

Introduction

1.1. Communication, Power, and the Fragmentation of the Ancient World

In 310 C.E., the emperor Constantine hurried an army south from the Roman Empire's Rhine frontier. He was on his way to disrupt one of the many political coups that troubled the early fourth century, but first he and his soldiers had to reach Arles and Marseille, two cities along the Mediterranean coast of Gaul (an area that covered what is now France, the Low Countries, and parts of western Germany and Switzerland). To move south, the troops marched by road halfway down Gaul's length, until they came to *Cabillonum*—Chalon-sur-Saône, in modern Burgundy. Chalon stood at the intersection of important road and riverine networks; there, Constantine's men embarked into boats, and floated down the Saône and Rhône rivers to the coast. Even with soldiers' rapid marching speeds, the full journey likely required at least fifteen days, a testimony to the slow pace of "rapid" interventions in antiquity.¹ After dealing with the usurper in southern Gaul—his own father-in-law—Constantine led his troops back north toward the Rhine. It may have been on this return trip that the emperor witnessed the startling celestial vision that led him, in later years, to adopt the Christian faith.²

If this particular journey involved both the high drama of violent court politics and the seeds of epochal religious change, there was nothing out of the ordinary about a trip spanning the length of Gaul, or even greater distances. Fourth-century Gaul's roads and rivers were busy with movement, and the travelers who used those routes connected Gaul to distant points across the entire Roman world. A military officer serving at Trier might be a native of the Balkans, be married to an Italian wife (perhaps wearing fine fabrics from Asia), drink wine from Palestine, eat off pottery fired in Africa, and discuss ideas from Jerusalem with a comrade from Britain. Indeed, one accurate way to think of the Roman Empire is as a giant network of political, social, economic, and cultural connections. That network linked millions of human

beings from Britain to Mesopotamia; moreover, some of those connections branched still further, deep into northern Europe, the upper Nile basin, and central or south Asia—regions far beyond the reach of imperial administrators.

Over the fifth and sixth centuries, however, that interconnected world fragmented. We see evidence of its passing in many accounts, including some from Gaul. For example, Caesarius, a young man from Chalon—where Constantine's troops had embarked on boats in 310—also moved south to the Mediterranean coast, late in the fifth century.³ This time, however, such movement was much less typical. For one thing, the journey south now crossed a political border between two barbarian kingdoms, ruled by Burgundians and Visigoths. Years later, after Caesarius had become bishop of the southern Gallic city of Arles, citizens of Arles accused him of plotting to hand the city over to the Burgundians, because he had come from their territory. Back north, within the Burgundian kingdom, a monastery in the Jura Mountains lost access to local salt supplies because of violent Alamannic raids. When the local abbot sent two monks south to the Mediterranean coast to purchase salt, other monks grumbled that the abbot had assigned to the travelers "not so much exile, as a foreign death."⁴ Consequently, the monks were surprised when the travelers returned safely. Constantine's old route south now bridged different worlds.

At first glance, explaining such a dramatic breakdown in traditional communication patterns might seem straightforward. Between the lifetimes of the emperor Constantine and bishop Caesarius, Gallo-Roman communities like Chalon had to weather the transformations now often described as the "Fall of the Roman Empire" (or, more precisely, its western half). First, in the second half of the fifth century, the beleaguered imperial regime lost effective control over Roman Gaul; the area around Chalon transitioned to control by barbarian Burgundian kings, while other warlords seized the rest of Gaul. Later, in the 530s, a coalition of Merovingian Frankish princes destroyed the Burgundian kingdom, and divided its territory. Over several generations, regime change featuring potential or actual violence became a recurring part of life. Is it any wonder that so many customary ties between communities broke down, given such instability? Not only historians, but also anthropologists, archaeologists, and scholars of communication theory have produced innumerable studies on human movement and the social

¹ *Panegyrici Latini* 6.18, pp. 581-2 (= C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini. Introduction, Translation, and Historical Commentary with the Latin Text of R. A. B. Mynors* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994]). The trip-duration estimate follows *ORBIS, The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World* (orbis.stanford.edu ; accessed August 5, 2020), using a journey from Cologne to Marseille at military marching and river-transport speeds. For Cologne as a likely jumping-off point for Constantine's march south, see Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, fn. 60, p. 237; fn. 80, p. 244.

² On Constantine's vision, see Peter Weiss, trans. by A. R. Birley, "The Vision of Constantine," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 16 (2003): 237-59, and pp. 247-50 on the date and context within Constantine's movements across Gaul.

³ See Section 3.2.

⁴ *Vita sancti Eugendi abbatis* 158, BHL 2665 (i.e., *Vita patrum* 3.17): François Martine, *Vie des pères du Jura*, Sources Chrétiennes 142 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968), p. 408.

dynamics of communications changes.⁵ Across multiple fields, scholars have emphasized important links between communication and power. Writing on colonial New England, for example, Katherine Grandjean has argued:

Travel and communications, in fact, provide uncannily strong barometers of power. Who could travel where, who controlled the routes winding through the woods, who dictated what news might be sent—These things tell as much about power and geographic authority as any deed or document.⁶

Yet even if power and communication are intimately related, explaining precisely *how* the end of imperial rule altered communication networks turns out not to be straightforward at all. On the one hand, it is clear that late antiquity saw not only the fragmentation of imperial political unity but also the eventual unraveling of the ancient Mediterranean economic order. Synthetic archaeological studies have demonstrated beyond a doubt that the Mediterranean world's overall socio-economic trajectory between 300 and 700 was toward de-integration.⁷ Almost everywhere, by the end of that period, there was less material wealth, less social complexity, and less robust interaction with distant regions. That process, however, does not seem to reflect any single cause, but rather numerous contingent factors, including barbarian wars, plague, changing social structures, shrinking demand and buying power, and environmental change. Declining economic integration also followed different patterns in separate regions, over different time-scales. For example, the economy of much of Roman Britain seems to have collapsed, quickly and dramatically, in the early fifth century—right as major political turmoil began to threaten the western provinces.⁸ In Roman Africa, by contrast, a once-robust ceramic export industry dwindled over many generations and was gone by about 700, surviving the Vandal invasion of the fifth century and even staying somewhat brisk for decades after the end of direct imperial rule.⁹ Some late antique micro-economies were highly sensitive to political change, or even contracted before the

worst political disruptions; others appear to have been far more resilient—at least for a while. There is therefore no uniform explanation for the array of changes involved in the disintegration of the ancient Mediterranean economic and social order.

We can find similar diversity even within a single region. Written sources from Gaul offer many examples of ongoing long-range connections after the end of imperial rule, in contrast with anecdotes (like those cited earlier) that suggest a dramatic erosion of distant social ties. In 2001, Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer described post-imperial Gaul as a region that did not “become an isolated cultural backwater, separate from the rest of the Mediterranean world.” To support that claim, Mathisen and Shanzer noted several examples:

In the early sixth century some of [Gaul's] bishops looked to the Pope at Rome as a source of guidance and authority ... Some of her barbarian rulers sought, and received, patronage further afield, in Byzantium. Relics were imported from Jerusalem and Constantinople ... Golden church plate is said to have traveled (with some mishaps on the way) from Byzantium to Lyon.¹⁰

Such examples highlight the paradoxical complexity of late antique social experience. How are we to reconcile such long-range mobility with the Jura monks' complaint that a journey to the Mediterranean coast would bring “not so much exile, as a foreign death?” And why—to borrow Mathisen and Shanzer's language—did “some ... bishops” and “some ... barbarian rulers”—but not others—benefit from such ties? Some of Gaul's late antique communication networks withered while others did not, all against a backdrop of ongoing political instability. Just how, then, did the fragmentation of the Roman Empire change social ties across local and regional communities? In fifth and sixth-century Gaul, did political and military developments largely determine the fate of communication networks, or did other factors—social, economic, or cultural dynamics—affect networks quietly, but more profoundly?

To address those questions, this book closely studies the evidence for changing social networks in a small but strategic corner of eastern Gaul. It uses a synthetic approach, considering power and communication not only at the level of rival kings, but at lower social levels as well. For one (still relatively high) example, ‘communication as power’ aptly suits the Gallo-Roman aristocratic competition for social influence in late antique Gaul, even under barbarian kings. Moreover, even political changes might have affected many kinds of movement, not just those of an explicitly political nature. Indeed, part of communication history's versatility is its ability to embrace all manner of movements, whether of persons, goods,

⁵ See e.g. Alexander A. Bauer and Anna S. Agbe-Davies, eds., *Social Archaeologies of Trade and Exchange: Exploring Relationships among People, Places, and Things* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010). For an older, classic example, see Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950). Innis, a pioneering figure in the Toronto school of communications, argued that use of different communications media influenced historical empires' characteristics and stability.

⁶ Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontier in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 7.

⁷ Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean 400-800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 693-824, especially pp. 708-20; Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce A.D. 300-900* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 25-119, especially pp. 115-19. For a recent historiographical interpretation of these and earlier works, see Bonnie Effros, “The Enduring Attraction of the Pirenne Thesis,” *Speculum* 92.1 (2017): 184-208.

⁸ For orientation and literature, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 306-9.

⁹ For orientation and literature, see Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 708-13.

¹⁰ Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, eds., *Society and Culture in Late Antique Gaul: Revisiting the Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 2-3.

germs, or ideas. Recent decades have seen publications on many aspects of late antique movement, such as exile, the spread of saints' cults, the distribution of books, news dissemination, intelligence gathering across the imperial frontiers, and pilgrimage.¹¹ For the present study, I have defined communication as broadly as possible, as any act of human movement between communities.¹² Here, communication might involve a bishop setting out for a church council, a rampaging army, a princess taking her dowry to a nearby kingdom, a spreading plague, boatmen shipping a load of cooking-pots downriver for sale, or a cultured aristocrat sending his Latin poems for review by a distant correspondent. Such examples again illustrate that post-Roman Gaul's communication networks experienced a mix of continuity and robust activity, along with disruption.

The tension between disruption and continuity has often divided scholars of late antiquity. Many traditional interpretations for the end of Roman rule pointed to barbarian outsiders who overwhelmed a supposedly enervated society or failing state.¹³ Then, in 1971, Peter Brown changed everything; his small book *The World of Late Antiquity* presented a colorful vision of the late Roman world, dominated not so much by wars and invaders as by philosophers, mystics, heretics, and

artists.¹⁴ Brown revealed late antiquity as a time of spiritual and intellectual vigor, not decline, and invited a new generation of scholarship that privileged cultural, social, and intellectual histories. Looking back, it is important to recall that Brown's book was a valuable corrective rather than an outright rejection of earlier approaches to the period. As Brown cautioned in 1971:

A history of the Late Antique world that is all emperors and barbarians, soldiers, landlords and tax-collectors would give as colourless and as unreal a picture of the quality of the age, as would an account devoted only to the sheltered souls, to the monks, the mystics, and the awesome theologians of that time.¹⁵

Brown's intellectual heirs never entirely forgot late antiquity's men of violence, but they often adopted a radically reductionistic view of political change's long-term significance.

In this new century, however, other scholars have returned to themes of military and political disruption of a crumbling ancient order.¹⁶ This renewed interest surely reflects the contemporary West's increasingly uncertain position in global affairs; pressing modern concerns also have fueled a growing scholarly conversation about environmental change in late antiquity. Kyle Harper's *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (a title leaving little room for unblemished continuity) argues forcefully that ecological and human factors acted synergistically in the rise and then "the undoing of one of history's most conspicuous civilizations."¹⁷ Whether scholars describe a "fall," the "end of civilization," or a civilization's "undoing," ruin and collapse are making a comeback in late antique scholarship—despite decades of careful research into late antique cultural continuities.

As contradictory as such interpretations might seem, they appear more compatible if we step back from the limited viewpoint of late Roman studies, and adopt the global perspective of interdisciplinary scholarship in "collapse studies." From the Harappans to the Late Bronze Age Mycenaeans or the Classic Maya, many societies have undergone profound changes that some, at least, have described as social collapse. The term *collapse* is loaded, and notoriously difficult to define well, but one recent overview of collapse literature recognizes that most working definitions involve elements of "the fairly rapid ending of states ... which itself can involve fragmentation into smaller units, simplification of political and social systems, change in urban settings, redistribution of population in the landscape, and changes in ideology made

¹¹ For the themes listed here, see e.g.: Jonathan P. Conant, "Europe and the African Cult of Saints, circa 350-900: An Essay in Mediterranean Communications," *Speculum* 85 (2001): 1-46; Carlo Bertelli, "The Production and Distribution of Books in Late Antiquity" in Richard Hodges and William Bowden, eds., *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) pp. 41-60; A. D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, UK & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John F. Matthews, "Hostages, Philosophers, Pilgrims and the Diffusion of Ideas in the Late Roman Mediterranean and Near East" in F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) pp. 29-49; E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire, AD 312-460* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Beyond those themes, many other works are of note, including: Mark Handley, *Dying on Foreign Shores: Travel and Mobility in the Late-Antique West*. JRA Supplementary Series 86 (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2011); Linda Ellis and Frank L. Kidner, eds., *Travel, Communication and Geography in Late Antiquity: Sacred and Profane* (Aldershot, U.K. and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

¹² This parallels definitions used in (e.g.) Michael McCormick, "Byzantium on the Move: Imagining a Communications History," in Ruth Macrides, ed., *Travel in the Byzantine World: Papers from the Thirty-fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000* (Aldershot, UK, & Burlington, VT: Ashgate/Variorum, 2002) pp. 3-29; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*; Grandjean, *American Passage*.

¹³ The classic study is of course Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (1776-1788). Arnold H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964. Reprinted, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), influentially portrayed the late Roman state as bloated, the imperial tax burden as slowly erosive, and the population's willingness to produce needed resources for the central regime as minimal. Others, sometimes motivated by nationalist views, saw Germanic barbarians as less disruptive, not as despoilers of a decadent world but as responsible heirs of the imperial inheritance; for example, see Alfons Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization*, condensed by Erna Patzelt and translated by N. G. Beard and Nadine Marshall (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.; London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1937).

¹⁴ Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971; repr., New York: Norton, 1989).

¹⁵ Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, p. 9.

¹⁶ For key examples, see: Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 292.

visible in architecture and the arts.”¹⁸ These elements certainly were part of the late Roman fragmentation. Without wanting either to engage deeply here with the enormous literature on collapse, or to oversimplify it too much, I would dare to sum up what stand out to me as its three most relevant general insights. First: collapse happens; it is a recurring and normal part of the human experience, and unfortunately it often involves massive disruption and real suffering for many (but not necessarily all) people in society. Second: nonetheless, resilience—what scholars of late antiquity usually label *continuity*—is a regular feature of almost every known historical case of collapse. Many people respond to collapse as active agents, not just as passive victims of historical forces. Finally, most collapse processes are far too complex to admit monocausal explanations, or even to allow accurate but short, one-sentence interpretations. Rather, understanding collapse requires detailed engagement with many local contexts, in order to discover how broad macro-level changes interacted with local, more limited factors.

Those three points have guided this book’s investigation of changing communication networks in late antique Gaul. I have assumed that we can acknowledge the significance of violent regime change and economic decline, without forgetting the rich lessons learned by cultural and social historians since 1971. We should expect to write narratives embracing both cultural continuity and violent political-military collapse. An accurate picture of late antique communication networks, then, must accept both connection and disruption, both the withering of old ties and the persistence of others, or even the development of unprecedented new connections. Most of all, we need a longitudinal view that explains which connections or disruptions had the greatest influence on social experience, when, and why. Finally, to allow for a close level of detail, we need to ground ourselves in a precise geographic and/or social context, preferably one with connections that illuminate a broader area as well.

1.2. Scope and Methodologies

With those needs in mind, this book documents and explains the changing communication horizons of several adjacent communities in central-eastern Gaul. Today, their former territories lie in southeastern Bourgogne (Burgundy) and southern Champagne, in France; to be more exact, the area roughly corresponds to the French *départements* of Saône-et-Loire, Côte-d’Or, and all but the northern third of Haute-Marne.¹⁹ In late antiquity, however, and indeed throughout classical antiquity, these were the lands of two ancient tribal groupings, the *Aedui* and *Lingones*. Below the provincial level, Roman administration in

Gaul maintained such old Iron Age territorial groupings as a basic unit for organizing the landscape. These units were the *civitates* (singular *civitas*), essentially an urban administrative center with surrounding secondary communities and rural lands, somewhat like the large counties of western American states. For the Aeduians and Lingones (as I shall call them), the respective *civitas* centers were the cities of *Augustodunum* (now Autun, in Saône-et-Loire) and *Andemantunum* (now Langres, in Haute-Marne).²⁰

In this study, I explore how connections within these territories and to the world beyond changed over the course of the “long” fifth century, from about 395 to 550 C.E. I also consider *why* things changed, and whether violent political tensions or other factors were more responsible for mutations in local social networks. Political control of these communities changed many times, often violently, as Roman, Burgundian, Alaman, and Frankish warlords strove to rule the region. These cities’ histories are rich in details relevant to the power-and-communication dynamic.

Despite its tight geographic scope, a focus on these cities offers numerous advantages for a communications history. Gaul’s surviving written sources are among the richest from late antiquity. Today, the region also boasts an extensive and accessible corpus of published archaeological and numismatic data. That diversity of available evidence—rare for many other parts of the former Roman world—opens the door for fruitful interdisciplinary scholarship. Within Gaul, the Aeduan and Lingon communities’ geographic position, and their underlying topography and hydrography, make them a strategic choice for a communications-focused study. Much of the scholarship on late antique communication addresses movement across the Mediterranean itself, or in the hinterlands of great coastal centers such as Arles and Marseille. My study area’s deep inland location offers a window onto different patterns of communication. That is not to say that these communities have little to teach us about long-distance travel in the Roman world. Together, Aeduan and Lingon lands bridged three of Gaul’s major watersheds, facilitating movements from the Mediterranean into Gaul’s northwestern and northern extremities.²¹ For centuries, even before the coming of the Romans to Gaul, Aeduan

¹⁸ Guy D. Middleton, *Understanding Collapse: Ancient History and Modern Myths* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 18. Middleton’s book offers a useful and recent orientation to the extensive literature on collapse (especially pp. 1-50 and pp. 339-366).

¹⁹ Following France’s national regional reformation of 2016, these *départements* now fall within the regions Bourgogne-Franche-Comté and Grand-Est.

²⁰ I provide more background on each community in Sections 2.1 and 4.1. However, for an overview of these cities’ histories and sources see Brigitte Beaujard et al., *Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle*, vol. 4, *Province ecclésiastique de Lyon (Lugdunensis Prima)* (Paris: de Boccard, 1986). See also Carole L. Crumley and William H. Marquardt, eds., *Regional Dynamics: Burgundian Landscapes in Historical Perspective* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1987), especially the following contributions: Carole L. Crumley and Paul R. Green, “Environmental Setting,” pp. 19-40; Jason E. Dowdle, “Road Networks and Exchange Systems in the Aeduan *Civitas*, 300 B.C.-A.D. 300,” pp. 265-294; Paul MacKendrick, “The Romans in Burgundy,” pp. 431-446; Walter E. Berry, “Southern Burgundy in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,” pp. 447-608 (*sic*). For the Aeduan communities, see also the excellent but unpublished dissertation of Michel Kasprzyk, “Les cités des Éduens et de Chalon durant l’antiquité tardive,” 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Université de Bourgogne, 2005).

²¹ Crumley and Green, “Environmental Setting” (in Crumley and Marquardt, *Regional Dynamics*).



Fig. 1. Map of early 6th-century Gaul

and Lingon territories were at the heart of one of Europe's great north-south transport routes.²² Understanding how well movements along that route weathered late antiquity's political turmoil—and why—is no small gain for communication history. Illuminating Aeduan and Lingon communication patterns, then, can also illuminate the history of a much more extensive area.

Even at a local level, the “cities”—urban spaces—at the heart of *civitates* were not so much separate entities cut off from surrounding rural lands, but instead were integrated parts of a continuum of activity across the entire territory.²³ Movement, communication and competition occurred within these territorial units. The late antique Christianization of Gallo-Roman society, however, led to some changes in the *civitas* structure. Christian ecclesiastical organization generally followed the urban-centric secular organization of territory, so that bishops and *civitates* came to be closely associated. The eventual proliferation of bishoprics in more and more communities, the increasing prominence of episcopal leadership in Gallo-Roman society, and the general decline in importance of traditional urban councils all led to a multiplication of *civitates*.²⁴ By 540, therefore, the once-unified Aeduan *civitas* consisted of three separate *civitates*, administered from *Augustodunum*/Autun, *Cabillonum*/Chalon-sur-Saône, and *Matisco*/Mâcon. For convenience, throughout this study I have used “Aeduan” as a catchall to describe these three communities *en bloc*, but in cases where usage matters I employ more precise language. To the northeast, Lingon territory remained united under the nominal

administration of Langres, but—as we shall see—in reality social capital and power moved about the *civitas* over time. *Divio*/Dijon came to play an increasingly dominant role as the unofficial Lingon social center.

To illustrate those geographic contexts: the Rhône River descends through the western Alps and past the Jura Mountains to the plains, passes through the great city of *Lugdunum*/Lyon, and then flows south between the Alps and the *Massif Central* to the Mediterranean. In Lyon, it meets its greatest tributary, the Saône, which flows down from the old lands of the Aeduans and Lingones and facilitates connections between the Rhône's watershed and northern Europe. The Aeduan cities of Mâcon and Chalon-sur-Saône sit alongside the Saône. North of Chalon, the channels of the upper Saône and of its tributary the Doubs both descend from the northeast; their upper basins allow rapid overland access to the Rhine and Moselle rivers, which lead ultimately to the North Sea. Of course, the route could be reversed; Constantine's troops, as we have seen, took to south-moving boats at Chalon after marching from the Rhine.

The Saône basin also grants access to other routes. The Ouche, a minor tributary of the Saône, allows light boat access to Dijon, ca. 40 mi/64 km north of Chalon. The same distance north of Dijon lies Langres. Unlike Mâcon, Chalon, and Dijon, which spread out along river-plains, Langres clings to the top of a narrow ridge, a southern extension of the upland *Plateau de Langres* that spreads north into French Champagne. Although not situated on a navigable stream, Langres is highly defensible, and strategically located. North of the city, drainage patterns turn away to the upper reaches of the Marne and thence the Seine basin, which drains to the English Channel.

Finally, there is Autun, 29-mi/46 km northwest of Chalon, on a plain at the foot of the iron-rich Morvan hills. Although overland travel is necessary to reach Autun from the Saône, the Arroux River, which passes Autun, can carry light traffic to the Loire basin, which drains to the Atlantic. A Roman highway also linked Autun to Lyon, and in the other direction, to northwestern communities: Auxerre, Sens, Paris. Together, the Aeduan and Lingon cities guarded links between the Mediterranean, the Alps, western Gaul and the Atlantic, and the north, including the imperial court city of Trier, the Rhine frontier, and the routes to Britain.

To understand how such links changed over time, I have found network concepts useful. So have many scholars interested in exploring power and group dynamics, sometimes using the technical quantitative methodology of Social Network Analysis (SNA).²⁵ Although late antique

²² E.g., see Ph. Barral, “Langres à l'âge du Fer,” in Martine Joly, ed., *Carte archéologique de la Gaule* 52.2, *Langres* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2001) pp. 27-32, at pp. 27-8; Annick Richard et al., eds., *L'isthme européen Rhin-Saône-Rhône dans la Protohistoire. Approches nouvelles en hommage à Jacques-Pierre Millotte. Actes du colloque de Besançon, 16-18 octobre 2006* (Besançon: Université de Franche-Comté, 2009).

²³ See Penelope Goodman, *The Roman City and its Periphery: From Rome to Gaul* (Abingdon, U.K. and New York: Routledge, 2007), especially pp. 200-231.

²⁴ Jill Harries, “Church and State in the Notitia Galliarum,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978): 26-43.

²⁵ E.g., see Edward M. Schortman, “Networks of Power in Archaeology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 167-182; C. Knappett, *Network Analysis in Archaeology: New Approaches to Regional Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Giovanni Ruffini, *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2008), within which see pp. 8-40 for a tutorial on Social

Gaul's sources are rich and diverse, they are not extensive or coherent enough to support a full-fledged SNA approach. Instead, I have paid attention to the underlying concepts, asking how they might illuminate the social lives studied here. My engagement with network theory will be most apparent in the synthesis that concludes the book.

I have relied more, however, on a somewhat related approach: prosopography. That text-based methodology underlies the results presented in Chapters Two through Five. Like SNA, prosopography reveals hidden group dynamics through study of the aggregate experiences within a defined population, and is particularly effective when we lack detailed biographical information for many of a group's individual members.²⁶ To identify the members of my study population, I have relied chiefly on Martin Heinzlmann's 1982 Gallic prosopography, currently the most robust catalog of late antique individuals for this region.²⁷ Heinzlmann's inventory includes a deeper social range of individuals than the better-known *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire (PLRE)* and also incorporates the ecclesiastics, whom *PLRE* excludes and who dominate Gaul's textual evidence for the later fifth and sixth century. With Heinzlmann as my foundation, I have also consulted other prosopographical aids, including *PLRE*, lists by Ralph Mathisen and Karl Stroheker, and the classic *Fastes épiscopaux* of Louis Duchesne, to which Heinzlmann typically deferred when reporting bishops.²⁸

In building my own inventory of Aeduan and Lingon communicators, I looked for all persons described as Aeduan or Lingon, persons who visited those territories, or persons who communicated in any way with a known Aeduan or Lingon individual. I then turned to the texts identified as relevant for each such individual, in order to catalog their communications with Aeduans, Lingones, and members of other communities. Between the sources identified by Heinzlmann or other prosopographers,

Network Analysis methods. *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22 (2007) featured studies on "Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean." See also A. Collar, *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013); I. Malkin, *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Taco T. Terpstra, *Trading Communities in the Roman World: A Micro-Economic and Institutional Perspective*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 37 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

²⁶ For methodological orientation see the now essential K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *Prosopography Approaches and Application: A Handbook*. *Prosopographica et Genealogica* 13 (Oxford: The Unit for Prosopographical Research, University of Oxford, 2007). A dated but still useful introduction is George Beech, "Prosopography," in James M. Powell, ed., *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), pp. 185-226.

²⁷ Martin Heinzlmann, "Gallische Prosopographie, 260-527," *Francia. Forschungen für westeuropäische Geschichte* 10 (1982-1983): 531-718.

²⁸ Ralph W. Mathisen, "Some Hagiographical Addenda to P.L.R.E." *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 36 (1987): 448-461; Ralph W. Mathisen, "P.L.R.E. II: Suggested Addenda and Corrigenda," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 31 (1982): 364-386; A. H. M. Jones, J. Morris, and J. R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. 3 vols. Vols. 2-3 by J. R. Martindale (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1971-1992); Karl Friedrich Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Tübingen: Alma Mater, 1948); Louis Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Paris: 1907-1915).

and other texts needed to illuminate my topic, I have drawn on very diverse genres: histories and chronicles, letters and laws, epitaphs and panegyrics, geographies and documentary evidence, and especially hagiographic writings, the often controverted *Vitae* or Lives of late antique saints. By way of Mark Handley's work on epigraphically attested travelers in late antiquity, I have also considered relevant Gallic inscriptions.²⁹

For the text-based analyses in Chapters Two through Five, I have tried to study all persons known to have been alive or active by 395, the last year that a single emperor governed the entire Roman world, and before the troubles of the fifth century began. In practice, I have incorporated some communications from before that date as well, to help set the stage or to flesh out the background experiences of persons who also operated after 395. Heinzlmann nominally ended his prosopographical list at 527, but in fact I have been able to use his guide and other sources to push deep into the middle and even later sixth century, though my coverage probably becomes less comprehensive after mid-century. Partly because of clustering within surviving primary sources, and partly to satisfy questions raised during research, I have devoted the most pages in coming chapters to communications from ca. 460-540. Although that period opened under imperial rule and closed under the Merovingian Franks, the intervening years saw the dramatic rise and fall of another polity: the kingdom of the Burgundians.

Technically, we are referring to the Second Burgundian Kingdom; Huns had destroyed the first, near Worms, earlier in the fifth century. In 443, however, Roman authorities settled a group of barbarian Burgundians as federate warriors in the Jura Mountains of *Sapaudia/Savoie*, between Geneva and Lyon. From there, they expanded their reach outward, and by the mid-460s they held all of *Lugdunensis Prima* (a late Roman province incorporating Aeduan and Lingon lands, as well as the metropolis of Lyon to the south). Unlike some barbarians in fifth-century Gaul, the Burgundians appear to have expanded through collaboration (or at least relatively non-violent interaction) with elite Gallo-Roman landowners. Despite (sometimes violent) setbacks, the kingdom persisted for decades, weathering Frankish invasions in 500 and 523/4. In 532, however, Franks captured Autun; in 534, they dismantled the rest of the Burgundian realm.³⁰

²⁹ Handley, *Dying on Foreign Shores*.

³⁰ See Justin Favrod, *Histoire politique du royaume Burgonde, 443-534*, Bibliothèque historique vaudoise 113 (Lausanne: Bibliothèque historique vaudoise, 1997); Favrod also has written a much shorter and more accessible history, *Les Burgondes: un royaume oublié au cœur de l'Europe*, 3rd ed. (Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2005). See also Katalin Escher, *Les Burgondes. I^{er}-VI^e siècles apr. J.-C.* (Paris: Editions Errance, 2006); Katalin Escher, *Genèse et évolution du deuxième royaume Burgonde (443-534): les témoins archéologiques*. BAR International Series 1402. 2 vols. (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2005); Reinhold Kaiser, *Die Burgunder* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004); Henri Gaillard de Semainville, ed., *Les Burgondes: apports de l'archéologie. Actes du colloque international de Dijon 5-6 novembre 1992* (Dijon: Association pour la Connaissance du Patrimoine de Bourgogne, 1995); Biagio Saitta, *I Burgundi (413-534)* (Catania: Muglia, 1977); Odet Perrin, *Les Burgondes. Leur histoire, des origines à*

Losers in Gaul's game of thrones and overshadowed by the triumphant Merovingians, the Burgundians have become, in the words of one French scholar, "a forgotten kingdom at the heart of Europe." Not many Anglophone scholars have written at length about that kingdom, though scholarly interest happily has grown in recent years.³¹ Among Gaul's fifth- and sixth-century barbarian realms, the Burgundian kingdom has stood out to researchers as particularly Roman-like (at least in the self-representation of Burgundian rulers), not disruptive to traditional social habits. Because several Burgundian kings took pains to secure legitimate official titles from the emperor in Constantinople, Ian Wood (the most prolific Anglophone scholar of Burgundian history) has even characterized the kingdom as "essentially a late Roman province, run by late Roman officials."³² Aeduan and Lingon lands formed most of the Burgundian kingdom's northwestern quarter, and butted up against Frankish-held territory. My study of those communities' social networks and communications offers a close look into social affairs under Burgundian rule.

As I have already noted, communications history should draw on multiple kinds of evidence, reflecting multiple kinds of movement. Therefore, I turn in Chapters Six and Seven to archaeology, focusing particularly on numismatic evidence, and provide the most detailed published analysis to date of the distribution of Burgundian coins found in France. I also compare the relevant distribution patterns of ceramic wares from across my study-area. My goal in marshaling these different types of material evidence has

la fin du premier Royaume (534) (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: la Baconnière, 1968); Carl Binding, *Das burgundisch-romanische Königreich (von 443-532 n. Chr.)* (Leipzig: 1868).

³¹ Merle Eisenberg, "A New Name for a New State: The Construction of the Burgundian *Regio*," in Jan Willem Drijvers and Noel Lenski, eds., *The Fifth Century: Age of Transformation. Proceedings of the 12th Biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2019), pp. 157-67; Yaniv Fox, "Anxiously Looking East: Burgundian Foreign Policy on the Eve of the Reconquest," in Stefan Esders et al, eds., *East and West in the Early Middle Ages: The Merovingian Kingdoms in Mediterranean Perspective* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 32-44; Yaniv Fox, "Image of Kings Past: The Gibichung Legacy in Post-Conquest Burgundy," *Francia* 42 (2015): 1-26; Ian Wood, "The Political Structure of the Burgundian Kingdom," in Mischa Meier and Steffen Patzold, eds., *Chlodwigs Welt: Organisation von Herrschaft um 500* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), pp. 383-96; Ian Wood, "The Burgundians and Byzantium," in *Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Cultural Transfer in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 400-800 AD*, eds. Andreas Fischer and Ian Wood (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 1-15; Danuta Shanzer and Ian Wood, trans. and eds., *Avitus of Vienne: Letters and Selected Prose* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002); Patrick Amory, "Names, Ethnic Identity, and Community in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Burgundy," *Viator* 25 (1994): 1-30; Patrick Amory, "The Meaning and Purpose of Ethnic Terminology in the Burgundian Laws," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 1-28; David Boyson, "Romano-Burgundian Society in the Age of Gundobad: Some Legal, Archaeological, and Historical Evidence," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 91-118; Ian Wood, "Clermont and Burgundy: 511-534," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 119-25; Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans A.D. 418-584. The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Ian Wood, "Avitus of Vienne: Religion and Culture in the Auvergne and the Rhône Valley 470-530" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1979).

³² Wood, "The Burgundians and Byzantium," p. 15. For a different but complementary view, see Eisenberg, "A New Name for a New State."

been to synthesize their implications with those of the textual sources examined in Chapters Two through Five.

It is worth commenting here on the range—and limitations—of my numismatic sources, as well as the steps taken to mitigate such limitations. Along with older sources, the basis for this book's numismatic analysis is a landmark 2003 inventory of early medieval coins found in France, by Jean Lafaurie and Jacqueline Pilet-Lemière.³³ Although reliance in 2020 on a seventeen-year-old inventory might seem to preclude a significant, current analysis, this is not the case. For one thing, the pace of discovery and publication of early medieval coins in France is not as rapid as some might think. More importantly, the 2003 inventory has by no means been exploited fully, even though important numismatic publications have drawn on it as recently as 2018.³⁴ In fact, the present book offers the most detailed distribution analysis yet published for Burgundian coins in France, or for pseudo-imperial coins found within the Burgundian kingdom's territory.

However, since numismatic and archaeological activities have hardly stood still since 2003, this book also has benefited from two data-gathering trips over the past decade to France, where I deeply appreciated the generous assistance of archaeologists and archival professionals. Patrick Périn welcomed me for a week's study in 2011 at the *Musée d'Archéologie nationale* in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. In May 2014, I enjoyed the warm support of staff at the DRAC (*Direction régionale des affaires culturelles*) Rhône-Alpes library in Lyon, DRAC Bourgogne in Dijon, and DRAC Champagne-Ardenne in Chalons-en-Champagne (I have gratefully listed these staff members in this book's Acknowledgements). I also enjoyed a very useful meeting in 2014 with numismatist Jacques Meissonnier, whose bibliographic advice made a significant difference to this study's Chapter Six. All these left me grateful for their warm assistance, and facilitated supplementation of data from the 2003 coin inventory with more recent findings. Although the lamentable outbreak of a global health crisis ruled out a final, 2020 trip to France in support of this book, generous support from the Ambrose University Research Fund allowed me to access useful archaeological literature published in recent years.

Although this book draws on a rich array of evidence of many different kinds, it would be a grave mistake to treat such disparate kinds of sources as simply equivalent in their potential meanings. Just as written texts may reflect a plethora of perspectives and agendas, so the distributions of various types of material may reflect entirely different social, economic, political or cultural processes. Moreover, late antique written texts have

³³ Jean Lafaurie and Jacqueline Pilet-Lemière, *Monnaies du haut Moyen Âge découvertes en France (I^{er}-VIII^e siècle)*. Cahiers Ernest-Babelon 8 (Paris: CNRS, 2003).

³⁴ Most recently, Jean François Boyer, *Pouvoirs et territoires en Aquitaine du VI^e au X^e siècle: Enquête sur l'administration locale* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2018), pp. 9-199, especially pp. 26-27. I discuss related literature in more depth in Section 6.1.

infamously little to say directly about the sophisticated social questions framed by many archaeologists. Texts, coins and pots may not illuminate social changes on the same time-scale, or even reflect the movements of the same kinds of people. Although gold coins are *prima facie* more likely to have belonged to privileged persons, there is no reason to suspect that common ceramic wares must reflect the economic connections of the abbots, bishops and magnates who feature in most of our written sources.

Therefore, in collating prosopographical, numismatic, and ceramic evidence, I have not considered any class of evidence simply ancillary to the others, brought on board to “prove” the validity of earlier interpretations.³⁵ Rather, each stands on its own, but also is interpreted in light of the others. This approach has proven very fruitful. Although different types of evidence point to different strata within late antique society, their mutually overlapping testimony compensates for the limited scope of each form of data. By turning from an exclusively text-based, elite perspective, we are able to contextualize that legitimately interesting view within a broader and equally interesting socio-economic context. By situating materially adduced economic patterns against the more precise chronology of political history, we can better understand how short-term pressures complicated structural effects within the timescale of individual lives. In combining approaches, I have tried to move the literature on Burgundian-era society beyond conjoined descriptions of history and archaeology, where many works have stopped, and toward a true synthesis that is greater than the sum of its parts.

1.3. The Last Horizons of Roman Gaul

Although this book’s varied sources have their differences, they all support a synthetic picture of Aeduan and Lingon communication horizons in the late fifth and early sixth century. Under the Burgundian kings, Aeduan and Lingon horizons contracted; they remained relatively more open to the south, but markedly less so toward the Frankish north, where old ties had once flourished. That picture finds unexpected confirmation in the apparently unconscious cognitive geography of a sixth-century Lingon author, discussed in detail in Chapter Five. As scholars of cognitive mapping have shown, communications can alter perceived geographies of space. Patterns of interaction with other people and places can change our spatial perception—that is, our sense of the shape of the world—which in turn alters subsequent interactions.³⁶ Related phenomena have been observed in contexts ranging from the Roman

Empire to the modern telecommunications revolution.³⁷ It is appropriate, then, to speak of Gallo-Romans potentially experiencing multiple “worlds” of spatial perception. Indeed, it should be clear by the end of this book that the world’s shape did change for some late antique observers; the spatial horizons (so to speak) moved over time as experiences of communication altered.

Early in the sixth century, one Lingon writer composed a fraudulent and wildly anachronistic passion account of a putative saint, Benignus. Describing the city of Sens, this author associated it with lands located *in extremis finibus Galliarum*—“in the uttermost limits of the Gallic provinces.”³⁸ Not only does that description inaccurately reflect the actual administrative geography of this region in antiquity, but Sens was the *first* metropolitan city within Frankish lands that one would encounter when moving northwest from Lingon territory early in the sixth century. However, this counter-intuitive expression of distance and separation perfectly fits the patterns of communications across the Aeduans’ and Lingones’ northwestern frontiers while under Burgundian rule—patterns deduced in this study from textual, numismatic and ceramic evidence. If the Burgundian kingdom was, in Wood’s words, “essentially a late Roman province,” the great network of networks—the Roman Empire as Constantine had known it—was nonetheless gone.³⁹ To look northwest from Lingon territory was to peer across the “uttermost limits,” the last horizons of Roman Gaul.

³⁵ See the related concerns raised in Jonathan M. Hall, *Artifact and Artifice: Classical Archaeology and the Ancient Historian* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), especially pp. 207-15.

³⁶ On cognitive mapping and the phenomenon of “mental maps” see Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps*, 2nd ed. (Penguin, 1986; repr. London: Routledge, 2002); Rob Kitchin and Scott Freundschuh, eds., *Cognitive Mapping: Past, Present and Future* (London: Routledge, 2000); Roger M. Downs and David Stea, eds., *Image and Environment: Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1973); Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960), was foundational.

³⁷ Walter Scheidel, “The Shape of the Roman World: Modelling Imperial Connectivity,” *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 27 (2014): 7-32; Roland Wenzlhuemer, “Globalization, Communication, and the Concept of Space in Global History,” *Historical Social Research* 35 (2010): 19-47.

³⁸ See Section 5.1.

³⁹ Wood, “The Burgundians and Byzantium,” p. 15.