eTopoi

Journal for Ancient Studies

Kai Grundmann

The Ostrogothic Defence of the *Hesperia*. Contested Borders, Contested Loyalties

Kai Grundmann

The Ostrogothic Defence of the *Hesperia*. Contested Borders, Contested Loyalties

After Theoderic the Great had effectively taken the place of the Western Roman Emperor, he based his border defence on late Roman designs, but adapted it to the new situation he faced. While claiming Raetia and Noricum for his realm he established little direct presence, relying on local troops and a *shadow of hierarchy*. This contributed to the northern border being fuzzy. Contrasting this with the Balkans border highlights the effect a direct presence of Theoderic's troops had in the long run. The attempt to establish clear borders against opposition from the Eastern Roman Empire forced many local powers to realign their allegiances. Whereas the fuzziness of the northern border stabilized the region, the clear but contested borders on the Balkans eventually destabilized the region.

Military History; Gothic History; Late Antiquity; Early Middle Ages; Border Conflict; Theoderic; Loyalties

Nachdem Theoderich im Westen des Römischen Reiches eine kaiserähnliche Stellung übernahm, organisierte er auch seine Grenzverteidigung nach spätrömischen Mustern. Er passte sie jedoch seiner spezifischen Lageeinschätzung an. Bei der Eingliederung Raetiens begnügte er sich mit einem Schatten der Hierarchie, statt direkter Kontrolle, und überließ lokalen Truppen weitgehend die Verteidigung. Im Gegensatz dazu besetzte Theoderich seine Ostgrenze auf dem Balkan mit eigenen Truppen und konfrontierte das Ostreich. Als Folge dessen mussten lokale Akteure ihre Politik neu ausrichten. Während die indirekte Herrschaftsausübung im Norden die Situation stabilisierte, führte der Versuch der direkten Kontrolle und klarer Grenzen auf dem Balkan langfristig zur Destabilisierung der Region.

Militärgeschichte; Gotische Geschichte; Spätantike; Frühmittelalter; Grenzkonflikte; Theoderich; Treueverhältnisse

1 Defending the North

The provinces of Raetia are the bars and bolts of Italy. Wild and cruel nations ramp outside of them, and they, like nets, whence their name, catch the barbarian in their toils and hold him there till the hurled arrow can chastise his madness.

Receive then for this indiction the *ducatus Raetiarum*. Let your soldiers live on friendly terms with the provincials, avoiding all lawless presumption and at the same time let them be constantly on their guard against the barbarians outside. Even bloodshed is often prevented by seasonable vigilance.[1]

These words could have been spoken by a later Roman Emperor when appointing a duke *(dux)* for his northern borders. This particular letter was indeed written by Cassiodorus,

---

[1] Cassiod. Var. 7,4: […] *Raetiae namque munimina sunt Italiae et claustra provinciae: quae non immerito sic appellata esse iudicamus, quando contra feras et agrestissimas gentes velut quaedam plagarum obstacula disponuntur. ibi enim impetus gentilis excipitur et transmissis iaculis sauciatur furibunda praesumptio. sic gentilis impetus vestra venatio est et ludo geritis quod vos assidue feliciter egisse sentitis. […] Quapropter responde nostro iudicio, fide nobis et industria placiturus, ut nec gentiles sine discussione suscipias nec nostros ad gentes sub incuriositate transmittas. ad necessitatem siquidem rarius venitur armorum, ubi suscepta surreptio custodiri posse sentitur. privilegia vero dignitatis tuae nostris tibi iussionibus vindicabis.* (Translation Hodgkin 1889, 322).

who rose through the ranks of the late Roman civil administration up the Pretorian Prefecture. However it was written in the name of King Theoderic the Great, himself often called a Barbarian. Although this letter is a *formula* with a blanket for the name of the duke to be filled in, it had a very real application since we know of more letters in which Theoderic addressed his border commanders, including the Duke of Raetia. They tell a lot about the organization and defence of the late Roman Empire and its Ostrogothic successor. At first glance it seems little had changed. This paper examines the elements of continuity and especially discontinuity, and goes on highlighting the stark differences in the governance of the northern and the eastern borders of the Ostrogothic Kingdom.

There was no longer an Emperor in Ravenna. The federate military officer Odoaker deposed Emperor Romulus Augustus in 476 CE. The Western Emperors had gradually lost the West, the *Hesperia*, during the 5th century. The power in former provinces resided in the hands of various Barbarian kings, who usually claimed one legitimacy or another, awarded by some Emperor. They still did not dare minting gold coins, and they respected Roman senators greatly, as they needed them for their civil administration. When the same finally happened in Italy, it was so unremarkable that it largely went unnoticed by contemporaries and it must be stressed that Roman people still saw themselves as inhabitants of the Roman Empire.[2] For many years Odoaker continued to rule in the name of the Emperor who had once appointed him to office, Julius Nepos. In 489 CE however the Eastern Roman Emperor Zeno sent one of his most ambitious and thus most dangerous officers west to reclaim Italy: the master of the western armies *(magister militum praesentalis)* Theoderic with his federate command of the Goths, the *exercitus Gothorum*. Theoderic could boast Roman citizenship, the consulate of 484 CE, and a *patricius*-title. He again officially ruled the Western Roman *res publica* in the name of the new Eastern Emperor Anastasius.[3] He extended his sphere of influence by driving the Vandals out of Sicily, re-establishing control of the Danube provinces, conquering southern Gaul and reinstalling the Gallic Prefecture, and taking the Visigothic kingship in Spain for rather dubious pretexts during a civil war. One can argue a lot from a legal – *Staatsrecht* – point of view, but it cannot be doubted that Theoderic had practically restored the *Hesperia* and that he was vastly more powerful than any Western Emperor in the fifty years preceding his assumption of power. Despite officially shying away from the title, he was hailed as a Roman Emperor,[4] presented himself as such and took on corresponding responsibilities[5] – including the defence of borders, which had been ill-defended for generations.

The *Vita Severini* for example reports a most desolate state of the Danubian defences; the few soldiers left there were no longer paid and had little motivation. Odoaker had even recalled more troops to Italy, leaving the borders wide open.[6] Cassiodorus's letters give the impression that Theoderic actually cared for the northern provinces and strengthened their defences. While these letters also need to be read with care and will be analysed in depth later on, Theoderic's decision makes geostrategic sense: as Herwig Wolfram outlined long ago, the strategy for the defence of Italy – and the *Hesperia* as well for that

2   Cf. Börm 2013, 112–117.

3   Cf. Wolfram 2001, 278–288; Wolfram 1967, 47; Mommsen 1889, 506–507.

4   Cf. ILS 827: *D(ominus) N(oster) gl(o)r(io)s(issi)mus adq(ue) / inclyt(us) / Rex Theodericus / Vict(or) Ac Tri / umf(ator) semper Aug(ustus) / bono R(ei) P(ublicae) natus / custos libertatis / et pro / pagator Rom(ani) nom(inis) / domitor g(en)tium.*

5   Cf. Heydemann 2016, 20–24; Arnold 2014, 88–91; O'Donnell 2008, 144–147.

6   Vita Severini 20; of course this text needs to be read with extreme care and should not be taken too literally as it aims at highlighting the achievements of Severus at a time when the region was all but deserted by the government, in this case represented by Odoaker. The actual extent of the military retreat from this region is open to debate, as is the question of whether this order to retreat from the province of Noricum was also issued to the troops in other Danubian provinces. However it does seem that the Roman military defences along the Danube had been gradually deteriorating since the mid-5th century, cf. Schwarcz 2015, 26–28.

matter – rested on Raetia, so that Theoderic relied on a trifold system consisting of a chain of fortresses along the southern Alps which was most likely based on the *tractus Italiae circa Alpes* of *Notitia Dignitatum* fame, the Duchies of Raetia and Noricum under his control, and allies in front of these duchies.[7]

It is noteworthy that the dukes of Raetia and Noricum seemed to have their own troops at their disposal, rather than troops from the *exercitus Gothorum*. In fact, the dukes themselves were likely not Goths but Roman citizens; at least they had Roman names. Theoderic addressed a duke named Servatus whose troops were explicitly not Goths:

> It is your duty to repress all violence and injustice in the Provinces over which you preside. Maniarius complains that his slaves have been without any cause taken away from him by the Breones, who are continuing in peace the habits and maxims of war.[8]

Servatus as duke[9] commands a military unit called Breones, who had obviously gone on looting the provincials they ought to protect, and Servatus must bring them to justice. This is a quite typical problem of ancient military formations,[10] and the main intent of the letter is to illustrate that Theoderic takes care of this problem even when alerted by an otherwise unknown person from a border region. Indeed the crown was well aware that the economic success of the provincials was pivotal to paying the soldiers, and thus considered such looting counterproductive.[11] The information about the perpetrators being Breones is nonetheless important. They were a local mountain people who by that time had long been Romanized, and seemingly now formed a military unit tasked with defending these mountains.[12] Another hint to the local ties of the duke and his troops is the simple fact that they never left their homes. There were massive troop movements in the Ostrogothic Kingdom. The *exercitus Gothorum* proper, the Gothic king's main force, fought everywhere: from Sicily to Gaul, from Spain to the Balkans.[13] However, the border troops of Raetia did not move anywhere, not even when the Gothic Wars raged on as the Eastern Empire under the new Emperor Justinian went on to conquer Italy from the Gothic Kings in the 6th century. The border troops remained in place and continued to guard their lands, apparently almost heedless of who ruled Italy.

It seems that the neighbouring province of Noricum had a similar design. We know of a high ranking *(vir spectabilis)* man named Ursus, whose identity is not entirely certain. However with such a rank, he could have been the duke of Noricum. His name means male bear and that of his wife Ursina means female bear. These names are Roman again and may have been common in the Alpine Roman lands although is this disputed. However they were definitely Catholics, which – despite a few converts – strongly implies that they were not Gothic.[14] It seems again they were mostly local troops, but the information is very sparse here. Archaeological evidence for the presence of Goths north of the Alps

---

7   Cf. Wolfram 2001, 315–317. Also Beyerle 1962, 66–71, putting a greater emphasis on Alemannia.
8   Cassiod. Var. 1,11: *Quapropter Moniarii supplicatione commoti praesentibus te affamur oraculis, ut, si re vera mancipia eius Breones irrationabiliter cognoveris abstulisse, qui militaribus officiis assueti civilitatem premere dicuntur armati et ob hoc iustitiae parere despiciunt, quoniam ad bella Martia semper intendunt, dum nescio quo pacto assidue dimicantibus difficile est morum custodire mensuram.* (Translation Hodgkin 1889, 151).
9   Cf. Amory 1997, 414–415.
10 Cf. Fear 2008, 439.
11 Cf. Cassiod. Var. 8,26,4.
12 Cf. Glaser 2008, 613–614.
13 Today, there is still no comprehensive military history of the *exercitus Gothorum*, yet the narratives of Procopius and Agathias as well as Cassiodorus's information clearly outline the high mobility of at least a core strike force.
14 Cf. Prostko-Prostynski 2002, 297–302, who does not agree on the rank of Ursus. Following Prostko-Prostyński we know even less about the organisation of Noricum.

is often limited to female items like fibulae, and generally inconclusive.[15] Even most careful examinations of the province's few mentions in late 5th and early 6th century written sources end with little confidence regarding the analysis of its organization beyond the very fact that it was considered to be Theoderic's sphere of influence, at least from Ravenna's point of view.[16]

Looking at the troop movements and organization, the pattern is familiar: we have rather immobile local troops on the borders under the command of their local lords, a mobile strike force under the direct command of the head of state, and beyond that palace guards. It does not take much to see that the late Roman military practice impinged heavily on the overall structure of the 'Ostrogothic' military and the design of the Kingdom's defences.[17] The level of continuity is so strong in this respect that the palace guards appear to be militarily useless gatherings of Senatorial teenagers, who did not guard much and were even supervised by civilian, not military, officers.[18]

It should not come as a surprise that the army structure was entirely late Roman, because Theoderic *was* a Roman army general, the *exercitus Gothorum* was a Roman federate command operating on Roman soil for all of its existence. Instead of a diffuse reference to obscure tribal practices, the late Roman context offers a far more sensible background for the military organization. The most obvious change was the replacement of the *comitatenses* by a federate army, serving the same role within the system.

The letters of Cassiodorus allow us to understand how this military would have reacted to enemy incursions, in theory at least. We do not know the armament, or tactics, of the border guarding *limitanei*, but it seems they were not expected to hold out against noteworthy forces. Delaying the enemy advance by harassing him in the mountains, perhaps blocking passes, and defending key fortresses were the prime tasks of the border defenders. Despite the fancy words of Theoderic about Raetia being the bars and bolts of Italy, it seems he was perfectly aware that an army could easily slip through that net. The *tractus Italiae*, the chain of fortresses at the foot of the Southern Alps, was reinforced; well-known are two fortresses, Verruca and Dertona. But again, they were not designed to stop the enemy:

> Advised by the calculation of public utility, a care which is always a welcome burden to me, I command that the castle sited near you be strengthened, since matters of war are well ordered when planned in time of peace. Indeed, a fortification is made especially strong when reinforced by prolonged planning. Anything done

---

15 Jirík 2012, 338; Bierbrauer 2010, 94–95. An interesting side note is that Theoderic once ordered his *saio* Duda to take away the gold items from the graves of rich people, cf. Cassiod. Var. 4,34. This seems to have been an emergency order and not standard practice though, cf. Nelsen 1978, 112–113.

16 Arnold 2016, 78–89.

17 Doubts have again been raised, of whether a division between semi-autonomous local forces and the *exercitus Gothorum* really existed, given that the ducal troops were never properly addressed as *limitanei* but rather *milites*, which technically could mean they were part of the field army too, cf. Halsall 2016, 186. While a valid caveat – especially since even the late Roman distinction between *comitatenses* and *limitanei* can be doubted (Le Bohec 2010, 171–184) – the absence of clear terminology should not be overstated; late Roman border troops were not always referred to as *limitanei* (or *riparienses* and the likes). Their assignment and duties marked them as borderers, cf. Southern and Dixon 1996, 55; Isaac 1988, 146. This is probably the case with the ducal troops in question, and even if they were not 'true' *limitanei* they certainly acted as a functional equivalent to them. Ultimately, this is the most important aspect when trying to understand their role in the Ostrogothic military organization.

18 Cf. Cassiod. Var. 6,6,1; 8,12,8. The development of late Roman palace guards from elite forces to mere show units, or units in which service was prestigious but harmless and far from any enemy, repeated itself a few times, cf. Mommsen 1879. Theoderic probably thought it was wise giving the Roman aristocracy some honours by employing their youths as palace guards, but Justinian radically disbanded these units upon his conquest of Italy; he even wanted the money that they had been paid all these years paid back, cf. Proc. Anec. 26, 27–30.

in haste is evidently ill-advised, and it is a bad thing to demand building on a site when danger is already feared. [...] What an advantage it will be to live in your own homes, while the enemy endures the harshest quarters! He will be exposed to the rains; you will be shielded by a roof; hunger will gnaw him; you will be refreshed by your stores. So, while you remain in perfect safety, your enemy will suffer the fate of the loser before the battle is fought. For clearly, in time of need, he who is not distracted among many cares will be proved the bravest. For could anyone suppose a man wise if he starts to build or lay up supplies only when he should be thinking of war?[19]

The fortress thus serves a dual purpose: it is to shelter to own civil population but also to deny shelter to an enemy. It forces a foreign army to invest part of their time and resources to forage, leaving them exposed not only to the elements but also to an impending counter attack. Since Dertona lies deep in Italy, it is inappropriate to think of lines of defence, because this would be the very inner-most line – if there was one. Gothic strategy should be understood in terms of space. An invader may advance through it, but he cannot get anything there. Hence there is no hard border to crack and no soft core to exploit afterwards. Even in the middle of the Italian peninsula there were dedicated fortresses of no civilian use.

This can be observed in the later stages of the First Gothic War between 537 and 540 CE. Justinian's general Belisarius had landed in southern Italy and worked his way north. The Gothic field army could not prevent him from taking Rome, which it then besieged. The losses were horrendous and the Gothic army had to retreat before Belisarius. That retreat is interesting, because – from Rome to Ravenna – suddenly a number of fortresses were (re-) activated, to which the Gothic troops fell back. These were mostly old ones guarding passes and roads. For example there was Petra at the *via Flaminia*. Although the exact location remains unknown, we have a good description of it, situated between a river crossing and a mountain:

for the end of the rock reaches to the very stream of the river, affording no room for those who travel that way to pass by. So the men of ancient times constructed a tunnel at that point, and made there a gate for the place. And they also closed up the greatest part of the entrance, leaving only enough space for a small gate there also, and thus rendered the place a natural fortress, which they call by the fitting name of Petra.[20]

---

19   Cassiod. Var. 1,17: *Publicae utilitatis ratione commoniti, quae nos cura semper libenter oneravit, castrum iuxta vos positum praecipimus communiri, quia res proeliorum bene disponitur, quotiens in pace tractatur. munitio quippe tunc efficitur praevalida, si diutina fuerit excogitatione roborata. omnia subita probantur incauta et male constructio loci tunc quaeritur, quando iam pericula formidantur. [2] Adde quod animus ipse in audaciam non potest esse pronus, qui diversa cura fuerit sollicitus. hanc merito expeditionem nominavere maiores, quia mens devota proeliis non debet aliis cogitationibus occupari. quapropter amplectenda res est, quae generalitatis consideratione praecipitur, nec moram fas est incurrere iussionem, quae devotos maxime noscitur adiuvare. [3] Et ideo praesenti auctoritate decernimus, ut domos vobis in praedicto castello alacriter construatis, reddentes animo nostro vicissitudinem rerum, ut, sicut nos vestris utilitatibus profutura censemus, ita tempora nostra ornare vos pulcherrimis fabricis sentianius. tunc enim accidit, ut et sumptus competentes vestris iam penatibus congregare velitis et habitatio vobis non sit ingrata, quam propria potest commendare constructio. [4] Quale est, rogo, in laribus propriis esse, cum durissimas mansiones hostis cogitur sustinere? ille imbribus pateat, vos tecta defendant: illum inedia consumat, vos copia provisa reficiat. sic vobis tutissime constitutis hostis vester ante eventum certaminis fata patiebitur perditoris. constat enim tempore necessitatis illum probari fortissimum virum, qui se per multa non distrahit. nam quis eum habuisse prudentiam putet, si tunc coeperit fabricis operam dare aut penum condere, cum oporteat bella tractare?* (Translation Barnish 1992, 14–15).

20   Proc. Bella 6,11, 12–14: [...] λήγουσα γὰρ ἡ πέτρα ἐς αὐτόν που μάλιστα τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὸν ῥοῦν διήκει, διάβασιν τοῖς ταύτῃ ἰοῦσιν οὐδεμίαν παρεχομένη. [13] διῶρυχα τοίνυν ἐνταῦθα οἱ πάλαι ἄνθρωποι ἐργασάμενοι, πυλίδα τῷ χωρίῳ ταύτῃ πεποίηνται. [14] φράξαντες δὲ καὶ τῆς ἑτέρας εἰσόδου τὸ

Those men "of ancient times" in the text often indicate that we are dealing with a generic literary convention, a *topos*, but in this special case we know from Aurelius Victor that those ancient men were the engineers of Emperor Vespasian.[21] This means a 450-year-old fortress in the heartland of Italy was still in good enough shape to form part of the Gothic defences. We can therefore assume that the fortress had been maintained continuously, even if at a minimal level, for centuries. Again this is an element of continuity, rather than being novel. Although the image of the Empire fighting Barbarians on its outer borders was fostered by Roman authors, already Vespasian – the old general – knew war was every bit as common on the Empire's ground; be it civil war, rebellion or barbarian incursion.

Perhaps Theoderic's own experiences when invading Italy and defeating Odoaker also prompted thinking in terms of spaces rather than in lines. After he crossed the Isonzo-river on August 28, 489 CE, it took him only about five weeks to get to Milan, despite a battle in late September.[22] If we compare that to the expected average marching speed of Roman legions, which is somewhere between sixteen and twenty Roman miles (24–30 km) a day,[23] he was barely slowed down in his advance – just two weeks[24] – despite being in the middle of the *tractus Italiae*, the chain of fortresses. He thus knew fortifications would not stop an enemy. It was the field army which needed to strike.

This strategy had severe consequences for the border regions. The Gothic field army, while highly mobile by the standards of Late Antiquity, could never react in time to cross the Alps and protect the provinces of Raetia against smaller incursions. The locals were on their own, and Theoderic made sure they knew they were on their own militarily unless a great invasion happened. However there was the *shadow of hierarchy* (or perhaps rather a functional equivalent to it), to use a term from political science. In case of a full scale invasion, but also in the event of a major uprising, Theoderic and his troops *could* act with terrifying efficiency as demonstrated in many theatres of war.[25] This kind of deterrent meant the locals would need to fight most of their small battles alone when subjected to a raid, but this strategy was far more credible than trying to achieve a permanent, direct presence. This would have served only to overstretch the available forces and have anyway failed to protect anything. While Theoderic's system of indirect presence, which at times may have been little more than symbolic domination, did nothing to prevent small scale incursions it was a credible enough threat stabilizing the region on a grander scale while leaving it largely independent. It is thus not a symptom of military weakness, as has been argued when reviewing the apparently low quality and numbers of the ducal troops.[26] It should not be forgotten that fending off small scale incursions, and not full scale invasions, was precisely what local border guards were supposed to do anyway. In

πλεῖστον, πλήν γε δὴ ὅσον πυλίδα κἀνταῦθα λελεῖφθαι, φρούριόν τε αὐτοφυὲς ἀπειργάσαντο καὶ Πέτραν αὐτὸ λόγῳ τῷ εἰκότι ἐκάλεσαν. (Translation Dewing 1919, 383).

21 Cf. Epit. 9.
22 Cf. Fasti Vind. Prior. A.490; Cassiod. Chron. a.489; An. Val. 2,50.
23 Cf. Thorne 2007, 226.
24 Walter Scheidel's program *Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World* gives an impression, however debatable, what those abstract numbers actually could mean.
25 Cf. Börzel and Risse 2010, 115–118. The concept itself needs some adaption to work for the late Antiquity since it was developed describing the relation between present-day non-state actors and the state, especially in non-hierarchical rulemaking. Even disregarding the vexed question of whether 'states' existed in antiquity, cf. Patzold 2012, 406–442; Pohl 2006, 9–29; Wiemer 2006, 1–4, decision- and rulemaking was predominantly hierarchical. However, having a greater power which by its sheer potential to markedly influence processes already affects these processes is something that can be observed in late antique Raetia as well. This works as functionally equivalent to a shadow of hierarchy.
26 Cf. Claude 1997, 417.

the end, it was a win-win situation, the borders gained relatively high stability, and the heartlands gained their bars and bolts.[27]

This would explain why the northern borders in particular are so extremely fuzzy. The precise extent to which the Gothic Kingdom exercised control north of the Alps simply cannot be determined. Yet considering his system of indirect presence and the *shadow of hierarchy* it did not much matter as long – as Theoderic could claim the old Roman provinces to be under his control and restored to the Roman *res publica* he headed.

2   Trade, gifts, and non-military interaction

Due to a lack of sources it is hard to make definite statements about the intensity or importance of the trade the Gothic Kingdom had with its neighbours. Even the relevance of the very question of whether the overall economy under Theoderic recovered or further declined can be disputed.[28] Numismatic evidence could perhaps indicate that the northern provinces traded a lot more with the south and the centre of the Gothic Kingdom than with their western and northern neighbours.[29] The literary evidence rests on Cassiodorus's letters, which are certainly not representative for the trade as such, because the ones dealing with it are best interpreted in a context of political interaction. In this, Theoderic is portrayed as some kind of a senior king in the west, advising although not directly commanding the lesser kings of neighbouring realms. As such, Theoderic's court inevitably appears to be the centre point of all trading action, always receiving more than giving.

Despite this caveat, some most interesting letters reveal details otherwise lost, especially about trade goods, their origin and value:

> A well-furnished royal table is a credit to the State. A private person may eat only the produce of his own district; but it is the glory of a King to collect at his table the delicacies of all lands. Let the Danube send us her carp, let the salmon come from the Rhine, and let the labour of Sicily furnish the lamprey […]; in short, let well-flavoured dishes be gathered from all coasts.[30]

This letter not only tells us about the most diverse sorts of fish enjoyed at court. The salmon from the Rhine – if the translation of *anchorago* as such is correct[31] – is noteworthy not so much because this species is almost extinct nowadays, but because the Rhine is another old border of the Western Roman Empire like the Danube. Implicitly – yet perfectly clearly – Theoderic outlines his sphere of influence by dishing out this collection of fish acquired through trade, gifts and tribute.

Another letter of note is about the gift of swords, which the King of the Varni made to Theoderic:

---

27   Such a design would also be supported by recent research highlighting the continuity of substructures in the duchy itself, rather than that of overlaying superregional (pseudo-)imperial structures of the late Roman, Gothic or Frankish administrations, and the importance of the ducal, rather than imperial, identity for the local population, cf. Esders 2012.

28   Cf. Claude 1996, 42–44.

29   Cf. Beyerle 1962, 71.

30   Cassiod. Var. 12,4,2: *Mensae regalis apparatus ditissimus non parvus rei publicae probatur ornatus, quia tanta dominus possidere creditur, quantis novitatibus epulatur. privati est habere quod locus continet: in principali convivio hoc profecto decet exquiri, quod visum debeat ammirari. destinet carpam Danuvius, a Rheno veniat anchorago, exormiston Sicula quibuslibet laboribus offeratur: Bruttiorum mare dulces mittat acernias: sapori pisces de diversis finibus afferantur.* (Translation Hodgkin 1889, 490–491, slightly modified by the author).

31   Cf. Heuberger 1937, 98.

You send us swords, which can even penetrate armour and which we praise for their steel rather than for their golden hilts. With their strikingly perfect polish, they shine so brightly that they reflect the face of whoever looks at them. Their perfectly formed edges are so regular that one would believe they were fashioned with a file rather than hammered in the forge. The admirably hollowed middle part of their blades seems to be veined and patterned. There is the play of so many different shadows that one would think the metal is interlaced with elements of various colours. The beauty of these swords is such that one is tempted to attribute them to Vulcan, of whom they say that he forges with such skill that whatever comes from his hand is not the work of a mortal, but of a god.[32]

This is a perfect description of a so-called *Goldgriff-Spatha*. This kind of longsword – pattern welded and golden hilted – was not a rank and file weapon,[33] so this letter is not about arms trade in the traditional sense of arming troops. The Goths controlled the most likely still functional west-Roman *fabricae*-facilities which would have provided them with ample weapons anyway. This kind of sword is a diplomatic message, being military high-tech as well as status symbol. Again Theoderic positions himself as the senior king receiving these splendid gifts, but it is equally important that he judges them favourably showing his appreciation and understanding of the craftsmanship as well as for the gesture itself.

Curiously, in their dealings with the north, Theoderic and his advisors used a language that emphasized the difference between the culturally superior Roman Empire and the wild barbarians in the north. The Goths, while not Roman citizens themselves for the most part, were nonetheless styled to be the defenders of the *res publica*. And the barbarians in the north were still portrayed with all the old *topoi* known from centuries of Roman ethnographic and historiographic traditions:

Think what a life of hardship the soldier leads in those frontier forts for the general peace, thus, as the gate of the Province, shutting out the entry of the barbarian nations. He must be ever on the alert who seeks to keep out the Barbarians. For fear alone checks these men, who honour [to the treaties] will not keep back.[34]

However, this kind of rhetoric mostly served representing Theoderic's regime to the Romans as a continuation of Roman traditions and policies more than it really impinged on his strategy. It is no surprise that Theoderic avoided such *topoi* in his letters to the Thuringians for example. Still he placed himself in the de-facto position of Roman Emperor, who as wise father guided the cause of the other kingdoms, which he considered subordinate.[35]

---

32   Cassiod. Var. 5,1,1–2: […] *spathas nobis etiam arma desecantes vestra fraternitas destinavit, ferro magis quam auri pretio ditiores. splendet illic claritas expolita ut intuentium facies fideli puritate restituant, quarum margines in acutum tali aequalitate descendunt, ut non limis compositae, sed igneis fornacibus credantur effusae. harum media pulchris alveis excavata quibusdam videntur crispari posse vermiculis: ubi tanta varietatis umbra conludit, ut intextum magis credas variis coloribus lucidum metallum. [2] Hoc vestra cotis diligenter emundat, hoc vester splendidissimus pulvis ita industriose detergit, ut speculum quoddam virorum faciat ferream lucem, qui ideo patriae vestrae natura largiente concessus est, ut huius rei opinionem vobis faceret singularem: enses, qui pulchritudine sui putentur esse Vulcani, qui tanta elegantia fabrilia visus est excolere, ut quod eius manibus formabatur, non opus mortalium, sed crederetur esse divinum.* (Translation by author).

33   Cf. Ament 1998, 333–335. Ironically no Ostrogothic sword, much less a *Goldgriff-Spatha*, has been found because the Goths were buried without weapons. Nevertheless their neighbours, the Franks and Alemanni, left a number of contemporary swords which illustrate the precision of Cassiodorus's description. Furthermore they are likely to be heavily influenced by the Gothic swords, cf. Menghin 1983, 166.

34   Cassiod. Var. 2,5,2: *Decet enim cogitare de militis transactione, qui pro generali quiete finalibus locis noscitur insudare et quasi a quadam porta provinciae gentiles introitus probatur excludere. in procinctu semper erit, qui barbaros prohibere contendit, quia solus metus cohibet, quos fides promissa non retinet.* (Translation Hodgkin 1889, 174).

35   Cf. Cassiod. Var. 4,1.

3   A clear border. The Balkans

The focal point of the Balkans border region was the city of Sirmium, which had once belonged to the Western Roman Empire, but was effectively under Eastern control for a long time. However, with the Eastern preoccupation with the Persians and incursions into Thrace, the city was taken by Gepids during the later 5th century.[36] Theoderic decided to reclaim it for the *Hesperia*, and his general Pitzias swiftly conquered the city from the Gepids in 504 CE.[37] While the Senate in Rome cheered loudly that the *Hesperia* was whole again, the Emperor in Constantinople was furious for he considered the city his, albeit just not *currently* under his control. The result was a clash between Theoderic and Emperor Anastasius.[38] And the mere prospect of military action realigned the allegiances across the Balkans borders almost immediately.

It was not only the border between the Eastern and the Western parts of the Empire, but also various peoples to the north. The Gepids around Sirmium were beaten, but the Bulgars offered their troops to the Emperor, whereas a certain general named Mundo allied himself with Theoderic. Mundo claimed to be a descendant of Attila and had created his own little rogue dominion with the help of mercenaries and lost soldiers of vanquished kingdoms, including Gepids. Initially called a king of thieves *(rex grassatorum)*,[39] he had chosen the right side at the right time and officially became a federate commander of Theoderic, which is ironic considering Theoderic himself was technically only a federate commander of the Emperor against whom he was fighting just at that time.[40] Despite another Gothic victory in 510 CE and the constant presence of potent Gothic field army units, the situation remained volatile. Mundo was but one factor in a highly militarized border region where Gothic, Gepid, Lombard, Bulgar and Eastern Roman forces cautiously watched each other, waiting for a chance to strike at each other, with the help of each other. In 530 CE resurgent Gepids saw their time had come and attacked the Goths; however, a successful Gothic counterattack took the opportunity to not just repulse them but also grab an Eastern Roman city in the process.

The seemingly stronger presence of cities in the Balkans marks a difference to the north where cities had shrunken massively, sometimes to the extent of insignificance.[41] Since the Balkans also saw a process of de-urbanization, perhaps one more dramatic,[42] this stronger presence is best attributed to the stronger focus of our narrative sources on the region and the wars waged there. The remaining cities were all the more important. The lower dispersion of the local population in areas dominated by a city, its economic impact there, and its symbolic importance – the winning of Sirmium in particular boosted the reputation of its conqueror as governing power[43] – heavily influenced the strategies how to defend the region, almost predetermining campaign goals. On the other hand, the ongoing development of de-urbanization and the adapting economy might also suggest that the loss of a city might have been far from a catastrophic setback for the loser on a purely economic level. Further, when considering the growing number of new fortresses,

---

36   Cf. Vössing and Milinkovic 2005, 499–502.

37   Cf. Ennod. Pan. 60–62.

38   Cf. Kitchen 2011, 128–129.

39   Cf. Jord. Get. 301.

40   Cf. Ennod. Pan. 62–69; Jord. Get. 300–301; Jord. Rom. 356; Marc. Com. A.505.

41   Nevertheless it can be argued that the administrative structures laid out by the cities sometimes could remain intact and effective, especially in the regions more closely connected to Italy, even though the size of the cities itself was reduced, cf. Witschel 2008, 45–46.

42   Cf. Poulter 2004.

43   Cf. Ennod. Pan. 69; Sirmium had been the capital of the province Pannonia II and could look back on a history of imperial attention until the 5th century, cf. Dey 2014, 15; 60–61. Thus Theoderic's claim of renewing this attention contrasted with the Eastern Emperor's neglect, and once again serves to affirm his imperial pretensions.

fortified villages and other strongholds, the military could choose to defend these and thus compensate the loss of a city. For instance, for Mundo's base of operations a fortress or a mere watchtower *(turris)* named Herta sufficed; he definitely did not need a city.[44] Even Sirmium was not important enough to be without alternative as a military stronghold and was eventually replaced by a newly built fortress.[45] In this changing world, the greatest worth a city had may perhaps have been the growth of prestige its owner gained simply by holding it, especially when fewer of them flourished.[46]

Four years after the war between Gepids and Goths, the new Emperor Justinian retaliated, and Mundo switched sides or had done so already, and fought the Goths as the Emperor's new master of the Illyrian armies *(magister militum per Illyricum)*.[47] As it is fitting for such an illustrious character, he died in a spectacular battle. Mundo can be analysed as exemplary in illustrating the shifting identities and the fluidity in the application of ethnographical terms[48] – claiming the names of the Huns, Goths, Gepids, and Romans – and as example for a leader of a purely plunder-based warrior group,[49] yet he is also a good example of how smaller local forces reacted to the influence of larger superregional forces in contest.

Unlike in the north, where the Gothic Kingdom had no equal, the situation on the Balkans is not characterized by fuzzy borders. The borders are clear to each protagonist, with a few cities being high-visibility markers of their zone of influence, they just could not settle for a common understanding of where, exactly, the border lay. It proved disastrous that two superpowers – the Gothic one fledging, the East Roman one temporarily weakened – tried to establish, respectively re-establish clear-cut borders with direct military action against each other. This forced the many smaller powers to constantly shift their allegiances and resulted in permanent instability that ended with the later, total destruction of the Gothic military in the wake of the Gothic Wars 535–562 CE. This, however, is perhaps not the inevitable result of two neighbouring superpowers. The Romano-Persian border in the east remained relatively stable and peaceful except when a full-scale war broke out, during which several provinces could be devastated. One should avoid 'what-if' history, but the question of what might have happened had Theoderic used an indirect approach, as he did in the north, might be worth exploring.

4 Fuzzy borders vs clear borders

When the power exerted by the centres of the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire deteriorated massively, reaching the point of total collapse in the west, as a delegated army commander, Theoderic stepped in. With him came an agenda aiming for the territorial restoration of the *Hesperia*. Ideologically this was supported by ancient

---

44 Cf. Jord. Get. 301.

45 Cf. Caldwell 2012, 102.

46 On cities and their ideological role in Ostrogothic Italy cf. Marazzi 2016, 105–113.

47 Cf. Amory 1997, 397–399; Krautschik 2002, 382–383. Admittedly, it is not entirely certain that this Mundo is really identical with the Mundo who sided with Theoderic earlier (cf. PLRE IIIb, 903), but it seems probable.

48 Cf. Pohl 1980, 290–293.

49 Cf. Berndt 2011, 131–134. However, the extent to which plundering and looting is essential for the formation and stabilization of this group may be somewhat overstressed. It is a military group first and foremost, and ancient authors seldom characterized soldiers or mercenaries favourably; in fact sometimes only through the employer the difference between robbers and soldiers could be seen, cf. Riess 2001, 74. The line between foraging and plundering can be thin and blurred indeed, especially from the affected civilians' point of view. But that is precisely the reason why this point of view should not be our only means of judging such troops. Their quick integration into regular armies (cf. Burian 1960, 47–49), which can also be seen in case of Mundo's men, is vital to understanding how they operated, i.e. in no way differing from other troops of the time.

rhetorical *topoi* and Theoderic's pretention of taking over the Emperor's job without legally taking over his actual position. In practice, he reformed the Roman military system to fit his own needs and the defence strategy of the *Hesperia* also betrays a down-to-earth assessment of the impossibility of truly defending all of it, which differed from the late Roman strategy of defending everything everywhere. North of the Alps, a mere *shadow of hierarchy* had to suffice, offering the reasonable chance that his troops could engage adequately there. The fuzzy borders in the north may well be deliberate rather than a sign of weakness. The indirect rule proved to be very fruitful for the centre as well as for the border region. As the allies beyond the border were reliable, or at least they did not switch sides, the trade worked reasonably well. The downside was the fact that the locals in the border region felt little loyalty to Ravenna and remained essentially neutral during the Gothic Wars of the 6th century. By contrast, the clear Balkans borders and the attempt to hold them, no matter what, did a lot to destabilize the region permanently. The shaping of the periphery therefore depended greatly on what mode of achieving political domination over the realm's edges was chosen by the centre.

In any case, the defence strategy did not rely on forward defences at the borders. On the contrary, it was anticipated that neither fortresses nor natural obstacles could hold an enemy for long. Fortifications were merely intended to deny supply and shelter, while protecting the population until field army units from the *exercitus Gothorum* could engage. Not even an obstacle as massive as the Alps and a chain of fortresses as impressive as the *tractus Italiae* made an exception to that rule.[50]

This strategy was largely vindicated during the Gothic Wars, which could only be passingly reviewed here, but the simple fact that the Gothic military survived as long as it did against superior forces is a testimony to the strategy's effectiveness. It bogged down the Eastern Roman troops in siege after siege. Its greatest weakness is probably the neglect of naval affairs, but that topic is out of scope for this paper.

---

50   It has been argued that the late Roman army pursued a strategy of "defence in depth", cf. Luttwak 1976, controversially so and not without massive criticism pointing to the late Roman forward defences (cf. Mann 1970; Goldsworthy 2005, 154), however even the term itself can be a bit misleading. In modern military thought it means multi-layered, pre-set defence lines to which troops retreat while giving up land for time and engaging the enemy with the purpose of slowing him down, cf. Stein 1987. But neither the late Roman nor the Gothic military would give up the land entirely as the cities and fortifications were not to fall. No lines of defence can be seen and there is also no evidence that the provincial troops would retreat out of the provinces to the centre. Lastly the northern provinces of Raetia and Noricum are not representative for the overall border defence strategy.

References

Ament 1998

Hermann Ament. "s.v. Goldgriffspatha". In *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 12*. Ed. by H. Beck, H. Steuer, D. Timpe, and J. Hoops. De Gruyter, 1998, 333–335.

Amory 1997

Patrick Amory. *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554*. Vol. 33. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Arnold 2014

Jonathan Arnold. *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Arnold 2016

Jonathan Arnold. "Ostrogothic Provinces: Administration and Ideology". In *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*. Ed. by J. Arnold, S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa. Brill's Companion to European History. Leiden: Brill, 2016, 73–97.

Barnish 1992

Samuel Barnish. *Selected Variae of Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator*. Translated Texts for Historians 12. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992.

Berndt 2011

Guido Berndt. "Beute, Schutzgeld, Subsidien". In *Lohn der Gewalt. Beutepraktiken von der Antike bis zur Neuzeit*. Ed. by H. Carl and H.-J. Bömelburg. Krieg in der Geschichte 72. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2011, 121–147.

Beyerle 1962

Franz Beyerle. "Süddeutschland in der politischen Konzeption Theoderich des Großen". In *Vorträge und Forschungen*. Ed. by T. Mayer. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft Darmstadt, 1962, 65–81.

Bierbrauer 2010

Volker Bierbrauer. "Goten im Osten und Westen: Ethnos und Mobilität am Ende des 5. und in der 1. Hälfte des 6. Jahrhunderts aus archäologischer Sicht". In *Zwischen Orient und Okzident: Festschrift für Hansgerd Hellenkemper*. Ed. by F. Naumann-Steckner, B. Päffgen, and R. Thomas. Kölner Jahrbuch 43. Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 2010, 71–111.

Börm 2013

Henning Börm. *Westrom. Von Honorius bis Justinian*. Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2013.

Börzel and Risse 2010

Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse. "Governance Without A State – Can It Work?" *Regulation and Governance* 4.2 (2010), 1–22.

Burian 1960

Jan Burian. "Latrones Milites facti". *Eunomia* 2 (1960), 47–49.

Caldwell 2012

Craig Caldwell. "The Balkans". In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*. Ed. by S. Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 92–114.

Claude 1996
Dietrich Claude. "Studien zu Handel und Wirtschaft im italischen Ostgotenreich". *Münsterische Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte* 15 (1996), 42–74.

Claude 1997
Dietrich Claude. "Clovis, Théodoric et la Maîtrise de l'Espace entre Rhin et Danube". In *Clovis. Histoire et Mémoire*. Ed. by M. Rouche. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997, 409–419.

Dewing 1919
Henry Dewing. *Procopius. History of the Wars, Books V–VI.15*. Loeb Classical Library 107. London: William Heinemann, 1919.

Dey 2014
Hendrik Dey. *The Afterlife of the Roman City. Architecture and Ceremony in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Esders 2012
Stefan Esders. "Spätantike und frühmittelalterliche Dukate. Überlegungen zum Problem historischer Kontinuität und Diskontinuität". In *Die Anfänge Bayerns. Von Raetien und Noricum zur frühmittelalterlichen Baiovaria*. Ed. by H. Fehr and I. Heitmeier. Bayerische Landesgeschichte und europäische Regionalgeschichte 1. St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2012, 425–462.

Fear 2008
Andrew Fear. "War and Society". In *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare: Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*. Ed. by P. Sabin, H. van Wees, and M. Whitby. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, 424–458.

Glaser 2008
Franz Glaser. "Castra und Höhensiedlungen in Kärnten und Nordtirol". In *Höhensiedlungen zwischen Antike und Mittelalter von den Ardennen bis zur Adria*. Ed. by H. Teuer and V. Bierbrauer. Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Ergänzungsbände 58. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008, 595–642.

Goldsworthy 2005
Adrian Goldsworthy. *The Complete Roman Army*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.

Halsall 2016
Guy Halsall. "The Ostrogothic Military". In *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*. Ed. by J. Arnold, S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa. Brill's Companion to European History. Leiden: Brill, 2016, 173–199.

Heuberger 1937
Richard Heuberger. "Das ostgotische Rätien". *Klio* 30 (1937), 77–109.

Heydemann 2016
Gerda Heydemann. "The Ostrogothic Kingdom: Ideologies and Transitions". In *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*. Ed. by J. Arnold, S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa. Brill's Companion to European History. Leiden: Brill, 2016, 17–49.

Hodgkin 1889
Thomas Hodgkin. *The Letters of Cassiodorus, Being A Condensed Translation of the Variae Epistolae of Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator*. London: Henry Frowde, 1889.

Isaac 1988

Benjamin Isaac. "The Meaning of the Terms Limes and Limitanei". *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988), 125–147.

Jirík 2012

Jaroslav Jirík. "Böhmen in der Spätantike und der Völkerwanderungszeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Beziehungen zu Baiern und Thüringen". In *Die Anfänge Bayerns. Von Raetien und Noricum zur frühmittelalterlichen Baiovaria*. Ed. by H. Fehr and I. Heitmeier. Bayerische Landesgeschichte und europäische Regionalgeschichte 1. St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2012, 359–402.

Kitchen 2011

Tom Kitchen. "Italia and Graecia. West versus East in the Rhetoric of Ostrogothic Italy". In *Unclassical Traditions. Perspectives from East and West in Late Antiquity*. Ed. by C. Kelly, R. Flower, and M. Williams. Vol. 2. Cambridge Classical Journal, Supplemental Volume 35. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 116–130.

Krautschik 2002

Stefan Krautschik. "s.v. Mundo". In *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 20*. Ed. by H. Beck, D. Geuemich, H. Steuer, and J. Hoops. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2002, 382–384.

Le Bohec 2010

Yann Le Bohec. *Das römische Heer in der späten Kaiserzeit*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010.

Luttwak 1976

Edward Luttwak. *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century AD to the Third*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

Mann 1970

John C. Mann. "Review of Luttwak, Edward: The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century AD to the Third, Baltimore 1976". *Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1970), 175–183.

Marazzi 2016

Federico Marazzi. "Ostrogothic Cities". In *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*. Ed. by J. Arnold, S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa. Brill's Companion to European History. Leiden: Brill, 2016, 98–120.

Menghin 1983

Wilfried Menghin. *Das Schwert im Frühen Mittelalter. Chronologisch typologische Untersuchungen zu Langschwertern aus germanischen Gräbern des 5.–7. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* Wissenschaftliche Beibände zum Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums 1. Stuttgart: Theiss, 1983.

Mommsen 1879

Theodor Mommsen. "Die Gardetruppen der römischen Republik und der Kaiserzeit". *Hermes* 14 (1879), 25–35.

Mommsen 1889

Theodor Mommsen. "Ostgothische Studien (Fortsetzung)". *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde zur Beförderung einer Gesamtausgabe der Quellenschriften Deutscher Geschichte* 14 (1889), 453–544.

Nelsen 1978

Hermann Nelsen. "Der Grabfrevel in den germanischen Rechtsaufzeichnungen". In *Zum Grabfrevel in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit*. Ed. by H. Jankuhn, H. Nehlsen, and H. Roth. Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 3. Folge, 131. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978, 107–168.

O'Donnell 2008

James O'Donnell. *The Ruin of the Roman Empire: A New History*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008.

Patzold 2012

Steffen Patzold. "Human Security, fragile Staatlichkeit und Governance im Frühmittelalter". *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38 (2012), 406–422.

Pohl 1980

Walter Pohl. "Die Gepiden und die Gentes an der mittleren Donau nach dem Zerfall des Attilareiches". In *Die Völker an der mittleren und unteren Donau im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert*. Ed. by H. Wolfram and F. Daim. Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 145. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980, 239–305.

Pohl 2006

Walter Pohl. "Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter". In *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*. Ed. by S. Airlie, W. Pohl, and H. Reimitz. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006, 9–29.

Poulter 2004

Andrew Poulter. "Cataclysm on the Lower Danube. The Destruction of a Complex Roman Landscape". In *Landscapes of Change. Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Ed. by N. Christie. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 223–253.

Prostko-Prostynski 2002

Jan Prostko-Prostynski. "Ursus: Ein ostgotischer Statthalter in Binnen-Norikum?" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 139 (2002), 297–302.

Riess 2001

Werner Riess. *Apuleius und die Räuber: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Kriminalitätsforschung*. Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien 35. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 2001.

Schwarcz 2015

Andreas Schwarcz. "The Roman Frontier along the Upper Danube in Late Antiquity". In *The Medieval Way of War. Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*. Ed. by G. Halfond. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, 21–28.

Southern and Dixon 1996

Pat Southern and Karen Dixon. *The Late Roman Army*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Stein 1987

Hans-Peter Stein. *Angriff – Verzögerung – Verteidigung*. Truppenpraxis Beiheft 1. Bonn: Verlag Offene Worte, 1987.

Thorne 2007

James Thorne. "Battle, Tactics, and the Emergence of the Limites in the West". In *A Companion to the Roman Army*. Ed. by P. Erdkamp. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, 218–234.

Vössing and Milinkovic 2005

Konrad Vössing and Mihailo Milinkovic. "s.v. Sirmium". In *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 28*. Ed. by H. Beck, D. Geunenich, H. Steuer, and J. Hoops. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2005, 499–502.

Wiemer 2006

Hans-Ulrich Wiemer. "Staatlichkeit und politisches Handeln in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Einleitende Bemerkungen". In *Staatlichkeit und politisches Handeln in der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Ed. by H.-U. Wiemer. Millennium-Studien 10. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2006, 1–40.

Witschel 2008

Christian Witschel. "Sterbende Städte? Betrachtungen zum römischen Städtewesen in der Spätantike". In *Schrumpfende Städte. Ein Phänomen zwischen Antike und Moderne*. Ed. by A. Lampen and A. Owzar. Städteforschung A76. Wien: Böhlau, 2008, 17–78.

Wolfram 1967

Herwig Wolfram. *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts*. Vol. 21. Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung. Ergänzungsbände. Wien: Böhlau, 1967.

Wolfram 2001

Herwig Wolfram. *Die Goten. Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des 6. Jahrhunderts*. München: C.H. Beck, 2001.

Kai Grundmann

Kai Grundmann (Dr. phil. FU Berlin 2014), was an independent scholar and is now working as a social-educational instructor for refugees in Berlin. His research focusses on military and loyalty in late antiquity.

Dr. Kai Grundmann
Holzmarktstr. 53
10179 Berlin, Germany

E-Mail: kai_grundmann@gmx.de