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# PLEBEIAN

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# *The Wounded and the Dead: Objections to the Orthodox Model of the Hoplite Phalanx*

*Toby Keymer*

How hoplites actually fought in battle is a notoriously difficult question. The ancient authors provide very limited descriptions of battles, so ancient Greek military history relies on a mix of clues from literary sources, art, archaeology, and thought experiments. One model of the hoplite phalanx in particular has gained traction in recent years<sup>1</sup>, a model I shall call the orthodox view. I shall argue that this orthodox model is not tenable on two accounts. Firstly, that our evidence about the corpses that covered the battlefield does not accord with the demands of the orthodox model; and secondly, that our knowledge of the retrieval of wounded soldiers does not accord with the orthodox model. I shall also briefly suggest alternative features of the phalanx that account for such objections, although I by no means am attempting to create a complete and detailed model. Let us begin by reviewing the orthodox model of hoplite warfare. I shall primarily be basing my characterization of this model on the work of Victor Davis Hanson, the leading proponent of this view, and especially on his seminal work, *The Western Way of War*.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldsworthy, "The Othismos, Myths and Heresies," 2.



This much is undisputed: the hoplite phalanx was a mode of battle that dominated Greek warfare in the Archaic and Classical ages (approximately the seventh to fourth centuries BCE) until the defeat of the traditional phalanx by the Macedonian Phalanx developed by Phillip II at the battle of Chaeronea<sup>2</sup>. The phalanx was exclusively made up of heavily armoured infantrymen known as hoplites (although other types of soldiers began to be deployed towards the end of the Classical age alongside the phalanx). A hoplite in full panoply was equipped with bronze greaves, breastplate, helmet, spear, sword, and a wooden shield faced in bronze, which altogether weighed around 50-70 lbs.<sup>3</sup> The phalanx was usually eight rows deep. The orthodox interpretation is as follows: hoplites would stand very close to one another (close enough that “it was impossible for men in hoplite armour to move without rubbing and jostling against their neighbours’ [equipment]”<sup>4</sup>) so that one soldier’s shield, held on the left arm, would cover his own left side and some of his neighbour’s right side.<sup>5</sup> Two phalanges would charge into each other, and the few minutes following the initial collision was when the majority of casualties were sustained (at least for the winning side; the losers would sustain most casualties during the rout), as most spears would shatter very quickly, rendering them largely useless.<sup>6</sup> After this short and violent stage of battle “was the push, or *othismos*, as ranks to the rear put their bodies into the hollows of their shields and forced those ahead constantly onward”.<sup>7</sup> The two phalanges would attempt to literally shove into one another until one broke and the soldiers fled. This is the orthodox model of hoplite warfare.

Since this position became popular following the publication of *The Western Way of War*, numerous objections have been levied against it on an astounding number of fronts, from detailed arguments about the use of the word *othismos* (is it literal or metaphorical?), to basic problems of plausibility: some would say eight ranks of men leaning into and shoving another eight ranks of men as a mode of battle stretches the imagination.<sup>8</sup> However, no objections have been raised in the literature, with respect to how the wounded and dead hoplites who must have littered the field of battle would have affected the orthodox phalanx’s movement and cohesion.

The first issue is one of plausibility. How could the hoplite phalanx possibly maintain order in its ranks while its constituent soldiers were treading on and tripping over fallen bodies? A point not in dispute about hoplite battle is the necessity of

2 Wheeler, “The General as Hoplite,” 136.

3 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, 56.

4 Ibid., 148.

5 Ibid., 27.

6 Ibid., 160-170.

7 Ibid., 28.

8 For a good summary of objections see Goldsworthy, “The Othismos, Myths and Heresies,” 1-26.

maintaining tight cohesion, as any gaps, or worse, breaches, in the line would allow enemy hoplites to rush in and attack from the side and rear. The key to winning a battle was preventing this from happening to one's own phalanx and attempting to inflict it on the enemy's.<sup>9 10</sup> This would be very difficult to maintain if the orthodox account of battle is true, as men would have had to hold the line at the same time as being shoved forward by seven men behind them. This fact alone makes the orthodox account suspect, as many scholars have pointed out. But when one considers that the soldiers would have to maintain their footing while at the same time treading on dead and wounded men, not to mention the broken pieces of metal and wood from broken arms and armour, the orthodox account loses coherence.

Furthermore, that phalanx battles left large piles of dead men on the field is well established. Hanson describes piled bodies "perhaps as many as two or three high"<sup>11</sup> and Pamela Vaughn, in describing the difficulty of identifying and retrieving the dead after a battle, says "wounded or dead, ally and enemy would lie piled together."<sup>12</sup> These piles of bodies are portrayed in Greek geometric art<sup>13</sup> and referenced in ancient sources. For example, Diodorus Siculus describes soldiers "climbing" over corpses to push forward and a mound of bodies piling up around the fallen Spartan king Kleombrotos at the battle of Leuctra,<sup>14</sup> Xenophon has "friend and foe lying side by side" in the aftermath of Koroneia,<sup>15</sup> and Thucydides speaks of bodies "piled one upon another" at the battle of the Assinarus.<sup>16</sup> This mass piling of bodies would have had to been located at the point where the two phalanges met. The orthodox phalanx required tight cohesion, dense physical proximity, and eight ranks of mass-shoving: I find it highly implausible that such a formation could function on a battlefield with a large physical impediment, like a pile of corpses, in the way. A hoplite in the front rank, with the weight of seven men behind him, would be entirely unable to avoid dead bodies or clamber over a pile of them. The soldiers of the front rank would fall over and themselves be trampled.

It may be objected that the piling of bodies would take place slowly over the course of the battle, only presenting a real issue for the phalanx by the end of the battle, when the engagement was probably already decided. However, recall the claim of the orthodox model that the majority of casualties (barring casualties sus-

9 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, 160-162.

10 Lazenby, "The Killing Zone," 95.

11 Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, 198.

12 Vaughn, "The Identification and Retrieval of the Hoplite Battle-Dead," 39.

13 Ahlberg, *Fighting on Land and Sea in Greek Geometric Art*, both fig. 87, Louvre A 519 (A5), and fig. 88, Louvre A 527 plus A 535 (B7), clearly show piles of bodies on a battlefield, and fig. 57, Greifswald 87, also appears to, though less obviously.

14 Diod. 15.55.2-5

15 Xen. Ages. 2.14

16 Thuc. 7.85.1

tained by the losing side during the rout) must have taken place during the initial collision and the following few minutes. Peter Krentz's analysis of 17 hoplite battles in the Classical era puts the average casualty rate for the winning side at 5%.<sup>17</sup> Using this figure, Adrian Goldsworthy shows that, if we accept the orthodox model, approximately 40% of the hoplites in the front rank of a phalanx eight men deep were killed or gravely wounded in the initial collision and the subsequent few minutes.<sup>18</sup> Hoplites, according to the orthodox model, had perhaps three feet of space around them.<sup>19</sup> 40% casualties on each side (two out of every five men) means four bodies (two from each side) every 15 feet (every five men), or in other words, one dead or wounded body every 3.75 feet after just a few minutes of fighting. The orthodox model cannot explain how a phalanx could maintain cohesion given this fact.

Suppose we grant that the orthodox phalanx could still function on a battlefield littered with bodies, but that the bodies would indeed make it more difficult, not impossible to maintain cohesion. This presents its own problems for the orthodox model. The major claim of the orthodox model is that battles, if one side did not break following the initial clash, were determined by mass shoving: the aim was to push the enemy back until they broke. But if one phalanx were to push forward (thus gaining the upper hand, according to this model), it would find itself walking over all the corpses that had accumulated at the collision point. In other words, if you accept that bodies underfoot disrupt a phalanx, there is no incentive for a phalanx to push forward, which is the central claim of the orthodox model.

I have put forward the first part of my argument, the part concerning the dead and mortally wounded, and will now examine an alternative model and see how it can overcome the objections I have given. This is not an attempt to construct an entirely new model of phalanx battle, as that is beyond the scope of this essay, but I will posit two necessary elements of a phalanx that would not collapse in battle given the above objections. A more plausible phalanx would be made up of hoplites reasonably far apart from each other (certainly not close enough to accidentally bump into each other, as Hanson says above) who would fight individually and without being shoved forward by the men behind them. With this wider phalanx, it would be much easier for individual hoplites to avoid bodies on the ground, and the bodies would be less concentrated. Any piles of bodies would still, of course, present a challenge for fighting, but individual men climbing over a pile is certainly feasible, whereas men being shoved forward by seven others and attempting to do

17 Krentz, "Casualties in Hoplite Battles," 19.

18 Goldsworthy, "The Othismos, Myths and Heresies," 17.

19 This is an approximation given by revisionist scholar Hans van Wees (in van Wees, *Greek Warfare*, 185.) in his characterisation of the orthodox model; I think it is fair.

the same is not.

Now, the issue of the retrieval of the wounded. How could men wounded in the front ranks be transported to the back ranks without the phalanx collapsing, given the orthodox model? This is a problem that Hanson acknowledges directly:

...friends from the first ranks who had been stunned, wounded, or knocked down could be helped to their feet and absorbed in the formation or passed back to the rear. Obviously, such consideration was difficult to accomplish: it required an armoured man to bend over and raise a fellow soldier (himself weighing nearly two hundred pounds with his equipment) – all the while maintaining steady pressure, and without breaking formation.<sup>20</sup>

Hanson makes no attempt here to provide any explanations. Indeed, how could a man be dragged out from the front ranks? His saviour would have to get out of his position, a difficult task considering he would be sandwiched between the man in front of him and the man shoving him; then he would have to get a hold of the wounded man's body and drag all 200 lbs. of it, while assailed by enemy weapons in front of him and tightly packed, heavily armoured men jostling around him; finally, he would have to drag him out through 8 ranks of men between whom there was nearly no space. Hanson's suggestion that "there must more likely have been frequent 'walking' [...] over the bodies of wounded friends"<sup>21</sup> is weak for a number of reasons. First, as we saw earlier, trampling over bodies would ruin the cohesion of a phalanx. Secondly, although stepping on one's allies must have taken place sometimes, there is a passage in Xenophon that suggests to me that it was uncommon. He describes a battle near Lechaeum in 392 or 391 BCE in which an army of Argives, running in disarray from the Spartans, becomes trapped in between a set of walls and an army of hostile Corinthians. Xenophon says "Some [Argives] mounted the fortification and then jumped down and were killed. Others were pushed back by the enemy to the steps and were struck down. *Still others were trampled by their own men and suffocated.*"<sup>22</sup> This suggests to me that trampling ones allies was a rare occurrence, the kind of thing that only happened when an army was in extreme disarray and trapped in an enclosed area.

Furthermore, we do have accounts of wounded men being rescued from the front lines without the phalanx collapsing. First, the Theban general Epameinondas was struck by a spear at the battle of Mantinea. Diodorus Siculus tells us that a struggle ensued over the general, with the Thebans ultimately taking him away from the front lines.<sup>23</sup> Second, the Spartan general Brasidas was wounded at the battle of Am-

<sup>20</sup> Hanson, *The Western Way of War*, 172.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Xen. Hell. 4.4.11, emphasis mine

<sup>23</sup> Diod. 15.87

phipolis and was, according to Thucydides, “taken up by those near him and carried off the field” without the Athenians noticing.<sup>24</sup> Note that this account is particularly trustworthy, as Thucydides himself was present at the battle as one of the Athenian generals. A perhaps less trustworthy account comes from Plutarch when he tells an apocryphal story about the friendship between Pelopidas and Epameinondas. In battle, Pelopidas received seven wounds and sank into a pile of allied and enemy soldiers’ corpses, but Epameinondas fought single-handedly to protect him until a relieving force arrived.<sup>25</sup> All these examples show that men who fell in the front ranks were able to be dragged out, sometimes after a fight over the fallen man. This sort of localized fighting is not permitted in the orthodox model, as any fluidity or gaps in the line would cause an instant collapse. In two of the examples given, multiple men are described as pulling out the wounded soldier, which is inconceivable given the orthodox view that men nearly shoulder to shoulder: how would multiple men leave their columns, sandwiched as they were, without the men behind them stumbling forward and the men in front losing the needed weight of the seven men behind them, all without the line collapsing? And then how could multiple men fit through such a small space when removing the body from the front line? The retrieval of the wounded makes far more sense when considered in the framework of the model I outlined previously: more open ranks would allow for multiple men moving through, and a more fluid battle line (that is, a battle line without any mass shoving) would allow for the localized defence of fallen men without breaking the phalanx’s overall cohesion.

The wounded and the dead point to serious issues with the orthodox model of the phalanx. Bodies on the ground, often at great density and in piles, would easily disrupt the delicate balance in the phalanx demanded by the orthodoxy, and the fact of retrieval of wounded men is at odds with the tightly packed, unwavering model. I hope to have lent some credibility to the view that the phalanx was a looser and more individual military formation than is thought by many modern scholars.

24 Thuc. 5.10.8

25 Plu. Pel. 4.5

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# *The Western Argolid Regional Project: Final Report*

*Kate McGrath*

Last summer, I was fortunate enough to participate as a field walker for the Western Argolid Regional Project, an interdisciplinary archaeological field survey of the Western Argolid Plain. The Western Argolid Plain is located in the upper valleys of the Inachos River to the north and west of Argos, in the Argolid region of the Peloponnese.<sup>1</sup> Within our survey area are the ruins of Orneia, a former polis that was destroyed by Argos in the late 5th century BCE, the modern town of Lyrkeia and several agricultural complexes and farm fields.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this archeological field survey is to track settlement patterns and to get a better sense of our survey area's relationship to the broader region.<sup>3</sup>

The Western Argolid Regional Project is carried out under the aegis of the Canadian Institute in Greece and the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, and is under the direction of Dr. Scott Gallimore of Wilfrid Laurier University, Dr. Sarah James of the University of Colorado Boulder, and Dr. Dimitri Nakassis of the University of To-

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1 Nakassis et al., "The Western Argolid Regional Project: Results of the 2014 Season."

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

ronto.<sup>4</sup> In total, there were twenty undergraduate participants, five of whom, including myself, were from the University of Toronto, and six graduate participants.<sup>5</sup> We were divided into five survey teams, each comprised of four undergraduate field walkers and one graduate team leader.<sup>6</sup> Each team, equipped with compasses, a portable GPS device, and unit forms, would survey about 20-30 divided units of our survey area each day.<sup>7</sup> In each survey unit, approximately 0.21 hectares, all four field walkers were spaced 10 meters apart, and would walk in a straight line, looking for artifacts and various finds to recover from the surface of the ground.<sup>8</sup> Last summer was the first of the project's three planned six-week long field seasons, and covered approximately 5.5 square kilometers of our survey area.<sup>9</sup> After conducting this first, six-week long intensive field survey of the Western Argolid Plain, our survey recovered consequential finds from the Archaic, Classical-Hellenistic, Late Roman, and Ottoman eras that provide insight into our survey area's unclear history, settlement patterns, and relationship to the archaeology of the broader region.

The vast majority of the artifacts that we recovered were from the Classical-Hellenistic and Late Roman periods. The highest concentration of Classical-Hellenistic finds recovered by my team, Team Three, were from the survey units located in Kastro and Ano Patima, toponyms or specific geographical regions of our survey area located north of the Inachos River and the modern town of Lyrkeia, and from units located in Pigadakia North and Steno, toponyms located south of modern Lyrkeia. Specifically in Kastro, Ano Patima, and Steno, we recovered dense concentrations of Classical fine ware sherds that were painted with black stripes. Additionally, in these same toponyms, large quantities of Classical-Hellenistic pithoi rims, lamp fragments, handles, cooking ware fragments, massive roofing tiles, spools, and loom weights were recovered. In particular, our team recovered a large quantity of handles and loom weights from 2333, a survey unit in Kastro, located east of the ruins of ancient Orneia, and a large number of spools from 2268, a survey unit in Pigadakia North. Furthermore, there were dense concentrations of massive Classical-Hellenistic roofing tiles, roughly  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a metre in width and length, in the central and northwest units of Kastro. Since massive roofing tiles, lamps, weaving materials, cooking ware, and pithoi storage vessels are common finds in Classical rural residences and sites, the specific finds listed above are therefore evidence of a

4 "The Western Argolid Regional Project," The Western Argolid Regional Project, accessed February 26, 2015, [http://westernargolid.org/?page\\_id=2](http://westernargolid.org/?page_id=2).

5 "People," The Western Argolid Regional Project, accessed February 26, 2015, [http://westernargolid.org/?page\\_id=49](http://westernargolid.org/?page_id=49)

6 "People."

7 Nakassis et al, "The Western Argolid Regional Project: Results of the 2014 Season."

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.



Classical rural settlement in our survey area, concentrated mainly in these toponyms.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, since a survey's level of finds is indicative of the level of settlement in an area, the overall large quantity of recovered Classical-Hellenistic finds indicates that settlement in the Western Argolid Plain was at a high during the Classical-Hellenistic period.<sup>11</sup>

High settlement and activity in our survey area during the Classical-Hellenistic era is plausible because, as observed in Classical archaeology, high settlement was quite common in areas surrounding or in close vicinity to a major Greek polis during the Classical period.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, high Classical-Hellenistic settlement in our survey area fits into the archaeology of the broader region because the Western Argolid Plain is located only 18 kilometres away from Argos, which was a prominent polis during the Classical-Hellenistic period, rivalling Sparta in terms of influence and power over the Peloponnese.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, since there was a main road during the Classical era that lead from Argos to Ancient Lyrkeia, which was located in our survey area, and continued on from there to Mantinea, another key Peloponnesian polis, it also plausible that our survey area would have been subject to a considerable amount of human activity during this period.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it is fitting that high levels of settlement and activity would have continued during the early Hellenistic era, because Argos was still a prominent polis and a favourite of King Philip II of Macedon.<sup>15</sup>

Not only do our finds indicate that the Classical-Hellenistic period was a time of high settlement and activity for our survey area but that it was also one of industry and prosperity. First of all, my team leader, Machal Gradoz, suggested that our survey area may have been the site of a Classical-Hellenistic weaving industry due to the notably high density of weaving materials, specifically loom weights and spools, which, as mentioned before, were found in those two specific units of the toponyms Kastro and Pigadakia North. Furthermore, one of the other survey teams, Team Two, while surveying a unit in the ruins of Orneai, right near the loom weight dense unit 2333, recovered a Classical-Hellenistic coin, which is evidence of some sort of economic activity going on in our survey area during the Classical-Hellenistic era, perhaps in relation to this possible weaving industry. A Classical-Hellenistic weaving industry in the Western Argolid Plain is quite plausible due to our survey area's close location and access, through a main road, to Argos, a major Classical-

10 Bintliff, "The Archaeology of Classical Greece," 270.

11 Bintliff, "The Archaeology of Greece from Middle Roman Imperial Times to Late Antiquity," 354-358.

12 Bintliff, "The Archaeology of Classical Greece," 269-271.

13 Tomlinson, *Argos and the Argolid*, 2, 38-40, 87, 101-103, 117-141.

14 Ibid., 38-40.

15 Ibid., 2, 145-146, 246.

Hellenistic urban centre.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, a Classical-Hellenistic weaving industry is also plausible because “satellite settlements of slightly larger city-states,” such as the one in our survey area, were sites of industry and trade in Classical Greece.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, since industry was often a source of wealth, the evidence for a possible weaving industry demonstrates that our survey area may have been home to a somewhat prosperous Classical-Hellenistic community.<sup>18</sup>

Other than Classical-Hellenistic, a large number of our finds were also Late Roman. Specifically, our team recovered a large quantity of fine-ware sherds from survey units in Pigadakia North and Lyrkeia North, toponyms located north of the Inachos River and south from the toponyms mentioned before, and a number of African Red Slip Ware sherds, a “distinctive import[ed]” type of Late Roman tableware, from units in Lyrkeia South, a toponym located directly south of the river.<sup>19</sup> The large quantity of Late Roman sherds signifies that the Late Roman era was our survey area’s second period of high settlement, which was focused more in these areas surrounding the Inachos River. It is fitting that there would have been high levels of Late Roman settlement in our survey area because, as observed in many field surveys of Greece, there was an overall resurgence in activity and settlement in Greece during the Late Roman period, mainly on account of Greece’s close vicinity to Constantinople, the capital and centre of activity and power in the Late Roman Empire.<sup>20</sup> Late Roman settlement and activity in the Western Argolid Plain also makes sense due to the Argolid region itself being located in close vicinity to Corinth<sup>21</sup>, the Late Roman provincial capital that was home to the prominent port at Lechaion and Lechaion Basilica,<sup>22</sup> “one of the largest basilica churches in the Roman world,”<sup>23</sup> the ruins of which we observed on one of our field trips to Corinth.

Although the majority of our survey’s finds were either Classical-Hellenistic or Late Roman, finds from other eras were also recovered and of equal importance to our survey and its relationship to the archaeology of the broader region. For example, one of the other survey teams, Team Four, recovered a Late Geometric fine-ware sherd in a unit near the ruins of ancient Orneai, which was painted with a distinct geometric pattern of geese in thin black lines. This Late Geometric sherd is of consequence because it not only signifies activity in our survey area during the early

16 Tomlinson, *Argos and the Argolid*, 38-40.

17 Bintliff, “The Archaeology of Classical Greece,” 269.

18 Bintliff, “The Archaeology of Greece in Hellenistic to Early Roman Imperial Times,” 329.

19 Bintliff, “The Archaeology of Greece from Middle Roman Imperial Times to Late Antiquity,” 355.

20 Ibid., 354-361.

21 Tomlinson, *Argos and the Argolid*, 232.

22 Bintliff, “The Archaeology of Greece from Middle Roman Imperial Times to Late Antiquity,” 358-362.

23 Ibid., 361.

Archaic period but it also might be a first-hand example of Late Geometric Argive vase painting.<sup>24</sup> After 800 BCE, vase painters from the Argolid “were amongst the earliest to develop,” the decoration and painting of figures, particularly humans, horses, and birds, like the geese painted on the sherd, in thin black geometric lines.<sup>25</sup> Since the appearance of this Late Geometric sherd matches the above description, it is highly probable that this sherd is a first-hand example of Late Geometric Argive vase painting. Evidence of this kind therefore indicates that our survey area engaged to some degree with this artistic school, whether through consumption or perhaps as an actual production site of this artistic workshop.

Another crucial find was the Ottoman donkey road or *kalderini* in the survey unit 2323, located in the northwest region of the toponym Kastro. This *kalderini* is significant because it is evidence of some sort of Ottoman activity in our survey area. Ottoman activity in our survey area is plausible because there was a resurgence in human activity in the Peloponnese during the Ottoman period, with the population drastically increasing from 125,000 in the Venetian period to 400,000 by the end of the Ottoman period.<sup>26</sup> During the Ottoman period as well, the “major plains of Greece” were home to Ottoman “*cifliks* estates,” sites of intense agricultural activity, whose farm fields and groves were vigorously worked by Greek serfs in order to produce vast quantities of agricultural goods for the Ottoman Empire to trade and export.<sup>27</sup> Since our survey area is located on the fertile, western region of a major plain, the Argive Plain, and the *kalderini*, our evidence for Ottoman activity, was discovered in a unit located in close vicinity to Kastro’s farm fields and groves, it is quite possible that our survey area was involved to some degree in this intensive form of Ottoman agriculture, and thus a significant site of Ottoman activity.<sup>28</sup> After all, a *kalderini* would have been quite useful for the transport of produce to and from the various farm fields.

In conclusion, the first field season of the Western Argolid Regional Project yielded noteworthy artifacts that provided consequential information and first-hand insight into the previously unclear history and settlement patterns of the Western Argolid Plain and its relationship to the archaeology of the broader region. Our survey demonstrated that the Western Argolid Plain was involved in significant forms of human activity from the Archaic to even the Ottoman period, and was a site of high settlement and activity during the Classical-Hellenistic and Late Roman eras. Furthermore, our overall finds and data were consistent with the history and ob-

24 Tomlinson, *Argos and the Argolid*, 229.

25 Ibid.

26 Bintliff, “The Archaeology of Ottoman and Venetian Greece,” 449.

27 Ibid., 445-452.

28 Tomlinson, *Argos and the Argolid*, 38.

served archaeological trends of the broader region. Since valuable pieces of evidence and information were already recovered in the first year of survey alone, the Western Argolid Regional Project's continued field survey of the Western Argolid Plain is therefore important as future field seasons will yield even more finds of consequence and thus provide us with an even firmer and more in depth understanding of this significant area of the Argolid.

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# *Gothic Ethnogenesis*

*Ashley Raymer*

As a nation, the Goths materialized during the third century CE in response to political pressures from within and without the Roman Empire, as Huns and other barbarian groups pushed them towards the safety of Rome's borders and Rome refused to accept them. The dichotomy of Roman vs. Barbarian which Romans maintained throughout these centuries of conflict helped to solidify Gothic identity. The Goths who were a creation of the Roman frontier and had only wanted admission into the Empire eventually became dominant both politically and culturally within Italy, appropriating and perpetuating Roman symbols of authority.

Our literary sources for the Goths shed little light on their origins. In part, this stems from the practice employed by ancient authors to sort barbarian groups into broad ethnographic categories such as Scythian, German, or Celt. These umbrella terms obscured the distinctions between the vast numbers of ethnic groups which populated the *barbaricum*. For this reason, Roman sources aren't useful in locating the Goths historically before the third century CE. The only source for a Gothic past which pre-dates contact with the Roman Empire is Jordanes' *Getica*. This collection

of pseudo-history relates the migration story of the Goths south from modern day Sweden to the lands around the Black Sea. Jordanes bases his account on the lost works of Cassiodorus, a first-hand witness to Gothic culture as the praetorian prefect to the Ostrogothic kings of Italy in the 530s CE.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Jordanes' account, which places the Goths in Scandza around 1400 BCE, is not supported with archaeological evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Two material cultures, the third-century Wielbark and fourth-century Chernyakhov cultures, located near the Baltic and Black sea have been long associated with the Goths. Jordanes account encourages the Wielbark and Chernyakhov cultures to be seen as linear stages in the cultural evolution of the Gothic people although these two cultures were no more closely connected than Chernyakhov was to any other nearby culture at the time.<sup>3</sup> The burial practices, artefacts, and housing structures of the Chernyakhov culture coincide with elements within Roman provincial culture, Wielbark, Przeworsk culture from the North, and nomadic steppe culture from the East. It is only safe to say that in the fourth century, a group within the Chernyakhov culture, who became known as the Goths, attained political dominance.

The Goths became the dominant political body across the Danube with Roman assistance. It was Rome's policy to upset power hierarchies beyond their borders and to subsidize certain kingdoms to the detriment of others in order to maintain a favourable status quo among their enemies. It was this system which led to the creation of the Visigoths, the Western branch of the Goths, as the main power body across the Danube. In addition to coin or grain subsidies, Roman emperors also physically intervened in inter-barbarian conflict, as when Constantine lent troops to support the Visigoths against the Carpi in the Gothic War.<sup>4</sup> The peace treaty Constantine later made with the Visigoths in 332 CE gave them the respite needed to build power and authority over the next thirty years. During the 350s the Visigoths continued to benefit from Roman favour, as then Emperor Constantius spent the decade suppressing the Sarmatians and Limigantes, rivals for Visigothic control across the Danube. By 378 when the Romans and Goths were once again at odds at the Battle of Adrianople, the Visigoths were established enough to soundly defeat a Roman army in the field.<sup>5</sup>

After Valens fell in the Battle of Adrianople, his successor Theodosius in-

1 Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars*, 50.

2 Ibid., 68.

3 Ibid., 68.

4 Thompspon, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila*, 38.

5 Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars*, 106.

incorporated the Goths as *foederati* into the Roman army.<sup>6</sup> Gothic leaders, like Alaric I, exercised authority both in their capacity as tribal rulers and also as generals within the Roman army. With soldiers organized into Gothic military contingents, the men within these units identified more and more with each other and their Gothic designation. With Rome constantly referring to these leaders and soldiers legally as Goths, they began to think of themselves as such. Unlike other barbarian groups such as the Gauls or Celts who became Romanised, the Goths were never definitively conquered or integrated within the Empire as provincials. Roman hostility drew the Goths together. Coins and monuments depicting conquered barbarians were visible throughout the Empire. Gothic soldiers would have been well aware of Roman attitudes. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the deployment of Alaric's soldiers by Theodosius at the Battle of Frigidus against the Franks in 394. Alaric's men were sent into the most heated part of battle with the expectation that great numbers would die, yet net an overall victory. The fifth century Christian apologist Orosius wrote of the loss of the Gothic soldiers as a double triumph, "to have lost these was surely a gain, and their defeat a victory."<sup>7</sup>

Roman intolerance further swelled the ranks of the Goths when Stilicho, a half-vandal *magister militum* in the Roman army, was publicly beheaded having incurred the displeasure of the Emperor Honorius, on whose behalf he had effectively ran the Western Empire.<sup>8</sup> Public resentment against foreigners broke out with his death. Throughout Italy, the wives and children of barbarian soldiers were murdered by local Romans and these husbands and fathers of those slaughtered deserted, joining the Goths in their raiding of Italy. In the face of imposing Otherness of Rome, the internal differences among the various peoples who comprised the Goths became less divisive.

Just as the threat of Persia and Carthage encouraged Greek and Roman unity, the military might of Rome forced smaller barbarian groups to coalesce along the frontier. Once established, the Goths achieved a number of striking military victories which cemented their sense of identity. The Battle of Adrianople in 378 and Alaric's Sack of Rome in 410 were defining moments in Gothic history in which the Goths underwent definitive moments of ethnogenesis.<sup>9</sup> Their victory demonstrated what could be accomplished with Germanic unification against a standing Roman army. The changing attitude of Romans towards the Goths as they became less manageable can be ascertained from a number of speeches extant from the orator Themistius. In

6 Professor Nicholas Everett, Toronto, May 28, 2014

7 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 24.

8 Ibid., 188.

9 Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars*, 139-146.

one of his earlier orations from 379, the fourteenth, he praises Theodosius as a militaristic emperor. By 381, Themistius claims that the main job of an emperor is civilian government, shifting tact perhaps because great military victories could no longer be obtained.<sup>10</sup> Allowing outside groups to settle somewhat autonomously within the Empire showed great administrative relaxation and broke with tradition. The Goths would not be conquered and divided after Adrianople; rather Romans were forced to change their outward ambitions and policies to match reality.

The psychological effect on the Roman world from Alaric's Sack in 410 prompted all manner of religious writings. It inspired Augustine's *City of God*, written to reassure a shaken Church body that in the grand scheme of Heaven, the fall of one city meant little. Meanwhile from Jerusalem, Jerome believed the end of the world was at hand, he wrote in one letter, "the City which had taken the whole world was itself taken."<sup>11</sup> Orosius was inspired to write *History Against the Pagans* to prove tit for tat that worse crises had befallen Rome in its pagan heyday, while Salvian blamed the Romans for not being as virtuous as the ideal which the Goths had become. The Goths were viewed as blank slates, post-colonial "noble savages", ready to take on the positive aspects of Roman civilization, without the moral vices which the Romans believed had caused their own decline.

In his mid-fifth century treatise *On the Government of God* Salvian writes of Rome:

"All the while, the poor are despoiled, the widows groan, the orphans are trodden underfoot, so much so that many of them, and they are not of obscure birth and have received a liberal education, flee to the enemy...yet they prefer the strange life they find there to the injustice rife among the Romans. So you find men passing over everywhere, now to the Goths, now to the Bagaudae, or whatever other barbarians have established their power anywhere, and they do not repent of their expatriation, for they would rather live as free men, though in seeming captivity, than as captives in seeming liberty. Hence the name of Roman citizen, once not only much valued but dearly bought, is now voluntarily repudiated and shunned, and is thought not merely valueless, but even almost abhorrent." In book five, he writes, "But as for the way of life among the Goths and Vandals, in what single respect can we consider ourselves superior to them, or even worthy of comparison?"<sup>12</sup>

Religion was another dichotomy which separated the Goths from the Romans. When Valens allowed Goths into the Empire in 376, it's likely that he required conversion to Christianity.<sup>13</sup> The prevailing branch of Christianity at that time was Arianism, which professes that the Father and Son are of similar but not identical substance and therefore the Son is subordinate to the Father. The Goths were evangelized by Ulfila, a Cappadocian Arian bishop who had spent time among the

10 Themistius Orr. 14-16 as seen in Heather, Peter and Moncur, David, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire in the Fourth Century*, 218-265.

11 St Jerome, Letter CXXVII, cited in Maas, *Readings in Late Antiquity*.

12 Salvian, *On the Governance of God* 5.4-7 as seen in Maas 353.

13 Heather, *Goths and Romans*, 328.



Goths as a captive.<sup>14</sup> The Goths which he converted held to their Arian beliefs even when the Nicene tradition, which professes a unity in substance between the Trinity, prevailed as Orthodox. This Arianism which was considered heresy, so much more reviled than simple un-belief, became part of the Gothic identity.

Persecution of Nicene Christians became a way of asserting dominance by Gothic leaders along the lower Danube. The fourth century Passion of Saint Saba records events during one such wave of persecution in 369 under king Athanaric. Epiphanius notes the act was done “in order to spite the Romans, because the Emperors of the Romans were Christians, he drove out the whole race of Christians from those regions.”<sup>15</sup>

Just as the Goths adopted Arianism, they appropriated other symbols of Roman legitimacy and authority and adopted them into their material culture. By the time of Valens, the Gothic economy beyond the Rhine had become dependent on Roman goods. Bronze coins minted within the thirty year period of Constantine’s peace have been found beyond the Rhine in quantities on par with finds in Scythia indicating a high degree of integration with the Roman economy.<sup>16</sup> Locally minted imitations of Roman coins have been found which likely made up for insufficient supplies.<sup>17</sup> Goths and barbarians had become so reliant on Roman goods by the fourth century that when Valens shut down trade along the frontier in his threeyear campaign against the Gothic king Athanaric, Athanaric was forced to sue for peace.<sup>18</sup>

The effect of Roman tastes on Gothic sensibilities can be seen most readily among the wealthy elite. The Chernyakhov houses of the peoples who would become the Goths were been made of wood, half-sunken into the ground, and roofed in a mixture of wattle and daub. The find of a fourth century Roman-style structure in the village of Sobari, three hundred kilometers north of the Roman frontier, then is striking. The building boasts a colonnade of sixteen columns, and 14,000 terracotta roof tiles in addition to glass windows. Similar buildings made of stone have been found near the black sea.<sup>19</sup> Association with Roman trappings likely had the desired awe-inspiring effect on the local population.

Gothic leaders uniformly sought the stamp of Roman legitimacy through serving in a Roman military capacity or pushing their aims for land through legitimate channels. Stilicho was content to run the Empire as regent, knowing that he

14 Kulikowski, *Rome’s Gothic Wars*, 109.

15 Epiphanius 248.20 cited in Thomson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila*, 99-100.

16 Heather, *Empire and Barbarians*, 76.

17 Kulikowski, *Rome’s Gothic Wars*, 87.

18 Thomson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila*, 36.

19 Kulikowski, *Rome’s Gothic Wars*, 93.

would never be accepted as an Emperor himself due to his mixed blood. Alaric's rebellion and Sack of Rome was a result of his not receiving a military command after the Battle of Frigidus.<sup>20</sup> In the time leading up to the Sack of Rome, when the Emperor Honorius would not negotiate with him from his palace in Ravenna, Alaric appointed a puppet emperor in Rome, Attalus, whom he then attempted to make terms with.<sup>21</sup> Eventually, the balance of power tipped in the West, and the Romans became outsiders within Italy in the emerging medieval world. Under the Gothic King Theodoric, who united both the Eastern and Western branches of Goths and ruled Italy from 493-526, the Goths transformed their image from that of barbarian invaders to protectors of Italy and Roman law, using the Latin language, imperial coinage and existing systems of taxation as the foundation of their rule.<sup>22</sup> In Ostrogothic Italy and Visigothic Spain, Roman laws and buildings were rigorously preserved. Cassiodorus preserves Theodoric's concern for old buildings in a letter: "Though our intention certainly is to construct new buildings, we are more deeply concerned to preserve old ones, since we can obtain equal glory from innovation and preservation."<sup>23</sup> An inscription from 483 in Spain commemorates the repair of a main bridge over the river Gaudiana and the Breviary of Alaric or *Lex Romana Visigothorum* preserves the Theodosian Code.<sup>24</sup> Arian Visigothic kings also stepped into the role of protectors of the Christian Church, summoning general councils in an attempt at Christian unity.<sup>25</sup>

With such a willingness to preserve the structure of Roman society, why then did the Empire "fall" and why was the same degree of power known to earlier emperors unattainable for the Gothic kings? The stability of the Empire depended on the strength of its army which in turn depended on taxes. When Roman administration could no longer be maintained in provinces, due to a series of invasions, usurpers and lacklustre leadership, power became divided between local nobles. These aristocrats or bishops were left without Roman protection and were forced to organize resistance against invasions by themselves. One example comes from the city of Clermont in response to the early Visigothic settlement in the Garonne valley. The citizens drew themselves into a militia under their bishop, reportedly eating grass while under siege rather than concede to the Visigoths.<sup>26</sup> As Roman infrastructure declined, material sophistication collapsed. Whereas previously, specialized

20 Zosimus HN 5.54 as seen in Thomsson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfila*.

21 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 43-44.

22 Ibid., 69.

23 Cassiodorus, *Official Correspondence* 3.8 as seen in Maas, *Readings in late antiquity: a sourcebook*, 357.

24 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 69, 76.

25 As Alaric II did in 506. Heather, *The Goths*, 198-201.

26 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, 14.

centers of manufacture had produced goods exported throughout the Empire, with the retraction of centralized influence, local economies had to become more basic and produce a wider range of goods. Wealth simply did not accumulate or circulate as it had in earlier times. The stability needed to consolidate power on the same level as earlier Emperors was not possible for the barbarian Kings of Italy.

The Goths, a people who underwent a third century ethnogenesis in response to political pressures, eventually became dominant, militarily and culturally within Italy, taking over existing Roman administration. Ambitious Romans, like Cyprianus and his sons, adopted Roman names and learned the Gothic language. Cassiodorus wrote about them, "The boys are of Roman stock, yet speak our language, clearly showing the future loyalty they will hold towards us."<sup>27</sup> Another writer, Ennodius records the mocking sentiment some Romans had towards youth who straddled both worlds, sporting for instance, Roman cloaks and Gothic beards, likely mustaches.<sup>28</sup> In the fifth century, there were still recognizable differences between Romans and Goths or Romans and Franks, as recorded in Salic law, which gave the Romans a different and lesser legal identity than their masters. By the seventh century however, this distinction disappeared, and no Romans were left in Italy, only the hybrid cultures which would later carve out medieval kingdoms.

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27 Ibid., 92.

28 Ibid., 79.

# *You've Got a Friend in Me: Tactics of Amicitia in Cicero and Pliny's Letters of Request*

Gillian Scott

In the highly stratified society of ancient Rome, knowing how best to communicate with one's social superiors was necessary in order both to avoid offense and to potentially gain political or social advantages. This is especially apparent in letters of recommendation, or indeed, any letter that made a request of another, as a refusal of a request would have been potentially damaging to one's reputation. Methods and tactics of form, content, and tone were of paramount importance for writing a successful letter of this nature. This paper seeks to examine how aspects of *amicitia* were used in the form, content, and tone of Cicero and Pliny's letters of request throughout their interactions with their social superiors, Caesar and Trajan respectively. Ultimately, Cicero and Pliny create the illusion of intimacy with the nature of their requests, linguistic choices, and the positioning of their recipients. In doing so, they were able to form stronger relationships with their correspondents and reap the social and political benefits that accompanied those relationships. However, Pliny also made a conscious comparison of his relationship with Trajan to Cicero's relationship with Caesar in order to paint his friendship with Trajan as more balanced and affectionate than Cicero's complicated and utilitarian friendship with

Caesar. Ultimately, through his interactions with Trajan in Book 10 of his letters, Pliny wanted to show his superiority over Cicero in the realm of political relationships, in the same way that, in the rest of his writing, he positioned himself in comparison with Cicero as an orator, poet, politician, epistolographer, and governor.

In discussing the tactics of friendship in Roman letters, it is important to examine first the views that the Romans had regarding the fundamental nature of friendships. The ideal *amicitia* was based upon concepts, like trustworthiness, goodwill, and affection.<sup>1</sup> Genuine friendship was therefore something based upon personal values and was meant to exist in the realm of private relations. However, ideals of friendship did not always reflect the general practice of friendship in the Roman world. Many friendships tended to be more utilitarian in nature. Friendship was part of the system of political relations in Rome and could be used as a method for gaining favours, establishing advantageous alliances, or seeking other social or political benefits. In such relationships, “mutual affection is secondary in importance at best, at worst, empty pretence or not even pretended.”<sup>2</sup> Roman society would have encompassed both types of friendship, the genuine and the utilitarian, as well as relationships that mixed elements of the two. The best way to distinguish the nature of these relationships in Roman letters is to examine the language used to describe them. “The explicit acknowledgement of utility and concrete benefits characterizes ‘political friendships’”, whereas certain linguistic cues and concepts help to identify “personal” or “true” friendships.<sup>3</sup> However, it is important to note that these characteristics are not mutually exclusive. In fact, terms of *amicitia* were often used to disguise the more utilitarian nature of certain requests or recommendations, as will be discussed later in this paper.

It is also important to examine why, despite the fact that they come from different time periods and socio-political environments, the letters of Pliny and Cicero can be fruitfully compared. Cicero was writing to a general and dictator during the final years of the Republic; Pliny, to an emperor during the Principate. However, these relationships are still characterized by a considerable power disparity and reflect the conventions that are associated with this sort of relationship; their similarities, in this regard, allow them to be placed in comparison. The time disparity that existed between the two writers is not an obstacle, as Cicero’s writings were still prevalent and well-respected long after his death. Indeed, he was “the great Latin archetype in epistolary and oratorical prose”, making him a natural figure against whom any

<sup>1</sup> Wilcox, *The Gift of Correspondence in Classical Rome*, 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 51.

Roman epistolographer could be compared.<sup>4</sup> Pliny was especially conscious of his intellectual and professional self-positioning with regard to Cicero due to their proximity in terms of literary genre, subject matter, and profession.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, their closeness in genre and profession, as well as Cicero's traditional dominance in the literature of the period would have naturally lead the reader to make the comparison, but Pliny further invites it by mentioning Cicero explicitly and alluding to him frequently throughout all ten books of the collection. Pliny and Cicero also differ as Pliny was writing his letters with an eye to publication, while Cicero's letters were initially private pieces of correspondence that were only officially published after his death. Nevertheless, they both use linguistic conventions and common elements of friendship that reflect the practices of the Roman political elite. Cicero simply uses these in an effort to cultivate and maintain a politically beneficial, private relationship with Caesar, whereas Pliny is both maintaining his relationship with Trajan and positioning it within his own self-conscious representation. Ultimately, while the two were writing in different times, in very different political environments, and with different expectations of publication in mind, their letters have enough common elements to create an interesting analysis.

For both authors, making requests would have been an integral part of the Roman political and social structures that they interacted with on a day to day basis. Coordination between aristocrats was necessary in order to keep the political and bureaucratic functions of the empire running smoothly, and more often than not, the performance of assigned duties would have required the assistance or resources of others. This would have been especially true for those performing these duties at a great distance, as Pliny was during his governorship in Bithynia, Cicero, during his governorship in Cilicia, or Caesar, during his many military campaigns. This distance represents one of the inherent difficulties of sending and receiving letters in the ancient world. The differing responses of the pairs to this obstacle provide an opportunity for Pliny's relationship with Trajan to be favourably compared with Cicero's relationship with Caesar. For although, as White says, Cicero's relationship with Caesar was "one of the most productive connections that Cicero acquired" in terms of patronage and largess, Caesar's use of his distance and constant mobility as a tactic of personal manipulation kept Cicero at arm's length socially and politically, and emphasized the power disparity between the two.<sup>6</sup> Caesar's correspondence reached Cicero through lines of communication that were established by Caesar himself, and he often portrayed himself as busy and geographically distant, which lead to letters that were brief and indirect. Often Cicero even had to go

4 Gibson, *Reading the Letters of Pliny the Younger*, 77.

5 Ibid., 74-75.

6 White, "Tactics in Caesar's Correspondence With Cicero," 70.

as far as learning of Caesar's opinions through third parties like Balbus, Dolabella, Caelius, and Trebatius.<sup>7</sup> This resulted in a relationship in which Caesar was able to hold much of the power by obfuscating his intentions and withholding information, while Cicero's letters were continually anxious and overly obliging in an attempt to get a positive response from Caesar. This anxiety manifested itself in Cicero's repeated scrutiny of the few responses he did get from Caesar, his close analysis of Caesar's linguistic choices, the far longer letters that he wrote in response, and his appeals to various third parties for supplementary information. Pliny's published letters in Book 10 consciously de-emphasized this lack of access in order to promote the sense of friendly sincerity that is missing from Cicero's extant correspondence with Caesar. While Cicero seemed to have difficulty communicating with Caesar, Pliny and Trajan had a continuous chain of communication that was open to participants on both sides. Cicero's relationship with Caesar depended on lines of communication that Caesar created and controlled, which left Cicero scrambling for Caesar's reactions through intermediaries. On the other hand, Trajan encouraged Pliny's questions and requests with explicit statements of approval in his letters and consistent responses (whether positive or negative). While it may have been the office of imperial freedmen replying to Pliny, the fact that they were published in the name of Trajan meant that Pliny was consistently receiving a direct response from his interlocutor (or at least could portray it as such in his published letters), in a way that Cicero was not. And further, we do not read of Trajan being too busy to respond to Pliny. While his responses were often brief, they never explicitly mentioned that the cause of the letter's brevity was Trajan being too busy to reply (unlike in Caesar's correspondence with Cicero). Trajan's position as emperor would doubtless have kept him extremely busy, so the fact that he consistently replied to Pliny in spite of this emphasizes the importance that Trajan placed on their correspondence, and therefore, their relationship. Indeed, their letters are an ideal representation of the continuation of bureaucratic business between two separated parties. Both emperor and governor are shown working towards the good of the provincials, and despite the power disparity, seemed to be doing so in a relationship without complication or misinterpretation. In this regard, Cicero's relationship with Caesar appears imperfect and Cicero's anxieties about that imperfection are very clear, while Pliny and Trajan's relationship is ideal by Roman standards.

Friendship also allowed individuals to work together more easily within the highly stratified society.<sup>8</sup> Requests for assistance, allegiance, or other political favours were common in letters throughout both the Republic and Principate; how-

7 White, "Tactics in Caesar's Correspondence With Cicero," 74-75.

8 Fiore, *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship*, 70.

ever, it was the personal nature of Cicero and Pliny's requests, as well as the way in which they were presented, that allowed them to create an intimacy between the authors and their correspondents. Cicero's letters of request most often contained recommendations of his protégés (like Caius Trebatius and Publius Crassus) to Caesar. These protégés can be seen as reflections of Cicero himself; after all, a man is only as good as the company he keeps. Their close connection with Cicero meant that if Caesar decided to accept the recommendation, he was, in essence, accepting Cicero himself. This triangulation not only reflected how much esteem Caesar had for Cicero, but also represented an opportunity for Cicero to increase his social capital. If Caesar was willing to accept and nurture Cicero's recommended youth, it would have shown both that Caesar cared a great deal for Cicero, and that Cicero had enough social capital and political sway to gain the ear of the great Caesar and an important position for his protégé. By making the presumption that Trebatius would be able to look to Caesar in the same way he had looked to Cicero, Cicero implied both that he and Caesar were intimate enough to exchange these sorts of favours, and that he believed Caesar cared enough for him to accept Trebatius. The importance of these recommendations is clear from Cicero's anxiety in a letter sent to Caesar. Cicero writes, hoping that Trebatius may "look to [Caesar] for everything he would have hoped for from [Cicero]", and states that he described Caesar's "friendly disposition in terms no less ample than [Cicero] had previously been wont to use respecting his own" (*Ad Fam.* 7.5).<sup>9</sup> Despite this, we later hear that Caesar was "too busy" to take the time to get to know Trebatius (*Ad Fam.* 7.8).<sup>10</sup> Although Caesar's response towards Trebatius was depicted as negative, Cicero still replies in a deferential manner, stating that Caesar would "oblige [him] by conferring upon [Trebatius]... goodwill, friendly offices, and liberality" (*Ad Fam.* 7.8).<sup>11</sup> Cicero's continued pursuit of a position for Trebatius belies the significance of such a request, especially when viewed in context with Cicero's continual alignment of himself with Caesar through Trebatius. When Cicero's initial attempt to create intimacy through Trebatius is refused, his next strategy is to respond obligingly and to appeal to the same sort of virtues that characterize a personal and affectionate friendship (i.e. "goodwill" and "liberality"). The use of affiliative strategies in an interaction that is both socially and politically significant for Cicero, in turn helps to confirm the prevalence and importance of those same strategies in letters of request.

Pliny's requests of Trajan were many and varied; they dealt with everything from resources to aid his governing of Bithynia, to more personal requests that sought citizenship for his clients and positions for his friends. While his administra-

9 Bailey (trans.), *Cicero: Selected Letters*, 89.

10 Ibid., 91.

11 Ibid., 91.



tive requests would have been common to many other governors and administrators throughout the empire, tactics of *amicitia*, as well as the more personal content of a number of his other letters, helped to place him in a category above these other administrators. We can see examples of this more affectionate relationship when Pliny asked Trajan to grant favours that would normally not be granted to another. One such instance can be found in Pliny's request for Roman citizenship for his therapist Arpocras in letters five through seven.<sup>12</sup> While the granting of citizenship would have been a common enough matter, both the fact that it was someone who was personally important to Pliny and that he was additionally granted Alexandrian citizenship at Pliny's request indicate a certain amount of special favour on the part of Trajan. Indeed, Trajan writes in 10.7 that he "[does] not intend to grant Alexandrian citizenship except in special cases."<sup>13</sup> We can also see the granting of exceptional favour to Pliny in the final letters of Book 10, 120 and 121. Pliny, without asking in advance, granted his wife a permit to use the Imperial Post for personal business. Trajan did not take offense at this imposition, but said that Pliny was right to feel confident of his positive response. This is especially significant when considered alongside letters 45 and 46, wherein Pliny asks about the expiration of Imperial Post permits, and Trajan replies with a strict ruling. If Trajan took the integrity of the Imperial Post seriously enough to have strict rulings regarding expiration dates of permits, surely Pliny's unauthorized usage of the Imperial Post for personal rather than political business should have warranted some negative response from Trajan. Yet, because of Pliny's self-conscious positioning of their friendship as intimate throughout the letters of Book 10, it doesn't seem out of the question for Trajan to grant Pliny special favours.

Pliny also wrote letters which seem like they should be of little interest to the Emperor, and yet the fact that he received positive responses to those letters (whether from the emperor personally or from his office of freedmen), implies the creation of a positive, affiliative relationship between the two. Indeed, letter 15's assertion that Pliny is sure Trajan "will be interested" in Pliny's travel plans to his province seems slightly absurd without further context.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Trajan stated in letter 16 that Pliny "did well to send [him] news" and that he is "much interested to know what sort of journey [Pliny] is having to [his] province."<sup>15</sup> It is a strong indicator of intimacy between the two that Pliny feels comfortable writing to Trajan about seemingly trivial matters, and that Trajan responds positively to these trivial notes. Through his requests for personal favours and his letters concerning common, domestic matters,

12 Radice, (trans.), *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, 262-3.

13 Ibid., 262.

14 Ibid., 265.

15 Ibid., 266.

Pliny was representing his relationship with Trajan as inherently more personal than an average governor or political figure. Noreña asserts that: “Pliny appears both as a public official and as a private friend of Trajan, a conflation of roles that enables him to fashion himself in the correspondence as something more than just another bureaucrat.”<sup>16</sup> In the world of the Principate, the centralization of power around a single person meant that the closer one was to that centre, the more power one could gain for oneself. By positioning himself in a more intimate relationship with Trajan, Pliny was using affiliative tactics as a strategy for gaining social capital. It is also interesting to note that we may read similar letters concerning travel sent between Cicero and Atticus, as Cicero was departing for his governorship in Cilicia. Cicero describes the mundane details of the trip, like how he’s travelling on a “hot and dusty road”, as well as certain geographical markers like Ephesus and Tralles (*Ad Att.* 5.14).<sup>17</sup> However, these are the sort of inconsequential details that he sent to his most intimate friend rather than to someone like Caesar, whereas Pliny was sending a similarly insignificant message to the ruler of the empire. So, while it can be taken as a simple bureaucratic note, given Pliny’s obsession with self-representation and his combative relationship with the Ciceronian tradition, we may posit another interpretation. By publishing this seemingly inconsequential interaction, Pliny seems to be indirectly attributing the intimacy of Cicero and Atticus to his own relationship with Trajan, and indeed, bragging that he has friends in higher places.

The presence of friendship tactics in Cicero and Pliny’s letters is illuminated further by close readings of the original Latin. First, there is a certain vocabulary that is used when discussing friends or friendship, that relates to the core values and ideals of Roman friendships. These words refer to trustworthiness or faithfulness (*fides*), the cycle of favours and influence (*benefice, officia, merita, gratia*), and goodwill and affections (*voluntas, bene, velle*).<sup>18</sup> The use of these words serve as a way to bring public negotiations into the private sphere. By applying the language that defines friendship to the on-going process of obligation and exchange that was the basis for Roman political interaction, the Romans were able to use the appeal of friendship to achieve their goals. So, while both parties would have been aware of the nuances of certain terms like *benevolentia*, which was frequently used in negotiation, as well as the monetary sense of *liberalitate*, their positions as key terms in the vocabulary of Roman friendship meant that their use would have been clearly affiliative.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when Cicero continually sought Caesar’s “*benevolentiam et liberalitatem*” (*Ad Fam.* 7.5), or cited that things were done with/by his “*beneficio*” or his “*liberalitate ben-*

16 Noreña, “The Social Economy of Pliny’s Correspondence with Trajan,” 246.

17 Bailey (trans.), *Cicero: Selected Letters*, 119.

18 Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship*, 22-23.

19 Hall, *Politeness and Politics in Cicero’s Letters*, 46.

*eficioque*" (*Ad Att.* 8.11), he was still making utilitarian requests of Caesar. However, he was doing so within the polite framework of elite Roman society, using customary affiliative conventions to mitigate any self-interest in the request. While the specific and repeated use of these words may seem overly polite or excessive, failing to use them could make any request seem too brusque and had the potential to reflect badly on the author of the letter. The only time at which such customs could have been forgone was when a large enough power differential existed that would allow for the superior to do without these social niceties without fear of repercussion.<sup>20</sup>

Power differentials also have an effect on the tone of any given letter. There was a thin line to tread between overly familiar and overly formal. If an author was too familiar, he risked causing offence by failing to act with the proper deference. If too formal, the letter could place distance between the author and the recipient and make their request less likely to be granted. Cicero erred on the the side of familiarity, which created an intimacy that was advantageous to his requests. However, the risk of offense was mitigated by his ornate use of superlatives and expressions of delight and affection.<sup>21</sup> In *Ad Fam.* 7.5, Cicero played around with Caesar's perception of his tone, saying: "*De quo tibi homine haec spondeo non illo vetere verbo meo, quod cum ad te de Milone scripsissem, iure lusisti*"<sup>22</sup> and "*simus enim putidiusculi, quamquam per te vix licet; verum, ut video, licebit.*"<sup>23</sup> These casual asides imply a knowledge of Caesar's propensity for simple diction, reference past events and private jokes the two have shared, and position Caesar's reaction to this letter and request as positive, all of which in turn implies an intimacy between the two that is both affectionate and reciprocated. However, these familiar moments are only part of a wider letter which contains more formal diction and effusive expressions of affection; indeed, Cicero calls his own letter "*putidiusculi.*" Wilcox asserts that his inclusion of these interjections "indicates his awareness of the indelicacy of appearing to dictate favours. He seems to suggest that his rhetorical over exuberance can lead to regrettable, but surely excusable transgressions of social decorum."<sup>24</sup> In order to write a letter of recommendation that would have the greatest chance of success, Cicero needed to include conventional language of friendship and enthusiastic expressions of affection, but also had to temper these with a less formal, affiliative tone so as not to seem overbearing.

20 Hall, *Politeness and Politics in Cicero's Letters*, 43.

21 Wilcox, *The Gift of Correspondence in Classical Rome*, 30-31

22 "As for him, I will answer that you will find him - I won't use that old-fashioned expression of which you rightly made fun when I wrote to you about Milo..." Bailey (trans.), 90.

23 "...if I may become a trifle fulsome, though that's hardly permissible with you. But you will let it pass, I see you will." Bailey (trans.), 90.

24 Wilcox, *The Gift of Correspondence in Classical Rome*, 31.

Pliny also used a similarly ornate and effusive tone when corresponding with Trajan, however, this tone would have been more appropriate for Pliny than Cicero, as Pliny was addressing an emperor in more formal exchanges that were intended for publication. Pliny also made use of typical friendship terminology, making numerous references to Trajan's *indulgentia* and *beneficia*. However, rather than being used as tactic or strategy to get what he wanted from his interaction with Trajan, Pliny's careful choice of diction was a natural show of deference to the leader of the empire. These terms were part of the common conventions of social etiquette that were necessary in exchanges between the political elite, especially in the context of letters, which did not allow the same flexibility as face-to-face interaction. Unlike Pliny, Cicero used this deferential tone with someone who, by most standards of the Republican era, should have been his social peer and a fellow member of the senatorial aristocracy. Cicero's use of such an ingratiating tone reflects his uncertainty that Caesar will respond favourably to his requests, while Pliny pairs the language of politeness that is conventionally due to an emperor with a confidence that Trajan will grant his requests. As Woolf puts it, Pliny portrays his correspondence with Trajan as the ideal relationship between senator and emperor, where "the senator forever defers and the princeps forever concedes, one articulated by unequal exchanges, but exchanges conducted within the elaborate language of patronage."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Cicero and Caesar's correspondence can hardly be called ideal – despite the power differential, Cicero did not always defer, nor could Caesar always concede.

Successful political exchanges in relationships with power differentials also depended a great deal on the positioning of the more powerful member of the relationship by the less powerful. In *Ad Fam.* 7.5, Cicero styles himself as Caesar's "alter ego", a clearly affiliative tactic that was an attempt to align Caesar's interests with his own, and in doing so, make the granting of his request more likely.<sup>26</sup> Cicero positioning himself as one so intimate with Caesar that the two are essentially of one mind is therefore a chance for the acquisition of both intimacy and social capital if it is acknowledged and accepted by the recipient. By claiming the position of alter-ego, Cicero asserts that he is confident that Caesar's feelings and actions (such as those related to Trebatius), will mirror his own. However this claim is only helpful if Caesar is willing to back it up, which makes Cicero's ensuing anxiety about Caesar's response to this assertion, as well as to his treatment of Trebatius, even more justified. Regardless of the outcome, the positioning of a superior as an alter-ego is still a compelling affiliative tactic when used in letters of request. Pliny would have been unable to utilize this tactic explicitly in the context of a governor's correspondence

<sup>25</sup> Woolf, "Pliny's Province," 97.

<sup>26</sup> Bailey (trans.), *Cicero: Selected Letters*, 89.

with the emperor, as it would have been far too presumptuous for Pliny to position himself as being the same as the ruler of the empire. However, Pliny's portrayal of his and Trajan's almost constant agreement allows him to show the reader that they are, in fact, each other's alter-egos, while remaining within the bounds of propriety. This is consistent with Pliny's general policy of self-effacement and his tendency to place the onus of praising himself onto an interlocutor, or the reader. He doesn't say explicitly that he and Trajan are close, but instead allows the implications of their correspondence to speak for him.

Pliny's tactic for positioning Trajan rested in the terms of address that he used for Trajan. While he would sometimes use a combination of *imperator* and a positive superlative, the word most often used to address Trajan in book 10 was *domine*. Noreña makes a compelling case for the evolution of nuance in the vocative usage of *dominus*, tracing it from the initial use as "an amatory address between lovers" to "a term of affection among family members," to "a more generalized and particularly polite form of address for social equals and superiors."<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that Pliny is recontextualizing this term in an attempt to avoid the pejorative connotations of a master/slave relationship, as well as possible characterization of Trajan as a "bad" emperor (like Domitian, *dominus et deus*).<sup>28</sup> Instead, in Pliny's letters, the term takes on a deferential quality appropriate for addressing an emperor, along with a nuance of private intimacy that would aid in Pliny's self-representation as one of Trajan's inner circle.

Regardless of their success or failure on individual occasions, affiliative tactics in letters of request or recommendation were clearly prevalent throughout both the late Republic and the Principate. The presence of expressions of *amicitia* allowed a letter-writer to soften their more brusque requests and played into the Roman conventions of politeness that were necessary within elite interactions. The presence of the diction and conventions of *amicitia* within the letters of Cicero and Pliny was meant to create an intimacy between the authors and their patrons, who represent members of society with higher social standing and political power. This creation of intimacy was a useful strategy for seeking and obtaining benefits from those higher up on the social ladder. Pliny was also able to utilise these conventions in order portray his relationship with Trajan in a more positive light than Cicero's relationship with Caesar, which fits with his general policy of positive self-representation and competitive engagement with Cicero. Ultimately, sincere friendship meant fairly little in the sphere of Roman political interaction; good public relations in the guise of friendship was a better strategy for political and social advancement.

<sup>27</sup> Noreña, "The Social Economy of Pliny's Correspondence with Trajan," 248.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 247-49.

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# *Roman Collegia as Corporate Entities*

*Hadley Staite*

The word *Collegium* can be translated as “club,” “association,” or “organization,” but certainly not as “business.” However, through surviving inscriptions, we know there were many *collegia* strictly for craftspersons and professionals throughout the Roman world. The complete purpose of these associations is not fully clear. Their similarity to medieval guilds is currently debated, and it is unclear whether or not they had economic purpose.<sup>1</sup> In Claire Holleran’s 2012 book *Shopping in Ancient Rome*, Holleran makes an interesting suggestion during her discussion of clustered-together workshops and their conduciveness to economic and social ties:

Such ties would facilitate credit relationships between those involved in different stages of production and retail, which in practice were probably essential to the functioning of this system of manufacture. Furthermore, producers were perhaps able to pool their labour resources, and also their financial resources, in order to purchase raw materials in bulk, thus reducing the overall cost of supply; this may have been particularly prevalent among those producers who were linked by the more official ties of the *collegia*.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Liu, *Collegia Centonariorum*, 14.

2 Holleran, *Shopping in Ancient Rome*, 59.

This idea of *collegia* collaborating in commercial endeavours is an exciting one. However, to attempt to argue that *collegia* were the corporations of the ancient world would be misguided. Still, the idea of a professional *collegium* as a jointly owned single entity that acts on behalf of its owners is worth discussing. For our purposes, such an entity will be referred to as a “corporate entity.” This paper will investigate to what extent professional *collegia* were corporate entities.

Despite market competition, professionals in a shared field needed to work together. Roman workshops were generally small and independent, becoming more specialized and interdependent in denser areas, rather than merging into larger businesses as is common today.<sup>3</sup> This provides a basis for a *collegium* to become a corporate entity, as the members would certainly share commercial interests that could be pursued by means of collaborative investment.

The independence of freeborn workshops contrasts with the more complex model of an upper-class entrepreneur’s enterprise, which provided unfair competition. Workshops owned by an upper-class citizen were likely staffed by that person’s *familia* – the household slaves and freedpersons under the power of the head of the family. Freedpersons and slaves were active forces in the economy, and there were practical reasons why wealthy Romans would use their labour instead of freeborn labour. The *pater familias* would have greater control over the workers if they belonged to him, freed or not.<sup>4</sup> He could incentivize production and minimize risk with his own slaves and freedpersons by means of a *peculium* – private property that they could own with their master’s permission, here resembling a wage. He could also, of course, coerce his slaves to strive for greater profits.<sup>5,6</sup> Thus, a freeborn craftsperson more likely owned an independent business completely distinct from upper-class industrial operations – any business relationship between the two would be limited to rent. The freeborn crafter would then be left to his own devices to purchase materials and cover all other expenses, unlike the slave or freedperson. Slaves and freedpersons could also be placed directly into a workshop of their owner or former owner, whereas the freeborn always needed to contend with the rental market.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, one could speculate that upper-class consumers would have been inclined to purchase from workshops owned by their colleagues for the sake of diplomacy. To speak broadly, then, a *collegium* potentially acted as a support system where there was no wealthy *familia* to provide that support. More specifically, the *collegium*’s treasury, made up of member dues, may have been used to purchase bulk

3 Holleran, *Shopping in Ancient Rome*, 27.

4 Ibid., 31.

5 Ibid.

6 Gamauf, “Slaves Doing Business,” 339.

7 Holleran, *Shopping in Ancient Rome*, 48.



materials, facilities, and other large investments that a single craftsperson might not have at his disposal.

Thus we must examine the possibility of *collegia* dues being used for capital investment. Because written evidence pertaining to the financial activities of the lower-classes is extremely limited, it is pertinent to try and deduce their tendencies based on the activities and attitudes of the upper-class. We know there was a disdain for the profit-driven manufacturing sector among wealthy Romans. Cicero describes all crafters as *sordida*, citing the workshop as unable to contain anything *ingenuus*.<sup>8</sup> According to the upper-class, the noble industry was agriculture, as this is touted frequently by ancient authors such as Cicero, Cato the Elder, Horace, etc. Practice reflects this attitude to an extent, although certain sections of the upper-class were involved in manufacture. Dennis Kehoe's article on the early empire in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* posits that upper-class investment in manufacturing generally stopped at the supply of raw materials, many of which were linked to the rural property they owned.<sup>9</sup> Kehoe's observation seems to neglect the fact that *peculia* and skilled slaves, whose workshops generally belonged to their masters, were forms of investment, and evidence at least that there were Romans wealthy enough to own slaves who were interested in manufacture.<sup>10</sup> It's reasonable to say that the upper-class in general preferred to avoid *direct* involvement in the manufacturing sector. This avoidance of manufacture would have left craftspersons with the need to make their own investments. It is possible that the *collegium* facilitated pooling of resources between crafters in order to make mutually beneficial investments.

Evidence for *collegia* dues is scant, and this impedes any effort to prove that *collegia* were jointly owned in a proprietary way.<sup>11</sup> The surviving records of entrance fees reflect dues that would seem quite high: on the low end, a funeral *collegium* called *Cultores Dianae et Antinoi* cited a fee of 100 sesterces, an amphora of good wine, and an additional five asses per month; and on the high end, a religious *collegium* in Lambaesis had an entrance fee of 1,000 denarii.<sup>1213</sup> However, it is impossible to know if these high fees were typical, especially considering that the wealthiest *collegia* were more likely to purchase inscriptions. The wealth- and class-diversity of *collegia* is uncertain.<sup>14</sup> That being said, in Pompeii alone, there are at least fourteen

8 Cic. Off. 1.150. From the context of the writing, it seems likely that Cicero here equates *ingenuus* with "freeborn" or perhaps even "noble." Shelton, 126 translates it as "genteel."

9 Kehoe, "Part VI: The Early Roman Empire," 561.

10 Holleran, *Shopping in Ancient Rome*, 31, 47.

11 Liu, *Collegia Centonariorum*, 163.

12 Shelton, *As The Romans Did*, 97.

13 Liu, *Collegia Centonariorum*, 163 n. 10.

14 Ibid., 162-171.

political endorsements by what appear to be professional *collegia* painted on walls.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Among these associations are fishermen, fruit sellers, farmers, chicken sellers, mat makers and other unglamorous professions. While funerary and religious *collegia* could have wealthy members, perhaps these ones had humbler dues or a less formalized monetary arrangement. A counterpoint to this idea is that there were legal restrictions on the size of *collegia* treasuries that could inhibit spending.<sup>17</sup> However, without knowing the details of these laws we cannot know what kind of effect they would have on collaborative investment. Furthermore, it seems that such laws would be difficult to enforce, as a *collegium* could easily conceal its finances, especially if the treasury was on the informal side.

With the purchasing power of professional *collegia* being inconclusive, the matter of what they would have invested in remains open. Bulk materials, as suggested by Holleran, would be a likely group-purchase. The option to buy materials in bulk would be particularly useful for a craftsperson in ancient Rome. For non-perishable materials, purchasing a stockpile would provide security for the slower shipping seasons, and provide a safety net for random fluctuations. However, one must take care not to superimpose the modern practice of bulk purchase on the ancient

world without better evidence. Another possibility for collaborative capital investment is facilities. A donor in Brixia bequeathed shops and possibly a reservoir to the city's *collegium* of textile workers.<sup>18</sup> This demonstrates that it was suitable for *collegia* to acquire buildings for commercial purposes. La Graufesenque, a major pottery manufacturing centre in Gaul, had large kilns which were each shared by multiple workshops.<sup>19</sup> This instance of a nucleated workshop industry is a great example of collaboration between independent craftspersons, even if there is no evidence they were united in a *collegium* or *collegia*. Patrons may have purchased these kilns, but it is just as likely they were purchased for mutual benefit by those who used them.

The adoption of patrons by *collegia* is an interesting phenomenon. It is more common to see clients depicted as individuals, such as in Martial and Pliny the Younger's complaints about patrons.<sup>20 21 22</sup> But this is a situation where professionals would work together to serve a patron, and be rewarded as a group. According to

15 Shelton, *As The Romans Did*, 128.

16 CIL 4.113, 206, 336, 373, 490, 497, 677, 710, 743, 826, 864, 960, 6672, 7273, 7164, 7473

17 Shelton, *As The Romans Did*, 97 n. 105.

18 Liu, *Collegia Centonariorum*, 224.

19 *Ibid.*, 25.

20 Martial, *Epigrams* 5.22 and 6.88.

21 Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 2.6.1 and 2.

22 Seneca the Younger, *Letters* 19.4

Alison Burford, a craftsman was utterly destitute without a patron.<sup>23</sup> It would be easier for a *collegium* to find a patron than for an individual. For a patron interested in running in politics, a citizen *collegium* would be an attractive client: a body of eligible voters, all ready to be swayed in one direction. Distinctly political *collegia* existed, but it was not uncommon for *collegia* to have a mix of purposes.<sup>24</sup> An example of this would be the previously cited political advertisements by professional associations in Pompeii.<sup>25 26</sup>

Thus far we have examined why *collegia* would be required to act on behalf of their members, and it follows that we analyse the mechanisms which allowed a *collegium* to act as a single entity. The body of *collegium* members was called the *populus*.<sup>27</sup> The *populus* was divided into *plebs*, who consisted of all ordinary members and those of minor posts, and *magistri*, who were elected to preside over meetings and carry out decrees among other duties.<sup>28</sup> The *plebs* could also be further divided into *decuriae*, each being headed by a *decurio*.<sup>29</sup> *Decuriones* would form a council that had the power to pass decrees.<sup>30</sup> The model clearly imitates that of municipal government. It reflects a certain gravity to the system that *collegia* members would elect leaders (although it is unclear how *decuriones* were chosen) to preside over them. One might argue that these titles were purely symbolic. Yet, if that was the case, why go to the trouble of dividing the *plebs* up into *decuriones*? Such a pattern seems more practical than honorary. Also, the uniformity of the system seems to reflect that there was a proper way for a *collegium* to be run. This suggests that fairness and carefully measured leadership were important in *collegia*, which in turn suggests that the actions a *collegium* undertook had a direct effect on its members.

If we define “corporate entity” as “a jointly owned single entity which acts on behalf of its owners,” then professional *collegia* were corporate entities in certain ways. Although it is strange to picture a club as something that can be owned, the entrance fee and other potential dues were an investment. A *collegium* must not be confused with any form of a business, however, as they were not money-making entities in themselves; profit was generated elsewhere. Furthermore they did not resemble our modern day corporate model in a strong way, as there was no official ownership and no dividends. Still, a *collegium* spent money, made decisions, and had political allegiances on behalf of its members, who were in a way owners. The

23 Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*, 124, 135.

24 Royden, *The Magistrates of the Roman Professional Collegia in Italy*, 1.

25 Shelton, *As The Romans Did*, 128.

26 CIL 4.113, 206, 336, 373, 490, 497, 677, 710, 743, 826, 864, 960, 6672, 7273, 7164, 7473

27 Royden, *The Magistrates of the Roman Professional Collegia in Italy*, 13.

28 Ibid., 13-15.

29 Ibid., 13.

30 Ibid., 14.

necessity for a *collegium* to be used for economic purposes lies in the pressures put on manufacturers by wealthy *familiae*. By grouping together inside one entity, *collegia* members invested fees in return for cooperation, a better chance at finding a patron, and possibly mutually beneficial financial investments. At present, our knowledge of the free lower-class is too lacking to provide us with a complete picture of what professional *collegia* were used for. There is certainly room for more investigation and discussion on the issue, and it will be interesting to see if future archaeological finds shed more light.

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# *The Role of the Mycenae Shaft Graves in the Creation of a Stratified Society*

*Taylor Stark*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Heinrich Schliemann's discovery of the wealth of Mycenae shattered expectations of Bronze Age Aegean civilization. The image previously held of the society that existed pre-Antiquity was found utterly irreconcilable with the fabulous gold artifacts, jewelry, and weapons pulled out of the Grave Circles of Mycenae. Here was a truly magnificent elite, the heroes of Homer, presiding over the countryside of prehistoric Greece. Of the many discussions that have occurred between archaeologists and scholars concerning the evaluation of mortuary data to construct the social organization of a society, the general consensus is that an emergence of such a spectacular concentration of wealth is an expression of marked social stratification. Therefore the development of the unique shaft grave burials at Mycenae highlights a ruling elite class that reigned throughout the Late Helladic, approximately 1550 - 1050 BCE.

However, this direct relationship between mortuary systems and social distinction has come under fire. As Ian Hodder points out, burial ritual may be a part of an ideology which mirrors aspects of living society, but it may also be associated

with a distortion or inversion of particular forms of social relationships<sup>1</sup>. Mortuary rituals may demonstrate an idealized image rather than an accurate reflection of societal relations. With this in mind, I propose that the Mycenae shaft graves are not *reflective* of an elite class, but rather helped to *create* the highly stratified society which would carry on into the palatial period of the Late Helladic. This was achieved through the idealized presentation of spatial and temporal divisions, and the conspicuous consumption exhibited by the shaft graves.

Before presenting my argument, I would first like to discuss a summary of the emergence of the shaft graves and the evidence they present for stratification. During the first two phases of the Middle Helladic<sup>2</sup> period, 2000 - 1550 BCE, there was a high degree of variability between graves in terms of type, furnishings, and grave goods<sup>3</sup>. The level of effort used to create the grave and the elaboration of the grave goods within was not always equal. As such, one could find a simple pit grave with bronze items and jewelry or a complex cist grave void of goods of any sort<sup>4</sup>. The lack of distinct levels of wealth or elaboration suggests a small class separation, rather than the clear differentiation that materializes in later periods<sup>5</sup>. There is little evidence for grave cults in the MH, although various rites were practiced, such as treatment of the corpse, mourning behaviours, and wealth of grave goods.<sup>6 7</sup> Sofia Voutsaki theorizes that the lack of emphasis on material wealth in the MH suggests a main organizational principle based on kin relations, which did not “require legitimation by means of...material distinctions.”<sup>8</sup>

The transition from MH II to MH III marks a period of increased development in terms of mortuary practices and variability. The beginning of the MH III period saw the introduction of the *tholos* tomb and the dramatic appearance of the shaft graves. Going beyond Mycenae, there were many other changes to mortuary practice: a decline in intramural burials, the emergence of a more complicated ritual sequence (featuring the reuse of tombs and secondary treatment of bodies), and the increased implementation of ritual practices alongside the disposal of the deceased, such as libations, funeral feasting, and animal sacrifice<sup>9</sup>. At this point there

1 Hodder, “The identification and interpretation of ranking in prehistory,” 152.

2 From this point on, the Middle and Late Helladic periods shall be referred to by their standard acronyms (MH and LH).

3 Nordquist, “Middle Helladic Burial Rites: Some Speculations,” 35.

4 Ibid., 36.

5 Mee and Cavanagh, “Mycenaean Tombs as Evidence for Social and Political Organisation.”

6 Nordquist, “Middle Helladic Burial Rites: Some Speculations,” 38.

7 However, evidence of a sacrifice or funeral meal has been found, such as signs of burning in the grave and on top of the slabs so we cannot utterly discount cult practice. (Taylour, “Excavations at Agios Stephanos,” 219).

8 Voutsaki, “Mortuary evidence, symbolic meanings, and social change,” 44.

9 Ibid., 44.

was also a marked increase in the deposition of rich grave goods with the body.<sup>10 11</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> Most scholars now propose that the changing landscape of mortuary practice and the advent of the shaft graves of Mycenae marks an emergence of an elite which distinguished itself by building more labour-intensive tombs and by displaying their wealth through burials.<sup>13 14</sup>

The shaft graves can be closely associated with a hierarchical elite in four key ways. Firstly, the shift from intramural to extramural burial space circumscribed a reserved area for a limited social group to be buried in, separate from other graves.<sup>15</sup> This created a specialized location in which the elite dead were isolated from non-elite dead. Grave Circle A, within the walls of the citadel of Mycenae itself, held a primary place of reverence compared to the tombs located outside the walls. Secondly, the shaft graves were constructed with reuse in mind. This display would have publicly asserted the ties between status and family, demonstrating the increasing importance of lineal descent within the community.<sup>16</sup> Thirdly, the uniqueness of the graves and the labour required to construct them would mark those buried in the shafts as significant. Lewis Binford suggests that the status of the deceased can be correlated with the amount of labour and energy used in the preparation of their burial.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the shaft graves would indicate quite a high status; James Wright estimates that in order to dig a shaft the size of Circle A Grave V, ten men would have had to work for ten days.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the immense concentration of precious artifacts within the shafts is the clearest marker that these graves are associated with elite individuals. The sheer number of valuables is immense, not to mention the extraordinary skill of craftsmanship and design, as well as the enormous variety of materials, decorations, types, and shapes.<sup>19</sup> Aside from works of gold, weapons, and jewelry, rare luxury and high status items have been found which correlate to artifacts found in distinct locations on Crete.<sup>20</sup> These objects imply a special access to the markets and production centres of Minoan Crete and the Aegean islands. This wealth therefore denotes a socio-political development of status which was “supplied externally and limited by highly restricted access to markets.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Dabney and Wright, “Mortuary customs, palatial society and state formation in the Aegean area,” 49.

<sup>12</sup> Graziadio, “The Process of Social Stratification at Mycenae in the Shaft Grave Period.”

<sup>13</sup> Mee and Cavanagh, “Mycenaean Tombs as Evidence for Social and Political Organisation.”

<sup>14</sup> Graziadio, “The Process of Social Stratification at Mycenae in the Shaft Grave Period.”

<sup>15</sup> Wright, “Death and Power at Mycenae,” 49.

<sup>16</sup> Graziadio, “The Process of Social Stratification at Mycenae in the Shaft Grave Period,” 405.

<sup>17</sup> Binford, *Practices*,” 21.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, “Death and Power at Mycenae.”

<sup>19</sup> Voutsaki, “The creation of value and prestige in the Aegean Late Bronze Age,” 42.

<sup>20</sup> Such as a stone bull rhyton of Grave IV also located in the palace at Zakros, and marble vessels from Graves IV and V corresponding with items from the palace at Zakros.

<sup>21</sup> Dabney and Wright, “Mortuary customs, palatial society and state formation in the Aegean



there can be no argument that the Mycenae shaft graves were inexorably linked to the developing aristocracy; but what was the nature of that relationship?

To restate my original proposition, I argue that the shaft graves at Mycenae are not reflective of a growing elite, but rather were one of the primary mechanisms involved in their creation. This conclusion is in accordance with Voutsaki's hypothesis that mortuary rituals create rather than mirror social reality, and help shape people's perspectives of the world and their place in it. She stipulates that this is achieved through the creation of "spatial and temporal schemes that divide and order the cultural universe" and the creation of "differentiation by means of ostentatious [...] gestures."<sup>22</sup>

First, spatial and temporal boundaries are set up through a number of methods in mortuary practices. The manner in which they are erected creates distinction in both physicality and society. The primary boundary is between the realm of the dead and the living. By separating the spaces which the living and the dead inhabit, abstract distinctions are made concrete by "being fastened to the physical landscape."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the separation of the shaft graves from traditional intramural burials created division between the living and dead, and the elite and non-elite<sup>24</sup>. Boundaries are further erected within the shafts themselves in terms of their three parts, the shaft, the roof, and the tomb. These parts each constitute a transitional zone that lies between the two worlds. This triple boundary is recreated in the temporal forms surrounding the treatment of the body.<sup>25</sup> As previously mentioned, the beginning of the LH period featured an increase in the reuse of tombs and in the secondary treatment of the dead. Secondary treatment, involving the disarticulation of an earlier burial and the scattering of offerings, occurred after a certain interval following primary burial.<sup>26</sup> The process of primary burial, mourning, and secondary treatment can be seen as a rite of passage, comprised of rites of separation, transition, and integration. Death creates a predictable cycle of renewal by structuring periodicity in cultural life.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, mortuary practices construct order through spatial and temporal divisions, which subsequently reflects itself back on the individual, forming divisions and differentiation within society.

In addition to these boundaries, mortuary rituals also create governing so-

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area," 49–50.

22 Voutsaki, "Mortuary evidence, symbolic meanings, and social change," 44–45.

23 Voutsaki, "Mortuary evidence, symbolic meanings, and social change," 45.

24 See (Wright, "Death and Power at Mycenae," 49.) for his conclusions on the creation of stratification through reserved space

25 Voutsaki, "The creation of value and prestige in the Aegean Late Bronze Age," 45.

26 Cavanagh, "A Mycenaean second burial custom?"

27 Voutsaki, "Mortuary evidence, symbolic meanings, and social change," 45.

cial divisions through the use of ostentatious display and conspicuous consumption. During the rise of the shaft graves in the late MH, ostentation became a primary means for creating differentiation.<sup>28</sup> Voutsaki suggests that the increase in luxury items from Minoan Crete points to a system of formalized gift exchange between the mainland and the Aegean islands. As the system of gift exchange relied on a continuous circulation of goods being passed between elites, the burial of such wealth both halted the flow of goods and limited the ability of other aristocrats to obtain them.<sup>29</sup> Before the deposition of wealth, material goods were fluid and mobile. Ownership of goods passed between members of society and was never retained for a single family or individual. Yet the emergence of wealth deposition in the MH III period allowed a “symbolic appropriation of wealth, as well as social fragmentation and asymmetry.”<sup>30</sup> Through ritual deposition, the concept of owned property could be institutionalized and carried out. Alongside the notion of tomb reuse and multiple burials within kin groups, deposition of wealth within shaft graves could be seen as being retained inside the family, as it was being held *in perpetuum* by the ancestors. As such, the more riches were disposed in burials, the more wealth was retained by the family; thus status became associated with the procurement and discarding of elaborate goods and wealth.<sup>31</sup> Conspicuous consumption therefore developed as a central strategy for the creation, rather than the legitimation or reflection, of social stratification.

From the late MH III period onwards, a clear development of elaboration and emulation can be observed, stemming from the initial creation of the Mycenaean shaft graves. Giampaolo Graziadio describes a gradual evolution of complexity in the two grave circles in terms of elaboration and architectural features, from the MH III to the LH I.<sup>32</sup> This evidence demonstrates increasing development in differentiation, as effort of labour and concentration of wealth intensifies. Thus it can be established that the shaft graves did not initially exist in a period which featured a crystallized stratified system, but were a part of a measured formation. The establishment of conspicuous consumption through shaft graves initiated a spiral of elaboration, in which various forms of ostentation and prestige were adopted and abandoned. The shaft graves are replaced in the LH II by *tholoi* tombs and rich, elaborate chamber tombs as local social and political competition takes hold. This continuing competition results in a fluid and changeable situation from which a hierarchy slowly emerged. Finally, in LH IIIA-B (1400 – 1200 BCE), mortuary displays are restricted

28 Voutsaki, “Mortuary evidence, symbolic meanings, and social change,” 45.

29 Ibid.

30 Voutsaki, “The creation of value and prestige in the Aegean Late Bronze Age,” 44.

31 Ibid.

32 Graziadio, “The Process of Social Stratification at Mycenae in the Shaft Grave Period,” 407.

to palatial sites, signalling the formation of a stable hierarchy and centralized political system; that of the Mycenaean palace.<sup>33</sup> Thus it can be argued that the disposal of goods, sparked by the deposition found in the shaft graves, ignited a spiral of competition, imitation, and embellishment, which led to the formation of the established palatial hierarchy. As such, the ostentation displayed through the shaft graves became the main mechanism for social stratification on the mainland.

I have thus summarized the evolution of mortuary practices at Mycenae between the MH II and MH III periods, suggesting an original social structure during the MH which revolved more around kinship relations than material wealth. In the transition into MH III, mortuary ritual and practices became more pronounced, increasing in conjunction with greater disposal of wealth and expenditure of effort in grave construction. Over MH III and LH I, the elaboration of the shaft graves gradually expanded, with even more concentration of wealth in later phases. The shaft graves were eventually abandoned as an increasingly competitive system of ostentation replaces the old with new monumental tomb structure at the end of LH I. There has been much discussion over the interpretation of the mortuary data from the Mycenae shaft graves, with the orthodox view hypothesizing that the richness of Grave Circle A and B are an expression of a stratified, wealthy elite. I have countered this argument by suggesting that the shaft graves did not reflect a hierarchical elite structure, but were essential in the creation of social stratification and differentiation. This is achieved primarily through the use of conspicuous consumption, and secondly through the construction of spatial and temporal boundaries surrounding mortuary practices. The increasing display of wealth in the shaft graves was a result of the freezing of the fluidity of the gift exchange market, an action associated with the growing importance of personal property and wealth. By burying their rich goods, the elite were able to create a system of social stratification, distinguishing themselves from the non-elite. This initiated a complex play of competition within the local elite, with individuals continually attempting to out-do their neighbour, until finally, in the LHIII period, a stable stratified society emerged in the form of the palatial system. Therefore, I have concluded that the ostentatious display of wealth within the Mycenae shaft graves was one of the leading mechanisms behind the emergence of the Mycenaean palatial elite during the Late Helladic period.

33 Voutsaki, "The creation of value and prestige in the Aegean Late Bronze Age," 44–48.

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# *Three Effects of Climate Change on the Later Roman Empire*

*Sean Stewart*

Although climate change may have had a direct or (more likely) indirect effect on the fall of the Western Roman Empire, local climate data from the imperial heartlands – Italy, Greece, etc. – are not yet available to such an extent that we may speak in more than very general terms about climate change in these areas.<sup>1</sup> For example, we are lacking in the tree-ring data for the central Mediterranean that would give us a local, high-resolution idea of the historical climate.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is at this time impossible to make any tenable hypotheses concerning the connection of climate to the fall of Rome in the Mediterranean. There is, however, more detailed data from the fringes of the Empire, outside the Mediterranean climate zone. From this data, we can demonstrate that climate change had a direct and detrimental effect on these regions, opening the possibility that climate could have been to Rome's detriment elsewhere. This paper will explore three "episodes" of climate change and what effect they had on late Roman history: less-than-ideal Nile floods in the third century, climatic deterioration in Britain, and drought in Central Asia.

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1 McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell Us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," 70.

2 Manning, "The Roman World and Climate," 136.

At the apogee of Roman power, there existed the so-called Roman Climatic Optimum, a remarkably stable climatic period lasting from about 100 BCE to 200 CE, especially conducive to food production across the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> Egypt especially benefited from this optimum, which included higher levels of precipitation, as well as from a particularly favourable period of Nile floods. During this time, the best floods occurred very frequently, once every five years on average, although the worst floods occurred just as frequently, and there was significant variation in flood levels.<sup>4</sup> Overall, however, these conditions were relatively favourable, so plentiful and presumably cheap grain was available to the Roman state. It is well known that Egyptian grain played a key role in feeding Rome itself and other places around the Mediterranean. After the mid-second century CE (one of the postulated end dates of the Roman Climatic Optimum), there is more stability in yearly flood levels, but the occurrence of the best floods is only 8%, or once every 12.5 years, while the worst floods occur far more frequently, rising from 21% to 31%. The data is problematic, however, because this second period, with its inferior floods, is not as well documented as the earlier period, making a sampling error more likely.

An important question regarding the Nile floods is what forced them to change. At the moment this question cannot be answered, as no work has been done on palaeoclimatology at the Nile's headwaters in Uganda and Ethiopia. Since the Nile is fed by these rivers during the rainy season, if we can begin to reconstruct the precipitation history of these areas, then perhaps we can detect correlations between precipitation and already-known flood levels from antiquity, and then reconstruct the missing years to get a clearer picture of Egypt's potential productivity.

If Egyptian floods became less favourable, it would follow that the Roman state could not enjoy such bountiful Egyptian harvests in its later history – indeed, the Empire was quite vulnerable to any reduction in its production capacity due to population pressure<sup>5</sup> – but current analysis does not yet support a connection between poor Egyptian harvests and widespread food insecurity.<sup>6</sup> Assuming that such insecurity existed, what would have been the effects on the Mediterranean population? Starvation is certainly a possibility. The severity of the Antonine Plague of the mid- to late-second century CE might be explained by widespread malnutrition, as malnourished populations are more vulnerable to disease, but the timing does not

3 McCormick et al., "Climate Change during and after the Roman Empire: Reconstructing the Past from Scientific and Historical Evidence," 174-183.

4 See McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell Us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," 76-81 for more complete data.

5 Malanima, "Energy Consumption in the Roman World," 27.

6 McCormick, "What Climate Science, Ausonius, Nile Floods, Rye, and Thatch Tell Us about the Environmental History of the Roman Empire," 82, where he suggests avenues for further research into this question.

align neatly with the less favourable Nile floods. These ideas are not yet supported by any direct evidence. For now, we can only conclude that the Egyptian economy would have been smaller in the later Empire because of this environmental change, and there would have been more pressure on alternate sources of grain, such as Syria and Africa.

We have rather more firm evidence for climate change in Roman Britain in the fourth and fifth centuries CE. First, proxy data from Alpine and Norwegian glaciers indicate that cooling in Britain began around 400.<sup>7</sup> It is postulated that the drop in average temperature was 1.5°C, which would have, according to Michael Jones, “lowered the upper limit of productive cultivation [...] by almost 200 metres” and shortened the growing season everywhere by almost four weeks, among other detrimental effects.<sup>8</sup>

Aside from changes in average temperature, we can also detect increased precipitation in Britain beginning in the late fourth century. Analysis of peat bogs suggests that a dry phase ended at some point before 400; when this occurred is not precisely known because a bog will not show evidence of regeneration until some time after the return of wetter conditions.<sup>9</sup> The dry period which Britain enjoyed during much of its time as a Roman province was only dry relative to modern conditions and conditions immediately before and after: even in the dry phase it was well known as a wet place.<sup>10</sup> We can also detect an increase in moisture archaeologically: numerous late Roman wells are shallower than those of later periods, and could not be filled under mediaeval or modern conditions, implying that the water table was higher.<sup>11</sup> The effects of increased precipitation were even greater than those of the cooling trend previously mentioned. Thin soils would have been denuded of accumulated nutrients and leached of minerals, while heavy clay soils would have become almost impossible to plough and drain.<sup>12</sup> These clay soils had been exploited more and more throughout the Roman occupation as the population resorted to more marginal agricultural land in order to meet growing demand for grain. Additionally, for many generations there had been much forest clearance, grazing, and ploughing, making much of the island defenceless against soil erosion.<sup>13</sup>

It has been estimated that in the middle of the second century, the amount of land required for agriculture in the Roman Empire would have been around 1.5

7 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 192.

8 Ibid., 222-223.

9 Ibid., 195-196.

10 Tacitus, *Agricola*, 12.

11 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 198.

12 Ibid., 222.

13 Ibid., 202-203.

million km<sup>2</sup> out of a total territory of 3.8 million km<sup>2</sup>, including all areas unsuitable for cultivation.<sup>14</sup> This would have necessitated the use of marginal agricultural land throughout the Empire, as was certainly the case in Britain, where even a fully-exploited countryside would have difficulty feeding an estimated population of 3.5 million, in addition to obligations to the state such as taxes and feeding the army.<sup>15</sup> Exploitation of marginal land would have been essential, much of which would have been most vulnerable to the negative effects outlined above.

While not going so far as to blame Britain's misfortunes entirely on climate change (political turmoil was probably a more direct cause), the effects on the population were especially severe, and no other part of the Roman Empire experienced such a precipitous collapse.<sup>16</sup> In the early fifth-century, the post-Roman period, there seems to have been a demographic collapse in the heavily Romanized south. While this may be an argument from silence, as we are largely lacking in datable archaeological material from this period,<sup>17</sup> we would not expect to find much material, if any, had the area been depopulated. While there was a collapse in that area, other regions seem to have continued to play host to populations as large as they did during the Roman period, or even larger. Had many marginal areas actually been depopulated, there should be evidence of forest regrowth in cleared areas, but this evidence is lacking.<sup>18</sup>

Because we are lacking much demographic data for Britain at this time, and even the archaeological evidence in all parts of the island is sparse, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the effects of any event on the general population, be it climate change, political turmoil, or something else. However, this much can be inferred: the carrying capacity of the island must have dropped with lowered temperatures, increased precipitation, and erosion. At the same time, with the Roman withdrawal from the island in 410, a decline in food production may not have been so detrimental as it would have been had the population been forced to continue to pay taxes and feed the army. Regardless, the island could have continued to support as large a population as it had in gentler conditions, when resources were probably already strained. Some population decline must have occurred. The former province would have been severely weakened by climate change when the Saxon auxiliaries turned on their hosts and began to conquer them. In this way climate change had a real, if indirect, effect on the fortunes of the Roman Empire.

14 Malanima, "Energy Consumption in the Roman World," 18.

15 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 208.

16 Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, 122, though I must express skepticism at how he can measure "economic complexity" in a simple graph.

17 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 229 and Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, 128.

18 Jones, *The End of Roman Britain*, 227.



Lastly we turn to an episode of climate change far removed from the Empire, but probably with a more acute effect on it than the two already described. It has been widely acknowledged since Antiquity that the westward movement of the Huns caused a sort of domino effect of migrations, forcing successive groups (such as the Goths) to move west and/or south as they were overcome.<sup>19</sup> The burning question is (or was) just why the Huns left their homeland in central Asia. A plausible answer to this has been given in a recent paper by Edward Cook. In it, he explored the question of whether El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has a climatic effect on Central Asia, and if we can detect ancient ENSO using proxy data in order to estimate its effects at the time of the migrations of the Huns and Avars. There is evidence of drought in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century in northern China (Dulan-Wulan), gleaned from tree-ring data, but this is over 4000 km away from the Huns' homeland, which, being in the steppes, lacks tree-ring data.<sup>20</sup> The question Cook ultimately seeks to answer is whether or not there is a correlation between droughts in northern China and Central Asia with ENSO. Based on modern data, there is a connection between ENSO and precipitation: El Niño causes dampness, while La Niña causes drought.<sup>21</sup> With this in mind, we can reconstruct the occurrence of ENSO based on ENSO-sensitive tree-ring data. In doing so, Cook finds that there were three extreme episodes of drought in Central Asia at the same time as the Hun-Avar migrations.<sup>22</sup>

The implication, then, is that prolonged drought may have forced Huns and Avars to migrate to the west (although the timing of their migrations does not always perfectly match the droughts) because of deteriorating pastoral conditions, which had a direct effect on Roman affairs: the diplomatic and military trouble the Huns – and the other peoples they forced to move west – inflicted upon the Empire are as well-known as anything can be in the fifth century. Thus, assuming Cook's hypothesis that climate forced the migrations is accurate, climate change – even change caused by such a remote phenomenon as ENSO – had an acute and detrimental effect on the Roman Empire, contributing to the total collapse that the state experienced in the West. Further research might consider whether climate change had a similar forcing effect on other foreign troublemakers, such as Berbers and the Germanic peoples.

Although considering three isolated episodes as examples of how climate might have contributed to the demise of the Roman state may not be as satisfying as generalizing about conditions throughout the Empire, we do not yet have

19 See, e.g., Ammianus, XXXI.2

20 Cook, "Megadroughts, ENSO, and the Invasion of Late-Roman Europe by the Huns and Avars," 89-91.

21 Ibid., 94.

22 Ibid., 100.

enough high-resolution local data to support such generalizations. Until more local data is available and is analyzed scientifically and historically, we cannot discuss whether climate change had a negative effect on the Roman state as a whole, hence this paper's focus on areas for which there is better data. Although not yet proven, it has been hypothesized that climate change did have negative effects on the Roman Empire as a result of local climate change. In all three cases climate change reduced the carrying capacity of one area by reducing the potential for agricultural production, but in each case the end result was different: Egypt never collapsed as a result of lower production, Britain seems to have literally gone through a Dark Age, and the people of Central Asia violently emigrated en masse to the West. In these ways climate change had effects both direct and indirect on the weakening – and eventually the destruction – of the Roman state, at least in the West. More research is to be done if we are to have a clear understanding of the effects of climate change in the Mediterranean itself, especially Italy, North Africa, and Greece.

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# WHY PLEBEIAN?

Undergraduate students are often seen as an anonymous crowd, a mass of bodies, numbers on an administrator's computer screen, and are thus frequently overlooked when it comes to original ideas and research. Like the plebs of Ancient Rome and *hoi polloi* of Greece, we are many; nevertheless, we remain a vibrant community of explorers, thinkers, pioneers. This journal is so named in an attempt to reclaim this word of disdain for our own. Here, we proudly display our undergraduate research to those who might otherwise let it pass by, unnoticed.

