

# Final Report on Project no. HEA H15122

## ***HEA PRS E-Learning Project 2008/09: Mapping the Great Migrations of 395-476 and their Christian consequences (follow-up project to HEA RA0174)***

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### ***Aims and Background:***

Employing the graphic and pedagogic techniques developed in the course of our previous HEA (PRS) project (Interactive mapping for teaching World Christianity 1453 to 2000), the project team designed and created a sequence of interactive animated scholarly maps of the Great Migrations (otherwise known as the Barbarian Invasions) into the Western Roman Empire during the years 395-476. These we hope will allow students of medieval Christianity to make sense of the complex movements and settlements of the various Germanic peoples who, together with the Celtic and Romanised peoples among whom they settled, laid the foundations of medieval Europe, and with it Western Christianity.

The first project was designed to create a series of maps for students taking the, History of Christianity as a World Religion 1B: From 1453 to the Present (HCWR1B) course at the University of Edinburgh. Students reported that they found the sequence of maps extremely helpful for fitting together different parts of a complex team-taught course. They appreciated having access both to animated maps, which showed events over time, such as successive European explorations, and to stills from the sequences, which were presented as a text alternative, with short explanations of the data included.

The sister course, History of Christianity as a World Religion 1A: From 33 to 1453 (HCWR1A), already contained two stand-alone map-diagram sequences, The Spread of Early Christianity and Aspects of the High Middle Ages (created as part of an internally-funded University of Edinburgh Principal's E-Learning Fund project). However, students reported that these materials lacked the sense of coherence and completeness of those developed for HCWR1B, because they covered only the first and last sections of the course. In particular, there were no animated materials to help them make sense of the most difficult section of the course, the so-called Dark Ages. This project addressed this missing sequence.

### ***Progress of the project:***

#### **1. The designing of the maps.**

As was agreed for the previous project the 'maps' were be considered as representational diagram-maps rather than true cartographic drawings. The map sequence created made use of the best of the techniques already used in the previous map sets and built further on the experience of the group.

One animated map sequence was created (see [http://www2.div.ed.ac.uk/courses/Animated\\_Maps/Divinity6web/index.html](http://www2.div.ed.ac.uk/courses/Animated_Maps/Divinity6web/index.html)) using the same European/North Africa/ West Asia projection as the other HCWR1A maps. The new sequence begins by illustrating the Roman Empire as it existed in 395AD, followed by a geographic representation of the approximate locations of the various peoples making up the Barbarian movements – including the Huns; Vandals, Alans and Sueves; Visigoths; Ostrogoths; Franks; Britons; Angles, Saxons and Jutes; and Scots. The complex movements of these people during this period were then clearly and separately illustrated, before ending with an

illustration of the extent of Arian Christianity in Europe after the invasions, to show the ecclesiastical-historical effects of these movements.

## **2. The embedding of the map.**

The animated map created was embedded along with the existing series for the start of the 2008/9 academic session in the course's VLE WebCT site and used in teaching within the relevant part of the course.

## **3. The making publicly available of the maps.**

As previously the map is available via JORUM (<http://www.jorum.ac.uk/>) and from the School of Divinity website where the whole series of animated maps is made available - [http://www2.div.ed.ac.uk/courses/Animated\\_Maps/](http://www2.div.ed.ac.uk/courses/Animated_Maps/).

We hope to present a poster to the Alt-C conference in 2009 on our animated map work.

## **4. Evaluation of the pedagogical usefulness of the maps.**

As this was a low budget, add on project evaluation was very low key. Two additional questions were included with the normal course monitoring forms to assess student's reactions to the animated maps in general and the new map in particular.

From the 30 forms completed, only five had either not used any of the maps or used them only occasionally. Most claimed to have found the whole map series useful and had found the new map created for this project a particularly useful representation of a difficult area to understand. Comments included:-

*Very helpful in visualising the movements*

*Helping me to understand migration and movements better – change to looking at slides and pictures*

*A picture says 1000 words*

*Helped me understand the pattern much better*

*Helps make sense of the weakening/demise of the Roman Empire – quite an obscure subject*

*Helped as difficult to visualise just using fixed points*

*Gave more insight*

*Place names didn't really help to visualise things but seeing the sequence made the directions of the movements clear*

*It was interesting to help understand the migratory nature of the peoples involved*

*Put the barbarian invasions into geographical perspective*

*Good way of visually comprehending a complex subject*

Although this was a low-key evaluation it is clear that student reaction is favourable. Initially the project team had planned to carry out further evaluations with the sister course HCWR1B but as this was quite rigorously covered in the previous report it was decided that this was not in fact necessary.