Introduction: Early medieval Romanness – a multiple identity

Few pre-modern empires had an impact on their subjects that was comparable to that of the Roman Empire. Arguably, it also affected the identities of its population to a considerable extent, until well after its rule had faded out. Unlike nation states, empires rarely strive for the full integration of their subjects; rather, they seek to maintain difference, which is a feature in the definition of empire given by Burbank and Cooper: ‘Empires are large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people.’¹ The Roman Empire certainly maintained and moderated distinctions. However, it also pursued nuanced strategies of integration. Step by step, immigrant inhabitants of Rome, Latins, Sabines and other Italic groups became involved, without abandoning their urban or ethnic origins.² This created a model for the later integration of non-Italic groups in Roman political life and identity.

What had once been a clear-cut designation of the inhabitants of Rome was thus amplified in many ways by imperial expansion.³ ‘Roman’ became a label for the multiple ways in which subjects of the empire were drawn into its sphere by the Roman army, by imperial elite identities, by Roman law and citizenship, by Latin language and education, by ‘Roman’ art and customs, by the spread of consumer goods and of ways of life, or by imperial administration and taxation. Those were not simply aspects of a consistent process of Romanization, which we could take for granted. All of these ways of becoming Roman, as much recent research has demonstrated, proceeded at a different pace and only partially overlapped. Their common denominator was not romanitas, a term late to appear and limited in its uses⁴ — unlike in Greek, where romaiosynē provides an equivalent for our notion of ‘Romanness’.⁵ Ultimately, the meaning of all these modes of identification was derived from the authority of the Empire, prestigious and awe-inspiring as it was. In its extensive realm, and sometimes beyond it, all these emblems of Romanness gradually spread over wide regions that had never before shared an identity or a common designation, and would never again do so after the end of Roman rule. In Late Antiquity, many

¹ Burbank/Cooper 2010.
³ See also Pohl 2014.
⁴ Woolf, forthcoming.
⁵ See the contribution by Johannes Koder, in this volume.

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inhabitants of the Empire had thus become *Romani*, in different ways and to different extents. What once had been a civic identity had now become the marker of an *orbis Romanus*, a Roman World, if in fuzzy ways. That, of course, did not mean that all these Roman subjects and citizens had stopped being anything but Romans. A striking example is provided by a bilingual inscription from Thullium in Roman Africa, where the Latin text calls the deceased Caius Iulius Gaetulus, veteran of the army and *flamen perpetuus*, a high-ranking priest, whereas the Libyan text presents him as Keti, the son of Masawallat, an imperial servant from the people of the Misiciri, from the subunit of the *S’rmmi*. This is a remarkable case of ‘code-switching’ between a local and an imperial language of identification. In Latin, the ethnic cognomen Gaetulus is the only clear indication of the man’s non-Roman identity, whereas in Libyan the ethnic self-designation is much more specific, and the reference to imperial service is the only hint to Romanness. Being Roman was perfectly compatible with maintaining or obtaining more particular civic, ethnic, provincial, linguistic, religious or cultural identities. Many of these specific frames of reference had been created by the Empire – new cities, provinces or ethnographic designations (it is even likely that Julius Caesar had invented the umbrella term ‘Germans’ for the Empire’s best enemies, with long-lasting consequences).

Even in the imperial period, few Roman citizens combined all attributes of Romanness. Many spoke Greek or ‘barbarian’ languages, came from remote and less reputable provinces, practised exotic oriental cults or were soldiers of barbarian origin who despised the ‘real’ Romans. Still, there was an underlying dynamic that tended to make different forms of Romanness cohere. For a career in imperial service, a good knowledge of Latin, rhetorical skills, some measure of classical education, and the use of visible attributes of Romanness might be required. When (and where) Roman rule ended, this process was reversed, and the modes of Roman identification became increasingly disconnected. Many features of Romanness – language, law, Latin literacy and culture – continued, but their connectivity and their potential for identification was fading. In many social contexts, being Roman gradually lost its significance.

How the ancient texts use the label *Romanus* is therefore inconsistent, in line with the multiplicity of ways to be Roman in the Roman Empire. There is no reasonable way to translate the enormous variation in the uses of the term into a clear scholarly concept of who was or was not a ‘Roman’. Uses differ considerably between the disciplines. ‘Roman’ is a key term for ancient, medieval and legal historians, for historians of art, for classical and early medieval archaeologists, and for classical philology, which deals with Latin, but calls its speakers ‘Romans’. Likewise, ‘Roman’ also means different things between different national research traditions. In Ger-

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6 CIL 8.5209; Shaw 2014, 531.
7 See Wallace-Hadrill 2008, 13. See also the contribution by Roland Steinacher, in this volume.
8 Pohl 2002; Lund 1998.
man, we can differentiate between Römer, ancient Romans, and Romanen, post-Roman Romans: a convenient, but controversial distinction. Difference in terminology and approach reflect the multiplicity of the subject and of its modern uses.

Different schools of thought as to what exactly constituted a ‘Roman’, however, have not influenced general narratives of the period. For a long time, scholars have confidently employed the term ‘Roman’ as if it corresponded to some substantial reality of belonging. The concept of identity employed in this book is not intended to affirm this unquestioned sense of Romanness of the Romans; it should allow us to question who was Roman and in what way. It is striking, as Ralph Mathisen notices in his contribution to this volume, that hardly any late antique inscription identifies individuals as Romans or as Roman citizens. Before Caracalla’s edict of 212, Roman citizenship had been a mark of distinction; after its extension to all free inhabitants of the Empire, it almost went without saying. The conclusion can hardly be that being Roman did not matter anymore in the late Empire. A lack of self-identifications as Romans in the post-Roman evidence cannot therefore be taken as proof that Romans had disappeared – these silences may just have continued established practice. Generally, personal identities were multi-layered, from very local to much broader allegiances and aspirations of belonging. Which of these identifications became salient depended on the circumstances (and was ‘situational’). In a Roman World, Romanness was less distinctive than other, more specific identities; it only needed to be highlighted if it was in doubt, or if it had been a recent achievement.

Work on what Roman identity and Romanness meant in ancient Rome has been intense in recent years, starting in the late 1990s. Here I shall mention just a few substantial contributions. Andrea Giardina’s *L’Italia romana: storia di un’identità incompiuta* showed that opening up Romanness (and its elite focus, the senate) to provincial elites in the first century CE crucially extended the basis of Roman rule, but prevented the consolidation of a regional or core identity. Greg Woolf’s *Becoming Roman* provided fundamental new insights into the ways in which Gaul became integrated in a wider form of Romanness. Emma Dench’s *Romulus’ Asylum* departed from Livy’s story about the multiple and rather disreputable origins of the city’s population to discuss its implications for the development of Roman identities. Gary D. Farney’s *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome* showed how republican senators manipulated their ethnic background in order to increase their status. Louise Revell’s *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* understood ‘Roman’ as ‘a discourse, a project which each person understands in a different way’ – a point reinforced by her recent sequel, *Ways of Being Roman: Discourses

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9 See Pohl 2017, 21.
12 Dench 2005.
of Identity in the Roman West. Florence Dupont, in Rome, la Ville sans origine, elaborated on the ambiguity of Roman origins, in which the stranger Aeneas played a key role. Further monographs and several important collaborative volumes about ‘Rome, the Cosmopolis’ and its cultural identities complete the picture.

David Mattingly, in his Imperialism, Power and Identity, used extensive material evidence to describe imperial identities as the result of a colonial experience – ‘four centuries of foreign domination’, as he claims for the British case. Not least stimulated by his contributions, a controversial debate emerged about the process of Romanization, mostly among archaeologists. ‘Romanization’ was criticized as a teleological concept, and as a way to gloss over brutal colonial expansion with a term suggesting the peaceful spread of a superior civilization. Some of the British contributions to the debate appear to have been written in a somehow Boudiccan spirit. Others tried to fade out the imperial context by attributing the spread of terra sigillata and other forms of material culture to object agency. A post-colonial perspective certainly offers valuable complementary points of view to our deep-seated Renaissance & Enlightenment scholarly attitude that we owe much of our modern achievement in Europe to the Romans. Both approaches – regarding Romanness as a colonial layer that can be removed to return to a more or less pristine cultural landscape, or as a process of acculturation that made imperial subjects culturally ‘Roman’ by degrees – have some basis in the sources, but do not suffice as an explanation.

Things were not all quiet at the other end of the Roman period, where the debate about the ‘Fall of Rome’, the ‘Transformation of the Roman World’ or the smooth continuation of Romanness was even more heated than the one about Romanization. However, in all the discussions about the impact of the barbarians, and about the end or apotheosis of Roman civilization, surprisingly little attention was paid to the question of what happened to all these Romans in the centuries after the fall of the Empire in the West. Debates were mostly conducted within rather static categories of ‘Roman’, ‘barbarian’ or ‘Germanic’. While ancient historians and classical archaeologists challenged the concept of Romanization, there was not even a concept of post-Roman de-Romanization which we could now begin to discard as teleological. For the transformationists (among whom I still count myself), gradual changes in Roman identity were implied by the broader and less teleological term ‘transformation’. For catastrophists such as Heather or Ward-Perkins, Romanness declined dramatically after the fall of the Empire, so that no processual concept was

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14 Revell 2008 and 2015.
15 Dupont 2011; German translation: Dupont 2013.
17 Mattingly 2011, 7.
18 See the debate in Archaeological Dialogues 2014.
19 Overview of the debate: Pohl 2008; Pohl 2016a. See also Halsall 1999; Halsall 2007a.
needed.\textsuperscript{20} For Roman continuists such as Walter Goffart, Romaness continued to shape post-Roman Europe, so that changes of identity did not matter much within this overall vision of a continuous political culture.\textsuperscript{21} Cultural historians explored all the aspects of continuation and re-appropriation of Roman cultural idioms and remains, but did not care much to what extent those who transmitted these cultural contents regarded themselves, or were regarded as Romans or not. In fact, few people worried about what Roman identity may have meant in the fifth- to eighth-century West.

This issue has been approached from several angles in the ERC grant project, Social Cohesion, Identity and Religion in Europe, 400 – 1200.\textsuperscript{22} Our interest in this field also took into account methodology. Romaness provides an extraordinary test case for concepts of identity and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{23} Early medieval ethnicity has mainly been discussed on the basis of ‘barbarian’ identities. That was an important step, but it had its limitations. Roman identity covers a much broader range of modes of identification. Few identities spread so far and wide in the ancient world, and consequently remained ‘unachieved’, as Andrea Giardina has called it.\textsuperscript{24} Can being Roman be understood as a civic, legal, political, imperial, religious, or cultural identity? To what extent did it assume ethnic characteristics? One reason why we need modern concepts such as identity and ethnicity in this field is that Romaness could mean very different things in the course of Roman history, and all the more, after it. It is important to have the conceptual tools to track these changes and differences.

The challenge is that these differences were gradual, not fundamental. It is certainly correct to say, as Patrick Geary has done, that the \textit{populus Romanus} represented the model of a ‘people by constitution’, whereas the barbarians were ‘peoples by descent’, \textit{gentes}.\textsuperscript{25} However, there are instances in which (the) Romans can also be described as a \textit{gens}. This usage spread in Late Antiquity. Fifth- and sixth-century grammarians (such as Priscian) unproblematically use \textit{gens Romana} as an example.\textsuperscript{26} In the letters written by King Childebert II to the Byzantines in the 580s, he repeatedly referred to the peace between the two \textit{gentes}, Franks and Romans; incidentally, these letters also provide the first evidence for the official use of the title \textit{rex}

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\item 'The wide-spread diffusion of well-made goods ceased. Sophisticated cultural tools, like the use of writing, disappeared altogether in some regions, and became very restricted in others'. B. Ward-Perkins 2005, at 183. Heather 2014, 432–443, speaks of the fall of central Romanness, but allows for survivals of local Romanness, which meet different fates.
\item Goffart 2008b.
\item Pohl 2013c; see also the contributions by Maskarinec 2013, and von Rummel 2013; McKitterick 2014a; Pohl/Haubrichs/Hartl 2017; Fehr/Pohl/von Rummel, forthcoming.
\item See Pohl 2013c.
\item Giardina 1997.
\item Geary 2003.
\item Priscian, \textit{Institutiones grammaticae} 17, ed. Hertz, 2, 181; \textit{Pseudacronis scholia in Horatium vetustiora}, ed. Keller, 340. For this and further examples see the database GENS, http://www.oeaw.ac.at/imafo/gens/, which was funded from the ERC project SCIRE.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Francorum by the Franks, whereas the emperor is addressed as princeps Romanae reipublicae.\textsuperscript{27} There is little discussion in our sources whether the Romans were either a populus or a gens, or what exactly the semantic distinction entailed. Yet the alternative use of these terms is often deliberate. Jordanes called his Roman History ‘De summa temporum vel de origine actibusque gentis Romanorum’, and his Gothic history ‘De origine actibusque Getarum’ – he underlined that he saw the Romans as a gens like the Goths (where it went without saying), not a populus.\textsuperscript{28} Roman origin myths from Livy to the fourth-century Origo gentis Romanae balanced ‘ethnic’ elements (descent, migration, mixing of populations) with civic features (foundation, constitution by law, attracting a varied population) and also took the land, terra, into account. Therefore, it makes no sense to debate whether Roman identity was political/legal/civic or ‘ethnic’. It could be both, and more.

An adequate scholarly concept of Roman identity, therefore, has to fulfil four requirements:\textsuperscript{29} it needs to be inclusive (including all elements of Roman identity); dynamic (allowing for changes of significance); multi-layered (taking into account that Romanness was only one level of identification besides more local and particular identities); and it needs to account for the extraordinary tenacity of some Roman identities (for instance, of the Romantsch population in the Swiss Alps), and for the low profile and fluidity of others. It has become habitual in scholarship to gloss over problems with identities by saying that they were fluid and flexible; but that is not enough. I have proposed a model of a ‘circuit of identifications’ that may be more adequate for interpreting our sources sources.\textsuperscript{30} In my view, group identities are the result of a continuing process of interaction and identification (and not just of a phase of ethnogenesis).\textsuperscript{31} This process includes three forms of identification – of individuals within a group (which has to be accepted by this ‘in-group’); of the group as such through joint rituals or by its representatives; and the outside perceptions of the group. Identities thus are not what a group ‘has’, but what is formed, maintained or modified in a series of interactions in which the cohesion of the group is at stake. Our sources are traces of this process of communication in which identities are negotiated. These recurrent acts of identification are rarely only ethnic, political, religious, civic, military, territorial or other, but they contain several of these modes of identification. Such composite identities are still badly understood. Romanness is an excellent example. Being Roman might mean something different for different people at the same place and time. In order to differentiate be-

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\item \textsuperscript{27} Epistulae Austrasicae 28 – 42, ed. Rochais, 451 – 465. See also the contribution by Helmut Reimitz, in this volume.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Jordanes, Romana and Getica, ed. Mommsen, 1 and 53; the title occurs in the manuscripts, although that of the Getica is omitted in a number of them.
\item \textsuperscript{29} For a similar argument, see the contribution by Guy Halsall, in this volume, and Halsall 2007a, 35 – 45.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Pohl 2013a, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{31} For the history of research about ethnogenesis and ethnicity, see Pohl, forthcoming (a).
\end{itemize}
tween these forms of identity and to detect changes in the prevalent ways of establishing cohesion in a group, it is useful to distinguish between various modes of identification (political, ethnic, religious etc.). They rarely occur in their pure form, but their relative weights shift, and related modes of identification might become disconnected. That is exactly what happened with ‘Romanness after Rome’.

**Modes of Roman identification**

Therefore, I would like to explore in this article what ‘modes of identification’ the term ‘Roman’ may imply, and how that is expressed in the sources. The first question is whether a person, group or practice is explicitly called Roman in written sources, or whether we use a, however well-founded, modern categorization to describe someone as ‘Roman’ (which is of course admissible, but makes a difference). The second question is whether we have any clues to understand what the sources mean by calling somebody or something ‘Roman’, and the third, in what cases some form of Romanness may have been implied without explicitly mentioning the term. What is striking is the multiplicity of ways to be, feel, act as or be recognized as ‘Roman’ even in the classical period. Of course, they overlapped in many respects. There was a discourse of Romanness that linked multiple realities, as Louise Revell has argued, but connectivity was not only discursive.³² What we have become accustomed to see as Romanness is in fact a conglomerate of closely linked ways to be Roman. For centuries, these interlocking circuits of identification were at work connecting millions of people more or less profoundly with the Roman Empire. That corresponded to the long-term success of the Roman policy of imperial integration: it turned out to be easier to become Roman than it had been to become Athenian or Carthaginian. The Romans were aware of that; the Emperor Claudius, in Tacitus’ version of his speech about admitting Gauls to the senate, says: ‘What else proved fatal to Lacedaemon and Athens, in spite of their power in arms, but their policy of holding the conquered aloof as alien-born? But the sagacity of our own founder Romulus was such that several times he fought and naturalized a people in the course of the same day!’³³

No doubt the city of Rome was the core of ancient Romanness: an *urban identity* like many others in Classical Antiquity, defined against a multitude of other cities and against an outer rural or savage sphere. Unlike many Asian urban centres, classical cities were mostly civic communities with their own institutions and some measure of citizen participation. Internally, the ancient *polis/civitas* was carefully graded: according to social status within the city; between the city and the surrounding countryside; and between citizens and inhabitants of foreign origin, *peregrini*.

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³² See also Revell 2008, 192.
Still, living in the city of Rome, the caput mundi, entailed privilege in itself. Rome could thus become the cosmopolis par excellence. ‘Which people is so barbarous, Caesar, from which no spectator would be in your city?’, is what Martial wrote in a poem to Titus on the occasion of the inauguration of the Colosseum.

In Late Antiquity, the city gradually lost its exceptional status; Ammianus describes it almost as a foreign city, debased by vice and corruption, as Shane Bjornlie shows in his contribution to this volume. In the fifth and sixth centuries, it was repeatedly humiliated by Gothic and Vandal conquerors. However, the papal see, and Rome’s almost unparalleled spiritual capital as a centre of pilgrimage helped retain some of the city’s supra-regional significance. Increasingly, the term Romani came to be restricted again to the inhabitants of the city, or of the duchy of Rome. Whereas in the letters of Cassiodorus, written in the first half of the sixth century, Romani still mostly designates the Roman majority living in Italy under Gothic rule, Gregory the Great who wrote at the end of the century almost exclusively used the name for the population of the city. In Paul the Deacon’s eighth-century Historia Langobardorum, civis Romanus may be used for someone born in the city of Rome, as in the case of the late-sixth-century Archbishop of Ravenna Mar(in)ianus. Legally, of course, all other archbishops of Ravenna were Roman citizens too, as long as Byzantium ruled there. When other uses of ‘Roman’ faded in the course of the early Middle Ages, the urban identity gained ground again. Vernacular terms were coined that more or less restricted Romanness to the city, such as Old English Rōmwaran or South Slavic Rimljane, ‘inhabitants of Rome’.

Interestingly, civitas Romana, the city of Rome, occurs rather rarely in Antiquity as compared to the overwhelming evidence for the agency of the populus Romanus, the Roman people, or as the more inclusive formula has it, senatus populusque Romanus, SPQR. Romanness could thus denote the political identity and the republican ethos of this populus. Populus in that sense could be distinguished from the lowly plebs, a distinction still found in Isidore of Seville: populus est universus cum senatu et civibus Romanis. The political identity of the populus Romanus and of its res publica, which was built on law and political organisation, was supposed to have given

34 Martial, De Spectaculis, carmen 3, l. 1: Quae gens tam barbara, Caesar, ex qua spectator non sit in urbe tua?; Edwards/Woolf 2003b, 1.
35 For instance, Gregory the Great, Registrum epistolarum XI, 35, ed. Norberg, vol. 2, 924: The reputation of the English queen Berta has not only spread apud Romanos [...], sed etiam per diversa loca et usque Constantinopolim.
37 Pohl 2017, 15.
38 Isidore of Seville, De differentiis verborum, CPL 1187, 472: Inter Populum et plebem. Quod populus est universus cum senatu et civibus Romanis, plebs tantum vilior numeros. See also Isidore, Etymologiae IX, 4, 5: populus universi cives sunt, connumeratis senioribus civitatis [...] vulgus vero plebs est.
unity to an initially heterogeneous crowd that first settled in the city. ³⁹ Res publica remained part of the imperial rhetoric. Between the sixth and eighth centuries, the Eastern Empire could still be called res publica or sancta res publica by western authors. ⁴⁰ In the eighth century, as Byzantine control of the city of Rome crumbled, this term was appropriated by the popes for their, much more regional, sphere of influence. Paul the Deacon allows for the agency of the populus Romanus in one instance, when the Emperor Philippicus sent a letter to Rome regarded as heretical by the pope: then ‘the Roman people confirmed that they would not receive the name, the charters or the image on the coins of the heretical emperor.’ ⁴¹ This was the populus of the city of Rome. It is remarkable that the pope relied on legitimation by the people of Rome to back his stance against what he regarded as a heretical measure by the emperor. The political agency of the Romans as a civic body is rarely highlighted, but it always represented an option. When Charlemagne was proclaimed emperor in 800, the acclamation by the Roman populus played an important role. ⁴² For all of its papal and imperial implications, early medieval Roman identity in the city of Rome had purely local dimensions, as Paolo Delogu states in his contribution.

In a more restricted sense, a small caste of hereditary office-holders and members of the senate could represent the polity. This privileged group continued to dominate the city well into the Gothic Wars, when the senate disappeared from the city and its remaining members mostly went to Constantinople. In Gaul, senatorial identity was maintained until the seventh century, and claiming origin from a senatorial family was obviously preferred to Roman identity in the more general sense. Sidonius Apollinaris, in the fifth century, mostly called the Roman elite in Gaul ‘senators’, and a member could be described as senatorii seminis homo, a man of senatorial descent, ‘who every day rubs shoulders with the figures of his ancestors arrayed in robes of state’. ⁴³ A hundred years later, Gregory of Tours was proud of his senatorial family and his peers, but avoided calling them Romans. ⁴⁴ A Carolingian genealogy produced in the late eighth century traced the dynasty to an obscure Ansbert ex genere senatorum, from senatorial stock, who married a Merovingian princess. ⁴⁵ In Spain, a man ex genere senatorum is attested in the seventh-century Vitae patrum

³⁹ 'An obscure and humble multitude’ of migrants and fugitives that Romulus attracted into his asylum, as Livy put it: Livy, Ab urbe condita 1.8.5. See Dench 2005.
⁴⁰ For instance in the letters of Pope Gregory the Great or in the Epistulae Austrasicae: e.g. Gregory the Great, Registrum epistolarum 1,73, ed. Norberg, vol. 1, 82; Epistulae Austrasicae 41; 48, ed. Rochais, 462–463; 470 (de parte rei publicae). Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, 4, 36, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 128 (Eraclius rem publicam Romanam regendam suscepit).
⁴¹ Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, 6, 34 ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 176: Statuit populus Romanus, ne heretici imperatoris nomen aut chartas aut figuram solidi usciperent.
⁴² See the contribution by Paolo Delogu, in this volume.
⁴³ Sidonius Apollinaris, Epistula 1, 6, 2, ed. Anderson, vol. 1, 362. See also Pohl, forthcoming (c).
⁴⁴ For a selection of sources, see the contribution by Ralph Mathisen, in this volume.
⁴⁵ Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris, ed. Waitz; see Reimitz 2002; Pohl 2016.
Emeretensium. In Lombard Italy, Senator could become a personal name: it is attested for two persons in eighth-century charters. One of these men, a top-level estate owner, was married to a woman called Theodelinda; their daughter was called Sine-linda, according to a Germanic habit of onomastic variation: Sen(ator) + (Theod)e-linda. The other Senator was a paravaeredanus, responsible for transport horses. In the city of Rome, the aristocracy resumed representing itself collectively as the senate in the eighth century, without, however, reviving the institution.

Roman citizenship had been limited to the city for a long time, then opened up to the allies in Italy in 89 BC, and gradually extended until Caracalla granted it to all free inhabitants of the empire in 212 CE: a legal and civic identity that implied certain privileges; among others, full access to Roman law. In the early fifth century CE, Rutilius Namatianus, using a familiar trope, maintained that by granting access to citizenship and law, Rome had turned the world, orbis, into a city, urbs. Ralph Mathisen’s contribution makes a case that by its omnipresence Roman citizenship had lost much of its attraction, and stopped being mentioned in inscriptions. In an episode recounted in Ammianus Marcellinus, the citizens of Africa are simply cives without qualification, whereas only the Roman soldiers are called Romani. However, Roman citizenship did not disappear when direct Roman rule receded from the West, a topic treated in the contributions by Stefan Esders and Lukas Bothe. The Gai Epitome, a second-century juridical text contained in the early sixth-century Breviarum Alarici, distinguishes between three forms of liberti, freedmen: cives Romani, Latini, and dediticii, among which the first were the most desirable option. The Lex Romana Curiensis follows that model in a number of instances. Isidore’s Etymologies also differentiate between these three categories.

46 Vitas sanctorum patrum Emeretensium 4,2, l. 4–5, ed. Maya, 26; see the contribution by Javier Arce, in this volume.
48 Codice Diplomatico Longobardo (CDL), vol. 2, 277 and 289, ed. Schiaparelli, p. 393 and p. 423. For the paraveredus, see below and Esders 2009.
49 See the contribution by Paolo Delogu, in this volume, and Arnaldi 1997a.
50 For the role of citizenship Gardner 1993; in the early Empire see Marotta 2009; in Late Antiquity, Mathisen 2006.
52 Ammianus Marcellinus 28, 6, ed. Seyfarth, 4, 88–94; see the contribution by Shane Bjornlie, in this volume.
53 Lex Romana Visigothorum, Liber Gai 1, 1, ed. Haenel, 314–316.
54 Lex Romana Curiensis 22, 1, ed. Zeumer, 406: Liberti vero sunt, sicut iam diximus, trea genera; hoc est: cive Romanum et Latini et dediticii. [1]. Cives Romani ingenui per tres modis facere potest; id est per testamentum; alium vero in eclesiam ante plebem; tercia vero ante principem. See also ibid., 2, 20, ed.
Gregory the Great, in a letter, freed two famuli of the Roman Church and turned them into cives Romanos.⁵⁶

In the regna, manumission as a slave seems to have led by default to the status of a cives Romanus. This is attested in the seventh-century Visigothic Formulae by the formula: ingenuum te civem Romanum esse constituo.⁵⁷ The Formulae Arvernenses list the advantages that people manumitted to become Roman citizens had, mainly in the freedom of drawing up a will.⁵⁸ The seventh-century Frankish Lex Ribuaria offers three procedures of manumission, one of which, the ritual of the ‘open doors’, resulted in Roman citizenship, now a ‘medium status of limited freedom’.⁵⁹ This was also the only option to live under Roman law. Manumission in church, although explicitly stated as conforming to Roman law, did not confer Romanness any more: it made the freedman a dependent of an ecclesiastic institution – which seems to be an innovation of the Riburian Code. The most favourable option now was manumission by ‘penny-throw’ in the presence of the king, which made a free Ribuarian. Options may have been reduced, but one could still become Roman in the regna. The practice of manumission to become a Roman citizen was also continued in Byzantine Italy, as is attested by a document from Bari in which a slave is freed to become a politēs Rō̄maîon, cited in the contribution by Annick Peters-Custot.⁶⁰ An indirect reflection of a continuing idea of citizenship may perhaps be found in the name of the modern Welsh for themselves, Cymry, which could be derived from ‘fellow citizens’.⁶¹

Roman law continued to be applied, and remained more important in the early medieval West than we tend to believe, as is also attested by a considerable manuscript transmission.⁶² Alaric’s ‘Breviary’ (also known as Lex Romana Visigothorum),⁶³

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⁵⁵ Isidore of Seville, Etymologies IX, 4, 49 – 52, ed. Lindsay.

⁵⁶ Gregory the Great, Registrum epistolarum VI, 12, ed. Norberg, vol. 1, 380: vos Montanam atque Thomam famulos sanctae Romanae cui Deo auctore deservimus ecclesiae liberos ex hac die civesque Romanos efficitum omneque vestrum vobis relaxamus peculium. Previously, as the letter states, they had been under iuris gentium iugo.

⁵⁷ Formulae Visigothicae 2 – 6, ed. Zeumer, 576 – 577; see the contribution by Javier Arce, in this volume.


⁵⁹ Lex Ribuaria 64, ed. Bayerle/Buchner, 117: Si quis servum suum libertum fecerit et civem Romanum portasque apertas conscibserit [...] See the contributions by Stefan Esders and Lukas Bothe, in this volume.


⁶¹ Brown 2003, 129.

⁶² See the contribution by Stefan Esders, in this volume, and Esders 2007; Liebs 2002; Liebs 2016; in general, Harries/Wood 1993; Harries 1999; Matthews 2000; Mathisen 2001; for the manuscript transmission, Radding/Ciaralli 2007, esp. 37 with a list of 17 manuscripts of the Corpus Iuris Civilis from the sixth until the eighth centuries listed in the Codices Latini Antiquiores; Kaiser 2004.
the Lex Romana Burgundionum and the Lex Romana Curiensis, which were based on the Codex Theodosianus, were put together and remained in force in the regna. Interestingly, the Frankish kings never issued a Roman law collection for their subjects. The assumption in the leges, which is most clearly seen in the Frankish realm, is that the majority of the population had a clearly circumscribed legal status as Romans, whether they lived according to Roman law or not. ‘Barbarian’ law codes presuppose or explicitly mention the existence of a 'Roman' population, who generally received reduced wergild, rates of compensation for wounds or killings. The Lex Salica neatly differentiates in its Germanic Malberg glosses between the categories of leodi, ‘(compensation for) people’, and uualaleodi, ‘for Roman people’. The latter were classed into possessores, landowners, and tributarii, dependent farmers who owed rent. It is an asymmetrical distinction between ‘the’ people (Franks and other barbarians who live according to Salic law, and their corresponding legal value) and ‘Roman people’. However, the distinction does not apply to the king’s Roman table companions, also classed under leodi. Roman status could also be granted in the case of Roman immigrants, advenae Romani. The wergild between all these categories differed widely, between 300 and 62,5 solidi, and represented half of that of a Frank of comparable status. Unlike the Lex Ribuaria cited above, the Lex Salica is not concerned with Roman law and citizenship.

Being subject to Roman law seems to have been an important element of continuing Roman identification. People could still become Romans in the legal sense through a professio iuris, the adoption of Roman law, and Romanness could also be conferred as a privilege. That is also attested in other kingdoms. In 731, King Liutprand introduced a clause into Lombard law under which the Lombard wife of a Roman would ‘become a Roman’, and she and her offspring would henceforth live under Roman law. As a consequence, her relatives could not sue them anymore according to the clauses of Lombard law, if, for instance, she chose another man after her husband’s death. That must have been an attractive option for women who sought to escape the mundium, guardianship, of her male relatives.

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64 Liebs 2016 and the contributions by Stefan Esders and Lukas Bothe, in this volume.
65 Pactus legis Salicae 41, 1;5;8;9, ed. Eckhardt, 203–204; Olberg 1998, 69; and the contribution by Lukas Bothe, in this volume.
66 Esders 2011, 269–270. An advena Romanus, a Roman immigrant, was protected only by a quarter of the wergild of an advena Francus, and also less than a Saxon or Burgundian, in the Lex Ribuaria 40, 3, ed. Beyerle/Buchner, p. 92.
67 For an extensive overview of the debate about the exact status of these Romans, see the contribution by Lukas Bothe, in this volume.
68 See the contribution by Lukas Bothe, in this volume.
69 Liutprand 127, ed. Azzara/Gasparrri, 192: Quia [mulier langobarda] posteus romanum maritum se copolavit, et ipse ex ea mundio fecit, romana effecta est, et filii, qui de eo matrimonio nascuntur, secundum legem patris romani fiunt et legem patris vivunt. Her relatives could not claim faida (feud) or anagrip (illegal sexual intercourse) any more even if she was a widow.
The different social meanings of Romanness had never formed a coherent whole in ancient Roman society; now they were reduced to a few formal categories integrated in the new hierarchy of the Frankish kingdoms. As we can see in more descriptive sources, the few top-notch Roman leodi mostly preserved their Romanness for a few generations, but in Northern Gaul they gradually merged with the Frankish elite (if they had managed to maintain their status). The others had to be content with their prescribed Roman legal status, which (at least in Northern Gaul) was not necessarily a distinction to assert with pride. This (at least in legal terms) ‘Roman’ majority was hereditary; the Romanness of these born Romans has otherwise left relatively few traces in the sources. Identification as Romans in these categories tended to fade away. Eighth-century sources from the Salzburg area still call a distinct social group Romani tributales, which eventually turned into simple tributales. The legal category ‘Roman’ tended to become detached from Roman (self-)identification, and was gradually transformed into a marker of status groups in the social hierarchy, formally measured by the amount of the respective wergild. Thus, the universal significance of being Roman was eroding; as Stefan Esders puts it in his contribution to this volume: ‘Legal Romanness ceased to be a universal category but became a feature of one group among others within the post-Roman kingdoms.’ In that respect, Southern Gaul, where Romans continued to dominate regional politics, remained an exception.

However, in seventh-century Gaul, we still have instances of individuals being rather straightforwardly identified as ‘Romans’. Jamie Kreiner’s contribution analyses a small set of early seventh-century hagiographic texts that emphasize the Roman origin of episcopal saints, principally the Passio of Praejectus of Clermont and the Life of Gaugeric, bishop of Cambrai, born in the Ardennes region. Both are presented as sons of Christian Roman parents, who were not of senatorial status: Gaugeric’s parents, for example, were ‘not the first and not the last in secular dignity’. Non-senatorial Roman and Christian origin seems to be underlined here in a perhaps stubborn effort to insist on the dignity of such a family: Romanae generis stemate effulsit, he shone with a pedigree of Roman descent, as the Passio Praejecti begins. As we know from the Life of St. Eligius of Noyon, Roman bishops could also be rejected in Northern Frankish cities when they interfered with local customs. Senatorial saints in the seventh century, unlike in the works of Gregory of Tours, may also receive the epithet ‘Roman’, such as Bonitus of Clermont – did authors
begin to feel that they could not take that for granted anymore? As the contribution by Helmut Reimitz shows, the name ‘Roman’ is used a lot in the Fredegar Chronicle, so the discourse of Romanness had regained some salience in the seventh century.

One of the ways in which men from remote provinces had always acquired a sense of Romanness was in the Roman army. In the early imperial period, the ‘Roman’ army was still differentiated from the auxiliary troops of barbarian origin; Vegetius, who wrote around 400 CE, noted that among the ancients, ‘the principle was observed that there should never be a greater number of allied auxiliaries in camp than of Roman citizens.’ Yet, this military identity had always been open to foreigners from beyond the frontiers, and much more so in Late Antiquity. As Shane Bjornlie shows in his contribution to this volume, Ammianus Marcellinus identifies mostly military men as Romans. Similarly, as we learn from the contribution by Jack Tannous, the Syriac r(h)ūmāyē, Roman, mostly meant ‘soldier’, so that in the Syriac Bible it could be used to translate the Greek stratiōtēs, soldier. A rare glimpse of Roman pride in a barbarian soldier can be caught in the third-century funerary inscription from Pannonia, Francus ego cives Romanus miles in armis. Although there are several other inscriptions which link the concept of cives with particular identities of Roman citizens or even with ‘ethnic citizenship’, as Ralph Mathisen argues in his contribution, the text could also be read, according to Kent Rigsby: ‘I, a Frank, a Roman citizen, a soldier in arms’. In Late Antiquity, Roman-barbarian military ways of life could seem quite alien and threatening to the civil population. On the other hand, they offered an efficient context for acquiring the basics of Romanness. As Stefan Esders has repeatedly shown, post-imperial society in Gaul and elsewhere preserved and developed many features of the Roman army, from the military oath to the paraveredus, the system of service horses. Roman military law, which was quite different from the better-known civil law, thus had an important influence on the regna.

Procopius gives an interesting example of how a Roman and military identity could develop along ethnic lines when he describes the fate of the Roman troops in northern Gaul (‘the other Roman soldiers’ apart from the Arborychi):

> These soldiers, having no means of returning to Rome [...], gave themselves, together with their military standards and the land which they had long been guarding to the Arborychi and Ger-
mans; and they handed down to their offspring all the customs of their fathers, which were thus preserved [...]. For even at the present day they are clearly recognized as belonging to the legions which they served in ancient times, and they always carry their own standards when they enter battle, and always follow the customs of their fathers. And they preserve the dress of the Romans in every particular, even as regards their shoes.  

There was a recognisably Roman military tradition which could obviously also be maintained under Frankish rule; a military unit was thus ethnicized by handing down ‘the customs of the fathers’ to the next generations.

In the course of expansion, Romanness could become a territorial identity of some core areas, most likely, of the Italia suburbicaria, that is, central and southern Italy, perhaps also of Italy as a whole. In the different origin myths of Rome and the Romans, that level was often present as the most ancient one, prior to the foundation of Rome. The arrival of Saturn and/or Janus in Italy opened up an Italian line of narrative. Then there is a Latin strand, starting with Latinus, King of the ‘Aborigines’, and establishing the heritage of the Latini. The fourth-century Origo gentis Romanae extensively used this material. As Andrea Giardina has shown, this option of a limited Italian Romanness in the heartland of the Empire began to be replaced by a more open vision of empire when Gauls were admitted into the senate under the emperor Claudius. When the Western Empire dissolved, there was no trace of a particular sense of Italian Roman identity, apart from a growing feeling of distance to the ‘Greeks’ who, since the Gothic wars, now represented the Roman state. Paul the Deacon repeatedly used the ancient poetic expression ‘Ausonia’ for Italy, but that hardly reflected a consolidated sense of Italian identity. As Giorgia Vocino’s contribution shows, the hagiography in the duchy of Spoleto preserved memories of classical Romanness in a rather general guise, peopled by emperors, the senate and imperial officials; only after 774 is there a certain trend to fashion Spoleto’s own Romanness as a resource.

However, there were regions in which particular territorial identities remained more or less distinctively, although not always explicitly Roman. In some provinces, legends of a particular relatedness to Rome had developed in the imperial period. A curious case is Justinian’s Novel 25, which relates that the Lycaonians believed themselves to be ‘most closely akin to the Roman people’, and that the founder king Lycaon ‘gave beginning to the Roman Empire’ in ‘times far more ancient than those of Aeneas and Romulus’. Similarly, Sidonius Apollinaris claims that the Arverni ‘dared once to call themselves brothers to Latium and counted themselves a

80 See Dupont 2011.
81 Origo gentis Romanae, ed. Sehlmeyer. See Dench 2005; Pohl 2014; Dupont 2011; Revell 2015.
82 Giardina 1997.
people sprung from Trojan blood.” Sidonius presents the Auvergne and Clermont, the civitas Arvernorum, as an isolated bulwark of Romanness. He was as Roman as one could be in fifth-century Gaul, even hyper-Roman, as Peter Brown put it, but hardly ever explicitly defined himself as a Roman. Much more emphatic is the ‘nos, miseri Arverni’ he employed when describing how the city was threatened once more by a Gothic onslaught. Civic identity, ethnic reminiscences and a privileged link with Rome were entangled in Sidonius’ view. Southern Gaul, mostly ruled but hardly inhabited by the Franks, preserved its Roman-style allegiances. In Aquitaine, ‘Roman law retained an almost territorial application,’ although the development of a regional identity was not without ambiguities.

The alpine part of Raetia around Chur, administered by a dynasty of bishops, had its own law code and regional Roman identity, and its relative autonomy was still confirmed in a privilege by Charlemagne. Eventually, its Raetian identification prevailed, as can be seen from two successive versions of the Via Sancti Galli: whereas Wetti’s version written around 820 has robbers despicably speak of isti Romani, Walahfrid Strabo in 833/34 replaces that by isti Rhetiani. Onomastic studies have suggested that in the contact zones between Romance-speakers and Alamanni north of the Alps, by that time not only Walchen, but also Romans was used as an outside designation and hardly for self-identification. A smaller but rather homogeneous group of Romans, including some nobles (the genealogia de Albina), lived south of Salzburg; but they did not preserve or create a strong regional affiliation, and their distinctiveness faded out in the Carolingian period. Another regional Roman group, presented in Francesco Borri’s contribution, lived in Dalmatia, where Carolingian Annals distinguish between Roman and Slavic settlers. In the tenth century, Constantine Porphyrogenitus distinguished these as Rhômanoi from the general subjects of the Empire, the Rhômaioi. Nevertheless, these ‘Roman’ Dalmatians disappear from the sources in the course of the eleventh century. The Greek term Rhômanos also appears in Italo-Greek documents for the representatives and inhabitants of Rome.

A more difficult question regards the extent to which the vast populations that were subjected to Rome without necessarily being citizens had become Roman. Was there such a thing as an imperial identity as a loose frame of convergence within

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86 Brown 2012.
88 See the contribution by Stefan Esders, in this volume.
89 DD Caroli Magni 78, ed. Mühlbacher, 111–112; Wolfram 1995b, 100–103 and 143.
91 Schneider/Pfister 2017; see also the contribution by Ingrid Hartl, in this volume.
95 See the contribution by Annick Peters-Custot, in this volume, and ead. 2014.
the orbis Romanus? Few empires have created such a rich and coherent language of power. On the material level, the impact of empire was massive: attires and symbols of rulership, palaces, public buildings, statues, inscriptions, images, coins, uniforms and many other things, complemented by a differentiated discourse of empire. That was hardly a material culture ‘beyond representation’; for the most part, it created serial and recognisable reminders of Roman rule. It is more difficult to assess the extent to which such symbols could inspire a sense of belonging in the subject populations, and how they affected the ways subjects ‘experienced empire’, as David Mattingly has put it (comparing them with subalterns in European colonial empires, as he suggests, may yield interesting perspectives, but should not level out the obvious differences). ‘Becoming Roman’ was not always something one could freely choose or avoid, and the benefits of Roman rule were distributed unevenly, so that social inequality rose sharply in Gaul and other subjugated areas in the West after the Roman conquest, as Greg Woolf has shown. Provincial elites who could profit from Roman rule were probably quite susceptible to assimilating imperial symbols into their own forms of representation, and became part of the system soon.

We know less about the lower strata of society. Egyptian papyri provide some insight in the impact of empire on the local level and on all groups of population. This problem touches on very general and rather controversial issues of interpretation. How deeply had Roman rule penetrated? Were the slaves of Romans Roman slaves? Even with the only mention of a Roman in the seventh-century Lombard Edictus Rothari, an ancilla Romana, we do not know whether she was a Roman or the servant of a Roman; we only know that her master should receive a mere 12 solidi as compensation if another man had intercourse with her, as compared to the 20 solidi for an ancilla gentile (sic). Was the Roman population largely hybrid and used to smooth code-switching, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has argued, and globalized by ‘an accelerating process of interconnectivity’, as Miguel Versluys has put it? We can probably agree that we want to go ‘beyond Romans and natives’, and beyond the old paradigm that these natives were gradually Romanized in a more or less linear process of acculturation. We surely have to assume differences in space, time, background and social status in the ways in which Roman rule affected the population, and made itself felt on a regional level.

It seems that it was only in the fifth and sixth century that ‘Romani’ could be fairly generally used for all subjects of the Roman state. At that time, imperial identity

98 Woolf 1998.
99 Palme 2009; id. 2012; id. 2014. His contribution at the conference, ‘Rhomaioi, Hellenes and Barbaroi in Late Antique Egypt’, will be published at a later date.
100 Edictus Rothari 194, ed. Azzara/Gasparri, 56 (here translated as ‘serva di un Romano’).
101 Versluys 2014, 12.
102 Woolf 1998.
was strong enough to support the adoption of the collective name *Rhomaioi* for the population of the Eastern Empire. What that meant for these ‘Romans’ surely varied. As Annick Peters-Custot shows in her contribution, “‘Byzantine’ individuals from Italy never describe themselves as “Roman”, although “Romanness” is supposed to be the political foundation for being part of the Eastern Empire.’ Yet Romanness could provide a potential frame of identification, especially in times of trouble. For instance, an inscription scratched onto a brick, obviously during the Avar siege of Sirmium in 580–582, reads: ‘Oh Lord, help the town and halt the Avar and protect the *Romania* and the scribe. Amen.’

The Empire could be regarded as ‘*Romania*’ by someone in its exposed periphery who looked towards it for protection. Probably people in Syria or Egypt considered themselves less Roman during the Islamic conquests. In Syriac historiography, ‘like Persians, Armenians, and Arabs, Romans are almost always treated in the third person’, as Jack Tannous remarks. After the watershed of the seventh century, what remained of Byzantium was more homogeneous. In John Haldon’s new book, identities and solidarities play an important role in explaining the strange case of ‘the Empire that would not die’.

As Ioannis Stouraitis argues in his contribution to this volume, ‘the apparently enhanced cultural homogeneity (single *lingua franca*, Chalcedonian orthodoxy)’ could have been used to construct and project an image of the *Rhomaioi* as an ethnic group; but the elites rather promoted loyalty to the centralized rule of the city-state of New Rome and its emperor. An ethnic image of a Roman *genos* only appeared in Byzantine historiography in the twelfth century.

Seen from the Latin West, *Romani* was now often used for the inhabitants of the remaining Empire, that is, if one did not want to express a sense of distance by calling them Greeks. In Isidore’s early seventh-century *History of the Goths*, for instance, the term *Romanus* is employed in this sense. Whereas in the beginning of the text, the term *Romani* covers the inhabitants of the whole Roman Empire, it is subsequently reduced to the Eastern Romans and to the Byzantine military forces in Spain (*milites*). On no occasion does the term *Romani* describe the inhabitants of the former provinces. The Merovingian *Vita Eligii* notes the saint’s presence at the reception of foreign embassies at the royal court, which came from the Roman, Italian or (*Visi-) Gothic realm.

In Paul the Deacon’s late eighth-century *History of the Lombards*, Ro-
mani refers consistently, but not exclusively to the Byzantine state and its inhabitants, and in a number of ways.\textsuperscript{108} This corresponds to the usage of ‘Roman’ in the laws of King Aistulf, who conquered Ravenna in 751 and proudly states in his prologue: ‘The Roman people has been transferred to us by the Lord’.\textsuperscript{109} The modern regional terms Lombardia/Romagna go back to that territorial juxtaposition between Byzantine and Lombard Northern Italy. As Paolo Delogu remarks in his contribution, Charlemagne later sought to suppress the ‘ethnic’ perception of an imperium Romanorum to avoid the impression that the imperial title could be bestowed by the people of Rome in the same way the Franks could raise a rex Francorum; but this tension remained open throughout the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{110}

Cultural Romanness first of all constituted a mark of social distinction.\textsuperscript{111} High-status Roman \textit{cultural identity} was acquired in upper-class education through the mastery of rhetoric and of the literary canon, and should guarantee impeccable performance in public. In that sense, full-fledged romanitas was an elite identity, which gradually disappeared after Sidonius Apollinaris and Cassiodorus. Eugippius, in his early sixth-century \textit{Vita Severini}, styled Severinus as the last true Roman on the Danube, of noble birth, a \textit{homo omnino Latinus}, a man of thorough Latin education.\textsuperscript{112} One could, of course, aspire to Roman \textit{civilitas} by degrees, and even barbarians could master it quite admirably. Educated Franks of the late sixth century were lauded as ‘Franks by birth and Romans by education’ or similar by Venantius Fortunatus, whereas Gregory of Tours ridiculed King Chilperic’s attempts to write Latin poetry.\textsuperscript{113} Correct use of language was an important feature of identification that involved a much wider range of Romans, and still allowed for subtle strategies of distinction by the use of different registers.\textsuperscript{114} However, it was not unambiguous – the name of the language was Latin, a term that occasionally also served as an identity marker in the late- and post-Roman period. Speakers of the Rhômaikē, that is, Greek could regard themselves as the true Romans in Byzantium.\textsuperscript{115} On the other hand, the fluent


\textsuperscript{109} Aistulf, \textit{Prologue}, ed. Azzara/Gasparri, 250: \textit{traditum nobis a domino populum romanorum}. See also Aistulf 4, ed. Azzara/Gasparri, 250, on penalties for doing business with Romans in times of war: \textit{Sic patiatur, qui contra voluntatem regis cum romano homine negotium fecerit, quando lites habe-mus}.

\textsuperscript{110} See also Classen 1985. Sarti 2016 gives a broad, but rather superficial overview of the development of Roman identities in the Frankish kingdoms up to Charlemagne.

\textsuperscript{111} Cf. Laurence/Berry 1998.

\textsuperscript{112} Eugippius, \textit{Vita Severini}, ed. Mommsen, 5.

\textsuperscript{113} For Venantius Fortunatus, see n. 174 and n. 177. Gregory of Tours, \textit{Decem libri historiarum} 5, 44, ed. Krusch/Levison, 254; ibid., 6, 46, ed. Krusch/Levison, 320.

\textsuperscript{114} See Kramer 1998.

\textsuperscript{115} See the contribution by Johannes Koder, in this volume.
use of Latin became a distinctive feature of high-level Frankish, Irish or Anglo-Saxon clerics and monks, without turning them all into Romans. The issue of Roman cultural identity touches on many aspects of materiality and performativity that cannot be addressed here, and raises the question of whether and how the archaeological record can shed light on identities.\(^{116}\)

The subject of Roman religious identity, like many other modes of identification touched here, is particularly striking because Romanness was transformed by a complete change of religion in the fourth and fifth centuries, and opinions about the reasons and the impact of this fundamental change differ widely.\(^{117}\) The contribution by Yitzhak Hen discusses this issue, and underlines the close connection between Roman religion and identity. Ancient Romans believed that the extraordinary success of their state had been a reward of the gods for their piety.\(^{118}\) Roman ‘religion’ focused on correct cult practice, which was, as Clifford Ando put it, ‘of and for a political community or body of citizens, one that included both humans and gods.’\(^{119}\) Therefore, ‘the imperial city did not impose or export its religion on or to its provinces.’\(^{120}\) However, it could easily be translated; just as Roman gods roughly equalled the Greek pantheon, the gods of other cities or of ‘barbarian’ subject peoples could be seen as analogous to Roman deities. These efforts of cultural translation sat well with imperial expansion because they acknowledged differences and allowed integration at the same time. Roman imperial domination could be expressed by the imperial cult, and identity was maintained by venerating the gods of the city of Rome on a scale that was adequate to their enormous achievement of enabling empire.

This balance changed when oriental cults with their own mysteries spread across the Empire; of these Christianity was the most successful. Constantinian Christianity provided a new religion for empire, however we want to explain that momentous change.\(^{121}\) It swiftly replaced the mos maiorum, the customs of the forefathers, as a token of Romanness.\(^{122}\) Augustine, as Richard Corradini shows in his contribution to this volume, was certainly averse to the Roman thirst for glory; in a happier world, ‘all kingdoms would have been small, rejoicing in neighbourly concord’.\(^{123}\) At the same time, he ridiculed localized Roman religion and the idea that the gods were closely connected to their shrines.\(^{124}\) Christianity offered a much more cen-

\(^{116}\) See Fehr/Pohl/von Rummel, forthcoming.
\(^{117}\) Still the most convincing overall narrative: Brown 1978; see also Brown 2013a.
\(^{118}\) E.g. Cicero, De natura deorum 2, 3; Pliny, Naturalis historia 28, 5. Liebeschuetz 1979, 3. See also Beard/North/Price 1998; Veyne 2005.
\(^{119}\) Ando 2008, 3.
\(^{120}\) Ando 2008, 105.
\(^{122}\) See the contribution by Yitzhak Hen, in this volume.
\(^{123}\) Augustine, De civitate dei 4, 15, ed. Dombart/Kalb, 111.
\(^{124}\) Fredriksen 2006, 590; see the contribution by Richard Corradini, in this volume.
‘vision of community’. Although a certain tension was inevitable, religious unity could now serve as a vehicle for imperial unity – one God for all, an extremely ambitious, powerful and potentially divisive vision of an empire united in Christ. The intense efforts of bishops to push emperors to suppress dissent on rather peculiar theological matters, and the struggles of the emperors to force churchmen to agree on some Unitarian dogmatic formula soon entangled the exercise of power with questions of religious authority. All of this is well-known, but the consequences for Roman identity may deserve some further thought. For a while, the Roman Empire and Christendom were almost co-extensive. However, it can hardly be a coincidence that the erosion of the Empire started at the very moment when Theodosius I had removed the last checks to the progress of Christianity triumphant. The vision of Christian Rome provided a new frame for a wide range of identifications. To an extent, this conjunction survived the end of Roman rule, as Jack Tannous observes: ‘The history of Rome had become inextricably linked with the history of Christianity; as a result, Syriac-speaking Christians were interested in Roman history regardless whether they were living under Roman rule.’ In a thirteenth-century Syriac gospel lectionary, the pagan Mongol khan Hülagü could be portrayed as a new Constantine. Memories of Constantine were much more ambiguous in the Latin West.

As the Empire fell apart, it became clear that in the Latin West Christian identity could not correspond directly with an imperial one. Christian Romanness contracted again to the city of Rome, which represented the rock of St Peter on which the Church had been built. Rome disposed of an unrivalled treasure of relics, sacred spaces and Christian memories, soon to be propagated in the Liber Pontificalis, one of the most ambitious trans-generational book projects of the age. This made up in part for Rome’s loss of central functions in the Empire. Even so, for a considerable time ecclesia Romana mostly referred to the diocese, in spite of its universal ambitions; that is still the case in Paul the Deacon’s late eighth-century History of the Lombards. Then, in the later eighth century, res publica was used for the sphere of political domination that the popes tried to carve out of former Byzantine possessions. Yet already in the sixth century, ‘Romans’ could also be used for those who followed

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125 For ‘visions of community’: See Pohl/Gantner/Payne 2011; Hovden/Lutter/Pohl 2016.
127 See also the contribution by Richard Corradini, in this volume.
128 Vatican Syriac 559, see the contribution by Jack Tannous, in this volume.
130 See the contribution by Rosamond McKitterick, in this volume, and McKitterick 2015; McKitterick 2014b.
132 Noble 1984; Gantner 2014b; see also the contribution by Thomas Granier, in this volume.
the Roman creed and the liturgical practices of the Roman Church.\textsuperscript{133} In that sense, the seventh-century conflict about the correct date of Easter in the British Isles could be perceived as a struggle between Roman and Irish practice.\textsuperscript{134} Later, in the Carolingian period, Roman liturgy, chant, canon law and ecclesiastic practice played a major role in reform debates. As Rosamond McKitterick shows in her contribution, this particularly ‘Roman’ history of Christian liturgy was based on the \textit{Liber Pontificalis}, where liturgical innovations are attributed to single popes, an effort that only gained momentum in the course of the eighth century. Christianity could now become ‘Roman’ in a way that was very different from the Christian Empire of Late Antiquity, and it hinged more on the popes than on the succession of distant ‘Roman’ emperors. That could trigger concerns about the relationship of this form of Roman-ness with other modes of Roman identification. Just as there are ‘Roman’ Catholics in Europe now, they are called Rūm, Romans, in Syria to this day.\textsuperscript{135}

Finally, identities are always constituted by differences, and the Romans had inherited a powerful scheme of ‘us and them’ from the Greeks, for whom they had initially been barbarians themselves. Romans and Greeks could be juxtaposed to barbarians, the Other of classical culture. Identity means difference, and this binary identity provided the most general frame of identification for the inhabitants of the Roman World in an asymmetrical scheme: civilization against barbarism, culture against nature, reason against irrationality, freedom against tyranny, a \textit{populus} established by law against \textit{gentes} bred naturally. In spite of its ideological uses, this black-and-white matrix allowed for many shades of grey: some barbarians could be more barbarian than others, and some Romans could be criticized as barbarous. Distinguishing themselves from despised barbarians was not the only way by which Romans could reassure themselves of their Roman-ness; that could be achieved by various distinctions, as Erich Gruen has shown.\textsuperscript{136} ‘Barbarians’ could be used in a rather neutral manner as a general label for those whose (sometimes rather distant) origins lay outside the Empire, and it could be employed in a deprecating sense implying a number of prejudices and stereotypes. Ralph Mathisen remarks in his contribution to this volume that both before and after the end of the Western Empire, Roman identifications mostly occur in juxtaposition with barbarians, both in general and with specific peoples, for instance, Goths or Franks. It is hard to ascertain to what degree the stereotypes reflected back on what appears to us as neutral use.

In Late Antiquity, the Roman/barbarian distinction had obviously become fuzzy; the crisis of Roman identity threatened the great divide.\textsuperscript{137} Boundaries had to be re-

\textsuperscript{134} Corning 2006.
\textsuperscript{135} See the contribution by Jack Tannous, in this volume.
\textsuperscript{136} Gruen 2011.
\textsuperscript{137} Greatrex 2000.
drawn; not least, Roman/barbarian opposition shifted to that between Christians and pagans. Only for a brief period, these two binaries more or less coincided. Already Augustine had emphasized that ‘the semen of Abraham was promised not only to the Romans, but to all peoples.’ Soon, many former barbarians had become Christians and even Catholics. Bishop Avitus of Vienne wrote to Clovis on the occasion of his baptism: ‘Let Greece, to be sure, rejoice in having an orthodox ruler, but she is no longer the only one to deserve such great a gift.’ Remarkably, the Roman Empire had now become ‘Greece’ to a bishop from southern Gaul.

Modern scholars have reappropriated the clear binary logic of the Roman/barbarian distinction, and also extended it to the early medieval period when the inside/outside dichotomy had turned into a leopard skin of romano-barbarian confrontation and hybridity. This may not be totally inappropriate, because the binary distinction also remained in use in the period. Still in the late eighth century, the road from Chur, where Raetians lived, to the Alamanni in the North was called ‘Via Barbaresca’. Contemporary authors, however, were capable of making distinctions. Agathias, in the sixth century, writes that the Franks were ‘practically the same as ourselves except for their barbaric style of dress and peculiar language’. He still allows for some differences, but acknowledges that in fact there was a continuum between people who were more or less Roman or barbarian. Early medieval sources, biased as they may be, do not overwhelmingly class the population of post-imperial Europe into Romans and barbarians, and even less, into Romans and Germans. These broad categories became less and less convenient for the definition of particular communities. It is up for discussion whether the term ‘barbarian’ in the regna is used to include or to exclude the ruling people, Goths or Franks, in their kingdoms. In the Lex Salica, barbarus Salicus could obviously be used for the Franks; the manuscript variants of §14.2 display a whole range of options: barbarus Salicus, Francus Salicus, homo barbaricus or homo Francus. By and large, the juxtaposition of Romans vs. barbarians (for specific people or in a generalizing sense) wore off, and Romans were integrated as more specifically defined groups into a new landscape of social and ethnic distinctions. We can still use the term ‘Roman’ for general classification, as in the broad perspective offered by this volume, but we have to be aware that this hardly corresponds to the usage of the sources. And it is important to historicize the term ‘barbarians’, which was not only open to different uses simultane-

139 Avitus of Vienne, Epistula 46 (to Clovis), trans. Wood/Shanzer, 370.
140 Pohl 2013c, 22–23.
141 In a charter from 844: Erhart/Kleindinst 2004, n. 40, 225.
142 Agathias, Historiae, I 2, 3–4, ed. Keydell, 11; trans. Frendo, 10; see also Wood, 2011.
143 Pactus Legis Salicae, 14, 2–3, ed. Eckhardt, 64–65; for a general discussion, Sivan 1998.
ously, but, as Ian Wood has shown, also changed in a more general sense in the course of the ‘transformation of the Roman World’.¹⁴⁴

**Romanness and ethnicity**

Romans have not usually been regarded as an ethnic group by scholars. No doubt, Rome was a city state, a universal empire, and later, a Christian society defined by orthodoxy rather than by ethnicity. However, it was already possible in the classical period to regard the Romans as a *gens*, and I would interpret that as *ethnic identity*. That became more marked in Late Antiquity when increasingly the Romans could be seen as one people among many, although perhaps a special one. Only recently, ancient historians have addressed the question of Roman ethnicity.¹⁴⁵ For a long time, studies of late antique and early medieval ethnicity have rather concentrated on the barbarians, and bypassed the Romans, as Guy Halsall argues very compellingly in his contribution to this volume. Should we take, as he suggests, ethnicity to the heart of (at least post-Roman) Romanness? Or should we rather discard ethnicity as unhelpful for understanding Roman and barbarian identities in Late Antiquity?

An exemplary statement for such an ‘ethno-sceptical’ position is Erich Gruen’s argument that ancient Greeks, Romans, and even Jews ‘did not agonize much about ethnicity.’¹⁴⁶ ‘The ancients did not have a word for ethnicity [...] Ethnicity is an elusive notion, much discussed, debated, and stubbornly resistant to definition.’¹⁴⁷ Gruen’s own criteria for ethnicity, as they emerge from his fast-forward discussion of a great number of ancient sources, are very narrowly defined: for Gruen, ethnicity is incompatible with previous migrations or even myths about it, only a strong consensus about the autochthony of the people in question fits his definition. It excludes any intermingling or mixed marriages and not only requires contempt for the inferiority of others, but that inferiority must also consistently be sought in their very nature. Furthermore, his definition requires that ethnicity corresponds to a ‘fixed nature, inherent in the people’ and does not allow any change of lifestyle.¹⁴⁸ This rather pejorative concept of ethnicity equals that of ‘race’ as perceived by racists. Read against these criteria (never discussed but systematically used to exclude possible cases of ethnicity), it is little wonder that Gruen cannot find sufficient evidence for ethnicity in his sources. He would hardly find any nowadays.

Geoffrey Greatrex offers a more nuanced argument as to why ‘ethnicity’ is unhelpful to understand ‘Roman identity in the sixth century’. He very aptly describes the many options open to successful commanders in the period: ‘A man of ambition

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¹⁴⁴ Wood 2011.
¹⁴⁵ Farney 2007; Greatrex 2010; Revell 2015; McInerney 2014.
¹⁴⁶ Gruen 2013, 20.
¹⁴⁷ Gruen 2013, 1.
¹⁴⁸ Gruen 2013, 12.
born in the Balkans in the fifth century, who pursued a military career at least partly in Roman service, might go on to be king of the Ostrogoths, consul, *magister militum*, emperor or rebel tyrant (or several of these). However, does this really warrant the following conclusion? ‘The term “ethnicity” is particularly unhelpful in coming to grips with the notion of Roman-ness or Roman identity in the sixth century. [...] *Genos* [...] in no way played a deciding role in determining an individual’s ethnicity or political allegiance’.

‘Ethnicity’ is disconnected on both sides here, almost as if one needed to make sure that this explosive concept would not blow up a well-ordered argument: it is not always determined by *genos*, that is, descent; and it does not determine political allegiance. But why should we assume that ethnicity would only be a helpful term if it could be shown to ‘determine’ anything? Would we want to abandon the term ‘family’ because it did not determine allegiance and solidarity, as can clearly be shown in the case of the Merovingians? In fact, the relatively wide variety of options available, among which clear ethnic identification was just one possible career path, is what makes the period so interesting. Ancestry determined ethnic identity to a lesser extent than in other periods, and we can observe ambiguous or shifting identities (as in the case of Odoacer) more often than at other times. Likewise, identities and affiliations were not always decisive for careers and political loyalties. Goths and Franks fought for Romans, and Romans for Goths and Franks.

Playing the card of *gens/genos* in these power games was always an option, and that included not only barbarian identifications, but also asserting one’s Roman descent, or an ancient Roman sense of community that at least tacitly excluded those who behaved too obviously like foreigners. First-generation barbarian immigrants were de facto excluded from the imperial throne; non-Roman origin constituted a glass ceiling. Yet in the hothouse of military ambitions and shifting alliances, boundaries tended to be drawn pragmatically, and not according to any clearly-defined ideological divide between Romans and barbarians. In sixth-century texts, as Greatrex argues, ‘Romans’ usually are those who remain loyal to the emperor and can pass for Chalcedonian Christians.

By implication, such a definition was rather open and volatile, and left little room for arguments about distant Roman or barbarian origins. This seems to have been the hegemonic model of Romanness in the Justinianic period. It had lasting impact; ‘Romans’ could now finally become an inclusive term which could refer to all Christian subjects of the emperor. However, this movement of inclusion had only limited political success, and provoked much adversity. Perhaps that was because its principal instruments were ruthless tax-collectors, increased pressure on orthodox dogmatic unity and a Roman army that often appeared to the civil population like a horde of foreigners.
In the West, an alternative model of identity politics was more successful. Procopius makes the Gothic king Totila say to his army before the decisive battle against the forces of Narses in 552: ‘The vast number of the enemy is worthy only to be despised, seeing that they present a collection of men from the greatest possible number of peoples. For an alliance which is patched together from many sources gives no firm assurance of either loyalty (\(pistis\)) or power, but being split up in origin (\(genēsis\)), it is naturally divided likewise in purpose’.¹ This is Procopius’ attempt to explain the success of the gentes and of their kingdoms in the West. The irony is that it is put into the mouth of a Gothic king before a lost battle and the downfall of his kingdom. However, that does not invalidate the author’s critique of the Justinianic policy of putting loyalty first at the expense of true Romanness. Procopius, in the guise of Totila, denied the Romanness of the victorious Roman army; and he spoke from experience. The assumption is that ethnic solidarity could help to integrate large groups of soldiers even in hardship and defeat. Indeed, that may have been an advantage that Roman commanders who were also barbarian kings had over those who were not in the fifth and sixth centuries. Shared ethnic background, of course, offered no guarantee against scission and bitter conflict, as can be seen in the struggles between Theoderic the Amal and Theoderic Strabo.² Yet it probably was no coincidence that in the West, the new kingdoms that replaced the Empire came to be distinguished by ethnic designations.

Therefore, if in the sixth-century Empire ethnicity did not serve to establish clear boundaries or allow peoples’ loyalties to be predicted, that does not mean it is worthless as a scholarly category. It is not that sixth-century authors did not try to get their ethnic distinctions right: Procopius’ ‘Wars’ are full of ethnonyms and ethnographic digressions, and they are not limited to areas outside of imperial control: ‘Procopius refers not just to people of the Armenian, Gothic, Persarmenian and Herul genos, but also to those of the Cilician, the Palestinian, the Calabrian and Illyrian.’¹ I would regard ‘ethnicity’ as just that: a way of distinguishing between large and inclusive social groupings through the use of ethnonyms. And it increasingly became applied to Roman provinces. Like Geoffrey Greatrex, we may find that confusing and inadequate. But the complex stories that fifth- and sixth-century Roman authors tell could not be told without using all these names. It adds an important element to the story of the two Theoderics if we know that they were both Ostrogoths, and perhaps from the same family. They competed for the loyalty of the same set of warbands. And the flexible uses of ‘Roman’ do not only tell us something about identity politics and their short-term perspectives; they also betray an underlying insecurity about the boundaries of Romanness, and a lack of consensus about the qualities essential for a true Roman.

³ Greatrex 2000, 268.
Guy Halsall, in his contribution to this volume, advocates a solution that is in some ways contrary to the variants of ethnoscepticism I have just discussed. He subverts the seeming contrast between Romanness and ethnicity by the model of multi-layered identity. ‘Gentile’ identities, as he calls them, could well be compatible with being Roman, because they were situated on a different plane. Regional and civic identities could also be complementary to an overarching Roman affiliation. In sixth-century Gaul, ‘gens’ and ‘civitas’, Franks, Arverni or Turonenses, were then analogous. ‘There is nothing’, Halsall states, ‘that allows us analytically to distinguish these types of identity from the gentile level.’¹⁵⁵ This issue is central to recent debates about ethnicity and ‘ethnogenesis’ because, in Halsall’s words, many misunderstandings were prompted by two silences: ‘the silence about what distinguishes an ethnic group from a non-ethnic group within the same part of the spectrum, or layering of identities. The other is the silence about what distinguishes such identities or layers of identity among barbarians from their equivalents among the Romans, or more accurately among the inhabitants of the Roman empire.’¹⁵⁶ As this is not only an issue that seems to be in need of clarification, but also very pertinent for the subject of Roman identities, I would like to discuss it at least briefly here.

The question is relevant on two levels, specific and theoretical. There is much to recommend the view that in many respects, urban and ethnic identities had something in common. In the Merovingian kingdom of the fifth and sixth centuries, ethnic, regional and urban denominations constituted a rather mixed system of subdivisions: ‘new’ ethnic groups (Saxons, Alans and others); traditional Gaulish identifications (the revived Arverni, the name of a civitas with strong ethnic overtones); an ethnonym that had turned into a political-regional designation (Burgundians); a Roman province that that acquired ethnic overtones (Aquitaine); later even the term for province itself that came to designate a region and its population (Provence); the name of the Franks which could both refer to the entire kingdom, and to a particular ruling group within it; and the ambiguous, and therefore often rather avoided term ‘Romans’ – it was an interestingly hybrid set of internal distinctions. I have argued that ethnicity is, on a rather formal level, a system of distinctions between basically analogous, inclusive social groupings predominantly based on ethnonyms, and a way to endow these groups with agency and meaning. Within sixth-century Gaul the predominant form was distinction by the name of the civitas (or rather, of its inhabitants). Sometimes, ethnic distinctions were used, not least, within the cities; an example is King Gunthram’s reception by the citizens of Orléans in 585: ‘An enormous crowd proceeded towards him with signs and standards. Here one heard the language of the Syrians, here of the Latins, and here even that of the

¹⁵⁵ Halsall, in this volume, p. 46.
¹⁵⁶ Halsall, in this volume, p. 44.
Jews.\textsuperscript{157} Some ethnic groups were directly associated with the cities where they lived, for instance the Saxons of Bayeux or the Franks of Tournai.\textsuperscript{158}

Ethnic and civic or regional categories could all serve as subdivisions within the kingdom, and could have similar functions for internal distinction. However, if these different sets of distinction are mixed, that usually has a purpose in our texts. Sometimes it expresses geographic or social distance. For instance, the \textit{Liber Pontificalis}, at the beginning of each pope’s life, gives the origin of the incumbent: \textit{natione Romanus}, if (and only if) he came from the city of Rome; \textit{natione Tiburtinus, Ostiensis} etc., if from the cities around Rome; \textit{natione Tuscus, Campanus, Siculus} etc., if he came from Italian regions; and \textit{Grecus, Syrus} or \textit{Afer} (from Africa) if he came from distant lands.\textsuperscript{159} A mixing of different types of group identifiers may also express emotional distance and be a sign of quiet protest; a contemporary example comes to mind: German-speaking Alpine skiers from South Tyrol are part of the Italian national team; but when the German Tyrolean papers print the results of races, South Tyroleans are listed with their home village, whereas all others, including Italians, are identified by their nation. Surely, Gregory of Tours was more concerned to pinpoint the city of origin of Gallo-Romans (especially if they came from Tours) than to differentiate between Franks. A Frank was a Frank, whether he lived in Tours or north of the Silva Carbonaria. From his very restricted and not at all contingent use of the ethnonym ‘Frank’, we may also infer that Gregory considered them to be on a somewhat different plane from the Arverni or the Turonenses.\textsuperscript{160} It was not easy for him to integrate the Franks in his vision of a non-ethnic, post-Roman Christian world. Other sources unproblematically operate on a level of ethnic distinctions, where Romans are seen as analogous to Franks, Burgundians and others; that occurs, for instance, in the seventh/eighth century \textit{Formulae Marculfi}.\textsuperscript{161} However, and here I agree with Guy Halsall, the coincidence of different modes of identification and differentiation may also point to insecure terminology and shifting identities, which was certainly the case in late sixth century Gaul.

On the theoretical level, it is striking that most current definitions of ethnicity are as valid for urban, regional, religious or even linguistic identities. A.D. Smith’s oft-cited definition of ethnicity lists six criteria: a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity.\textsuperscript{162} If we replace ‘a common myth of descent’ with a myth of foundation, we can easily apply the same definition to ancient and medieval cities – considering that it is a weak criterion anyway, because many peoples and

\textsuperscript{157} Gregory of Tours, \textit{Decem libri historiarum} 8, 1, ed. Krusch, 370.  
\textsuperscript{158} Gregory of Tours, \textit{Decem libri historiarum} 5, 26, ed. Krusch, 232; ibid., 10, 9, ed. Krusch, 492.  
\textsuperscript{159} See also the contribution by Ralph Mathisen, in this volume.  
\textsuperscript{160} Reimitz 2015a.  
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Formulae Marculfi} 8, ed. Zeumer, 47–48: \textit{Omnis populus ibidem commanentes, tam Franci, Romani, Burgundionis vel reliquas nationis}. See also the translation in Rio 2008.  
\textsuperscript{162} A. Smith 1986, 22–30.
many cities have no such myths. It would be more distinctive to use definitions that rely on ‘metaphoric or fictive kinship’; but that idea is only very patchily attested among early medieval gentes. In fact, genealogical thinking occurs surprisingly rarely on the early medieval continent, apart from some spectacular cases such as the Amal genealogy in the Getica or King Rothari’s pedigree in the prologue of his Edict.

Yet there is a difference between ethnic identities and many other ‘modes of identification’: ‘Most identities [...] have a decisive point of reference outside the group: the city, the land, the state, the army, a religious creed. Symbolic strategies of identification attach themselves to these figures that represent the common denominator, the defining feature of the community. In ethnicity, by contrast, the principle of distinction and the symbolic essence of the community are thought to lie in the human group itself. Its symbolism builds on kinship, blood, origin and fate. Distinctive features are perceived as expressions of an innermost self, an ingrained common nature.’

Isidore of Seville, in the ninth book of his Etymologies, clearly differentiated the ‘gentes’ from those who identified with their civitas or territory. His long list of gentes contains hardly any examples of groups that we would not consider as ethnic, with the exception of a few ethnicized populations of regions such as the Tuscans. And he lists the Romans, in a fine example of an almost Derrida-esque display of ‘différence’:

The Romans are called after the name of Romulus, who founded the city of Rome and gave the name to the gens and the city. Before that, these were called Saturnians after Saturn, and Latins from Latinus. For Latinus was a king of Italy, who after his own name designated those Latins who were later called Romans. These are also called Quirites, for Romulus was called Quirinus, because he always used the spear, which is called curis in the language of the Sabinians.

This is about as much ethnic language as can be used on the basis of the rather ambiguous urban/ethnic Roman origin narratives: the Romans were not created by the foundation of the city, but they had existed before, albeit under different names; they can thus be derived from three other ethnic groups, and linked to the Sabines. These peoples took their name from divine ancestors; and it is explicitly mentioned that the gens of the Romans were named after Romulus, and not after the city. The story of the

163 Eriksen 1993, 12.
165 Pohl 2013a, 25.
origins of Rome and of the Romans has also been told in very different ways in the course of Roman history.\textsuperscript{167} To assess that difference, the category of ethnicity is very useful; and for that purpose, we need a medium-range definition calibrated to our evidence, so that neither almost everything nor nothing at all can be accommodated. The example of Isidore is telling: a Hispano-Roman with a brilliant classical education, a defender of the Roman Church and at the same time a professed enemy of ‘the Romans’, that is, the Byzantines, who lived under Gothic rule and never used the label ‘Romani’ for the Latin-speaking population of Spain.\textsuperscript{168} Isidore lived in a world of gentes, and he regarded the Goths and Romans of his day as pretty much on the same plane, while paying full respect to Roma caput gentium, Roma victrix omnium populorum and urbs cunctarum gentium victrix of the past.\textsuperscript{169} The (Hi)spani, to whom he belonged, are mentioned rarely in his works; here, the point of reference is the patria, Spania, a pointedly non-ethnic solution for the issue of identity of the subjects of the Goths in Spain.

What, then, is the significance of ‘Roman ethnicity’? It is important to be precise here. First, on an abstract level, it means that the name ‘Romans’ is included in a system of ethnic distinctions that offers an overview of collective actors, organized by their ethnonyms. This is what I would regard as the baseline of ‘ethnicity’. As we have seen, Romani often sit uneasily among the gentes because of the much wider semantic range of the term. The tension is what makes the example so fascinating. Still, early medieval lists of peoples, such as the so-called Frankish Table of Nations or Isidore’s catalogue of gentes in the Etymologies, unproblematically include Romans on the same level with Goths, Franks and others. This cognitive level of ethnic classification says little about actual Roman ethnic identities in the sense of a mode of identification that presupposed that these Romans had something intrinsically in common that went beyond their shared political, legal or urban identities. Secondly, therefore, higher levels of Roman ethnicity might be reached in cases where the Romans would emphatically be styled as a gens (as in the title of the Roman History of Jordanes), or where their origin was described in ethnic language (for instance, in the Origo gentis Romanae or in Isidore’s summary of Roman identity). That might still be due to outside ascription (Isidore may not have regarded himself as a ‘Roman’), but where the evidence gets more substantial that could imply it also was what Romans thought about themselves. Of course, this ethnic mode of Roman identification remained in competition with other forms – political, legal, or urban forms of Roman identity.

What I would like to suggest here is certainly not that ethnicity was necessarily the lead identity, the one that in case of conflict superseded all others in the early Middle

\textsuperscript{167} See Dench 2005.
\textsuperscript{168} Pohl/Dörler 2015; J. Wood 2012.
\textsuperscript{169} Isidore, Historia Gothorum, Prologue (De laude Spaniae), ed. Mommsen, 267; ibid. 67, ed. Mommsen, 294; ibid. 15, ed. Mommsen, 273.
Ages (something that has been argued for the modern nation).¹⁷⁰ Neither would I maintain that the late antique Romans were first of all an ethnos. I simply advocate that we should continue using the concept of ‘ethnicity’, and using it in a sense that is neither too restricted nor too all-encompassing, so we can use it to detect differences and changes in the way identifications were handled in the period. This is not easy, because if you look only at ethnicity you tend to lose it. Ethnicity is a very powerful mode of community construction but also a precarious one. It seldom survives in its pure form; rather, it has to attach itself to other, more tangible forms of community – a common homeland, state or religion.¹⁷¹ And it has to interact closely with more local and regional communities. Therefore, I agree with Guy Halsall that ethnicity has to be seen in conjunction with all other, and often very similar modes of identification, and not singled out as a special quality of barbarians or as a feature on which the future of Europe was to depend. Not saying this clearly enough has created unpleasant misunderstandings.¹⁷² Finally, we should not forget the point that Halsall makes in his preamble: identity is always ‘a motion towards an ideal’, from a past to be proud of to the promises of the future. Hopes can also be disappointed. Ultimately, the ideal is unattainable. Early medieval Romanness in the West had a most glorious past, but held little promise for the future.

Towards a history of Roman identifications

Around 570, the poet Venantius Fortunatus wrote a panegyric to the duke Lupus, one of the military leaders and advisors who served under the Frankish king Sigibert I of Austrasia. In this poem, he pictures Lupus as the last Roman: ‘You alone possess all traits which were exercised by Scipio the wise, by Cato the venerable, and by Pompey the fortunate. With these men as consuls, Rome’s might shone in splendor; but with you as duke, Rome has now returned for us.’¹⁷³ Apart from his role of representing the Roman past, Lupus’ Roman ancestry is underlined: ‘Gaining your venerable traits from Roman stock, you wage war with force of arms, you govern the sway of law in tranquillity.’¹⁷⁴ It was a time of transition. Lupus gave his son a Germanic name, Romulf, a name of studied ambiguity: Germanic speakers would understand it as the ‘glory wolf’, whereas it could also be understood as the ‘Roman wolf’, lupus Romanus – an emblem of Romanness translated into the language of the Frankish rul-

¹⁷⁰ Wehler 2001, 40.
¹⁷¹ Pohl 2013a, 25.
¹⁷² See Pohl, forthcoming (a).
¹⁷⁴ Venantius Fortunatus, Carmen 7.7, trans. George, 60.
ers.175 It is remarkable that for speakers of Frankish or Old High German, ‘Rome’ sounded like glory, ‘ruom’.

Unlike his contemporary and friend Gregory of Tours, Venantius, who was born near Treviso during the Gothic war and later migrated to the Frankish realm just when Narses finally seemed to establish full ‘Roman’ control over Northern Italy in 566, liberally underlined the Romanness of Romans, or the exquisite Roman qualities of Franks: ‘Roman by upbringing, barbarian by descent’176; ‘you restore the spirit of the great emperor Trajan [...] Though you are a Sigambere, progeny of a noble people [...] you overcome us Romans in eloquence’.177 It is useful to read Venantius alongside Gregory who, as has often been noticed, rather avoids the name Romans and would have never written of ‘nos Romani’.178 The rhetoric of barbarians’ achievements in Roman virtues and Latin eloquence did not disappear, and surfaced again in the Carolingian period. High-status Romans in Merovingian service are still attested in the seventh century.179 However, as a voice that propagated the persistence of a coherent Romanness in Frankish Gaul – noble Roman lineage, military virtues, political office, traditional eloquence, literary education – Venantius would not find a successor.

That does not mean that ‘Roman’ disappeared from the political language of the early Middle Ages. On the contrary, it became available for a variety of meanings and uses. Helmut Reimitz, in his contribution, traces the development of its significance in Merovingian Gaul. In my contribution, Paul the Deacon’s History of the Lombards may once more serve as an example.180 For him, similar to Germanic identity, Romanness is in many respects a thing of the past. This becomes clear with an emblematic story in one of the first chapters, in which the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus is transferred to ‘the farthest boundaries of Germany, in the West-North-West’, where they lie in a cave, uncorrupted and venerated by the barbarae nationes in the area: ‘These then, as far as regards their dress, are perceived as being Romans’.181 The veneration of these Christians of by-gone days raises hopes that these barbarians may one day be converted. Romanness, then, is a sleeper: a thing of the past, still recognisable by its specific and venerable cultural flavour, which may hold a promise for the future. Roman dress and customs are mentioned

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175 Haubrichs 2014b, 57. See the contribution by Helmut Reimitz, in this volume.
176 Venantius Fortunatus, Carmen 4, 26, ed. Reydellet, vol. 1, 155–61, at 156; trans. George, 9, on the noblewoman Vilithuta (I have replaced the antiquated and misleading ‘race’ for proles by ‘descent’).
177 Venantius Fortunatus, Carmen 6, 2, ed. Reydellet, vol. 2, 53–57, at 56–57; trans. George, 37 (instead of ‘race’ for gens I have put ‘people’), on King Charibert.
178 See also Buchberger 2016.
179 See the contributions by Helmut Reimitz, Ralph Mathisen and Jamie Kreiner, in this volume.
180 For an extensive analysis of the significance of Romanness in Paul the Deacon’s Historia Langobardorum, see Maskarinec 2013.
once more as a model for the Lombards. In a similar vein, Roman History may still teach useful things.

As already exemplified above, the overwhelming use of ‘Roman’ in Paul’s History of the Lombards is political; it refers to the Eastern Empire and its representatives. Its continuous existence is never in doubt, but its Romanness needs to be mentioned as an attribute to its numerous manifestations. In most cases, Paul routinely qualifies kings, provinces or offices not as ‘Roman’ (Romanus), but ‘of the Romans’ (Romanorum), an important difference as far as identifications are concerned. One can even distinguish an older, classicizing layer, mostly used in the early chapters, of a ‘Roman’ empire (only mentioned under Justinian), res publica and the ‘Roman and public standards’ of the army, from the ‘Byzantine’ layer in which the Empire and its institutions have become a ‘kingdom of the Romans’. These ‘Romans’ are the representatives, but also the subjects of the Roman (in our terminology, Byzantine) state; they attack, wage war, are defeated by Lombards, conclude peace, hide treasures, are suppressed by their emperor etc. Roman law, as established by Justinian, is called leges Romanorum, in analogy to the Langobardorum leges promulgated by King Rothari.

One can detect a shift of meaning around 600 in Paul’s use of ‘Roman’ for the population in Italy, which is limited to the sixth century. The plague strikes only the Romans, and the ‘Romans’ complain to Narses about his harsh rule, threatening that it would suit them better to serve the Goths than the Greeks. In the early

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186 It may be noted that the terminological shift does not coincide with the end of the parts based on the Historiola of Secundus, which end at c. 610.
188 Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, 2, 5, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 75: [Romani] contra eum Justiniano Augusto et eius coniugi Sophiae in haec verba suggererunt, dicentes quia expediierat Romanis Gothis potius servire quam Grecis. However, these seem to have been mainly Romans from the city of Rome.
570s, the Lombard king Cleph kills or expels many powerful Romans.¹ In the later parts of the book, ‘Romans’ is (apart from the Byzantine subjects in general) specifically used for the inhabitants of Rome.² In that sense, ecclesia Romana is used for the church of the city of Rome, not for the ‘Roman Church’ of the West.³ Paul the Deacon’s uses of Romanus/-i in his Lombard history are manifold and show that Romaness still had a strong potential for distinction; yet it is remarkably consistent and usually allows for relatively clear distinctions, if we discount that he stopped calling Lombard subjects ‘Romans’ at a certain point. On the whole, most of the modes of Roman identification discussed above are still present in Paul’s History of the Lombards; but they constitute different registers of Romanness that gradually move apart.

The results of the brief analysis of Paul’s text should not be generalized, and the present volume contains a wide range of case studies that show similar, but also different developments. Running the risk of simplifying the more complex and detailed assessments of regional developments and changing features of Romanness presented in this volume, I would like to make a few general points about the rhythms of change in the meanings of Roman identity in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

1. Many of the unifying visions and robust attempts at drawing the Empire together into a single body only go back to Late Antiquity. Universal Romanness was work in progress furthered by a number of ambitious projects of integration and control. The generalization of citizenship under Caracalla, for example, created a formal equality in the legal status of the free population in all provinces. Although the Roman administrative apparatus was still comparatively slim by modern standards, practices of bureaucratic control were expanded, not least by the reforms of Diocletian. Christianization resulted in a hitherto unparalleled drive for religious unification and for the suppression of dissent. In parallel, Christian art and architecture propelled a simplified late-Roman canon of public building and images into all parts of the Empire and beyond, replacing classical forms and their local appropriations. The codification of Roman law certainly did not remove legal pluralism, but established an inclusive corpus of imperial legislation that would last. In many respects, the Late Empire was more ‘Roman’, if less classical, than the early Empire had been.

¹ Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, 2, 31, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 90. There is one possible later example, Theodota ex nobilissimo Romanorum genere, lover of King Cunincpert and later confined to a monastery; but as the Greek name suggests, she most probably came from the Empire.
² Paul the Deacon, Historia Langobardorum, 4, 10, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 120 (civis Romanus from Rome as archbishop of Ravenna, see above); ibid., 6, 34, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 176: the populus Romanus refuses a heretical doctrine imposed by the emperor (see above); the civitas Romana is flooded (ibid., 6, 36, ed. Bethmann/Waitz, 177).
³ See above n. 132.
2. All these efforts to establish shared discourses and practices throughout the Empire deeply shaped the social fields in which they unfolded: civic identity; administration and language of state; religious life and beliefs; art and architecture; legislation and jurisdiction. They would by far survive the Western Empire, and carry ingrained notions of Romanness into the future, in a way that in most of these fields could not easily be disentangled from their Roman character. What was much more precarious was the way in which they were complementary and related to each other and to an overriding sense of Romanness. Ultimately, only the Empire could make a meaningful whole of them.

3. In the course of the fifth century, direct imperial control receded from the West. This did not mean the end of the cultural hegemony of Romanness, which still dominated the courts of ‘Roman Barbarians’ for a long time to come. Yet political power was now finally dissociated from the hegemony over defining what Romanness might mean. In parallel, some traditional anchors of individual Roman identity were abandoned surprisingly smoothly. The ‘statue habit’ that had accentuated public spaces with marks of personal achievement disappeared in the fifth century. Public inscriptions declined in many places, and funerary epigraphy became less elaborate, abandoning many features relevant for discerning the identity of the deceased. Somewhat later, the traditional Roman naming system of the tria nomina was abandoned. It is not always clear whether these changes were in some way linked to the dissolution of the Empire, or were more due to the effects of the Christianization of society. As Ian Wood has recently demonstrated, it took some time until contemporaries realized that these were not just temporary problems, but that the glory days of Rome were gone forever. In the barbarian kingdoms, categories of subaltern Romanness became legally fixed. It is no coincidence that the terms ‘Romans’ and ‘Welsh, Walach’ could eventually acquire the meaning ‘serf’ in several languages, among them, Old English and Romanian, whereas ‘Vlach’ in Balkan languages signified low-status transhumant herdsmen.

4. There are substantial traces that the significance of Romanness changed around 600. This is a point specifically made by Guy Halsall in his contribution to this volume. It also becomes visible in the changes in Paul the Deacon’s terminology analysed above. Romanness became defined not only through loyalty to the emperor, but increasingly also by orthodoxy, whatever that meant at any given point.

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194 De Rubeis 2013; De Rubeis 2002; Cardin 2008.
196 Wood, forthcoming (a).
197 Insley 2006; Pohl 2017.
198 Greatrex 2000, 278.
That provided a more convenient way in which barbarians could become good Romans. Indeed, many of the Romani who acted on behalf of the Empire in Paul the Deacon’s *History of the Lombards* were presumably of barbarian extraction. In Italy, the Gothic war effectively split the Roman elites into those who supported Gothic rule (such as Cassiodorus) and those who favoured the imperial side; and later, into those who acquiesced to Lombard rule and those who withdrew to lands under Roman control. Shared Roman identity ceased to provide a sense of social cohesion. The end of the senate in the West removed a group that had always set the standards of what Romanness meant.

5. In a simplifying overview, the semantic development of ‘Roman’ between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages could be sketched like this. Both in the Empire and initially in the *regna*, there was a basic binary division between Romans and non-Romans/barbarians which could be used on several levels, in a political/ideological, legal, ethnic or linguistic and cultural sense, which were mostly seen as intrinsically related. This overall distinction gradually faded out as a key organizing principle of the social world. The political unity of the Romans in the Western Empire collapsed, making the term accessible for rather diverse ideological uses. The legal significance of Romanness became fragmented, as we can see most clearly in the Frankish kingdoms, and some of the diverse status groups resulting from the process lost their Roman connotation: *Romani tributales* tended to become simple *tributales*. Ethnic identification as Romans by origin declined: in many contexts, self-identification and outside designation became dissociated. The Germanic term *walhaz* and its derivatives spread as a term used by outsiders, and even ‘Roman’ itself seems to have become restricted to an etic category in some contexts. As territorial identifiers, the names of regions such as Aquitaine, Provence or Raetia replaced ‘Roman’, which had become elusive and contradictory. Spoken Late Latin slowly drifted apart and became regionalized too in what were to become Romance languages; through the Carolingian reforms, they became disconnected from the literate classical Latin that served as an instrument of elite communication. Christian education selected, appropriated and reshuffled what had once been a distinctively Roman cultural canon. As a result, several residual meanings of ‘Roman’ became detached from each other: inhabitants of the city of Rome; representatives of the ‘Byzantine’ empire; the ‘Roman’ Church, eventually expanding its range beyond the Roman diocese; and, of course, Romanness as a thing of the past, *tempore Romanorum*. Whereas these forms of identification retained their significance throughout the Middle Ages, the ‘Roman’ population in the *regna* became reduced to a few minorities, mostly in Alpine regions, in the course of the early Middle Ages. Where ‘Romans’ remained the majority, as in Gaul or Spain, Roman identity tended to fade away.

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199 Pohl, forthcoming (b).
6. Thus, eventually, many forms of Roman representation in the West were detached from a sense of Roman identity, as far as we can see. This means that they became available for reappropriation, a process that has gone on until the present. As Stefan Esders puts it, ‘the process by which Roman law in many areas lost its importance as an identity marker could also give way to it being more freely used and adapted as a legal resource’. Romanness remained only in a vague sense as a general frame of reference that might allow social groups, individuals or cultural contents to be re-connected to the prestigious notion of Rome. Ideological references to that ancient source of magnetism mattered until modernity in European history. By 800, when a new Roman emperor was crowned in Rome, self-identification as Romans had become marginal in most areas of Western Europe, and most of these ‘Romans’ had a lower social status. Living Romans, in Rome and elsewhere, had a rather dubious reputation. Hate or despisal of Romans is recorded more frequently in the Carolingian period. *Stulti sunt Romani, sapienti sunt Piaioarii* is what an early ninth-century gloss records in both Latin and Old High German. Saint Goar, according to his Life written in 839 at Prüm, had to deal with people who hated *omnes Romane nationis et linguae homines.* As Liudprand of Cremona put it in the tenth century: ‘We regard “Romani!” as one of the worst insults.’ In such cases, Roman identities could still become quite conspicuous, though controversial.

At the same time, Romanness remained a political and cultural model, and a source of unfailing prestige. The name ‘Rome’ could be attached to the second and third Rome, Constantinople and Moscow, to the Scandinavian Romvarar or to the Rum Seljuks, and European cities and aristocratic families were proud of their often imagined Roman origins. The Roman past continued to generate Roman identifications and appropriations, because they were no longer linked to a consistent Roman identity. This paradox can tell us a lot about how identities work.

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200 See the contribution by Stefan Esders, in this volume.
201 See Hirschi 2012.
203 *Vita et miracula sancti Goaris* 6–7, ed. Stiene, 49–52.