

EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Edited by

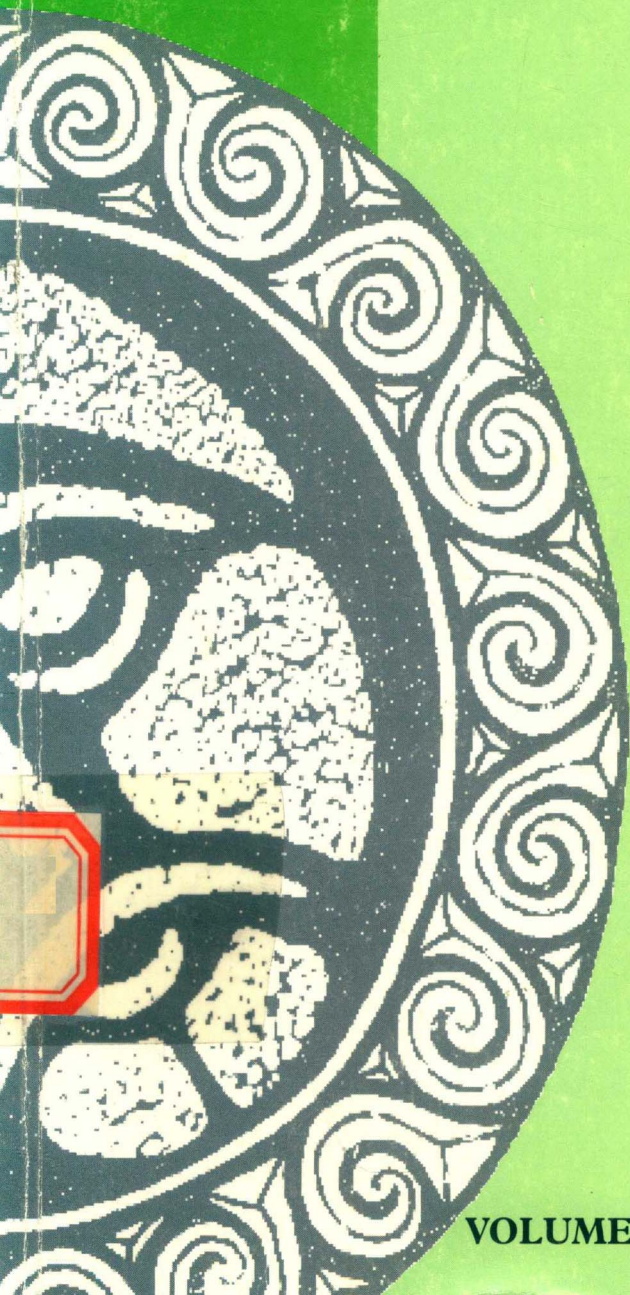
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Aims and scope *Early Medieval Europe* fills an important gap in the English-language literature available in this field. It covers the history of Europe, including Britain, from the 4th century to the 11th. The focus is historical, and a great variety of source materials – archaeological, numismatic, literary, onomastic, etc – are used.

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Editorial

1998 see important new developments for *Early Medieval Europe*. From this year the journal will appear three times a year. One of these issues will normally be on a particular theme. We are delighted that this significant increase in the journal's size will be accompanied by only a minimal increase in the personal subscription price. There have also been changes to the editorial board. Edward James, a valued member of our original team is stepping down but will remain a corresponding editor. Rosamond McKitterick is retiring from both the editorial board and from the coordinating editor's chair, but will likewise continue to offer help and advice as a corresponding editor.

We are all most grateful to Rosamond for the first-rate job she has done, not only as coordinating editor over the last two years, but also in guiding the journal from its inception: EME would not be the success it is today had it not been for her magnificent efforts. As a reflection of our policy of encouraging work by younger scholars, we welcome two new members to our editorial board who fit into that category, Guy Halsall and Matthew Innes. Tom Brown is taking over once again as coordinating editor.



The fluidity of barbarian identity: the ethnogenesis of Alemanni and Suebi,

AD 200–500

HANS J. HUMMER

This article argues against the romantic notion that barbarian peoples organized themselves around internal identities which persisted essentially unchanged over centuries. The Alemanni comprised an amalgam of constituent groups whose identities and behaviour fluctuated according to situation and context. This loose association of groups was transformed into a more cohesively organized gentile configuration during the migration period, when Alemannic and Suebic elements formed a common Alemannic identity.

Today, the French call Germany *Allemagne*, while Germans and Swiss refer to south-west Germany and north-west Switzerland informally as *Alemannien*. In Freiburg, the *Alemannisches Institut* and its journal the *Alemannisches Jahrbuch* have dedicated themselves to researching and preserving the history of the upper-Rhine region. What serves as a national designation for some people, indicates a regional identity for others.

Modern Germans also call parts of south-west Germany *Schwaben*. The name survives formally in geographical terms such as *Schwäbische Alb*, but like *Alamannien* it lacks official political meaning.

In the Middle Ages both designated administrative district. In Otto the Great's empire of the tenth century, the Duchy of Swabia encompassed the Alsace, south-west and southern Germany, Switzerland and portions of northern Italy. Divisions within Louis the Pious' empire 150 years earlier reveal a smaller *Alamannia* in the same location, but no Swabia. Interestingly, eighth-century monastic chronicles refer to conflicts between early Carolingians and *Suavi*¹ in *Alamannia*.² In the

¹ *Annales Sancti Amandi* and *Annales Sancti Tiliani*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *M[onumenta] G[ermaniae] H[istorica]*, *Scriptores* [SS] I (Hanover, 1826), pp. 6–9.

² *Annales Laurehamenses*, ed. G.H. Pertz, *MGH*, *SS* I, pp. 22–3.

sixth century, Gregory of Tours claimed Alamanni and Suebi were different names for the same people living east of the upper Rhine.³ For late Romans, Alemanni were a troublesome Germanic people inhabiting the upper Rhine and Danube regions beginning in the third century, and the Suebi a Germanic people residing variously on the middle Danube near modern Vienna in the third and fourth centuries, or along the Elbe in the first century of the Common Era. Thus, through the centuries, *Alamannia*, Swabia and kindred words have meant different things to different people and have served various uses.

This study seeks to peer behind centuries of accretions, to pierce the *interpretatio romana* of contemporary sources and look at the ethnogenesis of Alemanni and Suebi between AD 200 and 500, and to determine how Alemanni and Suebi came to form a common Alemannic identity by the sixth century.

The early Alemanni, 200–310

Upheavals in free *Germania* stemming from increased social differentiation within and among Germanic peoples in the later second century led to a reorganization of the barbarian world. The Roman policy of supporting and thereby enriching frontier chiefs malleable to Roman persuasion created within those groups Roman and anti-Roman factions which ultimately destabilized the Germanic world. The abundance of luxury goods in these areas attracted the attention of groups beyond the buffer zones causing increased intergermanic conflict. The Marcomannian wars accelerated the process of reorganization when Marcus Aurelius smashed the coalition of leadership united against the Empire. Old groupings and nobilities disappeared, but out of the ruin new confederations coalesced. The Alemanni were one of these new entities.⁴

The early history and scope of Alemanni remains problematic and difficult to discern. Modern investigators have complained that the Roman compulsion to organize opponents along the frontier into generic categories makes it difficult to determine the social reality behind the ethnographic terminology. Narrative and inscriptive evidence, they contend, indicate that *Alamanni* often functioned as another term for *Germani*. The *Historia Augusta*, for example, claims Alemanni were still called *Germani* during Proculus' reign (280). And, when one glosses the first appearance of Alemanni in Cassius Dio in

³ Gregory of Tours, *Decem Libri Historiarum*, ed. W. Arndt, MGH *S[criptores] r[erum] M[erovingicarum]* (SRM) I, 2nd edn (Hanover, 1851), 2.2.

⁴ E.A. Thompson, *The Early Germans* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 72–108.

213 with imperial titulature, which designates Caracalla as *Germanicus maximus*, and with inscriptions of the *Fratres Arvales*, which describe Caracalla's foes variously as *Barbari* and *Germani*, one can see that for Romans *Alamanni* served as a collective term. In short, they argue, it is difficult to determine where Roman perceptions ended and Alemannic self-perception began.⁵

One should not ignore the Roman tendency to organize barbarians into generic categories, but neither should one exaggerate the effects of such practices. Producing evidence from the *Historia Augusta*, apparently written as a practical joke,⁶ to show the generic character of the term Alemanni, presents a risky strategy. For example, the *Historia Augusta* also asserts that Caracalla took the title *Alamannicus*,⁷ which clearly is an interpolation from the fourth century, when the *Historia Augusta* was written and when emperors commonly assumed that title.⁸ Second, glossing literary sources with inscriptions to elucidate how Roman historians used the term Alemanni may generate misleading conclusions. The closeness of celebratory inscriptions to actual events and the survival of their graven letters, uncomplicated by textual transmission, suggest a mimetic quality, that disintegrates upon closer inspection. The imperial titulature encoded within inscriptions formed a genre distinct from that of historical literature and, consequently, conformed to a different set of rules.

Michael Peachin's study of third-century titulature between 235 and

⁵ D. Geuenich, 'Zur Landnahme der Alemannen', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 16 (1982), pp. 25–44, at 27 and 30; R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*. [Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes], 2nd edn (Cologne, 1977), p. 502; D. Geuenich and H. Keller, 'Alamannen, Alamannien, alamannisch im frühen Mittelalter. [Möglichkeiten und Schwierigkeiten des Historikers beim Versuch der Eingrenzung]', in H. Wolfram and A. Schwarcz (eds) *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn* 1 (Vienna, 1985), pp. 135–57, at 137.

⁶ Ronald Syme argues that one author wrote the *Historia Augusta* after 360 as a well-executed hoax, rather than the six argued by many other scholars, 'The Composition of the *Historia Augusta*', in R. Syme, *Historia Augusta Papers* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 12–29. By 1979, computer analysis had vindicated single authorship by demonstrating the homogeneity of structure, 'Controversy Abating and Credulity Curbed?', in *ibid.*, pp. 209–23, at 212. The author invented over 200 characters and 35 historians and biographers, and peppered his biographies with criticism of and comment on non-existent works – a virtual minefield for historians, 'Bogus Authors', in *ibid.*, pp. 98–108. The author values the monarchy and the Senate and glorifies the Antonine emperors, but his content does not betray any serious purpose. He is 'patently a rogue scholar, perverse, delighting in deception ... this man ranks with impostors in other ages', 'Propaganda in the *Historia Augusta*', in *ibid.*, pp. 109–30, at 128–9.

⁷ *Historia Augusta*, ed. E. Hohl (Leipzig, 1965), 13.10.6.

⁸ L. Okamura, *Alamannia Devicta*. [Roman-German Conflicts from Caracalla to the First Tetrarchy (A.D. 213–305)], PhD thesis, University of Michigan (1984), p. 89; W. Kuhoff (eds.), *Inchriften und Münzen, Quellen zur Geschichte der Alamannen*, 6 vols (Sigmaringen, 1894), VI, pp. 11–23. None of the nineteen surviving, contemporary inscriptions collected by Kuhoff dealing with Caracalla refers specifically to Alemanni.

284 implicitly reveals the persistent use of geographical titles such as *Arabicus maximus*, *Britannicus maximus*, *Dacicus maximus*, *Germanicus maximus*, *Parthicus maximus*, *Persicus maximus* and *Sarmaticus maximus* rather than the designations of individual peoples so popular in the late third and fourth centuries.⁹ For much of the third century, emperors and laudatory poets preferred grander terms, which implied conquest of whole regions or races rather than tactical, defensive victories over bands of barbarians. Apparently, third-century practices still operated within the traditions of earlier imperial titulature which did not celebrate (or admit) victories over single peoples within a racial category. Cassius Dio reveals as much when he says that Marcus Aurelius adopted the title *Germanicus* in 172 after defeating the Marcomanni, because the Romans call all those who inhabit the northern regions Germans.¹⁰ One simply should not expect to uncover the subtleties of ethnic differences with evidence from third-century titulature.

Since inscriptions and panegyrics impose an impenetrable layer of generality for much of the third century, linguistic evidence and histories must serve as sources for uncovering the nature and structure of early Alemanni. The word *alamanni* was common to Germanic dialects ranging from Gothic to those of the lower Rhine. *Manni* simply meant 'people' and *ala*-functioned as an intensifier. After the arrival of Christianity the term assumed the sense of 'all people'.¹¹ Linguistic evidence can be suggestive, but one cannot assume the immutability of a word's meaning, especially if that word developed a technical sense or was reified into an ethnic designation.

Despite such problems, the etymology of *alamanni*, the polyethnic character of Alemanni observed in the fourth century by Ammianus Marcellinus and the location of Alemanni in south-west *Germania* has prompted some to suspect continuity with the Suebic Semnones of Tacitus. Others have rejected a Suebic connection and argued instead

⁹ *Gothicus maximus*, *Francicus maximus* and *Carpicus maximus* present exceptions to this pattern. Firm evidence indicates *Gothicus maximus* was bestowed first upon Aurelian (270–5). *Francicus maximus* appears in connection with Probus (276–9); however, the title appears in the problematic *Historia Augusta* (see n. 6). *Carpicus maximus* first appears in 248 with Philip the Arabian (244–9), and twenty-four years later with Aurelian; *Roman Imperial Titulature and Chronology, A.D. 235–284*, *Studia Amstelodamensia ad Epigraphicam, Jus Antiquum et Papyrologicam Pertinentia* 29 (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 65, 86–7, 91–2 and 96. Nevertheless, of these three titles, two emerged in the later third century, when such designations became common.

¹⁰ Cassius Dio, *Historiarum Romanarum Quae Supersunt* 3, ed. U.P. Boissvain (Berlin, 1901), 71.3.5, p. 255: Γερμανούς γὰρ τοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀνω χωρίοις οἰκοῦντας ὀνομαζόμεν.

¹¹ Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, pp. 500–2.

for the rise of a new union or confederation of peoples. The former proposition remains highly unlikely. If a Suebic *Traditionskern* did unite various elements, one must explain why they failed to adopt the legendary and venerable Suebic designation. The latter theory seems equally problematic. By definition, ethnic groups possess their own traditions and nomenclature. Hence, any constituent peoples would have identified themselves as something other than Alemanni.¹²

The objection to this latter theory, however, assumes the exclusivity of identities. One can imagine Alemanni as a new confederation of groups, if one assumes the operation of multiple of situational identities. Reinhard Wenskus has argued that the pan-Germanic character of *alamanni* indicates that this designation was not a new term. Rather, similar to Suebi, it offered a competing indigenous, neutral collective, which eventually won out in south-west *Germania*.¹³ Combining Wenskus' argument with the notion of a flexible identity indicates that a new coalition of Germanic groups may have adopted a familiar collective term, which did not expunge constituent identities.

Support for such an explanation comes from Agathias' mid-sixth-century account of Byzantine history. Agathias preserved a passage from Asinius Quadratus' history of the Germanic peoples, which was written in the first third of the third century and which suggests that Alemanni were a polyethnic entity from very early in their history. Asinius claimed the name Alemanni reflected a hybrid ethnic composition.¹⁴ The statements seems pejorative and may indicate either an unflattering designation applied to Alemanni by neighbouring Germanic peoples or the unfriendly interpretation of an Alemannic self-designation by hostile neighbours.¹⁵ The latter seems likeliest, since pagan, church-violating Alemanni serve in Agathias' history as exemplars of wickedness and as foils to the righteous, orthodox Franks.¹⁶ Agathias probably thought this piece of information unflattering and marshalled it for his pro-Frankish purposes.

¹² For a review of the debate see Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, pp. 494–500; and more recently, with special emphasis on archaeology, H. Keller, 'Probleme der frühen Geschichte der Alamannen ["alamannische Landnahme"] aus historischer Sicht', in M. Müller-Wille and R. Schneider (eds) *Ausgewählte Probleme europäischer Landnahmen des Früh- und Hochmittelalters, Methodische Grundlegendiskussion im Grenzbereich zwischen Archäologie und Geschichte I* (Sigmaringen, 1993), 83–102.

¹³ Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, p. 502.

¹⁴ Agathias, *Historiarum Libri Quinque*, ed. R. Keydell, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 2 (Berlin, 1967), 1.6.3: οἱ δὲ Ἀγαμάνοι, εἰ γὰρ χρὴ Ἀσινίῳ Κοναδράτῳ ἐπεσθαι, ἀνδρὶ Ἰταλίῳ καὶ τὰ Γερμανικὰ ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἀναγεγραμμένῳ, ζυγκλυδὲς εἰσὶν ἀνθρώποι καὶ μῆαδες, καὶ τοῦτο δύναται αὐτοῖς ἡ ἐτωνυμία.

¹⁵ H. Wolfram, *Das Reich und die Germanen. Zwischen Antike und Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1990), p. 81.

¹⁶ A. Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 44–5 and 54.

One should not dismiss the possibility that Alemanni attempted to surmount this apparent negative by interpreting polyethnicity as an advantage, which they codified in a name. Such a strategy would have been exceptional, but not necessarily improbable. Peoples of the ancient world also considered antiquity of ethnic roots a mark of distinction and strove mightily to show such maturity in their origin myths. Nonetheless, the Scythians turned the apparent weakness of newness to their advantage by frankly proclaiming themselves the youngest of nations.¹⁷ Early on, *alamanni* probably offered a flexible and familiar collective term, around which scattered bands of warriors and their dependents could rally against Germanic or Roman enemies, but which would not impinge on various foci of authority.

Narrative sources for the earliest period are few and brief, but they bear witness to a decentralized Alemannic ethnogenesis, which persisted throughout the third century. Cassius Dio's account of Caracalla's expedition into *Germania* along the Raetian *limes* in 213 represents the first written evidence of Alemanni.¹⁸ Unfortunately, portions of the account are missing because only an epitome of the relevant book survives, but Dio's belittling of Caracalla's achievements in the German campaigns¹⁹ indicates Alemanni were not as yet formidable foes. They apparently remained a marginal force until the mid-third century, for Herodian speaks only of incursions of *Γερμανοὶ* during the latter years of Alexander Severus' reign (222–35) and Alemanni fails to appear in his account of Maximinus Thrax's (235–8) campaigns against *Γερμανοὶ* and the emperor's grandiose plans to conquer *Germania* once and for all.²⁰

The details of Alemannic formation can only be guessed at, but

¹⁷ Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. Carl Hude, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1927), 4.5.1.

¹⁸ Some have denied the existence of Alemanni on the basis of the complicated manuscript tradition of Dio's history. Nineteenth-century editors reconstructed the critical events of 213 in Germany from portions preserved in the *Excerpta Constantiniana* of the tenth century and in an epitome of books 36–80 by Joannes Xiphilinus of the eleventh. The word *Alamanni* does not survive in the manuscripts, but rather four varied spellings, which were standardized to *Alamanni* by modern editors; see H. Castritius, 'Von politischer Vielfalt zur Einheit. [Zu den Ethnogenesen der Alemannen]', in H. Wolfram and W. Pohl (eds) *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern I* (Vienna, 1990), pp. 71–84, at 73–4; and Okamura, *Alamannia Devicta*, pp. 99–110. Okamura goes on to argue that the cognates of Alemanni found in the surviving manuscripts were later interpolations, *ibid.*, pp. 122–4 and 129–33. However, the scepticism of Castritius and Okamura seems over-zealous, and Okamura in particular fails to locate definitively the source of interpolation or to explain persuasively the reasons for interpolation.

¹⁹ Cassius Dio, *Historiarum Romanarum Quae Supersunt* 3, 78.13.3–5.

²⁰ Herodian, *Ab Excessu Divi Marci*, ed. K. Stavenhagen (Stuttgart, 1967), 6.7.2–10 and 7.1.5–2.9.

Maximinus Thrax's ambitious offensive into *Germania* may have prompted an aggrandizement of the Alemannic entity, which was ideologically flexible and hence uniquely prepared to accommodate disparate groups. Gallienus' treaty 'with the leader of a Germanic people' to prevent further crossings of the Rhine c. 253–4²¹ indicates that significant foci of power and influence had coalesced at least six years prior to the reappearance of Alemanni in the sources in 259–60, when according to Eutropius and Aurelius Victor both Alemannic and Frankish war bands raided Gaul.²² The range and multiplicity of assaults attested between 259 and Constantus' stabilization of the Gallic frontier with his daring and decisive victory over a large host of Alemanni at Lingones (modern Langres) in eastern Gaul around 300 suggests Alemanni were still a decentralized, though growing and increasingly formidable, collection of groups.²³ Thus, one does not witness a change in the basic structure or behaviour of Alemanni in the third century, or any mutations in the process of their ethnogenesis,²⁴ but rather the elaboration of an ethnic idea.

In the early fourth century their growing influence was checked by Constantius' son, Constantine the Great (306–37), who won the affection of provincials by slaughtering Alemanni and Franks, and casting their *reges* to the beasts.²⁵ Either his brutal crackdown in Gaul liquidated a substantial portion of Alemannic leadership or his reorganization of the Empire deterred thoughts of raiding, for news of Alemanni

²¹ Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, ed. L. Mendelssohn (Leipzig, 1961), 1.30.2–3. Zosimus wrote his history sometime between 498 and 502 (see Cameron, 'The Date of Zosimus' *New History*', *Philologus* 13 (1969), pp. 106–10), but book 1 is primarily a summary of the work of the third-century historian Dexippus, who wrote an account of the third-century Gothic wars; see R.T. Ridley, 'Introduction', *Zosimus. New History* (Canberra, 1982), pp. xi–xv, at xi–xiii.

²² Eutropius, *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, ed. H. Droysen, *MGH, Auctores antiquissimi* [AA] II (Berlin, 1879), 9.7 and 9.8.2; Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus*, ed. F. Pichlmayr (Leipzig, 1961), 33.3. Eutropius does refer to both *Alamanni* and *Franci* as *Germani*, a practice similar, say, to a modern American referring to French and Germans collectively as Europeans. That is, Eutropius' use of the term *Germani* here does not necessarily expose *Alamanni* and *Franci* as mere generic collectives.

²³ In 268 Alemanni disturbed Italia, *Epitome de Caesaribus*, 34.2. Around 270–1, 'Alemanni and their neighbouring peoples invaded Italia', Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 1.49.1, and forced Aurelian to hurry from the east to relieve afflicted Italian cities, *Liber de Caesaribus*, 35.1–2. In the late 270s, during the reigns of Probus (276–82) and Proculus (280), skirmishes with Alemanni flared up again along the Rhine, *Historia Augusta*, 28.12.3. Constantius' victory is recorded in Eutropius' *Breviarium*, 9.23. See also Okamura on the patterns of coin hoard evidence, which corroborate this reading of the written sources, *Alamannia Devicta*, pp. 263–330.

²⁴ For a different reading of the sources, see Castritius, 'Von politischer Vielfalt zur Einheit', pp. 77–83.

²⁵ Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 10.3.2.

dries up for a half century until Ammianus Marcellinus picks up the trail in 354.²⁶

The Alemanni of Ammianus Marcellinus, 354–78

Firm, detailed observations of the decentralized gentile structure of the Alemanni emerge only in the mid-fourth century with the history of Ammianus.²⁷ His account of Julian's so-called war against the seven kings of the Alemanni in the battle of Argentoratum in 357 provides the richest passage on Alemannic gentile structure.²⁸ Admittedly, one must exercise caution when using Ammianus as a source, since his concerns were primarily military and political, rather than ethnographic. His portrayals show Alemanni in moments of considerable stress and so may or may not represent the social structures of peacetime. Nevertheless, how Alemanni displayed themselves in battle presumably says something about their hierarchy of power.

Ammianus recounts that in the Alemannic troop formation, Chonodomarius and his nephew Serapio, *potestate excelsiores ante alios reges*, commanded the left and right wings, respectively; followed by five *reges proximi potestate*, ten *regales a series optimatum*, and 35,000 troops *ex variis nationibus*. Some of these soldiers were mercenaries, others were loaned with the agreement that the favour be returned.²⁹ Thus, at the top of Alemannic wartime society sat *reges*, followed by more numerous *regales* (petty kings), then *optimates* (distinguished men) and finally a polyethnic body of warriors.

At first glance, the passage implies political stratification of a centralized *gens*. However, the context indicates that Ammianus distinguished two general categories of independent ruler based on martial ability

²⁶ Inscriptions from 331 in Phrygia, between 335 and 337 in Rome and before 340 in the province of Scythia proclaim Constantine II (337–40) *Alamannicus*, but they appear merely to reaffirm a title earned earlier, Kuhoff, *Inscripfen und Münzen* pp. 47–9.

²⁷ See M. Grant, *The Ancient Historians* (New York, 1970), pp. 358–84; and J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), esp. pp. 306–32 and 376–82. Several additional points on the trustworthiness of Ammianus as an observer of barbarians should be made. Ammianus served in the army with barbarians, many of whom, according to Ammianus, remained in contact with relatives in *Germania*. Presumably, many of Ammianus' observations take the reader beyond the *interpretatio romana* into the barbarian world. Second, one must distinguish between groups Ammianus had direct knowledge of, like Burgundians, Alemanni, Goth and Persians, and those he did not, such as Huns, Scythians and Chinese. It is in the latter cases that he resorts to literary convention.

²⁸ Ammianus was transferred to the east just before the battle, but he apparently had access to letters and pamphlets of Julian and communiqués submitted by Julian to Constantius, see Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, pp. 378–9.

²⁹ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum* [*Libri Qui Supersunt*], ed. W. Seyfarth (Leipzig, 1978), 16.12.23–6.

and, by implication, on the size of their territories and retinues. Chonodomarius' *potestas* was neither magisterial nor official, as the word often indicates, but rather, in the spirit of its root *possum*, an influence which exuded from personal ability. Chonodomarius was *excelsus* – great in stature – because of his prowess on the battlefield. He was the *princeps audendi periculosa* who had defeated Decentius Caesar and sacked many wealthy Gallic cities.³⁰ One may clarify further the meaning of *princeps* by glossing it with another passage, which describes Chonodomarius as a skilful *ductor* (commander) beyond the others.³¹ The combination of terms indicates that Chonodomarius' authority derived from his skills as military leader.

Consequently, through martial prowess an Alemannic *rex* could extend his influence over neighbouring *reges* and *regales*. When two other *reges*, Gundomadus and Vadomarius, refused to dishonour the peace they had made with the Empire and join Chonodomarius' campaign, Gundomadus was murdered and Vadomarius' followers pressured him to join.³² Ammianus does not reveal who slew Gundomadus, but the pressures placed on Vadomarius and the common cause Gundomadus' *populus* made with Chonodomarius after the murder imply Gundomadus' own people, heeding Chonodomarius' call for war, mutinied.

Tacitus described a division among Germanic peoples between *reges* based on noble birth, who ruled in peace, and *duces* based on military prowess, who commanded on the battlefield.³³ This division of duties may have existed for the Alemanni in theory, but Chonodomarius acted both as *rex* and *dux*, and many of the other *reges* throughout Ammianus' history are seen both making war and brokering peace with the Romans.³⁴ It is perhaps more appropriate to situate Alemannic notions of leadership within the context of western- and eastern-Germanic political traditions. According to Herwig Wolfram, east-Germanic groups, such as Goths and Burgundians, distinguished the *thiudans* – an ethnic, sacral king of the people in the past – from the *rieiks*, who was *rex* of a constituent group. In times of emergency, the various risks invested one of their number for a limited time with the monarchical authority of the ancient *thiudans*.³⁵ The *rieiks* kingship ultimately prevailed among east-Germanic peoples, as these warrior

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.12.4–5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.12.24.

³² *Ibid.*, 16.12.17.

³³ Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. A. Önnersfors (Stuttgart, 1978), 7.

³⁴ Geuenich, 'Zur Landnahme der Alemannen', p. 35.

³⁵ H. Wolfram, 'Athanaric the Visigoth: Monarchy or Judgeship? A Study in Comparative History', *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975), pp. 259–78, at 268–9.

kings established their reputation and dominance during the trials of migration and founded barbarian kingdoms on Roman soil.³⁶

By contrast, west-Germanic groups, such as Alemanni, Franks and Saxons, and their Celtic neighbours had forsaken the *thiudans* high kingship by the time of Caesar, and the fates of Orgetorix, Dumnorix, Vercingetorix, Arminius and Civilis demonstrate the resistance of these western groups to strong *rieiks* kingships. By the migration period, west-Germanic groups had ceased using the term *rieiks* to describe their kings.³⁷ The equivalent, derived from Anglo-Saxon, was *cyning* or *kyning*, which became the most encompassing political term of the Franks. *Cyning* betrays the social foundations upon which west-Germanic lordship rested. The word derives from *cyn* (kin) and the suffix *-ing*, which means 'one belonging to' (e.g. modern earthling) and acts as a patronymic. The *cyning* literally was 'the man of, or from or representing the *cyn*', hence that one who embodied the power of the *cyn* and protected its interests.³⁸ Within a *pagus* (district), *cyning* applied specially to the leader of the most powerful kin group. Whether a *rex*'s influence was inherited or earned, his power ultimately rested in the strength and cohesion of the kin group.

The west-Germanic context and the Latin political terms *rex* and *regalis*, which convey a sense of independent and autonomous exercise of power, reveal that for Ammianus differences between Alemannic *reges* and *regales* resided in their relative influence among the confederation, not in formal subordination of the latter to the former. Theodor Mayer called these leaders *Gaufürsten*, or princes sovereign in *pagi* under their control and around whom Alemanni clustered.³⁹ Consequently, one hears in Ammianus of Macrianus, *rex* of the *Bucinobantes*, a *gens* of the Alemanni;⁴⁰ Priarius, *rex* of the *Lentienses*, a *populus*⁴¹ and *pagus*⁴² of the Alemanni; the *pagus* of *rex* Vodomarius;⁴³ and the *Juthungi*, both a *gens* and *pars* of the Alemanni.⁴⁴ The choice of vocabulary to describe these constituent entities lacks consistency, ranging from the political, to the biological to the geographical, yet it

³⁶ H. Wolfram, 'The Shaping of the Early Medieval Kingdom', *Viator* 1 (1970), pp. 1–20, at 4–5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–8.

³⁸ J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings* (New York, 1962), p. 153.

³⁹ T. Mayer, 'Grundlagen und Grundfragen', in *Grundfragen der alemannischen Geschichte. Vorträge und Forschungen* 1, Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für Mittelalterliche Geschichte (Sigmaringen, 1970), pp. 7–35, at 19.

⁴⁰ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 29.4.7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31.10.2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 15.4.1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.3.1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, the title of ch. 6 of book 17, p. 102; and 17.6.1.

does point up the absence of any Alemannic *Einkönigtum* at this time. Dieter Geuenich believes names like *Bucinobantes* and *Lentienses* to be geographic rather than ethnic divisions within an Alemannic *Völkerbund*;⁴⁵ however, the need to distinguish Alemanni with hyphenated terms may simply indicate the desire on the part of Ammianus to find some criterion by which he could account for the divergent policies of *reges* and various internal factions. Ammianus' choice of hierarchical or factional terminology, then, is best understood as the description of a social reality, rather than as the reflection of a formal, theoretical system of governance.

Be that as it may, like all of us, Ammianus can never completely free himself from unconscious biases. Part of the difficulty for a modern researcher sifting Ammianus' observations lies in Ammianus' tendency to admit tacitly the heterogeneity of Alemanni while simultaneously objectifying them as an ethnic group, with whom the Empire ought to be able to deal bilaterally. Hence, when defeats inflicted upon individual *reges* failed to compel peace from the whole, Ammianus considered the Alemanni a treacherous, untrustworthy lot.⁴⁶

Another problem arises from the possibility that qualified groups such as *Bucinobantes*, *Juthungi* and *Lentienses* may never have considered themselves Alemanni, but were stereotyped as such by Ammianus due to their geographical proximity to *Alemanni*. For a Roman, Alemanni probably served as a generic term for all groups inhabiting the region between the Rhine, Main and the Alps.⁴⁷ An alemannic entity did exist, but Roman pressures helped mould it. A reciprocal relationship existed between indigenous processes, which brought Alemanni into being, and Roman perceptions, which projected the term back onto a larger group, thus prompting neighbouring groups to adopt the identification in their dealings with the Empire. Something of the sort appears to have befallen the *Juthungi*.

Juthungi first appeared in 270 negotiating peace with Aurelian after an assault on Istria, though our source, Dexippus, neglects to mention any association of *Juthungi* with Alemanni at this time. An oversight perhaps, but the passage is much lengthier than any other source for the *Juthungi*, and Dexippus' description of the negotiation and treaty surely would have revealed other allegiances or alliances.⁴⁸ By the mid-fourth century, Ammianus considered *Juthungi* a *pars* and *gens* of the

⁴⁵ Geuenich, 'Zur Landnahme der Alemannen', pp. 32–3.

⁴⁶ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 27.10.5.

⁴⁷ Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*, p. 502.

⁴⁸ Dexippus, *De Bellico Scythico, Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, ed. K. Müller (1949; reprint, Frankfurt, 1975), 24–5.

Alemanni. However, around 430 Juthungi, unconnected to Alemanni, re-emerge in a panegyric to Avitus, which celebrates the defeat of Juthungi by Aëtius.⁴⁹

This fluidity of identity possible among barbarian groups like the Juthungi also applied to frontier Romans. One should not confuse the tendency of Roman authors to dichotomize politically the Roman and barbarian worlds with rigid ethnographic boundaries. The Alemannic attacks of 259–60 overwhelmed the *limes* and extinguished celto-roman *villa* habitations in the *agri decumates*.⁵⁰ Other types of settlements, however, persisted throughout the so-called Alemannic *Landnahme*.⁵¹ Several sites located on heights indicate that some Alemanni may have used old celtic *oppida* for protection against Roman strikes,⁵² and Roman settlements, which continued in the areas close to Roman forest in the midst of Alemannic territory, reveal a continuity of settlement before and after the *Landnahme*.⁵³ Indeed, Ammianus remarks that many of the houses of Alemanni were built in Roman fashion.⁵⁴

Throughout the third and fourth centuries, the Alemanni maintained a decentralized gentile structure. Movements of Alemanni lacked central co-ordination and membership changed as groups struck out for the Empire and others were added. Lulls in raiding after Constantine's accession and again after 378, when Ammianus' account ended, indicate loss and gain of members over time. However, not only membership, but also the gentile structure of Alemanni would be altered in the fifth century with the arrival of Suebic elements in south-west *Germania*.

The Suebi

Judging from Julius Caesar's punitive expedition into *Germania*, Suebi of the first century BC inhabited regions east of, though not bordering on, the Rhine.⁵⁵ By the turn of the first century of the Common Era, Tacitus located them further east in central *Germania* along the axis of the Elbe river, and in the 170s they fought in the Marcomannian wars

⁴⁹ Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina*, ed. C. Lütjohann, *MGH, AA*, VIII (Berlin, 1887), 7, vv. 233–5.

⁵⁰ G. Fingerlin, 'Zur alamannischen Siedlungsgeschichte des 3.-7. Jahrhunderts', in W. Hübener (ed.) *Die Alemannen in der Frühzeit* (Bühl, 1974), pp. 45–88, at 48 and 77.

⁵¹ On the set of romantic assumptions underpinning the traditional notion of the Alemannic *Landnahme*, see Keller, 'Probleme der frühen Geschichte der Alamannen', esp. pp. 83–5.

⁵² J. Werner, 'Zu den alamannischen Burgen des 4. und 5. Jahrhunderts', in W. Müller (ed.) *Zur Geschichte der Alemannen* (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 84–90.

⁵³ Geuenich, 'Zur Landnahme der Alemannen', pp. 67–90, at 40–1.

⁵⁴ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 17.1.7.

⁵⁵ Julius Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum*, ed. O. Seel (Leipzig, 1977), 4.1–19.

along the Danube near Bohemia. The connection between fifth-century Suebi and earlier Suebi is difficult to assess because the term seems to disappear from the sources around 180, after Aurelius' wars, only to reappear suddenly along the Rhine around 400. All references to Suebi in Dio's history, which spans the period from the Republic until AD 229, antedate the Marcommanian wars. Eutropius, whose *Breviarium* extends from the founding of Rome to Jovian in 364, mentions Suebi once in the Marcommanian wars.⁵⁶ The *Epitome de Caesaribus*⁵⁷ and Aurelius Victor,⁵⁸ which treat imperial history down to 395 and 361, respectively, speak only of Suebi in the early Empire. In Zosimus' history, which covers Roman history from 192 to 410, Suebi appear in 406, when they join the Alans and Vandals in attacking Gaul.⁵⁹ Orosius' *Seven Books Against the Pagans*, which treats Roman history down to the early fifth century, summarizes the general ebb and flow of Suebic nomenclature in Roman historiography. Orosius mentions Suebi four times during or before the Marcomannian Wars of the 170s.⁶⁰ Suebi disappear from his work in the third and fourth centuries, only to reappear four more times between 406 and 408.⁶¹

However, two brief exceptions to this pattern occur in the third and fourth centuries. The *Historia Augusta* speaks of Aurelian's (270–5) defeat of Suebi and Sarmatians,⁶² and his display of them in his triumph.⁶³ The account fails to mention the location of Aurelian's battle, but the conjunction of Suebi and Sarmatians points to the Pannonian Plain, where the latter resided. Admittedly, the reliability of the *Historia Augusta* poses problems, but Ammianus' weighty authority offers corroboration. According to Ammianus, Constantius hurried to confront Suebi, Quadi and Sarmatians raiding Raetia, Pannonia and Moesia after his triumphal visit to Rome in 357.⁶⁴ The passage does not clarify the direction of the Suebic assault on Raetia, but their proximity to Quadi and Sarmatians, who inhabited the middle Danube regions north of Pannonia and Moesia, indicates the

⁵⁶ Eutropius, *Breviarium*, 8.13.1.

⁵⁷ *Epitome de Caesaribus*, 1.7 and 2.8.

⁵⁸ Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus*, 2.4.

⁵⁹ Zosimus, *Historia Nova*, 6.3.1.

⁶⁰ Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII*, ed. M.P. Arnaud-Lindet (Paris, 1990); Orose, *Histoires contre les païens*, 6.7.7, 6.9.1, 6.21.16 and 7.15.8.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.38.3, 7.40.3, 7.41.8 and 7.43.14.

⁶² *Historia Augusta*, 26.18.2: 'Idem Aurelianus contra Suebos et Sarmatas isdem temporibus vehementissime dimicavit ac florentissimam victoriam rettulit.'

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 26.33.1 and 4: 'Non absque re est cognoscere, qui fuerit Aureliani triumphus ... Praecesserunt ... captivos gentium barbararum - Blemmyes, Exomitae, Arabes Eu[n]d<a>emo[m]nes, Indi, Bactrani, Hiberi, Saraceni, Persae cum suis quique muneribus, Gothi, Halani, Roxolani, Sarmatae, Franci, Suevi, Vandali, Germani ...'

⁶⁴ Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum*, 16.10.20.