

Barbarians as Roman Elite: the Problem of Perspective

Philipp von Rummel, Rome

Using the example of the Flavius Stilicho, *magister militum* of the West from 394 to 408, the famous ivory diptych from Monza, the reliefs of the base of the obelisk of Theodosius in Istanbul, and the grave of the Frankish king Childeric, the paper showed the difficulty of our usually binary system of classifying historical figures as barbarians or Romans. Instead of a barbarian king with two different faces, one Roman and one barbarian, the case of Childeric seems to be better described if, firstly, we understand those so-called barbarians as a special and one-faced part of the regional aristocracies developing in the whole western empire from the 4th century onwards, if we, secondly, refrain from Germanic antiquity as a parallel universe of the Roman world and if we, thirdly, allow the Roman world to do what it always did: to change.

Literature

R. Brulet, La sépulture du roi Childéric à Tournai et le site funéraire, in: F. Vallet / M. Kazanski (eds.), La noblesse romaine et les chefs barbares du III^e au VII^e siècle. Actes du Colloque Intern. Saint-Germain-en-Laye 1992 (Saint-Germain-en-Laye 1995) 309–326.

G. Halsall, Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West (Cambridge 2007) 376-568.

S. Lebecq, The two faces of King Childeric. History, archaeology, historiography, in: W. Pohl / M. Diesenberger (eds.), Integration und Herrschaft. Ethnische Identitäten und soziale Organisation im Frühmittelalter. Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 3 (Wien 2002) 119–132.

P. v. Rummel, Habitus barbarus. Kleidung und Repräsentation spätantiker Eliten (Berlin / New York 2007).