

---

# NOTES ON THE *RES GESTAE* AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL VIEWS TOWARDS THE BATTLE OF ADRIANOPE (378 A.D.)

**Abstract:** The Battle of Adrianople has been presented as a turning point in history by classical as well as by modern authors. In this paper, classical sources, especially the *res gestae*, are being set into context together with modern works, trying to point out a balanced view on historical events and their interpretation by historians. Special attention is being paid to legal aspects as the *foedus* and *dedictio* within the limits of the Roman *ius gentium*. In light of the sources, the Roman-Gothic conflict, even if having resulted in a devastating defeat for the Romans, did not yet challenge the ideal of the Roman state as a hegemon power. The Goths did not seek to infiltrate the Roman Empire in order to carve out their own realm, but even after the battle rather sought to gain permanent and secure settlement within the system of the Roman state. This research focuses on a critical analysis of the events as presented in the *res gestae* by Ammianus Marcellinus.

**Keywords:** *Roman History, Battle of Adrianople 378 AD, Late Antiquity, Ammianus Marcellinus, Roman historiography*

## INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Adrianople, fought on August 9<sup>th</sup> 378 on the plains of Thrace has left a great impact on the historiography of late antiquity as well as on the historical literature on the late Roman Empire until the present day. One of our main sources, the *res gestae* authored by the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus serves as the primary account of an occurrence that is usually represented as having rocked the very foundations of the late Roman Empire. Indeed, with several Roman legions crushed, between 15-20 thousand soldiers fallen and Emperor Valens himself having been killed in action by his Gothic adversaries, the battle had left a striking impact on the late Roman Empire. Moreover, the works of Roman and later historians on the battle have deeply influenced the imagination of following generations with the battle of Adrianople representing one of the turning points of Roman decline. This paper strives to research in how far the events as narrated in the *res gestae* have been impacting the reasoning of generations of later historians. This research focuses furthermore on a critical analysis of the events as presented in the *res gestae* by Ammianus Marcellinus, setting his testimony in perspective towards contemporary sources. Exerting other primary sources of late antiquity as well as more recent research material it shall be determined in how far Ammianus Marcellinus narrative is still critical for modern historians. Finally, it shall be revealed whether the historiographical representation of the Battle of Adrianople is to be evaluated as one of the milestones that cemented the narrative of the decline of the Roman Empire.

**Mehmet YILMAZATA**

Istanbul University

E-Mail: mehmetyilmazata@gmail.com

---

DOI: 10.14795/j.v5i3.337

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN-L 2360 – 266X

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE IN A CHANGING WORLD

Rising pressure on the borders of the Roman Empire did not start to build just in the beginning of migratory movements, known as the “Barbarian invasion” or the “Völkerwanderung” at the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Modern research has set back the timeline of those migratory to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., while the concept of “invasion” itself has been frequently challenged by modern historians as too generalising.<sup>1</sup> Since the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., Germanic tribes did exercise certain pressure on the imperial borders; likewise, on its eastern borders, Rome was in constant rivalry with the Sassanid Empire. It is quite easy to explain the so-called “crisis of the Empire” just with a strategic overstretch, rising costs for military supplies and pressing security issues that developed parallel. This, however would be a grave oversimplification.<sup>2</sup> It is true that economic crises, including inflation and monetary crises became more apparent after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century; however, it is also true that the provincial administration as well as public finances were newly organized in a process that culminated in the establishment of the Tetrarchy under Diocletian.<sup>3</sup> Beginning with the classical sources of late antiquity and fostered by deterministic view of history which is quite visible in Gibbon’s masterpiece “Decline and fall of the Roman Empire”, it became established practice to judge the chain of events that led to an administrative split between the Eastern and Western Empire and the political –but not cultural and economic end- of the latter in 476 AD as natural decline.<sup>4</sup> Political, sociologic and economic changes were judged to be the anti-climax of Roman power and milestones as the Battle of Adrianople were interpreted as one of many steps towards the inevitable fall of the heirs of Caesar and Augustus.<sup>5</sup> Within the last decades, this categorical judgement has been partially revised, a new evaluation of literary sources from a philological perspective as well as archaeological evidence have led to a new and much broader interpretation of the events that took place after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD as natural change and transformation of the Roman Empire over the course of times.<sup>6</sup> What can be said with certainty is that Rome’s neighbours on its Western Borders were less organized than the Sassanid Empire on the East, but started to organize themselves in a loose fashion that has been dubbed as a tribal confederation.<sup>7</sup> It is of course tempting to draw the image of organized Barbarian pressure towards Rome that was pushed by migratory developments and economic as well as demographical factors. This, again

<sup>1</sup> MARTIN 2010,166

<sup>2</sup> FERGUSON 2010, 18-32

<sup>3</sup> SOMMER 2004, 68

<sup>4</sup> BROWNLEY 1981, 629-642

<sup>5</sup> Other references on the transformation of the Roman World do include, but are certainly not limited to: MATHISEN, R. W. / SHANZER, D. (2016). Romans, barbarians, and the transformation of the Roman world: Cultural interaction and the creation of identity in late antiquity. ; WHITE, L. (1973). The transformation of the Roman world: Gibbon’s problem after two centuries. Berkeley: University of California Press.; MITCHELL, S. (2015). A history of the later Roman empire, AD 284-641.; KAGAN, D. (1992). The end of the Roman Empire: Decline or transformation?. Lexington Mass: D.C. Heath.; LEE, A. D.,(2014). From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565: The transformation of ancient Rome. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.

<sup>6</sup> WEBSTER/BROWN 1997, 7

<sup>7</sup> WOLFRAM 2005, 70

would be an oversimplification, especially Germanic tribes were less inclined in overrunning the Empire than attracted by its economic and cultural attractiveness.<sup>8</sup> The Roman Empire had to deal with those groups in different ways and developed strategies that included the use of military force, diplomatic and economic measures as well as deliberate settlement policies to include those elements in the sphere of the Empire, striving to balance them against each other.<sup>9</sup> Ancient and modern literature describes Rome’s neighbours who were in a contractual relation to the Empire as *dedictii* or *foederati* who were expected levies and military service in lieu for the right to settle in or close to the borders of the Empire. On the Western and Northern borders, across the Rhine and the Danube, besides the Alamannians, the Franks and the Quads, the Goths developed into a force that began to impose greater pressure on the border areas. While evaluating the Gothic wars, the administrative and military division of the Empire that crystallized itself during the reign of Valens and Valentinian to culminate in a more formal decision afterwards in 395 has to be taken into consideration; however we should not conclude that this division was yet a non-reversible split.<sup>10</sup>

## FOEDUS OR DEDICTIO - THE GOTHS WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE IUS GENTIUM

In the years following the uprising of the usurper Procopius in Constantinople (365-366), Valens, having been elevated to the rank of Augustus by his brother Valentinianus I, first did crush Procopius rebellion who was subsequently captured in Nicaea and executed.<sup>11</sup> He subsequently fought Gothic tribes that had been driven towards the eastern realm of the Empire, supposedly, due to the pressure of Hunnic tribes and partially had been settling within the closer geography of Roman hegemony. The terminology may be misleading: the ethnic depiction as “Goths” creates the image of a centralized, mono-ethnic community which is too discerning. The Gothic tribes were divided into sub-groups as Greuthungi, Thervingi and others, our classical sources usually don’t go into detail describing the Gothic ethnogenesis.<sup>12</sup> The process of Gothic identity building remains extremely shady as ancient sources are often employing hearsay, on the other hand, we should not go as far as to deny the existence of the Goths as a group per se.<sup>13</sup> The aforementioned tribes-more concretely the Visigoths-had allegedly provided support for the usurper Procopius; therefore, after consulting with his brother, Emperor Valentinianus I, Valens set forth two a two-year long campaign (367-369) to the area of Thrace that was set beyond the border at the river Danube. Here, Ammianus provides the moral justification for fighting the enemy: it is stressed that Valens “took up arms against the Goths due to a just cause (*ratione iusta*) because they had helped Procopius when he began his civil war”.<sup>14</sup> That statement sets the tone for the

<sup>8</sup> PARKER 2010,109-132

<sup>9</sup> THOMPSON 2002, 25

<sup>10</sup> SCHARF 1991: 265-272

<sup>11</sup> ZOSIMUS, Nea Historia, IV,8.3

<sup>12</sup> PFEILSCHIFTER 2014, 164

<sup>13</sup> LIEBESCHUETZ 2015, 131

<sup>14</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, Res Gestae, XXVII,4,1: “arma concussit in Gothos ratione iusta pemotus, quod auxilia misere Procopio civilia bella

developing story; the war is, within this context, conferred to the reader as “just and rightful”. Generally, the Romans, since expanding their power towards Italy and the Mediterranean, deemed their allies and other actors as subservient and did expect them to act accordingly; a mere refusal to comply with Roman wishes was deemed a break of faith and therefore could be punished. Mc Donald stresses that the concept of Stoic philosophy in dwelling on the subject of imperial responsibility was displayed as a rationale for conquest.<sup>15</sup> As the *res gestae* itself is an account by a high Roman officer who wrote about his adversaries, it is only natural that his comments reflect a certain tendency. Withal, it is apparent that the author strove for objectivity and openly strove to explain his sources. Ammianus’ style is elevated, sometimes more an epic than a historical account and his narrative is influenced by older historians as Tacitus, whose influence is clear to sense in his work.<sup>16</sup> The literary approach shown by Ammianus and other historical authors of antiquity is indeed in line with the definition of Metahistory by Hayden White: historical work as a narrative prose discourse, a literary model of the representation of bygone processes.<sup>17</sup> Using Ammianus as a source, we have to take into consideration that later historians tended to judge his work heavily according to the respective *Zeitgeist*.<sup>18</sup> Historical events were thought as an ever-recurring cyclical process of ups and downs but the concept of *Roma aeterna*, was much more as a stylistic element in literary sources borrowing from authors as Tacitus, Cicero and Vergil.<sup>19</sup> The Imperium was not just a political construct but an idea that, for historians as Ammianus as well as his forbearers had an everlasting character as derived from the *stoa* and other philosophical interpretations of the world.<sup>20</sup> A crisis on the border of the Empire was seen as temporary regardless how repugnant the circumstances might be and the Gothic wars were no exception. Only later historians would challenge that concept and it is no concept that those writers defending the pagan tradition do possess a more optimistic view than their Christian counterparts who bore in mind the principles of final judgement and evanescence. Valens Gothic expedition in historiographic writing has usually been referred to as a success by his contemporaries, with the following peace agreement flatly broken down to the fact that henceforth the Goths were not allowed to cross the river. Interestingly, Zosimus feels the urge to stress that the peace agreement was not “dishonouring” for the Romans.<sup>21</sup> A hint why that expression was necessary is found in the more extensive description of the peace treaty by Ammianus: reportedly, the Goth “king” Athanaricus had sworn an oath not to cross into Roman territory, therefore the agreement

coeptanti”.

<sup>15</sup> MCDONALD 1939, 124-146

<sup>16</sup> BURKE 2013, 437-447

<sup>17</sup> WHITE 1975, 4

<sup>18</sup> For the interpretation of Ammianus by later generations of historians and authors refer to: BLOCKLEY, R. (1996). Ammianus Marcellinus and His Classical Background: Changing Perspectives. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 2(4), 455-466.

<sup>19</sup> For a philological interpretation of Ammianus as a disciple of Cicero refer to: Blockley, R. (1998). Ammianus and Cicero: The Epilogue of the “History” as a Literary Statement. *Phoenix*, 52(3/4), 305-314

<sup>20</sup> VOGT 1943, 22

<sup>21</sup> ZOSIMUS, IV,11.4

between Valens and Athanaricus was concluded on board of two ships, having dropped anchor midstream.<sup>22</sup> Given the exalted position of the Augustus Valens, the meeting (astonishingly to be reminiscing in the peace treaty at Tilsit nearly one and half a millennium later) is in fact a diplomatic elevation for the Gothic side as being on even terms, but Ammianus prefers not to elaborate further and Zosimus tries to relativize its importance. Given the circumstances in the fourth century A.D., the Goths continued to impose a latent military threat on the fringes of the Empire. Emperor Constantine the Great had dealt a blow to the Goths in 332 and conducted a *foedus* with them. In general terms, a *foedus* was a treaty under the *ius gentium* between the Romans and a third party, regarding terms of friendly conduct, trade and military support. The *foedus* can be categorized as a treaty between two equal partners (*foedus aequum*) or include the subjection of the third party towards Rome (*foedus iniquum*).<sup>23</sup> Kulikowski stresses that the *foedus* conducted in 332 did not elaborate on the nature of the concord, therefore the client relationship of *foederati* in sense of being subordinate on Rome cannot be seen as given.<sup>24</sup> After his first Gothic campaign, Valens decided to conduct an agreement with the Gothic rival within the space of the *foedus*.<sup>25</sup> In order to obtain a correct historical perspective on the status of the Goths, it has to be established whether they were seen as subjected people or clients who –from the perspective of the Romans– rose up and had to be crushed or if the Goths could be evaluated as a coequal counterpart with certain rights. Within the legal interpretation of the *ius gentium* the non-Roman analogue accepting the *foedus* would also accept the superiority or *maiestas* of the Roman state, if the treaty also included a formal surrender, the *deditio*.<sup>26</sup> Procopius invokes the Goths as “*foederati*”, having not been decisively defeated, in other words, merely a party bound by an international treaty.<sup>27</sup> As Procopius’ did write much later than Ammianus; it is important to discuss whether the re-evolved Byzantine concept of the *foedus* system can be applied to earlier events, too. Generally, the *foederati* were Barbarians that were allowed to settle on Roman territory and expected to provide military assistance, pay taxes if expected and, most important, were expected not establish independent foreign relations.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Rome would sometimes provide monetary assistance, or in other terms, gifts, to keep unruly Barbarians at height. Heather points out that a *deditio* especially in late antiquity would not necessarily rule out a *foedus*.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the relationship between Romans and Goths does not seem to be interpretable in the classic terms of tutelage which would evolve the Goths out of client status. Ammianus Marcellinus does use the term *foedus* not in a strictly legal way but rather uses that

<sup>22</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXVII, 5.9

<sup>23</sup> KARLOWKA 1885, 289

<sup>24</sup> KULIKOWSKI 2008, 86

<sup>25</sup> On the evolution of the *foedus* agreements towards the military practice of employing border-tribes as *foederati* within the late Roman military refer to: RALF SCHARF. (2006). *Foederati. Von der völkerrechtlichen Kategorie zur byzantinischen Truppengattung*. TYCHE, Supplementband 4. *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 99, 1, 265-271.

<sup>26</sup> NUSSBAUM 1952, 678-687

<sup>27</sup> PROCOPIUS, *History of the Wars*, VIII,13

<sup>28</sup> VOIGT, 66

<sup>29</sup> HEATHER 2006, 242-256

designation in lieu of treaties with foreign powers in general. Regarding the opening of hostilities against the Goths after 366, Ammianus raises the question why a people that were seen as friends by the Romans and bound by long-lasting peace treaties and the *foedus* (*foederibusque longae pacis obstricta*) provided support to a usurper (Procopius).<sup>30</sup> Here the *res gestae* does provide an interesting point in combining and readdressing the justification for warfare against the Goths as well as the interpretation space of the terms of *foedus*.<sup>31</sup> It is apparent that the Romans expected the Goths to back Emperors deemed legitimate. This might imply a claim of hegemony; on the other hand the Gothic tribes are clearly presented as rogue but more or less independent actors in reality. As Ammianus yearns to elaborate on the fact that the Goths broke the treaty, we may conclude that the Goths in 366 are clearly not yet in the state of direct clients as implied by the *deditio*. This situation did change, though, around the year 376. As recorded by Ammianus Marcellinus, other Gothic tribes as the Thervingi, driven out of their ancestral homelands by the Huns, sent emissaries to Emperor Valens and asked permission to settle on Roman territory. Ammianus takes note that the Gothic emissaries begged humbly for reception (*suspici se humili prece poscebant*) and were ready to provide auxiliary forces to the Romans, if needed.<sup>32</sup> Ammianus manifests the Roman gesture of allowing the Goths to cross the river Danube as a noble gesture and does not omit to brandmark the Goths as “future destroyers of the Roman state” who had been embraced with open arms by the Romans.<sup>33 34</sup> It is apparent that the status of the Goths was changing in practice, regardless of the interpretation of legal terms. Iordanes, in the *Getica* explicitly stresses that the Goths expressed readiness to subject themselves under the Roman law if they were allowed to settle in the Roman provinces of Thrace and Moesia.<sup>35</sup> Iordanes furthermore reports the wish of the Goths to get provided with interlocutors who might teach them the gospel. Iordanes also indicates the renewal of the *foedus* conducted by Constantine the Great with the Goths in 332.<sup>36</sup> Here, we get exposed to a retrospective view of Roman-Gothic diplomatic relations. It has to be remembered that later historians placed more formality on the interpretation of legal terms than Ammianus Marcellinus himself. Besides that, the apprehension of treaties as *foedus* in strict legal boundaries is neither present in the works of Ammianus Marcellinus or Iordanes; what remains for sure is that both parties did conclude official acts within the limits of the *ius gentium*.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, Ammianus Marcellinus, a pagan and former officer, did lay greater emphasis on presenting the Goths as humble supplicants towards the Roman state who ensuing heinously broke their oaths versus their protectors and had to be fought against with military means. In

<sup>30</sup> “.quam ob causam gens amica Romanis, foederibusque longae pacis obstrict, tyranno dederat adminicula, bellum principibus legitimis inferenti.”

<sup>31</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXVII, 5.1

<sup>32</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 4.1

<sup>33</sup> “nequi Romanam rem eversurus relinqueretur”

<sup>34</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXVII, 4.5

<sup>35</sup> IORDANES, XXV,131. In: Jordanes: Romana et Getica Berolini: Weidmann 1882. —LXXIII, 200 S. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi; 5,1)

<sup>36</sup> Iordanes, XXVIII,145

<sup>37</sup> SIVAN 1987, 759-772

contrast, the bureaucrat Iordanes, probably himself being of Gothic descent and writing 170 years after the Battle of Adrianople, was more interested in presenting the events as a path leading towards the integration of the Goths into the Empire.<sup>38</sup> It is no coincidence that Iordanes also elaborated on the Goths readiness to accept the Christian faith, depicting them as temporary adversaries but prospective loyal servants to the emperor. In light of those sources, it is much likely that the Gothic tribes indeed wished to integrate themselves into the Roman Empire, even if it involved the *deditio*. Therefore, the troubles that arose between the newly arrived prospective Goth subjects and Roman military bureaucracy seem to be the real reason the Goths took up arms against the Romans, as invoked by Wirth.<sup>39</sup> Disregarding the nuances of historiographical depiction, it becomes quite apparent that the Goths were not plotting to destroy the Empire from inside.

### CONFLICT BUILDING IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEPICTION

The motivation of Emperor Valens to embrace Visigothic settlers in his territory can be broken down to about two factors. On one hand a vast mass of refugees just outside the borders of the Roman hegemony would cause permanent harassment in forms of raiding parties and full-fledged attacks as seen about ten years before. It was established Roman practice to supply potential Barbarian allies with food, monetary donations and other means of assistance in order to stabilize the borders and establish control over its neighbours cross the border.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, in terms of statesmanship of classical antiquity, prospective newcomers were evaluated as a possible source of taxes and as potential auxiliary forces for the army. This point of view is stressed in the *res gestae*, reporting that unspecified officials described as “educated/seasoned flatterers” (*eruditus adulatoribus*) encouraged the Emperor to accept the Goths in lieu of that potential gain.<sup>41</sup> The decision to accept the Goths is in line with practice seen throughout the late Roman Empire: forthcoming arrivals were granted the right to settle and more often than not did provide the state with their military as well financial resources, even acculturating themselves with local customs.<sup>42</sup> Even archaeological evidence can nowadays be interpreted in terms of the evolvement of a multi-strata society without constructing the concept of separate “Roman” and “Barbarian” ethnicity in a modern sense.<sup>43</sup> In other words, former “outsider” tribes became integrated into the late Roman state. The historiographical view of “extramural Barbarians” as destroyers of the state is to be evaluated in the chains of events that led to the political fall of the Western-Roman Empire. Accordingly, the *res gestae* blames the insistence of bureaucrats who were tasked with settling the Goths, as the beginning of the ruin of the Roman world.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> GOFFART 2010, 45

<sup>39</sup> WIRTH 1997, 13-56

<sup>40</sup> HEATHER 2006, 250

<sup>41</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 4.4

<sup>42</sup> PERIN/KAZANSKI 2011, 299-330

<sup>43</sup> THEUWS 2009, 283-320

<sup>44</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 4.6

<sup>45</sup> In the geography to be known as Eastern-Roman Empire, the process of accommodating newcomers was more or less identical as in the West, the mere fact that the East continued to remain a power centre lead to a non- reflection of similar settlement processes in historical sources. Notwithstanding, Goffart reminds us that the Roman state did not openly bear in mind a policy of cultural assimilation: the “barbarian” outside of the Roman orbit as the “other” served as a justification for Rome to set up rule and order; “Barbarians” in the Empire were a welcome pool to draw soldiers from for that purpose.<sup>46</sup> The negative attitude towards the Goths in the *res gestae* therefore has to be interpreted in light of contemporary events and should not lead towards a generalization: most re-settled outside tribes simply do not appear in literary sources because their continued presence was not really noteworthy. Hence, it is quite rewarding to concentrate on the circumstances that led towards escalation between both parties. Ammianus reports that Gothic parties led by Fritigern and Alavivus, wishing to cross the borders were accordingly and provided with foodstuff and fields to cultivate by the Emperor. Having been allowed to settle at the banks of the river Danube, the Visigothic tribes were confronted with a harsh treatment by the Roman administrators. The *res gestae* blames corrupt officials, profiting from the lack of resources and enriching themselves shamelessly on the cost of the Goths.<sup>47</sup> Ammianus elaborates on Roman injustice, horrendous conditions and administrators who apparently traded dogs as foodstuff against Goth children. Especially two administrators, Lupicinus and Maximus are depicted as utterly corrupt and unworthy. It is also understood that the Goths did not arrive as a monolithic bloc, but rather as heterogeneous units, comprised of various tribal entities. Iordanes backs up Ammianus’ account of the developing events by stating that famine befell the Goth tribes that had been resettled in Dacia Ripensis, Moesia and Thracia. It is stated that the Goths asked local Roman authorities in vain to allow the Goths, when still camped around the river Danube, to open a market. Eager in enriching themselves, Roman commanders and administrators willingly or not contributed to creating scarcity, inflating the prices, going as far as providing dog meat and finally forcing the Goths to sell their own children into slavery.<sup>48</sup> Given the close matching of the sources, it is likely that Iordanes builds upon the narrative of the *res gestae*, on the other hand, Iordanes includes further details which back up the credibility of the events presented. Whether the Roman officials, namely Lupicinus (*comes rei militaris per Thracias*) and Maximinus (*praefectus praetorio Galliarum*), acted out of neglect, corruption or both, or if the withholding of food was employed as a mean to control the still heavily armed Gothic tribes, it is apparent that local Roman authorities underestimated the conflict potential.<sup>49</sup> Iordanes sheds the blame towards corrupt officials while Ammianus, acknowledging neglect on the Roman side, adds the element of treaty-breach in his evaluation of the Gothic side, but admits that the Goths were not yet to blame

<sup>45</sup> “Ita turbido instantium studio orbis Romani perniciis ducebatur.”

<sup>46</sup> GOFFART 1981 : 275-306

<sup>47</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI,IV.10-11 & ZOSIMUS 4,20.6

<sup>48</sup> IORDANES, XXVI, 134,135

<sup>49</sup> KULIKOWSKI 2008, 131

(*peregrinos adhuc innoxios*) for the circumstances.<sup>50</sup> Generally Ammianus does judge Rome’s Germanic opponents harsher than i.e. his Sassanid foes, so if he breaks a lance for the berated enemy, this bears testimony for his strive for objectivity. In his attitude of defending the tradition, *mos maiorum* and his paganist worldview, Ammianus paints the events as an inevitable evil befalling the Roman state. This perspective is understandable in taking into account the background of the Roman traditionalist, pagan retired officer who grimly watches towards the gradual elimination of age-old traditions being replaced with Christian ones. Fuhrmann stresses that the concept of Rome as a political ideal and moral idea as expressed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was newly embraced by the aristocratic elites of the late Roman Empire from whose ranks Ammianus was hailing.<sup>51</sup> While the hermeneutic approach towards the interpretation of our sources and the authors’ intentions shall in no way be compromised, it is worth to note that Ammianus Marcellinus has to be credited for a relatively objective and balanced view. While his worldview is certainly reflected in his opus, Ammianus does not have the presumption to discriminate neither against Christians or Barbarians/ Germanians per se and upholds *virtus*, righteousness as a benchmark for his judgements.<sup>52</sup> Notwithstanding, it is hard to shed more light on the source of developing unrest in just relying upon the *res gestae*, as the deterministic tendency of the oeuvre does sometimes mask or does not take into account material developments.<sup>53</sup> While Lupicinus and Maximinus are hold responsible for the coming escalation and are presented as the source of all evils, their appointment is, construed as “if of the choice of some adverse deity”.<sup>54</sup> <sup>55</sup> While that particular choice of wording also bears references to the Roman Classics (Virgilius) it is also used to provide a moralistic and stylistic culmination: the administrators are utterly vicious, but (apparently) a higher power is involved, even if included as literary element.<sup>56</sup> Naturally, the representation of reality by other authors also has to be perceived accordingly. Iordanes, while likely of Gothic blood, likewise exhibits a mix of a positive and rather unfriendly attitude towards his kinship due to the Goths having embraced the Arianist version of Christianity. It should be remembered that ethnicity in late antiquity cannot be treated as a definite term, indeed it is disputed whether Iordanes was really a Goth or maybe of Alanic ancestry.<sup>57</sup> Given the historical circumstances, this question is hardly solvable and only bears importance regarding the interpretation of our primary source, *the res gestae* and Iordanes’ opus, the *Roma et Getica*. For one reason or the other, including his career path close to a patron of Gothic descendant, Iordanes does display an emotional attitude

<sup>50</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 4.9-11

<sup>51</sup> FUHRMANN 1998, 53

<sup>52</sup> DEMANDT 2013, 387

<sup>53</sup> On Ammianus Marcellinus’ stance towards Christianity refer to: WOODS, D. (1998). Ammianus 22.4.6: An Unnoticed Anti-Christian Jibe. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 49(1), new series, 145-148.

<sup>54</sup> „...quasi laevo quodam numine deligente...” For more information on the philological and historical background of the *res gestae* refer to: BOEFT, J. ., DRIJVERS, J. W., HENGST, D. , & TEITLER, H. C. (2018). *Philological and historical commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus*. Leiden: Brill

<sup>55</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 4.9

<sup>56</sup> BOEFT /DRIJVERS /HENGST /TEITLER 2018, 74

<sup>57</sup> WAGNER 1967, 15

towards the subject; nevertheless by no means does that imply that he is not more credible than other sources. Given all that facts, Iordanes' style has to be considered carefully when divulging into the subject: just like Ammianus, he takes an unsympathetic stance towards Emperor Valens that sometimes shows open hostility due of the Emperors' tolerance towards the Goths' Arianist creed.

The situation in Thrace continued to escalate as Lupicinus, compelled the Thervingi Goths tried to move the group away from the area of the Danube in order to prevent them uniting with other Gothic tribes. Ammianus reports that certain unrest and a sensing of fear among the Goths was existent which seems quite logical; on the other hand, despite the negative depiction of Lupicinus, the latter's move to re-settle the Goths is understandable in taking account of Roman security concerns in a border area. Roman patrol measures around the river Danube are presented as not efficient enough, which allowed a group of Thervingi Goths to cross the river. Taking advantage of the confusing situation and with Roman orders issued to move away from the river Danube, the Goth leader Frithigern united his already present followers with those of the Thervingi and marched towards Marcianopolis. In doing this, he avoided without blatantly violating Roman terms who wanted to clear the border area.<sup>58</sup> With the Goths having arrived in front of the walls of Marcianopolis, the *comes rei militaris* Lupicinus invited the leaders of two tribes, Fritigern and Alavivus to dine with him, while the bulk of his men were camping outside of town. Being refused to enter and provision themselves, the situation escalated when the Roman military used force to disperse the unruly Goths. The following developments as described by Ammianus are confusing: reportedly Lupicinus "dozed and drunk" ordered the bodyguard of his guests to be killed, but yet restrained himself from inflicting the same fate on Fritigern and Alavivus, who, pointing out towards the unrest the Goths in front of town would cause, were set free. Subsequently, the Goths rose to arms and started pillaging the countryside. In answer to that threat, Lupicinus hastily mustered his troops, only to suffer a decisive defeat by hands of the Goths.<sup>59</sup> Iordanes confirms that version of the plot against the Goth leaders' life, pointing out that they preferred rather die free in battle than to starve to death, adding that Fritigern was able to rescue some men of his bodyguard.<sup>60</sup> This small detail, not included in the *res gestae*, is important as it could point out Iordanes having access to other sources than Ammianus. On the other hand, it could also be an element to add dramatics to the text, which is unlikely as the chain of events is summarized rather briefly. Before judging the description of the events as a whole, we should cite a remarkable passage in the *res gestae* where the author readily reminds his readers that he indeed took a very strict and objective stance towards the accuracy of his sources. Ammianus asks the reader "not to demand (of me) a strictly accurate account of what happened or the exact number of the slain, which there was no way of finding out".<sup>61</sup> This is a remarkably modern seeming approach towards the

depiction of the past. Ammianus also draws comparisons to historical events in the past and tries to relief the image of hopelessness posterior the lost battles against the Goths. Ammianus Marcellinus mentions that he strove to rely on the most accurate accounts; those would be administrative documents, edicts and the testimonies of witnesses to the topics which he recalls to the readers' attention. Besides all that facts, the depiction of the events in Marcianopolis seems strange. Nevertheless, we can conclude that his view on the officials depicted is utterly negative. Ammianus judged the actions of the administrators responsible for the treatment of the Goths extremely harsh, which comes of no surprise if even only a part of the allegations against Lupicinus or Maximinus were true.<sup>62</sup> Besides that, Lupicinus' actions in Marcianopolis are hard to explain with reasoning. The justification for the *comes rei militari*, having killed the bodyguard but not the leaders of his Gothic guests is given for the latter as being "dozy and drunk."<sup>63</sup> This is in line with Ammianus negative depiction, but if Lupicinus would have been willing to escalate the situation it is illogically not to deprive the Goths of his leaders. Some authors do suggest that killing potential unruly adversaries at banquets was a practice not unknown to the Romans.<sup>64</sup> We do possess no further information to either confirm or reject that notion; it is a fact that if there was a deliberate plot, it was not crowned by success. The depiction of a drunken high official, unable to perform his duty is in line with the representation of Maximinus and his colleague Leo as unprofessional, corrupt and heartless characters.<sup>65</sup> Whatever the officials' fault was, later historians continued to depict them in the most negative light. If Lupicinus' "drunkenness" is not the real cause for the evolving crisis, we should take into consideration that the military force he assembled against the Thervingi Goths was much smaller in numbers. This hints not so much to incompetence but to the limited disposal of military forces. Ammianus, in an earlier part of his works, mentions a certain Lupicinus, who as a young soldier as part of the *schola gentilium* regiment distinguished himself in battle against the Alamanni by dashing forward with a comrade against the enemy in 368.<sup>66</sup> If that person is the same Lupicinus as the *comes rei militaris Thraciae*, which is quite likely, Ammianus himself would have reported on his earlier deeds much more positively.<sup>67</sup> Heather points out that the explanations given by ancient writers might have been presented as too simplified and moralistic. The *foedus* of 376 did allow the Goths to settle in close pockets, retaining their arms.<sup>68</sup> Originally, the Goths were supposed to surrender their arms, but probably this provision of the treaty was simply non- implementable. If it is assumed that the Romans deliberately did use the scarcity of food in order to control the large Goth masses, the main problem present consisted of a massive overstretching of that situation due to corrupt officials, combined with desperate masses and insufficient Roman defence capacity and is backed up by all primary

<sup>62</sup> DEMANDT 2013, 390

<sup>63</sup> "dio discumbens vino marcebat"

<sup>64</sup> KULIKOWSKI 2007,134

<sup>65</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXVIII,1,5-13

<sup>66</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS XXVII,10,12

<sup>67</sup> JONES /MARTINDALE/ MORRIS 1971, 519

<sup>68</sup> HEATHER 2005, 163

<sup>58</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 5.4

<sup>59</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 5.,5-5.9

<sup>60</sup> IORDANES,XXVI, 136,137

<sup>61</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 5.9-5.10

sources.<sup>69</sup> This is in line with the general situation in the area with the *res gestae* mentioning the lack of military means to patrol the area of the river Danube. As the emperor himself was on campaign in the East, the situation evolved faster than the Romans could handle it. Coupled with evil-minded officials- there is no reason why Ammianus would not blame the Goths when he could have done so- the situation was deemed to simply spin out of control, even if the *res gestae* as well as other sources do not elaborate on all aspects in detail.

### THE BATTLE OF ADRIANOPOLE AND ITS MEANING IN HISTORIOGRAPHY: AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS AS A NARRATOR

Hadrianopolis, strategically situated on the *via militaris* between Serdica, Phillipopolis and Constantinople, was not only an administrative centre but also a production hub for armory in the region. Two loyal Gothic tribes under the leadership of chieftains named Sueridus and Colitas had camped in the vicinity of the town, having been settled there “since long times” and had been assigned winter quarters there.<sup>70</sup> It is further mentioned that the Goths in the vicinity of Hadrianopolis in the beginning were fully indifferent to the uprising and just remained concerned for their own welfare which is certainly another important detail.<sup>71</sup> The Goths are presented as reliable subjects and it is likely that those elements also provided that troops were part of Roman auxiliary forces serving the Augustus of the East.<sup>72</sup> Here we are reminded again that we shall not evaluate the Goths as a monolithic political entity: the evolving events merely did push the different tribes and groups to act together. However, the Emperor seems to have not trusted the Goths to fight their kinsmen and decreed their resettlement towards the Asian vicinity. An imperial order was sent out asking the aforementioned group to cross towards the Hellespontus and Ammianus reports that they willingly agreed, just pledging, without causing any trouble (*sine tumore*) for stipends for their expenditures as well as two days to prepare themselves for the journey. What followed then is a repetition of a string of events the *res gestae* did familiarize its readers before: again the harsh treatment of Roman administrators, combined with hostility by the local townfolk, drove the Goths towards rebellion. One cannot then wonder whether the continuous depiction of Roman administrators as irresponsible and short-sighted characters was the verdict of Ammianus, a former high official himself who in his moralistic tone systematically depicted the evils and shortcomings of contemporary Roman society. It is striking that the Goths, who ran havoc through the Empire and would annihilate Roman armies in such a crushing defeat that Ammianus compares the catastrophe with the writing of the wall at the battle of Cannae, are portrayed as being not responsible for the unfolding crisis. Modern commentaries to the *res gestae* are also pointing out to the passive stance and reasonable way the Goths displayed towards Roman policy: according to all sources, only grave injustice drove

them towards open rebellion.<sup>73</sup> Ammianus, as a true disciple of such illustrious historians as Tacitus and Polybius did not only write to inform the following generations of the events that had taken place in the past, like his forebearers, Ammianus had also to convey a message of warning to his audience to return to the ideal, high moral standards of the past, which he did present in drastic but literary rich and floral terms. Despite all adversary forces, Ammianus is not a pessimist and is upholding the image of the perpetuity of the *res publica* or *Roma Aeterna*.<sup>74</sup> It is also interesting that the *res gestae* mentions the plundering of a villa of the local magistrate in the vicinity of Adrianopolis as the turning point of things getting out of control. Normally it would be expected that the Goths are the side to blame but Ammianus rather cites the disproportionate response of the Romans as the cataclysm that left the shocked Goth no choice but to raise arms. The Goths are clearly presented in a victim role: we might even speculate whether Ammianus, as Tacitus, uses the image of the Barbarian counterpart as a “noble savage” to convey his message to abhor decadence, return to the *mos maiorum* of the fathers and- without specifically mentioning it- lamenting at the destabilizing effect of Christianity. If this topos is appropriate, we can detect critique of civilization, the idealization of the “Barbarian other” as the counterpart to decadent Roman lifestyle as well as the image of the “unconquerable wild”, as derived from Herodotus.<sup>75</sup> It is indeed necessary to delve into some literary analysis in order to give more close judgement of Ammianus’ intentions. In his famous oeuvre “Mimesis”, Auerbach concludes that, not unlike Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus is less inclined with the objective problematic; he rather strives in creating strong sensory impressions.<sup>76</sup> In doing that, he leads his readers towards a more detached level and manages to give his writings a moral verse without compromising the historic connotations of his plot. Without the slightest doubt, Ammianus made use of his sources in a formidable and comprehensive manner, his conclusions are among the most valuable literary traditions of the late principate.<sup>77</sup> Whatever the connotations might be, following the magistrates’ actions, the local populace, including the personnel at the big armories in Hadrianopolis and the so-called “plebs” were armed, threatening the Goths with annihilation. Subsequently, the Romans, again presented as having underestimated their foes, attacked the Goths who rose up, heavily beating back the Roman attackers. The victorious Goths subsequently united forces with Fritigern’s warbands and began to siege Hadrianopolis. As the Goths did not possess the technical means to lay siege to a city, they decided to abstain from further action, rather striking at “soft targets” and went forth in pillaging the Thracian countryside.<sup>78</sup> Given the situation, the Augustus of the East, Valens, had no choice than to rally his troops, asking his nephew Gratian for military support, and to move towards Thrace in forced marches. Subsequently, Roman armies were rallied for weeks order to corner the Goths for a decisive

<sup>69</sup> ZOSIMUS,4,20.6

<sup>70</sup> „cum populis suis longe ante suspecti“

<sup>71</sup> “salutem suas ducentes antiquissimam omnium, otiosis animis accidentia cuncta contuebantur”

<sup>72</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI,6,1-2

<sup>73</sup> BOEFT /DRIJVERS /HENGST /TEITLER 2018 , 109

<sup>74</sup> DEMANDT 2013 , 86

<sup>75</sup> PATZEK 1988 , 27-51

<sup>76</sup> AUERBACH 2003, 53

<sup>77</sup> ROSENBERG 1921, 264

<sup>78</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI,6,2-4

battle. The ranks of the assailants were strengthened by former Goth slaves, but also by elements of the local population. Remarkably, Ammianus freely admits that the reason for side-switching of the former Roman subjects was the effect of heavy and unjust taxation. Ammianus, without ever denying his aristocratic background, with his pen did expose injustice and expressed social critic quite frankly, and does not refrain from doing so besides the accused did collaborate with the enemy.<sup>79</sup> According to the sources, Valens concentrated his troops between Constantinople and Adrianople around the imperial villa at Melanthias, his troops still exhausted by the long approach but motivated by extra pay and spirit rising speeches by the emperor.<sup>80</sup> From a military perspective, the Romans have to be credited with not granting the initiative to the Goths, with a seasoned infantry commander, the *magister peditum* Sebastianus assaulting pillaging Gothic troops in the countryside within the operational area.<sup>81</sup> This is another indicator that Valens should not be discredited as a military leader, being capable of directing active tactical movements to disrupt the development of opposing forces. Zosimus backs that story and presents Sebastianus as an officer of high character who had volunteered for active duty, disgusted by the intrigues at the imperial court.<sup>82</sup> Zosimus further mentions that Sebastianus did carefully select and train his shock troops that would become the nemesis of his Gothic foes. Sebastianus also persuaded Valens to wait for offering battle until the Goths were worn and deprived of provisions. The fighting force at hand of the Romans seems to have been a mix of well-trained and less-reliable elements but in no regards should it be described as sub-standard. The Goths, concentrated at Cabyle under the command of Frithigern left back their trails and marched towards the hamlet of Nice to unite their army with reinforcements. This move was likely a reaction to the Roman tactical countermeasures that included aggressive attacks against the enemy's support lines in the rear in order to challenge control of the hinterland and demonstrate military presence. The ancient sources are drawing an indifferent picture of what happened next at the Roman council of war: Zosimus mentions that among the staff officers, Sebastianus urged to delay the battle.<sup>83</sup> But Ammianus counters that motion in stressing that Valens was persuaded by Sebastianus to advance his troops. Given Sebastianus' previous pattern, Zosimus' account is more in line with the narrative, but Ammianus must be credited with being a trained officer himself and with being a more contemporary witness. Modern authors, as Seeck, usually are embracing the topos of the classics, concluding that Valens' thirst for glory was the epicentre of his personality.<sup>84</sup> At large, post-classical authors were usually spending more energy on critically questioning the technical accuracy of ancient sources, but did not much evolve onto the inner drive of the authors to report events. In turn, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this led to a more or less uncritical reception of the character depiction of historical actors. Whatever the

<sup>79</sup> FUHRMANN 1998, 123

<sup>80</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 11.1

<sup>81</sup> JONES /MARTINDALE /MORRIS 1971, 457

<sup>82</sup> ZOSIMUS, IV, 22.4-23.6

<sup>83</sup> ZOSIMUS, IV, 24.1; AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 12.6

<sup>84</sup> SEECK 1966, 117

background might be, Valens sallied forth to prepare his attack, as he supposedly estimated the enemy to comprise only about 10000 soldiers. Here, in line with his critical approach towards Valens, Ammianus blames the Augustus for being jealous of his nephew Gratian, not willing to wait for his arrival, and claims that the Emperor was keen in gaining the merits of battle all for himself. Frithigern had offered a last-minute peace agreement on the battlefield employing the good offices of a Goth priest, coupled with a secret offer for an alliance if the Goths would be allowed to settle in compact pockets in Thrace and were exempt from certain levies. Such an agreement would have changed the *foedus* between both parties to much better terms for the Goths. Whether Fritigern was sincerely interested in avoiding battle or if he merely tried to gain time to deploy his troops towards a better strategic position on the field of battle, as suggested by classical authors, remains to be debated. Valens is blamed as having neglected reconnaissance and negatively credited with attacking the enemy imprudently. Besides that version, it has been discussed in this paper that Valens by no means was a bad strategist and, as proven in his Gothic and Persian expeditions, had successfully deployed his military talent on the tactical as well as on the operational level. It might very well be possible that Valens, being aware of the danger of even more Gothic warriors joining Fritigern, was rather keen in attacking the enemy before the other side was able to enlarge its forces ready for deployment. That could be evaluated as a preventive strike and Ammianus hints that the Goths were striving to join their kinsfolk garrisoned around Beroea and Nicopolis.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand Ammianus as a former staff officer should not be underestimated in his criticism regarding military matters. This does not mean that Ammianus was wholly referential; his battle depictions are known to include heavy literary allegory and have to be interpreted accordingly. Valens is described in a not too positive light by Ammianus, who does not omit to stress the Pannonian born Emperor lacking education in the liberal arts as well as in the art of war.<sup>86</sup> The negative opinion regarding Valens' military capabilities is generally reflected in contemporary Roman and later historian's evaluation of the Battle of Adrianople. From a tactical perspective, Valens was in disadvantage; while he had waited for rallying his troops for about a month in Adrianople, he decided to give battle on the plains and had his troops marching for about seventeen kilometres on a hot summer day which would affect the mobility and fighting capacity of his forces negatively. Further attempts by Frithigern to parlay are most likely to be evaluated as a tactical measure to gain further time in developing his troops on the battlefield. According to the *res gestae*, the Goths had set fire to the neighbouring fields and the wind blew smoke and heat towards the already exhausted Roman troops who were also negatively impacted in their visibility as it was even harder to reconnaissance the enemy.<sup>87</sup> The battle itself seems to have begun with skirmishing troops as well as cavalry, the *scutarii* (elite cavalry) and *sagittarii* (infantry archers) units at the left wing attacking at own will, being

<sup>85</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 11.2

<sup>86</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 14.1-9

<sup>87</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI, 12.11-13



repulsed by Frithigerns troops.<sup>88</sup> The *res gestae* reports the failure of the Roman cavalry in preventing the Goths to attack, who, supported by newly arrived cavalry reinforcements pressed and finally encircled the left flank of the Roman infantry. As far as retractable from the sources, the Gothic encircling manoeuvre and the ferocity of the quick cavalry attack did prevent the Romans from sending in reserve units, comprised of most of the Roman infantry. With the Goths being able to catch the enemy at the flanks, immobilizing him, the Romans started to waver from the pressure and finally were overwhelmed with the greater part of the Romans fighting to the death.<sup>89</sup> About 20000 Roman soldiers, including nearly all staff officers, thirty-five tribunes, the *magister peditum* Sebastianus and Valens himself died a soldier's death on the field of battle.<sup>90</sup> About a third of the Roman army is said to have escaped their fate. The accounts regarding the fate of the emperor are conflicting, but it is certain that he fell in battle. Valens was either killed in action right on the battlefield after being hit by an arrow, or he perished after the enemy set flames to a farmhouse he retreated to close to the battlefield.<sup>91</sup> The untimely end of Valens is a topic for Pagan as well as Christian authors, each one with their very own agenda. While Ammianus reflects on the matter in terms of classical tradition, likening the (possible) cremation of the Augustus to a funeral pile, Zosimus rather feels inclined to add an element of morbidity. As a pagan, with a grudge towards the Emperor, who had put to death real and presumed opponents, Zosimus elaborated on a mythical encounter of the emperor and his entourage while on their way towards the West. Reportedly, a mysterious man, lying dead like at the path and miraculously disappearing during a short encounter, in retrospective was presented as a bad omen that would befall the Empire and the Emperor himself.<sup>92</sup> The fate of Valens, as having been consumed by the flames is also taken up as a topic by authors as Iordanes, and should therefore be reviewed with caution. Abhorring Valens for paving the way of the Goths to convert to Arianism, -pure heresy for Iordanes- Valens' end by the hands of the Arianist Barbarians is referred to as a "direct judgement of god".<sup>93</sup> Iordanes, just as Ammianus, is displaying a moralistic perspective towards interpreting the events. Unlike his pagan counterpart, he judges the ill fate that had befallen the Empire not as the straying off the path of tradition, but as a result of Valens' alleged support of heretic proselyting in form of Arianism.<sup>94</sup> Søby summarizes the dilemma existent in the dealing with ancient texts regarding the Gothic war as well as the battle of Adrianople itself: most authors did use fragmentary sources from other writers, often with a great lapse of time having passed.<sup>95</sup> It is just naturally to assume that the respective events were henceforth interpreted in their very own religious-ideological context. This practice continued as a pattern, Lenski has pointed out that the religiously motivated damnation of

Valens, was reflected in later writings that just re-used their predecessors' factual inputs, but refurbishing it according to their respective spiritual or historical texts.<sup>96</sup> As a matter of fact, the victory at Adrianople was decisive for the Gothic side but could not really be turned to a strategic success. While the defeat had been a hard blow for Roman strength and morale, the Empire was never genuinely threatened in its existence. The raging Barbarian warbands were certainly a catastrophe for the areas affected, but as the Goths were not in a position to capture major cities, a longer-lasting domination over the hinterland was not possible either.<sup>97</sup> One of the Roman reactions to the defeat by the Goths was an organized massacre against Roman soldiers of Gothic descent in Asia Minor.<sup>98</sup> After five years of fighting, a *foedus* was concluded between Rome and the Goths, with Emperor Theodosius formally accepting the Goths settlement in Thrace as well as their status as *foederati*. The Eastern Empire had recognized that without granting the Goths a more attractive status, it would not be able to draw from their military manpower and remove the lingering threat over ever again occurring uprisings. The Goths within a few decades would rise to important positions in the military and distinctively shaped the character of the later Roman Empire, taking over the rule over the Italian peninsula about a hundred years later. The battle and its immediate results had already been assigned political gravity by contemporary writers, but only later historians would evaluate it as an event that led to the end of a historical era. Ammianus compared Adrianople to the catastrophe of Cannae; not without a reason: Rome, in the end, had risen as a phoenix from the ashes.<sup>99</sup> Obviously, Ammianus was trying to gather moral. While it had hardly occurred for the Romans to lose a pitched battle on the open field against Barbarian opponents, it is often argued that the outcome of that battle did change the institutional position of the Roman monarchy and represented the end of an epoch.<sup>100</sup> It is indeed correct to stipulate that both halves of the Empire in East and West showed a different institutional development in the aftermath; but the roots for that process had been laid beforehand by rulers as Diocletian and Constantine the Great. The Goths as *foederati* first and foremost were interested to participate in the wealth of the Empire and even the establishment of Gothic kingdoms on Roman territory from the fifth century on did not bring an end to the ideal of the Imperium Romanum as a philosophical ideal. Instead, the Goths would rise to the highest positions of military hierarchy in the Western Empire before founding their own kingdoms in the sixth and seventh centuries. Roman institutions however did outlast the end of the imperial court in the Western part of the Empire.<sup>101</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The battle of Adrianople is the outcome of a set of events that, in the greater picture, took place within the

<sup>88</sup> CAREY /ALLFREE 7 CAIRNS 2013, 140

<sup>89</sup> SEECK 1996, 119

<sup>90</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI,13.6-18; ZOSIMUS,IV,24.2

<sup>91</sup> AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, XXXI,12.1; ZOSIMUS,IV,24.2

<sup>92</sup> ZOSIMUS,IV,21.1-3

<sup>93</sup> IORDANES, XXVI,138

<sup>94</sup> LIEBESCHUETZ 2015, 139

<sup>95</sup> SØBY 2002, 112

<sup>96</sup> LENSKI 2004: 93-117, 107

<sup>97</sup> PFEILSCHIFTER 2014, 107

<sup>98</sup> ELBERN 1987: 99-106

<sup>99</sup> "Nec ulla annalibus praeter Cannensem pugnam ita ad internationem res legitur gesta...."

<sup>100</sup> MITCHELL 2015, 54

<sup>101</sup> FUHRMANN 1998, 34

economic and social transformation of the Roman Empire and was as much part as result of the migration of tribes in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. The Goths as settlers or *foederati* within the Empire were not really an exception but a decade long proven exercise in the later Roman Empire under the *ius gentium*. What makes that case different is the fact that the Goths, even if not a centrally organized entity like the Roman state, did arrive in great numbers, were concentrated in one specific region and, due to the special circumstances, still bore their arms. When exposed to highly adversary circumstances, the Goths rose up in arms, not to destroy the Empire but to secure a living within its boundaries and amenities. It is striking that only five years after the battle another *foedus* was concluded and the Eastern part of the Empire was able to integrate the Goths into its system, from a military, economic and sociologic perspective. The Eastern Roman Empire, dubbed “Byzantine” by renaissance scholars, would hold out for another thousand years, while Roman institutions in the former Western Roman Empire likewise were to survive the end of the imperial throne in Rome.<sup>102</sup>

In a final evaluation of Ammianus Marcellinus’ *res gestae*, it has to be stressed that the author exercises great diligence in providing credible sources and openly elaborates on problematic narratives if he cannot bear witness to them. On the other hand, the *res gestae* stands in the tradition of epical Roman histories, taken up in order to shed light on the *virtus*, the *mos maiorem* and the deeds that made Rome the true hegemon in its realm.<sup>103</sup> The pagan worldview confronts the final cementing of the Christianized *Imperium Romanum*; Ammianus Marcellinus tries to hold up a mirror towards his contemporaries and –probably fully aware that he was making a last stand- admonishes them to return towards the revered way of life of the ancestors. He bequeaths the reader with a timeless work of literary depth, and also steadfast holds up the ancient, the pagan tradition.<sup>104</sup> The events leading to the temporary escalation between Romans and Goths and the catastrophe of the lost battle are drawn as the result of the decay of the *virtus* of the *res publica*. The Goths themselves are presented as adversaries but also shown as humans acting in a rational way. While the Goths are tainted as treaty-breakers and a described as a definite threat to Roman order by Ammianus, he does not deprive them of moral qualities and recognizes that they had been subjected to grave injustice. Nevertheless, in the *res gestae*, the fate, the *fatum*, seems to deploy the Goths also as tools of a destiny the Romans are inclined to suffer for straying away from the path from tradition. His literary genius and historical craftsmanship aside, Ammianus, the former officer, first and foremost is a true servant of his state and fully believes in the Roman virtues; his writings in an epic and polished literary style, deeply influenced by the *stoa*, have to be evaluated from that perspective. The catastrophe of the lost battle, compared to him in relentless openness to the nemesis of Cannae is no reason to loose heart; in truly soldierly manner he meticulously points out the rather grave situation but sternly refuses to give up his belief that Rome finally will prevail over all its foes. The Battle of Adrianople, while

indeed a milestone in Roman history from a chronological perspective, has gained its nimbus as the end of an era only in the eyes of posterior historians. The presumed decline of the Roman Empire needed to be interpreted on fixed dates and the interpretation of the battle has mostly served that purpose. This is quite understandable, if we take into consideration that the Emperor himself with thousands of Roman soldiers fell on the battlefield and the echo that event has made through the works of the writers of late antiquity. The battle was surely a major occurrence in military history, but it was neither a Waterloo nor a Stalingrad. The battle as tactical event was more than paramount, from an operational point of view it was yet manageable and at the strategic level the effects were well mitigated by the Imperial government. The foundations of the processes that changed the role of the Emperor himself, the bureaucracy and altered the fate of the Roman state as a whole were already laid in earlier years during the reign of such illustrious rulers as Constantine the Great and Diocletian.

## REFERENCES

- AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS, *RES GESTAE*  
Ammianus Marcellinus/ Rolfe, J. C. (trans.) (1986)  
*Ammiani Marcelini Rerum Gestarum Libri qui Supersunt* 1-3.  
London: Heinemann (Loeb Classical Library)
- AUERBACH 2003  
Auerbach, E., & Trask, W. R. , *Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western literature*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- BOEFT 2018  
Boeft, J., Drijvers, J. W., Hengst, D. , & Teitler, H. C., *Philological and historical commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus*. (Leiden: Brill)
- BROWNLEY 1981  
Brownley, M., Gibbon’s Artistic and Historical Scope in the Decline and Fall. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42(4), 629-642.
- BURKE 2013  
Metahistory: before and after, *Rethinking History*, 17:4, 437-447
- CAREY /ALLFREE / CAIRNS 2013  
Carey, B. T. /Allfree, J. B. / Cairns, J., *Warfare in the ancient world*. (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military).
- ČEŠKA 1983  
Češka, J., Julians Nichtbeachtung der bösen Vorzeichen bei Ammianus Marcellinus XXIII 1,7 und XXV 2,8. *Listy Filologické / Folia Philologica*, 106(3), 169-173.
- DEMANDT 2013  
Demandt, A. , *Zeitenwende: Aufsätze zur Spätantike*. (Berlin: De Gruyter).
- ELBERN 1987  
Elbern, S., Das Gotenmassaker in Kleinasien (378 n. Chr.). *Hermes*, 115(1), 99-106.
- FERGUSON 2010  
Ferguson, N., Complexity and Collapse: Empires on the Edge of Chaos. *Foreign Affairs*, 89(2), 18-32.
- FUHRMANN 1998  
Fuhrmann, M., *Rom in der Spätantike: Porträt einer Epoche*. (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler).
- GOFFART 1981  
Walter Goffart., Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians. *The American Historical Review*, 86(2), 275-306.
- GOFFART 2010  
Goffart, W., *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later*

<sup>102</sup> JONES 1973, 1026

<sup>103</sup> MUTSCHLER 2000: 23-49.

<sup>104</sup> ČEŠKA 1983, 169-173.

- Roman Empire. (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press).
- HEATHER 2005  
Heather, P., *The Fall of the Roman Empire. A New History.* (Oxford: Pan Macmillian).
- HEATHER 2006  
Heather, P.J., „Foedera and foederati of the fourth century“. In: *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdom*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble, 242-256.
- IODANES, *Romana et Getica*  
Jordanes, *Romana et Getica* Berolini : Weidmann 1882. —LXXIII, (Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi ; 5,1)
- JONES / MARTINDALE/ MORRIS 1971  
Jones, A. H. M. / Martindale, J. R./ Morris, J. , *The prosopography of the later Roman empire: Vol. 1.* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press).
- JONES 1973  
Jones, A. H. M. , *The later Roman Empire 284-602:Vol 2.* (Oxford: Blackwell)
- KARLOWKA 1885  
Karlowka, O. , *Staatsrecht und Rechtsquellen.* (Leipzig: Veit).
- KULIKOWSKI 2008  
Kulikowski, M., *Rome's Gothic wars: From the third century to Alaric.* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- LENSKI 2004  
Lenski, N., Valens and the Monks: Cudgeling and Conscriptio as a Means of Social Control. *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 58: 93-117.
- LIEBESCHUETZ 2015  
Liebeschuetz, J. , *East and West in late antiquity: Invasion, settlement, ethnogenesis and conflicts of religion.* (Leiden: Brill).
- MARTIN 2011  
Martin, J., *Spätantike und Völkerwanderung.* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag).
- MCDONALD 1939  
The History of Rome and Italy in the Second Century B.C. *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 6(2), 124-146
- MITCHELL 2015  
Mitchell, S. , *A history of the later Roman empire, AD 284-641.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- MUTSCHLER 2000  
Mutschler, F., „Virtus“ Und Kein Ende? Römische Werte und römische Literatur im 3. und 2. Jahrhundert v. Chr. *Poetica*, 32(1/2), 23-49.
- NUSSBAUM 1952  
Nussbaum, A., The Significance of Roman Law in the History of International Law. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 100(5), 678-687.
- PARKER 2010  
Parker, N., Empire as a Geopolitical Figure, *Geopolitics*, 15(1), 109-132.
- PATZEK 1988  
Patzek, B., Die historischen Bedingungen des Fremdverstehens in Tacitus' ‚Germania‘. *Historische Zeitschrift*, 247(1), 27-51.
- PERIN / KAZANSKI 2011  
Perin, P. / Kazanski, M., „Identity and Ethnicity during the Era of Migrations and Barbarian Kingdoms in the Light of Archaeology in Gaul“ . In: *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World : Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity.* (eds.)R.W Mathison and D. Shanzer
- PFEILSCHIFTER 2014  
Pfeilschifter, R., *Die Spätantike: Der eine Gott und die vielen Herrscher.* (München.C.H.Beck)
- PROCOPIUS, *History of the Wars*  
Procopius / Dewing, H.B. (transl.) (1962) *Procopius of Caesarea. History of the Wars.* London: Heinemann (Loeb Classical Library)
- ROSENBERG 1921  
Rosenberg, A., *Einleitung und Quellenkunde zur römischen Geschichte.* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung).
- SCHARF 1991  
Scharf, R., Seniores-juniores und die Heeresteilung des Jahres 364. *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 89, 265-272.
- SEECK 1966  
Seeck, O. (1966). *Geschichte des Untergangs der Antiken Welt. Fünfter Band.* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung).
- SIVAN 1987  
Sivan, H., On Foederati, Hospitalitas, and the Settlement of the Goths in A.D. 418. *The American Journal of Philology*, 108(4), 759-772.
- SØBY 2012  
Søby, C. A., *Cassiodorus Jordanes and the history of the Goths: Studies in a migration myth.* (København: Museum Tusulanum Press).
- SOMMER 2010  
Sommer, M., *Die Soldatenkaiser.* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).
- THEUWS 2009  
Theuws, F., „Grave goods, ethnicity, and the rhetoric of burial rites in Late Antique Northern Gaul.“ In : *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition* (Eds.) T.Derks & N. Roymans, 283-320.
- THOMPSON 2002  
Thompson, E. A. , *Romans and barbarians: The decline of the Western Empire.* (Madison/Wis: Univ. of Wisconsin Press)
- VOGT 1943  
Vogt, J., *Vom Reichsgedanken der Römer.* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang).
- VOIGT 1871  
Voigt, M., *Beilagen IX - XXI zu dem jus naturale, aequum et bonum und jus gentium der Römer.* (Leipzig: Ernst Julius Günther).
- WAGNER 1967  
Wagner, N., *Getica: Untersuchungen zum Leben des Jordanes und zur frühen Geschichte der Goten.* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co.)
- WEBSTER / BROWN 1997  
Webster, L. / Brown, M., *The transformation of the Roman world, AD 400-900.* (London: British Museum Press).
- WHITE 1975  
White, H., *Metahistory: The historical imagination in nineteenth-century Europe.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- WIRTH 1997  
Wirth, G., „Rome and its Germanic partners in the fourth century“. In: *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, W. Pohl (ed.), 13-56.
- WOLFRAM 2005  
Wolfram, H., *The Roman Empire and its Germanic peoples.* (Berkeley, Calif: Univ. of California Press).
- ZOSIMUS, *Nea Historia*  
Zosimus / Ridley, R. T. (transl.) (2006). *New history.* Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies.