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The Vandals and the Culture of Africa – Mutual Influences, Independent Developments and Universal Consequences[1]

The years 429 and 439 heralded a new era in the late antique in North Africa. In 429 the Vandals made their way to Africa and in 439 they took over Carthage, which was the most important city in North Africa and the most significant metropolis in the ancient Mediterranean world. Carthage became the capital of a new independent kingdom. The most important part of the Roman province in Africa remained under Vandal rule for nearly 100 years until the Byzantine invasion of 533, which heralded the end of their reign with the last Vandal king Gelimer surrendering and being led by the Byzantium in triumph in 534.

In my lecture, I would like to address a series of questions related to this era. The title I chose refers to the fundamental work of researchers into the time of the Vandals in North Africa. Christian Courtois published "Les Vandales et l'Afrique" in 1955 in which he questioned earlier opinions of the character of the Vandal Kingdom in North Africa and emphasised in particular the continuity between the late Roman and Vandal era[2]. The period of Vandal rule in North Africa was viewed for a long time from only one perspective. Earlier works were mainly based on historical sources from the Vandal's enemies, so it was therefore no surprise that the corresponding era was described in the best case as a time of stagnation and decline, and in the worst case as the most terrible age of Catholic persecution ever seen. The most influential and comprehensive source on the Vandals of North Africa was a work entitled "*Historia persecutionis Africanae provonciae sub Geiserico et Hunerico regibus vandalorum*" by Victor von Vitas, which was significant due to the way the era was presented[3]. Victor von Vita was a cleric who wrote in Carthage at the end or shortly following the rule of the Vandal king Hunerich (who reigned from 477 – 484), who he sharply criticised for his anti-Catholic politics. Victor von Vitas played a decisive role in the development of the term "vandalism" in the context of the French Revolution. His *Historia persecutionis* was already widely known in France during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, countless legends of

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[1] This Text is a shortened version of the lecture that I presented as part of the Euro*log* conference in Tunisia. I would like to thank the organisers, particularly colleagues from the Baden State Museum in Karlsruhe, for the invitation to present and the possibility to publicise my work. I would especially like to thank the translators for their work during the conference and for the publication.

[2] Christian Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1955)

[3] Current edition with comprehensive commentary: Victor de Vita, *Histoire de la persecution Vandale en Afrique. La passion des sept martyrs. Registre des provinces et cités d'Afrique*. Textes établies, traduits et commentés par Serge Lancel (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002)

martyrs from monasteries and episcopal residencies, as well as other religious texts that were republished in the 17th and 18th Centuries, refer to a Vandal raid in 406. In this climate the first recorded usage of the term "vandalism" emerged in a report by the Bishop of Blois in 1794. The bishop used the word to describe the destruction that, in his opinion, was being directed at the bourgeois Revolution by externally controlled groups[4].

The image of the Vandals in Africa has changed significantly since this time and it is now clear that the time of the Vandals has nothing to do with the modern sense of "vandalism". New impressions of the Vandal era have been possible through recent excavations and more precise dating over the last decades, as well as the work of Courtois who paved the way for a paradigm change[5]. These impressions were impressively presented in the exhibition "The Kingdom of the Vandals in North Africa" at the Baden State Museum in Karlsruhe, which displayed a comprehensive collection of material culture from North Africa in the 5th and 6th Centuries and clearly showed the visitor a significant continuity through the consideration of various topic areas[6].

As the title of my lecture suggests, I see three fundamental directions in which cultural development leads during the Vandal rule of North Africa: mutual influences, independent development and the question of the consequences. Firstly, one should try to avoid thinking too strongly in dichotomies. As the research of the last years has clearly shown, North African society during the Vandal era was not black and white or divided into opposing Roman and Vandal sides. In reality, a clear separation of these groups was practically never possible. One should also consider the component of time. The era of Vandal rule in North Africa was not a static period in which no development took place; quite the contrary in fact. The Vandal kingdom and it ruling society changed significantly between the establishment of the kingdom and its end; and were closely linked with the economy and politics of the entire Mediterranean region. Finally, we must remember to consider, if we question differences and similarities, the wide basis of late Roman culture – this was shown impressively in the Karlsruhe exhibition on the Vandal Era of North Africa and will also be once again clearly shown in this text. This fact is very important, as it was assumed for many decades that it must be possible to identify "Vandals" in archaeological excavations. We now know today that this assumption is

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[4] Roland Steinacher, 'Slawen, die Vandalen heißen. Der Vandalenname im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit', *Vernissage*, 11.9 (2003), 60-66 (p. 63)

[5] The current status of research is comprehensively covered by Andrew H. Merrills and Richard Miles, *The Vandals* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); s.a. Ralf Bockmann, *Capital continuous. A Study of Governance and Society in Vandal Carthage and Central North Africa from an Archaeological Perspective* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, currently in preparation)

[6] *The Kingdom of the Vandals*, Baden State Museum Karlsruhe, exhibition catalogue (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2009)

definitely incorrect. The question of the "Germanic origins" of certain artefacts was discussed, mainly on the basis of a series of closely linked graves. The most well-known artefact is the Koudiat Zâteur from Carthage, which was discovered in 1915 and continues to be intensively discussed even recently[7]. The artefacts that were revealed here include, among other objects, two large clip brooches with cloisonné decoration, a small golden brooch, an equally ornate belt buckle and jewellery, and undoubtedly do not belong to "original" Vandal culture outside of North Africa, but are rather clearly Mediterranean products[8]. Furthermore, the fact that the artefacts have been dated to the middle of the 5th Century, and this type of burial in elaborate clothing was not typical in North Africa, indicates a relationship with a new social group: the Vandals. Findings of this type belong in the context of a changing society in which new members of the upper classes show their status[9]. Due to the low number of excavations like these (a total of eight), one cannot exactly speak of Vandal influences, but rather from individual unusual burials that occurred at the beginning of the Vandal rule. Little is known about the origins of the Vandals[10]. As far as we know today, their identity as a group was created quite late; probably in North Africa itself. We can trace the political power of the Vandal kingdom in North Africa, the royal Hasdingen family, back to Spain where they also ruled and lead the Vandals as an inhomogeneous group to North Africa[11]. We are clearly dealing with a group that established itself as a military power in various constellations and was led by a ruling family who proved to be worthy commanders during various military battles. In other words, they were one of many groups who also served under the Romans and were closely familiar with Roman culture over several generations. The commanders of these groups differed only slightly from the *magistri militum* of the 4th and 5th Centuries and were in official positions often responsible for leading elite troops of soldiers in the emperor's army. One could say these groups were a part of the Roman Empire and the Roman world long before they established their own independent empires.

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[7] Christoph Eger, 'Vandalische Grabfunde aus Karthago', *Germania*, 79 (2001), 347-390 (pp. 349-370), Philipp von Rummel, *Habitus barbarus* (Supplementary volume 55 of the Encyclopaedia of Germanic Archaeology, Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2007), pp. 270-323

[8] Image: *Das Königreich der Vandalen*, p. 350; Christoph Eger, ' Vandalisches Trachtzubehör? Zu Herkunft, Verbreitung und Kontext ausgewählter Fibeltypen in Nordafrika', in *Das Reich der Vandalen und seine (Vor-)Geschichten*, edited by Guido M. Berndt and Roland Steinacher (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science Press, 2008), 183-195 (p. 191); von Rummel, *Habitus barbarus*, p. 305

[9] from Rummel, *Habitus barbarus*, pp. 383-385

[10] In addition: Walter Pohl, 'The Vandals: Fragments of a Narrative', in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers. New perspectives on late antique North Africa*, edited by Andrew H. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 31-47

[11] History of the Vandals with a view of the creation of a group identity: Guido M. Berndt, *Konflikt und Anpassung. Studien zu Migration und Ethnogenese der Vandalen* (Husum: Matthiesen Verlag, Historische Studien 489, 2007)

As a consequence, it is not surprising that the material culture we see in this era is also a similar form of universal material culture found across the Mediterranean region. This is also clear in the numerous mosaic pieces of the period[12]. In fact, many earlier researchers claimed to recognise Vandals in mosaics from the 5th and 6th Century. The most well-known example is the hunting mosaic from Bordj-el-Djedid in Carthage, which is now in the British Museum in London[13]. The long hair-style of the rider and his clothing, particularly his trousers, were considered typical of the Vandals, however, the image corresponds to the widely-seen hunting and military representations of the late antique, even though it was originally considered "barbaric". The hunting mosaic emphasises how the Roman aristocratic ideal also strongly influenced the representations culture of the North African Vandals.

As both of these examples show, it is hopeless to search for genuine "Vandal" material culture in North Africa – therefore no influences expected from this side. How does it look on other levels? Following the establishment of Vandal rule in Carthage, land ownership proportions shifted in the central provinces of North Africa. As we know from Victor von Vita and Procopius, countless properties were confiscated in Africa Proconsularis and tax-free ownership was transferred to the Vandal army to be inherited by subsequent generations, while the ruling family themselves claimed land in the neighbouring provinces of Numidia and Byzacena[14]. It appears the army was paid in this way and the ruling family was able to finance its budget. We hear from countless North African refugees who met in the eastern Mediterranean region during the middle of the 5th Century in an attempt to offer substitutes in Mauretania through the *Codex Theodosianus* to the people of Proconsularis, Byzacena and Numidia who lost their land[15]. The significant influence on ownership proportions that took place at the beginning of Vandal rule is hard to understand from an archaeological perspective. Other royal activities can be interpreted on the basis of material artefacts. Coins were minted soon after the establishment of Vandal rule and a new calendar system based on the ruling years of the current king was recorded in a series of inscriptions.[16].

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[12] Summary of new dating: Aicha Ben Abed, 'L'Afrique au Ve siècle à l'époque vandale: nouvelles données de l'archéologie', in *Carthage, l'histoire, sa trace et son écho* (exhibition catalogue Paris, 1995), 308-315 and particularly for Carthage Aicha Ben Abed and Noël Duval, 'Carthage, la capitale du royaume et les villes de Tunisie à l'époque vandale', in *Sedes regiae (ann. 400-800)*, edited by Gisela Ripoll und Josep M. Gurt (Barcelona: Reail Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 2000), 163-218 (pp. 178-9)

[13] Image from *Das Königreich der Vandalen*, p. 237

[14] Victor de Vita, *Histoire de la persecution*, I, 13; Procopius with an English Translation by H. B. Dewing. *History of the Wars: Books III and IV: The Vandalic War I and II* (London: Heinemann, 1916), I, V, 11-14

[15] Yves Modéran, 'L'établissement territorial des Vandales en Afrique', *Antiquité Tardive* 10 (2002), 87-122 (pp. 100-108)

[16] Summary of the Vandal monetary system: Guido M. Berndt and Roland Steinacher, 'Die Münzprägung im vandalenzeitlichen Nordafrika - Ein Sonderweg?', in *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante. Festschrift für Peter W. Haider zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Press, 2006), 599-622; a series of grave inscriptions with dates of the ruling

Vandal coins and inscriptions with dates of the ruling years of Vandal kings are obvious influences that came about through the establishment of the Vandal ruling house. Let us look at the example of Carthage where archaeological findings, mainly building relics, can be dated to the 5th and 6th Century and see how these are connected to written records. Carthage was the site of the Roman provincial administration, with 400 imperial government employees, a large archive and a well-regarded legal system. The proconsul of Africa resided in Carthage and was protected from the urban cohort in an elaborate palace. The Vandal kings also required impressive buildings as the new rulers of North Africa in order to create laws, to receive goods and to stage royal appearances. Texts in the Anthologia Latina provide us with insights into this. The Anthologia Latina is a literary collection that was put together towards the end of Vandal rule in Carthage and consists of a comprehensive collection of classical texts by a series of authors who wrote during the Vandal rule, especially in the early 6th Century[17]. Two poems in the Anthologia Latina describe the audience rooms of King Hilderich where guests and visitors were received in a room decorated with wall paintings and fitted with a marble floor[18]. Thrasamund also relocated his centre of representation to a suburb called Alianas where he constructed a church and thermals baths that are described in a total of five poems in the Anthologia Latina[19]. Unfortunately neither Alianas nor Anclas have been identified yet. Both appear to have been located outside the antique centre, which consequently indicates a significant change made by the Vandal kings to their residencies and building activities from the centre to the periphery of the city. In Carthage itself, late antique constructions have been identified on Byrsa Hill where some of the Vandal king's palaces have been found, notably the Basilica Palace[20]. This was a long, rectangular, three story

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years of Vandal kings from Courtois, *Les Vandales et l'Afrique*, app. II, nos. 54, 96, 98, 103, 104, 106; s. a. the incribed dates of a church by Henchir el-Gousset, F. Béjaoui, 'Une église d`époque vandale à Henchir el-Gousset (Région de Thelepte, Tunisie)', *Africa* 13 (1995), 101-122 (Inscribed Plate VII); also dated after the ruling years of Vandal kings were found in two groups of documents from Algeria concerning country estates, the "Tablettes Albertini" and the "Bir Trouch Ostraka", also Christian Courtois et al., *Tablettes Albertini: Actes Privé de l`époque vandale (fin du Ve siècle)* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1952); Jonathan P. Conant, 'Literacy and Private Documentation in Vandal North Africa: The Case of the Albertini Tablets', in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers. New perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, edited by A. H. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 199-224; J.-P. Bonnal and P.-A. Février, 'Ostraka de la région de Bir Trouch', *Bulletin de l'Archéologie Algérienne* 2 (1966-67), 239-249

[17] *Anthologia Latina sive Poesis Latinae*, edited by A. Riese, 2 Bde. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894); M. Chalon et al., 'Memorabile factum: Une célébration de l'évergétisme des rois Vandales dans l'Anthologie Latine', *Antiquités africaines* 21 (1985), 207-262; Richard Miles, 'The Anthologia Latina and the creation of secular space in Vandal Carthage', *Antiquité Tardive* 13 (2005), 305-320
[18] *Anthologia Latina* (ed. Riese, 1894), no. 203 und 215
[19] *Anthologia Latina* (ed. Riese, 1894), nos. 210-214, s.a. no. 376
[20] Liliane Ennabli, *Carthage, une métropole chrétienne du IVe à la fin du VIIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS, 1997), p. 40 and p. 87

building with a domed roof that would have housed many representative rooms. While the floor plan could have given the building a religious function, it is also possible that the representation rooms were secular in nature and not necessarily connected to the king's house. The definite identification of such archaeological sites with well-known buildings from written sources is very difficult without inscriptions or other obvious findings in the building. Excavation findings confirm without doubt that there was a strong need demonstrate wealth in Carthage in the 5th and 6th Centuries (including the example from Byrsa Hill); especially for private city houses. During the Vandal era, private residencies in Carthage were often extended. The most impressive examples were found in the "Parc des Villas Romains". The most notable of these are the "Maison de la Rotonde", which received an expanded reception hall, a larger peristyle and a rotunda with domed roof in the late 5th Century, and the "Maison du Cryptoportique", which also had its reception hall extended significantly in the late 5th Century[21].

View of the "Maison de la Rotonde" with a restored rotunda from the 5th Century in the foreground (Photo: Author)

"Maison du Cryptoportique" and the view to the "Parc des Villa Romains" in Carthage (Photo: Author)

Similar developments were also observed in the neighbouring "Parc des Thermes d'Antonin". Here the "Maison du Triconque" received a new triconch structure in the 5th Century complete with mosaics that displayed the lavish wealth of the house owner[22].

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[21] C. Balmelle et al., 'Recherches franco-tunisiennes sur la colline de l`Odéon à Carthage en 1991-1993', in *L`Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale (VIe Colloque, Pau 1993), II: Productions et exportations africaines. Actualités archéologiques*, edited by P. Trousset (Éditions du CTHS, 1994), 421-439 (pp. 433-35); CTEMA (Tunisia) & CNRS (Paris), 'Recherches sur les pavements de la "Maison du Cryptoportique" à Carthage', in *Actes du IVe colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, Strasbourg 1988, I: Carthage et son territoire* (Paris: CTHS, 1990), 157-173 (pp. 160-161)

[22] A. Ben Abed et al., Corpus des mosaiques de Tunisie IV, Karthago (Carthage) I. Les mosaiques du Parc Archéologique des Thermes d`Antonin (Tunis: Institut National du Patrimoine, 1999), p. 60 (Photo mosiac no. 101, plate LXXIX)

The emphasis on elaborate buildings is a very clear characteristic of the period of Vandal rule in Carthage. This is not surprising given that Carthage was the capital of an independent kingdom and not only the site of a provincial administration; regardless of how comprehensive this was. Not only the kings themselves, but also members of the royal family acted as building developers in Carthage, as shown in inscriptions found at a thermal pool that was endowed by the Vandal prince Gebamund: "regalo origo"[23]. At the same time, there were numerous public buildings constructed in the classic period of Carthage between the 2nd and 4th Century, which were in disrepair and no longer maintained in the 5th Century. However, the Vandal kings were celebrated in poems praising them as benefactors of Carthage, which was especially clear for all those associated with the royal family in the early 6th Century[24]. The relatives of the African Vandal upper classes also left traces of their presence outside of Carthage. In the so-called temple church of Thuburbi Majas, a person named Arifridos was buried. The remains were buried in an aisle with a mosaic epitaph inscribed with his name over the grave.[25]. Arifridos was, as was the case with burials in Koudiat Zâteur in Carthage, interned in elaborate clothing that could be dated to the 5th Century due to a brooch and shoe buckle[26]. A second elaborate burial with similarly exclusive clothing was also found in the same church, the Narthex[27]. As both cases concerned unusual burials, which were not typical in this form in North Africa, but rather more common in the north-eastern Mediterranean region and in southern Central Europe, in the context of military representation in "Roman-barbaric" border regions, one can assume these burials could also be considered in a Vandal context representing the relatives of upper classes in the Vandal kingdom. This assumption is supported by the name Arifridos, which is considered more Vandal than Roman-African. Thuburbo Majus is located not far from Carthage in the province of Africa Proconsularis and as a consequence belonged to the region of *sortes Vandalorum*, which was the region reserved for the relatives of the Vandal army during the establishment of Vandal rule. Arifridos was possibly a Vandal army officer who was buried in the church in the biggest city of the region.

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[23] Image: *Das Königreich der Vandalen*, p. 227

[24] *Anthologia Latina* (ed. Riese, 1894), no. 376; for more information on Carthage during the Vandal time, the activities of the kings and the relationship between them see in detail Bockmann, *Capital continuous*, Kap. 2

[25] Image of the mosaic and findings in *Das Königreich der Vandalen*, p. 363

[26] The burial and findings are fully discuss by Rummel, *Habitus barbarus*, pp. 337-342

[27] The finding is described by A. Merlin, 'Découvertes à Thuburbo Maius', *Comptes rendu de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1912), pp. 347-360

A very similarly mixed upper class was also found in Haïdra, the antique Ammaedara, which was also in Africa Proconsularis and located only a few miles from the end of the great road connection from Carthage through the whole province to the inland town of Theveste near the provincial borders of Numidia und Byzacena. Significant quantities of goods from the large inland country estates of North Africa were transported along this road, which was also an important communication network. The strategic importance of Ammaedara is shown by the fact that not only the third legion was stationed here in the 1st Century AD, but also that the Byzantine fortifications are still the most impressive structures in the town to this day. A series of church buildings have also been documented in Ammaedara. Inscriptions in one of these churches indicate several graves from the same family: the *Astii*, whose grave

The "Vandal Chapel", Basilica IV in Haïdra (Photo: Author)

inscriptions are dated according to the ruling years of Vandal kings; which is why the church is known as the "Vandal Chapel"[28]. At least two generations of *Astii* appear to have been buried in this church and the family seem to have been honourable leading members of the local community, as shown in grave inscriptions "flamen perpetuus" and "sacerdotalis", which were titles original used for emperor worship.

We will remain in Ammaedara and look at another area in which the Vandal rulers displayed their influence and caused change: religion. The Vandal ruling house favoured the Arian religion – the Vandal upper classes were clearly Arian before they arrived in Africa and presumably brought their own priests with them[29]. The term Arian is perhaps not quite appropriate as it originated from their enemies and relates to the man who caused conflict in the church: Arias, who was apparently not considered at all relevant in the 5th Century. As the Vandal kings gained power, they ensured through a series of laws that the Vandal church in Africa received an elevated status in which the numerous Catholic-Nicene churches – including no doubt their possessions - were converted through confessions. Those connected

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[28] N. Duval, 'Les églises d'Haidra (églises dites de Melléus et de Candidus et "chapelle Vandale"), recherches franco-tunisiennes de 1969', *Comptes rendu de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1969), 409-436; N. Duval, 'Les inscriptions de la "chapelle vandale" à Haidra d'après l'abbé Delapard', *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1969), 99-120; N. Duval and F. Prévot, *Les inscriptions chrétiennes. Recherches archéologiques à Haidra I* (Rome: Collection de l'École Française de Rome 18 (2), 1975), 243-48
[29] For information on the church conflict in Vandal North Africa: Yves Modéran, 'Une guerre de religion: les deux églises d'Afrique à l'époque vandale', *Antiquité Tardive* 11 (2003), 21-44

to the Vandal-Arian church of the royal house enjoyed exclusive priority[30]. In reality, the communities mixed over time and references to "Catholic" Vandals and "Arian" Roman-African were found in texts from the time[31]. However, the royal government attempted to suppress the Catholic Church using laws and state authority, especially in Africa Proconsularis, where the country estates of the Vandal army were located[32].

Considering this historical background, a finding from the Basilica I in Haïdra is particularly interesting. Here we see a Vandal bishop in an inscription on a grave. It appears the word "vandalorum" was later added the original text "Victorinus episcopus in pace" in order to clearly identify Victorinus as an Arian bishop. Presumably someone wanted to differentiate him from "episcopus unitatis", the "Catholic" bishop Melleus who was later burial in a different part of the same church. The Basilica I in Haïdra was a three storey building with an atrium more than 40 metres high and was located in the centre of the city. The building was certainly one of the most important structures in the city during the 5th and 6th Century. Evidently the Basilica in Haïdra served for some time as a Vandal church. Bishop Victorinus, who bore a Latin name, was buried in a very honourable position at the entrance of the church. Bishop Melleus, who was active during the Byzantine period in Haïdra and was presumably the leader of a re-established Catholic-Nicene community, organised the transfer of relics to the city from holy Cyprus, which he interned under the altar and on the entrance side of the building[33]. Here the tomb of Victorinus was not disturbed; however a new enclosure was added to the area with the relic in its centre. While the Vandal bishop was treated with respect, one wanted to ensure, through the addition of the terms "vandalorum" and "unitatis" on their graves, that it was clear both bishops served different churches in the same building.

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[30] Victor de Vita, *Histoire de la persecution*, I, 9, 15, 23-24, 29 and II, 23

[31] This problematic is discussed, for example, in A. Schwarcz, 'Religion und ethnische Identität im Vandalenreich. Überlegungen zur Religionspolitik der vandalischen Könige', in *Das Reich der Vandalen und seine (Vor-)Geschichten*, edited by G. M. Berndt und R. Steinacher (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Science Press, 2008), 227-231 and D. Shanzer, 'Intentions and Audiences: History, Hagiography, Martyrdom, and Confession in Victor of Vita's Historia Persecutionis', in *Vandals, Romans and Berbers. New perspectives on Late Antique North Africa*, edited by A. M. Merrills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) 271-290, s.a. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'Gens into Regnum: The Vandals', in *Regna and Gentes. The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, edited by H. W. Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl (The Transformation of the Roman World 13, Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2003) 55-83 (pp. 82-83)

[32] Victor de Vita, *Histoire de la persecution*, II, 39 und III, 8-9

[33] Duval und Prévot, *Les inscriptions chrétiennes,* pp. 20-24

Haïdra, Basilika I, view from the dome towards the entrance, the remains of the altar base in the foreground and the supporting columns of the atrium in the background (Photo: Author)

The today very difficult to read grave inscription of Victorinus at the entrance of Basilica I (Photo: Author)

What can we say from this example about influences, differences and their consequences in Vandal North Africa? First of all, it is not possible to identify "Vandals" alone from the material objects we have found such as clothing accessories in excavations. As we have seen, we always need a context that may be found in written text or inscriptions. Vandal bishops, such as Victorinus, could obviously have Latin names. Perhaps Victorinus did not have any ancestors from the "original" Vandals that came to North Africa in 429. Vandals who served in the army owned property, as was most probably the case for Afridos who we saw in Thuburbo Maius. This social position meant that one could join the upper-classes through income and partly also through privilege when one also belonged to the Vandal church. The culture of the mixed upper class was actually still the culture of the late roman aristocracy, as we saw in the residence and it mosaics described in the poem on Anthologia Latina.

The universal consequences of the establishment of Vandal rule in North Africa, which also had influences beyond the borders of North Africa, are based on the changes in the political situation through the establishment of an independent kingdom. As we saw at the start, land ownership distribution in North Africa, including state, private and church, was influenced strongly by the activities of the Vandal kings. This meant the loss of control of North Africa for the west Roman Empire and the painful loss of state subsidised deliveries of grain and oil, which had been arranged by the Annona System to make deliveries predominantly to Italy, but after Vandal rule led to shortages in the Roman treasury and the supply of food products[34]. A fundamental theme with wide-reaching consequences that is still not sufficiently researched is the relationship of the Vandal states to the autochthonous groups and states of North Africa

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[34] Merrills & Miles, *The Vandals*, pp. 148-49

who the Romans named the "Moors"[35]. In my opinion, the key to understanding the development of later eras lies in this relationship. During the late Roman era North Africa was defended as a part of the entire Mediterranean region by regularly stationed border troops and a mobile army, even though it was small. The integrity of Roman North Africa changed significantly during the Vandal rule. The concentration of Vandals in the centre of Roman North Africa and a series of strategically important cities opened space that could push against the newly-forming autochthonous states. In all the cultural continuity found in Vandal North Africa, far-reaching developments took place at the political level here that had a strong effect on the centuries that followed[36].

Translation: Scott Hemphill

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[35] Yves Modéran, *Les Maures et l`Afrique Romaine (IV-VIe siècle)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2003) presents a fundamental work that earns increased attention in many aspects, particularly concerning connections with the Vandal era.

[36] These and other points that are only covered briefly within the framework of this lecture and article are discussed in more detail in Bockmann, *Capital continuous*