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THE GREAT COURSESSM

Ancient & Medieval History



Rome and the Barbarians

Taught by: Professor Kenneth W. Harl,
Tulane University

Part 3

Course Guidebook

 THE TEACHING COMPANY®

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Kenneth W. Harl, Professor of Classical and Byzantine History, joined the faculty of Tulane University after he completed his Ph.D. in history at Yale University in 1978. Professor Harl teaches courses on Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader history from the freshman to graduate levels. He has won numerous teaching awards at his home university, including the coveted Sheldon H. Hackney Award (twice voted by faculty and students), as well as the Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teachers from Baylor University. Professor Harl, a recognized scholar on coins and classical Anatolia, takes Tulane students on excursions to Turkey or as assistants on excavations of Hellenistic and Roman sites in Turkey. He is currently working on publishing coins from the excavations of Metropolis and Gordion.

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Rome and the Barbarians

Scope:

The history of the Romans and the barbarians on their frontiers has, in large part, been written as one of warfare and conquest. Driven by memories of a Gallic menace, Rome's legions advanced the frontiers of Classical civilizations far north and east of the Mediterranean core by the 1st century A.D. Yet the Roman conquerors and native peoples intermarried and exchanged ideas, mores, and objects. The ensuing provincial Roman cultures became the basis of Western European civilization.

The first third of this course deals with the Roman mastery of the Celtic peoples, first in northern Italy, then in Gaul and Central Europe. Simultaneously, the Roman Republic conquered Spain. Roman exploitation of resources in the peninsula transformed Iberian society into the first successful provincial society. But wars against new barbarian foes in North Africa, Gaul, and Asia Minor proved a costly victory that undermined the Roman Republic.

The second third of the course deals with the barbarian peoples encountered by imperial Rome of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. These included Germanic peoples of the forests, Iranian nomads of eastern Europe, and the Arsacid kings of Parthia. The emperor Augustus (27 B.C.–14 A.D.) consolidated the Western provinces, forged a professional army, and established frontiers along the Rhine, Danube, and Euphrates. He thus set the precepts of Roman frontier defense and diplomacy for the next two centuries.

The final third of the course deals with commerce and cultural exchange between imperial Rome and the frontier peoples. The cultural exchange created a unique Roman frontier society and transformed the societies of the peoples beyond the imperial frontiers. Hence, the Germans, depicted as dreaded foes in Classical sources, are revealed by archaeology as settlers, merchants, and soldiers. The northern frontiers became a great mixing bowl of peoples and cultures. The ensuing martial society that emerged by 300 A.D. on both sides of the imperial frontier engendered both the defenders and foes of the late Roman world. The course concludes with the frontier wars and migrations of the 3rd through 6th centuries that transformed the Classical into the Medieval world.

Lecture Twenty-Five

Romanization of the Provinces

Scope: In Spain and Cisalpine Gaul, the Romans had learned the techniques of assimilating provincials. The Roman peace brought improvements in technology, transportation, and land management in former barbarian lands. The imperial army played a decisive role by constructing roads, bridges, and base camps. Archaeology documents expansion of the arable; development of viticulture; and manufacturing of ceramics, glass, leather goods, and textiles to supply the armies in the Rhineland and Britain. By the early 2nd century, some Gallic businesses were even exporting their wares in Italy. The Rhine and rivers of Gaul linked the cities of northern Italy with the North Sea—the primary axis of European civilization ever after. Dacia was Romanized soon after Trajan's conquest, as veterans, merchants, and miners flocked to mining boom towns and Roman colonies. Success in Dacia assured prosperity of the Balkan lands of Pannonia, Dalmatia, and Moesia. In eastern Asia Minor and on the desert frontiers of Syria and North Africa, archaeology documents similar patterns. In the 2nd century, wealthy provincials funded Roman-style municipalities, took imperial service, and even entered the Senate. In 212, the emperor Caracalla capped this process by granting citizenship to all free residents of the empire. But success carried responsibilities. Henceforth, the imperial government was committed to defending these vital provinces on the frontiers.

Outline

- I. The Roman imperial army played a decisive role in Romanizing the frontier provinces of northern Europe and along the upper Euphrates and desert frontiers.
 - A. The legionary bases we have discussed were more than just military strong points for launching expeditions against barbarian foes; they quickly became societies and cities in their own right, and these bases had to be supplied with foodstuffs, household goods, and equipment.
 - B. The *limes*, the limits between the barbarian lands and Rome, came to rest in areas along lines of communication that allowed the armies to be supplied easily.
 - C. Studies based on archaeology in northern Europe offer some interesting information on the economic and social impact of the army on these frontier zones.
 1. In the 1st century of the empire, for example, more than 100,000 soldiers of the Julio-Claudian army were stationed along the Rhine after the Varian disaster.

2. These men would have required 7.5 million *modii* of wheat (50,000 tonnes) annually. The Roman army also issued generous rations in meat, wine, olive oil, and other types of commodities.
 3. The forces of the Rhine in the 1st century A.D. were supplied from production in northern Italy, especially Milan. The trade routes over the Alpine passes linked northern Italy to the Rhineland.
 4. One result of the presence of the Roman army on the Rhine was the transformation of Treveri (modern-day Trier) from a Celtic *oppidum* into a Roman city. Treveri became one of the centers for supplying the Roman army, producing wine in the 1st century A.D. and pottery and glass by the 2nd century.
 5. In supplying the army, the provincial zones experienced changes in their patterns of manufacturing and distribution of goods.
- D. By the 1st century A.D., cities in eastern Gaul emerged as major urban centers. In the 2nd century, villa farming and Roman agricultural methods took hold. Gallic notables adopted Roman tastes and mores.
 - E. Even regions of Gaul not directly tied to supplying and equipping the army were profoundly changed.
 1. The Romans' ability to transport goods was equivalent to that seen in 18th-century Europe on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. Such movements of goods were accompanied by movements of attitudes, language, and identity.
 2. The modest Celtic settlement Lutetia (Paris), for example, was not directly tied to the army but enjoyed the advantages of its location on a major trade route.
 3. The construction of highways prompted the relocation of Celtic populations from fortified hill forts to cities on the plains. In this way, the Celtic settlement of Bibracte declined as the population moved to the Roman city of Augustodunum (Autun).
 - F. Similar patterns of transformation also appeared in Britain, as well as in the Balkans, Dacia, eastern Turkey, and even along the desert frontiers of Syria and North Africa.
- II. In the cities not directly along the frontier boundaries, the elites who led the process of Romanization were not Romans.
 - A. Many of these notables had earned their citizenship through service in Rome's auxiliary armies, and they took over the job of Romanizing the cities behind the frontier.
 - B. Again, Gaul serves as a good example of this pattern. The Gauls readily constructed amphitheatres and adopted the Roman tradition of gladiatorial games.
 - C. The practice of worshipping the spirit of the emperor (*genius*) had been established in the Roman army with Augustus and was transported to the provinces, where major shrines were erected.

- D. The mining activities in the Balkans and Dacia gave a special dimension to that area.
1. Gaul and Britain received the bulk of imperial attention and military presence in the 1st century; only in the 2nd century did the Balkans and Dacia experience this type of Romanization.
 2. In the reign of Nero, Dalmatia (Rumania) hit rich veins that produced 18,000 pounds of gold annually, or about 20 million *denarii*. Miners from Dalmatia were later lured into the Dacia mines under generous contracts.
 3. Mining towns mushroomed across Dacia and the Balkans that might include 5,000 miners, 10,000 laborers and slaves, and more than 15,000 civilians providing supplies and “entertainment.”
 4. By 200 A.D., a network of mining towns existed, which in turn, fed business into the cities on the imperial highways. This combination of mining activities and military presence explains the rapid Romanization of Dacia.

III. Along the desert frontiers, the impact of Rome was not as remarkable.

- A. The Romans stationed their forces behind the boundaries of the desert, and much of the patrolling was done by Berber or Arab warriors.
- B. Nonetheless, these tribal groups were organized into ethnic Roman auxiliary units and stationed in Roman fortresses.
1. One of the best examples of the mixed provincial culture that emerged in these situations comes from Dura-Europus, a base on the Euphrates that was the home of the XX cohort of Palmyrenes.
 2. The site was populated by a mix of Greek, Aramaic, and Latin speakers; excavations there have revealed a synagogue, as well as the earliest known Christian house church.
 3. Also found at Dura-Europus was the *Feriale Duranum* (c. 220s), the military calendar highlighting holidays in celebration of Roman war gods and victories.

IV. We close by touching on an area in Asia Minor, Anatolia, that may not immediately come to mind as a frontier zone.

- A. Some regions of Anatolia were thoroughly Hellenized, but the interior and eastern sections of Asia Minor (Turkey) constituted a Roman frontier province similar to those on the Rhine or the Danube. These regions were populated by “inner barbarians,” tough mountain people, whom the Romans felt the necessity to control militarily.
- B. In what is today southwestern Turkey, in the Pisidiam highlands, near the modern town of Yalvaç, is an amazing Roman colony, Antiochia ad Pisidiam, founded by Augustus in 25 B.C.
- C. Perhaps 3,000–4,000 Roman veterans and their families were settled there and built a Roman city in the middle of a rugged Anatolian

landscape. They immediately erected the impressive public buildings with which they were familiar in Italy.

1. A series of monumental stairways and squares led to the great public center where the temple of Augustus was built.
2. The city also had a series of fortification walls and an aqueduct, the arches of which still stand today. The aqueduct brought two-thirds of the city’s water supply from mountain springs at 4,700–5,000 feet above sea level; it pumped 3,000 cubic meters of water a day and spanned over 6 miles.

D. By 200 A.D., the *limes* had come to mark a political and cultural boundary. Further, the provincials, descended from the barbarian foes of Rome, were increasingly concerned about their security, which explains the expansion of the military system to defend these zones.

1. This expansion began in the reign of Hadrian (117–138) and climaxed in the Severan age (193–235). This period marks a shift of military and fiscal resources away from the Mediterranean core to the provinces.
2. In 212, the emperor Caracalla gave legal recognition to this cultural change by issuing the *Constitutio Antoninana*, extending citizenship to all free residents of the Roman Empire.

Readings:

Garnsey, Peter, and Richard Saller. *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture*.

Whittaker, C. R. *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What was the impact of Roman military and fiscal demands on transforming frontier societies? How did these demands influence social, economic, and cultural change in provinces behind the military frontier?
2. What was the impact of building Roman colonies, highways, and fortresses? How did the Romans transform the urban landscapes of their empire? Why did these efforts have such a profound influence?

Lecture Twenty-Six

Commerce Beyond the Imperial Frontiers

Scope: The Roman peace witnessed an unparalleled expansion of regional and long-distance commerce beyond the imperial frontiers. In northern Europe, Rome fell heir to the trade routes of Celtic Europe emanating from Massilia (Marseilles), the Greek colony on the French Riviera, and the cities of northern Italy. Celtic merchants sailing to Jutland and the Danish islands sustained the growth of Roman cities in the Rhineland and Britain. Classical authors describe the routes and tribes of southern Scandinavia, and archaeological finds testify to the volume of Roman goods exported. The Germanic tribes of central Europe and Iranian nomads of the Russian grasslands were likewise drawn into the web of Roman markets. They all prized Roman luxuries, such as finely wrought jewelry and wine, but they also bought daily commodities with Roman coins. By 200 A.D., the northern lands beyond the *limes* from the western shores of Ireland to slopes of the Caucasus were linked to the Roman world by trade. To the far south, Berber caravans linked Roman North Africa to the kingdoms on the upper Niger. In the Far East, Alexandrine and Levantine merchants, versed in using the monsoons, sailed the Erythraean Sea (Indian Ocean) in an international luxury trade linking Rome to the distant ports of Axum (Ethiopia), Arabia Felix (Yemen), Taprobane (Sri Lanka), and India. This commerce enriched and reshaped the Roman and barbarian worlds alike.

Outline

- I. From the mid-2nd century A.D., the barbarian peoples beyond the frontier experienced far more contact with Rome through the avenues of trade than through warfare. This lecture examines this trade and its role in the Roman economy.
- II. The imperial peace of Rome transformed the volume of goods and the scale of trade on all frontiers.
 - A. This aspect of trade in the Roman world is somewhat puzzling because the Romans themselves were not responsible for any major innovations. Often the Romans borrowed existing technology, as for example, the carts and harnessing of the Celts.
 - B. The imperial peace, and the resulting legal standards and common currency, created social conditions that facilitated the spread of trade and technology.
 - C. Further, their cities on the frontier served as markets, stimulating trade both within the empire and into the barbarian lands. The trade contacts

established by these cities in the 1st century were maintained well into the 5th, disrupted only by the fighting of the 3rd century.

- D. The Romans' contribution to these trade networks came in the form of a revolution in transportation.
 1. They made available technology in carts and harnessing and constructed all-weather roads, bridges, and canal systems.
 2. River transport was developed at least to the extent seen in northern Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.
 3. The Romans also excelled in shipbuilding and built vessels using the shell and skeleton construction techniques.
 4. The Romans had both the motives to engage in long-distance trade and the means to carry it out on a hitherto unknown scale.
- III. In the middle of the 1st century, trade between the Romans and the Germanic tribes increased considerably.
 - A. This trade involved not only what is today western Germany but also Scandinavia and the lands around the Baltic in eastern Europe, as well as the Iranian nomadic areas.
 - B. Most of this trade was carried out by provincial merchants of Celtic origin, who regularly sailed from Gallic and British ports into the North Sea and followed traditional routes into the Baltic.
 - C. The Roman historian Tacitus and the geographer Strabo give us remarkably detailed information on the tribes dwelling in Jutland, the Danish islands, and Scandia (southern Sweden).
 - D. Merchants also used river routes leading up the Lippe and the Main into western Germany, then picking up and following the Weser or Elbe to the North Sea.
 1. An important route began at the legionary camp of Carnuntum, just to the east of what is today Vienna on the Danube.
 2. This was the so-called Amber Route, which followed the Elbe and could cut over to the Vistula or Oder into the Baltic zone. Use of this route can be traced back to the late Bronze Age.
 3. In the imperial age, the level of trade increased substantially.
 - E. Farther east, along the northern shores of the Black Sea, the city of Olbia, an ancient Greek colony, and Panticapeum, the principal Greek city on the Crimean shore, had long contact with the peoples of the steppes.
- IV. What went across the frontiers on these trade routes, and how did this trade change these societies?
 - A. Germania and Scandinavia exported raw materials, including timber, iron ore, flax, honey, amber, walrus ivory, and furs. Slaves, laborers, and recruits for the Roman army were another important commodity.

- B. In turn, the Romans exported a host of finished goods, such as glass, pottery, and jewelry, as well as perishables, including textiles (silks, woolens, cottons), wine, and olive oil. Weapons and furniture were also manufactured in the empire for export to Germania.
- C. A remarkable number of Roman coins have been found in the northern barbarian world, primarily the silver *denarius* used in payroll in the Roman army. In regions close to the Roman frontier in northern Europe, coins would have been used in exchanges for common Roman goods; in zones beyond the immediate frontier, coins would have been a curiosity brought in with other prestige goods.
- D. The exchange of people, through immigration and the slave trade, was important to both sides of the frontier. The Romans needed the labor for construction of cities in the Rhineland. The existence of Gothic loan words from Latin and Greek for menial tasks and specialized goods documents the use of the Goths as servants and laborers.
- E. This trade also allowed Germanic tribes to export excess population in a peaceful manner. Archaeology in villages shows continuity in population size and ways of life from the 1st century A.D. into the 4th century. This suggests that excess population was exported to the Roman world in the form of slaves, laborers, and soldiers.
- F. The Roman imperial government tried to regulate trade, with limited success. For example, Roman emperors attempted to ban the export of weapons. They also attempted to enforce the return of captives and deserters who were skilled craftsmen and could establish manufacturing operations in frontier regions.
- G. The prosperity that the barbarian peoples enjoyed from this Roman contact transformed their societies.
 1. The Teutonic chieftains and nomadic khans acquired prestige goods and elevated themselves as rulers. Certain Roman products, such as silver bowls, coins, and glass, were used for gift exchange in this process.
 2. Increased trade and Roman contacts also enabled these rulers to preside over larger political organizations by the end of the 2nd century A.D. To some extent, success in political organization and changing social patterns in the German world depended on the prosperity of the Roman Empire and the connections between the two worlds.
- V. At the same time, the Romans engaged in impressive long-distance trade to the east and to the south.
 - A. The cities that the Romans established in North Africa and the security of Roman Egypt stimulated trade with contacts deep into Africa, especially for gold and exotic animals for the arena.

- B. Trade in the east is well documented in the *Periplus* (“Sailing Around”), a manual for navigation. Several itineraries exist, outlining the caravan routes that started in the Roman world and moved east, crossing over to Mesopotamia, through Iran, and to the cities of central Asia or going south into Babylonia and taking the sea route to the Indian ports. There were also trade routes in the Indian Ocean.
- C. All three of these major routes, again, owed a great deal to Roman organization, shipbuilding, and the stimulus of Roman markets.
 1. In the time of Augustus, the trade down the Red Sea into the Indian ports probably increased fivefold.
 2. The long-distance trade began as voyages of discovery but became long-term, consistent commercial development and exploitation.
- D. A good portion of the profits made in these transactions went to reinforce the imperial government through its customs duties or to the senatorial and equestrian families that backed the trading ventures. Profits were invested in land, as well as the spectacular building programs, social development, and festivals that characterized successful Classical civilization.
- E. Although Rome’s economy is often classified as underdeveloped, immense profits from long-distance trade were netted by investors and the Roman state, and so contributed to the prosperity in the Roman world and the barbarian world beyond the imperial frontiers.

Readings:

Duncan-Jones, R. *Scale and Structure in the Roman Economy*.

Garnsey, P., K. Hopkins, and C. R. Whittaker. *Trade in the Ancient Economy*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How was trade promoted both within and beyond the Roman Empire by improvements in transportation, the spread of the use of coins, and rising demands for consumables by imperial cities? How did the trade circuits between Rome and the barbarian worlds beyond the frontier affect both trading partners?
2. How did the interaction resulting from trade change attitudes and perceptions of Romans and the foreign peoples (*gentes externae*)?

Lecture Twenty-Seven

Frontier Settlement and Assimilation

Scope: By 150, Romans could point to a definable *limes* that marked them off from the *gentes externae* ("foreign peoples") of the barbarian world. Rome did not halt as much as regulate barbarian movement. Fortresses and highways inhibited raiders along desert frontiers in North Africa or Syria. Along the great river frontiers or in Britain, legions and auxiliaries were stationed to intercept and destroy barbarian invasions. Simultaneously, the *limes* was a great mixing bowl of Romans, provincials, and barbarians from which emerged a distinct frontier society by 300. Favored tribes, such as the Batavians, were recruited into the army and gained citizenship. Other barbarians arrived as laborers, slaves, or immigrants. Latin loan words in the Gothic reveal the menial occupations of Germans on the frontiers. The term *colonus* came to denote peasant farmers, who by the mid-4th century, were veritable serfs and mostly barbarian captives in origin. Barbarian newcomers were dispersed and assimilated into Roman society. By the accession of Constantine, one out every five provincials in the frontier zones was of barbarian origin. In some ways, the *limes* was blurred as a common way of life emerged on both sides of the frontier. In another sense, the limits of Roman civilization extended beyond the political *limes*. But with Constantine, Christian emperors were to redefine this boundary and the relationship between Rome and barbarians.

Outline

- I. By 200 A.D., the *limes*, the frontier, had become a political and cultural border, marking the extent of Roman political power and success in assimilating provincial peoples.
 - A. The *limes* was not the same as a modern national border or a military barrier. At many points, the Roman frontier was unguarded, and people flowed across in both directions.
 - B. One of the major sources of this flow was military recruits. For example, the Batavians, who lived in the marshlands of the lower Rhine (modern Holland), furnished at least 5,000 men to the Roman army. This represented one-third of the tribe's adult male population. Other tribes, such as the Frisians, the peoples of the Agri Decumates, and the nomadic peoples of eastern Europe, were similarly recruited.
 - C. The movement of barbarians across the frontiers into Roman military units was constant and significant. The barbarians in these units learned Latin, were issued Roman-style weapons, and were moved into different

areas of the empire. As discharged veterans, many of them settled in Roman territory and became provincial Romans.

- D. Until the 4th century, barbarians served in auxiliary units. They were not allowed to use their own language, and none of them rose to a high position in the military structure or at court. They remained, essentially, soldiers, although their children and grandchildren would be assimilated into the general population.
- E. The Romans sought to regulate the flow of immigration into the empire, rather than to halt it.
 1. Romans specifically took in populations that would be useful. Roman political and social institutions, such as the patron-client relationship, were at work in this kind of assimilation.
 2. Often, barbarian immigrants were dispersed once they arrived in Roman territory. For example, two exiled kings of the Marcomanni, Maroboduus and Vannius, along with their extensive retinues, were granted lands in the Balkan provinces.
 3. In a similar situation, Plautius Silvanus, legate on the lower Danube in 67 A.D., boasted that he settled 100,000 barbarians into the Balkan provinces, dispersing them into smaller communities.
 4. As late as 269 A.D., the emperor Claudius II defeated a huge horde of Goths, then settled them as *coloni* ("tenants"), again, in the Balkans.
- F. The settlement of these barbarians in Roman imperial lands was done under specific arrangements. Tacitus tells of one situation in which a German tribe, the Ampsivarii, attempted to move into vacant lands in modern Belgium but was driven out by the Romans. At the same time, other tribes were allowed to settle in vacant lands so long as they asked permission and abided by certain agreements.
- G. Roman coins, minted in 348–352, celebrated the long tradition of immigration by depicting a Roman emperor leading two barbarians out of their hut for resettlement in the empire.
- H. Accurate statistics on the extent of this immigration are difficult to come by, but it is possible to make some educated guesses.
 1. In 429, King Gaiseric of the Vandals crossed from Spain into Africa, reputedly leading 80,000 Vandals, Sueves, and Alans. If this number is accurate, then these three barbarian tribes had 15,000 warriors.
 2. Classical authors grossly exaggerated the size of barbarian armies at 100,000 or 250,000, when most likely forces of 3,000 to 5,000 represented major forces. Many of the barbarian movements were probably also on this order of magnitude.
 3. Although these movements were relatively small, they were still significant in their impact on the frontier zones.

4. By 300 A.D., probably one out of five provincials on the frontier of northern Europe was of recent barbarian origin.

II. We must also note that assimilation did not work in only one direction. The Roman army, administrative class, and elites to the immediate west or south of the military frontier acquired a great deal from the barbarian immigrants who settled among them.

- A. By the end of the 1st century A.D. in northern Europe, soldiers of the Roman army began to wear hooded leather jackets that were common among the Celtic and Germanic peoples. They also adopted leggings and boots that were characteristic of the area in which they were stationed, as well as trousers and belts.
- B. In some ways, the provincials in frontier zones also recalled their own traditions. In Gaul and Britain, from 200–300 A.D., jewelry, relief works, and textiles reflected a resurgence of older Celtic traditions.
- C. The result of this mix was the emergence of a distinctly composite frontier culture. One feature that characterized this culture was that it was heavily military and martial in its ethos.
- D. Archaeological work reveals that local and regional trade increased contact between the Romans and the barbarians without necessarily leading to settlement.
 1. The Roman army in Britain drew much of its meat from the tribes to the north of Hadrian's Wall.
 2. The same kind of provisioning went on in the lower Rhine. The Germanic tribes outside of Roman control provided hides and salted meat to the military forces stationed in that locale.

III. The barbarian tribes that were engaged in these activities and being absorbed into the Roman provincial system became increasingly important for the Roman army. They also became better armed and had a stronger identity of themselves.

- A. By the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd, the literary sources describe larger and more clearly delineated tribal confederations among the barbarians; in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, the sources name kings leading these confederations.
- B. The barbarians did not adopt city life or mining activities, but they did learn better military and political organization from the Romans. Ironically, Roman trade and military pressure caused this change on the other side of the frontier.
- C. This pattern is also seen along the southern and eastern frontiers. In the desert frontier of Syria, for example, the Romans and the barbarians experienced similar exchanges as those seen in northern Europe.
 1. From the early 2nd century A.D. on, the Romans began to incorporate Arab nomads into their auxiliary units.

2. By 300 A.D., the Romans had to construct more forts and military highways to patrol this zone, and by the opening of the 4th century, Arab tribes were emerging with identities and institutions that they never had before.
 3. In the early Roman imperial age, it is difficult to track the movement and assimilation of these groups, but by the early 4th century, Arab confederations appeared that would ultimately fuse into Arab kingdoms by the end of the century.
 4. The same pattern also appeared in North Africa, with Berber tribes acquiring a sense of identity and greater political cohesion.
- D. These barbarian tribes came into contact with the material culture of Rome and, especially, with the Roman army, which offered a hierarchy and organization that had been unknown to the barbarians.
 - E. The conversion of Constantine and the spread of Christianity enhanced the distinctive identities of the barbarians in the 4th and 5th centuries, which would become an important problem for Roman emperors as these barbarians became a critical military force in the later empire.

Readings:

Burns, Thomas. *Rome and the Barbarians, 100 B.C.–400 A.D.*

Thompson, E. A. *Romans and Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How did barbarians settle in the Roman Empire? How important was military service? Did these means of exporting population to the Roman world act as a safety valve to Germanic societies in central Europe?
2. How did trade, travel, and military service enrich the material lives of barbarian peoples in central Europe? How did these same forces define the barbarians as ever more distinct from Romans? How did barbarians likely view the Roman world?

Lecture Twenty-Eight

From Germanic Tribes to Confederations

Scope: By commerce, immigration, and war, Germanic tribes transformed their world. Archaeology has revealed societies far more sophisticated by the 2nd century than the stereotyped images found in classical authors. The Suevic kingdom in Bohemia, for example, was a model of organization based on the achievement of the La Tène civilization and trade with Rome. Aerial photography has revealed widespread villa settlements by the mid-2nd century, which explains why the emperor Marcus Aurelius considered annexation of the kingdom. Early German warriors pledged loyalty to a lord and elected kings only in war; thus, Rome could seldom negotiate with a single leader. Any prince exalted by Roman gifts and friendship was compromised in the eyes of his fellow tribesmen. But by 200, the tribes of western Germany were coalescing into effective confederations: the Franks, Saxons, Alemanni, and Sueves. They were assisted by familiarity with Roman military organization and the prosperity from trade and cultural exchange. They had also learned to cooperate, because any tribe arousing Roman suspicions became a target. These German confederations posed a minor threat to Rome, but it was the sudden emergence of two new barbarian threats, the Goths and Sassanid Persia, along with succession crises and civil wars, that opened the Roman frontiers to an unexpected barbarian assault in the 3rd century.

Outline

- I. This lecture deals with the relationship of Rome to various barbarian peoples during the crisis of the 3rd century.
 - A. For historians, this is the era when Rome moved from its distinctly classical civilization into the period of Late Antiquity (300–750 A.D.).
 - B. The barbarians are seen as major players in this transformation. The Roman world would be profoundly changed during this period, and the barbarian assault is seen as one of the key agents of that change.
- II. The changes that took place are sketched out by two primary literary sources that describe Romans dealing with barbarians, Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus, “the last great historian of Rome.”
 - A. Tacitus was writing at a time when Rome was indisputably the superior partner in the Roman-barbarian relationship.
 1. He published his *Germania*, an ethnographic treatise on the Germans, in 98 A.D.. He also wrote the *Agricola*, an encomium to his father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, governor of Britain from 78 to 85 A.D.

2. These two works together reflected the views of one segment of the Roman upper classes about barbarians in the year 100 A.D.
 3. Tacitus’s account can be compared against archaeological evidence, but it also clearly represents the prejudices of a Roman political elite that had an idealized and unchanging vision of Germanic society. The Germans described by Tacitus in 100 A.D. are the archetype of the noble savage that reappears throughout Western literature.
 4. Tacitus also uses the Germans to measure the extent to which the Roman political elites had lost their freedom under despotic rulers. Tacitus tells us a good deal more about his view of the Roman imperial monarchy than about the barbarians.
- B. Ammianus Marcellinus served in the army of the late Roman Empire; his history begins in the time of Tacitus and concludes with the Battle of Adrianople (378).
 1. Ammianus’s account accepts the fact that German barbarians moved freely through the military high commands. The easy intermixing of Romans and barbarians on the frontier is taken for granted, even by the highest ranks of Roman society.
 2. This significant change grew out of the crisis of the 3rd century.
- III. We begin our examination of this crisis with a look at the Roman army.
 - A. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* is a controversial work by E.N. Luttwark describing how the Romans defended their empire. The value of Luttwark’s book was to refocus scholarship on the fact that Roman soldiers were stationed on the frontiers to defend the empire from barbarian foes.
 - B. By the 2nd century A.D., there were significant changes in the positioning of the Roman army and imperial goals. Further, the legions on the frontiers were no longer being recruited primarily from Romans and Italians. By the reign of Hadrian, most legionaries came from regions in which they were stationed.
 - C. With the emperor Hadrian, the Roman army also began to erect stone fortifications instead of wooden structures. Legions were no longer concentrated in large forces; each legion was tied to a separate camp, which resulted in some loss of mobility.
 - D. The emperor Septimius Severus instituted a number of laws that are also seen as affecting the ability of the Roman army to wage wars of conquest. For example, Severus removed the laws forbidding soldiers to marry, which made some soldiers reluctant to embark on far-flung expeditions.
 1. Roman military policy used detachments of units (*vexillationes*), usually composed of younger, unmarried men, in offensive

- operations, while older, more settled soldiers were left in the garrison to hold the position on the frontier.
2. This policy became prominent in the 3rd century, fostering a sense of detachment between field armies moving with the emperor and forces stationed on the frontier.
 3. Over the course of the 3rd and 4th centuries, the Roman civil administration became militarized, and an increasing number of soldiers became detached from military service for use in tax collection and administration of justice. Indeed, one of the ways in which the army lost its professional edge was by becoming too involved in the business of civilian government.
- E. These social changes in the army—the ethnic origins of the soldiers, the purposes for which the soldiers were used—led to the demise of the traditional Roman army by 300 A.D.
- IV. At the same time that the Roman army was changing, the Germanic kingship emerged as a result of pressure from, and contact with, the Romans themselves.
- A. Early Germanic tribes and Iranian nomads were organized in villages based on kinship groups, but the Romans sought leaders for these groups with whom they could make agreements.
 - B. The kings who emerged in these tribes probably came from aristocratic groups in which they had competitors. They received gifts from the Romans and could, in turn, pass on prestige goods to their warriors. Through their influence, tribal kings could affect the decisions of tribal assemblies.
 - C. The Romans never fully understood that any one of these kings who was identified with Rome could easily be overthrown by rivals.
- V. The level of fighting between barbarians and Romans increased significantly in 235 A.D.
- A. One reason we know that the fighting was serious is that the imperial government could not pay for the wars. The Romans had to debase their silver currency to the point that their fiscal institutions were compromised.
 - B. Further, in 235, when the fighting intensified on the frontiers and the empire began to be plagued by civil wars, traditional legions responded, but over the course of the crisis, the army changed significantly.
 - C. In 235, the emperor Severus Alexander was assassinated by a clique of his army officers on the Rhine frontier. This put in power the Thracian Maximinus I.
 - D. The murder of Maximinus in 238 led to a succession of emperors from the high aristocracy who failed to contain the attacks in the east and the north. When the last of these emperors was assassinated in 268, a line

of tough soldier-emperors came to the throne. These emperors halted barbarian attacks, restored Roman imperial authority on the frontiers, and carried out monetary and administrative reforms.

- E. The northern provinces, Gaul, the upper Danube, and Britain, were hit hard by the crisis, starting from the mid-3rd century. At this point, new coalitions of Germans appeared, including the Saxons in northern Germany, who began to raid the island of Britain.
- F. The imperial government failed to protect the coasts of Britain. In 287–288, military forces in Britain raised a rebellion and put their own man, Carausius, on the throne.
- G. Likewise in Gaul, Postumus, commander of the Rhine army, rebelled in 260. From 260–274, a Gallo-Roman emperor ruled Britain, Gaul, and parts of Spain from Trier.
- H. The barbarian attacks came principally from West Germanic tribes who had acquired better organization and discipline from the Romans; the result was political fragmentation in the empire. The Germanic barbarians had become a serious threat, along with the Sassanid shahs of Persia and the Goths, whom we shall meet in the next lecture.

Readings:

Luttwark, E. N. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third.*

MacMullen, Ramsay. *Roman Government's Response to Crisis, A.D. 235–337.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What were Roman perceptions of the northern peoples in the 1st and 2nd centuries? How does Tacitus reflect the prejudices and perceptions of the Roman upper classes?
2. How significant were the Germanic attacks in transforming the Roman West? How did they lead to the secessionist empires in Gaul (260–274) and Britain (287–296)? How was provincial and barbarian life transformed by the crisis of the 3rd century?

Lecture Twenty-Nine

Goths and the Crisis of the Third Century

Scope: Between 150 and 200, East Germanic peoples migrated from their Baltic homelands into eastern Europe. Foremost were the Goths from southern Sweden, who followed the river routes of Russia later used by the Vikings. The Goths, who settled to the north of the Black Sea, learned horsemanship from the Sarmatian nomads. In the 230s and 240s, Goths under Kniva invaded Dacia and Pannonia. They were followed by other Germans of Scandinavian origin (Vandals, Gepidae, and Herulians), as well as Sarmatian tribes. These migrations, in turn, pushed the West Germanic confederations into Gaul and northern Italy. Civil wars and the campaigns against Sassanid Persia distracted the legions. In 251, the emperor Trajan Decius was defeated and slain by the Goths in the Dobrudja. For nearly two decades, the Goths terrorized the Balkan provinces, while Herulians entered the Aegean world, sacking the environs of Athens and Ephesus in 262. Failure to contain the Goths discredited the Severan senatorial elite. In a coup in 268, the first of the soldier emperors risen from the ranks, Claudius II, seized the throne. He and his successors, Aurelian and Probus drove back the Goths and defeated the rival secessionist Roman states in Gaul and Syria. But Rome paid a high price for victory. Diocletian, who ended a half century of civil war and invasion, faced new conditions along the frontier and barbarian foes who had been bested but hardly defeated.

Outline

- I. This lecture looks at a new barbarian threat, the Goths, a Germanic-speaking people who originated from Sweden. They are closely associated with the political and military crisis that Rome suffered after 235 A.D.
 - A. This lecture also examines the Roman situation—the civil wars and the wars against the foe in the East, the Sassanid shahs of Persia.
 - B. Finally, we look at how the Romans surmounted the threat of the Goths, primarily under the leadership of a new breed of soldier-emperors.
- II. The Goths seem to have spoken an East Germanic dialect, akin to the Scandinavian languages of the north. The Goths who came to settle in eastern Europe retained close ties with the Baltic world.
 - A. The homeland of the Goths was said to be the island of Gotland or the southern Swedish districts of Gautland. In the late 2nd century, the Goths crossed from their Swedish homeland into central Europe.
 - B. By the first quarter of the 3rd century, the Goths had reached their new homes in eastern Europe and were pressing south and southwest against Sarmatian and Germanic tribes that, in turn, raided the Roman frontiers.

- C. The main direction of Gothic attacks was along the middle and upper Danube, so that the Goths had to cross Dacia. In the mid-240s, this province came under heavy pressure from the Goths and was abandoned by the Romans in 271.
- III. By the mid-240s, the Goths were attacking the Roman Empire directly from their settlements in eastern Europe. Their timing was fortuitous, because the empire was preoccupied with other problems.
 - A. As mentioned earlier, the emperor Severus Alexander was murdered in 235. He was the last emperor of a dynasty that had ruled Rome since 193 A.D. and the last representative of political stability for Rome for the next 50 years.
 - B. During this 50-year period, each of the three regional armies—the Rhine, the Danube, and the Eastern army—put their candidates on the throne. Rome lost the political stability of the Augustan solution, because no dynasty was in place to take over after Severus Alexander was murdered.
 - C. The Rhine army put Maximinus I on the throne, a Thracian from humble origins who was known for his great strength. Maximinus was unpopular and was murdered by his own soldiers in 238 in a civil war.
 - D. Civil war in 238 put on the throne a young emperor named Gordian III, who was a member of the older Roman aristocratic elite. From 238–268, although most of the emperors seized power through the regional armies, they originated from the high senatorial and equestrian classes.
 - E. These emperors failed to contain the Gothic threat, in part because they faced serious pressure on the Eastern frontier from the Sassanid Persians. Large numbers of military forces on the Danube had to be transferred to the East to meet the Persian threat.
 1. Roman emperors were compelled to defend the Eastern provinces where two-thirds of the population and wealth were located.
 2. In the 3rd century, the locus of imperial power shifted to the Eastern provinces, symbolized by the founding of Constantinople as the “New Rome.”
 - IV. The Goths attacked in tandem with other Germanic peoples from Scandinavia.
 - A. In the mid-240s, the literary sources mention new German tribes, notably Vandals, Gepidae, and Herulians. By the early 4th century, we hear of the Rugians, Lombards, and Burgundians, who would play important roles in the early Middle Ages.
 - B. Only a single Gothic king, Kniva, is mentioned as coordinating Gothic raids in the 240s and early 250s.
 - C. The Goths were assisted by the Roman civil wars. The emperor Gordian III was murdered by his army in 244, and Philip I, “the Arab,”

seized the throne. Philip battled the Goths on the middle and lower Danube with limited success.

- D. In 249, Trajan Decius, as governor of Moesia, defeated the Goths and was declared emperor by the Danube legions. The legions marched into northern Italy and killed Philip, leaving the Danube unprotected.
- E. The Goths thereupon attacked Dacia and the Danube provinces. In 251, Trajan Decius fell fighting the Goths at Abrittus in Lower Moesia—a humiliating defeat.
- F. The new emperor, Trebonianus Gallus, concluded a hasty treaty with the Goths and returned to Rome to secure his position. As a result, the Goths were still free to operate along the frontier.
- G. In 253, the legions of the Lower Danube again declared their commander, Aemilian, emperor. Aemilian defeated and slew Trebonianus Gallus, but Aemilian, in turn, was defeated and killed by Valerian, the candidate of the Rhine army.
 - 1. Within a decade, the Romans fought three major civil wars, and on each occasion, the Danube legions were withdrawn from the frontiers.
 - 2. The civil wars compromised defense and drove the imperial government to debase the silver currency, thereby precipitating a monetary and fiscal crisis by the 260s.
- V. The emperor Valerian, and his son and co-emperor Gallienus, battled assaults from three directions: from the Germans in the north, the Goths in Dacia and the Danube provinces, and the Persians in the east.
 - A. The situation worsened after 260 for two reasons. First, Valerian was captured by the Persian shah Shapur. Second, the legions of the Rhine declared as emperor Postumus, who ruled an independent regional state in the Roman West based at Treveri. Postumus gained legitimacy in the eyes of Western provincials by checking the Franks and Alemanni.
 - B. Gothic attacks climaxed with devastating raids in 262 and 267, when the Goths sacked the suburbs of Athens. Goths also burned the Artemesium of Ephesus, the greatest city of Asia Minor.
 - C. In the 280s and 290s, Gaul experienced destructive and widespread attacks by the Franks and Alemanni.
 - D. Gallienus was murdered in 268 by his Illyrian officers, who acclaimed Claudius II as emperor. Claudius was the first of the soldier-emperors who would halt the crisis in Rome.
 - E. In 268, the empire fragmented into three rival states—one in the east, opposed to Persia; the Central Empire (comprising Italy, Africa, the Danube provinces, and Asia Minor); and the northwestern provinces under the Gallo-Roman emperors.

- F. Claudius died of plague after winning a significant victory against the Goths in the Balkans in 269. His successor, Aurelian, was hailed as the restorer of the Roman world. Aurelian halted the attacks on the Danube and pulled Roman forces out of Dacia; he also ended the Palmyrene and Gallo-Roman empires.
- G. With the accession of the last of the soldier-emperors, Diocletian, the boundaries of Rome had been restored. Diocletian himself ended the civil wars at Rome.
- H. In the course of battling these barbarian foes in the 3rd century, the Romans had lost some strategic provincial zones in southern Germany and Dacia, and the barbarians had gained confidence and better organization to face the Romans in the 4th century.

Readings:

Burns, T. R. *A History of the Ostrogoths*.

———. *Rome and the Barbarians, 100 B.C.–400 A.D.*

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How humiliating were the defeats suffered at the hands of the Goths, notably the death of the emperor Trajan Decius? How destructive was the fighting from the 240s to 280s? What accounted for the success of Roman arms after 268?
- 2. In what ways did the barbarian threat contribute to the imperial crisis of the 3rd century? How were state and society transformed by this crisis?

Lecture Thirty

Eastern Rivals—Sassanid Persia

Scope: In 227 A.D., Ardashir, Sassanid shah of the Persians, overthrew the Parthians. The Sassanid shahs proclaimed themselves heirs of the Achaemenid Empire and condemned the Parthians and Arsacid kings as barbarian interlopers. In large part, Rome had contributed to the success of this political revolution, because repeated imperial victories had shattered Parthian power. Shahs Ardashir and Shapur I built a Near Eastern bureaucratic state exalted by the reformed monotheism based on the teachings of Zoroaster. They also overthrew the Kushans, thereby acquiring access to the nomadic horse archers, silver mines, and caravan cities of central Asia. Sassanid shahs, who fielded armies with siege and supply trains, declared their intent to expel the Romans from Asia. In 229–232, the emperor Severus Alexander had to take the field to defend the Eastern provinces. His inconclusive Persian war cost him his throne and political stability in Rome for the next half century. In 260, Shapur scored his greatest success by capturing the emperor Valerian and plundering eastern Asia Minor and Syria. Sassanid armies won victories as a result of imperial blunders. The legions and cities of the Roman East rallied and expelled the Persians. Briefly, Odenathus, caravan prince of Palmyra, and his wife, Zenobia, made their city the capital of an Eastern Roman state. In 273, Aurelian restored unity to the Roman world, and his successors humbled the Persians by 300. Henceforth, however, Rome faced a rival empire, rather than a barbarian foe, in the East.

Outline

- I. The Sassanid state was the creation of two shahs, Ardashir (227–241) and Shapur I (241–272). These rulers built an effective bureaucratic state based on the traditions of the Hellenistic world, as well as the earlier Persian and Near Eastern empires.
 - A. To some extent, the Persian shahs owed their success to the Romans, especially to the emperor Trajan and his strategy for defeating the Parthians. The weakening of the Parthian kings by the Romans enabled their overthrow by the Persian shahs.
 - B. Further, the Sassanid rulers had legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of Iranians. The shahs adopted the symbols and traditions of Persian monarchs from the 6th century B.C. and sponsored Zoroastrianism, which served as one of the pillars of Sassanid power and eventually became a state religion.

- C. The bureaucratic state of the shahs, based on the support of the Iranian landed elites, replaced the loose hegemony that the Parthian kings had exercised over the various peoples of Iran.
 - D. The Sassanid army was accompanied by disciplined infantry, war elephants from India, and siege and supply trains. The shahs had far greater financial and military resources to field such armies than the Parthian kings.
- II. Zoroastrianism, the religious ideology of the shahs, explains why they were so determined to go to war with Rome.
 - A. According to the literary sources, in 229, Ardashir I sent a message to the then-reigning emperor of Rome, Severus Alexander, that the Romans could have peace with Persia if they withdrew from Asia. The Persian shah demanded that the Romans relinquish control of Asia Minor, Armenia, the Syrian provinces, and Egypt—the locus of financial strength in the Roman world.
 - B. The Persians had visions of restoring the empire of Cyrus the Great from the 6th century B.C. When the Romans refused, war erupted, and Severus Alexander had to take the field.
 - C. Persian expeditions were expensive and difficult. The Persians attacked imperial territory in 230, but the Romans were not in a position to launch a counteroffensive for another two years. Severus Alexander had limited success in this first Persian war. In 232, he was forced to negotiate with Ardashir in order to return west and face Germanic attacks on the Rhine.
 - D. The ensuing frontier and civil wars allowed the new shah, Shapur, to reopen the offensive against the Roman Eastern provinces. Shapur waged three great campaigns, which are recorded on a monumental inscription in southern Persia.
 1. Shapur's first efforts were directed toward the Roman fortresses in Mesopotamia, which had been organized into a network in 198–200. The fortresses ultimately repelled the Sassanids' efforts to capture Syria and Asia Minor, but the attacks were serious.
 2. In 242, Gordian III had to take the field but was murdered before his army could go into action. His successor, Philip the Arab, arranged a truce with Shapur and agreed to pay him 20,000 gold aurei to break off the operation.
 3. Roman civil war in 253 allowed Shapur to renew his offensive and, according to his monumental inscription, he sacked Antioch, third city of the Roman Empire.
 4. The emperor Valerian waged an inconclusive Persian campaign in 254–256. When Shapur launched a third campaign in 258, Valerian again took the field, but he was captured near Carrhae in 260. The

demoralized Eastern legions failed to check the Persians from sacking cities of Syria and Asia Minor.

5. The Eastern army rallied under two new emperors, Macrianus and Quietus, and drove the Persians out, but Shapur retained his booty and captives and celebrated the third campaign as a victory.
 - E. In 260, the Roman Eastern frontier was disorganized, but Shapur could not exploit his victory because Rome commanded the loyalty of the city elites of the East.
- III. In 260, an enigmatic figure, Odenathus, emerged to save the Roman East.
- A. Odenathus was a merchant prince from the city of Palmyra, which had dominated the caravan trade running into the Sassanid Empire. By the middle of the 2nd century, Palmyra had adopted Greek civic-style institutions.
 - B. Odenathus, a product of this composite provincial society, commanded operations against the Persians, launching an offensive against Ctesiphon that compelled Shapur to sue for peace by 264.
 - C. Odenathus, down to his death in 266/7, never aspired to rule as emperor, for he, and later his wife Zenobia, lacked legitimacy among the elite classes of the Roman East.
 - D. At his accession in 270, Aurelian refused to accept Vaballathus, the son of Zenobia, as an imperial colleague. In 271, Palmyrene forces moved to secure Egypt and Asia Minor, but in 272, Aurelian swept across Asia Minor and capture Palmyra.
 - E. Aurelian reorganized the Eastern frontier, and Diocletian constructed the line of desert forts and highways known as the *Strata Diocletiana*.
 - F. In 298–300, Galerius, the Caesar of Diocletian, wrested from Shah Narses strategic fortresses on the Upper Euphrates that closed the fighting of the 3rd century.
 1. At the end of that war, the then-reigning shah agreed to surrender strategic provinces in Mesopotamia and recognized Roman authority in Armenia.
 2. Galerius's victory is celebrated on the Arch of Thessalonica, and the treaty marked a major triumph for Rome.
 3. The success of the Romans against the Persians was a testament to the logistics, training, discipline, and tenacity of the Roman army; the foresight of Septimius Severus in constructing the fortresses of Mesopotamia; and the loyalty of the elites who paid for these wars in the Roman East.
 4. Ironically, the Roman victory in the East eroded the civic institutions and battered the Roman army, both of which had been so vital to Rome's success in the 3rd century.

Readings:

Isaac, Benjamin. *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*.

Watson, A. *Aurelian and the Third Century*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the first shahs, Ardashir, Shapur, and Narses, use war against Rome as a means to advance their dynasties and personal reputations? Why did they fail to conquer the Eastern Roman provinces? How important was the opposition of the Armenians to Sassanid Persia?
2. What accounted for Roman setbacks and defeats on the Eastern frontier after 230? How did these Eastern wars transform the Roman state and society? What accounted for the ultimate success of Roman arms in the East?

Lecture Thirty-One

Rome and the Barbarians in the Fourth Century

Scope: At the opening of the 4th century, barbarian invasion and civil wars had militarized life in the frontier provinces. Many Romanized provincials had fled threatened zones, while German and Sarmatian barbarians were settled in depopulated districts. The *limes* bristled with fortifications and signal towers constructed to inhibit movement of barbarian invaders within the empire, rather than to act as bases for strikes across the frontier. The emperor Constantine stationed field armies near imperial capitals, while the frontiers were manned by second-class formations (*limitanei*). Henceforth, frontier wars were fought on Roman soil. Consequently, provincial society experienced repeated raids, even though trade and cultural exchange resumed. Two major changes in Roman society dictated future relations between Romans and barbarians. Diocletian restored order by exalting the power of the emperor and forged the late Roman autocracy known as the *Dominate*. Thereafter, honor and rank were defined by service to the emperor, rather than patriotic service to one's native city. In 324, Constantine founded Constantinople, "New Rome," and sponsored Christianity as the favored religion of his court. As a result, all barbarians, who were treated as dreaded foes in official iconography, could become civilized imperial servants by embracing Christianity and professing loyalty to the emperor. Barbarian peoples could, thus, enter the Roman world without acquiring a Roman identity.

Outline

- I. This lecture explains the changes that occurred in the Roman world as a result of the civil and frontier wars of the 3rd century.
 - A. Two emperors were fundamentally involved with these changes. One was the last of the pagan emperors, Diocletian (284–305), and the other was Constantine (306–337), the first Christian emperor.
 - B. These two emperors are often seen as creating the style of late-Roman government known as the *Dominate*. In this government, the emperor was an autocrat, styled as *dominus noster*, "our lord." The government was also associated with the exaltation of imperial power, the construction of a new bureaucracy of civil officials, the reorganization of the army, and the establishment of new policies concerning the barbarian peoples.
 - C. In many ways, Constantine built on the tradition of Diocletian, but the two emperors fundamentally differed. Diocletian came from a

generation of soldier-emperors and looked to Augustus as his model. Constantine, as the first Christian emperor, created an imperial order.

- II. Diocletian was a tough Balkan soldier who understood that the extent of the barbarian threat required an imperial presence on each of the key frontiers.
 - A. Diocletian shared imperial power with three colleagues, and the four emperors reigned together in an arrangement known as the *Tetrarchy* ("rule of four").
 1. In 285, Diocletian elevated his comrade-in-arms Maximianus to rule as Augustus of the West, residing in the city of Milan. Diocletian himself ruled from his capital at Nicomedia (in modern Turkey), close to the Danube frontier.
 2. In 293, Diocletian and Maximianus adopted sons to serve as junior emperors (Caesars), Galerius (293–305) in Antioch and Constantius I Chlorus (293–305) in Trier.
 - B. The Tetrarchy gave Rome a measure of stability for 20 years and allowed Diocletian to return the government to a sound monetary footing. Under this arrangement, efforts were also made to rebuild cities and frontier fortifications and to revive the ancient gods.
 - C. Unfortunately, civil war erupted in just over a year after the retirement of Diocletian and Maximianus.
 1. Galerius and Constantius assumed power in 305 and, in turn, appointed their own junior emperors.
 2. The appointments passed over Constantine I, the son of Constantius, who died while campaigning in Britain in 306. The Western army immediately declared Constantine I as emperor.
 3. Constantine accepted the position and, in doing so, condemned the Roman Empire to another round of civil wars.
 - D. These civil wars ended in 324, when Constantine defeated his last opponent Licinius and united the empire under his sole authority. These wars also differed from those in the 3rd century.
 1. First, the empire was not assaulted by the same barbarian threats that had taken advantage of the civil wars in the 3rd century.
 2. Further, in the 4th century, emperors ruled regional states and waged long-term civil wars. The control of Rome was needed for legitimacy so that command of powerful regional armies was essential.
 - E. These changes transformed the Roman monarchy and society.
- III. Constantine overhauled the civil and military administration of the empire.
 - A. The Senate was no longer important to the central administration of the government. Emperors distanced themselves from members of the aristocracy, preferring the services of bureaucrats who could collect

taxes and enforce the emperor's will in the provinces but would not offer any challenges.

- B.** The size of imperial administration was greatly increased. In 200 A.D., the Roman imperial government might have had 3,000 high officials; in 320 A.D., there were at least 35,000.
1. A new palace administration was created around the person of the emperor. Many of the key positions were staffed by eunuchs, who posed no threat to the emperor.
 2. The civil and military administration was divided. Provincial administration was reorganized into three tiers. Instead of 35 provinces, 125 were recognized; these provinces were grouped into regional districts known as *dioceses*. The dioceses were further grouped into four *prefecturates*.
 3. Notions of honor, as well as the client-patron relationship, were inverted in the new government. In the early empire, an individual had to have high status and honor to serve the state. Under Constantine and later emperors, high status was the reward for serving the state, which resulted in mismanagement and corruption.
 4. Finally, under Constantine, it behooved officials to convert to Christianity. After 324, Christians had control of the court, the administration, and the army. In 325, at the Council of Nicaea, Constantine defined Christianity and created the imperial church.
- C.** The army, the other pillar of imperial power, was reformed by Constantine.
1. Diocletian premised his army on the traditions of the legions, although these were divided into garrison units and vexillations, or battle units. More cavalry were recruited, but the imperial army relied primarily on infantry until the 6th century.
 2. In the 4th century, the mission of the army had changed from defending the frontiers to defending the emperor.
 3. The *Notitia Dignitatum*, army roles compiled in 406–423, tells us that imperial forces were classified into the privileged *comitanensis*, the “comrades” who comprised the emperor’s field army, and the *limitanei*, who guarded the frontier. This division probably came out of the regional civil wars, in which the emperor needed an effective field army to battle his rivals.
 4. Both the field and the frontier armies were increasingly being manned by barbarians. There were few ethnic units in the 4th century, but many in the officer corps carried Germanic names. The army was a route for social mobility for the barbarians in a way that it had not been in the 3rd century.
 5. This change was the result of the bloodletting in the civil wars of the 3rd century, because few veterans survived to train recruits for the new wave of civil wars in the early 4th century. The lack of

adequate training also explains changes in Roman arms and tactics, such as simplification of the armor and helmets and the replacement of the *gladius* with a thrusting spear.

6. The division of the army into garrison and field units also led to a steady erosion of frontier territories over the course of the 4th century. By the mid-4th century, the Roman armies no longer launched deep strikes into barbarian lands; the fighting took place on imperial territory.
7. The impact of Christianity on the imperial army’s fighting ability is still an open question. Most soldiers probably saw the new imperial standard, the *labarum*, as a talisman of the house of Constantine, rather than a Christian symbol. But with the end of the traditions of the legions and the shift in religious loyalties, Roman soldiers no longer had the certainty in their divine protectors that they had in the Principate.
8. The late Roman army lacked the discipline and traditions of the camp of Hadrian. In the late 4th century, members of the literate class called for a return to the *antiqua legio* (“ancient legion”) to defeat the barbarians, but those appeals failed.

Readings:

Jones, A. H. M. *The Decline of the Ancient World*.

Matthews, John. *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were the significant changes in the Roman state and society that transformed the relationship with barbarians in the 4th century? In what ways did the emperors Diocletian and Constantine reshape this society of the Dominate?
2. How did the changes in the imperial army and frontier defense compromise the integrity of the Roman world? Why did emperors pursue new military and frontier policies? What were the primary threats and concerns of emperors down to the reign of Valens?

Lecture Thirty-Two

From Foes to Federates

Scope: During the reign of Constantius II, the Goths and their East Germanic kin embraced Arian Christianity through the efforts of Ulfilas, “the apostle to the Goths.” Ulfilas adapted the Greek alphabet to the Gothic language to translate the Bible and created a literary culture. The Goths, whose society was transformed by the booty and captives taken in raids of the 3rd century, acquired an ethnic identity. From the mid-4th century on, Goths, Franks, and Alemanni came to monopolize imperial military commands. Constantius II recruited more tribal regiments of barbarians, known as “federates” (*foederati*), into imperial field armies. Federates, who served under their own leaders and used their own weapons and tactics, were settled in depopulated frontier lands. The new arrangements carried dangers. In 350–353, the Western army revolted under the usurper Magnentius, an officer of barbarian origin. The ensuing civil war opened the frontiers to barbarian migrations for the next 15 years; these served as the dress rehearsal for the collapse of the Roman West in the 5th century. In 375, the emperor Valens admitted 100,000 Goths into the Balkans as federates, refugees from a terrifying new nomadic race, the Huns, who had just overthrown the Gothic kingdom—an event long remembered in Scandinavian epic. Corrupt imperial officials drove these Goths into rebellion. On August 8, 378, the Gothic rebels annihilated the Eastern Roman field army and slew the emperor Valens at Adrianople. For the second time, the Goths plunged the Roman Empire into a political crisis.

Outline

- I. In this lecture, we shall discuss the relationship between the barbarian foes of Rome and the new imperial order created by Constantine in the early 4th century.
 - A. The northern barbarians were eventually transformed into *federates*, or allies. Specifically, the term *foederati* refers to German tribes who were recruited as ethnic military units to fight under contract for the Roman emperor.
 - B. This lecture also looks at how well the Dominate coped with barbarians in the East, that is, the Sassanid shahs of Persia, and in the north, the Germanic barbarians who were now organized into confederations led by kings. In this Germanic group we include the Goths, who at the time, were a dominant power in eastern Europe.
- II. We begin with the Persians. The late Roman army reformed by Constantine was tested in a war against Persia in the generation after Constantine’s

death—and found wanting.

- A. Shah Shapur II (309–379) challenged three Roman emperors: Constantius II (337–361), Julian (360–363), and Valens (364–378). They fought the Persians with an imperial army suffering sundry problems.
 - B. In the 350s, Shapur reopened the wars of conquest against Rome and besieged the cities of Mesopotamia; these operations climaxed in 359 with the capture of the fortress of Amida in southeastern Turkey.
 1. The successes of Shapur forced Constantius II to mount a major eastern expedition. As in the 3rd century, such a campaign required the withdrawal of large numbers of forces from Europe and posed a heavy financial burden for Rome.
 2. As Constantius was engaged in fighting the Persians, the army of the Rhine rebelled and declared Julian the Apostate as emperor in 360. Julian had been reared as a Christian but had later secretly converted to paganism.
 3. In 361, Constantius died of illness, and Julian as sole emperor inherited the Persian war so that, ironically, he withdrew forces from the West.
 - C. In spring 363, Julian led his main column down the Euphrates, but he failed to capture Ctesiphon or to draw Shapur into decisive battle.
 1. To some extent, the blame can be placed on Julian’s own failure in leadership. He timed the campaign poorly, and his army suffered from lack of provisions and water. Julian was forced to withdraw, and he was killed in a skirmish on June 26, 364.
 2. Jovian, elected emperor, evacuated the army under truce whereby he surrendered to Shapur the strategic fortresses of Roman Mesopotamia.
 - D. This defeat of the Eastern field army proved significant. Rome relinquished the provinces gained in 300, and in 385–386, Theodosius I agreed to an unfavorable partition of Armenia whereby Persia gained most of the former kingdom. From 400 on, Persia was occupied in dealing with nomadic barbarians on its own frontiers and could not pursue further operations against Rome.
- III. Defeat in Persia, however, had repercussions across the empire and seriously affected the northern frontiers.
- A. By 300 A.D., the Germans had gained a great deal of confidence, along with better organization and equipment, from their fighting in the 3rd century.
 1. In addition, ever more Germans were recruited into the reorganized Roman army and served in the *comitanensis*, not in auxiliary units. These soldiers retained their German identity far more strongly than they did in the old imperial army.

2. We read in the history of Ammianus Marcellinus that many of the German officers retained their tribal names. There was also an alarming tendency for these leaders to operate on both sides of the frontier, as both Germanic kings and Roman officers.
 3. These changes in the army might have been partly to blame for Julian's failure. The field forces did not perform to standard and were unable to carry out effective siege warfare.
- B.** The defeat in Persia also compromised the northern defenses.
1. In 350, the Western army rebelled under Magnentius in response to the imperial policy of halting sacrifices.
 2. Magnentius was, by origin, a barbarian and retained ties to his kinsmen. He recruited Franks and Alemanni from the other side of the frontier for the rebellion.
 3. The rebellion forced Constantius to suspend his Persian war and to march west in 352–353. With the defeat of Magnentius, Constantius returned to the East.
 4. With the departure of Constantius, the Western frontiers collapsed. From 355 on, barbarians surged into Roman territory, penetrating deep into Gaul.
 5. Constantius sent his cousin Julian to restore the West. In 357, Julian won a decisive victory over the Alemanni near Strasbourg. He claimed to have defeated a coalition of 35,000 men led by 7 kings.
 6. Julian reorganized the defenses of Gaul by settling Franks as federates on the lower Rhine.
- C.** The frontier of the Danube also showed some of the same changes that can be documented in the Rhineland.
1. The Danube frontier changed as a result of a decision made by the emperor Valens in 375. Valens and his brother, Valentinian, had been elected jointly by the army in 364; Valentinian ruled in the West, and Valens took charge of the East and the lower Danube.
 2. In 375–377, Valens admitted 100,000 Goths who had petitioned for refuge from the Huns in the empire. The Goths had been settled in eastern Europe as members of a confederation.
 3. Between 370–375, the Gothic king and his army were annihilated by an attack of two nomadic peoples, the Alans and the Huns. The Goths fled before these invaders to the banks of the Danube.
 4. Valens accepted the Goths into the empire and settled them in the old province of Moesia. The Roman authorities, however, could not feed or house such large numbers of immigrants; abuses by corrupt officials and starvation drove the Goths into rebellion in 377.

5. As Goths plundered the Balkans, Valens had to suspend his eastern operations. On August 9, 378, Valens engaged the Goths near the city of Adrianople.
6. The Roman army became entangled in assaulting the Gothic infantry, and so lost cohesion when the Gothic cavalry surprised the Roman army in the rear. The emperor Valens was killed, and 20,000 Roman soldiers fell.
7. Gratian, the surviving emperor in the West, appointed Theodosius I in the East. Theodosius came to terms with the federates and returned them to their territory. By 382, the Goths had been given land and terms and enrolled in the Eastern army, but they had learned an important lesson: Rebellion was effective in extorting concessions from Rome.

Readings:

Elton, Hugh. *Warfare in Roman Europe, A.D. 350–425*.

Lenski, N. *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.*

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the clash between Rome and Sassanid Persia in the early 4th century influence changes in Roman policy on the frontiers? What weaknesses in the late Roman army were revealed by the failure of the emperor Julian's eastern expedition in 363?
2. Why did the Germanic confederations pose a more powerful threat to Rome after 300? In what ways did the imperial government promote the formation of these tribal identities and rise of tribal kings? Why did the Roman emperors come to rely ever more on tribal federate armies for their field forces?

Lecture Thirty-Three

Imperial Crisis and Decline

Scope: Theodosius I, elevated as emperor in the East following Adrianople, received the submission of the Goths, who were restored to their lands on promise of military service. Roman field armies were steadily filled with barbarian mercenaries tied by personal loyalty to the emperor. The East Germans, devoted to Arian Christianity, were divided further from other Christians after Theodosius upheld the Nicene confession in 381. On Theodosius's death, the courts of his sons, Arcadius at Constantinople and Honorius at Milan, clashed. Stilicho, commander of the Western army, intrigued to dominate the two courts and marry into the imperial family. Stilicho advanced his personal ends by exploiting the threat of Alaric and his Gothic federates, who raided the Balkans in 395–397. In 400–402, Alaric and his Goths migrated across the Balkans and entered Italy. Stilicho, who preferred to humble, rather than destroy, Alaric, withdrew field armies from Gaul to Italy. In the winter of 408, Germanic tribes migrated en masse across the frozen Rhine, overrunning the northwestern and Iberian provinces. Honorius, who ordered the execution of Stilicho, was powerless to prevent a Gothic sack of Rome in 410. Alaric's Goths, henceforth known as Visigoths under his successors, were granted an independent kingdom in Aquitaine with rights to collect taxes and assign lands. Within a generation, the Western Roman Empire was dismembered by similar treaties into Teutonic kingdoms, while the imperial court at Ravenna fell into the hands of barbarian generalissimos who played the role of king makers.

Outline

- I. This lecture examines the implications of the Battle of Adrianople in 378, in which the Goths defeated the Eastern Roman field army.
 - A. The defeat at Adrianople proved decisive in retrospect, as a result of the arrangements that followed immediately afterward.
 - B. In 379, the emperor Theodosius was commissioned by his colleague, the emperor Gratian, to take charge of the Eastern provinces and come to terms with the rebel Goths. Theodosius's solution was to renegotiate the military contracts of the Goths, settle them back in their quarters along the Danube, and ensure that they received sufficient provisions.
 - C. Under Theodosius, the Goths became one of the major elements of the Roman imperial field army. They were recruited in tribal regiments and usually fought under their own kings.

- D. In 392, the Western army staged yet another revolt, perhaps in response to Christian legislation. Theodosius marched west with an army that included 20,000 Goths and won a total victory against the Western army at the Battle of Frigidus. This was seen as a vindication of both Theodosius and the Christian God.
 - E. At Frigidus, two talented officers of Theodosius served: Alaric, the future Goth king who would sack Rome, and Stilicho, a Vandal-Roman provincial who would defend Rome. By 395, Stilicho was supreme commander (*magister militum*) under Theodosius.
 - F. Theodosius was a charismatic soldier-emperor who commanded the loyalty of the Germanic kings and officers. Without such an emperor, German warriors could transfer their loyalty, as many were to do in the crisis after 395.
 - G. The bureaucratic elites, who were denied command of armies, employed German tribal armies in rebellions from the imperial governments, but in so doing, they allowed the Germans to carve out their own kingdoms.
- II. Theodosius died in January of 395 and was succeeded by two sons, Arcadius (395–408) and Honorius (395–423). The succession crisis that ensued revealed the institutional and military weaknesses of the late Roman state.
 - A. Arcadius was 17 years old and ruled the wealthier half of the Roman Empire from Constantinople. The emperor in the West was Honorius, who was 11 years old. Both young emperors were in the hands of ministers.
 - B. The Eastern court was divided into factions, while in the West, Stilicho had at his command virtually all the field armies of the Roman world. Stilicho also claimed that Theodosius had named him regent for the two brothers.
 - C. The Eastern court was not inclined to be dominated by the barbarian Stilicho, who was determined to link himself to the imperial family through marriage.
 - D. Stilicho had an opportunity to intervene in the East, because the Eastern government had alienated Alaric, a talented officer in the army and king of the Visigoths.
 1. When Alaric was passed over for command of the Eastern army, he attacked Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece in 395–397. The Eastern government summoned Stilicho and the Western army for salvation.
 2. In handling this crisis, Stilicho revealed that his primary motivation was personal ambition. He could have destroyed the Goths on several occasions but, instead, decided to negotiate.

3. In 397, Stilicho gave Alaric the position of commander of a regional army (*dux*) and settled the Goths as federates in Epirus.
 4. This arrangement revealed that a tribal army by rebellion could force terms from the Roman imperial government.
- III.** In 400 A.D., the civil aristocracy in Constantinople reasserted itself in a popular riot against the Gothic soldiers quartered in the city by Stilicho. At the same time, the Eastern government encouraged the Goths to move west as a way of embarrassing Stilicho and the Western government.
- A.** In 404, the Goths entered Italy through the Julian Alps. Again, Stilicho chose not to destroy the Goths in northern Italy, because he hoped to negotiate. He did, however, withdraw large numbers of field forces from the Rhine and upper Danube, many of whom were Germanic soldiers.
 - B.** The northern provinces were left open to German migration. On New Year's Eve in 406, the Rhine froze and barbarians moved across in great numbers. The frontier defenses collapsed, and Stilicho was discredited with the ruling classes at Rome.
 - C.** Honorius decided to remove the Western court from Milan to Ravenna on the east coast of Italy. This move underlined the fact that the Western government was unable to defend its vital frontier provinces.
 - D.** In 408, Honorius had Stilicho arrested and executed. Most of the field army consisted of barbarian tribal regiments who owed their loyalty to Stilicho; as a result of his death, these regiments defected.
 - E.** Alaric, as leader of the only military force left in Italy, pressured the imperial government by attacking Rome.
 1. From 408–410, Alaric conducted three different blockades of Rome. His goal was to gain a command from the government so that he could legitimize his tribal regiments as a Roman army and reward his followers with land or money.
 2. Honorius refused to deal with Alaric, who captured and sacked Rome on August 24–26, 410. The Goths retired into southern Italy where Alaric died in late 410.
 3. Athaulf, Alaric's brother-in-law, led the Goths (henceforth known as Visigoths) out of Italy as imperial federates who were to clear Gaul of the barbarian invaders who had immigrated there in 406–407.
 - F.** In 406–407, Franks had migrated into northern Gaul; Burgundians settled in central Gaul; and Vandals, Sueves, and Alans entered Spain. As imperial power broke down in these regions, the cities reacted in various ways. Some of them bought off the Germans with food; others hired them on as soldiers in local rivalries.
 - G.** The only effective field army in the Western Empire after 406 was in Britain. This army rebelled in 407 and crossed over into Gaul, leaving

Britain unprotected. The Roman administration there broke down over the next generation.

- H.** In 411–418, the Visigoths restored order in Gaul and Spain. They became federates and were rewarded with territory in southern Gaul that would today be the Aquitaine.
 1. Under an imperial treaty (*foedus*), the Goths were to receive one-third of the tax revenues from surrounding Roman provinces to support themselves as a field army.
 2. In effect, the Visigoths were settled as an armed nation, and the foundation was laid for the creation of a territorial kingdom.
- I.** At the death of Honorius in 423, the Western court had lost its possessions beyond the Mediterranean core. In 425, Valentinian III, nephew of Honorius, ruled under the tutelage of a new *magister militum*, Aetius. To control German federates residing in the Western Empire, Aetius called in a frightening new barbarian ally, the Huns.

Readings:

Burns, T. S. *Barbarians within the Gates of Rome: A Study of Roman Military Policy and the Barbarians, ca. 375-425 A.D.*

Heather, Peter. *Goths and Romans, 332–489.*

Questions to Consider:

1. What was the frontier and military situation faced by the two imperial governments in 395? Could a charismatic soldier-emperor have met the crisis? How responsible were the weak-willed emperors Arcadius and Honorius in precipitating a crisis? What institutional weaknesses contributed to the crisis?
2. What were the ambitions of Stilicho and Alaric, and was it a matter of historical irony that they were cast in the roles of defender and sacker of Rome? How did the migration of the Visigoths and their settlement in Gaul transform them into a nation?

Lecture Thirty-Four

Attila and the Huns

Scope: The Huns were the first steppe nomads from central Asia who arrived in eastern Europe to play a pivotal role in the course of medieval history. They were to be followed, in turn, by Avars, Bulgars, Khazars, Pechenegs, Cumans, and Mongols. In 370, Huns migrated westward from their homes north of the Caspian Sea. They were one of many Turkic-speaking tribes who displaced the Iranian-speaking nomads on the Eurasian steppes between the 4th and 6th centuries. The Huns smashed the Gothic kingdom, whose legendary king, Ermanaric, committed suicide. By 380, the Huns dominated the southern Russian grasslands and had subjected the barbarians of central Europe. Rome initially employed the Huns as allies to keep German federates in check. In 437, on imperial orders, Huns annihilated Burgundians settled around Worms—an incident remembered in Germanic legend. Attila, once sole king of the Huns, launched devastating raids into the Balkan provinces of the Eastern Empire in 441–443 and 447. The raids gained Attila the sobriquet “Scourge of God,” as well as captives and booty. Foremost, Attila dictated treaties to the court at Constantinople requiring tribute in gold and abandonment of the Danubian *limes*. In 451, Attila invaded Roman Gaul, to the dismay of the Western court and its commander, Aetius, who had premised imperial policy on an alliance with the Huns. At Châlons, Aetius and Visigothic federates checked the Huns. The next year, Attila halted his invasion of Italy on an appeal of Pope Leo I, and Attila’s premature death led to the collapse of the Hun Empire. But the fury of the Huns ensured that the Germanic kingdoms of the West would succeed to Rome.

Outline

- I. This lecture deals with the Huns and their most famous king, Attila, the “Scourge of God.” Ironically, the Huns never conquered the Roman Empire, but they played an important role in shaping the political and cultural landscape of the world that came immediately after the breakup of the Western Empire.
 - A. The Romans and Germans saw the Huns as a new people who were outside the stereotypes of barbarians that the Romans had passed on for centuries.
 - B. The Huns are first mentioned in the accounts of Ammianus Marcellinus. Writing in the 380s–390s, he describes them as “abnormally savage.” Based on this account and scant archaeological evidence, the Huns are believed to be the first Turkomen to enter eastern Europe.
- C. Some modern scholars have attempted to identify the Huns with a group known as the Hsiung-nu in Chinese sources. Other than the similarity in names and the fact that both groups were Turkish speakers, there is no evidence to support this identification.
 1. The Hsiung-nu are found in Chinese accounts from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D., in the Han dynasty, which was roughly contemporary with the late Roman Republic and early Roman Empire.
 2. The construction of the Great Wall and migration of the Hsiung-nu to the west are often erroneously cited as explanations for the fall of the Roman Empire.
 3. As mentioned earlier, most of the Great Wall as it stands today was constructed in the 17th and 18th centuries. In antiquity, the Great Wall was a set of ditches and fortifications, comparable to what the Romans were building in Britain and Dacia.
 4. The Chinese became adept at handling these nomads by mounting cavalry, usually recruited from Turkic or Mongolian allies, in combination with infantry armed with crossbows. These military formations were far more effective in controlling nomadic warriors than the wall.
 5. Indeed, the Hsiung-nu as a coalition had disintegrated by 150 A.D., but the Chinese efforts to control half of the Silk Road caravan trade probably did assist in the ethnic transformation of central Asia.
- II. In 375, the Huns were comparatively recent arrivals on the eastern steppes between the Don and Volga Rivers. They allied with Iranian Alans to crush the Goths.
 - A. These Huns were probably related to other Turkomen groups, such as the Hephthalites (“White Huns”) who attacked the Persian Empire.
 - B. The Hun victories in 375 sent the first wave of Gothic migration into the Balkan provinces.
 - C. By 395, the Huns had subjected the Alans of the southern Russian steppes. They then poured over the Caucasus and attacked into the Near East. St. Jerome, writing in Bethlehem, identifies the Huns with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.
 - D. At first, the Romans used the Huns as allies to pressure German tribes. By 400 A.D., the Huns had settled into the lower Danube and expanded the range of their attacks.
 1. The Huns were a nomadic warrior elite who exacted tribute from the agriculturalists, the people in the Russian forest zones, and the Dacians involved in mining operations. They also subjected a number of Germanic tribes, including several groups of Goths.

2. In 422, the then-reigning king of the Huns, Ruga (also Rua or Rugila), crossed the lower Danube, devastated Thrace, and exacted 350 pounds of gold from the imperial government. This was the first serious attack of the Huns into imperial territory, and it came just as the Western Empire was collapsing.
3. Ruga was succeeded by two of his nephews, Attila and Bleda. Attila murdered his brother, seized the kingship, and welded the Hun tribes together as a *khan*.

III. Before Attila, the Huns had been primarily interested in blackmailing the Roman Empire and had hired themselves under contract as federates for the Romans. Indeed, the entire military force of the Western imperial government was premised on this alliance with the Huns from 425–450.

- A. Attila did not seek to conquer the Roman Empire, but he instead wished to extend the sway of his domains. He also milked the Roman government in the east for gold.
- B. In any military operation, Attila had speed and surprise on his side and was skilled in gathering intelligence from merchants, diplomats, and envoys. He timed his invasions carefully, generally when the imperial field armies were fighting elsewhere.
- C. Unlike the Goths, the Huns learned siege warfare. In 441–443 and 447, Attila commanded devastating raids into the Roman Balkans and captured cities with siege equipment. In constructing such equipment, it is clear that Attila augmented his army with the skills of his captives and subjected peoples.
- D. In their attacks, the Huns were checked by the Theodosian Walls, which had been constructed by the Praetorian prefect Anthemius as the defense of Constantinople.
 1. The first obstacle in these fortifications was a moat (*fossa*), 60 feet wide and 25 feet deep. Next came the outer walls, which were 25 feet high and 10 feet thick and were guarded by towers of about 40 feet high. The inner walls were 40 feet tall, guard by towers that were 60 feet tall.
 2. Attila discovered that the capital could not be taken. The Theodosian Walls cut off the peninsular triangle of Constantinople, forming an island that could be supplied by sea.
- E. When Theodosius II died in 450, he was succeeded by his sister, Aelia Pulcheria, who married Marcian, a tough general from the Balkans. Marcian refused to deal with Attila.
 1. Simultaneously, Honoria, the elder sister of Valentinian III, appealed to Attila to “rescue” her in the West. Attila interpreted this as a marriage proposal and demanded half of the Roman Empire as a dowry.

2. When Valentinian refused, Attila invaded Gaul with a huge barbarian army. The only way that the Roman commander, Aetius, could oppose this onslaught was to appeal to the Visigoths in southern Gaul for assistance.
 3. In 451, the two armies collided at the Battle of Châlons. The king of the Goths, Theoderic, fell, but the Huns were checked. Attila retreated to his capital, but in the next year, he invaded Italy.
 4. In 452, two senior senators and Pope Leo I were sent as emissaries to meet Attila on the banks of the Po. Attila was persuaded to retire, but he vowed to come back and settle with the Romans.
 5. Attila returned to his capital near Budapest and married a new wife, Ildico. In celebration of this marriage, he drank to excess, burst a blood vessel, and died. His new wife was accused of murdering Attila and immediately killed.
- F. With Attila’s death, the Hun Empire quickly collapsed. This had been a great barbarian state, but it was held together by a charismatic ruler and had no institutional basis to sustain it. The experience of Attila, however, proved decisive.
1. This experience confirmed that the Germanic territorial kingdoms that were emerging with the death of Honorius would succeed to the Western Roman world.
 2. In 454, Valentinian was murdered, bringing to an end the line of legitimate Western emperors. The last of the Western emperors would be deposed in 476; with one exception, they were nothing more than figureheads of the *magister militum*.

Readings:

Gordon, C. D. *The Age of Attila: Fifth-Century Byzantium and the Barbarians*.
 Maenehn-Helfen, O. J. *The World of the Huns: Studies in their History and Culture*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What were the aims and achievements of Attila the Hun? How much did Attila owe his success to the indifferent leadership of Theodosius II and Valentinian III? Did Attila deserve his reputation as the “Scourge of God”?
2. In what ways did Attila determine the course of the barbarian world that followed the collapse of the Western Roman Empire?

Lecture Thirty-Five

Justinian and the Barbarians

Scope: With the collapse of the Hun Empire, Germanic federates consolidated kingdoms in the Western Roman Empire. Anglo-Saxons overran Britain, driving Celtic provincials into Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany. Franks and Burgundians occupied northern and eastern Gaul, respectively. The Visigoths conquered Spain; the Vandals founded a kingdom in North Africa. In 476, Odoacer, barbarian generalissimo in Italy, deposed the last Western emperor, Romulus Augustus. At Constantinople, Roman emperors, who ruled over the wealthy Greek-speaking provinces of the East, treated these barbarian kingdoms as their allies. Hence, the emperor Zeno commissioned Theoderic and his Ostrogoths to replace Odoacer in Italy in 489–491. Justinian, the last great Roman emperor, pursued a policy of reconquest to reverse the military decisions of the 5th century. A consummate diplomat, Justinian inherited a full treasury and a professional army. He also had a brilliant commander in Belisarius, who destroyed the Vandal kingdom in 533–534. His stunning victories over the Ostrogoths promised equal success in Italy. But a Persian invasion in 540, the outbreak of plague, and the rally of the Goths by Totila prolonged the fighting in Italy. The Gothic war ruined Classical Italy, bankrupted the imperial treasury, and ended plans of recovering the Western provinces. Within a generation, Justinian's restored Roman world was shaken by new migrations of barbarians that ended the Classical world.

Outline

- I. This lecture covers the political and cultural situation that emerged in the former Western Empire at the end of the 5th century and beginning of the 6th. We will also look at the Eastern emperor Justinian (527–565), who dominated the 6th century.
 - A. Justinian's efforts to reverse the political and military decisions of the 5th century and retake the Western provinces were ultimately unsuccessful, but in these efforts, he transformed the Mediterranean world and northwestern Europe.
 - B. After Justinian's death in 565, the empire contracted to only the Anatolian and Greek core, centered on Constantinople. The role of Rome as the major intermediary with the barbarian peoples ended.
 - C. In 476, the last Western Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, was deposed by the German Odoacer, who ruled Italy as a representative of Emperor Zeno in Constantinople. The events that followed were billed

as a reunification of the Roman Empire, even though the Western provinces were out of the hands of imperial administration.

- II. From Justinian's viewpoint in 527, the changes in the Roman Empire might not have seemed as dramatic as they do to us today.
 - A. Except in Britain, the Germanic tribes had settled in the former Western provinces and Italy under legal treaties with either the Western or Eastern imperial government.
 - B. Britain was an exception for several reasons. First, it was a remote island province and had been brought in late to the Roman political and cultural order. Further, Britain suffered no major Germanic attacks until late in the 3rd century. It was subject to coastal raids but had a sophisticated system of naval defenses.
 1. In 410, however, as a result of the usurpation of Constantine III, Britain was left without an effective Roman military presence, and the Roman administration disappeared within 20 years.
 2. After 430, Romano-Celtic warriors began to assert themselves as dynasts to impose order on the island. By 450, Germanic tribes began to arrive in the province in great numbers.
 - C. At this time, southern Gaul was controlled by the Visigoths as federates under a treaty with Rome. The Goths had to compete with the Burgundians in central Gaul and the Franks, who had expanded across the Rhine into northern Gaul.
 1. The Franks, under Clovis, subjected the Burgundians and drove the Visigoths into Spain.
 2. Clovis passed on a loose Frankish state to his sons. He had also inherited some of the Roman administration in his territories by taking over the church and converting to Catholic Christianity.
 - D. The Visigoths in Spain, the Ostrogoths in Italy, and the Vandals in North Africa were all descended from East Germanic peoples and had converted to Arian Christianity.
 1. The Visigoths created a territorial kingdom in Spain, converted to Catholicism, and issued codes based on Roman common law. They were overthrown by an Arabic conquest in 711–713.
 2. In 439, the Vandals occupied Carthage, so that they ruled as a naval power over the provinces of Africa and Numidia as well as Sardinia and Corsica.
 3. The Ostrogoths were the most successful of the Germanic immigrants in the late Roman state. In 489–491, the king of the Ostrogoths, Theoderic, conquered Italy on the orders of the Eastern government and substituted himself as ruler, defeating and slaying Odoacer.
 4. The successor states that followed the collapse of the Western Empire, then, showed a great deal of cultural continuity with the

Roman world. The peculiar martial society that had been created on the Roman frontiers from the 2nd century B.C. to the 4th century A.D. had simply migrated into the interior and taken over.

III. Justinian was determined to reverse this political change.

- A. Justinian was unpopular, in part because his wife, Theodora, a former prostitute, as well as his able ministers of low origin, outraged the elites of Constantinople.
 - 1. Justinian also surrounded himself with talented “new men,” notably the general Belisarius, who was responsible for the military reconquests of the Western provinces.
 - 2. Justinian needed victories to gain prestige with the army and to intimidate the elite classes. This may have been one reason for conducting the wars of reconquest.
 - 3. The other reason was that Justinian strongly believed in the need to restore the immutable Christian Roman order.
- B. Although the wars of reconquest cost the empire dearly, Justinian initially had sufficient money and manpower if the wars were quick and decisive.
 - 1. In 532, Justinian bought off Shah Chosroes I by Perpetual Peace, but the security of the Eastern frontier was compromised..
 - 2. In 533, Justinian was free to send an expeditionary force under Belisarius who decisively defeated and overthrew the Vandals in two battles. Roman rule returned to Africa.
- C. Justinian then turned to Ostrogothic Italy under the pretense of intervening on behalf of his former ally, Queen Amalasantha, who had been murdered by her consort, Theodahad.
 - 1. Initially, this war also went well. In 536, Belisarius landed in Campagna and swept aside resistance, occupying Rome, but the Goths regrouped under an able king, Wittigis, who besieged Rome in 536–537.
 - 2. Belisarius raised siege and resumed the offensive, capturing Ravenna, along with Wittigis and his court, in 540.
 - 3. Belisarius, however, was recalled to check a Persian attack into Syria, and so the Goths rallied under Totila who waged a war of attrition. In 552, Justinian’s eunuch general Narses decisively defeated and slew Totila, but imperial victory came at the price of Italy’s devastation.
- D. The Eastern Empire was ravaged by a plague in 542–543. This was the first of a series of pandemics that destroyed populations in the Near East and Europe and led to a demographic collapse. Together with rebellions in Africa and Spain, the plague put an end to the idea of reconquering the West.

- E. By the time of Justinian’s death in 565, he had recovered the Mediterranean lands of the former Western Empire, but these provinces were in no position to pay for the restored imperial government. Further, these Germanic states were evolving into distinct local societies with no ties to the old imperial administration.
 - 1. The wars of reconquest had seriously sapped the military and financial resources of the Eastern Empire.
 - 2. New barbarians migrated into Italy and the Balkans, while the Persians renewed their wars of conquest.
 - 3. Within a decade of Justinian’s death, the empire was fighting for its life. The wars and migrations that followed Justinian shattered the Roman state; transferred the Roman political legacy to Constantinople; and saw the arrival of new barbarians who shaped the destinies of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Islamic world.

Readings:

Cameron, Averil. *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, A.D. 395–600*. Moorhead, J. *Justinian*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the East Germanic kingdoms of the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals? Did an alliance of these kingdoms pose a threat to Constantinople?
- 2. Why did Justinian seek the reconquest of the Western provinces? How well did he comprehend conditions in the former Western provinces? Why did the reconquests of Africa and Italy prove so difficult?

Lecture Thirty-Six

Birth of the Barbarian Medieval West

Scope: The dissolution of Justinian's Mediterranean-wide empire resulted in the birth of the medieval world. The Lombards, fierce pagan federates, settled in the Balkans, crossed the Alps in 568, and overran northern and central Italy. Henceforth, imperial rule was confined to the coastal cities, islands, and far southern regions. Slavic-speaking tribes crossed the Danube and settled in the Balkan provinces, thereby isolating Constantinople from Western Europe. The emperors in Constantinople were put on the defensive battling, first, the Persians, then the armies of Islam. These Eastern Roman or Byzantine emperors came to rule over a Hellenic state based in Anatolia. In the West, the papacy fell heir to the Roman legacy. Pope Gregory the Great initiated the alignment of the Roman church with the Celtic and Germanic peoples of Western Europe. Clovis, Merovingian king of the Franks, made the Franks the political heirs of Rome in the West. Clovis welded the Germanic peoples and Roman provincials of Gaul into the first Catholic Christian kingdom of the barbarian west. Anglo-Saxon kings in England followed Clovis's example by embracing Catholic Christianity in the next century. North of the Alps in the old Celtic heartland, barbarian newcomers and Roman provincials constructed a new order based on Christian, Roman, and Germanic traditions that produced the Carolingian Empire and, thus, medieval Christendom in the 8th century.

Outline

- I. This lecture concludes the 900 years covered in our examination of the relationship of Rome and the barbarians.
- II. We shall begin with a look at the successor societies in the East and move west.
 - A. The Byzantine Empire reinvented itself in the 7th century as a medieval kingdom dedicated to the Roman political legacy but Greek in speech and Orthodox in faith.
 - B. The reign of the emperor Heraclius (610–641) marked an important transition into the Byzantine period.
 - C. The eastern half of the Roman Empire was attacked by sundry new peoples.
 1. The Turkomen tribe known as the Avars moved into eastern Europe in the later years of Justinian's reign and constructed a steppe empire. They plagued both the Byzantine successor state and the Frankish kingdom down to the 8th century.
 2. The Avars were accompanied by Slavic-speaking subject tribes, who moved into the Balkans and settled in great numbers as the authority of Constantinople over its provinces weakened. From the 6th century to the 8th century, the region of the Balkans was ethnically and linguistically transformed by these peoples.
 3. This region saw a return to the pattern that existed before the Romans, with Hellenized urban cities along the shores and village life and stock raising in the interior.
 - D. The Sassanid shahs of Persia nearly won the age-long struggle with the Byzantines. Heraclius achieved a significant victory over the Persians, but this final Persian war, which ran from 602–628, weakened both empires.
 - E. The ultimate winners of this conflict were the Arabs, who would overrun the Sassanid Empire and the Roman provinces of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Libya in 634–642.
 1. To both the Romans and the Persians, the Arabs were a quintessentially barbarian people, yet both empires had created Arab client kingdoms and fought through Arab proxies in the 4th, 5th, and 6th centuries.
 2. These client kingdoms served as the training grounds in which the Arabs absorbed the military techniques and administrative institutions of Rome and Persia. In the 7th and 8th centuries, then, the Arabs readily formed their caliphate and were quite successful for well over 1,000 years.
 - F. The emergence of the Avars, the Slavs, and the Muslim-Arab caliphate marked a significant break from the Classical Roman order.
- III. We usually think of the barbarian legacy in terms of Western Europe, primarily because the people who settled there were the archetypes of barbarians to the Greeks and Romans.
 - A. The Germanic-speaking tribes were the groups that ultimately toppled the Roman Empire. In 375, when the Goths first arrived in the Roman world, Rome was clearly losing the ability to assimilate these barbarians. Further, the Romans had contributed a great deal to creating tribal identities among these invaders and enabling them to form new territorial kingdoms.
 - B. The wars of Justinian opened Italy to a new Germanic people, the Lombards.
 1. In 568, the Lombards were settled as imperial federates in Pannonia. They fought as auxiliaries in the later campaigns of Justinian's wars to bring the Goths to heel in Italy.
 2. Within three years of Justinian's death, as many as 200,000 Lombards migrated to northern Italy. They quickly took over the regions that had once been Cisalpine Gaul, but they never captured

Rome which remained the seat of the papacy, and the cities of the far south held by imperial armies.

3. Lombard society is well illuminated in charters and law codes; these documents reveal that the Lombards settled as a military elite. With this society, the Roman institutions that had survived broke down, and Italy entered a medieval world. The Lombards brought a martial ethos and assimilated to the Roman elite.
 4. Essentially, Italy returned to the world before 264 B.C., when it was characterized by a host of different societies and linguistic groups that were unified slowly by the Romans in the course of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.
- C. The same pattern can be seen in England, France, and Spain.
1. In England, for example, the Anglo-Saxons who arrived were pagans, and they destroyed what little progress Christianity had made. Between 450–550, these Germanic peoples drove out or exterminated a significant portion of the male population of what had been Roman Britain, enslaved the survivors, and imposed their culture and language on the island.
 2. The Franks took over the Celtic heartland of Gaul and quickly assimilated the aristocratic elite of the Gallo-Roman population. The Merovingian kings based their administration on the church for civil matters and gave real power to regional counts (*comites*). Therefore, in the course of the 5th–7th centuries, the society of Gaul became privatized and broke up into local identities.
 3. As far as we know from literary sources, the pattern in Visigothic Spain was similar. Members of the Visigothic aristocracy rallied after Muslim conquests in the 700s and reinvented themselves as the Christian princes of the Reconquista.
- IV. To some extent, it can be argued that the 900-year history of Roman ascendancy was an interlude in local barbarian societies.
- A. But Rome was a powerful memory for these societies. All the territorial kingdoms that emerged in Western Europe looked to the papacy in Rome for guidance in the use of Christianity for their political aims.
 - B. Foremost, the example of Rome endured. All Germanic kings styled themselves as Roman rulers. They put value in the literary culture, and they saw the need for cities or the issuing of law codes. As Christian monarchs, these Germanic kings looked to Rome as their model.
 - C. These kingdoms did not represent merely a return to La Tène civilization; they were new societies. The impact of the Roman legacy is revealed in the fact that, by 800, these Germanic kingdoms had a new sense of identity as Latin Christendom.

Readings:

Arnold, C. J. *Roman Britain to Saxon England*.

Geary, P. J. *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*.

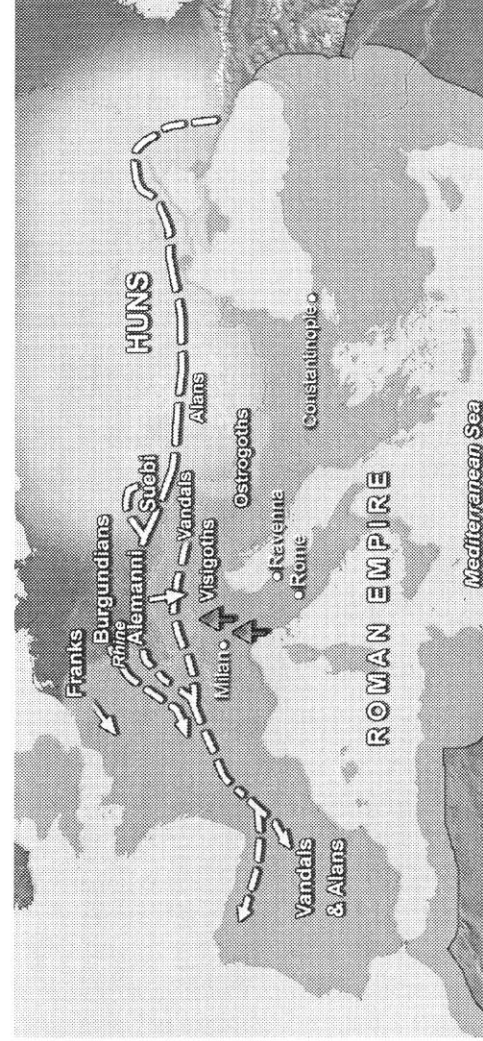
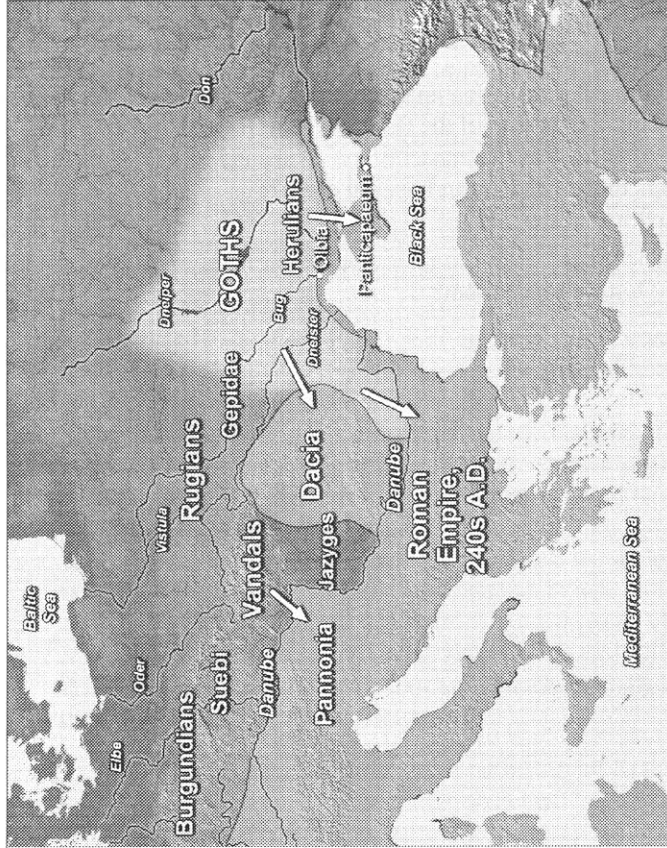
Goffart, Walter. *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418–584: The Techniques of Accommodation*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the failure of Justinian's reconquests ensure the success of new barbarians and the end of the Roman Mediterranean world in the 7th century? What was the impact of the Avars and Slavs? How did the Arabs fall heirs to the late Roman imperial order?
2. Why did the image of Rome exercise such a powerful influence on the later Germanic kings? How did their emulation of the vision of Rome lead to the birth of Latin Christendom?

The Goths:

Between 150 and 200, East Germanic peoples migrated from their Baltic homelands into eastern Europe. Foremost were Goths from southern Sweden who followed the river routes of Russia. Settling near the Black Sea, they raided Roman territory in the 230s, and by the 240s, they were pressing hard on the frontier. They attacked in tandem with other tribes, including the Vandals, Gepidae, Herulians, Rugians, and Burgundians. These tribes would carve out successor kingdoms in the Roman world.



Barbarians Overrun the West

In 402, the Visigoths entered northern Italy under the leadership of Alaric. Stilicho moved field armies from the Rhine and Danube to counter them, leaving the frontier unprotected. When the Rhine froze on New Year's Eve, 406, Franks, Alans, Suebi, Burgundians, Alemanni, and Vandals poured over the frontier. Roman weakness was confirmed by Honorius's craven decision to move the court from Rome to Ravenna, a city protected by swamps and marshes.

Glossary

Achaemenid: The dynasty of Persian kings (559–330 B.C.) who ruled the Near East during the classical age.

adlection (Latin *adlectio*): The right of the Roman emperor to nominate worthy men to the Senate at the rank of a curule magistrate.

Africa: The Roman designation of the region settled by Phoenicians in Tunisia and along the shores of western Libya; annexed as the province of Africa in 146 B.C.

ager publicus (“public land”): Land appropriated by Roman people from defeated foes. Those occupying the land, designated *possessores*, paid a rent to the Roman state. *Populares* reformers after 133 B.C. proposed to redistribute such land on long-term leases to poorer citizens.

Agri Decumates (“Tithe Lands”): Comprising Germany between the Main and upper Danube, this region was annexed by Rome in 73–161 A.D. It was abandoned circa 260–271 A.D. and subsequently occupied by the Alemanni.

ala (pl. *alae*; “wing”): Auxiliary unit of cavalry (512 men).

Alans: Iranian-speaking nomadic Sarmatians dwelling on the steppes between the Black and Caspian Seas from the 2nd century B.C. to the 4th century A.D.

Alemanni: A confederation of southern Germanic tribes united in the 3rd century A.D., who pressed along the upper Rhine and Danube frontiers.

Amber Route: A network of trade routes across central Europe that linked the Mediterranean world with the lands of the Baltic Sea.

amicitia (“friendship”): Denoted either cooperation between Roman politicians or informal diplomatic relations between Rome and a client power.

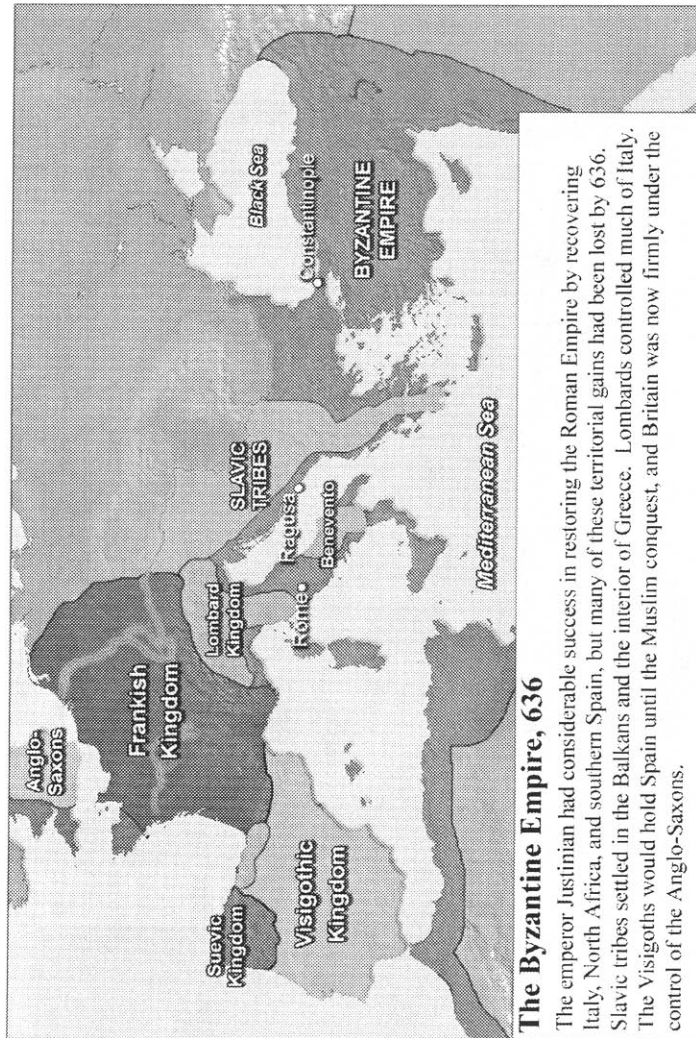
Anglo-Saxons: Germanic tribes of northern Germany and Jutland who migrated to Britain in 450–550 A.D., thereby establishing England.

aquila (pl. *aquillae*; “eagle”): The legionary standard that was believed to have sacred power (*numen*). From the time of Gaius Marius, each legion carried a distinct eagle.

Arsacid dynasty: Founded by King Arsaces (r. c. 246–210 B.C.); ruled the Parthian Empire in 246 B.C.–227 A.D.

Asia: The western third of Asia Minor (modern Turkey); annexed as a Roman province in 133–130 B.C.

assemblies: Roman citizens voted in four different assemblies based on property or residence. The Centuriate Assembly (*comitia centuriata*), based on centuries that favored age and wealth, elected the senior magistrates (censors, consuls, and



praetors). The *imperium* for these magistrates was voted in the Curiate Assembly. The Tribal Assembly (*comitia tributa*) passed law (*lex*; pl. *leges*). See *concilium plebis* for the fourth assembly.

assiduus (pl. *assidui*): A Roman citizen of propertied class eligible for draft.

auctoritas (“influence”): The personal qualities and patronage of a Roman that commanded respect and loyalty, as opposed to the legal power, or *imperium*, voted by an assembly.

auxilia: Any allied forces serving in the Roman army under the republic. The emperor Augustus organized the auxiliaries into professional units of provincials commanded by Roman officers.

barbarian (Greek *barbaros*; pl. *barbaroi*; “foreigner”): In the Classical age, this term designated non-Greeks who did not live under the rule of law. Romans turned the term into a cultural designation for those outside their civilized world.

Batavians: A Germanic people dwelling in the lower reaches of the Rhine (modern Holland) allied to imperial Rome; furnished soldiers to the auxiliary army.

Belgae: Related Celtic-speaking tribes of northeastern Gaul and southeastern Britain who were regarded as the fiercest Gallic warriors.

bellum iustum (“just war”): Declared by Rome according to the fetial rite; the origin for the later medieval and modern religious war.

beneficiarius (pl. *beneficarii*): Roman soldiers on detached service.

Bibracte: In eastern Gaul; the site where Julius Caesar defeated the Helvetians in 58 B.C.

Burgundians: East Germanic people dwelling in the upper Main valley in the 4th century; migrated into eastern and southeastern Gaul in the 5th century A.D.

Caledonia: The Scottish highlands—regions never conquered by Rome.

canabae: Civilian settlements near a legionary base; *canabae* evolved into cities.

castra: A legionary camp; passed into English as the word *chester*. The *castellum* (pl. *castella*; “castle”) was a fort garrisoned by an auxiliary unit.

cataphractus (pl. *cataphracti*): A lancer wearing chain mail or lamellar armor. Parthians, Persians, and Sarmatians based their armies on this heavy cavalry. From the reign of Hadrian (r. 117–138), the Romans fielded comparable units of *cataphracti*, who became the elite forces of the early Byzantine age.

Celt (Greek *Keltos*, pl. *Keltoi*): A speaker of related Indo-European languages in the British Isles and western and central Europe. See also **Gauls**.

Celtiberians: Descendants of Celtic immigrants and native Iberians, who dwelled in central and southwestern Spain and Portugal.

censor: One of two magistrates, elected at intervals of five years, who revised the census and the membership of the Senate, let out public contracts, and ruled on public morals. Censors held no *imperium*, but they held office for 18 months and were regarded as the most senior magistrates in the republic.

Centuriate Assembly: See **assemblies**.

centurion (Latin *centurio*; pl. *centuriones*): A noncommissioned officer who commanded a century. There were 60 centurions in the post-Marian legion.

century (Latin *centuria*; pl. *centuriae*): The basic tactical unit of a legion. Initially, 100 men formed a century; in the imperial army, the number was 80 men.

civis Romanus (pl. *cives Romani*; “Roman citizen”): A citizen with full legal and political rights. See **ius Latinum**.

civitas (pl. *civitates*): An urban-based community under Roman law in the imperial age.

civitas sine suffragio (“citizenship without the suffrage”): A citizen accorded only private rights of Roman citizenship. All members of this class had been promoted to full citizens by 188 B.C.

cohort (Latin *cohors*; pl. *cohortes*): A tactical unit of the legion. Initially of 600 men, the cohort of the imperial age was fixed at 480 men. Auxiliary units of infantry were also organized into cohorts.

collegium (pl. *collegia*): A burial society and guild of craftsmen, cults, or professions.

colonia (pl. *coloniae*; “colony”): One of two self-governing communities under military obligation to Rome. Initially, colonies comprising settlers of Latin status were founded in Italy from the 4th through the 2nd centuries B.C. After 88 B.C., colonies were founded in the provinces and were usually of Roman legal status.

colonus (pl. *coloni*; “cultivator”): A dependent tenant in later Roman imperial law.

comes (pl. *comites*; “count”): A commander of a regional field army under the Dominate.

comitatenses: Units of the imperial field army in the Dominate; the senior service; see also **limitanei**.

comitatus: The Roman designation for a retinue of dedicated Germanic warriors; these warriors have been compared to the *berserkers*, “frenzied warriors,” in later Scandinavian legend.

concilium plebis: A meeting of only the Roman plebians (without patricians present), organized in voting units identical to the Tribal Assembly and presided over by a tribune of the plebians. This assembly passed *plebiscitia* (plebiscite),

which had the power of law (*lex*) since 287 B.C. This was the assembly preferred by *popularis* reformers in the late republic.

Constitutio Antoniniana: Edict issued by the emperor Caracalla in 212 A.D. that granted citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire.

consul: One of two senior curule officials of the Roman Republic annually elected by the Centuriate Assembly and with *imperium*, the right to command armies. Consul became a senior administrative post under the Roman Empire.

cuneus (“wedge”): An attack in dense column, favored by Germanic warriors.

curule magistrates: Any senior official elected (censor, consul, praetor, quaestor) who had a chair of office (*sella curulis*). Such officials were eligible for membership in the Senate.

Dacians: A Geto-Thracian-speaking peoples dwelling in modern Rumania (Dacia), who were conquered by Trajan in the Dacian Wars (101–102, 105–106 A.D.).

de repetundis (“on corruption”): Courts at Rome, first reported in 171 B.C., that investigated and punished Roman magistrates for corruption in the provinces. In 149–70 B.C., the composition of juries was a political issue between senators and equestrians.

dedictii: Defeated foes who surrendered unconditionally; in the imperial age, such barbarians were often settled as *coloni* in imperial provinces.

denarius (pl. *denarii*): The Roman silver coin, minted at 84 to the Roman pound from 214 B.C. to 64 A.D. (3.83 gr.); used to meet fiscal obligations. Twenty-five denarii were exchanged to a gold coin (*aureus*). The debasement of the denarius to meet rising costs after 235 A.D. resulted in inflation and fiscal instability.

dictator: An official with overriding *imperium*, elected in a emergency, who could serve only six months. The office was discontinued after the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.). In 82–78 B.C., Lucius Cornelius Sulla was the first of the great *imperatores* of the late republic who revived the office to legitimize an extraordinary position in civil war.

dilectus: The Roman draft, for which all citizens of propertied status (*assidui*) were eligible in the Roman Republic.

diocesis (pl. *dioceses*): The administrative unit of several provinces under the Dominate. Constantine (r. 306–337 A.D.) organized the imperial Christian church by dioceses.

Dominate (284–476 A.D.): Refers to the late Roman imperial government after Diocletian (r. 284–305), who dropped republican symbols and styled himself an autocrat or lord (*dominus*).

donative (Latin *donativum*): The money given to veterans by a Roman commander at his triumph; in the imperial age, the donative became a regular bonus to the entire army.

Druids: Members of the Celtic priestly caste who reportedly headed resistance to Rome.

dux (pl. *duces*; “duke”): The commander of a garrison in the later Roman Empire.

epigraphy: The study of inscriptions.

equestrian order (Latin *ordo equester*; “knights”): The propertied class below the senatorials. In the 2nd century B.C., the equestrians amassed fortunes and, thus, legal rank from careers in justice, the military, banking, and commerce.

Erythraean Sea: The Roman designation of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

ex formula togatorum (“from the formula of togated peoples”): The obligation of Latin and Italian allies to provide soldiers on demand by the Roman Republic.

fascis (pl. *fascēs*): The bundle of rods carried by lictors as symbols of the power of life and death held by Roman republican magistrates elected with *imperium*.

Feriale Duranum: Military calendar discovered at the Roman fortress of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, in Syria, dating from the reign of Severus Alexander (r. 222–235 A.D.).

Five Good Emperors (96–180 A.D.): Nerva (96–98 A.D.), Trajan (98–117 A.D.), Hadrian (117–138 A.D.), Antonius Pius (138–161 A.D.), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180 A.D.), whose collective reigns marked the height of the Roman peace (*pax Romana*).

Flavian dynasty (69–96 A.D.): The second imperial dynasty of Rome ruled by the emperors Vespasian (r. 67–79 A.D.) and his two sons, Titus (r. 79–81 A.D.) and Domitian (r. 81–96 A.D.).

foederatus (pl. *foederati*; “federates”): Barbarians serving in tribal armies under contract to Rome. In 417–418 A.D., the emperor Honorius settled the Visigoths in Aquitaine as federates; they were the first Germans to gain a kingdom in the Western Roman Empire.

foedus: A formal treaty issued by Rome to any ally. Such treaties bound Italian allies to the Roman Republic. In the 5th century A.D., emperors issued such a treaty to Germanic tribal armies who were quartered in the provinces.

Franks: A coalition of tribes in northwestern Germany between the Rhine and the Weser, which emerged as a power in the late 3rd century A.D. The Franks, under King Clovis (r. 482–511 A.D.), conquered most of Roman Gaul.

Frisians: Kin of the Batavians; occupied the shores of Holland; entered into alliance with Rome; and supplied the Roman army of the lower Rhine with hides, meat, and dairy products.

Galatians: The Celts who settled in western Asia Minor in 279–255 B.C.

Gallia Comata (“Long-Haired Gaul”): The three Gallic regions (later the provinces of Aquitania, Belgica, and Lugdunesis) beyond the Roman province in southern Gaul, Narbonensis, organized in 121–118 B.C.

Gallomachy: A monumental relief depicting the combat of Greeks and Gauls.

garum: A fish sauce devised and marketed from Gades (Cadiz) in southern Spain.

Gauls (Latin *Gallus*; pl. *Galli*): The Latin designation of Celtic speakers and, more specifically, of those Celts dwelling in Gaul proper (Transalpine Gaul) and northern Italy (Cisalpine Gaul).

genius (pl. *genii*): The spirit of a Roman emperor that was deified on his death.

gens (pl. *gentes*): The extended Roman clan, as opposed to a *familia* (“family”), which was a branch of the *gens*. The second name (*nomen*) of a Roman male denoted the *gens*; the third name (*cognomen*) designated the family. Female names were based on the *nomen*.

Gepidae: An East Germanic peoples of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. who headed the revolt that ended the Hun Empire in 454 A.D..

Germania: The Roman designation for central and northern Europe east of the Rhine and north of the upper Danube, where German-speaking peoples dwelled.

gladius (pl. *gladii*): The cutting and thrusting sword of the legionary.

Hallstatt civilization (c. 800–450 B.C.): The early Iron Age civilization of Celtic peoples in central Europe.

Hellenes, Hellas: Proper Greek names for Greeks and Greece.

Hellenistic (323–31 B.C.): The “Greek-like” civilization in the Near East and Mediterranean world after the death of Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 B.C.).

Hercynian Forest: Roman name for the Black Forest (Schwarzwald).

Herulians: An East Germanic people who headed the invasion of Greece in 267 A.D.

Hibernia (“land of winter quarters”): The Roman name for Ireland.

Hispania (Spain): The Roman name for the Iberian peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal).

Huns: The first Turkish-speaking nomads to enter Europe circa 375 A.D.; under King Attila (r. 434–452 A.D.), they dominated the barbarian world.

imago (pl. *imagines*): The Roman death mask images of ancestors displayed in the atrium of a Roman house. The term later designated the official portrait of the Roman emperor.

imperator (pl. *imperators*): A Roman commander who had been saluted by his soldiers for a major victory. The term designated the extraordinary commanders of the late republic (88–31 B.C.) and, later, the Roman emperor.

imperium: The right to command an army accorded to senior magistrates. The magistrates were elected by the Centuriate Assembly, but the *imperium* was voted by the Curiate Assembly.

Imperium Galliarum (“Empire of the Gauls”): Proclaimed by the Gallic and German insurgents under Gaius Julius Civilis in 69–70 A.D.

itinera (“itineraries”): Schematic maps and directions for overland travel.

ius Italicum (“Italian right”): The exemption from direct taxation awarded to favored Roman colonies in the provinces.

ius Latinum (“Latin status”): A legal category created by Rome in 338 B.C. for those Romans and allies settled in colonies in Italy. Each self-governing Latin colony enjoyed rights of marriage and contract with Rome. Latins had the right to migrate to Rome and acquire Roman citizenship. Latin status was, thus, defined as midway between full citizenship and allied status.

Jazyges: Sarmatian nomads who settled in the Theiss valley (eastern Hungary) in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.

kurgan: Monumental Scythian burial barrows erected on the southern Russian steppes between the 6th and 2nd centuries B.C.

La Tène civilization (c. 450–50 B.C.): Late Iron Age culture of the Celtic peoples of central and western Europe characterized by the settlements known as *oppida*.

laetus (pl. *laeti*): Barbarians (either captives or immigrants) settled in communities within the Roman Empire during the 4th century A.D.

Late Antiquity (c. 300–750 A.D.): The late classical and early medieval periods; the term is used to designate cultural continuity.

Latins, Latin status: See *ius Latinum*.

legatus (pl. *legati*; “legate”): A lieutenant of a Roman republican magistrate with *imperium*. In the Principate, governors of senatorial rank ruled provinces as legates of the emperor, with either proconsular or propraetorian rank.

legio (pl. *legions*): The legion (5,200 men) was the Roman strategic fighting unit capable of independent operations. Under the republic, each consul typically commanded two legions of citizens and two of allies.

lex Appuleia (103 B.C.): Law passed by the tribune Lucius Appuleius Saturninus that granted leases of public land in Africa to veterans of Gaius Marius.

lex Pompeia (89 B.C.): Law of consul Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo that granted Latin status to the provincials of Cisalpine Gaul.

lex Sempronia (133 B.C.): The law of the tribune Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus that granted leases of public land in Italy to poor citizens. The law was suspended in 129 B.C.; it was reactivated by Gaius Sempronius Gracchus in 123 B.C.

libertus (pl. *liberti*): A freedman of a Roman citizen. Freedmen acquired Roman citizenship and became clients of their former masters.

lictor: The official who carried the *fascis*, the symbol of *imperium*. A dictator was accompanied by 24 lictors; consuls, by 12 lictors; and praetors, by 6 lictors.

limes (“limit”): Originally designated any Roman military encampment that marked a border. In the imperial age, the term designated the political-cultural boundary between the Roman and barbarian worlds.

limitanei: Units of the Roman frontier or garrison army in the 4th and 5th centuries; see *comitanenses*.

Lombards (Langobardi): An East Germanic people who migrated into northern Italy in 568 and shattered Byzantine control over the peninsula.

Luca (56 B.C.): The scene of the conference where Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus renewed their alliance, the First Triumvirate. Caesar received a five-year extension of his proconsulship in Gaul; Pompey and Crassus stood for the consulship of 55 B.C.

Lusitanians: Celtic-Iberian tribes in Portugal and southwestern Spain.

magister militum (“master of the soldiers”): The supreme commander of late Roman field armies. The position was held by Stilicho (395–408 A.D.), Aetius (425–454 A.D.); Ricimer (457–472 A.D.); and Odoacer (476–491 A.D.).

maniple (Latin *manipulus*; pl. *manipuli*): The principal legionary tactical unit, comprising two centuries, from the 4th through the 2nd centuries B.C. The large cohort replaced the maniple in the late republican and imperial ages.

Mare Nostrum (“Our Sea”): Roman designation of the Mediterranean Sea.

Merovingian dynasty (458–751 A.D.): The family of Clovis (r. 482–511 A.D.), who ruled the early Frankish kingdom.

Moors (Latin *Mauri*): The Berber-speaking nomads of North Africa.

mos maiorum (“custom of the ancestors”): Expressed Roman reverence for tradition over change (*res novae*, “new things”).

Nabataeans: Arabic nomads who formed a kingdom east of the Jordan, based at Bostra and Petra. The region was annexed as the Roman province of Arabia Petraea in 106 A.D.

nobilis (pl. *nobiles*; “noble”): Those of Roman families (either of patrician or plebian order) whose members had held a curule office after 367 B.C.

Notitia Dignitatum: A list of Roman military units compiled circa 406–423 A.D.

novus homo (“new man”): A Roman elected to the consulship whose ancestors had not held a curule magistrate.

numen (pl. *numina*): Sacred power innate to any object or symbol.

oppidum (pl. *oppida*): An Iron Age Celtic settlement, such as Entremont or Magdelensburg.

optimates: Roman politicians favoring supremacy of the Senate in the late republic.

ordo (pl. *ordines*; “order”): A legally defined rank. Roman society was initially divided into the two orders of patricians and plebians.

Ostrogoths: The Goths settled in Pannonia under imperial treaty who migrated to Italy under King Theoderic (r. 489–526 A.D.). These Goths were descended from those who had submitted to the Huns after 375 A.D..

Parthians: Iranian-speaking nomads who settled in Khursan (northern Iran) in the 3rd century B.C. and, under the Arsacid kings, ruled a rival eastern empire to Rome.

patrician: The original Roman order (*ordo*) alone permitted to hold office in the early republic. The plebians, who formed an order of voters, gained rights and redress of grievances that climaxed in 367 B.C., when they also gained the right to be elected consul.

pax Romana (“Roman peace”): Described the conditions of the Principate, specifically the collective reigns of the Five Good Emperors.

peregrines (Latin *peregrinus*; pl. *peregrini*): Free foreigners residing in the provinces.

Periplus (“Sailing Around”): A manual for navigation.

pilum (pl. *pila*): The legionary thrusting and throwing spear.

plebian: See **patrician**.

popularis (pl. *populares*): A politician favoring reform in the name of the Roman people.

populus Romanus (“Roman people”): The Roman citizens as a whole in public actions.

praetor: A curule magistrate with *imperium* below the rank of consul; their number was increased to six by the late republic.

Praetorian Guards: The garrison of Rome commanded by the equestrian Praetorian Prefect.

prefect (Latin *praefectus*; pl. *praefectus*): A Roman officer of equestrian rank who commanded an auxiliary unit or administered a province.

prefecture: One of four great regional divisions of the Roman Empire (Gaul, Italy, Illyricum, and the East) in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. Each prefecture comprised several dioceses.

princeps Senatus (“prince of the Senate”): The leading senator whose superior *auctoritas* was recognized by his peers. The term *princeps* (“prince”) was an informal way of designating the Roman emperor.

Principate (27 B.C.–284 A.D.): The imperial government created by Augustus, in which the emperor ruled in accordance with the symbols and powers of the republic.

proconsul: An ex-magistrate with the *imperium* of a consul who was, thus, granted an extension of command within a province. The *imperium* of a proconsul ranked below that of a consul.

proletarius (pl. *proletarii*): A property-less Roman citizen not eligible for legionary service.

propraetor: An ex-magistrate with the *imperium* of a praetor who was, thus, granted an extension of command within a province. The *imperium* of a propraetor ranked below that of a praetor.

prorogatio (“prorogation”): The formal vote by the Centuriate Assembly to extend or augment the *imperium* of an ex-magistrate in a province.

prosopography (“the study of faces”): The analysis of family and matrimonial links that dictated politics at Rome.

provincia (pl. *provinciae*; “province”): Originally a theater of operation where a magistrate exercised his *imperium* or *pro-imperium*. By the mid-2nd century B.C., overseas provinces had evolved into administrative districts defined in Roman law.

Res Gestae divi Augusti (“Deeds of the Deified Augustus”): A monumental inscription in Latin and Greek erected throughout the Roman Empire that narrated the accomplishments of the emperor Augustus.

res publica: The Latin designation for republic or commonwealth.

Roxolani: Sarmatian nomads dwelling in modern Wallachia and Moldavia, just north of the lower Danube, between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D.

runes: Germanic magical letters inspired from northern Italic alphabets at least since the 2nd century B.C.

sacramentum: The oath of soldiers to their commander (*imperator*).

Sassanid dynasty: These shahs of the neo-Persian Empire (227–651 A.D.) overthrew Arsacid Parthia and challenged Rome in the Near East.

Saxons: West Germanic peoples dwelling along the shores of northwestern Germany who raided Britain and northern Gaul from the mid-3rd century A.D. Saxons, along with Angles and Jutes, settled in Britain between 450 and 550 A.D.

scutum (pl. *scuta*): The rectangular, semi-cylindrical shield of the legionary.

Scythians: The Iranian-speaking steppe nomads of southern Russia between the 7th and 2nd centuries B.C.

Senate: The advisory council of the Roman state, composed of ex-curule magistrates whose collective influence (*auctoritas*) dominated politics, diplomacy, and finances of the republic. Under the Principate, the Senate became an administrative body and supreme judiciary.

Senatorial class: By the mid-2nd century B.C., this class was defined as those aristocratic families whose members undertook a political career. Augustus redefined the senatorial order as the premier legal and social order of the Roman Empire.

Social War (90–88 B.C.): The revolt of Italian allies (*socii*) in central and southern Italy when Rome denied them citizenship.

socius (pl. *socii*; “ally”): Any Roman ally, but in the republic, the term was applied foremost to the Italian allies owing military service *ex formula togatorum*.

SPQR (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*; “Senate and People of Rome”): The abbreviation applied to official acts of the Roman Republic.

Strata Diocletiana: The Roman military highway and forts along the Syrian desert; initiated by the emperor Diocletian (r. 284–305 A.D.).

Sueves: A coalition of the West Germanic tribes, the Marcomanni and Quadi.

Tax farming: The practice of letting out contracts to private companies organized by equestrians to collect provincial taxes under the Roman Republic.

Tetrarchy (“rule of four”): The collective rule of four emperors, two Augusti and two Caesars, devised by Diocletian (r. 284–305 A.D.).

thing: The sovereign assembly of free German males.

transhumance: A pattern of seasonal movements by desert nomads and their herds among the oases and pre-desert zones.

tria nomina (“three names”): The Roman nomenclature of males with a *praenomen* (personal name), *nomen* (clan name), and *cognomen* (family name).

Tribal Assembly: See **assemblies**.

Tribune of the plebians (Latin *tribunus plebis*): One of 10 sacrosanct representatives of the Roman plebians who had the power to veto (“I forbid”) any action by a magistrate that threatened a plebian. Tribunes, elected by the *concilium plebis* and with the right to initiate legislation, were the main agents for *popularis* reform in the late republic.

Tribune of the soldiers (Latin *tribunus militum*): One of six junior officers (of senatorial or equestrian rank) attached to a legion.

Tribunician power (*tribunica potestas*): The power of the tribune voted to Augustus in 27 B.C. and later emperors without the limitations of office. This power was the legal basis for the constitutional position of the Roman emperor.

tributum (pl. *tributa*): Direct provincial taxation (head and land taxes).

triumph (Latin *triumphus*): The parade displaying booty and captives that glorified a successful Roman magistrate who had slain more than 5,000 foreign foes in battle. A lesser *ovatio* (“ovation”) was voted for lesser victories.

triumvirate (“rule of three”): The First Triumvirate was an informal agreement by Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Crassus to cooperate and, thus, dominate the republic in 58–49 B.C. The Second Triumvirate (42–31 B.C.) was a legal alliance of Octavian, Marc Antony, and Lepidus to punish the assassins of Julius Caesar, then reorder the Roman world.

tumultus (“tumult”): A Gallic migration that required a state of emergency by the Roman Republic.

Vandals: An East Germanic peoples in central Europe who migrated across Gaul and Spain to North Africa in 406–429 A.D.. The Vandal kingdom in Africa, recognized in 439–442 A.D., was overthrown by Justinian’s general Belisarius in 533 A.D..

velites: Recruited from the *proletarii*; served as the light infantry of the republican legion; organized by maniples between the 4th and 2nd centuries B.C.

vexillatio (pl. *vexillationes*; “vexillation”) A legionary detachment of 2,000 men withdrawn to serve in offensive expeditions.

viratim (“man by man”): Allotments of individual farmsteads to Roman citizens from public land (*ager publicus*).

virtus (“virtue”): Manliness and bravery—qualities personified by the god Virtus. Christians defined virtue in a moral sense.

Visigoths: Descended from Goths who entered the Roman Empire in 375–377 A.D. and migrated under Alaric (r. 395–410 A.D.) to Italy. In 417–418 A.D., the Visigoths founded a territorial kingdom in southern Gaul under imperial treaty.

White Huns (or Ephthalites): Turkic-speaking nomads who attacked the northeastern frontiers of the Sassanid Empire in the late 4th and early 5th centuries A.D.

Zoroastrianism: The monotheist creed of Iran based on the teachings of Zorathustra.

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