

Devastation or Design?

The Role of the Huns in the Birth of Medieval Europe



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Thomas Michael Hills

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Introduction

“For what fortress, what city, what wide extent of the Roman Empire can hope to exist, secure and impregnable. If it is our pleasure that it should be erased from the earth?”¹ - Attila the Hun

The Huns are always regarded as witless savages in popular depictions from ancient Greek, Chinese and Roman Sources. When historians think of Attila the Hun, they immediately have a pre-conceived view of Attila as a marauder, murderer and recklessly violent. The quote inserted above from Attila certainly supports the view of him as fearsome character. Attila was described by Pope Leo as ‘The Scourge of God’,² and mystified in superstition by Roman literary sources such as Ammianus Marcellinus. Who provided almost a mythical description of the Huns stating “They were the Centaurs”.³ Many prototype Hunnic groups such as the Royal Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Bulgars, Turcomans and the later Mongols throughout history are described as frightening raiders, who could quickly level towns and villages on their horses, devastating populations with their famous Composite Bows.⁴ Leading Hunnic armies to victory in pitched battles, often against more superior professional armies such as the Roman cohorts, as well as raids and harassment of their enemies’ borders.⁵ Nomadic groups such as the Royal Scythians had a better political organisation than its other nomadic counterparts.⁶ This provides this paper evidence of intelligent organisation prior to the Huns, therefore making it hard to believe from the research that the Huns would not have built upon “already existing nomadic government”.⁷ Hyun Jin Kim in *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* argues that the Huns “had a unique political system, a centralised

¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 120.

² Blockmann and Hoppenbrouwers 2009: 130-131.

³ Amm. *Hist.* 26.4.5-6.

⁴ Linder 1981: 3-4. (Bows commonly used by the Huns and various nomadic tribes originating from the steppes). This will in turn feature within the paper, as the use of Steppe tactics provided the ingenuity leading Hunnic armies to victory, when overwhelming enemies of the Huns.

⁵ Linder 1981: 4-5. (Hunnic use of harassment from mounted archers, similar to how the Huns farmed cattle in the Steppes).

⁶ Jin-Kim 2013: 20-21.

⁷ Jin-Kim 2013: 24.

government with correspondence between the eastern half of the Hunnic expansion and the western, demonstrating more political cohesion than that of the Gothic barbarians on the Western Roman Empire's North Frontier".⁸ Hunnic identity itself could also be viewed as a generalisation of nomadic groups, which indicates there could have been a multifaceted layer to the Hunnic Empire's true identity, incorporating the Hepthalite (White Huns), Turkic speaking nomads, Alannic and Gothic tribes in addition to Indo-Iranian nomads into a description of the Huns.⁹ Confusion as to what direct enemy the Roman Empire faced can be evidenced in additional struggles which the Roman Empire had with Barbarian forces. Jordanes occasionally labels the Goths as the Scythians and vice-versa.¹⁰

Throughout this paper, analysis will be made upon the Hunnic-Gothic relationships and how the Huns may have influenced the Gothic incursions into Italy. This paper will also evaluate a personal perspective of how Attila was able to cause the Western Roman Empire harm. Wherein this paper will evaluate Attila's relationship with Rome, as a Hunnic spy and prolific Hunnic general. From his time serving as a Roman Auxiliary.¹¹ This paper will answer the question of how the Huns helped to create the birth of Medieval Europe, and how their actions brought the Roman Empire to a stranglehold. Ultimately, how did the Huns achieve their goals, through devastation or intelligent design?

⁸ Jin-Kim 2013: 25-26.

⁹ Jin-Kim 2013: 30-31.

¹⁰ Jord. Geti. 60. 1.243-249.

¹¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 130.

Chapter One

Methodology, Chronology and Identity of the Huns

This paper has been provided with a particularly difficult barrier, in terms of analysing authentic Hunnic behaviour from Roman comprehension. Ancient literary sources have provided this paper with a multitude of contemporary descriptions of Attila and the Huns. Jordannes, Priscus and Virgil appear to categorise Huns as a different type of organised barbarian.¹² Whereas Ammianus Marcellinus appears to use a fabulist approach in his description of the Huns. Tacitus is additionally a useful ancient literary source as he describes the immergence of the Huns before the time of Attila in the 3rd century AD.¹³ Therefore providing this research with a better perspective of Hunnic power before the appearance of Attila. The ancient Roman literary sources also provide valuable information into Attila's relationship with Rome. During his service as a mercenary/auxiliary, wherein Jordannes mentions Attila could understand Latin.¹⁴ Suggesting that Attila was potentially literate with a strong familiarity with the Latin language, in addition to his fearsome reputation. Hyun Jin Kim accredits Attila with creating a standardised common Hunnic language and alphabet,¹⁵ in order to encourage stronger political control of the various different ethnicities within his Hunnic Empire. Suggesting that Attila was an extremely perceptive man and administrator. Alternatively this research will include how the ancient Chinese empires dealt with the threat of the Huns. This will provide a parallel with the Roman Empire because the Huns dealt with the Chinese Empire in similar methods. As Hyun Jin Kim states "the Hunnic predecessors the Xiongnu",¹⁶ dealt with the Chinese Empire in an identical fashion to the Roman Empire. This

¹² Jord. *Geta*. 60. 1. 243-249.

¹³ Yamauchi 1983: 91-93.

¹⁴ Jord. *Geta*. 60. 1. 243-245.

¹⁵ Jin-Kim 2013: 130-132.

¹⁶ Jin-Kim 2013: 14-15.

paper will propose that the Huns were in fact an incredibly well organised and mobile force, using the most devastating field tactics of the 4-5th centuries AD. This paper has additionally examined alternative views about the birth of Medieval Europe and whether the Huns had any influence at all. Through research of the Hunnic Empire and Attila's leadership of the Huns in the 5th century, this paper has been able to ascertain the level of threat the Huns posed to the Roman Empire. However, throughout the research for this assignment, the methodology has been somewhat straightforward in certain aspects. In relation to the three categories of the Western Roman Empire's decline. Whether it was the Romans themselves that caused their own decline, the Goths that caused their decline or the Huns. This is because the ancient literary sources that have been used such as Ammianus Marcellinus, Jordanes and Virgil are mostly contemporary to the period of Hunnic invasions from 300-500AD, with Priscus Panitus being an eyewitness to Attila.¹⁷ Modern scholars are largely divided on the Role of the Huns. The birth of Medieval Europe was caused by the initial collapse of the Roman Empire. Peter Heather in his *The Huns and the End of the Roman Empire in Western Europe* argues that it was the "Goths themselves who were more organised in the 5th century and had begun developing strong social cohesion and political unity, allowing them to pressure the Roman Empire from military matters and diplomacy".¹⁸ J.M Wallace-Hadrill in his *The Barbarian West 400-1000AD* accredits the Western Roman Empire's downfall to internal strife, "provincial landlords had increasing indifference and frustration towards the Roman elite in society which led to a breakdown of political power, and loss of tax infrastructure; the barbarian uprisings were the final nail in the coffin for the Western Roman Empire".¹⁹ Hyun Jin-Kim argues that the Huns can directly be accredited with the Roman Empire's downfall and the birth of Europe, by triggering gothic migrations into Rome and

¹⁷ Jim-Kim 2013: 132-134.

¹⁸ Heather 1995: 10-12.

¹⁹ Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 70-72.

using clandestine techniques to destabilise Rome,²⁰ allowing the Goths to settle in Spain, Italy and North Africa.

In order to fully appreciate how Attila achieved his rule over the Huns and the success of mounted nomads. Analysis must be place on the origins of the Huns and their prototype cultures. Fundamentally understanding what type of society the Huns were is necessary. As this enables a historian to understand how the Huns arrived at the status where the Hunnic Empire was when Attila rose to command of the Hunnic Empire. Originating from modern day Mongolia, the Huns lived in pastoral nomadic communities who derived their livelihood from their herds of horses, goats and other cattle.²¹ If a suitable opportunity appeared to the Huns they could raid their settled neighbours, quickly retreating on horseback when large armies arrived.²² The Huns had a “strong reliance on horses, and therefore the nomadic nature of their society and armies’ success largely lay on the ability to gain many acres of land for grazing”.²³ Therefore, the Huns from a young age would be required to learn the mastery of horse riding, applying their skills to their everyday life on the Steppes as well as in times of war. Ammianus Marcellinus describes the Huns as “Warriors who were born in the saddle”.²⁴ Therefore suggesting that Roman literary sources recognised the importance of horse mastery to the Huns crucial success. According to Priscus Panites, “a Wealthy Hunnic warrior would have 4-5 additional mounts”.²⁵ Therefore this suggests that vast amounts of land would be needed to field such amounts of horses and their riders. The Steppes have vast open plains which are ideal for the Huns to build armies upon as there was plenty of grazing space for the Hunnic horses.²⁶ For example, based on Priscus Panites statement, if there was a

²⁰ Jin-Kim 2013: 125.

²¹ Linder 1981: 4.

²² Linder 1981: 4.

²³ Sinor 1981: 134-135.

²⁴ Amm. *Hist.* 26.4.5-6.

²⁵ Pris. *Fr*6. 78.4.

²⁶ Linder 1981: 6-7.

Hunnish army of 2,000 mounted warriors. Theoretically 500 of which could have been wealthy Hunnish warriors, which would mean they alone would need 2,500 horses for grazing space. The army all together would have 4,000 horses, which would all require many acres of grazing space. Therefore territories with vast open plains would be perfect for the Hunnish Empire to control, hence their seizure of Hungary, which had a similar geographical layout to the Steppes.²⁷ Attila's Huns were masters of fighting pitched battles, their mobility and flexibility on horseback enabled them to defeat even the strongest armies of their day.²⁸ Enabling them to defeat both Gothic war bands who mainly fought on foot, as well as professional Roman armies that had cavalry contingents. The Huns would start any battle with a significant advantage because of the sheer amount of mobile troops in the army. A Hunnish horse archer could shoot 15 arrows a minute, turn 360 degrees in his saddle and retreat to a safe distance from retaliation on the Steppe Pony,²⁹ the world's swiftest horse, capable of riding at bursts of 37-40mph. Therefore this would be difficult for the opposing army to catch up with the horse archer, even with cavalry, whilst being shot at by the mounted archer. The aforementioned example of an army of 2,500 horse mounted archers, makes a Hunnish army incredibly devastating, as this would mean 2,500 soldiers would ride around the opposing armies, firing arrows into every exposed flank of an enemy force ensuing mass casualties within minutes of a battle starting. Additionally, Hunnish tactics were almost ingrained in a Hunnish horse archer from as early as 10 years old.³⁰ The tactics the Huns used in battle were essentially the same tactics the Huns would have used to herd their cattle, in their pastoral nomadic lives. Attila used this to full advantage whenever he led a battle, ensuing him victories in both theatres of war on the Roman Empire's Eastern and

²⁷ Horworth 1874: 454-455.

²⁸ Jin-Kim 2013: 45-48.

²⁹ Linder 1981: 12.

³⁰ Linder 1981: 12-13.

Western Frontiers.³¹ These tactics proved successful from the earliest nomadic groups such as the Scythians/Sarmatians through to the Alans/Magyars and into the 15th-16th centuries under the Mongols. The steppe horses the Huns used were able to carry the rider a vast distance quickly, this therefore made communication between Attila's control of the Western half of the Hunnic territory and Bleda his brother; as vice regent in the Eastern Hunnic territories.³² Jordanes stated that "The military potential of nomads was far superior to that of rural peasants and villagers, and so nomads could rely on predation and extortion".³³ Therefore the Huns had a natural advantage over tribes and kingdoms who had a more agrarian lifestyle, enabling them to create havoc for rural communities who stood in the Huns' gaze.

The Huns had many predecessors that similarly came from the Steppes and were always a danger to the ancient civilisations of Greece and Persia. There was a continuous existence of dangerous nomadic raids originating from the Steppes. This created a concern for empires or kingdoms with vast borders such as King Phillip of Macedon's Thracian border, for the Persian Empires, their Parthian and Massagetaean borders.³⁴ Herodotus described the Scythians as "frightening and dangerous horse mounted tribesman, who could release havoc upon the Greeks riding away when the Greeks had organised forces to defend themselves."³⁵ Herodotus also mentions "King Darius of Persia when trying to invade Greece was repelled savagely by these Horse mounted savages".³⁶ The Royal Scythians had their own kingdom, centralised government and stability due to their introduction of East and West government.³⁷ This was a system wherein, the Scythian king would appoint tribes of elected representatives to ruler over his eastern territories. Wherein the Scythian king's elected Eastern

³¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 111-112.

³² Horworth 1874: 455-456. (Bleda later 'mysteriously' died. However Attila still established firm control of Eastern territories through his East and West style government).

³³ Jord. *Geta*. 60. 1.245-249.

³⁴ Jin-Kim 2013: 113.

³⁵ Her. *Hist.* 32.5.129-130.

³⁶ Her. *Hist.* 32.5.131.

³⁷ Jin-Kim 2013: 38-39.

representatives would collect tax contributions, investigate political incidents and introduce trialling courts. Some Turkish scholars such as Ziyai accredit ancient Turkish history with steppe nomadic warriors. Ziyai states that “Turkic speaking nomadic tribes often became incorporated into the Hunnic Empire, giving Turks a shared ancestry with the Huns from Mongolia”.³⁸ Eunapius of Sardis, documented various different Steppe nomadic cultures, which included Scythians and the Huns. Eunapius explains that “Scythians in the time of Phillip of Macedon had their own governmental rule”.³⁹ Similarly the Sarmatians, can be viewed as well organised because they exacted tributes and financial sums for military protection, or mercenary contracts especially with the Roman Empire.⁴⁰ This suggests there is ancient evidence of intelligent government in Steppe kingdoms before the Huns emerged as the dominant Steppe power. Therefore it is credible to suggest the Huns would have adopted these political systems, if they had proved successful for previous nomadic cultures. Evidence of the Huns using this style of government is evident in the term Hephthalite Hun (White Hun).⁴¹ Who Hyun Jin Kim states “maintained territories on Rome’s Eastern Frontiers from Persia to India”.⁴² Ancient China also had similar problems with the Xiongnu kingdom, which Hyun Jin Kim accredits as “legitimate predecessor of the rise of the Huns”.⁴³ Ancient Chinese sources describe the Xiongnu as having “very flexible mobile armies that seemed to have a strong sense of political organisation”.⁴⁴ This would have made resisting the Xiongnu difficult for ancient Chinese kingdoms as they weren’t simply a “mob gang on horseback”.⁴⁵ Hyun Jin-kim, argues that European powers would often refer to the Huns as “Hiungnu,

³⁸ Ziyai 2010: 890-891.

³⁹ *Euna. Hist.* 4.32.3-4.

⁴⁰ Suliminski 1970: 50-51.

⁴¹ Phillips 1957: 269-270. (White Hun does not refer to skin colour, as it is term the Huns used to distinguish East or West).

⁴² Jin-Kim 2013: 121.

⁴³ Jin-Kim 2013: 40-41. (Compares the struggles of Ancient China and Xiongnu tactics, with Hunnic tactics against the Roman Empire).

⁴⁴ Graf 1988: 158-159.

⁴⁵ Jin-Kim 2013: 41-43. (Hyun follows this statement up by adding that the Xiongnu if a failed attack occurred wouldn’t simply disband, as disorganised Gothic tribes would).

Hunas, or Chionites”.⁴⁶ This indicates that the Huns could almost be a generic term for Steppe people because the Xiongnu or Hunas were the most dominant power. Hyun Jin-Kim also states that “in the year AD311, Luoyang, the capital of the Jin dynasty of China was sacked by the Huns (Southern Xiongnu)”.⁴⁷ Therefore the Huns demonstrated a strong display of power, which is the equivalent to their victories against Rome. The Huns can be described as the Scythians by Jordannes on occasion, “these Scythians have been known and dangerous to our empire for many years”.⁴⁸ Therefore confusion can arise as to who exactly the Huns were. However, the Scythians are likely to have been incorporated into the Hunnic Empire, as with the Alans, Magyars and Parthians. Due to the rising dominance of the Huns as powerful nomadic force, they were able to change from petty opportunistic raiders in the Steppes to a large empire with a strong grasp of political control. Eunapius of Sardes mentions that the Huns had an empire which spanned from India pressuring the Guptas and Persians, to modern day Lithuania, Finland and parts of Poland, pressuring the Magyars, Alans and Tuetones.⁴⁹ This provided the Huns with plenty of land to field colossal armies across both the Western and Eastern Frontiers, in turn making it difficult for disorganised tribes like the Visigoths, Vandals and Cherusci, even the Roman/Chinese Empires to organise the manpower to defeat a singular Hunnic army. Hunnic armies could easily be replaced if beaten due to the number of different horse mounted warriors the Hunnic Empire could call upon to replace a defeated army.⁵⁰ In turn this must have gave enemies of the Huns a tremendous task to subdue them, the various ethnicities that made up the Hunnic Empire, contributed to their successes. The Hephthalite Huns in the East incorporated Turkic, Iranian, Parthian, and Massagetic nomadic tribes.⁵¹ These nomadic peoples adopted the same

⁴⁶ Jin-Kim 2013: 5.

⁴⁷ Jin-Kim 2013: 6. (Hyun then accredits the Huns with being the third ancient superpower, alongside the Chinese and Roman Empires).

⁴⁸ Jord. *Geta*. 60. 1.243-249.

⁴⁹ *Euna. Hist.* 4.32.4-5.

⁵⁰ Pris. *Fr*6. 78.4.

⁵¹ Sinor 1981: 140-141.

tactics in warfare and lived similar pastoral nomadic lives to the Huns from Mongolia, enabling their integration into the Hunnic Empire easy through cultural affinity.⁵² Therefore if the Huns were without a strong sense of government, they could be able to form allegiances or pacts with other nomadic groups. Which added to the Huns armies even more experienced horse archers that could harass the Huns enemies almost like they were one limb, joined by their horse mastery and similar lifestyle. However, the Magyars and Alans resisted the Hunnic invasions more so than the Eastern Nomads. Fighting in the same style as the Huns made it difficult for the Huns to have instant victory, over the course of 350-355AD the Huns launched a campaign against the Magyars and Alans.⁵³ In which Phillips stated in his *New Light on the Ancient History of the Eurasian Steppe*. That the Huns ended up dominating the Alans and Magyars, “their expertise in nomadic organisation and government, as this enabled them to recover from battles instead of retreating after a failed raid or invasion”.⁵⁴ With victory over the Alans and Magyars the Huns had incorporated all of the Steppe nomads, West Russian/Polish nomads and the nomads in the Middle East into their empire. In turn the Huns commanded master Horse archers from all across the ancient world. This gave the Hunnic Empire a large amount of resources, manpower and communication the Huns would need in order to take down a powerful empire, such as China, and eventually Rome.

⁵² Maenchen-Helfen 1957: 280-283.

⁵³ Phillips 1957: 269-271.

⁵⁴ Phillips 1957: 271.

Chapter Two: The Huns and the Goths, their Roles in the formation of Medieval Europe

This chapter will evaluate the Huns conquests against the Visigoths, including how the Visigoths were used by Mundzuk (Attila's Father), Rugilla or Ruga (Attila's uncle), Attila and Bleda to achieve their goals of destroying Rome. This chapter will also analyse the Visigoths as an independent faction in the Birth of Medieval Europe in order to assess to what extent the Huns were solely responsible for the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. There are issues to be addressed in relation to the Visigoths and other Germanic tribes in terms of what the Gothic borders with Rome were. Including, when the gothic tribes were hostile, how large was the threat the Goths posed? Jordannes stated that "the Roman Empire faced a real threat of complete barbarian dominance from both the Huns and the Goths, the Huns, the Visigoths stirring themselves to action in the wake of the successes the Huns had".⁵⁵ This indicates that the Visigoths themselves were aware that the Roman Empire had weaknesses to exploit. Ancient literary sources are useful in determining the location of the major Germanic tribes that had a significant effect on the Roman Empire. Maureen Carroll stated that "Germania was categorised by the Romans into two provinces, Germania Inferior and Germania Superior, these covered a territory which spanned from the North Sea coast to the Swiss Alps".⁵⁶ Multitudes of natural resources meant that the Gothic territories presented lucrative benefits for organised empires to take advantage of; a particular interest for the Roman and Hunnic Empires. Carroll stated that there were "numerous tribal affiliations in a single area in the 1st century AD but some had developed into stronger groupings resulting in large tribes such as the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, by the 3rd and 4th centuries".⁵⁷ The Germanic tribes were by no means an organised confederacy, intertribal warfare was commonplace amongst Gothic tribes and others across the Rhine and Danube river systems.⁵⁸ Even within Visigoth clans rivalries and disputes often caused a complete lack of cooperation

⁵⁵ Jord. *Geta*. 60.I.250.

⁵⁶ Carroll 2001: 15.

⁵⁷ Carroll 2001: 67.

⁵⁸ Tacit. *Ger*. I.83.

between tribal identities. However when the Germanic tribes were unified the Roman Empire had difficult barriers to overcome. The Roman Empire always had trouble throughout its existence on the Northern frontier, Germanic and Gaulic tribes had always been a source of conflict the Roman Empire had to deal with. Famously the battle of Teutoburg forest in 9 AD. This serious ambush made the Roman Empire face a harrowing new perspective on the nature of further conquest into Germania.⁵⁹ In this example the unified Goths demonstrated that Rome's military was not undefeatable. The Lower and Upper Rhine had contained the Visigoths, Cherusci, Thuringi, Chauci and Chatti, tribal confederates were always watchful of any weakness within the Roman Empire, when united they presented a danger to Rome.⁶⁰ In his *Germania* Tacitus described the Goths as "ultimately chaotic in political practise but catastrophic when united". However, more often than not deeply entrenched factions within the individual tribes prevented the Visigoths from holding on to any kind of victory against the Romans. Disputes between the elected Visigothic King and his chieftains were commonplace. Treaties that the Roman Empire had signed with tribes like the Visigoths such as the Treaty of 382AD which gave the Visigoths land in Moesia. Resulting in the loss of territory for the Roman Empire in the pension lands.

Factions within Visigothic armies were usually divided in opinion on how relations with the Roman Empire should be handled, those who were Pro-Roman and those who were not. The Visigothic King Theodosius created a treaty with the Romans in 371AD.⁶¹ One of the outlines of this treaty included terms for Visigothic clans who were settled on Roman frontiers to be sent annual subsidies of grain by the Roman Senate during 382-418AD. On the whole the Visigoths benefited from the Roman Empire. When chieftains were stirred to action against the Romans, compromises were often found in the form of settlement in

⁵⁹ Tac. *Ger.* I.84.

⁶⁰ Tac. *Ger.* I.84-85.

⁶¹ Thompson 1982: 39.

Roman lands, monetary tribute or employment as auxiliaries. Thompson stated that “Chieftains such as Munderic were given high ranking positions as leaders of Roman garrisons or legions”.⁶² This displays that the Visigoths were capable of Particular attention must be paid to the Huns use of intelligent tactics when handling the Goths. The Huns were forcing the Visigoths in mass to flee into Italy and other parts of the Roman Empire. Hyun Jin Kim stated that “the Huns new the importance of Roman pension lands such as Pannonia and Moesia”.⁶³ This would have caused a lot of tension within the Roman cohorts stationed in the Western Roman Empire because the pension lands served as compensation for a legionaries’ servitude,⁶⁴ therefore removing the amount of land that could be allocated to the Roman Empire’s soldiers which in turn would have placed pressure on the Roman Senate to make sure that their soldiers were paid appropriately. Additionally, this displays how the Huns used the Goths to achieve a dismantlement of the Roman Empire, supporting the intelligent design argument. Pressure from the Huns in 382AD caused the Visigoths to be routed from their homelands. As a result, they were permitted to settle in Moesia by the Romans. Alongside the issues caused by handing over parts of the Roman pension lands to the Visigoths caused, were an additionally apparent problems. The added pressure consisted of supplying of these new settlements with grain and having an additional hostile neighbour in Roman territory. Gothic kings such as Fritigern disrupted the Roman peace and showed that Germanic tribesman when united by a capable king were devastating. After the Battle of Adrianople the Eastern Roman emperor Valens was forced to deal with the Goths. Fritigern made use of cunning over brute force and resorted to an intelligent use of manipulation wherein he tried to lure Valens outside the city walls, with the promise of an allegiance; written to Valens in Latin.⁶⁵ This shows that the Visigoths could act on their own initiative without the aid of the

⁶² Thompson 1982: 41.

⁶³ Jin-Kim 2013: 60.

⁶⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 41.

⁶⁵ Heather 1989: 104-105.

Huns because Fritigern displayed his capability for designing his own victory instead of achieving it through destruction. Although after this victory Fritigern himself faced troubles within his army. Eugenius one of Fritigern's chief in command rebelled against him outside the walls of Adrianople.⁶⁶ The Visigoths evidently do not have a reliable system of government or loyalty to a hierarchical system. Therefore this supports the argument that the Huns would be able to manipulate the Visigoths, through better political organisation and military strength. An additional concept this paper has identified to take into consideration is the endemic plague that swept the continent of Europe.⁶⁷ This plague could have had an effect on the Gothic migrations as the Gothic tribes could have sought to escape to a more hygienic environment. Romans had public baths, running sewers and aqueducts.⁶⁸ Therefore, this can be considered to be a cause for the Gothic incursions into the Roman Empire. Implying that the Visigoths did not solely leave their homelands because of their hostile neighbours the Huns. In turn this does not support the Huns creating the birth of Medieval Europe through using devastation or design because Peter Heather in *Goths and Romans* argues that "the Visigoths had more of an influence on the fall of Rome with the initial sack of Rome and argues that the Visigoths became far more organised by 400AD".⁶⁹ This paper would however dispute that Rome was left wide open for the Visigoths to capture because Attila was at the gates of Rome after demolishing Roman cities in the north of Italy.⁷⁰ Hyun Jin Kim maintained that "this presented an opportunity for the Visigoths to exploit Rome when the city was at last breath".⁷¹ Ultimately due to Attila who had decided not to engage in the capture of Rome. However the Visigoths may well have noticed for themselves where prime targets to bring down the Western Roman Empire were. Through the allegiance to the

⁶⁶ Jord. *Geta*. 60.I.251.

⁶⁷ Wallace-Hadrill, 1996:41-42.

⁶⁸ Rich and Shipley 1995: 66-67.

⁶⁹ Heather 1991: 34-35.

⁷⁰ Jin-Kim 2013: 130.

⁷¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 132-133.

Romans throughout the conflict with Attila. Suggesting that the Visigoths scavenged a victory from Attila the Hun's military successes. However Peter Heather acknowledges and supports the Goths for advancing their political system and would debate that the nature of Visigothic politics was had changed by the 300-400 AD.⁷² This argument is credible because the Goths did secure victories against the Romans without the aid of the Huns such as Adrianople. The Visigoths were by no means had Rome's best intentions in their hearts throughout their allegiance to the Western Roman Empire, which is clearly evident from the mutinies that Visigothic nobles led when in Command of the Eastern Roman Empire's garrisons.⁷³ Thompson would argue that it was "uniting against an even more dangerous enemy that had ensured the Visigothic alliance to Rome, motivated by fear of the Huns".⁷⁴ Psychological warfare was a tactic employed by the Huns throughout their conquests, Attila used psychological warfare to great success. Jordannes stated in *The Getica* that the Visigoths were routed in full-scale flight from the onslaught of the Huns, those who were not subjugated where brutally put to the sword".⁷⁵ Attila levelled whole cities and settlements during warfare, this was displayed across his conflict with the Visigoths.⁷⁶ Wherein the message of the savage attacks would spread to a defending city or town long before Attila had arrived to besiege it. This is pertinent to the Huns using Design as their means to achieve victory over their enemies because Attila's usage of psychological warfare gives their adversaries the impression that there is no hope. This is evident because the Western Roman Empire was eager to make a swift alliance with the Visigoths, a long standing enemy, as the Roman Empire did not have the manpower to effectively combat the Huns by themselves.

⁷² Heather 1989: 104-105.

⁷³ Thompson 1982: 121.

⁷⁴ Thompson 1982: 122.

⁷⁵ Cas. *Geta*. 82.2.119.

⁷⁶ Sinor 1981: 140-141.

The nature of the war between the Huns and Visigoths was purely one of domination. Whoever had been left behind after the Huns had attacked a Visigothic settlement would have been brought under subjection, capable fighters being drafted into the Hunnic army. The Visigoths had completely different tactics when fighting pitched battles, whilst the Goths used cavalry their reputation as foot soldiers was formidable.⁷⁷ The Visigoths would have fought in a shield wall with, spear, axe or sword. Heather states that “the field tactics of the Goths had changed drastically since the start of the first century AD”.⁷⁸ This meant that Gothic armies were better organised and used disciplined formations as oppose to the earlier Gothic armies where there would be a massed charge, with a handful of skilled warriors wearing chainmail which professional Roman armies could easily overcome in pitched battles. The Hunnic armies comprised mainly of horse mounted warriors overpowered foot soldiers who would give chase to the horse archers whilst being shot with volleys of thousands of arrows a minute.⁷⁹ This would mean that a Visigothic army would have to chase the Hunnic army around the battlefield, tiring themselves out and then the Huns would have herded selected contingents of the opposing army into elimination zones often picking out the most well-disciplined troops. The Hunnic armies had access to superior military equipment, the Hunnic composite bow was more effective compared to the bows used by Germanic tribes due to the speed a Hunnic archer could reload.⁸⁰ This would have proved a massive advantage over the Visigoths wherein the armies would have had a strong amount of disciplined fighters but the majority would have been the poorly equipped Fyrd.⁸¹ In terms of devastation, generals such as Mundzuk would have led bands of skilled warriors often trained from the moment they could walk. This meant that the Huns had access to warriors who had

⁷⁷ Thompson 1982: 64.

⁷⁸ Heather and Matthews 1991: 40-41.

⁷⁹ Elton 1996: 69.

⁸⁰ Niles 2016: 135-136.

⁸¹ Blockmann 2009: 230-231. (Fyrd were peasants conscripted to fight and defend their homelands, often poorly armed and equipped).

spent nearly all their lives being trained for combat. Therefore without numerous experienced generals or soldiers, combating the Huns would have been a difficult process. This supports the devastation argument in the role of the Huns in the birth of Medieval Europe because the technology and training the Huns displayed on the battlefield forced European powers to make a more active use of cavalry as new threats emerged from the Steppes. Therefore this provided the Visigoths with little chance to defend themselves, causing them to flee into Roman territories and seek new alliances to protect them. Additionally, tribes who accepted Hunnic subjugation were given new technology, the Visigoths by themselves had very poor siege equipment.⁸² The Huns however had developed much better siege equipment, Attila pursued the development of siege weaponry capable of knocking through Roman town walls, which were heavily fortified. Priscus stated that “Attila surprised the defenders of Naissus with rams that flattened the walls”.⁸³ Attila whilst being notorious for his racketeering of protection money from the Eastern Roman Empire was also a business man, who traded the construction details of his battering rams. Procopius an Eastern Roman imperial usurper is discussed by Priscus, whom explained that during the siege of Petra in Lazica, some Sabirian Huns showed the Procopius’s Romans how to make a new kind of battering ram.⁸⁴ This displays evidence that the Huns could have designed the fall of Rome because trading these rams with the Goths, would have given them a considerable advantage when attempting to take Roman towns. Therefore the Huns subjugated Visigothic tribes with powerful battering rams meant that even when the Huns left other barbarian forces could still use Hunnic rams to defeat Roman fortifications. This therefore supports the Design argument because the Huns effectively used the Visigoths in a proxy war when the Huns were at peace with the Romans

⁸² Millar 1993: 50-51. (Gothic battering rams only capable of breaching a roman town gate prior to the Huns arrival).

⁸³ Pris. *Frg.* 44.1.7-8. (Attila had manufactured powerful battering rams which previous barbarian forces did not have access to).

⁸⁴ Pris. *Frg.* 6. 78.4.9

such as the treaty of 443AD.⁸⁵ On the other hand, according to Maenchen-Helfen “the Goths despite battle after battle, never once lose an engagement with the Western Roman Empire in its weakened state”.⁸⁶ This insinuates that the Visigoths were actually decisive themselves in inflicting defeats on the Western Roman Empire, therefore suggesting the Huns did not have a strong impact on the military capabilities of the Visigoths. Jordannes however stated that “the coming of the Huns marks their first defeat which, in turn, inaugurates further military losses and hardships when the Goths migrated into Roman provinces”.⁸⁷ Therefore based on Jordanes statement it does seem that the Visigoths were able to cause damage to the Roman territories before the Huns arrived. However what is also be certain is that Jordanes described the Huns as striking the first defeat against the Visigoths which confirms that the Huns were deliberately putting pressure on the Visigoths so that they would weaken the Western Roman Empire. Another apparent issue in regard to assessing the impact the Huns had on the birth of Medieval Europe is that the Hunnic armies desperately needed more food for their armies and that the nomadic lifestyle couldn’t sustain themselves when moving into different environments that did not have vast open plains. In order for the Hunnic armies to make any progress in the defeat of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires, the establishment of a foothold near the Western Romans was essential. Attila already had Hungary which bordered the Eastern Roman Empire, with the conquest of Visigothic lands this gave Attila a position to drive his forces through the Visigothic lands along the Danube.⁸⁸ The Huns also needed to make use of agricultural communities, as nomadic cattle farming methods would not have been as sufficient to feed entire armies, if there were not vast open plains fit for cattle grazing. Agrarian workforces would have been needed to meet the Huns needs for expansion, the Visigoths also barred the entrance to the Eastern Roman Empire where there was plentiful

⁸⁵ Bayless 1976: 76-77.

⁸⁶ Maenchen-Helfen 1957: 281-282.

⁸⁷ Jord. *Geta*. 50.1.247-248.

⁸⁸ Potter 2009: 300-301.

fertile land.⁸⁹ This reveals that the Hunnic Empire could not have held onto conquered territories from the people they subjugated without adapting to new environments and methods of food production to make sure the rise in population surplus was not starved. Therefore the Huns needed to use the Visigoths in order for multiple parts of their plans to move on to extort the Western and Eastern Roman Empire's to succeed, the Huns needed to firstly inspire fear in the population they wished to subjugate demonstrated in their pillaging of the Visigothic and Ostrogothic lands. Secondly the Ostrogoth's retreat into Visigothic territory then the Visigoths and Ostrogoths flee to the Eastern Roman Empire and the Western Roman Empire's provinces in Ravenna. Finally the Huns needed to have some security over the lands the armies defeated, therefore the conquered peoples become subjugated and produce goods for the Huns. Ultimately, the conflict with the Visigoths resulted in more pressure on the Roman Empires and was a catalyst for the change to Europe Attila was to bring.

⁸⁹ Cameron 1993: 50-51.

Chapter Three: The Huns and the Decline of the Eastern Roman Empire

This next chapter will focus on the Eastern Roman Empire. This chapter will evaluate what state the Eastern Roman Empire was in around the period of 350-453AD. What weaknesses existed that were exploited by Attila and other Hunnic leaders, including what was the extent of the damage the Huns inflicted on the Eastern Roman Empire and their relations with the Sassanid Persians. Analysis will also be provided to what extent the Eastern Roman Empire itself was responsible for its own decline from authoritative power. The Eastern Roman Empire's capital Constantinople served as a geographical barrier against marauding barbarians. The cities' defences were impregnable by a barbarian force due to the level of technology required to besiege and maintain a siege of Constantinople, its location on the Bosphorus River gave it a natural barrier between Europe and Asia.⁹⁰ However this did not mean that the wider extent of the Eastern Roman Empire was free from harassment. The Eastern Romans had access to a superior wealth than its western counterpart. The spice and silk trade flowed through the Eastern Provinces on the Persian frontier coming from India, and the provinces in Greece, Thrace and the Danube were incredibly fertile areas which meant that the Eastern Romans had access to a wealth of resources.⁹¹ However the resources were to come under extreme pressure from 350-453 AD the arrival of the Huns and Gothic tribes proved a struggle that the Eastern Roman Empire constantly had to be prepared for.

⁹⁰ Dodgeon and Lieu 1991: 111-112.

⁹¹ Friell 1998: 40-41.

After the decisive defeat the Emperor Valens suffered at Adrianople against the Goths, Burns stated in *‘Barbarians within the Gates of Rome: A study of Roman military policy and the Barbarians’* that “Ammianus after 378AD becomes distressed with the defeat at Adrianople. To such an extent that he did not continue writing further works under the reign of Theodosius and states that because Ammianus finished his writing, he unintentionally elevated the significance of the defeat at Adrianople.⁹² In the midst of the defeat at Adrianople ruthless succession issues also arose, Procopius a claimant for Imperial power started a rebellion against Valens and Theodosius. This resulted in a dramatic shortage in Roman military manpower for the Eastern Roman Empire and promoted them to make use of barbarians such as the Goths, Alans and Huns to make up for the loss of manpower in the succession crises.⁹³ Gothic warriors were used on all sides of the political division and became a vital role in Roman political support as gothic chieftains could align themselves to usurpers such as Procopius. The total influx of the Gothic population into the Danube was estimated to be between 60,000-75,000 heads.⁹⁴ Placing an enormous strain on Roman resources. However this highlights that the Eastern Roman Empire desperately needed to make a productive use of the influx of peoples into Imperial provinces. The Eastern Roman Empire brokered a treaty with Athanaric and Fritigern in 382 AD, which was an attempt to sap the strength of the Visigoths. This treaty aided the settlement of Goths fleeing from the Huns in Roman territory.⁹⁵ The Eastern Roman Empire still owned the lands given to tribes. However the tribes were given their own separate autonomy which in turn was to be exacted in the form of supplying troops to the Eastern Roman Empire. This system proved effective for the short term issues that Eastern Romans had with the Goths.⁹⁶ Pacatus stated that “because of Theodosius’s kindness Scythians flocked to his service, the Goth Hun and Alan stood watch and protected parts of your lands under service and were afraid of being marked down as absent without

⁹² Burns 1994: 1-2.

⁹³ Lenski 2002: 264-265.

⁹⁴ Williams and Friell 1994: 40-41.

⁹⁵ Blockley 1992:40-41

⁹⁶ Blockley 1992: 41.

leave”.⁹⁷ This suggests that Goths and other barbarian people working with the Eastern Roman Empire was commonplace. Pacatus also stated that “Hunnic contingents of Theodosius’s army frequently won excursions against the rebel Maximus and were feared by his soldiers”.⁹⁸ This shows evidence that the Huns were used as auxiliaries and were noted for their fine horsemanship. Therefore this supports the argument that it was the Eastern and Western Roman Empire’s themselves which led to the collapse of Rome because the Eastern Roman Empire appears to have regained control over the issues of Barbarian attackers. Suggesting that internal disruption played a more important role in the Roman Empire’s decline. Additionally Theodosius was considerably more competent in his rule than the Western Roman Emperors. Although what is clearly evident in this period is that the Huns from both frontiers of the Eastern Roman Empire were placing crippling pressure on the crises the Eastern Roman Empire was dealing with. On the Persian frontier the Eastern Roman Empire’s positive relationship with the Sassanid Persians was decreasing. In the Eastern half of the Empire, Christianity and Zoroastrianism were clashing as the Persians wished Zoroastrianism to be their main religion.⁹⁹ The Eastern Roman Empire showed a lack of compromise in not addressing the religious concerns that the Sassanid Persians had. In turn this revealed a weakness in Roman foreign policy as the lack of understanding and flexibility resulted in a strain on their foreign relations.¹⁰⁰ Initially this provides evidence for the Eastern Roman Empire causing its own decline because mistrust and poor compromise grew uncomfortable for the Sassanid Persian elite. However these tensions were to be exacerbated by the Huns.

The Instigator of further hostilities between Romans and Persians was Uldin the ruler of a group of Hunnic and other nomadic peoples”.¹⁰¹ This shows that there must have been a collective goal amongst the Hunnic leaders of subsequent areas to cause interference with the Eastern Roman Empire’s allies to dismantle them. Uldin passed this to Ruga and Mundzuk, then down to Attila and Bleda. Whilst Uldin’s campaign ended in his army’s defeat he proved that the Roman Empire’s

⁹⁷ Pac. *Pan.* 32.1.42.

⁹⁸ Pac. *Pan.* 115.2.94.

⁹⁹ Blockley 1992: 42.

¹⁰⁰ Blockley 1992: 42-43.

¹⁰¹ Burns 1994: 50.

defences in the Danube and in Persia where in need of a serious improvement.¹⁰² There is clear evidence that the Hunnic incursions had frightened the Persians. The African government came under pressure from the Persians who caused a diversion of grain fleets from Rome because of a perceived complacency the Eastern Roman Empire had in dealing with the Hephthalite Huns”.¹⁰³ This pressure supports the Design argument because it illustrates how familiar the Huns were with Roman policy and weaknesses that could be exploited throughout the Empire. In the years 418-420 AD the Eastern Romans desperately tried to re-establish diplomatic ties with the Persian king Yezdegerd, however there was an assassination or sudden illness of the Persian king.¹⁰⁴ This erupted into a war in Mesopotamia with the Sassanid Persians which resulted in a stalemate. During this struggle a Hunnic attack across the Danube in 421-2AD showed that the Romans had been desperately weakened.¹⁰⁵ Hyun Jin Kim stated that the Persians had withdrawn much earlier from the war and did not challenge the Romans in open battle again, whilst the Hephthalite Huns soon reduced the Sassanid’s to vassalage status”.¹⁰⁶ This shows that the Huns were attacking from every possible angle that could cause discomfort to the Eastern Roman Empire. The Huns had also successfully dismantled a valuable ally of the Eastern Roman Empire meaning that the Sassanids could no longer be called upon for further alliances. Therefore, this supports the Design argument for the Huns because they engineered the stress on Romano-Persian relations, and effectively used the Persians much like the Goths to weaken the Eastern Romans, inevitably conquering them and absorbing the Sassanid Persians into their own empire. Therefore supporting design as the major contributor to the Huns success and the birth of Medieval Europe because the Huns cleverly designed arguments between Rome and its allies. Attila was then able to reap further rewards from the damage he and his predecessors had inflicted on the Eastern Roman Empire. Another Issue that the Eastern Roman Empire faced was the introduction of Christianity from Constantine. The introduction of Christianity into mainstream Roman politics created Christian and Pagan factions within the Roman Empire who worked against each other inside the senate which made politics even more divided although there are multiple instances of

¹⁰² Lenski 2002: 270.

¹⁰³ Pac. *Pan.* 129.2.98.

¹⁰⁴ Blockley 1992: 45.

¹⁰⁵ Michael O’Flynn 2002: 7-8.

¹⁰⁶ Jin-Kim 2013: 70-71.

cooperation.¹⁰⁷ Wallace Hadrill stated that “the lands and grants given to the Bishops under Constantine ensured that they were wealthier than senatorial families”.¹⁰⁸ This would have placed an immense strain on Roman politics because the Senate was the most respected political organisation throughout the Roman Empire’s history. Saint Basil including other holy figures of Late Antiquity believed that it was the Eastern and Western Roman Empire’s fault that the Huns had arrived for being improper Christians; Attila was their punishment. Saint Basil stated that “that the Huns were a constant danger to the survival of the Eastern Roman Empire”.¹⁰⁹ This is evident in Attila’s campaign against the Eastern Roman Empire. Hyun Jin Kim stated that “the Gallic Chronicle of 452AD records that the Huns under Attila captured some seventy cities in the Balkans. Every city in Thrace was sacked except Adrianople and Heraclea”.¹¹⁰ This shows the extent of Attila’s ambitions to bring down the Eastern Roman Empire, having captured the vast majority of the imperial territories and raiding into Greece as far as Thermopylae proved to the Eastern Roman Empire that they were not the only superpower in the European theatre of war. Attila’s campaigns against the Eastern Romans also broke down relationships with the Western Roman Empire because the generals were so terrified of Attila they did not intervene and help the Eastern Roman Empire.¹¹¹ The ultimate cost of Attila’s campaign meant that the Balkans were virtually defenceless many years after the death of Attila, still open to barbarian incursions. Whilst Attila could not capture the city of Constantinople, his reputation had preceded him, the defenders of Constantinople decided not to give battle to Attila and paid him a modern equivalent of 60 million Pounds to turn away and leave.¹¹² Having extorted money from the Eastern Roman Empire and effectively cutting off the Eastern Roman Empire from supporting the Western Roman Empire. Attila’s focus turned towards Rome,

¹⁰⁷ Michael O’Flynn 2002: 9.

¹⁰⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 31.

¹⁰⁹ Bas. *Let.* 3.10.479.

¹¹⁰ Jin-Kim 2013: 71.

¹¹¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 72.

¹¹² Williams & Friell 1994: 50-51.

Attila's campaign in against the Eastern Roman Empire supports Devastation as the Huns main tactic in causing the fall of Rome because the Eastern Roman Empire was ultimately left without sufficient means to protect the West as it had been so damaged. Therefore aiding the creation of Medieval Europe because the Eastern Roman Empire could not intervene in the recapturing of Rome until the 5th Century AD laying the foundations for the Germanic tribes to finish off Rome.

Chapter Four: The Huns and the collapse of the Western Roman Empire

This next chapter will address the arguments surrounding the Western Roman Empire, what was the cause of Rome's fall. Analysis will be placed upon the internal policies of the Emperors and the breakdown in relationships with the provincial landlords resulting in less revenue for the Empire. Further evaluation will be conducted into the loss of pension lands, military usurpations and rebellious claimants to the Imperial seat of power. The Huns will also be examined through determining what affect they had on the Western Roman Empire, including whether Attila was responsible for the eventual collapse of Rome and the formation of Medieval Europe.

The Western Roman Empire during the 4th-5th centuries AD was plagued by internal disputes in the Imperial edifice. Relations between the dominant provincial landlords and the Imperial office had become seemingly more fractured due to hostile relationships between the higher class members of the senate and the imperial families demanding more for their own luxuries. Wallace Hadrill stated that "the luxurious Roman higher class lifestyle had become so extravagant that they deemed it provincial landlords' duty to supply Rome and themselves directly with fine goods and bountiful crop yields because the alternative was not to live at all".¹¹³ This meant that goods specifically tailored to Western Roman Imperial elite were being encouraged to place in production. The people of Rome also resented the heavy taxation that had been placed by the emperors, who Walter Goffart described as "intolerable assessments and taxes"¹¹⁴. Taxation became a heavy burden for an underappreciated civilian base, which resulted in riots, starvation and increased levels of dysentery from lack of ability

¹¹³ Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 70.

¹¹⁴ Goffart 1989: 35.

to afford adequate sanitation. Additionally this caused a handful of the provincial landlords to separate themselves from the system of supply to the Western Roman Empire because it was more profitable to sell their produce on already firmly established trade links, elsewhere outside the Empire.¹¹⁵ This caused a devastating impact on the amount of resources the Western Roman Empire had to employ, as trade and supply had been critically damaged, the Roman civilians were suffering and the impact of disease forced further hardships onto the Imperial edifice. The Cyprian plague of 250-270AD had also devastated the population the Western Roman Empire had to draw it's manpower from.¹¹⁶ This created less able bodied workers to till fields, work in weapons manufacturing and serve in the Roman Military. Another issue was the influx of Goths who had been forced into the provinces of Ravenna, Moesia and Western Illyricum.¹¹⁷ This was a tremendous social and economic pressure enforced by the Huns through their conquests against the Gothic tribes. Veterans within the Roman Empire were promised a pension of a land grant and ownership of small holdings as remuneration for their service within the Roman military.¹¹⁸ The influx barbarians into the Imperial territories of Ravenna, Moesia and Western Illyricum either meant that there was less land to allocate to the Veteran's pensions contribution or that the retired Legionaries would have to be settled in hostile areas with neighbours that could change their allegiance to the Western Roman Empire swiftly.¹¹⁹ Therefore the Western Roman Emperors had to become far more prudent in their expenditures and the military campaigns they became involved with, usurpations in government meant that Rome had to divert much needed reinforcement garrisons from the precarious frontiers with the Goths and Persians to the political struggle at hand. This left the Western Roman Empire open to exploitation as the

¹¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill 1996: 71.

¹¹⁶ Burns 1992: 20.

¹¹⁷ Seager 1999: 260-261.

¹¹⁸ Cameron 1993: 50.

¹¹⁹ Cameron 1993: 23.

weakness of the Imperial edifice would have spread to people who wished the Roman Empire harm. From 363AD significant challenges were faced by the Western Roman Emperors, in Britain Magnus Maximus a Spanish officer had proclaimed himself Augustus and emperor by the armies on the British Isles, under Gratian and Valentinian II.¹²⁰ This was a catastrophic uprising because competent Roman generals as well as mercenary generals could choose to align themselves with contenders to the Imperial throne. Completely restricting the manpower that the Emperor's themselves could draw from to support their own positions in power. The Gothic peoples caused a further strain on the Western Roman Empire's military, the appointment of Visigothic chieftains to high positions of command proved to be a successful short term policy in dealing with the waves of Gothic refugees, fleeing the Huns. However, the long term impact of the decision to incorporate more Goths into Roman armies proved disastrous for the Western Roman Emperor's because if there was a mutiny led by a Visigothic chieftain they could align themselves to rival claimants such as Maximus, Procopius and John.¹²¹ This meant that all the resources invested into incorporating barbarian forces to serve in standing armies would be diverted because the Visigothic chieftains ended up being incredibly well respected for the prestige of their rank within the Roman Empire. Therefore large swathes would follow mutinous chieftains who contributed massively to the success of rival claimants, and ultimately ended up becoming keys to solidifying political power. Competent generals such as Valerius Aetius were often the only form of defence that Western Rome had.¹²² Despite his initial allegiance to John a usurper his military knowledge and familiarity with Gothic and Hunnic customs he was able to provide effective resistance against enemies of Rome. Serving in his armies were multitudes of barbarian peoples, Goths, Huns and Alans all contributed large numbers to his forces.¹²³ Additionally, Lee in his

¹²⁰ Michael O'Flynn 2002: 3.

¹²¹ Michael O'Flynn 2003: 30.

¹²² Elton 1996: 40-41.

¹²³ Matthews 1998: 68.

Abduction and Assassination stated “that Roman diplomacy had become even more cutthroat, issues of mistrust within the Senate created a stifling hostility between different parties which resulted in a breakdown in communication between Senatorial politicians”.¹²⁴ Including Attila himself receiving a promise of betrothal from Emperor Valentinian III’s sister,¹²⁵ which in turn shows Attila’s Design to conquer Rome as this gave him a legitimate reason to declare war on the Western Roman Empire. This highlights the difficulty that the Imperial government had faced preventing political factions from declaring support for usurper Emperors or foreign enemies. Walter Goffart stated that “Now, however the Roman Army fought only long enough to wrest a peace treaty from invaders”.¹²⁶ This supports the claim that Western Rome had dilapidated military resources to finance and pursue gruelling struggles in warfare. Therefore Rome’s internal weaknesses must be taken into consideration when discussing the eventual collapse of Rome because the political and social atmosphere came to crippling fragmentation and division within Roman society. On the other end of the political spectrum Attila had a solidified and unified personal court. He had access to a wealth of information about his enemies having worked for the Roman Commander Aetius as a mercenary, his knowledge was vital in identifying weaknesses the Roman Empire was suffering from.¹²⁷ In his court he had Greek and Roman scribes who could write letters to both the Eastern and Western Roman Empire, being able to speak Latin himself he could negotiate with Romans. Attila’s introduction of a common Hunnic language across his empire meant that all under his control could converse and debate their grievances allowing Attila to kept control of political incidents.¹²⁸ The “mysterious” death of Bleda (Attila’s brother) removed any potential opposition to Attila’s rule within the Empire. Hyun Jin Kim

¹²⁴ Lee 2006: 5-6.

¹²⁵ Sid. *Fal.* I.31.100.

¹²⁶ Goffart 1989: 33.

¹²⁷ Jin-Kim 2013: 55.

¹²⁸ Jin-Kim 2013: 56.

stated that “Attila’s system of government meant that he had regents who governed his provinces that could relay information from provinces in the Far and Middle East and throughout Hungary, the Balkans and North Eastern Europe”.¹²⁹ This suggests that Attila had his government completely under control, with a vast communication network across his empire, enabling him to harass the Western Roman Empire from wherever he pleased. Throughout the research in this paper the Huns always appear to have the upper-hand in knowledge pertaining to the Western Roman Empire. The Huns throughout different leadership always appear to make decisions that will place stress on the heart of the Roman Empire: Rome. Uldin’s command of the Huns in the East demolished relationships between Eastern Rome and Sassanid Persia. Under Ruga and Mundzuk the conquest of the Goths and Alans was pursued resulting in the Gothic migrations into the Western Roman Empire. Displaying an intelligent use of Design to cause fragmentation within the Roman Empire. Attila and Bleda ruin Rome’s reputation for using mercenaries, this is evident in the massacre of the Burgundians as mentioned by Sidonius Apollinaris.¹³⁰ After the massacre of the Burgundians in 432AD. Aetius’s reputation among many Barbarian tribes deteriorated and barbarian tribes became increasingly wary of Rome’s intentions as an ally. Attila had used Destruction and psychological warfare in this situation to brake the Roman Empire. Attila also demonstrates that the Roman walled cities were not indestructible who remarked that “For what fortress, what city, what wide extent of the Roman Empire can hope to exist, secure and impregnable. If it is our pleasure that it should be erased from the earth”.¹³¹ Showcasing his ability to capture Roman towns. Attila’s career as a mercenary is particularly fascinating because he acquires knowledge of strengths and weakness of Rome’s military capabilities. While his uncle Ruga was in power, Attila in the opinion of this paper appears to

¹²⁹ Jin-Kim 2013: 56.

¹³⁰ Sid. *Fal.* I.28.80.

¹³¹ Jin-Kim 2013: 120.

be acting as an informant or spy who relayed information back to his connection with the Hunnic Empire. Attila knew how important the provinces of Ravenna, Moesia and Western Illyricum were to the Roman Empire. These grievances are represented by the Late Antique historians such as Ammianus, Priscus, Vegetius and Apollinaris who all describe the disruption caused by the Goths being accommodated in those provinces. Huns were used by various different generals serving in the Roman Empire. Aetius used Huns as auxiliaries through his connections established in his time spent as hostage within Ruga's court.¹³² This shows that some groups of Huns were trusted by Roman officials which could be exploited by intelligent leaders such as Attila. The Battle of Chalens in 451AD was a triumphant victory for Aetius against Attila as considerable damage was inflicted to Attila's army.¹³³ However, this did not mean the Romans had won the war against Attila. Aetius used Huns as support cavalry in his army, Huns being the fastest and most capable Horse mounted warriors would have been used for scouting and reconnaissance due to the Steppe Pony's ability to cover vast distances.¹³⁴ Particularly intriguing in regard to these Hunnic scouts is that they failed to report Attila's army that was recovering in the Alps. In the opinion of this paper, this appears to be collusion with Attila because the battlefield of Chalens was not an astonishing distance away from the Alps. Therefore Attila could have maintained his network of spies and information gathered on the Roman Empire from Huns used in Roman armies. Aetius was also distracted believing he had completely routed Attila and pressed on to further campaigns against other Gothic tribes that were considered threats against Roman Rule.¹³⁵ Within a year Attila's army had recovered from the losses inflicted upon it. Under Attila's leadership the Huns came down from the Alps into Italy, similarly to Hannibal in Rome's early history and sacked Milan, including three larger city centres in North Italy, reaching Rome itself.

¹³² Cameron 1993: 67.

¹³³ Sid. *Fal.* I.40.120.

¹³⁴ Jin-Kim 2013: 130.

¹³⁵ Sid. *Fal.* I.60.180.

Therefore this supports the Design argument because Attila appears to know exactly when and where to attack, exactly what difficulties this would cause Rome and ultimately appears to have acted as a Hunnic Spy himself as well as using networks of spies within Roman employment to further damage Rome. Attila however does not continue on his path of destroying Rome, as an envoy from Pope Leo I arrived, wherein Pope Leo I famously persuaded Attila to turn around and take his army back to Attila's capital at Hungary.¹³⁶ Attila appeared to have outmanoeuvred the Western Roman Empire on multiple occasions. However Attila's death marked the end of the Hunnic incursions into the Roman Empire because Attila's empire crumbled with his death in 453AD.¹³⁷ The aftermath of Attila's war with Rome left the Western Roman Empire a hollow shell. The Visigoths and other Germanic tribes armed with rams created by the Huns or stolen from the Romans were able to bulldoze through Italy.¹³⁸ The collapse of Rome to the Visigoths under Alaric, set in motion the chain of events that would later lay the foundations for the creation of Medieval Europe. Heavily influenced by the conquests and interference of the Huns. The Lombards, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals and Franks settled in the remnants of the Western Roman Empire. Wherein the Eastern Roman Empire occasionally launched campaigns to salvage Italy and Sicily. Desperate attempts to recover the old heart of the Roman Empire: Rome.

¹³⁶ Potter 2009:80.

¹³⁷ Jin-Kim 2013: 250.

¹³⁸ Rich and Shipley 1995: 248-249.

Conclusion

As the Huns rapidly absorbed other nomadic kingdoms into their control, the Hunnic Empire had become immensely diverse, comprising of the Xiongnu, Sarmatians, Scythians, Turkic tribes and Indo-Iranian nomads. The ability to have a tolerance for the assimilation of all the different cultures within the Hunnic Empire enabled the Huns to have an enormous amount of physical manpower. Contributing to the successes of Uldin, Ruga, Mundzuk, Bleda and Attila. By the end of Attila's reign the Hunnic Empire had grown to cover such vast areas that it would take incredibly competent leaders to pursue its development which did not happen following the death of Attila on his wedding night in 453AD. Attila's political administration proved to be tremendously helpful in assuring the galvanisation of the different peoples incorporated into his Empire. The West and East centralisation of government gave Attila flexibility which he could use to achieve his goal of crushing the Western Roman Empire. Within a unified political system, Attila did not have to concern himself with political opposition compared to the Western Roman Empire which had political division in every direction. This weighs in favour of Design being the main contributing factor in the birth of Medieval Europe because Attila's personal court proved impenetrable to the Roman Empire, resulting in the Roman Empire having poor knowledge about the Huns and their way of life. Attila had collected a vast amount of wealth and was considerably wealthier than the Roman Empire due to the debts the Eastern Roman Empire paid for Attila to leave them alone. The Visigoths have to be accredited as playing a part in the formation of Europe as the Gothic tribes proved that they had become more organised, developing into the prototype governments that formed the boundaries for Medieval Europe. However through Devastation the Huns managed to overwhelm the Goths with their military tactics and use of the horse archer in their warfare. Triggering the Gothic migration into the Roman Empire. Ultimately using the Goths to pressure the Western and Roman Empires. Design also played a part in the

Huns use of the Goths, providing the Visigoths with better siege equipment enabled the Goths to besiege Roman towns effectively and get through the walls which the Goths struggled with prior to the Huns. The Huns campaigns against the Eastern Roman Empire appear to be completely through Design, the Huns under Uldin engineered further stress on the relations with the Eastern Roman Empire's close ally the Sassanid Persians, by forcing them into hasty treaties and agreements which broke down trust between them both.¹³⁹ The Huns pressured the relationship to the extent that war was declared between the Sassanid Persians and Eastern Roman Empire which in turn exhausted the Eastern Roman Empire's military. The pressure faced from the East by the Huns created even further struggles when the Huns caused the Goths to migrate into the Eastern Roman Empire. Resulting in the catastrophic defeat at Adrianople. The aftermath of which shattered the Eastern Roman Empire's confidence, enabling Attila to dismantle any hope of aid the Eastern Romans could send to help the Western Roman Empire. Therefore the Attila's conflict with the Eastern Roman Empire was achieved through Design. Due to the nature of decline that the Huns had pushed the Eastern Roman Empire into. The Western Roman Empire however can accredit its own fall to the internal strife that plagued it. The Cyprian plague devastated the population, the distancing of Provincial landlords and heavy taxation placed its own economic strain on the Western Roman Empire. Politically the Western Roman Empire was in a dire state due to the frequent mutinies, rebellions and usurper Emperors who caused large rifts in the Senate. Including the over-reliance on using auxiliaries to provide the numbers for the Roman military, the Gothic chieftains achieving high positions in the Roman Military commandeered munitions that would support rebels such as Procopius, John and Maximus giving weak Emperor's such as Valentinian III small success at controlling the Senate and his Empire. Taking all the internal factors to Rome's collapse into consideration, this paper argues that the

¹³⁹ Blockley 1992: 50.

Huns aided the stress of the political situation. Attila used Design to combat the Western Roman Empire, establishing exceptional capability at undermining Roman authority. The promise of betrothal made by Valentinian III's sister gave Attila a potentially genuine political control in Rome. Attila also contributed to the Design argument because he established an exceptionally destructive network of spies and informants, himself acting as one for his Uncle. Attila carefully mapped out the weaknesses he could exploit in the Western Roman Empire, this culminated in his campaigns against Western Rome. Severely damaging the Western Roman Empire's capability of defending itself against further barbarian invasions from the Goths. Overall this paper has come to the decision that it was Design which was the main tactic employed by the Huns that contributed to the Hunnic Empire's success. Attila and his predecessor's designed the setting stones that triggered the Western Roman Empire's collapse placing overwhelming pressure on the weaknesses Imperial Rome already had. Therefore allowing the Goths and the barbarians in the aftermath of Attila's conquest to take full advantage of a severely weakened Rome, to destroy the Western Roman Empire. Ultimately the Huns played a decisive role in the Birth of Medieval Europe as the catalyst to the change that was to come, the Huns are responsible for picking out the Roman Empire's weaknesses, exploiting them through Design and leaving the Eastern Roman Empire and the Gothic barbarians to fight over the remains of Western Europe following the death of Attila. Culminating in the creation of Medieval Europe as the Huns had encouraged the Goths to settle Spain, North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France.

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Image of Attila the Hun on Cover page

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