

# **The transition from foederati status to Early Medieval statehood in Europe and the Mediterranean**

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## **Summary**

In my dissertation I study the very complex and *dynamic* process of transition from *foederati* status to early medieval statehood in different areas in Europe and the Mediterranean. I am very interested in early medieval states and also in the so called "barbarian societies" and in my current research I attempt to figure out why some barbarian groups create powerful kingdoms while others don't and if there is some connection with the presence or with the absence of a *foederati* status among one or another group. My research is related to different aspects of late antique and early medieval groups, communities, societies and states (most of them Barbarian kingdoms). I am focused on some very important problems which have recently been a field for serious historiographical disputes: identity, state-building, transition, transformation and/or collapse/destruction of the Roman Empire and so on. My research is directly related to a great number of series, monographs, articles et cetera, published in the past 30 years. I am familiar with the ESF "Transformation of the Roman world" project which was a great opportunity for improvement of our knowledge on some very complex and contradictory topics. I am also familiar with the recent publications on this subject in world historiography and I think that there are still many unsolved problems and questions without an answer. Because of this I started my research in 2011 year and now I have almost finished it.

I decided to use one specific and recently very popular scientific method known as "case study". Because of the use of this method my dissertation is divided into a theoretical chapter which sets an overall framework for the entire research and three separate cases (respectively in three different chapters). My final objective is to point out similarities and differences between these cases and to formulate some final conclusions which should make the overall picture more unambiguous. Through this case study I try to explain the phenomena of the early medieval statehood and to support understanding of the complex and very *dynamic* processes related to it.

My dissertation is organized in four chapters as I mentioned above. The first chapter (the theoretical one) is dealing with the term "*foederati*" and the early medieval statehood (especially Barbarian *regna*). I follow the term "*foederati*" through the entire Roman history

and I make an attempt to clarify its meaning in Republican times, in the period of the Principate and in the Late Roman Empire. I analyzed different ancient and medieval sources searching for some descriptions of this term. Finally I managed to create a comprehensive, albeit very complex framework in which the meaning of this term and its relationship with many other terms peculiar to Roman law, Roman political and historical terminology should be understood.

In the first chapter of my dissertation I trace the evolution of the *foederati* status and firmly argue that it seriously changes over time. The most significant changes began in the III century and developed with full force in the IV and V century. Ultimately these changes lead to the creation of Barbarian kingdoms on imperial soil. The first such Barbarian kingdom is that of the Visigoths created in 418 years in Aquitania. I trace not only the evolution of the *foederati* status and its connection with the barbarian states, but also the idea of Rome what are the *foederati* and for what purpose they can/can't be used. Then I outline the meaning of the term "*foederati*" in Byzantium, highlighting the difference between these "late federates" (from the time of emperor Justinian onward) and federates of the Empire in the IV and V century.

In the same chapter I study the so-called "client states" and track the relationships between their occurrence and the *foederati* status that some barbarian *gentes* have. Along with this I study the institutions of those states and their characteristics, so I can compare them with the early medieval Barbarian kingdoms.

In the final parts of the chapter I examine the specifics of the early medieval statehood in Europe and the Mediterranean. Firstly, I try to resolve some of the most complex theoretical questions on the topic: the relationships between the concepts of *gens* and *regnum*; different types of identities that simultaneously coexist in the Barbarian kingdoms and the *dynamic* process of mutual influence and struggle for supremacy between Rome and the barbarians, between different barbarian groups and between local elites and the centre. Then I make an attempt to outline the conditions that must be met for a structure to be called Barbarian kingdom, focusing on some particularly interesting historical examples that allow me to create the necessary framework within which to develop my research.

The second chapter is dealing with the "Gothic case". First of all I study the appearance of the Goths in the Roman sources and the first Gothic contacts with the Empire. Here my purpose is to determine what impact the Empire has had on them. My researches on early Gothic history are connected with my willingness to specify what institutions and structures existed among *gens Gothorum*. Moreover, I try hard to answer the question what identity Goths had (and what changes it suffers) and when is the beginning of the formation of the two large Gothic groups: one in the East and another in the West, which will later be known as Ostrogoths and Visigoths. I also give my answer to the question whether Visigoths

can be equated to *Tervingi* and Ostrogoths to *Greuthungi*. This question once again shows how *dynamic* different identities were in the Late Antiquity and in the Early Middle Ages.

Then I do a thorough analysis of the sources and I point out what the first reliable information about Goths obtaining a *foederati* status is, and I extensively comment on the *foedera* (treaties) concluded during the IV century between Emperors Constantine, Valens and Theodosius and the Goths. Systematization of sources and in-depth analysis allow me to draw conclusions that in some points are quite different from the generally accepted views on the problem. This is due to the fact that I have a very critical approach to the later sources, especially to often cited authors like Cassiodorus, Jordanes and Procopius.

In the next part of the second chapter I study the emergence and strengthening of the Visigothic kingdom in Aquitania, and I answer the questions what the imperial motives for settling Goths in this province are and why the Roman Empire allows emergence of Barbarian kingdom on imperial soil. I also track the characteristics of this first Barbarian kingdom on imperial territory and try to find out what influence on the Visigoths the *foederati* status which they enjoyed had.

In the final part of the second chapter I research the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, trying to clarify whether its occurrence is associated with the *foederati* status, eventually acquired by Theoderic the Great. I also answer the question what heritage Ostrogoths took from Rome. It was commonly noted that this Kingdom was highly Romanized and I discuss the reasons for this, but I also pointed out some aspects of its life that are far from the ideas of the so-called "*Romanitas*". The *dynamic*, albeit short, period of existence of the kingdom, allows us to answer some important questions related to the emergence of the early medieval statehood in Europe and the Mediterranean.

The third chapter of my research is called "The Vandalic case". Firstly, it deals with the emergence of the *gens Vandalarum* in the Roman sources. Then I study and analyze the first reports of their institutions, identities and characteristics. After that I research the first contacts between Romans and Vandals because I want to have the opportunity to outline the influences between them. Then I study again, as noted above, the known treaties between the Empire and the Vandals and I estimate the importance of the *foederati* status for this group. I track in detail the Vandal expansions in Spain and especially in North Africa. I research deeply the question of the specific church organization of the Vandals and I consider it in relation to kingdom's policy. I also study this church organization as an attempt to create a sustainable and *dynamic* growing group of the representatives of the gens Vandalarum et Alanorum who should take care for the administration and protection of the Kingdom.

Kingdom of the Vandals and Alans in North Africa provides interesting examples of a multi-layered identity in the transition period from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages and also for the peculiarities of landowning and taxation in the early medieval Barbarian

kingdoms. Based on the available sources I make an attempt to answer the question why the Kingdom of the Vandals and Alans was so easily defeated by the forces of Commander Belisarius sent by Emperor Justinian. Furthermore, I study the *dynamic* development of the Kingdom in various fields including political propaganda, administrative organization and active religious policy of some of its rulers (for example King Huneric).

In the fourth chapter entitled "The Frankish case" I continue to use the model used in the previous two chapters. However, here I try to answer a few specific questions. The first is whether a part of the Franks was accepted into the Empire not as *foederati* but as *laeti*. The second question is connected to the rituals of power among the Franks, and the third to the influence of Rome and *Romanitas* on them. Moreover, I try hard to trace the ethnogenesis of the Franks and different identities related to it. Then I explore proto-state institutions and how the *foedera* concluded with the Roman Empire stimulate the emergence of the Frankish state.

In this chapter particular emphasis is related to the specifics of the Frankish kingdom. I try to clarify why the Franks create the most sustainable Barbarian kingdom in the former Roman provinces of the West. The answer is not simple and it is associated with a number of factors that allow the Franks to survive in the *dynamic* world of Post-Roman West where armed conflicts are quite common and the threat comes not only from other barbarians, but also from the emperors in Constantinople whose policy has sometimes proved more detrimental to the Barbarian kingdoms than the actions of their immediate barbarian neighbours.

My dissertation allows us to create a little more complete and comprehensible picture of some key elements in the complex transition period from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages and it helps us orient ourselves in a labyrinth of states, institutions and identities that emerged in the Post-Roman world. My goal is not to give an answer on the raised questions once and for all because I think that many of them should be solved through interdisciplinary research conducted by historians, archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists and many other specialists. However, I hope I have created an acceptable framework which can provide some valuable guidance for future researches. Furthermore, I hope my research can produce a scientific debate on the issues involved in it.