The Career of Theodosius the Elder in Fourth Century Politics

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S3355187

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‘28560 Words’
Not so happy, yet much happier/

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none

-The Scottish Play 1.3.69-70
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Abbreviations

Ambr. *de obit. Theod.*

**Ambrose:** G. Banterle, *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera* vol. 18.

Amm. Marc.

**Ammianus:** W. Seyfarth, *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum Libri Qui Supersunt*

Aug. *RG.*

**Augustus:** A.E. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti.*

BNP


Cic. *Cat.*

**Cicero:** T. M. Maslowski, *Tullius Cicero, Orationes in L. Catilinam quattuor.*

Claud. *Cons. Hon.*

**Claudian:** *Panegyrici de Consulatibus Honorii Augusti* in, J.B Hall, *Claudii Claudiani Carmina.*

-Cons. Theod.

**Panegyricus de Consulatu Mallii Theodori.**

-Gild.

**De Bello Gildonico**

Cod. Theod.

**Theodosian Code:** P. Meyer and T. Mommsen, *Theodosiani libri XVI*

Jer. Chron.

**Jerome:** R. Helm, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus/Hieronymi Chronicon*

Luc. Phars.

**Lucan:** D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *M. Annaei Lucani De Bello Civili libri X.*
Not. Dign. [occ.]

Notitia Dignitatum: Seeck, O. Notitia Dignitatum

Oros. Pag.

Orosius: M.P. Arnoud-Lindet, Orosii Historiae adversum Paganos.

Pan. Lat.

(Pacatus): R. Mynors, XII Panegyrici Latini.

PLRE

A.H.M. Jones et al. The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire.

SHA. Quad. Tyr.

Historia Augusta, Quadrigae Tyranni: E. Hohl, Historia Augusta.

Socrates. Hist eccl.

Socrates Scholasticus: G.C. Hansen, Sokrates Kirchengeschichte.


Symmachus: M.J. Roberts and M.R. Salzman, The Letters of Symmachus

-Relat.

R.H. Barrow, Prefect and Emperor: The Relationes of Symmachus

Vat. lat.

Ammianus MS: “Manuscript Vat. Lat. 1873.” The Vatican Digital Library.

Zos.

Zosimus: F. Paschoud, Zosime, Histoire Nouvelle.

AE

M. Besnier and R. Cagnat, L’Annee Epigraphique.

ILS

H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.
Notes

All translations from Latin and Greek, unless otherwise noted, are my own. I have used abbreviations from the fifth edition of the Oxford Classical Dictionary where listed. Otherwise, I have adopted the best combination of brevity and lucidity conventional in Classical scholarship. I have listed all above.

This thesis would not have been possible without the extensive advice and mentorship of Professor J.W. Drijvers whose patience with my unending new and crazy ideas has been truly remarkable. I also owe thanks to my father for comments and my friend M. van Kranenburg for his relentless support and help with Dutch spelling. All errors, of course, are my own.

-Groningen, 2018.
I. Introduction

Sometime during the summer of AD 378, a thirty one year old man named Theodosius relaxed on his family’s estates in Spain. Perhaps, like Voltaire’s Candide, he reflected on his lot in life and wondered whether he was among the fortunate or the miserable. He was lucky to have recently celebrated the birth of his first child, a boy he and his wife Flaccilla named ‘Arcadius’. He was especially lucky to be lounging in sundrenched Spain, not only because the weather compared favorably with the Empire’s northern frontiers where he had spent much of his career, but also because he had been lucky to escape the frigid border regions alive. This realization must have turned his reflection towards melancholy. Until a few years ago, Theodosius had enjoyed a promising career, commanding an army at the age of only twenty eight. His homonymous father had counted himself among the Empire’s most talented and experienced generals, serving the emperor Valentinian I (364-375) in the illustrious post of Magister Equitum. The two Theodosians had faced political rivals, of course, such as Valentinian’s brother and co-emperor Valens and the scheming Praetorian Prefect Maximinus. Yet it was only in late 375 that things began crashing down. On 17 November, the family’s protector Valentinian suddenly died. Within a few months, someone had ordered the execution of Theodosius’ father. Theodosius himself had been fortunate to escape his billet on the Danube frontier for his current Spanish exile. Since those dark days, Theodosius’ family had made a minor comeback at the court of Valentinian’s son Gratian (367-383); Theodosius’ uncle Eucherius, for example, was presently occupying a major post in the court bureaucracy. Yet the pervading influence of Valens kept Theodosius exiled in Spain. He must have felt rather despondent as he finally noticed the messenger arriving, likely carrying another update from Eucherius in the imperial court. The messenger did seem to be in a hurry, but he was unlikely to report anything import. Theodosius’ father’s career had already determined the course of his son’s whole life, the thirty one year old thought bitterly.

Like the young Theodosius I (379-395), this paper also considers the life of his father. We have the benefit of hindsight; yet our knowledge of the career of Theodosius the elder remains sadly deficient. Therefore, I intend this paper to examine how political realities defined the elder Theodosius’ career.

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1 For general context, see G. Friell and S. Williams, Theodosius: The Empire at Bay (London: B.T. Batsford, 1994), 75-103.
The emperor’s father first emerges onto the historical scene, already a senior general as a *Comes Rei Militaris*, when the emperor Valentinian appoints him to suppress the so-called Barbarian Conspiracy that had erupted (367-368/9). Valentinian had already appointed first the general Severus, and then Iovinus, to rectify the situation in Britain. They had each returned unsuccessful. Thus, Theodosius’ remarkable success provides a sharp contrast. Our major historical account describes how he lands on the British coast at Richborough (*Rutupiae*) and marches immediately to secure the important city of London (*Lundinium*). After a wait in London, Theodosius sets out northwards, evading ambushes. He defeats and executes Valentinus, the brother-in-law of his enemy the Praetorian Prefect Maximinus, and reorganizes the defenses of Britain. His successful return to his imperial master in Gaul earns him promotion to the high rank of *Magister Equitum*.

Over the next few years Theodosius continued to serve under Valentinian, campaigning on the northern frontiers. Our evidence for this period is marginal and his role is unimportant compared to the previous and subsequent events in his career. Thus, Theodosius bursts back onto the historical scene when Valentinian dispatches him to suppress the revolt of the Moorish chieftain Firmus in North Africa (372-375). Firmus’ father Nubel had been an influential Roman client king and his decease caused a political crisis. The *Comes Rei Militaris* responsible for the area, Romanus, had elevated Firmus’ brother Zammac to replace their father. Firmus, resenting this, murdered his brother and soon launched a revolt.

Theodosius thus arrives to a messy political crisis. He subtly disciplines Romanus and, after failing to negotiate with Firmus, launches a series of prolonged campaigns. Eventually Theodosius sufficiently attrites the Moorish resistance that Igmazen, a local king allied to Firmus, betrays the rebel into Theodosius’ hands. Theodosius might have expected promotion and congratulations, but politics would interfere.

In late 375, Valentinian I was campaigning on the Danube. He had left his teenage son and nominal co-emperor Gratian on the Rhine frontier with the Praetorian Prefect Maximinus. His brother Valens remained based in the eastern city of Antioch (Antakya, Turkey). Valentinian’s sudden death on 17 November triggered a power struggle among imperial courtiers. The officials stationed with Valentinian’s army, led by the Frankish *Magister Peditum* Merobaudes, arbitrarily elevated Valentinian’s younger son Valentinian II to the

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2 We also find the variant “Valentinianus”. I adopt the alternative purely to avoid ambiguity with the homonymous emperors.

3 Similar to Magister Equitum, another senior generalship.
emperorship as a nominal colleague to his uncle and brother. Then the court of Valentinian II travelled to join Gratian at Trier (Augusta Treverorum). During this process, Theodosius had remained in North Africa. At some point in early 276 or possibly late 375 he was executed in Carthage, North Africa’s largest city. His young son departed his command in Moesia on the Danube for his melancholy and reflective exile in Spain.

Within a few months, circumstances began to change. Once Merobaudes and Valentinian II arrived at Trier, Gratian purged Maximinus and the Praetorian Prefect’s followers. Soon members of the Theodosian family returned to court. Yet Theodosius the younger remained in Spain until he was suddenly recalled in late 278. Hostile Goths had destroyed the emperor Valens and his entire army at the battle of Hadrianople on 9 August. Gratian rapidly thrust Theodosius into the fray and soon appointed him as his co-emperor. Theodosius I himself would not only found a long-lived dynasty but become associated with some of the most important events in the history of the late Empire. Thus, the son’s life influences our view of the father’s as much as the father’s influenced contemporaries’ view of the son.

Our problem is that scholars still could better reconcile the documented events of Theodosius’ life with the political realities of the late fourth century. Therefore, this paper describes the previously unknown ways the politics of the Valentinianic dynasty defined the career and legacy of Theodosius the elder. I recharacterize late 360s AD British campaign, explaining that the general focused on suppressing the usurper Valentinus, the politically connected brother-in-law of the emperor’s Praetorian Prefect. I then describe how politics followed Theodosius on his campaign against the Moorish rebel Firmus where his severity in response to a shocking betrayal fueled hostility in political circles. Finally, I address the political purges and counter-purges that caused the execution of Theodosius and the ascent of his son to emperor a mere three years later; I argue that the only way to fully understand the situation is to identify not only Theodosius’ killer, but also his other enemies. To explain the whole thesis, I discuss the literary approach of our main source, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus whose favorable assessment of Theodosius contains nuanced liable to misinterpretation.

My focus on three events naturally encourages a certain structure for the paper. I thus divide it into three sections focused on the Barbarian Conspiracy in Britain, the Revolt of Firmus in North Africa, and finally the execution of Theodosius at Carthage. Before
surveying those three incidents, I offer a brief discussion of the historical approach of Ammianus Marcellinus who is by far our most important source.

The Ammianus section is essentially an apology. Scholars have spilled much ink on the historian’s message and prejudices, yet little of it is directed at the figure of Theodosius the elder in his history. Only a brief study by Thompson purports to be directed at the figure of Theodosius specifically. Since Ammianus wrote during the reign of his son Theodosius I, the historian faced pressure from political censorship that dictated he treat the emperor’s father differently. I argue that Ammianus uses specifically panegyrical language to satisfy the regime’s censors and his own ambitions regarding the panegyrical genre; yet he does this while concealing an analysis that matches the other heroes of his history. He provides a laudatory but critical perspective. Thus, I unabashedly offer an alternative view that influences my analysis of the events of the general’s career.

The British section also argues for a radical thesis. Scholars have generally accepted the essential narrative in Ammianus, our main source, uncritically. Instead, they argue over details such as the precise dates and nature of the administrative reorganization undertaken by Theodosius. The only criticism of the essential story, that Theodosius saved Britain from an overwhelming barbarian invasion, we find in an article by Phillip Bartholomew. He rightly observes some of the deficiencies in the existing consensus before proposing a somewhat bizarre alternative. I reconcile Ammianus’ account with historical reality by recourse to both his text and other sources. All of them agree that Theodosius defeated an executed Valentinus for self-interested treason. I argue that Theodosius primary task in Britain was not to attack unmentioned barbarians but rather to confront a known usurper. I discuss the text in Ammianus, literary sources, other historians, and archaeology to buttress this new conclusion. Since I overturn the existing historical consensus, I provide a brief discussion for what this means for some of the other issues attributed to Theodosius’ campaign in Britain.

I address the Firmus revolt more conservatively. Although the revolt itself has motivated some scholarship, most of this neglects the revolt’s broad political context. Instead,

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the existing material considers the general conditions of North Africa and even the career of Theodosius’ predecessor, the Comes Romanus. Of the useful material, an article by Drijvers offers a general overview while one by Seager argues that our main source Ammianus seeks to malign Theodosius’ generalship despite ostensibly panegyrical language. I argue that both Theodosius and Valentinian initially underestimated the gravity of the threat posed by Firmus. Therefore, Theodosius’ failures and harshness in North Africa should largely be attributed to the corrupt political situation in North Africa and the imperial court. I maintain that Ammianus subtly hints this corrupt political situation led to Theodosius’ final fate.

By comparison, we possess extensive scholarship on Theodosius’ execution and the contemporaneous political crisis. New manuscripts of Jerome’s Chronicon and prosopographical studies have dated much of the earlier material. We find the current scholarly consensus explained in articles by Kelly, Errington, and Demandt. Essentially, they rely on the new manuscripts of Jerome to show that Maximinus the Praetorian Prefect ordered Theodosius’ execution in the political vacuum that emperor Valentinian I’s death caused; when Merobaudes the Magister Peditum and the court of Valentinian II arrived in Trier, they purged Maximinus and welcomed back members of Theodosius’ family. A number of new articles, especially by Sivan and Treadgold, attack this mainstream view. By contrast, I accept the scholarly consensus. Yet I maintain that it insufficiently explains the political circumstances. I argue that the emperor Valens was a firm enemy of the Theodosian family but did not conspire in Theodosius’ execution. This helps resolve some of the existing controversy. Scholars have failed to reconcile Theodosius the younger’s continued exile after the death of the family’s enemy Maximinus. This seems naturally attributable to Valens, but would contradict Kelly’s view of the near practical impossibility of Valens arranging

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Theodosius’ death all the way from Syria. Thus, the overall picture I offer is one of Theodosius’ life entirely defined by imperial politics. This was obviously a sensitive perspective for our sources to convey.

Our ancient sources are numerous but largely fragmentary. The fifth century New History of Zosimus and History against the Pagans of Orosius are among the few sources to cover the entire period. Yet both Zosimus and Orosius are not only highly prejudiced, albeit quite differently, but also rarely provide a desirable level of detail. The fifth century militant Orthodox Christian Orosius is among the only authors to mention Theodosius’ execution; yet he refuses to attribute responsibility. The equally militant pagan Zosimus, who largely abridges the circa-400 AD History of Eunapius, largely serves to supplement and confirm other knowledge. The Chronicon of St. Jerome is more useful primarily because of the attached gloss which appears to be written by a contemporary. Jerome provides the only explicit evidence of Maximinus’ role in Theodosius’ execution as well as evidence for the barbarian conspiracy in Britain. He also wrote early enough to have personal knowledge of political figures in Theodosius’ world. Additionally, the panegyric to Theodosius I which an orator called Pacatus delivered in 389 also provides veiled hints regarding the general’s career. Likewise, we can carefully use the Notitia Dignitatum, late fourth-early fifth century administrative document, to calculate general circumstances and search the fifth century Theodosian code for a collection of laws that often list specific office-holders and dates. Letters and published speeches by the contemporary senator-politician Symmachus also occasionally offer context. Occasionally we encounter references in other sources. Yet, aside from the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, the evidence is largely limited and eclectic.

We can use these tools to analyze Theodosius’ life when discarding the literary themes of our sources and adding due weight to Late Antique politics. We then see Theodosius the elder defined by the political constraints of a role as a senior general in the imperial court. We learn that imperial politics was never far from any of the events of his life. This becomes clear through all three problems we consider. Seeking to discern what Theodosius confronted in Britain through Ammianus’ overly stylized narrative, we learn the general actually handled a sensitive political task. To discover contemporaries’ view of his role in the Firmus revolt, we learn opinions were largely shaped through the factionalism of Empire-wide politics. When

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12 Kelly, “Political Crisis,” 401.
13 Discussed in section 4 below.
14 Discussed in section 2, below.
we examine Theodosius’ end, we also grapple with a political question: why did Theodosius’ son remain in exile when his other associates were welcomed back to the court of the emperor Gratian? The answer, that the emperor Valens opposed the Theodosians but did not murder the father, evidences the same essential reality. A political explanation is even necessary to understand the events surrounding the elder Theodosius’ death. It seems the source material overstates practical excuses for political events. This become clear when we pay attention to the inclinations of our ancient sources, particularly the most important of them. Therefore it is to the historian Ammianus that we now turn.

II. Theodosius and Ammianus

i. Who was Ammianus Marcellinus?

Any survey of the ancient evidence for the career of the elder Theodosius must rely heavily on the Res Gestae (deeds done) of Ammianus Marcellinus. A former military officer (Protector Domesticus Adulescens) who served in the wars of the 350s-360s AD, Ammianus retired at Rome and soon thereafter must have begun writing his monumental Latin history. Stylistically, Ammianus emulated the greats of the Latin historical tradition: Livy, Sallust, and especially Tacitus. Ammianus commenced his Res Gestae with the accession of the emperor Nerva in 96 AD where Tacitus had concluded his Histories. The Res Gestae therefore cover a nearly three hundred year period up to the Goths' destruction of the emperor Valens (364-378) at Hadrianople in 378, yet they do so in uneven fashion. The first two hundred sixty years of the Res Gestae have not survived to the modern era, but overall seem to have offered a less detail account than the surviving portion.15 Yet judging from Ammianus' mention of his detailed account of the emperor Constans' (337-350) British expedition a few years before the surviving portion commences,16 we should conclude the work became more detailed as it approached the historian's own time. The surviving portion appears as much a personal memoire--"A Protector and his Times"--as a centuries long narrative history. Thus, the detail Ammianus provides varies greatly with his knowledge and pedantic interests.17 A chapter of text to which Ammianus might otherwise devote several years covers the seventy two day siege of Amida in whose defense the author had served. Thus, although Ammianus considered himself a historian, he wrote history as a "Graecus et quondam miles" (a former soldier and a

16 This among other clues. Cf. Barnes, Reality, 216; Den Boeft et al., Commentary 27, 190-191.
17 Ammianus adds extended excursus (extended discussions) on obscure topics to his history.
'Greek', a Pagan). Therefore, while Ammianus himself has justly merited many scholarly studies, accounts of his entire work must necessarily simplify the nuances of vastly differing individual sections. Only specialized works can devote full and necessary detail to many aspects of his work; little from this mass considers the career of Theodosius the elder. This is especially regrettable because the figure of Theodosius stands alone in the Res Gestae. On the one hand, he is the figure Ammianus most bluntly panegyrizes with phrases like "dux nominis incluti" (leader of noble name). On the other hand, Theodosius' legacy remained the most politically charged of any figure of the Res Gestae into Ammianus' own day. The historian's surviving work covers events under the two previous imperial houses whose leaders remained politically relevant but had largely ceased to be ideologically threatening to the imperial regime of the emperor Theodosius I. Yet in the final books of his history, Ammianus covers Theodosius, the homonymous father of the reigning emperor, who was executed only three years before his son's accession. Ammianus usually does not discuss anything so sensitive; he may even have restructured his history to avoid mentioning the execution. Thus, his decision to offer detail on select episodes from the career of the emperor's father requires significant attention to comparative evidence.

ii. Ammianus in Scholarship

Many distinguished scholars have discussed Ammianus as a historian. Understandably, we find the majority of relevant material on Theodosius in general Ammianus work. Modern scholarship of Edward Gibbon's "faithful guide" has a long history, beginning with Gibbon's own Decline and Fall which popularized the eponymous field and the study of the late Empire generally. Studies since Gibbon have covered many aspects of Ammianus, from his style, to ideology, to biography, reaching their apex in the recent publication of the Philological and Historical Commentary which offers detailed discussion of the author's every sentence and greatly enhances this thesis. Other relevant material on the whole of the Res Gestae includes works by Thompson, Syme, Blockley,

19 Amm. Marc. 28.3.1
20 While the emperor Valentinian II lived into the 390s, he remained a puppet of Theodosius I, his opponents, and courtiers. Thus, there remained substantially less pressure to eulogize the dying Valentinianic family.
21 A. Hoepfner, La Mort du Magister Militum Théodose,” Revue des Études Latines 14 (1936), 120; Thompson, Historical Work, 94.
22 E. Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire II, (London: Elecbook, 1999), 575.
Sabbah, Seager, Matthews, Barnes, and Kelly. Additional articles and chapters address the two major episodes from Theodosius' career that Ammianus describes: the Barbarian Conspiracy in Britain and the revolt of Firmus in North Africa. Yet overall, the bibliography on Ammianus’ approach to Theodosius the elder remains very limited.

This is a shame because the reigning emperor's executed father presented a political danger unique among Ammianus’ subjects. Thus, we should expect a unique treatment that renders the historian's general tendencies unreliable. A casual glance confirms this supposition. Ammianus overtly panegyrizes Theodosius with a sort of flamboyant praise absent even from descriptions of his other heroes Julian (361-363) and Ursicinus. This praise largely includes superficial appellations like "dux efficacissimus" (most effective leader) and "amplissimus ductor" (most potent leader). In contrast, Ammianus provides far more nuanced and critical descriptions of events, particularly relating to the Firmus revolt. This explains the current scholarly consensus: The Theodosian regime compelled Ammianus to superficially praise a man whom the historian surreptitiously but powerfully undermines through descriptions of brutality and failures. Yet this view falls before close scrutiny. I argue that laudatory language and elaborate deceptions suit the historian’s literary aspirations as well as political needs. These panegyrical forms provide cover for a narrative that Ammianus’ informed fourth century readers could tell matched the historian’s approach towards his other heroes: he praises them but not without criticism. Hence, we should discard the critical view of Theodosius in many modern scholars.

Seager, the most comprehensive proponent of Ammianus’ hostility to Theodosius, is typical. He relies entirely on reading ambiguous phrases a single way. For example, he says

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24 There are also references to the emperor himself Amm. Marc. 29.6.15 and other contemporary figures. Yet these largely comprise brief references and none besides the mention of his son with the political weight accorded to Theodosius the elder who receives three while chapters.


26 Amm. Marc. 27.8.6

27 Amm. Marc. 29.5.2 For a full list see Thompson, *Historical Work*, 89.

28 Amm. Marc. 29.5.1-56

that Ammianus writes the phrase "dux nominis incluti" (leader of noble name) to remind the reader of the censorship to which he was subject. Yet there is no reason to believe Ammianus intended his reader to understand that particular subtlety. Seager shows that Ammianus uses phrases that can be interpreted as hostile but he does not explain why they must be interpreted in their hostile sense. Instead, a closer analysis shows inconsistencies that do not fit a covert ad hominem attack.

The trouble with Seager’s thesis lies in Ammianus’ utter inconsistency. The two major surviving narratives of Theodosius, in Britain and Mauritania, seem to describe two different figures. This is especially true of the characteristics scholars generally consider hostile. During the Firmus revolt, Theodosius brutally punishes disloyal soldiers, amputating the hands of a unit of archers. Yet in Britain he entices treasonous soldiers to return to his banner with a promise of amnesty. This severely undermines the image of Theodosius as a cruel disciplinarian. Political pressure cannot explain it; if Ammianus could mention harsh penalties in Africa, surely he could also in Britain. The inconsistency makes this a poor way to undermine Theodosius.

Likewise, Ammianus portrays Theodosius hastily hurrying around Mauritania, exposing himself to numerous enemies. By contrast, heeding the advice of deserters in London, he slowly plans a campaign to avoid suspected ambushes. Seager maintains Ammianus attacks Theodosius as reckless in the one instance and cowardly in the other. Perhaps he is right. Yet if so, Ammianus' attacks do not comprise separate parts of a sustained invective because they undermine one another. Theodosius may display two contradictory faults but, given their differentiation, neither can characterize him. It is a poor way to show judgement faults. Indeed, as a result of these contradictory decisions, Theodosius largely succeeds in his military campaigns.

Yet he does sometimes fail. We find these setbacks almost entirely in the Firmus narrative. It is profoundly unlikely Ammianus knew of no errors whatsoever that he could mention in Britain. Thus, Theodosius’ mistakes are isolated to a small section of text and do

30 Amm. Marc. 28.3.1; Seager, “Ammianus and Jugurtha,” 2.
31 Amm. Marc. 29.5.22; Seager, Ammianus and Jugurtha, 4.
32 Amm. Marc. 27.8.10
33 Amm. Marc. 27.8.9
34 Seager, Ammianus and Jugurtha, 2, 5-6.
not prevent his overall success. Quite simply, if Ammianus intended to undermine Theodosius he would not have done it in this way.

Ammianus also adds other details inconsistent with a covert condemnation of the Spanish general. He probably praises Theodosius’ concern for his wife and certainly lauds his care for his troops and the African provincials.\(^{35}\) I provide these examples as the most obvious of many compliments that neither seem ingenuine nor directly aid the overall narrative. Since these are asides that neither add to Ammianus’ flowery appellations for the general nor contribute to the overall story, he would not mention them if his purpose were to malign Theodosius. Both the unnecessary praise and the inconsistency of the faults means Ammianus surely did not intend to attack him. Instead the limited criticisms appear like the nuanced critiques Ammianus provides for his other heroes, Julian and Ursicinus. We should recall this method when considering Ammianus as a historian.

iii. Ammianus’ View of Theodosius

We should recall a simple principle that is too easily forgotten. Ammianus could not possibly have anticipated that his Res Gestae would be the sole surviving source for much of the history of the latter Roman Empire. He wrote in a highly bureaucratized, literary, political, and militarized environment, producing a work intended to suit his high literary aspirations. He composed the surviving portions of the Res Gestae as almost a memoire. He did not intend to produce a textbook account of facts. Instead he offers the personal opinions of a “miles quondam et Graecus”.

Thus, Ammianus frequently deceives his reader; he does so by grafting his view onto what he assumes is common knowledge. Portraying the Valentinus revolt as a barbarian invasion allows Ammianus to both emulate the literary approach of Tacitus whose noble heroes Iulius Agricola and Suetonius Paulinus defeat exotic British barbarians before betrayals by corrupt politicians, and also denigrate the significance of an uppity Pannonian before one of Ammianus’ own heroes. Ammianus similarly conceals the essential accuracy of the Comes Romanus’ judgement of Firmus, that the Moorish chieftain presented a grave danger, in order to diminish a man he detested. He can write this way because of his readers’ presumed knowledge. A knowledgeable readership allows Ammianus to use his literary skill to revise the conventional interpretation but prohibits him from directly lying about facts his readers would recognize. We can trust most factual statements but should be suspicious of the

\(^{35}\) See section 3.3 below.
assumptions that result from the specific facts provided. Fortunately, careful attention to our other ancient source material and evidence in Ammianus allows us to place the historian’s statements into a more accurate general picture. This also helps show his prejudices and approach.

Ammianus chooses to discuss the politically sensitive figure of Theodosius at much greater length than the minimum necessary to provide context for his history. For example, his account of the Barbarian Conspiracy in Britain is far longer than the few perfunctory sentences devoted to Lupicinus’ similar expedition. He must have a purpose for making this choice. Likewise, his praise-filled names for Theodosius are more exaggerated than minimal political correctness demanded. It seems like Ammianus wanted to emulate the style of panegyric prominent in his time in court orators like Pacatus. Yet it is unsurprising that even in panegyric, Ammianus did not wish to abandon his critical faculties. Thus, as well as adding his usual opinions and prejudices, he uses the panegyrical language to hide a critical assessment of Theodosius. This is rightly the opinion of Seager et al. Yet, we would be wrong to suppose Ammianus severely maligns Theodosius. Instead, the general mostly succeeds militarily and gives orders that are mostly praiseworthy. Ammianus critically encomizes Theodosius like he does his favorite hero Julian. We would be wrong to assume the historian disliked the general. His opinion of the Theodosius I, whatever it may have been, need not determine his opinion of that emperor’s father. He even invokes Domitius Corbulo who was effectively succeeded by a son in law with whose conduct Corbulo provides an especially poignant contrast. It seems that Ammianus’ essential agreement with the Theodosian regime enables his extended narrative. We merely must use our judgement to understand this feature of a historian who wrote not as an “accurate and faithful guide” but as a “miles quondam et Graecus”. This choice may compromise his value as source, but his thoughtful opinions only enhance his stature as a historian. It is from this perspective that he describes Theodosius in Britain.

III. Theodosius in Britain

i. The British Campaign: Overview

Source material for Theodosius’ British campaign consists almost exclusively of Ammianus’ narrative. The crisis first arises when the emperor Valentinian I receives a

36 Cf. PLRE I, ‘Drepanius’
37 Amm. Marc. 29.5.4
38 Amm. Marc. 27.8.1-10 and 28.3.1-9
sudden warning that Britain has fallen into a “barbarian conspiracy”.\textsuperscript{39} Valentinian had recently fallen ill and, fearing imminent death, proclaimed his young son Gratian as co-emperor along with himself and his brother Valens. Having recovered shortly before receiving the warning, Valentinian first dispatches the general Severus,\textsuperscript{40} and on his unsuccessful return, the general Iovinus.\textsuperscript{41} When Iovinus also fails to rectify the situation, Valentinian sends Theodosius with a small field army. Theodosius lands at Richborough and marches towards London. He attacks bands of an unspecified enemy, distributes recaptured booty to his army as well as its original owners, and offers an amnesty for deserters who return to the Roman banner. He reaches London and encamps there while consulting deserters and awaiting the general Dulcitius\textsuperscript{42} whom he requested.

In book 28, Theodosius departs north from London, carefully avoiding potential ambushes. He manages to overcome Valentinus, the brother-in-law of the notorious Praetorian Prefect Maximinus, and orders Dulcitius, who must have just arrived, to execute the defeated rebel.\textsuperscript{43} Theodosius then disbands the corrupted Areani border scouts,\textsuperscript{44} repairs the island’s defenses, and sails back to Gaul. Valentinian promotes him to Magister Equitum for his services and continues to employ him at court alongside Maximinus.

Scholars have generally accepted this account of events in Britain. While arguing about secondary aspects, such as dating or the administrative reform conducted afterwards, they take Ammianus’ core narrative as factual cannon, critiquing his style while offering few reinterpretations.\textsuperscript{45} Essentially the problem we face is that the Barbarian Conspiracy is considered in longer archaeological accounts of Britain or else in Ammianus scholarship; thus, it has not been considered in the context of fourth century imperial politics as a whole but rather as an isolated example. A reinterpretation shows the political importance of the British campaign to Theodosius’ political profile.

\textsuperscript{39} Amm. Marc. 27.8.1
\textsuperscript{40} PLRE I, ‘Severus 10’.
\textsuperscript{41} PLRE I, ‘Iovinus 6’.
\textsuperscript{42} PLRE I, ‘Dulcitius 4’.
\textsuperscript{43} Cf. PLRE I, ‘Valentinus 5’.
\textsuperscript{44} Some emend the term, only in Ammianus, to “Arcani”.
\textsuperscript{45} A contrast to this approach is offered by Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 181-184 who argues that the conspiracy was actually largely a famine from Ammianus’ customary use of “inopiam” Amm. Marc.27.8.1. This is very dubious given Britain’s role as an exporter of grain under Julian, Amm. Marc. 28.2.3. The tenuousness of this single word, the lack of archaeological evidence, literary evidence in other writers, and lack of other evidence in Ammianus. The far simpler explanation is that Ammianus uses the word in a slightly different sense than he normally does. E.A. Thompson, “Ammianus and Britain,” 1-15 considers the evidence for the interpretation here but lacks the confidence and context to fully endorse the conclusion.
Bartholomew, the only important scholar to question the conventional view, observes many of the same weaknesses in the ‘barbarian invasion’ story that we both reject. He argues that Theodosius was dispatched to confront a sudden famine rather than a barbarian attack. This is already dubious given Britain’s role as an exporter of grain under Julian. The only evidence he identifies is the word “inopiam” in Ammianus’ explanation of general conditions that “Britannias...barbarica conspiratione ad ultimam vexatas inopiam” (the Britains harmed to the greatest “inopiam”). He observes that Ammianus always uses the word “inopiam” to refer to famine. Yet a tendency does not require that an author always maintain his habit in choosing words. Since Bartholomew’s circumstantial evidence is very weak, it seems far more sensible to attribute the word “inopiam” to a change in Ammianus’ habit rather than an utterly unattested famine. Two other indications presage my analysis. First, a very sloppy article by Thompson does seem to indicate further usurpation attempts in the years before Theodosius’ time; this obviously evidences a pattern with which Ammianus doubtlessly assumed his readers’ familiarity. Moreover, recent archaeological work has failed to evidence descriptions of barbarian attacks. This has led to a sense of general discomfort among scholars which there have been insufficient attempts to explain. Thus, I intend to ascertain what really happened in Britain behind Ammianus’ obtuse and unnatural language.

When we closely consider the conventional story in light of Ammianus’ approach and other source material, we uncover a greatly distorted account. Ammianus portrays the defeat of the usurper Valentinus as a series of campaigns against barbarians. This becomes clear from Ammianus’ narrative which never explicitly states what readers have only generally assumed, from the misinterpretation of evidence from flowery literature, from the secure and reliable testimony of other historians, and from the common consensus among archaeologists. The role of the usurper Valentinus, by comparison, is attested in Ammianus and three other sources; the only revision I propose is attribute to him greater importance than modern readers of Ammianus usually grant. Yet this minor revision of interpretation profoundly affects how

46 Amm. Marc. 28.2.3
47 Amm. Marc. 72.8.1; Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 181.
48 Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 181 refers to general problems of food shortage in the Roman army. Ammianus, who may have been a logistics officer, usually complains food shortages explicitly. N.J.E. Austin, Ammianus on Warfare: An Investigation into Ammianus’ Military Knowledge, (Brussels: Latomus, 1979), 14-15.
49 Thompson, “Ammianus and Britain,” 2 writes “We cannot possibly ascribe this degree of incompetence to so great an historian as Ammianus.” The assumptions that merit as an ancient historian is based on modern textbook writing is only one of the sloppy and outdated assumptions Thompson makes about our main source.
50 See section 3.5
we view Late Antique Britain. Thus, I provide a new interpretation of the Barbarian Conspiracy and its bearing on Theodosius’ political career.

ii. Ammianus on the Barbarian Conspiracy: A Closer Reading

We can begin to understand the revolt of Valentinus from the approach taken by many modern scholars who maintain that Ammianus offers a highly artificial laudation. 51 We have already discussed his motives for doing so. Yet that he does so is unambiguous. Ammianus peppers his descriptions of Theodosius with personal praise such as “dux efficacissimus” and “dux nominis incluti”. 52 This is all the more remarkable given the exceedingly negative tenor of the Res Gestae. 53 Yet most pointedly, an author does not employ praise-filled adjectives except to praise on at least a superficial level. Even sarcastic use would lead us to expect a positive yet sarcastic description of events. We should expect that Ammianus describes Theodosius’ deeds in Britain positively and this is what we find. Ammianus writes an account of Theodosius so panegyrical that he does not offer a single word of censure. This merits suspicion. As we have discussed, both literary and political objectives motivated Ammianus to offer an unbalanced narrative. Where we can easily detect, the account we read is highly imbalanced. We should expect more unevenness as we examine the Barbarian Conspiracy more closely. Ammianus carefully offers no facts which are provably wrong but rather manipulates his account by selecting the material to include in his narrative. Combined with the predilections of scholars, this ensures that only a few accurate if unimportant additions are enough to distort an account of a usurpation. We need merely understand why.

A long cultural and literary history influences Ammianus. The Romans had always esteemed victory in foreign wars and yet mourned civil conflict. Thus, Julius Caesar incurred criticism for Triumphing over Roman opponents and Lucan mourned wasted Roman blood. 54 This ideology also characterizes Tacitus, Ammianus’ foremost model, whose Histories resound with similar sentiment. By contrast, a walk through the physical monuments of Rome serves as a tour through successful foreign wars. Literary monuments are similar: both Caesar’s de Bello Gallico and Ammianus’ account of Julian glorify the defeat of Roman enemies. This belief system was a staple feature of Roman culture. Indeed, it was more than that. Roman literary culture required authors to write in reference to a distinct cultural

52 Amm. Marc. 27.8.6 and 28.3.1. For a list see Den Boeft et al., Commentary 27, 188.
53 Eg. D. Rohrbacher, The Historians of Late Antiquity (London: Routledge, 2010), 41.
54 Luc. Phars. 1.13-14
tradition. An author who wished to write a conservative and traditionalistic history in the style of Tacitus would find himself obliged to adopt his forebear’s norms as well as style. Certainly this was true of Ammianus; readers would expect that he accept this belief. Thus, although celebrating civil war was less offensive than in the early Empire, Ammianus faced the expectation that his work would reflect traditional ideology. To call a figure a victor in Civil War would inherently indicate a hostile perspective. To praise a man as “efficacissimus” for his destruction of fellow Romans would seem inherently crazy. Thus, Ammianus was obliged to acquit Theodosius of involvement in civil war. Yet an obligation to alter events poses something of a challenge for a historian.

Luckily for Ammianus, he was not the first to grapple with the constraints of Roman ideological culture. The first emperor Augustus (31 BC-14 AD) had already developed an ideological basis for reconciling this impulse. He celebrated his victory over Mark Antony as a success in a foreign war against Antony’s Egyptian ally. His propaganda and writing naturally exaggerated the importance of foreign conquest vis-à-vis his Roman foe. He wrote, for example, “Aegyptum imperio populi Romani adieci” (I added Egypt to the authority of the Roman people).55 Relying merely on Augustus’ Res Gestae we would no doubt conclude that his Egyptian enemies were aided only by a few “qui fugerant a dominis suis et arma contra rem publicam ceperant” (a few who had fled from their own masters and had snatched up arms against the Republic).56 One imagines less-informed scholars debating whether this sentence referred to Roman traitors maligned as slaves or a contemporaneous slave revolt. We certainly would not conclude that the entire conquest of Egypt was incidental to a great Roman civil war. Luckily we can witness this model in the better documented first century.

Yet the literary technique would last to Ammianus’ day. The historian portrays his hero Julian forced into usurpation57 while Constantius II, a target who neglects to defend the Empire against the Persian king Sapor, is “only victorious in civil wars”:58 Naturally this ideology also characterizes the post-Julian parts of his history.

It fits the Barbarian Conspiracy. Ammianus continually hints that Theodosius’ Roman enemies were foreign barbarians. Arguing from this observation may seem circular: we establish Ammianus portrayed Romans as barbarians to show a tendency that we apply in this

55 Aug. RG. 27.
56 Aug. RG. 25.
57 Eg. Amm. Marc. 20.4.15
58 Amm. Marc. 21.16.15 offers a digestive metaphor to this effect.
case. Yet we can surely conclude that his account matches the expectations we have formed from his and other Roman histories.

Ammianus describes a general barbarian problem only before Theodosius’ arrival. Here, he is intentionally unclear. He mentions the confusing phrase “barbarian conspiracy”, jumps to an account of a barbarian attack in 343, and then describes the barbarian threat. I print the quote here.

Et quoniam, cum Constantis principis actus conponerem motus adulescentis et senescentis oceani situmque Britanniae pro captu virium explanavi ad ea quae digesta sunt semel revolvit ut Ulixes Homericus apud Phaeacas ob difficultatem nimirum replicare formidat. Illud tamen suffict iniquod eo tempore Picti in duas gentes divisi Dicalydonas et Verturiones, itidemque Attacoti bellica hominum nation et Scotti per diversa vagantes multa populabantur Gallicanos [vero] tractus Franci et Saxones isdem confine quo quisque erumpere potuit terra vel mari praedibus acerbis incendiisque et captivorum funeribus hominum violabant.

And, since in giving an account of the history of the emperor Constans I described the ebb and flow of the ocean and the situation of Britain, as well as my powers permitted, I have thought it superfluous to unfold again what has once been set forth, just as Homer's Ulysses among the Phaeacians shrinks from repeating the details of his adventures because of the excessive difficulty of the task. It will, however, be in place to say, that at that time the Picts, divided into two tribes, called Dicalydones and Verturiones, as well as the Attacotti, a warlike race of men, and the Scots, were ranging widely and causing great devastation; while the Gallic regions, wherever anyone could break in by land or by sea, were harassed by the Franks and their neighbours, the Saxons, with cruel robbery, fire, and the murder of all who were taken prisoners.⁵⁹

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He describes Constans’ 343 expedition before announcing “Illud tamen sufficiet dici…” (that however suffices to be said). He then says “quod eo tempore” (because at the time/at this time), before describing the depredations of various barbarian tribes. “eo tempore” could refer to Theodosius’ time, to Constans’, or to the time of Ammianus’ writing. The question is whether these depredations occurred in in Constans’ time or Theodosius’. A conventional view would accept it refers to the Barbarian Conspiracy of 367, but this conventional view also operates under the assumption that the 367 Conspiracy involved major barbarian attacks. Both arguments are circular. I suggest that Ammianus mentions the barbarians to provide context for his readers in 367 and that he uses an intentionally ambiguous phrase. This may either distorts the picture of the Conspiracy without lying, as Bartholomew and I argue for different alternatives, or buttress the conventional view. Yet it seems the ambiguous chronology, whatever picture Ammianus intends us to adopt, describes conditions in Britain generally. He uses the imperfect (past ongoing) tense “populabantur” (were harassing) and “violabant” (were violating) to describe an ongoing situation. While this could simply refer to the temporal period of 367-369, it seems better to imagine that this is a general description of the island and its problems. That would also explain why he invokes the geography he provided in his previous book; he intends to give a general picture of Britain applicable then and now. The general picture accurately describes issues that would concern a commander dispatched in 367. Thus, by mentioning only minor problems rather than the immediate crisis, Ammianus cleverly conceals what Theodosius actually confronted. Likewise, the mention of barbarians in the general introduction primes the reader to imagine the largely undescribed enemies Theodosius confronts as barbarians. Thus, it is striking that

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60 My own translation here is intentionally ambiguous. Rolfe above follows Bartholomew’s interpretation choosing to translate “It will, however, be in place to say…” One imagines Den Boeft et al. would prefer something like “however, that is enough to be said”.

61 This would mean either that the subsequent description occurred “at the time” of Constans, “at this time” of Theodosius’, or “it is enough to say at this time that…” The latter explanation does not receive enough credence because the text is traditionally printed in the Teubner edition with an ahistorical comma between “dici” and “quod”; read without this comma, Ammianus’ phrase is not only ambiguous, but intentionally ambiguous.

62 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 27, 192 argue the conventional view for a 367 Theodosian date whereas Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 175 suggests 343. Thompson, “Ammianus and Britain,” 1-2 follows the conventional view of Den Boeft et al. He suggests that Ammianus, after promising not to repeat his earlier description of tides, would also refrain from repeating his description of 343 barbarian conditions. Yet this assessment ignores the words “sufficiet dici” (it suffices to be said) which may be taken as Ammianus’ apology for offering a brief summary of the earlier description he promised not to repeat. Similarly, Thompson’s argument that Ammianus’ later use of “ad haec prohibenda” Amm. Marc. 27.8.6 (to prevent these things) refers to the mention of ravaging barbarians above, also falls; it can also be taken to refer to the “multa et metuanda” (many things and ones to be feared) at 27.8.3. Yet Thompson’s analysis, while questionable, in no way contradicts my view of Ammianus presenting a general account of Britain’s problems in the fourth century; thus, Theodosius could be dispatched to confront problems similar to those of 343.
Ammianus only mentions barbarians in a general sense and never after Theodosius arrives in Britain.

When he does finally land at Richborough, Theodosius marches for London while dividing his forces to confront “vagantes hostium vastatorias manus” (wandering bands of enemies laying-waste).\(^{63}\) This description instantly invokes an image of ravaging barbarians even though Ammianus nowhere says so explicitly. The word “hostium” suggests foreign rather than domestic enemies; yet for that reason its misapplication regularly serves to malign Roman enemies. Ammianus was doubtless aware that this was how Cicero characterized Catiline and his associates.\(^ {64}\) The word “hostis” suggests an attempt to portray a Roman enemy in foreign garb. This is exactly what Ammianus does. Certainly the use of “hostis” does not directly specify foreign enemies. Likewise, he carefully chooses the word “vagantes” (wandering). Ammianus uses it a few sentences previously\(^ {65}\) to describe the invading barbarians. This also suggests without explicitly stating that Theodosius encountered invading barbarians. Yet it is the Caledonian “Scotti” (Scots) rather than the “Franci et Saxones” (Franks and Saxons) whom Ammianus first describes as “vagantes” (wandering) in 27.8.5. Later, however, in 27.8.7 Ammianus describes “manus” (bands) as “vagantes” (wandering) between Richborough and London. It is inconceivable that Scottish barbarians, originally described as “vagantes” (wandering), were suddenly ravaging the Saxons shore so far from the Scottish border.\(^ {66}\) If so, where did the Franks and Saxons attack? Ammianus presents a cleverly constructed illusion. As a literary and propaganda product, he invokes an image of his hero conquering barbarians at the far edge of the world; this is similar to the stories of monuments of Roman literature like Caesar’s British expeditions and the great Caledonian venture in Tacitus’ Agricola. These literary monuments also purported to be works of history and likewise Ammianus might have considered it his duty as a historian to present Theodosius as a great Roman hero and his own Res Gestae as another literary monument. Yet Ammianus leaves clues for his knowing readers. He never explicitly mentions foreign enemies on route to London. His illusions/allusions also, while suggesting barbarians at first glance, cannot be interpreted that way. That makes sense considering the situation he describes.

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\(^{63}\) Amm. Marc. 27.8.7

\(^{64}\) Cic. Cat. I.1.3, I.11.27, II.4, etc.

\(^{65}\) Amm. Marc. 27.8.5

\(^{66}\) See W.H.C. Frend, “Pagans, Christians, and 'the Barbarian Conspiracy' of A. D. 367 in Roman Britain.” Britannia 15 (1992), 129 for more discussion of the geographical inconsistencies of Ammianus’ description of supposed barbarians
Ammianus mentions Theodosius’ main method for reestablishing Valentinian’s control over Britain: Theodosius regains the loyalty of the troops. Even though Ammianus willingly mentions his hero’s rather brutal conduct in North Africa later,\(^67\) he relates that in Britain Theodosius is exceedingly lenient towards the army. Theodosius offers deserters a full amnesty on their return\(^68\) and distributes a share of goods stolen from the population to his

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\(^{67}\) Cf. Seager, “Ammianus and Jugurtha,” 4-6; Thompson, *Historical Work*, 90.

\(^{68}\) Amm. Marc. 27.8.10
own men. That Theodosius confronts large numbers of Roman soldiers who deserted before the enemy is plausible but unusual. Yet Theodosius also worries about the loyalty of his own army to the extent that Ammianus defends his misappropriation of private citizens’ wealth. These trust issues occupy a substantial place in Ammianus’ narrative; rewarding and pardoning the soldiery are among relatively few listed decisions Theodosius takes regarding his army rather than administration. We cannot escape the conclusion that Theodosius worried about the loyalty of his own men.

Generosity to secure the loyalty of armies was always among the chief characteristics of Roman civil wars. Theodosius’ lenience contrasts markedly with the cruelty of his master in Gaul whom Ammianus roundly criticizes for his treatment of the rank and file. Valentinian, though confronting aggressive barbarians, did not face a civil war. By contrast, Theodosius had arrived in Britain with crack troop from the imperial field army, the Batavi, Heruli, Iovii, and Victores, who had not been exposed to any local corruption and who surely would not have been dispatched if they possessed ties to the island that might lessen their loyalty. Valentinian doubtlessly selected the units he trusted most. Yet, Theodosius deemed it necessary to bribe them with local plunder even though no prior Barbarian Conspiracy would have tried their loyalty. There was a general threat rather than a single specific conspiracy affecting the loyalty of troops dispatched to Britain. A conspiracy among the existing garrison should not have affected reinforcements from Gaul. The best way to explain this concern is a way well-precedented in Roman history: The soldiers were bribed to make the right choice between two competing emperors. Certainly, Ammianus allows for pliable loyalties.

Ammianus himself describes how a messenger “…Britannias indicabat barbarica conspiracione ad ultimam vexatas inopiam…” (…was indicating that the Britains were injured to the greatest harm in a barbarian conspiracy). The term Barbarian Conspiracy has thus become standard nomenclature. What did Ammianus actually mean? A conspiracy

\[69\] Amm. Marc.27.8.6
\[70\] J. Szidat, Usurpator Tanti Nominis: Kaiser und Usurpator in der Spathantike (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010), 195.
\[72\] Amm. Marc. 27.8.7
\[73\] Amm. Marc. 27.8.1
(conspiratio) would naturally suggest Roman betrayal led to “...Britannias...ultimam vexatas inopiam...” (the Britains injured to the greatest harm). Since Ammianus indicates that the Conspiracy caused such a major disaster, if we are to fully trust him, we must assume that he refers not merely to treason but a major betrayal that caused disaster across the island. A conspiracy large enough to cause a Diocese-wide crisis could not merely involve a few bribed soldiers; it would require complicity among senior members of the Roman military administration. Yet contradictorily Ammianus seems to deny this because the only two senior officials he mentions, the British generals Fullofaudes and Nectaridus, both were lost in the conspiracy. Their loss ensures neither could be Ammianus’ unnamed conspirator, Theodosius’ principal opponent. Thus, we must face the conclusion that some colleague betrayed Fullofaudes and Nectaridus. Yet it would be absurd for Ammianus to mention the two men betrayed but not their betrayer, the main agent in the disaster. The only wrongdoer Ammianus mentions is Valentinus. He is left as the only potential senior conspirator.

One could of course reject this conclusion by arguing that Ammianus’ account is illogical and deficient—that a conspiracy did not cause the whole disaster, that Ammianus does not mention the complicity of Fullofaudes or Nectaridius, or that he does not mention the official who betrayed them. Yet such a failure would cast Ammianus’ entire account into grave doubt and force us to rely more on Zosimus and Jerome who both indict Valentinus. Indeed, discussion of a conspiracy helps justify the Ciceronian hostis image. Insinuating Valentinus was allied with barbarians allows Ammianus to portray him as a traitor and Theodosius as a victor in foreign war much as Cicero associated Catiline with the Allobroges. Ammianus hints Valentinus conspired with the barbarians. Why?

There is a simple reason powerful Romans engaged in conspiracies: to seize power. This is true of, inter al., Gaius Silius and Otho in Tacitus and then Procopius and Theodorus in Ammianus. Even Ammianus’ hero Julian secretly plots to have himself named Augustus while deceiving the general Lupicinus in Britain. Countless other treason trials in Ammianus, including those overseen by Valentinus’ brother-in-law, focus on suspected usurpers and their supporters. The general Silvanus even has himself declared emperor because he is suspected of plotting to have himself declared emperor! In the late fourth century, such plots were not aberrations but very common. This pattern especially

74 PLRE I, ‘Fullofaudes’, ibid, ‘Nectaridus’.  
75 Cic. Cat. 3.4-6  
76 Amm. Marc. 20.9.9  
77 Amm. Marc. 15.5.16
characterized late Roman Britain. Unlike much of the Empire, Britain prospered in the third century, likely because it was separated from trouble by the ocean. Yet it also witnessed many usurpers. Carausius and his successor Allectus turned the island into almost a private kingdom. Not long after the later was defeated by Constantius I, Constantius’ son proclaimed himself emperor at York, without consulting the senior Augustus Galerius. Shortly after the Barbarian Conspiracy, the British army would proclaim Magnus Maximus (383-388) as emperor. Yet while Britain raised all these usurpers, the frontiers remained largely stable before 367. A usurpation buttressed by barbarian pressure on the frontiers conforms perfectly with British and Imperial patterns whereas a barbarian conquest and Roman reconquest would be singularly unusual. We should interpret a “barbarian conspiracy” as a conspiracy with barbarian involvement rather than a barbarian invasion with a minor conspiracy. Certainly this better fits Ammianus’ description.

The only group scholars have been able to indict with involvement in the conspiracy are the Roman border scouts called the Areani. The idea is that scouts’ treason near Hadrian’s Wall led to a barbarian takeover. This also might help explain the lack of damage to Hadrian’s Wall. The trouble, as Frend observes, is that Ammianus describes fighting near Richborough and hard besought London. Surely the corruption of a few scouts alone could not have directly caused the collapse of the entire British army and thus barbarian “manus vagantes” (wandering bands) in Kent. Ammianus never mentions Theodosius going anywhere near the north of the Roman Diocese. That is because he confronted a conspiracy rather than an invasion.

Ammianus certainly displays the sensitivity necessary for a highly charged issue in Roman politics. He mentions that Dulcitius, the newly requested Dux rather than Theodosius himself, executes Valentinus. Ammianus already laid the groundwork for this obfuscation by mentioning that Theodosius specifically requested Dulcitius. Significantly Ammianus does not mention any of Dulcitius actions besides the execution of Valentinus. Neither Theodosius nor Dulcitius would actually have personally handled the blood and gore of an

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78 BNP, ‘Britannia’.  
79 Ibid.  
80 Ibid; ibid, ‘Constantinus 1’.  
81 PLRE I, ‘Maximus 39’.  
82 Cf. Den Boeft et al., Commentary 28, 129.  
83 Vide supra  
84 Frend, “Pagans, Christians,” 129.  
85 Amm. Marc. 28.3.6  
86 Amm. Marc. 27.8.10
execution which Dulcitius ordered while under the orders of Theodosius. The distinction is meaningless. Yet Ammianus uses a fair bit of labor in a very brief nineteen capita to make this meaningless distinction. The issue appears to be sensitive.

Theodosius the elder, the father of the reigning emperor at the time of writing, was executed by another target of Ammianus’ history, Maximinus.\textsuperscript{87} Maximinus was the brother-in-law of Valentinus whom Dulcitius executed under Theodosius’ command.\textsuperscript{88} Marriages among the Roman elite served to cement political alliances so Maximinus and Valentinus must have been close connections. If Ammianus wrote that Theodosius the elder himself had executed Valentinus, then he would be justifying Maximinus motivation in executing of the reigning emperor’s father. That would be dangerous to write. Thus, it is surely not coincidental that Jerome, writing in the same environment, refers to Valentinus being suppressed in the passive voice.\textsuperscript{89}

Ammianus himself hints at this animosity. He says that Valentinus hated Theodosius specifically because Theodosius had the military ability to stop him.\textsuperscript{90} This makes no sense. Valentinus would scarcely hate his opponent because of competence. The obvious explanation for this phrase is that Ammianus feels a need to note the enmity between the two families but fears to discuss their full history and rivalry. Instead he offers a bland phrase which prompts his readers’ recollections.

Ammianus’ obituary of Valentinian I in book 30 displays similar nuance. Ammianus records a list of Valentinian’s successes “…per se vel duces…” (through himself or his generals).\textsuperscript{91} “dux” (general/leader) obviously refers to Theodosius because the list of victories Ammianus recounts, against the Saxons, in pacifying Britain, against Valentinus, and against Firmus, is a list of Theodosius’ deeds. This not only emphasizes that Ammianus praises Theodosius far more than political pressure would require since the assessment of Valentinian could well be concerned only with the emperor’s deeds, it also provides evidence for Britain. Crucially these sentences are numbered separately in the Teubner edition. I print the text below.

\textsuperscript{87} Thompson, \textit{Historical Work}, 94. See section 4.1
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{PLRE} I, 1, ‘Maximinus 7’.
\textsuperscript{89} Jer. \textit{Chron.} 286.7.e (Helm, 246).
\textsuperscript{90} Amm. Marc. 28.3.4
\textsuperscript{91} Amm. Marc. 30.6.9 NB Ammianus tends to use \textit{dux} in the casual rather than technical sense; he regularly labels Theodosius as dux and we can understand a similar sense here.
8. *Inter haec tamen caute gesta iam conuersos ad metuendam rabiem Saxonas semper quolibet inexplo-rato ruentes delatosque tunc ad...res tractus, quorum spoliis paene redierant locupletes, malefido quidem, sed utili commento peremit praeda raptoribus ui fractis excussa.*

9. *Itidemque Britannos cateruas superfusorum hostium non ferentes spe meliorum assumpta in libertatem et quietem restituit placidam nullo paene redire permissro grassatorum ad sua.*

10. *Efficacia pari Valentinum quoque, Pannonium exsulem, per has prouincias molientem otium turbare commune, antequam negotium efferuescat, oppressit. Africam deinde malo repentino perculsam discriminis magnis exemit, cum uoraces militarium fastus ferre nequiens Firmus ad omnes dissensionum motus perflabiles gentes Mauricas concitasset.*

8. While he was accomplishing these exploits with due caution, the Saxons, who had already broken out into formidable madness and were always rushing wherever they pleased without reconnaissances, had then invaded the maritime districts, and had almost returned enriched with the spoils which they took; but by a device which was treacherous but expedient he overwhelmed and stripped of their booty the robbers thus forcibly crushed.

9. Again, when the Britons could not resist the hordes of enemies that were overrunning their country, he restored them to freedom and quiet peace with the hope of better conditions, and allowed almost none of the plunderers to return to his home.

10. With like effectiveness he also crushed Valentinus, the exile from Pannonia, who was trying to disturb the public peace in that province, before his design came to a head. Next, he saved Africa from great dangers, when that country was in the throes of an unexpected disaster; for Firmus was unable to endure the greed and arrogance of the military officials and had aroused the Moorish tribes, whose ardour can always easily be fanned to any plan of dissension.92

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92 Amm. Marc. 30.7.8-10; trans. Rolfe, *Ammianus*, 30.7.8-10.
Notice that Ammianus joins the first mention of Saxons to Britain with “itidemque” (and in the same way) and the last mention of Africa to the rest with “deinde” (thence); the references to Britain, sentences nine and ten, are not joined together and so form part of the same section. The Saxons section therefore need not relate to the same theater as the two joined British sections. Instead, it must refer to Theodosius previous campaign against the Saxons in Germania Inferior as Bartholomew has established. This is significant because within the British section Ammianus again neglects to mention any barbarians. Instead he again refers to “hostes” (enemies) before mentioning that Theodosius restored Britain in “…in libertatem et quietem… placidam…” (into liberty and calm peace). The concern with “libertas” (liberty) subtly suggests the word “tyrannis/τυραννίς” (tyranny) which Jerome, Zosimus, and Jordanes employ, referring to the same source Ammianus likely used. Thus, Ammianus summarizes the Barbarian Conspiracy in the obituary as entirely a usurpation. This matches his main account of the conspiracy which mentions unrelated barbarian problems, mysterious hostes in Britain, and finally the execution of Valentinus. Ammianus provides a literary narrative of grand exploits at the edge of the world without explicitly contradicting the report he and the other historians relied upon.

The point is that Ammianus is especially concerned with imperial politics. Much of the British section in book 28 specifically discusses the usurpation of Valentinus. Ammianus also adjusts book 27, mentioning Dulcitius’ assignment, in light of Valentinus. On a closer glance, the revolt does pervade Ammianus’ account. The discrepancy largely results from modern scholarship. A barbarian invasion of Britain and a heroic general appeal far more to modern, often British, scholars than does yet another of Ammianus’ countless descriptions of conspiracies and executions. Thus, we have failed to look beyond Ammianus’ initial labelling and analyzed the entire nineteen capita in light of the wrong presumed subject. Only by recourse to our other limited sources can we begin to properly read Ammianus’ account of the Barbarian Conspiracy.

iii. Panegyrics and Poems: No Evidence of Barbarians

We also find numerous references to Theodosius’ career in panegyric and poetry, but most of these are too vague to be useful. These do, however, reinforce Bartholomew’s thesis

94 See below
95 Claud. Cons. Hon. 4.8.24-33; Pan. Lat. 2.5.1-2; Symm. Relat. 9.4 and 43.2; etc
96 There is also an inscription which refers vaguely to Theodosius exploits. AE, 1931 (1932), 53.
that Theodosius fought a separate campaign against the Saxons in Germany; all references to Saxons seem intentionally separated from those to British tribes and the orator Pacatus specifically mentions the Rhine river.\textsuperscript{97} Aside from that, all the rhetoric in panegyric and poetry fits the standard expected for laudation of a man who held an important command in Britain: he defeats exotic tribes in exotic places. The genre comfortably employs stock descriptions of angry Scots for any honoree known to have commanded in Britain just as Achilles can be described as swift footed while lounging. It should not surprise that panegyrical speeches and poems to not depart from the conventional forms in order to discuss controversial issues. None of these sources unambiguously mentions Firmus, the target of Theodoius’ African campaign, so it is also predictable that they do not mention Valentinus by name either.

Yet one source may provide a vague hint. The Gallic orator and politician Pacatus delivered a panegyric of Theodosius I in 389 in which he also praises the emperor’s father. I print part of that passage here:


What, I What, I say, shall I do? Shall I turn to what the Rhine and Waal have seen? Now the Danube, bloody with slaughter of Sarmatians, will confront me. Shall I tell of Britain, worn out by infantry battles? The Saxon, exhausted by naval warfare, will be called to mind. Shall I speak of the Scot, driven back into his bogs? All the Alamanni, forced into their pathless wastes, and both Moorish peoples will occur to me.\textsuperscript{98}

Pacatus may intend the fourth sentence (\textit{attritam…}) to reference the civil war against Valentinus since the Saxon sentence separates it from the one where the Scots are the enemy whom the reader would otherwise suppose he fought in “\textit{pedestribus proeliis}” (foot battles). Since Pacatus specifies that Theodosius fought the Saxons in “\textit{bellis navalibus}” (naval campaigns) which contrasts with the infantry battles in the previous sentence, Pacatus ensures

\textsuperscript{97}\textit{Pan. Lat.} 2.5.2
\textsuperscript{98}\textit{Pan. Lat.} 2.5.2. Trans. slightly modified (see note on MSS below) from Birley, \textit{Government}, 634.
his reader does not attribute the state of Britain to the Saxons. 99 “pedestribus proeliis” (foot battles) so starkly contrasts with “bellis navalibus” (naval campaigns) that Pacatus must have intended to differentiate the sentences. By inserting the “bellis navalibus” (naval campaigns) sentence between the “Brittaniam attritam” (Britain ground down) and the “Scotum redactum” (Scot driven back) sentences, he specifies these are separate events. Instead, This clever rhetorical structure echoes Ammianus. Both authors mention Theodosius fighting an unnamed foe in close context to their descriptions of barbarian attacks and thus subtly suggest Theodosius fought barbarians. Yet in Pacatus and Ammianus, a closer reading demonstrates that both authors clearly indicate the barbarians were not the unnamed enemy. Pacatus’ audience, the politically informed Roman Senate, could understand the subtle reference from other sources in Theodosian Rome.

iv. Other Histories Indict only Valentinus

The most striking discrepancy with Ammianus is the evidence our other historical sources provide. The references in Jerome, Zosimus, and Jordanes are extremely brief comprising a combined three sentences to Ammianus’ nineteen capita. Yet in the context of Britain, these three authors mention only the revolt and suppression of Valentinus rather than any barbarian threat. 100 We shall see that there is no reason to give their shorter narratives any less credence than Ammianus’ longer one. To understand why we owe attention to those historical accounts, we must understand what the authors intend when writing.

We have already discussed Ammianus’ literary approach. He writes accurate yet distorted history. The other historians all offer far less detail. Their works summarize the event within longer narratives of Roman history. Often this is a crude process; unlike

99 Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 183-184 argues we should maintain the reading “Bataviam” (Batavia) of the older manuscript M rather than the emended “Britanniam” in M’s descendent W; cf. M. Durry, *Pline le Jeune: Panégyrique de Trajan*, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1938), 74 for the stemma. If so, then Pacatus’ speech is reduced to a single stock reference to Scots. Yet, the fact that “Britanniam” is an emendation does not necessarily make the emendation wrong, especially given that the entire manuscript tradition is descended from a single archetype. Indeed, it seems preferable, both because of the contrast between “pedestribus proeliis” (foot battles) and “bellis navalibus” (naval campaigns) and because reading “Bataviam” would accord disproportionate space in Pacatus’ speech to a lesser known campaign.

100 Jer. Chron. 286.7.e (Helm, 246), “Valentinianus in Britania, antequam tyrannidem inuaderet, oppressus” (Valentinus in Britain, before he could secure the tyranny, was suppressed); Jord. Rom. 308: “…Valentinianus in Britannia tyrannidem adsumens in continenti oppressus est” (Valentinus in Britain, assuming the tyranny, was essentially suppressed); Zos. 4.12.2: “κατὰ τόνδε τόν χρόνον Όυλαντινιανός, διὰ τινα πλημμελήματα τὴν Βριταννικὴν νῆσον οὐκέτι κελευθείς, ἐπιθέμος τυραννίδι συναπέθετο ταύτῃ τὸν βίον” (At this time Valentinus, on account of a certain transgression, having been ordered to live on the British island, putting on that tyranny, lost his life). Paul the Deacon, though likely valueless given he wrote in the eighth century (*BNP* II, ‘Paulus 4’) also prints “Valentinus inter haec in Britannia, antequam tyrannidem invaderet, oppressus est” (Amindst these things, Valentinus in Britain, before he could seize the tyranny, was put down). A. Crivelucci, *Pauli Diaconi Historia Romana*, (Rome: Fonti per la Storia d’Italia, 1914), 11.3.i (p. 153).
Ammianus they misdate the revolt of Valentinus.\textsuperscript{101} Yet while a crude memory naturally entails brief and inaccurate statements of facts, it is less likely to compromise the author’s overall assessment. Three undergraduate students’ identical but distant memory of their homework will more likely reflect a standard textbook’s assessment than the book of an excellent revisionist historian. Among modern works we have the privilege of praising the revisionist history because we have comparative material to balance its perspective. We also could display more confidence in the detailed facts, like dates, cited by the historian. Yet the students’ identical memory of a textbook more likely recalls a textbook account and so accepted and trustworthy consensus. We must remember that Ammianus describes recent and sensitive politics whose outline would be familiar to contemporaries; since he can assume general knowledge, he can make concealed references that were intelligible in his own time.\textsuperscript{102} Like the revisionist historian today, Ammianus could never have imagined he would be the sole surviving source for important political events in his time. He probably assumes our familiarity with the same story in 380s Theodosian Rome our other sources reference. Thence, Ammianus manipulates his longer narrative.

Remarkably two of our sources hail from the same context as Ammianus. Jerome likely wrote his \textit{Chronicon}, a work modelled on Eusebius but extended to Theodosius’ time by Jerome himself, in the 380s during which he spent much time resident at Rome.\textsuperscript{103} Zosimus, by comparison, most scholars agree largely copies the work of the equally militant pagan Eunapius of Sardis who wrote in Asia Minor around the beginning of the fifth century.\textsuperscript{104} It is likely none of these authors were influenced by one another. As Jerome and Zosimus contradict Ammianus, we may easily label them independent for our purposes. Likewise, it is highly unlikely that Jerome influenced Eunapius slightly later history given their different literary circles and styles.

Indeed, Jerome particularly parallels Ammianus. Both were literary men who had lived in both Rome and Antioch and wrote around the 380s. The \textit{Chronicon}, like Ammianus’

\textsuperscript{101} Den Boeft \textit{et al.}, \textit{Commentary} 28, 154.
\textsuperscript{102} Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 171-172.
\textsuperscript{103} M.D. Donalson, \textit{A Translation of Jerome’s Chronicon with Historical Commentary}, (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 4-12.
\textsuperscript{104} Bartholomew, “Saxons,” 176 and Birley, \textit{Fasti}, 338 claims to detect a longer account in Eunapius from Zos. 4.35.3 which mentions that Magnus Maximus, in the context of his later rebellion, had served under Theodosius in Britain. It seems more likely these were simply separate references in Eunapius given his focus on eastern affairs (R.C. Blockley, \textit{The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire} vol. 2 (Liverpool: Francis Cairns, 1983), 1-26). Regardless, what matters is that Zosimus, not the most creative historian, could summarize Eunapius’ account into only the usurpation of Valentinus. Eunapius’ account must have been reducible to that.
Res Gestae, ends with the battle of Hadrianopole in 378 and so was likely composed shortly afterwards. Ammianus himself was already long retired from military service by 367 and wrote a total of only nineteen capita, compared to fifty six for the less famous revolt of Firmus. This brevity and context suggest that Ammianus was comparatively ill-informed. Thus, it is highly unlikely Ammianus derived information from one of his military connections. He probably relied on the same information publically available in 380s Rome that Jerome did. Unless it derives from better information, a more detailed account is by no means necessarily more credible. Jerome, likely with the same information, choses only to mention the suppression of Valentinus. Ammianus also mentions Valentinus, but he provides other details to counterbalance the weight of Valentinus’ revolt. By adding unbalanced additional detail, Ammianus presents a vastly distorted story without lying or changing otherwise known facts. It seems Ammianus embellishes what was otherwise public knowledge.

Indeed, even the erroneous chronology in Jerome and Zosimius shows that they wrote knowledgeably. Jerome wrongly associates the suppression of Valentinus with his brother-in-law’s later treason trials at Rome. That brother-in-law, Maximus, would connive in the execution of Theodosius, the man who had killed Valentinus. Jerome’s mistake therefore evidences a knowledge of important political events. Likewise, Zosimus may not even err in his perceived misdating of the revolt of Valentinus. He mentions it immediately before the illness of Valentinian and ascent of Gratian to Augustus in 367 which Ammianus informs us occurred around when Valentinian was first warned about the Barbarian Conspiracy. This is wrong if we associate Valentinus with 369, where Ammianus mentions him, but Ammianus never explicitly says that Valentinus’ plotting only began in 369. Indeed mention of a Conspiracy suggests Valentinus’ complicity from the beginning of the Barbarian Conspiracy. We can reasonably assume that, whatever Valentinian’s information at the time, Valentinus was later blamed for plotting right from the beginning of the Barbarian Conspiracy. If so, then Zosimus merely offers a summary of the Barbarian Conspiracy at the chronological point where it began. Since he only offers a single sentence, this would be as natural a time as any. The chronology only offers more reason to trust our other historical sources.

105 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 27, 181.
The similarity among our other sources reinforces this. Jerome, Zosimus, and Jordanes all refer to Valentinus seizing “tyrannis/τυραννίς” (tyranny) specifically, even though Jerome and Zosimus are independent from at least the 380s. This suggests Jerome and Zosimus’ likely source Eunapius both derived their information from the same public material in the late fourth century. This is likely all Ammianus also could access. Therefore, Ammianus probably only offers a distorted and lengthened account of common knowledge under Theodosius I. Our other historical sources all share the same assessment when using the same source as Ammianus. We can best explain Ammianus’ Barbarian Conspiracy narrative as an attempt to show panegyrical skill without compromising the critical perspective of his history. This embellished barbarian threat also explains the archaeological evidence.

v. Archaeology: No Barbarians

The history of archaeological work on Late Antique Britain largely comprises a creative series of incongruous attempts to explain the utter lack of evidence for the Barbarian Conspiracy. I present two highlights of attempts to explain away the evidence. First is the theory that the Picts built boats to sail around Hadrian’s wall. This would explain the lack of damage to the wall itself. Second is the assumption that various imprecisely datable construction should be assigned to this event. The first approach frankly recalls Schliemann’s fictional Troy; the only real evidence for boats is the failure of the archaeology to match Ammianus’ account. Given the dearth of evidence besides Ammianus for Scottish raiders’ presence in England, it seems better to interpret Ammianus’ account to conform with the main body of evidence rather than vice versa.

106 Jer. Chron. 286.7.e (Helm, 246); Jord. Rom. 308; Zos. 4.12.2. It is even in Paul the Deacon who uses similar vocabulary to the Latin authors: Crivellucci, Historia Romana, 11.3.1 (p. 153).
107 C.E. Stevens, “Magnus Maximus in British History,” Études Celtiques 3 (June, 1938), 92 suggests a later reference in Gregory of Tours (1.43) that mentions “tyrannidem” in the context of Magnus Maximus refers to his role, confirmed by Zos. 4.35, in defeating Valentinus. While the word may simply refer to Magnus Maximus’ own tyranny, the word certainly suggests a usurpation.
111 The panegyrical/poetic evidence, while it makes literary reference to Scots, does not mention anything about a substantial invasion. Indeed it seems to emphasize the exotic conditions of Scotland itself. This is unsurprising as this was a standard feature of poetic narrative about Britain.
The issue of construction deserves a bit more attention. On the one hand, we could simply dismiss attempts to assign undatable buildings to a particularly prominent historical event. Amidst the surviving literary sources, the Barbarian Conspiracy stands alone as a famous event in Late Antique Britain. Yet this is an accident of the evidence. We have lost Ammianus’ far lengthier account of the campaign of Constans in Britain\textsuperscript{112} and he also neglects the deeds of the general Lupicinus in 360. Similarly, the revolt of Magnus Maximus in 383 also marks an important event and instance of direct imperial attention to the island. Archaeologists may simply have assigned Late Antique material to what they wrongly regarded as the island’s most prominent event.

On the other hand, there may be some truth the idea of a Theodosian construction program. The end of Theodosius’ tenure on the island corresponds nicely with the inception of the main phase of Valentinian and Valens’ border fortification program.\textsuperscript{113} Theodosius, as the chief general in Britain, might have ordered the construction on the British fortifications. Yet this need not indicate major invasions. Valentinian and Valens also extensively fortified the Danube and Rhine frontiers which offer a good parallel for Britain. They were beset by the usual barbarian threat which required active campaigning and military presence but were never overrun. Yet it seemed wise to build fortifications anyway. Evidence for building rather than destruction does not suggest the complete failure of the British garrison. Our evidence better indicates remedies to the disorganization that would have accompanied a swiftly ended revolt than a major invasion. Combined with the assessments of Zosimus and Jerome, archaeology should lead us to suspect Ammianus’ text.

On close inspection, the case for a barbarian invasion in 367 collapses. The archaeology shows it did not occur and the brief yet trustworthy accounts of Jerome and Zosimus do not mention it. Even Ammianus, our sole historical source for a barbarian invasion, never clearly says it occurred. The entire idea is based on literary innuendo in poetry, a panegyric, and a manipulated history, none of which explicitly states a major barbarian attack occurred. Instead, we must fall back on our only other possibility—that Theodosius encountered a revolt. This is the only detail on which Ammianus and our other three historians all agree. Jerome, whose information is as good as Ammianus’, considers Theodosius to be solely concerned with the revolt of Valentinus. Both Zosimus and Jordanes

\textsuperscript{112} Mentioned in Amm. Marc. 27.8.4; cf. Barnes, Reality, 216; Den Boeft \textit{et al.}, \textit{Commentary} 27, 190-191.
\textsuperscript{113} N. Lenski, \textit{Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century AD}, (London: University of California Press, 2014), 376. It appears Valentinian and Valens actually undertook much of their building during a brief period.
concur. Even Ammianus admits that the revolt took place and the other facts in his narrative are consistent with a usurpation rather than a civil war. All the sources indicate this is what Theodosius confronted. What matters is how it happened.

vi. Theodosius in Britain: A Hypothetical Reconstruction

We have seen that Theodosius’ primary task in Britain was to defeat Valentinus. Thus, we should revise conclusions based on the idea the Barbarian Conspiracy was a foreign invasion. The following section suggests a few revisions to the present consensus. It discusses the chronology of the Barbarian Conspiracy, events prior to the arrival of Theodosius in Britain, and the policy of Theodosius himself. We begin with chronology.

Scholars generally accept that there was a barbarian invasion in 367 that preceded campaigns by Theodosius in 368-369. Tomlin, however, argues that the entire episode should be condensed into the years 367-368. One new piece of evidence supports the conventional view. Recent research indicates Valentinian I and Valens implemented the great bulk of their border fortification program in 369 and 370. Ammianus, in 28.2 which describes summer 269, discusses Valentinian’s fortification of the Rhine frontier. This (28.2) immediately precedes Ammianus’ account of the second part of Theodosius’ campaign (28.3). In that section Ammianus credits Theodosius who “…restauabat urbes et praesidaria ut diximus castra…” (…was restoring the cities and outposts [and] as we discussed, the camps). This may refer to Theodosius ordering the British phase of the emperors’ fortification program. It further supports, though does not definitively prove, a 269 campaign. It also leaves more time for Theodosius to have grappled with a complicated problem.

On hearing of the crisis in Britain, Valentinian dispatched two of his senior generals, first Severus the Magister Peditum, then Iovinus the Magister Equitum, before sending Theodosius with an army. All of these men were experienced soldiers, not scouts or attaches, so the three appointments represent extraordinary turnover in just late 367. This extremely limited time frame indicates that the emperor’s dissatisfaction did not cause the replacement of generals; a few months would have been too little time for Valentinian to reach any judgement. Unfortunately, Ammianus’ text suffers from a lacuna right here. Yet

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114 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 27, 183
116 Lenski, Valens, 376.
117 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 28, 117.
118 Amn. Marc. 28.3.7
119 Amn. Marc. 27.8.2
120 For the lacuna see Vat. lat. 1873, The Vatican Digital Library, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.1873.
our previous observation about the importance of Valentinus’ revolt allows for some conjecture about events in progress.

The obvious motivation for Valentinian to make rapid changes among competent generals is a rapidly changing situation. The most obvious change to the situation was the elevation of Valentinus; an army raising its commander in response to an invasion fits imperial precedent and is supported by Ammianus placing the usurpation well after the commencement of barbarian attacks. It would make sense if Valentinian dispatched Severus to fight barbarians, Iovinus to confront Valentinus, and then Theodosius once an army became necessary. This scenario also neatly explains the structure of Ammianus’ account: Valentinian learns of a barbarian invasion, dispatches Severus, and then, with no more context, sends Iovinus. Scholars have generally taken the description in 27.8.1 of a “barbarian conspiracy” as referring to the 267 situation in Britain. Yet context, especially the mention of Valentinian on the road, suggests it may only refer to the emperor’s information upon the dispatch of Severus. We have only assumed it was a general description because Ammianus specifically does not mention the circumstances which led the emperor to send Iovinus! This may be another of Ammianus’ clever tricks to understate the civil war aspect of Theodosius’ mission. Certainly this observation allows a (highly hypothetical) reconstruction of events in 367 Britain.

The Notitia Dignitatum lists the three senior military officials in Late Antique Britain: The Dux Britanniae, the Comes Litoris Saxonici per Britannias, and the Comes Britanniarum. We can link the first two offices with generals whose doom Ammianus mentions at the very beginning of his account, but the third is conspicuously absent. The sources uniformly list Valentinus as an exile; Zosimus says he was compelled to live in Britain. Yet these sources may well be influenced by the later Theodosian regime. Indeed, Valentinus must have planned his usurpation with the support of the British army since quite simply there was no other way to conduct a usurpation in frontier province in the absence of

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121 Amm. Marc. 28.3.4
122 Amm. Marc. 27.8.1-2
123 The phrase “barbarian conspiracy” refers to an ambiguous time within the era of Theodosius and Valentinian. The rest of Ammianus’ description of barbarians in Britain, as discussed in 3.3, does not necessarily refer to the era of Theodosius but also a situation over the decades from 343-369.
125 Amm. Marc. 27.8.1 Whatever the precise relationship between the Comes Litoris Saxonici in the Notitia and the “com[es] maritimi tractus” in Ammianus, it seems certain that both officers were responsible for the defense of south east Britain against seaborne attacks.
126 Zos. 4.12.2
the emperor. It would be far easier and better fit historical patterns if Valentinus held a military command. The only open position is that of the Comes Britanniarum. We can consider the references to Valentinus as an exile as a euphemism for relegation to a distant and unimportant military command. Certainly this seems like a reasonable explanation for a Pannonian and Praetorian Prefect’s brother-in-law living in Britain. He only needed to step into the power vacuum caused by the death of the Dux Fullofaudes.

Ammianus comes closest to explaining the phrase “barbarian conspiracy” in two instances. He says that Fullofaudes, the Dux Britanniae, was “hostilitibus insidiis circumventum” (overcome by enemy plots)\(^{127}\) and that the Areani border scouts betrayed the Romans.\(^{128}\) As a Dux, Fullofaudes likely was responsible for border defenses.\(^{129}\) This would not have included those in the south under the special command of Nectaridus. That leaves the northern border with Caledonia, where the Areani were stationed, as Fullofaudes’ post. We can naturally conclude he was their commander. It seems best to connect the two references to duplicity and conclude that the Areani betrayed their commander Fullofaudes. Certainly he is the only official either named as betrayed or likely stationed near enough to the northern border to be at risk from local scouts. Whatever Fullofaudes’ eventual fate,\(^{130}\) his betrayal must have gouged a hole in the northern command structure. Ammianus indicates that Valentinus based himself in northern Britain.\(^{131}\) Valentinus, whether as a prominent exile or Comes, could easily have filled the hole opened by Fullofaudes’ death. From northern England, it would have been necessary for Valentinus to establish his control over the south of the island, around the important city of London and over the remaining troops in the south who had been responsible to the deceased Nectaridus. This conveniently explains the conduct of Theodosius upon arriving in Britain. He first marches for London and grapples with the southern army before Valentinus can fully establish his control. He then cautiously pushes north into Valentinus’ support base in the north while peeling off his soldiers with inducements. This reconstruction, of course, is highly speculative. Yet it offers the best way to reconcile the references in Ammianus’ account to the conditions and patterns of the Late

\(^{127}\) Amm. Marc. 27.8.1

\(^{128}\) Amm. Marc. 28.3.9


\(^{130}\) “circumventum” is usually taken to mean killed although this is not certain. Doubtlessly, however, Fullofaudes would have been unable to properly exercise his responsibilities thereafter. For discussion see Birley, *Government*, 631.

\(^{131}\) Ammianus has Theodosius march from the channel, through Kent, to London and then later set out from there on route to disband the Areani who were stationed at the Scottish border. The placement of the Valentinus incident between his departure from London and arrival at the Scottish border suggests that Valentinus must have been in northern England where much of the garrison was likely stationed.
Antique west. Some is fairly obvious: most scholars would accept that Valentinus based himself north of London; thus, a loyalty contest among the southern troops would be only natural. Certainly that explains the policy of Theodosius.

A brief summary of Theodosius’ actions can help us understand the situation. He immediately races for the main political-administrative center of the island, pauses to reaffirm the loyalty of the army, and then carefully moves north wary of ambush. The first two steps relate to political control. Consolidating the loyalty of soldiers makes no sense if confronted by barbarians but is necessary to defeat a usurper. Likewise Theodosius would have faced pressure to move northward immediately if the island were overrun with foreign enemies; attacking the invaders would have been the most rapid way to gain support. Instead Theodosius, having preempted Valentinus’ bid to control the entire island, could slowly peel away the usurper’s supporters. Theodosius could simple wait while others accommodated themselves to a result made inevitable by the occupation of the island’s principal city. If Valentinus could not dislodge Theodosius from London and take over the whole island, how could he defeat Valentinian in Gaul? In the Spring, Theodosius needed merely to mop up Valentinus’ core supporters and rebuild while avoiding ambush, the only recourse left to the usurper.

Essentially our revision of the historical consensus provides a much simpler and more regular picture. Sudden frontier attacks caught a Late Antique Diocese’s defenses off-guard. A slow and ham fisted imperial response prompted local troops to declare their leader on the spot emperor. An imperial army arrived before the usurper could consolidate power and, facing the inevitable, the usurper’s supporters abandoned him for the inducements of the imperial government. This is a normal and plausible set of circumstances in Late Antiquity. It better explains our question, what occurred in Britain, than the conventional view which has some large portion of the Scottish population wintering outside London. It suggests that imperial politics rather than security issues dominated both the events and the sources of this part of Theodosius’ career. His relationship at court with Maximinus must have been especially tense in the subsequent years. This doubtlessly affected Theodosius’ political image and status. Now we compare this situation to the revolt of Firmus.
III. Theodosius and the Revolt of Firmus

i. The Revolt of Firmus: What Happened

For North Africa, almost all of our source material also derives from Ammianus. The historian devotes a single continuous section comprising a full fifty six capita to Theodosius’ suppression of Firmus’ revolt in Mauritania. The crisis that eventually prompts the dispatch of Theodosius begins with the death of the Roman client king Nubel. The local Roman commander, the Comes Africae Romanus, installs Nubel’s son Zammac as a pro-Roman successor. Zammac’s brother Firmus kills the newly installed king and usurps his position. When the Magister Officiorum (a high official) Remigius, Romanus’ ally, helps condemn Firmus in Valentinian’s court, the Moorish king revolts. Valentinian rapidly dispatches Theodosius with a small body of troops to Sitifis, the capital of the province of Mauritania Sitifensis. Theodosius arrives, disciplines Romanus, and appeases the aggrieved provincials. He then attempts to negotiate with Firmus while adopting a hostile approach to some of the rebel’s more committed allies, like a tribe called the Mazices. Firmus delays the negotiations, at one point failing to provide promised hostages, yet in the end he appears to reach a successful agreement with Theodosius.

Then, Theodosius enters the city of Iol Caesarea, in the province of Mauritania Caesariensis, which has been destroyed; there a tribune called Vincentius warns Theodosius that Firmus is secretly plotting against him. Theodosius then fights a series of hasty battles

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132 Oros. Pag. 7.33.5 and Zos. 5.11, inter al., also mention it.
134 PLRE I, ‘Remigius’.
against the various Moorish tribes and despite limited success, forces Firmus to flee the main part of the province. Throughout this period, Theodosius brutally punishes Romans he suspects of treason, a tendency that would serve as ammunition for his detractors. Meanwhile, Firmus takes refuge with a neighboring tribe called the Isafenses whose leader Igmazen initially opposes Theodosius. Savvy to the course of imperial politics, Igmazen eventually decides to betray Firmus and aid the Roman general, advising Theodosius to pressure his own tribe into acquiescence. Finally, Igmazen secretly arranges Firmus’ arrest and delivers the Moorish rebel’s corpse to a victorious Theodosius. Throughout the account, Ammianus offers many technical geographic details but generally fails to provide the broader context desirable to a modern reader. Ammianus is also full of ideology, offering more panegyric for Theodosius, even defending him against accusations of cruelty, while attacking Romanus in any way possible. The account thus also should be analyzed in the context of the sensitive Roman politics that generally characterize Ammianus’ portrayal of the emperor’s father.

Firmus has drawn considerable attention among scholars interested in Late Antique North Africa, but little work centers on Roman politics or Theodosius himself. Exceptions include two political studies that discuss not Theodosius but Romanus and largely employ the same outdated prosopographical approach discussed below in section 4.1. Thus, Firmus’ status as a usurper or brigand has received much attention in both ancient and modern literature, including an entirely fictional biography in the Historia Augusta, even though the debate is semantical rather than informative. It depends more on the definition of a rebel, brigand, or usurper than the circumstances of the revolt. Instead, I examine what the revolt meant for Theodosius and Roman politics rather than how it affected Mauritania. I particularly value the study by Seager which, focusing largely on the Firmus revolt, suggests Ammianus condemned Theodosius’ cruelty. Such a reputation would matter a lot in imperial politics and motivates the key question for the episode: what can we learn about contemporaries’ views of Theodosius from the Firmus war?

135 Drijvers, “Firmus,” 133.
138 SHA. Firmus. 3-6.
I find it most salubrious to focus on this thesis of Seager et al. By emphasizing the suddenness of Firmus’ betrayal and his subsequent efforts to corrupt Roman troops, I suggest Ammianus genuinely defends Theodosius’ harshness. We should attribute the sense of reluctance Seager detects to Ammianus’ dissatisfaction with circumstances that compelled Theodosius to extremities rather than backhanded invective. The core of this argument relies on the striking difference between Theodosius’ conduct after Firmus’ betrayal and his initial approach in North Africa and in Britain. The contrast with the former is especially remarkable. In Mauritania, the general shows extraordinary respect for provincials’ property, brutally disciplines unruly soldiers, and pursues his enemy with such haste that he falls into traps. I argue these marked differences in Ammianus provide important context for both the events of Firmus’ revolt and the circumstances around Theodosius’ subsequent execution. Having better explained Ammianus’ view, I discuss how he tackles the hostility of other political actors and evince a hint that must refer to Theodosius’ subsequent execution which Ammianus later fails to discuss. Thus, despite the dearth of relevant scholarship, our examination of the Firmus revolt can connect the praise-filled story of Theodosius in Britain with his subsequent and sudden execution.

ii. A Critical Betrayal

Theodosius and his master Valentinian encountered a debacle seemingly caused by Romanus who, as Comes Africae, served as the chief Roman officer in the region. Thus, when Theodosius arrives in North Africa, he attempt to soothe a chaotic situation. He disciplines Romanus and his deputy Vincentius while announcing he will not burden locals with the supply of his army. Meanwhile Theodosius engages in a series of protracted negotiations with Firmus which are stymied by the Moor’s poenica fides. The entire description suggests an attempt to settle a combustible situation rather than fight a war. It is only when Theodosius sees the ruins of Iol Caesarea, a major city built long ago by the Numidian king Juba, that Theodosius realizes he has been betrayed. Vincentius, a tribune, informs him that Firmus is secretly plotting an ambush and thus his negotiations were assumedly a distraction. Thence Theodosius launches a series of rapid campaigns against Firmus and his allies while brutally punishing soldiers corrupted by the Moor’s inducements. Throughout, he is rather devious. He initially inflicts a mild punishment on the disloyal

139 Amm. Marc. 29.5.10
140 Amm. Marc. 29.5.30, 29.5.49-50
141 The office is identified in Not. Dign. [occ.] 1.32.
142 Amm. Marc. 29.5.6-7
143 Amm. Marc. 29.5.10
Constantiniani Peidtes (Constantinian infantry, a military unit), orders them surrounded, and then mets out death;\textsuperscript{144} he later arranges to have Firmus betrayed by the rebel’s own ally Igmazen. It appears that the sudden betrayal of the North African tribes occasioned his brutal and desperate approach. This also suggests a change in his regard for the previous Roman military administration.

Theodosius uncovers Firmus’ plot through a warning from the tribune Vincentius\textsuperscript{145} whose identification with Romanus’ deputy Vincentius\textsuperscript{146} remains a matter of scholarly dispute.\textsuperscript{147} Whatever his identity, the tribune Vincentius initiates a critical shift in Theodosius’ approach. We, with this shift, might naturally anticipate a change in Theodosius’ regard for the pre-existing North African military establishment. Previously he had conciliated its critics; henceforth he becomes aggressive, especially towards traitors. Romanus had opposed Firmus vigorously. Theodosius now did the same. Ammianus unsurprisingly refuses to mention that his target Romanus was prudent. The warning of Vincentius the tribune, therefore, constitutes the key turning point of Theodosius’ campaign since the general transitions from reorganizing a region in disarray to suppressing a serious revolt.

There are additional circumstantial clues that Theodosius’ experience in Iol Caesarea caused his strategic shift. He had arrived in Africa with very few troops.\textsuperscript{148} Ammianus says his army at the battle of Adda, one of the many he fought during his campaign against Firmus, included only 3,500 men.\textsuperscript{149} Ammianus’ consistently describes the Romans outnumbered both

\textsuperscript{144} Amm. Marc. 29.5.20-22
\textsuperscript{145} Amm. Marc. 29.5.19
\textsuperscript{146} Amm. Marc. 29.5.6
\textsuperscript{147} In favor of the identification see B. H. Warmington, “Romanus,” 60; A. Coşkun, “Der Comes Romanus, 294-295; Drijvers, “Firmus,” 153. Opposed to the identification see Jones et al., PLRE I, 1, ‘Vincentius 3’ and ‘Vincentius 4’; L. Anglieviel de la Beaumelle in G. Sabbah, Ammien Marcellin, Histoire VI, Budé, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999), 124; Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 162-163, 177-178. As Vincentius the tribune hid near Iol Caesarea in the province of Mauritanea Caesarenolis, it seems most likely that he served under the Dux Mauritaniae Caesarenolis (Not. Dign. [occ.] 1.30) rather than Romanus the Comes Africae (Not. Dign. [occ.] 1.25). The Dux must have been based in Mauritanea Caesarenolis, likely in Iol Caesarea its capital where Theodosius found Vincentius the tribune. The Comes Africae Romanus was likely based in Carthage, which was the largest city of western Roman North Africa and we find Theodosius mainly interacting with Romanus and his staff in the province of Mauritaniae Sitifensis. Since Ammianus says that Vincentius the tribune came out of hiding to find Theodosius in Iol Caesarea, one imagines that he was stationed nearby before being forced to hide. Moreover the rank of tribune likely refers to the billet of praepositus or else the staff role of tribunus vacans (Jones, Later Roman Empire, 640-641). Both of these positions suggest an officer too junior to be “qui curans Romani vicem” (who was caring in the absence of Romanus. The Latin refers to a deputy; the idea is that in the chance “vicem” of an officer being unavailable, the subordinate will fill his role. In the presence of the officer, the man who would fill his role in his absence would be the next highest ranking and hence deputy). Yet, considering Ammianus’ imprecise use of titles and limited access to information, the matter must remain uncertain.
\textsuperscript{148} Coşkun, “Der Comes Romanus,” 298; Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 159.
\textsuperscript{149} Amm. Marc. 29.5.29. This is merely a rough estimate. Theodosius supplemented his army with units already stationed in North Africa, while his own army was by no means always reliable. Thus, he had punished the
at Adda \(^ {150} \) and later against Igazen. \(^ {151} \) Although he managed to recover these situations, Theodosius suffered defeats from his lack of men. As Valentinian I retained sufficient troops to contemporaneously launch major campaigns on the Danube, we should probably conclude that the “small” body of troops with which Theodosius had departed Europe was utterly inadequate for major campaigns against the Moorish rebels. This suggests how the general and his emperor had initially viewed the crisis: It was a diplomatic mess to be fixed. This assumption fits the intelligence likely to have reached the imperial court.

Ammianus’ hostility towards Romanus fundamentally colors our information. The historian describes how Romanus used his influence at the imperial court to prevent the Moorish chieftain Firmus receiving a fair hearing from the emperor. A desperate Firmus revolts, prompting Valentinian to send Theodosius. \(^ {152} \) Ammianus’ account is seriously deficient. He does not explain \(^ {153} \) how the imperial court’s calculus changed after hearing of the revolt itself; he only mentions the reaction of the imperial court to Romanus’ accusation of murder. Yet it seems the revolt finally grabbed Valentinian’s attention. It is likely Theodosius departed in haste both because Ammianus mentions it immediately in his narrative \(^ {154} \) and because we hear nothing of Romanus fighting Firmus before Theodosius’ arrival. If Romanus had faced Firmus successfully, then the emperor would have had no need to dispatch a high ranking general whereas if Romanus had suffered a reverse, we would expect Ammianus to celebrate the shame of his bugbear. Indeed, Firmus had already sent reports indicting Romanus, who would later face discipline. These very reports became known to Ammianus and so must have emerged from the oblivion to which Romanus’ friend Remigius had sought to consign them. Whatever Romanus’ alleged crimes of extortion, it must have been treasonous Constantiniani Pedites (Constantinian infantry, a military unit) in “prisca more” (the old custom, likely brutal decimation) which probably degraded their capacity for military action afterwards (Amm. Marc. 29.5.22; Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 183). The unit in question seems to have been praesental, nominally stationed in the presence of an emperor, and thus probably accompanied Theodosius from Europe (Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 180; Not. Dign. [occ.] 5.251-253). Likewise, Theodosius also punished the Equites Quartae Sagittariorum (The fourth horse archers) whom the Notitia Dignitatum lists as both subject to the Comes Africae (Not. Dign. [occ.] 7.191), Romanus, and within Africa to the Magister Equitum (Not. Dign. [occ.] 6.72), Theodosius, but stationed within Africa (Amm. Marc. 29.5.20. D. Hoffmann, Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum vol. 1 (Dusseldorf, 1969), 345 and A. Mueller, “Militaria aus Ammianus Marcellinus,” Philologus 64 (1905), 578 suggest the troops Theodosius would station to garrison Caesarea were already stationed nearby). The Notitia does postdate Firmus’ revolt and thus does allow the Equites Quarto Sagittariorum to have been brought by Theodosius and subsequently stationed in Africa; yet it is more reasonable to assume they were drawn from Romanus’ field army.

\(^ {150} \) Amm. Marc. 29.5.29
\(^ {151} \) Amm. Marc. 29.5.48
\(^ {152} \) Amm. Marc. 29.5.2-5
\(^ {153} \) Admittedly a few words are lost in a lacuna. For the lacuna see Vat. lat. 1873, The Vatican Digital Library, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.1873.
\(^ {154} \) Amm. Marc. 29.5.4
something in his approach to the Firmus revolt that ultimately undermined him. What, is not clear. Romanus had favored the pro-Roman\textsuperscript{155} son of the client king Nubel over the potentially rebellious alternative, Firmus. As if to justify Romanus’ suspicion, Firmus immediately murdered his brother, seized power, and launched a revolt. Romanus does not seem to have pursued a foolish policy.\textsuperscript{156} Yet on hearing of Firmus’ revolt, the imperial court decisively swung against him. That Valentinian sent Theodosius with very few troops confirms that his primary purpose was not to reinforce Romanus but effectively replace him because the Magister Equitum would automatically supersede a mere Comes Rei Militaris. Theodosius would soon apprehend Romanus and dispatch Firmus’ loyal brother Gildo\textsuperscript{157} to seize Romanus’ deputy Vincentius.\textsuperscript{158} It appears the imperial court had rapidly abandoned Romanus. Ammianus’ prejudice conceals this fact; his disdain for Valentinian I is well documented.\textsuperscript{159} He therefore treats the emperor’s conscious decision to relieve Romanus, likely on grounds of incompetence for allowing the revolt to occur, as inevitable. This allows him to avoid crediting one target with the destruction of another. This does not entail that Ammianus lies or intentionally deceives his reader. He may well have believed that Romanus’ conduct had become so egregious as to make his replacement inevitable, even by a Valentinian.

On arrival, Theodosius attempts, like in Britain, to solve a political crisis with minimal fighting. He disciplines the previous administration, negotiates with the rebels, and soothes the provincials. It is only amidst the destruction\textsuperscript{160} of Iol Caesarea that Theodosius realizes he has been betrayed. Significantly, Firmus was absent from all the minor battles Theodosius fought before his arrival in Iol Caesarea, even though the rebel was near enough to personally negotiate with Theodosius. This suggests that Firmus intentionally avoided direct confrontation to maintain his negotiating ploy. It seems Firmus negotiated in bad faith while plotting. This explains his constant delays, initial refusal to deliver promised hostages, and the bribing of Roman troops.\textsuperscript{161} It neatly accounts for the warning of the tribune Vincentius.

Ammianus unsurprisingly does not mention that Firmus’ betrayal must have vindicated the

\textsuperscript{156} For discussion of the figure of Romanus see Warmington, “Career of Romanus.”, and Coskun, “Comes Romanus.”
\textsuperscript{157} Gildo would launch his own revolt several decades later. Cf. Claud. Gild; PLRE I, ‘Gildo’.
\textsuperscript{158} Amm. Marc. 29.5.6
\textsuperscript{160} Symm. Ep. 1.64, though likely exaggerating, suggests the city suffered greatly.
\textsuperscript{161} Amm. Marc. 29.5.8-16
aggressive tactics of Romanus whom Theodosius may only have arrested on Valentinian’s urging.\textsuperscript{162} There is no reason to assume any great enmity between Theodosius and Romanus. Instead Theodosius effectively assumed Romanus’ original plan by waging war on Firmus.

\textbf{iii. Historiographic Consequences of Firmus’ Betrayal}

It is only after the revelation of Firmus’ \textit{poenica fides} that Theodosius becomes cruel and aggressive. Yet the general’s harshness seems to have been largely directed at cases of disloyalty.\textsuperscript{163} After Firmus had compromised several whole army units, it is understandable that Theodosius would have relentlessly punished anyone disloyal. Ammianus says so.\textsuperscript{164} An otherwise puzzling comment confirms that this was a serious problem. Explaining how the hard-pressed Romans escaped the battle of Adda, Ammianus describes how the rebels, seeing a tribe called the Mazices approaching “\textit{quos anteibant quidam Romani}” (whom certain Romans were preceding), and thinking themselves ambushed, allowed Theodosius’ men to escape.\textsuperscript{165} Den Boeft \textit{et al.} are wrong to assume the Mazices were allies coming to aid the Romans.\textsuperscript{166} First, if reinforced, Theodosius would probably have pursued the fleeing enemy rather than immediately extract his army. Second, if the Mazices were now Roman allies, Ammianus would have no reason to mention Romans at the head of their column because the rebels, seeing native Mazices approaching, still would have panicked before the double assault. The implication of the statement dictates that the rebels, whom Ammianus says were confused, misidentified the column of allied Mazices upon seeing the Romans in their vanguard. Seeing Romans must mean they misidentified the column as Roman allies; misidentifying them as Roman allies entails that rightly they were the Romans’ enemies and so the rebels’ allies. The only possible explanation for Romans leading a column of rebels is that they were treasonous. This confirms that disloyal troops endangered the Roman army. So does Firmus’ later conduct; the scarlet-cloaked Moor rides before Roman soldiers, urging them to betray Theodosius. Some Romans then abandon the battle.\textsuperscript{167} Indeed, throughout the

\textsuperscript{162} In fact we later hear that Theodosius brutally executed Martinianus and Castor whom Ammianus call participants in Romanus’ crimes. Amm. Marc. 29.5.50 They likely were minor officials who had robbed landowners under Romanus’ blind eye. Theodosius made an example of low level offenders and Ammianus celebrates it as vindication of his hatred for Romanus.

\textsuperscript{163} For a full list see Den Boeft \textit{et al.}, \textit{Commentary} 29, 184.

\textsuperscript{164} Amm. Marc. 29.5.23

\textsuperscript{165} Amm. Marc. 29.5.30

\textsuperscript{166} Den Boeft \textit{et al.}, \textit{Commentary} 29, 191.

\textsuperscript{167} Amm. Marc. 29.5.45
whole narrative, Ammianus seems especially concerned with treasonous Romans. Towards everyone else, Theodosius is not cruel but merciful.

First, Theodosius cares for his exhausted wife Thermantia. Although his actual actions towards her are lost in a lacuna, they must be praiseworthy because it would have been incredibly dangerous to suggest the reigning emperor’s father showed anything but the kindest of care for said reigning emperor’s ailing mother. In the very next sentence, the historian mentions that Theodosius rewarded his men with better food and a bonus. Theodosius’ care for his wife and men fit together into a single section. Ammianus appears to have inserted this section as an aside devoted to showing Theodosius’ concern for his subordinates. It helps reveal Ammianus’ view of Theodosius. He fills his account of the Firmus revolt with instances of Theodosius’ brutal punishments for which he offers various defenses. Thus, scholars debate whether Ammianus undermines Theodosius, providing spurious defenses to satisfy censorship, or whether he genuinely endorses Theodosius’ conduct. If Ammianus actually condemned Theodosius’ brutality, he would not add a section devoted entirely to the general’s kinder, more caring, side. Furthermore, all the descriptions of brutality occur only after Firmus’ betrayal. Ammianus probably just expressed his resentment of treasonous soldiers. Indeed, Theodosius even sends envoys to the North African tribes, offering money for abandoning Firmus; he does not insist on punishing the guilty tribes. A mad bloodlust thus does not overcome Theodosius like it does Ammianus’ real villains like Maximinus. The cruelty is precisely directly at certain condemnable targets.

This requires a new assessment of the Firmus campaign. While the Comes Africae Romanus may have been corrupt, his corruption was insufficient to motivate discipline before his ultimate failure of political competence. He passionately opposed Firmus who eventually revolted. The emperor, possibly recalling how Theodosius had undercut Valentinus with a minimum of fighting, appointed him to soothe the situation. Theodosius arrived in Mauritanea Sitifensis and slowly progressed east towards Mauritanea Caesarensis where most of the

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168 The references may also reflect Ammianus’ desire to write a literary parallel with Sallust and Tacitus’ accounts of similar North African wars. For discussion of literary parallels see Drijvers, “Firmus,” 151-154.
169 Amm. Marc. 29.5.36-37. For the lacuna see Vat. lat. 1873, The Vatican Digital Library, [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.1873](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.1873).
170 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 185 supports my view of Ammianus as Theodosius’ defender. Seager, “Theodosius and Jugurtha” leads a chorus of voices arguing otherwise as discussed in the Ammianus section above.
171 Den Boeft et al., Commentary 29, 185 cites Amm. Marc. 24.5.2 as an example of Ammianus’ justification of Julian’s similar behavior. Ammianus both admired Julian and displayed a willingness to criticize him so it would appear the defense is genuine. There is no reason to believe his feelings towards Theodosius were any different.
172 Amm. Marc. 29.5.33
conflict would occur. During his journey, he negotiated firmly yet fairly with the Moors, slowly removed the previous Roman administration, and conciliated the aggrieved provincials. Meanwhile he fought allies of Firmus without starting an open war with the rebel himself.\textsuperscript{173} The final accord with Firmus seems to hold. It is only in Iol Caesarea, when Theodosius learns of Firmus’ betrayal, that everything changes. The remainder of the narrative describes the small Roman army hard-pressed by enemies and the general’s brutal punishment of anyone tempted by Firmus’ inducements. Clearly Theodosius does not consider Firmus a usurper because his penalties offer no consideration for soldiers conflicting loyalties like in Britain. This is understandable. Valentinus, on account of his connection to Maximinus and distant Pannonian origins,\textsuperscript{174} must have been a senior Roman official. Thus, Ammianus never has Firmus promise the rewards of the whole Empire to the men he tries to bribe. In the minds of Roman officials, Firmus raised what the senator and former proconsul Symmachus calls a “\textit{rebellio barabrica}” (barbarian rebellion).\textsuperscript{175} Therefore, Theodosius harshly punished perceived treason despite pardoning supporters of the usurper Valentinus. His military policy presents both contrast and similarity with Britain. On that northern island, he exercised patience and caution pursuant to the advice of deserters.\textsuperscript{176} Igmazen, essentially a deserter to Firmus’ cause, urges Theodosius to keep the enemy under constant pressure.\textsuperscript{177} This seems to have been his policy over the entire campaign. Theodosius takes prudent advice.

This brings us to Ammianus’ approach overall. While, we must beware literary illusions,\textsuperscript{178} we see that Ammianus ultimately writes a laudatory yet nuanced description of Theodosius. He preserves the overt form of a panegyric through praiseful apppellations and references to past Roman heroes. Yet he treats Theodosius not hostilley but fairly. The general is compelled to inflict brutal discipline by the state of his army and the risk of an adverse example.\textsuperscript{179} He acts in good faith to mend wrongs but requires help to uncover

\begin{footnotes}
\item[173] Amm. Marc. 29.5.11-17
\item[174] Amm. Marc. 28.3.6; \textit{PLRE} I, ‘Valentinus 5’
\item[175] Symm. \textit{Ep}. 1.64
\item[176] Amm. Marc. 27.8.9
\item[177] Amm. Marc. 29.5.53
\item[178] Illusions in the form of allusions! Seager, “Theodosius and Jugurtha,” 7 as well as Drijvers, “Firmus” compares these. I would add that while he suggests Ammianus’ narrative lacks a figure similar to Sulla in Sallust, I do see one possibility. Amm. Marc. 29.5.21 mentions a Maximus who is generally identified, Den Boeft \textit{et al.} \textit{Commentary} 29, 162, with the future emperor and ultimately usurper against Theodosius I, Magnus Maximus. Maximus apprehends the Moor Bellen as Sulla does Jugurtha. Maximus eventually raises himself above the Theodosians as Sulla did Marius. It is quite possible Ammianus inserts the reference to him as an allusion, if not an illusion, to Sallust.
\item[179] Amm. Marc. 29.5.23
\end{footnotes}
Firmus’ conspiracy. Although he suffers frequent reverses, Igmazen’s advice confirms that he pursued the best policy possible with his limited troops.\textsuperscript{180} In Britain the panegyrical forms make his enemy appear foreign. Yet he still successfully completes a grim but necessary task. Ammianus does not condemn his other hero Ursicinus for a similarly sad yet necessary action.\textsuperscript{181} Looking past the panegyrical language, it appears Ammianus sees Theodosius in the same light as Ursicinus. In Africa, Valentinian’s court does not adequately brief or supply him, Romanus, the real villain, provokes the situation, and the corruption of the bureaucracy compels Firmus to revolt. Theodosius ultimately appears a tragic hero. The tragedy is that the circumstances of the Empire put Theodosius and his men into such ugly situations. Theodosius remains a good and competent man whose endeavors are inexorably crushed by corrupt politics. Thus, Ammianus alludes to Domitius Corbulo and Lusius Quietus; he hints at a similar life and fate.\textsuperscript{182}

\textbf{iv. A Final Hint}

Ammianus ceases his narrative of western events in 375, immediately before Theodosius’ execution. Since he continues his eastern narrative to the 378 aftermath of the battle of Hadrianople, scholars generally assume he intentionally structured his history to omit this sensitive political event.\textsuperscript{183} Yet Ammianus cannot resist hinting. One remark is especially clear. Ammianus declares of Theodosius’ harsh but necessary punishments that “\textit{obtrectatores malivoli...hoc [penalty] ut dirum vituperant et asperrimum}” (ill-minded denouncers condemn this [penalty] as terrible and harsh).\textsuperscript{184} The word “\textit{dirum}”, which I roughly translate as “terrible”, falls among Ammianus’ harshest terms of invective.\textsuperscript{185} Who were these ill-minded denouncers of Theodosius? Ammianus wrote for a literary and politically informed audience.\textsuperscript{186} Ammianus could not put his own feelings nor those of insignificant persons into the mouths of the “\textit{obtrectatores malivoli}” (ill-minded denouncers); readers would have instantly recognized this and Ammianus’ ostensibly panegyrical literary approach would have collapsed. The panegyrical language requires that Ammianus’ professed opinions be laudatory even if his narrative suggests otherwise. For both literary and censorship reasons, he cannot offer a hostile opinion statement that might appear to be his own. A hostile implication would

\textsuperscript{180} Amm. Marc. 29.5.53
\textsuperscript{181} Amm. Marc. 15.5-6 discusses Ursicinus destroying a man who had been fraudulently pushed into actions that required his elimination.
\textsuperscript{182} Amm. Marc. 29.5.4. Cf. \textit{BNP} II ‘Domitius 11’; ibid ‘Lusius 2’.
\textsuperscript{183} A. Hoepfchner, “La Mort du Magister Militum Théodose,” 120; Thompson, \textit{Historical Work}, 94.
\textsuperscript{184} Amm. Marc. 29.5.23
\textsuperscript{185} Den Boeft \textit{et al.}, \textit{Commentary} 29, 184.
\textsuperscript{186} See discussion in the above section on Ammianus as a historian.
have been unavoidable unless the reference referred to denouncers whom a politically informed reader would have recognized. There must have been loud and prominent detractors of Theodosius’ cruelty.

This is especially important because of the limited opportunities for these denouncers to attack Theodosius. After 19 January 279, nobody would have attacked the rehabilitated father of a reigning Augustus. Those outside Theodosius I’s direct control in Gratian’s territory risked contradicting the prevailing Theodosian faction at the Trier court, undermining the emperor’s appointment of his co-Augustus. Even after war began between Magnus Maximus and Theodosius I, an attack on the cruelty of Theodosius the elder would have meant condemning either the one emperor’s father or the other’s mentor in whose cruelty he seems to have participated.\(^{187}\) By the brief 394 usurpation of Eugenius,\(^ {188}\) the conduct of Theodosius the elder would have been too dated to attract loud public discourse. The attacks on Theodosius the elder must have predated the accession of his son in 379. It is unlikely the attacks occurred after his early 376 execution since Gratian’s court rehabilitated the Theodosian family and the general’s image very quickly afterwards.\(^ {189}\) Criticism would have contradicted the ideology of the western court. Moreover, criticism of a dead man would have been both pointless and tasteless. It would serve little purpose to attack the character of a man whose career had firmly ended. Posthumous criticism would also reduce the relevance of Ammianus’ comment; it serves a greater literary purpose as a hint at the prevailing political situation.

Theodosius’ political opponents very likely attacked the brutality of his disciplinary approach. Although utterly speculative, it is tempting to imagine these critics were Pannonians who associated themselves with both the rank and file of the army and the Praetorian Prefect Maximinus. It is easy to understand Ammianus’ defense of Theodosius as part of his contempt for the wild and uneducated ranks of the Roman army.\(^ {190}\) This does not mean we should accept the thesis that Theodosius was executed because of his brutality towards his men.\(^ {191}\) Both the critics and any formal charges would have been insincere and political. For a man of Theodosius’ rank and skill the imperial court could have ignored nearly any complaint if desired whereas accusations would merely serve as justification for a

\(^{187}\) *PLRE* I, I, ‘Maximus 39’.

\(^{188}\) *BNP* II, ‘Eugenius 1’

\(^{189}\) See 4.1 below.

\(^{190}\) Thompson, *Historical Work*, 3 referring to Amm. Marc. 22.4.6-8.

political purge. Yet what Ammianus’ mention of “obtrectatores malivli” (ill-minded denouncers) does confirm is that Theodosius faced influential enemies who were able to raise a controversy about his alleged misconduct. This links our question about contemporaries’ view to Theodosius’ political situation. A poor reputation might pose a threat. So far his patron Valentinian I had protected him and facilitated his rise. Yet, if the Theodosian family learned anything in politics, it was how quickly fortunes could change.

IV. The Death of Theodosius

i. Historiographical Introduction

Our historical sources have subjected the death of Theodosius the elder to a “conspiracy of silence”. This doubtless reflects how many wrote under the reign of his son. Yet for this reason, the details are especially murky and we have no primary ancient source. Scholars have tried to piece together events from such disparate origins as laws preserved in the fifth century Theodosian Code and a few deviant manuscripts of Jerome’s Chronicon. Yet amidst the scholarly controversy, a basic consensus has emerged. The story is more or less this: Theodosius the elder found himself in the major North African city of Carthage, celebrating his defeat of the rebel Firmus. Meanwhile his homonymous son had been achieving minor successes in a generalship on the Danube frontier where the court of Valentinian I had recently arrived from the Rhine. On 17 November 375, Valentinian I suddenly suffered a seizure and died. The emperor left his brother Valens as co-Augustus residing at Antioch, his teenaged son Gratian at Trier under the Praetorian Prefect Maximinus and his other four year old son, soon to be Valentinian II, a few days travel away. The leaders of the late emperor’s court, led by the Frankish Magister Peditum Merobaudes, acted quickly. Within five days, on 22 November, they proclaimed Valentinian II as emperor. The court of the new emperor then travelled to Trier. By spring 376, Valentinian II had been accepted as co-Augustus by his uncle and half-brother; he had come to reside under the guardianship of the latter at Trier. By this point, Theodosius the elder had been executed at Carthage and his son had departed his Balkan command for exile on the family’s Spanish estates.

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192 The term originates from the French “conspiration du silence”. Hoepffner, “La Mort du Théodose,” 120.
193 BNP II, ‘Valentinianus 3’.
194 PLRE I, ‘Merobaudes 2’.
195 Gratian and Valentinian II descended from Valentinian I’s two different wives; the fact is unimportant for our purposes.
The current consensus rightly hold that sometime between the death of Valentinian and the arrival of Valentinian II and Merobaudes at Trier, the Praetorian Prefect Maximinus had ordered Theodosius’ execution at Carthage. When Valentinian II’s court reached Trier, Merobaudes maintained his position as *Magister Peditum* while Gratian increasingly came under the influence of his old Gallic tutor Ausonius. Over mid-376, Gratian then fired and executed Maximinus and his political faction while promoting allies of Ausonius, Merobaudes, and old associates of Theodosius the elder. This situation, with Theodosius I in exile, tension between Valens and the court of his nephews, and the promotion of allies of Ausonius and Theodosius the elder continued into 378. On 9 August of that year, Valens and his army perished before the Goths at Hadrianople. Within a few months, Gratian had recalled Theodosius I, entrusted him with an army, and then promoted him to co-Augustus. Yet beyond that still controversial outline, much remains subject to debate.

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196 *PLRE* I, I, ‘Ausonius 7’
The limited information available means that this period has given rise to much scholarly theorizing. Moreover, the lack of evidence has meant that very limited new material can quickly allow much scholarly work to be superseded. The discovery of new manuscripts of Jerome’s *Chronicon*, which indict Maximinus, allows most early scholarship to be discarded. Next followed a period characterized by the prosopographical approach of Otto Seeck. The idea was that political figures could be attributed to various factions, usually on the basis of province of origin. Scholars would identify figures with factions by their relations with known members of other factions. This approach overemphasized individual disputes and political alliances. Political actors can have minor disagreements without necessarily belonging to opposing factions. Thus, the purely prosopographical approach gave rise to the utterly unjustifiable notion, now debunked by the articles of Naudé and Rodgers, that Merobaude conspired in the death of Theodosius. The idea was, because Theodosius temporarily arrested Romanus who was later greeted politely by Merobaude, that Merobaude must have been an opponent of Theodosius and hence an ally of Maximinus in the Spanish general’s execution. This view obviously ignores that Theodosius’ discipline of Romanus did not seem motivated by personal hostility, and also ignores that Maximinus attacked Romanus’ kinsman Remigius and thus they could not have been united. The prosopographical method’s rigidity led to its undoing. Hence, the current consensus which rightly is less strict and estimates the importance as well as strength of any conflict between two figures. Various aspects of this view are still routinely challenged, but the view seems to no longer be subject to systemic attack. The current consensus described above, developed by Errington, Kelly, and to a lesser extent Demandt, is largely acceptable. Yet it is not entirely free of flaws. Instead, these alternative views seek to reconcile a simple question: why did Theodosius’ son remain in exile while other family members, including his brother, held high offices at Gratian’s court. Treadgold argues that the emperor Valens’ hostility,

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198 The most notable manifestation: Seeck, *Untergangs.*


200 There are additional practical reasons why Merobaude culpability is virtually impossible which do not require repeating here.

201 Thus, Sivan, “Usurper?” argues that Theodosius had returned early to the Danube and launched a coup against Gratian whereas Treadgold, “Predicting the Accession” argues that Valens ordered Theodosius’ execution. Though worthy of consideration, these remain isolated views.

because he had executed Theodosius the elder, excluded Theodosius’ son; I address this view in section 4.4. Sivan answers the question differently, arguing Theodosius I returned to prominence before the battle of Adrianople. Yet his revised chronology does not alter the fundamental problem because he still leaves a substantial gap in which the younger Theodosius was excluded while his family prospered. The question remains to be solved.

I accept the mainstream consensus of Kelly, Errington, et al. Yet I propose a solution to the issue of Theodosius’ prolonged exile. I argue that the only way to explain the continued exile of Theodosius is the hostile influence of the emperor Valens. Yet I accept the ideological and practical difficulties of Valens guilt in the execution of Theodosius the elder. This approach is especially valuable because scholars have generally only looked for animosity towards Theodosius as a way of explaining his death. By accepting the possibility of limited enmity, we get a much more nuanced picture of politics in the later fourth century.

My argument, predicated on the now generally acceptable idea of cooperation between Merobaudes, Ausonius, and the Theodosians, deduces first the reasons for enmity between Merobaudes and Valens, then the dislike between Theodosius and Valens, and finally the impossibility of Valens’ involvement in Theodosius’ death. With this picture of an innocent and hostile Valens established, I offer a tentative reconstruction of the role of the Theodosians in politics between 375-379. Yet we begin with the death of Valentinian I.

ii. Hostility between Merobaudes and Valens

Merobaudes, likely Ausonius, and most other imperial officials had accompanied Valentinian I to the Balkans, leaving only Maximinus with Gratian at Trier. Between the death of Valentinian I on 17 November 375 and some time in the early spring of 376, Theodosius died and Maximinus was said to have imposed himself on the sixteen year old Gratian. By spring Merobaudes, Ausonius, and the Danube army arrived at Trier with their newly proclaimed emperor. It was likely during this period that the young Theodosius I left his Balkan command for Spain. The political purge that followed was undoubtedly a messy affair; yet it still merits our attention. Maximinus is last attested as Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls on 16 April 376, whereas by 23 May we know the Theodosian relative and fellow Spaniard Antonius occupied that office. Within a few months Maximinus and his allies had all died while the careers of Merobaudes, the Ausonians, and the Theodosians, prospered.

204 Symm. Rel. 4.11 etc…
205 Cod. Theod. 10.19.4
206 Cod. Theod. 13.3.11
Throughout the entire 376-379 period, these groups coexisted in Gratian’s court. Theodosius I’s uncle Eucherius became *Comes Sacrarum Largitionum* (a high ranking official) in 377 and Ausonius’ family dominated civilian offices in the same way Merobaudes oversaw military affairs. The long coexistence and shared influence of these groups of these groups serves as powerful evidence for their ability to cooperate.\(^{207}\) This contrasts with the situation at Valens’ court. Maximinus’ associate Festus remained prominent while none of the westerners’ allies advanced. We should reject the assumption that this divide merely reflects divergence between the eastern and western parts of the Empire; where politics did not interfere, generals and bureaucrats like Eutropius and Sebastianus transitioned between the two.

The case of Sebastianus is the first instance of enmity between Valens and the western court. Ammianus says that, upon hearing of the decease of Valentinian I, Merobaudes immediately dismissed Sebastianus lest his popularity provoke treason.\(^{208}\) Perhaps Merobaudes acted purely out of duty; this is highly unlikely. If he had truly trusted Sebastianus, he could have dismissed him with a truthful explanation rather than perpetrating a trick on a colleague. Likewise, after Merobaudes and Ausonius consolidated their position, Sebastianus languished in obscurity rather than returning to serve the now established western regime.\(^{209}\) The trickery and length of exile suggest Merobaudes rejected Sebastianus on political grounds rather than momentary danger. Sebastianus would never receive another command under Merobaudes. Instead Valens summoned him in 378 to serve as Magister Peditum on the Hadrianople campaign.\(^{210}\) Thus, the elevation of Sebastianus likely constituted a snub of Merobaudes because Valens promoted a man the Frankish general rejected to Magister Peditum, Merobaudes’ equal. This is persuasive but would be insufficient evidence for a Merobaudes-Valens rivalry if not for subsequent behavior.

Ammianus describes how, when Gratian’s court finally sent troops to reinforce Valens in the Balkans, Merobaudes was said to have induced many of them to mutiny out of concern for the Rhine frontier.\(^{211}\) This harmed Valens, perhaps fatally, while ensuring a greater proportion of the Roman army, and thus the power it provided, remained under Merobaudes. Alone we could interpret Merobaudes’ subversion of imperial policy at Valens’ expense as concern for the Rhine frontier. Yet in a broader context, it fits a pattern of behavior that belies

\(^{207}\) If the Maximus Ammianus mentions several times (*PLRE* I, ’Maximus 39’) is the future emperor Magnus Maximus, then we have further evidence for the career of a Theodosian family client.

\(^{208}\) Amm. Marc. 29.10.3


\(^{210}\) Errington, “Accession,” 441.

\(^{211}\) Amm. Marc. 31.7.1
any explanation other than hostility between him and Valens. Merobaudes continued to scorn Valens’ Gothic plight.

Eventually Gratian personally sought to render Valens aid against the Goths who were marauding throughout the Balkans. As Gratian departed Gaul, the Lentienses, a Germanic tribe, seized the opportunity provided by his impending departure to invade the Empire. On attacking across the frontier, they were promptly defeated by Gratian’s generals. Yet the emperor, rather than marching to aid his uncle, launched a campaign of vengeance against the Lentienses. Gratian’s subsequent success generated great prestige for his court at a terrible cost to Valens. When the decision was made to fight in Germany rather than reinforce Valens, Merobaudes remained the chief military figure at Gratian’s court. Given his previous concern for the Rhine frontier and indifference to the Gothic threat in the Balkans, combined with his military rank at court, he must surely bear significant responsibility for this decision. He had yet again abandoned Valens. It fit a consistent habit.

Indeed, the hostility between Merobaudes and Valens dated back to at least 375. On the death of Valentinian I, Valens became the senior and only full grown Augustus. Merobaudes, the relatively new Magister Peditum, took it upon himself to raise Valentinian II as a new Augustus. This was a crass usurpation of Valens’ authority. Typically only Augusti could create new emperors acceptable to the pre-existing imperial college; other proclamations usually entailed civil war. That Merobaudes appointed Valens’ nephew removed any motive for actual violence; yet this did not in any way lessen the degree of insult implied in Merobaudes’ presumption. On an issue as important as a new emperor, a snub could never be insignificant. The subsequent enmity between Gratian and Valens’ courts demonstrates this clearly.

We see that Merobaudes consistently clashed with Valens, from the death of Valentinian I to the battle of Hadrianople. This was clear through Merobaudes’ assumption of Valens’ authority and refusal to aid him as well as Valens’ promotion of Merobaudes’ opponent Sebastianus. Merobaudes was the senior military official at court when Gratian

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212 *PLRE* I, ‘Merobaudes 2’
213 The only case of an emperor’s acceptance of an unauthorized imperial proclamation would be Galerius’ acceptance of Constantine in 306 (*BNP* II, ‘Constantinus 1’), another familial case. Septimius Severus also temporarily accepted Clodius Albinus whose proclamation was contemporaneous to Severus’ and ultimately ended in conflict (*BNP* II, ‘Clodius 1’).
214 Errington, “Accession,” 441 demonstrates that Sebastianus remained without a military career in the western court. Since he was undoubtedly qualified and Merobaudes both ran the military side of Gratian’s court and also had dismissed Sebastianus, there can be no doubt about Merobaudes’ hostility.
appointed Theodosius I emperor and remained in office well after that decision. He must have been reasonable friendly towards the Theodosians in a court that, while hostile to Valens, promoted the deceased general’s family members. This observation is crucial for understanding the behavior of Theodosius I.

iii. Hostility between Theodosius I and Valens

When Valentinian I died, the younger Theodosius was “Dux Moesiae”, holding a command on the lower Danube frontier. Around the time of his father’s execution, Theodosius I left his command for his family’s estates in Spain where he would father his eldest son Arcadius. A few decades later, bishop Ambrose of Milan would say that Theodosius the younger feared the same fate as his father had suffered. Yet Maximinus was entrenched at Trier and his followers based at Rome whereas the only other political forces in the Empire were further east in Antioch and the Balkans. It thus seems bizarre that Theodosius I went from an area outside Maximinus’ influence, the Balkans between Merobaudes and Valens, to Spain which was closest to where Maximinus held court. How then are we to interpret his journey?

We must understand past events in the Balkans. Valentinian I and Valens had not divided the Empire into equal and later traditional eastern and western halves. Instead, the elder brother Valentinian retained the vast majority of the Empire, including most of the Balkans. Thus, Valentinian I spent the period before his death campaigning on the Danube frontier while his brother remained in the east. This explains how, when his father was Magister Equitum in the west but his family was unconnected in the east, Theodosius the younger held his Moesian command—the post fell under Valentinian I’s influence. Ammianus even mentions the position being reinforced by Gallic troops whom Valentinian I likely brought along when he arrived in the Balkans from Gaul. Theodosius I held a command under Valentinian I’s court. This would change after the western emperor’s death. Valens would begin coveting a more senior role of the governance of the Empire and styled himself “Maximus Augustus”. Merobaudes naturally opposed this and Gratian maintained

215 Amm. Marc. 29.6.16. Cf. Zos. 6.16.6
216 It appears that Roman diplomacy with the Goths in the lead up to Adrianople began in the beginning of 276. If so it is possible Theodosius had grappled with aspects of the Danube crisis in 375, helping to explain his later appointment.
217 Ambr. de Obit. Theod. 53.
218 Lenski, Valens, 26. Zos. 4.3.1 leaves Valens only Thrace.
219 Amm. Marc. 29.6.16
220 Den Boeft et al, Commentary 29, 245.
221 Lenski, Valens, 358.
his father’s control of the central Praetorian Prefecture in Illyricum through the nominal guardianship of his brother. Yet this outcome was by no means inevitable in early 376.

Valens resented Gratian’s effective assumption of his father’s territory. It was reasonable that as the younger and inexperienced emperor, owing his office to his elder brother, Valens would rule only a third of the Empire. Yet now that he was sharing power with a teenager, surely things would change. The chief target of Valens’ ambition was doubtless the Central Balkans. The region, bordering his pre-existing territory, contained to the estates where Valens had spent most of his adult life. It also was one of the most militarily troubled frontiers. Indeed, Valentinian I had been campaigning on the Balkan frontier and Valens soon would, while Gratian delayed in Gaul. While Gratian’s court, through the nominal guardianship of Valentinian II, seems to have maintained administrative jurisdiction over Valentinian I’s former Balkan territory, Theodosius the younger would not have anticipated this outcome in 376. He would only have been aware of Valens’ desire to claim Moesia where he was based, his father’s murder, and the movement of Merobaudes’ army west, away from a position to protect him from Valens in the Balkans. Staying near Merobaudes and Ausonius must have offered him the best protection.

We also should not understand the younger Theodosius’ fate as purely the result of the exigencies of the crisis surrounding Valentinian I’s death. The future years he spent in exile, unless we accept that Valens was hostile to him, are utterly inexplicable. By mid-376, Maximinus’ faction had perished and the Theodosian associate Antonius had already succeeded Maximinus as Praetorian Prefect on 23 May. His uncle Eucherius, brother of the executed Theodosius the elder, would become Comes Sacrarum Largitionum by 29 March 377. Yet Theodosius would remain in exile until after Valens’ death on 9 August 378.

Theodosius certainly had not spurned the idea of a public career, considering his quick ascent after Hadrianople. He must have faced personal political opposition. This opposition certainly did not originate in the western court where Eucherius, Antonius, Merobaudes, and Ausonius

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222 Lenski, Valens, 361.
223 Lenski, Valens, 51-52.
224 Cod. Theod. 13.3.11
225 Jones et al., PLRE 1, I, ‘Eucherius 2’.
226 Errington, Accession, 449 argues that Theodosius I returned to the Danube in late 377 to early 378. Yet even this chronology leaves an inexplicable gap as it requires Theodosius I to have remained in Spain during the 377 campaign season when his relatives had already assumed influence for some time. Moreover, if Theodosius were on the Danube frontier, then how was he involved in the Hadrianople campaign. Gratian had promised reinforcements to Valens and Theodosius would have commanded the nearest troops. He either would have been complicit in the disaster or else have refused to help Valens, thus further evidencing their enmity.
ruled. Gratian would later appoint Theodosius’ emperor and Valentinian II was only a little boy, so neither of them would have opposed him either. The only way to understand Theodosius I’s ongoing absence is through the influence of a limited power, one incapable of stemming Gratian’s favoritism for the Theodosian faction but which could still could render its ringleader persona non grata. The only conceivable force which could restrain Gratian, an Augustus, to resist his inclination would be his uncle Valens. Valens’ influence easily explains the otherwise bizarre political developments. Gratian likely would have respected a passionate wish of his uncle while resisting the notion that this affirmed Valens’ superior rank as Maximus Augustus. The teenage emperor thus would have symbolically rejected Valens’ authority by appointing allies of the exiled man even while grudgingly accepting his uncle’s essential wish. One Valens died discredited, no obstacle remained to Theodosius’ return. Such a chain of events also help explain our sources.

Our more contemporary and reliable sources either blame Maximinus or are silent on Theodosius the elder’s execution. Yet both Jordanes and Paul the Deacon, later less-informed authors, indict Valens for Theodosius the elder’s death. Given Valens’ later hostile reception as a persecutor and an Arian heretic and the sense of divine punishment his end seemed to entail, it is hard to see what would have motivated the Conspiracy of Silence in most of our contemporary sources. The notion of Theodosius the elder as the unjust victim of Valens would have enhanced the reputation of his son in both the church and the army. The only way to account for their silence is if it were known that Valens did not kill Theodosius the elder. It is impossible to see how Jordanes would have been the first writer to share

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227 H. Sivan, “Was Theodosius I a Usurper,” Klio 78 (1996), 198-211 argues that Theodosius I effectively launched a coup which would seemingly allow Gratian’s hostility to Theodosius as he did not appoint him emperor. Yet this is implausible: Theodosius I’s small reconstituted army could not have opposed Gratian’s so a coup would only have been possible with support from Gratian’s courtiers or army. It seems unthinkable Theodosius’ allies at Gratian’s court were able to compel Gratian to appoint Theodosius emperor when they could not even induce his recall from exile a few years before. Likewise, Gratian’s army had no real ties to Theodosius since his father had been cruel enough for them to abandon him and his former Moesian army was small. It seems unthinkable he rather than someone better known to the troops would have been better known to the troops. Moreover, Sivan’s conclusion that Theodosius did not fit the expected profile of an emperor is entirely wrong. The case of the two Theodosians uncannily echoes both the cases of Jovian (363-364) and Valentinian whose fathers were successful generals who fell from grace, who held successful commands themselves but were still young, who had infant sons to continue their dynasties, and who were Nicaean Christians.

228 Jor. Rom. 312; Crivellucci, Historia, 11.9.i-k (p. 155). Socrates. Hist. eccl. 19 says that Valens executed a Spanish “Theodosiolus” in the context of the Theodorus affair.

229 Thompson, Historical Work, 87-107 argues that Theodosius the elder must have committed some crime universally viewed as intolerable to account for his execution. This is implausible because the context of the 376 power struggle, contemporaries would have viewed the sudden execution of the Magister Equitum as an inherently political act. Furthermore, his crime was not so egregious as to prevent his son from rehabilitating his memory. Thus, contemporaries would not have refused to implicate Valens on account of the severity of Theodosius’ supposed crimes.
such a convenient story. Merobaudes the politically manipulative Frank, however, would have been a far less attractive avenger than a just, and Orthodox, God. Maximinus downfall would have only exposed the awkward relationship between the emperor’s family and the other emperor who legitimated him.

Likewise, chronology and geography present further impediments to Valens ordering Theodosius’ death from Antioch. In Gavin Kelly’s admittedly conservative estimate, there would have been no time for Valens to have arranged it. North Africa was also subject to the western court; eastern officials would have had a hard time explaining to the governor, Chilo, why Valens was reaching into his late brother’s territory to order the execution of Valentinian I’s most successful general. It is hard to see how Valens could have sanctioned the execution himself.

iv. Against Valens’ Complicity

The chief issue of the enmity between Valens and Theodosius the elder is its cause. We can see the clear separation in their locations and political networks, but not what caused the initial friction. This is a particular problem for someone who accuses Valens of involvement in Theodosius’ death. The only explanation is that of Warren Treadgold, who cites a particular event as the *impetus* for Valens’ hostility. In 371 a group of senior officials in Antioch illegally sought to predict the successor of the emperor Valens. They used a prophetic device which picked out Greek letters that composed lines of poetry in dactylic hexameter to explain what was fated to happen. When the poem reached the point of naming Valens’ successor, the conspirators stopped the prophecy after the first four Greek letters of his name, “ΘΕΟΔ” (Theod); they immediately assumed this referred to one of their number, the notary Theodorus (ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ) whom they subsequently plotted to install as emperor. When Valens discovered the conspiracy, after holding an inquiry and trials, he executed all the conspirators. Treadgold argues that Valens feared the prophecy might have referred to

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230 This would have required news of Valens death to travel from Brigetio to Antioch and then for Valens to order a slow show trial at Carthage, as Oros. *Pag.* 7.33.7 indicates occurred. This would leave fewer than four months before *Cod. Theod*. 15.7.3 attests to Hesperrius’ appointment as the new proconsul at Carthage who must surely have been named after the execution order was condemned at Gratian’s court which, given travel times, could not substantially antedate Theodosius’ death. Kelly, “Political Crisis,” 366 posits rather long travel times, such as four weeks from Brigetio to Antioch. Stanford’s optimistic Orbis tool suggests it would take 27.2 days, until 14 December, for an order from Valens, knowledgeable about Valentinian’s death, to reach Carthage. W. Scheidel, “ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World,” Stanford University, [http://orbis.stanford.edu/](http://orbis.stanford.edu/), accessed 15 June 2018. Valens would have required weeks to plot, to dispatch a conspirators to neutralize support in Theodosius’ army, and to hold a show trial.


232 W. Treadgold, “Predicting the Accession of Theodosius I,” *Mediterraneo Antico* ann. 8, fasc. 2 (2005), 767-791.
another man named “Theod…” and so killed Theodosius the elder and persecuted his homonymous son. Thus, Valens would not have opposed their heteronymous allies Antonius and Eucherius. After Valens died, a fearful Gratian supposedly bowed to the prophecy and appointed the only militarily experienced “Theod…” as emperor in Valens’ place.

As well as the previously mentioned impediments of time and distance to Valens involvement, Treadgold’s argument falls on four grounds. First, all of our sources postdate the accession of Theodosius I and the prophecy is too convenient not to be interpreted in that context. It is an unnatural coincidence that the conspirators just happened to prematurely stop the prophecy when just one more letter, in Greek either an omicron (Ο) or an omega (Ω), would distinguish between Theodoros (ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ) and Theodosius (ΘΕΟΔΟΣΙΟΣ). Likewise, the conspirators never even considered that the prophecy referred to one of the most senior “Theod…”s in the empire, the Magister Equitum Theodosius the elder, even though Treadgold would have us believe Valens made that same assumption. It is hardly credible that the conspirators would have rejected the idea that the prophecy referred to Theodosius on the metrical impossibility of his name but that Valens would have ignored this.

Second, Treadgold’s argument fails because of the reactions of the imperial parties. Valentinian I remained Theodosius the elder’s patron, even entrusting him with an independent army, while Valens supposedly considered Theodosius a mortal threat. Treadgold justifies this by explaining that the prophecy only referred to Valens’ eastern throne. Yet it seems absurd that Valentinian I would react with utter nonchalance to a mortal threat to the brother whom he had appointed. Then, since Valentinian I did not react at all, why did Gratian? Why did Gratian feel the need to fulfill the prophecy when his father had been content to do nothing? This already imperils Treadgold’s argument.

Yet it falls for a third reason. The last years of Valens’ reign saw the rise at Gratian’s court of one Flavius Mallius Theodorus who would eventually become a Praetorian Prefect. Throughout this time Theodosius I remained in exile. If Valens’ feared enough to impel Gratian to exclude one man because he was a “Theod…”, then why would he sanction Gratian’s sponsorship of another “Theod…”. Valens did not act because of fear.

233 Furthermore the short omicron required to spell Theodosius’ name would have violated the rules of dactylic hexameter Treadgold, “Predicting the Accession,” 775; D. den Hengst, “The Mimas Oracle in Books 29 and 31 of the Res Gestae,” Ammianus Symposium to Celebrate the Completion of the Ammianus Commentary by Jan den Boeft, Jan Willem Drijvers, Daan den Hengst, and Hans Teitler (Lecture, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden NL, 9 April 2018).
The fourth argument is that Valens failed to protect Maximinus whom Jerome’s glossator indicates was involved in Theodosius’ death. This means that we would either be obliged to reject the evidence of the glossator entirely or explain why Valens did not protect his henchman. Indeed if he had conspired with Maximinus, aside from the impediment of the time it would have taken Valens to arrange Theodosius’ death from Antioch, it would have taken impossibly long to coordinate it with Maximinus. Valens’ actual behavior is revealing. He allowed the purge of Maximinus, his allies, and other officials. Yet later he would employ both the purged Sebastianus and Festus, a known Maximinus associate,235 in senior positions. We witness both Valens’ discordance with the prevailing influence at Gratian’s court since he promoted the men they purged as well as his lack of obligation or desire to protect Maximinus and his fellow conspirators. This should inform our final assessment of Theodosius’ execution.

v. Tentative Reconstruction

The order to execute Theodosius almost certainly originated in the Trier court. Officials at Rome would have required authorization, Valentinian II did not possess the necessary legitimacy, and Valens was far away in both geographic and jurisdictional terms. When we combine the practical necessity of the order emanating from Trier with the glossator’s indictment of Maximinus, and the literary opprobrium Maximinus receives that is consistent with what we would expect for the murderer of the emperor’s father, it becomes fairly clear that the decision came from Trier.

It seems Maximinus acted, and acted alone. It would involve a senseless sort of whiplash for the same officials in the western court to order Theodosius’ execution and then within months begin favoring his family. We should probably blame someone who rapidly lost influence. We know that just a few months after Theodosius died, Maximinus, the dominant influence at the Trier court, was fired and promptly executed after new arrivals superseded his position. This seems like by far the most sensible way to explain the sudden reversal. Combined with the glossator’s evidence, we can be nearly certain.

Two more clues indicate Maximinus’ sole complicity. Gratian later appointed Theodosius I as emperor.236 This would be an extremely irresponsible gesture towards a man whose father he had killed. Likewise, as emperor with a large army, Theodosius never sought

235 PLRE I, 1, ‘Festus 3’; Lenski, Valens, 61.
236 See note above on Sivan, “Usurper.”
revenge on Gratian, Merobaudes, or Ausonius. At the time of Theodosius the elder’s death, Gratian was sixteen years old and deprived of the presence of his father for the first time as emperor. Maximinus must have been as much a guardian as a subordinate; in the initial months he would have been well placed to exercise power alone. This is the impression we receive from Symmachus, who refers to Gratian as powerless and manipulated.\textsuperscript{237} It also fits Maximinus’ political motivations.

The death of his patron Valentinian I must have left Maximinus isolated. His rivals had raised their own emperor, Valentinian II, and were marching with an army towards Trier.\textsuperscript{238} The next largest army in the western empire was presently victorious, free, and under the command of the man who had killed Maximinus’ brother-in-law Valentinus. Maximinus was surrounded by enemies and required a new protector. The only political force in the Empire strong enough to oppose the Merobaudes-Theodosius cabal was Valens. Moreover Maximinus, while facing this threat, had a few months of effective sole rule over the only clearly legitimate court in the west. He would have been aware of the hostility between Valens and Theodosius. The latter’s recent brutality towards his army would have left him especially vulnerable. The current proconsul, Chilo, would have been familiar to Maximinus from their shared time in Rome.\textsuperscript{239} The order would have been swift and unexpected.

The news certainly would have shocked observers in the Balkans. Theodosius the younger, in Moesia, would have heard about his father’s execution and the rumored cabal between Valens and Maximinus. Valens hostility and ambition to control the central Prefecture, where Theodosius I was currently serving, provide a clear explanation for why he did not go east to escape Maximinus and why Ambrose says he feared for his life.\textsuperscript{240} Meanwhile the court of Valentinian II, with the only friendly figures left in the Empire, marched towards Trier. It seems sensible that Theodosius would have attached himself to their protective aura.

On their arrival at Trier, Merobaudes and Ausonius, aided by the former’s army and the latter’s relationship with Gratian, initiated a purge. Valens, who was tied down in Antioch and desirous to stabilize the imperial regime,\textsuperscript{241} did nothing to protect Maximinus. Yet Valens’ grudging acquiesce to the execution of a man who had done him an unexpected favor

\textsuperscript{237} Symm. Relat. 4.11 cf. Amm. Marc. 28.1.57
\textsuperscript{238} Kelly, “Political Crisis,” 372.
\textsuperscript{239} Barnes, “Proconsuls,” 153. \textit{PLRE} I, I, ‘Chilo 1’.
\textsuperscript{240} Amb. \textit{de obit. Theod.}, 53
\textsuperscript{241} Kelly, “Political Crisis,” 371.
would have extended to a certain degree. The exclusion of Theodosius I was likely the price for Valens acceptance of a settlement that he cannot have liked.

Several years later, Gratian would recall Theodosius I from exile and then quickly appoint him emperor. This made sense. Theodosius I was amply qualified. Furthermore he had been a general in the Balkans in 376, just before the outbreak of the Gothic crisis. He would have been one of the only generals experienced in the area whose reputation was not tarnished by the Hadrianople campaign. He may even have had an existing relationship with the Gothic leadership with whom he would ultimately negotiate. He was also well regarded by the leaders at Gratian’s court. The emperor was also Orthodox-Nicaean. One wonders if the Nicaean-Arian divide motivated the hostility between Valens and the Theodosians. Yet there is insufficient evidence to explain Valens’ dislike of Theodosius the elder; we can only see that it existed.

V. Concluding Remarks

All of the events discussed help solve our essential research problem; they rectify the failure to fully link the events of Theodosius’ career with the imperial politics to which he was so closely connected. In Britain, our analysis demonstrated the importance of Valentinus to Theodosius’ mission. This realization reconciled known discrepancies, such as the lack of archaeological evidence for barbarians and the excessiveness of Ammianus’ language, with an as yet unmodified historical consensus. In Mauritania, we saw something similar. We learned both that the cruelty mentioned by Ammianus occurred only in response to extraordinary circumstances and that it served as ammunition for Theodosius’ enemies. Finally, we confronted the political morass surrounding of Theodosius’ death and his son’s accession. We grappled with the essential problem in the guilty Maximinus consensus: why did Theodosius’ son remain exiled from 376-378 while his brother Eucherius continued to enjoy favor at Gratian’s court. The explanation I propose, that Valens opposed the Theodosians without murdering Theodosius the elder, seems like the safest way to marry the present historical consensus with this discrepancy. All of these observations match the original analysis of the historian Ammianus. The stylistic impressions fail to match stated facts. This is to be expected of a work that is literary as well as historical: the author

242 Contra Treadgold, “Predicting the Accession,” 767-768; Sivan, “Usurper,” 200. Theodosius uncannily fits the profile of other non-familial appointees. He, like Valentinian and Jovian (363-364) had a young son to continue the dynasty, was the son of a popular general wounded by politics (PLRE I, ‘Gratianus 1’; ibid, ‘Varronianus 1’) had held a generalship but remained reasonably young, and was an Orthodox Christian.
intentionally manipulates our general impression through the structure of the narrative. Historians have found it easier to accept the overall transmitted picture while dismissing single inconvenient pieces of evidence. Yet more often the flaw is not in our evidence but in the challenge of interpreting it. By seeking to integrate known facts with political trends, we can bypass some of the biases in our source material.

Indeed, this seems to be a prevailing theme not just in Ammianus’ history, but the study of Theodosius the elder’s career fourth century politics defined all the major events of his life. We have seen how the first success of his career was double-edged, earning the general both a major promotion and incurring a powerful enmity. We followed him, now a brilliant yet controversial figure, through a Mauritanian campaign that compelled him to negotiate complex politics with serious ramification back home. Finally, we saw how two sudden surprises, the death of Valentinian and battle of Hadrianople, each radically reshaped the political fate of the Theodosian family. Just as much as a life in the late Roman army or late Antique Spain, Theodosius the elder led an existence in fourth century politics. We have acquired a new understanding of the process that led a thirty-two year old Theodosius I to Sirmium on 19 January 279.

Travelling down the road to Sirmium, Theodosius had much less time for reflecting on the nature of fortune than on his Spanish estates, a mere five months ago. He was now back in the Balkans, devoted to grappling with the Gothic crisis that had overcome the Empire. It was probably a good thing he had little time for reflection; considering his own fate now must have seemed purely selfish. If anything, he probably realized sorrowfully that the event which resurrected his career had cost the Empire dearly. On the one hand, when he arrived in Sirmium he would receive a prize that only months ago had seemed laughably unachievable: he would be appointed emperor. Yet on the other hand, at few times in Roman history could the emperorship have seemed less desirable. He would inherit the place of Valens, killed at Hadrianople, and the meager forces that remained to the late eastern Augustus. Ironically, the chunks of Moesia, which he had previously feared would be transferred to the office of eastern Augustus, now finally would be attached to the new eastern Augustus—himself. This gift too, with its military liabilities must have seemed burdensome. Yet even so, Theodosius personally must have felt largely contented. His family’s allies, Gratian, Merobaudes, and Ausonius had finally restored to him his real inheritance from his father: a duty to confront a desperate situation with an utter lack of resources. At least, he must have reflected, he had
avoided the need to defeat politically connected usurpers; that part of his father’s legacy would simply be another poisoned chalice.

Appendix: a Theodosian Family Tree

![Family Tree Image]
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