued to deprive the general of Hunnic allies whom he could have used to check Visigothic expansion in Gaul (Täckholm, 1969, pp. 269-271). According to Hodgkin, Aetius's reason for letting Attila go was twofold: first, it was sentimental, as Aetius had many memories with the Huns; second Valentinian III, whom Hodgkin (1892, pp. 137-138) represents as "the dark and rotten hearted Augustus", feared Aetius as long as the Huns were there to help. Actually,

the fact that he let the Huns go in the aftermath of the battle, instead of destroying them, can be more understandable in the light of Roman military existence or lack thereof. He did not finish Attila off, because he also hoped a return to status quo between the Western Roman-Hun relations and desired to continue to use their manpower in his future campaigns. Therefore, Attila's Italy campaign was a total let down for Aetius and in a sense, it sealed his fate, for he turned into a *magister utriusque militiae* without *militia* (army).

Although primary sources attest the victory to the Romans by claiming that the Huns were defeated (*Chron Gall*. S.a. 451; Prosp. s.a. 451; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc*. 2.7; Jord., *Get*. 213), and indeed Attila's advance was checked and clearly this forced the king to undertake another campaign in a year to recover his lost prestige[210] at Campus Mauriacus (Goldsworthy, 2009, p. 332), Aetius, as has been just said above, was also deprived of the last remnants of his Roman field army and with the ultimate cessation of Hunnic *foederati* could not conduct any further campaigns. Furthermore, the Western Romans lacked allies, even though Aetius settled the Burgundians and the Alans within Roman lands and was on friendly terms with the Visigoths. All these barbarian groups only interested in their own survival and joined up with Aetius against Attila, because the latter threatened to break down the status quo in Gaul.

Nevertheless, there are also some highly interesting theories regarding not only the result of the battle, but also its account by Jordanes. In 1959, Altheim first suggested that the battle's narrative was an allusion to the battle of Salamis by Herodotus and recently Kim has claimed that Jordanes directly copied Herodotus' account of the battle of Marathon (Altheim, 1959, pp. 324-329; Kim, 2013, pp. 77-79, 2015, pp. 127-142.). He believes that the Huns took the role of the invading Persians, the Alans that of the weak Athenian centre, Aetius' Romans that of the Plataeans on the left wing and the Visigoths that of Callimachus' successful Athenians on the right wing, by whom the greatest damage was inflicted upon the Persians (Huns). His allegation is further strengthened when he draws a parallel between Callimachus and Theoderic, two leaders who died during fighting and

[210] Which was the most important element together with fear that held the subject nations in line. The battle of the Catalaunian Plains, indeed broke the invincibility aura by which Attila had come to be surrounded in the 440s (Holmes & Marix Evans, 2006, p. 37). Even though Attila had never met the Romans in a battle as major as this one before, he also had never been able to be pushed back by any Roman forces.

both were substituted by similar heroic men who sealed the victory, that is, by Miltiades and Thorismund. Lastly, Kim draws attention to the withdrawal of the victorious Athenians back to Athens in Herodotus was taken by Jordanes and turned into Thorismund's retreat back to Toulose. The similarities are indeed undeniable, however, it should be noted that Roman authors it was a normal practice to imitate the great historians of their antiquity, whether in style or in grammar. Indeed, Priscus' account of the siege of Naissus by the Huns (Prisc., *fr*. 1b) is known to have copied words or even phrases from Thucydides' account of the siege of Plataea, but it has been proven that his imitation was only at a linguistic level (Blockley, 1972, pp. 18-27; Whitby, 2001b, p. 709) and it does not mean that a siege of Naissus never took place, which are proven by other entries found in primary sources.[211] Therefore, even though we should not take everything Jordanes narrates at face value, we cannot dismiss his account either just because there are similarities between him and Herodotus.[212]

Nevertheless, the battle of the Catalaunian Plains was obviously not a battle that saved the western civilization from the menacing Asiatic hordes, as some historians appear to have believed (Murdoch, 2006, p. 56; Thierry, 1856). Bury (1923, pp. 293-294) is not very wrong when saying that even if Attila had been victorious on that day, the future of European history would not have been greatly altered changed. Unfortunately, some modern historians even go further and claim that it was a religious battle, where Christians and others were clashed against each other, while erroneously turning a blind eye to the presence of Germanic Arian Christians in the Hunnic army.[213] The battle, in reality, was neither religious nor ethnic (Kim, 2013, p. 74). The reasons that kindled the hostilities were purely political and the aims of the both sides were limited by their political ambitions.

Although the battle has left many legacies behind, it did not leave much for archaeology to study. There is a Hunnic cauldron found near Troyes, which is claimed to have been used in the burial of Laudaricus, a relative of Attila, who had been slain in the battle (Bóna, 2002, p. 57; Érdy, 1995, pp. 17-18; Marin, 1990, p. 45). The treasure of Pouan,

[211] cf. Marc. Com. s.a. 441
[212] Kim (2013, p. 75ff), moreover, while encouraging his readers to dismiss Jordanes' account of the battle due to its unauthentic and fabricated nature (ibid. p. 217, n. 284), he literally bases his whole evidence in favour of a Hunnic victory on what Jordanes relates and therefore seems to contradict with himself.
[213] cf. Ferrill, 1986, p. 150

that was accidently unearthed by a laborer in 1842 at Pouan-les-Vallées had initially been associated with Theoderic (Peigné-Delacourt, 1860), as the contents of the burial was clearly signified a wealthy Germanic warrior. It included a long sword with a gilded hilt, a *scramasax* (Germanic dagger), scabbard and various other golden items (Salin & France-Lanord, 1956, pp. 65-75). However, although accepting that the burial indeed belonged to a Germanic warrior who likely might have taken part in the battle, modern scholarship rejects the notion that it was belonged to Theoderic. Other finds have also been made near Pouan since then such as horse-trappings and vases which also support their owners' likelihood participation in the famous battle.[214]

The battle of the Catalaunian Plains was the last major battle the Romans fought. It was the also biggest battle of its era (Goldsworthy, 2009, p. 332), when the warfare came to rely much more on defensive and small-scaled operations. Probably due to that scale and the fame of its participants, its legend grew and in the 18th century came to define a "golden age" when Europe stood tall against the barbaric invaders. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, when the German army entered Belgium, it was labelled as the Huns. Today, the science of history is almost totally free of such old fashioned impressions, but there are still many questions waiting to be answered by experts about the conflict near Troyes.

[214] See Drioton, 1932; Hennequin, 1932 for two discussions from the early 20th century.

CHAPTER 5

ACROSS THE ALPS

The status quo in Gaul had been preserved, but neither Attila nor his army were destroyed. The Hunnic menace was still real, although, the Hun must have ruled out another campaign in Gaul in the near future, as the Romans and the various barbarian groups inhabiting the region proved themselves ready to defend it against anyone who would disturb their current political status. After his retreat from Gaul back to Pannonia, Attila must have met with discord among his Germanic subjects, who would have viewed the Gallic campaign as a failure. They had, no doubt, carried off much spoils from the cities they sacked, but the retreat from the battlefield must also have certainly caused them to lose much of it. What is worse for Attila, it was made clear that he could be stopped and even beaten. As the steppe rulers are known to have secured the loyalties of their followers and subjects through mixture of gold and fear (Maur., *Strat*. 11.2), owing to his retreat from the Catalaunian Plains, he had lost that mixture and damaged his prestige. After all, was not he the one who had found the sword of Mars and promised victories in all wars? (Jord., *Get*. 183). The absence of that two elements cementing the Hunnic Empire's unity, might not only stir subject nations, but might also disturb Attila's own Huns.

Attila himself was no doubt aware of this and in order to secure his homefront and recover his prestige (Lindner, 1981, p. 11), he first consolidated his power and rebuilt his army and setting out from Pannonia he descended on northern Italy, after ignoring the route through the Alps, so that he might not face any Romans covering the passes there (Prosp. s.a. 452).[215] Instead he chose to cross over the Julian Alps (stretching from northeastern Italy to Slovenia), which Aetius left undefended. The reason for leaving them unprotected lay in the fact that those passes have relatively lower mountain ranges and therefore were quite flat when they are contrasted with other points in the Alps (Paul. Diac., *Hist. Lang*. 11.9).[216] Such physical features would not have helped the Romans when facing the Hunnic army. Maenchen-Helfen (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 135) draws attention to four other invasions that took place through the same passes: in 401 and in 408 by Alaric, in

[215] Not, as Hydatius (s.a. 452) assumes he moved into Italy directly from Gaul.
[216] Translation in Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 135.

425 by the Eastern Roman general Aspar, and in 489 by Theoderic. According to him, this shows that Romans were *traditionally* uninterested defending the Julian Alps. On the other hand, Börm suggests that Aetius left the passes undefended because he had no spare troops to deploy in their defense (Börm, 2013, p. 106).

We have a completely different Aetius throughout Attila's Italian campaign. Prosper (Prosp. s.a. 452) even claims that when Aetius heard the news of Attila's approach, he tried to persuade Valentinian III to flee Italy together. Whether this is true or not, Aetius seems really to have been in the command of only a handful of troops, as he could not stop the descent of the Hunnic army. This is no surprising, since the previous year's engagement had cost him the further depletion of his Roman army and his allies in Gaul appear to have not taken notice the danger Italy was then in (Halsall, 2007, p. 253). Apart from his *bucellarii*, the supreme commander might also have had some *foederati* under his command, which, all the same, seem to have not been strong enough to face Attila. As the later events would reveal, however, Constantinople would not stay a mere spectator to unfolding events, when the Western *magister militum* approached them seeking assistance.

Meanwhile, unfortunately for Italo-Romans a famine had broken out in 451 due to a fail in crops[217] and it had been affecting the whole peninsula to which additional grain brought from Sicily and Gaul appears to have proved no remedy (*NVal*. 29, 31).[218] At the same time, a plague is reported to have broken out (Hyd. s.a. 453). For a believer at that time, there were no doubt sent by a divine power to destroy Attila (ibid), who, in the meantime, already started to besiege his first major target Aquileia. After three months, the city finally fell[219] (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7; Marc. Com. s.a. 452) around the end of August and the beginning of September (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 133.), but at the expense of losing valuable time, during which his army increasingly suffered from the disease (Hyd. s.a. 453; Jord., *Get*. 219-221; Heather, 2006, p. 341).

[217] See Ruggini's *Economia e società nell'Italia Annonaria. Rapporti fra agricoltura e commercio dal IV al VI secolo d. C.* pp. 152-76 for the history of famines in Italy from the 4th to the middle of the 5th century.
[218] Surely, if Africa had still been under Roman control, things would have been different.
[219] Procopius intentionally puts the fall of the city after Aetius death to render his last Roman in the west faultless (Procop., *Vand*. 3.4.29; cf. Brodka, 2007, p. 151).

After Aquileia, Pavia, Mediolanum, once the capital of the West (286-402),[220] Ticinum and many other cities such as Concordia, Altinum, Patavium, Vicetia, Verona, Brixia, Pergamum in north followed (Jord., *Get*. 222; Prisc., *fr*. 22; (Paul. Diac., *Hist. Rom.* 14.9-13).[221] It seemed as though nothing could stop Attila. Halsall (2007, p. 254) is indeed not wrong when saying it was the most threatening attempt against Rome since Hannibal. However, if Attila was Hannibal, Aetius was Fabius.[222] Aetius, while cautiously keeping an eye on the Hunnic king's movements, as he was leaping from one city to another, had already contacted Marcian, the emperor in Constantinople, and asked for his assistance, upon which the latter acted and dispatched another Aetius[223] to lead a military expedition to the Hunnic base in north of the Danube (Hyd. s.a. 453).[224] Attila weighed his options and seeing that he was directly challenged by the emperor who refused him to pay him any tributes while his army was struck by a plague, decided to retreat (ibid), although he seems to have continued to threaten Italy with war should the West not surrender Honoria to him (Prisc., *fr*. 22.1; Jord., *Get*. 223). All the same, Attila was once again on full retreat within two years. Moreover, his army, probably moving much slower as it was laden with booty and due to sickness, must have left Italy not before losing some of the loot to the Western *magister militum* Aetius' guerrilla style attacks which would have harassed Attila's rear.

Jordanes (Jord., *Get*. 222) relates that Attila intended to march on Rome, but he was prevented by his friends from doing so, as they did not wish the same fate which had befallen upon Alaric after his sack of the city in 410, who died shortly thereafter. While considering this, he also met by a Roman embassy led by the bishop of Rome Leo, who persuaded Attila to abandon his campaign, to whom Attila is reported to have obeyed by promising peace (Jord., *Get*, 223). In Prosper of Aquitaine's account (Prosp. s.a. 452),

[220] By presenting a sermon held in the city as a proof, Maenchen-Helfen (1973, p. 138, n. 664, 666) asserts that, although many houses and churches including the basilica of St. Ambrose were indeed destroyed, Mediolanum and Ticinum were neither looted, nor their citizens were slaughtered, as they had evacuated the city before Attila arrived. He also says that Aetius intentionally ignored the northern cities to impede the speed of the Hunnic army.
[221] Primary sources on Attila's Italian campaign are as follows: Chon. Gall 452; Hydatius s.a. 452, 453; Jordanes 219-24; Priscus fr. 22; Prosper s.a. 452; Greg. Tur 2.7, marc. Com s.a. 452.
[222] Fabius Maximus (280 BC – 203 BC), the famous *Cunctator* (the delayer), who adapted a guerilla style of warfare during Hannibal's invasion of Italy and inflicted heavy damages to his supply lines.
[223] For this Aetius, see *PLRE*, Aetius 8.
[224] For different interpretations of Hydatius' entry see Bury, 1958, pp. 295-296; Demougeot, 1979, p. 555; O'Flynn, 1983, pp. 98-100, 182-103; Seeck, 1920, p. 312; Stein, 1959, p. 499. Burgess (1988, p. 362) altogether rejects any military action undertaken either from the East or the West.

this embassy was consisted of a consul Avienus, *praefactus praetorio* Trygetius[225] and again the bishop of Rome, Leo. Allegedly Attila was so rejoiced to see Leo before him, when he was ordered to put an end to the war, he immediately departed from Italy. A meeting between Attila and Leo seems likely,[226] but attributing Attila's retreat merely to Leo's words may be wishful thinking. In fact, many modern historians favor Alaric's fate as the factor that forced Attila to withdraw (Bury, 1958, p. 295; Halsall, 2007, p. 254; Sinor, 1990, p. 196; Thompson, 1948, p. 147). Additionaly, Kelly and Heather draw attention to the part that was played by Marcian's intervention (Heather, 2001, pp. 17-18; Kelly, 2009, p. 228). The former also adds that Valentinian III might have paid Attila gold to end his campaign (Kelly, 2009, p. 227). He also seems to be not alone when asserting that the campaign of Italy was a success, as Attila returned home with many riches similar to those of he had seized in 441 and 447 (ibid. p. 228; Kim, 2013, p. 83). I would argue that they give a little too much credit to Attila when they define his Italian campaign as successfull, for although there is no reason for ignoring the many amounts of loot Attila's men acquired during their descent on Italy, this by itself is not enough to picture the whole campaign as a success. It should not be forgotten, that Attila withdrew from Italy not on his own terms, but he was forced to do so. The campaign can be regarded successful in so far as it secured the continuous loyalty of Hunnic subjects, but it did not reverse the negative image of a retreating leader that the battle of the Catalaunaian Plains had created.

Attila was now out of Italy, but the city of Rome had only been saved owing to Marcian's aid, the superstitious nature of Attila and the plague surrounding Italy (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 141). Otherwise, Rome might have been sacked for the second time in the same century after Alaric's sack[227] and there was not a regular Roman army to defend even the heart of the empire, but only a handful of *foederati*, who would have rather cared for the gold they were being paid, more than the security of Roman cities. Moreover, gold now came to be the second luxury the Western Romans no longer possessed. The Western

[225] For more on these names see Avienus 4, Trygetius 1 in *PLRE*.
[226] It is interesting to note that Leo never mentios this meeting or Attila in his letters (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, p. 134-5).
[227] This first sack took place in 410. As the later events would show, the second sack would happen in 455 through the hands of Geiseric.

Roman Empire was now deprived of its army, reserves, resources and was also about to lose its most capable general.

CHAPTER 6

PERSONAE NON GRATAE

6.1. THE DEATH OF ATTILA

Although Attila returned from his Italian campaign with much gold, he was still in a precarious situation. No doubt, he shared the loot of his Italian campaign as soon as he returned home among his subjects, but gone were the days in which he forced the Romans to pay tributes. Now there was no annual flow of gold into the Great Hungarian Plain from either side of the empire and Marcian was resolute about not paying Attila a single *solidus* (Jord., *Get*. 225). Furthermore, the loss of prestige he had suffered in Gaul was still fresh in memories.

Sometime in 453, however, Attila took another woman, named Ildico, as his wife, probably to cement another political alliance. After the celebrations ended that included excessive drinking, he went to his tent, only never to come out again. When the morning came, his guards wondered about the king's delay and entered into his tent. There they found Ildico weeping over the corpse of his husband. Apparently, Attila had died of a hemorrhage (Jord., *Get*. 254-8; Hyd. s.a. 453; Prosp. s.a. 453).[228] To this day, the exact reason what caused Attila to draw his last breath on that night is still shrouded in mystery.[229] Marcellinus Comes appears to have heard two versions of the event in Constantinople. In the first one, he relates that he was stabbed by his wife to death, and in the second, he reports that he died coughing up blood (Marc. Com. s.a. 454). John Malalas, on the other hand, asserts that it was one of the bodyguards of Attila, who had been bribed by Aetius himself to do the job (Joh. Mal., *Chron*. 14.10).

All the same, the king of the Huns was dead. His *strava*[230] filled with scenes of men scarring their cheeks to let the blood flow down their faces instead of tears and racing of

[228] Jordanes bases his account on Priscus' lost fragments.
[229] A recent attempt has been made to close the coldest case ever by Babcock (2005), who asserts that Attila did not die due to drowning from a nosebleed, but instead, the Eastern emperor Marcian had him killed. This would be not unusual, since this kind of aggressive diplomacy was a Roman practice when met with enemies causing nuisance to the empire and considering Marcian's unbending anti-Attila stance since the start of his reign. I would also suggest that Attila's death was inevitable, especially after the blunders he experienced in the west, directly or indirectly at the hands of one of those who resented Attila's sole leadership. Hunnic fugitives he zealously demanded from the both halves of the empire in almost all treaties and their immediate executions when they were delivered can only point out to the fact that Attila had no shortage of enemies among his own kinsmen.
[230] The only Hunnic word we know. It means *funeral*.

horses around the breathless body of Attila, are certainly carrying the traditions of a Central Asian peoples (Sinor, 1990, p. 197). However, as soon as he was dead, his empire began to crumble amidst discord, in which many Germanic subjects and Attila's sons came to meet on the opposing sides of the battlefield (Prosp. s.a. 453) to inherit Attila's legacy. Apparently, Attila's three sons wanted to divide the control of the subject nations among themselves, upon which Ardaric,[231] the king of the Gepids, arduously opposed and revolted. He was supported by various former Hunnic subjects. One of Attila's sons, Ellac, was leading the Huns and other Hunnic subjects that chose to remain loyal to Attila's bloodline. Two armies which had recently fought and raided the Western Empire together, met on a battlefield near the Nedao River in Pannonia in 454. After leaving 30,000 soldier and Ellac dead on the battlefield, Ardaric emerged victorious. (Jord., *Get*. 259-262).

Attila's favourite son, Ernac,[232] in the meantime, first settled with his followers in Scythia (Jord., *Get*. 266), but what happened to him later remains unknown (Golden, 1992, p. 92), after he had fallen out with his brother Dengizich in 466/467 (Prisc., *fr*. 36). Dengizich had apparently decided to pursue an aggressive policy against Constantinople in the manner reminiscent of his father, but this cost him dearly, as his head was removed from his body only to be paraded in Constantinople's streets in 469 (Marc. Com. s.a. 469).[233] Taking advantage of the power struggle in Pannonia, moreover, Marcian had ordered the reoccupation of the area south of the Danube in 458 (Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, 161-162), taking advantage of the power struggle in Pannonia. With Attila's and his sons' fall, the fragmentation of the Hunnic superstate was complete. Its departure was as quick as it had come into existence in the first place.[234]

When the news of Attila's demise reached Ravenna, Aetius must have thought that the normalization[235] of the relations with the Huns was only a matter of time. With their assistance, he could again lead successful campaigns similar to those of 420s and 430s.

[231] Whom Kim claims to have been a Hun with Germaniczed name (Kim, 2013, p. 93). He also believes the wars following Attila's death were a part of Hunnic civil war (Kim, 2013, p. 92).
[232] About whom the prophecies had foreseen that his achievements would suprass those of his father (Prisc., *fr*. 8)
[233] Not before heavily defeated by the Ostrogoths in Pannonia in in 456/457 (Jord., *Get*. 272)
[234] Remaning Huns, now again led by numerous chieftains, seem to have returned to serve in the Romans armies beginning in 457 under Majorian's reign (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5.475).
[235] That is, the return of the Huns to fill the ranks of the Western Roman army.

New campaigns, moreover, were necessary. In 452 or 453, Thorismund, the king of the Visigoths since the aftermath of the battle of the Catalaunian Plains, had first set out against the Alans[236] north of the Loire (Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7) and then continued down to besiege Arles (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 7.12-3). The city did not fall to him only because the *praefectus praetorio Galliarum* Ferreolus was able to persuade him to break off the siege after inviting him to a feast. The fact that the king was persuaded by food and eloquent words, instead of an approach of an imperial army, further supports the theory that the Western army was almost nonexistent at the time. Thorismund, on the other hand, appears to have returned to his father's pre-439 policy, but this led ultimately to his downfall, as in 453 he became a victim of fratricide (Hyd. s.a. 453; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.7; Jord., *Get.* 228). His brothers apparently did not wish to follow Thorismund's anti-Roman policy (Prosp. s.a. 453). He was succeded by Theoderic II, who had received Roman education in his youth by Avitus himself (Sid. Apol., *Carm.* 7.481-3, 395-9).

6.2. THE MURDERS OF AETIUS AND VALENTINIAN III

In 454 Valentinian III was thiry-four years old. He had been the emperor of the Western Roman Empire since he was six years old. The Western diadem had been handed over to him by Theodosius II as if it were a toy to be played with. Due to his minority, his decisions in his youth were mostly influenced by his mother, Galla Placidia. But if there were one person who left a deeper mark in Valentinian III's life, that was Aetius. It was probably in 425 when the young Valentinian was first exposed to the terrifying sight of the Hunnic army. What was more terrifying for him, was that they were being commanded by a Roman general and he himself together with his mother were their target. For neither little Valentinian nor his mother, there was no other choice, but to bow down to Aetius' demands. Beginning from 425, the emperor and his mother watched helplessly, as Aetius' authority grew every passing day. Fortunately for the empire itself and probably owing to Aetius' and his Huns' successes in the 430s, an uneasy friendship came to dominate the lives of the both. However, everyone, including Valentinian III himself, knew that it was Aetius who was taking all the decisions. Valentinian III might

[236] Jordanes distorts this story turns it into a second encounter between the Visigoths and Attila, who apparently returned to Gaul to avenge himself on the former. (Jord., *Get*. 226-227)

have become an adult, but a childhood spent under other's control would have naturally created a weak ruler.

In the meantime, once Aetius' arch-enemy, Galla Placidia, had died on November 27, 450 and was buried in the monastery of St. Nazarius in Ravenna (*Chron Gall*. s.a. 452; Hyd. s.a. 452). Her last years, after his son came of age and their relationship with Aetius seemingly patched up, seem to have been spent away from court politics and devoted to prayer (Oros. 7.43-7). She was lucky enough not to witness Attila's march towards the West, but not so lucky when she had to bear the scandal that surrounded her daughter Honoria. All the same, with Placidia's death, the last barrier between Aetius and Valentinian III was removed. Theodosius II, the senior member of the Theodosian dynasty had already died in 450, and Marcian was apparently uninterested in western politics. It was a perfect moment for Aetius to capitalize on. In 454, his son Gaudentius[237] was married to Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian III (Prosp. s.a. 454). Although the succession in the Roman Empire would leave out females, Valentinian III had no male offspring, to whom he might hand down the empire and therefore in case of an untimely death of Valentinian III, Gaudentius would have been in a very powerful position, with his father and the pro-Aetius Gallic aristocracy ready to back him up.

Although Valentinian III had lost both of his guardians, i.e. his mother and Theodosius II, his court seems not to have been short of capable intriguers. Seeing Aetius' move aimed at the purple, the anti-Aetius faction, led by Heraclius, the eunuch of Valentinian III and Petronius Maximus, a senator, persuaded the emperor that it was high time to remove Aetius out of the picture.[238] Gregory of Tours asserts that Valentinian III acted out of his baseless fear that he would die at the hands of his general. Procopius, on the other hand, claims that everything was planned by Petronius Maximus, who wanted to remove Valentinian III from power, but realized that this could only be possible after Aetius' removal, whose power is said to have reached new heights after his successful encounter with Attila (Procop., *Vand*. 3.4.25; 3.4.24; Brodka, 2007, pp. 149-150). According to Pawlak (2009, p. 134), the only area the emperor was free from outside

[237] He was probably born in 440 (*PLRE*, p. 494 (Gaudentius 7)).
[238] According to Procopius, Maximus is said to have been determined to kill Valentinian III first, for the emperor allegedly spoiled his wife, but he decided to remove Aetius, as he feared that the general might foil his plan (Procop., *Vand*. 3.55.20-28)

intervention was his family business and when Aetius arranged that marriage, the emperor could not stand idle (2009, p. 134). There has been no consensus reached on the matter, but all the same, on September 21-22, 454, while Aetius was informing the emperor regarding the latest developments about the treasury, Valentinian III suddenly jumped off from his throne and stabbed Aetius to death. When Aetius fell motionless, one of the witnesses is said to have replied to Valentinian III, who asked whether he had done good or bad, that he had cut off his right hand with the other (Procop., 3.4.28). After him many of Aetiıs' followers, including his friend and *prefectus praetorio* Boethius were also killed after having been summoned to the imperial palace. (Prisc., *fr*. 30; Hyd. s.a. 454; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.8.; Prosp. s.a. 454; Marc. Com. s.a. 454; Procop., *Vand*. 3.4.20-33).[239] Valentinian III, also named Placidius, meaning peaceful,[240] had just taken the most violent decision of his whole life, but as the later events would reveal, it would also prove to be the worst.

Following Aetius' fall, Majorian was immediately recalled[241] and given the rank of *comes domesticorum*, to whose command also Aetius' *bucellarii* was transferred. (Sid. Apol., *Carm*. 5.306-8; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 201, 4-5). The post of *magister militum* seems to have stayed vacant for the time, but apparently Maximus demanded both the consulship and the rank of *patricius* from Valentinian III. Regardless, his wish was not realized as a result of Heraclius' intervention (Joh. Ant., *fr*. 201). In the meantime, Valentinian III is reported to have sent embassies to various foreign peoples, although we are not informed about their contents, they were highly likely sent for the purpose of assuring them about the continuation of status quo regarding their relationship with Rome despite Aetius' death (Hyd. s.a. 454).

Meanwhile, *comes* Marcellinus[242] rebelled in Dalmatia upon the news bearing Aetius' death at the hand of the emperor reached him and he declared that he no longer recognized the emperor in the West (Procop., *Vand*. 1.6.7).[243] Moreover, Maximus, probably due to

[239] It should be added that Procopius' chronology of the events is wrong, for he put Aquilea's siege by Attila after Aetius' death.
[240] Or rather "more peacefully, calmly", as *placidius* is the comparative form of the adverb *placide*.
[241] Apparently, Majorian had fallen out with Aetius' wife by 454 and retired from active service (sid carm app 290-300; Oost, 1964, pp. 23-29).
[242] On Aetius, *comes* Marcellinus, Ricimer and other Roman warlords of the 5th century see the magnificent work of MacGeorge, 2002. For the events of Marcellinus' lifetime see ibid. pp. 32-63.
[243] Marcellinus appears to have continued to recognize the emperors in Constantinople, for he was later sent by the emperor Leo to Sardinia to expel the Vandals out of the island. (Proc. BV VI.8)

the rejection of his demands by Valentinian III and since he aspired for the highest rank possible, he incited two Hunnic *bucellarii* who had served under Aetius, named Optila and Thraustila,[244] to avenge their leader's death. He sent both first against Heraclius, the eunuch, and after they killed him, the duo attacked Valentinian III in the Campus Martius in Rome in front of other soldiers. No one helped the emperor of Rome and so died the last of the Theodosian dynasty[245] on March 16, 455, as one of the feeblest emperors in Roman history. (Hyd. s.a. 455; Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* 2.8; Marc. Com. s.a. 455).

Börm (2013, pp. 110-111) suggests that Valentinian III's motive for killing Aetius might be the fact that his assistance began to be seen as redundant after the death of Attila. Whatever his true intention was, the moment he killed Aetius, he had lost his legitimacy. The Roman emperors were the representatives of God on earth and therefore they were divine human beings. Once the blood of his general stained the emperors' purple, he lost that divinity and turned into a criminal. What he did was murdering a legitimate general serving the empire, a man who was no ordinary official but Flavius Aetius, whose popularity far exceeded that of Valentinian. Therfore, when Valentinian III was killed in front of the eyes of other soldiers, no one attempted anything to prevent it.

Maximus, on the other hand, did not live long to enjoy his status. Although he was hailed as *augustus* the day after Valentinian's murder, Geiseric and his Vandals arrived at Rome to sack the city. The chaos reigning in Rome was a perfect opportunity for Geiseric, although his official excuse was that he was only securing the inheritance of Gaudentius, Aetius' son, as he was wedded to Placidia, and thus representing an ousted legitimate successor for the purple. Rome was defenseless. Maximus was killed as he was trying to escape the city by the angry populace. Geiseric sacked the city thoroughly and took Valentinian III's wife Eudoxia and her two daughters Placidia and Eudocia captive. They were all carried off to Carthage (Prisc., *fr*. 24; Hyd. s.a. 455; Marc. Com. s.a. 455; Jord., *Get*. 235; Jord., *Rom*. 334; Procop., *Vand*. 1.4.38-9; Joh. Ant., *fr*. 200, 201.6, 204). In the past, the Romans would carry barbarian chieftains' wives and children to Rome, but in the 5th century, the roles were reversed. From this date on, the Western Roman Empire, sometimes by an intervention of Constantinople, would continue to raise emperors until

[244] Their names are of Gothic origin, but it should not be surprising since many Huns, such as Attila and Bleda, are known to have had Germanic names (Börm, 2013, p. 112).
[245] It was also the last dynasty of the Western Roman Empire.

476, a much exaggerated year, in which the Western Empire and its emperor both were declared redundant (Kelly, 2009, p. 237). Marcellinus Comes is not far off when saying that upon Aetius' death the Western half of the Empire ceased to exist (Marc. Com. s.a. 454).[246]

[246] Bede would write in the 8th century that Valentinian III's murder was the last breath of the empire (*Hist. Ecc.* 1.21). It would appear that for many living not very long after the events or even centuries after, the empire ended with Aetius' death, whom Procopius (*Vand*. 3.9-16) calls as *ultimus Romanorum* (the Last of the Romans), besides Bonifatius.

CONCLUSION

Attila's empire lasted no longer than two decades, but when contrasted to other short lived empires such as Napoléonic France (1804-1815) and Nazi Germany (1933-1945), none of its effects were profound as theirs. From the moment they arrived in Europe, the Huns' role was either limited by serving Roman armies as *foederati* rather than conquerors or assuming the role of parasites whose sole purpose to benefit themselves by deriving nutrients (gold) from their rich host (the Roman Empire).[247] Indeed, they were simply a nuisance to both halves of the Roman Empire and never constituted a real threat to its existence, not only because they did not have the strength, but also they lacked an advanced political organization to replace that of Rome.

Their greatest impact came instead indirectly by the way of other Germanic peoples who did not wish to become subjects of the Huns. The Goths (later Visigoths), the Alans, the Vandals, the Suebi and Radagaisus' Goths that flooded into western provinces in the late 4th and early 5th centuries were the Huns' greatest injury to the Western Romans, who later could neither find time nor resources to fight the Vandals or the Suebi. We have especially witnessed how the former's presence within the Roman lands ended in a catastrophe for the Roman commonwealth. With the fall of Carthage, the court of Valentinian III lost its hopes of rebuilding a regular Roman army, let alone equipping its already serving soldiers.

For an outside viewer, who is familiar with literary works such as *Nibelungenlied*, it is as if the Huns themselves who did left their mark on Europe, both in Roman lands and in *barbaricum*, whereas it was *barbaricum* itself that in fact most affected the Huns. The moment they came into contact with Germanic groups, a symbiotic relationship was born and the Huns began to adopt Germanic material culture and names. Our study has also demonstrated that their leadership strata turned Germanic at least on philological level. The fact that Hunnic archaeological findings are scarce when contrasted with Germanic ones can only be explained with Huns' gradual Germanization.

The performance of the Hunnic polyglot army and Attila as a general in pitched battles were, moreover, proven to be mediocre at best. There is only one major battle that took

[247] Especially Constantinople.

place in this era (the battle of the Catalaunian Plains) and it ended by a Hunnic withdrawal. For the Huns, the battles were sources of seizing wealth by force and best done through hit-and-run tactics. When confronted by armies at equal strength, they either lost great deal of men or retreated to strike back when their opponents were busy elsewhere. On the other hand, they were highly successful in extracting relatively important amounts of gold especially from Constantinople, although this did not make the Hunnic threat any more than a temporary headache throughout their existence on the borders of the Roman Empire.

The real threat for the other side of the Rhine and Danube came not from north, but from south. Our narrative has shown that, after the fall of Carthage in 439, the Western Roman Empire came to be an empire of all kinds of shortages. The same date had also seen the cessation of Hunnic military aid to Aetius and with an economic and a military blow, all achievements of Aetius in Gaul in the 430s were nullified, since there were neither money to equip soldiers, nor Attila's permission to employ new Hunnic *foederati* to do the Roman army's work.[248] Nevertheless, Aetius quickly adopted a new policy and settled other barbarian groups such as the Alans in Gaul and after striking a peace treaty with the Goths in Aquitaine, he at least secured stability of the region until the end of Valentinian III's reign. Again, thanks to this policy, he successfully checked Attila's advance in Gaul. However, when confronted with the Hun in Italy, the miserable condition the Western Empire revealed itself clearly: with no allies, no regular army, not enough *foederati*, the heart of the empire was vulnerable.

The shortage in manpower, that is in federates, could have been overcome by employing other barbarians, but as long as Carthage was out of Roman control, there was no hope for the Western Roman officials to restore Roman order back in northern Gaul or Spain or even protect Italy. It was not Attila's descent upon northern Italy that rendered Aetius vulnerable, it was because there was no regular Roman army or any substantial *foederati* for him to lead and both assert and protect his authority. There is no doubt that post-439 politics of the West were wholly dictated and affected by the loss of Carthage.

[248] This was probably due to Attila's intention to preserve soldiers for his upcoming campaigns against Constantinople.

Therefore, it can be safely deduced that, no other event was as important as Geiseric's capture of the jewel of North Africa for the reign of Valentinian III. Having analysed the period's documents, including imperial ones such as *Novellae Valentiniani,* there is no doubt that in this age the Huns and Attila's role was limited with being auxiliaries at best and opportunist pillagers at worst. In the middle, there was Aetius, *magister utriusque militiae* of the West, the sole effective ruler of the empire from the middle of the 430s until his assassination in 453 and Valentinian III, an emperor only in name. It was his empire that Aetius' energetic campaigns secured with the aid of Hunnic allies, however, the fall of Carthage proved itself to be the catalyst that paved the way for the fall of the Roman economy, army, then of Aetius and in two decades, of the whole Western Roman Empire.

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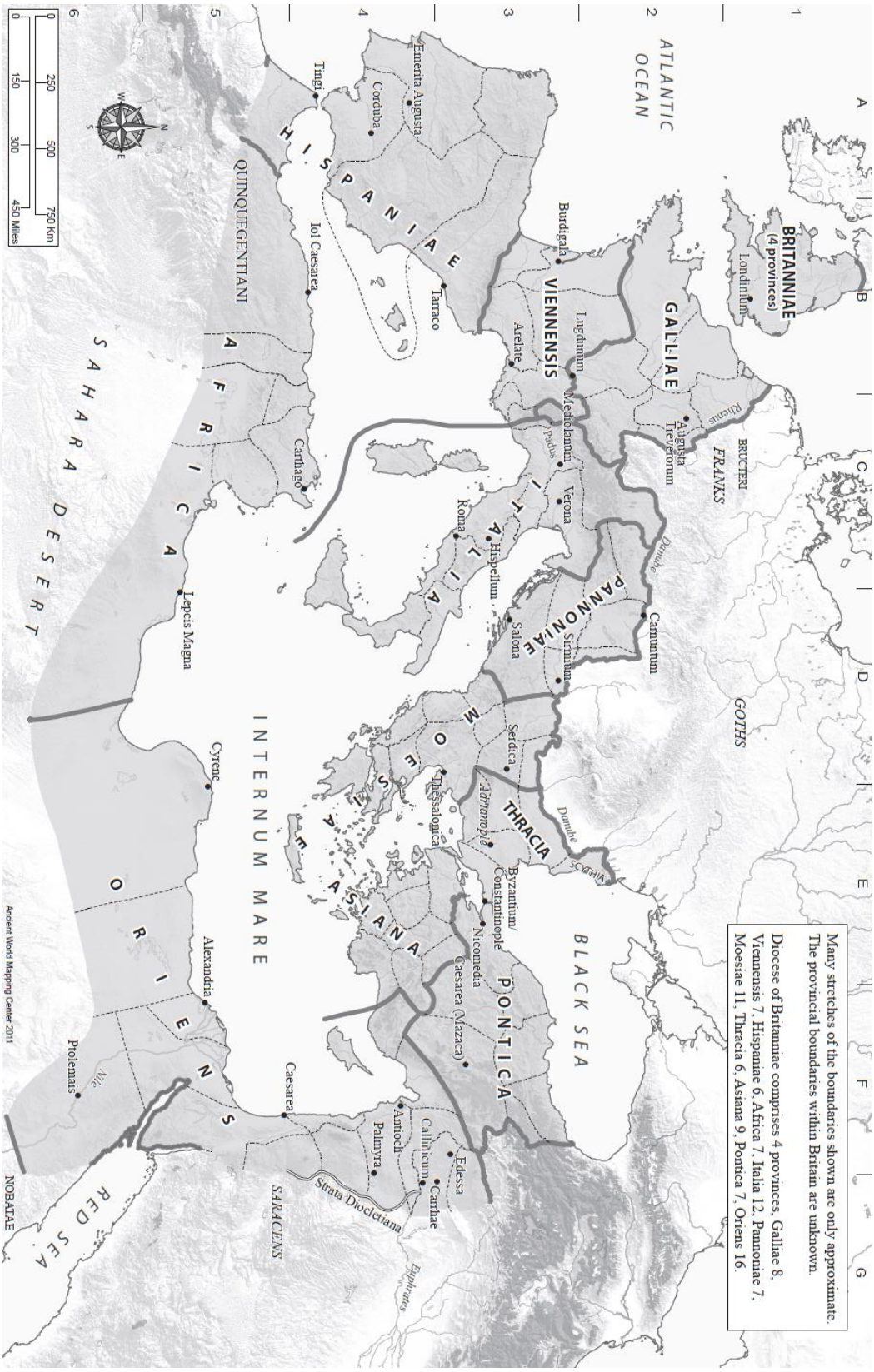
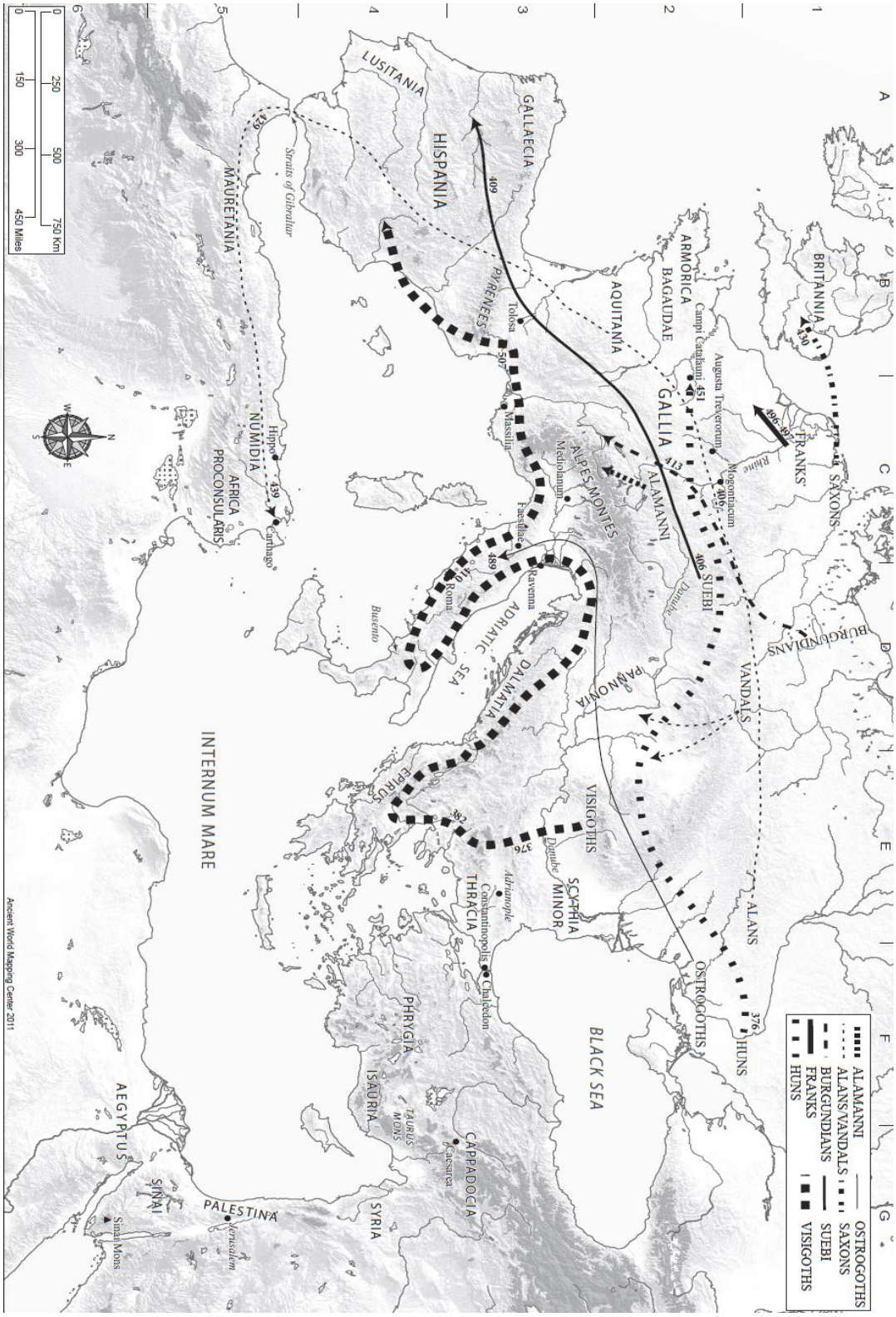
APPENDIX1. MAP I



MAP II


ALAMANNI
ALANS/VANDALS
BURGUNDIANS
FRANKS
HUNS
OSTROGOTHS
SAXONS
SUEBI
VISIGOTHS
BRITANNIA
FRANKS
SAXONS
BURGUNDIANS
VANDALS
ALANS
HUNS
OSTROGOTHS
ARMORICA
BAGAUDAE
AQUITANIA
GALLIA
ALAMANNI
SUEBI
GALLAECIA
HISPANIA
LUSITANIA
PYRENEES
ALPES MONTES
PANNONIA
DALMATIA
ADRIATIC SEA
EPIRUS
VISIGOTHS
SCYTHIA MINOR
THRACIA
BLACK SEA
PHRYGIA
ISAURIA
CAPPADOCIA
SYRIA
PALESTINA
AEGYPTUS
SINAI
MAURETANIA
NUMIDIA
AFRICA PROCONSULARIS
INTERNUM MARE
Straits of Gibraltar
Augusta Treverorum
Mogontiacum
Campi Catalaunici
Tolosa
Massilia
Mediolanum
Ravenna
Roma
Beneventum
Hippo
Carthago
Adrianople
Constantinopolis
Chalcedon
Caesarea
Jerusalem
Sinai Mons
Taurus Mons
Rhine
Danube
406
451
489
410
455
439
376
382
Ancient World Mapping Center 2011

APPENDIX2. FIGURE I

The Brescia Medallion. (From left to right) Valentinian III, Honoria and Galla Placidia.

FIGURES II, III, IV

Solidus of Valentinian III

Solidus of Valentinian III. On the back (from left to right) Valentinian III, Theodosius II and Licina Eudoxia.

Solidus of Honoria.

FIGURE V

Possible relief of Flavius Aetius with his wife on the left.

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Student No: N13229732
Department: Department of History
Program: Master's Degree in History (with Thesis)
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ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

Assistant Professor Doctor
Selda Güner

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ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Assistant Professor Doctor
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Statüsü: ☒ Y.Lisans ☐ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Dr.

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