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Disertační práce

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ORCHESTRATING THE DOWNFALL OF OPPONENTS: POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE FIFTH-CENTURY ROMAN WEST (395-472 CE)

JAK ZREŽÍROVAT PÁD SVÉHO ODPŮRCE? NÁSILÍ V POLITICE ZÁPADOŘÍMSKÉ ŘÍŠE V 5. STOL. (395-472 N. L.)

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Statement of Originality

I declare that I wrote this doctoral dissertation by myself using only the listed and duly quoted sources and references, and that the dissertation was not used in another university study, or to acquire another or the same title.

Prague, 05.06.2021 Mgr. Tunç Türel

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Dedication

Τῷ πεδίῳ ἀληθείας.

Abstract

This dissertation aims to examine and categorize violence on political level in the fifth century Roman west that has so far enjoyed no systematic inquiry. Specifically, cases of violence that came to materialization almost exclusively amongst the high ranked generals of the western empire at a time its imperial office was undergoing infantilization is the focus of this research. Genesis of such rivalries was the individuals' desire to seize and control the post of the *magisterium militum* (the office of the supreme general), the post that allowed its holder easy and direct access to the soldiery, those veritable tools of political violence in ancient Rome. Once one established himself as *the* supreme general, he would have also established his monopoly on violence and bend others, including emperors, to his will. Due to the military and economical privations of the west in its last century, however, these generalissimos' prized position could never be completely safe. When the ambitious and competitive nature of others was added to the equation, the number of political violence cases naturally multiplied. The result was that the western Roman empire in the fifth century suffered also from an endemic that deprived it of further time and energy from its already limited reserves.

Keywords: political violence – generals – western Roman empire – Aetius – Ricimer

Abstrakt

Cílem této disertace je prozkoumat a roztřídit projevy násilí ve vnitřní politice západořímské říše v 5. století, čímž se dosud nikdo systematicky nezabýval. Konkrétně jde o případy násilí, které vůči sobě užívali téměř výhradně vysoce postavení vojenští velitelé západní části říše v době, v níž císařský úřad pozbýval na významu, protože jej zastávaly nezletilé děti. Rivalita vznikala z touhy získat a ovládat *magisterium militum* (hodnost nejvyššího generála), tedy post, který svému držiteli umožňoval snadný a přímý přístup k vojsku coby skutečnému nástroji politického násilí v antickém Římě. Komu se podařilo si postavení nejvyššího generála zabezpečit, ten tak nastolil i svůj monopol na použití násilí a ostatními, včetně císaře, manipuloval podle své vůle. V důsledku vojenských i ekonomických útrap západořímské říše v posledním století její existence však tuto ceněnou pozici nejvyššího generála nebylo možné zabezpečit trvale. A když do rovnice přibyla ctižádostivá a soutěživá povaha ostatních zúčastněných, množství případů politického násilí se přirozeně znásobilo. Výsledkem bylo, že západořímská říše v 5. století trpěla endemickým násilím, které ji připravilo o další čas a energii z jejích už tak omezených zdrojů.

Klíčová slova: politické násilí – generálové – západořímská říše – Aetius – Ricimer

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

Abbreviations such as *Ep.* and s. a. are not included in this list due to their obvious nature, while abbreviations for authors and their works used in the dissertation throughout can be found in the bibliography section. In abbreviation of the journal names the standards set by *L'Année Philologique* are followed.

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
AnTard	*Antiquité Tardive*
CCL	*Corpus Christianorum Latina*
CIG	*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
CP / CPh	*Classical Philology*
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
EHR	*English Historical Review*
FHG	*Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*
HSPh	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
ILS	*Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
Insc. It.	*Inscriptiones Italiae*
JLA	*Journal of Late Antiquity*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
LRE	*Later Roman Empire:* Jones, A. H. M. (1964). *Later Roman Empire.* Oxford.
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
MGH AA	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica Auctores antiquissimi*
MGH SRM	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*
Mon. Anc.	*Monumentum Ancyranum*
ODLA	*Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*: Nicholson, O. ed. (2018). *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity, 2 volumes.* Oxford.
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*
PBSR	*Papers of the British School at Rome*
PLRE	Jones, A. H. M., Martindale, J. R., Morris, J. eds. (1971-92). *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire, 3 volumes.* Cambridge.

REL	*Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
RIC	Pearce, J. W. E. (1951). *Roman Imperial Coinage: Volume 9: Valentinian I – Theodosius I.* London; Kent. J. (1994). *Roman Imperial Coinage: Volume 10: The Divided Empire and the Fall of the Western parts, AD 395-491*. London.
RH	*Revue Historique*
RIL	*Rendiconta dell'Instituto Lombardo*
SP	*Studia Patristica*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

INTRODUCTION

Looking at Roman history, one wonders whether it would be unjust if the words "violence" and "Rome" ever be used interchangeably. It seems almost certain that it would not be an unjust equation when we approach the matter solely from our own modern memory, parts of which inexorably would have been shaped by the image ancient Rome holds in our popular culture. Yet even an academic approach to the same question, that professionally traces the footprints ancient Romans had left behind, appears to yield not very much different an answer. "The Roman storehouse of memories was a blood-spattered place" says a scholar and rightly so.[1] Since, from its nascent days, no period in Roman history was completely free from violence. The destruction of Troy by the Greeks led eventually to the foundation of the city of Rome on the Italian peninsula, so the Romans believed. The foundation of the city itself is said to have been preceded by a fratricide. The violent abduction of the neighboring Sabine women, celebrated so much by Renaissance and Neoclassical painters, then gave the city the first impetus for growth within the Italian peninsula, which was followed by its expansion over the whole Mediterranean basin by the second century BCE. This empire burgeoned through violence, which was freely celebrated not only in Livy's or Polybius' pages but also on public monuments, the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius are being perhaps its most famous examples. According to one commentator, perhaps with exception of the Assyrians, no other ancient society had so much affinity to violence.[2] Born amidst, grown, and nurtured throughout centuries both in word and action, violence was inescapably hardwired in Roman culture and memory; it was one of their principal traits,[3] almost a cardinal Roman virtue.[4]

Violence, of course, varied in the Roman world, as it varies in ours. When the subject of violence finds mention within the context of Roman studies, there are broadly three possibilities what type of violence is usually meant, depending on the period the term is used for. If the period in question is the Republican one (509-27 BCE), it is highly likely that political violence is meant.[5] When we go further down the road and arrive at the Roman empire in late

[1] Fagan 2020, 550.
[2] Zimmermann 2006, 348.
[3] Assmann 1999.
[4] Fagan 2020, 551.
[5] See, for instance: Sherwin-White 1956; Lintott 1968; Lintott 1970; Gaughan 2010.

antiquity (roughly between third and seventh centuries CE), mostly religious, or sometimes barbarian violence (that is violence within military sphere), is implied.[6]

Approaching violence in late antiquity too much from either religious perspective or through its occurrence during conflicts with barbarian peoples has been the practice of the scholars of the discipline, with works analyzing violence and its manifestation within the public space, such as violence tax-gatherers demonstrated to citizens[7] or violence exhibited in arenas where human beings killed each other much to spectators' joy,[8] having been interspersed here and there. Political violence in late antiquity, however, mostly remained on the sidelines, picked up mostly when the historical narrative compelled its author and even then only by being squeezed into the narrative briefly until the next historical event arrived and diverted the author's attention elsewhere.[9] The result, no doubt unintentionally, has been that political violence has so far remained a subject rarely merited a study on its own, even though the evidence for political violence is palpable. This neglect remains true to this day, if the recently released multi-volumed "The Cambridge World History of Violence", the first volume of which examines violence in prehistory and the ancient world, is of any indication: out of 33 articles present in the volume only two of them directly deal with violence in late antiquity. One article focuses on violence within Roman warfare[10] and the other on religious violence,[11] whereas the phrase "political violence" only appears in a piece dealing with the Roman Republic.[12] This approach adopted by this source, which will no doubt remain an authoritative source of information for studies concerning violence, aligns with what I have asserted above when I said that religious and military violence studies eclipse all other forms of violence.

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[6] McLynn 1992; Gaddis 1999; Drake 2006; Sizgorich 2008, et al. For a rich and recent bibliography containing plethora of literature on religious violence in late antiquity, see Drake 2006, 360-89.

[7] Ziche 2006, 127-136.

[8] Carter 2020, 493-511.

[9] Although existing works treating either generals or specific generalissimos cannot be blamed of a neglect of mentioning most of those violence instances sometimes occupying only a couple of lines in the modern editions of primary sources, the nature of their works have prevented them from going into details of each and every case narrative. To name a few, O'Flynn's "Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire" (1983) and Henning's "Periclitans res publica" (1999) belong to the first category, whereas works such as Zecchini's (1981) and Stickler's (2002) monographs on Aetius and Wijnendaele's articles on western generalissimos belong to the latter. One admission is necessary here. Wijnendaele's article on the supreme general Felix' murder as a result of Aetius' machinations (2017d) is an exception with its systematic approach to violence and how the assassination may have taken place.

[10] Lee 2020.

[11] van Nuffelen 2020.

[12] Tatum 2020. Another authoritative source of information, "The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity", published in 2012, treats violence largely from its occurrence on religious level, with the author of its preface mentioning violence in late antiquity in a way to imply several works solely handling religious violence (Johnson 2012, xix).

Political violence, endemic in the Roman empire since homicide and political power had become intertwined with the murder of Tiberius Gracchus in 132 BCE,[13] remained so in late antiquity and especially in the western Roman empire in the fifth century, as anyone who turned the pages of a late Roman history book would agree.[14] There were, of course, differences in the late Roman empire which effected the nature of political violence which separated it from political violence of the previous centuries besides other institutional, military, social, and religious changes, but for all the novelties, some things did not change at all. Men and his ambition for wealth and power still knew no bounds and in this empire, where one's rank and title and the order he belonged to defined a man's social standing and honor, namely his *dignitas*,[15] naturally some men wished for ranks, titles and a belonging to a specific order with which they could become superior to others.

In the later Roman empire, there were three orders which defined a man's standing in official imperial service. The highest order was composed of a very small group of people titled *illustres* (lit. illustrious men), with whom we will almost exclusively deal here. Next came *spectabiles* (lit. admirable men) and last *clarissimi* (lit. noble men).[16] According to *Notitia Dignitatum*, an indispensable contemporary source which lists the offices, ranks, and titles of the late empire, the *praefectus praetorio* (Praetorian Prefect), the *praefectus urbi* (Urban Prefect), the *magister militum* (Master of the Soldiers), the *praepositus sacri cubiculi* (Officer of the Sacred Chamber), the *magister officiorum* (Master of Offices), the *quaestor sacri palatii* (Quaestor of the Sacred Palace), the *comes sacrarum largitionum* (Count of the Sacred Largess), the *comes rerum privatarum* (Count of the Imperial Private Property) and the *comes domesticorum* (Count of the Domestic Troops) were all the *vires illustres*. The above grading of ranks also reflects their precedence, with the *magister militum* coming in the third place. What separated a *magister militum* than other *illustres* and made his rank worthy to be fought over was the fact that in

[13] Gaughan 2010.

[14] Even if prima facie otherwise may be assumed. Just because we are less informed concerning political violence cases, say, in contrast to earlier Roman periods, this does not mean that there was less political violence in late antiquity. By the same token, of course, as Zimmermann (2006, 353) said, possessing more evidence and report on cases of political violence of an era should not mean that era was heavily fraught with political violence.

[15] The Roman concept of *dignitas* signified one's social worth, authority, or even his character (Baldson 1960, 45).

[16] Although important honors, rarely, if ever, men of these orders played a large role in political violence cases we will treat here. To the first order belonged men such as proconsuls, secretaries who dealt with imperial orders, letters, and constitutions such as the *magister epistularum*, the *magister libellorum*, the *magister memoriae*, the *magister scriniorum*, while to the latter, lower ranked governors such as the *consularis*, the *praeses*, and the *corrector*, the *notarius* (lit. notary), and the members of the senate.

late antiquity only this rank gave clear access to the command of soldiers, hence to violence. Very soon, another title of honor, the *patricius* (patrician), would be added next to the *magister militum*'s name, so that no one could mistake his precedence. How these came to be we will deal with below, but it should be emphasized in this early stage that with the infantilization of the imperial office a *magister militum* by the fifth century could hardly be challenged directly by a *magister officiorum* or *comes domesticorum*, the only two posts within the order of the *illustres* that could command troops, albeit in very limited numbers due to the nature of their office.[17] Herein lies what made political violence revolved so much over the *magisterium militum* and among or against the master of soldiers of the west. It will be this interpersonal violence that played out on the highest strata of the western empire, which we shall call rivalries or feuds, either among western Roman generalissimos[18] themselves or between them and others concern us here.[19]

This dissertation is, therefore, an attempt to remedy that neglect present within the discipline of late antique studies. It aims to systematically analyze and categorize the violent methods and strategies generalissimos and their rivals resorted to get rid of each other for the sake of their political interests.

In late antiquity, as it was true for much of the earlier Roman history, the basis of political power lay in military.[20] This had to do with the fact that the Roman army and its elements existed for the sole purpose of being the institution to exercise force.[21] The period this dissertation is interested in, due to reasons we will presently dive into, no post other than the *magisterium militum* offered such proximity to the soldiers. This office's raison d'être, on the other hand, entirely lay in deciding where the violence that force is capable of should be directed to. As such, for the realization of political violence only two things remained to

[17] The *magister officiorum* commanded the *scholae palatine* (imperial guard), whereas *comes domesticorum* another branch of the imperial guard, named the *protectores domestici* (lit. protectors of the imperial household). It should be noted that both posts were also ranked below the *magister militum*, making the latter their superior.

[18] Generalissimos is a modern term that is largely used to designate generals of the western Roman empire who came to dominate the west in late antiquity. It was first used in the late 1920s (Stein 1928, 320, 368, 477) and was made popular in the 70s and 80s (Alan Cameron 1970, 97; Demandt 1970; O'Flynn 1983). I will use the term occasionally interchangeably with others such as strongman, partner, manager to imply *magistri militum* and its variations (such as *magister utriusque militiae*) throughout the work.

[19] *Militia* is a term that designates those who served under Roman emperors, both in civil and military capacities (*LRE*, 377-8). The *militia armata* encompassed *magistri militum* and patricians; the *militia officialis* comprised consuls, prefects, and governors; and the *militia palatina* covered quaestors, *magistri officiorum*, and others that were employed at the imperial court.

[20] MacGeorge 2002, 2.

[21] Lee 2020, 270.

complete the recipe for political violence and this was supplied by human nature: ambition and desire, under which a number of concepts can be grouped, such as honor, fear, wealth, fame, security, and glory.[22] A generalissimo resorting to violence under the influence of these made the human cost and ramifications of such acts for the empire only of secondary importance, as the protagonist would have become indifferent to all but to his own interests, a fact which would also have rendered them blind to their crimes and made them even think that what they did was useful and proper, if we are to subscribe to criminologist Lombroso's positivist approach to violence.[23] The result of these chain of events, unsurprisingly, was that violence beget violence, almost in a reminiscent of an Aeschylean drama, for the protagonists could be contained by no bounds. In this period, the only law followed appears to have been that of nature, which tended to render an otherwise illegitimate act legitimate by force, the commonplace maxim "Might is right" lying at its heart.[24]

Unlike generalissimos, this study has boundaries. I have chosen the period and geography covering the western portion of the empire between the years 395 and 472 CE as the start and end dates of my dissertation. This can be justified as follows.

This was a period that saw several changes in the west such as the increasing barbarian threat, deteriorating finances and the empire's incapability to mount large offensives.[25] Child emperors' incapacity to fully establish their rule over the western affairs between 395-455 was a phenomenon that had first started in the 370s. Gradually but surely, *de facto* authority over the military command and *fides* (loyalty) of the soldiers slipped more and more away from the holder of the imperial office to the *magistri militum*, who used their military experience and loyalty of their followers to advance their own interests, which led them to become the dominant force in the west.[26] This change led also to another one, in the nature of political violence: whether in the form of assassinations or civil wars, political violence now slowly

[22] Ruggiero 2006, 11.

[23] Lombroso 1902, 353.

[24] Cesare Beccaria's statement on the relationship between one' passion and law seems apt to quote here: "If we open our history books we shall see that the laws, for all that they are or should be contracts amongst free men, have rarely been anything but the tools of the passions of a few men or the offspring of a fleeting and haphazard necessity." (Beccaria 1995, 7).

[25] Lee 2020, 274.

[26] When Constantine I separated the civil and military hierarchies in the early fourth century, this ensured that the military commands of the empire would from now on only be held by those who were skilled in military matters (Elton 2019, 65).

made its nest near the *magisterium militum*, leaving the fight for the imperial office behind to a large extent.

Choosing 395 as the start date has several reasons. First, this was the last year the empire was ruled by a single *Augustus*, Theodosius I. After his death in January 395, the west and east had their own emperors and only after this date, at least in historiography, one can truly talk about the histories of the western and eastern Roman empires. Second, what happened in 395 in the west, with the benefit of hindsight, reveals itself to have been a watershed for emperors and generals: the vacancy Theodosius I left in the west was filled *de iure* by his son Honorius, 11-years-old, but de facto by Stilicho, a veteran who led the late emperor's armies on several occasions and now the supreme general of the western armies. The great contrast between these two figures had an immediate impact on the nature of the imperial office and *magisterium militum*, which led to fundamental changes regarding who is to be regarded as the actual ruler of the west, as we shall see. Though there have been a case of a child-emperor and generalissimos shortly prior to Honorius and Stilicho which cannot be ignored if we are to understand the relationship between young emperors and their grizzly generals, it was the role Honorius appears to have been satisfied in assuming during long reign (395-423) and Stilicho's dominance that lasted for 13 years (395-408) which institutionalized the ceremonial emperor and active generalissimo concept in the eyes of the contemporaries until the dissolution of the western empire.

Speaking of the end of the *pars occiends*, one may rightly demand an explanation for the preference of the date 472 as the limit of the dissertation instead of the commonly, though arbitrarily and mistakenly, accepted expiration date of the western empire, the year of 476.[27] The reason that the research ends with generalissimo Ricimer's and emperor Anthemius' civil war in 472 lies not so much in the cessation of political violence cases with the end of that civil war (which was not the case at all) but in the fact that this year also marked the reshuffling of several leading actors, leaving the political stage for all new actors: a month after emperor Anthemius was terminated by a general of Ricimer, named Gundobad, the generalissimo

[27] As the end of the western empire does not fall into the scope of this study and for the sake of avoiding a rabbit hole while pursuing arguments regarding the "fall" of the western part of the Roman empire, why this date is not a satisfactory choice for the "fall" can be briefly explained on the following technical reasoning. The date 476 appears to have been arbitrarily (possibly for the sake of convenience) chosen, as this was the year in which emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed in Italy. But he was not the last western Roman emperor, for Julius Nepos would continue to carry the title of the western emperor and rule, at least *de iure*, until his death in 480 in Dalmatia.

himself died. He was followed by a few months later in the same year by Anicius Olybrius, whom Ricimer had named his (puppet) emperor during his war against Anthemius. In 473-4, Gundobad, who replaced Ricimer as the first *magister militum* of the west and patrician, too, left, in that he willingly gave up the most prized rank and title and departed for the Burgundian kingdom to take place of his late father as the new Burgundian king.

Disappearance of such names one by one from the political stage may on its own not be regarded as a sufficient reason to stop at 472. But Gundobad's remarkable decision to renounce being the supreme general and patrician, over which generals and others had fought and killed for years either for its possession or indirect control, raises suspicions about whether something had changed concerning the nature of that post. As we shall see, the advent of child emperors in the late 300s precipitated a change both in the imperial office and the *magisterium militum*, so Gundobad's choice to become a barbarian king instead of the strongman of the empire naturally makes one wonder if another change silently occurred in that point of history. To pursue that possibility, however, is not one of the aims of this dissertation. The fact that Gundobad behaved the way he did is enough reason to regard his time in that office holding those titles different than his predecessors, whose ambitions targeted one thing only. He was clearly a different *magister militum*, whose decision may have been the harbinger of the things to come in the post-Roman period in the west. His abdication, therefore, constitutes a perfect demarcation line to the study.

With the post of the *magisterium militum* in the spotlight, those who served within the capacity of *militia armata*, namely commanders of various ranks, vying against each other for its possession are inevitably our protagonists. This does not exclude others who served in the remaining imperial services, such as *militia officialis*, *militia palatina*, and even emperors themselves. As much as the rivalries that left their mark on this period of the western Roman history came to realization between generals, their opponents occasionally encompassed ambitious aristocrats, eunuchs, and holders of the imperial office, who were not blind to the fact that the occupation of the post of the supreme general by a too autonomous commander was a threat to their interests, authority, and independence. Inescapably, surrounded by such individuals, generals had to pay attention to their relationship with them and when necessary, deal with them as well to secure their own future. As such, generals' feuds with other high ranked individuals and *Augusti* are also a part of this dissertation, which should be regarded

as a testament to the significance the *magisterium militum* gained and enjoyed in this period since its establishment under Constantine I.

Having defined the limits of the dissertation and justified its existence, next an answer should now be given to the question that might be raised, which is, how to write on political violence that surrounded the *magisterium militum*, if it is a theme that has been often neglected in the scholarship so far.

While it is true that political violence in late antiquity has been largely overshadowed by the number of studies on religious and military violence, still, it is not that the soil has not been tilled before, so to speak, but it has been tilled for a different purpose. Any political and military history of the late empire, from A. H. M. Jones' three-volume magnum opus "The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey" (1964) to Elton Hugh's recent work "The Roman Empire in Late Antiquity: A Political and Military History" (2018), has its share of late Roman rivalries, for one cannot tell the story of Flavius Aetius' rise by omitting his feud and battle with the count of Africa, Bonifatius, nor anyone can fully appreciate the level of Flavius Ricimer's ambition, if his enmity with emperor Anthemius is omitted. The issue is not whether this or that rivalry is found mention in scholarly works, however. It is rather the nature of the treatment such rivalries received at the hands of the scholars. Assassinations, battles, and feuds among generals and others, while not omitted, have been for the most part playing a secondary role in their narratives. This is by no means a criticism, as their purpose was mainly to satisfy our lacking knowledge on generalissimos and the structure of their prized office. In such works going into details of an assassination by discussing its probable culprits and their possible aims would mean digressing from that main objective. Nevertheless, the fact that many of the rivalries found mention in the secondary literature, has supplied this dissertation for many of the historical cases it handles a good amount of information to establish a point of departure, while their brief yet intriguing passing comments have offered enough variety point of views that the present author was not only able to expand on some of them (while rejecting some others with justification) but also he cannot imagine the genesis some of his hypotheses without their existence, which indirectly supplied an impetus while looking for answers to questions such as "Who dunit?" that are frequent in deducing the identity of a potential perpetrator.

As the introduction has so far been brushing the previous scholarship to give a sketch of its own limits, lastly, a couple of words must be said on the methodology this study will follow throughout.

Taking on a theme that belongs to late Roman politics, however regular, can be likened to find a way out of a labyrinth. This analogy a priori assumes that such a study comes already with methodological problems and rightly so. As the literature review below will make it clear, our sources for the fifth century Roman empire are disappointingly meagre. Our primary information largely depends either on poor in detail or fragmentary or partisan or classicizing accounts of the events. We lack historians of the same caliber as Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus. To write about a topic such as political violence, a sound narrative account of military and political events is necessary in order to understand the background reasons out of which those violent acts were born and make pertinent observations about them. For all these drawbacks, we nevertheless possess a sufficiently well reconstructed picture of the fifth century west, thanks to scholarly editions of primary sources and rich secondary literature, that allows us to follow the events and make observations and reach conclusions, all within the realm of reason. Still, it should not be forgotten that perhaps almost any picture of the fifth century will remain imperfect, something that may not going to change any time soon on account of the extant nature of the primary sources. As such, maneuvering amidst these historical events can very well be likened to looking for a way out of a maze.

For in the first place, all primary sources come with their own specific problems. Late antique chronicles often lack details for cases we regard important. Ecclesiastical histories are very liable to suffer from extreme partisanship with respect to their religious agenda. Even when we meet a historian such as Priscus whose sober account *prima facie* seems to have not suffered from such symptoms, because he was a classicizing historian, who put style and literary effect before "the truth", we are forced never to drop our guard while reading him and those like him. Even when we can look beyond rhetoric devices, that are usually easy to discern, another obstacle comes up: the fragmentary natures of the sources. Not every account survived in fragment, however. We have several panegyrics that survived in full, but they bring their own difficulties, namely, the sincerity of their authors in such works, which were produced in the first place to flatter their recipient. Even letters, which we moderns take as a very private form of communication, are fraught with problems due to the fact that letters in antiquity in most

cases were not only written to be read by their addressees but also friends and family. The fact that they would be orally conveyed for artistic effect makes us question their reliability only further.

The limits and dangers than surround the textual evidence do not end there either. Scribes of the post-classical age, to whom we are indebted for the knowledge we have of the period, also made mistakes in copying the original texts. Spotting such mistakes becomes increasingly difficult, however, when a manuscript has no other copy or the mistake made is not extremely blatant. Scientific editions of texts are of extremely helpful to rectify such problems along with easing our study with textual sources, as Burgess' edition of fragmentary classicizing historians,[28] but there is no guarantee that modern historians are immune to making errors.

Is it, then, possible to do a justified analysis of the political violence in Rome by studying those ancient and modern sources fraught with such potential problems and come with that much baggage? Is the historian condemned to the bleak view Sartre's protagonist Antoine Roquentin felt before his research? Is there a way out of this labyrinth?

The author of this dissertation is of the opinion that late antique historians of our age should not seek a way out of the labyrinth they found themselves in. Rather, they should seek means that might help them maneuver within this maze. This can be only done accommodating their methodologies in accordance with nature of the sources that face them.

The historian must first take an essential step, if political violence is the theme they have decided to treat. A work of that nature is condemned to be created largely out of the surviving textual evidence, and to properly understand that evidence, let alone decode its author's meaning, requires in the first place learning to look at events from someone else's perspective. Cases of violence in question here occurred in a different world dominated by a culture, understanding, and concept of violence alien to the twenty first century. As Zimmermann puts it:

> "Each age has its own way of speaking or writing about violence, or of depicting it in other ways. … [this] is fundamental for historians, because the texts and images that transmit violence to posterity follow the rules and conventions of their own time, and these may not be easily accessible to the modern observer."[29]

[28] Blockley 1981-3.

[29] Zimmermann 2006, 344.

To overcome this specific challenge surrounding the studies of violence in late antiquity, I have, therefore, adopted a two-pronged approach. First, following Koltun-Fromm's suggestion in her article[30] about Jewish-Christian relations that researchers should not worry that much to find a definition of their own to brand individuals and groups that lived in late antiquity but look for answers how they defined themselves. This is the approach I have adopted in my attempt at understanding and defining political violence: how *I* define it did not play a role, but instead how the Romans did, which I have done in the chapter where I examine the reception of violence and self-help in Roman thought and law. I have then applied the same method also to my treatment of the protagonists of the violence acts I have put under examination: e.g. generalissimos were treated within the context of the social group they belonged to in his age, that is, the generalissimos in the fifth-century Roman west. This required me first to take a look at the conditions that created generalissimos and what made that honor so appealing to many others to such an extent to fight battles over it. Because only after this background is soundly established the analyzation and categorization of political violence acts would make sense.

As such, I naturally relied largely on textual evidence rather than that of material, always keeping in mind, however, that such sources were prone to say what their authors wanted them to say.[31] To quote once again from Zimmermann, as he has brilliantly articulated a fundamental element of my research:

> "One must always be aware of the fact that the authors of these images and texts carefully thought out their renditions with an intended impact in mind. They were deeply familiar with their audience's accustomed patterns of perception and potential for making associations. Both the authors' aims and the process of reception needs to be painstakingly reconstructed from our modern perspective, and this can only be achieved if we make clear distinctions between modern moral evaluations and ancient judgments. This is a major methodological problem for any study of violence. What is valued positively or negatively in today's understanding of legitimate or illegitimate, good or bad violence may have been understood quite differently in antiquity. When we think an ancient report wants to draw our attention to the victims, the ancient author might instead have been trying to give a positive portrayal of the perpetrator.

[30] Koltun-Fromm 2009, 556-71.
[31] Meyer 2009, 2-9.

> Ancient and modern readers may have very different criteria of moral and ethical judgment".[32]

Which brings me to the second main part of the method I have followed, which is, that I hold it imperative to understand where my primary sources got their information and how they stood in relation to events and individuals that they wrote about. This necessarily made my approach to the textual evidence a very cautious one: reading them several times, contrasting my reading with those available in scholarly editions, stripping them of their emotions and bias to the best of my abilities to extract the non-subjective information and only then moving on to present them in a critical and systematic fashion.

In the end, for all the maneuvering within this so-called labyrinth, the final product remains a necessary captive of what surviving and limited evidence we have. That is why I have suggested above that the late antique historian is not supposed to look for a way to escape the maze. For escaping entails leaving behind all the primary evidence we possess, and such an act would be equivalent to writing fiction, where the author is not restrained by anything but their imagination. Instead, I have simply followed a path where I have attempted my best to steer away from drawing strict conclusions on events our knowledge may just be insufficient for the moment, subscribing to the maxim that no single source should be taken for its word alone (*nullius in verba*). All my efforts have, therefore, been directed at reconstructing this part of late antiquity by amalgamating different authorities and evidence, when and where possible, meanwhile always be at the ready to adopt, modify, and suspend my judgements and preconceptions.

[32] Zimmermann 2006, 344.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Primary Sources

Chronicles, Ecclesiastical Histories, Classicizing Histories

We owe the general picture we have for the late fourth and fifth centuries of the western Roman empire largely to the surviving textual evidence and they come in battalions. While this is a great blessing for historians, because of the fact that the information available in those sources are often of varying quality and quantity (fragmentary, vague, partisan), the task of a historian of this period may often resemble that of the hero trying to find his way out of the Cretan labyrinth.

Chronicles were one of the frequent types of history which became extremely popular in late antiquity in the west.[33] Their origin can be traced back to Jewish and Hellenistic traditions of historical writing, but it was Eusebius who was the catalyst for its popularity in the said period. Chronicles inform the reader as to what important event occurred when. They follow a year-by-year account and are by nature laconic in details. Because of this, they may be likened to reading subheadings of a newspaper. For instance, Flavius Aetius' orchestration of a rival general's assassination or the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451 against Attila's army, though two major events of the fifth century, occupy a few lines in the modern scientific editions of chronicles found in *MGH* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*), a multi-volumed work bringing the chronicles of late antiquity together.

For all their dearth, chronicles of late antiquity underlie much of the basis of our information regarding the events of the late fourth and fifth centuries west. Hydatius, Prosper, Marcellinus Comes, the anonymous writer(s) of the Gallic chronicles wrote their chronicles in Latin and John Malalas, John of Antioch, and Theophanes in Ancient Greek. Theirs are the chronicles that proved to be most invaluable in constructing the narratives of the period in question.

Hydatius' chronicle encompasses the years between 379 and 469 which makes him a contemporary to nearly all political crises of the period we treat here.[34] His work is especially important because he was not only active in Spain and therefore close to the Visigothic power base, which played a role in the rivalry between emperor Anthemius and Ricimer, but also in political affairs, as for instance when he requested Aetius' help against the Suebes in Spain.

[33] On chronicles of late antiquity, see: Croke 1992.

[34] On Hydatius, see Burgess 1993.

Hydatius was a Christian bishop who believed that the world would end in the century he was living in and this might be argued against his reliability, but in his approach to political events of his time he is a complete Roman, who was fully anti-barbarian and a strong supporter of the Theodosian dynasty,[35] and therefore, his account at least gives us a "true Romans" point of view of the events he shares. His work is nevertheless too focused on affairs in Spain or related to,[36] making him our first choice for events occurring in or close to that region.

Prosper or Prosper of Aquitaine is another Christian who wrote a chronicle in the fifth-century and he accompanies us as far as the year 455, where his chronicle ends. His work is much colored by religious rhetoric which takes even a "Papal" turn after 440, as he was linked to Pope Leo I.[37] Therefore, it is only after we extinguish his religious zeal his work becomes properly useful for historians who are not reading him for religious information. Once that done, as Zecchini says of him, he becomes "the most valuable source for the history of the West in the first half of the fifth century."[38]

Another useful chronicle for our research is Marcellinus Comes. He is different from Hydatius and Prosper, chiefly in that he was a soldier from the reign of Justinian who wrote his chronicle from an eastern perspective.[39] His focus is Constantinople and Illyricum. But just as Justinian's reign cannot be imagined without mentioning the western affairs, this chronicler too gives sufficient attention to them, as when he regarded the western empire fell with the death of Aetius in 454. He is, therefore, a significant source for us in that he supplies us with an eastern perspective of the events that occurred in the west. He is also a source that furnishes us with information lacking elsewhere, such as concerning his namesake Marcellinus of Dalmatia's patriciate, and so he too becomes indispensable in our reconstruction of the political rivalries of the age.

The Gallic chronicles and their editions written in 452 and 511, have a very dark view of the fifth-century Gaul and western Roman empire. The cause of this bleakness is religious heresy, from which Augustine of Hippo is also said to have not been free.[40]

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[35] Zecchini 2003, 343.
[36] Zecchini 2003, 342.
[37] As Muhlberger 1990 says of him: "His focus was on theology and included engaging with heresies." On Prosper, Muhlberger 1990, 73-135.
[38] Zecchini 2003, 338.
[39] On Comes Marcellinus: Croke, 2001.
[40] Zecchini 2003, 341. On the Gallic chronicles: Muhlberger 1990, 136-92.

The work's real value, however, shine where it offers contemporary accounts on politics. It regards children in the imperial office, likely meaning Valentinian III, as the origin of the problems that beset the west, for the anonymous author believes that it was due to their incapacity of being generals the barbarians became successful and generals, no doubt a shot at Aetius, became dominant.[41] The Gallic chronicles, therefore, and especially its 452 edition, offer a prized view of the relationship between a child-emperor and a generalissimo.

Turning our attention to chronicles written in Ancient Greek that encompass our period, we come across John Malalas, John of Antioch, and Theophanes. John Malalas' chronicle follows the events from the "Creation" of the world to the end of Justinian's reign in 565. It is more focused on eastern affairs but major events in the west take their share in his narrative.[42] John of Antioch, who lived in the sixth or seventh century in the eastern part of the empire, mostly relies on Priscus' fragments.[43] Theophanes, on the other hand, flourished in the eighth and ninth centuries and therefore very separated from our timeline,[44] still matters, because his chronicle deals with events starting from Diocletian's reign in 284 and because he was a compiler, his work is liable to contain information otherwise lost.

Next to chronicles the other chief historiographical genre in late antiquity was ecclesiastical history, a type of history that looks at historical events through Christian lens. This genre owes its late antique popularity to Eusebius as well.[45] This being so, his followers in this genre naturally adopted Eusebius' maxim as their point of departure which they read in his Ecclesiastical History on how this form of history is not about narrating wars and generals, victories and defeats but instead about wars waged in one's soul. Still, because their works "explained historical developments as driven by providence and personal action, highlighting the connection between political efficacy and orthodox religious policy",[46] what they have to say interest political and military historians as well.

In this work Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen spearhead the ecclesiastical historians supplying information for our rivalries. Because it was also written with the intention of promoting a religious argument, Orosius' work *Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri Septem*

[41] Zecchini 2003, 341-2.
[42] On Malalas: Jeffreys 2003, 497-527.
[43] On John of Antioch: Treadgold 2007, 311-29.
[44] On Theophanes: Mango and Scott, 1997.
[45] Due to Eusebius' influence in late antique historiography and hence his contributions to history, he is put by Croke 2009 next to Thucydides and Leopold von Ranke.
[46] Croke 2009, 576.

(History against the Pagans in Seven Books) will be handled here as well, though categorically it was a universal history, a type of history treating the events from "the beginning" to the current age it was being written.

Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen all lived in the fifth century in the eastern empire. Philostorgius' work covers the period between 315-425 and offers a unique view of events because he apparently had access to sources which are lost to us. His work is especially important because he is likely to have used Olympiodorus' and Eunapius' histories, of which we have only fragments.[47] Socrates is also a unique source because of his sober approach to history, influenced only little by his religious beliefs. Add to this the fact that his history "centers upon conflict, and Socrates portrays both religious and secular controversy",[48] his work, covering the years 306-439, is a source fraught with rational analysis of secular events.[49] Sozomen's history, dedicated to emperor Theodosius II and roughly covering the period between 324-439, following Socrates in many places, is also very generous in sharing information on the early monasticism and monks.[50] His other sources, among others, also include Olympiodorus and Eunapius, which makes his work an attractive source for historians working outside the religious sphere. Finally comes Orosius, who was a bishop in Spain and who also floruit in the fifth century. He wrote his history after the sack of Rome in 410 on the instigation of Augustine to show that the sack had nothing to do with Rome's abandoning its former pantheon of gods and it was just a punishment sent by Christian god for their vices (2.19). What interests us in his book, however, is that he pursues this goal while mentioning contemporary events such as the rivalries the *comites Africae* had with the *magistri militum* in Italy, thus offering significant aid in our analyses of those violent confrontations.[51]

Leaving the chronicles and ecclesiastical histories which were mostly written from manifest Christian perspective, now we arrive at classicizing histories of late antiquity, which were the spiritual successors of the genre that goes back to Herodotus and Thucydides. The latter was especially considered their role model in writing this sort of history.[52] It is our misfortune that this is the genre that survived almost completely in fragments besides a couple of exceptional

[47] On Philostorgius: Leppin 2001, 111-24.
[48] Rohrbacher 2002, 113.
[49] On Socrates: Urbainczyk 1997.
[50] Rohrbacher 2002, 118. On Sozomen: van Nuffelen 2001.
[51] On Orosius: van Nuffelen 2012.
[52] For Thucydides' reception in late antiquity: Whately 2017.

cases. This puts us at a disadvantage to balance the Christian perspective dominant in the historiography of late antiquity. Nothing is all lost, however, when we factor in the fact that they are found in quotations in other sources, which somewhat remedies the situation.

The classicizing sources that were largely essential to this study were written in the fifth and sixth centuries, both in the west and east halves of the empire. Olympiodorus, Priscus, Zosimus, Jordanes, Procopius, Gregory of Tours, and Ammianus Marcellinus, who deserves a special mention though he belongs to the fourth century, are the names that will be treated here.[53]

Olympiodorus' fragments cover the years between 407-424. Therefore, he is a significant source for the reign of Honorius and its immediate aftermath. As these years witnessed several usurpers, his fragments are useful to learn how little actual power Honorius exercised during his reign and how powerful Constantius gradually became, filling the power vacuum another generalissimo Stilicho had left, to whom Olympiodorus was also very sympathetic. His work supplies us with a look at the early career of the future generalissimo Bonifatius and a description of the private armies of the fifth-century generals, *bucellarii*, as well. In short, his fragments are extremely invaluable with respect to how much novel information they supply for the political and military historian of the fifth century west.[54]

Priscus' fragmentary work informs its readers about what took place between 433-4/470s. His work is mostly remembered with the eye-witness account of his visit to Attila's headquarters. His work tackles the events of the reigns of Theodosius II, Marcian, and Leo I in the east and it is considered largely reliable. His value for us lies in the fact that he gives plenty of information on the regime of Aetius and that of Ricimer, especially with regard to Aetius' confrontation with Valentinian III in 453 and that of Ricimer with emperor Anthemius. Without Priscus, much of the political violence analysis of the period would be incomplete.[55]

Zosimus' history stands directly opposed against the ecclesiastical histories of the period. For Zosimus Christianity promoted by Constantine I was the cause of Rome's ruin. His largely extant work, known in modern English usually as "New History" is an amalgamation of

[53] It goes without saying that of course there are other historians employed in the service of this dissertation, but here, as I have done in my treatment of chronicles and ecclesiastical historians, I try to be selective as much as I can, lest I bombard and exhaust the reader with a very long review of them. A truly justified treatment of every and each late antique source would be a task worthy of its own separate book.

[54] So much so, Thompson 1996, 11-12 sees him as one of the greatest historians of late antiquity. On Olympiodorus: Matthews 1970, 79-97.

[55] On Priscus: Treadgold 2007, 96-102.

Olympiodorus' and Eunapius' works, both of which survive in fragments. As such, his treatment of the period up until 404 follows Eunapius and after that time Olympiodorus. The result being is that he offers little originality except his open hostility to Christianity. Having said that, Zosimus' history is indispensable because his work is largely extant, a rarity among late antiquity classicizing historians, and this means his work may contain some details from the aforementioned authors, to which we may have otherwise no access.[56]

Jordanes', Procopius', and Gregory of Tours' histories, all written in the sixth century, survived all intact. Jordanes lived in Constantinople and authored two works, known as *Romana,* which depends on western sources, and *Getica*.[57] Both works deal with the affairs of the western empire in detail, especially with Aetius' political activities.

Procopius is rich in details regarding the western affairs of the fifth century, but his account of the *pars occidens* is largely seen unreliable, especially what he has to say about Marcellinus of Dalmatia.[58] He informs his reader about the affairs of the fifth-century western empire in his "Wars" only to set up the main narrative of how Justinian's armies won back that empire after fighting in various places. Since his work's main purpose is to deal with the Justinianic reconquests, then, why Procopius is regarded as an unreliable source for the fifth-century west is understandable. Here, too, Procopius' account was only given credence when no other contemporary sources were available to draw information from, and even then, the approach was cautionary.[59]

Gregory of Tours was a bishop of Tours, who wrote under the Franks in the sixth century. Although he was of the ecclesiastical order, his history can be defined rather secular in its emphasis, as his work does not seem to pursue a blatant religious agenda. It is, in fact, a work dedicated to record the history of the Franks and while doing so, especially in the early books, the author often deals with the Romans and their activities in Gaul. The affairs elsewhere are of little interest to him. He is an important source for the fifth-century historian not only because he has a lot to say about the Franks, but also about the Romans who left their impact in Gaul, which brings us to Aetius. It is in his second book Aetius is described in detail, a

[56] On Zosimus: Liebeschuetz 2003, 176-218. However, not all historians are convinced by Liebeschuetz' interpretation of Zosimus and his work. On this matter, see: Paschoud 2005, 363-76.

[57] These sources seem to be Cassiodorus (Goffart 1988: 23-31) and Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus (Ensslin 1949). *Getica* draws largely from the well of Priscus (Rohrbacher 2002, 87).

[58] Kulikowski 2002, 182.

[59] On Procopius, see Averil Cameron's "Procopius and the Sixth Century" published in 1985.

description, which apparently originates from another source,[60] that is of quintessential nature for studies on this *magister militum*'s military prowess,[61] a necessity for any potential generalissimo if he set his ambitions high.

One last historian deserves a special mention, whom the Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity defines as "the last great Latin historian in classical manner".[62] We are talking about Ammianus Marcellinus, whose work does not encompass our period, but without it we would have been less informed about not only how the empire and its offices functioned in in late antiquity but also how a pattern change occurred in the imperial office and the *magisterium militum*.

Published towards the end of the fourth century,[63] the *Res Gestae*'s extant books (18 out of 31) cover the political and historical events between 353 and 378, stretching from Constantius II's reign to the Battle of Adrianople. Ammianus' work has been invaluable for the dissertation in that it goes into details in treating the reigns of the first two child emperors, Gratian and Valentinian II, and hence the rise of the generalissimos, in the west.

That its author did not have any partisan views concerning matters and individuals (even his clearly favorite ruler Julian is admonished) adds to his credibility and makes it even more an important source due to its highly sober nature. Although it must also be admitted that this credibility suffers in places from the author's tendency to classicize parts of his narrative.[64] Still, because he was in the military and would have been familiar with how generals of the age operated and led a relationship with ruling emperors, his observations are precious for us to trace how the nature of the relationship between emperors and their generals gradually changed during and between the reigns of Constantius II, Julian, Valentinian I and Gratian, Valentinian II, that is, during the infantilization of the imperial office.[65]

[60] This source is Frigeridus (Zecchini 2003, 334-5).
[61] Both on Jordanes and Gregory of Tours: Goffart 1988.
[62] *ODLA*, 62.
[63] In antiquity publishing a book, or rather a manuscript, generally entailed the distribution of the work copied by hand to a small circle of friends and then, if lucky, to a wider audience. Some authors, such as Augustine, even had a list of names to whom his books could be given (Marrou 1949, 217).
[64] Rosen 1982; Kelly 2008.
[65] On Ammianus Marcellinus and the *Res Gestae*, see best: Drijvers and Hunt 1999.

Panegyrics and Letters, Laws and Official Documents

Panegyrics of our period are fraught with details concerning the *magistri militum* and their careers. This is particularly true for Stilicho, Aetius, and Ricimer.[66] The contemporary panegyrists are Claudianus, Merobaudes, and Sidonius Apollinaris who left us several works of this nature. Claudianus was the panegyrist of Stilicho and Merobaudes of Aetius,[67] while Sidonius Apollinaris often took up the same duty in the post-Aetian world when he became the son-in-law of emperor Avitus (r. 455-6)[68] and then the *praefectus urbi* (468-9), writing panegyrics for the reigns of Avitus, Majorian, and Anthemius.[69] Their works constitute an indispensable part of our studies, without which our knowledge of the events and figures would be extremely poor.

As almost everything belonging to the ancient world they too come with a significant problem, however. Panegyrics were speeches written according to the rules established by epideictic rhetoric. The purpose of the panegyrist was to praise the addressee, usually the reigning emperor, and this meant outright distortions, lies, and fabrications. In late antiquity they would be orally performed at the court before emperor and other important figures. It is because of their nature panegyrics are described works of explicit flattery,[70] a conclusion the ancients had already reached (Isoc. *Paneg*. 42c; Julian. *Or*. 4c).

For all their artificial nature panegyrics may often contain nuclei of truth if we succeed in looking past the obvious rhetoric. In the first place, reading them may supply us with the knowledge of the official imperial program of the time,[71] that is, either how things stood or were supposed to stand at the court. Since the panegyrists of the period were more often than not in the service of the *magistri militum*, their works interest us particularly, since the imperial pictures Claudian or Merobaudes drew put their patrons Stilicho and Aetius in the spotlight with all their military prowess being praised while leaving emperors occupied with

[66] It seems that generalissimos of the fifth century had usually a panegyrist-poet accompanying them (McEvoy 2013, 269 n. 77). According to Gillett, Aetius had another panegyrist (besides Merobaudes) named Quintinianus and both Bonifatius and Sebastianus too had their own panegyrists (Gillett 2012, 271).

[67] For Claudian: Alan Cameron 1970; for Merobaudes: Clover 1971.

[68] "r." is an abbreviation that stands for "reigned".

[69] On Sidonius Apollinaris: Harries 1994, 159-66.

[70] Macmullen 1964, 437. On late antique panegyrics in general: Whitby 1998.

[71] Straub 1939.

ceremonial responsibilities,[72] though the panegyrist would have been attentive to do this in a way to display as if an actual partnership existed between them. Such depictions became the norm with the advent of child-emperors and this fact makes panegyrics our contemporary witnesses to how the imperial virtue of *imperator* that once solely belonged to emperors went over to generals. In short, while they emboldened the position of their *magistri* by praising their doings, they reminded on the one hand the élite and on the other the reigning emperor who actually held the reigns in the west.

Letters require mention here as well. In antiquity a letter would be written to be read orally and could be no less affectioned than panegyrics.[73] The reason for this is that letters would frequently pass into others' hands and be copied as though any other art form. That it was so should not be an obstacle for using them as a reliable source, however. Thanks to one of Sidonius Apollinaris' letters, for instance, we have more knowledge about the case of Arvandus, who was in cahoots with the Visigoths against emperor Anthemius in late 460s, and departing from this point, it can be argued that he was also in league with Ricimer, who pursued pro-Visigothic policies and was also hostile to Anthemius.

Two important sources originated directly from the imperial court now demand our attention. These are namely the *Codex Theodosianus* (Theodosian Code), *Novellae* (Constitutions), the *Corpus Juris Civilis* (Body of Civil Law). These colossal legislative works bring together a collection of laws enacted by the imperial court and are the perfect source to see on which legal basis the empire was supposed to function. For all their pragmatism and technicality, these also must be used with caution, however, for the imperial law codes were often prescriptive rather than descriptive.[74]

With respect to this research, these law codes have been particularly helpful in providing the official stand on violence and with it, how self-defense was seen a natural right among the Romans. Again, thanks to them we are more informed about the results of several rivalries, such as those between Gildo and Stilicho and Heraclianus and Constantius, in that the laws mention how the vanquished lost his property to the victor, and as a novel development of the age, to the victorious general rather than the privy purse.

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[72] See, for instance, Claudian's praises of Stilicho's success as a general: Claud. *Get*. 359-63; *Cons. Stil*. 1.122-8.; Claud. *Ruf*. 2.171ff; *Get*. 323-9, 373-5; *Cons. Stil*. 1.188-97; for the army's loyalty to him: *Cons. Stil*. 1.160-9, 2.145-9, 152-6; and love: *Get*. 404-7; *Ruf*. 2.257ff.

[73] On letters and the art of letter writing in late antiquity, see: Sogno, Storin, and Watts 2016.

[74] Averil Cameron 1993, 25-6.

The same codes are also informative regarding the imperial ranks and titles, the privileges they brought, and how the preeminence worked in cases where individuals accumulated several high honors. This was understandably a highly sensitive subject in the ambitious world of late antiquity, for ranks and titles mattered immensely for those who set their eyes high. Clarifications on such matters, therefore, were highly needed. At the risk of simplifying, one may even argue that the rivalries between generals were mainly originated from their passion to accumulate the most prized rank of the late antique west, that is, *magister utriusque militiae et patricius* (the master of both [class of] soldiers and patrician). The imperial office's attempts at devaluating such ranks and titles by multiplying them would have made less sense had we lacked these sources in which we find the treatment of its privilege, both in theory and practice, in great detail. We owe our knowledge, for instance, of what rank and title Aetius enjoyed at his apogee to these sources (*Nov. Val*. 17: *comes et magister utriusque militiae et patricius* [the count and master of both [class of] soldiers and patrician]; *Nov. Val*. 35: *magnificus vir parens patriusque noster* [our magnificent hero, parent, and father]).

To the same sources again we are indebted for our information regarding the economic capacities, or rather limits, of the late western empire. When the imperial admission of how its financial resources deteriorated in the 440s in a way to raise a formidable obstacle in recruiting new soldiers and even in equipping those of already had been recruited is evaluated together with the simultaneous rise of private armies (composed of *bucellarii* and others) of generalissimos, the question of how those generals became and maintained their position as violence brokers for such a long time becomes a bit easier to understand.

It remains now to say a few words on the *Notitia Dignitatum* (The List of the Offices), an official document which lists the civil and military offices of the late empire. It contains updated information regarding the west up until 425.[75] It is an essential source because, on the one had it lists the offices that belonged to the civil and military affairs hierarchically, and on the other, it also documents the military forces under the military commands they belonged to, albeit with no hint to their numbers. Its antiquarian nature shrouded with fog makes it a source that needs to be approached with caution, but what it contains even on the surface renders it an indispensable source especially for political and military historians.

[75] Kulikowski 2000.

Inscriptions and Coins

Inscriptions and coins, these relatively dull sources yet provide historians with what otherwise may very well have been neglected in others. Sometimes it is thanks to them we are fully informed about some historical fact, like the price edict of emperor Diocletian, the exact details of which could not have been known without surviving epigraphic evidence.

Inscriptions are extremely useful in expanding our knowledge on military personnel as well. It is, for instance, possible to reconstruct the origins of a common *miles* (soldier) or pedigree of a *legio* (legion) with their help. Bombastic lists of full imperial titles of emperors in many cases owe their survival to them too. Here, Aetius' list of military activities was often supplemented by inscriptions accompanying his missing statue in Italy. Without them, it would also be difficult to make plausible connections of individuals to rival parties who held high government posts and so argue for or against a general's domination of the government through his appointees.

Numismatic evidence plays a role, if not great, in this study, as well. If coins of late antiquity are less helpful in constructing the imperial office holders' physiology, as in that period naturalistic portraiture was no longer the priority in representation, they nevertheless are a helpful medium which advertises the official imperial policy (e.g. victory) and traits (e.g. militaristic, religious). The latter is especially true for this study, for coins from the reigns of emperor Honorius to Libius Severus help us further our research on the relationship between emperors and their generalissimos. For instance, while the inspection of coins dating back to Honorius' reign reveals that the imperial office still wished to be seen militarily competent, as Honorius' image as a soldier clad in military dress printed upon them attests (*RIC* 10.46-7), the numismatic evidence from Severus' reign betrays that the partnerhip the panegyrists were singing about and coins carrying the images of a soldier-emperor were no longer seen essential in Ricimer's day, who felt perfectly at ease in displaying his monogram on coins (*RIC* 10.188-92), a move none of his predecessor had commited.

2. Secondary Sources

We draw our information on historical events from primary sources, but this is only one side of the coin of conducting a historical research. On the other side comes consultation of secondary sources. Because the data in the primary sources are quite raw, just like minerals found in nature, they require processing in order to be useful. This process in historical

research entails analytical and logical reasoning conducted by a selective, independent, and skeptical scholar, who ultimately shares their findings in peer reviewed publications.

As has been pointed out in the introduction, so far there has been no study directing its attention solely to the analysis of political rivalries of the fifth century Roman west. Still, the conduct of this research owes a great deal to those who took upon the task of writing about generals and emperors of the west. What follows is an attempt to show which secondary sources were most essential in my research.

Authored in 1983, John Michael O'Flynn's "Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire"[76] has not only made the word "generalissimo" persistent in late antique studies, but it is also an early study focusing particularly on the holders of the supreme command in the west. O'Flynn here does a very good job in showing how the *magistri* and their office reached its preeminent power broker status by tracing its development between the fourth century and until the perforation of the *occidens*. Rivalries between generalissimos naturally find mention but they are not as detailed as one would have hoped and sometimes many cases are omitted. The book was definitely not written with the aim of analyzing how generalissimos interacted with emperors and their peers. This cannot be a healthy critic of the work, however, for O'Flynn's focus is elsewhere, that is, in tracing the rise of the office itself.

Henning Dirk's "*Periclitans res publica*: Kaisertum und Eliten in der Krise des Weströmischen Reiches 454/5-493 n. Chr" (1999) tackles the period after Aetius' death in 454 and ends its study close to the dawn of the sixth century.[77] It is an important work with respect to the information and views it offers concerning Ricimer, Aegidius, Marcellinus of Dalmatia in particular, the three military individuals who left their trace in the third quarter of the fifth century west. The study treats political, military, and economic aspects of the western empire in separate chapters but as the title of the book implies, with heavy emphasis on the intrapersonal interaction of the age.

Penny MacGeorge's "Late Roman Warlords" (2002) is a work in the same vein which takes the generalissimos of the last decades of the Roman empire, a time period that saw them gradually turn into warlords, as the author claims.[78] The *magistri* Ricimer, Aegidius, and Marcellinus

[76] O'Flynn 1983.

[77] Dirk 1999.

[78] MacGeorge 2002. In this dissertation, whenever I opt to use the term warlord, I will specifically mean generals who functioned independently, dependent on their own resources, and without official imperial recognition.

have their own long chapters and therefore this book constitutes an invaluable source for anyone researching political rivalries these generals had with each other. Inquiries of both Dirk and MacGeorge leave much to be desired as to how those rivalries were born, endured, and ended, however.

While my research frequently turned to these three works for the period covering 454-472, Timo Stickler's "Aëtius: Gestaltungsspielräume eines Heermeisters im ausgehenden Weströmischen Reich" (2002) was fundamental in helping me to draw the dominant picture Aetius drew during his career (425-454).[79] Stickler's work is first and foremost about Aetius: the chapters dealing with his military campaigns, relationship with the Huns and Valentinian III, rivalries with Bonifatius and Sebastianus are where the work most shines but it is no less stellar a monograph when it comes to the treatment of the western empire in that period.

If Timo Stickler is a source that cannot be excluded from any study taking on that general, the same goes for Jeroen W.P. Wijnendaele. This scholar has lately especially been busy with the western commanders and their careers, offering novel hypotheses regarding the careers of those strongmen. His 2015 dated monograph "The Last of the Romans. Bonifatius, Warlord and *comes Africae*" highlights the life of the greatest rival of Aetius and is a work that shines in usefulness when it is used in accompany with Stickler's handling of Aetius.[80] But Wijnendaele is at his most original when he shares his fresh views about the rivalries of Gildo and Stilicho ("The Career and 'Revolt' of Gildo, *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam*", 2017), Heraclianus and Constantius ("The Manufacture of Heraclianus' Usurpation" 2017), and Aetius and Felix ("The early career of Aëtius and the murder of Felix", 2017).[81] While his first two articles plausibly and very attractively reach the conclusion that both Gildo's and Heraclianus' so-called revolts may have been originated from their fear of seeing another military individual other than themselves establishing his dominance in the west, his article on Aetius and Felix brilliantly examines their rivalry and convincingly traces the methods Aetius followed in Felix' downfall. It is a proud acknowledgment of this work's author that this article of Wijnendaele which inspired his analysis of the rivalry between Ricimer and Marcellinus of Dalmatia in 468.

[79] Stickler 2002.
[80] Wijnendaele 2015.
[81] Wijnendaele 2017a; 2017c; 2017d.

While these works played an undeniable role in helping me reconstruct the rivalries of the period, those rivalries required in the first place a background to play out, one which every researcher of the late western empire cannot ignore: the trend of child-emperors.

The infantilization of the imperial office, a phenomenon that began with the last soldier-emperor Valentinian I's death in 375, as this dissertation will shortly display, was the antecedent cause of the rivalries between generals that beset the west in its last century. These non-adult emperors have been lamented *ad nauseam* in much of the modern historiography ever since Edward Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in the 18th century to J. B. Bury's "A History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian" (1923).[82] Nor did they enjoy much popularity even in our age whether when treated by Alexander Demandt ("Geschichte der Spätantike", 1989) or Peter Heather ("The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians", 1999).[83] But although general histories of late antiquity such as these flirted with the idea that child-emperors' advent paved the way for generals' rise, no scholarly work until Meaghan McEvoy's research in the 2010s ("Rome and the Transformation of the Imperial Office in the Late fourth-mid-fifth centuries AD", 2010; "Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367-455", 2013) did such a thorough analysis of the effects of child-emperors on the western empire.[84] Her works, but especially her 2013 monograph, trace the development of child-emperors from Gratian to Valentinian III and how under those children the imperial office was turned into a ceremonial one, steering clear of the military duties of an emperor, due to their inexperience and age. She goes on to reveal how this development led to generals' assumption of the military mantle of soldier-emperors and with it, as control of violence paved the way for political dominance as well, the de facto control of the empire itself. This dissertation takes her argument as its foundation and lays upon it the political rivalries between generals.

McEvoy's conclusions, coupled with the theses of Mark Hebblewhite's "The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire, AD 235-395" (2016),[85] where he deals with the subject of soldier-emperor in the period encompassing rulers from Maximinus Thrax to Theodosius I, indirectly unveil the keys of power behind the age of generalissimos, which I have taken and

[82] Gibbon 1993; Bury 1923.
[83] Demandt 1989; Heather 2005.
[84] McEvoy 2010; 2013.
[85] Hebblewhite 2016.

applied to period in question here: the loyalty of the soldiery; capability of paying and awarding them; and willingness to display the skills and bravery of common soldiers in the heat of battle (*commilito*).

With warfare being a common occurrence in late antiquity, works on military history of the late empire were also frequently consulted. While the articles in the second volume of "The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare" (2007) supplied me with the elementary information such as of what the late Roman armies were composed, their numbers, what changes they underwent through, and how and why they were superseded by private armies of generals.[86] A.D. Lee's "War in Late Antiquity" (2007) was especially informative with respect to war making and its limits.[87] It also weighs in on the subject of child-emperors and generals' rise to dominance, themes he connects with each other. It is also a work that mentions a few types of elimination strategies rival generalissimos employed in getting rid of their enemies. As this is not his main subject, however, he does this only in passing and very briefly. However unsatisfactory their nature may be, an acknowledgement must be made here that I owe the *idée de base* of my categorizing the elimination types to this book.

Departing from studies dealing with specific themes towards those possessing a rather more general outlook of events, persons, and institutions, first comes A.H.M. Jones' "The later Roman Empire, 284-602" (1964).[88] Jones' study, though not recent, still successfully fulfills the role of a handbook for the late Roman empire. Its examination of political, military, and religious conditions of the empire in late antiquity is still almost unmatched. This magnificent lump of information comes with a disadvantage, however. The study depends to a great extent upon the textual material and therefore naturally suffers in some parts where our knowledge could be enhanced by our access to, for instance, archaeological findings. This deficiency of Jones' work was mended by consulting Simon Esmonde Cleary's "The Roman West, AD 200-500: An Archaeological Study" (2015), where the author presents the latest archaeological discoveries in accompany with the narrative history of the western empire and sheds a new perspective on several issues.[89] As an instance that interests us, the author documents the cessation of mints outside of Italy in the early fifth century, hence inferring, because the coins

[86] Sabin, van Wees and Whitby 2008.
[87] Lee 2007.
[88] Abbreviated as *LRE* throughout the dissertation.
[89] Cleary 2015.

issued from the imperial mints were distributed largely to the regular legions, their disappearance should have been equated with the disappearance of regular armies outside of Italy at the time. This archaeological information agrees with what we read in the primary sources, where we cannot help but see the western Romans depending more and more on barbarians to fight their wars on their behalf, say, for instance, in Spain against the Suebes, Alans, or Vandals, the three non-Roman peoples that invaded the province in the early fifth century.

Two special secondary sources need mention before concluding our review. One is the "Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire" which contains biographical information, depending on their availability in textual sources, on thousands of individuals living in the empire between 260-641, excluding those of who belonged to the clergy.[90] It can be treated as a sort of dictionary of therefore sort of a dictionary of contemporary persons. In my dissertation it served its purpose chiefly in my establishing which individuals likely belonged to which faction.

The last secondary source that needs mentioning is "The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity" (2018), a colossal work of incredible value, as it contains more than 5,000 entries about persons, places, terms, concepts, and ideas of the period stretching between 250-750 in the classical Mediterranean world.[91] The work proved itself most useful in my project when simple explanations of imperial posts were required. That each entry recommends a reading list for its subject has also been much useful in directing me to other sources for more information.

[90] Abbreviated as *PLRE* through the dissertation.
[91] Here abbreviated as *OLD*.

CHAPTER 1. THE ANATOMY OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

nam cum sint duo genera decertandi, unum per disceptationem, alterum per vim, cumque illud proprium sit hominis, hoc beluarum, confugiendum est ad posterius, si uti non licet superiore. (Cic. *Off.* 1.34)

As can be inferred from the quotation that cited from Cicero, violence had no place in his ideal civilized world. But the Romans often fell short of that ideal, especially on political stage.

It was through violence Rome had asserted its dominance on the Mediterranean basin. Again, it was through violence Sulla and Julius Caesar reached their political goals that left so great a mark in Roman history. Even the Catiline conspiracy, in the suppression of which Cicero a played a large role, could only be extinguished through violent methods.

It is the purpose of this chapter to anatomically examine violence, its theoretical and practical contrast within the Roman thought, and finally offer a late antique definition of it.

To achieve this, after briefly seeking out what violence is, I will move on to investigate how violence was regarded by Romans in political thought and law. This is essential to establish the Roman view of violence as an intrinsic trait not only of human nature and but also of politics. Once this is done, the birth and evolution of the office of the *magisterium militum* (the office of supreme general) and the honorific title *patricius* will be our next task, for the rivalries of the age revolved around the holders of these positions. Finally, I will propose a specially tailored definition for violence that occurred in political rivalries in the fifth-century western empire.

1.1. What is Violence?

An Etymological Answer

What is this violence we hear and read so much about? Is there even any difference between their violence and ours?

The origin of the word "violence" can be traced back to Latin *violentia*. Because the English word is rarely used in a positive way,[92] we already face the danger of being led to assume that the Latin word also carries purely a negative meaning.[93] It is exactly at this point we must be on our guard, because the Latin equivalent of the modern word is actually *vis*.

[92] Gibson 2018, 269.

[93] See specifically: Gibson 2018, 272 n. 20.

Vis is a neutral word,[94] the meaning of which is open to alterations with respect to the context it is used in. Its neutrality already hints to the possibility that violence in Roman political thought could be either a positive or a negative concept, that is, context dependent. *Violentia* and *vis*, therefore, are two distinct words. *Violentia* is loaded with less ambiguous meanings,[95] and thus can be used in limited contexts, mostly in a disapproving way.[96] *Vis*, in contrast, carries a large spectrum of connotations, which can be employed in contexts related to such as bodily strength, military force, nature, and political violence among many others.[97]

The difference between the two, however, is best displayed when we look at the context they are used in. While *violentia* appears to have found usage in describing acts that were considered shameful and evil by authors, *vis* seems to have been preferred for its subtlety. In Cicero's narration of the rivalry between Tiberius Gracchus and Scipio Nasica,[98] which ended in the former's death, his employment of the word *vis*,[99] reveals that the violent deed is seen by the author as something positive. That in the same place *vis* is put next to the military violence Scipio Africanus had exercised against the non-Romans further strengthens the argument to what extent *vis* was context dependent.[100] When we look at a context in which *vis*

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[94] Lintott 1968, 22-3.

[95] See *OLD* s.v. sects. 1 'The (unreasonable) use of force against others, violence [b] violence, aggressiveness, passionateness, etc., of disposition or mood. 2 Destructive or overwhelming force, violence (of natural agencies, etc.).'

[96] Gibson 2018, 272.

[97] Ibid. See: *OLD* s.v. sects. 1 'Physical strength exerted on an object (esp. in order to constrain), force, violence. [b] *vi*, *per vim* forcibly, by force. 2 [a] force used to obtain sexual gratification. 3 (leg) unlawful force or violence (distinguished by ancient jurists as *vis privata*, orig. primarily a civil offense, incl. active interference with a plaintiff's exercise of his rights as well as the use of physical force or threats against him, and *vis publica*, a criminal offense ranging from acts of public disorder to outrages by officials. 4 violence in politics, public life or sim. 5 violence directed against enemy troops, military force 7 energy or forcefulness of character, behaviour, determination etc., [c] (in bad sense) violence of character or conduct 8 (w. gen., usu w. *magnus* or sim. adj. of quantity) A large body or number (of persons, animals etc., often implying potential violence) 11 (of a person, office etc.) Ability to control affairs, political weight, power, influence, or sim. 13 (of laws, decisions, etc.) Binding force, authority [b] (of a will, covenant, etc.) legal efficacy, validity 16 a primary element or force, principle (in an organism) 17 That which makes a thing what it is, its essence; *sua ui*, in itself, intrinsically 19 Value, amount; *vim habere* (w. gen.), to be equivalent in amont (to) 24 Military strength, fighting power 25 (of persons) Power over others (in politics, etc.), control, influence; (also, of nations) [b] (of abst. things) power to influence events, actions, etc.; (also, astrol., or stars or sim.) [c] legal sufficiency, validity (of a will, title, etc.) 28 [a] Value, amount; (also, app.) capacity or volume (of a pipe) [b] meaning, significance (of words, etc.).'

[98] In 133 BCE, Gracchus and Nasica were champions of the plebs and the patricians in Rome, respectively, and became bitter enemies, due to the fact that the two groups had conflicting views regarding what was best for Rome and Romans. Eventually Gracchus was assassinated by Nasica's men.

[99] Cic. *Off.* 1.76: *nec plus Africanus, singularis et vir et imperator, in exscindenda Numantia rei publicae profuit quam eodem tempore P. Nasica privatus, cum Ti. Gracchum interemit; quamquam haec quidem res non solum ex domestica est ratione – attingit etiam bellicam, quoniam vi manuque confecta est – sed tamen id ipsum est gestum consilio urbano sine exercitu*. A discussion of this passage can be found in Gibson 2018, 276.

[100] Scipio Africanus was the celebrated Roman general who defeated the Carthaginian general Hannibal and brought Carthage to its knees in the Second Punic War, waged between 218-202 BCE.

carries a negative connotation, Suetonius may be of some assistance, in whose account Caesar is said to have cried out *ista quidem vis est* at the time he was about to be fatally stabbed in the senate (Suet. *Iul*. 82.1). Similarly, Tacitus also uses *vis* negatively when he treats Caesar's assassination,[101] once again proving the point that negativity and positivity of violence is context dependent.

But nowhere else its subtlety is more apparent than in Roman law. In the *Digesta*, the term is consecutively used in the legal phrase *vim vi repellere*, carrying both negative and positive connotations (*Dig*. 9.2.45.4).[102] It follows from these paradigms that, while *vis* was no doubt employed in occasions that had something to do with violence, the meaning it was supposed to convey across could either be positive or negative, which was ultimately up to the author and the narrative he chose to weave.[103]

Power and Violence: An Inexorable Link

At the root of the phrase "political violence" lies the forceful elimination of an individual or individuals considered either dangerous or as an obstacle to another's political agenda. Violence, the rawest manifestation of power (κράτος, *potentia*), tended to be a bloody business by its very nature. This power, to which this phenomenon owes its existence, has been described as an essential part of *conditio humana*, from which hardly any aspect of social relationships is left untouched.[104] Since we find the apogee of human interaction in antiquity in politics of the age, power necessarily assumed a significant role to play for those who desired to play a prominent role in governing the citizen-states[105] and empires of antiquity. Power, "the ability or capacity to do something", was essential to "direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events",[106] especially in politics.

That power, violence, and politics are intertwined can be seen even in the legendary story of Romulus' murder of his brother Remus, the story supposed to mark the beginning of the city of Rome. The story's endurance throughout antiquity is telling how politics and violence were

[101] Tac. *Hist.* 3.68.1: *repentina vis dictatorem Caesarem oppresserat*.
[102] Gibson 2018, 273-4.
[103] Gibson 2018, 284. Still, it should be mentioned that it sometimes appears to have been used on par with *violentia*, as has been noted by Gibson, at least in Tacitus' works. See: Gibson 2018, 279, 284.
[104] Popitz 1992, 11.
[105] The origin of the word "politics" can be traced back to Ancient Greek πόλις, which is usually translated as "city, city-state". But a more appropriate translation, it can be argued, would be "citizen-state", stressing the citizens' involvement in governance (Cartledge 2000, 11-22).
[106] From https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/power (accessed on March 29, 2019)

associates in Roman memory, perhaps also serving as a forewarning the extent to which even blood relatives could go to satiate their political ambitions.

In *Politik als Beruf* (1919), Max Weber's seminal work, this inseparable relationship between politics and power is systematically made and his findings can very well be applied to cases of all ages that bring politics and personal ambition and interests together. According to Weber, politicians wielding power, however limited that power may be, are prone to be seized by *Machtgefühl*,[107] being aware that their actions carry extraordinary weight.[108] This *Machtgefühl*, intoxicating by its very nature, can easily be the instigator that urges politicians to desire always more. They may then arrive to a point to satiate their wants not through legal means but through violence. Weber said these things with his contemporaries in mind, but as our analysis of political violence in late antique west will shortly reveal, his conclusion that political violence and power are not only linked both also universal and timeless,[109] perfectly applies to the context of my dissertation.

1.2. *Vim vi repellere*: Reception and Justification of Political Violence as Self-Help in Roman Political Thought and Law

Political violence at first look does not seem to have enjoyed a good reception in Roman political thought. Violent confrontations for the sake of political preeminence were detested because their occurrence was often to the detriment of Rome's stability. This negative picture of political violence will be drawn from the works of Cicero, Ambrose, and Augustine. Each lived in a period fraught with violence, especially that of political. Cicero is included, not only because he has a lot to say about how Roman politicians and generals functioned, but also because his views still mattered in late antiquity, if his enduring popularity at the time is of any indication. Ambrose was actively involved in imperial affairs in the late fourth century,

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[107] Which could be translated as "self-importance".

[108] "Nun, sie gewährt zunächst: Machtgefühl. Selbst in den formell bescheidenen Stellungen vermag den Berufspolitiker das Bewußtsein von Einfluß auf Menschen, von Teilnahme an der Macht über sie, vor allem aber: das Gefühl, einen Nervenstrang historisch wichtigen Geschehens mit in Händen zu halten, über den Alltag hinauszuheben." (Weber 1992, 226). Kant's argument against involving in politics deserves a honorable mention here. In *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (1795), although the word *Machtgefühl* was not coined yet, the concept is there as the primary reason philosophers should stay away from politics, for power in politics inevitably corrupts.

[109] From Hanna Arendt's "On Violence" (1970) to Isaac D. Balbus' "Governing Subjects: An Introduction to the Study of Politics" (2010), the connection of power and violence and their results on political level The statement, "All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence", made by the sociologist C. Wright Mills (1956, 171) is also telling.

interacted with names essential to our research, such as *Augusti* Valentinian II and Honorius, child-emperors in the west, and generalissimos such as Arbogast and Stilicho. Augustine frequently corresponded with the *comes Africae* Bonifatius, Aetius' rival and empress Placidia's champion. All, in one way or another, were close witnesses to violent political turmoils of their age, if not directly involved. As such, what they say about violence matters.

In Cicero, we read […] *vis abesto*. *Nihil est enim exitiosius civitatibus*, *nihil tam contrarium iuri ac legibus*, *nihil minus civile et inhumanius*, *quam composita et constituta re publica quicquam agi per vim* (Cic. *Leg*. 3.42). The same negativism echoes in his defense speech of Sestius: *atque inter hanc vitam perpolitam humanitate et illam immanem nihil tam interest quam ius atque vis*. Horum *utro uti nolumus, altero est utendum* (Cic. *Sest*. 92).[110] If we stopped reading here, Cicero and his views on violence could be easily put next to many other moralists. But that would be a great mistake. For his description of violence does not end there. He also describes it as *innata*, that is, as a fundamental human principle which he juxtaposes to pietas and religio. Violence is suddenly and perhaps shockingly for the modern reader put on the same pedestal together with concepts pregnant with positive connotations. By doing so, the unavoidability of violence is being made clear: *vindicationem*, *per quam vim et contumeliam defendendo aut ulciscendo propulsamus a nobis et a nostris*, *qui nobis esse cari debent*, *et per quam peccata punimur* (Cic. *Inv*. *Rhet*. 2.65). He makes the same concession also in *Pro Milone*, in which he argues that a person has a right to self-defense (Cic. *Mil*. 9-10).

Violence, then, for Cicero, though not befitting humans, should one believe their interests or survival are at stake, could be easily justified. Accordingly, violence was an auxiliary force that could be summoned to secure one's rights and safety when laws failed to do so.[111]

Fast forward four centuries later, did anything change? Christianity, which enjoyed strong imperial patronage and promotion from the time of Constantine I, has a lot to say on ethical behavior,[112] clemency (*clementia*) and mercy (*venia*) being two of its favorite themes. But these were not new concepts for Romans.[113] Add to this the fact that Christianity accommodated itself into the Roman world rather than causing a socio-cultural renewal within Roman society,

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[110] cf. Livy, 38.50.9: *qui ius aequum pati non possit, in eum vim haud iniustam esse*.

[111] For rationalization of violence in Cicero, see Cic. *Off*. 2.50.

[112] Epitomized in the Golden Rule read in Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, and Luke 10:27: "Love thy neighbor."

[113] See, for instance, Seneca's separate work *De clementia*, addressed to emperor Nero and Cicero in *Off*. 1.35: *et cum iis quos vi deviceris consulendum est, tum ii, qui armis positis ad imperatorum fidem confugient, quamvis murum aries percusserit, recipiendi*.

we are faced with a potential result of Christianity having played minimal role in changing the Roman attitude toward violence. It is true that in the early fourth century condemning criminals to fight for their lives in gladiatorial shows was banned by emperors (*Cod. Theod*. 15.12.1; Euseb. *Vit*. *Const*. 4.25) and the practice of crucifixions as corporal punishment was forbidden (Soz. *Hist. eccl*. 1.8.13), but non-Romans were still being condemned to fight for the fun of the audience in public games (Symm. *ep*. 2.46), wars were incessantly being fought, and people continued to be killed by other people, even by their family members and relatives, an act from which neither the first Christian emperor Constantine I nor his son Constantius II were exempt.[114]

Still, in writing at least, such Christian ideals were often promoted by prominent names such as Ambrose. His letters to emperor Theodosius I are fraught with the Judeo-Christian *exempla* of forgiveness.[115] The same rhetoric of mercy echoes in his other works. In *De Officiis*, titled after Cicero's work of the same name, he urges his readers not to resort to violence even when it would be the justified thing to do so. It may be argued at this point that Ambrose differs from Cicero in his approach to violence and this is due to Christianity. For indeed, Ambrose often reminds his readers that their goal is to imitate Christian God (Amb. *Off*. 1.11.38), the sole origin of merciful behavior (Amb. *Off*. 1.11.39). However, it would appear that Ambrose was also not one who could always turn the other cheek. For in a hypothetical scenario where one's neighbor is attacked, violence is recommended (Amb. *Off*. 1.36.179). Therefore, for all his stand against violence, he, too, must admit that violence is an intrinsic value of *conditio humana*. When we turn to Augustine's thoughts on the same subject, we find his stand much more resolute. According to him, violent acts should only be exercised by individuals who possess the legal means, that is, governors in public life and soldiers and generals on the battlefield, while waging a "just war".[116] Private persons are on no condition allowed to resort to it, even if their excuse was self-defense (August. *Ep.* 47.5). Moreover, he emphasizes that violence cannot be exercised for hateful purposes such as revenge and domination (August. *De civ. D*. 4.6).

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[114] Constantine I is associated with the murders of his eldest son Crispus and that of his second wife Fausta (Zos. 2.29; Zon. 13.2.38-41). After his own death in 337, in an attempt to assert his and his brothers' rule, Constantius II moved on to removing several members of the Constantine dynasty (Julian. *Letter to the Athenians* 273B; Zos. 2.40.2; Lib. *Or*. 18.31).

[115] Especially his letters numbered 61 and 62. For an analysis of these letters, see: Türel 2019.

[116] Clark 2006, 137-46.

But for all his seemingly uncompromising stand, Augustine too eventually concedes the point that violence is a necessary evil on earth, a curse of the human condition (August. *Ep.* 189.5-6; *De civ. D*. 4.15; 19.7).[117] In light of these views, it seems that we would not be far off, should we dare to infer that as in almost everything, violence too appears to have differed in practice than theory.

Self-Help

The invocation of self-help, as we have just seen, was a factor that justified the use of violence, should an individual have no other means of defending their being, especially in the face of violence that they could not avoid. In a world where police forces did not exist in the modern sense, resorting to violence for self-defense may make sense. When the safety of a person was at risk, help could come too little too late or not come at all. This possibility, therefore, must have rendered violence and self-help two recognized facts of daily life in antiquity.

The acceptance of self-help did not mean that in such cases laws fell silent and gave way to unadulterated violence. Laws, in fact, have a lot to say about it. Roman law, it can be argued, was born amidst violence[118] and self-help had been in constant company of violence in different epochs of Roman history.[119] Series of laws, entitled *lex Lutatia de vi*, *lex Plautia de vi*, *lex Pompeia de vi* and enacted in the late Republic in the 1st century BCE, where we first find the first clear arguments for its reception and function on a legal basis,[120] for it was an age where political violence was rampant, were the first series of statutes that try to define a limit to the usage of self-help[121] to keep it under the state's control. It suffices here to say that these laws and other similar ones did not exactly do a successful job in hindering neither further political violence nor the rise of soldier politicians such as Julius Caesar to unprecedented heights.

A better description of self-help is most conspicuously seen, however, in two separate sections of the *Digesta*:[122] The first reads as follows:

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[117] See the discussion in Atkins 2018, 184.

[118] Atkins 2018, 13.

[119] On the relationship between self-help and violence within the context of Roman history see best Lintott 1968, 22-34; Nippel 1995, 35-9; Harries 2004, 116-8.

[120] Lintott 1968, 30, 34.

[121] See *lex Lutatia de vi*, *lex Plautia de vi*, and *lex Pompeia de vi* in Berger 1953, 556-8.

[122] At this point, it should be noted that there were other laws that concerned with both private and public violence in Rome and were still in force in late antiquity. For instance, the range of the *leges Iuliae de vi* of Augustus was greater than all the previous laws *de vi*, compassing decrees against illegally collected crowds, forceful confiscation of goods, abuses of officials, poisoning, and treasons against the security of the public and the state (*Dig.* 48.4.1-11,

> *qui, cum aliter tueri se non possent, damni culpam dederint, innoxii sunt*: *vim enim vi defendere omnes leges omniaque iura permittunt*. *sed si defendendi mei causa lapidem in adversarium misero, sed non eum, sed praetereuntem percussero, tenebor lege Aquilia*: *illum enim solum qui vim infert ferire conceditur, et hoc, si tuendi dumtaxat, non etiam ulciscendi causa factum sit.* (*Dig*. 9.2.45.4)

The law is a striking testament to the admittance of self-help not only as an old Roman tradition by its reference back to *lex Aquilia* dating back to the 2nd century BCE but as a perfectly legal mean to protect one's own rights, with a line having been attempted to be drawn to limit the violence exercised for self-defense purposes only.

In the other example, in which a reference has been made to Cassius, a jurist from the 1st century CE, self-help is declared a natural right: *Vim vi repellere licere cassius scribit idque ius natura comparatur: apparet autem, inquit, ex eo arma armis repellere licere.* (*Dig*. 43.16.1.27). Together, according to these laws, to fight violence with violence, as long as the individual had no other options, that is, he did not act with a view to take revenge or harbored a similar passionate motive, and provided that he also drew a line to it, was recognized and approved. The obvious loophole of this was that anyone could claim that they were a helpless victim and that their sole purpose in resorting to violence was defending themselves, not ambition or the protection or fulfilment of their interests.

When the intrinsic trait of violence in human nature, its common place in Roman culture, and the acceptance of self-help as a perfectly natural excuse to exercise violence is added to the fact that the *magisterium militum* was never a legally defined post in Rome,[123] it becomes relatively easier to see why there were so many violent rivalries raged between the generals of late antiquity for preeminence. There was not an established way with regard to who would be the next first *magister militum*. Though appointments were made by emperors here and there, being products of their world and captives of their culture and concepts, violence was a perfect option for ambitious soldiers to acquire what they want. Generalissimos or warlords simply did not care about what laws said or whether Cicero or Ambrose thought and preached about

48.6.1-12 and 48.7.1-8). The *lex Iulia maiestatis* (*Dig*. 48.4.1.1) charged anyone who bore arms against the state with treason. The act of *perduellio* (treason), which was later assimilated into the *crimen maiestatis* in the Later Empire (Berger 1953, 626) also decrees the same (*Dig*. 48.4.11), and moreover, protects all imperial magistrates against violence (*Dig*. 48.4.1.1: *Maiestatis autem crimen illud est* […] *quo quis magistratus populi romani quive imperium potestatemve habet occidatur*.).

[123] Wijnendaele 2017, 434.

violence. For them, violence was the only currency they could exchange for political dominance.

Self-help (*Selbsthilfe*) was therefore simply a Roman tradition. Gale and Scourfield observe that "categories of violent act prohibited by law will self-evidently be those that are socially disapproved, while those that are positively regarded remain beyond the scope of such legal sanctions."[124] But still in essence it was "the right to employ armed force and kill in certain circumstances",[125] and therefore a most dangerous tradition, one which was securely imbedded in Roman character, hence, a part of their nature.

1.3. Linking Political Violence to the *magisterium militum* and Patriciate

Now that we have established the significant place violence occupied in antiquity and ended our discussion of it by slowly incorporating the late antique generalissimos into that violent world, we must now necessarily shift our focus to the office itself, together with the other ranks and titles the *magistri militum* held, for, since the departure point of many violent turmoils in the west was the office generalissimos officially held, answers that may prove satisfactory with respect to its having become the goal of those soldiers' desire can be found in its birth, development, and hence nature.

It is an undeniable fact of late antique history that political violence frequently involved the holders of the post of *magister militum*. Almost a hundred-year-long period between 375-472 witnessed a plethora of violent confrontations and a great number of them can be linked, one way or another, to the *magistri militum*. What made this post so special that men were ready to die for it even if that meant going to a civil war?

The military rank of the *magister militum* was created by Constantine I after 324 (Zos. 2.33.3). His goal was to eliminate the praetorian prefects' rights to command armies,[126] who also had been in command of the famous praetorian guard, since history showed him that, having accumulated so much power in their hands, which ultimately rested upon armed forces, they could pose a threat even to emperors. Recently he had experienced an example of this, when his rival emperor Maxentius was acclaimed emperor in Rome by the praetorian guard and its

[124] Gale and Scourfield 2018, 11.
[125] Gale and Scourfield 2018, 11.
[126] Elton 2007, 307.

prefect, against whom he would have to fight for the control of the west in 312.[127] To eliminate the possibility that these *magistri* might turn into just as much powerful figures he therefore created two of them.[128] Now there was a *magister peditum* (master of infantry) and a *magister equitum* (master of cavalry) with equal powers and unlike their names would suggest, with armies composed of both infantry and cavalry.[129] Just like Diocletian's tetrarchy (rule of four emperors), perhaps Constantine I had thought that his creation was supposed to keep the balance within the military and prevent the emergence of any too ambitious figures who could cause trouble. Historical developments would prove Constantine I's strategy of balance a failure just as it had proved that of Diocletian.

Under Gratian (367-383) and Valentinian II (375-392) there were still two *magistri*, but the infantilization of the imperial office under these emperors[130] led to the birth of dominant figures in the form of a first *magister militum (*or *magister militum praesentalis*), who had the age, experience, and skills to command the armies and to hold the monopoly on violence in their grasp.[131] Already under Gratian his *magister peditum* Merobaudes (375-388) had openly demonstrated disposition to become the unrivalled first general in the west. This trend he had started was picked up by his successors Bauto (380-385) and Arbogastes (388-394) who continued to take full advantage of child-emperors' passivity. It was in these Frank generals' lifetime the *magisterium militum* began to lose its dual nature which was supposed to create balance among military power brokers and during Stilicho' regime it completely gained a hierarchical structure with one magister being dominant not only over other military commanders but also other *magistri*.

This first magister militum was now *the* supreme commander, the decision maker of all things related to military affairs. He commanded the loyalty of troops,[132] with whom he campaigned and fought. This counted all the more important as child emperors were by nature *Palastkaiser*, having neither experience nor skill to offer to the troops.

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[127] On the office of the praetorian prefect, see Jones, *LRE* 101-3; 353; 370-3; 587-92.

[128] O'Flynn 1983, 5. In the east the number of the *magistri* would gradually increase to five, two of them being *prasentales* (lit. present, meaning they held seniority over the others), commanding the elite palatine troops and, at least in theory, were supposed to attend emperor on his campaign (O'Flynn 1983, 17-8). How the east was mostly able to exercise a functioning balance policy among its numerous generals, see Jones, *LRE* 342-3.

[129] O'Flynn 1983, 5.

[130] McEvoy 2013, 324.

[131] Elton 2007, 308.

[132] Jones, *LRE* 342.

The possession of a loyal group of armed followers was the basis of these generals' power. Subsidiary military commands such as *comites rei militaris* (counts of military matters) and *duces* (dukes), fell under their jurisdiction.[133] In short, the first *magistri* enjoyed total dominance in military matters and in the militaristic world of fourth and fifth centuries nothing could be counted more significant.

What the *rheinfrankische* generalissimos appeared to have introduced was yet to be an enduring trend. The period between 374-394 had seen the rise of a single *magister militum* as the dominant person in the west, but for it to continue one prerequisite would have to be fulfilled, that is, the continuing occupation of the imperial office by a child or another individual just as passive, almost in the manner of a puppet. Return of soldier emperors like Constantine I or Valentinian I could have reversed everything.

Fortunately for generals, the era of soldier-emperors in the west was over. With a couple of exceptions after the middle of the fifth century, the imperial office would find no occupants who could take independent decisions and even then their independence would prove illusionary.

The watershed event that paved the way for this change to be permanent occurred at the end of the fourth century. Shortly before his death in January 395, emperor Theodosius I divided the empire in two halves between his two young sons, allotting the western portion of the empire to his 11-year-old Honorius, with the *magister militum* Stilicho having been appointed his guardian (*tutela*).[134] According to Roman law, guardianship would cease once a young Roman celebrated his fourteenth birthday.[135] But as long as a person was younger than 25 years of age, he was considered minor.[136] As such, a legal loophole was also there, had Stilicho wished to take advantage of it.

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[133] The *comites rei militaris* (sg. *comes rei militaris*) would command smaller field armies, whereas *duces* (sg. *dux*) would be responsible for frontier forces (Elton 2007, 274-5). In the fourth century the first *magister militum* was usually styled either as the *magister peditum* or *magister equitum*, or *magister militum praesentalis*; in the fifth the stylization was usually the [*comes et*] *magister utriusque militiae praesentalis* (MacGeorge 2002, 5). As such, the *magister utriusque militiae*, *magister utriusque militiae et patricius*, *magister peditum*, *magister peditum et equitum*, *comes et magister utriusque militiae*, all express the first *magister militum*. Ultimately all these define the dominant generallissimo in the west. From this point onwards I am going to apply the adjective *first* to the preeminent *magister militum* in the west, whenever it is necessary to point out so as to prevent a confusion with other *magistri militum*.

[134] On guardianship, see: Kaser 1971, 85ff, 277f, and 352ff.

[135] Alan Cameron 1969, 277.

[136] Pharr 1952, 578, 588, 598.

It is not befitting a modern historian to judge such actions of the past with the benefit of hindsight, but Theodosius I, it may be argued, gave the west another Valentinian II and Arbogastes in the form of Honorius and Stilicho. For by attaching Stilicho to his son as his *tutela*, he approved the seniority of this commander in the west. A side-effect of this decision would be the gradual merging of the two *magistri*, the *magister peditum* and *equitum*, in the hands of one person that is Stilicho,[137] thus triggering a great evolution in the nature of the post of the *magisterium militum*.

This evolution can be traced in the ranks and titles used by that post. Stilicho's guardianship was displayed in his adoption of the title *parens principum* (the father of the emperors).[138] *Parens*, meaning father or parent besides other terms that are connected to familiar matters, was of course not used in its real sense, meaning, Stilicho did not become Honorius' stepfather, so it did not bring Stilicho any legal benefits *paterfamilias* would have enjoyed over his family members throughout antiquity.[139] It was rather adopted to underlie Stilicho's relationship with emperor, perhaps to enhance his *tutela* status. Regardless, being called *parens* of a reigning emperor in ancient world, in which *patria potestas* (fatherly power) held a long traditional and powerful place in familiar relationships, was liable to summon the relationship of a powerful father-obeying son, and it stands within reason that a man like Stilicho would have welcomed such associations, so long as it served his interests.

After Stilicho's death in 408 the title was not dropped from usage altogether but eclipsed by *patricius* (patrician), an ancient title revived by Constantine I.[140] Originally an honorific title, following its adoption by general Constantius in 415/416 (Prosp. s.a. 415, 419; Hyd. s.a. 416; *Cod. Theod.* 15.14.14) *patricius* would be the go-to title of all *magistri militum* who wished to emphasize their seniority in the west.[141]

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[137] O'Flynn 1983, 16. In the records there are still individuals who are ranked as the *magistri peditum* or *equitum*, but in the presence of Stilicho or any other general like him, they would be subordinate generals (O'Flynn 1983, 20).
[138] O'Flynn 1983, 16.
[139] On the concept of *paterfamilias* in late antiquity, see: Arjava 1998.
[140] Jones *LRE*, 105; MacGeorge 2002, 5. On the usage of the patriciate in the west, see: Baynes 1922, 227; Barnes 1975, 155-69; Demandt 1970, 631; O'Flynn 1983, 65-7, 85-7; Barnwell 1992, 43-7.
[141] O'Flynn 1983, 66 n. 13.

Unlike *parens*, there could sometimes be other several *patricii*,[142] but it was the *magister militum et patricius* who was *the* patrician, *the* supreme commander.[143] After Constantius the title was so inexorably linked to the first *magister militum*, that contemporary records sometimes saw it sufficient to imply him by merely naming him as the *parens patriciusque noster* (*Nov. Val*. 36), as for example when the government meant Flavius Aetius.

Magistri militum enjoyed consulships as well, which added to their prestige and influence,[144] but no other title were so much pregnant with connotations of a special relationship with emperor. It was this privilege that made a *magister militum* the first in command and separated him from others.[145] Simply being called a *magister militum* might not hint to one's superiority. He also needed to be called the patrician.

On the one hand, the patriciate emphasized the special relationship they enjoyed with the occupant of the imperial office, on the other, being the first *magister militum* formed the basis of their command in military matters. Having accumulated so much power and influence in their hands, naturally they became involved in civil matters. Constantius took active role in 'papal elections' in 415; Aetius gathered support for the primacy of the Roman church in 445; again, Aetius nominated the praetorian prefect of Italy; settled barbarians on Roman soil in the 440s to his own liking. Military matters were no longer the limits of their position.[146]

The military, however, was the source from which *magistri* drew their power. It was the potential threat their loyal armed followers constituted which enabled them to act with such freedom, not the honorific titles and ranks they collected. But because the patriciate came to be linked with this post, together with the *magisterium militum*, it came to be the first target of each and every ambitious commander to obtain an official status, if they hoped to acquire their share of privilege, power, and wealth.

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[142] Barnes 1975; O'Flynn 1983, 85. As MacGeorge laconically states (2002, 6): "Others might hold the title of *patricius* but they were not *the* Patrician." Especially civil patricians can be attested in sources and their *patricius* title must demonstrate their influence at the court (O'Flynn 1983, 65), though definitely of lesser prestige than the patriciate the first *magister* held. Of course, one should note that if another individual of military rank was granted the patriciate while there was already one, a rivalry would usually follow, historical examples of which we will treat below.

[143] Jones *LRE*, 176; O'Flynn 1983, 78.

[144] MacGeorge 2002, 5.

[145] O'Flynn 1983, 23.

[146] On the discussion of civil matters being gradually undertaken by generalissimos, see: Jones *LRE*, 85, 343-4.

Having established these points, to keep the promise I made in the very beginning, now it is time to offer a specifically tailored definition for the nature of political violence in the late antique west by rounding up what we have learned so far.

Political violence we treat here is a type of violence that had its roots in the preeminence of the rank of the *magister militum* and the honorific title of *patricius*, which took their ultimate shape at the hands of Stilicho and Constantius, who finalized the process already well under way during the ascendancy of the *rheinfrankische* generalissimos.

Being the *magister militum* and *patricius* meant being the preeminent power broker, decision maker in the late antique west. Holders of these not only did lead the western empire's campaigns, but also were involved in civil affairs, filled governments with their favorites, appointed their subordinates, settled barbarians. They were *de facto* rulers of the west, in appearance partners with emperors, but in reality, their masters.

As such there was no shortage of other generals who desired to enjoy the same dominance, and this was the reason for many violent rivalries. A *magister militum* became an enemy of a *magister militum*, a *comes* broke off with a *magister militum*. Sometimes one side was eliminated without bloodshed through cashiering or exile. But assassinations, murders, and civil wars were constant. Since ruling the empire was at stake, emperors were involved too, and other officials of the palace. The implication or threat of violence was everything: those who backed up their threats with actual violence, usually won the day. And the favorite weapon of choice to exercise that violence was their armed followers, soldiers belonging to imperial regiments, barbarians, private bodyguards.

Political violence for the fifth century west was, consequently, a deadly game, in which every move was made with the intention of either seizing or controlling the *magisterium militum* and patriciate, played in an empire that simultaneously and incessantly had to deal with barbarians, lost lands and revenues.

CHAPTER 2. POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE FIFTH-CENTURY WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

2.1. Introduction

An Overview of the Events that Occurred in the West from Honorius to Anthemius (395-472)

The cases of political violence this study investigates took place in the western part of the Roman empire in late antiquity. When dealing with a historical phenomenon, we necessarily, if indirectly, also deal with the period that phenomenon originates from. This is especially true when the subject matter such as ours falls within the political realm. Our next task, then, is to go over that world as concisely as possible to supply readers with a picture of the period, which shall form the historical background of political violence cases we soon examine.

Theodosius I (r. 378-395) was the last Roman emperor who ruled as a sole emperor over the two halves of the empire stretching from the River Tyne to the Tigris, from the Lower Danube to the Sebou. At his death in 395, the empire was parted in two halves: as though cut with a knife, Sirmium (modern Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia) roughly marked the limits of the western empire and the start of the eastern empire.

Ruled from this point onward always by two rulers, the empire was nevertheless still a single entity. For most of the fourth century, if the picture drawn by contemporaries such as Ammianus Marcellinus is to be believed, the empire was strong as ever. It was still unrivalled in the Mediterranean, which was still a Roman lake, *mare nostrum*, offering no access to outsiders. It was, in a way, still the empire of Augustus and at the same time unmistakably a late antique one after going through the military and administrative reforms of emperors Diocletian (r. 284-305) and Constantine I (r. 306-337) in the late third and early fourth centuries that irrevocably altered the fabric of the empire. Their greatest legacy, however, was perhaps their active involvement in religious matters, with Diocletian paving the way with his close attention to the traditional pantheon of Rome and Constantine I displaying almost the same level of zeal but for the god of Christians.

For all these changes, under the reigns of Constantius II (r. 337-361), Julian (r. 361-363), Jovian (r. 364), Valentinian I (r. 364-375) and Valens (r. 364-378), Rome was arguably still at its apogee. Punitive campaigns against the barbarians were still the norm in the west, whereas in the east the traditional enemy Persia under the Sassanid dynasty was ever challenging. Civil wars, as always, caused the greatest harm, which continued to occur very frequently. But even the

eastern legions' catastrophic defeat in the face of the Goths at Adrianople in 378 was a momentary setback from which the eastern empire would recover.

Indeed, the east with its capital city Constantinople would not only recover but also flourish and survive until the 15th century. But a different fate awaited the *pars occidens*. After Valentinian I's death in 375 emperors Gratian (r. 375-383) and Valentinian II (r. 375-392) proved ineffectual at the helm of the imperial office due to their inexperience and young age. Luckily for the empire, their generals continued to fight successful wars in their names, though the problem of civil war persisted. So much so, Valentinian II's general having incurred the wrath of the eastern emperor Theodosius I, suffered a great defeat at the Battle of Frigidus River in 394 together with the emperor he elevated named Eugenius (r. 392-394). The west had already lost another civil war in 388 against the same emperor. Such losses in a short space of time especially hit the west hard in terms of men, material, and money.

Theodosius I survived his latest victory only for a little while. His son Honorius (r. 393-423) now controlled the west, though the son was apparently under the influence of his supreme general Stilicho. Tensions with Constantinople were high in this period due to Stilicho's desire to exert the same level of influence over the eastern emperor Arcadius. There was also the Gothic problem between the two halves of the empire, a legacy of Adrianople. These Goths, recently served under Theodosius I under their leader Alaric, now wished for a settlement within the Roman territory. Their search brought them to Rome to discuss the issue with Honorius' representatives. Talks were held but were unfruitful. Alaric and his Goths sacked the city of Rome in 410, which was echoed throughout the Mediterranean as Jerome's letters and Augustine's *De civitate dei* attest.

This event occurred four years after groups of barbarians entered Gaul by crossing the Rhine. The Vandals, Suebes, and Alans for a time wandered in Gaul and passed over to Spain in 409. Around the same time a general in Britain declared himself Augustus and a new series of civil wars began. Neither Stilicho nor his immediate successors were able to control what was going on. Time and distance were indeed proving themselves the enemy.[147]

Only with the advent of general Constantius the west recovered to some degree from these turmoils. The Gothic problem was for the moment was solved for the moment by their settlement in Gaul in 416/7 in return for which they promised to give military aid. It was thanks

[147] Brown 1971, 36.

to this agreement the barbarians now roaming in Spain were somewhat checked. The same general subdued the usurpers and returned the control of the west again back to Honorius. But in the process Britain had been lost to the empire for good, stripping the imperial treasure from another of its sources.

There was, however, a stability under Constantius' regime, who moved on to be elevated as co-*Augustus* in 421. His reign as emperor lasted only several months and Honorius once again became the sole emperor in the west. When he died in 423, another civil war followed for the imperial office, only to end after the eastern emperor Theodosius II (r. 408-450) sent an army to the west to defeat the usurper, heaping one further onus upon the shoulders of the exhausted west.

The new emperor Valentinian III's reign (425-455) can be characterized as being another child-emperor under the influence of others, namely, generals. Under his reign, it was Flavius Aetius who now held the preeminent position in the west. The general was especially active in Gaul, bringing home laurels of victory from his campaigns against the Goths and Franks. No usurpers were attested in this period, but now generals were bickering with each other to hold the supreme position. A civil war was even fought for it in 432 between Aetius and another general, changing the nature of civil wars in the west forever. More catastrophically for the west, Carthage and parts of North Africa were lost to the Vandals in 439, who had entered the region in 429 after leaving Spain. The loss of Carthage broke the tax spine of the west, if we are to use Wickham's apt saying.[148] From 439 onwards, therefore, the main foreign policy of the west was aimed at recovering this loss. Attempts were made in 440-1 and 468 with the eastern forces taking the lead, but until Justinian's *reconquista* in the sixth century, North Africa remained in Vandal hands.

With the loss of revenues coming from Carthage added to those of Britain, parts of northern Gaul, and Spain, the capabilities of western empire in the 450s were seriously limited more than ever. It is no accident that around this time the west came to depend more and more on irregular formations and barbarian allies to fight its wars. One such war took place in 451 when Attila and his Huns attacked Gaul. Aetius was able to bring together a coalition of forces that stopped Attila's rampage in the region. Though when northern Italy was invaded the next year by the same king of the Huns, Rome was left to its own devices and offered no stand

[148] Wickham 2005, 709.

against the approaching enemy army. However, a combination of military and political factors appears to have forced Attila to give up his Italian campaign and return home.

After Valentinian III's death, Rome was sacked again, this time by the Vandals in 455 during the brief reign of a former senator Petronius Maximus (r. 455). The reign of emperor Avitus (r. 455-456) after him was too short to offer any substantial remedy, for it was abruptly ended by two generals named Majorian (r. 456-461) and Ricimer. The duo ruled the west together as emperor and his supreme general, respectively, until the former's murder at the hands of Ricimer in 461, who found Majorian too independent for his liking, as the emperor's planned African expedition which left Ricimer out of it.

The period between 461-472 saw Ricimer orchestrating almost every decision of the empire. His puppet emperor Libius Severus (r. 461-465) was a non-entity. So much so, after his death in 465, Ricimer did not see any reason to elect another emperor and ruled the west as its supreme general. Only when in 467 the eastern emperor Leo I sent Anthemius (r. 467-472) as his nominee the west had another *Augustus.* Anthemius' reign, sponsored and materially aided by the east promised much, but as soon as the great African expedition failed in 468, Anthemius quicky became a *persona non grata* in the west. With the northern Italian nobility and surviving elements of the army and his private soldiers following Ricimer, the generalissimo waged a civil war against Anthemius, which ended with the latter's death, shortly followed by the former's death of natural causes. 472, therefore, can be defined as a watershed year in which every protagonist died, leaving the stage for new actors. After this date, the western empire would have its own emperors and generalissimos only for a little while longer before going out with a whimper, but this is a story that does not concern our investigation here, which starts with the coming of child-emperors and ascendancy of generals.

2.2. A Change of Pattern: The End of Soldier-Emperors

The last soldier-emperor in the west, Valentinian I, had firsthand experience of how crucial it was for an emperor to display and act like one. His military experience was the deciding factor in him being chosen the next emperor after Jovian's death in 364, though the late emperor had also at least one living relative with military experience[149] and choosing that individual would

[149] Jovian's relative's name was Januarius, proposed as his successor at first (Amm. 26.1.4-5). He had gained military experience during his time as the *magister militum per Illyricum* or *comes rei militaris*. See *PLRE* I, Ianuarius 5. Though

also have been in line with dynastic concerns.[150] The fourth-century empire had to often deal with barbarian incursions and punitive expeditions were required to ensure the continuity of Roman hegemony in the *barbaricum*. In this world, Valentinian was a perfect candidate for the empire's current military needs, having proven his military prowess.[151] He knew, therefore, that the same criteria for the imperial office would be applied to his sons. The late Roman empire first needed a warrior emperor, then an administrator.

The symptoms of this expectation can be traced back to Maximinus Thrax' reign (r. 235-238). As Hebblewhite's study on the relationship between Roman emperor and soldiers reveals, in the third century the balance of emperors' responsibilities changed heavily in favor of the fulfillment of the role of an active *imperator* (a worthy general).[152] A fourth-century source tells us that Thrax owed his imperial office to his military merits (*Eutrop*. 9.1).[153] This necessary quality, which was born amidst the military emergencies of the third century, was quickly recognized by the senate, which followed suit by raising its own "Military First" type emperor Pupienus (r. 238) (*Hist. Aug. Max*. 2.7) against Thrax (after their brief failed experiments with Gordian I (r. 238) and Gordian II (r. 238). Starting with these series of emperors, a long and often dizzying line of soldier-emperors reigned, co-reigned or usurped imperial power in different parts of the empire until 375. The common point they all shared was their prior military experience and competence. Former praetorian prefect and later emperor Philip's (r. 244-249) rival Decius (r. 249-251) is noted to have attained the purple thanks to his *militiae gradus* (military position, rank) (Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 29.1) and because he was *in armis promptissimus* (most eager in war) (*Epit*. *Caes*. 29.2; cf. Zos. 1.21.3); Ingenuus is said to have owed his reign (r. 260), however brief, to the active energy he demonstrated in fighting (Hist. Aug. *Tyr. Trig*. 9.1-

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Januarius' was checking all the boxes as a perfect candidate for the imperial office, it is not exactly clear why Valentinian I was eventually chosen and not him. Nevertheless, that the council was looking for an experienced candidate and not a figure for the continuity of a dynasty, can especially also be seen in the fact that they altogether overlooked Jovian's son Varronianus, at the time an infant, the appointment of whom would have secured the continuation of Jovian's dynasty but fallen short of the ideal soldier-emperor expectations of the age and circumstances.

[150] It should be noted that in the Roman empire the imperial office was never legally hereditary, legitimacy often came with or after victories on the battlefield, which were accepted as a sign of divine favour. McEvoy 2013, 40 calls this *post eventum* legitimacy: "Put together, it appears that there were three basic criteria for legitimacy which an emperor needed to fulfil: first, the manner of his election; secondly, for his reign to succeed, which thus confirmed its divine sanction; and thirdly, what the *post eventum* verdict on the regime was, itself based largely on the two prior criteria."

[151] Hebblewhite 2017, 21. For Valentinian I's military pedigree, see *PLRE* I, Valentinianus 7.

[152] Hebblewhite 2017, 8.

[153] Even though we should be cautious in taking the views of a 4th century historian for the events that happened more than a century ago, his views nevertheless may reflect the expectations of some in his own day.

3); Claudius Gothicus (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 34-1) (r. 268-270), Aurelian (Hist. Aug. *Aurel.* 16.5; 37.5-7) (r. 270-275), *alter Hannibal* (other Hannibal) Probus (Aur. *Vict. Caes*. 37.1-2) (r. 276-282), and Diocletian (Zon. 12.30) himself (r. 284-305) are all said to have owed their elevations to their military capabilities. Whenever child-emperors or non-warlike emperors happened to find an opportunity to rule amidst such emperors, they were found inadequate and criticized.[154] In many cases, their military incompetence led to their downfall.[155] Hence Valentinian I must have started to groom Gratian as a soldier-emperor as early as 367, when the latter was merely 8 years old,[156] as the coins from the era attest.[157] For all his father's wishes and attempts, Gratian was not destined to be a soldier-emperor. According to the anonymous writer of the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (47.4-6) and Zosimus (4.35.2-3), Gratian's inclination for education and learning was to blame.[158]

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[154] This theme is recurrent in Herodian's account of Severus Alexander (r. 222-235), who became the sole emperor at the age of 14. That Postumus (r. 260-269) was hailed as emperor in Gaul, although the legitimate emperor Gallienus' (r. 253-268) 18-year-old son Saloninus had already been in the province as *Caesar* to represent his father's authority, should also be indicative of the contemporaries' concerns. Obviously Postumus, recently victorious against the Franks, was regarded a better choice in current circumstances, for which an experienced soldier with *ingens virtus* (great courage) (Eutrop. 9.9; Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 33.8) would be a better choice than a ceremonial representative (Hebblewhite 2017, 11). For Postumus, see *PLRE* I, Postumus 2.

[155] It is telling that after the warlike emperor Constantine I died in 337 and left the empire in the hands of his three children, whenever the new emperors showed signs of military incompetence, their authority was challenged. Constans' military failings made him unpopular with the soldiery (Eutrop. 10.9) and resulted in the usurpation of Magnentius against him in 350.

[156] In a speech before the army in the same year, when the emperor was seeking the blessings of the army to declare Gratian as his partner in the imperial office, he spoke of his martial abilities or rather lack thereof, in the following manner: *Gratianum hunc meum adultum, quem diu versatum inter liberos vestros commune diligitis pignus, undique muniendae tranquillitatis publicae causa in augustum sumere conmilitium paro, si propitia caelestis numinis vestraeque maiestatis voluntas parentis amorem iuverit praeeuntem: non rigido cultu ab incunabulis ipsis ut nos educatum, nec tolerantia rerum coalitum asperarum, nec capacem adhuc Martii pulveris, ut videtis, sed familiae suae laudibus maiorumque factis praestantibus concinentem, potioribus — invidiae metu dicitur — protinus surrecturum, ut enim mihi videri solet, mores eius et adpetitus licet nondum maturos saepe pensanti.* (Amm. 27.6.8). Then the emperor went into details as to what kind of a soldier-emperor Gratian would be when the time comes: [...] *in pulchra facinora procursabit signis militaribus et aquilis adhaesurus: solem nivesque et pruinas et sitim perferet et vigilias: castris, si necessitas adegerit aliquotiens, propugnabit: salutem pro periculorum sociis obiectabit: et quod pietatis summum primumque [munus] est, rem publicam ut domum paternam diligere poterit et avitam*. (Amm. 27.6.9). Treating well-known classical military *topoi* such as enduring cold and heat, the army, having heard what they wanted to hear, is reported to have met this speech with joy and approved the elevation of the young boy.

[157] This is explicitly clear when we consider the coins of the era, perhaps the greatest and most easily available tool for the Roman emperors to convey their messages. Numismatic evidence from Gratian's reign shows how he wished to be perceived by the soldiery. Gratian's coins are fraught with military imagery: spears, shields, and helmets (*RIC* 9, 313-4; for Valentinian II's imagery see the page 315). The fact that his coins depicted such iconography frequently, far more than we come across in his father's (Valentinian's martial capabilities were well known and would not have required as much reminder, says Hebblewhite 2017, 49), may be accepted as an indication of the young prince's attempts to compensate his shortcomings in military matters.

[158] With their comment they appear to have cut the rope instead of untying it. Why such a reason was credited to Gratian's military incompetence by these two authors can be perhaps ascertained from the emperor's well-known close relationship with Ausonius (*PLRE* I, Ausonius 7). The Gallic teacher of rhetoric had been appointed as tutor by Valentinian I for his son in 367. He was a prolific writer and reaped the benefits of his proximity to Gratian, who

Interestingly, Gratian appears to have appreciated the importance of military matters well enough after becoming the senior *Augustus*. He had chosen experienced leaders for the job when he had to, as his elevation of rugged Theodosius I as co-emperor while the east found itself in a military crisis after Valens' sudden death near Adrianople in 378 suggests.[159] He was also aware of the importance of keeping soldiers loyal to himself, at least partly, as his relationship with the Alan troops shows.[160] In the light of this evidence, Gratian does not seem to have been neglectful of the empire's military exigencies. Instead, I suggest that, should the sentiments of the *Epitome de Caesaribus* and Zosimus amount to something, that would be taken as contemporary view of which imperial business should have had the top priority.[161] In the eyes of late fourth and fifth century authors, who wrote after the military disasters of Adrianople in 378 and were either contemporary or near contemporary to other military failures in the west in the fifth century, business of war should indeed come at the top of the list of Roman emperors' businesses and an innocent side interest or lack of proof of active leadership on the battlefield as in Gratian's case would justify criticism.

Moreover, Gratian seems to have been more than ready to have his own military record and apparently was willing to share the pains of battle with his soldiers (that is, performing the virtue of *commilito*). In 378, a group of barbarians called in the sources the Lentienses having taken advantage of the weakened Roman defenses, which had been sent to assist Valens against the Goths, attacked the Roman territory and suffered a major defeat at the hands of Gratian's generals, in which they also lost their king.[162] The young emperor, who was also marching toward the east to assist his uncle, hearing about this victory, paused his march, made a left turn and attacked what remained of the Alamannic tribe.[163] For, we are told, he *delere statvit malefidam et tvrbarvm avidam gentem* (Amm 31.10.11). Such a victory would have greatly added some truth to his propagandistic military image. Ammianus says he took active

awarded him with several distinguished offices, including the consulship of 379. Yet Gratian's love for learning can hardly make a strong argument to explain his failure in fulfilment of the soldier-emperor role. Clearly such intellectual pursuits had not prevented emperors, among them Marcus Aurelius and Julian, in the past from becoming successful soldiers.

[159] Theodosius I had proven his military prowess in defeating bands of barbarians in the region in the aftermath of Valens' defeat (*Epit. Caes*. 47.6; Theod. *Hist. eccl*. 5.6; Zon. 13.17). For Theodosius I's military pedigree prior to his elevation, see *PLRE I,* Theodosius.

[160] Zos. 4.35.2. Gratian did this by neglecting the Roman soldiers who would have faithfully served his father.

[161] Zosimus' view is regarded as contemporary here, for he drew from contemporary authors such as Olympiodorus to create his history, as we have pointed out in the literature review.

[162] For Ammianus' narrative of the campaign, see Amm. 31.10.

[163] The Alamanni of the fourth century consisted of several groups, Lentienses being one of them.

part in the fighting together with *antesignani*[164] in this stage of the war (31.10.13), which ultimately resulted in the surrender of the enemy. For the energy Gratian demonstrated in this campaign the soldier-historian has only good things to say:

> *Hanc victoriam, opportunam et fructuosam, quae gentes hebetauit occiduas, sempiterni numinis nutu, Gratianus incredibile dictu est, quo quantoque vigore exserta celeritate aliorsum properans expedivit: praeclarae indolis adulescens, facundus et moderatus et* ***bellicosus*** [emphasis mine] *et clemens, ad aemulationem lectorum progrediens principum, dum etiam tum lanugo genis inserperet speciosa* […] (Amm. 31.10.18)

Even though it can be argued that Gratian attacked an enemy already bled white, he clearly had some military talent.[165] After their defeat, the Lentienses are never mentioned in the sources ever again. But what is more, he was eager to lead soldiers in person. Then how is it that the conqueror of the Alamanni (*Alemannicus Maximus*) Gratian is not recorded to have taken up similar military leadership roles afterwards? What could have happened that Gratian, who obviously knew where his priorities should have lain as emperor, failed in becoming a full-fledged *imperator*? Although Ammianus is our richest source on Gratian his poor attempt at explaining this should be easily ignored as it fails to supply a satisfactory explanation.[166] Instead, we must search for an antecedent cause in this phenomenon of the 4th century. For without properly treating this cause, the analysis of political violence not for the diadem but for the *magisterium militum* would be a flawed attempt.

2.3. The Dawn of Child-Emperors and Generalissimos

Valentinian I's elevation of 8-year-old Gratian to the rank of *Augustus* instead of *Caesar* was a novelty for contemporaries. Ammianus says that a similar step had only been taken once in the past by Marcus Aurelius who named his adopted brother Verus co-*Augustus*, who was 31 years old at the time. Valentinian I had also named his brother Valens, who was well into his 30s also, as his partner in the office, and this may have given Valentinian I a pass, but now by elevating his son as another *Augustus*, Valentinian I *morem institutum antiquitus supergressus*

[164] Literally, those who stand in front of the battle standards.

[165] I cannot see any reason why Ammianus, a soldier himself, would have wished to display Gratian as a somewhat able soldier if he were not such one.

[166] He connects his failure to the emperor's frivolous activities such as hunting wild animals in enclosed spaces (31.10.18-19). In the same place Ammianus goes on to say that, although Gratian busied himself with activities such as these, in his time the public affairs were in so a calamitous state that even an ideal emperor like Marcus Aurelius would have found them difficult to cope with.

(27.6.16).[167] In hindsight of what soon happened during the reigns of a series of child-emperors, this anecdotal comment of the historian may be owed to his knowledge concerning the earlier child-emperors and the trace they left, even if briefly, in Roman history.

In his choice Valentinian I was clearly motivated by dynastic concerns. He, as the founder of the Valentinian dynasty, naturally wished to see his kin rule the empire as long as possible. But in his thinking, he appears to have found no genuine supporters. Factions at the imperial court would hardly have a mentality of "loyalty until death" with regard to dynasties.[168] When Valentinian I was sick and considered at the point of death in 367, no one entertained the idea of choosing Gratian as his successor. Different groups had their own candidates.[169]

Gratian's elevation, the novelty and unexpectedness of which can be linked to Valentinian I's wish to dash the hopes of those who had been considering other imperial candidates during his illness, turned out to set the precedent for later child-emperors. No doubt Valentinian I hoped that Gratian would have reached maturity and gained enough experience to rule on his own before he died. But he prematurely died at a time Gratian was only 16 years old with little to no experience. The most influential legacy of Valentinian I's reign, therefore, was that it showed that it was possible to confer the diadem on a child's head.[170]

As legitimate emperors, children could of course rule and they indeed ruled, at least officially. But being an emperor meant more than giving his name to laws or carrying the imperial regalia. There were specific imperial virtues that emperors were expected to fulfill.

Menander Rhetor's *Basilikos Logos*, an influential treatise on what should be included in an encomium for an emperor, lists and expounds on these virtues. Before all virtues comes the

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[167] Amm. 27.6.16: *In hoc tamen negotio, Valentinianus morem institutum antiquitus supergressus, non Caesares sed Augustos germanum nuncupavit et filium, benevole satis. Nec enim quisquam antehac adscivit sibi pari potestate collegam, praeter principem Marcum, qui Verum, adoptiuum fratrem, absque diminutione aliqua maiestatis imperatoriae, socium fecit*. However, it should be pointed out, as my supervisor Dr. Prchlík has pointed out to me, Ammianus perhaps was criticizing not only Valentinian I's elevation of Gratian as Caesar but also that of his brother, Valens.

[168] McEvoy 2013, 50-1. Although we must not forget that things could not be easily either black or white. For instance, In Szidat (1979, 504), Arbitio's transfer of his loyalty from Eugenius to the Theodosian forces at the Battle of the Frigidus River, seems to have been resulted from his view of Theodosius and his house as the legitimate dynasty (Oros. 7.35.16; Soz. 7.24.5). As much as this may seem likely, other factors could also have played a role in his change of mind, such as Theodosius' military prowess or the belief that Theodosius would be the eventual victor and Arbitio merely wished to be on the winning side when the battle ended.

[169] One was Rusticus Julianus, the *magister memoriae*, a senior imperial officer responsible with publishing imperial laws (Jones *LRE*, 504-7). Another candidate was the *magister peditum* Severus (Amm. 27.6.1-3). As noted by McEvoy 2013, 51, the fact that the deceased emperor Jovian's son Varronianus we have noted above was also never considered as his father's successor "should banish any idea that court factions felt an automatic dynastic loyalty to the family of their emperor so soon after his accession."

[170] McEvoy 2013, 52.

treatment of emperor's military prowess.[171] Written in the third century, an age fraught with wars and soldier-emperors, its priority over other virtues makes perfect sense. Especially since Maximinus Thrax' reign the army expected that the holder of the imperial office would carry this virtue and practice it regularly.[172]

The fourth century had its shares of problems, but it seems to me more likely that it was the fifth century which showed resemblance to the military emergencies of the third. Accordingly, emperors were still expected to prove their military worth by acting as generals (*imperator*). But emperors such as Gratian and Valentinian II, although they might possess the matériel and other resources to equip, arm, and pay the soldiers, as long as their military capabilities were limited due to their age and other factors, had little room to maneuver and develop in this respect. A child-emperor who could not show active leadership in war would risk his influence and command over the army and hence his monopoly on violence might be challenged by those who could.

This is exactly what happened in Gratian's sole rule. It was not his interest in non-military matters that soiled his reign. Military necessities during his age had already produced a trio of experienced generals who put the military mantle of soldier-emperors over their shoulders, in the persons of Merobaudes, Bauto, and Arbogastes, of the *reichsfränkisches Kriegermilieu*,[173] likely originated from the barbarian mercenaries that had been settled north of the Loire in the early fourth century.[174] Merobaudes, who was the *magister peditum* from 375 until his death in 388 and thrice consul (377, 383, 388), is noted to have been the first of the general "who rivaled

[171] For imperial virtues and their discussion see best McEvoy 2013, 23-47. For the role of the emperor as a military leader in late antiquity, see Lee 2007, 21-49.

[172] That the emperors were well-aware of this was reflected on the coinage and titulature since 235. Manders points out that after this date the display of civic virtues on coinage sharply declined in the face of *virtus* (military courage) (Manders 2012, 171). Likewise, emperors' titulature such as *imperator*, *invictus* (unconquered), *restitutor* (restorer), and *cognomina devictarum gentium* (names taken after conquered peoples) saw increase in usage. For the discussion of this covering the years 235 and 395, see Hebblewhite 2017, 33-60. Inscriptions reveal that Theodosius I, who was an active *imperator*, adopted rather simplistic and less bombastic titles such as *victor* (victorious) and *triumphator* (triumphant) (*ILS* 785). The reasons for this change can be well sought for in more than one place, but I have little doubt that, for the west at least, the primary impetus of this change was the transformation the office of the western emperors went through under child-emperors (McEvoy 2010). McCormick 1986, 114-115 proposes that, by approaching the subject from a more general view, such pompous titles were no longer believable as the empire's military limits were well known. Furthermore, adopting titles such as *Alamannicus* or *Sarmaticus* would have probably bear negative effects since the Roman army at the time was gradually coming to depend more on foreign recruits.

[173] The definition used by Böhme 1974.

[174] *PLRE* I, Merobaudes 2; *PLRE* I, Bauto; *PLRE* I, Arbogastes.

and often surpassed the emperor in power".[175] A brief look at his career under Gratian demonstrates that he truly deserves that definition.

Merobaudes owed his power simply to his proximity to the army.[176] In Ammianus (30.5.13) and Zosimus (4.17.1) we read that he was already a seasoned soldier by 375, the former is adding the information that he fought under Valentinian I against the Quadi in Pannonia. Campaigning together offered many opportunities to form interpersonal loyalties for generals and soldiers and it appears that Merobaudes' time with the army bore plenty of fruit. His relationship with the army in fact must have been so close, that when Gratian in 377 decided to send regiments against the Goths in Thrace, the general was able to urge most of them to stay back in Gaul instead to protect the region against potential barbarian incursions, thus overruling the emperor's order (Amm. 31.7.4). For those soldiers, Gratian's words apparently meant little than their actual commander with whom they fought and bled.

Merobaudes is important for us because the things he did as soon as Valentinian I died determined the future of the relationship between emperors and their senior commanders by showing his peers where a general should stand in the reign of a child-emperor. After Valentinian I's body was dispatched to Constantinople for burial, an atmosphere of uneasiness appears to have dominated the west. Ammianus says (30.10) that not many were made aware of Valentinian I's death with the aim of preventing a coup.[177] This small circle did not include Merobaudes at first either, who was even summoned by those near the court *ut superstitis Valentiniani mandato*, as though Valentinian I were still alive (Amm. 30.10.2). We are told Merobaudes either thanks to his keenness or to the talkative courier who brought the message quickly perceived what really was going on and swiftly started making the necessary arrangements which would most benefit him and the faction that called him (Amm. 30.10.3). His first decision was to elevate Gratian's 4-year-old brother Valentinian II, who was at that time with his mother Justina in a country villa (Amm. 30.10.4). The decision was taken by him alone.[178] Gratian was not consulted, and it appears the senior emperor of the west was not even

[175] Liebeschuetz 2011, 481.

[176] O'Flynn 1983, 4.

[177] The legions in Gaul, Ammianus adds, were especially feared in this respect.

[178] Zosimus (4.19.2-2) claims that Flavius Equitius, another *magister militum*, was in cahoots with Merobaudes in the elevation of Valentinian II. Ammianus adds a certain Cerealis (30.10.5), Rufinus mentions Petronius Probus (Ruf. *Hist. eccl*. 11.12). On Flavius Equitius, *PLRE* I, Equitius 2; Cerealis, *PLRE* I, Cerealis; Petronius Probus, *PLRE* I, Probus 5. If either Zosimus' or Ammianus' or Rufinus' claims have any truth to them, this means Merobaudes was indeed part of a faction and did not necessarily act alone. However, even if this were so, which was likely the case,

made aware of his father's death![179] If a similar thing had happened in an adult-emperor's rule, the trumpets of civil war would have already been blown.[180] What is more, when finally heard of what happened, Gratian displayed nothing but indifference.[181] Whether this derived from fear from his general or actual apathy, can only be guessed.

What happened was clearly just another coup[182] by a group of individuals who were swift enough to call in Merobaudes to earn his support, since his influence over the army was well known, and make him the strongman in the west. By the time Valentinian I died the western court was already surrounded by men belonging to different factions of varying goals,[183] but it was Merobaudes' party that used the knowledge of Valentinian I's death as leverage against others and turned the inexperience and youth of the late emperor's children to their own advantage. The sudden death of Valentinian I presented those individuals an opportunity they could wield more power and influence. In this context, it would not be far off to regard the elevation of Valentinian II as a preemptive strike by Merobaudes and his associates to have a strong bargaining chip of their own against the already reigning emperor Gratian.[184] Of course, a 4-year-old could not be expected to take an active part in the administration. But Valentinian II was useful for Merobaudes in that the child-emperor could serve them as a fail-safe in case Gratian proved himself at odds with the Frankish general. There are no records explicitly saying that this was what Merobaudes had planned,[185] of course, but that Valentinian II was sidelined as soon as he was elevated and took up the role of a sleeping-partner until Gratian's

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I argue that Merobaudes must have the last word in every council, just because he held the ultimate military power in his hands, being the generalissimo of the west, and thus simultaneously held the power to sway others' opinions. Therefore, Merobaudes can be regarded to have acted eventually alone, even if he was a part of a faction.

[179] Amm. 30.10.1: *gestorum ignarus etiam tum Gratianus agebat tum apud Treveros*.

[180] When in 394 the general Arbogastes raised Eugenius to the imperial office on his own initiative, the sole emperor Theodosius I considered it nothing but a usurpation and waged war on both.

[181] Socrates 4.31 mentions, on the other hand, the fears Merobaudes and his party felt before of Gratian's and Valens' reactions. Gratian's teacher Ausonius praises his student's warm acceptance of Valentinian II as his partner in office "like a son" (Auson. *Grat. act*. 2). On Van Dam's suspicions of sarcasm in Ausonius work, see: Van Dam 2007, 105-6. McEvoy (2013, 55 n. 13) regards these suspicions ungrounded, for Ausonius belonging to the court of Gratian, would naturally portray Valentinian II, though *Augustus*, nevertheless a junior emperor by labelling him as a son of Gratian, so as to make most of the situation Gratian's court was forced to find itself in.

[182] I think it is proper to quote here what statement Stein (1959, 183) has made about this event: "cette apparente usurpation".

[183] Sivan 1993, 120.

[184] McEvoy 2013, 63-4.

[185] Of course, if there were any, that would still be a historian's guesswork since Merobaudes' real intentions would have been only known to himself.

death,[186] and that Merobaudes served as Gratian's supreme general and shared with him the consulship of 377 leaves little doubt that Merobaudes got what he wanted out of this bold decision. If not Gratian himself, his close supporters must by now have had to recognize that they were forced to play the game according to the rules set by the general. Even if the party of Gratian had gathered enough strength to stand up against the general, the issue would still be in doubt since they could not be sure how much of the army would have followed their suit. All the same, Gratian was too weak in a position to successfully rival Merobaudes' political shrewdness and military prestige. Especially in the latter area Gratian was so extremely deficient, that it can be said his downfall was a natural result of this. When Magnus Maximus, a successful general in Britain, usurped power in 383 and crossed over to Gaul, Merobaudes took the soldiers of the western armed forces and went over to his side.[187] Shortly after, the emperor that promised so much was dead at the age of 24.[188]

When Merobaudes died (388) things did not go back to what they were. The vacant posts of emperor and generalissimo were quickly filled by Valentinian II and Bauto, respectively. Valentinian II was now a 13-year-old boy. The conditions during the years he passed as *Augustus* did not allow him to develop those skills requisite for the imperial office, however. Hence, when he became even the sole emperor in the west, his new generalissimo easily continued to exert power while allowing emperor very little freedom. Because of this, Valentinian II may be truly considered the first ceremonial emperor, a mere figurehead, whose monopoly on violence fully fell into the hands of his generals.

For as soon as Bauto replaced Merobaudes he exerted even more influence over the emperor, a reality which did not escape the attention of contemporaries such as the usurper Magnus Maximus, whose thoughts on the whole situation are echoed in a letter of Ambrose.[189] Granted, Ambrose' letter may be indicative of his own thoughts rather than the usurper's, who may be

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[186] McEvoy 2013, 62-3. Zosimus claims (4.19.1-2) that Gratian and Valentinian II ruled the west as co-*Augusti* but this is at odds with the contemporary accounts of the period by Symmachus (*Or*. 4), Themistius (*Or*. 13.167c, 169b, 177b-c, 179c). For a modern criticism of Zosimus' claim, see Errington 1996, 441-2.

[187] Prosp. s.a. 383; Jer. *Ep*. 60.15. For modern evaluations of his defection, see Rodgers 1981, 103; Nixon and Rodgers 1994, 477-8 n. 79. On Magnus Maximus see *PLRE* I, Maximus 39.

[188] In the light of these evidence, the successful Lentienses chapter of Gratian's, I would argue, should be seen as an anomaly rather than a challenge to Merobaudes' military prowess. For by the time Gratian achieved his victory in 378 the image and role of the imperial office already went through a change thanks to the general and it is doubtful how much a clean-up victory would improve Gratian's hand. Still, if Gratian ever thought of challenging his general's power, that victory would have supplied him with the perfect backdrop, considering in hindsight what the future held for emperor.

[189] Amb. *Ep*. 24.4: *ille Bauto, qui sibi regnum sub specie pueri vindicare voluit.*

the bishop's mere mouthpiece for the occasion, but regardless of its true nature, this is a piece of evidence that reflects at least part of the contemporary view concerning Bauto's position and his relationship to emperor.

That this trend was becoming enduring again demonstrated itself when Bauto suddenly died in 385. His successor was Arbogast, who cared little for imperial courtesies so long as he knew that he had the support of the troops:[190] when Valentinian II dismissed him by handing a letter, Arbogast is said to have torn it up and moved on with his business (Zos. 4.53.1-4).[191] Arbogast's unprecedented dominance over the reigning emperor would lead the latter to take his own life at the age of 21 in 392.[192]

That a holder of the imperial office ended his own life, not because he faced a strong enemy at his very doors but because his general oppressed so much that Valentinian II saw no other way out is telling. The *rheinfrankische* trio in a very short time had truly shown that emperors may not be essential to the empire once they fail to regularly play their role of an *imperator*. Of course, a Roman empire without a Roman emperor could not be imagined and these generals had no intention of fighting against such a strong tradition. Emperors could still rule, if in appearance only. The more puerile and inexperienced they were the better for the generals, for it was then easier to control them. Gratian and Valentinian II could only put up a weak resistance to their generals' will, but they fought against a current.

The business of war and everything attached to it, that is, the army and the use of violence at will, had now become these generals' prerogative. But now another problem showed its face. Since there would be more than one general, the power and influence the office of the supreme general reached would start creating ambitious men out of their ranks. Violence would now be generally exchanged between fellow generals for the sake of the *magisterium militum*, with emperors rarely finding an opportunity to reverse thing to their original condition.

Although it is possible that Merobaudes acted with short-term goals in mind and not at all planned to set a new trend, his elevation of Valentinian II and the unchallenged position he found himself in as the supreme general in the west no doubt set a precedent for future child-

[190] Arbogast may also have put some faith in Theodosius I's support.

[191] John of Antioch (*fr*. 196) claims Arbogast also killed one of Valentinian II's advisors.

[192] On Valentinian II's death there are opposing views split between his death by his own hand (Croke 1976, 244; Matthews 1975, 238; McLynn 1994, 336-7) or at the hands of Arbogast (Jones *LRE*, 159; Grattarola 1979, 359-70), but one thing can be surely established that it was not a natural death and the cause of it can hardly be sought somewhere else other than in Arbogast's behavior.

emperors. In the first place, these child-emperors could be useful for ambitious men at the court: through inexperienced and submissive youths it would, on the one hand, be easier for such men to exert power, and on the other, less hazardous than taking their chances at the imperial office itself as a usurper.[193] Gratian's and Valentinian II's reigns revealed that skilled generals, with the majority of the army's support behind them, could become dominant to such an extent that would enable them to dictate the empire's policies.[194]

Just as the young holders accidentally started a change in the nature of the imperial office and the *magisterium militum*, their reigns cause a change in how the imperial office and its holders are portrayed. A *princeps clausus* and *princeps puer* such as Valentinian II is now praised for his ceremonial, judicial and non-warlike virtues, as evidenced by Ausonius' *Gratiarum actio* and Ambrose's *De obitu Valentiniani consolatio* (392). With little venues open for praise, they are applauded not because of their warlike qualities but because of their piety, mildness, and innocence. Especially in Ambrose's work, which had a long-lasting effect into the post-classical world, emperors of the west are equated with doves, lambs, and calves (Amb. *De ob. Val*. 79). In short, similes and praises that would not normally be heaped upon adult emperors.[195] If such works are indeed of any indication, heroic qualities and military prowess were now reserved for generals, perhaps subtly hinting the *arcana imperii* for the last century of the western empire: being a worthy general (*imperator*), acting like a *commilito* when necessary, and taking care of the needs of the soldiery which would cement loyalty.[196]

[193] McEvoy 2013, 54, 59-60.
[194] McEvoy 2013, 100-1.
[195] McEvoy 2013, 128.
[196] See, for example, Merobaudes' panegyrics, composed at the time the infantilization of the imperial office was already complete and in which the poet reserves every warlike achievement (defeating enemies, restoring peace) for the first general of the empire, namely Aetius (*Pan*. II. 19-20), for whom he also says *tu tibi inniteris, ad te respicis nec ullum quod imitari velis exemplar extra te quaeris* (*Pan*. I. *fr*. IIA. 19-20).

CHAPTER 3. THE PARAPHERNALIA OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

3.1. Introduction

We have seen what self-help did mean for the Romans and the part it played in violent confrontations. But what did self-help entail for the rivalries of this age? For those who were ambitious enough to attempt at being the strongman of the west, the soldiery, whether serving in the imperial regiments or in the *foederati*, or their private armies called *bucellarii*, constituted the main arm of their arsenal. It was these and other types of armed followers, those veritable tools and instruments of political violence, that enabled commanders to apply self-help to feuds they found themselves in. Since self-help of the age largely depended upon these soldiers, having a substantial force and commanding their loyalty had to be a priority. But how did generalissimos manage to do this?

Even a superficial look at the rivalries between the generalissimos of the age reveals a couple of qualities common to each case of political violence. These were integral parts of the violent cases dated to this period. Playing the role of an active *imperator* and taking care of soldiers' needs (*annonae*; *annona militaris* [rations]) largely played the key role in this matter. If a general wished to secure his soldiers' loyalty and thereby to have a chance at successfully eliminating his rivals (let alone keep the imperial office under his thumb), in other words, overcoming other party's monopoly on violence and replacing theirs with his own, showing himself active in these respects were essential. For, as case studies will eventually show, the soldiers mostly tended to stay loyal and follow the general who not only led them in person but also paid, armed, and awarded them, rather than blindly following the standards that would have carried the likeness of emperors.

Next to these two key qualities, the case studies treated here will from time to time also reveal other factors that played a part in orchestrating and waging war on opponents. To name a few here, *annona* from Africa, as long as North Africa remained under western Roman control, played an indispensable role in the rivalries between generals stationed in Africa and their opponents in Italy, since Rome was largely dependent on the grain and supplies sent regularly from this province. The support found among the *ordo senatorius* (senatorial order) and the local aristocracy also did come in handy and the élite was more than ready to lend support to those they regarded essential for their own interests. These were of secondary importance, however, and did not play an indispensable part in each rivalry we are going to deal with here,

unlike the key qualities of being an *imperator* and taking care of the soldiery. Therefore, they will not be separately treated here, but instead will be dealt with as they occur in our analysis of cases.

3.2. The Key Qualities

3.2.1. The Virtue of *imperator*

For all his unfortunate reign and tragic end, Valentinian II, who was never allowed to learn or exercise the most important imperial prerogative, nevertheless, just like his brother Gratian knew and even attempted to demonstrate the imperial virtue most closely associated with his office: being a worthy general. He is said to have attempted to gain his independence by setting out on an expeditionary campaign against barbarians threatening northern Italy in 392 but he was prevented from doing so probably by Arbogast (Amb. *De ob. Val*. 22, 24),[197] which led to the failed dismissal of Arbogast by emperor. Valentinian II knew or was told that the way to break generals' hegemony went through earning victories at the head of the army but generalissimos would not give up so easily the privilege of enjoying the benefits of being an *imperator*.[198]

Imperator was originally a title awarded to Republican generals (Polyb. 10.40.2-5.) such as Pompey or Caesar by their soldiers in the heat of the moment to celebrate their victories over their enemies. Caesar adopted the title to be used with his name (CIL 1².788: *C. CAESARE IMP*), Augustus did the same (CIL 5.526: *IMP*(*eratori*). *CAESARI DIVI F. IMP*(*eratori*). *V*), and so the title came to be routinely added to the nomenclature of emperors to emphasize their "continuing military power and supremacy",[199] and hence it became an important imperial virtue.

Those emperors of the Principate did not always practice this virtue, though they remained the supreme generals.[200] The task of leading the armies on the battlefield was often delegated to their *legati Augusti*,[201] but still, this did not mean one bit that those generals, even if

[197] Ambrose does not directly name Arbogast as the individual who prevented Valentinian II, but I fail to see who that person could be other the generalissimo.

[198] Theodosius I in Constantinople could have also found the news of Valentinian II's independent undertaking disturbing, which could lead the latter accumulate laurels of victory and in turn could gradually lead him to win his military independence from the east. But it seems to me that Valentinian II probably hoped to break the chains of Arbogast in the first place by planning to undertake such an expedition.

[199] Keppie 1991, 42.

[200] Atkins 2018, 29-39; Keppie 2015, 126.

[201] Keppie 2015, 126, 129.

victorious, could be granted the title of an *imperator*. The *res publica* was a private matter for *Augusti*[202] and they were naturally overprotective of their possessions. For instance, victory triumphs, long associated with generals of the Republic, were now solely reserved for emperors and their kin.

Their jealousy can be made clearer with the help of a modern market analogy.[203] For the empire to function, it was vital for the Roman state to maintain its position as the sole station to say the last word in every administrative, military, and financial matter, since competition over these fields with potential candidates, who might offer alternatives (in the case of the élite and army), would put emperor's dominance and rule into danger. Strictly in the context of this study, the primary challenger to the emperor's political dominance were the generalissimos, through whose agencies their dominance was first challenged, then weakened, and eventually lost, together with their power to exercise political violence at will, as we shall see.

The jealousy Domitian harbored against his general Agricola (Tac. *Agr.* 39-43) or Constantius II against Ursicinus (Amm. 15.5.35-6) was exactly of this nature. In both cases, political dominance of the emperor was at stake, at least that is how these emperors interpreted it, as their hostility to their successful generals shows. Agricola's military achievements in Britain and the popularity he then achieved in Rome, as we gather in Tacitus, had rendered Domitian uneasy. Knowing this, Domitian's courtiers and informers often tried to induce the emperor to indict the general. Likewise, when Ursicinus, who was at the time already a renowned general and had been attacked by Constantius II's courtiers, successfully discharged a mission of vital importance to Constantius II, he was this time accused by the emperor of embezzlement instead of receiving a warm welcome, for we are told Constantius II *semper oderat fortiter facientes, ut quondam Domitianus*. Indeed, successful generals posed, real or not, a threat to the emperor's political dominance, for conferred legitimacy upon emperors' political position in the first place was military success.[204] Generalship was supposed to fall into emperors' field of responsibility.[205]

As we have seen, with the third century soldier-emperors this virtue was once again began to be frequently practiced on the battlefield. Its practice gained so much weight in these chaotic

[202] Atkins 2018, 30.

[203] I owe the genesis of this analogy of mine to Wisman 2008, who likened the Roman Empire to a financial firm which would strive to eliminate all its competitors for its monopoly in the market.

[204] Gagé 1933; McCormick 1986; Averil Cameron 1993, 32.

[205] Tac. *Agr*. 39: *ducis boni imperatoriam virtutem esse*.

times, the problems of which were primarily of military nature,[206] that when emperors failed in fulfilling this virtue, soldiers, seeing their emperors fell short of their expectations, as was the case with Gordian III[207] and Florianus,[208] at once looked for replacements who could play that role actively and effectively.[209]

In the fourth and fifth centuries, therefore, soldiers still expected to be led by emperors who were also capable military commanders, just as they had been in the third. The refusal of *Caesar* Julian's soldiers to join *Augustus* Constantius II's ranks in the East, who gave the order, though it is explained by Ammianus (20.4.2) by the soldiers' reluctance to leave their homes, had, in my opinion, much to do with soldiers' willingness to follow Julian rather than their wish to protect their homes and families, because he had recently proved his worth as a general at the battle of Argentoratum (357), unlike Constantinus II, whose only military success so far encapsulated his civil wars.[210] When soldiers could not find such a candidate in the imperial office, they turned their attention to their generals.[211]

Being a worthy general, accordingly, first and foremost entailed an understanding of strategy proper (massing of troops), grand tactics (maneuver of armies), logistics, and in a smaller yet no less unimportant scale, tactical knowledge on the battlefield, sending cavalry for a flank attack, sending in the reserves, making speeches before the battle to exhort soldiers. Even some adult and experienced emperors failed to achieve these,[212] so to expect child-emperors to be successful would be absurdity. Onasander's treatise presents as the primary reason that they cannot inspire confidence in troops and they are liable to err due to their own overconfidence (1.9).[213]

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[206] Watson 1999, 1-21 clearly summarizes the hard-pressing military conditions of the third century.

[207] Gordian III is said to have fallen from power on account of his failure as *imperator*, who indeed is never recorded to have led his troops (Loriot 1975, 770-4; Hebblewhite 2017, 9-10).

[208] Florianus, who had failed in both respects, could only hold onto his diadem for two months. His soldiers had realized Probus would be a better suited candidate to lead and to attend the army's needs (Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 37.1-3).

[209] Watson (1999, 1-21) clearly summarizes the hard-pressing military conditions of the third century.

[210] Amm. 21.16.15: *Ut autem in externis bellis hic princeps fuit saucius et afflictus, ita prospere succedentibus pugnis civilibus tumidus*. Constantius' success in civil war and failure in foreign ones is a frequent theme among our primary sources: *Epit*. *Caes*. 42.18; Eutrop. 10.15.

[211] I think this is what Lee 2008, 382 also chiefly means with this statement: "Although the dynastic principle of succession reasserted itself during the fourth century in the form of the Constantinian, then the Valentinianic, and finally the Theodosian dynasties, the legacy of the third-century soldier emperors also continued to exert an important influence in various ways."

[212] For emperors between 235 and 395 and their military pedigree, see: Hebblewhite 2017, 8-32.

[213] It should be noted here, while writing these lines Onasander had clearly young generals, not children, in mind. But that this is so, should be more telling.

In this extremely militaristic age,[214] Valentinian I was the last western representative of soldier-emperors, a true carrier of the legacy of the military tradition of those third-century emperors:[215] leading the armies in person and taking part in fights. This age, therefore, can be labelled as an age in which heroic and post-heroic ages were mixed:[216] the heroic part emphasizing emperors' fighting in the ranks (*commilito*) and the post-heroic standing for emperors' command of battle in person (*imperator*). Child-emperors could do neither.

The practice of these tasks, which we sum up above under the phrase of virtues of an *imperator*, then, accordingly fell onto the shoulders of candidates both capable and willing. Beginning from their reign, soldiers of the western Roman army,[217] whether regular legionaries or

[214] That late antiquity was an exceptionally militaristic age can be inferred from the fact that the imperial service (both civil and military) was called *militia,* even though not all imperial departments busied themselves with war (*Cod. Theod*. 12.1.120). Civil servants would also receive, just like the soldiery, rations and wear uniforms with *cingulum* (military belt) (Lee 2008, 379).

[215] The origins of which can be traced back to Hellenistic kings, from whom Roman emperors borrowed the means of securing monopoly on violence and military glory (Serrati 2008, 481).

[216] If I may be allowed to apply John Keegan's categorization of command and commanders in his seminal work "The Mask of Command" (1987) to late antiquity.

[217] At this point, it should be fitting to go over the western Roman army as concisely as possible. After all, monopoly on violence could not have been achieved without soldiers willing to follow commands and neither soldier-emperors nor generalissimos could have achieved their political dominance without it. The origins of the late Roman army can be traced back to the reigns of Gallienus (r. 253-268), but even to Septimius Severus (r. 193-211) and Marcus Aurelius (r. 161-180) (Tomlin 1987, 107; Southern and Dixon 1996, 4). It generally took its eventual shape under Diocletian's and Constantine I's military reforms (van Berchem 1952, 87; Southern and Dixon 1996, 15-8, 37). Under Diocletian, the army is said to have composed of 389,704 soldiers and 45,562 navy personnel (John Lydus, *Mens*. 1.27.), figures usually seen reliable, though modern estimates take 300,000 in total as more reasonable (Elton 2008, 285). Military campaigns were usually conducted by field armies (*comitatenses*) numbering somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 (Elton 2008, 285), but in the fifth century west this was hardly the case, as Ricimer's field army of 6,000 men in 472 would imply. The exceptionally bloody battles and heavy defeats the western forces suffered especially in the fourth century civil wars (those of Constantius II in 351 and 353, Magnus Maximus in 388, Eugenius in 394, which were followed by those in the first quarter of fifth century, and even under and between generalissimos in the 430s and 470s, all the while there were frequent confrontations with barbarians around and within the empire) caused the western army to lose profusely blood, besides being prevented from finding time to recuperate. This undeniable effect of civil wars upon the western armed forces is well researched in Shaw 1999. Civil wars and failure to successfully deal with the barbarians within Roman borders undermined not only "the symbolic potency of imperial authority in the west but also contributed to the material loss of significant areas of territory", which in turn hampered the empire's abilities to collect money to recruit, train, equip, and feed soldiers (Lee 2008, 419-20). After the civil wars, came the fall of Carthage in 429, a catastrophic event that came to dictate every decision taken in the west. Under such conditions levying of Roman citizens became a problem (Dill 1905, 236; Southern and Dixon 1996, 52). Strained under financial burdens and time constraints (Southern and Dixon 1996, 52), Rome turned to employ more and more barbarians to fight its wars which proved to be both an easier and cheaper option, as they would come already trained for the campaign they were hired for and be disbanded as soon as that campaign ended, unlike Rome's traditional standing army (Amm. 31.4.4; Grösse 1920, 39; Hoffmann 1969-70, 138-9, 153-5, 403-4). Stilicho's army mainly consisted of such troops he recruited from among barbarian groups around the Rhine and the Danube in 396 and 401, respectively (Stickler 2007, 506). Again, after defeating a great band of barbarians on Roman soil in 405/6, 12,000 of the vanquished enemy were recruited to fill the Roman ranks (Oros. 7.37.14-16; Olymp. *fr*. 9). Under Aetius' regime (r.432-454), the lack of Romanization in the army became palpable (Southern and Dixon 1996, 53). The Romans' unwillingness to serve is usually explained by either their failure in grasping the dangers the empire faced or even if they did, their opposition to fight in distant places away from home, with lack of patriotism and landowners' dislike in delivering new recruits to the army, whom

irregular formations that came to compose the private armies of generalissimos in the fifth century and dominate the military arm of the western empire, such as *bucellarii*,[218] the "biscuit-eaters", which, by the time of Aetius' regime became the "major mobile strike force" of the western Roman army,[219] together with the *foederati*,[220] and others,[221] now sticked close to their generals, who shared the toils of battle and spoils of victory with his troops. First, we treat how these generals practiced the virtue of an *imperator*, then turn to which generals could be regarded as *commilitiones*, so as to draw the framework of their dominance as precisely as possible.

On Merobaudes' military activities much has been said already in our treatment of the change the imperial office went through during his ascendancy, therefore we begin with his successor to the post, Bauto. About his military achievements we have limited knowledge. He is noted to have assisted Theodosius I against the Goths in 380 (Zos. 4.33.1), where his military skills

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they would have preferred to see working on their estates having been offered as other possible reasons (Southern and Dixon 1996, 69; Liebeschuetz 1991, 20). That is why, already by the time of Stilicho's death in 408, military capabilities of the western Roman empire were mostly dependent on non-Roman formations such as *buccellarii* and *foederati*, units that would have been composed majorly of non-Romans.

[218] The word b*ucellarii*, from *bucellatum* (twice baked-bread ration given to troops), designates groups of soldiers acting as bodyguards of their generals, their *patroni*, the caretaker of all their needs. At a time the regular Roman formations were in decline, they emerged as the main fighting force of the western armies (Carrié, 1995). They seem to have risen in prominence during Honorius' reign (Olymp. *fr*. 7; *Not. Dig. Or*. 7.25: *comites catafractarii Bucellarii iuniores*; Cod. Theod. 7.4.6). All generals or even statesmen of the period had *bucellarii* attached to their person, including Gildo, Rufinus, Stilicho, Bonifatius, Aetius, and Ricimer (Diesner 1972). Initially they were of either Germanic or Hunnic origin, but it appears that free provincials, the *coloni*, and even slaves, in short, with whomever generals were able to establish a clientele-patron relation, was welcomed in the ranks. Naturally, they would be maintained at their generals' expense, to whom they also swore oath of loyalty (they would also swear the same to emperor) (Liebeschuetz 2007, 483). Their numbers, therefore, varied depending on generals' needs and wealth. Belisarius was able to equip 7,000 mounted soldiers out of his pocket (Procop. 7.1.20), while Valerian employed 1,000 troops and Narses less than 200. This evidence stems from the sixth century generals, but the same varying figures, I suggest, can be applied to fifth century, as generalissimos of the century must have possessed varying amounts of resources, such as Constantius, who would have expanded his riches after assuming his defeated rival Heraclianus' possessions, or Sebastianus, who was exiled by Aetius and therefore must have at that time commanded a limited number of soldiers in his retinue. Attached to their general not only on account of financial reasons but also due to feeling of esprit de corps that would have resulted from frequent campaigning, they became the new symbol of physical of physical power and their possession revealed who had the strength to monopolize the use of violence (Liebeschuetz 1986, 463-74).

[219] Whittaker 1993, 289.

[220] *Foederati,* from *foedus* (agreement, treaty), is a general term that encompassed non-Roman troops serving the Roman state as either mercenaries, partners, or allies, in return for payment throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. They were not regular part of the army and could be recruited either from within or outside the empire. The payment made to them is termed *annonae foederaticae* (Jones *LRE,* 611), which was made at first in kind and later converted to annual payments (Bury 1958, 42). Naturally, their generals no doubt would award them with spoils of battle, just like *bucellarii* (Southern and Dixon 1996, 49-50, 71; Stickler 2007, 495-514).

[221] Such as *laeti* or *gentiles*, who were settled within the empire after having been defeated and assimilated into the Roman culture, hence, unlike *bucellarii* or *foederati*, they left little archaeological remains that let us differentiate them from the Romans (Stickler 2007, 500).

are praised by Zosimus (4.33.2). The apparent small scale of his military activities should not strike us, since Merobaudes left for Maximus' camp a little before with the majority of the western Roman army. Bauto simply had to do with whatever manpower and resources Merobaudes left behind and these were obviously limited to conduct major operations. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that he continued the role of a strongman in Valentinian II's court, a fact attested by primary sources which portray him as the one dealing with all sorts of issues (Amb. *Ep*. 24.4-6).

Around 388 Arbogast replaced Bauto as the first *magister militum* or as O'Flynn claims Bauto appointed him as his successor.[222] What can be said with certainty is that Arbogast had already enough military experience under his belt by this time. He is first attested in assisting Bauto in the latter's campaign with Theodosius I against the Goths in 380 (Zos. 4.33.1-2). When Bauto died, it was reportedly easy for Arbogast to take his place on account of his popularity with the troops (Zos. 4.53.1; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 187). After becoming the supreme general he marched together with Theodosius I against Magnus Maximus and put an end to his usurpation by capturing the usurper himself (Oros. 7.35.4) and killing his son (Zos. 4.47.1), deeds truly worthy of a soldier-emperor. After this he is recorded to have conducted punitive operations against the Franks (Paulin. *V. Amb*. 30; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9). Eventually he became so dominant[223] that he could with impunity tear up emperor Valentinian II's orders in front of him, who was reduced to live a life behind closed doors in Vienna until his death in 392, after a brief reign that received (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9; Zos. 4.53.2-3; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 187).

Even when the last of the *rheinfrankische* generalissimos was dead after his defeat at the hands of the eastern emperor Theodosius I in 394, the practice of dominant generals continued not only thanks to emperor Honorius' infancy required a guardian for the proper functioning of the empire in the west after 395 but also thanks to Theodosius I's permission for it to happen, who appears to have naively thought that Stilicho would serve Honorius with the same degree of loyalty which he had displayed under Theodosius I. Time would reveal where exactly Stilicho's loyalty lay after Theodosius I's death.

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[222] O'Flynn 1983, 7.

[223] It can be argued that Theodosius I, the senior emperor, must have secretly welcomed Arbogast' strong dominance over Valentinian II, for, though Theodosius I had returned the young emperor his diadem after the civil war of 388, I do not see him wishing Valentinian II to become a strong independent emperor, not only because such a ruler could someday declare also his military independence from the eastern court but also he could jeopardize the future plans of Theodosius I for the empire in general, which were revealed by the time of his death when he partitioned the empire between his two sons.

Stilicho at that time was by all standards already a rugged soldier on account of the services he rendered under Theodosius I in the east, fighting against the usurpers Magnus Maximus in 388 and Eugenius in 394 (Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 1.94-115; *in Ruf*. 1.308-22; *Laus Serenae* 207-9), and the barbarians in Thrace (Zos. 4.57.2), among other activities of similar nature.[224]

In 395 and 397 he led two expeditions against Alaric and his band of Goths in Greece, though both were failures (expedition of 395: Claud. *in Ruf.* 2.101ff; expedition of 397: *de IV*. *Cons. Hon.* 459ff). Between these expeditions he squeezed a military inspection of the Rhine armies (Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 1.189-231; *de IV*. *Cons. Hon*. 439-59). As he could not be everywhere at the same time, however, from time to time he had to depend upon other subordinate generals to do the work, as when he sent a trio of generals to Africa to suppress Gildo, the *magister utriusque militiae* in Africa, who made an attempt at breaking Stilicho's hegemony on violence in 397.

Following this, Italy suffered two Germanic incursions in 401 and 406, by Alaric and Radagausius, respectively. Stilicho was at the head of the armies on both occasions and successfully defeated his antagonists; Alaric, in two battles at Pollentia and Verona (Claud. *de VI*. *Cons*. *Hon.* 127ff; Oros. 7.37.2; Prudent. *C. Symm*. 2.711ff; Jord. *Get*. 154) and Radagausius decisively at Faesulae (Zos. 5.26.3-5; Oros. 7.37.4-16; Marcell. Com. s.a. 406; Jord. *Get*. 154; Prosp. s.a. 406).

Between his victory in 406 and death in 408, he is not recorded to have led armies, a time that bore a new usurper in the west, Constantine III, who was elevated after Stilicho's regime failed to meet the barbarian threat that crossed the Rhine in 406-7. Alaric also again turned hostile, who now came closer to Rome than ever before. Stilicho would be killed as a result of court intrigues before seeing the closures of both events.[225]

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[224] Thanks to the inscription erected in his honor around 400 (*Inscr*. *It.* 4), his early career under Theodosius I can be traced back to 383. He is first noted to have been *tribunus praetorianus militaris* (military praetorian tribune) at the eastern court under Theodosius I. The next year he became *comes stabuli* (count of the stable) (Claud. *Laus Serenae* 190-3) and between 385-392 *comes domesticorum* (commander of the *protectores domestici* [elite corps of the court]) (Claud. *Laus Serenae* 193-4). In 392 he was a *magister utriusque militiae* but not the senior one (*praesentalis*) (*Cod. Theod*. 7.4.18). In 394 he was one of the generals that commanded Theodosius I's victorious eastern Roman army against Eugenius, after which he was finally named the first supreme general as *magister utriusque militiae praesentalis* in the West, the post he held until his murder in 408 (Zos. 4.59.1; *Inscr*. *It.* 15).

[225] After Stilicho's death we come across several figures appointed in his stead but none of them lasted for long. Holding either the post of the *magister peditum* or *equitum* in quick successions, these were Turpilio (the *magister equitum* in 408, the *magister peditum* in 409; *PLRE* II, Turpilio), Varanes (*magister peditum* in 408; *PLRE* II, Varanes 1), and Vigilantius (the *magister equitum* in 409; *PLRE* II, Vigilantius). After the orchestrator of Stilicho's murder, the *magister officiorum* (master of the offices) Olympius (*PLRE* II, Olympius 2), died in 409, Valens was the *magister militum* (*PLRE* II, Valens 2) and Allobichus the *magister equitum* (*PLRE* II, Allobichus). All the same, we know next

Not until 411, when a general named Flavius Constantius asserted himself as the dominant military figure at Honorius' court this imperial virtue saw once again a thorough fulfillment. Already a seasoned soldier under Theodosius I (Olymp. *fr*. 39), from 411 until his death in the purple in 421, Constantius was ever busy dealing with the military challenges the west was facing on all fronts. Having overcame all challenges, he was the leading man in the western empire (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 8.210-11: *Constantius omnia praestat*). An extremely capable general (Jord. *Get*. 164: *vir industria militari pollens multisque proeliis gloriosus*), in 411 he successfully fought and defeated the usurper Constantine III and another usurper that in the meantime appeared in Spain, Maximus Tyrannus' *magister militum* Gerontius, in pitched battles and sieges (Oros. 7.42.1-3; Prosp. s.a. 411; Soz. 9.13.3, 14-15; Olymp. *fr*. 1.16; Hyd. s.a. 411).[226] In 414 and 415, as the *comes et magister utriusque militiae* and soon as the *patricius* he attacked the Goths, pushing them out of the important southern Gallic city Narbo and then out of Gaul into Spain, where he put them under blockade until the Goths had no choice but to come to terms with the general in 416 (Oros. 7.43.1, 10-13; Hyd. s.a. 414, 415, 416). In the meantime, he also captured a short-lived usurper named Priscus Attalus in 415, who was elevated to the imperial office by the Goths (Oros. 7.42.9; Prosp. s.a. 415).[227]

Constantius' achievements illustrated that not only the west could still do away with its enemies, if led by a competent general who had the resources. But the case of Constantius also showed that it was possible for such generals to be crowned with the diadem, as when Constantius, now styled as Constantius III, was elevated as co-*Augustus* in 421 (Theoph. AM 5913; Olymp. *fr*. 34; Soz. 9.16.2; Philost. 12.12; Hyd. s.a. 421; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 197; Joh. Mal. 13.49; Zon. 13.21.9). It seems highly probably that Constantius fundamentally owed his elevation to the series of spectacular victories he gained over the usurpers and non-Roman peoples, which must have made him a perfect candidate in the eyes of some very influential people at the western court. Here it can be an idea entertained as to who those could have been by summoning the name of Galla Placidia, Constantius' soon to be wife and Honorius' sister, with whom she would fall out very soon. Regardless, Constantius appears to have been regarded worthy of a support for co-rulership and this, I imagine, could hardly have been the case

to nothing concerning their military activities, if any indeed took place. It would appear they could not repeat their predecessors' achievements due to reasons that remain unknown.

[226] *PLRE* II, Constantius 17; Maximus 2 (not to be confused with Magnus Maximus); Gerontius 5. Gerontius himself would later usurp, after briefly serving as the supreme general of a usurper.

[227] *PLRE* II, Priscus Attalus 2.

without Constantius' proven military prowess and achievements. All the same, Constantius' regime and his rise to the purple would remain an example *par excellence* for future *magistri*, in that it showed the path to the imperial office now passed through the holding of the first place in the *magisterium militum*.

Honorius, on the other hand, had numerous opportunities to take active participation in military matters not only after Stilicho's death but also after that of Constantius and to assert himself as the soldier-emperor, but he appears to have preferred to remain passive. By the time of his death in 423, the ceremonial child-emperor rule was, therefore, as suggested, truly became institutionalized,[228] Honorius' long reign having shown that to be an emperor in the fifth century one need not to fight battles.

It is in this atmosphere of change, after Constantius III's death in 421, we meet several generals, all ambitious, who rivalled with each other to become the next long-lasting first *magister militum et patricius*. First of these was Asterius, who was awarded with the patriciate sometime between 420 and 422 as a result of his successful Spanish campaign of 420, which he had led as the *comes Hispaniarum* (count of Spain) against the Vandals (Hyd. s.a. 419-420).[229] As he abruptly disappears from the records in 422, Castinus appears to have filled his position.[230] He had already distinguished himself in 420/421 against the Franks as the *comes domesticorum* (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9), the office that would continue to produce future generalissimos and even emperors. In 422 he is noted to have been the *magister militum* (Hyd. s.a. 422; Prosp. s.a. 422), who picked up the unfinished business with the Vandals in Spain. Due to his rivalry with another general named Bonifatius, however, the campaign bore no results (Prosp. s.a. 422). This is the first time in western empire's recorded history that we witness a rivalry between two generals interfering with the empire's interests for their own private ones. When Honorius died in 423, Castinus elevated a civil servant named Ioannes as *Augustus*,[231] who possessed no military experience whatsoever, without consulting anyone but himself, following the precedent set by the once generalissimo Merobadeus, since Ioannes, though an adult, would have owed his position to his general and the fact that he was no experienced or interested in military matters would make him an agreeable ruler for Castinus. Unlike

[228] McEvoy 2013, 217.
[229] *PLRE* II, Asterius 4. Gregory of Tours *Hist.* 2.9: *cum autem Asterius codicillis imperialibus patriciatum sortitus fuisset*.
[230] Kulikowski 2000b, 127-8. *PLRE* II, Castinus 2.
[231] *PLRE* II, Ioannes 6.

Castinus' career as the *magister militum*, his elevation of a puppet emperor would have a longer effect upon the generals in the making such as Ricimer.

After Ioannes' usurpation was ended by Theodosius II's armed intervention in 425, Flavius Constantius Felix, Bonifatius, and Flavius Aetius appeared as the leading military persons in the west.[232] They would several times come to blows with each other for the sole possession of the *magisterium militum (*Procop. 3.15-36). Meanwhile, the new emperor of the west was a 6-year-old boy named Valentinian III, a perfect ceremonial ruler model for generals. Valentinian III's reign would witness several rivalries and civil wars for that prized post.

The *magister militum* and *patricius* Felix[233] enjoyed relative supremacy in the West between 425-430. He was likely a candidate of Theodosius II sent by him to the west.[234] Unfortunately we do not know much about his military exploits, unlike Aetius or Bonifatius, except that he sent an army against his rival Bonifatius in 427, which he clearly did not lead in person (Prosp. s.a. 427). The hypothesis that he was the same commander who expelled the Huns roaming in Pannonia in 427 (Marcell. com. s.a. 427) has now been securely refuted.[235] His brief lackluster career therefore may be explained in part by the little room left to him to maneuver by those two men, who already covered the most dynamic regions of the western empire at the time, Gaul and Africa, respectively, while the Italian peninsula was enjoying peace that arrived after the civil war.

In the aftermath of Felix' elimination by Aetius, Bonifatius appears to have been the strongman of the court, even though he was physically not present. Unlike Felix, Bonifatius could easily claim a career fraught with military success. His earliest achievement was a personal one in that he is said to have wounded the Gothic king Athaulf in 413, when the latter was attacking Massilia (Olymp. *fr*. 21). After 417 as *tribunus* (tribune) he was operating as the leader of *foederati* forces in Africa against the Moorish tribes (Aug. *Ep*. 185). By 422, he gained, not undeservingly, a good military reputation. In Prosper's words he was *bellicis artibus satis clarus* (s.a. 422). That Honorius' court sent him to Spain against the Vandals with Castinus, therefore, can be interpreted as the recognition of his warlike abilities (Prosp. s.a. 422; Hyd. s.a. 422), even though the campaign did not proceed according to the plan. After becoming the *comes Africae*

[232] *PLRE* II Felix 14; Aetius 7; Bonifatius 3.

[233] For the debate on exactly when Felix may have been granted the rank of a patrician, see: Sundwall 1915 n. 170; Sirago 1961, 284; Oost 1968, 228; O'Flynn 1983, 77-8.

[234] McEvoy 2013, 234, Sirago 1961, 264-86; Kaegi 1968, 23ff; Moss 1973, 715.

[235] Kovács 2020.

(count of Africa) in 423, however, he had further chances to display his military prowess, as for example when he successfully defended the vital region against the usurper Ioannes' forces in the name of Valentinian III, that is, of the Theodosian dynasty in 424 (Prosp. s.a. 424), for which he was later appointed the *comes domesticorum* (Aug. *Ep*. 220.7). While Bonifatius' remaining years were dominated by his rivalry with Felix and Aetius, with whom he came to clashes in 427 and 432, respectively, he was not neglectful of Africa either (Olymp. *fr*. 41). But he could do little when the newcomers of Africa, the Vandals, defeated him in battle in 430 and forced him to take refuge in Hippo Regius, where he was also besieged (Procop. 3.30-32, 3.34). This was followed by another military debacle when the Vandals inflicted a further defeat upon him in 432 (Procop. 3.3.35; Theoph. AM 5931). Despite these losses he was named the *magister militum* and *patricius* in the same year (Prosp. s.a. 432; Marcell. Com. s.a. 432, 435), probably because Aetius, who had sided with Ioannes back in 423 and then carved a position in the current government by using the Huns as a threat, seemed a greater threat to Valentinian III's rule. Bonifatius could not enjoy this new office for long, however, as his rivalry with Aetius culminated into a pitched battle at which he was fatally wounded by Aetius himself in 432 (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron. Gall*. *452* s.a. 432; Hyd. s.a. 432; Marcell. Com. s.a. 432; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.3).

Aetius was born to a father who was a soldier (Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.8). Like his father, Aetius too led a life constantly wearing *cingulum* from his earliest years. His time as a political hostage among the Visigoths and Huns, must have also no doubt sharpened his both military and political skills.[236] His first conduct as befitting an *imperator* happened, however, in 425 when as the *cura palatii* (the one in charge of the palace) of the usurper Ioannes he led an army of Huns against Theodosius II's general Aspar (Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.8; Prosp. s.a. 425; *Chron*. *Gall*. *452*, s.a. 425). But at this point Ioannes was already dead, he was fighting for his own survival rather than the usurper's cause and he did this wish success. Valentinian III bestowed upon him the title of the *comes et magister militum per Gallias* in return for disbanding his Hunnic warriors, against which the forces of the government in its current state otherwise could do little (Prosp. s.a. 425; Cass. s.a. 425; Jord. *Rom*. 328; Philost. 12.14). He then spent the years between 425-429 actively campaigning in Gaul against the Franks and Visigoths. His

[236] Before 405 he is recorded as a *tribunus praetorianus* (Gregory of Tours *Hist*. 2.8). Between 405-8 he was likely Alaric's hostage (Clover 1971, 56-8; Gregory of Tours 2.8; Merobaud. *Carm*. 4.42-6) and afterwards of the Huns (Gregory of Tours *Hist*. 2.8; Merobaud. *Pan*. 2.1-4).

success against them bore fruit in that he was named the second *magister militum* in the west after Felix (Prosp. s.a. 429). Once he got rid of Felix in 430, he then led further successful operations against the Iuthungi (*Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 430; Hyd. s.a. 430; Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 8.233), Nori (Hyd. s.a. 431; Sid. Ap. *Carm*. 8.233), Visigoths, whose war chief he captured (Hyd. s.a. 430). Between 430-2 he fought off the Franks (Hyd. s.a. 432), all the while receiving and sending embassies to Spain to deal with the Suebian problem (Hyd. s.a. 431, 432), before turning his attention to eliminate his last standing rival Bonifatius, which he would do success in 432.

Having once again and for the last time asserted himself as the supreme general of Valentinian III's government in 433 thanks to his Hunnic band of warriors he came for the second time to Italy to once again reinstate himself as the dominant figure in the government of Valentinian III (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 433, 434). Once this is done, he then duly resumed to fulfill the *imperator* role in the west uninterruptedly until his death in 454: in 436 he inflicted the Burgundians a heavy defeat, which he followed up by sending against them the Huns to finish them off (Prosp. s.a. 435; Cass. s.a. 435; *Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 436; Hyd. s.a. 436; Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 8.234-5). In the same year he, together with a subordinate general named Litorius, suppressed the Bacaudae and their chief Tibatto (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.3; *Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 435, 437).[237] In 438 and 439 military operations against the Visigoths followed (Hyd. s.a. 438; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.3, Prosp. s.a. 438) who eventually sued for peace in 439 (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 8.297-309; Prosp. s.a. 439; Hyd. s.a. 439). Though he could not be in Spain, he was also closely watching the ongoing operations led by his subordinates (Jord. *Get*. 176; Merobaud. *Pan*. 1. *fr*. 2a.22-3).

From 439 until Attila's attack in 451, he spent most of his time in Italy arranging other matters, although he did not neglect his sword when opportunity arose. Towards the end of the 440s, he took to the field in Armorica in (*Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 448) and fought once again against the Franks (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.210-18). Then in 451, at the head of a motley army, he successfully deflected Attila's expedition into Gaul (Prosp. s.a. 451; *Chron. Gall. 452*, s.a. 451, 452; Cass. s.a. 451; Hyd. s.a. 451; Jord. *Get*. 197ff; Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.7; Procop. 3.4.24; Joh. Mal. 14.10.; Theoph. AM 5943).

[237] Bacaudae were locals who resorted to self-help for survival in places where the imperial authority largely lost its effects through the fifth century. Their independence would bring them into clashes with the central government in Italy. On the Bacaudae, see best: Drinkwater 1992.

Although after Aetius' and Valentinian III's deaths in 454 and 455, respectively, it cannot be spoken of child-emperors at least for the moment, no change occurred with respect to the roles emperors and *magistri militum* should play in the west. The rule of children lasted so long that it had become traditional that emperors were expected to deal with ceremonial matters and leave the military stuff to their commanders. Any step they may take out of these bounds would be unwelcome. *Magistri militum* now would even go so far as to either depose or kill them with impunity, should they decide emperors became too independent. This was the dominant state of affairs from 455 until Ricimer's death in 472, of whom we now have to speak. Ricimer's earliest military experience is noted under Aetius' regime (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.266-8). Then in 456 as emperor Avitus' *comes* he is recorded to have been sent to fight the Vandals in Sicily, which he successfully did by earning a victory over them at Agrigentum and then at Corsica (Hyd. s.a. 456; Prisc. *fr*. 24; Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.367). These victories made him the *magister militum* in 456, the year which saw him marching against Avitus and depose him, together with another general named Majorian (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 202; Theoph. AM 5948). With Majorian named *Caesar* with the blessings of the eastern emperor and eventually *Augustus* likely on his own initiative, Ricimer, for the first time in a long time, had to deal with an adult emperor who distinguished himself in military affairs. The two had initially friendly relations or at least common goals, which made them work together against Avitus, but after Majorian became *Augustus*, it was from the start that he would not accept a purely ceremonial role, which he clearly declared with a major military undertaking he decided to lead against Vandals in Africa. As if that were not enough, he also sidelined his first *magister militum* Ricimer from taking an active part in it, rubbing salt into Ricimer's wound. The eventual failure of this expedition, however, furnished Ricimer with the perfect opportunity to get rid of the man, whom he executed after capturing him in the Summer of 461 (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 203; Hyd. s.a. 461; Cass. s.a. 461; Marcell. Com. s.a. 461; Evagr. *Hist. eccl*. 2.7; Theoph. AM 5955). After Majorian's removal, Ricimer took care that his monopoly on violence would not be threatened by another Majorian-like emperor by supporting, whenever he was able to, ceremonial emperors such as Libius Severus in 461 and Olybrius in 472, who would not show the same level of energy Majorian had shown.

Once this had been done, Ricimer went on to expand his military record, defeating the Alans in Italy in 464, killing their king (Cass. s.a. 464; Marcell. Com. s.a. 464; Jord. *Get*. 236). Though

his relationship with Constantinople would decay and he would find himself embroiled in a civil war with an emperor sent by Constantinople during the last period of his life (467-472), his collection of an army which is reported to have been 6,000 strong (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207) and his successful besiege of Rome and finally the removal and execution of the emperor sent by Constantinople (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209; Marcell. Com. s.a. 472; Jord. *Get*. 239, Cass. s.a. 472; Procop. 3.7.1; Joh. Mal. 14.45) would seal Ricimer's legacy as the strongman who could make and unmake emperors at his will.[238]

3.2.2. The Virtue of *commilito*

As we have seen, to act worthy in the capacity of a general was an essential quality of a leader in antiquity. Generals having stripped emperors from this privilege thanks to the latter's infancy, could become actual power holders. Being an *imperator*, however, would also bring a chance to demonstrate another part of their military prowess: involvement in combat so as to show themselves as fellow soldiers (*commilito*).

According to Cicero's conception of an ideal *imperator (*Cic. *De imp. Cn. Pomp*. 10.28), besides *scientia rei militaris* (knowledge of military matters), *auctoritas* (ability to influence others), and *felicitas* (lucky fortune), a recipe for a successful general entailed *virtus* (courage). Now commanders who led their forces in person no doubt displayed this *virtus* but being physically present on the battlefield and so close to the action would offer them an attractive opportunity of carrying that *virtus* even in higher places. If to lead a campaign and manage a battle from a safe distance could help establish a strong tie with soldiers, how greater that tie could be established if the general were seen fighting alongside his soldiers?

Early Greeks, Alexander the Great and Hellenistic kings frequently involved in combat, showing their skills in monomachy. Indeed, taking part in battle was an ordinary step in being a general, because after the battle commenced commanders thought they had little to do but to watch it unfold.

Commanders had plenty to do, however. Taking part in a fight would limit commanders' knowledge of battle to their immediate vicinity, leaving their army essentially without a leader.[239] This conclusion was reached by the Romans under Scipio's command towards the

[238] Flomen 2009.
[239] Jones 1988, 26.

end of the Second Punic War (218-201).[240] In the first century CE, a Roman handbook written on the art of command by Onasander warned generals that they should stay out of combat and not lower themselves into the station of simple soldiers (Onas. *Strat*. 33.1-2) and summarized the duties of a general as to ride before the army; show himself to those under threat; scold cowards; encourage those who lost heart; fill up gaps; change positions of cohorts; send assistance to those under duress; and try to perceive potential crises (33.6).

Practice, nevertheless, differed from what was preached, and soldier-emperors and generals often partook of battles. The first soldier-emperor Maximinus Thrax is said to have not only fulfilled his *imperator* role but also played his part as *commilito* during his campaigns very well (Hdn. 7.2.6-7).[241] So much so, his soldiers, when marched against a rival emperor's legionaries, tried to induce them to join Thrax' army by shouting to abandon "the feminine, feeble emperor who is controlled by his mother" (meaning Alexander Severus) and to join up with "the courageous, clever, and fellow-soldier (*commilito*) [Thrax]" (Hdn. 6.9.5).

Thrax' legacy appears to have found imitation among later emperors to a varying degree until the coming of child-emperors. Emperors, apparently, not only led but also fought, in which they are said to have often risked their lives and sometimes even perished.[242] So Decius died in 250 fighting the Goths (Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 29); Valerian was captured in 260 by the Persians later to be killed after going through a heavy set of humiliations (Eutrop. 9.7); Gallienus was ambushed and attacked (Zos. 1.43.3, Zon. 12.25); Aurelian killed a chieftain and was then injured at the siege of Palmyra (*Hist*. *Aug*. *Aurel*. 22.3; 26.1.); Constantine I was injured at the siege of Verona in 314 (*Pan*. *Lat*. 12(9).9.3-4); Valentinian I was ambushed and was almost captured before the battle at Solicinium (Amm. 27.10.10-11) and his brother Valens died at the Battle of Adrianople in 378 (Amm. 31.13), adding his name to the list of emperors who died in battle, like Julian who perished in Mesopotamia in 363 during the katabasis of his Persian campaign (Amm. 25.3). Though it must be pointed out that many of these examples do not necessarily mean that all the mentioned emperors actively sought and fought battles by putting themselves into danger,[243] these examples nevertheless suggest that they were almost at all times very close to areas of action and did

[240] Delbrück 1990, 232, 370-6.

[241] Hebblewhite 2017, 22-7.

[242] So Decius died in 250 fighting the Goths (Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 29); Valerian was captured in 260 by the Persians later to be killed after going through a heavy set of humiliations (Eutrop. 9.7); Gallienus was ambushed and attacked (Zos. 1.43.3, Zon. 12.25); Aurelian killed a chieftain and was injured at Palmyra (*Hist*. *Aug*. *Aurel*. 22.3; 26.1.); Constantine I was injured at the siege of Verone in 314 and by an arrow fighting Licinius' forces in 324 (*Pan*. *Lat*. 12(9).9.3-4; Or. 24); Valentinian I was ambushed and almost was captured before the battle at Solicinium (Amm. 27.10.10-11) and his brother Valens died at Adrianople in 378 (Amm. 31.13), adding his name to the list of emperors who died in battle, like Julian who died in 363 during his Persian campaign (Amm. 25.3).

[243] Hebblewhite 2017, 23-5.

not appear to have shrank back in fear when necessity required them to fight, something we cannot truly say for child-emperors and even for many other adult emperors of the fifth century with minor exceptions such as Majorian.[244]

Roman Soldiers of the fourth century were, them, accustomed see their emperors' taking risks and though this should not necessarily mean that they expected to see their commanders always fight on the front line, lest their commander may die,[245] we also cannot imagine soldiers completely let go of their joy in seeing their generals demonstrate personal bravery and skill in monomachy.

That imperial propaganda fed just such imagery which confirms this. Panegyrics to Constantine I (*Pan. Lat*. 6(7).3.3) and Theodosius I (*Pan. Lat*. 2(12).10.3-4) do not fail to mention acts of personal bravery and skill in fighting. Julian in Ammianus, who can give us a soldier's point of view, obviously holds this emperor's acts of *commilito* in high respect.[246] Constantius II's skill in the use of the javelin and bow, the training he received in the art of *miles* (foot-soldier) are displays of an emperor anxious to convey a picture of a soldier-emperor ready to fight.[247]

Even child-emperors were not exempt from this, though both their instances are far and between[248] and the soldiery already knew with whom they would leave the city for battle when the campaigning season arrived. We have already seen bits of Gratian's attempts. Honorius seems to have attempted to leave a mark of a *commilito* upon his soldiery with the language he used in addressing the army (*sanctissimi nostri commilitones*);[249] now lost inscription erected to mark *his* victory over the Goths in 402 (*ILS* 798); and his depiction wearing a military dress on

[244] Even if we blindly assumed all the given examples were lies told by historians and panegyrists, this would still be telling, for even the mere portrayal of emperors in battle and in danger would reveal the expectations of contemporaries from the holders of the imperial office.

[245] Hebblewhite 2017, 25-6. Julian's *candidati,* personal bodyguards, shouted at emperor not to risk his life to prevent a greater calamity from occurring (Amm. 25.3.6: *clamabant hinc inde candidati (quos disiecerat terror) ut fugientium molem tamquam ruinam male compositi culminis declinaret*). Similar scenes must have frequently happened in soldier-emperors' careers.

[246] Julian is recorded to have given orders in the thick of battle (Amm. 24.4.18) and encouraging the troops while fighting (Amm. 24.6.11).

[247] Amm. 21.16.7: *Equitandi et iaculandi, maximeque perite dirigendi sagittas, artiumque armaturae pedestris perquam scientissimus*'. Constantius II is said to have received military training at an early age under his father Constantinus I (Lib. Or. 59.35).

[248] Lee 2008, 387.

[249] See: Sivan (1985, 274) for the letter attributed to Honorius, from which this address to the troops taken from, which is a part of the text known as *De laude Pampilone epistula.*

his famous ivory diptych.[250] In the fifth century the depiction of emperors on coins wearing military dress (usually cuirass and chlamys) was highly popular[251] and it was usually through this medium they tried to instill loyalty to their troops.[252]

In our period, however, emperors' claims to be an *imperator* and *commilito*, when there were any, remained in word and image only, Honorius' case is our most probable example. For after Valentinian I's death in the west emperors were not at fully ease to conduct operations at will without the consent or participation of the first *magister militum* and when they did so, they did it only after they thought they secured themselves against their influence and domination, as we shall see in Majorian's and Anthemius' cases. But it is now time to turn our attention to generals who practiced the virtue of *commilito* in their careers.

The first recorded name to have acted as a fellow soldier from the period is Bonifatius. When Olympiodorus recounts the talks that surrounded Galla Placidia's return to Rome, who had been taken captive by the Goths during the sack of Rome in 410, he mentions how the Visigoths under Athaulf's leadership took advantage of Ravenna's weakness and attacked and tried to capture the coastal city of Massalia (Marseilles) in 413 (Olymp. *fr*. 21). If captured, the city could ameliorate their supply shortage problem since Honorius' government so far failed to keep its promise in this respect (Olymp. *fr*. 20). But Bonifatius, unbeknownst to Athaulf, happened to be in the city as well and though at the time of the attack he was virtually an unknown figure, his decision to meet the attacker's king head-on would change this:

> Ἔνθα πληγεὶς Βονηφατίου τοῦ γενναιοτάτου βαλόντος, καὶ μόλις τὸν θάνατον διαφυγών, εἰς τὰς οἰκείας ὑπεχώρησε σκηνάς, τὴν πόλιν ἐν εὐθυμίᾳ λιπὼν καὶ δι᾽ ἐπαίνων καὶ εὐφημίας ποιουμένην Βονηφάτιον. (Olymp. *fr*. 21)

Olympiodorus does not share by what type of a weapon the Gothic king received his wound or where. It would have been interesting to know these minute details, but Olympiodorus leaves little room to doubt that Bonifatius personally stepped forward to meet the enemy king and wounded him, as his assertion when saying πληγεὶς Βονηφατίου τοῦ γενναιοτάτου βαλόντος clearly shows. Olympiodorus wrote his history at the western court and was

[250] I admit, however, this selection of undertakings may not necessarily point to an active undertaking on Honorius' part to portray himself as successful soldier-emperors of the past but may have been a part of an imperial tradition, long associated with the holders of the imperial office, to whom military victories were supposed to be ascribed, whether they led in person or not, as we have examined briefly above (page 73). For the mentioned famous diptych, formally known as the diptych of Anicius Petronius Probus, see: *CIL* 5.5836.

[251] Lee 2008, 393.

[252] Lee 2008, 384-94.

personally close to events and persons that were related to those events.[253] Although he is our only source on this matter, it is unlikely he was exaggerating Bonifatius' singular feat.

A note must still be made, however. Bonifatius behaved like a *commilito* in 413, but he was indeed a simple *miles* at the time.[254] This admission, however, should not necessarily rob us of attributing this daring act to Bonifatius the General and simply take this feat as an exception exclusively belonging to his earlier days in the military. For at the time Olympiodorus wrote about this in his history, Bonifatius was no longer a simple soldier and I think he specifically mentioned this to elevate Bonifatius of his day, a general, in order to remind and emphasize his willingness and bravery to take part in action personally. Time will soon reveal that what Bonifatius had done in 413 was indeed not an exception.

All the same, Bonifatius' achievement at Massalia appears to have had a profound effect upon his future career in terms of his relations with the Goths. When Wijnendaele, the biographer of Bonifatius, says that "there seems little reason to doubt that Bonifatius' battle prowess at Marseilles formed the basis for his subsequent military career".[255] This exploit against Athaulf earned him a reputation amongst the warlike culture of the Visigoths. If we are to subscribe to the plausible hypothesis that the Goths that formed the mainstay of Bonifatius' *bucellarii* forces were Athaulf's veteran soldiers, who after the peace treaty of 416 came over to the Roman side,[256] not few of them must have chosen to serve the general willingly upon familiarizing themselves with the general's monomachy story, which they would have no doubt heard (add to this the fact that the transmission of oral stories is liable to exaggeration). Such a story must have portrayed a picture of a general who was ready to stick his neck out like a common soldier for the sake of victory. In societies as that of the Goths where prestige within a group is built purely upon military achievements, such a feat no doubt immensely counted.

Bonifatius' most famous monomachy occurred, however, in 432 at the Battle of Rimini, which happened to be the place of Aetius' sole example of single combat. The duel between the two ambitious men is recorded by Marcellinus Comes. He says: *Aetius longiore Bonifatii telo pridie*

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[253] On this, see: Treadgold 2004.

[254] De Lepper 1941; Burns 1994, 257 n. 43; Wijnendaele 2015, 31.

[255] Wijnendaele 2015, 32.

[256] Wijnendaele 2015, 36. For the peace treaty of 416 the *magister militum* Constantius concluded with the Visigoths, see: Oros. 7.43.12-13; Olymp. *fr*. 31; Philost. 12.4; Prosp. s.a. 416. For its modern evaluation together with the treatment of barbarian settlements within Roman lands, see best: Goffart 1980.

sibimet praeparato Bonifatium congredientem vulneravit inlaesus, tertioque mense Bonifatius vulnere quo sauciatus fuerat emoritur [...] (Marcell. Com. s.a. 432).

Of course, one is at freedom to approach this claim rather skeptical,[257] by questioning whether Aetius did *really* owe his victory over Bonifatius to his *telum* with a longer reach, a weapon which can be described either as a sword or a lance. But the likelihood of this duel increases when we factor in the attested level level of animosity between the two generals which started in the late 420s. Add to this Bonifatius' experience in single combat and Aetius' noted adeptness at usage of arms (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 7.230-1), it becomes highly plausible that they dueled each other on the battlefield like the Homeric heroes.[258]

The whole scene may also very well be a product of Marcellinus Comes' imagination to give an epic finale to the generalissimos' rivalry, who wrote it well after the battle occurred.[259] I find the incident very likely due to the aforementioned reasons I have offered, a couple of points need also be made.

Wijnendaele is one of those who say that the probability of the duel is high, but he is doubtful whether Aetius used a modified *telum.* I do not see why not, for Aetius would have likely known the standard length of various weapons in use in the later empire. Such weapons would be produced at *fabricae* (factories) scattered over the whole Roman world and specialized in producing arms and equipment for soldiers.[260] He may have very well ordered a custom one to be made, above the standard measures of the age, to give himself the cutting edge. This out of the box way of thinking would suit Aetius.

Another thing is that even if Marcellinus Comes' story were a pure fiction, it still would say something of substance, not only to its contemporary readers but to posterity: how the attribution of a warrior and soldier traits, once inseparable from emperors, now came to fall within the sphere of generals, who became its sole demonstrators. Marcellinus' contemporary

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[257] For Marcellinus Comes considered Aetius a hero of the western empire (s.a. 454: *rei publicae salus*) and a skeptic may assume a hyperbole and dramatization on Marcellinus' part to elevate Aetius' status further by attributing him feat of monomachy.

[258] Wijnendaele (2015, 101) asserts that the probability of the duel is high but the story about longer *telum* is suspicious. I see no obstacle to this, however, since Aetius would have likely known the standard length of various weapons and he might have very well make a custom one for himself, above the standard measures of the age.

[259] Depending on a single source naturally split the scholarly opinion in two. Croke (1995, 80) and Zecchini (1983, 160) are of the opinion that the duel took place the way it is told by Marcellinus Comes while De Lepper (1941, 106), Oost (1968, 233 n. 87), O'Flynn (1983, 176 n. 28) reject it.

[260] James 2006, 257-331.

audience would have received this duel, if not literally, as the author's hint to the changes occurred in the imperial office of the age.

Now back to the duel itself. Although Aetius lost the Battle of Rimini, the mortal wound inflicted to Bonifatius rendered him the eventual victor. What concerns us now what advantages Aetius possibly gained by this feat of his besides he shortly after became the unrivalled political figure in the west with his rival's death.

After Bonifatius died, part of his *bucellarii* went over to the late general's son-in-law Sebastianus,[261] perhaps following an instinct of loyalty. But not all *bucellarii*, I imagine, must have seen taken up the cause of Sebastianus. Some must have joined forces with Aetius. If we remember how it is a very likely possibility that Bonifatius' *bucellarii* came to be composed of mostly Gothic warriors would have impressed by the general's feat of monomachy, we should not be prevented from entertaining a similar result for Aetius' case.

Moreover, once Bonifatius was out of the picture, Aetius came to possess his estates and took also his wealthy wife, Pelagia, as his own bride (Marcell. Com. s.a. 432.3). While both Aetius' reputation and wealth increased, I would find it very difficult to believe that all of Bonifatius' men followed Sebastianus simply out of loyalty. Some certainly must have done so, but even if Aetius' personal victory over their former general made no impression upon them, Aetius was now simply the general with the richest resources in the west. Aetius would have certainly fit the criteria of a man who could meet his soldiers' demands much easier than Sebastianus, who would shortly end up being an exile with little means and as a result his men would resort to piracy (Prosp. s.a. 437; Marcell. Com. s.a. 438).

Our last example of monomachy comes with Ricimer, though the evidence is not rich in detail as one would have hoped. In 464, the Alans under their king Beorgor and the western Romans under Ricimer came to blows near Bergamum. The Romans defeated the Alans decisively and Ricimer apparently killed the Alan king. All sources that mention the battle attest to this with the sole exception of the *Fasti Vindobonenses Priores* that leaves out Ricimer's name.[262] This may merely be a neglect on the part of the chronicler, but other accounts present another challenge:

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[261] Stickler 2002, 55-6.

[262] Marcell. Com. s.a. 464: *Beorgor Rex Halanorum a Rigimere rege occiditur*; Jord. *Get*. 236: *Recimerem generum suum contra Alanos direxit, virum egregium et pene tunc in Italia ad exercitum singularem. Qui et multitudine Alanorum et regem eorum Beorgum in primo statim certamine superatos internicioni prostravit;* Cass. s.a. 464. *rex Halanorum Beorgor apud Pergamum a patricio Ricimere peremptus est*.; Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Rom.* 15.1: *Biorgor rex Alanorum cum exercitu adveniens occurrente patricio Ricimere superatus non longe a Bergamo civitate Venetiae atque extinctus est*.; *Fasti Vind. Prior*. s.a. 464: *occisus est Beorgor rex Alanorum Bergamo ad pede montis VIII idus Februarias*.

none explicitly mention Ricimer was *the* person who killed the king. He may have been killed in the battle he faced Ricimer's army by one of Ricimer's soldiers or even by a stray arrow. I find it plausible that Ricimer took up the role of a *commilito* in this instance and slayed the king, for it befits the figure of a late Roman generalissimo, but we should nevertheless be wary of arguing from silence and not go so far as to draw a certain conclusion. Suffice it to say that Ricimer was probably aware of the contemporary examples of monomachy that took place not only in the west but also in the east[263] and he may have been willing to imitate them.

As much as reading acts of single combat may be dazzling, we should not be so easily swayed into thinking that *magistri* of this period frequently fought within the ranks and put their lives constantly on danger. Generals were more interested in staying alive and reaping the benefits of their machinations rather than leaving a mark in history as a Homeric hero. It would, therefore, be more reasonable to think that when they acted as *commilito*, they probably had no other choice but to fight, just as Catilina is claimed to have done so by undertaking *strenui militis et boni imperatoris officia* (Sall. *Cat*. 60.4) when he apparently had not options left him. That would be a wise path to follow anyway, as ancient battles were chaotic, covered by dust and sounds of the clashing arms, and a javelin did not differentiate between a *miles* and emperor, as Julian's death not long ago in Mesopotamia demonstrated.

3.2.3. Taking Care of the Soldiery

> *De quibus ut unum aliquid dicam, quis non videat quod multi homines tibi cohaereant ad tuendam tuam potentiam vel salutem, qui, etiam si tibi omnes fideles sint nec ab aliquo eorum ullae timeantur insidiae, nempe tamen ad ea bona quae ipsi quoque non secundum deum sed secundum saeculum diligunt, per te cupiunt pervenire, ac per hoc, qui refrenare et compescere debuisti cupiditates tuas, explere cogeris alienas*? (Aug. Ep. 220.6)

In a Roman world devoid of soldiers neither being an imperator would have been possible nor feats of monomachy would have made much sense. In that fictional world which lack the backing of armed followers, violence could hardly be monopolized in one man's hands. Accordingly, we now turn to the last quality that was necessary to be a generalissimo in late antique west: taking care of soldiers' needs. Generals had to make sure their soldiers were equipped, well fed, paid, and awarded. This constituted an indispensable part of the general-

[263] The eastern *comes domesticorum* Aereobindus recently duelled the Persian Ardazanes in 422 (Socr. 7.18.25; Joh. Mal. 13.23).

soldier relationship.[264] A general who did not fail in this would have his men's loyalty in and out of the battlefield.

A lifelong career under arms was attractive in the first place for it secured a pay and chance of booty. If bereft of these advantages, a soldier may resort to various remedies, all to the detriment of their commanding general/emperor. Late antiquity teemed with such examples. A military unrest broke out in Africa in the 540s among the Roman troops due to late payments (Procop. 4.18.2-9; 4.26.10-12).[265] In 540 the garrison of Beroea in Mesopotamia surrendered itself to the Persians because of the same reason (Procop. 2.7.37). Towards the end of the century emperor Maurice's troops revolted because emperor wanted to make changes in the form of usual payments (Theophyl. Sim. 7.1.2-9). A general on duty on the eastern front was relieved from duty by his own soldiers when their payment was reduced in 588.[266]

What these payments entailed and from where they were drawn is our first task before treating how our generalissimos fulfilled this quality.

Throughout the history of the Roman empire there were several types of payments and awards, but in the fifth century these were mainly *donativa*, irregular military salary, and annona militaris, payment in kind,[267] born out of necessity in the shadow of the financial deterioration of the third century. The former was an established practice already during the reign of Claudius when he secured the fides (loyalty) of the soldiers of the praetorian guard in his ascension as emperor in 41,[268] the latter came to assert itself gradually, until it became official under Diocletian in the late third century.[269]

Currying the favor of troops by such means was not a novelty that arrived with these emperors, however. Julius Caesar and Augustus had earlier perceived the importance of successfully playing the role of a caretaker of the troops.[270] In time, the emphasis on this only

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[264] Hebblewhite 2017, 71.

[265] Kaegi 1981, 49-52.

[266] Kaegi 1981, 68-72.

[267] *Stipendium* (regular military salary) lost importance and disappeared in the fifth century vis-à-vis *donativa* and *annona militaris* (Hebblewhite 2017, 88-9). *Donativa* were payments made either on significant days on an annual basis such as emperors' accensions (*dies imperii*), their birthdays (*dies natalis*), and consulships, or irregularly such as after a campaign or a civil war. *Annona militaris* would typically encapsulate food, arms, armor, clothing, bedding for soldiers and fodder for their horses. For brief discussions of types of *praemia militiae* in late antiquity, see: Lee 2007, 57-60; Veyne 1990, 334-45; Delmaire 1989, 535-63.

[268] Suet. *Claud*. 10.4: *armatos pro contione iurare in nomen suum passus est promisitque singulis quina dena sestertia, primus Caesarum fidem militis etiam praemio pigneratus*.

[269] Hebblewhite 2017, 90.

[270] Julius Caesar: Suet. *Iul.* 26.3. Augustus: *Mon. Anc.* 17; Suet. *Aug*. 49.2.

increased. The Severans made sure that the army must receive whatever it needs from emperors, not anyone else.[271]

Later soldier-emperors continued to observe the same practice, as Ammianus' attests. Constantius II, who had very little desire to see *Caesares* Gallus and Julian as his equals withheld the *annona* (ration allowance) from Gallus to injure his relationship with his soldiers (Amm. 14.7.11); had Barbatio burn annona reserved for Julian's soldiers to injure his relationship with them (Amm. 16.11.12); did not allow the same Caesar to pay the *donativa* to his followers (Amm. 17.9.5-6); and had his *notarius* Gaudentius reproach the young Caesar if he did so (Amm. 17.9.7). Constantius II's examples are especially noteworthy because it is a representative of the feeling common to all emperors: their dislike of seeing others, other than himself, paying the troops and thus disturbing that special bond between *Augustus* and his soldiers.

Again, Magnus Maximus and Theodosius I secured the loyalty of their *foederati* with *annona*, especially the latter, allegedly to a degree of disregarding the needs of his regular soldiers, which is criticized by Zosimus.[272]

To sum up, all these later emperors' approach to the issue was fully in line with their predecessors. To tend to the needs of soldiers was their traditional prerogative, a must if they wanted to secure the loyalty of their soldiers, the most indispensable weapon of violence. But as child-emperors failed to properly play the role of a worthy general, they necessarily failed in creating any solid relationship through this that would make the sides reciprocally dependent upon each other: soldiers on their emperor for pay and awards, emperors on soldiers for monopoly on violence and thus political dominance.

At this point it must be admitted that the fault did not entirely originate with child-emperors, however. Financial-military conditions of the fifth century, which caused an apparent change in the nature of military forces, must also be taken into account, the ruin of which cannot be pinned on them alone.[273]

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[271] Hebblewhite 2017, 75.

[272] Magnus Maximus: Amb. *Ep*. 30.4. Theodosius I: Zos. 4.40.2. Though it must be kept in mind that Zosimus was hostile against Christian emperors, and *foederati* in Theodosius I's army probably just gave him another chance to complain.

[273] For it must be remembered that even the able generalissimos could hardly do anything of substance to reverse the situation for good, as there were simply too many problems on too many fronts simultaneously.

The regular Roman army was the greatest expenditure of the imperial treasury.[274] This treasury would first and foremost be filled by taxpayers' contributions (either money or in kind throughout late antiquity),[275] which were largely discharged to the troops under the names of *annona* and *donativa*. Annona would entail bread, wine, oil, and meat for troops and fodder for horses and would be distributed under the supervision of the *praefecti praetorio*.[276] *Donativa* were payments made on the accensions of new emperors and on their anniversaries every five years. The standard pay was five solidi (gold coin) and 0.4535923 kg silver, a very significant amount of contribution to soldiers' income.[277] They would be supervised by the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, the caretaker of the *sacrae largitiones*, the imperial treasury.[278] Collection of special taxes, namely the *aurum coronarium*, *aurum oblaticium*, and *collatio lustralis* (χρυσάργυρον) would also fall into his sphere of responsibility, through which the payments of *donativa* were made possible in the first place.[279] But collection and distribution of all these became harder in the fifth century west as a result of losing imperial control over regions such as Britain, large swaths of Gaul, parts of Spain and Pannonia, and eventually, the most devastating of all, north Africa.[280] It should be kept in mind that such losses did not only mean losing taxpayers' money but also the destruction of a trade network. Add to this that the army only consumed and did not produce anything of financial value, it was as a result, as has been put by a scholar, "a net

[274] According to a calculation, the army required half or even 75% of the annual budget to continue to function (Hendy 1985, 157). This can be correlated with the fact of how often contemporaries lamented the army's great consumption of resources (*De rebus bellicis*. 5.1; Syrianus Magister (Anon.), *Peri strat*. 2.4; Amm. 20.11.5).

[275] The economy got somewhat stabilized in the fourth century, the wounds of the third century having been tended to, so payment in kind was in the process of very slowly being commuted into gold, first in the west (Jones LRE, 207-8, 629-30; Southern and Dixon 1996, 63), though payment in kind never ended (Lee 2008, 407).

[276] For the *foederati* the term was *annonae foederaticae* (Jones *LRE,* 611). In the later Roman empire, there were four *praefecturae praetorium*, two in the west (*PPO Galliarum* and *Italiarum*) and two in the east (*PPO Illyrici* and *Orientis*).

[277] Jones *LRE*, 624, Hendy 1989, 18.

[278] On the department of *sacrae largitiones*, see: Jones, *LRE* 427-9 and Delmaire 1989. The other department of the imperial treasury was *res privata*, which exclusively dealt with the personal wealth and possessions of emperors.

[279] Jones *LRE*, 430-2, 624; King (1980a). *Aurum coronarium* were tax payments made by the cities of the empire to the treasury on the accension of new emperors and their quinquennial anniversaries. *Aurum oblaticium* worked in the same manner, but for senators. *Collatio lustralis* would be collected every four years from merchants and traders.

[280] It is worth quoting Lee's summarizing assessment of the situation in the fifth century here: "During the course of late antiquity the western half of the Empire increasingly lost control of territory which in turn affected its capacity to acquire enough revenue to sustain its armed forces, and in due course it ceased to be a viable political entity." (Lee 2008, 411-2). We lack detailed accounts of how much the loss of these territories affected the empire except for Africa, which is well attested in *Novellae Valentiniani*, but it can be easily said that long term loss of those regions must have been cataclismic for the economy. Frequent inroads into Thrace throughout the fourth and sixth centuries can serve as a witness here to show how hard hitting the results of losing a region could be for the empire (*Cod. Iust.* 10.27.2.10).

burden on the economy."[281] Consequently the imperial treasury in much of the fifth century could not maintain a large arm, having largely lost its capacity to recruit or even equip its soldiers (*Cod*. *Theod*. 11.18 [promulgated in 412]; *Nov*. *Val*. 15 [promulgated between September 11 September 444-18 January 445 CE]). Child-emperors lacked character and authority to form a bond between themselves and soldiers, it is true, but in the first place they lacked money to pay even the soldiers they already had.[282]

These changes brought greater dependence on using irregular forces to make war. Rome had always made use of auxiliary troops but never to the extent that happened in the fifth century.[283] The wars of this period witnessed a great number of battles that fought by barbarians on behalf of the Romans.[284] Their employment perhaps was light on the imperial treasury, but foederati proved even more loyal to generalissimos' than regular army soldiers in some cases. When Aetius was killed by emperor Valentinian III in 454, the latter was in turn murdered in broad daylight by two of Aetius' Hunnic soldiers named Optila and Thraustila (Jord. *Rom*. 334; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455).

What made these soldiers bond with generals? Apart from fulfilling the role of a worthy general and skills in monomachy, it can be here speculated that, since agreements with these

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[281] Lee 2008, 402. Even the greatest conquest of late antiquity, Justinian's campaign in the west, brought little to no gain to the empire (Hendy 1985, 171).

[282] That the nature of taking care of the troops in the west was already transforming is clear when we look at its mint operations. In 402 before Gaul experienced the catastrophic invasion of 406/7 and well before the tax spine of the west, Carthage, was broken by the Vandals in 439, mints outside of Italy appear to have ceased their coin production for good, the primary material whereby the Roman soldiers were paid as we have seen (Cleary 2015, 348-9). Only the mints in Ravenna and Rome continued operations to produce silver and bronze, respectively, meaning only a small army in Italy must have been paid by the government directly. One of the hypotheses Esmond-Cleary advances forward makes very much sense in explaining what could have happened. The government probably turned to other unrecorded alternatives to pay its army (Cleary 2015, 349-50), meaning, to irregular soldiers such as *foederati* which could be disbanded after the end of campaigns and cost a lot cheaper than a standing army.

[283] An analysis of the mid-second century CE army argues that half of the Roman forces were made up of non-Romans (Rankov 2008, 71).

[284] Averil Cameron 1993, 148. Here are several, but not all, battles that are recorded to have been fought by the "Roman" army of the fifth century: Radagaisus was apparently the leader of band of barbarian army that attacked northern Italy in 405/6 and its defeat was largely on account of the Hunnic king Uldin's army, with whom Stilicho had struck a deal (Oros. 7.37.12; Marcell. Com. s.a. 406; Jord. *Rom*. 321). The same king also eliminated the Gainas problem of Constantinople, when a general went rogue (Zos. 5.22.1-3). The Suebi, Alans, and Vandals in Spain were fought by the Visigoths and their king Vallia on behalf of the Romans in the late 410s (Oros. 7.43.12-13; Olymp. *fr*. 31; Prosp. s.a. 416; Hyd. s.a. 416). The Burgundians near Gaul were almost wholly eliminated by the Huns sent by Aetius in 437, from where the author of the epic poem *Nibelungendlied* got his material (Prosp. s.a. 435; Cass. s.a. 435; Hyd. s.a. 436, 437; Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7.234-5). In 439 Aetius' right hand Litorius fought the Visigoths in southern Gaul with Huns under his command (Hyd. s.a. 439; Prosp. s.a. 439; Jord. *Get.* 177). The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains in 451 against Attila was fought with army that was commanded by Aetius, but its regiments were filled by scores of barbarian peoples such as Visigoths, Franks, Alans and not a single regular soldier, if we are to believe the claim of Sidonius Apollinaris (*Carm.* 7.329).

allied federate units appear to have been made either by the strongman of the court themselves or in their name, as several examples attest,[285] they must have come to regard the generalissimos the way they used to regard emperors before the era of child-emperors, that is with respect mixed with fear. After all, diplomacy was an extremely symbolic art in the Roman empire, aimed at shock and awe the barbarians through displays of imperial power.[286] Though those soldiers would probably still sworn in the name of *Augustus* at time of their recruitment as a formality, given the historical fact that Valentinian III felt the need of informing barbarian peoples of the validity of their arrangements signed with Aetius whom he killed (Hyd. s.a. 454), strongly implies that barbarians indeed viewed generals and not reigning emperors the guarantors of their treaties. This regard may have constituted the first step in bringing the interests of the generalissimos and the *foederati* into alignment.

These foederati units would be supplemented by bucellarii in times of war, formally acting as the general's bodyguard but in practice they made up his private army, whose needs would be fully met by their *patronus*, and hence tied to their general much more strictly. So, with the business of war coming to be undertaken mainly by these units and the forming of an undeniably close relationship with generals, the emperors that came after 375 did what emperors from Augustus to Valentinian I tried so hard to avoid: the western Roman army of the fifth century was privatized under able and resourceful generalissimos,[287] whose methods and possibilities of caretaking of those units shall now be our subject.

The sources of the period do not allow us an easy reconstruction of the picture of how generalissimos, beginning from Merobaudes up to Ricimer, specifically dealt with the *annona* and *donativa*. This should not be so striking on the following ground: by nature, historians and chroniclers were only interested in squeezing these details into their books only if they deemed such information essential to their narrative, as the cases we read from Constantius II's reign have demonstrated above. Therefore, where the sources fall silent, I argue that nothing should

[285] Constantius settled the Visigoths in Aquitania Secunda in Gaul in 418 (Prosp. s.a. 419; Hyd. s.a. 419); Aetius settled a group of Alans in the Rhone valley in Gaul in 440 (*Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 440), another group in Armorica, Gaul in 442 (*Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 442) and the surviving Burgundians in Savoy in Gaul in 443 (*Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 443); Avitus struck a deal with the Visigoths in 451 on behalf of Aetius against Attila (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7.328-31, 339-41; Joh. Mal. 14.10). All these treaties and settlement agreements were naturally followed by military assistance of those who were settled.

[286] Sidebottom 2008, 17-22.

[287] Cleary 2013, 349-50.

prevent us from assuming that the generalissimos duly continued to carry out this quality, for without which they would have been bereft of their primary tool of violence.

Under child-emperors, beginning from Gratian, it is safe to assume that generals assumed the role of a caretaker of the troops to fortify their relationship with the army by maintaining a healthy relationship with the praetorian prefects, whose responsibilities covered the distribution of annona. The four-time praetorian prefect Probus[288] belonged to the faction of Merobaudes, which saw the elevation of Valentinian II (Ruf. *Hist*. *eccl*. 11.12; Amm. 30.5.10). Since this was so, Merobaudes must have with ease demanded whatever source he deemed necessary for the army from Probus. Aetius must have enjoyed the same freedom with his friend Boethius, the praetorian prefect of Italy in 454 (*Fast*. *Vind*. *Post*. s.a. 455; Prosp. s.a. 454; Hyd. s.a. 454; Marcell. Com. s.a. 454). That he was simultaneously killed by Valentinian III along with Aetius hints that whereas the general held monopoly on violence his *praetorian prefect* friend controlled Italy's resources.

The list of western *comites sacrarum largitionum* we can link with generals are much weaker, because the list itself has many holes and even when we have names of office holders, we cannot pinpoint the nature of their relationship with the government and regime as exactly as we would like to. It suffices here to say that a friendly relationship with these men would have also made it much easier for generalissimos to access the money collected from special taxes in the imperial treasury and those secured in the *thesauri* (treasury depots), of which there were four in Gaul and Italy each and one in Britain.[289] Nevertheless, we must leave a door open for the possibility that regardless of who held the office, a general extremely prone to violence and force such as Aetius and Ricimer would have little cared about any obstacle a *comes sacrarum largitionum* posed.

As we have seen, however, the imperial treasury was in a constant financial struggle in this century and therefore it could hardly be the only option for generals from which they drew sources to pay and arm the troops. Already in 383, when Merobaudes changed his allegiance from Gratian to the usurper Magnus Maximus, his decision may be explained by his concerns about his economic prospects under the former. The fact that Gratian had been using the empire's limited resources to make generous payments to his Alan archers to ensure their

[288] He was the praetorian prefect of Illyricum (364), Gaul (366), Italy, Illyricum, and Africa (368-375 and again 383-4) (Alan Cameron 1985).

[289] Delmaire 1989.

loyalty to himself (Zos. 4.35.2-3; Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 47.5) may have forced Merobaudes to look for a new financial source out of which he could feed, arm, and pay his soldiers. In Merobaudes' day the age of generalissimos was still in the process of dawning, so this probably explains the simpleness of Merobaudes' decision. It is known that changing sides in civil wars offered opportunities to make extra money (Zos. 4.6.3-4) and Magnus Maximus seems to have offered just such an opportunity. Regardless, if the treasury had remained strong as ever, the regular army would not have gradually melted away and give way to non-Roman irregular formations in the first place.

A general, however, first had to be officially recognized if he aimed at the summit. A possible reason for this may be sought for in the possibility that only then they would be in a sound financial position to keep the flow of their armed followers, which would have otherwise been difficult to maintain let alone expand. Gainas' inability to secure an imperial recognition in 395 is a case in point. When he found himself out of command, he was unable to keep up a private army, which paved the way to his downfall.[290] Aetius' eventually successful attempts to force himself into the official imperial command structure in 425 and 432 should also be evaluated in the same context. He resorted to violence in those instances not only for his own personal survival but to ensure the support of an official financial base with the help of which he could make distributions to his soldiers, which was essential for his bid to power.

Apparently, one could only go so far as an independent generalissimo. Aegidius in Gaul and Marcellinus in Dalmatia, generals who broke off from the western government in the 450s and so cutting themselves off from any financial assistance that may arrive from there, both looked for alternatives to keep a steady supply of manpower and resources to continue to possess power by establishing close relationships with the Franks and Constantinople, respectively (Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.12; Hyd, s.a. 466; Marcell. Com. s.a. 468).

Once generals secured an official rank and title, opening the door to access to imperial resources, they could combine it with their private wealth, which should not be underestimated. Generals had estates which made them also landowners and it is an attested fact that landownership was a profitable business.[291] Ammianus speaks of estates belonging to the rich senators dotting the map from east to west (Amm. 24.6.10). A name hard to pass over

[290] Alan Cameron and Long 1993, 203 n. 24.
[291] Averil Cameron 1993, 115, 117-8.

when the subject comes to estates in late antiquity, Melania the Younger's case (380-439) displays the correlation between estate ownership and wealth. She is noted to have owned property in Italy, Sicily, Africa, Britain, and Spain (*V. Mel. Gr.* 9ff, 19, Pall. *Hist. Laus.* 61). Her yearly income is told to have been 120,000 solidi (*V. Mel. Gr.* 15). Such estates, of course, did not only bring money but also manpower in the form of *amici*,[292] *clientes*,[293] and slaves who could be armed when the need arose.[294]

Though it is difficult to pinpoint where and how many estates our generalissimos possessed, Whittaker's statement made for the soldiers and officers of the later empire, who grew accustomed to regions they were on active duty and so they usually came to possess lands there, can justifiably be applied to generalissimos, which should us allow to claim that these individuals who were more powerful and influential than simple soldiers and officers must have possessed several estates.[295]

Out of the *rheinfrankische* generalissimos, Merobaudes is known to have owned landed property in Baetica in Spain and near Troyes in Gaul, and Arbogast's family on the Moselle River.[296] Sources indicate that Firmus had an armed retinue composed of his *satellites*, *plebes* and *servi* (Amm. 29.5.36,39), no doubt connected to his grandiose estates mentioned in the Theodosian Code (*Cod. Theod.* 7.8.7; 9.42.19). Gildo, likewise had his own *bucellarii*, the existence of which proved itself so dangerous for the government that it was forbidden for such men to swear personal allegiance to their patrons.[297] Stilicho and Heraclianus, who owned estates, too, could draw both manpower and other resources from their estates and his *clientes* (*Cod. Theod.* 9.42.22; Olymp. *fr.* 23). Bonifatius, who owed much of his military capabilities to his Gothic federates and bucellarii, a portion of which appears to have been later inherited by his son-in-law Sebastianus, must also have had large estates in Africa. Otherwise, I would

[292] *Amici* (business associates) and their *patroni* (protectors) were connected through a relation in which they would perform mutual *officia* (obligations, duties). In this type of relation, the sides were more or less social equals (Billows 2008, 320).

[293] *Clientes* (personal dependents) were in a relation with their *patroni* in which the sides would also have had reciprocal *officia* to fulfill with an aim to protect and advance each other's interests. In this type of relation *clientes* and *patroni* were not equals, however (Billows 2008, 320).

[294] Whittaker 1993, 286: "With the growth of huge estates and concentration of property ownership in the later Empire came control of large numbers of dependants who could be mustered for military action." Further, they also offered safe havens for escape and protection, as when Aetius went to his estates in Italy after his defeat at the Battle of Rimini in 432 (Prosp. s.a. 432).

[295] Whittaker 1993, 286.

[296] Whittaker 1993, 285.

[297] Diesner 1972, 324.

think, Aetius' plot to have him framed as a usurper there would have had little effect upon Galla Placidia, had Bonifatius not already possessed some considerable and visible wealth as the *comes Africae*. Aetius is clearly noted to have an estate in Italy, to which he retreated in 432 after his defeat at Rimini. Given his connections to the Gallic élite on account of his constant campaigning in Gaul, it is plausible to entertain the idea that he possessed some land there as well, out of which he must have bolstered the ranks of his bucellarii. Though not supreme-commanders Aegidius and Syagrius had estates near Soissons in Gaul, their seat of power.[298] On the other hand, Ricimer, with whom Marcellinus could not deal on account of the former's wealth as we shall see below, likely made use of the large estates he owned in the Po-valley,[299] a legacy of the imperial court's concentration in the area in much of the fourth century.[300] Ricimer is known to have used Mediolanum as his power base after he fell out with emperor Anthemius, but even before that when Majorian left Italy in 458 for a campaign, the strongman of the west highly likely had accumulated some landed property, as he was pointed out to have increased his influence and financial means during that year in the absence of the emperor.[301]

There were also other irregular venues that contributed to their chests and eventually into those of their followers. Marrying rich ladies was one of them and this is well illustrated in Aetius' case.[302] His marriage to Pelagia (John. Ant. *fr*. 201.3; Merobaud. Carm. 4.15-18.), the widow of his rival Bonifatius and once a Gothic princess of royal blood (Aug. *Ep*. 220.4),[303] regardless of whether Bonifatius indeed urged Pelagia to marry Aetius as one source claims (Marcell. Com. s.a. 432),[304] was in any event a result of the natural process that accompanied the end of battles, when the victors enjoyed the spoils their success. In this sense, what Aetius did was little different from what the generalissimo Constantius had done after defeating Heraclianus. This time a prized wife was among the spoils, who was supposed to have been

[298] MacGeorge 2003, 114.
[299] As Odoacer would take advantage of later (MacGeorge 2003, 283).
[300] Bullough 1966, 117.
[301] Henning 1999, 249-50.
[302] His father had already married a wealthy Italian woman who remains unnamed, advantages of which must have contributed not only to his father's finances but Aetius' early career (Jord. *Get*. 176; Merobaud. *Carm*. 4.42-43; Merobaud. *Pan.* 2.110-5, 119-20; Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.8; Zos. 5.36.1). On her allegedly royal blood Merobaud. *Carm*. 4.17.
[303] Clover 1978, 172.
[304] Marcellinus has this to say (s.a. 432): *Pelagiam uxorem suam ualde locupletem nulli alteri nisi Aetio nupturam fore exhortans.*

very rich by the time of Bonifatius' death.[305] It is also possible that the decision of marrying Pelagia to Aetius was taken by Bonifatius' the Gothic bucellarii, who were a byproduct of Bonifatius' marriage with Pelagia in the first place.[306] Now that their beneficiary died and Aetius clearly became the strongman of the west, these soldiers may also have urged their princess to go over to Aetius' side with themselves.[307]

Perhaps the most irregular yet effective material incentive that brought in support and loyalty was spoils won after a successful battle. In the handbook written for generals by Onasander the author urges commanders to let soldiery to plunder conquered cities and baggage trains and carry away spoils so that they may become more eager for further violent endeavors (34.4-5). Soldiers in this period followed their leaders not only for their warlike virtues, but also because their commanders were the ones who could award them with spoils of war,[308] two great expectations of the soldiery, as Augustine's letter to Bonifatius demonstrates (Aug. *Ep*. 220.6).

Over the spoils of war, as Shatzman has argued, the Roman general had complete authority, but even if such a statement goes far too extreme, as Churchill has proposed,[309] there should be little doubt that generals of Rome made good use of sharing the spoils of war with their supporters for their own benefit. Enriching *amici* and *clientes* through this way, was common in the late Republic as it made soldiers and clients "indebted to the general, and it cost him nothing"[310] and the same practice undoubtably endured in late antiquity as the business of war endured.

Of course, the inability to campaign due to unfavorable season[311] or other circumstance such as lacking financial resources could have negative effected generals' *auctoritas* over their troops. Augustine's letter in question bears witness to this fact, in which the bishop laments the looting of the African locals by Bonifatius' troops. The reason for the looting, as one may

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[305] *PLRE* II, Pelagia 1. Pelagia's wealth alone may be offered as sufficient reason for Aetius to marry her.

[306] Scharf 1989, 143, 146.

[307] The suggestion made by Scharf 1989, 146 that Pelagia's *bucellarii* may have remained neutral in the brief rivalry between Aetius and Sebastianus shortly after the former's rivalry with Bonifatius, if true, may lead us to assume that Pelagia acted with a calculating mind and waited to see who would come out on top so that she would only then throw her support over that side to guarantee her survival. This, in my opinion, makes a much more plausible story for Pelagia's marriage to Aetius than the dramatized scene we read in Marcellinus Comes.

[308] Cleary 2013, 351.

[309] Shatzman 1972, 177-205. For a colder headed approach to the same subject, see: Churchill 1999.

[310] Churchill 1999, 115.

[311] In antiquity campaigning season usually lasted from early Spring to late Autumn, but invasions could still take place in winter (Krentz 2008, 154-5).

infer from the letter, was apparently that at the time the comes Africae was in the middle of a rivalry with the court of Ravenna as a result of Aetius' machinations and this had put a strain on his capability to meet the material needs of his soldiers. Just like Gainas' case in 395 quoted above, once a general fell out of favor with the central government, his financial capabilities could become seriously limited, forcing them to solely rely on their own private possessions. When generals had to depend completely on their own means in such cases, as that of Bonifatius' shows, this was insufficient to satisfy large group of followers. The result could easily be what we read in Augustine's letter: generals could find them a situation in which they had to turn a blind eye their soldiers' crime for the sake of continuing to command their loyalty.

So important a role played the ability of richly distributing money and awards that even though supported by both the governments of Ravenna and Constantinople, Marcellinus of Dalmatia, a rival of Ricimer, could not prevent the troops under his command from switching their allegiance to Ricimer when the latter enticed them with *praemia militia*. What he had promised them and what was actually paid, we are not informed, but those troops certainly regarded Ricimer's proposal more appealing than to continue serving under a generalissimo they know. This historical case reveals in what terms soldiers of the era worked. Their sole interest lay in getting material awards in return for their service and apparently the sooner the better.

Power and wealth were inextricably connected in the ancient world. As noted by Garlan, "each fed on the other […] power was used to seize wealth […] wealth was seized in order to enhance power."[312] Generalissimos of the western empire worked within the same context, hence, for the western Roman empire of the fifth century Demosthenes' words on the medium that glued generals and soldiers still rang true. A general could not command obedience without money (Dem. *Phil*. 4.24) and money could most easily be obtained through wars, the business that brought, if executed successfully, plenty of profits that could be exchanged for more power and loyalty,[313] and the generalissimos of the age believed not unjustifiably that waging a war was a business best undertaken in a position recognized by the government.

[312] Garlan 1975, 183.
[313] Aymard 1957; Finley 1985, 76-7.

3.2.4. The African *Annona*

Before concluding this part, a special brief mention must be made regarding the African *annona* by taking into consideration that it was region tied rather than a universal asset generalissimos could anywhere claim for themselves. Therefore, it cannot be placed next to the key virtues and practices we have enumerated for generalissimos, but nevertheless it was an ancillary asset or rather a very effective political weapon that came into play when one of the rival commanders hailed from north Africa.

The weaponization of the grain shipment from Africa to Italy is already attested in the late Republic.[314] In late antiquity, the responsibility to oversee the collection and control of the grain shipment from this region concerned the *praefectus annonae Africae*, who would in return answer to the *praefectus praetorio Italiae*, but since these two ranks were purely civilian and had no military capabilities, an ambitious *comes Africae*, the holder of the highest military command in Africa,[315] could and did easily decide what to do with all that grain.

When he decided to stop the shipmen altogether, this would lead to catastrophic results for the city of Rome since the city almost exclusively depended on the grain from Africa to feed its inhabitants.[316] Even a few days of delay of the shipment could and did result in famine shortly to be followed by civilian turmoil, who would blame the city authorities as the source of their problem.[317]

In an attempt to curb Stilicho's influence at Honorius' court and eventually eliminate him, Gildo, the *comes et magister utriusque militiae per Africam*, held up the grain supply to Rome and declared his allegiance for the eastern emperor Arcadius in 397-8, thus becoming the first late antique generalissimo who weaponized the African grain in a rivalry with a fellow commander.[318] This must have had no small effect upon Stilicho's regime, since in Claudian we read of an impending famine and the supreme general's attempts to alleviate the situation by bringing grain from Spain and Gaul (*Gild*. 68-74, 102-4).

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[314] With the examples of Pompeius Magnus and Sextus Pompeius (Linn 2012, 305; Vervaet 2020).

[315] Africa fell to Roman hands after the successful termination of the Third Punic War in 146 BCE and remained under direct Roman control until the Vandals' arrival in the early fifth century CE, who captured its most prominent city Carthage and the province *Africa Proconsularis* in 439.

[316] Jones *LRE*, 695-705; Sirks 1991; Wijnendaele 2015. Africa's importance for the empire primarily lay in its wealthy agricultural production, primarily grain and olives. Due to its closeness to Sicily, it also could be used as a springboard into the mainland Italy, and of course, vice versa.

[317] Welch 2012, 54-5, 239-40.

[318] Wijnendaele 2017, 13.

Soon after the same tactic was successfully employed by the *comes Africae* Heraclianus, who did not recognize the puppet emperor Alaric set up in Rome in 409 and cut the grain shipments to the city.[319] The result was hunger and allegedly cannibalism (Zos. 6.11.2; Procop. 3.2.27). Bonifatius, although we have no direct evidence to support the following inference, possibly did the same when he decided to support Galla Placidia, when the latter was exiled from Ravenna to Constantinople. As a witness we may call upon Olympiodorus' statement that Bonifatius did all he could to help Placidia (Olymp. *fr*. 40). Why, then, should Bonifatius' help have not included the stopping of the grain shipment to put pressure on Placidia's enemies? After all, there had been two *comites Africae* before him who demonstrated how important a role *annona* could play in times of crises. All the same, as Wijnendaele has noted,[320] even the implication of such a threat would have been sufficient, for just as we have noted frequently, the mere implication of violence without materialization could still give results. And if we are to interpret Castinus' attack upon Bonifatius in Africa during the civil war between Ioannes and Theodosius II, it seems not too far-fetched to entertain the idea that Castinus wished to solve the problem of *annona* once and for all by taking the region, whether Bonifatius had already cut the shipment or not.[321]

From Ioannes' failed usurpation in 425 to the fall of *Africa Proconsularis* and Carthage in 439 there are no other instances of the African *annona* having been utilized as a political weapon. By the 430s Africa had already a greater problem to deal with: the Vandals. Their arrival was not only the harbinger of a financial catastrophe for the west but also the end of *comitiva Africae*.

[319] Oost 1966, 236.
[320] Wijnendaele 2015, 59.
[321] Wijnendaele 2015, 63.

CHAPTER 4. THE METHODOLOGY OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

For the period and geography under focus here, methods used to eliminate rivals and potential threats on the political stage can be grouped under two main headings: preemptive strikes and direct confrontations. The first heading has five subheadings: i) appeasement; ii) sabotaging power and influence; iii) withholding honors; iiii) branding the enemy; and v) cashiering, removal from command, exile. The second main heading, on the other hand, has three subheadings: i) preemptive assaults; ii) the use of naked force; and iii) attempts at reasserting the imperial authority. To go over these one by one and in detail with the help of picked historical cases is the emphasis of the chapter 4.

4.1. Preemptive Strikes

4.1.1. Appeasement

Appeasement was a preemptive way of eliminating the threat ambitious men posed by satiating their desires of power and wealth just enough so that they might refrain from resorting to illegitimate means to satisfy their wants. It was method reigning emperors and their governments frequently had recourse to in order to maintain the equipoise between their generals. As such, it was a method favored by the weaker side, that is, the side for which military option was not feasible on account of limited resources. Lacking either the means or perhaps the confidence whether they could get rid of such powerful individuals by any other means at that time, appeasement seemed to them the safest, perhaps the only, course. But historical evidence from the period shows that this method usually worked in the opposite way, in that making the appeased individual bolder. For power and significance of a man was measured in late antiquity by the ranks and titles he had been given and what the imperial court did to appease him most of the time ended up stoking the fires of his passion for further honors and authority.

A case in point is the early career of Flavius Aetius. With the threat of further hostilities with Aetius and his army of Huns, like Damocles' sword, hanging above the exhausted west in 425, at a time just another page of a civil war was closed with the help of Constantinople, the newly established government of Valentinian III could see no other option than to appease the powerful Aetius, who had fought on the usurper's side, by awarding him the military rank of *comes* (Philost. 12.14). By doing so, the government had solved the immediate problem, that is Aetius' Huns, whom the general sent back home after his reconciliation with the new emperor

(Prosp. s.a. 425; Cass. s.a. 425; Jord. *Rom*. 328; Philost. 12.14). That Aetius' appeasement could not be a long-term solution soon became apparent, however. In 432, Aetius, after an unsuccessful civil war caused by his desire to be the strongman of the west against the champion of the government, once again advanced the threat of the Huns against Valentinian III to force him into submission (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron. Gall*. *452* s.a. 433), in which he once more succeeded, since the young emperor, just like seven years ago, could offer no remedy when confronted by Aetius' Hunnic soldiers, accepting Aetius' demands to become the first *magister militum* of the west.

One can hardly blame Valentinian III for giving in to the general's demands. Valentinian III's government was only able to seize the western diadem with the help of Theodosius II, the eastern Roman emperor. The western forces had originally sided with the usurper Ioannes. Having been defeated by Theodosius II's forces in the civil war, their condition, both in numbers and morale, must have been low to fight another battle so quickly against Aetius and the Huns. That his champion Bonifatius died of his wounds shortly after his victory over Aetius also robbed him of his last capable military force. This plausible condition of Valentinian III's army should answer why the new western government failed to solve the problem of Aetius on the battlefield and desperately sought a solution in appeasement.[322]

Already in 430 Valentinian III's government had witnessed firsthand that appeasement is a method by which a man like Aetius could not be pacified (the previous *magister militum* Felix had been murdered by the machinations of Aetius who wished to replace him (Prosp. s.a. 430; Hyd. s.a. 430; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201), it resorted to the same appeasement strategy in 432 before Aetius and Bonifatius came to open conflict. The only difference once, this time they decided upon appeasement through civilian honors, particularly, the consular insignia.

[322] The civil war of 432, fought by Bonifatius on behalf of Valentinian III's government against Aetius, was a battle between two private armies of two generalissimos, Aetius' *bucellarii* facing those of Bonifatius, and therefore, I suggest, it should not be wholly regarded as a battle between Aetius' forces and the forces of the western Roman government, even if for the moment Bonifatius' interests coincided with those of the government. On the other hand, Theodosius II's eastern expedition army, though victorious and possibly in a much better condition than its western counterpart, apparently was not looking for another fight either. This can be inferred from Aspar's indecisive battle against Aetius shortly after Ioannes' death and Aetius' reconciliation with Ravenna. Aetius' Hunnic forces were simply too much of a trouble and their total defeat would have probably led to serious men and materiél loss for Constantinople. That the east did not raise any objection to Aetius' reconciliation with Valentinian III alone can be interpreted in a way that Theodosius II was fine by solving the problem by appeasement.

This strategy was appeasement *par excellence*, for on the one hand it brought great prestige to its recipient, who is now recognized and awarded with one of the oldest and prestigious titles in Roman history. On the other hand, this was purely a civilian honor that brought along no actual power.[323] Especially adopted by the court in Constantinople,[324] the government of Valentinian III too now decided upon this course against Aetius.

But the historical context it took place within did more harm than good. For Valentinian III bestowed the consular insignia upon Aetius only to alleviate the impact of the antagonizing effect of his decision to award Bonifatius with the patriciate (Marcell. Com. s.a. 432), a title that long overshadowed the consular insignia and became associated with the first *magister militum*.

That Ravenna now championed Bonifatius over Aetius was also all too clear and this strategy soon cost the west the civil war of 432, fought specifically for the sake of being the sole *magister militum*.[325] Soon after, however, the western court decided to turn its weak hand into a rather strong one, by moving on from its appeasement strategy to a more aggressive one, which brings us to types of strategies employed to sabotage power and influence without seeking any appeasement.

4.1.2. Sabotaging Power and Influence: Antagonizing Strategies

Strategies that aimed at sapping the power and influence of opponents differed from the appeasement strategy in that while the latter was almost exclusively a strategy adopted by emperors and his court, specifically Valentinian III against Aetius, as being the weaker side and having no other resources to resort to and/or not wanting the rivalries escalate into armed conflicts, the former had also seen utilization by generals.

Sub-methods belonging to this type that will interest us here include i) debasement [of titles and offices] by inflation and withholding honors; ii) labelling rivals as *hostis publicus*; iii) removing generals from their post; and iv) cashiering. By adopting these strategies, ambitious names could be nipped in the bud, forcefully yet without causing great bloodshed, assuming

[323] Lee 2007, 68-9.

[324] Promotus and Timasius, generals who served under Theodosius I in 388 against Magnus Maximus were the recipients of the consular insignia in 389 (*PLRE* I, Flavius Promotus; Flavius Timasius); Zeno in 448, for his successful repulsion of the Hunnic attack against Constantinople (*PLRE* II, Fl. Zeno 6); Ioannes the Scythian and Ioannes Gibbus in 498 for their successful termination of the Isaurian war (*PLRE* II, Ioannes Scytha 34; Ioannes 93).

[325] O'Flynn 1983, 80.

it was not already too late. By too late it is meant before the ambitious individuals had already secured himself a strong power base in the form of substantial armed following, against which no force of equal strength could be advanced. At that point, such methods merely worked to stir the target rival to act and seek a more violent solution for the predicament he found himself in. This was the result Ravenna had to face when it theoretically followed an appeasement strategy in 432 against Aetius but in fact practiced a mixed and unbalanced strategy of appeasement-antagonizing.

Only in few cases western emperors attempted to break the dominance of a single individual by adopting this route, which, once taken, meant that they were operating far too outside of their passive ceremonial roles that turned into a tradition in the fifth century and running the risk of antagonizing their supreme generals. Since such cases are limited and they came into existence following emperors' appeasement strategy, it is proper that we first treat the execution of this specific method, fittingly called debasement by inflation.

The Law of 443: "Debasement by inflation"

The failed attempts at appeasing the ambitious Aetius and what followed had clearly revealed the ineffectuality of appeasement either by military or civil offices and titles. The former could only make the recipient hungry for more, for it paved the way for further advancement in the military hierarchy, while the latter ran through the danger of antagonizing its recipient, especially if it occurred within a context where one's rival were simultaneously awarded with a superior office and title, thus stripping the significance of the honor *per se*.

That Valentinian III's strategy of appeasement was in need of a modification thus became apparent and the sorely needed adjustment arrived in 443, perhaps after observing the finely tuned eastern model.[326] Though it is also possible that it owes its existence directly to the senator Petronius Maximus, an ambitious member of the Roman senate who wished to outrank his opponents and claim a higher place for himself.[327] All the same, in the *novella* (law) dated 13 March 443 and entitled *De honoratis et quis in gradu praeferatur* (*Nov. Val*. 11), emperor decrees that a person who wore the insignia of consulship twice should be given precedence

[326] Eastern emperors since Theodosius II (and apparently until Leo I) were able to keep their *magistri* and their ambitions in check by either carefully refraining from conferring too much honor upon a single individual or if they did so, by balancing their decision in that they equally allocated such honors and offices. Demandt 1970, 745ff; Stickler 2015, 300.

[327] Sundwall 1915, 105 n. 310; Clover 1978, 187; Barnes 1975, 158-9; McEvoy 2013, 282.

over to an individual who held the consulship only once, even if that person also obtained the patriciate.[328] What the promulgators of this law endeavored to achieve was decreasing the values of ranks and titles by multiplying them on the one hand and putting up another individual to challenge or even outrank others. By 443 Aetius was *patricius* and held two consulships, those of 432 and 436 (*CIL* 5.7530; *CIG* 9427). But by the time of the promulgation of this law, Petronius Maximus had just been awarded with his second consulship and in 445 he was awarded with the patriciate (*Nov. Val.* 19). According to this law, therefore, Maximus and Aetius were equals, at least in protocol. Now Aetius was not the prominent name in the west, if evaluated by the ranks and titles he held. In a world where such honors determined one's *dignitas* and fortunes, it must not have missed Aetius' attention that this law was an attempt to curb his hegemony or at least insult his prominence.

On the other hand there is slight possibility that the law, if the hypothesis that it owed its existence to Maximus in the first place be true, may have been aimed at Sigisvultus, who at the time held the rank of the *magister equitum*.[329] At any rate, it seems a strong possibility that Petronius Maximus was one way or another involved with the imperial edict, as all current possible scenarios give the impression that he would have been most benefitted by such an edict.

Whomever the promulgation actually targeted, scholars call this strategy "debasement by inflation"[330] and it is held probable that the attested record number of names that obtained the patriciate[331] under Valentinian III should be viewed as part of the strategy aimed at undermining Aetius' position.[332]

If the target was indeed Aetius, though a noble attempt, it was resorted to a little too late to have any serious affect upon him. Having left in its wake many successful battles in Gaul, with which he further augmented his image of a worthy general, and orchestrated the deaths of two *magistri*, Felix and Bonifatius, Aetius of the 440s was a generalissimo, who was, like a politician, settling down barbarian peoples in Gaul to his liking, where had the support of the

[328] On the discussion of this law, see: Barnes 1975, 158ff.

[329] Clover 1989, 109. For Sigisvult, see: *PLRE* 2. 1010. Twymen (1970, 503) claims it was a certain Flavius Avitus Marinianus whom Maximus wished to outrank.

[330] O'Flynn 1983, 84; Stickler 2015, 302-3.

[331] These names are as the following, regardless of the certain or probable nature of their patriciate: Helion, Felix, Bonifatius, Aetius, Merobaudes, Sigisvult, Petronius Maximus, Flavius Albinus, and Firminius.

[332] The originator of this view is Sirago (1961, 349 n. 2), with Oost (1968, 258) and Clover (1971, 36) and McEvoy (2013, 284) also holding plausible.

élite as a result of his frequent presence there. Although the new Hunnic king Attila set a barrier to further Hunnic auxiliaries to be sent to the empire for the moment,[333] he apparently had still enough manpower under his direct command to conduct campaigns for the west.[334] In brief, he had little to fear from Valentinian III's court.[335]

O'Flynn, therefore, is right in asserting that it was a strategy doomed to fail from the start.[336] The government lacked the resources to meet and engage Aetius' physical manifestation of power, his *bucellarii*, the workhorse of the western armies in that period, if Aetius ever decided to challenge the court's attempts in devaluating his position. Aetius must have felt himself secure in his position for he did not resort to such extreme tactics. It is said that he could easily parry such attacks by creating new titles for himself to affirm his primacy, if he ever felt really threatened.[337] All the same, this proved unnecessary, for in 446 Aetius once again emphasized his primacy also in protocol, by obtaining the consular insignia for the third time in 446 (Merobaud. *Pan*. II). Debasement by inflation could apparently only work as a remedy if applied before it was already too late.

If, however, Sigisvultus or any other name was the actual target, then the law must have had more to do with outranking opponents. So long as we cannot learn the real story behind its promulgation together with who gave the law its impetus, we can only speculate.

Aetius and Sigisvultus: Friends or Foes?

Sigisvultus was a Gothic general[338] who first appears in records when he was sent against Bonifatius in 427 (Prosp. s.a. 427). He had shared the consulship with Aetius for the year 437 (*CIG* 9427, *CIL* 9.1366). In 440, together with Aetius, he was responsible of Italy's defenses against potential Vandal attacks that may come from North Africa (*Nov. Val*. 9). By 440, his title was the *comes et magister utriusque militiae*, but at this date he must have been one of Aetius' subordinates.[339] His military activities, however, point out to the fact that Aetius was not the

[333] Oost 1968, 258; Thompson 1996, 137-8.
[334] Mathisen 1989, 75-6; McEvoy 2013, 253.
[335] McEvoy 2013, 285.
[336] O'Flynn 1983, 84.
[337] O'Flynn 1983, 84.
[338] Schönfeld 1911, 206-7.
[339] Mathisen claims that Sigisvultus held the highest military position, even above Aetius, in the west between the years 432-5, and was only later demoted after Aetius' rise. I fail to see how Aetius would have been okay with an equal, regardless of his personal feelings toward him, after spending the years between 430-3 in zealously eliminating his opponents for the strongman position one by one (Felix in 430, Bonifatius in 432, Sebastianus in 432-3). For Mathisen's reading of the events between 432-5, see: Mathisen 1999, 173-96.

only man capable of displaying military skill in this period.[340] This makes it likely, in my opinion, that he held the patriciate sometime during his career, the year 448 being a strong candidate. Such a scenario, as at least according to one scholar, must have made him Aetius' rival,[341] as the duplication of *patricii* would have no doubt annoyed Aetius, since he would have imagined the danger of a patrician with military prowess could possess to position.[342] But the proof of his patriciate rests on a single source, only attested in Constantius of Lyons' *Vita Germani* (*V. Germani* 36).[343]

Accordingly, here we have a couple of possible scenarios to entertain. If Sigisvultus indeed obtained the patriciate in 448 and Aetius regarded him as a threat,[344] he may have decided to get rid of him, for after all, Aetius had a certain knack in eliminating his rivals, and this may explain Sigisvultus' sudden disappearance from the sources shortly after receiving his patriciate. But the argument for such a scenario would rest on a weak foundation. No source indicates the two fell out or even whether Sigisvultus died or not. He simply vanishes from the records. I believe, if Sigisvultus were eliminated in some way, a *magister militum* and a *patricius*, at least one source would find it noteworthy to mention. But this begs another question. Why would Aetius kill him? Even if Sigisvultus was a *magister militum* and *patricius*, and held a consulship once, according to the law of 443 it was Aetius who still held the precedence in protocol.[345] Though this suggestion may be brushed off aside by proposing the argument of a preemptive strike on Aetius' part, such an argument a priori accepts that Aetius' hegemony in the 440s was still not firmly established, a completely diametrical picture to the ease with which Aetius behaved himself in the same period.

It seems rather more probable, given the undeniable dominance of Aetius in the west, that the patriciate of Sigisvultus, if ever occurred, must have been realized with Aetius' blessings.[346] Since the late 420s Sigisvultus had been serving under Aetius: he led the first embassy to

[340] Stickler 2015, 302.

[341] Ensslin 1931, 467f. For a view that supports the idea that bestowal of honors and ranks upon Aetius' subordinates would threaten his hegemony, see: Twyman 1970, 499-502.

[342] Unlike the practice in the east, it was rare in the west for two generals to hold the patriciate simultaneously. For the discussion of another possible case within the context of a rivalry, see the rivalry of Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Ricimer below.

[343] For Sigisvultus' probable patriciate, see: Barnes 1975, 158-9.

[344] Twyman 1970, 500 indeed sees them as enemies.

[345] This explanation also eliminates the argument that their shared consulship was meant to create a balance among the generals (Mathisen 1999, 193-4).

[346] According to Clover (1978, 190) appointments made during this period in the west were all Aetius' decisions.

Bonifatius when the latter fell out of Ravenna's in 427-9; he shared a consulship with him, and joined him in defense of Italy. At no point, the two appear to have fallen into a dispute or Aetius openly resented Sigisvultus. The generals appear to have been more like allies than rivals.[347] As McEvoy asserts, "it is hard to believe Sigisvultus would have enjoyed the long career he did if he had been Aetius' enemy."[348]

Few words need to be said also on Sigisvultus' joint consulship with Aetius in 437. A date prior to the law of 443, it has been suggested that the consulship of Sigisvultus was meant to balance Aetius' high ambitions.[349] I suggest that this can hardly be the case, for this one was Sigisvultus' first, but Aetius' second consulship. If a goal of parity were really pursued, a different individual other than Aetius should have been picked for the honor.[350] In late antiquity consulships were usually shared between the west and the east, each naming their own choice. The consuls of 437 instead both hailed from the west, probably an eastern gesture that accompanied Valentinian III's marriage celebrations with Theodosius II's daughter that took place in the same year (Marcell. Com. s.a. 437; Soc. 7.44). It is also possible that the bestowal of the consulship was an indication of Constantinople's content with Aetius and the western affairs,[351] whereas Sigisvultus' participation in the same honor may be linked to Aetius' content with his subordinate.

4.1.3. Withholding Honors

Just as bestowing illustrious honors and titles to appease specific individuals, denying such prestigious honors was also a strategy in waging bloodless wars against political rivals. A fine example of this strategy is owed to Valentinian III's *primicerius sacri cubiculi*[352] Heraclius.

By late antiquity eunuchs had been a part of ancient Mediterranean history already for centuries,[353] but with the transition from the principate system of government to the dominate with Diocletian and Constantine I, eunuchs found it easier to exert influence over emperors, now that they controlled the access to the *sacrum cubiculum*, the imperial bedchamber.[354]

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[347] Clover 1978, 190-1.
[348] McEvoy 2013, 283.
[349] Mathisen 1999, 193-4.
[350] As is also pointed out by McEvoy 2013, 283.
[351] Clover 1971b, 362-3 n. 52.
[352] The second most highest office within the hierarchy of the palace eunuchs, after the *praepositus sacri cubiculi*.
[353] Hopkins 1978.
[354] Though Diocletian is held responsible for the growing power of eunuchs (*cubicularii*) at the court, the first *cubicularius* deemed worthy of mention by name is attested under Constantine I's reign (*Lib. Pont*. 34.14). The

Heraclius, who fulfilled the office of the *primicerius sacri cubiculi* in 455, is mentioned in the sources as one of the lead actors not only in Aetius's downfall (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 200-1; Prosp. s.a. 454; Hyd. s.a. 454) but also what shortly followed can be cited as testaments to eunuchs' influence over imperial politics.

After he and Petronius Maximus worked successfully in concert in manipulating Valentinian III to murder Aetius in 454 (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201), Maximus quickly petitioned for the patriciate to be bestowed upon him. He also did not fail to add a third consulship to his list of demands (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201). The powerful senator obviously held it perfectly in line with the period's standards to continue the trend of a ceremonial emperor and a strongman. But Heraclius, and probably to some extent Valentinian III, now a 34-year-old adult, had apparently little desire for the continuations of this trend. As a result, they refused Maximus' demands (Prisc. *fr*. 30.39-51; John Ant. *fr*. 201.4),[355] eventually creating an enemy out of him. They did not kill Aetius, so it is said, to give way to another Aetius.

That they wished to put an end to the days when the *magistri militum* enjoyed hegemony is discernable from their policy in the aftermath of Aetius' death. Aetius was denounced in a quickly convened senate meeting and envoys sent to barbarian peoples with whom Aetius was on good terms to ensure their support (Hyd. s.a. 454), since Valentinian III apparently feared a backlash from them, assuming the usual practice of agreements becoming void might apply to Aetius' death, the person who made the agreements with those barbarians in the first place.[356] Lastly, Valentinian III tried to bring back the soldier-emperor image both by personally examining the soldiers (John Ant. *fr*. 201.5) and minting coins carrying warlike attributes (*RIC* 10.163-4). All these attempts were laudable, but like a flower sprouting in the wrong season, doomed to wither away.

Valentinian III and Heraclius were indeed so careful to keep the office of the first *magister militum* vacant to prevent the rise of another dangerous strongman. But at the same they urgently needed a man of military experience and prestige in the absence of Aetius. So they

praepositus sacri cubiculi was ranked fourth in importance in the *Notitia Dignitatum* right after the *praefectus praetorio,* the *praefectus urbi* and the senior *magister militum* (*Not. Dig*. *occ*. 1.8; *or*. 1.9; Jones *LRE*, 566-70).

[355] Barnes 1975, 156-7.

[356] Elton 2018, 91.

summoned Majorian whom they made *not* the supreme general but the *comes domesticorum* (*Chron. Gall. 511* s.a. 456; Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 5.305-11).[357]

Majorian's first task, we are told, was to win over Aetius' *bucellarii* (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.306-8). That his very first assignment was to try to win over Aetius' private army should tell us the strength and danger such forces possessed by the middle of the fifth century. As it afterwards proved, the continuity of Valentinian III's independent regime depended upon the successful termination of task. Ultimately, Majorian failed in persuading them to side with Valentinian III, who had killed their general with his own hands (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.306-8).[358] *Bucellarii* had sided with Maximus, who urged them to kill emperor and his eunuch as an act of revenge for the murder of their *patronus* (Prisc. *fr*. 30.51-7; John Ant. *fr*. 201.4). They realized their design with success on 16 March 455 at Campus Martius in broad daylight, while emperor was inspecting the troops in a PR move for his soldier-emperor image.[359]

By withholding Aetius' honors from Maximus and not appointing a new *magister militum*, Valentinian III and Heraclius thought they could keep the ambitious Maximus or anyone else from becoming a second Aetius. All attempts of Valentinian III after Aetius' death to secure his power base could have succeed if the circumstances had been different.[360] They did not even fail to factor the importance of the *bucellarii* into their calculations. But they were fighting against what had become the new norm in the recent decades. Valentinian III, for all his efforts at demonstrating himself an emperor ready for military endeavors, made no impression upon the western forces. Frank asserts that the fact that two of Aetius' Hunnic *bucellarii* were assigned to Valentinian III as *protectores* should underline the fact that emperor lacked loyal soldiers to himself alone to fill even the ranks of his own bodyguard unit.[361] This should occasion no surprise as by this time Aetius' men would have themselves deeply entrenched within the government.[362] This can also explain the reported indifference of the soldiers occupying the Campus Martius to the murder of their emperor. Disinterest and indifference

[357] Oost 1968, 286-7; McEvoy 2013, 298. The duty of this office entailed commanding emperors' *protectores* (imperial bodyguards) units and its holder could be directly promoted to the office of the *magister militum*. Diocletian was a *comes domesticorum* before he was hailed as emperor (Aur. Vict. *Caes*. 39.1).

[358] Oost 1964, 24-5; McEvoy 2013, 299.

[359] The primary sources for Valentinian III's murder are numerous: Prisc. *fr*. 30.58-72; 30.3.1-9; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.5; 200.2; Evag. 2.7; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455; Hyd. s.a. 455; Jord. *Rom*. 334; Prosp. s.a. 455; Joh. Mal. 14.14; Theoph. AM 5947; Agnellus 42.

[360] McEvoy 2013, 300.

[361] Frank 1969, 190.

[362] McEvoy 2013, 299.

to violence is no less effected by hatred and disdain felt for the other side, feelings or rather lack thereof some of Aetius' soldiers apparently felt for Valentinian III.[363]

The strategy of denying honors could also only work if what was denied to ambitious men such as Maximus could be backed up either by actual or implied threat of violence. Once Majorian failed to convince Aetius' *bucellarii*, it was apparent that the rest of Valentinian III's reign would lack both, which made his position explicitly vulnerable for any attacks from his enemies.

It must be pointed out that Maximus did not or could not mobilize all of Aetius' *bucellarii* under himself, however.[364] The records state two names (Jord. *Rom.* 334; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455) and these two likely sided with Maximus merely to avenge their commander's death by removing the murderer. Maximus' enmity to Valentinian III was what brought them together. Avenging a wrong was a long-established aspect of ancient relations and its macrocosm played out on a grand scale in wars. Examples range from Xerxes' war against Greece in 480-79 BCE to avenge the defeat at Marathon in 490 BCE (Hdt. 7.5) or Alexander's Persian campaign to avenge the attempted Persian invasion of Greek πόλεις to the Roman expedition in 16 CE to avenge the defeat at the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE or any other imperial Roman punitory campaigns both across the Rhine and the Danube to avenge previous wrongdoings of barbarian tribes.[365]

4.1.4. Branding the Enemy

The late Republican and early Imperial practice of legally branding internal enemies[366] of the state as *hostes*, and after the second century, *hostes publici*, remained in usage in the fourth and fifth centuries.[367] Declaration of *hostis publicus* would mean that the individual(s) had become

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[363] For the discussion of indifference to violence, see: Popitz 1992, 68-71.

[364] That his extremely brief reign after the murder of Valentinian III as emperor ended by lynching on the streets of Rome (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. et. *Post*. s.a. 455; Prosp. s.a. 455; Hyd. s.a. 455; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455; Cass. s.a. 455) should also say something about his lack of armed followers.

[365] Hall 2008, 89-90.

[366] Macmullen 1992.

[367] Perhaps its first historical instance occurred in 88 BCE, when Marius, Sulpicius Rufus, and several other men were declared *hostes* (Livy, *Per*. 77; Cic. *Brut*. 168; Val. Max. 3.8.5). In the imperial era emperor Nero (Suet. *Ner*. 49.2) and the usurper Aemilianus (Zos. 1.28.2-3; Zon. 12.21) are some of the well-known names who were branded with the infamous title. For the history of *hostis publicus* in the Republican and early Imperial Rome, see: Bauman 1983. The reader may ask why, among other terms that define internal enemies, *hostis publicus* is chosen here. As Cañizar Palacios 2006, 137-8 demonsrates, *hostis publicus* was the most preferred term used to define internal enemies in legislation throughout the Roman empire, accompanied by other negative terms such as *tyrannus*, *praedonis*, *latro* and *perduellis* (Doyle 2014). However, these were usually applied to usurpers, as *Codex Theodosianus* attests: there

enemies of the legitimate government and its magistrates had now the power to kill those branded as such under the pretext of protecting the interests of the commonwealth.[368] To cite Gaughan's definition of it:

> "The *hostis* declaration identified the wrong-doers, and it converted them from citizens of Rome into enemies of Rome. This conversion meant not simply that these men were no longer Roman citizens, and therefore not deserving of protection, it meant that they were active enemies of Rome: not only could they be killed, but they should be."[369]

Sulla, both in 88 and 81 BCE, resorted to this strategy and had declared his enemies *hostes*, whereby he sought to legitimize the murders of his personal enemies (*inimici*), who now became also the enemies of the Republic.[370]

Although the traditional denotation of the term is applicable to its official late antique usage, where it found application in handful of cases, all of them concerning ambitious generals, the historical instances of its practice in the period and geography in question that rested on different conditions require us to take a more nuanced look.

For one thing, since for the following cases we are only interested in the official and legal usage of the term,[371] the propagandistic nature of legislation in late antiquity should be taken into account in our analysis. This is clear from the fact that most official decrees concerning *hostes publici* declarations took place after the public enemies were successfully dealt with.[372] Gildo's (400), Stilicho's (408), and Heraclianus' (413) posthumous labelling as *hostes publici* fall into this category.

After Stilicho's subordinate Mascezel put an end to the *comes Africae* Gildo's revolt against Stilicho's regime in early 398 (Claud. *Gild*. 1.9-13; Oros. 7.36.12; Zos 5.11.3-4; Marcell. Com. s.a. 398; *Chron. Gall*. *452* s.a. 398; Prosp. s.a. 398),[373] the renegade count of Africa was officially declared *hostis publicus* in 400 (*Cod. Theod*. 7.8.7). Not even a decade later, after Stilicho fell victim to Olympius' *coup d'état*, the former was labelled as public enemy (*Cod. Theod*. 7.16.1). Likewise, again during Honorius' reign, the term was posthumously applied to Heraclianus,

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are more than thirty instances where the term is applied to usurpers between 314 (*Cod. Theod*. 5.8.1) and 426 (*Cod. Theod*. 9.42.24) (Cañizar Palacios 2006, 146).

[368] Bauman 1983, 276 n. 1.

[369] Gaughan 2010, 127.

[370] Gaughan 2010, 126.

[371] By official or legal usage, I mean the term's handling in legislation and leaving out its unofficial and/or literary employment, as, for instance, one of Symmachus' letters (*Ep*. 4.5) suggests that Gildo was already a *hostis* in their eyes while he was still alive (Alan Cameron 1970, 103; Matthews 1975, 267-70).

[372] Cañizar Palacios 2006, 130.

[373] Mascezel was Gildo's brother (*PLRE* I, Mascezel).

after he failed to compete with the *magister militum* Constantius, his rival (*Cod. Theod*. 9.40.21; 15.14.13). In all three cases the properties and wealth of the dead generals were annexed: in the first two cases by *res privata* (emperor's treasury), in the latter by Constantius (Olymp. *fr*. 23.1-9).[374]

The pattern of all *hostes* declarations under emperor Honorius is similar. Official labelling came only after their enemies were dead and within a context that announced the absorption of their property. Hence it follows that *hostes publici* decrees found in the *Codex Theodosianus* aimed at a twofold effect: first, the decrees sent a message to the élite, always the primary target audience of such official declarations,[375] announcing that the promulgators of the law are the victorious hence the legitimate side, while the losing side was painted to the pleasure of their conquerors,[376] which helped justifying their murders and so carried a propagandistic value, and second, they served as a means to announce the transfer of the wealth and properties of the dead men.

In the single case we can attribute to after Honorius' reign, which we cannot affirm by any laws in the codices, it is a different matter: the term was apparently actively used as a weapon, which makes it more akin to the late Republican usage of the term, like Sulla had employed it against his *inimici*.[377]

To make a demonstration of its first use in our period this described context, we may summon Stilicho's labelling as *hostis publicus* by the eastern court, as it forms an elimination strategy while the target of the law was still alive. Stilicho was declared *hostis publicus* by the east in 397 at the instigation of the powerful eunuch Eutropius, who inherited the anti-Stilicho stance of

[374] On Stilicho's property: *CIL* 6.1732-4.

[375] Alan Cameron 1998, 130.

[376] Cañizar Palacios 2006, 133.

[377] Though it concerns a strategy employed by Constantinople, I think Stilicho's labelling as *hostis publicus* by the eastern court should be noted here as well, as it forms an elimination strategy while the target of the law was still alive. Stilicho was declared *hostis publicus* by the east in 397 at the instigation of the powerful eunuch Eutropius, who inherited the anti-Stilicho stance of the late praetorian prefect Rufinus, another rival of Stilicho (Zos. 5.11.1; Alan Cameron 1970, 176; Matthews 1975, 272) whom Theodosius I had nominated as guardian of Arcadius in the east in 394 (Alan Cameron 1970, 63), which naturally conflicted with his decision of naming Stilicho as the guardian over both of his sons at the time of his death (Elton 2018, 148-9). The official declaration was followed by Gildo's change of allegiance to the east after cutting the grain transfer to Rome in an attempt to hurt Stilicho's power base there (*Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 397; Claud. *Gild*. 66-7, 70, 75, 256ff, Claud. *Eutrop*. 1.399-400, Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 1.172ff; Symm. *Ep*. 4.5; Oros. 7.36.2-3; Zos. 5.11.2; Alan Cameron 1970, 93; McEvoy 2013, 157). Stilicho's success both in military and political arenas appears to have annulled any negative effect the notorious label carried, however, by not only bringing Gildo down to his knees but also by attributing the victory to both Honorius and Arcadius, a clever political maneuver to reconcile himself with the eastern emperor (*CIL* 6.1187 and 31256; McCormick 1986, 117; McEvoy 2013, 158). According to one scholar, the way Stilicho dealt with Gildo had caused a rift between himself and the senate, however, which would in time become only greater (McLynn 1994, 368).

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Next, we have the *magister militum* Felix' branding his rival the *comes Africae* Bonifatius *hostis publicus* in 427.[384] That Bonifatius surrounded Carthage with walls and opened a mint in the same place probably helped Felix to sow the seeds of suspicion in emperor's mind.[385] Add to this that the poor loyalty records of the previous *comites Africae*, Gildo and Heraclianus, were still fresh in memories, the contemporaries would have been inclined to view the whole situation as another case of a troublesome general in Africa, especially considering this was

[378] Alan Cameron 1970, 176; Matthews 1975, 272.
[379] Alan Cameron 1970, 63.
[380] Elton 2018, 148-9.
[381] Alan Cameron 1970, 93; McEvoy 2013, 157.
[382] McCormick 1986, 117; McEvoy 2013, 158.
[383] McLynn 1994, 368.
[384] Prosp. s.a. 427; Ps.-Bonifatius, *Ep*. 10. Here, I take up the view of Wijnendaele (2015, 70) and side with contemporary account of Prosper for the rivalry between Felix and Bonifatius, disregarding Procopius' colored and non-contemporary account (Procop. 3.3.17-22) written by the eastern perspective, which names Aetius as Bonifatius' chief antagonist at the time. I argue that Aetius' and Bonifatius' violent rivalry in 432 affected the reading of the events of 427 in that it made some scholars downplay the role and importance of the primary generalissimo of the time, namely Felix, who had already removed some of his opponents from the picture in 426 (Prosp. s.a. 426), including the bishop Patroclus who had had supported the cause of Placidia. Now by aiming at Bonifatius, the champion of Placidia and the holder of the very important north Africa, no doubt he wished to further entrench his position with the death of a very dangerous potential rival. Clearly, he had both the pretext and resources to wage such a war against Bonifatius, unlike the only recently reestablished *comes* Aetius, who at that time was busy establishing his power base in Gaul. For scholars arguing for Aetius' primary role in this scenario: Collins 1991, 83; Mathisen 1999, 189-191; Graham 2006, 289 n. 55; Halsall 2007, 240. For Felix': De Lepper 1941, 49; Wood 1998, 533; Elia 1999, 54; Merrils and Miles 2010, 52; Wijnendaele 2015, 70.
[385] Though I do not think it would have mattered what Valentinian III personally thought about the whole situation. His government's meek acceptance of Aetius' demands just a couple of years before showed that in terms of resources and manpower they were in no place to reject the wishes of a general backed up by a substantial force.

the second time Bonifatius now had to defend himself against the forces sent by the imperial court. But *hostis publicus* declaration of a rival who was still alive carried weight only if it was supported by a substantial and capable force ready to act when necessary. This was exactly where Felix failed: the generals he sent against Bonifatius first turned on against each other and the last one alive finally fell victim to Bonifatius (Prosp. s.a. 327),[386] who went on to beat off the second attempt to dislodge him from Africa with the help of his private army.[387] Though Felix was determined to get rid of Bonifatius and sent Sigisvultus against him in 427 for this purpose (Prosp. s.a. 427), the imminent Vandal invasion of Africa[388] probably helped Bonifatius in his reconciliation with Ravenna in 429, thus cancelling his *hostis publicus* status.[389] In the light of these instances, it can be inferred that if the bestowal of *patricius* was the highest honorary title a generalissimo could obtain, *hostis publicus* was the lowest. Despite their contraposition they had something in common, however. Just as the title of *patricius* brought no practical advantages the moment of its bestowal but emphasized the prominence of its holder, a mere *hostis publicus* declaration could hardly bring any immediate practical disadvantages but rather carried a propagandistic value to make the recipient's unwanted presence public. Perhaps because of this reason its usage in the late antique west was limited to posthumous contexts, where it also displayed its real practicality in cases such as making the confiscation process of the property of "the public enemy" appear more legitimate to the élite and everyone else. All the same, Felix' declaration definitely does not appear to have made Bonifatius' situation any worse and that he was able to reconciliate later shows that it was not even regarded that seriously to an extent it could not be irrevocable.

The ancient tradition is not attested either under Aetius' nor Ricimer's regimes, though these men could well choose to resort to it: Aetius in Sebastianus' case and Ricimer in that of Marcellinus of Dalmatia, as we shall see. A possible reason for it may be that these generals

[386] On this expedition, see: Wijnendaele 2015, 72-4.

[387] Wijnendaele 2015, 74.

[388] If the figure of maximum 50,000 given for the Vandals be true (Procop. 3.5.18-9; Merrils 2004, 38), I very much suspect a movement of a group of people this size could have been done without anyone noticing it (Graham 2006).

[389] For the details of the campaign and how the peace talks possibly proceeded, see: Wijnendaele 2015, 81-6. Procopius (3.3.22-7) and Jordanes' claims (*Get*. 167-9) that Bonifatius invited Vandals to Africa to use them against Ravenna, though enjoyed some support in the past (Bury 1923, 245; Sirago 1961, 278 n.1; Diesner 1963, 113-4; Scharf 1989, 142; Elia 1999, 55; Collins 2000, 124 n. 23; Whitby 2000, 296 n.31) seems improbable (Clover 1966, 18-31; Pohl 2004, 40; Schwarz 2004, 51; Berndt 2008), as it cannot be corroborated by any other contemporary source (Merrils 2004, 51). It seems more plausible that the Vandals took advantage of the present turmoil in Africa, where they would be likely free of the Visigothic pressure on their back in Spain (Heather 2005, 265-6; Halsall 2007, 241; Traina 2009, 84; Wijnendaele 2015, 87-8) and hence decided to cross over to Africa.

knew that such labels did neither mean much nor bring any immediate advantages, especially in the face of the possibility that the recipient could annul it with actual use of violence, as the cases of Stilicho and Bonifatius had demonstrated.

4.1.5. Cashiering, Removal from Command, Exile

Arbogastes' tearing up his dismissal letter handed to him by emperor Valentinian II in 392 could have remained a singular anecdote, had the rest of the history of the western empire proved that the decision and power to remove generals from command remained only with emperors. For it had been, at least under traditional circumstances, the prerogative of emperors to decide whom to relieve from command, cashier, and exile. *Caesar* Julian had dispatched his *magister equitum* Lupicinus to Britain under the pretext of suppressing the Scots and Picts (Amm. 20.1.2-3) which was a decision motivated by his fears of him becoming a threat to his command in Gaul.[390] In the sixth century emperor Justinian, fearing his commander Belisarius' growing popularity and success in Italy, transferred him to the Persian front in 541. (Procop. 6.29.18-28, 6.30.1-2).

With emperors who lacked absolute authority to enforce their commands on account of their youth (Zos. 3.9.13),[391] this popular elimination strategy came to be practiced by the strong *magistri militum* of the period as well. Emperors' role in the instances we are about to see were mostly passive, so much so they offered no resistance even when their favorites in the army were forcefully sent to their retirement, lacking any means to hinder the wishes of their generals.

Already in 375, the year the last soldier-emperor died in the west, Merobaudes took advantage of the situation that culminated into his acclamation of the four-year old Valentinian II to get rid of several influential generals. Sebastianus, the *comes rei militaris*, was one of them:[392] he was eliminated by having been sent to a distant post (Amm. 30.10.3) upon the orders of Merobaudes, the only man who could benefit from such an elimination.[393] Ammianus

[390] Indeed, Lupicinus was later ordered by Constantius II with the delicate mission of readying a part of Julian's troops to be sent to the east (Amm. 20.4.3; Jul. *Ep. ad Ath.* 282d). Even with Lupicinus away, Julian still felt anxiety (Amm. 20.4.6) and fearing he would openly revolt, first cut all shipments to Britain (Amm. 20.9.9), then had him arrested on his return to Gaul (Jul. *Ep. ad Ath.* 281a-b).

[391] McEvoy 2013, 48-70.

[392] Not to be confused by a later Sebastianus, the son-in-law of the future generalissimo Bonifatius in the fifth century.

[393] McEvoy 2013, 57; Lee 2015, 104.

explicitly mentions Sebastianus' popularity with the troops as the reason of his removal. Under Valentinian I's reign, Sebastianus at least had once served under Merobaudes' command (Amm. 30.5.13), during which the latter highly likely had witnessed Sebastianus' military prowess and his popularity and noted the danger he might one day pose for himself. This explains his swiftness in acting against him, at a very suitable time when Sebastianus was still unaware of emperor Valentinian I's death.[394]

Under Stilicho's and Constantius' regimes between 395-421 the method seems to have fallen into disuse, perhaps due to a mix of these generalissimos' hegemony over the government and harmony with their subordinates. But once Constantius died as Constantius III in 421, several names did not wait long to jockey over to inherit Constantius' legacy.

Castinus and Bonifatius: Rivalry Over Constantius' Legacy

Asterius, about whom we know almost next to nothing except that he was the next new *patricius,* after enjoying a brief prominence, is nowhere to be seen in the records by 422. Factoring in the fact that Castinus and Bonifatius are the first names attested violently falling out due to their disagreement over who is going to be the strongman of the west, one may assume they had something to do with Asterius' disappearance. This inviting hypothesis rather fits the strategy of outright elimination and shall be pursued below.

The vanishing of Asterius did not only leave the seat of the strongman vacant, but also the command of military operations in Spain, which were now inherited by Castinus and Bonifatius.[395] But it was apparent from the very moment they came together that the duo would not see eye to eye. As such, reciprocal jealously swiftly turned them into rivals.[396] Our primary source for this rivalry, Prosper, attributes the cause to the new *magister militum* Castinus' exclusion of Bonifatius from participation in the campaign, who then fled to Africa, having regarded Castinus a troublesome and arrogant man (Prosp. s.a. 422).

I am of the opinion, however, that we should not be too hasty to side with the chronicler and join him in his judgement that portrays Castinus as the guilty party and Bonifatius a victim of

[394] Sebastianus' ignorance of the news must have to do with his compliance with Merobaudes' order, who probably had issued it in Valentinian I's name. Merobaudes had originally been secretly summoned to lead the new government in the immediate aftermath of Valentinian I's death (Amm. 30.10.2).

[395] By 422 the Siling Vandals and Suebi in Spain had been destroyed by the Goths which had been recently settled in Aquitania in Gaul in 418, and the remaining operations in Spain were against the Hasding Vandals and their allies.

[396] Kulikowski 2000b, 135; 2004, 174; McEvoy 2013, 216.

a wrongdoing. Prosper wrote his work from a papal perspective under the Theodosian dynasty and considering Castinus later sided with the usurper Ioannes in 423-5 who had fought against that dynasty, putting the blame on Castinus was the understandable choice instead of Bonifatius, who later sided with the Theodosian dynasty during the civil war. Our other source on what was happening during that time in Spain, Hydatius, does mention Castinus' eventually failed Spanish campaign, but does not mention any rivalry the cause of which was Castinus, claiming, however, that Bonifatius having left the imperial palace, invaded Africa (Hyd. s.a. 421). Though two sources differ on these details, Prosper's assertation that Bonifatius' flight to Africa was the beginning of *multorum laborum et malorum* (Prosp. s.a. 422) may have probably been shared by Hydatius as well, considering soon to be materialized in rivalries between Bonifatius, Felix, and Aetius.

All the same, being captives of Prosper's treatment of the case, we must move on. By Prosper's wording of the event (s.a. 422: *Qui Castinus praeclarum virum Bonifacium, ac bellicis rebus exercitatum, inepto et iniurioso imperio ab expeditionis suae societate avertit*), he must have meant one of the two things: either Castinus outright denied Bonifatius his share of the command which would have been assigned to him by the imperial court or Bonifatius was able to hold command for some time and was later removed by Castinus. In either case the *magister militum* clearly dismissed Bonifatius. But since they appear to have been in command as co-generals in the campaign one may rightly ask how did Castinus manage to force his decision over Bonifatius.

In the first place, Castinus outranked Bonifatius and therefore he was in justified position to dismiss Bonifatius from his command, regardless of the fact that both were named as the leading generals to lead the Spanish campaign. The former was by 422 the *magister utriusque militum* while the latter, if not *tribunus* (Aug. *Ep*. 220.7),[397] whose responsibility was to command imperial regiments (of the field army known as the *comitatenses*). Since he seems to have been holding this rank since c. 417, he must have been still lower ranked than the *magister militum*. Unfortunately, we simply do not know for sure what rank Bonifatius exactly held in this part of his life. One thing we can be sure about is that, since there could not be another first *magister militum*, Castinus was his superior.[398]

[397] Who would have commanded either 400 cavalry or 800 infantry (Drinkwater 1998, 292).
[398] Wijnendaele 2015, 47-8.

Both men did not lack influential supporters either, for in the aftermath of Constantius III's death and during the rivalry between Castinus and Bonifatius the court of Ravenna was undergoing a political crisis which saw two factions pitted against each other, one grouped behind emperor Honorius and the other behind his sister and late Constantius III's wife Galla Placidia (Olymp. *fr*. 40). It was within this context that between 422 and 423 several *comites rerum privatarum* and *praefecti praetorio per Italiam* were replaced in quick successions (Stein 1968, 275); Roman soldiers of Castinus and Placidia's Gothic auxiliaries came to blows on the streets (Olymp. *fr*. 38); and on the orders of Placidia two philosophers that belonged to Castinus' faction were killed (Marcell. Com. s.a. 424).

We should note, however, that this rivalry at the court between the two factions was not directly between Honorius and Galla Placidia, because doing so would mean giving Honorius a goal at this stage of his reign, such as asserting himself as the dominant figure in the west, but he was probably only a front figure used by those at the court (such as Castinus) who disliked Galla Placidia and her supporters. Placidia was no doubt invested in seeing her son Valentinian III as the next ruler of the west,[399] over whom she could wield much influence and therefore over the west. In this tremulous political atmosphere it makes much sense that Castinus and Placidia considered each other enemies.[400] Hence Placidia gave a subordinate command to Bonifatius in the significant Spanish campaign to have champion of her own, who would act as a counter-weight against Castinus,[401] who would have been perfectly content with Honorius' passive ceremonial role under his regime, which would be also a continuation of the regimes of Stilicho and Constantius.[402] His animosity to Bonifatius, therefore, can be explained by the fact that Bonifatius belonged to Placidia's faction, which was challenging Castinus' bid to unrivalled power by advancing forward a general of their own choosing.

Although Castinus outranked everyone, including Bonifatius, the latter, clearly enjoying *Augusta*'s support, was a strong challenger to his own power and authority.[403] Because of this reason it was essential for the first *magister militum* to find a way to get rid of his rival and as we have seen, he decided to deny Bonifatius the exercise of his command.

[399] Oost 1968, 169-71; O'Flynn 1983, 74-5.
[400] McEvoy 2013, 216.
[401] Wijnendaele 2015, 45.
[402] O'Flynn 1983, 74.
[403] Wijnendaele 2015, 53.

For a while he was the certain victor of this rivalry: on top of Bonifatius' successful removal from command his protector Galla Placidia was exiled to Constantinople (Olymp. *fr*. 40). It is probable that Castinus had something to do with driving a wedge between Honorius and Placidia that resulted in the latter's exile, for her removal to Constantinople was proved to be to Castinus' benefit, now that neither Honorius nor his successor Ioannes advanced other generals forward that Castinus appears to have regarded as a threat, and the generals named in the records during this brief hegemony Castinus enjoyed, are not attested to have had any conflicts with their supreme general.

Moreover, Castinus was awarded with the consulship of 424 (*CIL* 5.5206, 6281, 11.4996). But the precarious condition of his position was apparent when his consulship was not recognized in Constantinople.[404] That he let Bonifatius go alive also proved itself to be a mistake. After Ioannes was elevated to the western throne in 423, Bonifatius returned to the scene as the *comes Africae* and supported the cause of Placidia against Ioannes (Olymp. *fr*. 40; Prosp. s.a. 424). As such, Placidia's exile to Constantinople turned out to be a blessing, giving her a safe base from where she could continue her animosity against Castinus with the support of the eastern court on her back.

But before things came down to that point, Castinus would enjoy his hegemony over the west, first over Honorius until his death in mid-423 of dropsy at the age of 39 (Olymp. *fr*. 39.1-6; 39.2; Philost. 12.13), and then over the new *Augustus* Ioannes, who appears to have been raised to the purple by Castinus himself (Prosp. s.a. 424*: conivente*, *ut putabatur Castino*). The new emperor in the west had been a *primicerius notarium* (chief secretary) and naturally had no military background (Soc. 7.23.3), which would make Prosper's statement, that he was elevated by Castinus, more plausible, for a general such as Castinus would have obviously wished for a figure who would be content to play the ceremonial-emperor role.[405]

Ioannes' reign proved to be short lived, however, when the western forces could not match those of the east, Aetius and the Huns he gathered to support Ioannes having arrived too late.

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[404] "For one emperor to refuse to recognize the consuls of a co-emperor was a standard sign of hostility." (Bagnall 1987, 24).

[405] McEvoy 2013, 227. According to O'Flynn (1983, 174 n. 5), Constantius III's reign as emperor was only an "aberration". Oost (1968, 179) and Nagy (1990-1, 86) claim that Castinus had an arrangement with the eastern emperor Theodosius II concerning ruling the west as the eastern emperor's representative, which he later broke. McEvoy says that (2013, 229 n. 19), considering the fact that Castinus' consulship of 424 was not recognized by Constantinople, this is unlikely, but I posit that things may have changed for one or another reason. See here, Stein (1959, 565 n. 152), who asserts that Theodosius II in fact recognized Castinus' consulship.

Reminiscent of what had happened in 388 and 394, as was often the case with what followed *bella civilia*, the losing side was punished, and a new regime was established upon the ruins of its predecessor.[406] Amidst these changes, Castinus' punishment was merely a banishment (Prosp. s.a. 425: *quia videbatur Iohannes sine conniventia ipsius regnum non potuisse praesumere*).[407] Given the role Castinus played in all these, Theodosius II's punishment seems mild. It is curious that Castinus did not share the fate of his emperor. To give a plausible answer to Theodosius II's intentions here is very difficult, primarily because the surviving sources for the period, befitting their nature, refrain from furnishing their readers with details.[408] Still, we should be allowed to make an educated guess. By the time Honorius died (August 423) Theodosius II had not recognized neither Placidia as *Augusta* nor her husband Constantius III as *Augustus*; this came only after Ioannes' usurpation forced his hand. But even then, the eastern emperor still took his time to decide whether he was going to fully support Placidia's and Valentinian III's cause (Hyd. s.a. 423; Soc. 7.23).[409] Until Ioannes' usurpation broke out, he had ruled the empire as the sole *Augustus* (*Cod. Theod*. 11.20.5; Hyd. s.a. 423; Prosp. s.a. 423; Cass. s.a. 423; *ILS* 1283) and if, as we have mentioned above, what Stein has posited be true and Theodosius II had recognized Castinus' consulship, it may be inferred from that that the eastern emperor did not harbor strong antagonistic feelings towards Castinus and when he had to fight him, he decided that removing the usurper and installing Valentinian III was the farthest he would go. Letting Castinus go alive may therefore be connected to Theodosius II's reluctant/undecided nature he displayed in the civil war of 425.

We should also say a couple of words on Castinus' position after his party's defeat. That we never hear from Castinus again hints that the former generalissimo lost his means and resources to keep a private army and therefore his chances to ever make a return with the help of violence. Chances of him being reinstated to his former position under Valentinian III were therefore slim, something Aetius was busy doing exactly at that time with a Hunnic army

[406] Ioannes was beheaded together with his five-year-old son (Olymp. *fr*. 43.1, 43.2) and the six-year-old Valentinian III took his seat as *Augustus* of the west (Olymp. *fr.* 43.1, 33.1; Marcell. Com. s.a. 425; Hyd. s.a. 425; Soc. 7.25; Philost. 12.13; Theoph. AM 5916).

[407] On guesses regarding Castinus' eventual fate: Freeman 1887, 432; Oost 1968, 190; Wilkes (1972), 387-91; O'Flynn 1983, 75.

[408] The author of the fake correspondence between Augustinus and Bonifatius, Pseudo-Bonifatius, weaves a highly dramatic end for him, claiming that Castinus escaped to Africa, where Bonifatius was in charge as the *comes Africae* (*Ep*. 10-11). Given Castinus' rivalry with Bonifatius, the story makes little sense.

[409] McEvoy 2013, 228.

behind his back. Bereft of substantial armed force, Castinus could no longer pose any threat to anyone, hence exile was a befitting punishment.

Aetius and his subordinates

Aetius had lost the civil war of 432, but as the wounds Bonifatius received in the battle proved fatal, the former eventually emerged victorious. Even Sebastianus, Bonifatius' brief successor as the first *magister militum* in 433, although supported by the government of Valentinian III, was no match for him, as Bonifatius' son-in-law clearly lacked the sources to protect his position in the face of Aetius and his army of Huns. For the rest of his career, which lasted until 454, Aetius did not have to deal with another Bonifatius and enjoyed an unrivalled monopoly on violence. As such, for the rest of his career Aetius' go-to strategy was limited to removing potential rivals from their commands.

This change of strategy made sense, because unlike his first seven years under Valentinian III (425-432), the years between 433-454 witnessed no one outranking him, neither in title and rank, nor in physical manifestation of military power. During the former part of his career his position in Gaul, which he only had obtained after threatening the government with violence, was never truly secure, with Felix and Bonifatius alive. There was now no need to risk anything in a field battle or to outright kill opponents; merely the implication of violence sufficed. These were the conditions that made Aetius so confident and rendered the removals of Sebastianus, Merobaudes, and Majorian from their respective commands possible.

Sebastianus, Hydatius (s.a. 432) says, '*per Aetium de palatio superatus expellitur*'. Just before this happened, Sebastianus, if we are to cite his full official title, was the *comes et magister utriusque militiae*, whereas Aetius was not recognized in any official sense, having lost his post and title first to Bonifatius and then his successor Sebastianus (Prosp. s.a. 432: *deposita potestate*). But bringing an army of Huns into the Italian peninsula and lack of any substantial armed followers that could face that army on the part of either the imperial government and Sebastianus had once again made Aetius the ultimate victor. Now the question was what to do with Sebastianus and Aetius chose exile.

His decision of letting the inheritor of Bonifatius' rivalry alive, though it may seem imprudent in the light of Sebastianus' recent attempt at killing him by sending soldiers to his estate in Italy (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Gall. Chron. 452* s.a. 433), it was in fact a sensible move. In the first place, through this decision Aetius prevented the continuation of civil bloodshed, that may not have

ended with Sebastianus' murder, should the rivalry be inherited by another or the government determined to fight on. Prolonging a rivalry may cause Constantinople to intervene. After all, it was Theodosius II who had installed the current government of the west.

The main reason that motivated Aetius to take this path must have had more to do with Sebastianus' want of military support. Even if he had inherited some of Bonifatius' *bucellarii*, it must be taken into account they just fought a war and lost their commander and therefore must have been in little condition to fight anew the enemy whose ranks were bolstered up by an army of Huns. We should also not forget that some of Bonifatius' men no doubt transferred their allegiance to Aetius after the former's death, whether to secure their future under another *patronus* or were attracted to Aetius' leadership having heard about the heroic monomachy feat of Aetius. That Sebastianus is said to have requested help from the Visigoths in Toulouse to take part in the attack on Aetius in his Italian estate (*Chron. Gall*. *452* s.a. 433)[410] says much about the condition of his forces. Even for a raid Sebastianus had needed to increase his manpower. Combination of all these, which must have not escaped Aetius' notice, the generalissimo, knowing that Sebastianus' hand was weak, after ousting him from his position by a threat of violence decided upon exile.[411]

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[410] Wijnendaele 2015, 105.

[411] In time, this decision clearly proved itself to be the right one, since Sebastianus spent the rest of his life wandering from one place to another, almost in reminiscent of Odysseus' journey, albeit without a happy ending. On the rest of Sebastianus' career, see best: Scharf 1989. Hydatius is our most detailed primary source on his life (Mathisen 1999, 188). Marcellinus Comes, on the other hand, epitomizes his life and end, mentioning his flight to Constantinople and death in Africa (s.a. 432), skipping his time in Hispania. After losing his position to Aetius, he wandered from court to court around the Mediterranean until he exhausted all his options and died at the hands of Geiseric in Africa sometime between 440 and 445. Before this happened, however, he is first attested in Constantinople, from where he also had to flee in 435 following the news he received concerning a plot which was allegedly about hatch against him (Hyd. s.a. 434, 444). The details of the plot are not known but either the power brokers in the east, perhaps influenced by Aetius, did not enjoy the newcomer's presence (Scharf 1989, 147-9) or perhaps the eastern emperor did want to antagonize Aetius and draw the west and east into a confrontation, as it happened in Stilicho's days. For in two years Valentinian III and Eudocia would be married, the Theodosian Code would be officially published, and Aetius would receive his second consulship. In short, the western and eastern relations at the time were in harmony and Sebastianus' presence in Constantinople could jeopardize it. In the face of all this, sacrificing Sebastianus was a safer option (Scharf 1989, 149; Stickler 2002 66; Wijnendaele 2015, 106-7). He then went to Spain, where he was declared an outlaw by Theoderic I of the Visigothic kingdom in 439 (Hyd. s.a. 444) and after his brief adjourn in Barcelona, which he held in his hands for some time but then gave up having turned his eyes to a greater prize, that is Africa, once he learned of Geiseric's departure for Sicily (Hyd. s.a. 440; Prosp. s.a. 440), though the news of an incoming Roman campaign in Tarraconensis in 441 may also have played a role in his departure (Scharf 1989, 152). Thompson (1948, 138) claims that Sebastianus must have been sent to Barcelona by Theoderic I but since that would have violated the treaty the Visigothic king just made with the Romans I believe this was a renegade move on Sebastianus' part to set up himself a base of power. Barcelona in late antiquity was a rich city with a good port and easy access to many important Mediterranean cities (Cleary 2013, 137; Liebeschuetz 2000, 90). The Vandal king, however, left Sicily upon hearing of Sebastianus' arrival in his kingdom and returned to Africa, where he had an uneasy relationship with the Roman general. That Sebastianus was killed on Geiseric's orders (Hyd. s.a. 450) may have to do with either the king's mistrust or could even be a

Just about the same period Aetius was enjoying his supremacy, the government of Valentinian III, as we have seen above, made its first attempt at undermining Aetius' influence by resorting to devaluate the *patriciate*, though such a method was to no avail as long as Aetius remained the sole broker of violence in the west. But as Valentinian III matured in years, it was becoming gradually apparent that this emperor would continue to seek his means to augment his independence from the generalissimo.

In another step towards this goal, Valentinian III now suddenly recalled Merobaudes, the *magister utriusque militiae*, a subordinate of Aetius, from his command in Spain in 443, where he was successfully fighting the local insurgents (*bacaudae*) (Hyd. s.a. 443).[412] The reason, according to Hydatius, was jealously at the court. The claim of the Spanish chronicler is most plausible, for Merobaudes, besides being a successful commander, was also the personal poet/propagandist of Aetius, whose deeds he praised in his panegyrics, continuing Claudian's portrayal of a majestic yet immobile emperor in a partnership with an unrivalled active general.[413] It is to men like Merobaudes, who formed a body of Aetius' close supporters within the military circles, the generalissimo would delegate the responsibility of military as he could not be everywhere simultaneously.[414] The result being, while Aetius was expanding his influence through his appointees, there would necessary be men who were just as ambitious but whose influence over the western affairs could not match that of Aetius. We know such men existed among the Italian élite and Merobaudes' removal may indeed have something to do with them, who would have given Valentinian III a chance to hurt Aetius.[415]

Even though Valentinian III's order was fulfilled and Merobaudes lost his command, there was nothing celebratory about Valentinian III's strategy. Because first, Aetius' influence was so great that the court, just as they had done in their strategy of multiplying ranks and titles, chose to strike Aetius yet again obliquely. It is possible to argue that the court was playing the long game until it felt itself strong enough to launch a direct strike on Aetius, but as it can be inferred from Aetius' endurance of such indirect attacks, he knew that he could, if absolutely necessary, to appoint another one of his subordinates to this or that command, thus annulling

result of a secret clause added to Geiseric's treaty with the western Romans, that is Aetius, in 442. This would suggest that Aetius, though had him exiled, kept his eyes on the general's movements and actions, lest he make a strong return.

[412] McEvoy 2013, 284.

[413] McEvoy 2013, 252.

[414] Clover 1978, 190.

[415] Sirago 1961, 349 n. 2; Clover 1971, 10 n. 32; O'Flynn 1983, 85; McEvoy 2013, 284.

any political goal Valentinian III's decision carried. Granted, the target of this imperial order, in this case Merobaudes, suffered a loss, but his loss did not necessarily mean Aetius' loss as well.

In military sphere too, there was no loss whatsoever, since Merobaudes successfully managed to douse the *bacaudae* of Tarraconensis in Spain, which would last until 449.[416] Therefore, Merobaudes' removal seems to have not done much either to deteriorate Aetius' position or improve that of Valentinian III, and it should be seen, rather than an effectual jab at Aetius by Valentinian III, an indulgence on Aetius' part for the sake of preserving the apparent imperial partnership Merobaudes praises in his panegyrics.

Aetius and Majorian

When Valentinian III, perhaps encouraged by Aetius' apparent indifference to Merobaudes' removal from command previously, decided to betroth a soldier named Majorian to his daughter Placidia in 450,[417] the generalissimo's answer was absolutely fierce: he broke the engagement and cashiered Majorian. Majorian was to spend remain in his estates until Aetius' downfall (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.119-274).[418]

Why did Aetius, who had accepted one of his successful general's dismissal silently, react so harshly to this betrothal? We are told Majorian was a *iuvenis* at the time of his removal (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.299),[419] who could, in terms of rank and title, pose no threat to the senior *magister militum*. The answer to this question lies in the fact that Valentinian III had no male offspring who could succeed him while Aetius had two sons, whom he had been clearly grooming for greater things.

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[416] Kulikowski 2013, 183.

[417] Majorian was then a subordinate of Aetius, under whom he fought battles in Gaul in the late 440s (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.198-200; 220-7). He was also a comrade of Ricimer (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.266-8) and Aegidius (Prisc. *fr*. 50), two other general who would leave their mark in the history of the west very soon. Placidia was the youngest daugther of now 31-year-old Valentinian III (Prisc. *fr*. 29), born around 440 (Merobaud. *Carm*. 1.19ff). Valentinian III's other daughter was Eudocia, who had been betrothed to a son of the Vandal king Geiseric in the 440s (Merobaud. *Carm*. 1.17-8; *Pan*. 2.27-9).

[418] This rivalry between Aetius and Majorian was also dealt with by Oost in 1964. Oost there investigates Sidonius' claim that Majorian was dismissed on account of Aetius' wife's jealousy, because she feared Majorian would be the next emperor instead of her son Gaudentius from Aetius. While this is plausible it should not be forgotten that Sidonius may have been forced to resort to transfer the blame to Aetius' wife, instead of directly pointing to Aetius himself, who even after his death maintained a positive image among contemporaries (Marcell. Com. s.a. 454: *Aetius magna Occidentalis rei publicae salus* […]) and any open attack against the man might have incurred displeasure.

[419] Likely in his early 20s (Oost 1964, 23).

In the fifth century marriages of outsiders, in this case generals, into the imperial family had become a regular occurrence.[420] Stilicho's wish to marry his son Eucharius to Honorius' sister Galla Placidia (Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 2.352-59) and Constantius' marriage to the same in 417 were two great recent precedents by the time Aetius established himself in the 430s. While Majorian was briefly betrothed to the young Placidia in 450, in the same year a rugged general named Marcian in the east took the late Theodosius II's sister Pulcheria's hand in marriage and became emperor.[421] Aetius had two sons who could play a similar role in the west by joining the imperial family by marriage.

His older son from his first marriage, Carpilio, is noted to have been sent to Aetius' allies Huns on an embassy (Cass. *Var*. 1.4.11), among whom he apparently resided for some time as political hostage (Prisc. *fr*. 8), just as his father had experienced in his youth. The Huns' part in Aetius' rise had been undeniable and no doubt the young Aetius had cultivated his friendship with them during those hostage years. Carpilio could have formed a similar friendship, the benefits of which could be reaped at a later date.

His second son from his second marriage with Bonifatius' widow, Gaudentius, was born in 440, around the same time as Placidia, as Merobaudes' genethliakon (*Carm*. 4) composed for the child in 441/2 suggests.[422] As Aetius forced Valentinian III in 454 to betroth Gaudentius to Placidia clearly shows,[423] it had been long Aetius' intention to marry his younger son to Valentinian III's daughter and make his son the eventual successor of the emperor. For, as O'Flynn has observed, "Like Stilicho, Aetius hoped to consolidate his position by becoming father of an emperor."[424] Majorian's betrothal to Placidia was, therefore, a clear threat to Aetius' plans. Because of this reason his instant breaking up of the betrothal and dismissal of Majorian were moves completely motivated by political concerns.[425]

Valentinian III's preference of Majorian over all other potential candidates deserves a brief investigation here. His decision was in all likelihood a product of the years-long cultivated

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[420] Oost 1964, 24.

[421] One of Valentinian III's successor Petronius Maximus' first tasks in 455 would be marrying the widow of Valentinian III, Eudocia, while giving his son to a daughter of Eudocia (Procop. 3.4.36; Prosp. s.a. 455; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201. 6, 200.2; Hyd. s.a. 455; Evagr. *Hist. eccl*. 2. 7).

[422] Clover, 1971 29-30; 1978 172.

[423] Valentinian III must have been extremely displeased with the situation he found himself in, for after his plans for betrothal were foiled by Aetius, the general next forced the emperor to publicly swear a friendship with himself (Prosp. s.a. 454).

[424] O'Flynn 1983, 95.

[425] Oost 1964, 23.

and honed political maneuvering he had first witnessed as a youth and then began practicing at the western *aula*. The dominance of Aetius since his earliest years, especially in the domain of military, made out of Valentinian III a model ceremonial emperor, who neither had the chance of experiencing the din of a battle nor to practice the once primary imperial virtue *imperator* in person. He must have known, since he possessed neither any substantial means under his command to get rid of Aetius forcefully nor a son who could secure the continuation of the Theodosian dynasty in the west, unless he took the necessary precautions to establish ties with the military, on whose loyalty he could depend, Aetius would eventually be succeeded either by his sons or other generalissimos waiting in line, the candidates being not only within the borders but also outside of the empire, as O'Flynn suggests.[426] Surrounded by such bleak possibilities, Valentinian III must have seen in Majorian a way out of these possibilities, should he die without a son.[427] That Majorian was favored and especially trusted by Valentinian III and his close circle is also apparent in his recall by emperor after Aetius' murder: as *comes domesticorum* he was tasked with winning over Aetius' *bucellarii* (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.306-8) to strengthen the hand of the imperial court and Valentinian III's widow Eudocia's desire to see him as the next emperor in 455 (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201. 6). Betrothal of a young and promising commander such as Majorian to the imperial family could therefore only benefit Valentinian III.

Faced with such a rival, it may seem surprising that Aetius did not kill Majorian. Because as long as he remained alive, the possibility of him being recalled by Valentinian III and sent against Aetius remained probable. Such an interpretation of events, however, would imply that Aetius' power had been diminished by 450 and that of Valentinian III increased. But no such thing occurred. Aetius' quick intervention and cancelling the betrothal was an action of a man obviously stronger than the reigning emperor, as Valentinian III's obedience to his general's will attests.[428] In fact, considering Aetius' indifference in the aftermath of Merobaudes' dismissal, we can very well argue that the *magister* had now become more powerful than ten years ago, so much so that he could annul and arrange marriages at the

[426] O'Flynn 1983, 94-5 mentions Huneric, Geiseric, and Attila as potential non-Roman candidates to replace Aetius' with, as all three names were closely involved not only with internal imperial policies but also with the imperial family: Huneric, a son of Geiseric, the Vandalic king in possession of North Africa, was betrothed to Valentinian III's daughter Eudocia after 442 (Merobaud. *Carm.* 1.17-8; *Pan.* 2.27-9) and Attila, the king of the Huns, was awarded with the rank of the *magister militum* in 449 (Prisc. *fr*. 8).

[427] O'Flynn 1983, 95; McEvoy 2013, 291.

[428] McEvoy 2013, 292.

court to his liking,[429] demonstrating that even in matters that involve ceremonies the emperor did not after all have carte blanche. That he was given the title in its most illustrious form in 452 (*Nov. Val.* 36: *magnificus vir parens patriciusque noster*), can only be a sign of a man more influential than ever, not weaker.

As a major part of what constituted that power, of course, armed followers loyal to Aetius continued to play the largest role. As much as Bleda and Attila's decision of ceasing to send military help to either part of the Roman empire in 439 meant that Aetius now became bereft of repeating the scenarios of 425 and 432,[430] he still possessed an army able to take part in operations in the 440s: it was thanks to them the *bacaudae* in Armorica were suppressed; Tours in 448 was successfully defended;[431] and a victory over the Franks near *vicus Helena* was achieved (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.207-27). In 451 Attila's inroad into Gaul was halted in its tracks yet again by Aetius' army, composed of numerous peoples. The architect of these alliances and therefore of those *foederati* was Aetius, and together with his *bucellarii,* it was *his* forces that made up the western Roman army of the mid-fifth century.[432] This was so clear to all contemporaries, that even when Aetius was dead and Majorian was emperor, panegyrics read out loud to the emperor at the court would pay attention not to cause injury to Aetius' memory (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5), lest those who had served under Aetius and now were serving under Majorian take offence.

As such, regardless of how much smaller and how less regular in comparison to the previous century the Roman army was, Aetius was the commander of its loyalty and was therefore in a position to force Majorian's removal from duty, since the latter could pose little physical threat.[433] Killing the young commander was unnecessary, for given his resources, he was neither a Felix, nor could become a second Bonifatius. But Aetius' motley army that secured the safety of what remained of the western Roman empire, once bereft of its *foederati* collaborators that helped him so much a year before, would show its cracks in the face of Attila's attack into Italy in 452: Aetius' *bucellarii* and the remnants of the regular Roman army alone could not face the Hunnic king. Add to this that Aetius could never again draw huge

[429] McEvoy 2013, 291.
[430] Jones *LRE*, 199.
[431] Dierkens and Périn 2003, 170.
[432] Oost 1964, 25.
[433] O'Flynn 1983, 102.

number of Huns from outside, both the implied and actual threat of violence the generalissimo posed decreased greatly and his enemies seized their chance.

Ricimer and Majorian

Neither of Aetius' enemies, Valentinian III (d. 455) and Petronius Maximus (r. 455), could hold onto their diadems for long after the generalissimo's death. Nor the Gallic emperor Avitus (r. 455-6) and once promising Majorian (r. 457-461) could enjoy a long and stable reign. Through the seven-year period following Aetius' murder none of these emperors died in their beds. Valentinian III was killed by Aetius' former soldiers (Prosp. s.a. 455; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455); Maximus was lynched on the streets of Rome (Prosp. s.a. 455; Hyd. s.a. 455); Avitus was eventually killed after having been deposed on the orders of Majorian and Ricimer (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.11; Hyd. s.a. 456); and Majorian was killed by Ricimer (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 461; Hyd. s.a. 461). The trend set by the three Frankish generals in the late fourth century proved enduring, as Ricimer's eventual dismissal of Majorian also showed, who was an emperor of "a singular anomaly; a ruler of strong will, energy, and independence."[434] Political violence thus once again showed its nature in the late Roman west: it nested under generalissimos' *paludamenta* and so it continued to occur frequently under Ricimer's hegemony throughout the period from 457 until 472. To understand where all the rivalries stem from in Ricimer's age, we first need to look at Ricimer himself and his relationship with Avitus and Majorian.

The generalissimo had initially worked with Majorian in harmony in 457 in getting rid of emperor Avitus, who owed his imperial position to the Visigothic backing (Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 7.508-9; 520-1; 571-80; Hyd. s.a. 455) and was never recognized by Constantinople.[435] It was under this emperor Ricimer as *comes* had won victories against the Vandals at Agrigentum and off Corsica (Hyd. s.a. 456; Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.367; Prisc. *fr*. 24)[436] and was given the rank and title of the *magister militum* (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 456; *Auct. ad Prosp. Haun*. s.a. 456), though Remistus and then Messianus belonged to the party of Avitus, with whom Ricimer had to deal first (see below). All the same, the ambitious Ricimer's popularity among the military circles and Avitus' unrecognized status in the east, add to this Majorian's flirtation with the imperial

[434] Max 1985, 231.
[435] Mathisen 1981, 235ff. This is a fate many emperors in the west after Valentinian III shared: out of his successors, only Anthemius and Julius Nepos enjoyed the full recognition of Constantinople as *Augusti* (Henning 1999).
[436] Solari 1938, 392, 474 n. 78; Clover 1966, 166f.

office since the early 450s, had created an alliance between the two and caused eventually Avitus' downfall, which came at the hands of Ricimer and Majorian at the battle of Placentia on 17 October 456 (*Chron. Gall*. *511*. s.a. 456; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 202).

The victors were obviously highly ambitious men. This is especially clear by the ranks and titles they accumulated in the aftermath of their victory: first, both were recognized as co-*magistri militum* by Constantinople on 28 February 457 (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 457), with Ricimer apparently having the precedence, for he was also given the patriciate on the same date (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 457).[437] Then came Majorian's acclamation as *Caesar* on 1 April 457 (Marcell. Com. s.a. 457: *Leo eidem (sc. Marciano) defuncto successit. Cuius voluntate Maiorianus aput Ravennam Caesar est ordinatus*), very likely urged by some part of the army (*Nov. Mai*. 1; *Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 457: *levatus est … in campo ad columellas*)[438] and approved by the eastern emperor Leo, who nevertheless seemingly did not wish for an equal colleague in the form of an *Augustus* in the west, hence the *Caesar* status of Majorian.[439] For all the show of *recusatio imperii* Majorian put on, he obviously wished to become *Augustus,* which he achieved by taking the initiative in his own hands on 28 December of the same year, with the support of Ricimer (Joh. Mal. 14.45).[440]

While Majorian finally became *Augustus,* Ricimer, the *comes et magister utriusque militiae et patricius* by 457, was named *parens patriciusque noster* on 11 January 458 (*Nov. Mai*. 1) and consul of the year 459.[441] The dazzling series of honorary ranks and titles Ricimer accumulated not only shows the general's love of honor but also implies that Majorian was initially attentive to

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[437] Demandt 1970, 683; Henning 1999, 36-40.

[438] Max 1985, 234.

[439] Max 1985, 232; Henning 1999, 39. Sidonius (*Carm*. 5.9-12) claims that Majorian did not even accept his *Caesar* title and continued to use his military one until his elevation as *Augustus* at the end of the year. What we read in Sidonius is a *recusatio imperii*, a literary *topos* much attested in Roman history and no less in late antiquity: Julian in Libanius (*Or*. 13.37-41); Valentinian I in Symmachus (*Or*. 1.10); Theodosius in Pacatus (*Pan*. *Lat*. 12.11.1f.); Avitus in Sidonius (*Carm*. 7.509f.) and Anthemius again in Sidonius (*Carm*. 2.24-8; 210-12).

[440] The dates 1 April 457 and 28 December 457 in the original sources (*Fasti Vindobonenses priores* and *Continuatio Prosperi*, respectively), which are suggested for Majorian's elevation as *Caesar* and *Augustus*, respectively, forced scholars to make different interpretations as to whether these dates represent first an informal and later a formal elevation of Majorian as emperor (Jones *LRE*, 241). I have followed here the reading adopted by Otto Seeck (1921, 339): 27 February 457 is when Majorian was made the *magister militum*, 1 April 457 is when he was named *Caesar*; and 28 December 457, *Augustus*.

[441] This was the last time a western *magister militum* wore the consular insignia. O'Flynn says this was so because with the disappearance of the rulers from the Theodosian dynasty by the mid-450s, holding consulships came to be regarded less important (O'Flynn 1983, 108-9). MacGeorge believes this was intended by Ricimer so that he might not offend the anti-barbarian Italian aristocracy by holding the consulship more than once (MacGeorge 2002, 209). I agree with O'Flynn's point of view: Ricimer probably did just no longer care enough for an empty honor, though still prestigious, as long as he was the first *magister militum* and patrician.

keep his ally satisfied. Ricimer, after all, had played a key part in weakening Avitus by eliminating his chief *magistri* and then in leading the army at the battle of Placentia. Though Majorian was not like other ceremonial emperors, for he was definitely more active in ruling the empire, looking from the only perspective that really mattered in late antiquity, that is the military one, Ricimer, on account of his military prowess and inclination to violence, was obviously the first man in the west.[442]

Majorian actually knew this as well, as his first novella hints (*Nov. Mai*. 1), where it is officially declared that the first *magister militum* was on the same level with emperor with regards to military matters. These matters had stopped being assigned with the responsibilities of western emperors for some time now, though on paper emperors post-Valentinian I never acknowledged this fact.[443] With this novella, however, Majorian was making it official, something most of the élite and the army had already been aware of. But is this all what we have to say about this piece of law?

What especially should concern us with this novella is the fact that Majorian was actually trying to say that he, as the reigning emperor, would not be confined to his palace but take the field like soldier-emperors. This was eventually materialized in his greatest military project: taking Africa back from the Vandals, for the sake of which he marched as far as Spain at the head of his army, though his plans would be destined to ruin by a preemptive strike of the Vandals in 461, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Ricimer, who would then orchestrate his coup d'état against Majorian and kill him, who proved to be a little too much independent for his taste (Marcell. Com. s.a. 461; Hyd. s.a. 461; Cass. s.a. 461; John Ant. *fr*. 203; Jord. *Get*. 45. 236; Evagr. *Hist. eccl*. 2.7; Theoph. AM 5955).

Before his African campaign, however, emperor had demonstrated that he would be directly involved in all military matters, as he promised to do so in the novella. This apparently entailed also choosing his subordinates, which generalissimos had been taking care of for quite some time already. Before his departure, he had established good relations with several leading commanders of their age: in Dalmatia with an independent generalissimo named Marcellinus; the *magister militum per Gallias* Aegidius, and another *magister militum* Nepotianus, with whom he would set out on his African expedition while leaving Ricimer in

[442] Max 1985, 225.
[443] O'Flynn 1983, 109-10.

Italy.[444] They were entirely chosen by Majorian on his own initiative and Ricimer does not seem to have had any friendly relations with any of the emperor's generals. At all events, Aegidius would prove himself Majorian's staunchest ally[445] and Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Majorian had a friendly relationship.[446] Majorian's decision to leave Ricimer out of his most ambitious military expedition could be sought in Majorian's foresight which made him aware of the possibility that he and Ricimer's views regarding the imperial office and its holders were contrary to each other and a disagreement over it would be one day inevitable. I cannot think of any other reasonable excuse for Majorian's exclusion of Ricimer, whom he a little while ago publicly declared as the other person carrying the military burdens of the empire together with the reigning emperor.

It should also be noted how quickly Ricimer acted against his old comrade and killed him after the failure of the African expedition only five days later (7 August 461). No partnership that came to a such a quick and bloody end can be described healthy. Regardless, merely Majorian's appointments alone at the time had been surely enough to make Ricimer uncomfortable and he would be right in feeling so, for in a short time it would be seen that Majorian's appointees, now their emperor having been killed, would take a stand against Ricimer himself.

Aegidius and Marcellinus of Dalmatia: Antagonists of Ricimer

> Ὅτι οἱ ἑσπέριοι Ῥωμαῖοι ἐς δέος ἐλθόντες περὶ Μαρκελλίνου, μήποτε αὐξανομένης αὐτῷ τῆς δυνάμως καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἀγάγοι τὸν πόλεμον, διαφόρως ταραττομένων αὐτοῖς τῶν πράγματων, τοῦτο μὲν ἐκ βανδίλων, τοῦτο δὲ κἀκ Αἰγιδίου, ἀνδρὸς ἐκ Γαλατῶν μὲν τῶν πρὸς τῇ ἑσπέρᾳ ὁρμωμένου, τῷ δὲ Μαιοριανῷ συστρατευσαμένου καὶ πλείστην ἀμφ' ἔχοντος δύναμιν καὶ χαλεπαίνοντος διὰ τὴν τοῦ Βασιλέως ἀναίρεσω. (Prisc. *fr*. 39)

Two immediate consequences of Ricimer's murder of Majorian was the secession of the influential generals from the government in Italy: Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Aegidius. Their decision, in the first place, meant that the west was now further drained of its manpower and revenue. The provinces of Dalmatia and Gallia were the home bases for the Illyrian and Gallic

[444] O'Flynn 1983, 110. What Ricimer was doing at time in Italy, we do not know, as the records are silent (MacGeorge 2002, 209).

[445] Max 1985, 230.

[446] There appears to have been some sort of an agreement between Majorian and Marcellinus of Dalmatia concerning the Ostrogothic *foederati* pool north of Marcellinus' power base, which joined up Majorian's army (Max 1985, 235), which would have been impossible without the existence of a friendly relationship.

field armies, respectively. Over the former, Marcellinus had authority,[447] and the latter, as Priscus above attests, was under Aegidius' command. By killing Majorian and making enemies out of these two, Ricimer deprived the western empire of those regions and resources as well.[448]

Hosility of Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Aegidius against Ricimer marks the most of the 460s, including the instances Ricimer's subordinates were targeted: Aegidius' rivalry with Agrippinus, a supporter of Ricimer, in 462, which would result in the loss of the important maritime city Narbonne to the Visigoths is perhaps a good example of how detrimental rivalries could become for the empire (Hyd. s.a. 462). Generals were ready to sacrifice what little land remained available for the west if that meant getting rid of their opponents. After Agrippinus, another one of Ricimer's supporters, Fredericus, would quarrel with Aegidius in 463, who would employ a direct confrontation strategy to eliminate his opponent (Marius Avent. s.a. 463; Hyd. s.a. 461; *Chron. Gall. 511*, s.a. 463; Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 11.18). After Aegidius successfully came out on top from these clashes, he would move on, apparently together with Marcellinus, to remove the source of their problems, Ricimer.

Aegidius and Marcellinus Join Forces Against Ricimer?

After Majorian's disposal in 461 Ricimer was the ruler of the west, though he put on a show and elevated an emperor in the person of Libius Severus (Theoph. 5955; Hyd. s.a. 461; *Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 461; Marcell. Com. s.a. 461). Before this, during the three-month-long interregnum, Ricimer had led the correspondences with the Vandal king Geiseric, who, on the one hand wished to see his own candidate Olybrius wearing the western diadem, and on the other, sent soldiers to pillage parts of both Sicily and Italy as he considered his treaty with Majorian now became void (Prisc. *fr*. 29; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 204). Ricimer's choice Severus was an aristocrat but the mere fact that he had nothing to do with anything military should be emphasized here to remind us of Ricimer's ideal emperor picture. Probably his ideal would

[447] MacGeorge 2002, 40.

[448] Unlike Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Aegidius, with whom Ricimer would jockey for unrivalled hegemony in the west for the next several years, another one of Majorian's appointees, Nepotianus, appears to have remained passive (Henning 1999, 81). He was the father of the last legitimate western Roman emperor Julius Nepos (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.553-557; *PLRE* II, Nepotianus 2; Demandt 1970, 683; Burgess 1992, 25) and had fought successful battles in Gaul and Spain against the Suebi between 459 and 461 (Hyd. s.a. 459, 461). His post as the second *magister militum* would be briefly taken over by Arborius, who would not play any special role either in military or politics (Demandt 1970, 684; Henning 1999, 86).

have also entailed his puppet being recognized by Constantinople, but a recognition from the east never came (Jord. *Rom*. 335). Regardless, since Severus perfectly played his ceremonial role until his death in 465,[449] Ricimer could concentrate all his attention to what was happening outside of the imperial palace, where he was greeted by several problems.

The most obvious one was his antagonists Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Aegidius. Just like the eastern emperor in Constantinople, they also did not recognize Severus, *qui Occidentis arripuit principatum* (Marcell. Com. s.a. 465). That Ricimer sent first Agrippinus and then Fredericus as his *magistri militum per Gallias* against Aegidius (463) and robbed Marcellinus of Dalmatia of his Hunnic troops in 461 (Prisc. *fr*. 29) were some of the strategies Ricimer employed to render his rivals incapable of any action, but none of them produced such a result.

On top of that, Aegidius and Marcellinus were likely in contact with the eastern emperor Leo, who also did not recognize Severus and was clearly an anti-Ricimer ruler, as can be inferred from his rejection of Ricimer's consulship for the year 459. They shared a common dislike for Ricimer. Probably that is why Leo apparently helped Marcellinus in material terms during his operations in Sicily in 464/5,[450] after the latter had lost most of his men to Ricimer in 461. Although no similar example exists for Aegidius, there is no reason he did not enjoy a warm reception by Leo due to his animosity towards Ricimer. For all these, however, as the Priscan fragment states, a coordinated plan of Ricimer's removal never came to bore fruit. But why?

Our primary textual evidence (Prisc. *fr*. 39) for the stillborn attack upon Ricimer in Italy suggests that, as far as Marcellinus of Dalmatia is concerned, Ricimer was able to appease Leo temporarily,[451] who then sent Marcellinus of Dalmatia an envoy and urged the general not to take any offensive actions against the generalissimo in Italy.[452] The question we must ask here is what Ricimer's appeasement entailed that made Marcellinus forced to obey Leo's command.

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[449] Ricimer's notorious relationship with emperors gave birth to Cassiodorus' accusation of Ricimer that he may have had something to do with Severus' death (Cass. s.a. 464). The contemporary and geographically close Sidonius Apollinaris denies such a accusation, however (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.317-18).

[450] MacGeorge 2002, 50.

[451] An idea can be entertained here as to how Leo was persuaded by Ricimer. Severus' death in 465 prompted a two-year interregnum in the west with Ricimer as the sole authority until Leo decided to send Anthemius as the new western emperor in 467. By taking this fact into account, I suggest that this interregnum was rather a period Ricimer awaited upon Leo's appointment than a time, during which the generalissimo on his own initiative did not see a necessity for an emperor in the west.

[452] The same envoy was then also sent to Geiseric, who was asked of the same thing, but his second mission was a failure (Prisc. *fr*. 40).

We should first note that an attack was never materialized between late 462 and August 465,[453] that is, while emperor Severus (died 14 November 465) was still alive. This is significant to emphasize because what I am going to propose hinges upon these dates. Severus' death in 465 was followed by a two-year interregnum in the west with Ricimer being the de facto authority in the west, but more significantly, Leo the sole emperor of the Roman empire until he decided to send Anthemius as the new western emperor in 467. After Majorian was killed, Ricimer did not lose much time to announce his own appointee as emperor, but this time he did not do such a thing and instead let Leo rule alone over the whole empire, at least in theory. I suggest, then, that Ricimer's appeasement of Leo on the eve of Marcellinus' attack entailed Ricimer's willingness to accept Leo as the sole emperor when Severus died, who never received a recognition from the east. Finding out that Ricimer would not declare an emperor of his own choosing like he did with Severus, Leo saw no reason to attack the generalissimo and prevented Marcellinus from doing so.

This interpretation of events quickly proves itself to be problematic, however. Not so long ago, no diplomatic decision, not even one coming from an emperor could hinder ambitious men such as Aetius and Bonifatius from going against their rivals. Legitimizing one's position by force had been in the Roman empire: yesterday's usurpers could tomorrow become legitimate through successful application of military force (e.g. Constantine I, Aetius). It seems to me that, though no doubt Ricimer's appeasement worked on Leo, Leto's prevention of Marcellinus of Dalmatia had more to do with the latter's military force's condition.

Marcellinus of Dalmatia, as we have inferred above, received material support from Leo after the setback he had received at the hands of Ricimer in 461. Priscus says that within the possible timeframe we have given above, Marcellinus was in possession of a force growing in strength (Prisc. *fr*. 39: μήποτε αὐξανομένης αὐτῷ τῆς δυνάμεως). But I argue that this was still not enough to conduct an expedition and Leo's decision to prevent Marcellinus from launching into Italy just came in time to help Marcellinus save face.

First, Marcellinus of Dalmatia's forces at this time were probably composed of *foederati* and *bucellarii*, the former being mostly Ostrogoths living close to Marcellinus' powerbase[454] and the latter of whatever warriors he could employ. Otherwise, he would have commanded the

[453] According to the dates Kulikowski (2002) has calculated.
[454] Max 1985, 235.

remnants of the western Illyrian field army, which must have already fallen well under its original strength (ca. 13,000) after the command of Illyricum was transferred to Constantinople in 378.[455] Given that Ricimer was able to cripple Marcellinus of Dalmatia's operations in Sicily after robbing him of his Hunnic soldiers, it may even be possible that no such army was in existence towards the end of the fifth century. This makes Marcellinus almost wholly dependent on his private army of *foederati* and *bucellarii* and if this be true, they were not enough to guarantee a successful operation against Ricimer. What happened in 461 must still have been fresh in Marcellinus' mind and the repetition of such a scenario was always possible. Therefore, I believe, when Priscus says that Marcellinus' forces were growing, he specifically means that they were growing in contrast to their previous condition, that is, in contrast to what had happened in 461, and that Marcellinus' forces were in no shape to face those of Ricimer directly, even if Leo had not prevented him from doing so.

With Marcellinus' hopes of removing Ricimer allegedly dashed by Leo, likewise those of Aegidius, who must have realized that, since Marcellinus' undertaking had to stop in its tracks, his march on Ricimer would then have received little approval from Leo. But just like Marcellinus of Dalmatia, Aegidius too was suffering from insufficient sources, the deployment of which against Ricimer would have brought great risks.

Aegidius had recently fought and defeated Fredericus at the battle of Orléans in 463 (*Chron. Gall. 511* s.a. 461; Hyd. s.a. 461) but he could not follow up on this victory but returned to his powerbase. This can only be explained by his limited resources.[456] The Gallic field army in the late fourth century could field as much as 34,000 men,[457] but now it was apparently only strong enough to defend its territories. Already in 451, we must remind ourselves, that it was not the Gallic field army but Aetius' coalition of barbarians that had seen Attila off in Gaul. By the 460s, its capacities must have become more limited. As Priscus attests yet again in the much-quoted fragment (*fr.* 39), that army was now necessary to defend Aegidius' powerbase chiefly against the Visigoths.[458]

[455] Elton 2008, 274-5.
[456] MacGeorge 2002, 100.
[457] Elton 2008, 285.
[458] MacGeorge 2002, 93-4.

Considering these facts, Aegidius' and Marcellinus of Dalmatia's failure in removing Ricimer from his position is owed more to their manpower condition rather than Ricimer's shrewd diplomatic skills.

Aegidius' Riposte

Aegidius' and Marcellinus' plan of removing Ricimer by a coordinated attack had failed, but neither rival of the generalissimo would ever deviate from his hostile attitude. The same, however, applied to Ricimer as well. The supreme commander was very well aware that he had enemies to his north and east and although for the moment his regime in Italy seemed secure under his puppet emperor Libius Severus, the future could be different. These men, therefore, would have to be dealt with sooner or later. The general, however, could not be at two places at the same time, and Italy no doubt occupied the first place in his mind[459] as the Vandals in Africa posed a major threat in the south. The result of these conditions was that Ricimer would have to take advantage of every opportunity offered and when such opportunities did not exist, he would have to create them himself. It is in this context that the rivalry of Ricimer and Aegidius between 461 and 463 needs to be evaluated.

Within this two-year long period the sources record that Aegidius had to defend himself in Gaul first against Agrippinus and then Fredericus. The former would fail in meeting face to face with the Roman warlord but the deal he struck with the Visigoths continued to beleaguer Aegidius in that he would have no choice but to fight a pitched battle against the Visigoths under Fredericus. Ultimately, by 463, Aegidius would triumph and secure his position and eventually the future of his independent Gallo-Roman power base, but he would never again disturb Ricimer directly, since the growing Visigothic presence in Gaul and their expansionist policy, combined with other developments in Gaul, would force Aegidius to wholly concentrate on his own survival.

Here, I will offer a look at what possibly occured between 461-463 between Ricimer and Aegidius and put the events that I have briefly sketched above in the context of these two men's rivalry, by suggesting that both Agrippinus and Fredericus, whose personal interests coalesced with those of Ricimer, acted in concert against Aegidius under the orders of the generalissimo in Italy.

[459] What MacGeorge defines as Ricimer's "Italy first" policy (2002, 227).

The murder of Majorian and elevation of Severus by Ricimer in 461 had sealed the future of Aegidius' and Ricimer's relationship: enemies until the end. Aegidius and Majorian had been on friendly terms (Prisc. *fr*. 30) and Aegidius never recognized Severus (Prisc. *fr*. 39). As far as Ricimer is concerned, Aegidius was now not only a personal enemy but also a warlord working outside of imperial command. To solve this both public and private problem, Ricimer resorted to the strategy of seizing Aegidius' office from him to leave him without *dignitas* and support, and hence eliminate him. Ricimer's utilization of this strategy did not involve himself personally. Instead, he depended on proxies, acting as Ricimer's candidates of *magistri utriusque militiae per Gallias*. The first one was Agrippinus and the second one was Fredericus, with whom he shared a connection in their dislike for Aegidius.

First, we deal with Agrippinus. He was the first to be sent to Gaul to replace Aegidius as the new supreme commander of Gaul. He seems to have been active in that region since the early 450s, where he is reported to have already held the *magisterium per Gallias* in 451/2 (Hyd. s.a. 452) and 457/8, until he was replaced by Aegidius in the reign of Majorian (Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.11). This is probably the origin of Agrippinus' personal hostility towards Aegidius, for one can hardly imagine that Agrippinus took Majorian's decision kindly. Add to this that after a short while Aegidius went on to accuse him of working with barbarians against Rome (*Vita Lupicini* 11), and the perpetuity of their rivalry was sealed.

The charge Aegidius made against Agrippinus was taken so seriously by the emperor that according to *Vita Lupicini*, Agrippinus was condemned to death without emperor Majorian ever hearing his side of the story (*Vita Lupicini* 11ff). Given Aegidius' influence upon Majorian (Prisc. *fr*. 30), this is not surprising: his testimony alone against Agrippinus was probably enough evidence for emperor. Majorian's murder in 461 and Agrippinus' timely escape from prison,[460] however, would turn over a new leaf for his career, one he could dedicate to avenge himself. It is possible to entertain the idea here that he was pardoned by Ricimer to strengthen his party, even if the charges heaped upon Agrippinus were indeed true. After all, Ricimer would welcome any extra help against Aegidius, and Agrippinus had enough reasons to personally dislike Aegidius (Hyd. s.a. 462).

[460] MacGeorge 2002, 226.

MacGeorge is one who entertains the idea that Agrippinus was a follower of Ricimer or later turned into one on account of his enmity towards Aegidius.[461] Mathisen, on the other hand, claims that the rivalry's origin lies in the fact that Agrippinus was originally an adherent of Avitus and Aegidius that of Majorian.[462] I would prefer a reconciliation between these opinions and suggest that Agrippinus had indeed been a supporter of Avitus and therefore an enemy of Majorian and naturally Ricimer (for both worked in concert against Avitus), but at the latest in 461 decided to attach himself to Ricimer's faction, after his sham trial, for he had definitely more reasons to hate Aegidius rather than Ricimer. The latter could also supply him with resources to avenge himself on the man, being the strongman of the west.

Joining forces against Aegidius would indeed work to their advantage. Agrippinus could reclaim his *dignitas* and avenge himself. Ricimer, as soon as Aegidius was out of the picture, could concentrate on the enemies to his south and east.

It is under these conditions, then, Ricimer and Agrippinus, two men who had sound reasons to hate Aegidius,[463] joined forces. After Majorian's disposal, Ricimer's emperor Severus rushed, no doubt at the behest of Ricimer, and sent Agrippinus to Gaul to replace Aegidius as the *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias*.[464] But the result was far from what Ricimer would have wished. Agrippinus failed in removing Aegidius and disappeared, at least from the records.

Aegidius, as has already been noted, was in command of what remained of the Gallic field army. At least since 458, he could also count on the loyalty of the Salian Franks, with whom he shared the common goal of keeping the Visigothic expansion into northern Gaul in check.[465] These Franks no doubt composed a substantial part of Aegidius' army,[466] for otherwise it is difficult to understand how Aegidius, without any back up, could maintain his power base in Gaul.

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[461] MacGeorge 2002, 225.
[462] Mathisen 1989, 200.
[463] Schwarcz 1995, 50f.
[464] Jones *LRE*, 241; Demandt 1970, 690; O'Flynn 1983, 124; Henning 1999, 86; MacGeorge 2002, 91.
[465] MacGeorge 2002, 155. The relationship Aegidius and his successor Syagrius shared with the Franks is treated in MacGeorge 2002, 69ff.
[466] Henning 1999, 148, 294; MacGeorge 2002, 155. The former notes that whether those Franks served Aegidius as allies, mercenaries, or *bucellarii* is unknown. The Burgundians and Visigoths had also been brought back under imperial authority by Majorian in 458/9, but after his death they quickly returned to their former independent stance.

With what forces, if any, Agrippinus, on the other hand, was sent to Gaul from Italy by Ricimer remains unknown. It is possible that no army accompanied him on his journey, perhaps except a small armed guard, the only army in Italy reasonably being the *praesentalis* army that Ricimer commanded. The likelihood of this assumption increases when we look at what Agrippinus did after reaching Gaul.

Our closest witness to the events, Hydatius, writes that *Agrippinus Gallus comes civis Aegidio comiti viro inimicus, ut Gothorum mereretur auxilia, Narbonam tradidit Theudorico* (s.a. 462). Hydatius, who was aware of the rivalry between Aegidius and Agrippinus says that the latter surrendered Narbonne to the Visigoths, who, he hoped, would have lent military aid in return.[467] Agrippinus' seeking of the Visigothic aid can be used to answer the question of his forces' strength. They were clearly not strong enough to stand against those of Aegidius alone. Here, one can claim that Agrippinus worked for his self-interest and outside of Ricimer's original orders when he handed over the city,[468] but one should not forget that Agrippinus was sent there in the first place by Severus, hence Ricimer, to deal with Aegidius. I find it little plausible that the man, who only a short while ago was about to face death because he had been charged with working barbarians against the emperor, at the moment he was given a fresh start suddenly followed his own agenda without his superior Ricimer's knowledge. Moreover, the policy Ricimer had been following in Gaul was one of indifference and not at all hostile to the Visigoths.[469] Whether this related to him being a half Goth (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.363, 368-70) is arguable,[470] but his primary concern with Gaul at this time can only be reasonably connected to Aegidius' person. Since bringing the *praesentalis* army into Gaul would have stripped Italy of its only substantial force and rendered it vulnerable to a potential attack either from the Vandals or Marcellinus of Dalmatia, it is very likely Ricimer planned to use the Visigothic help to get rid of Aegidius. They were already close by and having them attack Aegidius would also have meant keeping their attention away from the empire.

The Visigoths did perhaps have their own reasons to accept Ricimer's offer to fight against Aegidius: expanding their territories northwards. It is clear in these decades the Visigoths had been already following an expansionist policy, especially into Spain, and now they could do

[467] At this point it should be mentioned that Aegidius' initial accusation of Agrippinus' working with the barbarians seems to have had a good rationale.

[468] As regarded possible by Wolfram 1988, 181 and MacGeorge 2002, 92.

[469] MacGeorge 2002, 226.

[470] Henning 1999, 224 n. 18.

the same into northern Gaul under the auspices of imperial orders.[471] Even if they failed in doing that, they would have already received Narbonne, thus gaining access to Mediterranean.[472]

Although Agrippinus suddenly disappeared from the records[473] and died without avenging himself, the deal he had struck with the Visigoths remained valid. In this context we come to Fredericus, the next man who faced Aegidius.

Fredericus was a brother of the Visigothic king Theoderic II (Jord. *Get*. 190). The bishop of Arles, Hilary, mentions a letter he received from him in the following way: *a magnifico viro filio nostro Fritherico* (Hilar. *Ep*. 7.1). His title *vir magnificus*, which can be equated with *illustris*, suggests that he may have beeen a *magister militum*, very likely *per Gallias*.[474] He had fought on behalf of the Romans the Spanish *bacaudae* in 453/4 (Hyd. s.a. 453/4) und may have been already appointed a *magister militum* back then. He had also, together with Theoderic II, played an important part in raising Avitus as emperor (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 7.432-6, 518-9) and therefore had enough reasons to dislike Majorian and hence his supporters, which would have included Aegidius. Although the same reason can be used to make an argument for his lack of sympathy for Ricimer, Aegidius' proximity to the Visigothic lands and Ricimer's hostility towards Aegidius must have made the generalissimo an ally rather than an enemy, at least for the moment. A common enemy, therefore, seems to me to have brought Ricimer and Fredericus together, besides a deal struck, and this is how Fredericus must have assumed command as Ricimer's next *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias*.[475]

So, what Agrippinus had hoped to achieve with the Visigothic help now fell to Fredericus' lot: to attack and defeat Aegidius. In 463, at Orléans, a battle was fought, recorded by several sources (Marius Avent. s.a. 463; Hyd. s.a. 461; *Chron*. *Gall*. *511*, s.a. 463; Gregory of Tours, *Hist.*

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[471] MacGeorge 2002, 100.

[472] Surrendering Narbonne meant giving the Visigoths full access to the Mediterranean Sea for the first time since their settlement in the region in 418 (MacGeorge 2002, 226), the repercussions of which would be greater than Aegidius' secession. They had already demonstrated that they had become more ambitious than their predecessors in the region when they helped elevating Avitus to the throne in 454/5 and the continuous internal crises the west had been going through in the 450s and 460s only assisted them in their expansion policies (Henning 1999, 325). Now they came to possess the important maritime city of Narbonne. Shortly after they would annul their *foederati* agreement with emperor Anthemius and in 475 force the western government to recognize all their claims on Gaul and truly become an independent kingdom (Henning 1999, 306-7).

[473] Wolfram (1988, 181) suggests that Agrippinus was besieged in Narbonne by Aegidius. If this be true, Agrippinus perhaps died during or shortly after the siege. However, such a conclusion will have to remain a pure speculation.

[474] *PLRE* II, Fredericus 1; Henning 1999, 87.

[475] Demandt 1970, 690f. and Henning 1999, 87 are in accord with this view.

2.18),[476] in which Aegidius, supported by his Frankish allies led by Childeric, won the day whereas Fredericus fell.[477] Ricimer, being aware that removing rivals from office meant little if such decisions could not be backed up by naked force, rightly decided his subordinate Fredericus to meet Aegidius on the battlefield, but Aegidius' forces combined with those of Childeric proved an unsurmountable obstacle.

Aegidius, however, though he won a major victory, was not in a much better condition than Ricimer in terms of manpower and resources. Aegidius is not said to have followed up his victory by marching further south. His adversary had lost the battle and his life, but what Aegidius won was no more than a pyrrhic victory. Even the losing side, the Visigoths, do not appear to have suffered a major defeat. They were able to hold onto Narbonne (*metropolis civitas Narbonensium*) and thus reached the Loire. They would be fully independent of Roman influence by 475, becoming, from a band of warriors seeking refuge in the Roman empire to a *Regnum Tolosanum*.[478] On the other hand, what interests us here, Ricimer was never again disturbed by Aegidius nor his successor Syagrius, who would succeed Aegidius in 465, as the resources of this secessionist Gallic power base were only sufficient enough for its own defenses (Prisc. *fr.* 39). Looking at what followed the battle, therefore, it can be argued that the battle of Orléans was eventually a personal victory for Ricimer.

The generalissimo now could focus more on Italy and deal with any threat that may come either from Dalmatia or Africa. But for his own survival he had sacrificed Narbonne. The importance of this city lied in the fact that it was a strategic point, like Arles, which so far assisted the Romans to establish authority not only in southern Gaul but also keep the land and sea routes towards Spain safe.[479] Now the western empire was bereft of this advantage, which would jeopardize future operations whether in Gaul or Spain. The surrender of the city

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[476] Hydatius' wrong date of 461 has been rectified by Muhlberger 1990 and Burgess 1993.

[477] Because not all the sources for the battle name all the main participants, that is, Aegidius, Fredericus, and Childeric, some have raised their suspicion as to Childeric's presence in the battle (Frye 1992, 1-4), which we owe to Gregory of Tours' account. The number of battles fought is also contested, that is, whether only one main battle was fought or Childeric fought other battles (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.18: *pugnas*). For the discussion of this varied views. I agree with Périn and Feffer (1987, 108) and Daly (1994, 624, 627), who number Childeric as one of Aegidius' allies in the battle, for I find it also far from possible that Aegidius did not bring the Franks to the battle, in which not only his own future but also that of the Franks was at stake, though it is possible just as well that Childeric did fight more than one battle.

[478] After their defeat at the hands of Aegidius and during the beginning of the reign of the new western emperor Anthemius (r. 467-472) they appear to have been licking their wounds, for once the great African expedition of 468 failed, the Visigoths went onto offensive, which would be crowned by their independence in 475 (Heather 1991, 71-224).

[479] Riess, 2013.

also appears to have fueled the Visigothic ambitions, for after 463 Ricimer turned to the Burgundians to replace the position of allies which was usually by the Visigoths, as they became more interested in pursuing their own destiny. This is apparent in Ricimer's choice of the next supreme commander of Gaul Gundioc, a Burgundian (Hilar. *Ep*. 9). Indeed, Ricimer seemed to have secured its north from Aegidius, but the methods he used in doing so costed the empire a significant city and a strong ally.

For he could not even eliminate the threat Aegidius posed. Hydatius (s.a. 464) notes that Aegidius sought cooperation with Geiseric against Ricimer but Aegidius' death prevented this from ever coming to fruition. Still, as long as Aegidius and his power base remained independent, theoretically, Ricimer's rivalry never ended, a rare result in the violent rivalries of late antiquity. What this historical case demonstrates, then, is the fact that the rivalries by the 460s had reached a point where the power and resources of either side became extremely more limited and along with it their sphere of command and influence.

Ricimer Feeling Imperial Pressure: Anthemius' Arrival and the Generalissimo

When Severus died in mid-465 the greatest obstacle to Ricimer's full reconciliation with the eastern emperor Leo[480] was also removed. The reconciliation was urgently needed on Ricimer's part, for the generalissimo not only faced two rivals to his north and east but an enemy to his south in the person of Geiseric, all of whom he had to face with his own limited sources. With Constantinople ready to back the west up, Ricimer now could feel somewhat at ease. Indeed, the eastern contribution would be fundamental to the realization of the western expedition of Africa in 468.[481] But by 468, the relationship between Ricimer and Leo would have been changed once more.

Ricimer was apparently willing to stay on Leo's good side: he did not appoint another one of his own choices as the western emperor like he did with Severus, leaving the choice to Leo while accepting his sole authority over the whole empire between 15 August 465 and 12 April 467. When finally on the latter date Leo decided to use his imperial prerogative and appointed Anthemius as the new western emperor, his choice could hardly have been worse for Ricimer. Anthemius was of military background; he had been emperor Marcian's *magister utriusque militiae et patricius* (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.205-7) and had successfully fought battles against the

[480] O'Flynn 1983, 114.
[481] Seeck 1921, 352.

Ostrogoths and Huns under Leo (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.224-6, 232-5; 2.236-42; 269-80).[482] With such a strong military pedigree and the support of Constantinople, one wonders how uneasy Ricimer must have felt when heard of Leo's choice. Even if at the beginning he did not have such concerns, the impressive *advent* of Anthemius in Rome must have made clear to the generalissimo that Anthemius had not come to be a puppet at the hands of the western strongman: the new *Augustus* was accompanied by a substantial eastern army, his own *comitatus* that included Basiliscus, a *magister utriusque militiae et patricius*, who would take charge of the great African campaign of 468 (Prisc. *fr*. 42; Jord. *Rom*. 332; Joh. Mal. 14.44; Zon. 14.1.24), two of his four sons, Anthemiolus and Marcianus, of whom the former would take charge of a Gallic campaign in 471 (*Chron. Gall. 511* s.a. 471), alongside his only daughter, Alypia (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.212-5; *Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 467; Marcell. Com. s.a. 467; Hyd. s.a. 466; Jord. *Get*. 236, *Rom*. 336; Cass. s.a. 466).[483] Although this daughter of his was given to Ricimer in marriage (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209.1; Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 1.5.10; *Carm*. 2.484-6), Anthemius had come to lead on all fronts and he had little sympathy for the generalissimo: he at once practiced the inflation of titles and ranks policy of Leo[484] and multiplied the number of *patricii* in the west by making Ricimer's rival Marcellinus of Dalmatia also a *magister utriusque militiae et patricius* (Marcell. Com. s.a. 468, 474),[485] rising him to the same level as that of Ricimer. This was obviously a direct attack on Ricimer's position.[486] Even though Ricimer remained a *magister utriusque militiae et patricius*, the fact that Anthemius would assign the lead commanding roles in the great African expedition to Basiliscus and Marcellinus was a clear sign of the new government's anti-Ricimer policy. Just like Majorian had done, he was sidelined. But this was not the only measure Anthemius took against the generalissimo: his intention to eliminate Ricimer ever becoming a threat to his rule was a recurring theme in reign, for the generalissimo was also not idle.

Casus Arvandi

For all Anthemius' show of force early in his reign, his position was never altogether secure: Ricimer still enjoyed substantial support, to whose party belonged influential men. The

[482] Henning 1999, 43.
[483] Henning 1999, 43.
[484] O'Flynn 1982, 116-7; Mathisen 1991, *passim*.
[485] Demandt 1970, 685-7.
[486] O'Flynn 1983, 114-5; Henning 1999, 92.

praefectus praetorio Galliarum, Arvandus, was one of them, who owed his position to Ricimer.[487] He held the Gallic prefecture twice for nearly five years between 464-8, a time period spanning from Severus to Anthemius.[488] This all came down in 469 when a letter allegedly written by him to the Visigothic king Euric was intercepted, in which Arvandus urged the king to sever his relationship with emperor and move north of the Loire and then to divide Gaul between himself and the Burgundians (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 1.7). He was promptly charged with treason and sentenced to death, which was later commuted into exile (Cass. s.a. 469; Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Rom*. 15) by the intervention of some of his friends, notably, Sidonius Apollinaris, whom the whole affair appears to have afflicted (*Carm*. 1.7: *Angit me casus Arvandi nec dissimulo angat*). What was the cause and goal of Arvandus' letter? Cassiodorus asserts that Arvandus wished to become emperor (s.a. 469) while a modern interpretation suggests that Arvandus intended to play the role of a quisling under Euric.[489] I propose that the letter was composed on the orders of Ricimer and thus Arvandus' letter should be seen as though it had been written by Ricimer.

Anthemius' catastrophic African expedition in 468, from which Ricimer was barred, made him turn his attention to other areas still under direct Roman control. Gaul held a prominent position in this, where Anthemius at the beginning of his reign paid no particular attention, as he was content with the administrative arrangement made under his predecessor.[490] Around the same time the letter was dispatched, an army of Britons led by an unknown figure carrying the title *Riothamus*[491] appeared on the Loire to serve Anthemius (Jord. *Get*. 237; Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 3.9).[492] Clearly, Anthemius was trying to strengthen his hand, now that not only his prestige was seriously hurt with the failure of the African campaign and but because he also lost one of his principal generals, Marcellinus of Dalmatia (below). Supposedly 12,000 strong, Riothamus' army could be a perfect weapon that would threaten Ricimer with violence, who led the praesental army of Italy, besides his *bucellarii* and possibly still once to Marcellinus belonged *foederati*, probably somewhere around 6,000 men, considering the number given for 471/2 can also be applied to this date (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207). It was, of course, no less dangerous for

[487] O'Flynn 1983, 118.
[488] Henning 1999, 86, 91.
[489] Teitler 1992, 317. There would be no novelty in Romans siding with non-Romans against Rome (MacGeorge 2002, 227).
[490] Henning 1999, 164.
[491] *Riothamus*, *rigo-tamos* in Old English, meaning "supreme king" (Adderley and Gautier 2010, 188).
[492] Halsall 2007, 276.

Euric and in Arvandus' letter a common point was thus found: Euric was invited to north of Loire to act against emperor and his allies.[493] Regardless, Arvandus' letter was Ricimer's attempt to hinder Anthemius from gathering substantial support that could be well used against himself and therefore it should be seen as part of a feud between Ricimer and Anthemius, though fought indirectly. The removal of Arvandus from office and his subsequent exile was a natural response by emperor, who neither wished to see his officials conspire with the enemy nor his rival become stronger.

Ricimer's family ties have been advanced forward as evidence for why the letter appealed to the Visigoths and Burgundians.[494] Besides being a half Suebe, he was a Goth on his mother's side (Sid Apoll. *Carm*. 2.361-2, 363, 368-70) and he was also the uncle of the later Burgundian king Gundobad I (473-516) while his sister had already married the current Burgundian king Gundioc (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209; Joh. Mal. 14.45). But it seems to me Ricimer's appeal to two non-Roman groups should rather be seen in pragmatic terms: during his feud with Anthemius the Visigoths and Burgundians were close by and Ricimer simply took advantage of this proximity.[495]

It is open to debate, however, had the letter not been intercepted and Euric accepted Arvandus/Ricimer's terms, whether the course of events would have played out much differently. Euric appears to have had his own plans for the region already, for in 471 he would reject Anthemius' proposal of returning Septimania near Narbonne, which would re-open the trade route into Spain, in return for Clermont (Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 3.1.4),[496] then move on to defeat both the army sent by Anthemius and that of Riothamus (*Chron*. *Gall*. *511* s.a. 471). Ricimer and Anthemius would fight their battle in Italy, regardless of what was about to unfold in Gaul.

Ricimer has been accused of caring little for Gaul, unlike Aetius.[497] This is not an ungrounded accusation, for already a few years before during the rivalry between Agrippinus and Aegidius, as we have seen above, Narbonne was handed over to the Visigoths by Ricimer to gather support against Aegidius. Seeing from this perspective, Arvandus' encouragement of Euric was just another case of Ricimer's continuous pro-Gothic policy: to try to win over them

[493] Halsall 2007, 276. In 471 Anthemius' son Anthemiolus would campaign against Euric (*Chron*. *Gall*. *511* s.a. 471).
[494] MacGeorge 2002, 227; Halsall 2007, 276-7.
[495] Just as his party sided with the Visigoths against Aegidius before (MacGeorge 2002, 227).
[496] Halsall 2007, 277.
[497] MacGeorge 2002, 225.

to use against his enemies, regardless of its potentially negative impacts on the empire's interests. Nevertheless, this accusation may be modified by noting that he was ready to pay attention to Gaul, as long as the events and individuals there could affect his own plans and presence in Italy.

After 468 Anthemius could no longer easily ignore Ricimer, now that the eastern army turned back to Constantinople and Marcellinus of Dalmatia was killed. He knew he was exposed to an attack by Ricimer more than ever and therefore he had to be on lookout to seize any opportunity to curb his enemy's influence and power. The letter of Arvandus supplied such an opportunity, but the commutation of his sentence alone suggests that the emperor's position was weak: just as Valentinian III's young government when faced Aetius and his Huns: for how else could letting go of Arvandus alive be explained? Just like Valentinian III, Anthemius now could try to injure Ricimer by removing men who were his adherents but eventually ended up realizing without actual monopoly on violence no knot of a rivalry can be so easily untied.

4.2. Direct Confrontations: Assassinations and Civil Wars

- Speak, hands, for me!
William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.1.1283

For all the variety of subtle ways of eliminating one's opponent, none, other than assassination and civil wars, offered a more direct approach and promised a swift victory over rivals. Rome, just like other ancient cultures, had its share of such acts. Indeed, assassinations and *bella civilia* are embedded into its founding legend and the birth of the principate.

These two types of direct confrontations are not equally distributed. Assassination was far more the preferred method. Although poisoning may come to mind first in this context, stabbing, as one research has concluded, was the popular method in the republican and early imperial Rome.[498] Its popularity endured in late antiquity. It would usually be preceded either by a short dramatic exchange of words between the parties or a monologue of the attacker. The historical plausibility of the recorded word cannot be higher than generals' speeches before battles, but their literary effect was and still is no less strong than the Shakespearean soliloquies.[499]

[498] Withington 2020, 38-9.
[499] Although it must be admitted that the nucleus of what had been said might have been preserved by those who were present.

Civil wars in late antiquity until the fifth century followed the same pattern and goal of its predecessors in the principate: to become emperor. But beginning with the *comites Africae* Gildo and Heraclianus the nature of civil wars underwent a change. By 432, the change was complete: the opposing sides, Aetius and Bonifatius, did not fight to become *Augustus*, but the *magister militum et patricius*. Civil wars had become another type of direct confrontation for those who wanted to control the office of the generalissimo and hence the west.

That the realization of such confrontations therefore took place either *sub rosa* or openly, it may look less complex than other types of elimination strategies, as one side ultimately ended up dead, but if it were so, its apparent simplicity is easily eclipsed by its repercussions which were clearly more direct and detrimental upon the empire, for perhaps the most violent solution of them all was rarely followed by peace and stability whether at home or abroad. Indeed, a closer look reveals that in the late fourth and fifth centuries the west had its share of assassinations and murders nearly as much as the late Republic without producing a literary equivalent of the moralistic story entailing Fabricius and Pyrrhus.[500] Add to this that the barbarian groups the late Republican Romans had to deal with had posed a threat nowhere close to the danger their late antique equivalents would, the complete survival of the western Roman administration could be at stake.

Just as the above analyzed elimination strategies popular in this period have shown, here too, generals play the prominent role, whether in the fore- or background, as the nature of political violence in this period and geography focused on the *magisterium militum* and the patriciate. Excessive ambition to become the senior *magister militum* combined with lack of patience, which otherwise would be required in other types of elimination strategies, stands in the background of all direct confrontations here selected. It is against this background of an excessive ambition the change in the nature of civil wars may be set.

When one party was not a general but an emperor or another member of the *militia officialis* or *palatina* confronting a rival general, what was at stake was still that who held the office of the *magister militum* and the patriciate. Even if neither side did belong to *militia armata*, we see yet again the same goal in their crosshair with only difference being the battle is fought through their proxies. Direct confrontation was a risky option, which, once decided upon, required all

[500] Ammianus bemoans the assassination of the client king of Armenia Pap in 374 by the Romans to stress his point that the Romans of his day were lesser than those of the past days by recalling the famed story of Fabricius and Pyrrhus (30.1.1-23).

opportunities to be seized before they quickly passed, whether in the imperial palace or on the battlefield, that riskiest arena of all confrontations as Maurice emphasized in the *Strategikon* (Maur. *Strat*. 7.1.65; 8.2.86).

Many generals' lives came to their ends under this method: Stilicho in 408, Aetius in 454, Marcellinus of Dalmatia in 468, Aspar in 472, and Illus in 477. Emperors were not exempt either: Valentinian III in 455, Majorian in 461 and Anthemius in 472 were not lucky enough to die in their beds. Though less of occurrence, members of the *militia officialis* and *palatina* too met violent ends, like the archenemy of Stilicho Olympius in 411.

The categories this elimination type put into use fall are as follows: i) preemptive assaults; ii) use of naked force; iii) attempts at reasserting the authority of the imperial office.[501] A preemptive assault was an opportunistic fatal strike of one side to establish itself as the prominent power broker before the same goal was achieved by another general and his party. Such assaults aimed at physically eliminating rivals out of the picture. A successful general, Theodosius the Elder, was one such threat, whom Merobaudes had executed before he had a chance to strike first. Preemptive assaults which we will treat here distinguish themselves from the preemptive strike strategies we have dealt with above, in that the latter was not specifically designed to achieve the biological death of rivals, but instead limited themselves to more "lenient" means to get rid of them.

By use of naked force is meant the seizure of the first position in the *magisterium militum* from its current holder either through assassination or direct confrontation on the battlefield. Aetius wrested the prized rank and title from the generalissimo Felix in 430 in this way after had him assassinated. Aetius' and Bonifatius' rivalry in 432 is the example *par excellence* for direct confrontation.

Lastly, reasserting the authority of the imperial office entails here the undertakings of emperors, who attempted to get rid of an either dangerous or already dominating military figure, namely their generalissimo, by killing him. Constantius II had achieved this by incorporating the preemptive method into his strategy when the general posed a threat to his rule in Gaul in 355 (Amm. 15.5).[502] Stilicho's and Aetius' murders also fall into this type as

[501] Lee (2007) briefly touches upon the first and third but omits the second category, by far the most frequent one.
[502] Hunt 1999.

well,[503] but differ in that, although the emperors had been successful in getting rid of their generals, they nevertheless could not regain their full authority and independence, the role of the generalissimos having been undertaken by some other ambitious military figure.

4.2.1. Preemptive Assaults

Merobaudes' Arrangements in 375

Elimination of opponents by means of preemptive assaults was a favorite method of Merobaudes, the greatest profiter of the death of Valentinian I in 375. As soon as Valentinian I died, he had disregarded the other *Augustus* Gratian and raised the four-year-old Valentinian II to the throne. His next task was sidelining a promising commander, named Sebastianus, but there were others with whom Merobaudes needed to deal with.

One such commander was Theodosius the Elder, who was the *magister equitum* under Valentinian I. He had a brilliant military pedigree: in 368-9 he was tasked with suppressing the barbarians in Britain (Amm. 27.8.6-10; 28.3.1-8); fought against the Alamanni in 371 (Amm. 28.5.15), then Alani (Amm. 29.4.5) and Sarmatians (*Pan. Lat*. 12(2).5.2) in 372. In 373 he arrived in Africa and put an end to Firmus, winning back the important region for the emperor (Amm. 29.5; Oros. 7.33.6; Symm. *Or*. 6.4; *Pan. Lat*. 12(2).5.2). But in 375, while he was still in Africa, he was executed on the orders of the *magister peditum* Merobaudes and the *magister equitum per Illyricum* Equitius, as soon as Valentinian I died (Jer. *Chron*. s.a. 376; Oros. 7.33.7; Jord. *Rom*. 312; Amb. *de ob Theod*. 53). Theodosius did not have time to counter-attack to this order. How did this come to?

Theodosius, while in Africa between 373-5 appears to have earned the hostility of Merobaudes, when he arrested Romanus, an adherent of Merobaudes' party (Amm. 28.6.29-30). More important for Merobaudes, however, was the presence of such an esteemed commander in an important region such as Africa.[504] It is unlikely that, if Theodosius had lived longer, he would have sided with Merobaudes' party. Even without cutting the grain shipment from Africa to Rome, Theodosius' presence there could on its own constitute a threat to Merobaudes' regime. With so much at stake for Merobaudes, it seems probable that the man behind Theodosius'

[503] Lee 2007, 70. Aspar's murder by Leo in 472 brought more success to the emperor though the eastern relationship between the emperor and his generalissimo had been developed differently from the start and even then Leo could not escape the murder unscratched, his prestige having taken a hit by the epithet given to him shortly after the bloody business: "the Butcher" (Malch. *fr*. 2a).

[504] McEvoy 2013, 57.

execution.[505] After all, Merobaudes was the man who most profited from the death of Theodosius: with his death Merobaudes and Equitius had removed another obstacle in their path to dominate the western government through their choice of child-emperor Valentinian II.[506]

Just as Merobaudes had so eliminated Theodosius the Elder by seizing the moment to strike first and so became the first of many generalissimos in the west, so he seems to have got rid of Flavius Equitius, the *comes et magister militum per Illyricum*, with whom he had orchestrated the elevation of Valentinian II (Zos. 4.19.1-2).

Equitius belonged to Merobaudes' party and had recently enjoyed a shared consulship with emperor Gratian in 374. Never again his name is mentioned anywhere after this date.[507] Natural death, as always, is a possibility, but his sudden disappearance within the context of such political violence in 375 is suspicious. As the sole victor of this turmoil, Merobaudes, therefore may yet again be our prime suspect,[508] if we are to adopt inference to the best explanation method. His regional command and the subsequent consulship suggest that Equitius was a man of some significance, and it may be that he did not fully agree with Merobaudes' actions or just as Merobaudes he did have his own ambitious plans, which may have interfered with those of Merobaudes. If Equitius did not die a natural death, it is very possible to connect his disappearance, perhaps even death, to Merobaudes' arrangements in the post-Valentinian I world.

Gildo Challenges Stilicho

The importance of northern Africa for western Romans can be clearly seen in their efforts of winning it back after losing it in 439. But the same can also be gathered from their anxiety to keep the region and its commanders, *comites Africae*, within the imperial fold before 439. Although usually stable and peaceful, late antique Africa experienced almost constant political and religious commotion in the region. The threat Firmus constituted to the central government in 372 (Amm. 29.5) could not have escaped the future *comites Africae*, Gildo, Heraclianus, and Bonifatius. Their subsequent actions indeed suggest that this was not so. All three made their bid to be *the* generalissimo – their breaks with the central government having

[505] McEvoy 2013, 57; Tomlin 1973, 527-8.
[506] Matthews 1975, 64; Elton 2018, 130.
[507] Errington 1996, 441; Sivan 1993, 120.
[508] McEvoy 2013, 57.

been a side-effect of this. Gildo and Heraclianus fall here into the category of those who resorted to preemptive assaults. First, let us look at Gildo.

Traditionally seen as a revolt,[509] Gildo's secession from the western government in the summer of 397 ended in 398 after suffering a major defeat at the hands of the western Roman army preemptively sent (but not personally led) by Stilicho. Though short, this was rather complex event that entails two preemptive assaults, one failed and another successful, the cause of which lies in the count's *invidia* of Stilicho's preeminence.[510]

By 397 Stilicho, the *comes et magister utriusque militiae praesentalis*, accumulated great power in his hands: he had married Theodosius I's niece Serena in 384 (Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 1.69-83); led his armies against the usurper Eugenius in 394 (Zos. 5.57.2); and more significantly, he was made regent over Honorius in 395 after Theodosius I's death (Claud. *In Ruf*. 2.4-6; Amb. *de ob Theod*. 5). On top of this, his illustrious rank and title combined both in theory and practice the offices of the *magister peditum* and *equitum*, a clear sign of the fact that the military command became centralized in the person of a single man, that is Stilicho.

More importantly for Stilicho, however, his regency claim also extended over Arcadius, emperor in Constantinople, even though for Arcadius and definitely for his influential courtiers, Rufinus and Eutropius, it had no validity, which naturally caused a rift between the two courts. It is in this atmosphere of hostility the sources say that Constantinople urged Gildo to transfer his loyalty from Ravenna to Constantinople, to which Gildo agreed and crowned his decision with cutting the vital grain shipment to Rome, thus siding with the east against the west (Zos. 5.11.1-2; Claud. *Cons. Stil*. 1.271-3, 277-9).[511] Gildo had shown no sympathy for the eastern empire when he decided not to send military assistance to aid Arcadius' father Theodosius I in his confrontation with the usurper of the west Eugenius in 394 (Claud. *Gild*. 246-7; *de VI. Cons. Hon*. 104-5, 108-10). Why did this change of heart now occur now?

The short answer is that Gildo needed allies in challenging the generalissimo of the west to become the first *magister militum*. His active career precedes that of Stilicho as he held a military command (Amm. 29.5.6, 29.5.21-4) and joined the imperial family by way of his daughter's marriage (Jer. *Ep*. 79) well before Stilicho. In 386 records attest him named the *comes Africae*,

[509] Kotula 1979; Shaw 2011, 36-52.

[510] In this analysis I follow McEvoy's (2013) and Wijnendaele's (2017) reading of the Gildonic War and expand upon their conclusions.

[511] Alan Cameron 1970, 93, 103.

the commander of a very vital and important region. His full title by 393 was the *comes Africae et magister utriusque militiae per Africam* (*Cod. Theod*. 9.7.9) and this was unique to him,[512] which suggests that Gildo's loyalty was especially important for the imperial court in the east.[513] But for all these privileges, Stilicho was the person who eventually enjoyed the greatest benefits and proximity to emperor Theodosius I, whose *comes domesticorum* he was made sometime between 385 and 392 (Claud. *Laus Serenae*, 193-4), which was usually the last step before becoming a *magister militum*. He was then made one of the *magistri* who led Theodosius I's army against Eugenius in 394 (Zos. 5.57.2) and finally the regent of Honorius by the time of Theodosius I's death in 395, whereas Gildo obviously was sidelined after enjoying a brief imperial favor. It follows therefore that Theodosius I's eventual preference of Stilicho and his meteoric rise made Gildo envy of Stilicho's success already by 394, which is visible in him rejecting sending help to the eastern emperor, and this is likely the origin of Gildo's rivalry with Stilicho.[514] That both ancient and modern commentators suspected of the man's disloyalty in these years therefore also appear to have originated from Gildo's envy of Stilicho.[515]

Although fueled by feelings of ambition and envy toward Stilicho, Gildo could not act as long as Theodosius I was alive, since he could not match the emperor's resources, which after Eugenius' defeat also included those of the west, but when Theodosius I's death and Gildo's particularly low opinion on child-emperors (Oros. 7.36) coupled with Arcadius' ministers' enmity against the generalissimo, this offered a chance for the count of Africa to get rid of him. Stilicho's failed military campaigns of 395 and 397 against Alaric, which also had seen off the general's eastern regiments going back to Constantinople, must have raised Gildo's hope of success as well and made the count preemptively move against the general by switching his allegiance to Constantinople. But he either overestimated the east's hatred for Stilicho or underestimated the general himself, because Gildo's preemptive assault which was composed of cutting the grain shipment was overturned by Stilicho's preemptive assault by sending a military force to Africa which was quickly organized and led by Gildo's brother Mascezel: by February 398 the Gildonic problem was solved with the man's suicide (Oros. 7.36; Claud. *Gild*. 1.9-13).[516]

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[512] Demandt 1970, 719.
[513] Wijnendaele 2017, 388.
[514] Wijnendaele 2017, 398.
[515] Claud. *Gild*. 1.253-517; Oost 1962, 27; Matthews 1975, 272-3.
[516] Alan Cameron 1970, 95.

Gildo did not attempt to overthrow Honorius and his government but the generalissimo Stilicho.[517] He had risked his office and property[518] for this alone and preemptively moved against Stilicho, while the latter's hands were full with the Goths of Alaric in Greece. An ambitious man like Stilicho would want subordinates, not equals in his regime – a point Gildo would probably agree. By seizing the initiative, Gildo tried to eliminate Stilicho and become the strongman of the west, though it is possible that the first step of his plan may have entailed bringing the balance between generals that predates the Frankish generals, as Wijnendaele claims.[519] Whatever exactly his final goals were, he failed, just as his premonition about the child-emperors proved to be wrong: Honorius reigned 30 years, surviving several generalissimos because he was content with his ceremonial role and his successor Valentinian III also reigned another 30 years – long enough time to change the fabric of the imperial office. Nevertheless, Gildo's example had shown his successors and others, those who may find themselves in a rivalry with a general, that if they ever decide to act preemptively they need to support it by taking the initiative also on the battlefield. By trusting too much on Constantinople, Gildo unexpectedly received a deadly strike at the hands of the army sent by Stilicho.

Evaluated from this perspective Gildo's failed preemptive assault yielded several positive results for other generalissimos and us, significant in seeing the development of political violence in the following years: first, Gildo's elimination helped Stilicho' cement his regency and position in the west[520] and the *magisterium militum* became an office centralized more than ever in the hands of a single man; second, Gildo's example showed to other generals that to act the way the *comes Africae* had done was an option if they regarded their command or interests were threatened by another successful general. These revolts would not necessarily entail the replacement of the holder of the imperial but instead a change within the *magisterium militum*.[521] They would act primarily in order to protect and/or improve their positions and

[517] Wijnendaele 2017, 397.

[518] Gildo's wealth must have been so enormous that a new office called the *comes Gildoniaci patrimonii* was created after his downfall to see the distribution of his possessions (*Not. Dig. Occ.* 12.5).

[519] Wijnendaele 2017, 399.

[520] McEvoy 2013, 159-60. Trying to cement his position further Stilicho arranged Honorius' marriage, almost 14 at the time, to his eldest daughter Maria (nearly 12 years old) early 398 (Zos. 5.4.1-2). Claudian says that Theodosius I arranged it before his death, though this may be a fabrication, as he was the chief propagandist of Stilicho (Claud. *Nupt*. 335-41: *sic uterus crescat Mariae; sic natus in ostro parvus Honoriades genibus considat avitis*).

[521] Wijnendaele 2017, 401.

interests by any means necessary;[522] third, by operating outside of the official central command chain as soon as he seceded, Gildo became a warlord, the first of its kind,[523] whose army composed of the elements of African army and his *bucellarii*.[524] It was of vital importance to put this armed force into action as soon as possible to eliminate the rival on the battlefield by taking the initiative, where Gildo failed. Heraclianus would successfully do this, likewise Bonifatius, but Aetius would exploit it to its fullest extent.

Heraclianus Challenges Constantius

After the coup d'état against Stilicho and his party in 408, the replacement for the coveted office of the *comitiva Africae* was Heraclianus. The post was clearly offered to him as a reward. He was member of the anti-Stilicho party and was also the man who had killed the generalissimo with his own hands (Zos. 5.37). His loyalty proved itself unshakable during the Gothic menace that surrounded Rome in 409-10: he never recognized Alaric's puppet emperor Priscus Attalus (Zos. 6.5-6); sent financial aid to Honorius in Ravenna (Zos. 6.10.2); successfully defended Africa against an expedition sent by Attalus and cut the *annona* shipment to the city and so injured Attalus' fragile hold over Rome's inhabitants (Zos. 6.9.1-2; 11.1; Oros. 7.42.10; Soz. 9.8.7). The appreciation from Honorius' government for all this was the bestowal of the consular insignia upon him in 413 (Oros. 7.42.10; Prosp. s.a. 413; *Cod. Theod.* 15.14.13).

Within the same year, however, he broke off with Honorius, having ceased the grain shipment, and attacked Italy.[525] Years between 408-413 had witnessed numerous usurpers, barbarian chieftains and a memorable sack of the city. All were opportune moments for Heraclianus to act but he had chosen to remain loyal. Now that he was at the apex of his career as a consul of the west, he sailed to Italy for war. What could possibly have changed?

Traditional scholarship was quick to judge Heraclianus' attack to Italy as a usurpation,[526] probably influenced by the number of usurpations attested in those years, but recent studies

[522] Diesner 1972, 328.
[523] Wijnendaele 2017, 402.
[524] Diesner 1972, 324.
[525] His breaking off with Honorius: Olymp. *fr.* 23; Philost. 12.16; Prosp. s.a. 413; *Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 413; Hyd. s.a. 412; ending the *annona* shipment: Oros. 7.42.12; attack to Italy: Oros. 7.42.12-13; Marcell. Com. s.a. 413; Jord. *Rom.* 325. For their modern coverage, see: Heather 2005, 256-7; Oost 1966; Shaw 2011, 50-1; Wijnendaele 2017.
[526] Such as Courtois 1955, 131; Kotula 1977; O'Flynn 1983, 63; Muhlberger 1990, 177, 187; Elton 1996, 229. Those against this: Jones *LRE*, 188, 190; Oost 1966; Matthews 1975, 316; Brown 2000, 337; McEvoy 2013, 199-200. Official

have convincingly argued for another reading of the event: Heraclianus did not attack Italy and Honorius to make himself emperor but to get rid of Constantius, Honorius' new first *magister militum*, before the new generalissimo acted against him.[527]

The argument is not new and was entertained previously by several scholars.[528] It is sound, because it makes excellent sense within the context of Constantius avenging spree of those who were responsible for Stilicho's death.[529] The architect of Stilicho's fall, the *magister officiorum* Olympius had already been killed (Olymp. *fr*. 2.8) in 409/10 on the orders of the general and his executioner Heraclianus was probably next. Constantius then received the rank and title the *comes et magister utriusque militiae* in 411 to lead the operations against the usurpers in Gaul (Oros. 7.42.3)[530] and if this and Olympius' death did not send an obvious message to Heraclianus, Honorius' decision to give Constantius the right to interfere into military matters in Africa (*Cod. Theod*. 7.18.17) must have opened his eyes to the fact that he would have to face sooner or later the active partner of Honorius for the sake of preeminence in the west.[531] As the only *comes Africae* that received consulship Heraclianus no doubt had high hopes for further advancement and gain, both of which was now threatened by the rise of a new general who would no doubt seek not only to assert his dominance but also to avenge Stilicho's murder.[532] That after Heraclianus' fall all his property and estates went over to Constantius (Olymp. *fr*. 23.1-9)[533] strengthens our hypothesis that the two men had started to see each other rivals as soon as after Olympius' downfall and Constantius' assumption of official command sometime between 410 and 411.

Evaluated in the light of these facts, Heraclianus' invasion of Italy in 413 was very likely a product of his preemptive move to eliminate Constantius. Why he waited for some time until 413 although Olympius' earlier execution 409/10 and Constantius's new title and command in 411 already had signaled the coming of a new era under another strongman is open to speculation. But since armed following and resources are the most vital tools that help waging

imperial records never recognized Heraclianus as a usurper: *Cod. Theod*. 9.40.21; 15.14.13. For this discussion, see: Wijnendaele 2017c, 143-4.

[527] Chiefly McEvoy 2013, 199-200 and Wijnendaele 2017c.

[528] Oost 1966; O'Flynn 1983, 70; Gaggero 1991, 214; Shaw 2011, 50.

[529] Oost 1966, 239.

[530] Wijnendaele 2017c, 141.

[531] Shaw 2011, 51; Wijnendaele 2017c, 141.

[532] Constantius is also noted to have been much closer to Honorius than Heraclianus (Wijnendaele 2017c, 141).

[533] McEvoy 2013, 200.

violence on political level, one may assume that Heraclianus was busy gathering his strength before confronting his rival. It has been noted already that he had helped Honorius financially during the Gothic crisis in Rome and this cannot have been of small amount, since it was offered to an emperor. But at the end of the day, he had Africa under his command and if we go by the size of his fleet that sailed with him to Italy in 413, which is said to have been 3,700 (Oros. 7.42.13) the count was by 413 in a position, where he must have seen promising success for his expedition, even though we have to take into account that the number was likely a result of Orosius' exaggeration. His force, however, still could not match that of Constantius in terms of manpower.[534] Most of his forces must have consisted of elements of the African field army and those of his personal followers.[535] If his amount of wealth – totaling ca. 900 kg in weight, which was much less than that of Gildo's fortune (Olymp. *fr*. 23) – which fell to Constantius' hands after his fall are of any indication, he had already spent most of his resources on this invasion force and already reached his limits. In order his preemptive assault to succeed, he had to employ a stratagem.

This he found in the cutting the grain shipment to Rome before moving out, not in order to sow distress among the city's populace and officials, but instead to keep Constantius away from his operation in Italy.[536] The generalissimo at the time was arranging a treaty with the Visigoths for the return of Galla Placidia, who had been kidnapped during the sack of Rome in 410 (Oros. 7.42; Olymp. *fr*. 3). Heraclianus' decision to cut the *annona* brought an end to these discussions and turned Goths once again hostile (Olymp. *fr*. 22.1), which caused Constantius to stay in Gaul instead of going to Italy to deal personally with Heraclianus.[537]

For all the strategic brilliance of his plan, however, Heraclianus failed in his undertaking, though he was able to elude Constantius himself. As a *comes*, perhaps a *comes domesticorum*,[538] instead faced him, who would have commanded an army of elite soldiers, and defeated the

[534] Wijnendaele 2017c, 149. For comparison: previous *comites Africae*, Firmus and Gildo had been able to be dealt with 2,500 and 5,000 soldiers sent against them, respectively, by the government, which can be used as an argument that Heraclianus had a similar force of a smaller nature like Firmus and Gildo. Hydatius' battle account (s.a. 413) claims 50,000 dead in total for both sides but this is probably an exaggeration for dramatic effect.

[535] Liebeschuetz 1993, 269 and *Cod. Theod*. 9.40.21.

[536] Wijnendaele 2017c, 146-7.

[537] When an agreement was reached in 416, the decided amount of grain was 600,000 *modii* (1 *modius* = 6.7 kg), a huge amount only African farmers could meet (Moss 1973, 713 n. 21).

[538] Stein 1968, 195.

count (Oros. 7.42.14; Olymp. *fr*. 23; Hyd. s.a. 413), meaning that Constantius won the rivalry without involving in the fight.

Although a failure was crowned by his murder upon his return to Carthage (Oros. 7.42.14; Olymp. *fr*. 23; Hyd. s.a. 413; Marcell. Com. s.a. 413; Jord. *Rom*. 325), Heraclianus' preemptive assault nevertheless should be regarded as an ingeniously orchestrated plan. As the *comes Africae*, he had first cut the grain shipment, usually a vital step in demoralizing the populace and cause disturbance, but this time to specifically disturb Constantius' ongoing arrangements with the Visigoths at the time, who expected the generalissimos' grain shipment to themselves.[539] After this crucial step, he did not lose time by stalling like Gildo and instead quickly organized an invasion force with which he sailed to Italy. But as his defeat implies, though he proved to be a good strategist who could masterfully orchestrate elimination strategies, this alone was not enough when the matter came to direct confrontation, where perhaps nothing played a larger role than fortune.

Felix' Downfall

After his march against Italy with Huns and his submission of Valentinian III's government, what Aetius received as appeasement in 425 was a command in Gaul as the *comes rei militaris* (Olymp. *fr*. 43.2; Philost. 12.14). But Aetius had proven himself no common thespian and this meagre rank and title was no sufficient appeasement for a person who clearly aimed at greater things.

Aetius' early years (425-430) can be divided into two halves: on the one hand, he was building up his military prestige in Gaul, on the other, he was working towards the downfall of those who stood in his way to be the strongman of the west, namely the *magister utriusque militiae et patricius* Flavius Felix and *comes Africae* Bonifatius. On Bonifatius we are already well informed. The count, whose connection to Valentinian III and Placidia's cause had been proven during Ioannes' usurpation in 425 was an earlier target who had come into the crosshair of Aetius (Procop. 3.3.14-28; Hyd. s.a. 427).[540] In 427 he had besmirched the count, having taken advantage of the count's remoteness from the court, and tried turning the government against him but eventually failed, though not before Felix, on the orders of the government, sent an expedition to Africa and Bonifatius lost his *comitiva* for the moment.

[539] Wijnendaele 2017c, 147.

[540] Which would render O'Flynn's statement (1983, 77) about Felix being the first rival of Aetius incorrect.

(Prosp. s.a. 427; Procop. 3.3.16-22; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 196; Theoph. AM 5931).[541] Aetius' and Bonifatius' rivalry would be reignited in 432, but for the moment, Aetius had turned his attention elsewhere: the generalissimo of the west, Felix.

About him we have very limited information, although he was the holder of the most powerful office between 425-430. His earlier career eludes us completely. But since we know for a fact from a close source to the events, he was the first *magister militum et patricius* under Valentinian III's newly established government (Hyd. s.a. 425: *Felix patricius ordinatur et magister militum*),[542] he was unlikely to have been an active player in the usurpation of 425 and may even have been sent by Constantinople, since he originally would belong to the party sent from the east at the beginning of the campaign against Ioannes.[543] It is possible that he was a man of little importance and exactly this may have contributed to Valentinian III/Placidia's reasoning in bestowing upon one such individual that distinguished rank and title to create some sort of balance of power among the generals.[544]

But this would not be so and even Felix adapted himself quickly to the nature of his high office, proving himself no stranger to political violence. That he was fully capable of it had become apparent in 426 when he had the bishop of Arles and a deacon of Rome assassinated (Prosp. s.a. 426).[545] The question of why a generalissimo needed to kill such individuals is difficult to answer, but given the bishop of Arles, Patroclus, had been a *cliens* of Constantius, suggests that Felix, though *the* generalissimo, saw his position not secure and suspected treachery even from among the clergy.

Amidst this tense atmosphere of hostility between three generals came the downfall of Felix in 430. He, his wife, named Padusia (*CIL* 4.41394 [*ILS* 1293]), and a cleric name Grunnitus fell victim to an assassination while climbing the steps of the Ursiana Basilica in Ravenna (Prosp.

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[541] Prosper attributes the blame for this attack upon Bonifatius to Felix, a hypothesis to which several scholars have subscribed (Freeman 1887, 437; Moss 1973, 715; Coulon 2000, 97-8), but we should not forget that Prosper was a chronicler writing from the papal perspective and therefore his desire to blame an individual who was known to have killed a bishop and a deacon should be taken *cum grano salis.*

[542] Several scholars, amongst whom Oost (1968, 228), Sirago (1961, 284), O'Flynn (1983, 77-8), have contested Felix' patriciate, but I prefer siding with our primary source Hydatius, who had little reason to make such a mistake, owing to his proximity to events and usual reliability.

[543] Sirago 1961, 264-86; Kaegi 1968, 23ff; Moss 1973, 715; McEvoy 2013, 234, 242.

[544] Sirago 1961, 265-6. Similarly, Freeman 1887, 433; Zecchini 1983, 142, Mathisen 1999, 194; Stickler 2002, 38. McEvoy (2013, 246-50) deals briefly with three generals and their rivalry and on page 248 with Felix' murder, though very briefly.

[545] Oost 1968, 211-12; Mathisen 1989, 73; Coulon 2000, 96-7.

s.a. 430; Hyd. s.a. 430; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.3; Marcell. Com. s.a. 430; Agnellus 31). No investigation followed while the *magisterium* remained unfilled until 432.

As has been our practice so far, the first thing we do in the aftermath of such a case of violence resulted in the death of a general, we ask ourselves who benefitted most from it? The answer is not always easy to find, but in Felix' case, we are somewhat luckier. There is no doubt that Aetius and Bonifatius were the two individuals who benefitted most.[546] Aetius, after holding the rank of *comes* for a handful of years in Gaul, was now made the *magister militum per Gallias* (Prosp. s.a. 430; Jord. *Get.* 176, Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.212f.).[547] His military achievements in the region also no doubt contributed greatly to this promotion, specifically those against the Goths and Franks. Bonifatius, on the other hand, was restored to his *comitiva* (Aug. *Ep*. 229-31; Procop. 3.3.28-30). Wijnendaele claims in his article[548] that this promotion and restoration took place while Felix was still alive, in 429, but I find it much more plausible to date them to the year of 430, after Felix' assassination, since dating them to 429 means assuming Felix so feeble a first *magister militum et patricius*, who lacked power not only in the face of Aetius' promotion but also Bonifatius' restoration. Such a passive stance on Felix' part can hardly be reconciled with his previous violent behavior towards Constantius' former *cliens* and is completey at odds with how a generalissimo would behave in this period.

Having modified the chronology of this event, we should turn back to find an answer of the question who was responsible for Felix' death. Is it possible that Aetius and Bonifatius could have worked together?

The fact that neither was awarded Felix' former rank and title but instead either promoted or restored may cause us to assume that may be so. Because such an arrangement would seem to aim at some sort of equilibrium between the surviving generalissimos without conferring upon only one the real prize. But such an argument can be easily dismissed on the following ground. Aetius' defamation campaign of Bonifatius in 427, which led to the latter's removal from him *comitiva*, was not an offense that anyone could take lightly. I cannot see them, therefore, having reconciled in the meanwhile, and worked in concert towards Felix' downfall.

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[546] McEvoy 2013, 247.

[547] Demandt 1970, 654, 657; O'Flynn 1983, 78; Stickler 2002, 48 n. 237); McEvoy 2013, 248, Wijnendaele 2017d, 478; *CIL* 4.41389. As has been pointed out by O'Flynn (1983, 79), to pinpoint exactly which ranks and titles Aetius (and also Bonifatius) held and when between 425-432 is not an easy job. Here I follow McEvoy's recent (2013) chronology for Aetius' career.

[548] Wijnendaele 2017d.

Furthermore, none of the primary sources allude to such a cooperation. This leaves us with the likelihood that either Aetius or Bonifatius must have alone carried the responsibility for Felix' murder.

Historians, as usual, are divided into two camps in this matter, either for or against Aetius as the responsible individual,[549] following the division of the contemporary sources on the matter: Prosper (s.a. 430) and John of Antioch (*fr*. 201) present Aetius as the wrongdoer, whereas Hydatius (s.a. 430) and Marcellinus Comes (s.a. 430) do not name any names. Prima facie, Aetius indeed seems to have been our culprit. I suggest here that Aetius was indeed to blame, who acted before Felix had a time to act against him, following Prosper's (s.a. 430) statement: *Aetius Felicem cum uxore Padusia et Grunito diacono, cum eos insidiari sibi praesensisset, interimit*.

As *comes* in Gaul, Aetius' military achievements are well known. In contrast to him, Felix' failed campaign against Bonifatius must have brought no little injury to the patrician's prestige, since generals' rise and falls were usually preceded by their victories and defeats on the battlefield. This would suggest Felix had another reason to despise Aetius, not only because of him he was led to organize an eventually failed expedition against Bonifatius but also while he suffered a defeat, Aetius was collecting further laurels of victory. Felix had shown his competence in eliminating anyone he deemed as opposition to himself with the murders of a bishop and a deacon,[550] now having failed against Bonifatius, Aetius would probably be the next on his list. The only difference is that Aetius acted first, anticipating Felix' moves.[551]

The ongoing invasion of Africa by the Vandals makes the backdrop of the assassination, as Wijnendaele adroitly explains. As the first *magister militum* of the west, it was Felix' sphere of responsibility to organize a force to stand against the Vandals there, to work in harmony with those that would come from the east (Procop. 3.3.35), and Felix' forces would have probably included Aetius' soldiers as well,[552] just like a similar emergency in Africa in 440 would give

[549] Aetius responsible: Bury 1923, 243; Oost 1968, 229-30; O'Flynn 1983, 79; McEvoy 2013, 248; Wijnendaele 2017d. Aetius not responsible: Freeman 1887, 444; Coulon 2000, 99-101.
[550] O'Flynn 1983, 78; Wijnendaele 2017d, 479.
[551] Oost 1966, 229; Demandt 1970, 654; O'Flynn 1983, 79; McEvoy 2013, 247-8. Those against this hypothesis: Croke, 1995, 78; Mathisen 1999, 176; Halsall 2007, 241.
[552] Wjinendaele 2017d, 480-1.

birth to a similar expectation (*Nov. Val*. 9.1). But instead of being a part of that relief force,[553] Aetius acted like a warlord would, conducted his own operations in Noricum and Raetia under the pretext of defending those regions against the Iuthungi and rebels (Hyd. s.a. 430), two group of peoples that posed little to no threat to the empire at the time in regions for which the government had little care[554] especially while the Vandals were rampaging in Africa. The real purpose of Aetius' activity in the region was keeping a close eye on the outcome of his orchestration of Felix' assassination in Ravenna, into where, had the things gone to his dislike, say, if the soldiery revolted after their general's murder, he could swiftly descend from north and take control.[555]

It should not be forgotten that the rivalry of the three generalissimos may have been much more complex than imagined here, with all parties concurrently seeking opportunities to get rid of each other. The contemporary sources undoubtably have only a part of the story and we, who are dependent on them to build our own conjectures, have to frequently call upon reason to our aid. I have followed here Wijnendeale's plausible construction of Felix' murder which needed a little modification concerning the chronology of Aetius' promotion and Bonifatius' restoration, and a small augmentation to strengthen the idea not only of Wijnendeale and other scholars, who have opted for the hypothesis that Aetius murdered Felix before the latter would have a chance to attempt the same.

Felix had probably intended to weaken Aetius' military strength by incorporating his forces to the African relief force. Then Aetius, whether quickly after the planned African campaign or during, would have been much easier to deal with, as he would have been weakened in terms of manpower. But Felix did either not calculate the Gallic soldiery's proven dislike to leave their home region for far away campaigns, as when Julian's soldiers in 361 did not want to leave their homes to serve abroad (Amm. 20.8.8), which would have made his plan of taking the bulk of Aetius' forces away from him a stillborn project, or underestimated Aetius' resilience, and imagined him as a mere *comes*, who could do nothing except obeying his

[553] At the time of Felix' murder in May 430, the city of Hippo Regius, in which Bonifatius was surrounded, was undergoing a severe 14-month siege (Possid. *Vit. Aug.* 28.)

[554] Military forces in Noricum were already minimal in Radagaisus' invasion of 405/6 (Alföldi 1974, 213-4), while Raetia seemed also little of importance for the central government as the latest legislation sent to the region was dated to 398 (*Cod. Theod.* 11.19.4; Wijnendaele 2017d, 482 n. 71). In the light of these, Aetius' sudden interest to the region seems indeed extraordinary.

[555] This strongly persuasive argument of Wijnendaele on how Aetius orchestrated Felix' murder, see especially 2017d, 481-6.

superior. Either way, Felix' responsibility in organizing a force for the African problem must have included a way to eliminate Aetius, and likely Bonifatius, to become the unrivalled strongman of the west. But Aetius' preemptive assault changed all these plans. Now Aetius was one step closer to his ultimate aim, but its cost for the empire, as almost always in such rivalries among commanders, was already high, if not immediately visible: more instability and loss in terms of land and revenue in addition to time and energy which could have been spent on the empire's defense rather than personal rivalries.

Sebastianus' Preemptive Assault and Its Failure

Aetius' career fraught with political violence did not only see him as perpetrator but also victim. His father, Gaudentius,[556] Ioannes' *magister equitum per Gallias* in 425 (*Chron. Gall. 452* s.a. 425), had already experienced the other edge of the sword when he fell victim to what was likely to be a preemptive assault during a military mutiny.[557] His soldiers took him out of the picture via this mutiny after probably having been incited by the Theodosian dynasty or its supporters, eliminating any chances of the general taking part in the coming civil war. Aetius survived the disturbance of these years and even could manage to carve himself a place in the new government, but even after his greatest rival Bonifatius' death in 432 he still could not enjoy the safety and preeminence he longed for as easily as he would have wished. This is because after Bonifatius, this generalissimo's position was inherited by his son-in-law Sebastianus,[558] who also happened to have inherited the rivalry of his father-in-law.

The entry for the year of 432 in Prosper gives us our first clue as to how Sebastianus hoped to finish what Bonifatius had started:

> *Aetius vero cum deposita potestate in agro suo degeret ibique eum quidam inimici eius repentino incursu opprimere temptassent, profugus ad urbem atque illine ad Dalmatiam* […] (Prosp. s.a. 432)

Those whom Prosper identifies as *quidam inimici* at this time can only be the adherents of Sebastianus. From this detail squeezed into the same entry where he mentions Aetius and

[556] Demandt 1970, 641; Stickler 2002, 22-4.

[557] Zecchini 1983, 118f.

[558] Wijnendaele 2015, 105. It is noteworthy to point out that how quickly the office of the *magisterium militum* had become hereditary. Just as Arbogastes had inherited Bauto's post following 385, Sebastianus with no protests of the imperial government was able to inherit Bonifatius' position. Other examples include Aegidius and Syagrius, Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Julius Nepos, and Ricimer and Gundobad. On these men, see: MacGeorge 2002 and Liebeschuetz 2007, 485-88.

Bonifatius' battle, Bonifatius' death, and ultimately Aetius' revenge after his return to Italy, we can freely infer the conclusion that Aetius' attackers belonged to Bonifatius' party, who would have now belonged to Sebastianus, his successor (Hyd. s.a. 432: *cui* [sc. Bonifatio] *Sebastianus gener substitutus per Aetium de palatio superatus expellitur*).[559]

Sebastianus' attack on Aetius in his estates is a sensible strategy that carries the sub-trait of a preemptive assault. After the pitched battle Aetius and Bonifatius fought, neither side must have been in condition to follow the battle with another. Aetius' return to his estates can be explained by his desire to lick his wounds and perhaps collect more men to incorporate into his armed retinue, which must have, given the defeat he suffered, lost some manpower. Moreover, his decision to remain in Italy, whatever its exact circumstances might be, does not suggest that he was ready to accept defeat. In Sebastianus' case, though now in the possession of a victorious army, the death of their original leader must have morally affected the men and forced Sebastianus not to take a risk at another battle so soon under his fresh command. Under such hypothetical conditions sending a group of handpicked men he knew he could trust with a delicate covert operation must have seemed to him more logical. But Aetius' escape and his eventual return would turn the tables against him.

Although occurred after a battle and Aetius had all the reasons for the continuation of hostilities with Bonifatius' successor, Sebastianus' attack can be labelled as a preemptive assault, for the general aimed at eliminating Aetius before he could find time and space to recollect himself. Though ultimately a failure, that Aetius had received the attack in his Italian estates before he was able to escape Italy, which implies his unpreparedness, only serves to strengthen our branding of the act as a preemptive assault.

Ricimer Deals with Marcellinus of Dalmatia

As MacGeorge has pointed out, the most certain thing we know about the career of Marcellinus of Dalmatia is that he was killed in 468.[560] In total, six primary sources mention his death (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 468; *Pasch. Camp*. s.a. 468; Cass. s.a. 468; Marcell. Com. s.a. 468; Dam. *Epit. Phot*. 91; Procop. 3.6.25). While the statements in *Fasti Vindobonenses Priores*, *Paschale Campanum*, Cassiodorus are of a briefer nature, they are nevertheless useful as regards

[559] Wijnendaele 2015, 105.
[560] MacGeorge 2002, 58.

pinpointing location of the event, Sicily.[561] On the other hand, in Marcellinus Comes and Damascius we read the reason for it as treachery,[562] which Procopius echoes in his work (Procop. 3.6.25). Modern readers, meanwhile, are left disappointed in their hopes about hearing anything clear about the identity of the perpetrator(s). Only Marcellinus Comes and Procopius offer some information, albeit unsatisfactorily. According to these two, the responsible party were the Romans, and specifically Marcellinus of Dalmatia's fellow generals or officers.[563] But who they might be exactly? It is here that I will propose Ricimer as the chief perpetrator and offer an argument as to why we have much more reason than anyone else at the time to believe it could hardly be anyone else than this generalissimo.

Modern scholars are indeed mostly in accord with seeing Ricimer as the wrongdoer.[564] While I agree with them on this point, none has so far pursued the Ricimer hypothesis diligently: none have offered any detailed answers to the question how Ricimer could have managed to get rid of Marcellinus.

A possible hinderance for them appears to have been, first, that how could Ricimer orchestrate it though the two were separated by some good distance, since at the time of the events Ricimer was in Italy and Marcellinus in Sicily, and second, how come that primary sources fail to mention Ricimer, if he indeed was responsible.[565] But whereas the champions of the former seem to forget that distance posed no obstacle whatsoever to the orchestrations of assassinations, those of the latter, on the other hand, appear to have strictly taken the word (in this case their *lack* of word) and failed in recognizing the concomitants. For, as the case of Aetius and Felix has demonstrated, it was possible to get rid of rivals, even though they were separated from each other by some distance, for instance, by employing the soldiery or other subordinates for the actual manifestation of the attack. As to the apparent silence of the six sources on the identity of the guilty party, I cannot but fail to see how the accounts of Marcellinus Comes, Damascius, and Procopius could be taken as silent, although they clearly

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[561] Cass. s.a. 468: *In Sicilia Marcellinus occiditur*. *Pasch. Camp*. s.a. 468: *Marcellinus occiditur Sicilia*. *Fasti Vind. Prior*. s.a. 468: *occisus est Marcellinus in Sicilia mense Aug*.

[562] Marcell. Com. s.a. 468: *Marcellinus Occidentis patricius idemque paganus dum Romanis contra Vandalus apud Carthaginem pugnantis opem auxiliumque fert, ab iisdem dolo confoditur, pro quibus palam venerat pugnaturus*.

[563] "Generals" is the translation Blockley (1981-3) follows in Priscus (*fr*. 53), which Procopius is said to have used as his source, whereas MacGeorge offers "fellow officers" or "commanders" as translation (2002, 58 n. 230).

[564] For instance, Seeck 1921, 368; Stein 1959, 391; O'Flynn 1983, 117; MacGeorge 2002, 54; Kulikowski 2002, 189. An exception is Demandt 1970, 685.

[565] The first argument is held by MacGeorge (2002, 60) though it should be noted that she is warm to the idea that Ricimer was responsible, and the second by Demandt (1970, 685).

mention a treachery (*dolo*) and point out to individuals of military personnel (*Romanis*; Greek in Procopius here), which cannot be anyone else than Ricimer and his associates at this time, since the generalissimo was the rival of Marcellinus of Dalmatia, and moreover, he was the person who would have most benefitted from Marcellinus' elimination.

Even if we are to ignore Procopius' account for Marcellinus of Dalmatia's career and hence his death on account of his unreliability for the events of the fifth century,[566] we still possess Marcellinus Comes and Damascius as witnesses to a Roman treachery at work concerning Marcellinus' death. This hardly explicit information they furnished us with can only be decoded by an investigation which we are about to make into reasons that will display why Ricimer is our primary suspect first and thus reveal the identity of those *Romanis* […] *ab iisdem* [Marcellinus] *dolo confoditur* (Marcell. Com. s.a. 468). Our point of departure, therefore, will be Ricimer under just before and at the very beginning of emperor Anthemius' reign in the west. Ricimer's murder of Majorian and elevation of Libius Severus in 461 had caused an irremediable rift between the supreme general and those who had been loyal to Majorian. We have seen above that this included first and foremost Aegidius in Gaul and Marcellinus in Dalmatia.[567] By 465 Aegidius had died and his successor Syagrius was more concerned with the Gallic affairs, which must have relieved Ricimer's to some extent, but after the arrival of Anthemius from Constantinople in 467 as the new western emperor, things became alarming for Ricimer in Italy, as Anthemius made several appointments within the military cadre without consulting his first *magister militum*'s opinion, which saw Marcellinus of Dalmatia first being made the second *magister militum* and shortly after as another *patricius* (Hyd. s.a. 469; Marcell. Com. s.a. 468). A second *magister militum* was not a novelty but the bestowal of the patriciate to another military individual was clearly one. That Marcellinus was next given an important role in the upcoming African expedition of 468 and Ricimer was apparently

[566] Kulikowski 2002, 182. It is not exactly known whether Procopius really used Priscus as his source for the events, which forces us to be really cautious against Procopius' statements regarding the events of this century (Kulikowski 2002, 183-4). In reconstructing Marcellinus of Dalmatia's career, likewise, MacGeorge is cautious in using Procopius (2002, 64-8).

[567] Marcellinus' connection to Dalmatia is sometimes seen suspicious, as only the sixth-century sources Procopius and Damascius attest to this. Perhaps his connection to that region is caused by the fact that his nephew, and the last legitimate emperor in the west, Julius Nepos, later held the post of the *magister militum Dalmatiae* (Kulikowski 2002, 183). It is only for convenience's sake this study prefers to use the Dalmatian epithet when mentioning the general Marcellinus, in order to prevent a possible confusion with the chronicler sharing the same name, Marcellinus Comes.

sidelined, no doubt the latter regarded his position and domination in the west under direct assault.

All these arrangements in 468 must have been a rude awakening for Ricimer, who, since 461, had been enjoying total control over the western military affairs, a date, to which also his personal rivalry with Marcellinus of Dalmatia reaches back: it was then Ricimer had stripped Marcellinus of his troops while the latter was in Sicily, which caused him to flee the island (Prisc. *fr*. 29). Between 462-65 rumors of a joint operation between Aegidius and Marcellinus against Ricimer caused the latter to fear for his life until the eastern emperor Leo intervened (Prisc. *fr*. 39), but Marcellinus' return to Sicily and his success against the Vandals there in 465 (Hyd. s.a. 465), though no doubt good news for the empire, signaled Ricimer that Marcellinus both recovered from what had happened in 461 and that Marcellinus was truly a gifted military commander, who went so far as to achieve something Ricimer could never claim so far: a victory against the Vandals.[568] It was apparent that the rivalry would not end until one side was eliminated. When, then, Marcellinus came to Italy as part of Anthemius' *comitatus* in 467 (Hyd. s.a. 467) and was given the aforementioned command of the western forces for the African campaign (*Cons*. *Const*. s.a. 468)[569] and the patriciate (Marcell. Com. s.a. 468), this was a direct assault on Ricimer's position,[570] the sole patrician in the west until that moment. Then, to suspect another individual other than Ricimer in the involvement of Marcellinus' death, just because the sources did not explicitly name him, would only be logically possibly when we completely disregard a rivalry that had been going on for several years.

But how exactly did Ricimer manage to pull of such an act of assassination in Sicily when he was in Italy?

It should not be forgotten that for an assassination to be counted successful the only thing really matters is the death of the target. The identity of the actual assassins(s) or the method they employed (poisoning, murder) in striking their target are trivialities and concerns that should matter only very little next to their importance of being instruments in the realization of the perpetrator's plan. As our argument above, I believe, has sufficiently demonstrated, this perpetrator was Ricimer. As we remember, three decades ago Aetius had managed to orchestrate the assassination of the first *magister militum et patricius* Felix by way of his

[568] Kulikowski 2002, 187.

[569] Burgess 1993, 199-207, 245.

[570] This is the chronology of events Kulikowski (2002) follows which excludes Procopius' narrative of events.

supporters in 430, although the former was in Raetia et Noricum and the latter was in Ravenna. This particular instance proves that distance is no hinderance to assassinations.

Ricimer in August 468 does indeed not appear to have been in Sicily, unlike Marcellinus, whose presence in Sicily is easily attested in the records.[571] Ricimer was very likely in Italy, probably in northern Italy, Mediolanum, for this was the region and city, where he had many allies and friends.[572] Nevertheless, just like Aetius or perhaps even more than him,[573] he commanded the loyalty of many of his supporters, especially of military rank, whom he could employ as instruments of his will. He may also have used his very well-known wealth[574] to seduce some of the soldiery to join his conspiracy. We cannot be exactly sure, but it seems very plausible that those treacherous Romans we read in Marcellinus Comes either out of loyalty or because of money joined Ricimer's cause in taking down Marcellinus of Dalmatia, while the latter was completely focused elsewhere, namely to the African campaign at hand, just as Felix had once lost his life on climbing the steps of a Ravennite church, expecting no such attack.

Furthermore, Ricimer had very good reasons to orchestrate the assassination from afar. A confrontation in the form of a pitched battle, like the one that occurred between Aetius and Bonifatius, would be out of the question. Not only such battles were risky, but also the resources by the late 460s were very scarce. In 472 Ricimer would command an army of 6,000 troops (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207). This was a number even less than a semi field army, which would have composed out of 10,000 or 15,000 soldiers.[575]

But perhaps more significant than this, would be the reactions of Anthemius and Leo. Anthemius was sent to the west by Leo and in 468 a major campaign was under way. If Ricimer had openly shown his involvement in this affair at such a critical time, no doubt, even if Marcellinus had already died, he would have drawn the anger not only of Anthemius and

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[571] As attested by Cass. s.a. 468; *Pasch. Camp*. s.a. 468; *Fasti Vind. Prior*. s.a. 468. In August 468 Anthemius' African expedition was in full swing, from which Ricimer was excluded. Basiliscus, Heraclius, and finally Marcellinus of Dalmatia were three generals conducting the campaign in their respective areas: Basiliscus on the sea, Heraclius in Africa, and Marcellinus in Sicily (Hyd. s.a. 468; Procop. 3.6.1-2). Sicily was very significant for the western empire, especially now because after the loss of north Africa in 439 it had become the new breadbasket of the empire in the west (Vera 1997). It was recently the home base for the failed operation against Africa in 441 (Prosp. s.a. 441; Marcell. Com. s.a. 441). The island, however, had also become less secure for the Romans since at least in 455, since the Vandals had been regularly raiding it (Prisc. *fr*. 39; Kislinger 2014, 237-59).

[572] Henning 1999, 137.

[573] For by 468 Ricimer had been enjoying preeminence for more than a decade, whereas Aetius by 430 had not yet even held either the first *magisterium* or the patriciate.

[574] Demandt 1989, 174.

[575] Elton 1996, 237.

other still loyal generals of the African campaign, but also that of Leo. Perhaps Anthemius would have been easier to deal with due to eventual failure of the campaign which brought loss of prestige and the return of the surviving elements of the eastern army to Constantinople, but no one could guarantee that Leo would be completely fine with Ricimer's behavior towards his junior emperor. Strong eastern emperors had shown time and again they would not stay mere spectators to western affairs.

Furthermore, Leo had been aware of Ricimer's rivalry with Marcellinus in already 465. It was only after his intervention that the two generals for the time being appeared to have dropped their feud aside (Prisc. *fr*. 39). If Ricimer were to break this apparent peace, Leo could take the offense personally. The eastern emperor had already demonstrated his displeasure with the patrician in 459, when he did not recognize Ricimer's consulship[576] and after elevation of his puppet Libius Severus in 461 (Marcell. Com. s.a. 461; Jord. *Get*. 236).[577] Conditions at the time having been so, Ricimer had very good reasons to conceal his involvement as much as possible in this act. He appears to have been successful in doing this, for even the contemporary and near-contemporary historians failed to have noted Ricimer's involvement, causing our sources to settle with the unnamed treacherous Romans as the wrongdoers.

That our perpetrator must be Ricimer can also be inferred from the fact that the was also the person who benefitted most from Marcellinus' elimination.[578] He now did not have to share the patriciate with another person of military rank,[579] let alone a rival, and once again was able to claim his influence over the general affairs of the western empire, which he exactly started doing right after the great African debacle, by making appointments to shape the military and civil offices to his liking: the influential post of the *magister officiorum* was given to a friend (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207) and Gundobad was made the *magitser utriusque militiae per Gallias* (Joh. Mal. 14.45). He attempted to re-arrange the Gallic affairs with barbarian support against Anthemius' anti-Visigothic policy before the *casus Arvandi* broke out and finally the opportunity finally arrived to replace emperor himself, which he eventually did in 472, after a civil war culminated in the sack of Rome and murder of Anthemius.

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[576] Bagnall 1987, 493.

[577] See: Kulikowski 2002, 185-6 for Ricimer's unpopularity in the east.

[578] O'Flynn 1983, 117-8; Kulikowski 2002, 189.

[579] For there were other patricians in the west but they belonged to civil offices with no military command, which made their patriciate not threatening for the first *magister militum*.

That the fortunes of Anthemius and Ricimer reversed this sudden after Marcellinus' death is telling. When no other generals who could rival the generalissimo's position existed, the attention of the latter would eventually turn to emperor himself, who had no choice but to conform to the trend that had been the norm since Stilicho: a ceremonial emperor like Honorius. Generals such as Ricimer had long ago done away with independent and strong emperors.

4.2.2. Use of Naked Force

By far and large forcefully seizing the rank and title of a rival, either through a confrontation on battlefield or assassination, was the most popular elimination type of them all. Exercising political violence to an extent that the opponents would kill and die openly for the sake of being the first *magister militum* had picked up steam in the 420s and hardly lost momentum thereafter. In this period, in which the rank and title of the supreme general was enhanced by the illustrious addition of the patriciate, no generalissimo would show the philosophical resignation Stilicho had shown in accepting defeat in 408.[580]

It should be argued at this point that this category is to be separated from the above categorization in the following manner, for one can argue that preemptive assaults could also entail both confrontations on the battlefield and types of murders. I would counter this argument by saying that the combination of the two types would cause us to miss the nuance of preemptive assaults. Hence here, as far as the sources allow, I trace particularly those historical cases which lack the features of a preemptive assault, in the manner I have handled the subject above. I think it will be clear to the reader that to none of the cases handled below the features of preemptive assaults can be attributed. Enough time was a prerequisite for preemptive assaults (and strikes) but in these cases the protagonists had little or no time to premeditate their enemies' downfall.

Constantius III's Legacy

When the first *magister militum* and *patricius* Constantius died as emperor Constantius III in 421 and the position for the strongman of Honorius opened up once again, political violence

[580] After the coup d'état staged by Stilicho's enemies in 408, the former took refuge in a church but later abandoned it, having been persuaded by those sent by the government, and was immediately executed, putting no resistance (Zos. 5.34).

duly made its return. At the time of Constantius III's death two generals quickly appear: Asterius, *comes Hispaniarum*, in 420 (Hyd. s.a. 420) and Castinus, *comes domesticorum*, in 420/421 (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9). The office of *comes domesticorum* was, as we remember, a very convenient rank from which one could step forward to become the *magister militum*. In view of this historical precedence Castinus makes the impression of being a likely successor of Constantius III. However, we have a much stronger reason to argue that this person was Asterius, for he is said to have held the patriciate sometime between 420-22 (Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 2.9: *cum autem Asterius codicillis imperialibus patriciatum sortitus fuisset*), but possibly in 421 after his victory over the usurper Maximus in Spain and while Constantius III ruled as co-emperor,[581] who would have no longer need to hold the patriciate, having seized the imperial office.[582] What concerns us here is the fact that from Constantius III's attainment of the title back in 415 forward, the patriciate had come to mark the preeminence of the first *magister militum*. While Asterius' military achievement was probably the reason for earning the patriciate, its bestowal during Constantius III's lifetime makes him a candidate who received the new emperor's approval.

After Constantius III's death, then, we have Asterius as the first *magister militum* and Castinus as *comes domesticorum*. However, Asterius disappears from the records in 422,[583] shortly after Constantius III' death. He, who succeeded him as the new *magister militum* is, unsurprisingly, Castinus (Hyd. s.a. 422; Prosp. s.a. 423).

Natural causes may be held responsible in Asterius' disappearence but given the high rate of violence that surrounded the most prized possession of the fifth century west, one can hardly ignore an attractive scenario in which Castinus may have something to do with what happened in 422. When Valentinian I died in 375 Merobaudes had quickly moved on to eliminate several names who would have constituted a threat to himself as the generalissimo. Castinus may have acted on the same impulse and seized an opportune moment as soon as Constantius III died to make himself *the* generalissimo.

What makes this scenario so attractive is that Castinus was indeed the man who benefitted most from Asterius' disappearance. *Invidia* was a frequent feeling in such rivalries for

[581] Clover 1993, 84-5, Kulikowski 2000b, 135. The latter proposes the period between February 421 and 422 (2002, 128).

[582] Kulikowski 2000b, 128.

[583] Kulikowski 2000b, 127-8.

ascendancy and Castinus may have felt this strongly once Asterius rose from holding a *comitiva* to the *magisterium militum* with the addition of the patriciate: surely a much longer jump, say, than from a *comes domesticorum* could make. That he disappeared soon after Constantius III's death makes the argument more tenable that Castinus was waiting for a moment to strike and he waited until he was sure that Asterius could not enjoy imperial protection now that Constantius III was dead, to whom Asterius likely owed his patriciate and position. Considering another name, that is Honorius, for Asterius' rise in these years would make little sense, for I doubt that Constantius III lost interest in arranging military appointments after his elevation as *Augustus* and delegated such matters suddenly to Honorius.

Asterius' death, when evaluated from this perspective that factored in the historical relationship between him and Constantius III seems likely to have resulted from the jealousy of Castinus. The mere fact that such a tremendous promotion was awarded to a low-ranking *comes* would be sufficient for anyone to be envious in an age marked for its ambition.

Civil War for the Magisterium Militum and Patriciate

After Felix fell victim to Aetius' machinations in 430, the post of the *magister militum* and the patriciate was not filled as quickly as Aetius and Bonifatius, for their own particular reasons, would have hoped. Instead, it remained vacant until 432.[584] The government of Valentinian III refrained for the moment from appointing a replacement for Felix' position. It may be argued they acted prudently in doing so, since bestowing the post and the title on either of the remaining men could have likely opened hostilities between them in no time. But following this route appears to have changed little: the decision only inflamed Aetius and Bonifatius more than ever for the post itself, for which a civil war was fought in 432 and Bonifatius died shortly afterwards with Aetius becoming the strongman of the west.

Even if not in rank and title, one can offer little counter argument against the hypothesis that Aetius was de facto the strongman of the west after Felix' downfall.[585] His military successes

[584] Aetius, by some scholars, is said to have become the *magister peditum praesentalis* (Ensslin 1931, 477-81; Demandt 1970, 654-7; O'Flynn 1983, 79), but due to the vagueness of the sources, it is just as possible that he may have become the *magister militum per Gallias* and not the *magister militum praesentalis*. As in the case of Felix' murder, here, as well, the chronology of events in McEvoy (2002, 248) is adopted, as the work offers a recent critical view of the events and notes that, in the aftermath of Felix' death, Aetius was the *magister militum per Gallias* and Bonifatius once again the *comes Africae.*

[585] O'Flynn 1983, 79. Stickler 2002, 54 emphasizes that his position was yet to be cemented, however.

in Gaul and the fruits he picked up in the form of a friendly relations with the Gallic élite earned him much prestige and power in contrast to his rivals Felix and Bonifatius.[586] His elimination of Felix, which was recognized by period sources (Prosp. s.a. 430; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201; Hyd. s.a. 430), was his first open bid to the preeminence in the west. He would soon come once again for Bonifatius, since he had already in 427 fabricated a story to bring about Bonifatius' downfall from imperial favor but failed (Prosp. s.a. 427; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 196; Theoph. AM 5931). Bonifatius, although a successful commander and soldier, failed to stop the Vandals in Africa (Aug. *Ep*. 220; Theoph. AM 5931; Procop. 3.3.29-32). Because of this, he was eventually replaced by an eastern commander named Aspar in 431 (Procop. 3.3.34-5). In terms of military prestige, therefore, Bonifatius was not on par with Aetius. But perhaps the greatest asset on Bonifatius' side was the favor he enjoyed by the Theodosian dynasty, unlike Aetius, who could not expect any sympathy fromthem, for he had fought against it under the usurper Ioannes and then subdued it by force to gain a formal position in it. Bonifatius' assistance to Placidia's cause, on the other hand, not only during the years of Ioannes' usurpation but also before when she had problems with her brother Honorius were very favors, which Placidia could possibly not forget. Moreover, in Placidia's eyes, an alliance with Bonifatius must have become more significant than ever after Aetius' involvement in her patrician's murder, as that event probably displayed the fact that Aetius was not appeased at all by what he held. And although Bonifatius military pedigree was lacking, his loyalty probably counted for a lot more for the government of Italy. Loyal generals were hard to find in this period and Bonifatius had proven himself time and again that he regarded the Theodosian government and its members as allies. Why, then, Valentinian III did not right away summon Bonifatius to the court and award him the *magisterium militum* and patriciate upon Felix' assassination in 430? This question is actually already answered when we have mentioned Aetius' military prestige and the support he enjoyed in Gaul. He was simply too strong to be sidelined that easily. Giving Felix' position and titles to Bonifatius would surely offend Aetius. From the moment of Honorius' death in 423 the western empire lacked stability and with Africa's future in immediate peril, it is easy to understand why the government wished to adopt a balance policy[587] between its generals similar to the one usually existing in the east.[588] For only then a concentrated effort against

[586] Twyman 1970; Traina 2009, 73-5.
[587] O'Flynn 1983, 79-80; Wijnendaele 2015, 97.
[588] Sundwall 1915, 5.

Africa and other external problems could be made, not while generals were busy pecking at each other.

No one would orchestrate the murder of a *magister militum et patricius* to see it handed over anyone else, however. Aetius had become the *magister militum per Gallias* but obviously he wanted to be Felix' successor. The balance policy of the government could hardly be maintained. The rivalry of Aetius and Bonifatius could rekindle anytime, with the government of Valentinian III likely throwing their support behind the latter.

In light of these circumstances, in 432, Bonifatius was recalled from Africa to Ravenna, where he was named the first *magister militum praesentalis* and *patricius* (Prosp. s.a. 432; Marcell. Com. s.a. 432; Hyd. s.a. 432).[589] Ingeniously, the court also called Aetius at the same time to the palace to name him one of the two consuls for the year of 432 (*CIL* 5.7530). This move appears to have aimed at forcing upon Aetius the imperial decision of Bonifatius' superiority.[590] Summoning Aetius from his power base (Gaul) to Italy, where he also would be unaccompanied by the majority of his Gallic field forces, must have made him the weaker side,[591] unlike Bonifatius, and this must have left Aetius little room to maneuver at the spot other than to silently accept Bonifatius' appointment to a higher position. This decision was, of course, still a direct assault on Aetius' person.[592] The consulship was prestigious to hold, but next to being the first *magister* and *patricius*, it meant very little. Besides, Aetius no doubt believed, with such a pedigree of military achievements under his belt, he deserved those titles more than Bonifatius.[593]

The government's plan seeming to have envisaged sidelining Aetius by elevating Bonifatius to the supreme generalship leaves us with several questions concerning its feasibility. How could the government hope that this might work at all? The two men had a history and Aetius clearly had demonstrated the extent to which he could go for being the first *magister militum*.[594]

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[589] Freeman 1887, 448-9; Oost 1968, 230-3; Demandt 1970, 656; O'Flynn 1983, 78-81; 448-9; McEvoy 2013.

[590] McEvoy 2013, 248; Wijnendaele 2015, 99.

[591] Stickler 2002, 54 n. 270.

[592] O'Flynn 1983, 80.

[593] Oost 1968, 227-8; Stickler 2002, 35, 47-8.

[594] Again, since it is nearly impossible to exactly pinpoint which ranks and titles these men held between 430-2, just like the period for 425-30 (O'Flynn 1983, 79). Just like I had done by following McEvoy's recent (2013) chronology in my treatment of Felix' rivalry with Aetius above, here I once again follow McEvoy's timeline and take Aetius as the *magister militum per Gallias* and Bonifatius as the *comes Africae* until their invitation to the palace in 432. Exactly what ranks and titles they had been holding until that moment, in the general picture, means not that much, since their rivalry was in essence caused by one's preferment over the other. It suffices to know that they were never equals.

Then there is the problem of luring Aetius to Italy without the support of his troops.[595] What exactly the government and Bonifatius did try to achieve with this? Sure, at that moment Aetius indeed could do nothing, for he lacked the manpower to quickly call upon and enforce himself by force like he had done before, but also nothing did prevent him from resorting to that option eventually. Treating what happened from this perspective, I cannot fail but to explain Ravenna's doings other way than that it hoped to delay the inevitable for as long as possible.

For the supreme generalship was, as we have seen, indeed the main cause for hostility between the generals of the age. From Aetius' perspective, Bonifatius had to be removed by all means necessary. Rightly so, then, Aetius and Bonifatius were called *Unruhestifter*,[596] whose feud could only be solved through naked force that is called civil war. As O'Flynn has acutely observed, "For the first time, a civil war was fought not over who should be emperor, but over who should be the emperor's generalissimo."[597] The result had been a victory for Bonifatius but his death following soon after turned this into a defeat for the party Bonifatius belonged to (Prosp. s.a. 432; *Chron. Gall. 452*, 111; Hyd. s.a. 432; Marcell. Com. s.a. 432; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 291). What happened?

In pitched battles risks were extremely high. Especially when the meeting armies composed of soldiery of similar discipline and nature, a frequent case in civil wars, usually luck decided the day. Aetius' and Bonifatius' armies included no doubt their personal *bucellarii*, as Randers-Pehrson asserts, but I disagree it was the only type of force present in that battle that day.[598] According to Randers-Pehrson's reconstruction of the battle, Bonifatius had to turn his forces to Aspar's command before coming to Italy and hence, just like Aetius, was accompanied solely by his *bucellarii*. But Aspar would not have necessarily required Bonifatius to transfer the western troops to his command, for he would have no doubt arrived with eastern regiments. Moreover, if, as I have tried to show, there was some sort of plan behind Ravenna's summoning of Aetius and Bonifatius to the court simultaneously, I find it very unlikely that the court summoned Bonifatius escorted only by his *bucellarii*, for in case of a very possible clash, Bonifatius would have to have at least matched Aetius' forces. John of Antioch (*fr*. 201),

[595] Wijnendaele 2015, 97.
[596] Stickler 2002, 40.
[597] O'Flynn 1983, 80.
[598] Randers-Pehrson 1983, 155. Wijnendaele 2015, 100-1 is in agreement with this hypothesis.

still further, mentions that Bonifatius crossed over to Italy with a great army. Moving on to Aetius, since the battle did not immediately take place after the generals left the court with their newly bestowed honors, we can assume either that he, in the meantime, went back to Gaul or summoned a part of his army from there to bolster up his strength in Italy as much as possible. Whether numbers or generalship decided the result of the battle, we cannot be exactly sure, but wounding of Bonifatius and fortune, appear to have indeed sealed the next decades of the western empire.

Ricimer's Elimination of Remistus and Messianus

> "The first action in the revolt of Ricimer and Majorian was the murder of the *patricius* and *magister peditum* Remistus, whom Avitus had designated to hold Ravenna."[599]

By 17 September 456 emperor Avitus lost almost all his credibility in the Italian peninsula. From the moment of his coronation on 9 July 455 emperor had been conducting his policies in favor of the Gallic aristocracy and Visigoths, two groups that supported his coronation and as a result, came to hold a more prominent place in the western empire.[600] The fact that they were emperor's favorites in age where the treasury was emptied (a legacy of the Vandalic sack of 455) and a famine broke out in Rome, steadily provided the conditions for Avitus' and his followers' downfall. These conditions combined with the jealously over those groups' preferment over others, eventually triggered the senate to force emperor to renounce his Gallic and Visigothic retainers (Prisc. *fr*. 32; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 202), that is, the bulk of his forces, and so made him vulnerable to attacks. One such attack came soon at the hands of Ricimer and Majorian near Piacenza on 17/18 October 456, a fateful date that left in its wake two dead *magistri militi et patricii* of the reigning emperor, Remistus and Messianus, thus making the one-month period between 17 September and 17 October 456 a significant timeframe not only because it saw an emperor unmade but, more importantly for our subject, Ricimer's first acts of political violence for the sake of the *magisterium militum*.

Remistus was Avitus' first choice as *patricius*, therefore highly likely his first *magister utriusque militiae*.[601] He was also the first victim of Ricimer's series of politically motivated murders that would stretch into 472.

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[599] O'Flynn 1983, 106.

[600] Under his reign the number of Gallic aristocrats and Visigoths in the senate had risen (Henning 1999, 35).

[601] Demandt 1970, 672; Henning 1999, 74-5.

He, according to the sources, was killed by Ricimer on 17 September 456, after fleeing to the palace in Classis in Ravenna, having heard of Ricimer's revolt (*Fasti Vind. Prior*. s.a. 456; *Auct. ad Prosp. Haun*. s.a. 456). That he chose flight over defending his position implies that Remistus lacked resources to stand against those of Ricimer, about which we are uninformed yet must assume that they were superior at least in numbers over Remistus' army. Ricimer had served under Aetius, to whom the forces of the western empire served loyally even after his death, in avenging their commander's murder, so the same soldiers and their comrades could have preferred to follow a general who once belonged to Aetius' camp rather than an adherent of Avitus' government.[602]

Although we lack hard evidence regarding their prior relationship, it can nevertheless be sound to argue that Remistus and Ricimer had a rivalry,[603] most probably for the preeminence in the office of *magister militum*. Under Avitus, Remistus was the first *magister militum* and Ricimer the second.[604] That Remistus was Ricimer's first target bolsters the hypothesis that Ricimer saw Remistus as his chief rival at the time.[605]

This hypothesis grew more plausible when we add Messianus into the calculation. After Remistus' death, Avitus nominated Messianus as his new *patricius* (*Fast. Vind. Prior*. s.a. 456), making him his new first *magister militum*.[606] Avitus trusted him, for he and his patrician went back: in 455 the two had fought together against the Goths (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 7.425-7). His one-month long career ended not very differently than that of his predecessor, however. Near Piacenza on 17/18 October 456, Ricimer's army defeated that of emperor Avitus and *patricius eius* was one of the victims of that confrontation (*Auct. ad Prosp. Haun*. s.a. 456; *Fast. Vind. prior*. s.a. 456). Ricimer could finally assume the patriciate, which he did shortly afterwards: *Ricimer mag. mil. patricius factus est pridie kl. Marcias et factus est Maiorianus mag. mil. ipso die* (*Cons. Ital*. s.a. 457).

Remistus and Messianus' deaths, and of course Avitus' disposal, did therefore benefit most of all Ricimer, now the first *magister militum* and the *patrician* in the west. His "revolt" from the moment it had been born was aimed at seizing the preeminence in the west by way of holding

[602] Henning 1999, 247. Add to this that he joined forces with Majorian, a candidate for the throne before Avitus, which may answer why Remistus decided not to meet Ricimer in battle.
[603] Suggested but not pursued by MacGeorge 2002, 193 n. 788.
[604] O'Flynn 1983, 105-6.
[605] Henning 1999, 75.
[606] Henning 1999, 75.

the *magisterium militum* and the patriciate in his hands, which he achieved first by murdering Remistus. That Avitus remained emperor, however, meant that he could nominate a successor to his liking, which he did, and it was apparent to Ricimer that as long as Avitus occupied the imperial office, his path to being the first *magister militum et patricius* would remain obstructed, now that all the bridges he had with Avitus were burnt, under whom he once served as his second *magister militum*.[607] Thanks to Avitus' weakness in terms of manpower, however, which can be attributed to the senate's aforementioned decision, a weakness Avitus tried to remedy too little too late by recalling the Goths (Hyd. s.a. 456),[608] Ricimer's forces combined with those of Majorian outmatched Avitus' army (*Auct. Prosp. Haun*. s.a. 456: *quem* [Avitum] *cum magna vi exercitus magister militum Recimer excepit*) and so came emperor's and his *patricius*' downfall. A pitched battle finally decided not only who is going to be the next emperor, but more significantly, who is going to be the first *magister militum et patricius* for years to come.

4.2.3. Attempts at Reasserting the Imperial Authority

This category occupies a special place within the context of political violence in the west in this period, which, as we have been seeing, was frequently associated with generals' rivalries with other generals for the possession of the patriciate and the *magisterium militum*. Who was going to hold these is still the focal point of this category, but instead of a confrontation between two or more generals, what is at issue here is emperors' attempts at asserting their authority on their generals to once again become fully independent by returning to the usual practice of emperors nominating and replacing his commanders at will.

This type of violence occurred only twice (and unsuccessfully) in the period in question and this is telling. Nevertheless, Valentinian III attempted this in 454 when he killed Aetius and Anthemius tried to eliminate Ricimer as soon as he arrived in the west which eventually resulted in a disastrous civil war for himself. It is here I will treat what emperors tried to achieve by resorting to methods associated with generalissimos of the age and how, and finally, what results did they hope to achieve not only for themselves but also for their empire.

Valentinian III's Murder of Aetius

[607] Demandt 1970, 682.

[608] Avitus' original plan appears to have been to withdraw to Arelate and wait for the Visigothic king Theoderic II's help, which did not come to realization (Burgess 1987, 336-40).

> ἐρομένου γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλέως εἴ οἱ καλῶς ὁ τοῦ Ἀετίου θάνατος ἐργασθείη, ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων οὐκ ἔχειν μὲν εἰδέναι τοῦτο εἴτε εὖ εἴτε πη ἄλλη αὐτῷ εἴργασται, ἐκεῖνο μέντοι ὡς ἄριστα ἐξεπίστασθαι, ὅτι αὑτοῦ τὴν δεξιὰν τῇ ἑτέρᾳ χειρὶ ἀποτεμὼν εἴη. (Procop. *Vand*. 3.4.28)

On 24 or 25 September 454, the *comes et magister utriusque militiae et patricius* (*Nov. Val*. 17) Flavius Aetius was summoned to the imperial palace in Rome by Valentinian III to discuss financial matters (Prisc. *fr*. 30.1; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.2). But, as it turned out, this subject was just a pretext to send for the supreme commander. For as Aetius was speaking, emperor is said to have attacked together with his eunuch Heraclius the generalissimo with his sword and stabbed the general to death (Prisc. *fr*. 30.13-27). So Aetius' regime in the west came to an end at a moment he probably least expected it.[609]

In 454, Valentinian III was 36 years old and Aetius was likely in his 60s. The latter had contributed much to the safety of the empire through his military achievements, most recently in his defense of Gaul against Attila in 451.[610] His prestige was so great that near contemporaries soon equaled the murder of Aetius, whom Procopius held as one of the last of the Romans (Procop. 3.1.15: εἴ τις αὐτοῖν ἑκάτερον ἄνδρα Ῥωμαίων ὕστατον εἴποι, οὐκ ἂν ἁμάρτοι), with the murder of the whole *occidens* (Marcell. Com. s.a. 454). What had happened, to echo Edward Gibbon, that made emperor draw his sword for the first and last time in his life only to use it against his *patricius*?[611] Why did he wait for decades, if all that necessary for killing Aetius was to command him come to the *consistorium*?[612]

The answers to these questions should be sought for in Valentinian III's resentment that snowballed in nearly three decades. Already in his first year in the imperial office in 425, at a time when he was merely a 6-year-old boy, his government had to acquiesce to Aetius' forceful demands. The story repeated itself in 432 with the result being Aetius' unrivalled hegemony in the west for years to come. In Valentinian III's eyes, Aetius' successful campaigns in Gaul and in Raetia and Noricum must have been eclipsed by Aetius' elimination of his three

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[609] The primary sources dealing with Aetius' murder are: Prosp. s.a. 454; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.1-4; Hyd. s.a. 454; Cass. s.a. 454; Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 5.305f; *Auct. ad Prosp. Haun*. s.a. 454. For secondary sources: Seeck 1921, 318ff; Bury 1923, 298ff; Sirago 1961, 364f; Oost 1968, 264ff; Zecchini 1981, 281ff; Stickler 2002; McEvoy 2013, 295-7.

[610] Though not everyone agrees with this view, specifically Moss (1973), who is openly hostile to Aetius because of his alleged abandonment of Africa to the Vandals, focus on Gaul, and friendship with the Huns. He sees Aetius as a traitor and one of the reasons for the "fall" of the western empire. I think historians who enjoy the benefit of hindsight should be less generous with their harsh criticisms, especially if our subject matter belongs to a period of which we are not completely informed.

[611] Gibbon 1993, 461.

[612] The *consistorium* was the name given to the advisory council of emperors.

patricians with impunity. Among them, Bonifatius was especially close to his mother Galla Placidia and therefore must have held a dear place in young Valentinian III's heart also, if this is not a too romantic approach. Valentinian III had all the reason to fear what else the generalissimo could next do.

After Theodosius II's death in 450 Aetius' influence and power increased further, now that he had less to fear from an eastern intervention in case he might do something that would have been recognized in Constantinople as crossing the line. Theodosius II had demonstrated himself ready to intervene in western affairs, should he see it necessary as the senior emperor, as he had done in 425, but after his death it was Valentinian III who now became the senior emperor, not Marcian, an outsider who succeeded Theodosius II.[613] Valentinian III blamed Aetius for having been prevented from going on a campaign against the new emperor in the east, whom Valentinian did not recognize until the summer of 452, when Attila's incursion into Italy forced emperor to seek for help.[614] Such an operation would have aimed at making Valentinian III's the sole emperor by his assertion of authority over the two halves.[615] The lack of harmony between the east and west was something Aetius could exploit for his advantage. Valentinian III's plan for the east should not be seen at odds with his character. It has been argued by several scholars[616] that since 437 Valentinian III had been drawing a portrayal of a more proper emperor who was capable of political maneuvering, as we have seen with his strategy of debasement of ranks and titles, proper to a senior emperor who knows what he was doing. I see the reason of this change in his marriage in 437 to Licinia Eudocia,[617] the daughter of Theodosius II, in Thessalonica. This was a crucial moment in the young emperor's otherwise not so active life. One can only imagine the strength of the impressions with which the young emperor left the city and his wedding, away from Aetius' presence who was not there.[618] To experience such a grand event with all its imperial splendor must have awaken no meager feelings in Valentinian III to imitate Theodosius II. This is why Theodosius II's death in 450 marks a new phase for both Aetius' and Valentinian III's lives for completely different

[613] Zecchini 1981, 172, Oost 1968, 251ff, and Stein 1958, 338ff.
[614] Stein 1958, 586 n. 169; Bayless 1985, 94f.; Stickler 2002, 76.
[615] McEvoy 2013, 297. This would not be a first time as Honorius wished for the same when his brother Arcadius died in Constantinple in 408 but allegedly was prevented from going there to assume the role of the sole emperor by Stilicho (Zos. 5.31).
[616] Zecchini 1981, 172; Stein 1958, 338ff; Oost 1968, 251ff.
[617] The betrothal had taken place in 424 (Marcell. Com. s.a. 424). The marriage is treated in McEvoy 2013, 256-61.
[618] McEvoy 2013, 257.

reasons: for the former, a chance to push his power to its limits not only in civil but also in matters that concern the imperial family, whereas for the former, to assert his authority over the whole empire as the senior emperor, which would also mean reasserting his authority over his general.

Aetius had the head start, however, since he had not been idling for the past 20 years, especially in Gaul, the region in which we notice Aetius' first ambitious move after Theodosius II's death.

Due to his constant activity in the region, it can be naturally assumed that Aetius' relationship with the Gallic élite was better than, say, with that of Italy.[619] Since Honorius' reign no appointments from Gaul had been made to imperial posts in Italy, but a change occurred in 450. A Firminus was made the praetorian prefect of Italy in 450 and stayed in that position until 454 (*Nov. Val*. 31). That he was also made *patricius* in 451 (*Nov. Val*. 31) may lead us to assume at first sight that Valentinian III utilized debasement of ranks and titles strategy once again, but this must have been at the behest of Aetius or at least approved by him, for there occurred no hostility between the two. Given Aetius' jealousy over his post and titles, Firminus, therefore, must have been at least a nominal friend. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that Firminus, though held the patriciate, was of no military rank but a civilian, hence, inferior to Aetius in eminence.[620] The patriciate, only if accompanied by the possession of the first place in the *magisterium militum* rendered its holder as the dominant figure. The same also applies to Boethius, Firminus' successor in 454, and definitely a minion of Aetius, who shared his master's fatal fate at the imperial palace (Prosp. s.a. 454; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4).

Besides these two names there is attested a certain Opilio, who was *magister officiorum* in 450 (*Nov. Val.* 28, 30). He then is recorded as the *praefectus urbi* and *patricius*[621] as we gather from an inscription on a stone marble found near Vicus Augustanus (*CIL* 14.2046), and finally consul in 453.[622] They were all of Gallic origin and no doubt they came to possess those ranks and titles with Aetius' consent,[623] as neither an argument claiming that Valentinian III suddenly decided to appoint men outside of Italy for Italian offices would be satisfactory nor an

[619] Zecchini 1983, 249

[620] This applies to other men like Firminus, such as Opilio and probably Boethius (*Auct. ad Prosp. Haun.* s.a. 454), who became *patricii* but were not of military rank.

[621] Which can be explained in the same manner we have explained Firminus' patriciate.

[622] *PLRE II*, Opilio.

[623] Oost 1968, 237-8; Twyman 1970, 486-7, McEvoy 2013, 295.

assumption that such important transfers from Gaul to Italy could pass without Aetius' approval would be in accord with the political logic of the age. These appointments in the highest offices in Italy, therefore, largely turned into another avenue for Aetius to display his increased domination over the western affairs.[624]

I suggest that, however, what primarily pushed Valentinian III from merely feeling resentment to action was the general's breaking up Valentinian III's engagement plans for his daughter Placidia between 450-452.[625] Valentinian apparently took the role of *pater familias* very seriously,[626] as the Honoria affair of 450 proved. Honoria, Valentinian III's sister, allegedly wrote a letter to Attila sometime in 449, inviting him to come and rescue her, after she had been kept in custody in Constantinople and then forced to marry a senator on the orders of her brother, upon the discovery of her extramarital affair with her estate manager (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 199; Marcell. Com. s.a. 434; Jord. *Get*. 224). When, then, Aetius' intervened in an area where Valentinian III saw himself as the sole responsible person, this was too much for him.

The date of Valentinian III's betrothal of Placidia and Majorian, its annulment, and Aetius' revision is apparently difficult to pinpoint.[627] Clover dates the event to 450.[628] I favor the year 452 as *terminus ante quem*, for I regard the imperial legislation dated to 29 June 452, which mentions a new title of Aetius, a result of Aetius' violent rearrangement of imperial betrothals. Sometime between 450-452, after Theodosius II's death but before the aforementioned legislation, then, Aetius annulled Valentinian III's decision of betrothing his daughter to Majorian, whom Aetius then forced into retirement (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 5.119-274). Instead, he forced emperor to accept his son Gaudentius as his future son-in-law (Prosp. s.a. 454). Aetius' first act was somewhat understandable, as Majorian's marriage into the imperial family would be a direct challenge to his hegemony.[629] But his second act hinted to Valentinian III that he was not even independent in taking decisions – even though it had a political aspect – that concerned his family. By doing what he did, Aetius, one may be allowed to say, now usurped Valentinian III's *pater familias* role as well.

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[624] Hydatius notes (s.a. 454) that there were others, called the *honorati*, who fell victim to political violence together with their party leader Aetius, but he does not explicitly name them. The *honorati* were those who retired from active service but still held titles (Jones *LRE*, 146, 466, 616)

[625] Siding with Oost's (1964) hypothesis here.

[626] Stickler 2002, 79.

[627] McEvoy 2013, 292.

[628] Clover 1971.

[629] McEvoy 2013, 291.

It is true, as Stickler argues,[630] that emperor and his wife Eudocia were still young and could hope to produce a male heir, so Aetius' rearrangement could not at the moment define the empire's near future, but I cannot see any other way to interpret emperor's decision to marry Majorian into his family than for the reason he was very concerned about regaining his independence as soon as possible by a rushed decision like this rather than putting his trust on luck and wait for a male heir to be born.

The apparently forced oath of friendship Prosper mentions between Aetius and Valentinian III and the bestowal a newer and more spectacular title, *magnificus vir parens patriciusque noster* in 452 (*Nov*. *Val*. 36), upon the former that followed the above discussed developments are two clear pieces of evidence that can be accepted as hints to Aetius' increased dominance. In this regard, they are testaments to the fact that emperor had only one role to play for his generalissimo – a ceremonial one – while all sorts of decision, even those that concerned emperor's family, would require Aetius' approval and when necessary, revision. Valentinian III had been living for decades under the shadow of his strongman, but when Aetius became much more forceful than ever before after the death of Theodosius II, this must have demonstrated emperor that a reign much more constrained than before awaited him. This was a deal Valentinian III could not accept so he acted.

Although fully dominated by Aetius in almost all spheres of his life, the moment to act could not be more opportune for Valentinian III. The possibility of re-living the events of 425 or 432 was unlikely, because the Huns had now their own problems: Aetius' defeat of them in 451 and their retreat from Italy in 452 due to problems such as disease (Hyd. s.a. 453) were now augmented with Attila's death in 453 (Prosp. s.a. 453; Marcell. Com. s.a. 454; Jord. *Get.* 254-8; Hyd. s.a. 452), causing them to concentrate on their own affairs. In 439, on the orders of Bleda and Attila, the Huns had stopped supplying the Romans, hence Aetius, with sending fresh warbands of Hunnic warriors.[631] Now that Attila died as well, this could change soon, but for 454 this was a remote possibility. Huns' significance for Aetius' victories, both for the empire and for his own person, was undeniable: the number of campaigns he led in the 440s cannot be compared in terms of number to those preceding 439. No doubt his own *bucellarii* had still some Huns, besides others, but when we factor in his coalition of forces that stood up against

[630] Stickler, 2002, 77.
[631] Jones *LRE*, 199.

the Huns in 451 in Gaul and his complete passive stance in the face of Hunnic invasion of Italy in 452 (Prosp. s.a. 452) it is easy to conclude that Aetius' armed followers by 454 were weaker in terms of numbers. If a crisis faced him, he would have to do with what sources were available to him.

Regardless of his military retinue's reduced numbers, that Aetius is said to have arrived into the imperial palace alone (except that he was accompanied by Boethius) is telling (Prisc. *fr*. 30.13-27; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.1-4). Obviously, an attack on his person did not cross his mind: he had never faced a mutiny from among the soldiery; his last serious rivals Bonifatius and Sebastianus were long dead; Majorian was in retirement with hope of return on his own; while his all other subordinates were nothing but loyal.[632] He had little to suspect from emperor, with whom he had shortly before publicly swore an oath of friendship. No doubt it appeared to Aetius there was no one left in the west to challenge his power, let alone one that could come from Valentinian III himself. This belief paved the way to his downfall.

With respect to armed followers, Valentinian III was in a worse condition. A perfect assumption of the role of a *Palastkaiser* was the greatest contributor. Emperor knew this, of course, so in order to assert his authority over his generalissimo and hence the empire, assassination was the obvious choice. Surely there were other ways of assassinating Aetius without putting emperor at risk, but, as we have analyzed, this was personal for Valentinian III. Still, he is also said to have been accompanied by a man named Heraclius, his *primicerius sacri cubiculi*, whom some sources point as the instigator of the whole affair (Prosp. s.a. 454; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.1; Theoph. AM 5946), but I am of the opinion that, given blaming the eunuch was a literary *topos* among ancient authors,[633] we should be cautious in attributing the primary motivation of the assassination to him. Valentinian III's antecedent causes for resentment were much greater, while we find none for Heraclius. It is reported that it was Valentinian III who exchanged words with Aetius, not the eunuch, just before the general received the deadly strike (Prosp. s.a. 454; Prisc. *fr*. 30.1; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.2). Though he may have been motivated by hopes of repeating the dominance of eunuchs such as Chyrsaphius enjoyed in the east in the 440s[634] and Eusebius under Constantius II (Amm. 21.16.1-2),[635] and if this be true, Aetius

[632] O'Flynn 1983, 82.
[633] Hopkins 1978, 172-96.
[634] Stickler 2002, 73.
[635] *PLRE II*, Eusebius 2.

was clearly an obstacle in his path.[636] Eunuchs were wholly dependent on emperors they served,[637] so it is also possible Heraclius helped Valentinian III because there was simply no other option for him, and Valentinian III needed his eunuch because he could not trust others,[638] as the regime was Aetius', in which mostly Aetius' men had been actively working and holding positions.[639]

So, Valentinian III finally got rid of his generalissimo and broke the chains of domination that had been constraining him for years. But his independence was real or just an illusion? His first order of business after killing Aetius was to display his severed head on the forum (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4). This was a message addressed to no one else other than other generals and the élite, that such an end awaited those who turned against their emperor (Prisc. *fr*. 30.39-51; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4). Apparently, emperor was afraid of a revolt as an outcome of his violent behavior.[640] The reason for the fact that Gaudentius, Aetius' son who was betrothed to Placidia, was left alive (Hyd. s.a. 455; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 204) can be only searched within this concern of his. Leaving Aetius' son alive was can either be interpreted as a chance for Valentinian III to demonstrate the imperial virtue of *clementia* which would have appeased the remaining pro-Aetius part of the aristocracy[641] or, as Dr. Prchlík has suggested me in our talks, that Valentinian III acted like Brutus had done in rejecting to kill the rest of Caesar's supporters including Mark Antony alongside with Julius Caesar to emphasize that his business was concluded with the death of Caesar and that he did not wish to go on a killing spree (Plut. *Brut*. 18.2-6). Regardless of his reasoning, his decision does not seem to have been very effective, since we know at least one individual, Marcellinus in Dalmatia, who denounced his loyalty to Valentinian III's government the moment the news of Aetius' assassination reached him (Procop. 3.6.7).

Valentinian III is also recorded to have sent envoys to non-Roman peoples to notify them of the general's death and the validity of their agreements signed during Aetius' lifetime (Hyd.

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[636] Hopkins 1978, 188.

[637] Hopkins 1978, 188.

[638] McEvoy 2013, 296-7. His participation, regardless of his motivation, would nevertheless be the reason of his murder together with emperor a year later, when Aetius' former soldiers seized their chance to avenge the murder of their commander (Prosp. s.a. 455; Marcell. Com. s.a. 455; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 201.4; Jord. *Rom*. 334).

[639] Stickler 2002, 79.

[640] McEvoy 2013, 296.

[641] *Clementia* was another imperial virtue emperors were expected to demonstrate, as Seneca emphasizes *passim* in his *De Clementia*.

s.a. 454). Agreements made between the Romans and barbarians would be valid by the sides who signed them – emperors, in case of Romans – and they would lose that validity as soon as the reigning emperor died.[642] That Valentinian III was especially concerned with this is a clear indication of his fears, now that Aetius was dead, that barbarian groups may decide to attack ignoring the reigning emperor. In brief, signs of the illusionary nature of Valentinian III's independence were on all fronts for him to see.

Anthemius' Backfired Attempt at Reasserting his Authority

The conditions that had enabled Valentinian III to come so close to his generalissimo to inflict the deadly strike in person did not apply to other emperors, including emperor Anthemius, who, from the moment of his arrival demonstrated that he would not be satisfied with a ceremonial role and quickly made his views clear regarding Ricimer, the man who had been enjoying almost unrivalled hegemony since Aetius in the west. On account of the different conditions that surrounded these two's relationship and in order to understand Anthemius' failed attempt to reassert his authority, it is imperative that we take the earlier years of Anthemius' reign as our point of departure.

By 472, Anthemius and Ricimer were long rivals. According to Ennodius the cause of their enmity was clear to all:

> *Nam imperatore Romae posito seminarium inter eos iecit scandali illa quae dominantes sequestrat inuidia et par dignitas causa discordiae. Surrexerat enim tanta rabies atque dissensio, ut mutuo bella praepararent, et praeterquam origo irarum proprios suggerabat stimulos, lis ipsa circumstantium consilio nutribatur. Nutabat status periclitantis Italiae et adfligebatur ipsis discriminibus grauius, dum expectabat futura discrimina. Interea apud Ricemerem patricium Mediolani ea tempestate residentem fit collectio Ligurum nobilitatis, qui flexis genibus soloque prostrati pacem orabant principum et ut ab scandalo utraeque partes desinerent, occasiones gratiae ab una precabantur offerri. Quid plura contexam? Mulcetur Ricemer et uelle se reparare concordiam permotus multorum fletibus pollicetur. "Sed qui" ait "potissimum huius legationis pondus excipiet? Quem tantae molis cura maneat? Quis est qui Galatam concitatum reuocare possit et principem? Nam semper, cum rogatur, exuperat qui iram naturali moderatione non terminat.* (Ennod. *Vita Epiph*. 51-4)

Invidia, unsurprising to come across to in political rivalries, was the antecedent cause, fought in this instance for the primacy between the two *principes*. Ennodius' account was written with

[642] Sidebottom 2008; Humphries 2008.

the benefit of hindsight, after the events, so it must have been quite easy for him both to pinpoint *invidia* as a major cause in their conflict. All, however, did not come crashing down until 471. In fact, the initial impression of the events pointed out at first to a different direction. Having begun his reign in 467 with a spectacular adventus, the first days of the new western emperor's rule must have given the impression of not being dictated by any general, namely Ricimer. That it was indeed so would not be a baseless claim: first, he was an adult by the time he came to power, unlike Honorius and Valentinian III. Moreover, Anthemius' career up to that point had been purely military (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.199-201), previously holding a position within the magisterium militum and the titles of *patricius* and consul under the eastern emperor Marcian (Sid. Apoll. *Carm*. 2.205-7). He was, therefore, an emperor who could very well fit the description of a soldier-emperor. Furthermore, he had four sons, who would likely replace their father in case something happened to him and hold the west under their control for years to come, akin to what had Constantine I and his sons achieved for much of the fourth century.

The eastern backing, both in terms of Anthemius' nomination and the resources that accompanied him to the west, coupled with emperor's active nature was a novelty for Ricimer. Avitus had never been recognized by the east and his powerbase primarily consisted of the Visigoths and the Gallic aristocracy, meaning he was a ruler who did not establish his hegemony over the entirety of the west. But even then, Ricimer had required Majorian's help in disposing him in 456. Next emperor, Majorian, even if he also did not receive the full eastern approval after he became *Augustus*, had at least been nominally accepted as a ruler in the west by Leo and his downfall could only be possible after his failed expedition to Africa supplied Ricimer with a window to act. Anthemius' situation differed from that of his predecessors, for he arrived in the west with the full support of Constantinople. But more importantly, unlike Avitus and Majorian, he, from the moment of his arrival, had followed a clear cut anti-Ricimer policy.

To pacify Ricimer, Anthemius organized a two-pronged attack: first, two generals, Marcellinus of Dalmatia and Flavius Basiliscus, whom emperor could trust, were given preference over Ricimer in the upcoming great African expedition of 468 (Marcell. Com. s.a. 468; Prisc. *fr*. 42; Jord. Rom. 332; Joh. Mal. 14.44; Zon. 14.1.24). Second, Ricimer's barbarian policy in Gaul, namely his pro-Visigothic stand, was now replaced by a pro-Burgundian and an anti-

Visigothic one by Anthemius.[643] It is true, emperor gave the hand of his daughter, Alypia, to Ricimer in 467 (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209.1; Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 1.5.10; *Carm*. 2.484-6), but this should be rather regarded as the utilization of the maxim "keep your enemies closer", which would have given Ricimer a display of friendship. Further, I see this decision of Anthemius as a concession on his part, because prior to his arrival Ricimer was the de facto ruler in the west and completely not recognizing him from the start might hurt acceptance in the west, among some parts of the aristocracy (in northern Italy), with whom Ricimer had been particularly on good terms, at a time he had not yet established himself.

Anthemius' hopes of eliminating Ricimer, or at least, his desire to sideline him gradually until he came to possess only little influence and power, failed once the great African expedition of 468 came to naught (Procop. 3.6.10-26). The immediate results of this disaster bereft Anthemius both of the eastern material support and one of his leading commanders, Basiliscus, two leverages he lost after the campaign ended and they returned to the east (Procop. 3.6.25-6). Thus, Anthemius' power, meaning his threat of either actual or implied violence, was undeniably diminished in contrast to the year 467 and so the strength of Anthemius' policies, both civil and military, capsized, allowing Ricimer to take the initiative.

His actions after 468 were ruthless and decisive. First Marcellinus of Dalmatia fell to the generalissimo's machinations, stripping emperor of another one of his most trusted commanders and making Ricimer once again the unrivalled general in the west. Emperor at this point could still count on his son Anthemiolus, however. We do not possess any knowledge regarding his exact rank, being emperor's son, he, in theory, must have had the highest authority over other commanders.[644] But the fact that he may have been 17-18 years old at the time,[645] casts serious doubt on the actual possibility of this idea, even if we somehow manage to disregard Ricimer. All the same, he could little be counted as the main deterrence against any possible aggression against the imperial diadem and its policies as once the eastern support and Marcellinus of Dalmatia had been.

Ricimer next named another ally to one of the most influential posts in the empire. In 469 or 470 he named Romanus the *magister officiorum* (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207). This was shortly afterwards followed by the bestowal of the patriciate upon the same individual, no doubt at the behest of

[643] Henning 1999, 25.
[644] Henning, 1999, 94.
[645] Calculating according to the information given in *PLRE II*, Anthemiolus.

Ricimer. Romanus was a friend[646] who had no ties to the military, so there was little risk for him to be another *patricius* in that limited capacity. Anthemius had other plans for Romanus, however.

As we have seen above in the treatment of the *casus Arvandi*, emperor had first attacked Ricimer by way of eliminating Arvandus. Then, in 470, Romanus was suddenly executed on the orders of Anthemius (Joh. Ant. fr. 207). The reason given was treachery against the state (Cass. s.a. 470; Paul the Deacon, *Hist*. *Rom*. 15.2), rather than what John of Antioch claims: Anthemius apparently fell seriously ill as a result of some sort of sorcery, which is said to have been practiced by a group of men inimical to Anthemius, including Romanus. Such a report, however, must be noted that it must have served emperor another chance to weaken Ricimer' influence.[647]

The office of magister officiorum was an important one. He had control over the palatine personnel charged with civil and military, albeit limited, business, which would include not only legal and diplomatic matters but also ceremonial ones along with the personal protection of the emperor (*scholae palatinae*). Besides being a member of emperor's *consistorium*, he could decide to receive or not receive delegations from every corner of the empire and had a share of controlling the *fabricae* and *cursus publicus*.[648] A man holding this office, if his loyalties not solely laid with emperor but someone else, like Ricimer, may cause a great hindrance to the former and advantage to the other.

That Anthemius' execution of Romanus was directed against Ricimer can also be easily inferred from the chronology of events. As soon as the news of Romanus' death reached Ricimer, he is said to have left Rome and collected 6,000 soldiers (Joh. Ant. *fr*. 207), probably the praesentalis army in the west, to start his war against emperor. Ricimer apparently took the execution very personally and knew that the time to play his cards openly arrived. The civil war would encapsulate much of 471 and 472 and end with Anthemius' death after a long siege in Rome at the hands of Ricimer's *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias* Gundobad, another one of his supporters (*Chron*. *Gall*. *511* s.a. 472; Evagr. *Hist*. *eccl*. 2.16; *Fast*. *Vind*. *Prior*. s.a. 472; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209.1; Joh. Mal. 14.45; Marcell. Com. s.a. 472; Theoph. AM 5964).

[646] Henning 1999, 94.
[647] MacGeorge 2002, 246.
[648] Jones *LRE*, 504-7

With Anthemius the west experienced how was it to be ruled by an active emperor once again, even if that activity did not include participation in campaigns. Though Anthemius had for a moment been able to sideline Ricimer, this was a success mainly owed to the eastern support he enjoyed and the presence of his other generals who were loyal to him until the African campaign of 468 changed the conditions, which turned out to be to Ricimer's advantage. In short, Anthemius lost this rivalry because he lacked the resources to fight on his own, unlike Ricimer. In view of this want, reasserting his authority by removing Ricimer's satellites was not a feasible strategy. It would require support in terms of armed followers, which Anthemius lacked seriously after 468.

To pin the blame for this solely on the failure of the African campaign and deaths of men such as Marcellinus of Dalmatia may not be satisfactory, however. In fact, this was only one side of the coin. To be able to fully understand why Romanus' execution did not help Anthemius reassert his authority we must look into his policies as well, especially in Gaul, that one region over which the western empire had commanded still some influence towards 470s. For it is there, rather than in the siege of Rome, Anthemius' fate seems to have been sealed.

While the siege of Rome was going on, Ricimer's supporters were significantly outgrowing those of Anthemius, both in the arena of battle and politics. The antecedent cause of this change was primarily owed to the anti-Visigothic policy Anthemius had decided to follow in Gaul. Ricimer's policy was the exact opposite until Anthemius' arrival and because of this reason emperor apparently thought that reversing it would undo Ricimer's power by injuring his influence in Gaul.[649] There was nothing interesting in adopting a new imperial policy, but imperial policies in *barbaricum* could only work as long as the decisions taken in the palace be enforced by steel on the battlefield when necessary, much like how political violence basically worked. This is where and why Anthemius' policy failed and greatly contributed to his downfall.

[649] Stein 1959, 389-90. Similarly, O'Flynn 1983, 118. MacGeorge, however, is of the opinion that this change of policy may have not necessarily been made without involving Ricimer (2002, 242). I do not agree with her on this point, since, in my reading of events, the military appointments made by Anthemius at the start of his reign were clearly anti-Ricimer, and while they were so, I find it implausible that emperor then went on to take Ricimer's opinion concerning foreign affairs. Even if we concede this point, however, we are met by a difficult question regarding why Ricimer would approve such a policy change, although he was clearly on friendly terms with the Visigoths.

As Ricimer besieged Anthemius in Rome, his back, the northern part of Italy and especially Mediolanum, were teemed with Ricimer's supporters.[650] Only from Gaul Anthemius could hope help to come, either from Riothamus or his *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias* or his son Anthemiolus. But in Gaul were the Visigoths and their king Euric, the target of Anthemius' anti-Visigothic policy. If those who belonged to Anthemius' party were to reach to Rome, they had to overcome first Euric and then Ricimer.

This would not be so. In 471, first, Riothamus, who took the cause of Anthemius,[651] was killed by the Visigothic king Euric (Jord. *Get*. 237). Then, emperor's son Anthemiolus and other three low-ranked commanders accompanying him were all slain by the same barbarian king near Arelate (*Chron*. *Gall*. *511* s.a. 471).[652] Already two groups of forces were eliminated that threatened to break Ricimer's siege and the generalissimo did not even have to lift a finger.

Still, emperor could trust on his *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias* Bilimer, another one of his own appointees.[653] This man rushed Rome to assist Anthemius,[654] but he was intercepted and defeated by Ricimer (Paul the Deacon, *Hist*. *Rom*. 15.4). Now Anthemius' situation became truly desperate: all his remaining allies that commanded a substantial military force were eliminated and the number of his other allies were likely decreasing as the balance of advantage with each passing day further tipping in favor of Ricimer. Anthemius had never enjoyed the full support of the western élite, among whom he was nicknamed as the excitable Galatian or Greekling (Ennodius, *Vita Epiph*. 53, 55) and Greek emperor (Sid. Apoll. *Ep*. 1.7.5: *Graeco imperatore*). Now, what support he had must have been decreasing daily as a result of his hopeless situation.

Anthemius could not expect a serious help from Constantinople either, as emperor Leo's attention was increasingly focusing on his generalissimo Aspar.[655] The only help that came from there was Anicius Olybrius, an influential Roman senator who had fled to Constantinople in 455 after the Vandal sack of the city (Evagr. *Hist*. *eccl*. 2.7; Joh. Mal. 14.26) to

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[650] MacGeorge 2002, 297. Paul the Deacon (*Hist. Rom*. 15.3) also confirms this: *Ricimerem patricium qui tunc Mediolani positus praeerat Liguriae*.

[651] MacGeorge 2002, 243.

[652] Euric, however, does not appear to have joined with Ricimer's forces, as he is recorded to have followed his own policy in Gaul afterwards, that is, seizing further control in Gaul.

[653] MacGeorge 2002, 255.

[654] How he was able to bypass Euric is unknown, but it is possible that since Euric did not care for either party's fortunes he just did not see any reason to pursue him.

[655] Leo's occupation with Aspar no doubt boldened Ricimer in his dealing with Anthemius, as he knew Leo would hardly intervene in the west while he was concentrated with his *magister militum* (MacGeorge 2002, 244).

mediate between the two, but he ended up being appointed as the new western Augustus by Ricimer (Joh. Mal. 14.45). Then, Ricimer moved on to name his cousin Valila as the second magister utriusque militiae,[656] the post that originally belonged to Marcellinus of Dalmatia. His nephew Gundobad (Joh. Mal. 14.45) was also named the new *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias* (Joh. Mal. 14.45). The latter would enter Rome in August 472 after being summoned by Ricimer and kill with his own hands Anthemius to install Ricimer's puppet Olybrius as emperor (*Chron. Gall. 511* s.a. 472; Joh. Mal. 14.45; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 209.1).[657]

So, what Anthemius had started by killing Romanus it backfired in that it gave Ricimer the perfect excuse to wage an open war against Anthemius. There was nothing initially wrong with Anthemius' plan of weakening Ricimer by starting with his minions, for summoning of the general unguarded to the palace and killing him was out of the question, as both sides never recognized each other passive from the first day of their meeting. The deciding factor was that after 468, unlike Anthemius, Ricimer's use of both implied and actual threat of violence outweighed that of emperor, as 6,000 strong *prasentalis* army's decision to follow their general instead of Anthemius also implies,[658] which would be later boldened by Gundobad's arrival in 472.[659] Besides this, 16 years of unrivalled leadership in the west had earned Ricimer, one way or another, substantial support among the élite.[660] The destruction of these two advantages would have required just as much substantial support in terms of men and material, besides ambition, on Anthemius' part. He did not lack the latter but his want with respect to the former two compared to Ricimer after 468 extremely limited both the chances of the materialization of his new Gallic policy and therefore his own survival. The result was another of those ironies found frequently in history: Anthemius, who had replaced Ricimer's

[656] Ensslin 1931, 492; O'Flynn 1983, 119; Henning 1999, 92-3; *PLRE* II, Fl. Valila.

[657] Olybrius' nomination by Ricimer as emperor makes also sense in that the Vandal king Geiseric favored him on familiar grounds and this could be used to Ricimer's advantage (O'Flynn 1983, 120; Collins 1991, 87). Olybrius' wife's sister Eudocia had been married to Huneric, Geiseric's son (Prisc. *fr*. 29, 30; Joh. Ant. *fr*. 204). By 472, the Vandal threat was still serious for the Italian peninsula and by naming Olybrius as emperor Ricimer should be credited here with foresight. We should also note that Olybrius' original mission given by Leo did not only include reconciling the two parties in Italy but also to establish friendly relations with Geiseric by visiting Africa (Joh. Mal. 14.44-5).

[658] Henning 1999, 256.

[659] MacGeorge 2002, 246 n. 1044.

[660] By 472 Ricimer had been largely the de facto leader of the western empire for well over a decade which witnessed emperors unmade (Avitus and Majorian) and made (Libius Severus and Olybrius) while his support and dominance was growing both in military and civil levels (Henning 1999, 257).

pro-Visigothic policy with a pro-Burgundian one ended up dead at the hands of a Burgundian.[661]

[661] Gundobad was a Burgundian whose father was the Burgundian king Gundioc (Ennodius, *Vita Epiph*. 174; Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 2.28; Fredegar, 3.17).

CONCLUSION

ξιφοδηλήτῳ, θανάτῳ τίσας ἅπερ ἦρχεν. (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 896-7)

From the preceding systematic inquiry into the nature of political violence in the fifth century Roman west several conclusions can be inferred:

i. Establishing one's monopoly on political violence passed through having resources, in terms of armed followers (e.g. legionaries, *foederati*, *bucellarii*) and incentive material to be disposed of (e.g. spoils of war, types of payments), at their disposal that could eclipse those others. In multiple cases we have witnessed that those who could not match their rivals' resources fell inevitably behind in their race to the *magisterium militum* in that they eventually, if not killed, were neutralized to an extent that they lost all their hopes to become the supreme general. Shortly after *magister militum* Bonifatius died in 432, the generalissimo the court of Valentinian III had advanced against the ambitious commander Aetius, his son-in-law Sebastianus replaced him as the new supreme general of the west. He naturally continued the anti-Aetius policy of the court and his father-in-law, but once Aetius returned with Hunnic warriors to Italy to forcefully renew his claim to become the first *magister militum*, soldiers and other resources under Sebastianus' command must have been dwarfed so much by those of under Aetius, that the former, though supported by the imperial government, could not face the latter, had to relinquish his post, and ended up being exiled on the orders of Aetius, who finally seized the *magisterium militum* for himself.

Again, in Aetius' lifetime, in 450, when Valentinian III lay his hopes of getting rid of Aetius once and for all by drawing a promising commander named Majorian to his side, his plans were foiled in that the generalissimo forced Majorian out of public life and sent him into an early retirement. Emperor had hoped marrying Majorian to his daughter Placidia, which would have made Majorian a general loyal to the cause of Valentinian III's government on account of the newly established blood ties. Then he could push him against Aetius and his regime. The plan made sense but it was little feasible, as the result has demonstrated. Valentinian III's arrangements of marriage were just as easily canceled as Majorian was forced to step back from public life. That neither Valentinian III nor Majorian could offer any resistance to Aetius implies how poor was the government in terms of resources that could be summoned to wage violence. The generalissimo's cancellation of emperor's plans on the other

hand implies the threat of violence which he could easily transform into reality and emphasizes his monopoly on violence.

For the sake of not limiting this conclusion to Aetius' regime alone, we can also remind ourselves of the rivalry of emperor Anthemius and the strongman of his reign, Ricimer. Until the disastrous end of the African expedition of 468, Anthemius had been enjoying a material superiority, thanks to the support of Constantinople, which allowed him not only to make appointments within the military sphere, a privilege that few western emperors could boast, but also to sideline Ricimer. The failure of the expedition bereft Anthemius of Constantinople's material aid, however. He then had to depend on whatever resources that were available to him in the west, and these were clearly not enough to successfully pursue his anti-Ricimer policy. Ricimer gradually reclaimed his regime and got rid of Anthemius after a long civil war.

ii. The circumstances that enabled one to successfully threaten his enemies with either implied or actual violence were set by perhaps the most important imperial office in the west in the fifth century: *magisterium militum*. The reason for this was that in the empire the basis of violence was formed by the soldiery, which became increasingly loyal to their generals rather than emperors as a result of the infantilization of the imperial office. This change necessarily rendered the holder of the title of supreme general a man, as long as he could command a substantial number of armed followers and their loyalty, a very dangerous one for anyone opposing him, for those soldiers and supporters could be as easily utilized against rivals at home as they were against non-Romans.

One who wished to be the strongman in the west had to be the first *magister militum* and should not remain a warlord working outside the imperial hierarchy, though he had the means to resort to violence successfully and effectively, before either he stuck in that position forever or was eliminated or his followers melted away. Only the sole possession of the *magisterium militum* offered a chance at a long-lasting success in all those areas. Examples show that those who remained and worked without imperial recognition did not fare well unlike those holding the *magisterium militum*. Sebastianus, after his exile in 432, tried his luck in different places and courts, from Constantinople to Spain and eventually Carthage, but though he had his own armed followers that accompanied him in his odyssey, the former *magister militum* does not seem to have posed a real threat to anyone for long. Having lacked imperial recognition and a

position within the hierarchy, he was reduced to being a wandering warlord, whose sole income would have been his own pocket and spoils of war, that is, both limited and uncertain. A commander like Sebastianus could therefore not hope in establishing his monopoly on violence as long as he remained a warlord.

Regardless of how meagre the resources of the western Roman empire got throughout the fifth century, a *magister militum*, at the very least, through the authority and legitimacy he drew from this post, could sign agreements with barbarians to either exploit them or use their manpower for his own gains, even if this meant giving Roman land to non-Romans, as Constantius did with the Visigoths and Aetius with the Alans. One who was not recognized by the imperial court would have only little to hand out except hopes and promises.

iii. What put the *magistri militum* in the center of many politically violent events in the fifth century west can be found in the fact that by the fifth century they surpassed all other posts and offices, including that of the imperial office, with respect to commanding the loyalty of the soldiers: from emperor Gratian onwards, child emperors did possess neither the skill nor the experience to command the respect and loyalty of their soldiers, which rendered their utilization as a political weapon by emperors a thing of the past. On the other hand, the *magistri militum* had both military prowess and experience, which made them perfect candidates next in line to practice one of the most essential imperial virtues, displaying the skills of an *imperator*, a virtue emptied of all meaning under child emperors. Therefore, the inability that child emperors displayed was perhaps the most important catalyst in the transformation of political violence in the fifth century west, which saw the rivals fighting each other not to become emperors but instead the individual carrying the title and rank of a *magister militum et patricius*.

iiii. The infantilization of the imperial office had gradually began under Gratian I and Valentinian II and reached its perfection with Honorius and Valentinian III. A total of 80 years passed under child emperors' rule (a calculation that regard them still as children though some reached adulthood due to them being unable to seize their independence from their generals) had left in the memory of western Roman officials so great an impression that even when adult emperors made a return after 455, the adult and even experienced holders of the imperial

office, such as Majorian and Anthemius, could little do to undone the damage done under child-emperors. Anthemius, for instance, had the skillset of an independent emperor to arouse respect and loyalty when he arrived in the west in 467 (a military background, sons that could succeed him) but the nature of the imperial office was so much changed by the time of his arrival. Such the expectations from a western emperor: the contemporaries, apparently, if not all, expected that the military responsibilities and decisions would be taken and fulfilled by their generalissimo, not emperor. This was an expectation and mostly the reality even under adult emperors that made sure that monopoly on violence would remain with the general who was most successful in eliminating his rivals. That the *magistri militum* were equated at least by some observers with the safety and survival of their empires is also apparent in the fact that after Valentinian III's murder of Aetius one contemporary lamented the death of the general as the death of the western empire (Marcell. Com. s.a. 454). A similar thing happened to the eastern emperor Leo I, who, after he had his strongman Aspar murdered, was labelled as "the Butcher".

v. The cases of political violence put under focus here have revealed that they share a pattern that hint to their intentional and precalculated nature and which can be grouped under two headings: preemptive strikes and direct confrontations. To the first category belong the methods of appeasement and withholding honors, which usually came from the court, to prevent the rise of a single dominant general. Appeasement of a general entailed giving him a rank and title, except for the senior position in the *magisterium militum*, so as to limit the commander's sphere of influence and action, while also paying attention to not to alienate him, as the government of Valentinian III did with naming Aetius a *comes* in 425. Withholding honors, on the other hand, another method favored by the imperial court, involved outright rejecting the bestowal of ranks and titles expected by its potential recipient(s). A case in point was the court's denial of the wish of the powerful senator Petronius Maximus to be the new first *magister militum* after Aetius' murder in 454.

The other methods that are classified among preemptive strikes were openly antagonistic. Branding enemies as *the* public enemy of the state or either cashiering or banishing them were two methods which found usage in the hands of those who hoped to eliminate their rivals for good but in a way that would have not turn their rivalry into a direct confrontation. Declaring

someone a *hostis publicus* meant that the target lost all his rights as a Roman citizen and being an enemy of the state, killing him was perfectly justified, that is, if someone had the means to do so. Cashiering, removal from command or banishment, on the other hand, rendered individuals bereft of all their privileges as a commander (if the commander in question was not sent to another but insignificant post, in which case that commander would have still been largely neutralized), which meant their chance to practice the virtue of *imperator* and so command the loyalty of their troops, which would have meant losing any chance of having a monopoly on violence. Their ties severed from the military hierarchy, one could still end up as a warlord like Sebastianus did, who still had some armed followers left, but unrecognized by the imperial government, time and distance even more worked against them, for every day they spent without imperial recognition meant that they could only count on their own sources, which naturally would have a much greater limit now that they became private citizens.

The next category covered means of direct confrontation such as assassinations and battles, which were naturally not only bloody but risky, though, if one were successful, he would have little to fear from ever seeing their rivals standing again. Under this category some attempted to eliminate their opponents by moving against them before they did the same, as Merobaudes struck down very likely both Theodosius the Elder and Flavius Equitus at a time they did not expect it, so as to remain the unrivalled generalissimo. Two *comites Africae*, Gildo and Heraclianus later tried to do the same by attacking the *magistri militum* Stilicho and Constantius, respectively, as they saw these two generalissimos a threat to their interests. In both of these cases the *comites* were the defeated party, being in possession of a more limited number of resources and manpower in contrast to the supreme generals of the west which no doubt played a major role in their failure. A drawn-out rivalry with a supreme general could hardly end well for the underdogs; that is why Aetius, when he was a *comes* in 430, did not choose open war with the first *magister militum* Felix but instead had orchestrated his assassination from a safe distance, as Ricimer later did with Marcellinus of Dalmatia in 468.

Under the same category, some also tried to seize their opponents' ranks and titles by openly going against them in that they either met them on the battlefield or kill them without having a recourse to any underhanded means. The most known example of this method is Aetius' and Bonifatius' rivalry that culminated in a civil war in 432, which was fought purely to decide

who was to become the first *magister militum* in the west. Emperors too, however, are noted to have resorted to direct confrontation to re-establish their authority by eliminating the dominant generalissimo: Valentinian III's assassination of Aetius in 454 and Anthemius' failed attempt in the late 460s fall into this classification.

Regardless of the variety in terms of methods and strategies adopted by the parties for the sake of eliminating their opponents, all cases share one common point: all who set their mind to rise superior over their rivals had to have a substantial physical power (=monopoly on violence) to enforce their will by force, if necessary. If Anthemius' sidelining of Ricimer worked at the beginning of his reign, it worked because Anthemius had monopoly on either implied or actual violence that surpassed that of Ricimer for the time being. But if Ricimer then successfully struck back at Anthemius, he was able to do so because Anthemius had lost that monopoly. The currency the political actors of the period exchanged for political dominance was simply violence.

vi. The "fall" of the western Roman empire, if that is a proper term to use, is an incredibly complex subject and one which could never be satisfactorily explained through monocausal explanations. Be that as it may, it can be hardly denied that the political violence surrounding the *magisterium militum* contributed to the dissolution of the political apparatus that had been in existence in the west for centuries.

During the rivalry of Aegidius and Agrippinus in Gaul, on the orders of Ricimer, Narbonne in southern Gaul was given to the control of the Visigoths, for Ricimer hoped to gain their support against Aegidius. But his decision meant in reality not only the Visigoths now had access to the Mediterranean for the first time but also caused the western Roman empire to lose its vital and last connection to Spain. Gaining Narbonne would also prove to be a decisive moment in the Visigothic history, who in 475 earned their complete independence after they were freed from all their obligations to the Roman empire. This could not have occurred if the Visigoths were seen weak and no doubt their receival of the significant city of Narbonne added to their power in the meantime.

In Ricimer's rivalry with Marcellinus of Dalmatia in 468, the decisions taken by the former also seem to have led to another land and revenue loss for the western empire. When Ricimer had his hated rival Marcellinus assassinated in 468, the latter was campaigning in Sicily as a part

of the great African campaign of emperor Anthemius. But though he now got rid of his rival and approached one step closer to re-establish his dominance over the west, the west now lost large portions of Sicily to the Vandals such as Lilybaeum, which was aptly described by one historian as "Fuß in der Tür".[662]

Examples to support the hypothesis that political violence caused or at least perfected the conditions for serious collateral damage to the western empire can be multiplied as we remind ourselves of either the Visigothic sack of the city in 410 shortly after Stilicho's death or of the Vandalic sack Rome in 455 right after the violent murders of Aetius and then Valentinian III. No doubt the actors who went to these lengths and took those decisions wished no damage to the empire under which they lived and flourished but in this turbulent age time was in short supply, which offered the western empire little time to recuperate let alone to strike back.

Zimmermann has stated that "In late antiquity, there does not seem to be any increase of violence; in some areas, even the contrary seems to be the case."[663] One can hardly apply the statement for the last century of the western empire. The last century of the western Roman empire was fraught with violence on political level, feuding for the sake of the *magisterium militum* and the patriciate being its *par excellence*.

Throughout the work it has been my aim to demonstrate that this form of violence was very commonplace in late antiquity and especially in the western empire's last century, worthy to be treated on its own merits, rather than remain condemned to be mentioned only within historical narratives of either general histories of the later Roman empire or in monographs written on generalissimos. For, as has been documented, political violence for either seizing or controlling the office of the supreme general and the often-accompanying title of the *patricius* was waged rather systematically, involving several persons of high rank, mostly generals, but also often others who belonged to other imperial offices and emperors, with serious ramifications for the empire and its stability.

While violence in the later Roman empire has understandably been treated often from a religious point of view, for the empire experienced remarkable novelties due to adapting an Abrahamic system of belief, one thing in the late empire had not changed: war remained a fact

[662] Kislinger 2014, 255.
[663] Zimmermann 2006, 353.

of life, as the fact that the histories of the period, even those of non-military and non-political nature could not skip the mention of wars and battles imply.[664] This should occasion no surprise, as Rome survived into late antiquity more militaristic than ever, a path which was paved by its soldier emperors in the third century and culminated in the militarization even of its civil offices in the fourth and the adoption of the word *militia* to define every type of service under emperor, a word that originally stands for military service. On the top of this militarized service, there were the *illustres,* with whom we have dealt here. According to one study,[665] the *viri illustres* composed only 0,0048% of the population in the later Roman empire and because of this reason, it would be unjust to equate this extremely small minority with the empire in general, as such a low number cannot possibly define the total. But it was the individuals who belonged to this class, especially the *magistri militum* who gave a direction to the western empire in its last century, whether directly or unintentionally. Their ambitions and desires, which frequently came to a climax through violence on political level, left an undeniable mark in the politico-military history of the western Roman empire. It is high time that political violence in late antiquity receives the same level of attention as its counterpart in the Republican period.

[664] Hornblower 2008, 23.
[665] Harper 2011, 59.

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Book Reviews

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Books

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CONFERENCES

- Roma Aeterna MMXIX – Structures of Historical Narrative, Prague, Czech Republic, 1-2 November 2019. "A Thematic Parallelism between Xenophon's Ἀνάβασις and Ammianus (25.3.3-6), and Its Implications"
- Laetae Segestes VI, Brno, Czech Republic, 12-14 November 2018. "*Cubicularii domus divinae Honorii Valentinianique*: Loyal Servants of the Imperial Family or Ambitious Men of Intrigue?"
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Appendix

Dramatis Personæ

List of the *Magistri Militum* (West)

The lists below, borrowed from the *PLRE* merely for purposes of helping the reader orientate themselves amongst the plethora of names and dates used througout the dissertation, also includes some names assisted by guesstimated dates of office that I have not treated anywhere in the dissertation. The reason of their inclusion resides in the fact that the reader should be aware that there were other (mostly of secondary importance) generals in the western empire, whose length of command and acts we know almost nothing about due to their almost ghostlike or one time appearances in the primary sources.

Magistri praesentales

This list, perhaps the most significant of all, includes those who held the first position within the *magisterium militum* (*magistri praesentales*; *magistri peditum*) roughly between 395 and 472, to whom the honor of the patriciate (*patricii*) began to be attached with Fl. Constantius' regime. They were *the* generalissimos of the western empire.

Fl. Stilicho (394-408)

Varanes (408)

Turpilio (409)

Valens (409)

Fl. Constantius (411-421)

Asterius (420/422)

Castinus (423-425)

Fl. Constantius Felix (425-430)

Bonifatius (432)

Sebastianus (432-433)

Fl. Aetius (433-454)

Remistus (456)

Messianus (456)

Fl. Ricimer (457-472)

***Magistri praesentales ii* (*magistri equitum*; generals second-in-command)**

Iacobus (401-2)

Vincentius (408)

Turpilio (408)

Vigilantius (409)

Allobichus (409)

Ulphilas (411)

Crispinus (423)

Fl. Aetius (429-432)

Fl. Sigisvultus (440-448)

Avitus (455)

Fl. Ricimer (456-457)

Fl. Majorian (457)

Fl. Valila (471)

Magistri equitum per Gallias

Gaudentius (399/425)

Sarus (407)

Chariobaudes (408)

Fl. Aetius (425-429)

Cassius (429?-430)

Avitus (437)

Litorius (439)

Agrippinus (451?/456-457)

Aegidius (456/457-461/462-465?)

Agrippinus (461/462)

Gundiocus (463)

Vincentius (465?-473)

Gundobadus (472)

Bilimer (472)

Other *magistri militum*

Gildo (386-398)

Iustinianus (407)

Nebiogastes (407)

Gerontius (407-9)

Edobichus (407-411)

Iustus (409)

Gerontius (409-411)

Alaric (409-410)

Valens (409-410)

Sabinianus (409/423)

Iovinus (422-423)

Castinus (422) (?-423)

Fl. Astyrius (441-443)

Fl. Merobaudes (443)

Vitus (446)

Attila (449)

Fredericus (453/454)

Nepotianus (458/459-461)

Arborius (461-465)

Marcellinus (461-458)

List of the Augusti (364-472, West)

This list contains emperors who ruled as the *Augusti* in the west from the last soldier-emperor Valentinian I in 364 to Ricimer's puppet Olybrius in 472, the former being our point of departure and the latter that of arrival.

Valentinian I (364-375)

Gratian (375-383)

Valentinian II (383-392)

Magnus Maximus (384-388)

Theodosius I (394-395)

Honorius (395-423) (with Constatius [III] his co-emperor between 421-423)

Constantine III (409-411)

Constans II (409-411)

Valentinian III (425-455)

Petronius Maximus (455)

Avitus (455-456)

Majorian (457-461)

Libius Severus (461-465)

interregnum (465-467)

Anthemius (467-472)

Olybrius (472)