

# The Saracen Defenders of Constantinople in 378

*David Woods*

**W**RITING *ca* 391, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus has left us a vivid description of the Roman defense of Constantinople against the Goths shortly after their crushing defeat by these Goths at Adrianopolis on 9 August 378 (31.16.4ff):

*Unde Constantinopolim, copiarum cumulis inhiantes amplissimis, formas quadratorum agmimum insidiarum metu servantes, ire ocius festinabant, multa in exitium urbis inclitae molituri. Quos inferentes sese immodice, obicesque portarum paene pulsantes, hoc casu caeleste reppulit numen. Saracenorum cuneus (super quorum origine moribusque diversis in locis rettulimus plura), ad furta magis expeditionalium rerum, quam ad concursatorias habilis pugnas, recens illuc accersitus, congressurus barbarorum globo repente conspecto, a civitate fidenter erupit, diuque extento certamine pertinaci, aequis partes discessere momentis. Sed orientalis turma novo neque ante viso superavit eventum. Ex ea enim crinitus quidam, nudus omnia praeter pubem, subraucum et lugubre strepens, educto pugio, agmini se medio Gothorum inseruit, et interfecti hostis iugulo labra admovit, effusumque cruorem exsuxit. Quo monstroso miraculo barbari territi, postea non ferocientes ex more, cum agendum appeterent aliquid, sed ambiguis gressibus incedebant.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> “From there [Perinthus] they [the Goths] hastened in rapid march to Constantinople, greedy for its vast heaps of treasure, marching in square formations for fear of ambushes, and intending to make mighty efforts to destroy the famous city. But while they were madly rushing on and almost knocking at the barriers of the gates, the celestial power checked them by the following event. A troop of Saracens (of whose origin and customs I have spoken at length in various places), who are more adapted to stealthy raiding expeditions than to pitched battles, and had recently been summoned to the city, desiring to attack the horde of barbarians of which they had suddenly caught sight, rushed forth boldly from the city to attack them. The contest was long and obstinate, and both sides separated on equal terms. But the Oriental troop had the advantage from a strange event, never witnessed before. For one

That Saracen troops played a key rôle in the defense of Constantinople in 378 is amply attested. Writing at the beginning of the sixth century, Zosimus also described their success against the Goths, or Scythians, as he called them (4.22.1ff Paschoud):

Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Οὐάλης ληζομένους ἤδη τὴν Θράκην πᾶσαν τοὺς Σκύθας θεώμενος, ἔγνω τοὺς ἐκ τῆς ἐφᾶς σὺν αὐτῷ παραγενομένους καὶ μάχεσθαι μεθ' ἵππων ἐπειροτάτους τῆ τῶν Σκυθῶν ἵπῳ πρότερον ἐπιπέμψαι. Λαβόντες οὖν οὗτοι παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τὸ σύνθημα κατ' ὀλίγους ἐκ τῶν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως πυλῶν ἐπεξήσαν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλείποντας Σκυθῶν τοῖς κοντοῖς περονῶντες πολλῶν ἡμέρας ἐκάστης ἔφερον κεφαλᾶς. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἡ τῶν ἵππων ταχυτῆς καὶ ἡ τῶν κοντῶν ἐπιφορὰ δύσμαχος εἶναι τοῖς Σκύθαις ἐδόκει, καταστρατηγῆσαι τὸ Σαρακηνικὸν διενεοήθησαν φύλον· ἐνέδραν τινὰ κοίλοις ἐναποκρῦψαντες τόποις τρεῖς ἐνὶ Σκύθας ἐπιέναι συνείδον Σαρακηνῶ. Καὶ ταύτης δὲ διαμαρτόντες τῆς πείρας, τῶν Σαρακηνῶν διὰ τὸ τῶν σφετέρων ἵππων ταχὺ καὶ εὐάγωνον κατ' ἐξουσίαν ἀποφευγόντων, ἠνίκα δ' ἂν πλήθος ἐπιὸν ἴδοιεν, ἐπελαυνόντων δὲ σχολαίοις καὶ τοῖς κοντοῖς ἀναιρούντων, τοσοῦτος ἐγένετο Σκυθῶν φόνος ὥστε ἀπαγορεύσαντας αὐτοὺς ἐθελησαὶ περαιωθῆναι τὸν Ἴστρον καὶ σφᾶς ἐκδοῦναι τοῖς Οὐννοις μᾶλλον ἢ ὑπὸ Σαρακηνῶν πανωλεθρία διαφθαρήναι· καταλιπόντων δὲ αὐτῶν τοὺς περὶ Κωνσταντίνου τὴν πόλιν τόπους καὶ πορρωτέρω προελθόντων, γέγονεν εὐρυχωρία τῷ βασιλεῖ παραγαγεῖν εἰς τὸ πρόσω τὸ στράτευμα.<sup>2</sup>

---

of their number, a man with long hair and naked except for a loin-cloth, uttering hoarse and dismal cries, with drawn dagger rushed into the thick of the Gothic army, and after killing a man applied his lips to the throat and sucked the blood that poured out. The barbarians, terrified by this strange and monstrous sight, after that did not show their usual self-confidence when they attempted any action, but advanced with hesitating steps" (text and tr.: Rolfe, LCL).

<sup>2</sup> "The emperor Valens, seeing the Scythians plundering all Thrace, decided to send against the Scythian cavalry first the Saracens he had brought with him from the East, who were expert cavalry men. At the emperor's order, they left the gates of Constantinople in small groups, and impaling the straggling Scythians on their lances, brought back the heads of many each day. Since the speed of their horses and the impact of their lances were difficult for the Scythians to withstand, they decided to counteract the Saracens by stratagem, and set up an ambush in some hollows, outnumbering the Saracens three to one. This plan was thwarted, however, because the Saracens, owing to the speed and manageability of their horses, escaped whenever they saw a group of Scythians approaching, but whenever the Saracens caught the Scythians un-

Zosimus very closely follows his late fourth-century source, Eunapius (fr. 4 Blockley), and sets the Saracens' defense of Constantinople before the battle of Adrianopolis. This contradicts Ammianus, who sets their defense of Constantinople after this battle. So when did it occur? It is generally accepted that Ammianus and Zosimus describe the same engagement, but that one of them has misplaced it within his narrative, and Ammianus' account is usually preferred to that of Zosimus.<sup>3</sup> Shahîd has argued, however, that they really describe two different engagements, *i.e.*, two Saracen defenses of Constantinople, one before the battle of Adrianopolis, the second after, but his arguments are unconvincing and occur in a work otherwise marred by a determination to discover references to Saracens where none in fact exist.<sup>4</sup> His interpretation of the evidence is disconcerting not least because it requires that Ammianus and Zosimus are both mistaken, that each has omitted one of the two alleged defenses of Constantinople, rather than that one alone errs. Further, no ancient source actually supports his thesis of two Saracen defenses. Consequently, a brief response to his argu-

---

awares, they killed them with their lances and there was such slaughter that they gave up and wanted to cross the Danube and submit to the Huns rather than be utterly destroyed by the Saracens. When they left the area around Constantinople, the emperor had room to bring his army forward" (tr. R. T. Ridley, *Zosimus, New History* [= *Byzantina Australiensia* 2 (Canberra 1982)] 79f).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. N. H. Baynes, M. Manitius, in *CMH* I (1924) 235, 252; A. Piganiol, *L'Empire chrétien (325-395)* (Paris 1947) 168f; H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, tr. T. J. Dunlap (Berkeley 1988) 129; P. HEATHER, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford 1991: hereafter 'Heather') 142 n.52.

<sup>4</sup> I. SHAHÎD, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington 1984: hereafter 'Shahîd') 179f. For an example of his determination to discover references to Saracens that will enhance their political and military significance at this period, see his treatment of the rôle of the Saracens during Julian's Persian expedition in 363, esp. 107-10. Many of his alleged implicit references to Saracens in Ammianus refer in fact to two Roman units, the *Lanciararii* and the *Mattiararii*, on which see D. Woods, "The Role of the *Comes* Lucillianus during Julian's Persian Expedition," *AntCl* 67 (forthcoming, 1998). S. T. Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier* (Winona Lake 1986) 144, and T. S. Burns, *Barbarians within the Gates of Rome: A Study of Roman Military Policy and the Barbarians ca 375-425 AD* (Bloomington 1994) 28f, 34, seem also to accept two Saracen defenses of Constantinople, although they do not explain their arguments. If I seem to single out Shahîd for disagreement, this is because his is by far the most comprehensive account of the relevant issues, and he always makes his assumptions or arguments explicit in a refreshingly honest and open way.

ments is not out of place. Why should we believe Zosimus that a Saracen defense of Constantinople took place before the battle of Adrianopolis?

Shahîd claims first that "he [Zosimus] wrote in Constantinople not long after these events had taken place, and thus he was in a privileged position to ascertain such details as affected the deliverance of the city in which he lived." Although it is probably true that Zosimus did write in Constantinople, he did so *ca* 498–520.<sup>5</sup> Some confusion is evident here between Zosimus and his main source Eunapius. The exact date of Eunapius' *History*, and whether it was published in stages rather than as one complete work, is a matter of some controversy,<sup>6</sup> but what is not controversial is that Ammianus and Eunapius were contemporaries, and that neither's work can be preferred to the other's simply on the basis of date. To what extent, if any, Eunapius travelled outside his home city of Sardis in Lydia after his return there in 369 remains unknown.<sup>7</sup> Relatively little is also known about Ammianus' travels after his retirement from the army at his home city of Antioch in 363, although he did reach Rome by *ca* 383.<sup>8</sup> So neither author had particularly strong ties with Constantinople, although both may have visited the city. In brief, neither Zosimus nor, more properly, his source Eunapius merit a "privileged position" over Ammianus.

Shahîd's second argument completely misses the point. He claims that "Zosimus' account contains topographical and chronological indications that leave no doubt that he knowingly assigned it [the Saracen defense of Constantinople] to the first phase of the Gothic War," *i.e.*, before the battle of Adrianopolis. Yet the real question is not whether Zosimus "knowingly" did this, but whether he was *correct*. Indeed, as Zosimus for the most part merely abbreviated Eunapius' work, there is little question of his deliberately, or "knowingly," assigning anything anywhere. He simply followed the order of his one main source at this particular point in his narrative. Again, in his fourth argument Shahîd claims that "a close examination of the accounts of the two engagements reveals that in spite of super-

<sup>5</sup> See R. T. Ridley, "Zosimus the Historian," *BZ* 65 (1972) 277–302 at 278ff.

<sup>6</sup> See A. Baker, "Eunapius' Νέα Ἐκδοσις and Photius," *GRBS* 29 (1988) 389–402.

<sup>7</sup> See R. Goulet, "Sur la chronologie de la vie et des œuvres d'Eunape de Sardes," *JHS* 100 (1980) 60–72.

<sup>8</sup> See J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London 1989) 8–17.

ficial similarities involving Gothic and Saracen horsemen fighting not far from Constantinople, they are quite distinct from each other." Here he emphasizes the difference between Zosimus, who claims that the Goths wanted to retreat across the Danube in the face of the Saracen attack, and Ammianus, who claims that the Goths were eventually driven back across the Balkans to the foothills of the Julian Alps (31.16.7). Yet Zosimus' claim—a rhetorical statement to emphasize Gothic fear of the Saracens—is not to be taken literally, and if Zosimus does not understand this himself, then he has misinterpreted Eunapius.<sup>9</sup> The Goths were never driven beyond the Danube. Indeed, it is important to note that Zosimus states not that the Goths actually retreated across the Danube, but that they merely *wanted* to do this, so that his account is perfectly reconcilable with Ammianus' in this detail at least.

I have left Shahîd's third argument until last because it represents a clear rejection of the interpretation that I shall advocate in this paper. He rejects as "the most improbable of courses" any suggestion that "instead of hurling the Arab against the Gothic horse, he [Valens] locked up the Arab *foederati*, horsemen adapted to mobile warfare, within the walls of Constantinople, where they remained inactive, to be exhibited only after the campaign was over, in the aftermath of the battle of Adrianople, and fight in an engagement such as the one Ammianus describes." But such an interpretation remains improbable only if one assumes that the Saracens were Valens' only, or most highly reputed, cavalry when he returned to Constantinople in the spring of 378, and that they were the natural choice to repulse any Gothic raiders in the vicinity of the city. Yet Valens must have been accompanied by the bulk of his palatine forces at least, including two types of cavalry units, the *scholae palatinae* and the *vexillationes palatinae*, not to mention those mobile units ranking as *comitatensis* rather than *palatina*. So he did not necessarily need to use his Saracen cavalry in the manner assumed, as they were not his only horsemen "adapted to mobile warfare." Nor can we easily assume that large numbers of Goths really threatened Constantinople before the arrival of Valens, as Zosimus would have us believe—a subject to which I shall return shortly.

The truth is that neither Ammianus' nor Zosimus' accounts of the events leading up to, and after, the battle of Adrianopolis are

<sup>9</sup> For a list of Zosimus' geographical errors, see Ridley (*supra* n.5) 296f.

entirely satisfactory. Fortunately, we do not have to rely on their testimony alone. Although the so-called *Consularia Constantinopolitana* does not mention the Saracens, this important source for events 356–384, written at Constantinople from a Constantinopolitan point of view,<sup>10</sup> confirms that the Goths did reach the gates of Constantinople only *after* the battle of Adrianopolis. So full is its account of the momentous events of 378—Valens' arrival at Constantinople from the East on 30 May, his departure on 11 June, a great battle between the Goths and Romans on 9 August at the twelfth milestone from Adrianopolis—that it is difficult to believe that its compiler omitted a Goth-Saracen engagement of the size that Eunapius and Zosimus describe. So the earliest and most trustworthy source tends to support the testimony of Ammianus rather than that of Eunapius and Zosimus: the Goths reached Constantinople only once and after the battle of Adrianopolis.

The mid-fifth-century ecclesiastical historians Socrates (*HE* 5.1) and Sozomen (*HE* 7.1) also provide important information. Both describe how Saracens contributed to the defense of Constantinople, although Socrates' is the original account that Sozomen merely paraphrases (Soc. *HE* 5.1):

Τοῦ δὴ βασιλέως Οὐάλεντος ἄδηλον ἐσχηκότος τὴν τελευτὴν, οἱ βάρβαροι πάλιν ἕως τῶν τειχῶν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἐλθόντες τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν ἐπόρθουν προάστεια. Ἐφ' οἷς ὁ δῆμος ἀγανακτῶν δι' ἐαυτῶν τοῖς βαρβάροις ἀντεπεξήεσαν, ἕκαστος τὸ παρατυγχάνον ἀντὶ ὄπλου λαμβάνοντας. Ἐδίδου δὲ τοῖς ἐξιούσιν εἰς τὸν πόλεμον ἢ τοῦ βασιλέως γυνὴ Δομνίκα μισθὸν ἐκ τοῦ βασιλικοῦ ταμείου, καθὰ καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις ἐνενόμιστο. Ἐπεβοήθουν δὲ αὐτοῖς ὀλίγοι Σαρακηνοὶ ὑπόσπονδοι, παρὰ Μαυίας πεμφθέντες, ἧς καὶ ἀνωτέρω ἐμνημονεύσαμεν. Τοῦτον οὖν τὸν τρόπον τῆνικαῦτα τοῦ δήμου ἀγωνισαμένου, πόρρω τῆς πόλεως ἀπεχώρησαν οἱ βάρβαροι.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See R. W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana* (Oxford 1993) 194–98.

<sup>11</sup> "After the Emperor Valens had thus lost his life, in a manner which has never been satisfactorily ascertained, the barbarians again approached the very walls of Constantinople, and laid waste the suburbs on every side of it. Whereat the people becoming indignant armed themselves with whatever weapons they could severally lay their hands on, and sallied forth of their own accord against the enemy. The empress Dominica caused the same pay to be distributed out of the imperial treasury to such as volunteered to go out on this service, as was usually allowed to soldiers. A few Saracens also assisted the citizens, being confederates, who had been sent by Mavia their queen; the latter we have already mentioned. In this way the people having fought at this time,

Socrates supports Ammianus' description of events: only one Saracen defense of Constantinople *after* the battle of Adrianopolis. He is all the more trustworthy not only because he wrote at Constantinople,<sup>12</sup> but also because he clearly had access to a detailed Constantinopolitan account of events in and about the city at that time. Earlier he had provided an exact date for the arrival of Valens in Constantinople, 30 May, an exact date for his departure, 11 June, and much else besides (*HE* 4.38):

ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Οὐάλης περὶ τὴν τριακάδα τοῦ Μαΐου μηνός, ἐν τῇ ἕκτη ἑαυτοῦ ὑπατεία καὶ Οὐαλεντινιανοῦ τοῦ νέου τὸ δεύτερον, ἔλθων εἰς τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν εὕρισκει τὸν δῆμον ἐν ἀθυμία καθεστῶτα πολλῇ. Οἱ γὰρ βάρβαροι καταδραμόντες τὴν Θράκην ἤδη καὶ τὰ προάστεια ἐπόρθουν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, μηδεμιᾶς οὔσης ἀξιομάχου τηρικαῦτα δυνάμεως. Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ τοῖς τείχεσι προσπελάζειν ἐπεχείρουν οἱ βάρβαροι, χαλεπῶς ἡ πόλις ἔφερε τὰ γινόμενα· ἐπιθύριζόν τε κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως, ὡς ἐπαγαγόντος τοὺς πολεμίους, καὶ ὅτι μὴ ἀντεπεξῆγεν εὐθύς, ἀλλὰ παρεῖλκε τὸν πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους πόλεμον. Καὶ δὴ ἵπποδρομίας ἐπιτελουμένης, πάντες ἐκ συμφωνίας κατεβῶων τοῦ βασιλέως ὡς περιορῶντος τὰ πράγματα· ἔκραζον οὖν συντόνας, δὸς ὄπλα καὶ πολεμοῦμεν ἡμεῖς. Ταῦτα βοῶντων, ἐξάπτεται πρὸς ὀργὴν ὁ βασιλεὺς· καὶ ὑπερβαίνει περὶ τὴν ἐνδεκάτην τοῦ Ἰουνίου μηνός, ἐπαπειλήσας ἦν ὑποστρέψῃ, δίκην ἀπὸ Κωνσταντινουπολιτῶν λήψεσθαι, ὧν τότε ὑβρίζειν αὐτὸν ἐδόκουν, καὶ ὑπὲρ ὧν ἤδη πρότερον τῇ τυραννίδι Προκοπίου προσέθεντό· ἔρημόν τε καταστήσειν τὴν πόλιν, καὶ ἄροτρον εἰπῶν βαλεῖν κατ' αὐτὴν, ἐπὶ τοὺς βαρβάρους ἐχώρει. Καὶ ὡθεὶ μὲν αὐτοὺς πόρρω τῆς πόλεως· ἐδίωκε δὲ ἄχρι τῆς ἐν Θράκῃ Ἀδριανουπόλεως, ἢ ἐν τοῖς ὀρίοις τῆς Μακεδονίας ἐστίν.<sup>13</sup>

the barbarians retired to a great distance from the city" (tr. A. C. Zenos, in *Socrates, Sozomenus Church Histories* [= *NicPost-NicF* Ser. 2 2 (New York 1890)] 117f; Greek text: R. Hussey [Oxford 1853] 567ff).

<sup>12</sup> See T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor 1997) 13–39.

<sup>13</sup> "The Emperor Valens arrived at Constantinople on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, in the sixth year of his own consulate, and the second of Valentinian the Younger, and found the people in a very dejected state of mind: for the barbarians, who had already desolated Thrace, were now laying waste the very suburbs of Constantinople, there being no adequate force at hand to resist them. But when they undertook to make near approaches, even to the walls of the city, the people became exceedingly troubled, and began to murmur against the emperor; accusing him of having brought on the enemy thither, and then indolently prolonging the struggle there, instead of at once marching

The precise nature of the chronological information quoted—the consuls of the year, the dates of Valens' arrival in and departure from Constantinople—suffice to prove that Socrates had access to an authoritative source like the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*. The real question is whether he combined this with another source, *i.e.*, whether his information concerning the public disturbance in the Hippodrome, for example, came from the same authoritative source as this chronological detail.<sup>14</sup> Next, how did he use his source or sources? His account of the disturbance in the Hippodrome is probably trustworthy in that it seems to be the same incident that Ammianus described as a minor outbreak of popular discontent (31.11.1). His testimony fleshes out this incident in more detail—important because this detail may help explain why Eunapius, followed by Zosimus, wrongly dated the Saracen defense of Constantinople before the battle of Adrianopolis. In fact, there were two popular disturbances at Constantinople, the first during Valens' stay there when he ignored the inhabitants' pleas to arm them, the second after Valens' death when the empress Dominica acceded to their fresh pleas for arms, even paying them as regular soldiers. So one explanation for Eunapius' mistake about the Saracen defense is that he has dated it by one of the popular disturbances there, but wrongly attributed it to the occasion of the first disturbance. This interpretation, however, has Socrates describe

---

out against the barbarians. Moreover at the exhibition of the sports of the Hippodrome, all with one voice clamored against the emperor's negligence of the public affairs, crying out with great earnestness, 'Give us arms and we ourselves will fight'. The emperor, provoked at these seditious clamors, marched out of the city on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June; threatening that if he returned, he would punish the citizens not only for their insolent reproaches, but for having previously favored the pretensions of the usurper Procopius; declaring also that he would utterly demolish their city, and cause the plough to pass over its ruins, he advanced against the barbarians, whom he routed with great slaughter, and pursued as far as Adrianople, a city of Thrace, situated on the frontiers of Macedonia" (tr. Zenos).

<sup>14</sup> Socrates provides direct quotations relevant to events in the Hippodrome on two other occasions (*HE* 7.22, 23). As similar material does not occur in the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, one suspects that he may have had another source specifically for events in the Hippodrome. It may not be irrelevant to his knowledge of, and interest in, the history of the Hippodrome that the judicial records of the eastern praetorian prefect had been stored there since the reign of Valens: see, in general, C. M. Kelly, "Later Roman Bureaucracy: Going through the Files," in A. K. Bowman and G. Woolf, ed., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 1994) 161–76.



the disturbance in the Hippodrome as a reaction to the Goths' success in reaching the walls of Constantinople, and would seem to lend some weight to the claim of Eunapius and Zosimus that the Saracens had had to clear Gothic raiders from the environs of Constantinople even before the battle of Adrianopolis. So what do we make of Socrates' evidence in this matter? What was the real cause of the first public disturbance, if not the unexpected appearance of Gothic raiders at the gates of Constantinople?

One could argue that one or two raiders may have slipped past the Roman pickets on the main approach roads at this time, reached the suburbs and panicked the population almost exactly as alleged, and that Socrates, or rather his source, has exaggerated their number. On an alternative argument, there may have been no Gothic raiders at all. Even an empty rumor of such would have sufficed to panic the urban mob. Perhaps some individual Goths still serving in Roman forces at an outpost near the city misled passers-by into thinking that they had witnessed hostile Goths, scouts or some larger force.<sup>15</sup> A more radical reinterpretation of the evidence, however, may be required.

Why accept that the Goths, or the rumor of such, had anything at all to do with the disturbance in the Hippodrome? Clearly Socrates' account is not without errors. His claim that Valens, while leaving, threatened to demolish Constantinople is completely ridiculous—an absurd piece of propaganda that probably originated in a group opposed to the emperor's Arian policies. Nevertheless, Socrates appears to have accepted it at face value. His judgement may have failed him in other details also. In particular, there is a strong possibility that he has inferred the cause of the disturbance in the Hippodrome from the alleged words of the crowd and general political circumstances, rather than that his source specifically reported that Gothic raiders were the cause of it all. A recent work has rightly drawn attention to the ironic nature of the population's protest, "Give us arms and we ourselves will fight."<sup>16</sup> There was hardly a need to arm the people, for the emperor was present with his palatine and other forces. The people were simply protesting

<sup>15</sup> The *magister* Julius had probably not yet carried out his purge of Goths from the remaining eastern forces, but the very fact of this purge suffices to indicate the anti-Gothic panic that seized the East following the disaster at Adrianopolis (Amm. 31.16.8; Zos. 4.26).

<sup>16</sup> See A. CAMERON, J. LONG, and L. SHERRY, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley 1993: hereafter 'Cameron *et al.*') 209 n.55.

the emperor's lack of action, and not necessarily because they felt under any immediate threat from the Goths. One suspects rather that they were annoyed at the continued demands of the soldiers who were billeted upon them, and at the shortages in and about Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> So they perceived the Roman forces, not the Goths, as an immediate threat to their physical and financial well-being; their taunts to do the fighting if necessary aimed to embarrass the emperor into removing his forces—and their demands—as far from their city and as soon as possible. Little did they know that they would have a real reason to demand arms just over a month later. Socrates, however, wrote with the benefit of hindsight and in the knowledge that Goths really did threaten the city after Adrianopolis; this led him to interpret an ironic demand for arms literally and to infer Gothic raiders.

Although the importance of Socrates' testimony lies primarily in discerning the date of the Saracen defense of Constantinople, it is also significant because he specifically identifies the origin of these Saracens: they had been sent to Constantinople by their queen, Mavia. Sozomen provides the best account of Mavia's dealings with the Roman Empire, to be supplemented by other ecclesiastical historians.<sup>18</sup> Following the death of her husband, Mavia had led the Saracens in a revolt against the Empire, and had even forced the *magister equitum et peditum per Orientem*, one Julius apparently, to retreat from a battle that might have ended in a complete rout for the Romans, had not the *dux Phoenices* disobeyed orders and used his archers to cover his superior's retreat. It is difficult to date this war, but it seems likely that it ended not long before Valens set out from Syrian Antioch for Constantinople, *i.e.*, in 377 probably. The war was finally settled by negotiation. The terms of the final settlement do not survive, but Mavia and her followers seem to have done quite well, as the Arian Valens was forced to accept the ordination of the orthodox monk Moses as the bishop for Mavia and

<sup>17</sup> An ordinary citizen had to surrender a third of his house for the use of billeted troops, half of his house to more senior officers, and although there was no legal obligation to do so, it was customary for soldiers to demand bedding, food, and fuel from their reluctant host: *Cod. Theod.* 7.8.1–16, 9.1–4.

<sup>18</sup> Soz. *HE* 6.38; Theod. *HE* 4.20; Soc. *HE* 4.36; Ruf. *HE* 11.6; the basic study is G. W. Bowersock, "Mavia, Queen of the Saracens," in W. Eck., H. Galsterer, and H. Wolff, edd., *Studien zur Antiken Sozialgeschichte: Festschrift Friedrich Vittinghoff* (Cologne 1980) 477–96 (=Bowersock, *Studies in the Eastern Roman Empire* [Goldbach 1994] 127–40).

her followers, and the *magister equitum in praesenti* Victor accepted a daughter of Mavia as his wife.

This brings us to the Saracen defenders of Constantinople, usually described as *foederati*, and there seems no reason to doubt that they served Rome as a result of the final settlement or treaty (*foedus*) between Valens and Mavia. But *foederati*, an extremely vague term, indicates neither the status nor the organization of Rome's new Saracen allies.<sup>19</sup> How many Saracen recruits were there? Were they dispersed throughout different units or concentrated in one only? Were these units newly created for this purpose or had they existed earlier? What was the status of these units? Or did these recruits form a group of irregulars, not expected to conform to standard Roman organization or discipline, not part of the army proper, but merely a temporary support rather than a permanent force?

An obvious starting point for any investigation of this matter must be Ammianus' description of these Saracens in the defense of Constantinople. He refers to them as both a *Saracenorum cuneus* and an *Orientalis turma*. Although Ammianus was a former soldier and his work is an important source for military historians, he wrote within a classicizing tradition that discouraged the use of technical vocabulary, military or otherwise.<sup>20</sup> Thus he often avoids precise 'modern' terms in his description of military units in favor of vaguer classical terms like *cuneus* and *turma* here. Although *cuneus* could be a technical term for a particular type of Late Roman unit,<sup>21</sup> the word has a long history<sup>22</sup> and Ammianus uses it in an entirely non-

<sup>19</sup> H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe AD 350–425* (Oxford 1996) 91f, rightly emphasizes the difficulty in interpreting any particular use of the term *foederati*. Nevertheless, he proceeds (93) to include these Saracens in his table of the "foederati regiments in the Roman army," as if one could easily assume that all, or even most, *foederati* were constituted into separate units distinct from regular Roman forces. Alternatively, these Saracens are sometimes referred to as auxiliaries: see e.g. N. Lenski, "The Gothic Civil War and the Date of the Gothic Conversion," *GRBS* 36 (1995) 51–87 at 65 n.36. This is no less frustrating a description of these troops than *foederati*, because it often remains unclear whether it is being used technically to denote membership of an *auxilium palatinum*, as an synonym for *foederati*, or in a mistaken belief that their position was similar to that of the auxiliary forces of the principate.

<sup>20</sup> See A. D. and A. M. Cameron, "Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Empire," *CQ* 58 (1964) 316–28, esp. 326.

<sup>21</sup> *E.g. Not. Dig. Or.* 39.12–18, 40.11–17, 41.12–19, 42.13–21; *Oc.* 32.22–27, 33.24–28, 34.14f.

<sup>22</sup> See R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte* (Berlin 1920) 51ff.

technical sense—best seen in its use for barbarian forces, *i.e.*, forces hostile to Rome and unaffected by Roman organization or discipline: Frankish raiders in Gaul (17.2.1), for example, or Sarmatians and Quadi along the Danube (17.12.1), Isaurian brigands (19.13.1), Persian troops in the East (24.5.1), as well as Roman forces (17.12.9; 20.11.6). Likewise *turma*, which Ammianus does not hesitate to apply to both Persian forces (24.6.8; 29.1.3) and Roman (16.11.6; 18.8.2). Hence it is entirely wrong to assume that these terms in reference to Saracens prove anything concerning their organization or status, except that *turma* confirms that they are cavalry rather than infantry.<sup>23</sup>

One reason modern commentators are so unwilling to admit that the Saracens were recruited into the Roman army proper, *i.e.*, within existing Roman units alongside recruits of other ethnic or cultural backgrounds, Roman and non-Roman alike, must be Ammianus' horror story of the Saracen who drank a fallen Goth's blood. Not only was this a bizarre deed, but Ammianus' description of the Saracen as naked except for a loincloth does not match expectations of a soldier's dress, whatever his background, in any regular Roman unit. But Ammianus' account of the event is inaccurate and biased. His description of the Saracen is merely an ethnic stereotype, also seen in Jerome's similar description of Saracen raiders who captured a certain Malchus and his party on the road from Beroea to Edessa (*Vita Malchi* 4). Indeed, Ammianus' whole account of the Saracen defense of Constantinople has been distorted by his strong prejudice against Saracens (Shahîd 239–68)—best revealed by contrasting his account of the Saracen defense of Constantinople with that by Zosimus: Ammianus emphasizes that the Goths and Saracens were evenly matched in battle until that strange deed when a Saracen drank the blood of a Goth; Zosimus depicts the Saracens as clear superiors to the Goths from their first encounter, which forced the Goths to change their tactics in the false hope that this might turn the tide of battle in their favor. So Ammianus credits the Saracen victory to the fact that they were more barbarian even than the barbarian Goths; Zosimus credits their victory to their speed and maneuverability, *i.e.*, their skill in battle. Ammianus' horror story may

<sup>23</sup> Shahîd (*e.g.* 177, 179, 253 n.48, 535) places undue emphasis on Ammianus' terms, which he interprets as if they were technical military terms, *i.e.*, as if *cuneus* could only be used to refer to a particular wedge-shaped formation unique to the Romans and *turma* only to refer to a subdivision of an *ala* or other cavalry unit.

even have a basis in fact, but he has put the worst possible interpretation on the evidence. Zosimus specifically records that the Saracens beheaded their victims, so that Ammianus' account of the Saracen drinking blood from his victim's throat may be no more than a distortion of a Saracen's attempt to behead his victim.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the case, Ammianus' dislike of Saracens also appears much earlier when he describes them as desirable neither as friends nor enemies, and summarizes their customs in an inaccurate, unflattering manner (14.4.1–7). Whether Ammianus' attitude towards Saracens resulted from his experiences during Julian's Persian expedition in 363, when many Saracens had aligned themselves with the Persians (25.1.3, 6.8ff), or from his general military experience in the East, he was undoubtedly prejudiced against them.<sup>25</sup> So when we seek to investigate the status of the Saracen defenders of Constantinople in 378, we must be wary of any prejudice concerning their military worth unwittingly absorbed through reading Ammianus.

It is important at this point to inquire about the history of Saracen involvement in the Roman army during the fourth century in the hope that this might shed some light upon the nature of their contribution to the Empire's defense, in 378 in particular. The *Notitia Dignitatum* attests a number of Saracen units among the eastern *limitanei* ca 394. The *comes limitis Aegypti* had a unit of *equites Saraceni Thamudeni* at his disposal (*Or.* 28.17), while the *dux Phoenices* had two units of *equites Saraceni* (*Or.* 32.27f). A Saracen contribution, however, to the mobile forces under the immediate command of a *magister militum*, i.e., among the *palatini* or *comitatenses*, is not attested. Given the Saracen defense of Constantinople *after* Adrianopolis, one might expect inclusion of their unit, like others formed in this period, in the *Notitia Dignitatum Orientis* composed ca 394. The *Tervingi* and *Visi*, for example, *auxilia palatina* of the two eastern *magistri militum praesentales* in the *Notitia*, derived from Gothic groups who participated in Theodosius I's

<sup>24</sup> See A. K. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War 100 BC–AD 200* (Oxford 1996) 271–75, for an account of headhunting by Roman forces during an earlier period, although with too much emphasis on the Celtic origin and nature of this practice. As Caesar, Julian seems to have encouraged headhunting against German raiders ca 356 (*Zos.* 3.7.1–5).

<sup>25</sup> Given Ammianus' origin at or near Antioch, some of his friends or relatives may have suffered at the hands of the Saracens, particularly during Mavia's raids ca 377. See D. Woods, "Maurus, Mavia, and Ammianus," *Mnemosyne*, forthcoming.

382 settlement with the Goths (*Not. Dig. Or.* 5.61, 6.61; Heather 162f). Indeed, many units whose positions in the *Notitia* reveal their formation about the time of the Gothic war 376–382 retained their ethnic titles.<sup>26</sup> So if Valens had raised a unit of Saracens for his mobile forces during his Gothic war, then the *Notitia* might attest such a unit. But its absence provides good reason to doubt that the defenders of Constantinople had formed a completely new unit rather than being assigned to one or more pre-existing units.

The alternative suggestion, of course, is that the defenders of Constantinople were *limitanei*, temporarily assigned to the mobile forces for the duration of the Gothic emergency, who returned to their relevant station in the East after the settlement of 382. This remains possible, although Saracens had never been called upon in this way earlier (so far as known), not even during Constantius II's campaigns against western rivals. One suspects that the Saracens were recognized as specialist desert warriors whose expertise would have been wasted in the very different terrain of continental Europe, and that they were the last troops upon whom any emperor would have called as reinforcements for a western theater of operations, given that some troops had always to be left in the East because of the continued Persian threat. This is not to ignore that eastern peoples and units had been regularly transferred throughout the empire during earlier centuries,<sup>27</sup> but the new distinction between *comitatenses* and *limitanei* meant that those in a position to do so would inevitably try to negotiate service in one branch rather than the other. Given their position on the borderlands between the Roman and Persian empires, the wastelands where neither empire exercised complete control, no people were in a better position to do this than the Saracens. The reluctance to leave their native lands for prolonged service overseas, which played so large a part in encouraging his Gallic troops to hail Julian as Augustus in early 360, was hardly unique to these troops.<sup>28</sup> Of particular relevance is Julian's objection to Constantius II's demand to send more of his troops eastwards:

<sup>26</sup> *Not. Dig. Or.* 5.58ff (*Raetobarii, Anglevarii, Hiberi*), 6.58ff (*Bucinobantes, Falchovarii, Thraces*).

<sup>27</sup> E.g. *cohors I milliaria Hemesenorum* at Intercisa in Pannonia, *cohors I Hamiorum sagittariorum* at Carvoran in Britain.

<sup>28</sup> *Amm.* 20.4.10, 16, 8.8. Note also the large number of desertions from units that the *comes domesticorum* Richomeres transferred from Gaul to Thrace in 377 (*Amm.* 31.7.4).

many of them were trans-Rhenane volunteers who had been promised that they would never be transferred beyond the Alps (Amm. 20.4.4). There seems no reason why many Saracens should not have been able to extract similar promises. So it is no surprise that the only known Saracen contribution to a mobile Roman force was during Julian's Persian expedition in 363, when Julian passed through the very territories they ruled and Roman *limitanei* also were called upon for support.<sup>29</sup> Finally, one should not forget that Socrates specifically states that the Saracen defenders of Constantinople were few in number, so few that they had to be reinforced by arming some civilians. This is all very vague, but it does provide grounds for believing that the Saracens may have formed only part of a cavalry unit rather than a full unit.

From another perspective, which troops would Valens most likely have left to garrison his capital, in part at least, after he set out against the Goths with the main body of his troops? The *scholae palatinae*, the units of the imperial bodyguard, spring to mind immediately.<sup>30</sup> They had a long association with the eastern capital. At least two units had been entitled to receive *annona civica* at Constantinople since the time of Constantine I,<sup>31</sup> and Constantine's extended presence there during his last years suggests that barracks should have been arranged to accommodate some *scholarii* from this early date. Many *scholarii* must have been accommodated within the city-walls, for the *scholae palatinae* certainly played a key rôle in defending their capital (and their emperor) from the rebel Goth Gainas in 400 (Cameron *et al.* 207–17). The evidence is scanty, and there can be no absolute proof that Constantinople had a permanent garrison of *scholarii*, or that *scholarii* remained there in the absence of the emperor. But Valens had already had his fingers burned earlier: the usurper Procopius had been declared emperor in Constan-

<sup>29</sup> See Amm. 23.3.8, 5.1; 24.1.10; 25.6.10. On the rôle of *limitanei* note the presence on the expedition of the *dux Osrhoenae* Secundinus (Amm. 24.1.2) and the *legio I Armeniaca* (Malalas 13.23).

<sup>30</sup> The *Notitia* of ca 394 lists seven *scholae* under the command of the eastern *magister officiorum* (Or. 11.4–10), but their number varied between five ca 364 and eight ca 420: see my "The *Scholae Palatinae* and the *Notitia Dignitatum*," *JRomMilitEquipSt* 7 (1996) forthcoming.

<sup>31</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.9 (26 July 389): *Annonas civicas in urbe Constantinopolitana scholae scutariorum et scutariorum clibanariorum divi Constantini adseruntur liberalitate mervuisse*, possibly referring to three *scholae* with this privilege: *schola scutariorum prima* and *secunda* (*Not. Dig. Or.* 11.4f), as well as *schola scutariorum clibanariorum* (11.8).

tinople on 28 September 365 when he had won over two palatine legions, the *Divitenses Iuniores* and the *Tungricani Iuniores*, which had happened to be in the capital for two days during their journey from Asia to the Danube frontier (Amm. 26.6.12–18). Procopius' success—he met no armed resistance—suggests the absence of a permanent unit of *scholarii* in the city at that time. But his success may also have convinced Valens of the need for such a garrison in the future. Whatever the case, it is somewhat misleading to focus on the person of the emperor in this instance, to the neglect of others of the imperial family. Socrates' testimony reveals that the empress Dominica, Valens' wife, was present during the Saracen defense of Constantinople. Presumably her husband had left her there for her own safety when he had finally set out against the Goths. It is not an unreasonable assumption that her escort included *scholarii* for both her personal protection and that of her entourage.<sup>32</sup> And as none of the varied sources for the Saracen defense of Constantinople describes the separate participation of *scholarii*, an obvious inference is that these Saracens were *scholarii* and members of Dominica's escort.

So why not identify the Saracen defenders of Constantinople as *scholarii*? After all, they were, like the *scholarii*, cavalry. Perhaps modern commentators have shied away from this identification—apart from Ammianus' prejudiced description of the Saracens—because Germanic or Gothic influences on the late Roman army have received too much emphasis.<sup>33</sup> Yet the evidence for recruitment into the *scholae* in particular should not be anachronistically applied, such as the facile assumption that the ethnic or cultural mix in the *scholae* remained constant throughout the fourth century, or was the same in both halves of the Empire. Much of the most colorful and often-quoted evidence in this matter pertains to the period 382–402, after the Gothic settlement of 382 until shortly after Gainas' revolt in 400,

<sup>32</sup> That empresses retained military escorts is generally agreed: e.g. K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (Berkeley 1982) 25f; see also Jul. *Ep. ad Ath.* 285b; Soc. *HE* 5.11; Theod. *HE* 5.18.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. R. I. Frank, *Scholae Palatinae: The Palace Guards of the Later Roman Empire* (=PAAR 23 [Rome 1969]) 59, claims that "During the fourth century most of the *scholares* were Germans, and this was especially true of the enlisted men"—a widely repeated view (e.g. R. MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* [New Haven 1988] 201), although challenged recently by Elton (*supra* n.19) 151f.



when Gothic or German influence in the East peaked.<sup>34</sup> Yet the situation that had confronted Valens throughout most of his reign had been very different. Since the division of the Empire between himself and his brother Valentinian in 364, he had been cut off from the manpower resources of the Rhine and upper Danube regions. On the lower Danube he had been in continuous conflict with his Gothic neighbors from his accession in 364 until the treaty of 369, which then had weakened Gothic obligations towards their Roman neighbor. So Valens was increasingly forced to turn towards his eastern borderlands for fresh troops for all branches of service. His situation foreshadowed that of the fifth century, when Armenians and Isaurians predominated in the armed forces to such an extent that it was later claimed (Procop. *Anecd.* 24.15ff) that the *scholae palatinae* had consisted entirely of Armenians by the reign of Zeno (474–491). In this instance, Valens' recruitment of Saracens to the *scholae palatinae* should be compared to his recruitment of Iberians to the same branch of service. The tribune of the *schola scutariorum sagittariorum* at Adrianopolis was an Iberian prince Bacurius (Amm. 31.12.16). Later evidence suggests a special association between the ruling dynasty of Iberia and this unit, probably created as recently as *ca* 370 to provide honorable service for the hostages Valens had detained following his settlement of the Iberian crisis in that year.<sup>35</sup> Valens' treaty with Mavia and her Saracens may have stipulated similar conditions such as the surrender of certain nobles, among others, for service in the *scholae palatinae*, hostages in fact.

I argue, therefore, that the Saracens who defended Constantinople in 378 were *scholarii*, probably members of the empress Dominica's escort. They had remained in Constantinople from 30 May, the date of Valens' arrival with his wife. This is not to claim that Dominica's escort consisted solely of Saracens, merely that they were the part of her escort designated to sally forth against the Gothic raiders who approached the city. In describing the defense of Constantinople, Ammianus states that the Saracens had only recently been summoned there (*recens illuc accersitus*)—an extremely vague statement, which does not relate who had summoned them, nor whence and when they

<sup>34</sup> The writings of Synesius of Cyrene have proven very influential, especially *De regno* 12; in general see P. Heather, "The Anti-Scythian Tirade of Synesius' *De Regno*," *Phoenix* 42 (1988) 152–72.

<sup>35</sup> See D. Woods, "Subarmachius, Bacurius, and the *Schola Scutariorum Sagittariorum*," *CP* 91 (1996) 365–71.

had been summoned.<sup>36</sup> Most importantly, however, Ammianus does not claim that they were the only forces summoned. Hence I believe that Ammianus refers here, in a rather casual fashion, to the fact that the Saracens were members of Valens's train when he arrived in Constantinople on 30 May, after he was himself summoned to his capital not only by his senior officials, military and civilian alike, but also by the very urgency of the situation. No other interpretation fits the political circumstances and the relevant time scale. The Goths reached Constantinople only days after the battle of Adrianopolis, so the authorities had insufficient time to send for reinforcements and for reinforcements, unless at scattered outposts within the immediate vicinity, to reach the city. But why would Valens have left such forces to his rear when he marched against enemies whose great strength lay in their sheer numbers? Nor does it convince that Mavia had originally sent her Saracens to join the main body of Roman forces under Valens, but that they had arrived too late for the battle.<sup>37</sup> This suggests Valens' lack of organization or a measure of freedom on Mavia's part, neither of which seems plausible given the length of time that Valens had tarried at Antioch and his determination there to settle affairs in the East before returning to deal with the Goths.

Shahîd prefers another interpretation: the Saracens defenders of Constantinople were survivors from the battle of Adrianopolis.<sup>38</sup> Yet it is difficult to understand why other survivors should not have made it back to Constantinople, not just the

<sup>36</sup> Shahîd (181 n.152) emphasizes Ammianus' *recens* to describe the arrival of the Saracens at Constantinople, as if it were best suited for an event during a preceding period of days only—thus supporting his theory that the Saracens had returned to Constantinople in the few days between the battle of Adrianopolis and the Gothic attack on Constantinople. Ammianus, however, also uses *recens* for two cavalry units summoned from Illyricum to Mesopotamia ca 359 (18.8.2: *ad subsidium Mesopotamiae recens ex Illyrico missi*)—a journey of several weeks at best. So he does not use *recens* in as limited a manner as Shahîd requires.

<sup>37</sup> See A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602* (Oxford 1964) 154; M. P. Speidel, "The Roman Army in Arabia," *ANRW* II.8 (Berlin 1977) 727.

<sup>38</sup> Shahîd 181ff, who even claims (182 n.155) that the participation of the *magister* Victor in the battle "could also argue for the participation of the Saracens, now his in-laws," and that Victor "is not likely to have left them [the Saracens] behind to perform garrison duty in Constantinople; rather he would have taken them along with him to engage in field operations and active combat." But if there was such a close association between Victor and the Saracens, why did Victor flee towards Macedonia and the West (Zos. 4.24.3) while the Saracens ended up in Constantinople?

Saracens. Where were these other survivors? Not only might one expect Ammianus to mention survivors from Adrianopolis contributing to the defense of Constantinople, but Dominica's need to arm civilians for the city's defense raises further suspicions concerning this interpretation. After all, even a fraction of the third of the Roman army alleged to have survived Adrianopolis should have sufficed to defend Constantinople without recourse to so desperate a measure.<sup>39</sup> But the survivors of Adrianopolis made for the nearest walled strong points, like the town of Adrianopolis, and were then left in the rear of the main Gothic forces who, unable to storm walls and unwilling to mount long sieges, decided to maintain their march towards Constantinople. The Goths no doubt hoped not only for rich pickings along the way, but also to surprise a poorly garrisoned city long unaccustomed to defending herself. The Roman forces left in their wake then used the opportunity provided by the Goths' advance to retreat westwards, in hope of linking up with Gratian's forces, whose imminent arrival had been promised even before the battle of Adrianopolis (Amm. 31.16.2; Zos. 4.24.3.).

A final point concerns the identity of the *schola* of these Saracens. If we assume six *scholae palatinae* in the East ca 378,<sup>40</sup> then Zosimus' evidence on the speed and maneuverability of the Saracens' horses rules out the *schola scutariorum clibanariorum*, and his view that they fought with lances combines with Ammianus on Bacurius' command of the *schola scutariorum sagittariorum* at Adrianopolis to eliminate their membership in this unit. Indeed, the probability that the volunteers whom Dominica raised were archers reinforces this point.<sup>41</sup> So the Saracens

<sup>39</sup> Amm. 31.13.18. The estimates of survivors vary: Heather (147) and Burns (*supra* n.4: 31ff) say 5,000–8,000.

<sup>40</sup> Although the *Notitia* lists seven eastern *scholae* ca 394 (*Or.* 11.4–10), I follow D. Hoffmann, *Das spätromische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum* (Düsseldorf 1969) 284, in interpreting the *schola gentilium seniorum* (*Or.* 11.6) as a late transfer from West to East.

<sup>41</sup> The *sagittarii Dominici* (*Not. Dig. Or.* 6.56) seem to have been named after Dominica, so one assumes that it was formed of the volunteers raised for the defense of Constantinople. This is the only occurrence of *Dominici* in the *Notitia*—an argument against its interpretation as an adjective (“of the Lord”), as occasionally in inscriptions: see e.g. M. P. Speidel, “Maxentius' Praetorians,” *MEFRA* 100 (1988) 183–86. Although naming a unit after an empress was unusual, so were the circumstances: there was no obvious alternative (or objection) during the interregnum between Valens' death and Theodosius I's accession on 19 January 379.

belong to one, at least, of the *schola scutariorum prima* or *secunda*, the *schola armaturarum iuniorum*, and the *schola gentiliium iuniorum*.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, this is as far as present evidence on the movements and activities of the eastern *scholae* at this period permit us to go.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, the Saracen defenders of Constantinople in 378 chanced to be there simply because they belonged to the empress Dominica's escort. They were not bloodthirsty savages only recently assembled as a temporary, anonymous unit of *foederati* to fight the Goths, but members of the elite *scholae palatinae*. The absence of a Saracen known to have risen through the ranks to *magister militum* or another senior post during the subsequent period proves not so much that the Saracens had not been privileged with membership of this elite, but that the changing tides of political fortune had turned against them. Their lack of advancement up the military hierarchy was surely due, in part at least, to the increased competition for rank and privilege from the Gothic nobles who poured into the system after the Gothic settlement of 382. Nor can the breakdown *ca* 383 of the treaty, which had seen their acceptance within the *scholae* only a few years earlier, have contributed much to their further promotion or continued presence within this elite, although to what extent the increased Gothic competition for

<sup>42</sup> Note that Nevitta, tribune of the *schola armaturarum*, probably commanded the escort of Eusebia, Julian's wife, during her trip to her husband's court in early 360: see D. Woods, "Ammianus and Some *Tribuni Scholarum Palatarum*," CQ 47 (1997) 269–91 at 287.

<sup>43</sup> Recently, M. P. Speidel, "Sebastian's Strike Force at Adrianople," *Klio* 78 (1996) 434–37, has argued that shortly before the battle of Adrianopolis the *scholae* were each divided between Valens and his general Sebastianus so that the latter received a little over half of their total number. Unfortunately, this argument rests on a number of misconceptions, not least of which is that Eunapius' ὀπλίται for Sebastianus' men (fr. 44.5 Blockley) is a translation of *scutarii* (436 n.5). Again, although the precedents quoted (436 n.7) do prove that senior military commanders did sometimes lead *scholae* in the field, there is no evidence that these were detachments of *scholae* rather than complete units. In other words, the detachments composing Sebastianus' force cannot have been fragments of *scholae*. Most importantly, it is arguable that Ammianus and Zosimus, or a common source perhaps, have each misunderstood a description of Sebastianus' career, which began with his promotion by Valens at Constantinople in early June 378, but proceeded then to describe the achievements that led to his promotion, so that they have misdated Sebastianus' victories over the Goths to the period after his arrival at Valens' court rather than before. In brief, it is arguable that Sebastianus received his strike-force from Gratian, not Valens: see D. Woods, "The Role of Sebastianus against the Goths in 378," forthcoming.

rank and privilege was a factor in the breakdown of this treaty is an interesting question.<sup>44</sup> So ended an experiment, which, if allowed to continue, might have Romanized and Christianized the Saracen elite at an early date and have had a significant impact upon subsequent developments between Byzantium and her eastern neighbors.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, MAYNOOTH  
*July, 1997*

<sup>44</sup> The breakdown of the treaty is attested only by *Pan. Lat.* 2 (12).22.3. I tend to agree with Shahîd (203–21), who explains this event in terms of the rivalry between Goths and Saracens, although he exaggerates the significance of the religious differences between “Arian Goths” and “good orthodox Saracens.”