

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

by

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THE EASTERN INFLUENCE UNDER GREAT THEODERIC'S REIGN: A COMPLEX ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

CONTEXT

The aim of my PhD project is to take a new look at working of complex systems between outsiders and natives *vica versa* with assistance of both traditional and new interdisciplinary academic methods. My research concentrates on the ecclesiastical, political, and social history of the Early Medieval Italy.

The migrations of the fourth and fifth centuries from eastern and central Europe saw new groups formation. Theoderich, the **Ostrogoth** came to Italy and **established a powerful kingdom in 493**, with that Western Europe had moved into a post-Roman period. The deposition of the last emperor in 476 was registered by **Byzantine authors** of the sixth century: they **saw it as a major change**, but **the Western aristocracy still was the same**.

Anastasius, the new emperor did not legitimate Theoderich's reign immediately, so missions sailed towards East to legitimate ostrogothic leader's rule but at the same time several riots broke out in Italy. **The Italian aristocracy belonged to a totally different group with different measurable cultural characteristics**. Theoderic recruited widely into his army and palatine bureaucracy from among indigenous Italian groups. Former members of Odoacer's army, together with large numbers of **native Romans, were incorporated into the bureaucracy** establishment of the Ostrogothic Kingdom.

Some views claims that this process facilitated their rapid assimilation into Italian societies, but it seems that the competition starts between different wings. The most important event was the Laurentian schism although it was mainly ecclesiastical, the senatorial aristocracy played an important role in it. Inside the state, scisms, competing aristocratic factions, and an absence of social cohesion weakened the central state's ability to adapt to the challenges of this new environment. **It seems that this *integration* was not a long-sustained thing in Italy**.

STATE OF THE ART

From the middle of the 20th century, **sociologists and anthropologists** were interested in the subject of larger group identities. Most of them **took the view that human identity was not only objectively measurable** (customs, language, customs or dress) **but unchanging**. In the beginning of 1990s the historical and social studies have been confronted with a new kind of scientific research on social, as well as economic and historical phenomenon based on the conception of compound systems. This is the so-called complexity turn, in which quantitative and mathematical methods are used to analyse social structures, and it is proposed that these models capture dynamics of real-world phenomena and even have few prognostic value. At the same time, **this new method claims to be more suitable for the analysis of social and historical**

dynamics than the earlier calculation which were based on the thinking of 19th century. In 2003 a mathematical ecologist, Peter Turchin published his work (*Historical Dynamics: Why States Rise and Fall.*) in which he examines that the signs of political instability could be anticipating.

HYPOTHESIS

Already in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Times, several differentiated communication systems have emerged such as politics, religion or economy and these elements provided a good criteria for selection. It seems that already in the early 5th century could be anticipate that the Ostrogothic Kingdom won't be a long-sustained kingdom in Italy because Theoderic recruited widely into his army and palatine bureaucracy from indigenous Italian groups, like members of Odoacer's army, together with large numbers of native Romans, were incorporated into the bureaucracy establishment of the Ostrogothic Kingdom. This process creates new avenues that allow a few Italian aristocrats to join the ostrogothic elite.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

- 1) Detailed network analysis of the considerable senatorial aristocrat families: *Anicii, Decii, Corvini, Symmachii*. The above mentioned senatorial families lived in peace under before the Ostrogothic rule, therefore the main question is: **What caused violence between the families?** Their conflict began during the Laurentian schism, but the families' altercation appeared later as well (507-508 circus riot, middle of the years of 510 and in Boëthius' case).
- 2) To identify their **social/political connections with the Eastern Roman Empire and its intensity**
- 3) To paint a more subtle picture about the Ostrogothic **integration** into the Roman society and they role in central and rural bureaucracy
- 4) To investigate that the „**idea of recapture of Italy**” was the point of the issue during the 490's and early 500's
- 5) To investigate the influence of senatorial families to the most important **violences**, such as the Laurentian schism, the riot in the circus of Rome in 508 and the **execution of Boëthius (case studies)**.

METHODOLOGY

I integrate conventional instruments of text analysis, prosopography, epigraphy and new methods of research like social network analysis. My attempt to combine the tradition of network research in the social sciences with the results of research on complex networks. I count with the numbers of followers of the various political and ecclesiastical factions in 5-6th century Ostrogothic Italy.

POINTS OF RELEVANCE

My research concentrates on the ecclesiastical, political, and social history of the Early Medieval Italy in **comparison with other pre-premodern and modern polities**. I analyse the usefulness of concepts from **the Social Network Analysis (SNA), which have never been used for research on the Late Antique Italy**. This project aims at a new analysis of the last years of Later Roman Empire. With a detailed analysis of these families the research will show more clearly the reign of Ostrogoths in Italy. A few long debated and unsolved problems will be clearer.