

**THE  
FRAGMENTARY CLASSICISING HISTORIANS  
OF THE  
LATER ROMAN EMPIRE**

**EUNAPIUS, OLYMPIODORUS, PRISCUS AND MALCHUS**

**II**

**Text, Translation and Historiographical Notes**

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**X**

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He sent a third embassy and a fourth after it. For the barbarian, mindful of the Romans' liberality, which they showed out of caution lest the treaty be broken, sent to them those of his retinue whom he wished to benefit, inventing new reasons and discovering new pretexts. The Romans heeded his every bidding and obeyed whatever order their master issued. They were not only wary of starting a war with Attila, but they were afraid also of the Parthians who were preparing for hostilities, the Vandals who were harrying the coastal regions, the Isaurians whose banditry was reviving, the Sarmatians who were ravaging the eastern parts of their dominions, and the Ethiopian tribes who were in the process of uniting. Therefore, having been humbled by Attila, they paid him court while they tried to organise themselves to face the other peoples by collecting their forces and appointing generals.<sup>25</sup>

## 11

### 1. (*Exc. de Leg. Gent.* 5)

Edeco, a Scythian who had performed outstanding deeds in war, came again as ambassador together with Orestes, a Roman by origin who lived in the part of Pannonia close to the river Save which became subject to the barbarian by the treaty made with Aetius, the general of the western Romans. This Edeco came to the court and handed over the letters from Attila, in which he blamed the Romans in respect of the fugitives. In retaliation he threatened to resort to arms if the Romans did not surrender them and if they did not cease cultivating the land which he had won in the war. This, he asserted, was a strip five days' journey wide and extending along the Danube from Pannonia to Novae in Thrace. Furthermore, he said that the market in Illyria was not on the bank of the Danube, as it had been before, but at Naissus, which he had laid waste and established as the border point between the Scythian and the Roman territory, it being five days' journey from the Danube for an unladen man. He ordered that ambassadors come to him and not just ordinary men but the highest ranking of the consulars; if the Romans were wary of sending them, he would cross to Serdica to receive them.

When the letters had been read out to the Emperor, Edeco departed with Vigilas, who had interpreted all of Attila's views which the barbarian had communicated, and went to another suite to meet Chrysaphius, the Emperor's chamberlain and the most powerful of his ministers. The barbarian expressed wonder at the magnificence of the

palace rooms, and when he came to speak to Chrysaphius, Vigilas, while translating, said that Edeco was praising the palace and congratulating the Romans on their wealth. Chrysaphius said that he, too, would become the owner of wealth and of rooms with golden ceilings if he were to disregard Scythian interests and work for those of the Romans. When Edeco replied that it was not right for the servant of another master to do this without his lord's permission, the eunuch asked if he had unrestricted access to Attila and any authority amongst the Scythians. When Edeco replied that he was one of Attila's intimates and that he, together with others selected from amongst the leading men, was entrusted with guarding Attila (he explained that on fixed days each of them in turn guarded Attila under arms), the eunuch said that if he would receive oaths, he would speak greatly to his advantage; there was, however, need of leisure for this, and they would have it if Edeco came to dinner with him without Orestes and his other fellow ambassadors. Edeco promised to do this and came to dinner at the eunuch's residence. With Vigilas interpreting, they clasped right hands and exchanged oaths, the eunuch that he would speak not to Edeco's harm but to his great advantage, Edeco that he would not reveal what would be said to him even if he did not work towards its achievement. Then the eunuch said that if Edeco should cross to Scythia, slay Attila and return to the Romans, he would enjoy a life of happiness and very great wealth. Edeco promised to do this and said that for its accomplishment he required money – not much, only fifty pounds of gold to be given to the force acting under his orders, to ensure that they co-operated fully with him in the attack. When the eunuch replied that he would give the money immediately, the barbarian said that he should be sent off to report to Attila upon the embassy and that Vigilas should be sent with him to receive Attila's reply on the subject of the fugitives. Through Vigilas he would send instructions as to how the gold was to be dispatched. Since he had been away, he, like the others, would be closely questioned by Attila as to who amongst the Romans had given him gifts and how much money he had received, and because of his companions he could not hide the fifty pounds of gold.

Edeco's words seemed sensible to the eunuch, and, accepting the barbarian's advice, he dismissed him after dinner and took the plan to the Emperor. The Emperor summoned Martialis, the master of the offices, and told him of the agreements with the barbarian. (Of necessity he confided in this official, since the master of the offices, being

in charge of the messengers, interpreters and imperial bodyguard, is informed of all the Emperor's plans.) They discussed the proposal and decided to send as envoys to Attila not only Vigilas but also Maximinus.

2. (*Exc. de Leg. Rom.* 3)

When Chrysaphius had proposed to Edeco that he kill Attila, the Emperor Theodosius and the master of the offices Martialis discussed the proposal and decided to send as envoys to Attila not only Vigilas but also Maximinus. They told Vigilas, while apparently serving as interpreter, to take his orders from Edeco, and Maximinus, who knew nothing of what they had planned, to deliver the Emperor's letters. In reply to Attila it was written on behalf of the ambassadors that Vigilas was the interpreter and that Maximinus was a man of higher rank than Vigilas, of illustrious lineage and a confidant of the Emperor in matters of the highest importance. Then it was written, "It is not proper that one who is undermining the treaty should enter Roman territory", and, "In addition to those already handed over I have sent you seventeen fugitives, since there are no more".<sup>24</sup> These were the words in the letters. Maximinus was ordered to speak personally to Attila in order that he need not demand that envoys of the highest rank come to him; for this had not been the case with his ancestors or other rulers of Scythia, but ordinary soldiers and messengers had acted as ambassadors. To settle the matters in dispute it seemed best to send Onegesius to the Romans, for, since Serdica had been sacked, Attila could not proceed there with a man of consular rank.

Maximinus by his pleadings persuaded me to accompany him on this embassy. So, we set out together with the barbarians and reached Serdica, which is thirteen days from Constantinople for an unladen traveller. There we broke our journey and thought it proper to offer hospitality to Edeco and the barbarians with him. The inhabitants supplied us with sheep and cattle which we slaughtered, and we prepared a meal. While we were drinking, the barbarians toasted Attila and we Theodosius. But Vigilas said that it was not proper to compare a god and a man, meaning Attila by a man and Theodosius by a god. This annoyed the Huns, and gradually they grew heated and angry. But we turned the conversation to other things and by our friendly manner calmed their anger, and when we were leaving after dinner, Maximinus

won over Edeco and Orestes with gifts of silk garments and pearls.<sup>25</sup>

While Orestes was awaiting Edeco's departure he said to Maximinus that he was a wise and very good man not to have committed the same offence as those at court, for they had invited Edeco to dinner without himself and had honoured him with gifts. This remark was meaningless to us since we were in ignorance of what had been done, and we asked him how and on what occasion he had been slighted and Edeco honoured. But he made no reply and went away. On the following day as we were travelling along, we told Vigilas what Orestes had said to us. Vigilas said that he should not be angry at being treated differently from Edeco, since Orestes was a servant and secretary of Attila, whereas Edeco, as one of the leading warriors and of the Hunnic race,<sup>26</sup> was by far his superior. Having said this and having spoken privately with Edeco, he later told us (either truthfully or otherwise) that he had reported to Edeco what had been said and had only with difficulty calmed him down since he had become very angry at the report.

When we arrived at Naissus, we found the city empty of people since it had been laid waste by the enemy. In the Christian hostels there were some persons suffering from disease. A short distance away from the river we halted in a clean place<sup>27</sup> (for all towards the river bank was full of the bones of men killed in the fighting) and on the following day we came to Agintheus, the general of the forces in Illyricum, who was not far from Naissus, to convey to him the Emperor's orders and to receive the fugitives. He was to hand over five of the seventeen about whom it had been written to Attila.<sup>28</sup> We spoke to him and caused him to hand over the five fugitives to the Huns. He treated them kindly and sent them off with us.

Having spent the night we set out on our journey from the border at Naissus to the river Danube.<sup>29</sup> We came upon a thickly-shaded place where the path took many twists and turns and detours. While we were here the day dawned, and, thinking that we were journeying westwards, we saw the sun rise<sup>30</sup> right in front of us. As a result those who were unfamiliar with the lie of the land cried out that the sun was travelling in the opposite direction and portended unusual events. But because of the irregularity of the terrain that part of the path turned to the East. After this difficult ground we came to a plain which was also wooded.<sup>31</sup> Here barbarian ferrymen received us and conveyed us across

the river in boats which they had made from single trunks, themselves cutting and hollowing out the trees. They had not made these boats for our sake, but had already ferried across a force of barbarians, which had met us on the road, since Attila wished to cross over to Roman territory as if to hunt. But the royal Scythian was really doing this in preparation for war, on the pretext that all the fugitives had not been given up.<sup>32</sup>

When we had crossed the Danube and travelled about seventy stades with the barbarians, we were compelled to wait on some flat ground while Edeco's attendants went to Attila to announce our arrival. Our barbarian guides remained with us, and in the late afternoon we were taking our dinner when we heard the clatter of horses coming towards us and two Scythians arrived and told us to come to Attila.<sup>33</sup> We bade them first join us for dinner, and they dismounted and were well entertained. On the next day they led us on the road, and we arrived at Attila's tents (of which there were many) at about the ninth hour of the day. When we wanted to pitch our tents on a hill, the barbarians who had come to meet us prevented us because Attila's tent was on low ground.

When we had encamped where the Scythians thought best, Edeco, Orestes, Scottas and others of the leading men amongst the Huns came and asked what we hoped to achieve in making the embassy. We were shocked by this unreasonable question and looked at each other, but they persisted, becoming troublesome in their demands for a reply. When we said that the Emperor had ordered us to speak to Attila and no others, Scottas became angry and replied that this was the command of their leader; for they would not have come to us meddling on their own. We said that it was not the rule for ambassadors that they should wrangle through others over the purpose of their mission without meeting or coming into the presence of those to whom they had been sent. The Scythians, moreover, were not ignorant of this since they had sent frequent embassies to the Emperor: we deserved equal treatment, and if we did not receive it we would not tell the purpose of the embassy. They went off to Attila and came back again without Edeco and told us everything for which we had come on the embassy, ordering us to leave with all speed if we had nothing further to say. At these words we were even more puzzled, since we could not see how things which the Emperor had decided in secret had come to their knowledge. We considered that it was of no advantage to our

embassy to give a reply unless we were granted access to Attila. We, therefore, said that their leader was asking whether we had come as envoys on the matters mentioned by the Scythians or on other business and that we would by no means discuss this with others than himself. They ordered us to depart immediately.

While we were preparing for our journey Vigilas criticised us for our answer, saying that it was better to be caught in a lie than to leave without achieving anything. "If", he said, "I had been able to speak with Attila, I should easily have persuaded him to set aside his differences with the Romans, since I became friendly with him on the embassy with Anatolius".<sup>34</sup> He claimed that Edeco supported him in this,<sup>35</sup> in order that by arguing for continuing the embassy and for saying anything, whether true or false, he might have an excuse to consult over what they had decided against Attila and as to how the gold, which Edeco said he needed for distribution amongst those under his orders, might be brought. But he did not know that he had been betrayed. For Edeco had either made his promise falsely or he was afraid of Orestes, lest he say to Attila what he had said to us at Serdica after the banquet, blaming Edeco for having spoken with the Emperor and the eunuch without himself. Therefore, he reported to Attila the plot that had been hatched against him and the amount of gold that was to be sent, and he revealed the purpose of the embassy.

Our baggage had already been loaded upon the animals, and out of necessity we were attempting to start out on our journey at night, when some barbarians came to us and said that Attila bade us wait because of the hour. At that very spot from which we had set out men came bringing us an ox and fish from the river, which Attila had sent us. Therefore, we ate dinner and turned to sleep.

When day came we thought that there would be some mild and conciliatory indication from the barbarian. But he again sent the same men, ordering us to leave if we had nothing to say beyond what was already known to them. We said nothing and prepared for our journey, although Vigilas argued persistently that we should claim that we had other things to say. Seeing that Maximinus was very dejected, I took with me Rusticius,<sup>36</sup> who knew the language of the barbarians (he had come with us to Scythia not on the embassy but on business with Constantius, who was an Italian and secretary of Attila, sent to him by Aetius, the general of the western Romans),<sup>37</sup> and approached Scottas, for Onegesius was not there at the time. With Rusticius as interpreter,

I spoke to Scottas and said that he would receive many gifts from Maximinus if he obtained him an interview with Attila. For his embassy would benefit not only the Romans and the Huns, but also Onegesius whom the Emperor wished to come to him to settle the disputes between the two peoples and who, if he came, would receive very great gifts. Since Onegesius was absent he must help us — or, rather, his brother — in this laudable enterprise. I said that we had heard that he, too, had influence with Attila, but that the reports about him would not seem well-founded unless we had an example of his power. He rose to the challenge and said that we should no longer doubt that he spoke and acted before Attila on an equality with his brother. Then he immediately mounted his horse and galloped off to Attila's tent.

I returned to Maximinus, who, like Vigilas, was in despair and at a loss in the present situation, and I told him what I had said to Scottas and what he had replied. I said that they should prepare the gifts to give the barbarian and work out what they would say to him. Both of them leaped up (for they had been lying on the grass) and applauded what I had done. They called back those who had already set out with the pack animals and fell to considering how they should address Attila and how to present to him the gifts from the Emperor and those which Maximinus had brought for him.

While we were busy with these matters, Attila summoned us through Scottas, and we came to his tent, which was surrounded by a ring of barbarian guards. When we were granted entrance, we saw Attila seated on a wooden chair. We halted a little before the throne, and Maximinus advanced, greeted the barbarian, gave him the letters from the Emperor and said that the Emperor prayed that he and his followers were safe and well. He replied that the Romans would have what they wished for him. Then he immediately directed his words towards Vigilas, calling him a shameless beast and asking why he had wished to come to him when he knew the peace terms agreed between himself and Anatolius, which specified that no ambassadors should come to him before all the fugitives had been surrendered to the barbarians. When Vigilas replied that there was not one fugitive of the Scythian race amongst the Romans, for all who were there had been surrendered, Attila became even more angry and abused him violently, shouting that he would have impaled him and left him as food for the birds if he had not thought that it infringed the rights of ambassadors to punish him in this way for the shamelessness and effrontery of his



words. He continued that there were many fugitives of his own race amongst the Romans and he ordered the secretaries to read out their names, which were written on papyrus. When the secretaries had read out all the names, Attila told Vigilas to depart immediately and he said that he would send with him Esclas to tell the Romans to return to him all the barbarians who had fled to them from the time of Carpilio (the son of Aetius, the general of the Romans in the West), who had been a hostage at his court.<sup>38</sup> He would not allow his own servants to go to war against himself, even though they were unable to help those who entrusted to them the guarding of their own land. For, asked Attila, what city or fortress had been saved by them after he had set out to capture it? When they had announced his views on the fugitives, they were to return and report whether the Romans were willing to give them up or would go to war on their behalf. Maximinus he first ordered to remain with the court so that through him he might reply to the Emperor's written messages, and then he told us to hand over the gifts which Maximinus was bringing and to withdraw.<sup>39</sup>

We handed over the gifts and, returning to our tent, discussed amongst ourselves each of the things which had been said. Vigilas expressed amazement that while Attila had seemed calm and mild towards him on the previous embassy, on the present occasion he abused him violently. I said that perhaps some of the barbarians who had dined with us at Serdica had made Attila angry by telling him that Vigilas had called the Roman Emperor a god and Attila a man. Maximinus, since he had no part in the plot which the eunuch had devised against the barbarian, accepted this explanation as likely. But Vigilas was at a loss and appeared to me to have no explanation of why Attila had railed at him. For he did not think, as he told us later, that either the business at Serdica or the details of the plot had been reported to Attila, since no one else from the group, because of the fear which constrained all of them, would dare to go to speak with him, and Edeco would keep entirely quiet both because of his oaths and because of the uncertainty in the matter, in case he should be judged to have forwarded the plot, since he took part in the talks, and be killed as a punishment.

While we were in this state of uncertainty, Edeco arrived. He drew Vigilas aside from our group and, pretending to be serious about what they had planned, said that the gold should be brought to be given to those who would co-operate with him in the attempt. Then he left.

When we asked what Edeco had said to him, Vigilas, being himself deceived, tried to deceive us. Hiding the true reason, he said that Edeco had told him that Attila was angry with him over the fugitives, since it was necessary either that he receive them all or that ambassadors of the highest rank come to him.

While we were discussing these things, some of Attila's men came and said that neither Vigilas nor ourselves were to buy any Roman prisoner, or barbarian slave, or horses, or anything else except for food until the disputes between the Romans and the Huns had been settled. This was cunningly contrived and part of the barbarian's plan that Vigilas should be easily trapped in the plot against himself without a reason for bringing the gold, and that, on the excuse of a reply to be given to the embassy, we should await Onegesius, who would thus receive the gifts which the Emperor had sent and which we wished to deliver.

It happened that Onegesius had been sent together with Attila's eldest son<sup>40</sup> to the Akatziri, a Scythian people that had submitted to Attila for the following reason.<sup>41</sup> This people had many rulers according to their tribes and clans, and the Emperor Theodosius sent gifts to them to the end that they might unanimously renounce their alliance with Attila and seek peace with the Romans. The envoy who conveyed the gifts did not deliver them to each of the kings by rank, with the result that Kouridachus, the senior in office, received his gifts second and, being thus overlooked and deprived of his proper honours, called in Attila against his fellow kings. Attila without delay sent a large force, destroyed some and forced the rest to submit. He then summoned Kouridachus to share in the prizes of victory. But he, suspecting a plot, declared that it was hard for a man to come into the sight of a god: "For if it is not possible to look directly at the sun's disc, how could one look at the greatest of the gods without harm?" In this way Kouridachus remained amongst his own folk and saved his realm, while all the rest of the Akatzirian people submitted to Attila. He, wishing to make his eldest son king of this people, sent Onegesius for this purpose. Therefore, as I have said, he ordered us to remain with him and sent off Vigilas with Eslas to cross to Roman territory on the pretext of the fugitives, but in reality so that Vigilas might bring the gold to Edeco.

When Vigilas had left, we waited for one day after his departure and on the next set out with Attila for the more northerly parts of the

country. For a while we travelled with him and then turned off onto a different road at the command of our Scythian guides, since Attila was to go to a certain village where he wished to marry a daughter of Escam.<sup>42</sup> (Although he had many wives, he was marrying her according to Scythian custom.) From there we travelled along a level road over a plain and crossed navigable rivers, of which the greatest, after the Danube, were the ones named the Drecon, the Tigas and the Tiphesas.<sup>43</sup> These we crossed in boats made of single tree trunks, which those living near the rivers used; the others we negotiated on the rafts which the barbarians carry on their wagons because of the marshy areas. At the villages we were abundantly supplied with foodstuffs, millet instead of wheat and instead of wine what is called by the natives *medos*. The attendants in our train also carried millet and the drink made from barley which the barbarians call *kamon*.<sup>44</sup>

Having completed a long journey, in the late afternoon we encamped near to a pool containing drinkable water which supplied the inhabitants of the nearby village. Suddenly a wind and a storm arose with thunder and a great deal of lightning and rain, and it not only collapsed our tent but blew all our baggage into the pool. Terrified by the tumult that was raging in the air and by what had already happened, we fled the place and scattered, each of us in the darkness and the downpour taking the path which we thought would be the easiest.<sup>45</sup> Arriving at the huts of the village (which we all reached by our different routes), we gathered together and began to shout for the things we needed. At the uproar the Scythians rushed out, kindling the reeds which they used for fire and making light, and asked us what we wanted with our shouting. When the barbarians who were with us replied that we were panicked by the storm, they called to us and took us into their own homes and, burning a great quantity of reeds, gave us warmth.

The woman who ruled the village (she had been one of Bleda's wives) sent us food and attractive women for intercourse, which is a mark of honour amongst the Scythians. We plied the women generously from the foods placed before us, but refused intercourse with them. We remained in the huts and at about daybreak we went to search for our baggage and found it all, some in the spot in which we had happened to halt on the previous day, some at the edge of the pool, and some actually in the water. We gathered it up and spent the day in

the village drying it all out, for the storm had ceased and the sun was shining brightly. When we had taken care of the horses and the rest of the baggage animals, we visited the queen, thanked her, and repaid her with three silver bowls, red skins, Indian pepper, dates and other dried fruits which the barbarians value because they are not native to their own country. Then we called blessings upon her for her hospitality and departed.

When we had completed a journey of seven days, on the orders of our Scythian guides we halted at a village, since Attila was to take the same road and we had to follow behind him. There we met some western Romans who were also on an embassy to Attila. Amongst them were Romulus, who had the rank of count, Promotus, the governor of Noricum, and the general Romanus.<sup>46</sup> With them were Constantius, whom Aetius had sent to Attila as his secretary, and Tatulus, the father of Orestes who was with Edeco. They were not members of the embassy but were travelling with the envoys out of personal friendship, Constantius because of his earlier acquaintance with them in Italy, Tatulus out of kinship, since his son Orestes had married a daughter of Romulus. . . . They were making this embassy from Patavio, a city in Noricum,<sup>47</sup> in order to pacify Attila, who wanted Silvanus, the manager of the bank dealing in bullion at Rome,<sup>48</sup> to be handed over to him on the ground that he had received some golden bowls from Constantius. This Constantius came from the Gauls of the West<sup>49</sup> and he too, like the later Constantius, had been sent by Aetius to Attila and Bleda as secretary. At the time when Sirmium, a city of Pannonia, was being besieged by the Scythians,<sup>50</sup> Constantius was given the bowls by the bishop of the city for the purpose of ransoming him if the city were captured and he survived, or, if he were killed, of buying the freedom of those citizens who were being led off as prisoners. However, after the capture of the city, Constantius ignored the rights of the Scythians<sup>51</sup> and, coming to Rome on business, handed over the bowls to Silvanus and received from him gold on condition that either within a stated period of time he repay the gold with interest and recover the sureties or Silvanus do with them as he wished. But Attila and Bleda

came to suspect Constantius of treachery and crucified him, and, after a time, Attila, being informed of the matter of the bowls, wished Silvanus to be handed over to him as a thief of his own possessions. Therefore, envoys had been sent by Aetius and the Emperor of the western Romans to say that, as Constantius' creditor, Silvanus had received the bowls as sureties and not as stolen property and that he had sold them for silver to priests and not to common citizens; for it was not right that men should use for their own purposes vessels dedicated to God. Accordingly, if, after<sup>52</sup> this reasonable explanation and out of respect for divinity, Attila would not drop his demand for the bowls, they would send gold for them but would not surrender Silvanus, since they would not hand over a man who had done no wrong. This was the reason for their embassy, and they were attending him so that the barbarian might give his reply and dismiss them.

Since we were on the same journey, we waited for Attila to go ahead and followed with our whole party. Having crossed some rivers, we came to a very large village<sup>53</sup> in which Attila's palace was said to be more spectacular than those elsewhere. It was constructed of timbers and smoothly planed boards<sup>54</sup> and was surrounded by a wooden wall which was built with an eye not to security but to elegance. The buildings of Onegesius were second only to those of the king in magnificence, and they too had a circuit wall made of timbers but not embellished with towers, as was Attila's. Not far from this wall was a bath which Onegesius, whose power amongst the Scythians was second only to that of Attila, had built, fetching stones from Pannonia. For there is neither stone nor timber amongst the barbarians who inhabit this area, but the wood that they use is imported. The builder of the bath had been taken prisoner at Sirmium, and he hoped to gain his freedom as a reward for his inventive work. But he was disappointed and fell into greater distress than slavery amongst the Scythians. For Onegesius made him bath attendant, and he waited upon him and his followers when they bathed.

In this village, as Attila was entering, young girls came to meet him and went before him in rows under narrow cloths of white linen, which were held up by the hands of women on either side. These cloths were stretched out to such a length that under each one seven or more girls walked. There were many such rows of women under the cloths, and they sang Scythian songs. When Attila came near to Onegesius'

compound, through which the road to the palace passed,<sup>55</sup> Onegesius' wife came out to meet him with a crowd of servants, some carrying food and others wine (this is a very great honour amongst the Scythians), welcomed him and asked him to partake of what she had brought out of friendship. In order to please the wife of a close friend, he ate while sitting on his horse, the barbarians who were accompanying him having raised aloft the platter which was of silver. When he had also drunk from the cup of wine which was offered to him, he proceeded to the palace, which was higher than the other structures and built on a rise.

We waited at the compound of Onegesius as he had ordered, for he had returned with Attila's son. His wife and the most important members of his clan received us, and there we dined. Onegesius did not have time to dine with us, since immediately upon his return he had gone to speak with Attila to report to him upon the business for which he had been sent and upon the accident suffered by Attila's son, who had fallen and broken his right arm. After the meal we left Onegesius' compound, moved closer to Attila's palace and camped there, so that when the time came for Maximinus to have an audience with Attila or else to speak with others of his retinue, he should not be far away. We spent the night where we had encamped, and at daybreak Maximinus sent me to Onegesius to give him the gifts, both those which he was giving and those which the Emperor had sent, and to learn where and when he wished to speak with him. I arrived with the servants who were carrying the gifts for him and, since the doors were still shut, I waited until someone should come out and report our arrival.

As I was waiting and walking about before the circuit wall of the palace, someone, whom I took to be a barbarian from his Scythian dress, approached me and greeted me in Greek, saying, "*khair*" ("Hello"). I was amazed that a Scythian was speaking Greek. Being a mixture of peoples, in addition to their own languages they cultivate Hunnic or Gothic or (in the case of those who have dealings with the Romans) Latin. But none of them can easily speak Greek, except for those whom they have taken prisoner from the sea coasts of Thrace and Illyria,<sup>56</sup> and whoever met them could easily recognise them from their tattered clothes and filthy hair as persons who had fallen into

adversity. This one, however, was like a well-cared-for Scythian with good clothing and his hair clipped all around.<sup>57</sup>

I returned his greeting and asked who he was and where he came from to the land of the barbarians and took up a Scythian way of life. In reply he asked why I was so eager to know this. I said that his Greek speech was the reason for my curiosity. He laughed and said that he was a Greek and for purposes of trade he had gone to Viminacium, the city in Moesia on the river Danube. He had lived there for a very long time and married a very rich woman. When the city was captured by the barbarians,<sup>58</sup> he was deprived of his prosperity and, because of his great wealth, was assigned to Onegesius himself in the division of the spoils; for after Attila the leading men of the Scythians, because they were in command of very many men,<sup>59</sup> chose their captives from amongst the well-to-do. Having proven his valour in later battles against the Romans and the nation of the Akatiri and having, according to Scythian law, given his booty to his master, he had won his freedom. He had married a barbarian wife and had children, and, as a sharer at the table of Onegesius, he now enjoyed a better life than he had previously.

He continued, saying that after a war men amongst the Scythians live at ease, each enjoying his own possessions and troubling others or being troubled not at all or very little. But amongst the Romans, since on account of their tyrants<sup>60</sup> not all men carry weapons, they place their hope of safety in others and are thus easily destroyed in war. Moreover, those who do use arms are endangered still more by the cowardice of their generals, who are unable to sustain a war. In peace misfortunes await one even more painful than the evils of war because of the imposition of heavy taxes and injuries done by criminals. For the laws are not applied to all. If the wrongdoer is rich, the result is that he does not pay the penalty for his crime, whereas if he is poor and does not know how to handle the matter, he suffers the prescribed punishment — if he does not die before judgement is given (since lawsuits are much protracted and much money is spent on them). And this may be the most painful thing, to have to pay for justice. For no one will grant a hearing to a wronged man unless he hands over money for the judge and his assessors.

While he was putting these and many other complaints, I said gently in reply that he should also hear my point of view. "Those who founded the Roman polity were," I said, "wise and good men. So that things should not be done haphazardly, they ordained that some should be guardians of the laws and that others should attend to weaponry and undergo military training, with their sole object that they be ready for battle and go out confidently to war as if to some familiar exercise, their fear having been already eradicated by their training. Our founders also ordained that those whose care was farming and the cultivation of the land should support both themselves and those fighting on their behalf by contributing the military grain-tax. Still others they appointed to take thought for those who had suffered wrongs, some to have charge of the cases of those who, through their own natural incapability, were unable to plead for themselves, and others to sit in judgement and uphold the intent of the law. Furthermore, they took thought for those who came before the courts, that there should be persons to ensure that the one who obtained the judgement should receive his award and that the one adjudged guilty should not pay more than the judge decided. If there did not exist persons to take thought for these matters, a reason for a second case would arise out of the cause of the first, because either the victor would proceed too harshly or the one who had obtained the adverse decision would persist in his injustice.<sup>61</sup>

"There is also a set sum of money laid down for these men to be paid by the litigants, just as the farmers pay a set sum to the soldiers. Is it not right to support one who comes to your aid and to reward his good will (in the same way as the feeding of a horse benefits the horseman and the care of cattle, dogs and other animals benefits herdsmen, hunters and others who keep the animals for their own safety and profit) and to blame one's own illegal act rather than another person whenever the court costs have to be paid even though the case has been lost?

"The excessive time taken over the cases, if that happens, is the result of a concern for justice, lest the judges deal with them carelessly and err in their decisions. For they think it is better to conclude a case late than by hurrying to wrong a man and offend against God, the founder of justice. The laws apply to all, and even the Emperor obeys them. It is not a fact" — as was part of his charge — "that the rich do



violence to the poor with impunity, unless one escapes justice through escaping detection; and this is a recourse for the poor as well as for the rich. These offenders would go unpunished because of lack of evidence, something which happens not only amongst the Romans but amongst all peoples.

“For your freedom you should give thanks to fortune rather than to your master. He led you out to war, where, through inexperience, you might have been killed by the enemy or, fleeing the battle, have been punished by your owner. The Romans are wont to treat even their household slaves better. They act as fathers or teachers towards them and punish them, like their own children, if they do wrong, so that they are restrained from improper behaviour and pursue what is thought right for them. Unlike amongst the Scythians, it is forbidden to punish them with death.

“Amongst the Romans there are many ways of giving freedom. Not only the living but also the dead bestow it lavishly, arranging their estates as they wish; and whatever a man has willed for his possessions at his death is legally binding.”

My acquaintance wept and said that the laws were fair and the Roman polity was good, but that the authorities were ruining it by not taking the same thought for it as those of old.

While we were discussing these things, one of those inside came out and opened the gates of the wall. I ran forward and asked what Onegesius was doing, saying that I wished to pass him a message from the ambassador of the Romans. He replied that if I waited a little I should meet him, since he was about to go out. Shortly afterwards I saw him coming out and I went forward and said that the ambassador of the Romans sent him greetings and that I had come bearing gifts from him and gold sent by the Emperor. I also asked where and when he was willing to speak with the ambassador, who was eager to confer with him. He ordered his attendants to take the gold and the gifts and told me to report to Maximinus that he would come to him straight-away. I returned to Maximinus and reported that Onegesius was on his way; and he came to the tent immediately.

Onegesius addressed Maximinus, thanking both him and the Emperor for the gifts and asking what he wished to say in sending for him. Maximinus said that the time had come when Onegesius would win greater fame amongst men if he went to the Emperor and, by his

own sagacity, settled the disputes and established harmony between the Romans and the Huns. From this not only would advantage come for both nations, but also he would derive many benefits for his own household, since he and his children would be forever friends of the Emperor and his family. Onegesius asked what he was to do to win the Emperor's friendship and how the disputes were to be settled. When Maximinus replied that if he crossed over to Roman territory, he would earn the Emperor's gratitude and he would settle the disputes by investigating the causes and removing them in accordance with the terms of the peace, Onegesius said that he would simply tell the Emperor and his officials what Attila wished. "Or do the Romans think," he retorted, "that they will bring so much persuasion to bear on me that I shall betray my master, turn my back upon my upbringing amongst the Scythians, my wives and my children and think that slavery to Attila is not preferable to wealth amongst the Romans?" He concluded that it would be better for him to remain in his own country and to calm his master's rage on those matters over which he was angry at the Romans rather than to go to them and incur the charge that he had acted other than seemed best to Attila. Having said this and having instructed that I should confer with him on questions we wished to ask of him (for continual visiting was not proper for Maximinus, a man in an official position), he went away.

On the following day I approached Attila's wall bearing gifts for Attila's wife, whose name was Hereka<sup>62</sup> and who had borne him three sons, the eldest of whom ruled the Akatiri and the other tribes dwelling by the Black Sea in Scythia.<sup>63</sup> Inside the wall there was a large cluster of buildings, some made of planks carved and fitted together for ornamental effect, others from timbers which had been debarked and planed straight. They were set on circular piles made of stones, which began from the ground and rose to a moderate height.<sup>64</sup> Here lived Attila's wife. I entered through the barbarians at her door and found her reclining on a soft couch. The floor was covered with woollen-felt rugs for walking upon. A group of servants stood around her in attendance, and servant girls sat facing her working coloured embroidery on fine linens to be worn as ornaments over the barbarian clothing. I went forward, greeted her, presented the gifts and withdrew.

Then I walked to the other group of buildings, where Attila was living, and waited for Onegesius to come out, since he had already left his own dwellings and was within. As I was standing in the midst of the whole throng (for I was known to Attila's guards and followers, and no one hindered me), I saw a group of persons advancing and heard murmuring and shouts around the place, since Attila was coming out. He came out of the house swaggering and casting his eyes around. When he had come out, he stood with Onegesius in front of the building, and many persons who had disputes with one another stepped forward and received his judgement. Then he re-entered the house and received the barbarian envoys who had come to him.

While I was waiting for Onegesius, Romulus, Promotus and Romanus, who had come from Italy as envoys to Attila over the golden bowls, came to speak to me. With them were Rusticius, the subordinate of Constantius,<sup>65</sup> and Constantiolus, a man from the part of Pannonia subject to Attila. They asked whether we had been dismissed or whether we were being forced to remain. I said that I was waiting by the enclosures to learn this from Onegesius. When I, in my turn, asked whether Attila had given them a mild and gentle reply on the matter of their embassy, they said that he had changed his mind not at all and was threatening war unless either Silvanus or the bowls were sent to him.

When we expressed amazement at the unreasonableness of the barbarian, Romulus, an ambassador of long experience, replied that his very great good fortune and the power which it had given him had made him so arrogant that he would not entertain just proposals unless he thought that they were to his advantage. No previous ruler of Scythia or of any other land had ever achieved so much in so short a time. He ruled the islands of the Ocean and, in addition to the whole of Scythia, forced the Romans to pay tribute. He was aiming at more than his present achievements and, in order to increase his empire further, he wanted to attack the Persians.

When one of those amongst us asked what road Attila could take to reach Persia, Romulus replied that the land of the Medes was not a great distance from Scythia, and the Huns were not ignorant of the route. They came upon it long ago when famine was sweeping their land and the Romans did not oppose them on account of the war in

which they were then involved.<sup>66</sup> Basich and Kursich, members of the Scythian royalty and commanders of a large force (who later came to Rome to make an alliance), reached the land of the Medes. Those Huns who have gone over to the Romans<sup>67</sup> say that, having come into a desert land and having crossed a lake (which Romulus thought was Maeotis), after fifteen days they passed over some mountains and entered Media. As they were overrunning and plundering the land, a Persian army confronted them and filled the air above them with missiles, so that they had to retreat from their immediate danger and retire across the mountains. They gained little plunder, since the Medes took most of it from them. As a precaution against enemy pursuit they took a different route and, after a journey of a few days from the flame that issues from the rock beneath the sea,<sup>68</sup> they reached their own land. Thus they know that Scythia is not far from Media and, if Attila wished to go there, he would neither have much toil nor a long journey. And so, since he has a military force which no nation can withstand, he would subdue the Medes, the Parthians, and the Persians and force them to pay tribute.

When we prayed that he would go against the Persians and direct the war against them, Constantiolus said that he feared that when he had easily subdued the Persians, he would return as a master rather than as a friend. At present, gold is brought to him because of his rank. However, if he were to subdue the Parthians, Medes and the Persians, he would not continue to endure a Roman state independent of himself and, holding them to be obviously his servants, would lay upon them very harsh and intolerable injunctions. (The rank which Constantiolus mentioned was that of a Roman general,<sup>69</sup> which the Emperor had granted to Attila, thus concealing the word tribute. As a result, the payments were sent to him disguised as provisions issued to the generals.) Constantiolus said that after the Medes, Parthians and Persians, Attila would reject the title by which the Romans wished to call him and the rank with which they thought they had honoured him and would force them to address him as king instead of general. Already when angry he would say that his own subjects were generals of [Theodosius]<sup>70</sup> and that his own generals were of equal worth to the Emperors of the Romans.