

# Cities in Turmoil and Transition: The Continuity of Trier and Regensburg between the Late Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages

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## Introduction

The Fall of the Roman Empire in the West occurred as the end result of a fundamental weakening of imperial structure for more than a century. The over-extended and internally fragile regime collapsed under the feebleness of the Roman army, the declining effectiveness of its own power, and increasing foreign pressure on the limes. In the centuries which preceded and followed the 455 sack of Rome by the Vandals, these factors caused many upheavals felt throughout the Empire. The imperial frontier was especially damaged, and the cities themselves were altered by the loss of Roman political and military power, as well as the Germanic invasions.

This paper follows the transformation from the Late Empire to the Early Middle Ages of two frontier cities, Regensburg and Trier. Although many *civitas* capitals, like Trier, survived successfully into the Middle Ages, it was unusual for garrison towns such as Regensburg to have endured. Examining these two cities sheds light on the characteristics they possessed which enabled them to successfully make the transition. The sources of evidence for this area consist primarily of archaeological, funeral, historical (Roman and early medieval), and inscriptional data. In the first part of the paper, I examine Trier and Regensburg in the Late Empire, looking specifically at political, economic, sociological, symbolic, and military aspects. Second, I consider the effects of the Germanic invasions on the two cities. Third, I analyze Trier and Regensburg in the context of the Early Middle Ages. The purpose of this inquiry is to determine the particular characteristics which enabled them to survive successfully through these troubled times.

## The Late Roman Empire

The Late Empire witnessed many attempts at reform, some of which were successful, but none of which were sufficient to stave off the imminent decline in the West. In the late third century, Diocletian divided the Empire into East and West and reorganized the governing structure. He appointed an emperor and a caesar, or sub-emperor, for each half. Although the East continued to prosper through the fourth through sixth centuries, the West crumbled under pressure. Despite reforms, the Western imperial government became less and less able to

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directly control the administration and military defense of the provinces, and thus its control of the frontier area decreased (Collins 1991:89-90). Moreover, after the death of Constantine in the mid-fourth century, financial troubles in Rome began to affect the provinces, including the cities. For example, markets failed and economic activity decreased (Arragon 1936:54).

One of the most pressing problems with which Rome and its provinces were increasingly forced to grapple was the decline and withdrawal of frontier troops. The army in the principate had been a professional one in which the soldiers served for a long time, if not life. In the Later Empire, however, the army recruited soldiers from both Roman citizens and barbarians, many of whom remained only for a short time, and this decreased its stability. As the Empire entered the fourth and fifth centuries, the army depended more and more on barbarian troops at the same time as its general strength decreased (Jones 1966:215). The Early Medieval historian Collins (1991:44) argues that the quality of the army during this period was destroyed. This increasing weakening of the defensive forces on the limes in part allowed the Germanic invaders to penetrate the border (Musset 1975:10).

Closely connected with the weakening of the Roman forces was the increasing withdrawal of troops from the frontier starting in the mid-fourth century. During the civil war between Constantius II and Magnentius, frontier troops were transferred back west in order to back up Magnentius' troops. Moreover, the war eventually resulted in the weakening and withdrawal of Roman forces along the Rhine (Collins 1991:31). The Marcomannic War also contributed to this problem because between 395 and 398, Stilicho transferred troops from the Danube frontier in order to support forces back in Italy (Musset 1975:24). Troops in Gaul were also removed slowly over several decades. Moreover, many sections of the limes were abandoned because the army lacked the troops to man them. The reduction in troops decreased the ability of the Western imperial government to enforce its decisions in the frontier areas (Collins 1991:89).

During this period there was also increasing pressure by Germanic tribes on the limes to enter the Roman Empire. Some of this pressure was caused by the growing threat of a Persian offensive in the East around the mid-fourth century (Collins 1991:31). Migrations of Goths in the East also contributed to this problem, as did the population growth in what is now central Germany (Musset 1975:10). This pressure remained an ever-present threat which culminated in the disastrous fifth-century invasions. Even before the invasions, however, Germanic tribes were legally entering imperial territory. For example, in 357 and 358, several Frankish groups entered Gaul by treaty (Collins 1991:34). Also in the mid-fourth century, Visigoth groups which later turned against the imperial government were allowed into the Empire. Thus a situation was created in which Germanic groups were already present in imperial territory before the fifth-century invasions occurred.

### *Trier*

Before examining the cities in the later imperial period, some background information concerning their origins and development is necessary. Trier began as a legionary fort for a cavalry regiment in Augustan times, although it soon gained more diverse functions. In AD 37 it ceased to be a fort when the Rhine became the more or less permanent boundary of the Empire. Trier soon became a tribal and administrative center (Von Elbe 1975:390). In AD 44 and 45, the

city was given a formal layout under the emperor Claudius and received the name Augusta Treverorum.

By the second century, Trier was expanding rapidly, and it maintained this pace until the end of the fourth century. This was made possible in part by its location in the fertile Mosel Valley and its proximity to the Rhine, an excellent position for trade and communications. In the third century it was briefly made a capital by the general Postumus when Gaul ceded from the Empire, and it subsequently re-gained this status after Diocletian divided the Empire in AD 293. In the next century, the Praetorian Prefecture was transferred to Trier, and the city continued to flourish until the Praefecture's departure in AD 395.

During most of the Later Roman Empire, Trier held a very important political position. The city was assigned to Constantius Chlorus in 293 and became the capital of the West (MacKendrick 1970:215). It remained the imperial capital and residence of many emperors, such as Valentinian I, for the remainder of the third century and most of the fourth. The emperors controlled both commerce and politics, but Christianity was primarily in the hands of the bishops. If the emperor was absent, his deputy carried out many of the governmental functions, such as raising taxes. Many Gallo-Romans and Gauls gained important positions of office in the Roman administration of Trier (Mathisen 1993).

While in its prime, Trier was the political focus of Gaul, even holding governmental functions outside the city. For a number of years, Trier was the residence of the procurator, (chief financial officer) of Belgica and the two Germanies (Von Elbe 1975:390). In addition to influencing Gaul and its neighbors, Trier also held some political control over provinces such as Spain and Britain (Randers-Pehrson 1983:27). The loss of the Praetorian Prefecture in 395, however, resulted in decline and a loss of population which was aggravated by troop withdrawal and Germanic invasions. As Collins (1991:75) has noted, the withdrawal of troops greatly diminished the ability of the imperial government to control the political administration of frontier cities.

Economically, Trier was a very successful city in the Later Empire. Some of the evidence for this comes from the magnificent buildings constructed by emperors in Trier, including the well-known basilica. Wealthy townsmen occupied magnificent villas containing baths, walls painted with murals, and floors covered in mosaic (Von Elbe 1975:392). Many of the owners were part of a rich Roman bourgeoisie, although natives of Trier prospered economically as well. Even by the first century, Trier was referred to by the geographer Pomponius Mela as an "urbs opulentissima" (ibid., 391). It was also called the "second Rome" and the Rome of the north (ibid. 395).

Agriculture contributed its share towards Trier's success (Schutz 1985:101; MacKendrick 1970:215). The city was located in the fertile Mosel Valley, which is surrounded by hills which boast prosperous grape vines. Grains and other agricultural products were cultivated at and around Trier, but the city has always remained famous for its wine.

Trade was a large factor in Trier's prosperity as well. Geographically, the location of the city was ideal for exchange relations with many other cities and areas. It was located at the intersection of rivers, enabling the favored means of transport (Brogan 1953:159). The city was also at an intersection of trade and military roads. It connected the Rhineland, Belgica, and Gaul,

as well as linking the Mediterranean area with the north (Günther and Kšpstein 1975:377; Schutz 1985:99). Roads led out to Koblenz, Cologne, Mainz, Strasbourg, and Paris, bringing goods in and shipping them out. Trier was ideally situated for moving supplies to Roman garrisons stationed on the Rhine. Moreover, the city attracted many craftsmen and traders from all over (Randers Pehrson 1983:16). Trier exported agricultural and industrial products, including food, wine, textiles, leather, and pottery, throughout the Empire and beyond. The city imported raw materials and goods such as stone, basalt, cloth, furniture, grain, wine, and pottery. Traders came from as far away as Syria, bringing luxuries like ivory, incense, precious stones, fruits, and oil (Deansley 1956:126; Randers-Pehrson 1983:27).

Trier's manufacturing industries were prosperous in the Later Empire and furnished goods for the city, its surroundings, and the Roman army. Trier was considered one of the most important suppliers for the Roman forces (Latouche 1968:102; Von Elbe 1975:390). The city housed such industries as a textile woolen mill, armory, and a coin mint (Jones 1966:239). There were prominent pottery kilns at the southern end of Trier, several of which produced the celebrated black beakers and wine cups, which were highly regarded in the Late Empire and traded throughout the Rhineland, Gaul, and into Britain (Brogan 1953:148). It is also possible that diatreta glass was manufactured at Trier (Randers-Pehrson 1983:30). The economic sphere was not immune to troubles, however. Trier experienced financial decline when the Praetorian Prefecture departed for Arles at the end of the fourth century. However, as is discussed below, Trier was able to survive both this hardship and the Germanic invasions.

Trier was fairly socially diverse. High-born Roman emperors, administrators, and court officials resided there, as did members of the Roman army; there were many troops stationed on the Rhine during much of this period. But Trier was not primarily made up of Roman citizens (Von Elbe 1975:390). Gallo-Romans constituted a significant portion of the population, and many of them were prosperous landowners residing in villas. There were also many native Gauls, as well as Germanic peoples, especially Franks. Their numbers increased towards the end of the Western Empire, as they experienced growing pressure to enter imperial territory. While the Praetorian Prefecture resided at Trier, a large aristocracy remained there, although many departed for the south after 395 (Mathisen 1993:59). Manufacturers and traders resided in Trier, as did a prosperous bourgeoisie which included wealthy vineyard owners. Trier had become a bishopric early in the fourth century, and since then religious personages became more and more important (Schutz 1985:159).

There were also symbolic elements to Trier. Religion was a central focus, and the city planning was very deliberate. Trier appears quite "romanized" in many ways by the Later Empire. The emperors built an amphitheater to seat 20,000 spectators, a Roman temple, a forum, and Roman baths (MacKendrick 1970:216). The city layout itself was formal and Roman, following a grid pattern with frequented streets that were reworked several times (Brogan 1953:114). Third-century mosaics portray a taste of the metropolis, suggesting that many inhabitants favored the city life (*ibid.*, 229).

Trier's administrators, Roman and otherwise, presented an image of strength to the barbarians outside imperial territory. This was especially important for Trier because it was located close to the frontier (Johnson 1983:143). In fact, we see increased fortifications throughout Trier's imperial existence right up until the fifth century. The city itself was

surrounded by thick walls with monumental gateways. The protective wall built in the third century boasted forty-seven round towers and four gate fortresses (Von Elbe 1975:392). The Porta Nigra, Trier's most celebrated of such gate fortresses, was constructed in the fourth century as protection against the barbarians. It was built three meters thick by eight meters high (Butler 1959:38).

Religion was an important element in late imperial Trier. Although Christianity had been rapidly gaining ground since the third century, paganism nonetheless remained a noticeable presence. There were increasing attempts to destroy paganism, however. During the reign of the emperor Gratian, the Altbachal pagan sanctuaries were deliberately and fiercely destroyed (Wightman 1970:229). Pagan worship continued, however, even after Theodosius' 392 prohibition of it. Paganism in the Western Empire, although almost completely absent from Gallic cities by the late sixth century, continued in some rural areas into the eighth and ninth centuries (Wightman 1985:285).

Christianity gained much strength in Trier during the Late Roman Empire, as can be seen in evidence from archaeological excavations and written documents from the Roman period and the Early Middle Ages. Christianity could have reached Trier as early as the late second century, but had definitely taken root in the third century, when we find the first list of bishops for the city (Wightman 1970:227). It was one of the centers of early Christianity in that the religion was established before the conversion of Constantine in AD 312 (Schutz 1985:159). By the late fourth century, Christianity was strongly rooted in Trier (King 1990:193).

As Heinen (1985:343) notes, Christianity in the West at this period was primarily a religion of the cities. Its development spread fairly quickly in Trier, especially after 392. Constantine and his family resided in Trier for a number of years, and they actively encouraged its proliferation (Von Elbe 1975:394). The growth of the religion can be seen in certain locally-manufactured goods, such as metal objects, glass rings, pottery lamps, and terra sigillata bowls, which displayed the Chi-Rho symbol or other Christian motifs (Wightman 1970:237). Funerary evidence is also indicative. By the late fourth century, most gravestones displayed Christian symbols, and this increased into the fifth century (Günther and K&spstein 1975:379; Wightman 1985:297). Inhumation graves, also suggestive of the adoption of Christianity, became increasingly prevalent in the late third century. Archaeologists have also uncovered many graves containing coins with Christian inscriptions (Wightman 1970:247).

Trier became a pilgrimage center visited by many, and enjoyed its share of healing miracles, Christian architecture, and religious controversy. It became the most important church center in Gaul after the Edict of Toleration for Christian worship in 313 (King 1990:190). Construction of the cathedral began in 321 as the first church architecture of the province. Constantine's family funded the basilica, the double church, and other buildings. Many famous theologians came to Trier, including St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, Martin of Tours, and Athanasius, after whose exile a small monastic community was founded outside the city walls (Randers-Pehrson 1983:33).

Although Trier soon developed into much more than the initial legionary camp, the city did not sever all its connections with the Roman army. Its position close to the limes and the resulting need for protection necessitated heavy fortification and defense. Trier also served as a center for military communication among garrisons, which were numerous along the Rhine.

Moreover, the army provided an important market for manufactured goods from Trier, and the forces depended heavily on the city as a source of supplies (Randers-Pehrson 1983:4-5). There were also members of the Roman army residing in Trier, although it does not appear that army officers or other members were particularly active in the administrative affairs of the city.

### *Regensburg*

The city of Regensburg has an equally interesting, if less celebrated, history. It is located at the northernmost point of the Danube limes at the conjunction of the rivers Danube and Regen. Roman forces built it as an auxiliary castellum, a small military stronghold, around AD 70 or 75 (Ulbert 1960:65). At this time, it was a 500 man fort, measuring 160 by 137 meters (Ulbert 1960:65; Hable 1970:21). After a series of second-century Marcomannic invasions across the Danube, which culminated in the Marcomannic War, the fort was rebuilt in AD 179 during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The Legio III Italica was assigned to this area and they constructed a larger castrum in place of the earlier fort. It was built of stone and enclosed 540 by 450 meters, which made it bigger than most limes forts, especially in the province of Raetia (Johnson 1983:68; Schutz 1985:144). From this point on, there was a civilian settlement to the west of the camp, and the city grew more prosperous. The Roman army remained at Castra Regina throughout a series of third-century invasions, but abandoned it permanently in the mid-fifth century.

Information on the political and administrative aspects of Regensburg in the Later Roman Empire is unfortunately far less abundant than for Trier. Most provincial castra during this period were basically self-governing, although the governor was usually a Roman (Jones 1966:238). The castra usually had simpler political structures than the civitas capitals like Trier. Roman officers often held administrative offices at garrisons, which occurred at Regensburg. In fact, the commander of the Legio III Italica, which built the camp, was appointed a praetor and governed Raetia from the capital of Augusta Vindelicum (Augsburg). It is important to keep in mind that a substantial and integrated civilian settlement was attached to the military camp after AD 179, and these inhabitants were also subject to the governing of the city.

Although Regensburg never became an administrative center or capital, it was economically quite successful for an army garrison. It held other functions, but remained primarily a garrison town. It is also important to note that although Raetia developed more slowly in terms of economics and levels of prosperity than the Rhineland, Regensburg was quite successful (Johnson 1985:173; Schutz 1985:138). Most houses in the city were constructed out of wood, but by the third century, some wealthy army officers and others had built expensive city villas. In fact, the living standards of Castra Regina reached the level of the provincial capital of Augusta Vindelicum (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:22).

Roman troops, especially the ones stationed at Regensburg, constituted one of the main elements around which the economic activity of the city centered. Civilian craftsmen and artisans manufactured goods for the needs of the soldiers. Traders and merchants at Regensburg, including many soldiers, maintained exchange relations with groups both north and south of the city (*ibid.*, 19). Regensburg was located at a key junction of the Regen and Danube rivers, and three significant but smaller rivers also flowed into the Danube in the area of Regensburg (Ulbert 1960:65). There was a ship landing at the city to accommodate the traffic, and this small port

played an important role throughout the existence of *Castra Regina*. Trading began to flourish after AD 179, at which point life in general at Regensburg became more prosperous (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:21). Merchants engaged in an active trade in both raw and finished materials, importing such goods as *terra sigillata*, glass, metals, and textiles (*ibid.*, 22). Regensburg was a particularly vital city for trading in Raetia because it was one of the largest in the area.

People of different professions, backgrounds, and hierarchical strata of society lived at Regensburg. There were members of the Roman army, who in themselves were a diverse group, with wealthy commanders and less affluent soldiers. A large civilian population was also present, consisting of farmers, traders, merchants, and an increasing number of ecclesiastical figures. There were also the wives and children of soldiers, who were key in the integration of the military and civilian spheres (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:19). In terms of background, there were Roman citizens, native Celts, and various combinations of both. People of Germanic background also resided there both because Regensburg was close to the limes, and because an increasing number of Germans was entering the army (Schutz 1985:41).

Regensburg was symbolically powerful. First and foremost, the city existed as a garrison town whose purpose was to guard against Germanic invasions from across the Danube. Thus, the city was designed to express power and strength. The stone fortress built in AD 179 survived through the Later Roman Empire, with some subsequent rebuilding. The fortress walls measured eight meters high and two meters thick (Von Elbe 1975:322). The northern gate was known as the *Porta Praetoria*; it was solid and imposing at four meters wide, and was built in the fourth century (Johnson 1983:174).

Although the city was not completely "romanized," it was stamped with a definite Roman influence. The city was planned on the regulation rectangular plan, which in itself represented a symbolic imposition of order. The civilian settlement was romanized enough to have porticoed streets flanked by colonnades (MacKendrick 1970:117). In addition, there is likely to have been a theater and maybe hot baths for the legions (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:21). Unfortunately, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of the interior buildings and layout within the fortress walls in Roman times because the medieval and modern town occupied on exactly the same spot (Johnson 1983:174).

Christianity played an important role in the development of late imperial Regensburg. Wallace-Hadrill (1960:84) emphasizes that what is now Bavaria had a definite ecclesiastical organization during this time. It is not known exactly when Christianity entered the city, but in the third century and even the late second, it had spread to such an extent in the West that Christian communities in Raetia had probably already formed in a few big cities like Augsburg and Regensburg (Günther and Kšpstein 1975:370). By the third century, it was certainly established at Regensburg; there were many routes of diffusion into the city, including traders, merchants, and Roman troops (Dietz et al. 1979). It must be remembered, however, that pagan religion was not immediately wiped out, although it became decreasingly prevalent towards the end of imperial rule.

Christianity soon took route in Regensburg, and there were already churches in the Later Empire. Examining burial practices provides strong evidence for the Christianization of the city. Starting in the third century, there was an increase in the number of inhumation burials, and a decrease in ash-urn burials, suggesting the advancement of Christianity. Moreover, third-

to fifth-century funerary inscriptions bearing the Christian symbols of Alpha and Omega or the Chi-Rho indicate the growing presence of the religion in the Late Empire (Von Elbe 1979:328). The late fourth century witnessed the burial of a young girl named *Sarmannina*, whose grave reveals Christian inscriptions and Roman text describing her as a martyr for Christianity (Ulbert 1960:76). Other evidence includes pieces of gold glass from the mid-fourth to early-fifth centuries with inscriptions of Peter and Paul, and fingerings with Christian inscriptions (Ulbert 1960:76; Dietz et al 1979:139).

The military element of Regensburg was very important because the city existed primarily as a Roman garrison to protect against Germanic invasions. In fact, the location was chosen for its strategic importance. It provided an optimal view over the Danube and into free Germany (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:19). The city was positioned at an important crossing of the Danube and guarded common routes into Free Germany (Von Elbe 1975:322). Because Regensburg remained an army town for the duration of its imperial existence, the city itself was inseparable from its military connections. Thus, Regensburg appears as especially susceptible to a withdrawal of Roman troops.

## **Germanic Invasions and Decline of the Roman Army**

Barbarian invasions in the late-third century created a period of crisis in which the limes of Upper Germany fell and Frankish invaders plundered through the interior of Gaul (Musset 1975:11). Some frontier cities were not able to withstand these attacks and were abandoned, but others survived by bringing the whole city within the walls. Trier was fortunate enough to have been spared the worst of these attacks, although they suffered some damage. There was subsequent rebuilding of the city and strengthening of fortifications and defense (Johnson 1983:72). The impressive *Porta Nigra* was built in the fourth century, as were granaries and warehouses in which to store food in the event of attack (Mathisen 1993:28). The amphitheater could also have served as a stronghold if needed (Johnson 1983:117).

Regensburg experienced several damaging attacks in the third and fourth centuries. In AD 233, the city survived an invasion by the Alemanni. Thirty-five years later, the Juthungi crossed the Alps and invaded Regensburg and Augsburg (Schutz 1985:41). This resulted in serious damage to the walls and gates, which required serious repair. Even after this invasion, however, the central organized defense of the city remained, as did the Roman army (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:22). The *Porta Praetoria* was built in the fourth century in order to prevent further attacks.

Towards the end of the late Roman Empire, the quality of the frontier troops and the effectiveness of both the army and the imperial authority itself diminished drastically, especially after Diocletian's reign. There was increasing decline of economic activity and political security, and imperial administrators found it more and more difficult to exercise direct control over the provinces. Financing the frontier army became a rapidly escalating expense. Rome lost effective control of the frontier when the armies were withdrawn, which occurred at varying times during the fifth century in the north-west provinces. The culmination of the end of Roman authority came with the 455 sack of Rome by the Vandals; the murder of Nepos in 480 marked the end of the Roman Empire in the West (Collins 1991:85-88).



The exact dates of troop withdrawal are often difficult to determine, especially in Gaul, where the process occurred over several decades (Collins 1991:75). Towards the end of the fourth century, after the Praetorian Prefecture had moved to Arles, soldiers stationed in the military garrisons on the Rhine began to be withdrawn (Mathisen 1993:19). Emperor Theodosius (388-95) instituted this policy of withdrawal, which also included political administrators, in what has been called the "sacrifice" of Trier (Latouche 1968:102). The policy of troop removal was accelerated such that when the Frankish invasions of the first part of the fifth century occurred, Trier was left undefended.

The turning point for Regensburg in troop withdrawal occurred in AD 401. The Vandal general Stilicho, who was in the service of the Roman army, was forced to recall troops to fight the West Goth king Alaric in Italy. Although Roman rule in the city continued for several decades to come, the crucial step had been taken towards the abandonment of Regensburg (MacKendrick 1970:117). The Legio III Italica, which had built *Castra Regina* in AD 179 and had been stationed there ever since, remained at the city until the middle of the fifth century, although reduced in numbers (Von Elbe 1975:323). The final exit of troops from Regensburg and the province of Raetia came in the year 450. When St. Severin wrote about his travels in the area around this time, he described the absence of troops in the city (Ulbert 1960:77).

The invasions that definitively ended imperial rule in the frontier provinces came in the fifth century. The Franks initiated a series of forays into Trier throughout the fifth century, which culminated in the imposition of Frankish rule. They occurred in 406, 411, 419, 440, and between 475 and 480 (Musset 1975:128, Randers-Pehrson 1983:3). Mid fifth-century attacks plagued Regensburg as well. Attila and his Hun army crossed the Danube in 452 and met no Roman resistance (Collins 1991:80). During the next century there were more attacks by the Avars and Slavic groups also coming over the Danube (Musset 191975:94).

The primary motive for these invasions was pressure. The growth of population pressure in Central Germany had encouraged Germanic tribes to enter the Empire in previous centuries, and in the fifth century they forced their way in (Musset 1975:10). There was also pressure from groups in the East, including Persians, Huns, Goths, and nomadic tribes on the Asian plains who were migrating and moving around (Collins 1991:31). The often fertile agricultural areas and the wealth of many frontier cities, with which the invaders were quite familiar, also served as strong incentives, especially as the Roman political and military power increasingly diminished.

The reaction of most of the frontier cities to the Germanic attacks was to close up within the city walls. This was their last means of defense since the departure of the Roman army. Both Trier and Regensburg were heavily walled cities, but the walls alone were not sufficient to prevent the invasions. The Franks were fairly easily able to take Trier because it had lost much of its power when the Praetorian Prefecture moved to Arles (Musset 1975:177). There is continuing debate over the extent of devastation caused by the invaders. Certainly it cannot be denied that destruction was severe in many places. However, numerous cities did survive, although these were rarely garrison towns. Trier experienced some decline, but as Wightman points out (1970:250), despite the invasions, there was no complete destruction of fifth-century life in Trier.

Some scholars have claimed that the barbarians showed a particular savagery in destroying those Roman cities which had been successful in trade and manufacture, but this theory remains unproven. Salvian of Marseilles did write about the destruction of many cities in Gaul, including Trier, but the damage was not complete by any means (Mathisen 1993:28). Salvian himself wrote, "I myself saw, in fact, men of Trier, of noble houses and exalted in rank . . . for whom, although they had been in fact plundered and pillaged, something yet remained of their wealth" (Mathisen 1993:28). Trier did experience a certain amount of population loss, especially of the wealthy aristocracy (Musset 1975:128). It is unfortunately difficult to obtain correct population figures for this period (Wightman 1985:224).

Although Trier encountered some destruction, the city walls and numerous old Roman buildings remained standing. The Franks incorporated many of them for themselves, especially the imperial ones -- they seem to have taken the buildings they wanted and simply left those for which they had no use. The public baths became the official residence of the Frankish count, for example (Musset 1975:128). The double church built by Constantine remained standing, as did the basilica.

There was also loss of population in Regensburg and the Danubian area, which was aggravated by the recent withdrawal of Roman troops. We cannot know for certain what percentage of the population fled from the city, but a large part withdrew into the Alpen areas (Ulbert 1960:76). City life in Regensburg did not end, however. It is likely that many civilians remained, as did numerous veterans of the Roman army and their families (Reindel 1979:39). Nor did the Germanic invaders wreak complete destruction on the city. They kept the city within the confines of the Roman walls, which had survived the invasions (Hable 1970:21). The situation seems to have resembled that of Trier in that the Germanic invaders incorporated Roman buildings, especially the stone ones, for their own use, rather than destroying or rebuilding them (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:22; Reindel 1979:38).

## **The Early Middle Ages**

Many cities on the frontier, especially the *civitas capitales*, survived into the early Middle Ages, although often partly in ruins and with a reduced population. However, there were also cases of total and violent destruction, especially of military establishments (Musset 1975:130). Such garrison towns on the northern *limes* include Stockstadt, Carnuntum, and Vetera (MacKendrick 1970:109). Continuity was nonetheless real in many places. As MacKendrick states (1970:244), the seed of the Middle Ages was sown in the Later Empire. Many wealthy aristocrats who were living on the frontier fled south, but most common people lacked the monetary ability, and often the desire, to emigrate (Reindel 1979:37). As Musset (1975:116) writes, "more or less coherent shreds" of *romanitas* remained in many regions, although the degree to which this occurred varied greatly.

The Roman administrative structure was often incorporated by the invaders and kept intact throughout the fifth century, allowing previous inhabitants of the cities to hold office (Mathisen 1993:81). The Roman (or partly Roman) administrators would have been subject to the control of the Germanic leaders, and held less power than before. Fusion of Germanic, Celtic, and Roman beliefs and practices often occurred, as did the creation of a new nobility (Wightman 1970:253; *ibid.* 1985:311). Some scholars suggest that there was a complete return

to a "natural" economy, but it is unlikely that the economy became entirely subsistence-based (Wightman 1985:252). Trade was reduced however, often to foodstuffs alone, and the range of circulation also decreased.

### *Trier*

The military situation in Trier in the post-invasion period was straightforward: Roman troops had withdrawn and then replaced by the armies of the Frankish invaders. As Bloemers writes (1983:204), the end of Roman authority signified the beginning of the Frankish kingdom. This was not a process of immediate replacement, however. Rather, we find phases in the transition between Roman and Germanic administrations in Trier, as opposed to a sharp break (Mathisen 1993:129). Many Romans entered Frankish administration, and were able to maintain a strong amount of independence. Salvian of Marseilles remarked on the continuance of Roman municipal administration in Trier during his travels there in the late fifth century (*ibid.*, 81). The Romanized count Arbogastes was administering Trier in the late fifth century, although the extent to which he and others like him were controlled by the Franks is difficult to gauge. However, there was a definite decline in the number of secular positions of power open Romans and Gallo-Romans in Trier, so many of them began to look towards ecclesiastical power.

The economic situation of Trier certainly took a turn for the worse in the post-invasion period. The financial positions of aristocrats, middle-class groups, and the poor were all reduced (Mathisen 1993:85). Those who had depended on trade, both with the frontier army and long-distance exchange, suffered from a decrease in the market (Wightman 1970:250). The artisans working in Trier also experienced a recession because the market for luxury goods was severely reduced (Musset 1975:129). Many river- and especially land-trade routes through Trier were abandoned, and the city continued to lose the prominence it had held in earlier centuries. Moreover, much of the economic activity moved out of Trier and other cities and into the countryside.

But Trier did remain economically cohesive, and as Wightman (1970:253) points out, it did not lose all of its former greatness. Many of the diverse economic functions the city had fulfilled before the invasions continued to exist, although at decreased levels of production and profit. Some of the earlier trade routes continued to be used, particularly within the old Empire (Anton 1987:62). Long-distance exchange also endured, especially along the Mosel (MacKendrick 1970:244; Wightman 1985:311). In addition, the pottery industries and possibly the glass industries continued production into the sixth centuries and beyond, and the market for luxury crafts picked up again, despite the period of initial decline (Wightman 1970:250; Musset 1975:131). Moreover, agriculture outside the city walls continued to flourish, especially in the vineyards. Oftentimes the Frankish invaders left viticulture to those current inhabitants who had practiced it for years, although noble Germanic families did move into the old Roman estates (Wightman 1970:252).

The societal structure of Trier also underwent some changes in this period, although not all of them were drastic. The social distance between wealthy land owners and semi-free peasants remained intact; Frankish land owners simply replaced Roman ones (Wightman 1970:252). There was also a Gallo-Roman aristocracy which remained, although many had fled the city. Moreover, Trier experienced the formation of a new aristocracy which consisted of

Franks, Gauls, and Gallo-Romans, including men like Arbogastes (Wightman 1985:311). An obvious change in society was the loss of imperial authority in favor of Frankish rule; even though some Romans still held office, the "upper-hand" belonged to the Germans (Mathisen 1993:57). The Christian church began to play an increasingly important role, and ecclesiastical figures became a prominent social group (King 1990:196). They held growing power over all levels of society and bishops often served as mediators between the local population and the Frankish rulers (Mathisen 1993:98).

In terms of town planning and symbolism, the Franks did not change the layout of the city to any great extent, at least initially. As is discussed above, they incorporated many Roman buildings and kept the city within the same walls, as well as retaining the original Roman grid pattern.

Christianity continued to be important both during the transition period and afterwards. Trier maintained a high level of "spiritual significance" and experienced religious continuity between periods (Heinen 1985:344; Schutz 1985:160). We know this from the unbroken lists of Bishops from the city (King 1990:192). The invasions were more damaging to the pagan religions, which were less organized than Christianity, and which were also losing popularity while Christianity was gaining it (Heinen 1985:344). The Christian religion in Trier was able to survive this chaotic period especially because the framework of its organization had been firmly established before the invasions (King 1990:201).

Christianity continued to grow and accrue power and influence during the Early Middle Ages. For example, religious, clerical, and episcopal positions began to possess a powerful type of authority which was often held by Gallo Romans (Mathisen 1993:90; 103). As King states (1990:193), bishops and other ecclesiastical figures were eager to exhibit influence over the often chaotic political situation in Trier. The church continued to gain strength and there was a growth in the number of cathedrals and large churches (Wightman 1985:299). Roman religious buildings, including the double cathedral, St. Maximin's, and St. Paulin, all remained in use (Anton 1987:59). There were more and more Christian burials than ever in the fifth century, as indicated by funeral evidence and the fact that fifth-century stone carvers created an increasing number of Christian gravestones (Wightman 1985:93). Nor did the Franks oppose this ecclesiastical power in most cases, and indeed incorporated Christian beliefs. In fact, the Frankish king Clovis converted around 508 (Collins 1991:104).

### *Regensburg*

Regensburg suffered from the loss of Roman troops, and for the remainder of the fifth century, the city was occupied by several different tribes in succession. By the sixth century, however, the situation had stabilized and a new political order, the Bajuwarens, settled in Regensburg and took control (Reindel 1979:37). In the years following the invasions, the Bajuwarens were the first tribe able to gain real power in the city and are considered to have been the direct successors of the Romans (Von Elbe 1975:323). It is through the tribe Bajuwaren that this area came to be know as Bavaria. The Bajuwarens took power around 530, at which point Regensburg became the official headquarters of the Bajuwaren duke. The Agilolfingers were the specific family of this tribe who took power and made Regensburg the capital of Bavaria

(Reindel 1979:39). In fact the Bavarian royal family kept residence at Regensburg throughout the entire Middle Ages (Hable 1970:21).

The invasions and loss of the Roman army caused a serious economic decline for the city. The closest and most dependable consumer of trade and manufactured goods --the army-- had disappeared. However, as Ulbert (1960:76) emphasizes, the economic life of Regensburg persevered along with the rest of the city. Unfortunately, much less is known about the period right after the invasions in Regensburg than in Trier. We do know that merchants continued to trade in the city, and that the market place existed in the same area as it had in Roman times, which included much of the civilian section in the north-western part of the city (Hable 1979:21). Moreover, a bridge was constructed across the Danube to aid in transport. Agriculture and other manufacturing also continued, although on a reduced scale (Dietz et al. 1979:152).

We also know little about social relations in Regensburg at this time, except that the old classes of farmers, traders, and bishops remained in the city, and that there was a new Bavarian royalty. The layout of the city also remained basically intact. The Bajuwaren dukes kept the city within the original Roman walls, incorporated Roman buildings for their own use, and maintained the trading section of the city in its original position. They do not seem to have been very concerned with ridding the city of its Roman flavor.

One of the most important elements to be considered here is Christianity. It was already strong in the Later Empire and continued to grow during the Early Middle Ages. There was continuity in the Christian burial practices between the two periods, and the Bajuwaren Germans took up these funerary practices as early as the sixth century (Ulbert 1960:77). The episcopal district in the northern part of the city which contained both the church and the bishop's court continued in use. In the seventh century there was a new Germanic cemetery constructed near a Christian church, which was also used by earlier inhabitants (Kraus and Pfeiffer 1979:28). Thus we see that the Bajuwarans began to willingly adopt the Christian religion in this period. The royal family ordered the construction of a cathedral and episcopal church, including one that was built after the 685 death of the famous St. Emmeram (Hable 1970:21). The city also constructed important monasteries in the Early Middle Ages. This all indicates that Christianity, which was gaining strength in Regensburg during the Late Empire, continued to increasingly prosper throughout the Early Middle Ages.

## **The Reasons Behind Continuity**

An examination of Trier and Regensburg during both the Late Roman Empire and the Early Middle Ages reveals that the elements of economics and Christianity are the most crucial ones for continuity. I incorporate the theory of Jane Jacobs in an attempt to understand the significance of economic depth and diversity. Jacobs points out (1969:86) that a city will not thrive if it is economically dependent on one industry, no matter how strong that industry might be. She uses the modern examples of Manchester and Birmingham to emphasize that many little industries "which were not rationally and efficiently consolidated" will keep a city from deteriorating and in fact allow it to flourish (*ibid.*, 87). She writes that "economies that do not add new kinds of goods and services, but continue only to repeat old work, do not expand much nor do they, by definition, develop" (*ibid.*, 49), and she holds this rule to be true for ancient cities as well as modern ones. She adds, moreover, that only in stagnant economies does work stay

within one category. In other words, she recognizes the importance of adding new work onto old work, and maintaining a diversified economy.

We see this theory at work in the continuity between Roman times and the Early Middle Ages in both Trier and Regensburg. The most important part of her argument for this paper involves economic diversity and adding new work onto old. Not only did Trier thrive financially, but it enjoyed numerous and diverse economic activities. It was a wealthy city which took advantage of many opportunities, and never focused solely on one industry. Moreover, new economic activities were often being added during the Late Empire. Thus Trier represents the kind of city which would emerge in a fairly stable economic condition after a tumultuous period.

The situation of Regensburg is less understandable at first glance. It remained primarily a garrison town and never attained the level of wealth or prominence that Trier did. Moreover, most garrison towns did not survive into the Early Middle Ages. However, Regensburg was quite large for a garrison, and was also one of the most comprehensive cities in the area. In addition, it enjoyed a diverse economy. Although Regensburg was dependent on Roman troops, the army was not its only source of wealth. The fact that the city possessed various sources of income meant that it was economically strong enough to withstand the economic pressures of the fifth century. Had it been entirely dependent on the Roman army, or one economic activity of any kind, it would almost certainly have collapsed during this period.

An economic approach alone cannot provide a sufficient explanation, however, and Christianity emerges as a vital factor in continuity. In other words, the cities which survived this period were usually ones of ecclesiastical power and organization (Burns 1948:436). Trier, in fact, became the most important center for the Gallic Church after the 313 Edict of Toleration for Christian worship (King 1990:190). Mathisen writes (1993:94) that the survival of the frontier cities often depended on the presence of a strong and effective bishop. Many scholars emphasize that it was the most important element in the continuity (e.g., Anton 1987; Heinen 1985, King 1990).

Bishops and inhabitants of both Trier and Regensburg were concerned with maintaining the prominence of Christianity. King states (1990:201) that in the fifth century, the Christians in particular took on the responsibility of leadership when others were evading it. Hence the importance of bishops and the extension of ecclesiastical authority to every stratum of society. Moreover, we find that the Germanic invaders were not only tolerant of Christianity in Trier and Regensburg, but actively sought to incorporate it. Christians in the cities were eager to pass their beliefs on to the Germans, and this provided a common societal foundation. Wightman (1985:296) emphasizes the appeal of Christianity to all ranks and groups, indicating that not only were newcomers interested in it, but that old inhabitants might have been more willing to remain in an invaded and chaotic city in order to stay with their religious organization and bishop. Wightman claims (1970:251) that the presence of a fairly Christianized Germanic community before the invasions, at least at Trier, made continuity easier.

Thus we find that Trier and Regensburg exhibited two aspects of continuity that were critical to their survival. Although these are not the only important elements to be examined, the situation cannot be understood without taking them both into account. An interesting question to ask would be whether these elements of diversified economy and a strong religion are always necessary to the survival of any city which undergoes a period of conflict and chaos. Future

research spanning various time periods and areas, especially other frontier cities, would provide a comparative framework within which to consider this question. A deep-rooted and expanding religion, along with a diversified economy were necessary qualities for both Trier and Regensburg, and they are ones which might constitute an essential part of any general theory of survival for cities in turmoil.

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