

Ethnicity, Identity and the Development of the Roman  
Frontier in Central Europe.

By

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# Abstract

## Ethnicity, Identity and the development of the Roman Frontier in Central Europe

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The purpose of this thesis is to identify and examine the degree to which ethnicity, specifically the etic Roman ethnicity of Gallic and Germanic tribes, affected the development of the Roman frontier in Central Europe from around the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC through to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Of primary concern is the etic ethnic identities Roman society created around the Gallic and Germanic tribal groups. Analysis of textual and archaeological evidence from the period shows that there was a consistent discourse surrounding these tribal groups; and that this discourse, while fluctuating and changing in response to changing political and military events, presented a number of recurring ethnic traits.

Taking these key Gallic and Germanic etic ethnic traits, the thesis discusses the influence such identities had on the development of the Rhine Frontier. Firstly, through a consideration of the Roman conceptualization of their empire and frontier and its evolution between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC through to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Followed by an assessment of the Roman state's ability to gather objective information regarding the frontier zone and then its capability in translating this information into effective strategic decision making concerning Frontier policy. Thirdly, their ability to choose strategic frontier positions with a particular focus on the causes and justifications given by Julius Caesar for the establishment of the Rhine as the frontier in Central Europe. The thesis includes a consideration of the interactions across the frontier between Roman and native groups, which directly affected the development of the frontier over time. In particular, economic and diplomatic interactions, and the role such interactions played in mitigating some of the ethnic traits, identified earlier in the thesis. The discussion also addresses the nature of the social and culture changes experienced by tribal groups as a result of these interactions, and how the ethnic perceptions of the Roman state directly influenced these changes, and therefore the development of the frontier as a whole.

This thesis demonstrates that the etic Roman ethnic identity of Gallic and Germanic tribal groups was a significant factor in the nature and development of the frontier in Central Europe. Direct influence from ideas regarding ethnicity can be identified in the Roman concepts of empire and frontier, how frontier locations were chosen and established, and the nature and consequences of interaction between the Roman state and native communities. The importance of ethnicity to the understanding of the Roman frontier in Central Europe should therefore be considered a foundational issue for future study.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

"When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with them. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."(Neate 2015)

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2015, Donald Trump announced his candidacy for presidency of the United States of America. The quote above comes from some of the opening lines of this speech. In it, he argued that the Mexican state was directly involved in the systematic emigration of Mexican criminals, drug dealers and rapists to the United States of America. Donald Trump used a number of perceived stereotypes regarding Mexican people, such as criminality, illegal narcotics and aggressive immigration, in his speech to justify his policy regarding the construction of a large dividing wall along the Mexican-American boarder. A policy which would eventually be turned into the slogan "Build the Wall" chanted by many of his supporters during the political campaign. The obvious response to such rhetoric is to criticize it as misinformed and inaccurate. However, this ignores the nature of the American discourse around Mexican ethnicity that Donald Trump was drawing from. The speech framed the presentation of the Mexican people in terms of immigration with its inference that these people were crossing over into the United States. It then introduced facets of an etic Mexican ethnicity constructed by an American audience. The Mexican people were presented as "other" suggested by the speech inferring that problems such as drugs and crime are being brought to America from Mexico. These specific themes had been carefully chosen from the wider discourse to provoke a particular reaction. In this case, the reaction in question was political support for Donald trump and his boarder policy. As clearly manipulative as the rhetoric in this speech was, it served as an example of the influence the ethnic discourse had not just on the perception of an external group, but on the nature of a frontier was to take and the manner in which interactions across it could occur.

Some of the fundamental issues that form the modern discussion on Roman frontiers include the Roman conceptualisation of their frontiers, such as their purpose; and the process by which frontiers developed and changed over time. Just as with the likely response to Donald Trump's speech, modern scholars have tended towards identifying the Roman perception of foreign groups and critiquing the accuracy of such etic ethnic identities. This has been a valuable pursuit and has improved our understanding of the Roman perception of their wider world. Yet rather than critique the accuracy of such identities, one could instead consider the degree to which the ethnic discourse influenced the issues mentioned above. To what degree did Roman perceptions of foreign groups influence the nature and purpose of their frontiers with those groups? Did ethnicity factor into the development of the frontiers over time? This thesis addresses these very questions.

Specifically, the thesis focuses on the Roman frontier system of Central Europe most commonly defined as the Rhine frontier and its previous expansion through Gaul. The frontier of Central Europe between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD experienced significant changes and developments, both in the physical nature of the frontier and the manner in which interactions across it were conducted. The communities present along this frontier were the Gallic and Germanic tribes. These two groups were a significant part of the Roman etic discourse on ethnicity, and are each heavily represented in the ancient textual and archaeological evidence. A consideration of these specific communities and the frontier associated with them provides a rich source of material to consider and analyse. In order to address the question of ethnicity's influence in the nature and development of the Roman frontier in Central Europe, these key issues must be considered. First, an understanding of the way in which ancient communities conceptualised and constructed ethnic identity is paramount. From this, we can establish the nature of the Greek and Roman discourse concerning the etic identity of Gallic and Germanic tribes. The discourse will then be separated into discrete chronological cross sections, the analysis of which will identify the major themes and developments of the Gallic and Germanic etic identity. This work is primarily interested in the etic ethnic identities Roman society created around foreign cultures, rather than the emic ethnic identities foreign groups created for themselves. The reason for this is that we seek to specifically consider Roman actions and decision making along the frontier in Central Europe. The major themes present in the etic ethnic identity of Gallic and Germanic communities will then be applied to discussions on the Roman conceptualization and development of frontiers. From this approach, the thesis argues that

Roman etic ethnicity was a significant factor in the nature of the Roman frontier in Central Europe.

Central to this study are two academic areas of discussion and debate, the first being the nature and role of ethnicity in the ancient world, and secondly frontier theory, specifically those works concerned with the development and function of the Roman frontier.

The study of ethnicity has in part been the pursuit of a suitable definition. In this endeavour, there have been two primary modes of thought best outlined by Barth (1969). There is the primordialist view, which places greatest importance upon common ancestry or belief in one. The second view of ethnicity is that of the instrumentalist. This view prioritises the idea that individuals actively define themselves as part of an ethnic group by engaging in common political and social institutions (Hall 1997: 17; Spek 2009: 101). There are problems within each of these schools of thought. In the case of the primordialist view, the failure to deal with the concept of cultural ethnicity renders it severely limited as it is unable to address the shifting influence culture has upon ethnic identity. The instrumentalist view suffers from a similar malady as it fails to explain the influence of common descent in relation to ethnicity. In considering the factors involved in the construction of ancient ethnicity, this study uses aspects of both the primordialist and instrumentalist view points, and in particular the work of Smith (1986), Nash (1989) and Renfrew (1995). Smith (1986) identified a list of factors from both viewpoints that could be formed together in the construction of ethnic identity. Nash (1989) developed this list refining it down to three essential parts, kinship, commensality and common cult. Renfrew (1995) returned to the list presented by Smith in his paper *Prehistory and the identity of Europe, or, don't let's be beastly to the Hungarian*. The framework offered by Smith and Renfrew, and the refinements of Nash are used within this thesis to frame our understanding of how ancient communities conceptualized and constructed ancient ethnicity.

From this understanding of ethnic construction, the concepts of etic and emic identity can be drawn out. Emic identity is the way a community comprehends its own identity. While etic identify is the perception that community holds for external groups. As mentioned above this thesis is concerned with etic identity. As such, the idea of the 'other' is the conceptual manifestation of an etic identity. The first major discussion of the 'other' is from Edward Said's (1978) work *Orientalism*. In his book, Said (1978) discusses colonial imperialism and its ability to spread and maintain the image of the oriental 'other'. This 'other' was an etic

construction of western thought and was defined in part by its differences from that of the westerner. The idea of the 'other' transferred into the study of ancient history through the work of Francois Hartog's (1988) and his book: *The Mirror of Herodotus*. Hartog (1988) discussed the manner in which the concept of the 'other' was present in the work of Herodotus. Examples within Herodotus' text, such as Scythians and the barbarous easterner, were shown to have been part of a wider Greek discourse on foreign ethnicity, from which Herodotus drew. Soon after this Edith Hall (1989) explored the concept of the 'other' in Greek tragedy, while Jonathan Hall (2002) considered the manner in which the Persian War had developed Hellenic identity in contrast with that of the 'barbarian other'. The concept of the 'other' has been a prevailing one, which has led to the significant contribution of Benjamin Isaac (2004) to the topic with his work *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Isaac presents wide-ranging evidence of Greek and Roman cultural bias against a plethora of ancient communities within the Mediterranean region. His conclusion: that such evidence displayed a significant level of ethnic prejudice or even as he refers to it "proto-racism".

The ascendancy of the 'other' hypothesis has naturally resulted in critiques of the model. Gruen (2010) in his book *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, presents a cogent rebuttal to the concept of the 'other'. Attempting to moderate the view that negative images lead to the creation of the 'other', Gruen applies detailed analysis to key ancient authors such as Caesar and Tacitus. He shows that many of the descriptions and viewpoint offered by these ancient authors were far from the "proto-racism" suggested by Isaac (2004). Instead, Gruen explains how these descriptions displayed delicate characterisations that resisted categorisation as either positive or negative representations. Gruen argues for a cultural discourse which allowed ancient communities to conceive of connections between themselves and neighbouring groups, rather than the model of the 'other' as a means of establishing a group's identity and superiority over others. To do this Gruen engaged with only major extended texts rather than fragments and looked at the methods by which ancient authors built connections between differing peoples. Specific authors are linked within each chapter to particular ethnic groups, such as Caesar and the Gauls or Tacitus and the Germans. Gruen noted that his analysis was not exhaustive and served only as a demonstration that the concept of a communities identity in terms of (rather than in contrast to) another culture was an ingredient in the ancient discourse. Such work expands upon that of Momigliano (1975) who considered the intellectual interactions of Greeks with foreign groups such as Romans,

Celts and Jews. The present study takes much from Gruen's work, using his careful analysis of the ancient source material without presupposing the creation of an 'other' based on negative comparisons. However, the limitations of Gruen's study in accessing the development of the ancient discourse is arrested in this thesis with the inclusion of both major works and fragmentary ones, and the consideration of only two ethnicities over a significant chronological period. This thesis then seeks to position itself at this point in the scholarly discussion regarding ethnicity. The concept of the 'other' is an apt representation of ethnic identity. However, this model should not presume that ethnic representations of communities are part of a process of identifying one's own group via negative traits of external groups. The ancient source material supports this moderation of the 'othering' model. Though it requires an assessment of the ancient discourse chronologically, to comprehend the instability such identities possessed.

As stated above there is a second academic area represented within this study. Frontier theory, specifically those works concerned with the development and function of the Roman frontier, forms the academic backdrop which this thesis seeks to place the concepts of ethnic identity into. In considering the study of frontier theory, there has been a number of significant advancements in our understanding of how frontiers function and can be interpreted. The earliest advancement was made by Frederick Jackson Turner and his paper *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893) which was later included in his book *The Frontier in American History* (1920) as its first chapter. He presented the frontier not as a boundary line but as a "meeting place between savagery and civilisation". Turner proposed that far from being a point at which to stop, the frontier invited expansion and thereby influenced the development of the expanding culture. His work was one of the first to advance the idea of the frontier as a zone into which groups advanced rather than a line to cross (Jacobs 1970:363). This development is key for the present discussion. The understanding of the frontier as a zone marked a move away from the model of frontiers as static lines in the sand. Turner's zonal frontier presented a model that allowed for continual advancement and development, similar to that seen in evidence for Roman frontiers. However, it lacked a significant factor. The complete exclusion of native populations meant that the theory presented frontier development in terms of advancement of the frontier rather than the interactions of groups across it. This is the critique both Larsen (1993:242) and Whittaker (1994: 5) make of Turner's work, both of arguing that frontiers can only be accurately understood through consideration of the cultures operating with the transitional

zone. The understanding of economic, diplomatic and cultural interactions across the Roman frontier are significant factors in this thesis. The reason for this is that it was through these forms of interaction that ethnic identities became relevant to either community and therefore influential to the frontier development.

One of the most recent discussions regarding the nature and function of the Roman frontier came from Luttwak (1976), who presented the development of Roman frontier systems in terms of a strategic frontier policy. In his book *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (1976), Luttwak made a significant assumption about Roman frontier policy. He presumed the ability of the Roman state to have made conscious choices about frontier location was well established, and that the primary driving factor in these decisions was a desire for secure boundaries. This was part of a wider idea that Roman frontier policy was made as part of a rational strategic plan with the ultimate goal of protecting Roman territory. There has been a clear reaction in scholarly circles to the grand strategy theory. Mann's (1979) review of the theory noted the issues mentioned above and the lack of analysis of the Republican period, an oversight that he argued held back the rest of the study. Isaac (2000) in his book, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* offered a wholesale rejection of grand strategy. He argued that the Roman state was not concerned with a quest for defensible frontiers, nor was it capable of making such strategic decisions, as it developed no intelligence gathering system or systematic maps of frontier regions. The work of Austin and Rankov (1995) has done much the deal with the claim of poor information gathering on the part of the Roman state. They have laid out a significant range of ways in which the Roman state procured information regarding its frontier and those that lived beyond its influence. However, in each of the cases presented by Austin and Rankov the issues of cultural bias and ethnic identity continue to play a role in the interaction between the Roman state and foreign communities, such as examples of captive prisoners and deserters. Whittaker (1994: 85) argued that while the criticisms of Luttwak's strategic frontier were valid, he remained unconvinced by the idea of accidental boundaries suggested by Luttwak's critics. His argument was that even unconscious decisions such as the placement of frontiers were determined by factors that could be explained rationally. It is the contention of this thesis that the factors Whittaker refers to in this argument is ethnic identities. Recently Luttwak (2009: 421) has offered a response to the critiques of the Grand strategy theory, based on how he defines strategy in comparison to his critics. He argued that the importance of geographical knowledge, highlighted by the like of Isaac are misplaced. Instead, the concept

of strategy in the ancient world should be understood in terms of comprehension of the entire struggle without the necessity for a spatial dimension. Luttwak argues that strategy is often contradictory and can lie far away from modern concepts of linear logic. His concluding point was that ancient strategic decisions shaped by culture and motivated by power are often rationalised by modern scholars apply modern concepts of strategy to ancient ideas. Luttwak then claims that modern scholars have sought rationalised answers for issues regarding the Roman frontiers nature and purpose. An argument which this thesis in principle agrees with, in the sense that the desire to understand Roman concepts of ancient groups has led to the question of accuracy forming a dominating part of the discussion. The result of which has been a lack of consideration for the fact that the Roman state acted on information and perceptions, regardless of the fact that modern scholarship has shown such ideas to be false.

It is important to note that much of the discussion within frontier studies has often occurred with little reflection on those communities existing beyond the empire in question. Both Turner (1893) and Luttwak (1976) were guilty of this oversight, offering too much significance to the actions of the expanding culture, while ignoring the influence external cultures must have had on such zone of interaction. Wells (1999) in his work *The Barbarians Speak*, seeks, despite the lack of any native literacy sources, to present a clear argument for the influence periphery groups had on frontier zones, and how they in turn were affected by it. In his chapter, *Identities and Perceptions* (99-121), Wells discusses many of the issues presented in the present work, but avoids deeper analysis of the influence inaccurate perceptions may have had on the frontier development. At the end of the chapter he discusses the process of tribalization, a concept which conceives the reaction of tribal communities to interactions with more complex societies. Wells argues that during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC in Gaul and the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC in Germany native groups began to respond to the presence of and interactions with the Roman state. In the case of the Gallic tribes, this took the form of the development of *oppida* and the formation of communities with great organisational complexity. While in Germany, there was a gradual trend towards regional distinctions between tribes, through material evidence such as burial practices and pottery. Wells concluded that the presence of the Roman state was another impetus for change among tribal communities that had been experiencing continual change beforehand. While not concerned with communities beyond the frontier as Wells, Roymans (2004) argued that a similar process occurred to the Batavians. However, in this case the process of change was more directly guided by Roman hands through institutions such as auxiliary recruitment. This

avenue of scholarship has presented this thesis with another area of inquiry regarding the influence of Roman ethnic ethnicity. If we accept that native groups were affected by interactions with the Roman state, then one would imagine that such changes were directly influenced by ethnic perceptions the Roman state held.

Finally, there is a significant study concerned with the interaction between Roman and Gallic groups was *Beyond the Rubicon: Romans and Gauls in Republican Italy* by Williams (2001). Williams correctly identified the need for analysis of the perception of Greek and Roman audiences in regards to Gallic communities. Taking a thematic approach, Williams uses the invasion of northern Italy by Gallic tribes to consider the representations of Gauls in geographical space. He then used the sack of Rome to discuss the manner in which Roman and Greek audiences discussed and told stories about Gallic culture and history. However, Williams limits the study of Gallic identity up to the incorporation of *Gallia Cisalpine* into *Italia* (42 BC). Therefore, the study does not take into account the developments under Caesar and after the conquest of Gaul. Williams also does not refer to ethnic identity, though he makes numerous references to the perception of Gauls by Greek and Roman audiences. This thesis incorporates Williams' use of textual and archaeological evidence in identifying the nature of the Roman discourse around Gallic identity. However, as stated above the present study adopts a chronological study in order to better display the developments over time that the discourse displayed.

As stated above the purpose of this thesis is to consider the effects of ethnicity on the development of the Roman frontier in Central Europe. The first step in any analysis of ethnicity is to define it. This is the primary concern of chapter two. Structured around the working definition of ethnicity in the ancient world provided by Smith (1986), Nash (1989) and Renfrew (1995), the chapter considers how this method of constructing ethnic identities allowed Greek and Roman authors to create ethnic identities. This is done through breaking down the facets of ethnic construction in four separate groups. Section 2.1 deals with the importance of language and self-defining. The discussion includes a consideration of the Greek term *barbaros* and the interpretations modern scholars have brought to this label. The next point is shared territory, dealt with in section 2.2. Here the ancient connection between ethnic traits and geography/ climate, and the development of the 'harsh land begets harsh men' concept within the ancient discourse are considered. Following on from that,

section 2.3 approaches the issue of shared history and common descent through and analysis of the contrasting claims of the Athenian and Roman state regarding their individual mythic histories. Finally, Chapter 2 concludes in section 2.4, with a look at the concept of shared culture and religion. This is achieved through a case study regarding the Greek and Roman etic ethnic identity of Egyptians. In particular, it considers the fact that communities understood each other in terms of similarities as often as they did contrasts.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to identify the consistent facets used by Greek and Roman authors in the construction of etic Gallic and Germanic ethnic identities. To do this we will analyse the ethnographic information presented by ancient authors within a chronological framework. As stated above the approach in the chapter is based around chronological cross sections of the ancient discourse. These cross sections provide discrete snapshots of the Greek and Roman discourse regarding the etic identity of either the Gallic or the Germanic tribes. The purpose of this method is to show the development of the ancient discourse within the historically relevant context. Textual evidence is supported with the inclusion of analysis of archaeological representations of Gauls and Germans, again placed within the above chronological framework. Through this methodology, the chapter will identify not just the significant facets of the etic identity of both Gauls and Germans, but also the developments across time that lead to these themes becoming the dominant associations with these tribal groups. While this discussion will not seek to identify inaccurate ethnic identities presented in the ancient sources, it will aim to explain motive and historical context for each author. In the case of the Gallic tribes, Polybius is the earliest surviving work to discuss relevant ethnographic information. In addition to Polybius, we will consider the work of Diodorus Siculus and the *Commentarii* of Julius Caesar. Careful note will also be given to those works that are either lost to modern scholarship or in partial or fragmentary form. Such works will be analysed in the same framework as the more substantial texts. Germanic tribal groups are also of interest in our discussion forming as they did the Rhine frontier zone with the Roman Empire. Literary evidence of these groups is unfortunately sparse, with only the work of authors such as Julius Caesar and Tacitus surviving in any condition to the modern day. There are in the case of German ethnographic material significant written documents missing from the historical record, such as Pliny's *History of the Germanic Wars*. Despite the limited ethnographic material, it is possible to construct a general image of what Roman society considered Gallic and Germanic identity.

Chapter 4 takes the major themes drawn out from the Roman discourse on Gallic and Germanic ethnic identity and places them within a wider discussion on the nature and development of the Roman frontier in Central Europe. The chapter is divided into two broad sections. Firstly, section 4.1 considers the Roman concepts of empire and frontier and how they were intimately linked with the Roman perception of ethnic groups. Then the section will look at the methods by which the Roman state gathered and acted upon information about the frontier and beyond. In particular, it will discuss whether such methods allowed the Roman state to avoid the cultural biases seen within its ethnic identities of groups such as the Gauls and Germans. Lastly, section 4.1 will consider the way in which frontier locations were determined through a case study looking at the establishment of the Rhine frontier by Julius Caesar, and whether Caesar's ethnic perception of Gauls and Germans effected its location. Section 4.2 is an assessment of to what degree the interactions occurring across the frontier were affected by ethnic identities. This is broken down into three parts. The first section deals with the issue of economic interaction and economic control on the part of the Roman state. The use of prestige goods to influence tribal elites and the limiting of trading rights was possibly used to control particular ethnic traits of Germanic communities beyond the Rhine. The next section assesses the use of diplomatic interactions by the Roman state in maintaining stability across the Rhine frontier, through the re-settling of tribal communities and the development of alliances. In addition, it will look at the encouragement of ethnic traits among some communities living within the frontier zone such as the Batavians. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on the social and cultural changes native communities experienced as a result of the interactions across the frontier mentioned above. The development of more complex social structures, including an elite, strata will be shown to have developed because of the economic and diplomatic interactions previous discussed in the chapter; and therefore, to have been directly influenced by the ethnic identities held by the Roman state.

## Chapter 2

### Greek and Roman Ideas of Ethnicity

If we are to consider the views Romans held of their tribal neighbours and the effects such views had on the frontier, then the way in which they arrived at those views is a vital consideration. This chapter considers the methods and ideas by which ethnicity was constructed within both Greek and Roman discourses, and how the ideas have a clear continuity from Greek through to Roman literature. The identification of themes within the ancient discourse will then be applied to the specific examples of Gallic and Germanic ethnic identities in Chapter 3.

As was shown in the Introduction, modern scholarship has long wrestled with the definition of ethnicity. The concept has proven to be evasive when attempting to pin it down (Gruen 2013: 1). The modern word ethnicity is derived from the Greek *ethnos*. Liddell and Scott's (1996: 195) *Greek-English Lexicon* defines *ethnos* as: 1. a company, body of men. 2. a race, tribe. 3. a nation or people. 4. a particular class of men, a caste" and in itself demonstrates that the ancient Greek concept of ethnicity was as diverse as modern attempts at a definition. The *Iliad* (2.87; 2.459; 2.469) uses the term several times, often for a band or group of men as well as animals. Mc Inerney (2001: 55) notes that *ethnos* remained a popular poetic term for flock, herd or collective group. Sophocles (*Phil.* 1147) used it in relation to the wild animals of the land. In Pindar's Pythian (4.252) and *Nemean Odes* (3.74) *ethnos* becomes a collective group of men or women. Herodotus employed the term in other ways. It described the inhabitants of several *poleis* at once (*Hist.* 5.77.4), and in relation to a foreign group such as the Lydians (*Hist.* 1.6.1). At the same time, it was a general undefined foreign group such as those who lived within the Caucasus Mountains (*Hist.* 1.203.1). In short, the Greek meaning of *ethnos* was used in many circumstances as a term for both groups of men and animals, at least in poetry, with the term retaining a fluid nature.

Barth (1969: 11) wrote that an ethnic group was understood to be a population that was biologically self-perpetuating in which shared cultural values formed a field of communication and interaction, and had a membership that identified, and was identified by, others. Sian Jones (1997: 84) later defined such groups as "...culturally ascribed identity

groups which are based on the expression of a real or assumed shared culture and common dissent." An important distinction between these two viewpoints is the influence that Jones gives culture rather than that of biology as stated by Barth, and the flexibility Jones' definition offers in comparison to Barth's self-perpetuating characterisation. The ideal of a monolithic and static ethnic identity, either emic or etic, does not allow for the continuous change and development. Emic and etic identity refers to the differing perspectives from which identity can be created. Emic identity is created internally by a group as a display of their own identity. Etic identity is created by a group regarding an external 'other' and this will be the focus of Chapter 3. As we shall see, ancient peoples were part of a discourse on ethnic identity, which placed concepts such as shared ancestry above those of the biological link put forward by Barth. Therefore, we need to define the concept of ancient ethnicity. To do this we will consider the way by which ancient ethnicity was constructed. We will consider several facets of ethnicity and how ancient sources used them to form ethnic identities. The chapter also seeks to show how these ideas were not only present in Greek thought but also existed within the Roman discourse. In this way, we will see that concepts seen in Greek literature were taken up by Roman authors and adapted to suit the concerns and realities of the Roman Republic and Principate.

When considering ethnicity there are two principal forms that it can take. The first is objective ethnicity, which defines people in terms of shared physical or genetic characteristics (Hall 2002a: 136). Most importantly, an objective ethnicity is one based on verifiable facts about the individual or group. The second form is subjective ethnicity, which describes people by facets such as their culture, customs or history. The two forms can and do overlap. An example is in Tacitus' *Germania* (4), where he states "...so far as can be said with their vast numbers is identical: fierce blue eyes, red hair, tall frames." These comments are observing objective ethnic characteristics of the Germanic tribes. However, in the same sentence Tacitus continues "...powerful only spasmodically, not correspondingly tolerant of labour and hard work." That some of the Germans may have had blue eyes and red hair is considered an objective viewpoint, as this is something that could have been verified. However, to say that most Germans were intolerant of hard work was a subjective claim. It was an attempt to describe the tribes based on their customs and culture as perceived from a Roman viewpoint. As this example illustrates, there is a significant difference between these two forms of ethnicity. In addition, ethnic identity is not required to be the creation of the individual's community (emic). As we shall see later, it is commonplace for external viewers

to imagine an ethnic identity for a group and then impose it upon them regardless of whether it is accurate or accepted by the community or individual. This idea is referred to as ethnic identity and will be of significance in Chapter 3.

There are different considerations when constructing a subjective ethnic identity. An individual or community rarely perceives itself on a single level, but will instead have several facets to their perceived identity (Huskinson 2000b: 10; Spek 2009: 102). An example of this would be an individual who considers themselves European, but then also views themselves as a particular nationality within that group, such as British or German. It can be argued that this is in fact the rule, rather than an exception to the norm (Browning 2002: 258). Let us consider an individual living in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece. During that time, any individual who believed themselves a Greek would first and foremost view themselves as a citizen of a city state (polis), rather than a member of the Hellenic community (Carroll 2001: 117; Farney 2007: 29). This would have been much the same for a member of a Gallic or Germanic tribe, where loyalty to familial groups would have held more general importance day to day than one's tribe. Indeed tribal identities may have only held import during rituals or intertribal politics. The wider image of Gallic or Germanic identity, as we shall discuss in Chapter 4, may only have come about due to interactions with large entities such as the Roman Empire, and therefore have been a response to the Roman ethnic perception of the Gallic people. An individual's loyalty to any of the facets of their personal identity was a situational occurrence, shifting from national to local or familial depending on the immediate context of their surroundings. It was this understanding of identity that affected an individual's life, such as which dialect they spoke and under which laws and social system they lived. If this individual was from Athens, they may have had loyalty to their *deme* before the city, adding yet another layer to their self-perception (Hall 1989: 7). Therefore, the reality of interacting with numerous levels of identity was a common occurrence in the ancient world. This fact was made even more complex as ethnic identities and the groups formed around them were constantly being created and ceasing to exist (Hedeager 1993: 123; Woolf 2011a: 26). Such ideas regarding the mutability of an individual's or group's identity can be referred to as nested or layered identities.

The idea of nested ethnicity posits the concept of an internal discourse within an individual regarding their own ethnic identity. Through the situational nature of ethnicity, an individual is able to present the most prominent identity at any given time. In addition to this,

these nested ethnic identities are not static; rather they exhibit significant change being in a general state of constant flux (Crielaard 2009:39). Such changes are most extensively seen at times of significant political and cultural change. Derks (2009b: 242) makes this point in relation to wider group ethnic identity, noting that in the study of the process of ethnic identity and its changes, two observations can be made: 1) the main driving force behind most modifications to the ethnographic map are changing configurations of power and 2) if ethnic identity groups show significant changes it would appear that the binding factors of origin myth and collective myth also change. Roymans (2009: 226) notes a clear example of this referring to the discovery of the cult of Hercules among the Batavians. The appearance of this cult among the Batavians has been interpreted by Roymans as "...appropriation by indigenous groups of the Roman Hercules cult." With the changing political map around the Rhine region between the late Republic and early Principate, it is unsurprising that the ethnic identity of native groups reacted to this change by displaying more relevant versions of their own ethnicity. One can also note that it appears that the etic identity many Roman and Greeks perceived of such native groups, such as their descent from Hercules, must have had an effect on the emic identity of native groups, thereby offering further complexity to the nature of ethnic identity and its nested nature.

A useful example of the concept of nested identities from the ancient world is from the poet Ennius (Farney 2007: 7-8), who in a passage quoted by Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 17.17.1) referred to himself as having three hearts or identities (Greek, Oscan and Latin) and that his primary reason for this view of himself was his command of each of these languages. As we will see in section 2.1, language formed an important part of the ancient concept of ethnic identity. Yntema (2009: 163) notes that it was highly unlikely that Ennius was the only individual to consider himself as such in the ancient world. It is because of this complex interplay between factors such as nested identities, and emic and etic perspectives that the pursuit of any clear definition of ethnicity often results in confusion. An explanation would have to account for the constantly adapting process that ethnicity goes through, thereby rendering any static definition unworkable. Therefore, it is more useful to consider the method by which ethnicity can be constructed. Renfrew, in his article *Prehistory and the identity of Europe* (1996: 130), laid out a working basis for how one can think of the construction of ethnic identities in the ancient world, one that has been used by numerous scholars since (Laurence 2001b: 95). Renfrew's criteria for the construction of ethnic identity are as follows:

1. A shared territory or land
2. A common descent
3. A shared language
4. Common customs or culture
5. Common beliefs or religion
6. A name, an ethnonym to express the identity of the group
7. Self-awareness, self-identity
8. A shared history or myth of origin

The eight criteria attempt to overcome the ill-defined nature of ethnicity by providing a variable method for constructing such an identities. To show the flexibility of this method, not all these factors need be present in a community for an ethnic identity to manifest itself (Laurence 2001b: 96). Renfrew's framework can be traced back to the work of Smith (1986) and his book *The Ethnic Origin of Nations*, in which he offered a similar list of dimensions of ethnic identity. Smith (1986: 22-31) suggested that factors such as a collective name, common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinct shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity, could be part of the construction of ethnic identities. While there are a number of differences between Smith's and Renfrew's criteria, the ground each covers is very similar. There is also the view of Nash (1989), who sought to refine this list down to the essential parts. He argued that it is on three pillars that an ethnic identity stand, the first being kinship which marks the biological boundary for the ethnic group. The second is commensality which he defines as the "...the propriety of eating together indicating a kind of equality, peership and the promise of further kinship links.". Finally, there is the cultural marker of a common cult, which brings with it a value system as well as sacred symbols (Nash 1989: 10-11). In addition to this, Nash argued for a secondary tier of identifiers, which included such things as language, dress and physical features. As one can see, there is significant crossover between the Renfrew/Smith and Nash lists of criteria. For the purpose of this study, I will combine those facets of Renfrew's list into boarder groupings comparable to those of Nash. The first of these is self-identifying, naming and language. The reason for this combination of factors is that they in part all fall under the banner of a group attempting to categorise their surroundings and themselves and in so doing they each create a similar ethnic boundary point. Secondly, there is the idea of a shared territory which Renfrew similarly includes individually. Next is the grouping of a shared

history and common descent. Similar to the first grouping, these two ideas seek to offer the ethnic group a similar boundary, that of self-context within history. Finally, I have placed both shared culture and shared religion together. This seems the clearest combination possible of those facets of ethnicity listed by Renfrew, especially for the ancient world in which for many ethnic groups religion and culture was one and the same.

If we refer back to Derks' (2009: 242) observation of the nature of why ethnic identity change, we can now point to those facets of ethnic construction listed above, as the parts affected by the change in political power. This then raises a question regarding the nature of empire and imperialism over ethnic identity. We know from the example mentioned above that interaction between the Roman state and the Batavian tribes generated a shift in the Batavian construction of their own ethnic identity. This was most likely a response to the Roman etic perception of the Batavians. In this way we not only see the importance of etic identities over emic ones in cases where the power balance is unequal, but also that the capacity for empires to influence and direct the emic perception of smaller communities was significant. The influence an empire could exert of tribal ethnic identities will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Hanson (1997: 76) has argued that it behoved the Roman state to have influenced the ethnic identity of native groups, as it created a stability through which a state's authority could maintain control over a (large) geographical area. Revell (2015: 38) notes that the adaption of Roman cultural markers could be seen as the acceptance of "...dominant ethnic traits by the subjugated group." Whittaker (2009: 196) referred to the application of *civitas* status on provincial communities by the Roman state, as one way through which it fostered cultural values and ideas. The edict (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* V. 5050 in Braund 1985: 198-199) of Claudius regarding the status of the Anauni, Tulliasse and Sinduni Alpine peoples offers an example of the Roman state conferring citizenship status on the foundation of tradition. Claudius accepted the people's claims of Roman citizenship on the basis that they had claimed the status as inherited for many years. Here we can see how the tacit acceptance of this view by Claudius was an active encouragement of the Roman states social and political system (Whittaker 2009: 201). By taking the *civitas* status, native groups adopted not only the nomenclature of the roman state but a place within the Roman organisational and legal system (Whittaker 2009: 200). From Tacitus' *Agricola* (21.1) we have the case of Agricola encouraging the natives to build temples and houses, to which

Tacitus notes that through this "...the rivalry for his compliments took the place of coercion." Much like the previous example, here we have native groups engaging in Roman cultural systems and thereby engaging with Roman values and goals. It was through such instances, consciously or not, that the Roman state began to influence those groups living around its frontiers. What can clearly be seen in this example is what Revell (2016: 39) refers to as "...an inequality within the process of cultural change." While the Roman state may have accepted facets of other groups' ethnic identity, it wielded far greater change upon such groups. Native groups that fell into the sphere of the Roman state were subject to significant political change and thereby their emic identity and its parts underwent change and adaptation.

It is important to mention here the concept of the 'other', as it informs much of this discussion. The hypothesis suggests that throughout history it has been a natural human action to define oneself or group not in terms of present characteristics but instead absent stereotypes (Browning 2002: 257). This thought process created the idea of the 'other', an undisclosed external group who exhibited characteristics deemed negative or opposite to those of the original group. The undisclosed nature of the 'other' allows for it to include a number of distinct groups, which often are represented in crass generalities ignorant of individualities. The 'other' is modelled around the central concept that outsiders are not of the group. Common ideas ascribed to the external 'other' included that they were primitive while the group was civilised and so on. They are in many ways a mirror image of the group. It is thought that through such common perceptions a group distinguished itself from the vast range of cultures (Browning 2002: 257).

One of the first academics to bring the concept of the 'other' to the fore was Said (1978) in his work *Orientalism*. Here Said breaks down the western and eastern divide, in particular the westernised etic perceptions of eastern peoples. The link between colonial imperialism and the spread and maintenance of such images and ideas is also emphasised here, showing some degree of the interaction between empire and ethnicity as discussed above. Said (1979: 323) notes that the technological, economic and educational superiority shown by the west at his time of writing, allowed for the sustainment and reinforcement of the Oriental "other". The desire for eastern students to study in the west meant that the ideas of Orientalism and the distinct otherness of the two groups was spread within eastern cultural thought thereby affecting and altering their own emic identity. Said's conclusion was that the Orientalism of thought surrounding the east by western academics represented a form of

"ideological straight jacket" that scholars should aim to break free of through examining one's own methods and scrutinizing them.

Other scholars were influenced by Said's methodology and took to analysing ancient texts for similar uses of negative images, stereotypes and misrepresentations. In doing so, they identified the Hellenic separation of the eastern barbarian and the idealised Greek. Hartog (1988) in his work *The Mirror of Herodotus* identified the ways in which Herodotus had identified the 'other', in particular the Scythians who are used as Hartog's primary example. He also went on to show how the historical nature of the *Histories* was tightly intertwined with that of Herodotus' ethnographic pursuits. In so doing Hartog shows that any reading of the text must be done as an interconnected whole, reflecting the indistinguishable connection between ancient historiography and ethnography.

The most recent change in scholarly thinking regarding the other has come from Gruen (2011) in his work *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Gruen, noting the important advancements scholars such as Said and Hartog had made, offers an optional interpretation to their presentation of the other. Noting that "it is easy enough to gather individual derogatory remarks"(Gruen 2011: 3), Gruen argued that such things taken out of their cultural and chronological context should not offer modern scholars reason enough to tarnish ancient peoples with a blanket characterisation such as racists or xenophobia. Instead Gruen proposes that ancient peoples re-imagined one another's ethnic groups in relation to their own, as he states that "the 'other' is not a rejection or denigration or distancing but rather appropriation" (Gruen 2011: 4).

Finally, before we consider the specific facets of ethnicity the nature of ancient ethnography should be discussed. Woolf (2011b: 15) comments of ethnography that it was never regarded as an autonomous discipline in the ancient world; rather it was a collection of traditions focused on "enquiry and interpretation." Later, Woolf (2011b: 36) suggests that it would have been a rational decision for an ancient author, if he comprehended the differences between groups in terms of geographical differences, to preface his work with descriptions of the foreign lands in question. Indeed Caesar (*Gallic Wars* 1.1) began by laying out a geographical understanding of the Gallic region and the location of the significant tribes within it. While this may have been linked more to the purpose of his writing (see Chapter 3), it can be understood that he was conforming to a literary tradition, to which his audience would have previously been introduced via Greek authors such as Herodotus. The clearest

expression between the traditions of geography informing the study of ancient ethnography is found in the work of Strabo (*Geog.* 1.1.1). In the opening chapter of his *Geography*, it is asserted: "In addition to its vast importance in regard to social life, and the art of government, Geography unfolds to us the celestial phenomena, acquaints us with the occupants of the land and ocean." Here the literary tradition of connecting the study of a people to their land is stated plain. In this way, ethnography was not considered a subject unto itself. Rawson (1985: 250) noted this idea when arguing that in the ancient world geography and ethnography were so closely related as to have been the same subject. He goes on to comment that for many of the ancient authors ethnography was often taken as a "desire for the strange" (Rawson 1985: 266). It is possibly for this reason that we see a preponderance of reference to ideas surrounding myths and ethnic origins of groups. The tradition of ethnography in this ancient form can be traced back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and the figure of Hecataeus of Miletus, who displayed an interest in geography and the peoples who inhabited them (Thomas 1982: 1). This custom reappeared in the work of Herodotus with the inclusion of his Egyptian and Scythian *logoi*. As noted above, the influence of geography on its people began to develop eventually being brought into the Roman tradition through figures such as Posidonius (Thomas 1982: 2). However, as also noted above it was the obscure and the oddity that drew interest to the study of ethnography. Relating the differences regarding political, cultural and mythological concepts and structures became an important factor in the development of the ethnographic tradition. As we shall see in the following sections, it is through many of these areas, with which the ancient authors found such fascination, that we can now understand how they constructed and perceived ethnic identity.

### **2.1. Self-identity, naming and language**

Renfrew (1995: 130) argued that of the constituent parts of ethnicity, self-identity and self-awareness should be considered the most significant. The reason being that due to the subjective nature of it, ethnicity is what people believe it to be. In turn, the identifying of foreign groups is also an important part of constructing a group ethnicity, though it should be stated not as significant as those who espousing the idea of 'othering' suggest (Said 1978; Hartog 1988; Balsdon 1979). In conjunction with self-identity, the use of names or an ethnonym has important effects on constructed ethnicity. In this section, we will discuss the importance of self-identity and the expression of that identity via naming.

This section considers the importance of naming in the construction of ethnicity in the ancient world. Words such as *Hellene* and *barbaros*, which while not ethnonyms represented emic and etic naming of ethnic groups, were fundamentally linked together through the ideas of shared language. Because the meaning of these words is linked to language and its role in ethnicity, we will discuss the gradual process through which their meanings changed over time and how important it was that the ancient Greek could use such terms to explain complex concepts. In turn we will then consider how depictions of barbarians in the ancient sources, and in particular the way in which foreign groups were presented, was affected by the constantly evolving concepts of *Hellene* and *barbaros*.

The first known use of *barbarous* is in Herodotus' *Histories* and in its opening paragraph (*Hist.* 1.1). From the context of its use, "that great and marvellous deeds, some displayed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians", it is clear that its use was as an etic group term for non-Greeks. The word barbarian here did not carry with it any negative connotations and seems only to have referred to those that the ethnic label Greek did not apply. The meaning seems to imply that the idea of the *Hellene* must have arisen first before the use of *barbarous* (Antonaccio 2001:121). It is the first example of the concept of barbarian as an antonym for *Hellene* or Greek. Herodotus clearly interpreted the meaning of the two words as directly linked to one another.

So let us then consider the meaning of *Hellene*. Herodotus (*Hist.* 8.144) and Thucydides (1.3) both defined a key part of being Greek as a perceived shared language. Herodotus also included a shared culture and religious practices, concepts we have already discussed. Isocrates (*Pan.* 50) writing later in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC suggested that a requirement of Hellenic identity was an Athenian education and culture. This last example, was an extreme case of Athenian 4<sup>th</sup> century rhetoric regarding the cultural primacy of that city state, and was most likely an attempt by Isocrates as part of his promotion of Athens and its culture. In this context it would be much more accurate to see the identity of the *Hellene*, as Skinner (2011: 249) puts it, as "...an ongoing process of positioning relative to the narratives of the past and other people."

The ethnic identity of the *Hellene* was for the Greeks, to prove an important development in their interactions with their neighbours. The idea of 'Greekness' or *Hellenism* would have been one of the ethnic identities nested within the emic ethnicity of many Greeks,

taken up primarily when the surrounding context merited. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, other nested ethnic identities would have been more relevant and influential, such as an individual's *deme* (Hall 1989: 7). To be Athenian or Spartan could be of far greater importance to a person's identity depending on the situation and the nature of the discourse they were involved in than the fact that they were part of the wider Greek community, especially during the archaic period. These ethnic identities had existed for far longer and held meaning in all the facets of ethnicity that we will discuss in this chapter. Mitchell (2007: xv) however, argues that from the 6<sup>th</sup> century the idea of a Hellenic community was present. In this argument, she claims that Herodotus' (*Hist.* 8.144) statement of Greek ethnicity regarding language, shared gods and religious rites and common way of life was indicative of an earlier concept of the *Hellene*, which was based on the ideas of religious practice, language and common ancestry. It is clear from Skinner (2012) that Greeks were interested in foreign peoples, and had an understanding of different cultures around them. It also seems that the idea of a common Hellenic or Pan-Hellenic identity was used (Homer *Iliad* 2.530; Hesiod *Works and Days* 526-28). Hall (2002a: 131) argues that this use of *Panhellene* referred to the diversity of groups living within the land of *Hellas*, rather than as a cohesive identity built on a shared kinship or culture.

By the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, the on-going process had been coupled with the experiences of Greeks in colonies. The extensive nature of the Greek colonial spirit and the widespread success of these endeavours brought the Greek experience into contact with a wide range of diverse cultures. With the success of the colonisation, Greek communities often found themselves as a minority presence in such new areas, existing in a form of local subordination to local peoples (Harrison 2002a: 2). This external pressure was countered by the development by colonies of strong cultural and kinship bonds with their mother city and to some degree the wider Hellenic community. The Hellenic community gave access to a dynamic collection of ideas, themes and stereotypes, which constructed a concept of what was Hellenic identity.

As mentioned previously, Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.57) discussed the nature by which the Athenians became *Hellenes*. It is stated that the Athenians must have learnt Greek at the same time as they became Hellenic. Herodotus did not consider language to be the only part of what it meant to be Hellenic, for he states they learnt Greek *as* they became *Hellenes* not in order to become so. It indicates that language was an important factor in the concept of the

*Hellene*. The concept would develop further, being constantly redefined and contextualised in relation to the needs of the Greeks. In the case of the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century, *Hellene* began to evolve a strong cultural and semi-political meaning, as the influence of the Persian threat caused the development of the idea of Greek ethnicity further (Hartog 1988: 323-324; Hornblower 1991: 11). As will be shown later, this process was not one done via the demonization of foreign peoples; rather it threw into greater contrast the similarities and differences that Greeks and foreign peoples possessed as ethnic characteristics. The concept of *Hellene* during the 5<sup>th</sup> century was also not the unifying ideal Mitchell (2007: xix) suggests. Within 40 years of the Persian Wars, the Spartans would accept the aid of the Persian king to defeat the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 8.5). This lends more credence to the transient nature of any definition of *Hellene*. It was an ephemeral idea that held meaning for a specific context but could be jettisoned or outright re-imagined as soon as it posed any difficulties or needed to fulfil a new function.

Even the apparent connecting cultural concept of language exhibited great variation within the Hellenic community. Herodotus said of the people of Ionia: "They do not all speak exactly the same language, but there are four different dialects" (*Hist.* 1.42). For a concept such as Hellenism to be relevant to the ancient Greeks, it must have been as variable as the many different dialects, traditions and practices that existed across the city states of Greece. Therefore, if, as has already been shown, the idea of the barbarian was linked to the concept of the *Hellene*, we must accept that it also was part of a long cultural process of Greeks contextualising their place in the world. It has been assumed by scholars such as Hall (1989: 12) that ancient authors such as Thucydides (1.3) offered little or no evidence of the barbarian in Archaic Greece. However, because of the constantly evolving nature of such concepts, it is unlikely that clear evidence for the generic barbarian would be present; rather we should consider proto ideas of foreigners as a part of an archaic mind-set that would eventually create the barbarian.

The early use of naming conventions such as epithets during the archaic period speaks of the common stereotypes of the time. A clear example is in the *Iliad* (4.533): "...top knotted Thracians." Skinner (2012) argues that such descriptors existed in a grey area between ethnological science and simplistic stereotyping. The formation of such proto-ethnic identities could later have developed into the easy associations like those in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women* (1.287-289), which quickly reels off several ethnic identifiers of Amazons

including being armed with bows and the devouring of raw flesh. Therefore such early concepts created a pool of cultural ideas which later writers, such as Aeschylus, were influenced by in the forming of later ethnicities through the perception of local and foreign identities (Skinner 2012: 121). Such epithets then formed one of the many steps in the long evolving process of contrasting ethnicities.

*Barbaros* was another such step. One of the first recorded uses of the term in some form appears to be in the *Iliad* (2. 867). While the meaning of *barbarophonos* is not in doubt, the idea that it represents an early concept of the barbarian is still up for debate. The meaning ‘to speak poorly’ links it in some way to later 5<sup>th</sup> century uses of *barbaros* purely through the reference to speech that both words had (Davies 2002: 166). *Barbaros* had formed from, as Hall (1989: 4) states, “reduplicative onomatopoeia” representing the incomprehensible speech of foreign cultures. Much like *Hellene*, *barbaros* began to develop a cultural relevance possibly in respect of its use in referring to the myriad number of different cultures across the Persian Empire and its nature as an antonym to *Hellene* (Hall 1989: 10). It is important to note that even within the Hellenic ethnic group certain communities such as the Spartans did not use the term *barbaros*. Instead they used *xenoi* in their dealings with external groups (Hall 1989: 11). It would seem then that even as part of a concept such as the dichotomy of *Hellene* and barbarian, which focused on Greek unity, there was a degree of difference between city states about what this actually meant for the Hellenic community as a whole.

We have seen then how the term *barbaros* was linked to *Hellene*, and how over time it underwent changes in its meaning. Can we then see such nuance in the depictions of barbarians in Greek culture? The use of barbarian imagery in classical Greek plays, especially in Athens, was seen by Hall (1989: 16) as suggesting a fundamental support for the actions of the Democracy, and therefore a continuous perception of barbarians as a group. Hall argues that around half of the known tragedies contain barbarians or a foreign location, and their cultures were usually disparaged and displayed as inferior. The question that this leaves is why it is that barbarians, a clearly lesser form of mankind in Greek thought, was to some degree an obsession for Athenian playwrights? I think therefore such consistent depictions of barbarians show a Greek interest in foreign groups though not necessarily with the aim of humbling them before the ‘greatness’ of the *Hellene*.

Hall (1989: 12) continues her discussion by arguing that the way in which the barbarian was portrayed in plays and art did not require accuracy. Instead, all that was needed was to include a set of stereotypes so large that they would be instantly recognisable. Skinner (2012: 115) comments of stereotypes, that they were an important means for a community to contextualise and make sense of the world in which they lived. Stereotypes are often morally ambivalent, not necessarily negative or positive. Therefore, Hall (1989: 13) concludes the image of the barbarian began to appear as an amalgamation of several cultures and groups in the Persian Empire. In this way, there was a misperceived unity across that empire. This was due to the Greeks not requiring the separation of such groups as the Medes and the Persians in their understanding of their neighbours. As we will see when considering Aeschylus' *Persae* this viewpoint may be a little too simplistic when compared to the complex position the Persian Empire held in the Greek consciousness.

Aeschylus' *Persae* is considered by scholars such as Hall (1989) as a theatrical condemnation of not only Persian characteristics and culture but also politics. Indeed the political systems of the Persian Empire were one of the most often discussed concepts (Hall 1989: 13). Aeschylus is a good standard by which to judge the commonality of understanding the Persian Empire in the Greek thought, writing as he did for a large audience in Athens. In the *Persae*, the comparison of the two political systems is often claimed to be shown in lines 242 and 243. Here the chorus comment that the Athenians call no man slave or vassal. While this can be read as an implied condemnation of not only the nature of politics in the Persian Empire but also its use of slavery, it is important to consider the context of the statements. The chorus here is replying to the concerns of Atossa who is attempting to understand the danger Athens poses to the Persian Empire. Alongside the reference to Athens as vassal to no one, are statements of the size of the Athenian army, of the wealth of her silver mines and the way in which its soldiers use shield and spear (*Persae*235-244). With this context, while we could construe the previous comment as disparaging the nature of Persian politics, it is in fact part of a discussion of the merits of the Athenians, and not part of some wider narrative of *Hellene* and barbarian. There are indeed references to the greatness of the Persian monarchy and the breadth of its power (*Persae*44-50, 234). Lines 852-857 extol the virtue of the "god-like Darius", stating: "...it was in truth a glorious and good life under civil government that we enjoyed so long as our aged and all powerful king, who did no wrong and did not favour war." If Aeschylus was seeking to conform to some common notion of the barbarian as the degenerate opponent to the noble *Hellene* then this, we could presume would be the last thing

one would expect for him to include in the text. This suggests a more complex representation of Persian groups and culture was at work than might have been thought if the text were to conform to the ideas of othering discussed above.

Hall (1996: 117-118) commented on several other lines in the play that show the Persian Empire as feminine and devoid of manly qualities (*Persae* 118-9, 548-9, 714-8, 760-1). This, it is argued, is a further example of the *Persae* using negative stereotypes in reference to barbarians. The instances however, do not refer to the lack of male characteristics but instead are exaggerations of the damage that Athens inflicted upon the Persians during the war. Both instances of decimation and depopulation are made in clear context of the military power of the Persian Empire. Lines 118-9 refer to the claim that Susa, the royal capital, was devoid of men. Again, we see another exaggeration, one that must have been as blatant to Aeschylus and his audience as it is to us today.

Finally, in the *Persae*, where we might expect to see the extolling of the Greek achievement in defeating the Persian Empire, we instead find the influence of the gods. In fact, the conquering nature of the Persian is not blamed on their love of holding sway over others, or their desire for power but instead is "the will of the gods" (*Persae* 93). Aeschylus (*Persae* 93-114) spends some time laying the victories of the Greeks at the feet of the gods. It was Xerxes' impiety, not the natural superiority of the Greeks that lead to their salvation (Gruen 2011c: 16). There is then little to suggest that the dichotomy of *Hellene* and barbarian was particularly strong in the *Persae*, but there was clearer distinctions between the noble rule of Darius and the mistakes of Xerxes. It is as Gruen (2011c: 21) concludes, a true tragedy rather than political propaganda.

The Greeks, as we have already seen, were often considered to be one of the originators of 'otherness' (Harrison 2002a: 1), a concept that was discussed in the opening of this chapter. Aeschylus, it has been claimed, portrayed the Persians as cruel, decadent, emotional and perilous (*Persae* 95-99), although as we have already seen his depiction of the Persians was much more varied than this concept allows for. 'Othering' implies that apparent depictions of this sort were common and well received, directed at captivated audiences, and shaped the thinking and interactions between the Greeks with Persians, thereby reinforcing this perception of the 'other'.

When we consider the nature and construction of the 'other', it is easy to suggest that it was, especially in the ancient Greek world, a form of (ancient) racism. However, a more balanced view of the 'other' in Greek life could be surmised as xenophobia. The reason that racism is wrong, as an underlying principle for the ancient Greeks' way of thinking in this situation is that there was never a biological difference between the Greeks and the barbarians. Colour itself was hardly relevant, if at all, in the Greek discussion of identity (Harrison 2002a: 128). Rather the origins of many issues for the Greeks with the 'other' were due to political or cultural differences. One of the characteristics of this etic identity is that the image the 'other' presented was often far removed from the objective identity of the group in question. So in the case of the Greek idea of the barbarian, this can be considered a quintessentially etic identity as it was mostly based on inaccurate generalisations and an ignorance of Persian culture and custom.

There is however, no predisposition for the creation of the 'other'; in fact, the concept of the 'other' is not needed at all for internal cohesion. Rather it was the strength of the 'other' concept, which rose and fell in relation to the historical events of the time (Hall 1989: 6). Often the ideas of the 'other' are ill defined and diffuse. The issue with the 'other' however, is not its evolving nature but instead its inability to account for those instances, as we have seen in the case of the *Persae*, where Greek views appeared to be ambivalent if not slightly praising. Gruen (2011c: 5) argued that the 'other' is less subtle than what is seen in the ancient literature and it would be better to consider the conception of collective identity, such as ethnicity, in terms of other foreign cultures rather than in contrast to them.

While there are, as have been shown, problems with the 'other' hypothesis, we can still consider one of the conclusions the concept suggests and then contrast it with some of the ancient evidence. The belief of separation between the Greek and barbarian is thought to have created a sense of history and tradition for many Greeks, and this idea was used in much of the imperialistic ideology of the time. In this way the image of the barbarian was not only a etic view of the enemy but also a emic view of their own history and purpose, creating what is referred to as the war against the barbarian (Mitchell 2007: xviii). Plato in his *Republic* (5.470) stated that "Greeks fight and wage war with barbarians, and barbarians with Greeks and are enemies by nature." Such a sentiment is an example of a feeling that must have held some sway in the Greek consciousness after the Persian Wars though in its use here, by Plato, may have been a repurposed for his own philosophical arguments relating to the nature of the

Greek *polis*. However, the word barbarian used by Plato held a degree of flexibility in its meaning. Mitchell (2007: 12) argues that it meant the true enemy of the Greeks, the barbarian, could never be fully associated with a single people or location. Here the subjective idea of the barbarian allowed for a flexibility that was easily manipulated for political ideologies' sake. This was because the Greeks viewed the Persian Empire as a homogenous mass, a rampant horde moving all in its wake. Variety was indicative of their nature and their empire. For this reason, the Greek understanding of barbarian was an umbrella term, and therefore suffered from a severe lack of detail and nuance towards significantly different cultural groups, factors synonymous with the concept of 'othering' as mentioned above.

The idea of the 'other' has led to a perception that Greeks viewed the purpose of war as it meant to be Hellenic as participation in the war against the barbarian (Mitchell 2007: 11). The ultimate expression of it however, relies on some assumptions. First there is the principle method by which people identify other groups is in contrast to themselves rather than in relation to them. Second, this comparison delivers an aggregated negative identity, a polar opposite, and one that must be opposed. The evidence from the ancient sources however does not support this. Instead, we find more nuanced understanding of foreign groups indicating the comprehension of a more complex picture. One can interpret Herodotus' (*Hist.* 1.1-4) opening to his work as a historical reference to the idea of the war against the barbarian. The passage speaks of the hostility of the Persians towards the Greeks based from the sack of Troy onwards (*Hist.* 1.5). The concept of the war against the barbarian then held deep roots in Greek thinking and Hellenic identity. The war, with its links to the heroic past of Greece, became a sacred venture for Greeks, and one of the representations of their Hellenic ancestry. The Persian Wars then can be considered another reference point within the Greek discourse on Persian ethnicity, further developing the ideas surrounding the concept of *barbaros*. A link to the heroic age of the Trojan Wars and a powerful cultural lynchpin to their understanding of not only the barbarian but also what it was to be Hellenic (Mitchell 2007: 13). However, there are issues with this reading of Herodotus.

Herodotus does begin with a discussion of the initiation of conflict between Persia and the city states of Greece. Before this however, he explained his reasons for writing. His stated purpose in writing was to record the great deeds of Greek and barbarians (*Hist.* 1.1). He also explained why hostilities between the Greek and the barbarians existed. Here the

conflict was not labelled as the main cause of his writing but only one of many deeds that the two groups shared. The Persian Wars were not the cause for writing the *Histories* but instead were a backdrop to another goal. Herodotus (*Hist.* 3.80.) relates the common notion of Persian monarchy in his Persian *logoi*. In it Darius, Meagbyzus and Otanes debate the merits of the differing forms of political organisation. While it is clear that Otanes' argument for democracy was clearly intended to resonate with the Athenian audience, the very fact that Herodotus included the discussion at all is significant. The debate is evidence that Greek audiences understood that monarchy was not the natural form of the Persian Empire, and felt the acceptance of monarchy had been a logical decision based off rhetorical discussion. Writing later, Xenophon (*Anab.* 1.9) wrote of the merits of the Persian king Cyrus, commenting on his self-control, courage, integrity and trustworthiness, although elsewhere he also referred to him being able to control such a vast empire through the use of fear (*Cyrop.* 1.1.5). It should be noted that Xenophon displayed a noted preference for monarchies, in particular Persia, over democracies, noting the political instability a system such as democracy brought with it (Carlier 2010: 330). Such a bias would have lead him to represent the Persian system and the Persian monarchy in a more complimentary light than other authors of his time. These examples suggest the Greek discourse on Persian ethnic identity was formed of a broad contingent of ideas and views, a far different image than is painted through the hypothesis of 'othering'.

The nuance shown in the consideration of barbarians in ancient Greek literature is illustrative of the greater distinction of the Hellenic ethnicity. While the 'other' had encouraged the growth of Pan-Hellenism as an idea, the basic presumption of the *Hellene* ran counter to this with the autonomous core of the city state system being the principle. Differences were not only common to the *polis* system but a key ingredient in many of the advances that were associated with the ancient Greeks. Political organisation and social ideas were dramatically varied in their content and execution, without even leaving mainland Greece. In the case of religious practices and beliefs, the range of variations was even greater (Harrison 2002a: 7). Such subtly in the self-perception of Greeks is seen in Herodotus (*Hist.* 7.136) where he criticised the Spartan act of killing the Persian heralds, by showing the honourable conduct of the Persian king Xerxes.

Persian culture is also represented in a more positive light. They are recorded as teaching their children to tell only the truth (Herod. *Hist.* 1.136.2), and their cultures' deep

revulsion of the practice of lying (*Hist.* 1.138). In terms of their temperament, Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.137.1) recalled the Persian practice of weighing the good and bad deeds of an individual before resorting to acts of violence. He also referred to the Persian respect of bravery on the battlefield (*Hist.* 7.181). The nature of Herodotus' commentary of Persian culture and practices was such that Plutarch (*De Malig Her.* 857a) would later brand him a *philobarbaros* for his overly positive viewpoint. There is also evidence of a cultural change in the depictions of Persians. Herodotus (*Hist.* 9.82.2-3) had the Greeks find the Persian camp after the battle of Plataea and witness the lavish nature of Persian culture. However, at the start of the description, Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.156) had Cyrus the Great advised of the excess of luxury, and it was recommended to the king that he impose such things on unruly members of his empire, in order that a lavish lifestyle full of comforts might subdue their fiercer natures. This juxtaposition was first and foremost a literary tool, foreshadowing the downfall of Xerxes in Greece, but it also shows that Herodotus understood that the culture of Persia had changed over time and was not simply static. Herodotus (*Hist.* 6.58-59) made direct comparison between Greek and Persian practices. The Spartan practice of a new king cancelling any debt a citizen held with the previous monarch Herodotus felt resembled the practice of cancelling outstanding tribute performed by newly appointed kings in Persia. Therefore Herodotus, and one can imagine his audience, recognised the similarities between both Greek and Persian practices. In this way, the 'other' hypothesis again lacks a way of accounting for this fact.

The method by which the authors understood the evidence is significant. In examples such as the Persian constitutional debate in Herodotus (*Hist.* 3.80) and discussed above, we see how Hellenic authors understood foreign peoples in terms of their own cultural norms. When differences did arise then, they were caused through a process of relation and similarity. The fact that many works concentrated on the political and military actions of the Empire from a Greek perspective meant that the subjective identity of the Persians was by far the best fit. The image of wealth and of luxuriant tyrants commanding vast hordes of slaves in some ways was not an unrecognisable stereotype; its presence in the ancient source material makes that a certainty. Rather it was part of the image of the barbarian that was itself as complex as the concept of the *Hellene*. Greek authors relied on the image and term barbarian as it provided them with a means to articulate an intangible concept to their audience, and which in turn brought with it a complex context of its own.

Other barbarian groups such as the Thracians and Scythians were known far more for their feats in battle than for the luxuriant nature ascribed to most barbarians. Indeed Herodotus (*Hist.*4.2-32) gives over the first part of his fourth book to a *logoi* on his cultural knowledge of the Scythians. The consideration of individual groups within the concept of the barbarian can be seen in some iconographic evidence, with images of the two groups just mentioned and the traditional Persian archer forming popular designs for painted pottery (Hall 1989: 137) along with the erection of statues of defeated Gauls in Athena's sanctuary in Pergamum (Camp 2001: 171). Herodotus assumed that the Hellenic world was the central point around which the world was created, but in doing so did not suffer from the misconception that the *Hellenes* were somehow morally superior to their barbarian opponents (Mitchell 2007:187). We will see in the Chapter 3 how Roman views of barbarians were influenced by the Greek approach to foreign peoples, specifically in relation to Gallic and Germanic tribes.

In conclusion, we have seen how naming words such as *Hellene* and *barbarous* were important in Greek concepts of ethnicity. They came to mean the antithesis of each other, based on the use of a common language. The concept of *Hellene* seems to have had a gradual development from the archaic through to the Classical periods. Beginning as *Panhellene*, in early epic poetry, which referred to the diverse number of groups that inhabited the land of Hellas, *Hellene* would come to mean those groups that spoke Greek. While *barbarous* developed from meaning simply poor speech to meaning being unable to or speaking poor Greek.

In this way, it has been shown that both *Hellene* and *barbarous* were closely related concepts in the Greek understanding. These ideas evolved alongside developments in ethnicity and each other. By the time of the Classical period they came to refer not only to language but also culture, possibly as a consequence of the Persian Wars and how that event forced the Greeks to redefine what it was to be a *Hellene* and by default *barbaros*. During the Classical period, we see this development in the depictions of barbarians in art and culture. However as we have discussed, the concept of the 'other' has pushed this idea too far. Too much has been made of those instances of negative depictions of barbarians at the expense of the evidence that Greek people had a clear interest in the foreign that was naturally negative. The process by which the 'other' is created has been shown to ignore the fact that groups tend to understand foreign groups in terms of their own culture, as we will discuss in Section 2.4

and the Greek and Roman views of Egypt. This process of relating one culture to another rather than contrasting the two still allows for division due to differences but does not make this a present occurrence.

## 2.2. A Shared Territory

The earliest example of the use of shared territory in the ancient source material is the *Illiad*. Homer listed the Greek states, which had assembled at Troy. When it came to the Athenians, he stated: "...the land of great hearted Erechtheus, whom of old Athene, daughter of Zeus, fostered, when the earth, giver of grain had borne him" (*Iliad* 2.546). The mythical figure of Erechtheus, the second king of Athens, was believed to have been born out of the soil of Attica itself, emphasising a strong historical and mythological link for the Athenians to the land of Attica. The Athenians considered themselves the descendants of Erechtheus, as shown when Pindar characterised the Athenians as "the sons of Erechtheus" (*Isth.*2.19). This connection to the land was used by the Athenians of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to claim that they were autochthonous due to their identity as the sons and daughters of Erechtheus.

In Herodotus' *Histories* (7.161), an Athenian representative claimed that "we are Athenians, the most ancient ethnos in Greece, the only ones to have remained in the same homeland for all our history." The context of this statement was an audience between Gelo, king of Syracuse, and a Greek delegation. The Athenians requested aid in the defence of Greece against the Persian king. Gelo offered his aid but requested command of either the naval or the land forces. In response, the representative from Athens stated that it was the Athenians who would command the naval forces, ending his argument with the above statement. Whether or not this was an accurate account of the response by the Athenian representative is irrelevant to the discussion. Herodotus included it in the speech because his audience would comprehend and accept the argument he was making as not only plausible, but also convincing. The *Histories* were not contemporary with the events they described, but were most likely composed around 431 BC and the start of the Peloponnesian War (Thomas 2000: 2). Therefore, the speech and its strong link between homeland and ethnicity may have been a reflection of the rise in ethnic identification that appeared in the later 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Konstan 2001: 34).

The direct relationship between the land and the peoples who inhabited them is another theme explored in the work of Herodotus. At the very end of the text, Herodotus writes "of lands to breed soft men" (*Hist.* 9.122). As a conclusion to the entire work, it shows an underlying assumption that a land influenced its inhabitants. It also reinforced the difference between the weak and the strong (Gruen 2011b: 72). The context of the passage was as part of advice that Cyrus the Great offered to the Persians. It was cautionary as the preceding text detailed how the Persians ignored the advice and became 'soft', hinting that it was not territory alone that affected a peoples characteristics which we will consider later in the chapter. That the idea is found with some prominence at the very end of the text should not be considered strange for it can be found throughout the work. The Egyptians are said to have customs the antithesis to anywhere else and which Herodotus believed was in keeping with the idiosyncratic climate of the region (*Hist.* 2.35). He refers to the outer reaches of the world as having the most attractive features allotted to them (*Hist.* 3.106). It comes after a short digression on the tribes of India who are described as living furthest east (*Hist.* 3.98). Here Herodotus seems to claim that the Indians inhabited one of the most beautiful regions in the known world, but when speaking about their customs he compared their practice of intercourse in public to that of herd animals (*Hist.* 3.101). The comparison is hardly flattering and does not hold to the idea that a 'beautiful' climate creates 'beautiful' people. There is then no consistency in regards to the theory of climate and its influence on people within Herodotus' text. In the case of Ionian Greece, Herodotus speaks of the climate of the region: "In terms of climate and weather, there is no fairer region in the whole known world ... the lands to the north and south some of which suffer from the cold and rain, while others are oppressively hot and dry" (*Hist.* 1.142). In his description, Herodotus does not connect any ethnic characteristics to the Ionian people because of their climate. This hints at the fact that his views on the influence of climate may have been subtler than the works of other ancient authors.

In modern scholarship the ideas relating to the connection between a peoples' ethnicity and their climate, is labelled environmental theory or environmental determinism (Thomas 2001: 216). The theory suggests that a people are directly affected by their climate. In this way, they develop/acquire traits which link them directly to their land. The theory does not allow for subtlety or specifics, instead it works in generalities and is ignorant of any individualism present in those being commented on. Whether this modern definition of these ideas is a direct reflection of what we find in the works of ancient Greek authors is unclear,

though there are certainly some significant similarities between these ancient and modern ideas. It can also be said that Herodotus applied the strangeness of a land not only to its inhabitants but also to its natural diversity. The further a land was thought to be located the more fanciful are the characteristics found in its animals and people. Exceptionally large ants were claimed to dig out the gold of the desert in India (*Hist.* 3.105). Winged snakes were said to guard frankincense producing trees in Arabia (*Hist.* 3.107). To the far North griffins had amber stolen from them by a one-eyed race of men known as the Arimaspians (*Hist.* 3.116). In all these passages, it is commented by Herodotus that they were the most distant lands in their respective directions. Last but not least, the importance of what can be summarised as geography in relation to ethnography is to be seen in the preponderance of ancient authors who included geographical descriptions within any treatise on foreign groups. Herodotus did so at the beginning of his Egyptian *logos* (2.6-34), where he speaks of the details of the Egyptian coastline and the competing theories regarding the inundation of the Nile. Again, details of geography and climate are included throughout the Scythian *logos* (*Hist.* 4.1-82).

At that time the focus for Greeks looking to foreign lands would have been to the East, to Persia, especially as the Persian Wars had brought the Greek world into direct contact with a foreign group, more so than ever before (Hall 1989: 2). Therefore, it is little surprise that it is to the East that the (Pseudo-) Hippocratic text *On Airs, Waters and Places* focuses. It is uncertain when the work was written, though it is thought to be some time after the composition of Herodotus' *Histories* (Isaac 2004: 62). In chapter 12 of *On Airs...*, we find mention of the idea that there was a difference between Asia and Europe. The author states in the opening lines "I wish to show, respecting Asia and Europe, how in all respects, they differ from one another." This is not the three-way split of Aristotle's Europe, Asia and Greece but is instead an earlier version of the same discussion, which focuses on the dichotomy between East and West. *On Airs...* later states that "I think the inhabitants of Europe more courageous than those of Asia, for a climate which is always the same induces indolence" (23.4). Here the author begins to introduce the idea that not only are the two groups different from each other, but it was because of their climates that they were so. It is these ideas that later influenced the likes of Aristotle and Plato.

Thucydides, an Athenian, gave credence to the Athenian view of their common land in his *Peloponnesian War*. He wrote: "It is interesting to observe of Attica, which, because of the poverty of its soil, was remarkably free from political disunity, has always been inhabited

by the same race of people"(1.2.6). This is not the only instance of the idea, as it is found in the second book of the same work (2.36). The second occurrence is of interest when we consider the idea of a shared land and its link to a common idea of ethnicity. The reference is found in the funerary oration of Pericles. Given during the first public funeral of those killed in the war, Pericles stated: "In this land of ours there have always been the same people living from generation to generation up till now." Pericles used the idea of a free land to galvanise his audience into an acceptance of the risks inherent in the war with Sparta and the rest of the Peloponnese. The concept of a shared and inherited land was therefore a cornerstone of what it was to be Athenian. This shows the consistency with which this theme of Athenian ethnicity was part of the discourse, as we have seen even before Thucydides, Herodotus referred to the Athenians as an *ethnos* in several passages (*Hist.* 5.77; 7.161). The Athenians' link to their land is a clear example of the important role a shared territory could have on a group's ethnic identity. Xenophon (*Ways* 1.6) made the claim that with Greece being the centre of the inhabited world, Athens must lie at its centre. The claim was justified by Xenophon's view that the further one goes from Athens the more intense the heat or cold one feels. For Xenophon the Athenians were the ideal people and this in part was due to the location of their territory offering a balance in comparison with Asiatic regions.

The theme of a lands' effect on its people was taken up and developed by Greek philosophers. Plato's *Laws* (5. 747 c-e) refers to lands which are "naturally superior to others" in the raising of men. The division of quality is linked to "a variety of winds or to sunshine, others owing to their waters." These theories show a common idea: that a people have collective characteristics, which are determined not by their own actions, but by the nature of the climate around them. Aristotle in his *Politics* stated that the land and its climate determined the character of the people who lived there. The peoples of Asia, for example, are listed as intelligent and skilful but lacking in spirit, while the nations of Europe and colder regions were full of spirit but deficient in skill and intelligence. Finally, he explained Greece's place in this theory: "But the Greek race participates in both characters, just as it occupies the middle position geographically, for it is both spirited and intelligent"(*Pol.*1327b). For Aristotle, the Greeks were the ideal people and this in part was due to the location of their territory offering a balance in comparison with Asiatic regions. Isaac (2004: 70) comments that both Aristotle and Plato show influences in their ideas concerning climate and peoples, which are likely derived from earlier works such as *On Airs* that we have already discussed above.

The Greek writer Polybius writing in Rome towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC intones the environmental theory as he attempted to explain why the Arcadians introduced practices regarding music. Polybius believed that as a result of the cold and gloomy climate of the region, the inhabitants had become equally “austere”. In the same passage Polybius (*Hist.* 4.21) goes on to say: “the fact is that as mortal men we adapt ourselves by sheer necessity to climatic influences, and it is this reason and no other which causes separate nations and peoples dwelling widely apart to differ so markedly in their circumstances, their physique and complexion.” The idea of environment affecting ethnic traits in Greek thought entered the Roman discourse through authors such as Polybius. By the Late Republican period, authors such as Cicero had taken up these themes. Cicero writes in his *De Lege Agraria* that an individual’s character is determined by how they are fed and live within nature. In the same passage, Cicero (2.95.5) says of the Ligurians, “...being mountaineers, are a hardy and rustic tribe. The land itself taught them to be so by producing nothing which was not extracted from it by skilful cultivation and by great labour.” Here the Ligurians are first characterised as “rustic” and that this facet of their identity was given to them by the hardship of the land they inhabited. Similar views regarding the Ligurians can be found in the work of Vergil (*Georg.* 2.167-69). Again, in *De Divinatione* (2.96) the influences of the climate are to be seen. As part of the repudiation of astrology, Cicero asked that if natural defects afflicting people had been “implanted by a star” then by what means could they be changed. Rather he argued “...do not unlike places produce unlike men.” He continued with the view that the differences between the Indians, Persians, Ethiopians and Syrians are so striking as to be incredible. At the beginning of the next section (2.97), he expresses his views thus: “hence it is evident that one’s birth is more affected by local environment than by the condition of the moon.” His arguments are given as a just rebuttal of astrology, which Cicero dismissed as a “delusion” (2.99). Diodorus Siculus (2.36.1), writing during the latter half of the first century BC, mentions the tribes of India as having great skill in the arts. He attributes this significant expertise to the pure air that they breathe and the finest quality water that they drink. That this passage like many others that have been mentioned thus far appears in the text without further explanation or discussion, is some of the clearest evidence possible that these ideas formed a significant part of the ancient discourse on ethnicity.

Livy in his *History of Rome* (38.17.17) included a speech given by the general Cn. Manlius, who in 189 BC informed his assembled troops that the enemy had become weak

because of their time spent in a gentle climate: "...in a land most rich, under a sky most kindly, among natives mild in disposition, all that fierceness with which they came has grown gentle." The enemy in question were the Gauls. Earlier in the speech (38.17.9-10), Manlius stated that the Gauls who had settled in Asia were lesser versions because of the influence of the eastern climate. He referred to them as a mixed race, "Gallogrecians." Here Livy included several references to agriculture and farming. It should be noted that most likely the speech is a fabrication, especially given Livy's questionable relationship with facts (Syme 1959:56; Walsh 1972: 13). It most likely displays the author's personal feelings more so than those of Cn. Manlius. One imagines, as Isaac (2004: 90) suggests, that Livy may have thought it appropriate for a republican commander to use such language in speaking to the professional farmers that made up his army. In any case the passages are as follows: "...the seeds have less power to maintain their natural quality than the character of the soil and climate in which they live has power to change it" and "whatever grows in its own soil, has greater excellence; transplanted to a soil alien to it, its nature changes and it degenerates towards that in which it is nurtured" (Livy 38.17.10-13). While the content of these passages may refer to 189 BC, the inferences we can draw about the Roman discussion of ethnicity are relevant to Livy's time of writing under the Augustan regime. The second of the two passages brings a further point about the ancient connection between peoples and land. It was inferred that were a people to move and settle in another climate they would "degenerate." To be specific, the Gauls who had moved to Asia Minor, had suffered from the change of environment and become as capable at fighting as those communities that surrounded them. The idea of degeneration or loss of ethnic characteristics will appear later when we consider the idea of a shared culture. For now, it is enough to point out that to some degree Roman authors felt that by migrating to another climate, one's ethnic characteristics might degenerate. However, to remain in the same land was a reinforcement of such characteristics.

It is important to note those instances where environmental theory was clearly challenged, in order that we not assume the theory was completely accepted. Strabo (*Geog.* 2.3.7; 14.2.16) at several points argued that group characteristics were not determined by natural occurrences, as was the general assumption. However, it was by their education and institutions that peoples' characteristics were formed. Strabo stated: "It seems that the effeminacy of man is laid to the charge of the air or of the water; yet it is not these, but rather riches and wanton living, that are the cause of effeminacy" (14.2.16). In this passage, the characteristic of effeminacy is not the work of the climate nor the land but rather the culture

within which an individual lived. In these lines, Strabo not only shows clear disagreement with the environmental theory, but offers up a secondary method of understanding an ethnic group. The importance of one's society seems paramount to Strabo in determining the character of an individual. This perspective, as we will see in the following chapter, is one that allowed for a wider discourse on Germanic ethnicity, a discussion Strabo was part of.

The importance a culture placed on certain compass directions, as it is found in *On Airs...* and other Greek sources discussed above, entered the Roman discourse along with early environmental theory. Ideas such as those found in *On Airs ...* were taken by Roman authors and adapted to suit the realities of their time (Isaac 2004: 166). For Greek authors, groups such as Scythians, Egyptians and Persians formed the relevant discussion around ethnicity, while during the Roman period groups such as the Parthians to the East and the Germans to the North were of primary concern in the then present discourse (AD 39-65; Isaac 2004: 93). The split between East and West found in Greek literature could not adequately explain this world view. Therefore, in his text Lucan split his land between North and East to emphasise for his audience the concerns of their day. Other Roman authors such as Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* 2.80.189), emphasised the split between North and South. Pliny's *Natural History* (2.80.) flipped the focus to concentrate on the differences between North and South, areas that were of much greater concern to the Roman Empire at that time. The Roman poet Lucan in his *Bellum Civile/Pharsalia* included the following assertion: "Every native of the Northern snows is vehement in war and courts death, but every step you go towards the East and the torrid zone, the people grow softer as the sky grows kinder" (*Phars.*365-368). Again, this connects people with their climate, but it also focuses on the North and East, unlike *On Airs ...*, which we have seen, was focused on the dichotomy between East and West. Roman authors then did not simply repeat the ideas of their Greek forbears but instead adapted them and developed them to remain relevant to the changing political and cultural situation in the Roman Empire.

The final work to consider is that of the *Germania*, written by Tacitus around the end of the 1st century AD. In this work, Tacitus drew from the cultural discourse laid out above when he began by stating: "Germany as a whole is separated from the Gauls and from Raetians and Pannonians by the River Rhine and Danube" (*Gem.* 1.1). Just as with Herodotus, Tacitus drew from the ethnographic tradition of placing import on a lands geography in understanding it people. He also uses the ideas of the effect of one's distance

from civilisation and strange native lands having a direct effect on one's ethnic characteristics. Tacitus says: "Beyond this all else that is reported is legendary: that the Hellusii and Oxiones have human faces and features, the limbs and bodies of beasts" (*Gem.* 46). That even Tacitus at the close of his ethnographic treatise still allowed his audience the idea of the semi-mythological shows the continuation of the ideas around strange lands and stranger inhabitants found in Homer and Herodotus.

In conclusion, we have seen in this section how the importance of a shared territory or climate influenced the ancient understanding of ethnicity. Part of this was the connection a people felt with their homeland. The Athenians in several sources are shown to have been particularly concerned with this, using the connection to justify their pre-eminence in terms of their ethnicity. The connection of a people with their land was also used from a secondary viewpoint. The author of *On Airs, Waters, and Places* used the concept to impose characteristics on Eastern groups because of the perceived nature of their climate. Unlike the Athenian tradition, this ethnicity was constructed from without rather than within. Later authors, including the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, showed the influence from these early ideas on ethnicity, reflecting and building upon them. Its use was often directed towards different regions, often those that bore a particular importance or influence during the author's life. Examples that were discussed included the work of Lucian whose dichotomy of regions was between the North and the East. The North was the direction of the German menace, and East the location of the Parthian threat. Such ideas were adapted to suit the narrative of the time and reflect those ethnicities that were relevant.

We have seen how early Greek literature such as Herodotus' *Histories* bore the embryonic ideas of climate and its influence. However, early Greek thought was typified by a lack of clear statements detailing the climate to be the direct cause of an ethnic group's characteristics, while at the same time prioritising discussions about geography and climate when commenting on foreign peoples. The modern label for these ancient ideas is the environmental theory. It posits the idea that people's ethnic characteristics are determined by their climate. As a theory, it is uniform in its generalizations, and removes the opportunity for individualisation or choice.

Such a theory is clearly represented in the works of Roman authors; examples discussed above include Livy who wrote of climate and peoples in terms of seeds and soil.

These farming analogies were a Roman adaptation of the tradition. In particular, that such ideas formed part of the discussion on ethnicity within an empire may have created a significant increase in its influence within the discourse, as the reach and pressure an empire could exert on such discussions could be significant, as mentioned above. They allowed a Roman audience to comprehend the ideas in terms in which they would have been more comfortable. We have also seen that the ancient concept of ethnicity and climate allowed for degeneration of ethnicity, or a loss of identity. This will be discussed further in Section 2.4 below. The explicit way in which much of this evidence is found in the ancient sources implies that these were not extreme ideas, but that they were common and generally accepted. Finally, we have considered the over-lapping nature of ancient writing on geography and ethnography. Authors in the past did not consider the study of one to be exclusive to the other. This is best shown by Strabo, who held that one directly informed the other. Therefore, in the ancient world, not only could one not write about other cultures without mention of their lands, but also the nature of the land spoke to the nature of its inhabitants. A shared land or a peoples' territory were important parts of their ethnicity. However, this facet of identity did not function alone, as we will see.

### **2.3. A shared history and common descent.**

In discussing the importance of a shared ancestry and common descent, in the construction of ancient ethnicity we can look to early Greek texts to see the genesis of this idea in the ancient discourse. Examples such as Pindar (*Isth.* 2.19) regarding the Athenians, commented that they were the sons of Erechtheus fall within the same discourse considered in the previous section. As we have already seen the Athenian myth of their origins concerned Erechtheus, who was said to have been born of the land of Attica. The much later writings of Pausanias (1.26-27) include a description of the *Erechtheion*, a building that was claimed to be the sacred building on the Acropolis. It is also said to be a shared temple between *Athena Polias* the primary deity of the city of Athens and Erechtheus (Camp 2001: 93). Here we have a mythical tradition specific to Attica, which extolled their collective descent from a single line, one not just manifested in literature but as part of their cultural

traditions. This shows the fundamental link the Athenians perceived between themselves and the land of Attica.

There were also other mythical facets of Athenian ancestry that formed part of what it meant to be Athenian. Herodotus discussed the nature of the original communities of Greece stating: "Lacedaemon was populated by Dorians while Athens was populated by Ionians. For these two people, the one Pelasgian, the other Hellenic had been pre-eminent in the old days" (*Hist.* 1.56). The Athenians were therefore descended from the Pelasgians and not Dorians, a Hellenic group. In the next passage Herodotus suggested that the people of Attica, originally Pelasgian, had become Hellenized once they "learnt a new language", and it is implied that the new language was Greek (*Hist.* 1.57). The Pelasgians are referred to in the earlier text of the *Iliad* in two references, the first (2.68) speaks of "Pelasgian Argos", while the second is "Zeus, thou king, Dodonaean, Pelasgian" (16. 233). Both references are epithets, the second of which clearly implies that the Pelasgians shared some facets of their religion with their Hellenic counterparts. In the *Odyssey* (19,175-177), Odysseus speaks of the Pelasgians as being on the isle of Crete among a population, which included the Achaeans, True Cretans, Cydonians and the Dorians. In these examples, the Pelasgians are never referred to as Hellenic; although Skinner (2012: 107) comments that the traditions surrounding the Pelasgians show little in the way of consistency.

Hall (2002a: 141) goes further in arguing that the confusion was caused due to each independent city state attempting to create its own version of a unique ancestral ethnicity. In Herodotus' *Histories* (6.52-54), there is the example of competing claims around the origins of the Spartans. The Spartans claimed that they were brought to their current land by Aristodamus, the grandson of Cleodaeus. Herodotus explained how this version was unique to the Spartans and that both the Greeks and Persians had competing stories. The Greek version has the Spartans as kin of Perseus and even further back the Egyptians. The Persian account was in some way similar. They agreed on the kinship with Perseus, but it was claimed in the Persian story that Perseus was Assyrian whose ancestors were not Greek. In this example, the Spartans not only disagreed with Persian accounts of their heritage and one might assume they would, but they also differed in the claims of their fellow Greeks. Therefore, within larger ethnic groups such as *Hellenes* there was still disagreement and competing accounts of the common descent of specific city states.

That the tradition of their Pelasgian descent was accepted by the Athenians can be inferred from a passage in Herodotus (*Hist.* 8.144). Here Herodotus has the Athenians explain their reasoning behind their defiance of the Persians and loyalty to Greece. The argument included language, gods and religious rites as well as a common way of life. At no point however, do the Athenians mention a common ancestry, inferring that they did not believe that they shared one with other *Hellenes*. While it could be argued that this factor did not form an important part of the Athenian understanding of ethnicity, I think this unlikely looking at the evidence above. It is more plausible that ancestry was a part of an Athenian ethnicity and the identification with the region of Attica. When this was applied wider there was no shared ancestry and so it did not form part of their understanding of what it was to be Hellenic as one would expect with nested ethnic identities. The Athenians then held to both a Hellenic identity and their own unique place within that grouping of people's. What would have been important at the level of regional identity may not have been a factor at a Pan-Hellenic level. If we consider Thucydides, he claimed that the whole the land of Hellas did not exist before the time of Helen, and that the most common name used by the tribes was Pelasgian (Thuc. 1.3). This confuses the issue further as Thucydides seems to suggest that until the events of the Trojan War most communities considered themselves Pelasgian. It may be more constructive to consider Pelasgians as "...an enigmatic construct that was variously appropriated and manipulated over time"(Skinner 2012: 107). In other words, there may not have been such a group, in that they were an ethnic construct that allowed Greeks to better understand their past.

"And so far has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood"(Isoc.

*Pan.50*).

This statement by Isocrates, spoke of the connection through shared knowledge and understanding the Hellenic people possessed. However, it is the final point that bears some importance to this discussion. Isocrates felt that the rise of Hellenic intelligence had overcome or replaced the bonds of shared blood in connecting the Hellenic world. At some point in the past then Isocrates believed that it was a common blood or shared descent that united the Greek city states as a cohesive group. The passage refers to the primacy of

Athenian intellect, and its extensive influence over the Greek world. It is interesting then to consider that, while an Athenian, Isocrates felt his fellow *Hellenes* had, at some point in the past, been bonded by their shared heritage and had later become linked due to their shared culture. In another work, Isocrates divides the races of the world, listing Hellenes, Macedonians and Barbarians (Isoc. *Philip*154) displaying an intentionally limited world view which supported his political goals (Said 2001: 278). Isocrates here presents the Hellenes as a cohesive group, willing to fight alongside the rest of Greece in part due to their shared Hellenic heritage and common ancestry. Isocrates was attempting to convince King Philip of Macedon to join with the Hellenes and combat the barbarians. This Pan-Hellenic purpose is the reason for his separation of the three races of the world mentioned above. In the linking of Greek communities together through culture and blood ties Isocrates developed the ideas found in Herodotus for his specific context.

The interest in ethnic ancestry within Greece continued into the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Plutarch in his biography of Pericles explained how in 451/450 BC Pericles proposed a citizenship law which restricted claims of citizenship to those individuals who could prove that both parents held Athenian citizenship before (*Per.* 37.3). The method of identifying who could become a citizen is of importance here. The desire for both parents to be Athenian clearly held to the ideal of a shared or common ancestry. Its inclusion Plutarch's writings suggests the continued relevance of such ideas well into the Roman period Plutarch was writing in. Isaac (2004: 148) states that the long tradition of idealizing the ideas around an unmixed or pure lineage can be found throughout Greek and so Latin literature. He goes on to point out that while views on these concepts seem strongly held, there does not appear to be any rationale given for them other than a base fear of degeneration or impurity. The ideas are not only represented in the literature but also in the Athenian law, Plutarch included in his account of Pericles' life. While the author Tacitus used the concept of a pure lineage and autochthony in his etic ethnic identity of the Germanic tribes. Tacitus speaks of the Germans as "...indigenous and very slightly blended with new arrivals from other races or alliances" (*Germ.* 2). He also says that he agreed with those who claimed the Germans to be a "...race unmixed by intermarriage with other races, a peculiar people and pure, like no one but themselves" (*Germ.*4). It should also be noted that Tacitus likely included such ideas as a critique of the perceived corruption of Roman society, rather than an outright endorsement of Germanic practice. This is evidence that these ideas surrounding shared ancestry and pure lineage continued to form part of the discourse around ethnicity under Roman authors

An example of shared history forming a core of a group's ethnic identity is the mythic story of Romulus and Remus and the founding of the Roman state. The Republican period poet Ennius wrote the *Annals*, completed sometime after 184 BC. Although it is now only known to us through fragments in other later works, we know that it was a history of Rome. Fragment 71 of the work recounts how Romulus and Remus were cared-for by a she-wolf. This example shows that even as far back as the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, when Ennius was writing, there were diverging accounts of a Roman tradition of common history focused around figures such as Romulus and Aeneas. Later Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC stated that the Roman people "remained in this same place of abode, both never afterwards driven out by any others" (*Antiq.* 1.9.3). He continued to explain that they changed their name twice. Once from Aborigines to Latins after their then king Latinus around the time of the sack of Troy, and for a second time to Romans after Romulus who founded the city named after him. The inclusion of the reference to a set geographical location for the Roman people, found at the beginning of the above quote, suggest that while the discourse around Roman ethnic identity may have been dominated by stories of Troy and Romulus, there were still hints of a peoples connection to their land as seen in the previous section. The seeming importance of a shared history to the Roman identity, and the limited use of concepts such as shared land or territory did not prevent their use within the Roman discourse of emic identity. Other examples of Roman literature from this time used similar but variant mythology. For example, there are differences between Livy's and Dionysius' mythology, as Dionysius (*Antiq.* 2.15, 3.47) writes that Italy was populated with more civil and cultured native than Livy portrays. In this way, as Dench (2005: 101), notes the discourse surrounding Roman ethnic identity held within its contradictory elements which coexisted.

There is a significant difference between the discourse around Athenian ethnic identity, and that of the Romans. No attempt was made to ascribe the Roman people a pure lineage or any notion of being autochthonous such as mentioned in the previous section. The very nature of their foundation myth did not offer this possibility. Rather the Roman discourse was based on a shared history. As we have seen, Livy's *History* (1.4-17) begins with the retelling of the actions of Aeneas in Italy and the life and deeds of Romulus and his brother Remus are recounted. Livy (1.1) states the movements of those who fled Troy and their eventual settling in Italy. Livy begins the passage with a comment that makes it plain that what comes after it was to his mind widely agreed, although this does infer he

understood there to be other differing accounts such as Dionysius mentioned above. The story was not some invention by Livy for the general amusement of his readers, but another retelling of an often repeated and changed foundation myth. Therefore, at the beginning of a history, which its author claimed recounted events that were accepted, there was a foreign group leaving their homeland. Therefore, the Romans never claimed a pure ancestry in the same way that some Greek city states did. In fact Dench (2005: 102-103) points out that the very nature of Aeneas' immigrant past offered the ethnic identity of Rome and wider Italy a complex multi-layered culture to draw upon. Though it should be noted that there was ambivalence surrounding the immigrant nature of Aeneas as well, in particular his links to the luxury and decadence of the East (Dench 2005: 103-104). Although the fact that the discourse moved to include such concerns should not be of any surprise when one considers the fallout from the civil war against Antony and the perceived influence of Cleopatra held by many in Rome. If any pure lineage was to be claimed from this mythic history it was in relation to the specific connection of Roman kings and their ancestral link to Troy that writers such as Livy used the ideas of pure lineage, rather than the Roman people as a whole. However, this was not preventing other authors from attempting to do so.

Virgil's *Aeneid* focuses on Aeneas, for as Virgil puts it "whence rose the Latin race, the royal line of Alba and the high walls of Rome" (1.6-7). The *Aeneid* then explained not only the founding of Rome but also the rise of the Latin people. In his parallel biography of Romulus, Plutarch coupled him with Theseus, one of the mythical founders of Athens. Romulus is described as a "King of races and founder of cities" (*Romulus* 4). However Plutarch recounted claims made by some that the city of Roman was founded by "the Pelasgians after wandering over most of the habitable earth" (*Life of Romulus* 1.1). Both Plutarch and Dionysius recorded attempts at a common descent or lineage for the Roman people, which sought to remove the ancestry of Troy. It should be mentioned though, that at several points Dionysius used the sack of Troy as a chronological point from which to work and Plutarch only referred to the story of the Pelasgians in relation to the story of Aeneas and Troy. While as noted above Livy intended to write the accepted version of Rome's ancient past, versions from these other authors such not be discounted or considered less commonly held. Rather we should see these differing stories as part of the complex discourse surrounding Roman ethnic identity. Such apparently conflicting accounts, as we shall see in Chapter 3, formed the ongoing discourse in Rome, rather than a series of incompatible myths and legends of Rome's history.

Archaeological evidence supports the acceptance of such a tradition among the populace of Rome. Statues of Aeneas and Romulus stood in the Forum of Augustus. Aeneas was also displayed on one side of the *Ara Pacis*, dressed in the style of Roman kings (Zanker 1990: 204). There is also the example of the *Fasti Triumphales*, the triumphs taken since the founding of the city. The first name on the list is "King Romulus, the son of Mars. Over king Akron of Caenina" (*Fasti Tri.* 752.1). The list was placed in a public location on the side of a triumphal arch erected in honour of Augustus (Zanker 1990: 203). The public placement of this list suggests the mythology was part of the discourse surrounding Roman identity at the time. The perceived renewal of Rome under Augustus was in part propagandised through the use of such images of Aeneas and Romulus to centre the Roman identity on its past and the virtues of *pietas* and their links to Augustus and his family. Therefore this can be considered in some way a state sponsored part of the discourse on Roman ethnicity which was created to suit the political needs of the emperor, again showing the influence empire could have on the nature of such discussions.

In this section, we have seen how ancient Greek and Roman literature used a shared history or ancestry to construct an identity for their respective communities. It is clear then that such ideas as shared history and common descent were important to the ancient concept of ethnicity. However, the methods and message differed. Athenians linked themselves to a common ancestry, extolling the virtue that was their autochthony and pure lineage. Through figures such as Erechtheus, they united themselves not only to the land but also to each other. The Romans also presented themselves as sharing a mythological history, although due to the very content of that history they were unable or unwilling to claim a pure lineage. Autochthony was impossible, as they believed their ancestors to have travelled from Troy and settled in Latium.

In conclusion then, that Greek and Roman concepts of ethnicity were formed in part by ideas such as shared history and common descent is clear. This included the Greek desire for autochthony and pure lineage. The Athenians spoke of a unified Hellenic ideal (Herod. *Hist.* 8.144), but did not include a shared ancestry. This was because, as we have seen, they perceived their ancestry as separate to that of their fellow Greeks. This is a clear example of the complex interaction between nested identities discussed above. Such was the importance given to this desire for a pure lineage that even laws were enacted to limit the size of the

citizen body. They were written in terms of proof of lineage. The fact that their mythological origins included those who escaped from Troy and the native Latin communities prevented the Roman claim to a pure lineage such as the Athenians. Instead, a focus was placed on the common history of the city and the strong imagery of Aeneas and Romulus. However, as we have seen, the idea of shared ancestry also brought with it other traditions namely the hereditary nature of previously acquired characteristics. How traits thought to be caused by things such as climate (see section 2.2) could in turn over a generation or two become hereditary characteristics without need for external characteristics. In the following section, we will see how these ideas influenced the classical view of foreign cultures and how those very cultures conferred characteristics upon the participants.

#### **2.4. Culture and religion**

Jonathan Hall in his book *Hellenicity* (2002b) argues in part that cultural and ethnic identity are two different things. It is suggested that ethnic identity's most important facet is kinship as it brings with it a clear biological boundary to the ethnic group. As we have seen in the preceding section kinship, real or imagined, was a strong basis for constructing an ethnicity. While on the subject of cultural identity, Hall (2002b: 179) says that it is a far broader form of identity in comparison to ethnic identity, and does not rely on kinship identity as it lacks the aforementioned biological boundary. An example, he gives that of supporters of a sports team. If culture was a method of forming ethnicity and ethnicity was not dependant on the presence of kinship then a group such as a sports team could be considered an ethnic group. This is clearly not the case. While there is a sense of community and group mentality within many such groups, they would not be considered an ethnicity. So why then are we to discuss culture and religion and their role in constructing ethnicity when there is an example of where this would not be a viable method? The answer is one that has been mentioned previously but bears repeating. Ancient peoples clearly believed that culture was an important part of their ethnic identity. We are not concerned with more accurate modern understandings of ethnicity; instead, we are seeking to comprehend how Greek and Roman people considered their own identity.

This section considers the etic ethnic identity of the ancient Egyptians from the perspective of Greek and Roman authors as a short case study. In so doing the importance that both the Greek and Roman discourses around ethnicity placed on culture and religion can

be better seen. We will also look at Egyptian influences on Greek and Roman culture, and how this was perceived by authors of the time. Finally, we will look at the concept of ethnic degeneration and its particular link to cultural identity and foreign influence. It should be noted that many of the references in this section are reflective of the time and place both Greek and Roman audiences found themselves in related to Egypt. Events such as the declining power of the Ptolemy's, the rise and fall of Cleopatra, the Roman conquest of Egypt and the gradual rise of Isis cults within Rome all affected the ethnic identity foreign writers presented about the Egyptian people. Such realities of ethnic identity are examples of the fluid nature of ethnicity discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Such chronologically specific context will be highlighted in chapter three when we will discuss the evolving nature ethnic identity of Gallic and Germanic tribes from the perspective of Greek and Roman audiences.

If we begin with Greek and Roman views of Egyptian religion, we find that it was considered to be at the forefront of Egyptian ethnic identity. As Herodotus stated: "...they are exceedingly religious, more so than any other people in the world" (*Hist.* 2.37). Even later writers such as Isocrates (*Busiris* 24-29) gave credence to this view. It can be noted already that the implicit comparison laid out by Herodotus was not done so against Greek religiousness but rather all peoples, nor was it construed with negative connotations of superstition. Lucian characterised the Egyptians as "the most religious race on earth", who "never tire of divine names" (*Pro Imaginibus* 27). Such views of Egyptians however, could be interpreted otherwise as Tacitus showed: "whom this most superstitious of nations" (*Hist.* 4.81). Here the religiousness that was seen by other authors as a characteristic of the Egyptian people was to Tacitus simply a mark of their innate "superstition". As we shall see views of Egypt by Roman authors tended either to be influenced by events of their time, or misunderstanding when attempting to relate to the Egyptian cultural and religious practices.

The Egyptians were considered to be so linked to their gods that Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.144) related how gods had been kings of Egypt before men. He also equated two of the Egyptian gods, Horus and Osiris, to two Greek deities, Apollo and Dionysus respectively. Here we see a good example of not only Greeks attempting to equate Egyptian and Hellenic deities, but also the process of seeing one's own practices or beliefs in the foreign. This was a significant process as can be seen in the first book of Diodorus' *Library of History*, which contains numerous references to Egyptian gods being Greek gods under another older name.

Osiris is again equated to Dionysus (1.11.3-4); Isis is linked to Demeter (1.13.5) and Zeus to Ammon (1.15.3).

From these dual identities, we can take two important points. First, authors such as Herodotus and Diodorus, when attempting to convey ideas such as the Egyptian pantheon, relied upon their audience's intimate knowledge of their own Hellenic mythology and therefore the common nature of that mythology. This can be seen clearly in Diodorus where he mentioned the story of Osiris collecting nine maidens "who could sing and were trained to dance" (1.18.4). The clear connection here to the Greek muses is not stated explicitly until later, thereby relying on the similarities in the mythologies to engage the audience. Second, there was a view held by the authors of commonality at some level. Diodorus (1.28) suggested that mysteries such as those performed at Eleusis were the same as those practiced in Egypt. This section of his text includes other claims such as that of Athens being an Egyptian colony and its early kings being descended from Egyptians. These two claims were discarded by Diodorus as being made only because of the fame of Athens rather than any claim to truth. In either case there was thought to be a significant similarity between Greek and Egyptian religion based on the deities and the traditions of their religious practice. Plutarch writing much later composed the *Moralia Isis and Osiris*. In this work, he reaffirmed the similarities listed above, such as Osiris being identified by the Greeks as Dionysus (Plut. *Is Os.*356a-b).

As mentioned above, there are examples of critical views of Egypt particularly in Roman literature, though it should be noted that these are often single instances with little attempt at verification. Cicero in his *De Natura Deorum* recorded his view on the "monstrosities of the Magi, and the similar lunacy of the Egyptians, and the beliefs of the common herd, which their ignorance of the truth renders wholly inconsistent"(1.43). Virgil included critical images of Egyptian deities such as the "barking Anubis" which he claimed was the "progeny of grotesque deities" (*Aen.* 8.698). Similar to this is the speech in Dio (50.24), given by Octavian before the battle of Actium. In this, Octavian justified the reasons for the war and lamented the possibility that Roman men who have acquired such a vast empire could be laid low by the actions of an Egyptian woman. After these points, he said of the Egyptians in general that they "worship reptiles and beasts as gods, who embalm their own bodies to give them the semblance of immortality" (50.24.6). What does this say about Roman views of Egyptian culture? If we consider the context, the speech is set just before the

battle of Actium and Octavian is speaking to his assembled army. The context is then of opposition and aggression. While it would be incorrect to assume that this informs us of the views of Romans during that civil war, it does give a view on how later Roman people considered the Egyptians of Cleopatra's reign. In other words, the views espoused here are specific to the events they recall. Examples such as those discussed above tell us something of the nature of the Roman discourse on Egyptian ethnicity during Dio's time. Such ideas as seen in Virgil and Dio were clearly influenced by the war with Cleopatra and the propaganda of the Augustan regime (Gruen 2011c: 108). This serves as a clear example of how complex the ancient discourse on ethnicity could become, especially when influenced by the propaganda of the state and changes in international political power and control.

The Roman interest in religious practices is significant and often focused on the worship of animal cults. Plutarch (*Is Os.* 371) discussed the use of animals in cults as symbolism and the practice of hunting crocodiles in the town of Apollonopolis in relation to its religious significance. Herodotus commented on the Egyptian practice of not differentiating between animal and human. While he stated his dislike of this practice, he again referred it to the fact that the Egyptians are “extraordinarily scrupulous” in matters of religion (*Hist.* 2.64). He then lists, with reasons, the creatures that the Egyptians viewed as sacred (2.65-76). In all of this extensive consideration, there is no implicit judgement of the practices, other than his particular interest in the practice of hunting crocodiles (2.70). We can see that the Greek and Roman view of Egyptian ethnicity was strongly linked to the religion of the Egyptian people. Moreover, it seems there was a desire in these works to understand such practices and beliefs. This was represented by the equating of Hellenic and Egyptian gods, and in the case of Diodorus some religious practices. In Book 1 (83-89), Diodorus not only included several justifications by Egyptians for the practice of worshipping animals, but also the similarities that such worship had with Greek practices. He argued that the Egyptian deification of the goat was just as the Greeks honouring Priapus. Once again, here is an example of ancient writers attempting to understand another culture without implicit judgement and thereby displaying the importance they themselves placed on such ideas.

If we consider the wider view of Egyptian culture from the Greek and Roman viewpoint, we find an interest in not only the different and unusual but also the similar and common. Diodorus (1.93.4) not only complimented Egyptian culture for its laws but also

argued that because the laws improved its peoples' character Egypt had become the most virtuous culture. Previous to this he commented that "many of the customs obtained in ancient days among the Egyptians have not only been accepted by the present inhabitants, but have aroused no little admiration among Greeks" (1.69.2). Diodorus pointed to the spread and appreciation of Egyptian culture among the Greek peoples. He stated that for many of his readers some of the customs of Egypt might be strange but others useful and virtuous.

A respect for Egyptian culture is also found in Aristotle (*Pol.* 1329b), who explained that the Egyptians aside from being the oldest of nations were also the first to have had laws and a political system. It was also claimed that the Egyptian legal system closely resembled that of the city states of Greece (Dio Sic. 1.75.4). Their law courts were said to be devoid of the manipulation of orators as all communication had to be completed via the written word, thereby avoiding any negative influence on the execution of the law (Dio Sic. 1.75.6-76.1). A different point of admiration is given by Plato (*Phaedrus.* 274c-d), who ascribed the creation of numbers, calculation, geometry and astronomy to the Egyptian people. The subject of knowledge and writing is mentioned in Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.36), who in his only direct comparison between the Greeks and Egyptians, commented of the direction in which each culture wrote. Again, there is no claim to superiority, just a juxtaposition of differing traditions, though he noted the similarity in that both groups claimed the others' method to be incorrect. Diodorus (1.81.7) also mentioned education in a seemingly direct comparison with Greece practices. He recounted that only a few children were instructed in reading and writing, with the majority being instructed in crafts. He noted the lack of teaching in wrestling and music although he explained how the Egyptians came to these decisions. In these examples, we see how ancient authors constructed an Egyptian ethnicity using cultural institutions such as education and the law. The Egyptians were seen as an intelligent people who were the origin for much of fundamental knowledge of the ancient world, while also being a just and honest people who respected the rule of law and were one of the first people to have such things. Diodorus summed this view up well, saying that the Egyptian people were gifted with the "...most excellent customs and laws and the institutions which promote culture of every kind" (1.69.6). They are shown to be exceptionally respectful of their own culture, (Herod. *Hist.* 2.79) as they perpetuated their own customs and institutions rather than acquiring new ones. Foreign objects and implements were also shunned due to their unclean nature (Herod. *Hist.* 2.41). Such references suggest that the Greek people saw in the Egyptian

culture one that was virtuous and preserved itself from foreign influence via preventing external contact.

Later writers, in contrast to earlier authors, attempted to disparage Egypt for its customs. Juvenal in one of his *Satires* (15. 44-6) spoke of the extravagance and the barbarity of the Egyptian people. Dio (39.58) commented that the Egypt was heavily populated and its people were easy and fickle in their nature. Egyptian culture and religion was, as we have seen, of particular interest to Greek and Roman audiences. This is illustrated by the influence Egyptian culture had on these groups. Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.43-4, 81) commented that both the Greek pantheon and cult practice, such as the Orphic and Bacchic rites, originally came from Egypt. However, such influence was not limited to the origins of deities and rites. Cassius Dio (40.47.3) commented that cult shrines to the Egyptian deities Serapis and Isis had been built by private individuals. The Senate is recorded by Dio as having these shrines destroyed. However, Dio conceded that the popularity of the cults persisted, until later when their worship was accepted but located outside the *pomerium*. Gruen (2011: 111) suggests that the reason some Roman authors showed particular hostility towards Egyptian cults was that their practices were incompatible with Roman cults, and no doubt the extent of their worship within Rome only succeeded in fanning this hostility.

Greek and Roman audiences comprehended other foreign peoples via their own culture. The method of identifying the similar in the foreign group can be seen in the case study above on the Egyptian peoples. Greek and Roman authors attempted to understand Egyptian gods and wrote of their admiration of Egyptian laws and institutions. That it was through one's own culture that it was possible to conceptualise other foreign ethnicities is significant evidence of the importance it could play in the construction of ancient ethnicity. However, as we have seen both culture and religious practice were some of the first facets of foreign groups that Greek and Roman audiences attempted to understand and contextualise.

It is clear that cultural and religious beliefs were important aspects of ancient ethnicity. However, as with the introduction of Egyptian cults in Rome, more can be said of the influences that these two facets had on the construction of ethnicity in the ancient world, particularly the influence other cultures had on each other. Sallust (*Cat.* 11.5) when speaking of Sulla's military command in Asia says that he "...had treated them[Sulla's soldiers], contrary to the practice of our ancestors, with extraordinary indulgence, and exemption from

discipline; and the pleasant and luxurious quarters had easily, during seasons of idleness, enervated the minds of the soldiery." Sallust continued: "Then the armies of the Roman people first became habituated to licentiousness and intemperance, and began to admire statues and pictures, and sculptured vases.... to spoil temples; and to cast off respect for everything sacred and profane" (*Cat.* 11.6). Sallust articulated the concern that Eastern and Oriental culture was having a detrimental influence on the Roman military. Pliny in his *Natural History* wrote: "It was from the conquest of Asia that first introduced luxury into Italy... so that by a fatal coincidence, the Roman people, at the same moment, both acquired a taste for vice and obtained a license for gratifying it" (33.53). Again, we see the motif of the dangerous influences of Asiatic culture. However, Pliny did not condemn foreign culture for its influence. Instead, he bemoaned the loss of morals and the Roman descent into vice. The disappointment at the Roman acceptance of luxury is a recurring theme that we will come across. Pliny also gave a reason for this influence, claiming that it was "the conquest of Asia" and "the downfall of Carthage." It was not the foreign people who had so infected Roman tradition, but rather the acquisition of an empire that had gradually corrupted the Roman populace. The concerns of these ancient authors surrounding the perceived influences of Asiatic culture shows how fundamental the idea of culture and religion were to the ancient concepts of ethnicity. Such discussions drift from etic ethnic identities and into a discourse on the strength of Roman emic identity and its possible 'corruption' from outside influences. Therefore not only was culture deeply important to the construction of ethnic identities, but it offers further evidence of the fluid nature these discourses must have taken.

Cicero spoke of the causes of vices in the Roman world in his lifetime. When attempting to prove the morals of Lucius Murena, Cicero argued that his accuser would not find "...the shadow of luxury in that man in whom you cannot find the luxury itself" (*Pro Mur.* 6). Previous to this, Cicero had listed those actions which were considered marks of luxury, "shameless feasting... improper love...carousing...lust...extravagance." We see the same concerns in Juvenal's *Satires* (6.286-313). Here Juvenal condemned those who "...lap at giant oysters, long, long after midnight ... when drinking is from a perfume jar ... and take it in turns to ride one another and thrash around with no man present." Juvenal ascribes these actions to the influence of "filthy money" and claims that its origins were in Tarentum, Sybaris, Rhodes and Miletus. Such attitudes did shift, though not with respect to the degeneration of Roman virtue, which was as we have seen a constant concern to some Roman authors. Instead, the shift was geographical, focusing on the origin of the negative influence

further and further east over time. Florus (*Epitome* 1.47.7) developed further the Roman view of luxury originating from the east, arguing it “was the conquest of Syria which first corrupted us, followed by the Asiatic inheritance bequeathed by the king of Pergamum.” However, Florus did not only suggest that this was a negative influence on a few but rather the “resources and wealth thus acquired spoiled the morals of the age and ruined the state.” It should be noted that Florus continued his diatribe on the influence of luxury and wealth by suggesting that it caused the rebellion of Spartacus, the conflict between Marius and Sulla and finally the destruction of the state at the hands of Caesar and Pompeius. The frequency with which we find such ideas surrounding the negative cultural influences of external groups suggest that there must have been some moralists in Rome who agreed with Florus' point of view.

If we consider the Roman perception of the Greek influence on Roman culture in particular, as opposed to the general influence of the East, we find several incidents in which is implied a concern for the influence of Hellenic ideas and cults. Livy (40.2) discussed the discovery of the presumed tomb of Numa Pompilius, one of the kings of Rome, in 181BC. While no body was found, several books were discovered and thought to be Pythagorean writings. The writings we are told were circulated among close friends until the *praetor urbanus*, Quintus Petilius, wished to read them himself. Upon perusing them he is said to have observed that they were “subversive of religion”, and recommended them to be thrown to the fire. This occurred after the Senate had voted in agreement that the praetor's views were correct. Isaac (2004: 385) argues that this incident represented the application of Roman traditional values against Hellenistic ideas and beliefs. The story is repeated by Plutarch (*Numa* 22.2-5). In this version, Livy's account is repeated, although Plutarch suggested that the burning of the documents might have been done to conform to the Pythagorean tradition of not entrusting their teachings to writing. In either case, Plutarch also commented “...such mysteries ought not to be entrusted to the care of lifeless documents.” This is in keeping with the version in Livy, and again stresses the dangerous nature of the contents of the document. That said, contrary to Livy, it should be noted at no point does Plutarch claim the writings to be a detriment to the cults of Rome.

Livy mentioned the influence of Greek mystery cults in Italy. He stated that a “low-born Greek” who is described as “a hedge-priest and wizard...a hierophant of secret nocturnal mysteries”, introduced to Italy a “conspiracy” (39.8). The effects Livy ascribed to this cult are

significant: “debaucheries of every kind commenced; each had pleasures at hand to satisfy the lust he was most prone to”, “false witness, the forging of seals and testaments” and “also poisonings and murders of families where the bodies could not even be found for burial.” In the following chapter it stated that the cult was “pestilential evil” and that it penetrated the Italian countryside from Etruria to Rome (Livy 39.9). It is at 39.9.3 that Livy linked the cult to the worship of Bacchus and referred to it as the Bacchanalia. The text continues to explain the consuls’ actions in attempting to remove the cult. However, as Gruen (1993: 258) explains, its expulsion was insufficient and was repeated at several other point during the Republic. The interaction between Rome and Greek cult however, was not wholly negative; there are numerous examples of healing cults, and goddesses being brought over to Rome from Greece (Gruen 1990: 7-8). By 217 BC, connection with the Oracle at Delphi had been made, and there is some suggestion that Rome's mythological connection with Troy came from this increase in cultural interaction with the Greek mainland and its discourse on ethnicity (Gruen 1990: 11).

Cato the Elder is widely regarded as the first Roman author to consider the issues of Greek culture and its influence on the Roman people (Isaac 2004: 385; Sciarrino 2004: 323). A target of his vilification were the Greek physicians working in the city of Rome. He regarded them to be the “...most iniquitous and intractable race” when advising his son Marcus (Pliny *NH*, 29.7). He referred to their literature as corrupting all things and that they “...conspired to murder foreigners with medicine, but this very thing they do for a fee.” According to Plutarch (*Cato the Elder* 22.3-5), Cato is said to have feared that the youth of Rome would prefer a reputation built on words rather than martial deeds through the teachings of Greek philosophers. Such were his concerns he spoke in the Senate of the need to return such men to Greece where they could lecture to their students, and the sons of Rome could instead heed the laws and magistrates. Plutarch (23.1) believed that Cato made such comments out of patriotic zeal rather than hostility towards Greeks and their culture. His analysis seems likely when we consider the absurdity of Cato's previously mention comments of a conspiracy to murder foreigners. Gruen (1993: 78) has accurately labelled his comments as caricatures, and stresses that they suited Cato's purpose of elevating the stature of Roman culture. Plutarch questioned the purpose of Cato's professed desire to remove the influence of Greece from his city, commenting: “for while the city was at the zenith of its empire, she made every form of Greek learning and culture her own”(Cato the Elder 23.5). By the time of Cato, Greek literature had become a significant part of Roman high culture. While the record

of Cato's views implies at first sight a strong dislike for Greeks and their culture, it is rather the case that he attempted to elevate Roman culture (Gruen 1993: 83). Targets such as Greek literature and medicine, which were becoming popular in Rome, were convenient for his purpose. His warning of the work of Greek philosophers came with the desire for the youth of Rome to return to the ways of old, venerating martial deeds.

The perception of Greek culture as having negatively influenced the people of Italy was not the only view taken however, groups such as the Sabines claimed ancestry from the Spartans. Farney (2007: 101) notes that the Sabines claimed to have gained their harsh discipline and austerity from the Spartans, and the Romans in turn gained their moral superiority over their neighbours from the Sabines. The link between the Sabines and Spartans can be found in Ovid (*Fast.* 1.260), where the figure of Oebalus a legendary early king of Sparta was an ancestor of the Sabine people. While the use of Greek ancestry is significant and speaks to the importance of shared ancestries, as discussed above, the inheriting of positive cultural traits such as discipline and austerity speaks to a complex and often contradictory Roman perception of Greek ethnicity. Isaac (2004: 404) speaks to this issue, commenting that often Roman authors distinguished between the Greeks of the classical period and their contemporary Greek neighbours. In this way the Roman discourse encompassed a love and appreciation for classical Greek culture while dismissing the Greek of their own time (Isaac 2004: 405).

This Roman discourse surrounding Greek culture was not made in isolation but was directly affected by the mirror of the same discourse from the Greek perspective. The ancient literature is littered with examples of Greek claims of Roman barbarism (Poly. 9.37, 9.39, 11.5; Livy 31.29). It might therefore be easy to surmise from the views discussed above that the Roman concept of Greek culture was wholly negative. This was not the case. Lucan (*Phars.* 1.162-163) when discussing the descent of Rome into an excess of wealth and prosperity, stated that before these things had occurred it was virtue that had enthroned Roman culture. Polybius (6.56.6) also wrote that in all the ways the Romans were greater than others, the clearest was in religiousness. Whether these views were on balance an accurate self-image is not the concern of this discussion, rather it is important for us to understand that for a great many Romans this was how they would have viewed or at least judged themselves. Therefore, the concern that both Greek and Eastern influences brought was one focused on the maintenance of traditional standards. In this way, we can understand

the theme that runs through the literature, that contact with foreigners brought with it degeneration of tradition. While this did not accurately represent the realities of such contact, as can be seen in Plutarch (*Cato the Elder* 23.5), it was a recurring theme in Roman literature. It came with a series of assumptions. First, that contact with foreign cultures brought cultural change to Roman traditions. Second, that the change this contact brought was a contamination, which degenerated the aforementioned traditions, and was therefore always a net negative. The final assumption was that the degeneration had not previously occurred, and could be prevented if the state removed the foreign influence.

In conclusion, culture and religion formed a significant part of how ancient groups understood their ethnicity. This can be seen most clearly in the importance that was placed on such things in the works of ancient authors when writing on foreign groups. While there is evidence of negative views of foreign cultures, such works often show the influence of historical events such as the writings of Augustan authors about Egyptians. More detailed works, like those of Herodotus and Diodorus, show a much less judgemental approach to the topics of culture and religion. There were attempts to equate the familiar with the foreign. In cases where an author could not equate foreign practices with local one, explanations were offered to afford their audience a degree of comprehension. In some cases, some Roman authors, namely Cato the Elder, appear to have had an ulterior motive for their views of foreign people. The desire to elevate Roman culture over that of others seems to have been a considerable motivation. However, this in turn displays the importance with which Romans regarded culture and religion, especially in relation to groups other than themselves.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

At the beginning of this chapter, we discussed its purpose and the importance that understanding how ancient concepts of ethnicity arose and developed. In the subsequent discussion, we have covered the complications that any conversation on ethnicity entails including the inherent subjective nature of ethnicity and how its meaning changes based on the requirement of those constructing ethnicity hold. For this reason instead of attempting to define ancient ethnicity, we have considered the act of construction and creation as a means to understanding how such an identity may be created and under what processes it developed and changed.

Section 2.1 was concerned with the factors of self-awareness and identity, shared language and the importance of naming. These factors brought together several issues presented in the previous sections including the subjective nature of ethnicity, the constant process of change that ethnicity underwent and the fact that groups view others through a lens of their own practices first. This is also reflected in the process of naming which often links one's ethnic identity with that of foreign groups. An example of which is *Hellene* and *barbaros*. These two labels were linked via the factor of language. *Hellene* was initially an individual who spoke Greek, while *barbaros* was an individual who either spoke no Greek or spoke it poorly. The theme of ethnicity as a constant process was presented, and showed how the two labels came to represent not only language but also many of the factors previously discussed in the chapter. Self-identity then was an important factor in constructing ethnic identity. Ethnicity was a constantly moving concept, causing it to be difficult to explain it in terms of simple binary thinking such as *Hellene* and *barbaros*. However, with a consideration of the origins of these ethnonyms we found a long process of development and evolution. This means that the meanings of such terms are linked directly to the period in which they were used.

Section 2.2, analysed the idea of shared territory. This reveals a number of influences on ancient thinking. A strong connection to a homeland, such as the Athenians with Attica, was used to propose and edify ethnic identity. Such a concept however, could be imposed from outside the groups, such as in *On Airs, Waters, and Places* where the author linked foreign inhabitants in the East to their geographical location and claimed that the nature of their climate had direct effects upon their ethnic identity. The focus of such claims often matched those areas that were of particular interest to people at that time. In the work of Lucian, the dichotomy of regions was between the North and the East, reflecting the concern of the Germanic tribes to the North and the Parthian Empire to the East. Greek literature, from early works such as Herodotus through to later authors such as Plato and Aristotle, held influences of the importance of climate. There is however, a clear indication that there was a gradual increase in the significance assigned to the concept of environmental theory throughout the development of Greek literature. The modern label for these ancient ideas is environmental theory or environmental determinism. The theory suggests that people's characteristics are directly influenced, if not determined, by their climate. Roman authors were influenced by this Greek ethnographic tradition, re-purposing the ideas for their own

viewpoint and the language used. Metaphors based in terms of farming, which included seeds and soil, were commonly used. Ancient Greece being an agricultural economy it is unsurprising that such concepts were drawn upon by Greek authors. Such connotations to farming and cultivation may also have proved effective with a Roman audience, who were also living in much the same agricultural economy as the Greeks. The concept of ethnic degeneration, or a loss of identity, was also introduced. This idea was returned to in 2.4, where it was shown that influence from other cultures could also cause a perceived degeneration in ethnic identity. The means by which one could negatively affect one's ethnic characteristics was by changing one's climate. The fact that many of the examples of the environmental theory are so casually included within the source material has suggested that these concepts were both common and generally accepted. Finally, the section considered the importance ancient authors placed on geography in their understanding of foreign peoples. This is best displayed by Strabo who claimed geography and the study of people directly informed one another.

In the third section of the chapter, the importance of kinship and shared history was explored. We discussed the interplay of both ancestry and shared territory in the ethnic identity of the Athenians. The extreme end of this concept was that of pure lineage and clear importance it held to ancient authors, which also hinted at the threat of degeneration in the polluting of one's lineage. Again, we saw how these ideas not only changed between groups but over the course of time. Where the Athenians valued their ancestry and lineage, Rome held its shared history and founding figures as important for its self-identity. The aforementioned changes could be explained through the ancient understanding of the hereditary passing of acquired characteristics. Such acquired characteristics could be gained from climate (section 2.2) or learnt (section 2.4). In either case there was a belief that such things could then be passed on from parent to child.

The importance of culture and religion was dealt with in 2.4. Through a consideration of Egyptian ethnicity from the perspective of a Greek and Roman audience, we found not only the importance that such factors had on ethnicity but also groups understood each other via similarities first and thereby gradually identified differences. This became an important point in 2.1 where it informed the discussion about the limitations of 'othering' in our understanding of ancient ethnicity. The process of 'othering' predisposed a natural opposition to foreign groups, which was based on either expected characteristics being absent or

unwanted characteristics being present. In terms of culture and religion, we saw again the fact that such factors changed over time just as was seen in the previous sections. As tastes, preferences and external influences changes so too did the perspective Greek and Roman authors held on Egyptian religion or culture.

In summary then, this chapter has shown the importance of a range of factors which can be used in the construction of group ethnicity in the ancient world. Certain factors held different importance and significances to different groups. The meaning of these factors, in terms of ethnicity, underwent constant change and adaption, which always occurred in relation to the process of a group re contextualising itself in relation to other groups. Such a process was not done by contrasting oneself with another group, but instead relating one to the other. This allowed for a complex understanding of ethnicity in the ancient world, which was neither all set in opposition nor completely open to external influence. Finally we have seen how cultures create ethnic identities for foreign groups based on their own cultural norms (Briant 2002: 209). These facts will bear considerable importance in the following chapter which seeks to show the complex nature of Roman views of Gallic and Germanic tribal ethnicity.

## Chapter 3

### Perceptions of Gallic and Germanic Ethnicity in Ancient Literature

It was discussed in Chapter 2 ways by which, using the extant textual evidence, ethnic identity could be constructed in the ancient world. This chapter looks at the main aspects of Greek and Roman perceptions of first Gallic, and then Germanic ethnicity, again through the analysis of primary textual sources. The chapter considers works from the earliest surviving extant treatment of Gallic ethnicity, that of Polybius, through to the ethnographic description of the German tribes by Tacitus in his *Germania*. By considering the ethnic identities of those cultures on the northern frontier of the Roman world, we will be able to infer the threats and concerns these foreign cultures presented to the Roman mind-set. It is the contention of this study that these ethnically derived concerns and perceived threats formed a significant driving force in the development of the Roman frontier policy in northern Europe.

This chapter therefore considers the perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity through the analysis of both textual and archaeological evidence. These discussions are broken down into specific 'moments' within the Roman discourse surrounding ethnic identity, thereby situating specific cross-sections of the discourse surrounding ethnicity within the wider historical context. The positioning of these cross-sections is based on the argument by Derks (2009b: 242) that was mentioned the previous chapter: that changes to ethnic identity can be observed when the configuration of power shifts. In each case there, either had been or was an on-going shift in the power dynamic between the Roman state and the Gallic or Germanic tribes. The cross-sections of the discourse considered here will for Gallic ethnicity are those of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (200-100 BC), the late Republican period (60-30 BC) and the early Principate (30 BC- AD 70). When considering Germanic ethnic identity, we will refer to the cross-sections of the late Republican period (60-30 BC), the early Principate (30 BC-AD 70) and the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. In each of these cases, the nature of the Roman ethnic identity for both Gaul and German alike underwent significant change. By taking these specific instances and comparing the discourses represented within the relevant

texts, we should be able to chart some kind of movement in the perceptions of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity.

Within each section, the primary authors for ethnographic material on Gallic and Germanic ethnicity are considered. Some works are treated to a greater extent than others based on not only quantity of text remaining to modern scholars but also the extent to which the author included the discourse on Gallic and Germanic ethnicity in their discussions. Within each section note will be made of historical context not only of the ancient authors in question, but also the shifting interactions between the Roman state and the northern tribes. Of primary importance in this analysis are those traits and characteristics, such as a perceived natural aggressiveness, which influenced the interaction between Gallic/Germanic and Roman groups in frontier regions. Finally, it is important to note that the purpose of this chapter is to consider the ethnic perception of Gauls and Germans held by the Roman people. It is not a discussion of the accuracy of the cultural practices or characteristic traits that the authors describe. Roman and Greek perceptions of Gauls or Germans were often misinformed or lacked a complete understanding, but it is in these 'mistakes' or fictitious information that we can best understand the ethnic images the ancient authors were attempting to construct. In Chapter 4, we will take the ethnic perceptions of these groups identified in the current chapter and consider how they may have affected the nature and development of the Roman Frontier in central Europe.

### **3.1: The Ethnicity of the Gauls**

The Gallic tribes as a group shared a 'frontier' region with the Roman people for some 300 years before the completion of the conquest of Gaul by Caesar. During that time there was almost constant warfare, initially driven by the Roman desire to expel the Gauls from northern Italy (Gargola 2010: 179), which culminated in the eventual expansion of the Roman Empire to include the whole of Gaul. During this time the northern frontier shifted from Latium, upwards through Italy finally coming to rest at the west bank of the River Rhine (Raaflaub 2010a: 168-169). Over the course of this process, the development of the frontier was driven by the numerous Roman commanders, far too many over too long a period to consider it possible to argue for a cohesive structure to the development of this frontier (Isaac 2000: 387). However, what all these individuals shared was a common ethnic perception of those living within that frontier zone, the Gallic people. It was this perception

that informed the concerns of the Roman elite, which in turn drove the development of the frontier. This case study seeks to analyse ancient literature and uncover the Roman perception of the Gallic people. In so doing we will see how there were common traits, such as those that we discussed in the previous chapter, that appear throughout the works in question. While initially these themes are presented as simplistic stereotypes, they were eventually developed by later authors to explain further cultural and social facets of the Gallic tribes.

### **3.1.1: The Second Century BC**

The earliest examples of discussion surrounding Gallic ethnic identity or customs are found in sparse remarks before the first century BC. One notable example of this was Aristotle, writing in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC who referred to the Gallic people as a single group, which unlike other warlike races, held in honour the links between men in their society (*Politics* 1269b). The passing mention to Gauls in the *Politics* referred to a trait of Gallic ethnicity that we will see repeated throughout later sources. The Gauls for Aristotle were a warlike nation. He referred to them as being exceptions among the warlike races of the world. Aristotle was therefore one of our earliest examples of an author presenting the Gallic people as conflict loving. So significant was this a part of the discourse surrounding the Gallic ethnic identity that, as we will see below, it would continually be reinforced by later authors throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and beyond.

Some of the earliest examples of depictions of Gauls are from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC (Ferris 2013: Loc 372). These portrayals often show Gauls as imposing warriors and by a great majority are themed around warfare and conflict (Wells 1999: 104). One example of such a depiction can be found in Italy, on a frieze of a temple at Civita Alba, in the region of Umbria (Ferris 2013: Loc 372). Dated to c.160 BC, the depiction is a Celtomachy and relates the story of the Gallic attack on Delphi in 279 BC. The attack on the sacred site in Greece was a significant cultural event to both the Hellenic world and to Rome, who had developed connections with the cult centre (Gruen 1990: 9). So much was this the case that many thought of the event as divinely influenced, and it is this view that is represented on the relief. In it the Gallic warriors are shown defeated and fleeing from Delphi. However, rather than showing a victorious Hellenic force, the Gauls are instead shown fleeing from a collection of Greek deities. This depiction conveys two significant ideas about the Gauls. First, their expulsion from Delphi was, in Hellenic eyes a preordained events caused by the gods

themselves. Second, following on from the first, that the Gauls presented such a threat that it required the intervention of the Greek pantheon to defend the sacred site of Delphi (Ferris 2013: Loc 393). The image is directly concerned with warfare and its aftermath, so we again see the strong connection between Gauls and conflict. Beyond this, there is at least one Gallic warrior depicted carrying a large amphora, hinting at the Gallic love of plunder and those items taken from the site of Delphi (Ferris 2013: Loc 380). In addition to this the frieze, as has been mentioned is dated to 160 BC. This places it soon after the expulsion of Gallic communities from the Italian peninsula, and the end of near constant conflict with those Gallic communities. The inference one could draw from this is clear. Much like the Gallic attack on Delphi, the inhabitants of Roman Italy may have felt the expulsion and victory over the Gallic tribes in northern Italy was a divinely influenced outcome (Ferris 2013: Loc 393).

By the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the contact between Gallic tribes and Rome had been typified by an extended period of near ceaseless conflict. The fighting between 400 BC and the end of the Second Punic War included the migration of a number of Gallic tribes into northern Italy and the Po valley, the taking and sack of Rome by Gallic forces and the long series of campaigns undertaken by Rome to push them out of Italy and beyond the Alps. There are in any study of ancient history those works that while clearly important to the subject at hand, are either lost or so fragmentary as to prevent close investigation of any significant degree. Both Cato the Elder's *Origines* and the work of Posidonius fall into the latter category. In the *Origines*, Cato the Elder wrote on the origins surrounding the communities of Italy. We know he began the first of his seven books with the deeds of the kings of Rome, going on to discuss the rest of Italy including the Gallic tribes to the north (Sciarrino 2004: 324). Writing in the first half of the second century BC, Cato would have presented a vision of the Gallic *ethnos* just after their expulsion from northern Italy, and from the perspective of a member of the senatorial class who had prosecuted that conflict. It is therefore likely his work would have contained a similar depiction of the Gauls as that of Polybius who we know had access to Cato's work (Dench 2005: 51).

Polybius offers us our first significant and intact description of the Gallic tribes from the perception of a Greek author who had been heavily influenced by Roman culture and society (Walbank 2002: 245). His work the *Histories* was written in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. It offers the reader an opportunity to consider not only a Greek view of the Gauls after their plundering of Delphi and settlement in Asia Minor, but also possible inferences of the Roman view of those Gallic tribes which had only some 50 or so years before been

expelled from northern Italy. The purpose of Polybius' work was to record for his Greek audience the manner by which the Roman state became the pre-eminent power in the Mediterranean (Polyb. 1.1.5). It is not concerned directly with ethnographic material, and in consequence has some significant issues that must be addressed before we look at the version of Gallic ethnic identity Polybius presented. Polybius was very clear in his reasoning for discussing the Gallic tribes of Italy, simply to enable his readers to understand the decisions of Hannibal during the Second Punic War (Polyb. 3.34.2). Therefore, his purpose in depicting the Gauls was not because of an interest in their culture but rather their influence on Hannibal's military acts in Italy. After this point, the Gauls are mentioned only in cases in which they interacted with Hellenic cultures. It is clear from this approach that Gallic communities were not of an ethnographic interest. In spite of this, Polybius' work provides a brief ethnographic overview of the Gallic tribes, although it was shaped more by Polybius' narrative than by a genuine interest in the Gallic *ethnos*.

In his own words Polybius was keen for historians to pursue first hand evidence, something he makes clear in his comments on the inaccuracy of Timaeus (Polyb. 12.4c). His extensive experience as both a commander and politician (Mouritsen 2001: 6) offered him specific experience in many of the subjects he wrote about. In particular for this study, it is possible he served alongside the Romans during the Galatian War of 189BC (Paton 1967: vii), the events of which he records in Book 21 of his work, thereby offering him some first-hand experience of Gallic peoples. Of other sources we know he used, there is little information, the only references to other writers work is in reference to the poor quality of it. References of this type include Fabius Pictor (Polyb. 1.14.1), Phylardeus (Polyb. 2.56.1), Philinus (Polyb. 3.23.1) and both Chaereas and Sosylus (Polyb. 3.20). Fabius Pictor in particular would have been a source of information on Gallic tribes as he wrote a History of Rome ending at the Second Punic War (Eckstein 2012: 206). Clearly, Polybius was read widely and with a critical eye for accuracy of information.

The first mention of the Gauls made by Polybius is in relation to the sack of Rome in 390 BC (Polyb. 1.6.2-3). It could be argued that Polybius here offered the reader a consideration of Gallic ethnicity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, but this is not the case. What is meant by this is that one cannot infer from Polybius' account of the sack of Rome, the view of Gallic ethnicity at the time of the attack. Instead, what Polybius offers is an indication of how such past events had influenced the construction of a Gallic ethnic identity in his own time. As discussed in the previous chapter, ethnic identities are subjective and highly changeable, and

therefore evidence from textual sources is often greatly influenced by events occurring around the time of their writing, rather than the historic events that they may refer to. Polybius then gives us a complex image of a mid-second century Greek view of Gallic actions stretching from the sack of Rome to Polybius' present.

Unlike what other Greek authors had written, such as Herodotus and Thucydides, Polybius was writing after there had been significant contact between Gallic tribes and Hellenic communities (Mitchell 2003: 280-284). In particular, the invasion of Gallic tribes into Macedon and Greece during the third century BC resulted in their settling in central Anatolia in an area that became known as Galatia. It is in this setting of declining Hellenic states and the ascendant Roman state that the Gauls are presented to the reader. All of these factors influenced how the Gauls were depicted in the work, as the primary way in which Polybius and much of his audience either had experienced or learnt of the Gallic people had been through direct conflict.

The Gauls do not appear that often in the text; however, they do occur intermittently throughout. As stated above, the first mention is in the explanation of the starting date for the work, "...the Gauls after taking Rome itself by assault occupied the whole city except the Capitol" (Polyb. 1.6.2; 2.18.1). The Gauls are framed as an opponent to the Roman state from the beginning of the text. In the following lines however, they are also shown to be amenable and reasonable. As Polybius notes that it was via a treaty that the Gauls were convinced to leave Rome (390 BC), though it should be noted that Polybius also refers to the invasion of Gallic land as another reason the Gauls came to terms (1.6.2). In the rest of Book 1 the Gauls are labelled invaders (1.6.5), conquered foes (1.6.6), and as mercenaries (1.17.4). In each of these cases there is no differentiation made between different tribal groups within the Gallic *ethnos*. These initial comments built the *metus Gallicus* image of the Gauls for Polybius' audience; they were referred to in the context of conflict and invasion. The Gauls were so frequently linked to conflict that Polybius made the struggle against them and the Samnites as the reason for Roman mastery (1.6.7).

In the opening sections of the text, Polybius linked warfare to the Gallic *ethnos* and reinforced this theme later in his text. However, while Polybius gave the Gauls a militaristic trait he still referred to them being unable to cope with the hardships of marching, due to them being accompanied by their wives and children (Polyb. 5.78). This reference, with its specific inclusion of wives and children, appears to comment on the capacity of the tribes to

migrate from one region to another. Polybius also comments that the Gauls of Asia were granted autonomy as long as they remained within their own frontiers (Polyb. 31.2). This indicates that the Gallic tribes were seen as constantly on the move, which is why the caveat on the agreement was for them to remain in their own land.

Book 2 contains the majority of information regarding the Gallic tribes. It has eight separate references to actual or threatened Gallic invasions (Polyb. 2.13.7; 2.17.3; 2.18.6-9; 2.19.1; 2.19.5-7; 2.20.1-5; 2.23.6; 2.25.1). These references occur throughout the section that deals with the subsequent Gallic tribal invasions after the sack of Rome in 390BC (Polyb. 2.17-35). The resulting conflicts are described by Polybius (2.35) as "the war against the Celts" and occurred between 390- 222BC. Polybius (2.35.2) goes so far as to claim that this war was "second to no war in history" for the numbers of soldiers and the desperation it elicited. For Polybius, warfare was the hallmark of the relationship between Gauls and Romans. The aggressive nature of the Gauls dominates the discussion as it suited the narrative that Polybius wished to convey, which was the rise of Rome and her military success (Walbank 2002: 278).

So much did it suit Polybius' narrative that even when he discussed the customs of the Gauls, he referred back to their warlike nature. There are a significant number of cultural practices assigned to the Gauls in this very small section of text, although Polybius offers no moral viewpoint of these practices. The casual nature by which this information was given to the reader makes it clear that these ideas were not considered unduly distasteful of Polybius' day. Polybius had already established a clear link between the Gauls and warfare, and his audience at the time of writing would have already had this association in mind due to the prolonged Roman campaign to expel the Gallic tribes from northern Italy. All the cultural traits of the Gallic tribes that Polybius lists are linked directly to their aggressive nature or propensity for warfare. For instance, the reason that they lived in un-walled villages and had as their possessions only gold and cattle was because this allowed them to relocate where ever they chose (Polyb. 2.17.11), suggesting a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Also noted is that by sleeping on beds of leaves and eating only meat they were only occupied with warfare (Polyb. 2.17.10) as this meant that they were not concerned with other things such as luxury or agriculture.

These two characteristics, the semi-nomadic nature with the possibility of large scale migrations, and an inclination for warfare, are given greater consideration in the text (Polyb.

2.17.10); as it was these factors that caused the Gallic tribes to come into contact with the Roman state. The rest of his text is a history of the conflict between the Romans and the Italian Gauls, culminating in the Roman expulsion of the tribes from northern Italy and across the Alps. Other passages that describe the Gallic people refer to their actions in Greece and Asia Minor. Of the later references to the Gauls, Polybius noted that they plundered the cities on the Hellespont with a great deal of violence and performed “acts of hostility” (Polyb. 5.111.1-3), again reinforcing the link between warfare and the Gallic people. Polybius then did not simply create a negative caricature of the Gauls in direct contrast to the Hellenic communities but instead associated them with particular traits that had directly influenced their role in the history Polybius was recording

We do find however, some additional remarks regarding the Gallic tribes that do not relate to warfare in Polybius. He devoted a section (Polyb. 2.17) of his text to describing the geographical layout of the Gallic tribes of northern Italy. As we saw in Chapter 2 (section 2.2), geography was part of the ethnographic tradition in ancient literature, and it is for this reason that Polybius included this passage. However, there is no generalisation of the tribes and their characteristics based on their geographical location and climate. Instead, there is clear separation between each tribe with several different names included in the text, such as Laevi, Lebecii, Insubres, Cenomani, Anares and the Boii (Polyb. 2.17.4-7). The author does not generalise the tribes under the label of Gauls or Celts at all times, and therefore was not ignorant of their separate tribal identities. The fact that Polybius was writing so long after the period that he described indicates that there was still knowledge of these individual tribes sometime after their expulsion from Italy. Indeed, it is likely that Polybius had access to histories of Rome such as those of Cato the Elder (Baronowski 1995:25) and which clearly contained accounts of these tribes.

While most of the references relating Gallic practices outside of warfare reinforce the aggressive nature of the Gauls, there are instances where Polybius gave commentaries on particular Gallic individuals, which developed a more complex picture of the Gauls and indeed acknowledged some of their positive attributes. For instance, he described Ortiagon, whom he names as one of the Galatian princes, as a man of generosity, manners and tact (Polyb. 22.21). Particular note is also made of his most important characteristic which, as with all Gauls in the work, was his courage and skill in war. This part of the text is unfortunately heavily fragmented, so there is little else said about Ortiagon and his goal of subjugating the whole of Galatia, though we do have the story of his wife Chiomara and her revenge against a

Roman soldier for his poor treatment of her (Polyb. 31.38.1-5). What can be said of this reference is the link Polybius offers between the princes' traits and that some of these were gained naturally. This suggests that Polybius was referencing the concept of ethnic traits passing from one generation to the next, which displays the use of shared ancestry in the construction of ethnicity as we discussed in the previous chapter (section 2.3). Cauarus, King of the Gauls in Thrace, is described as a "...truly royal and high minded" individual, though interestingly he is noted as having been corrupted by a flatterer named Sostratus of Chalcedon (Polyb. 8.24). Here is a hint of cultural corruption by a Greek source upon a Gallic king. As noted in the previous chapter, such influence was considered a degenerative effect and suggested that eastern influences negatively affected the characteristics of the Gallic king (section 2.2).

Finally, we can consider the work of Posidonius, though it is now only available through quotations in the works of Athenaeus, Strabo and Diodorus (Tierney 2007:19). Posidonius was a gifted polymath showing a deep interest in ethnography (Edelstein & Kidd 1972: 2.8-10). His account of the Gallic people, written sometime early in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, perhaps in c.80 BC, came from first-hand evidence (Athen. 4.23-25), though it has been suggested by Nash (1976:120) that there is no indication that he travelled into interior Gaul but instead formed his account from travels in southern Gaul. Of the actual content of his work, we know that Posidonius' Gallic ethnography formed Book 23 of his history (Tierney 2007: 20) but it from Athenaeus that we learn of the Gallic custom of fights during feasts and the offering of the best portions of meat to the noblest warrior (Athen. 4. 23-25, 40) and Posidonius' work was a major influence on Diodorus who, as we will discussed, included the customs just mentioned in his own work. Posidonius' work influenced not only Diodorus and Strabo after him but also Caesar, who, as highly educated as he was (Torigian 1998: 45), no doubt consulted the available work on the Gallic people. Even though the work may be lost, the ethnic identity of Posidonius' Gauls directly influenced these later writers to the point that he was directly quoted by them. We can therefore consider the fact that his work, while it may have contained greater detail than Diodorus and others, was similar in its depiction of the Gallic people. Therefore, from his influence on the writing of both Diodorus and Strabo, Posidonius formed a core part of the discourse around Gallic ethnicity for many later authors (Gardner 1983: 185).

In conclusion, the discourse on Gallic ethnicity from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC is dominated by Polybius, in part due to the extent of its survival and the lost works such as those of

Posidonius and Cato the Elder. Polybius presented a Gallic ethnic identity, which was typified by the martial prowess and the desire of the Gallic people for warfare. The ethnic identity of the Gauls in the text was limited to shared customs, with no inclusion of other facets of ethnic construction such as shared ancestry or religion, which we discussed in the previous chapter. Of the cultural information Polybius provided, each instance was used to highlight the potential for warfare, a key trait of the Gallic people in his eyes. Gruen (2001: 142) suggests that such an image may have been constructed as a warning for Polybius' Roman audience; this is likely as there is a sense of begrudging respect for the threat posed by the Gauls in Polybius' description, no doubt a reflection of the danger the Gallic tribes had already posed in the preceding two hundred years. The perception of the Gauls as warlike and semi-nomadic was in part due to the purpose within the narrative that they served. Polybius also made specific allusion to the nature of Gallic migration and the impact events had on the wider world. One must consider how, from the previous chapter, the association between ethnicity and territory translated over to the Gallic identity. It could be suggested that such an inconsistent connect to the land may have presented the Gauls as listless agents of chaos to a Roman audience. At the very least, there seems to be some similarity between their lack of connection to the land and their chaotic temperament a theme we will find Caesar developed further in the late Republican period. They are only referred to when they came into contact with either Roman or Hellenic communities. It is this fact that caused the ethnic identity Polybius constructed of the Gauls to favour matters of warfare and migration, both traits that brought them into contact with other cultures which were more central to Polybius' work.

The Gallic custom of living in un-walled villages and desiring no possessions other than gold and cattle were explained as the result of their desire for warfare and their semi-nomadic lifestyle. That this image of the Gauls is so clearly stated in the text and then emphasised throughout, is suggestive of the fact that these were common views of the Hellenic world at the time. That these were such long lasting perceptions can be seen in the way they reoccur in later classical writers. In the next section, we will consider the work of the late Republic, and how the Gallic ethnicity of Polybius was adapted over time and also whether the central themes of Polybius' Gallic identity, warfare and semi-nomadism, were repeated or adapted in later Roman ethnographic material. Of Cato the Elder and Posidonius, we can note that their uses by later sources such as Diodorus and Strabo is clear evidence of a continual discourse existing within Greek and Roman literature regarding Gallic ethnicity.

### 3.1.2: The Late Republican Period (60-30 BC)

The changes in the political relationship between the Gallic tribes and the Roman tribes during the late Republican period were significant. Since the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the establishment of the province of Gallia Narbonensis around 121 BC, contact between the two groups had intensified both economically and militarily. With the occupation of previously Gallic territory beyond the Alps, the Roman state was now keenly interested with the stability of their frontier with the Gallic tribes of central Gaul. As we will see when we consider Caesar, the protection of not only Gallia Narbonensis but the wider stability of the region became ample reason for further Roman intervention. While slightly outside of the time period for this section, Cicero's speech *Pro Fonteio* offers an insight into the discourse around Gallic ethnicity in the years immediately before the conquest of Gaul. In this speech, Cicero defended Marcus Fonteius in 69 BC, the governor of Gallia Narbonensis. Cicero sought to discredit the Gallic witnesses for the prosecution. In doing so, he referred the Gauls as enemies of Rome (*Pro Font.*32), their long and bitter war with the Roman people (*Pro Font.*12) and the Gallic attacks on Delphi and the Capitol in Rome (*Pro Font.*30). In addition, Cicero (*Pro Font.* 27) made clear remarks concerning the lesser status of Gauls in comparison to Romans: "...is any of the most honourable native of Gaul to be set on the same level with even the meanest citizen of Rome, let alone with the highest men of our commonwealth?" Cicero then went on to suggest that the Gallic people differ in habits and character from all other people, and that they do not fear the gods or respect oaths (*Pro Font.*30). Lastly, Cicero leveraged the fears of attacks from the northern tribes, arguing that were the Gauls to see a weak state, as shown by the prosecution of his client of course, it would have resulted in them rising up and invading Roman territory (*Pro Font.*36). Cicero and his views on Gauls, were examples of the Roman act of presenting the Gallic people as the 'other' or natural enemy of Rome (Gruen 2010: 471).

One cannot argue that Cicero here presents a balanced view of the Gallic view without condemnation of their character, for that was his intended purpose. He aimed in this section of his speech to defend his client not to present an informed ethnographic consideration of the Gallic people. The Gallic people are presented as caricatures of themselves for the purpose of Cicero's rhetoric (Gruen 2010: 481). The references to Gallic impiety and flawed character are, as we shall see, only mentioned here by Cicero suggesting that this was an attempt on his part to discredit them. In fact, for Cicero, Gallic impiety seems to have been an idea deployed just for this speech, for he later refers to the Gallic druid

Divitiacus as an individual with knowledge of the science of nature and a skill at augury (Cicero *De Div.*1.90). However, the fears of Gallic aggression and the threat of an invasion of the northern tribes mentioned must have been a present feature of the collective Roman psyche to allow Cicero to manipulate it to his favour in the defence of Fonteius. Such fears of attack and the aggressive nature of the Gauls were highlighted by the likes of Polybius and appear to have remained a significant part of the etic ethnic identity ascribed to the Gallic tribes.

When looking at the Roman concept of Gallic ethnicity during the late Republic the first eight books of the *Commentarii*, which deal with Caesar's conquest of Gaul, offer us an unprecedented first-hand account of several years' worth of evidence. Written across a number of years (58 to 51 BC) the *Commentarii* were not conceived together, instead they were most likely composed individually as records of Caesars' actions and achievements during his campaign in Gaul. Wiseman (1998: 4; Dunham 2007: 163) notes that the reason for this segmented commentary was Caesars' desire to remain within the public eye back in Rome during his time away in Gaul. Even beyond this Wiseman (1998: 3) argues that due to the constant presentation of the plebeian bravery of his men contrasted with the cowardice of his more noble officers, the works were written with the purpose of being read aloud to the people of Rome, rather than as private communication with the Senate. With this in mind and the fact that Caesar was an orator and rhetorician of some significant skill (Torigian 1998: 45), one should not ignore the extent Caesar went to in the text to present the Gallic ethnic identity in extreme detail when compared to those authors who came before him. The first hand and wide-ranging nature of the evidence gives a far more detailed view of the Gallic people than previous authors had been capable of, and importantly for our discussion the *Commentarii* show a Roman author attempting to contextualise previously unrecorded Gallic practices (Dobesch 2007: 113). This is not to say that the manner by which Caesar was able to collect this information meant his work was accurate, but both accurate and inaccurate insights are equally important to our discussion.

As seen previously in Polybius' work, contemporary historical events affected the manner in which ancient authors constructed Gallic ethnicity. Both authors referred to the Gauls as those who sacked and captured Rome, and to which Diodorus also included their plundering of Delphi. For Caesar too, there is an instance that points to recent events informing his view of a Gallic ethnic identity. When the Helvetian delegation, formed of tribal nobles, requested to cross through Roman lands on their way to regions west of the

Rhone they were refused. His decision, Caesar claimed, was in part based on the slaying of Lucius Cassius and the forcing of his army to pass under the yoke after its defeat in 107 BC (Caes. *BG.1.7*). This event, occurring seven years before Caesar was born, clearly had joined the cultural memory of the Roman people, so much so that it could be used some 60 years later by Caesar as a justification for his actions. Therefore, while Caesar was able to gain first-hand evidence of Gallic culture and traits, he was influenced by pre-existing Gallic stereotypes that had been formed over 300 years of Romano-Gallic interaction. What does this mean for our reading of his work? It could be expected that we would therefore find a predisposition towards negative characteristics of Gauls. However, this is not the case. Instead, we find an account that does not mindlessly parrot clichés. This suggests that while Caesars' view was not without historical influence it was open to the realities of what faced him, rather than the creations of previous authors.

As part of an ethnographic digression in Book 6, Caesar detailed several facets of Gallic culture and social structure. The latter he splits it into three principle groups; two are groups of "definite account and dignity", while the third was the common folk (Caes. *BG.6.13.1*). He refers to this lower class existing as something akin to slaves, constricted as they were by debt, tribute or the actions of more influential members of the tribe. The first two groups, which stood above the common folk, he designated as druids and knights (Caes. *BG.6.13*). It is interesting to note how Caesar uses Roman concepts such as knights (*equites*) in relation to the social structure of Gallic tribes. We can suppose that his use of *equites* in the text was indicative of the role that he saw this specific group perform in Gallic political and military life. It is also further evidence of the idea of understanding foreign groups through one's own culture as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1).

Much like his contemporary Diodorus (5.31.2), Caesar found particular interest in the actions of the druids. He dedicated two chapters of Book 6 to their responsibilities. A brief overview of these included officiating both public and private sacrifices, the interpretation of divinations and rituals and the meting out of justice in both public and private disputes (Caes. *BG.6.13-14*). The last of these responsibilities also allowed them the right to ban from sacrifices those who did not tolerate their rulings. These individuals were then shunned from the community. Caesar also noted that druids were spared from warfare and from the payment of taxes (Caes. *BG.6.14*). It is clear that a group such as the druids, which operated on a diplomatic level between the many tribes of Gaul, with significant authority over social and judicial matters, was of significant interest to Caesar. Such understanding of the political

structures of the tribes must have been invaluable to Caesar, when attempting to navigate the complex web of tribal relationships. It is surprising that there is no sense of opposition or dislike of the druids in this description. Rather Caesar complimented them on their practice of committing to memory their training rather than committing it to the page (Caes. *BG.6.14*). This view however did not last long after the conquest as the Roman state suppressed Druids and their cult, labelling them practitioners of superstition (Beard, North & Price 2009: 341).

In their capacity as officiators of sacrifice, the druids were said to be present on the battlefield to oversee the sacrificing of enemies, a practice that Caesar believed was derived from the devotion the Gauls had for ritual and religious observances (Caes. *BG.6.16*). He commented here that Gauls believed that for an individual's life another must be taken or their gods would not be appeased and that this was the practice in both public and private matters. This is the same picture we see in Diodorus writing later. Both authors made significant note of the religious nature of Gallic life and their practice of sacrificing men to their gods. Both also mentioned the practice of using criminals for such acts, and when no such individuals were available then innocents were offered up instead (Caes. *BG.6.16*; Diod. 5.31.3). We do not find a condemnation of this practice, but its inclusion suggests some conformity with the ethnographic tradition of including exotic or unusual native practices in one's narrative. In the wider Roman world, human sacrifice was considered a facet of magic, and by the imperial period, the act was heavily prohibited with Roman authorities having sought to eradicate the practice. By the mid-1st century AD the presentation of Gallic human sacrifice presented by Caesar was identified as magical art and viewed as barbaric (Beard, North & Price 2009: 81).

Of the deities, Caesar mentioned that the Gauls worshipped, it was Mercury over all others. They also worshipped "Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Minerva" (Caes. *BG.6.17*). As with the use of *equites*, there was an equating of Roman deities with Gallic gods (Revell 2009: 113; Webster 1995: 153). It was suggested in Chapter 2 (section 2.4) that this was not unusual. Greek and Roman authors undertook a similar process when presented with Egyptian deities (Beard, North & Price 2009: 297). However, in that case they first mentioned the foreign gods and then equated them with their own (Herod. *Hist.2.43*). Here Caesar does not offer Gallic names for these gods at all. This may be a reflection of his understanding of his audience. The practice of interpreting Gallic and Germanic gods, customs and practices in terms of Roman or Greek concepts was an important step in the formation of the ethnic identity of the northern tribes. Ideas such as deities were

manipulated, stretched or possibly even created to explain native practices or beliefs. Often as we have seen with religious practice, the odd or exotic was focused on while more digestible practices were directly amalgamated with Roman customs or beliefs.

An example of the process discussed above is Mercury, who is said to be revered by the Gauls as the "inventor of all arts, the guide for every road and journey, and they deem him to have the greatest influence for all money making and traffic" (Caes. *BG.6.17*). The use of the Roman Mercury figure here suggests that Caesar equated native gods to their Roman equivalents. It is also interesting that Caesar gave the god who had greatest influence over all, one associated with money making, the highest place in the Gallic pantheon. There is a slight allusion here of the love of gold, which we have already seen in Polybius, but it is only included here as an implication of the Gallic worship of Mercury and Caesar makes no clear mention of this trait of Gallic character. Caesar also commented on the Gallic nature of the previously mentioned gods, each of which were given the same responsibilities as their Roman counterparts. In particular, they dedicated the spoils of war, both sacrifices and other materials, to Mars. Caesar stated that so pious were the Gauls that removal of these offerings happened rarely and that "...the most grievous punishment" was set aside for such an act (Caes. *BG.6.17*), proof that the Gallic *ethnos* possessed a developed sense of piety.

We have seen religion was a key part of the Gallic ethnicity in the Roman viewpoint, and the druids were the arbiters of its practice. In addition to this role, Caesar noted that they held the records of their peoples' history, including their common descent from the god Dis (Caes. *BG.6.18.1*). It is here where Caesar pointed out a distinction between Roman and Gallic practice, stating that it was because of their descent from Dis that the Gauls record time by the number of nights that had past rather than the number of days. The highlighting of this difference seems significant as it sits in amongst a number of examples displaying the similarity between Gallic and Roman culture. He further separated the Gauls by noting that "...the main difference between them and the rest of mankind is that they do not allow their own sons to approach them in public until they have grown to an age when they can bear the burden of military service" (Caes. *BG.6.18*). After explaining the similar nature of Gallic social structure, religious observance and pantheon, Caesar purposely separated the Gauls from first the Romans and then other groups such as the Germanic tribes. What was his purpose for this sudden shift? This section is an example of identifying a group in terms of their differences. As stated in the last chapter the concept of "othering" has fundamental issues with how it suggests communities identify one another. It presumes that communities

identify each other through differing practices or traits, and that these presentations are most often manifest themselves as negative generalisation within a communities discourse. While the argument that people use differing practices or characteristics to identify other groups is correct, it should not be considered a predisposition to negative depictions. Here Caesar was contextualising the Gauls as a distinct group from not only other tribal groups such as the Germans, but also the Roman, whom he had already shown to hold many similarities with the Gauls.

In the case of the second elite sector of Gallic society, the *equites*, Caesar is less forthcoming. This is most likely due to this group being considered similar to the *equites* of Roman society; therefore, Caesar and his audience could easily comprehend their purpose in Gallic society. Caesar noted that in times of war all members of this class were present and "...according to the importance of each of them in birth and resources, so is the number of retainers and dependents that he has about him" (Caes. *BG.6.15*). This description of Gallic society seems to mirror in its implied use of economic and social contracts the system of patronage found in Roman society. Again, we see an author contextualising the practices of another group in terms of those of his own culture. This is not to say that Caesar's description is inaccurate, but that the manner in which he articulates such traditions was within the cultural comprehension of himself and his audience (Rawlings 1998: 178). The responsibilities of the *equites* in Gallic society were not expanded upon further, though there are mentions of armed conventions (Caes. *BG.5.56*) formed before the declaring of war and of Gallic senates (Caes. *BG.7.33*). The inclusion of a senate in Gallic society is again a further example of Caesar attempting to articulate the social institutions he was confronted with. The use of such a term would have been clear to his audience and would have informed their view of Gallic ethnic identity, even though it may have been in some ways a form of cultural mistranslation.

In the discussion, Caesar offered his audience on the nature of Gallic culture and social structure he makes repeated references to characteristic traits of the Gallic nation. Some of these insights are in relation to specific Gallic tribes. For example, in Book 7 Caesar referred to the "treachery of the Gauls" (Caes. *BG.7.17*). Taken out of context, this reference seems to imply a generalisation of the Gallic people. However, within the text Caesar was referring to those Gauls who had been participants in the slaughter at Cenabum. The killing of Roman citizens there was perpetrated by the "Carnutes, under the leadership of two desperate men, Cotuatus and Conconnetodumnus" (Caes. *BG.7.3*). In this sense, the claim of

Gallic treachery is specific to the actions of the Carnutes. There are other examples of generalisations such as when Caesar comments that while “the temper of the Gaul is quick eager and ready to undertake a war; they lack the determination and strength of character needed to carry on when things go against them” (Caes. *BG.3.19.6*). Not only does this quote refer to the Gallic *ethnos* in general, but it also echoes Polybius who had already commented on the fragile nature of Gallic stamina (Polyb. 2.28.11; 2.33.2-3; 2.35.6).

As with the example given above, Caesar included some stereotypes that seem to have been supported by his experiences. The repetition of commonly associated traits is seen again, Caesar referred to the movements of the Gauls as being encouraged by "sheer fickleness" and them being "set upon a change of rule" (Caes. *BG.2.1.3*). Again, we saw in Polybius (2.17.11) how the Gauls were closely associated with a nomadic nature and a readiness for change. Fickleness is also here linked to the Gallic ethnic identity, a trait that Diodorus (5.31.1) associated with their use of language. Numerous references to the Gallic propensity for reckless or foolish actions occur throughout Caesar's text (*BG.7.42*; 7.77). In addition to Gallic impetuosity, Caesar made several references to the untrustworthy nature of Gauls. He referred to tribes who "...had sought for peace by guile and treachery" (Caes. *BG.4.13.1*) and to the "treachery of the Aedui" (Caes. *BG.7.54.2*). In Caesar's estimation, one of the motivators for action was the Gallic seduction by the rewards of plunder (Caes. *BG.7.42-43*). One can also find reference to the Gallic predisposition for conflict. Caesar writes that all Gallic men were expected to attend armed conventions, which marked the beginning of conflicts, and that those who arrived last were killed as punishment (Caes. *BG.5.56*). Such an image of the Gauls is reminiscent of Polybius' Gauls around a hundred years earlier.

While, as demonstrated above, there are examples of traits that Caesar clearly regarded as negative; there are also examples of characteristics for which he shows admiration. The Gauls are described as a people "possessed of a remarkable ingenuity" (Caes. *BG.7.22*). This Gallic trait is described as a match for the courage of the Roman troops sent against them. The same is said of the Gallic skill in the construction of fortifications (Caes. *BG.5.52*; 7.23), and Caesar acknowledged that it was not due to a lack of courage that the Romans defeated the Gauls, but rather that the Gallic tribes lacked the knowledge of siege operations (Caes. *BG.7.29*). Caesar admired the practices of the Nervii who refused the importation of wine or luxury, for they believed it would enfeeble them and reduce the stature of their courage (Caes. *BG.2.15.3-5*; 2.27.5). Such practices as this were used in the text to

emphasise the distance from the Roman world these tribes lived (Schadee 2008: 168). In the case of the Aedui, Caesar noted that it was only by their continued friendship with Rome that his operations in Gaul had been possible (Caes. *BG.7.37*). The image Caesar offers of Gallic ethnicity is by no means a simple one, and as we shall now see demonstrated in the numerous examples of Caesar recording the virtues of the Gallic people.

We have already discussed the social structure and character traits of the Gauls in Caesar's work, but now we will consider the Roman traits that Caesar ascribed to the Gallic people. There are a significant number of examples of Caesar associating the Gallic people with the Roman concepts of *libertas* and *virtus*. These two ideals were considered the highest of Roman principles (Arena 2013: 30), and it seems to have been a reflection of Caesar's first-hand experience with the Gauls that he used the terms to describe their character. As we have already discussed, Polybius touched upon the Gallic desire for autonomy in his recording of the Gallic settling of Asia Minor (Polyb. 31.2) but Caesar takes this a step further. He included the concept of *libertas* as the prime motivator for Gallic action against Rome. So key was this to Caesar's image of the Gauls that it is included early on in the text, "...for they did not doubt that, if the Romans overcame the Helvetii, they meant to deprive the Aedui of liberty, in common with the rest of Gaul" (Caes. *BG.1.17.4*).

On several occasions, Caesar placed the concept of Gallic liberty into the mouths of significant Gallic leaders. Ambiorix spoke of the desire of Gauls to recover their "common freedom", a desire that "it would not have been easy for Gauls to refuse Gauls" in the matter of (Caes. *BG.5.27.6*). Dumnorix seeking to defend himself rallied his followers by "crying repeatedly that he was a free man and of a free state." This was repeated again by Convictolitavis the Aeduan who, when speaking to his compatriots, referred to the fact that they were born to a common freedom (Caes. *BG.7.37.4*). Likewise Vercingetorix, when collecting his forces, gathered his men by urging them to act for "the sake of the general liberty" (Caes. *BG.7.4*). One can discuss the accuracy with which Caesar recorded these speeches, but it is not the salient point for our discussion. Caesar projected the ethnic qualities he perceived within the Gallic people into the mouths of their chiefs, in this case Vercingetorix and a desire for liberty, for the purpose of reinforcing the image he presented of their culture (Barlow 1998: 153). Their inclusion show us that the ethnic identity of the Gaul had for Caesar, and for his audience, evolved past the simple caricatures of Polybius into something far more complex and possibly dangerous. There is a sense that Caesar has great admiration for the desire of *libertas* in the Gallic psyche. However, there is also a hint

of trepidation. The reference to *libertas*, as these do, relate to the ease with which the Gauls are drawn into conflict on its behalf. In fact, it seems Caesar considered it a foregone conclusion that all Gauls would oppose Roman authority (Caes. *BG.3.10.3*) because of this desire for liberty.

When speaking of the Veneti, Caesar referred to the ingrained nature of Gallic *libertas* as he noted, "...they urged the remaining states to choose rather than to abide in the liberty received from their ancestors than to endure Roman slavery" (Caes. *BG.3.8.4*). The language here is telling; Caesar has the Gauls depicted as fighting for liberty against the threat of slavery. There is a similarity here to the call for Ionian freedom from Persian rule in Herodotus (*Hist.5.49*). While it would be a step too far to claim that Caesar displayed the Gauls in a sympathetic light, especially with the aforementioned displays of treachery and fickleness, Caesar's language here suggests the strong concepts of liberty and defence against slavery. This blurs the image of Gallic aggression that had been present in the Roman comprehension of these peoples as seen in Polybius. Critognatus is recorded as warning against slavery stating: "Do not deprive them of your help! Do not be so foolish, reckless or feeble-minded that you ruin the whole of Gaul and bring it into perpetual slavery" (Caes. *BG.7.77.9*). Caesar then understood that on a deep level the conflict he was involved in was for his enemy one against "everlasting slavery" and that they would therefore act accordingly. So intractable was this ethnic trait that Caesar noted, "so strong was the unanimity of Gaul as a whole for the maintenance of their liberty and the recovery of their ancient renown in war that no benefits, no memory of friendship could influence them" (Caes. *BG.7.76*). It was then a fool's errand to attempt to gather Gallic allies for, at a fundamental level, they would always be drawn back to their desire of *libertas*. So strongly held was this that it is noted that Gauls would rather fall during battle than not recover their *libertas* (Caes. *BG.7.1.5-8*). Critognatus believed that resistance to Roman authority in particular was the "most glorious thing for the sake of liberty" (Caes. *BG.7.77*). That Caesar put this quote, and the others noted above, in the mouths of Gallic commanders is not by accident. In doing so, he displayed the common value that he perceived both Roman and Gaul held, though it should be noted that there is no clear evidence that any of the Gallic peoples held to such concepts of that of *libertas*.

For Rome, it was *virtus* that stood as the highest of ideal that one could aim for. That it appears in the *Commentarii*, some 31 times in relation to Gauls and 28 times for Romans (Gruen 2011c: 150), marks an interesting comparison between the two cultures. As the most

common use appearance of *virtus* is as bravery or courage in warfare, it is not surprising that it would be found throughout the *Commentarii*. The frequency with which it is used for Gallic actions is a deviation from previous depictions of the Gauls (Gruen 2011c: 150). Roman *virtus* is only mentioned on two occasions as superior to the Gauls. Caesar, in Book 3, commented that "the rest of the conflict was a question of *virtus*, in which our own troops easily had the advantage." He also offered a reason for this superiority, which was his presence on the battlefield, and the superior position the Romans held (Caes. *BG*.3.14.8). The second example is found in Book 7 where it is stated "...the matchless courage of our troops was met by all manner of contrivances on the part of the Gauls" (Caes. *BG*.7.22.1). Here, Roman *virtus* was superior but matched by the ingenuity of the Gallic people, hardly a clear-cut example of the superiority of the Roman spirit.

On the other hand, Caesar equated Gallic and Roman *virtus* on at least two occasions. This is significant as it shows that such claims of Gallic *virtus* were not made on a differing scale of those examples of Roman *virtus*. Caesar refers to that fact that "...the enemy were our equals in valour and in fighting zeal" (Caes. *BG*.5.34.2), while later he comments that "...both sides were stirred to courage by desire of praise and fear of disgrace" (Caes. *BG*.7.80). In the first quote the Gauls are shown to be the equals of the Roman forces, and this is the case in the second example. However, it also refers to the fact that both Roman and Gaul were motivated to acts of courage by the same factors, "the desire of praise and the fear of disgrace." The direct nature of the comparison here is significant; the Gauls are not presented as some distant people but rather as a people with similar motivations and desires. Here we see what has already been shown to be present in Caesars work, an understanding of Gallic actions through Roman norms. It is unlikely that Caesar could accurately claim to know the minds of the enemy combatants, but he attempts to understand their actions by assuming similar motivations as those of his own men. In the pursuit of *virtus* then, Roman and Gaul are alike. One could argue that the purpose of identifying the Gauls as pursuers of *virtus* was either a process of creating an enemy worthy of defeating or even depicting the Gallic tribes in a manner by which they could be accepted as members of the Roman Empire.

The accolade of *virtus* was not simply ascribed to the Gauls in general, but was on several occasions was given to specific tribes. The Helvetii, at the beginning of the work, are described as excelling all other Gauls in the sphere of valour and their deputies when speaking to Caesar, referred to the ancient valour of the Helvetii, which they had learnt from their ancestors to fight their battles with (Caes. *BG*.1.1; 1.13). Of the Belgae Caesar notes that

it was the Bellovaci who held the most dominant influence due to their courage and authority (Caes. *BG.2.4*). Caesar noted that the Nervii were "...fierce men they were of a great *virtus*, denouncing and accusing the rest of the Belgae for that they had surrendered to Rome and cast away the courage of their sires"(Caes. *BG.2.15*). This assessment is similar to the previous references to Gallic *libertas*, as it suggests that *virtus* was a received quality from their ancestors and thereby an example of the use of ancestry in the construction of the Gallic ethnicity. Therefore, the Gallic notion of *virtus* was for Caesar as fundamental to them as their desire for freedom, which as we have already seen was a significant part of the Gallic ethnic identity. This fact is best shown in a further reference to the bravery of the Nervii, Caesar displays a degree of admiration for their actions when stating that "...the enemy however even when their hope of safety was at an end displayed a prodigious courage" (Caes. *BG.2.27*). The importance of *virtus* to Caesar image of the Gauls can be summed up by its inclusion in the speech of Critognatus, who argues that the Gallic *virtus* was not just a desire to throw themselves in the face of death but to act with patience for the betterment of all Gauls (Caes. *BG.7.77.4-5*). Here Caesar displayed how many may have considered the Gauls to be an impulsive people; their courage could also be seen in their patience and willpower.

Diodorus Siculus' discussion of the Gauls showed a greater understanding of the tribes of northern Europe than the work of his predecessor Polybius. Much of this was the result of the increased interaction between Rome and Gaul caused by Caesar's conquest of Gaul at a time when Diodorus was writing. The return of soldiers and traders from the central Gaul would have meant there was greater opportunity for collecting information on these people, in addition to those individuals who lived in the province of Transalpine Gaul. As we shall see, Diodorus clearly made use of the increased availability of knowledge on the Gallic tribes (Diod. 1.4.2-4, 3.38.1, 17.52.6), as demonstrated by the greater detail he included in his work compared to earlier authors such as Polybius. Writing around the mid-first century BC (Oldfather 1933: 9), Diodorus was a Sicilian born Greek historian. His work the *Bibliotheca historica* consisted of around forty books, of which only a limited number have survived. We are fortunate that one of the surviving portions of his work is his description of the history and culture of the Gallic people found in Book 5. This book, along with his ethnographic work on peoples of the East, North Africa and Greece, forms the first half of the whole work. Book 5 contains noteworthy ethnographic material on the Gallic tribes, suggesting a significant interest in ethnography on the part of Diodorus (Gruen 2011c: 143). His purpose was to write a universal history up to his day (Oldfather 1933: 11). He claimed that he visited

many of the most significant regions (Diod. 1.4.1), yet there is little to suggest that he travelled anywhere other than Egypt (Diod. 1.22.2).

Diodorus' etic ethnic identity of the Gauls is influenced by contemporary events at the time he was writing, shown by the mention of the city of Alesia at the beginning of his brief study of the Gauls. The *oppidum* was the site of the final significant battle of Caesar's Gallic conquest. However, in terms of greater import, to the Gallic people, it was merely the capital of the Mandubii, a tribe allied with the much larger Aedui (Caes. *BG*.7.68). But for Diodorus the significance of Alesia was as the setting for the battle of Alesia in 52BC, the end of the revolt of Vercingetorix and the eventual Roman control of Gaul. It is unsurprising then that Alesia was chosen to be given a mythical founder such as Heracles by a Hellenic audience (Roymans 2009: 221). Diodorus writes that "Heracles visited Celtica and founded there the city of Alesia" and that his son Galates then "subdued a large part of the neighbouring territory and accomplished great feats in war" (Diod. 5.24.2-3). As one might immediately suppose this narrative falls into the category of myth, but its inclusion is telling of the context of Roman and Greek views in regards to Gauls at this time. The connection to Heracles brings the Gallic *ethnos* into the Hellenic view of the world. The Gallic tribes were thereby quantified and sorted, in relation Greek and Roman concepts of themselves. It is also the case that the figure chosen, Heracles, was an indicator of a view Diodorus attempted to construct. If the Gauls were descended from Heracles they would therefore be a formidable *ethnos*, as Heracles was a figure noted for his strength and courage (Orlin 2010: 33-5). This association presented an image of the Gauls that would have been seen as solidifying their image as aggressive and warlike within a mythic structure. The use of Heracles as a mythic founder was not unusual, before Diodorus, Herodotus had described the semi mythic figure Scythes as the son of Heracles and a half-woman half-viper, from which every Scythian king was descended (*Hist*.4.10). Herodotus (*Hist*.4.8) was very clear that this version of the Scythian ancestry was from Greek sources, and it is most likely the same practice that we see at work in Diodorus in his mythic ancestry for the Gauls (Belayche 2009: 167).

Diodorus identified some differences between Roman views on the Gauls and the Greek version. For example, he noted the fact that those individuals living around the city of Massalia and on the slopes of the Alps and Pyrenees were known as Celts while those living further north and as far as Scythia were Gauls (Diod. 32.1). This presents us with an interesting point. In his discussion of Western Europe Diodorus makes no mention of the Germans and in the above reference clearly explains that in his view the Gauls inhabit that

region of northern Europe. The separation between Celts inhabiting southern Gaul and the Gallic tribes living to the north may be a distinction based off the segmented conquest of the Gallic region. Groups living with the province of Transalpine Gaul had been under the influence of the Roman state for over half a century by the time Diodorus was writing. This may have resulted in significant differences in the perceptions of those living within the Roman state, as opposed to those living beyond its political and military borders. Though Diodorus does go on in the text to explain that the distinction between Celts and Gauls was not the view taken by the Romans who gives the name Gauls to all such people. Diodorus offers no reason for why only a few people considered the Celts and Gauls to be separate groups, though it appears from that the Roman view was significantly more common as he claims that the Greek view was "unknown to many" (Diod. 32.1). Previous to this Diodorus mentioned how Caesar had built a bridge over the Rhine and "...subdued the Gauls who lived beyond it"(Diod. 5.25.4). These references show that while Diodorus had some interest in the people of this region he either had not read or disagreed with Caesar's *Commentarii* and the distinction made between Gaul and German found therein (Caes. *BG*.6.11.1). It also lends weight to the argument that Diodorus wrote fully aware of Caesar's actions and that it influenced his picture of the Gallic people.

Diodorus' interest in understanding the people of the region is shown again when he discussed the nature of the tribal system. He commented that the region of Gaul is "...inhabited by many tribes of different tribes" (Diod. 5.25.1). Here we do not find any generalisations; Diodorus refers to the numerous tribes and the ranging size of such tribes stretching from the large, 200,000 men, to the smallest of 50,000. He also referred to the fact that some tribes held terms of kinship and friendship with the Roman people. To Diodorus' audience these tribes then had not necessarily been opponents. The final point made before Diodorus began a discussion of cultural practices was that of a geographical description of the major features of Gaul, which he seems later to define as the land north of the land surrounding city of Massalia (Diod. 5.32). That this description does not mention the influences of climate and geography on the Gallic people suggests that he did not believe that such things influenced ethnic characteristics. That such ideas had been popular in the ancient world (section 2.3), and yet are not present here implies that Diodorus had a considerable interest in ethnography yet did not follow all of its literary traditions.

We have seen how Diodorus included mythological figures in his description of Gallic origins, and it is this practice that was used again when it came to discussing the

physical description of the Gallic people. They are described as "...tall of body, with rippling muscles, and white of skin" (5.28.1). Diodorus also refers to their hair as being blond, both naturally and due to the use of lime-water, which "...means to increase the distinguishing colour which nature has given" (5.28.1-2). Their practice of pulling their hair to the back for the head is compared to the appearance of the "Satyrs and Pans" (Diod. 5.28.2). Diodorus' short discussion of the hairstyles of the Gauls shows the Greek and Roman fascination with the unusual. Once again, we see mythical references employed to understand this foreign group, with the comparison to satyrs. Diodorus here is not implying a mythical origin for this practice rather a similarity in look. However, it should also be noted that such a link with mythical creatures known for their drinking and lawlessness may also have inferred to Diodorus audience further links to similar customs displayed by the Gallic tribes.

The interest in the physical form of the Gauls and the presentation of their bodies can be seen in the Attalid Gauls (figure 1), which were a set of Hellenistic sculptures created to commemorate the defeat of Gallic tribes in Asia Minor (Ferris 2011: 187-188). The sculptures framed the Gauls in the context of warfare, specifically their defeat by the forces of Pergamon. The statue known as the dying Gaul is shown naked wearing a torque, referencing the Gallic tradition of entering combat with little or no clothing, as an expression of confidence or intimidation. His physical features are exaggerated in an attempt to suggest the power and vitality of the individual (Ferris 2011: 187/8). Beneath the figure lies his shield, of Gallic design and sword. The figure is a defeated combatant, created to display the humbled nature of the Gallic tribes. While these statues were originally placed on the acropolis in Pergamon, copies have been found in marble at a site on the Quirinal in Rome thought to be that of Caesar's estate (Ferris 2013: Loc 574) suggesting that such imagery still had relevance in the discourse surrounding Gallic identity in the late Republic. We can observe two things from this; first, these representations of Gauls were still relevant to the Roman perception of the northern tribes some hundred years after their creation. Second, that the copies were most likely commissioned as commemorations of Caesar's victories in Gaul. The connection to combat is clear from the statues and the reasons for their creation.

If we return to Diodorus, there are several ways in which the Gauls are depicted as wild and uncivilised. One of the ways is the description of Gallic women who are said to match in stature and courage their men, and lust after their embrace in an "outlandish fashion" (Diod. 5.32.2-7). The dangerous nature of Gallic women is also found in Livy (38.24.2). Livy recounts the tale of Chiomara, the wife of Orgiaigon a Gallic king, who killed



Figure 1 Attalid Dying Gaul. (Antmoose, 2013)

the soldier who had captured her. The wild nature shown in their women is a characteristic also attributed to their speech. Diodorus speaks of the terrifying aspect that all Gauls possessed, and that their voices are "deep and altogether harsh." As we saw in Polybius' writing, the author hints here at the aggressive nature of the Gauls. He continues that they would meet together to discuss dark things, using only a few words or riddles and speaking one word yet meaning another (Diod. 5.31.1). This description presents a mysterious and dangerous image of a secretive group. The implication of Diodorus' writing is that the Gauls presented a threat to the Roman world through their natural proclivity towards secrecy and manipulation. The fickle nature of Gallic speech is reinforced with reference to the Gallic trait of boastfulness displayed through a desire of theirs to "talk in superlatives" (Diod. 5.31.1). This digression on Gallic speech continues by noting the Gallic preference to extol oneself while depreciating others. This could be considered an indictment on the part of Diodorus of the Gallic people, however this is not completely the case for the section concluded with him also noting that "...they have sharp wits and are not without cleverness at

learning" (Diod. 5.31.1). Therefore the traits such as a love of riddles and implicit language comes not necessarily from predisposition towards secrecy and manipulation on the part of Gauls, but rather from intelligent conversation and a love of language. These are hardly the words of a stringent condemnation, but instead we see a balanced consideration of cultural traits, most importantly with some form of explanation for them.

The introduction of negative characteristics that are then modified by either reasonable explanations or equally noble practices is a formula repeated by Diodorus, particularly in regard to the cultural and social practices of the Gallic people. When speaking of the mineral deposits of Gaul, for instance, he commented that silver is a rarity but gold is found in great quantities (Diod. 5.27.1). Gauls are shown to covet this mineral, using it for ornamentation on both men and women (Diod. 5.27.3). Diodorus concludes by stating explicitly that "...Gauls are an exceedingly covetous people" (Diod. 5.27.4). Polybius also noted the love of gold when he stated that the principle possessions of the Gallic tribes were cattle and gold, due to their constantly shifting nature (Polyb. 2.17.11). However, Diodorus, as with the example of Gallic speech, mitigates this negative trait. Their lust for gold is described as limited by their religious traditions which encouraged them to deposit "...a great amount of gold" in shrines sacred to their gods (Diod. 5.27.4). Diodorus noted that even though the Gauls were naturally covetous of gold, they never removed any that had been dedicated in one of the aforementioned shrines. Such control of their character was due to the significant religious scruples all Gauls possessed, even though they were so covetous of it. As with the above example, Diodorus was by no means accusatory when speaking of the Gallic customs in regards gold. While he does imply a degree of greed on the part of the Gauls, he modified it by expressing the piety of the Gallic *ethnos*.

That Diodorus was a recipient of some of the same ideas of Gallic ethnicity as Polybius can be seen in the above example, but it is not the only similarity between the two works. This identity was formed by outsiders, particularly the Romans and Hellenic cultures, and contained several stereotypical traits that were closely linked to Gauls. As mentioned above in the previous section, Polybius referred to the Gallic practice of sleeping on animal skins, repeated by Diodorus (5.32.7), though he made reference to it when speaking about the sexual preferences of the Gauls. He did not go as far as Polybius who infers, that it was done as part of their desire to constantly be on the move. The customs of the Gauls received significant discussion by Diodorus, such as the Gallic love of wine and their native drink made from barley, which was called *zythos*. Diodorus' language in these passages depicts

over-indulgence in the extreme. The Gauls are "addicted" to the consumption of wine, which is done "without moderation" (Polyb. 2.19.4). Such language was used by Polybius when he spoke of the "inordinate drinking" of the Gauls (Polyb. 2.19.4). However, Diodorus reminded his audience that this predilection towards uncouth drinking on the part of the Gallic tribes had brought a positive result, as the Greek and Roman wine traders to these tribes had become extremely wealthy (Diod. 5.26.3).

The exuberance Diodorus saw in the Gallic love of drinking is carried over into the depiction of Gallic dining. He again refers to their use of animal skins while sitting on the ground, but also to a tradition in which they "...seize upon any trivial matter as an occasion for keen disputation and then to challenge on another to single combat without any regard for their lives"(Diod. 5.28.5). This image of combat during a feast sits well with the image of a warlike *ethnos* depicted by Polybius. However, Diodorus inferred that the reason for their disregard for life was based on their belief of reincarnation, which he compared to that of Pythagoras (Diod. 5.28.6). Before this Diodorus also referred to the Gallic practice of serving the bravest warriors with the best cuts of meat, which resembled the honouring of Ajax after his combat with Hector (Diod. 5.28.4). These comparisons were not made by accident; it was the clear intent of the author to aid his audience in their understanding of this foreign group in terms of their own cultural comprehension.

Diodorus also includes a digression describing both the bards and druids of Gallic society. The druids in particular were a *curio* for a Greek and Roman audience (Navarro 1969: 71; Webster 1999: 2), a fact shown through the interest of both Diodorus and, as we shall see later, Caesar. But first let us consider the bards. Diodorus compared not only their instruments to the lyre but also their purpose to that of the lyric poets (Diod. 5.31.2). This is again the use of one's own culture to further understand a foreign one as was discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.1). The Druids received the same treatment, being referred to as the Gallic equivalent of philosophers. Diodorus commented that the Gauls treated the druidic class with particular reverence. He stated that their role within the tribes was to be present at sacrifices and to preside over warfare, for which Diodorus complimented the Gauls as he says it showed that "...passion may give place before wisdom"(Diod. 5.31.5). This went some way to moderating the mindless aggression that is suggested by Polybius, and it is clear in the language used that Diodorus considered it a positive trait in foreign peoples. There is also mention of the use of diviners, whom the Gauls are said to honour as equally as the druids. These men foretold the future through the flight of birds and the slaughter of sacred

animals (Diod. 5.31.3). This description could be equally accurate in describing some of the practices of the Roman priesthods such as the *augurs* such as the consulting the flights of birds (Beard, North & Price 2009: 21-22).

In the case of human sacrifice however, Diodorus seems to refrain from judgement, either positive or negative. Rather he expressed his astonishment at such practices and remained neutral on his own views. A point is made in the text that this practice was only performed in relation to matters of great import to the tribe (Diod. 5.31.3). There is no indication of Diodorus' views on this practice, which may have been due to the use of sacrifices in Rome in at least 216 BC (Livy 22.57.1-6). Though later he speaks of the Gauls "pursuance of their savage ways", this is in relation to their impious treatment of both prisoners and criminals who after five years of captivity were finally sacrificed in honour of the gods. It is unclear whether this impiety was due to the practice of human sacrifice or the use of criminals after such a long captivity. The one practice in which Diodorus displayed a clearly negative view was the eating of human flesh. The tradition he attributed to the "most savage" Gauls who dwell nears the borders of Scythia. His claim of the savagery regarding the ritual, clearly display his distaste for such practices.

There is also Diodorus' account of the Gallic traditions in warfare. Much like Polybius this is of some interest to the author, though the detail offered by Diodorus seems to suggest that by his time there was far greater access to information on this subject, for instance from traders or soldiers. He referred to the use of chariots in warfare (Diod. 5.29.1) and also the significant proportions of their weaponry commenting on the fact that Gallic swords were longer than the javelins of other people while their javelins had larger heads than the swords of other groups (Diod. 5.30.4). Again, here is the implication of warfare as a central part of Gallic culture and an implication of the relative strength of Gallic warriors to be able to wield such weapons. This is echoed when he discussed the Gallic tradition of entering into combat naked (Diod. 5.29.2; 30.3). Although Diodorus claimed the reason for this was linked the fact that Gauls "despise death", this was still a clear suggestion of the Gallic *ethnos* and its proclivity for combat. Diodorus also refers to the Gallic practice of decapitating their enemies and mounting their heads around the necks of their horses. As with human sacrifice, he did not stray from the position of neutral ethnographer, merely relating the practice and linking it in some way to the Gallic beliefs of death and the afterlife (Diod. 2.29.4). We will see later that Caesar similarly distanced himself from offering an opinion on this practice in his *Commentarii* (section 3.1.3).

Not all mentions of Gallic characteristics were based around warfare. Diodorus commented on Gallic dress, which he claimed was striking for its varied colours (Diod. 5.30.1). He complimented their artisanship in regards to their shields stating that they were "...skilfully worked with an eye not only for beauty but also protection" (Diod. 5.30.2). The Gauls were therefore skilled artisans, not just in matters of armour or weaponry, which still referred to their warlike nature, but also in clothes and styles of dress.

Diodorus concluded with comments on the nature of the Gallic people as a whole. He reminds his audience that he speaks of a people who sacked Rome and plundered Delphi (Diod. 5.32.5). These are the same cultural touchstones we found in Polybius, and helped to frame his audiences understanding of the Gallic people. These actions contextualised by Diodorus when he states these events formed part of a cultural desire to invade and plunder the lands of other groups and "regard all men with contempt" (Diod. 5.32.5). This view is mirrored in Polybius (3.78.5) where he claimed that the Celts were "eagerly looking forward to an invasion" of enemy territory. One must note again that Diodorus merely explained the Gallic desire for plunder and went no further with any analysis suggesting this was a reference to long distance raiding on the part of the tribes rather than their semi-nomadic lifestyle. His implication that Gauls invaded Greece for the purposes of plunder seems to suggest that, he and possibly his audience were unaware of the intertribal warfare that had encouraged such tribes to migrate away from their homeland. Beyond the mention of their plundering of Delphi and Rome, Diodorus makes only the most tangential of references to the fluid nature of Gallic tribal movements. He speaks of Gallic force crossing frozen rivers (Diod. 5.25.3). Riggsby (2006: 57) suggests that this is a representation of the unpredictable nature of the Gallic people, and which is also seen in the Gallic thinking on death, of which we have already spoken above.

To conclude, Caesar's ethnographic depiction of the Gauls is the most complete first-hand account available to us. There are clear signs that he was influenced by past events such as the defeat of Lucius Cassius in 107 BC, perceiving the Gauls as possessing significant martial skill. However, references to such events seem to grow scarce further into the text. Particular interest was shown in the social structure of the Gauls especially the druid class, whose multitude of customs and responsibilities made them significant figures of intertribal culture. The remaining social systems were displayed as mirroring that of Rome, with *equites* and the common people forming two clear classes. Alongside the description of Gallic social structure, Caesar included a discussion of Gallic religion. He presents the Gallic people as

worshipping gods who were analogous to Roman deities. The reason for this cultural similarity is two-fold. First, this was the way Romans interpreted foreign cultures, and second that by the time Caesar was completing the sixth book of the *Commentarii* he was well aware that Gaul was to be included in the Empire, and therefore manipulated Gallic culture to seem as familiar to Roman customs as possible. We also find significant attempts to comprehend Gallic practices from the point of view of Hellenic traditions within Diodorus' work. Just as with Caesar, he is a clear example of an author who attempted to understand a foreign culture within the cultural language and traditions of his own. In this way, he uses the cultural comparison of his audience to communicate the nature of Gallic ethnicity. This of course meant that in areas such as religion and ancestry the ethnic identity of the Gallic people seems more Roman than Gallic.

Diodorus consistently seems to straddle the line of neutral ethnographer in his depiction of the Gallic people. He was neither wholly positive nor completely condemning. He gave his audience a far more detailed picture of Gallic ethnicity than that provided by Polybius. This was in part due to the greater contact with the Gallic people at this time and also due to the greater focus on ethnographic material in Diodorus' work. However, he does not offer up a clear opinion of their traditions or practices, except for the act of eating human flesh. There was clear interest in their physical appearance and different social groups such as the druids, most likely due to their exotic customs (Rawson 1985: 266). The Gallic ethnic identity created from this account is one of balance. On the one hand, the Gauls were a savage people who were thought to be constantly close to anger and conflict, and were spread across numerous tribes throughout a vast swathe of land to the north. In contrast to this, they were also a people of wit and learning, who honoured their poets and philosophers. Gauls were covetous of gold and wealth, yet pious enough to offer their wealth in great amounts to the gods. We do not see the one-dimensional martial culture that Polybius presented. Instead, we are left with a more thoughtful idea of Gallic ethnicity.

In the case of Caesar, his apparent desire to present Gallic culture as compatible with that of Rome was reinforced with the emphasis of Gallic *virtus* and *libertas*. The way in which the Gauls were shown to value their *libertas* was seen as not only a mirroring of Roman values but also an indication of the threat that they had posed and could continue to present after their defeat. In the case of *virtus*, Caesar used it frequently in relation to the Gallic people more so than with his own soldiers. The combination of the Gallic desire for *libertas* and their possession of *virtus* as a core of their ethnic character was used in the text

to justify the danger the tribes posed. It is also used as an explaining factor for the warlike nature of the Gauls and their constant opposition to Roman military action. Caesar's perception of Gallic ethnicity is therefore a unique snap shot of an *ethnos* being manipulated to appear at the same time both similar to the Roman people and dangerous. The same ideas seen in Polybius are found here and in the work of Diodorus. The Gauls were fiercely warlike (Dobesch 2007: 143); a trait that Caesar believed was caused by a combination of their *virtus* and *libertas*. In addition, the perceived migratory and semi-nomadic nature of Gallic tribal life is represented in the text, a trait that Polybius considered just as significant as the Gallic desire for conflict. We can therefore see how the constituent parts of the Greek and Roman discourse on Gallic ethnicity had, from the time of Polybius, not simply been repeated ad nauseam but rather adapted and developed in line with the changing nature of the political surroundings.

### **3.1.3: The Early Principate (30 BC-AD 70)**

By the start of the Principate, Gaul and its tribes had begun to develop into a facet of the Roman Empire. Under Augustus, three provinces were created, Gallia Belgica, Gallia Lugdunensis and Gallia Aquitania. The conflict, which had typified this region in previous periods, was now limited to a militarised frontier zone along the Rhine River. In addition to this infrastructure was built along with new an expansion of old social centres such as at Lugdunum. The majority of the textual evidence regarding this region appears to concentrate on the new frontier groups such as the Germanic tribes, with the Gallic people resigned to references to past historical events.

Titus Livius was a Roman historian writing around the Augustan Principate. His work *Ab Urbe Condita* was composed as a monumental history of the city of Rome from its founding through to Livy's present day. Comprised of some 142 books, only a quarter survive in any significant state. Of those that have survived to the present day, there is a continuous narrative from the founding of the city in Book 1 through to the mid-2nd century BC in Book 45. Those books dealing with events such as the wars against the Cimbri, or Caesar's conquest of Gaul are lost. Livy therefore presents a challenge in that analysis of his presentation of Gallic ethnicity is dependent on his accounts of events occurring between 400-300 years before his time. This would not of such a significant issue were it not for the fact that we lack those books written about events more recent to Livy's own life. His work is therefore more likely to present an image of the Gauls similar to that of Polybius, given that

Livy was used the works of such authors to compose his early history of Rome. What can be gleaned from this is the manner in which Augustan Rome perceived such historical events, which in turn must have continued to inform the nature of the discourse around Gallic ethnicity within the Roman world.

The early references to the Gallic peoples within Livy's work are typified by those characteristics seen in earlier authors such as Polybius. Livy refers to them as "a fierce people and by nature eager for combat" (7.23) and that the Gallic tribes were "always eager to unsheathe the sword" (21.16). Less overt examples included the Gallic predilection for bringing weaponry to assemblies (21.20) and the justification offered by Gallic chieftains for claiming land in Italy, that they "carried their right at the point of the sword and that all things belonged to the brave" (5.36). With this desire for conflict, Livy in one passage includes the concept of Gallic enmity towards Rome as being a factor in the Gallic identity (Livy 10.16). Livy also includes facets of Gallic ethnicity introduced by Caesar (*BG*.7.29), such as the lack of Gallic knowledge regarding siege works (Livy 21.25). Though Livy does include an instance of Roman appreciation for the skill with which the Gallic tribes had laid out their encampment with "rows of tents and also the well-spaced streets between" (Livy 31.34). Also included in Livy's presentation of Gallic identity was their poor physical tolerances, which as we have already seen in Polybius (2.28.22) and Caesar (*BG*. 3.19.6) was a consistent part of the discourse on Gallic ethnicity. Livy (34.47) wrote of heat and fatigue causing the Gauls to retreat from battles, and Gallic tribesmen becoming weary from "...the long and painful march for the race is ill adapted to such hardships and attempt to steal away or refuse to go forward" (Livy 22.2). There is also an example from Livy's account of the occupation of Rome by the Gauls just after its sack at their hands. The Gauls are said to have been parched by the heat resulting from the fires set in the city, and that owing to their races preference towards the damp and the cold, they began to suffocate, sicken and die (Livy 5.48).

There are other repeated themes within Livy's presentation of the Gauls. When referring to the Roman attempts to gain Gallic support at the outset of Hannibal's invasion into Italy, Livy noted that "Hannibal had been beforehand.....gaining the goodwill of the Gauls ....from time to time should he make use of gold which the race is very covetous" (Livy 21.20). This passage echoes that of Diodorus (5.27.3) who also referred to the Gallic desire for material wealth and gold. There is also the suggestion of the Gallic desire for *libertas* as found in Caesars (*BG*.1.17.4). Livy recounts Hannibal's justification for entering Italy being that he had come at the invitation of the Gauls to set them free from Roman rule (Livy 21.52).

Unfortunately, we do not possess those books of Livy's work that referred to Caesar's conquest of Gaul, so it is unclear if this theme of Gallic *libertas* was one that Livy developed in later books. One area in which Livy clearly agreed with Caesar's (*BG.4.13.1*) account was the Gallic propensity for treachery (Livy 22.1). There are also a few allusions to Gallic religious observance, though the first mention of it was to note that the Gauls had chosen to perform no auspices or omens before a battle (Livy 5.38). Later Livy mentions the taking of a Roman general's head by a Gallic chieftain who then went on to adorn the skull in gold and perform sacred libations with it within the most revered temple of the Boians (23.24). While neither of these examples offer a positive image of Gallic religion in comparison to the account by Caesar, Livy clearly uses such religious aspects to develop his image of Gallic ethnicity.

One notable difference between the accounts of authors such as Caesar and Livy is that the latter includes numerous mentions of savagery on the part of the Gallic tribes, which can only be taken as clear condemnation of their practices and actions. Gauls are referred to as "a race of savages" (Livy 8.14) and suffering from an inability to control their wrath (Livy 5.37). Livy does not limit this view to the perspective of the Roman people, offering the opinion of the Etruscan people in one passage as not wanting to have "men of a savage race for neighbours" (Livy 10.10). Even in situations where it is the behaviour of others who is worthy of consternation, Livy quantifies such poor behaviour through a comparison with the Gallic nature (Livy 5.36). It should be noted that these examples all come from early in the work, and refer to the early conflicts between Gallic tribes and the Roman people which lead up to the sack of Rome in 390 BC. One suspects that Livy's language in these sections is influenced by those sources discussed at the opening of this Gallic case study. However, as stated above, without those books more closely in line with Livy's own time we are unable to draw wider conclusions about Livy's negative presentation of Gallic ethnicity in these passages.

Livy presents us with an important view of the semi-nomadic nature of the Gallic people and act of migration. He begins by recounting the story of Bellovesus, a Gallic chief responsible for crossing the Alps and establishing the city of Mediolanum in Cisalpine Gaul (Livy 5.39.1-9). He then goes on to mention the names of several tribes who migrated into northern Italy following Bellovesus' success. These tribes include the Cenomani, Libui, Salluvii, Boii, Lingones and the Senones (Livy 5.35.1-6). This is a significant point Livy makes here to his audience: migration begets further migration. Readers of his work would well know the significance of the tribe Senones, for it was they who sacked Rome. Indeed, it was due to the Senones seeking land that brought them into conflict with the city of Clusium

and in turn Rome. These were not war bands raiding south, but whole communities moving into and settling in northern Italy. The sack of Rome itself was a black mark on the cultural landscape of Rome and remained a significant point of reference throughout its history. Livy himself suggests this to his readers noting that for many years after the sack Romans feared Gallic invasion (Livy 6.42.4; 7.12.11; 7.23.1-10; 7.25.1; 8.17.6; 8.20.3) though this could be reference to the fear of further raids rather than migratory tribes. One could argue it was the sack of Rome that led the Roman people into an almost continuous war with the Gallic tribes of Italy until their final expulsion in the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Just from this semi-mythologized event, Livy and his audience understood the danger tribal migrations presented to Rome. Even with the eventual conquering of Gaul, the Roman people still feared attack, but now it was from Germanic tribes (Chapman 1992: 41). Rosenberger (2003: 366) makes an important concluding point on the Roman fear of Gauls and Germans saying fear could not have been the only force behind the decisions in the Roman politics. This view is correct, however one can also not deny the influence fear had and continues to have on the interactions between cultures.

Another writer from this period was the geographer Strabo, who in his work the *Geographica*, discussed the customs and character of the Gallic people. The work as a whole was conceived as a study of the peoples and places within and bordering the Roman Empire. Strabo (2.1.22-23) informs us that his work was written for individuals in high station, presumably political (Dueck 2010: 237). In the same section, he noted that his text dealt with the grand scale and therefore would likely dismiss the small and seeming insignificant. Riggsby (2006: 49) has noted the degree to which Strabo seems to have made use of the author Posidonius, suggesting that these were not only the shared remarks of Posidonius but also commonly parts of the discourse from the time of Posidonius through to Strabo. Within his text, Strabo included a description of the physical nature of the Gallic people, commenting on their tall muscular frames and blonde hair (Strabo 4.4.5; 4.5.2), as well as the Gallic custom of eating large quantities of meat and drinking only milk or wine (Strabo 4.4.3). These are all points we have seen in the ethnographic image of Gauls by Diodorus. Alongside this Strabo referred to the Gallic character as being highly boastful (Strabo 4.4.5) and quarrel loving (Strabo 4.4.6), and their "war crazed" nature which had given the Gallic people a desire for battle (Strabo 4.4.2). The Gauls had therefore continued to retain the image as a warlike nation. Strabo also commented on the migratory nature of the Gallic



Figure 2: Augustan Triumphal Arch of Orange. (Raddato, 2014)

tribes, noting that tribes could be found moving with whole households when expelled from their native lands by neighbours or other tribes (Strabo 4.4.6). Just as with Diodorus and Caesar then, Strabo saw the Gauls as a semi-nomadic people, primed for war, although once again this ethnographic discussion was written without thought to condemning the Gallic tribes for their nature.

In addition to the two textual examples above, there are numerous depictions of Gallic and Germanic tribesmen on triumphal arches. Primarily built under Augustus and Tiberius the arches at La Turbie, Saint Remy, Carpentras and Orange (figure 2) all display similar imagery of Gallic individuals. The arches are primarily victory monuments; therefore, it is no surprise that those Gauls shown on the arches are depicted as defeated and captured. At La Turbie, the depiction shows male and female Gauls bound at the hands as captives (Ferris 2011: 189). Meanwhile at Carpentras, the Gallic prisoners are shown standing to the side of a victory monument with their weapons placed at its base (Ferris 2013: Loc 940). Such imagery once again links the Gauls to warfare, albeit in the form of defeat as the frieze and Attalid Gauls also infer.



Figures 3 and 4: RRC 468/1 (3, above) and RRC 503/1 (4, below). (© Trustees of the British Museum)

The image of the captured Gaul is by far the most prevalent used image of Gauls in Roman culture. The use of such images can also be found on coinage minted under the early Principate. Coins were a far more ready source of imagery, and there are a number of examples from the Republican period showing Gauls in the same captive position that was used on the arches of Augustus and Tiberius mentioned above. Coins such as *RRC 468/1* (denarius 46-45BC, figure 3), *RRC 452/4* (denarius 48-47BC) and *RRC 503/1* (denarius 43-42BC, figure 3; from Crawford 1974) all display on their reverse sides Gallic captives. The design on the reverse of each coin depicts a trophy upon which Gallic dress, shields and weapons have been placed. Seated around this trophy are both a male and female Gallic captive. Both have hands bound behind them, and are shown with heads lowered. Just as with

the arches, the Gauls are depicted as defeated foes, which as many of these coins were minted in celebration of Caesar's victories in Gaul, was an apt image. The perception such images were attempting to spread was the dominance of Rome over these foreign aggressors.

In all these images there is a consistent theme, Gauls were primarily depicted in the context of warfare and more specifically their defeat. The defeated nature of many of the Gallic individuals depicted has much to do with the Roman desire to spread the news of their successes against their northern foe and their implicit superiority over them, rather than a specific theme linked to the Gallic ethnic identity. We can then consider that a great majority of Roman depictions of Gauls and Germans links these northern tribes strongly with warfare and conflict. Under the Republican period, much of the art produced was linked strongly to the state or to religion. Themes such as the power and influence of Rome were important concepts, represented in sculptures such as those of successful generals. These pieces showed the honour of military action and the strength of Rome's might (Zanker 2010: 6). The coinage discussed above also falls into this group, as such images conveyed Roman dominance over its neighbours. Other examples of early Roman coinage display triumphal chariots and deities (*RRC 258/1*, *RRC 320/1*, from Crawford 1974). Such themes were important in the dissemination and development of early Roman ethnic identity. By the Imperial period, the emperor and his family had become the primary focus of state imagery with the purpose of celebrating the emperor and his cult (Zanker 2010: 335). Such depictions, as we have already discussed, clearly show the Roman perception of conflict in relation to the northern tribes.

#### **3.1.4: The Etic Ethnicity of the Gauls: Conclusion**

In this case study, we have considered Roman and Greek perspectives of Gallic ethnicity, from the earliest references to the Gauls through to works completed in the years after the Gallic people had been brought into the empire. We have been particularly interested in the common threads between all these ancient works, which formed the core of the constantly evolving Roman view of these northern tribes. It would be these pillars of Gallic ethnic identity that would have been most influential in the development of the northern frontier during the conflicts between Romans and Gauls.

As far back as Aristotle, there was a strong link between the Gallic people and their predisposition for combat (*Politics* 1269b). It was this trait that Polybius used to frame his short discussion of Gallic ethnicity. He pointed to their warlike culture (Polyb. 2.17.35) and the fluidity of their wandering movement (Polyb. 2.17.11). Historical events such as the sack of Rome and the plundering of Delphi were included to reinforce this ethnic stereotype (Polyb. 1.6.2). It is unsurprising that it would be these two characteristics that would appear most commonly in our source material. Except for the attempts of some authors such as Posidonius who would go and study the culture of these tribes, most interactions between the Romans and the Gauls had been defined by conflict or invasion. There is however, no condemnation of the Gallic race in these accounts. One might take the implication from Polybius that he did not approve of Gallic customs, but he does not state it out right. Instead, he preferred to frame the Gallic people in terms of their aggression, often only including them in his narrative when they were present in a conflict.

Both Diodorus and Strabo, who both used Posidonius as a source in their work, depicted the Gauls in a similar manner to Polybius, all be it with a greater emphasis on the customs and practices of the Gallic *ethnos*, an influence from Posidonius no doubt. Gauls were shown to be deceitful and boastful (Diod. 5.31.1; Strabo 4.4.5). Diodorus pictures the Gallic tribes as lovers of risk and danger and desirous of plunder through invasion (Diod. 5.28.5, 32.5). Strabo echoed this view referring to the Gallic desire for battle (Strabo 4.4.2). The two authors both wrote after the conquest of Gaul by Caesar, so were writing of an *ethnos* that had recently become part of the Empire after many years of war. Just as with Polybius, neither author refers negatively to the Gallic people, except for implied remarks on the part of Diodorus in reference to the practice of human sacrifice. In general, both authors maintain a detachment from their subject preferring instead the role of neutral ethnographer.

Other examples we have considered are the works of Cicero and the *Commentarii* of Caesar. Cicero's depiction of Gallic ethnicity is an over exaggeration of traits present in other authors. His manipulation of the identity of the Gallic people should therefore be considered as such. It includes those traits that were most commonly associated with the northern tribes, yet amplifies them for the purpose of discrediting the Gallic witnesses Cicero was arguing against. Caesar offers a contemporary view of Gallic ethnicity, though again his depiction is coloured by this purpose and the nature of his interaction with the Gallic people. Early in his work, the Gauls maintain the image of the warlike tribes that we had seen before, and the opening actions of the Helvetii in both their migration and willingness to engage in combat

emphasised these characteristics. By the sixth book and the inclusion of what is considered the Gallic ethnography, these traits have been expanded, in particular, the reasoning for their appearance in Gallic culture. Through the ideas of *virtus* and *libertas*, Caesar presents the same ethnographic image with a thoroughly Roman explanation. It is through their *virtus* and love of freedom that the Gaul appeared so warlike and the wandering nature of the people was a reflection of their desire to remain free. One might consider this a rosy image, but Caesar offered these plaudits to the Gallic nation with the purpose of detailing the threat that they posed to the Roman state. With their natural inclination towards *libertas*, Caesar considered it likely that the Gallic people would resist Roman authority at every turn (Caes. *BG.3.10.3*), a conclusion that was reasonable considering their desire to die rather than suffer Roman slavery (Caes. *BG.5.34.2*).

For the purposes of our discussion, it is important to note several points about the Roman view of Gallic ethnicity. First, the source material does not suggest outright opposition or hostility towards the Gallic people rather there seems to have been a general interest and desire to understand these northern tribes. Second, the depictions of the Gallic people, stretching from Polybius through to Caesar and the like of Diodorus and Strabo, included the concept of a warlike nature. The Gauls were an *ethnos* skilled in warfare, with some authors offering this as a cause of the customs and practices of the Gallic tribes and others such as Caesar suggesting it was instead indicative of a deeper desire for *libertas*. Third, the other trait to be included throughout the source material was that of a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Migrations were a part of tribal life and a form of social safety valve when the dangers of over-population or conflict presented too great a threat. Roman authors do not seem to have grasped the deeper causes of the fluidity of Gallic tribal movement. They instead considered it a part of the incomprehensible character of the Gallic nation, set alongside their perceived love of risk and instability. One could surmise that the Romans perceived the semi nomadic lifestyle of the Gauls as a representation of chaos in comparison to the cultured and civilised existence they experienced in an urban setting.

These two factors directly inform our understanding of how the Romans considered their northern frontiers, and what facets of the Gallic nature they needed to consider when interacting with them. This perception of the northern tribes as aggressive nomads was, as we will see, not only limited to the Gallic people, but was eventually carried over into the ethnic identity of their neighbour the Germanic tribes of northern Europe, whom the next case study will consider.

### **3.2: The Etic Ethnicity of the Germans**

By the end of the conquest of Gaul (50 BC), the northern frontier of the Roman Empire had reached the Rhine where, in spite of the efforts of those who came after Caesar, it remained. Beyond the Rhine, the people of Rome saw the Germanic tribes. An ethnic group with whom Rome had already fought against, most notably during the Cimbrian War (113-101 BC). In the course of Cimbri and Teutones tribes migrating south, the Roman state suffered a number of losses. The first in 112 BC was the defeat of a consular army under Gnaeus Papirus Carbo, followed soon after in 109 BC and the loss of the Roman force under Marcus Junius Silanus. Two years later, in 107 BC, another Roman army was defeated and its commander, Lucius Cassius Longinus Ravalla, killed at the hands of the Tigurini, allies of the Cimbri. A final consular army under Gnaeus Mallius Maximus was defeated at the Battle of Arausio in 105 BC. This list of significant defeats within just the space of seven years earned the Germanic tribes a fearsome reputation. Much like the Roman perception of Gallic ethnicity, the Germanic *ethnos* was created through a number of the factors discussed in the previous chapter. This case study will consider the presentation of Germanic ethnicity in the ancient literary sources. The primary sources are the *Commentarii* by Caesar and the *Germania* by Tacitus. Both of these complete works provide significant ethnographies on the Germanic people, which show a specific group of cultural traits that the Roman ascribed to the tribes of Germany.

The structure of this case study will mirror the previous one. First, we will discuss the presentation of the Germans from the late Republic. Second, the early Principate (30 BC-AD 70) is considered, and finally we will look at the depiction of Germanic tribes in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. This structure is in aid of considering the change across time of the discourse with Roman society regarding the etic ethnic identity of the Germanic tribes.

#### **3.2.1 The Late Republic (60-30BC)**

Before we regard the nature of the Germanic etic identity of the late Republic, we should first consider two of the very few references to the Germanic peoples from before this period. Pytheas was a 4<sup>th</sup> century BC writer who recorded his travels through the Mediterranean and beyond. While his work no longer survives, quotes in other authors do. One of these found in the work of Pliny the Elder referred to the German tribes on the Baltic

coast. Pliny wrote that it was through the work of Pytheas it was known that the German tribe, the Gutones, collected amber on the shoreline and used the material for either fuel or trade with other communities (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 37.11). Unfortunately, quotes such as this do not clearly show us the Germanic *ethnos*, which Pytheas may have recorded. It is unclear from these quotes if Pytheas was recording his personal experiences having travelled as far as the Baltic, or stories collected from secondary sources. However, in a line from Strabo we can see how Pytheas and his opinions were not universally considered accurate. Strabo wrote that Pytheas was found "...upon scrutiny to be an arch-falsifier" (1.4.3) questioning the veracity of his claims regarding the distances and measurements of Britain and the Baltic coast. This suggests that by the Principate of Augustus it was considered by some that Pytheas was at least inaccurate. However, Strabo's comments cannot inform us of the consideration of the work in the years between the completion of Pytheas' work and that of Strabo.

We have already discussed the lost work of Posidonius, and the nature of his first-hand account of Gallic culture in southern Gaul. Unfortunately, there is very little surviving of his work regarding the German tribes, even as fragments, save a passing mention to the thirtieth book of his text concerning the German people (Athen.4.153e). This is important information for it displays how Posidonius considered the Germans and the Gauls to be separate cultural groups, as we know that the Gallic discussion was found in Book 23 of his work (Athen. 4.154a). In the fragment, Posidonius related the Germanic customs of drinking milk and wine unmixed. Such ethnic identifiers has already been used by Greek authors in their representations of Scythian customs. Hobden (2013: 88) notes that the presentation of Scythians in these terms was in line with the Greek perspective of their martial character. If we can assume that Posidonius included such customs for a similar purpose then the Germanic tribes were linked to a martial nature through the manner of their customs in this fragment. There is also the lost *commentarii* of Q. Lutatius Catulus who wrote an account of his consulship in 101 BC and his campaign against the Cimbri (Austin & Rankov 1995: 89).

That the first eight books of the *Commentarii* record the conquest of Gaul and yet contain almost constant references to Germanic tribes, and also include a short ethnographic discourse on them is evidence of the influence that these tribes from beyond the Rhine had on the region of Gaul. The context of the *Commentarii* has already been discussed at the beginning of section 3.1.3. In this section, we will first consider the image presented of Germans in the *Commentarii*. The discussion will examine Caesar's repeated references to

Germanic tribal migration and in particular the crossing of the Rhine, and the historical tableau that these actions formed. We then look at the German ethnographic digression found in Book 6 and the primary ethnic traits that Caesar links to the Germans and how these compare to treatments of the Gauls by earlier authors. Finally, we discuss the relationship between Gaul and German, and the direct comparison that Caesar encouraged of his readers.

One of the first references to German tribes is made in relation to the valour of the Helvetii, which was described as a result of "daily fights with the Germans, either endeavouring to keep them out of Gallic territory or waging an aggressive warfare in German territory" (Caes. *BG.1.1*). The Germans are introduced to the reader as an aggressive raiding people who demand *virtus* of their opponents lest they be swept away by constant German raids. This was not just Caesar's interpretation; the Aedui through a summons by the Arverni and Sequani had suffered the loss of a third of their land to Ariovistus, who then demanded a further third for the Harudes (Caes. *BG.1.31*). These events form part of a speech delivered by Diviciacus, an Aeduan, who then warned that "...in a few years all the Gauls will have been driven from their lands and all the Germans will have crossed the Rhine" (Caes. *BG.1.31*). This was as much a warning by Caesar as it was by Diviciacus, the safety of Gaul if it was to be a province of Rome, was dependant on resisting German raids. Caesar himself realised the accustomed nature of the Germans to cross the Rhine and refers it as a direct threat to the Roman people (Caes. *BG.1.33*). In these examples Caesar suggests that the Germans were not merely raiding but subsuming territory from their neighbours. Such an action did not constitute a semi nomadic lifestyle, though it did force other groups to pursue a migration to avoid further conflict.

These concerns did not originate with only the Gauls. Caesar referred to the likelihood of Germans following in the footsteps of the Cimbri and Teutoni (Last 1971: 140), and invading the province of Gaul and then Italy itself through migration (Caes. *BG.1.33.4*). This is not the only point at which the actions of the two tribes were mentioned. Caesar speaks of the Aducatuci being the descendants of the Cimbri and Teutoni (*BG.2.29*). When speaking to his officers, Caesar found cause to assuage their fears caused by the prospect of war with Ariovistus and the Germans. In doing so he reminded his men that "...we have made trial of this foe before in the time of our fathers, on the occasion when in the defeat of the Cimbri and Teutoni" (*BG.1.40.5*). Here we see the constructive force of shared history, as discussed in the previous chapter (section 2.3). Germanic identity for Caesar and his men was in part formed by the actions of the Cimbri and Teutoni, as these tribes, it was perceived, shared a

common ancestry with the Germanic tribes Caesar encountered this during his campaign. Therefore, their actions in the past informed the Roman perception of Ariovistus and his Germanic tribes. The Germans were then perceived as skilled in warfare and living a semi-nomadic lifestyle allowing them to migrate large distances similar to the previous actions of the Cimbri and Teutoni. Caesar then reinforced these traits throughout his work. For instance, Caesar also recorded, in a speech given by Critognatus that the Gauls had suffered under the Cimbri and Teutoni, being forced to lock themselves within their walled towns and driven to consuming the flesh of the weak and those "useless for war" (Caes. *BG.7.77*). The two Germanic tribes were therefore presented as having been a threat to both Roman and Gaul alike.

The first instance of Caesar crossing the Rhine in 55 BC was done to display Roman authority and military power (Caes. *BG.4.16*). The crossing of the Rhine was seen as a symbolic action, a fact displayed by a conversation between Caesar and unit of Germanic cavalry. When asked if they would surrender, they replied that "...if he thought it unfair that the Germans should cross into Gaul against his will, why did he claim any imperial power across the Rhine?" (Caes. *BG.4.16*). Crossing of the Rhine was then considered a threat, be it by Germans crossing into Gaul, or Caesar crossing into Germany. While this was reported as the reply of German soldiers, its inclusion may have been for the benefit of Caesar's intended audience, with the aim of reinforcing the importance of his crossing the Rhine. The perception of the crossing was one of stepping into the unknown paralleling that of Caesar's campaign in Britain and added to the list of his achievements later touted back in Rome. The second instance of his bridging the river is found in Book 6; the reason given in this instance was specific to the actions of Ambiorix, which included a request of German tribesmen as auxiliaries in the fight against Rome. Interestingly, the second half of Caesar's justification referred to a desire to prevent Ambiorix crossing the Rhine and seeking shelter with the German tribes there (Caes. *BG.6.9*). This passage again shows the significance given to the crossing of the Rhine, and also the way in which Caesar now imagined this river as a boundary for his Gallic campaign.

While his crossing of the Rhine may have been significant for his Roman audience, Caesar made extensive references to the raiding incursions of the Germanic tribes and the emphasis on the prevalence of such acts show them as a significant hindrance to the security of the Gallic province. Such Germanic crossings caused greater issues than general raids, often in the text they are described as whole movements of tribes (Caes. *BG.1.31*), bringing

with them all of their possessions and a desire to settle in Gaul (Caes. *BG.4.14*) suggesting a migratory purpose. Caesar's judgement of these tribal migrations is recorded as follows: "...it was not just that men who had not been able to defend their own territories should seize those of others; on the other hand, there was no land in Gaul which could be granted without injustice" (Caes. *BG.4.8*). Migrations then presented a serious destabilising effect to Gaul above and beyond that of tribal raiding. The effects of these migratory tribes was significant; Caesar recorded the pursuit of a German raid into Gallic territory and the realities of tribal migration must have been much the same. Settlements were burnt and the land pillaged, with great numbers of cattle taken which Caesar notes the Germans to be extremely covetous of (Caes. *BG.6.35*). While raids such as the one described here would have caused a limited degree of damage, tribal migrations had the potential to cause much greater issues across a larger swathe of the country and over a much greater period of time, as seen during the migrations of the Cimbri and Teutoni.

References to migrations in the ancient literature do offer insight into Roman perceptions of them. Caesar (*BG.1.10*), for example, when stating his reasoning for attacking the Helvetii as they sought to move through the lands of the Sequani notes "...this event would bring great danger upon the Province; for it would have a warlike tribe, unfriendly to the Roman people, as neighbours to a district which was at once unprotected and very rich in corn." This is an important justification, as it shows that Caesar, and in his estimation his fellow Romans, understood that migrations lead to conflict and warfare (Gardiner 1983: 185). In addition, it brought instability to the region via not only the political instability that it would cause to the region but also the threat it posed to those regions that possessed significant resources such as a ready supply of corn. The threat to the land itself is repeated later in the text, though in this case Caesar places the comments in the mouth of Critognatus. Speaking of the Cimbri migration, Critognatus comments: "The Cimbri devastated Gaul; they brought great disaster upon us..." (Caes. *BG.7.77*). Here we see how migrations required resources from the lands they passed through. In so doing, they could cause secondary effects to direct conflict such as famine. In addition to this, Caesar noted the other threat migrations posed to the Roman state, as tribes migrated, they in some cases forced or encouraged other tribes to eventually follow in their wake. Caesar commented in his text that the Germans displayed an unsettling familiarity with straying into Gallic territory and that if left unchecked would eventually move towards the Italian peninsula (Caes. *BG.1.33.4*). In this way Caesar's view of tribal migration was as something to be resisted and prevented in order

to maintain peace and safety for the Roman state. While Caesar is one of the few examples of a commander in the field who displayed a clear view of migration, he is not the only ancient author to infer the threat such large-scale human movement presented.

Caesar offered his audience a more detailed discussion of the German *ethnos* in Book 6, though this digression, as mentioned already in this chapter, was framed as a comparative one between the cultural and social practices of the Gauls and Germans. It is for this reason that his discussion of Germanic practices begins with a direct comparison between the Gauls and the Germans. Germans, it was said, did not have among them druids, as the Gauls did, and did not possess the "zeal" for sacrifice that the Gauls displayed (Caes. *BG*.6.21.1). The importance of religion and culture in the construction of ethnicity is again seen here and Caesar inclusion of several notes on Germanic rituals and their deities. For example, in Book 1 he recorded that the Germans drew lots and divinations when deciding upon whether to engage the enemy in battle (Caes. *BG*.1.50). Of their gods, the Germans were again different to the Gauls. Caesar this time does not mention the names of any deities preferring instead simply to comment that the Germans only hold to those gods that they can see and are assisted by (Caes. *BG*.6.21). The difference in detail between Caesar's reports of Gallic deities and those of the Germans is striking. We know from his own work that he had contact with German chiefs and employed them as auxiliaries (Caes. *BG*.6.32; 7.13; 8.10). Therefore, it was not due to a lack of information that his description was little more than a side note in his text. The description seems to paint the Germans as less civilised than their Gallic cousins (Krebs 2011: 203), but Caesar abstained from condemnation, in fact not offering any judgement on these practices. Caesar's presentation of the Germanic pantheon as rudimentary may have originated from his belief that they were a people set apart from others. Indeed in reference to their understanding of other gods he states that "...they have learnt not even by report" of other deities (Caes. *BG*.6.21). In addition Caesar used Germanic religion to clearly separate them from the Gallic tribes, further justifying his inclusion of the Gallic people in the Roman world and exclusion of the Germanic people via the frontier on the Rhine.

The idea that the Germanic *ethnos* preserved its distance from others is a theme to which Caesar returned. When speaking of the Suebi it is stated that they viewed it to be the highest honour to live with the land surrounding them uninhabited, for they believed it a sign of their own greatness that their neighbours could not withstand their force of arms (Caes. *BG*.4.3.1). The practice is at first only associated with the Suebi, however later Caesar generalises the practice to the rest of the German tribes, commenting that "...their states

account it the highest praise by devastating their borders to have areas of wilderness as wide as possible around them" (Caes. *BG.6.23.1*). In the same passage Caesar stated that they believed this to be a true sign of *virtus* as no man would settle near them, and in this way they make themselves safer from sudden attacks. The practices of the Suebi are given further dimension, as they are said to never reside in the same location for more than a year, at which time they seek new lands (Caes. *BG.4.1*). The practice was an exaggerated form of one that Caesar used to describe the whole of the German people. He said that the elders of a tribe gifted land for a year, when it was then redistributed again (Caes. *BG.6.22*). Such a practice, Caesar claimed, was performed to prevent the men of the tribe accepting agriculture over "warrior zeal." There is a direct association with Germans and a shifting nature, much like that ascribed to the Gauls by Polybius some hundred years before. It was by this constant movement that Caesar felt the Germans derived and maintained their *virtus*. However, as with the Gauls, the picture given by Caesar was not without some exceptions. The Ubii were described as the most civilised of all the Germans, due to their acceptance of traders among their people (Caes. *BG.4.3*). The Ubii were therefore unlike other German tribes as they by comparison encouraged interaction with foreign people. This contrasted with the Suebi who refused the importation of wine in order to preserve their men from becoming "soft and womanish" (Caes. *BG.4.2*).

Much like the refusal of wine, in order to prevent one becoming soft Caesar recorded that German tribes regularly committed "acts of brigandage" against other tribes (Caes. *BG.6.23*). Engagement in these acts was considered an ideal practice as it prevented the young men of the tribe from becoming slothful. Instead of agriculture, the men of the tribes were said to dedicate their whole life to the pursuits of hunting and warfare (Caes. *BG.6.21*), showing no interest in the practice of agriculture (Caes. *BG.6.22*). This belief on the part of Caesar affected decisions he made in the field, for he noted that the reason he did not push further into Germany after his second crossing of the Rhine was due to the lack of agriculture in the region and the perceived difficulty this would bring when attempting to feed his army (Caes. *BG.6.29*). This is a clear example of Caesar's perceived ethnic identity of Germanic tribes directly affecting decisions during his campaign in Gaul.

Just as with the Gauls, Caesar presented many of the cultural practices of the Germans from a perceived 'neutral' standpoint (Gruen 2011c: 158). The aggressive nature of the Germans (Caes. *BG.1.47*) and the reported infighting between tribes (Caes. *BG.1.54*) are recorded with the same lack of judgement as the Germanic sacred practice of opening one's

house to any guest and sharing any food with them (Caes. *BG.6.23*). Much like Polybius speaking of the Gauls, Caesar claimed that the Germans wore the skins of animals (Caes. *BG.6.21*), and stated they possessed only a limited diet made up of milk, cheese and flesh (Caes. *BG.6.22*). Yet, as stated before, Caesar did not consider the Germans lazy, rather they were "zealous for toil and hardship" (Caes. *BG.6.21*).

That Caesar thought of the Germans in terms of their comparison to the Gauls has already been commented upon, but the interaction between the two groups is found not just in Book 6 but also throughout the text. In speaking to Gallic representatives, Caesar learnt of the Germans, that they were a people of significant size and possessing *virtus* (Caes. *BG.1.39*). As we have already discussed Caesar was very clear in his estimation of Gallic *virtus*, so the inclusion of Gallic opinions of Germanic courage holds significant weight not only for Caesar but also his audience. This is echoed later when Caesar discussed the historical relationship between the Gauls and the Germans, noting that Gallic tribes were once greater in *virtus* to Germans, and Gallic tribes, such as the Volcae, traversed the Rhine seizing the fertile lands there (James 2000: 60). The only factor to have changed this state of affairs was, for Caesar, the influence of the Roman provinces and the importation of luxury goods into Gaul, thereby reducing the stature of the Gallic people when compared to their Germanic cousins (Caes. *BG.6.24.5-6*). The Volcae however, unlike their fellow Gauls were still considered to hold the "highest reputation" as they lived in the same conditions as the Germans (Caes. *BG.6.25.3-4*). A similar point was made about the Treveri who, due to their proximity to Germanic tribes, had begun to exhibit several Germanic customs (Caes. *BG.8.25*). We have already seen how Caesar felt that the influence of the provinces had negatively affected the Gallic people in certain ways. In these cases however, we see a kind of cultural preservation. Rather than Germanic culture having a degenerating effect on the Gallic tribes that they lived near, instead it was thought by Caesar to have acted as a protector of Gallic culture and *virtus*.

It is clear that Caesar saw German and Gallic ethnicities as separate, but their cultures did not appear to be so far removed from one another. However, while their cultures appeared similar the interactions between Gallic and Germanic tribes was far from harmonious. Caesar refers to the Aedui having encouraged Germanic tribesmen to cross the Rhine and aid them, but then found themselves bound in slavery to them (Caes. *BG.1.33*). The fear with which many Gallic tribes felt about the prospect of Germanic raids was a constant reminder of the open warfare many tribes experienced (Caes. *BG.6.41*). Such conflict does not tell the

complete nature of the relationship between Gallic and German tribes, for there are a number of examples within the *Commentarii* of amicable interactions between these groups as well. Gauls on a number of occasions are recorded as requesting aid from German tribes, thereby encouraging them to cross into Gallic territory (Caes. *BG.*1.31; 6.2). Gallic nobility, after defeats at the hand of Caesar, were known to flee across the Rhine to the safety of friendly Germans (Caes. *BG.*6.9; 8.21). Gauls and Germans are therefore shown to be more than just enemies of one another; Caesar understood that the relationship between the two ethnicities was more complex.

The same can be said for Rome and the Germanic tribes. We have seen the Germans were in part known for their aggressive nature and skill in warfare, not only through their actions during the conquest of Gaul, but also for the migrations of the Cimbri and Teutoni. In Caesar's account as we have seen with other such ethnic traits, there is never condemnation of the aggressive nature displayed by Germans. What we do find are numerous references to German skill at war being used to Caesar's advantage through the recruitment of German auxiliaries (Caes. *BG.*7.13, 65; 8.10, 36). In addition to this Caesar comments on two Germanic tribes, the Segni and Condrusi, who petitioned him in the hope of gaining his friendship (Caes. *BG.*6.32). The image presented to us of the Germans as warriors was more than just an enemy of the Roman Empire and included a mercenary culture.

In conclusion, Caesar's *Commentarii* constructed an ethnic identity of the Germanic people, which was equally as complex as that of the Gauls. There is a significance ascribed to the crossing of the Rhine on the part of Germanic tribes. The act of crossing over was considered a threat to the security of Gaul. The references within the text to the action of the Cimbri and Teutoni suggest this, with the implication of the threat they once posed returning. In the cases where it was Caesar who crossed the Rhine, he still implied that it was considered a threat but instead by the German tribes against whom he was marching. There is then a danger ascribed to the Rhine, the region beyond and those who came from there. This danger was emphasised by the warlike nature of the Germans and the instability caused by their frequent raids into Gallic territory. The significance ascribed to the Rhine in part must have arisen through the Roman perception of it as a natural boundary separating the two ethnic tribal groups, regardless of the accuracy of such a belief.

However, the threat of the Germans was not an intrinsic part of their character, rather a consequence of their nature. Just as with the Gauls, Caesar considered the Germans to hold

significant *virtus*, and their desire for independence and distance from other cultures seems to have been respected. Their religion is described in rudimentary terms and they are said to know of no other gods, reflecting their isolated nature (Caes. *BG*.6.21). The separation that Caesar saw in Germanic culture also allowed them, in his view, to maintain their culture, courage and skill in battle. They were in some sense culturally pure, untouched by luxury and civilisation.

We have also considered the comparison between Gaul and German and the interaction between the two. The comparison was the lens through which Caesar viewed the Germans. The two ethnic groups were not enemies of one another by their own natures. Caesar noted in equal measure those Germanic and Gallic tribes that shared contact and friendly relations, and those tribes that participated in open warfare and raiding between one another. The example of tribes such as the Volcae who were Gallic but through the assuming of Germanic practices had been able to maintain the traits of their ethnicity, shows a clear connection between Germanic and Gallic ethnicity in Caesar's understanding. Finally, as we have seen the Germans were not by default an enemy of the Roman people. Many tribes offered auxiliaries to fight under Caesar and attempted to gain his friendship through diplomatic means (Caes. *BG*.7.64). The Germanic *ethnos* Caesar offered his audience was one of a distant people, whose ancestors had once threatened Italy, but whose aid had been sought in order to conquer Gaul. The ethnic identity for the Germanic tribes was far more complex than the simple foreign enemy one may have expected.

### **3.2.2 The Early Principate**

With the conquest of Gaul by Caesar (51 BC), the Rhine had become the next frontier in the north of the Roman Empire. While the creation of formally annexed territory in the region was not yet underway, several legions were stationed along the length of the Rhine (Luttwak 1976: 47). The interaction between Germanic and Roman cultures had shifted dramatically from sparse interactions caused by tribal migration to a military frontier running the majority of the Rhine's length. Within this frontier zone cultural, economic and political interactions were developed. Some Germanic tribes were brought across the Rhine and inducted into the Empire, while others were forced to move away from the frontier zone. It is in this new political power structure that a number of textual and archaeological sources regarding the ethnic identity of the Germanic tribes should be considered.

The work of Velleius Paterculus at first appears to be of significant importance for any study of Roman attitudes towards Germanic peoples. Velleius was a member of the senatorial class eventually gaining the praetorship in AD 15. He had also had an extensive military career, serving eight years in Germany and Pannonia, from AD 4 as a praefect of cavalry and legatus, under Tiberius during the latter's campaign in the region (AD 12), not to mention his service before this as well. He was then an educated individual with first-hand evidence of the German tribes during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius. However, his work is primarily focused on the military achievements of Tiberius, and often discussed military records in the place of any ethnographic evidence.

Even with this preference for lists of defeated enemies and tactics used over ethnographic descriptions, there are instances of where Velleius offered opinions on the Germanic tribes. He wrote of the Germanic people: "they combine ferocity and great craft and are born to lying" (Vell. 2.118.1-4). As this quote implies Velleius, tended towards a negative characterisation of the Germanic tribes. We see this again when he spoke of Maroboduus, the leader of the Marcomanni. Velleius described him first as "a barbarian by birth but not intelligence" (Vell. 2.108.2), and later as an individual who "clung to the limits of his territories he had seized as a serpent to his hole" (Vell. 2.129.3). Neither of these examples could be considered positive or even neutral in their depiction of Maroboduus. The work primarily considered the Germanic tribes as opponents to Tiberius and made no attempt to view them otherwise, much like Polybius' depiction of the Gallic tribes. To emphasise this point there are repeated references in the text to the migratory invasions of the Cimbri and Teutoni (Vell. 2.8.3; 2.12.2; 2.12.4). Just as with Caesar and Tacitus, the inclusion of such historical events in the text were used as a historical touch stones for Velleius' Roman audience, and it further depicted the Germanic people as opponents of the Roman state.

Just as with those authors whose references to the Gallic tribes were either passing or framed for a particular purpose, the likes of Strabo and Velleius did the same for the Germanic people. Their respective images of the Germanic tribes were informed by their interest. Strabo was concerned with geography and therefore saw particular relevance in the semi-nomadism of the Germanic tribes and the link to the geography of the region beyond the Rhine (section 2.2). Meanwhile Velleius wrote of the Germanic tribes as enemies of Rome, thereby reinforcing the actions of Tiberius. His text is more concerned with numbers of the enemy defeated in battle rather than the customs and nature of those people. The lost works of authors such as Posidonius and in particular Pliny showed that there was an interest in the

Germanic people, but with the scant references to these work in other texts it is near impossible to construct an idea of Germanic ethnicity from them. Therefore in the surviving works we do have, such as Strabo and Velleius, we can conclude that there was a repeating set of traits which constantly were applied to the German people. These traits, a warlike nature and the practice of semi-nomadism, evolved over time, being focused on and highlighted by the needs of the author in question.

Strabo devoted the first chapter of Book 7 of his *Geographica* to a discussion of the geography of Germany, though his interests included local histories, mythologies, ethnography and politics (Dueck 2010: 249). There is a reference to the differences between the Gauls and Germans, as the latter "vary slightly from Celtic stock in that they are wilder, taller and have yellower hair" (Strabo 7.1.2). Then later he comments on the practice of divination via human sacrifice, which he claimed, was performed by priestesses who travelled with the wives of the Germanic warriors on their expeditions (Strabo 7.2.3). These two examples are the only ones that do not refer in some way to the Germanic customs of migration. Strabo commented that "...it is a common characteristic of all the peoples in this part of the world that they migrate with ease" (7.1.3). The custom was used to explain the Germanic practices of living in temporary shelters and avoiding the practice of agriculture. One should note that while both Strabo and Tacitus identify the Germanic reluctance for agriculture, they offer differing explanations. Tacitus argued that it was a reflection of the Germanic focus on warfare and combat while Strabo said it was due to the ease with which the tribes were required to migrate. The differences of opinions can be explained by the fact that Strabo's main focus was a description of the geography of Germany. It therefore stands that he would be interested in those customs that caused people to move from one region to another, as it pertained to the geography of the region. This in turn meant that he perceived Germanic culture in terms of their nomadic habit and therefore explained other practices in terms of the custom. Examples of this included the statement that Germanic tribes migrated away from the Rhine to avoid the Romans (Strabo 7.1.3), that the Germanic people would often either yield or quit their settlements (7.1.4), and that the tribe of the Cimbri were by their very nature "piratical and wandering" (7.2.2). The Germanic tendency to being shiftless and nomadic was therefore the primary trait to which Strabo made reference and shaped his identity of Germanic ethnicity.

The final text, which we know of but is unfortunately lost to us, is the *History of the Germanic War* by Pliny, referenced by Tacitus and Pliny himself (Tac. *Ann.*1.69.2).The work

would have concentrated on the conflicts in Germany during the reigns of Augustus through to Nero, covering significant campaigns along the Rhine frontier such as those of Tiberius (12 BC) and Germanicus (AD 13). The nature of the source material regarding the Germanic ethnic identity in the early Principate is unfortunately limited in its scope. Much like the early discourse on the Gallic tribes, Velleius and Strabo made ample use of historical events such as the attacks of the Cimbri in their constructions of Germanic ethnic identity. However, we once again see repetition of the skill of warfare, and semi nomadic lifestyle of the Germanic people relayed to us in the texts, though the potential threat Caesar perceived the Germans to be, by this time had become a reality for authors such as Velleius.

### **3.2.3: The Late First Century AD**

The principle work of Tacitus' dealing with the German people is the *Germania*. The work, written soon after the *Agricola* in AD 98, concerns the origins and land of the Germanic tribes (Tac. *Germ.*1.1). Tacitus' text presents an ethnic image of the Germanic people some 150 years after Caesar. Tacitus's father was a procurator in Gallia Belgica and there is a significant possibility that Tacitus experienced some form of provincial governorship or command in the region. However, if Tacitus made use of his personal experience he makes no indication of it within the text. We do see evidence of the use of several ancient authors including Caesar and the lost history of the Roman wars in Germany by his friend Pliny the Elder (Anderson 1938: 19; Mellor 2005: 76). Having held a suffect consulship in the year before the writing of the *Germania*, Tacitus' was well versed in the political life of Rome and had access to significant stores of state documentation. He is then an extremely important source, not just for the completeness of his text but also for the social position from which he wrote. While Tacitus was concerned with many of the themes of relevance to other Roman authors as Rives (1999: 45) puts it he "often treated old themes in new and more complex ways." His perspective on moral and political issues of his day in conjunction with the tremendous artistry (Rives 1999: 46) displayed in his works marks Tacitus out as a unique author, whose work often holds greater meaning than on first inspection.

This section considers the *Germania* as a source of ethnographic material, and will identify those facets discussed in the previous chapter that Tacitus used in constructing the German *ethnos*. We will also look at the primary traits his constructed Germanic *ethnos*

contains and how these then factored into the wider image of German identity this case study has been considering. First, there is the inclusion of geographical material in the text and the addition of a discussion of Germanic ancestry. Following on from this the customs of the Germanic tribes are examined and how Tacitus emphasised traits such as aggression and piety. We will discuss the religious customs described by Tacitus and how they show a development of knowledge from the work of Caesar. Finally, we examine the association of Roman virtues with the Germanic people in much the same fashion as Caesar did with the Gauls.

First, we should examine the purpose of the *Germania*. This issue is not straightforward for the text of the *Germania* lacks the common ancient practice including a preface. It has been left to modern scholars, through analysing the text itself to draw out Tacitus' purpose for writing. Thomas (2009: 61) states that Tacitus' primary interest was not the historical recording of the Germanic tribes; rather it is the use of this image to question the nature of Roman society. The comparison between the two cultures was Tacitus's primary aim for writing (Thomas 1982: 125), with the Germans being presented as the moral society that possessed a balanced representation of *libertas*, unaffected by the unjust and immoral acts of the elite political class in Roman during the reign of Domitian. Germans then are shown in many ways to have been the opposite of Tacitus' Roman audience (Revel 2009: 46). It is unsurprising then that the image Tacitus presents of the Germans is neither accurate in the traditional sense, nor an accurate impression of his perception of the Germanic tribes. For these two reasons we must exercise extreme caution when considering the image of Germans that Tacitus presents, as the presentation of the Germanic tribes is idealised (Mellor 2005: 79). As Rives (1999: 57) states: "...although the work does contain a few verifiable observation, it is so shaped by ethnographic preconceptions as to be virtually unusable as a historical source", views he shared with Lund (1991: 1951-4). However, the text of the *Germania* need not be lost to us. Mellor (2005: 79) notes that there are Germanic traits included which do not wholly present them in a perfect light, such as drunkenness and cruelty. Indeed, for the purpose of this study, the quote from Rives above points to the usefulness of the text as it contains the sorts of ethnographic preconceptions with which this study is concerned.

Two of the facets of constructed ethnicity that we spoke of in Chapter 2, a shared land and ancestry, appear early on in Tacitus' work. Following on from previous Greek ethnographic tradition, Tacitus included a geographical description of the land of Germany in

the opening section of his text (Tac. *Germ.* 1). Particular attention is paid to the Rhine and the Danube as delineators of Germanic territory. Of the inhabitants, Tacitus regarded them to be indigenous and only slightly blended with new groups to the region (*Germ.* 2.1). The Germans are again set as a people apart from the rest of the world. Ships rarely visit them and Tacitus justifies his claims of indigenesness by the remark that he could not imagine anyone having left another land for the regions of Germany (*Germ.* 2.2). Separation is further found to be a trait of the Germanic tribes as they are said to be "a race unmixed by intermarriage with other races" (*Germ.* 4.1). We have already spoken of the concept of ancestry as being a key factor in the creation of ethnic identities; here the Germans are given such an ethnic trait. However, Tacitus also mentioned other claims regarding the ancestry of the Germanic people, which included mythological figures such as Heracles. He describes the inclusion of Heracles in a native hymn as evidence of a local version of Germanic ancestry (*Germ.* 3.1), while other "authorities" claimed that Ulysses was carried to the land of the Germanic tribes and founded the settlement of Asciburgium (*Germ.* 3.3). The inclusion of both these explanations in the work is similar to the inclusion of Hercules in the origins of the Gauls related by Diodorus (5.24.2-3), and performs a similar role in this text. Tacitus states clearly his preference for the unmixed nature of the Germanic people, though he offers the other claims so that "...everyone according to his temperament may minimise or magnify their credibility" (*Germ.* 3.4). The implication is that these myths were without merit, although their inclusion shows that some of his audience may have at least known of these stories.

Tacitus then separated the Germans from other cultures at the earliest possible point of their history. He also states that it was in their very nature to seek this distance, as they lived in scattered groups where even the buildings did not touch one another (*Germ.* 16.1). Tacitus comments that this was very different to that of the Roman people who lived in buildings that were continuous and connected. The distance from foreign groups had afforded the German people a degree of secrecy, which had only been lifted through the prosecution of war (*Germ.* 1.2). References to the separation of the Germanic people via distance from other groups, along with comments regarding the nature of German villages suggest that the nomadic nature of the people was still apparent during the time of Tacitus.

The continuation of ethnic traits, such as a nomadic lifestyle, is found in other aspects of Tacitus' ethnographic work such as his discussion of customs and cultural practices. Excessive drinking was considered by Tacitus as a pervasive trait of the Germanic people (*Germ.* 22.1). As we have seen already, the association with drinking and the tribes of the

Gaul and the Germans went back some way in Roman perceptions of the two groups. Tacitus offers some further details on the nature of Germanic inebriation, stating that alongside the trade in wine the Germans fermented barley and wheat (*Germ.*23.1). So great did Tacitus see the effects of the Germanic desire for alcohol that he commented that "...they will be vanquished through their vices as easily as on the battlefield" (*Germ.*23.2). Of the Germanic appetite, Tacitus claimed that they preferred simple food while indulging in lavish feasting (*Germ.*23.1, 21.2). Such excessiveness seems at odds with the previous claim of the preference for simple food, though it spoke to the Roman view of the Germans as an impulsive race, a trait shown in their approach to warfare and gambling. Feasts saw drunken brawling yet it was thought a crime to refuse a guest entrance or any desire (*Germ.*21.2, 22.2). Such brawls could result in bloodshed and were often the result of feuds, which Tacitus regarded as frequent and dangerous when mixed with the freedom of the Germanic nature (*Germ.*21.2). Here we see that Tacitus, and therefore his audience, considered Germanic aggression and lack of moderation to be a significant part of that society.

Such aggression could be seen in the nature of Germanic social customs. When young men found themselves in times of peace, Tacitus recorded that they would leave their land in search of conflict (*Germ.*14.2). As mentioned above, we see here a depiction of the Germans as impulsive and aggressive, their desire for warfare encouraged them to abandon their local ties and engage in a mercenary lifestyle. Tacitus suggested that this practice was due to the Germanic races dislike of peace and preference for uncertainty over stability. So much did they prefer the unknown that they acted with great recklessness when gambling going as far as staking their personal liberty (*Germ.*24.3). As will be discussed later, Tacitus considered *libertas* among the Germans to be a fundamental factor in their identity, therefore the staking of such a thing during gambling displayed to a Roman audience the German predilection for risk and uncertainty.

Tacitus commented of the young men of Germany that they showed distaste for peace yet a love of sloth, for they refused to till the land preferring instead to fight or hunt (*Germ.*15.1). They showed a formidable strength on the battlefield yet lacked the tolerance to maintain it past the initial offensive (*Germ.*4.3). Again, we have a depiction of an impulsive people who rushed into combat without thought to the end result. But this generalisation of all Germans finds an exception in the Aestii, who unlike other German tribes, shook off the inertia of their fellow Germans and cultivated the land, a practice which Tacitus complimented as a mark of patience "out of keeping with the lethargy customary to

Germans" (*Germ.*45.4). When speaking of the Cherusci, Tacitus described them as overcome with a "languid peacefulness" and being "indolent and blind" (*Germ.*36.1-2). This passage suggests that Tacitus considered the Cherusci, because of their lack of action, to be foolish and ignorant of their surroundings. It would seem then that there was an expectation of Germanic tribes that they would act in a certain manner, when this did not occur they were thought of as lesser than their neighbours. Aggression then was considered a key component in Germanic ethnicity.

In contrast to the simplistic depiction of Germanic religious practice in Caesar's account, Tacitus wrote in far greater detail about the matter suggesting that the intervening 150 years had allowed for a greater deal of information on the subject to slowly work its way to Rome. On several occasions, Germanic gods are listed with Roman names (*Germ.*3.1, 9.1, 43.3). This equating of foreign deities with those of the Roman pantheon was used in Caesar's description of the Gallic pantheon but lacking in discussion of Germanic gods. Tacitus included Hercules, Mercury and Mars to name only a few. He claimed, as Caesar did of the Gauls, that the Germans had a preference for the worship of Mercury (*Germ.*9.1). The Naharvali were said to possess a grove in which they worshipped Castor and Pollux, although Tacitus did state that this was a Roman interpretation (*Germ.*43.3). Indeed that fact that Tacitus accepted this to be a Roman interpretation suggests that he knew that this was information that had been manipulated by the cultural comprehension of his sources. To clarify further the point, Tacitus suggested that the gods named the Alci were at least of a similar nature to Castor and Pollux if not their direct Germanic counterparts. Tacitus also included Germanic names for at least one other deity. When speaking of several German tribes, Tacitus commented that "...nor is there anything noteworthy about them individually, except that they worship in common Nerthus, or Mother Earth" (*Germ.*40.2-3).

His views on Germanic deities were complex. He was seemingly respectful enough to offer detailed descriptions of their natures and methods of worship, yet cast doubt on the veracity of the claims made by his sources. Later there is reference to the Aestii and their worship of the "mother of the gods." Her worshipers were said to wear figures of wild boars that were thought to protect them in place of other means. Again, Tacitus gives details here about methods of worship yet refers to the worship of this mother goddess as a whole as a "superstition" (*Germ.*45.3). There is one other deity mentioned by Tacitus. Isis is recorded as being worshiped by the Suebi, although Tacitus in the same passage clearly stated that he had been unable to discover the origin or cause of the worship (*Germ.*45.3). Its inclusion though

is significant as Caesar before him had claimed at his time of writing that the Germans had no knowledge of foreign gods (Caes. *BG.6.21*). Here we see some of the fluidity of ethnicity, Germans were still considered to be as distant people as we have seen, but gradual inroads were being made and cultural influences taking effect. There is another case where Tacitus' account disagreed with Caesar. The Germans were said to be practitioners of sacrifices, both human and animal (*Germ.9.2-3*), where Caesar had claimed that they were adverse to sacrifices (Caes. *BG.6.21.1*). When speaking of the Semnones, Tacitus stated that the practice of sacrifice was a part of "barbarous worship" (*Germ.39.2*). It is difficult to argue that this comprises a neutral opinion on the part of Tacitus; he was clearly adverse to such practices. However, this is the only clear denouncement of human sacrifice, and Tacitus by no means focused on the practice elsewhere. It is true that the greater levels of interaction between the Germanic tribes and the Roman state during the time Tacitus was writing generated potential for greater degrees of information regarding Germanic tribes, which in turn may have translated into the apparent greater depth of Tacitus' Germanic ethnoses when compared to that of Caesar's work. However, one should also consider the possibility that Tacitus developed a more detailed image of the Germanic tribes not due to the greater levels of knowledge regarding the Germanic tribes, but instead in order to better compare them to Rome as part of his wider critique. In this way, Tacitus' wider purpose in the work potentially pushes his etic Germanic identity further from reality and closer to a caricature for his moralising purpose.

The Germans were considered pious, believing as they did that gods should not be kept within walls, preferring instead to consecrate groves and coppices to them (Tac. *Germ.9.3*). Tacitus also referred to their piety when he spoke of their extensive practices of divination. The Germans used the method of drawing lots; they consulted the flights of birds and observed the actions of sacred white horses (*Germ.10*). Last of all, Tacitus commented on the German practice of pitting a warrior against captive enemies in combat and depending on the result of their combat, a divination was taken (*Germ.10.6*). The last two methods, the sacred horses and combat, Tacitus considered unique to the Germans thereby distinguishing their culture from other foreign people and yet again presenting these differences in terms his audience would comprehend, that of divination.

There are significant similarities with Tacitus' account of the Germanic people and other groups such as Caesar records of Gallic ethnicity. Both authors ascribed the desire for *libertas* to their respective subjects. However, Tacitus' use of *libertas* within the discourse

surrounding Germanic ethnicity was predicated on his desire to compare the Germanic tribes to Roman society, which he believed to have lost its sense of *libertas*. Therefore, one must be aware of Tacitus' tendency to promote the Germanic love of *libertas* as being partially motivated by the wider purpose of the text. His first mention of *libertas* is made in relation to the Germanic "foible" of slowly assembling for tribal gatherings (*Germ.*11.3). *Libertas* was so much a part of their nature that it was accepted that when called on by tribal leaders, Germans still acted upon their own desires. Tacitus again associated the Germanic predisposition to *libertas* with negative result when he referred to its dangerous nature when coupled with the proclivity of feuds within Germanic society. The concept of the Germanic tribes presenting a threat due to their freedom is shown in a later quote where Tacitus commented that "...the German fighting for liberty has been a keener enemy than the absolutism of Arsaces" (*Germ.*37.3). Arsaces was the founder of the Parthian dynasty so this statement is a significant claim. Just before this, Tacitus referred to the extensive time that the Germans had been at war with Rome without resolution (*Germ.*37.2). So great was German *libertas* that when tribes were ruled by kings, this was still not considered a limitation on their freedom (*Germ.*44.1). There is however, a single instance of Germanic *libertas* being undermined. It occurred at the end of the work and refers to the tribe of the Sitones in which it was said women were the rulers (*Germ.*45.6). Of this practice, Tacitus claimed it caused the Sitones to have fallen lower than freedmen and slaves. The example is an extreme one and is only made in reference to a single tribe in a section of the text where Tacitus information was becoming limited (*Germ.*45.6). The overall picture is that the Germanic desire for freedom and the natural predisposition they had for it had caused them to become a significant threat to the Roman world, much like what is evident in Caesar's account of Gallic *libertas* (section 3.1.3). By the time, Tacitus was writing he considered the extensive time that Rome had been at war with tribes from the region as proof enough of this claim.

We once again find the use of another Roman concept, *virtus*, in Tacitus' writing. As with Caesar's accounts of both Gauls and Germans, Tacitus used this most sought after of Roman virtues as a means for describing to his audience the character of the German people. *Virtus* was used to describe a number of parts of Germanic society. The Germans were said to decide upon their generals and his retinue on the grounds of *virtus* (*Germ.*7.1, 14.1). Among the Chatti, Tacitus recorded that, it was a warrior's ability to remain equal to the demands of *virtus* that showed his capability in battle (*Germ.*31.5). In fact, the Chatti were considered by Tacitus to rely upon their *virtus* where others may have trusted to luck (*Germ.*30.2). Their

reliance on *virtus*, Tacitus notes was part of their customs with youths only succeeding, and attaining *virtus*, after they had slain an enemy combatant (*Germ.*31.1). Many of the allusions to *virtus* come in relation to skill on the battlefield, such as the nature of the battle chant, which was thought of as a convergence of their *virtus* (*Germ.*3.2). Finally, Tacitus noted however, that Germanic *virtus* was not limited to the battlefield. In reference to the Chauci, he commented that they depended upon their *virtus* over injustice in order to maintain their superior position (*Germ.*35.5). Here *virtus* was a factor in the preservation of the Chauci's territory and as a form of justice rather than just as a representation of their skill at warfare.

Tacitus also included several references to Germanic ethnic identity in his work the *Annals*. Written some 20 years after the *Germania*, the *Annals* concern the history of the Principate from AD 69-96 (Woodman 2004: X). Within the text Tacitus related a number of ethnic traits that we have already seen, excessive drinking (*Annals* 1.50.4; 11.16.1), strong religious beliefs (*Annals* 13.57.1) and inability to tolerate wounds and exhaustion (*Annals* 2.14.-4). Tacitus also continued to apply a number of themes taken up in the *Germania*. Germans were described as "...brutal to behold..." (*Annals* 2.14.3) and possessing the habit of going to war against one another (*Annals* 2.44.2). Such ideas continue the theme of the Germans and a warlike people as we saw in the *Germania*. The concept of Germanic *libertas* was also referenced in relation to Arminius, who is described as being "...a warrior of freedom" (*Annals* 2.44.2). Examples such as these show that the ethnic Germanic identity Tacitus presented in the *Germania* was still being deployed and adapted some 20 years later.

Tacitus' depiction of the Germanic people has several themes that we can distinguish from the text. Firstly, the connection between them and an aggressive nature was still present in the work continuing on from Caesar's account. Tacitus saw this trait as a major cultural motivator, influencing the actions of the Germanic male youth. Their strong desire for conflict had such an influence over them that Tacitus saw it as one of the few activities that could rouse them from their normal slothful nature. Innate ethnic traits such as the desire for *libertas* and rewarding of *virtus* were considered the driving forces behind this aggressive nature a perception that we have already seen in Caesar's interpretation of the Gauls. Such aggression was not limited to conflicts, but was present in moments of celebration and feasting, and emphasised by their lack of moderation. Tacitus summed up the threat that the Germanic tribes and their love of *libertas* presented the Roman people, when he noted the length of time the two cultures had been at war.

Tacitus displays a more informed understanding of Germanic religion (Tac. *Germ.*9.1-3), suggesting that the contact with such tribes over the frontier had caused a greater level of familiarity with the practices of these tribes. The attempts to equate Germanic gods and religious practices with those of the Roman people was a tradition that Tacitus used, just as we have seen with other authors, to aid his audience in their understanding of the Germanic tribes through their own cultural comprehension. The German people were displayed as a more pious *ethnos* than Caesar had previously presented, and it is in the way in which they honoured their gods that we have seen suggestion of the second theme of Tacitus' Germanic ethnic identity. The Germanic practice of worshipping their gods outdoors, in groves and other such locations, reinforced the non-urban nature of the Germanic people; Tacitus even alluded to this differing practice in comparison to the Roman deities who were worshipped in great temples.

Here we see a stark dividing line between the Germans and the Romans for Tacitus, one group lived scattered through the land, while the other lived in structured cities and towns. It is the nomadic nature of the Germanic people and their distance from other cultures to which Tacitus made constant reference. We have seen this in their belief in the honour of living apart from their neighbours and their intrinsic desire for both personal and tribal *libertas*. Both the warlike nature and a custom of semi-nomadic movement, as we have seen, were constantly noted in both Caesar' and Tacitus' depictions of Germanic ethnicity. It would seem then that these characteristics, just as with the Gallic *ethnos*, were key cultural stereotypes for the Roman people of both these northern peoples living on their frontiers. In the following section, we will consider whether this was the case for other authors, whose work contained ethnographic material on the Germanic people and see whether these stereotypical traits continued to dominate the literary sources.

#### **3.2.4: The Etic identity of the Germans: Conclusion**

In this second of the two case studies in this chapter, we have considered the Roman image of Germanic ethnicity, from the earliest extant account of the Germanic tribes through the ethnographic work, the *Germania*, and its focus on the Germanic *ethnos*. The goal was to analyse the Roman depictions of Germanic ethnicity from the literary sources. We have seen how there were two significant traits that the Romans ascribed to the Germanic people, which also would have directly informed interactions in the frontier region. These traits were a preference towards conflict and battle and an aggressive nature, and the cultural practice of

migration, which was considered a fundamental cultural practice of the Germanic tribes. In both these cases, each ancient author offered differing explanations for these facets of Germanic ethnicity.

The association of Germanic ethnicity with the aggression that was seen to form part of their culture was present from the first ethnographic studies we have. Caesar offers numerous examples of the Germans engaged in warfare. The Germanic tribes of the *Commentarii* were responsible for raiding across the Rhine into Gallic territory, fighting against the Romans on behalf of Gallic tribes and forming auxiliaries who fought for Caesar himself. We should not be surprised by this accusation as not only was conflict the most consistent method of Germanic interaction with the Roman people, but with the numerous references to the conflicts of the Roman people with the tribes of the Cimbri and Teutoni, it was seen as part of a long term Germanic images which had been built up from their first interactions with the Roman people. Such was the effect of the Cimbri and the Teutoni that Caesar, Strabo and Tacitus all included the events of that conflict in their works, suggesting that it still informed their understanding of the Germanic *ethnos*.

Velleius, of all the ancient authors, focused on the warlike nature of the Germanic people, though the constant emphasis of this trait was probably a direct result of the focus of that section of his work being the campaigns of Tiberius across the Rhine and Danube. His concentration on the aggressive nature of the Germans was part of a narrative that consistently contained references to battles, tactics, enemy numbers and casualties (Vell. 2.12.4, 2.47.1). Both Caesar and Tacitus sought to explain the aggressive nature of the Germanic *ethnos* through Roman values. The Germans were described as lovers of *libertas*, and possessing *virtus* in equal measure. Such characteristics were part of the Roman consciousness and so formed a cultural comprehension for Romans attempting to understand the practices of the Germanic tribes. Their love of *libertas* meant that they would, just as Caesar thought of the Gauls; resist the Romans at every opportunity. *Virtus* was seen as not only a way in which the Germanic people protected their culture, as they sought to prevent a loss of *virtus* through external influence, but also as a factor which influenced every part of their society such as agriculture and social justice. These examples show us how the Roman people sought to understand their foreign counterparts in terms of their own culture. By seeing both *libertas* and *virtus* in the Germanic tribes, it made them more comprehensible and more dangerous, as they then displayed traits that the Romans thought were responsible in the own success.

The second main trait to which a majority of the ancient authors referred was the custom of migration. The act itself was linked to the impulsive nature of the Germanic people, a factor that was reinforced through their apparent love of gambling and risk taking. Again, the references to the Cimbri and Teutoni spoke to this image of Germanic ethnicity. The Germanic invasion force that was difficult to predict and caused a great deal of damage and suffering for the Roman people, was used to shape the Germans in Roman consciousness.

Caesar and Tacitus, both commented on the separate nature of the Germanic people, and how they were a 'pure' race, that suffered no mixing between themselves and other races. They saw this being achieved through the German belief of distance from ones' neighbours being a sign of respect and honour. It was thought that the internal politics of the German tribes was influenced by their desire to live removed from others, therefore requiring a tribe to force their neighbours to move away from them. In this way, migration was understood to be a part of inter-tribal life. Roman authors also saw the difficulties that this presented the Roman people. Caesar commented that those Germanic tribes he attempted to engage with simply took up their belongings and removed themselves into the forests, where the Romans would not follow. Strabo reinforced this image in his writing arguing that it was a common practice, which gave the Germanic people the ability to simply remove themselves from the influence of the Roman presence on the Rhine. Indeed Strabo characterised the whole Germanic *ethnos* in terms of their migratory nature, stating that it was the common practice throughout all of the tribes.

It was the warlike nature and the practice of migration that typified the key Germanic traits for their interaction on the frontier with Roman groups. The two traits were the primary influence on the Germanic *ethnos*, from the Roman perspective that brought them into contact with them and influenced most of the interactions on the frontier.

### **3.3: Perceptions of Gallic and Germanic Ethnicity: Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the image of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity that was constructed in Greek and Roman cultures. Far from the image of the barbarian possessing noble qualities, an image that has been accepted by some scholars, we have found one that shows both Gallic and Germanic cultures to be complex and most importantly not intrinsically different as the concept of "othering" (section 2.1) might suggest. The majority

of ancient authors who wrote in any way about ethnographic nature of the Gauls or Germans avoided condemnation of the two cultures, only reserving such judgement for specific practices such as human sacrifice. We have discussed those ancient authors whose work has offered up the most significant ethnographic material on the Gallic and Germanic tribes at times when these groups were present on Roman frontiers. In this way, we have been able to consider those traits the Romans most commonly associated with the Gallic and Germanic *ethnos*. It was established in the previous chapter that ethnicity is primarily a social construction, and can be formed by the subject group or an observing group. In this chapter, we have been considering the later of these cases. There has been no consideration as to the accuracy of these constructed ethnicities, as we are not concerned with realities rather we are interested in what Roman believed was fact. The Roman construction of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity may not have been accurate at all, yet it was the cultural information that they possessed, and therefore it was that image that they acted upon in interaction with these cultures on the frontier. It has been the case that as we are primarily interested in the interactions on the northern European frontier, which we have concentrated on those traits and cultural practices that would have most affected the nature of the frontier.

The outcome of this study has been that the Romans comprehended the Gallic tribes and Germanic tribes as possessing similar traits. Both were thought to have a warlike nature and an aggressive temperament, while also holding a semi nomadic lifestyle and the capacity for migration as core ethnic traits. There is a difference within the discourse between semi nomadic traits and the act of migration. Semi nomadism is often shown as a cultural practice and to some degree a curiosity (Polyb. 2.17.11). While the nature of migration was often presented as a violent and destabilising force (Polyb. 1.6.5, 5.78; Caesar *BG*.1.33.4). The only significant difference given to the two groups was that the Germanic tribes had preserved their culture, while the Gauls had allowed theirs to be corrupted by the influence of Greek and Roman cultures. One could consider this presentation of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity as the "othering" of nomadism by an urban civilised Greek and Roman audience, and there is little doubt that this was the reality of these depictions.

The focus of Gallic and Germanic culture on combat and conflict is an easily understood assessment on the part of ancient authors, from Polybius onwards, their main inclusion in historical writing came as a result of either invasions or conflicts. This is however, no consistent negative connotations found in the ancient literature, in fact in the writings of Caesar and Tacitus we find attempts to explain this trait as a method of protecting

their *libertas*, a cause that the Roman people would have understood. Tacitus in particular seemed to use the Germanic expression of *libertas* as a form of "othering" in comparison to the stagnation of the Roman state. The possession of *libertas* did not mark the northern tribes out as dangerous, for many cultures the Romans came into contact with displayed a society that was warlike in nature. Instead, it seems that the presence of *virtus* in both Gallic and Germanic people caused their warlike nature to become a real danger. They were often spoken of as being unpredictable and lovers of risk, a trait ancient writers highlighted in their brawls during feasts and love of gambling. This unpredictability and perceived love of risk taking was also a large component of the second significant trait the Romans perceived in the northern tribes.

The cultural trait of semi nomadism and the act of migration were key, but not the sole, methods by which interactions between the Greek and Roman peoples occurred. It was also a dividing cultural practice between these two groups. For Roman and Greek audiences, migrations had been a part of their semi-mythical history, be it the Dorian invasion into Greece or the migration of the survivors of Troy to Italy. However, it had not remained so. For the Gallic and Germanic *ethnos*, it was seen as a continuing process that through historical events such as the sack of Rome, the plundering of Delphi (Hammond 1976: 70) and the invasion of the Cimbri and Teutoni had brought destruction and damage to both Greek and Roman alike.

Roman authors understood the significant affects that migrations could have on the surrounding area. Caesar prevented the Helvetii from migrating as it presented a threat to the Roman interests. However, he also forced the Helvetii to return to their lands in order to prevent Germanic tribes crossing the Rhine and causing significant instability in the region. The Cimbri and Teutoni were known by both Caesar and Strabo to have caused panic and chaos throughout the Gallic tribes before they threatened Italy. While the aggressive nature of the Gallic and Germanic people might have caused fear and concern of the power of these tribes when roused to war, it was by migration or that this was most effectively unleashed on the empire.

Nomadism as a feature of the Gallic/Germanic ethnicity was the part of constructed ethnicity discussed in the last chapter as "a shared land or territory." In this case, the factor of tribal migration for Greek and Roman audiences displayed an implicit lack of homeland for these tribal groups; however, this functioned in the etic construction of Gallic and Germanic

ethnicities in the same unifying manner. A unifying etic culture was seen through the perceived chaos of the tribal structure. This is much the same with warfare, this trait was part of perceived "shared culture" that the tribes possessed. So significant were these two traits that they affected other parts of the constructed ethnicity of the Gauls and Germans, with ancillary factors such as social structure being explained through these two tribal organising principles. We can therefore consider nomadism and the cultural preference for warfare that the Gauls and Germans displayed as the most significant factors in the perception of these tribes by Greek and Roman authors. One should note however that the traits discussed in this chapter were etic in nature. While there is no doubt that the tribal communities living in Central Europe considered themselves skilful warriors, there is little evidence that the image presented in this chapter would have been the emic identity for these communities. As Todd (1987: 7) notes, even the terms Gaul and German are unlikely to have been by the tribes themselves. The questions remain however, to what degree could these associations found in the ancient literature be considered normative for the Roman world and how did they affect the development of the Roman frontier in northern Europe? In the next chapter, we will consider whether this perception was common throughout Roman society, and for what reasons these two particular traits may have been given such prominence in the Roman understanding of the Gallic and Germanic peoples.

## Chapter 4

### An Ethnic Frontier

This thesis has thus far presented an argument for the importance of ethnic identities and the manner in which such identities were constructed. First, we established the nature of ethnicity in the ancient world and how ethnic identities could and were constructed by communities. We then assessed all significant ethnographic material relating to Gallic and Germanic groups. This concluded that the Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity primarily focused around the concepts of warfare, semi-nomadic lifestyles and the potential danger of tribal migrations. This chapter considers the application of these ideas to the question of the Roman concept of the frontier and its nature.

The Roman view that both Gallic and Germanic tribes were predisposed to warfare, a semi-nomadic lifestyle and large-scale migration was a common perception, as we have seen from the textual evidence. Such a view had been formed over many decades based on events such as the sack of Rome and the invasion of the Cimbri and Teutoni (113 -101 BC), and must have affected the cultural perception of threats on the Rhine 'frontier'. We have seen how the perception of these events affected the Roman view of these tribes. This resulted in Caesar preventing the migration of the Helvetii as a threat to both the nearby Roman province and the stability of the region beyond Roman borders (Osgood 2009: 332). With the cultural perception the Roman citizenship had of the northern tribes, such reasoning as Caesar presented must have made logical sense regardless of its actual accuracy.

To analyse how such perceptions of tribal groups affected the frontier we can breakdown the issue into several themes. The first section of this chapter will consider how the Romans perceived their own frontiers and in what way their perception of their tribal neighbours affected this view? We will consider the way in which ethnicity played a role in the Roman understanding of the geographical world around them, and how there is little actual evidence regarding the purpose assigned to the frontiers by the Romans themselves. To better understand the Roman concept of their frontiers we can also discuss the nature of information gathering along the frontier and identify to what degree the Roman state comprehended the situation on the frontier. In addition to these factors, we need to look at

how decision making on the frontier may have functioned and how choices were often influenced by social and political concerns within the Empire rather than strategically relevant concerns in the frontier regions. Lastly, the initial section of the chapter will look at how frontiers were chosen and what reasoning led to frontiers being placed where we find them today. In particular, we will assess the Rhine frontier and how the Roman state perceived the frontier.

The second section in the chapter analyses how the Roman state interacted across the frontier zone. To do so we will break down interaction into three broad categories. First economic interaction, which included the development of complex trade networks and supply routes within the frontier zone. Second, we will consider the use of diplomatic influence across the frontier, involving factors such as treaties, the resettlement of tribal communities and the recruitment of tribal warriors into Roman auxiliary units. Finally, we will look at the manner in which these interactions may have affected the tribal communities within the frontier zone, and how the Roman ethnic perception of the Gallic and Germanic tribes may have influenced these interactions and their eventual results.

#### **4.1: The Roman Understanding of Frontiers and Empire**

In attempting to understand the purpose and development of frontiers in the Roman period, we must understand the Roman perception of their borders. While it might be enticing to imagine that Roman views on frontier were similar if not identical to our modern views of a boundary line (Fawcett 1918:17), this is not the case. Instead, the Roman understanding of their borders was based on ethnic groups rather than geography (Visy 2003b: 213). Such an idea would have been influenced by the perceptions of ethnic identity discussed in Chapter 3. We should therefore look at how the Roman state understood frontier zones. This section will first cover how Romans viewed their own borders and the extremities of their Empire. Second, we look at how decisions regarding frontier policy were made and what information Roman officials could realistically rely on to inform their choices. Thirdly, the method by which Romans chose their borders and expanded them will be considered. This is especially important as the Roman understanding of their frontiers, as we shall see, was based on ethnic differences. Therefore, the location of such frontier must have had an ethnic component. Finally, we will focus on the Rhine frontier, and analyse how Romans viewed not only river frontiers but also the Rhine frontier in particular.

#### 4.1.1: An Ethnic View of a World Empire

In considering the effect of perceptions of foreign ethnicity upon the frontier in central Europe, we must analyse how the Romans viewed and understood their frontiers. Up to this point in this thesis, we have used the term 'frontier' without real definition. While this was not of great importance for the previous chapters we should here make clear the definition. Unlike modern frontiers around the world, which are considered clearly placed geographical boundaries, it has been a part of a discussion among modern scholarship that ancient frontiers are better considered as zonal (Potter 1992: 274; Wheeler 1993a: 11). These zones represented the periphery of Roman influence (Goodman 2012: 25), which could take a number of forms be it economic, military or political/diplomatic influence (Doyle 1989: 19). To better understand this concept of Roman frontiers we should consider the changing concepts of empire and frontiers in the Roman discourse.

There is little evidence for early Republican concepts of frontier or empire. Those examples that do exist tend towards claims of immediate natural boundaries, such as the Alps framing the north of Italy (Polyb. *Hist.* 3.54.2-3). While such statements did not constitute claims of frontier, they did serve as some form of limit to political influence Rome wished to exercise (Whittaker 1994: 27). By the later Republic, notions of frontier were still limited, shown in the lack of any development of frontiers or early *limes* system during the Republic. However, the conceptualisation of empire had developed significantly. Polybius (*Hist.* 1.1.5) in his preface questioned those who do not wish to know "...by what means and under what system of polity the Romans in less than fifty-three years have succeeded in subjecting nearly the whole inhabited world to their solo government." Polybius again repeated this opinion of Roman domination, who stated "...the Romans, who had aimed merely at the subjection of Italy, in a short time brought the whole world under their sway..."(6.50.6). Polybius' meaning here is seemingly ambiguous, as even he would have known the limits of the Empire did not encompass the whole of the known world. Instead, it would seem that the meaning in Polybius' words are similar to those of Cicero (*De. Rep.* 3.15.24), who refers to the "...*orbis terrarum*" already being contained within Rome's imperium. In comparing these statements, one sees the development of the theme referred to above, of Roman political influence. In both cases our authors would have been well aware of existence of lands beyond the Roman Empire, but it was to the reach of Roman political influence that they referred to which stretched well beyond the physical limits of the empire.

The focus on political influence eventually became focus on influence over ethnic groups, as mentioned above. In the *Commentarii*, we find that Caesar described the region of Gaul in terms of ethnicity. The *Commentarii* begins with "Gaul is a whole divided into three parts, one of which is inhabited by the Belgae, another by the Aquitani, and a third by a people called in their own tongue Celtae, in the Latin Galli" (Caes. *BG*.1.1). In these lines, Caesar informs us of how he perceived the region of Gaul (Dench 2005: 53). It was not based on the rivers or mountain ranges of the region but instead by the apparent ethnically distinct peoples that could be observed. Only after this distinction had been made did Caesar refer to any of the geographical features of Gaul (Caes. *BG*.1.1). Just as with Augustus later, Caesar presented the region not only in terms that he understood it, but also in frames of reference that his audience would have comprehended. So with a focus on ethnic groups instead of geographical features how then might the nomadic nature of the Gallic and Germanic tribes have been understood within the Roman mind set? It is possible that the semi-nomadic nature of the tribes and the large-scale migratory movements that occurred within the frontier zone would have been looked upon as direct challenges to Roman authority, and presented as an image of instability and strife. In Chapter 2, we noted the idea that when a body such as the Roman Empire came into contact with other ethnic groups, it was common for the empire to seek a static interpretation of the other groups' identity. By propagating this new etic identity, the empire in question would have gradually begun to affect the emic identity of the ethnic group. The desire for static perceptions of external groups was probably from desire for a wider sense of stability, both conceptually of the world around them and physically around the periphery of the empire. That such groups as the Gallic and Germanic tribes manifested ethnic traits which were antithetical to this Roman perception of stability, must have had an effect not only on the discourse surrounding their etic identity but also the practical nature of interacting with these groups within frontier zones. Even with a frontier zone, which was semi-permeable, the wider knock on effects of tribal movements must have created a perception of chaos and instability just beyond Roman influence.

Under Augustus, the establishment of the Roman conception of empire in terms of ethnicity was fully established. If we look to the *Res Gestae*, we find that Augustus frames the expansion of Roman influence in terms of those peoples brought under Roman sway: "I enlarged the boundaries of all provinces of the Roman people, which has as neighbouring peoples that were not subject to our rule" (*Res Gestae* 26.1). In this quote, it is significant that Augustus refers to the 'Roman people' rather than the Roman Empire or state (Richardson

2008: 119). This is the framing of concepts surrounding both frontier and empire in terms of ethnic groups rather than geographical regions. It is not the only example in the *Res Gestae*. In the opening lines of the text, we find the following: "he made the world subject to the rule of the Roman people" (*Res Gestae* preface). The use of 'Roman people' infers a link between empire and ethnicity. The link can also be seen in the names attached to each province, which better reflected the ethnic groups that inhabited the region than the geographical features. Examples of this include Galatia, Numidia, and Germania (Purcell 1990: 8). The quote also references the Roman view of their destiny to have control over the known world (Woolf 2005: 116) a further continuation of the ideas presented by Polybius and Cicero above. Nicolet (1991), in *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*, argued that references to the bringing of the world under Augustus' control related to a larger ideal of the Roman conquest of the world (Breeze & Jilek 2003: 141). Such a grandiose ideal can be found in the poetry of Augustus' day. Virgil, in the *Aeneid* (1.15-18) writes: "This is said; Juno loved above all other lands holding Samos itself less dear... that here should be the capital of all nations." In this example, Virgil refers to the destiny of Rome, as that of the capital of all nations, or of the world. This was by no means the only occasion that Virgil referred to this idea of a Roman world empire. Later in the same book, Virgil wrote: "Of Mars and with his own name endow the Roman nation. To these I set no bounds, either in space or time; Unlimited power I give to them" (*Aen.* 1.278-279). This goes farther than the previous example, as Virgil stated clearly that the Roman Empire would have "...no bounds." Towards the middle of the *Aeneid* Virgil repeated this theme: "Caesar Augustus, son of a god, destined to rule; Where Saturn ruled of old Latium, and there bring back the age of gold: his empire shall expand past Garamantes and Indians to a land beyond the zodiac..." (*Aen.* 6.792-5). There are several ideas in this section of Virgil's text; the first is the repeated idea of a limitless empire found in the previous examples (Gruen 2004: 242). Second, we have the use of both the Garamantes and Indians as ethnic markers to represent the vast expanse the empire covered. This is an example as we have seen above, of Romans understanding their surrounding in terms of ethnicity rather than geography, of peoples rather than places. Livy, writing around the same time as Virgil, included these ideas in the opening book of his *Histories* (1.16.7): "announce to the Romans that the gods in heaven will my Rome to be the capital of the world." Here Livy echoed the same sentiment from the first example by Virgil. However, the context in which Livy presented this statement offers further significance. In the preceding section, Livy referred to both the mythic and suspected stories surrounding the death of Romulus. While his opinion is not clear, he noted that support for the myth increased

after the testimony of a man named Proculus Iulius, who claimed that Romulus had descended from heaven and commanded him to relay the quote above to his fellow citizens.

With the death of Augustus came his instructions to his successors alongside the *Res Gestae* and the *breviarium totius imperii* (Whittaker 1994: 35). Tacitus (*Annals* 1.11) records the salient point of these instructions: "... and had added the counsel of confining the empire within its boundaries." The sentiment of this statement seems at odds with the perception of the empire before Augustus' death. Such feelings most likely came about due to the military disaster of Varus in the Teutoberg Forest in AD 9. The reference can be interpreted as the first example of imperial frontier policy, however due to the vagueness of the statement and the unknown nature of the document in question this is likely not to be the case (Whittaker 1994: 35). Whether it was policy or not, Augustus' successors seem to have largely ignored his recommendations. For example both Gaius and Claudius planned conquest of Britain, with only the latter being successful (AD 43).

Beyond the Julio-Claudians, the perception of the frontier and empire seems to have continued to be one that incorporated its expansion. Tacitus (*Germ.*37) commented that from the time of the Cimbrian invasion to his own was 210 years and that "... for that length of time has the conquest of Germany been in process." Writing towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Tacitus shows how the expectation of expansion was still present in Roman concepts of the empire and its frontier policy. It is only later in the history of the Roman Empire that there is significant evidence of a change in perceptions of empire and frontier. Dio writing towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD included in his history of Rome a speech claimed to have been delivered by Octavian to the Senate in 27 BC. Dio (53.10.4-5) writes: "Guard vigilantly what you already have, but never covet what does not belong to you. Do not treat your allies or subject nations arrogantly, or exploit them for your gain..." Even if we are to assume that Octavian actually recited this to the Senate, it does not match what we know of his military career, and is therefore most likely a rhetorical creation of Dio similar to the constitutional debate he included in his text (52.1-40). A second example is found later in Book 54 (9.1) where Dio states that Augustus was not in favour of adding new territory to the empire. Again, this is difficult to match with what we know of his military actions and is most likely a reflection of current thinking at the time Dio was writing. The evidence from Dio therefore suggests that the image of the empire and the frontier by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD had become a significantly more static affair. With particular importance placed on defence and maintenance of what exists, though it should be noted that

the first quote retains the importance of ethnic groups through its reference to allies or subject nations.

Considering development of Roman understanding relating to their own frontier what can be said regarding the possible purpose of those frontiers? Isaac (2000: 376) has argued that the fact that there exists no description in the ancient literature of Roman frontier and which therefore renders any assumptions highly questionable. This has however, not prevented scholars from claiming to know the frontiers' purpose (Dyson 1985: 32; Hodgson 2003: 186). Isaac continues, noting that both justifications for distribution of troops or placement of forts are also missing from any ancient source material. So if we were to consider the purpose of the Roman frontier in this context, what could be said of it? The examples shown above do not refer to any stated purpose for the frontier in fact the very nature of the Roman concept of a world empire centred on Rome removed the need for a frontier of any kind. The fact that these themes were part of the Roman ideology suggests that no region was seen to be truly beyond the influence or control of Rome. Those areas not yet within the sphere of the Roman world were simply waiting for the Roman Empire to bring them into the fold. It is inadvisable to draw wide-ranging conclusions from evidence that does not directly refer to the question in hand. The evidence does however; allow us to conclude that the Roman view of the frontier, at least during the Republic and the early Principate, was not a defensive structure. Even with this reflection, the purpose of the Roman frontier in central Europe remains elusive, and the lack of direct evidence remains a problem. We can then look at the issue in another manner, such as how were decisions relating to the frontier made, and can the answer to this help in our understanding of the frontiers purpose?

#### **4.1.2: Decision Making on the Frontier**

The issue of how Roman officials gathered information and made critical decisions relating to the frontier is vital in understanding how the Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity affected the frontier. This is because it would have been at these moments that cultural basis would have been at its most influential, especially if the information available surrounding an issue was severely limited. There has been, in the previous 40 years, a significant discussion regarding the manner by which policy was decided and enacted on the frontier. Much of the discussion was caused in reaction to the publication in 1976 of *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* by E. N. Luttwak. As one might surmise from the title,

Luttwak proposed a highly organised frontier system, within which he identified three clear stages of frontier system. The titles of those stages were as follows, the Julio-Claudian system, the Flavian to 3<sup>rd</sup> century system and finally the Severan with its Defence-in-Depth system. Firstly the Julio-Claudian system was presented by Luttwak (1976: 49-50) as a system of hegemonic wars rather than territorial conflicts. Victories were used to expand Roman diplomatic influence through an extensive client state system that has begun early during the Republican period. Those annexations made during this period, such as Moesia, Pannonia, Noricum and Raetia, Luttwak interpreted as security measures only undertaken when efficient client states could not be established. For Luttwak this period in the Roman frontier was typified by the concept of economy of force, which allowed the Roman military to not only defend a significant geographical area but also expand the Empire. With the ascension of Vespasian (AD 69) to the emperorship, Luttwak (1976: 57) argued a series of policies were undertaken through to the reign of Hadrian (AD 117) which created a systematic network of boarder defences. These were not static positions, but rather operated as fixed elements in a mobile approach to imperial military defence. Luttwak (1976: 60) argued that the invisible frontier of the early Principate had by the time of Hadrian been replaced by a physical frontier. With the development of the frontier came a need for infrastructure, and so the construction of road network, systems of watch towers and military forts and a signalling network was completed (Luttwak 1976: 61). Such a frontier system Luttwak (1976: 66) argued was created for the purpose of defending against "low intensity threats", such as small tribal raids. While large-scale threats would be met beyond the frontier by mobile striking forces with the *limes* functioning as a supporting structure. Such changes Luttwak (1976: 80) linked with a fragmentation of military power into regional armies placed along a thin linear perimeter. Finally in contrast to the Julio-Claudian system Luttwak (1976: 111-113) argued that there was a decline in the use of the client state system which resulted in an increased need for Roman military action along frontiers which had been previously manned by allied forces. By the Crisis of the third century, Luttwak (1976: 132) identified a system he referred to as Defence-in-Depth. He argued that the Roman frontier developed a system of self-contained fortified strongholds between which mobile military forces were deployed. It is claimed this was done to effectively allow for a balance of the mobile offensive of the enemy and a counter offensive mounted by the mobile forces (Luttwak 1976: 133). The fortified centres functioned as supply depots, tactical positions and provisions for internal provincial security (Luttwak 1976: 188). Luttwak implied from his work that the Roman state had been capable of clear, efficient and strategic thinking, an

argument some scholars accepted (Levick 1990: 151; Visy 2003b: 213; Wells 1984: 129-130; Wightman 1985: 209).

There has been since its publication a significant reaction to this assumption of Roman decision making (Fulford 1992: 294; Whittaker 1994: 71). Isaac in his work *The Limit of Empire: The Roman army in the East* (2000) dedicated a chapter to critiquing the Grand Strategy theory. He noted the following assumptions made of the theory; firstly, it is assumed that the Romans understood the strategic benefit of certain types of frontier and boundaries (Isaac 2000: 373). Secondly, that the primary purpose of the frontier was the security and safety of the provinces. Third, that most of the frontier lines within the empire were actively chosen by Rome (Isaac 2000: 374). Finally, that the Roman state had access to both strategic and geographical information which allowed them to make informed decisions regarding the frontier (Isaac 2000:401). Some of these assumptions will be discussed below, for now we are concerned with the assumption regarding the gathering of information and the degree to which decisions were made for strategic reasons. We will see later, when we discuss the Roman view of river frontiers and specifically the Rhine, how this last assumption is highly inaccurate. All of the assumptions are present within the theory presented by Luttwak, and while they explain the major issues with the work, the fact that they were even made allowed other scholars, such as Isaac (2000: 372-418; Eckstein 1987: xviii), to address them further.

As mentioned above, in the ancient literature there is no example of a clear explanation for the deployment of troops along frontiers or the placement of fortifications, even though some authors seek to explain this regardless (Enckevort 2003: 85). In most cases, the ancient literature relates to the position of a particular legion at a particular time with little or no justification, only for modern scholars to attempt a strategic justification for the decision (Breeze 2011: 18). This commits a serious misinterpretation on two points: it presupposes that not only did the Roman state always make the correct strategic decision regarding frontier issues, but that they also made each decision with a significant amount of information and prior thought. In considering how the Roman state made decisions regarding frontiers we can view the issue in two ways. How did the empire collect information about frontier regions in order to better inform their choices? Who made these choices and what other factors influenced or motivated their decision making?

Gathering of accurate information was from the time of the Republic seen as an important requirement for generals in the field. Polybius (3.48) chastises other reporters of Hannibal's deeds during the second Punic war, for presuming that Hannibal had entered Italy without knowledge of the region, its people and their disposition toward the Roman state. At the end of the section of text, Polybius described Hannibal's collection of information as being of "sound practical sense" (3.48). Though as we have seen from the analysis of ancient source material in Chapter 3, was both limited in nature and often inaccurate. Much of the information gathered by officials would have been gained from a number of specific sources, which included merchants, local allied natives, captives and scouts. Merchants moved far in advance of any frontier, often in the search for new trade routes and the possible profits that could be achieved (Saddington 1991: 414). The influence of trade and the intermingling of both Roman and tribal economies will be discussed later in the chapter, though for now it is important to note that the economic reach of the Roman Empire was often far in excess of the actual periphery zone (Steel 2013: 216; Wheeler 1993a: 11). Through analysis of archaeological data, some scholars have theorised that the economic domination of Rome extended some 200 km beyond the frontier line, with another 200 km zone beyond that representing the limits of Rome's economic and political influence (Austin & Rankov 1995: 26). By ranging so far beyond the frontier zone merchants were presented with significant opportunities to gather information about groups living well outside of Roman influence.

However, the gathering of such information was not the primary concern of merchants, and understanding of regions beyond the frontier would have been incidental to their real purpose. Because of this, the information merchants could offer was likely disjointed and prone to cultural misinterpretation based on their own cultural prejudices (Wells 1972: 5). An example from Caesar's *Commentarii* refers to his first invasion of Britain, and a discussion Caesar had with a number of merchants who had travelled to Britain. Referring to his desire to visit Britain regardless of the lateness of the year, Caesar noted how "...it would still be of great advantage to him merely to have entered the island, observed the character of the native, and obtained some knowledge of the localities, the harbours and the landing places; for almost all these matters were unknown to the Gauls. In fact nobody except traders journeyed thither without good cause; and even traders know nothing except the sea coast and the districts opposite Gaul"(Caes. *BG*.4.20). In this example, we can note a number of things about information gathering in the Roman world. First, in relation to the pre-existing knowledge of such areas we can see that Caesar had little if

anything of note. Secondly, the traders Caesar questioned only had an extremely limited knowledge of the island, lacking neither any understanding of the groups who inhabited it nor the size of the island. However, this claimed lack of knowledge on the part of the traders seems unlikely. Caesar appears here to present a lack of information or familiarity with the island, possibly in an attempt to make his crossing to and conquering of tribes their all the more impressive and challenging, allowing him to claim to have pushed Roman influence and power to unknown corners of the world. In other words, Caesar's presentation of the information offered by the merchants was most likely lacking in order to highlight his later achievements.

For the Roman state, it was the military itself that formed the core of its information gathering processes. The most obvious way for a commander to gather information was through personal observation or the reports of his immediate officers, such as the ordering of A. Caecina by Germanicus to scout out the land ahead of his forces route to the location of the Varian Disaster (Tac. *Annals* 1.61; 63.3). Cavalry bore the brunt of this chore (Dixon & Southern 1992), in particular two groups: *procuratores* (advanced guard) and *exploratores* (scouts). The *procuratores* were often part of the legions cavalry contingent operating out in front of the armies march; an example from Caesar has them shadowing the Helvetii (Caes. *BG* 1.15). During the Republican period, this role was attributed to *equites* though later they became a formalised part of the Roman army (Austin & Rankov: 1995: 40). The *exploratores* meanwhile were often raised for specific campaigns rather than forming part of the standard legion composition. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, *exploratores* units were attached to most garrisons along the frontier (Austin & Rankov 1995: 27). These cavalry contingents fulfilled a number of roles, including assessing the nature of the terrain ahead of the army and its general security (Caes. *BG*. 7.56.4) and the setting up of camps (Caes. *BG*. 2.17.1). Tacitus (*Annals* 1.50.3) also tells of the *exploratores* being sent into Germanic territory by Germanicus (AD 14) to gather information on the Germanic Marsi in preparation for an attack against them from the legionary base at Vetera (Xanten). This last example is particularly significant as it shows the *exploratores* capacity for gathering information beyond the military frontier, and with an accuracy which could be reliably trusted and acted upon by Germanicus. Of particular note are the native cavalry used by Caesar in this role during his campaign in Gaul. Both Gallic and Germanic cavalry were used, such as in 53 BC were scouts from the Germanic Ubii were sent in advance of the Roman army while operating across the Rhine (Caes. *BG*. 6.29.1). Native scouts offered particular advantages, as

they possessed knowledge of the native people, territory and most importantly the language of the enemy in question (Austin & Rankov 1995: 101). The use of such scouts formed a major part of the Roman military information gathering method throughout the time of the Roman Empire.

Diplomacy was also key in the gathering of information. The use of envoys was extensive and present throughout Roman history (Austin & Rankov 1995: 16). Envoys would have formed an almost constant flow of information travelling across the frontier in either direction. We know Caesar used envoys in his diplomatic talks with Ariovistus, sending two trusted men to the meeting. One was a Roman citizen already known to Ariovistus and the second was a Romanised Gaul (Caes. *BG.* 1.47). While this incident ended poorly, with Ariovistus claiming the two to be spies, and placing them both in chains and the talks breaking down. The importance of envoys in such roles is clear. In this case, the Romanised Gaul was an individual named Valerius Procillus, an inhabitant of the province of Transalpine Gaul. So significant was the value of individuals such as Procillus, that when Caesar defeated the Germans in battle and came across Procillus, he claimed it "...no less pleasure than the victory itself to see a most distinguished member of the province of Gaul, his own close friend and guest snatched from the hands of the enemy and restored to himself" (Caes. *BG.*1.53). Before this event we know that during a meeting with the chief of the Sequani, Caesar spoke through Procillus, leading to a successful result (Caes. *BG.*1.19). While the personal friendship Caesar refers to between himself and Procillus, would by no means have been the norm, one can clearly see the value placed on an individual with such skills. Caesar (*BG.*4.21) also writes of the king of the Atrebates, Commius, whom he sent to the coast of Britain to gather information, showing that it was not just Roman individuals used for such purposes. Dyson (1985: 145) argues that the ease with which ambassadors moved through the region suggests they may have had knowledge of the geography of the region. However, as in the case of Procillus, such individuals due to the requirements placed upon them were particularly vulnerable to capture or execution.

The other method by which diplomacy aided in the gathering of key information was the offering of knowledge on the part of native groups. In the case of Caesar, he took information offered to him by the Remi, regarding the gathering of large new forces led by the Bellovaci and their location (*BG.* 8.6.2). There were at least two occasions, the first in 55 BC and the second in 53 BC, where the Ubii offered Caesar information relating to the hostile actions of the Suebi one of their Germanic neighbours, whom dwelt on the eastern bank of

the Rhine to the lands of the Ubii (Caes. *BG.* 4.19.2; 6.10.2-4). The use of such sources was not limited to Caesar, as Tacitus (*Annals* 1.55.2-3) relates how Segestes a leading man, along with Arminius, of the Cherusci tribe passed information to the provincial governor Publius Quinctilius Varus in AD 9, which regarded the development of a rebellion against the Romans within his tribe. That this information was ignored does not detract from the valued source such individuals such as Segestes must have been to the Roman state.

Another source of information was military prisoners, in Book 8 Caesar relates how, while he marched towards the territory of the Bellovaci he sent out scouts to catch prisoners. Once this had been completed, Caesar said: "By inquiring of these as to where the main body of the Bellovaci was and what was their intention, he found that all the Bellovaci able to bear arms had assembled in one place and likewise the Ambiani, Aulerici, Caleti, Veliocasses and Atrebatas; that they had chosen for their camp high ground in a wood surrounded by a marsh..." If Caesar brought up a larger force, they had chosen, while they tried, from ambushes, to prevent the Romans from getting forage, corn and all other supplies"(Caes. *BG.* 8.7). The Bellovacian prisoners presented Caesar with significant strategic information which forewarned him not only of there being a larger force than he had foreseen but also a plan to undermine the Romans' ability to supply itself. There can be no doubt that such information drastically aided Caesar's cause, however this example presents an ideal situation for Roman officials: accurate information offered new insight to a strategic problem. We must however, accept that as many times as prisoners would have been an aid for information gathering (Caes. *BG.* 6.18.1), they would also have presented a hindrance, offering misinformation. Just as with merchants, captives presented the significant risk of presenting Roman officials with inaccurate information. There is also the case of deserters, such as the example Tacitus (*Annals* 4.73.4) relates of Germanic deserters informing the Roman military that two Roman forces had been cut off from the frontier at a nearby grove and a second in a villa. It is unclear from the text whether information offered was accurate, but it does suggest that such avenues of intelligence gathering may have been open.

The general information of travellers such as Pytheas may have offered some form of guide when attempting to glean information of territory beyond the frontier zone. However, sources such as these often had limitations as Strabo (*Geog.* 7.2.4) laid out noting that he knew of no one who had travelled beyond the limits of Roman expansion up to the Elbe River. Textual evidence such as we have already seen, was often focused with presenting interesting facts and oddities to its audience rather than coherent strategic information. There

were also geographical works, such as Strabo's own, and *commentarii* (Millar 2001: 260). Even if such reports were not formally published as Caesars were, they would have been available to the Emperor and his *consilium* (Austin & Rankov 1995: 89; 113).

The finally there was the provincial governors and their staff and in turn the Emperor himself. As mentioned above a governor could rely on their own observation as they toured the province, but their staff often offered them a significant advantage in gathering information. A governor's *officium* were typically large and in some cases, several hundred people strong (Austin & Rankov 1995: 149). They in turn managed the governor's archives that stored the significant amounts of paperwork, which the Roman military generated. Local communities and clients would have provided the governor with first-hand information regarding his province and his area of the frontier, aiding in his perception of the province and its surroundings. Under the Republic, governors, due to the competitive nature of the political system, were encouraged to present their actions to the Senate back in Rome in the best possible light. This would have lightly caused a further issue of reliability surrounding any reports coming in from the provinces. By the time of the Principate the political landscape, and the role of competition within it, had drastically changed. Governors were no longer encouraged to manipulate their reports, and while presenting information in the best possible light to the Emperor was probably still undertaken, misleading or poorly informing the Emperor would have had greater costs (Austin & Rankov 1995: 123).

As we have seen through analysing each of the primary methods of gathering information of Roman officials, there were a number of ways information gathering was performed. However in each of these cases issues clear inaccurate, misinformed, or misinterpreted information would have continued to present a problem (Kagan 2006: 343). Greek and Roman merchants would have been just as likely to consider Germanic tribes as dangerous nomads as the officers of the Roman state. The case is also applicable for the military scouts who would have been influenced by the Roman cultural perception of the foreign groups they were fighting. Therefore, if information gathered was influenced by the cultural perception of foreign ethnic identities, how then could governors and general divest themselves of such cultural biases and make objective decisions?

Austin and Rankvo (1995: 12) note in regard to the making of plans and taking action on the Roman frontier, that the majority of cases display Roman action only took place after an event had occurred, a phenomenon identified throughout the Republic and Principate. In

an effort to analyse decision-making on frontier policy we should first identify those who would have been in a position to make significant decisions. Depending on the period in Roman history, this would have been consuls, proconsuls, governors and pro-praetors during the Republican period, and provincial governor, legates and the emperor himself under the Principate (Goldsworthy 1996: 121). While the list seems limited, if we consider those who would have had influence on the decisions the list expands by some degree. Under the Republic, the Senate had significant influence on both issues of war and diplomacy (Eckstein 1987:63-64). In the case of the Principate, the Emperor followed the tradition of the Republic and consulted with an advisory council (*consilium*) whose members were rotated every six months (Goodman 2012: 96; Austin & Rankov 1995: 109). An emperor's advisors could include his family members, senators, individuals from the *equites* and even freedmen (Isaac 2000: 386). Under Augustus, the *consilium* discussed issues and decided on those motions to place before the senate. Under Tiberius, further changes were made with the members of the group becoming permanent appointments (Austin & Rankov 1995: 109). With a permanent council consistent policies could be established and followed unlike under the Republican senate which had suffered from fluctuating policies due to the annual changing of magistrates (Isaac 2000: 384). However the limited nature of the fixed term appointments, would not necessarily prevent the development of knowledge and experience among the Republican senatorial class. With the continuous need to develop and advance one's political career, there was significant encouragement within the political system of the Republic for senators to seek multiple provincial posts in the course of their career. Therefore, under the Republic senators were capable of gathering a general knowledge of the provinces, while under the Emperor specific governors could become experts on particular areas of the empire due to long-term posts. The most significant problem the Emperor faced was the centralized nature of his command. Isolation from the frontiers restricted the scope and accuracy of the decision making (Austin & Rankov 1995: 125).

The above argument also presupposes that the individuals involved acted in the objective best interest of the state. Let us consider specifically the emperor, who as noted above was the one figure who could be in position to develop a large-scale frontier policy. In reality, we know from the literary evidence that the Roman perception of some Emperors was that their motivation in deciding on issues regarding frontier policy was the safeguarding of their own position and the enhancement of his personal glory and image (Isaac 2000: 416) while others showed restraint and caution. One could easily be ruled by an Augustus as one

could a Caligula, ordering his men to gather seashells on the north coast of Gaul (Suet. *Calig.* 46). This was by no means an issue limited to the Principate. Under the Republic, the social institution of the *cursus honorum* encouraged individuals to pursue political competition over the considerations of the state (Brennan 2004: 56; Wheeler 1993b: 222). The desire for political office among senatorial families was deep rooted, and never truly ended. Achieving the consulship provided significant esteem, which in turn often resulted in military commands or governorships over provinces. Even in these situations, where the individual was best placed to affect frontier policy, concerns regarding the acquisition of wealth, military success and the securing of one's position (Harris 1979: 17) were far more influential factors (Ando 1993: 329; Farney 2007: 12; Keppie 1984: 100). Most importantly, the process fed into itself, with successful generations within families merely setting the goals higher for later generations. We need only consider the case of Marcus Fonteius discussed in Chapter 3. Cicero in his speech *Pro Fonteio*, defended Fonteius from a corruption charge placed against him by inhabitants of the province Gallia Narbonensis (*pro Font.*32). It was alleged that Fonteius had manipulated the provincial treasury to increase his own personal wealth. It is difficult to argue that such actions were done to improve the province. Instead, we must accept that if governors acted in such ways, they did so for personal benefit regardless of the problems this could cause.

We have now seen how there were significant obstacles placed in the way of Roman officials making informed strategic decisions regarding the frontier. While the number of information gathering methods available to the Roman state were significant, they were limited by the perceptions of those gathering the information and the human limitation in making objective decisions. Their personal motivations were in some cases an influential factor in decisions. Next, we will consider the reasoning for the location of the frontiers themselves.

#### **4.1.3: How borders were Chosen (Case Study: The Rhine Frontier)**

As stated above, previous scholars such as Luttwak have made the assumption that Rome was able to make strategic choices in regards border position and construction. Much has been made of the strategic advantages of the geographical frontiers of the Roman Empire (Breeze 2011: 170; Hodgson 1997: 61; Polak 2009: 947). However, were the Romans so active in the creation of their frontier or was the process one made up of much more

haphazard decisions than authors like Luttwak would suggest? Some scholars, like Mann (1974: 503-33), have suggested that the frontier was the remains of failed expansions, and that the Roman military were positioned not in strategic locations for defence but in places that were pre-existing. We have already discussed how the Roman perception of the lands surrounding them was based on an ethnic basis rather than a geographical one. We must still consider however, the aforementioned assumption on the part of some scholars (Karavas 2003: 193), that the Romans chose their frontiers for strategic advantages.

We have already seen in section 5.2.2 that the ability of the Roman state to gather accurate information regarding regions beyond their frontier was significant and seems only to have been limited by the cultural biases, and separation from the frontier of those given responsibility for setting frontier policy. We can reconsider the example of Caesar before his first crossing to Britain. He states clearly in his writing that "...although he summoned to his quarters traders from all parts, he could discover neither the size of the island nor the number or the strength of the tribes inhabiting it..."(Caes.*BG*.4.20). If we consider Caesar's crossing to Britain, it was made not on strategic grounds but on the desire for personal glory and notoriety back in Rome (Caes. *BG* 4.38). In regards to the ability for Roman officials to make informed decisions on the placement of the frontiers, Isaac (2000: 401) noted that due to the lack of accurate information on regions beyond Roman influence, there was simply no way in which an effective strategic border could be laid out. With these ideas in mind, let us consider the Rhine frontier and the Roman views of river frontiers.

By 13 BC Roman legions had been moved up to the Rhine frontier (figure 5 and 6), as part of the organisation for the campaigns of Drusus across the Rhine. Before this point, the internal security of the provinces had prevented formal manning of the river (Breeze 2011: 93). Drusus campaigned up until his death in 9 BC, leaving behind a number of legionary bases along the frontier including Nijmegen (*Noviomagus*), Cologne (*Colonia Agrippinensis*), Xanten (*Vetera*) and Mainz (*Mogontiacum*). The development of the area over the next twenty years included the construction of roads, forts and the gradual organization of a province with its eastern edge most likely towards the Elbe River. Breeze (2011: 93) notes that by AD 6 the province was likely considered pacified resulting in the appointment of its first non-military governor. With the set back of the Varian disaster in AD 9, the military occupation was drawn back across the Rhine, with a number of exception such as the campaigns of Germanicus (AD 14-16). Two legions were left at each of the bases at Xanten, Cologne and Mainz. The loss of the wider province and the establishment of a frontier on the

Rhine was gradually entrenched with the splitting of the military presence at Cologne (AD 35), Xanten (AD 69) and Mainz (AD 89). Further forts were constructed in particular at junctions between the Rhine and its tributaries. Some forts were maintained on the eastern bank of the Rhine, particularly around Mainz. By the time of Domitian, the ambitions of advancement beyond the Rhine seem to have disappeared and the frontier was turned into two provinces (AD 83), Upper Germany and Lower Germany. Each province was afforded two legions, another signifier of the reduced focus the region received. This transition into two provincial regions marks the true establishment of the Rhine as a formal frontier.

In assessing the Rhine frontier, we must begin with the significant issues caused by forming frontiers around river systems. If we accept for the moment that a frontier can be considered a defensive system, then the use of rivers presents numerous problems. Breeze (2011: 92) notes, for instance, that rivers, especially in northern regions, had a tendency to freeze over. Rankov (2003: 178) also noted this issue with river frontiers, adding that drought presented a similar problem. There are a number of examples of tribes using frozen rivers to cross into Roman territory. Dacians crossed frozen portions of the Danube in both 30 and 10BC (Florus 2.28). There can be little doubt that events such as this undermined the effectiveness of the Rhine as a defensive frontier. It should be noted however, that for armies to take advantage of such changes they would have been required to move during winter which presented problems to both Romans and their tribal neighbours (Rankov 2005: 179). In addition to the changes such frontiers underwent during the year, rivers are significant avenues of communications. Those communities which existed on the banks of the Rhine would most likely had some understanding of sailing or rowing, allowing for easier and expedient routes for travel rather than across land. However, such realities of river frontiers offered advantage to both Roman and Germanic groups, as Roman knowledge and experience of such actions must have been significant with frontiers on both the Rhine and Danube.

Rankov (2005: 179) argues that the only significant assessment of a river as a defensive frontier was based on the ease with which one could cross. Those groups that could make use of river as communication routes could also presumably easily cross the river itself. Why then, if crossing a river would have been a likely prospect for those living near it, would the Roman Empire consider constructing a frontier around it? The answer to this may be a matter of scale. The ease with which an individual might have crossed the Rhine would not have translated to large groups. Swimming presented the significant risk of drowning, which

was even greater if the individual was encumbered by arms or armour (Rankov 2005: 180). Fords presented the best natural crossing point for groups of significant size, though the

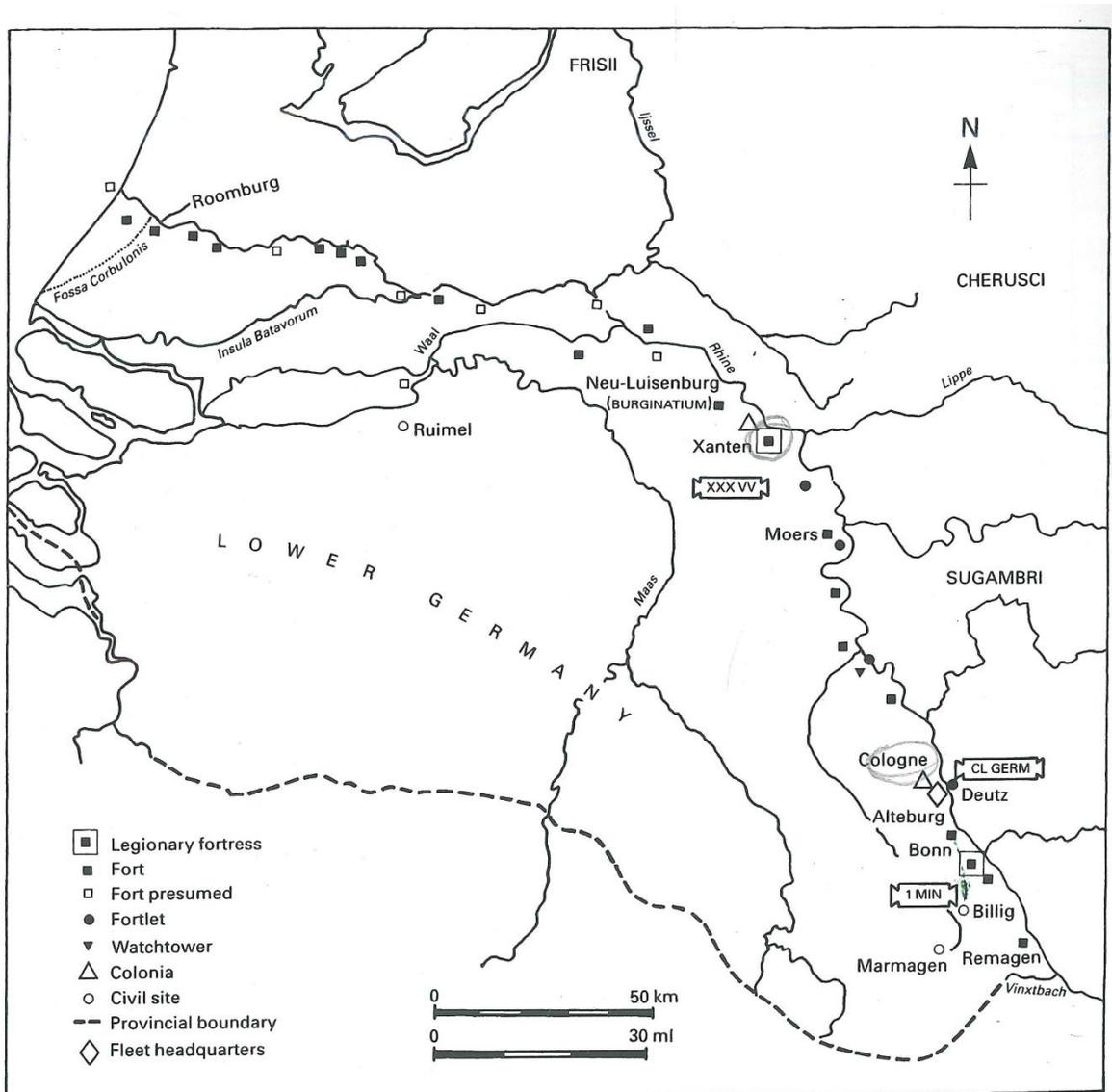


Figure 5: Map of the Lower German *limes*. (Austin & Rankov, 1995, pp. 248)

nature of rivers again presented risks. In many parts, the Rhine is far too wide and deep to ford and even established fording points could become extremely dangerous if the river became flooded. The difficulty in crossing the Rhine would have only been increased for Germanic tribes, with the military defences on the Roman military usually placed west bank. In addition, while the Rhine could freeze, offering routes across, it was also unpredictable in its thawing such as the sudden thaw that prevented the Chatti from crossing the river in AD 89 (Suet. *Domitian* 6.2). In general, the Rhine, as with other large rivers such as the Danube, presented as many advantages as it did disadvantages as a natural frontier.

The only reliable way of large groups crossing a river was via bridges. Rankov (2005: 180; Austin & Rankov 1995: 174) notes however that it was for this very reason that the Romans held a preference for not creating permanent bridges across the Rhine. There is no

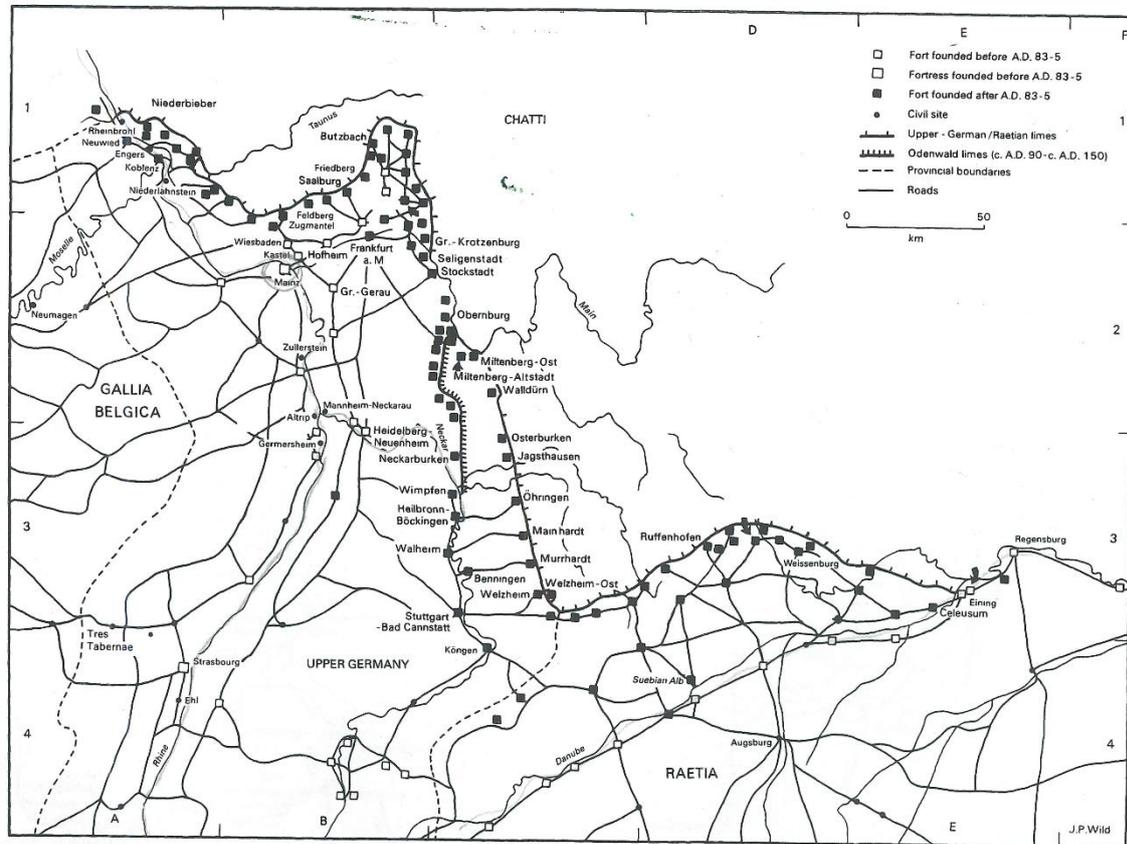


Figure 6: Map of the Upper German *limes*. (Austin & Rankov, 1995, pp. 249)

clear evidence of permanent bridges across the Rhine into tribal territory until the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Austin & Rankov 1995: 175). Along the German frontier under the Principate the number of known bridges which crossed the Rhine were small, examples of which occurred at Xanten, Koblenz and Maniz. Tacitus (*Annals* 1.49; 69) included references to the bridge at Xanten, in his account of Germanicus' campaign across the Rhine in AD 14. There is no further references to this bridge and it is unclear if it remained in use or was torn down soon after. At Koblenz Austin and Rankov (1995: 175) note that dendro-chronology has been used to date the bridge piles to AD 49, possibly linking the bridge to the attempted invasion of the territory of the Chatti, by the governor of Upper Germany P. Pomponius Secundus in that year (Tac. *Annals* 12.27). All of the piles date to the same year suggesting that little was done to maintain the bridge after its creation. It seems likely that the bridge either managed to remain in use or was knocked down soon after the AD 49. The bridge at Maniz is known

from a series of piles that suggests a pontoon bridge (Austin & Rankov 1995: 175). However this bridge allowed access to territory on the east bank of the Rhine under the view of two Roman forts built on that bank of the Rhine, and permanently held from Germanicus recall in AD 14 through to Vespasian's rebuilding of the bridge in stone some time later. The bridges therefore was a route across the Rhine but into Roman held territory. The first evidence of a permanent bridge across the Rhine leading into tribal territory comes in under Constantine and the construction of a stone bridge at Cologne, linking it to Divita in AD 310 (Austin & Rankov 1995: 175). There were a number of smaller bridges that crossed tributary rivers at points along the formal military frontier. Across both the Main and Neckar rivers bridges were placed in order to carry the *limes* roads, apparently in an attempt to shorten the distance the roads traced along the frontier.

Instead, the Roman military became proficient at pontoon building. Such temporary crossing points offered numerous advantages to the Roman military. They could gain ingress into tribal territory, while also later dismantling the pontoon bridge and returning the river to a natural barrier for their neighbours. The protection of such constructions and the denial of bridges to opposing forces was the responsibility of the Rhine fleet which was originally based at Alteburg, near to the legion base at *Colonia Agrippinensis* (Rankov 2005: 181). The river fleet, *classis Germanica*, may have actually formed a significant method of allowing Roman forces access to the east bank of the Rhine. Possible jetties or quays have been found at several forts along the Rhine, which in turn were often positioned at junctions between the Rhine and tributary rivers allowing access deep into tribal territory (Austin & Rankov 1995: 179). Such positioning of forts and quays for the fleet suggest that the fleet would have had the capability to provide access to the military beyond the west bank of the Rhine. Tasked with watching over the river, the fleet and legions stationed along the Rhine would have been well placed to prevent any attempts at constructing crossing point across the Rhine. However the lack of permanent bridges meant that the Romans lacked the ability to take immediate action if threats were to present themselves (Isaac 2000: 411). The limitations as we have discussed here meant that the river presented equal issues to both Roman and German alike. Small raiding parties would have found the necessary access to boats easier to procure, due to their limited requirements (Breeze 2011: 195; Dhaeze 2009: 1232), but larger groups such as a tribe attempting to migrate to Roman lands would have found crossing the river a challenge near impossible (Wheeler 1993a: 25).

By only making crossing for small groups a viable option, the Romans took advantage of the river to significantly constrain the numbers of people who were able to cross at any one time. In this way, it was a very effective frontier at limiting tribal migration routes, though it still presented little problem to raiding parties small in number. Any tribe attempting to move the greater part of its community in to Roman territory faced not only the natural barrier of the Rhine but also the threat of the Roman military stationed along it. After the conquest of Gaul there seems to have been a slow trend towards the limitation of tribal groups crossing the Rhine, by the time the Germanic provinces were created tribal migrations across the Rhine seem to have been severally limited, only occurring under the auspices of the Roman state as we will discuss below. The difficulties the Rhine presented to migrating tribes along with the military force on the other bank must have acted as a significant deterrent for further movement westwards.

With the limitations presented by the geography and the placement of legionary force, the Rhine frontier was at best a semi-permeable membrane. Significant military forces were placed at an immediate disadvantage when attempting to cross, and migratory tribes who brought with them children and the elderly would have found the frontier near impassable without the direct consent of the Roman state. Yet the nature of river boundaries allowed for movement in both directions. As we shall see later in the chapter, such geographical boundaries did not limit the spread of trade, and throughout the Roman presence on the Rhine tribal raids remained a constant threat to the Roman province beyond. In addition, if we consider the choice of the Rhine to have been a strategic one, we must also concede the implicit strategic danger it presented. Due to the Rhine, swinging west as it heads inland, it and the Danube created a natural corridor through to the base of the Alps. The breadth of this gap is such that it permitted large groups of people movement westward without the need to cross any large expanse of water. It is difficult to see how Roman officials could have made a conscious choice to leave this avenue leading to the Alps and beyond Italy open for migrant tribes to enter and threaten the peninsula. Such was the slow reaction to this strategic issue that it was not until the emperor Vespasian that the formulation of a formal frontier was finally begun, the aim of which was to link both the Rhine and Danube (Parker 2009: 74). Issues such as this present a problem for those arguing for the Grand Strategy explanations, for as they propose a logical and strategic layout to the frontier, they must also accept the complete incompetence of those who constructed it. It is nigh impossible then to argue that

boundaries and frontiers were placed in response to a wider reasoned frontier policy. Why then did the Roman frontier in central Europe end up on the Rhine?

The idea of the Rhine as some form of boundary is first found in the work of Caesar, who used the river as a marker between the lands of the Gauls and those of the Germans (Caes. *BG*.1.1). A closer inspection would have revealed that this was a frivolous claim. There were a number of tribes on either side of the Rhine whose claims to Gallic or Germanic ancestry would have disproven Caesar's assertion (Mommsen 1968: 25). He even notes himself that some tribes occupied both sides of the river. The Gallic people of the Menapii tribe were said by Caesar to have had "...buildings and villages on both banks of the river" (*BG*. 4.4). It is unclear whether having occupied this middle ground affected the image presented of the Menapii by Caesar. Though one should not that Caesar (*BG*.6.5) later describes them as having been the only tribe in Gaul to "... never sent deputies to Caesar to treat of peace." This could be a further representation of those tribes which formed the Belgae people as being "... the most courageous" (Caes. *BG*. 1.1) as Caesar notes at the start of his work. Though it is possible that the perception of the tribe as a constant issue was in part because they did not conform to the Roman perception of the region. As Isaac (1993:108; Derks 2009b: 240) notes, Roman policy could not plot a physical boundary that would not interfere with pre-existing ethnic or cultural connections. Communities within any given area would have had contact with nearby cultures (Woolf 1997: 341). The sudden presence of Roman control in the region would not immediately break such bonds of kinship (Elton 1996: 7). In the case of the Rhine frontier, we have already noted that communities along the river would likely have had some ability at traversing the river. Would it then not make sense that these communities would continue their interactions with other nearby groups regardless of the creation of a Roman frontier separating them? In this way from the very creation of the frontier, there must have been an acceptance that there would be movement through this frontier zone (Galestin 2003: 221).

Regardless of the inaccuracies in Caesar's claims, the Rhine became the boundary from which Roman influence stretched into Germania, and after the retreat from the Elbe under Augustus, it became the main geographical feature of the northern frontier. Why, if Caesar's view was so clearly inaccurate, did the Rhine still become the marker for the frontier in central Europe? To answer this we should consider his views about the Rhine again. The specific reference to the Rhine at the start of the *Commentarii* reads as the following: "Of all these peoples the Belgae are the most courageous because they are the farthest from the

culture of the Province... and also because they are nearest to the Germans dwelling beyond the Rhine"(Caes. *BG.1.1*). Everything about the introduction of the Rhine as a border in this section falls in line with how Caesar and the Roman state understood foreign lands. The Rhine was not a significant geographical marker, but the separating marker between different ethnic groups. Again, we should note that Caesar presents the lands of Gallia and Germania in this way because it is how he and his audience comprehended it (Wolfram 1990:5). It is not the fact that the Rhine was an actual ethnic boundary, but rather that the Romans perceived it as such, that is the reason it became so significant to the Roman people. It was this reason that the Roman state treated it as such, controlling the movements of Germanic tribes attempting to cross (Moatti 2006: 124). The differences that Romans constructed between Gallic and Germanic ethnicity reinforced the view of this ethnic boundary zone. As we saw in Chapter 3, the manner by which Caesar discussed the Gallic and Germanic *ethnos* was significant. In particular his comparisons between Gallic and Roman culture and religion. Gauls were presented as the next ethnic group to come under the influence of Rome, while the Germans were shown to be to set apart from the culture of Rome.

There are other examples of Caesar's perception of native ethnicities directly affecting his choices. The following three quotes are taken from the opening sections of the *Commentarii*, where Caesar offers his explanation for his involvement in the migration of the Helvetii:

"Caesar considered that no concession should be made nor did he believe that men of unfriendly disposition, if granted an opportunity of marching through the Province would refrain from outrage and mischief" (*BG.1.6*).

"The news brought back to Caesar that the Helvetii were minded to march through the land of the Sequani and the Aedui into the borders of the Santones, which are not far removed from the borders of the Tolosates, a state in the Province. He perceived that this event would bring great danger upon the Province; for it would have a warlike tribe, unfriendly to the Roman people as neighbours to a district which was at once unprotected and very rich in corn" (*BG.1.15*).

"He also ordered them to restore with their own hands the towns and villages which they had burnt. His chief reason for so doing was that he did not wish the district which the Helvetii had left to be unoccupied, lest the excellence of the farmlands might tempt the Germans who

dwelt across the Rhine to cross from their own into the Helvestian borders and so to become neighbours to the Province of Gaul and to the Allobroges" (*BG.1.28*).

The three quotes represent the sum total of Caesar's justification for intervening against the Helvetii in 58BC (Hignett 1971: 547). In his claims we can see how the Roman perception of Gallic tribes affected his decision making not only in what he perceived to be the greatest threat, but also in how he attempted to prevent it from occurring. While there is no doubt the primary motivation for Caesar's actions were personal aggrandisement and military prestige. The way in which he went about achieving this goal was influenced by his underlying perceptions of Gallic ethnicity. Let us now examine these quotes further and assess how Caesar was influenced by his preconceived notions of Gallic ethnicity.

Caesar was at first petitioned by a deputation of the noblest men from the Helvetii for permission to cross through the territory of the province. Upon hearing their request, Caesar, recalling the death of Lucius Cassius and the humiliation of his army by the Helvetii, requested time for further consideration. The death of Lucius Cassius, as was noted in Chapter 3 had occurred in 107 BC. The influence of this event on Caesar's decision, displays clearly how cultural history played a role in such scenarios. Later, at the allotted time, the delegation returned and were informed by Caesar that following the customs of the Roman people he would not grant any passage through the Province. For Caesar's audience the similarity to the threat of previous migrating tribes beyond the Alps such as the Cimbri and Teutoni, must have been very clear. Indeed, it may be for this reason that Caesar risked the stability of the surrounding region by refusing the Helvetii.

After several attempts by the Helvetii to cross into the Province failed, they retreated, and convened to pass through the borders of the Sequani and continue on to the lands of the Santones on the western coast of Gaul. As can be seen by the second quote Caesar's perception of this action, was focused on the fact that the Helvetii were a warlike tribe, and would neighbour the very rich land of the Tolosates. As discussed in chapter three, the perception of the Gallic tribes as naturally warlike was one of two fundamental ideas behind Roman perceptions of Gallic ethnicity. Indeed the implication, on the part of Caesar that, the land of the Tolosates would likely be attacked due simply to its close proximity, is further evidence for the strength of the perceived Gallic ethnic identity.

The final quote comes at the end of the conflict with the Helvetii, and concerns the restrictions placed on them by Caesar. They were ordered to return to their land and rebuild

their communities. So adamant is Caesar about this endeavour, that he also commands the Allobroges to supply the returning Helvetii with corn. If we were to assume on the part of Caesar, a strategic decision at this point, this would not have been it. Before this point, much had been made of the skill in arms posed by the Helvetii (Caes. *BG.1.1*) and their unfriendly disposition towards Rome. Why then did Caesar return them to the borders of the Roman province? The reasoning he offered was the prevention of Germanic tribes crossing over the Rhine into Gallic territory (Caes. *BG.1.28*).

As we have just discussed, the concept of the Rhine as a frontier zone, was likely as a result of Caesar's perception that it separated Gauls from Germans. If the Helvetii did not return to their lands their absence would create significant instability only matched by the regional threat that would have been caused had Germanic tribes began to migrate over the Rhine and compete for land. Other perceptions of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity are implied by this decision, such as the perceived danger of Germanic tribes in war in comparison to Gallic tribes. Caesar by this point in the text had indicated that the reason for the Helvetian skill at arms was the constant conflict with Germanic tribes (Caes. *BG.1.1*). The other factor in sending the Helvetii back to their own lands was that the tribe remained with the frontier zone of the Roman state and therefore within its sphere of influence. Even within what was a rather straightforward set of interactions across the frontier, we can find numerous examples of how the Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity affected even these relatively small events and thereby the nature of the frontier.

Both of Caesar's crossings of the Rhine, the first in 55 BC and the second in 53 BC, were operations in the attainment of further personal glory, rather than strategic actions. He was able to secure his conquest of Gaul from the unstable influence of the warlike semi-nomadic Germanic tribes, while at the same time gained the renown for crossing to the eastern bank of the Rhine and into another ethnic region of the world, much like the Roman perception of his landing in Britain (Caes. *BG.4.20-36*). Braund (1996 : 46) comments of the invasion of Britain, that it was a great achievement of which Caesar could boast of back in Rome, it is likely that the same could have been said for his actions across the Rhine. Of the first crossing Caesar claimed that his purpose was twofold, to display to the Germanic tribesmen that Roman military might could and would cross the Rhine (*BG.4.16.1*), and second that a company of cavalry from the Usipetes and Tencteri had crossed to the east bank of the Rhine and joined with the Sugambri (*BG.4.16.2*). As stated above, such decisions regarding frontier policy were most likely not part of some great strategic plan. Instead we

can understand such actions through considering how Romans viewed foreign regions and how individuals came to make decisions. Caesar in this justification of his actions, just as we have noted above, established the Rhine as some form of boundary to be crossed, and in crossing over to the east bank of the Rhine proposes that Germanic tribes would perceive this as the significant act that he clearly believed it to be. Here we have another example of Caesar's ethnic identity of Gallic and Germanic tribes affecting his decision making and justifications. We have also seen how the constructed ethnic bias discussed in Chapter 3 affected not only the information gathered about foreign regions, but also as in the case of Caesar and the Rhine, how frontier regions were initially chosen. In the following section, we will look at how the same ethnic identities of Gallic and Germanic tribes influenced how Rome interacted with the tribes at the edges of her influence.

#### **4.2: Interactions across the Frontier Zone**

In the previous section (4.1) it was established that the Roman view of the Rhine frontier was in ethnic terms, rather than geographical. In addition to this, we discussed how both the process of information gathering and decision making were influenced by the Roman perceptions of ethnic identity and the perceived threats such identities implied. In the current section, we will consider the means of interaction across the northern frontier zone. The importance of understanding the nature of interactions between Roman and tribal groups across the frontier comes from the fact that if ethnicity was a significant factor in the development of the frontier one could expect to perceive its influence in such interactions. It was in part via interactions between Roman and tribal groups that these two groups and in turn the frontier developed over time.

The Roman concept of empire had developed from the Republican period through to the Principate into an ethnic system that focuses on the diplomatic and economic influence that could be exerted on neighbouring. It was the interactions across the frontier zones that were the means by which Rome exerted that influence. The forms this interaction could take can be broken down, to aspects such as trade and diplomacy. By considering these types of interactions, we can analyse how Roman perceptions of ethnicity affected them, and how this in turn allowed the Roman people influence over Gallic and Germanic tribes on their periphery. Lastly, these interactions caused social and cultural changes within the Gallic and Germanic communities, and a consideration of these changes offers another avenue through which the ethnic Roman perception of these groups may have affected the nature of the frontier

in central Europe. Such methods of influence discussed in this section would have been undertaken on an ad hoc basis, rather than as an organised strategic frontier policy. Influenced by the Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic tribes, generals and governors would have independently sought means of maintaining control over such groups.

#### 4.2.1: Trade and Commerce

We have already established that the frontier zone in central Europe was a semi-permeable (Batty 2007: 259). Merchants ranged across and well in advance of any military or political interactions (Steel 2013: 216; Wheeler 1993a: 11), and were implicitly protected via the ever present threat of military repercussions from the Roman state, an example of which can be found in Caesar's *Commentarii*(BG.7.3). Speaking of the actions of the Carnutes and their leaders Cotuatus and Conconnetodumnus, Caesar says they "...rushed at a given signal on Cenabum, and put to the sword the Roman citizens who had established themselves there for trading purposes." Caesar's response to this act was to swiftly plunder and burn their town, taking captive the general population (Caes. BG.7.11). Though Caesar's response here seems in part connected to the apparent Roman designation of the traders, one presumes that significant disruption of the economic life of a province would have resulted in the same response regardless of the ethnic identity of the traders in question. The importance of understanding the economic system between the Roman state and the tribes cannot be understated, as Wells (2013b: 7) notes Roman material culture is the most significant evidence for interactions between the Roman state and tribal communities, and therefore offers the clearest image of the nature of the interactions between them.

For many tribal groups their first interaction with Roman culture was through merchants finding routes to their communities with the purpose of trading with them. We know that merchants were throughout Gaul by the start of the first century BC, and in turn were across the Rhine and Danube within Marcomannic territory by the start of the first century AD. In fact, the material culture itself would travel further beyond the frontier zone than even merchants (Kagan 2006: 341). Hedeager (1987: 126) notes that brooches and pottery were found some 200 km from the *limes*, while Roman luxury goods travelled further with bronzes, glass and silver bowls reaching a distance of 400-600 km from the Rhine frontier. The reason for the greater spread of luxury goods could have been the internal trade of such prestige goods between tribes. There is evidence for this influence of trade well

before the creation of the Rhine frontier, wine amphorae found in the oppida of Manching attested to the presence of Roman material reaching central and northern Europe by the second century BC (Wells 1999: 52). By the time Rome itself expanded into these regions, significant economic networks had been feeding off the Roman economy for some time (Woolf 2009: 208). We have seen an example of this in the writings of Caesar (*BG.4.20*), where he attempted to rely on the knowledge of merchants who had been trading with British tribes for some time before Caesar arrived on the northern coast of Gaul. In the same account, we also find examples of communities who, according to Caesar, separated themselves from this trade network for cultural reasons. Both the Nervi (*Caes. BG.2.15*) and the Suebi (*BG.4.2*) are said to have refused contact with traders, due to the importation of wine, which both tribes viewed to be an enfeeblement to their courage. This presentation of these tribes is most likely etic in nature, as it follows with the Greek and Roman perception of wine and luxury as part of the path to moral degeneracy.

The use of Roman material as prestige goods bears a moment of consideration. Hedeager (1992: 88) defines prestige goods as objects that were not required for the maintenance of personal existence, but were essential in the maintenance of political and social systems within the community, through such methods as dowries and political gifts. Such goods represented a monopoly on intertribal politics, external alliances and long distance trade connections, all significant factors in the development of a permanent elite strata in tribal societies. Hedeager (1992: 89) therefore argues that such items existed in a transition point between tribal societies and the later establishment of early states. During the Principate, Roman luxury goods are found to have held significant value to Germanic communities. This is based on the fact that few if any copies were made with only genuine articles holding significant value (Hedeager 1992: 156). We can therefore assume that Roman luxury goods in some way function as prestige items within Germanic communities. The distribution of such items between communities via political leaders and their inclusion in high status burials emphasize the significance placed on them. Such items were key in the development of the elite structures within tribal communities, this can be seen as Thompson (1965: 13-15). As we will discuss later (section 4.2.3) this development of tribal society may have also been affected by the ethnic perceptions of the Roman state.

Rome required its economic network, as it offered a supply network that could aid in supporting the frontier zones and the provinces behind them (Operanu 1997: 250). During the conquest of Gaul, Caesar is noted as having required of friendly communities' resources to

supply his legions. In Book 1 (16), he refers to this fact clearly: "Meanwhile Caesar was daily pressing the Aedui for the corn that they had promised as a state. For by reason of cold weather not only were the corn-crops in the fields unripe, but there was not even a sufficient supply of forage to be had." If military units were unable to feed themselves then pressure would be placed on friendly communities to aid in supplying the troops. Later under the Principate Rome imposed tributes from neighbouring tribes, such as the Frisii and a demand of ox hides (Tac. *Annals* 4.72). Whittaker (1994: 115) notes that by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD buildings resembling Roman villas became a common occurrence beyond the Danube, and archaeological evidence from within these structures revealed significant amount of Roman material including pottery. Such centres such beyond the frontier seem to have been trading locations between Romans and the local tribal communities.

Materials traded from the frontier zone into the provinces included grain, cattle, iron and leathers (Galestin 2003: 223). The agricultural richness of the region was of particular importance to the Roman military along the Rhine, and it appears that the development of the farming processes in the region may have been as a result of the nearby Roman presence. As both Caesar (*BG.* 6.10.22) and Tacitus (*Gem.* 14.26) commented on the Germanic unwillingness to make ample use of the agricultural potential of the region. Trade routes from further afield were also established such as links to the Baltic and trade in amber. Tacitus (*Germ.* 45) spoke of the Aestii who inhabited a region on the Baltic coast. He notes of them that they "...are the only German people who gather in the shallows and on the shore itself the amber, which they call in their tongue glesum." Tacitus continued on to note that the tribe did not inquire as to the nature of the substance and were roundly shocked to be paid for such material, collected as it was from the coastline. Examples such as this show how it was not only Rome that benefitted from the trade networks created in response to the empire. Instead, the economy of the frontier zone became a pattern of exchange with regions beyond the frontier supplying the Roman frontier zone, while goods such as wine were exported back beyond the Roman periphery.

As this two-way economic exchange became a fixture of the Empire, tribal economies became dependant on the interaction with the Roman Empire. Such tribes began to focus of creating large surpluses of tradable goods in order to further interact with the economic frontier (Curk 1991: 250). The changes also presented advantages to the Roman state; as such tribal groups became more sedentary and connected to the Roman economic system, thereby generating stability and economic gain (Hedeager 1987: 127). An example of this is from

Tacitus (*Germ.* 41) who refers to the Hermunduri, a tribe who were allowed to conduct trade "...not only on the river bank, but far within the frontier in the most thriving colony of the province of Raetia." Here we have an example of the close ties continual economic interaction generated, with Germanic tribesmen allowed entry into Roman provincial regions. In this way the Roman and tribal economics became closely interconnected and interdependent (Bartel 1980: 12).

How then did the Roman state use this interdependent system to influence tribal groups? There appears to have been two ways in which this occurred. The first was overt and used to maintain stability over the frontier zone, while the second was an indirect effect on the social systems of tribal groups and will be discussed in a later section (4.2.3). As trade created more settled communities, which were linked into the economic system, Roman officials began to use the connection to exert influence over tribal groups (Wheeler 1993a: 11). The Roman frontier zone was dependent on the economic network beyond their borders. However, this did not mean they relied on specific tribal communities. Simply by cutting off access to trade networks, Rome could significantly affect the prosperity of any tribe along the frontier. We know of edicts passed which prevented the trading of certain materials across the frontier zone. Weaponry, gold, iron, grain and salt or flints were all at one time not permitted to be traded with tribal groups (Whittaker 1994: 119). In both cases just mentioned such actions would have severely limited the strength of any given tribe particular its military strength. Through this method, Roman officials could exert some control over the actions of tribes who may have been threatening to destabilise the frontier region and thereby the damage Roman influence beyond her borders (Hunter 2013: 16). It is no surprise that limitations on trade with tribal groups came in the guise of items such as weaponry and iron. As we discussed in chapter 3 the etic Roman perspective of tribal communities had always emphasised their martial culture. By controlling the flow of items directly related to this facet of their society, the roman state was indirectly acting upon their own ethnic biases in the pursuit of regional stability.

#### **4.2.2: Diplomacy**

Hand in hand with economic interactions came a diplomatic presence, for the purposes of this discussion; diplomacy refers to any and all political interactions between Roman and tribal groups. This included the waging of campaigns, treaties, the development of client states, the movement of whole tribal communities and the process of recruitment

among tribes for auxiliary forces within the Roman military. As many of these interactions were directly political in nature, the influence of Roman perceptions of Gallic and Germanic identity was more overt. Attempts at controlling the stability of the frontier region included the paying of subsidies to tribes (Grane 2013: 32), such as the possible example of Claudius providing gifts to Italicus of the Cherusci (Tac. *Annals* 11.16.1). Such gifts as in this example were used to maintain peace and stability beyond and within the frontier zone (Wightman 1985: 209), such as the actions of Drusus in 12BC against the Sugambri (Cunliffe 1988: 172). These methods were employed in an effort to control the greater perceived threats, such as the instability that was perceived to be caused by the semi nomadic lifestyle the tribes held, as discussed in Chapter 3.

As we have seen above, Rome could support economically friendly tribes or remove their ability to interact with the trade network of the frontier zone, which was dominated by Rome. Other forms of contact between Rome and her tribal neighbours were through diplomacy and the creation of treaties, client states and recruitment from allied tribes (Murray 2003: 435). Tiberius used the client state arrangement with numerous tribes along the Rhine (Garzetti 1974: 27; Luttwak 1976: 20-21) although this method of Roman influence was not as effective on the northern frontier as it had been in the East due in part to the semi nomadic nature of the native groups.

One form of diplomatic interaction that allowed the Roman state more direct control over the frontier zone was the wholesale movement of tribal communities across the frontier and settlement within Roman territory. Some scholars have suggested that this was part of a process of populating regions within the frontier zone (Frier 2000: 810), though others have pointed out that the land offered to these groups was often less than adequate for productive agriculture (Boatwright 2015: 137). It is worth noting that before the Roman conquest of Gaul tribal migration had both been uncontrolled and an important part of tribal interaction. However, one of the last recorded tribal migrations within Gaul was that of the Helvetii, which itself set off Caesar's campaign and eventual conquest of Gaul. After Roman influence had exerted itself throughout Gaul, tribal migration ceased, instead the source of migrating tribes was now beyond the frontier zone of the Rhine. Regardless of the encroaching Roman Empire, the causes of migration such as tribal warfare and famine remained in the frontier zone. The only change was that the Roman state was now able to influence the region and prevent such events occurring.

An example of this came in 20/19 BC. The Ubii, a German tribe beyond the Rhine, were resettled on the west bank by Agrippa. Tacitus in the *Germania* (28.5) refers to the reasoning behind this decision as being: "...in order to block the way to others, not in order to be under supervision." He made no claim about whom they were intended to block, though if we consider his work *The Annals* (12.27.1-2), there are suggestions that it could have been the Chatti, and that the desire to be resettled on the part of the Ubians was due to the threat of incursions from this neighbouring tribe. Previous to the Roman frontier zone, the Ubii would have migrated across the Rhine away from the Chatti, but in turn displacing another tribe in an effort to find suitable lands. Through the actions of Agrippa the threat such an event would have caused was mitigated. There are a number of examples of such actions by Roman officials, though it should be noted by no means in sufficient numbers to suggest anything other than an ad hoc use of such a decision (Saddington 1991: 414).

Of the other examples, the majority are focused around the Rhine and Danube frontiers. Around 8 BC, Tiberius relocated some 40,000 Suebi and Sugambri and settled them on the western banks of the Rhine (Suet. *Aug.* 21.2). Strabo (7.3.10) also mentions the actions of Aelius Catus who "...transplanted from the country on the far side of the Danube into Thrace fifty thousand persons from among the Getae." Tacitus (*Annals* 11.18-20) refers to a settlement of Frisians in AD 47 under the orders of Corbulo. Finally, there is the inscription (*CIL* XIV 3608) of one Tib. Plautius Silvanus, a governor of Moesia under Nero. In AD 60, he transported 100,000 Transdanubians into Roman territory. As one can see the frequency of such events, this was by no means a common occurrence or a consistent one. Instead, it appears that such frontier policy was deployed on the basis of specific pressure within a local reason, often to maintain the stability of an area of the frontier in much the same way that Caesar justified his involvement with the migration of the Helvetii. One method of Roman influence that was significantly more common was the use of treaties between Roman and tribal communities.

Roman officials sought to control communities within the frontier zone through the establishment of treaties. However, how could treaties be used to influence the frontier zone and the tribes within it? As an example, we can consider a number of treaties described by Dio (72.11, 15-16, 19), between Marcus Aurelius and Commodus and the tribal groups, the Marcomanni, Quadi and the Lazyges between AD 170 and 180. The treaties themselves show the attempts on the part of emperors to influence the stability of the frontier zone. The first treaty (Dio 72.11) refers to concerns the granting of peace between Rome and the Quadi, but

who were still refused the right to attend markets out of concern that their past allies might seek ingress with them into Roman territory. This example shows how Rome could create ad hoc treaties designed to deal with particular issues and concerns of the emperor. Five years later, Dio (72. 15-16) notes two further treaties. The Marcomanni were once again allowed to dwell within 38 stades (5 miles) of the Danube, rather than the typical distance, which was twice that. In addition to this they were given specific days on which they could trade with Rome. The second of the two treaties was with the Lazyges who were required to dwell the requisite 76 stades from the Danube.

Four years after this Marcus removed all restrictions from the Lazyges bar those regarding trading, the use of their boats and access to the islands in the Danube (Dio 72.19). Finally, upon the death of Marcus Aurelius, Dio (72. 2-3) states that Commodus made a treaty with the Marcomanni. Under this final treaty recorded by Dio, an annual tithe of grain was required from the Marcomanni along with number of warriors from both them and the Quadi. The treaty also stipulated that the Marcomanni were not to engage in war with the Lazyges, Buri or the Vandili. This treaty displayed how the Roman state believed it could influence the stability of the frontier region. The stipulation against attacking neighbouring tribes is indicative of this belief. Breeze (2011: 32) notes that if such treaties were used on the Danube frontier, then it is likely that similar treaties were used in other frontier zones. However, there is still a question surrounding the ability of Rome to enforce such treaties. An example of this problem is found in Tacitus' *Annals* (13. 54). The text relates how the Frisians moved on to land alongside the River Rhine. After a petition was sent to the emperor Nero, he ordered the tribe to vacate the land. In response, Tacitus (*Annals* 13.54.4) notes: "When this was spurned, the sudden sending in of auxiliary cavalry enforced its necessity, with the capture or slaughter of those whose opposition had been too persistent." This example illustrates not only the desire to control the movement of tribal groups, but also the problems caused by trying to enforce such orders. As Roman officials sought to maintain the control of the frontier region and mitigate migratory nature of some tribes, their efforts would not always have been successful, at which point military force may have been applied as with the example of the Frisians.

The final method of diplomatic interaction that we might consider is the use of tribal warriors as either mercenaries or auxiliary forces within the Roman military. Caesar made extensive use of mercenaries particularly from German tribes due to their superior skills as cavalymen and the fear they inspired in Gallic tribesmen. In Book 8 Caesar (*BG*.8.11)

comments that "...he himself has called out a large number of horsemen belonging to the Remi, the Ligones and other states; and he now sent these by turn to act as escorts for the foraging parties and to resist sudden raids of the enemy." In addition to this, we know that Caesar gathered significant numbers of mercenary foot soldiers from allied Gallic tribes such as the Aedui and Segusiavi (Caes. *BG*.7.64). Caesar was clearly impressed with the skills of these native soldiers, noting their fierce temperament in battle (Caes. *BG*.8.10). Recruitment of native groups identified as martial cultures could be interpreted as the harnessing of the warlike ethnic traits we discussed in Chapter 3. As we identified in that chapter, from early Greek writer through to Roman authors, the Gallic tribes had been closely associated with martial prowess and skill in combat. It is little surprise then that the Romans were keen to act upon this perception in their military recruitment. By the time of the Principate, the recruiting of native warriors as formal auxiliaries was far more common than as mercenaries.

While the majority of auxiliaries were recruited from within the Empire, there was a significant rise in the numbers of auxiliary soldiers recruited from regions on its periphery (Wightman 1985: 210). By the latter half of the 1st century AD, the numbers had risen to match those of the legionaries. Such a rise meant a large number of adult males being taken out of tribal communities and trained in the Roman military. Most individuals would have been for the 25 years of their service in the auxiliary cohorts (Dyson 1992: 196) stationed close to their homeland until the Batavian revolt in AD 69. For this reason, Wells (1999: 238) suggests that a majority of such recruits would have returned to their communities.

The example provided by the Batavian units within the Roman military is a particularly clear example of the influence such interactions had on tribal communities. While the Batavians occupied land in the Lower Rhine, which was within Roman territory the perception of them within the military, must have been similar to that of the other Germanic tribesmen. Roman authority cultivated specific ethnic identities within tribal communities focused around values such as bravery and loyalty to the emperor (Van Driel-Murray 2003: 200-217). It is no surprise that such focuses made best use to the etic Roman identity already perceived from such groups. This model, Roymans (2004: 223) argues, is correct for the Batavians. Unlike the native soldiers under Caesar, who were formed into units and lead by their own leaders, the system under the Principate moved towards regular auxiliary units of often mixed ethnic makeup, led by Roman prefects. There were a number of exceptions of this system mostly originating in the province of Gallia Belgica, of which the Batavians are one. Batavians units were formed of solely Batavian auxiliaries and lead by

local elites. While part of the Roman military Batavians and other tribal peoples would have been presented with the Roman perception of them on a regular basis. As discussed in Chapter 2 the influence of such a large scale imperial system would have had a dominating effect on the Batavians perception of their own ethnicity and self-image (Roymans 2004: 227). The large scale recruitment from communities such as the Batavians through the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD suggests that a significant number of individuals must have become influenced through this process, and that on some level the Batavian perception of themselves as loyal soldiers began to take hold. There has been some disagreement about the proportion of those recruits who would have returned home, with some suggesting only 10% of recruits would have survived 25 years' service to make the return (James 2003: 275). However the quantity of Roman military material found within the Batavian region suggests that such issues did not prevent the Roman perception of the community from taking hold (Roymans 2004: 228).

The influence of Roman ethnic identities on local communities must have been, along with the economic effects discussed in the section (5.2.1) above significant causes in the development and change of tribal societies around the frontier zone. Wells (1999: 238) accepts this idea noting that such individuals had considerable influence on social structure in their communities, even representing part of the reason for the development of large economic centres linked to the trade network of the Roman Empire. He also suggests that is that ex-soldiers may have desired access to luxuries to which they may have become accustomed during their service, in turn driving the economic interactions discussed above.

#### **4.2.3: Social and Cultural Change**

In this thesis, we have been careful to focus our discussion on the subjective perceptions held by Roman authors and the state itself. The reason for this is that we have been concerned with how such perspectives had affected the development of the Roman frontier as it expanded into northern Europe. In this final section, we must consider the resulting effect that cultural interaction had on those communities lying across the Rhine frontier zone. To do this we must divert from the limitations of our discussion and identify the actual nature of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity before they met the Roman Empire.

The first point to note is one of language. It is unlikely that Gallic and Germanic communities before the interactions with Roman culture, ever identified themselves by these two general terms (Carroll 2001: 113; Roymans 2004: 28), even though some scholars have

argued against this (Goodman 2012: 245; Wightman 1985:3). While this is difficult to prove beyond a doubt, due to the lack of written evidence for any of these communities before their incorporation into the Empire, we can point to some important facts within Greek and Roman sources. An example of which is the use of the term German. As discussed in Chapter 3, the earliest examples of the word in use can be found in the work of Pytheas and then later Posidonius. Pytheas, writing in the fourth century BC, made passing reference to the Germanic tribe, the Gutones (Pliny *Nat.Hist.*37.11). Posidonius (Ath. 4.154a) meanwhile writing much later makes clear in Book 23 of his work that the Germanic peoples were culturally diverse from Gauls. In both cases, there is little evidence to suggest that the authors spoke directly to the communities to which they were referring. In fact, the first author to propose that the Germanic people were a wholly separate ethnos was Caesar (Krebs 2006: 119). There is no evidence to show that these communities ever used the term, nor that there was ever a concept of national identity (Carroll 2001: 113). Instead it is more likely that the primary identify of these groups was tribal, and even this assumption as we will see can be easily challenged.

If we now focus on the social development of Germanic communities, we can assess the way in which the tribal structure was undergoing a significant period of change long before contact with Rome. It is important to avoid the mistake made by Roman and Greek authors when considering Germanic tribal communities. The assumption that such ethnic groups were static was significant mistake. During the Bronze age communities in central Europe were structured around clan based systems, this changed during the early bronze age (500 BC) with the rise of family based village structures exhibiting greater levels of social complexity and the La Tène culture ( Hedeager 1992: 240; Rankin 1987: 9-10; Momigliano 1975: 51). Material culture found at sites on either side of the Rhine paints an image of a homogenous culture spread across the majority of central Europe. By the fourth and third centuries BC, communities were again characterised by small agricultural settlements that with little to no social differentiation displayed in the burials. However, these communities now dominated central and northern Europe (Rankin 1987: 9-10; Momigliano 1975: 51). Soon after time hierarchical structures began to develop and the manifestation of the retinue can be seen with the stratifying of grave goods found after this period. Weapons and other local prestige items were often included in elite graves as markers of social standing. The development of complex funerary rituals and practices often went hand in hand with the

development of greater complexity with social structures (Hedeager 1992: 138). Hedeager (1992: 228) argues that the formation of the *comitatus* (tribal council) at this time displayed the linked nature of military, political and judicial functions within the communities at this time. Hedeager (1992: 87) also states that the nature of political power, ideology, exchange and social organisation were not separate social institutions in pre state societies as a whole.

By the 2nd century BC, the elite strata within Germanic communities had begun to further establish themselves. Competition between tribal groups for control of trade routes and production, partly for the purpose of maintaining this new elite social class, resulted in the expulsion of tribal communities from the region (Hedeager 1992: 246) such as the Cimbri and Teutoni discussed in Chapter 3. It is worth noting then that the social changes occurring within the tribes at this time caused the initial Roman interactions with the Germanic tribes and the beginnings of the Roman discourse on Germanic ethnicity.

By the end of the conquest of Gaul, communities east of the Rhine had established a range of large settlements ranging in size and economic integration with the surrounding area (Goldsworthy 1996: 43; Todd 1992: 17-19). Burials at such sites displayed a wealth of grave goods suggesting a complex social structure (Wells 1999: 97). The earlier social developments of Iron Age German tribes had begun to be augmented through the external influence of the Roman state both economically and politically. As we discussed in section 5.2.1 the introduction of Roman luxury goods into the Germanic tribal system resulted in them being used as prestige items. Their use further solidified the German tribal elite's position who separated off from the rest of the tribal community. This change in social structure resulted in the weaponry which had been used to display social standing in earlier periods being replaced with Roman prestige goods in burials during the 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (Hedeager 1992: 138). It is unsurprising that equality among tribal burials seen before this point began to disappear around this time (Hedeager 1992: 241). Roman prestige goods were monopolised by the tribal elite and used as exclusive representations of tribal pre-eminence. Therefore, Roman luxury objects accelerated a process that had already been underway. This brief example shows how when Roman and Greek authors perceived the Germanic culture as stagnant (Dench 1995: 1; Quiroga 2003: 245; Revel 2009:113), they were highly inaccurate.

Therefore, as we can see the realities of these ethnic identities were that they were constantly in flux, adapting to new stimuli. In this way, interaction with the Roman state

produced significant evolutions in the ethnic identity the communities of central and northern Europe. Wells (1999: 116) writes that the creation of communities that could be considered tribal is characteristic of the frontier zones of empires. As states such as Rome expand, they cause the creation of "discrete political and territorial units among complex, multilingual, culturally diverse indigenous people" (Wells 1999: 116). This process Wells (1999: 116) refers to as tribalization while Hedeager (1992: 173) labels it the transition from tribal structure to early state structure. In the case of Rome, through interactions both diplomatic and economic, she encouraged more developed societies to appear around her. Roman authors then perceived these groups as distinct tribes with defined cultural traits, when in actual fact they were the creations of Rome herself (Carroll 2001: 113). An advanced example of tribalization can be seen in the formation of the confederation of Gallic tribes that rebelled against Caesar towards the end of the conquest of Gaul. In this case, Gallic communities reacting to the stress of Roman interaction came together forming a larger group under the command of Vercingetorix (Millett 1990: 20).

Interactions over the frontier zone only influenced further these tribal groups, resulting in tribal groups becoming more economically linked to Rome. In this way, the creation of economic centres in the region, with sites such as *oppida*, were as a result of the economic requirements of the Roman state (Wells 1999: 63). The development of distinct kingdoms and chieftains was due to the increased economic complexity and the diplomatic expectations of Roman officials. Rome in some sense imagined the Gallic and Germanic tribes into existence. By interacting with these communities, under the misapprehension of expecting culturally distinct, hierarchical tribal structures, they incidentally influenced those communities to develop along those lines. Therefore, we can say that not only did the perception of Gallic and Germanic tribes affect the manner in which the Roman state interacted with these tribal groups via economic and diplomatic means, but it also contributed to the very nature of the tribes themselves.

### **4.3: Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an image of how the ethnic identity of Gallic and Germanic tribes, constructed by Roman society, affected the development of the Roman frontier zone in central Europe. In doing so, we considered two separate areas of discussion. The Roman perception of their own frontiers, and the nature of Roman and tribal interactions across the frontier zone.

To begin, we assessed the Roman view of both their empire and their concept of its purpose. The Roman concept of empire was linked closely to their perceptions of power and control. For the Roman state, the frontiers were defined in terms of ethnicity rather than geographically and an idea that seems to have developed from a focus on political control and influence. In this way the Roman concept of frontiers was not the limit of their territorial control, but instead the limit of their political influence. In addition to this the Roman understanding of the frontiers purpose was shown to be an issue in which we are sadly lack any clear explanation from ancient authors. Due to this brevity of information regarding the purpose of the Roman frontiers we considered the manner in which both decisions regarding were made and how the Roman state collected relevant information on those regions beyond their borders.

The primary methods of collecting information on foreign regions can be broken down by the groups gathering the information. These included merchants, military scouts, native allies, and captives. While the Roman of information gathering was seen to be diverse and complex, in each of these examples the influence of the Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity affected the reliability of the information gathered. Cultural bias, misinterpretation all factored in, resulting in the acquisition of objective strategic information being a significant challenge for any Roman official. We then considered the manner in which decisions were made regarding the frontier. Some scholars have proposed the ideas of a cohesive ‘grand strategy’ for the whole of the Roman frontier system. This idea in part relies on the assumption that Roman officials made logical and strategic decision regarding issue of frontier policy. In our discussion, we discerned that this could not be the case during the Republic, and while it was possible under the Principate issues regarding the centralization of power and the decision making process came into play.

We then moved on to consider the manner in which the frontiers of the Roman Empire were chosen. Proponents of Grand Strategy suggest that Rome placed frontiers in the most geographically advantageous positions. To analyse this idea we considered the case study of the Rhine frontier zone. There are significant advantages and disadvantages to placing boundaries along rivers. Historically, rivers have been routes of communication rather than boundaries to movement. This factor both offered the Roman military logistical advantages, yet presented the Roman state with a semi permeable frontier region that was constantly crossed by merchants and natives. Instead of considering this argument further, we returned to the Roman perception of their empire and frontier. The Roman Empire was

defined by ethnicity and not geography. The geographical nature of the frontier was not the method by which it was chosen. Instead, if we look to the first mention in Roman literature of the Rhine, we find that it was Caesar describing the ethnic construction of the people of Gaul. In these terms, the Rhine was significant because it represented to Caesar the ethnic boundary between the Gallic *ethnos* and the Germanic *ethnos*. Therefore, Caesar's perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity defined for him the boundary of Gaul, and it was for this reason that the Rhine became identified as a frontier zone in Roman society. This was shown to not be the only instance of Caesar being affected by his ethnic perception of Gallic and Germanic tribes, as the case of his involvement with the Helvetii tribe displayed a number of examples of the influence of ethnic identity in his decision making and justifications for his actions.

The second theme discussed was that of the way in which Rome interacted with foreign groups across the frontier zone. This section was split into three areas of interaction: trade and commerce, diplomatic and the social and cultural change that resulted from these interactions. In each of the areas, we have seen how the Roman perception of foreign tribal groups affected the way in which officials viewed threats to the frontier zone. Through controlling access to the trade network of the frontier region and luxury goods, Rome was able to manipulate some tribes into an economically dependent state. Through diplomatic interaction, Rome was able to influence the causes of inter-tribal conflict. In particular, the case of the Batavii was discussed and the influence that the ethnic perception of tribal groups held by the Roman Empire had on this tribal community, through the promotion of a warrior culture and continuous recruitment into auxiliary units. Both of these cases displayed Roman attempts at maintaining regional stability along the frontier, by mitigating those ethnic traits seen as most significant in the image of the tribal groups, a martial culture and semi nomadic nature.

Finally, we considered the nature of Rome's cultural interaction with neighbouring communities. To do so we had to discuss the reality of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity, instead of the ethnic identity constructed by Roman perceptions of these tribal communities. In reality, while Roman society had depicted the Gallic and Germanic cultures as static, these communities had, long before the influence of Rome, undergone significant cultural and social change. Therefore, when Roman authors represented such groups as culturally and socially static, it was a significant inaccuracy. The misinterpretation however, remained in the cultural consciousness of the Roman world, and would come to affect these periphery communities through a process that has been referred to as tribalization. This process

suggests that tribal-like communities are formed out of interaction with large, more complex societies. Particular discussion was given over to the example of Germanic tribal communities before and after the establishment of the Roman Frontier on the Rhine. Therefore, as we have seen throughout this chapter the manner in which the Roman state interacted with foreign groups was directly influenced by the perception of Gallic and Germanic tribal ethnicity. In turn, Roman interactions with Gallic and Germanic communities across the frontier zone incidentally influenced these societies to develop in ways the Roman state perceived them to be. It can therefore be concluded that the effect ethnicity had on the frontier and its development was significant stretching from the frontiers location and possible purpose, through to the manner in which interactions across the frontier zone occurred and how in turn they affected the development of native communities.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis has been to identify and assess the degree to which ethnicity, specifically the etic ethnicity, of Gallic and Germanic tribes affected the development of the Roman frontier in central Europe from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC through to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. This involved addressing the following issues. First, how did Greek and Roman audiences conceptualise and construct ethnicity? Chapter 2 focused on this issue determining a number of facets of ethnicity used in the construction of such identities in the ancient world. Second, what was the specific nature of the discourse, regarding the ethnicity of Gallic and Germanic tribes? Chapter 3 addressed this issue through the analysis of textual and archaeological evidence from across several chronological cross sections. This led to a greater understanding of how the discourse around these tribes changed over time and to the identification of key themes within Gallic and Germanic etic identities. Finally, in what manner did the etic ethnicity of these tribal groups affect the location and development of the Roman frontier. Chapter 4 focused on the Roman conception of the Rhine frontier and assessing reasons for its location as well as its impact on the Gallic and Germanic tribes. The chapter addressed how Roman-tribal interactions affected the development of the Rhine frontier.

Chapter 2 addressed the conceptualisation and construction of ethnicity in the ancient world. Using the work of Renfrew (1996), Smith (1986) and Nash (1989) a number of facets of ancient ethnicity were identified, including idea of a shared territory, shared culture and religion and a shared ancestry. Concepts such as ‘othering’ were discussed, with particular note made of the suggestion that groups identified themselves in contrast to the ‘other’. The issue with this interpretation of ethnic identity is that it presupposes that groups will act negatively towards differences seen in other ethnic identities. The importance of the development of group terms such as *barbarous*, in the ancient world in section 2.1 shows

how the presumption of a negative perception of the 'other' is often a modern misconception of a complex ancient discourse.

Shared territory was identified as having a significant influence on ancient ethnographic thinking in section 2.2. The idea that people's characteristics were influenced in some way by their surrounding and climate was prevalent in the ancient discourse surrounding ethnicity. Examples of this theory include the work *On Airs, Waters, Places*, in which the author linked foreign cultures in the East to their geographical location. Of particular relevance to the latter chapters was the often quoted notion that soft lands bred soft, civilised people and harsh lands. The Roman perception of the Gallic and Germanic tribes as courageous men bred among harsh and difficult conditions was a significant part of their early understanding of such tribal groups. The geographical focus of such claims were often determined by the political focus of those directing the discourse at that time. For example, in the work of Lucian in which the dichotomy of regions was between the North and the East, reflecting the threat posed by Germanic tribes to the North during the early Principate when Lucian was writing.

Next, the ideas of shared history and common descent were assessed. Groups such as the Athenians placed significant value on their belief of pure lineage, often from mythical figures such as Erechtheus. While the Roman state used the myths of Aeneas and Romulus to present a shared history for the Roman people (Livy 1.4-17).

The final facet for the construction of ethnicity in the ancient world identified in Chapter 2 was that of shared culture and religion. By assessing Greek and Roman views of Egyptian ethnicity, we found not only the importance that such factors had on ethnicity but also that groups understood each other via similarities first and thereby gradually identified differences. In understanding the construction of ethnicity, certain factors held different importance and significances to different groups. Groups created ethnic identities for each other also known as etic ethnic identities. It was these etic ethnic identities, which while prone to inaccuracies, were influential in how a group understood the world around them. This made for a complex network of ethnicity in the ancient world where a group, such as the Gallic or Germanic tribes, were perceived by a number of conflicting etic identities.

Chapter 3 analysed specific snapshots within the chronology of the ancient discourse related to ethnicity. Using the framework for constructing ancient ethnicity laid out in Chapter 2, key traits that were prominent within the Greek and Roman perception of Gallic and Germanic tribes were identified. The focus of Gallic and Germanic culture on conflict was present from the work of Polybius through to that of Tacitus some three hundred years later. It was not presented, however, as a negative stereotype by some authors. In the writings of Caesar and Tacitus, the warlike nature of the Gauls and Germans was depicted as a function of tribal *libertas*. The desire for freedom was presented to Roman audiences as comparable to their own love of *libertas*. However, such similarity was tempered by the Gallic and Germanic predisposition for *virtus* and a semi nomadic lifestyle. Roman authors, such as Caesar, understood the significant effects that the semi nomadic lifestyle of the tribes and the cultural act of tribal migration could have on the surrounding area. The Cimbri and Teutoni were known to have caused panic and chaos throughout Gaul before they threatened Italy. For Roman audiences, it was seen as a continuing process throughout their history, as seen in the events such as the sack of Rome (Homo 1969: 565; Lomas 2004b: 493; Oakley 2004: 23), the plundering of Delphi (Tarn 1969: 103). Each event reinforced the threat migrations were seen to pose to Roman society and reinforced the aggressive, warlike nature of the northern tribes. This nomadic nature of the Gallic and Germanic ethnicities was a significant aspect of the identity the Roman state had constructed for them. In fact, so influential were the twin factors of conflict and tribal migration, that for Roman audiences they explained other issues such as tribal organisation. The presentation of the tribes as semi nomadic, was a process of "othering" them from the Roman norm of urban sedentary life. The Gallic and Germanic tribes in this sense represented a chaotic alternative, which possessed not only a desire for freedom against Roman domination but also the courage to oppose the Roman people and threaten their supremacy and security. Such an image as this undoubtedly affected the manner in which the Roman conceived of and developed their frontier against such groups leading to the discussion in Chapter 4. Also, considered within Chapter 3 were artistic depictions of the tribes as part of the wider discourse on tribal ethnicity. The ethnic identity presented within the textual evidence can be seen in the sculptures and other forms of artistic depictions of the time period including the use of imagery on coinage. In each case, we found that warfare was strongly linked to the Gallic and Germanic tribes just as it was in the textual evidence, though there was little to no representation of the semi nomadic lifestyle of the tribes. The reasons for this revolve around

themes within Roman art and its focus on both state iconography and cultural representations of myth and historical events such as with the statue of the Dying Gaul.

Taking the importance of the Roman perception of tribal warfare and the semi nomadic nature of tribal life into account, Chapter 4 assessed the Roman concept of their empire and frontier, and the possibility of a wider purpose and their concept of its purpose. The Roman state was shown to have defined its frontiers in terms of ethnicity rather than geographically in section 4.1.1. For example in the *Res Gestae*, Augustus framed the expansion of the Roman Empire in terms of those peoples brought under Roman influence. Therefore, for the Roman state it was the limit of their political influence that was the defining feature in their concept of frontiers more so than physical boundaries. Ethnicity, in particular the ethnic ethnicity of foreign groups, played a key role in the fundamental conceptualisation of the frontier within the Roman discourse. The Roman understanding of the frontiers purpose was an issue that ancient authors never directly addressed which has led to a number of different models and theories to emerge in the field of Roman frontier studies such as the work of Luttwak (1976). This thesis has sought to present the argument that due to the fundamental nature of ethnicity in the Roman understanding of the frontier, it had an equally important role in understanding its purpose and development.

To advance this argument, Chapter 4 considered the methods for gathering information on the frontier and in what manner decisions regarding frontier policy may have been made. The Roman state had numerous methods for gathering information regarding not only the frontier zone but also those tribes dwelling within it. Sources such as merchants, military scouts, diplomacy and the possibility of native deserters or captives. However, each of these cases were subject to the cultural bias generated from the discourse revealed in Chapter 3. Sources of information regardless of accuracy were only as useful as the decision making process they were subject to. Frontier policy was determined, depending on the period of Roman History, by either a series of annually elected senatorial career politicians, or an Emperor surrounded by a permanent council of advisors often too distant from the frontier to make truly informed decisions. In addition to this, one must not suppose that historical figures acted rationally at all times. The possibility of external influences manipulating the decision making process was always present, and as ethnicity was a significant factor in regards the frontier one can see how it must have had a role in the construction of frontier policy.

A significant part of frontier policy discussed in Chapter 4 was the location of the frontiers. Chapter 4 examined the manner in which the frontiers of the Roman Empire were chosen and sought to ascertain if and how the ethnic perceptions of the Gallic and Germanic tribes affected the formation of the frontier in central Europe. Some scholars such as Luttwak have suggested that the purpose of locating the frontier in central Europe on the Rhine was as a strategic defensive barrier. This analysis suggests a rational wide-ranging frontier policy unaffected by issues of ethnic perception. Historically rivers had been routes of communication rather than boundaries to movement. Therefore, while the Roman military made use of the logistical advantage, the frontier zone itself was semi permeable region, which required little effort to cross, shown by the fact that merchants and envoys would have constantly crossed through this frontier region. The bridging of the river was not a priority for the Roman military. The river provided as many advantages to crossing as it did difficulties (Austin & Rankov 1995: 174); therefore suggesting that strategic defence was most likely a secondary or tertiary purpose for the frontier. Instead, if one considers the earliest establishment of the frontier another possibility is presented. The earliest reference in Roman literature to the Rhine as a frontier from Caesar's *Commentarii*. In it, we find that Caesar referenced the Rhine in terms of describing the ethnic breakup of the people of Gaul. For Caesar, the Rhine was significant because it represented the ethnic boundary between the Gallic ethnos and the Germanic ethnos, rather than any particular strategic position. Therefore, Caesar's perception of Gallic and Germanic ethnicity defined for him the boundary of Gaul, and it was for this reason that the Rhine became identified as a frontier zone in Roman society. Through understanding the etic Roman perspective of Gallic and Germanic identities, we can identify clear ways in which Roman decision making regarding the frontier was directed by ethnicity.

The final aspect of frontier development considered in Chapter 4 was the way in which Rome interaction with foreign groups was affected by ethnicity. The importance of this is based on the basic idea that one cannot understand the frontier from just the Roman side. If ethnicity had a significant effect on the frontier, it should manifest itself in the interactions across it. Such interactions can be broadly defined into three types, economic, diplomatic and cultural or social interactions. By controlling access to the trade network of the frontier regions, Rome was able to manipulate some tribes into economically dependent states. While engaging in diplomatic interaction with the tribal groups allowed the Roman state further control over the stability of the region, thereby managing the perceived warlike nature of the

tribes as discussed in Chapter 3. The semi nomadic lifestyle of the tribes was also managed through economic ties and the resettling of tribal groups on the Roman west bank of the Rhine. Rome's interaction with neighbouring communities cause cultural and social changes within tribal groups. This is to be expected; especially considering the point made by Derks (2009) regarding the opportunity for changes in ethnic identity due to shifts in regional power structures and the significant influence an empire's ethnic perception can have over smaller communities. Gallic and Germanic communities were incidentally shaped by contact with Rome. Through methods such as trade the Roman state aided in the development of greater complexity in Gallic and Germanic communities. Wells (1999) refers to this process as tribalization. Due to the Roman ethnic perception of these tribes as static communities with specific structures, Gallic and Germanic communities began to morph into social systems that could better interact with the Roman state across the frontier zone. This involved the development of a clear elite strata within the tribal group that was often in control of trade and other interactions with Roman representatives. Therefore ethnicity not only determined the manner in which the Roman state used diplomacy and trade with the Gallic and Germanic tribes, but also the very nature of the tribes themselves. When combined with the influence ethnicity had over the placement and nature of the Roman frontier, it seems clear ethnicity should be a key factor in our understanding of the Roman frontier in central Europe.

Throughout this work, we have seen how ethnicity had a fundamental effect on the development of the frontier in central Europe. However, the degree to which ethnicity affected other frontiers within the Roman Empire is relatively unexplored field. Especially in the East were the communities Rome interacted with across frontier region were equally as complex and developed, resulting in the need for further study in this area. Whittaker (1994: 85) says of the academic discussion on the nature of Roman frontier: "even unconscious decisions are determined by factors that can be explained rationally." It is the agreement of this thesis, that the "unconscious" factor Whittaker refers to here is ethnicity. Further study of both the Eastern frontier and North African frontier would presumably display a similar function of ethnicity. However, the ethnic identities as play there would be significantly different resulting in the development of very different frontier systems. There is further space for study along the Rhine frontier, with the period between AD 200 – AD 500 being of particular interest, due to nature of the foreign invasions that occurred in that region.

By surveying and analysing ancient literature to identify the key aspects of perceived ethnic identities which are shown consistently throughout a variety of authors and contexts;

followed by considerations as to how these ideas permeated the Roman psyche and were reflected in art; a clearer, balanced understanding can be gained of exactly how Roman society perceived ancient communities. This can then be used to gain greater insight into the decisions and interactions that occurred across particular frontiers at particular times. This understanding could also be developed further through more extensive comparative studies with other historical and contemporary events where people meet, particularly through migrations, but also warfare and imperialism.

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