

THE BARBARIANS¹

The aim of this paper is to try to define the concept of the Barbarian and, at the same time, to show some aspects of the role that peoples entering into this category played in the course of history. We shall use the term “barbarian” in a very loose sense and will forego altogether the study of the history of the word itself. We know that it denoted successively the non-Hellene, the non-Roman, the non-Byzantine, the non-Christian, and, finally, even the non-Italian.² In spite of numerous secondary applications and even misapplications of the word, it is quite clear, and has been asserted more than once, that in its primary and principal meaning the term is the antonym of “civilized” and is, therefore, for all practical purposes synonymous with “uncivilized”; it has a distinctly pejorative flavor.

The fact that in its earliest, Greek, application “barbarian” simply meant

1. With insignificant alterations this paper is printed as it was read. As in most lectures, at some points considerations of entertainment have had to prevail over the exigencies of strict scholarship. A number of aspects—for example, the very important economic background of the Barbarian—could not even be mentioned, and the material adduced to sustain a given assertion is but a fraction of what is available. In spite of these, and possibly other, shortcomings, I feel that the following pages give a fairly accurate picture of what I consider the problem of the Barbarian. I hope to examine it one day with full apparatus.

2. The history and the different applications of the word have been studied time and again. The following publications may be chosen from among the relevant literature: Julius Jüthner, *Hellenen und Barbaren: Aus der Geschichte des Nationalbewusstseins* (“Das Erbe der Alten,” Vol. VIII [Leipzig, 1923]); Kilian Lechner, *Hellenen und Barbaren im Weltbild der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1954); Rodolfo De Mattei, “Sul concetto di barbaro e barbarie nel Medio Evo,” *Studi... in onore di Enrico Besta* (Milan, 1939), IV, 481–501.

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“foreigner,” together with some other considerations, would suggest that this pejorative flavor is due to chauvinism: Country A tends to regard Country B as barbarous and vice versa. Superficial proofs could easily be found to warrant such a theory: the Romans were barbarians for the Greeks; China and Europe regarded each other as barbarians. However, to accept such proofs would lead us very much astray. A closer examination of, for example, Chinese-European relations would soon reveal if not a mutual esteem at least the recognition that each civilization is what the Germans call a “*Hochkultur*,” a word which, for want of a better expression, we could translate “major civilization.” For the Chinese, India was never a country of barbarians, nor was Persia, oddly enough, for the Romans or the Byzantines. This is rather surprising because for some time the Persians were for the Greeks the Barbarians par excellence—as far as the actual use of the term went. Later, even the denomination ceased to be applied to major civilizations; the Romans ceased to be called “barbarians” by the Greeks. It is interesting to note that Ammianus Marcellinus will not apply the term to the Persians, and this in spite of the protracted hostilities between them and Rome.³ It can be said that, notwithstanding the occasional use of the term for one or another of them, no major civilization considered another major civilization as barbarian (i.e., as uncivilized). The concept “barbarian” cannot be explained by simple chauvinism.

There is another fallacy, more dangerous because less easily detectable, that we must dispose of. Since the word “barbarian” has been recognized as almost synonymous with “uncivilized,” must we not assume that the major civilizations regarded as barbarian all those that did not come up to their standards? The answer to this question must be an emphatic “No.” The objectively low level of a civilization does not necessarily cause it to be called “barbarian.” Even in modern usage, really backward populations of, say, New Guinea or Darkest Africa are never referred to as Barbarians. We call them, rather, “savages.” Nor do we regard as barbarian despised or ostracized sections of a greater community, such as Negroes in the United States or in South Africa. Even more interesting is the fact that aboriginal populations pushed back, exterminated, or annihilated by an expanding human community do not enter, as a rule, into the category of Barbarians. The pre-Roman population of Italy, the Celtic nations of Europe, and the Indians of America exemplify well this statement. It would thus seem—and I am putting this forward as a provisional

3. Cf. Wilhelm Ensslin, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung und Weltanschauung des Ammianus Marcellinus* (*Klio*, Beiheft XVI [Leipzig: Dieterich, 1923]), p. 33.

conclusion—that to be branded “barbarian” requires attributes other than the possession of an inferior civilization. A barbarian must also be aggressive; he must be dangerous.

Peoples answering to these requirements are very often called, both in history and in myth, the peoples of the North. They are the Barbarians, and they are the subject of this paper. On the historical level they include, roughly speaking, and going from west to east, the Germanic tribes; the so-called nomadic tribes, such as Huns, Sarmatians, Avars, and Hungarians, who were known to Europe; Hiung-nu, Juan-juan, and Uigurs, who were known to the Chinese; Turks and Mongols, who were known from one end to the other of the great Eurasian continent; and the forest peoples living to the north of China, such as the Kitan, the Juchen, and the Mandju, to mention but a few among the great number of names known to us.

We must now examine the main characteristics of the relationship between these peoples and the major civilizations by which they were surrounded.

It is regrettable, although not surprising, that this relationship must be viewed mainly from the standpoint of the “civilized,” on whom we must depend for most of the written documents which form the basis of our research. For the earliest period we have to rely chiefly on Chinese sources, and not only because they are older and richer than those of European origin; the relationship between civilized and uncivilized is governed by a conception of the world which the Chinese evolved earlier and with greater clarity than the Europeans or which, at least, has been better preserved by them and handed down to us. It will be seen that, as far as the Barbarian problem is concerned, Eastern and Western conceptions show great similarities.

As far as our subject is concerned, the world conception of the major civilizations is egocentric: they form the center of the world. They represent—in fact, they are—humanity. Even during its decline the Roman Empire was considered in the West, by Romans and Barbarians alike, as the only possible political framework. China is the Central Kingdom, the “Flower of the Center,” surrounded by the four species of Barbarians, the Barbarians of the Four Seas.⁴ The Barbarians, although often related to animals, form, nevertheless, part of humanity—humanity taken in a large

4. A magistral picture of the relations between Chinese and Barbarians is given by Marcel Granet, *La Civilisation chinoise* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1929), pp. 86 ff.; English trans.: *Chinese Civilization* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951).

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sense. The Barbarians are also actors in the human drama that can almost be conceived as a dialogue between the two species which, though opposed to each other, are complementary. "Inside are those who don the cap and girdle [the Chinese]; outside are the Barbarians," says the Chinese historian,⁵ to indicate that everyone is in his proper place.

War between Chinese and Chinese, that is to say, between the Civilized and Civilized is, theoretically, at least, impossible; it should never happen. If it happens, there is no glory in it for the participants. How different when it comes to combating the Barbarian! This is a manly sport. Victory over the Barbarian is the justification of the ruler; it is his foremost duty. The attacking Barbarian is guilty of rebellion. Is he not referred to as a "slave" even though in fact he is free? Wars are like the illnesses of the nations—according to Eustathios of Thessalonica—but a war waged by a Barbarian against Byzance is as if an illness were to defy the omnipotence of God.⁶

The greatest difference between the Civilized and the Barbarians is a difference in comportment: the latter have no manners. They act *κατὰ κόσμον*, without propriety, in disorder.⁷ "The rules of conduct," so we read in the Chinese *Book of Ceremonies*, "allow the Civilized to keep his feelings under control . . . to follow the inclinations is the way of the Barbarian."⁸ In a civilized state everything is order; among the Barbarians everything is disorder. They have no proper rule of conduct; therefore, they are unreliable, "irresolute as rats."⁹ They are ignorant. Salvianus of Marseille, by no means blindly prejudiced against the Barbarians, nevertheless considers them as "men void not only of Roman but of human wisdom."¹⁰ "They are called Barbarians," says Albertus Magnus, "who are not ordered for virtue by law or government or the discipline of any other system."¹¹

A true man knows how to dress; he knows what is becoming to his rank and state. "Well ordered are the garments and headgear," lauds an in-

5. Édouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien, I-V* (Paris, 1895-1905), III, 401.

6. Twelfth century; cf. Lechner, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

8. *Li Chi*, ed. Couvreur, I, 215.

9. Cf. Édouard Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions chinoises de l'Asie centrale d'après les estampages de M. Ch.-E. Bonin* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1. sér., XI, II, 1902), pp. 193-295, 220.

10. *De gubernatione Dei* v. 8 (MGH. AA. I, p. 56).

11. *Ethic. Lib.* vii.

scription of the T'ang dynasty of China.¹² The Barbarians now button their garments to the right, as the Chinese do, and not to the left as they used to in their barbarous ignorance. They wear their hair "dishevelled, hanging on their shoulders,"¹³ unless, thanks to the virtue of the ruling Chinese dynasty, they renounce the custom. Shame on him who like Rufinus, minister of Arcadius, though Roman, wears barbarian clothes! The poet Claudius Claudianus seems to choke with indignation in reporting this fact.¹⁴ If around A.D. 400 some young bloods of Constantinople tried to show off in Barbarian costumes, the law soon put an end to this unseemly behavior.¹⁵ In 1274, almost three centuries after the Hungarians have settled in Hungary, the Pope makes bitter reproaches to King László IV for wearing his hair and his clothes in the fashion of the nomadic Barbarian Comans.¹⁶

I have endeavored to give a picture, sketchy though it be, of what we could call the "ideal Barbarian." Since we described him as highly unreliable, we may not be surprised to find a considerable discrepancy between him and the real, historical Barbarian. The characteristics of the two coincide on a certain number of points; for example, on their greed. "Know therefore," says the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, in his instructions given to his son, "that all the tribes of the north have, as it were implanted in them by nature, a ravening greed of money, never satiated, and so they demand everything and hanker after everything and have desires that know no limit or circumscription, but are always eager for more, and desirous to acquire great profits in exchange of small service. And so these importunate demands and brazenly submitted claims must be turned back and rebutted by plausible speeches and prudent and clever excuses."¹⁷

It is for the reasons expounded by Constantine that Barbarians like to receive presents, a tendency which Romans, Byzantines, and Chinese are unanimous in deploring. They also have a curious way of bringing

12. Inscription dated A.D. 640. Cf. Chavannes, *Dix inscriptions* ..., p. 218.

13. On this expression see James Russell Hamilton, *Les Ouïghours à l'époque des Cinq dynasties* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1955), p. 92.

14. In *Rufinum II*, ll. 78-85, ed. Platnauer ("Loeb Classical Library").

15. Cf. Ferdinand Lot, *Les Invasions germaniques* (Paris: Payot, 1945), p. 168.

16. Cf. *A magyar nemzet története*, ed. Szilágyi, III (Budapest, 1896), 562.

17. Gy. Moravcsik (ed.) and R. J. H. Jenkins (trans.), *De administrando imperio* (Budapest, 1949), p. 67.

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presents. Tanguts and Uigurs, to “help” China, are in the habit of providing her with horses. For this service they are well compensated. Not only do they receive a much higher price than would be just for the sorry nags they present, but their traveling expenses are generously reimbursed; they are entertained on a lavish scale; and they themselves receive various gifts, pieces of silk and such like. To the scandal of the historian, they even behave improperly—they get drunk at the banquets and, with arms linked together, sing songs of their homeland. Millions were spent each year on the horses brought by the Barbarians, to the great distress of the officials. The emperor Ming-tsong (926–33), however, justified the practice by saying: “When the Barbarians bring tribute to the Court, China grants them presents; this is a normal function for an Emperor.” The historian adds that thereafter sheep and horses of the Barbarians came in unceasing flow to the court.¹⁸

How applicable to the situation is the complaint voiced some four hundred years earlier by Salvianus of Marseille: “We must pay to the Barbarians taxes. The fiends sell to us the very use of light. That we have breath in our bodies at all, we owe to a trading-transaction. O evil fate of ours! How low have we sunk! And for this we give thanks to the Barbarians, from whom we buy ourselves for cash. . . . Further, we ourselves bring yet more ridicule upon us, calling the gold we pay a gift. We call that a present which is a purchase price, and indeed a purchase price for a very bitter and unhappy lot.”¹⁹

One can see, in fact, that it is possible to find a *modus vivendi* with the Barbarian. Very often he wants nothing other than material security, food, some money. Although the moralist may condemn such action, the rulers, whether Roman or Chinese, have regular recourse to Barbarian armies, either to combat other Barbarians or to help against other “civilized” rulers. The role of Germanic soldiers in the late Roman Empire is too well known for us to enlarge upon it here.

As a rule there is no concerted action on the part of the Barbarian to destroy the existing order of the world; all he wants is to change sides or simply to take advantage of the facilities offered by the civilized. He is quite willing to settle down, to till the land, to occupy military or administrative posts. On the whole, he seems reasonable. With people like this it is possible to come to some sort of understanding. They can be

18. Cf. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

19. *De gubernatione Dei* vi. 98–99 (MGH. AA. I, p. 83).

absorbed, assimilated, or annihilated; they can be played out against one another, bought by presents or promises. Constantine's *De administrando imperio* is full of good advice on how to take advantage of their naïveté, how to rebut the demands "of these shifty and dishonorable tribes of the north."²⁰ They may be dangerous opponents or awkward partners, but their evaluation of things is not basically different from that of the civilized. One could say, even, that they play the same game and respect the rules. "Inside are those who don the cap and the girdle; outside are the Barbarians," but it is possible to move from the cheerless outside to the friendly warmth of the hearth where happy people sit at their fleshpots. One could even speak of "tame" Barbarians, almost happy with their lot of unhappiness, mitigated as it is with the hope of their being admitted in due course into civilized communities. These tame Barbarians gather round the borders of the civilized world as moths gather round a lamp. But it would be mistaken—and how many rulers have fallen victim to this mistake!—to consider them as the true representatives of Barbarism. They are, to use wartime jargon, the "collaborationists" among the Barbarians, those ready to accommodate themselves to, and take maximum advantage of, the existing circumstances. They form, as it were, a protective crust around the major civilizations.

What is beyond this protective layer of half-assimilated, tame, Barbarians—the Civilized hardly knows. He is, in fact, inclined to think that there is nothing behind it. Who would bother to measure the depth of "the country of the horses and the thieves," as the Chinese call it?

It happens, however, that hitherto unknown tribes burst forth from behind the known Barbarians. They menace the order of the world; they disturb the equilibrium; they level Barbarian and Civilized. They spoil the game. When they appear, the Civilized shrieks with indignation and invokes rules set up by himself precisely to keep the Barbarians at bay—rules which the latter do not respect. One cannot play cricket with people who think that the bats are clubs.

There is a considerable difference in the attitude of the Civilized toward the two types of Barbarians which, for want of a better distinction, we could call the "ordinary" Barbarian and the "absolute" Barbarian. In Europe the Germanic tribes represent the former type; Huns, Hungarians, Mongols, etc., exemplify the latter, which, almost everywhere, appear as mounted archers. The balance we have seen established between the civilized peoples and the ordinary Barbarian is completely disturbed with the appear-

20. Ed Moravcsik-Jenkins, p. 71.

ance of the latter. The absolute Barbarian has a long-term policy; he cannot be permanently neutralized with presents or tributes. He claims universal recognition and feels that he has a mission to fulfil. Very often he is Barbarian "by divine right."

"When, above, the blue sky and, beneath, the brown earth were created, between the two were created the sons of men. And above the sons of men were set my ancestors Bumin kaghan and Istemi kaghan," read the Türk inscriptions of the Orkhon.²¹ Having described the decadence of the Türk power, the inscriptions continue: "Above the God of the Türk the holy land of the Türk thus decided: the Türk people will not come to nought they said; it should become a nation they said; and they raised my father Ilteris kaghan and my mother the katun Ilbilge." In a letter addressed to the Emperor of Byzance, the kaghan of the Türk calls himself "chief of the seven races and lord of the seven regions of the world."²²

Attila, king of the Huns, had in his possession the sword of God (of Ares, Priscus tells us), found miraculously and giving him power over the whole world.²³

The consciousness of a divine mission is particularly apparent in the case of the Mongols, for whom our sources are so much more detailed. The seal of the Mongol khans bears the inscription *Mongke ingri-yin kücün-dür*, "In the force of the Eternal Heaven."²⁴ In his letter to Pope Innocent IV, the great khan Güyük calls himself "the strength of God and the ruler of all men." In the same letter we read: "We by adoring God, in the strength of God have destroyed all the earth from the East to the West. And if this were not the strength of God, what could men have done?" Speaking of various eastern European nations, Güyük continues: "Because they did not obey the word of God, the command of Chingis khan and that of the Kaghan [Güyük], and having held a great council, killed our messengers,

21. Eighth century A.D. My translation, which endeavors to follow the original as closely as possible but does not claim strict philological accuracy, is based essentially on the inscription of Kül-tegin, as edited by V. Thomsen, *Inscriptions de l'Orkhon déchiffrées* (Mémoires de la Société Finno-ougrienne," Vol. V [Helsinki, 1896]), and by S. E. Malov, *Pamjatniki drevne-tjurksko pis'mennosti* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1951), pp. 19-55.

22. Theophylactus Simocatta vii. 8, ed. de Boor, p. 257. A translation of the whole passage relative to the Türk can be found in Edouard Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Tures) occidentaux* (St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 246-49.

23. Ernst Doblhofer, *Byzantinische Diplomaten und östliche Barbaren* ("Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber," Vol. IV [Graz, 1955]), p. 51.

24. For the most recent study of this seal see Antoine Mostaert and Francis Woodman Cleaves, "Trois documents mongols des Archives Secrètes Vaticanes," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, XV (1952), 419-506, esp. pp. 485-95.

God commanded them to be destroyed and gave them into our hands. Else, if God had not done it, what could man do to man?"²⁵

This is not the voice of the Barbarian asking humbly for admittance into the empire. He who speaks like this cannot be expected to show consideration for a myth—the myth of the inherent superiority of the Civilized.

Suidas transmits an interesting anecdote. When in Milano, Attila saw a fresco representing Roman emperors seated on golden thrones with slain Barbarians at their feet. He then ordered another fresco to be painted, representing him seated on a throne, with Roman kings carrying sacks on their shoulders and pouring gold at his feet.²⁶

The true Barbarian—as represented by some of the nomadic peoples—is conscious and proud of his state. I repeat: he is not a beggar asking for protection from and offering his services to the Civilized. He deliberately declines, in fact, to be civilized, being no longer a Barbarian by necessity but one by choice. The Orkhon inscriptions, in describing the period of decadence of the Türk Empire, exclaim against those nobles who “abandoning their Türk titles accepted Chinese offices and for fifty years put their strength at the disposal of the Chinese emperor.”

John of Plano Carpini records that the Mongols “are most arrogant to other people and look down on all, indeed they consider them as nought, be they of high rank or low born.”²⁷ The Türk kaghan “Me-ch’o,” according to the Chinese *Annals*, “proud of his conquests, despised China and was bursting with pride.”²⁸

We have said that the true Barbarian had a long-term policy—that he consciously represented some ideal, some conception which should be studied from the political, economical, and social points of view. I shall limit myself here to a discussion of the social aspect of the Barbarian concept, which, in my opinion, is the most interesting of the three.

The rise of a nomadic Barbarian empire, such as that of the Huns or the Mongols, can in many respects be considered a revolution, a rising of the

25. Quoted in the *Cronica* of Salimbene (MGH. SS. XXXII, p. 208).

26. Quoted by Amédée Thierry, *Histoire d'Attila et de ses successeurs, I-II* (Paris, 1856), I, 213.

27. *Istoria Mongalorum* iv. 4. I quote from the excellent translation made by “a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey,” published in *The Mongol Mission*, ed. Christopher Dawson (London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), p. 15.

28. Stanislas Julien, “Documents historiques sur les Tou-kioüe (Turcs),” *Journal asiatique*, II (1864), 424. The fact that the quotation comes from a secondary source is, for our purpose, unimportant. I had no opportunity to check the translation against the original. In any case, similar statements abound in Chinese sources.

poor, disinherited classes of a society. It is easy, in such a situation, to read into the past political and social currents and tendencies proper to our own time. To avoid projecting into a different epoch problems and tensions which are alien to it, to avoid easy and false analogies, one must abide more firmly than ever by the testimony of the texts and resist their supplementation with hypotheses, however tempting.

We have clear evidence that the rise of the Türk Empire (sixth century) began as a revolt of the metallurgist Türks against their Juan-juan masters. In the inscriptions of the Orkhon which have already been quoted, the ruler of the Türks, speaking in the first person, gives a poignant picture of the difficult process of bringing prosperity to a people of paupers:

“I did not reign over some rich people, but I took the lead of a people vile and wretched, [of men] with no food inside them and on their outside no clothes. We discussed the matter with my younger brother Kül tegin. . . . For the sake of the Turk people I did not sleep at night and did not rest by day. Together with my younger brother Kül tegin and two dignitaries we worked [?] to exhaustion. . . . The dispersed people came to me on foot and naked. In order to raise the people I led twenty-two campaigns. . . . Through the command of Heaven and because I was fortunate, I led to life the dying people, I clothed the people that was naked, and I made the poor rich. . . .”

The great Barbarian empires were not national states. They were multi-lingual and were not held together by a common religion. They represented, at their inception, the reunion, under strong, individual leadership, of disinherited, often half-starved populations. The “Secret History of the Mongols” says repeatedly that Chingis “united the peoples living under felt-tents.”²⁹

Even at the height of their power the peoples of Barbarian empires remained astonishingly poor. The Huns who made Europe tremble were—so we are told by Ammianus Marcellinus—accustomed to endure hunger and thirst from their cradles and wore their clothes on their backs until “they had been reduced to rags and fallen from them bit by bit.”³⁰ Plano Carpini exhibits admiration mingled with horror for the diet of the Mongols. “They have neither bread nor herbs nor vegetables nor anything else, nothing but meat, of which, however, they eat so little that other

29. Text dated 1240, first edited by Erich Haenisch, *Manghol un niuca tobca'an* (*Yüan-ch'ao pi-shi*) (Leipzig, 1937).

30. Translated by John C. Rolfe for the “Loeb Classical Library” (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935-39) xxxi. 2, 4-5.

people would scarcely be able to exist on it." In the winter "they boil millet in water and make it so thin that they cannot eat it but have to drink it. Each one of them drinks one or two cups in the morning and they eat nothing more during the day; in the evening however, they are all given a little meat, and they drink the meat broth. . . . When they are without food, eating nothing at all for one or two days, they do not easily show impatience, but they sing and make merry as if they had eaten well."³¹

Even their rulers lived very modestly. The Byzantine ambassador Priscus noted at a banquet that Attila was served from wooden plates, drank from a wooden cup, and ate only meat. He was dressed with simplicity.³²

The sparseness of Barbarian life and the elementary social justice which seems to have characterized it were not without attraction to the less fortunate sections of the civilized community. Priscus records a long discussion he had with a Roman who chose to live with the Huns and who proffers very bitter charges against Roman justice, which does not compel the law-breaking rich or the mighty to pay a fine but is ruthless toward the poor, who have no means of defending themselves by suborning the judges.³³ One could consider his presentation of the facts as a sort of *apologia pro vita sua* were it not for other corroborating evidence, for example, Salvianus of Marseille's terrible indictment of fifth-century conditions: "The poor are spoliated, widows sigh, orphans are trampled upon. Things have deteriorated to the extent, that many—and often people of noble origin and good education—take refuge with the enemy, so as to avoid death under the pressure of the persecution by the state. Among the Barbarians they search for the humanity of the Romans because among the Romans they cannot endure the barbarous inhumanity. And though they differ in custom and language from those among whom they take refuge and even though they may be repelled by the evil smell of the Barbarians' bodies and clothes, they prefer to suffer among the Barbarians from the strangeness of their way of life rather than to suffer under the Romans from horrible injustice."³⁴

Other instances could be quoted in illustration of the Civilized praising the Barbarian. Philosophers in Rome and China, in Byzance and in France,

31. Dawson (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17.

32. Doblhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

34. *Op. cit.* v. 21 (MGH. AA. I, p. 108).

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were often tempted to contrast favorably the Barbarian with their own decadent civilization. Still more often they use the Barbarian as a convenient dummy masquerading in their own favorite political ideas. A curious example is the apocryphal letter of Chingis, said to have been sent by him to the Taoist Ch'ang-ch'un:³⁵ "Heaven has abandoned China owing to its haughtiness and extravagant luxury. But I, living in the northern wilderness, have not inordinate passions. I hate luxury and exercise moderation. I have only one coat and one food. I eat the same food and am dressed in the same tatters as my humble herdsmen. I consider the people my children. . . . At military exercises I am always in the front, and in time of battle am never behind. In the space of seven years I have succeeded in accomplishing a great work and uniting the whole world in one empire."

Such favorable utterances, whether based on personal observation of advantages offered by Barbarian societies or produced by wishful thinking, are but rarely applied to the true Barbarian. This idealized Barbarian is always identified with Germanic tribes in more recent European political thought or literature, from Montesquieu to the German Nazi writers. The divergence between the two types of Barbarian is strongly emphasized by Montesquieu:

"The nations in the north of Europe conquered as free-men, the people in the north of Asia conquered as slaves, and subdued as others only to gratify the ambition of a master. . . .

"Hence it follows that the genius of the Getic or Tartarian nation has always resembled that of the empires of Asia. The people in these are governed by the cudgel; the inhabitants of Tartary by whips. The Spirit of Europe has ever been contrary to these manners, and in all ages, what the people of Asia have called punishment those of Europe have deemed the most outrageous abuse.

"The Tartars who destroyed the Grecian empire established in the conquered countries slavery and despotic power: the Goths, after subduing the Roman Empire, founded monarchy and liberty."³⁶

There are no horrors that have not been attributed to the true, the aggressive, Barbarian. They are indeed the "detestable race of Satan."

35. E. Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources, I-II* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1910), I, 37. Cf. also Arthur Waley's remark in *The Travels of an Alchemist: The Broadway Travellers* (London: Routledge, 1931), p. 160.

36. *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: Bell, 1914), p. 280 (XVII, 5).

“They are terrible in person,” we read in Matthew Paris on the Mongols, “furious in aspect, their eyes show anger, their hands are rapacious, their teeth are bloody and their jaws ever ready to eat the flesh of men, and to drink human blood.”³⁷ Cannibalism is but one, though admittedly an important, peculiarity ascribed to the true Barbarian. It stigmatizes him as the Unclean, it puts him outside the bonds of the civilized world. There is a standard set of abominable crimes of which the Barbarian is accused. Huns, Avars, Hungarians, and Mongols are all described in similar terms; often whole passages are simply copied from ancient writers and applied to the people most recently emerged from the “northern wilderness.” Who are they? Where do they come from?

“It would seem,” writes Chateaubriand, “that they have heard something from the South that calls to them from the North and from the East. What is their name, their race, their country? Ask this of the Heavens, which alone must show them the way, since they are themselves as unbeknownst to man as the place from which they come and where they are going. They come: all is prepared for them; the trees are their tents, the deserts their paths. Would you know where they have made camp? Witness the bones of slaughtered sheep, pines, broken as if by lightning, forests in flames, and plains strewn with ash.”³⁸

Are they perhaps the Lost Tribes of Israel, the people of Gog and Magog shut up by Alexander or some other hero behind precipitous mountains, locked behind iron gates? But who can be sure that they are safely imprisoned? At any moment they may break out to destroy the order of the world. No atrocities can be exaggerated; no adjectives are too vile to describe him who dares to challenge the Civilized, the guardian of world order. The Barbarian living on the border of the civilized world and modestly asking for admittance may be inferior, even despicable. But he is as it were a necessary evil; he is needed in the great drama of history to give the cues to the Civilized. But woe betide him who refuses to take part in this play! There can be no place for him on earth, no honor for him in history.

The entry of the true Barbarian upon the stage is the signal for the finale: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to

37. *Chronica maiora, Additamenta*, ed. Luard (“Rolls Series”), VI, 77. Trans.: Giles, III, 451.

38. *Les Martyrs*, VII (ed. Garnier Frères, p. 128).

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battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”³⁹ But even the eschatological appearance of the Barbarian must end in ignominy; he is doomed to failure, given up to destruction: “Yea, the Lord will answer . . . I will remove far off from you him who comes from the north and I will drive him into a land barren and desolate . . . and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he has done great things.”⁴⁰

39. Rev. 20:7–8.

40. Joel 2:19–20.