Master's Thesis, History

Political Culture of Ostrogothic Italy in a Numismatic Perspective

Hans Tore Hindrum

2014, Fall

Institutt for arkeologi, konservering og historie, UiO

Table of Contents

Chapter I

Introduction

Ostrogothic rule in Italy came about as a consequence of the development in politics and power structures in the Mediterranean world throughout the fifth century A.D.[1] This world had largely been a Roman world for almost a millennium. It is not easily determined how deep the *romanitas*[2] was rooted in the common people in the various provinces of the Roman Empire. In the wealthy and powerful sections of society however, these ideas had taken hold through the centuries of Roman domination and had come to define society, high culture and politics. Romanitas was the leading premise for the political culture. A major theme of this thesis will be the undoing of this romanisation through the arrival of the Ostrogoths into Italian politics. This example is one among many of how the former Roman provinces in Western Europe came out of the Roman era and the foundations for the medieval Western Christianity were laid down. This is not the tale of a sudden upheaval and destruction of the old, however. The Ostrogoths arrived in an Italy already in change. In many respects the Ostrogothic kings, first among them Theodoric, promoted the Roman ideas and ideals and attempted a revitalisation of the old Roman political power structures. This served the kingdom well in many ways, but required a balancing act between the old Roman ways and the new, a balance that was possible to achieve under favourable conditions.

Modern examinations of "barbarian"[3] societies[1] of the 5th and 6th centuries often seek to answer questions of periodisation. Are these societies first of all the successors of the

---

1   All references to dates and centuries in this thesis are given in *anno domini.*

2   *Romanitas;* a term first used by the Christian writer Tertullian in his speech *De Pallio.* Occasionally translated to *Romanness* in English references. Bernhard Green, *Christianity in Rome in the First Three Centuries,* (London: T&T Clark Int., 2010), 129.

3   The term "barbarian" is a word potentially loaded with preconceptions of violence and people unconditioned by civilization, i.e. "barbarism". However, I am going to use the term "barbarian", in accordance with historical custom and Roman literary tradition, to denote the societies outside the borders of the Roman Empire and those peoples pushing into the Roman provinces from the late 4th century, establishing independent or semi-independent societies in what had once been areas under imperial control.

Roman world, basing their civilisation on the Roman inheritance, or are they the harbingers of something new? Clear indications of this debate are the two major terms of periodisation of European history of the second half of the first millennium, the traditional *early medieval age* and the alternative *late antiquity*.[4] Admittedly, these two terms have different thematic emphasis; *early medieval age* being based on the interpretation of political development in the first millennium by renaissance historian Leonardo Bruni[5], while the *late antiquity* is primarily based on development and continuation in artwork and architecture in the same period. Even so, the two expressions, one putting emphasis on the break with the old and the beginning of something new, the other underlining the continuation of the old, clearly underline the difference in perception of this period. The Ostrogothic kingdom and the contemporary barbarian kingdoms establishing in the Roman West in the 5th and 6th centuries are at the very centre of this debate. Were the barbarian kings continuing the traditions of the Roman emperors, consuls and prefects or should they be held as the first in the medieval tradition of kings and dukes? What sort of societies were these kingdoms of the post-Roman world? How were they organised and what relations did the ruling class of barbarian warriors have with the Roman nobility and population at large, the imperial power in Constantinople and the other barbarian warrior kingdoms?

The Ostrogothic kingdom of Theodoric and his successors stand out as a special case of coexistence between old and new, in both Italian and early medieval European history in general. Under the leadership of Theodoric, at the turn of sixth century, the Italian peninsula experienced a revival as a centre of power. This period form a contrast to the violent and unstable periods before and after Theodoric's reign. In a time of much uncertainty, violence and disruption of old power structures, Theodoric stand as an unusually able and successful regent. His abilities and successes were described by chroniclers and political commentators of the time. These works form important source material and will be treated at a later point. Monumental remains of construction projects overseen by Theodoric also contribute to the overall impression of a period of revival. This feat of politics and leadership seems particularly impressive given the circumstances under which Theodoric ruled. As the king,

---

4   As coined and popularised in English literature by Peter Brown, in *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: W. W. Northon and Company, 1989).

5   Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)*, 154.

rex[6], of a foreign, Germanic warrior people that entered Italy as an invading force, Theodoric remained the ruler of the Ostrogoths as long as he lived. At the same time, he filled the role as *princis*, the first among the Romans in Italy. This dual role of king of Goths and first citizen among Romans is beautifully described in the inscriptions on his famous celebratory medallion (fig. 2.10 in the numismatic catalogue). This double approach to the kingship in Italy is heavily emphasised in the written sources presenting Theodoric's rule. This is particularly true for the most detailed source on this topic, Cassiodorus' *Variae*.[7] The true extent to which Theodoric and his successors should be credited with balancing the complicated political culture and landscape of an Italian peninsula dominated by Goths will be examined and discussed throughout this thesis.

The Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy left a mark in history more by the way it was destroyed than how it was created and ruled. After describing almost thirty years of successful Ostrogothic rule in Italy, sources go on to describe a sudden decline. This concerns both internal affairs in the kingdom and in relations to other powers, most imminently the relationship to the Byzantine Empire. The last years of Theodoric's rule and those of his immediate successors were marked by political scandals and a royal authority that withered away. The reigns of the kings following Theodoric on the throne were for the most part short and marked by internal strife as well as devastating war. The Ostrogothic kingdom was pulled into a long and brutal war with the Byzantine Empire, led by the ambitious and aggressive Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. This war, known from the accounts of Byzantine soldier and chronicler Procopius as the *Gothic War*[8], brought terrible destruction to the Italian peninsula and was eventually the cause for the fall of the Ostrogothic kingdom. The war dragged out for many years because the Byzantine forces were unable to overcome the Ostrogoths as easily and effectively as Emperor Justinian had hoped. Leading up to the invasion of Italy, the emperor's forces had reconquered the African provinces after these had been under the Vandals for almost a hundred years. This campaign had been relatively quick and effective. This was not to be the case in the Gothic War. A stalemate developed between

---

6   Procopius, *History of the Wars Book V and VI*, trans. Henry B. Dewing, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1919), 12. References to the *History of the Wars* are done either by a single number, indicating the page in Dewing's English translation or a chapter in Roman numerals and a section indication in Indian-Arabics referring to the sectioning in the original document of Procopius.
7   Cassiodorus, *Variae*, trans. Thomas Hodgkin, (London: Henry Frowde, 1886).
8   Procopius, *History of the Wars*.

the two sides and Ostrogothic rule continued for some time in parts of an Italy embroiled in war.

The was lasted for a exhausting eighteen years, from the imperial invasion in 535 to the last major battle at Mons Lactarius in 553 sealing the fate of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy. The long war lead to the disruption of the political patterns prevalent in the Ostrogothic kingdom before the Byzantine intervention in Italian affairs, but this apparently did little to undermine Ostrogothic administration and resistance. The brutal warfare of this period led to the undoing of Theodoric's project of cooperation between Goths and Romans, but this did not lead directly to the kingdom's collapse.

According to the *Variae* by Cassiodorus[9], the principle for Theodoric's rule had been the division of responsibilities between Goths and Romans. The Goths would make out the military force to guard and expand the kingdom, while the learned Romans would provide civic services. The dangers and destruction of property brought by the war led many aristocrats to flee Italy. Those without the means or will to do this remained on pillaged and impoverished lands. The Roman landowners ended up between a rock and a hard place, not knowing whether to ally themselves with the invading Byzantines, the soldiers of the Emperor, or stand by their allegiance to the Ostrogoths. In a was with constantly shifting lines of battle and wide scale plundering, the picking of sides was perilous.[10] It is also unclear whether fighting men under the Ostrogothic kings saw it in their best interest to protect the Roman landowners. The true value of the services provided by the Roman aristocracy were not necessarily that high in the eyes of the Ostrogoths.

Overview of analytical topics

Much is written about the Ostrogothic kingdom by modern historians, and much academic effort has been put into understanding the social and political functions at work in this society, existing simultaneously in the last twilight of the Roman Empire in the west and the dawn of the medieval age. Historians have attempted for generations to gain a better understanding of the political culture that made such a development possible. Still, many

---

9   Cassiodorus, *Variae,* 20
10 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book 7)*, 213 – 215.

questions remain unanswered about the apparently unlikely success story of Theodoric's Italy and the subsequent fall of the Ostrogothic kingdom. Certainty is hard to establish, as literary sources are scarce, and modern research has questioned their reliability. Alternative sources for insight are therefore important to expand the perspective of analysis and hopefully improve the understanding of this unique and intriguing society. This thesis will approach this challenge by including numismatic material to the analysis of political culture in the Ostrogothic kingdom. The textual sources and the modern research based on these will necessarily form a backdrop for the numismatic analysis. This material will be treated in greater detail in the historical overview. A few of the most central themes of Ostrogothic political culture will be presented in the following paragraphs.

The Ostrogothic kingdom was a social and political project on a large scale. It included the inclusion of the Ostrogothic people into an Italian society already diverse but dominated by Romans. This true nature of this process is still not clear, as it is still uncertainty surrounding the true extent of the migration that happened as Ostrogoths moved into Italy and the administrative solutions applied to deal with the logistical challenges regarding settling of the newcomers and integration among the people already living in Italy. What seems certain is that the Ostrogothic reign in Italy got off as well as it did much thanks to the unusual skill and shrewdness of it's first and greatest king, Theodoric. What measures Theodoric employed to achieve this inclusion is a question still debated in the historical culture.

The most well established claim is that the Ostrogoths established themselves and survived in this precarious situation only through a complicated balancing act between the many different interests in his kingdom. This balancing was first and foremost designed and applied by Theodoric. His policy of division of responsibilities between Romans and Goths, as mentioned in earlier sections, where Romans were responsible for legal and administrative affairs while the Goths defended the realm, was only the most famous of his policies to make everyone find their place and stay content, so as not to rebel against his rule. Other civic measures claimed to represent Theodoric's maintenance of a ordered kingdom was strict and fair enforcement of law and order. This is represented by the

Edictum Theoderici, a set of rulings by the monarch (edicts) collected and attributed to Theodoric.[11]

The history of the Ostrogoths, as told by the contemporary, written sources is not the violent history of attempted coups and threat towards the ruler such as the situation had been in the more vile years of the late Western Empire. The sources, dominated by the *Variae*, tell a story of surprising stability and order, despite some tension between different groups in of the kingdom. However, the threat from a discontent Ostrogothic nobility and disobedient Roman aristocracy is hinted at in the written sources and most certainly did affect the reigns of the kings directly succeeding Theodoric. Some of this discontent and possible insubordination is possible to trace also in the last years of Theodoric's reign. Especially the problematic executions of powerful Roman aristocrats by Theodoric point in this direction.[12] The tension became elevated among the Ostrogoths after the death of their great leader Theodoric. Their expectations of an efficient military leader had be fulfilled by Theodoric, the conqueror of Italy and a stern defender of the kingdom throughout his reign. Less able kings following him did not fare so well.

The nature of the relationship between the Ostrogothic kings and the Roman aristocracy is a central key to the understanding the political culture of the Ostrogothic kingdom. This group was one which the kingdom relied upon in one way or another. If nothing else, these landowners were at least a source of wealth for the kingdom, be it taxation through money or supplies. To maintain a working relationship, the kings would attempt to please and appease these men to the best of his abilities. The most powerful of the Roman aristocrats were members of the Senate in Rome and took part in political life at the very highest level. Their power was based on old Roman traditions. It was in their clear interest that the Ostrogothic kings acted according to the old ways, as not to challenge the ancient structures of authority that Roman aristocracy benefited from. This is reflected in the minting of coins with reference to the ancient Roman society, both in Rome and Ravenna, the capital of the Ostrogothic kingdom. The leading elements of the Ostrogothic nobility would likely see the Roman aristocracy as a challenging factor to their position. This created two, possibly

---

11 Sean Lafferty, *Law and Society in the Age of Theoderic the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
12 Procopius, *History of the Wars* (Book Five)*,* 14.

conflicting, concerns for the Ostrogothic king. On one side he had to please the Ostrogothic nobility and on the other gain the acceptance of the Roman aristocracy. Some attempts at this balancing can to a degree be seen in the numismatic material. However, this is not as clear as could perhaps be expected from such a strong tool of communication as the coinage.

The relationship to the imperial court in Constantinople was the second major concern the Ostrogothic kings in Ravenna had to struggled with. Theodoric had received imperial sanction to set out on his expedition to Italy, but there was little guarantee that the Empire would let the Ostrogoths rule the original heartland of the Roman world in all eternity. It was in the Empire's interest to keep the barbarian kingdoms down to such a degree as to make sure they could not challenge the imperial overlordship. Again the numismatic material show an attempted balancing act from the Ostrogothic kings. The coins were suited for showing the Ostrogothic kings' subordination to the imperial power, through depictions and inscriptions referring to the might of the emperor. At the same time these kings benefited from increased authority within their own kingdom and facing other barbarian opponents in Europe. A king standing up to the imperial power by replacing the imperial references in his coinage with his own name and image would be perceived as independent and daring, both at home and in the rest of the political world of the barbarian Western Europe.

The Ostrogothic project of social, political and functional coexistence between Romans and Goths, under the constant threat from external powers was an ambitious one. The abilities of Theodoric enables the project to get off to a good start, but the challenges mounted up as his reign came to an end, and quickly overtook his successors. The challengers to the control of the Italian peninsula were many, and the internal power structures too underdeveloped for the Ostrogothic kingdom to survive without an extraordinary king on the throne. When less then able kings came to power instead in the decade following Theodoric's death, the fate of the project of coexistence was in reality sealed. Even under pressure from foreign invasion, this did not mean the immediate undoing of the kingdom. From this it appears the Ostrogothic kingdom, over the thirty years it was

ruled by Theodoric, did not establish a connection so strong between Romans and Goths that the kingdom's functioning and existence truly rested on an effective coexistence.

The Numismatic Approach

Extensive numismatic material exists from Ostrogothic Italy, and this source therefore presents itself as a natural starting point for research. The advantages of coins as historical sources are first of all their ability to carry information about the ones responsible for striking the coins at the time of the minting. Compared to literary sources, which are often produced, reproduced and edited after the period they describe, the coins are a truly a product of their time, provided they are not forgeries. On the other hand, numismatic research also bring considerable challenges, particularly those of precise dating and correct interpretation.

The lack of a coherent dating system on pre-modern coins makes dating one of the main issues in numismatic research. Often, the time of minting is simply determined to be within the known reign of the ruler mentioned in the coin inscriptions. More precise dating may derive from known development in coin types or tracking of the dies used to apply inscriptions. With numismatic material about fifteen hundred years old, these methods will necessarily bring some uncertainty. For the Ostrogothic material the dating is believed to be relatively accurate, however, due to insight into the successions of the Ostrogothic regents, though textual sources, and a extensive material allowing for detailed cross references and research into die traces.

Perhaps the most obvious source of information in coinage can be found in material, weight and other value markers. These features in coins are clear indicators of economic development and traits in a society. The purity and amount of metals, stable weight standards, denomination systems and extent of money circulation are indications of economic strength, fiscal policy and trade which can be read from numismatic material. In this thesis, these considerations will not play an important part, but only be considered when it affects the political or cultural effect of the coinage, such as the denominations' effect on

distribution.[13]

The primary focus will be on the iconography of coins and the relationship between development in coin design and political environment. The theoretical background for this analysis will be presented in more detail in connection with the numismatic analysis in chapter three (Numismatic Analysis). The inspiration for the analysis is to a large extent inspired by similar, but by no means identical studies of materials of later origins. For interpretation of coin inscription, symbolism and their connection to political culture in a early medieval kingdom, studies in other Early Medieval kingdoms provide the theoretical background and methodological inspiration. In particular, works on the Carolingian kingdom/empire of the Franks[14] and the Anglo-Saxons in Britain[15][16] are used for the interpretation of symbolism. These works treat societies in some distance, both chronologically and geographically, from Ostrogothic Italy. Still, certain fundamental principles on iconographical interpretation are considered to hold true across the two centuries and distances separating these cultures.

The expectation of meaning and intent in the choice of coin decoration lie as a premise for the use of a society's coins to shed light on its political culture. It is held as a premise for the the approach here chosen that the kings controlling the minting of coinage actually used this opportunity for what it was worth. The circulating coins were, in some cases literally, a golden possibility for rulers to promote their message to the people handling this money. This is truly the closest a pre modern ruler would come to mass media. This effect could not have been overlooked, and it seems obvious that the messages carried by coinage were carefully considered. At the same time, it must be appreciated that central features of the coins were indeed based on tradition and long standing customs. A variety of elements could be found on coins in the late fifth and early sixth century for the simple reason that it had been custom to strike the coins in that fashion.[17] Yet in other cases, a specific feature could be preserved or revived from earlier issues by a conscious choice. To tell automatic

---

13 E.g. how the high denomination of gold coins would make these coins circulate, and thus present their inscriptions, only in the wealthy and powerful segments of society.
14 Ildar Garipzanov, *The Symbolic Language Royal Authority in the Carolingian World*, (Leiden: 2008).
15 Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
16 Rory Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
17 Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England,* 50.

continuation of tradition from conscious strategy to secure royal authority often proves a challenging or even impossible task.

The Ostrogothic coinage is based on traditions from both the late Western Roman Empire, the kingdom of Odovacar and the Byzantine Empire. The Ostrogothic kings created their own independent coins on this background, merging traditional and original iconography and inscriptions. Analogous development, both in coin types, power politics and culture can be observed in other successor kingdoms in provinces previously ruled by the Western Empire. The Vandal coinage will here serve as a comparison to the Ostrogothic material. The choice of the Vandals as part of the comparanda has to do with their comparable political and cultural situation.

There are several points that tie the Vandal and the Ostrogothic kingdoms together and make them suitable for comparison. In the first half of the fifth century, the Vandals invaded the Roman provinces of Numidia, Mauretania and Africa Proconsularis, establishing a Vandal kingdom in North Africa that would survive for almost a hundred years despite intense pressure from both the Western and the Eastern Empires. Finally the Vandals were defeated in the large scale western campaign of Byzantine general Belisarius, the same campaign which would turn north towards the Ostrogoths in Italy and have as final outcome the ruin of Italy and the downfall of the Ostrogothic kingdom. The Vandals were a people forcing their way into former Roman provinces and established a kingdom for themselves, ruling as masters of this area but coexisting with a Roman aristocracy. Both the Vandals and Ostrogoths were Arian Christians, even if religious uniformity was more ardently enforced in the Vandal kingdom than in Ostrogothic Italy. The fall of these two kingdoms also have great resemblance, both invaded by Byzantine armies. This would have created a mutual understanding of their respective security situations. The regents and leading nobles in these two kingdoms must have been aware of the risk that this great power in the east could turn it's attention to the barbarian kingdoms in the west. This case is further strengthened by the fact that both kingdoms had been in armed conflict with the imperial forces before the decisive invasions. The parallels between the Vandals and the Ostrogoths are many, both in political history and in their minting and use of coins. The numismatic material from the

Vandal kingdom will therefore be central for comparison in the following analysis along with that of the Byzantine Empire and the former Western Empire.

The Ostrogothic coins share a wide range of features with both the Western Imperial coinage, that of the Eastern Empire and the Byzantine continuation of this and other barbarian kingdoms such as the Vandals presented above. Among the most notable, basic features shared across the Roman world is the division into imperial gold, royal silver and municipal bronze. This presentation is a simplified model with an abundance of exceptions to it, but the model still has merit. Most significant and generally true of the three is the imperial prerogative to the economically accepted denominations of gold coinage, the Byzantine emperor's near unique monopoly on having his head struck onto the gold coins. Germanic kings having carved out kingdoms for themselves in the former western provinces tended to use the silver coins to promote their own person and political message. Lowest in value among the coin metals was copper. These coins were more likely to end up in the hands of commoners than the highly valuable gold or silver coins. These coins were often without imperial or royal references, but were municipal issues, issued in the name of cities, in many cases this would be the city where the mint striking the coins was situated. This is not always the case however. Nor was bronze coins exclusively municipal. Royal inscriptions can be found on Ostrogothic coins as well. The significance of this will be discussed further in chapter three (Numismatic Analysis).

In addition to the message carried in the type of metal in the coin, a regular set of inscriptions and symbolic features dominated the coins of this period. The standard layout of a portrait and a surrounding legend on the obverse and an inscription or symbol on the reverse, know also from modern designs, was in use in the Roman world and continued in the Ostrogothic material. The legend inscription would in most cases carry the name and title of a ruler. Municipal coins would often be connected through their city of origin by a legend inscription or a centre symbolism relating to the city. Monograms were introduced by Odovacar during his reign in Italy and was used extensively in the Ostrogothic kingdom. Monograms were created to represent the names of kings as well as make references to cities. Features can be found to be uniquely Ostrogothic, but the overall tendency is a close

resemblance on many levels between the coinage from previous periods and that of the Ostrogothic kingdom. Within the well sixty years of Ostrogothic rule in Italy, there is some notable development in the numismatic material, even if the core of the coinage seems to remain and form a continuous line throughout the period.[18]

Numismatic Works

The coinage of the Ostrogothic kingdom has attracted much academic attention and the result has been extensive research results in this field. For the following treatment of the material, there will be references to some of the main works of Ostrogothic numismatics from the last century. Already in 1911 Warwick Wroth published his *Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards[19]*, a large catalogue of the material from the barbarian kingdoms in Western Europe based on the material available to him in coin cabinets of the British Museum. Even though this overview is old and in many regards outdated, the share size of it makes it a valuable source. The *Moneta Imperii Byzantini[20]* by Wolfgang Hahn from 1973 is a work of more modern date and based on an even wider material than that of Wroth. The first part of this extensive work treats the Ostrogothic material together with the contemporary material from the eastern imperial mints. With its extensive source material and highly convenient infographics used to present it, this work is a valuable asset for reference. For deeper discussions and treatment of interpretation the *Medieval European Coinage[21]* from 1986 by Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn stand central. The newest addition to the discussion is *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy* from 2004 by Michael Metlich.[22] This book in many ways presenting alternative interpretations to those of Blackburn and Grierson and put their arguments to the test. For cross references to imperial material, both for the eastern and western parts of the empire, the collections and commentaries in J. P. C. Kent's *The Roman Imperial Coinage[23]* from 1983 has been of great use. For the creation of my own catalogue of coins the freely available online resources of

---

18 J.P.C. Kent, "The Coinage of Theodoric in the Names of Anastasius and Justin I" in *Mints, Dies and Currency,* ed. R.A.G. Carson, (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1971), 67.

19 Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards* (London: British Museum, 1911).

20 Wolfgang Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini.* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der WissenSchaften, 1973).

21 Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

22 Michael Mettlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy,* (London: Sprink 2004).

23 J.P.C. Kent, *The Roman Imperial Coinage Vol. XI,* (London: Sprink & Son, 1981).

the British Museum has been invaluable. All pictures used in the catalogue which can be found in the appendix of this thesis, has been downloaded from the archives of the British Museum and reprinted, unless another source is given.

Textual Sources

This analysis is based on the coinage of the Ostrogoths in Italy, but this material cannot stand alone, without reflecting upon alternative sources illuminating the same problems and questions. The numismatic approach is intended as an additional perspective, but it is an inescapable fact that the written text will always stand as the main source of insight into the past for periods when such sources exist. The textual source base for the Ostrogothic kingdom is not particularly rich compared to other parts of Italian history. In addition to being scarce, the material is heavily influenced by being its creation in a time of conflict and upheaval. No clearly neutral writers have recorded the events taking place and the whole material is quite prone to bias or even intended inaccuracy.

The most clear example of these issues of material reliability is the *Variae*, a collection of letters compiled and published by the Roman official Cassiodorus. Cassiodorus is likely to have used his position as former questor and high official at the Ostrogothic, royal court in Ravenna to attempt to get out on top of the dire situation he found himself in after the fall of Ravenna to the advancing Byzantine forces in the opening stage of the Gothic War. He presented the realities of the Ostrogothic kingdom in such a fashion that it would favour him in a court environment in Constantinople, the place to which he fled to escape the savagery of the Gothic Wars. This presentation included a Ostrogothic court of Theodoric and his successors that was smoothly run according to Roman principles of state administration.[24] The accuracy in this claim must be exposed to doubt, first of all because of Cassiodorus' situation after his escape from Italy to Constantinople.

This criticism does not take away the fact that The *Variae* is by far the most important textual source for information about political culture in the Ostrogothic society. In many ways it provides a wide and detailed picture of the administration and challenges of the

24 Shane Bjornlie, Cassiodorus Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10.

16

kingdom under the kings Theodoric, Athalaric and Theodahad. Theodahad was the last king served by Cassiodorus. The *Variae* is therefore limited to the reigns of these three first king. The compilation is primarily one of letters sent from a king to different recipients throughout the kingdom. The letters are written by Cassiodorus, in the names of the kings. Some letters are also written by Cassiodorus himself after he attained the position of preatorian preafect in 533. The research into the inner workings of the Ostrogothic kingdom is thus in the unfortunate situation that the best source to subject must be considered quite unreliable, even if it's detailed. This should make the need for an alternative approach seems evident.

The best source for early Gothic history, and the background for the Ostrogothic invasion of Italy is the *Getica* by Jordanes.[25] According to Jordanes himself, the text is derived from notes originally recorded by Cassiodorus. It is likely that the exchange of these notes between Cassiodorus and Jordanes happened wither directly or indirectly as Cassiodorus was seeking a safe haven in Constantinople after the fall of Ravenna. In *Getica's* chronological presentation, the earliest beginnings of Gothic history is presented, but shrouded in mystery and legend. As the tale turns to the Balkans and the Goths' dealings with the Eastern Roman Empire is described, it can be references against other sources and found to be quite accurate. The separation of the Goths into Visigoths and Ostrogoths is treated, as well as the expeditions of both these groups towards the lands of the Western Mediterranean, the Visigoths ending up in Spain and the Ostrogoths under Theodoric invading Italy. In addition to the *Getica's* occasional references to unlikely events and supernatural phenomena, the credibility of this source also suffer under the special situation and motives of Cassiodorus mentioned above. Cassiodorus, given as the source for the original manuscript for the *Getica*, would have a general interest in presenting the Goths in a a favourable way. This may also have affected his presentation of this people's early history.

The third major, contemporary work of history shedding light on the Ostrogothic kingdom is the sober and detailed descriptions of the wars of Justinian by the Roman official and jurist

---

25 Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths, trans:* Charles Mierow, *(*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1908).

Procopius. Procopius followed along as a scribe and lawyer in the camp of General Belisarius during his conquests both in Africa and Italy. In this way Procopius learned the truth about the brutality of the Gothic War first hand. As a direct witness to the bloodshed Procopius would have been well positioned to make accurate descriptions of what happened. His detailed presentations also seem reliable for that simple reason that they are detailed. What should be kept in mind however is that also Procopius would have had a personal agenda and perhaps fit the story to suit these personal preferences of his. The power politics of Constantinople were treacherous and full of danger for the successful and ambitious. Belisarius was among the most successful and ambitious in the vicinity of Emperor Justinian, a ruler known for his paranoia. Even the many services Belisarius had done the Byzantine Empire, it did not keep him safe from falling out with the emperor and ending up in misery. Procopius was thus well aware of the dangers of publishing works in the heavily censored imperial capital. His most famous work, the *Secret History*, deal with exactly these dangers and the culture of lethal power play. It is very likely that also the *History of the Wars* contains alterations of facts to promote the author's position in public life or at least keep him out of harm's way.

The work is comprised of eight books. The last four of these deal with the Gothic Wars in Italy. The previous books present the other campaigns of Emperor Justinian, the war against the Persians and the invasion of Africa and the conquest of the Vandal kingdom. As an observer of the events taking place in Italy after the imperial invasion, this work quite neatly continue the history of the Ostrogoths where the records of Cassiodorus' *Variae* ends. However, these two sources are quite different in both perspective and topic. While Cassiodorus give the reader insight into the administration of a kingdom at peace, Procopius deal with the brutal realities of war. His descriptions are detailed descriptions of military strategy, tactics, reprisals and movement of troops. Being a invaluable source to the military aspects of the Gothic War, the *History of the Wars* does not provide the same insight into Ostrogothic society as the *Variae.*

The *Edictum Theodorici* is a collection of edicts (simple guidelines in the shape of a law), possibly set down by Theodoric in the beginning of his reign. The *Edictum* is not a

collection of laws like the major law codes like that of Theodosius or Justinian, but possibly just a collection of Theodoric's judgements. The providence of this collection is not completely proven, but provided the collection is indeed from the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy and from the reign of Theodoric, it would be a valuable addition source of information about the rule of law in his realm.[26] Even given the authenticity of the collection, the general problems of using a collection of laws as historical source material remains. The laws are normative in nature and must be treated that way. In addition it is difficult to know which part of society the laws applied to if this is not explicitly stated as part of the collection. When the *Edictum Theodorici* give the impression of a uniform Ostrogothic legal system, not taking into account the differences between Goths, Romans or other groups, this might be misleading. The modern researcher may be led astray by the fact that the law was not in fact enforced like the ruler had envisioned and how it appears from just the written source. Or it might implicitly have applied just to sections of the population, distinctions lost on a modern reader.

The Layout of the Thesis

The thesis will be divided into three major chapters with one set of subdivisions referred to as sections. The first chapter present a general overview of the Ostrogothic history, based on the textural material mentioned above. A chronological summary of events will be given while issues and central discussions in modern research, regarding questions of political culture and power in the Ostrogothic kingdom, are discussed in parallel. The overview span from the earliest years of Theodoric's life to the final outcome of the Gothic Wars almost a hundred years later. This covers the entire history of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy. The discussions from the research literature provide a background on which to apply the numismatic material.

Chapter three contain the treatment of the numismatic material and provide the main analysis of this thesis. The initial section of this chapter is a presentation of the main principles of analysis applied. Then follows an overview of the numismatic material. Distinct types are pointed out, comparisons to contemporary material are made and the lines

---

26 Lafferty, *Law and Society in the Age of Theoderic the Great,* 10-13.

of development are drawn from Theodoric all the way to Totila, the last Ostrogothic king with a long enough reign to have made a mark in the numismatic material. Finally the numismatic material is analysed for cues to the political culture and realities of the Ostrogothic kingdom.

Finally chapter four will conclude the thesis by bringing together the historical material and the discussions from chapter two with the numismatic analysis from chapter three. The development brought on by the death of Theodoric, the royal successions following and the Byzantine invasion give clues to the realities of the political culture and of the society constructed by Theodoric. The kingdom that Totila and Theia defended with their last resources in the final years of the Ostrogothic kingdom was ravaged by war and consisted of levelled cities and ravaged countryside. Even still, this political culture of this kingdom might not have been as different from that of Theodoric's as the sources indicate. The textual sources describing Ostrogothic political culture, based to a large degree on the questionable work of Cassiodorus, are likely to overplay the links between Ostrogothic warrior culture and the Roman *civilitas*.

Chapter II
Historical Overview

Odovacar and a new political landscape

Odovacar established the Italian kingdom after the imperial office had ceased to exist in the west. In this way he paved the way for the ambitious King Theodoric of the Ostrogoths, who could make use of the new reality of power politics created by Odovacar. Theodoric could aim for control of Italy without entering the poisonous game of manoeuvring for the imperial throne. He was less bound by tradition than his predecessors in imperial purple and could shape the Italian kingdom to his own ideas and ideals. Odovacar created the situation which enabled the creation of this kingdom, even if its creation directly led to his downfall.

In 491 Odovacar, after having ruled Italy for the last fifteen years was killed by the Ostrogothic king Theodoric. This marked the definite beginning of Ostrogothic rule in Italy and the age of Theodoric the Great. Theodoric proved to be an efficient king and his reign is generally considered a time of stability, safety and improving conditions. This stood as a contrast to most of the previous century which was dominated by weak emperors, civil war, barbarian incursions and even several sackings of Rome itself. Effective power was often in reality in the hands of military officials in central positions. Many of these men were of Germanic or otherwise of barbarian descent. Their position of power was largely based on martial abilities and availability to Germanic manpower. The role played by these powerful men opened the way for the barbarian kingdoms in Europe after the disintegration of the Roman Empire in the west. Theodoric was arguably the most successful of these warlords taking advantage of the power vacuum in the Western Roman Empire in the late antiquity. However, his predecessor on the royal throne in Italy, Odovacar, was the one who broke the barrier created by the authority of the western imperial office.

Odovacar is traditionally held to have been the responsible power behind the deposition in 476 of Romulus Augustus, the last western emperor aspiring to wield effective, imperial rule. Romulus Augustus had ascended the imperial throne only one year earlier and was only a teenager when Odovacar, as *magister militum*[27], sent him into exile on an estate in Campania in southern Italy. Former emperor Julius Nepos, residing in exile in Dalmatia was accepted by Odovacar as formal ruler of the Western Empire, but his intentions were clear. Nepos was far from the centre of power in Italy and Odovacar had no intentions of continuing the imperial line any further. Odovacar had the western imperial insignia to Constantinople with the message that the western part of the Roman Empire no longer needed its own emperor. When Nepos was assassinated in 480, Odovacar had effectively abolished the position of Western Emperor as he himself took the title of king and degraded Italy to just another kingdom under the supreme rule of the emperor in Constantinople. Even though Odovacar probably acted on his own in this coup, without consent from Constantinople, Emperor Zeno ended up accepting Odovacar as king, presumable because the imperial resources were strained by unrest on other fronts and succession issues in Italy did not have priority.

The action of Odovacar created a political situation and historical precedence that set a course for the future political development in Italy. A situation of opportunity was created that men like Theodoric could capitalised on. The role of Odovacar and the significance of his actions should not be reduced to the level of insignificance. It is true however that the effects of the abolition of imperial office in the west on social, economical and cultural matters was not significant. Modern historians playing down the role of Odovacar is likely to capture the realities of the society as a whole in a better way that the classical, historical view of a Roman world in steep decline after the end of the Western Empire. The consequences of Odovacar's actions could not have been foreseen by his contemporaries. A barbarian warlord manoeuvring in Italian politics was nothing new. The emperor in Ravenna, the city acting as imperial office during most of the fifth century, had long been

---

27 *Magister militum* (eng.: "Master of Soldiers") was the top military official in the late Roman Empire. Several men in this position, such as Stilicho, Aetius and Ricimer had held considerable power throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, often acting as de facto rulers of the Empire in the west.

under strong influence by barbarian warlords acting as generals in the Western Roman army, occasionally striving for the imperial office themselves. To Emperor Zeno in Constantinople it would have seemed reasonable to assume that if one of these generals threw himself up as official ruler of Italy and in the process making the office of Western Roman emperor obsolete, the real political consequences would not be significant.

As the first post-imperial ruler of Italy Odovacar did not change the Italian society itself, rather the premises of how it would be governed. Odovacar's contribution was political. He played an important role in establishing the royal power as dominant in Italy. He also shaped the relationship between Constantinople and the new royal court established at the former imperial court in Ravenna. On many levels, this role was inherited by Theodoric after he came to power, though his relations to Constantinople was shaped through a years of interaction before he even set his eyes upon Italy.

Theodoric and the invasion of Italy

The personality and abilities of Theodoric is central to the history of the Ostrogoths. The origins of this great king of the Goths is to be found in the wars that ravaged the Balkans in the late fifth century. When Odovacar deposed Romulus Augustus in 476, Theodoric had been a leader for his Ostrogothic[28] people in the Balkans for merely a years, after his father Theodemir died and left his son to rule.[29] Theodoric was part of the Amal line of Gothic royalty, or at least benefited from the general recognition as such. The Amal line would function as a source of authority for the kings in Ostrogothic Italy, through associations to the kings of old and Theodoric himself.[30]

It was not an inexperienced man who took leadership of this people. Theodoric had spent several years aiding his father in fulfilling his responsibilities as king, leading the Ostrogoths in battle and negotiations with both the imperial power and other barbarian

---

28 I use the term *Ostrogothic* to describe the people that Theodoric came to lead into Italy, in accordance with Jordanes' accounts in the *Getica (Origins and Deeds of the Goths)*. According to Wolfram (1988, 25), this people descended from the *Greuthungi* tribe known to have lived in the Balkans and north west of the Black Sea for much of the fourth century, playing a part in the events that led to the battle of Adrianople, the most defining event of the Eastern Empire in the fourth century.

29 Joseph Thomas, *Universal Dictionary of Biography and Mythology Vol. II* (London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1908), 2114.

30 Jordanes*, The Origins and Deeds of the Goths,* 79 - 81

kingdoms. He even had extensive experience with life at the imperial court. From his infant years until he turned eighteen, he lived as a political hostage at the court in Constantinople. This arrangement was part of a deal made between his father, Thiudemir, and uncles, Valamer and Vidimer, the leaders of the Ostrogoths, and the imperial administration. The deal was struck after hostilities had erupted between Romans and Ostrogoths. The Ostrogoths had been seeking a privileged status among the barbarian peoples dealing with the Eastern Empire. To achieve this, the war bands of Thiudemir, Valamer and Vidimer had been ravaging the Roman countryside, partly to carve out a living for their people through spoils and partly to force the Romans to accept a deal to Ostrogothic advantage.

The Ostrogoths got a deal, but their leader had to give up his son and send him as hostage to Constantinople. Theodoric's forced stay in the imperial capital was hard for his father to accept, but certainly prepared the future king well for the political and military challenges he was to face in the years to come. Jordanes reports that Theodoric established good relations to the imperial court while staying there as a young man. After he had assumed the title of king of his people, this imperial favour secured him the senior office of *consul ordinario* and much praise from the emperor Zeno. Jordanes goes on describing how Theodoric himself proposed the expedition to Italy to reclaim the peninsula in the name of the emperor. The young king argued that is was unjust that the usurper Odovacar ruled in the ancient heartland of the Romans, presenting himself as a favourable alternative, given his amiable relations to the court in Constantinople.[31] Thus in 489, with what seems to have been an imperial consent, Theodoric led his army westwards to challenge Odovacar as ruler of Italy.

At several points, the sources available to us paint a favourable picture of the Ostrogothic king regarding relations to Constantinople. Considering the generally pro-Ostrogothic sentiment in both the Gothic History of Jordanes and the letters of Cassiodorus, this presentation is probably rather biased. It is likely that Theodoric's long stay in the capital as a child and young adult secured him some preferential treatment from the imperial administration, if only from the fact that he would know his way about imperial etiquette

---

31 Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths*, 289-290.

and the power centres at court. However, the extent of emperor Zeno's heartfelt support for the Ostrogothic expedition to Italy can bee doubted. Zeno's ability to wield effective power in Italy was very restricted with Odovacar ruling from his royal throne in Ravenna. The emperor must have expected that Theodoric would act just as independently, were his invasion plans to succeed. Considering the fact that the Ostrogoths had recently pillaged the Roman provinces in the Balkans, the motive for Zeno's acceptance of Theodoric's expedition might simply have been to get rid of a barbarian king to close to the imperial capital for comfort.[32]

The relationship between Constantinople and Theodoric, and the regents succeeding him, is one of the main topics of debate regarding the Ostrogothic kingdom. The search for the true nature of the arrangement between Theodoric and Zeno is one examples of how available sources might draw a picture of the Gothic kings, and Theodoric in particular, as closer to the imperial administration than really was the case. The political situation in the mid sixth century, when these texts were written and edited, with imperial forces threatening to completely destroy the Ostrogothic kingdom, could have prompted those with interests in this kingdom to tie the Ostrogoths tighter to the Empire through selective descriptions of past events.

The expedition to Italy led to a three year war between the forces of Theodoric and Odovacar. The first confrontations between the forces of Odovacar and those of Theodoric led to resounding victories for the invaders. After an initial Ostrogothic victory at Verona and their crossing of the river Po into central Italy, Odovacar found it best to retreat into the well fortified city of Ravenna and seek to wear out the Ostrogothic forces in a siege. Theodoric soon gained control of the Italian countryside however, and resupplied his forces this way. Even if lack of supplies did not wear them down, the Ostrogothic forces were unable to break through the city's defences. The city walls were build so that the defenders would take tactical advantage of the swamps surrounding the city. This terrain feature, combined with the city's role as a naval base, was a main reasons why Ravenna had been chosen as imperial capital by emperor Honorius in the early fifth century.[33] It is worth noting

---

32 Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Liverpool: Liverpool Univeristy Press, 1991), 216.

33 Deborah Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 41.

that Ravenna proved to be the most reliable stronghold of Italy throughout the Gothic Wars and the following centuries, often held by the Byzantines as an enclave, surrounded by territory controlled by their enemies.

Odovacar held out in Ravenna for almost three years, and finally the two warring kings agreed to break up the stalemate and accept a truce. According to this agreement, they were to share the rule of Italy.[34] Whether Theodoric acted out of loyalty to the promise he had given the emperor or out of mere lust for power and blood is unknown, but only ten days into this arrangement, he struck Odovacar down as his men watched, thus positioning himself as sole ruler of the kingdom of Italy.

Organising an Ostrogothic Italy

After the killing of Odovacar and the final victory of the Ostrogoths in 493, Theodoric spent the following decade consolidating his power in the realm he had won for himself and his followers. Exactly which strategies he and his court officials adopted for dealing with the intricate political and social challenges arising from introducing the Ostrogoths into Italy is not certain. This uncertainty is connected to the unanswered questions about the true nature of the people of Theodoric itself, which has been a source of much debate.

The ethnographic and demographic picture usually drawn when describing the Ostrogoths in Italy is one of a whole people arriving to seek fortunes in a new land. This is in accordance with the descriptions of Jordanes and the traditional view of the fourth and fifth centuries as the time of great migrations. This view of an entire people, with every part of a barbarian society included, following behind Theodoric's victorious forces has been challenged however.[35] A hypothesis regarding the entourage of Theodoric, includes only members of the warrior class, possibly also their families and households stand as an alternative interpretation of the Ostrogoths entering Italy. Whether the Ostrogoths included thousands of people not under arms or not would be crucial to interpreting the social and cultural impact of their coming into the Italian society.

---

34 Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths,* 293-295.

35 Patrick Amory, *People and Identity of Ostrogothic Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 27-34.

The task of creating a functioning state of both Romans and Goths, no matter their demographical composition, must have been causing both opportunity and challenge for the Ostrogothic kings. The political reality created by this situation, the need to balance between Gothic and Roman culture and interests, is a main theme throughout this analysis of the Ostrogothic kingdom. Unfortunately, the archaeological, legal or other sources available can not provide any certain insight into this matter. The *Edictum Theodorici*, the collection of edicts attributed to Theodoric and likely to have been compiled during the first decade of his reign, provides some vague hint at the relations between Romans and Ostrogoths. As mentioned in the introductory overview of textual sources, use of this collection as a source for the Ostrogothic society is complicated by the uncertainty surrounding the origins of this document and the general difficulty in using legal texts as a description of society.

Accepting the arguments for attributing the *Edictum* to Theodoric the Great still provides a potentially valuable insight. The legal corpus of Theodoric, as seen in the *Edictum,* seems to have been based on a system where Romans and barbarians received equal treatment and judgement according to the same laws in most cases. This approach differ from other barbarian societies in former Roman provinces, where separate laws applied to those regarded as Roman and those held to be barbarian.[36] It has been proposed that this was indeed the case in the Ostrogothic kingdom as well, even if this view does not find much support in the *Edictum.*[37] Many aspects treated in the *Edictum* are based on copies or slight rewritten versions of earlier Roman law material. There is ambiguity in this, however. Either it could mean that Theodoric wanted to integrate his people into the Italian society and create a unified Italy of both Goths and Romans ruled by the same law, or simply that the Ostrogoths arriving in Italy really comprised only the military entourage of Theodoric, an martial elite to whom special laws, not included in the *Edictum*, would apply in any event.

Cassiodorus makes references in his *Variae* to Theodoric's policies of a "division of responsibilities" in the Ostrogothic kingdom between fighting Goths and Romans

---

36 P.S. Barnwell, "Emperors, Jurists and Kings: Law and Custom in the Late Roman and Early Medieval West", *Past and Present* 168 (2000): 7.

37 Thomas Burns, *History of the Ostrogoths* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana Univerity Press, 1991)*,* 135.

responsible for state service and organisation (*civilitas*).[38] The martial responsibilities put on the Goths must have been shouldered by a warrior elite with the means to form an effective fighting force. This would point in the direction of "the Ostrogoths" simply implying an aristocratic group of men making up Theodoric's military organisation. On the other hand, the Romans referred to as administrators guided by the virtues of *civilitas* was certainly educated aristocrats, not the common Roman peasantry, even if this section of society made out the dominant majority of the Italian population. It is thus hard to make out from available sources the composition of social groups within the Ostrogothic people entering Italy under Theodoric. Which of these models of the Ostrogoths in Italy is the closest to the truth, that of a people of broad social and economic variety or that of military elite, is thus hard to determine and stand as perhaps the most fundamental obstacle to a clear understanding of the Ostrogothic society in Italy.

In relation to the composition of the Ostrogoths stand the question of economic support and accommodation of the Ostrogothic army. In the *Variae,* Cassiodorus mentions the tertium.[39] This is presented as a taxation and redistribution system which allocated "a third" of estates throughout Italy as economic support for the Ostrogothic elite who had been fighting under Theodoric during his conquest of Italy and later provided him his military strength in dealings with foreign kingdoms. The traditional interpretation of this description has been a transfer of land rights from Roman landowners to the Ostrogothic elite. However, Goffart[40] has argued that transfer did not include land itself, but rather a share of the wealth collected as taxes from these estates. This hypothesis is part of a general theme of peaceful integration of barbarians into the Roman society.

The direct takeovers by the Ostrogoths of whole or parts of land held by Romans certain must have been a more hostile and disruptive move than simply to allocate tax money, as Goffart suggests. A third possibility for is that general depopulation in Italy, a trend visible

38 Cassiodorus, *Variae,* 20.

39 Cassiodorus, *Variae,* 153.

40 Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: The technique of Accommodation*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 61.

in archaeological material and economic sources from the fourth century onwards[41], might have ensured available land for the Ostrogoths, without too much conflict with established Roman interests. Still, it is not likely that the Ostrogoths, victorious invaders as they were, would settle with inferior pieces of land, those that would certainly have been abandoned first by Romans experiencing times of decline.

How Theodoric arranged for a settling and upkeep of his fighting, Ostrogothic followers is an unresolved question, which carry significance beyond the technical functions of distributive organisation. Conflict of land and wealth distribution could potentially ruin the subtle cooperation that must have existed between Goths and Romans in the Ostrogothic kingdom.

The Role of the Roman Aristocracy

The relation between the new Ostrogothic elite and the Roman aristocracy, first of all those men who belonged to the senatorial elite, is generally considered a crucial point in Theodoric's construction of a functioning Italian state. Cassiodorus' *Variae* reveal an author going out of his way to underline the king's love for the high culture of Roman aristocracy and the values contained within the term *civilitas*. The king's protection of Roman values, such as law, order and aristocratic culture is also emphasised by Ennodius in his panegyric to Theodoric, even if Ennodius particularly points out Theodoric's ability to combine both military strength and civil wisdom in this task of protecting the lands and interests of his people.[42] Respect for the Roman institutions and the special rights of Roman citizens and nobles to public offices and honourable titles were one of the central principles on which Theodoric's rule was based. Goths were generally excluded from these offices.[43] This naturally lead to a separation of tasks between Roman and Goth, in accordance with Theodoric's policy, though only at the top levels of society.

The Gothic nobles were fighters, defending the kingdom with the sword, while the Romans were administrators, defending it with laws and letters. The support of the Roman

---

41 Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford Univerity Press, 2005), 25.

42 S.A.H.Kennell**,** *S. Ennodius - A Gentleman of the Church,* (Detriot: University of Michigan, 2000), 48.

43 John Bury, *The Later Roman Empire,* (Dover: Dover Publications, 1958), 456.

aristocracy and senate was important to Theodoric for clear administrative reasons. These men made up the educated elite who had been running the imperial administration until the end of the Western Empire and then went on to serve Odovacar's royal administration. To efficiently uphold the law in the land, a source of prestige for any ruler, required the cooperation of such able administrators. Order and adherence to the rule of law would also have made collection of taxes and drafts for public works more efficient, factors of great practical importance to the king's ability to project military power and influence. In addition to such practical concerns regarding the running of the kingdom, the Roman elite, those connected to the Senate in particular, were politically powerful and an important diplomatic asset for the Ostrogothic king in his dealings with the Byzantine Empire. Dealing with Constantinople was a complicated affair, something Theodoric would know from first hand experience. He relied on senatorial diplomats, such as the envoys Festus and Faustus, negotiating in Constantinople on behalf of him on several occasions throughout the 490s.[44]

Recognising their use, Theodoric spent the initial years of his reign putting effort into forming good relations to the elite in Rome. The high point of this campaign was around the year 500, when he celebrated his *decennalia*, an ancient imperial tradition where the emperor ceremonially gave up his power to the senate and people of Rome, whereupon it, just as ceremonially, was returned to him and his right to rule was confirmed. Originally initiated by Augustus, this tradition had never been more than a show of good will from the emperors, creating the impression that not all of the checks and balances of the ancient republic had disappeared. This would appear the perfect opportunity for Theodoric to show his good intentions as a ruler respecting the traditions of Roman political culture. The *decennalia* is of interest of numismatic reasons as well, as Theodoric's famous "triple solidus", the only coin on which his portrait can be seen, is likely to be connected to this event. This piece of both political and artistic expression will be treated in more detail in the numismatic analysis in chapter three.

There are reasons to doubt how well things really worked out between the royal administration in Ravenna and the senators in Rome. The main available source treating this

---

44 Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 284.

subject, Cassiodorus' *Variae*, is particularly prone to selective presentations or outright manipulation of facts concerning the relation between Ravenna and Rome, according to the criticism of this source by Bjornlie[45] and others mentioned in the introductory source overview. The dominantly positive impression given by the *Variae* is not necessarily an accurate description of the realities of this relationship. Whether the *Variae* was compiled, and possibly edited to create the impressions desired, in Italy or in Constantinople, the author would have had incentives to polish the relationship between the Ostrogothic kings in the role of his former employers, and the traditional Roman aristocracy. As a stark example of the selective writing of Cassiodorus stand the complete absence from his collection of the conflict between Theodoric (and possibly Cassiodorus himself) and the senator and philosopher Boethius, that ending in the scandalous execution of the latter in 525. This event is easily interpreted as a sign of the fragile relations between the senatorial elite of Rome and the Ostrogothic elite of Ravenna cracking up in the end of Theodoric's reign.

Challenges and Opportunities of Religion

The religious landscape of the late fifth and early sixth century was dominated by the conflict between Catholics accepting the Council of Chalcedon and monophysite communities in major cities in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Disagreement over religious interpretation caused friction between the major religious centres in the Mediterranean world. Theodoric came to power in Italy in the midst of the Acacian Schism, a long lasting conflict between Rome and Constantinople. This separation between the two major cities in the Roman world made it easier for the new, barbarian king to form connections to the aristocracy and religious elite in Rome. In the last years of his reign, as Emperor Justin came to power in Constantinople, the schism was resolved, and the aftermath of this episcopal unification seems to have had negative consequences for Theodoric's rule.

Another clearly potential cause of conflict in the Ostrogothic kingdom was the difference in belief between the Ostrogoths and the Romans in Italy. While the Goths were Arian Christians, like many of the barbarian peoples originating from north of the imperial

---

45 Bjornlie, *Cassiodorus Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople*, 10.

borders, the Italian Romans were mostly Catholic. The true spread of different religious beliefs in Italy in the fifth and sixth century is largely unknown. It is likely that considerable parts of both urban and peasant population still remained tied to the mythology of the ancient Roman gods, as well as blends between pagan traditions and quasi-Christianity. The presence of pagans in the Roman world is most clearly shown by the effort to counter such alternative faiths in the dominating law code at the time, the *Codex Theodosianus.*[46] Other versions of the Christian faith, as well as Judaism also had Italian communities in late antiquity. Theodoric and his Goths themselves made up a minority in this religious variety, and initially chose a line of respect and tolerance towards other religious groups, in particular the Catholic majority.

The Gothic peoples, including the Ostrogoths who came to Italy, had according to the Gothic histories written in the fifth century[47] been converted to Arianism in the middle of the fourth century by the bishop Ulfilas, a man of partly Gothic descent. Knowing the Gothic language and being an educated man, Ulfilas is credited with creating an alphabet out of of the oral Gothic language and writing a Gothic translation of the Bible.[48] With this textual basis and efficient missionary work, Ulfilas created a foundation for Arianism among the Gothic tribes in the Balkans and along the Black Sea coast. The Ostrogoths thus arrived as Christians, but still a religiously foreign people, in the dominantly Catholic Italy.

As a relative foreigner to the ecclesiastic conflicts raging between the leaders in the Christian world, Theodoric found that he could take political advantage of the unresolved conflict between East and West. In the years 484 and 519, a period that covered most of Theodoric's reign in Italy, the Western and Eastern churches were locked in a conflict over interpretation of the nature of Christ, known as the Acacian schism, after the eastern patriarch Acacius. The disagreement had a theological background in the unresolved questions discussed at the church meetings of the last two century. It is clear, however that there was political reasoning and power play behind the schism as well. The conflict had

---

46 Oliver Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources. Vol. IV: The Early Medieval World* (Milwaukee University Research Extension Co., 1907), 69-71.

47 Jordanes, *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths,* 267.

48   A sixth century copy of Ulfilas Bible, known as the *Codex Argenteus* ("silver book" or "silver Bible") for its distinct silver-dyed letters, is preserved as the only considerable piece of Gothic literature.

developed as emperor Zeno had tried to solve old disputes over the true nature of Christ by promulgating a religious statement drafted by the patriarch of Constantinople, Peter III.[49] This attempt backfired as the synod of bishops, the usual members of church meetings where such theological questions were traditionally discussed, had not been heard in the matter. The pope in Rome felt particularly set aside, and a strong disagreement evolved between Pope Felix III and the western church on one side and and the patriarch and the emperor on the other. The disagreement came to involve both theoretical, theological disputes, appointments to ecclesiastical positions throughout the Christian world and outright persecutions for religious reasons. The schism proved defining for the development of the Christian church in the late fifth and early sixth century and had major political ramifications. It led to an increased distance between the church of the east with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the papal seat in Rome.

The quarrel between Constantinople and Rome inevitably had political consequences, as well as theological. The papal authority had very limited contact with Constantinople or was openly in conflict with the emperor and the patriarch. Therefore the pope in Rome turned to the worldly leader in Ravenna for support. This strengthened Theodoric's position in Italy as Symmanchus, the pope from 498 to 514 particularly established a good relationship to Theodoric and his court in Ravenna, a relationship driven by the conflict with Constantinople and party by Symmachus' conflict with other groups of Roman nobles.[50] The special bond between Theodoric and Symmanchus had been created early on, as Theodoric had supported Symmanchus in his conflict with representatives of other Roman families over the position as pope. The way Theodoric skilfully played the game of high politics among the senatorial class and powerful families went a long way to establish his power and authority among the leading groups of the Roman aristocracy. The conflict of religion between Roma and Constantinople also put Theodoric in the favourable situation when the Roman elite became alienated from the imperial court and communication between east and west became more limited. This seems especially true for the period between 511 and 519,

49 The theological part of this dispute was based on the complicated discussions between miaphysitism, nestorianism and other theoretical schools on how the human and diving natures of Christ were to be interpreted. These questions had been main topics at church meetings throughout the fourth and fifth century, but splinter groups within the Christian world caused continuous unrest by opposing the official conclusions from these meetings.
50 Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*. (Routledge Revivals, 2014).

when emperor Anastasius was seeking to improve relations with Rome and break the diplomatic ice resulting from the religious schism.[51]

Theodoric might have had an interest in the continuation of the schism and the political distance between east and west that this conflict maintained. It was therefore quite possibly to his disadvantage when the church in Rome under Pope Hormidas came together with a more willing imperial authority in Justin I, and negotiations to solve the schism bore fruits.[52] Emperor Justin worked towards a solution to the schism and to end the separation between east and west as his religious views were not aligned with the monophysite of the east. A policy of rapprochement was thus natural to him. As he ascended the imperial throne in 519 he oversaw the successful resolving of the Acacian schism.[53]

Just how important the diplomatic consequences of this church dispute was, and how the resolve of it affected the position of King Theodoric is not certain. However, it is worth noting that the difficulties affecting the last years of Theodoric's reign were brought about by a more challenging relationship between the royal court in Ravenna and powerful in factions in Rome. Closer ties between the aristocratic class in Italy and Constantinople, resulting from the resolve of the schism, are quite likely to have created new political realities for the king to handle. A shift of focus away from Ravenna towards Constantinople would have meant a challenge to Theodoric's authority and potentially caused friction between the king and the more powerful and politically active among his subjects.

The variations in beliefs in late antique Italy provided the foundations for religiously inspired violence and persecutions. Theodoric maintained a line of relative openness and acceptance for different beliefs, and when the Christian Catholic majority met other religions with crime, he responded with legal action and demands of uprisings paid by the persecutors to the victims. Particularly the Jews in Italy were prone to harassment for their religion and traditions, and both Theodoric and Eutharic[54], while serving as consul, are

---

51 Heather, *The Goths,* 252.
52 Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages*.
53 Burns, *History of the Ostrogoths,* 92.
54 Eutharic: Theodoric's son-in-law and the one set out to inherit the Ostrogothic kingdom, but died before he could inherit.

reported to have defended the Jews' rights according to the law. This probably tied the exposed minorities closer to the Ostrogothic administration, but at the same time created discontent among the more zealous groups of the Catholic majority.[55]

Foreign Affairs

Along with his skills in domestic organisation, Theodoric is famous for establishing and securing his kingdom through shrewd diplomacy and skilful use of military force in the face of challenges from the other powers in Europe and the Mediterranean. Strongest of his potential foreign adversaries was undoubtedly the Byzantine Emperor. Not only had the emperor formal, imperial overlordship over the post-Roman world of the west, but also at his disposal the very real power to undertake military expeditions on a vast scale, as proven by Belisarius' campaigns during the wars of Justinian in the 530s. Still Theodoric must have regarded his position as fairly strong in relation to the Byzantines as he maintained a hard line towards Constantinople. Behind courteous formulations of subordination to imperial superiority, the correspondence from Ravenna proved that he demanded to be treated as an equal in many respects.[56]

Theodoric had to defend his interest with force on many occasions, even ending up in armed conflict with the Byzantine Empire over interests in the Balkans. To the mainly Italian kingdom of the Ostrogoths belonged the Balkan/Danubian provinces of Dalmatia and Pannonia. These stretches were partly lands held by Theodoric before his Italian expedition in 489 and partly spoils attained after the victory over Odovacar. While defending Ostrogothic interests in these provinces from Gepid incursions in the early first decade of the sixth century, the forces of Theodoric ended up in skirmishes with imperial units. Byzantine naval forces were also raiding the Italian coast, actions to which the Ostrogoths responded by rebuilding parts of the western imperial fleet at the former imperial naval base at Classe, south of Ravenna.[57] These incidents remained local though, and the relations between Ostrogothic Italy and Constantinople remained largely peaceful, if strained,

---

55 Amory, *People and Identity of Ostrogothic Italy,* 216.
56 Heather, *The Goths*, 229.
57 Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity, 56.*

throughout the reign of Theodoric.

Also on other fronts did Theodoric use varied means to achieve a dominant position. He had clear ambitions to reign the west as the emperor's representative, with the other barbarian kingdoms under the dominance of the Ostrogoths. Initially, his mixed strategy of political marriages, threats and use of military force, seemed to work out quite well. Alliances were forged through marriage between female relatives of Theodoric and royals from other barbarian kingdoms in the west. He sent female relatives to marry into the courts of all the major powers in western Europe and to the Vandals ruling in Carthage.[58] In late antiquity, political marriages were frail arrangements however, and in the end these insurances for the future did not pay of in the way Theodoric must have hoped.

The strongest opposition to the Ostrogothic dominance in the west came from the Franks. King Clovis had built up his power in Gaul, and vied for dominance in the province of Aquitania, separating his heartlands from those of the Visigoths in Spain. The Visigoths were the favourite partner of Theodoric in the political game of the first decades of the sixth century. Through several royal marriages he hoped to forge a strong alliance between the two Gothic peoples, stemming the advance of the Franks. Initially, the Visigoths suffered defeats at the hands of the Franks at the battle of Vouillé in 507. The Visigothic king, Alaric, who was married to one of Theodoric's daughters, was killed and the Franks tightened their grip on Aquitania. Trying to curb the Frankish advances, Theodoric aided the Visigoths and pushed the Franks back, securing the region under strong Ostrogothic influence. Even though Theodoric's forces had prevailed, the threat was not gone. The border disputes with the Franks held up large parts of Ostrogothic military resources and preoccupied the Ostrogothic rulers for as long as their kingdom existed.

The *Variae* reveal Ostrogothic policy in exposed area through actions taken in areas near the realm of the Franks.[59] In a letter to the population in these border areas the Ostrogothic king promises tax relieves to the farmers. This could be interpreted as an economic move to ensure growth in a province frequently ravaged by war. At the same time, it is likely that the

---

58 Jordanes*, The Origins and Deeds of the Goths,* 297-299.
59 Cassiodorus, *Variae,* 219.

Ostrogoths tried to sway the population in their favour to gain popular support against the Franks. For the king it was difficult to find the balance between on one side sufficient taxation to maintain the loyalty of the armed forces on one side, and on the other side to keep the taxation lenient enough to allow growth, or at least to sustain production, and avoid popular uprisings. With border areas constantly prone to become battlegrounds, this was particularly challenging.

Also in the south the Ostrogothic kingdom was under threat from a rivalling kingdom, but in a slightly different form than the Frankish threat in the north. The Vandals settled in Africa conducted both expeditions for conquests and raids for plundering during the last decades of the fifth century and into the sixth. Having captured the former imperial fleet in Constantinople, the Vandals brutally sacked Rome in 455 and continued to spread fear throughout the western Mediterranean up until their defeat by Byzantine forces in the 533 - 534. That the southern parts of Ostrogothic Italy were exposed to the Vandals are clear from the writings of Cassiodorus. As an aristocrat in a central position with access to funds and potentially troops, he felt a responsibility to defend his home town of Scylletium in Calabria when the Vandal raiders threatened, thus revealing the reality of menace in his letters.[60]

The relationship between Ostrogothic Ravenna and the Vandals in Carthage had never been particularly warm. To mend this situation Theodoric had married his sister Amalafrida to the Vandal king Thrasamund. With the bride followed five thousand Ostrogothic troops, clearly signalling that Theodoric wanted to keep thorough control with matters in Carthage. The relationship between the two kingdoms were seriously upset with the death of Thrasamund, however. His successor, Hilderic was a Catholic and supported the Catholic cause in Africa. Thrasamund had protected the Catholics from persecution by Arians, which was not an unusual occurrence in the Vandal kingdom. The wholesale conversion to Catholicism however, alienated both a majority of Vandals, Amalafrida and her Ostrogothic guardsmen. She organised a rebellion against the new king, but failed, was imprisoned and finally killed along with the Ostrogothic soldiers sent to Africa with her.[61] The strategy of political marriages thus failed in most cases, leaving the Ostrogoths surrounded by declared or

---

60 Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 39.
61 Cassiodorus, *Variae, 385.*

potential enemies.

Theodoric's Successors and Prelude to War

At the end of his reign, Theodoric must have been painstakingly aware that his kingdom was surrounded by enemies. He had experiences how the barbarian kingdoms could challenge the supremacy of the Ostrogoths in the west. However, as long as the social and political challenges within Italy could be handled, these problems could be dealt with. Another matter entirely was the Byzantines and their armies. These were indeed to attack the Ostrogothic lands less than a decade after the death of Theodoric. Perhaps had Theodoric sensed or been made aware of the intentions of Justinian, the likely successor to the imperial throne. Cassiodorus[62] describe the final advices the ageing King Theodoric gave his successor. Among the chief concerns was to maintain good relations and peace with the Byzantine Empire.

In 526, Theodoric died, leaving the Ostrogothic kingdom to his grandson Athalaric, a boy of just about ten years of age. The following year emperor Justin I died, leaving the imperial throne to is nephew Justinian, the ruler who would order the invasion of Ostrogothic Italy eight years later. The originally intended successor to the Ostrogothic throne, Theodoric's son-in-law Eutharic, had died in 522, something that must have caused Theodoric must grief, both personally and on behalf of the kingdom. He had spent much time and effort assuring the safety of his political project through diplomatic marriages and planned successions with only minor success. When his son-in-law, planned successor and apparent favourite died it is to be expected that the old king was affected and disillusioned in the final years of his reign.

As the new king Athalaric was too young to rule himself, his mother Amalasuientha, acted as regent. It seems that her relationship with the Gothic warrior aristocracy, which the Ostrogothic monarchy depended upon, was not the best. First of all she was a woman in a world of male dominance where martial values were important for any ruler. Secondly, she was accused by at least some of the leading Ostrogothic lords for raising her son, the future

---

62 Cassiodorus, *Variae,* 158.

38

king, to Roman, civil values and interests. This was not suitable for a king who would in the future command these very warlords in battle to defend and expand the interests of the kingdom. When remarrying to assure the legitimacy of her rule, she chose the Ostrogothic nobleman Theodahad. As a man of learning and philosophy himself, he was not the obvious choice to reassure the rest of the warrior aristocracy of the new regime's ability to lead the kingdom in times of war.[63]

Theodahad had a familiar link to the dynasty of Theodoric however, and this probably was one of the deciding factor when the marriage between him and Amalasuientha was decided upon. How influential Amalasuientha was in this process is unknown, but it is quite possible that Amalasuientha genuinely believed in the way she raised her son to Roman arts and culture, and that she hoped her new husband would support this line. The marriage had a rather more sinister outcome, however. King Athalaric was taken from his mother by Ostrogothic noblemen to acquire the martial skills required of a king. Whether it was caused by this change of surroundings or some other factors in his life is not certain, but in the hands of the nobles, Athalaric turned to drinking and gambling in his teenage years. His lifestyle is believed to have been to blame for his early death in 534. Officially, he had been king for eight years, but he had just reached maturity and had not had a chance to make a mark of his own upon Ostrogothic politics. For this reason, Athalaric's reign is not marked by any great achievements in politics, culture or social policies. However, the Ostrogothic coinage saw some interesting development under Athalaric which will be treated in the next chapter.

With the last directs male successor of Theodoric dead, Theodahad moved to secure his position and tighten his grip on power in the kingdom. Amalasuientha was put in confinement on the island of Martana in the Bolsena Lake where she was assassinated in 535. Theodahad must have regarded his connection to the former queen mother as a liability. His own reputation as a man of philosophy and letters, not the military leader the Ostrogothic kingdom needed, was further reinforced by marrying Amalasuientha, herself accused of leading her son astray on such paths. Theodahad seems to have had a image problem he thought best to deal with by distancing himself from her. The warrior

---

63 Heather, *The Goths,* 261.

aristocracy's worries about the new king's lacking abilities as a military commander would soon be vindicated. The murder of Amalasuientha, one of emperor Justinian's personal friends, served as an honourable excuse for the emperor to go through with his planned invasion of Italy.

Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Onslaught

After Justinian became Byzantine emperor in 527, his vast ambitions as emperor was truly revealed. With harsh measures he forced through a legal reform based on strict Christian principles. The changes were opposed by important factions in the aristocracy and bureaucracy of Constantinople, and the conflict led to a violent uprising in 533, known as the Nika revolt. As the furious crowds surrounded the palace and the emperor with his guard was barely holding out, the armies under General Belisarius returned from campaigning on the Persian front, restoring order through brutal bloodshed. These events are likely to have sealed the fate of the Vandal and the Ostrogothic kingdom.

After such a brutal and appalling events, the mauling of his own citizens by the imperial troops, the emperor needed a reason to bask in glory like the grand emperors of old. Few things could serve this purpose better then to overrun barbarian kingdoms and restore imperial control in provinces in the former Roman West. The man for the job had also presented himself. By breaking up the Nika revolt, Belisarius had proven his resolve and unconditional service to the emperor. Belisarius was able to do what ever the situation demanded, widespread cruelty included, to get the job done. That ability was to prove decisive in the Gothic wars, the near twenty years conflict described in great detail by Procopius.

The first target of Belisarius' invasion force was the Vandal kingdom in Africa. Despite the Vandals' earlier successes in fending off imperial attempts of invasion and widespread worries in Constantinople that Justinian was sending his armies to yet another defeat in Africa, the Vandal defences folded surprisingly fast and the Byzantines gained control of the African provinces in 534. As the Vandal kingdom faltered, Corsica and Sardinia, islands held by the Vandals, also came under Byzantine domination. After these conquests,

Belisarius had a glorious return to Constantinople, where the emperor held triumph and paraded the last Vandal king, Gelimer, in public. Despite humiliation, the defeated Vandal ruler was not harmed by his conquerors. He was allowed to settle down on an estate in Galatia and lived there until his death.[64] These events took place as Amalasuientha was the effective ruler of Ostrogothic Italy as regent for her son Athalaric. The Ostrogoths under Amalasuientha showed themselves supportive of the imperial invasion of the Vandal kingdom. During the campaign in Africa, the imperial navy was allowed bases of operations and markets for resupply in southern Italy, areas under Ostrogothic control. One reason for this support given by the Ostrogothic to the imperial forces could have been a heartfelt approval of the destruction of the Vandals. The Vandals had ravaged the Italian coast for decades and quite recently done harm to the Amals by murdering Theodoric's daughter Amalafrida. A more strategic reason for the aid given was Amalasuientha's attempt to maintain a warm relationship to Justinian. Her objective in doing so was to safeguard her kingdom and avoid conflict with the Byzantine Empire.[65]

The conquest of Africa did not suffice for Justinian's ambitions, and when the murder of Amalasuientha presented him with a pretext for an invasion of Italy, Belisarius was sent to war again in 535. This time the force sent with him was considerably smaller, even though the opposition in Italy would have been expected to be stiffer than what had been the case in Africa. What lay behind this decision is not clear, but general fatigue in the Byzantine army and depletion of resources are likely to have been factors after long and expensive campaigns on the Persian front and the conquest of the Vandals. The Byzantine force was split between a sea borne expedition led by Belisarius and a land force from the Balkans under general Mundus moving west towards Dalmatia, a province held by the Ostrogoths. To further strengthening his position, Justinian allied himself with the Franks, bribing and convincing them to join the imperial forces in war against the Ostrogoths.[66] By first conquering Sicily, the Byzantines established a bridgehead for further advances into Italy. The island was taken with relative ease, as the Roman population proved to be friendly towards the imperial forces. The imperial forces now achieve a two pronged attack, with an

---

64 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book III), IX* 11-16.
65 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book III), XIV* 2-7.
66 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book V), V* 45.

army based on Sicily and another moving west and south along the Adriatic Sea.

Initial Byzantine success was countered when the Ostrogoths sent reinforcements and recaptured most of the territories lost to Mundus' forces in Dalmatia. Even so, this massive onslaught must have been overwhelming for King Theodahad, and he tried at several occasions to sue for peace with Justinian. When Belisarius secured Sicily, the Ostrogothic king offered to surrender the entire Italian peninsula to the Byzantine Empire, in exchange for a lenient treatment for himself as prisoner in Constantinople. These offers of surrender coincided with the successful counter attacks of the Ostrogoths against the Byzantine forces in the Balkans. The Ostrogoths chose to push their advantage against the Byzantines, and lost any chance of an early resolve of the conflict through negotiations. It might have been the Gothic nobles who pushed for continued resistance, blocking Theodahad's attempts to surrender. Considering the very favourable terms presented by Theodahad to Justinian, it is hard to imagine the emperor would rather enter a drawn out conflict in Italy with strained supply lines and weary soldiers, than accept the offer of Ostrogothic surrender.

The Gothic War

The nobles showed themselves as the group in the Ostrogothic society most eager to hold of the Byzantines with military means, for understandable reasons. This warrior elite had a privileged position in the Ostrogothic kingdom, as the military backbone of the system established by Theodoric. Their privileges included access to the king, the pinnacle of power and ability to have a say when decisions were made. In addition, their economic interests were secured through the system of "accommodation", either through direct control of land in Italy or rights to shares of tax income, as discussed above. It is quite clear that these perks would disappear if the peninsula was to fall under the rule of Constantinople, giving the nobility a clear incentive to maintain the resistance.

It is also possible the nobles, raised, trained and experienced in the art of war, saw military possibilities not so easily appreciated by their less battle hardened King Theodahad in the initial phase of the war. The relative small force under Belisarius easily secured a base of operations by landing in Sicily, but the invasion of Italy would prove to be much more

challenging. The Ostrogothic nobles probably predicted this and hoped they could force terms upon the Byzantines more favourable for them than outright surrender. Theodahad had problems coming to terms with his role as king leading a kingdom in a war of survival. Personally he favoured to resolve the conflict by accepting hard terms imposed by the emperor. His military leadership did not impress the Ostrogothic nobles and he lost his royal authority through this military ineptness.

As in most wars, control of cities became an important goal for the opposing sides. The early capture of fortified cities was of particular importance for the Byzantines to provide them ports and bases for further operations in Italy. Cities were also signs of authority and prestige, and most prestigious of all was Rome. In 536 Belisarius made headway into Italy, capturing Naples after a short siege and entering Rome virtually unopposed. The ancient metropolis, once home to a million people had by the 530s been reduced to a town of perhaps as few as some tens of thousands.[67] Rome had lost it's position as imperial capital already in the fourth century, but still functioning as the city of the Senate and religious centre through the papal seat. Through these institutions it held considerable political importance and prestige even in Ostrogothic times. In terms of economic and demographic measures, the city of Rome had suffered throughout the fifth century. First besieged and captured by Alaric the Visigothic king in 410, than even more brutally ravaged by the Vandals under Geiseric in 455, the inscription "*Invicta Roma*"[68], found on public buildings and coins even in the Ostrogothic period, must have carried a certain irony.

Most damaging to the prosperity of Rome was the fall of the African provinces to the Vandals. Carthage, the granary of the west, had for centuries supplied Rome with grain and oil through the *annonae.* As Rome's population was growing and demand far outweighed local supply, both the West African provinces based on Carthage and the province of Egypt was included in the *annonae* system where taxes were paid in these highly demanded goods and transported to Rome by a system of state subsidised, privately owned transport services. In late antiquity, the supply from Egypt had partly been broken off by increased piracy in the Mediterranean and partly redirected to the new imperial capital in Constantinople,

---

67 Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migration and the Roman West,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 90 – 91.
68 *Invicta Roma* – invincible Rome.

leaving Carthage and the agricultural lands of western North Africa as sole supplier for Rome. As the Vandals captured these provinces in the 430s, production was reduced by the upheaval they caused, supplies to Rome were continued only at the mercy of the Vandal rulers and not as part of the taxation system, as earlier.[69] Even if Rome was reduced from it's former glory, it's fall was nonetheless a tactical loss, considering the city's formidable defences and central position on the Italian peninsula. More than anything, the fall of Rome was a potential hit to the Ostrogothic prestige. Rome was the most powerful symbol of the old and glorious Roman past. Holding Rome meant holding the cradle of the mighty Roman Empire itself.

Theodahad's failure to effectively mount a defence in the face of the Byzantine invasion and his inability to hold Rome cost him his throne and his life. The Ostrogothic nobles had him murdered and put Witigis, an experienced commander from their own ranks, on the throne.[70] Witigis was the first of the Ostrogothic ruler in Italy without any connection to the royal bloodline of Theodoric. To strengthen his claim to the throne, Witigis married Theodoric's daughter, Matasuntha and stressed his likeness to the founder of the kingdom through deeds and ability. In the challenging and dangerous situation the new king found himself, it was first of all Theodoric's martial skills he intended to emulate. With military abilities and ambition far more convincing than those of Theodahad and the trust of the Ostrogothic army, he set about to retake Rome. He surrounded Belisarius and his Byzantine forces within the city for a year, but finally had to abandon the siege and retreat back to Ravenna.

As the siege lifted, Belisarius could once more take the initiative. The war raged across the Italian countryside for years without any definite victory for any of the sides. The toll on the Italian population was terrible. The fronts in the conflict shifted rapidly and the civilian farmer population was forced to supply both sides with provisions as the troops advanced or retreated. Helping one side, the communities in the path of an offensive risked to be victims of reprisals from the opposite side.[71] Casualties and material damage caused by the war is hard to estimate, but its brutality and the fact that it lasted for near two decades make it clear

69 Andrew Merilles and Richard Miles, *The Vandals,* (London: John Wiley and Son, 2009), 149.
70 Heather, *The Goths,* 263.
71 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book VII)*, 187.

that the Gothic War is among the most destructive wars in the history of Italy.

Not until 540 came a new major development in the conflict. After four years of struggling for control in central Italy, Belisarius besieges and finally captured Ravenna, where Witigis was caught and taken to Constantinople. Like the Vandal king Gelimer, Witigis was treated well as a prisoner of Justinian, despite the ferocious resistance he had put up against Belisarius' forces. Even if the emperor's enemies could be paraded and humiliated in triumphal processions, the ceremonial executions of captured barbarian leaders, known from republic and earlier imperial times were not included. The policy of treating captured adversaries with respect, or at least a certain leniency, could be seen as a strategy chosen by the emperor to encourage surrender instead of continued resistance among his enemies.

Justinian's conquests can be explained in many ways. His declaration of war officially as a response to Theodahad's responsibility for the death of Amalasuientha, an ally the emperor was on amiable terms with. It seems unlikely that such a risky endeavour was undertaken over the murder of Amalasuientha alone however. A more complex calculation of risks and possible gains of the expedition certainly lay behind the decision to go to war. A reason for Justinian to decide for the invasion of Italy could be his need to present great achievements on the political scene in Constantinople to preserve his prestige as emperor. Also his strong Catholic zeal would have made him inclined to target the Vandals and Ostrogoths for being Arians. Considerations regarding power politics probably also played a role. Justinian did not see the barbarian kingdoms as preferred political entities in the former Roman provinces. The barbarians did not rule in accordance with Justinian's view of good state organisation. This was also the case with the rule of the Ostrogothic Italy. In the emperor's view, Italy should come back under imperial rule once more for good governance according to civilised, Christian and Roman principles.

Revival under Totila

The Ostrogothic resistance against the Byzantines did not end with the fall of Ravenna in 540. Even if they never managed to recapture their capital, the Ostrogothic nobles, having everything to lose from a peace arrangement on Byzantine terms, continued the fight. After

he had captured Ravenna, Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople, as he was needed on the Persian front, where hostilities between the two empires had erupted once more. The Ostrogothic resistance centred both around the new kings elected after Witigis' capture and separate cells of resistance centred on lesser dukes. Little is known about these kings other than their names and that their reigns were short. From 540 to 541 the two noblemen Ildibad and Eraric were kings of the Ostrogoths but both died less than a year into their reigns.[72] After Eraric's death in 541, an ordered resistance against the Byzantines was effectively reorganised by the new king Totila, a warrior who used to be close to King Witigis.[73]

Totila was a nobleman from the Ostrogothic warrior aristocracy. He proved to be an effective leader and throughout the 540s it seemed he would turn the tides of war in favour of the Ostrogoths. In several successful campaigns he recaptured important cities and strongholds throughout Italy. He managed to get large parts of the Italian countryside under his control, gaining tax income to continue the struggle for an entire decade. Avoiding major sieges and leveling walls to deny his enemies the strongholds they were seeking, the Ostrogoths under Totila pushed the Byzantines back throughout the 540s. Totila's ability to lead effectively in war and maintain an administration effective enough to keep up the war effort have led to comparisons between the reigns of Totila and Theodoric and for those two kings to be considered the most successful of the Ostrogothic regents.

Totila found himself in a peculiar position regarding the political situation of his kingdom. He was locked in a conflict of existence or annihilation with the Byzantine Empire, but still needed to mind the relationship between the two warring sides. Should the Ostrogoths manage to force a truce upon the imperial forces and normalise the situation, Totila's court in Ticinum would still have to maintain relations with Constantinople, and likely also the Byzantine enclaves in Italy centred on Ravenna as the emperor would be unlikely to surrender his conquests so expensively bought during the Gothic War. The successes of Totila in the face of the imperial adversary must have given hope that such a resolution to the the conflict could be within reach. The organisation of a new kingdom at peace must have been part of his planning and measures were put into place to prepare for an end to the

---

72 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book VII),* 165-168.
73 King Totila is also known by the name Baduila, the name always used on his coins.

hostilities. Procopius describe how Totila was lenient in his treatment of prisoners of war. When capturing a besieged city, he spent time and resources to get the inhabitants and enemy troops that had been trapped and starving within the city back on their feet again.[74] This leniency could be explained by by the Ostrogothic king's wish to recruit captured soldiers into his own ranks. Also, a population experiencing leniency from their king would make better subjects in a kingdom at peace.

Totila ruled an Ostrogothic kingdom in wartime and planned for a transition to peace, in the event that he manage to force an agreement with his enemies. Ten to fifteen year of war had destroyed the economic system of the Romans aristocracy in Italy. Many had fled to Constantinople, and many more had seen their villas and estates be ravaged by the conflict. King Totila and his Ostrogoths were preparing for the reestablishment of the Ostrogothic kingdom in a new economic and social landscape, with a harshly reduced Roman aristocracy. They were, however prepared to applying the same Ostrogothic power structures and social models as before.

When Ostrogothic resistance hardened under Totila, Belisarius returned to the Italian theatre, but not with the sufficient troops and supplies to stem the Ostrogothic counter offensive. Without achieving any major breakthroughs, he was once again recalled to the east in 548, this time for good. Justinian had always had powerful political enemies and acted with apparent paranoia, for good reasons. Even Belisarius, the emperor's favourite for many years, was accused of plotting against his master, relieved of his command and forced to retire in disgrace. The war in Italy raged on with continued success for the Ostrogoths until 550, when Justinian finally sent a considerable force to break the last remnants of Ostrogothic resistance. The Byzantine army, led by the eunuch general Narses met the Ostrogoths of Totila in battle at Busta Gallorum near Naples in 553. Totila was killed in this encounter. Remnants of the Ostrogothic army gathered around a new king, Teia, but they were defeated again later that year at Mons Lactarius. This was the definite end of any real Ostrogothic opposition to Byzantine rule in Italy.

---

74 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book VII),* 213-215.

The Legacy of the Ostrogoths

The sources and remains from the Ostrogothic kingdom are dominated by the written records of actors who were outsiders in one sense or another. No written sources are known to have come directly from anyone truly within the warrior elite of Ostrogothic nobles. Artistic and architectural remains form another perspective into the Ostrogothic society, though the building projects know from the Ostrogothic period are restricted to the reign of Theodoric. The coins minted in Ostrogothic Italy form the last of the major sources of insight into Ostrogothic society.

The sudden undoing of the Ostrogothic society and the reduction of population in Italy, including the Roman aristocracy and the Ostrogothic nobility is part of the explains for the narrow source material from this period. This long and hard fought war had completely destroyed the Ostrogothic kingdom that was created by Theodoric in Italy. The Roman nobility in Italy based around the Senate in Rome and the senatorial families had been reduced by senators abandoning their landholdings in Italy and escaped east, as their estates were ravaged by war. The exodus of Roman aristocrats from Italy to Constantinople show a Roman upper class giving up on the Ostrogothic project and hoping to succeed in the courtly world of Constantinople or return to their privileges in Italy as the conflict was resolved, one way or another. The senatorial class would survive and regained their social position in Italy after the war, even if the political significance of the Senate was fading.

The group of Ostrogothic nobles who had made up the fighting force and a central part of the population in the Ostrogothic kingdom had been reduced through years of conflict. The hopes of Totila and his Ostrogoths of a future in Italy for an Ostrogothic political entity was shattered through the final destruction of the Ostrogothic warriors that made up the backbone of the society that Totila championed. The Ostrogothic warrior could not be recognised as a coherent group in Italian after the war. As they did not have any chance of remaining a dominant part of society in a Byzantine Italy, their war effort had been an all out struggle, going on until they were truly unable to continue putting up resistance. The Gothic War would not end until the Ostrogothic nobles forced through a treaty securing their continued position of power in parts of Italy, or were completely eradicated as a social

group. Narses' intervention sealed their fate and made the latter option reality. Only scattered groups of Ostrogoths remained, unable to mount a concerted effort against the Byzantines and unable to put their mark on the Italian society that followed after the war.[75] Valuable sources that would otherwise have been passed on to coming ages to shed light on Ostrogothic society, could easily have been lost in this period of upheaval.

With the main group of representatives for the Ostrogothic system utterly removed, few clear signs of Ostrogothic heritage remained visible after the end of the war. Because of this abrupt end to the Ostrogothic system, it is hard to decide which material remains should be considered Ostrogothic and thus help modern research paint a precise picture of the Ostrogoths. The archaeological material that could be connected to the Ostrogoths in Italy include weapons, cloths, brooches, jewellery and other articles of metal for practical use or beauty. The material finds are supported by textual and pictorial references. Still, to define the Ostrogothic in this material is challenging. In late antiquity the styles and fashions of Roman and barbarian largely blended to the point where looking for ethnic differences will prove near fruitless. Differences are more clearly found across social and economic strata than across ethnicities.[76] This also has ramifications for interpretation of the numismatic material, where for instance clothing and fashion is depicted and require interpretation. It is not clear whether a seemingly 'barbarian' outfit is to be considered a sign of ethnic belonging or reference to the military class that in late antiquity generally would have adopted traditionally barbarian apparel.

Some extensive construction projects were undertaken during the reign of Theodoric, giving some clues of what might be considered an expression of Ostrogothic art. These include the palace of Theodoric in Ravenna, construction and redecoration of churches, both in Ravenna and other major cities and most notably the mausoleum of Theodoric, also in Ravenna. Much of the mural paintings and mosaic decorations of these buildings were remade after the Byzantine conquest, but written accounts still give a picture of how it looked during the Ostrogothic period. Generally, there is not much to separate the Ostrogothic expressions from the Roman. The clearest trait, and what probably prompted

---

75 Heather, *The Goths,* 274.
76 Merilles and Miles, *The Vandals,* 105.

the Byzantine redecoration was the extensive references to Theodoric or too clear references to Arianism. Most famous among these redecorations is the large mosaic portrait found in the church Basilica di Sant'Apollinare. The mosaic text connected to the portrait reads *Iustinian.* Both textual references to this mosaic and comparison with other portraits of the emperor and of Theodoric show signs however that this might in fact be a renaming of a portrait of Theodoric.

In style and architectural execution the Ostrogothic constructions are clearly according to Roman designs. The iconic mausoleum of Theodoric is still standing majestically in solitude outside modern Ravenna. As a sign of the king's vast ambitions, his final resting place stylistically resembles the mausoleum of Augustus in Rome, as a multi plateau, circular, white tower.[77] The mausoleum is topped by a large nearly half spherical single piece of marble making out the roof of the construction. This impressive feat of engineering stand as a fittingly monumental and lasting memory of Theodoric the Great and his Ostrogothic project in Italy.

Perhaps less impressive than Theodoric's mausoleum, but still as valuable for the understanding of the Ostrogothic society is the extensive numismatic material from the Ostrogothic period in Italy. Even if also the coins, like the architectural remains, are clearly based on Roman templates from the imperial period, they give a unique insight into the strategies and priorities of the Ostrogothic monarchs. In the following chapter, the numismatic material will be presented together with its consequences for the interpretation of the political culture of the Ostrogothic kingdom.

---

77 Theodoric's mausoleum is made in limestone (Istria stone), while the original, white exterior of the mausoleum of Augustus was made from marble.

Chapter III
Numismatic Analysis

The overview of Ostrogothic political history given in the previous chapter will serve as a background for this analysis, as the coinage of the Ostrogothic kings will be examined. The questions raised earlier about the political culture and authority in the Ostrogothic kingdom will be examined through the numismatic material. Main topics for this analysis will be the balancing act between the interests of the Ostrogothic warrior nobility and the Roman aristocracy, the importance of the ancient Roman cultural heritage, the honouring of imperial supremacy and the threats to the authority of the Ostrogothic kings. As stated in the introduction, the written sources are far from exhausting or always consistent in their treatment of these questions. The numismatic material will in the following be used as an alternative perspective to answer these questions.

The first section of this chapter will discuss the methods, possibilities and challenges in a numismatic approach to questions of political culture, like the ones introduced above. The second sections will give an overview of the numismatic material known from Ostrogothic Italy. Similarities and differences between Ostrogothic material and that of the imperial west, the Byzantine Empire and other barbarian kingdoms will be pointed out and commented. Just as important will be the differences and developments found in the material of different rulers of the Ostrogothic kingdom. From the reign of Theodoric through the well fifty years of Ostrogothic rule in Italy, there are some distinct features of development in the numismatic material, which will be related to the political culture and events unfolding in the kingdom. The analysis of the numismatics will merge with the historical overview in the previous chapter to form a conclusion in the last and fourth chapter.

Principles of the Numismatic Analysis

A main method of analysis will be a comparison between Ostrogothic coinage and the systems of coins that served as templates for the mints of the Ostrogothic kingdom. In this way the Ostrogothic minting innovations will stand out from the features simply borrowed from previous issues. The coin systems which the minting by the Ostrogoths was based upon include the contemporary coinage from the Byzantine Empire and the types minted in the final years of the western empire, transferred to the Ostrogoths through the reign of Odovacar. Odovacar had continued most of the types minted in Italy under the western emperors, with only slight modifications. The Vandal kingdom in North Africa had also been minting their own coins for several decades when the Ostrogoths entered Italy. The Vandal material is comparable to the Ostrogothic in that both kingdoms based their coinage upon the imperial system with minor changes. Upon these traditions the Ostrogothic minting was based. New features and artistic development introduced to coins attributed to mints controlled by the Ostrogoths will be considered based on this background.

The use of monograms and portraits, and the inscriptions and symbolism accompanying these will form a central part of the analysis of the material. The monograms are clear and easily recognisable signs of the royal authority behind the minting of the coin and the rule of the kingdom. The coins on which they appear and the symbolism accompanying the monogram indicate what image the kings wanted to create for themselves and to which part of the society this image was projected. The royal portrait on coins could even more efficiently connects the king to the authority transferred through coinage and literally draw a picture of him for his subjects to see. This was not just a simple image identifying the king, but the choice of style and presentation could create an intended perception of the king. It could mould the royal image, and spread this image more efficiently than with any other means.

By the start of the 6th century, the imperial portrait had been stylised and had lost the individual details that could graphically tell one emperor from another. The personal

differences in graphical presentations was to a larger degree preserved in the barbarian coinage, including the Ostrogothic. This increase the value of this material for understanding the developments of the Ostrogothic kingship as it is clear that the rulers intended to create an image of their own personal rule and traits, not just a representation of the general Ostrogothic ruler.

The abundant imperial references in the numismatic material will be examined for clues about the rather ambiguous relationship between the royal Ostrogothic court and the imperial court in Constantinople. Until the declaration of war in 535, the Ostrogothic kings in Italy were nominally the representatives of the emperor, according to the agreement between Theodoric and Emperor Zeno that lead to the Gothic expedition that established their Italian kingdom. However, there were periods when these bonds were severely strained, even before Belisarius' invasion. The relations to the imperial court would naturally effect the Ostrogothic kingdom's role in the political landscape in which it existed. Additionally, the relationship to the imperial authority affected the Ostrogoths' authority and support among the non-Gothic institutions of power within Italy, such as the Senate of Rome and the Catholic church. For this part of the analysis, coins combining Gothic and imperial references will be of special interest. This include both silver and copper issues from throughout the period of Ostrogothic rule.

Municipal coins form a special part of the numismatic material, being without either imperial or royal references. The municipal coins are usually copper issues connected to the cultural heritage of the cities of Rome and Ravenna, where the mints were situated. Similar coins are known from other parts of the barbarian world, such as Carthage under Vandal rule. These coins have an abundance of inscriptions and symbolism that reached back to pagan antiquity. As sources for the interpretation of the Ostrogothic political culture, these coins may seem to have limited value at first glance, the inscriptions and depictions being without any direct links to the kingship or the Ostrogothic organisation. Still the existence of these issues during the Ostrogothic reign hint at the role of the ancient institutions and traditions in the realm of the Ostrogoths.

The municipal issues of Rome are of particular interest, as they are linked to the Roman Senate, an institution that still wielded power and enjoyed influence in the early sixth century. The true extent of the Senate's involvement in the minting of coins is disputed.[78] Still, the recognition of the senatorial institution and the Roman traditions in general are present in this material. The municipal coins also interplay with copper issues with royal coins, revealing lines of development and inspiration that tie the traditionally Roman to the new Ostrogothic elites.

The prevailing feature in the Ostrogothic coinage is the strong similarities to imperial material, often with only subtle references to what can be considered truly Ostrogothic themes. One of the challenge in using numismatics for the interpretation of the Ostrogothic political culture thus lie in picking out these subtleties and decide which meaning was intended for them to convey. An underlying assumption for this analysis is the active influence by the royal power in all minting activity in the Ostrogothic areas. This also includes the copper coins that by some are considered purely municipal or senatorial, such as in the argument presented by Grierson.[79] The choices in design and cultural emphasis in the coinage will here be interpreted as reflections of policies and strategies of the king himself or an authority representing the Ostrogothic kingdom. In this the argument follow the premise of Metlich.[80]

The presentation of the numismatics of the Ostrogoths and the following discussion of special features found in this material lead up to a conclusion which tie this to the political culture in the kingdom. My argument will go along the lines of a royal power constantly being forced to play a game of fine balancing between differing interests, but with a heavy reliance upon it's power base in the Gothic military nobility. The threats to the security and authority of the Ostrogothic kings primarily came from foreign powers. This made the ability to defend the kingdom from foreign incursions the primary concern for the Ostrogothic kings.

---

78 Michael Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy,* (London: Sprink, 2004), 9-10.

79 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage,* 31-33.

80 Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy,* 9.

The coinage show sporadic attempts at tying the royal authority to the groups wielding power within the kingdom. This first of all included both Gothic noblemen and Roman aristocrats, two groups which would not necessarily adhere to and support the same values and political messages. Between reigns or even within single reigns, there is a lack of coherent projects of tying the royal authority to these power groups. The prospect of invasion by the imperial forces was always a looming threat for the Ostrogothic kings, and this is where the Ostrogothic kings use most of the authority wielded through their coinage.

Even if it took the reign of the ambitious and cynical Justinian to go through with plans of full scale war and invasion, the lesser powers in the Mediterranean were aware of this threat throughout their existence. The menace from the Byzantine Empire is a defining feature in the political culture of the Ostrogothic period in Italy. Ostrogothic kings stayed well within the limits of references to royal power on gold coins. Theodoric is the most audacious in challenging the imperial authority on this point, but neither him, nor his successors stray considerably from the established customs honouring the imperial supremacy.

Overview of the Ostrogothic coinage

The coins of the Ostrogothic kingdom are closely linked to the western imperial types and are part of a larger tradition of imperial and post imperial coinage, drawing both on eastern and western artistic methods and symbolism. The denomination system, inscriptions and general style is in large part adopted from the imperial period in Italy. The material also show clear ties to the Byzantine mints, especially in the case of gold coins which are in most cases copies of the Byzantine types. The copper coinage of the Ostrogoths was minted in the folles system reintroduced in the east through the reforms of Emperor Anastasius in the late 490s. In Italy, this system had been phased in already under Odovacar and was continued throughout the Ostrogothic period.[81] It is indeed possible that the imperial reform bringing these copper coins into circulation was inspired by development in the mints of the Vandal and Ostrogothic kingdoms.[82]

All of the three standard coin materials of the ancient Mediterranean world, copper, silver

---

81 J. C. P. Kent, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. XI, (London: Sprink & Son, 1981), 218.
82 G. Berndt and R. Steinacher, "Minting in Vandal North Africa" in *Early Medieval Europe 16 (2008):* 261.

and gold, are represented in the Ostrogothic material. All three were struck in mints controlled by the Ostrogoths and served monetary purposes. This sets the Ostrogothic material apart from that of the Vandals and of the Byzantine Empire, the two contemporary minting authorities most naturally compared to the Ostrogoths. The Ostrogoths differ from the Vandals in the production of gold coinage. It is unlikely that any gold was minted in the Vandal controlled North Africa. Gold coins found in Africa has traditionally been attributed to Vandal mints, but recent revisions have shown that these coins are more likely struck in Constantinople or other eastern mints and taken to Africa through plunder, tribute or trade.[83]

The silver coinage of the Ostrogothic kingdom is certainly meant to play a monetary role, with clear denominations according to established traditions in the Western Empire. This distinguishes the Ostrogothic system from that of the Byzantine Empire in the late fifth and sixth century, when silver coins were used exclusively for religious and ceremonial purposes. Silver coins from the eastern mints of this period are known, but not in the numbers to make them an important part of the monetary system, as the case is in the western system.

Even if the coinage of the Ostrogoths was mostly created within a set of established traditions, peculiarities and unique features stick out as interesting breaks with these norms. Such breaks is probably most apparent in the case when the Ostrogothic regents make alternations to the prestigious gold coinage, the first of the three minting metals to be treated in detail. The non-imperial triple solidus has become a symbol of Theodoric and his Ostrogothic kingdom. However, this is a single coin of little significance beyond it's artistic value.

Gold Coinage

The gold coinage of the Ostrogoths are in theme and motif not easily distinguishable from the Byzantine templates on which they are modelled. Only mint marks and the techniques and styles of the coin engravers in the different mints can tell if a coin originates in Italy or in imperial mints in the east. The inscriptions and depictions are often near identical, with the Italian mints performing at a level of artistic execution on par or even above that of the

---

83 Berndt and Steinacher, "Minting in Vandal North Africa" 257.

mint of Constantinople.

The main reason for the close resemblance between Ostrogothic and imperial gold is the imperial gold prerogative. Procopius describe how the emperor enjoyed the right of being the only one to have his bust on gold coins.[84] After the murder of Emperor Nepos in 480, the emperor in Constantinople was the sole ruler enjoying this right. This custom was adhered to by the Ostrogoths in regard to all their gold coinage. The only possible exception, the special case of Theodoric's triple solidus, will be discussed below. During the late antiquity the Roman coinage turned more stylised. By the time of the establishment of the Ostrogothic kingdom, the individual features of emperors were all but gone. Only the inscription of the emperor's name would separate the coins of one imperial reign from another. This would further ease and promote the uniformity of gold coinage in the Mediterranean area.

The gold denominations of Ostrogothic Italy is based on the solidus standard, measuring about twelve thousand nummi,which makes it a high value coin suited for large payments on state level and for making up the fortunes of the extremely wealthy. In addition to the solidus, the Ostrogoths minted the tremissis, a third of the solidus, ideally measuring four thousand nummi. The semissis, half a solidus, and the double solidus is known from the imperial mints, but was not minted in any considerable amount in Ostrogothic Italy. Only one semissis in the name of Anastasius is attributed to an Ostrogothic mint.[85]

Gold coins were very valuable and intended for large transactions conducted by the rich and powerful. A comparison to the copper denominations used for day to day transactions show which role the gold must have played in the economy of the time and which parts of society would have come into contact with these coins. The regular denominations of copper coins measured between two and forty nummi after the reform of Anastasius. The forty nummi coins, called folles after the word for a small bag of coins that would normally contain about an equivalent value, is believed to have had a value suited for everyday transaction among commoners of the Mediterranean world. The vast difference in value between the upper and

---

84 Procopius, *History of the Wars (Book IV)*, 438-439.
85 Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy*, 19.

the lower denominations, given the solidi were valued at about twelve thousand nummi, clearly show that only the well off parts of society could be expected to encounter the gold coinage at all. These coins could serve as a medium to promote the authority of the ruler to the very highest strata of society.

The upholding of the imperial prerogative must be considered more than just a result of keeping to tradition and the technical simplicity for the coin strikers of keeping to the traditional imperial bust. The potential for sending a message of authority through minting a truly Ostrogothic gold issue would be so great that it would certainly have been considered, but after all rejected. The Merovingian ruler of Austria, Theodebert, is famous for his blatant break with the prerogative, the offence that caused Procopius[86] to mention this imperial right in his works. Theodebert must have come to a different conclusion that the Ostrogothic rulers. Perhaps did the Austrian king feel he had fewer ties to the ruler in Constantinople, or that he was less threatened by the military and political force of the Byzantine Empire. His kingdom, centred on the European continent, was further away from the reach of the imperial fleet and armies than Italy. Theodebert's realm would have been a less likely target than the Ostrogoths in Italy for Byzantine ambitions, which could be fuelled by such offences as a break with the golder prerogative. When the risks were considered negligible, Theodebert seized the benefits of increased authority that his head on the gold coins could bring him.

Determining the reasons for the Ostrogothic kings to forego the same benefits as Theodebert was seeking will provide important insight into the political culture in which these rulers manoeuvred. The most obvious cause for hesitation about breaking the imperial prerogative would be the reluctance to undermine relations to Constantinople. The conquest of Africa and eventually Italy by Justinian's armies proved that the imperial power was able and willing, under the right circumstances, to engage the major barbarian kingdoms in the Mediterranean. This potential danger must have been clear also to Theodoric, Amalasuientha, Theodahad and perhaps Athalaric even before the invasion actually took place. The Ostrogothic Amals had themselves come to power in Italy through the imperial

---

86 Procopius, *History of the Wars,* (Book IV), 438-439.

interest of a regime change. There was no guarantee a similar deal would not be struck with another ambitious warlord in the Balkans or elsewhere, if the relations between Ravenna and Constantinople were to deteriorate too gravely. The fear of retaliation kept the Ostrogothic leaders from challenging the imperial authority by breaking with the golden prerogative.

In addition to the direct consequences of poor relations to the imperial power, support from Constantinople would have improved the royal authority within the Italian society. Ostrogothic Italy was dominated by two strong factions, the Ostrogothic warrior elite and the wealthy Roman landowners, the pinnacle of whom made up the senatorial aristocracy. The most prestigious senators had close ties to the court and aristocratic society in Constantinople. Even if trade and communication between the provinces that once made up the united Roman Empire was waning, the rich and learned elites still participated in a community of *romanitas* across the Mediterranean world. In dealing with the senatorial power, the Ostrogothic king could benefit from an impression that he was part of this united world of civilisation and civil structure, as opposed to the savage otherness easily connected to barbarian rule. Few methods would be more efficient for creating this impression than to strike the bust of the overlord of the Roman world, the Byzantine emperor, on the gold coins that were likely to end up in a senator's purse.

The gold minted by King Theodoric and his successors is closely related to the eastern, imperial issues, but with certain, minor differences. The imperial gold of Anastasius, which served as model for the coins of Theodoric, include the bust of the emperor on the obverse side with a legend giving his name and honouring him as 'our lord' and 'emperor'. The bust is in a three quarter turned position for the solidus (fig. 7.1. and 7.2.) and in profile for the tremissis (fig. 7.3). The reverse side show the goddess Victory supporting a large cross on the solidus and advancing carrying a wreath and cruciger (globe topped with a cross) on the tremissis.

During the last decades of the fourth century, the three quarters facing of the bust on the solidus was introduced in the east and subsequently also adopted in the Italian mints

(fig. 1.7), replacing the earlier, frontal style (fig. 1.2 and 1.9). This change in style show that Italian minters were in contact with their eastern colleagues and adjusted to developments there to maintain the uniformity of the coinage.

Uniformity could serve two purposes. First, a standardised monetary system across the Mediterranean provided economic benefits. The highly valuable gold coins would be likely to travel great distances as a result of luxury and bulk trade or diplomatic agreements including the payment of tribute or ransom. A uniform system of the coins included in this system was essential for the economic relations across the Mediterranean world. Secondly, when the kings in the new barbarian kingdoms in the west upheld conformity regarding the imperial style, this gave an impression of subordination, both on an artistic and on a political level.

Despite the value of uniformity and even if the prerogative was respected by the Ostrogothic rulers, they did not completely refrain from adding royal references to the gold coins minted under their authority. Theodoric minted solidi with his own monogram struck at the end of the Victory legend on the reverse side (figs. 2.1. - 2.4.). Quite possibly these coins were struck in the period of disagreement between Theodoric and Emperor Anastasius, from the ascension of Anastasius in 491 until an agreement was reached and the reign of Theodoric was accepted by the emperor in 497.[87] Later issues of the solidus appear without the royal monogram (fig. 2.5), in honour of the agreement with the imperial power and respecting the emperor's monopoly on references on gold.

Straying from the policy of uniformity could also show greater subordination to the emperor. Both the solidus and the tremissis had the goddess Victory on their reverse sides. The usual reverse of the tremissis had Victory advancing right holding a wreath as a sign of victory and a globe cruciger, a cross on top of a globe. Issues of the tremissis minted under the authority of Theodoric and Athalaric show the globe has been removed and the cross is simply hovering above the hand of Victory (figs. 2.6. and 2.7). With this gesture the Ostrogothic king showed that he had no global ambitions (as represented by the globe),

---

87 Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy,* 18

60

which would have challenged the authority of the emperor.[88]

The most interesting numismatic case from the Ostrogothic material is undoubtedly the triple solidus of Theodoric (fig. 2.10.). It is the only example of a gold coin bearing the portrait of an Ostrogothic king. Theodoric is depicted in frontal view with the entire torso visible on the obverse side of the coin. In his left hand the king is holding a globe, and on top of this Victory is dancing. The reverse side also feature a dancing Victory and the meticulous inscription *REX THEODORICVS VICTOR GENTIVM*. This reference to King Theodoric's victories over "people" is by Grierson interpreted as a reference to his victories over Burgundians and Franks in 509. The more traditional view however is for the coin to be dated to the year 500, when Theodoric celebrated his combined *decennalia* as ruler in Italy and *tricennalia* and ruler of the Ostrogoths.[89] [90]

The portrait of the king show him addressing a crowd as he is holding his hand up to form the *ad lucatio*, the sign given by Roman military commanders about to encourage their men before battle. As the lord of Italy Theodoric is addressing his subjects and establishing his authority through words and through symbols. This blatant use of gold coinage to promote his own standing as king in Italy would seem to be just as much of an outrage as Theodebert striking of gold in his own name. However, special circumstances surrounds the triple solidus. It weighs 15.3 grams, approximately the third of a regular solidus, and is as far as known to modern numismatics, one of a kind. It has been suggested that the uniqueness of the coin and its probable use as a medallion makes it rather a piece of art than a functional coin which would challenge the gold prerogative.[91] Theodoric is here showing his skill in balancing different interests. On one hand he basks in the glory the precious coin (or medallion) yields, having it play a central role in the celebrations at Rome would have ensured it caught the attention of important groups in the high society in the city. At the same time, keeping the triple solidus from circulating freely, as a regular coin would have, Theodoric restricted the negative consequences for his relationship to Constantinople. The immediate successors of Theodoric would continue the types used by him without any

---

88 Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy* 21
89 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage,* 35.
90 Brown, *Late Antiquity.* 109.
91 Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins(...)*, xxxii.

major developments apart from the change of emperor honoured on the obverse as Justin was succeeded by Justinian in 527.

In the eastern mints, a development in the Victory type for Justin's solidi took place in that the ancient goddess Victory on the reverse was replaced by an angel with masculine features. This Christianisation of the coinage can be seen as an early example of the general policy of strict religious doctrines dominating the reign of Justinian. Justinian is believed to have taken care of civic matters during the reign of his illiterate uncle Justin, which support viewing the change in the solidus symbolism as a part of Justinian's wider plans. These changes were not implemented in the Ostrogothic mints, however.[92] The traditional values represented by the ancient goddess appear to have been more valuable than to follow the imperial lead.

The first part of Athalaric's reign, with Amalasuientha as effective ruler, was marked by warm relations to Constantinople, with personal bonds between Amalasuientha and Justinian. The Ostrogothic nobles were less enthusiastic of the reign of a boy and his mother, and accused them both of excessive romanisation and of abandoning the warrior virtues that had guided Theodoric during his years on the throne. In this situation it would have distanced the ruler further from his Gothic subjects to reject the goddess of Victory for the new innovation of the emperor. Keeping the old design for the solidus, as opposed to following the new one introduced in Constantinople, can be seen as playing down the link between Ravenna and the imperial court at a time when such a link created domestic problems.

One of the most interesting features in Ostrogothic gold coins are found in the material of King Totila, or Baduila as he is officially names on his coins. As the only ruler who really effectively opposed the Byzantine forces invading Italy, Totila enjoyed a relatively long reign, but one constantly defined by the war waged against the Byzantines. Even when battling the forces of the empire, Totila upheld the traditional prerogative of its emperor to have his bust on the obverse of the gold coins when striking gold in his mint in Ticinum.

---

92 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage, 24.*

Obviously not to eager to honour his enemy Justinian, though, Totila turned to a time of more friendly relations by depicting the head of the late Emperor Anastasius, honouring him with both portrait and inscription (fig. 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4). Such honouring of deceased emperors on coins was not unprecedented at the time of Totila. The Vandals are known to have minted silver coins in the name of Emperor Honorius in the late fifth century, more than fifty years after that emperor's death (fig. 8.1). This connection to the past must be considered a delicate way of keeping in touch with the idea of the Roman Empire on the one hand, and being able to show strength and opposition against the present regime on the other.

In the case of the Vandals, the anachronistic use of Emperor Honorius' portrait can be related to the uncertain political situation in the Mediterranean in the 480s and 490s. The coins are believed to first have been minted in the reign of Gunthamund. Gunthamund was seeking to improve foreign relations for his Vandal kingdom after years of plunder and religious persecutions. With the western emperor removed and replaced by King Odovacar, Gunthamund reached back in time to associate with the imperial authority that represented order and peace in the Mediterranean.[93]

Totila chose to mint coins with a deceased emperor for a different reason, but was nonetheless seeking to establish a link of relation between his own regime and that of the imperial authority. He was locked in a exhausting and bloody struggle with the imperial forces and had to show his unwavering resolve to have any chance of leading his followers to victory. Depicting the enemy on the Ostrogothic coins would certainly send contradicting messages to those fighting in his ranks. At the same time the Ostrogothic king could not have seen any immediate benefits from trying to improve relations to the Byzantine Empire, as Justinian could not be expected to back out of the conflict because of flattery alone. Still, Totila does not follow the Merovingian Theodebert, replacing the imperial bust with his own. The reason must have been the hopes of victory against the invading forces, or at least to bring about a stalemate and a peace treaty where the peninsula would be shared.

---

93 Merilles and Miles, *The Vandals,* 149.

Given the uprisings in Constantinople and outspoken opposition to Justinian among Byzantine court officials early in his reign, Totila could also have hoped for such opposing forces to re-emerge in the imperial capital, especially if the costly campaign in Italy dragged on for too long. If the aggressive Justinian was replaced by someone less militarily ambitious, the chances of a peaceful settlement in Italy would be greatly improved. If peace was brought about somehow, the Ostrogothic kingdom would benefit from normalised relations to the Empire, and keeping the imperial bust on the gold coins would be a clear sign that the Ostrogoths never wished or intended to break their bonds to Constantinople.

Apart from the triple solidus of Theodoric, all of the gold coins minted by the Ostrogoths are copies of imperial types, though the Ostrogothic coins and those from the Constantinople mints can quite easily be distinguished between, through slight differences in style, mint marks and occasional differences in depictions and inscriptions. Some of these differences are merely technical in nature, but the more symbolic alternations can tell of a kingdom finely balancing its interests between showing respect and subordination towards the emperor and projecting authority of its own.

Silver Coinage

The Ostrogothic coinage differed from the Byzantine material on one important point. The extensive use of silver in the Ostrogothic monetary system is contrasted by the eastern system in the fifth and sixth century, where the limited number of silver coins minted indicate that their economic importance had largely ceased.[94]

The silver coins of Ostrogothic origin are partly based on earlier western imperial types and adopt Byzantine traits, but also show features that must be considered Ostrogothic, or at the least Germanic, in origin. The silver coins are therefore a particularly interesting part of the material on which this analysis is based, as the different political entities making up the background for the Ostrogothic kingdom come together in these coins.

Ostrogothic silver coins mainly come in just two denominations, the half siliqua and the

---

94 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage, 24.*

quarter siliqua. A very few examples of full siliqua and milarensis are known from the reign of Theodoric, but the minting of these larger silver denominations ceased in the first quarter of the sixth century.[95] The siliqua was a unit of five hundred nummi, and would be a rather high valued unit in the monetary system.

The silver would naturally play an intermediate role between the high value gold and the everyday copper denominations. The low number of whole siliqua, but abundance of the half and quarter siliqua show that these silver coins were minted to be utilised in a lower value section of the economy. The silver would potentially end up in the hands of a wide range of social groups, and the varied symbolism on these coins would be spread widely in both the Italian society and beyond.

The silver of Theodoric was primarily imperial types with the bust of the Byzantine emperor in profile in the obverse. This is in accordance with the imperial types of both pre Ostrogothic Italy and the Byzantine mints. The reverse sides are more of interest as they show the many different facets of Theodoric's ambitions. The half siliqua come in several quite different versions for the reverse side. One type contains a Christogram (chi rho), with the inscription *CONS* on the reverse (fig. 2.11). This Christian reference with an abbreviation of the eastern capital is from the early reign of Theodoric, before the Ostrogothic capture of Ravenna. Theodoric was sent from the east to liberate Italy from the reign of the barbarian Odovacar. He upheld that he was in his right to do so through agreement with the Byzantine emperor. Despite his differing religion, Theodoric issued a coin connecting his imperial overlord in the east, on his throne in Constantinople, to the divine rule of Christ. Through these almighty authorities had Theodoric come to Italy.

A simpler form of the Christogram, a six armed star is an alternative form of the half siliqua under Theodoric. The reference to Constantinople is omitted in this version (fig. 2.12). Both are within wreaths. A third half siliqua type feature an advancing Victory with the inscription *INVICTA ROMA*, a traditional Roman legend celebrating the past glories of the city as well as the victories of King Theodoric.The quarter siliqua is more standardised with

---

95 Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini,* 87.

the reverse featuring the monogram of Theodoric. The monogram appear with wreath (fig. 2.14) and interestingly with the *INVICTA ROMA* inscription, tying the monarch closer to the eternal city.

The silver of Athalaric is less varied than that of Theodoric, featuring just two major types. The half siliqua has the monogram of Athalaric on the reverse side (figs. 3.6 and 3.8), following this trend started by Odovacar and continued by Theodoric. The quarter siliqua of Athalaric introduce a new type in that the king's name is spelled out completely on the reverse side with the royal title *RIX* added to it (figs. 3.7 and 3.9). Through this clear reference to his own person, Athalaric is presenting himself as regent to his people. Any successor of Theodoric the Great would struggle to establish an authority over the realm that would match the predecessor. Athalaric, a minor torn between the interests of his mother and those of the Ostrogothic nobles, would need all the help available to establish his position as ruler of the Ostrogoths. An important tool in this process was the silver coinage with his name on it, for everyone to see.

The successors to the Ostrogothic throne continued to mint the two denominations of half and quarter siliqua with reverse sides featuring wreaths containing either monograms or fully written names with the *RIX* title. The monogram minted by King Witigis is of special interest however, as he never created a monogram of his own, but simply used that of Theodoric (fig. 5.2). It is clear that the value of association with the great king and establisher of the kingdom was worth a lot in the time of strife when Witigis ascended the Ostrogothic throne. To get the Ostrogoths to fight for him against the imperial forces invading Italy, he reached back to the days of Theodoric and identified himself with him.

Witigis was without Amal blood and was tied to the house of Theodoric only through his marriage with Matasuntha, the old king's grand daughter. Silver issues with references only to Theodoric is believed to belong in about the reign of Witigis. This would be a naturally way for the first Ostrogothic king in Italy without any blood line to Theodoric to connect to the founder of the kingom. Grierson[96] attributes these coins, referring to Theodoric, as

---

96 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage, 37.*

66

minted in the sole reign of Amalasuientha after the death of her son Athalaric, as the minting authorities did not want to strike coins in the name of a woman. Although possible, this hypothesis seems rather unlikely given the short span of time between Athalaric's death and Amalasuientha's marriage to Theodahad, who certainly minted coins in his own name and with his own monogram.

For Totila's silver coins the interesting development is found on the obverse side of the coins. While the reverse is just a continuation of the full name (fig. 6.5) and monogram (fig. 6.6) types, Totila put his own portrait on the obverse in place of the emperor's. This break with tradition is an indication of how far removed Totila must have felt his kingdom was from it's original position as a part of the Mediterranean world under the ultimate leadership of the Byzantine emperor. Being able and willing to change the obverse of his silver coins it is interesting that Totila remained faithful to the gold prerogative, as mention in the previous section. After almost two decades of conflict there was a marked break with the Empire, as seen in the silver coinage, but even at this point the break was not complete. The hope of better times with peaceful relations lived on.

Copper Coinage

Copper coinage of the Ostrogoths was minted according to the folles system, where forty nummi were counted to the folles. The denominations varied from the small two nummi coin through five, ten, and twenty nummi up to the folles. This provided a wide range of coins for varied combinations. The copper can naturally be divided into groups by type and reference. Throughout the Ostrogothic period in Italy the copper types tend to develop from mostly referring to cities, the so called municipal types, and the imperial types to more royal types. This development go hand in hand with a similar trend in silver coinage, and is naturally driven by the conflict between the Ostrogoths and the Byzantines, and the need to emphasise the royal authority in such times of danger.

The copper coinage in the Ostrogothic kingdom is subject to a lot of uncertainty and debate. This is in part because of poor execution and copper's higher rate of deterioration, making the coins left for modern inspection less clear and legible than gold and silver coins.

Another feature making it difficult to reach certain conclusion is the lack of references to reigns and regents on many of the copper issues.

The main lines of disagreement relate to the question of the so called municipal issues. These are copper coins without reference to imperial or royal authority, simply containing traditional symbolism of the major cities of the former Western Empire, most often those having an imperial mint. The cities of the Ostrogothic kingdom minting this sort of coins were Rome and Ravenna. Comparable cases are known from Carthage and these were also issued after the conquest of the Vandals (fig. 8.6 – 8.9).

The term municipal coins imply a hands off approach from the monarch and a large degree of local or urban decision making regarding the minting process. The main argument for this view is the Roman coins bearing the mark *SC,* interpreted as "senatus consulto" by both Wroth[97] and Grierson[98], thus implying the Roman Senate's direct responsibility and power of decision over the minting of these municipal coins. The Senate's right to mint these coins was, according to this view, revived by Theodoric as a gesture towards the ancient institution. This view has been challenged by Metlich[99] however, who is critical of the whole idea of the Senate having any direct responsibility or interest in the minting of the Roman copper coins. According to this line of argument, the minting of coins was the responsibility of the monarch, and he would oversee the creation of coins of every material and decide which motif should be put on them. If the *SC* mark was indeed a reference to the Senate, the only honouring of that institution lay in the inscription itself, not in any special rights or duties held by it.

The municipal issues were all minted in the reigns of Theodoric and Athalaric. Both Rome and Ravenna are represented in the material of both kings. Theodoric's issues include a ten nummi coin with a personification of Ravenna and an eagle (fig. 2.19) and an issue with equal artistic themes in a Roman forty nummi coin with personification of Rome and eagle (fig. 2.21). The eagle was a traditional Roman symbol, famously carried as battle standard

97 Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins...*, 333.
98 Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage,* 31.
99 Metlich, *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy,* 9.

by the Roman legions from republican times. It was also a favoured theme in Gothic and generally Germanic artwork. It is unlikely that this motif is chosen by chance. Whether the royal power was behind this decision or someone else, such as the Senate, was responsible is not clear, but the minting authority saw a possibility to merge Roman and Goth within the artistic expression of a coin and ceased upon it. The municipal coinage of Theodoric also include a ten nummi coin of Ravenna with a personification of the city with the city's monogram within wreaths (fig. 2.20) and several issues featuring the Roman wolf, a reference to the founding myth of the city, not available in the catalogue.[100]

One of the few actions taken under the reign of Athalaric of any lasting consequence was the expansion of the copper coinage to include several of the denominations in the folles system and thus minting a more varied selection of types. Under his reign, the municipal types were continued with examples such as the eagle and tree type (3.13) and the wolf of Rome (figs. 3.14 and 3.15). The maintenance and expansion of these municipal types prove the importance of a bond between the king and the powerful groups in Italy still adhering to the idea of a glorious Rome.

An interesting coin is the ten nummi with a personification of Rome on the obverse and a standing figure in armour with the legend *DN ATALARICVS* on the reverse (fig. 3.12). The figure, presenting Athalaric as a able warrior seems to have been inspired by the standing soldier type from Vandal Carthage (figs. 8.8 and 8.9), but where the Vandal version is anonymous, Athalaric have himself depicted in full figure on his copper coin, the only such format in the whole material of Ostrogothic coinage. The message behind the coin seems clear. Athalaric had been accused by the Ostrogothic noblemen of being unfit to rule and lead. These accusations were countered by royal propaganda portraying the young king as able to perform his martial duties.

The same strategy seems to have been employed by Theodahad, facing the same accusations of ineptness in war. To him the accusation were even more drastic, as the Byzantine invasion forced him into a war and the preservation of his position required the support of

---

100 Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini,* catalogue.

the Gothic warrior class. Like Athalaric, Theodahad used copper coins to spread the image of his abilities as a leader in times of war. A detailed and well executed issue was created with King Theodahad suited up for battle with the legend *DN THEODAHATVS REX* on the obverse side and an advancing Victory on the reverse (fig. 4.4). This coin seems inspired by the bust type minted by Odovacar for his half siliqua (fig. 1.12). Unlike the bare headed Odovacar, the portrait of Theodahad include a so called *spangen* helmet. This metal head wear is held together by riveted metal bands, which is the origin of the German term. This must at first be regarded as a helmet of typically Germanic style. The cloak and armour worn by the king on this depiction is harder to pinpoint as either Germanic or Roman. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the truly Germanic features in art and fashion is hard to distinguish from the styles adopted and integrated in the Roman world in late antiquity.[101] In comparison to the Roman uniform worn by the full figure representation of Athalaric on his ten nummi (fig. 3.12), the attempt by Theodahad to play down his connections to the pleasant life of the Roman aristocracy seems obvious. This was a clear response to those voices criticising him for his shortcomings as military commander. Even if Theodahad was eventually deposed and killed, this coin is clearly yet another example of the Ostrogothic kings using the propaganda potential in coinage to adjust relations between the royal power and groups in the Ostrogothic society, or at least play down the impact of the criticism from these groups.

The copper coinage of Totila stand out as unique in comparison to the issues of the previous reigns. He initially minted his copper in Ticinum, the capital of the Ostrogothic kingdom after the fall of Ravenna. The Ticinum ten nummi issues (fig. 6.9) are reminiscent of the silver coins of Totila, with the centred inscription *DN BADVILA REX* on the reverse. The obverse, having the bust of the emperor on the comparable silver coins, have a personification of Ticinum and the inscription *FELIX TICINUM.* The *FELIX* prefix is known from municipal issues from Ravenna (ex. Fig. 2.19), and these coins hint at the restoration of the Ostrogothic kingdom based on a 'new Ravenna'.

After Totila's recapture of Rome in 546, he commenced minting of copper in the city. These

---

101 Merilles and Miles, *The Vandals,* 105.

coins were highly royal and militarised with a frontal bust of the king on the obverse and a the kings name (fig. 6.8), a standing soldier (fig. 6.10) or an approaching lion (fig. 6.11) on the reverse. The recapture of Rome was not of great strategic significance, but it must have given the Totila and his Ostrogoths a hope that the conflict could be resolved though continued resistance and an eventual peace treaty. The coins from Rome show a king with his head held high attempting to rally support for his cause and maintain the initiative.

Summary of Features

Imperial, Ostrogothic royal and ancient municipal references are all appearing together in different configurations in the total body of silver and bronze coinage of the Ostrogoths. Throughout the Ostrogothic period, from Theodoric to the reign of Totila, there is a development of increased use of the royal symbolism at the expense of the imperial. This development does not go as fast as one would perhaps expect, considering the state of war between the Ostrogothic kingdom and the Byzantine Empire.

This development is part of the use of coins as tools to improve the king's standing in a shallenging changing political landscape. The new royal types developed in copper and silver in the reigns of Athalaric and Theodahad show this clearly. The two kings succeeding the great Theodoric had problems establishing their authority and securing the full support for their reigns among their subjects. They attempted to use the potential found in coins to forge the royal image of themselves to their advantage and make up for some of their lacking abilities.

The last kings of the Ostrogoths with a reign of some duration, Witigis and Totila, continued this trend, even if these kings had more success as commanders and enjoyed prestige through their military feats. The inspiration for the royal types in silver primarily came from Vandal Africa, where silver coin had been minted with clear royal references since the last quarter of the fifth century (fig. 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5). The Vandal kings Hilderic and Gunthamund had silver coins minted with their profile busts on them, resembling the style of imperial busts. This was a feature also adopted by Odovacar in the final years of his reign, even if the bust of Odovacar had a more 'Germanic' style than that of the Vandal kings

(fig. 1.12).

Odovacar introduced the monogram to his coinage, another feature continued onto the Ostrogothic coinage. The monogram is used for the reverse side of silver of all the Ostrogothic kings minting silver. A unique monogram was made for Athalaric and struck on his silver coins (fig. 3.6). Theodahad minted his own monogram while Witigis adopted the one used by Theodoric's to increase his standing and connect closer to the line of Amals. The monograms are thus used both to enforce the authority of the regent himself and to draw lines back to the tradition of earlier kings. In Witigis' case the references to Theodoric are obvious, but also the kings using their own monograms are taking part in a tradition which relate them to their predecessors, first of all the great Theodoric.

The reign of Athalaric saw the introduction of complete inscriptions of the king's name on the reverse side (fig. 3.7), a feature continued by all the later Ostrogothic kings known to have minted coins. This royal legend was written in horizontal lines down the middle of the reverse side, unlike the usual legend following the edge of the coin like a wreath. The inscription thus resembles the monogram more than anything else and could be seen as a more explicit version of a monogram.

Odovacar used the title *Flavius* for himself on coins where his name was spelled out, a term referring to the old, Roman gens Flavia. The name was closely attached to imperial power and through it, Odovacar was relating himself to the heritage of the Western Roman rulers. A similar reference is found on the coins bearing Athalaric's full name, which was preceded by *DN*, the abbreviation of *Dominus Noster*. Even though the phrase literally means 'our lord', which could be interpreted as simply pointing to the king's overlordship within his kingdom, the term is widely used in imperial coinage and the reference to imperial coinage is evident. In comparison, Theodoric did not refer to himself using such titles found on imperial types. Almost exclusively using his monogram when referring to himself on coinage, his full name is spelled out only on the triple solidus, mentioned under the section on gold coins. On this coin the title *RIX* is used, a latinised version of the Germanic term for king or chieftain, and no explicitly imperial references are found in the legend. The use of

72

the fully spelled out name of the king put emphasis on the king's presence and rule in the kingdom. In times when the royal power was challenged by foreign or domestic threats, the references to the royal power in the coinage turned more explicit and direct.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The history of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy is one about *occupation, coexistence, authority*, and *crisis*. The conclusion of this thesis will be presented as a readjustment of the relative scales of these terms describing the kingdom and it's political culture. The starting point for this readjustment is a social project of integration between Roman and Gothic as described by Cassiodorus in his *Variae*. This view is too far in the direction of cooperation and symbiosis between the Italian Romans and the Goths. The Ostrogoths arrived from the Balkans as a people with social structures based on it's nobility of warriors. This group came to Italy as invaders and occupied the Italian peninsula for their own benefits.

Establishing in Italy, the Ostrogoths under Theodoric did not have such a deep integration as Cassiodorus makes his readers believe through the *Variae*. Theodoric was first of all a king of the Ostrogoths. His triple solidus clearly states that he was king, *rex*, a Germanic title implying his rule over his barbarians. Except for the help he could take from Romans handling the administration of the kingdom, the role of the inhabitants already living in Italy by the time of the Goths' arrival was first of all *gentes* which *Theodoric Victor Gentium* ruled because of his martial prowess.

The numismatic material from Theodoric's reign reveal a conscious approach to the relationship to the Byzantine empire. This included a careful adherence to the gold prerogative and a low degree of self promotion on coinage of any type. Silver and copper coins of Theodoric carried the bust of the Emperor with no depiction of the Ostrogothic monarch. The king connected himself to the Empire, the authority which had given him the green light for the expedition, but did little to tie himself to either the Roman elite or bring Ostrogothic elements into the coinage. There was no need for this. Theodoric had his authority through his role as warlord commanding a fearsome and effective fighting force. The only real menace to his supremacy was the Byzantine Empire and it's superior military

might. The Roman aristocracy turned to Theodoric when the Acacian Schism cut them of from Constantinople, but this was the initiative of the aristocrats, not Theodoric. To tie the Ostrogothic elite into the Italian society by striking Ostrogothic references on coins was not necessary either, as Theodoric enjoyed considerable authority among his Gothic warriors through his military achievements. Cultural or political means were unnecessary.

Theodoric's successors were thrown into the role of regents in a kingdom where the power had been linked to the authority of one man, Theodoric, and founded in his personal qualities. When men (and women) lacking the same abilities and authority ended up as regents, there was no system they would rely on. Athalaric and Theodahad turned to the coinage to mend their problems as kings. Both brought military references into their coinage to send a message to the Ostrogothic nobility. This was an attempt to increase their standing and authority. Athalaric also spread his name on coins, further hitting home the message of royal authority. In Theodahad's case, these efforts did not succeed, and it costed him his life.

Witigis had the military experience to handle the role as commander of the Goths, but lacked the pedigree of the Amals. In addition to his marriage with Theodoric's grand daughter, he used the coinage specifically to create a link to the old king by the use of his monogram.

None of these kings specifically reached out for the Roman aristocracy for closer bonds. The Ostrogothic society, in Italy as in the Balkans, was a society of warrior nobility. Senators and bishops happened to be inhabitants in the county that was promised to the Ostrogoths, and so they became subjects in the Italian kingdom. Their rank in the Roman society did not make them much more interesting to their Ostrogothic rulers. The only factor that might could have been of interest was the size of a nobleman's fields and the amount he could be expected to pay in tax to sustain the Ostrogothic warriors.

Well into the Gothic War with ravaged lands and a broken Italian economy, the Roman aristocracy had either fled or remained impoverished. Totila as king of the Ostrogoths still believed in a future peace and a continued Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy. The Ostrogothic

project did not rely on the Romans as Cassiodorus claimed then he arrived in Constantinople. His exaggerations of his role as Roman was a tactical move, an attempt by an employee of the Ostrogothic king to manoeuvre the deadly politics of Constantinople in the midst of the Gothic War. It does not necessarily convey the truth.

The history of the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy is one about *occupation*, *coexistence, authority*, and *crisis*. Is was indeed an occupation, even if the Ostrogoths had an imperial sanction to go through with their invasion and subsequent occupation. There was coexistence, but it was on according to the will of the Ostrogoths. The level of cooperation is likely to be an exaggeration on the part of Cassiodorus. The factor of be or not to be for the Ostrogothic kings was not the relationship to the Roman elite, but the authority they enjoyed with their own people. The security situation with the Byzantine Empire was also a concern which occupied the Ostrogothic regents. The Gothic War threw Roman Italy into crisis, but it did not break the spirits of the Ostrogoths. The warriors who came to Italy with Theodoric had suffered years of was and famine in the Balkans before arriving in Italy. Two generations later the Ostrogoths had not become romanised by being in Italy. They had brought their warrior culture with them.

Totila's attempt at preserving an Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy failed because his forces were overpowered by the enemy. The Ostrogothic project could not be broken by anything by steel, because it was forged and maintained by Gothic steel, not by Roman pens.

Coins of Emperor Nepos (474-480, Nepos ruling from exile in Dalmatia from 475, mainly with Odovacar as actual authority in Italy, reign interrupted by Romulus Augustus in 476)

1.1. Solidus (4.42 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVL NEPOS PF AVC*, Emperor Nepos facing with trifolium helmet, cuirass and spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIAAVCCC:* Victory with large cross. Mintmarks R (left) and V (right). COMOB

1.2. Solidus (4.3 g, Milan): Ob: *DN IVL NEPOS PF AVC*, Emperor Nepos facing with trifolium helmet, cuirass and spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIAAVCCC* Victory with large cross. Mintmarks R (left) and V (right). COMOB

1.3. Tremissis (1.4 g, Milan): Ob: *DN IVLI NEPOS PF VAC*, Emperor Nepos diademed and cuirassed. Re: Cross within wreath. COMOB

1.4. Tremissis (1.46 g, Arles (?)): Ob: *DN IVLNEPF AVC* , Emperor Nepos diademed and cuirassed. Re: Cross within wreath. COMOB

1.5. Siliqua (2.04 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVL NEPOS PF VAC*, Emperor Nepos diademed and cuirassed. Re: *URBIS ROMA,* Victory enthroned holding Roma and scepter. RVPS

1.6. Half Siliqua (0.94 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVLI NEPOS PF VAC*, Emperor Nepos diademed and draped. Re: Tyche of Ravenna on the prow of ship. Mintmarks R (left) and V (right).

Coins of Emperor Romulus Augustus (476)	
1.7. Solidus (4.41 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ROMVLVSAVCVSTVS PF AVC* Emperor Romulus Augustus (Augustulus) front with trifolium helmet, cuirass and spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC:* Victory standing left with large cross. Star right. COMOB.	1.8. Tremissis (4.41 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ROMVLVSAVCVSTVS PF AVC* Emperor Romulus Augustus (Augustulus) front with trifolium helmet, cuirass and spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC:* Victory standing left with large cross. Star right. COMOB.
Coins of King Odovacar (476 - 493), coins in the name of Emperor Zeno until 491.	
1.9. Solidus (4.43 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ZENO PERPAVC* Emperor Zeno front with trifolium helmet, cuirass and spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC* (cross in the end of legend). Victory standing left with large cross. Star right. COMOB. (Odovacar in the name of Zeno)	1.10. Tremissis (1.45 g, Ravenna): Ob: *[DN ZE]NO PERP F AVC* Emperor Zeno facing right, diademes and draped. Re: Cross within wreath. COMOB. (Odovacar in the name of Zeno)
1.11. Half Siliqua (1.28 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ZENO PERP AVC* Emperor Zeno facing right, diademes and draped. Re: Eagle with raised wings and cross between wings. (Odovacar in the name of Zeno)	1.12. Half Siliqua (0.82 g, Ravenna): Ob: *FL OD[OVA]C* Odovacar right, bare headed with mustache, draped. Re: Monogram of Odovacar within wreath. RV

1.13. Half Siliqua (0.92 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ZENO PERP AVC* Emperor Zeno facing right, diademes and draped. Re: Figure standing on prow with spear and cornucopiae. Mintmark MD.	1.14. Nummus (1.41 g, Ravenna): Ob: *ODOVAC* Odovacar facing right, bare headed and draped. Re: Monogram of Odovacar within wreath.
1.15. Nummus, 40 (19.83 g, Rome): Ob: *INP ZENO FELICISSIMO SEN AUG* Emperor Zeno facing right, with laureate. Re: *IMVICTA ROMA SC* Victory advancing right with trophy and wreath. Denomination mark *XL* in exergue.	

Gold of Theodoric, in the name of Emperor Anastasius (491 - 518)	
2.1. Solidus (4.44 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with trifolium helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG, legend ending with monogram of Theodoric. Victory standing with large cross. Ravenna mint mark left. Star right. CONOB	2.2. Solidus (4.47 g, Rome): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with trifolium helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG, legend ending with monogram of Theodoric. Victory standing with large cross. Mintmark of Rome left. Star right. COMOB.
2.3. Solidus (4.33 g, Rome): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with trifolium helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG, legend ending with monogram of Theodoric. Victory standing with large cross. Roman mint mark left. Star right. COMOB	2.4. Solidus (4.42 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PF AUG*, emperor Anastasius with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG, legend ending with monogram of Theodoric. Victory standing with large cross. Milan mint mark left. Star right. CONOB
2.5. Solidus (4.4 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG. Victory standing with large cross. Milan monogram in end of legend. Star right. CONOB	2.6. Tremissis (1.41 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with diadem, draped. Re: VICTORIA AVCTORVM. Victory advancing right with wreath and globus cruciager. Star right. CONOB

2.7. Tremissis (1.45 g, Rome): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS PF AVG*, emperor Anastasius with diadem, draped. Re: *VICTORIA AVGUSTORVM*. Victory advancing right with wreath and globus cruciager. Star left and right. COMOB	2.8. Tremissis (1.43 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS PP AVG*, emperor Anastasius with diadem, draped. Re: *IVCTORIA AVGUSTORON*. Victory advancing right with wreath and globus cruciager. Star left. CONOB

Gold of Theodoric, in the name of Emperor Justin (518 - 526)

2.9. Tremissis (1.45 g, Rome): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS PP AVC*, emperor Justin with diadem, draped. Re: *VICTORIA AVGUSTORVM*. Victory advancing right with wreath and globus cruciager. Star right. COMOB	

Gold of Theodoric, in name of himself

2.10. Triple Solidus (medallion, 15.3 g, Rome): Ob: *REX THEODERICS PIUS PRINCIS*, full frontal torso of King Theodoric, ad lucatio gesture with right hand and holding Victory in left hand, in cuirass. Re: *REX THEODERICVS VICTOR GENTIVM*. Victory advancing right with wreath and palm leaf. Star right. COMOB	

Silver of Theodoric, in the name of Emperor Anastasius (491 - 518)

2.11. Half Siliqua (1.21 g, Rome): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS PF AUG*, Emperor Anastasius with paludamentum and diadem. Re: Christogram in wreath CONS

2.12. Half Siliqua (1.45 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS AUG*, Emperor Anastasius with paludamentum and diadem. Re: Six-armed star in wreath.

2.13. Half Siliqua (0.9 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS P AUG*, Emperor Anastasius draped and with diadem. Re: *INVICTA ROMA* Victory advancing right with long cross and wreath.

2.14. Quarter Siliqua (0.66 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN ANAS[TASIUS P AUG]*, Emperor Anastasius draped and with diadem. Re: *INVICTA ROMA,* monogram of Theodoric, four armed star above.

2.15. Quarter Siliqua (0.68 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTA[SIUS P AUG]*, Emperor Anastasius draped and with diadem. Re: *INVICTA ROMA,* monogram of Theodoric, cross above and star below.

2.16. Quarter Siliqua (0.86 g, Milan): Ob: *DN ANASTASIUS P AV[C]*, Emperor Anastasius draped and with diadem. Re: *INVICTA ROMA,* monogram of Theodoric, cross above and star below.

Silver of Theodoric, in the name of Emperor Justin (518 - 526)	
  2.17. Quarter Siliqua (0.71 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS P AVC*, Emperor Justin draped and with diadem. Re: monogram of Theodoric, cross above, all in wreath.	

Copper of Theodoric (491 - 526)	
  2.18. Nummus, 2 (0.5 g, Rome): Ob: Diademes bust of Emperor Anastasius. Re: Simple monogram of Theodoric.	 2.19. Nummus, 10 (3.89 g, Rome): Ob: *FELIX RAVENNA*, Draped and crowned personification of Ravenna. Re: Eagle sitting, wings by its side. Star left and right. Denomination mark: X.
  2.20. Nummus, 10 (3.02 g, Rome): Ob: *FELIX RAVENNA*, Draped and crowned personification of Ravenna. Re: Monogram of Ravenna within wreath.	 2.21. Nummus, 40 (10.14 g, Rome): Ob: *INVICTA ROMA*, Helmeted and draped personification of Rome (Roma). Re: Eagle ready for flight, looking back. Denomination mark: XL

Gold of Athalaric, in the name of Emperor Justin (526-527)

3.1. Solidus (4.46 g, Rome): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS PF AVG*, Emperor Justin with helmet and armour, carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVGGG A. Victory standing with large cross. Star left. COMOB	3.2. Tremissis (1.45 g, Rome): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS PF AVG*, Emperor Justin diademed and cuirassed. Re: VICTORIA ACVSTORVM. Victory on globe holding wreath and globus cruciger. Star left. COMOB

Gold of Athalaric, in the name of Emperor Justinian (527-534)

3.3. Solidus (4.44 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PF AVG*, Emperor Justinian with helmet and armour, carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVCCCA. Victory standing with large cross. Star left. COMOB	3.4. Solidus (4.44 g, Rome): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PP AVG*, Emperor Justinian with helmet and armour, carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVCCCA. Victory standing with large cross. Star left. COMOB.
3.5. Tremissis (1.47 g, Rome): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PF AVG*, Emperor Justinian with helmet and armour, carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVCVSTORVM. Victory advancing right with wreath and globe cruciger. Star left. COMOB.	

Silver of Athalaric, in the name of Emperor Justin (526-527)	
3.6. Half siliqua (1.39 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS P AVG*, Emperor Justin diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Athalaric between D and N. Cross above. Star below. Wreath border.	3.7. Quarter siliqua (0.69 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS P AVG*, Emperor Justin diademed and draped. Re: *DN ATHALARICVS* within wreath.

Silver of Athalaric, in the name of Emperor Justinian (527-534)	
3.8. Half siliqua (1.36 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS P AVG*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Athalaric between D and N. Cross above. Star below. Wreath border.	3.9. Quarter siliqua (0.7 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIAN AVG*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: *DN ATHALARICVS REX* within wreath.

Copper of Athalaric	
3.10. Nummus, 2.5 (1.16 g, Rome): Ob: *IVSTINIAN*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Athalaric in wreath.	3.11. Nummus, 5 (1.61 g, Rome): Ob: *INVICTA ROMA*, Personification of Roma in helmet and armour. Re: *DN ANASTASIUS RIX*. Denomination mark V within inscription.

3.12. Nummus, 10 (2.7 g, Rome): Ob: *INVICTA ROMA*, Personification of Roma in helmet and armour. Re: *DN ANASTASIUS*. Anastasius full figure in military dress and armed.

3.13. Nummus, 20 (7.47 g, Rome): Ob: *IMVICTA ROMA*, Personification of Roma in helmet and armour. Re: Tree between two eagles. Denomination mark XX.

3.14. Nummus, 20 (6.48 g, Rome): Ob: *IMVICTA ROMA*, Personification of Roma in helmet and armour. Re: She wolf (lupa) with Romulus and Remus. Denomination mark XX.

3.15. Nummus, 40 (14.33 g, Rome): Ob: *IMVICTA ROMA*, Personification of Roma in helmet and armour. Re: She wolf (lupa) with Romulus and Remus. Denomination mark XL.

Silver of Theodahad (534-536)

4.1. Half Siliqua (1.26 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIAN AVG*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Theodahad within wreath.	4.2. Quarter Siliqua (0.73 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIAN AVG*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: *DN THEODAHATHVS RIX*

Copper of Theodahad (534-536)

4.3. Nummus, 10 (3.92 g, Rome): Ob: *INVICTA ROMA*, Helmeted and draped personification of Rome (Roma). Re: *DN THEODAHATHVS REX* within wreath.	4.4. Nummus, 40 (11.77 g, Rome): Ob: *DN THEODAHATHVS REX*, King Theodahad, helmeted and draped. Re: *VICTORIA PRINCIPVM,* Victory navalis standing on prow holding palm branch and wreath.

Silver of Witigis (534-536)

5.1. Half silique (1.47 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PF AV*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: *DN VVITICES REX* within wreath.	5.2. Quarter silique (0.71 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIAN AVC*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Theodoric within wreath.

Copper of Witigis (536-539)	
 5.3. Nummis, 10 (4.52 g, Ravenna): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PF AV*, Emperor Justinian diademed and draped. Re: *DN VVITICES REX* within wreath.	

Gold of Totila/Baduila (541-552)	
 6.1. Solidus (4.23 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS P I AV*, frontal bust of Emperor Justinian, in trifolium helmet and cuirassed, spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC AII* (legend hardly legible), Victoria standing left with large cross.	 6.2. Solidus (4.4 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PP AVG*, frontal bust of Emperor Anastasius, in trifolium helmet and cuirassed, spear over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC AI*, Victoria standing left with large cross. CONOB ('N' reversed)
 6.3. Tremissis (1.36 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANIS P I AV*, Emperor Justinian, diademed and draped. Re: *VICTORIA AVGVSTORVM*, Victoria advancing right carrying globus cruciger and wreath. C – N -	 6.4. Tremissis (1.41 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS P AVC*, Emperor Anastasius, diademed and draped. Re: *VICTORS AAVCOSTRVI*, Victoria advancing right carrying globus cruciger and wreath. CONOB

Silver of Totila/Baduila (541-552)

6.5. Half siliqua (1.4 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN BADVILA RIX*, King Totila/Baduila, diademed and draped. Re: *DN BADVILA REX* within wreath.

6.6. Half siliqua (1.38 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS P AVC*, Emperor Anastasius, diademed and draped. Re: *DN BADVILA RIX* within wreath.

6.7. Quarter siliqua (0.39 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN IVSTINIANVS PF AVC*, Emperor Justinian, diademed and draped. Re: Monogram of Totila/Baduila within wreath.

Copper of Totila/Baduila (541-552, Roman issues 549 - 552)

6.8. Nummis, 10 (4.9 g, Rome): Ob: *DN BADVELA REX*, King Totila/Baduila, helmeted and draped. Re: *DN BADVILA REX,* denomination mark X below royal inscription. Within unclear wreath.

6.9. Nummis, 10 (2,98 g, Ticinum): Ob: *FELIX TICINVS*, personification of Ticinum, crowned. Re: *DN BADVILA REX,* within unclear wreath.

6.10. Nummis, 10 (4.5 g, Rome): Ob: *DN BADVELA REX*, King Totila/Baduila, helmeted and draped. Re: FLOREA SSEMPER, King Totila/Baduila standing with spear and shield.

6.11. Nummis, 2 (1 g, Rome): Ob: *DN BADVELA*, King Totila/Baduila, helmeted and draped. Re: Lion advancing right in wreath.

6.12. Nummis, 2.5 (0.95 g, Ticinum): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS P AVC (?)*, Emperor Anastasius diademed and draped. Re: *DN REX B*

6.13. Nummis, 2.5 (0.72 g, Ticinum): Ob: Emperor Anastasius diademed and draped (?). Re: *DN RE(X) B*

Imperial gold of Anastasius (491 - 518)

7.1. Solidus (4.44 g, Constantinople): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PP AVC*, Emperor Anastasius with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: VICTORIA AVCCC (ending in Greek gamma). Victory standing with large cross. Star left. CONOB	7.2. Solidus (4.51 g, Constantinople): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PP AVC*, Emperor Anastasius with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC I*. Victory standing with large cross. Star right. CONOB

7.3.[1] Tremissis (1.45 g, Constantinople): Ob: *DN ANASTASIVS PP AVC*, Emperor Anastasius diademed and draped. Re: VICTORIA AVCVSTORVM Victory advancing with wreath and cruciger. Star right. CONOB	

Imperial solidi of Justin (518 - 527)

7.4. Solidus (4.47 g, Constantinople): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS PP AVC*, Emperor Justin, facing 3/4, with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC* (ending in Greek epsilon). Angel (for Victory) standing with large cross and cruciger. Star right. CONOB	7.5. Solidus (4.45 g, Constantinople): Ob: *DN IVSTINVS PP AVC*, Emperor Justin, facing 3/4, with helmet and armour and carrying lance over shoulder. Re: *VICTORIA AVCCC I*. Angel (for Victory) standing with large cross and cruciger. Star right. CONOB

---

1   Illustration from CoinArchives.com. URL: http://www.coinarchives.com/a/lotviewer.php?
    LotID=665132&AucID=1219&Lot=244&Val=97f763db6aba176e17573b172edc6db4 (last visited: 2nd of May 2014,
    now turned into pay service)

Vandal silver (484 - 534)	

8.1. Siliqua (1.36 g, Carthage): Ob: *HONORIUS PVACT*, Emperor Honorius diademed and cuirassed. Re: *ANNO* possibly a count of years since the Vandal capture of Carthage. Personification of Carthage facing and carrying grain ears. Ears below.

8.2. Siliqua (1.69 g, Carthage): Ob: Illegible legend, Emperor Honorius diademed and cuirassed. Re: *URBS ROMA*. Personification of Rome (Roma) seated. *RVPS*.

8.3. Siliqua (0.61 g, Carthage): Ob: *DN HIL[DIRIX RIX?]* (legend badly damaged), King Hilderic diademed and cuirassed. Re: Denominations mark XXV, within wreath.

8.4. Denarius (1.25 g, Carthage): Ob: *DN HILDIRIX RIX*, King Hilderic diademed and cuirassed. Re: *FELIX KARTG,* personification of Cartage facing and carrying grain ears.

8.5. Denarius (1.13 g, Carthage): Ob: *DN RX GVNTHA*, King Gunthamund diademed and cuirassed. Re: Denomination mark, DN (denarius), within thick wreath.

Vandal copper (435 - 534)

8.6. Nummus, 42 (13.02 g, Carthage): Ob: Personification of Carthage standing holding grain ears. Re: Denomination mark, N XLII, within wreath.

8.7. Nummus, 4 (1.38 g, Carthage): Ob: Man holdning palm branch. Re: Denomination mark, N IIII, within dotted border.

8.8. Nummus, 12 (5.61 g, Carthage): Ob: *KARTHAGO* Soldier standing armed and in armour. Reverse: Horse head. Denomination mark, XII.

8.9. Nummus, 21 (6.23 g, Carthage): Ob: *KARTHAGO* Soldier standing armed and in armour. Reverse: Horse head. Denomination mark, XXI.

8.10. Nummus (1.28 g, Carthage): Ob: *DOMINIS NOSTRIS*. Diademed and draped bust of emperor. Reverse: SALVS REIPVBLICE. Gateway.

8.11. Nummus (0.89 g, Vandal Africa): Ob: Diademed and draped bust of emperor. Reverse: Victory advancing holding wreath and globe.

Bibliography

Barnwell, P.S. "Emperors, Jurists and Kings: Law and Custom in the Late Roman and Early Medieval West." *Past and Present* 168 (2000): 6-29.

Berndt, G. and R. Steinacher, "Minting in Vandal North Africa" in *Early Medieval Europe 16 (2008):* 252-297.

Bjornlie, Shane. *Cassiodorus Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople.* Cambridge: | Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Breisach, Ernst. *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Brown, Peter. *The World of Late Antiquity.* New York: W. W. Northon and Company, 1989.

Burns, Thomas. *History of the Ostrogoths.* Bloomington, IN.: Indiana Univerity Press, 1991.

Bury, John. *The Later Roman Empire.* Dover: Dover Publications, 1958.

Cassiodorus. *Variae* (translated by Thomas Hodgkin). London: Henry Frowde, 1886.

Deliyannis, Deborah. *Ravenna in Late Antiquity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Garipzanov, Ildar. *The Symbolic Language Royal Authority in the Carolingian World.* Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Goffart, Walter. *Barbarians and Romans, A.D. 418-584: The technique of Accommodation.*
      Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Green, Bernard. *Christianity in Rome in the First Three Centuries.* London: T&T Clark Int.,
2010.

Grierson, Philip and Mark Blackburn. *Medieval European Coinage.* Cambridge:
      Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Hahn, Wolfgang. *Moneta Imperii Byzantini.* Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie
      der WissenSchaften, 1973.

Halsall, Guy. *Barbarian Migration and the Roman West.* Cambridge: Cambridge University
      Press, 2009.

Heather, Peter. *The Goths.* Liverpool: Liverpool Univeristy Press, 1991.

Jordanes. *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths.* Translated by Charles Mierow. Princeton:
      Princeton University Press, 1908.

Kennell, S.A.H. *S. Ennodius - A Gentleman of the Church.* Detroit: University of Michigan,
      2000.

Kent, J. C. P. "The Coinage of Theodoric in the Names of Anastasius and Justin I". In
      Mints, Dies and Currency, edited by R.A.G. Carson, 67 – 74. London: Methuen & Co
      Ltd., 1971.

Kent, J. C. P. *The Roman Imperial Coinage* Vol. XI. London: Sprink & Son, 1981.

Lafferty, Sean. *Law and Society in the Age of Theoderic the Great.* Cambridge: Cambridge
      University Press, 2013.

Merilles, Andrew and Richard Miles. *The Vandals.* London: John Wiley and Son, 2009.

Metlich, Michael. *The Coinage of Ostrogothic Italy.* London: Sprink, 2004.

Naismith, Rory. *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England.* Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2012.

Procopius. *History of the Wars (De bellis).* Translated by Henry B. Dewing. Cambridge
Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1919.

Thomas, Joseph. *Universal Dictionary of Biography and Mythology Vol. II.* London: J. B.
Lippincott Co., 1908.

Ward-Perkins, Bryan. *The fall of Rome and the End of Civilization.* Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2005.

Wolfram, Herwig. *History of the Goths.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979.

Wroth, Warwick. *Catalogue of the Coins of Vandals, Ostrogoths and Lombards.* London:
British Museum, 1911.