

The Good, the Bad, and the *Barbari*: A Comparison of the Foreign Tribes in the Eastern and Western Empire of Ammianus Marcellinus

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ABSTRACT

The Roman attitude toward *barbari* or “barbarians” is traditionally regarded as negative, characterizing them as either uncivilized or primitive people and wreaking havoc among civilized societies. Mass population movements of foreigners into the Roman Empire have generally been referred to as “barbarian invasions,” which includes the unfavorable connotation that hordes of barbarians are capturing and seizing villages. This thesis argues against the traditional view of barbarians and what is considered the “barbarian invasions” as these are events usually associated with the “fall” of the Roman Empire. I will be looking specifically at *Res Gestae* of the Roman historiographer, Ammianus Marcellinus, as his work has been long regarded as a key text in the study of barbarian invasions. By applying Erich Gruen’s *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* to Ammianus’ barbarians within the Eastern and Western frontiers, I argue that much of the movement of foreigners into the empire was approved by the emperors, themselves, and the Romans did not perceive all barbarians in the traditional way. Ammianus’ perspective on the barbarians within the Rhine frontier, the Alamanni, is that of the traditional view, while the barbarians on the Danube frontier, the Thuringi, are beneficial contributors to Roman society. I will include how the frontiers of the Roman Empire are defined, the motivation for the two key battles within the Western Empire and the Eastern Empire, the Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople, themselves, and what occurs in the resolution.

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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY AND TRANSLATIONS

Ammianus' careful distinction between the comparison of the Alamanni and the Theringi compels the use of a term other than "barbarian" as it has many negative connotations in English. The use of the Latin term, *barbari*, with the meaning "foreigner" will replace the English term.

All translations of the *Res Gestae* are taken from Lacus Curtius, an online reproduction of *The Roman History of Ammianus Marcellinus* of the Loeb Classical Library edition, translated by J. C. Rolfe (1939) with my own edits as needed.

INTRODUCTION

The *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus provides us with substantial detail on the late Roman Empire as it is a key source of information regarding the 4th and 5th centuries resulting from the presence of Ammianus, himself, during those events. His work primarily focuses on military matters of the Roman Empire, including a special focus on the movements of *barbari* and their characterizations. The two main battles identified in the latter books of the *Res Gestae* are the Battle of Strasbourg, against the Germanic tribe of the Alamanni and the Battle of Adrianople, against the Thuringian Goths. The *barbari* are traditionally perceived negatively; however, the Romans, themselves, did not always view them in this way. The characterization of the *barbari* given by Ammianus includes not only the origins of the *barbari* but their actions as well, which can greatly influence the way the Romans viewed the *barbari*. I will argue the perception of the *barbari* on the Western Empire by Ammianus follows traditional characterizations, while conversely, the *barbari* on the Eastern Empire pursues a more contemporary view, similar to Gruen's analysis on Tacitus' *Germania*. Ammianus' vast military background would lead us to expect him to have an "us" versus "them" mentality, but through close evaluation of his work, this approach on the *barbari* and the Romans as such does not occur.

The *Res Gestae*¹ of Ammianus is one of the most revered contemporary sources we have of the later fourth century. It has even been compared to better-known writers and historiographers of the time such as Sallust and Livy and owes a large debt toward Tacitus.² The work consists of 31 books as a continuation of Tacitus, from the death of Nerva to the death of

¹ Sabbah 2003; the title of *Historiae* could not be used which was appropriate for the account of contemporary history (353-378), nor *Annales* which would fit only the books preceding 353.

² Crump 1975: 1.

Valens; however, the first 13 books, providing a summary of events before 353 CE, are now lost to us. The latter books, from 353 to 378, contributes a generous amount of information detailing life in the empire and the duties of the officials. Ammianus' background and experiences elevate the value of the *Res Gestae* as a historical document as his personal knowledge and experience of late Roman affairs support his work.³

There is a rather large collection of information regarding Ammianus' life, as he enjoys inserting himself in his own work.⁴ Ammianus refers to himself as an *adolescens*⁵ in 357, which generally applies to a young man under the age of 30,⁹ implying he was born circa 325-330. His birthplace was in the Greek-speaking East, most likely in the Syrian city of Antioch, which was also one of the important cities of the 4th century.⁹ The city was filled with Latin-speaking soldiers and bureaucrats, due to the Emperor Constantius II using Antioch as his base during the wars against the Persian Empire, thus influencing Ammianus to write in Latin instead of Greek.⁹ As a young man, Ammianus served as a *protector domesticus*, a military staff assistant, and because of how young he was, it was largely suggested that he received his rank through familial connections.⁹ He was also involved in the Persian invasion of 359 with Ursicinus, where they marched to the Mesopotamian city of Nisibis to protect it from an anticipated siege.⁶ The events did not go accordingly and Ammianus was forced to flee to Amida⁷ and again, to Melitina, an Armenian town.⁸ The consequences of the failed siege compelled Ursicinus to retire and Ammianus vanishes as a character in his own history for years.⁹

³ Crump 1975: 1; Ammianus received a standard education in rhetoric and continued to read a wide variety of Greek and Latin authors.

⁴ Rohrbacher 2002: 14.

⁵ Amm. Mar. 16.10.21; *adulescentes eum sequi iubemur*.

⁶ Amm. Mar. 18.6.8.

⁷ Amm. Mar. 18.8.8.

⁸ Amm. Mar. 19.8.12.

⁹ Rohrbacher 2002: 19.

Ammianus' rich background in military campaigns enhances his work as he writes with experience within the Roman army. He has also witnessed the achievements of Julian, first hand, in Gaul, and devoted much of his work mentioning the successes of Julian's career.¹⁰ This observation could have also influenced Ammianus' perception of Julian in the *Res Gestae*. It was also likely that Ammianus was in Antioch during the last years of Valens' reign, where he was a spectator in the treason trials held by the emperor during 370-371, in which he describes the terror that gripped the city.¹¹ He would also witness the devastating loss of Adrianople in 378, thus influencing his attitude on Valens.¹² His close experiences with Julian, the general of the Rhine frontier in Strasbourg and the events of Adrianople produces legitimacy in his documentations of the events. The *Res Gestae* was deeply connected with Ammianus and embraces his personal life and the history and attitude of that time. For instance, books 14-19 were memoirs of general staff officers who was an active participant in a lot of the events he relates and books 23-25 were of the Persian War where he was a direct participant and observer.

The *Res Gestae* focuses not only on military campaigns but also the movement of *barbari* as is shown with the Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople. In 340, Constans ruled the Western Empire with his brother, Constantius II in the East. Constans was assassinated by the usurper Magnentius¹³ and Constantius II, during that time, had been involved in a lengthy war with the Persian Empire, but a truce was concluded to attend to Magnentius in the beginnings of a civil war. Ammianus describes the invasion of the *barbari* in the Rhine frontier as the Franks and the Alamanni seized the opportunity of the preoccupied Roman forces to overrun eastern Gaul and Raetia.¹⁴ They succeeded in capturing many Roman forts along the

¹⁰ Matthews 1989: 19.

¹¹ Rohrbacher 2002: 20.

¹² Matthews 1989: 15.

¹³ Zos. *Historia Nova*: 2.58.

¹⁴ Amm Mar. 15.5.2.

Rhine and demolishing their fortifications. In 355, Constantine made his cousin, Julian, Caesar of the West,¹⁵ where he had command over all the forces in Gaul. The civil war left Gaul in a lawless state¹⁶ with *Colonia Agrippina* (Cologne), *Rigodunum* (Remagen), and *Confluentes* (Koblenz)¹⁷ as the only garrisons. The position Julian was installed in was in such a disarray, it has been said that he was given this hopeless mission to rid Constantius' rival for the throne.¹⁸ Julian; however, proved himself to be a very capable military leader, defeating the *barbari* and refortifying the garrisons along the frontier.

Ammianus describes the similar situation of Adrianople in 378 where there was an uprising of the Goths in the East. The Thervingi, a Gothic tribe led by Alavivus and Fritigern, requested to be accepted into the Roman Empire, as the Huns were threatening their lands.¹⁹ The Eastern Emperor, Valens, authorized their journey in hopes of gaining auxiliaries. However, the dishonesty of the provincial commanders, Lupicinus and Maximus, led the Thervingi into a revolt. Gratian, the Western Emperor, interfered with the situation by sending reinforcements and defeating the Lentienses on the way to Adrianople. Another victory occurred when Sebastianus, a general appointed by Valens, ambushed small Gothic forces while leading his legionaries toward Adrianople.²⁰ Valens, learning of Gratian and Sebastianus' victories was eager to have one of his own, though advised by his council and Gratian, himself, to wait for auxiliaries before attacking, Valens ignored the advice and went forward to Adrianople where his death awaited him.

¹⁵ Lee 2007: 29.

¹⁶ Amm. Mar. 15.8.1.

¹⁷ Amm. Mar. 16.2.12; 16.3.1.

¹⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.11.13.

¹⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.3-9; see also Lee 2007: 7; the onslaught of nomadic Huns from Central Asia forced the Thervingi to request imperial permission to settle within the empire.

²⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.10-11.

Ammianus' ample background in military campaigns, greatly influenced his perceptions on the events in Strasbourg and Adrianople. As a retired Roman soldier, it would be expected for Ammianus to have a strong differentiation between the Romans and the *barbari* in his *Res Gestae*, with the praise going toward the Romans in a patriotic sense. Rhiannon Ash explains this mechanism of Roman historiography of "bolstering the physical and moral caliber of the Roman state."²¹ This was the "Sallustian notion of *metus hostilis*, 'fear of the enemy'."²¹ It was used by historiographers, like Tacitus in his ethnographic digressions on the Jews exemplifies this mechanism, presenting them as an inversion of everything a Roman reader would regard as normal.²² It would be compelling to assume Ammianus uses the same mechanism throughout the *Res Gestae*; however, Ammianus only follows the *metus hostilis* while describing Strasbourg. The events in Adrianople are more like Plutarch's writings,²³ where the Romans experience a "corrosive moral decay,"²¹ thus making it difficult to differentiate the actions of the Romans from foreign invaders.

Along with the intricate characterization of the Romans, many scholars, especially Erich Gruen, have argued a more complex attitude toward the *barbari* instead of being the "other" or the "enemy." Gruen provides us with an analysis of the recategorization of the Germans in Tacitus' *Germania* in a more "sophisticated and calculated fashion...[and] not as a mindless stereotype."²⁴ The *barbari* in the *Germania* are described as the "quintessential barbarians."²⁵ Ammianus provides us with the same outlook on the Thuringian Goths on the Danube frontier. The Alamanni; however, are perceived to be restless, acting on impulse, and anxious for combat,

²¹ Ash 2009.

²² Ash 2009; he outlines their customs and religious practices in terms of the "other."

²³ Ash 2009; "a single soldier displays Galba's severed head on a spear, whirling it around in the manner of Bacchants;" see also Plutarch *Galba* 27.4.

²⁴ Gruen 2011: 160.

²⁵ Gruen 2011: 161.

much like the Gauls in Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*.²⁶ It is possible there is this stark contrast between the two frontiers because of the admiration Ammianus had with Julian and the known dislike of the emperor, Valens.²⁷

Although I am not the first to argue that foreigners in the Roman Empire are not always considered to be uncivilized, as Ian Hughes alludes to the corrupt actions of the Roman generals causing the uprising at Adrianople, while the *barbari* remained and Gruen, as discussed before, interpreting the *barbari* in a positive image. I am taking note of the drastic reversal of the perception of *barbari* in a single historical work. It is peculiar in the *Res Gestae* to have such a drastic shift in perspectives on the *barbari* within a few chapters.

Considering the attitudes of Hughes and Gruen, along with other scholars, I will apply their views onto the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, focusing primarily on the Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople. Including the central discussion on the battles, I will examine the onset of the battle and the aftermath, where the *barbari* and the Romans develop most of their characterizations. This bipartite thesis concentrates on the Western Empire, with the Battle of Strasbourg and the Eastern Empire, with the Battle of Adrianople. The events in Strasbourg portray the *barbari* to be feral creatures and the Romans are elevated as the defenders and protectors of the empire and the events in Adrianople conversely depict the *barbari* as “noble savages”²⁸ and the Romans, untrustworthy in their morality.

²⁶ Gruen 2011: 148.

²⁷ Rohrbacher 2002: 14.

²⁸ Gruen 2011: 166.

CHAPTER 1 THE WESTERN EMPIRE

The Western Empire was under the rule of Constantius II with Julian as his Caesar from 355 to 360. It was a time of great turmoil as the Romans faced many attacks by nomadic *barbari*. Ammianus establishes a lengthy description of the events occurring c. 357, which provides us with information on the Battle of Strasbourg, his characterization of the *barbari* in the surrounding area, and the portrayal of the Romans and their general, Julian.

Ammianus' depiction of the Alamanni follows the traditional view of *barbari*. As Gruen explains in reference to Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, Caesar stereotypically describes the *barbari* as impulsive, hasty, and reckless.²⁹ In Gruen's view, Tacitus' description of the Chauci³⁰ in the *Germania* contrasts Caesar's, as Tacitus saw the Chauci to be ideal and the model *barbari*.³¹

As the *Res Gestae* is a continuation of the *Germania*, it is inviting to compare Ammianus' narrative with Tacitus', but the *Res Gestae* opposes the view of the *Germania* with the Alamanni being a violent society due to "social insecurity resulting from chronic poverty... [and] would fight each other and the Roman Empire not out of malice... but because they felt they had to."³² The Alamanni are extremely different compared to the noble Chauci of the *Germania* who "maintain[ed] their greatness by righteous dealing... they [living a] peaceful and secluded [life and] never provoking a war or injuring others by rapine and robbery."³⁰

In this chapter, the characterization of the Alamanni and their contrast to the Romans will be divided into five sections: (1) the description of how Roman boundaries are defined and where they are located; (2) the differentiation of the *barbari* by Ammianus, with respect to boundaries

²⁹ Gruen 2011: 148; see also Caes. *BG* 2.1.3; *mobilitate et levitate animi novis imperiis studebant*; 3.8.3; *sunt Gallorum subita et repentina consilia*; 7.77.9.

³⁰ Gruen 2011: 165; Tacitus believes the Chauci are the noblest of German peoples because they preserve their greatness through the exercise of justice; see also Tac. *Germ.* 35-36.

³¹ Gruen 2011: 161.

³² Drinkwater 2007: 121.

and their actions; (3) the continuous interaction between the Alamanni and the Romans; (4) the events occurring in the Battle of Strasbourg; and (5) the events following the battle.

(1) THE BOUNDARIES

The frontiers of the Roman Empire were traditionally viewed as a tool to divide and separate the world of the Romans and the world of the *barbari*.³³ This; however, is opposed by a contemporary view³⁴ that insists the frontiers of the Roman Empire were “political instrument[s] of imperialism and an artificial tool of organization... not delimitation.”³³ Ammianus incorporated both interpretations and used the frontiers as a tool to differentiate those who are amicable and divide them from those who are hostile.

Roman frontiers fluctuated throughout its history and consisted of a combination of natural borders, such as rivers, and man-made fortifications, which were rationalized by administrative policies, that reinforced the more combative areas of the empire. Whittaker describes the boundaries as a “perimeter manned by auxiliaries [with] faster communications between fronts, and a good flow of information between the emperor... and his generals.”³⁵ The Rhine frontier consisted of *limes*, a border defense, along with the river itself, and soldiers were stationed in barricaded camps as a garrison along the countryside.³⁶ The fortified *limes* covered only a small part of the Roman Empire³⁷ but as the Rhine was an area undergoing constant assault, the fortifications were necessary. The *limes* included makeshift barricades of felled trees and wooden pikes, which were not impassable but rather a way to observe the migrations of the *barbari*.³⁸

³³ Whittaker 1994: 8.

³⁴ Geouffre de Lapradelle. See Lapradelle 1928: 55-57; Febvre 1922: 336.

³⁵ Whittaker 1994: 63.

³⁶ Amm. Mar. 16.11.4.

³⁷ Whittaker 1994: 160.

³⁸ Barbero 2007: 10.

Roman frontiers can be considered a zone that unites and integrates the people around the area, as well as a line that separates and differentiates.³⁹ To demonstrate how the Roman frontiers were a zone, Ammianus describes several *barbari* establishing their homes on the Roman side of the Rhine⁴⁰ and observes how the “Romans were ranging freely all through the country beyond the Rhine.”⁴¹ The idea of the frontier being a zone and a strict delimiting system is presented by peoples from both parties passing freely between the borders. Another use for the frontiers was for generals at the perimeters of the empire to communicate with the emperor within and organize the massive territory of the Roman Empire.

(2) DIFFERENTIATING THE BARBARI

Referencing the information supplemented above, Roman borders do not divide the individual *barbari*, it is, instead, the imagination of Romans that divide the *barbari* and the borders are used to organize them. The separation of the *barbari* is based on the friendliness of the group and is furthered by cultural differences and actions. Ammianus continues the tradition of subdividing the *barbari* by where they originate and how they behave regarding the Romans. This is best illustrated at the beginning of Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*, where “Gaul is a whole divided into three parts... all these are different... from another in language, institutions, and laws.”⁴² Caesar refers to the separate tribes of the Gauls, rather than the entire ethnic group.⁴³

Tacitus also alludes to the separation of the Germans in the *Germania* as he mentions the Tungrians who were previously called Germans, which “was the name of a tribe, and not of a race.”⁴⁴ Tacitus also differentiates tribes by deducing “the institutions and usages of the several

³⁹ Whittaker 1994: 72.

⁴⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.11.8.

⁴¹ Amm. Mar. 16.11.15.

⁴² Caes. *BG* 1.1.1-2.

⁴³ Gruen 2011: 148.

⁴⁴ Tac. *Germ.* 2.

people, as... they vary one from another.”⁴⁵ The *barbari* are categorized by name based on their origin, whether they are favorable or unfavorable groups, and once the Romans allow acceptable⁴⁶ *barbari* to immigrate into the Roman Empire, the categorization is furthered by whether the *barbari* roam past their allotted lands or remain static. The Romans greatly disapprove of wandering *barbari*.

The Alamanni, a Germanic tribe on the upper Rhine, established their homes near the frontier of the Roman Empire. They began to move further into imperial territory in the 3rd and 4th centuries with a continuity of settlements beyond the *limes*.⁴⁷ Some had settled inside the empire as Ammianus describes part of the Alamanni who had “established their homes on our side of the Rhine.”⁴⁸ It was only when they were restless and roaming beyond their allotted encampments that Julian was notified of this potential assault.

The attention focused on the migratory *barbari* as the Romans prepared to “[drive the Alamanni] into straits... with a pair of pliers by twin forces of [the Roman] soldiers, and cut [them] to pieces.”⁴⁸ Harsh resolutions were made of the Alamanni who were roaming in the Roman Empire to display the consequences of migrating tribes. The Roman’s fear became apparent as another group of *barbari*, the Laeti, an independent tribe inhabiting the Roman side of the Rhine,⁴⁹ “passed secretly between the encampments”⁵⁰ of the Romans. The invasive *barbari* are described as a “savage tribes skilled in seasonable raids,”⁵⁰ which was a common way to describe invading *barbari*. The Romans disliked migrating *barbari* and in turn, the *barbari* are portrayed negatively.

⁴⁵ Tac. *Germ.* 27.

⁴⁶ Acceptable regarding Roman standards.

⁴⁷ Drinkwater 2007: 84.

⁴⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.11.3.

⁴⁹ Simpson 1977: 520; see also Goldsworthy 2001: 215; Laeti was a term used to denote communities of *barbari* who have been permitted to settle in the Roman Empire on the condition that they provide recruits for the Roman military.

⁵⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.11.4.

The Romans disapproved movement of the *barbari* and praised static groups, which Ammianus highlights in 16.11.4, where the Romans attack the *barbari* who have decided to move onto islands and not the ones who were stationary, while the Laeti were invading. Julian, “with [a] quick grasp of the situation, sent three squadrons of brave light cavalry”²² to keep watch. Ammianus characterizes Julian to be a celebrated commander as he was quick to act and diffused the situation before it escalated into something larger. The Alamanni, who were between the invading Laeti and Julian’s cavalry, “were alarmed by the approach of [the] armies, and some of them skillfully blocked the roads.”⁵¹ The Alamanni are separated into two groups with respect to their actions, (1) the ones fearful of the Romans and blockading the roads that lead to their houses, not wanting any trouble, and (2) the ones who take this diversion as an opportunity to migrate to nearby islands and cried out insults to the Romans and Julian. Julian, taking offense to the insults, came and “butchered everyone they found, men and women alike, without distinction of age, like so many sheep.”⁵² This brutality displayed by Julian is to demonstrate what will happen to *barbari* who are disorderly and wander past their appointed territory, insult, and threaten the Romans.

Ammianus illustrates Julian’s severity by briefly comparing the *barbari* to sheep being slaughtered and does not express any sort of outrage toward Julian for the massacre. The lack of empathy for the *barbari* on the islands indicates Ammianus’ acceptance of the force brought upon disorderly *barbari*. The migrating *barbari* are an illustration of the fear the Romans have of roaming tribes and the disturbances they can cause the empire. The insubordinate *barbari* who shouted insults and carried out the taboo of being mobile clarifies Julian’s harsh consequences on the Alamanni.

⁵¹ Amm. Mar. 16.11.8.

⁵² Amm. Mar. 16.11.9.

The *Res Gestae* is an addition to the tradition of subdividing *barbari* as Ammianus differentiates the *barbari* by their origins and by their actions when they are granted entry into the empire. The Germans divided into the Alamanni and the Laeti, coming from different areas. When the Alamanni distinguish themselves by either blockading roads when the Roman army arrives or moving to the islands, they are further separated by the Romans as mobile and immobile groups. The fate of the Alamanni that move is death, as it is prohibited for *barbari* to migrate elsewhere other than their situated territory.

(3) THE HISTORY OF JULIAN AND THE ALAMANNI

The Alamanni slowly migrated into the Roman Empire beginning as early as 352 to 355.⁵³ The first campaign conducted by Julian was against the Alamanni and the *barbari* around the Rhine in 356 where he participated in campaigns in Gaul as Caesar of Constantius II. Ammianus follows him from Vienne, through Autun to Rheims, Auxerre, and Troyes and throughout his campaign, he was threatened by *barbari*. Meanwhile, the cities of Autun and Troyes had suffered ambushes from the *barbari*.⁵⁴

While Julian passed the winter in Vienne in 356,⁵⁵ he learned Autun had been besieged by the Alamanni and the soldiers who were garrisoned there had been defeated, with veterans, now, defending the ancient city. Intending to eliminate the enemy, Julian reached the city and immediately. As continual attacks were made by the *barbari* on Julian's army, fearing for his soldiers, he took his men, strengthened the flanks, and reconnoitered. Ammianus describes Julian as an "experienced general, distinguished for power and policy"⁵⁶ as he reformed his army to

⁵³ Drinkwater 2007: 217.

⁵⁴ Drinkwater 2007: 219.

⁵⁵ Gibbon 1995: 217.

⁵⁶ Amm. Mar. 16.2.1.

endure the attacks more effectively. Julian is portrayed by Ammianus to be a noble general and considering his troops' well-being and fatigue.⁵⁷ Ammianus also praises Julian for his wariness and caution, which is a “special merit in great commanders [that will] help and save their armies.”⁵⁸

As the Alamanni, wanting to take Sens, attacked Julian and his army in full confidence, Julian shut the gates of the city and strengthened the walls of the city in hopes of keeping the *barbari* out. He waited at the gates with his troops and finally, after a month, the Alamanni left the blockaded city. Ammianus praises Julian's moderation, as the number of the Alamanni were too great to have fought and listed his merits, comparing him to Alexander the Great by being fair and self-reliant.⁵⁹ At the same time, he ridicules the Alamanni by belittling their efforts in their attack. Ammianus also describes Julian as militarily ready to act as he was confronted with *barbari* and ambushed by the Laeti, as mentioned above. Julian, after butchering them, raided many places for wealth and gathered crops for rations for himself and his troops.

Julian then headed to Tres Taburnae to repair the fortress that was previously destroyed by the *barbari*, which renders him invested in preserving the boundary by actively fortifying the empire.⁶⁰ Following the events at Tres Taburnae, Julian continues to accumulate supplies and wealth from neighboring *barbari* villages, which leads him to confront the kings of the Alamanni in Strasbourg.

⁵⁷ Amm. Mar. 16.2.8.

⁵⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.2.11.

⁵⁹ Amm. Mar. 16.5.4.

⁶⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.11.11.

(4) THE BATTLE OF STRASBOURG

The Battle of Strasbourg was the height of Julian's campaign in 357 to subdue the Alamanni who were pillaging towns and straying past their territory. Julian was substantially outnumbered; however, victory was met with arduous struggle and maintaining discipline during the onslaught of less controlled adversaries.⁶¹ The Alamanni were a respected opponent, but the Romans experienced insignificant casualties while inflicting heavy losses on the Alamanni and driving them back beyond the Rhine. As Ammianus composed this work during Julian's lifetime, it could be said, although tentative, that Ammianus was concerned on how the emperor would receive this account of his battle. He often embellishes Julian's achievements with more splendor than it was and elevates the Alamanni to be a worthy and challenging opponent.⁶²

Ammianus was writing within the tradition of historiography where battles and sieges naturally played an important role in the narrative. The significance of the battle is indicated with direct comments⁶³ and the length of the account consisted of 70 lines of description.⁶⁴ When evaluating the importance of the Battle of Strasbourg, there are two elements we must be wary of: the first is the general perception of importance, which Julian may have directly influenced by his own report of battle and the second is Ammianus' own appreciative attitude toward Julian, which leads him to build up the battle as a part of the process of magnifying his hero.⁶⁵ Considering these observations, the Battle of Strasbourg can be analyzed with the bias of the author in mind.

⁶¹ Matthews 1989: 296.

⁶² Blockley 1997: 219; Ammianus' personal attitude toward Julian led him to build up the battle and magnify the hero to the disadvantage to the Emperor Constantius II; see also Amm. Mar. 16.12.1-2; the aggression and confidence of the Alamanni are described by their leverage in numbers; 16.12.14; the confidence of the Alamanni also results from the defeat of Barbatio representing Constantius II; Drinkwater 2007: 221.

⁶³ Amm. Mar. 16.12.62; "so the battle was thus finished by the favor of the supreme deity"

⁶⁴ Blockley 1997: 218.

⁶⁵ Blockley 1977: 219.

As mentioned previously, the Laeti proceeded to ambush Roman camps and were met with grim circumstances as the Romans swiftly decimated the *barbari*, with fear of another attack. Although Ammianus provides graphic language⁶⁶ in his narrative of Roman brutality, the aggression was unnecessary as there was no other major warlike activity from the Alamanni at the time.⁶⁷ Even with the morally ambiguous actions, it had no influence on the generally positive portrayal of Julian and his men.

Ammianus begins the narrative of the Battle of Strasbourg by cataloging the seven kings of the Alamanni,⁶⁸ which creates a notable contrast between the sole leader of the Romans. Ammianus also repeatedly notes the Roman's plan of attack throughout the narrative, which emphasizes the Roman military strategy compared to the disorderly, sporadic attacks from the Alamanni. The seven kings of the Alamanni reflect the disorganization of the *barbari* as with were many rulers, there are many different approaches to command. The kings are also depicted with much arrogance, resulting from the defeat of Barbatio.⁶⁹ Chonodomarius, the chief amongst the kings of the Alamanni, is described as someone who is arrogant and narcissistic as he enjoyed "making his presence felt everywhere... [and] lift[ed] his brows with pride."⁷⁰ Chonodomarius' pride is intensified as a Roman deserter⁷¹ informs the Alamanni of the numbers of Julian's troops,⁷² in which the Alamanni surpassed by almost double the amount.⁷³ The kings haughtily sent a delegate to propose the Alamanni as the victors and Julian should "depart from

⁶⁶ Amm. Mar. 16.12.13; "[the soldiers] gnashed and ground their teeth and showed their eagerness for battle by striking their spears and shields together;" see also footnote 51.

⁶⁷ Drinkwater 2007, 227.

⁶⁸ Drinkwater 2007: 236; the kings of the Alamanni, Chonodomarius, Vestralpus, Urius, Ursicinus, Serapio, Suomarius, and Hortarius formed an alliance against Julian.

⁶⁹ Drinkwater 2007: 236; a general representing Constantius II who fled from the Alamanni.

⁷⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.12.4

⁷¹ Blockley 1997: 220 n. 9; informs us the deserter was from Barbatio's troops and deserted to the Alamanni after the departure of the *magister peditum* "master of the infantry."

⁷² Amm. Mar. 16.12.2; reports 13,000 soldiers, whereas Drinkwater 2007: 237; reports 35,000 men with the Alamanni.

⁷³ Blockley 1997: 220.

the lands, which they had won by valor and the sword”⁷⁴ because of the difference in the size of their armies. This reveals Chonodomarius to be a difficult opponent, although arrogant, his arrogance is supported by his achievements of destroying and sacking many wealthy cities and overrunning Gaul without opposition.⁷⁵ Drinkwater explains Ammianus’ magnification of Chonodomarius as Julian needed a “redoubtable foe” to withstand.⁷⁶ Ammianus gives Chonodomarius’ confidence and arrogance a “brilliant physical summation in the description of their king:”⁷⁷

Chonodomarius... rode before the left wing with a flame-colored plume on his helmet, a bold man, who relied upon his mighty muscular strength, a huge figure on his foaming steed, he towered with a lance of formidable size; made conspicuous above others by the gleam of his armor, he was both a doughty soldier and a skillful general beyond all the rest.⁷⁸

The confidence of the Alamanni is repeatedly stressed to increase their savagery⁷⁹ and to eventually amplify their defeat.

Furthermore, with Julian dictating orders as their sole general, the Roman army was provided with coherent orders and successfully performed them, unlike the disorganization of the Alamanni, resulting from too many leaders. Ammianus describes Julian as “a stranger to fear, [and he] neither lost his temper nor felt aggrieved, but [laughed] at the presumption of the [barbari].”⁸⁰ The number of the Alamanni is far greater and Julian’s army was aware the challenges of facing the Alamanni. This led Julian to be “forced with only a few (though brave) troops to meet [the] swarming tribes.”⁸¹ Ammianus uses the verb *cogere*,⁸² to force or to assemble, to describe the few troops Julian was provided with to oppose the Alamanni. This verb

⁷⁴ Amm. Mar. 16.12.3.

⁷⁵ Amm. Mar. 16.12.5.

⁷⁶ Drinkwater 2007: 237.

⁷⁷ Blockley 1997: 222.

⁷⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.12.24.

⁷⁹ Amm. Mar. 16.12.2; *barbara feritate*.

⁸⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.12.3.

⁸¹ Amm. Mar. 16.12.6.

⁸² Amm. Mar. 16.12.6; *periculis cum paucis licet fortibus, populosis gentibus occurrere cogebatur*.

of forcing indicates the unwillingness of the troops to go against the Alamanni as they were an intimidating opponent. However, Julian gives a speech that is a model of caution⁸³ to his army and raises their confidence. His eloquence in his address to his soldiers astonishes the *barbari*, which further separates the *barbari* from the Romans by diminishing their ability to have Roman culture. Ammianus describes Julian to be loved by his troops but his authority was also feared.⁸⁴

As the Battle of Strasbourg develops, Ammianus' language is highly vivid, "especially in the visual and concrete nature of its images,"⁸⁵ which intensifies the importance of this battle. The *barbari* are "stronger and taller [but] savage and uncontrollable."⁸⁶ The *barbari* also "[ran] forward with more haste than discretion,"⁸⁷ illustrating their bloodthirstiness and chaotic nature. On the contrary, the Roman soldiers are persistent, with their cavalry fighting bravely and the infantry firmly, in a disciplined manner.⁸⁸ With caution, prudence, and trust in the gods, Julian rises victorious and the battle is "finished by the favor of the supreme deity,"⁸⁹ reiterating the difficulty the Romans faced against the Alamanni.

The Battle of Strasbourg was won by discipline and leadership since Julian was at a disadvantage with the Alamanni. The Romans are likened to towers⁹⁰ as their vigor and steadfastness opposed the Alamanni, while the ferocity of the Alamanni ignites and increases their disorder.⁹¹ As confidence and arrogance on the part of the Alamanni were stressed repeatedly by Ammianus, the victory of Julian is amplified. The battle was concluded with the

⁸³ Amm. Mar. 16.12.9-12.

⁸⁴ Amm. Mar. 25.4.12-13.

⁸⁵ Blockley 1997: 221.

⁸⁶ Amm. Mar. 16.12.47

⁸⁷ Amm. Mar. 16.12.36

⁸⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.12.37.

⁸⁹ Amm. Mar. 16.12.62.

⁹⁰ Amm. Mar. 16.12.49.

⁹¹ Amm. Mar. 16.12.44; 16.12.49; 16.12.36; see also Blockley 1997: 223.

soldiers “reluctant to be recalled”⁹² and subsequently camped near the Rhine and enjoyed food and sleep.

(5) THE AFTERMATH

Ammianus expresses the battle to be a successful outcome and recounts the number of soldiers fallen in battle. The Romans suffered losses of 243 soldiers and four high officers. Ammianus counted 6,000 of the Alamanni dead on the field and an abundance carried off by the ocean. Ammianus crowns Julian as the “man of greater mark than his position and more powerful in his deserts than in his command”⁹³ with the comparison of the numbers and he was hailed as Augustus unanimously by his army, but refused the honor. He continues to exemplify piety as he spared the life of Chonodomarius by sending him to Rome, where eventually he died from senile decay.⁹⁴

Following the victory, the Alamanni were removed from the Roman territory in an “ethnic cleansing.”⁹⁵ Ammianus continues his use of vivid imagery to describe the poise and tranquility of Julian “with [his] mind at ease”⁹⁶ with descriptions of the Rhine flowing peacefully. Julian also orders his men to bury the bodies of the slain and to collect the spoils of war and send captives to Metz.

Julian continues his campaign and presents another speech to convince his soldiers to continue onto Mayence. At Mayence, he builds a bridge to cross the Rhine and proceeds search out the *barbari* and “lay waste [on] whatever they could find.”⁹⁷ Ammianus disregards the savagery now turned on Julian as he encompasses the nature of the Alamanni by seeking out

⁹² Amm. Mar. 16.12.62.

⁹³ Amm. Mar. 16.12.64.

⁹⁴ Amm. Mar. 16.12.66.

⁹⁵ Drinkwater 2007: 239.

⁹⁶ Amm. Mar. 17.1.1.

⁹⁷ Amm. Mar. 17.1.4.

barbari for the sake of fighting.⁹⁸ This is overlooked by the adoration Ammianus possess for Julian as he perceives him to be a “fortunate and successful general,”⁹⁹ despite his blurred morality and actions. Julian’s brutality can be coupled with the actions of the Alamanni.

Despite Ammianus’ connection with Tacitus, the *barbari* in Strasbourg are not noble. Ammianus’ concern with Julian’s acceptance of his narration surpassed the views of his predecessor. To appeal to his hero, Ammianus was known to exaggerate Julian’s success¹⁰⁰ and does so by emphasizing the dangers the Romans faced in the battle and exaggerating the ferocity of the enemy. Along with the distortion of the battle, Ammianus advertises Julian’s constructions and refortifications to accentuate his duty as a general who expands and reinforces the Roman Empire. The *barbari* are demonized with characteristics that oppose what is normal to Romans, while the Romans are augmented to a place of virtue and piety. Ammianus also neglects Julian’s questionable acts of brutality toward the *barbari* and still portrays him to be righteous.

⁹⁸ See footnote 32.

⁹⁹ Amm. Mar. 17.1.14.

¹⁰⁰ Drinkwater 2007: 238.

CHAPTER 2 THE EASTERN EMPIRE

Valens was the emperor of the Eastern Empire from 364 to 378, where he met his defeat and death by the Goths in the Battle of Adrianople. He had much influence on the events leading up to his death as he permitted the immigration of the Thervingian Goths and disregarded their mistreatment by his generals once they were within the empire. Consequently, his actions and the actions of his generals forced the *barbari* to revolt. The revolt began as a small uprising and as the *barbari* across the Eastern Empire suffered similar maltreatment, they united in opposition from the abusers. Valens, eager to participate in the battle for honors and along with his poor military command, miscalculated the strength and numbers of the *barbari* and met his fate on the battlefield.

As Ammianus transitions toward the Danube frontier, there is a difference on how he perceives the Eastern Emperor, Valens, and the *barbari*, which are now known as the Goths. As was mentioned previously, Ammianus developed a fondness for Julian; however, the same affection is not transferred to Valens. Instead, Fritigern, the leader of the Thervingi¹⁰¹ is elevated into Julian's position while Valens is demoted to the position of *Chonodomarius*.¹⁰²

The constant complication of boundaries is still present, as Ammianus describes both the immigration¹⁰³ of the Thervingi and an invasion from other *barbari* on the Danube frontier.¹⁰⁴ The immigration of the Thervingi included the privilege of crossing the Danube and "food for

¹⁰¹ Wolfram 1997: 145; up until c. 400 no other Germanic tribe was more Romanized, territorialized, and Christianized than the Thervingi.

¹⁰² Blockley 1977: 225.

¹⁰³ Hughes 2013: 153; suggests an immigration for the Thervingi as they ask for asylum from Valens and they were accepted.

¹⁰⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.5.3; the Greuthungi.

their present needs and fields to cultivate”¹⁰⁵ by the emperor’s permission. Although the emperor gave orders for the Theringi to be given supplies, his generals refused to comply.¹⁰⁶

The deteriorating situation caused the Theringi to behave like the invaders and collaborate with them. The exploitation of the *barbari* provoked small uprisings and subsequently, the unification of the Goths. The Battle of Adrianople, at the climax of the revolution, was unlike the previous battle against *barbari* in Strasbourg. The Eastern battle is an inversion of the Western battle, as the *barbari* and Romans in Adrianople are characterized to be opposite those in Strasbourg. The outcomes and events after the battles also counter each other. Ammianus furthers the transposition of events in his perception of the *barbari* in Adrianople. He conveys the Goths to be similar to the view he possesses of the Romans in Strasbourg and Valens to be similar to the Alamanni.

(1) IMMIGRATION OR MIGRATION: THE BOUNDARIES OF THE EMPIRE

The difficulty with defining boundaries is still present in the Eastern Empire, whether they are physical, geographical or cultural. Ammianus, writing in hindsight, includes these verses from an inscription in Constantinople in the beginning of 31.1:

When gaily through the city's festal streets
 Shall whirl soft maidens in a happy dance,
 When mournfully a wall shall guard a bath,
 Then countless hordes of men spread far and wide
 With warlike arms shall cross clear Istrus' stream
 To ravage Scythia's fields and Mysia's land.
 But mad with hope when they Pannonia raid,
 There, battle and life's end their course shall check.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.4.8.

¹⁰⁶ Amm. Mar. 31.4.11; the generals hid the supplies and inflated the prices; cf. Hughes 2013: 153; the number of Theringi that entered the empire exceeded Roman expectations and there were not enough supplies.

¹⁰⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.1.4; the inscription “clearly reveal[s] what was to happen.”

This inscription provides omens of the eminent catastrophe that will occur in the Roman Empire when Valens allows thousands of *barbari* into the walls.¹⁰⁸ The “countless hordes of men” is parallel to the Theruingi as Ian Hughes mentions the number of *barbari* exceeding Roman expectations.¹⁰⁹ The crossing of the *barbari* across the Danube corresponds to the “warlike arms... cross[ing] clear Istrus’ stream.” Along with the inscription, Ammianus also describes an omen of an “armed Bellona in the company of her attendant Furies”¹¹⁰ traveling to the East, where her forthcoming causes bloodshed and was foretold by a clear testimony.¹¹¹

Simultaneously, Valens was blamed for the deteriorating situation of Edessa with the continuation of a famine.¹¹² Riots and quarrels of the plebeians erupted, blaming him for their suffering and condemned his death with shouts. As the Theruingi were associated with the omens above, these public uprisings will foretell the future of famine and revolution for the *barbari*. This also predicts the continuation of Valens’ inability to maintain order and provide for the people in these cities.

In spite of these omens, Valens fulfills the omens and solidifies his fate by allowing the entry of the Theruingi into the empire and permitting disastrous conditions to be forced upon the migrants. The extent of his supervision of the Theruingi crossing the Danube is providing “various officials... with vehicles to transport [them].” Ammianus describes the crossing of the *barbari* as “columns of armed men like flowing ashes from Aetna,”¹¹³ which is another omen that prophesizes the harrowing flight of the Theruingi¹¹⁴ and the destruction they will cause to the empire.

¹⁰⁸ Amm. Mar. 21.1.3; Ammianus states this is “clearly reveal[ing] what was to happen.”

¹⁰⁹ Hughes 2013: 153.

¹¹⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.1.1.

¹¹¹ Amm. Mar. 31.1.1.

¹¹² Hughes 2013: 146.

¹¹³ Amm. Mar. 31.4.9.

¹¹⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.3.8; the Theruingi were fleeing from the Huns as they were overrunning their territories.

Nonetheless, the movement of the Theringi was administered by Valens; therefore, it was an immigration, not an invasion. Ammianus writes catastrophic omens of the destruction of the empire by *barbari* and also expresses the acceptance of the movement of the Theringi by the supervision of the Romans. By describing two views of the immigration; the demolition of the empire caused by the *barbari* and the Romans welcoming the *barbari*, a perception of the Romans overseeing their own destruction is formulated. Although the omens portray vicious *barbari*, the Romans are responsible for Battle of Adrianople and the Theringi are blameless.

The desire for refuge in the Roman Empire was due to the inevitable collapse of the Theringian society. From 367 to 375, civil wars tormented the Theringi between the leaders Fritigern and Athanaric. The civil wars devastated the Theringian society with copious casualties and collapsed their food source. Furthermore, the Huns began to raid their regions. The Huns were described to be a new type of enemy¹¹⁵ that could “destroy at will and advance without warning.”¹¹⁶ As they were looking to expand their territory; the Theringi were, unfortunately, the recipients of their ferocity. The situation of the Theringi declined quickly together with the civil war and invading Huns. They were “worn out by the lack of the necessities of life.”¹¹⁷ This caused the acceleration of the migration of the Theringi into the empire, as the enemy was approaching and their lands were unworkable.

Fritigern sent envoys and advanced toward the Danube with his comrade Alavivus¹¹⁸ and 90,000¹¹⁹ Theringi to negotiate with Valens. Upon their arrival, they “begged with prayers and

¹¹⁵ Mathisen 2017; states the Huns were the least Romanized and viewed as uncivilized peoples.

¹¹⁶ Wolfram 1997, 81.

¹¹⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.3.8; see also Wolfram 1997: 81; the food supply of the Theringi collapsed and they no longer had the hope of surviving in a devastated land.

¹¹⁸ Hughes 2013: 150; Alavivus was the senior of the two leaders but in Adrianople, Fritigern was seen as the leader and the most suitable individual when negotiating with Valens; see also: 31.4.1; “under the lead of Alavivus.”

¹¹⁹ Hughes 2013: 150; according to Eunapius, a Greek Sophist and historian of the 4th century, there were almost 200,000 in number. Modern estimates propose 90,000.

protestations that an exiled race might be received on the [Roman] side of the river.”¹²⁰ The Theringi begging Valens for asylum supports the severity of their situation. With the onslaught of the Huns and their peoples divided by the civil war, the Theringi were an “exiled race” in need of refuge. Along with humbling themselves with the act of begging, they offered to submit to the Romans by furnishing auxiliaries as needed and promising vast amounts of gold.¹²⁰

Ammianus praises the Theringi for understanding the circumstances¹²¹ in which they were to be allowed into the Roman borders. Thus, referring to their knowledge of Roman procedures and compliance to mandates. Although Ammianus arranges the view of the Theringi as the “noble *barbari*,”¹²² he is aware of the threat that they will eventually transform into, in the upcoming years.

The propositions of auxiliaries and gold offered by the Theringi were perceived to be advantageous for the empire. It was regarded as an instance of unexpected luck for Valens that “brought him so many young recruits from the ends of the earth and the union of his own and foreign forces would [become] an invincible army.”¹²⁰ Auxiliaries in the Roman Empire were desired since their pay was less than that of the legionaries,¹²³ and they were expendable. Apart from increased auxiliary troops, Valens also found it beneficial as a vast amount of gold would be acquired.¹²⁴ Though Valens had good intentions to increase auxiliaries and bring in wealth to the empire, it was inevitably his lack of evaluating the *barbari* and the supplies of the empire that commenced the destruction.

¹²⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.4.4.

¹²¹ Kulikowski 2007: 130; the imperial procedure was to disarm *barbari* before they were admitted to the empire and to submit to the emperor.

¹²² See footnote 101.

¹²³ Watson 1959; explains the pay rate of the auxiliaries could be 1/3 5/6 or 3/5 depending on different theories.

¹²⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.4.4; on top of the tax of soldiers which were contributed annually by each province.

As the Theringi were an example of an immigration, the movement of the Greuthungi is perceived to be an invasion. The Greuthungi were a separate tribe of Goths residing near the Theringi and as they watched the Romans approving the relocation of the Theringi, they wished to be treated in the same way. The Greuthungi, desiring the kindness of the Romans, “hastily sent envoys and besought the emperor,”¹²⁵ expecting to be received correspondingly. Valens refused the envoys, presumably to keep migrations separate and recover the resources that were to be given to the Theringi. The selfishness of the Greuthungi is revealed through their envoys. It presented their desire to benefit from living within the empire without returning any services, while Theringi offered auxiliaries and gold. The authenticity of the requests also differed in the way it was presented as the Theringi begged, while the Greuthungi were abrupt and hasty.¹²⁶

The Greuthungi disregarded their denial and while the Roman soldiers were preoccupied, they took advantage of the opportunity and “passed over the stream in badly made craft and pitched their camp at a long distance from Fritigern.”¹²⁷ The language Ammianus uses to characterize the Greuthungi is identical to that of usual invading *barbari*. They are described as a “warlike people”¹²⁸ and “exceeding every degree of savagery,”¹²⁹ similar to the Alamanni.¹³⁰ The Greuthungi crossed the river with “badly made crafts,”¹³¹ comparable to the Huns’ lack of knowledge in ship-building.¹³² This increases the likening of the Greuthungi to invading, hostile *barbari*. As the Greuthungi were comparable to the Huns in their actions, they are put in a

¹²⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.4.12.

¹²⁶ See footnote 121; 125.

¹²⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.5.3.

¹²⁸ Amm. Mar. 27.5.6.

¹²⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.2.1; *omnem modum feritatis excedit*.

¹³⁰ See footnote 92.

¹³¹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.3.

¹³² Amm. Mar. 31.3.6; lacking the knowledge to build a raft, the Huns “chose what seemed to be the best course [and] crossed the river by a ford.”

position that poses a large threat to the empire and furthers the distinction between the Theringi and the Greuthungi. Contrarily, the Theringi representing honorable *barbari*, are not described with the negativity Ammianus uses for the Greuthungi. Instead, the Theringi are people with natural cleverness and quick wit, determined to survive with the evils of starvation and mistreatment by Romans surrounding them on all sides.¹³³

The mistreatment of the *barbari* is executed by commanders with stained reputations: Lupicinus, the commanding general in Thrace, and Maximus, a pernicious leader.¹³⁴ The “two rivals in recklessness”¹³⁷ with their treacherous greed were unaware of the distress they will cause the empire.¹³⁵ Blinded by greed, Lupicinus and Maximus committed “the worst of motives... against the foreign newcomers, who were blameless.”¹³⁹ Ammianus’ descriptions of the generals complement the loss of Roman values interpreted by Gruen through the contrast of “self-satisfied, listless, and degenerate Romans”¹³⁶ and “ideal primitives and noble savages”¹³⁷ in the *Germania*.

This corruption illustrates the rhetorical sense of the *barbari* and the Romans exchanging roles. Here, the Romans harassed "the barbarians after their crossing... by the lack of food [and] those most hateful generals devised a disgraceful traffic; they exchanged every dog that... their insatiability could gather... for one slave each, and... [the] sons of the chieftains”¹³⁸ were carried off and sold into slavery. The Romans behave in such a way that is comparable to the Huns with their thirst for gold.¹³⁹

¹³³ Amm. Mar. 31.5.

¹³⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.4.9.

¹³⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.4.10.

¹³⁶ Gruen 2011: 160.

¹³⁷ Gruen 2011: 160; the Germans in the *Germania* represented values of “simplicity, hardiness, and self-restraint that were once exemplified by Romans but long since abandoned or betrayed.”

¹³⁸ Amm. Mar. 31.4.11.

¹³⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.2.11; “they burn with an infinite thirst for gold;” 31.3.12; “with an inhuman desire for plundering others’ property, [making] their violent way amid the rapine and slaughter of the neighboring peoples.”

Ammianus uses *turpis*, shameful, foul, to describe the “disgraceful and hated” generals, compared to *innocentus*, harmless, innocent, for the “blameless” Thervingi.¹⁴⁰ The wickedness of the generals¹⁴¹ and their comparison with the Huns influences an unfavorable perception of the Romans, while simultaneously elevating the Thervingi as they were victims of the Huns and the Romans’ scandals. It would be difficult to hold the Thervingi responsible for the revolt when the circumstances they were provided with was out of their control and the Romans were caused the strife they endured.

The prophetic writing of Ammianus meets every decision Valens makes with disapproval. The omens suggesting hordes of *barbari* instigating the destruction of the empire occurs in due time, with the admission of the Thervingi and the invasion of other *barbari*. The omens are accurate regarding the *barbari* devastating the empire, but the source of the downfall would be the misconduct of the Roman generals that coerced the *barbari* to carry out the actions.

(2) PRECEDING THE BATTLE: WHO STARTED WHAT?

The relationship was strained between the Thervingi and the Romans as the promise of supplies were not fulfilled. This situation became increasingly stressed, until the Thervingi, “lost faith in the Romans to supply them with food”¹⁴² and began to plan for a revolt. The Thervingi are active in the development of the revolt as the generals prompted the *barbari* to act accordingly, unlike the Alamanni, whom we met in the previous chapter, undergoing the aggression of Julian. The appearance of a revolt does not go unnoticed and the Roman generals and *barbari* leaders try to diffuse the situation by discussing the circumstances. It is the Romans, again, who cause the situation to go awry in a supposedly friendly dinner banquet to discuss

¹⁴⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.4.10-11.

¹⁴¹ Amm. Mar. 31.4.10; their actions of exploiting the *barbari* were so terrible they were “unheard of.”

¹⁴² Hughes 2013: 154.

uprisings. The Thuringian leader, Alavivus, is killed by a Roman general, Lupicinus, which prompts the skirmishes to develop into a battle.

Despite constant pleading, the Thuringi were not given supplies, which caused “great wrangling [to arise] between the *habitatores*, inhabitants, and *vetiti*, those who were shut out, [and] finally reached a point where fighting was inevitable.”¹⁴³ The Romans were the *habitatores*, dweller, occupier compared to the Thuringi who were acknowledged as *vetiti*, forbidden ones. The use of *habitatores* is rare in Latin prose and is only used a handful of times by Cicero, Livy, and other authors¹⁴⁴ and while *vetiti* is used for the Thuringi, they have occupied the area for two years prior. Ammianus uses the passive participle of *veto* to describe the Thuringi, which implies the Roman generals prohibiting the Thuringi. It is beneficial to look at the Latin here because it forcefully brings out the contrast between the two groups.

Lupicinus and Maximus, in opposition to Valens, did not provide the Thuringi with provisions and these wrongdoings caused the untimely devastation of the empire. Even with limited supplies, Lupicinus proceeded to disobey orders and exploit the difficult position of the Thuringi and profit from it.¹⁴⁵ The Thuringi faced two obstacles were contrived by the generals: (1) the first being the “ruinous negligence of the generals” and (2) a disgraceful traffic was devised on top of that by diverting the food that was allocated for the Thuringi and raising the prices. The price of dog meat was raised to the price of one dog and furthermore, Lupicinus sold the children of Thuringian nobles to slavers.¹⁴⁶ The Thuringi were still roaming the banks of the river, amid these obstacles, despite permissions for them to be in the Roman Empire.

¹⁴³ Amm. Mar. 31.5.5.

¹⁴⁴ Packard Humanities Institute <http://latin.packhum.org/stats?q=habitatores>.

¹⁴⁵ Kulikowski 2007: 13; see also Hughes 2013: 86.

¹⁴⁶ Amm. Mar. 31.4.11.

The Theringi gradually realized Lupicinus constructed their hardships and “they muttered that they were being forced to disloyalty as a remedy for the evils that threatened them.”¹⁴⁷ The use of the participle *instans*¹⁴⁸ [insisting, urging, pressing upon] elevates the innocence of the Theringi as Lupicinus forced their decision to revolt. The hindrance of the battle from its first mentions to the event itself consists of five chapters, mirroring the suffering of the Theringi and the buildup of their fury and “[kindle] the frightful torches that were to burn for the destruction of the state.”¹⁴⁹ As stated previously, it was Lupicinus who forced this situation upon the Theringi.

In an attempt to diffuse the uprising, Lupicinus invited the leaders of the Theringi to a banquet in Marcinopolis. Alavivus and Fritigern, along with their bodyguards, were welcomed inside the city, while Lupicinus posted his soldiers “against the main body of the [*barbari*] and kept them at a distance from the walls of the town.”¹⁵⁰ This separation of the commanders and the main body of troops is not a novelty as Julian was also separated from his troops when entertaining high commanders in Paris.¹⁵¹ However, Fritigern was wary of Roman motive and with a good reason.¹⁵² Banquets were one of the ideal settings to perform treason, as annexations were plotted and set in motion and prominent hostages seized and sent off to captivity. Although not all banquets end in corruption, it is the most convenient setting to do so.¹⁵³

While Lupicinus is “reclining at the prodigal table amid noisy entertainments... [in luxury] drowsy and half drunk.”¹⁵⁴ the Theringi, lacking in supplies, is contrasted by starving at

¹⁴⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.5.2; see also Hughes 2013: 153; Jerome also claims the Theringi were driven by hunger to rebel.

¹⁴⁸ Amm. Mar. 31.5.2; *ad perfidiam instantium malorum subsidium*.

¹⁴⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.4.

¹⁵⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.5.5.

¹⁵¹ Kulikowski 2007: 134.

¹⁵² Hughes 2013: 154.

¹⁵³ Kulikowski 2007: 133.

¹⁵⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.5.6.

the walls. It is ironic for the Romans to be eating and drinking since this banquet was a meeting to discuss the situation of the *barbari*.

The Theringi, separated behind the city walls, considered the seclusion to be a plan to remove the leaders¹⁵⁵ and believed their leaders to be detained by force. They began to increase their numbers in an attempt to avenge them.¹⁵⁶ Lupicinus began to panic¹⁵⁷ and Fritigern, sensing distress, was quick-witted and “cried out [to the Romans] that they would have to fight with heavy loss of life unless he, himself, could go out with his companions to quiet the people, who, believ[ed] that their leaders had been slain under pretense of friendly entertainment, had blazed out into turbulence.”¹⁵⁸ He devised a solution to resolve the dispute in fear of having it escalate to the murder of himself and Alavivus.

However, the rumors of murder spread across *barbari* lands and the entire nation of the Theringi came to fight and was joined by other tribes of *barbari* such as the “Teutones with the Cimbri, coming from unknown parts of the ocean, suddenly [overflowed] Italy.”¹⁵⁹ Lupicinus is secretly informed of an uprising between the Roman soldiers and the *barbari*, he gave orders to “put to death all the attendants of the two leaders, who [were] a guard of honor... to ensure their safety.”¹⁶⁰ When the *barbari* learned the manslaughter was true, “the people who were besieging the walls... in their resentment... gradually increased their number... and uttered many savage threats.”¹⁶¹ Fritigern, with his surviving attendants, went out to his followers, while Alavivus was never mentioned again, it is assumed he was killed by Lupicinus, along with his attendants.

¹⁵⁵ Hughes 2013: 155.

¹⁵⁶ Amm. Mar. 31.5.7.

¹⁵⁷ Kulikowski 2007: 134.

¹⁵⁸ Amm. Mar. 31.5.7.

¹⁵⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.12.

¹⁶⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.5.6.

¹⁶¹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.7.

The consequence of Lupicinus' actions is the grueling battle and loss at Adrianople. The Thervingi had no desire to revolt as negotiations were made for them to thrive under Roman rule. It was the actions of Lupicinus; however, that resulted in an uprising due to mistreatment. His attempts at reconciling the agitated *barbari* were not fruitful as the banquet escalated the conflict into a full-scale battle.

(3) THE BATTLE BEGINS

The treatment of the Thervingi was not unfamiliar to other *barbari* as it was also experienced by Sueridus and Colias, Gothic chieftains who were stationed at Adrianople to pass the winter. Sueridus, Colias, and their followers were welcomed into the empire preceding the Thervingi, and the Romans treated them with similar transgressions. The Roman soldiers brought starvation and humiliation upon the Goths and citizens partook in attacking them.¹⁶² These hardships were stacked on top of each other and to be pushed the Goths to their extent. Much like the Thervingi, the desperate situation the Goths were put in forced them to break out into open rebellion. After suffering the exploitation bestowed onto them by the Romans, the Goths massacred more than half the citizens¹⁶² and joined with Fritigern in his rebellion. Compared to the numerous crimes of the Romans, their actions seem irrelevant. The rebellion was also understandable as the Goths no longer wanted to be under the tyrannical rule of the Romans. Although the Goths encompass some of the unpleasant behavior of the Romans, it does not affect Ammianus' overall conjecture of the *barbari*.

Ammianus, continues the characterization of the *barbari* as moral people, following Tacitus' model in the *Germania*. Fritigern is seen as a leader who is virtuous and mindful of his

¹⁶² Amm. Mar. 31.6.3.

troops. He notices his troops are “inexperienced in conducting a siege”¹⁶³ and were struggling with losses so he advises them to focus on easier and more fruitful parts of the country instead of trying to besiege a city. He wants success for his troops with as little loss as possible. Even with a massive army behind him, he is willing to provide adequate training for them. While Fritigern is referred to as *dux*,¹⁶³ leader, for most of Ammianus’ work, in 31.6.5, Fritigern is described as *rex*,¹⁶⁴ king. He was unanimously proclaimed *rex* after the Goths and the Thervingi unify. It is intriguing how Ammianus recognizes Fritigern as a king and not only just a military leader but someone who encompasses leading the people outside of any military conflict.

Among the Romans, Valens is an incompetent leader, as he sends Profuturus and Trajanus to consult with the areas of turmoil. Ammianus describes Profuturus and Trajanus as *imbellis*, unwarlike and therefore unfit to be sent as consultants in a strained area. To make matters worse, the generals seclude the *barbari* in deserted and solitary places so they may be worn out by hunger.¹⁶⁵ This situation was the cause of the revolt, to begin with. The Roman generals continue to unreasonably deprive the *barbari* of food in hopes that it will resolve problems.

Before Ammianus describes the battle, he addresses the reader directly:

Those who are unacquainted with ancient records [and] say that the state was never before overspread by such a dark cloud of misfortune... are deceived by the horror of the recent ills which have overwhelmed them. For if they [studied] earlier times or those which have recently passed, these will show that such dire disturbances have often happened.¹⁶⁶

Ammianus reassures his reader's battles and wars, similar to this one, has happened in the past and describes battles fought by previous emperors and recounts the many battles and wars which concluded with Roman cities being destroyed. Ammianus removes the accusation of the attack

¹⁶³ Amm. Mar. 31.6.4.

¹⁶⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.6.5; *laudato regis consilio*.

¹⁶⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.7.3.

¹⁶⁶ Amm. Mar. 31.5.11.

from the Thervingi by comparing it to other battles fought against *barbari*. He also, at the same time, foretells the imminent destruction of Adrianople by listing the battles where Rome has come under siege of *barbari*.¹⁶⁷ Thus, with the narrative, Ammianus acknowledges the misbehavior of Lupicinus and Maximus, that ultimately caused bloodshed, as well as the innocence of the Thervingi and their indirect cause of the Battle of Adrianople.

As events escalated and the news of the revolt spread, Fritigern gradually increased his numbers as the *barbari* who encountered the same mistreatment joined him. The allied Goths began to besiege towns and cities and eventually reached Adrianople, where they were met by the Roman army. The Goths attacked the Roman army with such violence, the army buckled, began to fall back, and break up.¹⁶⁸ This weakness in the Roman army was the fault of the city magistrate who failed to provide mercenaries.¹⁶⁹

Neither Valens nor his court realized the extent of the danger¹⁷⁰ the *barbari* posed. Once Gratian, Valens' nephew and a general from the West, learned of the situation, he hastened toward Thrace. This situation was extreme enough for Gratian to intervene as Western generals did not intervene in Eastern affairs.¹⁷¹ Ammianus continues to favor the West as he praises Gratian's ability to act quickly and Gratian, being Valens' nephew, enhances Valens' poor decisions by exemplifying what Roman leadership should be. Ammianus provides this contrast within the same bloodline where Gratian is capable of noticing a critical event that will negatively affect the empire and Valens do not have the skill of perceiving such things. Valens continues to send more auxiliaries to aid the generals, instead of pertaining to the battle himself.

¹⁶⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.5.12-17.

¹⁶⁸ Barbero 2007: 53.

¹⁶⁹ Barbero 2007: 56.

¹⁷⁰ Wolfram 1997: 82.

¹⁷¹ Kulikowski 2007: 137; Western generals did not intervene in eastern affairs as a rule nor did junior commanders to their seniors. Gratian was the junior Augustus of the west under his father, Valentinian I, from 367-375.

The addition of multiple generals furthers the confusion of the multiple commanders and auxiliaries.

While Gratian is traveling toward Adrianople, he defeats the Lentienses and with Sebastianus exaggerating his exploits, news of these victories reaches Valens. Valens became “eager to do some glorious deed to equal his young nephew, whose valiant exploits consumed him with envy.”¹⁷² Feeding off his rivalry with his nephew, Valens called together a council of higher officers to deliberate the next plan of action. Unlike Gratian and Fritigern, Valens requires a council to guide him with his decisions, rather than swiftly and effectively making them and makes haste toward Adrianople. Valens disregards the council to wait and is focused on being victorious, encompassing some of Chonodomarius’ traits, Valens is degraded to his status.¹⁷³

The Romans in the Battle of Adrianople were disorganized as half the cavalry were waiting on their general to give them orders while the other half were continuing forward. The disorganization is caused by the abundance of generals, each leading a separate part of the Roman army. This situation is similar to the Battle of Strasbourg, with the Alamanni and their seven kings in disarray while the Romans fight confidently under Julian. Valens is likened to the Alamanni, again, as he proposes dispatches multiple generals to Adrianople and the Goths are led by their king, Fritigern.

As the battle rages on, news of the death of Valens spreads. However, there were two accounts of his death. The Roman army in such a disarray that the accounts of the emperor’s death were confused. The first assumption of Valens’ death was his bodyguards abandoning him and “no one... saw him or [was] with him, [he] fell mortally wounded by an arrow, and presently

¹⁷² Amm. Mar. 31.12.1.

¹⁷³ Blockley 1977: 225.

breathed his last breath; and he was never afterward found anywhere.”¹⁷⁴ The second account was slightly more reputable as “Valens did not give up the ghost at once, but with his bodyguard and a few eunuchs [he] was taken to a peasant's cottage nearby, well-fortified in its second story; and while he was being treated by unskillful hands, he was surrounded by the enemy, who did not know who he was, but was saved from the shame of captivity.”¹⁷⁵ As Valens was surrounded by the enemy who did not recognize him, implying he did not look nor act the part of an emperor.

(4) THE AFTERMATH

After both armies suffered great losses, Ammianus continues to berate Valens, while elevating Fritigern, indirectly. He addresses the “loss of distinguished men [and] the deaths of Trajanus and Sebastianus stood out.”¹⁷⁶ Unsurprisingly, he does not include Valens with the *virii illustres* or outstanding men. Ammianus describes the death of Valens and includes “his merits, as known to many... and of his defects.”¹⁷⁷ It was unforeseen that Ammianus listed merits for Valens since throughout the narrative, he spoke poorly of Valens. The offenses Ammianus recalls of Valens’ reflect his inability as an emperor as:

He was ready to gain advantage and profit at the expense of others' suffering, and more intolerable when he attributed offenses that were committed to contempt of, or injury to, the imperial dignity; then he vented his rage in bloodshed, and on the ruin of the rich.¹⁷⁸

Fritigern does not portray any faults Ammianus lists, contrasting the two leaders with the foreign *barbari* considered respectable and the Roman Emperor unsophisticated. As a part of Roman and Greek physiognomy, Ammianus describes Valens’ appearance as being:

¹⁷⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.13.21.

¹⁷⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.13.14.

¹⁷⁶ Amm. Mar. 31.13.18.

¹⁷⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.14.2.

¹⁷⁸ Amm. Mar. 31.14.5.

[Dark in complexion], the pupil of one of his eyes was dimmed, but in such a way as not to be noticed at a distance; his body was well-knit, his height neither above nor below the average; he was knock-kneed and somewhat pot-bellied.¹⁷⁹

This tradition claims the ability to reveal the true inward personality through interpretation of outward appearance of an individual.¹⁸⁰ Contrary to the *barbari* who were described as “powerful”¹⁸¹ and “tall and handsome, their hair inclines to blond, by the ferocity of their glance they inspire dread.”¹⁸² The Battle of Adrianople occurred with great losses from both sides, but with the immense number of *barbari* and Fritigern’s capability to lead quickly and sufficiently, the Romans eventually retreated with the loss of their emperor.

Following the Battle of Adrianople, more chaos ensues as “the victors, like wild beasts roused to cruel ferocity by the provocative tang of blood, driven by the lure of a vain hope”¹⁸³ tries to besiege the city. The Goths join with the Huns and the Halani to further their victories in hopes of besieging Constantinople. They are described to be “exceedingly warlike and brave peoples”¹⁸⁴ and with all the *barbari* assembled together, they are seen as united and powerful, very much opposite from the Roman army at Adrianople. It was eventually the walls that stopped the horde of *barbari* from getting any further into Constantinople. As powerful as the *barbari* might seem, they are still viewed as uncivilized, being turned back by fortifications.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.14.7.

¹⁸⁰ Rohrbacher 2010: 1; physiognomy from the Greek *physis* meaning "nature" and *gnomon* meaning "judge" or "interpreter" is the assessment of a person’s character or personality from outer appearance, especially the face.

¹⁸¹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.4.

¹⁸² Amm. Mar. 31.2.21.

¹⁸³ Amm. Mar. 31.15.2.

¹⁸⁴ Amm. Mar. 31.16.3.

¹⁸⁵ Amm. Mar. 31.16.7.

CONCLUSION

Ammianus provides us with a rich history of the later Roman Empire in his *Res Gestae*. His surviving books give us a detailed understanding of Roman life, the *barbari*, and the battles that he describes with much detail. The Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople are two important events in the *Res Gestae* that pertain to combat against *barbari* inside Roman boundaries. Along with his military descriptions, Ammianus' characterizations and accounts of the different *barbari* are beneficial to the modern scholar.

Having analyzed the events on the periphery of the battles and the battles themselves, I identified ways in which the *barbari* are categorized and organized through the use of boundaries and uncovered the personal bias of Ammianus as he characterizes the *barbari* and the Romans in each of the battles. I have discussed Ammianus' characterization of two groups of *barbari*, the Alamanni, and the Thuringi, and contrasted their portrayal to that of the Romans whom they oppose.

The use of boundaries in the Roman Empire is to provide communication within the empire in addition to the more significant use of organizing *barbari* based on amiability and hostility. These categorizations are established by the opinion of the Romans instead of the location of the borders. The frontiers were seen more as a zone rather than a strict line as the boundaries of the Roman Empire throughout history were fluid. Ammianus illustrates the "zone-like" boundaries in his narrative when he describes the *barbari* and the Romans passing freely amongst frontiers.

The manner in which the Romans categorize the *barbari* is based on their origins and their actions. The act of subdividing *barbari* has been in practice with Roman historiographers across antiquity. The origins of the *barbari* are used as an overarching term to separate ethnically

different groups and they are then divided further based on their degree of friendliness. Once in the empire, the *barbari*, if they diverge from Roman expectations, are categorized into groups that move and are hostile and groups who are stationary and generally tolerated.

Using this information, I applied it to Ammianus' *Res Gestae* and discovered a connection between the battles where he reverses the concept of hostile and friendly *barbari* and adept and inept commanders with the Western Empire consisting of hostile *barbari* and adept commanders and the Eastern Empire with friendly *barbari* and inept commanders. The main distinctions between the West and the East are portrayals of the generals, the characterization of the *barbari*, the acceptance of the *barbari* into the empire, omens, and the description of the commanders during the battle:

1. Admirable Julian, Dishonorable Valens: Julian was the commander of the Roman army in the Western Empire during the Battle of Strasbourg, Ammianus' admiration of Julian is revealed in his characterization on the general. Valens; however, is depicted negatively, possibly due to the personal dislike of the emperor that Ammianus holds.¹⁸⁶

The Romans on the Rhine frontier are celebrated for their grandeur and uprightness. Julian is depicted as a general who acts swiftly and surely. Although he holds a council to advise him, it is for a situation that he previously decided on and they plan the execution.¹⁸⁷ Ammianus regards Julian as an experienced general distinguished for power, policy,¹⁸⁸ and an organized command comparable to Sulla¹⁸⁹ as he defeats the Alamanni singlehandedly, with an army half the size of

¹⁸⁶ Matthews 1989: 15; see also footnotes 112; 113.

¹⁸⁷ Amm. Mar. 16.2.3.

¹⁸⁸ Amm. Mar. 16.2.1.

¹⁸⁹ Amm. Mar. 16.12.41; see also footnote 82.

the enemy's. Ammianus also lists the merits of Julian in 16.5, while he was living and uses an entire chapter to do so, without listing faults.

Valens is seen as an inept emperor who requires a council to advise him¹⁹⁰ on his plan of action, in contrast to Julian's swift decisiveness. In addition to the council, Valens also needs auxiliaries from the West to aid him in the Battle of Adrianople,¹⁹¹ while Julian defeated the Alamanni, unassisted with a disadvantage. The Roman generals of the Eastern Empire are also portrayed in the same negative light. Lupicinus and Maximus, are described using *turpis*¹⁹² to supplement the foul nature of the generals. In 31.5.11, Ammianus recounts the many battles in wars that were lost by Rome to *barbari* in comparison to Adrianople with Valens, while Julian is compared to Sulla, a renowned general. Ammianus includes the merits of Valens after his death in Adrianople and while he lists them, he also compares them to his vices. Valens' generals; Profuturus and Trajanus, are described by Ammianus to be unwarlike, opposing Julian's fervor in seeking out and defeating *barbari*.

2. Hostile Alamanni, Amicable Theringi: The Western Empire provides us with the traditional view on *barbari* as being uncivilized peoples, while the Eastern Empire features the noble Theringi. As I showed, in creating these portrayals, Ammianus engages with both positive and negative images of *barbari* in earlier historiographic texts, especially Tacitus' *Germania*.

The Alamanni is identified as a violent society, which was "in line with the martial nature of barbarian society in general and the habitual violence and feuding."¹⁹³ Drinkwater proposes the savagery was due to social insecurity as the Alamanni were a poor agricultural and mining

¹⁹⁰ Amm. Mar. 31.12.5.

¹⁹¹ Amm. Mar. 31.12.1.

¹⁹² Amm. Mar. 31.4.11; *turpe... duces*.

¹⁹³ Drinkwater 2007: 121.

community,¹⁹⁴ thus, to compensate, they attack savagely and disorderly. They are also referred to as a “savage tribe” and are perceived to be sneaking around Roman camps.¹⁹⁵ Arrogance and overconfidence are also conveyed by the primary commander of the Alamanni, Chonodomarius. Although his overconfidence is not in vain, executed distastefully as Chonodomarius ventures to announce his victory to Julian before the battle.¹⁹⁶

The characterization of the *barbari* of the Eastern Empire; however, is inverted. The Theringi possessed natural cleverness and organization as they all came under the doubtless leadership of Fritigern.¹⁹⁷ The Theringi, despite revolting against the empire, were seen without fault as they were suffering under the cruel mistreatment of the Roman generals.¹⁹⁸ As they were forced¹⁹⁹ to revolt, with no other options available, Ammianus implies that the Theringi were peaceful and rejected violence unless otherwise provoked.

3. Acceptance into the Empire: The discussion on the *barbari* brings us to another comparison between them. Ammianus specifically describes the situation in which the Theringi asked for asylum in the Roman Empire. The request was approved by Valens and he instructed generals to oversee the migration and administer provisions for the Theringi.

Conversely, Ammianus does not mention whether the Alamanni were authorized into the empire. Although the Alamanni retained a long relationship with the Romans and were gradually immigrating into the empire, it is unclear in the instance with the Battle of Strasbourg whether it

¹⁹⁴ Drinkwater 2007: 85.

¹⁹⁵ Amm. Mar. 16.11.5.

¹⁹⁶ Amm Mar. 16.12.5; his victory over Decentius; 12.2, 12.4; descriptions of conceit; 12.5; announcing his victory; see footnote 72.

¹⁹⁷ Amm. Mar. 31.5.4.

¹⁹⁸ Amm. Mar. 31.5.2.

¹⁹⁹ Amm. Mar. 31.5.2; *ad perfidiam instantium malorum subsidium*.

was an immigration or migration. Ammianus does not precisely state authorization of the Alamanni into the empire nor does he propose their movement as a gradual maneuver.

4. Omens: Omens in historiography are often an instance of luck or misfortune. They provide a contemporary witness to the event recorded and can be added by the historiographer to include their personal views and knowledge of hindsight.²⁰⁰

Ammianus' narrative mentions omens pertaining to both Julian and Valens in their respective conquests. Ammianus indicates, specifically, favorable omens for Julian when he is traveling to Rheims.²⁰¹ This is a minor episode compared to the unfavorable omens of death and destruction of the empire regarding Valens. Ammianus includes a complete chapter²⁰² on unfavorable omens toward Valens, disapproving his decision to grant the Thuringi access into the empire.

5. Commanders in the Battle: The difference between the Roman army in the Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople is significant as they mirror the *barbari* in the alternative battle. In the Battle of Strasbourg, we observe Julian, the sole commander of the Roman army, against the seven kings of the Alamanni. Ammianus repeatedly mentions how disorganized the Alamanni are in respect to their military command and praises Julian for being coordinated. This highlights the importance of the number of commanders in an army corresponding to the level of organization.

²⁰⁰ Seters 1997: 78.

²⁰¹ Amm. Mar. 16.11.1.

²⁰² Amm. Mar. 31.1.

Valens, with the Battle of Adrianople, is similar to the seven kings of the Alamanni. He has Gratian, Sebastianus, Profuturus, and Trajanus, along with himself commanding different parts of the army, while the Thervingi are unified under the leadership of Fritigern. Scholarship has proposed this to be one of the sources for the loss the Romans endured,²⁰³ as it is crucial for the leader to send efficient and clear orders, which accounts for the capability of the army to fight. If the leader is inadequate and the orders are confusing, the soldiers have no guidance and cannot perform to their capacity.

When recounting the contrasts between the Battle of Strasbourg and the Battle of Adrianople, Ammianus clearly arranges a traditional view on the *barbari* and the Romans in Strasbourg to create a foundation to compare the Roman Empire in Adrianople in an opposing way. The roles in which the *barbari* and the Romans are described within Strasbourg follow stereotypes of antagonistic *barbari* and exemplary Romans. These are reversed in Adrianople with docile and dignified *barbari* and the Romans are criticized and denounced.

²⁰³ Blockley 1977: 225-226; Valens was misled by his generals on the number of *barbari* and was hasty and disorganized in leading his army to battle.

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