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**Das Imperium Romanum und seine Erben**  
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**The Roman Empire and its Heirs**

**Abstract**

The transformation period of the Roman Empire during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages will be focussed. Long term factors and short term causes of political change will be investigated. From the 4<sup>th</sup> into the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Empire underwent a process of regionalisation und ruralisation, which lead to the establishment of several new kingdoms. This formative period of medieval history shall be further highlighted by a comparison of the Frankish and Ostrogothic designs of political rule. Early medieval kings developed markedly different ways of organizing multi-ethnic Christian and at the same time Roman societies, among which, however, different creeds were competing. How did the kings deal with these mixed societies? Integration, separation, suppression, expulsion and dispossession were the mutually exclusive strategies pursued by the political leaders of the post-Roman kingdoms. But which strategy would prove to be successful in the long run?