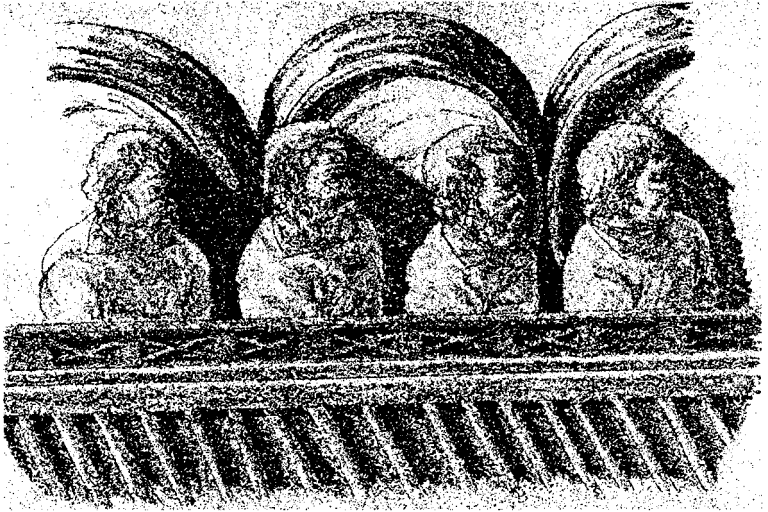


De obseruatione ciborum

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF FOODS



Wine barrels on a barge on the Moselle: taken from a stone relief in the Rheinische Landesmuseum, Trier.

ANTHIMUS

De obseruatione ciborum

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF FOODS

Translated and edited by

MARK GRANT



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Wine tasting. Drawing based on a stone relief in the Rheinische Landesmuseum, Trier.

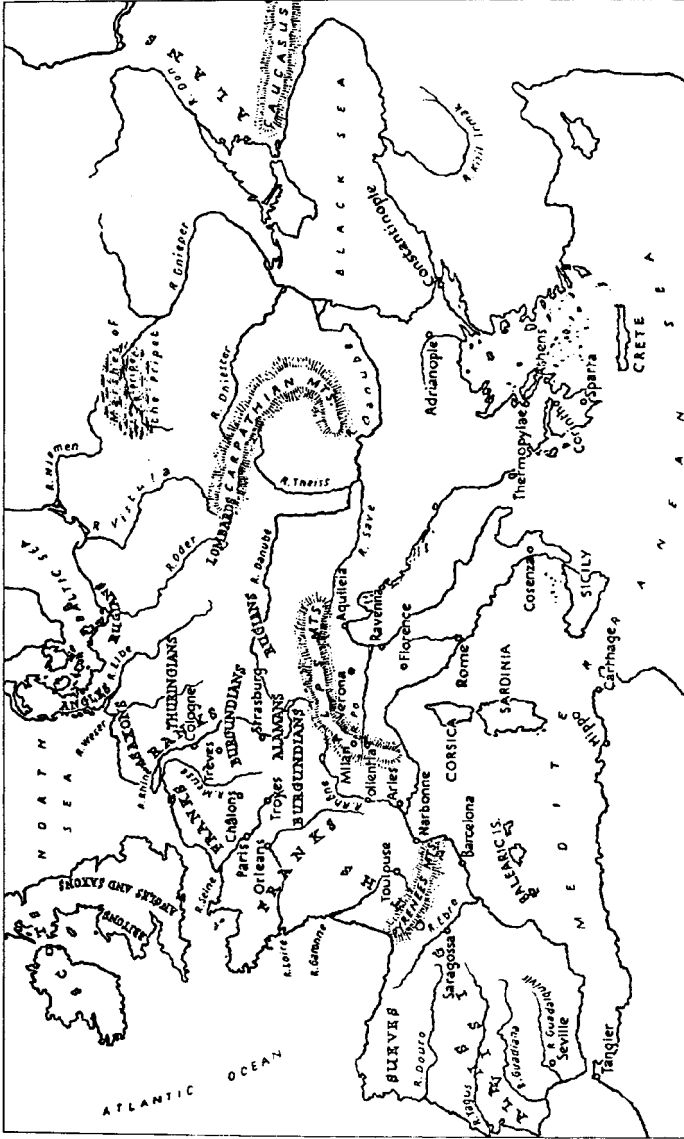
Acknowledgements

This book has matured over many years. Starting out as a dissertation for a Classics degree from the University of St Andrews, it has drawn me back again and again to its puzzles and peculiarities, the first typescript now being liberally strewn with pencilled marginalia. My first debt, therefore, is to Mr Peter George, who supervised the original dissertation with his dry wit and eye for detail. Mr David Miller read the original version and, with his sharp knowledge of the Latin language, pointed out errors and inconsistencies in the translation. At a conference on food in antiquity held at the University of London in 1992, the late Alan Davidson fired me with the necessary drive to prepare the text for publication. At every stage Mrs Elizabeth Craik offered academic advice and assistance, whilst Mr Tom Jaine suggested ways of improving the flow and impact of the arguments.

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Numerous people have been subjected to my culinary experiments, from audiences at learned societies which I have addressed on the subject of Roman food, to friends perhaps expecting more modern fare at dinner parties. To these offer my thanks. Finally, I am for ever grateful to my wife Alison and my daughter Anna for enduring my prolonged sessions in front of the word-processor and being buried away in the Library of the Institute for Classical Studies in London, and it is to them that I dedicate this book.

*Haileybury College
May 1996*



Europe in the fifth century AD. Map based on that in H. St. L. B. Moss, The Birth of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1935).

Introduction

I first came across Anthimus in 1982 when an undergraduate at St Andrews. The University Library is especially fortunate in holding copies of some extremely unusual classical texts published at the end of the last and the beginning of this century, the happy consequence of bequests by professors with truly eclectic tastes, such as W. M. Lindsay. An afternoon browsing among the classical texts published by Teubner in Leipzig unearthed the small, dark-bound volume of Anthimus. My interest in ancient food had been started some six years before at school, when a chance remark by my Classics teacher Mr Shaun Holman inspired me to try out some recipes from the pages of Apicius. Research into Anthimus was thus a fascinating exploration of the development of Roman cuisine into the early Middle Ages.

It was V. Rose who in 1864 edited and published Anthimus for the first time. Previously Anthimus had been left almost forgotten in various manuscripts housed in libraries in Germany and France. The publication intrigued philologists, who have used Anthimus to illustrate the transformation of Vulgar Latin into the Romance languages, but as a writer on food Anthimus has generally been ignored, despite the inclusion in his work of several recipes that can stand comparison with those in Apicius. For example, his beef stew (Section 3) is rich and aromatic, whilst his rice pudding (Section 70) is pleasantly tangy. Over the past few years there has been considerable interest in historical cooking, from ancient Greek times to the early modern period, and so perhaps Anthimus will now be able to take a rôle too in the culinary rather than just the philological tradition of European thought.

In order to place Anthimus, we need to relate him to his historical period and to the cooking of the time. To live in Gaul in the early sixth century was to experience the still powerful remains of classical Roman civilisation and the burgeoning of those ideas that would lead to the flowering of medieval French culture. Although Anthimus was writing for a royal court that displayed the trappings of Romanised authority, the supply routes that had allowed the creation of exotic Roman dishes had ceased to function effectively, although much trade was still being conducted across the Mediterranean. It is therefore to the ordinary food

of the Roman empire that we need to compare what Anthimus describes. Like the people in the poems of Martial and Horace, the Franks and the Gallo-Romans could generally eat only what was found in their immediate vicinity, so we discover in Anthimus butter rather than olive oil, beer alongside wine, salmon rather than red mullet. But there are some classical survivals, such as the famous fermented fish sauce called *garum* or *liquamen*, and spices like pepper and ginger, that would have had to have been imported.

1. Sources

This book has been written for any reader interested in the history of food, so I have tried to make the references to ancient authors as intelligible as possible. However, because the authors of late antiquity and its aftermath are not generally famous, yet are nonetheless crucial for explaining Anthimus, three biographical details are needed here, rather than repeated at every mention of a particular name in the text. Similarly the political geography of Europe in the fifth and sixth century calls for an explanation, otherwise the journey of Anthimus, the diplomatic moves of the Roman emperors and the migrations of barbarian tribes will whirl into a medley of outlandish nomenclature.

For a discussion of Anthimus the key literary figures in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul are Sidonius Apollinaris, Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus. Gaius Sollius Apollinaris Sidonius was born at Lyon in about 430. Through his marriage to Papianilla, from a noble Gallo-Roman family, he acquired the estate of Avitacum in the Auvergne. His own aristocratic background brought him into high political office within the crumbling western Roman empire, culminating in his appointment as Prefect of the City of Rome in 468. In 469 he headed back to Gaul and, since further secular promotion was impossible because of growing barbarian power, he turned to the church and accepted the bishopric of Avernus (now Clermont-Ferrand in Puy-de-Dôme). He died sometime after 479. His collected letters to friends and relations give a commentary on Roman life as the empire receded.

Gregory was born Georgius Florentius into a noble family that could look back to ancestors holding the illustrious Roman title of Senator. His father died when he was still a boy, so he was brought up first by Gallus, his uncle and the bishop of Avernus, then on this relative's death by the

archdeacon Avitus. As a young man he used to visit Nicetius, bishop of Lyon, and Eufronius, bishop of Tours and his first cousin once removed. This life within the church led to his ordination as deacon at the age of twenty-five in 563, and in 573 to his election as bishop of Tours, a post he held until his death in 594. Serving as a bishop entailed demanding duties, from repairing churches and visiting monasteries in the diocese, to administering properties and ensuring the effective cultivation of church lands. In the course of his duties he visited, among other cities, Bordeaux, Chalon-sur-Saône, Koblenz, Metz, Paris and Soissons. He wrote a *History* that charts the course of the internecine wars between the various Frankish states in Gaul, an invaluable document not only for the actions of kings and queens, but also of life and society at the time.

Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus was born near the modern town of Treviso in northern Italy in about 540. He was educated at Ravenna on the Adriatic coast. Using his extensive classical education as a passport, he travelled through Gaul, and was at Metz in time for the marriage of King Sigibert of the Franks to Princess Brunhild from the Visigothic kingdom of Spain in 566. His public delivery of a celebratory poem in Latin on this festive occasion won him royal patronage and an introduction to the leading figures in the court. Bishop Eufronius of Tours invited him to Poitiers, where he met Radegund, foundress of the nunnery of the Holy Cross. From then on he lived at Poitiers, striking up a friendship with Gregory of Tours, who gave him land and a villa, and eventually serving as bishop of the city in the closing years of his life in the early seventh century. His poetry provides a commentary on life among the nobility and clergy, recording such details as favourite wines and prized foods.

Far from being a Dark Age, the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaul brought forward a proliferation of writers. Despite the laments for the decline of literary standards, a topic that is wistfully examined by every generation including our own, more works were published at this time than ever before in the history of Gaul. If anything, putting pen to paper was a sign of nobility and, with the end of the empire and its political offices, anyone who wished to be considered noble had to find different ways of expressing that status.

The political geography of these three writers is dominated by the split in the Roman empire that was given a decisive turn in AD 324

with the foundation of Constantinople (now Istanbul) by the emperor Constantine. Experiments in the sharing of the burden of government had been tried throughout the history of the empire, the most conspicuous example starting in 293 with the ‘Tetrarchy’ of the emperor Diocletian, whereby there were two senior emperors, one based in the eastern half of the empire and the other in the western, each assisted by a junior emperor. Very roughly the eastern empire comprised of what today is Greece, Turkey, Syria, the Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Libya; whilst to the western empire belonged Italy, France, the Iberian peninsula, the Maghreb, western Germany, the Low Countries and Britain. The western empire bore the brunt of the barbarian attacks and supported a greater proportion of expensive heavy infantry. By the early years of the fifth century it was already reeling under this dual strain, causing its eventual demise in 476. The eastern empire survived this debacle, and still remained a vigorous entity, despite severe military problems on the Danube frontier in particular, enduring until the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. The story of Anthimus spans both these geographical areas.

2. *The Career of Anthimus*

The treatise by Anthimus carries the title *De observatione ciborum epistula* which means literally *The Letter on the Observance of Foods*. This sounds cumbersome in English, but the sense is made clear by the subsequent explanation of the theme that Anthimus offers: by following the advice in the letter a list of healthy foods can be drawn up which, together with the proper methods for their preparation in the kitchen, should ensure health and vigour in the observant reader. The letter is addressed to Theuderic, king of the Franks in the area around Metz between 511 and 534, by a certain Anthimus, the ambassador and representative of Theodoric, the Ostrogothic king in Italy between 493 and 526. Although there are passing references in contemporary chronicles and other sources to the cuisine and dietary customs of the Franks in the sixth century, this treatise alone gives a comprehensive picture of cooking in the tumultuous transition between classical antiquity and the medieval world. In addition, the culinary contents, albeit linked with extensive dietary advice, allow it to be regarded as the first cookery book published in what is now France.

Anthimus is an enigmatic figure from an obscure age. There is but one reference to him in surviving literature, and further details about his life must be teased from his own work. Roughly one hundred years before the floruit of Anthimus there lived another doctor whose vicissitudes form a close parallel: Oribasius was also involved in politics and as a consequence suffered exile to barbarian lands, yet nevertheless survived through his medical skills and possible charm. Oribasius was born in the early 320s, almost certainly at Pergamum, now Bergama, on the Aegean seaboard of Turkey, and trained as a doctor. In 351 he met Julian, the nineteen-year-old half-brother of the emperor Constantius II, who had come to Pergamum to continue his studies under the Neoplatonist philosopher Aedesius. Through their shared fascination with Hellenism, the two men became friends, and it was under Julian's patronage that Oribasius wrote a medical encyclopaedia which curiously has a geographical connection with Anthimus, for it was composed in northern Gaul in the mid-350s while Julian was administering Britain, Gaul and Germany on behalf of Constantius II.

Julian was himself promoted emperor in 360, avoiding prolonged civil war when Constantius died of a fever the next year. Julian's reign was brief, marked by his vigorous promotion of paganism at the expense of Christianity. In the reaction that followed the emperor's assassination in 363, his medical protégé Oribasius was exiled to Gothic territory north of the Danube, although, unlike Anthimus, he was soon recalled. By his death, perhaps in the early 400s, he had written two more medical works, and fathered four children after marriage into a noble family.¹

That much and more we know of Oribasius through the pages of his biographer Eunapius; but whence Anthimus hailed from is impossible to state. The name might have furnished clues to his provenance were it not so widespread: an inscription from Syria² records one Lucius Minucius Anthimus, another, from Lambaesis in Africa,³ has an Anthimus offering his farewell to his deceased wife Vercella, whilst from Rome comes an epitaph⁴ to Caius Trebellius Anthimus set up by his daughter Trebellia Ursilla. Anthimus is connected with the name Anthus: at the

(1) B. Baldwin, 'The Career of Oribasius', *Acta Classica* 18 (1975), pp.85–97.

(2) *Corpus of Greek Inscriptions* 2.3272.

(3) *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* 8.3463.

(4) *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* 14.1679.

Porta Capena in Rome, a dedication⁵ was erected to Lucius Iavolenus Anthimus by his son Anthus, and on a military diploma⁶ of AD 120 there is listed a Lucius Pullus Anthus. The name, therefore, does not stress a wholly Greek origin, but no more can be stated. Anthimus may have studied Latin at Constantinople, which would account for the Greek flavour of some of his expressions; or he may have learnt his Latin when he arrived in Italy.

The sixth-century historian Malchus of Philadelphia⁷ recounts the story of the downfall of Anthimus. Not long after recovering his throne from the usurper Basiliscus (475–6), the eastern Roman emperor Zeno (474–5 and 476–91) was threatened by two rival Ostrogothic chiefs, both claiming to be stipendiary allies of the empire: Theodoric, the son of Triarius, surnamed Strabo because of his squinting eyes; and Theodoric the Amal, son of Theodemir, later known to history as Theodoric the Great. The Romans made extensive use of nominally friendly barbarian tribes to strengthen the frontiers of their empire.

To clarify the rôle of the Ostrogoths at this time, the succession of Marcian to the eastern throne must be considered. When the emperor Theodosius II died in July 450, his sister Pulcheria was named empress, but realising that her gender would preclude her from any effective running of government, she married a retired army officer called Marcian, whom she thought would respect her noble rank and apply his knowledge of the military to save the empire from its external enemies. Marcian's first gamble was refusing to pay subsidies for good behaviour to Attila the Hun, nomadic ruler of a kingdom that stretched from the Alps and Baltic Sea in the west to near the Caspian Sea in the east. The ploy was successful: Attila died in 453 before he could wreak vengeance on the empire. Marcian's second gamble was to settle some of the peoples

(5) *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* 6.19663.

(6) *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions* 16.68.

(7) Fragment 15, see R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, vol.2, ARCA 10, Liverpool (Cairns) 1983, pp. 422–33; also vol.1, ARCA 6, Liverpool (Cairns) 1981, pp. 81, where Blockley refers to the doctor erroneously as 'Anthimius', and adds that he was spared 'for the sake of appearance' by Zeno. The emperor is depicted by Malchus as vacillating, not playing off Theodoric, son of Theodemir, against Theodoric Strabo in the usual Roman fashion, but acting indecisively and treacherously.

originally subject to the Huns in Roman provinces devastated by war and plague. Among them were the Ostrogoths, many of whom were found new homes in Pannonia and Illyricum, modern western Hungary and Bosnia, under their kings, the brothers Valamir, Videmir and Theodemir of the house of Amal; whilst others under Theodoric Strabo, son of Triarius, were enrolled in the imperial army, and had no fixed abode other than the Roman camps on the Danube frontier.

Marcian died in 457 and Leo was elected emperor. The Ostrogoths in Pannonia and Illyricum took advantage of the new regime to complain that they needed a subsidy to match the pay of those under Theodoric Strabo. As governments up to the present day have found to their cost, bribery encourages further greed, and Leo's concessions were no permanent solution. Consequently, in 471 the Ostrogoths of Pannonia and Illyricum decided to search for better lands in which to settle. Videmir headed west and joined the Visigoths (i.e. western Goths, just as the name Ostrogoth denoted the east) in southern Gaul (what is now Provence), whilst Theodemir went east, devastating the province of Macedonia in northern Greece and besieging Thessaloniki. When Theodemir died later in the year, he was succeeded by his son Theodoric, by which stage Leo had acquiesced to the Ostrogothic demands and settled the tribe in Macedonia.

Leo died in January 474 and his son-in-law Zeno was made emperor by the senate. Zeno was not popular: his lack of dynastic prestige meant the aristocracy regarded him as an upstart; and Verina, his mother-in-law, hated him to the extent of fomenting uprisings and revolutions. Faced with an angry mother-in-law, troubled by grave shortages of cash and troops, and forced to flee Constantinople within a year of attaining the throne because of the usurpation by Verina's brother Basiliscus, many historians have expressed admiration for the sharp and ruthless diplomacy that kept Zeno in power for seventeen years.

The diplomatic manoeuvres that involved Anthimus stemmed from a vain attempt to offset Ostrogothic power by playing Theodoric Strabo against Theodoric, son of Theodemir. When it came to a battle, the two refused to fight, and sent instead ambassadors to Constantinople: Theodoric Strabo wanted pay for his men and the title of Acting Chief of Staff; Theodoric Amal demanded land for his men and a salary commensurate with that of his rival and new-found ally.

Negotiations were in progress at Constantinople in 478 with the embassy of Theodoric Strabo, son of Triarius, when letters addressed to the other Theodoric, assuring him of friends in the city, were intercepted by Zeno's officials. These letters were signed by Marcellinus and Stephanus, together with the doctor Anthimus. The three collaborators were arrested and interrogated, but were spared execution by Zeno, who instead sentenced them to permanent exile. Presumably Anthimus went to the Theodoric whose cause he favoured. Zeno no doubt had further ideas in his mind with the release of the doctor, and it is not impossible to imagine that Anthimus was allowed his life in return for periodic reports on the military capabilities and strategic plans of the Ostrogoths.

The remainder of Anthimus's career draws no comment from any surviving contemporary writer, despite the apparent importance that his official titles bestow upon him. But enough is known of the history of Italy and Gaul of this time to surmise how he fared. He gives some support to these conjectures with references in his book to his own life, and to the peoples among whom he lived.

The language he used has been a rich source for philologists studying Vulgar Latin and its transformation into the Romance languages, for what Anthimus wrote seems very much in the colloquial rather than literary vein. Where he learnt his Latin is open to conjecture, but might furnish some clues about the course of his travels. Rose argued that his preference for *nam non* instead of *sed non* reveals a northern Italian dialect, which would coincide with the known movements of the Ostrogoths, and their subsequent establishment of a capital at Ravenna on northern coast of the Adriatic; but Liechtenhan stresses that this formula was not peculiar to Italy.⁸ Once Anthimus was in Gaul as an ambassador, he could, had he required any linguistic assistance, have found vestiges of Greek learning even at this time: Sidonius mentions reading *The Arbitration* by the fourth-century BC Greek playwright Menander and Caesarius was busy teaching the laity to sing hymns in Latin and Greek.⁹

For the first few years of Anthimus's exile, Zeno oscillated in his favour between the two Ostrogothic chiefs: the standard Roman policy

(8) *Anthimi, De obseruatione ciborum ad Theudericum regem Francorum epistula*, Corpus Medicorum Latinorum 8.1, 2nd edition, Berlin (Teubner) 1963, p.x.

(9) Sidonius Apollinaris *Letters* 4.12.1; *Life of Caesarius* 1.19.

of divide and rule. However, in 481 Theodoric Strabo was accidentally killed in his own camp when his horse threw him on to a spear fastened to a wagon. Anthimus hints at these years in his letter (Section 64) when he says that the Goths called barley soup 'fenea', a gratuitous statement unless a personal note of his exile among this people.

Theodoric the Amal remained at the head of the united Gothic tribes, and for the next six years he was sometimes in harmony with Zeno, whilst others he made raids for the purpose of extracting fresh favours. In 486 he ransacked the province of Thrace, now Bulgaria, and in 487 he grew even bold enough to attack Constantinople. Zeno must have been more than delighted when opportunity arose in 488 to get rid of a man who had caused him nothing but grief.

This opportunity centred on the affairs of Italy, at this juncture in the grip of the barbarian ruler Odoacer. Odoacer was the son of Edecon, a chief of the Scyrri tribe which had settled in Pannonia, or what is today western Hungary, and had acted as federate troops in the Roman army. After Pannonia had been ceded by the imperial government to the Huns, Edecon served with Orestes, a Roman noble from Pannonia, as ambassador of Attila the Hun to the court at Constantinople. On Attila's death in 453, Edecon had continued in service to the Huns, commanding the guard of the royal village. But Edecon died soon afterwards, and Odoacer decided that he wanted a life of honour and reward away from the Huns, so enlisted in the army of the western Roman empire. By 476 he had accumulated sufficient political power to depose Romulus Augustulus, an appropriate name for the last Roman emperor in the west, who was by chance the son of Odoacer's old accomplice Orestes.

Odoacer acknowledged Zeno as sole emperor and offered to run Italy as a diocese, or province, of the empire. He gave himself the title of king, but he did not claim a formal frontier to his kingdom. Italy was his, but he also dominated parts of Raetia and Noricum, Bavaria and Austria in modern political geography. However, his later expansion into Sicily and Dalmatia worried Zeno, who encouraged Felitheus, king of the Rugi who lived north of the Danube, to invade Odoacer's lands in Noricum. A ferocious military response followed from Odoacer, the Rugi were decisively beaten, and Felitheus was captured together with his queen. Their son managed to escape and he sought asylum with Theodoric, from whom he pleaded help in regaining power.

With the encouragement of Zeno, and probably accompanied by Anthimus, Theodoric set out for Italy in the autumn of 488, no doubt following the route of the old Roman road through what is now Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia into northern Italy, passing by the cities of Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Serdica (Sofia), Naissus (Nis), Singidunum (Belgrade) and Emona (Ljubljana), until he had reached the northern shores of the Adriatic. After defeats at the battles of the river Isonzo near Aquileia, not far from modern Trieste in the province of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and at the river Adige near Verona, then loss of his capital Ravenna, Odoacer surrendered in February 493. Theodoric had him murdered at a banquet at Ravenna in March the same year.

The new ruler of Italy governed as a Patrician, and representative and mandatory of Zeno. Many of the great generals who ran the western provinces of the Roman empire in the fifth century were given the title of 'Patrician', which meant that they had absolute authority over the areas under their control and were answerable only to the emperor. This honour was apparently never bestowed on Odoacer by Zeno, thus highlighting the particular power held by Theodoric. At first, Theodoric was often addressed as 'Prince' (*princeps*), but after 497 his official title was 'King' (*rex*). Interestingly one inscription refers to him as 'His Excellency' (*gloriosissimus*), the very epithet that Anthimus applies to Theuderic in his letter. After many requests, the emperor Anastasius (491–518) granted him the imperial insignia of a purple robe in 498.

Possession of Italy did not put a stop to Theodoric's ambitions, including bringing into his own sphere of influence the Visigothic kingdoms in southern Gaul and Spain. The emperor Anastasius resorted once again to the imperial policy of playing one barbarian ruler off against another to hold these in check.

Political conflict in Gaul was given a further dimension by religious controversy between the Catholics (in the sense of orthodox) and adherents to the Arian view (which held that Christ was made by God to assist in the creation of the world, and was not therefore divine). The Germanic nations – Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and others – were Arians, although their Roman subjects remained Catholic. This broad division had been radically altered by the conversion of the Franks under Clovis to the Catholic position at the end of the fifth century. The new alignment profoundly affected politics throughout the region.

These spiritual and political schisms provided a volatile combination. Perhaps one of the reasons for Clovis declaring war on Alaric II, king of the Visigoths in south-western France and Spain, was his dislike of Arianism, though the temptations of plunder must also have been in his mind. A fierce battle in around 507 at the unidentified field of Vouillé (or possibly Voulon) near Poitiers, saw the Visigoths routed and the Franks in control of Bordeaux, thereby winning for Clovis the favour of the Catholic church, as Gregory of Tours describes, with the appearance of miraculous signs indicating the blessing of God on the Franks.

Anastasius manipulated the situation to his own ends: he favoured Clovis as his western ally over Theuderic, and encouraged a Frankish invasion in 508 of southern Gaul, which was run by the Visigoths. This campaign was led by Theuderic, eldest son of Clovis. Theuderic responded by launching an attack on the Franks to safeguard Italy. Although the Burgundians, who helped Theuderic in 508, suffered the full wrath of the Ostrogothic king and lost much of Provence, Theuderic, in turn, was prevented from continuing his conquest of Aquitaine, and the Franks once again looked north for expansion.

Between 508 and 509 the Ostrogothic general Ibbas conquered the coastal plain of southern Gaul up to the Rhône. This allowed Theuderic to set Amalaric, Alaric II's only legitimate son, on the Visigothic throne of Spain, for the great Roman road called the Via Julia Augusta, running through Nicaea (Nice), Aquae Sextiae (Aix-en-Provence), Nemausus (Nîmes) and Narbo (Narbonne), was open for his officials and messengers to communicate swiftly with his new satellite kingdom. It may be dubbed thus, because Amalaric was, through his mother, Theuderic's grandson. As Amalaric was a minor, his kingdom was administered by two nominees of Theuderic, one an Ostrogoth, the other a Roman, whilst the army was commanded by an Ostrogoth called Theudis. This episode in Provence had repercussions beyond the battlefield, since it brought into close contact the two major powers of western Europe at the time, the Ostrogoths and the Franks.

In 511 Clovis, the Frankish king who founded the Merovingian royal house, died at Paris after a reign of nearly thirty years. His kingdom in central and northern Gaul was divided among his four sons: Chlodomir (died 524), Childebert (died 558) and Chlothar (died 561), who were children by his marriage to Clothild; and Theuderic (died 534), son

of a concubine. The boundaries between the four kingdoms remained in a constant state of flux, which accounts for the numerous raids and skirmishes related in the pages of the writers at that time. Chlodomer held Limousin and Bercy, ruling from his capital at Orléans; Childebert's capital was at Paris, and he held the lands stretching just north of the Seine to the Loire in the south; from Soissons Chlothar ruled the area with its boundaries a little south of the Somme to the west, the Meuse to the south, and the Schelde to the east; whilst Theuderic ran what is now Belgium, Holland and northern Germany up to the Wesser, although with his capital at Metz, and his possession of Köln and Basel, he looked as much to Gaul as to the east. Since his half-brothers were still minors when they inherited their thrones, Theuderic could at first dominate them by showing himself an energetic, successful and ruthless leader. He laid an unsuccessful ambush for his brother Chlothar during their joint campaign in Thuringia between the Elbe and the Wesser in what is now Hannover and Lüneburg; he authorised the treacherous murder of Magneric; and he had his kinsman Sigivald killed.

Just as he had tried to contain the power of Clovis, so Theodoric the Ostrogoth now had to deal with Theuderic's territorial ambitions. Thus it was to this king's court that Anthimus was sent by Theodoric on an embassy, hence his title 'Legate' in the preface to the work, and it was to this Theuderic, king of the Franks, that the letter is addressed. There are references to the Franks in the letter: for example, in Section 14 their predilection for raw bacon is remarked upon with obvious distaste. As to the nature of this embassy, it will be examined in detail in the discussion that follows on northern Gaul in the sixth century.

The date of the composition of the letter is therefore sometime after 511, but exactly when is not known, nor can it be said when or if Anthimus returned to Italy, nor when he died. Unlike Oribasius, Anthimus had no Eunapius to act as his biographer.¹⁰ Yet he experienced as much as his predecessor, whom he may well have studied at Constantinople: in his introduction he refers to 'the directions of medical writers', and certain phrases in his text seem to be translations from the Greek of Galen and Oribasius. Other doctors may have interfered in politics, for example Eudoxius, whose disastrous efforts in 448 at

(10) Eunapius wrote his *Lives of the Sophists* sometime after AD 395. This work included a brief biography of Oribasius.