INTEGRATING *MAGNA DACIA*. A NARRATIVE REAPPRAISAL OF JORDANES

OTÁVIO LUIZ VIEIRA PINTO

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ii

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Al contrario, rispondo, chi siamo noi, chi è ciascuno di noi se non una combinatoria d'esperienze, d'informazioni, di letture, d'immaginazioni? Ogni vita è un'enciclopedia, una biblioteca, un inventario d'oggetti, un campionario di stili, dove tutto può essere continuamente rimescolato e riordinato in tutti i modi possibili.

Italo Calvino, *Lezioni Americane*.

[…] his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ao meu avô, neto de escravos, que sempre quis me ver virar "doutor".

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to propose a new interpretation of Jordanes' famous work, *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, commonly known as *Getica*. The traditional view concerning the *De Origine* postulates that Jordanes was trying to devise a mythical, glorious history for the Goths, based on Greek and Latin texts, as well as what could have been 'real elements of Gothic tradition.' A number of scholars have also investigated the dependence of the *De Origine* on the lost *Historia Gothorum*, written by Cassiodorus – a high-ranking officer of the Ostrogothic court. Because Jordanes affirms, in the preface of the *De Origine*, that he was asked to abridge the Cassiodorian *opus*, many are led to believe that our author was able to transmit the *Historia Gothorum* to some extent. This thesis will counter those two views by proposing a narrative interpretation of the *De Origine*: my analysis is focused on the rhetorical strategies and textual choices of Jordanes. I argue that Jordanes' usage of the ethnonym *Geta*, usually viewed as a classicising synonym of *Goth*, is, in fact, a way to link a number of different people that inhabited the Balkans throughout history: Dacians, Getae, Scythians, Goths, Gepids, and Huns. The reasoning behind this ethnogeographic constructions is, precisely, the goal of the *De Origine*: to devise a historical narrative of the vicissitudes of the Balkans. I chose to single out the narrative conceptualisation of this regions by calling it *Magna Dacia* – which is the *Kulturraum* that interests Jordanes and it is where most of the story takes place. My conclusions have incisive implications: we can see the *De Origine* as an independent text, one that does not owe its ideas to Cassiodorus; we can see a new Jordanes emerge, one with a high degree of agency in the composition of the work.

Abbreviations

Primary Sources

Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae*	Ammianus Marcellinus, *Ammianus Marcellinus: Roman History, Volume III, Books 27-31. Excerpta Valesiana*, trans. by J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939)
Cass., *Exp. Psalm.*	Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum I - LXX*, ed. by M. Adriaen, CCSL, 97 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958)
Cass., *Variae*	Cassiodorus, *Variae*, ed. by T. Mommsen, MGH AA, 12 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1894).
Cass. Dio, *Hist. Rom.*	Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. by E. Cary, 9 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914)
Claud., *In Ruf.*	Claudian, *Claudian*, trans. by M. Platnauer, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922)
Chron. Pasch.	Dindorf, L. A., ed., *Chronicon Paschale*, CSHB, 2 vols (Bonn: Impensis Weberi, 1832), II
Diod. Sic., *Biblio.*	Diodorus of Sicily, *Diodorus of Sicily in Twelve Volumes*, trans. by C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967)
Ennod., *Paneg.*	Ennodius, *Magni Felicis Ennodi Opera*, ed. by F. Vogel, MGH AA, 7 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885)
Evag. Schol., *Hist. Eccles.*	Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. by J. Bidez and L. Parmentier (London: Methuen, 1898)
Greg. Tur., *Hist.*	Gregorius Turonensis, *Libri Historiarum X*, ed. by B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SRM, 1 (Hanover: Impenis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1951)
Hrdt., *Hist.*	Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, trans. by A. D. Godley, 4 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920)
Jord., *Getica* Jord., *Romana*	Iordanis, *Romana et Getica*, ed. by T. Mommsen, MGH AA, 5 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1882)
Just., *Epit.*	Justinus, *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum*, ed. by A. L. Marie-Pierre, CSL, 2003

Marcell. Com., *Chron.*	Marcellinus, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. by B. Croke, Byzantina Australiensia, 7 (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995)
Oros., *Hist. Adv. Pag.*	Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII*, ed. by K. Zangemeister, CSEL, 5 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1882)
Ov., *Tr.*	Ovid, *Tristia / Ex Ponto*, trans. by A. L. Wheeler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939)
Plin., *Hist. Nat.*	Plinius Secundus, *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII*, ed. by K. F. T. Mayhoff and L. von Jan (Leipzig: B. G. Teubneri, 1898)
Procop., *Goth.*	Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. by H. B. Dewing, 5 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006)
Prosp. Aqu., *Chron*	Prosperus Aquitanus, *S. Prosperi Aquitani Chronicum Integrum in Duas Partes Distributum*, ed. by J. P. Migne, PL (Paris: Bibliothecae Cleri Universae, 1861), LI
Ptol., *Geog.*	Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geographia*, ed. by K. F. A. Nobbe, 2 vols (Leipzig: Sumptibus et Typis Caroli Tauchnitii, 1843)
Sid. Apoll., *Carm.*	Sidonius Apollinaris, *Gai Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii Carmina*, ed. by C. Luetjohann, MGH AA, 8 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1887)
Strab., *Geog.*	Strabo, *Geography*, trans. by H. L. Jones, 2 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917)

COLLECTIONS

CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, ed. B. Janssens, L. Jocqué and P. Sartori, 201 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953 – 2014)
CSHB	*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. B. G. Niebuhr, 50 vols (Bonn: Impensis Weberi, 1828 – 1897)
CSL	*Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum*, Collaborative Digital library of Latin Literature: http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/aaronx.html
MGH:	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*
AA	*Auctores Antiquissimi*, 19 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1877 – 1919)
SEM	*Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, ed. B Krusch and W. Levison, 7 vols (Hanover, 1885 – 1920)
PL	*Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Bibliotheca Cleri Universae, 1841 – 1865)

NOTE ON NAMES, EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Most of the names of authors, kings, and characters present in this thesis have a standardised English form. In most cases, I decided to follow those in order to avoid confusion. In a few cases where the name can be found in two or three different spellings, I decided to remain faithful to a possible original spelling, as with *Ermanaric* rather than *Hermanaric*, or *Amalaswintha* rather than *Amalasuentha*, *Amalasuntha* or any other form. Quotations of secondary literature or translations of primary sources in which the name was rendered differently were standardised – Mierow's translation of Jordanes' *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, for example, uses *Hermanaric*, which I changed to *Ermanaric* to keep internal logic and consistency.

Hunnic names are more challenging. Because we have no knowledge of their native language, we have to rely solely on a variety of inconsistent Greek spellings. Otto Maenchen-Helfen's *World of the Huns* provides the best analysis of what could have been the Hunnic language and, therefore, I decided to employ his etymological version of names, especially in regards to the sons of Attila: Ernak, Ellac, and Dengizich.

Regarding editions of primary sources, I chose to follow Mommsen's version of the text, as present in his *Auctores Antiquissimi* volume 5 of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. However, I also consulted both Closs and Giunta's editions extensively. Concerning other primary sources, I followed the original text as present in reliable collections, such as the aforementioned *Monumenta*, *Patrologia Latina*, *Corpus Christianorum* and others (see *Abbreviations*). Whenever possible, I also consulted material that features translations facing the original text, such as the *Loeb Classical Library* or the *Byzantina Australiensia*.

Although the original text of primary sources was employed throughout this thesis, I consulted a plethora of modern translations. Because Mierow's version of *De Origine Actibusque Getarum* of Jordanes is widely spread and easily available, I decided to use his translation, unless stated otherwise. I also had access to Spanish, French and German translations of the *De Origine*, which were consulted in some cases. Regarding the *De Summa Temporum vel Origine Actibusque Gentis Romanorum*, I employed Brian T. Regan's translation (unless stated otherwise). Because it is available online, it can be easily accessed by any reader.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

At some point in 550, a man named Castalius, probably a member of a lower aristocracy in Constantinople, became interested in the Goths. Such reaction was justified: for the past twenty years, the emperor Justinian, bent on consolidating his rule and leaving his mark upon the sands of time, decided to wage war against the Ostrogoths in Italy. He sent the general Belisarius and his forces first to Southern Italy, and from there the Roman army of Byzantium made their way north. Justinian canvassed his lust for war in a frame of vengeance and liberation: Belisarius' sword would avenge the death of the rightful queen Amalaswintha at the hands of her own cousin, Theodahad; in the process, Italy would be cleansed from the tyranny of that barbarian king and Roman citizens would be integrated back into the empire. It was Justinian's very own *Reconquista*.

The carnage was seemingly over when Vitiges, the king elevated after the murder of the unpopular Theodahad, was captured – along with his *entourage* and the city of Ravenna itself, then the capital and headquarters of the Ostrogoths. Belisarius triumphed in bringing Rome back into imperial orbit just after 5 years of war. The tides of history, however, were relentless. The battle for Rome was not over, as the proud Gothic warriors elevated a number of petty kings in an effort to reclaim the Italian lands. Certainly, the crown of the Ostrogoths was taken by the Byzantines, but resistance ensued. Those warriors were not part of a kingdom anymore, but were fighting, even more ferociously, to survive. Things changed when they found a fitting commander in the figure of Badwila, *nom-de-guerre* Totila. A skilful leader, he organised the remaining Ostrogoths as a force to be reckoned with. They took back many cities, Rome included, and showed Justinian

that the war was not over. Totila's grit prolonged the conflict for years – a little more than ten, in fact. After so many years fighting this tireless leader and his fearsome army, it would not be surprising if people in Constantinople, far away from the horrors of war, wanted to know who was, after all, this Totila. Who were these people that deserved such a lingering engagement? Where did they come from? When did they burst into the civilised world of the Romans? Furthermore, as for those who were aware of the deeds of Theoderic, the great Amal and first king of the Italian Ostrogoths – bearer of the imperial *insigniae* and approved by Zeno and Anastasius, no less – the question remained. Why wage an expensive war against the subjects of a king whose apparent only misstep, while alive, was to kill two Roman aristocrats without a trial?

Questions about this militaristic Gothic race must have arisen in the course of the unending conflict. Castalius, the instigator of our tale, presumably shared this curiosity. Already nine years into the bitter conflict against Totila, our Castalius decided to turn to the one person he knew that, with a barbarian background himself, could provide some insight into the *gens* of the Goths. His name was Jordanes. Formerly a bureaucrat in the distant interior of Moesia, Jordanes had served under the Ostrogoth Gunthigis, son of Baza. He had lived among Goths, Alans and Huns, most likely hearing tales of Attila, of long-gone barbarian kings, of the great conflict that pitched against each other two halves of his world – the Huns and their myriads of followers, and the Romano-Visigothic coalition with their *auxiliaris* at the so-called Catalaunian Plains. 'Perhaps,' Castalius must have thought, 'Jordanes is even a Goth himself?'.

This was 550, the exact middle of the sixth century. Jordanes, already an elderly man, had left his life of *negotium* behind and now meditated about God in the capital of New Rome, Constantinople. Apparently motivated by the anxieties of his own time, Jordanes was compiling a chronicle that would tell the tale of the Roman Empire, its rise, and its decline. He expected to recount the tragedy of Rome to a friend, Vigilius, and

hopefully bring him to a life of contemplation as well. Fate decided, however, that he was not going to finish that project just now. Castalius approached him and asked to be enlightened in the history of the Goths. The commission was not easy: Castalius, lusting for that knowledge, did not request any history of the Goths, but a breviary of *the* history of the Goths, the one that Cassiodorus, famed Roman aristocrat, minister to Theoderic himself, had written. Cassiodorus Senator's *Historia Gothorum* must have been a celebrated text; a crafted propaganda for the Amal lineage, it was so cherished by the Goths of Ravenna that, a few years upon completion, Cassiodorus was granted the position of *Magister Officiorum*. Castalius had heard about this book. He also knew that Jordanes, very likely a knowledgeable man in Gothic matters, had read it. His wish was granted: Jordanes agreed to stop his summary of the Roman chronicles and write down a narration of the deeds of the Goths. And so the *De origine Actibusque Getarum* (*Getica*) was about to be born.

Jordanes had indeed read Senator's *Historia*, but only had access to it for a couple of days. He could not possibly summarise *that* work specifically, but he still went on to narrate the vicissitudes of the Goths – even if that meant keeping Cassiodorus as a literary compass rather than as a foundation. Understandably, the prologue of the *De origine* is a *mea culpa*: 'I cannot convey what you ask of me, but I will proceed nonetheless, based on the knowledge of olden authors and on my own familiarity with the topic', Jordanes wanted to say. Along the last lines of this prologue, he states: 'wherefore reproach me not, but receive and read with gladness what you have asked me to write.' We do not know how Castalius reacted to the reading. We do not know if Castalius reproached Jordanes, or if he was pleased to receive the *De origine*.

Modern historians, however, have not shown not show the parsimony that was asked of Castalius. We read Jordanes' excuse and still proceed to look for Cassiodorus, hidden within the lines of the Jordanes. We search for traces of Gothic tradition; we search

for the seeds of the 'real' history of the Goths germinating in the *De origine*. Of Jordanes, a narrative of the deeds of the Goths was asked – and perhaps just like Castalius, a narrative of the deeds of the Goths is what we want. We have, however, scarcely been satisfied.

Throughout the age of modern scholarship, Jordanes has suffered many depreciative epithets: a poor historian, a poor Latin speaker, a simpleton who was but a shadow of Cassiodorus' eloquence. The disappointment that plagues the Jordanes' student of today arises from high expectations: just like Castalius, we do expect a history of the Goths – but as modern agents of knowledge, we expect a genuine one, filled with *ethnos*, with Gothic roots. That is not what we are given, in the end. This thesis, I hope, will partially shift the blame from Jordanes to ourselves: perhaps he did not write a history of the Goths, but rather an ethnogeographical narrative of the land which the Goths occupied. And, as a result, the approach we often take is, at least, sterile.

The aim of this thesis is to convey a narrative reappraisal of Jordanes. As an author, he has received more positive attention recently. More critical analyses have understood Jordanes' agency and, to some degree, tried to grasp the *De origine* as it seemingly is – a political, if fictitious, story of Gothic people written in a way that made sense for the expectations of sixth-century circles. Armed with this newly-crafted approach, we allowed ourselves to *relativise* Jordanes' conclusions, his anecdotes, and his inputs in what concerns the identity and the past of Gothic people. I will not, however, dabble over that; conversely, I propose a new look into Jordanes and the *De origine*. I will argue that, although the motivation for writing the *De origine* genuinely seemed to be the request of Castalius, Jordanes seized the opportunity to write a narrative that not only made sense to him but also explored the meanders of *his own* understanding of what was the Gothic history and how it developed. And for Jordanes, the history and the deeds of the Goths were linked to their geographical domain – the Balkans.

The Balkans of Jordanes – comprising more or less the provinces of Moesia, Dacia, and Scythia – I will call *Magna Dacia*. The reason for doing so stems from the fact that, at the beginning of his work, Jordanes calls the Goths *Getae*. This is not a new ethnonym by any means, and it was rather common, in Late Antiquity, to employ this classicising designation. In the *De origine*, however, Jordanes goes one step further: he *justifies* the usage of the ethnonym by turning the history of the classic Getic people into Gothic history. Goths are not just referred as Getae, but they basically *become* the Getae. Moreover, Jordanes also attaches different people, such as the Gepids or the Scythians, to the Getic label. To put this in general terms, Jordanes gathers all the different people that lived in the provinces of the Balkans and understands them as one *gens*: the Getae. Therefore, because these people are listed in Herodotus as a tribe of Dacians, I have decided to define the broader geographical perspective of Jordanes as *Magna Dacia*: the 'cultural empire of the Getae'.

In order to prove this theory, I have divided this thesis into chapters that will explore and break down several narrative aspects of the *De Origine*. The first and second chapters will provide a general overview: the former is aimed at a survey of the state-of-the-art regarding historiography about Jordanes, and also a methodological clarification on how to perceive ethnicity within the *De Origine* (this matter will address the problems of scrutinising the work for legitimate elements of identity as well); the latter will explore the works of Jordanes and his persona. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how the rhetorical nature of the *De Origine* is idiosyncratic and, above all, how Jordanes picked a myriad of Greek and Latin authors to carry his arguments. Supported by this general explanation, the third chapter will focus on the Goths: I will establish the meaning and function of the ethnonym *Geta*. Moreover, essential narrative elements, such as the characterisation of the famous king Ermanaric and the rhetorical role of the Visigothic Balthi, will also be discussed in order to show how Gothic history is structured in order

to highlight the importance of *Magna Dacia.* Finally, this chapter will discuss the separation of Visigoths and Ostrogoths and how it affects this geographical/cultural approach that I propose. Ensuing the Visigothic/Ostrogothic debate, I will present the fourth chapter, which will be an analysis of the Huns in the *De origine*. This examination is fundamental, as the Huns occupy a privileged place in the narrative: through the figure of Attila, the Huns are presented as the hegemonic force in *Magna Dacia* and, as we will see, they epitomise the apex of politics in the region. This argument makes the emphasis on geography all the more evident. Thus, to better explore this dimension of the text, I will talk about the origin and development of the Huns in the *De Origine*; about the character of Attila himself; about the significance of two major Hunnic battles to the overall story; and about narrative turn that the *De Origine* takes after the death of Attila and the geopolitical chaos that follows. Lastly, the fifth (and last) chapter will address the arguments in favour of the *Magna Dacia approach* by emphasising the importance of geography for Jordanes and how it profoundly affects the narrative and the agenda of the *De Origine*.

All these points were carefully selected: they are the narrative elements that denote how the *De Origine* was constructed and what could have been its goals. They are categories of a rhetorical *continuum* whose over-arching topic is the story of how the Goths (i.e., the Getae) are fundamentally linked to the region that I call *Magna Dacia* – and, consequently, how the history of the place interweaves with the history of the people and vice-versa. In order to comprehend this dimension, the *De origine* has to be seen in its own context, that is, as a *constructed* narrative riddled with authorial agency and crafted, in structural terms, as a story.

For the sake of the argument, let us imagine for a second that Jordanes is the author of a play. The *De origine* is the script, and it is divided, accordingly, into three acts: the first one, the setup, presents the stage (*Magna Dacia*, through a geographical description,

as we will see in chapter 5) and the actors (the Getae/Goths, as will be discussed in chapter 3). Jordanes uses the opportunity to craft the plot, describing the mythical deeds of the Getic people in order to establish the personality of the actors (Dacian people who encompass the Goths, the Gepids, the Huns and the Scythians). The second act, the development, describes the rise and fall of our protagonists (in the figures of Ermanaric and Attila, as will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4); it advances the plot and reaches its climax with a conflict: the protagonists are divorced (into Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Huns), and many calamities follow it. The third act, the payoff, is the wrapping up of the plot. The protagonists are reunited, and they move to a new setting – Italy – thus bringing the story of *Magna Dacia* to an end and pointing to a future yet to be written.

This scenario illustrates something fundamental: the *De Origine* has internal narrative logic. It is not an unsystematic text, and it does not include information at random. The geographical introduction has a function, as much as the seemingly disconnected mythical exploits of the 'Goths' (in reality, Dacians). The jump to Ermanaric and the Amali, like the incursions into Visigothic and Hunnic history, is also deliberately placed, as it enters into the realm of 'historical reality' and, as such, introduces Jordanes' analysis of the political and cultural development of *Magna Dacia* when the Goths themselves come to the fore in Greek and Latin texts. And, finally, the narrative of the Gothic wars in Italy are not only a contingency of its times (and of Castalius' request), but also a way to conclude the separate story of Ostrogoths and Visigoths in a unifying note – but at the same time it is also very telling that, once the narrative leaves the Balkans, it looses breath and becomes much shorter. Naturally, all these elements will be explained, analysed and discusses much more in-depth further into this thesis.

With these debates, I intend to provide a serious and meaningful discussion of Jordanes and the textual nature of ethnography in Late Antiquity. As popular as Jordanes is – as exhausted as the scholarship about him might seem – I aim to provide an original, narrative reappraisal of him. If this goal is reached and my argument accepted, I hope that, in our analysis of Jordanes, we can start to take Jordanes' focus on *Magna Dacia* into account.

CHAPTER I

BEING BARBARIAN: PARADIGMS OF CULTURAL ETHNICITY IN JORDANES

1.1 – IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PROBLEM

Once Theoderic, the head of the Gothic house of the Amali, received the imperial *insigniae* from Anastasius in AD 497 – which had been sent back to Constantinople when Odoacer stormed Ravenna and deposed Romulus Augustulus, in 476 – a new chapter of Roman international politics was inaugurated.[1] It was a formal attestation that the West, although under the sphere of influence of the Emperors in the East, was under the suzerainty of new players.[2] Barbarian kings and military leaders, whose clout had already been felt within the Empire for centuries, were now, for all effects and purposes, protagonists of the political tides in the provinces of the *pars occidentalis*. The Iberian Peninsula and Gaul witnessed the rise of Frankish, Visigothic, Burgundian and Suevic lords; North Africa was held in the grip of the Vandals; and now, Italy, the old seat of Rome, was under the authority of the newly-arrived Ostrogoths.[3] It certainly became clear to the emperors that new strategies were required when dealing with these powers, and, thus, new modes of diplomacy and transnational policies started to surface.

From a historiographical point of view, this scenario is exciting but, equally, complicated. Both pragmatically and ideologically, it is unclear if the West was still the

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[1] J. J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 2–5.

[2] D. Mîrşanu, 'The Imperial Policy of Otherness', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 84.4 (2008), 477–98.

[3] On Barbarian Kingdoms and their nature, *cf.* I. N. Wood, 'The Germanic Successor States', in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. by P. F. Bang and W. Scheidel (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 498–517.

'Roman Empire'.[4] Should we see the late fifth and the early sixth centuries as a period of Fall or as a period of change and international rearranging? While the narrative of Fall has become popular and paradigmatic, the notion of transformation has attracted a considerable number of historians. To disprove the theory of sudden imperial rupture, historians have been trying to understand the role of barbarian rulers – and the basis for their authority – in a deeper sense. Sources and contemporary accounts have been scrutinised with considerable caution, which has led to new, solid notions of constructed discourses and an awareness of late antique (and early medieval) mentalities. We look into official propaganda, ideological narratives, and biased testimonies to better understand the nature of politics in this period. In this sense, we have fully embraced the *Zeitgeist* of the Barbarian Kingdoms through the eyes of its narrators: the anxieties of Gregory of Tours tells us much about sixth-century Gaul, the prominence of Avitus of Vienne is our medium to the court of Gundobad, and, similarly, Cassiodorus' political activities give us insight into the Ostrogothic affairs.[5]

In simple terms, the ideological narratives of the fifth and sixth century are sustained by crafted discourses of tradition. What does that mean? These new polities were accompanied by new socio-cultural mosaics: rulers whose ethnicity was perceived as 'barbarous' could not rely on the Roman past as a legitimising factor. For them traditional stories – that is, the 'past' – should be enticing and epic as the Roman traditional stories were. Theoderic was extremely aware of it, in part because he took over Italy itself, and in part because he had arrived after sovereigns such as Gundobad, Clovis and Alaric II were already established (or establishing) themselves in their respective territories.[6] Cassiodorus, the dutiful servant of the Goths, certainly did his best to provide

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[4] On the historiography of the end of the Roman Empire, see note 64.

[5] I. N. Wood, 'The Transmission of Ideas', in *The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 400-900*, ed. by L. Webster and M. Brown (London: British Museum Press, 1997), pp. 111–26.

[6] There is an established historiographical tradition in what concerns Theoderic's reign, his propaganda machine and his ideological positions, *cf.* Arnold; A. Goltz, *Barbar, König, Tyrann: Das Bild Theoderichs*

Theoderic's court with this necessary tradition. He wrote a History of the Goths – a monument of history which was, most likely, the first official, written account of the tradition of a non-Roman people:

> He extended his labours even to the ancient cradle of our House, learning from his reading what the hoary recollections of our elders scarcely preserved. From the lurking place of Antiquity he led out the kings of the Goths, long hidden in oblivion. He restored the Amals, along with the honour of their family, clearly proving me to be of Royal stock to the seventeenth generation. From Gothic origins he made a Roman history, gathering, as it were, into one garland, flower-buds that had previously been scathered throughout the fields of literature. [7]

To our misfortune, this *Historia Gothorum* was lost at some point in the past. We have no fragments nor hints of what Cassiodorus claimed to be the 'Roman origin' of the Goths. 'Originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam.' However, we do have Jordanes. This sixth-century author wrote a *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, commonly known as the *Getica*. In the preface to this book, he affirms that he tried his best to summarise what Cassiodorus had written in his *Historia*.[8]

With one simple sentence in his preface, Jordanes raised what seemed like an unanswerable riddle: if the *De Origine* is a faithful reproduction of the *Historia Gothorum*, does it then retain the official ethnic, ideological narrative that circulated in Theoderic's Italy? If the *De Origine* is not a faithful reproduction of the *Historia Gothorum*, does it at least retain 'proper' Gothic traditions that did not make it into the highly-romanised *Historia Gothorum*? Either way, what lies at the core of this problem is the assumption that, one way or another, the *De Origine* deals with the history of the

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Des Grossen in Der Überlieferung Des 5. Bis 9. Jahrhunderts (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2008); J. Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[7] 'Tetendit se etiam in antiquam prosapiem nostram, lectione discens quod vix maiorum notitia cana retinebat. Iste reges Gothorum longa oblivione celatos latibulo vetustatis eduxit. Iste Hamalos cum generis sui claritate restituit, evidenter ostendens in septimam decimam progeniem stirpem nos habere regale. Originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam, colligens quasi in unam coronam germen floridum quod per librorum campos passim fuerat ante dispersum', Cass. *Variae*, XXV, 4 – 5. Translation by Barnish, in: Cassiodorus, *Cassiodorus Selected Variae*, trans. by S. J. B. Barnish (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 128.

[8] This will be discussed in length in the next chapters.

Goths. To what extent it is reliable, to what degree it is a copy of Cassiodorus, are different problems. These various degrees of 'ethnic' reality, history, and tradition in the *De Origine* became a problem of historiography.

After the Second World War, during our 'modern age of Historiography', many influential scholars have attempted to establish definitive conclusions surrounding Jordanes' *De Origine*, with different degrees of success. James O'Donnell, already in the 1980s, tried to understand the authorial intent of Jordanes, thus looking into the sixth-century writer on his own terms.[9] Albeit a commendable effort, O'Donnell's diffuse answers did not achieve the desirable scholarly consensus, as the very question of authorship and dependence on Cassiodorus have been asked many times ever since.[10] Liebeschuetz, Weißensteiner, Bradley and Croke all dabbled with the same question, in some ways.[11] Motivated by the 'Gothicness' in Jordanes' work, that is, elements of Gothic history and the validity of these 'barbarian traditions', they all tried to assert the accuracy and the usefulness of the *De Origine* as a historical work – if it does not contain traces of 'Gothicness', it could at least clarify our understanding of Ostrogothic notions of the past through its proximity to what Cassiodorus might have written.

Some other scholars decided to approach the topic from a different point of view: Baldwin (and also the aforementioned Bradley) analysed the *De Origine* based on its linguistic characteristics and the manuscript tradition – something done again by Galdi,

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[9] *Cf.* J. J. O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 31.2 (1982), 223–40.

[10] The conclusions reached by O'Donnell are important and satisfactory, but they do not seem to hold: to propose such an important analysis of Jordanes in a restrained, short article ended up leaving quite a lot of the primary evidence out, which ended up creating an aura of 'speculation', rather than academic investigation.

[11] *Cf.* J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, 'Why Did Jordanes Write the Getica?', *Antiquité Tardive*, 19 (2011), 321–40; J. Weißensteiner, 'Cassiodor / Jordanes Als Geschichtsschreiber', in *Historiographie Im Frühen Mittelalter*, by A Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (Vienna; Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994), pp. 308–25; D. R. Bradley, ''In Altum Laxare Vela Compulsus': The 'Getica' of Jordanes', *Hermes*, 121.2 (1993), 221–36; B. Croke, 'Cassiodorus and the Getica of Jordanes', *Classical Philology*, 89.2 (1987), 117–34.

much more recently. [12] These works are indispensable for the student of Jordanes, as they provide fundamental textual tools – they do not, however, answer or touch upon the *nature* of the *De Origine* in its historical and cultural context.

It was Walter Goffart, however, who provided us with the most influential interpretation of Jordanes before the 2000s. In his famous *Narrators of Barbarian History*, Goffart decided to look into the *De Origine* from a more pragmatic point of view: instead of carrying Gothic traditions, did Jordanes convey aspects of Ostrogothic/Byzantine policies? The question is not starkly different from the issue of authorship, but it brought a necessary breath of fresh air. His answer attributes to the work of Jordanes the tones of a 'Happy Ending', as he concluded that the *De Origine* was written as a piece of propaganda whose objective was to show the triumph of Rome through marriage and the assimilation of the Amali by the lineage of Justinian – rather than being a shadow of Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum*, it was a product of Eastern policies.[13] Although he also dealt with the question of Germanic traditions in the *De Origine*,[14] this heterodox interpretation ended up being his most famous achievement within Jordanes' studies.

Then, in 2002 Arne Søby Christensen published what seemed to be the definitive study on Jordanes.[15] His lengthy monograph, called *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the*

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[12] *Cf.* G. Galdi, 'Considerazioni Paleografiche E Linguistiche Sulle Opere Di Jordanes', in *Latin Vulgaire X Latin Tardif: Actes Du Xe Colloque International Sur Le Latin Vulgaire et Tardif*, ed. by P. Molinelli, P. Cuzzolin, and C. Fedriani, 3 vols (Bergamo: Bergamo University Press, 2014), III, 789–806; G. Galdi, 'Late Sparsa Collegimus: The Influence of Sources on the Language of Jordanes', in *Colloquial and Literary Latin*, ed. by E. Dickey and A. Chahoud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 357–75; G. Galdi, 'Ex Dictis Maiorum Floscula Carpens Breviter Referam: L'apporto Linguistico Dei Modelli Nell'opera Di Jordanes', *Journal of Latin Linguistics*, 10 (2008), 109–32; D. R. Bradley, 'Manuscript Evidence for the Text of the 'Getica' of Jordanes (I)', *Hermes*, 123 (1995), 346–62; B. Baldwin, 'The Purpose of the 'Getica'', *Hermes*, 107.4 (1979), 489–92.

[13] *Cf.* W. A. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[14] W. A. Goffart, 'Jordanes's 'Getica' and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia', *Speculum*, 80.2 (2005), 379–98; W. A. Goffart, 'Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today', *Traditio*, 50 (1995), 9–30.

[15] *Cf.* A. S. Christensen, *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths: Studies in a Migration Myth* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002).

History of the Goths: Studies in a Migration Myth, managed to cover the birth and development of a historiography, going all the way back to the seventeenth century, that was concerned with unveiling the elements of *Germanisches Altertumskunde* in the *De Origine*.[16] His book, the fruit of his Ph.D. thesis, brought to scrutiny the literary relationship (and dependence) of Jordanes in relation to Cassiodorus' lost *Historia Gothorum* on a much wider level: not restrained by the diminutive space of a single article or chapter, methodologically Christensen was able to tackle the problem in a very thorough way. His conclusions were balanced: Jordanes must have relied, to a lesser or greater extent, on the History of Cassiodorus. However, says Christensen, both authors were responsible for creating the idea of a migration myth: neither the *De Origine* nor the *Historia Gothorum* should be seen as time-capsules for Germanic oral traditions; Jordanes, and possibly Cassiodorus, were reproducing traces and elements of Romano-Christian traditions – rather than Gothic traditions.

Christensen's study received much-deserved praise for its care in addressing the subject matter (as well as the polemics surrounding it). Seemingly, no stone was left unturned: the Danish classicist dealt with all the thorny questions that mantle Jordanes' scholarship. He analysed Jordanes' name, his identity, his motivations, his sources, his goals. His conclusions, nevertheless, were all reached while guided by one big motto: both Jordanes and Cassiodorus, regardless of their co-dependence and Roman influence, dealt with the history of the Goths. The longstanding assumption that these two authors are inexorably linked, at least in their view of Gothic past, was indeed Christensen's inducement to investigate the topic, and his answers were given in order to address this

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[16] I have to stress the importance of Christensen's analysis of centuries of Jordanes' studies. His monograph provides the reader with the necessary knowledge of how the *De Origine* was understood in the ninteenth century and how it shaped our modern notions in this topic. I fully agree with his points in this matter and, therefore, I will not address this aspect of the historiography in this thesis.

specific issue. With or without 'real' traditions, the Goths were still hogging the limelight in what concerns Jordanes and the *De Origine*.

As fundamental as Christensen's results were, such a predetermined line of investigation resulted in equally limited answers. A few stones were left unturned, after all. In other words, as fundamental as his results were, they still allowed space for different readings. Since the publication of his book, a few scholars noted as much (or were not satisfied with Christensen's conclusions), and decided to dedicate articles and books to the study of Jordanes.[17] Andrew Gillett is one of them. He regularly delivers articles that put Jordanes under the spotlight. The questions that motivate Gillett, however, are somewhat similar to one of the elements that motivated Christensen: are there Gothic traditions in the *De Origine*? In order to solve this problem, Gillett was one of the few researchers who tried seriously to tackle the question of Ablabius, the lost historian of the Goths mentioned by Jordanes and Cassiodorus.[18] For too long historians have speculated that Ablabius could have been the real source of Gothic traditions for both the *De Origine* and the *Historia Gothorum* of Cassiodorus – if, indeed, they conserve any tradition at all.[19] Again, the Goths are still the very core of any question concerning Jordanes.

All in all, both Goffart and Christensen became *quasi*-paradigms of interpretation for the *De Origine*, and the bulk of the material written on Jordanes still deals with his

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[17] C. Whately, 'Jordanes, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, and Constantinople', *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*, 8.Supplément 8 (2013), 65–78; W. Liebeschuetz; B. Croke, 'Jordanes and the Immediate Past', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 54.4 (2005), 473–94, among others.

[18] The problem of Ablabius will be discussed in chapter 2.

[19] *Cf.* A. Gillett, 'The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now', in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. by P. Rouseeau (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 392–408; A. Gillett, 'The Goths and the Bees in Jordanes: A Narrative of No Return', in *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, ed. by J. Burke and others (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2006), pp. 149–63; A. Gillett, 'Jordanes and Ablabius', *Latomus*, 254.10 (2000), 479–500. Gillet also published studies less concerned with Jordanes, but that still addressed Jordanes' issues, cf. *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by A. Gillett (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002). It has to be said that, even though Gillet's articles were published after Christensen's book, yet his study on Ablabius came out two years before.

usefulness to the study of Gothic history.[20] Curta and Korkkanen might be the exception,

as they deal with the presence of the Slavs or Finno-Ugric people in the *Getica*.[21]

However, their interpretations follow many of the same steps established by previous

scholars: trying to institute a way to analyse Jordanes' reliability as a source of historical

information, be it Barbarian or Roman.

As it is, even with this abundance of studies and different analyses, many still see

the *De Origine* as a problematic or even dangerous book.[22] Even the remote possibility of

the *De Origine* retaining real Gothic traditions (such as the migration from Scandinavia)

imbues Jordanes' work with a rancid aura of racialist theories and sociobiological

approaches that were so common especially before the Second World War. The result,

nowadays, is excessive carefulness employed when debating these issues.

Understandably, there is the unspoken, looming danger that the *De Origine* might be used

to reinforce and legitimise these unacceptable arguments – a similar problem faced by

Tacitus' *Germania*.[23] The deconstruction of the 'Gothicness' is a theoretical necessity to

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[20] S. Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past: Studies in Early Medieval Historical Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 39–92; M. Cruz, 'Gregório de Tours E Jordanes: A Construção Da Memória dos 'Bárbaros' no VI Século', *Acta Scientiarum Education*, 36.1 (2014), 13–27; Whately, 'Jordanes, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, and Constantinople'; V. da C. Silveira, 'Jordanes, Isidoro de Sevilha E a Origem Dos Godos', in *Perspectivas de Estudo Em História Medieval No Brasil*, ed. by A. L. P. Miatello (Belo Horizonte: LEME/UFMG, 2012), pp. 67–85; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, 'Making a Gothic History: Does the Getica of Jordanes Preserve Genuinely Gothic Traditions?', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 4.2 (2011), 185–216; M. Coumert, 'L'Identité Ethnique Dans Les Récits d'Origine: l'Exemple Des Goths', in *Identité et Ethnicité: Concepts, Débats Historiographiques, Exemples (IIIe - XIIe Siècle)*, ed. by V. Gazeau, P. Bauduin, and Y. Modéran (Caen: CRAHM, 2008), pp. 49–74; Bernhard Tönnies, *Die Amalertradition in den Quellen zur Geschichte der Ostgoten: Untersuchungen zu Cassiodor, Jordanes, Ennodius und den Excerpta Valesiana* (Olms-Weidmann, 1989).

[21] F. Curta, 'Hiding Behind a Piece of Tapestry: Jordanes and the Slavic Venethi', *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 47 (1999), 321–40; I. Korkkanen, *The Peoples of Hermanaric Jordanes, Getica 116* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1975).

[22] *Cf.* S. Bodelón, 'Jordanés Y La Problemática de La Gética', *Memorias de Historia Antigua*, XXI–XXII (2005), 49–72; Croke, 'Jordanes and the Immediate Past'; B. Girotti, 'La 'Prefazioni' Di Jordanes Alle Sue Opere: Problemi Di Scansione E Di Composizione', *Rivista Storica Dell'antichità*, 35 (2005), 189–216; C. M. Zottl, 'De Origine Actibusque Getarum: Textanalytische Gedanken Zur Gotengeschichte Des Jordanes', *Concilium Medii Aevi*, 7 (2004), 93–123.

[23] 'At the council of Basle (1431 - 1449), the delegates of [Spain and Sweden] clashed in 1434 in a dispute over the seating arrangements, for both parties claimed that as direct descendants of the ancient Goths, they had a right to occupy the most prominent position. [...] The text referred to by both delegations to substantiate their demands was De Origine Actibusque Getarum [...]'. As anecdotal as this evidence is, it is this sort of situation that frightens modern historians so much: the instrumentalisation of ancient works and, therefore, ancient ideas. In: Christensen, pp. 7–8.

prove that we do not hold any racialist positions or fantasies of accessing an untouched, pure Germanic world.[24]

This diligence and caution are, indeed, commendable, but they come at a price: Jordanes becomes a polarising author, and the *De Origine* is used in a manichaean fashion, as it is analysed to either prove or disprove different levels of 'Gothicness'. Granted, some fundamental studies on Early Medieval identities and ethnicity do use Jordanes as they would use any other source, that is, shielded by a critical structure of source analysis and contextual knowledge – elements that allow the *De Origine* to be seen in a wider context, alongside with a plethora of other written material.[25]

The rigorous scrutiny and criticism over 'Gothicness' and an accurate history of the Goths brings along another problem. Jordanes, as is less-widely known, wrote another book besides the *De Origine*: the *De Summa Temporum vel Origine Actibusque Gentis Romanorum*, commonly known as *Romana.* This world-history (focused on the Roman Empire) however, gets close to no scholarly attention at all.[26] To a certain extent, this dearth in *De Summa Temporum* studies is justified, as this volume is a cookie-cutter example of typical Roman chronicles – it is heavily dependent on Jerome and Florus. It is less original, less enticing and less mysterious than the *De Origine*. The problem, nonetheless, is the consequential fracture that is created between the works. They are

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[24] W. A. Goffart, 'Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians', *The American Historical Review*, 86.2 (1981), 275–306 (p. 279).

[25] To mention just a few, *cf.* P. J. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); *Kingdoms of the Empire: The Integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, ed. by W. Pohl (Leiden ; New York ; Köln: Brill, 1997); P. J. Heather, *Goths and Romans: 332-489* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); H. Wolfram, *Die Goten: von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts: Entwurf einer Historischen Ethnographie* (C.H. Beck, 1990); P. J. Heather, 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 79 (1989), 103–28; T. S. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[26] B. Girotti, *Ricerche Sui Romana Di Jordanes* (Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 2009); B. Girotti, 'Considerazioni a Margine Di Jordanes, Romana, 310-314', *Rivista Storica Dell'antichità*, 34 (2004), 323–42; M. Festy, 'De L''Epitome de Caesaribus' à la 'Chronique' de Marcellin: l''Historia Romana' de Symmaque Le Jeune', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 52.2 (2003), 251–55; D. Bartoňková, 'Marcellinus Comes and Jordanes's Romana', *Sborník Prací Filosofické Fakulty Brněnské University*, 12 (1967), 185–94.

mostly viewed as separate entities, almost if the Jordanes who wrote one was not the same Jordanes that wrote the other. He obviously wrote both, and, moreover, he composed them both at almost the same time. They have to be seen as a fruit coming from the same tree.[27]

Connecting both works is fundamental because it gives us, above all, a glimpse of *who* our author really is. The *De Summa Temporum* is, indeed, a work heavily based on other writers, but the choices that create the narrative logic of this book are, unquestionably, Jordanes'. He decided, then, to create an *opus* that was concerned with matters of state and power: in fact, we can see a Jordanes that is as pessimistic with his times as Marcellinus Comes was – as I will discuss in the next chapter. Because both the *De Summa Temporum* and *De Origine* were written almost simultaneously, the same authorial character must be present in both.[28]

This 'authorial character' is the driving force behind this thesis. Having considered all the historiographical questions described above, and the narrative intricacies of the *De Origine* and *De Summa Temporum*, I propose a certain interpretation of Jordanes that, in my opinion, solves the two main problems that surround Jordanes: whether he was copying Cassiodorus; and whether he records any form of genuine Gothic traditions. His discoursive choices and the clear geopolitical importance of some particular geographical areas (especially in the *De Origine*) seem to indicate that Jordanes was discussing the nature and the development of the Roman *Res Publica* in the *De Summa Temporum* and, similarly, the nature and the historical evolution of the Balkans in *De Origine*, which is what I propose. If the focus of the *De Origine* is geographical,

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[27] More topic will be addressed in chapter 2.

[28] The titles *Getica* and *Romana* were popularised by Mommsen, who published the most acclaimed editions of these texts. These simplified titles, in my opinion, create a forced parallel between them, as if they were to sides of the same coin: one narrates the history of the Roman, and the other, the history of the Goths. To avoid this connection (and I will explain the reasons to avoid it, in chapter 2), I decided to use the much less popular titles – that is, an abridged reference to their original titles (*De Origine* for *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, and *De Summa Temporum* for *De Summa Temporum vel Origine Actibusque Gentis Romanorum*.

the Goths become incidental to the work – or, more precisely, they become rhetorical tools: they are inhabitants (and cultural products) of *Magna Dacia*, and it is for this reason that they become the political protagonists of the work.[29] If that is the case, and the focus indeed rests upon the cultural-political *milieu* of *Magna Dacia*, then Jordanes obviously had a much more pronounced authorial agency, which leaves Cassiodorus out of the 'narrative picture'.

This panorama will be explored at greater length further ahead. But, before we continue, we have to clarify what is the meaning and what are the implications of the idea of *ethnicity* in Jordanes and in this thesis, as this concept is inexorably linked to the geocultural and geopolitical take proposed here.

1.2 – FICTIVE ETHNICITIES: ANTHROPOLOGY OF ALTERITY

Problems like 'Gothicness' and the hunt for reliable ethnographical material in the *De Origine* derive, in part, from the difficulty that Late Antique and Early Medieval scholarship have with the usage and conceptualisation of ethnicity.[30] In general terms,

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[29] Throughout this thesis, the concept of rhetoric will be linked to the textual dimension of the narrative, that is, to the construction of the argument and to the theoretical pillars set up by Jordanes. It is, in other others, refering to the discourse, the written reality of the *De Origine* and its persuasive strategies. As Lloyd Bitzer argued: 'In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought (...). The rhetor alters reality by bringing into existence a discourse of such a character that it becomes mediator of change', in: Lloyd F. Bitzer, 'The Rhetorical Situation', *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 1.1 (1968), 1–14 (p. 4).

[30] The discussion about 'Early Medieval Ethnicity' is endless, as it has been dominating academic studies for more than four decades – departing from the classic work of Wenskus. It is certainly unfair to place every single study concerned with post-Roman identities in the same basket, but it is more or less clear that the definition of ethnicity employed in a great part of these works is either situational, circumstantial or, at least, not deeply concerned with long-standing anthropological debates and conceptualisations. Among the most important studies, we could name *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by W. Pohl and G. Heydemann (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); J. V. A. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010); H. Wolfram, 'Origo et Religio. Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts', *Early Medieval Europe*, 3.1 (2007), 19–38; P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. by W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998); W. Pohl, 'Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies', *Archaeologia Polona*, 29 (1991), 39–49. Moreover, it is worth stressing the methodological discussions present in R. Bartlett, 'Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race

ethnicity has been applied by historians as a technical word for 'identity' – with a less abstract, more attainable content. While identity implies a certain psychology of identification and a sense of belonging, ethnicity seems to comprise a more objective explanation: it points to social and cultural constructs shared by a particular group. In this sense, while identity stems from the individual, ethnicity is a wider category, describing a cohesive societal formation.[31]

Naturally, the application of the concept of ethnicity requires, then, palpable, qualifying elements. A society can be only analysed under the scrutiny of ethnicity if we understand what define that formation as such. Traditional songs, name giving, mythological accounts, political structures; everything is open to 'ethnicness', that is, of being seen as a category of wide, cultural identity. However, as a scientific category, ethnography requires observation, the only way through which the canvasser can access (and assess) the nature of what creates the social bond of identity. It is logical that, in the case of the historian, the chronological gap between researcher and research makes it impossible to determine ethnicity through direct observation.

This epistemological problem cannot be ignored or glossed over. Cultural Anthropology has been concerned with the conceptual boundaries of ethnicity for the past decades, resulting in contradictory definitions, plural methodologies and, above all, different schools of thought.[32] Diverse threads of ethnographic methods are constantly developed and applied to different contexts. The debate about ethnicity among aboriginal tribes is unlike that of cosmopolitan, urban areas, and precisely because there are so many different cultural and societal spheres, methodology is rendered so important. Categories

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and Ethnicity', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 39–56; P. J. Geary, 'Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages', *Mitteilungen Der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 113 (1983), 15–26.

[31] I will not employ this definition, however. Here, *identity* will be the affiliation to a certain ethnicity.

[32] *Cf.* P. Poutignat and J. Streiff-Fenart, *Teorias da Etnicidade* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 1997).

of analysis are dependent on the object of study, and they invariably obey the reality and contingencies of this dialectical relation (that is, ethnic categories and ethnic subjects).

The question surrounding the methodological nature of ethnography should especially concern historians of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. As a moment deeply marked by the continuing appearance of non-Roman players, ethnicity plays a key role in understanding the nature of the new societies that emerge in texts and accounts of the period. Certainly, interest in different cultures and the alterity between the 'us' and the 'other' is a hot topic since time immemorial. From Egyptians to Greeks, the ethnographic discourse – or better, the process of qualifying otherness – is ever present.[33] The shift that occurs in the studies of the '*Völkerwanderung*' is one of methodology, not of topic. Instead of understating ethnicity as textual motivations, scholars tend to see this ethnographic discourse as a means to achieve an otherwise unattainable end: the observation of new, different and contrasting societal groups. In other words, motivated by the exigencies of the historical context and the character of the sources, post-Roman scholars look into any sort of ethnographic account as lenses on the reality of these new, emerging social and tribal associations. The historian puts him or herself in the position of a second-hand observer, and with diligent and thorough assemblage and criticism of the sources, a new panorama of ethnic veracity will emerge.

There is nothing inherently problematic with this approach, as long as it is backed by a strong methodological apparatus. It is safe to say, however, that this ideal scenario

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[33] 'Egyptology has seen a late reception of the term 'ethnicity', and has only rarely applied insights from the anthropological debate with scrutiny to its evidence', in: T. Schneider, 'Foreigners in Egypt: Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Context', in *Egyptian Archaeology*, ed. by W. Wendrich (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 143–63 (p. 143). Also, *cf. A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. by J. McInerney (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014); *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation*, ed. by R. F. Kennedy, C. S. Roy, and M. L. Goldman (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2013); H. J. Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Duckworth, 2009); *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel, 1300-1100 B.c.e*, ed. by A. E. Killebrew (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005); Irad Malkin, *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2001).

is mostly uncommon. As mentioned above, the application of the concept of ethnicity in Late Antique scholarship tends to be reckless, merely enabling new, technical ways of referring to turgid perceptions of identity.[34] At the core of the problem lays the lack of rigour; there is no attention to a definition of *what is ethnicity* – at least, not one that respects the enormous contribution of anthropological scholarship. By under-defining ethnicity, we incur in a consequential deficiency in establishing the categories through which historical, cultural identities can be studied.

The idea that Roman sources can be surrogate observers in the collection of ethnographical data is rooted in the classic anthropological debate of etic and emic perspectives. The emic approach places the gestation of ethnic traits on the investigated group: based on self-perceptions of worldview, societal behaviour, and cultural elements, the observer can draw conclusions. The etic approach is 'scientist-orientated', that is, it postulates that self-awareness of ethnic categories is unattainable within the investigated group. Therefore any framework of analysis will derive from the observer's perspective.[35] These positions engender a distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' definitions of ethnicity – respectively, regarding ethnic groups as either (1) social and cultural entities with distinct boundaries characterised by relative isolation and lack of interaction, or (2) culturally constructed categorisations that inform social interaction and behaviour.[36] The concerned Late Antique historian is commonly found lost in between these perspectives: are Roman sources agents of ethnic construction through the rhetoric of their texts? Can we pass through the barrier of the observer and understand elements of ethnicity that are

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[34] The difficulty in dealing with methodological analysis of ethnicity and historical realities is at the core of Gillet's rather problematic criticism of 'ethnogenesis' – the issue here is that, more often than not, the concept of identity is regarded, for better or worse, as a political (or positivist) notion. *Cf.* Gillett, *On Barbarian Identity*.

[35] *Cf. Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, ed. by T. N. Headland, K. L. Pike, and M. Harris, Frontiers of Anthropology (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990); M. Harris, 'History and Significance of the EMIC/ETIC Distinction', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 5.1 (1976), 329–50.

[36] S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 57.

intrinsic to the self-perception of tribal groups? These questions have to remain more or

less unanswered, as the methodological problem relies not on the nature of the sources,

but rather in the accepted nature of ethnicity as an analytical category. It is pointless to

enquire ourselves on the extent of the anthropological fidelity of the historical material if

we cannot decide what exactly composes the social identity of groups and, even, if this

social identity exists in itself, that is, regardless of what the observer has to say. Moreover,

even outside the field of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, the stark contrast between

a direct etic and emic perspectives is criticised. Jones states that:

> It has long been recognized that such a simplistic distinction between 'objective' and
> 'subjective' definitions of ethnicity is problematic as it entails the naive pre-supposition of a
> value-free objective viewpoint located with the researcher, versus the subjective culturally
> mediated perceptions of the people being studied. [...] it is generally accepted that the
> categories of the social scientist and the people being studied are equally subjective, and
> constitute different, although sometimes overlapping, taxonomies embedded within diverse
> frameworks of meaning. However, the situation is more complex because the distinction
> between 'objectivist' and 'subjectivist' definitions of ethnicity also relates to a difference of
> opinion about the nature of ethnicity itself. Are ethnic groups based on shared 'objective'
> cultural practices and/or socio-structural relations that exist independently of the perceptions
> of the individuals concerned, or are they constituted primarily by the subjective processes of
> perception and derived social organization of their members?[37]

This problem, after all, plagues both the social scientist and the historian. A time

gap does not change the epistemological concept of ethnicity, it just creates different

methodological obstacles. Regardless, current anthropology seems to have settled on an

answer to this question: ethnic groups have to be understood as self-defining systems,

with emphasis on the fluid and situational nature of both group boundaries and individual

identification.[38] If that is the case, does ethnicity have any meaning for a historical study

of the distant past? A look at Jordanes' scholarship can show us that the answer to this

question is positive. If ethnic groups are, above all, self-defining cultural systems, then

Jordanes can be dangerously seen as the perfect conveyer of ethnographical data: a non-

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[37] Jones, p. 57.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Roman writing about the non-Roman. In the case of Late Antiquity, this assumption gets us as close as possible to accurate insights into the social identity of groups ('Gothicness'). Of course, this perspective would only be valid if Jordanes were even remotely approaching and presenting traditional elements of societies that could be understood as qualitatively 'ethnic' – and, as we will see in this thesis, I argue that this is not necessarily the case.

The different methodologies and definitions that surround broad notions of etic and emic, of subjective and objective approaches to ethnicity end up creating two general understandings of identity, the primordialist and the instrumental understandings. The primordial imperative postulates that certain ethnic traits are bestowed at birth:

> [...] immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language [...] and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech and custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto*; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself.[39]

In other words, the primordial imperative, championed by ethnologists like Shils and Geertz, infers that tribal, basic ethnic bonds are involuntary and coercive, regardless of social circumstances or political contingencies.[40] To back the supposition of primordial elements of identity based on language, geography, and kinship, the debate entails elements of psychology and socio-biology in an attempt to understand the very essence of human (and communal) nature. Amidst the investigation for these *a priori* elements of humanity itself, primordialists tend to associate, therefore, the idea of ethnicity and

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[39] C. Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States', in *Old Societies and New States*, by C. Geertz (New York: The Free Press, 1963), pp. 105–57 (p. 109).

[40] G. M. Scott, 'A Resynthesis of the Primordial and Circumstantial Approaches to Ethnic Group Solidarity: Towards an Explanatory Model', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13.2 (1990), 147–71 (p. 151). *Cf.* Geertz; E. A. Shils, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology*, 2 vols (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957).

kinship – social identity would be, in this sense, an extended form of kin relationship and, as states van der Berghe, a form of kin selection. Ethnicity becomes race.[41]

On the other hand, instrumentalist approaches take an entirely opposite account of ethnicity. Although this perspective engenders a variety of different conceptions and methodologies to assess ethnic traits, the fundamentals remain the same: ethnicity is a social tool that moderates the contact among various groups of interests. Advocated mainly by Barth and Cohen, instrumental ethnicity has at its core the idea that ethnic groups do not exist in isolation, and ethnic boundaries are the very fabric of social identity.[42] In other words, it is the contact, the interaction, and the sociability that create the notion of ethnicity. This is a tremendous departure from the primordial imperative and the classic ethnographic method of understanding ethnic qualifiers within the premise of 'purity.' Instrumentalist theories also leave space open for *individual* perceptions of ethnicity – that is, individuals contained by a certain ethnic system can experience fluidity of their own notion of identity depending on social, political and economic interests.

While both broad perspectives attract criticism, they each touch on crucial elements of ethnicity, from the psychology of belonging and the symbolic coerciveness of basic ethnic impulses to the impact of social networks on the collective perceptions of culture and the individual self-identification. McKay proposes that:

> Ethnic tension or conflict which is purely ideal or purely material constitutes a minority of all cases. It is surely the case that all polyethnic societies are characterized by a combination of instrumental and affective bonds. [...] It seems pointless to bifurcate 'theories' into primordial or mobilization camps, when it is obvious that both dimensions are involved.[43]

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[41] P. L. van den Berghe, 'Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1.4 (1978), 401–11 (p. 405).

[42] *Cf. Urban Ethnicity*, ed. by A. Cohen (London: Routledge, 2013); *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. by T. F. W. Barth (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1970).

[43] J. McKay, 'An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 5.4 (1982), 395–420 (pp. 401–2).

The idea of Late Antique and Early Medieval ethnicity can be seen floating around these three dimensions, although it is easy to understand why any reference to 'race' or socio-biological categories of identity rings a very dangerous tone to historians. Through the distance between past and present, many have created a theoretical bridge, a continuum that, more often than not, legitimises modern prejudices (with racialist or racist overtones) by asserting an unquestionable weight of tradition upon contemporary ideas.[44] In this sense, 'Germanic people', for example, if understood in terms of race and kinship, can effortlessly become an argument in favour of current nationalism. With that in mind, many scholars employ conscious efforts in order to neglect the very idea of race or blood kinship in historical studies – by affiliating themselves to extreme instrumentalist notions of ethnicity, any primordial imperatives have to be abhorred. Yet, although this position is justifiable, it does not necessarily propose an explanation or a conceptualisation for ethnicity.

So far, we could (very simplistically) define ethnicity as a form of social organisation, based on categorical attributions that classify people according to a perceived origin and that, in social interaction, are validated by the activation of a variety of cultural signs that can be socially distinctive.[45] This minimal definition can direct us to the conclusion that ethnicity depends on mutable processes in which participants identify themselves but are also *identified* by others. It requires a certain dichotomy that is established and enforced by cultural differentiation. Ethnic identity, therefore, is never postulated by purely endogenous means (transmission of the ethnic essence through

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[44] A prime (and extreme) example of the racialist employment of historical ethnicity is the foundation of the Nazi *Ahnenerbe*, an institute envisioned by Heinrich Himmler as a path to the study of the archaeology and culture of the 'superior Aryan race'. Among those funded by the *Ahnenerbe*, Frazn Altheim is an illustrious case – the German scholar would become famous for his studies on the Huns and Central Asian nomadic groups. In: H. Yilmaz, *National Identities in Soviet Historiography: The Rise of Nations Under Stalin*, Central Asia Research Forum (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 60; M. H. Kater, *Das 'Ahnenerbe' der SS, 1935-1945: Ein Beitrag Zur Kulturpolitik Des Dritten Reiches* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2006), pp. 78–79. For more on the foundation and manifesto of the *Ahnenerbe*, *cf.* H. A. Pringle, *The Master Plan: Himmler's Scholars and the Holocaust* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).
[45] Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, p. 141.

belonging), but it is always and inevitably constructed also by the perception and interaction with those who *do not belong* to the specific ethnic group.[46] Therefore, the dynamism of ethnicity is due to the dialectic between exogenous and endogenous definitions of ethnic belonging. This realization is fundamental because the action of extraneous elements in the definition of identity creates a relation of force; if there is unbalance among the parties, one will *impose* identity over the other, while simultaneously denying the right of self-identification to the other party.[47] This is precisely the case with colonial ethnography or even ethnography that is still contaminated by colonial or imperialist paradigms. One could go further and say that, indeed, *any* ethnography establishes an immediate relation of power: to the ethnographer is reserved the power of naming, of establishing the categories and defining the elements that compose the identity.

The dynamic of force between the one that identifies and the one who is identified is one of the central aspects of neomarxist takes on ethnicity. This approach, for instance, links ethnicity, its creation, and its diffusion to the functions that different social classes play in any given society. In other words, this instrumentalist vision asserts that social roles are intrinsically linked to the perception of ethnicities, and therefore are also dependent on political and economic (that is, material) circumstances. Widely employed by scholars such as Wallerstein and Balibar to explain questions of racism and immigration under a capitalist world system, Neomarxist ethnography brings an important aspect to the academic debate: the correlation between ethnicity and hegemonic political entities.[48] It postulates that the hegemony of a cultural system, through politics and economy, will create disparity and more acute perceptions of ethnicity and belonging.

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[46] L. Drummond, 'Ethnicity, 'Ethnicity' and Culture Theory', *Man*, 16.4 (1981), 693–96.

[47] Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, p. 142.

[48] *Cf*. E. Balibar and I. M. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

Moreover, although this paradigm is a product of an analysis of current Western society, it seems to be quite fitting for the Roman context: Rome, as a cultural institution and the most outstanding political force at that time and place, exerted a level of 'cultural imperialism' that forced interaction with foreign tribes. This interaction took the form of economic regulation, geographical expansion, military conscription and, as has been said, cultural hegemony (*Romanisation*).[49] The unbalanced interaction contrasts two different ontological systems: the Roman *res publica*, functioning as a modern state, and the 'Barbarian organisations', functioning like tribal societies outside the existential boundaries of the state. Hence, this disparity creates conflicting world-views and, naturally, generates ethnographical discourses that could be analogous to the colonial accounts of European and North American ethnographers recording the customs and aspects of tribal societies which were suddenly faced with the reality of a 'civilised' world. This perspective has, in other words, a profound implication with its ethnographical epistemology: ethnicity is created and postulated by contrast, comparison, and cultural disparity. Therefore, ethnicity is understood and imposed by someone else who is not part of the communities under the anthropological scrutiny. It is not the science of defining the self, but the science of defining the other.

Hence, departing from instrumentalist standpoints, Balibar and Wallerstein 'politicise' their ethnographical analyses in order to cope with world systems, that is, in order to understand the formation of identity in a completely integrated reality. The

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[49] The idea of cultural hegemony is certainly complex. It does not only exert its influence in the Roman past, but also became a matter of debate among modern critical scholars, who started questioning the political and ideological outlines of the concept of 'Romanisation', *cf. Rome and the Black Sea Region: Domination, Romanisation, Resistance*, ed. by T. Bekker-Nielsen (Aarhus; Oakville: Aarhus University Press, 2006); R. Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005). For a discussion of cultural hegemony and imperialism, *cf. Cultural Imperialism: Essays on the Political Economy of Cultural Domination*, ed. by B. Hamm and R. C. Smandych (Peterborough; Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 2005). Although applied to a very different context, the notions expressed by Sider in relation to cultural dominance and imperialism in a class-based society are rather interesting, *cf.* G. M. Sider, 'The Ties That Bind: Culture and Agriculture, Property and Propriety in the Newfoundland Village Fishery', *Social History*, 5.1 (1980), 1–39 (pp. 14–15).

different, unequal forces that act on the construction of ethnic perceptions is then represented in a more engaged, specialised academic jargon: we see the emergence of terms like ethno-class, used by neomarxist anthropologists as a concept that does not dissociate the idea of social role and ethnic perception; and, specifically in the case of Balibar, the concept of 'fictive ethnicity'. He says:

> I apply the term 'fictive ethnicity' to the community instituted by the nation-state. This is an intentionally complex expression in which the term fiction, in keeping with my remarks above, should not be taken in the sense of a pure and simple illusion without historical effects, but must, on the contrary, be understood by analogy with the *persona ficta* of the juridical tradition in the sense of an institutional effect, a 'fabrication'. No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized - that is, represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions.[50]

The acceptance of fictive ethnicities imposes a great paradigm shift in ethnographical studies. It postulates that cultural (communal) identities are created to obey a more powerful, hegemonic narrative. In other words, they are *imposed* over those who are identified as belonging to a certain ethnic group. They do not exist as a given fact – diametrically opposed to the idea of primordialism –, but are shaped. In this sense, categories such as 'language' and 'race' operate as elements of 'ethnic cohesion', they 'express the idea that the national character is immanent in the people and convert the historicity of populations, of their diverse languages and 'races', into a predestined fact of nature'.[51] However, this socio-political examination of ethnicity ('ethno-class', 'fictive ethnicity') does require an overarching framework of world system and hegemonic notions of reality – globalised capitalist nation-states, for example. There is an underlying need for contact and network for the narrative of created identities to make sense; isolated,

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[50] E. Balibar, 'The Nation Form: History and Ideology', in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. by E. Balibar and I. M. Wallerstein (London; New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 86–106 (p. 96).
[51] J. Merçon, 'Fictive Ethnicity, Language and Race: A Brief Start for a Longer Discussion on Schooling and Identity', *Das Questões*, 1 (2014), 85–93 (p. 86).

tribal communities would not, at first glance, fit the theoretical model of highly politicised ethnicity.

Under Balibar's model, therefore, ethnicity is a narrative – and, in consequence, the very notion of state, of community, is also a narrative.[52] A narrative of force, of establishing the dominant power responsible for 'naming' the categories of identity and the lines of ethnic belonging, but nonetheless a narrative. Naturally, this assumption has non-written implications of perceptions of reality. It enters a realm of sociology (or anthropology, or philosophy, or all of the above) in which data is not necessarily material, but the result of ontological abstractions. To perceive and accept fictive ethnicities, then, one needs to accept that elements of identity will not be surmised through observation alone. The image of the lone, undisturbing ethnographer loses it power when faced with a dynamic reality of socio-politic narratives and constantly moving ethnicities.

Despite this *raison d'être*, conceiving ethnicity is part of a 'fictitious' narrative incurs into further epistemological implications. The link between the national and the ethnic discourse highlights the internal logic of the argument itself, that is, the dialectic between the *ur*-justification and the constant fluidity of ethnicity. What does that mean? In order for it to make sense, the fictive ethnicity requires categories that bond its participants together and, above all, create an innate sense of belonging. Through tales of origin, race, and language, the 'identity narrative' creates a self-legitimising tradition that survives superficial scrutiny, as it has the approving hand of history over it. In other words, the weight of the past and tradition is indispensable when creating the sense of shared community. However, at the same time, the necessity of 'fitting' within the wider, hegemonic narrative makes the fictive ethnicity constantly fluid. It has to change and adapt according to socio-political contingencies. Hence, fictive ethnic groups conserve a

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[52] E. Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 262–63.

traditional, immutable category of identity while, at the same time, regularly changing and adapting themselves *as a group*.

What is ethnicity, then? Thus far, it seems that we could still agree that ethnicity, as mentioned earlier, is a collection of elements that categorise and conscribe the identity of a community. It is comprised of symbols, signs and inter-recognised traits of culture, all acting in order to label the boundaries of a group as such. However, defining how ethnicity is created (or even if ethnicity is *real*) is more complicated. We saw that ethnicity can be viewed as primordial imperative, that is, an innate socio-biological, coercive kinship that dictates impulses of belonging; it can be viewed as a trait of communal interest and self-preservation, a utilitarian element of socialisation; it can be viewed as an entwinement of both these perspectives; and it can also be viewed as a narrative of power, of unequal categorisation. In other words, it is debatable if ethnicity sprouts from self-identification or if it is ascribed by the other onto the self (rather than being the definition of the self in contrast to the other). In this sense, it is also debatable if ethnicity is *real* of it is a social *fiction*, that is, a created, theoretical element. However, in spite of the many ways in which is possible to interpret and assess ethnicity, it seems more or less unanimous that ethnicity is a fundamental element of *human sociability*. From the smallest tribe to the most hegemonic nation, a level of ethnic identification is necessary for the very existence of societal survival.[53] Therefore, the different applications and conceptions of ethnicity are contextual, but the 'nature' of ethnicity, that is, communal cohesion, is *ahistorical*. Consequently, if ethnicity is the academic translation of a human phenomenon, then it can be ascribed in hindsight – it can be perceived and studied in historically and chronologically distant groups. It is precisely because ethnicity is a human phenomenon that Late Antique and Early Medieval

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[53] Merçon, p. 85.

historians cannot shy away from the scholarly debate. Studying ancient, long-gone societies is no excuse to avoid the many questions concerning the anthropological discussion of ethnicity. The employment of this concept cannot lack accuracy nor be devoid from the background discusses above. Unfortunately, this happens all too often, as if the chronological gap justified an unspecific, diffuse usage of a concept of ethnicity.[54]

Moreover, perhaps with the exception of Balibar (to a certain extent) and certain branches of 'anti-colonial' ethnography, some of these methodological assumptions fail to take into consideration the extent to which the *written* record of ethnicity creates a reality of its own.[55] It is in the very nature of ethnography that both categories of identity and cultural elements that create a community have to be described, analysed and recorded. Ethnicity, as perceived in a group, is a written, well-thought account – it does not represent, in itself, the 'purity' of identitarian qualifiers, but it rather accounts for a cognitive process in which the scientist processes the information that he or she considers to be ethnic. If ethnicity is inherently part of a written, analytical discourse, we could go to the extreme and say that, as a field of knowledge, it is always *created* through narratives and *ascribed* by the writer. As a discourse, ethnic identity does not exist beyond the limits and boundaries imposed through the eye of the beholder. As a rhetorical tool, ethnicity is understood and imposed by someone else who is not part of communities under the anthropological scrutiny.

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[54] However, it has to be said that even among ethnographer, ethnologists and anthropologists, ethnicity is seldom defined and conceptualised. Poutignat e Streiff-Fernart noted that 'a revista das definições, proposta por Isajiw em 1974 punha em evidência a imprecisão e a heterogeneidade do conteúdo da noção. Dos 65 artigos sobre a etnicidade passados em revista pelo autor, a maioria não comportava nenhuma definição explícita, e as poucas que foram propostas pareciam, ao mesmo tempo, vagas e heteróclitas'. In: Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, p. 85. Out of these 65 articles, Jones affirms that only 13 had some sort of definition, in: Jones, p. 56.

[55] '(…) through socially shared mental representations, social power is reproduced by its discursive enactment and legitimation', in: T. A. van Dijk, 'Discourse and Cognition in Society', in *Communication Theory Today* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), pp. 107–26 (p. 108). Also, *cf*. Y. Jiwani and J. E. Richardson, 'Discourse, Ethnicity and Racism', in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. by T. A. van Dijk (London: Sage Publications, 2011), pp. 241–62; T. A. van Dijk, 'Analyzing Racism Through Discourse Analysis. Some Methodological Reflections', in *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, ed. by J. Stanfield (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993), pp. 92–134.

Through the postulation of fictive ethnicity and assuming that the ethnic discourse is part of a rhetorical strategy of distinction, we can return to the Late Antique and Early Medieval discussion. Without necessarily defining the employed concepts and perceptions, historians have been close to this definition in the sense that barbarian identities are mostly understood as construction. Not many would say that barbarian ethnicities are fictive, but they certainly are seen through lenses of Roman erudition.[56] In other words, some could say that what we have are *perceptions* and *receptions* of ethnic traits (as if, in general, ethnography itself were not a systematised perception of a certain ethnic, cultural system). The problem with this understanding is that it is generally encapsulated in a paradox: textual traits of identity are constructed, but there must be a level of 'reality' that texts cannot reach. We end up with a dual perception of ethnicity, then – constructed but real.

Before continuing, we first need to understand, as clearly as possible, what exactly would be the components of Late Antique ethnicity. Given that most of our written information on barbarian identity comes from Greek and Latin texts, the most prominent category of ethnic identification is the *ethnonym*. Sometimes, attached to the ethnonym, we can find physical descriptions, political organisation, religious practices or social behaviour. Beyond that, another constant aspect highlighted by sources is the *geographical placing* of a group. Therefore, ethnonyms and geographical locations are the staples of Late Antique ethnicity.[57] Although Woolf calls ethnicity 'the creation of new stories in the Roman West,'[58] I would argue that folktales are but a sub-product of

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[56] Concerning the 'Gothic identity', for example, *cf*. B. Swain, 'Goths and Gothic Identity in the Ostrogothic Kingdom', in *A Companion to Ostrogothic Italy*, ed. by J. J. Arnold, M. S. Bjornlie, and K. Sessa (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 203–33 (pp. 228–29); M. Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars From the Third Century to Alaric.* (Leiden: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 41–42.

[57] E. Dench, 'The Scope of Ancient Ethnography', in *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches*, ed. by E. Almagor and J. Skinner (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 257–68; Y. Syed, 'Romans and Other', in *A Companion to Latin Literature*, ed. by S. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 360–71 (p. 371).

[58] G. Woolf, *Tales of the Barbarians: Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 3.

ethnic discourse; ethnicity, in its most basic Late Antique definition, seems to be the art of *naming* the other. By attaching a name to a group, people in the empire were able to understand and process knowledge of other people outside the boundaries of the imperial reality.

Naturally, this is a very straightforward and basic notion, but it does help us to understand how ethnicity was categorised. As a genre, 'ethnography' was part of geography: describing people was part of describing lands and, therefore, a way to comprehend the world.[59] Among scholars, even if the geographical scope is sometimes left out of the academic ethnic analysis, the ethnonym seems to be recognised as the central issue of the debate. Stemming from the usage of ethnonym in the sources, Wenskus composed what might be the most famous and applied notion of identity for Late Antique and Early Medieval groups. The German scholar, investigating the process through which Germanic groups were formed and identified, identified socio-political cores called *Stämme*, that is, 'tribes,' 'trunks' of people sprouting from an anthropological tree. The popularised understanding of his monumental work concentrated on the notion of *Traditionskern*, that is, a nucleus of people of aristocratic background who would form and perpetuate tribal polities, thus forming the standard sociological measure for larger units. These larger *Stämme* would keep cultural cohesion by employing notions of kinship and commonality of origin.[60] This notion found equal amounts of adherence and criticism, and it opened the gates for an analysis of ethnicity that is, at the same time, *symbolic* but *real*. In other words, the idea of *Traditionskern* would allow the historian to perceive the ethnicity of the *Stämme* in symbolic, constructed terms, but more or less free from the

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[59] N. Lozovsky, 'Geography and Ethnography in Medieval Europe: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Concerns', in *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, ed. by K. A. Raaflaub and R. J. A. Talbert (Chichester; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 311–29 (pp. 311–13).
[60] P. J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 77. Also, *cf.* R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Köln: Böhlau, 1977).

Latin and Greek bias. It became a method of scrutiny that seemingly brought us the closest to actual ethnographical observation.

Wenskus' method found so much echo, then, because it translates into an academic discourse the desire to unveil the 'real' elements of ethnicity of long-gone people. Looking closely into traditions, names and Germanic notions and categories of identity creation, we could reach a Roman-free ethnography. Yet, as commendable and useful as this method might be, we should bring Balibar's fictive ethnicity into this discussion. The Roman Empire, as said before, was undoubtedly the strongest cultural power during Late Antiquity; from the shores of Portugal to the Black Sea, to Asia Minor and to the gates of Persia, Roman reality was the hegemonic norm. It was a cultural empire in every sense. For analytical purposes, this hegemony (or even 'cultural imperialism') can be seen as similar to that of modern nation states; and if nation states are responsible for creating, narrating and enforcing smaller fictive ethnicities, then we can see how Rome exerted enough symbolic power to create, narrate and enforce smaller fictive ethnicities. This is not to say that, because ethnographic accounts are confined in Roman sources, we can only get a Roman point of view; assuming that fictive ethnicities correspond to an imperial reality, this is to say that, in fact, Barbarian identities were *created* and *existed* because of Roman political, cultural and even existential contingencies. The tribal notion of barbarian ethnicity is registered because the imperial *Weltanschauung* required these narratives to configure itself as such: a world system whose boundaries delimited the frontiers of civility. Certainly, the limit between (a very loose comprehension of) barbarism and civility is at the heart of any ethnographic account. In simple terms, observing and describing ethnic traits require an awareness of one's own reality – one that can be contrasted with that of the observed. And this, finally, brings us back to Jordanes.

Jordanes, for the most part, presents us with an ethnographical account in the *De Origine*. It follows the staples of Late Antique descriptions of its kind: it sets the story around a cultural-geographical limit, it attaches a number of ethnic groups to the place, it enumerates a variety of ethnonyms and, quite often, postulates customs, political practices, folkloric elements and language. It stays faithful to the genre of ethnography by opening the text with geographical elements – and as we have seen, geography was the dominating character of ethnographical accounts in Antiquity. This tonal focus is clear, from the title to the closing sentence, and coupled with Jordanes' own *persona* – very likely a barbarian – it created the aura of ethnic 'authenticity' to some modern historians, as we have discussed. Whether this authenticity was regarded in a positive or negative light, it seems unanimous that the *De Origine* is a text fit for ethnographic analysis and discoveries (or denunciations) of barbarian customs. I argue, however, that considering this text as a bridge to ethnic information is merely scratching the surface. The *De Origine* certainly possesses a very particular way of addressing identities: ethnicity has a narrative function, and understanding its placement within the framework of the story seems to be more beneficial and rich than looking at tribal elements at their face value.

Whether a barbarian or not, Jordanes was still very much integrated into the Roman mindset. He accepted Latin and Greek values and institutions as the norm, and the idea of empire (and cultural hegemony) is the default argument in the *De Origine*. Therefore, we can safely agree that the imperial narrative *is* the central thread of the work – and, as it is, the narrative of barbarian ethnicities is subject to it. Similar to Balibar's argument of fictive identities, the ethnic character of Getae, Huns and others functions as a cog within the logic of the hegemonic, 'imperialist' subtext. This poses a problem for the conception of 'Gothicness', as it does not represent a real category *per se*, but is the rhetoric construction of a conceived narrative.

That being said, we have two levels of ethnographic approaches in our case with the *De Origine*. The first one is the human phenomenon of categorising identities; the second one is the rhetorical nature of ethnicity within the logic of the text. We have seen that ethnicity, as the identity of a group, is littered with various methodological understandings. It can be seen as emic or etic on occasion, it can be understood with objective or subjective tones and, above all, it can be regarded as primordial or utilitarian. These perceptions should not be set in stone, as they are generally dependent on the context in which ethnicity is observed. Isolated tribes, urban groups, and pre-modern societies all have different realities and different ethnic qualifiers. Beyond these instances, however, there is also the realisation that ethnicity can be a measure of social and political antagonism and force – it is not just the set of elements that create social identity, but also the textual (and theoretical) argument that creates a wider social narrative. Classic ethnography, in spite of the lack of modern-day methodological necessities, seems to convey notions that are similar to the primordialist system: coercive impressions of kinship and aprioristic belonging attached to a land. Jordanes subscribes to these elements – especially in what concerns the royal families of the Amali and the Balthi, and the focus on geographical predisposition – but goes beyond and, I argue, creates fictive ethnicities. The identities present in the *De Origine* exert a narrative function and are subject to a wider topic of hegemony and historical interaction.

Before we proceed with a more in-depth discussion of the application of fictive ethnicity in Jordanes (and in a broader spectrum of Late Antique and Early Medieval historiography), we have to understand how this discourse of identity fits the Roman ideal of self. By doing so, we will perceive the dialectics between the empire and the ethnography of external groups, which will clarify the conceptual boundaries of ethnic identification in ancient texts.

1.3 – GRAND NARRATIVE AND LITTLE NARRATIVES: *ROMANITAS*

Ethnic narratives, self-confined and attributed to a plethora of barbarian tribes, were constructed within a logic of Roman *Weltsanchaaung*, as we discussed. This does not mean that fictive identities were shaped along obviously conscious lines, but they are subject to a process of cognition that requires a hegemonic political system and relations of force in relation to the said system. In other words, what we have is a Roman perception of reality that assesses exterior identities – ethnicity is dictated by imperial typologies. If this is the case, we certainly cannot understand the process of *naming* fictive ethnicities, that is, the *other*, without comprehending the nature of the *self* – which, in our case, is the Roman Empire.

It does not seem feasible to address one single, unified idea of 'Roman Identity';[61] the empire underwent many changes of political, social and cultural order. A powerful institution that lasted for many centuries and spanned a considerable part of the known world is bound to experience a great deal of transformation. By the time Jordanes started writing his *De Summa Temporum* and his *De Origine* the empire was confined to its former Eastern territories, characterised by Greek influence, constant warring with Persians and nomadic groups, and, of course, the weight of Christianity (which is at the heart of the foundation of Constantinople and the subsequent official division of Eastern and Western empire).[62] The West, on the other hand, was nothing but an ideal of power, a symbolic image of what it once represented: Odoacer had already seized power in 476, and Julius Nepos was unable to establish himself as a figure of authority.[63] Western

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[61] *Cf.* C. I. Arno, 'How Romans became 'Roman': Creating Identity in an Expanding World' (University of Michigan, 2012); E. Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, ed. by R Laurence and J. Berry (London: Routledge, 2001).

[62] For this period, *cf. The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. by M. Maas (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[63] J. P. C. Kent, 'Julius Nepos and the Fall of the Western Empire', in *Corolla Numismatica Memoriae Erich Swoboda Dedicata* (Graz; Köln, 1966), pp. 146–50.

provinces, then, were under a completely different political setup; new players (such as Franks, Burgundians, and Goths) had achieved a tremendous level of influence and, in general, the scenario of international relations became more complex. This complicated panorama was not a sudden product of its times, but came in a wave of many different issues that plagued the Empire for decades – and even centuries: economic issues, social problems, military difficulties; this is not, however, the space to discuss in-depth what brought the Empire to bay.[64] Suffice to say that, from an existential point of view, the turbulences of Late Antiquity must have had a profound effect in the very idea of Roman identity. This is evident in the *De Summa Temporum*, as we will see; Jordanes talks about the glorious days of Trajan with a hint of sad nostalgia, while his own times were beset with war and ignorant rulers. Rome, in that work, is decadent and is about to be swallowed by some yet-unknown political juggernaut – as Jordanes subscribes to the Christian theory of the succession of empires.

Nevertheless, even if we cannot specifically pinpoint elements of *what is to be* Roman, some elements can – and should – be clarified for the sake of analysis. It is common to analyse identities with a straight dichotomic contrast: barbarian is the contrary of Roman; civility is the opposition to barbarism. This methodology is sometimes applied to ethnicities as well, thus making ethnic tribes somewhat *different* from, perhaps, ethnic Roman groups. Indeed, there is an important element of contrast in the making of

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[64] The historiography on the fall of the Western Roman Empire is vast and certainly deserves a doctoral analysis of its own. There are a variety of different approaches and explanations, from the more categorical (*cf*. A. Goldsworthy, *The Fall of the West: The Slow Death of the Roman Superpower* (London: Phoenix, 2010); Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*; B Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).), to ideas of transformation; reasons for the 'fall' are sometimes external, sometimes internal, sometimes both, *cf*. P. J. Heather, 'The Huns and the End of the Roman Empire in Western Europe', *The English Historical Review*, 110.435 (1995), 4–41; L. Musset, *Les Invasions: Les Vagues Germaniques* (Paris: Presses universitaire de France, 1994); A. Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988); R. J. Antonio, 'The Contradiction of Domination and Production in Bureaucracy: The Contribution of Organizational Efficiency to the Decline of the Roman Empire', *American Sociological Review*, 44.6 (1979), 895–912. For an overview of Early Modern interpretations of the Fall of Rome, *cf*. I. N. Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 52–73.

identities, as we discussed above, but the issue here is that we are dealing with two different, unequal analytical categories. Ethnic groups are not the direct contrast of 'Roman', as there is no such a thing as Roman ethnicity – in the sense of the imperial institution. Comprising a label of citizenship and related civic duties (paying taxes, serving the military), the 'ethnic' aspect of Rome is mostly confined to artificial lineages of aristocrats and arguments of legitimation.[65] However, as important as kinship might be to the upper echelons of Roman society, they seem (in pragmatic terms) to matter less and less as we see the rise of other socio-political groups, from bureaucratic officers to religious figures. The central issue is that, overall, the Late Empire (at least, after Caracalla) is not defined by ethnic qualifiers; it became a hegemonic, political institution that, for the sake of its dimension and influence, requires a level of 'universality' when it comes to identities.[66] Certainly, one can be a provincial *and* a Roman; people such as Stilicho could be seen as a barbarian *and* a Roman when it mattered. Being Roman is an encompassing label of political affiliation. It is a *citizenship*, after all.[67]

Attachment to the Roman citizenship requires, nonetheless, a self-perception of its reality. If not ethnic, what is, then, to *be a Roman*? There are, throughout imperial history, staples of political identity that can be circumscribed. At the rise of the Empire, with Augustus, Vergil crafted the Roman epic *par excellence*; the *Aeneid* sets the ground for the comprehension of the self. It has a tale of origin, and it establishes a narrative of triumph over hardship. It is also a nod to the Greek οἰκουμένη, as Rome is linked to the

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[65] *Cf.* L. Revell, *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 191–94; E. Gunderson, *Declamation, Paternity, and Roman Identity: Authority and the Rhetorical Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); J. F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993).

[66] *Cf.* L. Revell, *Ways of Being Roman: Discourses of Identity in the Roman West* (Oxford; Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2016).

[67] I. Hughes, *Stilicho: The Vandal Who Saved Rome* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2010), p. 14; R. W. Mathisen, 'Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire', *The American Historical Review*, 111.4 (2006), 1011–40.

grand narrative of Troy.[68] The theme of conquest would follow the Roman *ethos* for centuries, even when its character was deeply affected by the adoption of Christianity. After Constantine, a new Rome had to rise from the foundations of the pagan epic of Vergil, and many Christian authors were quick to answer the call (in their own peculiar ways).[69] Eusebius and Jerome crafted a lineage of the world, an account of times, from the creation of Earth to the times of the Romans, thus asserting that the religious quality of the empire was dormant in the past, but had now achieved its due glory.[70] Augustine elaborated a symbolic explanation of his epoch, shifting the focus from the earthly to the heavenly, thus establishing one true, definitive end-of-it-all objective to the life in the empire.[71] Orosius opposed pagan history with his very own Christian story of the world.[72] And, following the narrative trend of defining the empire, Christian poets used rhetoric to imbue the cultural and literary background of Rome with the feature of salvation, meditation, and communion with God.[73] In spite of this drastic Christian shift, the paradigm of religion was a perfect fit for the ideology of Roman self-perception: the triumph of Jesus, the idea of salvation and the necessity of conversion and expansion were

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[68] Y. Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 13–32.

[69] *Cf. The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. by N. E. Lenski (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[70] *Mosaics of Time: The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD.*, ed. by R. W. Burgess and M. Kulikowski (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), I, pp. 99–132.

[71] P. Weithman, 'Augustine's Political Philosophy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. by D. V. Meconi and E. Stump, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 231–50 (pp. 235–37); J. von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), pp. 152–53. Certainly, restraining the figure of Augustine in a simple political narrative is a fruitless task, *cf.* C. Leyser, 'Augustine in the Latin West, 430-Ca. 900', in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. by M. Vessey (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 450–64; C. Leyser, *Authority and Asceticism from Augustine to Gregory the Great* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3–33. Acknowledging the simplification that I incur in these brief examples of Christian authors constructing a metanarrative, I insist that *Christianitas* became a chief, indissociable element of Roman life and identity, regardless of dogmatic polemics or personal strifes among different aristocracies (Christian and non-Christian alike).

[72] P. V. Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History*, Oxford Early Christian Studies Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 92; P. M. Cavero, 'Los Argumentos de Orosio En La Polémica Pagano-Cristiana', *Antigüedad Y Cristianismo*, 7 (1990), 319–31 (pp. 232–33).

[73] M. Mastrangelo, *The Roman Self in Late Antiquity: Prudentius and the Poetics of the Soul* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 2–5.

suitable arguments for a logic of hegemony, conquest and singularity.[74] There was no

redemption outside Christ; there was no redemption, no recognisable or worthy reality

outside Rome. The truth behind the Christian discourse became the truth of imperial,

universalistic power.

The singularity and ownership of truth are powerful elements of a discoursive,

symbolic perception of the Roman self. Mastrangelo, in his powerful study of Prudentius'

poetry as a tent pole of knowledge and tradition in the post-Constantinian world, affirms

that:

> […] Prudentius' use of his intellectual inheritance, as manifested in the Roman epic tradition,
> the Bible, Christian theology and pagan philosophy, constitutes a vigorous contribution to the
> fouth-century reformulation of Greco-Roman literary and intellectual tradition. This
> reformulation is best understood as an effort to produce a 'grand narrative' or 'meta-narrative'
> of Roman Christian identity in all its cultural, ideological, and intellectual expression. A grand
> or master narrative is 'central to the representation of identity, in personal memory and self
> representation or in the collective identities of groups'. An essential function of the Roman
> epic was to restate national identity through a master narrative of larger than life figures.[75]

Although the focus here is not Prudentius, the affirmation still stands. As the

hegemonic power in its own contemporary world-system, Rome required its grand

narrative to embody its cultural identity. *Romanitas*, that is, the essence of *being Roman*

is precisely the subscription to this 'meta-narrative', this cognitive perception of a

triumphant, universal entity. Of course, this entity is further defined by political, literary

and military achievements, and that is why a solid background of knowledge, poetry, and

epic tales are fundamental, as they hone the perspective of a superior, successful

institution. If the narrative of *Romanitas* aspires to be a universal metanarrative,

Christianitas provides the perfect situation for such: the absolute values of God and

salvation that emanate from the Christian logic concedes to *Romanitas* an even more

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[74] P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 118–58.
[75] Mastrangelo, pp. 2–3.

legitimate essence of truth – universal truth.[76] In the Late Empire, the dialogical self-perception of *Romanitas* and *Christianitas* is a strong argument for a 'total identity', a national, hegemonic metanarrative.[77]

    Romanitas could be defined, then, as the loose sense of pertaining to Roman identity – a cultural system that claims hegemony and superiority. Late Roman *Romanitas* achieves the desired element of universal truth with the advent of Christianity and the providence of a divine framework. However, the rhetorical efficacy of the metanarrative of *Romanitas* must have suffered an enormous amount of doubt and scepticism with the rise and prominence of barbarian groups and other internal problems of the empire.[78] These alien societies, certainly, were always part of Greco-Roman reality. Geography, as we discussed, made sure that the observers, from their position of power, could understand different groups and the variety of people within a matrix of *civilitas*: their *loci*, their behaviour, and their customs would be explained with Greco-Roman lenses. *Christianitas*, however, allowed some of these groups, during Late Antiquity, to become members of the *Grand Narrative* of Rome by converting and accepting the set of cultural and political values of the empire.[79] In this sense, ethnic communities could easily coexist under the notion of *Romanitas*, even if their ethnic nature did not fully render them as *Romans*.[80] In this sense, the fictive ethnicities of Balibar make sense: groups and plural

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[76] To defend the idea of *Romanitas* as a hegemonic perception of identity does not mean to equate this level of recognition with the everyday praxis of the Empire – and, in this sense, authors like Salvian or Augustine would never attach *Christianitas* to the political *Otium*. *Romanitas*, in essence, has more to do with pertaining to a *Kulturraum* rather than being just the existence under a certain political system.

[77] On Vergil's *Aeneid*, Syed says that 'the Roman identity that emerges from the poem can best be compared to the modern concept of nationhood, as it strives to unite within itself various ethnic groups to form a whole unified by common language, customs, and religion'. In structural terms, the Roman Empire functions as a 'nation'. In: Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse*, p. 220.

[78] This is the situation in which Orosius' *Historia* and Augustine's *Civitate Dei* were thought and written.

[79] G. Clark, 'Augustine and the Merciful Barbarians', in *Romans, Barbarians and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. by D. Shanzer and R. W. Mathisen (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 33–54 (p. 39). Also, 'Prudentius is keen to show that reason is what distinguishes Romans from barbarians', in: M. Brown, 'Prudentius' Contra Symmachus, Book II. Introduction, Translation and Commentary' (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2003), p. 164.

[80] Although through completely different means and category, this is the process enabled by Josephus in his narratives of the Jewish people, *cf.* E. Nodet, 'Josephus' Attempt to Reorganize Judaism from Rome',

communities started to be recognised as ethnic nuclei within the empire; their 'little narratives,' that is, their ethnic identities, begun to be subject to the grand narrative, the national conception of *being Roman*.[81]

This conception has special impact in Jordanes' *De Summa Temporum* and *De Origine*. In the former, Jordanes draws a scenario of failure and negativity: as we have discussed, by the mid-sixth century the Roman Empire was but an echo of the hegemonic force that it once was.[82] The West was consumed with wars and conflicts between Barbarian kingdoms and the desire of reconquest demonstrated by Justinian. The East, similarly, suffered 'daily' incursions of Slavs and Bulgars, meaning that, for Jordanes, the situation was not necessarily better – in fact, he gives us the impression that, in general, the empire was drawing its last breath.[83] The very idea of triumphant *Romanitas* was lost in constant warring and the appointment of inept rulers. Roman identity, as an epic *ethos* of conquest and triumph, proved ineffective when faced against the vicissitudes of fifth and sixth centuries. Hence, if *Romanitas* is represented by the grand narrative of success, the *De Summa Temporum* is established as a questioning of this idea or, at least, stands as a pessimistic account of it. As for the *De Origine*, certainly the big picture is rather different. This work is established as a different, more focused narrative: it recounts the deeds of the Getic people as they construct their history across the territories of Dacia. On the surface, it is a story of success and exploits (in spite of the ultimate defeat at the hands of Belisarius); at first, it also does not seem to dabble over *Romanitas*, it being a tale of 'Gothicness'. This leads people to believe that both works are complementary to each other, in the sense that the *De Summa Temporum* is the history of the Romans, while

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in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method*, ed. by Z. Rodgers (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 103–24 (pp. 110–13).

[81] For a discussion of the nature and contraction of Little and Grand narratives, *cf.* B. Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 56–57.

[82] *Cf.* Chapter 2.

[83] 'Hi sunt casus Romanæ Rei Publicæ præter instantiam cottidianam Bulgarum, Antium et Sclavinorum', in: Jord., *Romana*, 388.

the *De Origine* is a history of the Goths. However, I would argue that their nature is rather different and do not add to each other very much in this sense. *De Summa Temporum* addresses the diminishing greatness of the empire; its negativity can be seen as a commentary on the failure of *Romanitas*. The *De Origine*, as we will see in-depth, is also a commentary, but on the formation of an alternative metanarrative; the geographical, cultural and political focus on the territories of *Magna Dacia* has a unique ethnogeographical ring to it. The 'little narrative' of ethnic groups takes the central stage and, in terms, becomes itself a *Grand Narrative* of the Dacian succession of people.

With the argument in favour of fictive ethnicity and 'national' metanarratives of culture and power in mind, how can we understand ethnicity in Jordanes and, above all, what are the implications of it to our analysis? These elements have to be clear because they are not just the focus of Jordanes' historiography but also essential to the points that I will raise in this thesis. It is usual, as we saw, for scholars to interpret Jordanes under a light of (positive or negative) 'Gothicness': he is a Goth narrating the history of Gothic people. Whether that narrative is accurate or false, whether it conserves elements of Germanic tradition or whether it just reproduces archetypes of Christian and Greco-Roman literature, whether Jordanes is original or whether he is just copying the main elements of Cassiodorus, is up for debate. However, these assumptions, be they accepted or not, rest upon the supposition that ethnicity, in Jordanes, is a given fact; that identity is a simple tool of self-perception or political contingency and, by looking into them with deep 'historical criticism', we can learn something about ethnicity and politics in Late Antiquity. Hence, we go back full circle to the common misconception of the ethnic discourse (and the nature of ethnicity) among historians and medievalists. If we accept fictive ethnicities as an element of narrative power, we can see how, at a theoretical level, Roman authors will shape identities according to their own *Weltsanchaaung*, that is,

according to their cognitive reality. Moreover, if this Roman perspective, again at a rhetorical level, is the grand narrative of a cultural world system and, therefore, a holistic representation of imperial identity from which the little fictive ethnicities will be seen, analysed and shaped, then we can look at the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine* under this definition.

In both texts, Jordanes defines identities with two categories in mind: language and geography. He follows the staples of classic Ethnography. However, as a concept, we should understand ethnicity, in the *De Origine* and *De Summa Temporum*, as a fictive, rhetorical phenomenon. They are part of a wider framework based on a symbolic perception of the world, one that is canvassed by grand, overarching 'national' (imperial) metanarratives. Both works complement each other on epistemological grounds: the *De Summa Temporum* addresses the failure and decline of the Roman narrative of the aggrandised *self*, while the *De Origine* tells a more or less self-contained story that presents and explains and alternative narrative of identity – not necessarily an alternative to the Roman identity, but one that runs in parallel. The 'national', *Grand Narrative* of the *De Origine* is not a story of 'Gothicness'; it is rather a discoursive incursion in the ethnogeographical history of Dacia. Ethnicity is a symbolic tool of power to understand the metanarrative of *Magna Dacia*, which is embedded in classical perceptions of ethnography and, above all, geography.

With these notions of ethnicity, the nature of ontological *narratives* and hegemonic identities in mind, we can proceed to understand who is, exactly, our author and what are the realities of his textual production.

CHAPTER II

PORTRAIT OF AN AUTHOR

2.1 – THE *AGRAMMATUS* OF MOESIA

Jordanes was an interesting man. Relegated to the second rank of historians of Late Antiquity, he is nonetheless an ever-present spirit in scholarship.[84] In spite of the harsh criticism so often directed to his Latin, because of his knowledge and his presentation of his sources he has always been central to analysis of Gothic history or, more specifically, with the busy 'Ostrogothic' years that follow the 'Fall of the West' to the end of Justinian's wars.[85] His *De origine Getarum* is stuffed full of conspicuous details, idiosyncratic approaches, and unique information. The lavish amount of singular data found in his work has created a love-hate relationship between him and researchers.

Although he is such a polarising figure, we know next to nothing about the author. We have precious scraps of personal information left by himself in his two known works, the *De origine,* and the *De Summa Temporum*. It is, nonetheless, unsatisfactory. Suffice it to say that even his name is open to debate: was it really Jordanes? Maybe it was the more Gothic Iornandis? Was it a misnomer, a baptismal name awarded after his 'conversion'? We will probably never know, but I consider that we have enough, at least,

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[84] 'Though the Constantinopolitan Jordanes is belittled as a poor transmitter of this tradition, introducing many irrelevant classical cliché′s, the Getica is deployed as the residue of a barbarian ''ethnic discourse'' aimed at attracting adherence to Gothic group identity, in the face of competition both from other barbarian identifications and from Roman imperial allegiance' is an emblematic way to summarise the historiographical appraisal of Jordanes. In: Gillett, 'The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now', p. 404.

[85] K. P. Harrington, *Medieval Latin* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 129; Christensen, p. 101.

to speculate about some details and engage with long-standing ideas proposed by scholarship.[86]

We know, as we will see further below, that he wrote his *opera* after 550 – most likely in 551 and 552, although Goffart proposes the later date of 554.[87] In any case, these datings assure us that he was born sometime towards the end of the fifth century, maybe around 480 or 490. He grew up in a post-Attilan world, where the Balkans were filled with petty tribes fighting over dominance of land, while bigger groups, such as Gepids, Heruli, Alans, and Goths were competing for hegemonic authority; he certainly saw the obstacles faced by the Eastern Empire when negotiating with barbarians; he must have witnessed the decline of Western Empire, surviving only nostalgically, under the auspices of Odoacer – and he also must have witnessed, as a young man, the flight of Theoderic the Ostrogoth to Italy and his subsequent efforts to build a powerful ideological machine.[88] Jordanes was probably working in the Balkans when these Goths, these Amali who were so familiar to him, decided that they were now the heirs of the Imperial tradition, leaving their ancient abodes – the Balkans, according to Jordanes – forever. If Jordanes was born in Moesia (and he probably was), then he heard about the times of Ermanaric, of Attila, of the three Amali brothers Valamer, Vidimer, and Thiudimer. He heard about a unified territory that I term *Magna Dacia*. I argue that this scenario left an indelible impression on the young Jordanes – an impression that would live and breathe through the pessimistic lines of the old Jordanes in the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine*.

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[86] On Jordanes' name, *cf.* Christensen, pp. 87–89.

[87] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, pp. 98–101.

[88] *Cf.* A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia: A History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2014); P. Vingo, 'Changes and Transformations in Late Antique Pannonia: From the Roman Province to the Multiethnic Transit Area of 'populations in Movement'', *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 62.2 (2011), 363–79; A. Sarantis, 'War and Diplomacy in Pannonia and the Northwest Balkans during the Reign of Justinian: The Gepid Threat and Imperial Responses', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 63 (2009), 15–40. For Theoderic, *cf.* Moorhead.

This is all, of course, speculation. What we know for certain is that he worked for a certain Gunthigis, also called Baza, in Moesia; that his father was called Alanoviiamuth, and his grandfather was Paria (who worked for an Alan chief Candac, uncle of Gunthigis); that he calls himself an *agrammatus*, an unlearned man, before his *conversion*; that he does not profess the Arian faith; that he could read Greek, Latin and possibly spoke other languages, such as Gothic; that he knew of Cassiodorus and, most probably, knew and read Procopius as well; that he dedicates his works, *De Summa Temporum* and *De Origine*, respectively to a certain *frater* Vigilius and a *frater* Castalius (though they seemed to be laymen); and that, by the end of his life, he was disillusioned with bureaucratic and political work, as he thought the Roman Empire had, somehow, failed.[89] These are the pieces of the jigsaw. By arranging them together, we can hopefully expect to gain a more or less complete, albeit highly speculative, picture of the author we are dealing with.[90]

The bulk of Jordanes' personal information is all dropped in at once in chapter L of the *De Origine*, when we witness the dissolution of the Hunnic Confederacy and the ensuing geopolitical instability. The author enumerates the lands received or taken by a plethora of different groups:

> The Sciri, moreover, and the Sadagarii and certain of the Alans with their leader, Candac by name, received Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia. Paria, the father of my father Alanoviiamuth (that is to say, my grandfather), was secretary to this Candac as long as he lived. To his sister's son Gunthigis, also called Baza, the *Magister Militum*, who was the son of Andag the son of Andela, who was descended from the stock of the Amali, I also, Jordanes, although an unlearned man before my conversion, was secretary.[91]

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[89] *Cf.* Chapter 3.

[90] An interesting and rather thorough summary of Jordanes' biographical information is discussed in S. Doležal, 'Who Was Jordanes?', *Byzantion*, 84 (2014), 145–64.

[91] 'Scyri vero et Sadagarii et certi Alanorum cum duce suo nomine Candac Scythiam minorem inferioremque Moesiam acceperunt. Cuius Candacis Alanoviiamuthis patris mei genitor Paria, id est meus avus, notarius; quousque Candac ipse viveret, fuit, eiusque germanae filio Gunthicis, qui et Baza dicebatur, mag. mil., filio Andages fili Andele de prosapia Amalorum descendente, ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannis ante conversionem meam notarius fui', Jord., *Getica*, L, 265 – 266.

Jordanes' family is to be found in the middle of a small coalition of Sciri, Sadagarii, Alans and Ostrogoths. Because these *gentes* received territories across Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia (around modern-day Drobuja and Northern Bulgaria), we can imagine they did not necessarily act as a cohesive entity, but a certain level of cooperation and understating must have taken place. As it is, this ethnic composition is interesting: they must have been a ragtag, independent group of stray barbarians because Jordanes himself gives us contrasting information about the Sciri, the Sadagarii and the Alans (not to mention the Ostrogoths!). The Sciri, for instance, seem to be always divided: some followed Odoacer into Italy, but most of them were obliterated by the Goths when Hunimund, king of the Suevi, rose against Thiudimer and incited the Sciri to join battle; they ended up killing Valamer, but his enraged followers crushed them all: 'They fought in such wise that there remained of all the race of the Sciri only a few who bore the name, and they with disgrace. Thus were all destroyed'.[92] Jordanes is not very clear about the chronology between the Sciri moving into Moesia, the Sciri fighting Thiudimer and Valamer and the Sciri joining Odoacer, but we can see a lack of central, unifying power nonetheless. Moreover, with regard to the Sadagarii, we have a similar situation: if the *Sadagis* are the same groups as the *Sadagarii*, it means that, at some point, they held inner Pannonia:

> Furthermore, they were eager to display their wonted valour, and so began to plunder the neighboring races round about them, first attacking the Sadagis who held the interior of Pannonia. When Dengizich, king of the Huns, a son of Attila, learned this, he gathered to him the few who still seemed to have remained under his sway, namely, the Ultzinzures, and Angisciri, the Bittugures and the Bardores. Coming to Bassiana, a city of Pannonia, he beleaguered it and began to plunder its territory. Then the Goths at once abandoned the expedition they had planned against the Sadagis, turned upon the Huns and drove them so

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[92] 'ut pene de gente Scirorum nisi qui nomen ipsud ferrent, et hi cum dedecore, non remansissent: sic omnes extincti sunt', Jord., *Getica*, LIII, 276.

ingloriously from their own land that those who remained have been in dread of the arms of the Goths from that time down to the present day.[93]

It is not clear if Dengizich attacked because he saw an opportunity, or because the Sadagis were his subjects. However, after the clash between Huns and Ostrogoths, some of them must have fled to Moesia or, alternatively, some took over parts of Moesia after the dissolution of the Hunnic Confederacy, and a different group of Sadagarii (or Sadagis) went into inner Pannonia.[94] Another curious reference concerns the AngiSciri. It is unclear if this people, still loyal to Dengizich after the tent pole battle of Nedao, was the same as the Sciri. Maenchen-Helfen believes that they might have been a Turkic tribe who, for some reason, received the same ethnonym as the aforementioned group of the Sciri.[95] If that is the case, it could mean that this tribe was heterogeneous and diffuse enough at this stage that other groups also received the same ethnic label.

As for the Alans and Ostrogoths, it might a bit easier to trace their political situation. Before the battle of the Catalaunian Plains, some Alans with their king Sangiban, the successor of king Goar, were dwelling in Gaul, near to modern-day Orléans.[96] Although Sangiban had sworn fealty to Attila, he was coopted by the Visigoths and forced to fight against the Huns in the Catalaunian Plains. After the battle, Attila decided to attack to Alans and incorporate their numbers, so that he could face the Visigoths again. The plan was foiled by Thorismod, the Visigothic king, who drove the Huns back. The Alans, then, seemed to have remained in Gaul until they were destroyed

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[93] '[...] cupientes ostentare virtutem, coeperunt vicinas gentes circumcirca praedari, primum contra Sadagis, qui interiorem Pannoniam possidebant, arma moventes. Quod ubi rex Hunnorum Dintzic filius Attilae cognovisset, collectis secum qui adhuc videbantur quamvis pauci eius tamen sub imperio remansisse Vltzinzures, Angisciros, Bittugures, Bardores, venientesque ad Basianam Pannoniae civitatem eamque circumvallans fines eius coepit praedare. Quod conperto Gothi ibi, ubi erant, expeditionemque solventes, quam contra Sadagis collegerant, in Hunnos convertunt et sic eos suis a finibus inglorios pepulerunt, ut iam ex illo tempore qui remanserunt Hunni et usque actenus Gothorum arma formident', Jord., *Getica*, LIII, 272 – 273.

[94] Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, p. 123; O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 441.

[95] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 439.

[96] A. Alemany, *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), pp. 131–38.

by Ricimer.[97] This specific Alanic contingent was not representative of the whole people, as Jordanes also affirms that they fought at the Nedao, when the sons of Attila were defeated. This group that remained behind, in the Moesia of our author, must have been precisely the host that fought at the Nedao – thus justifying Jordanes' postulation that 'some of the Alans' received Scythia Minor and Moesia. In fact, the idea of scattered Alanic 'kingdoms' – or, at least, large political groups – proves to be correct, as, beyond the Alans of Goar and Sangiban and the Alans that fought at Nedao and received Moesia, the Chronicle of 452 mentions another Alanic group in Gaul, led by a certain Sambida near the city of Valentia (modern-day Valence, in Southeastern France).[98]

Moreover, it is likely that, if Candac was leading a body of Alans at the Catalaunian Plains, they were not fighting against Attila, but rather under his sway, as Candac's sister was married to Andag, Gunthigis father – thus placing Sangiban and Candac on opposite sides. This is explained because, according to the *De Origine*, Andag not only fought for Attila at the Catalaunian Plains, but he also was responsible for the death of Theoderic I, king of the Visigoths.[99] For the union of Andag and Candac's sister to have happened, we can suppose that these two branches were rather close or, at least, shared political affinities and allegiances.

This is a fundamental information. If we believe that Candac's followers and Gunthigis' family were fighting on Attila side and, consequently, took part in the major battle of the Catalaunian Plains, we can postulate that, culturally and ideologically, Jordanes grew up in an environment that was rather 'pro-Hunnic', and the *gravitas* of these traditions must have exerted strong influence on our author.

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[97] Jord., *Getica*, XLV, 236. For more on this topic (and the accuracy of Jordanes' account), *cf.* B. S. Bachrach, *A History of the Alans in the West: From Their First Appearance in the Sources of Classical Antiquity through the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973), pp. 38–40.

[98] A. C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 83–84.

[99] Jord., *Getica*, XL, 209

Furthermore, this Gunthigis, the Ostrogoth for whom Jordanes acted as a *notarius*, can provide us with further historical clues about this context of Alans, Goths, and Huns. As an alleged Amal, Gunthigis, his father Andag and his grandfather Andela must have been related to Valamer and his brothers (who were, in turn, among the most trusted generals of Attila) thus reinforcing the notion of 'Attilan' influence. Moreover, some Ostrogoths must have followed Gunthigis, an Amal, into Moesia, which means that this faction of Goths did not follow Valamer and his brother into Pannonia after Nedao. This is to be expected, as although some Ostrogothic people fought in Nedao (we do not know if with or against the sons of Attila), Valamer, Thiudimer, and Vidimer did not. The Amali branch of Gunthigis, of his father Andag and his grandfather Andela, was still under Hunnic sway until the very end, even after the escape of Valamer and his brothers.[100]

This is, then, the socio-political arrangement under which Jordanes grew up and became a bureaucrat, a possibly heterogeneous mosaic of post-Attilan subjects that included Alans, Goths, Sciri, and Sadagarii. These specific groups share one thing in common, beyond kinship: they all, very likely, were loyal (or at least obedient) to the Huns until the catastrophe of succession at the Nedao.[101] It is not surprising that, personally, Jordanes would have retained some of the admiration for the Amali and some awareness of the impact caused by the tremendous authority of Attila over these groups. Nevertheless, this socio-ethnic canvas leaves one thing out: was Jordanes a Goth?

Too many arguments make assumptions about Jordanes' ethnicity. In fact, most of the *De Origine*'s allure rests upon the fact that it might be the first 'National History' written by a non-Roman.[102] It is the dream of anyone tracing elements of *originem gentium* in Late Antique text: a barbarian writing about his or her own tradition. Even if

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[100] For Valamer and the Huns, *cf.* Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII; LII. Also, Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 356–60.

[101] P. J. Heather, 'The Huns and Barbarian Europe', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. by M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 209–29.

[102] Gillett, 'The Goths and the Bees in Jordanes: A Narrative of No Return', pp. 150–51.

we look at this work as an abridgment of the lost Cassiodorian *Historia Gothorum*, the

question of genuine Gothic traditions is always present in debates about Jordanes

precisely because he *is seen* as a writer of Gothic stock. That being said, it is safe to

assume that Jordanes was not a Roman. His father was not a Roman, his grandfather was

not a Roman, his bosses were not Romans. He was born and raised in Moesia, and

possibly only moved within the Roman Empire after his 'conversion'. Moreover, if we

are to take his account into consideration, we could assume that he was either an Alan or

a Goth – perhaps a Scirus or a Sadagarus could have been an adequate option had Jordanes

actually included more information about these people in the *De Origine*. Therefore,

because his work is a 'History of the Goths' (it would be more accurate to call it a 'History

of the Getae', and further ahead we will see why the rhetorical distinction is important),

people assume that he must be a Goth (he was working for the Amal Gunthigis, after

all).[103] In fact, the conclusion of such a statement tends to derive, above all, from the

closing remark that Jordanes himself wrote at the end of the *De Origine*:

> Thou who readest this, know that I have followed the writings of my ancestors, and have culled
> a few flowers from their broad meadows to weave a chaplet for him who cares to know these
> things. Let no one believe that to the advantage of the race of which I have spoken – though
> indeed I trace my own descent from it – I have added aught besides what I have read or learned
> by inquiry. Even thus I have not included all that is written or told about them, nor spoken so
> much to their praise as to the glory of him who conquered them.[104]

    This is a very tricky passage because the Latin is ambiguous – and many scholars

are quick to judge and dismiss this ambiguity.[105] When Jordanes affirms that he 'traces

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[103] Heather, *Goths and Romans*, p. 5; Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 90; O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', p. 223; A. Momigliano, *Secondo Contributo Alla Storia Degli Studi Classici* (Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1984), p. 207.

[104] 'Haec qui legis, scito me maiorum secutum scriptis ex eorum latissima prata paucos flores legisse, unde inquirenti pro captu ingenii mei coronam contexam. Nec me quis in favorem gentis praedictae, quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem, aliqua addidisse credat, quam quae legi et comperi. Nec si tamen cuncta. Quae de ipsis scribuntur aut referuntur, complexus sum, nec tantum ad eorum laudem quantum ad laudem eius qui vicit exponens', Jord., *Getica*, LX, 316.

[105] Christensen, pp. 89–90.

[his] own descent from it,' the original text goes 'quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem.' The term *quasi*, originally meaning 'as if', throughout Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, gets used more like *ut*, that is, a conjunction with a causal meaning, such as 'as', 'how', 'because'.[106] In other words, this passage could read both as 'as if I traced my own descent from it' or 'because I trace my own descent from it'. Even though Jordanes employs the particle *quasi* another 23 times in the *De Origine* and 34 in the *De Summa Temporum*, the usage is not really consistent, as it works both as a causal and a comparative conjunction (it seems to be more causal in the *De Origine*, but more comparative/illustrative in the *De Summa Temporum*). Only a few instances can be translated with absolute certainty: when Jordanes describes the origin of the Huns, for example, he uses 'quasi hominum genus,' 'almost like humans'.[107]

Hence, even though translations of the *De Origine* tend to gloss over this ambiguity, they still choose to read the author as a Goth – and *quasi* as a causal conjunction.[108] Scholars like Christensen have postulated that, overall, the sentence cannot be fully understood and, through the principle of Ockham's Razor, we should accept that Gothic ethnicity is the simplest, most obvious choice.[109] However, this long-standing assumption ignores the possibility of an editorial error: Theodor Mommsen, the

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[106] Galdi, 'Late Sparsa Collegimus: The Influence of Sources on the Language of Jordanes', p. 359; Galdi, 'Ex Dictis Maiorum Floscula Carpens Breviter Referam: L'apporto Linguistico Dei Modelli Nell'opera Di Jordanes'.

[107] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 122. Passages in the *De Origine* that include the term *quasi*: III, 17 & 22; IV, 25; V, 37 & 45; XIII, 78; XV, 88; XVI, 90; XVIII, 103; XXI, 110; XXIV, 122 & 125; XXV, 132; XXVIII, 143; XXIX, 147; XXI, 160; XLIII, 225; XLIX, 255; LII, 268; LIV, 277; LVII, 295; LX, 307 & 315. Passages in the *De Summa Temporum* that include the term *quasi*: 14; 90; 95; 97; 101; 108; 115; 119; 123; 125; 134; 148; 149; 156; 164; 165; 169; 176; 178; 183; 184; 188; 192; 223; 225; 241; 251; 254; 351; 385.

[108] All translations chose 'because I am a Goth' rather than 'as if I were a Goth': 'y que nadie pense que, puesto que yo procedo también de este pueblo del que he tratado'; 'que nul n'imagine qu'au crédit de la nation don j'ai parlé, puisqu'aussi bien j'en tire mon origine'; 'though indeed I trace my own origin from it', *cf.* Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, trans. by J. M. Sánchez Martín, Letras Universales, 318 (Madrid: Cátedra, 2001), p. 234; Jordanès, *Histoire des Goths*, trans. by O. Devillers (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), p. 122; Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, trans. by C. C. Mierow (Calgary: Theophania, 2014), p. 105. The one exception to this widespread trend in the German translation: 'und keener glaube, dass ich nicht zur Ehre des oben genannten Volkes, als ob ich von dort meinen Ursprung gehabt hätte (…)', in: Jordanes, *Die Gotengeschichte*, trans. by L. Möller (Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2012), p. 187.

[109] Christensen, pp. 89–93.

editor of Jordanes' work in the *Auctores Antiquissimi* volume of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, is responsible for the most common version of the text available to us.[110] His were the grammatical choices and the normatisation of the many problems with the manuscripts – Karl Closs, an earlier editor, when discussing the manuscript tradition, complained of 'the criminal spreading of both the force and damage of time, and the inattentiveness of copyists, their negligence, stupor, ignorance and sometimes even their wilfulness'.[111] Clearly, the codices were problematic, the medieval copying complicated, and the results of it were felt by the modern editors.[112] Moreover, there is the problem of Jordanes' Latin: he was commonly regarded as a limited, ignorant writer (an *agrammatus*, as Jordanes himself humbly says) whose Latin was poor and decadent.[113] This judgment tends to denote not only an academic elitism in establishing the purity and value of a style or language but also to ignore the fact that Latin could have easily been Jordanes' third or fourth language. As we have seen, he knew Greek and must have known some other Germanic and perhaps nomadic dialects, so it is not surprising that his mastery of Latin was not on par with that of Cicero, Boethius or even Cassiodorus.

With all these problems, it becomes even more difficult to rely on an already ambiguous sentence to claim that Jordanes was probably a Goth. Certainly, it is very compelling to just accept the Gothic alternative: as Christensen reported, authorities of the past, such as Wagner and Grimm, believed that reading that passage with 'as if I,' that is, the comparative meaning, was too artificial.[114] Well, the same could be said of the

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[110] Bradley, 'Manuscript Evidence for the Text of the 'Getica' of Jordanes (I)'.

[111] Iordanis, *De Getarum Sive Gothorum Origine et Rebus Gestis*, ed. by K. A. Closs (Stuttgart: Eduardi Fishhaber, 1861), pp. 2–3.

[112] The main manuscript – basis for Mommsen's edition – was lost in a fire. Overall, what I mean by 'editorial error' is that we cannot be absolutely certain of the accuracy of the remaining manuscripts because the transmission is problematic. The original Latin in specific passages could have been different and, in a paragraph where grammar and meaning become crucial, like the one in debate here, our conclusions have to be, at best, dubious and careful. *Cf*. Bradley, 'Manuscript Evidence for the Text of the 'Getica' of Jordanes (I)'. Also, for modern editions, *cf*. Galdi, III.

[113] Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, p. 1.

[114] Christensen, p. 90.

opposite meaning, i.e., the causal. 'Jordanes as a Goth' is just too convenient to anyone that expects to see proper Gothic traditions within the *De Origine* – this ethnic postulate asserts this work as the first non-Roman history about the Goths written by a Goth. I argue that both these things (Jordanes as a Goth and the *De Origine* as a Gothic text) are, to a certain extent, inaccurate. The *De Origine* is not only a history of Goths (it deals as much with Huns, with Gepids and with the people of Dacia and Moesia as with Goths, as we will discuss in length further below), and Jordanes does not have to be, necessarily, a Goth. The ambiguity of his affirmation should be proof that, if anything, we should not be too clear-cut in assigning him an ethnonym – and in this sense, Mommsen seems quite sensible in thinking that the ambiguity of the sentence translates the ambiguity of a possibly mixed background.[115]

Nevertheless, we cannot speculate about Jordanes ethnic affiliation without discussing his parentage as well. Let us go back to the famous passage in chapter L:

> Paria, the father of my father Alanoviiamuth (that is to say, my grandfather), was secretary to this Candac as long as he lived. To his sister's son Gunthigis, also called Baza, the Master of the Soldiery, who was the son of Andag the son of Andela, who was descended from the stock of the Amali, I also, Jordanes, although an unlearned man before my conversion, was secretary.[116]

As we discussed before, he affirms that his grandfather, Paria, worked for the Alanic leader, Candac. He also drops the name of his actual father, the odd-sounding Alanoviiamuth. Trying to unveil the etymology of his father's name is also an endless task: Christensen listed all the arguments and theories, and all of them are

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[115] In the preface for his edition, Mommsen believes that Jordanes should be, at least, partially Alan, given that his family worked for the Alans and his father, called Alanoviamuth, apparently contain a genitive form in his name (*alano / alanorum*, 'of the Alans').

[116] 'Cuius Candacis Alanoviiamuthis patris mei genitor Paria, id est meus avus, notarius; quousque Candac ipse viveret, fuit, eiusque germanae filio Gunthicis, qui et Baza dicebatur, mag. mil., filio Andages fili Andele de prosapia Amalorum descendente, ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannis ante conversionem meam notarius fui', Jord., *Getica*, L, 265 – 266.

unconvincing.[117] The only thing that is generally accepted is the idea that the name got

lost in later copies of the manuscript, and it could be two different words: Amuth being

his name, *Alanovi* being some sort of genitive or qualitative ('of the Alans' or something

along these lines). Some suggested that *vi* is a corrupted form of *d(ux)*, which would

render the name *Alanorum dux Amuth*, or a general of the Alans or of Alanic ancestry.[118]

This is quite an interesting theory because Jordanes never really affirms that his father

worked for the Alans – his grandfather, Paria, yes, served Candac the Alan, and Jordanes

himself served as a *notarius* for the Ostrogoth Gunthigis, as we have seen. It would have

been quite odd to include this mark of vassalage in his father's name without mentioning

if he also worked for the Alans (and, even if he did, we discussed how heterogeneous the

groups in Moesia, at this stage, were).
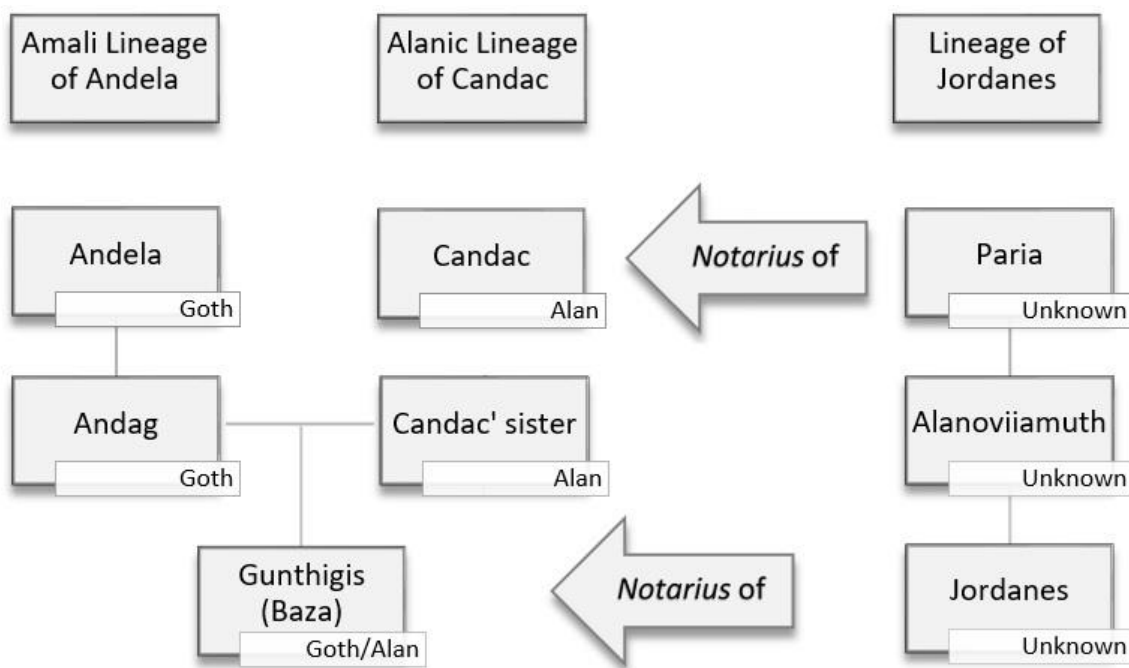
[117] Christensen, pp. 90–95.
[118] *Ibid.*.

Moreover, another aspect is ignored when talking about Jordanes' family. Alanoviamuth sounds very much alike a name already registered in Procopius: Filimuth (or Philemuth), a Herul commander that fought during the campaigns of Justinian.[119] Another Herul named by Procopius is Fara. Fara could have been a Germanic nickname, and we could believe that this is also the case with Paria. Both Paria and Fara could stem from the same word *Farja* or *Faran*. *Farja* is not accounted as a proper name, but is an East Germanic word for 'travel'.[120] We know very little about the Herulean language besides some proper names, and even then they are basically equal to some Vandalic, Gothic or even Lombardic names.[121] All these languages shared a same East Germanic origin, so it is not surprising that they look and sound similar, especially in the archaic art of name giving. On the other hand, it is surprising that these Germanic names, like Paria, are immediately seen as, specifically, Gothic words. That is the case with the suffix -muth in Jordanes' father name. According to some authors, as mentioned before, -muth is a Gothic particle. Schönfeld postulates that -muth indeed comes from the Gothic -möds, meaning 'wrath' (akin to modern English 'mood'). However, he also says that in Herulean language, the -s apocopes, rendering the final -d sound muffled and the -ö becomes -ü. Therefore, even if the whole name Alanoviamuth is still mysterious, we can understand that its ending probably includes a Herulean mark, that is, the apocope and the sound-shift.[122]

If these names include Herulean elements, there is another question standing: how is it possible that these characters had an Herulean background? After all, Jordanes did

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[119] εἵποντο δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ τοῦ Ἐρούλων ἔθνους πλέον ἢ τρισχίλιοι, ἱππεῖς ἅπαντες, ὧν ἄλλοι τε καὶ Φιλημοὺθ ἦρχον, καὶ Οὖννοί τε παμπληθεῖς. Procop., *Goth.*, IV, 26, 13.

[120] M. Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch Der Altgermanischen Personen- Und Völkernamen Nach Der Überlieferung Des Klassischen Altertums* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winte, 1911), pp. 85–86. Also p. 180.

[121] *Cf.* H. B. Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1939).

[122] Schönfeld, pp. 9–10. Other Heruli names recorded in Procopius are Aruth, Aluith, Ochus, Uligagus, Datius, Grepes, etc. *Cf.* W. A. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 335. With Aluith and Aruth we can see the apocope and the muffled –d rendered as –th.

not include 'some Heruli' in his listing of people who received Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia. In rhetorical terms, the Heruli share, in the *De Origine*, the same *Urheimat* as the Goths: 'Heruli, [...] claim [the] prominence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness'.[123] Therefore, they also are said to have originated in the island of Scandza. Later in the narrative, they are noted as one of the principal nations that were brought down by Ermanaric and thus became part of his Getic sect.[124] After this, they are only mentioned twice: some follow Odoacer into Italy and some fight at the Nedao. Although this affirmation could prove that, after the Nedao, the Heruli went West with Odoacer and, therefore, left he Balkans, historiography shows that this assumption is wrong. In fact, the Heruli remained in the East after the Nedao and were able to establish a kingdom near the Morava. The rise of Odoacer and the deposition of Romulus Augustulus brought even more instability to the politics along the Danube, and the Heruli were very much in the middle of a storm. Steinacher notes, however, that they were able, after the Nedao and before the conflict with the Lombards (sometime between 498 and 508), to push out the Sciri and the Suevi from the Balkans and, in the *De Summa Temporum*, Jordanes notes how they were constantly ravaging Illyria at the time of Justinian.[125] However, at the same time, some Herulean groups were also fighting *for* Justinian – some of their generals were even fighting against the Ostrogoths in Italy, under the banner of the Romans.[126] These chaotic political allegiances and geographical dominion make it clear that, to a certain extent, power among the Heruli was not overly centralised, and it was possible that several bands of stray Herulean peoples were roaming in different parts of the East. Some

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[123] '[…] [Heruli] qui inter omnes Scandiae nationes nomen sibi ob nimia proceritate affectant praecipuum', Jord., *Getica*, III, 23.

[124] Jord., *Getica*, XXIII, 117 – 119.

[125] Jord., *Romana*, 363.

[126] For the most complete overviews of Herulean history in English, *cf.* A. Sarantis, 'The Justinianic Herules', in *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. by F. Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 361–402; R. Steinacher, 'The Herules: Fragments of a History', in *Neglected Barbarians*, ed. by F. Curta (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 319–60.

Heruli could have easily ended with Goths, Alans, Sciri and Sadagarii in Moesia.[127] Jordanes' grandfather, after all, may have been known as the 'wanderer,' the 'traveller,' *Farja*.

But for contemporary audiences, would Jordanes' ethnicity be of any value, either socially or to the understanding of the *De Origine*? By the time Jordanes wrote the *De Origine*, Gothic identity must have been well-known: there was public interest in their history and their deeds after all (that is exactly what motivates the writing of that work in the first place). Jordanes has to deal with this ethnic recognition to establish that Getae, Scythians, and Dacians, when convenient, were the same thing as Goths. His equation 'Geta = Goth' is one of the most acknowledged points of the work and part of the rhetorical framework of the *De Origine* is engineered in order to support this argument.[128] It would have been easy for Jordanes to establish his own identity – and his own authority – in the text if he just said, straight away, that he was a Goth. Moreover, it seems, by the conciliatory tone at the end of the work (the marriage between Germanus and Mathasuntha), that being a Goth was not necessarily a political or a social problem in Constantinople by 551. Vitiges, the very king of the Ostrogoths, deposed by Belisarius, lived in peace in Constantinople for the remaining of his life. Hence, if Jordanes depicts himself as a non-Roman, clarifying, in no ambiguous terms, his Gothic ethnicity would have strengthened his position of authority and knowledge. The war was almost over by then. The Goths were not the fierce enemies that they once were.

The reality of the *De Origine* is, in fact, the opposite. It is almost as if Jordanes kept his ethnic affiliation ambiguous on purpose. Perhaps it is because his works were

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[127] Heather, 'The Huns and Barbarian Europe', p. 226; Steinacher, 'The Herules: Fragments of a History', p. 334.

[128] R. Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination: Ethnicity, Legend, and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 194; Gillett, 'The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now'; A. H Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 100–121.

aimed at a restricted audience, people who would have known Jordanes personally and be aware of his identity, but it is also possible that he kept it hidden because, in opposition to the Gothic one, a Herulean or another Germanic/Nomadic ethnicity could have been socially and culturally inconvenient: by 552, the Heruli had fought against the Ostrogoths in Italy, led by their general Filimuth.[129] The Ostrogoths were ruled by the warrior king Totila, whom Jordanes chose to ignore altogether in the *De Origine* (and, in the *De Summa Temporum*, he talks about him in very gloomy terms, because his war efforts were stretching Justinian's campaign and bringing the Roman Empire close to its end).[130] Therefore, bringing up an identity whose compatriots were still fighting in Italy would not work with Jordanes' envisioned closure to his *opus*, that is, the marriage between Ostrogoths and Byzantines and the seemingly peaceful ending of the story. This is especially true because, as well as Goths, Heruli were an easily recognizable ethnicity in Constantinople around this time.[131] Procopius, in his narratives of the wars, has a long side-argument explaining the origin and the history of the kings of the Heruli, assigning the island of Thule as their *Urheimat*.[132] Thule is commonly identified as Scandinavia,[133] which happens to be the same land of origin that Jordanes assign to the Goths and Gepids. Culturally, they seem to be almost identical anyway: similar language, similar names, close geographical activities, same war-like traditions. Perhaps a Herul, a Gepid, and a Goth would have been seen almost as part of the same barbarian wave by audiences in Constantinople – but still different people.

Thus, although it is purely a speculation, we can postulate that a Gothic identity would have been useful for Jordanes, and since he never actively admits being a Goth,

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[129] Steinacher, 'The Herules: Fragments of a History', pp. 349–56.

[130] 'Qui et ipse vix anno expleto peremptus est et in regno. Malo Italiae Baduila [Totila] iuvenis nepus asciscitur Heldebadi', Jord., *Romana*, 379.

[131] Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, pp. 205–15.

[132] Goffart has different views on this topic and clamis that, for Procopius, the origin of the Heruli goes back to the Danube, *cf*. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 209.

[133] *Cf*. Rix.

his affiliation remains open to interpretation: an Herul, all in all, would have been close enough to a Goth to still assert Jordanes' knowledge of their history and deeds in the eyes of the audience. In other words, our author does not claim to be a Herul, but we can speculate that doing so would undermine the ending of the *De Origine*, of unity and tolerance towards the Goths – the same Goths whom the Heruli were slaying in Italy at that very moment.

Definitive conclusions are, of course, still elusive, even after clarifying these arguments. Nonetheless, we can postulate a few things about Jordanes' identity. Judging by his own words, he claimed to be close to the Goths, that is, his ambiguous sentence at the end of the *De Origine* could mean that he traces his ancestry from Gothic roots, but it could easily signify a historical affinity, rather than a proper belonging to that group – admitting a clear-cut identity might be dangerous and methodologically too convenient. This fluidity (or rather ambiguity) is further established when our author mentions his father and his grandfather names. They cannot be easily translated or identified, but they certainly seem to be East Germanic and, following comparison with similar names, we might detect Herulean elements. Although we should not rely on names alone to assign a certain ethnonym,[134] identifying Jordanes as a Herul (or, at least, giving him a vaguely East Germanic ethnicity that is not, necessarily, Gothic) might prove correct. All in all, I would argue that we should not see Jordanes as a Goth. The speculation surrounding this idea can be equally applied to assign Jordanes with other fictive ethnonyms.

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[134] Indeed, names are never reliable sources of ethnicity. Jordanes himself admitis that many Goths took Hunnic names, Sarmatians took Germanic names, etc. ('Ne vero quis dicat hoc nomen a lingua Gothica omnino peregrinum esse, nemo qui nesciat animadvertat usu pleraque nomina gentes amplecti, ut Romani Macedonum, Greci Romanorum, Sarmatae Germanorum, Gothi plerumque mutuantur Hunnoru', Jord., *Getica*, IX, 58). Jordanes own name has a mysterious meaning, as it is not clear if it is connected to the River Jordan or if it is a wrong rendering of a Gothic name, such as Iornandis, *cf.* Christensen, pp. 88–89.. The point is, the latinisation (and hellenisation) of these names (Alanoviamuth, Aluith, Aruth, Filimuth) seems to follow a pattern of the Herulean language or dialect. There are a plethora or Gothic names ending in –möds that are written with this very Gothic suffix. Therefore, it seems that the suffix –uth and –uith at least come from a Herulean *sprachraum*, that is, a context in which Heruli were fundamentally present.

Another element that we can learn from his writings is that Jordanes was an orthodox Christian – or, at least, was not an Arian. In two different instances, he attacks the Arian faith: in the *De Summa Temporum*, he says that 'Valens, converted and baptized by Eudoxius, an Arian bishop, hostilely attacked the orthodox';[135] and in the *De Origine*, he talks about Valens again, saying that he was infect by the Arian perfidy and taught this heresy to the Visigoths, making them Arian rather than 'Christians'.[136] Another passage in the *De Origine* bears an interesting take on Arianism being spread among the Goths:

> There were other Goths also, called the Lesser, a great people whose priest and primate was Ulfila, who is said to have taught them to write. And to-day they are in Moesia, inhabiting the Nicopolitan region as far as the base of Mount Haemus. They are a numerous people, but poor and unwarlike, rich in nothing save flocks of various kinds and pasture-lands for cattle and forests for wood. Their country is not fruitful in wheat and other sorts of grain. Certain of them do not know that vineyards exist elsewhere, and they buy their wine from neighboring countries. But most of them drink milk.[137]

What Jordanes means by 'alii Gothi, qui dicuntur Minores' is debatable, but it is undisputable that this Ulfila of whom he writes about is the fourth century bishop who, having Gothic ancestry, was chosen to teach Christianity to the Tervingi; he even invented an alphabet highly inspired by the Greek writing system, so that he could write down the Bible in the language of the Goths.[138] In any case, it is clear that Jordanes was not part of the barbarian sects that professed Arianism – however, the oddity and the seemingly out-of-place reference to these *Gothi Minores* have led people to believe that Jordanes, in fact, was a member of this segment. Doležal has argued that textual (and contextual)

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[135] 'Valens ab Eudoxio, Arianorum episcopo, suasus et baptizatus, contra orthodoxos infestus insurgit', Jord., *Romana*, 308.

[136] Jord., *Getica*, XXV, 132.

[137] 'Erant si quibid. et alii Gothi, qui dicuntur minores, populus inmensus, cum suo pontifice ipsoque primate Vulfila, qui eis dicitur et litteras instituisse. Hodieque sunt in Moesia regionem incolentes Nicopolitanam ad pedes Emimonti gens multa, sed paupera et inbellis nihilque habundans nisi armenta diversi generis pecorum et pascua silvaque lignarum; parum tritici citerarumque specierum terras fecundas. Vineas vero nec, si sunt alibi, certi eorum cognoscent ex vicina loca sibi vinum negotiantes; nam lacte aluntur plerique', Jord., *Getica*, LI, 267.

[138] H. Wolfram, 'Vulfila Pontifex Ipseque Prima Gothorum Minorum, Sed Non Apostulus Eorum. Vulfila, Bishop and Secular Leader of His People but Not Their Apostle', in *Arianism: Roman Heresy and Barbarian Creed*, ed. by G. M. Berndt and R. Steinacher (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 131–44.

elements of the *De Origine* would point to Jordanes' affiliation to these Goths: his knowledge of letters (but the lack of formal learning, *agrammatus*) and his familiarity with the Balkans would explain how he ended up as a *notarius* under Gunthigis while, at the same time, putting an end to the endless debate of Jordanes' origin.[139] This is wrong, in my opinion. The description of the customs and abodes of these *Gothi Minores* follows the ethnographic formula that Jordanes employs when describing a number of other ethnic groups, and the sudden inclusion of this people in the *De Origine* could function, rhetorically, as an emphasis on the criticism towards the roots of Arianism among the Goths – without, obviously, attacking the Ostrogoths and the Amali, who were also Arians, openly.

This treatment of Arianism, coupled with the affirmation that he was a *conversus*, led many to believe that Jordanes was, in fact, a monk or even a bishop. We will discuss these hypotheses in-depth in the next section of this chapter but, for now, suffices to say that these arguments do not hold up. Momigliano considered that our author could have been a certain Jordanes, bishop of Crotone, and that Vigilius, to whom the *De Summa Temporum* is dedicated, should be identified as Pope Vigilius himself![140] It seems a very improbable scenario: Jordanes coaxes Vigilius to turn towards God, hardly a statement that would be made towards the bishop of Rome. Vigilius was a layman, and there is a chance that Castalius was one as well. The *De Origine* – and also the *De Summa Temporum*, in spite of the religious overtones in the preface – was aimed at the retelling of a secular history, one with heroic or legendary overarching themes. Even if Jordanes' works were crafted in such a way that the work of God could be seen through the vicissitudes of the world, the moral was not, necessarily, to teach or enforce Christianity. Jordanes relied equally on Christian and Pagan authors, and the *De Summa Temporum*

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[139] Doležal, pp. 147–63.
[140] *Cf.* Chapter 2.2.

retains resemblances to Jerome's chronicle because it was crafted as a world history, a genre that, in Late Antiquity, was fully understood as a Christian genre.[141]

This panorama makes us question what Jordanes meant when he said he was a *conversus*. This conversion could have been a change of faith, from the Arian to the Nicean – and this would also explain his criticism of Arianism in a work that does not meddle with orthodoxy that much. It could also have a much more mundane meaning: he decided to leave the life of *negotium* behind and, just like Cassiodorus, embrace of life of contemplation and culture, a life of *otium*.[142] In any case, we cannot affirm (or deny) that Jordanes was a monk; he certainly had access to a decent library, as he consults a considerable number of famous authors and works to compose his *opera*. Moreover, he must have been operating from Constantinople, as he claimed to have had access to the *Historia Gothorum* of Cassiodorus for three days – access that was granted by Cassiodorus' steward.[143] It is probable that this meeting happened at some central place, and Constantinople is our best bet. Given this scenario, it seems that if Jordanes had a clerical position, perhaps he was not a monk, but held a lesser position in the church, one that allowed him time and space to write two works on a topic that did not involve Christianity and had no (religious) educational purpose. The only thing that we can actually say with certainty is that religion does not play a large role in the *De Origine* – it is more present in the *De Summa Temporum*, but not enough to render it as a *religious* work.

Moreover, the claim of conversion comes as an opposition to the affirmation that Jordanes was *agrammatus* before that. Here, *agrammatus* cannot possibly mean that he

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[141] *Cf. Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by A. Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Vienna; Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994).
[142] Cass., *Exp. Psalm.*, praefatio.
[143] Jord., *Getica*, praefatio, 2.

could not read or write:[144] he was, after all, a *notarius*, a bureaucrat working for a minor Amal Ostrogoth. If Gunthigis Baza needed a *notarius*, we can suspect that he need one that was actually alphabetised. Jordanes probably meant that he had no formal, academic learning, although the contrast with *conversus* points to a slight religious overtone. The term *agrammatus,* ἀγράμματος in Greek, appears in the New testament in the Acts of the Apostles 4:13: 'Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus'.[145] It is also implied in the gospel of John: 'The Jews then were astonished, saying, 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?'.[146] Here, ἀγράμματοί and μὴ μεμαθηκώς mean the same thing, that is, not having a very formal, edifying education.[147] The characters in this passages still know things and can even read ('Πῶς οὗτος γράμματα ο ἴδεν'), but have no official training. If *conversus* means a personal turn to *otium* and to higher, more divine studies, than *agrammatus* is merely the lack of those skills or this lifestyle. Jordanes left the bureaucratic job and pursued a proper education (possibly religious).[148] In other words, *agrammatus* and *conversus* should be seen, to a degree, two sides of a similar argument.

To sum up, then, we can attempt some tentative answers to the question: who was Jordanes? Jordanes seems to be a barbarian man, affiliated with a 'fictive ethnicity' that would place him in the cultural reality of 'Barbarians of the Balkans', such as the Heruli, the Goths, the Alans, or an ethnic/cultural mix of some of those; he comes from a *milieu* that was, politically and ideologically, closer to Attila than to the Romans; he knew how to read and write, but probably never had any formal training while acting as a *notarius*;

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[144] Galdi, 'Late Sparsa Collegimus: The Influence of Sources on the Language of Jordanes', p. 395.
[145] 'Θεωροῦντες δὲ τὴν τοῦ Πέτρου παρρησίαν καὶ Ἰωάννου, καὶ καταλαβόμενοι ὅτι ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοί εἰσιν καὶ ἰδιῶται, ἐθαύμαζον, ἐπεγίνωσκόν τε αὐτοὺς ὅτι σὺν τῷ Ἰησοῦ ἦσαν', Acts 4:13.
[146] 'Καὶ ἐθαύμαζον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες, Πῶς οὗτος γράμματα ο ἴδεν, μὴ μεμαθηκώς', John 7:15.
[147] P. G. R. de Villers, 'The Medium Is the Message. Luke and the Language of the New Testament against a Graeco-Roman Background in The Language of the New Testament.', *Neotestamentica*, 24.2 (1990), 247–56.
[148] Croke, 'Cassiodorus and the Getica of Jordanes', p. 119.

and he did not profess the Arian faith (at least at the time of his writing). For the sake of the argument presented in this thesis, I would stress his affiliation to Hunnic history (through the figure of Attila) and his upbringing in Moesia, which, as I defend, influenced so much of his political, cultural and ideological thought. And, with that being said, we might have a slightly clearer picture of the author before embarking on an analysis of his works.

2.2 – A TALE OF TWO BOOKS: THE '*GETICA*' AND THE '*ROMANA*'

Jordanes, as said earlier, is known for two works, *De Summa Temporum vel Origine Actibusque Gentis Romanorum* and *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*, commonly known as *Romana* and *Getica* (and, to avoid the historiographical implications attached to the most common version of these titles, I will use *De Origine* when referring to the '*Getica*' and *De Summa Temporum* when referring to the '*Romana*').[149] While the *De Origine* is, by far, the most popular of the two, the *De Summa Temporum* should also be discussed on its own merits, as an independent work, but also as a wider historiographical frame, one from which the *De Origine* sprung. After all, the context of production for both narratives is quite interesting: Jordanes was writing his Roman history when his 'history of the Getae' was commissioned.[150] He started and finished the *De Origine* as he was writing the *De Summa Temporum*. Both are fruits from the same political and cultural context, and putting them side by side will certainly clarify our understanding of the narrative implications of these works.[151]

We know, then, that both works were written around the 550s. The *De Origine* certainly was finished by 551,[152] which leaves us to guess that the *De Summa Temporum*

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[149] See note 28.
[150] Jord., *Getica*, I, 1.
[151] Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, pp. 21–22.
[152] His last entry is on the death of Germanus, which happened in the autumn of 550.

started being written maybe around 549 and published no later than 552 – Jordanes says that he finished writing it in the 24th year of Justinian' reign, which would be 551, if his dates are correct.[153] Both works seem to be unaware of the definitive fate of the wars between Ostrogoths and Byzantines, as the *De Origine* ends with the possibility of union between the Amali and the Anicii through the marriage of Mathasuntha, granddaughter of Theoderic and Germanus, nephew of Justinian.[154] The *De Summa Temporum* ends with a darker note: the war is still going on in Italy, there is no mention of the death of Totila, and the concluding tone is much less triumphant and optimistic than the *De Origine*:

> These are the misfortunes of the Roman *Res Publica* aside from the daily inroads of the Bulgars, Antes and Slavs. If anyone wishes to know them, let him go through the annals and the history of the consuls without disdain, and he will find a modern-day empire worthy of a tragedy.[155]

He acknowledges the ongoing problems with Slavs and Bulgars in the Balkan regions, [156] but also seems to understand the fate of the Roman Empire in a very dramatic fashion: an empire worthy of a tragedy, a story that an author of Greek plays could have devised. Jordanes could not have summarised more eloquently the end of 551 and the beginning of 552.

To reinforce the *terminus ante quem* of late 551/ early 552, the last major event described by Jordanes is a clash between Gepids and Lombards. Thurisind, king of the

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[153] Jord., *Romana*, 4.

[154] Goffart believes that Germanus represents a deliberate narrative mechanism to give the *De Origine* a 'happy ending', one that marks the end of the Gothic wars with the final triumph of Justinian through the arranged marriage between Germanus *senior* and Mathasuntha. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, pp. 70–84.

[155] 'Hi sunt casus Romanae rei publicae preter instantia cottidiana Bulgarum, Antium et Sclavinorum. Que si quis scire cupit, annales consulumque seriem revolvat sine fastidio repperietque dignam nostri temporis rem publicam tragydiae'. Jord., *Romana*, 388.

[156] Although not prominent in the narrative, Jordanes refers to the enemies at the Balkan *limites* a few times. For an assessment of his take on the Slavs, *cf*. Curta, 'Hiding Behind a Piece of Tapestry: Jordanes and the Slavic Venethi'. On the policy of Justinian concerning the Balkans and the problems with Barbarians in these regions, *cf*. Sarantis, 'War and Diplomacy in Pannonia and the Northwest Balkans during the Reign of Justinian: The Gepid Threat and Imperial Responses'.

Gepids, was defeated by Aldoin, king of the Lombards, in 552 or 551.[157] Jordanes says that his days had not seen a greater battle than this since the times of Attila – with maybe the exception of Calluc against the Gepids and Mundo against the Goths.[158]

Therefore, if both works were written almost at the same time, they were certainly written in the same place. Most scholars agree that Constantinople was the locus of production, given that Jordanes had access to a plethora of material, including the elusive *Historia Gothorum* of Cassiodorus – even if only for three days. Shane Bjornlie believes that even the *Variae* of Cassiodorus were assembled in the Byzantine capital, so it would be likely that he had his older material with him, including the *Historia Gothorum* and the *Chronicon*.[159] Jordanes claims that a three-day access to the *Historia* was granted by Cassiodorus' steward, so we could believe that they were both in the same place in 551 – possibly Constantinople.[160] However, there are concurring theories: Serafín Bodelón, investigating some of the usual problems attributed to the *De Origine* – such as the dependence on Cassiodorus and the goals of the work – listed a few places where Jordanes could have written his works according to some historians.[161] Besides Constantinople, Ravenna, Vivarium, Crotone, and Thessaloniki are some of the other theorised *loci*. O'Donnell claimed that Jordanes must have been in an unidentified place of the Eastern

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[157] W. Pohl, 'I Longobardi in Pannonia E La Guerra Gotica Di Giustiniano', in *Le Origini Etniche dell'Europa: Barbari E Romani Tra Antichità E Medioevo*, ed. by W. Pohl (Rome: Viella, 2000), pp. 137–48; I. Bóna and E. Szilágyi, *A l'aube du Moyen Âge Gépides et Lombards dans le Bassin des Carpates* (Budapest: Corvina, 1976), p. 7.

[158] 'nec par, ut ferunt, audita est in nostris temporibus pugna a diebus Attilae in illis locis, praeter illa quae ante hanc contigerat sub Calluce mag. mil. ibid. cum Gepidas aut certe Mundonis cum Gothis, in quibus ambobus auctores belli pariter conruerunt', Jord., *Romana*, 387. Jordanes is referring to Mundos, the possibly-Hunnic general of Justinian who died fighting the Ostrogoths in 536, and to Calluc, a Byzantine *Magister Militum* who was killed by the Gepidic king Thrasaric, in a raid in 539. Procopius (*Goth.*, V, 7 and *Goth.*, VII, 93 respectively) also covers both occasions. Furthermore, Mundos is present in John Malalas and Marcellinus Comes. For more, *cf.* F. Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c.500–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 191; Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 148–49.

[159] M. S. Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition Between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae, 527-554* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 19–26.

[160] Jord., *Getica*, I, 1-2. Cassiodorus was in Constantinople when he was finishing his commentary on the psalms. In: J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 56–76.

[161] Bodelón, 'Jordanés Y La Problemática de La Gética', pp. 49–50.

Empire, whereas Mommsen believed that he must have been somewhere in Moesia – which was, after all, his land, his place of birth and where he was stationed when he was younger.

Anywhere in Italy is probably unlikely. Jordanes pays little attention to coeval Italy and when he does, it is because of contingencies – he is living under the rule of Justinian, an emperor who spent many resources waging wars, including an important one in the Italian peninsula. Jordanes also pays little attention to the Amali lineage of the Ostrogoths in recent history. He certainly focuses on ancient Gothic history around this family, but Theoderic, Amalaswintha, Athalaric and others are very much absent from the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine*.[162] Because the affairs in Italy sound almost incidental to some of Jordanes' analysis, we could believe that he was not interested in it very much, and thus certainly not living there in times of war and crisis.[163]

Moesia is unquestionably a better guess. Jordanes demonstrates attention and carefulness in describing the geography of the region, his awareness of its historical developments is sharp, and he overall pays much attention to it, especially in the *De Origine*.[164] There are a few issues with this idea, though. First of all, it would have been much more complex to have access to all the volumes used in the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine*, and we could wonder why Cassiodorus' steward would be carrying the *Historia Gothorum* around in Moesia. Moreover, among the few autobiographical hints in these works, we have a brief account of how Jordanes used to work in that region before becoming a *conversus*, which is worth revisiting:

> Now when the Goths saw the Gepids defending for themselves the territory of the Huns and
> the people of the Huns dwelling again in their ancient abodes, they preferred to ask for lands

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[162] Goffart touches this topic in: Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, pp. 66–70.
[163] In fact, as will be discussed in this chapter, Jordanes seems to have a very negative approach towards the fate of the Western Empire as a whole. Although he writes down the history of the Roman Republic and the foundation of the Roman Empire, he does not hold any hopes or affection toward the Italian peninsula in general. Certainly not as much as he does towards the Balkanic regions.
[164] O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', p. 229.

from the Roman Empire, rather than invade the lands of others with danger to themselves. So they received Pannonia, which stretches in a long plain, being bounded on the east by Upper Moesia, on the south by Dalmatia, on the west by Noricum and on the north by the Danube. [...] The Sciri, moreover, and the Sadagarii and certain of the Alans with their leader, Candac by name, received Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia. Paria, the father of my father Alanoviiamuth (that is to say, my grandfather), was secretary to this Candac as long as he lived. To his sister's son Gunthigis, also called Baza, the Master of the Soldiery, who was the son of Andag the son of Andela, who was descended from the stock of the Amali, I also, Jordanes, although an unlearned man before my conversion, was secretary.[165]

'ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannis ante conversionem meam notarius fui.' It is not a definitive argument, but in spite of the real meaning of *conversus*, we could say that Jordanes' life took a turn after this period, and he was now doing something else, somewhere else. One could even say that this small textual incursion into personal territory sounds somewhat nostalgic.

O'Donnell's theory of an unspecified place in the Eastern Empire is possibly the most methodologically accurate argument of all. We cannot know for certain where Jordanes was, and everything beyond it is conjecture.[166] But as it is, Constantinople would be, possibly, the most obvious place to be if one were to be in the Eastern Empire. Jordanes wrote both works in Latin and consulted a vast amount of works in Latin and Greek – some of them very recent and produced in Constantinople, such as the *Chronicon* of Marcellinus Comes.[167] The birthplace of the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine*,

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[165] 'Gothi vero cernentes Gepidas Hunnorum sedes sibi defendere Hunnorumque populum suis antiquis sedibus occupare, maluerunt a Romano regno terras petere quam cum discrimine suo invadere alienas, accipientesque Pannoniam; quae in longo porrecta planitiae habet ab oriente Moesiam superiorem, a meridie Dalmatiam, ab occasu Noricum, a septentrione Danubium. [...] Scyri vero et Sadagarii et certi Alanorum cum duce suo nomine Candac Scythiam minorem inferioremque Moesiam acceperunt. Cuius Candacis Alanoviiamuthis patris mei genitor Paria, id est meus avus, notarius; quousque Candac ipse viveret, fuit, eiusque germanae filio Gunthicis, qui et Baza dicebatur, mag. mil., filio Andages fili Andele de prosapia Amalorum descendente, ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannis ante conversionem meam notarius fui'. Jord., *Getica*, L, 264 – 266.

[166] It is always worthy going back to O'Donnell article on Jordanes, where he eloquently summarises some of the main historiographical arguments and asserts his take on them – even though the article is from 1982. *Cf.* O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes'.

[167] On the issue of Jordanes and Marcellinus, *cf.* Festy; Christensen, p. 108; Bartoňková.

judging by their context, was a cosmopolitan circle, and Constantinople would have provided the right environment.

Therefore, if both works were produced in Constantinople around 551 and 552, there is another pressing question: who was Jordanes' intended audience? This is a puzzling query, and some scholars have provided, for example, theories on the purpose of the *De Origine* solely based on this question.[168] We have only a few clues within the works themselves: they were written in Latin, they acknowledge the rule of Justinian, and they are addressed to certain people – the prologue of the *De Summa Temporum* mentions 'brother Virgilius' and the preface of the *De Origine* mentions a certain 'brother Castalius.' Castalius is mentioned again in the *De Summa Temporum*:

> This [narrating the vicissitudes of Rome] I have, however briefly, nonetheless completed in the twenty-fourth year of Emperor, in this one tiny book dedicated to you. I have added to it another volume on the origin and deeds of the Getic people, which I published some time ago for our common friend, Castalius, so that, learning of the disaster of various peoples, you might desire to become free of all trouble and turn to God, who is true freedom.[169]

This revealing passage is often forgotten or overlooked. Scholars have tried to identify who are Castalius and Vigilius, and one argument was that Vigilius was, indeed, the pope.[170] It seems unthinkable, as we stated, that Jordanes would tell the bishop of Rome to turn to god after reading about the disasters of politics.[171] From the tone adopted by Jordanes, we could say that Vigilius was not even a cleric: 'ab omni erumna liberum te fieri cupias et ad Deum convertas.' Since Jordanes used the word 'conversionem' when talking about himself, it seems that he understands it as turning to a more contemplative

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[168] The best example is Momigliano, p. 213. Also, cf. J. Zeiller, *Les Origines Chrétiennes dans les Provinces Danubiennes de l'empire Romain* (Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider, 1967), pp. 570–71.

[169] '[...] in vicensimo quarto anno Iustiniani imperatoris, quamvis breviter, uno tamen in tuo nomine et hoc parvissimo libello confeci, iungens ei aliud volumen de origine actusque Getice gentis, quam iam dudum communi amico Castalio ededissem, quatinus diversarum gentium calamitate conperta ab omni erumna liberum te fieri cupias et ad deum convertas, qui est vera libertas.'. Jord., *Romana*, 4.

[170] See above, Momigliano.

[171] O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', pp. 223–25.

life – not necessarily becoming a monk or a man of the church.[172] The disillusions with current politics are also seen in Cassiodorus, when he says that the tribulations of life made him turn himself to god and learning.[173]

Therefore, judging by this information, Castalius and Vigilius should have been part of the same circle, possibly part of a lower aristocracy, educated and interested in history and politics of their time and, given the negative tone of Jordanes, affected and distressed by the wars waged by Justinian on all fronts: North Africa, Italy, Balkans and the East (against Persia).[174] Moreover, if we are to take Jordanes' prefaces literally, we could say that men like these were, in fact, the intended audience: learned men who were pessimistic about the state of the Roman Empire in the mid-sixth century. Men who were not really involved in politics, but who suffered economically and culturally with the wars and campaigns – after all, the *De Summa Temporum* shows a negative Jordanes, one that could see the empire crumbling under military vicissitudes, loss of land and ill decisions of emperors.

> And he will know whence it [the tragedy of Rome] arose, how it grew or in what way it subjected all lands to itself and how again it lost them through ignorant rulers. It is something we, to the extent of our ability, have treated so that, through reading, the serious reader may gain a broader knowledge of these things.[175]

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[172] Jord., *Getica*, L, 266. It is difficult to say if Jordanes was a man of church or not. Because his works do not reflect the possession of any ranks within the church – nor his ambitions seem to be theological –, we could be led to believe that his 'conversion' is more contemplative than institutional, but as with many things concerning Jordanes' life, this is speculative.

[173] 'Repulsis aliquando in Ravennati urbe sollicitudinibus dignitatum, et curis saecularibus noxio sapore conditis, cum psalterii celestes animarum mella gustassem; id quod solent desiderantes efficere, avidus me perscrutator immersi; ut dicta saluraria suaviter imbiberem post amarissimas actiones.'. Cass. *Exp. Psalm.*, praefatio. Coincidentally, the *Expositio Psalmorum* was completed around the same time as the *De Origine* and the *De Summa Temporum*, no later than 555. In: Cassiodorus, *Cassiodorus: Psalms 1-50*, trans. by P.G. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 5.

[174] On the economical state of the Eastern Empire at the time of Justinian, *cf.* P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 200–227. For the belligerent nature adopted by Justinian and the conflicts in the early sixth century, *cf.* A. D. Lee, 'The Empire at War', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. by M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 113–33.

[175] 'Cietque unde orta, quomodo aucta, qualiterve sibi cunctas terras subdiderit et quomodo iterum eas ab ignaris rectoribus amiserit. Quod et nos pro capta ingenii breviter tetigimus, quatenus diligens lector latius ista legendo cognoscat.'. Jord., *Romana*, 388.

This scenario also sheds light on the purposes of the *De Origine*. There is no reason to doubt that this Castalius truly wanted to learn about the Goths – these people who were troubling Justinian so much and made it worthy to invest so many expenses waging war for so many years. Jordanes takes the opportunity to not only explain that but also to show the rise and fall of *Magna Dacia*, his homeland. Therefore, maybe the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine* are not really the history of Romans and Goths, but the history of the Fall of Rome and, in a certain way, the Fall of Dacia.[176]

The content of the *De Summa Temporum*, as well as its goal, reiterates this argument. In the preface of the *De Origine*, Jordanes said that he had to stop abbreviating the chronicles of the past to work on the history of the Goths at the request of Castalius.[177] By abbreviating the Roman chronicles, Jordanes meant that he was not continuing them, but using them to make sense of his own Roman world:

> For you want to be taught to understand the trials of the present world or when it began or what has been endured up to our time. You further add that from the stories of our predecessors I should pluck some little flowers and briefly relate to you how the Roman state began and endured, subjugated practically the whole world, and should endure up to now in the imagination; or even how the series of kings should have proceeded from Romulus and, in succession, from Augustus Octavian to Augustus Justinian that this, however simply, I should nevertheless explain to you in my own words.[178]

Right from the beginning of the *De Summa Temporum*, he states the poor situation of his time. Therefore, he structures the work in a seemingly chronistic way, advancing

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[176] This conclusion requires a concomitant reading and a deconstruction of the *De Origine* itself – as I hope to do in the following chapters. Most scholars – such as Goffart – would agree that the *De Origine* is optimistic, even if the *De Summa Temporum* is not. On the other hand, most scholars will dismiss the *De Summa Temporum* as a lesser work, a mere abbreviation of Christian chroniclers. As I emphasise, both works are born out of the same context – politically, economically, and religiously. Given that the *De Summa Temporum* was already being written when the *De Origine* started, it seems a bit of a stretch to affirm that something happened in-between both of them for Jordanes to have taken such a different attitude when finishing his Roman narrative.

[177] Jord., *Getica*, I, 1.

[178] 'Vis enim praesentis mundi erumnas cognuscere aut quando coepit vel quid ad nos usque perpessus est, edoceri. Addes praeterea, ut tibi, quomodo Romana res publica coepit et tenuit totumque pene mundum subegit et hactenus vel imaginariae teneat, ex dictis maiorum floscula carpens breviter referam: vel etiam quomodo regum series a Romulo et deinceps ab Augusto Octaviano in Augustum venerit Iustinianum, quamvis simpliciter, meo tamen tibi eloquio pandam', Jord., *Romana*, 2.

in time from the Adam and the creation of the world down to Justinian, with a simple language and a straightforward style, aiming to highlight certain events and passages of history that suited his agenda of bringing to the balance the historical development of Rome.

This negative approach towards the fate of the Roman Empire is further evidenced by the eschatological take of Jordanes on world history: according to this work, he sees it as a succession of kingdoms, one overcoming the other: from the rise of Assyria to its fall under the Medes, who fell under the Persians. The Persian were taken down by the Parthians, who were conquered by the Macedonians and Greeks, who in turn were conquered by Octavian, thus signalling the rise of Rome.[179] By this rhetorical logic, the *De Summa Temporum* was Jordanes take on why Rome declined in his own time. It is not clear who would overtake the Roman Empire, or if it was falling on itself, but he tries to rescue chronicles and writers to better understand and demonstrate this scenario.

Thus, the *De Summa Temporum* is divided into two wide segments: world history up to the rise of the Empire and the decline of said Empire. Accordingly, the first covers the affairs of the aforementioned kingdoms, with special attention to the Jews. Jordanes lists the succession of kings and rulers based on the Bible, on Flavius Josephus and, mainly, on Jerome.[180] Once he reaches the times of Augustus, he changes the narrative flow and goes back in time to explain the foundation of Rome, following the legend of Romulus and the seven kings before the Republic. Jordanes seems rather fond of each of these kings, including Tarquinius the Proud: for each king, he assigns one of the great characteristics of Rome: Romulus gave to Rome his fiery temper, Numa gave his piety, Tullus gave the military skills, Ancus built and expanded the city itself, Tarquinius I gave dignity and royalty, Servio gave identity and self-awareness through the census and

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[179] Jord., *Romana*, 3.
[180] Jord., *Romana*, 8 – 84.

Tarquinius II, through his arrogance, gave the people of Rome the desire to be free and stand for themselves.[181]

The allegory of the seven kings in the *De Summa Temporum* certainly amplifies the nostalgic tone. Jordanes seems to understand that these seven elements are the core of Rome, and the inability of future rulers would ruin this foundation, as said before. Thus, from there on, Jordanes narrates, in traditional fashion, the development of the Republic and the affairs of the empire, highlighting mainly the wars and campaigns against foreign enemies – from Etruscans to Gauls to Carthaginians.

A considerable part of the *De Summa Temporum* is dedicated to the Republic, and the same happens to the times of the Empire up to the times of Diocletian[182] – when the text starts to gloss over quickly over politics and war and flows in a much faster way.[183] It is consistent with the intent displayed by Jordanes in the introduction, when he advocates that the secular world has been declining. In a didactic fashion, then, his focus is the glorified past – by the times of Vitiges, he says that the institution of the Senate in the West had practically died in name and in virtue.[184]

To summarise: both the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine* were written somewhere in the East, most possibly Constantinople, between 549/550 and 551/552. The *De Summa Temporum* was initiated before Jordanes started with the *De Origine* but nonetheless was finished later. While the *De Origine* was, at least in name, envisioned as an abbreviation of Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum*, the *De Summa Temporum* was

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[181] Jord., *Romana*, 109 – 110.

[182] Jord., *Romana*, 111 – 302. There is a lacuna in the manuscript between the end of Diocletian's reign up to the rise of Julian. Because Jordanes was following Jerome accurately, it is possible to guess that the missing parts are not too deviant from the Christian chronicle.

[183] Jord., *Romana*, 304 – 388 covers the period from Julian to the third Lombard-Gepid war, in 551/552, which is one of the last events mentioned by Jordanes.

[184] Jord., *Romana*, 373.

commissioned as an abbreviation of the Christian chronicles, thus an exercise in explaining the rise and decline of Roman Empire. Although some historians claimed that the *De Origine* has a somewhat positive tone, the *De Summa Temporum* is certainly a negative, pessimistic account. Because they were created in the same political and social environment, we will henceforth argue that the *De Origine* is also part of this pessimistic view on the state of the world by the 550s.

2.3 – AUTHORIAL CONNECTIONS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOTH WORKS

As stated before, the *De Origine* cannot – and should not – be analysed outside its context of productions, which inevitably involves the *De Summa Temporum* as well. Aims, style, and conjectures are wrongly addressed to the former when the latter is taken out of the picture. That being said, before stating what is unique about the *De Origine* and how we should proceed in understanding its meanders, we should comprehend, in a deeper rhetorical way, how both works relate to each other.

Structurally, the *De Origine* and the *De Summa Temporum* share only a few similar characteristics. They have roughly the same size; they rely on some of the same sources – Jerome, Josephus, and Marcellinus Comes; they have a similar Latin, and they were produced mostly in the same political environment. Beyond these points, they differ from each other quite heavily. While one-fourth of the *De Summa Temporum* reads as a chronicle[185] and the rest flows like a traditional work of history, the *De Origine* seems to have a more complex setup. It has a more intricate narrative flow, as it jumps between geographical descriptions and ethnographical reports. It also delves deeply into customs and traditions as much as it tries to explain history and current events. In certain aspects, the *De Origine* seems to be a more complete and thought-out piece.

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[185] Jord., *Romana*, 8 – 84, out of 388 paragraphs in the established division of the text.

Similarly, the interactions and the usage of ancient texts seems to be much greater in the *De Origine*. The nature of the *De Summa Temporum* requires only a specific set of authors: Christian chroniclers and early Roman historians: we can see traces of Josephus, Florus, Jerome, Prosper, and Marcellinus, mainly. In a rhetorical level, Jordanes is dealing with a well-established narrative, one that does not require much of his agency besides selecting passages and interpreting the vicissitudes of history.[186] The *De Origine*, on the other hand, presents a distinctive nature, as much in form as it does in content. Jordanes has the task to shape a narrative into a much more confined agenda: he has to historicise the Goths and the tribes of Dacia as one historical actor that should also fit into possibly well-known Greek and Roman tales (the Trojan War, for example).[187] These rhetorical gymnastics required a vast amount of sources because it certainly needed a greater degree of legitimacy (than the *De Summa Temporum*). The authorial requirements of the *De Origine*, then, made it a more 'critical' text, that is, one with more intense dynamic between author and sources and more interaction between writer and reader – Jordanes has to attest the truth of his words and the accuracy of his sources more than once and certainly more than in the *De Summa Temporum*.

These differences must be purposeful to a certain degree. The *De Summa Temporum*, as we learn from the words of Jordanes himself, was planned as an abridgment of Christian chronicles: it means that Jordanes saw it as an explanation of his times, as an analysis of the misfortunes of Rome and an argument on its decline. As it is, the *De Summa Temporum* does not include authorial ideas besides the negative tone and the general feeling of failure of the Empire – Jordanes indeed spells out the proper end of Rome in the West:

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[186] One example of this is the presence of the Bible or biblical narratives: whereas there are plenty in *De Summa Temporum* to fill the gaps of the past and explain the rise of world empires, the *De Origine* lacks a similar, significant canon that would be widely recognised or accepted.
[187] Even if famous, some of these tales were probably less canonical than the bible by the mid-sixth century.

Thus too the Western empire and the lordship of the Roman people which, in the seven hundred and ninth year after the foundation of the city, Octavian Augustus began to hold as the first of the Augusti, perished with this Augustulus, in the five hundred twenty-second year of the succeeding emperors of the realm, Gothic kings thenceforth holding Rome.[188]

Through the *De Summa Temporum,* we can see that Jordanes understood that, in the western parts, the institution of the Empire ended with Augustulus, and from there on, the rule went into the hands of the Goths. It is an unmistakable change of order. It also evidences the clear perspective that Rome was divided into two: the East and the West are tangible realities for Jordanes, and with this work, he more or less focused on the fall of the West – even if, it seems, the situation of the East was not much better.[189]

This self-fashioned didactical aura renders the *De Summa Temporum* simpler than the *De Origine*, more straightforward than the *De Origine* and, as we saw, more pessimistic than the *De Origine* – even though both seem to deal with times of crises and with the downfall of ideologies of power. Perhaps because the *De Summa Temporum* was finished later, Jordanes had time to witness the political tides of 551/552 and realised that this ideology of power, that is, the ideal of Roman rule, would not overcome its problems. In hindsight, we know that the Eastern Empire survived for much longer and adapted to history in a very singular fashion, but we could argue that Jordanes believed that Constantinople was not too far from another 476.[190] It was for Jordanes, at least, the failure of the secular world.

Even with those differences, the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine* complement each other in certain aspects, namely in the approach to rule and the

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[188] 'Sic quoque Hesperium regnum Romanique populi principatum, quod septingentesimo nono urbis conditae anno primus Augustorum Octavianus Augustus tenere coepit, cum hoc Augustulo periit anno decessorum regni imperatorum quingentesimo vicesimo secundo, Gothorum dehinc regibus Romam tenentibus'. Jord., *Romana*, 345.

[189] On the division of the empire, *cf.* Jord., *Romana*, 317 – 318.

[190] As we discussed, in the preface of the *De Summa Temporum*, Jordanes seemed to be hopeless in what concerns the secular world. Given his statement, it is possible that he held the Eastern reality in the same regard.

geographical scope. What does that mean? The idea of rule – ideology of power – in both works is a central aspect to them, as well to create cohesion between them. Jordanes demonstrates an idea of power that is more or less relate to the universality of it. Kings of all people, rulers of all races; ethnicity, or more specifically, the belonging to a certain group, the boundaries within identities – as we will discuss in-depth later – is present throughout all of Jordanes' works. Given that he understands groups as solid, delimitable social and cultural entities, ideal power is hegemony, is lordship over as many people as possible. Certainly, dominating all races means unity, and unity of hegemonic power seems to be some sort of historical leitmotif – that is the tone of the *De Summa Temporum* and, in a more confined level, in the *De Origine* as well.[191] The former is based on the idea of a succession of universal empires; the latter focus on the hegemony, or rise to hegemonic power, of Goths/Huns over other people. Attila was the lord of all Scythian people and was born to shake all races of the world.[192] Trajan triumphed over the Dacians, the Scythians, the Iberians, the Arabs, the Sauromatae, the Osdroni, the Bosphorians and the Colchi.[193] They both have the hegemony in common: one ruled, as the Romans should, over many *gentes* of the world; the other dominated all the barbarians and brought unity to *Magna Dacia* after the Romans lost control over it. Jordanes, it seems, brought this cosmopolitanism from his background to his works: he lived among Goths, Alans, Sarmatians, Huns, Romans, Greeks and possibly others. He was clearly familiar with different ethnic labels and to a variety of identities – identities not only confined to a cultural level but fighting to establish dominance over lands as well, to thrive in their '*little narratives*'. In other words, for Jordanes, the concept of identity was not the

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[191] 'Addes praeterea, ut tibi, quomodo Romana res publica coepit et tenuit totumque pene mundum subegit et hactenus vel imaginariae teneat, ex dictis maiorum floscula carpens breviter referam' Jord., *Romana*, 2.
[192] 'Qua pace Attila, Hunnorum omnium dominus et paene totius Scythiae gentium solus in mundo regnator, qui erat famosa inter omnes gentes claritate mirabilis.'. *Getica*, XXXIV, 178; 'Vir in concussione gentium natus in mundo, terrarum omnium metus, qui, nescio qua sorte, terrebat cuncta formidabili de se opinione vulgata'. Jord., *Getica*, XXXV, 182.
[193] Jord., *Romana*, 267.

abstraction of learned circles in Rome, but it was the reality of many pulverizes groups struggling over the control of a land that was left in a void of power after Romans and Huns lost control of it – that is, *Magna Dacia*.[194] Therefore, the reality of warring tribes certainly strengthened, in Jordanes, the importance of universal power to the concept of ideal power.

Besides the underlining ideological framework, the geographical/geopolitical scope of both works is fundamental, and we need to understand one to understand the other, as they are complementary. The *De Summa Temporum*, as the name suggests, has Rome as its scope, but in spite of the wide and universal title, it focuses on the West – even near the end, when it reaches the year of 476 and shifts to the Goths and the Byzantines, the *De Summa Temporum* is aiming at the occident:

> But so that the reader may understand more clearly the disaster in the West which I spoke about, I will be more explicit. When Consul Belisarius left Italy taking, as we said, the King and Queen [Vitiges and Mathaswintha] and the treasure of the Palace back to the Emperor, the Goths who dwelt on the other side of the Po in Liguria revived their will to war, rose up, installed Hildibad as chieftain, and emerged as adversaries.[195]

If the *De Summa Temporum* has a clear focus, the *De Origine* is vaguer. One could think that because of the Ostrogoths – and even the Visigoths – as ruling elites in the West, the *De Origine* would focus on their history and their traditions, therefore being primarily a Western narrative as well. A closer reading of the work will show the opposite, however. Jordanes spends an impressivly little amount of narrative time with the coeval Ostrogoths, and even less with the Visigoths.[196] The contemporary political set-up is nothing more

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[194] The province of Dacia saw the withdrawal of the Romans in 271. *Cf.* P. L. MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (La Vergne: Lightning Source, 2012), p. 177.

[195] 'Cladem vero quam diximus in Esperia plaga ut liquidius lector cognoscat, apertius memorabo. Egrediente Belesario consule ab Italia et ut diximus, rege regina opesque palatii ad principem reportante Gothi, qui trans Padum in Liguria consistebant, recrudiscentes animos ad bella consurgunt et ordinato sibi regulo Heldebado militi existunt adversi'. Jord., *Romana*, 378.

[196] Jord., *Getica*, XXV – XXXIV is dedicated to the Visigoths from the times of Valens (370s) to Wallia (415). Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII to LX is dedicated to the Ostrogoths from the times of Ermanaric (370s) to the defeat of Vitiges (540). For the rise of Theoderic as king of the Goths to the defeat of Vitiges, Jordanes dedicates only Jord., *Getica*, LVII to LX.

than the background and the contingency to the production of the text. The vast majority of the *De Origine* is focused on the Getae (Goths, Dacians, Thracians and, sometimes, Scythians) as they dwell in Eastern lands: Scythia, Moesia, Dacia, the Maeotic lake, the Sea of Pontus, among others. Rarely the narrative leaves this *locus*, i.e., the Eastern provinces.

Given that both the *De Summa Temporum* and the *De Origine* were written basically at the same time, the political and geographical imagery of Jordanes was the same, thus the East/West framework must have been intentional. Hence, as we mentioned before, if the *De Summa Temporum* was versing on the misfortunes of the Roman Empire in the West, the *De Origine* focus not necessarily only on the History of the Goths, as we would be lead to believe by modern scholarship, but by addressing the deeds of the 'Getae', Jordanes can afford to look at the historical development of Dacia under Romans, Huns and Goths and, through these series of events and facts, he could analyse the misfortunes of the Roman Empire in the East. In other words, although, as historians, we are tempted to look at the *De Origine* and the *De Summa Temporum* as rhetorical devices aimed at writing down the history of two people – Roman and Goths, befitting the political arrangement of the sixth century – we could also look at these works and see an author trying to understand his own times, trying to understand the decline of world powers and, through ancient authors and voices of authority, postulate what happened to the Roman Empire in Italy, Spain and France (the West), and what happened to the Roman Empire in Dacia, Moesia and Thrace (the East).

2.4 – THE *DE ORIGINE* SINGULARITY

Why, then, should we study the *De Origine* in its own merits? Why not approach both works as one, since they are part of the same chronological and political *milieux*? As

I pointed out throughout this chapter, a few things set the *De Origine* aside as a work worthy of being analysed. Mainly, the *De Origine* presents a Jordanes that is engineering a historical and political discourse in a level that the *De Summa Temporum* lacks. We can see the author present in both texts, but it is in the *De Origine* where his agency is more active in shaping the evidence and the conclusions.

This is not to say that the *De Origine* had political goals or was trying to achieve an impact beyond the intended circle of readers. Everything points to the fact that Jordanes did not have any relevant social roles nor was an important person in any sense. There are no signs of Jordanes being a civil officer outside the Barbarian circles, and he was not politically active in Constantinople nor in any other city of the East – as far as we can tell.[197] As with the *De Summa Temporum*, we have reasons to believe that the *De Origine* was an exercise in exposing flaws and understanding the ups and downs of history. Although, even if the political influence of the work was minimal, we can still see an industrious political discourse:[198] Jordanes, as said, has to put the evidence in a very specific narrative place for it to make sense – differently from the *De Summa Temporum*. In other words, the *De Origine* is more revealing of the author's selection of classical sources, in his manipulation of historical evidence, in his retelling of mythical passages and even in his political background. There is more of Jordanes' agency in the *De Origine*.[199]

Moreover, from a historiographical point of view, the *De Origine* is unique. If we look at it as a testimony of Gothic history – or, more precisely, as an ethnogeographical account of the Eastern Provinces, its rise, and its turbulences – [200] written by a non-Roman, this would be the first surviving example. For modern scholars, the content of

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[197] O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', pp. 238–39.
[198] Merrills, p. 33.
[199] Merrills, p. 113.
[200] Amory, p. 130.

the work is also singular: Jordanes is, unfortunately, our only source for a plethora of events and traditions of the past. We could list the tale of Gothic migration from Scandza, the narrative of Gepidic and Hunnic origins, a series of possibly mythic Gothic rulers, details for the life and death of Ermanaric that differ from Ammianus Marcellinus and a rich account of the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Jordanes is also our only source to mention the Gepid Ardaric and the Battle of Nedao River, where the sons of Attila were supposedly defeated by a confederation of Barbarians led by this same Ardaric.[201] Content-wise, this is a big deviation from the *De Summa Temporum,* a text that presents a traditional account of events from Roman history, one which all facts and information can be traced back to other sources, such as Jerome, Florus, Josephus, Marcellinus Comes and Procopius.[202]

From a rhetorical point of view, the *De Origine* also stands out. We spoke before about the nature of both works and how they affect their writing styles. This has to be stressed further: the narrative structure of the *De Origine* seems cleverer and more authorial, because the reality of its content demanded this different treatment. In this sense, we can underline three rhetorical aspects (that will be nonetheless developed further in following chapters): the elusiveness and structuring of its goals, the ethnic fabrication of the 'Getae' and the genealogy of tribes, and the portrayal of Attila.

The goal of the *De Origine* seems to be clear from the start:

> You urge me to leave the little work I have in hand, that is, the abbreviation of the Chronicles, and to condense in my own style in this small book the twelve volumes of the Senator on the origin and deeds of the Getae from olden time to the present day, descending through the generations of the kings.[203]

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[201] These matters will be approached in following chapters.

[202] The critical apparatus present in Mommsen's edition of the *De Summa Temporum* lists all authors that Jordanes uses – and that Mommsen could identify. This list seems to be very accurate at least for earlier sources.

[203] '[...] laxari vela compellis relictoque opusculo, quod intra manus habeo, id est, de adbreviatione chronicorum, suades, ut nostris verbis duodecem Senatoris volumina de origine actusque Getarum ab olim et usque nunc per generationes regesque descendentem in uno et hoc parvo libello choartem'. Jord., *Getica*, I, 1,

Jordanes was told to abbreviate Cassiodorus and write down the history and the deeds of the Goths. There seems to be no need to doubt Jordanes' claim, as it would make sense for someone living in Constantinople – someone born in the East or someone who migrated because of the war – to have the desire to learn and understand the development of the Goths and how the situation between them and the Roman escalated to a long-standing fight. What modern historians seldom like to admit is that Jordanes himself declares that he does not have access to Cassiodorus' *Historia*. What he will proceed to do, he says, is to navigate through the meanders of that book, which he once read, and compose a narrative based on that, on Greek and Latin authors and on his own knowledge, 'et plura in medio mea dictione permiscens'.[204] Suffice to say that, if the original goal was to literally abridge Cassiodorus, the final form of the *De Origine* does not achieve that. Jordanes knew that, and he apologised right from the start. Coincidentally, most of his preface is lifted, verbatim, from the preface of Rufinus to his translation of Origen's commentary on Romans. What Mommsen called an imprudent act of plagiarism[205] probably had a deeper, conscious meaning: Jordanes was borrowing from a well-known translator, one that turned into Latin the words of Origen, almost as if Jordanes wanted to portray himself as an authorial harbinger, a medium through which disputed issues would be materialised – and settled by his own contribution.[206] According to O'Donnell:

> The *Romana* was a simple matter, just shooting fish in a barrel to twist the metaphor slightly; but the *Getica* is another thing entirely, much more difficult and challenging. Why should this be, if Jordanes was merely abbreviating Cassiodorus the way he abbreviated the chroniclers? Why should Jordanes insist on the phrase *nostris verbis* (changing Rufinus' *voce* to *verbis*) if he did not mean to claim by this preface that his own contribution to the work was necessarily substantial?[207]

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[204] Jord., *Getica*, I, 2.
[205] MGH AA 5, p. xxxiv.
[206] For Origen and his religious stance, *cf.* P. W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For his commentary tradition on Romans and the translation of Rufinus, *cf.* T. P. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).
[207] O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', pp. 227–28.

We can assume, then, that Jordanes followed the request of Castalius to a certain degree: he would narrate what was asked, but he would not do so by abbreviating Cassiodorus. The origin and deeds of the 'Getae' will follow 'nostris verbis,' that is, Jordanes own style, voice, and knowledge, even though the meaning of Cassiodorus' work was retained[208] (something we should take with a grain of salt). Cassiodorus did not cover anything after Theoderic and, certainly, the tone of his work was laudatory: his was a courtly history, one made to display the nobility of the Amali. This is not what Jordanes does.[209] The Amali are still there but, essentially, the *De Origine* is not just a laudatory history and the Amali are not always connected to Ostrogoths of Italy – Jordanes claims to be working for an Amali in Moesia by the end of the fifth century or beginning of the sixth after all.[210] With or without the looming presence of Cassiodorus, what we actually have, in the end, is Jordanes take on the history of the Goths, and his take is a geographical one: he brings his own knowledge and his own persona, coupled with the authority of classical sources, to explain the rise and fall of Dacia *through* the history of the 'Getae'.

Therefore, the dynamic between abbreviating the work of Cassiodorus and presenting different material because the former could not be accessed creates a diffuse narrative between Goths, Huns, Gepids and the Eastern Provinces. Jordanes has to juggle between the request of Castalius and his own perspective concerning those matters, and the rhetorical logic that it creates is what makes the *De Origine* singular when placed side by side with the *De Summa Temporum*.

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[208] Jord., *Getica*, I, 1-2.

[209] Although Peter Heather discussed the issue of Jordanes/Cassiodorus and the genealogy of the Amali in his article from 1989 (Heather, 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination'.), the best discussion of the discrepancies between Jordanes and the 'official' lineage as listed in the *Variae* is made by Ian Wood in his review of Arne Christensen' book, *cf.* I. N. Wood, 'Anmeldelser - Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths. Studies in a Migration Myth', *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 103.2 (2003), 465–84 (pp. 481–84).

[210] Among the non-Ostrogothic Amali, the most prominent one is Ermanaric, who is possibly absent from the official Ostrogothic propaganda, possibly because he could be easily connected to the Visigothic royal lineage. For more on this topic, see following chapters.

This logic is evident through the structuring of the work. Most of the history of the Goths takes place as they migrate through regions of *Magna Dacia* and Scythia. The narrative is centred on a geographical axis – Jordanes' descriptions of the lands, because of that, are rich, and he even starts the *De Origine* with an account of the world, of Britain and Scythia.[211] Because this approach is not present in the *De Summa Temporum*, we can assume that this is how Jordanes envisioned telling the historical development and the deeds of the Goths. It would make sense, not only because Jordanes was probably from Moesia, but also because, prior to Italy, it seems that Gothic history is absolutely entangled with these Eastern provinces.[212]

The focus on Dacia and adjacent regions also explains the second rhetorical topic we should analyse: the fabrication of the Getic ethnicity and the genealogy of tribes. It is a well-known fact that Jordanes sees the Goths, the Getae, the Thracians, the Dacians and even, sometimes, the Scythians as part of the same ethnic cauldron. Commonly, as we will see in the next chapter, this is explained in a very simplistic way: because Jordanes was not able to unravel great deeds in the Gothic past, he used the formula present in sources like Orosius to equate Goths and Getae.[213] Since the Getae, that is, the people from Dacia, are mentioned all the way back in Herodotus and other ancient authors, it would be easy to find great things to say about them and create and logical, linear history that would connect with Theoderic and the Ostrogoths. This logic is tempting, especially if we believe the historiographically resilient idea that the *De Origine* has anything to do with the Goths in Italy. I would argue that this assumption is wrong. Jordanes was not

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[211] The relationship between Jordanes and the geographical thought of Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages can be seen in Merrills, pp. 100–169.

[212] Certainly, after the crossing of the Danube and the gradual settlement of the Visigoths, verifiable Gothic history tends to be centred in Western regions. However, as I shall discuss in further chapters, the division between Visigoths and Osrogoths is a matter of polemic in Jordanes and is used as another of his rhetorical tools. Therefore, we can say that, for the Goths and for the narrative that Jordanes is trying to tell, the Eastern provinces are more important than the Western ones, even if they had institutional Gothic presence since the fourth century.

[213] A discussion on this historiographical *topos* will be present in my next chapter.

trying to directly fabricate the Gothic past nor was he trying to link the Ostrogoths to the warring people from Herodotus. Jordanes was rather engineering a cohesive history for Dacia, one that runs concomitantly with Roman history and interweaves into one *Grand Narrative* of ascension and decline. That is why Jordanes pays much attention to Gepids and especially to Huns, besides Goths. All these tribes had fundamental roles to play in the development and fate of the region.[214]

Consequently, the ethnonym 'Geta' fits the narrative of Jordanes. Getae are one of the ancient tribes of Dacia, attested in a number of sources, especially Herodotus and Strabo. 'Geta' is also similar enough to the word 'Gothus,' which permitted people like Orosius to establish a connection between them. However, for Jordanes, this equation does not suffice. He puts a considerable effort, especially in the first third of the *De Origine*, to include not only other Dacia tribes (like Thracians and Dacians) but also Scythians in his imagined, fantastic Gothic past. It would seem rather contradictory to include people like the Scythian in the desired ethnonym, especially because they are viewed, historically, as a savage tribe outside the Graeco-Roman cultural sphere. This unexpected link can be understood once we realise that, within Jordanes' narrative, Scythian people played some role in the regions of Dacia.[215]

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[214] *Cf.* C. C. Petolescu, *Dacia: un Mileniu de Istorie* (Bucharest: Ed. Acad. Române, 2010); I. A. Oltean, *Dacia: Landscape, Colonisation, and Romanisation*, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007); M. Eliade, *Da Zalmoxis a Gengis-Khan: Studi Comparati Sulle Religioni E Sul Folklore Della Dacia E dell'Europa Centrale* (Rome: Ubaldini, 1975).

[215] History of Scythia and Scythian people is vast, spanning over many centuries and attracting the attention of classical historians and, mainly, archaeologists. For Scythian history and cultural impact, *cf.* I. Lebedynsky, *Les Scythes: la Civilisation Nomade des Steppes VII-III Siècles av. J. -C* (Paris: Errance, 2001); J. Davis-Kimball, V. A. Bashilov and L. T. Yablonsky, *Nomads of the Eurasian Steppes in the Early Iron Age* (Berkeley: Zinat Press Berkeley, 1995); R. Rolle, *Die Welt Der Skythen: Stutenmelker Und Pferdebogner: Ein Antikes Reitervolk in Neuer Sicht*, Report Archäologie (Lucern: C. J. Bucher, 1980); R. Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia* (New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press, 1970). For the archaeology of Scythian cultures, cf. *Chronologies of the Black Sea Area in the Period, C. 400-100 BC*, ed. by V. F. Stolba and L. Hannestad (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005); *Kimmerier und Skythen: Kulturhistorische und Chronologische Probleme der Archäologie der Osteuropäischen Steppen und Kaukasiens in Vor- und Frühskythischer Zeit*, ed. by A. I. Ivančik and H. Parzinger, Steppenvölker Eurasiens, Bd. 2, Dt. Version (Moskow: Paleograph Press, 2003).

Jordanes does not stop there. Besides designing his own brand of Gothic fictive identity, he also creates a wide genealogy of tribes: Goths came from Scandza in three ships, one was slower and stayed behind, and from this late ship came the Gepids.[216] A bit after, when the legendary Filimer was king of the Goths, he expelled some witches from his group. They wandered into the swamps of Maeotis and, upon meeting ghosts there, they copulated with them and, from this horrid connection, the Huns sprung.[217] Indirectly, Jordanes is saying that both Gepids and Huns come from the stock of the Goths. This is another seemingly counterproductive affirmation, since Gepids are obvious enemies of the Ostrogoths in the time of Theoderic,[218] and the Huns are not only enemies of all civilised humankind, but were also the overlords of the Ostrogoths before the rise of Theoderic.[219] Jordanes chose two well-known *gentes*, famously antagonistic to the most famous king of the Ostrogoths – one that, if historiographical expectations were right, should have been the protagonist of the *De Origine* – to be ethnically close to them. Furthermore, the Huns, at a certain point of the narrative, take the spotlight and, during the time of Attila, are, undisputed, the protagonists of the work.[220] This fact has been mostly overlooked by scholars. Why would Huns and Gepids not only be related to the Goths, but Attila, the most famous of the Huns, more important than any other character, Gothic or not, in the *De Origine*? If we look into this work through the geographical perspective, the answer is simple: because all these tribes and cultures were, to a greater or to a lesser extent, actors that shaped *Magna Dacia*. Getae, Dacians, and Thracians were the historical inhabitants of the regions. Scythians were important players in the politics

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[216] Jord., *Getica*, IV, 25 and XVII, 95.

[217] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 121.

[218] Although cooperation and animosity between Goths and Gepids are two common political situations in the fifth and sixth century, Gepids are certainly seem as a separate entity, even when they are a componing segment of the Ostrogothic army. In: W. A. Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London; Ronceverte: A&C Black, 1989), p. 178. For more on the belligerent relationship between Ostrogoths and Gepids, *cf*. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, pp. 190–201. Also, Ennod., *Paneg.*, VII.

[219] Cf. Heather, 'The Huns and Barbarian Europe'; Heather, 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination'.

[220] Jord., *Getica*, XXXV – XLIII.

of Thrace – part of Jordanes' *Magna Dacia* – since the fifth century BC.[221] Gepids and Goths, since the third century AD, shaped the region.[222] Finally, the Huns under Attila achieved desired political unity all across the Eastern Provinces, subjugating other Barbarians and bringing forth stability that was not seen since the times of Trajan and the conquest of Dacia.[223]

The hegemony that came with the ascension of Attila – and, in general, the portrayal of the Huns in Jordanes – is the core of the third rhetorical topic of the *De Origine*. Throughout Late Antiquity, Hunnic descriptions tend to be either shaped after Ammianus Marcellinus 'hunnophobia' or relegated to small entries in chronicles: Hydatius, Prosper are Marcellinus Comes being the prime examples.[224] It does not take long for the Huns to assume the role of enemies: the rage of Attila is a discursive *topos* in Cassiodorus and Gregory of Tours, for example.[225] The exception to these accounts is Priscus, an Eastern officer who left a testimony (surviving in fragments today) of his visit to Attila's court.[226] He was impressed, to say the least. Attila seems to be oddly noble, emanating a *gravitas* that, in Priscus, was translated almost as respect. This report was one of Jordanes favoured sources – he mentions Priscus by name a few times in the *De Origine*.[227] One could argue that this was exactly the medium through which Jordanes took his characterisation of the Huns. To a certain extent, that is probably correct, but it seems that Jordanes' narrative goes beyond. He not only painted Attila as a universal

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[221] Z. H. Archibald, 'Thracians and Scythians', in *The Cambridge Ancient History: The Fourth Century B.C.*, ed. by D. M. Lewis and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 444–75.

[222] *Cf.* Kulikowski, pp. 14–33; P. J. Heather and J. Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991).–10.

[223] *Cf.* M. Schmitz, *The Dacian Threat, 101-106 AD* (Armidale: Caeros Publishing, 2005).

[224] Discussions and references to Hunnic passages in these sources can be found in Maenchen-Helfen's post-mortem book on the Huns. It is still the most complete research made on societal, cultural and political aspects of the Hunnic world. In: Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*.

[225] Cass., *Variae*, I, 4, 11 & III, 1, 1 and Greg. Tur., *Hist.*, II, 7 &

[226] Priscus, *The Fragmentary History of Priscus: Attila, the Huns and the Roman Empire, Ad 430-476*, trans. by J. Given (New Jersey: Evolution Publishing & Manufacturing, 2014); *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, ed. by R. C. Blockley (Cambridge: Cairns, 2009).

[227] Jord., *Getica*, XVIII, 103; XXIV, 123; XXXIV, 178; XXXV, 183; XLII, 222; XLIX, 254 – 255.

overlord, but he also included information on Hunnic history, traditions, customs – as we said above, he linked the genesis of the Huns to the origin of the Goths, both being part of the same 'tribal genealogy.'

Why did the Huns deserve such an important role in the narrative? We could argue that they are rhetorically fundamental for the same reason that the Getae are composed of a variety of geographically-specific groups: because this all helps to explain the history of the Goths. In addition, because Jordanes was also looking to the history of the Goths through the development of Dacia, the history of the Goths becomes one with the History of *Magna Dacia*.

To summarise the conclusions reached so far, we can assert a few statements: both the *De Origine* and the *De Summa Temporum* are fruits from the same political and social context, and they obey a similar authorial logic. By comparing these works, that is, understanding that one is not complete without the presence of the other, we can see that Jordanes had a negative approach to the fate of Rome and saw its decline. This is evident in the *De Summa Temporum*, but from the context of production and authorial proximity, we can argue that the *De Origine* presents us with a similar scenario. However, these texts have different natures, their internal logic creates different narratives and different rhetorical strategies, and this difference is what makes the *De Origine* unique.

Now, having laid out some of the singularities of the *De Origine*, we can proceed to analyse these aspects more profoundly in the following chapters – but first, we should investigate the sources and authors read and used by Jordanes.

2.5 – Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: the Sources

2.5.1 – From Zalmoxis to Fritigern: the mythical past of the *Getae*

As every analysis of Jordanes points out, in his preface to the *De Origine*, he claimed that, at the request of his friend Castalius, he undertook to abridge Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum*.[228] Thus, one could be led to think that the work of Cassiodorus was the prime source for the *De Origine*, an idea which has indeed stirred numerous debates among scholars.[229] It must have come as a surprise, then, that Jordanes only references Cassiodorus and his work in the preface. In fact, a myriad of other authors that are *not* Cassiodorus are named and quoted throughout the *De Origine*. This apparent inconsistency has driven some historians to devise a borderline 'conspiratory' reading of Jordanes: although Jordanes never hid his references, the never-present Cassiodorus just *had* to be found somewhere.[230] The concern to find the lost *Historia Gothorum* hidden between the lines of Jordanes stripped his agency from the author for many years.[231] His usage of classical and authoritative sources, his vast reading and his ingenuity were left in the background, whereas the search for the Cassiodorian text took the spotlight and the central stage of debate.

Recent scholarship has amended this situation.[232] Even though the elusive rhetorical presence of Cassiodorus is still a matter of debate, much attention has been given to Jordanes as an independent author: his readings are, at least, acknowledged

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[228] Jord., *Getica*, 1 – 3.

[229] To name a few: Christensen; Weißensteiner; Bradley, ''In Altum Laxare Vela Compulsus': The 'Getica' of Jordanes'; Tönnies; Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*; Croke, 'Cassiodorus and the Getica of Jordanes'; S. J. B. Barnish, 'The Genesis and Completion of Cassiodorus' 'Gothic History'', *Latomus*, 43.2 (1984), 336–61; Momigliano; O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes'; Baldwin, 'The Purpose of the 'Getica''.

[230] J. M. Alonso-Núñez, 'Jordanes and Procopius on Northern Europe', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 31 (1987), 1–16; Barnish; Momigliano.

[231] Momigliano.

[232] *Cf.* Bradley, ''In Altum Laxare Vela Compulsus': The 'Getica' of Jordanes'; Croke, 'Cassiodorus and the Getica of Jordanes'.

now.[233] What still lingers over Jordanes' scholarship, though, is a selective reading of his work: even if Cassiodorus is not the focus and other sources are acknowledged, the aim of historians tends to be, as we discussed previously, the unknown and mysterious Gothic past. Because Jordanes is usually read with this established mindset – finding traces and hints of pre-Roman Gothic history – his usage of classical works is, very often, downplayed. Rhetorical mechanisms, such as the equiparation between Getae and Goths or the influence of classical, mythical narratives – such as Hercules or the Trojan War – are simply viewed as a way to make the Goths more important.[234] Under this interpretation, whenever Jordanes was reading an ancient author, it is believed that he was just looking for bits and pieces of history that compose a glorious past for the Gothic people, without regard for consistency or rhetorical strategies:

> Jordanes' reason for emphasizing the Goths' descent from the Getae, and borrowing the legends of their exploits for the Gothic people, was the high reputation they held in classical manuscripts.[235]

The assumption that Jordanes was merely crafting an epic past for the Goths tends to condition and limit our analysis of the *De Origine* and its sources. This explanation does not do justice to either Jordanes or to the wide circulation of texts in the sixth century. On the contrary, it creates difficulties for the analysis of the *De Origine*: the many reasons why Jordanes employed the texts that he did, and the diverse references are buried under the easy explanation of 'Gothic glory'.

Resolving the puzzle of authorial agency and interpretation of ancient sources becomes a simple matter of Jordanes' 'Gothicness': because it is believed that he was shaping Gothic past, then his usage of other sources must obey this logic. I will argue the

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[233] Croke, 'Jordanes and the Immediate Past', p. 473; Christensen; B. Baldwin, 'Sources for the Getica of Jordanes', *Revue Belge de Philologie et D'histoire*, 59.1 (1981), 141–46.
[234] Rix, p. 33.
[235] *Ibid*.

opposite. Jordanes read many authors, and his many influences were fundamental to make the complex history as it is presented in the *De Origine*. What does it mean? Jordanes did not choose random authors and just change the ethnonyms (from Getae to Goth) in order to embellish the Gothic past, but he deliberately sustained his narrative on the shoulders of authoritative writers who could contribute to the history of *Magna Dacia* and to the historical characters who participated in its development, while providing a logical flow to the story.

Jordanes was keen on ancient geographers and ethnographers.[236] He starts the narrative of the *De Origine* with a description of the world, including even a seemingly misplaced description of Britain, which then is followed by the description of the island of Scandza.[237] He relies on Paulus Orosius, Strabo, Titus Livy, Virgil, Sallust, Pliny the Elder, Cassius Dio, and Cornelius Tacitus for his geographical understanding, while Claudius Ptolemy and Pomponius Mela seem to be his most trusted sources for the description of Scandza.[238]

His usage of Ptolemy already demonstrates the dynamic between Jordanes and his sources. According to the sixth-century author, Ptolemy described Scandza and named seven tribes that inhabited that land – although, Jordanes claims, there are many more. He goes further and names more than 30 tribes: Adogit, Screrefennae, Suehans, Thuringians, Theustes, Vagoth, Bergio, Hallin, Liothida, Ahelmil, Finnaithae, Fervir, Gauthigoth, Mixi, Evagre, Otingis, Ostrogoths, Raumarici, Aeragnaricii, Finns, Vinovilith, Suetidi, Dani, Heruli, Grannii, Augandzi, Eunixi, Taetel, Rugi, Arochi and

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[236] Amory, p. 293.
[237] This topic will be explored in chapter 5.
[238] José Maria Sanchéz Martín, in his translation of the Getica to Spanish, offers a great analysis, passage by passage, on some of the sources used by Jordanes, cf. Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*.

Ranii.[239] Out of the 31 tribes described by Jordanes, only two or three seem to match the seven tribes of Ptolemy (Finns with Phinnoi, Ostrogoths and/or Gauthigoth with Goutai) and, even then, the relation between Goths and Goutai can be questioned.[240] Furthermore, almost all of these ethnonyms – with the exception of a few famous names, like Thuringians, Finns, Dani, Heruli and Rugi – do not mean anything to us and are not mentioned in any other known texts. We do not know whether Jordanes did indeed have knowledge of obscure Scandinavian tribes. What can be said is that Jordanes was certainly going beyond the narrative established by his sources, thus creating his own material and his own discourse. His reliance on ancient works was not naïve, and he used them to assert his erudition and the validity of his claims, but also to shape his story as he envisioned it.

It is also curious that the beginning of the *De Origine* is where we can find the highest amount of authors being mentioned together. 10 authoritative sources are cited in the space of 3 small chapters – a feat that will not happen again in the rest of the text. We could draw two conclusions from this: Jordanes was demonstrating his knowledge right from the start, in order to assert his authority; and he was making sure to distance himself from Cassiodorus as early in the narrative as possible. After all, it does create a rhetorical conflict when Jordanes affirms that the *De Origine* will be an abridged version of Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum* and then proceeds to name 10 different authors before even getting to Gothic matters. Setting up a distance between himself and Cassiodorus would not have been unexpected, in any case: already in the prologue, our author claims that he 'added fitting matters from some Greek and Latin histories [...] and many things

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[239] 'In Scandza vero insula, unde nobis sermo est, licet multae et diversae maneant nationes, septem tamen eorum nomina meminit Ptolemaeus. (…)', Jord., *Getica*, III, 19 – 23.

[240] For the tribes described by Ptolemy and Tacitus, cf. *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*, ed. by S. Tägil (London: Hurst, 1995), p. 118. For the seven tribes as described by Ptolemy himself, cf. Ptol., *Geog*. II.II.XI.16.

of my own authorship'[241] to the *De Origine*. In this case, it seems sensible to take Jordanes' words for granted: the *De Origine* was a rhetorical exercise that, at most was only motivated by the Cassiodorian narrative – the foundations, however, were built upon other Greek and Latin authors.

After the geographical introduction, Jordanes follows up with a narrative of the Gothic migration from Scandza to the lands of Scythia – and with a description of these lands (possibly derived from Strabo).[242] This is the first reference to the Gothic people and it comes with a historiographical problem: Jordanes claims that all this information on the ancestry of the Goths comes from the history of a certain Ablabius/Ablavius.[243] Nothing is known about this author, and he is not mentioned by anyone else besides Jordanes and Cassiodorus. The notion that this Ablabius was an authority for Jordanes with regard to the Gothic past has prompted historians to romanticise this reference.[244] He commonly became a substitute for Cassiodorus: if we cannot assert the presence of the *Historia Gothorum*, the lost works of Ablabius must have been the source for the pre-Roman narrative of Gothic deeds. Some optimistic scholars went even further and assumed that Ablabius was used by Cassiodorus himself – which is a very convenient argument indeed, as Cassiodorus also mentioned Ablabius in his *Variae*.[245] According to this idea, we would be able to solve two problems at once: we are not able to find direct

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[241] 'Ad quos et ex nonnullis historiis Grecis ac Latinis addedi convenientia [...] et plura in medio mea dictione permiscens'. Jord., *Getica*, 3.

[242] Jord., *Getica*, IV – V.

[243] Jord., *Getica*, IV, 28.

[244] A good appreciation of the character of Ablabius, according to Jordanes, is Gillett, 'Jordanes and Ablabius', and E. H. Jacobs, *Accidental Migrations: An Archaeology of Gothic Discourse* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2000), pp. 50–53. Liebeschuetz, more recently, published a volume containing an in-depth analysis of Ablabius, Jordanes and Cassiodorus as historians of the Goths. However, the problem with his argument is that it is completely dependent on the assumption that Cassiodorus read and supplanted Ablabius, and that Jordanes read both of them. *Cf.* J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *East and West in Late Antiquity: Invasion, Settlement, Ethnogenesis and Conflicts of Religion* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 105–34. Another popular theory is that Ablabius was a historian of the Visigoths, cf. Heather, *Goths and Romans*, pp. 61–64.

[245] 'Pro nobis potius tractate quod convenit. Trahitur enim ad benivola, cui causa creditur rationabiliter ordinanda, nec potest utilitatem propriam anteferre, cui magis decorum est credenti profutura praestare. considerate etiam, principes docti, et Ablabi vestri historica monimenta recolite, quantum decessores vestri studuerint de suo iure relinquere, ut eis parentum nostrorum foedera provenirent', Cass., *Variae*, X, 22, 2.

references to Cassiodorus because both he and Jordanes were relying on the same, elusive Ablabius.[246]

The ghost of Ablabius became a Common Place in Jordanes' studies. His non-existent character would explain odd passages, the absence of Cassiodorus, the knowledge displayed by Jordanes and even the origin of the debated *Carmina Prisca*. Some scholars, such as Mommsen, Meyer, Momigliano and, more recently, Liebeschuetz, even tried to unveil the historical identity of Ablabius – with one of the main contenders being the consular Flavius Ablabius, a fourth-century figure who could hardly be the same author mentioned by Jordanes.[247]

The truth is, we know nothing of Ablabius and possibly never will. Being so, he cannot become an analytical crutch to explain apparent inconsistencies or idiosyncratic information given by Jordanes, especially because he is not the only unknown author mentioned by Jordanes (although, apparently, he is the one that has captivated historians' optimistic hopes).[248]

When Jordanes first mentions the historical accuracy of Ablabius' work, he counter-balances his information with a criticism of Flavius Josephus:

> This part of the Goths, which is said to have crossed the river and entered with Filimer into the country of Oium, came into possession of the desired land, and there they soon came upon the race of the Spali, joined battle with them and won the victory. Thence the victors hastened to the farthest part of Scythia, which is near the sea of Pontus; for so the story is generally told in their early songs, in almost historic fashion. Ablabius also, a famous chronicler of the Gothic race, confirms this in his most trustworthy account. Some of the ancient writers also agree with the tale. Among these we may mention Josephus, a most reliable relator of annals, who everywhere follows the rule of truth and unravels from the beginning the origin of causes; but why he has omitted the beginnings of the race of the Goths, of which I have spoken, I do not

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[246] Hachmann theory on the Gothic migration from Scandinavia relies on the argument that both Cassiodorus and Jordanes read Ablabius, Rolf Hachmann, *Die Goten und Skandinavien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), pp. 59–81.

[247] J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, p. 114; Baldwin, 'Sources for the Getica of Jordanes', p. 143. For the consular Flavius Ablavius himself, cf. M. R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 100.

[248] Jordanes also mentions an unknown Fabius, responsible for a topography of Ravenna. No such author nor work are known to us. Jord., *Getica*, XXIX, 151.

know. He barely mentions Magog of that stock, and says they were Scythians by race and were called so by name.[249]

The need to acknowledge the contradictions between the *De Origine*/Ablabius and an author such as Josephus could possibly point to the fact that, if Ablabius was indeed a real historian, his work was not universally regarded or accepted, and that different narratives (by Josephus, for example), were more recognised. This dialogue between Jordanes and his sources is interesting and rich: it shows awareness (Jordanes will criticise or amend accounts which he disagrees with) and ingenuity when creating his own discourse. Jordanes is not a mere copyist, and the internal dynamic of the *De Origine* is far more complex than a mere collage of assorted narratives. When talking about the origin of the Gepids, for example, Jordanes explains the meaning of the ethnonym. He, then, affirms:

> '(...) as I have said, *gepanta* means something slow and stolid, the word Gepidae arose as a gratuitous name of reproach. I do not believe this is very far wrong, for they are slow of thought and too sluggish for quick movement of their bodies.'[250]

Furthermore, the most emblematic passage of Jordanes engaging with the veracity (or not) of his sources is when he lists the three first abodes of the immigrant Goths: Scythia/Maeotis, Moesia/Thrace/Dacia and Scythia/Pontus. He follows:

> Nor do we find anywhere in their written records legends which tell of their subjection to slavery in Britain or in some other island, or of their redemption by a certain man at the cost of a single horse. Of course if anyone in our city says that the Goths had an origin different

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[249] 'Haec ergo pars Gothorum, quae apud Filemer dicitur in terras Oium emenso amne transposita, optatum potiti solum. Nec mora ilico ad gentem Spalorum adveniunt consertoque proelio victoriam adipiscunt, exindeque iam velut victores ad extremam Scythiae partem, que Ponto mari vicina est, properant. Quemadmodum et in priscis eorum carminibus pene storicu ritu in commune recolitur: quod et Ablavius descriptor Gothorum gentis egregius verissima adtestatur historia. In quam sententiam et nonnulli consensere maiorum: Ioseppus quoque annalium relator verissimus dum ubique veritatis conservet regulam et origines causarum a principio revolvat. Haec vero quae diximus de gente Gothorum principia cur omiserit, ignoramus: sed tantum Magog eorum stirpe comemorans, Scythas eos et natione et vocabulo asserit appellatos', Jord., *Getica*, IV, 28 – 29.

[250] '(...) sed quia, ut dixi, gepanta pigrum aliquid tardumque designat, pro gratuito convicio Gepidarum nomen exortum est, quod nec ipsud credo falsissimum: sunt etenim tardioris ingenii et graviores corporum velocitate'. In: Jord., *Getica*, XVII, 95.

from that I have related, let him object. For myself, I prefer to believe what I have read, rather than put trust in old wives' tales.'[251]

This passage is interesting because it not only has Jordanes positioning himself and vouching for his own sources and knowledge, but also hints to the existence of concurrent legends of Gothic origins (more specifically related to Britain – a topic that will be discussed later, in chapter 5).

As Jordanes proceeds to describe Scythia, his source is, mainly, Strabo. He also introduces some legendary Gothic kings, such as Filimer (as the Gothic king in Scythia), Zeuta, Dicineus and Zalmoxis (as Gothic kings and 'sages' after the Goths moved from Scythia to Dacia).[252] Although Filimer – a Gothic name in itself – is one of these figures only found in the *De Origine*, Zeuta, Dicineus and Zalmoxis are well-known Getae characters. They are attested in a variety of texts, ranging from Herodotus to Strabo to Pomponius Mela.[253]

Chapter 5, in which Jordanes describes the historical development of the Goths in the Scythian lands and their earliest migrations is fundamental to the rhetorical framework of the *De Origine*. This is exactly when Jordanes starts to equate Getae (and Dacians and Thracians) and Goths, and he does so by carefully working with excerpts from classical authors. Using Herodotus and Strabo, he narrates the kingship of Zalmoxis and the other famous Getic figures. Because these people were known to be wise in Classical sources, it was easy for Jordanes to quote Cassius Dio in saying that the Goths were always the most intelligent among the barbarians – thus 'elucidating' classical sources and proving

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[251] 'nec eorum fabulas alicubi repperimus scriptas, qui eos dicunt in Brittania vel in unaqualibet insularum in servitute redactos et in unius caballi praetio a quodam ereptos. Aut certe si quis eos aliter dixerit in nostro urbe, quam quod nos diximus, fuisse exortos, nobis aliquid obstrepebit: nos enim potius lectioni credimus quam fabulis anilibus consentimos', Jord., *Getica*, V, 38.

[252] Jord., *Getica*, V – VI.

[253] Alongside with the ancient accounts, modern Romanian historiography pays especial attention to myths and legends of old Dacia, of Zalmoxis, of Decineus, etc. *Cf.* D. Dana, *Zalmoxis de La Herodot La Mircea Eliade. Istorii Despre Un Zeu Al Pretextului* (Iași: Polirom, 2008); L. Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997); Eliade.

the ethnic connection between Goths and Getae.[254] Besides their wisdom, Jordanes also remembered their lust for war, saying that Mars, god of war, was held in such a high regard among the Getae that some people believed he was born among these man. A quote from the *Aeneid* is used to corroborate this idea, followed by an affirmation that the Goths were known for their cruel human sacrifices in honour of Mars.[255] Jordanes also includes a quote from the *Farsalia* to attest the Getic/Gothic mastery of the bow.[256] He follows these miscellanea of information with a description of Scythian rivers, such as the Tanais and the Danaper – material taken straight from Orosius and Pomponius Mela (moreover, we have to remember that all this details will create a connection with the Huns as well – which we will discuss in chapter 4).[257]

At a first glance, the potpourri of sources clustered in these early chapters of the *De Origine* might seem like a cut-and-paste of well-known discourses, as said before. One should not, however, ignore the intricacies of Jordanes' textual construction. Especially in this chapter about Scythia, he is careful with the selection and connection between ideas. The usage of the ethnonyms 'Getae' and 'Goth' is not just interchangeable, but displayed in a way to induce the reader to perceive the connection according to Jordanes' discourse and narrative perception:

> Moreover, so highly were the Getae praised that Mars, whom the fables of poets call the god of war, was reputed to have been born among them. Hence Virgil says: 'Father Gradivus rules the Getic fields.' Now Mars has always been worshipped by the Goths with cruel rites, and captives were slain as his victims.[258]

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[254] 'Unde et pene omnibus barbaris Gothi sapientiores semper extiterunt Grecisque pene consimiles, ut refert Dio, qui historias eorum annalesque Greco stilo composuit'. In: Jord., *Getica*, V, 40

[255] 'Unde et Vergilius: '*gradivumque patrem, Geticis qui praesidet arvis*''. In: Jord., *Getica*, V, 40 – 41.

[256] 'Quorum studium fuit primum inter alias gentes vicinas arcum intendere nervis, Lucano plus storico quam poeta testante: '*Armeniosque arcus Geticis intendite nervis*''. In: Jord., *Getica*, V, 43.

[257] Martín, in his critical apparatus, has an excellent comparison between Jordanes and Pomponius Mela, in: Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, p. 81.

[258] 'Adeo ergo fuere laudati Gaetae, ut dudum Martem, quem poetarum fallacia deum belli pronuntiat, apud eos fuisse dicant exortum. Vnde et Vergilius: '*gradivumque patrem, Geticis qui praesidet arvis*'. Quem Martem Gothi semper asperrima placavere cultura (nam victimae eius mortes fuere captorum)', Jord., *Getica*, V, 40 – 41.

Whenever he uses 'Geta', he also uses 'Goth' afterwards to create an intentional connection that leaves no doubt of his aim to portray both groups as belonging to the same cultural, fictive ethnicity – and the implications of this 'formula' will be discussed in the next chapter. This mechanism is explicit in showing that Jordanes is aware of his choices and rhetorical constructions, rather than just reading authoritative sources as if Getae and Goths were always the same. He is making the connection and he is aware of it. He is also aware that his readers might not be familiar with this equation, so his text is constructed in a didactical way, employing 'Geta' and 'Goth' interspersedly.

Another example of the care underlying his ideas and readings is the two lists of kings and Gothic heroes present in this chapter 5 of the *De Origine*. He mentions Zeuta, Dicineus and Zalmoxes, who are obviously Dacian men.[259] To validate his knowledge he also mentions the Gothic-sounding Eterpamara, Hanala, Vidigoia, and Fritigern. It is not clear who Eterpamara and Hanala were, but Vidigoia and Fritigern would be recognisable Gothic names for anyone familiar with history and epic tales: while Fritigern was a famous fourth-century king of the Thervingi, Vidigoia (or Wudga) is present in heroic Germanic cycles and is also mentioned by Priscus.[260] Jordanes lines them up in order to create a dual line of illustrious figures, one evoking the history of Dacians and, the other, the history of the 'Goths':

> The aforesaid race of which I speak is known to have had Filimer as king while they remained in their first home in Scythia near Maeotis. In their second home, that is in the countries of Dacia, Thrace and Moesia, Zalmoxis reigned, whom many writers of annals mention as a man

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[259] See above, notes 250; 251.
[260] According to Christensen, both Vidigoia and Fritigern are not examples of 'oral Gothic traditions' alive in Jordanes. While the former derives from Ammianus' account, the latter comes from Priscus and could show Jordanes 'whishing to supply the Gothic song tradition with a certain authority by showing a Greek historian who is apparently familiar with Vidigoia'. Basically, both figures are coming from Greco-Roman accounts, not oral traditions. In: Christensen, pp. 325–26. There is a strand of scholarship, however, that understands Vidigoia as a key Gothic hero, entering the realm of legends, as did Theoderic. Vidigoia/Wudga could have been based on a historical figure, such as the Ostrogothic king Vitiges, and ended up in Germanic heroic cycles, such as the Anglo-Saxon Widsith and Waldere, and the Scandinavian Þiðrekssaga (as Viðga). This theory does not have a wide acceptance nowadays. *Cf.* F. E. Sandbach, *The Heroic Saga-Cycle of Dietrich of Bern* (New York: AMS Press, 1972); T. Westrin, *Nordisk Familjebok: Konversationslexikon Och Realencyklopedi* (Stockholm: Aktiebolag, 1921), XXXII, pp. 279–80.

of remarkable learning in philosophy. Yet even before this they had a learned man Zeuta, and after him Dicineus; and the third was Zalmoxis of whom I have made mention above. [...] In earliest times they sang of the deeds of their ancestors in strains of song accompanied by the cithara; chanting of Eterpamara, Hanala, Fritigern, Vidigoia and others whose fame among them is great; such heroes as admiring antiquity scarce proclaims its own to be.[261]

Oddly enough, belonging as they do to recent historical tradition, Vidigoia and Fritigern could not have been admired heroes of old, celebrated in ancient songs. Thus, Jordanes deliberately picks up names that do not come from ancient Gothic traditions, but from his reading of recent history. He seems to be putting these two figures with other two unknown warriors (Eterpamara and Hanala) in order to create a semi-historical chain of Gothic names that provides a necessary contrast (and addition) to the three Getic kings.

So, besides the conscious double usage of ethnonyms, Jordanes also deliberate juxtaposes three Getae and four Goths, plus Filimer.[262] He also describes the three phases of Gothic Migration, with the first settlement in Scythia, the second in Dacia and the third close to the Sea of Pontus, back in Scythia. For each phase, he lists a different array of kings with possible different ethnic affiliations: Filimer for Scythia, the three Getae for Dacia and the four Goths for the Pontus. This careful selection of names, of places and historical facts would not have been found anywhere else but Jordanes (unless Cassiodorus also had a personal interest in the history of Dacian people). It is surely an example of the authorial touch of Jordanes, and the discursive dynamic between him and his readings: not a mere copy, but a display of arguments befitting his agenda.

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[261] 'Vt ergo ad nostrum propositum redeamus, in prima sede Scythiae iuxta Meotidem commanentes praefati, unde loquimur, Filimer regem habuisse noscuntur. In secunda, id est Daciae, Thraciaeque et Mysiae solo Zalmoxen, quem mirae philosophiae eruditionis fuisse testantur plerique scriptores annalium. Nam et Zeutam prius habuerunt eruditum, post etiam Dicineum, tertium Zalmoxen, de quo superius diximus. […] Ante quos etiam cantu maiorum facta modulationibus citharisque canebant, Eterpamara, Hanale, Fridigerni, Vidigoiae et aliorum, quorum in hac gente magna opinio est, quales vix heroas fuisse miranda iactat antiquitas', Jord., *Getica*, V, 39 – 43.

[262] Filimer is an interesting figure because, later in the narrative, he becomes indirectly responsible for the genesis of the Huns, linking the origin of these people to one of the earliest kings of the Goths. More will be discussed in the following chapters.

Up to chapter 14, Jordanes provides a description of the mythical deeds of the Goths: wars against the Pharaoh Vesosis, conflicts with Greeks and Persians, participation in the Trojan War, etc. For most of these passages, his sources are the aforementioned Orosius, Pompeius Trogus and Dion Chrysostom.[263] Because he had already established the framework for his understanding of Gothic ethnic discourse was laid down, Jordanes does not need to keep the elaborate dynamic between his own discourse and his sources, but is able to just select historical passages, melding them and creating his own historical perspective of Gothic deeds. What does that mean, exactly? At the beginning of the *De Origine*, Jordanes utilises authoritative sources to present the world in which the story takes places – he describes the area of *Magna Dacia* and establishes it as the *Kulturraum* of the narrative; he then follows up employing most of these same authoritative sources to create the fictive ethnicity of the Getae, which is a historical and cultural mixture of myths and stories of Scythian, Goths and the very Getae as well. Once this framework is well enough established, Jordanes can just build it up further with details taken from his sources. By chapter 14, when the mythical past has been laid down, he can move into more 'historical' grounds, as his logic and the desired ethnic logic – the Getae as the cultural and historical protagonists of *Magna Dacia* – has already been already set.[264]

2.5.2 – THE AMAL AND THE ANICIUS: JORDANES AND THE RECENT PAST

From chapter 15 onwards, Jordanes has to take a different approach to his sources. Because he starts to approach the realm of recent past, playing with and deviating from his source material certainly becomes harder. His account of Gothic history is still very much based on Orosius, but he also includes the *Historia Augusta*, Priscus, Jerome,

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[263] The commentaries of Martín are fundamental for this debate, cf. Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, pp. 82–100.
[264] We will discuss the 'ethnic logic' of the Getae in the *De Origine* in depth next chapter.

Dexippus and, most likely, Ammianus Marcellinus, Procopius and Marcellinus Comes. Jordanes also mentions the History composed by Symmachus, which is now lost. Symmachus was Boethius' father-in-law and contemporary to Cassiodorus – he was also member of one of the most illustrious Roman families of the Late Empire (sometimes, the *Historia* is attributed to Aurelius Symmachus the Younger).[265] It is reasonable to think that Symmachus' *Historia Romana* was circulating at the same time as the Cassiodorian *Historia Gothorum*. We do not know if the former was the base for the latter or vice-versa, but is glaring that Jordanes mentions by name an author and a work that were contemporary with Cassiodorus, given that the latter is completely absent from being nominated in the *De Origine*, as I discussed earlier.

For the recent past and contemporary Gothic history, then, four things are worthy discussing: the appropriations of Orosius, the usage of Dexippus, the possible presence of Ammianus Marcellinus and, finally, authors dealing with the Ostrogothic presence in Italy – most likely people who were coeval to Jordanes himself.

Orosius, as said before, seems to be Jordanes' favourite author and the most authoritative writer cited within the *De Origine*. From geographical descriptions of the world, the ancient history of Scythia and Dacia, and the Gothic incursions during the Later Roman Empire, the *Historia Adversus Paganos* is present throughout most of the text. As in the case of ancient geographers, such as Strabo or Ptolemy, most of the details taken from Orosius are accurately cited. Certainly, things have been adapted and information has been shaped in order to fulfil Jordanes' agenda – passages on the Amazons and on the Getae, for example. But as Jordanes delves into the more recent past,

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[265] For the usage of *Historia Romana* by Jordanes, *cf.* W. Ensslin, *Des Symmachus Historia Romana Als Quelle Für Jordanes* (Munich: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1949). Martín believes that the Symmachus in question is Memmius Symmachus, father-in-law of Boethius (Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, p. 105.) whereas Vitielo argues in favour of Aurelius Symmachus the Younger, grandson of the famous orator Symmachus (M. Vitiello, 'Maximinus Thrax, General of Severus Alexander and Victor over the Persians? Some Considerations Concerning the Sources of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus' Roman History', *Histos*, 9 (2015), 199–219 (pp. 199–200).).

Orosius is taken more and more literally. This is curious, because it demonstrates that the *Historia Adversus Paganos* might be Jordanes' main source for the history of the Goths in general. This puts into question the possible historical validity of Ablabius or even the elusive presence of Cassiodorus. One could think that Ablabius would be the source for earlier Gothic traditions, but that is highly debateble, as I said before. Cassiodorus, even if aware of 'secret' aspects of Gothic past and even if these aspects were still present in the *De Origine*, certainly did not demonstrate this knowledge in the *Variae* or elsewhere. His role, as a Roman officer, would be to play down 'Barbarian' elements of the Amali court and make it as civilised as possible. He had to show how 'Roman' the history of the Goths was, 'originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam.'[266] That would seem to be quite the opposite of what is usually expected of Jordanes – who, in fact, made the Gothic origin Dacian.

The preponderance of Orosius and the emphasis on the Dacian elements of the narrative also point to the fact that, overall, the *De Origine* does not seem to address 'ancient Gothic traditions' in any shape or form. For sure, the narrative is authorial and a product of Jordanes' agency; the base for his arguments and ideas, however, are derived from Greek and Latin texts and authors. To simplify, we could probably affirm that the *De Origine* is an analysis of Dacian cultural and political history through 'Orosian lenses'.[267]

As for Dexippus, we do have an interesting historiographical problem. Because we have lost most of his *Scythica* it is impossible to be sure whether information on Goths and Scythians during the second and third centuries AD was made up by Jordanes or was actually present in Dexippus' work. This is important because Jordanes does talks about the sack of Phillippopolis by the Goths during the reign of the emperor Decius – and this

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[266] Cass., *Variae*, IX, 25, 5.
[267] Christensen, pp. 111–12.

passage is quite important for the narrative, as it unravels seemingly 'historically accurate' aspects of early Ostrogothic history. Jordanes provides us with an 'unnerving combination of details found nowhere else and sheer improbabilities'[268], including the name of the Gothic leaders, Cniva and Ostrogotha. Ostrogotha is a name present in the Amali genealogies given by both Cassiodorus and Jordanes.[269] For most scholars, the existence or not of this legendary king was an example of undeniable similarity between the *De Origine* and the *Historia Gothorum*, especially concerning the royal lineage of Theoderic and the Ostrogoths – a similarity made all the more significant because of the absence of any parallel account in other sources.[270] However, a few years ago, a palimpsest containing a small fragment of the Scythica was found in Austria, and among the few recovered lines, we were lucky to find a brief description of the sack of Phillippopolis that includes a reference to the chieftain Ostrogotha.[271] Of course, this new finding does not mean that Ostrogotha disproves a link between the narratives of Cassiodorus and Jordanes, but it shows that, most likely, Dexippus was indeed the main source for information on this specific topic.[272]

Ammianus Marcellinus is an interesting case. Much like Orosius, Ammianus's account covers historical facts ostensibly of great importance to the *De Origine*, namely the migration of the Goths into the empire, rule of Ermanaric and the dominance of the Huns over the Ostrogoths. This account is fundamental for Jordanes because it provides the narrative of Ermanaric and the Huns and sets the tone for the Amali dynasty in the

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[268] C. Ando, *Imperial Rome AD 193 to 284: The Critical Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 154.

[269] Cass., *Variae*, XI, 1; Jord., *Getica*, XIV, 79.

[270] It has to be noted that, in a review of Christensen's book, Wood pointed the inconsistencies between the Amali genealogy as described by Cassiodorus and the one described by Jordanes, *cf.* Wood, 'Anmeldelser - Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths. Studies in a Migration Myth'.

[271] 'ἅμα ὀςτρογούθθω', in: G. Martin and J. Grusková, ''Scythica Vindobonensia' by Dexippus(?): New Fragments on Decius' Gothic Wars', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 54 (2014), 728–54 (p. 740).

[272] Jordanes also mentions Dexippus by name, which would point to the fact that his source for the deeds of Ostrogotha was the *Scythica* rather than Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum*.

fourth century.[273] Given that, besides Jordanes, Ammianus is the only other author to mention Ermanaric, it would seem plausible that the former had access to the work of the latter. There are problems with this argument, though. As Peter Heather proved, there are too many inconsistencies between the *De Origine* and the *Res Gestae* concerning Ermanaric and his successors – if Jordanes had direct access to Ammianus, he certainly decided to change many details and much information.[274] Even though Christensen and Mommsen, to name a few, agree that our author read Ammianus, the contradictions have to be taken into account and explained.[275] This has taken historians back to Cassiodorus: Ammianus was supposedly read by the Italian senator, who was in turn read by Jordanes. Thus, the *Historia Gothorum* would be the source for the deviations. As usual, the one problem with this idea is that we just cannot know how much of Cassiodorus is in the *De Origine* and, if he is there at all, we cannot know if he is, indeed, the one who changed Ammianus' account into the shape in which we find it later in Jordanes. It seems to me that Cassiodorus does not have to be taken into account – we should be able to contrast Jordanes and Ammianus without the 'middle-man' and, in fact, if we do so and understand Jordanes' agenda, the inconsistencies between both can be explained. Because Ermanaric is such an important figure to Jordanes, his account deviates from Ammianus because it has to: it serves the narrative in a way that the author probably wanted.

Nevertheless, the description of the Huns, as present in Jordanes, should be a solid evidence of Ammianus' influence over parts of the *De Origine*. As we will discuss later, Jordanes provides a bestial and barbaric character to the Huns when they first appear in the story – a description that sounds quite similar to that of Ammianus but, at the same time, is highly dissonant in relation to other passages featuring Huns (which are, most of

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[273] This will be discussed in the next chapter.
[274] Heather, 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination', pp. 105–7.
[275] *Cf.* Christensen, pp. 135–55.

the time in the *De Origine*, described in positive or admirable terms).[276] I argue that this dissonance is a result of Jordanes' different readings: for the history of the Huns under Attila, Priscus was the obvious choice; however, for earlier passages, it seems that our author was indeed taking inspiration from Ammianus' *Res Gestae*.[277]

And, finally, we can now discuss authors who deal with the Ostrogoths in Italy and how Jordanes read/used them. Due to political vicissitudes and the dating of the *De Origine*, many of those who wrote on the short-lived rule of the Italian Ostrogoths were coeval to Jordanes. The main examples are the obvious Cassiodorus, but also Procopius and Marcellinus Comes. Because all these authors focus, to a greater or lesser extent, on the legitimacy and situation of Theoderic and his successors, it is easy to add Jordanes to this political batch. However, for someone recounting the deeds of the Goths, Jordanes is curiously silent about their contemporary history. Theoderic, Amalaswintha, Athanaric and others are very much absent from the *De Origine* and, in the broader rhetorical picture, do not play a fundamental role – they have to be there only because the contingencies of Jordanes' time demand it. The lack of contemporary Goths in the *De Origine* makes it difficult to accept the long-standing historiographical arguments about Jordanes' goals, i.e., defending the Ostrogothic regime in Constantinople or advocating the legitimacy of Germanus and the union between the Amali and the Imperial family in the East. It is equally difficult to assert the impact of contemporary works on the *De Origine*. Suffice to say that Jordanes deviates greatly from his contemporary peers, especially concerning the usage and application of ethnonyms. The nature of the *De Origine* and the agenda of the author make the understanding of ethnonyms and ethnicity vastly different from works of his time, such as the *Chronicon* of Marcellinus or even the

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[276] This topic will be discussed in chapter 4.
[277] *Cf.* Christensen, p. 135.

Wars of Procopius.[278] Overall, it seems that Jordanes' focus lay on the historical development (legendary or not) of Dacia, which renders classical sources more important than coeval ones – if nothing else, because the rise and fall of Ostrogothic Italy and of Justinian is not the centre of or reason for the narrative, but another step in the long-standing series of Dacia's vicissitudes.

2.5.3 – TABLE OF SOURCES

The following table is breakdown of Jordanes' *De Origine* chapters and sources used in each section. Sources highlighted in red are suppositions – either because we do not know if Jordanes had access and used them (such as Cassiodorus) or because we do not have any surviving copies of them (such as Ablabius of Flavius the Geographer). Although not ranked in this table, Jordanes' personal knowledge and agency might have played a major role in the shaping of some arguments – which has to be taken into consideration, especially in those chapters where no clear known author, beyond Jordanes himself, can be identified.

CHAPTER	SUBJECT	SOURCES
0	Prologue	Rufinus;
1	Description of the world	Orosius; Pliny the Elder; Sallust; Pomponius Mela; Virgil;
2	Description of Britain	Titus Livy; Cornelius Tacitus; Cassius Dio;
3	Description of Scandza	Claudius Ptolemy;
4	Departure of the Goths from Scandza	**Ablabius**; Flavius Josephus;
5	Description of Scythia	Strabo; Pomponius Mela; Orosius; Herodotus; Dion Chrysostom; Virgil; Lucan;

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[278] Festy; Marcellinus, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: A Translation and Commentary*, trans. by B. Croke, Byzantina Australiensia, 7 (Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1995).

6	War of the Pharaoh Vesosis and the Goth Tanausis	Orosius; Pompeius Trogus;
7	Description of the Amazons	Orosius; Pompeius Trogus; Virgil;
8	Offspring of the Amazons	Orosius; Pompeius Trogus;
9	Description of Telephus, king of the Goths	Orosius; Dion Chrysostom; Dictis of Crete;
10	Wars of the Goths against Persians and Macedonians	Pompeius Trogus; Theopompus; Orosius; Dion Chrysostom; **Ovid**
11	Dicineus and the teaching of the Goths	Herodotus; Pompeius Trogus;
12	Description of Dacia and the Danube	--
13	War against Domitian and the rise of the Amali	--
14	Genealogy of the Amali and the Balthi	**Cassiodorus**; **Ablabius**
15	Deeds of Maximinus Thrax (the Goth)	Historia Augusta; Orosius; **Symmachus**
16	Goths become enemies of Rome	Eusebe; Jerome;
17	War of the Ostrogoths against the Gepids	**Dexippus**;
18	War of the Ostrogoths against the Romans	Dexippus;
19	Gallus and Volusian make an alliance with the Goths	Jerome;
20	Goths ravage Asia Minor and Thrace	Dexippus;
21	Goths help the Romans against the Parthians	Cassius Dio;
22	Geberich defeats the Vandals	Dexippus;
23	Ermanaric conquers many tribes	Ammianus Marcellinus;
24	The invasion of the Huns	Orosius; Priscus; Ammianus Marcellinus;

25	Conversion of the Goths into Arianism	Orosius;
26	Hunger among the Visigoths	Ammianus Marcellinus; Orosius;
27	Visigoths and Theodosius	Ammianus Marcellinus; Orosius;
28	Athanaric goes to Constantinople	Ammianus Marcellinus; Orosius;
29	Alaric reaches Ravenna	Virgil; **Flavius the Geographer**
30	Alaric sacks Rome	Orosius; **Zosimus**
31	Athaulf conquers Gaul and Spain	Orosius;
32	Kingship of Wallia	Orosius;
33	Vandals reach Africa	Procopius
34	Huns and Romans fight the Visigoths	Priscus;
35	Attila the Hun	Priscus;
36	Visigoths and Romans against the Huns	**Priscus**
37	Visigoths and Romans occupy Orleans	**Priscus**
38	The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains	**Priscus**;
39	The Speech of Attila	**Priscus**;
40	Death of Theoderic and defeat of Attila	**Priscus**;
41	Thorismod becomes king	--
42	Attila ravages Italy	Prosper of Aquitaine;
43	Death of Thorismod	--
44	Suevi conquer part of Spain	--
45	Kingship of Euric	--
46	Odoacer deposes Romulus Augustulus	Marcellinus Comes;
47	Death of Euric and elevation of Alaric II	--
48	Ostrogoths under the Huns	Ammianus Marcellinus; Prosper of Aquitaine; **Ablabius**
49	Death of Attila	**Priscus**;

50	Ostrogoths liberated from the Huns	Prosper of Aquitaine; **Procopius**
51	Lesser Goths	--
52	Theoderic the Ostrogoth	**Cassiodorus**;
53	Ostrogoths fight the Suevi	**Cassiodorus**;
54	Military exploits of the Ostrogoths	**Cassiodorus**;
55	Theoderic fights the Sarmatians	**Cassiodorus**;
56	Ostrogoths settle in Macedonia	--
57	Theoderic becomes king in Italy	Marcellinus Comes;
58	International policies of Theoderic	**Cassiodorus**; Procopius
59	Death of Theoderic	Procopius; Marcellinus Comes;
60	Justinian conquers Italy	Procopius;

CHAPTER III

GENS GOTHORUM

3.1 – THE GOTHS WHO WERE GETAE: GENEALOGY OF AN ETHNONYM

In rhetorical and structural terms, the *De Origine* has one central pillar: the Getae. They not only lend their name to the accepted title of the work (*De origine actibusque getarum*), but they also have a fundamental role in the narrative flow and in the discoursive agenda – the Getae create the geographical link with Dacia and the classical past, and they group a number of different ethnicities under one ethnonym (interchangeable with Goth). Getae, a group that historically occupied regions of Dacia, become synonymous with Goths, Dacians, and Scythians. In other words, Jordanes creates a link between ethnic nuclei that, in one way or the other, occupied the Balkans throughout history.

This point is well known, and it is one of the main traits of the *De Origine* highlighted by historians.[279] Although the employment of Getae is central to the text, analyses of the use of the term tend to be simplistic: as said before, scholars usually assume that Jordanes was merely looking for an ethnonym that etymologically resembles the word 'Goth' and, at the same time, provides historical value for a fictional construct that places Gothic people under the spotlight of classical history.[280] In this traditional reading, through the employment of the name 'Geta', Jordanes was able to locate Gothic kings in a variety of legendary situations, such as the Trojan War, and to create narrative bonds with other recognised elements, such as Hercules, the Amazons, the pharaoh

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[279] Part of the historiography that deals with this issue is described in chapter 1.1.
[280] See chapter 2.5.1.

Sesostris, etc.[281] I consider that this explanation is, for the most part, naïve, and leaves out a number of important epistemological arguments. Certainly, it seems to be correct that Jordanes indeed anchored his argumentation on the fact that some people (notably Orosius), saw a similarity between the names 'Getae' and 'Goth'[282] but this does not explain why it would be so important to emphasise this connection – and, as discussed earlier, Jordanes favours this equation throughout the first chapters of *De Origine*. Of course, being able to attribute legendary deeds to the Goths prior to the third century is interesting for his narrative, but it does not explain why other groups, namely Dacians, Scythians and sometimes Thracians, become part of the correlation as well. In fact, it would be counter-intuitive to include Scythians, known as archetypical barbarians of the Greek and Roman worlds, in a structure that, according to historiographical tradition, was engendered to make Gothic past great and heroic.[283] Jordanes, in fact, is extremely careful in creating, rhetorically speaking, this extended definition of Goth (Goth-Geta-Dacian-Thracian-Scythian).

There is more, then, to Jordanes' rhetorical construct. Patrick Amory has an insightful explanation: he thinks that Jordanes was following a popular style of writing in the sixth century: ethnogeography. In order to explain the origins of Barbarian populations, authors would see successive waves of people that inhabited certain areas as the same, just with different names.[284] Goths, the society in focus here, would have been called Getae or Dacians by ancient authors, just as Huns would have been called Scythians, and so forth. Amory's argument is interesting: it removes attention from the

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[281] Jord., *Getica*, V – XI.
[282] Jord., *Getica*, IX, 58.
[283] Greek literature usually had a negative view on the Scythians. However, in spite of historiography's insistence in highlighting this position, there were also positive approaches. In general, Scythians were held as, at least, primitives. In: D. Braund, 'Greeks, Scythians and Hippake, or 'Reading Mare's-Cheese'', in *Ancient Greeks: West & East*, ed. by G. R. Tsetskhladze (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 521–64 (p. 521).
[284] 'Most notably, the *Getica* combines the history of various groups from the same region, the Black Sea – Scythians, Getae and various groups called Goths – using the so-called doctrine of transference; that is, geographical places continuously produce the same peoples with different names'. In: Amory, p. 293.

necessity of finding Gothic elements in the work and shifts it to preponderant points of the narrative, such as the ethnic debates. It also draws attention to the importance of geography, an argument that is also explored by Merrills.[285]

In spite of the popularity of ethnogeography among authors emulating classical writings (especially Procopius), the deployment of ethnonyms in Jordanes is idiosyncratic and does not seem to necessarily follow a rhetorical archetype. Placing Scythians under the umbrella-term 'Getae' and, beyond that, forging links between their origin and that of Huns and Gepids seems to be more than mere stylistic choice. In fact, we could argue that the Getae formula is more than a classical ethnogeographical construct: it is a conscious choice that obeys an authorial agenda.

Moreover, this historiographical approach that sees the usage of the ethnonym 'Geta' as Jordanes' shortcut to a glorious Gothic past mostly ignores the complicated history of the employment of this ethnonym, that goes back, at least, to Herodotus. The historian of Halicarnassus first mentions the Getae as a tribe opposed to the Persian King Darius:

> But before he came to the Ister he conquered first the Getae, who believe in immortality: for the Thracians who occupy Salmydessos and are settled above the cities of Apollonian and Mesambria, called the Kyrmianai and the Nipsaioi, delivered themselves over to Darius without fighting; but the Getae, who are the bravest and the most upright in their dealings of all the Thracians, having betaken themselves to obstinacy were forthwith subdued.[286]

He proceeds saying that this belief in immortality comes from Zalmoxis, a Thracian divinity who was, previously, a king.[287] Herodotus, therefore, seems to be

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[285] Merrills, pp. 100–169.

[286] 'πρὶν δὲ ἀπικέσθαι ἐπὶ τὸν Ἴστρον, πρώτους αἱρέει Γέτας τοὺς ἀθανατίζοντας. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸν Σαλμυδησσὸν ἔχοντες Θρήικες καὶ ὑπὲρ Ἀπολλωνίης τε καὶ Μεσαμβρίης πόλιος οἰκημένοι, καλεύμενοι δὲ Κυρμιάναι καὶ Νιψαῖοι, ἀμαχητὶ σφέας αὐτοὺς παρέδοσαν Δαρείῳ· οἱ δὲ Γέται πρὸς ἀγνωμοσύνην τραπόμενοι αὐτίκα ἐδουλώθησαν, Θρηίκων ἐόντες ἀνδρηιότατοι καὶ δικαιότατοι', Hrdt. *Hist.*, IV, 93.

[287287] Zalmoxis is a key figure to Getic history, so much that he was listed by Jordanes as one of the first and foremost Gothic kings. He follows Herodotus' tale and also states that after Zalmoxis died, he was worshiped as a god, just as the Getae, according to the Greek historian, did. *Cf.* Dana.

implying that the Getae are not only fierce but are also one of the tribes that inhabit Thrace. This is an important note because Herodotus also mentions a group with a similar name, the Massagetae:

> On the West then of this Sea which is called Caspian the Caucasus is the boundary, while towards the East and the rising sun a plain succeeds which is of limitless extent to the view. Of this great plain then the Massagetae occupy a large part, against whom Cyrus had become eager to march; for there were many strong reasons which incited him to it and urged him onwards - first the manner of his birth, that is to say the opinion held of him that he was more than a mere mortal man, and next the success which he had met with in his wars, for whithersoever Cyrus directed his march, it was impossible for that nation to escape.[288]

Some historians tried to connect the Getae with the Massagetae, claiming that the prefix massa- has an Iranian root meaning 'great.'[289] Therefore, the Massagetae would have been the 'Great Getae'. This is a problematic connection, for if they are to be equated, one would have to solve the problem of geographical origins: while the Getae are Thracians, the Massagetae are clearly a nomadic people, roaming the steppes east of the Caucasus:

> As to the Massagetae, they wear a dress which is similar to that of the Scythians, and they have a manner of life which is also like theirs; and there are of them horsemen and also men who do not ride on horses (for they have both fashions), and moreover there are both archers and spearmen, and their custom it is to carry battle-axes; and for everything they use either gold or bronze, for in all that has to do with spear-points or arrow-heads or battle-axes they use bronze, but for head-dresses and girdles and belts round the arm-pits they employ gold as ornament: and in like manner as regards their horses, they put breast-plates of bronze about their chests, but on their bridles and bits and cheek-pieces they employ gold. Iron however and silver they use not at all, for they have them not in their land, but gold and bronze in abundance.[290]

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[288] 'τὰ μὲν δὴ πρὸς ἑσπέρην τῆς θαλάσσης ταύτης τῆς Κασπίης καλεομένης ὁ Καύκασος ἀπέργει, τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἠῶ τε καὶ ἥλιον ἀνατέλλοντα πεδίον ἐκδέκεται πλῆθος ἄπειρον ἐς ἄποψιν. τοῦ ὦν δὴ πεδίου τούτου τοῦ μεγάλου οὐκ ἐλαχίστην μοῖραν μετέχουσι οἱ Μασσαγέται, ἐπ᾽ οὓς ὁ Κῦρος ἔσχε προθυμίην στρατεύσασθαι. Πολλά τε γάρ μιν καὶ μεγάλα τὰ ἐπαείροντα καὶ ἐποτρύνοντα ἦν, πρῶτον μὲν ἡ γένεσις, τὸ δοκέειν πλέον τι εἶναι ἀνθρώπου, δευτέρα δὲ ἡ εὐτυχίη ἡ κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους γενομένη· ὅκῃ γὰρ ἰθύσειε στρατεύεσθαι Κῦρος, ἀμήχανον ἦν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἔθνος διαφυγεῖν',. Hrdt. *Hist.*, I, 204.
[289] *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall*, ed. by E. J. van Donzel, A. B. Schmidt, and C. Ott (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 14; B. S. Dhillon, *History and Study of the Jats: With Reference to Sikhs, Scythians, Alans, Sarmatians, Goths, and Jutes* (Gloucester: Beta Publishers, 1994), p. 8.
[290] 'Μασσαγέται δὲ ἐσθῆτά τε ὁμοίην τῇ Σκυθικῇ φορέουσι καὶ δίαιταν ἔχουσι, ἱππόται δὲ εἰσὶ καὶ ἄνιπποι (ἀμφοτέρων γὰρ μετέχουσι) καὶ τοξόται τε καὶ αἰχμοφόροι, σαγάρις νομίζοντες ἔχειν. χρυσῷ δὲ καὶ χαλκῷ τὰ πάντα χρέωνται· ὅσα μὲν γὰρ ἐς αἰχμὰς καὶ ἄρδις καὶ σαγάρις, χαλκῷ τὰ πάντα χρέωνται, ὅσα δὲ περὶ κεφαλὴν καὶ ζωστῆρας καὶ μασχαλιστῆρας, χρυσῷ κοσμέονται. ὡς δ᾽ αὕτως τῶν ἵππων τὰ μὲν περὶ τὰ στέρνα χαλκέους θώρηκας περιβάλλουσι, τὰ δὲ περὶ τοὺς χαλινοὺς καὶ στόμια καὶ φάλαρα χρυσῷ. σιδήρῳ

Beyond geographical boundaries, Herodotus implies fundamental differences in lifestyle as well: while the Getae, as all Thracians, led a barbaric, crude life, the Massagetae have elaborate customs and intricate fashion and goldsmithing, just like the Scythians.[291]

Additionally, Herodotus also talks about the tribe of the Thyssagetae, who are said to live way outside the country of the Scythians, north of the Maeotis (the modern day Sea of Azov) and beyond:

> After one has crossed the river Tanaïs the country is no longer Scythia, but the first of the divisions belongs to the Sauromatae, who beginning at the corner of the Maeotian lake occupy land extending towards the North Wind fifteen days' journey, and wholly bare of trees both cultivated and wild. Above these, holding the next division of land, dwell the Budinoi, who occupy a land wholly overgrown with forest consisting of all kinds of trees. Then beyond the Budinoi towards the North, first there is desert for seven days' journey; and after the desert turning aside somewhat more towards the East Wind we come to land occupied by the Thyssagetae, a numerous people and of separate race from the others.[292]

'ἔθνος πολλὸν καὶ ἴδιον· ζῶσι δὲ ἀπὸ θήρης.' In the narrative, they are not connected to either the Getae or the Massagetae. If neither of these tribes shares a similar ethnic background, it is safe to say that the suffix -geta is not a standing ethnonym found in different groups, but a coincidence or a Hellenisation from Herodotus. Certainly, there is also the chance that Herodotus was wrong, and this variety of people actually shared a same cultural past, still marked by their identitarian designation. Despite these possibilities, it is clear that they each, in a rhetorical manner, end up in different ethnic niches: Getae are a Thracian tribe linked to Dacia; Massagetae are a nomadic group linked

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δὲ οὐδ᾽ ἀργύρῳ χρέωνται οὐδέν· οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέ σφι ἐστὶ ἐν τῇ χωρῇ, ὁ δὲ χρυσὸς καὶ ὁ χαλκὸς ἄπλετος', Hrdt. *Hist.*, I, 215.

[291] Hrdt., *Hist.*, V, 4 – 7 & I, 215.

[292] 'Τάναϊν δὲ ποταμὸν διαβάντι οὐκέτι Σκυθική, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ μὲν πρώτη τῶν λαξίων Σαυροματέων ἐστί, οἳ ἐκ τοῦ μυχοῦ ἀρξάμενοι τῆς Μαιήτιδος λίμνης νέμονται τὸ πρὸς βορέην ἄνεμον ἡμερέων πεντεκαίδεκα ὁδόν, πᾶσαν ἐοῦσαν ψιλὴν καὶ ἀγρίων καὶ ἡμέρων δενδρέων· ὑπεροικέουσι δὲ τούτων δευτέρην λάξιν ἔχοντες Βουδῖνοι, γῆν νεμόμενοι πᾶσαν δασέαν ὕλῃ παντοίῃ. Βουδίνων δὲ κατύπερθε πρὸς βορέην ἐστὶ πρώτη μὲν ἔρημος ἐπ᾽ ἡμερέων ἑπτὰ ὁδόν, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἔρημον ἀποκλίνοντι μᾶλλον πρὸς ἀπη᾽λιώτην ἄνεμον νέμονται Θυσσαγέται, ἔθνος πολλὸν καὶ ἴδιον· ζῶσι δὲ ἀπὸ θήρης', Hrdt. *Hist.*, IV, 21 – 22.

to the Scythian realm; Thyssagetae are hunter-gatherers from the North, possibly connected to a variety of nomadic societies from the Urals.[293]

After Herodotus, the usage and the meanings of these ethnonyms becomes blurred. Getae are automatically linked to Dacia. The geographer Strabo affirms, around AD 29, that Dacians and Getae speak the same language and inhabit different parts of the Dacian country: Dacians to the west, close to Germania, and Getae to the east, towards the Black Sea.[294] To make things difficult, Strabo also states that Getae and Thracians also speak the same language, making Dacians, Thracians and Getae part of the same cultural sphere, with that land – Thracia and Dacia – as a cultural cradle: *Magna Dacia* (an obvious influence on Jordanes, who, as we know, was keen on Strabo).[295] Pliny the Elder, some 50 years later, endorses a similar perspective, affirming that the Getae are known as *Dacii* by the Romans.[296] Pompeius Trogus (through the epitome of Justin) and Cassius Dio, two of Jordanes' main sources, present the same view: Trogus says that Dacians are progeny of the Getae;[297] Dio, in a fascinating statement, states that 'Dacian' is the Roman name for the tribe under discussion, but acknowledges that the Greeks call them Getae. He also states that Dacians are related to Thracians and that the inhabitants of Moesia are of Getic race:

> In ancient times, it is true, Moesians and Getae occupied all the land between Haemus and the Ister; but as time went on some of them changed their names, and since then there have been included under the name of Moesia all the tribes living above Dalmatia, Macedonia, and Thrace, and separated from Pannonia by the Savus, a tributary of the Ister. Two of the

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[293] Sulimirski implies that Thyssagetae were people of 'Fino-Ugrian' stock and language that came from the Baltic area. However, the author does not refer to the Thyssagetae, but to the Budinoi. In: T. Sulimirski, 'The Scyths', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. by I. Gershevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), II, 149–99 (p. 153).

[294] 'Ῥεῖ δὲ δι᾽ αὐτῶν Μάρισος ποταμὸς εἰς τὸν Δανούιον, ὧι τὰς παρασκευὰς ἀνεκόμιζον οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τὰς πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον· καὶ γὰρ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τὰ μὲν ἄνω καὶ πρὸς ταῖς πηγαῖς μέρη μέχρι τῶν καταρακτῶν Δανούιον προσηγόρευον, ἃ μάλιστα διὰ τῶν Δακῶν φέρεται, τὰ δὲ κάτω μέχρι τοῦ Πόντου τὰ παρὰ τοὺς Γέτας καλοῦσιν Ἴστρον· ὁμόγλωττοι δ᾽ εἰσὶν οἱ Δακοὶ τοῖς Γέταις', Strab. *Geog.*, VII, 3, 13.

[295] Strab., *Geog.*, VII, 3, 13 – 14.

[296] 'Ab eo in plenum quibid. omnes Scytharum sunt gentes, varie tamen litori adposita tenuere, alias Getae, Daci Romanis dicti, alias Sarmatae, Graecis Sauromatae, eorumque Hamaxobii aut Aorsi, alias Scythae degeneres et a servis orti aut Trogodytae, mox Alani et Rhoxolani', Plin, *Hist. Nat.*, IV, 25.

[297] 'Daci quoque suboles Getarum sunt', Just., *Epit.*, XXXII, 3, 16.

many tribes found among them are those formerly called the Triballi, and the Dardani, who still retain their old name.[298]

This passage in Cassius Dio seems to be fundamental to our understanding of Jordanes. It presents Getae, Dacians, Thracians and Moesians as sharing a historical, social, political and linguistic background – we could say that, in this train of thought, these tribes are connected through cultural lines, making their identity, even if variable, merely a singular cultural category. This cultural ambience affects their geographical scope, making the whole Balkan region – or, as I would call it, *Magna Dacia* – the heart of this tribal world.[299] This is fundamental, because, in this perspective, *Magna Dacia* is an important historical player, given that it flourishes in the times of Herodotus but develops to the times of Jordanes in accord with an ethnic *devenire*, that is, it changes and continuously flows, affecting those who live and rule the place. Getae, Dacians, Thracians, Moesians, Romans, Goths, Gepids, Huns, Heruli, etc., are all cultural sons of *Magna Dacia*, which is immutable in its 'becoming' – as Heraclitus postulates, everything in the world 'becomes', it changes and it is transformed in a constant ontological flow.[300] This philosophical approach, even if seemingly exaggerated when

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[298] 'Τὸ μὲν γὰρ πάλαι Μυσοί τε καὶ Γέται πᾶσαν τὴν μεταξὺ τοῦ τε Αἴμου καὶ τοῦ Ἴστρου οὖσαν ἐνέμοντο, προϊόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ ἐς ἄλλα τινὲς αὐτῶν ὀνόματα μετέβαλον, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτ᾽ ἐς τὸ τῆς Μυσίας ὄνομα πάνθ᾽ ὅσα ὁ Σάουος ἐς τὸν Ἴστρον ἐμβάλλων, ὑπέρ τε τῆς Δελματίας καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς Μακεδονίας τῆς τε Θρᾴκης, ἀπὸ τῆς Παννονίας ἀφορίζει, συγκεχώρηκεν. Καὶ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἄλλα τε ἔθνη πολλὰ καὶ οἱ Τριβαλλοί ποτε προσαγορευθέντες, οἵ τε Δαρδάνιοι καὶ νῦν οὕτω καλούμενοι', Cass. Dio., *Hist. Rom.*, LI, 27.

[299] For a survey on the Late Antique and Early Medieval Balkans, *cf.* F. Curta, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500 - 1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For a chronologically broader history of the region, *cf.* C. C. Petolescu, *Dacia: un mileniu de istorie* (Bucharest: Ed. Acad. Române, 2010).

[300] The idea of 'becoming' (*devenire*) is a philosophical concept thought by Heraclitus of Ephesus. It was conceived as an ontological approach in which everything flows, everything moves and changes, thus achieving universal growth. This fluid perspective is diametrically opposed to that shown by Parmenides. Some modern philosophers, such as Nietzsche, follow Heraclitus' thoughts through a different path: Nietzsche understands that the constant changing, the *devenire*, is a proof that chaos commands the universe and, in essence, things are empty. Jordanes, even if not a direct follower of Heraclitus, still seems to follow a similar theoretical path to that of the eternal 'becoming'; that is, he frames his argument in a way that ethnicity, when attached to a geographical scope, changes in essence, while still being the same (but, at the same time, being different). For Heraclitus, *cf.* M. Botten, *Herakleitos: Logos Made Manifest* (Peterborough: FastPrint, 2011); K. M. Dietz, *Metamorphosen des Geistes* (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 2004), III. For Nietzsche, *cf.* C. Cox, *Nietzsche, Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1999).

applied to Jordanes, is actually present in the text in a variety of ways: as Amory claimed, ethnogeography sees a changing of ethnonyms in relation to a static geographical *Raum*, and this is certainly true when applied to the *De Origine*. Not only that but the moral backbone of Jordanes' works – the eschatological fate of great powers and empires, be it Rome or Dacia – is based on an ideology of constant change. Rulers, kings, and empires are replaced by the flow of destiny, one overcoming the other, while the one true freedom and the one true stable lord is, of course, God.[301] The 'Becoming' of *Magna Dacia* is marked by the indigenous Dacians, Thracians, and Goths, then Romans, then Huns, then Gepids, etc. After that, there is a void of power which, in spite of the laurels of Justinian' successes in his wars, is left empty when the narrative of the *De Origine* ends.[302] Jordanes, therefore, rhetorically constructs an identity that is the same, even as it changes.

If cultural identities are preponderant in the work and, as we saw, the Getae share an ethnic affiliation with Goths, Scythians, and Dacians, it could mean that Jordanes, in using this sense of changing and eschatology, was trying to normalise and make sense of the past of *Magna Dacia* through the Goths – by combining these different groups, he was not just awarding the Goths a glorious history, but he was defining the deeds of Dacian tribes and establishing a historical motion for that region. This is why, when the narrative of the *De Origine* reaches the very recent past and coeval times, the Huns, not the Goths, are the overlords of Dacia: they were meant to be there, not only because of military prowess but because, given that, in essence, they are Gothic (thus, Getic) offspring, they represent the idea of change and immutability at the same time.[303] That is

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[301] See chapter 3.

[302] Jordanes, indeed, affirms that Gepids had Dacia during his own lifetime, but judging by the descriptions of earlier *hegemons* in the region, such as Ermanaric or Attila, it can be implied that Gepids are inhabitants, but not lords over the land. Jordanes is emphatic in his ideology of power, as discussed in previous chapters: he valorises unifying and hegemonic leaders. With the Gepids in charge of Dacia, in the aftermath of the death of Attila, there is still a void of power, as no Gepid leader was able to create the same political atmosphere ('Daciam dico antiquam, quam nunc Gepidarum populi possidere noscuntur', Jord., *Get.*, XII, 73).

[303] We will explore, below (and in the next chapter), how and why Jordanes connects the origin of the Huns to the history of the Goths.

why after the demise of Attila, since neither Huns nor Goths/Getae are in charge of the land, Jordanes subtly implies that chaos and political failure were casting a shadow over the fate of Dacia (in the *De Origine*), just as they did over Rome (in the *De Summa Temporum*).[304] In other words, the ontological status of *Magna Dacia* had, suddenly, ceased to exist. It was no longer in a state of 'becoming'. The land was void of a hegemonic nation, one that would keep the tread of a Dacian *devenire* alive.

PATH TO POLITICAL VOID (CULTURAL STAGNATION)

DEVENIRE OF MAGNA DACIA:

Gepids

Heruli

Huns

Ostrogoths

Goths/Getae
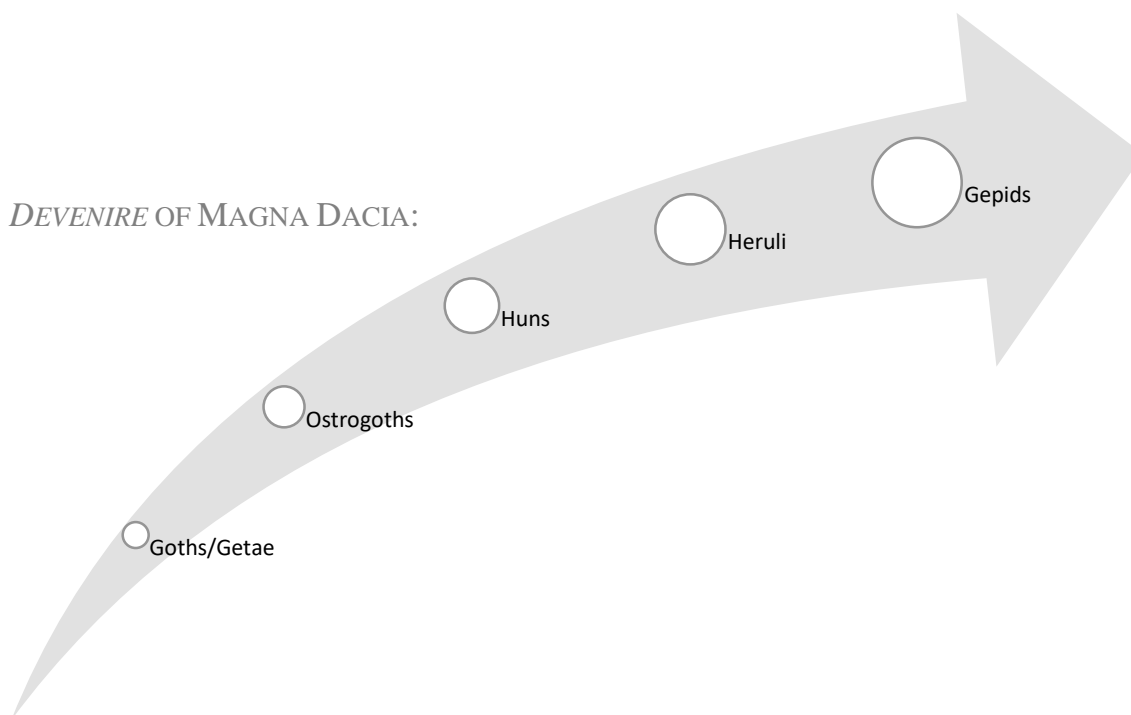
That being said, it becomes apparent that Jordanes engendered a complex process through which he created this equation of identities. Among a few of the authors who spoke about the Getae, he read Strabo, Pliny, Trogus and Dio, and probably read Herodotus as well. He was also familiar with the *Getica* of Dio Chrysostom, with the Getic inferences in Lucan and Virgil, not to mention the *Scythica* of Dexippus.[305] Jordanes also analysed the claims of Orosius, who, more simplistically, said the Getae and Goths

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[304] Jord., *Getica*, LII – LVII present a rather chaotic transition between the death of Attila and Theoderic' migration to Italy.
[305] See chapter 2.

shared the same name.[306] In other words, Jordanes was certainly aware of these many different historical and identity models. He was not being naïve or merely copying the classics when he came up with the correlation between Goths and Getae, as the authors that he read had all conflicting approaches, even if only in its details.

This is further demonstrated when we include the Massagetae of Herodotus in the mix. Like the Getae, the Massagetae are also regularly mentioned by later authors. Ammianus Marcellinus, Claudian, Procopius and Evagrius Scholasticus, to name a few – all of them, read by or contemporary to Jordanes – all refer to this people.[307] However, their references come into a very particular shape: Massagetae are the Huns, but from ancient times, that is, the Massagetic ethnonym was applied to people who, during Late Antiquity, were identified as Huns. Of course, this identification is to be expected, as the Massagetae (and, to a certain extent, the Thyssagetae as well) are described as being nomads from the Steppe, related to, but still different from the Scythians. As archaic nomads, the classicising connection was inevitable. Ammianus and Claudian, coeval with the first Hunnic incursions and, therefore, not familiar with the cultural tropes of Huns being a general term for nomadic Barbarians, linked the Massagetae to the Alans, an Iranian horse-riding people: 'the Massagetes who cruelly wound their horses that they may drink their blood, the Alans who break the ice and drink the waters of Maeotis' lake'.[308]

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[306] 'Modo autem Getae illi qui et nunc Gothi, quos Alexander euitandos pronuntiauit, Pyrrhus exhorruit, Caesar etiam declinauit, relictis uacuefactisque sedibus suis ac totis uiribus toti Romanas ingressi prouincias simulque ad terrorem diu ostentati societatem Romani foederis precibus sperant, quam armis uindicare potuissent', Oros., *Hist. Adv. Pag.*, I, 16, 2.

[307] Procop., *Goth.*, III, XI – 37; Evag. Scho., *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 2.

[308] The whole passage in Claudian is: 'iamque Getas Histrumque mouet Scythiamque receptat auxilio traditque suas hostilibus armis reliquias. mixtis descendit Sarmata Dacis, et qui cornipedes in pocula uulnerat audax Massagetes caesamque bibens Maeotin Alanus membraque qui ferro gaudet pinxisse Gelonus, Rufino collecta manus', Claud., *In Ruf.*, I, 305 – 315. Ammianus, concerning the Massagetae, says: 'namque ut Lucullum transeam vel Pompeium, qui per Albanos et Massagetas, quos Alanos nunc appellamus, hac quoque natione perrupta vidit Caspios lacus, Ventidium novimus Antoni legatum strages per hos tractus innumeras edidisse', Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae*, XXIII, 6, 16.

Jordanes, on the other hand, never mentions the Massagetae by name, but he includes traits of their history as part of Getic customs. Herodotus tells us that the Massagetae were led by the famous queen Tomyris, rumoured to be responsible for the death of the Persian king, Cyrus I, during a battle.[309] Strabo endorses this story of a Persian war against the Massagetae, linking them to the tribe of the Sacae and to the Scythian lands in general.[310] Trogus, on the other hand, stated that Tomyris was the queen of the Scythians (or, at least, did Justin in his epitome).[311] As it is, it seems to be clear that Tomyris, as famous as she is, is assigned a number of different ethnicities (Sacae, Scythian, Massagetae),[312] but never Getae – she is clearly located in Central Asia rather than Thrace, making the connection with the Getae inconvenient.[313] However, the geographical discrepancies were not enough to stop Jordanes: in his construction of Getic/Gothic history, he relates that Tomyris was a Gothic queen. In his narrative, she also defeated Cyrus in battle, but the *De Origine* goes further: after taking an incredibly rich booty, she introduced silk to the Goths for the first time and then crossed over to Moesia, building a city at the shore of Pontus and calling it Tomis, after herself.[314] This

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[309] 'ἦν δὲ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀποθανόντος γυνὴ τῶν Μασσαγετέων βασίλεια. Τόμυρίς οἱ ἦν οὔνομα [...] καὶ δὴ οὗτος μὲν τρόπῳ τοιούτῳ τελευτᾷ· Τόμυρις δέ, ὥς οἱ Κῦρος οὐκ ἐσήκουσε, συλλέξασα πᾶσαν τὴν ἑωυτῆς δύναμιν συνέβαλε Κύρῳ. Ταύτην τὴν μάχην, ὅσαι δὴ βαρβάρων ἀνδρῶν μάχαι ἐγένοντο', Hrdt., *Hist.*, I, 205 – 214.

[310] '[...] οἱ δ' ἔτι πρότερον διελόντες τοὺς μὲν ὑπὲρ τοῦ Εὐξείνου καὶ Ἴστρου καὶ τοῦ Ἀδρίου κατοικοῦντας Ὑπερβορέους ἔλεγον καὶ Σαυρομάτας καὶ Ἀριμασπούς, τοὺς δὲ πέραν τῆς Κασπίας θαλάττης τοὺς μὲν Σάκας τοὺς δὲ Μασσαγέτας ἐκάλουν, οὐκ ἔχοντες ἀκριβὲς λέγειν περὶ αὐτῶν οὐδέν, καίπερ πρὸς Μασσαγέτας τοῦ Κύρου πόλεμον ἱστοροῦντες. ἀλλ' οὔτε περὶ τούτων οὐδέν', Strab., *Geog.*, XI, 6, 2.

[311] 'Cyrus, subacta Asia et uniuerso Oriente in potestatem redacto, Scythiis bellum infert. Erat eo tempore regina Scytharum Tamyris', Just., *Epit.*, I, 8, 1 – 2.

[312] Sacae, as with many obscure ethnic designations from Antiquity, has a history of complex usage. Although ancient authors define the Sacae as a society similar to that of the Scythians, the label could be just the Persian word for 'archer', that is, horse-riding nomads. This would make the Sacae Scythians, but from a Persian perspective. *Cf.* I. Lebedynsky, *Les Saces: Les 'Scythes' d'asie, Viiie Siècle Av. J.-C.-Ive Siècle Apr. J.-C* (Paris: Errance, 2006); B. N. Puri, 'The Sakas and Indo-Parthians', in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: The Development of Sedentary and Nomadic Civilizations: 700 B.c. to A.d. 250*, ed. by J. Harmatta (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1994), II, 191–207.

[313] For Tomyris, *cf.* D. L. Gera, *Warrior Women: The Anonymous Tractatus De Mulieribus* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), pp. 187–204.

[314] 'Sed iterato Marte Getae cum sua regina Parthos devictos superant atque prosternunt opimamque praedam de eis auferunt, ibique primum Gothorum gens sirica vidit tentoria. Tunc Thomyris regina aucta victoria tantaque praeda de inimicis potita, in partem Moesiae, quae nunc a magna Scythia nomen mutuatum minor Scythia appellatur, transiens, ibi in Ponti Moesiaco litore Thomes civitatem suo de nomine aedificavit', Jord., *Get.*, X, 62.

story is not present in Herodotus, nor Justin (we cannot be sure about Trogus' original) or Strabo. It seems that Jordanes not only changed her ethnicity to Getic but also create a new narrative, in which she migrates West to Moesia (that is, in *Magna Dacia*). This information conflicts with that given by Ovid in his well-known poem about Medea, in which Tomis, the same city, gets its name from the quartering of Absyrtus.[315] We cannot be absolutely confident that Jordanes read Ovid, but he probably was familiar with the famous author – he read Virgil and Lucan, so we know that he was not unacquainted with poetry. On the other hand, it is possible that he was aware of the Medean legend and was drawing some sort of comparison between Medea and Tomyris. After all, Tomyris, as a warrior queen of old, certainly became an archetypical character in literature.[316] Described as a widow whose son was killed by Cyrus' troops, she is also said to have beheaded the body of the Persian king in order to take vengeance and humiliate him.[317] While she could be compared to the biblical Judith, a different approach to her might could draw a comparison with Medea as well.[318] The famous, tragic Colchian woman, in spite of her fame as the vengeful wife in Euripides' play, is responsible, according to Herodotus, for the ethnonym 'Mede' (from her own name and her son's name, Medeus), which the Aryan tribes took when she fled from Athens to their land.[319] Diodorus Siculus, another important source for Jordanes, also mentions Medea, telling her story and criticising the poets that tried to achieve marvellous and tragic narratives out of it.[320] As it is, Medea is clearly an archetypical figure, responsible for naming a group that, after being conquered by the Achaemenidae, would become synonymous with the Persians: the Medes. Like

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[315] 'Inde Tomis dictus locus hic, quia fertur in illo membra soror fratris consecuisse sui', Ov., *Tr.*, III, 9. *Cf.* Ovid, *The Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters*, trans. by P. Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[316] Gera, *Warrior Women*, p. 205.

[317] 'ἀσκὸν δὲ πλήσασα αἵματος ἀνθρωπηίου Τόμυρις ἐδίζητο ἐν τοῖσι τεθνεῶσι τῶν Περσέων τὸν Κύρου νέκυν, ὡς δὲ εὗρε, ἐναπῆκε αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐς τὸν ἀσκόν', Hrdt., *Hist.*, I, 214 – 4.

[318] D. L. Gera, *Judith* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), p. 65.

[319] '[…] ἐκαλέοντο δὲ πάλαι πρὸς πάντων Ἄριοι, ἀπικομένης δὲ Μηδείης τῆς Κολχίδος ἐξ Ἀθηνέων ἐς τοὺς Ἀρίους τούτους μετέβαλον καὶ οὗτοι τὸ οὔνομα. αὐτοὶ περὶ σφέων ὧδε λέγουσι Μῆδοι', Hrdt. *Hist.*, VII, 62 – 1.

[320] Diod. Sic., *Biblio.*, IV, 40 – 58.

Tomyris in Jordanes, Medea is a founder, a pioneer and an important political protagonist. In fact, the usual negative aura in which Medea is embedded – and her mythological connection to the Persians – makes her an unlikely trope for Jordanes to draw from if he wanted to anchor Tomyris in a rhetorically familiar level. However, we have to remember that, in the *De Origine*, women do not necessarily have a good reputation, even if they are Goths or responsible for marvellous deeds (such as Marpesia, the Amazon woman who conquered the Caucasus and gave her name to the Mountains).[321] The Amazons are the prime example of women's bad (discoursive) reputation.[322] Therefore, from Herodotus to Ovid, Medea is the etiological phenomenon behind the Medes and the city of Tomis – in essence, not so different from Jordanes' own Tomyris.[323]

However, in spite of Jordanes' influences or intentions in this passage, what is important to stress, in our case, is the ethnic background assigned to the otherwise nomadic queen Tomyris: if she was a Getic woman, she could not be a nomadic (Massagetic) ruler. Given that every single author understands that she was either a Massagetae or a Scythian (as is the case with Trogus, who is quoted by Jordanes as his source for the passage on Tomyris and the Persian Wars)[324], this means that Jordanes was consciously changing her ethnicity or he was including the Scythians (and the Massagetae) in his Gothic equation without necessarily emphasising the point, as he did with the Geta/Goth equation.

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[321] Jord. *Getica*, VII.

[322] 'Sive, ut quibusdam placet, editis maribus novercali odio infantis miserandi fata rumpebant. Ita apud illas detestabile puerperium erat, quod ubique constat esse votivum. Quae crudelitas illis terrorem maximum comulabat opinionis vulgatae. Nam quae, rogo, spes esset capto, ubi indulgi vel filio nefas habebatur', Jord., *Getica*, VIII, 56 – 57.

[323] In spite of the overwhelming negative representation from Medea, she is nonetheless an important mythical figure among Greek foundation stories and, therefore, could have easily been an inspiration for the etiological deeds of Tomyris and Marpesia (the adventurous queen of the Amazons) in Jordanes. *Cf.* Nita Krevans, 'Medea as Foundation-Heroine', in *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, ed. by J. J. Clauss and S. I. Johnston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 71–82.

[324] 'Tunc Cyrus, rex Persarum, post grande intervallum et pene post dcxxx annorum tempore (Pompeio Trogo testante) Getarum reginae Thomyre sibi exitiabile intulit bellum', Jord., *Getica*, X, 61.

We can see that, in spite of generalising ethnonyms or classical tropes with which Greeks and Romans saw societal groups outside their own sphere of culture, geographical elements were more or less stable: Getae, linked to Dacians, Thracians, Moesians or other tribes, tend to be addressed as inhabitants of the Northern half of the Balkans. Massagetae, Thyssagetae, Sacae and, mainly, Scythians, are less-defined ethnonyms, but they are mostly applied to nomadic groups from around the Black Sea all the way to Central Asia. Even when Scythian becomes a synonym of 'horse-riding warriors', they indicate people coming from the East. Therefore, when Jordanes decides to turn not only the Scythians but also the Goths (who, according to himself, originated in the Northern island of 'Scandza') into Getae, he is deliberately creating a cultural identity that breaks with the geographical rules – Jordanes was aware of the geographic archetypes attached to these ethnonyms, judging by the authors he read. Nonetheless, he decided to override what was standard classical knowledge and to craft his own arguments. Therefore, Goths, Scythians, and Getae become the same group, sharing the same geographical and historical traits. What is ironic about this scenario is that Jordanes still follows an ethnogeographical narrative, and it is concentrated mostly on *Magna Dacia* – the ancient cradle of the Getae. Therefore, we could speculate that, in fact, when Jordanes creates his ethnic equation, he was not placing the Goths in the centre of the narrative and addressing elements of Getic and Scythian history, but he was doing the opposite: he was rather placing the *historical Getae* in the core of the narrative and homogenising their history by adding elements of Gothic and Scythian origin, so that the historical development of *Magna Dacia* would make sense. After all, in spite of the Getae being its first inhabitants, Scythians and Goths also ruled the region at different points of time. Jordanes, by employing one single (but ample) ethnonym that included all these different people, was

creating a linear cultural development for the Balkans – even if that meant changing and adding information to well-established narratives:

TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVE:

Geta + Scythian = Goth
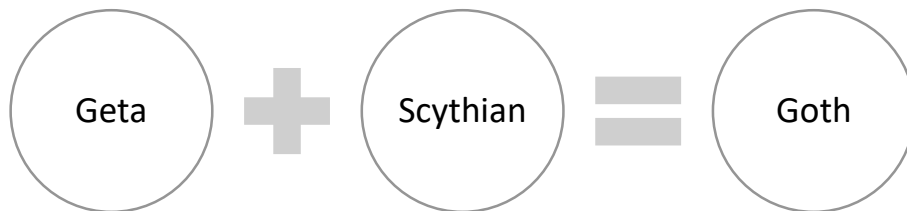
'JORDANES' EQUATION':

Geta = Scythian + Goth
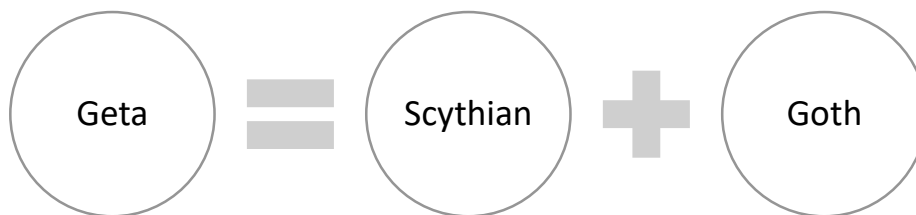
This is the theoretical framework behind Jordanes' discoursive choices. It provides the necessary background to present Goths, Getae, Dacians and Scythians as one cultural nucleus. However, it is only the canvas on which Jordanes paints the historical (and fictional) facts concerning these ethnicities in order to transform them into a single cultural ethnicity. As argued before, the strategy of Jordanes to achieve this desired rhetoric is to craft a linear, legendary history and attribute it to the Goths. He initiates the work by giving a geographical panorama of the world, focusing on Scandza, Britain, and Scythia, and then locates the migrating Goths in this picture. Getic kings and mythological figures, like Zalmoxis and Burebistas, become Gothic leaders. Scythian/Massagetic queens, such as Tomyris (and the Amazons) become Gothic rulers. Moreover, he does the same with Dacian figures, such as Medopa and Gudila, figures from the times of

Alexander and the Macedonians.[325] All of this is achieved by mixing facts and quoting ancient sources to provide the necessary authority for his arguments.

Therefore, Jordanes creates this one, inclusive identity by unifying the historical aspects and rulers of several peoples. Structurally speaking, Jordanes uses the ethnonyms 'Goth' and 'Geta' interchangeably until halfway through the *De Origine* (up to the narrative of Ermanaric), when he decides only to use 'Goth.' There are two reasons for this: firstly, as he approached events of recent history, Gothic ethnicity had been more and more ingrained in history writing, and had become familiar to his readers, therefore using the term 'Geta' too emphatically would render it obsolete, as the audience would be more familiar with 'Goth', not with the former.[326] But secondly, it was important for him to establish, right at the beginning, that Goths and Getae were one and the same, so he used them interchangeably mostly in the first chapters of the *De Origine*. After the case had been set out, and the desired effect (the equiparation between both ethnonyms) had been achieved, he could resort to using only 'Goth' to describe this group of people. Moreover, with the death of Ermanaric, Jordanes introduces the division between the Goths, that is, Visigoths and Ostrogoths. With two different political groups and two different ruling dynasties (the Amali of the Ostrogoths and the Balthi of the Visigoths), insisting on the usage of the Getic label would probably have been confusing, as Goth, in itself, would already have become an ample designation for the two different societies.

Nevertheless, if Jordanes is honest and open with his 'Goth/Geta' equation – and he even affirms so –, his inclusion of Scythian elements is more confusing. As we have seen, he unapologetically includes Tomyris and the Amazons in Gothic history. In spite of their being 'Goths', he still calls the Amazons, for example, Scythian women:

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[325] Jord., *Getica*, X.
[326] For the spreading of Gothic rhetoric and the first sources and authors to get in contact with them, *cf.* Heather and Matthews.

Then, as the story goes, Vesosis waged a war disastrous to himself against the Scythians, whom ancient tradition asserts to have been the husbands of the Amazons. Concerning these female warriors Orosius speaks in convincing language. Thus we can clearly prove that Vesosis then fought with the Goths, since we know surely that he waged war with the husbands of the Amazons. They dwelt at that time along a bend of Lake Maeotis, from the river Borysthenes, which the natives call the Danaper, to the stream of the Tanais. [...] This was the region where the Goths dwelt when Vesosis, king of the Egyptians, made war upon them. Their king at that time was Tanausis. In a battle at the river Phasis [...] Tanausis, king of the Goths, met Vesosis, king of the Egyptians, and there inflicted a severe defeat upon him [...]. After his death [Tanausis], while the army under his successors was engaged in an expedition in other parts, a neighboring tribe attempted to carry off women of the Goths as booty. But they made a brave resistance, as they had been taught to do by their husbands, and routed in disgrace the enemy who had come upon them. [...] Then these Scythian-born women, who had by such a chance gained control over the kingdoms of Asia, held them for almost a hundred years, and at last came back to their own kinsfolk in the Marpesian rocks I have mentioned above, namely the Caucasus mountains.[327]

Although they are undoubtedly stated to be the wives of Gothic men, they are said to be 'Scythiae genitae feminae.' It is not clear if they are 'Scythian-born' because they were in Asia at this stage, and therefore their daughters were born in Scythian territory, or if Jordanes is just saying that they are ethnically Scythians.[328] Overall that is irrelevant, though, because earlier on Jordanes tried to get around the 'Scythian' problem by saying that ancient sources, when talking about the wars of Vesosis against the Scythians, state that these men were husbands of the Amazons. And as Orosius affirms that Amazons were Gothic women, it was 'proven' that Vesosis fought not the Scythians, but the Goths. Therefore, 'Scythiae genitae feminae' seems to be referring to land, rather to ethnicity

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[327] 'Tunc, ut fertur, Vesosis Scythis lacrimabile sibi potius intulit bellum, eis videlicet, quos Amazonarum viros prisca tradit auctoritas, de quas et feminas bellatrices Orosius in primo volumine professa voce testatur. Vnde cum Gothis eum tunc dimicasse evidenter probamus, quem cum Amazonarum viris absolute pugnasse cognoscimus, qui tunc a Borysthene amne, quem accolae Danaprum vocant, usque ad Thanain fluvium circa sinum paludis Meotidis consedebant. [...] Hic ergo Gothis morantibus Vesosis, Aegyptiorum rex, in bellum inruit, quibus tunc Tanausis rex erat. Quod proelio ad Phasim fluvium, […] Thanausis Gothorum rex Vesosi Aegyptiorum occurrit, eumque graviter debellans […]. Post cuius decessum et exercitu eius cum successores ipsius in aliis partibus expeditione gerentibus feminae Gothorum a quadam vicina gente temptantur in praeda. Quae doctae a viris fortiter resisterunt hostesque super se venientes cum magna verecundia abigerunt. [...] Tale ergo Scythiae genitae feminae casu Asiae regna potitae per centum pene annos tenuerunt et sic demum ad proprias socias in cautes Marpesios, quas superius diximus, repedarunt, in montem scilicet Caucasi', Jord. *Getica*, V – VII, 44 – 52.
[328] E. H. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks: A Survey of Ancient History and Archaeology on the North Coast of the Euxine from the Danube to the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 119.

(unless, of course, Jordanes failed to follow his own logic and forgot to change the ethnonyms).

However, one could say that Jordanes was not differentiating Goths and Scythians, but rather offering proof that, as with the Getae, these two groups were the same. That could have been the case if Jordanes had not employed terms like 'Scythicis gentibus', 'Scytharum reges' or 'gens aliqua Scythica'. Thus, if Jordanes understands that Goths and Getae were always referring to one people, he seems, at first glance, to acknowledge that Scythians are a different group. Nevertheless, as in the case of the 'Scythiae genitae' Amazons, Jordanes appears to be referring more to geography than ethnicity. Certainly, he talks about Scythian tribes, but whenever he does so, he uses the plural, implying that 'Scythian' is not a singular identity – on the contrary, we could argue that he was merely referring to tribes that roam Scythian lands. If that were the case, it would not be a problem for him to include elements of Scythian history in a Gothic narrative: it seems that Jordanes understands 'Scythian' as a general designation rather than an ethnonym, then. This is important because Jordanes is not only thorough in his employment of identity labels, but he is also very inclusive: a common element in the *De Origine* is the lists of tribes. Jordanes likes to name as many people as he can – he does so when talking about the followers of Ermanaric, when he describes Scandza, and so on.[329] If he refers to a heterogeneous group as 'Scythians', then he is just talking about a wave of nomadic people living in the East. For example, when he panegyrically describes Attila, he says 'Qua pace Attila, Hunnorum omnium dominus et paene totius Scythiae gentium solus in mundo regnator, qui erat famosa inter omnes gentes claritate mirabilis.'[330] By this description, we could infer that Attila was reigning over all the Huns and almost all the peoples of Scythia. This is quite revealing, as the ethnonym 'Hun',

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[329] Jord., *Getica*, III; V; XXIII; L; among others.
[330] Jord., *Getica,* XXXIV, 178.

even if applied to many different political groups (and that is the reason why Attila is king of *all* of them), is still a trademark of identity. By contrast, we can conclude that 'Scythian' is consistently a geographical denominator rather than a fictive ethnicity. Attila is king over the people of Scythia. That does not necessarily imply an ethnicity – just as 'Roman' would point to a political affiliation, not necessarily an ethnic one.

'Scythian' as a geographical designation would explain, then, why Jordanes decided to include events and people of Scythian origins in his Gothic/Getic narrative. Because the area that we refer as *Magna Dacia* was so close – and sometimes even integrated to – parts of Scythia, it became natural that, when making the region a protagonist in his narrative, Jordanes would include these elements:

> Now Scythia borders on the land of Germany as far as the source of the river Ister and the expanse of the Morsian Swamp. It reaches even to the rivers Tyra, Danaster and Vagosola, and the great Danaper, extending to the Taurus range – not the mountains in Asia but our own, that is, the Scythian Taurus – all the way to Lake Maeotis. Beyond Lake Maeotis it spreads on the other side of the straits of Bosphorus to the Caucasus Mountains and the river Araxes. Then it bends back to the left behind the Caspian Sea, which comes from the north-eastern ocean in the most distant parts of Asia, and so is formed like a mushroom, at first narrow and then broad and round in shape. It extends as far as the Huns, Albani and Seres. In the land of Scythia to the westward dwells, first of all, the race of the Gepids, surrounded by great and famous rivers. For the Tisia flows through it on the north and northwest, and on the southwest is the great Danube. On the east it is cut by the Flutausis, a swiftly eddying stream that sweeps whirling into the Ister's waters. Within these rivers lies Dacia, encircled by the lofty Alps as by a crown. [...] We read that on their first migration the Goths dwelt in the land of Scythia near Lake Maeotis. On the second migration they went to Moesia, Thrace and Dacia, and after their third they dwelt again in Scythia, above the Sea of Pontus.[331]

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[331] 'Scythia si quibid. Germaniae terre confines eo tenus, ubi Ister oritur amnis vel stagnus dilatatur Morsianus, tendens usque ad flumina Tyram, Danastrum et Vagosolam, magnumque illu Danaprum Taurumque montem, non illum Asiae, sed proprium, id est Scythicum, per omnem Meotidis aditum, ultraque Meotida per angustias Bosfori usque ad Caucasum montem amnemque Araxem ac deinde in sinistram partem reflexa post mare Caspium, quae in extremis Asiae finibus ab Oceano eoroboro in modum fungi primum tenuis, post haec latissima et rotunda forma exoritur, vergens ad Hunnus, Albanos et Seres usque digreditur. [...] in qua Scythia prima ab occidente gens residet Gepidarum, que magnis opinatisque ambitur fluminibus. Nam Tisia per aquilonem eius chorumque discurrit; ab africo vero magnus ipse Danubius, ab eoo Flutausis secat, qui rapidus ac verticosus in Istri fluenta furens divolvitur. Introrsus illis Dacia est, ad coronae speciem arduis Alpibus emunita […] Quorum mansione prima in Scythiae solo iuxta paludem Meotibid., secundo in Mysiam Thraciamque et Daciam, tertio supra mare Ponticum rursus in Scythia legimus habitasse', Jord., *Getica*, V, 30 – 38.

Therefore, this is Jordanes' approach: Scythia is a geographical designation, a massive land that is connected to Dacia, and a place of Gothic settlement. After all, in the myth of Gothic migration Scythia was their first (and their third) abode after the migration – it was their country before they started dominating the world (through the deeds of the Getae and others) when they finally become integrated to the Dacian *Kulturraum*.

Therefore, Jordanes' framework and strategy is to craft a desired identity: Goths, because of coeval they are contemporaries, are the tinder on which the narrative is ignited. He gathers the information to which he has access and builds the Gothic narrative by developing the story of *Magna Dacia* (a region where he lived and worked. He was certainly familiar with its history and its protagonists). To include the Goths in this historical element, he cherry-picks passages and names from the history of the Getae and the Dacians, tribes who, alongside the Thracians and the Moesians, were considered by many authors to be the same. He also includes parts of the history of the Scythians, as they had an important role to play in the region in which Jordanes was interested. Therefore, he was actually trying to tell the history of Dacia and the Getae, but adapts the ethnonyms to his own context and contingencies – thus, Goths.

Beyond creating an idiosyncratic Getic/Gothic identity to cover the vicissitudes of *Magna Dacia*, Jordanes also had to deal with another problem: Huns and Gepids had preponderant roles to play in the history of the region, and it would make sense to include them in the same identity sphere of the Goths. But because the memory of their deeds was fresh in the collective imagery of the Roman Empire (the Gepids, specifically, were still very much active at the time of Justinian), Jordanes could not just mash their history in the same narrative line that he created for the Getae.[332] To help solving this problem, Jordanes resorted to another discursive strategy: he created an ethnic genealogy

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[332] *Cf.* Sarantis, 'War and Diplomacy in Pannonia and the Northwest Balkans during the Reign of Justinian: The Gepid Threat and Imperial Responses'; Festy; Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 1–15.

embedded into the migration myth. That means that the *De Origine* interlaces the origins of Goths, Gepids and Huns and, thus, connects their identities, even if they were, in reality, different people. This migration myth, as we know, starts with the Goths leaving Scandza in three boats, led by a legendary king Berig. These three boats sail to Scythia, but one of them was too slow and was therefore left behind. In this ship, Jordanes says, some people ended up being called 'Gepids' – *Gepanta*, in their own language, meant 'slow,' so they incorporated a trace of their origin into their ethnonym, claims Jordanes. As the two Gothic boats led the people to Scythia, they decided to live near the Lake Maeotis (modern day Sea of Azov). There, the king found witches called *Haliurunnae*, and expelled them from societal life, condemning these women to flee and wander the Maeotic marshes. The *Haliurunnae* met with filthy spirits there who, envious of the many nomads that inhabited that part of Scythia, decided to beget a race of their own. They copulated with the witches and from their wicked deeds sprung the Huns, who would end up conquering the whole region.[333] This is a very interesting story because it not only explains why the Huns had control over Scythia (as they were born in order to do so) but also implies that, just like the Gepids, the Huns also were connected to the tribe of the Goths. Even if they originated from exiled witches, they are still a branch of that nation.

This whole *origo* story is very allegorical, as the three ships represent three different political entities: the slow one symbolize the Gepids, whereas we can assume, even if Jordanes never actually says so, that the other two ships are meant to represent the division between Visigoths and Ostrogoths (Berig, the pioneer who left Scandza, is never listed as either being a member of the Balthi or Amali, even when the Amali lineage is constructed in a way that it goes back to a Nordic mythological figure).[334] With this

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[333] Jord., *Getica*, IV; XVII; XXIV;

[334] Gapt, the first name to appear in Jordanes genealogy, is supposed to be the name of a Norse god. This, however, is disputed, as the name of this legendary figure should have been 'Gaut'. Christensen lists the main arguments concerning this name, as the debate around is rather intense, given that a reference to the legendary Gaut could be a proper element of ancient and oral Gothic traditions. In relation to the problem

narrative, Jordanes quickly explains that, while Getae and Goths are the same, Huns and Gepids are also connected to this very stock. Consequently, with one designated label (Getic/Gothic), Jordanes covers the universal history of Dacia, even when the political focus of the region changes the focus to Gepids and, above all else, Huns.

Goths / Getae

Gepids

Huns   Ostrogoths   Visigoths
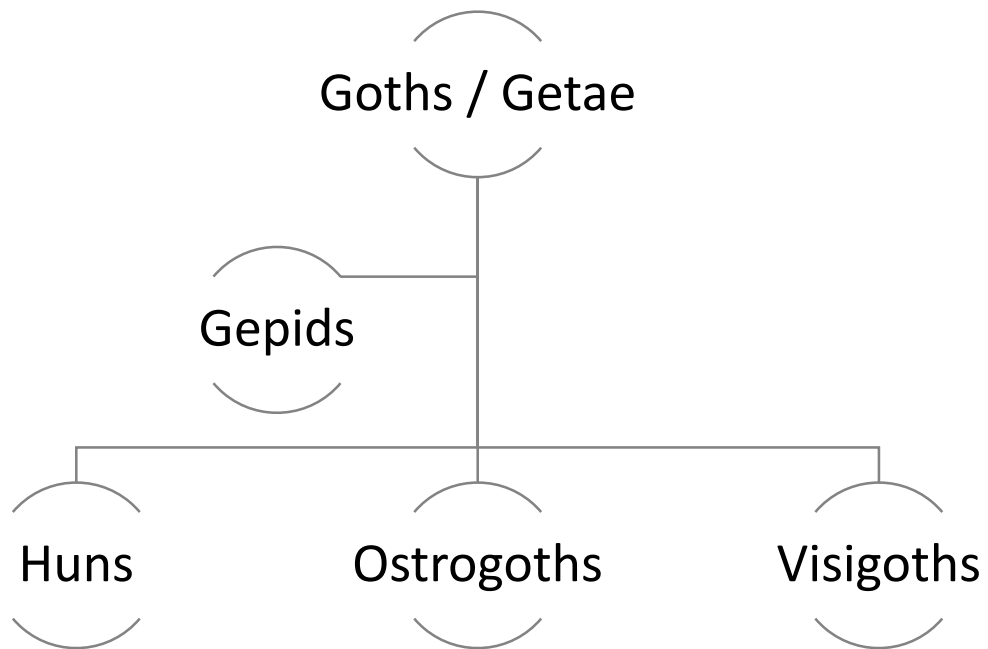
The 'Getic formula', if these arguments are accepted, is proof that Jordanes was an active, resourceful authorial figure, and this seems to be one of the significant issues with historiography concerning our author. Christensen, in his thorough study of Jordanes, assumed that a Gothic history based on the Getae would be *the* expected narrative, as it was common in Late Antiquity to understand Goths as the same people as Getae or Scythians. Orosius, Augustine and, prominently, Jerome did so.[335] Equally,

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of the -p and -u in these names, Birkhan states that 'die Vermeidung der Monophthongierung aber scheint aus der Bedeutungssphäre des sakralen Namens *Gaut* erklärt warden zu können'. In: Christensen, p. 132; T. M. Andersson, 'Götar, Goter, Gutar', *Namn Och Bygd. Tidskrift För Nordisk Ortnamnsforskning*, 84 (1996), 5–21; H. Birkhan, 'Gapt Und Gaut', *Zeitschrift Für Deutsches Altertum Und Deutsche Literatur*, 94.1 (1965), 1–17 (p. 17).
[335] Christensen, p. 230.

Amory, as insightful as his theory of Jordanes as an ethnogeographer is, follows an academic path (the same that Christensen would also follow a few years later): assuming that Jordanes was not creating, but obeying a rhetorical structure familiar to any Late Antique author (at least, to those writing about history and culture). That is not wrong *per se*, as Jordanes was, after all, a Late Antique author and he was writing about history, culture and geography, but it is, as said before, naïve at a theoretical level. Accepting these stylistic motifs and indistinctively applying them to Jordanes ignores a fundamental element of originality in the *De Origine*: the ethnic categories and their political – and cultural – employment. As we have seen, Jordanes does not merely follow the Late Antique 'Getic' footsteps, but he creates his own internal logic – a logic that is deeply rooted in geographical anxieties and, as discussed in previous chapters, in ideologies of power. His listing of *origines* and nations is more than a display of rhetoric but constitutes important pieces in the geopolitical theater unveiled through the pages of the *De Origine*. A prime example that emphasises the singularity of his Getic equation is his depiction of the Huns in relation to the internal narrative of the work. As affirmed above, Huns are fundamental to the development of Dacia, and their effect on the Gothic culture and ethnicity can be seen, structurally, in the introduction of Ermanaric. Ermanaric, as we will see in the next segment, is a divisor of waters in the *De Origine* and, in the core of his story, we have the real political introduction of the Huns. The discoursive effects of this, we will discuss next.

3.2 – RISE OF THE AMALI: LIFE AND DEATH OF ERMANARIC

Of all the historical kings of Gothic stock, one name that made fame for itself and became synonymous with legend and the 'heroic past' is that of Ermanaric. First

mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus,[336] Ermanaric embodies much of what is perceived as 'Gothicness': he was described as a heroic, gallant, and warlike prince; he died (or committed suicide) in a manner that fits rhetorical *topoi* of tragic and valiant deaths; he fought against enemies of alien extraction (the Huns and the Alans – although, in Jordanes, the Huns are genealogically linked to the Getae); and, mainly, he is historically located in a period in which the Gothic past can be more or less traced, without being completely linked to the history of the Roman Empire *per se* – in other words, he represents 'real' Gothic history, while it was still independent of the Romans; a crossroad between history and legend.

Although Ermanaric became a legendary character of the Germanic past in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian literature, his historicity is somewhat attested by Ammianus and, obviously, Jordanes.[337] The information they give us is relatively scarce, but still sufficient to paint a basic profile of the king: he was born in the first half of the fourth century, somewhere in Scythia. He was, most likely, part of a royal Greuthungi family, and achieved an important political status by subduing the many scattered tribes of the region. At the height of his power, it seems that Ermanaric had extended his influence from the Black Sea region to the Eastern border of Germania, crafting a Greuthungi confederacy that included people like the Heruli, the Aesti and the Venethi.[338] The ethnic composition of his confederacy and the study of archaeological cultures seems to point towards an 'area of Greuthungian influence' rather than proper ethnic/political domination: Ermanaric achieved hegemony over tribes while not necessarily expanding

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[336] Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae*, 3, 1, XXXI.

[337] Legendary characters vaguely based on Ermanaric (either the name or his historical fame) are present in Anglo-Saxon texts such as *Beowulf*, *Deor* and *Widsith* (as *Eormenric*) and in a variety of Scandinavian sagas, including the *Volsungasaga* and the *Edda* (as *Jǫrmunrekr*). Later Germanic texts such as the ballad *Koninc Ermenrîkes Dôt* also include his persona, in the form of *Ermenrîch*. Discussions regarding the significance of these legends and its relation to historical account are vast. *Cf.* C.A. Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric* (California: University of California Press, 1943). Also, more recently, B. Murdoch, 'Gothic', in *Early Germanic Literature and Culture*, ed. by B. Murdoch and M. K. Read (New York: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 149–70.

[338] This discussion can be also found in T. M. Andersson, 'Cassiodorus and the Gothic Legend of Ermanaric', *Euphorion*, 57 (1963), 28–43.

the realm of his own group.[339] Around AD 375, this hegemony was shaken by his death in a conflict with a group of Huns and Alans: according to Ammianus, his passing prompted the rise of a certain Vithimiris, whose short-lived rule was the last breath of Greuthungi authority. After that, power went to the hands of Alatheus and Safrax.[340] Jordanes gives us a different account, claiming that Ermanaric was succeeced by his relative Vinitharius.[341] Whether under Vithimiris or under Vinitharius, what is clear is that Ermanaric's death marked a drastic shift in Greuthungian history: while his hegemony seemed to be more or less independent from Rome, his successors moved closer, politically, geographically and culturally, to the Romans, leaving the void of power in Scythia to be progressively fulfilled by the Huns.[342]

The 'historical' Ermanaric presents us with an interesting problem of ethnicity: the Greuthungi are usually regarded as the precursors of the Ostrogoths, thus rendering them 'Goths before the Goths'. The vast dominion of Ermanaric, however, was likely multiethnic, encompassing Baltic, Slavic and Caucasian groups.[343] In this sense, attributing Ermanaric with a typical 'ethnic kingship', that is, ruling over a culturally cohesive tribe, is problematic.[344] He was not an early 'king of the Goths', but perhaps the earliest historically-attested hegemon of *Magna Dacia*. In this sense, we can start seeing why Jordanes saw in Ermanaric an important rhetorical tool, as his connection with the rise and decline of multiethnic 'Getic' power in the Balkans seem to be quite straightforward.

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[339] H. Wolfram, *Die Goten und ihre Geschichte* (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2001), pp. 86–89.

[340] T. S. Burns, *Barbarians Within the Gates of Rome: A Study of Roman Military Policy and the Barbarians, Ca. 375-425 A.d* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 61–63.

[341] P. J. Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), pp. 98–101.

[342] R. Collins, 'The Battle of Adrianople and the Sack of Rome', in *Early Medieval Europe 300–1000*, ed. by R. Collins (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 47–60.

[343] Wolfram, *Die Goten und ihre Geschichte*, p. 87; Korkkanen.

[344] Because of the argument that the Greuthungi are a 'Gothic' group, it is easy to see a cohesive ethnic element in this context, for exemple: P. J. Heather, 'Visigoths and the Fall of Rome', *Groniek*, 191 (2011), 33–44 (p. 35).

Concerning our sources on Ermanaric, while Ammianus was relatively coeval with this fourth-century leader, it is in the *De Origine* that we can see a lengthier literary development of his background and his political exploits. The reason for a more prolonged description is commonly justified by historians as being one example of Jordanes trying to set up a framework for the Gothic legendary past or reproducing Amali propaganda taken from Cassiodorus' *Historia:*[345] Ermanaric, after all, would have been a 'Getic' Alexander, the most powerful Gothic king before Theoderic.[346] By establishing this sort of powerful and hegemonic kingship in a period which the Goths were finally appearing in Greek and Roman annals, Jordanes (or Cassiodorus) would be providing a regal precedent for Theoderic and reaffirming the power and antiquity of the Amali lineage.[347]

Ermanaric, embodying the best example of an early historical Gothic king, is indeed a precious piece in any 'Gothic epic', but given the whole narrative devised in the *De Origine*, I would argue that this is not necessarily the case, and Ermanaric, in this text, operates mainly as the axis, the shifting point of the internal logic of the text rather than just an example of Amali royalty or heroic kingship. This ruler, in the *De Origine*, has, then, a much more specific rhetoric role: he is not only an exemplary Gothic monarch but also an epitome of the *Getic* historical development in *Magna* Dacia and a link relating, politically, Goths and Huns (similar to the rhetorical place of Attila later in the *De Origine*).[348] This argument will be developed further down.

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[345] H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1997), p. 262.; Tönnies, B, *Die Amalertradition in den Quellen zur Geschichte der Ostgoten* (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1989), pp. 34 – 37.

[346] 'Nam Gothorum rege Geberich rebus humanis excedente post temporis aliquod Hermanaricus nobilissimus Amalorum in regno successit, qui multas et bellicosissimas arctoi gentes perdomuit suisque parere legibus fecit. Quem merito nonnulli Alexandro Magno conparavere maiores', Jord., *Getica*, XXIII, 116.

[347] Christensen, p. 43.

[348] Christensen affirms that Ermanaric, in Jordanes, holds a political position similar to that of Attila, ruling over nations in Scythia and Germania, Christensen, p. 160.

Ammianus is concise in his only reference to Ermanaric:

Therefore, the Huns, after having traversed the territories of the Alans, and especially of that tribe of them who border on the Greuthungi [...]. And when they had united them to themselves, with increased boldness they made a sudden incursion into the extensive and fertile districts of Ermanaric, a very warlike prince, and one whom his numerous gallant actions of every kind had rendered formidable to all the neighbouring nations. He was astonished at the violence of this sudden tempest, and although, like a prince whose power was well established he long attempted to hold his ground, he was at last overpowered by a dread of the evils impending over his country, which were exaggerated by common report, till he terminated his fear of great danger by a voluntary death.[349]

This reference comes in a moment of the narrative in which Ammianus is describing the Alans and the Hunnic domination over them. After plundering and incorporating Alanic tribes, the Huns decide to advance into the rich dominion of Ermanaric, driving the illustrious king to a self-inflicted death. But perhaps the most striking element of this passage is the ethnic label that seems to be attached to Ermanaric: it is implied that he is a Greuthungus. As we said before, the Greuthungi are believed to be an old branch of the more generic 'Gothic race''. Alongside with the tribe of the Tervingi, historians claim that they become known, respectively, as Ostrogoths and Visigoths.[350] This bold claim presupposes a degree of historical cohesion within the chaotic cultural development of barbarian communities. As we argued previously, fictive ethnonyms tend to normalise ethnic narratives in order to make sense of it to the eyes of those who do not belong to those societies. That is possibly why this reference gave historians reason to believe that Ermanaric was, in fact, an ancient prince of the

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[349] 'Igitur Huni pervasis Halanorum regionibus quos Greuthungis confines [...] reliquos sibi concordandi fide pacta iunxerunt, eisque adiuti confidentius Ermenrichi late patentes et uberes pagos repentino impetu perruperunt, bellicosissimi regis et per multa variaque fortiter facta vicinis nationibus formidati. Qui vi subitae procellae perculsus quamvis manere fundatus et stabilis diu conatus est, inpendentium tamen diritatem augente vulgatius fama, magnorum discriminum metum voluntaria morte sedavit', Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae*, XXXI, 3, 1-2.
[350] Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 34.

Ostrogoths, as the ethnonyms *Greuthungus* and *Gothus* (more specifically in this case, *Ostrogothus*) would point to the same cultural group.[351]

This *little narrative* of the Ostrogoths/Greuthungi is perfectly reproduced in the *De Origine*. According to Jordanes, Ermanaric was not only a Gothic king himself, but he was also an Amal. In a certain way, this makes him the 'founder' of the Ostrogothic branch of the Goths, given that he was one of the first kings after the ultimate separation between Ostrogoths and Visigoths.[352] Ermanaric, from Ammianus to Jordanes, becomes the perfect example of shifting ethnonyms that refer to the same people: to a fourth-century writer, he was a Greuthungus; for a sixth-century author, he was already converted in an Amal Ostrogoth. Being so, Ermanaric can seemingly supply us with a historiographical element to make sense of the Ostrogothic past: Ostrogoths, Greuthungi, and Amali become the same historical actors, with a linear, organised cultural and political development suited for our understanding.

We have to be aware, though, that this is a completely theoretical construction. Even if the connection between these ethnonyms is crafted in our sources, they are still fictive narratives of ethnicity and cultural cohesion. Jordanes, for example, had a clear agenda when he subscribed to the argument that the Greuthungus Ermanaric was a Goth – the same he had when he made Zalmoxis and the other ancient Dacian figures into early Goths. The ethnogeographic discourse permeates this debate, and instead of just assuming that Goths and Greuthungi share cultural ties, we should unravel the rhetoric character of Ermanaric in the *De Origine* and understand the incentive behind this agenda.

Ermanaric is first mentioned when Jordanes constructs the genealogy of the Amali. Hence, from the start, it is established that this king was a descendant of Gaupt

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[351] Wolfram, for example, understands Ermanaric as an Ostrogoth, and uses the terms 'Ostrogoth' and 'Greuthungus' interchangeably. *Cf.* Wolfram, *Die Goten*, pp. 95–98.

[352] Heather, *The Goths*, p. 55. For more on Ermanaric and the separation of the Visigoths, see chapter 3.3.

(the legendary founder of the royal Ostrogothic clan) and Ostrogotha (the leader whom

the Ostrogoths are believed to be named after) and, at the same time, an ancient relative

of Theoderic and his successors:[353]

> Now the first of these heroes, as they themselves relate in their legends, was Gapt, who begat
> Hulmul. And Hulmul begat Augis; and Augis begat him who was called Amal, from whom
> the name of the Amali comes. This Amal begat Hisarnis. Hisarnis moreover begat Ostrogotha,
> and Ostrogotha begat Hunuil, and Hunuil likewise begat Athal. Athal begat Achiulf and
> Oduulf. Now Achiulf begat Ansila and Ediulf, Vultuulf and Ermanaric.[354]

The following mention of Ermanaric in the narrative comes in the form of a

slightly more developed version of Ammianus' account. Jordanes addresses the deeds of

the ruler and lists some of the tribes he subjugated, with very specific attention to the

Heruli (which he describes in great detail).[355] Then, having established the conquests of

Ermanaric, Jordanes follows with the origin myth of the Huns, connecting their societal

formation to the advance over Scythia and the land of the Alans, thus reaching the

dominions of Ermanaric. What follows, then, is a very interesting account of Ermanaric's

downfall and death: two brothers, members of a certain Rosomoni tribe, driven by lust

for vengeance, ambushed Ermanaric and plunged a sword into his side:

> Now although Ermanaric, king of the Goths, was the conqueror of many tribes, as we have
> said above, yet while he was deliberating on this invasion of the Huns, the treacherous tribe of
> the Rosomoni, who at that time were among those who owed him their homage, took this
> chance to catch him unawares. For when the king had given orders that a certain woman of
> the tribe [...] should be bound to wild horses and torn apart by driving them at full speed in
> opposite directions (for he was roused to fury by her husband's treachery to him), her brothers
> Sarus and Ammius came to avenge their sister's death and plunged a sword into Ermanaric's
> side. Enfeebled by this blow, he dragged out a miserable existence in bodily weakness.
> Balamber, king of the Huns, took advantage of his ill health to move an army into the country
> of the Ostrogoths, from whom the Visigoths had already separated because of some dispute.
> Meanwhile Ermanaric, who was unable to endure either the pain of his wound or the inroads

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[353] Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 95.
[354] 'Horum ergo heroum, ut ipsi suis in fabulis referunt, primus fuit Gapt, qui genuit Hulmul. Hulmul vero genuit Augis: at Augis genuit eum, qui dictus est Amal, a quo et origo Amalorum decurrit: qui Amal genuit Hisarna: Hisarnis autem genuit Ostrogotha: Ostrogotha autem genuit Hunuil: Hunuil item genuit Athal: Athal genuit Achiulf et Oduulf: Achiulf autem genuit Ansila et Ediulf, Vultuulf et Hermenerig', Jord., *Getica*, XIV, 79.
[355] *Cf*. Korkkanen. Also, Jord., *Getica*, XXIII.

of the Huns, died full of days at the great age of one hundred and ten years. The fact of his death enabled the Huns to prevail over those Goths who, as we have said, dwelt in the East and were called Ostrogoths.[356]

Ermanaric did not die immediately but dragged out an enfeebled existence. Balamber, king of the Huns, took the opportunity of Ermanaric's sudden weakness and attacked the Ostrogoths, driving the king to his death and subjugating the Goths. This domination would last until the death of Attila – who, as we will discuss, functions as a rhetorical counterpart to Ermanaric himself.[357]

A few things regarding Ermanaric in the *De Origine* have to be highlighted in order to better understand Jordanes' rhetorical framework. First of all, there is a clear connection between the king and the Amali lineage. Whereas Ammianus simply affirmed that Ermanaric was a Greuthungi prince, Jordanes places him in a preeminent position among the Ostrogothic royal family: he would become, in the *De Origine*, one of the first historically traceable kings, thus, as argued before, theoretically linking the Greuthungi and the Ostrogoths. This bond provides an established past for the Ostrogoths of Theoderic's time and reinforces the heroic deeds of the Amali family (even though Ermanaric's death brought forth Hunnic domination, this would be put to an end with the rule of Theoderic's uncles and father, great-great-nephews of Ermanaric, according to Jordanes).[358]

Secondly, there is the political position of Ermanaric and his exploits as a conqueror of tribes. Jordanes did not solely deviate from Ammianus account, but certainly

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[356] 'Nam Hermanaricus, rex Gothorum, licet, ut superius retulimus, multarum gentium extiterat triumphator, de Hunnorum tamen adventu dum cogitat, Rosomonorum gens infida, quae tunc inter alias illi famulatum exhibebat, tali eum nanciscitur occasione decipere. Dum enim quandam mulierem [...] ex gente memorata pro mariti fraudulento discessu rex furore commotus equis ferocibus inligatam incitatisque cursibus per diversa divelli praecipisset, fratres eius Sarus et Ammius, germanae obitum vindicantes, Hermanarici latus ferro petierunt; quo vulnere saucius egram vitam corporis inbecillitate contraxit. Quam adversam eius valitudinem captans Balamber rex Hunnorum in Ostrogotharum parte movit procinctum, a quorum societate iam Vesegothae quadam inter se intentione seiuncti habebantur. Inter haec Hermanaricus tam vulneris dolore quam etiam Hunnorum incursionibus non ferens grandevus et plenus dierum centesimo decimo anno vitae suae defunctus est. Cuius mortis occasio dedit Hunnis praevalere in Gothis illis, quos dixeramus orientali plaga sedere et Ostrogothas nuncupari', Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 129-130.
[357] Christensen, p. 160.
[358] Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII, 246-252.

also expanded it. The fourth-century writer only hinted at Ermanaric's successes, leaving the actual implication of it open to interpretation. Jordanes filled the gap with a list of dominated tribes and an analogy with Alexander the Great: 'He subdued many warlike peoples of the north and made them obey his laws, and some of our ancestors have justly compared him to Alexander the Great'.[359] Among the groups who were brought together under the banner of the Gothic/Greuthingi king, only the Heruli and the Venethi are more or less known to modern historiography.[360] The lengthy account on the Heruli is notable:

> But though famous for his conquest of so many races, he [Ermanaric] gave himself no rest until he had slain some in battle and then reduced to his sway the remainder of the tribe of the Heruli, whose chief was Alaric. Now the aforesaid race, as the historian Ablabius tells us, dwelt near Lake Maeotis in swampy places which the Greeks call *hele*; hence they were named Heluri. They were a people swift of foot, and on that account were the more swollen with pride, for there was at that time no race that did not choose from them its light-armed troops for battle. But though their quickness often saved them from others who made war upon them, yet they were overthrown by the slowness and steadiness of the Goths; and the lot of fortune brought it to pass that they, as well as the other tribes, had to serve Ermanaric, king of the Getae.[361]

The connection with the Maeotic lands is regarded as having given the ethnic name to the Heruli. This Greek justification for the etymology can be confusing, given

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[359] '[...] Hermanaricus nobilissimus Amalorum in regno successit, qui multas et bellicosissimas arctoi gentes perdomuit suisque parere legibus fecit. Quem merito nonnulli Alexandro Magno conparavere maiores', Jord., *Getica*, XXIII, 116.

[360] The Venethi are a famed and controversial people. Historians, notably Florin Curta, tend to see the Venethi as early Slavs, thus arguing in favour of a linguistic/cultural continuity in the Slavic world, going at least as back as Jordanes. *Cf.* Curta, *The Making of the Slavs*, p. 13. ;Curta, 'Hiding Behind a Piece of Tapestry: Jordanes and the Slavic Venethi'. For the other tribes, *cf.* Korkkanen. It has to be stated that other people have argued in favour of identifying some of the tribes in Jordanes with early Slavic peoples. These ideas are generally motivated by ethnic affiliations and, more often than not, ignore the cultural 'ethnodiscourse' of the *De Origine*, *cf.* S. V. Yartsev, 'Back to the List of Ermanaric's People', *Belgogrod State University Scientific Bulletin: History, Political Science, Economics, Information Technologies*, 32.21 (2014), 35–42; I. V. Zinkovskaia, 'On New Approaches to Interpretation of the Northern Peoples List in Jordanes's 'Getica'', *Ètnografičeskoe Obozrenie*, 4 (2011), 123–33. Also, M. Kazanski, 'Les Arctoi Gentes et 'L'empire' d'Hermanaric', *Germania*, 70.1 (1922), 75–122.

[361] 'Sed cum tantorum servitio clarus haberetur, non passus est nisi et gentem Herulorum, quibus praeerat Halaricus, magna ex parte trucidatam reliquam suae subegeret dicioni. Nam praedicta gens, Ablavio istorico referente, iuxta Meotida palude inhabitans in locis stagnantibus, quas Greci ele vocant, Eluri nominati sunt, gens quantum velox, eo amplius superbissima. Nulla si quibid. erat tunc gens, quae non levem armaturam in acie sua ex ipsis elegeret. Sed quamvis velocitas eorum ab aliis crebro bellantibus evagaret, Gothorum tamen stabilitate subiacuit et tarditati, fecitque causa fortunae, ut et ipsi inter reliquas gentes Getarum regi Hermanarico servirent', Jord., *Getica*, XXIII, 117-118.

that the Huns also originated in the lake Maeotis, according to Jordanes (and the reference

to *Hele* does not appear anywhere else in the narrative). Therefore, the contrived rhetoric

seems to establish both Heruli and Huns on different sides of the Maeotis: while the

former are closer to Greek areas of influence, the latter are said to inhabit the farthest

margins of the lake (the Eastern margin).[362] Such a geographical framework is interesting,

and could be seen as a rhetorical foreshadowing of Heruli importance after the

dismantling of Attila's confederacy, which will be discussed in the next chapter.[363]

Moreover, besides the comparative pairing with the Huns, Jordanes also connects the

Heruli with the Goths, at least at a discursive level: our author contrasts the quality of

speed and swiftness of the Heruli to the Gothic steadfastness, a trope that he has used

before when differentiating Goths and Gepids.[364] Certainly, the connection between

ethnonyms and physical or moral characteristics is not unique – it is, in fact, a *topos* of

ethnographical texts –[365] but in Jordanes, it seems to serve a very specific goal: to create

bonds and hierarchical connections between groups that were important to him (mainly

Goths, Huns, Heruli, Gepids, and Alans). In addition to the Huns and the Heruli being

linked, Jordanes also uses this passage of Ermanaric to develop the connection between

Huns and Alans. After narrating the origin of the Hunnic people, he follows the text of

Ammianus and narrates the dominance of the Huns over the Alans. In this context, he

claims that both tribes are alike in everything but manner and civility.[366] The grotesque

appearance and customs of the Huns are very similar to what he found in Ammianus –

and the borrowing of Jordanes becomes even clearer when compared to his accounts of

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[362] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV.
[363] Heather, 'The Huns and Barbarian Europe', p. 224.
[364] Jord., *Getica,* XVII, 94-96.
[365] Concerning the attributes assigned to ethnonyms in a nomadic context, *cf.* R. G. Kuzeev, 'Historical Stratification of Generic and Tribal Names and Their Role in the Ethnogenetic Study of Turkic Peoples of Eastern Europe, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia', in *The Nomadic Alternative: Modes and Models of Interaction in the African-Asian Deserts and Steppes*, ed. by W. Weissleder (Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), pp. 147–66 (p. 161).
[366] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 126.

the Hunnic society in the times of Attila, which completely deviates from these *topoi*, as we discussed earlier.[367] Even though this specific passage might have been inspired by the fourth-century text, it still has prime importance in the rhetorical scheme of Jordanes: in the *De Origine*, he wrote that his grandfather worked under the command of an Alanic leader, called Candac, which most certainly suggests that Jordanes had personal ties (or, at the very least, a family history) with Alanic elites.[368] Therefore, out of personal and possibly political goals, Jordanes uses the symbolic authoritative presence of Ermanaric to create a chain of connected tribes, both in lineage and in political maneuvering: the ancestral Goths migrated to Scythian lands and gave origin to the Huns, who in turn incorporated Heruli and Alans, then dominated Goths, fulfilling a historical circle and imposing rule over those who begot their people. This allegorical circle closes the first stage of Amali history in the *De Origine*, from their origin, to their rise, to their first subservient phase.[369]

Thirdly, there is the issue of the division between Ostrogoths and Visigoths and the place of Ermanaric in this separation. In this passage, Jordanes mentions that 'Balamber, king of the Huns, took advantage of his ill health to move an army into the country of the Ostrogoths, from whom the Visigoths had already separated because of some dispute.'[370] This, of course, would mean that Ermanaric was the king of an already established part of the Gothic people, the Greuthingi/Ostrogoths. Jordanes is inconsistent with this information though, and later on, states that 'It appears that at the death of their king, Ermanaric, they were made a separate people by the departure of the Visigoths, and

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[367] Jordanes' narration of the times of Attila includes the famous description of the Hunnic 'capital', made by Priscus. Jord., *Getica*, XXXIV, 178-179.

[368] Jord., *Getica*, L, 266; Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 20–21. Also, see chapter XXXX.

[369] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV.

[370] 'Quam adversam eius valitudinem captans Balamber rex Hunnorum in Ostrogotharum parte movit procinctum, a quorum societate iam Vesegothae quadam inter se intentione seiuncti habebantur', Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 130.

remained in their country subject to the sway of the Huns'.[371] This is the second and last time Ermanaric is mentioned, and it comes when Jordanes proceeds to narrate the history of the Ostrogoths specifically. The internal logic of the *De Origine* becomes rather unclear when it deals with the separation of the Gothic people into two major groups, but it is safe to say that Ermanaric has a somewhat pivotal role in that element of the narrative: although inconsistent, the author felt the need to include Ermanaric in his explanation whenever he was dealing with the split between Gothic tribes. It is important to address this element because, as stated before, Ermanaric embodies a discursive role that points to the beginning of the Hunnic domination, a topic dear to Jordanes and fundamental to the understanding of the *De Origine*. Once Ermanaric is placed in the centre of the dissociation between Visigoths and Ostrogoths, it becomes apparent that the Huns were indubitably linked to the Ostrogoths – as it is over them that, from Balamber to Attila, Hunnic dominance will fall. Therefore, with Ermanaric as a rhetoric tool, Jordanes conveys the glorious past of this family, the Hunnic domination over them, and sets up the ground for the rest of the story, with the fall of Attila, the rise of Theoderic and the political vicissitudes in *Magna Dacia*.

To conclude, what can we take from the role of Ermanaric in relation to the narrative logic of the *De Origine*? In contrast to the more common assumption that qualifies him as an illustrious Gothic king – and therefore an example of Ostrogothic (and Amali) legitimacy and antiquity – I argue that he is, in fact, a necessary force of narrative shift rather than just a Gothic king. This means that Ermanaric has the rhetoric role of establishing certain elements within the story: his appearance in the text marks the introduction of the Huns, the division between Visigoths and Ostrogoths, and the connections between the history of the Getae and the Heruli, the Alans, and the Huns.[372]

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[371] 'Quos constat morte Hermanarici regis sui, decessione a Vesegothis divisos, Hunnorum subditos dicioni, in eadem patria remorasse', Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII, 246.
[372] For the Huns as *Getae*, see chapter 4.1 and 3.1.

His main function, however, is to showcase the development of *Magna Dacia*: he is the first Amali (not including the eponymous Amal and other Goths listed in the Amali genealogy) properly mentioned in the text and, as such, is the first 'historical' *hegemon* of *Magna Dacia*. He is, then, the culmination of the authority first established with Berig and migration from Scandza. Yet, he is also the *last Getic*/Gothic independent ruler of the Balkans before Theoderic and his uncles. In order words, he is the final chapter of the heroic Gothic past. His death is the textual cue to the rise of the Huns as the the new sovereigns of *Magna Dacia* and to the separation of the Goths into two groups. A similar change in *status quo* would only happen again with the death of Attila – and that is why, rhetorically, we can see Ermanaric and Attila as interconnected points of the same historical cycle: the fall and rise of the Amali and the recent past of *Magna Dacia*: the first points to the subjugation of the Ostrogoths and *fall* of the Amali family; the latter marks the independence of the Ostrogoths and the *rise* of the Amali family (at least until the Gothic Wars of Justinian).

Berig to Ermanaric	Balamber to Attila	Theoderic to Justinian
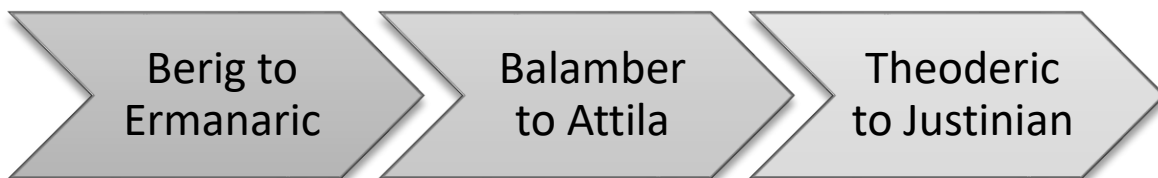
It is not a coincidence, then, that after the death of Ermanaric in chapter 25, the narrative changes drastically and Jordanes has to address Visigoths and Ostrogoths separately. They only become a more or less cohesive group again, narratively, around the time of the death of Attila, in chapter 49. The vicissitudes of the Goths/*Geta* is attached to the development of *Magna Dacia* – which, in turn, is marked by the rise and fall of important figures, namely Ermanaric and Attila.

3.3 – DIVISION AMONG THE KIN: THE BALTHI

The argument that the *De Origine* is indeed a narrative of Gothic history gains apparent support through the exposition of Visigothic history. By dividing the book into two storylines – the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths –, Jordanes gives the impression of historical veracity, that is, an impression that his efforts are aimed at describing the development of Gothic people and, once it reached a certain point in the fourth century, it is just expected that he focuses on the Amali and the Balthi lineages separately.[373] This assumption could be misguided, however. As we will discuss further below, the story of the Visigoths is derivative from the main Dacian argument and its vicissitudes are attached to the political outcomes in the Balkans. The focal link between these two seemingly separate threads is the rivalry between Huns and Visigoths, and this will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter. But, for now, let us explore how Jordanes constructs the Visigothic narrative and how it is an offshoot of *Magna Dacia*.

First of all, we have to understand how, and why, the separation between Ostrogoths and Visigoths takes place in the *De Origine*. In this sense, Jordanes is contradictory, as he gives us two different, conflicting moments for the divorce: before and after the death of Ermanaric. The first account reads:

> Balamber, king of the Huns, took advantage of his ill health to move an army into the country of the Ostrogoths, from whom the Visigoths had already separated because of some dispute. Meanwhile Ermanaric, who was unable to endure either the pain of his wound or the inroads of the Huns, died full of days at the great age of one hundred and ten years. The fact of his death enabled the Huns to prevail over those Goths who, as we have said, dwelt in the East and were called Ostrogoths.[374]

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[373] J. L. Abadía, '¿Godos O Visigodos En España?', *Anuario de Historia Del Derecho Español*, 60 (1990), 655–90 (pp. 659–61).

[374] 'Quam adversam eius valitudinem captans Balamber rex Hunnorum in Ostrogotharum parte movit procinctum, a quorum societate iam Vesegothae quadam inter se intentione seiuncti habebantur. Inter haec Hermanaricus tam vulneris dolore quam etiam Hunnorum incursionibus non ferens grandevus et plenus dierum centesimo decimo anno vitae suae defunctus est. Cuius mortis occasio dedit Hunnis praevalere in Gothis illis, quos dixeramus orientali plaga sedere et Ostrogothas nuncupari', Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 130.

The second account comes later in the text. After the narrative of the exploits of the Visigoths and their rivalry with the Huns, Jordanes writes:

> Since I have followed the stories of my ancestors and retold to the best of my ability the tale of the period when both tribes, Ostrogoths and Visigoths, were united, and then clearly treated of the Visigoths apart from the Ostrogoths, I must now return to those ancient Scythian abodes and set forth in like manner the ancestry and deeds of the Ostrogoths. It appears that at the death of their king, Ermanaric, they were made a separate people by the departure of the Visigoths, and remained in their country subject to the sway of the Huns; yet Vinitharius of the Amali retained the insignia of his rule.[375]

We can learn a few interesting things from these passages alone. The first quotation comes early in the *De Origine*. At this stage, the narrative had already explored the mythical past of the Goths, from their migration to Scythia to the rule of historical Dacian kings, such as Zalmoxis and Burebistas. As discussed before, the inclusion of Ermanaric in the text brings about a level of historical veracity and enters the realm of the recent past. In this sense, Ermanaric is a key rhetorical tool in the *De Origine*: he encapsulates not only a shift in the narrative (into a position of historical veracity) but also the rise of the Huns over the Goths and the end of Getic hegemony in *Magna Dacia*. It is understandable, therefore, that the flight of the Visigoths comes in when the story takes this narrative turn. The first segment of the *De Origine*, that is, the *pseudo-history* of the Getae in Scythia comes to an end and, with that, the unity in the fictive Gothic ethnicity. Their political unity is broken down into two different sides: one is the Ostrogothic submission to Balamber and his successors, and the other is the attempt of the Visigoths to establish themselves in the Roman Empire – far away from their Scythian abodes. It is interesting, however, that Jordanes states that the division had already

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[375] 'Et quia, dum utrique gentes, tam Ostrogothae quam etiam Vesegothae, in uno essent, ut valui, maiorum sequens dicta revolvi divisosque Vesegothas ab Ostrogothis ad liquidum sum prosecutus, necesse nobis est iterum ad antiquas eorum Scythicas sedes redire et Ostrogotharum genealogia actusque pari tenore exponere. Quos constat morte Hermanarici regis sui, decessione a Vesegothis divisos, Hunnorum subditos dicioni, in eadem patria remorasse, Vinithario tamen Amalo principatus sui insignia retinente', Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII, 246.

happened when Ermanaric found himself in his death bed: 'a quorum societate iam Vesegothae quadam inter se intentione seiuncti habebantur.' Before the passing of the king, says the author, some dispute had already separated the Gothic nations. We do not know what was the cause of this dispute. Immediately, in the next chapter, Jordanes says the Visigoths fled in fear of the Huns. Perhaps, then, the dispute was motivated by disagreements in the *modus operandi* to deal with the imminent Hunnic attack.[376]

Even though we are unable to scrutinise further the real meaning of these 'disputes,' it can be said that the narrative intentions of Jordanes with this inference are quite clear: he does not want to place the Visigoths under the sway of the Huns. Later on, when Attila attacks the West, the Goths of Gaul *have* to be seen as a hostile force towards Attila. Their relation to the Huns has to belligerent in essence, not political. With an early divorce, Jordanes can depict the Visigoths defecting Ermanaric in a delicate moment and, at the same time, leave them out of the new order in *Magna Dacia*.

As the narrative goes on and Jordanes returns to Ostrogothic affairs, he makes himself very clear about the rhetorical process: the *De Origine* explores the united Goths in Dacia, it then shifts the focus westwards with the Visigoths, just to finally return to the 'Scythian abodes' and resume the narrative of Goths/Huns. He justifies this choice by saying that, since the Visigoths fled from their homeland at the death of Ermanaric, it was necessary to follow them. In certain aspects, this affirmation contradicts that first one. Ermanaric, here, could probably be considered to be the king of the Visigoths as well, as Jordanes says that Visigoths and Ostrogoths became separate groups at the death of that king, '[…] constat morte Hermanarici regis sui, decessione a Vesegothis divisos.' It could be just semantics, but this statement seems to imply that it was the death of Ermanaric

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[376] L. R. Silva and R. C. D. Diniz, 'Relações de Poder Na Crônica de Idácio E Nas Histórias de Isidoro de Sevilha: Um Estudo Comparado Sobre Suevos E Visigodos', in *Poder E Trabalho: Experiências Em História Comparada*, ed. by F. S. Lessa (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad, 2008), pp. 35–58 (pp. 48–49).

and the rise of the Huns that caused the political rupture between the Goths. If that is the

case, those 'disputes' could not have happened before his reign, as claimed earlier in the

De Origine.[377] Either way, Jordanes seems to be at least confused when it comes to the

moment in which the Gothic branches got separated, but we can postulate that it happened

just before or just after the death of Ermanaric – as it is, this king functions as the shifting

point of the narrative, as argued earlier.

If Ermanaric represents a change in tone in the story and opens the path to a

reconfiguration of the *status quo* among the people of *Magna Dacia* (through the fall of

the 'Eastern Goths' and the rise of the Huns), we could assume that the Visigoths

themselves, becoming preponderant actors from this point on, also exert some sort of

rhetorical role. If the Amali are the main Goths within the *De Origine*,[378] what are the

Balthi and the Visigoths?

First of all, what is a Visigoth? At first, that seems like an easy question. Visigoths

are the Goths who moved into Gaul after the crossing of the Danube, then were defeat by

the Franks at Vouillé and established a kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula, remaining there

until the arrival of the Berbers from North Africa.[379] Moreover, they supposedly are

named Visigoths because they are the 'Goths from the West,' in opposition to the 'Goths

from the East,' Ostrogoths:

> Now Ablabius the historian relates that in Scythia, where we have said that they were dwelling
> above an arm of the Pontic Sea, part of them who held the eastern region and whose king was

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[377] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 130.

[378] Christensen, p. 82; Heather, 'Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals: Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination'; Tönnies.

[379] There is an established tradition of Visigothic studies in Spain, Brasil and Argentina. For selected works, *cf*. P. C. Diaz and R. Valverde Castro, 'Goths Confronting Goths: Ostrogothic Political Relations in Hispania', in *The Ostrogoths from the Migration Period to the Sixth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by S. J. B. Barnish and F. Marazzi (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 353–86; R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain, 409-711* (Oxford; Malden: Blackwell, 2004); R. Frighetto, *Cultura E Poder Na Antiguidade Tardia Ocidental* (Curitiba: Juruá, 2000); H. Wolfram, *Die Goten: von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts: Entwurf einer Historischen Ethnographie* (C.H. Beck, 1990); L. A. García Moreno, *Prosopografía Del Reino Visigodo de Toledo* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1974).

Ostrogotha, were called Ostrogoths, that is, eastern Goths, either from his name or from the place. But the rest were called Visigoths, that is, the Goths of the western country.[380]

However, as Abadía stated:

Dado que 'visigodo' no puede oponerse a 'godo', tiene que haber un contrario, y unánimemente se acepta que éste es el 'ostrogodo'. Parece que una distinción entre visigodos y ostrogodos no ha sido posible antes de fines del siglo IV o principios del siglo V, pues no la emplea Amiano Marcelino ni ningún otro coetáneo. Una de las menciones oficiales más antiguas puede ser la del Rey Teodorico hacia el año 500 al dirigirse a Alarico como 'rey de los visigodos', siempre que la epístola no haya sido manipulada. Sólo Jornandes parece haber considerado la distinción entre visigodos y ostrogodos anterior a la irrupción de los hunos, lo que la historiografía moderna ha considerado con mucho recelo.[381]

We could probably say that, in the early sixth century, the Visigoths were a political invention of Ostrogothic propaganda – it certainly made sense to Theoderic to commission this idea: as the king of the Goths in Italy and purported representative of the imperial crown at the heart of the *pars occidentalis*,[382] Theoderic was likely to embellish and craft legitimacy to his political position and his dynasty, the Amali, in order to create contrast and appear superior to the group of Goths who were already established in Southern Gaul.[383] Through the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, we can see that Alaric and his followers were always called *Visigoths*, in opposition to the purer *Goths* of Theoderic.[384] The political creation of two Gothic branches (or, at least, the distinction between *Goths* and *Visigoths*) certainly reached Jordanes, but we can, to a certain degree, dismiss the

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[380] 'Ablabius enim storicus refert, quia ibi super limbum Ponti, ubi eos diximus in Scythia commanere, ibi pars eorum, qui orientali plaga tenebat, eisque praeerat Ostrogotha, utrum ab ipsius nomine, an a loco, id est orientales, dicti sunt Ostrogothae, residui vero Vesegothae, id est a parte occidua', Jord., *Getica*, XIV, 82.

[381] Abadía, pp. 657–58.

[382] Y. Hen, *Roman Barbarians: The Royal Court and Culture in the Early Middle Ages* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 27–58.

[383] Arnold, pp. 57–70.

[384] R. Kasperski, 'Two Amali Peregrinations to the Kingdom of Visigoths: How Theoderic the Great and Eutharic Legitimised Their Authority over the 'United' Goths', *Acta Poliniae Historica*, 105 (2012), 5–15.

possibility that only reason for the ethnic separation in the *De Origine* was the Cassiodorian influence, and we will see why.

Whereas Cassiodorus was incorporating Amali propaganda but separating and singling out the Visigoths, Jordanes seems to have a deeper agenda. First of all, while the *Variae* presents a distinction between general Goths and Visigoths – although recognising the kinship among them –[385] Jordanes establishes an older, more clear-cut distinction between them: in the *De Origine*, they assume the shape (and ethnonym) of *Ostrogoths* and *Visigoths*. As Abadía reminded us, Jordanes might the first author to state this difference by locating it before (or, as we saw, during) the irruption of the Huns. This issue goes further: Jordanes is, most probably, the first author to not only differentiate them but to also name them based on geographical positions and ruling families. This means that, contrary to what Cassiodorus (and Theoderic) might have wished, Ostrogoths, in the *De Origine*, are not *pure* Goths, but are themselves part of a select, separated group. In Jordanes, there cannot be a pure Gothic stock while Visigoths and Ostrogoths exist as different political, social, and cultural entities.

In other words, Cassiodorus creates the Visigoths as political actors in contrast to Theoderic's Goths, while Jordanes devises an ethnic narrative that completely incorporates a political but also cultural division between Goths that predates the establishment of either kingdom – Visigothic and Ostrogothic.[386] This ethnic narrative goes beyond the political discourse and stands upon the idea of a totalising, *Grand Narrative* of the Getae. This means that the divorce between the Gothic kin is fundamental

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[385] There are 3 references to the word *visigotharum* in the *Variae*, all refering to the followers of Alaric. It seems to be a political statement. Cass., *Var*., III, 1, 1 – 3. There are no reference to the ethnonym besided the eponymous Ostrogotha in Cassi., *Var*., XI, 1, 19.

[386] O. L. V. Pinto, 'Átila, Rei Dos Ostrogodos? Um Estudo Acerca de Identidades Imaginárias Na Antiguidade Tardia', *História E Cultura*, 2.3 (2014), 318–31 (pp. 326–238).

to understand the genesis and development of the Goths as a people, a nation, a political institution in the fifth and sixth century.

In the vein of a hegemonic *Grand Narrative*, Jordanes interweaves the origin, the development and the fate of all the *gentes* that compose his ethnolabel *Geta.* Even if circumstances in the story make Goths, Huns and Gepids different people, they are, in essence, part of the same cultural sphere. This means that the narrative thread of the *De Origine* follow a logic that postulates that this variety of people are connected and, when separated, they perform a certain role within the story. As we will discuss further ahead, Huns, for example, appear in the tale as an unnatural derivation of the Getae, and their origins is explored in a point of the text in which they will perform some role: in their case, they appear in order to bring Ermanaric down and establish a new power in the Balkans.[387] A similar thing happens to the Visigoths – as such, they come up when the Hunnic power shift takes place, and Jordanes narrates their exploits in the Roman Empire up to the point in which they fight the Huns and, therefore, return the story to its original place: *Magna Dacia* and the deeds of the Amali after the death of Attila.[388]

It is between Ermanaric and Attila, then, that the story of the Visigoths takes place. Jordanes starts by telling us that, after the incursions of Balamber into Ostrogothic territories, the Visigoths were in fear for their safety and decided to bargain, with emperor Valens, lands in the Roman Balkans in which they could inhabit. In opposition to the previous unity brought upon by Ermanaric, the Visigoths were now led by three princes: Fritigern, Alatheus, and Safrax –[389] and Jordanes is quick to notice that these men were nor kings:

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[387] Jord., *Getica*, XXIX.
[388] The story of the Visigoths goes from Jord., *Getica* XXV to XLVIII – out of 23 chapter, around 11 deal with the relationship between Visigoths and Huns.
[389] It is quite interesting that Jordanes does not seem to refer to Alatheus and Safrax as Ostrogoths – since they are supposed to be Greuthungi leaders.

Their princes and the leaders who ruled them in place of kings, that is Fritigern, Alatheus and Safrax, began to lament the plight of their army and begged Lupicinus and Maximus, the Roman commanders, to negotiate.[390]

Their tale starts with difficulty and famine – all the while they are kingless. Jordanes follows up with the Battle of Adrianople and the succession of Roman emperors, narrating how they dealt and negotiated with the Visigoths, now led by king Athanaric, the successor of *dux* Fritigern.[391] At this point, the narrative introduces us to Alaric and to the Balthi, a royal family of the Visigoths and akin to the Amali in terms of glory and valour:

> He [Alaric] was of a famous stock, and his nobility was second only to that of the Amali, for he came from the family of the Balthi, who because of their daring valor had long ago received among their race the name *Baltha,* that is, Bold.[392]

There are a number of things to be taken from this passage. First of all, this is the moment in which we are properly introduced to the Balthi, although they have been mentioned before.[393] They are depicted as the second most important lineage among the Getae – after the Amali.[394] Moreover, even though Jordanes does not explicitly say how

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[390] '[…] coeperuntque primates eorum et duces, qui regum vice illis praeerant, id est Fritigernus, Alatheus et Safrac, exercitus inopiam condolere negotiationemque a Lupicino Maximoque Romanorum ducum expetere', Jord., *Getica*, XXVI, 134. In Mierow's, *negotiationem* is translated as 'open a market'.

[391] On the historicity of this topic, note XXX and *cf.* R. Eisenberg, 'The Battle of Adrianople: A Reappraisal', *Hirundo*, 8 (2009), 108–20; T. S. Burns, 'The Battle of Adrianopole: A Reconsideration', *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 22.2 (1973), 336–45.

[392] '[...] cui erat post Amalos secunda nobilitas Balthorumque ex genere origo mirifica, qui dudum ob audacia virtutis Baltha, id est audax, nomen inter suos acceperat', Jord., *Getica,* XXIX, 146.

[393] Jord., *Getica*, V, 42.

[394] The lineage of the Balthi is quite central to scholars dealing with early Visigothic history. Although Jordanes seems to be the first and only source to mention this dinasty, his statement – that the Visigoths were led by this aristocratic family – is taken more or less at face value, *cf.* R. Frighetto, 'Símbolos E Rituais: Os Mecanismos de Poder Político No Reino Hispano Visigodo de Toledo (Séculos VI - VII)', *Anos 90*, 22 (2015), 239–72; M. M. Mantel, 'Monarquía, Matrimonio, Sucesión Y Legitimación Del Poder (Siglos V-VII)', *Estudios de Historia de España*, 15 (2013), 31–51; R. Frighetto, 'Religião E Política Na Antiguidade Tardia: Os Godos Entre O Arianismo E O Paganismo No Século IV', *Dimensões*, 25 (2010), 114–30; M. R. Valverde Castro, 'La Monarquía Visigoda Y Política Matrimonial: El Reino Visigodo de Toledo', *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua*, 18 (2000), 331–55; M. R. Valverde, 'De Atanarico a Valia: Aproximación a Los Orígenes de La Monarquía Visigoda', *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua*, 12 (1994), 143–58.

old this group is, it could be understood that they are, perhaps, ancestral – *dudum*. Certainly, a case could be made that, in Latin, *dudum* means 'in the recent past,' but it could also mean 'formerly.' Either way, the quantity of time implied in Jordanes' sentence is unclear, but the fact that *Baltha* is said to mean 'Bold' and, in the Gothic language, *Balþs* indeed means 'Bold', it could imply that this nickname had been around at least after Gothic reached the shape and form that it had in the times of our author – assuming that this name was ever used.[395] It is interesting, nonetheless, that while the Amali lineage took its name from a mythical forefather, the Balthi (or, more specifically, the family of Alaric) were known by an epithet – and perhaps this was Jordanes' way of pointing a degree of hierarchy and legitimacy between Amali and Balthi.

Secondly, this reference to the Balthi hints at the narrative function that this lineage has in relation to the rhetorical logic of the *De Origine*. The first mention to this lineage comes early on in the text: 'The Visigoths served the family of the Balthi and the Ostrogoths served the renowned Amali.'[396] From the start, it becomes clear that, in the text, Visigoths and Ostrogoths are personified in their ruling families.[397] The second mention, stated above, introduces the Balthi to the story and states that Alaric, ruler of the Visigoths, is a member of the illustrious stock. The third and last mention to the Balthi, much subtle, calls them Alarici:

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[395] *Baltha*, from *Balþs*, 'bold', attested as the adverb *Balþaba*, 'boldly'. W. P. Lehmann, H. J. J. Hewitt and S. Feist, *A Gothic Etymological Dictionary* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. 60.

[396] '[...] Vesegothae familiae Balthorum, Ostrogothae praeclaris Amalis serviebant', Jord., *Getica,* V, 42.

[397] The idea of ruling elites composed by warlords as the defining trait of ethnic identity is quite strong among certain Visigothic scholars. Probably inspired by Wenskus' argument of *Traditionskern*, these scholars tend to assume a Germanist position and, because of the belligerent nature of this proposed ethnic elites, also consider groups like Visigoths to be part of a wider Germanic wave, *cf.* F. Guzmán Armario, '¿Germanismo O Romanismo? Una Espinosa Cuestión En El Tránsito Del Mundo Antiguo a La Edad Media: El Caso de Los Visigodos', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 35.1 (2005), 3–23; L. A. García Moreno, '¿Por Qué Los Godos Fueron Arrianos?', in *Tempus Implendi Promissa: Homenaje Al Prof. Dr. Domingos Ramos-Lissón*, ed. by E. Reinhardt (Pamplona: Eunsa, 2000), pp. 187–207; L. A. García Moreno, 'Una Hipótesis Germanista En Los Orígenes de Aragón', *Anuario de Historia Del Derecho Español*, 67 (1997), 633–41; A. M. J. Garnica, 'El Papel de la Épica en la Confección de la Dinastía Goda de Tolosa: una Hipótesis', *Antiquité Tardive*, 3 (1993), 159–65; L. A. García Moreno, *Historia de España Visigoda* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989).

He [Euric] was succeeded by his own son Alaric, the ninth in succession from the famous Alaric the Great to receive the kingdom of the Visigoths. For even as it happened to the line of the Augusti, as we have stated above, so too it appears in the line of the Alarici, that kingdoms often come to an end in kings who bear the same name as those at the beginning.[398]

Although Jordanes does not employ the word *Balthi*, it is clear that he is referring to them, as the Alarici are the family of Alaric, and he was, after all, a Balthus. This means that the protagonism of the Visigoths, in the *De Origine*, starts with Alaric and ends with Alaric II – and after this passage, Jordanes returns to the Ostrogoths and their deeds after the death of Attila.[399]

Moreover, if we consider that from the introduction of Alaric and the death of Alaric II Jordanes builds up the Visigothic kingdom as a Roman-friendly political machine that is, narratively, dependent on the Huns – that is, their story, in the *De Origine*, seems to focus on their conflict with Attila – we can better understand how they are connected to the original Dacian *locus*, even if they move West. Their logic within the text is indubitably attached to the core argument of *Magna Dacia* and to the fate of the Getic people (Huns and Ostrogoths, to be precise).

The tale of the Visigoths, then, ends with the passing of Alaric II and their reincorporation into the Ostrogothic stock through the marriage between Amalaswintha and Eutharic:

[…] Beremod [descendant of Ermanaric], at last grew to despise the race of the Ostrogoths because of the overlordship of the Huns, and so had followed the tribe of the Visigoths to the western country, and it was from him Veteric was descended. Veteric also had a son Eutharic, who married Amalaswintha, the daughter of Theoderic, thus uniting again the stock of the Amali which had divided long ago. Eutharic begat Athalaric and Matheswintha. But since Athalaric died in the years of his boyhood, Matheswintha was taken to Constantinople by her

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[398] 'Huic successit proprius filius Alarichus, qui nonus in numero ab illo Alarico magno regnum adeptus est Vesegotharum. Nam pari tenore, ut de Augustis superius diximus, et in Alaricis provenisse cognoscitur, et in eos saepe regna deficiunt, a quorum nominibus inchoarunt', Jord., *Getica*, XLVII, 245.
[399] Jord. *Getica*, XLVIII.

second husband, namely Germanus, a cousin of the Emperor Justinian, and bore a posthumous son, whom she named Germanus.[400]

This is quite an interesting passage because, even though Eutharic, Veteric, and Beremod were among the Visigoths – and thus became Visigoths – they were not Balthi, but rather Amali. The reunion of both groups ends up as a reunion of the Amali lineage, 'Amalorum stirpe iam divisa coniunxit.' This is further proof that, textually, the role of the Visigoths is confined to the deeds of the Balthi, and the deeds of the Balthi, in the *De Origine*, is to fight with the Huns and provide a stage to Attila and the fate of *Magna Dacia*. Jordanes, after all, is clear when he says that the Visigoths were ruled by the Balthi, and this lineage is only featured from Alaric to Alaric II (with Athaulf, Sigeric, Wallia, Theoderic, Thorismod, Theoderic II and Euric between them).[401] The quick succession of this dynasty can even be contrasted with the longer, more complex genealogy of the Amali:[402]

THE BALTHI ACCORDING TO JORDANES:

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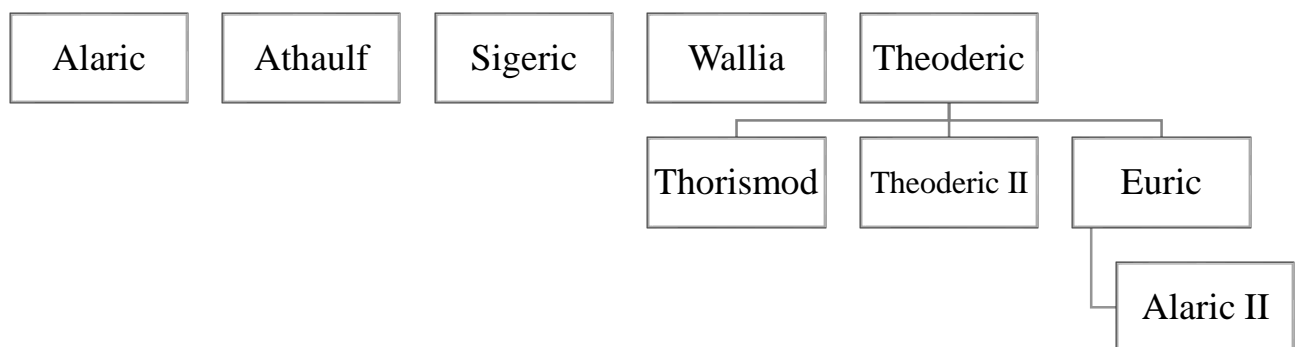
[400] '[…] Beremud iam contempta Ostrogotharum gente propter Hunnorum dominio ad partes Hesperias Vesegotharum fuisset gente secutus, de quo et ortus est Vetericus. Veterici quoque filius natus est Eutharicus, qui iunctus Amalasuenthae filiae Theodorici, item Amalorum stirpe iam divisa coniunxit et genuit Athalaricum et Mathesuentam. Sed quia Athalaricus in annis puerilibus defunctus est, Mathesuenta Constantinopolim allata de secundo uiro, id est Germano fratruele Iustiniani imperatoris, genuit postumum filium, quem nominavit Germanum', Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII, 251.
[401] Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, p. 243.
[402] The Amali geneaolgy of Jordanes does not include people who recognisebly belong to that kin, such as Gunthigis; earlier Gothic rulers, such as Berig and Filimer; Gothic heroes, such as Vidigoia; nor Dacian/Scythian/Getic kings, such as Zalmoxis, Burebistas or Tanausis.

THE AMALI ACCORDING TO JORDANES:

Gapt
— Hulmul
— Augis
— Amal
— Hisarnis
— Ostrogotha
— Hunuil
— Athal
  — Achiulf
    — Ermanaric
      — Hunimod
        — Thorismod
          — Beremod
            — Veteric
              — Eutharic
    — Ediulf
    — Vultulf
      — Valaravans
        — Vinitharius
          — Vandalarius
            — Thiudimer
              — Theoderic
                — Amalaswintha
                  — Athalaric
                  — Mathaswintha
            — Valamer
            — Vidimer
    — Ansila
  — Odoulf
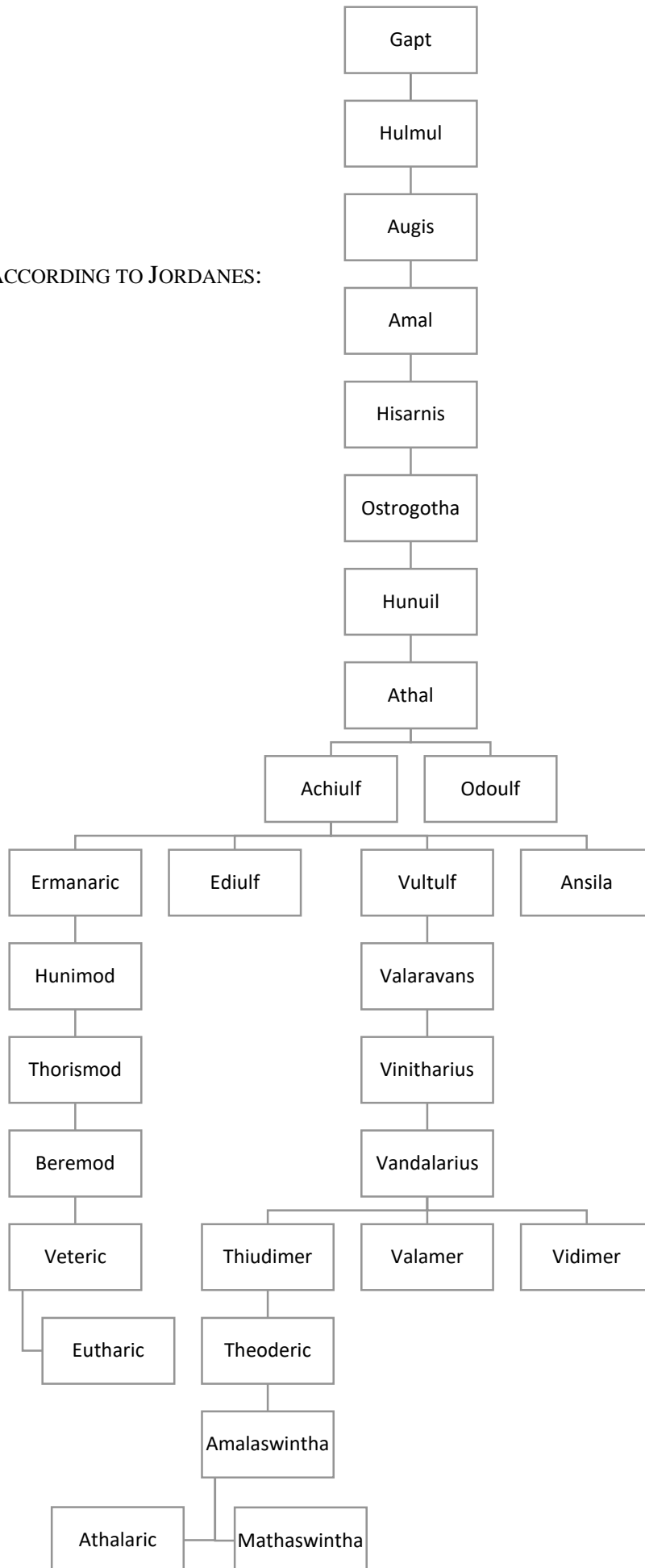
To conclude, we can affirm that the Visigoths, similarly to other major plot points of the *De Origine* – the Getic ethnonym, Ermanaric and, as we will see, Attila and the Huns – has a strong, specific narrative function: it sets the story in motion and it obeys a logic that is dictate by the core element of the tale: *Magna Dacia*. In this sense, the Visigoths are represented by the royal family of the Balthi, which is lesser to the Amali (both in terms of valour and narrative preponderance) and clearly delimited between Alaric I and Alaric II. Because they have a reduced, self-confined textual space within the *De Origine*, we can assume that their role is to clash with the Huns – a thread that ends with the death of Attila and another great shift in the *status quo* of *Magna Dacia*. In other others, the Balthi fulfill the narrative cycle between Ermanaric and Attila.

And now, with that being said, we can start debating the role of the Huns and discuss further in-depth the rivalry with Visigoths (and the dominance over the Ostrogoths).

CHAPTER IV

GENS HUNNORUM

4.1 – *ALMOST HUMANS*: ORIGIN AND NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUNS

Within the authorial stage set up by Jordanes, the Huns play a significant role, as we have discussed before. Hunnic forces and famed kings are rhetorically responsible for setting the narrative in motion in two key moments: first, with the advance of Balamber and the fall of Ermanaric (thus launching the Ostrogoths under Hunnic domination); and second with the death of Attila and the consequent dismantlement of his Confederacy, which freed the Goths and a number of other tribes, paving the way for the rise of the Amali in the Balkans and the flight of Theoderic to Italy.[403]

These are fundamental, defining episodes in the *De Origine*, mainly because they not only affect the fate of the Goths directly, but also because they change the geopolitical balance of *Magna Dacia*. While Ermanaric is established as the apex of early 'Getic' kingship in the region, Balamber is the rhetorical device that cuts him flat, rendering the Gothic hegemony void and starting the Hunnic dominion (remembering, of course, that in Jordanes the Huns are genealogically linked to the Goths themselves and, therefore, part of the Geto-Dacian 'Manifest Destiny' of the *De Origine*).[404] This preponderance of Hunnic affairs is evident from the start, as Jordanes, aside from Priscus, is the surviving late-antique source with the largest amount of data concerning the culture and history of

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[403] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV & L.
[404] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV.

the Huns.[405] Much similar too Priscus, Jordanes seems to present this information in a way that is tailored to his narrative: more rhetoric than ethnography as well.

In order to understand this rhetorical role and make sense of the highly fictionalised Hunnic presence in the *De Origine*, we have to contrast his depiction against earlier Hunnic accounts, which were certainly accessible to him through his readings and his access to Western and Eastern works. Moreover, Jordanes' background also has to be taken into consideration: his professional activities in the Balkans under the oversight of the Alans and Goths could have lent him access to historical and oral information, even first-hand accounts, that would not be present in other sources – a point we will discuss in greater detail when talking about the Catalaunian and Nedao narratives.

Modern historiography, since at least the eighteenth century, has been trying to identify the historical and ethnic origins of the Huns.[406] Deguignes was the first to affirm that Huns should be identified as a Western detachment of the Xiongnu, a confederation of tribes who were in constant clash with the Chinese since third century BC.[407] From Deguignes to our days, the *Xiongnu* theory has been criticised and accepted by scholars in equal measure, but whether or not one doubts the theory, for better or worse, Huns are

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[405] Jord., *Getica*, V; IX; XXIV; XXV; XXXII to XLIII; XLVIII; XLIX; L; LII; LIII.

[406] The latest review of the historiography on the Huns is in Kim – although the author himself is a proponent of the Xiongnu theory and seems to understand that most scholars are as well. In: H. J. Kim, *The Huns* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 5–9.

[407] For Deguignes' work, *cf*. Joseph Deguignes, *Histoire Générale Des Huns, Des Mongoles, Des Turcs et Des Autres Tartares Occidentaux*, 3 vols (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1757). The Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu) are a matter of heated discussion among sinologists and scholars of Inner and Central Asia. There is no consensus about their ethnic background – if there is any, given the plural nature of their political power. For the Xiongnu, *cf*. N. Kradin, 'Social and Economic Structure of the Xiongnu of the Trans-Baikal Region', *Archaeology, Ethnology & Anthropology of Eurasia*, 21.1 (2006), 79–86; N. Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Grousset. For English translations of Chinese sources dealing with the wars against the Xiongnu, *cf*. G. Sima and J. P. Yap, *Wars with the Xiongnu: A Translation from Zizhi Tongjian* (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2009).

unanimously seen as a nomadic tribe from the East.[408] In order to remove doubts and established an accurate explanation for the origins of the Huns, then, historiography has been trying to identify a possible alternative Hunnic ethnonym in classical sources (and also trying to determine archaeological cultures that could correspond with that of the Huns).[409] The sources used to find ethnic Hunnic traces can be divided into three categories: Eastern and Western sources prior to the fourth century; Eastern and Western sources from the fourth century onwards; Chinese sources and Soviet archaeological reports that are hardly, if ever, accessed by Western historians.[410] The Hunnic identification within these three groups leads to different results: in the first category we see scholars attempting solely to identify possible Hunnic ethnonyms in early sources, achieving mixed and disputed results. Even if identification occurs, we do not have enough information to establish any sort of interpretation;[411] the second category has a much more solid foundation, as it includes the attested presence of the 'European' Huns, that is, the tribe that appears in the fourth century and hits its peak during the kingship of Attila. This group of sources stretches from Ammianus Marcellinus and Claudian (the first authors to accurately identify the Huns as we understand them), to Eastern Roman, Syrian, Armenian and Albanian writings that deal with the aftermath of the dismantling of the Hunnic Confederacy, as well as with detached bands of Huns that never joined the wave led by the legendary Balamber and his successors;[412] the third category is highly

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[408] Thompson is perhaps one of the most influential scholars in the West to openly accept the Huns as nomads, but to neglect their possible origins within the Xiongnu Confederacy, in: E. A. Thompson and P. J. Heather, *The Huns* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 1–8.

[409] The wider and most glaring effort to do so is made by Gmyrya, who analyses many classical sources and a great number of Russian-speaking scholars who identified Huns with previous nomadic and pastoral tribes, in: L. B. Gmyria, *Strana Gunnov U Kaspiĭskikh Vorot: Prikaspiĭskiĭ Dagestan v Ėpokhu Velikogo Pereseleniia Narodov* (Makhachkala: Dagestanskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1995), pp. 8–30.

[410] O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, 'Review of A Hstory of Attila and the Huns by E. A. Thompson', *The American Historical Review*, 55.1 (1949), 110–12 (pp. 111–12).

[411] Maenchen-Helfen has the most thorough debunking of the real validity of this 'first group', in: O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, 'Pseudo-Huns', *Central Asiatic Journal*, 1.2 (1955), 101–6.

[412] Most, if not all studies on the Hunnic society are heavily based on this group of sources. *Cf.* Kim, *The Huns*; F. Altheim, *Geschichte der Hunnen*, 5 vols (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012); Thompson and Heather; S. Bock, *Los Hunos: Tradición E Historia*, Antigüedad Y Cristianismo, 9 (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, Servicio de Publicaciones, 1992); Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*.

disputed, as the very idea of equating Huns to Xiongnu is often questioned. The efforts to analyse this group of historical material is left to historians with Russian and Chinese-speaking skills, such as the late Otto Maenchen-Helfen and Hyun Jin Kim.[413]

That being said, it seems clear, both from his geographical comments and his narrative, that Jordanes only relies on sources that belong to our second category. This means that he could have found the information he needed in authors such as Ammianus Marcellinus, Claudian, Jerome, Orosius, Prosper of Aquitaine, Count Marcellinus, Procopius and, above all, Priscus. It is unclear if he had access to other sources that, in some way or another, contain mentions to the Huns, such as Olympiodorus and Hydatius.

The problems with Jordanes' description of the Huns, however, are clear from the start. The Huns, although mentioned earlier in the *De Origine,* really become part of the narrative when the story reaches Ermanaric.[414] Jordanes tells that, under Balamber, the Huns descended upon the nation of the Goths, then led by Ermanaric. The Gothic king was killed by treachery, enabling the ferocious Hunnic hordes to exert control over one branch of the Goths, that is, those dwelling in the East (Ostrogoths). The Visigoths, fearing that they would not be safe, decided to ask for permission to move into the Roman Empire, which led to the famous disaster of Adrianople.[415] The general outline of this story can also be found in Ammianus and Orosius – who, indeed, is quoted by Jordanes as the authority behind this information.[416] Nonetheless, Jordanes goes one step further and not only names the Hunnic king responsible for the offensive against the Goths (who is not attested in any other source), but he also tells us the story of their origin. As

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[413] *Cf.* Kim, *The Huns*; H. J. Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*; O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, 'Huns and Hsiung-Nu', *Byzantion*, 17 (1944), 222–43.

[414] Jord., *Getica*, V & IX, *in passim.*

[415] Jord., *Getica*, XXIV – XXV.

[416] 'Post autem non longi temporis intervallo, ut refert Orosius, Hunnorum gens omni ferocitate atrocior exarsit in Gothos'. In: Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 121.

discussed before, in the *De Origine*, the Huns are said to be the offspring of Gothic witches:

> Filimer, king of the Goths, son of Gadaric the Great, who was the fifth in succession to hold the rule of the Getae after their departure from the island of Scandza, - and who, as we have said, entered the land of Scythia with his tribe, - found among his people certain witches, whom he called in his native tongue Haliurunnae. Suspecting these women, he expelled them from the midst of his race and compelled them to wander in solitary exile afar from his army. There the unclean spirits, who beheld them as they wandered through the wilderness, bestowed their embraces upon them and begat this savage race, which dwelt at first in the swamps, - a stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human, and having no language save one which bore but slight resemblance to human speech. Such was the descent of the Huns who came to the country of the Goths.[417]

This legend, of course, does not find echo in Ammianus, nor in Orosius. In fact, Jordanes says that this story is present in old traditions, 'ut refert antiquitas.' It could be argued that he is indeed reporting a *fabula* of the past, one that he learned while living in Dacia, surrounded by Alans, Goths and probably a certain number of stray Huns as well – after all, the idea of ancient stories, *carmina prisca*, is a recurrent *topos* in the *De Origine*.[418] However, closer scrutiny of the elements in this passage might prove that this was not the case, and Jordanes was indeed coining an artificial legend – or, at least, one that made sense in the sixth century and could work within the logic of the *De Origine*'s narrative. This legend can be analysed in three different parts: geography, witchcraft and physical description. Starting with the latter, this might be the one detail lifted from accounts like those of Ammianus or Claudian – the bestial character of the Huns does not

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[417] 'Filimer rex Gothorum et Gadarici magni filius qui post egressu Scandzae insulae iam quinto loco tenens principatum Getarum, qui et terras Scythicas cum sua gente introisse superius a nobis dictum est, repperit in populo suo quasdam magas mulieres, quas patrio sermone Haliurunnas is ipse cognominat, easque habens suspectas de medio sui proturbat longeque ab exercitu suo fugatas in solitudinem coegit errare. Quas spiritus inmundi per herimum vagantes dum vidissent et eorum conplexibus in coitu miscuissent, genus hoc ferocissimum ediderunt, quae fuit primum inter paludes, minutum tetrum atque exile quasi hominum genus nec alia voce notum nisi quod humani sermonis imaginem adsignabat. Tali igitur Hunni stirpe creati Gothorum finibus advenerunt'. Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 121 - 122.

[418] ' Quemadmodum et in priscis eorum carminibus pene storicu ritu in commune recolitur [...]', Jord. *Getica*, IV, 28; ' [...] quos Amazonarum viros prisca tradit auctoritas [...]', Jord. *Getica*, V, 44; '[...] adhuc odie suis cantionibus reminiscent [...]', Jord. *Getica*, XI, 72; 'Nam hos, ut refert antiquitas, ita extitisse conperimus [...]', Jord., *Getica*, XXIV, 121.

regularly recur in Jordanes, which makes this passage glaring.[419] The more common laudatory tone of the *De Origine* towards Hunnic culture is in immediate contrast with remarks such as 'quasi hominum genus.' By the end of the passage, Jordanes acknowledges that these savage Huns are no more than the forefathers of the 'modern' Hunnic warriors of the fifth and sixth century – 'Tali igitur Hunni stirpe creati Gothorum finibus advenerunt.' We can argue, therefore, that Jordanes was, in fact, employing Ammianus' and Claudian's tropes – even if the legend, as presented here, was nowhere to be found in the *Res Gestae* nor in the panegyrics of Claudian. From a literary point of view, this would make sense, as this barbarian archetype would have surely been known to educated audiences, thus granting an aura of authority and legitimacy to Jordanes' description.[420] Similarly, the witchcraft aspect that permeates the passage, that is, the *Haliurunnae* and the foul spirits of the swamp are archetypical elements of Christian literature and narratives of fallen angels, as demonstrated by Maenchen-Helfen; narrating a tale of mage-women might have been, then, familiar to the intended audience, who would be able to recognise the structures and veracity of this fable (because the outlines of the witchcraft argument were ingrained in Christian rhetorical imagery, from to Book

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[419] 'est genus extremos Scythiae uergentis in ortus trans gelidum Tanain, quo non famosius ullum Arctos alit. turpes habitus obscaenaque uisu corpora; mens duro numquam cessura labori; praeda cibus, uitanda Ceres, frontemque secari ludus et occisos pulchrum iurare parentes. nec plus nubigenas duplex natura biformes cognatis aptauit equis: acerrima nullo ordine mobilitas insperatique recursos', Claud. *In Ruf.*, I, 323 – 331; 'ubi quoniam ab ipsis nascendi primitiis infantum ferro sulcantur altius genae, ut pilorum vigor tempestivus emergens conrugatis cicatricibus hebetetur, senescunt imberbes absque ulla venustate, spadonibus similes, conpactis omnes firmisque membris et opimis cervicibus, prodigiosae formae et pavendi, ut bipedes existimes bestias vel quales in conmarginandis pontibus effigiati stipites dolantur incompte. In hominum autem figura licet insuavi ita visi sunt asperi, ut neque igni neque saporatis indigeant cibis sed radicibus herbarum agrestium et semicruda cuiusvis pecoris carne vescantur, quam inter femora sua equorumque terga subsertam fotu calefaciunt brevi [...]', Amm. Marc., *Res Gestae*, XXXI, 2 – 3.

[420] From Ammianus to Sidonius, the description of the Huns is very much similar, as is the classicising tendency to label them as *Scythians* (especialy Claudian and Sidonius). In what is obviously a literary trope, there is no intent to unveil the origins of the Huns nor expand the analysis, such as Jordanes does to a certain extent; the function of these archetypical descriptions is to validate classical knowledge, civility and education. One only needs to compare the word choices of Ammianus, Claudian and Sidonius ('[…] ita vultibus ipsis infantum suus horror inest, consurgit in artum massa rotunda caput; geminis sub fronte cavernis visus adest oculis absentibus; […] vix matre carens ut constitit infans, mox praebet dorsum sonipes; cognata reare membra viris: ita semper equo ceu fixus adhaeret rector; cornipedum tergo gens altera fertur, haec habitat […]', Sid. Apoll. *Carm.*, II, 245 – 266) to see how Jordanes plays with it in this passage, but adopts a different tone further in the text.

of Enoch, to Eusebius and Lactantius).[421] The inclusion of the cryptic label for the witches – 'quas patrio sermone Haliurunnas is ipse cognominat' – is certainly another example of Jordanes familiarity with ethnographic discourses and the realisation that the language of the tribe being analysed is a fundamental category of perceived ethnicity.[422] However, while the issue of witchcraft and the description of the savage appearance and behaviour of the Huns could appeal to the literary sensibilities of the readers, thus granting verisimilitude to this fable, the geographical element seems to be entirely authorial. As discussed before, by fomenting an origin myth that not only places the Huns in the area of the Maeotis, but also directly connects them with the first generation of Goths, Jordanes assures the audience that, just like the Getae, the Huns are also a people from *Magna Dacia*, and share a major role in its historical development.[423] In other words, the legend narrated by Jordanes endows the Huns with a double-layered significance: they can be understood both in a Christian and in an ethnogeographical archetypical level, thus ensuring their desired function in the *De Origine*.

Moreover, the inclusion of the name *Haliurunnae* has puzzled historians and linguists. In the *De Origine*, as stated before, it is common to find words that, according to Jordanes, belong to the languages of specific groups: he says that Scythia, in the languages of the region, is called Oium;[424] that the ethnonym Parthian derives from

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[421] Maenchen-Helfen, appealing to a great number of Christian sources and Christian literary archetypes, believes that the Hunnic origins myth in Jordanes is patterned on the legend of fallen angels (also very common in late Jewish texts). The description of the early Huns as 'barely humans', *ex quasi hominum genus*, would also fit the Christian descriptions of demonic creatures such as the *faunus*. In: O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, 'The Legend of the Origin of the Huns', *Byzantion*, 17 (1944), 244–51 (pp. 245–48).

[422] For decades, Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology have been trying to establish clear-cut categories through which the concept of ethnicity can be understood. The most common and unanimous categories are 'language', 'geographical location' and 'political structures'. Although these categories are thought as tools to analyse mostly tribal societies in our own age, there is no reason why they should not be applied to the Roman period, as they rely more on the psychology of self-identification rather than caveats of our coeval history. In: Poutignat and Streiff-Fenart, pp. 85–93.

[423] While authors like Ammianus and Claudian also mention the 'frozen lands of the Maeotis' as the Hunnic abodes, it seems that they are employing the stereotypical notion of barbarians coming from the wastelands of the north rather than addressing a land of origin, as does Jordanes. Therefore, in this case, the geographical domain of the Huns seems to be definitely relevant.

[424] 'Qui aptissimas sedes locaquae dum quereret congrua, pervenit ad Scythiae terras, quae lingua eorum Oium vocabantur'. Jord., *Getica*, IV, 27.

'deserters', *Parthi* in Scythian language;[425] that the Danube, in the language of the Bessi, is called Hister;[426] that the ethnonym Gepid comes from the word 'slow' in Gepidic language, *Gepanta*;[427] and that the river Dnieper is called, in Hunnic tongue, Var.[428] Given that these examples necessarily include the affirmation 'in their language' or 'in their tongue', it seems clear that Jordanes understood that the inclusion of linguistic references would lend authority to his arguments. In this sense, it could be argued that the inclusion of the particular title of *Haliurunnae* had relevance within the fable of Hunnic origins because it demonstrates a profound knowledge of the subject-matter. In possession of this realisation, Goffart joked:

> I like to imagine Cassiodorus dictating his history and pausing to question his *saio* adjutant: 'By the way, Giberich, how does one say 'witch' in your language?' 'That's 'haliurunnae', sir.' 'Thank you, Giberich. I don't suppose you know whether it takes two n's or one?' 'No, sir.' This minimalist reading is unlikely, of course, to satisfy those wishing to uncover authentically native passages in a Christian Latin text. To them, 'haliurunnae,' in its 'classical-Christian disguise,' is not a word so much as a seed that, when found by the right cultivator, yields a bumper crop of tradition, a time capsule with antiquities beyond price.[429]

To Jordanes, these *Haliurunnae* followed Filimer, the fifth king after Berig, in his migration to Scythia. This timeline would make them very primitive and close to Gothic Scandinavian origins, which is, indeed, very enticing to any scholar trying to unveil elements of *germanische Altertumskunde*. To counter possibilities of understanding this passage as a proper element of Gothic tradition, Goffart affirms that *Haliurunnae* might have been just one of the many Gothic terms for 'witch' in the sixth century, picked because of the similitude with the ethnonym 'Hun' in particular – to whom they give

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[425] 'Ex quorum nomine vel genere Pompeius Trogus Parthorum dicit extitisse prosapiem. Vnde etiam hodieque lingua Scythica fugaces quod est, Parthi dicuntur […]'. Jord., *Getica*, VI, 48.
[426] 'Et quia Danubii mentio facta est, non ab re iudico pauca de tali amne egregio indicare. [...] Qui lingua Bessorum Hister vocatur'. Jord., *Getica*, XII, 75.
[427] 'Quarum trium una navis, ut adsolet, tardior nancta nomen genti fertur dedisse; nam lingua eorum pigra gepanta dicitur'. Jord., *Getica*, XVII, 95.
[428] '[...] quas Danabri amnis fluenta praetermeant, quam lingua sua Hunni Var appeIlant'. Jord., *Getica*, LII, 269.
[429] Goffart, 'Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today', p. 29.

birth. Even with the warnings of Goffart, Christensen, Maenchen-Helfen and others, some are still adamant to perceive more pronounced Germanic elements:[430] one possible theory is that *Haliurunnae* is the Latinised version of the Gothic *Haljōsrunōs*, from *Halja* (standard word for the Underworld, mostly 'Hell') and *Rūna* ('whisper').[431] The idea of *Haljōsrunōs*, that is, 'whisperers of the Underworld', would be similar, for example, to the Scandinavian Vǫlvas, clairvoyant women who feature heavily in Old Norse stories and literature.[432] The narrative of the migrant *Haliurunnae*, in this sense, is comparable to the legend of Þorbjörg and her nine clairvoyant sisters, who migrated to Greenland during the times of Eiríkr the Red.[433] Moreover, archaeological evidence could also shed light over this sorcery tradition: a cemetery unearthed near the Romanian city of Satu Mare, in 2003, contains a number of Gepid graves from the sixth century. Although no more than 30 graves were excavated as of 2016, one of the tombs belonged to a woman in possession of many mystical artefacts associated with divination and the Underworld.[434] However, if the *Haliurunnae* are genuine Gothic/Gepid witches and the tradition of women and divination is a staple in Germanic literature, it does not disprove the possibility that Jordanes, as Goffart affirmed, chose to pick up *Haliurunnae* because it resembles the Latin *Hunnus*, 'Hun' – nor does it neglect the fact that narratives of witches are also present in Christian discourses (to which Jordanes was probably more acquainted). 'The story of the origin of the Huns and all that followed it [...], grew out of late Roman pseudo-scholarship and Christian legends', emphasises Maenchen-Helfen.[435]

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[430] Goffart, 'Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today'; Christensen, pp. 241–42; Maenchen-Helfen, 'The Legend of the Origin of the Huns'.

[431] *Heljurúnar* in Old Norse; *Hellirunā* in Old High German; *Helrunan* in Old English. Cf. J. de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1956), I, pp. 260–65.

[432] *Cf.* L. Motz, 'Old Icelandic Völva: A New Derivation', *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 85 (1980), 196–206.

[433] 'Sú kona var þar í byggð, er Þorbjörg hét. Hon var spákona ok var kölluð lítilvölva. Hon hafði átt sér níu systr, ok váru allar spákonur, en hon ein var þá á lífi'. *Eiríks saga Rauða*, 4.

[434] I. Stanciu and N. Iercoşan, 'Primele Morminte Din Cimitirul Gepid de La Carei-„Kozárd' (Jud. Satu Mare)', in *In Memoriam - Nicolae Chidioşan*, ed. by L. Cornea and N. Chidioşan (Oredea: Muzeului Ţării Crişurilor, 2003), pp. 139–60.

[435] Maenchen-Helfen, 'The Legend of the Origin of the Huns', p. 251.

Beyond the narrative of their origins, the Huns in Jordanes follow a historic-narrative development that does not necessarily equate with that present in other sources of the aforementioned 'second group' either. Jordanes does not, for example, mention Uldin or any other Hunnic ruler in between Balamber and Attila (although he mentions, in passing, that, before Attila, his uncles Octar and Rugila were kings, but not over as many tribes as the former). This could mean that Jordanes was not interested in the campaigns and skirmishes led by the Huns during the fourth and the first half of the fifth century, that is, before they rose to prominence with the Attilan hegemony, thus ignoring the information present in Sozomen and Zosimus. On the other hand, the *De Origine* is filled with a richness of data on Attila, comparable only to that in Priscus. While Priscus had reasons to write at length about the famous Hunnic lord, as he was recounting his embassies to the Huns, Jordanes' motives are less obvious. His deference towards this figure is patent:

> Attila was lord over all the Huns and almost the sole earthly ruler of all the tribes of Scythia; a man marvellous for his glorious fame among all nations [...] king of all the barbarian world [...]; this Attila was the son of Mundiuch, and his brothers were Octar and Ruas who are said to have ruled before Attila, though not over quite so many tribes as he. After their death he succeeded to the throne of the Huns, together with his brother Bleda. In order that he might first be equal to the expedition he was preparing, he sought to increase his strength by murder. Thus he proceeded from the destruction of his own kindred to the menace of all others. But though he increased his power by this shameful means, yet by the balance of justice he received the hideous consequences of his own cruelty. [...] He was a man born into the world to shake the nations, the scourge of all lands, who in some way terrified all mankind by the dreadful rumors noised abroad concerning him. [...] He was indeed a lover of war, yet restrained in action, mighty in counsel, gracious to suppliants and lenient to those who were once received into his protection. [...] And though his temper was such that he always had great self-confidence, yet his assurance was increased by finding the sword of Mars, always esteemed sacred among the kings of the Scythians.[436]

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[436] 'Qua pace Attila, Hunnorum omnium dominus et paene totius Scythiae gentium solus in mundo regnator, qui erat famosa inter omnes gentes claritate mirabilis (…) Attilae regis barbariae tota (…); Is namque Attila patre genitus Mundzuco, cuius fuere germani Octar et Roas, qui ante Attilam regnum tenuisse narrantur, quamvis non omnino cunctorum quorum ipse. Post quorum obitum cum Bleda germano Hunnorum successit in regno, et, ut ante expeditionis, quam parabat, par foret, augmentum virium parricidio quaerit, tendens ad discrimen omnium nece suorum. Sed librante iustitia detestabili remedio crescens deformes exitus suae crudelitatis invenit. [...] Vir in concussione gentium natus in mundo, terrarum omnium metus, qui, nescio qua sorte, terrebat cuncta formidabili de se opinione vulgata. [...] bellorum quibid. amator, sed ipse manu temperans, consilio validissimus, supplicantium exorabilis, propitius autem in fide semel susceptis. [...] Qui quamvis huius esset naturae, ut semper magna conficeret, addebat ei tamen confidentia

Therefore, although he never met Attila, as he must have been born at least a few decades after the fall of the Confederacy, Jordanes still seems to demonstrate much personal admiration – beyond the unusual respect he might have had found in Priscus. As argued before, the reasoning behind his laudatory rhetoric could lie in the fact that, politically, Attila represented more than an enemy of Rome, but rather a stage in the development of *Magna Dacia*. Attila held hegemony and lordship over all tribes of Scythia and over Goths and barbarian *gentes* in the Balkans: ruling over Scythians, Goths, and Gepids, for example, meant that he controlled all the people that represent Dacia – all the Getae, while being himself a member of the Getic tribal genealogy. Attila, then, is the zenith of the political history of the Balkans.

It could be argued, then, that the importance of the Huns, for Jordanes, is purely rhetorical: they first appear in order to terminate the rise of Ermanaric and establish a new political organisation in the Balkans. After that, they appear again when Attila rises to power and submits all people of *Magna Dacia* to his rule, thus amassing enough manpower to pose a real and direct menace to the two biggest powers of the time: the Romans and the Visigoths (which, in turn, were more or less allied). Attila, then, takes up easily the most space dedicated to the Huns in the *De Origine* – being responsible for the massive conflict at the Catalaunian Plains and indirectly responsible for the battle of River Nedao, as we will discuss later on – and, after his death, the Huns virtually disappear from the narrative, hence giving back to the Ostrogoths (and, to a lesser degree, to the Gepids) political dominance of the region. So, taking as our standpoint the fable of the Maeotic origins and the laudatory description of Attila and his deeds, the *De Origine* differs from other sources on the Huns mainly because Jordanes does not use them to

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gladius Martis inventus, sacer apud Scytharum reges semper habitus'. Jord., *Getica*, XXXIV – XXXV, 178 – 183.

narrate the history of his time, but rather to *create* the history of his region. Ironically to a book that recounts the deeds of the Getae, the Huns are not supporting actors, but protagonists (possibly because, as I have been stressing, the Huns are, in a certain way, Getae themselves).

4.2 – THE MAN WHO SHOOK THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD: ATTILA THE HUN

The narrative presence of the Huns in the *De Origine*, therefore, is mostly condensed into the figure of Attila. Certainly, their origin myth and their disruption of Ermanaric kingdom are fundamental, but it is through this famous king that Jordanes highlights the rhetorical role of this *gens*. Attila brings the flow of the work to a halt and, while the story is orbiting around him, we can see the significance of Dacia and of the ideology of hegemonic power for Jordanes.

This 'pause' has significant structural implications. In chapter twenty five, when Jordanes recounts the attack of Balamber over the Goths and the death of Ermanaric, he infers that the Visigoths, in fear for their safety, fled from Scythia and sought the protection of the Romans, from whom they received Moesia and Thrace, and there were allowed to settle.[437] At this moment of the story, as we have seen in chapter 3, the narrative divides, covering the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths as independent entities. It is also at this moment that Attila is introduced, changing the overtones of the *De Origine* even further. When the focus changes to the Visigoths, we follow their exploits through Jordanes' subtle hints that their departure from the Ostrogothic abodes in Scythia is, in

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[437] 'Vesegothae, id est illi alii eorum socii et occidui soli cultores, metu parentum exterriti, quidnam de se propter gentem Hunnorum deliberarent, ambigebant, diuque cogitantes tandem communi placito legatos in Romania direxerunt ad Valentem imperatorem fratrem Valentiniani imperatoris senioris, ut, partem Thraciae sive Moesiae si illis traderet ad colendum, eius se legibus eiusque vivere imperiis subderentur. Et, ut fides uberior illis haberetur, promittunt se, si doctores linguae suae donaverit, fieri Christianos', Jord., *Getica*, XXV, 131.

fact, a form of 'corruption' of their historical 'manifest destiny': although they receive provinces that were part of the idea of *Magna Dacia*, little by little their power starts to drift away from that land and, consequently, they become increasingly foreign actors within the logic and the goals of Jordanes' story.[438] First, they convert to Arianism (a trait that is curiously attributed to them but not the Amali)[439], then they cease to have a sole ruler and start being led by different princes instead – in this case, Fritigern, Alatheus, and Safrax.[440] When they finally manage to appoint one single king to rule over them, Alaric, he decides to 'seek a kingdom by their own exertions rather than serve others in idleness,' thus marching into Italy.[441] This marks the final rhetorical divorce between Visigoths and Ostrogoths, since we are introduced to the family of the Balthi, to which Alaric belongs, and to their desire for leaving *Magna Dacia* (even if this choice is embellished with the will for independence, 'quam alienis per otium subiacere'). By addressing this new royal family and their final departure from the Eastern regions, Jordanes emphasises that these Visigoths are not the Getae of the Balkans anymore, and compose and entirely different entity. This break in the historical cohesion of the Goths is the moment chosen by Jordanes to introduce Attila: after describing a few of the Visigothic campaigns against foes such as the Vandals and even the Romans, Attila is presented to the readers as the great ruler of all barbarians. This is an interesting flow of narrative events, mainly because as the *De Origine* moves away from Dacia with the story of the Visigothic flight to the West, Attila reconnects the narrative threads back to the

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[438] Jord., *Getica*, XXIX – XXXIV.

[439] Jordanes seems to be a Nicene Christian, as he denounces Valen's love for Arianism and his perfidy in allowing it to be taught to the Goths ('Et quia tunc Valens imperator Arrianorum perfidia saucius nostrarum partium omnes ecclesias obturasset, suae parti fautores ad illos diriget praedicatores, qui venientes rudibus et ignaris ilico perfidiae suae virus infundunt', Jord., *Getica*, XXV, 132). In this case, he is certainly referring to the conversion of the Tervingi by Ulfilas. For an analysis of the role of Ulfilas and Arianism in Jordanes, *cf.* Wolfram, 'Vulfila Pontifex Ipseque Prima Gothorum Minorum, Sed Non Apostulus Eorum. Vulfila, Bishop and Secular Leader of His People but Not Their Apostle'.

[440] 'Quibus evenit, ut adsolet genti, necdum bene loco fundatis, penuria famis, coeperuntque primates eorum et duces, qui regum vice illis praeerant, id est Fritigernus, Alatheus et Safrac', Jord., *Getica*, XXVI, 134.

[441] 'Mox ergo antefatus Halaricus creatus est rex, cum suis deliberans suasit eos suo labore quaerere regna quam alienis per otium subiacere' Jord., *Getica*, XXIX, 147.

East. His introduction into the story is an important piece of textual consistency. His initial presentation as the hegemonic ruler of Scythia (at this stage, still the land where the Ostrogoths lived) brings the audience back to the affairs of the Balkans and demonstrates how, for Jordanes, the ideology of unified power is important. Moreover, as the narrative progresses, we learn more and more about the figure of Attila figure and his personal history, as well as his political and military exploits. In other words, after the breakdown of the geographically-focused narration, the story halts around the deeds of Attila, so that it can come back to *Magna Dacia* afterwards.

The 'Attilan pause' is structured in such a way that we can see how historically fundamental his rule was for the Balkans. As we discussed before, he is described in the most laudatory terms – one could say that, regarding power and nobility, he was even superior to the Amali in the pen of Jordanes. The first mention of his name comes attached with the panegyrical 'Hunnorum omnium dominus et paene totius Scythiae gentium solus in mundo regnator, qui erat famosa inter omnes gentes claritate mirabilis.'[442] This description denotes almost absolute hegemonic power. 'Hunnorum omnium dominus' indicates that he was able to tame and dominate the many pulverised ethnicities that composed the broader 'Hunnic' ethnonym. Jordanes, earlier in the *De Origine*, affirmed that the Huns were a 'fruitful root of brave nations,' 'Hunni quasi fortissimorum gentium fecundissimus cespes.'[443] Among the Hunnic tribes, he recounts the Altziagiri and the Sabiri (and, as descendants of the Huns, the Sacromontisi, and the Fossatissi).[444] Hence, Attila was, first of all, able to bring unity to what apparently was a swarm of different, ferocious nomadic tribes. Moreover, he was also 'paene totius Scythiae gentium solun in

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[442] Jord., *Getica*, XXXIV, 178.

[443] Jord. *Getica*, V, 37.

[444] Jord., *Getica*, V, 37. Jordanes must be right to a certain extent. Politically, especially before Attila, Huns were not necessarily united under one ruler, and many autonomous groups were roaming the East – even aiding the Romans in many occasion. Ethnically, if it were possible to postulate an identity to the Huns, they also must have been composed of plural tribes (as Jordanes himself acknowledges in this passage). In: D. Sinor, 'The Hun Period', in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. by D. Sinor (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 177–205 (p. 181).

mundo regnator.' 'Scythiae gentium' is certainly a geographical qualifier, denoting every group living on Scythian ground, including Goths, Gepids, Heruli, and certainly many more. It is also important to note that he was 'solus in mundo regnator:' he was the sole ruler, his hegemony was not shared with anyone else (maybe with the exception of Bleda, who, however, exits the narrative as soon as he is introduced), thus creating an interesting contrast with the divided rule of the early Visigoths (between Fritigern, Alatheus, and Safrax).[445] Therefore, Jordanes makes it clear that Attila was the ruler of almost every single tribe in the Balkan world, from the Huns to all the unrelated groups that, by chance, inhabited Scythia. This is significant because, following the narrative structure of the *De Origine*, we have an incredibly powerful king uniting all the Dacian people (remembering that Huns, Gepids, and Goths are all part of the same 'Getic' origin myth) right after the political break of the Visigothic migration. In other words, as a branch of the Goths leaves the cultural sphere of the Balkans (thus making the socio-ethnic composition of the area 'incomplete') another branch of the early Goths (the Huns, descendants of the *Haliurunnae*) comes in to 'complete' the missing picture.

The theme of hegemonic rule continues as Jordanes follows the narrative of Attila. The second piece of information we receive about this king concerns the murder of his brother, Bleda, which makes him the sole commander of the Hunnic Confederacy. Although this act is perceived as a treachery and injustice, 'sed librante iustitia detestabili remedio crescens deformes exitus suae crudelitatis invenit,' it nonetheless solidifies the Hunnic unity.[446] Jordanes implies that, before Attila, the rule was divided between at least two members of the same stock: in this case, Octar and Rugila, his uncles (it is unclear if

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[445] Jordanes takes historical liberties when it comes to Alatheus and Safrax. While Fritigern was indeed a Tervingi ruler, it seems that Altheus and Safrax were, in fact, leading bands of Greuthungi, largely considered to be 'Ostrogoths'. We do not know if this was a genuine mistake or if they were consciously labelled as Visigoths to strengthen the argument of the lack of centralised power; I would go with the latter. *Cf.* Kulikowski; Burns, *Barbarians within the Gates of Rome*.

[446] Jord., *Getica*, XXXV.

Attila's father, Mundzuk, was also king, but the chances are that Hunnic kingship was traditionally divided between all the sons of the previous kings).[447] This political trend passes down to Attila and Bleda, and although neither Priscus nor Jordanes mention any other brothers or cousins, it is a fair to assume that Octar and Rugila also had sons who could be ruling over Hunnic bands, as Jordanes says that Attila sought to increase his power through kin-slaying, 'augmentum virium parricidio quaerit, tendens ad discrimen omnium nece suorum.'[448] With this reproachable move, Attila ended what possibly there was of tribal sharing of power among one ruling family and manages to establish himself as a sole ruler.[449] It is an interesting turn of events, because although Jordanes cannot shed positive light over parricide, he still seems to marvel at Attila's power reach.

This ideology of power is further emphasised by subsequent qualifiers, all imbued with exaggerated greatness (and even awe). A man born to shake the nations, the scourge of the land, of whom the whole earth was terrified, 'vir in concussione gentium natus in mundo, terrarum omnium metus, qui, nescio qua sorte, terrebat cuncta formidabili de se opinione vulgata.'[450] Jordanes then borrows Attila's physical description from Priscus, affirming that he sought to subdue the foremost powers of his time: the Romans and the Visigoths.[451] Therefore, after bringing unity to *Magna Dacia*, Attila was bent on forcing the rest of the world onto its knees, and that meant that he had to conquer not only the Romans but also the stray Visigoths. We could argue that Jordanes did not reserve much

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[447] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 202–3.

[448] Jord., *Getica*, XXXV, 180.

[449] The Hunnic society at the time of Attila certainly obeyed its own, specific rules and trends. However, we could speculate that some nomadic structures were conserved or, at least, a point of influence in its political organisation (at least until the rise of Attila). In many nomadic societies across history, power was divided in a variety of levels and manners, and it's conceivable that, among some groups, authority was shared by all the children of the rulers. *Cf. Serendipity in Anthropological Research: The Nomadic Turn*, ed. by H. Hazan and E. Hertzog (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2011); *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, ed. by A. M. Khazanov and A. Wink (London: Routledge, 2001); A. M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd ed (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

[450] Jord., *Getica*, XXXV, 182.

[451] Jord., *Getica*, XXXV, 181. *Cf.* Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 358–75; Maenchen-Helfen, 'The Legend of the Origin of the Huns'.

sympathy for the Goths who broke away from those in the East, as Attila seems to function as the scourge, a weapon of historical vindication that appears in the narrative straight after the division of the Goths.[452] By stating, right after narrating the rise of Alaric and the Visigoths, that Attila sought to subdue them, Jordanes could be implying that this development of affairs – that is, the rupture between Ostrogoths and Visigoths – was not ideal.

The desire to conquer is acknowledged in the *De Origine*, by other large groups, especially the Vandals and the aforementioned Visigoths and Romans.[453] As the narrative progresses and it is clear that Attila is about to make a move against the West, Jordanes includes a message from the Emperor Valentinian III to the Visigoths, inciting them to be ready to oppose the Huns:

> Bravest of nations, it is the part of prudence for us to unite against the lord of the earth who wishes to enslave the whole world; who requires no just cause for battle, but supposes whatever he does is right. He measures his ambition by his might. License satisfies his pride. Despising law and right, he shows himself an enemy to Nature herself. And thus he, who clearly is the common foe of each, deserves the hatred of all. Pray remember--what you surely cannot forget – that the Huns do not overthrow nations by means of war, where there is an equal chance, but assail them by treachery, which is a greater cause for anxiety. To say nothing about ourselves, can you suffer such insolence to go unpunished? Since you are mighty in arms, give heed to your own danger and join hands with us in common. Bear aid also to the Empire, of which you hold a part. If you would learn how such an alliance should be sought and welcomed by us, look into the plans of the foe.[454]

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[452] The metaphor of Attila as the Scourge of God, sent to punish the world, is fitting for Jordanes purposes. This depiction, although present in Jordanes and made famous after the Renaissance, seems to be already present in accounts of the fifth to the eight century. In the second Life of Lupus of Troyes, Attila even talks about himself in those terms: 'Ego sum Attila, rex Hunnorum, flagellum Dei'; see I. N. Wood, ''Adelchi' and 'Attila': The Barbarians and the Risorgimento', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 76 (2008), 233–55 (p. 250).

[453] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 184 – 186.

[454] 'Prudentiae vestrae est, fortissimi gentium, adversus orbis conspirare tyrannum, qui optat mundi generale habere servitium, qui causas proelii non requirit, sed, quidquid commiserit, hoc putat esse legitimum, ambitum suum brachio metitur, superbiam licentia satiat; qui ius fasque contemnens, hostem se exhibet et naturae. Cunctorum etenim meretur hic odium, qui in commune omnium se adprobat inimicum. Recordamini, quaeso, quod certe non potest oblivisci, ab Hunnis non per bella, ubi communis casus est, fusum, sed, quod graviter anget, insidiis appetitum. Vt de nobis taceamus, potestis hanc inulti ferre superbiam? Armorum potentes favete propriis doloribus et communes iungite manus. Auxiliamini etiam rei publicae, cuius membrum tenetis. Quam sit autem nobis expetenda vel amplexanda societas, hostis interrogate concilia', Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 187 – 188.

This is a clear counter-argument to Attila's worthiness as a leader. To embellish the narrative and create the opposition between the forces of *Magna Dacia* and the West (here incorporated in the figures of the Visigoths and the Western emperor, Valentinian – but not Theodosius II), Jordanes presents a discourse that subverts all the Attilan qualifiers offered before. In the mouths of his Roman enemies, Attila is not a conqueror, but a tyrannical slaver, 'qui optat mundi generale habere servitium;' he is not a mighty warlord, but an opportunist who succeeds in battle by treachery, 'ab Hunnis non per bella, ubi communis casus est, fusum, sed, quod graviter anget, insidiis appetitum;' he is, overall, an enemy of the very nature of the world, 'hostis naturae.' The essence of this argument as a rhetorical tool to present the contrast (and pave the way to the great battle of the Catalaunian Plains) between the power of Attila and that of the Visigoths/Romans becomes even clearer when we see that, right before starting with this narrative of war, Jordanes quotes Priscus to tells us the tale of how Attila came to power:

> When a certain shepherd beheld one heifer of his flock limping and could find no cause for this wound, he anxiously followed the trail of blood and at length came to a sword it had unwittingly trampled while nibbling the grass. He dug it up and took it straight to Attila. He rejoiced at this gift and, being ambitious, thought he had been appointed ruler of the whole world, and that through the sword of Mars supremacy in all wars was assured to him.[455]

The legendary Sword of Mars, according to Jordanes, was sacred to all Scythian tribes. Within the narrative, this argument crowns Attila's lust and excellence for war. It is unclear if there was indeed a legend of a godly sword among Scythian tribes, but mostly likely Priscus and Jordanes were following a trend of attributing the worship of Ares/Mars to the Scythians – a suggestion that starts with Herodotus. According to the classical

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[455] 'Cum pastor, inquiens, quidam gregis unam boculam conspiceret claudicantem nec causam tanti vulneris inveniret, sollicitus vestigia cruoris insequitur tandemque venit ad gladium, quem depascens herbas incauta calcaverat, effossumque protinus ad Attilam defert. Quo ille munere gratulatus, ut erat magnanimis, arbitratur se mundi totius principem constitutum et per Martis gladium potestatem sibi concessam esse bellorum', Jord., *Getica*, XXXV, 183.

historian, Scythians worshiped a certain number of gods, but only erected temples to Ares, the chief deity and a fitting religious symbol for a warlike society.[456]

Jordanes, therefore, creates a remarkable disparity between the image of an Attila being appointed by divine forces as a warlord, and the message of Valentinian, accusing him of treachery (a possible synonym, in this case, for coward). In fact, Jordanes provides subtle hints that Attila's perspective is the right one, as the animosity between Huns and Visigoths that led to the battle of the Catalaunian Plains was stirred indeed by treachery, but not Attila's: Geiseric, the famous king of the Vandals, incited Attila to make war against the forces of Theoderic the Visigoth because he feared that the latter was planning to take revenge against the Vandalic people for a former act of hostility.[457] Huneric, son of Geiseric, had previously married Theoderic's daughter, but fearing that she could be planning to poison him, he cut off her nose and mutilated her ears.[458] Because of this injury, Jordanes implies that Geiseric decided to use Attila for his own purposes – if Visigoths and Huns were engaged in conflict, Theoderic would be too busy to seek revenge. The Hunnic king, consequently, decided to follow Geiseric's advice and plotted a scheme of his own, trying to pull Visigoths and Roman apart, so that he would not have to face them both at the same time. However deceitful this seems, the rhetoric of Jordanes makes it clear that, in this case, Attila was being wise rather than perfidious: 'Beneath his great ferocity he was a subtle man, and fought with craft before he made war', 'sub nimia

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[456] 'τοῖσι μὲν δὴ ἄλλοισι τῶν θεῶν οὕτω θύουσι καὶ ταῦτα τῶν κτηνέων, τῷ δὲ Ἄρεϊ ὧδε. κατὰ νομοὺς ἑκάστους τῶν ἀρχέων ἐσίδρυται σφι Ἄρεος ἱρὸν τοιόνδε φρυγάνων φάκελοι συννενέαται ὅσον τ᾽ ἐπὶ σταδίους τρεῖς μῆκος καὶ εὖρος, ὕψος δὲ ἔλασσον· ἄνω δὲ τούτου τετράγωνον ἄπεδον πεποίηται, καὶ τὰ μὲν τρία τῶν κώλων ἐστὶ ἀπότομα, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἓν ἐπιβατόν', Hrdt. *Hist.*, IV, 62. *Cf.* Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 279–80; Thompson and Heather, p. 89. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 279–280.

[457] 'Huius ergo mentem ad vastationem orbis paratam comperiens Gyzericus, rex Vandalorum, quem paulo ante memoravimus, multis muneribus ad Vesegotharum bella precipitat, metuens, ne Theodoridus Vesegotharum rex filiae suae ulcisceretur iniuriam', Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 184.

[458] In: R. Steinacher, *Die Vandalen: Aufstieg Und Fall Eines Barbarenreichs* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2016), pp. 190–95.For more on the kingdom of Geiseric and Huneric and analyses of their political relations, *cf.* Steinacher, *Die Vandalen*; A. H Merrills and R. Miles, *The Vandals* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

feritate homo subtilis ante quam bella gereret arte pugnabat.'[459] There is certainly a difference between 'craft', *ars*, and 'treachery', *insidia*. By putting the accusation of *insidia* in the discourse of Valentinian – and this is one of the few passages of the *De Origine* in which direct speech is employed – Jordanes shifts the responsibility of the denunciation from himself to the Romans.

The battle of the Catalaunian fields follows this rhetorical conflict. Although this confrontation did not end in an absolute victory for the Huns, Jordanes gives us colourful descriptions of the bravery and the hegemonic rule of Attila. In the battlefield, he was accompanied by the Ostrogothic kings Valamer, Vidimer, and Thiudimer, by the Gepid king Ardaric and by many other rulers of diverse nations, who followed him 'like slaves, and when he gave a sign even by a glance, without a murmur each stood forth in fear and trembling, or at all events did as he was bid'[460]. His undisputable authority is crowned with yet another kingly qualifier: 'Attila alone was king of all kings over all and concerned for all', 'solus Attila rex omnium regum super omnes et pro omnibus sollicitus erat.'[461] Moreover, once the battle starts and the Hunnic army is thrown into confusion by the manoeuvres of Theoderic and Aëtius, the Roman general, Attila encourages his troops by giving a rousing speech:

> Here you stand, after conquering mighty nations and subduing the world. I therefore think it foolish for me to goad you with words, as though you were men who had not been proved in action. Let a new leader or an untried army resort to that. It is not right for me to say anything common, nor ought you to listen. For what is war but your usual custom? Or what is sweeter for a brave man than to seek revenge with his own hand? It is a right of nature to glut the soul with vengeance. Let us then attack the foe eagerly; for they are ever the bolder who make the attack. Despise this union of discordant races! To defend oneself by alliance is proof of cowardice. See, even before our attack they are smitten with terror. [...] Attack the Alans, smite the Visigoths! Seek swift victory in that spot where the battle rages. For when the sinews are cut the limbs soon relax, nor can a body stand when you have taken away the bones. Let your courage rise and your own fury burst forth! Now show your cunning, Huns, now your deeds of arms! [...] And finally, why should Fortune have made the Huns victorious over so many

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[459] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 186.
[460] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVIII, 199 – 200.
[461] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVIII, 201.

nations, unless it were to prepare them for the joy of this conflict. Who was it revealed to our sires the path through the Maeotian swamp, for so many ages a closed secret? Who, moreover, made armed men yield to you, when you were as yet unarmed? Even a mass of federated nations could not endure the sight of the Huns. [...] I shall hurl the first spear at the foe. If any can stand at rest while Attila fights, he is a dead man.[462]

Jordanes' rhetoric, here placed as Attila's voice, summarises and solidifies the role of Attila. His power is hegemonic, his authority is unquestionable, and his warlike prowess is outstanding. 'Post victorias tantarum gentium, post orbem, si consistatis, edomitum' is the *De Origine*'s argument concerning the Hunnic king in a nutshell. The Huns, under Attila, managed to bring the people of *Magna Dacia* under unified rule, and now this stability was threatened by a coalition of Western powers, Visigoths who left their ancient abodes and Romans, whose ill-advised choices are so criticised in the *De Summa Temporum*. 'Adunatas dispicite dissonas gentes' is the subtle message behind this reasoning. To a certain extent, it seems that Jordanes makes a ring of nostalgia resonate through Attila's speech as if this was the final breath of a cohesive, hegemonic 'Dacian' power. Certainly, the Visigoths and the cunning Romans are also seen under positive light, and the general tone of the battle is of amusement rather than disappointment, but this does not detract from the fact that, within the logic of the narrative, Attila appears to be at the right side of history, that is, his motives and his persona grant him more legitimacy than the Western alliance of Visigoths and Romans trying to bring down the

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[462] 'Post victorias tantarum gentium, post orbem, si consistatis, edomitum, ineptum iudicaveram tamquam ignaros rei verbis acuere. Quaerat hoc aut novus ductor aut inexpertus exercitus. Nec mihi fas est aliquid vulgare dicere, nec vobis oportet audire. Quid autem aliud vos quam bellare consuetum? Aut quid viro forti suavius, quam vindicta manu querere? Magnum munus a natura animos ultione satiare. Adgrediamur igitur hostem alacres: audaciores sunt semper, qui inferunt bellum. Adunatas dispicite dissonas gentes: indicium pavoris est societate defendi. En ante impetum nostrum terroribus iam feruntur, [...] Alanos invadite, in Vesegothas incumbite. Inde nobis cita victoria quaerere, unde se continet bellum. Abscisa autem nervis mox membra relabuntur, nec potest stare corpus, cui ossa subtraxeris. Consurgant animi, furor solitus intumescat. Nunc consilia, Hunni, nunc arma depromite. [...] postremo cur fortuna Hunnos tot gentium victores adseret, nisi ad certaminis huius gaudia praeparasset? Quis denique Meotidarum iter maiores nostros aperuit tot saeculis clausum secretum? Quis adhuc inermibus cedere faciebat armatos? Faciem Hunnorum non poterat ferre adunata collectio. [...] primus in hoste tela coiciam. si quis potuerit Attila pugnante otio ferre, sepultus est' Jord., *Getica*, XXXIX, 202 – 206.

one ruler who had risen above the constant political unbalances of the Balkans since the times of Ermanaric.[463]

The correlation between Attila and Ermanaric, in fact, is a vital element in the textual construct of Jordanes. In many senses, as discussed in the previous chapter, they represent the same narrative motif and encompass a cycle that starts with the latter and ends with the former. The rise and fall of Ermanaric mirror the rise and fall of Attila (and vice versa). From the times of the legendary Berig to Ermanaric, we can see the gestation of a Getic power and the political and cultural creation of *Magna Dacia*. This is the period when the Goths, the Gepids, and the Huns come into the narrative, when Visigoths and Ostrogoths are still united and when the Getae perform their most impressive deeds, from mythical kings (such as Zalmoxis or Tanausis) to the appearance of the Amali, whose glory is encapsulated in the form of Ermanaric. He was the bravest of the Getic kings yet, and his might was sufficient to subjugate and amass the stray tribes of the East.[464] His downfall comes when the Huns, after conquering the Alans, move towards the Goths, and Ermanaric, weakened by the treachery of the Rossomoni, cannot hold his ground. Hence, the first period of Gothic hegemonic comes to an end by the sword of the Huns, who then become the lords of all the Eastern tribes – including the Ostrogoths – and achieve complete hegemony with the appearance of Attila. Mirroring the fate of Ermanaric, Attila has to face a great enemy (whom, coincidentally, the very Alans that assisted in the downfall of the Goths in the fourth century, were helping) but ends up dying soon after, choked by his own blood on his wedding night. His death precipitates strife among the Huns, giving the dominated tribes an opportunity to rise against their lordship, thus ending

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[463] 'Adclamant responso comites duci, laetus sequitur vulgus. Fit omnibus ambitus pugnae, hostes iam Hunni desiderantur. Producitur itaque a rege Theodorido Vesegotharum innumerabilis multitudo; qui quattuor filios domi dimissos, id est Friderichum et Eurichum, Retemerim et Himnerith secum tantum Thorismud et Theodericum maiores natu participes laboris adsumit. Felix procinctum, auxilium tutum, suave collegium habere solacia illorum, quibus delectat ipsa etiam simul subire discrimina', Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 180 best describes Jordanes' admiration towards the tenacity of the Balthi.

[464] See Chapter 3.3.

the Hunnic Confederacy at the so-called Battle of the River Nedao. This turn of events paves the way, in turn, for the rise of the Ostrogoths, who achieve their maximum glory with the kingship of Theoderic I. His successors are unable to keep the crown, as Justinian waged war against them, and conquered Italy and the Ostrogoths, hence ending the narrative.[465] Therefore, both Ermanaric and Attila mark the peak of the hegemony of their own people, and both represent the changing of the political tides of *Magna Dacia*. This succession of kings and nations is within the political logic employed by Jordanes in his *De Summa Temporum*. As discussed before, Jordanes understands that history moves forward through a progression of empires, one conquering the other, and enabling an eschatological wheel that eventually will lead to one final power – a biblical vision shared by Orosius, for example.[466]
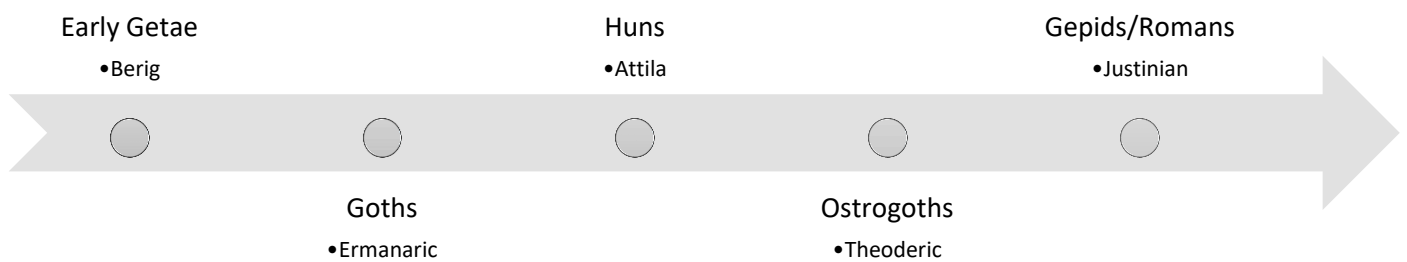
The motion of the 'succession of empires' – as well as the rhetorical cycle between Ermanaric and Attila – for the Huns, naturally ends with the death of their king. They continue to play a small role in the narrative at the battle at Nedao, but this event is linked

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[465] 'Haec hucusque Getarum origo ac Amalorum nobilitas et virorum fortium facta. Haec laudanda progenies laudabiliori principi cessit et fortiori duci manus dedit, cuius fama nullis saeculis nullisque silebitur aetatibus, sed victor ac triumphator Iustinianus imperator et consul Belesarius Vandalici Africani Geticique dicentur', Jord., *Getica*, LX, 315.

[466] Nuffelen. On the idea of the succession of empires in the sources read by Jordanes (and his probable influences), *cf.* M. Sordi, 'Il Problema della Successione degli Imperi tra Pompeo Trogo e Orosio', in *La successione degli imperi e delle egemonie nelle relazioni internazionali*, ed. by D. Foraboschi (Milan: S. M. Pizzetti, 2008), pp. 77–84.

to the passing of Attila rather than to any natural, historical development. As said above, the famous Hunnic king died during a wedding: Jordanes states that after giving himself over to excessive joy at the ceremony, he fell asleep and blood ran down his throat, choking him to death. He was found next morning, and great mourning ensued: the Huns 'plucked out the hair of their heads and made their faces hideous with deep wounds, that the renowned warrior might be mourned, not by effeminate wailings and tears, but by the blood of men.'[467] To justify this shameful death – mirroring the disgraceful one of Ermanaric – Jordanes mentions a prophetic dream that happened to the Eastern emperor Marcian, in which he saw Attila's bow (the weapon so common to the Huns) broken, thus signalling the end of the fierce king, as if heavenly forces announced his death.[468] This provides an interesting parallel to the sword of Mars, another divine sign that signalled his ascent to power – while a sword marks the beginning of his hegemonic authority, a broken bow marks its completion.

Attila's funeral is, then, the final testament of his hegemony, thus sealing his role and his function within the narrative:

> The chief of the Huns, King Attila, born of his sire Mundiuch, lord of bravest tribes, sole possessor of the Scythian and German realms – powers unknown before –captured cities and terrified both empires of the Roman world and, appeased by their prayers, took annual tribute to save the rest from plunder.[469]

This was a *strava*, a Hunnic lamentation, that conceals in itself the achievement that Jordanes was trying to convey: the subjugation of both Scythia and Germania. Attila, then, is buried in a three coffins: one made out of gold, one made out of silver and one

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[467] '(…) crinium parte truncata informes facies cavis turpavere vulneribus, ut proeliator eximius non femineis lamentationibus et lacrimis, sed sanguine lugeretur virile', Jord., *Getica*, XLIX, 255.

[468] 'Nam in tantum magnis imperiis Attila terribilis habitus est, ut eius mortem in locum muneris superna regnantibus indicarent', Jord., *Getica*, XLIX, 255.

[469] 'Praecipuus Hunnorum rex Attila, patre genitus Mundzuco, fortissimarum gentium dominus, qui inaudita ante se potentia solus Scythica et Germanica regna possedit nec non utraque Romani urbis imperia captis civitatibus terruit et, ne praedae reliqua subderentur, placatus praecibus annuum vectigal accepit [...]', Jord., *Getica*, XLIX, 257.

made out of iron, 'showing by such means that these three things suited the mightiest of kings; iron because he subdued the nations, gold and silver because he received the honours of both empires'.[470]

The veracity of this passage is debatable. The inclusion of the word *strava* seems to point towards some historical basis – Jordanes could have taken this narrative from Priscus, who in turn heard it from some eye-witness account. Maenchen-Helfen explores this possibility by pointing the possible Slavic origin of the term *strava*. He concludes that either Priscus or Jordanes got this information from a Slav informant and mistook the root of the word for Hunnic.[471] The passage, then, seems to be historically significant, however, that does not mean that Jordanes mindlessly employed it as he heard or read; it is crafted in such a way that it still obeys the goals and rhetorical strategies of our author.

After the death of Attila comes the battle of Nedao, which role we will analyse later. But the passing of the Hunnic king ends with the same rhetorical tone followed throughout the *De Origine* when it comes down to the function of the Huns: Attila, the famous ruler, condenses in his hegemonic image the narrative development of this *gens*. He becomes possibly the greatest example of Jordanes' political ideology: he is powerful enough to unite the peoples of *Magna Dacia*; he is the 'living' example of authority and hegemony. Through this image, Jordanes channels the narrative threads that will reconnect the history of the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, that is, it is during the 'Attilan pause' that the flow of the story being told in the *De Origine* returns its focus to the Balkans. Attila's role is further consolidated through the battle of the Catalaunian Plains and, to a certain extent, through the battle of River Nedao as well, as we will see next.

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[470] '[...] significantes tali argumento potentissimo regi omnia convenisse: ferrum, quod gentes edomuit, aurum et argentum, quod ornatum rei publicae utriusque acceperit', Jord., *Getica*, XLIX, 258.
[471] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 426.

4.3 – BATTLES OF THE HUNS

4.3.1 – *LOCUS MAURIACUS*: THE CLASH AT THE CATALAUNIAN FIELDS

Although the Huns are the driving force in the second half of the narrative, connecting the stories of the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths after their separation, Jordanes leaves out an impressive number of details relating to their history – especially before Attila. He merely skims over some of the early campaigns and, in spite of the emphasis on the Hunnic military capabilities, only the battles of the Catalaunian Plains and of the River Nedao are featured prominently.[472] There must be a reason for that, and I argue that this is an exemplary case of accounts that are not so much intended as a historical description, but rather serve as a narrative tool to achieve and establish a goal within the *De Origine*. This is further proven by the way in which these combats are structured: Catalaunian Plains, the Western incursion of Attila, his marriage, and the Hunnic debacle at Nedao are part of the same continuum, that is, they compose one single block of discourse. They all happen in immediate succession and are dependent on each other: without the war with the Visigoths there can be no Western incursion, and without the Western incursion, the sudden death of Attila and the consequent clash at Nedao make no sense. The Catalaunian plains are the zenith of the 'Attilan pause' and, therefore, all the accounts that surround this theoretical proposition ought to be seen as being connected.

To scrutinise these battles with particular attention to the rhetoric and function of this passage is no easy task, mainly because Jordanes is, in fact, our richest source of these facts – and the battle of the Catalaunian Plains is attested enough in other sources for the information present in the *De Origine* to make perfect historical sense.[473] The

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[472] Even if Jordanes had not received any information about the military exploits of the Huns from first and second-hand accounts, he certainly had access to sources that narrated it, such as Marcelinus Comes, Priscus and others. Therefore, we have to assume that leaving those out, as discussed earlier, was a conscious choice.

[473] Marcellinus Comes, Hydatius, Prosper, Chronicle of 452, *cf.* Murray, pp. 61–100.

amount of data is enticing, and stripping the factual information out of the narrative, and looking into its mere rhetorical role seems almost like a sterile effort. On the other hand, Nedao presents a different challenge, because although the battle makes sense within our factual perception, Jordanes is the only author to mention it as such: no other text, beyond the *De Origine*, has any information on this remarkable clash between so many groups – with the exception of Prosper of Aquitaine, who paints a different picture, as we will see below.

That being said, it is no surprise that Jordanes' account of the Catalaunian Plains has received much scholarly attention.[474] However, in contrast with the more critical views on the *De Origine* as a whole, historiography tends to feed on the description of this battle without analytical tools and takes its information at face value. In the Spanish translation of the *De Origine*, Sánchez Martin even includes a map depicting the strategic manoeuvres and the positioning of the armies.[475] In fact, since at least Gibbon, the battle of the Catalaunian Plains, or *locus mauriacus*, is seen as the moment in which the Roman world stood breathless, seeing its destiny hanging on a thread.[476] Because this battle crowns the so-called Gaulish invasion of Attila, it is certainly easy to see how a catastrophic Roman defeat in the *locus mauriacus* could have meant the effective end of the Empire – and this grandiose position is the traditional instance taken by most

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[474] To name a few, *cf.* C. Kelly, 'Attila's Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. by M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 193–208; S. MacDowall, *Catalaunian Fields AD 451: Rome's Last Great Battle* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015); Whately, 'Jordanes, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, and Constantinople'; P. Delogu, 'Metamorfosi Di Attila', in *Medioevo Letto, Scavato, Rivalutato. Studi in Onore Di Paolo Peduto*, ed. by R. Fiorillo and C. Lambert (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2012), pp. 47–72; K. DeVries, *Battles of the Ancient World 1285 BC - AD 451: From Kadesh to Catalaunian Field* (London: Amber, 2011); I. Lebedynsky, *La Campagne d'Attila en Gaule 451 apr. J.-C.* (Clermont-Ferrand: LEMME edit, 2011); S. Bodelón, 'Idacio: Prodigios Y Providencialismo En Su Crónica', *Memorias de Historia Antigua*, XVII (1996), 117–32; Bock; U. Täckholm, 'Aetius and the Battle on the Catalaunian Fields', *Opuscula Romana*, 7 (1969), 259–76; A. Alföldi, 'Les Champs Catalauniques', *Revue Des Études Hongroises*, 6 (1928), 108–11.

[475] Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, p. 172. The tradition of mapping the strategy and positioning of this battle might have originated with the vivid account of Sir Edward Creasy, E. S. Creasy, *The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World: From Marathon to Waterloo* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2008), pp. 145–46.

[476] E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 3 vols (St. Ives: Penguin Classics, 1995), II, pp. 338–45.

historians. Although Maenchen-Helfen diminished the importance of this battle (as did Bury), its status as one of the most (if not the most) important battles of Late Antiquity still stands.[477]

Such perspective is, to some degree, justifiable. Jordanes has an embellished, impressive account of the clash. He pays attention to details, describes both sides and the nations fighting under then, gives an insight into the general behaviour of Huns and Visigoths, and even talks about numbers and deaths in the field. This passage has such remarkable eloquence that some historians, who have assumed that Jordanes himself did not possess this level of skill in Latin, have argued that he must have copied this passage from someone else – though not, of course, from the usual suspect Priscus, who wrote in Greek.[478] We do not know if there was a previous, equivalent, account, in Latin, but as it is, Jordanes might have learned, first hand, about the stories of the battle when he was an officer in the Moesia – afterall, he worked for Gunthigis, whose father, Andela, fought under Attila and is said to have killed Theoderic the Visigoth himself.[479] I do not think that establishing a rank of 'good' or 'bad' Latin in the *De Origine* should be an academic measure, and Jordanes' Latin does assume many different shapes across the text. Therefore, we should see his account of *locus mauriacus* as a well-crafted passage in its own.[480]

That being said, we will not analyse nor criticise in depth the historical value of these narratives *per se*, but will try to understand how they fit within the logic of the *De*

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[477] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, pp. 130–32; J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 vols (New York: Dover Books, 1958), I, pp. 294–95. Overall, the aforementioned *magnum opus* of Sir Edward Creasy seems to be still very influential, *cf.* Creasy, pp. 133–46.

[478] Christensen, pp. 338–40. Christensen, though, admits the possibility of Priscus being a source for most of the Hunnic material. As for the well-crafted passage about *locus mauriacus*, he argues that Cassiodorus has to be the obvious source.

[479] Jord., *Getica*, XL, 209; L, 265. It is very likely that both Gunthigis and Candac, the Alan leader whom Jordanes' grandfather served, were present in the Catalaunian Plains fighting on Attila's side.

[480] Whately managed to demonstrate that the account of the Catalaunian fields, in Jordanes, presents many rhetorical *topoi* and anxieties shared by contemporaries like Count Marcelinus, Procopius and the Byzantine elites in general, which would be evidence of his own authorship, in: Whately, 'Jordanes, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, and Constantinople', pp. 75–78.

Origine and what is its purpose in the overarching argument of hegemony and political succession in *Magna Dacia*. Jordanes, after all, paid special attention to the events of the Catalaunian Plains and the Nedao. In both cases, these battles are presented not so much as a clash of two people, but rather as a clash of nations – the opposition of two different broad cultures and mindsets.

We have already seen how Jordanes presents the scenario before the battle: Attila, bent on expanding his hegemony and conquering the world, understood that the two great foes in his way were the Romans and the Visigoths. The Empire seems to have assumed that as well, as Valentinian III incites the Visigoths to make a stand against the Huns, in case Attila decided to attack. The indomitable personality of Attila is made apparent for everyone in the *De Origine*, as even Geiseric, according to Jordanes, decided to use it to his own ends, by stirring Attila to attack the Visigoths in the West by the ways of valuable gifts.[481] Maenchen-Helfen assumes that Jordanes completely made up the Vandalic ruse, as it would have been nearly impossible, he states, for the agents of the Vandal king to sneak through the Empire, from North Africa to Pannonia, carrying precious gifts and bags of gold to bribe Attila.[482] It is likely that Maenchen-Helfen is right, in which case the inclusion of Geiseric in the equation would further prove that Jordanes was relating these events as an example of Attila's might – his lust for power and desire to bring the world under his authority were, in the *De Origine*, renowned and perceived by everyone. Interestingly, both plans – the Roman and the Vandal – work, as the Visigoths gladly march against the Huns and, at the same time, the Huns rush into battle. This is a rhetorical set-up that immediately leads to the war (and, as said before, the prominent usage of direct speeches demonstrates how crafted and thought-out this passage was).[483] Moreover, as

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[481] *Cf.* chapter 4.2.
[482] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 130.
[483] Pre-battle speeches are an important staple of ancient warfare narrative – and are preeminently featured in Jordanes' contemporary, Procopius (certainly influence by Thucydides). The classical (and therefore authoritative) baggage that this element carried was certainly important to certain passages of the *Getica* –

Jordanes describes their tactical dispositions, he recounts how many nations are fighting

for both sides and wonders how damaging a king can be if he makes poor choices:

> On the side of the Romans stood the Patrician Aëtius, on whom at that time the whole Empire
> of the West depended; a man of such wisdom that he had assembled warriors from everywhere
> to meet them on equal terms. Now these were his auxiliaries: Franks, Sarmatians, Armoricians,
> Liticians, Burgundians, Saxons, Riparians, Olibriones (once Romans soldiers and now the
> flower of the allied forces), and some other Celtic or German tribes. And so they met in the
> Catalaunian Plains, which are also called Mauriacian [...]. That portion of the earth accordingly
> became the threshing-floor of countless races. [...] What just cause can be found for the
> encounter of so many nations, or what hatred inspired them all to take arms against each other?
> It is proof that the human race lives for its kings, for it is at the mad impulse of one mind a
> slaughter of nations takes place, and at the whim of a haughty ruler that which nature has taken
> ages to produce perishes in a moment.[484]

A few things can be taken from this passage. Jordanes implies that Aëtius had

amassed an international host of his own: auxiliary troops composed of a multitude of

'Celtic and Germanic tribes', a direct opposition to the 'Scythian and Germanic' nations

over whom Attila ruled. He continues the theme of ethnic plurality by stating that the

Catalaunian Plains became the *locus* of the great debacle of countless different people,

'innumerabilium populorum'; he then rhetorically inquires what is the reason for such a

bloody crash between so many nations, 'motibus tantorum'. This negative tone makes

explicit the authorial hand of Jordanes, as it echoes those thoughts that would later be

expressed at the end of the *De Summa Temporum*: the tragedy of the Roman Empire

comes about because of ignorant rulers, 'ab ignaris rectoribus amiserit.'[485] This

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namely during the narration of the Catalaunian battle. *Cf.* C. Whately, *Battles and Generals: Combat, Culture, and Didacticism in Procopius' Wars* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), p. 79; E. Anson, 'The General's Pre-Battle Exhortation in Graeco-Roman Warfare', *Greece and Rome*, 57.2 (2010), 304–18; R. F. Miller, *In Words and Deeds: Battle Speeches in History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2008), p. 18.

[484] 'A parte vero Romanorum tanta patricii Aetii providentia fuit, cui tunc innitebatur res publica Hesperiae plagae, ut undique bellatoribus congregatis adversus ferocem et infinitam multitudinem non impar occurreret. Hi enim adfuerunt auxiliares: Franci, Sarmatae, Armoriciani, Liticiani, Burgundiones, Saxones, Ripari, Olibriones, quondam milites Romani, tunc vero iam in numero auxiliarium exquisiti, aliaeque nonnulli Celticae vel Germanie nationes. Convenitur itaque in campos Catalaunicos, qui et Mauriaci nominantur [...]. Fit ergo area innumerabilium populorum pars illa terrarum. [...] Quae potest digna causa tantorum motibus invenire? Aut quod odium in se cunctos animavit armari? Probatum est humanum genus regibus vivere, quando unius mentis insano impetu strages sit facta populorum et arbitrio superbi regis momento defecit quod tot saeculis natura progenuit', Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 191 – 193.

[485] Jord., *Romana*, 388.

affirmation is on par with the statement that, by one act of a haughty commander, even what nature itself has produced over many centuries is destroyed, 'arbitrio superbi regis momento defecit quod tot saeculis natura progenuit.' Although this assertion could be taken as a sign of a more general 'anti-establishment' thought, it is clear that Jordanes sees a great difference between a bad and a good ruler: Aëtius, for example, is a wise – a man of *tanta providentia* – so much that the whole Western Empire depended on him;[486] Attila, as we have seen, is described as having all sorts of magnanimous qualities (in spite of his fury); and the Amali and Balthi, in general, are regarded as wise and noble. In other words, although the leaders on both sides of the Catalaunian battle were worthy, the act of war, in itself, is a result of rage and misguidance: perhaps because of the cunning tricks of Geiseric, or perhaps because the separation between Visigoths and Ostrogoths ended up pitting the Huns against the former. As it is, the battle of the Catalaunian Plains is an example of imprudent commands, an *exemplum* of political matters gone wrong.[487]

That being said, Jordanes nonetheless goes on to narrate the battle and the aftermath as a glorious event to behold – right down to the clash at Nedao. It could be argued that, although the occurrence of the conflict is not a good thing, the way it develops serves the rhetorical purpose of placing the narrative back on track, thus returning the focus of the *De Origine* to *Magna Dacia* and to the nations of that land. It also served to highlight the actions of honourable men in the face of a cruel situation: 'There such deeds were done that a brave man who missed this marvellous spectacle could not hope to see anything so wonderful all his life long.'[488]

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[486] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVI, 191. A similar inference can be found in Marcellinus Comes: 'Aetius magna Occidentalis rei publicae salus et regi Attilae terror', Marc. Com., *Chron.*, VII, 2.
[487] Whately understands that Jordanes, just like Procopius, was criticising Justinian's policies. I do not disagree as a whole, but it seems that the *Getica* had no specific political goal, but was part of a more general sense of pessimism when places alongside the *Romana*, in: Whately, 'Jordanes, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, and Constantinople', pp. 75–76.
[488] 'ubi talia gesta referantur, ut nihil esset, quod in vita sua conspicere potuisset egregius, qui huius miraculi privaretur aspecto', Jord., *Getica*, XL, 207.

The battle of the Catalaunian Plains comes to its end, after much bloodshed, with an ambiguous result. The fields, according to Jordanes, were piled high with the bodies of thousands of dead warriors. This halted the Hunnic army, and the Romans immediately thought they were victorious and, to seal the triumph, decided to besiege Attila's encampment, cutting his provisions of food and water.[489] This manoeuvre did not go as planned, for the bloodlust of Attila was only heightened. He would defeat his enemies or die trying: he heaped up a funeral pyre, planning to cast himself into flames before being captured by the Romans and Visigoths in case of a full defeat: 'he was determined to cast himself into the flames, that none might have the joy of wounding him and that the lord of so many races might not fall into the hands of his foes'.[490] At this stage, Theoderic the Visigoth had already been slain by the Ostrogoths.[491] His death threw his son into a state of rage and madness, and he was decided to kill all the Huns as a punishment for his father. Aëtius was wary of this disposition, because although the Romans were allied with the Visigoths, he feared that a total victory of Goths over Huns would leave the Romans overwhelmed by barbarians, so he advised Thorismod, son of Theoderic, to go back to Toulouse and claim his crown. The retreat of the Visigoths was, at first, suspicious to Attila, but after realising that this was not a ruse, he turned his mind to his desire to conquer and went on to sack and destroy Italian cities, while making his way to Rome itself.[492]

This is the effective end of the Battle of Catalaunian Plains itself. Although Attila's story continues, this one particular conflict of Huns and Visigoths was terminated with the retreat of Thorismod. The way in which Jordanes portrays this whole scenario is

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[489] Jord, *Getica*, XL – XLI.

[490] 'si adversarii inrumperent, flammis inicere voluisse, ne aut aliquis eius vulnere laetaretur aut in potestate hostium tantarum gentium dominus perveniret', Jord., *Getica*, XL, 213.

[491] Theoderic is killed by Andag, father of Gunthigis, who leading a host of Ostrogoths. It is interesting that Jordanes asserts the death of the Visigothic king to an Ostrogoth, technically making it a kinslaying, in: Jord., *Getica*, XLI, 215.

[492] Jord., *Getica*, XLI, 216 – 218.

interesting. Although historiography looks at *locus mauriacus* as a war fought by and within the Western Roman Empire, the account of Jordanes focuses on the conflict and rivalry between Huns and Visigoths – that is, between the *hegemon* of *Magna Dacia* and the deserters of the Getic people. Jordanes' rhetorical constructs make it clear: just before the conflict, Attila, anxious about the prospect of fighting such a huge contingent of enemies, consulted his soothsayers. The witch consulted the guts and entrails of enemies, a traditional Hunnic divination method, and prophesied that the king of the enemy would die – to the joy of Attila, who desired the death of Aëtius. However, this prophecy related not to Aëtius, but to Theoderic the Visigoth.[493] It is implicit, then, that the real enemy were not so much the Romans, but the Visigoths. The counterpart to Attila on the battlefield was Theoderic. Jordanes presents this revelation as a twist: ' This was what the soothsayers had said to Attila in a prophecy, though he understood it of Aëtius'.[494] The animosity between these two *gentes* becomes even more evident when we realise that it was the withdraw of Thorismod that ended the conflict. Aëtius, interestingly, had no urge to keep attacking the Huns, as his primary concern was, in fact, the ongoing presence of the Visigoths and the prospect of their ultimate victory. Had the Catalaunian Plains ended more decisively, it would have been a triumph of the Goths, not the Romans. Moreover, because the people of Theoderic do not leave the battlefield as the victors, neither do the Huns leave it as the defeated. The inconclusive outcome allows Jordanes not to concede the laurels to the Visigoths, while at the same time maintaining the Huns as an effective military force and, thus, keeping the narrative still flowing towards Attila.

The narrative then proceeds to recount how Attila ravaged Italy, while at the same time explaining the succession of Visigoth kings.[495] Jordanes' story is constructed in such

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[493] Jord., *Getica*, XXXVII, 195.
[494] 'Hoc fuit, quod Attilae praesagio aruspices prius dixerant, quamvis ille de Aetio suspicaret', Jord., *Getica*, XL, 209.
[495] Jord., *Getica*, XLI – XLVII.

a way that, by focusing on Attila on the one hand, and the Visigoths on the other, he can narrate a second conflict between them, this time without the involvement of the Romans, which ended with the defeat of the Huns and the subsequent death of Thorismod. According to Jordanes, Attila was bent on ravaging Rome after *locus mauriacus* because Honoria, sister of emperor Valentinian III, who was kept under constraint at the command of her brother, to achieve her freedom sent an ambassador to Attila, requesting his help.[496] This became a reason for Attila to antagonise the Romans. However, after meeting with Pope Leo, he decided that attacking the city of Rome would not bring him good fortune, so he returned to his encampment in Pannonia. He did not like peace, though, and still wanted to take revenge on the Visigoths. Therefore, he devised a plan to fool his enemies: he threatened the Eastern emperor Marcian, but only in order to confuse the Romans: and instead of moving East, as promised, he turned West. Thorismod guessed his plans and met the Huns at the abodes of the Alans:

> They joined battle in almost the same way as before at the Catalaunian Plains, and Thorismod dashed his hopes of victory, for he routed him and drove him from the land without a triumph, compelling him to flee to his own country. Thus while Attila, the famous leader and lord of many victories, sought to blot out the fame of his destroyer and in this way to annul what he had suffered at the hands of the Visigoths, he met a second defeat and retreated ingloriously.[497]

Jordanes clearly implies that this second, unspecified conflict, is still part of the Catalaunian battle. 'Simili eum tenore, ut prius in campos Catalaunicos' cannot refer to the Catalaunian Plains themselves: *locus mauriacus* included a body of Romans and other groups besides the Visigoths, while the Huns must have suffered a significant diminishment of their own troops after so many clashes. This was a smaller, more

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[496] 'Ferebatur enim, quia haec Honoria, dum propter aulae decus ad castitatem teneretur nutu fratris inclusa, clam eunucho misso Attilam invitasse, ut contra fratris potentiam eius patrociniis uteretur: prorsus indignum facinus, ut licentiam libidinis malo publico conpararet', Jord., *Getica*, XLII, 224.

[497] '[...] consertoque proelio pene simili eum tenore, ut prius in campos Catalaunicos, ab spe removit victoriae fugatumque a partibus suis sine triumpho remittens in sedes proprias fugire compulit. Sic Attila famosus et multarum victoriarum dominus dum quaerit famam perditoris abicere et quod prius a Vesegothis pertulerat abolere, geminata sustenuit ingloriosusque recessit', Jord., *Getica*, XLIII, 227.

concentrated fight. Jordanes is referring to the moral, maybe even ideological, character of the conflict. Huns and Visigoths face each other again, just like they did previously of the Catalaunian fields. This face-off is, then, the conclusion to that battle that never ended – and it never ended because the Romans felt it would have been more beneficial to them to keep it as it was. Curiously, although Attila retreated ingloriously, 'ingloriosus recessit,' he did not die. Jordanes is not clear about the number of dead or how big were the losses, but just mentions that Attila and his forces were driven out.[498] He connects, again, both this and the previous debacle with a statement about Attila's non-victories: 'Sic Attila famosus et multarum victoriarum dominus dum quaerit famam perditoris abicere et quod prius a Vesegothis pertulerat abolere, geminata sustenuit ingloriosusque recessit.'

The conclusion of this rivalry does not come with Attila's defeat alone. Jordanes tells us that, immediately after this battle, Thorismod went back to Toulouse and reigned for three years, until he fell sick and was betrayed by a certain client called Ascalc, who tried to kill the Visigothic king (who died fighting, but also killing his enemy).[499] It is remarkable that Jordanes chose to rhetorically end the friction between Huns and Visigoths by addressing, in the same paragraph, the defeat of Attila and the death of Thorismod in an unrelated incident. With him dead, the desire of the Visigoths to avenge Theoderic also died, and, finally, the political implications of the Catalaunian plains came to an end.

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[498] He does, however, say that Thorismod won the battle without harm for his troops, implying that he probably employed Alanic cohorts to fight Attila. This is an interesting argument, as Huns and Visigoth met near to the Alanic abodes precisely because Attila wanted to coopt them before facing Thorismod, in: Jord., *Getica*, XLIII, 225 – 228.

[499] 'Thorismud vero repulsis ab Alanis Hunnorum catervis sine aliqua suorum lesione Tolosa migravit suorumque quieta pace conposita tertio anno regni sui egrotans, dum sanguinem tollit de vena, ab Ascalc suo clienti inimico nuntiante arma subtracta peremptus est. Vna tamen manu, quam liberam habebat, scabillum tenens sanguinis sui extitit ultor, aliquantos insidiantes sibi extinguens', Jord., *Getica*, XLIII, 228.

The cessation of these conflicts, however, did not stop this rhetorical opposition between Huns and Goths. Indeed Jordanes spends the following paragraphs narrating the history and the royal succession of the Visigoths, but once he reaches the deposition of Augustulus and the rise of Odoacer (thus covering about 40 years since the Catalaunian Plains), he connects the thread with the Hunnic people through a subtle theoretical construct. According to the *De Origine*, when Euric, king of the Visigoths, was reigning, he was bribed by Geiseric to attack the Romans in the West. At the same time, the Vandal king incited with gifts the Ostrogoths – who were then in the Balkans – to attack the Romans in the East. By doing so, Geiseric hoped to rule unopposed in North Africa.[500] This is an interesting echo of his treachery before the battle of *locus mauriacus*, when he did the same thing to Attila. Even the wording, *muneribus*, is the same: 'Gyzericus etenim Vandalorum rex suis eum muneribus ad ista committenda inlicuit', whereas, in the passage concerning the bribery of Attila, Jordanes writes multis muneribus ad 'Vesegotharum bella precipitat'. This passage is set up in such a way that the reader would remember the previous acts of Geiseric and, therefore, as the narrative of the Visigoths ends the image of the Catalaunian Plains and the rivalry with the Huns looms over it.

In fact, Jordanes not only concludes his discussion of the participation of the Visigoths in the conflict against the Huns with this very passage but, strangely, he puts an end to the existence of their kingdom as well. He relates that, after the death of Euric (which happened years after the bribery of Geiseric, but which in the narrative comes right after that episode), his son Alaric rose to power:

> He was succeeded by his own son Alaric, the ninth in succession from the famous Alaric the Great to receive the kingdom of the Visigoths. For even as it happened to the line of the

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[500] 'Interim tamen ad eum ordinem, unde digressi sumus, redeamus, et quomodo Euricus rex Vesegotharum Romani regni vacillationem cernens Arelatum et Massiliam propriae subdidit dicioni. Gyzericus etenim Vandalorum rex suis eum muneribus ad ista committenda inlicuit, quatenus ipse Leonis vel Zenonis insidias, quas contra eum direxerant, praecaveret, egitque, ut Orientalem imperium Ostrogothas, Hesperium Vesegothae vastarent, ut in utramque rem publicam hostibus decernentibus ipse in Africa quietus regnaret', Jord. *Getica*, XLVII, 244.

Augusti, as we have stated above, so too it appears in the line of the Alarici, that kingdoms often come to an end in kings who bear the same name as those at the beginning.[501]

Jordanes here is obviously referring to Alaric II, the king who was defeated and killed at the Battle of Vouillé against the Franks in 507.[502] The *De Origine* is, in general, silent concerning the Franks (who are rarely mentioned and, when they are, it is either in relation to their presence at the Catalaunian Fields or their contact with the Italian kingdom of Theoderic).[503] This passage is no different: Jordanes chose to omit the clash between Visigoths and Franks or any other fact; he just, cryptically, alludes to the end of the Visigothic power, thus implying that the loss of Toulouse was the termination of this kingdom. His choice to not address the ensuing Visigothic kingdom of *Hispania* is raises questions, but I would argue that he does so because, in his eyes, the institutional existence of an independent Visigothic authority came to an end, as a result of Theoderic's intervention on behalf of Amalaric (Jordanes, however, acknowledges the rule of Theudigisel and Agila I, who were in charge of *Hispania* after Amalaric/Theudis).[504]

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[501] 'Huic successit proprius filius Alarichus, qui nonus in numero ab illo Alarico magno regnum adeptus est Vesegotharum. Nam pari tenore, ut de Augustis superius diximus, et in Alaricis provenisse cognoscitur, et in eos saepe regna deficiunt, a quorum nominibus inchoarunt', Jord., *Getica*, XLVII, 245. In this passage, Jordanes creates a parallel with the deposition of Romulus Augustulus and the end of the Western Roman Empire, which he mentioned in the previous chapter: 'Sic quoque Hesperium Romanae gentis imperium, quod septingentesimo nono urbis conditae anno primus Augustorum Octavianus Augustus tenere coepit, cum hoc Augustulo periit anno decessorum prodecessorumve regni quingentesimo vicesimo secundo, Gothorum dehinc regibus Romam Italiamque tenentibus', Jord., *Getica*, XLVI, 243.

[502] For more on the Frankish victory of Vouillé and its significance, *cf.* R. W. Mathisen and D. Shanzer, *The Battle of Vouillé, 507 CE: Where France Began* (Göttingen: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); I. N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450 - 751* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

[503] Jord., *Getica*, LVII – LIX.

[504] Amalaric was the son of Alaric II and Theodegotha, one of Theoderic Amal's daughter – he was, therefore, also an Ostrogoth. Theudis was a commander of Theoderic and guardian of Amalaric, therefore the *de facto* king of Visigothic Spain. For the regency of Theoderic and Theudis in *Hispania*, *cf.* P. C. Diaz and R. Valverde Castro, 'Goths Confronting Goths: Ostrogothic Political Relations in Hispania', in *The Ostrogoths from the Migration Period to the Sixth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by S. J. B. Barnish and F. Marazzi (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 353–86; for information on Theudigisel, Agila and the end of the Balthi and Amali rule among the Visigoths, *cf.* Frighetto, 'Símbolos E Rituais: Os Mecanismos de Poder Político No Reino Hispano Visigodo de Toledo (Séculos VI - VII)'; *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society*, ed. by A. Ferreiro (London; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1999).

4.3.2 – The Insurgency at the River Nedao

The conclusion of independent Gothic power runs alongside that of the Hunnic hegemony as well. With the rise (and fall) of Alaric II and the bribery of Geiseric, Jordanes turns his eyes to the 'East' again: 'quod nos interim praetermisso sic ut promisimus omnem Gothorum texamus originem'.[505] His narrative immediately returns to the times of Ermanaric, so that he may recount the generations according Ostrogothic commanders, leading to the rise of the three brothers Vidimer, Valamer, and Thiudimer.[506] Naturally, because the rule of Ermanaric was marked by the invasion of Balamber and the subsequent Hunnic domination, this is a discursive occasion to bring up Attila and, finally, conclude the 'Attilan pause' by recounting the succession of *Magna Dacia* to the Goths (through the three Amali brother, about whom Jordanes' says):

> Yet, as has often been said, they ruled in such a way that they respected the dominion of Attila, king or the Huns. Indeed they could not have refused to fight against their kinsmen the Visigoths, and they must even have committed parricide at their lord's command. There was no way whereby any Scythian tribe could have been wrested from the power of the Huns, save by the death of Attila, - an event the Romans and all other nations desired. Now his death was as base as his life was marvellous.[507]

It was only the death of Attila that made possible the establishment of the power of the Scythians (Getae), because, as we have seen, Jordanes constructs an Attila who was, unquestionably, the real hegemonic authority of *Magna Dacia*, with unifying power such as no other king had had before him. Hence, his death, in 453, marks the succession of 'empires' in the Balkans. Jordanes then narrates the manner of his death and his funeral (which I have already covered) and the ensuing battle for succession. According to the

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[505] Jord., *Getica*, XLVII, 245.
[506] Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII.
[507] 'Ita tamen, ut saepe dictum est, imperabant, ut ipsi Attilae Hunnorum regis imperio deservirent: quibus nec contra parentes Vesegothas licuisset recusare certamen, sed necessitas domini, etiam parricidium si iubet, implendum est. Nec aliter ab Hunnorum dominio divelli potuit gens aliqua Scythica, nisi optata cunctis nationibus in commune et Romanis mors Attilae proveniret, quae tam fuit vilis, ut vita mirabilis', Jord., *Getica*, XLVIII, 253.

De Origine, his sons Ellac, Ernak and Denzigich, infatuated with power and authority, proceeded to discuss the sharing of the subject *gentes* among them, as if they were talking about slaves. Ardaric, king of the Gepids and the most trusted general of Attila, was enraged by this treatment, and rose against Hunnic dominion, prompting all the other tribes to fight alongside his people. They met the Huns in Pannonia, near a river called Nedao, and there they killed Ellac, the eldest and most beloved of Attila's son. The Nedao uprising ended, once and for all, the Hunnic hegemony, casting *Magna Dacia* into a state of confusion.[508]

There are many things to talk about concerning Nedao. First of all, it has to be noted that, as it is, Jordanes is our only source to cast some light on the event, which led historians, for many years, to argue about the date and the exact place of the battle. Historically, it is hard to conclude anything about this fight. We have no other reference to a river called Nedao in Pannonia, which led Maenchen-Helfen to speculate that Jordanes was referring to a tributary of the river Sava, in southern Pannonia.[509] Dating the battle is also difficult, but evidence points to some time in 454.[510] Moreover, because Jordanes claims to be quoting Priscus – and because he remains as our only reliable source for this event – historiography tends to accept this battle at face value.[511] This is curious, since Jordanes, as a historical source, is heavily criticised and regularly held as a lesser replacement for the lost history of Cassiodorus. Ironically, this passage deserves a deal of textual criticism. First of all, we have reasons to believe that Jordanes was homogenising, in the figure of the battle of Nedao, a series of succession wars between the sons of Attila.

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[508] For Nedao, *cf.* Jord., *Getica*, L, 259 – 261; for the aftermath and the situation of the Balkans, *cf.* Jord., *Getica*, L, 262 – 266.

[509] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 149. For an older discussion on the location and name of Nedao, from which Maenchen-Helfen took many of his points (including the possibility that 'Nedao' is an Illyric name), *cf.* H. Krahe, 'Beiträge Zur Illyrischen Wort- Und Namenforschung 17; Der Flussname Nedao Und Verwandtes', *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 58 (1942), 208–18.

[510] Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 147.

[511] With the exception of some questions made by Maenchen-Helfen and Kim's proposition that Nedao was a civil war rather than a battle of liberation (in: Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, pp. 89–95), every other study on the Huns tend to include a picture of Nedao, more or less, as Jordanes described it.

In his chronicle, Prosper tells us that after the death of Attila, his sons were squabbling over who would be the new king, as a result of which the subject tribes saw reason and opportunity to defect. This led to many conflicts between them all, and the Huns, the 'most ferocious race', in return were worn down by the assaults of many people.[512] Given that no other source even mentions a conflict among the Huns – let alone details about Nedao – Prosper might provide our only insight into an event such as the one that Jordanes tells us. Prosper is a reliable source and, with the exception of the fragments of Priscus, his chronicle is apparently the contemporary work that tells us most about Attila, including his Gallic incursion and his meeting with Pope Leo, of whom Prosper himself was a secretary.[513] Prosper probably had access to privileged information (and he must have written his chronicle around 455, possibly only a few months after the clash between Attila's sons). It might be understood from this passage that Nedao was not an uprising, but rather a succession conflict.[514] This problem of succession was the reason for mass flight and unrest, 'causas et occasiones bellis dederunt'. The employment of the plural could mean, of course, more than one conflict. It is difficult to postulate that just the usage of *bellis* means a more prolonged struggle, but it does fit with the little that we know about the succession system of the Huns. Before Attila, Octar and Rugila were kings (possibly with Mundzuk, Attila's father, also sharing the crown in some way); After their rule, Attila and Bleda rose as conjoint commanders, but Attila ended up slaying his brother (and, as we saw, possibly more relatives). The hereditary system of the Huns seems to have been quite divisive, as many sons inherit the power from their fathers. We

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[512] 'Attila in sedibus suis mortus, magna primum inter filios ipsius certamina de obtinendo regno exorta sunt: deinde aliquot gentium, que Chunnis parebant, defectus secuti, causas et occasiones bellis dederunt, quibus ferocissimi populi mutuis incursibus contererentur', Prosp. Aqu., *Chron.*, 752.

[513] For an overview of Prosper and the historical value of his chronicle, *cf.* M. Humphries, 'Chronicle and Chronology: Prosper of Aquitaine, His Methods and the Development of Early Medieval Chronography', *Early Medieval Europe*, 5.2 (1996), 155–75.

[514] In spite of the many problems surrouding the Kim's arguments, he seems to make a fair point when addressing Nedao as an internal problem. However, his base for such claim relies not on textual interrogation or analyses of Hunnic power structures, but rather by claiming that Ardaric was, in fact, a Hun. His shift in focus does not change the structure of the battle – it just shifts the ethnic focus on those who fought it. In: Kim, *The Huns*, pp. 109–14; Kim, *The Huns, Rome and the Birth of Europe*, pp. 93–95.

do not know the intricacies of this system, but it is clear that before Attila no other king had drawn so many nations under his influence. It seems that this authority depended on a strong hegemonic figure, and the division of power between at least three sons (although Jordanes says that Attila had enough children to create a nation of their own)[515] could not support such a level of supremacy. Hence, a problematic succession and internal wars seem to be more plausible than a single-handed conspiracy by Ardaric to bring down the Huns.

What is the significance of this for the passage in Jordanes? As said before, it is not unreasonable to think that Jordanes decide to condense a greater number of conflicts into one battle. We cannot say if Nedao, in this case, was the place of one of these conflicts or if Ellac was killed there at some stage, but we can infer that, for rhetorical reasons, the idea of one single war was more suited to Jordanes' strategy in *De Origine*. After describing Nedao, Jordanes wonders that 'so baneful a thing is division, that they who used to inspire terror when their strength was united, were overthrown separately.'[516] 'Adeo discidium perniciosa res est', division does not cope with Jordanes' perspective on power, which seems to be a standpoint of concentrated hegemony. As well as ill-advised measures and ignorant rulers, the idea of rupture within the sphere of authority is despised by our author, who loathes the divorce between Ostrogoths and Visigoths and, here, abhors the internal problems of the Huns too. Therefore, one single battle between all the Scythian *gentes* was a good way to construct an exemplary narrative: Nedao could be an *exemplum* of the results of internal division and arrogance.

The way in which the battle is described also leaves room for the speculation that the account of Nedao is intentionally rhetorical:

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[515] 'Nam fili Attilae, quorum per licentiam libidinis pene populus fuit (…)', Jord., *Getica*, L, 259.
[516] 'Adeo discidium perniciosa res est, ut divisi corruerent, qui adunatis viribus territabant', Jord., *Getica*, 263.

There an encounter took place between the various nations Attila had held under his sway. Kingdoms with their peoples were divided, and out of one body were made many members not responding to a common impulse. Being deprived of their head, they madly strove against each other. They never found their equals ranged against them without harming each other by wounds mutually given. And so the bravest nations tore themselves to pieces. For then, I think, must have occurred a most remarkable spectacle, where one might see the Goths fighting with pikes, the Gepids raging with the sword, the Rugi breaking off the spears in their own wounds, the Suavi fighting on foot, the Huns with bows, the Alans drawing up a battle-line of heavy-armed and the Heruli of light-armed warriors.[517]

Jordanes, as expected, paints a picture of horrendous violence brought upon by confusion and division. 'Dividuntur regna cum populis, fiuntque ex uno corpore membra diversa' is a sermon on the result of this succession crisis and how harmful the lack of unity is, as a power that is not hegemonic possesses no head to control and guide political impulses ('sed quae exciso capite in invicem insanirent'). Nedao is, above all, an image of failure, as brave nations tore themselves to pieces even though no clear enemy was there to be faced: animosity rose through political confusion, not as a result of a legitimate quarrel between kings or people, 'nisi ipsi mutuis se vulneribus sauciantes se ipsos discerperent fortissimae nationes.' Finally, the concluding remark is a typical listing of people (with weapons assigned to them, as if to highlight the many ethnic labels that were stirred against each other): Goths, Gepids, Rugi, Suevi, Huns, Alans, and Heruli are among the ranked identities.[518] This is an interesting construction whose artistic tone has eluded some scholars: the translation above, made by Mierow (and by far the most over-used in historiography), lists these nations in the plural form, a mistake not committed by

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[517] 'Illic concursus factus est gentium variarum, quas Attila in sua tenuerat dicione. Dividuntur regna cum populis, fiuntque ex uno corpore membra diversa, nec quae unius passioni conpaterentur, sed quae exciso capite in invicem insanirent; quae numquam contra se pares invenerant, nisi ipsi mutuis se vulneribus sauciantes se ipsos discerperent fortissimae nationes. Nam ibi admirandum reor fuisse spectaculum, ubi cernere erat contis pugnantem Gothum, ense furentem Gepida, in vulnere suo Rugum tela frangentem, Suavum pede, Hunnum sagitta praesumere, Alanum gravi, Herulum levi armatura aciem strui', Jord., *Getica*, L, 261.

[518] Although this listing fits Jordanes' insistence in demonstrating the hegemony of certain rulers over a great number of people, it also is part of a Late Antique ethnographic trend, also present in authors such as Sidonius and Claudian. In: A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), pp. 285–89.

the most recent German, French and Spanish translations.[519] Jordanes, in this sentence, uses the singular: the Goth fighting with a pike, the Gepid raging with a sword, the Rugus breaking a spear in his own wounds, the Suevus fighting on foot, the Hun with his bow, the heavy-armoured Alan and the light-armoured Herulus forming a battle line. I would argue that this is not a realistic portrayal, but rather an embellished picture crafted to conjure the image of a plurality of ethnicities fighting for their own. The distinction of weapons is a good example of a rhetoric of ethnicity and identity, and it is there to create the intended feeling of multitude and separation at the same time: so many nations are fighting, and the singular case, together with the designated weapon of each people, invokes the isolation brought upon by the fissure in the Hunnic hegemony. Power is now pulverised between the 'Goth', the 'Gepid', the 'Herulus' and so forth.[520]

Another reason for Jordanes to have condensed this succession conflict down to one single battle is that, in this manner, the victory can be attributed to Ardaric alone. Already at the beginning of the *De Origine*, Jordanes affirms that at least a portion of *Magna Dacia*, in his days, belong to the Gepids. In this sense, by attributing the end of Hunnic hegemony to the exploits of Ardaric, he can continue the rhetorical trend of the 'succession of empires', as discussed before.

Nedao, therefore, ends the 'Attilan pause' of the narrative, which then proceeds to its final chapters by quickly covering the rise of the (second) Ostrogothic kingdom with the Amali brothers and its subsequent institutional migration to Italy with Theoderic. The

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[519] Jordanes, *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, p. 96; Jordanes, *Die Gotengeschichte*, p. 168; Jordanes, *Origen Y Gestas De Los Godos*, p. 205; Jordanès, pp. 101–2.

[520] Violence and weaponry was one qualifier of barbarian identity for some Late Antique authors. However, modern archaeology is much more careful when addressing ethnicity based on weapons and material found in burials, *cf.*: S. Hakenbeck, 'Roman or Barbarian? Shifting Identities in Early Medieval Cemeteries in Bavaria', *Post-Classical Archaeologies*, 1 (2011), 37–66; G. Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West 450-900* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 32; R. W. Mathisen, 'Violent Behavior and the Construction of Barbarian Identity in Late Antiquity', in *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices*, ed. by H. A. Drake (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), pp. 27–35; W. Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of the Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. by W. Pohl and R. Helmut (Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 1998), pp. 17–94.

Huns still play a small role in it, as the author affirms that Denzigich, one of the remaining sons of Attila (the other being Ernak), sought to attack the Ostrogoths.[521] This passage does not have any influence in the 'Hunnic role', and just goes on to show that, after Attila, the hegemony was lost, and it was time for a new political entity to take over. The rhetorical importance of the failure of Hunnic power is further proven by the silent concerning the fate of Denzigich: according to Marcellinus Comes and the *Chronicon Paschale*, Denzigich had skirmishes with the Eastern Roman and was defeated and killed by the general Anagastes, who displayed the severed head of the Hunnic commander in Constantinople.[522] This information is not relevant for Jordanes, as Denzigich did not play a decisive political role in the Balkans after Nedao – instead, he just recounts that, after attacking Valamer and losing the battle, the Huns were driven out of their own land, and lived in dread of the Goths thereafter. Asserting a Gothic victory and stating that the Huns would never dare to attack them again means that, within the *De Origine*, the role of the Huns was finally over.

4.4 – FROM ERMANARIC TO ATTILA: THE SECOND RISE OF THE AMALI

The dissolution of the Hunnic Confederacy sets forth a complicated scenario in the Balkans. From the narrative point of view, the scenario is one of political uncertainty, although Jordanes does his best to connect the rise of Valamer and his brothers with the fall of Ellac. This is, as we have seen, a cyclical argument that balances the exchange of power between Goths and Huns: Balamber defeats Ermanaric, starting the Hunnic

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[521] 'Quod ubi rex Hunnorum Dintzic filius Attilae cognovisset, collectis secum qui adhuc videbantur quamvis pauci eius tamen sub imperio remansisse Vltzinzures, Angisciros, Bittugures, Bardores, venientesque ad Basianam Pannoniae civitatem eamque circumvallans fines eius coepit praedare. Quod conperto Gothi ibi, ubi erant, expeditionemque solventes, quam contra Sadagis collegerant, in Hunnos convertunt et sic eos suis a finibus inglorios pepulerunt, ut iam ex illo tempore qui remanserunt Hunni et usque actenus Gothorum arma formident', Jord., *Getica*, LIII, 272 – 273.
[522] Marcell. Com., *Chron.,* II, 90; *Chron. Pasch.*, 598.

hegemony and ending Gothic authority; the death of Attila symbolises the end of the former's domination and the reacquisition of the latter's authority. However, this poses a problem to Jordanes: how to address the strong presence of the Gepids – and the *de facto* possession of a territorial domain – and still recognise the royal aspect of the Amali kings? After all, while Ardaric and his successors ruled over the land that once belonged to Goths and Huns, the newly-formed Amali independent crown fought to sustain a level of authority in some parts of Pannonia amidst rivalry with other Gothic groups, mainly the one led by Theoderic Strabo.[523] Jordanes himself admits that the Gepids were ruling over all of Dacia, a region that once belonged to the Huns.[524]

Within Jordanes' rhetorical construction, Gepids are 'Getae' as well, and continuously treated, in the *De Origine*, as kinsmen of the Goths. This ethnic connection would have solved the problem of tribal hegemony over *Magna Dacia*, as Gepids could have been easily seen as Goths. However, the political fractures between Dacia, Moesia and Pannonia, each ruled by a different group, were irreconcilable with the tone of centralized authority present throughout the text.[525] There is also a question of contingency: as the story advanced, Jordanes was getting closer and closer to his own times – in fact, he affirms that Theoderic the Ostrogoth was born on the same day that the Huns were finally defeated and, as we know, Theoderic might have been one of the most well-known barbarian kings in the first half of the sixth century.[526] It was time, within the

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[523] The relation between Theoderic the Amal and Theoderic Strabo is not featured in the *De Origine* but, historically, it represented one of the biggest obstacles for the establishment of an Amali crown. The division between Gothic groups not only weakened the position of Theoderic (Amal), but also granted Leo and, later, Zeno, the chance not to concede authority to the barbarians, but rather to play these leaders against each other. Understandably, this tale of ethnic fracture does not work within the image being constructed in the *De Origine*, especially if we are to consider Theoderic (Amal) as the successor of Attila's power in the narrative. *Cf.* Heather, *Goths and Romans*, pp. 249–308.

[524] Jord., *Getica*, L, 264.

[525] According to Vingo, the constant problems with the province of Pannonia changed the ideological perception that this *limes* was, in fact, a frontier zone between two worlds. The constant influx of people transformed the region into an area of cultural and political transformation. This idea could certainly be extended for most of the Balkans. In: Vingo.

[526] 'Eo namque tempore ad fratris Thiudimeri gaudii nuntium direxit, sed eo mox die nuntius veniens feliciorem in domo Thiudimer repperit gaudium. Ipso si quibid. die Theodoricus eius filius, quamvis de Erelieva concubina, bonae tamen spei puerolus natus erat', Jord., *Getica*, LII, 269.

chronological structure of the *De Origine*, to present the Ostrogoths as they were seen at that period: barbarian rulers of Italy, perhaps even illegitimate tyrants oppressing the Roman people in the former capitals of the Western Empire.[527] Therefore, if Jordanes was in fact focused on the affairs of the Balkans, he had a difficult literary puzzle in front of him: *Magna Dacia*, as it was in the times of Attila, existed no more; the Gepids were dominating Dacia proper, while Gothic groups were roaming in Moesia and Pannonia, the lack of a unifying force allowed a significant number of smaller tribes to wander through these very areas and, above all, the Amali were immersed in conflicts and negotiations with other Goths and with the Eastern Romans, which would lead to the flight to Italy and the defeat of Odoacer:

> [...] the Gepids by their own might won for themselves the territory of the Huns and ruled as victors over the extent of all Dacia [...]. [the Goths] received Pannonia, which stretches in a long plain, being bounded on the east by Upper Moesia, on the south by Dalmatia, on the west by Noricum and on the north by the Danube. [...] the Sauromatae, whom we call Sarmatians, and the Cemandri and certain of the Huns dwelt in Castra Martis, a city given them in the region of Illyricum. [...] The Sciri, moreover, and the Sadagarii and certain of the Alans with their leader, Candac by name, received Scythia Minor and Lower Moesia. [...] The Rugi, however, and some other races asked that they might inhabit Bizye and Arcadiopolis. Ernak, the younger son of Attila, with his followers, chose a home in the most distant part of Lesser Scythia. Emnetzur and Ultzindur, kinsmen of his, won Oescus and Utus and Almus in Dacia on the bank of the Danube, and many of the Huns, then swarming everywhere, betook themselves into Romania, and from them the Sacromontisi and the Fossatisii of this day are said to be descended.[528]

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[527] For the many faces and incarnations of Theoderic in Late Antique and Early Medieval sources, *cf.* Goltz.

[528] 'Nam Gepidi Hunnorum sibi sedes viribus vindicantes totius Daciae fines velut victores [...]. [*Gothi*] accipientesque Pannoniam; quae in longo porrecta planitiae habet ab oriente Moesiam superiorem, a meridie Dalmatiam, ab occasu Noricum, a septentrione Danubium. [...] Sauromatae vero quos Sarmatas dicimus et Cemandri et quidam ex Hunnis parte Illyrici ad Castramartenam urbem sedes sibi datas coluerunt. [...] Scyri vero et Sadagarii et certi Alanorum cum duce suo nomine Candac Scythiam minorem inferioremque Moesiam acceperunt. [...] Rugi vero aliaeque nationes nonnullae Bizzim et Arcadiopolim ut incolerent, petiverunt. Ernak quoque iunior Attilae filius cum suis in extrema minoris Scythiae sedes delegit. Emnetzur et Vltzindur consanguinei eius in Dacia ripense Vto et Hisco Almoque potiti sunt, multique Hunnorum passim proruentes tunc se in Romania dediderunt, e quibus nunc usque Sacromontisi et Fossatisii dicuntur' Jord., *Getica*, L, 264 – 266.

This scenario was all too familiar to Jordanes: he was born and raised amidst this unrest, as he relates. We have to assume that he had first-hand contact with the plurality of political and social groups in the Balkans, and his *quasi*-nostalgic take on the Attilan hegemony becomes not only more evident but almost justifiable from a personal point of view. Pressed by these circumstances, he has to rearrange his story in order to accommodate this instability, while at the same time maintaining the regal position of the Amali and the presence of the Gepids in Dacia.

To a certain extent, the Huns provide a rhetorical fodder that enables this turn in the narrative. As mentioned, their demise sets forth the rise of a plethora of newly-independent forces in the Balkans. Their final defeat also marks the appearance of Theoderic the Ostrogoth in the story – it could be argued that Theoderic continues and completes the cycle that encompasses Ermanaric and Attila, with the difference that, for chronological reasons, the Ostrogothic king comes into play almost as soon as Attila leaves the story. This could be seen as a rhetorical 'passing the torch' from the Huns to the Amali. Therefore, the auspicious birth of Theoderic stands for the symbol of a new-born *hegemon*, although this figurative discourse raises one issue: Theoderic did not hold hegemony over the East – and even his authority over Italy and a few other northern provinces (such as Raetia) could have been questioned, as Anastasius did not recognise this power immediately (and, of course, the Gothic wars of Justinian stood as an answer for the Ostrogothic flimsy hold over the Italian peninsula).[529] How does Jordanes solve this problem? He ends the narrative as it started: a tale of migration and conquest. Theoderic's predecessor, Valamer, Vidimer, and Thiudimer, as great Amali kings and

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[529] Some scholars see Theoderic as, indeed, one of the most powerful kings of the post-Roman world, *cf.* Arnold; P. J. Heather, *The Restoration of Rome: Barbarian Popes and Imperial Pretenders* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Beyond his ideology and his symbolic position, Theoderic has to be seen in contrast to other Western kings, such as Gundobad and Clovis: the wider panorama shows that these other rulers had as much, if not more, imperial baggage than Theoderic. If anything, his intense propaganda could be seen as a way to place himself, politically and culturally, among the other barbarian lords. *Cf.* Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples*, pp. 194–223.

former generals of Attila, start conquering lands and people: they receive Pannonia, as said, but also subdue the Suevi, the Sarmatians and, 'by right of war,' controlled parts of the Illyricum and Thessaly.[530] After the death Thiudimer, however, Theoderic decides to ask the Emperor Zeno permission to move into Italy and defeat the Rugi and the Torcilingi (who were under the command of Odoacer).[531] These developments are reminiscent of the migration of Berig and the subjugation of neighbouring people.

They are, however, clumsy. Jordanes dedicates eight chapters to the events that took place between the final disappearance of the Huns and the very conclusion of the *De Origine*. Out of these eight, four take place between the flight to Italy and the conclusion, whereas the wars of Justinian are described in one chapter alone.[532] Jordanes consciously chose to give less space to this final leg of the narrative: since the *De Origine* was written around 551, he must have been aware of almost all the results and consequences of the war. However, he omits the non-Amali kings of the Ostrogoths in Italy (the most glaring absence is that of Totila, who is mentioned in the *De Summa Temporum*). At this stage, his choices, his omissions, and his changes become more and more evident. Indeed, Jordanes took much historical liberty throughout the whole *De Origine*, but nonetheless, the proximity between this moment of the narrative and his own time makes his rhetorical juggling both harder and more explicit. The very end of the story exposes Jordanes' compromises:

> And thus a famous kingdom and most valiant race, which had long held sway, was at last overcome in almost its two thousand and thirtieth year by that conquerer of many nations, the Emperor Justinian, through his most faithful consul Belisarius. He gave Vitiges the title of Patrician and took him to Constantinople, where he dwelt for more than two years, bound by

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[530] 'Qui venientes tam eam quam Stobis mox in deditione accipiunt nonullaque loca Illyrici inaccessibilia sibi primum tunc pervia faciunt. Nam Eracleam et Larissam civitates Thessaliae primum praedas ereptas, dehinc ipsas iure bellico potiuntur', Jord., *Getica*, LVI, 286. For the exploits of three Amali Brothers, *cf.* Jord., *Getica*, LIII – LVI.

[531] ''Hesperia, inquid, plaga, quae dudum decessorum prodecessorumque vestrorum regimine gubernata est, et urbs illa caput orbis et domina quare nunc sub regis Thorcilingorum Rogorumque tyrranide fluctuatur? [...]', Jord., *Getica*, LVII, 291.

[532] Last mention of the Huns happens in chapter LIII; the flight to Italy happens in LVII; the Gothic war stars and ends in the last chapter of the *Getica*, LX.

ties of affection to the Emperor, and then departed this life. But his consort Mathesuentha was bestowed by the Emperor upon the Patrician Germanus, his cousin. And of them was born a son (also called Germanus) after the death of his father Germanus. This union of the race of the Anicii with the stock of the Amali gives hopeful promise, under the Lord's favour, to both peoples.[533]

This is a subversion of Jordanes' own previous ideas: the Goths, for a great part of their recent history, had been dominated by the Huns.[534] The Visigoths, who held an independent kingdom in Gaul and Spain for most of the fourth and the fifth century, are said to have been reannexed to the Amali lineage of the Ostrogoths and, as a sovereign power, ceased to exist after the conquest of Clovis and the death of Alaric II, thus rendering their authority void. Justinian himself, holding the artificial position of the greatest conqueror of the narrative, is barely mentioned before this passage. Why end the *De Origine* with such an affirmation given that, for a greater portion of the story, the Huns and, more specifically, Attila, are held in the highest regard? Surely the answer must rest upon the political contingencies of the time. The mention of a union between the Amali and the Anicii exposes this compromising attitude as well: Germanus, a cousin of Justinian, was not an Anicius, as far as we know.[535] This reference to an unlikely friendship between the Anicii and the Amali – especially after the execution by Theoderic of Boethius and Symmachus, a member of the very Anicii family – seems to be a nod

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[533] 'Et sic famosum regnum fortissimamque gentem diuque regnantem tandem pene duomillensimo et tricesimo anno victor gentium diversarum Iustinianus imperator per fidelissimum consulem vicit Belesarium, et perductum Vitiges Constantinopolim patricii honore donavit. Vbi plus biennio demoratus imperatorisque in affectu coniunctus rebus excessit humanis. Mathesuentham vero iugalem eius fratri suo Germano patricio coniunxit imperator. De quibus post humatum patris Germani natus est filius ibid. Germanus. In quo coniuncta Aniciorum genus cum Amala stirpe spem adhuc utriusque generi domino praestante promittit', Jord., *Getica*, LX, 313 – 314.

[534] Valamer, Vidimer and Thiudimer, according to Jordanes, were evev fighting in the Catalaunian plains, serving as the loyal generals of Attila: *Inter quos Ostrogotharum praeminebat exercitus Valamire et Theodemire et Vibid.ere germanis ductantibus, ipso etiam rege, cui tunc serviebant, nobilioribus, quia Amalorum generis eos potentia inlustrabat* (Jord., *Getica*, XXXVIII, 199). Even if their nobility is highlighted, Jordanes cannot hide the fact that the Ostrogoths were serving the Huns.

[535] Cracco Ruggini notes that, if Germanus was indeed related to the Anicii, Jordanes chose to highlight this one aspect of his parentage rather than that of the Justiniac lineage, in: L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Gli Anicii a Roma e in Provincia', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps modernes*, 100.1 (1988), 69–85 (p. 71).

towards the possible Roman aristocracies reading the text.[536] The war was over and, through marriage, mistakes of the past have been amended. The Amali were not Goths anymore, but through Germanus *junior* they became Romans, and the glory of those Getic kings of the past now belongs to this traditional Roman *gens* who, indeed, suffered at the hand of the Ostrogoths. Beyond the Jordanean reference to the union between Goths and Romans and hegemony (here attributed to Justinian), these statements do not fit with the rhetoric employed in the rest of the *De Origine*.

This impression of disinterest and rhetorical compromise are present as soon as the narrative leaves the cultural and political realms of the Balkans. We could infer, then, that the Huns represent the last breath of the story as Jordanes wanted to tell it. The migration of Theoderic is the real end, and whatever comes next is placed in the *De Origine* for purposes of contingency. And just as Scandza, the supposed original home of the Goths, is not the focus of the narrative, so too the Goths end their days in Italy, which is also not the focus of the narrative. Whatever happens in between Scandza and Italy takes place mostly in *Magna Dacia*, and therefore the beginning of the Italian kingdom of the Ostrogoths has to be seen as the 'real' conclusion of the story Jordanes wanted to tell.

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[536] Possibly similar groups to those who would have been reading Cassiodorus, *cf.* Bjornlie, pp. 185–215.

CHAPTER V

THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF JORDANES

5.1 – *MAGNA DACIA*: A CONCLUSION

Finally, after having concluded the narrative aspects of the *De* Origine, our last task is to assess the importance of geography in this work. In order to understand Jordanes' geographical concept of the world, then, it is fundamental to see the *De Origine* as an ethnogeographical text – one that is concerned with the genesis and the development of cultural power attached to a specific spatial *locus*. Therefore, given his ethnic construct of 'Getae' as a multitude of people who, at different points in history, existed within the boundary of a certain region, it is safe to assume that, in general, the focus of the *De Origine* is the East – more specifically, the Balkans. This is what we have been calling *Magna Dacia*, which included the eponymous Dacia, Moesia, Scythia and northern Thrace. This topographical setup more or less coincides with the Roman provinces of Scythia Minor, Lower Moesia, Dacia Ripensis, the Diocese of Thrace and the Diocese of Dacia, as well as both Upper Moesia and Pannonia.[537] The range of the Carpathian Mountains and the Carpathian basin seem to be included in this framework as well. As argued before, I chose to call this landmass *Magna Dacia* because, when Jordanes calls Moesians, Scythians, Goths (and even the Getae, in a certain way) Getae, he is using a theoretical structure that associates them with the deeds and the narrative of the people that inhabited Dacia in the past.[538] Zalmoxis, Burebista, Deceneus and so many of the

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[537] Following Jordanes description of Geography, as we will see below, these regions occupy more or less the western region of Scythia, between Germania and the Maeotis lake.
[538] *Cf*. Chapter 4.1.

legendary figure that Jordanes attaches to the genesis of Gothic traditions belong, in fact, to the Dacians of Herodotus, Strabo, Ptolemy and Pompeius Trogus. We saw how Jordanes did not merely hijack the narrative of the Dacians and apply it to the Goths, but he, in fact, normalised a long linear history of many peoples which he went on to call Getae. This was a conscious choice based on an ethnogeographical culture.[539] The creation of a broad geographical ethnonym seems to denote a personal attachment to the region in question – as Jordanes was probably born and raised in the area, as we discussed previously. This is clear not only because of the umbrella-term Geta, but also because of the manner in which the narrative is structured: the bulk of the action takes place within the limits and the surroundings of *Magna Dacia*. Gaul and Italy feature in the *De Origine*, to be sure, but they are incidental to the story being told – they have to be there because of the later development of the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths.

The *De Origine* also presents an overarching theme of hegemonic power that surrounds the cultural designation of *Magna Dacia*. The borders of this region enclosed, to a greater or lesser degree, the territory subject to the authority of Ermanaric and Attila, two leaders who extended their power over this area during the fourth and the fifth centuries AD. They are, at a deeply rhetorical level, the political and cultural protagonists of the *De Origine*. This is evident when we put the *De Origine* and the *De Summa Temporum* side by side. While the former exults the achievements of these barbarian leaders, the latter does the same to Trajan:

> Trajan, more powerful than almost all emperors, reigned for 18 years and 6 months. For this man triumphed over the Dacians and Scythians and subdued the Iberians and Sauromatæ, the Osdroëni, the Arabs, the Bosphorians, the Colchi after they had erupted into anarchy. He invaded and held Seleucia and Ctesiphon and Babylonia.[540]

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[539] Amory, pp. 19–24.

[540] 'Trajanus pæne omnium imperatorum potior regnavit annis XVIII mensibus VI. Hic enim de Dacis Scythisque triumphavit, Hiberosque et Sauromatas, Osdroënos, Arabas, Bosphoranos, Colchos edomuit, postquam ad feritatem prorupissent. Seleuciam et Ctesiphontem Babyloniamque pervasit et tenuit', Jord., *Romana*, 267.

Jordanes also mentions that '[...] Trajan [...] reduced the lands beyond the Danube which cover a thousand miles to provincial status, after defeating their king Decebalus'.[541] Attila, on the other hand, is said to have ravaged ('populatus est') some of the very provinces of *Magna Dacia* (Dacia, Moesia, Scythia, plus Illyria and Thrace) with the aid of Ardaric and the Gepids and Valamer and the Goths.[542] Ermanaric does not even feature in the *De Summa Temporum*. Jordanes surely creates an interesting contrast: here, Trajan is the conqueror of *Magna Dacia* and, laureated by this deed, he is regarded as the greatest of emperors. He is, in other words, the Attila of the *De Summa Temporum* (Trajan is barely mentioned in the *De Origine*). If anything, these discrepant accounts highlight Jordanes' focus and interest in the regions and the dissimilar ways in which he approaches them.

Nevertheless, *De Summa Temporum* and *De Origine*, as we saw earlier, were composed at the same time, sharing the same contextual background. Why, then, are these narrative details so different? I argue that Jordanes wanted naturally to emphasise different things and different ideas. The *De Origine* is a non-Roman ethnogeographical account of *Magna Dacia* – something that the *De Summa Temporum* was not. In this sense, geography plays a key role in the literary structure of the work. It defines the world known to Jordanes and locates the protagonists of the story in an imagined universe. That is one reason why Jordanes opens the *De Origine* with more or less lengthy descriptions of Scandza, *Britannia* and Scythia.[543] Contrary to Goffart's claim, this rhetorical incursion

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[541] 'Dacos [...] Trajanus, Decebalo eorum rege devicto, terras ultra Danuvium quæ habent mille milia spatia, in provinciam redegit', Jord., *Romana*, 217.

[542] 'Hunnorum rex Attila, junctis secum Gipedis cum Ardarico, Gothisque cum Walamer, diversisque aliis nationibus suis cum regibus, omnem Illyricum Thraciamque, et utramque Daciam, Mœsiam et Scythiam populatus est. Contra quem Arnigisclus, magister militum Mœsiæ, egressus a Marcianopoli fortiter dimicavit, equoque sub se decidente præventus est et, nec sic quiescens bellare, occisus est', Jord., *Romana*, 331.

[543] Jord., *Getica*, I – V.

is of little significance for the bulk of narrative, as Merrills rightly pointed out.[544] It gives

the audience a dimension and a proper space in which the narrative takes place.

There is certainly more to it, though. Jordanes, indeed, was abiding by the basics

of the historiographical style of Late Antiquity. Orosius, the great model of what a

historian should be, describes the world before starting his story.[545] Procopius includes

geographical description as well.[546] The dependence of Jordanes on not only Orosius, but

also Ptolemy and Strabo is evident – his geography serves, then, to locate the narrative

and, at the same time, it demonstrates knowledge and erudition. However, Jordanes

understands that many authors before him have already written about the circumference

of the world, so that he does not have to delve into that very much:

> Our ancestors, as Orosius relates, were of the opinion that the circle of the whole world was
> surrounded by the girdle of Ocean on three sides. Its three parts they called Asia, Europe and
> Africa. Concerning this threefold division of the earth's extent there are almost innumerable
> writers, who not only explain the situations of cities and places, but also measure out the
> number of miles and paces to give more clearness.[547]

From the start, we can see that Jordanes is not just showing off classical

knowledge. He knows, and he is aware that his audience knows as well, how other authors

before him have described the location and dimension of Asia, Africa and Europe.

Therefore, we have to suppose that the islands, mainly *Britannia* and Scandza, together

with Scythia, will play an important part of his argument. He is immersing his narrative

in a world that is already known, but he wants to draw attention to specific regions. In

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[544] Merrills, pp. 115–16; Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800)*, p. 75.

[545] Nuffelen, p. 4; B. D. Schildgen, *Divine Providence: A History: The Bible, Virgil, Orosius, Augustine, and Dante* (London; New York: Continuum, 2012), pp. 60–62; N. Lozovsky, *The Earth Is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West Ca. 400-1000*, Recentiores (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 77.

[546] M. Maas, 'Strabo and Procopius: Classical Geography for a Christian Empire', in *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron*, ed. by H. Amirav and B. ter H. Romeny (Leuven; Paris; Dudley: Peeters, 2007), pp. 67–86.

[547] 'Maiores nostri, ut refert Orosius, totius terrae circulum Oceani limbo circumseptum triquadrum statuerunt eiusque tres partes Asiam, Eoropam et Africam vocaverunt. De quo trepertito orbis terrarum spatium innumerabiles pene scriptores existunt, qui non solum urbium locorumve positiones explanant, verum etiam et quod est liquidius, passuum miliariumque dimetiunt quantitatem', Jord., *Getica*, I, 4.

this sense, Merrills takes Jordanes' statements for granted and believes that the whole point of this introduction is to present and describe Scandza, precisely because it is the land were the Getae originated and, therefore, it is fundamental for the structure of the story:[548]

> The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region, that is in the north, a great island named Scandza, from which my tale (by God's grace) shall take its beginning. For the race whose origin you ask to know burst forth like a swarm of bees from the midst of this island and came into the land of Europe.[549]

The description of Scandza ensues, backed by quotations from Pomponius Mela and Ptolemy. Merrills seems to be right: the inclusion of this specific description, based on previous accounts, helps to rationalise and include a tale of migration within the realm of the Graeco-Roman *Weltbild*.[550] However, it seems to me that this is the only reason why the geography of Scandza is singled out in the beginning. Jordanes wants to make sure that whoever is reading the *De Origine* understands that he is writing within a well-established tradition rather than merely narrating fables. Classical geographers will bring the audience to familiar ground. That being said, it is curious (and telling) that many scholars have dabbled over the possible Gothic traditions transmitted through this description, even if Jordanes is very clearly dealing with classical Mediterranean tropes.[551] Moreover, it is also telling that, after this passage, Scandza basically disappears from the story. Once Jordanes is certain that the migration myth is explained and the narrative can be seen through traditional archetypes of geography, he moves on to describe Scythia. In fact, the necessity of a solid rhetorical base for the beginning of a

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[548] Merrills, p. 117.

[549] 'Habet quoque is ipse inmensus pelagus in parte artoa, id est septentrionali, amplam insulam nomine Scandzam, unde nobis sermo, si dominus iubaverit, est adsumpturus, quia gens, cuius originem flagitas, ab huius insulae gremio velut examen apium erumpens in terram Europae advinit: quomodo vero aut qualiter, in subsequentibus, si dominus donaverit, explanavimus', Jord., *Getica*, I, 9.

[550] Merrills, p. 119.

[551] Rix; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz; Goffart, 'Jordanes's 'Getica' and the Disputed Authenticity of Gothic Origins from Scandinavia'.

migration story also explains why Jordanes included a lengthy description of *Britannia*:
as we saw in earlier chapters of this thesis, there were conflicting tales about the origins
of the Goths being told in Constantinople.

> Nor do we find anywhere in their written records legends which tell of their subjection to
> slavery in Britain or in some other island, or of their redemption by a certain man at the cost
> of a single horse. Of course if anyone in our city says that the Goths had an origin different
> from that I have related, let him object. For myself, I prefer to believe what I have read, rather
> than put trust in old wives' tales.[552]

Jordanes is not only locating his narrative in a geocultural sphere, but also deflecting any
possible counter-arguments to his story. In this sense, Scandza serves its purpose, but its
location in relation to the rest of the world is equally important. While *Britannia* is located
in the bosom of the ocean, between Hispania, Gaul and Germania, Scandza sits at its right,
an island lying in the Ocean, but close to Europe, so much that it 'separates' the land of
Germania and Scythia. Therefore, the mouth of the Vistula, says Jordanes, is positioned
in sight of Scandza.[553] This is interesting, because Goths and Gepids, having sailed from
the northern island to the country of Scythia, are immediately linked to the cultural sphere
of the east: they are not a people of *Germania*, which is much more connected to
Britannia; their genesis lies to the East of the Danube, in between the Vistula and the
Pontic sea (that is, the Black Sea). Even if they sprout from the savage lands of
'Scandinavia', they are part of Scythian history, and there is where their ethnicity is
constructed. Jordanes mentions that, right after migrating south, they landed on the
continent, and call that the region of their landfall Gothiscandza, that is, the 'Scandza of
the Goths' (which, says the *De Origine*, is a long-enduring name, lasting down to the

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[552] 'Nec eorum fabulas alicubi repperimus scriptas, qui eos dicunt in Brittania vel in unaqualibet insularum
in servitute redactos et in unius caballi praetio a quodam ereptos. Aut certe si quis eos aliter dixerit in nostro
urbe, quam quod nos diximus, fuisse exortos, nobis aliquid obstrepebit: nos enim potius lectioni credimus
quam fabulis anilibus consentimos', Jord., *Getica*, V, 38.
[553] Jord., *Getica*, III, 17.

present).[554] This detail, curiously, is left out by scholars, including Merrills. The rhetorical construction of Jordanes locates the origin of the Goths in Scandza, yes, but that place is merely a 'womb of races', out of which many tribes sprung from. The real *Urheimat* of Gothic (therefore, Getic) people is Gothiscandza, which happens to be located in *Oium¸* that is, Scythia.

To understand the geocultural relation between Scandza, Gothiscandza and Scythia, we have to understand how authors in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages saw the world physically. Jordanes was most probably picturing the world-map of Strabo.[555] The *De Origine* describes three lands, Africa, Asia and Europe, bathed by the girdle of the Ocean. These continents have very clear, established boundaries. Of Africa, Jordanes says nothing. The action of the story takes place between Europe and Asia – the author believes that certain Rhipaean mountains separate these two continents. From this range of mountains flow the Tanais (called Don nowadays), which then enters the marshes of Lake Maeotis. This marshland, now the Sea of Azov, is just north of the Pontus, that is, the Black Sea. East of this region Jordanes locates the Caspian Sea, which, more or less, acts as a marker for the end of North-eastern world: the Caspian connects itself to the Ocean in the frozen arctic, separating the most distant parts of the east. This whole region is, for Jordanes, Scythia. It borders the Germanic lands to the West, as far as the source of the Danube and the lands of modern Hungary. It stretches East, encompassing the Pontus, the Maeotis and the Caspian. In the South, Scythia is limited by the southern shores of the Black Sea (Pontus) and the Bosphorus, were Persia and

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[554] 'Ex hac igitur Scandza insula quasi officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum cum rege suo nomine Berig Gothi quondam memorantur egressi: qui ut primum e navibus exientes terras attigerunt, ilico nomen loci dederunt. Nam odieque illic, ut fertur, Gothiscandza vocatur', Jord., *Getica*, IV, 25.
[555] S. Pothecary, 'The European Provinces: Strabo as Evidence', in *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of a Kolossourgia*, ed. by D. Dueck, H. Lindsay, and S. Pothecary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 161–79 (p. 164).

Albania are located. It is clear that, for Jordanes, Scythia is a huge land, one that stretches from Europe into Asia. It takes over the whole north-central and north-east of the world.

Merrills believes that both *Britannia* and Scythia are described so that Scandza can be located on familiar rhetorical (and geographical) grounds – that is, within a recognisable Graeco-Roman notion of the world. He acknowledges, however, how discrepantly long the narration of Scythia is (comparable to that of Scandza, he says). They are two different pieces of discourse. Scandza is presented from a classical ethnographical account: lists of people, customs and the harsh realities of barbarian tribes. Scythia, on the other hand, is provided wih a richness of details and topographical signifiers: Pontus, Ister, Taurus, Maeotis, Caspian, etc. This proper geographical description, and has a different logic to the excursus on Scandza. Moreover, Merrills concludes that the amount of detail in this section reflects the three stages of Gothic migration within Scythia. I would go further and affirm that the whole reason for this in-depth analysis of the North-East serves the purpose of explaining the very genesis of Gothic culture. As said above, the Goths are shaped not so much by Scandza, but develop as a nation once they enter the lands of Gothiscandza and Scythia. Whereas they share elements of barbarism while inhabiting the Scandinavian island, this fact is shrouded in the mists of the past once they enter the sphere of the classical world: Scythia. This is the moment in which they became Getae and start sharing the historical elements of Dacian people.

This cultural shift, it seems to me, is fundamental for an understanding of the *De Origine*. Locating the Scandinavian origins for of Goths is an impossible task for historians because, in reality, their whole development takes places within the boundaries of Western Scythia. The migration from Scandza is nothing more than the change from barbarism to civility. The real migration myth of the Goths takes place in their constant

movements on the continent: from the Lake Maeotis to Dacia, Moesia and Thrace; and from there to the shores of the Pontus.

> The aforesaid race of which I speak is known to have had Filimer as king while they remained in their first home in Scythia near Maeotis. In their second home, that is in the countries of Dacia, Thrace and Moesia, Zalmoxes reigned, whom many writers of annals mention as a man of remarkable learning in philosophy. Yet even before this they had a learned man Zeuta, and after him Dicineus; and the third was Zalmoxes of whom I have made mention above. Nor did they lack teachers of wisdom. Wherefore the Goths have ever been wiser than other barbarians and were nearly like the Greeks, as Dio relates, who wrote their history and annals with a Greek pen [...]. In their third dwelling place, which was above the Sea of Pontus, they had now become more civilized and, as I have said before, were more learned. Then the people were divided under ruling families. The Visigoths served the family of the Balthi and the Ostrogoths served the renowned Amali.[556]

The shaping of Getic history, for Jordanes, happens in the course of this migration, and not that of Berig. Moreover, he not only describes Scythia in detail, but also highlights certain parts of this region, emphasising where the action of the narrative is taking place. He first introduces Dacia, saying that it is surrounded to the northwest by the river Tisia, whereas the Danube flows to the south.[557] He then affirms that the Goths, during their second migration, occupied the lands of Moesia, Thrace and Dacia. Although he names them separately, these provinces still lay within the western limits of Scythia.[558] This is, in other words, the stage of *Magna Dacia*.

If we are to conclude that the geographical introduction has deeper implications for the *De Origine*, then we have to understand what it implies for the work as a whole, and for the ethnographic discourse of the Getae: first of all, it puts in check the importance

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[556] 'In prima sede Scythiae iuxta Meotibid. Commanentes praefati, unde loquimur, Filimer regem habuisse noscuntur. In secunda, id est Daciae, Thraciaeque et Mysiae solo Zalmoxen, quem mirae philosophiae eruditionis fuisse testantur plerique scriptores annalium. Nam et Zeutam prius habuerunt eruditum, post etiam Dicineum, tertium Zalmoxen, de quo superius diximus. Nec defuerunt, qui eos sapientiam erudirent. Vnde et pene omnibus barbaris Gothi sapientiores semper extiterunt Grecisque pene consimiles, ut refert Dio, qui historias eorum annalesque Greco stilo composuit. [...] Tertia vera sede super mare Ponticum iam humaniores et, ut superius diximus, prudentiores effecti, divisi per familias populi, Vesegothae familiae Balthorum, Ostrogothae praeclaris Amalis serviebant. ' Jord., *Getica*, V, 39 – 42.

[557] 'In qua Scythia prima ab occidente gens residet Gepidarum, que magnis opinatisque ambitur fluminibus. Nam Tisia per aquilonem eius chorumque discurrit; ab africo vero magnus ipse Danubius, ab eoo Flutausis secat, qui rapidus ac verticosus in Istri fluenta furens divolvitur. Introrsus illis Dacia est […]', Jord., *Getica*, V, 33 – 34.

[558] Jord., *Getica*, V, 38.

of the migration from Scandza. Be it a literary *topos* or a genuine perception of reality, Jordanes decided to include related (and equally important) descriptions of *Britania* and Scythia. Merrills considers that this composition would persuade the audience into believing the origin story of the Goths. Beyond the question of readership, it seems that the geographical incursion has a narrative logic: it sets up the stage for Jordanes' tale. If that is the case, then Scythia is as important as Scandza. Moreover, if Scythia is part of the migration legend, then the Scandinavian origin loses importance in the face of the cultural-political development that happens on the continent, but not on the island – which ends up being just one step (the initial one, but still a single step) towards a narrative that happens somewhere else. Secondly, it legitimises the authorial discourse: Jordanes not only had awareness of the world and of classical descriptions of earth, but he also possibly used this knowledge to argue against contemporary theories relating to the origins of the Goths, and that might be the reason why a more or less thorough description of *Britannia* is part of this introduction. If Jordanes considers himself to be right about their origins, and manages to convince his audience, then the attention to the developments in Scythia is successful in its intent: his assertions become plausible for the reader and, therefore, the second leg of the migration story – more important than the barbarian roots in Scandza – has to be equally accepted. Thirdly, this introduction can give us a better glimpse on Jordanes' perception of the world; his long and detailed description of Scythia seems to attest that, for him, this country was massive, taking in most of the Europe and Asia and was, in a sense, divided into two parts: the West, from the Germanic border to the Caspian, and the East, from the Caspian to the edge of the known world. This expanded notion of Scythia could point to the level of importance given by the author to the region which, as a consequence, lends even more importance to the actions that unfold in the specific areas of this large country: Dacia, Moesia, Pannonia. *Magna Dacia*, in other words.

The logic behind these arguments has a deeper historiographical importance, especially for our modern understanding of migration in Jordanes. Scandza, I argue, is much less important for the narrative than scholars think. In the urge to discover genuine Scandinavian origins for the Goths we end up giving far too much credit for this aspect of the story, and consequently we undervalue the role of Scythia. Accordingly, neglecting the importance of Scythia while increasing the importance of Scandza transforms the rest of the *De Origine* in a text concerned with 'Germanic Goths', whereas this *opus* seems to be shaped much like a classical ethnogeographical account, but aimed at particular goals – that is, the historical development of *Magna Dacia*, where Scythia plays a major role, but Scandza does not. This means that the geographical belonging of the Goths is the most fundamental aspect of their ethnicity. If Scythia, not Scandza, is the Gothic abode *par excellence,* then the ensuing transformation of the Goths into Getae, as well as the obvious aspects of the history of Dacian people attributed to the Goths, becomes perfectly reasonable. This framework grants considerable importance to the geographical introduction. The often-conflicting account of Scythians, Goths and Getae demonstrated by other authors, as we saw in previous chapters, is normalised by Jordanes into a coherent ethnographical explanation, which is not only cohesive but also backed by a geographical (or ethnogeographical) argument. This is an ingenious rhetorical construction indeed – and one that makes Jordanes' hand and authorship all the more glaring.

Naturally, this interpretation creates a contradiction between three different levels of historiographical analysis: the materiality of evidence through archaeology, the search for historical accuracy through that evidence, and the biased reading of sources guided by these two previous notions. There is a long-standing theory that the Goths originated

in southern Sweden and migrated to the north of modern-day Poland.[559] It has been assumed that this theory is corroborated by the Wielbark archaeological culture. Finds in Eastern Pomerania, dating from the first century BC to the fourth century AD, which are usually attributed to, among others, Goths and Gepids, have strong links to material culture from Sweden. The later Sântana de Mureş-Chernyakhov culture (found in parts of Romania and Ukraine and dating from the second to the fifth centuries AD) is also attributed to Gothic peoples. Thus, a superficial reading of ethnicity in material culture might point to a migration from northern Poland/eastern Kaliningrad to the area north of the Black Sea, with a possible genesis in Southern Sweden. As problematic and questionable as this vision is, it has acquired a level of historical acceptance that has greatly shaped our notion of 'veracity' in relation to the so-called Gothic migrations.[560] By accepting the historicity of this archaeological evidence, scholars have created a pre-conceived notion of Gothic/ethnic movement across these regions, and this 'concrete' indication of Gothic 'pre-history' is immediately transported to the reading of historical texts.[561] In this sense, the *De Origine* was (and sometimes is) read with the Wielbark-Chernyakhov picture in mind. To a large extent the Scandza migration story fits onto this canvas: Goths are seen to leave Sweden and first settle in Gothiscandza (Poland), before moving to Pontic Scythia (Ukraine, Romania). If we accept the correlation between the archaeological evidence and the historical narrative, Jordanes ends up in an interesting

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[559] To name a few: Wolfram, *Die Goten und ihre Geschichte*, pp. 20–31; P. Urbanczyk, 'The Goths in Poland - Where Did They Come from and When Did They Leave?', *European Journal of Archaeology*, 1.3 (1998), 397–415; K. Greene, 'Gothic Material Culture', in *Archaeology as Long-Term History*, ed. by I. Hodder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 117–31 (p. 118).

[560] Any endorsement of the 'Gothic reading' of Wielbark and Sântana de Mureş-Chernyakhov cultures is merely illustrative of the argument. The direct link between ethnicity and material evidence is questionable at best. For an overview of this methodological problem, *cf*. F. Curta, 'Medieval Archaeology and Ethnicity: Where Are We?', *History Compass*, 9.7 (2011), 537–48; P. von Rummel, 'Migrazioni Archeologiche: Una Nota Sul Problema Dell'identificazione Archeologica Dei Barbari', in *Archeologia E Storia Delle Migrazioni Europa, Italia, Mediterraneofra Tarda Età Romana E Alto Medioevo*, ed. by C. Ebanista and M. Rotili (Naples: Tavolario Edizioni, 2011). For a debate of the possible ethnic horizons in archaeological researches, *cf*. F. Curta, 'Some Remarks on Ethnicity in Medieval Archaeology', *Early Medieval Europe*, 15.2 (2007), 159–85. For a more negative view of addressing ethnicity to material culture, *cf*. G. Halsall, 'Ethnicity and Early Medieval Cemeteries', *Arqueologia Y Territorio Medieval*, 18 (2011), 15–27.

[561] Halsall, 'Ethnicity and Early Medieval Cemeteries', pp. 24–25.

situation: be he right or wrong about the accuracy of the migration story, this story becomes nonetheless the central focus of debate. With these lenses of pretense historical accuracy guiding the scholarly and professional reading of texts, specifically the *De Origine* in our case, it becomes easy to ignore the agency and the overarching *topoi* and rhetorical ploys of the narrative. Neglecting the heavy hand of the author in name of a historical methodology based on 'empirical evidence' (at least, as empirical as we can be when dealing with the ancient past) will, almost invariably, affect our understanding of said agency and, in the end, the goals and propositions encapsulated within the consciously-crafted lines of the text. Hence, often the *De Origine* becomes an ethnographical text with the empirical shapes that we demand in name of historical veracity. Conditioned to see Goths as the unquestionable centre of the text and migrating from Scandza, we end up seeing a text in which the Goths are indeed the centre and indeed locate their *origo* in Scandinavia. In other words, the geographical introduction of Jordanes obeys the internal logic of the text, not that of our historical expectations.

5.2 – MAPS OF THE WORLD OF JORDANES

In order to better visualize the world as described by Jordanes, I decided to locate some of the political and geographical key points of the *De Origine* in two maps. The first aims to localise important areas described in Jordanes' first chapters, as mentioned above. The second is merely a 'visual' hint of where *Magna Dacia* could be roughly located (in relation to the Celtic groups and the tribes of Germania, region that limits *Magna Dacia* westwards).

To have these maps functioning as proper visual aids to a narrative concept, I decided to utilize not a modern*,* satellite image of the Earth, but rather a reproduction of what could have been the world according to Strabo. Envisioning our planet with this hypothetical 'Strabean' shape takes us, most probably, much closer to what Jordanes had in mind.

5.2.1 – THE WORLD AND ITS PLACES
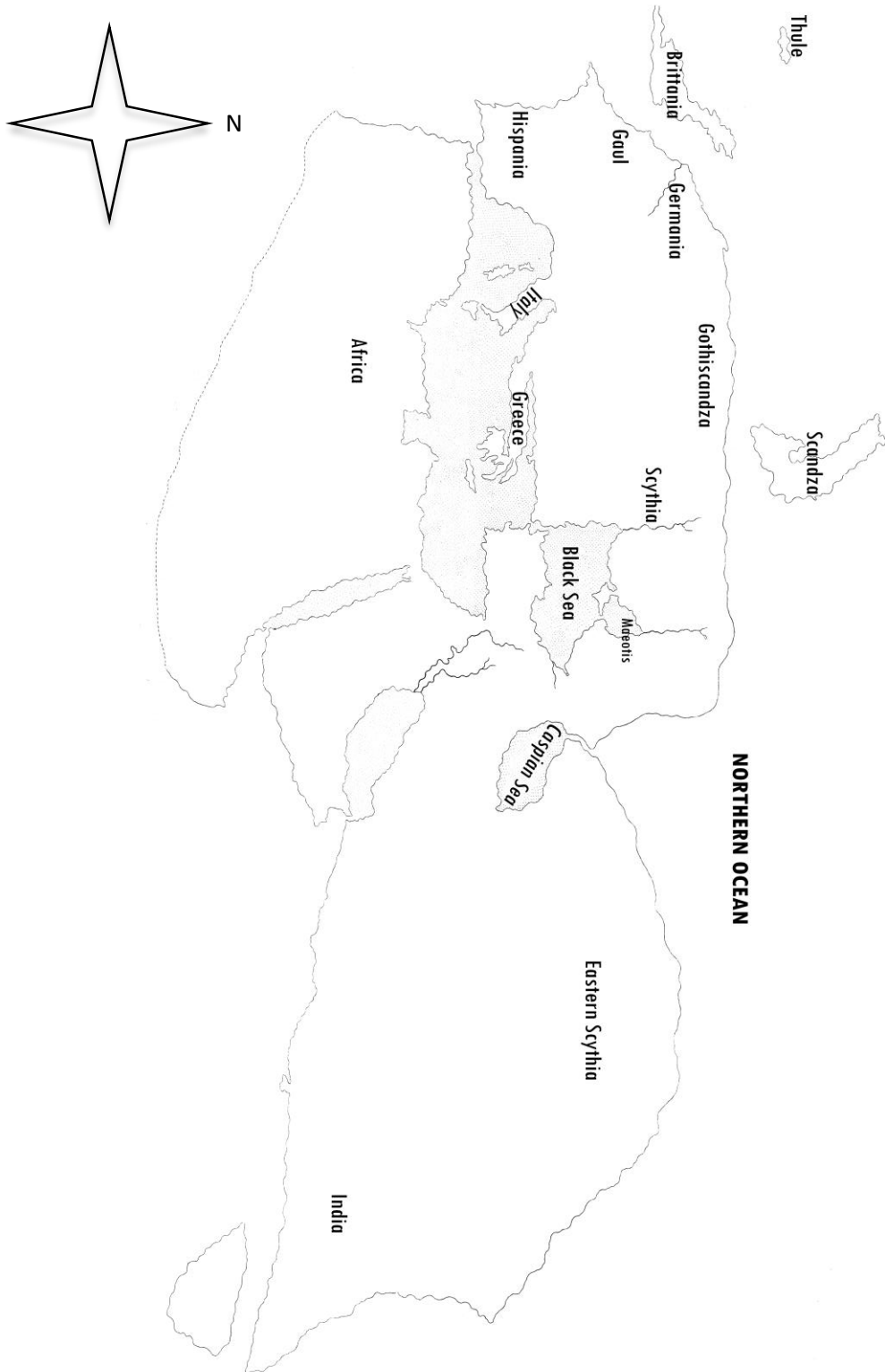
5.2.2 – *MAGNA DACIA* AND THE TRIBES OF GERMANIA[562]

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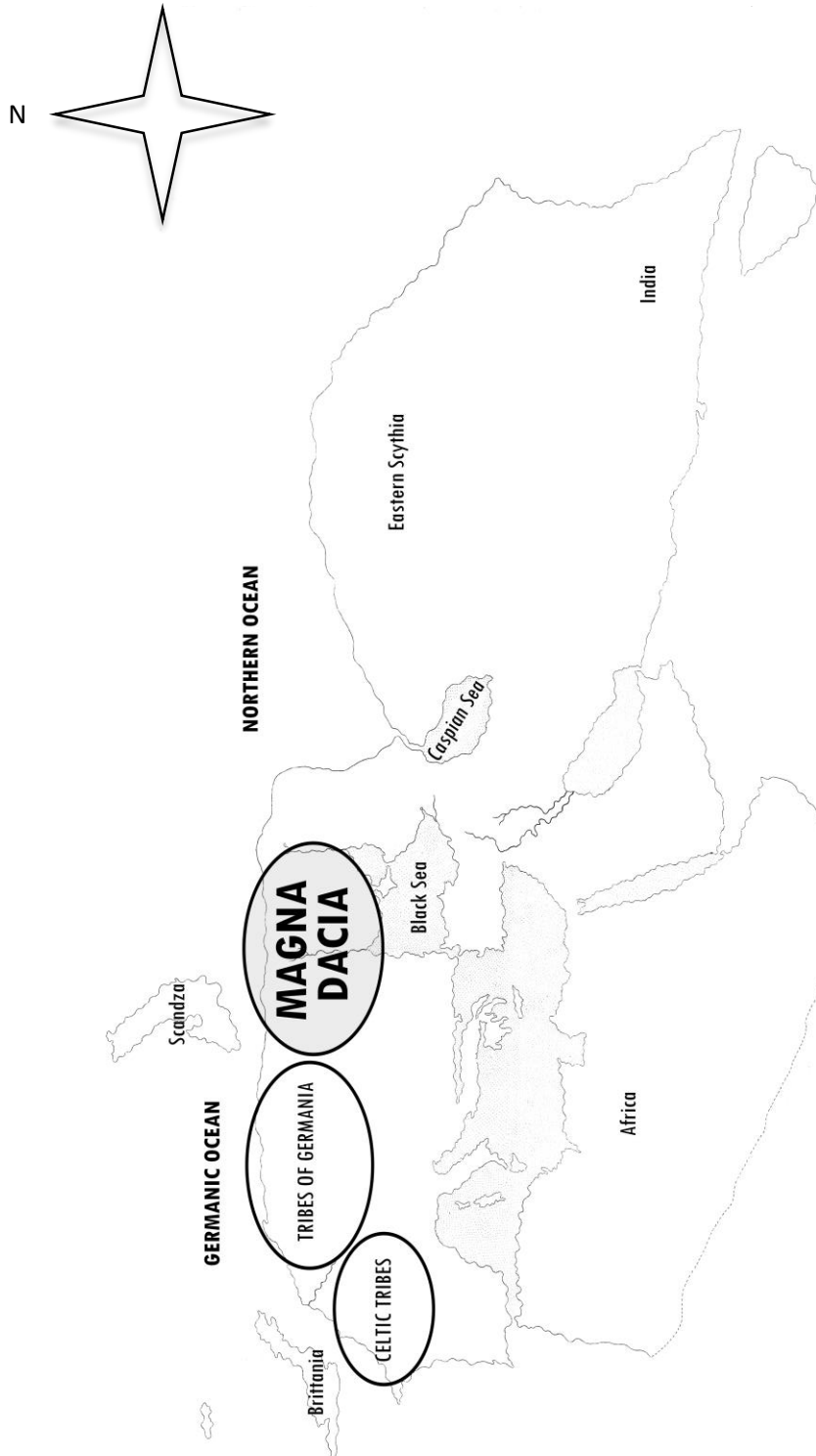
[562] It is rather difficult to pinpoint the exact location of *Magna Dacia* in a map like this: first of all, because the map itself is an approximation of a proposed model; secondly, because the very idea of *Magna Dacia*, we should remember, is a concept created for this thesis. The 'limits' of this narrative location, therefore, could easily stretch southtwards or even further westwards.

Epilogue

And so we reach the end of the story. As we stand here, we ought to remember our *frater* Castalius. What were his thoughts when he turned the last page of this *De Origine Actibusque Getarum*? We can only wonder. Perhaps the sudden celebration of Justinian was rather unexpected. 'I have not included all that is written or told about them [the Goths], nor spoken so much to their praise as to the glory of him who conquered them.' That must have made sense to Castalius, however. Justinian was, after all, the emperor; he was about to end the war and come out of it as the winner; he had conquered the Goths, Theoderic was dead, the Amali were no more – or had, at least, been completely assimilated by the imperial Anicii in Constantinople. The glory of the Ostrogoths was now, indeed, the glory of Justinian.

As modern readers – and critical readers – we have to ponder these words. At first glance, the very last sentence of the *De Origine* might sound apologetic: Jordanes did not sing the glories of Justinian throughout the text, as he claimed; he did, however (and this time, contrary to what he claimed) celebrate the past and the deeds of the Goths. From Berig to the 'Anicius – Amalus' Germanus, Jordanes guided us through the vicissitudes, the tragedies and the triumphs of the Gothic stock. Why, then, end the *De Origine* like this? What was Jordanes' purpose?

Throughout this thesis, we explored some of the tentative answers. Goffart established the idea that Jordanes was crafting Eastern propaganda: he advocated the union between Goths and Romans under the guidance of Justinian so that the Italian Wars would have a 'happy ending.' Influential as this take is, other, concurring interpretations are also widely popular. Some still defend the argument of the propaganda, but now coming from the other side of the belligerent forces: the *De Origine* was a pamphlet in

favour of the Ostrogothic aristocracies now living among the Romans in the East. The 'simple' interpretation, however, might still be the most prominent among scholars: Jordanes, a Goth, was narrating the story of his people. He was inspired by the elusive *Historia* of Cassiodorus, by the famous *Historia* of Ablabius. Amidst the fabrications, the clear fictitious passages, and the misinterpretations, Jordanes might have been capable of retaining and transmitting otherwise unknown elements of proper Gothic traditions – from Cassiodorus, from Ablabius, and from his own, personal experience.

By no means I reject the importance and the contribution of all those analyses and the interpretative efforts of previous scholars but, in this thesis, I tried to go back and, much similar to Castalius, understand the *De Origine* 'again.' This time, with different, methodological spectacles. What is the narrative implication of the text in question? What are the rhetorical strategies and, above all, can we find traces of internal logic and authorial agency hidden across the lines of this *opus*? I think we can.

That being said, perhaps now it is time to summarise the points and the results that were (hopefully) achieved in this thesis. My initial effort was to strip the *De Origine* from the rancid oppression of Cassiodorus and purported 'Gothicness': a narrative analysis of Jordanes demands recognition of authorial intervention *a priori*. Even if the whole text were copied verbatim from other sources, we would still have to take into consideration the logic behind Jordanes' choices. Furthermore, because we do not have any surviving manuscripts containing Cassiodorus' *Historia Gothorum*, we just cannot judge the amount of copying that went into the *De Origine*. We are not looking into Cassiodorus through Jordanes. We are looking into *Jordanes* through Jordanes. Moreover, being free from the weight of the Cassiodorus' argument, a fresh reading of the *De Origine* will show the vast quantity of sources that backed Jordanes' story. From Herodotus to Procopius, our author was acutely aware of an entire universe of Greek and Latin texts and their reputation. This knowledge and consciousness are at the core of the

narrative. One source, above all, seems to fill the meanders of this Getic tale: Orosius. The spirit of this celebrated fifth–century priest is ever present; his ideas are incorporated – from notions of ethnicity to the political theory of the succession of empires – and his historical take is the basis from Jordanes' own. Ironically, he seems to be, after all, the 'Cassiodorus' that many look for. *De Origine*, being an 'Orosian' tale of sorts, becomes more and more far away from the traditional Gothic elements, the 'Gothicness.'

But if this is a story built upon Greek and Roman foundations, then what is its point? Who are these Goths, Getae, Scythians, if not echoes of classical tropes and civilised rhetorical perceptions? To make sense of ethnicity and its role in the text, I decided to incur into an up to date, more rigorous definition of ethnicity and usage of ethnonyms. The conclusion was that any given hegemonic society would have a *Grand Narrative*, a way of explaining and establishing its 'total history'; and *Little Narratives*, rhetorical tools with social, cultural and ideological implications: they categorise and create hierarchies of socio-political prerogatives. That means that 'barbarian ethnicity' becomes one element of a greater, totalising narrative that thrive by making sense of reality. Perhaps that sounds overly complicated, but the thought can be simplified in one sentence: ethnicities are fictive, that is, are created and serve a purpose.

But then, if ethnicities in Jordanes are a rhetorical tool and part of a discoursive strategy, what does it entail? The answer to this question might have been the central conclusion of this thesis. I argued that the ethnonym *Geta* is far more complex than traditionally believed: while the common interpretation postulates that, by addressing the Goths as Getae, Jordanes was using a classicising terminology that would grant some degree of legitimacy and authority to his lexicon of choice. Moreover, it would be an easy way to connect a variety of different societies under the same umbrella-term, thus achieving a more 'complete,' ancient historical narrative that could go back to stories told by Herodotus and others. Reassessing the fictive nature of this ethnonym does not render

these explanatory instances wrong, but enriches them and takes us further. As I mentioned before, if we look into Jordanes as an active author whose agency permeates the text and dictates choices and internal logic, then we will be able to understand what are the discoursive implications of this ethnic construction. The idea of Getae, in the *De Origine*, allows Jordanes to combine stories and characters of different groups – these groups, however, are not random or picked because of classicising tropes. They have historical cohesion because they all 'belong' to the same region, the same *Kulturraum* of the Balkans. Jordanes is not just fabricating an ethnonym, but he is normatising and simplifying the history and legends of a number of Dacian and Scythian people: Goths, Moesians, Scythians, Getae themselves, Gepids, and more. In other words, there is some logic behind Jordanes' choices, as we could imagine. I would even argue that the geographical drive behind these choices is what motivates the exploration of 'Gothic history': the Goths, through the exploits of the Amali, are the illustrious sons of the Balkans, of this *Magna Dacia*, to use the concept that was employed in this thesis. It would make sense to have them as the protagonists of our story.

However, that is not necessarily the case. Again, when stripped from the historiographical vices of 'Gothicness,' the *De Origine* surfaces as a text that favours – and explores – the Huns as much as it favours the Goths. The attention to the detail, the praising of Attila, and the genealogical connection between Huns and Getae (they were, after all, the offspring of swamp ghosts and Gothic *Haliurunnae*) makes them, unexpectedly, also protagonists of our story.

Therefore, could we say that the *De Origine* is a story about fictive ethnicities that progressively assume the shape of Goths and Huns? We still have Romans, Visigoths, Gepids, Heruli; perhaps, then, this is still not the case. And with that said, we go back to the geographical drive of the narrative: what unites those *gentes*, what brings cohesion to their stories and what changes, shifts and shapes the central stage of the *De Origine* is, in

fact, the 'Dacian imperative'. This means that real protagonist of the work is not Justinian, is not Attila, are not the Amali nor the Balthi, are not the Goths nor the Huns; the protagonist of the *De Origine* is *Magna Dacia*, a region that comprises, sometimes literary, sometimes figuratively depending on Jordanes'reac intentions, Scythia, Moesia, Dacia, and parts of Thrace. A region that saw the wake of many groups and societies and a region that, through its constant changes and developments, affected so much the fate of the Roman Empire. In the *De Origine*, *Magna Dacia* is an empire in its own, and it is through the eyes and deeds of the Getae – that is, Goths, Dacians, Scythians, Huns – that we see its story.

The arguments and the reasons for this new interpretation, I hope, were made clear throughout this thesis. Weighting the narrative importance and intrincasies of the *De Origine* can bring a drastic shift in our interpretation and, consequently, in the implications of such a text. Certainly, that is not to say that we can indeed postulate a clear pragmatic goal to the *De Origine*: perhaps Jordanes was really just doing Castalius biding and had no major political intentions for his work; perhaps we expect to see a more ambitious Jordanes that never existed. After all, one of the pitfalls of looking back into our past is that we see things in order, as we assume that every human, every historical player that comes into our analysis has a role to play and a function to fill. Nothing is left by chance, and every action *demands* a purpose behind it. Purpose, however, does not implicate consciousness – and that is why I do not dare claim that Jordanes was trying to do more than just narrate a story that he felt compelled to narrate.

Instead, we can try to locate the *De Origine* in the big picture. If the Gothic text *par excellence* is not a conveyor of 'Gothicness', perhaps we should reassess some of our conclusions on the very idea of Gothic identity. If the Goths of Jordanes are so related to Huns and to the ambience of Scythia, rather than Germania or the Nordic world, perhaps we should also reacess our thoughts on the concept of 'Germanic people', even.

Furthermore, a new look into the *De Origine* might also direct us to new ways of understanding the imagery of Gothic identity *already* in the fifth and sixth centuries.

A new history of the Goths, maybe. That is a topic, however, for another story.

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