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LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

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POST-ROMAN TRANSITIONS

Christian and Barbarian Identities
in the Early Medieval West

Edited by

Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann

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I. Series

II. Pohl, Walter, 1953- editor of compilation.

III. Heydemann, Gerda editor of compilation.

940.1-dc23

ISBN-13: 9782503543277

© 2013, Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium

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D/2013/0095/195

ISBN: 978-2-503-54327-7

e-ISBN: 978-2-503-54420-5

Printed in the E.U. on acid-free paper

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WHO IS THE BARBARIAN? CONSIDERATIONS ON THE VANDAL ROYAL TITLE

Roland Steinacher*

*Dedicated to the memory of Yves Modéran
who died suddenly on 2 July 2010 in Paris*

The Vandal royal title *Rex Vandalarum et Alanorum* is known from the reign of King Huneric (477–84) from two decrees preserved in Victor of Vita's *History of the Vandal Persecution*. This Catholic polemic pamphlet itself derives from the eighties or nineties of the fifth century. As traditional diplomatics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries considered these decrees as rather authentic, the title was seen as an important case to understand the transformation of the Roman world in the late antique Mediterranean via the 'ethnic' titles of its new rulers. Furthermore, there is a silver bowl bearing the same title for King Gelimer (531–33), the last Vandal king. This means that the title is comparatively well attested in our sources. But is it really possible to define Hasding royal titulature and especially the twofold title as a special and unique case, where the use of ethnic labels occurred at an earlier stage and more prominently than in any other kingdom emerging from Roman provinces throughout late Antiquity? The royal title 'King of the Vandals and Alans' was in use and implied certain political contexts. We do not know yet how exactly these backgrounds may be characterized. So the twofold

* Walter Pohl funded the research time for this article with his Wittgenstein award and provided for years an open and challenging ambience for young scholars. It was possible to write this text as part of a writing bursary funded by the Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung. Timothy Scott (Macquarie University, Sydney) assisted with the English and thus deserves many thanks for his dedicated work. Julia Ess (Wien) helped with the bibliography and proof reading. Andrew H. Merrills (Leicester) sent me his manuscripts and exchanged ideas. Philipp von Rummel (Roma), Guido M. Berndt (Erlangen), and Francesco Borri (Wien) helped enormously with many long discussions, by reading the text, giving ideas, and suggesting improvements.

title as well as the single ethnic title 'King of the Vandals' has to be discussed again. This article will offer some considerations, by trying to put Vandal history back into its Roman and its local context.

Some years ago, Andrew Gillett presented a study in which he asked whether ethnicity was politicized in the earliest medieval kingdoms. His results were based on a count of ethnic labels in royal titles in Italy, Spain, Gaul, and Africa. The clear minority of the titles used ethnic labels. This is true as well, as we will see, for the Vandal kingdom. 'The question here is not whether ethnicity was innate or constructed, but whether it was a central and motivating political force'. At the same time, Gillett characterized the Vandal twofold title as a special case, exceptional for using strong ethnic markers.¹ But there have been other strong markers of ethnic affiliation in use as for example in the Burgundian and the Lombard case. Gillett is right in stressing the fact that this was not very frequently the case, and he is right to call into question the importance of ethnic titles, which older research has tended to overemphasize. But ethnic titles were in use for specific purposes: they have to be understood. Their backgrounds can be explained — at least in some cases. Walter Pohl has pointed out that the Lombard kings used the title *Flavius rex* in charters, and the contrast to the strong ethnic accentuation *Rex gentis Langobardorum* in the *Leges*. This hints at a situational use of such ethnic titles for a specific audience interested in a certain position within late Roman society.² Generally speaking, federate soldiers had taken over the political power in Roman provinces throughout Gaul, Spain, and Africa. Ethnicity, and in our case titles with an ethnic affiliation, might help us to understand the specific structures of these regions at the time.

Scyths or Goths? Roman Stereotypes on Barbarians in the Late Antique Mediterranean

Before we discuss specific sources attesting the royal titles from Vandal North Africa or try to understand how an ethnic name could have been used as part of a political identity, we have to summarize the Roman view on groups from

¹ Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized', p. 109.

² Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized', p. 109. For a situational use of ethnic titles and general considerations: Pohl, 'Ethnicity, Theory and Tradition: A Response'; for the Lombard *leges* and the charters in Northern Italy: Pohl, 'Geschichte und Identität im Langobardenreich', pp. 564–65; Pohl, 'Memory, Identity and Power'; the material for Northern Italy: Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 90–107; considerations for the Frankish case: Reimitz, 'Die Konkurrenz der Ursprünge'.

outside the Empire. Roman and Greek ethnography had built up certain stereotypes as well as literary patterns long before, Vandals, Goths, Burgundians, or Franks had entered the Empire in the fourth and fifth century as armed forces and built up new political entities in Gaul, Italy, Spain, and Africa.

At the end of the fifth century, sources use the term 'Gothic' to label peoples as different as the Goths in Gaul, Spain, and Italy, the Vandals in Africa, the Gepids and Heruli along the Tisza and the Danube, the Rugians, Sciri, and Burgundians, even the Sarmatians, and Iranian Alans. Greek and Latin authors had already used *Gothi/Gothoi*, or *gentes Gothicae* after the third century CE as a general term for peoples north of the Black Sea. These peoples were most often classified as Scyths using ethnographical basics dating back to the Greek ethnographers Hekataios, Herodotus, Erasthosthenes, and many others. Unlike the late antique sources, nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship included the so-called Gothic peoples within the idea of widespread Germanic unity. The Gothic peoples were classed as 'East-Germanic' peoples (*Ostgermanen*). The development of linguistics in the early nineteenth century had a deep impact on historical considerations and was one of the reasons for these assumptions.³ Another reason was the deeply rooted wish to trace national origins back into a past as ancient as possible.⁴ This suggested a uniformity of different barbarian groups which had never existed. No one in late Antiquity would have known what was meant.⁵

Procopius's introduction to his Vandal War is a good example of the Roman (or Rhomaian) ethnographical point of view. Even after a century of barbarian rule in Africa or Italy, a Roman intellectual classed kings and elites according to barbarian groupings. The Byzantine author described the biggest tribes of the Gothic peoples: the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, Alans, and Gepids. Long ago (πάλαι), all these peoples were, according to Procopius, called *Sauromatai* and *Melanchlainai*, or *Getae* all together (Γετικά ἔθνη). According to him, the Gothic peoples had different names but were similar in their habits and beliefs.

³ Geary, *The Myth of Nations*.

⁴ A good example is the work of Ludwig Schmidt. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, I: *Die Ostgermanen*; and II: *Die Westgermanen*. In the second revised edition of his *Die Ostgermanen* of 1934, Schmidt changed parts of his classification data for the 'East-Germanic' peoples. He did not do so for the 'West-Germanic' peoples. Schmidt tried hard to apply ethnographic categories. Furthermore, he considered delineating 'Germanic' history together with Roman history as a handicap.

⁵ Pohl, 'Telling the Difference', p. 39; Heather, *Goths and Romans*, pp. 135–40; Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, pp. 462–84; Steinacher, 'Heruli, People, Third-Sixth c.'

All Procopian Goths had white skin, blond hair, were tall and very good looking, had the same laws, and were Arians. They spoke one Gothic tongue. Initially, this united people settled at the Ister river, the lower Danube. The single peoples then separated, taking their new names from the names of their leaders.⁶

The *Sauromatai* are known from Herodotus. He tells a story that made them descendants of Scythian men and Amazon women. According to Herodotus, the female fighters had been eagerly looking for strong fathers for their children. *Melanchlainai* could be translated as 'those with black coats'. This ethnic name appears in Herodotus's *Histories* and later in the *Orationes* of Dion Chrysostomos. Based on these Herodotean origin legends, ancient ethnographers defined *Getae*, *Massagetae*, *Sakoi*, *Issedonoi*, as well as the Gothic peoples mentioned above as the offspring of the *Sauromatai* and *Melanchlainai*. Most ancient ethnographers located these peoples near the Lake Mæotis (Sea of Azov) and the Tanais (Don).⁷ In the sixth century, such ethnographic knowledge became a basis for the Gothic/Getic history of Jordanes and Cassiodorus, so much discussed in modern scholarship.⁸ Did it also influence the ethnic royal titles discussed here?

In Italy, a new elite needed a political and historical identity and Cassiodorus was eager to create one. As the followers of Theoderic were confronted with strong traditional identities in the Roman centre, the intellectual frame had to be far reaching. In a complicated text, Cassiodorus or Jordanes managed to give the Goths an ancient and condign history using the literary motifs available. The Getic history was one tool to link a rather young confederation that had evolved at the Roman borders opposite the Dacian and Moesian provinces to the old Herodotean tales of origin for barbarians from the north. 'The notion that the Goths were *Getae* gave the Romans a framework within which to respond to them.'⁹ One of the aims of this article will be to understand at least partly why the rulers of Africa had no similar origin legend created.

⁶ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 2. 3, II, pp. 11–12; Engels, 'Geten'.

⁷ Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. and trans. by Godley, IV. 20. 100–02 and 110–16, II, pp. 87, 90–91; Dion Chrysostomos, *Orationes*, ed. and trans. by Cohoon and Crosby, XXXVI. 3, III, p. 362; Cf. Engels, 'Geten', pp. 563–68; Eggers and Ioniță, 'Sarmaten'; Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 11. 9, II, p. 105, refers to the '*Massagetae* whom they now call Huns'. For further characteristics of these men in Procopius's history, see Dewing's index on p. 478, s.v. *Massagetae*.

⁸ Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*; Goffart, 'Jordanes's Getica'; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*; Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*; Wolfram, *Die Goten*.

⁹ Wood, 'Conclusion: Strategies of Distinction', p. 302. Cf. Steinacher, 'Gruppen und

Procopius explained the migration of the 'Gothic' Vandals too. As they were hungry, the Vandals and Alans moved to the Rhine and fought the *Germanoi*, who are called Franks in Procopius's times.¹⁰ *Germanoi* is usually limited to the Rhine area and to Frankish ancestors. Procopius never would have thought that 'Gothic peoples' were *Germanoi*. Nor did he define the Franks of his days as such. Likewise neither Cassiodorus nor Jordanes knew *Germani*.¹¹ Procopius knew and used Caesar's term. He described the situation as follows: In old times, on both sides of the Rhine, different peoples had lived, all together named *Germanoi* (*Γερμανοί*). The description of ancient Germans at both sides of the Rhine could be due to an attempt to explain the Frankish territory of the sixth century by historical considerations. Another possibility for understanding the passage is to think of the territorial name *Germania* used for the Roman provinces west and east of the Rhine. Be that as it may, this passage asserts that Procopius reduced the term *Germanoi* to the Franks and associated it with the Rhine area.¹² Shortly afterwards, Agathias referred to Frankish barbarians formerly called *Γερμανοί* in a similar manner. These Franks inhabited Gaul in his lifetime.

The Franks (*τὸ γένος τῶν Φράγγων*) have a common frontier with Italy. They may reasonably be identified with the people who in ancient times were called *Germanoi* (*Γερμανοί*), since they inhabit the banks of the Rhine and the surrounding territory, and though they occupy most of Gaul, it is a later acquisition since they did not previously live there; and the same is true of the city of Massilia, which was originally settled by Ionians.¹³

Procopius located the Vandals' place of origin around the Maeotian Lake, where already Herodotus had placed the encounter of the Scythians with the

Identitäten', p. 254.

¹⁰ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 3. 2, II, p. 23.

¹¹ Cf. Pohl, 'Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis 8. Jahrhundert'; Pohl, 'Vom Nutzen des Germanenbegriffes'; Pohl, *Die Germanen*; Jarnut, 'Germanisch', p. 108; Steinacher, 'Rome and its Created Northerners'.

¹² Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, V. 11. 29, III, p. 117: 'After this he began to gather all the Goths from every side and to organize and equip them, duly distributing arms and horses to each one; and only the Goths who were engaged in garrison duty in Gaul he was unable to summon, through fear of the Franks. These Franks were called *Germanoi* in ancient times. And the manner in which they first got a foothold in Gaul, and where they had lived before that, and how they became hostile to the Goths, I shall now proceed to relate'. Cf. Pohl, 'Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis 8. Jahrhundert', p. 171.

¹³ Agathias, *The Histories*, trans. by Frendo, I. 2. 1, p. 10.

Amazons. Contrary to research opinions of the last two centuries, Procopius therefore defined the origin of the fifth- and sixth-century Vandals not at the Baltic Sea but exactly from where all Scythian nations were derived. It may be noted that the late antique historian could not see a difference between the Vandals and the Alans and therefore did not consider that the simultaneous action of the Vandals and Alans called for comment. Furthermore, in Procopius's view Goths and Vandals were just the same: they were Scythian barbarians causing problems in the Roman West.

When Geiseric tried to secure his position in the Mediterranean in the second half of the fifth century, Vandal fleets annually attacked the Italian coasts. When spring came, strong Vandal naval formations (*numerosa classis*) attacked the Roman shores. Considering the political situation, the Gallic aristocrat Sidonius Apollinaris saw the world order turned upside down. The Byrsa — the hill in Carthage where the proconsul's palace was located, and therefore the political centre of the African provinces — was governed by the Caucasus. Once again Sidonius alluded to the Scythian as the barbarian identity of the Vandals.¹⁴

In 534, Justinian promulgated his *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. The opening sequence of this collection of laws lists the emperor's titles. After the Vandal kingdom was destroyed by Belisarius in 534, Justinian used the triumphal titles *Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus* in various sections of the *Digesta*, the *Novellae*, the *Institutiones*, and the *Codex Justinianus*, as well as in inscriptions. The Emperor appeared as the vanquisher of different barbarian *gentes*, such as the Alamanni and Franks in the provinces of *Germania prima* and *secunda* at the Rhine, the Goths in Italy and Spain, the Antes at the Black Sea and, last but not least, the Alans and Vandals in the African provinces ('Iustinianus Alamannicus Gothicus Francicus Germanicus Anticus Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus').¹⁵

¹⁴ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, ed. and trans. by Anderson, II. 348–52, I, pp. 38–39: 'Hinc Vandalus hostis | urget et in nostrum numerosa classe quotannis | militat excidium, convorsosque ordine fati | torrida Caucaseos infert mihi Byrsa furores'. Priscus, *Fragmenta*, XXXVIII. 1–2, in *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, ed. and trans. by Blockley, II, pp. 341–43.

¹⁵ *Institutiones*, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Behrends and others, *Constitutio Imperatoriam: praefatio*, I, p. xiii: 'In nomine Domini nostri Ihesu Christi Imperator Caesar Flavius Iustinianus Alamannicus Gothicus Francicus Germanicus Anticus Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus pius felix inclitus victor ac triumphator semper Augustus'. Cf. Alemany, *Sources on the Alans*, pp. 192–93; Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized', p. 109, n. 30; Pohl, 'Justinian and the Barbarian Kingdoms', pp. 448–76. Cf. the inscriptions *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, IV. 8636 and *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, III. 13673 (from ancient Miletus, today Akko/Balat near Söke, province of Aydın). The second, partly Latin inscription from Miletus reads:

Since the time of Augustus, such language of power had been used when neighbouring groups acted against the centre's wishes.¹⁶ Justinian wanted to make his fellow Romans believe that the world had returned to how it had been for centuries. Rome ruled the world and all the *gentes* were beaten and under control: even if these *gentes* had ruled Roman provinces for more than a century and in the end managed to keep up a Roman order in these parts of the West.¹⁷

In this world view, *gentes* were bound to Rome by treaties and duties, and in some cases war was necessary to put things right again at the periphery. The world (*orbis terrarum*) and Rome (*orbis romanus*) were seen as one. The dependent client states or *gentes* were seen as part of the Empire, whether within or outside the Roman borders. The *Laterculus Veronensis* lists about hundred provinces and twelve dioceses trying to give an overview of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the fourth century. As a matter of course, this list also names thirty-five *gentes* at the Roman borders and even notes that these peoples were formed, or evolved, under Roman influence and reacted to Roman structures.¹⁸ In the eyes of the Roman elites in Ravenna and Constantinople, the Vandals and Alans in the African provinces never were more than barbarians under Roman rule. Whether in the provinces a different view existed or

'Iustinianus Alaman(icus) Gothicus Fragicus Germanicus, Gallic(us A)lanicus Euandalicus Africanus'. Cf. *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebiger and Schmidt, no. 54, pp. 38–39, and no. 55, pp. 39–40. Franks and Alamanni appear apart from *Germanicus* and *Gallicus*. As two provinces are named, this should be seen as a geographical allusion, not as an ethnic label. The appearance of *Africanus* strengthens this view. Of course, the inscription is orientated on the promulgation of the CIC. *Anticus*: The much-discussed Antae can be located north of the Black Sea. Justinian made them allies, and between 545 and 602 the Antae co-operated with the Empire. Cf. Pritsak, 'Antae'; Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, pp. 78–89, and the index, p. 451; Pohl, *Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa*, p. 513 (index). Jordanes has only three victory titles cited: Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 316, p. 138: 'Sed victor ac triumphator Iustinianus imperator et consul Belesarius Vandalici Africani Geticique dicentur'.

¹⁶ Krierer, *Antike Germanenbilder*.

¹⁷ Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians*, pp. 150–82, 309–20.

¹⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, XXIX. 5. 46, III, pp. 274–75: Valentinian is 'orbis terrarum dominus'. The *Laterculus Veronensis*, ed. by Seeck, pp. 247–51, has a list of thirty-five ethnonyms including *Vandali*, *Sarmatae*, *Sciri*, *Scythae*, and *Gothi* ending with the *Persae*. The list is headlined with the remark: 'Gentes barbarae, quae pullulaverunt sub imperatoribus'. Cf. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty*, pp. 277–335; Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, pp. 321, 323, and n. 189; Dick, *Der Mythos vom 'germanischen' Königtum*, pp. 159–202; Wirth, 'Rome and its Germanic Partners', pp. 16–25; Schulz, *Die Entwicklung des römischen Völkerrechts*.

not is not totally clear. Nevertheless, both Romans and barbarians were part of a transforming Roman world.

After 533, the Vandals and Alans disappeared as a political and military power. What remained were uses and reuses of these ethnonyms throughout European history that are not easy to explain.¹⁹ The triumphal epithets *Alanicus Vandalicus Africanus* used by Justinian put the Vandals and Alans, former rulers of the Roman provinces Proconsularis, Byzacena, Numidia, Mauretania, and Tripolitana back into a barbarian context. They became simply *gentes* from the periphery beaten by a Roman emperor.

The literary statements discussed so far played an important role in the way late Antiquity has been seen in the Modern Age. The harsh antique images and stereotypes in use made it easier for scholars to use and abuse historical structures. Until the 1970s, scholarship put the story roughly like this: Roman inhabitants with a clear awareness of their identity resisted, or at best co-operated with, a culturally different and strongly separated group of conquerors from the north. Germanic barbarians settled in the countryside and had their problems with the alien yet sophisticated Roman culture. They used some Romans, who had to serve them and were supposed to take care for a working late Roman society, to acquire food and money, to be rich and powerful.²⁰

Was the social and political gap between so-called Romans and so-called barbarians as wide as some sources would have us believe? What was the role of ethnic labels in the organization of Roman provinces in the fifth and sixth centuries? Can we trace specific strategies for the use of ethnic labels in our sources? All this is being discussed in detail in recent research. In the following section, certain aspects of Vandal rule in the African provinces will be analysed against the background of ethnic labels appearing in the titles of the Vandal

¹⁹ Donecker and Steinacher, 'Der König der Schweden, Goten und Vandalen'; Steinacher, 'Wenden, Slawen, Vandalen'; Steinacher, 'Vandalen im frühneuezeitlichen Ostseeraum'; Steinacher, 'Vandalen: Rezeptions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte'.

²⁰ For example Schmidt, *Geschichte der Wandalen*. Schmidt's work has a remarkably high level of discussion of the sources, but sticks to a strong dichotomy between 'Germans' and 'Romans'. Similarly the French tradition: Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*. Cf. on recent critics of Courtois: Merrills, 'Introduction: Vandals, Romans and Berbers', pp. 7–8, and nn. 17–20; Steinacher, 'Gruppen und Identitäten', pp. 243–44. Recently, Maier, *Amtsträger und Herrscher in der Romania Gothica*, used such stereotypes again. A discussion of the same problems in archaeology can be found in Fehr, 'Romanisch-germanische Sprachgrenze'; and Bierbrauer, 'Romanen'. Cf. recently on the problem Fehr, *Germanen und Romanen im Merowingerreich*, and Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Late Roman West*, pp. 35–62.

kings to illustrate the great variety of possible political solutions in this age of Mediterranean history.

The Vandal Royal Title I: Gelimer's Basin and its Possible Background Compared to Similar Objects

As has been mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Vandal royal title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* is known from two decrees preserved in Victor of Vita's *History of the Vandal Persecution* written in the eighties or nineties of the fifth century.²¹ According to diplomatics, these decrees can be viewed as authentic and were defined as very close to Roman imperial decrees with regard to their language, style, and juridical background.²²

Some fifty years later, the last of the Hasding kings was celebrated as 'Geilamir Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum' in an inscription on a valuable silver basin found in 1875 in northern Italy in the ruins of the Castle of Artèn (Fonzaso, BL, Veneto). The round basin with a low base as a separate piece has an engraved rosette with an aperture of approximately twenty cm in its centre. Around this rosette, the inscription was engraved in between two striations. Together with this basin, a second one was found. It has an allegory with a woman, a man, and a child standing around an altar and is preserved today in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, like the bowl of Gelimer. The treasure included furthermore some copper fibules.²³

²¹ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II. 39, pp. 139–40, and III. 3–14, pp. 175–81 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead).

²² Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 79–87; Heuberger, 'Vandalische Reichskanzlei und Königsurkunden', pp. 93–105; Wolfram, *Die Goten*, pp. 295–99; Pohl, *Die Völkerwanderung*, p. 137.

²³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles et Antiques, no. BB 849. The basin weighs 3030 g, is 7 cm high, with an aperture of 49 cm. Cf. Morisson, Brenot, and Barrandon, 'L'Argent chez les Vandales', with a detailed technical analysis; Erbeling, 'Kat. no. 329'; Eger, 'Silbergeschirr und goldene Fibeln', pp. 72–73; *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, no. 51, p. 37; Maculevič, *Byzantinische Antike*, p. 52; Calvi, 'Il piatto d'argento di Castelvint'; De Longpérier, 'Le missorium de Geilamir'; Fiocco, 'Ultime voci della Via Altinate', pp. 374, 376, and a picture of the second basin tab. LI. Fiocco furthermore gives some considerations on when the silver objects could have come to the castle of Artèn, discussing also their modern history.

The basin of Gelimer is an example of antique ceremonial silver dishes labelled *missoria*. They were frequently used as gifts of largess (*largitio*) to persons close to the emperor or foreign ambassadors. Luxury articles (dishes, plates, cups, and bowls in silver) were prepared for imperial celebrations such as accession to the throne and anniversaries, and handed over by the emperor on these occasions to high-ranking dignitaries of the empire. A good example is the basin found in 1721 near Geneva which bears the inscription 'Largitas D N Valentiniani Augusti'. On the engravings, the emperor appears in between six soldiers protecting him, wearing an armour and a *paludamentum* (a cloak or cape fastened at one shoulder, worn by commanders) to demonstrate his military power.²⁴

Concerning Gelimer's basin, Andrew H. Merrills recently assumed that the piece could have been sent to the Ostrogothic court as a diplomatic gift. Other scholars have conjectured that the piece was Hasding royal property or a present prepared during the battle of Ad Decimum in 533 by Gelimer's followers to be presented to victorious Vandal leaders. After their wishes remained unfulfilled due to Belisar's victory, the piece may have come to Italy with Byzantine troops.²⁵ A third possibility is that it was a gift handed to the Vandal king by foreign rulers to honour his position.

Be that as it may, the eye-catching inscription hints at a representative, official, or diplomatic use. Procopius's description of Belisarius's triumph in Constantinople in 533 points to the sheer quantity of maybe similar objects plundered by Byzantine troopers in Africa:

For he [Belisarius] had the fortune to be advanced to the office of consul, and therefore was borne aloft by the captives, and as he was thus carried in his curule chair, he threw to the populace those very spoils of the Vandalic war. For the people

²⁴ Generally on *largitio*, cf. Enßlin, 'Largitio'; Bauer, 'Prestigegüter und Kaisernähe in der Spätantike'. Bauer lists also rings, fibules, and belt-buckles as gifts to signal proximity to the imperial house. The basin of Valentinian: Genève, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Inv. C 1241; Toynbee and Painter, 'Silver Picture Plates'; Wölfel, 'Mythos und politische Allegorie', pp. 18–19 and n. 88; for further reading on the basin, see Baratte and Painter, *Trésors d'orfèvrerie gallo-romains*, no. 236, pp. 271–72.

²⁵ Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 96. Morisson, Brenot, and Barrandon, 'L'Argent chez les Vandales', pp. 126–27, and Calvi, 'Il piatto d'argento di Castelvint', pp. 353–416, mention other valuable objects (amongst them another silver bowl) and coins found in the near ambience. The last coin (an Ostrogothic tremissis) was struck between 555 and 565. All this hints to a possible concentration of armed forces in the area hiding their *donativa* from whatever enemy or comrade in arms.

carried off the silver plates (*ἀργυράμα*) and golden girdles and a vast amount of the Vandals' wealth of other sorts as a result of Belisarius's consulship.²⁶

Three more objects have to be discussed here, before the Vandal royal titles themselves can be considered. The first piece is a sapphire engraved 'Alaricus Rex Gothorum'. The stone bears a stylized portrait and may have been used as a seal similar to the Merovingian signet rings. Most probably, the engraved stone is related to Alaric II (484–507). The reason why this inscription has been examined so carefully in research is that, in a similar way to the Vandal kingdom, the royal titulature in Visigothic Spain was normally used without any ethnic marker. Before the seventh century, the Visigothic kings used the royal epithet *Flavius* introduced by Odovacar and Theoderic in Italy. Other possibilities have been a simple *rex* combined with the ruler's name, *dominus* (*noster, meus*), especially on coins, or *princeps*. The famous Gothic King Alaric, who had conquered Rome in 410, had Roman military ranks (*magister militum*) or was simply called *rex*. Neither the rulers of the kingdom of Toulouse nor the law giver Euric (466–84) used ethnic labels in their own political statements. So, before the late sixth and the seventh centuries, an ethnic title is attested in Visigothic Spain in an engraved form only on this one piece.²⁷

The second object forms another exception and leads us back to a Roman environment. It is the only archaeological example we know for non-imperial *largitio* in the form of silver basins or bowls and it is bigger than most of the other known objects. Flavius Ardaburius Aspar celebrated his consulship with the basin, found near Orbetello (GR, Tuscany) in 1769 and kept today in Florence. No stamps or signs were found, but archaeologists suggested Carthage as the place of manufacture for stylistic reasons. Aspar was granted the consulship of the year 434 in

²⁶ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, iv. 9. 15, II, p. 283. The booty from Africa is described shortly before, explicitly naming the silver (iv. 9. 4–5, II, pp. 279–81): 'And there was booty — first of all, whatever articles are wont to be set apart for the royal service —, thrones of gold and carriages in which it is customary for a king's consort to ride, and much jewelry made of precious stones, and golden drinking cups, and all the other things which are useful for the royal table. And there was also silver weighing many thousands of talents and all the royal treasure amounting to an exceedingly great sum (for Gizeric had despoiled the Palatium in Rome, as has been said in the preceding narrative)'. Cf. Berndt and Steinacher, 'Minting in Vandal North Africa', p. 260; Steinacher, 'Gruppen und Identitäten', p. 257.

²⁷ *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, no. 250, p. 120; Kornbluth, 'The Seal of Alaric'; Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, I, pp. 217–19; Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 77–78; Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, I: *Die Ostgermanen*, p. 426 and n. 2. Cf. the lists in Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized', pp. 100–02.

Carthage, when he tried to defend the city against the Vandals and Alans in the African provinces. The inscription on the basin reads 'Fl(avius) Ardabur Aspar vir inlustris com(es) et Mag(ister) Militum et Consul Ordinarius'.²⁸

The third object is only known from written sources. Gregory of Tours refers to an impressive basin made from gold and jewellery as heavy as fifty pounds. The Frankish King Chilperic I praises himself for having ordered the basin made to honour the Franks. According to Gregory, the piece had the inscription 'I (Chilperic) made this to adorn and to ennoble the *gens* of the Franks' ('Ego haec ad exornandam atque nobilitandam Francorum gentem feci'). Immediately thereafter, Gregory describes another basin, in this case a gift of the Emperor Tiberius II Constantine (574–82) bearing the latter's portrait and the inscription *Gloria Romanorum*.²⁹

Military leaders — be it a king with a barbarian background or a high ranking Roman officer of the same descent — had their new honorary positions celebrated with prestigious and valuable presents of largesse to their closest followers. On these objects is a title, which in the case of Aspar, according to written sources, equates to official use. In the case of Alaric and Gelimer, the royal title differs from what we know from coins, inscriptions, or official documents. Only in the Vandal case can some other supporting documents be discussed. How should Gelimer's basin be interpreted? As a possibility, we could think of a person of high military rank acting closely around the Hasding king as the receiver of the basin. At least this was the purpose of the comparable objects discussed above. If this is the case, the engraved title was used in a special environment and forms only one possibility of political representation of a Vandal king. Why was the twofold ethnic royal title used and engraved in a valuable object deriving from the context described above? Was Gelimer wishing to stress a specific kind of political identity? We shall return to these questions in the conclusion.

²⁸ Firenze, Museo Archeologico, Inv. 2588. Aperture: 42 cm, weight: 1900 g; the right brim and the basis are lost. Cf. Toynbee and Painter, 'Silver Picture Plates', no. 17, p. 28; Wölfel, 'Mythos und politische Allegorie', pp. 23–25; Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler*, I, no. 35, pp. 154–56; Salomonson, 'Kunstgeschichtliche und ikonographische Untersuchungen', pp. 66–68; Musso, *Manifattura sontuaria e committenza pagana*, pp. 19–20. Cf. for Aspar: 'Fl. Ardabur Aspar', in Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, II: AD 395–527 (1980), pp. 164–69.

²⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, ed. by Krusch and Levison, VI, 2, pp. 266–67. Cf. Hardt, *Gold und Herrschaft*, pp. 102–03.

The Vandal Royal Title 2: The Written Sources Apart from Victor of Vita

In the following, I will discuss other sources using either the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* or simply *rex Vandalorum*. The next step has to be to present the evidence for royal Vandal titles that do not include ethnic labels, and to compare them to the evidence from other former Roman provinces under barbarian rule in the fifth and sixth centuries. As Victor's comparatively dense *History of the Vandal Persecution* needs detailed analysis, it will be discussed in a separate section.

Prosper's chronicle normally calls King Geiseric simply 'King of the Vandals' (*Gisiricus rex Vandalorum*).³⁰ The so-called *Laterculus Regum Vandalorum et Alanorum* uses an ethnic label for Geiseric (*Geisericus UUandalorum rex*) in the ninth-century manuscript deriving from the monastery of Reichenau. The thirteenth-century Madrid version, like the fifteenth-century version from Augsburg, label the Vandal kings just by their proper name and the title *rex*.³¹ Thrasamund appears as a king of the Vandals in the *Anonymous Valesianus* when he marries the Gothic princess Amalafrida. The same is true for the *Consularia Italica* in a passage where the King orders the closure of Catholic churches.³²

Sixth-century sources provide a similar picture. Jordanes names Geiseric frequently (and Thrasamund once) *rex Vandalorum*.³³ The letters of Cassiodorus constantly use *rex Vandalorum* to address Thrasamund and Hilderic.³⁴ It is, however, far from clear how near to the original text the headings in the *Variae*

³⁰ Prosper, *Epitoma chronicon*, ed. by Mommsen, a. 1327, p. 475: 'In Africa Gisiricus rex Vandalorum, intra habitationis suae limites volens catholicam fidem Arriana impietate subvertere [...]'.
³¹ *Laterculus Regum Vandalorum et Alanorum*, ed. by Mommsen, p. 458; *Laterculus Regum Vandalorum et Alanorum*, ed. by Steinacher, pp. 165, 167. Only the ninth-century Reichenau version uses the ethnic label: 'Post consulatum Theodosii et Festi Geisericus UUandalorum rex Carthaginem ingressus est die XIII kal. Nov'. The thirteenth-century Madrid version (Madrid, Bibl. Univ. Complutense, Matr. Univ. 134, fol. 47v) has only: 'Gerisericus tribus annis Ypone regio exemptis Cartaginem occupat sub die XIII kalendas Novembris'.

³² *Excerptum Valesianum II*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 68, p. 324: 'Item Amalafridam germanam suam in matrimonium tradens regi Vandalorum Trasimundo'; *Consularia Italica*, ed. by Mommsen, c. 21 (a. 492 post consules), p. 269: 'Inter Africam Trasemundus rex Vandalorum catholicas ecclesias clausit et CXX episcopos exilio Sardiniam mittit'.

³³ Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. by Mommsen, cc. 153, 167, 184, 235, 244, 299 (Thrasamund), pp. 98, 101, 106, 118, 120, 135.

³⁴ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, v. 43 and 44, pp. 170 (*Transimundo regi VVandalorum Theodericus rex*); IX, 1, pp. 267 (*Hildericus regi VVandalorum Athalaricus rex*).

are. This means that there remains the possibility that later scribes added them to give the different letters a clear geographical and dynastical structure.³⁵

The dual Vandal-Alan royal title is known from Victor, Procopius, and one Latin chronicle. Geiseric is labelled a 'King of the Vandals and Alans' (*rex Wandalorum et Alanorum Geisericus*) in an addition to Prosper's chronicle deriving from the late fifth century, that is, in a text written about the same time when Victor composed his *History*. Maybe Victor of Vita's *History* was known and used by the author or the authors of the *Continuatio* of the *Codex Alobacensis*. Nevertheless, the text is not contemporary with Geiseric's rule and it is possible that a Catholic writer labelled the famous founder of the Vandal kingdom in the same way Victor did with his son Huneric. Victor's text was comparatively widespread. We know about forty manuscripts, and this makes it probable that the text was known and used in late fifth- or early sixth-century Italy or Spain.³⁶ Be this as it may, the dual title was known and in use for Vandal kings also outside Africa.

Aside from Victor's diplomas and Gelimer's silver bowl, Procopius provides another attestation for the twofold royal Vandal title in our sources. Procopius used the title 'King of the Vandals and Alans' once. The title appears in an account of a letter sent by Tzazon, a Vandal general attacking the usurper Godas on the island of Sardinia, to his royal brother Gelimer. Reporting that the island was under control again and that Godas had been captured, Tzazon addressed his brother as 'O King of the Vandals and Alani' (*ὦ Βανδύλων τε καὶ Ἀλανῶν βασιλεῦ*).³⁷ Herwig Wolfram considered the way in which Tzazon addressed his

³⁵ Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 81 and note 31: 'Doch bleibt die authentische Form der "superscriptio" in den Variae epistolae wegen ihrer starken Stilisierung unklar'. Cf. Classen, 'Kaiserreskript und Königsurkunde'; Heuberger, 'Vandalische Reichskanzlei und Königsurkunden', p. 97; Mommsen, 'Ostgotische Studien', pp. 476, 536.

³⁶ Prosper, *Epitoma chronicon*, ed. by Mommsen, a. 455, p. 487: 'Rex Wandalorum et Alanorum Geisericus regn(avit) post mortem Valentiniani imperatoris annis XXI'. Cf. Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 81 and n. 31; Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, p. 237, n. 7. For the manuscripts and the transmission of Victor's text cf. Schwarcz, 'Bedeutung und Textüberlieferung der *Historia Persecutionis Africanae Provinciae*'.

³⁷ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, iv. 24. 3, II, pp. 196–97: 'Ἵδαν ἀπολωλέναι τὸν τύραννον, ὑπὸ ταῖς ἡμετέραις γεγνονότα χερσὶ, καὶ τὴν νῆσον αὖθις ὑπὸ τῇ σῇ βασιλείᾳ εἶναι, ὦ Βανδύλων τε καὶ Ἀλανῶν βασιλεῦ, ἴσθι καὶ τὴν ἐπινίκιον ἐορτὴν ἄγε. τῶν δὲ πολεμίων, οἱ ἐτόλμησαν ἐς τὴν ἡμετέραν στρατεῦσθαι, ἔλπιζε τὴν πείραν ἐς τοῦτο ἀφίξεσθαι τύχης, ἐς δὲ καὶ πρότερον τοῖς ἐπὶ τοὺς προγόνους τοὺς ἡμετέρους στρατευσαμένοις ἐχώρησε' ('Know, O King of the Vandals and Alani, that the tyrant Godas has perished, having fallen into our hands, and that the island is again under thy kingdom, and celebrate the festival of triumph. And as for the enemy who have

brother as a literary strategy chosen by Procopius to illustrate the ethnic (read barbarian) diversity in the Vandal realm. Africa was seen as the home of three kinds of barbarians: Vandals, Alans, and Moors. Justinian's *Novellae* explicitly listed these three barbarian groups.³⁸ At the same time, this direct translation to the Greek supports our evidence from the Latin sources concerning the use of the title as we know it.

Procopius frequently mentioned different barbarians in Africa. The major part of the third and fourth book of his *History of the Wars* deals with the Moors, not with the Vandals. Furthermore, he had an interesting idea concerning the identity of barbarians in Africa:

However, after that time by their natural increase among themselves and by associating other barbarians with them they came to be an exceedingly numerous people. But the names of the Alani and all the other barbarians, except the Moors, were united in the name of Vandals.³⁹

Together with a remark in the *Life of Saint Augustine* referring to the Vandals, Alans, and Goths, and other different persons fighting with them, this passage has often been seen as a proof for the mixed nature of late antique barbarian groups. Possidius puts it like this:

But a short time after this it came about, in accordance with the divine will and command, that a great host of savage foes, Vandals and Alans, with some of the Gothic tribe interspersed, and various other peoples, armed with all kinds of weapons and well trained in warfare, came by ship from the regions of Spain across the sea and poured into Africa and overran it.⁴⁰

had the daring to march against our land, expect that their attempt will come to the same fate as that experienced by those who in former times marched against our ancestors').

³⁸ *Novellae*, xxx. 11. 2, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, ed. by Behrends and others, III, pp. 234–35: '[...] Et apud Persas agere pacem Uandalosque et Alanos et Maurusios religare et Africam universam insuper et Siciliam possidere'. Cf. Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 81 and n. 29.

³⁹ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 5. 21, II, p. 53; Berndt, *Konflikt und Anpassung*, pp. 142–43.

⁴⁰ Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, ed. and trans. by Geerlings, xxviii. 4, p. 82: 'Verum brevi consequenti tempore divina voluntate et potestate provenit, ut manus ingens diversis telis armata et bellis exercitata, immanium hostium Wandalorum et Alanorum commixtam secum habens Gothorum gentem, aliarumque diversarum personas, ex Hispaniae partibus transmarinis navi-bus Africae influxisset et irruisset' (English translation: Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, ed. and trans. by Weiskotten, p. 227). Cf. the speech of the rhetor Synesius to his emperor Arcadius. The Scythian barbarians are strangers but nevertheless get the highest ranks in the Roman army.

Possidius wrote the *Life of Augustine* roughly hundred years before Procopius composed his *History of the Vandal War*. He intended to outline his and Augustine's view. It was the way the Catholic church would have liked the political organization of the African provinces to be at the time when a new military elite took over and changed their structures. Augustine had been in contact with count Boniface, one of the big players in the first third of the fifth century in the western Roman Empire. It can be shown that Augustine had clear political aims and tried to influence the count. The arriving barbarians thwarted this attempt to offer guidance to the powerful in the African provinces as well as overseas. Moreover, the Vandal King Geiseric attracted Arian clergymen from all over the Roman Empire who tried to build up a new African church, a heretical one in Possidius's eyes.⁴¹

As different as these two authors may be, they share similar views on barbarian soldiers. On the one hand, there is truth to what Procopius and Possidius tell us; the Roman army had always been open for many different peoples and individuals from diverse backgrounds fighting together. On the other hand, these remarks represent a kind of arrogance on Procopius's and Possidius's part towards the barbarians. In the end these had no specific political identity. Scythian soldiers had come to the African provinces. They were just subjects of Rome who had forgotten that. Having written his account as a member of Belisarius's invasion force, Procopius needed to cast doubt on the political system of the African provinces before 533.⁴² As a man of the church, Possidius

This is dangerous and dishonourable. Furthermore, barbarians who appear north of the Black Sea are never new. The barbarians just astutely invent new names to fool the Romans and scare them. Synesius of Cyrene, *De Regno*, ed. and trans. by Lacombrade, cc. 20–23, pp. 60–63. Cf. Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 23 and n. 77; Pohl, *Die Awaren: ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa*, p. 4 and n. 2; Heather, 'The Anti-Scythian Tirade'; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, pp. 142–43.

⁴¹ Modéran, 'Une guerre de religion'; Clover, 'The Pseudo-Boniface and the *Historia Augusta*'; Diesner, *Studien zur Gesellschaftslehre*; Diesner, 'Die Laufbahn des *comes Africae*'.

⁴² Rodolfi, 'Procopius and the Vandals', demonstrates how Procopius created social and political realities: 'What one has tried to show is nevertheless that, reading Procopius, one does not have to see a sudden and real crisis of identity in sixth century's Vandal Africa, but instead a strenuous propagandistic effort of creating three African identities (friends, barbarians, Romans), each one aiming at satisfying different political and diplomatic needs of the Byzantine court. Among these needs, the necessity to answer to the preoccupation that Africa might be a difficult country to "recover", or better to conquer, exactly because there appears to be many more social and cultural differences between African inhabitants and the Byzantine newcomers, than between those same Africans and their previous barbarian rulers, the Vandals' (p. 242).

tried to put the emerging new elite of federate soldiers back to the social status they belonged to in his view.

Another letter can be found in Procopius's *History of the Vandal War*. Justinian intervened against King Gelimer in the interest of Hilderic and the Vandal general Hoamer. After a coup bringing Gelimer to the throne, King Hilderic had been dethroned and imprisoned together with his cousin Hoamer. The Emperor in Constantinople defined this as an act of aggression as Hilderic was his ally. Interestingly enough, Justinian used, at least in Procopius's account, Geiseric's succession order as an argument. When Gelimer answered, he used the same title as the Emperor: 'King Gelimer to the King Justinian (*Βασιλεὺς Γελίμερ Ιουστινιανῷ βασιλεῖ*)'.⁴³ Yves Modéran indicated that the titles of rulers normally did not appear in letters in the sixth century.⁴⁴ So it cannot be excluded that Procopius simply depicted the coup as a motive for attacking the Vandal King.⁴⁵ Procopius aims at justifying Justinian's wars, and an allegation seems likely. However, Gelimer was a kinsman of the Theodosian imperial house, and he may have alluded to this by putting himself on equal footing with the emperor in Constantinople. No Vandal king ever bore a Roman military title like so many other barbarian leaders.⁴⁶ Whether Procopius imputed the barefacedness of claiming equal rank with the emperor to Gelimer or Gelimer deliberately did so himself is difficult to judge under these circumstances.

⁴³ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 9. 20, II, pp. 88–89. Dewing translated 'King Gelimer to the Emperor Justinian' as did most translators. See Merrills, 'The Secret of my Succession', pp. 150–52.

⁴⁴ Modéran, 'L'Établissement territorial des Vandales', p. 97. Cf. Steinacher, 'Gruppen und Identitäten', pp. 257–58. Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, p. 245, accepts the title as it is. Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 81–82, 134–35; Classen, 'Kaiserreskript und Königsurkunde', p. 5 and n. 20.

⁴⁵ Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 135: 'Man könnte daher vielleicht sagen: Prokop hatte die Absicht das "bellum iustum" des Kaisers gegen den vandalischen Usurpator, der nicht nur die Nachfolgeordnung Geiserichs, sondern auch das Imperium selbst störte, zu demonstrieren.'

⁴⁶ Modéran, 'L'Établissement territorial des Vandales', pp. 87–97; Clover, 'Timekeeping and Dyarchy in Vandal Africa'; Clover, 'Geiseric the Statesman', pp. 65–102; Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 56–82; Schulz, *Die Entwicklung des römischen Völkerrechts*, pp. 92–96, 185, and nn. 81–85.

The Vandal Royal Title 3: Victor of Vita's History of the Persecution in the African Provinces and the Depiction of the Vandal Kings

Victor of Vita's *History of the Persecution in the African Provinces* provides the richest source that we have concerning fifth-century Africa. This fact makes it very difficult to put Victor's view in context, let alone to confront his account with other evidence. The African Bishop outlined a longstanding religious conflict between barbarian Arians and Romano-African Catholics. He used every occasion to stress the strong and impregnable difference between these groups. Victor's account can be understood as a nearly nostalgic attempt to reclaim a position of patient suffering for a Catholic church which, for roughly one and a half centuries, had not only been fully accepted by the Roman emperors, but which also become the main, leading, and powerful religious community in the Empire. His extremely hostile account not only attacked everybody co-operating with the Vandals severely, it also questioned the political system in Africa after 439 as a whole.⁴⁷ And exactly this fundamental quest helps us to understand the basic conditions of Vandal North Africa as well as the use of the twofold royal title with a strong ethnic affiliation.

Whether the two edicts given in Victor's account are fully authentic or not cannot be clarified as his text is our only source. Victor has the *Überlieferungs-hoheit*. The language used is pseudo-imperial. The Vandal King Huneric is styled as a ruler with divine legitimacy: 'We do not wish for scandal in the provinces granted us by God!' ('provinciis a Deo nobis concessis scandalum esse nolumus').⁴⁸

Richard Heuberger argued in the 1920s that the notaries had been Romans who knew the set phrases necessary to promulgate edicts. Furthermore, he reasoned that the title *Rex Hunirix Vandalorum et Alanorum* has to be authentic as the correct Germanic wording *Hunirix* was used.⁴⁹ But the core problem is whether Victor tried to denounce Huneric's edict as an act of barbarism performed by a tyrant by styling the king's title as a truly barbarian one, or whether this title was actually in use in official documents. As there are no coins or inscriptions for the reign of Huneric, let alone other documents, absolute

⁴⁷ Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 190–91; generally for Victor: Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*.

⁴⁸ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II, 39, pp. 139–40 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead, pp. 37–38).

⁴⁹ Heuberger, 'Vandalische Reichskanzlei und Königsurkunden', pp. 84–98; Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 80.

certainty about the issue cannot be attained.⁵⁰ That the title existed and was in use remains a matter of fact. Gelimer's basin together with what we know from Victor's text hints to a use in certain circles and for certain circumstances. Apart from this, it remains a possibility that Huneric exploited the title in a heated situation to demonstrate Hasding power on a special occasion. Due to the long-standing discussions on religious practice in the Proconsular province, the king may have employed a title normally reserved for internal use in the inner circles of Hasding followers. It is difficult to judge how many persons belonged to this inner circle; maybe all soldiers labelled Vandals or only some very powerful men near to the king and the other Hasdings? Throughout his text, Victor gives a discussion of how the African provinces should be organized, especially concerning the role the Catholic church should have. Such discourses touched the core interests of the leading Vandals and the Hasding house. In such a situation, the twofold royal title could have been used willingly by Huneric to stress the right of federate soldiers — or their rich and privileged leaders — to get what they thought to be their right. Research has not yet been able to explain what happened under Geiseric in the first decades of the Vandal regime. But the imperial lands and vast parts of the senatorial property had been allocated amongst Geiseric, the Hasding family and their followers; this constituted the real basis of the system that the Vandals had established in the rich African provinces. As we still do not understand this system in detail, this is a risky argument. But we can observe that juridical power and possession rights in certain provinces, as well as an Arian religious creed, are the two basic principles needed to understand the title's background.

This article is not the place to discuss in any detail the background of the Arian policy followed by the Vandal kings in the African provinces.⁵¹ Only one aspect has to be stressed. In the royal edict of 484 which concerns us here and which is transmitted only by Victor, King Huneric invoked the theological adjudications of the councils of Ariminum (Rimini) and Seleucia from the year 359 on the provinces under his rule.⁵² Doing this, the Arian church was seen as the only, holy, apostolic, and catholic (in the original sense of being universal) church with full legitimation. This reads as follows in the text of the royal edict of 484:

⁵⁰ Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, pp. 262–65, 395–96; Diesner, 'Vandalen', p. 957.

⁵¹ Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*, pp. 263–82; Modéran, 'Une guerre de religion', pp. 184–92.

⁵² For Ariminum/Rimini cf. Brennecke, 'Lateinischer oder germanischer "Arianismus"?'; Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer*, pp. 5–22.

On the first day our venerable bishops proposed to them [i.e. the Catholics] that they prove the homousion in a proper fashion from the divine Scriptures, just as they had been asked to, failing which they would certainly condemn something which was done away with by a thousand and more bishops from the whole world at the council of Ariminum and Seleucia.⁵³

Defending the only church, Huneric persecuted Manichaeans. For this he was even praised by Victor.⁵⁴ The fact that Victor relates King Huneric's edict as promulgating a ban of Catholic liturgy in the so-called *sortes Vandalorum* in the Proconsularian province has been discussed intensively for more than one hundred and fifty years. At the beginning of the edict, the King again alludes to the truth of Arian Christology:

It is well known that not once but quite often your priests [Huneric addresses the Catholic clergy] have been forbidden to celebrate any liturgies at all in the territory of the Vandals (*in sortibus Vandalorum*), in case they seduce Christian souls and destroy them.⁵⁵

Whether these *sortes* can be seen as a territory of a Vandal settlement, however such may be defined, or whether the wording implies a certain juridical definition remains unclear.⁵⁶ In any case, the text does not seem to refer to the entire territory of the kingdom. Different areas of jurisdiction may have existed in the African provinces. Maybe only in the territory of former imperial and senatorial *latifundia* of the Proconsular province now in the possession of the Hasdings did the king have full juridical power. At the same time, it was in the

⁵³ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, III, 5, p. 176 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead, p. 38).

⁵⁴ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II, 1–2, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II, 39, p. 139; III, 4, p. 175 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead, pp. 38, 65).

⁵⁶ Cf. the chapter 'Die *sortes Vandalorum*/kleroī Bandilon und die Organisation der Provinzen nun unter vandalischer Herrschaft' in Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*. Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, I–II: *Die Vandalen*, pp. 189, 204–10 and n. 7, started the discussion in many aspects. From then on, the *sortes* were seen as the settlement grounds of a Vandal people by the majority of scholars. Recently, Modéran, 'L'Établissement territorial des Vandales', stressed this again. Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, p. 189, took an intermediate position, and Goffart, 'The Technique of Barbarian Settlement', pleaded for a term meaning a certain system of taxation only. Paolo Tedesco (Roma) is preparing an extensive article where he attempts to explain the African system in a broader context, which might contribute to a better solution.

Hasding's interest to secure and prolong the possession and allotment rights they had achieved. Arianism may have been a central ideological strategy for achieving this end.

Like Constantius II, who intended to change the results of Nicaea, the Vandal King Huneric attempted this for the parts of the African provinces under his full control and, in some respects, also for the rest of the Empire. He acted like a Roman emperor and the edicts cited by Victor deploy a juridical terminology known from late antique imperial chancelleries. As Peter Heather explains:

Like many mainline Roman churchmen of the mid-fourth century, the fifth-century Vandals should be seen, therefore, as adherents of a more conservative theology, unhappy with the potentially embarrassing connotations of *homousios*.⁵⁷

That is to say, no rude barbarians tried to impose their strange and foreign religion on fettered Romans. The Vandal kings just had become patrons of followers of a certain Christology which was, after 381, no longer supported by other elites in Ravenna or Constantinople. Arians came from different social groups. *Foederati*, for example, were not subject to the religious laws issued by Theodosius on the accepted doctrine after 381. During the first two decades of the fifth century, the Gothic army acting in Illyricum, Italy, Gaul, and later in Spain became something like a role model for barbarian armed forces acting inside the borders of the Roman Empire. It can be observed that for decades the Vandals were in fierce rivalry with prestigious Gothic groups, but this only demonstrates that they struggled for prestige, power, and influence in the Roman world and that they developed a specific set of skills for their group identity. Becoming a barbarian soldier inside the imperial borders required specific 'strategies of distinction', and accepting the creed of Ariminum/Seleukia was one of them.⁵⁸ After 439, remaining an Arian meant having used the opportunities of the Vandal realm. It was much harder to live and work in parts of the Roman Empire not dominated by a military-barbarian elite. Africa, Spain, parts of Gaul, and later Italy offered what was no longer possible outside these provinces.

Furthermore, Geiseric and Huneric performed policy to support Arian circles all over the Empire. When the Emperor Zeno tried to negotiate for the ordination of a new bishop in Carthage, Huneric had a condition:

⁵⁷ Heather, 'Christianity and the Vandals', p. 138.

⁵⁸ See the essays in Pohl and Reimitz, *Strategies of Distinction*.

The bishops of our religion who are at Constantinople and throughout the other provinces of the East are to have [...] the right to preach to the people in whatever language they wish in their churches and to practise the Christian religion, just as you will have this right, here [i.e. Carthage] and in the other churches which are in the provinces of Africa, to celebrate mass, preach and do the things which pertain to your religion, in whatever way you wish.⁵⁹

One of the claims brought forward to the emperor is free choice of language for the homily. It is likely that the Arian clergy in Africa used the Gothic idiom as the language of liturgy. One of the differences between Catholic and Arian liturgy was the possible use of a vernacular in church instead of Latin or Greek. The Gothic liturgy and the Gothic Bible should not be interpreted as conscious responses to the needs of a Germanic cultural context, but must rather be understood as consequences of the linguistic pluralism of the eastern churches. It remains one pattern of a military and barbarian identity to be Arian and to see Gothic as a language of church service.⁶⁰

In general, Victor used two strategies to denounce the Vandal kings. First, he pictured them like Roman emperors persecuting the Christians. For example, two royal officials (*comites*) tried to convince Catholics to change their confession. The true Christians — according to Victor — claimed *Christiani sumus* and confessed the trinity according to Nicaea and Constantinople.⁶¹ This wording and the whole scene is reminiscent of the imperial persecutions during the third century, and the Vandal king appears as a cruel persecutor like Diocletian or other pagan emperors. This implied depicting the Vandals as tyrants, rul-

⁵⁹ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II, 2–4, pp. 122–24 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead, p. 25); Malchus, *Fragmenta*, XVII, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians*, trans. by Blockley, II, pp. 425–27, does not mention the Arian case in the East. He focuses on Huneric's plea for peace and his proposal to drop all outstanding claims against the emperor and the Roman treasury. These claims derived from Eudocia's inheritance and provided a long standing conflict between Carthage and Constantinople.

⁶⁰ Cf. Brennecke, 'Lateinischer oder germanischer "Arianismus"?', pp. 136–38; Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*, pp. 269–70; Mathisen, 'Sigisvult the Patrician', exemplifies such on a bishop called Maximinus acting in Geiseric's environment. Before joining Geiseric, Maximinus had been with Sigisvult and his Gothic troops coming to North Africa to fight count Boniface. He was styled *episcopus Arianorum* and his function seems to have been to serve as a kind of high-ranking army chaplain. For the use of the Gothic idiom in the African provinces cf. Reichert, 'Die Sprache der Wandalen in Afrika'.

⁶¹ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II, 28, p. 134.

ers without any legitimacy to wield power in a Christian world. At the same time, Victor styled the Vandal kings as *Ariani*, nearly denying that they were Christians at all. Now exactly these bad guys had — again according to Victor — the *chutzpa* to use laws rightful Christian emperors like Theodosius the Great had proclaimed to protect the Catholic church against Arians and other heretics. Victor is quite explicit in this:

They did not blush for shame in deploying against us a law which our Christian emperors, seeking to do honour to the Catholic church, had previously issued against them and other heretics, to which they added many things of their own, just as seemed good to their tyrannical power.

Like an emperor, Huneric dared to impose laws that had been created to protect the church against the African Catholics. Victor then goes on to cite the edict under discussion.⁶² This forms the background that we have to keep in mind while discussing the text presented by Victor. To sum up: the twofold title handed down by Victor may have been used by Huneric's court to stress and to defend the basic interests of the Vandal elite in the African provinces. The conflicts with the Catholic clergy were a harsh quest for power. When the core interests of the former federates, their allotments and their payment were under question, one knew how to act: a Vandal identity was used as an expression of a strong political 'strategy of distinction'. At the same time, the Vandal quest for power in the western Roman provinces changed the political language in use. After Huneric's marriage with Eudocia, the possibilities of a Hasding king or prince as well as the chance for acceptance in the African provinces had changed dramatically. We shall return to this point in the conclusion of this paper.

⁶² Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, III, 2 and 3–14, pp. 174–81 (Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution*, trans. by Moorhead, p. 64); *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. by Mommsen, XVI, 5, 16–66, pp. 256–58. For the imperial laws used in Victor's text cf. Overbeck, *Untersuchungen zum afrikanischen Senatsadel*, pp. 74–82; Dahn, *Die Könige der Germanen*, I, pp. 255–57. A detailed discussion of Victor's strategies to barbarize the Vandals: Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*, pp. 229–39, 302–10. An overview of the persecutions: Modéran, 'L'Afrique et la persécution vandale'; Diesner, 'Vandalen', cols 962–69; Heather, 'Christianity and the Vandals', pp. 137–46; Vössing, '"Barbaren" und Katholiken', pp. 181–88; Spielvogel, 'Arianische Vandalen, katholische Römer', pp. 204–11; Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, pp. 223–25, 289–310; Schmidt, *Geschichte der Wandalen*, pp. 102–13.

The Vandal Royal Title 4: What Have the Moors Got To Do with This?

Procopius refers to fighting in the Aurès mountains at the end of Huneric's reign. Moorish leaders are said to have feared Geiseric, but after his death they 'both did much harm to the Vandals and suffered the same themselves'. After a short summary of Huneric's cruel persecution of the Catholics, Procopius tells us that

[...] by that time the Moors dwelling on Mount Aurasium had revolted from the Vandals and were independent [...]; and indeed they never came under the Vandals again, since the latter were unable to carry on a war against Moors on a mountain difficult of access and exceedingly steep.⁶³

It is on the eastern foothills of the Aurès mountains that the Bir Trouch ostraka from the time of Gunthamund's reign were found. This shows that the neighbouring regions of the Aurès had been under control from Carthage around the year 493. It seems likely that Procopius is trustworthy in his account and that the uplands of the Aurès after 484 developed their own political solutions as the lowlands still remained governed from Carthage. From the Aurès we know a late fifth-century inscription related to a *dux* and maybe later *imperator* Masties which reads:

I, Masties the *dux* am now in the age of sixty-seven years and imperator for ten years [or: ruled for ten years], never perjured myself nor broke faith with either the Romans or the Moors, and was prepared in both war and peace, and my deeds were such that God supported me well.

The problem with this inscription is that the characters IMPR could mean both, *imperavit* or *imperator*. Recent research, however, tends to accept the reading *imperator*.⁶⁴ The inscription can be read as a very diplomatic act to cover

⁶³ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 8. 1–5, II, pp. 72–75.

⁶⁴ Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine*, pp. 373–75, 396–415 (p. 374 and n. 239 on the ostrakon, pp. 398–412 on the inscription with a picture): 'Masties fut donc imperator, le seul titre qui pouvait exprimer à la fois la réalité sociale de son peuple et les ambitions de son pouvoir' (p. 407); Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 127 (English trans. by Andy H. Merrills except the first phrase, which Merrills translated, 'I, Masties, dux for 67 years and imperator for 10 years'): 'D[IS] M[ANIBUS] S[ACRUM] EGO MASTIES DUX | ANN[IS] LXVII ET IMP[E]R[ATOR] ANN[IS] X QUI NUN | QUAM PERIURAVI NEQUE FIDE | FREGI NEQUE DE ROMANOS NEQUE | DE MAUROS, ET IN BELLU PARUI ET IN | PACE, ET ADVERSUS FACTA MEA | SIC MECU[M] DEUS EGIT BENE | EGO VARTAIA HUNC EDIFICIUM CUM FRATRI[BUS] ME | IS FECI | IN QUOD EROGAVI SIL CENTU'; for the

all possibilities available in the African provinces of the time. Classical Roman religion (*diis manibus*) is used side by side with Christian overtones, or with potentially Christian overtones at least, as also a pagan maybe liked the *deus* of the inscription. Masties tried to welcome all Romans, pagan and Catholic ones. Everybody not satisfied with the Vandal world order was addressed:

All this is a hint that Masties's break from Vandal authority may well have been prompted by the onset of Huneric's persecution. Faced with these horrors, the formerly loyal lieutenant in the south of Numidia revolted from the Vandals and permanently removed his territory from the control of the Arian Hasdings.⁶⁵

But there are other possible interpretations, among them that rather poor herdsmen in the mountains used every possible language of power they knew at the same time.

Be this as it may, Masties may have called himself *imperator*. This means that he did not any longer recognize any supraregional power. As small as his sphere of power may have been, it is worth looking at the possible backgrounds. To do this, a glimpse at another inscription from Altava in Mauretania is necessary. The stone celebrates a certain Masuna as the king of the Moors and the Romans (*rex Masuna gentium Maurorum et Romanorum*). The inscription is dated around 508, and is thus roughly twenty years later than the one of Masties.⁶⁶

Yves Modéran confronted the twofold Vandal ethnic title with Masuna's solution. His conclusion was to see the Vandal titulature as a sign of a severe separation of Vandal conquerors and conquered Romans in social and religious matters. In Modéran's view, Vandals and Alans had become the new masters, while the so-called Romans had been excluded from the language of power. The king of the Vandals and Alans would have claimed power over the Romans, the latter not being included in the official title in use. Conversely, Masuna's concept of political and social organization had included the Romans. Integrating the Romans in a similar manner in their royal title would have been a possibility for the Vandals in the core regions of Africa.⁶⁷

first publication of the inscription Carcopino, 'Un "empereur" maure inconnu'.

⁶⁵ Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, p. 127.

⁶⁶ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VIII. 9835; Marcillet-Jaubert, *Les inscriptions d'Altava*, no. 194, pp. 126–27 (with illustration): 'Pro sa(lute) et incol(umitate) reg(is) Masunae gent(ium) Maur(or)um et Romanor(um)'.

⁶⁷ Cf. Modéran, 'L'Établissement territorial des Vandales', p. 95: 'Mais cette formule limitative avait plus pour fonction d'affirmer le maintien d'un strict cloisonnement ethnique et religieux entre conquérants et conquis que de témoigner d'une reconnaissance de la souveraineté

It remains a possibility that the two Moorish inscriptions hint to an alternative which had developed by the end of Huneric's reign in the periphery of the Vandal realm. The political and cultural environment of these Moorish polities shared many similarities with the core regions of Africa. At the very least, Latin inscriptions were in use according to a traditional Roman way. However, they remained at the periphery, with much less resources and without the opportunities for Mediterranean politics that the Hasdings in Carthage possessed. If Huneric went too far in his measures for establishing an Arian region in the Proconsularis and supporting Arian circles not only throughout Africa but in the whole Mediterranean, Moorish rulers at the periphery may have developed solutions that were more open to accommodate all groups in the African provinces during a phase of dense conflict in the core regions. The importance of these alternatives for the African situation as a whole is difficult to judge. Their political language appears to be more in line with what a Catholic would have preferred of Vandal politics in the time of Huneric. Not only were the Romans explicitly included in the groups supporting Masties's or Masuna's rule; Masties furthermore used different religious and cultural elements to attract disappointed Africans. If this interpretation is correct, we can deduce that titles with an ethnic affiliation had their importance and signalled distinct possibilities to organize political systems in the African provinces of the fifth and sixth centuries. This would also affirm an interpretation of Victor's text and the use of the twofold ethnic title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* in a heated situation. Huneric's successors looked for other solutions and went much further in their acceptance of the important role of the Catholic church in the late antique Mediterranean world. This change in Hasding church-policy may have affected the use of royal titles too.

impériale sur les Romains'. Similar arguments: Vössing, "Barbaren" und Katholiken, p. 180. Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 82–83 and nn. 39–40, interpreted Masuna's title as an imitation of the Vandalic royal formula: 'Die Römer werden zu einer *gens* wie jede andere'. Furthermore, he compares the formula with βασιλεὺς Βουλγάρων καὶ Ρωμαίων, a title used by the Bulgarian zar Simeon in 925. Recently, Herwig Wolfram expressed the idea during a talk with the author that Masuna might have been a Vandal dissident imitating the title of his Hasding king. This argument derived from Wolfram's observation that the very name Masuna was in use in Visigothic Spain. A similar name is not enough but the idea of switching identities and a possible Vandal background of Masuna remains a possibility. For the Moorish polities on the periphery of Vandal North Africa cf. Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, pp. 333–49; Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine*, pp. 541–64; Rusworth, 'From Arzuges to Rustamids', pp. 86–88.

The Vandal Royal Title 5: Dominus noster rex and Allusions to Imperial Status

An inscription from Henchir Koréiba near Ain Mlîla in the province of Numidia labels Gelimer 'Domn(us) Gei| lime| r'.⁶⁸ This inscription represents the majority of titles used by Vandal kings in the available sources. No inscription, coin legend, or dating formula using an ethnic title is known.⁶⁹ This is true for all the kingdoms in the transforming Roman West before the sixth century. The titulature of rulers in the former Roman provinces of the West used terms familiar from late imperial usage. As long as they were not named along with the emperor, kings of barbarian descent were labelled *domini nostri*. In the fifth century, even Ricimer could be a *princeps*, which shows a shift in terminology formerly reserved exclusively to the emperor. Later in the fifth century, Theoderic was addressed as a *princeps Romanus* too. He defined himself as the *princeps* of the West, fighting for the right of the *res publica*. At the same time he was entitled *Flavius Theodericus rex* as the ruler in Italy.⁷⁰ Other possibilities to label a ruler in Italy, Spain, Gaul, or Africa were *dominus* with different attributes or — concerning the Gothic kings and Odacer — *Flavius*. Along with these late imperial terms *rex* was used frequently, often together with *dominus*. Most images depicting fifth- and sixth-century kings on material objects, such as the seal of Childeric, the medallion of Theoderic, or the *visor* of Agilulf carry inscriptions styling the kings simply *rex*. The engraved sapphire of Alaric and Gelimer's basin do use ethnic terminology to specify the king's background. There were thus different possibilities, different languages of power which may have been addressed to specific social groups.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VIII. 10862; VIII. 19210 = *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, no. 50, p. 37; cf. Traube, *Nomina sacra*, p. 192. Cf. the commentaries on the use of *dominus* in *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, no. 42, p. 34.

⁶⁹ *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, no. 42, p. 34 = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, VIII. 2013 and VIII. 16516: The date is followed by 'do(mini) n(ostri) Trasamundi'; no. 48, p. 36 = VIII. 10516: 'anno IIII d(omini) n(ostri) regis Ildirix'.

⁷⁰ Wolfram, *Gotische Studien*, pp. 160, 166 (*Flavius rex*), 141, 143, 163, 166, and n. 133 (*patricius* and *magister militum*); Wolfram, *Die Goten*, pp. 288–90 (theory and reality of Theoderic's reign); *Princeps*: Werner, 'Völker und regna'; Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans*, pp. 58–102 (Italy ruled by Theoderic); *principalis potestas*: Hauck, 'Von einer spätantiken Randkultur'; Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 148–51 (Merovingian uses of *princeps*).

⁷¹ Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 56–75, especially pp. 69–70; Gillett, 'Was Ethnicity Politicized', pp. 90, 110–11; Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen*

Not surprisingly, the Vandal kings used the portentous honorific *dominus* or *rex*. From Gunthamund's reign onwards, *dominus* began to appear on silver coin issues, which is in itself an important ideological declaration. At the same time, no gold coins were issued in Africa, although the currency was based on the imperial solidus. Vandal coinage appears as a provincial issue: the emperor cared for the gold, the Vandal king guaranteed the silver and bronze issues used in daily life and economics.⁷²

One of the Tablettes Albertini has the title *rex invictissimus*. These tablets are, unlike Victor's account, legal documents without any transformation due to literary aims.⁷³ Furthermore, the acts of the council held in 525 at Carthage during Hilderic's reign transmit a dating 'anno secundo gloriosissisimi regis Hilderici'.⁷⁴ When Fulgentius of Ruspe had a theological dispute with king Thrasamund, he addressed the king as a 'rex clementissimus' or 'piissimus'.⁷⁵ The attributes *invictissimus*, *gloriosissimus*, *clementissimus*, and *piissimus* are known from the Roman senatorial order of rank or the imperial court as well as from other late Roman kingdoms with a barbarian elite. Late antique emperors were frequently addressed as *imperator* or *princeps*, and the title was often used in conjunction with attributes such as *piissimus*, *clementissimus*, *sapientissimus*, or *invictissimus*.⁷⁶

und Staatssymbolik, I, pp. 213–34; Bullough, 'Imagines regum', pp. 228–36. Lately, Italian scholars discussed arguments whether the plate of Agilulf could be a modern falsification: La Rocca and Gasparri, 'Forging an Early Medieval Royal Couple'.

⁷² Morrisson, 'Caratteristiche ed uso'; Berndt and Steinacher, 'Die Münzprägung im vandalenzeitlichen Nordafrika'; Berndt and Steinacher, 'Minting in Vandal North Africa', pp. 255–58.

⁷³ *Tablettes Albertini*, ed. by Courtois, I. 1, I, p. 215: [Ann]o nono d(omi)n(i) invictissimi regis xv k(a)l(endas) octob(res) tab(ella) [...]. Cf. the list 'Titulature royale' (I, p. 315). On all other tablets 'domini (nostri) regis' is used. The very name Gunthamund is written in several different ways. Only I. 1 has 'invictissimi regis'.

⁷⁴ *Concilium Carthaginense a. 525*, in *Concilia Africae a. 345–a. 525*, ed. by Munier, p. 255: 'Anno secundo gloriosissimi regis Hilderici, nonas februarias Kartagine in secretario basilicae sancti martyris Agilei'. Cf. Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, pp. 304–09; Massigli, 'Primat de Carthage'.

⁷⁵ Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Ad Trasimundum regem Vandalorum*, I. 1 and 2. Cf. Modéran, 'L'Établissement territorial des Vandales', p. 96 and nn. 61–63.

⁷⁶ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, I. 1. 1–2, pp. 10–11 (Theoderic to Anastasius *clementissime* and *piissime* *imperator*); x. 19. 3, p. 310 (Theodahad to Justinian *piissime* *imperator*); x. 9. 1, pp. 297–98 (Theodahad to Justinian *sapientissime* *imperator*); VIII. 1. 1, p. 231 and x. 1. 1, p. 298 (Athalaric and Amalaswintha to Justin I. and Justinian *clementissime principum*).

Gloriosissimus was used initially during the time of Diocletian as a means to address a Roman emperor. In the course of the fourth century, it became a term for high-ranking magistrates or bishops. All persons who bore the right to be labelled *gloria vestra* were allowed to use the attribute *gloriosissimus*. Such titles were drawn from the senatorial order of rank, the *cursus honorum*. Roman citizens were divided into three classes, and for members of each class a distinct career path was available. The magistracies of the consulship, praetorship, plebeian tribunate, aedileship, quaestorship, and military tribunate were only available to citizens of the senatorial class. So a *vir gloriosissimus* and a *vir excellentissimus* were of the highest magisterial rank. The exarch in Italy was a *vir excellentissimus* in the Byzantine order of ranks. Barbarian kings or generals often held first ranks of the *cursus honorum*, like the office of a *magister militum* or even a consulship, and were thus entitled to the attributes *gloriosus/issimus*, *excellentissimus*, or *praecellentissimus*. Theoderic or Hilderic were *gloriosissimus rex*, like the Burgundian King Gundobad.⁷⁷ The latter was Ricimer's nephew and his successor as the *patricius* of Italy. Furthermore, he held the office of a *magister utriusque militiae per Gallias*.⁷⁸ Yet, no Vandal king ever held a high ranking Roman office. It is noticeable that only after Huneric's marriage with the imperial princess Eudocia there appears titulature known for barbarian kings and accepted by Roman authorities. This is not the case for Huneric, only for his nephews Gunthamund and Thrasamund and his son Hilderic.

Gunthamund appears as a *rex invictissimus* on one of the Tablettes Albertini. *Invictissimus* derives clearly from imperial terminology. What German scholarship called the 'Invictie', the distinction of a victorious commander, was a distinc-

⁷⁷ An overview of the senatorial titles: Demandt, *Die Spätantike*, pp. 333–36; Vössing, "'Barbaren" und Katholiken', pp. 189–91; Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 63–65 and nn. 46, 48; s.v. 'gloriosus', in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, VI (1925–34), cols 2099–2107; Koch, 'Die byzantinischen Beamtentitel', pp. 58–62, 90–93; Hartmann, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der byzantinischen Verwaltung*, pp. 44, 47. *Ep. Theodericianae*, no. 4, in Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, p. 390: Pope Gelasius to Ereluwa, Theoderic's mother: 'Qui pro victu pauperum domino filio meo excellentissimo regi [...]'; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by Mommsen, x. 2. 1, p. 298: Theodahad addresses Justinian as 'piissime imperator' and Amalaswintha is labelled 'praecellentissima domina'. *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum*, ed. by Thiel, II. 12, p. 266: Emperor Anastasius labels Theoderic 'gloriosissimus rex' and Pope Hormisdas a 'beatissimus papa'. Cf. Helm, 'Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr', pp. 384–86, with further examples in the notes.

⁷⁸ Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 64 (n. 48), 87–89; 'Gundobadus I', in Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, II: AD 395–527 (1980), pp. 524–25.

tive rating frequently used by emperors in Antiquity. Commodus, furthermore, created the epithet of a *Hercules Romanus*. The god Mithras, so popular among the military in the Roman Empire, was also entitled as *invictus*. In the Greek East, emperors were celebrated as *ἀνίκητος* in inscriptions, the Greek equation of the Latin *invictus*. This Greek term is known since the rule of Emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE). It needs to be stressed that the epithet had not been in use in highly official bureaucratic texts such as Roman military diplomas. But we can find it frequently in inscriptions. Emperors from Septimius Severus up to Constantine I were labelled as the unbeaten sun god, the *ἥλιος ἀνίκητος*. The emperor represented the victorious sun god as the *sol invictus/helios aniketos*. From the struggle with the powers of gloom the ruler emerged as the great victor. Leo Berlinger thus described the emperor as an ‘incarnated supreme stellar goddess.’⁷⁹

One further title deserves consideration, since the mistaken assumption that it could have been an official royal Vandal title is still expressed in recent publications. Frequently, scholars considered the Vandal king a ‘King of Land and Sea’ (*König des Landes und des Meeres*). This originates from a misinterpretation of a passage from the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor, a ninth-century Byzantine historian. Already in the eighteenth century, Conrad Mannert, the author of the first Vandal history in modern scholarship, assumed that Geiseric had styled himself as a ‘King of Land and Sea’ (*Land- und Wasserkönig*) after the conquest of Carthage in 439 CE. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Felix Dahn considered Geiseric a ‘King of the Sea’ (*Meerkönig*).⁸⁰ The passage in Theophanes runs as follows:

In the same year a certain Gizerich, who had become powerful amongst the Vandals, named himself *rex*. He took over land, sea, and many islands, previously paying tribute to the Romans. This grieved Theodosius.⁸¹

⁷⁹ S.v. ‘invictus’, in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, VII (1956–79), cols 185–90; Berlinger, *Beiträge zur inoffiziellen Titulatur*, p. 22: ‘fleischgewordener oberster Gestirngott’; Imhof, ‘Invictus’; Ehrhardt, ‘Maximus, invictus und victor als Datierungskriterien’; Berrens, *Sonnenkult und Kaisertum*, pp. 205–42.

⁸⁰ Castritius, ‘Wandalen § 1’, p. 198; Miltner, ‘Vandalen’, col. 317; Schmidt, *Geschichte der Wandalen*, p. 96: ‘Es klingt überspannt, wenn er [Geiseric] sich, wie Theophanes angibt, König des Landes und des Meeres genannt hat’. Dahn, ‘Genserich’: ‘See- oder Meerkönig’. Concerning this title cf. also Papencordt, *Geschichte der vandalischen Herrschaft*, p. 75; Mannert, *Geschichte der Wandalen*, pp. 60–61. For an abuse of these approaches by right-wing extremists cf. Berndt, von Rummel, and Steinacher, ‘Rezension zu’, p. 314.

⁸¹ Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, ed. by de Boor, a.m. 5941, p. 146: ‘Τῷ δ’ αὐτῷ ἔτει Γίζεριχος τῷ Οὐανδαλικῷ πλῆθει πολὺς γενόμενος καὶ ῥῆγα καλέσας ἑαυτὸν γῆς τε καὶ θαλάσσης καὶ

Theophanes only tells us that Geiseric became king. The Byzantine chronicler refers to the Greek form of the Latin *rex*, nothing more. Turning this short passage into an official titlature remains a postulate of modern research.

There may be a different way to understand Theophanes’ allusion. In Roman literature and epigraphics, we can trace a certain tradition that focuses on mentioning both land and sea in order to stress the power of a ruler. Theophanes alludes, albeit indirectly and polemically, to an ancient and pagan praise of an emperor. Roman emperors were labelled ‘master of land and sea’. We know inscriptions celebrating, for example, Emperor Aurelian (r. 270–75) as the ‘ruler of the land, the sea and the whole ecumene’ (ὁ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης καὶ πάσας οἰκουμένης δεσπότες). A similar, but slightly shorter, wording is attested for Probus (276–82): ‘ruler of the land and the sea’ (ὁ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης δεσπότες). Vespasian (69–79) appears as ‘the deity of land and sea’ in an inscription.⁸² Ammianus Marcellinus reports a letter written by Constantius II (337–61) to the Persian Shah Shapur II (309–79), where Constantius is styled a *victor terra marique*: ‘I, Constantius, *victor* by land and sea, perpetual Augustus, to my brother King Sapor, offer most ample greeting’. Constantius II was the emperor supporting the Arian clergy and organizing the councils of Ariminum and Seleucia. Before he died, he was baptized but still styled *divus Constantius* after his death.⁸³

It is likely that Priscus was Theophanes’ source in this case. Priscus tended to show his knowledge of Latin by including Western terminology in his writings. Theophanes went one step further. Putting a barbarian *rex*, who had persecuted the rightful Catholic church in the North African provinces, near pagan Roman emperors was meant to convey a message. To be sure, it was an

νήσων πολλῶν τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ὑποτελῶν κατασχὼν ἐλύπει τὸν Θεοδοσίον’ (Theophanes Confessor, *Chronographia*, trans. by Mango and Scott, p. 157). Cf. Clover, ‘Timekeeping and Dyarchy in Vandal Africa’, pp. 59–61.

⁸² İplikçioglu, ‘Zwei Statthalter vespasianischer Zeit’, pp. 75–76 and 80, published an inscription from Olympos (Lycia, near modern Kumluca in the south east of Turkey): ἐπιφανὴς θεὸς γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης (Vespasian appears as the epiphany of the god of land and sea).

⁸³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, ed. and trans. by Rolfe, xvii. 5. 9, i, p. 337; Kienast, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, pp. 314–18; Cf. Helm, ‘Untersuchungen über den auswärtigen diplomatischen Verkehr’, p. 378 and n. 3; Wolfram, *Intitulatio I: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, p. 84 and n. 43: ‘Die Titulatur Geiserichs steht jedoch [...] in der Tradition der antiken Herrscherakklamation. Darum muß Geiserichs literarisch überlieferte Appellation nicht falsch sein; aber sie ist keine Selbstaussage’. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme*, i: *Die Ostgermanen*, p. 113, n. 1.

indirect allusion, but it worked. The reader was reminded of pagan titles and he knew what was meant by a cruel, heretical barbarian king. Victor of Vita used similar tactics, as described above.⁸⁴ On the one hand, the Vandal kings, like other barbarian rulers in the West, tried to act as 'vice-emperors' themselves in their provinces and were accepted by local societies as such. On the other hand, Catholic writers used this position at a time when Arianism was used to portray the kings in question as having acted like the pagan persecutor emperors.

But the situation is even more multi-faceted. We can compare Theophanes' strategy to denounce Geiseric with a depiction of King Theoderic on a mosaic known to us only from a ninth-century description. The iconography from Ravenna could provide another example of the use of imperial signs of dignity by barbarian rulers. Agnellus in his *Liber Pontificalis*, a history of Ravenna's diocese, describes the mosaic in the attic of Theoderic's palace in Ravenna. In the gable above the main entrance the Gothic king appeared — according to Agnellus — on a high horse wearing his armour, shield, and lance. To the right and to the left, the impersonations of the cities of Rome and Ravenna appeared. Near this mosaic another picture is described in Agnellus's text. On the apse behind the main entrance, the king was depicted again on a high horse. This time the *patricius* Theoderic has one leg over the sea and the other over land.⁸⁵ This example illustrates the complexity of the problems discussed here quite well. In every case we have to distinguish carefully whether a Christian writer tried to depict a king, whom he believed to be a heretic, according to one of two particular traditions: that of the famous Roman imperial persecutors of the Christians or that of a ruler in the late antique Mediterranean who has adopted long-standing traditions and ancient symbols of power. In the case of the 'ruler of the land and sea', both is true.

⁸⁴ Marksches, 'The Religion of the Late Antiquity Vandals', p. 93, points to Domitian (emperor between 81 and 96 CE). Christian writers frequently criticized his title 'Dominus ac Deus'. The Book of Revelation was written with Domitian in the back of the author's mind.

⁸⁵ Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, ed. by Deliyannis, c. 94, pp. 258–59: 'Unde vero telum tenensque fuit, Ravenna tessellis figurata, pedem dextrum super mare, sinistrum super terram ad regem properans'. Cf. Goltz, *Barbar — König — Tyrann*, pp. 533–34; Deichmann, *Ravenna*, I: *Geschichte und Monumente* (1969), p. 120; II. 3: *Topographie, Kunst und Kultur* (1989), pp. 51–53, 74–75.

Conclusion: The Vandal Royal Title Understood in the Context of the Power Struggle in the Hasding Family

The strong ethnic marker as a self-assertion of a king, which appears on an engraved piece of self-representation, leads us into the question of transmission. Sources derived from the military environment of Vandal or Gothic rulers are rare, and it is therefore difficult to get a coherent picture of the exact role of titles with an ethnic label within these societies. If it were not for Victor of Vita, a letter given by Procopius and an entry in an edition of Prosper's *Chronicle*, the situation for Vandal North Africa would be much more difficult.

The Vandal royal title with ethnic labels represents one possibility among the political terminology in use in the North African provinces ruled by the Hasdings. The Vandal kings did not act differently from other barbarian leaders who took over Roman provinces. Like Theoderic in Italy, they knew how to use Roman titles to express their power and position within late Roman society. The peripheral role played by the Vandals in the origin stories of Europe results in modern research seeing them as a unique case.⁸⁶ Can we detect any 'African' reason for the different ways to express royal power?

In Africa, the top of the Roman senatorial elite lost their power after the changes of the first half of the fifth century. How Geiseric changed the system of land tenure and the basic economic and social conditions that were always a concern for the small ruling class remains a matter of debate. Victor of Vita and Procopius, our main sources concerning these changes, put them in a dark light and use the stereotypes of Roman versus barbarian. The bishop Victor did this in defence of the Catholic church, the Byzantine officer Procopius to justify Justinian's war. As a matter of fact, Geiseric managed to concentrate enough property to enable his Hasding family to act as a 'big player' in the Mediterranean from the middle of the fifth century onwards. Geiseric was concerned to provide for all of his sons in organizing the newly acquired vast property. After the rebellion of 442, no threat to the Hasding power came from outside the royal family. Huneric had powerful rivals among his own relatives, and Hilderic's reign saw the emerging of new alliances within the family. After Geiseric and Huneric had managed to get rid of their competitors within the army, who had prevailed in the complicated situation of the African provinces

⁸⁶ Two examples: Wolfram, *Das Reich und die Germanen*, pp. 233–47: 'Ein vandalischer Sonderweg?'; Castritius, 'Barbaren im Garten "Eden"'

in the first half of the fifth century, the family itself became the battleground of power struggles in the African kingdom.

Huneric had a chance to be accepted into the kingdom, even by the Catholic church. The Nicene church welcomed a persecution of Manichaeans; it was, after all, what was expected from a rightful ruler. After twenty-four years a bishop was ordained in Carthage again. All this shows that Huneric tried several ways to organize his kingdom. Something went wrong, however. Victor relates murders in the royal family and the exile of others. Huneric's brother Theoderic died in exile and his wife and son were killed. The Arian Patriarch Jucundus was burnt in public because he was an adviser of Theoderic at the latter's court. Many counts and nobles close to Theoderic were persecuted. Huneric ordered to burn some of them and to execute others. Finally, King Huneric exiled Godagis, the son of his younger brother Genton. Mighty Vandals were tortured and removed from power as they were accused of participating in a plot against the ruling king. Victor reports that Huneric deprived of power Geiseric's *comitatus*, a group of the latter's closest advisers.⁸⁷

Following this, Huneric tried to convince the African Catholic bishops to support a change in Geiseric's succession order in favour of his son Hilderic. Victor stressed that the violence within the royal family and the leading circles of the Vandals was motivated by Huneric's wish to secure the succession of his own son Hilderic to the Hasding throne. This would have violated the principle of agnatic seniority, which Geiseric had introduced. One interpretation suggests that Victor told the story this way in order to limit the King's concern regarding resistance within the royal house against his own rule. Securing the position of his son would have been only of secondary importance in this reading. Victor's interest in referring to the violence amongst the royal and other leading Vandals was intended to highlight the barbarity and cruelty of Huneric and his followers. By concentrating his coverage of the political action performed by Huneric on the dynastic pretensions against the *constitutio* of Geiseric, Victor managed to present the king as an illegitimate ruler according to his own Vandal standards.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Victor of Vita, *Historia persecutionis Africanae provinciae*, ed. and trans. by Lancel, II. 2–6, 12–16, pp. 122–28; cf. Merrills, 'The Secret of my Succession', pp. 143–45, with new considerations on Geiseric's *constitutio*; Merrills and Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 74–77; Howe, *Vandalen, Barbaren und Arianer*, pp. 56–78; Courtois, *Victor de Vita et son œuvre*, pp. 16–17; Costanza, "'Uuandali-Arriani'"; Costanza, 'Vittore di Vita'; Schmidt, *Geschichte der Wandalen*, pp. 100–02.

⁸⁸ Merrills, 'The Secret of my Succession', pp. 143–48.

This fits well with Victor's textual strategies. However, there remains the possibility that Huneric really intended to change the succession order in the interest of the new legitimacy which became possible for his son only if he were the son of an imperial princess. The high prestige of Huneric's and Eudocia's offspring made a major difference to Hasding possibilities before. At the same time, all this may have caused a need to address the 'old Vandals', the military leaders in Geiseric's following who may have been disappointed with the power struggles and the executions amongst them. Huneric was in need to assert himself as the real Vandal king, the *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*. It may well be that Victor of Vita refers to a title with a political background from the time of Geiseric, which his son took up for specific purposes in his own reign to attract and convince the privileged Vandal land owners in the African provinces who had been upset by the new political solution developed by Geiseric's son. What we can trace are the power struggles in the African elites of the time. The use of the strong ethnic title by Huneric testifies to these struggles. Victor did not invent or create a title; he gives, maybe unwillingly, a trace of the problems of his age inside the barbarian, military elite in Africa at the end of the fifth century.

Huneric did not prevail. After his death his nephew Gunthamund, our *rex invictissimus*, acceded to the Hasding throne. Other circles took over and followers of Huneric's policy may have been persecuted themselves. The Latin poet Blossius Aemilius Dracontius was imprisoned for having supported the wrong ruler. For a long time, research defined Dracontius's situation as being motivated by supporting the Roman emperor overseas. But the background of the *Satisfactio ad Gunthamundum Regem* fits all too well into the picture of a power struggle between members of the African elite. Dracontius had written for Huneric, and the new king did not like this. This was the reason for the poet's imprisonment.⁸⁹ We also find a deliberate analogy with the imperial position in the *Satisfactio*. Gunthamund is compared to Caesar, Augustus, and Titus, who are famous for their clemency.⁹⁰

As we do not know much about Gunthamund's reign, the situation after the end of Victor's account is difficult to explain. What we do know is that the few sources we have did not use the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*. On the contrary, Gunthamund, Thrasamund, and Hilderic are labelled as rul-

⁸⁹ Merrills, 'The Perils of Panegyric'; Claude, 'Probleme der vandalischen Herrschaftsnachfolge', p. 346, analyses Dracontius' imprisonment as a proof of an anti-Vandal Roman bourgeoisie celebrating the emperor as their master.

⁹⁰ Dracontius, *Satisfactio*, ed. by Moussy, I–II. Cf. Merrills, 'The Perils of Panegyric', pp. 152–62.

ers in the western Roman Mediterranean with a political language comparable to what we know from Gaul, Spain, or Italy. But such a 'Roman' language of power was present in Huneric's time too. It was Huneric who adopted an air of unmistakable imperial arrogance in renaming an African city in his own honour. Hadrumantum was known as Uniricopolis for the duration of his reign. After the end of the Vandal realm, the city was renamed as Justinianopolis.⁹¹ Gunthamund, Thrasamund, and Hilderic all had panegyrics composed in their honour, as a Roman emperor would have.

Hilderic was a special case. The son of Valentinian's daughter Eudocia and the Vandal King Huneric could claim direct descent from the imperial and prestigious Theodosian house. This lineage may have been stressed in the wall paintings of a new palace complex in the Carthaginian suburb of Anclae. The poet Luxorius celebrated Hilderic as the mighty Vandal king and offspring of the imperial house. This made him the heir of a twin crown ('Vandalirice potens, gemini diadematis heres'). Valentinian's victorious grandson had finally beaten all the enemies of Rome (*hostes* and *gentes*), at least in the described wall paintings of a palace near Carthage.⁹² The offspring of barbarian federates stresses his maternal Roman rights more than his barbarian roots. In Italy, Theoderic was labelled *domitor gentium* and *victor gentium*, which recalls the praise addressed to Hilderic.⁹³ After Belisar's victory, the Vandal King Gelimer and his followers were taken to Constantinople. In Procopius's account the deposed King is clothed with a purple coat and treated as a relative of the great emperors of the Theodosian dynasty. Gelimer is offered a landed estate north of the capital where he could live in peace with his family. It is only because he does not convert to the Catholic faith that he cannot become a senator of

Constantinople. One might expect a different treatment of a beaten and conquered barbarian king.⁹⁴

The emphasis on imperial ideology that we find in Luxorius's poem illustrates the range of opportunity of Hasding policy after the marriage of 455 quite well. The four sons of Geilarith, Tzazo, Gunthimer, Ammatas, and the later King Gelimer were not, however, directly related to the imperial Theodosian house. This made a difference, even if Gelimer was treated in the way it is reported by Procopius in Constantinople. Hilderic's propaganda may have indicated the new direction he wished the Vandal monarchy to take. Hilderic's obvious attempts to reposition the Hasding monarchy along pseudo-imperial lines may have caused Gelimer's fear of disinheritance in favour of Hoamer or Hoageis, Hilderic's nephews. Hoamer was praised by Procopius as the Achilles of the Vandals and appears to have been a distinguished military leader.⁹⁵ This would explain Gelimer's usurpation and the harsh treatment of his relatives. Hilderic was killed and Hoamer blinded. The fact that after the coup close relatives of Gelimer, such as Tzazon and Ammatas, staffed important positions in the kingdom and replaced the nephews of Hilderic strengthens this point of view.

There are similar structures behind the problems Huneric had with his family and Gelimer's usurpation. In both cases, the Theodosian lineage after Huneric's marriage with Eudocia could be the background. Two rulers saw murder and heavy conflicts within the royal family: Huneric and Gelimer. As has been proposed here, it seems likely that this had to do with the various claims to the throne by different branches of the family. One part operated with the imperial lineage and obviously preferred titles common to other provinces of the transforming Roman West as a language of power. In opposition to this branch of the family around Huneric and his lineage, a kind of 'Vandalicity' may have been stressed by other Hasdings in order to convince certain Vandal circles of the validity of their bid for power in the African provinces.⁹⁶ At the same time, Huneric would have been in need to stress his support of certain rich Vandals and their interests by using the twofold title with its strong ethnic affiliation. There are two supporting documents for the use of the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum*. Victor of Vita attests the use of the title for Huneric. Huneric may have imposed such a title to emphasize his rigour in acting against the Catholic

⁹¹ McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, p. 262; Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, pp. 345–47.

⁹² *Carmina codicis Salmasiani 206 (In Anclas)*, in *Carmina in codicibus scripta*, ed. by Shackleton Bailey, p. 154: 'Vandalirice potens, gemini diadematis heres, | ornasti proprium per facta ingentia nomen. | Belligeras acies domuit Theodosius ultor, | captivas facili reddens certamine gentes. | Adversos placidis subiecit Honorius armis, | cuius prosperitas melior fortissima vicit. | Ampla Valentiniani virtus cognita mundo / hostibus addictis ostenditur arte nepotis'. On this passage, see the translation and discussion in Merrills, 'The Secret of my Succession', pp. 152–53; cf. Steinacher, 'Gruppen und Identitäten', p. 258.

⁹³ Wolfram, *Intitulatio 1: Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel*, pp. 54 (n. 103) and 56 (n. 1); Wirth and Wolfram, 'Augustus'; Neumann, 'Augustus'; *Inscriptensammlung*, ed. by Fiebigler and Schmidt, p. 193; Gold coin of 500: Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, 1, pp. 227–28; Kraus, *Die Münzen Odovacars und des Ostgotenreiches*, p. 82, n. 1.

⁹⁴ Procopius, *Bella*, ed. and trans. by Dewing, III. 9. 4–10, II, pp. 85–87; Steinacher, 'Gruppen und Identitäten', p. 257.

⁹⁵ Merrills, 'The Secret of my Succession', pp. 155–57.

⁹⁶ Liebeschuetz, 'Gens into regnum: The Vandals', pp. 56 and 82–83.

church. More likely, however, the ethnic title was intended to demonstrate to the Vandal elites that the son-in-law of an emperor knew how a true Vandal king should articulate his power. At the same time, Huneric's church policy can be understood as an attempt to establish a strong Hasding rule with an Arian church in the interest of military circles around the Mediterranean.

A similar explanation is possible for Gelimer. When he took power, he had to stress certain aspects of Vandal identity once more. The silver bowl can be interpreted as part of a quest for power by groups in opposition to Hilderic's policy. It reveals the situation: one branch of the royal family against the other, a power game within rather small cliques in the African provinces.

The title may have sparked memories of Geiseric and evoked feelings of glory and power in the hearts of certain privileged offspring of members of the Vandal-Alan army of the first half of the fifth century. Or it may have been an invention of Huneric's advisers trying to convince followers of his brother, or other royals as mighty Vandals, that this king was also supporting them and their privileges. At the same time, Huneric had the ability to widen the Hasding circles of power beyond the African provinces, and to be accepted in these provinces as a ruler married to an emperor's daughter. This in itself may have caused conflicts in the inner circles of Vandal power, who may have feared for their system of allotment and their privileged position as military leaders in a late Roman society. We lack detailed knowledge about this. The first half of the fifth century was an agitated period and identities emerged and disappeared quickly. The late Roman society in the African provinces between 439 and 533 had attenuated the harsh conflicts between military barbarian groups and other elites in the Western Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries. Much of Geiseric's and Huneric's reign was focused on solving problems related to these tensions. The history of the twofold Vandal royal title can be explained in such terms. No self-perpetuating memories of a glorious Vandal past are involved — rather, it should be viewed against the background of a struggle for power and wealth in the African provinces, most likely the disputes within a single royal family, whose different branches operated with two different languages of power.

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