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Constantius heros (ILCV 66) – An elegiac testimony on the decline of the Late Roman West

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JEROEN W. P. WIJNENDAELE – MICHAEL P. HANAGHAN

Constantius *heros* (ILCV 66) – An elegiac testimony on the decline of the Late Roman West

Introduction

Few scholars have ever summed up so eloquently the problems facing anyone trying to understand the secular history of the Late Roman Empire in the fifth century CE, as JOHN BURY:

«The fifth century was one of the most critical periods in the history of Europe. It was crammed with events of great moment, and the changes which it witnessed transformed Europe more radically than any set of political events that have happened since. At that time hundreds of people were writing abundantly on all kinds of subjects, and many of their writings have survived; but among these there is no history of contemporary events, and the story has had to be pieced together from fragments, jejune chronicles, incidental references in poets, rhetoricians, and theologians. Inscribed stones which supply so much information for the first four centuries of the Roman Empire are rare. Nowhere, since the time of Alexander the Great, do we feel so strongly that the meagreness of the sources flouts the magnitude of the events. Battles, for instance, were being fought continually, but no full account of a single battle is extant. We know much more of the Syrian campaigns of Thothmes III in the fifteenth century B.C. than we know of the campaigns of Stilicho or Aetius or Theoderic. The Roman emperors, statesmen, and generals are dim figures, some of them mere names.»¹

Even the lives of the *magistri militum*, the senior commanders of the imperial army in this era, are more famous than actually known.² We have a record of the most illustri-

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¹ BURY 1923, preface.

² Over the past few years, there has been no shortage of studies dealing with the fifth century western Roman Empire. For the political and military history in general, see now BÖRM 2017;

ous or notorious exploits of men such as the aforementioned Stilicho or Aëtius. Yet for many of their brothers-in-arms we do not know when they died, or where they were born; for the vast majority we do not even know what year they were born.³ As BURY points out, there is an acute contrast between the dearth of inscriptions at our disposal and the relative abundance of inscriptions for officers and gentlemen of earlier Roman Imperial history.⁴ It is precisely these considerations that make the following epitaph so enticing:

*Hic decus Italiae tegitur, Constantius heros
qui patriae tegumen, murus et arma fuit.
invictus bello, non fictae pacis amator
confixus⁵ plagis, victor ubique tamen.*

5 *hic mare per medium gentem compressit euntem
et victis pariter terra negavit opem.
sobrius, armipotens, castus, moderamine pollens
primus in ingenio, primus in arma fuit.
Romanis blando quantum flagravat amore*

10 *tantum Pannoniis gentibus horror erat.
iste sibi et natis bello mercavit honores,
munera principibus colla secata dedit.
natorum medio, pictus pater anxia mater
quem plangat nescit, stat stupefacta dolens.*

ELTON 2019; KULIKOWSKI 2019. For the commanders as a collective, DEMANDT 1970 remains seminal on the institutional background (though it has become outdated regarding our understanding of its political history). The same could very much be said about O'FLYNN 1983 who popularized the 'Generalissimo' concept (already used nearly a century ago by STEIN 1928) for his study of the western Roman military powerbrokers at court c. 375–493. LEE 2013 and 2015 are more impressionistic, yet shed welcome new light on the *magistri militum* of the fourth century, and those during the reign of Theodosius II.

³ The one exception is Odoacer, thanks to a chance remark of John of Antioch who says that he was sixty at the time of his murder in 493 (Joh. Ant. Frg. 238 MARIEV). GILLET 1995 has offered a plausible reconstruction about Ricimer's mixed ancestry, which points to a date of birth c. 416–418 in Spain. For Stilicho, Constantius (III), Aëtius and almost every other western commander of high rank we can only take a stab in the dark.

⁴ As a sample, we find the following examples: Stilicho: PLRE I s.v. Flavius Stilicho. Constantius (III): CIL V 7781; CIL VI 1719; CIL VI 1720; CIL VI 1749; CIL XIII 3674. Bonifatius: CIL VIII 898. Felix: ILCV 68; CIL XIII 10032. Merobaudes: CIL VI 1724. Aetius: CIL VI 41389. Ricimer: ILCV 1637. Valila: CIL VI 32169; ILCV 1785. To the best of our knowledge, there exists no collective study of these men's inscriptions yet useful analysis of individual aspects can be found in CASTRITIUS 1972; MARGONE 1987; LÜTKENHAUS 1998, 198–206; HEINEN 2000; DELMAIRE 2008; MATHISEN 2009; CHENAULT 2012, 124–129; ROBERTO 2013; GHELLER 2020. SCHARF 1994 wished to identify AE 1994, 1326 as belonging to *comitatenses* who were part of Aëtius' Alpine campaigns in the early 430s, yet the actual inscription sheds no light on the commander.

⁵ *LSJ II. B. <rendered powerless or inactive>.*

- 15 *peius Roma gemit, tanto spoliata senatu*
perdidit ornatum, perdidit arma simul.
tristes stant acies, magno ductore remoto
cum quo Roma potens, quo sine pressa iacet
hunc tumulum dux magne tuum, tibi condidit uxor
20 *quae tecum rursus consociata iacet*
istud nulla manus temptet violare sepulchrum
*at Theodora tuum te cupiente parens.*⁶

Here the glory of Italy, the hero Constantius, is buried
He was the shield of his homeland, its wall and its weapons.
Undefeated in war, nor a lover of fake peace,
debilitated by his war-wounds, but still a victor everywhere.
Throughout the deep sea, this man hindered the barbarian horde as it went,
and the land equally offered them no support.
Even minded, powerful in battle, chaste, valued in command,
Preeminent in character, preeminent in battle.
He was dearly in love with the Romans
as much as he was a terror to the Pannonian hordes.
He earned honours for himself and his sons in war
as gifts for emperors, he gave decapitated heads.
The father is depicted among his sons, the anxious mother
does not know whom to mourn, she stands dumbstruck by her grief.
Rome's grief is worse, robbed of such council,
she has lost her decoration, and at the same time, lost her armed might.
The battle lines form sadly, their great leader lost,
with whom Rome was powerful, without whom Rome lays crushed.
This tomb, great general, is yours, your wife built it for you,
she lies here, united with you again.
Let no hand try to disturb this tomb of yours,
Except Theodora's, your mother, as you wish it.

Textual analysis

This translation differs in numerous respects to the German and English translations offered by OTTO MAENCHEN-HELFEN in *‘The World of the Huns’*, published posthumously.⁷ MAENCHEN-HELFEN takes the force of the *non* in line 3 as affecting only *fictae* and not the entire phrase *fictae pacis amator*, and so renders the phrase into German as «ein Freund des wirklichen Friedens» and English as «a lover of true peace.»

⁶ ILCV 66.

⁷ MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1973, 102.

There are other, more specific ways of saying ‘true peace’ than *non fictae pacis*. The combination of *fict** and *pax, pacis* is attested elsewhere; Jerome’s commentary on the gospel of Matthew (3. 704) uses *fictae pacis*, while Hegesippus’ translation of Josephus refers to the sudden outset of hostilities (5. 2): *subitio ficta pacis versa in proelium* («suddenly the fictions of peace turned into battle»). In both cases *fictae pacis* speaks to a peace that cannot be trusted. MAENCHEN-HELFEN offers no reasonable historical context that might support why Constantius loved a ‘real peace’, presumably one that held for an extended period during the turbulent politics of the fifth century, as the Roman empire in the West faced numerous opponents on multiple fronts, and an almost endless series of wars and internal violence. These were circumstances hardly conducive for «ein Freund des wirklichen Friedens».

MAENCHEN-HELFEN translates *confixus plagis* as «nun von Wunden durchbohrt» and «though pierced with wounds». The participle *confixus* can mean ‘pierced through’ / ‘durchbohrt’ but in such cases it is invariably modified by the instrument that was used to make the wound.⁸ In this case, *confixus* is modified by *plagis*. This phrase could refer either to the manner of Constantius’ death, i.e. that he was stabbed multiple times, presumably in battle (perhaps in the same battle that killed his sons), or be used in a more transferred way, to indicate that he was debilitated by his war wounds. The contrast, clearly drawn between *confixus plagis* and the remainder of that pentameter *victor ubique tamen* is consistent with either interpretation. In the first case the pentameter acknowledges that Constantius was wounded in battle, but was ‘victorious everywhere else»; in the second, Constantius is limited by his war wounds, but ‘he was still a victor everywhere.’⁹ The second interpretation is preferable as it is consistent with the epitaph’s earlier claim that Constantius was *invictus bello*.

MAENCHEN-HELFEN misunderstood the strength of *compressit* and the aspect of *euntem* in line 5, offering «unterwarf er ein Volk, das die See inmitten durchquerte», and «He subdued the race that crossed the middle of the sea.» The allusion to Aen. 12. 452 is constructive (Aen. 12. 450–454):

*ille volat campoque atrum rapit agmen aperto
qualis ubi ad terras abrupto sidere nimbus
it mare per medium (miseris, heu, praescia longe
horrescunt corda agricolis: dabit ille ruinas
arboribus stragemque satis, ruet omnia late),*

⁸ e.g. *cruci, clavis* (Ambr. Expositio Psalmi 15. 38), *sagitta* (Amm. 18. 8. 11), *ligno* (Aug. Serm. 231), *iaculis* (Auson. Epitaph 19. 3), *telo* (Just. Epit. 13. 8), *cuspide* (Luc. Phars. 3. 618).

⁹ The explicit display of Constantius’ wounds was not just for heroic effect. In the Late Roman Empire, wounds sustained in combat counted both as marks of valour and as evidence for remuneration. Commanders could award wounded soldiers with money, property or promotions, while the Theodosian Code acknowledges wounds as evidence for the regulation of benefits to those discharged from military service. See RANCE 2020, 175–176.

«He [Aeneas] flew ahead and hurrying his dark troop on the open plain just like when the sky has broken, and a storm cloud moves towards land, across the deep ocean (woe, the presentient hearts of sad farmers fear it from afar: it will bring ruin to trees and havoc to harvests, ruining all far and wide).»

In Virgil's epic, Aeneas – like Constantius – has just been wounded, but has made a quick recovery. Given that Constantius is explicitly labelled as a *heros* in line 1 it would be odd if the allusion to a simile describing Aeneas is applied to the barbarian horde and not Constantius. The position of the phrase *mare per medium*, coming directly after *hic* rather than between *gentem* and *euntem* suggests that both Constantius and the barbarian horde travelled across the deep sea. The use of *medium* to qualify *mare* make it unlikely that the author had the Vandal crossing to Africa in mind. The straits of Gibraltar could hardly be thought of as the open sea.

MAENCHEN-HELFEN's use of «erwarb» for *mercavit* is suitable, but the English «sought» does not specify like *mercavit* that the honours were in fact earned. The noun *principibus* surely refers to emperors, not MAENCHEN-HELFEN's «Führer» or «nobles». MAENCHEN-HELFEN relies on BUECHELER's unnecessary suggestion of *mediost ictus* for what is clearly *medio pictus*,¹⁰ and so ends up offering «durchbohrt», «lies stabbed» for *pictus* «painted», which is in all likelihood an ekphrastic reference to the image that accompanied the epitaph. The noun *senatu* cannot be conflated with *senatore*, which MAENCHEN-HELFEN German does, offering «#des# Senators» and the English «senator». The use of *senatu* may at best be understood as co-opting the prestige of senatorial rank for the general in his role as an imperial adviser, as shall be discussed later. MAENCHEN-HELFEN did not translate the final couplet into English. His German «Wage es nie eine Hand, dies Grabmal dir zu verletzen, deins, Theodora zugleich, die als Nächste es wünscht» understands *Theodora* as an ablative qualified by *cupiente*, when *Theodora* must be nominative given the final *a* is short.¹¹

The epitaph begins by hailing Constantius using the Virgilian tag *decus Italiae*.¹² In book eleven of Virgil's epic, Turnus directs this remark at Camilla, after she offers to confront the enemy cavalry on her own. The phrase is particularly apt for the epitaph of a commander renowned for his personal valour who almost certainly fought on horseback. The poem is comprised of eleven elegiac couplets that elegantly follow the rules of prosody. The two postpositive uses of prepositions, in line five and line eighteen, are both marked by caesuras after the preposition: *mare per || medium; quo sine || pressa*. Lines that include repeat phrasing metrically underscore their repetition; in line eight both examples of the phrase *primus in* are dactylic, so too the two uses of *perdidit* in line sixteen. The seventh and eight couplets create a comparison between

¹⁰ BUECHELER 1882, 624.

¹¹ *āt Thëö|dōrā tū|ūm || tē cūpī|ēntē pār|ēns.*

¹² Aen. 11. 508: «*o decus Italiae virgo [...]*». BUECHELER 1882, 624. notes the reference, but does not interpret it.

the personal grief of Constantius' widow and a personified Roma. This is broadly consistent with Roma's personification in the panegyrics for Avitus performed by Sidonius Apollinaris on Jan 1, 456, in which Roma is presented as a victim of barbarian violence.¹³

What begins as an epitaph for Constantius, becomes a proleptic epitaph for Rome in her twilight years. The comparison between Constantius and Rome is underscored by the use of *armipotens* to describe the general, and *potens* to describe Rome. The similarity of their fate is reinforced by the use of *iacet* at the ends of lines 18 and 20, a verb regularly used in the epitaphic formula *hic iacet* to indicate that a body is laying in the ground. The final two couplets repeatedly use the second person to refer to the deceased (*tuum tibi, tecum, tuum, te*), declaring emphatically Constantius' ownership of the tomb and his enduring control over who else might use it, namely his mother, Theodora.¹⁴

Constantius who?

In a very recent article, PÉTER KOVÁCS produced the most thorough study to date of this inscription, which has been relatively neglected since it was first analysed by GIOVANNI BATTISTA DE ROSSI, THEODOR MOMMSEN, and OTTO SEECK.¹⁵ KOVÁCS' article is a good starting point for anyone wishing to consult the status quaestionis on scholarship regarding the text, its manuscript tradition, and philological aspects. This article offers an alternative interpretation of its historical context, but first some essential background.

Constantius' epitaph is unique; we do not have a single other epitaph of a fifth-century commander.¹⁶ The original epitaph is lost but, thankfully, as with so many other ancient sources, its text was copied and preserved in two Carolingian codices. These descend from a common source in northern Italy, which has been associated with the milieu of Paul the Deacon. Two other epitaphs were added to the same collection, one for the late sixth century Suebian *dux* Trocton (= Droctulf) who distinguished himself in the East, and one for Charlemagne's Bavarian paladin Gerold.¹⁷ The three texts all

¹³ Sidon. Carm. 7. 45–52, for discussion of which see HANAGHAN 2017.

¹⁴ PLRE II s.v. Theodora 4 lists her as the wife of Constantius 9. Theodora 4 should in fact be the mother of Constantius 9.

¹⁵ KOVÁCS 2020.

¹⁶ PLRE II s.v. Evila hazards that this individual buried at Ravenna (CIL XI 6784) could be the same person as Odoacer's *magister militum* Libila. Yet besides a slight similarity in the name, the mention of *cl. com.* in the brief inscription probably refers to a lower-ranking *comes* of *clarissimus* rank. That being said, we do have epitaphs for soldiers such as Mundilo and Segetius in Florence who served in the *schola gentilium (seniorum)* (CIL XI 1708 & 1711).

¹⁷ PLRE III s.v. Droctulf. Droctulf has left a rather surprising impression on modern literature. JORGE LUIS BORGES used him as the protagonist of his «Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva» (a short story in his 1949 collection *El Aleph*). BENEDETTO CROCE even referred to Droctulf's epitaph as «poesia che alza il capo dove meno si aspetterebbe» (CROCE 1936, 95).

mention barbarians in and around Pannonia. The original location of Constantius' epitaph is unknown. Rome seems a likely candidate given its pronounced position in the text, and the co-opting of senatorial prestige for Constantius (which we shall return to shortly).¹⁸

Specifying a precise date for the epitaph has its challenges. The *communis opinio* favours a fifth century date for three reasons. Firstly, the mention of *Pannoniis gentibus* (v. 10) is an acknowledgment that this region was no longer under the exclusive administration of the imperial state, and now hosted non-Roman communities commonly referred to as «barbarians». The first stage of this process commenced during Stilicho's tenure as western *magister peditum praesentalis* (395–408), and serves as the *terminus post quem*. Secondly, – and even more compelling – is the fact that Constantius scored victories against «the barbarian horde travelling across the sea» *mare per medium gentem [euntem]* (v. 5). From a Late Roman Italian point of view, this can only refer to the Vandals who started conquering the African diocese in the late 420s, and launched raids across the western Mediterranean c. 440–442 and decisively c. 455–474.¹⁹ The use of *princibus* (line 11) could refer to the system of Mehrkaiserium that held sway during the fourth and the fifth century, or simply indicate that Constantius served and fought under multiple emperors. The epitaph clearly refers to the western Roman government as an operational polity when the monument was erected, even if Rome is in poor shape without her brilliant commander Constantius. This means that a date beyond the 470s is out of the question, and so establishes the *terminus ante quem*.

Constantius was a common name among Late Roman officials, but the deeds of Constantius *heros* cannot immediately be reconciled with our knowledge of any one of the Constantii that left an imprint in other sources. MOMMSEN was baffled that «a hero so celebrated should have disappeared from the historical record altogether». Hence he championed the older manuscript's reading of *Pannoniis gentibus honorat* to strengthen his identification of the dedicatee as Constantius I Chlorus.²⁰ This interpretation is inconsistent with the epitaph's use of *gentes* which clearly indicates a group of people that no Emperor would have boasted descent from, and the later manuscript's version of *horror* has been deemed the most correct one (*inter alia* for metrical reasons, which are compelling given the epitaph closely follows the rules of prosody for elegiac couplets).²¹ In any case, the reading of Constantius bringing *honor* to Pannonian barbarians makes little sense.

¹⁸ KOVÁCS 2020, 75 believes that the tomb was located in Ravenna because Droctulf's epitaph was also set up there. Yet the three epitaphs were clearly not grouped together because of an Italian habitat, given that Gerold's body was interred at the abbey of Reichenau.

¹⁹ COURTOIS 1955 remains the classic study on Vandal Africa, but should now be supplemented with MERRILLS – MILES 2010, MODÉRAN 2014, VÖSSING 2014, STEINACHER 2017, ROBERTO 2020.

²⁰ MOMMSEN 1893, 35 f.

²¹ KOVÁCS 2020, 76.

The name of his mother Theodora, however, is relatively uncommon among aristocrats for this period (especially in the west). This, combined with the use of *heros* to refer to Constantius suggests an eastern connection in the family. The names Constantius and Theodora frame the epitaph suggesting the possibility of Constantinian echo here, as Mommsen already hazarded, since Theodora was also the name of Constantius I's wife. Theodora may well have been a name passed down to Constantius I's female descendants. Aristocrats who seemed to claim descent, or who at the very least wished to associate themselves with this imperial line, could still be found in Rome by the middle of the fifth century.²²

The epitaph makes clear that Constantius was a commander in the imperial army, though his exact office is unrecorded.²³ The use of *ductore* (v. 17) and *dux* (v. 19) on their own could refer to a commander of *limitanei*,²⁴ and while Danubian *duces* had access to riverine flotillas as late as the early fifth century, proper campaigns involving fleets (such as the ones against the Vandals) were coordinated by *comites rei militaris* or *magistri militum* of the field armies.²⁵ Furthermore, the word *dux* was also used in non-institutional sources in its traditional general sense of 'leader' or 'commander', to indicate well-known and often higher-ranking officials.²⁶ Finally, the epitaph claims Constantius had presented severed heads (*secata colla*) as war trophies to emperors, implying a level of access to the court that most *duces* never enjoyed, after

²² See ILCV 1759 for a decoration of St. Peter's Basilica by Gallus, son of the 420s praetorian prefect and consul Avitus Marinianus (PLRE II s.v. Fl. Avitus Marinianus 3), and a certain Anastasia. Gallus takes pride in his mother's line of the family (*Anastasiae natus*). Constantius I and Theodora had a daughter named Anastasia, while the *Caesar* Gallus was their grandson. CHAUSSON 2007, 138–141 has used this mid-fifth century pairing to argue that the *Caesar* Gallus' daughter (Julian, Ep. ad Ath. 272d), whose name has not survived in the historical record, was also called Anastasia. This might be pushing the data too hard, yet the names of Anastasia and Gallus are very rare in the fifth-century west and the Constantinian echoes cannot be a coincidence. We thank JULIA HILLNER for drawing this to our attention.

²³ PLRE II s.v. Constantius 9 nevertheless leaves the question open whether he was a *dux* or *magister militum*.

²⁴ That in both these cases the adjective *magnus* is added to *ductore* and *dux* also suggests a much more generic meaning instead of the specific military institution.

²⁵ ELTON 1996, 100. Examples include the *comites* Heraclianus in 413, Sigisvult in 428, Ricimer in 456, and the *magistri militum* Mascezel in 398, and Constantius (III) in 413. On *duces* more generally, see now ZERJADTKE 2019.

²⁶ A pertinent contemporary example is Hydatius (ed. BURGESS 1993 henceforth), who composed a remarkable well-informed provincial chronicle which refers to *magistri militum* such as Constantius (III) (Hyd. 42 [52], 46 [54]), the leaders of the joint eastern-western expedition that crushed Ioannes' usurpation in 425 (75 [84]), Aëtius (85 [95], 86 [96], 94 [103], 104 [112], 142 [150], 152 [160]), Litorius (108 [116]), and Astyrius (117 [125]) as *duces*. Even a Constantinopolitan court official such as Marcellinus *comes* occasionally does so in his chronicle, when referring to *magistri militum* such as Mundo (Marcell. Com. s.a. 530) or Solomon (Marcell. Com. s.a. 541. 3)

most emperors ceased operating as mobile supreme commanders from 395 onwards.²⁷ All these considerations exclude older suggestions to identify Constantius *heros* with individuals known from other sources, such as the tetrarch Constantius I Chlorus (MOMMSEN), the eastern *magister militum per Thracias* Constans (DE ROSSI) or even Attila's secretary Constantius (SEECK).

The Chain of Command

After a thorough heuristic exercise regarding every aspect of the epitaph, plus the scholarly status quaestionis surrounding the dedicatee, KOVÁCS concludes that this Constantius most likely was a «high-ranking military commander of the *magister militum* [Felix]», such as a «*comes Illyrici* who was later transferred to the Italian mobile army and served under Sigisvult». Felix was the military powerbroker at the court of Valentinian III, from the latter's accession as *Augustus* in 425 until his own assassination in 430.²⁹ This identification rests on the argument that Constantius' war conduct against the Pannonian tribes (v. 10) and against maritime enemies (v. 5–6), best aligns with what we know about campaigns during Felix' tenure as *magister utriusque militiae* of the western Roman army. The argument is most vigorously pursued with regards to Pannonia, which some late eastern sources claim was recovered from the Huns in 427.³⁰ Constantius' victory over the Vandals may have been an otherwise unrecorded event occurring during the earliest stages of their crossing into Africa.

Rather than immediately pondering the merits and deficits of this reconstruction, we wish to widen this historical investigation from two methodological considerations: what is our knowledge of the upper echelons of the fifth century western Roman army's chain-of-command? And how should we read and understand Constantius' legacy, derived from a unique source? This brings us ultimately back to MOMMSEN's surprise about Constantius' achievements in light of his utter obscurity. Yet as BURY pointed out, we are charting an era where even some of the most prominent individuals in society have only come down to us as mere names. This is especially apparent from the Theodosian Code which preserves the name of several high-ranking commanders, who are otherwise unattested.³¹ Let us start with the very top of the chain-of-command: the *magistri militum*.

At the dawn of the fifth century, the *magister peditum praesentalis* had emerged as the single most formidable official of the western Roman government. Its incumbent

²⁷ On this radical transformation of emperorship both in east and west, see now MCEVOY 2013 and MAIER 2019.

²⁸ KOVÁCS 2020, 84.

²⁹ PLRE II s.v. Fl. Constantius Felix 14; WIJNENDAELE 2017.

³⁰ Marcell. Com. s.a. 427. 1; Jord. Get. 166.

³¹ Examples for this era include the *magister militum* Gaiso (C.Th. 7. 18. 16), the *magister equitum* Crispinus (C.Th. 2. 23. 1), and the *comes domesticorum et vices ag(enti) mag(istri) mil(itum)* Maurianus (C.Th. 15. 11. 1)

filled the void in military authority that had started to grow with the death of Valentinian I in 375, and the repeated succession of incredibly young emperors. By 400, a clear difference had emerged between the East and West in this regard: in the East five *magistri militum* held an equal share of responsibility towards the command of the field armies, while the western *magister peditum praesentalis* utterly dwarfed in his hemisphere the *magister equitum praesentalis* (only nominally equal in rank) and the *magister equitum per Gallias* (structurally subordinate). The perennially perplexing *Notitia Dignitatum* leaves little doubt on this matter: the *magister peditum praesentalis* controlled, directly or indirectly, the vast majority of field units and its officers.³² In this constellation, who ever held one of the other two *magisteria* was bound to play second or third fiddle to the court's «field marshal». In this matter, we are not at the mercy of the kaleidoscopic gaze of the *Notitia*: the dominance of a single *magister militum* in the fifth century West was noted by various sources.³³ Modern scholarship even coined the label «generalissimos» for them. Yet what about the others?

Here the gaps in our record quickly become apparent. When Zosimus' history abruptly comes to an end on the eve of Alaric's sack of Rome, we lose our last exhaustive narrative account which gives ample attention to the various military officials. Instead, we are forced to rely on BURY's aforementioned jigsaw puzzle of fragments and loose ends. We know only a handful of *magistri militum* for Gaul, or *magistri equitum praesentales* c. 410–480.³⁴ These gaps in our knowledge become even wider if we consider other high-ranking commanders in the lower chain-of-command, such as the *comites Africae* or the *comites domesticorum*. If it were not for the Gallic Chronicle of 511, we would not even know a single *comes stabuli* for the entire fifth century. Yet the latter is instructive, since the chronicler mentions this Hermianus as one of the commanders who was sent by Anthemius to counter Euric in southern Gaul c. 471.³⁵ Even in the final decade of western Roman imperial rule, a recognisable chain-of-command continued to operate in tandem with the dominant *magister utriusque militiae*. In fact, after the dissolution of the western Roman emperorship, Odoacer held on to the position of *comes domesticorum*, and appointed *magistri militum* during

³² ND.Occ. 5; DEMANDT 1970, 615–627.

³³ Exemplary are Claudian's panegyrics on Stilicho, who heap quasi imperial praise on a man who was undeniably not an emperor. To a lesser extent this recurs in the fragmentary poetry of Merobaudes on Aëtius, and Sidonius Apollinaris' panegyric for Anthemius which includes a miniature panegyric for Ricimer's sake (Sidon. Carm. 2. 352–380). Priscus' encomium on Aëtius, as preserved by Joh. Ant. Frg. 224. 2 MARIEV, or Ennodius' verdict on Ricimer vis-à-vis Anthemius as *qui tunc secundis ab Anthemio principe habenis rempublicam gubernabat* (Ennod. V. Epiph. 52), also suggest as much.

³⁴ DEMANDT 1970, 787–790 provides a good overview. Of course, one cannot discount the possibility that the comparatively smaller recorded sampling of *magistri equitum praesentales* and *per Gallias* might come down to the fact that these positions were simply left vacant sometimes.

³⁵ Chron. Gall. 511. 76.

Theoderic's invasion of Italy.³⁶ All of this points in the same direction: there is no need to try equating Constantius with a namesake known from other sources concerning this period, since there is a relative abundance of unrecorded military officials. This brings us to the question of how we should read the testimony of Constantius' epitaph.

The case against serving Felix

KOVÁCS makes a special plea for the Pannonian *gentes* being the Huns, who were allegedly driven out of the region in 427.³⁷ However, this information is derived from terse notes in later eastern Roman historiography, which cannot be promptly reconciled with contemporary western sources.³⁸ If such an event occurred – there is no scholarly consensus that it did – it will have hardly manifested as a military campaign of conquest, given the larger framework of western Roman-Hunnic relations in previous decades. Our first clear and contemporary attestation is derived from a letter of Ambrose of Milan, occasioned by his second embassy to Magnus Maximus in the later 380s. The bishop recounts how a few years earlier the usurper had lambasted Bauto, the dominant *magister militum* at Valentinian II's court, for his use of Hunnic aid against Alamanni falling under Maximus' hegemony.³⁹ This would be the recurring dynamic in future dealings between western imperial courts and the Huns. At the height of the war against the Gothic leader Radagaisus in 406, Stilicho called upon the Hunnic army of Uldin.⁴⁰ Zosimus claims that the emperor Honorius requested 10,000 Hunnic mercenaries in his civil war with Alaric in 410.⁴¹ As late as 425, Aëtius brought a Hunnic army into Italy to support the western usurper Ioannes. Ioannes' head had already been separated from his torso, when Aëtius unleashed his Hunnic forces against the eastern army that had installed Valentinian III. The battle ended in a bloody draw, after which Aëtius was reconciled with the court in exchange for paying off his Hunnic mercenaries and sending them back to Pannonia.⁴² Everything before 427 points to the western imperial court's only relationship with European Huns as that of contractor and contracted.

The western Roman army, already in quite a fragile state, was soon committed to imposing imperial rule against Goths and Franks in Gaul, while simultaneously trying to crush the rebel-commander Bonifatius in Africa.⁴³ When Felix was murdered in a military riot at Ravenna in 430, the court could not call upon additional forces

³⁶ *Comes Domesticorum*: PLRE II s.v. Pierius 5. *Magistri Militum*: PLRE II s.v. Libila, Tufa.

³⁷ KOVÁCS 2020, 80f.

³⁸ CROKE 1995, 77; VAN NUFFELEN – VAN HOOF 2020, 299 (n. 563). For a more favourable view, TRAINA 2020, 102.

³⁹ Ambr. Ep. 30 [24]. 8.

⁴⁰ Oros. 7. 37. 12; Chron. Gall. 452. 52; Zos. 5. 26. 4.

⁴¹ Zos. 5. 50. 1.

⁴² Prosper s.a. 425; Olympiod. Frg. 43. 2 BLOCKLEY.

⁴³ Prosper s.a. 427.

to restore order.⁴⁴ In fact, it had already required succour from its eastern imperial twin against Geiseric's advance in Africa. Whether the west could have marshalled the resources to open a third front and reconquer Pannonia from the Huns precisely in between these years is a good question. In what is probably the most generous nod to Marcellinus Comes' statement about the «Pannonian *reconquista*», OTTO MAENCHEN-HELFEN concluded that the original information behind this source «probably exaggerated the success of the Romans. Perhaps they merely reoccupied a number of fortified places. It is likely that they drove back some Hun bands which had ventured too closely to Noricum. Possibly Roman horsemen dashed deep into long abandoned tracts; here and there they may even have reached the Danube».⁴⁵ Even if some allowance is made for epigraphic praise distorting reality, it is hard to imagine how Constantius' family may have seen such a scenario as sowing fear in the hearts of local barbarians. This line-of-thought becomes even more problematic in KOVÁCS' reconstruction of Constantius' victories over the Vandals in this same period.

It is true that during Felix' tenure, Geiseric began his invasion of the African diocese shortly after the supposed «Pannonian *reconquista*». Yet even KOVÁCS has to concede that we do not know of a single victory between western Roman forces and Geiseric's army in 425–430.⁴⁶ The only event tenuously approaching military success, was the city of Hippo Regius' garrison withstanding a Vandal siege for more than a year.⁴⁷ Still, the epitaph overtly acclaims Constantius' victories over *gentes* on land *and* sea. To make the case fit for Constantius «the Hero», one must imagine an unrecorded minor naval victory in the earliest stages of the western Roman counteroffensive. Even then the historical context leaves much to be desired. The Vandals only acquired their great raiding fleet after the fall of Carthage in 439. Hydatius recall a minor raid on the Balearic isles in the mid-420s, but this was only a quick jump from their holdings in Baetica.⁴⁸ When they crossed into Africa between 427 and 429, they naturally needed ships, but not necessarily a proper navy. In fact, the moment Geiseric led his army into Africa we do not encounter a single instance of him holding on to his ships. ANDY MERRILLS rightly remarks that «generations of scholars have been fascinated by the imagined prospect of a vast barbarian flotilla heading into Africa», while CHRISTIAN COURTOIS writes that «[à] l'anticipation de Vikings perdus dans un brouillard épique, je préfère celle d'un troupeau humain pressé dans des barques de pêcheurs».⁴⁹ This was no armada. The utter silence of other sources on naval engagements between the Vandals and western Romans is compounded by two further elements of the epitaph

⁴⁴ WIJNENDAELE 2017, 476f.

⁴⁵ MAENCHEN-HELFEN 1973, 79.

⁴⁶ KOVÁCS 2020, 82f.

⁴⁷ Possid. V. Aug. 28; WIJNENDAELE 2015, 92–95.

⁴⁸ Hyd. 77 [86].

⁴⁹ COURTOIS 1955, 161; MERRILLS – MILES 2010, 54.

Firstly, the lines *hic mare per medium gentem compressit euntem / et victis pariter terra negavit opem* indicate an enemy who made a significant crossing over the sea. This is not consistent with a jump from Tarifa to Tangiers. Indeed, the close proximity of Mauretania Tingitana and the Iberian provinces to one another, irrespective of the pillars of Hercules, had inspired the Tetrarchy to unite these territories as a single diocese.⁵⁰ Constantius' family probably had a far more daunting and hostile maritime itinerary and ensuing conflict in mind when they laid him to rest. Secondly, if we respect the order of events in the inscription then one should note that Constantius' victories over the maritime *gentes* are placed before his success against the Pannonian *gentes*. Other comparable examples of military epitaphs, such as Aëtius' inscription, respect the chronological order of his victories (over Burgundians and then Goths).⁵¹ If we are to reconcile these accomplishments with events from Felix' regime, we are forced to invert their sequence given the alleged 'recovery' of Pannonia occurred in 427 when the Vandals were yet to cross over into Africa. Constantius' military record cannot be reconciled with the age of Felix. A compelling counter-scenario looms.

The case for serving Avitus and Majorian

It is to Kovács' credit and intellectual honesty that he briefly considers, before ultimately rejecting, an alternative historical possibility for understanding Constantius' martial résumé.⁵² A few other sources allow us to establish properly recorded victories over maritime barbarians on both sea and land, followed by actions against Pannonian barbarians causing sufficient shock and awe. Together with the rest of Constantius' epitaph, this indicates Constantius gained his «heroic» prowess under the emperors Avitus (455–456) and Majorian (457–461). Let us begin with the Vandals.

Geiseric was by far the single most formidable opponent any western Roman regime faced throughout the fifth century. In a reign spanning just under fifty years, he progressively conquered the entire African diocese, occupied most western Mediterranean islands, and even sacked Rome in 455. Even more impressively, he managed to overcome, resist or dodge no less than four major counter-offensives by western and eastern Roman armies (431, 441, 460, 468). Yet the *rex vandalarum et alanorum* was not *invictus*. The contemporary chronicle of Hydatius and the panegyrics of Sidonius Apollinaris indicate that Geiseric suffered several significant setbacks in 456 and 457. Thus, we learn that the new rising star of the western imperial army, Ricimer, defeated the Vandals at Agrigentum in Sicily, followed by the defeat of a Vandal fleet of 60 ships near Corsica.⁵³ The following year, the emperor Majorian's soldiers defeated a major Vandal and Mauri raiding party in Campania led by none other than Geiseric's son-

⁵⁰ KULIKOWSKI 2004, 71–76.

⁵¹ CIL VI 41389.

⁵² KOVÁCS 2020, 83.

⁵³ Hyd. 169 [176], 170 [177]; Sidon. Carm. 2. 367.

in-law, who was killed in the process.⁵⁴ Not only are these properly attested victories, they are a better fit for an enemy (5–6):

*hic mare per medium gentem compressit euntem
et victis pariter terra negavit opem.*

Throughout the deep sea, this man hindered the barbarian horde as it went,
and the land equally offered them no support.

In each case the Vandals set out from Carthage and then suffered defeats ranging as far and wide as Corsica and Campania, both on land and sea. This ground is far more solid than resorting to undocumented (and probably fictitious) western Roman victories over the Vandals during Felix' tenure. Immediately after these victories over the Vandals, the emperor Majorian went on a major recruiting drive to field an army for his campaign to reassert imperial authority over the Transalpine provinces, where both *regna* and Gallic elites were on the verge of rebellion following his accession as *Augustus* at the end of 457. Sidonius' panegyric to the emperor explains how they gathered an army consisting of a multitude of Danubian communities that had previously been part of Attila's realm: *Bastarna, Suebus, Pannonius, Neurus, Chunus, Geta, Dacus, Halanus, Bellonotus, Rugus, Burgundio, Vesus, Alites, Bisalta, Ostrogothus, Procrustes, Sarmata, Moschus*.⁵⁵ One Hunnic band, led by a certain Tuldila, refused to follow along and went out on a pillaging spree. Some of Majorian's men took it upon themselves to quash Tuldila and his men. Such warbands are a clear fit for Pannonian *gentes*; Sidonius even identifies one of them explicitly as such (*Pannonius*) in his panegyric to Majorian.

In his earlier panegyric, for his father-in-law the emperor Avitus, Sidonius describes how Avitus served under Aëtius in the 430s, and then was assigned to Aëtius' subordinate, the Gallic commander Litorius. Litorius had first pacified Armorica against the Bacaudae and then continued the war against the Aquitanian Goths during the mid to late 430s.⁵⁶ Hunnic cavalry formed the edge of Litorius' army.⁵⁷ However, some of these could not resist the temptation to break away from the imperial army, and began looting the provincial population of the Auvergne.⁵⁸ When Avitus received word that one of his own servants had been killed in the process, he apparently took it upon himself to seek out the guilty party, challenge him to a duel in Homeric fashion, before impaling him.⁵⁹ Barbarian allies who fought under the banner of Rome, but criminally

⁵⁴ Sidon. Carm. 5. 385–440.

⁵⁵ Sidon. Carm. 5. 474–477.

⁵⁶ Prosper s.a. 436.

⁵⁷ Prosper s.a. 439; Hyd. 108 [116].

⁵⁸ Sidon. Carm. 7. 246–294.

⁵⁹ For a recent analysis, see HANAGHAN 2017.

misbehaved, were bound to invoke the ire of heroic imperial commanders.⁶⁰ The punitive actions Majorian's soldiers undertook against the Hunnic miscreants restored discipline. When the imperial army crossed the Alps, it succeeded in ousting the Burgundians from Lyons, breaking a Gothic siege of Arles, and beating Theoderic II in southern Gaul.⁶¹ This is a far better fit for what could constitute *tantum Pannoniis gentibus horror erat*, respects the text for not assuming *a priori* that this needed to have happened in Pannonia, and preserves the integrity of the claim that Constantius was *invictus* (v. 3).⁶² Finally the description of Constantius as «no lover of fake peace» (*non fictae pacis amator*) is a better fit for the circumstances of his rise to prominence if it happened under Avitus and Majorian. For the majority of Geiseric's half-century reign, the Imperial West and the Vandals were at war with each other. In 442 a peace treaty was struck that held until 455, when it was finally broken following the usurpation of Petronius Maximus due to the latter's disruption of Geiseric's ambition to have his heir Huneric marry into the imperial family.⁶³ Geiseric broke the peace brutally, pillaging Rome for some two weeks. No other event could have provided Italian aristocrats and commanders – already apprehensive of the treaty of 442 – with such irrefutable proof that this was an enemy not to be trusted.

Wider significance of Constantius' epitaph

Other aspects of Constantius' epitaph reinforce the case for him having served Avitus and Majorian in these years. The inscription has a marked focus on Italy and Rome. The fact that *Italia* is praised as Constantius' *patria* (v. 2) leaves little doubt that he himself was an Italian. This is truly remarkable given Italy had never been a prominent talent pool for the Late Roman military. To put it more emphatically: we do not know of a single officer or commander of this era who is unmistakably attested as an Italian

⁶⁰ While technically outside the time-frame of the epitaph, one could also point to Proc. Bell. 3. 12. 7–22 where Belisarius not only has two Hunnic auxiliaries impaled for having murdered a fellow imperial soldier during a drunk quarrel, but even proclaims a formal speech on this specific topic to his army. Another curious example is the quasi-panegyric presentation of Bonifatius in Olympiod. frg. 40 BLOCKLEY, He is not only praised as a soldier «pur sang», who was able to bring the native tribes of the African provinces to heel, yet also as a stern disciplinarian. In one case he hunted down one of his own non-Roman soldiers and cut off the latter's head, after complaints that the latter had seduced the wife of a local farmer.

⁶¹ Removal of Burgundian garrison: Sidon. Carm. 5. 564–571. Lifting the siege of Arles: Paul. Petr. V. S. Martini 6. 111–151; Greg. Tur. V. S. Martini 1. 2. Theoderic II beaten: Hyd. 192 [197].

⁶² Sidonius also used *Invictus* in praise of Ricimer (Sidon. Carm. 2. 352–353). This was no hollow praise since Ricimer is never known to have lost a battle. Bonifatius, who managed to survive three confrontations with Italian field armies between 424–428, may also be responsible for a series of coins struck by the mint in Carthage boasting the legend *inbictissimo*, see WIJNEN-DAELE 2015, 153 (n. 58), 156 (n. 133).

⁶³ Treaty of 442: Prosper s.a. 442. 2. Petronius disrupting marriage alliances: Prosper s.a. 455. 2; Hyd. 155 [162].

in any of the sources. This is surprising even for the fifth century, given the permanent residence of the western imperial court in the peninsula, and Italy becoming the most prioritized province of a slowly disintegrating realm following the ruinous reign of Honorius. During the 420s and 430s, when the western court still was able to administer vast tracts of Africa, Gaul, Spain and Dalmatia, we encounter high-ranking commanders of diverse origins. Aëtius and his father Gaudentius hailed from the province of Scythia Minor at the Black Sea.⁶⁴ Constantius (III) was an Illyrian from Naissus.⁶⁵ Bonifatius was probably an African.⁶⁶ The *comes Hispaniarum* Asterius and Merobaudes were Spaniards (the latter's father-in-law and *magister militum* Astyrius probably as well).⁶⁷ However, if we place Constantius a generation after the death of Felix, an Italian origin should not surprise us. At this point, Italy was the only secure *«Hausmacht»* of western emperors, whence they occasionally tried to project their authority over neighbouring provinces drifting away. In such vastly restricted quarters, it was inevitable that locals would rise up the imperial echelons.⁶⁸

To this we should add Constantius' proximity to emperors. If Constantius had fought alongside Ricimer against the Vandals at Sicily and Corsica in 456, he may as well have joined the revolt of the Italian field army against Avitus, especially given his Italian background. Afterwards, he could have been promoted as one of Majorian's two *comites domesticorum* (a position, *nota bene*, Majorian himself had held prior to his bid for the purple).⁶⁹ As such, he would have been perfectly positioned to join Majorian later on his Danubian recruitment drive, and quell Tuldila's insubordinate Huns

⁶⁴ Greg. Tur. Hist. 2. 9.

⁶⁵ Olympiod. Frg. 37 BLOCKLEY.

⁶⁶ CLOVER 1993, 84; WIJNENDAELE 2015, 29f.

⁶⁷ Merobaudes: Sidon. Carm. 9. 297. Admittedly, no source confirms that this Astyrius was a Spaniard. But his name, and theatre-of-war, strongly suggests he may have been a relative of the *comes Hispaniarum* Asterius (*floruit* 420–422), whom KULIKOWSKI 2000, 132 demonstrated to be a Spaniard based on an analysis of Consentius' letter 11* from the Divjak-collection. This, combined with his son-in-law Merobaudes' Spanish background seem reasonably enough to assume a similar origin for Astyrius (KULIKOWSKI 2004, 195).

⁶⁸ Though the historical context is different, it was not a coincidence that the repeated successions of late third century emperors such as Claudius II, Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian etc. all had in common a shared Illyrian background. This was not necessarily because Illyrians were natural born soldiers. Instead, this stems from the fact that during the height of the third century-crisis, following Valerian's capture by Sapor I, Gallienus only held firm control over Italy, Africa and Illyricum. Hence for virtually a decade, recruitment options were severely confined. See POTTER 2004, 264f.; KULIKOWSKI 2015, 142. On the civilian side, the dominance of Italian senators in fifth century western governments is firmly established, see HEATHER 2016.

⁶⁹ Majorian as *comes domesticorum*: Sidon. Carm. 5. 305–311; Chron. Gall. 511, 628. There is a tendency in modern scholarship to assume there was only one *comes domesticorum*, yet the Notitia Dignitatum distinguished two types of command as *comes domesticorum peditum* et *comes domesticorum equitum*. Interestingly enough, one of the rare cases where we see one of these commands specified is with Athaulf, who was appointed as Priscus Attalus' *comes domesticorum equitum* during his first usurpation (Sozom. HE 9.8.2)

in the process. The epitaph's claim that Constantius *munera principibus colla secata dedit* broadly fits a commander of the imperial household troops who accompanied the only campaigning emperor of the fifth century.⁷⁰ There may be a nod towards this when the epitaph has Rome lament: *peius Roma gemit, tanto spoliata senatu* (v. 15). Some scholars have taken this remark as confirmation that Constantius was a senator. While this is not impossible, as it currently stands the epitaph does not explicitly say so.⁷¹ The text may simply be co-opting the prestige of the most famous political body in the city, to which a position as *comes domesticorum* technically would have made him eligible even if he had never formally taken up his seat.⁷²

Finally, let us consider one of the epitaph's concluding, purpled phrases: *cum quo Roma potens, quo sine pressa iacet* (v. 18). If Constantius served until the late 450s – at the very latest – these words capture a sentiment entirely fitting for the years that followed. The victories of Avitus and Majorian could be regarded as the last hurrah of the western Roman army. Majorian offered the best chance for reintegrating the local aristocracies and military elites of the western provinces under the emperor's

⁷⁰ That being said, a devil's advocate could retort that the emperor Valens allegedly promised rewards to soldiers who delivered him barbarian heads during his first Gothic war (Zos. 4. 11. 2–3). Similarly, in the initial stage of his second Gothic war, Valens' Saracen auxiliaries drove away Gothic bands operating closest to Constantinople, and then paraded their vanquished foes' heads on their lances (Zos. 4. 22. 2). On the display of opponents' severed heads in the Late Roman empire, see OMISSI 2014.

⁷¹ We are still poorly informed about the inclusion of the military in the senate in the Late Empire, but a fine starting point is DEMANDT 1980. That said, this phenomenon is firmly attested in the case of Constantius' near-contemporary Valila (*qui et Theodovius*). Valila was *magister militum* in 471 and died before 483, as evidenced by his donation of the basilica of Iunius Bassus in Rome to its bishop Simplicius (ILCV 1785; CASTRITIUS 1972; ROBERTO 2013). His membership of the senate is confirmed by a seat in the Colosseum (CIL VI 32169). Aëtius' junior officer Merobaudes was also welcomed in the senate during the 430s (CIL VI 1724). The eastern Roman senate similarly hosted military dignitaries such as Aspar (Malal. 371; Chron. Pasch. s. a. 467).

⁷² While Constantine I's original reforms had vastly expanded membership of the senate at Rome during the fourth century (with Constantius II following suit for the Constantinopolitan senate), during the fifth century effective membership became more restrictive again. See JONES 1964, 526–530, and ZUCKERMAN 1998 for the fourth-century development. In the East, Marcian had already confined the praetorship to those senators actually residing in Constantinople; effectively discouraging the lower-ranking *clarissimi* and *spectabiles* from pursuing an essential stepping stone in the *cursus honorum* (CJ 12. 2. 1). It is true that in the 450s the twin regimes of the empires hardly took notice of each other's laws, by the time of Theoderic the Amal's rule the Roman senate seems also to have reserved its effective membership for *illustres*. BARNISH 1988, 121–123; HEATHER 2016, 18–21. A position as *comes domesticorum* could have given Constantius the prerequisite dignity of *illustris* to qualify for a seat. The same is true for *magistri militum*, yet we have a rough idea of who Avitus and Majorian's *magistri militum* were and it seems improbable Constantius was one of them, see DEMANDT 1970, 672–684; HENNING 1999, 74–75, 80–82.

authority.⁷³ Yet when his bold Vandal campaign came to an ignominious end in Spain in 460, the writing was on the wall. His execution by Ricimer in 461 signalled the final disintegration of the western Roman army.⁷⁴ Warlords such as Aegidius in Gaul and Marcellinus in Dalmatia went their own way, whilst Theoderic II quickly filled the imperial vacuum in Spain. Worse, it gave Geiseric a pretext to repudiate his treaty with Majorian, and once again let his raiding parties scourge Italy's coastlines.⁷⁵ A decade later, the city of Rome was sacked for the third time that century, this time by its very own army.⁷⁶ The epitaph's grief over the parallel fates of Constantius, Rome and Italy, is typical of how contemporary Roman thinkers disparaged the state of their world.⁷⁷ ILCV 66 is a genuine local testament to the fading twilight of the western Roman empire.

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⁷³ This has been a recurring assertion in later fifth century scholarship, but the case has now been most exhaustively argued by OPPEDISANO 2013.

⁷⁴ WIJNENDAELE 2018, 429–431.

⁷⁵ Prisc. Frg. 38. 1 BLOCKLEY.

⁷⁶ Joh. Ant. Frg. 232 MARIEV; Malal. 373–374; Paul. Diac. Hist. Rom. 15. 3–4.

⁷⁷ Hydatius in Gallaecia saw the murder of Aegidius in the mid-460s as equating the end of the protection he had offered to *regiones quas Romano nomini* (Hyd. 224 [228]). In the later 470s, Sidonius praised the *comes* Arbogastes for preserving some semblance of order around the city of Trier, whilst lamenting how Roman authority had collapsed in the rest of the region (Sidon. Ep. 4. 17). Finally, even the eastern contemporary Priscus in the 470s described the helplessness of the western Romans following Majorian's death, whom at this point he also designates more and more by their regional identities such as Gauls and Italians (Prisc. Frg. 39. 1 BLOCKLEY).

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