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von
James M. Harland

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Abstract: In his *Epitaphios for the emperor Julian*, composed in Antioch at some point between 365 and 368, Libanius describes an embezzlement trial which was held most likely in A.D. 359, in which Julian ruled against the accused, defying the wishes of Constantius II's Praetorian Prefect, Florentius. Libanius puzzlingly suggests that the trial prompted Julian's campaign to restore fortresses in 359 in Batavia, to restore shipments of British grain being blockaded by barbarian forces, and there is some chronological confusion in other sources between this event and Julian's campaign in Batavia in 358. Scholars have yet to explain the causal and chronological relationship between these events. This article suggests that Libanius' narrative is a propagandistic representation of several distinct stages of the taxation dispute Julian fought with Florentius. With the aid of recent advances in our archaeological understanding of agricultural practices in Britain and on the lower Rhine, the article argues that in response to this dispute, Julian's Batavian campaign was intended to disrupt longstanding access by barbarians on the lower Rhine to the later Empire's military supply mechanisms. The article suggests further that this has significant ramifications for the emergence of Saxon piracy in the second half of the fourth century, and thus the roots of the so-called 'Anglo-Saxon' migration to Britain.

This article examines how Julian exploited (and undermined) Roman-Barbarian relations during his Batavian campaign in Gaul in A.D. 357–8, and in this way offers a unique window on economic and military relationships between the empire and its neighbors on the lower Rhine. Previous studies have portrayed Julian as both an idealist and a shrewd political actor,¹ but the full significance of his Batavian campaign has been overlooked. While most approaches to the event have simply examined it as a minor stage in Julian's Gallic Wars,²

The completion of this article would have been impossible without support from a large number of people. First and foremost among these is Julia Hillner, whose guidance and unwavering support was instrumental in bringing this text to completion, as has been feedback from anonymous peer reviewers both at *Traditio* and in response to previous efforts at submitting this article elsewhere. I have been able to work on the research which underpins this article while supported as a fellow in three separate institutions funded by DFG grants: at the University of Tübingen in its Center for Advanced Studies 2496 "Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages" and the SFB 923 "Threatened Orders," and at the University of Bonn in its Cluster of Excellence, the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. I wish to thank all of these, as well as the excellent library resources and staff offered by these institutions. I also wish to especially thank Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner, Mischa Meier, Steffen Patzold, Irene Bavuso, Annamaria Pazienza, Harry Mawdsley, Paolo Tedesco, Michael Kulikowski, Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele and Aleksander Paradziński for specific, detailed feedback and guidance, as well as colleagues in our regular BCDSS Dependency and Ancient History Writing Group. A number of other colleagues have offered guidance, feedback and encouragement on specific issues, either privately or at conferences and invited lectures in Tübingen, Oxford, Innsbruck, Bonn, Leeds, and Warsaw. I regret that there is not space to name them all here, but my gratitude is no less warmly felt for it.

¹ See Adrastus Omissi, *Emperors and Usurpers in the Later Roman Empire: Civil War: Civil War, Panegyric, and the Construction of Legitimacy* (Oxford, 2018), 200–222 and Bruno Bleckmann 'From Caesar to Augustus: Julian against Constantius,' in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, ed. Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer (Leiden, 2020), 97–123, at 106–110 for overviews and recent statements. A classic early study of Julian's calculating strategy is Ilse Müller-Seidl, 'Die Usurpation Julians des Abtrünnigen im Lichte seiner Germanenpolitik,' *Historische Zeitschrift* 180 (1955): 225–244. On Julian's reign and behaviour as a political actor more generally, see e.g. Glenn Bowersock, *Julian the Apostate* (Cambridge, MA, 1978) and Klaus Bringmann, *Kaiser Julian* (Darmstadt, 2004).

² See references in ns. 69 and 70, below. Even those who correctly play down the scale of the Frankish threat tend to pay little attention to the episode. C.f. John F. Drinkwater, 'Julian and the Franks and Valentinian I and The Alamanni: Ammianus on Romano-German Relations', *Francia* 24:1 (1997): 1–16. Even Drinkwater's detailed reconstruction of Julian's Gallic Wars devotes less than a paragraph to the affair. (John F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome, 213–496 (Caracalla to Clovis)* [Oxford, 2007]).

others have instead sought to use it to chart the development of later Frankish ethnogenesis and political institutions, and these teleological aims have tended toward somewhat credulous analyses of the late Roman sources.³

This is a missed opportunity. The Batavian campaign grants us a rare window onto a set of complex, distinct yet inextricably linked socio-economic phenomena which met at the intersection of the Rhine frontier, and which determined Roman-Barbarian relations across this frontier. Close attention to the campaign, this article will show, allows us to identify the participation of ‘barbarian’ peoples in the region in the mechanisms of taxation and supply, collectively known as the *annona militaris*, which developed in the third century.⁴ I will argue that in the period of Julian’s campaign, barbarian groups on the lower Rhine had not only been granted use of, but also participated in conflict over material resources shipped by the empire along the Rhine frontier axis in order to feed its armies. Julian’s Batavian campaign, however, as an act of political opportunism, ended such state-sanctioned access by barbarian groups in this region to the resources shipped by the empire along the Rhine. Contrary to the belief that Julian’s actions were a response to the grain supply’s disruption, they were the cause of that disruption, motivated by political expediency, since these groups posed little serious threat.⁵

As I outline further below, recent advances in the archaeology of agriculture in Britain, northern Gaul and the barbarian world east of the lower Rhine reveal that the Britain-Rhine taxation spine served as a vital conduit for the regular shipping of grain in order to feed armies along the frontier.⁶ This conduit survives archaeologically in the vast volumes of pottery which piggybacked on this grain shipment and attest to centers of tax collection and distribution and in the multitude of coins which paid for bulk purchase of any shortfall.⁷ What has been less well appreciated, however, is that such a vast volume of surplus being shipped directly along one of the most prominent imperial frontiers must have also had a drastic impact upon social relations in the world beyond the Roman frontier. By reading against the grain textually, and following it archaeologically, we can explore these social relations by examining the impact of the Batavian campaign upon them. This new interpretation of the campaign has significant ramifications for our understanding of issues such as Roman-barbarian relations in the North Sea world and the shape which that world took after the empire’s control of the North-Western provinces receded, providing vital context for the mobility this world would witness into the fifth century and beyond.

³ See, e.g., Thomas Anderson Jr. ‘Roman military colonies in Gaul, Salian Ethnogenesis and the Forgotten Meaning of *Pactus Legis Salicae*, 59.5’, *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995): 135–139 or J.-P. Poly, ‘Freedom, warriors’ bond, legal book. The *Lex Salica* between Barbarian custom and Roman law’, *Clio@Themis* 10 (2016): 4–7.

⁴ Fritz Mitthof, *Annona Militaris: Die Heeresversorgung im Spätantiken Ägypten* (Florence, 2001); Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), 73.

⁵ On the scale of barbarian threat see Drinkwater, ‘Julian and the Franks,’ (n. 2 above); John F. Drinkwater, ‘Ammianus, Valentinian, and the Rhine Germans’, in *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (London, 1999), 127–37; Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2 above); Michael Kulikowski, ‘Constantine and the Northern Barbarians’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge, 2005), 352–54; Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West* (Cambridge, 2007), 144–45; Guy Halsall, ‘Two Worlds Become One: A “Counter-Intuitive” View of the Roman Empire and “Germanic” Migration,’ *German History* 34:4 (2014): 515–32. For an alternative point of view, see, e.g., Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History* (London, 2005), 446.

⁶ On shipping on the Rhine generally see the contributions in Heike Kennecke, ed., *Der Rhein als europäische Verkehrsachse: Die Römerzeit* (Bonn, 2014).

⁷ See Robin Fleming, *The Material Fall of Roman Britain, 300–525 CE* (Philadelphia, 2020), 370–87, at 371–76, for a summary.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE BATAVIAN CAMPAIGN

In the winter of 357 and then the spring or early summer of 358 Julian campaigned against Franks, who were present in the Rhine-Meuse Delta, before allowing them to settle on Roman territory in Toxandria. The first of these to be named, the Salians, are a nebulous group whose name first appears in the context of Julian's campaign, but may have been descendants of Franks settled in Batavia in the later third century by Constantius I.⁸ They had been driven into Toxandria from Batavia by a faction most of our sources call the "Chamavi".⁹ As our sources portray it, Julian's first assault was on a group of 600 Franks occupying the Meuse river, who after surrendering were sent as captives for Constantius II's armies. After this, because conflict on the lower Rhine had brought grain shipments from Britain to a halt, Julian took his forces further into Batavia in the spring or early summer of 358, defeating first the Salians and then the Chamavi, both of whom immediately surrendered to Julian and delivered hostages in exchange for new peace treaties, after which Julian was able to ship British grain up the Rhine.¹⁰

The putatively minor episode attracted notice from multiple contemporaries,¹¹ and the importance of this becomes clear when the proper context of the event is detailed. All of our sources describe the event as part of a series of conflicts between Julian and his rivals relating to issues of taxation and corruption. It should not be surprising that such conflicts would arise in a part of the empire with one of the highest concentrations of its soldiers—the military was far and away the greatest single burden on the imperial fiscal system.¹² As I intend to show, Julian exploited the opportunity with which this provided him to allege corruption against his rivals. These allegations concerned mechanisms for the supply of barbarian soldiers from beyond the frontier; namely, the superindiction as a means of tax collection, and the distribution of that taxation's proceeds via the *annona militaris*. Despite its technically extraordinary nature, the superindiction was not merely the usual mechanism by which to supply soldiers enlisted from across the Rhine in an "irregular" fashion, but the necessary mechanism by which to do so, because no separate fiscal chest is ever known to have been

⁸ Anderson Jr., 'Salian Ethnogenesis,' (n. 3 above), 136–7. *Pan. Lat.* 8.8–9.

⁹ This was one of several ancient names describing barbarians from the Scheldt-Elbe-Meuse delta. E.g. Tac. *Germ.* 33; Ptol. *Geog.* 2.10, and remained in use under the Tetrarchy. In the early fourth century the Chamavi seem to have been considered Frankish according to the *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Zos. 3.5 describes them (albeit whilst confusing their name with the Quadi) as a Saxon sub-group. The Roman ethnographic gaze weighs heavily on these sources, and modern scholarship has highlighted the futility in trying to consistently accurately categorize and classify the *gentes* about whom our late antique authors wrote. Andrew Gillett, 'The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now,' in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (London, 2009), 392–408. The most compelling historical work suggests that 'Saxon' and 'Frank' were, by the mid-to-late fourth century, simply generic Roman ethnographic terms to refer to inhabitants of the lower Rhine. Ian N. Wood, 'The Channel from the 4th to 7th Centuries AD,' in *Maritime Celts, Frisians and Saxons*, ed. Séan McGrail (London, 1990), 93–98, at 96; Robert Flierman, *Saxon Identities, AD 150–900* (London, 2017), 27–32. As I will suggest below, it may be because of Julian's campaigns that the Saxons took on an association with seafaring from the late fourth century onwards.

¹⁰ Amm. Marc. 17.8–9, 18.2; Julian. *Epist. ad. ath.* 280; Lib. *Orat.* 18, 82–9; Eunapius, *Fr.* 3.3–6; Zos. 3.5–8; *Pan. Lat.* 3.

¹¹ Amm. Marc. 17.8–9; Julian, *Ep. ad. athen.*; Julian. *Ep.* 4.

¹² Richard Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge, 1990), 105–116. Jean-Michel Carrié, 'L'État à la recherche de nouveaux modes de financement des armées (Rome et Byzance, IV^e–VIII^e siècles),' in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, Vol. III: States, Resources and Armies*, ed. Averil Cameron (Princeton, 1995), 27–60, at 30; Wickham, *Framing* (n. 4, above), 73–74.

allocated from the standard indiction to pay barbarian allies.¹³ This point is important for my argument below.

Reading Julian's reported motivations in Batavia with appropriate levels of scepticism allows us to demonstrate the above assertions. From this I will advance three related hypotheses. The first is that a group of seemingly separate events in the years of 357–9, described in different contemporary texts written by Julian or his supporters, in fact represent different stages of a single taxation and corruption dispute. Secondly, this lets us infer that prior to Julian's attack on Batavia, the Salians and Chamavi had been allocated funds from the *annona militaris*. This should not be surprising, these groups had settled in Batavia and Toxandria and served the Roman army in large numbers since the late third century,¹⁴ and both Salians and Chamavi may have accrued rights to the *annona* by treaty with either Magnentius or Constantius II when serving in their armies during their civil war. Third, the ability to relate this inference to Julian's taxation controversy allows us to demonstrate the ties of dependency that these groups had to the Roman Empire, and analyze the dramatic consequences that could occur when such ties were ruptured.

THE MATERIAL BASIS FOR THE *ANNONA MILITARIS*

At multiple stages in my argument below, questions about the supply of Julian's forces will emerge. Scholars have tied problems with the supply of Julian's armies attested in our sources to the alleged general collapse of the Rhine frontier, which ostensibly (as per Libanius) had already brought grain shipments from Britain up the Rhine to a halt for some time before Julian's Gallic career. This narrative will be refuted in due course, but the possibility of doing so hinges upon a synthesis which I now offer of recent developments of our archaeological understanding of the agricultural economy upon which all of these actors would have been reliant. Specifically, I reveal here a constant reliance by military forces in the lower Rhine region upon supplies of British grain. Before trying to reconstruct the tangled narrative of the Batavian campaign, this part of the article first describes these recent archaeological developments.

It is probably impossible with the present state of archaeological knowledge to accurately reconstruct the infrastructure for the Gallic military supply network in fine detail.¹⁵ But painstaking work drawing on decades' worth of archaeological data has made it possible to identify overall patterns of considerable significance.¹⁶ *The New Visions of the Countryside in Roman Britain* project draws upon data from over a million fields, including much previously unstudied grey literature.¹⁷ As the project has found, Britain had largely become self-

¹³ Paolo Tedesco, *State, Taxation and Power in the Late Roman West* (Cambridge, In Press), refuting Herwig Wolfram, *Gotische Studien. Volk und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter* (Munich, 2005), 83, 186. I am grateful to Paolo Tedesco for sharing his monograph with me before publication.

¹⁴ Drinkwater, *Alamanni* (n. 2, above), 73.

¹⁵ Michel Reddé, 'Conclusion: Des greniers ruraux aux greniers militaires et urbains. Les enjeux historiques d'une enquête archéologique', in *Rural Granaries in Northern Gaul: From Archaeology to Economic History*, ed. Stéphane Martin (Leiden, 2017), 128–44, at 140.

¹⁶ See especially Alexander Smith, Martyn Allen, Tom Brindle, and Michael Fulford, *The Rural Settlement of Roman Britain* (London, 2016); Martyn Allen, Lisa Lodwick, Tom Brindle, Michael Fulford, and Alexander Smith, *The Rural Economy of Roman Britain* (London, 2017), and Michel Reddé, *Gallia Rvstica I. Les campagnes du nord-est de la Gaule, de la fin de l'âge du Fer à l'Antiquité tardive* (Bordeaux, 2017).

¹⁷ Martyn Allen and Lisa Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies in Roman Britain,' in Allen, *et al.*, *Rural Economy* (n. 16, above), 142–77, at 164; Fleming, *Material Fall* (n. 7, above), 19–25 has used this and other material to make a firm case for Britain's long standing role in surplus export.

sufficient by the third and fourth centuries,¹⁸ and south and east of the Fosse Way, it possessed an agrarian economy geared towards surplus production, as shown by various indices including moves towards more extensive cultivation, involving larger areas of cultivated land with lower inputs of labor, due to spelt's relatively high yields.¹⁹ The infrastructure for this large-scale export is attested by the prevalence of aisled buildings likely used for the storage of grain and the largest concentration of corn-dryers in the north-western provinces, widely distributed from the second century A.D.,²⁰ indicative of significant processing.²¹ Sites like Orton Hall Farm (Cambs.) evidence grain processing suggesting surplus on the scale of an agri-business.²² The concentration of these storage and processing buildings on a limited number of farmsteads does not suggest the operation of a free market, but possible state involvement in the timing of exports.²³ The results issued from the *Rural Landscape of Roman Gaul* project have similarly found that in the highly productive loess-soil regions of the Cologne Bay, an agrarian economy focusing on surplus export, specialising in spelt, barley and emmer, had come into being by the first century A.D.,²⁴ with villa estates such as that at Hambach in modern North-Rhine Westphalia or Voerendaal in the modern south-eastern Netherlands almost entirely specialized in spelt by the later Roman period.²⁵ These formed part of a wider belt of loess soil extending across *Germania Inferior* and *Belgica Secunda* between Cologne and Bavai, characterized by high productivity and well-integrated transportation networks,²⁶ all along which one finds granaries of similar types to those found in Britain.²⁷

This large-scale cultivation for surplus was regionally variant and the impact of Roman expansion is possible to overstate; in some respects, this was simply a development from typical cultivation practices from before the Roman period.²⁸ The overall picture of the agricultural economy in northern Gaul is not one of vast wealth in the later Roman period. Despite Julian's protestations that Florentius' tax measures were unnecessary, settlements on the lower Rhine plain, stretching from Krefeld to Nijmegen had become barely self-sufficient even by the second century, when there would have been a much lower military population than in the third and fourth centuries.²⁹ The nobility of Xanten seem not to have held much land in the city's immediate hinterland, relying instead on estates a hundred kilometres to the

¹⁸ Allen and Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies,' (n. 17, above), at 173.

¹⁹ Lisa Lodwick and Tom Brindle, 'Arable Farming, Plant Foods and Resources,' in Allen *et al.*, *Rural Economy* (n. 17, above), 11–82, at 17–18.

²⁰ Lisa Lodwick, 'The Organisation of Cereal Production in Britannia: Grain-drying Ovens as Evidence for Agricultural Integration', in *Archaeology and Economy in the Ancient World – Proceedings of the 19th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, vol. 17: Villas, Peasant Agriculture, and the Roman Rural Economy*, ed. A. Marzano (Cologne; Bonn, 2018), 57–72.

²¹ Lodwick and Brindle, 'Arable Farming,' (n. 19, above), 55–61.

²² Lodwick and Brindle, 'Arable Farming,' (n. 19, above), 55–61.

²³ Allen and Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies,' (n. 17, above), 173

²⁴ Marion Brüggler, Karen Jenson, Renate Gerlach, Jutta Meurers-Balke, Tanja Zerl, and Michael Herchenbach, 'The Roman Rhineland: Farming and Consumption in different Landscapes,' in Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rvstica*, vol. 1 (n. 16, above), 19–95, at 85.

²⁵ C. C. Bakels, *The Western European Loess Belt: Agrarian History, 5300 BC–AD 1000* (London, 2009), 167.

²⁶ Nico Roymans and Ton Derks, 'Rural Habitation in the Area of the Texuandri (Southern Netherlands/Northern Belgium),' in Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rvstica*, vol. 1 (n. 16, above), 97–123.

²⁷ Ferdriere, 'De nouvelles formes de stockage de céréales à l'époque romaine en Gaule: quels changements avec quel(s) moteur(s)?' in *Rural Granaries in Northern Gaul: From Archaeology to Economic History*, ed. Stéphane Martin (Leiden, 2017), 73–105; Alexander Smith, 'Buildings in the Countryside,' in Smith *et al.*, ed., *Rural Settlement* (n. 16, above), 44–74.

²⁸ Lodwick and Brindle, 'Arable Farming,' (n. 16, above), 17–20; Ferdriere, 'Nouvelles formes de stockage,' (n. 27, above).

²⁹ Brüggler *et al.*, 'The Roman Rhineland,' (n. 24, above), 65–70.

south-west, in the fertile loess zone.³⁰ Further south, between the Eifel and the Rhine, close ties are clear between military-driven basalt and tuffstone quarrying and the comparative villa wealth in the districts of Mayen and Andernach, which also evidence direct military involvement in quarrying in the form of granaries for workers of a type which is also found on Hadrian's Wall.³¹ Here, a good harvest could mean sufficient surplus for export, but this was far from secure.³² Late Roman elite landowners on the Rhine were enormously dependent on the state, as attested by the construction of fortified granaries and low density of high-status villas even in areas of high productivity.³³ This level of precarity suggests that the lower Rhine frontier required constant supply from elsewhere.

It can be reasonably established that this was procured in Britain. An anonymous text (perhaps a merchant travel guide) completed between A.D. 350–362 remarked that Britain had 'all goods in abundance' (*in omnibus bonis abundans*).³⁴ In the late Roman period a shift to net surplus grain production in the villa system took place in Britain to such extent that previous pastoral practices such as sheep folding, which had been present since the Middle Iron Age, were phased out almost completely,³⁵ and an intensification of ultimately unsustainable agricultural exploitation practices took place to such an extent that farmers were forced to move to heavy clay soils.³⁶ The massively increased surplus export which we witness in the later Roman period must surely have gone to the Rhine. Digital network analyses of its transportation networks reveal the ease with which the produce of these estates could be shipped via the mouth of the river.³⁷ That this was the most viable route for large-scale shipping between Britain and the continent is reinforced by Magnus Maximus' decision to use this route for his invasion in 383.³⁸

In Toxandria and Batavia, where Julian's attack took place, the sandy soils were far less productive, and these regions barely met subsistence requirements.³⁹ Batavia's surplus came

³⁰ Brüggler *et al.* 'The Roman Rhineland,' (n. 24, above), 40. This confirms the previous arguments of C. Bridge, 'Veteran settlement in the Lower Rhineland: the evidence from the *civitas Traianensis*,' *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 19 (2006): 137–149, at 140.

³¹ Richard, Gilljohan, Angelika Hunold and Stefan Wenzel, 'Rural Life and Industry between the Eifel and the Rhine', in Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rvstica*, vol. 1 (n. 16, above), 125–52, at 146–47.

³² Gilljohan *et al.*, 'Rural Life,' (n. 31, above), at 141

³³ Paul Van Ossel, 'Insécurité et militarisation en Gaule du Nord au Bas-Empire: L'exemple des campagnes,' *Revue du Nord* 77 (1995), 27–36; Helmut Bender, 'Archaeological Perspectives on Rural Settlement in Late Antiquity in the Rhine and Danube Area,' *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. S. Burns and J. W. Eadie (East Lansing, MI), 147–161; Guy Halsall, 'Villa, Territories and Communities in Merovingian Gaul,' in *People and Space in the Middle Ages, 300–1300*, ed. Andrew Reynolds, Wendy Davies, and Guy Halsall (Turnhout, 2006), 209–232, at 212–5; Guy Halsall, 'From Roman fundus to Carolingian Grand Domaine: crucial ruptures between late antiquity and the middle ages,' *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 90 (2012), 273–98.

See also Alfred Schäfer, 'Köln: Römischer Hafen und rheinseitige Stadtbefestigungen. Zur Rolle des Römischen Heeres als Bauträger', in Kennecke, ed., *Der Rhein* (n. 6, above), 117–44, on the interdependency of civilians and state on the Rhine.

³⁴ *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 67.

³⁵ Lisa Lodwick, 'Cultivating Villa Economies: Archaeobotanical and Isotopic Evidence for Iron Age to Roman Agricultural Practices on the Chalk Downlands of Southern Britain,' *European Journal of Archaeology* 26:4 (2023), 445–66, at 457–58.

³⁶ Lodwick, 'Cultivating Villa Economies' (n. 35, above), at 460.

³⁷ R. J. Van Lanen, E. Jansma, J., van Doesburg, and B. J. Groenewoudt, 'Roman and early-medieval long-distance transport routes in north-western Europe: Modelling frequent-travel zones using a dendroarchaeological approach,' *Journal of Archaeological Science* 73 (2016): 120–37.

³⁸ Zos. 4.35.

³⁹ *Contra* Maaike Groot, Stijn Herren, Laura I. Koostraa and Wouter K. Vos, 'Surplus production for the market? The agrarian economy in the non-villa landscapes of Germania Inferior,' *Journal of Roman*

primarily from animal husbandry, especially cattle farming.⁴⁰ Grains grown for surplus export in the Roman north-west were rarely sown in this region, as this would lead to soil exhaustion.⁴¹ But numerous large granaries were nevertheless built in Batavia between the late second and early third century. Their histories of development and relationship with Roman-style architecture is unclear, but their presence still needs explaining.⁴² The storage of imported taxation in kind is a compelling explanation for this.⁴³ The distribution of these granaries, which show evidence of varying local control in different parts of Batavia, suggest ties to the settlements of powerful families, who had access to the proceeds of taxation from elsewhere.⁴⁴ Such ties between storage infrastructure and control by local elites map perfectly onto the distribution mechanisms for the *annona* utilized by the Roman state, under which the administration of public granaries as well as distribution of the *annona* from these granaries were public *munera* carried out by *decuriones*.⁴⁵ The proceeds of this taxation would most likely have come from the productive loess-soil regions further up the Rhine, the productive estates of the Somme valley in *Belgica Secunda* and Britain's highly productive agricultural estates in the south-east. Granaries of this sort were more rare at the turn of the fourth century, but there are known examples, and this rarity likely reflects problems of archaeological method more than an actual reduction in numbers.⁴⁶ A reappraisal of the dating schemes for the archaeology of the later Roman lower Rhine has suggested that many sites which putatively end with the so-called *Limesfall* of the late third century may in fact have persisted into the fourth century.⁴⁷ The granaries of Batavia fall within the purview of archaeological contexts that are affected by this dating reappraisal, and their continued presence into the fourth century certainly cannot be ruled out. This is not least the case because the basic morphology of these buildings remains broadly static between the bronze age and the middle ages, and the vast majority of excavated granaries in Batavia do not possess the sort of clear stratigraphic and material associations that would enable them to be assigned any chronological context at all.⁴⁸

The archaeological record therefore throws cold water on the idea that shipments to the Rhine valley from Britain were an exceptional response to the crisis in the Rhine-Meuse delta or that such shipments only took place in times of war.⁴⁹ Both Libanius and Ammianus confirm that grain had been regularly transported from Britain to this part of the Rhine,⁵⁰ it has just been established that this would have been essential to maintaining the frontier. Batavia, moreover, possessed storage infrastructure well beyond its own subsistence requirements or

Archaeology 22:1 (2009), 231–52. See Stéphane Martin, 'Storage in a non-villa landscape: the Batavian countryside', *Rural Granaries in Northern Gaul: From Archaeology to Economic History*, ed. Stéphane Martin (Leiden, 2017), 106–217.

⁴⁰ Roymans and Derks, 'Rural Habitation,' (n. 26, above), 103, 107–108; Bakels *et al.* 2017: 79–81; Martin 'Storage,' (n. 39, above).

⁴¹ Bakels *et al.* 2017, 79–81.

⁴² Martin 'Storage,' (n. 39, above).

⁴³ Martin 'Storage,' (n. 39, above).

⁴⁴ Martin 'Storage,' (n. 39, above), 121.

⁴⁵ Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 65), 458–59.

⁴⁶ Martin, 'Storage,' (n. 39, above), 120.

⁴⁷ Stijn Heeren, 'The theory of "Limesfall" and the material culture of the late 3rd century,' *Germania* 94 (2016), 185–209.

⁴⁸ Martin, 'Storage,' (n. 39, above), 110–11.

⁴⁹ *Contra* Wickham, *Framing* (n. 4, above), 77. Fleming, *Material Fall* (n. 7, above), 21, drawing on Allen and Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies,' (n. 17, above), shares my point of view.

⁵⁰ Lib. *Orat.* 18.83; Amm. Marc. 18.2.3–4. The fortifications named by Ammianus as receiving British grain are *Castra Herculis* (possibly near Arnhem), *Quadriburgium* (possibly near Nijmegen), *Colonia Ulpia Traiana* (Xanten), Neuss, Bonn, Andernach and Bingen.

productive capacity, which is likely to have been intended to store at least part of precisely that grain.

JULIAN'S MOTIVATIONS FOR THE ATTACK ON BATAVIA

The evidence for Julian's motivations for the campaign comprises

1. The Praetorian Prefect Florentius' attempted payment of the Chamavi, as described in Julian's *Letter to the Athenians*.⁵¹
2. An alleged embezzlement trial involving British military officials and Florentius, described by the rhetorician Libanius, in the oration he composed in the reign of Valens to commemorate Julian's death.⁵²
3. A set of taxation reforms relating to a superindiction, which Julian embarked upon in Gaul in opposition to Florentius, as described in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus (who had served as a staff officer in Julian's army) as well as in Julian's Letter to the physician Oribasius.⁵³

The Letter to the Athenians

In the *Letter to the Athenians*, written in 361 to justify his usurpation against his cousin Constantius, Julian writes about the events of 358:

τὸ δὴ μετὰ τοῦτο δεύτερος ἐνιαυτὸς καὶ τρίτος, καὶ πάντες μὲν ἀπελήλαντο τῆς Γαλατίας οἱ βάρβαροι, πλείους δὲ ἀνελήφθησαν τῶν πόλεων, παμπληθεῖς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Βρετανίδος ναῦς ἀνήχθησαν. ἑξακοσίων νηῶν ἀνήγαγον στόλον, ὧν τὰς τετρακοσίας ἐν οὐδὲ ὅλοις μῆσι δέκα ναυπηγησάμενος πάσας εἰσήγαγον εἰς τὸν Ῥήνον, ἔργον οὐ μικρὸν διὰ τοῦς ἐπικειμένους καὶ παροικοῦντας πλησίον βαρβάρους. ὁ γοῦν Φλωρώντιος οὕτως ὤφειτο τοῦτο ἀδύνατον, ὥστε ἀργύρον δισχιλίας λίτρας ὑπέσχετο μισθὸν ἀποτίσειν τοῖς βαρβάροις ὑπὲρ τῆς παρόδου, καὶ ὁ Κωνσταντίος ὑπὲρ τούτου μαθὼν' ἐκοινώσατο γὰρ αὐτῷ περὶ τῆς δόσεως" ἐπέστειλε πρὸς με τὸ αὐτὸ πράττειν κελεύσας, εἰ μὴ παντάπασιν αἰσχρὸν μοι φανείη. πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἦν αἰσχρὸν, ὅπου Κωνσταντίῳ τοιοῦτο. τὸν ἐφάνη, λίαν εἰωθότι θεραπεύειν τοὺς βαρβάρους; ἐδόθη μὴν αὐτοῖς οὐδέν" ἀλλ' ἐπ' αὐτοὺς στρατεύσας, ἀμυνόντων μοι καὶ παρεστώτων τῶν θεῶν, ὑπεδεξάμην μὲν μοῖραν τοῦ Σαλίων ἔθνους, Χαμάβους δὲ ἐξήλασα, πολλὰς βοῦς καὶ γύναια μετὰ παιδαρίων συλλαβόν. οὕτω δὲ πάντας ἐφόβησα καὶ παρεσκεύασα καταπτῆξαι τὴν ἐμὴν ἔφοδον, ὥστε παραχρῆμα λαβεῖν ὁμήρους καὶ τῇ σιτοπομπῇ παρασχεῖν ἀσφαλῆ κομιδὴν.

Then followed the second and third years of that campaign, and by that time all the barbarians had been driven out of Gaul, most of the towns had been recovered and a whole fleet of many ships had arrived from Britain. I had collected a fleet of six hundred ships, four hundred of which I had had built in less than ten months, and I brought them all into the Rhine, no slight achievement, on account of the neighboring barbarians who kept attacking me. At least it seemed so impossible to Florentius that he had promised to pay the barbarians a fee of two thousand pounds weight of silver in return for passage. Constantius when he learned this—for Florentius had informed him about the proposed payment—wrote to me to carry out the agreement, unless I thought it absolutely disgraceful. But how could it fail to be disgraceful when it seemed so even to Constantius, who was only too much in the habit of trying to conciliate the barbarians? However, no payment was made against them, and since the gods protected me and were present to aid, I received the submission of part of the Salian tribe, and drove out the Chamavi and took many cattle and women and children. And I so terrified them all, and made them tremble at my

⁵¹ Julian. *Ep. ad. athen.*

⁵² Lib. *Orat.* 18.

⁵³ Amm. Marc. 17.1.; Julian. *Epist.* 4.

approach that I immediately received hostages from them and secured a safe passage for my food supplies.⁵⁴

In this passage, which occurs after a recounting of his first years in Gaul, Julian describes his putative efforts to bring shipments of grain from Britain up the Rhine, hindered by hostile barbarian forces. Florentius, the Praetorian Prefect assigned to him by Constantius, had allegedly offered a ransom in order to secure these shipments, in a manner which disgusted even Julian's main adversary, whom this letter had been drafted to condemn. As Adrastus Omissi has observed, however, Julian's *Letter to the Athenians* offers a "rare opportunity to watch at work the propaganda of the imperial court as it shaped the past, creating an interpretation of events that served a demanding present."⁵⁵ The letter is of course an *apologia*, a carefully constructed piece of defensive rhetoric, intended to prove that Julian was no mere usurper, like the enemies Constantius had previously defeated in the early 350s.⁵⁶ Florentius had remained loyal to Constantius, so one cannot help but wonder whether what Julian represents as outrageous was actually something rather more mundane. Julian's word choices to describe the fee and agreement Florentius was proposing with the barbarians, are μισθός ("salary", "fee"), a term commonly associated with the payment of salary to soldiers,⁵⁷ and δόσις, which originates in the basic word, "to give," and can describe a donation or gift, but which by the fourth century had become a core term in accounting vocabulary, frequently used to describe the handover of taxes.⁵⁸ To a contemporary Athenian audience, the first mental image summoned by these words would have been that of the taxman, coming to seize the wealth of their estates. The fee, and particularly Constantius' indulging of it, was carefully selected to serve as a rhetorical climax in Julian's *apologia*. The Batavian campaign is the last detailed vignette which Julian gives us from his campaigns in Gaul, after which the letter insists on his unrequited loyalty to Constantius, and describes the final circumstances which (allegedly) left Julian no other option but to revolt.⁵⁹ We cannot be certain if it was the idea that distant barbarian brigands were receiving taxpayers' hard-earned money which proved to be a final straw for Julian's allegedly sympathetic Athenian audience, nor do we know if Julian's efforts to incite rebellion from this audience succeeded.⁶⁰ But to incite such rebellion was certainly Julian's aim, and the 2,000 lbs. of silver which Florentius allegedly offered to open up the Rhine to shipping is treated in the letter as a substantial, shocking sum. It certainly was one, if compared to (and seen as) the sort of the tributary payment which the empire occasionally gave to barbarian rulers.⁶¹ It is worth noting, however, that the language which Julian uses is quite distinct from that used to describe

⁵⁴ Julian. *Epist. ad. ath.* 280. The translation is that of W.C. Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian, with an English Translation*, 3 vols., (Cambridge, MA, 1913–1923).

⁵⁵ Omissi, *Usurpers* (n. 1, above), 194.

⁵⁶ Sara Stöcklin-Kaldewey 'Kaiser Julian, *An den Senat und das Volk der Athener*. Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar,' *Klio* 97:2 (2015): 687–725, at 689.

⁵⁷ *LSJ* 'μισθός'.

⁵⁸ For specifically tax-related instances in the fourth century, see *IG* 12.4.1.273. Denis Feissel, 'Une inscription de Kos et une loi de Valens (Iscrizioni di Cos ED 90 et *CTh* 13, 10, 7),' *Chiron* 39 (2009): 297–322. Julien M. Ogereau, *Paul's Koinonia with the Philippians: A Socio-historical Investigation of a Pauline Economic Partnership* (Tübingen, 2014), 79–101, at 100. Julian otherwise only uses the term in a religious context, to describe 'gifts' from the gods. The only known example of such a religious use on an inscription from the fourth century is found on a marble dedication on the base of a statue for Boethos, describing 'a gift of prayer'. This was set up by Aurelius Marinus, the *rationalis rei summae* (i.e., chief tax collector), who was perhaps drawing on a vocabulary he was more accustomed to using in his line of work. *CIL* 6.1701b; *LSA*-1405. By the sixth century, the term was being used to describe payment for goods. *P. Cairo Masp.* 2 67146.

⁵⁹ Julian, *Ep. ad. ath.* 280–281.

⁶⁰ Stöcklin-Kaldewey, 'Kaiser Julian,' (n. 56, above), 691

⁶¹ An example would be the 700 lbs. of gold paid to the Huns after the Treaty of Margus in 434, itself portrayed as an extraordinary figure. Priscus, *Fr.* 1 (FHG IV).

tributary payments to barbarians elsewhere. Priscus, for example, regularly uses either φόρος (“tribute”) or δῶρο (“gift”) to refer to the tributary payments to Attila.⁶² Themistius, likewise, uses φόρος in the context of Theodosius I’s suppression of the Gothic Wars.⁶³ These words, though certainly references to regular payments of some kind, do not bear the same fiscal connotations as those borne by Julian’s language choices. We should take these language choices seriously—this payment was not tribute, and the basis upon which it was critiqued thereby also differed.⁶⁴ As already mentioned, our other sources also associate the Batavian campaign with a broader set of disputes over fiscal policy and taxation, and this is our clue for what was really going on. Relative to the total military budget, 2,000lbs of silver was a paltry sum,⁶⁵ dwarfed by the five solidi and one lb. of silver which Julian distributed as a donative to every soldier on his accession in 360 alone.⁶⁶ The most likely equivalent to δόσις in the administrative Latin spoken by those supplying Julian’s armies in Gaul was *munus*, and there seems to be very deliberate rhetorical slippage at work here, between different forms of *munera sordida*.⁶⁷ The rhetorical force delivered by decrying the paying of the Chamavi thus only succeeds if we accept, as Julian very much wishes us to, that the payment’s recipients had no legitimate claim on the empire’s fiscal resources, an argument that must have carried all the more weight given Julian’s claim that his troops had not even received their annual salary.⁶⁸ I intend to show why we should not accept this argument.

Libanius and the Embezzlement Trial

I am far from the first to have noticed the relationship and chronological coincidence between this attempted payment and Florentius’ tax dispute with Julian, detailed further below.⁶⁹ But no one, to my knowledge, has realized the significance to this dispute of an embezzlement trial which appears only in Libanius’ *Epitaphios*, composed at some point between 364 and

⁶² Priscus, *Fr.* 9.3, 3.20, 11.401.

⁶³ Themistius, *Orat.* 10.135.

⁶⁴ Müller-Seidl is to my knowledge the only other scholar to have drawn a connection (albeit merely implicit) between the language of *Epist. ad. ath.* 280 and the workings of the *annona* distribution system (Müller-Seidel, ‘Die Usurpation Julians,’ [n. 1, above], 233–234).

⁶⁵ Estimates vary as to the annual salary of a soldier in the fourth century, but range between five to ten *solidi*. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964), at 623–25; Elton, *Warfare* (n. 66, above), at 120–125; Wickham, *Framing* (n. 4, above), at 73; Warren Treadgold, ‘Paying the Army in the Theodosian period,’ in *Production and Prosperity in Theodosian Period*, ed. I. Jacobs (Leuven, 2014), 303–18.

⁶⁶ Amm. Marc. 20.4.18. Elton’s lower estimate for the annual cost of paying the Roman army c. 360 is at least 31,625 lbs of gold. He calculates Florentius’ 2,000 lb silver payment as equivalent to 111 lbs of gold, 0.35% of this figure. Hugh Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350–425* (Oxford, 1996), 124, 189. On this point see also George Woudhuysen, ‘The Fall of the House of Constantine (c. 330–363 A.D.)’ (DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2017), 230–231: “It was quite a lot of money, no doubt, but can have been little more than a rounding error in the budget of a government routinely sending 40,000 or so men to campaign in Alamannia.”

⁶⁷ I am grateful to Guy Halsall for suggesting this point to me in conversation. Halsall discusses the nature of *munera* further in his forthcoming major work, Guy Halsall, *The Fates of the Late Antique State: Government and Politics in Western Europe* (The End of Western Antiquity, vol. 1).

⁶⁸ Amm. Marc. 20.8.8; 22.3.7. As Woudhuysen points out, the idea of a halt on payments seems implausible, and if such a thing was imposed, it must have been restricted to Gaul and driven by Gallic fiscal requirements, rather than form part of a conspiracy to undermine Julian (Woudhuysen, ‘Fall of the House of Constantine’ [n. 66, above] at 231–233).

⁶⁹ John Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (Baltimore, 1989), 88–90, treats these as separate events; Omissi, *Usurpers* (n. 1, above), 204 does likewise. Heather treats the events as related. Peter Heather, ‘The Gallic Wars of Julian Caesar,’ in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, ed. Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer (Leiden, 2020), 64–96, at 92.

368.⁷⁰ Although the text took the rhetorical form of a funerary epitaph, there are several reasons to believe that the text, if performed, could only ever have been performed for a limited audience, if this epideictic genre was not simply chosen to provide an appropriate form for Julian's biographical encomium.⁷¹ Here, Libanius tells us that before Julian's attack on Batavia, ships bearing grain from Britain had been prevented from entering the Rhine by barbarian raids upon them.⁷² Although Libanius would have us believe that this had already been a problem for some time (πάλαι),⁷³ I will show in subsequent that we cannot trust this depiction of affairs, and it is more likely that this was a situation which had developed in the immediate build up to the Batavian campaign.⁷⁴ Immediately after this, Libanius' text, in what at first glance looks like an odd digression, discusses a trial, in which a subordinate accused his superior of κλοπή. Libanius seems to be referring by this term to *peculatus*, embezzlement.⁷⁵ Florentius, presiding over the case, had allegedly accepted a bribe to rule in favor of the accused, about whom we are told nothing.⁷⁶ The whole affair, in Libanius' telling, appears to have proven a little too scandalous for Florentius to have comfortably remained involved, in response to which he tried to pass the buck on to Julian. Libanius describes Florentius' shock and outrage at Julian's refusal to rule in the favor of the person or persons who had allegedly bribed him, after which he had an ally of Julian's, probably Sallustius (who would himself later be made Julian's Praetorian Prefect of the East, and thus

⁷⁰ R. Foerster, *Libanius Opera*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1904), 272–74 does not seem to notice any connection. B. K. Weis, *Julian. Briefe*. (Munich, 1973), 261 and P. De Jonge, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus*, vol. 17 (Groningen, 1977), 53–55 both treat the trial as part of the same dispute but take the implications of this no further. Guy Sabbah, *Ammien Marcellin. Histoire. Tome II: Livres XVII–XIX* (Paris, 1970), 164–65 simply notes it as one of Julian's several financial disputes with Florentius. Neither Heather, 'Gallic Wars' (n. 69, above), nor Matthews, *Roman Empire* (n. 69, above), treat the embezzlement trial as related to these events. That it is part of the same set of events as the procuring of British grain is treated as a given but otherwise unremarked upon in Fritz Felgentreu, 'Aufbau und Erzähltechnik im *Epitaphios* auf Kaiser Julian: Zur Kompositionskunst des Libanios,' in *Theatron: Rhetorische Kultur in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. Michael Grünbart (Berlin, 2007), 53–67, at 58. There are no references to it in the commentaries on Libanius of E. Bliembach, *Libanius oratio. 18 (Epitaphios): Kommentar (par. 111–308)* (Würzburg, 1976), H.–U. Wiemer, *Libanius und Julian: Studien zum Verhältnis von Rhetorik und Politik im 4. Jahrhundert n. Chr* (Munich, 1995) or E.–M. Seiler, *Konstantios II. bei Libanios. Eine kritische Untersuchung des überlieferten Herrscherbildes* (Frankfurt, 1998). A. F. Norman, *Libanius: Selected Orations*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 332 treats it as a separate event, and also claims that it took place in the winter of 358/9, for reasons that are unclear. It also escapes notice in commentaries on Julian's own writing about these events of J. Bidez, *L'Empereur Julien. Oeuvres complètes. Tome 1–Ire Partie: Discours de Julien César* (Paris, 1932), Wilmer Cave Wright, *The Works of the Emperor Julian, with an English Translation*, 3 vols., (Cambridge, MA, 1913–1923), M. Caltabiano, *L'epistolario di Giuliano imperatore: saggio storico, traduzione, note e testo in appendice* (Naples, 1999), and Stöcklin-Kaldewey, 'Kaiser Julian', (n. 56, above).

⁷¹ On the date of the text's composition and its performance context see Wiemer, *Libanius* (n. 70, above), at 263–267; Fritz Felgentreu, 'Zur Datierung der 18. Rede des Libanios,' *Klio* 86:1 (2004), 206–217; Peter van Nuffelen, 'Earthquakes in A.D. 363–368 and the Date of Libanius, *Oratio 18*,' *Classical Quarterly* 56:2 (2006), 657–661; Felgentreu, 'Aufbau und Erzähltechnik' (n. 70, above); Alan J. Ross, 'Text and Paratext: Reading the Emperor Julian via Libanius' *Epitaphios*,' *American Journal of Philology* 141:2 (2020), 241–281, at 261–262. Felgentreu, 'Zur Datierung der 18. Rede' (n. 71, above), at 207 offers persuasive reasons for 366 rather than 365 as the *terminus ante quem*, contra Wiemer, *Libanius* (n. 70, above). Felgentreu suggests that the poem began to circulate in the 390s after Libanius' death. For a counter to the general claim that Libanius' epideictic rhetoric would have been kept behind closed doors, which highlights in those rare instances where it was, those present would not have been its sole intended audience, see Rafaele Cribiore, *Libanius the Sophist: Rhetoric, Reality and Religion in the Fourth Century* (Ithaca, 2013), at 76–81.

⁷² Lib. *Orat.* 18.83.

⁷³ Lib. *Orat.* 18.83.

⁷⁴ See below, 20–21.

⁷⁵ Lib., *Orat.* 18.84. It was used, for example, to describe Pericles' trial for embezzlement in Plut. *Vit. Per.* 31.3, 32.2.

⁷⁶ Lib. *Orat.* 18.84–5.

appears to have had some acquaintance with the financial affairs at stake),⁷⁷ expelled from the imperial court.⁷⁸ Libanius then describes Julian's subsequent decision to march on the lower Rhine, to restore fortresses there and secure the British grain shipments.⁷⁹

Libanius' digression becomes less odd once it is recognized that this sequence of causation only makes sense if, in his view, Julian's ruling in the trial against the embezzling officials, resulting in Sallustius' expulsion from the court, was in some way prompted by the disruption of and part of efforts to restore the grain shipments. This causal relationship becomes especially apparent in Julian's very own letter to Oribasius, which describes how Sallustius' expulsion prompted Julian's decision to 'defend the provincials from thieves'.⁸⁰ The embezzlement in which Florentius was allegedly complicit seemingly refers to revenue from Britain earmarked for the *annona militaris*, because we are told, immediately before Libanius' recounting of the Batavian campaign, that Julian had requested an assessment of precisely this revenue ("...λογιστὰς τῆς δαπάνης, ἣ τοῦνομα μὲν ἦν στρατιωτικὴ, τῷ δὲ ἔργῳ πρόσοδος τῶν ἡγουμένων"), which officials were allegedly pocketing for their own profit.⁸¹ These seem likely to be Florentius' alleged co-conspirators. But why does Libanius draw a direct relationship between this set of incidents and Julian's campaign to restore the Rhine shipments? It may seem difficult to see the precise relation between the superindiction dispute in 357, Florentius' payment, and the attack on Batavia in 358, and the holding of embezzlement trial followed by the restoration of the shipments in 359. These events all appear quite separate from one another. Yet as my discussion below will reveal, considering these sources and their respective portrayals of this chronological sequence in full makes the possibility that these are closely related events a compelling one.

We have hints here of a narrative of political skulduggery that I will attempt to reconstruct. At this stage I can propose it only suggestively, but it will be further developed as this argument progresses. The set of claims being advanced by Julian and Libanius in their respective representations of these events in 361 and the mid-360s, if we consider their ramifications in unison, seem to amount to the allegation that Florentius, through his complicity in the embezzlement of imperial revenue then given to barbarian groups, was enabling barbarian attacks on Batavia.⁸² If so, this was not something one alleged lightly. The penalty for *peculatus* alone was severe enough, incurring a substantial fine and lifelong loss of all status and positions in Julian's day. By 382, both it and the taking of bribes by judges who ruled on it would incur the death penalty.⁸³ But what was being alleged here had even more severe ramifications. Allegations about enabling barbarian attacks in the North Sea world for financial gain had caused Carausius' usurpation, which Constantius' and Julian's grandfather had previously put to an end by invading Batavia.⁸⁴ An edict issued by Constantius' father and brother in 323 punished crimes of this sort by burning the

⁷⁷ Amm. Marc. 22.3.1. For confirmation that Saturninus Secundus Sallutius and Sallustius are one and the same, see Theodor Mommsen, "Sallustius = Salutius und das Signum," *Hermes* 37 (1907), 443–455.

⁷⁸ Lib. *Orat.* 18.84–5. Woudhuysen correctly points out that Sallustius' expulsion was probably a result not of malevolence but of Constantius' efforts to maintain a balance between showing favor to Julian or Florentius (Woudhuysen 'The Fall of the House of Constantine' [n. 66, above], at 221).

⁷⁹ Lib. *Orat.* 18.87.

⁸⁰ Julian, *Epist.* 4. See below.

⁸¹ Lib. *Orat.* 18.82.

⁸² Julian's court appears to have actively advertised its pursuit of accused embezzlers, since Greg. Naz. *Orat.* 4.75 cites this approvingly in his otherwise bitter invective against the emperor.

⁸³ *Cod. Theod.* 9.27–28

⁸⁴ *Pan. Lat.* 4.8.1; Drinkwater, *Alamanni* (n. 2, above).

perpetrators alive.⁸⁵ Just a few months after issuing the *Letter to the Athenians*, Julian followed through on such threats, executing many of Constantius' senior administration at the tribunal held at Chalcedon, using exactly this brutal method.⁸⁶ Florentius, who had managed to escape, was sentenced to death *in absentia*.⁸⁷

It might seem odd at first glance for Libanius to have reiterated such allegations c. 365/6, but 365/6 was not so far removed from affairs as we might think. This would have been only four years after Julian's issuing of the *Letter to the Athenians*, and only three years since Libanius and Julian had spent considerable time in correspondence and likely one another's company during the latter's stay in Antioch. Although it is possible that much of Libanius' information about the Batavian campaign might have been gained then,⁸⁸ we also know that Libanius was in correspondence with Julian about these campaigns as they took place.⁸⁹ The *Epitaphios* likely received only a very limited circulation upon its composition, but may have begun to circulate more widely after Libanius' death in the 390s.⁹⁰ Libanius may well have had that wider circulation in mind: as Rafaele Cribiore has made clear, we should not treat the circumstances of the Epitaph's original performance as our sole guide for Libanius' intended audience.⁹¹ Such works were composed, Cribiore demonstrates, for an imagined, idealized audience, whatever the composition of a poem's 'true' audience during recital.⁹² In this respect, Libanius' ideal audience was one for whom he wanted to definitively cement the wrongs which Julian faced for posterity. This is a point also underlined by Felgentreu's analysis of the *Epitaphios*, which highlights that its imagined, idealized audience would have been "dignitaries from the court, the administration, the military... delegations from the *curias* in Rome and Constantinople, as well as a large number of important personalities... a public assembly representative of the entire Empire."⁹³ This is exactly the sort of audience for whom Libanius would wish to establish for posterity details to which other sources had only alluded, about the supposedly sordid crimes of Julian's enemies. Libanius could now do so with information provided by Julian, that he probably sincerely believed.

We have nevertheless long known that we must handle Julian's and his allies' descriptions of his adversaries' crimes with caution.⁹⁴ A peculiar silence allows us to query these allegations.

⁸⁵ *Imp. constantinus a. et caesar si quis barbaris scelerata factione facultatem depraedationis in romanos dederit, vel si quis alio modo factam dividerit, vivus comburatur. dat. iv. kal. mai. severo et rufino coss. Cod. Theod. 7.1.1.*

⁸⁶ Amm. Marc. 22.3.

⁸⁷ Amm. Marc. 22.3.

⁸⁸ His earlier orations, after all, are somewhat less detailed on Julian's Gallic career and certainly do not mention the trial. Lib, *Orat.* 12; *Orat.* 13.

⁸⁹ Lib. *Epist.* 324 [Foerster].

⁹⁰ Felgentreu, 'Zur Datierung der 18. Rede' (n. 71, above).

⁹¹ Cribiore, *Libanius* (n. 71, above), at 76–81.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹³ "Es bestand neben den Würdenträgern des Hofes, der Verwaltung, des Militärs und der Stadt Antiochien aus Delegationen der Kurien in Rom und Konstantinopel sowie einer Vielzahl bedeutender Persönlichkeiten, die aus allen Teilen des Imperiums angereist waren. Es handelte sich also um eine für das gesamte Imperium repräsentative Öffentlichkeit, die julianischer Panegyrik nach dem Tod des Kaisers kein Forum mehr bot. Dennoch erkennen wir sie in dem impliziten Publikum des Epitaphios wieder. So transportiert die Publikumsfiktion auch die Fiktion weitläufiger und anhaltender Anteilnahme am Schicksal und an den Absichten des Apostaten — und deutet gleichzeitig an, welchen Wirkungshorizont Libanios auch für den Epitaphios noch beansprucht." Felgentreu, 'Zur Datierung der 18. Rede' (n. 71, above),

⁹⁴ Mark Humphries, 'The tyrant's mask? Images of good and bad rule in Julian's *Letter to the Athenians*,' in *Emperor and Author: The Writings of Julian the Apostate*, Nicholas Baker-Brian and Shaun Tougher (Swansea, 2012), 75–90. Woudhuysen, 'Fall of the House of Constantine' (n. 66, above), 271–277; Omissi, *Usurpers* (n. 1, above), 194–208.

It is striking and strange that Ammianus Marcellinus makes no mention of them. Ammianus was a partisan of Julian, whose detailed account of the lead up to Julian's rebellion can be "actively demonstrated to have had access to and to have utilized sources composed by Julian himself."⁹⁵ He rarely missed an opportunity to lament Florentius' mistreatment of his beloved Caesar.⁹⁶ For such a figure to fail to even mention the embezzlement trial demands explanation, and the most straightforward would be that Ammianus simply gives us a more accurate representation of the administrative affairs behind Libanius' and Julian's more lurid accounts. Ammianus was no stranger to Julian's tactics during this affair. The collection of taxes always presented opportunities for officials to profit through speculation on changes in price between the *coemptio* and the *adaeratio*.⁹⁷ Ammianus knew that such opportunities could be used by shrewd politicians to entrap their opponents, as shown by his telling of the Lepcis Affair of 373–7.⁹⁸ Ammianus even describes a case of alleged embezzlement over which Julian presided in 359, and which he places immediately before Julian's arrangement of the Rhine shipments: that of Numerius, the *rector Provinciae* of Narbonensis, which ended with Numerius' absolution.⁹⁹ Why would Ammianus have missed an opportunity to raise the case described by Libanius, if Florentius had truly been bribed to offer a false acquittal for the same crime? This is not least striking given Ammianus' denial of similar allegations made at the imperial court in which the then-*numerius* Remigius was involved, and whose later involvement in the Lepcis Affair Ammianus would more than happily condemn. Remigius was alleged to be involved in embezzlement supposedly committed (though Ammianus denied this) by Ammianus' superior officer Ursicinus during their time in Gaul investigating Silvanus.¹⁰⁰

There are also hints that Ammianus knew about, but consciously chose to omit, the embezzlement trial in his version of this set of events. In the chapter after describing the superindiction dispute, Ammianus, as part of his excursus on Roman obelisks, relates the story of Cornelius Gallus, the *Procurator* of Egypt who had committed suicide after (in Ammianus' telling) being convicted of embezzlement during the reign of Augustus.¹⁰¹ Ammianus' source, Cassius Dio, makes no mention of embezzlement, which reinforces that Ammianus made a deliberate choice to allude to the British affair.¹⁰² Contemporary audiences familiar with the various recriminations cast about as Julian launched his rebellion would have surely spotted the resonances between this passage, the superindiction dispute, and Numerius' trial.¹⁰³ The latter closes with Julian's legal case for Numerius' defense: "can anyone ever be innocent, if it is enough simply to be accused?" (*ecquis innocens esse poterit, si accusasse sufficiet?*).¹⁰⁴ Ammianus' discussions of Numerius reads, in this light, like an awkward attempt at deflection, pre-empting an audience who might have been reminded that

⁹⁵ Omissi, *Usurpers* (n. 1, above), 205.

⁹⁶ Amm. Marc. 16.12.14; 17.3.2.

⁹⁷ Paolo Tedesco 'The Political Economy of the Late Roman Empire: An Essay in Speculation,' in *Uomini, istituzioni, mercati. Studi in onore di Elio Lo Cascio*, ed. G. D. Merola, M. De Nardis and G. Soricelli (Bari, 2019), 559–68, at 563–65.

⁹⁸ Amm. Marc. 28.6.

⁹⁹ Amm. Marc. 18.1.

¹⁰⁰ Amm. Marc. 15.5.36, 28.5–6, 30.2.11–12.

¹⁰¹ Amm. Marc. 17.4.5.

¹⁰² Cass. Dio. 53.23. On the role of *exempla* as allusions in Ammianus' work see Gavin Kelly, *Ammianus: The Allusive Historian* (Cambridge, 2008), 256–95.

¹⁰³ Ammianus' frequent formal excurses, as in the genre more broadly, often served a polemical function. H.V. Cantner, 'Excursus in Greek and Roman Historians,' *Philological Quarterly* 8 (1929): 233–47; Timothy D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1998), at 93.

¹⁰⁴ Amm. Marc. 18.1.4

Julian and Libanius had once at least implicitly accused Florentius of complicity in the very same crime. It is worth emphasizing that this is placed chronologically at precisely the point in time where Libanius places his embezzlement trial, with its quite opposite outcome to that described by Ammianus (and indeed Ammianus explicitly says that he could name other trials, but chooses not to do so).¹⁰⁵ Ammianus' drafting of his works decades later may seem some steps removed from the latter years of the 350s, but it is worth emphasizing that he knew personally many of the key figures involved, and had access to accounts from Julian now lost to us, as did multiple likely members of his audience, which perhaps included figures such as Libanius. Notwithstanding modern disputes regarding the precise social makeup of Ammianus' audience, this was certainly a heterogenous group extending beyond specific social circles, united primarily by their interest in a new, authoritative account of the reign of Julian.¹⁰⁶ From this, then, we can reasonably conclude that the trial took place. There had certainly been no shortage of litigation proceedings on bogus charges in Britain in the 350s, as the career of Paulus Catena makes clear. This trial might even have been one of the latter's—Julian seems to have been on rather better terms with the feared *notarius* in 358 than we would otherwise assume from Julian's complaints about him in the *Letter to the Athenians*, or from Paulus' execution in 361 shortly thereafter.¹⁰⁷

One possible objection might be that Ammianus did not in fact overlook this. Rather, his discussion of the case has simply failed to survive the transmission of his text. It is true that the relevant section of our sole surviving manuscript for book 17, the Fuldensis, is lacunose, but it is not sufficiently so for such objections to stand. A small gap appears in the lower half of the pertinent folio, between 17.3.5 and 17.3.6 (between *exprimere conaretur* and *denique inusitato...*). This would be one logical place for a reference to the trial to appear, but the space available scarcely leaves enough room to fit *unius animi firmitate* on the line above or *praefecto ut secunda[e] belgicae* on that below it. A second lacuna, in 17.3.6, appears in the middle of what editors have since resolved as a coherent sentence, between *quos in cura[m]* and *[susc]eperat*.¹⁰⁸ The scribe who copied book 17 in his “distinctive spidery hand” is generally acknowledged as being the most accurate of the Fuldensis scribes.¹⁰⁹ The lacunae left for us by the scribes of the Fuldensis can reasonably be taken (according to Kelly) as relatively accurate renditions of a damaged or illegible exemplar, with gaps left to be filled in the event that the scribes had been able to get hold of a better one.¹¹⁰ The scribe who copied book 17 certainly had no compunctions about leaving a sufficiently large gap when he thought the situation demanded, evidenced by the space left for the missing Greek obelisk inscription discussed in 17.4.17, which spans a full two thirds of a bifolium.¹¹¹ The idea that Ammianus could have squeezed a reference to the embezzlement trial into the gaps identified in 17.3 thus stretches credibility. There is hardly sufficient space in the first lacuna on 40r, and for it to appear in the yet smaller second lacuna would do considerable violence to a

¹⁰⁵ Amm. Marc. 18.1.3. The chronological relation between the trial of Numerius and the trial of the British officials will be made more explicit in the next section, below.

¹⁰⁶ Darío N. Sánchez Vendramini, ‘The Audience of Ammianus Marcellinus and the Circulation of Books in the Late Roman World,’ *Journal of Ancient History* 6:2 (2018): 234–259.

¹⁰⁷ Paulus was certainly present at Julian's court (*Epist. ad. ath.* 282), and is thus likely the Paulus whom Lib. *Epist.* 373 thanks for encouraging Julian to write to Libanius. Otto Seeck, *Die Briefe von Libanios, zeitlich geordnet* (Leipzig, 1906), at 233–4. The downfall of this later notorious, much hated figure would explain Libanius' decision not to name the litigant parties in the trial.

¹⁰⁸ Vatican City, BAV Vat. lat. 1873, fol. 40r.

¹⁰⁹ Gavin Kelly, ‘Why We Need a New Edition of Ammianus Marcellinus,’ in *Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author*, ed. Michael Hanaghan and David Woods (Leiden, 2022), 19–58, at 31.

¹¹⁰ Kelly, ‘Why We Need a New Edition’ (n. 109, above) at 30.

¹¹¹ BAV Vat. lat. 1873, fols. 41v–42r.

perfectly coherent sentence, against the logic of Ammianus' text. Meanwhile, the folio containing discussion of Cornelius Gallus' embezzlement in 17.4, which Ammianus probably intended as an allusion to the British trial,¹¹² evidences no such lacunae.¹¹³ The only alternative would be to imagine that a reference to the trial was lost in a segment so lacunose or damaged that the extent of this damage was already rendered unnoticeable in the exemplar which reached Fulda. Occam's razor would tip the balance against this explanation.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the section of the manuscript describing the trial of Numerius, a more logical location for the trial to be mentioned in any case, is not in the least bit lacunose.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, if Ammianus, as now seems likely, consciously omitted to mention Florentius' behavior, when Libanius had no qualms about doing so, we need to determine why. One simple explanation might be simply that Ammianus chose to emphasize Julian's leniency, but for Ammianus to omit any reference at all to an allegation of a crime of such severity against one of Julian's arch-nemeses on these grounds seems difficult to accept. We should not forget that by Ammianus' day, this particular crime was punishable by death.¹¹⁶ It is also difficult to believe that Ammianus did not have access to information about this particular trial. It would thus be reasonable to conclude, whatever the truth of the activities by the embezzling officials, that those elements of the trial's allegations which concerned Florentius' bribe had become widely known to be false by the time Ammianus, several decades later, came to compose his works.¹¹⁷ To mention it would not have spoken well to the image which Ammianus sought to craft of Julian as a just arbiter and reformer of the law,¹¹⁸ not least given Ammianus' own reporting on the notorious prosecutions of British officials on trumped up charges by Paulus Catena whom Julian condemned to being burned alive at Chalcedon,¹¹⁹ as well as Ammianus' fervent denial of similar allegations against Ursicinus.¹²⁰ Also noteworthy in this respect is that edict passed under Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius in 385, which re-iterated previous legislation criminalizing *calumnia*, the bringing of false allegations, before the court.¹²¹ The legal terrain for maneuver had shifted. Ammianus' solution, as so often when dealing with matters which proved to be an inconvenience to his portrayal of his idol, was to pass over the matter in silence, deploying one of his well-worn techniques,

¹¹² On which see further below, fns. 74–75.

¹¹³ BAV Vat. lat. 1873, fol. 40v.

¹¹⁴ Gelenius' 1533 edition, relying on the now mostly-lost Hersfeldensis which shared its exemplar with the Fuldensis, also gives us no reason to suspect this. Sigismundus Gelenius, "Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum Libri XVII quorum postremi III nunc primum excusae," in *Omnia quam antehac emendatiora. Annotationes Des. Erasmi et Egnatii cognitu dignae. C. Suetonius Tranquillus, Dion Cassius, Aelius Spartianus, Iulius Capitolinus, Aelius Lampridius, Vulcatius Gallicanus, Trebellius Pollio, Flavius Vopiscus, Herodianus Politiano interp., Sex. Aurelius Victor, Pomponius Laetus, Ammianus Marcellinus quatuor libris auctior* (Basel, 1533), 545–786, at 596. On the transmission history see Kelly, 'Why We Need a New Edition' (n. 109, above), at 29–35 and 21, fig. 1.1.

¹¹⁵ BAV Vat. lat. 1873, fols. 50r–50v.

¹¹⁶ Above, n. 83. The change in the severity of this particular crime between 361 and 382 may also explain why Julian chose to emphasise Florentius' payment to barbarians rather than the taking of bribes, then a comparatively lesser crime.

¹¹⁷ On which see Alan Cameron, 'Nicomachus Flavianus and the Date of Ammianus's Last Books,' *Athenaeum* 112 (2012): 337–358.

¹¹⁸ Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner highlights that efforts to propagate this image of Julian emerged from his court almost immediately upon his accession. 'Reform, Routine and Propaganda: Julian the Lawgiver,' in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate*, ed. Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer (Leiden, 2020), 124–71, at 125. Whether this reflects reality has been disputed. See Raphael Brendel, *Kaiser Julians Gesetzgebungswerk und Reichsverwaltung* (Hamburg, 2017).

¹¹⁹ Amm. Marc. 14.5.6; 22.3.10.

¹²⁰ Amm. Marc. 15.5.35.

¹²¹ *Cod. Theod.* 3.1.2; *Cod. Iust.* 9.46.8.

allusion, to allow those of his audience who had been in the know and shared Ammianus' sympathies to fill in the blanks.¹²²

One conclusion that can confidently be drawn from all of this is that allegations about embezzlement were a political tactic eagerly and regularly deployed by the various political factions involved in plots against one another at the imperial court in the 350s. This is in itself not particularly surprising. Behaviors that we would regard in the modern world as 'corrupt' were in some respects the grease which kept the wheel of late Roman bureaucracy turning.¹²³ When such allegations emerge, what we are usually witnessing is the outcome of a political dispute between different factions at the imperial court. The new administration under Valens and Valentinian seem to have recognized the potential problems caused by a constant stream of such allegations, issuing legislation just a few years after Libanius' *Epitaphios*, in which bringers of what were deemed false allegations before the Praetorian Prefect would be punished with the penalty applied to those legitimately found guilty of the same crime.¹²⁴ Needless to say, those who came out at the top of these disputes would usually have more success at propagating the claim that it was their rivals who had been the corrupt party.¹²⁵ In this respect, it is perfectly possible that some military officers were indeed skimming the top off of the *annona* as it was being collected in Britain. It is also perfectly possible that Florentius, recognizing a need to avoid rocking the boat overly, simply acted out of pragmatism in encouraging Julian not to rule against the accused official.

The Case of the Superindiction

Our third piece of evidence is an event which Ammianus *does* mention. Numerius' case occurs at the opening of Book 18 of the *Res Gestae*, where Ammianus offers it as an example of Julian's efforts to improve the administration of justice in Gaul. It seems likely that this was intended as a parallel to Ammianus' similar description, early in Book 17, of Julian's dispute with Florentius concerning the collection of a superindiction.¹²⁶ In Ammianus' telling of the dispute, Julian's efforts were to relieve the excessive tax burden allegedly imposed by Florentius on the Gallic provinces (it is worth reiterating that this would have included Britain). Florentius had allegedly deemed the typical taxation measures insufficient for fiscal requirements and so had resolved to cover the shortfall. The superindiction, a special levy which was the empire's usual mechanism for addressing budgetary shortfalls, was his method by which to achieve this.¹²⁷ Julian disputed this assessment and presented (so Ammianus claims) a set of calculations proving that existing tax mechanisms had yielded sufficient revenue, thereby circumventing the need to impose what Julian alleged was an additional ruinous burden on Gaul's landholders. Constantius gave assent to Julian's assessment, provided Julian did not go out of his way to discredit Florentius. Julian after this

¹²² On Ammianus' handling of the Ursicinus and Silvanus Affair, see David Hunt, 'The Outside Inside: Ammianus on the rebellion of Silvanus,' in *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (eds.) (London, 1999), 47–56 especially at 53.

¹²³ Christopher Kelly, 'Emperors, Government and Bureaucracy,' in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 13, ed. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey, 138–183, at 175–180. For the modern world see Pranab Bardhan, 'Corruption and Development: A Review of Issues,' *Journal of Economic Literature* 35:3 (1997), 1320–46, at 1322–24.

¹²⁴ *Cod. Iust.* 46.7

¹²⁵ Kelly, 'Bureaucracy' (n. 65, above), at 175–78.

¹²⁶ *Amm. Marc.* 17.3.1–6.

¹²⁷ On the general workings of this system, Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (n. 65, above), 449–59, Carrié, 'Nouveaux modes' (n. 12, above), and Paolo Tedesco, 'Indiction and Superindiction', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*, ed. O. Nicholson (Oxford, 2018), 771–772.

won fiscal control of *Belgica Secunda* from Florentius, on the proviso that none there be coerced to pay the tax.¹²⁸

This dispute would of course have concerned collection of taxes for the *annona militaris*. The dispute must have occurred in the context of Julian's attack on Batavia, because Ammianus places it chronologically in the aftermath of the Battle of Strasbourg and immediately before Julian's attack on the Chamavi. Moreover, the dispute immediately follows a description of Julian's siege in December and January of 357–58 of several fortresses occupied by Franks on the Meuse.¹²⁹ The final declaration of the annual tax levies bearing Julian's signature would have had to have been posted across the province by the start of July,¹³⁰ so we can presume that this dispute took place at some point in the late winter or spring, with the attack on Batavia following in the late spring or early summer.¹³¹ The embezzlement trial may have been held in the aftermath of this set of events, as Julian turned to arranging shipments along the route he had now re-opened. The letter from Julian to Oribasius raises some interesting questions in this respect. The letter is dateable to immediately before or during at least one of Julian's marches on Batavia in 358 or 359. Julian decries predations by an unnamed nemesis, who is clearly Florentius,¹³² against the 'wretched provincials', then expresses his hope that Sallustius would remain at court, before possibly confirming that his refusal to sign off on reports of some kind by Florentius' was what prompted his decision to 'defend the provincials from thieves'. As we will see momentarily, the question of whether this referred to the embezzlement trial or the superindiction is unclear.¹³³ Either way, it is yet further suggestive of the already strong apparent relation between both events, as I now intend to explore further.

DEATH AND TAXES

We have established that an embezzlement trial occurred, that it concerned provision of the *annona militaris*, that it might (but need not have) been conducted on false premises, and that was in some way tied to Florentius' undermining of Julian for his conduct during the superindiction dispute, which prompted the latter's decision to attack Batavia. The overall picture which therefore emerges is that our sources are in some way associating with embezzlement a dispute about the procurement and disbursement of funds to barbarians that Julian decried in his *Letter to the Athenians*—a conclusion more plausible in light of Julian's framing of the event using the contemporary, fourth-century accounting language of a tax administrator. This provides strong indication that apart from Julian and his allies, the disbursement in question was seen by the parties who had been involved in the dispute as a legitimate one—no such dispute could have otherwise occurred. The question we must therefore now ask is how this dispute came about. What exactly were these military officials doing in relation to the *annona militaris*, for what reasons they were doing it, and why did Julian's intervention on the lower Rhine take place in order to disrupt it?

¹²⁸ Amm. Marc. 17.2.

¹²⁹ Amm. Marc. 17.2.1–4.

¹³⁰ Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 65), 456.

¹³¹ This is also hinted at by the harvest cycle for spelt. See discussion, n. 156, below.

¹³² Despite some doubt on this matter. For convincing arguments that Florentius was the person referred to, see Weis, *Julian* (n. 70, above), at 261 and Caltabiano. *L'epistolario di Giuliano* (n. 70, above), at 90–1. Woudhuysen 2017 (n. 70, above), 229 concurs that this refers to the tax dispute.

¹³³ Julian. *Ep.* 4. Cf. Weis, *Julian* (n. 70, above), 261–2, who believes that this refers to the superindiction dispute.

Ammianus' obfuscation of Julian's political manoeuvres regarding the trial suggests a broader playing fast and loose with chronology,¹³⁴ which offers us a hint at how the conflict unfolded. Resolving some of the chronological uncertainties will help solidify this thus-far only apparent picture, lending us a reasonable degree of confidence that some of these thus far only vaguely associated events should in fact be seen as part of a related set of fiscal processes, specifically showing connection of the embezzlement trial to the *annona militaris*' distribution to barbarians. As already mentioned, Julian's first move in the winter of 357/8 was to lay siege to a group of 600 Franks, who had allegedly been pillaging the countryside and were occupying fortresses on the Meuse. These are likely to be part of the same Salians whom Julian would attack again in 358, after which he restored these forts. Allegations regarding their plundering of the hinterland notwithstanding, this suggests that a disagreement about the Salians' presence here and their right to supplies was the prompt for the taxation dispute.¹³⁵ Ammianus would have us believe the fortresses they occupied had been long abandoned in the wake of Magnentius' and Silvanus' revolts, which had more broadly, in his portrayal of events, brought about a catastrophic collapse of the Rhine frontier. John Drinkwater has shown this to be overblown rhetoric; the fall of Cologne, allegedly the climax of the disaster, had been more or less a fluke: the situation was quickly brought back under control once Julian's armies arrived in the region.¹³⁶ The periodic recruitment of forces from the Frankish side of the frontier had been commonplace since the Tetrarchy.¹³⁷ Large numbers of Franks already resided legitimately on the left bank of the Rhine, and had fought on either (or sometimes on both) sides of Magnentius' revolt.¹³⁸ Drinkwater suggests that the group attacked by Julian could have been settled on the Meuse by Constans after 342.¹³⁹ Cuijk, a late Roman fortress on the Meuse, which was established to control the river crossing on the road from Tongeren to Nijmegen, saw the construction of a bridge of considerable technical complexity in c. 347–349. It shows no evidence of destruction or abandonment before its renovation under Valentinian I.¹⁴⁰ Rumours of the Meuse's collapse had clearly been greatly exaggerated. Whether settled by Constans or Magnentius, the Frankish soldiers on the Meuse could easily have been billeted here legitimately. Most crucially, by Ammianus' own admission, they held out under siege from a vastly superior force for 54 days, suggesting that they were well supplied.¹⁴¹

This observation alone is enough to suggest that Ammianus misleads us when he claims that these Franks were merely bandits, who had resorted to occupying the Meuse only as they fled Julian's forces.¹⁴² It is worth recalling that Franks had been settled with imperial sanction in Toxandria and Batavia for more than two generations by the start of Julian's military career. Ammianus' writing treated both Roman provincials and barbarian *gentes* alike, following the same ethnographic principles. People who are treated as Romans in his works when serving

¹³⁴ Ammianus was hardly above doing this in other contexts. See, e.g., Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele, 'Ammianus on Mallobaudes and Magnus Maximus: A Response to Theodosian Discourse?' in *Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author*, ed. Michael Hanaghan and David Woods (Leiden, 2022), 204–27, at 221.

¹³⁵ Amm. Marc. 17.2.1–3.

¹³⁶ Drinkwater, 'Julian and the Franks' (n. 2, above); Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above), at 214–15

¹³⁷ Kulikowski, 'Constantine,' (n. 5, above); Wijnendaele, 'Ammianus on Mallobaudes' (n. 134, above), 206.

¹³⁸ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above); Michael Kulikowski, *Imperial Triumph: The Roman World from Hadrian to Constantine, 138–363* (London, 2018).

¹³⁹ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above), at 199–200.

¹⁴⁰ B. Goudswaard, R. A. C. Kroes and H. S. M. Van der Beek, 'The Late Roman Bridge at Cuijk,' *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek* 44 (2000/1): 439–560; P. A. Seinen and J. A. Van den Besselaar, 'A Late Roman Quay in the River Meuse near Cuijk, Netherlands,' *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 43:2 (2014): 330–42.

¹⁴¹ Elton, *Warfare* (n. 66, above), at 74.

¹⁴² Amm Marc. 17.2.1; Cf. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 1, above), 226–27.

(in his view) in defense of the Roman Empire often become barbarians in his narrative when acting in hostility to it.¹⁴³ Many of Julian's own troops had also come from across the Rhine.¹⁴⁴ Soldiers in the state's employ were just as likely to turn to pillaging and banditry when discipline was lacking,¹⁴⁵ and many other soldiers who had turned to banditry in the aftermath of Magnentius' revolt were recruited into Julian's army.¹⁴⁶ The portrayal of the Franks in this episode as a band of brigands could simply be a consequence of genre convention (and the needs of Ammianus' narrative). It is true that the usurpation of Magnentius followed by the Silvanus debacle must have left the Rhine frontier unstable and poorly organized, but many people with legitimate ties to the state must still have been present there, with the authority to requisition state resources. Many of those people would have been Franks, and we have little obvious reason not to count the Salians and perhaps even the Chamavi among them.

This set of observations enables a complete reversal in our understanding of these groups' decision to disrupt the supply of grain from Britain to the Rhine frontier. I want to suggest that the disruption was caused by Julian's choice to attack the lower Rhine and open shipping in the Rhine on his own terms, not the other way around. It is, after all, only if we accept the narrative of a general collapse of the Rhine frontier that Libanius' statements regarding barbarians being the cause of disruption to British shipping can be taken at face value. As was demonstrated earlier in this article, the lower Rhine plain and its accompanying military forces would have been almost impossible to feed without regular, annual supply from Britain.¹⁴⁷ We have no indication whatsoever that Julian's armies faced food shortages or other difficulties procuring adequate supplies before the summer campaign season of 358, despite having held Cologne since the summer of 356.¹⁴⁸ We are in fact told that Julian apparently made successful efforts to ensure that adequate supplies were available, in a region which had seen continual military campaigning for over half a decade. Julian was allegedly successfully able to do so despite (likely scurrilous) allegations that Constantius' allies attempted to thwart such efforts by deliberately destroying part of the *annona*.¹⁴⁹ Ammianus would have us believe that this was achievable simply by making recourse to the crops of the recently liberated lands of the upper and middle Rhine sown by the Alamanni, putatively providing sufficient supplies for 357.¹⁵⁰ But this, too, cannot stand up to scrutiny. The middle Rhine in the fourth century possessed relatively unproductive soil for agriculture, certainly compared to the Cologne Bay on the lower Rhine plain, and especially compared to Britain, which was the real powerhouse of grain production for the Rhine armies. The region appears, moreover, to have undergone possible reforestation, and experienced a *contraction*

¹⁴³ M. Shane Bjornlie, 'Romans, barbarians and provincials in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus,' in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, ed. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, Cinzia Grifoni, and Marianne Pohlheimer-Mohaupt (Berlin, 2018), 71–89.

¹⁴⁴ Amm. Marc. 20.4.4.

¹⁴⁵ A.D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford, 2007), 140, 163–75.

¹⁴⁶ Lib., *Orat.* 18.

¹⁴⁷ Below, Section IV, 'The Material Basis for the *Annona Militaris*'.

¹⁴⁸ Amm. Marc. 16.3.1–3. Heather, 'Gallic Wars' (n. 69, above), 69–70 for the date.

¹⁴⁹ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above); Amm. Marc. 16.3.1, 16.11.8. This context makes scarcely credible Ammianus' claim that Barbatio, at the same time as he allegedly destroyed boats intended to bridge the river in order to thwart Julian's campaign objectives, likewise deliberately destroyed supplies 'stolen' from Julian's forces, perhaps on Constantius' orders. The ships were burned simply to facilitate Barbatio's withdrawal from Alamannic territory, as had likely always been the intention. Any supplies that may have been burned would simply have been collateral damage. See Drinkwater, *Alamanni* (n. 2, above), at 230–233. See also David Woods, 'Ammianus versus Libanius on Barbatio's Alleged Bridge Across the Rhine,' *Mnemosyne* 63 (2010), 110–116.

¹⁵⁰ Amm. Marc. 16.11.11–12.

of agriculture in favor of pastoral farming in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁵¹ The idea that Julian could have amassed sufficient supplies to tide him over for a year from Alamannic crops alone is preposterous. Yet true supply difficulties only arose in the prelude to Julian's attack against the Salians in 358.¹⁵² This speaks strongly against the idea that barbarian piracy had posed an endemic problem for the shipping of the *annona* up the Rhine before 358, and we can reject Libanius' claims that it had in his *Epitaphios*. Something else must have taken place between 356 and 358 to alter the supply situation.

What, then, had changed between 356 and 358? As Drinkwater points out, the likely reason for Constantius' decision to send Julian's forces on campaign in 357 was growing recognition of the political embarrassment (not least encouraged by Julian's circle) resulting from Constantius' sanction of Alamannic settlement on the left bank of the Rhine as a reward for attacking Magnentius' forces.¹⁵³ In the aftermath of the 357 summer campaign, as thoughts turned to retiring for the winter and preparing the harvest for the supply of the provisions for the next year, it cannot have escaped Julian's notice that a large number of those receiving provisions on the Rhine would have had Frankish origins, and had formerly been loyal to Constantius' defeated enemies—Julian had himself only a few years previously called attention to Magnentius' own putative Frankish and Saxon ancestry, in a subtly subversive panegyric given in Constantius' honor.¹⁵⁴ He would have been aware, however we interpret the causes of the Silvanus affair, of how suspicions against that military commander of Frankish extraction had been exploited by a faction at Constantius' court.¹⁵⁵ Here, then, lay an opportunity to foster a political scandal of even greater proportions, one which Julian would prove only too happy to exploit. Julian may well have seen the early crisis on the Meuse in the winter of 357 as an opportunity to nullify Frankish access to the *annona* completely. As mentioned above, superindictions were by necessity the means by which a great many of these forces must have been supplied. We can therefore construct a sequence of events as follows: at some point in winter shortly after Julian's campaign against the 600 Franks on the Meuse, a furious dispute erupted over the need to provision soldiers of Frankish extraction on the Meuse and lower Rhine. At the climax of this conflict, Julian cancelled the superindiction. This would have disrupted supplies to the Frankish groups on the lower Rhine, prompting the Salian-Chamavi blockade. Further indicative that Julian may have provoked this particular conflict is that he tells us that he had ships constructed with which to bring grain up the Rhine in fewer than ten months. Spelt, which as we saw was the most popular sown wheat in Roman Britain, was typically harvested around July, though

¹⁵¹ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above), at 90–92. The data is less robust than that from Britain or northern Gaul, but the most recent comprehensive surveys, of which there are several, nevertheless identify villa contraction in the third and fourth centuries. Sabine Deschler-Erb and Örne Akeret, 'Landwirtschaft in Zeiten des Wandels,' in *Am anderen Flussufer: Die Spätantike beiderseits des südlichen Oberrheins*, ed. Gertrud Kuhnle, Eckhard Wirbelauer, Martine Keller and Nikola Krohn (Stuttgart, 2019), 150–155; Antonin Nüsslein, Pascal Flotté, Mathias Higelin, Olivier Putelat, Muriel Roth-Zehner, 'Alsace,' in Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rvstica*, vol. 1 (n. 16, above), 657–682, at 660–662; Antonin Nüsslein, Nicolas Bernigaud, Karine Boulanger, Gaël Brkojewitsch, Geneviève Daoulas, Murielle Georges-Leory, Nicolas Meyer, Simon Ritz, Valentina Bellavia, Sylvie Deffresigne *et al.*, 'La Lorraine,' in Reddé, ed., *Gallia Rvstica*, vol. 1 (n. 16, above), 555–655.

¹⁵² Amm. Marc. 17.8.1–2.

¹⁵³ Drinkwater, *The Alamanni* (n. 2, above), 228. The letters which they allegedly bore testifying to their legitimate settlement are treated as scandalous by Lib. *Orat.* 18.33, 18.39, and Julian gladly exploited them during his usurpation. Soc. Scholast. 3.1.

¹⁵⁴ Julian, *Orat.* 1. On the subversive elements of this panegyric see Shaun Tougher, 'Reading between the Lines: Julian's First Panegyric on Constantius II,' in *Emperor and Author: The Writings of Julian the Apostate*, ed. Nicholas Baker-Brian and Shaun Tougher (Swansea, 2012), 19–34.

¹⁵⁵ Amm. Marc. 15.5–6. On the Silvanus affair see Hunt, 'Silvanus' (n. 122, above).

perhaps as part of sequence of crop rotation into the autumn.¹⁵⁶ If Julian arranged for the construction of ships for the 358 harvest, this must therefore have been begun by no later than October 357.

Thus far, this sequence poses no chronological difficulties, but as we move into 358 matters become more complex. Julian associates his attack on Batavia with the restoration of grain shipments. This association becomes somewhat puzzling due to Libanius and Ammianus' accounts. Libanius tells us that the embezzlement trial was held after the end of Julian's campaigns against the Salians and the Chamavi,¹⁵⁷ but before Julian marched on (and restored) *Castra Herculis* and arranged to have shipments brought from Britain. The difficulty hinges upon Sallustius' expulsion from the imperial court, which is portrayed by Libanius as caused by the embezzlement trial, and as the cause of Julian's march on *Castra Herculis*.¹⁵⁸ Ammianus tells us that restoration of this fort took place in the harvest period of 359 (which would have been around July for spelt). He also discusses Numerius' trial, alluding to the British trial, immediately before this, allowing us to infer that the embezzlement trial took place in advance of (and was associated with arrangement of) shipments for the 359 harvest. But we know from Julian's letter to Oribasius that Julian refused to sign certain *ὑπομνήματα*, eventually prompting the expulsion of Sallustius.¹⁵⁹ This is usually associated with the taxation dispute, which would at first glance suggest that Sallustius' expulsion should instead be dated to late 357 or early 358. But as Woudhuysen points out, Julian's language suggests that Sallustius had in fact *not yet* been expelled but was merely under threat of expulsion.¹⁶⁰ Even if this refers to the taxation dispute, Sallustius' expulsion could thus have occurred later (in which case the trial would have been the final straw in a long-running dispute). Even more straightforwardly, the *ὑπομνήματα* which Julian was unwilling to sign could simply be documents containing Florentius' desired ruling in the British embezzlement trial. The term had been used to refer to the decisions of a magistrate since the second century AD.¹⁶¹ Woudhuysen is correct to point out that parts of the event in Julian's letter sound like the taxation dispute, but others sound rather like the events of the trial. This also suggests that Sallustius may have in some way been involved in the latter although, just as with Paulus Catena, we cannot say this with any certainty.¹⁶²

Another chronological puzzle which needs solving is Libanius' suggestion that subsequent military action took place in the process of re-establishing the grain shipments, which took place in 359 according to Ammianus. Julian himself, who was a major source for both Libanius' and Ammianus' information, compresses the 358 and 359 campaigns into a single set of events, under the rubric of the 'second and third years of his campaign' (the mid-summer of 357–358 to that of 358–359 in the Attic calendar). Julian makes it quite clear that Florentius' proposed payment to the Salians and the Chamavi (to enable the passage of shipping) caused him to attack them and restore the shipments. This causes some difficulty, because on the initial reading, this would suggest that Julian places the restoration of shipments a year earlier than do Libanius and Ammianus. Recognition that Julian is describing several related events from his two-year campaign allows us to resolve this. The

¹⁵⁶ Allen and Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies' (n. 17, above), 164.

¹⁵⁷ Lib. Orat. 18.75.

¹⁵⁸ Lib. Orat. 18. 85–87.

¹⁵⁹ Jul. *Epist.* 4

¹⁶⁰ Woudhuysen, 'Fall of the House of Constantine' (n. 66, above), at 229, fn. 192.

¹⁶¹ *LSJ*, 'ὑπομνήμα'.

¹⁶² At least suggestive of this is his later leading role in the investigations which led to the convictions at Chalcedon. Amm. Marc. 22.3.1.

first attack against the Salians and Chamavi certainly took place in 358, but Julian's and Libanius' words could suggest that mopping-up operations also took place in 359. These may have been undertaken to suppress parts of the Salians and the Chamavi who had not accepted the nullification of payments, and attacked Julian as he brought shipments down the Rhine. Alternatively, Julian's and Libanius' words may simply imply that Rhine shipments were delivered by Julian in 358 as well as in 359. The second option is perhaps preferable, given the already established reliance of the lower Rhine on British grain. If so, it is possible that Ammianus has imposed a neat chronological order on these events through artificial separation of them, quite possibly inspired by Libanius' previous chronological separation of the shipments from the attack on the Salians and the Chamavi.

Whichever option we choose to solve either chronological puzzle, an unavoidable outcome is that Julian in his *Letter to the Athenians* (and possibly in his *Letter to Oribasius*) treated several events, chronologically separated by a year in Ammianus' writing, as directly related to one another: the Batavian campaign in 358, Florentius' attempted payment to the Salians and Chamavi that same year, and the restoration of shipments the subsequent year of 359, with their accompanying military action, the latter allegedly prompted by the embezzlement trial and the expulsion of Sallustius. This is our final piece in the puzzle, showing the link between the embezzlement trial and Florentius' attempted payment, thereby tying this payment to the *annona militaris*.

JULIAN'S ATTACK ON BATAVIA: AN ACT OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM

This seems to be confirmed by Ammianus' description of the 358 campaign. Upon arriving in Toxandria in the spring or summer of 358, Julian was met by a Salian delegation, who, though quite shocked that Julian had left winter quarters, offered to maintain peace and remain quiet 'as if in their own territory', provided no one should attack them (*pacem sub hac lege praetendens, ut quiescentes eos tamquam in suis, nec lacesseret quisquam nec vexaret*).¹⁶³ The Salians and Chamavi must by this point have blockaded the Rhine-Meuse delta in response to Julian's winter assault and his overruling of the superindiction. Julian's forces deceptively accepted these terms and offered the Salians gifts, before launching a surprise attack in which the Salians were defeated, forced to hand over hostages and property, and forced to become *dediticii*. Julian then moved similarly against the Chamavi.¹⁶⁴ Given the precise similarities between these events and those described in the *Letter to the Athenians*, the gifts which Ammianus describes seem likely to refer to the 2,000 lbs. of silver which had been arranged by Florentius (decried by Julian in terms with a fiscal connotation). The truth of the matter may simply be that Florentius proposed the 2,000lbs as a token concession after Julian's new, far more unfavorable terms had been offered to the Salians, to prevent simmering tensions on the Rhine from boiling over and to re-open the Rhine to shipping. The Salians were hardly in a position to refuse. If so, even this compromise clearly proved too much for Julian to accept. Ammianus portrays the Salians' offer as outrageous insolence, but this would have been a considerable concession by forces who had believed themselves to be legitimate recipients of state supplies, and by no means enemies of the state.

Even this seems not to have been enough to placate Julian, since, as the new chronological sequence established above suggests, the embezzlement trial was launched at some point after these events, possibly early in 359, if the date for the trial of Numerius is indicative. As

¹⁶³ Amm. Marc. 17.8.3–5.

¹⁶⁴ Amm. Marc. 17.8.3–5.

Jill Harries has pointed out, recourse to the emperor was the only means one had of preventing cases which could collapse for all manner of reasons from resulting in an automatic charge of *calumnia*, a false allegation.¹⁶⁵ This may well be the context which truly lay behind Florentius' handing of the decision to Julian, in the hope that he would see the pragmatic need to find in favor of the accused. Julian had, after all, presided over other such cases, as we know from the case of Numerius. In light of Julian's previous actions this makes some sense: Florentius may have hoped that giving Julian greater responsibilities would finally placate him. A lack of being trusted would, after all, later become one of his main complaints.¹⁶⁶ Instead, of being placated, if my reading is correct, Julian used this opportunity to further embarrass his Praetorian Prefect. It is quite possible, as I have suggested above, that someone present at Julian's court familiar with these affairs, Sallustius or Paulus Catena, could have had a hand in these proceedings. If this were true it would suggest yet more explicit foul play on Julian's part than that he merely exploited an opportunity opened by his investigation of the supply chain, but we can only ever speculate about this.

One final obstacle is Libanius' and Ammianus discussion of grain being brought overland, in Libanius' case allegedly by necessity for several years. At face value this seems to be confirmed by Ammianus, but Ammianus' language makes no mention of such necessity. Instead, Ammianus simply states that Julian was anxious to secure the grain supply for the campaign, the delivery of which was expected from Aquitaine and could not be anticipated until the start of the summer season in July. To gain the element of surprise, he says, Julian instead forced his soldiers to rely on *bucellatum*, hard tack, rather than their usual rations, circumventing any need to wait for delivery of the *annona*.¹⁶⁷ In light of the archaeological findings described above, Julian's decision to procure the grain from so far afield was extraordinary. As mentioned, this campaign was the first in which Julian's forces encountered major supply problems. It was probably Julian's obstinate refusal to pay the Salians and the Chamavi that had forced him to wait to procure his supplies in this inefficient way.¹⁶⁸ We can infer this from Libanius' statement that British shipping was forced to unload its cargo in Gallic coastal ports to be carried overland, the disputing of Libanius' chronology notwithstanding.¹⁶⁹ The ports in question must surely have been Boulogne and others in *Belgica Secunda*, the administration of which Julian had won after his refusal to implement Florentius' tax measures in order to pay the Chamavi.¹⁷⁰ This suggests that Julian launched his administrative coup to seize control of ports at which grain from Britain could be offloaded and taken to the Rhine via the Cologne road. Control of *Belgica Secunda* also gave Julian access to the highly productive estates on the Somme.

The moving of grain overland was thus, *contra* Libanius, a temporary measure, forced in response to the blockade. This makes far more sense than assuming that the longstanding method had been to bring grain overland from Aquitaine (as per Ammianus), or Libanius' suggestion of longer reliance on overland transport via Boulogne. It is true that some of the *annona* would have usually been sourced by such routes. Constantius's forces had previously received supplies from Aquitaine while stationed in Valence before setting out against the Alamanni in 354 (a reference Ammianus may be consciously recalling in his discussion of

¹⁶⁵ Jill Harries, *Law and Crime in the Late Roman World* (Cambridge, 2007), 22.

¹⁶⁶ *Epist. ad. ath.* 267–269.

¹⁶⁷ *Amm. Marc.* 17.8.1–2.

¹⁶⁸ Above, 20–21.

¹⁶⁹ *Lib. Orat.* 18.83.

¹⁷⁰ *Amm. Marc.* 17.1.

the 358 campaign).¹⁷¹ Supplying Julian's forces stationed in Paris in 358 by such means was one matter, but supplying the forces who must have been left to hold the Cologne Bay since 356 (or indeed, Senon, where Julian spent the winter in 356) via these routes was quite another. Minimum estimates for journeys between these locations via oxcart and riverine transport are indicative. By such means, the major military positions where Julian's forces were stationed on the Rhine in 356–358 (which must have included Cologne and Bonn and probably also already Xanten and Nijmegen) could be supplied in a quarter or less of the time from London via the Rhine than was required for similar journeys to these locations over land from Bordeaux or Boulogne.¹⁷²

That such overland transport was unnecessary, because Julian was acting in defiance of an agreement understood by all other involved parties, is emphasized by the Chamavi shock at his decision to attack them and their immediate concession to his demands.¹⁷³ Julian must, after all, have been keenly aware that the main danger which he actually faced was mutiny by his own troops. If Julian had simply paid up and maintained the status quo, grain shipments could simply have resumed as normal, allowing Julian to easily supply his troops for the next campaign against the Alamanni. Instead, Julian's starving troops found themselves unable to replenish their supplies from the unripe crops in Batavia and were pushed to the brink of revolt.¹⁷⁴ The consequences risked by failure to bring the Chamavi to heel were dire and it is hard to imagine that Julian would have acted as he did without being sure of victory. His efforts to prevent his soldiers from stealing grain from the Salians suggest that he expected imminent resupply.¹⁷⁵ He was ultimately proven correct; the Chamavi were easily caught off guard. Julian was able in a single stroke to force the Chamavi to abandon their claims and restock the cities on the lower Rhine plain at no cost, all the while discrediting Florentius, whose efforts to keep the *annona* on the move Julian could then misrepresent as an outrageous handout of taxpayers' money to the barbarians. Interpreting this set of events as a propaganda coup on Julian's part far better explains Florentius' protests to Constantius about Julian's overreach than Libanius' (and Julian's) claim that Florentius had made the traitorous decision to buckle to extortion.¹⁷⁶ Ammianus notes, with what looks like the ironic amusement typical of his writing, Florentius' 'happy' surprise arrival at Bingen to claim the credit, once the delivery of provisions to the lower Rhine plain had in fact been secured by Julian's force of arms:¹⁷⁷

*...ubi laeto quodam eventu, etiam Florentius praefectus apparuit subito, partem militum ducens, et commeatum perferens copiam, sufficientem usibus longis.*¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Amm. Marc. 14.10.1.

¹⁷² Calculations from Walter Scheidel and Elijah Meeks, 'ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World' <https://orbis.stanford.edu/#>

¹⁷³ Amm. Marc. 17.8.5.

¹⁷⁴ Amm. Marc. 17.9.1–7.

¹⁷⁵ Eunapius, *Fr.* 3.18.2. Lib. *Orat.* 18.87.

¹⁷⁶ See also Müller-Seidel, 'Die Usurpation Julians,' (n. 1, above), 230.

¹⁷⁷ Amm. Marc. 18.2.1 describes this as part of a series of preparations undertaken before the summer campaign season of 359, thus allowing us to interpret these activities as coming in the wake of the Batavian campaign.

¹⁷⁸ Amm. Marc. 18.2.4. Matthews, *Roman Empire* (n. 69, above), 90, reads this as a sincere expression of Florentius' loyalty, but it is clearly an example of Ammianus' frequent use of satire, on which more generally see Roger Rees, 'Ammianus Satiricus,' in *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and D. Hunt (London, 1999), 141–155 and Danuta Shanzer, 'Laughter and humour in the early medieval Latin west,' in *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Guy Halsall (Cambridge, 2004), 25–47, at 32–34. On Ammianus' literary style more generally, Barnes, *Ammianus* (n. 103, above); Kelly, *Ammianus* (n. 102, above).

...where by a happy stroke of fortune the prefect Florentius also appeared unexpectedly, leading a part of the forces and bringing a store of provisions sufficient to last a long time.

But that Florentius wanted to make his own, very real efforts known is understandable. As his predecessor Rufinus had learned only four years previously, the Praetorian Prefect was often the first one up against the wall when starving soldiers turned to mutiny.¹⁷⁹ This is not the only instance where defensive action emerges, perhaps lending further support to my earlier suggestion that Julian had spied an opportunity to embarrass Constantius in 357: it would appear that these efforts did not go unnoticed at the imperial court. In July 358, in the immediate wake of Julian's Batavian campaign, Constantius issued legislation in Rimini reminding his Praetorian Prefects that that no unauthorized parties should be in receipt of the *annona*.¹⁸⁰

This reading of the evidence makes much better sense of the confusing narrative as it survives to us. The conflict between the Chamavi and the Salians should probably be understood as a long-running factional struggle over access to the *annona*. Political struggles in *barbaricum* were often fought over access to the material benefits that the empire had to offer, all the more so between groups on the imperial frontiers. Such conflicts could even be instigated by the empire as part of its policy of frontier management.¹⁸¹ It was common for the losers to seek refuge in the empire, as the Salians had done.¹⁸² Perhaps this explains both the arrival of the Salians in Batavia in the later third century and their move into Toxandria in the fourth century. Zosimus' extremely confused narrative describes the Chamavi (or 'Quadi' as he calls them) driving the Salians into Toxandria from Batavia as a response to Julian's wider victories in Gaul and efforts to restore the grain shipments.¹⁸³ But Zosimus, looking back on these events from the sixth century, needed to rationalize how the Chamavi had come to be in Batavia immediately before Julian's campaigns. Zosimus is notorious for getting confused about and chronologically telescoping events in the west, but his identification that the Salian expulsion from Batavia was the cause of the conflict on the lower Rhine accords well with the sequence of events that has been outlined above.

Interpreting the conflict between the Chamavi and the Salians as a longer factional struggle over control of the *annona* and its benefits makes better sense of how both groups responded to Julian's campaign.¹⁸⁴ Our only detailed description of the military campaign in Batavia, preserved in fragments of Eunapius' *History*, shows that almost immediately upon Julian's entry into their territory, the Chamavi begged that he 'treat this land [like that of the Salians], as if it were his own'.¹⁸⁵ Libanius, although he does not name them, tells us that the Chamavi 'at last concurred with those who had already had recourse to peace [i.e., the Salians] and

¹⁷⁹ Amm. Marc. 14.10.3–5.

¹⁸⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 1.5.6; 1.5.7.

¹⁸¹ Elton, *Warfare* (n. 66, above), at 191; Peter Heather, 'The Late Roman Art of Client Management: Imperial Defence in the Fourth Century West,' in *The Transformation of Frontiers. From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians*, ed. Walter Pohl, Ian N. Wood and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 2001), 15–68.

¹⁸² Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above), at 123–25; Michael Kulikowski, *Imperial Tragedy. From Constantine's Empire to the Destruction of Roman Italy, AD 363–568* (London, 2019), at 85.

¹⁸³ Zos. 3.5–6. This can only be the Chamavi referenced in more contemporary sources. Philip Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' *Britannia* 15 (1984): 169–85, at 170; Ronald T. Ridley, *Zosimus: A New Translation with Commentary* (Sydney, 1982), 171. Several of these, including Julian. *Epist. ad. athen.* 279 and Amm. Marc. 17.12.1 mention Constantius' campaigns against the Quadi near to their descriptions of the Batavian campaign, which may explain Zosimus' typical confusion.

¹⁸⁴ Amm. Marc. 17.9.1.

¹⁸⁵ Eunap. *Fr.* 3.18.6. Cf. Zos, 3.7–8.

they came asking to receive the same treatment on the same terms'.¹⁸⁶ Seeing the Chamavi-Salian conflict as a factional fight over rights to the *annona* explains Julian's decision to also attack the Salians and receive them as *dediticii*.¹⁸⁷ For his aggrandizing strategy to succeed, *both* groups needed to be put in their place and denied the *annona*. The unfortunate consequence of this would have been to upset the delicate balancing of power on the frontier, the supporting of one faction over another, the granting of the *annona* to one versus the other, that would have been pursued by other imperial administrators. The crisis certainly would have required imperial intervention, if only to determine which faction had a right to what, but Julian used this as an opportunity to turn into a political controversy what was in fact the perfectly standard procedure of using *superindictiones* to allocate revenue to barbarian troops, discrediting Florentius in the process. This does require that we explain why Ammianus represented events differently than Julian and Libanius, without explicitly drawing a link between the Frankish presence on the Meuse and the taxation dispute, or directly mentioning the blockade which resulted from that dispute. This is straightforward enough: to explicitly highlight in such an account that the Frankish presence on the Meuse had a direct role in the cause of the taxation dispute and that the latter's outcome was what had prompted the Chamavi to establish a blockade on the Rhine would have been to admit too overtly to the normality and legitimacy of the arrangements which Julian threw into disarray. To simply avoid drawing any direct links between these events served far more effectively to mask the disruption which Julian had caused. The factional fight between the Salians and the Chamavi would be interesting to explore at greater length, but this is perhaps an issue beyond the scope of the available space left in this article.¹⁸⁸

THE AFTERMATH

In this final part of the article, I wish to propose that certain developments which took place in the later fourth century in the North Sea zone were driven at least in part by the sequence of events that I have just described. This argument's advantage is that it allows us to better understand phenomena which have hitherto received no satisfactory explanation: namely the high mobility evidenced by our written and archaeological sources for the late fourth- and fifth centuries in the North Sea, and emergence of Saxon piracy which accompanied it. Much of this part of my argument is ultimately speculative. But such speculation, part-and-parcel of any attempt to produce coherent historical narrative, is especially necessary for events concerning this part of the world in the late fourth and fifth centuries, for which our already meagre source base is slender about an especially contentious set of events.¹⁸⁹ What I offer is a defensible possibility, if by no means the only one, for how to integrate this lacunose source base with the archaeological evidence for socio-economic developments in the North Sea zone, and recent reassessments of how we should interpret that archaeological evidence. What I offer below does hinge upon acceptance of my re-reading above of the Batavian campaign, aspects of which remain highly debatable. But if this reading is correct, it offers us potentially vital insight into some of the most important events to affect the North Sea world in the fourth and fifth centuries, which would shape society and politics in that world for centuries to follow.

¹⁸⁶ Lib. *Orat.* 18.89.

¹⁸⁷ Amm. Marc. 17.8.1–5; Julian. *Epist. ad. athen.*; Zos. 3.7–8.

¹⁸⁸ I intend to address this in an ongoing monograph project.

¹⁸⁹ On this point see Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above), at 165–169. More generally, Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (Berlin 2010, [Los Angeles, 1942]) and Hayden White, 'Interpretation in History,' *New Literary History* 4:2 (1973). For overviews of the historiography of fourth- and fifth-century Britain and its relationship with the North Sea world see Guy Halsall, *Worlds of Arthur* (Oxford, 2013) and James M. Harland, *Ethnic Identity and the Archaeology of the aduentus Saxonum* (Amsterdam, 2021).

There is good reason to believe that the barbarians on the lower Rhine who had been responsible for blockading British grain shipments saw themselves as perfectly legally entitled to claim part of the contents of these shipments and that they simply acted to get paid what they were owed. Florentius had evidently thought that they should be. Our overwhelmingly pro-Julian sources make clear the discontent among the Gallic landholding class at the additional tax burden that this would have imposed. But tax cuts have always been an easy way to win political support in high places, especially for figures like Julian, more concerned with short-term expediency of policy decisions than their long-term consequences. There had been no need to attack the Salians and the Chamavi. Julian's Batavian campaign was nothing more than a propaganda coup, to be later wheeled out during his usurpation. Constantius' approval at the time of Julian's intervention need not impede this interpretation. That Constantius was willing to renege on an agreement made by Magnentius should hardly surprise us. That the attack was both unnecessary and convenient for Julian's own political ambitions need not mean, of course, that Julian's motivations were purely cynical—this was not the first time that Julian had criticized excessive taxation measures or embezzlement, nor would it be the last.¹⁹⁰ The thorough grounding in the norms of late antique *paideia* and ideals of the classical tradition which Julian possessed perhaps more than any other late Roman emperor did not lend itself to the notion that barbarians were to be negotiated with on an equal footing.¹⁹¹ When such strongly-held principles came into conflict with the arcane, cautious and slow-moving operations of the late Roman bureaucracy,¹⁹² tempers were sure to flare.

But Florentius had good reasons to advise maintaining the agreement.¹⁹³ According to Zosimus and Ammianus, Julian solved the immediate military problem caused by disrupting preexisting arrangements on the lower Rhine by pressing some of the defeated barbarians into the field army, thereby removing them from the region.¹⁹⁴ Multiple cohorts of Chamavi, Franks and Saxons appear in the fourth century in the East and likely participated in Julian's invasion of Persia.¹⁹⁵ But this was a solution that had been repeatedly employed by emperors campaigning in Batavia since no later than Constantius I.¹⁹⁶ The empire's more astute administrators had clearly understood that continuing to support those who remained in the region by keeping them supplied through the *annona* was the better way to suppress piracy on the lower Rhine. Tacitus in the *Germania* claims that the Batavians were neither 'insulted with tribute, nor does the tax farmer ruin them; immune from burdens and contributions and set apart for fighting purposes only, like weapons and arms, they are reserved for war.'¹⁹⁷ Of course, we cannot transpose the first-century legal situation onto the fourth century, but this shows that the empire's administrators had previously recognized that regions like Batavia had to be treated with caution (the aftershocks of the Batavian Revolt then surely still fresh in memory). Batavia's strategic position on the Rhine-Meuse delta afforded control of the flow of Roman products both up the Rhine as well as along the coasts of the North Sea. This is reflected in the archaeology of the region immediately east of the Rhine, which indicates

¹⁹⁰ Amm. Marc. 16.5.15; Julian. *Orat.* 1.21. Tougher, 'Reading between the lines,' (n. 154, above), at 26.

¹⁹¹ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above), at 45–57.

¹⁹² On which see Christopher Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

¹⁹³ On this point see also Woudhuysen, 'Fall of the House of Constantine' (n. 66, above), at 230–231.

¹⁹⁴ Zos., 3.8.

¹⁹⁵ *Not. Dig. Or.* 31.61, 32.37; Amm. Marc. 25.6.13–14. On these references see Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' (n. 183, above), 169–71.

¹⁹⁶ *Pan. Lat.* 6.5, 8.9; Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' (n. 183, above), 170–71.

¹⁹⁷ Tac. *Germ.* 29. Trans. Anderson Jr. 1995.

stability in the third century.¹⁹⁸ In areas such as the Elbe-Weser Triangle and southern Scandinavia, an upsurge in finds of Roman goods begins from the middle of the second century, especially in materials from the lower Rhine.¹⁹⁹ Basalt querns from the Eifel are found from here as far as southern Scandinavia.²⁰⁰ It is perhaps, then, not coincidental that the major votive deposits we encounter in the bogs of Eastern Jutland and Gotland, containing high quality Roman commodities and weaponry from the master smiths of northern Gaul, appear at this time.²⁰¹ Between the turn of the third century and the middle of the fourth century, societies all across the North Sea world evidence increased social stratification, increased delineation of property, the intensive occupation of high-status settlement sites such as hillforts and the appearance of prestigious settlements whose status was based on access to Roman trade. This reached its apogee in the fourth century.²⁰² Previous attempts to explain this have often simply referenced nebulous notions of Roman influence, or via unsubstantiated invocations of specific historical events, such as blaming the aftershocks of the Marcomannic wars.²⁰³ But these developments directly coincide with two transformations of substantial economic significance in the north-west, namely Britain's transition from being a net importer to exporter of agricultural surplus,²⁰⁴ and the initial establishment under Septimius Severus of the *annona militaris*, which then became institutionalized under the Tetrarchy by the end of the third century.²⁰⁵ The formation of the Britain-Rhine tax-spine is a logical impetus for the social transformation that we witness in the Netherlands, northern Germany and Scandinavia, even if we cannot reconstruct the precise mechanisms which enabled its wealth to reach the periphery as far as Scandinavia. It might even have been the impetus for the formation of the Frankish confederacy, which also appears in our sources towards the end of the third century.²⁰⁶

No emperor ever campaigned on the lower Rhine between Julian and Magnus Maximus in the 380s. One would expect campaigns by subsequent emperors to appear even in the somewhat sparse textual record for the later fourth century, so, assuming that this absence of evidence is meaningful, any treaty arrangements in that time must have been on the terms which Julian arranged before he departed east to confront Constantius. This would have finally cut off access to the *annona's* wealth. Archaeology detects powerful economic shockwaves along the entire North Sea coast in the second half of the fourth century. Notions of a deserted landscape once inspired by Bede's claims of *angulus desertus* are now

¹⁹⁸ Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above), at 126 and 129.

¹⁹⁹ Ulla Lund Hansen, *Römischer Import im Norden*, (Copenhagen, 1987), 244 confirms the Rhineland connections; Both Hauke Jöns 'Überlegungen zu Transport- und Kommunikationswegen des 1. Jahrtausends im nordwestdeutschen Nordseeküstengebiet', in *Historia archaeologica: Festschrift für Heiko Steuer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Sebastian Brather (Berlin, 2009), 217–26, as well as the comprehensive survey of a wide range of products found in Heiko Steuer, „Germanen“ *aus der Sicht der Archäologie. Neue Thesen zu einem alten Thema* (Berlin, 2021), 580–601, 1104–37 confirm this, and alter the chronological picture to suggest a general second-century upsurge.

²⁰⁰ Steuer, „Germanen“ (n. 156, above); Helena Hamerow, *Early Medieval Settlements* (Oxford, 2002), 183.

²⁰¹ Lars Jørgensen, Birge Storgaard and Lone Gebauer Thomsen, *The Spoils of Victory. The North in the Shadow of the Roman Empire* (Copenhagen, 2003).

²⁰² Lund Hansen, *Römischer Import* (n. 199, above), 250–51; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above), 125–31 and references in the latter.

²⁰³ See the contributions in Jørgensen *et al.* 2003, *Spoils of Victory*, and criticisms of the shallowness of interpretation made in the review of the same volume by Fraser Hunter, 'Review of The Spoils of Victory. The North in the Shadow of the Roman Empire', *Britannia* 36 (2005): 519–20.

²⁰⁴ Allen and Lodwick, 'Agricultural Strategies,' (n. 17, above), 173.

²⁰⁵ Mitthof, *Annona Militaris* (n. 4, above), at 65–81.

²⁰⁶ See above, n. 9.

untenable,²⁰⁷ but northern Schleswig-Holstein and southern Jutland nevertheless suffered a drastic reduction in settlements in this period.²⁰⁸ The important terp settlement of Feddersen Wierde (Cuxh.) shows a marked reduction in dateable Roman finds and a reorientation toward finds in the Elbe-Weser triangle.²⁰⁹ Some settlements in southern Kehdingen on the lower Elbe were abandoned at the same time.²¹⁰ It is also only after Julian's mention of Saxons fighting in the war against Magnentius, as the 'the most warlike peoples on the shores of the western sea,' that they enter the popular imaginary as North Sea pirates at all,²¹¹ after which they regularly appear in our sources as a constant North Sea threat.²¹² Prior to this, the only certain reference to them (apart from their disputed appearance in Ptolemy's *Geographia*) appears in the *Verona List*, where the Saxons are associated with the Chamavi and the Heruli.²¹³ Saxon raiding after the 350s, though frequent, was never a serious threat to imperial rule in the north-western provinces,²¹⁴ and it is exceedingly unlikely that piracy involving Saxons threatened Britain substantially before the fifth century, not least in light of reassessments of the Saxon Shore fortresses.²¹⁵ We should not imagine the seafaring conquerors of early medieval heroic literature. A better analogy would be the destitute Somali fishermen on the Gulf of Aden, forced by the ravages of colonialism and capitalism into piracy on one of the world's busiest modern shipping lanes.²¹⁶

Many of the soldiers battling these pirates would have come from the same regions.²¹⁷ People from the Saxon homelands had long served in the Roman army, especially in northern Gaul, and continued to do so after the 350s.²¹⁸ At exactly the same time as Saxon piracy took off,

²⁰⁷ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* 1.15

²⁰⁸ K. H. Willroth, *Untersuchungen zur Besiedlungsgeschichte der Landschaften Angeln und Schwansen von der älteren Bronzezeit bis zum frühen Mittelalter: Eine Studie zur Chronologie, Chorologie und Siedlungskunde* (Neumünster, 1992), 434; M. Gebühr, "Angulus desertus?" *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 11 (1998): 43–85; A.S. Dobat, "'Angulus non desertus!': Kontinuität und Zentralität in der jüngeren Eisenzeit Südschleswigs," *Arkeologi i Slesvig/Archäologie in Schleswig* 11 (2006): 113–136; Hamerow, *Settlements* (n. 157, above), 109–10.

²⁰⁹ J. Schuster, *Die Buntmetallfunde der Grabung Feddersen Wierde. Chronologie – Chorologie – Technologie*. Feddersen Wierde 6 (Oldenburg, 2006), 107–108, fig. 18; 172–73.

²¹⁰ I. Eichfeld and D. Nösler, 'Bauern, Händler, Seefahrer: Ein neu entdeckter Handelsplatz des 1. Jahrtausends n. Chr. an der südlichen Niederelbe,' *Sächsische Leute und Länder: Benennung und Lokalisierung von Gruppenidentitäten im ersten Jahrtausend*, ed. Melanie Augstein and Matthias Hardt (Wendeburg, 2019), 183–200, at 184.

²¹¹ Julian. *Orat.* 1.,

²¹² Amm. Marc. 27.8.5; 28.5.1; *Pan. Lat.* 12.5.2. Claudian, *Carm.* Much of the evidence that these attacks specifically threatened Britain has been fiercely contested, chiefly though not exclusively on palaeographical grounds. Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' (n. 183, above).

²¹³ *Laterculus Veronensis*; Flierman, *Saxon Identities* (n. 9, above), at 27.

²¹⁴ Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' (n. 183, above); A. F. Pearson, 'Barbarian Piracy and the Saxon Shore: A Reappraisal', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 24:1 (2005): 73–88; A. F. Pearson, 'Piracy in Late Roman Britain: A Perspective from the Viking Age,' *Britannia* 39 (2006), 337–353. Most recently and importantly, John F. Drinkwater, 'The Saxon Shore Reconsidered', *Britannia* 54 (2023): 275–303, which proposes that an increased threat can only truly be demonstrated around the career of Stilicho.

²¹⁵ Pearson, 'Barbarian Piracy,' (n. 214, above); Pearson, 'Piracy in Late Roman Britain,' (n. 214, above); Bartholomew, 'Fourth-Century Saxons,' (n. 183, above); Drinkwater, 'Saxon Shore,' (n. 214, above).

²¹⁶ Nicholas W. Stephenson Smith, *Colonial Chaos in the Southern Red Sea. A History of Violence from 1830 to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2021), 161–77.

²¹⁷ Amm. Marc. 20.1.1–3, 28.5.4;

²¹⁸ The evidence for circular migration in the Saxon homelands tied to Roman service is vast. See especially Horst Wolfgang Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde des 4. bis 5. Jahrhunderts: zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire. Studien zur Chronologie und Bevölkerungsgeschichte* (Munich, 1974). Especially noteworthy examples of this evidence are the famous finds from Fallward and Feddersen Wierde. A fine recent example is the trading post at Freiburg on the lower Elbe, at which were found multiple military crossbow brooches, a solidus of Magnentius minted at Trier and a Hawkes and Dunning 1961 type IB belt buckle, a late fourth

the weapons and armaments produced in Jutland became almost indistinguishable from those produced in the empire.²¹⁹ Some actors must evidently have chosen both paths at different stages in their careers, turning the skills which they had gained in the Roman army to brigandage when the moment suited (and vice versa).²²⁰ Such choices need imply nothing about these soldiers' loyalty (or lack thereof) to the Roman army. Outdated narratives about the existence of a 'barbarian' fifth column in the late Roman army are misplaced,²²¹ as are notions about the existence of 'Germanic', anti-Roman ethnic solidarity.²²² These varying choices simply represent soldiers putting their skills to good use. Perhaps Julian's campaigns, against what he had alleged were seafaring brigands, helped to cement the association we see develop in the later fourth century between barbarians from the lower Rhine and piracy, once peoples from northern *Germania* who had served with Magnentius were forced to resort to violence to secure the means for their existence.

Julian's self-aggrandizing attack on the lower Rhine thus, if my reading of this evidence is correct, offers a vital context for the later migration of peoples from northern *barbaricum* to Britain. Our only detailed contemporary source for that migration, Gildas, tells us that the Saxons gained access to the *annona* following typical legal mechanisms for the recruitment of federate troops.²²³ The ability to demonstrate the longstanding integration of people on the lower Rhine into the *annona* system and its ties to Britain gives us an invaluable window onto the deeper history of this process.

CONCLUSIONS

Julian's Batavian campaign took place in a region of profound strategic importance, whose control was vital to the effective provisioning of the Rhine army. The idea that a figure like Florentius would cede this control to hostile barbarian groups is an absurdity, which reveals Julian's propagandizing for what it is. Instead, we can read Florentius' actions as an example of exactly the kind of careful frontier management in which we know the empire's more astute administrators were engaged.²²⁴ Furthermore, it was precisely the regularity of the mechanisms of such management, and the familiarity which both the imperial administration and their barbarian beneficiaries had with these mechanisms that enabled Julian to disrupt them for his own political aggrandizement.

century type of military buckle manufactured and primarily used in Britain. Eichfeld and Nösler, 'Bauern, Händler, Seefahrer,' (n. 210, above), 186–91. For a reconfirmation of the buckle's military associations, see Harland, *Ethnic Identity* (n. 189, above), at 228–30.

²¹⁹ M. Biborski and J. Ilkjær, *Illerup Ådal 11: Die Schwerter* (Aarhus, 2006), 392–93.

²²⁰ The apparent goal of the Saxon raiders who were slaughtered in 370 in an ambush after their surrender to the *magister peditum* Severus was enlistment in the army. Amm. Marc. 28.5.

²²¹ Elton, *Warfare* (n. 66, above), at 138–45; Kulikowski, 'Constantine,' (n. 5, above), 367.

²²² Halsall, 'Two Worlds Become One,' (n. 5, above); Matthias Friedrich and James M. Harland, eds., *Interrogating the 'Germanic': A Category and its Use in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Berlin, 2021).

²²³ *igitur intromissi in insulam barbari, ueluti militibus et magna, ut mentiebantur, discrimina pro bonis hospitibus subituris, impetrant sibi annonas dari: quae multo tempore impertitae clausurunt, ut dicitur, canis faucem.* Gildas, *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* 23.5. On which see Ian N. Wood, 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels,' in *Gildas: New Approaches*, ed. Michael Lapidge and David Dumville, (Cambridge, 1984), 1–25, at 20–21, and James M. Harland, 'Rethinking Ethnicity and "Otherness" in Early Anglo-Saxon England,' *Medieval Worlds* 5 (2017): 117–49, at 122–25.

²²⁴ On which see Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations* (n. 5, above); Heather, 'Late Roman Client Management,' (n. 181, above).

It would be pushing the evidence too far to suggest that Julian's actions bore sole responsibility for the instability and mobility we witness in the North Sea in the late fourth century and beyond, let alone to suggest that Julian was responsible for 'creating' the Saxons. But, if my interpretation of Julian's actions in the late 350s stands up to scrutiny, a logical conclusion that follows would be that the loss of access to the large volumes of surplus from Britain to which these regions had previously been accustomed and upon which they had become dependent must have had drastic effects, facilitating such processes. In this respect, Julian's allegation of embezzlement in order to discredit his political rivals, and the realignment of military supply priorities which it served to obscure, represents yet another example of the characteristic feature of Julian's approach to rule, as highlighted by the more revisionist assessments of his reign.²²⁵ Julian was a tactical genius, able to confound his enemies in political and military conflict, and an idealist who took drastic measures in the name of strongly-held broader principles. But the haste with which he resorted to his idealistic measures could come at the cost of a stability and security hard won by the empire's more prudent bureaucrats.

²²⁵ e.g. Kulikowski, *Imperial Tragedy* (n. 182, above), at 26–32. For a summary see Stefan Rebenich and Hans-Ulrich Wiemer, 'Introduction: Approaching Julian,' in *A Companion to Julian the Apostate* (n. 1, above), 1–37.