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AMANDUS: RUSTIC REBEL OR PIRATE PRINCE?

According to our surviving sources, two men by the names of Aelianus and Amandus led the revolt of the so-called Bagaudae in Gaul which the emperor Herculius Maximianus crushed about AD 286.[1] Unfortunately, our sources for this event are extremely brief and do not clarify their status or aims. Furthermore, those few Latin sources which do actually name these men seem all to derive from the same document ultimately, the so-called *Kaisergeschichte*, a series of imperial biographies which seems to have been composed in Gaul about 357.[2] Of these sources, the two earliest and most detailed surviving accounts are by Aurelius Victor and Eutropius. Writing c. 361, Aurelius Victor described the period of their revolt as follows (Aur. Vict. 39.17-20):

> Namque ubi comperit Carini discessu Helianum Amandumque per Galliam excita manu agrestium ac latronum, quos Bagaudas incolae vocant, populatis late agris plerasque urbium tentare, Maximianum statim fidum amicitia quamquam semiagrestem, militiae tamen atque ingenio bonum imperatorem iubet. ... Sed Herculius in Galliam profectus fusis hostibus aut acceptis quieta omnia brevi patraverat. Quo bello Carausius, Menapiae civis, factis promptioribus enituit; eoque eum, simul quia gubernandi (quo officio adolescentiam mercede exercuerat) gnarus habebatur, parandae classi ac propulsandis Germanis maria infestantibus praefecere. Hoc elatior, cum barbarum multos opprimeret neque praedae omnia in aerarium referret, Herculii metu, a quo se caedi iussum compererat, Britanniam hausto imperio capessivit.
>
> For when Diocletian had learned, after Carinus' death, that in Gaul Helianus and Amandus had stirred up a band of peasants and robbers, whom the inhabitants call Bagaudae, and had ravaged the regions far and wide and were making attempts on very many of the cities, he immediately appointed as emperor Maximian, a loyal friend who, although he was rather uncivilized, was nevertheless a good soldier of sound character. ... Well, Herculius marched into Gaul and in a short time he had pacified the whole country by routing the enemy forces or accepting their surrender. In this war Carausius, a citizen of Menapia, distinguished himself by his clearly remarkable exploits. For this reason and in addition because he was considered an expert pilot (he had earned his living at this job as a young man), he was put in charge of fitting out a fleet and driving out the Germans who were infesting the seas. Because of this appointment he became quite arrogant and when he had overcome many of the barbarians but had not turned over all of the booty to the public treasury, in fear of Herculius, who, he learned, had ordered his execution, he seized the imperial power and made for Britain.[3]

Writing c. 369, Eutropius, has left us a similar account, but with some different details concerning the revolt which the Roman commander Carausius led shortly after the subjugation of the Bagaudae (Eutr. 9.20-21):

> Ita rerum Romanarum potitus, cum tumultum rusticani in Gallia concitassent et factioni suae Bacaudarum nomen imponerent, duces autem haberent Amandum et Aelianum, ad subigendos eos Maximianum Herculium Caesarem misit, qui levibus proeliis agrestes

[1] There is a large bibliography on the Bagaudae. See, most recently, C.E. Minor, 'Reclassifying the Bacaudae: Some Reasons for Caution. Part I: Who Were the Third Century Bacaudae?', *AncW* 28 (1997) 167-83.

[2] In general, see R.W. Burgess, 'On the Date of the *Kaisergeschichte*', *CPh* 90 (1995) 111-28.

[3] Trans. by H.W. Bird, *Aurelius Victor: De Caesaribus* (Liverpool 1994), 42-3.

domuit et pacem Galliae reformavit. Per haec tempora etiam Carausius, qui vilissime natus strenuae militiae ordine famam egregiam fuerat consecutus, cum apud Bononiam per tractum Belgicae et Armorici pacandum mare accepisset, quod Franci et Saxones, infestabant, multis barbaris saepe captis nec praeda integra aut provincialibus reddita aut imperatoribus missa, cum suspicio esse coepisset consulto ab eo admitti barbaros, ut transeuntes cum praeda exciperet atque hac se occasione ditaret, a Maximiano iussus occidi, purpuram sumpsit et Britannias occupavit.

Thus Diocletian gained possession of the Roman empire, and when the country people in Gaul had incited a revolt and given their movement the name of Bagaudae and acquired as their leaders Amandus and Aelianus, he sent Maximianus Herculius as Caesar to crush them. He subdued the peasants in some petty skirmishes and restored peace to Gaul. During these times Carausius, too, who had achieved an outstanding reputation through a series of vigorous military actions, though he was of the meanest birth, after he had received orders at Boulogne to clear the sea along the coast of Belgica and Armorica, which the Franks and Saxons were infesting, frequently captured many barbarians but neither returned the booty intact to the provincials nor sent it to the emperors. When it began to be suspected that the barbarians were being admitted by him on purpose, so that he might intercept them with their booty as they passed by and use this opportunity to enrich himself, his execution was ordered by Maximianus, so he assumed the purple and took possession of the British provinces.[4]

It is the purpose of this note to suggest that this Amandus, the alleged leader of the Bagaudae, may be identifiable with the general of the same name who commanded the emperor Licinius' fleet during his second civil-war with Constantine I in 324. The anonymous *Origo Constantini* describes the latter's role as follows (5.23, 26).

Rupta iam pace utriusque consensu, Constantinus Caesarem Crispum cum grandi classe ad occupandam Asiam miserat, cui de parte Licinii similiter cum navalibus copiis Amandus obstabat. ..... Dehinc fugiens Licinius Byzantium petit; quo dum multitudo dissipata contenderet, clauso Byzantio Licinius obsidionem terrenam maris securus agitabat. Sed Constantinus classem collegit ex Thracia. Dehinc solita vanitate Licinius Martinianum sibi Caesarem fecit. Crispus vero cum classe Constantini Callipolim pervenit; ibi bello maritimo sic Amandum vicit, ut vix per eos qui in litore remanserant vivus Amandus refugeret. Classis vero Licini vel oppressa vel capta est.

Now peace was broken by consent of both sides; Constantine sent Crispus Caesar with a large fleet to take possession of Asia, and on the side of Licinius, Amandus opposed him, likewise with naval forces. ..... Then Licinius fled to Byzantium; and while his scattered forces were on the way to the city, Licinius closed it, and feeling secure against an attack by sea, planned to meet a siege from the land-side. But Constantine got together a fleet from Thrace. Then Licinius, with his usual lack of consideration, chose Martinianus as his Caesar. But Crispus, with Constantine's fleet, sailed to Callipolis, where in a sea-fight he so utterly defeated Amandus that the latter barely made his escape with the help of the forces which he had left on shore. But Licinius' fleet was in part destroyed and in part captured.[5]

Although the date and circumstances of composition of the *Origo* are controversial, it is generally agreed that it is of early, probably 4th-century origin, and that it is one of our

[4] Trans. by H.W. Bird, *Eutropius*: Breviarium (Liverpool 1993) 61.

[5] Trans. by J.C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus III* (Cambridge MA 1939) 523.

most valuable sources for this period.[6] Furthermore, its information concerning Amandus is supported by Zosimus writing at the beginning of the 6th century.[7] Hence it will be my argument that Amandus did not necessarily lead the Bagaudae, but may in fact be identifiable as the leader of one of the group of pirate raiders who so afflicted the Gallic coast at roughly the same period.[8]

The first and most obvious reason for identifying the alleged leader of the Bagaudae in 286 with Licinius' general in 324 lies in the identity of their relatively uncommon name.[9] The second lies in the realisation that our sources for events in Gaul c. 286 have confused two very different phenomena, the revolt of the Bagaudae and contemporaneous pirate raids upon the Gallic coast. Proof of this lies in the description by Victor of the early career of Carausius before he rebelled against Diocletian and Herculius Maximianus.[10] Victor describes Maximianus' defeat of the Bagaudae and then states that it was because of his remarkable exploits during 'this war' (*quo bello*), i.e. during the war against the Bagaudae, that Maximianus placed Carausius in charge of a fleet formed to drive German raiders from the sea. So what had Carausius done to merit such an appointment ? Given the circumstances of his origin as described by Victor, that he was an expert pilot because he had worked at this post in his youth, and the nature of his new appointment itself, the obvious conclusion would seem to be that Carausius had distinguished himself in some sort of naval engagement. The problem here is that, as all our sources make clear, the Bagaudae were country-folk, ordinary peasant-farmers apparently, and it is difficult to

[6] See T.D. Barnes, 'Jerome and the *Origo Constantini Imperatoris*', *Phoenix* 43 (1989) 158-61, in defence of an early date before 380/1 and in reply to I. König, *Origo Constantini. Anonymus Valesianus, Teil 1. Text und Kommentar* (Trier 1987) 19-28, who had argued that the author of the *Origo* knew the *Chronicle* which Jerome wrote at Constantinople c. 380.

[7] Zos. HN 2.23-4. Although Zosimus preserves the name Amandus as Abantus, he clearly describes the same man. R.T. Ridley, *Zosimus* (Canberra 1982) 34-5, translates: 'Licinius fled to Byzantium, pursued by Constantine, who besieged the city. His navy, as I said, had sailed from the Piraeus and was anchored off Macedonia, so Constantine sent for his admirals, and ordered them to bring up the ships to the mouth of the Hellespont. When the fleet accordingly arrived, Constantine's commanders decided to engage with only eighty triaconters, their best ships, because the place was narrow and not suited to a vast number. Abantus, Licinius' admiral, therefore sailed out with two hundred ships, despising the smallness of the enemy fleet and thinking he would easily surround them. When the signals were given on each side and the ships engaged, however, Constantine's admirals sailed to the attack in good order, whereas Abantus attacked without plan, wrecking his ships which were confined because of their numbers, and allowing the enemy to sink and totally destroy them. Many sailors and marines were drowned before night fell and put an end to the battle, whereupon one navy put in at Eleus in Thrace, the other at the harbour of Ajax. The next day, with a strong north wind, Abantus sailed out from the harbour of Ajax and prepared for battle, but now that the triaconters which were at the mouth of the Hellespont had come to Eleus by order of their commanders, Abantus was so terrified by the number of ships that he hesitated to attack the enemy. About midday, the north wind abated and a strong southerly blew up which caught Licinius' fleet near the Asian coast, driving some ashore, shattering some on the rocks, and sinking others with their crews. Five thousand men and one hundred and thirty ships with crew were lost; these were the vessels on which Licinius had sent away part of his army from Thrace to Asia because of the extremely overcrowded conditions in Byzantium where he was being besieged. This was the outcome of the naval battle and Abantus fled to Asia with four ships.'

[8] On the history of the pirate menace, see J. Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power: A Reassessment of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Seafaring Activity* (London 1991) 1-45.

[9] *PLRE* I, p. 50, names 3 Amandi, *PLRE* II none. In contrast, *PLRE* I, pp. 17-19, names 14 Aeliani (1 under the name Marcus), and *PLRE* II, p.14, names 6.

[10] On Carausius, see P.J.Casey, *Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers* (London 1994). As will become clear, however, I do not agree with his reading of Victor's description of Carausius, p. 49, where he claims that Victor 'contrasts his [Carausius'] naval talents with those he displayed in the land war against the Bagaudae, citing them as the qualification for promotion to the command of a fleet'. I do not see this contrast.

see how or why they should have taken to the seas.[11] The obvious explanation, therefore, is that Carausius did not really distinguish himself against the Bagaudae but against a group of pirate raiders, a small part of the larger menace against which he was subsequently appointed to act. Eutropius' statement that Maximianus ordered Carausius to be killed during 'these times' (*per haec tempora*), i.e. during the same period which saw Maximianus defeat the Bagaudae, emphasizes the contemporaneous nature of the revolt of the Bagaudae and the rise to power of Carausius, in the eyes of Eutropius, or his source, at least, if not in reality, so reinforcing this suspicion. If he does not explicitly support Victor in his emphasis upon Carausius' naval background and his specific statement that he had achieved his fame during the war against the Bagaudae, he says nothing to contradict him either. Hence the *Kaisergeschichte* does not seem to have made as clear a distinction as one would like between the revolt of the Bagaudae and contemporaneous pirate raids upon the coast. In its eyes, Maximianus waged one, simultaneous 'war' to restore central authority over Gaul against both Bagaudae and pirates. It is possible, therefore, that one or even both of Aelianus and Amandus may have led a contingent of pirates rather than the Bagaudae. Indeed, one cannot exclude the possibility that some pirates co-operated with the Bagaudae in joint operations against various coastal towns so that the distinction between their activities really was less clear than modern commentators tend to assume,[12] and that it was this fact which led the author of the *Kaisergeschichte* to fudge their distinction somewhat in the way that he seems to have done.

The third point in favour of the identification of the alleged leader of the Bagaudae with Licinius' naval commander lies in the Roman policy of transporting captives or, more often, former enemies who had decided to defect to the Roman empire for one reason or another, for service in the army in an another part of the empire altogether. For example, in 361 the emperor Julian initially sent the captured Alamannic king Vadomarius to serve in his Spanish garrison,[13] while the emperor Valentinian I sent the Alamannic king Fraomarius to serve in Britain c. 372.[14] At the time, neither of these emperors could have sent them much further away since they only possessed the western half of the empire. More to the point, by early 360 Julian was able to boast that he had taken 10,000 prisoners during his campaigns along the Rhine since his appointment as Caesar in 355, and, as a result, had been able to send 7 units of infantry and 2 of cavalry to serve with Constantius II in the east.[15] In this instance, if Amandus was a pirate, then he presumably led a contingent of either Franks or Saxons, since these were the 2 peoples identified by Eutropius as active pirates in this period. The obvious question, therefore, is whether there is any evidence to suggest that Maximianus did in fact

[11] E.g. *Paneg.* 10.4.3. C.E.V. Nixon and B.S. Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (Berkeley 1994) 60-1, translate: 'Inexperienced farmers sought military garb; the plowman imitated the infantryman, the shepherd the cavalryman, the rustic ravager of his own crops the barbarian enemy.'

[12] The obvious comparison is with the attempt by the former gladiator Spartacus in 71 BC to persuade Cilician pirates to aid the slave-revolt which he had initiated, and, in particular, to help him to capture Sicily. See Plut. *Crassus* 10. In contrast, modern commentators tend to assume that the Bagaudae were a reaction to pirate raids, and opposed to the same, a sort of civil defence who quickly got out of hand themselves. See, e.g. R. Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley 1985) 31-2.

[13] Amm. 21.4.6. See D. Woods, 'Ammianus Marcellinus and the *Rex Alamannorum* Vadomarius', *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 690-710.

[14] Amm. 29.4.7.

[15] Jul. *Ep. ad Athen.* 280d.

transport Frankish or Saxon captives eastwards. The only recorded Saxon unit in the Roman army in the 4th century was the *ala I Saxonum* stationed in Phoenicia,[16] while there were 4 units of Franks, all situated in the east once more.[17] A noteworthy feature of these units is that they are all old-style units, *cohortes* and *alae*, whose creation was severely reduced from the early 4th-century onwards. One also notes that there were relatively few periods after the death of Diocletian when the transfer of captives from the western to the eastern halves of the empire would have proven possible. It is more likely than not, therefore, that all or most of these units were Diocletianic creations from the Saxons and Franks whom Herculius Maximianus, or his Caesar Constantius, sent eastwards following their various victories in Gaul. Hence it is not at all a strange a suggestion as it might first seem that a former pirate in the North Sea should have found himself serving as a naval officer in the eastern Mediterranean instead.

Two major objections remain to be overcome. The first concerns the age of Amandus. The gap of almost 40 years between the revolt of the Bagaudae and the second civil war between Constantine and Licinius requires that the alleged leader of the Bagaudae must have been very young, in his early 20s at most, to have been able to serve Licinius as well. On the whole, though, it does not seem very likely that a young man of this age could have commanded enough authority to organise the untrained peasants of the Bagaudae in the way that someone obviously did. However, if Amandus led not the Bagaudae, but a group of Saxon or Frankish pirates, then his authority among them would most likely have depended not so much on his age or experience as on his relationship to their current or previous king. Hence he may well have led a group of pirates at a relatively early age, only to be captured, or forced to surrender, and spend the next 40 years of his life in Roman military service. Indeed, there is a comparison to be made here with the career of Hormisdas the Elder. He was a Persian prince, the son of the former emperor Narses, and brother of the current emperor Sapor II (309-79), who defected to the Romans c. 324.[18] He then spent most of his life in military service at the court, about 40 years also from his defection c. 324 until his apparent death during the emperor Julian's Persian expedition in 363.[19]

The second objection concerns the existence of some coins allegedly issued in the name of Amandus as Augustus.[20] While emperors did sometimes pardon usurpers,[21] if the alleged leader of the Bagaudae did actually declare himself Augustus and issue coins in

[16] *ND. Or.* 32.37. This, the eastern section of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, was written c. 401. See C. Zuckerman, 'Comtes et ducs en Égypte autour de l'an 400 et la date de la *Notitia Dignitatum Orientis*', *AntTard* 6 (1998) 137-47.

[17] These were the *ala I Francorum* and the *cohors VII Francorum* in the Thebais (*ND. Or.* 31.51, 67), the *ala I Francorum* in Phoenicia (*ND. Or.* 32.35), and the *ala VIII Flavia Francorum* in *Mesopotamia (ND. Or.* 36.33).

[18] The date is uncertain. Zos. *HN* 2.27 and Zon. *Ann.* 13.5 identify the emperor who received Hormisdas as Constantine, while John of Antioch, in C. Müller, *FHG* IV (Paris 1851) *frg.* 178 (p. 605), identifies him as Licinius.

[19] See D. Woods, 'Ammianus and Some *Tribuni Scholarum Palatinarum* c. AD 353-64', *CQ* 47 (1997) 269-91, at 289-90, where I suggest that he may have served as tribune of the *schola scutariorum clibanariorum* for the greater part of the period c. 324-62; also D. Woods, 'A Persian at Rome: Ammianus and Eunapius, *Frg.* 68' in J.W. Drijvers and E.D. Hunt (eds.), *The Late Roman World and Its Historian: Interpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London 1999) 156-65, on his role at a military display in the Circus Maximus at Rome in 357.

[20] See P.H. Webb, *Roman Imperial Coinage V, Part II* (London 1933) 595.

[21] E.g. Aurelian pardoned the two Tetrici in 273 (Aur. Vict. 35.5; Eutr. 9.13), and Constantius II pardoned Vetranio in 350 (Aur. Vict. 42.1; Eutr. 9.10-11).

his name, then there can be little real doubt that Herculius Maximianus would have executed him immediately upon his capture. Hence the existence of coins naming the Gallic Amandus as Augustus would almost certainly exclude his identification with Licinius' naval commander in 324. Fortunately, the two alleged specimens of his coinage that have survived into the modern age have been widely condemned as Renaissance forgeries.[22] Indeed, while one does not normally like to rely on negative evidence, the fact that no further specimens of his alleged coinage have come to light, during the last 30 years especially when the metal-detector has reigned supreme, serves almost to guarantee that he did not in fact issue coinage.

A final point remains. The second civil war between Constantine and Licinius was always going to be decided by their respective navies. Licinius relied upon his navy both to guard his retreat from Thrace to Asia Minor, if necessary, and to prevent Constantine from crossing the Hellespont into the heartland of his empire. Similarly, Constantine needed a navy either to isolate Licinius in Thrace or to pursue him across the Hellespont into Asia Minor, whatever should prove necessary. It is not without significance, therefore, that Constantine appointed his eldest son and Caesar Crispus as the commander of his naval forces. Here was someone that he knew would never be tempted to defect and had an obvious interest in the final outcome of the war. In contrast, Licinius appointed his *magister officiorum* Martinianus as his fellow Augustus. If the *Origo* is correct in dating Licinius' promotion of Martinianus before the defeat of Amandus,[23] as the coin evidence suggests also,[24] then a question remains: why did Licinius not promote Amandus, to whom he had already entrusted so vital a role, as his colleague rather than Martinianus? One possibility is that his barbarian origin prevented Amandus' appointment as emperor just as, for example, it was to prevent many of their most senior officers from succeeding either Julian in 363 or Jovian in 364.[25]

In conclusion, there is a distinct possibility—one dare put it no stronger than that— that the alleged leader of the Bagaudae, Amandus, did not actually lead the Bagaudae at all, but one of the groups of pirate raiders who so troubled Gaul at the same time. As a young Saxon or Frankish royal, he may then have survived long enough to command Licinius' fleet in 324. The Alamannic king Crocus who played a key role in the accession of Constantine I after the death of his father Constantius I at York in 306 need not have been the only barbarian royal to find a home in the Roman army, even at this early date.[26]

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[22] See Minor (n. 1) 171.

[23] Zos. *HN* 2.25.2 sets Licinius' promotion of Martinianus after Amandus' defeat when he himself had retreated back to Chalcedon from Byzantium.

[24] P. Bruun, *Roman Imperial Coinage VII: Constantine and Licinius AD 313-37* (London 1966) 25, dates the promotion of Martinianus to late July 324, well before the final battle between Constantine and Licinius at Chrysopolis, near Chalcedon, on 18 September.

[25] E.g. Jovian was only the *primicerius domesticorum* when Julian died and succeeded him above the head of his own commander, the *comes domesticorum* Dagalaifus, not to mention that of the even more senior *magister peditum praesentalis* Nevitta, both Germans to judge from their names. See Amm. 25.5. Similarly, Valentinian II was only a tribune when he succeeded Jovian over the heads, for example, of Dagalaifus again, and of the Sarmatian *magister militum* Victor. See Amm. 26.1.1-6.

[26] *Epit. de Caes* 41.3. In general on the 'barbarization' of the Roman army, see H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe AD 350-425* (Oxford 1996) 136-52; M.J. Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire: The Roman Army from the Reign of Diocletian until the Battle of Adrianople* (Amsterdam 1998) 97-116.