**Unit 2 – Barbarians**



**Introduction to Barbarians**

**Who were these guys and what did they look like?**

**They were neither the comic book characters nor the Hollywood barbarians.**

**Initially they were Northern Europeans, Middle Easterners, and North Africans that the ancient Romans were familiar with.**

**By "early barbarian" we mean those folks that the Romans fought against on**

**the fringes of the Roman Empire.**

**When barbarians were coopted into fighting on the side of the Romans the**

**were deemed to be "foederati", i.e., independent groups "federated" with Rome**

**If they were conquered or "provincialized" they were deemed to be inside of**

**and part of "Greater Rome", the empire.**

**Status of groups was somewhat fluid --**

**they could slip from one category to another**

**Ancient Romans called everyone who wasn't them "barbarians"**

**Etymology of "barbarian":**

**theory 1 -- Onomatopoeia: foreign languages sounded like "bar-bar-bar"**

**theory 2 -- facial hair: Latin word for beard was "barba"**

**theory 3 -- nobody really knows and 1 and 2 are ex post facto guesses**

**Romans exported Latin and were jingoistic about other languages --**

**except Greek**

**Romans were almost always clean-shaven --**

**except philosophers who were expected to have a beard (that's why**

**Marcus Aurelius is often shown with a beard that he probably didn’t have.)**

**Later Romans -- even emperors -- might be barbarian enough for beards**

**Romans themselves didn't know and debated the origin of the word**

**"barbarian"**

**We needn't worry about our Ignorance**

**So most early barbarians were long-headed caucasoid types or round-headed**

**Mediterraneans -- By caucasoid here we mean either "caucasian" or "from**

**the Caucasus region", i.e., slavs.**

**Later barbarians might be more oriental --**

**the Huns are sometimes thought of as Chinese**

**the Goths were pushed into Europe from the TransCaucasus by the Huns**

**the Lombards were Central Asians**

**Or they might be from the far north --**

**The Normans, as their name implies, were "North-" or "Norse-men":**

**They actually were peripatetic "Vikings" who conquered northern France and then sold their services as freebooters -- later versions were called "Condottieri".**

**As might be expected, they overthrew their employers.**

**And that was a well-established pattern.**

**Before talking about the sequential barbarian "invasions", we need to remind ourselves of several things:**

**The special case of the Franks -- It's hard to distinguish Franks from "barbarians"**

**but they usually are looked at differently and separately, maybe as heirs -- perhaps**

**because of Charlemagne and the founding of the Holy Roman Empire (not holy,**

**nor Roman, nor even imperial).**

**We will adhere to the "different/separate" convention.**

**Barbarian groups (often really just *ad hoc* confederations)**

**changed their names due to:**

**Population movements -- acquiring new place names**

**Expansion or contraction**

**Conquering or being conquered**

**Different names at different times**

**Different names in different languages**

**Different versions of "history"**

**Intentional ideological mislabeling -- as in "enemies" always equal ""**

**barbarians (of some stripe), and in modern times equal "terrorists"**

**"Historical" names for the large groups might be names that were applied by**

**enemies or by later writers/historians. They might not be what the folks**

**involved called themselves: we may not even know what they called**

**themselves.**

**This was already a long standing pattern and it still goes on today: American/English names of peoples, nations, communities, and states may bear little resemblance to what folks call themselves.**

**Italy/Italia;**

**Germany/Deutchland;**

**Switzerland/Helvetzia;**

**Greece/Hellas;**

**"Macedonian" claimed by two enemy groups;**

**Who are the "hilf tahrir falastinii"?;**

**etc.)**

**We can swallow all the historical naming variations, keeping in mind that**

**what is really important is coming to some conclusion about how the**

**peoples and events affected Medieval Rome (for the sake of this course) and**

**the end product us. (We'll keep asking that!)**

**Note also that there is a temporal organization here, but it is based on when the groups had their major interactions with Rome, not when the groups were formed, or had their most exciting events from an "in-group" viewpoint, or when they dissolved.**

**There will necessarily be loose ends -- there are just too many folks coming from too many directions to talk about everything and everyone. Our topics in this unit will therefore be somewhat illustrative rather than exhaustive. As usual, some of the more bizarre events will be included so that everyone doesn't just go to sleep.**

**Internal affairs, the predisposition of the Romans at various times and what was going on in Roman politics, often had more influence on their encounters with barbarian invasions than did the actions and strengths of the Barbarians.**

**Who's on first?????**

**A timeline/scorecard, even the bits that have little or nothing to do with Rome, using as many names of the teams and players as we can find (to confuse the innocent and conflate the guilty) is on the Internet at:** [**http://www.mmdtkw.****org/ALRItkwRom303\_2BarbTimelin.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/ALRItkwRom303_2BarbTimelin.html)

**Barbarian Groups and their Roman Interactions:**

**Visigoths -- Alaric trashes Rome -- 410 AD**

[**http://www.****mmdtkw.org/VAlaric.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VAlaric.html)

**Galla Placida -- a woman with connections**

[**h****ttp://www.mmdtkw.org/VGallaPlacida.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VGallaPlacida.html)

**Vandals -- Gaiseric nips off Spain, then N. Africa --**

**409-429 AD, Plunders Rome -- 455 AD**

[**http://www.newadve****nt.org/cathen/15268b.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15268b.htm)

[**http://www.wiki****pedia.org/wiki/Geiseric**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geiseric)

[**http://www.wik****ipedia.org/wiki/Vandal**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandal)

**Huns -- Attila dissuaded from attacking Rome by Leo 1 --**

**450's AD**

[**http://www.mmdtk****w****.org/VAttila.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VAttila.html)

**Leo 1:**

[**http://www.newadvent.or****g/cathen/09154b.htm**](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09154b.htm)

**Visigoths (Sciri) again -- Odoacer, a mercenary, rules Rome --**

**476 AD**

**Romulus Augustulus and Orestes**

[**http://www****.mmdtkw.org/VRomulusAug.html**](http://www.mmdtkw.org/VRomulusAug.html)

[**http://www.roman-e****mperors.org/auggiero.htm**](http://www.roman-emperors.org/auggiero.htm)

**Ostrogoths -- Theodoric boots out Odoacer -- 493 AD**

[**http://www.fordham.****edu/halsall/source/jordanes-theodoric1.html**](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jordanes-theodoric1.html)

[**http://historyme****dren.about.com/library/who/blwwtheogrt.htm**](http://historymedren.about.com/library/who/blwwtheogrt.htm)

[**http://www.wiki****pe****dia.org/wiki/Ostrogoths**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostrogoths)

[**http://www.wikiped****ia.org/wiki/Theodoric\_the\_Great**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodoric_the_Great)

**Amalasuntha, Daughter of Theodoric, Regent for Athalric -- 526 AD**

[**http://www.****wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalasuntha**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalasuntha)

[**http://womenshi****story.about.com/cs/medrenqueens/p/amalasuntha.htm**](http://womenshistory.about.com/cs/medrenqueens/p/amalasuntha.htm)

**Lombards -- Alboin takes most of Italy -- 568-570**

**Lombards hold it for two centuries**

[**http://www.boglewood.****com/timeline/alboin.html**](http://www.boglewood.com/timeline/alboin.html)

[**http://www.wikip****edia.org/wiki/Alboin**](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alboin)

**The Movie:**

[**http://www.cine****medioevo.net/Film/cine\_rosmunda\_alboino.htm**](http://www.cinemedioevo.net/Film/cine_rosmunda_alboino.htm)

[**http://www.cinema-shop.com/Filme/Adv****enture/X\_Plakate/alboin\_11.jpg**](http://www.cinema-shop.com/Filme/Adventure/X_Plakate/alboin_11.jpg)

[**http://w****ww.imdb.com/title/tt0056427/**](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0056427/)

**Franks -- Merovingians and Carolingians -- "protectors" not**

**barbarians -- 8th, early 9th century**

**See Unit 6**

**Saracens -- Pirates become occupiers -- 9th Century**

**[http://www.ccel.org/g/](http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap52.htm)****[gibb](http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap52.htm)****[on/](http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap52.htm)****[decline/volume2/chap52.htm](http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap52.htm) Gibbon, east, chapter 52**

[**http://www.c****cel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap56.htm**](http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap56.htm) **Gibbon, east, chapter 56**

[**http://www.bbc.c****o.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A275492**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A275492) **Gibralter**

[**http://www.an****gelfire.com/md/8/moors.html**](http://www.angelfire.com/md/8/moors.html) **Many images**

[**http://the****-tech.mi****t.edu/Sh****akespeare/othello/index.html**](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/othello/index.html) **Othello**

[**http://the-tech.mit.edu/S****hakespeare/**](http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/) **All Shakepeare's plays**

**Normans -- Robert Guiscard -- expels Saracens, saves**

**then sacks Rome -- mid-11th century**

[**http://www.roa****ngelo.net/valente/conquest.html**](http://www.roangelo.net/valente/conquest.html)

**Summing up:**

**Waves of "barbarians", all seeking the better life of southern Europe, brought new ideas into this "desirable" area. For the most part the barbarians wanted to preserve (for themselves) rather than to destroy the system in place.**

**The greener pastures and better organization that they sought in western and southern Europe were real, and by the end of the period of "invasions" everyone was much better off than ever before -- except, perhaps for the very thin veneer that had constituted the Ancient Roman ruling class. Remember that most of Ancient Rome's population was slave or downtrodden workers and that the "high culture" of the ancient civilization belonged only to a few.**

**And Medieval "culture" was more civilized than the Ancient Rome, which, by end, was chaotic, riven by civil wars and disputes, engorged and fascinated with human blood-sports, wrong (even evil) in so many ways. (Think about how few of us would have any chance of being what we are today in an "Imperial Roman" civilization.)**

**There were several reasons for this -- Christianity, removal of several layers of the ruling class to Constantinople, better land use, immunities to known diseases, etc. -- but not least among them were the new blood and ideas and more egalitarian social and legal organizations that arrived with the barbarians.**

**But then in the 13th/14th centuries, things came crashing down, first due to economic setbacks -- too many people and overcropped land led to food crises -- and then came the plagues with the opportunities that followed. More about that in unit 10.**