

**ON THE ORIGINS OF THE GOTHIC LEADER ALARIC:
BETWEEN CLAUDIAN AND ZOSIMUS***

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ABSTRACT

Alaric has often been seen as the leader of the Visigothic people, from 395 to his death in 410. Before his rebellion against the Roman Empire in 395, he served in the Roman military, participating in the campaign against Eugenius and Arbogast in 394. His early career is mentioned in the work of the historian Zosimus. But his background is shrouded in mystery. In the middle of the 6th century, Jordanes wrote about his noble origin and the Visigothic dynasty of Balthi. This has led some historians to look for Alaric's origins among the chieftains and nobility of the Gothic tribe of the Thervingi. Among contemporary authors, only the verses of the poet Claudian mention Alaric's birth. This article explores the possibilities of Alaric's origin and the internal policies of the Goths living in Roman territory. Most likely, the person of Alaric was more closely associated with the Roman army than is usually thought.

Keywords: Alaric; Visigoths; Claudius Claudianus; Zosimus; Goths; Gai-nas; Peuce Island; *Scythia Minor*

The Gothic leader Alaric is a well-known figure from the era known as “the Migration Period”. After the death of the Roman emperor Theodosius in 395, Alaric became the leader of rebellious Gothic people in the area of Roman Thrace. With his followers and their families, he marched through the Roman provinces of the praetorian prefecture of *Illyricum*. They ravaged Greece and Epirus and in 401 Alaric's forces were already on the borders of Italy and subsequently invaded it.¹ Over the next few years, northern Italy became a battlefield between Alaric's Goths and the army of the Roman *magister militum utriusque militiae* Stilicho, Alaric's main opponent. Despite a series of battles, the goal of Alaric was probably to reach an agreement with the western Roman gov-

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¹ For a recent discussion of when exactly Alaric invaded Italy and what his reasons were for doing so, see Kulikowski (2019: 134–135) and Halsall (2007: 200–202). The subject is also addressed in Cameron (1970: 156–188); O'Flynn (1983: 25–45); Liebeschuetz (1990: 48–85) and Liebeschuetz (1992). Alaric's campaigns are also covered in one of the most extensive contemporary works in the field of the Migration Period (Meier 2019: 191–223).

ernment, and obtain a Roman official post as well as land for his men.² The execution of Stilicho in 408 ruined all of Alaric's chances of negotiation and forced him to move with his warriors deeper into Italy. The Goths could not conquer the well-defended city of Ravenna, where emperor Honorius resided. Near Rome, Alaric even proclaimed the Roman senator Priscus Attalus the new emperor against Honorius. However, this did not lead to any advances in the negotiations. During the meeting between the Goths and the emperor's envoys, Alaric's men were attacked by Sarus, a Gothic warrior in service of emperor Honorius.³ Disappointed, Alaric then sacked the city of Rome in 410, thereby forever securing his place in history. The sack of Rome brought political defeat to both parties. Alaric subsequently moved to southern Italy, dreaming that the Goths could find a new home in Roman Africa. Here, however, the famous Gothic leader died soon afterwards, probably from the effects of malaria.⁴

Alaric is usually and traditionally viewed as the first king of the Visigoths. The statement is wrong on both parts. Firstly, there were no Visigoths. The term is used only by authors from Italy and Constantinople from the first half of the 6th century, so they could distinguish between the Ostrogoths and the Goths settled in Aquitaine and later Hispania.⁵ And it is known among scholars interested in Gothic research that the contemporary texts from the first half of the 5th century did not refer to him as the king of the Goths. He is called ὁ τῶν Γότθων φύλαρχος (Olymp. fr. 6 [Blockley]), ἡγούμενος τῶν Γότθων (Soz. *Hist. eccl.* VIII, 25, 3; IX, 4, 2 and 6, 2), *dux Gothorum* (Rufin. *Hist. praef.*), and *dux barbarorum* (Aug. *Civ.* I, 2). Of his contemporaries, only Paulus Orosius writes about him as a king.⁶ Only later was the myth and legend about Alaric created and in the surviving sources he became a literary character and a proverbial bogeyman, thanks to his role in the sack of Rome.⁷ This evolution of Alaric as a Gothic hero and enemy of Rome culminates in the mid-6th century, when Jordanes called Alaric *rex Visigothorum* and even wrote that Alaric was elected king of the Goths during the consulate of Stilicho and Aurelianus (year 400).⁸ The question of Alaric's kingship is often debated among

² At least according to Oros. *Hist.* VII, 38, 2, Alaric had already attempted to negotiate with the Western Roman government after his first invasion of Italy was repelled in 403 and he withdrew to Pannonia and Dalmatia. We know Alaric's demands only from the later negotiations with Honorius during the campaigns of 408–410 (Zos. V, 29, 5; 36, 1; 40, 4; 42, 1 and 48, 3). We can assume that Alaric's requests were very similar at this time.

³ For Sarus' role in Alaric's sack of Rome and failure of the negotiations, see Wijnendaele (2019).

⁴ For mentions of Alaric's death, see Hyd. *Chron.* 45; Iord. *Get.* 30, 156–158; Olymp. fr. 11, 4 [Blockley]; Philost. *Hist. eccl.* XII, 3; Procop. *Vand.* I, 2, 37.

⁵ Gillett (2000: 495–497). Texts using the term “Visigoths” are *Getica* by Jordanes, Procopius' books about wars, *Variae* written by Cassiodorus, and the anonymous *Vita Caesarii Arelatensis*. The official Visigothic documents and legal texts from the 6th and 7th centuries speak only about *rex Gothorum* and *gens Gothorum*. Today there is even a signet ring of king Alaric II (484–507) from the late 5th century with the inscription *ALARICVS REX GOTHORVM* (Kornbluth 2008). In the time of Alaric, the group of people around him was in the process of forming and the identity of his men was rather fluid.

⁶ Orosius mentioned Alaric's name a total of eleven times, but only three times together with the royal designation, Oros. *Hist.* VII, 37, 2: *taceo de Alarico rege cum Gothis suis saepe uicto*; VII, 37, 17: *ab incursu Alarici regis et hostis sed Christiani aliquantulo ad tempus spatio differtur*; VII, 43, 2: *Gothorum tunc populis Athaulfus rex praeerat, ... Alarico in regnum successerat*.

⁷ Sidon. *Carm.* VII, 505. In the panegyric on emperor Eparchius Avitus the Gothic king Theoderic II declares that he wants to atone for the sins of his grandfather, who harmed Rome itself.

⁸ Iord. *Get.* 29, 147: *mox ergo antefatus Halaricus creatus est rex, ... et sumpto exercitu per Pannonias Stilicone et Aureliano consulibus*. Later, the 7th-century scholar and bishop Isidor of Seville continues in

present-day historians,⁹ with the uncertain result of the splitting of Alaric's status and career between the official Roman military structures and the Gothic tribal structures,¹⁰ which are not recorded in our textual sources.

After this short introduction, we can now take a closer look at the origin of Alaric himself. His influence was already significant in 394, when he was a commander of barbarian *foederati* in the army of emperor Theodosius I during the campaign against the usurper Eugenius. But we can trace his career back to an even earlier time. The actions associated with him by the poet Claudian¹¹ could date back to the year 391.¹² From later sources, only Jordanes attempts to be more precise, and writes that Alaric was a member of the dynasty of the Balthi.¹³ Considering that according to the poet Claudian, Alaric was still

this tradition of Alaric as the first elected Visigothic king, Isid. *Goth.* 12: *Aera CCCXX, anno imperi Theodosii IIII Gothi patrociniū Romani foederis recusantes Alaricum regem sibi constituunt.*

⁹ Thompson (1963: 111), whose work may be regarded nowadays as outdated, tried to avoid identifying Alaric as a king and spoke about him as the leader of the Visigoths, who was elected by his men. It should be mentioned that Thompson relied heavily on the fragments of Olympiodorus (Thompson 1948: 8). One of the leading experts on the Goths, Herwig Wolfram, has confidence in the later sources and claims that Alaric really was king of the Goths. At the time of his accession to power he still needed the support of the Gothic tribal elites and elders – the *reiks* –, but during his reign, the tribe went through a process of centralization and, later, no one questioned that Alaric's successor Athaulf was king. According to Wolfram (1988: 143–146), Alaric became the Gothic king in 395 after the death of emperor Theodosius, whom the Goths acknowledged as their sovereign. A similar approach appears in the work of Burns (2003: 367), who argues that Alaric's decision to take the title *rex Gothorum* was merely his response to being rejected by Constantinople and Rome. Other English-speaking historians are more critical of Alaric's kingship. Liebeschuetz (1992: 76–77) dismisses that Alaric could have had some hereditary king-like role before 395, because in his view he was no more than leader of a war-band. Heather (1996: 139–146) speaks of Alaric as only a powerful Gothic leader and would-be king. Thus, he suggests that Alaric's royal title was the only potential option, and his position among the Goths was primarily as a military commander. So does Kulikowski (2007: 157–161), for whom Alaric is just one of the Roman generals with power only within the empire. He only refers to him as a “leader of his followers” and not as a king. Their view did not change even in their later studies (Kulikowski 2019: 125–126 and 134–135 and Heather 2010: 190–197). More recent German authors claimed that Alaric was indeed the Gothic king (Faber 2010: 163–165; Giese 2004: 28; Kampers 2008: 98), with only Kampers giving some argumentation about Alaric's position. The question is further explored by Halsall (2007: 202–206). According to him, the title *rex Gothorum* was a suitable title for Alaric in the context of his life, but the political developments indicate that the first Gothic king was Alaric's successor, Athaulf, rather than Alaric himself. Arce (2018: 25–29) points out that the contemporary authors did not care about internal Gothic politics, and that the later chroniclers interested in the Gothic royal tradition (Jordanes and Isidor) did not know any details of Alaric's position and function in Gothic society. Alaric probably was the king of the Goths, but not in the Roman/Latin sense of *rex*. Kokowski (2007: 232 and 236) uses the word “king” in quotation marks (in orig. “król”) when referring to Alaric. In his conception, Alaric began in the early 390s as the Gothic tribal leader, and through his actions and the centralization and consolidation of the tribe, his position became royal.

¹⁰ The subject of the fusion of the Roman military commander and the barbarian king in one person during the late 4th century is discussed in Wijnendaele (2022). Wijnendaele primarily addresses the person of Mallobaudes who during the reign of emperor Gratian was king of the Franks and Roman *comes domesticorum*.

¹¹ Claud. *Get.* 524 and *VI Hon.* 107–108. Alaric and his warriors tried to capture emperor Theodosius when he returned to Constantinople from Italy, where he resided in the imperial palace in Mediolanum. Claudian tells us the emperor was in danger when he was crossing the river Hebros (nowadays Maritza/Ebros) in Thrace. Alaric apparently led only a small group of warriors at that time and did not yet have much influence among the Goths.

¹² Boin (2020: 38–50); Kulikowski (2007: 161); Wolfram (1988: 136–137).

¹³ Iord. *Get.* 29, 146.

a young man (*calidae rapuit te flamma iuuentae*)¹⁴ during the fighting in Italy in 401 and 402, we can assume that he was born sometime between 365 and 370.¹⁵

But now we can look at the question of where Alaric might have been born. If only Jordanes and some of the chronicles from the 5th century had survived to the present day, we would have quite logically assumed that Alaric was born somewhere in *Barbaricum*, where the original settlements of the Gothic tribe of Thervingi were located. Alaric's place of birth is mentioned in the writings of two poets of the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries, Claudian and Prudentius. A Christian poet from Hispania, Prudentius, wrote that Alaric invaded Italy from his homeland on the Danube:

Italiam patrio ueniens iuratus ab Histro. (Prud. C. Symm. II, 697)

In the same way,¹⁶ the court poet Claudian writes in his *De bello Getico* that Alaric swore on behalf of his native Danube, thus emphasizing the importance of the river to Alaric and his Goths:

*aspice, Roma, tuum iam uertice celsior hostem,
aspice, quam rarum referens inglorius agmen
Italia detrusus eat quantumque priori
dissimilis, qui cuncta sibi cessura ruenti
pollicitus patrii numen iurauerat Histri
non nisi calcatis loricam ponere rostris.* (Claud. *Get.* 77–82)

But when Claudian, in a panegyric on the occasion of the sixth consulate of emperor Honorius, speaks of Roman enemies, of Alaric and the African rebel Gildo, he writes that Alaric was born on Peuce Island:

*Alaricum barbara Peuce
nutrierat.* (Claud. *VI Hon.* 105–106)

Both poets associate the place of Alaric's birth with the Danube River, Claudian even with a very specific place, namely Peuce Island, located in the mouth of the Danube. Both poets were also Alaric's contemporaries, with Claudian dying in 404 and Prudentius sometime after 405,¹⁷ and Claudian, who was a supporter of Alaric's enemy, the Roman *magister militum* Stilicho, himself was interested in the subject of the war with the Goths.

Of course, it is entirely possible to question all three reports as *licentia poetica*. The above-mentioned statements are parts of poems and as such are shaped by the subjectivity of the author – his opinion, as well as the metre, style of classical poetry, cultural

¹⁴ Claud. *Get.* 498.

¹⁵ *PLRE* II: 43 (Alaricus 1); Arce (2018: 23); Boin (2020: 17).

¹⁶ In his commentary on Prudentius, Gnilka (2017: 346–349) emphasises the similarity of the two passages. Both Claudian and Prudentius wrote about Alaric's oath, and both of them describe the Danube River with the adjective *patrius*. It is not easy to decide who copied from whom, or whether the texts were written independently. Gnilka shows Virgil's line, which is very similar to that of Prudentius and Claudian: *aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro* (Verg. *Georg.* II, 497). However, both Claudian and Prudentius add to the verse that Alaric was native to the Danube.

¹⁷ Hershkowitz (2017: 8).

milieu, and intended audience. Their goal is not to describe the real historical Alaric. For Prudentius, Alaric was just part of the background, and Claudian considered him Rome's enemy and Stilicho's rival, and so tried to portray him in a certain perspective that also did not correspond to historical reality. However, Claudian and Prudentius were no longer alive when Alaric sacked Rome in 410. This means that their narratives were not influenced by events that were yet to happen and they did not see Alaric as Rome's predestined enemy.¹⁸ If Prudentius had not used the ablative *patrio*, we might have thought that *ab Histro* meant only the direction from which Alaric invaded Italy. Claudian's verse about Alaric's oath devoted to the Danube River does not actually tell us much about Alaric himself, so more important for us are the lines from the panegyric to emperor Honorius about Alaric being born on Peuce Island.

Historians do not consider these poems to be credible sources. P. Heather criticizes the works of Claudian together with the writings of the poet and bishop Synesius of Cyrene, as misleading texts for research on the Gothic topic.¹⁹ The artistic and ideological dimensions of the panegyric cannot be omitted. The Gothic war against Rome is depicted as the *gigantomachy* and Alaric becomes the legendary giant, and his campaign against the Roman Empire is similar to the fight of *Gigantes* against Olympus because it is a fight against the order of the universe.²⁰ Alaric's birth on Peuce Island could be understood as highly symbolic because the river represented the border. On one bank was *Romania*, the Roman Empire, and on the other bank there was the *Gothia*, the wild and barbaric land of the Goths.²¹ The island in the middle of the river in this conception can be considered a no man's land. Claudian could thus be trying to say that Alaric did not belong to the Roman Empire, and no longer belonged to *Barbaricum*.

For our further research, let us assume that Claudian's verses about Alaric's birth are true and later we may see that they may indeed have been based on reality. But how do other historians work with Claudian's text? Not everyone does. Herwig Wolfram, in the revised English version of his study, writes that we should not take Alaric's origin from Peuce Island literally. According to him, the Peuce mentioned by Claudian was the area of the tribe Peucini/Bastarnae, just north of the Danube Delta.²² Wolfram has been backed up by Javier Arce. In Alaric's case, he also imagines under the name of Peuce the barbarian territory on the lower Danube near the Black Sea.²³ This certainly does not mean that Alaric was born in the Roman Empire. The author of another biography of Alaric, Douglas Boin, takes the idea of the island of Peuce more seriously, but in his view, the island was still located in the Danube Delta north of the Roman border.²⁴

¹⁸ The observation that Claudian and Prudentius died before the sack of Rome in 410 and thus could not see in Alaric the fatal enemy of the eternal city belongs to an anonymous reviewer.

¹⁹ Heather (2010: 191–192).

²⁰ Coombe (2018: 93–121).

²¹ Ammianus Marcellinus relates an episode from 369. The Roman emperor Valens was concluding a peace treaty with the chieftain of the Thervingi Athanaric and the negotiations took place on a ship on the Danube. This happened because, for both the Romans and the Goths, the river provided neutral ground, and Athanaric had previously sworn not to set foot on Roman soil (Amm. XXVII, 5, 9). For Claudian's conception of the Danube River in his poems, see Vukadinović, Smirnov-Brkić (2022).

²² Wolfram (1988: 144 and 397).

²³ Arce (2018: 23–25).

²⁴ Boin (2020: 16–37).

But what do we know about Peuce Island? Many classical authors mentioned it, so we know it was supposed to be an island in the Danube Delta. This area changed many times over the years. Nowadays, the Danube has three main branches: the Chilia, Sulina, and Sfântu Gheorghe. The space between them is filled with pools, swamps, and smaller river branches. However, the coastline and the Danube riverbed with its branches looked differently during antiquity. The latest research shows that behind the island of Peuce, known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, there was probably the area of the Beibugeac Corridor to the east of the town of Tulcea, between the Sfântu Gheorghe branch and the lagoon Limanul Razelm. Today, the Romanian villages of Murighiol and Dunavățu are found there. However, the drilled boreholes indicate that the area was not an island, but rather a peninsula. To Greek and Roman sailors sailing on the Black Sea, Peuce looked like an island when seen from the sea.²⁵ Nevertheless, this peninsula was without any doubt in the territory of the Roman Empire.

In late antiquity, Peuce was part of the Roman province of *Scythia Minor*. The province was created by emperor Diocletian in the 290s and its capital was the city of Tomis (today Constanța). The provincial governor, with the title of *praeses*, resided here, and the military command in the province was held by *dux Scythiae*, who commanded two legions and other smaller units stationed in fortresses around the Danube.²⁶ The northern part of *Scythia Minor* was defended by *legio I Iouia Scythica* stationed in the towns of Noviodunum (Isaccea) and Aegyssus (Tulcea). The island/peninsula of Peuce was defended by two infantry auxiliary units – *Milites quinti Constantiniani* in Salsovia (Mahmudia), and *Milites Gratianenses* in the fortress Gratiana (Dunavățu de Jos) – and an unspecified cavalry regiment, *Cuneus equitum ...*, in the fortified village of Salmorus/Thalamonium/Halmyris²⁷ (Murighiol). Later, at the end of the 4th century, the defence of Peuce was strengthened by the transfer of the cavalry regiment *Cuneus equitum Arcadum* from Egypt and the formation of naval squadrons of *Classis in Plateypegiis* and *Musculi Scythici*, all probably dislocated in the fortress of Halmyris.²⁸ However, these three units were not deployed here until after the migration of the Goths into the Empire, i.e., after the birth of Alaric.

The next step is to look at the “Visigoths” who were under Alaric’s leadership at the beginning of the 5th century. The most substantial research in this field was undertaken

²⁵ Romanescu, Bounegru, Stoleriu, Miha-Pintilie, Nicu, Enea, Stan (2015).

²⁶ Zahariade (2007). The province *Scythia Minor* was subject to the Diocese of Thrace. As such, it is mentioned in the Roman administrative texts (*Provinc. laterc. Veron.* 4 and *Not. dign.* or. 1, 53 and 116 and 26, 15). In the province, several fortresses formed the Danubian *limes*, as the region was exposed to numerous attacks by barbarian tribes, including the Goths. A comprehensive study dealing with the history of this province was written by Zahariade (2006).

²⁷ The Roman fort near Murighiol is called differently in the sources. The *Antonine Itinerary* uses the name *Salmorude* for this settlement (*Itin. Anton. Aug.* 226). In the *Notitia dignitatum*, the fortress is called *Thalamonium* (*Not. dign.* or. 39, 18). However, all Greek texts use the name Ἀλμυρίς (Philost. *Hist. ecll.* X, 6; Hierocl. *Synecd.* 637, 15; Procop. *Aed.* IV, 7, 20 and *Not. episc.* 3, 40, 650). The only Latin text that uses the name Halmyris is the Christian hagiography *AASS Iul.* II: 538–551, where the fortress is called *Almyridensium ciuitas*. This text is about two Christian missionaries from Bithynia, Epictetus and Astion, who were executed in Halmyris during the reign of the emperor Diocletian.

²⁸ The deployment of Roman troops in the province of *Scythia Minor* is discussed in Zahariade (2017). Our main sources are the text of *Notitia dignitatum* (*Not. dign.* or. 39, 18; 26; 27 and 35), and some local Latin inscriptions, which confirm the information from the *Notitia dignitatum*. The topic of the Roman defence of the Danube and local fortifications was studied by Băjenaru (2010).

by Peter Heather.²⁹ It is necessary to say goodbye to the old and erroneous idea that the pre-migration tribes of the Thervingi and Greuthungi transformed into the Gothic people of the Migration Period. The Danubian Thervingi did not become the Visigoths and, moreover, also the Pontic Greuthungi are not the core of the later Ostrogoths. Alaric's followers came from several different groups of barbarians and former Roman soldiers/*foederati*. The core was the people of the Thervingi tribe, who crossed the Danube in 376 under the leadership of Fritigern and Alavivus (Amm. XXXI, 4, 5 and 8). They were joined by the eastern Greuthungi with their *duces* Alatheus and Saphrax. In addition to the Goths, a group of warriors from the Alans and Huns crossed the river in 377 (Amm. XXXI, 8, 4). Independently of these groups and people, the Goths, led by the chieftain Farnobius, and the Taifals entered Roman territory (Amm. XXXI, 9, 3). However, they were defeated by the Romans and subsequently incorporated into the rest of the Goths. After the victory of the Goths at Adrianople, they were joined by other people from the *Barbaricum*. We know that the ruler of the Thervingi Athanaric, who had stayed in the *Barbaricum* after 376, now went to Constantinople (Zos. IV, 34, 4 and Oros. *Hist.* VII, 34, 7). Some Roman soldiers may also have become Alaric's followers, for we know that in 400 they were indeed in the ranks of another Gothic warlord, Gainas.³⁰ The core of the Gothic army was thus joined by other groups that could separate and subsequently rejoin.³¹ There was also the barbarian king Radagaisus³² who invaded Italy in 405 but was defeated by the Romans and part of his men were enslaved.³³ They then sided with Alaric when he came to Italy in 408.³⁴

²⁹ Heather (1996: 51–93).

³⁰ According to Zosimus, Gainas' forces were formed by both the barbarians and the Romans (Zos. V, 21, 6).

³¹ The Greuthungi, Alans, and Huns crossed the Danube together with the Gothic Thervingi. They all fought together against the Romans at the battle of Adrianople in 378, but later the Thervingi stayed in the area of Roman *Macedonia* and *Thracia*, and the Greuthungi, Alans, and Huns moved westwards. Subsequently, they were defeated by the emperor Gratian, and in 380 they were settled as *foederati* in the provinces of *Valeria* and *Pannonia I* (Iord. *Get.* 27, 141 and Zos. IV, 34, 2). The Alans were probably there in 401 to reinforce the Roman defence of Italy. The Greuthungi, under the leadership of Athaulf, joined Alaric's Goths in 408, when he was already pillaging Italy (Zos. V, 37, 1), and the majority of the Huns stayed in *Pannonia* (Gračanin 2006a: 29–44 and 2006b: 83–90). Although we speak of Athaulf's men as the Greuthungi, it should be noted that Zosimus mentions only that there were some Goths and Huns under Athaulf's command. The historians assume that in fact they were the Greuthungi who crossed the Danube in 376 and were settled in Pannonia in 380 (Bratož 2015: 36; Lotter, Bratož, Castritius 2003: 80–99 and Wolfram 1988: 132; 151 and 236).

³² The barbarian leader Radagaisus is usually called *rex Gothorum* in the sources (Aug. *Civ.* V, 23; Cassiod. *Chron.* 1169; *Chron. Gall.* CCCCLII 50 and Oros. *Hist.* VII, 37, 5). Some sources do not give Radagaisus any title, although they imply that he was leader of the Goths (Olymp. fr. 9 [Blockley] and Prosp. *Chron.* 1228). Some texts tell us that he was a Scythian man (Marcell. *Chron.* 406, 2 and Iord. *Rom.* 321). According to Zosimus, his army of 400,000 men was made up of Celtic and Germanic tribes (Zos. V, 26, 3). Radagaisus came from the area between the middle Danube and the Carpathians (Heather 1996: 107 and 2010: 173 and 177), which means his followers did not have to be Goths but could have come from local Germanic and Sarmatian tribes. For more information on Radagaisus' campaign in Italy and his defeat, see Wijnendaele (2016).

³³ Wijnendaele (2018: 263) considers that the former Radagaisus' men were not enslaved but incorporated into Stilicho's army. This view is supported by Olymp. fr. 9 [Blockley], who claimed that Radagaisus' commanders became Stilicho's allies.

³⁴ According to Zosimus (Zos. V, 42, 3), when Alaric was camping in Etruria in 408 after he departed from Rome, his army was enlarged by slaves from central Italy, among whom may have been former warriors of Radagaisus. Wijnendaele (2018: 272) further tries to argue that former Radagaisus' warriors serving in Stilicho's army joined Alaric in Noricum after their second commander's execution.

At the beginning of the 5th century, there was no unified Gothic tribe, but rather a heterogeneous group of warriors and their families following the leadership of Alaric. This gave rise to the idea that the migrating barbarian tribes, which became the Roman *foederati*, were a marching army (*exercitus*) rather than a clan-affiliated tribe (*gens*).³⁵ In this environment, the old gentile traditions would be difficult to sustain because they would clash with the traditions of other groups. The legitimacy and power of Alaric thus did not originate from the Thervingi tradition, and he did not even have to come from the family of some Gothic tribal *reiks*. His leadership had to be based on the consensus of all the groups belonging to his army, as well as on Roman approval of his position as commander.

What was the structure of the society of the Goths in the 4th century? What did the pre-migration Gothic *gens* look like? A reconstruction based on the language used by the Gothic bishop Wulfila in his translation of the Bible was attempted by Herwig Wolfram. The tribe could be divided into different family clans called *kunja* (sg. *kuni*). They were led by clan chieftains known as *reiks*. In Latin, this would correspond more to *dux* or *optimas*, rather than to *rex*. The representative of the entire Thervingi tribe was the tribal judge, called *kindins*. The eastern Greuthungi had a tribal king, *þiudans*, in the classical sense of *rex* or βασιλεύς.³⁶ So, in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus, before the year 376 the Goths had *kindins* Athanaric, *reiks* Fritigern and Alavivus, *þiudans* of the Greuthungi Vithericus, and some Greuthungi war leaders, Alatheus, Saphrax, and Farnobius. After they crossed the Danube and fought with the Romans, however, the social structure and leadership of the Gothic people changed.

As Peter Heather points out, we never again hear about the Gothic leaders involved in the battle of Adrianople.³⁷ They may have been killed in combat, or emperor Theodosius I may have refused to negotiate with them in 382 when the *foedus* between the Goths and the Romans was made. In the early 390s, we know of two Gothic leaders associated with Theodosius I, the traditionalist Eriulph and pro-Roman Fravitta. They probably

³⁵ Wolfram (1988: 14; 42 and 97). For an essential idea of what a barbarian tribe looked like at the time of the Migration period, see Wenskus (1961). A newer perspective is in Goetz (2003: 598–622). See also Geary (2002). An extreme view is presented by Amory (1997: 40–42 and 95–102). He believes that the Ostrogoths brought by king Theoderic the Great to Italy in the 490s were predominantly a band of male warriors, with a bare minimum of women and children.

³⁶ Wolfram (1988: 96–114). The reconstruction of Gothic society into *kunja* clans led by *reiks* chieftains is purely Wolfram's creation. It is difficult to confirm from written or archaeological sources. We could look at the usage of these titles. The Goths called Jesus Christ or the Roman emperors *þiudans* and, in Wulfila's Bible for Pontius Pilate, the title of *kindins* is used. Wolfram's hypothesis of the Gothic elites is supported by Roman sources, which reflect the peculiar status of the leaders of the Thervingi. They are called *iudex* or δικαστής, and not *rex* (Amm. XXXI, 3, 4; Ambr. *Spir.* I, prolog. 17 [according to Faber (2010: 160), the anonymous *iudex regum* mentioned by Saint Ambrose is Athanaric]; Them. *Or.* X, 134). For more about Athanaric's titulature, see Faber (2010: 158–163) or Wolfram (1975). The only text depicting the life of ordinary Goths on the other side of the Danube is the hagiography of St. Saba (*Pass. S. Sab.*). Gothic society of the 4th century is also the subject of Heather, Matthews (2004). The structure of Germanic society is also discussed in Pohl (2004: 65–85). When we are talking about Germanic society, it should be noted here that we today identify the Goths as Germanic people on the basis of their language. The Gothic is the only attested East Germanic language. The Germans were not at that time an ethnic group as we understand it today (Goffart 2006: 40–55; Halsall 2014 and Steinacher 2021). In Late Antiquity the Goths were never labelled by the Romans as Germanic people. They even represented a different and equivalent "ethnic" group as we can see in Procop. *Vand.* I, 2, 1.

³⁷ Heather (1996: 137 and 2017: 221).

ruled the Gothic *foederati* settled in *Moesia II*, and they visited the emperor in Constantinople and attended his banquets. At one such feast, Fravitta murdered Eriulph but he had to leave the Goths and went to the Roman Orient (Eunap. fr. 59 [Blockley] and Zos. IV, 56, 3).³⁸ Thus, another generation of Gothic leaders disappeared, and in 394 the Goths were taking orders from Alaric and Gainas, who led them not as tribal chieftains, but as Roman officers.

The position of Alaric before his revolt in 395 is recorded in the histories of Socrates Scholasticus and Zosimus. Socrates wrote his history in Constantinople in 439/440, and Zosimus created his *New History* shortly after the year 500 in the same place.³⁹ Neither of them was a contemporary of Alaric, but Zosimus copied from the work of Eunapius of Sardis preserved only in fragments, who recorded in his book the period 270 to 404. So, we shall look at what the two historians have to say about Alaric's early career:

Ἀλάριχος γάρ τις βάρβαρος, ὑπόσπονδος ὦν Ῥωμαίοις καὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ Θεοδοσίῳ εἰς τὸν κατὰ Εὐγενίου τοῦ τυράννου πόλεμον συμμαχήσας καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Ῥωμαϊκῆ ἀξία τιμηθεῖς, οὐκ ἤγγεκεν τὴν εὐτυχίαν. (Socr. Sch. *Hist. eccl.* VII, 10, 1)

Socrates then talks about Alaric's revolt, the migration of his people, the invasion of Italy, the elevation of Priscus Attalus, and the sack of Rome. Yet this chapter is the only one where Alaric is mentioned. Zosimus, on the other hand, speaks of Alaric many times in the fifth and sixth books of his *New History*. In his first mention of Alaric, Zosimus mentions his role in the campaign against Eugenius in 394:

... Ἀλάριχον (ἠγανάκτηε γὰρ ὅτι μὴ στρατιωτικῶν ἠγείτο δυνάμεων ἀλλὰ μόνους εἶχε τοὺς βαρβάρους, οὓς Θεοδόσιος ἔτυχεν αὐτῷ παραδοῦς ὅτε σὺν αὐτῷ τὴν Εὐγενίου τυραννίδα καθεῖλε) ... (Zos. V, 5, 4)

Both authors agree that Alaric took part in the campaign against the usurper Eugenius and his *magister militum* Arbogast, who were defeated by Theodosius' forces at the battle of Frigidus in September 394. Subsequently, the army remained in Italy, where Theodosius died in January 395. His military commander, Stilicho, then sent part of the army, including the Goths, home to the east, where Alaric and his men rebelled. But that is no longer part of this research.

Let us take a look at the leadership structure and organisation of Theodosius' army in his campaign against Eugenius. The emperor marched with the imperial army,⁴⁰ in

³⁸ Both Eunapius and, from him, Zosimus, refer to the two Gothic leaders as ἡγεμόν. Historians agree that they were Gothic noblemen who became Roman military officers thanks to *foedus* of 382 (Heather 1996: 143; Wolfram 1988: 146–147; Kulikowski 2007: 156; Williams, Friell 1994: 101). Eriulph was probably murdered in 391/392, and Theodosius I subsequently promoted Fravitta to the post of *magister militum per Orientem*. He even became the Roman *consul* for the year 401. Later, however, he was assassinated because of political disputes at the court of the emperor Arcadius. For more about Fravitta's career, see Elton (1996a: 95–106).

³⁹ An analysis of these authors and their works can be found in Blockley (1981); Marasco (2003); Treadgold (2007); Urbainczyk (1997).

⁴⁰ At the end of the 19th century, a Roman military cemetery dating to the end of the 4th century was discovered near Portogruaro (ancient Iulia Concordia). The tombstone inscriptions of the buried soldiers show that these soldiers were members of units that, according to the *Notitia dignitatum*, were placed under the command of the eastern *magistri militum praesentales*. For more see Hoffmann (1963).

time of peace stationed in Hebdomon near Constantinople, and Gothic *foederati* from *Moesia II*. The commanders whom Theodosius took with him to accompany him on the campaign are mentioned by Zosimus:

κεφάλαιον δὲ τῆς παρασκευῆς, ὡσπερ οὖν ἔστιν, οἰόμενος εἶναι τὴν τῶν στρατηγῶν αἴρεσιν, τῶν μὲν Ῥωμαϊκῶν στρατοπέδων ἔταξεν ἡγεῖσθαι Τιμάσιον καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ Στελίχωνα (συνῴκει δὲ οὗτος Σερῆνῃ Θεοδοσίου τοῦ βασιλέως ἀδελφοῦ θυγατρὶ), τοὺς δὲ συμμαχοῦντας αὐτῷ βαρβάρους ὑπὸ Γαῖνῃ ἔταξε καὶ Σαοῦλ. ἐκοινωνεὶ δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῖς καὶ Βακούριος, ἔλκων μὲν ἐξ Ἀρμενίας τὸ γένος, ἔξω δὲ πάσης κακοηθείας ἀνὴρ μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τὰ πολεμικὰ πεπαιδευθῆναι. (Zos. IV, 57, 2–3)

As we can see, emperor Theodosius I put Timasius, an experienced soldier already serving under the emperor Valens, in charge. He most likely held the post of *magister equitum et peditum*.⁴¹ Second-in-command was the husband of Theodosius' daughter and later supreme commander in the Roman West, Stilicho. At that time, he most likely held the position of *magister militum per Thracias*.⁴² The *foederati*, including the Goths, were under the joint command of Gainas, Saul, and Bacurius. Alaric is not mentioned among them. His participation in the battle is mentioned by both authors only in later chapters, which are devoted specifically to Alaric and are no longer concerned with the campaign against Eugenius and Arbogast. Gainas was of Gothic origin, and Saul was probably an Alan. Both, according to the assumptions of historians, held the title of *comes rei militaris*.⁴³ The more interesting character is Bacurius. He came from Caucasian Iberia and Zosimus mistook him for an Armenian.⁴⁴ Already an experienced Roman officer, he held the rank of *tribunus* at the battle of Adrianople in 378 and commanded there a unit of mounted archers called *Schola scutariorum sagittariorum*.⁴⁵ During Theodosius' reign, he was a military governor in the Roman Middle East holding the post of *dux Palaestinae* and because of the campaign to Italy, he was presumably given the rank of *magister militum uacans* by the emperor.⁴⁶ We can assume from the analysis of the

⁴¹ PLRE I: 914 (Flavius Timasius).

⁴² PLRE I: 854 (Flavius Stilicho). See Leppin (2003: 213–215); Williams, Friell (1994: 132).

⁴³ For Gainas see PLRE I: 379 (Gainas). In 399, shortly before his death, he was made *magister utriusque militiae*. For Saul see PLRE I: 809 (Saul) and PLRE II: 981 (Saul). Once, however, Saul is probably referred to as a *praefectus gentis*, but he is not mentioned by name (Claud. *Get.* 580–583). For this designation see Bachrach (1973: 37) and Lotter, Bratož, Castritius (2003: 86), since the authors of PLRE only presume that he was *comes rei militaris*.

⁴⁴ Other sources regarding the origin of Bacurius are Rufin. *Hist.* X, 11; Socr. *Sch. Hist. eccl.* I, 20, 20; Amm. XXXI, 12, 16. The Kingdom of Iberia was located in today's Georgia. Originally, this state was a client kingdom of the Roman Republic, but after the catastrophe of the eastern campaign of Julian the Apostate in 363, the kingdom fell into the Persian sphere of influence. For a history of this kingdom, see Braund (1994) and Schleicher (2021).

⁴⁵ According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Bacurius and Cassius were commanders of the cavalry units *Schola scutariorum sagittariorum* and *Schola scutariorum prima* (Amm. XXXI, 12, 16), which were parts of the elite imperial guards *Scholae palatinae*. The battle of Adrianople was started by a sudden attack by these units. For more about the *scholae scutariorum* units, see Southern, Dixon (1996: 56) and Negin, D'Amato (2018: 27–29).

⁴⁶ Bacurius acting as *dux Palaestinae* is attested in Rufin. *Hist.* X, 11 and Socr. *Sch. Hist. eccl.* I, 20, 20. For his position as *magister militum uacans* in the campaign of 394, see Burns (1994: 106). The *magistri militum uacantes* did not have permanent command of military forces in larger regions, but probably commanded medium-sized army units or were appointed by the emperor for the purposes of par-

sources that during the battle of Frigidus in 394 Alaric was probably a direct subordinate of the Gothic *comes* Gainas.

There is a different attitude towards the barbarian *foederati* – σύμμαχοι during the 4th century and in the 5th century. In the 5th century, the *foederati* were already forming semi-independent or fully independent units and their own kingdoms, and they could support Roman military efforts at the request of the Roman government. During the 4th century, however, they were more commonly barbarian military units incorporated into the regular Roman army.⁴⁷ Commanders of barbarian origin did not necessarily command units composed of members of their own tribe. Even barbarian *optimates* and royalty served in the regular and more common Roman posts and were rarely associated with their people.⁴⁸ The Gothic commander Gainas was probably no nobleman, and only Jordanes speaks about the nobility of Alaric in the 550s (Iord. *Get.* 29, 146). Commanders also did not need to have a kinship with their men. Alaric later ruled a group consisting of the Thervingi, Greuthungi, and the Goths of Radagaisus. When Gainas revolted against Constantinople in 399, he relied on the Greuthungi, whose ruler formerly was the king Odotheus, though he was probably a Therving.⁴⁹

After this detour describing the Gothic society and structure of the Roman army in the 4th century, we can return to Alaric. His power even among the Goths was based on the support of the Roman authorities. He was most likely not a member of any Gothic dynasty or a descendant of any previous ruler of the Thervingi.⁵⁰ Alaric was appointed to the command of one of the groups of Goths by either the *magister militum* Stilicho, the *comes* Gainas or directly by emperor Theodosius. At least this was the practice of the

tical campaigns. The careers of Bacurius and other Roman military officers of Iberian origin are analysed by Woods (1996).

⁴⁷ More about *foederati* in the late Roman army in: Elton (1996b: 91–94); Heather (1997); Scharf (2001); Southern, Dixon (1996: 48–50 and 71–72); Stickler (2007).

⁴⁸ Hoffmann (1978) and Wijnendaele (2022). For the study of Germanic (Alemannic) warriors serving as Roman officers, see Drinkwater (2007: 145–176). The cases are documented of Frankish king Mallobaudes and Alemannic king Vadomarius who were Roman officers. Also, we have the Burgundian Hariulfus and Bacurius from Iberia who were members of royal families. In the 4th century, the barbarian royalty reached at most the position of provincial governor and Bacurius probably became *magister militum uacans*. The anonymous reviewer argued that the barbarian kings serving in the Roman army in the 4th century were a rare phenomenon, but according to the author, the four cases mentioned above suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, the idea here remains that the barbarian kings and members of royal families, such as Mallobaudes and Bacurius, at this time did not command tribal auxiliaries, but aspired to ordinary and regular Roman military and administrative posts.

⁴⁹ King of the Grothingi (Γροθίγγοι) Odotheus invaded the Roman Empire in 386 and was promptly defeated at the shores of the Danube (Zos. IV, 35, 1 and 38, 1). However, Zosimus does not further discuss the fate of his people. Claudian, on the contrary, states that certain *Gruthingi* were settled in Phrygia (Claud. *In Eutr.* II, 153–159 and 196–197). From this, we may conclude that the Goths who revolted in the province of *Phrygia II* were Odotheus' Greuthungi (Heather 1996: 144). We do not know much about Gainas' origin. Zosimus states that he came from across the Danube (Zos. V, 21, 9), and Sozomen claims that he was relative (γένοϋς) of the commander of the Phrygian Goths Tribigild (Soz. *Hist. eccl.* VIII, 4, 2). It is difficult to determine whether he was born into the tribe of the Thervingi or the Greuthungi. According to Wolfram (1988: 138–139 and 148), Gainas was a Therving.

⁵⁰ There are theories that Alaric may have been a relative or descendant of one of the chieftains of the Thervingi. According to Wolfram (1988: 144), Alaric's father could have been Alavivus, who together with Fritigern led the Goths across the Danube, but was murdered by the Romans. García Moreno (2017: 18), however, considers Alaric to be the son of the Thervingi ruler Athanaric. These assumptions are made on the basis of Jordanes' claim that Alaric was part of the noble family of the Balthei and on the alliteration of the names Athanaric/Alavivus – Alaric.

4th century. Through the violence of 391 (Claud. *Get.* 524 and *VI Hon.* 107–108), Alaric attempted to gain respect and recognition among the Goths. Similarly, the fact that he was the leader of the Gothic revolt in 395 comes not so much from his position within the Gothic tribe, but from the promotions and changes among the Roman military commanders after the death of Theodosius I. Stilicho stayed in Italy and took command of the western army with the new rank of *magister utriusque militiae*. Gainas remained in the rank of *comes rei militaris* but seized command of the eastern army and led it back home.⁵¹ This vacated the position of commander of the Gothic *foederati* and so Alaric succeeded Gainas in this post. However, a Gothic revolt broke out immediately in 395.

Alaric can be considered the new man.⁵² In the days of the Roman Republic, he would have been called *homo nouus* and, some centuries later, Alaric would be regarded as having risen from the ranks. Like Gainas, he probably began his career in the Roman army as a common soldier. Jordanes' later reports of his noble origin can be disregarded. The dynasty of Balthi, if it existed at all, was formed during the reign of the Visigothic king Theoderic I in the first half of the 5th century. Alaric could thus be considered the ancestor of this dynasty.⁵³ After all, Jordanes does not mention any ancestors of Alaric.⁵⁴ The original tribal leaders of the Thervingi and Greuthungi disappeared after 378. Eriulph was murdered in 391/392 and Fravitta was removed away from the Goths to Syria. The leadership among the Goths was thus empty.⁵⁵ The military officer Alaric could thus fill this empty space with Roman support.

Whom, however, could the Romans choose to command the Gothic auxiliaries? True to the *diuide et impera* policy, the Romans apparently tried to choose their own candidate, and by the 390s were no longer considering the original tribal society of the Goths. Some contemporary historians believe that as early as 376, the imperial government tried to eliminate the Gothic tribal structure and divide or assimilate the incoming Goths.⁵⁶ The tribal leaders were gone and Rome had a free hand to choose new leaders. The imperial government reached for Roman-Gothic soldiers, whom it expected to maintain loyalty and trusted them to lead their men effectively according to their experience in the Roman

⁵¹ Eunap. fr. 62 [Blockley]; Ioh. Ant. fr. 213 and 215 [Mariev]; Iord. *Rom.* 319; Marcell. *Chron.* 395, 5; Oros. *Hist.* VII, 37, 1; Philost. *Hist. eccl.* XI, 3 and 8; Zos. IV, 59, 1 and V, 7.

⁵² Boin (2020: 16–50); Kulikowski (2007: 161); Mestek (2021: 83–85).

⁵³ Since according to Sidon. *Carm.* VII, 505 Theoderic II, the son of Theoderic I, claimed to be a grandson of the man who plundered Rome, we can suppose that Theoderic I married a daughter of Alaric. The dynasty of Balthi ruled the Goths and was acknowledged during the era of Theoderic I and his sons and grandsons (418–531). During Alaric's lifetime, however, the idea of the Goths being ruled by a royal family does not seem to have existed. Alaric's successors (Athaulf, Sigeric, Wallia, and Theoderic I) were not part of his bloodline, but Theoderic I's marriage to his daughter may have cemented his leadership over the Goths. Kinship with Alaric later seemed to have mattered for Theoderic I's family, but we cannot regard Alaric himself as a dynastic king.

⁵⁴ Jordanes tells us that the Balthi dynasty is the second most noble of the Goths after the Ostrogothic family of the Amals (Iord. *Get.* 29, 146). Unlike the Balthi, however, in Jordanes' text, the Amals have an extensive genealogy going back to their legendary demigod ancestors (Iord. *Get.* 14, 79–81). For more about Jordanes' concept of the Balthi dynasty, see Christensen (2002: 226 and 320–323).

⁵⁵ The present author does not want to imply that the Goths living in Roman territory were having unified leadership during the years 376 to 395. After Alaric's departure to the West, some Goths probably remained in Thrace. It is essential, that prior to Alaric's emergence, other known leaders of the Goths had either been removed or disappeared.

⁵⁶ Wolfram (1988: 119); Heather (2007: 182); Burns (1994: 23–26).

army. This is apparently how Gainas and Alaric became the leaders of the Gothic *foederati*. Only the following years showed how wrong the Romans were about both of them.

Thus, Alaric may indeed have been a Roman soldier of Gothic origin who had been born in the territory of the Roman Empire. The Goths had served in the Roman army since the time of the Severan dynasty.⁵⁷ We know that in 376 when the Thervingi and Greuthungi crossed the Danube, a Gothic military unit was already stationed in Adrianople (Amm. XXXI, 6, 1). The Gothic auxiliaries supported the usurper Procopius against the emperor Valens in 365 (Amm. XXVI, 10, 3). It can also be assumed that a considerable number of the Goths were in the units of the *Scholae palatinae* and also in the fortresses along the Danube. Nevertheless, Noel Lenski believes that emperor Valens' ability to recruit the Gothic warriors into the Roman army was severely limited, especially because of his war against them in 367–369.⁵⁸ However, there must have been some Goths in the ranks of the Roman army in the Balkans during Valens' reign.

Is there any evidence to prove the presence of Goths in the province of *Scythia Minor* at the time of Alaric's birth? There are only a few pieces, and they are indirect. From the inscription found in Carcaliu, we know that in the 340s the military commander of *Scythia Minor* was a man named Sappo (*CIL* III, 12483). He was titled *uir perfectissimus* and *dux limitis Scythiae*, and he was engaged in fortification work because of the dangers posed by the Goths. His name is not Roman and he was most probably a Goth.⁵⁹ His existence suggests the presence of the Goths in the province's military structures at least during the reign of emperor Constantius II. A later inscription from Cius (today's Gârliciu) dated 368/369, shows that the emperor Valens and his *dux Scythiae* Flavius Stercorius were again concerned with fortifying the Scythian province (*CIL* III, 6159).⁶⁰ A new fortress (*burgus*) was built in Cius by the military unit *milites Primani*. Due to the increasing military presence in *Scythia Minor*, some Goths may have been recruited by Valens to garrison the newly built fortresses. In the early 370s, another *dux Scythiae* Iunius Soranus, probably Stercorius' successor, accepted the remains of the Gothic martyr Saba and several Christian Gothic refugees seeking asylum from the persecution of Christians in the land of the Goths (*Pass. S. Sab.* 8).⁶¹

These references and inscriptions prove the presence of the Goths in the province of *Scythia Minor* at the time Alaric was born. His father could have been one of the Gothic Christian refugees or a soldier garrisoned in the fortresses on the Lower Danube. Corresponding to this is the observation of the sources that Alaric himself was a devout Chris-

⁵⁷ According to the inscription from the Roman fortress of Motha (today's Imtan in southern Syria), there had been Gothic soldiers in the Roman army since 208 (*AE* 1911: 57, n. 244). They were probably members of the *Gentiles* units formed by the emperor Septimius Severus on the Lower Danube (Speidel 1977: 713). The presence of Gothic auxiliaries in the Roman army as early as the 3rd century is further commemorated by a Persian inscription in Naqsh-e Rostam from 262. It proclaims that in 244, at the battle of Misikhe, the Persian king Shapur I defeated an army composed of the Romans, Germans, and Goths (Daryaee 2009: 7 and *Res gestae divi Saporis* 6–9).

⁵⁸ Lenski (2002: 317–319). On the contrary, Burns (1994: 9 and 16) thinks that in 365, the emperor Valens replenished the garrisons of the Danubian fortresses from the captured Gothic supporters of the usurper Procopius.

⁵⁹ Wiewiorowski (2008: 36–37).

⁶⁰ Poulter (2007b: 37).

⁶¹ For more about *dux* Soranus and the Gothic Christians, see Heather, Matthews (2004: 102–114); Lenski (2002: 119); Wolfram (1988: 83).

tian.⁶² His mother could have been a Goth or a Roman. This would make him similar to Flavius Stilicho, whose father was from the Vandal tribe and whose mother was a Roman. Thus, Claudian's verse mentioning that Alaric was born on the island of Peuce need not be dismissed as mere poetic license. Between 365 and 370, when Alaric was born, there must have been some Goths in the province of *Scythia Minor*, where Peuce Island was located, and the Goths around 395 no longer needed to have a leader according to their old tribal traditions. They were ready to accept a new generation of war leaders who could lead them successfully through the Roman world. Of course, it would be pointless to try to find specific place of Alaric's birth in one of the fortresses of Peuce, Halmyris, Salsovia, or Gratiana. However, it is a better option than looking for Alaric's origin among the *reiks* of the Thervingi tribe on the other side of the Danube. The leader of Gothic invaders probably came from one of Roman military bases in the Danube Delta.

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⁶² Alaric as a Christian (though an Arian) is portrayed mainly by Paulus Orosius. In his work we can find that in 402 at the battle of Pollentia the Goths originally did not want to fight because they were celebrating Easter and the battle was started by the pagan Alans fighting on the Roman side (Oros. *Hist.* VII, 37, 2). Later during the sack of Rome in 410 Alaric ordered his men to leave the Christian holy sites unharmed (Oros. *Hist.* VII, 39, 1). Orosius thus clearly puts Alaric in contrast to the pagan king Radagaisus who in turn was planning to sacrifice all the Romans to pagan gods (Oros. *Hist.* VII, 37, 5). Even Augustine wrote that Alaric (mentioned only as *dux barbarorum*) respected Christian temples as safe sanctuaries (Aug. *Civ.* I, 2).

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PŮVOD GÓTSKÉHO VŮDCE ALARICHA: MEZI CLAUDIANEM A ZÓSIMEM

Alarich je často chápán jako vládce kmene Vizigótů, a to od roku 395 až do své smrti roku 410. Před svým povstáním proti Římu sám sloužil v římské armádě a zúčastnil se v roce 394 tažení proti uzurpátorovi Eugeniovi a Arbogastovi. Jeho ranou kariéru zmiňuje ve svém díle Zósimos. Avšak Alarichův původ stále zůstává zahalen tajemstvím. V polovině 6. století Iordanes psal o jeho vznešeném původu a o tom, že byl členem vizigótské dynastie Balthů. Kvůli tomu někteří historici hledali Alarichův původ mezi náčelníky a velmoži gótského kmene Tervingů. Ze starších autorů pouze Claudianus ve svých verších zmiňuje Alarichovo narození. Tento článek tak zkoumá Alarichův původ a vnitřní vztahy mezi Góty žijícími na římském území. Alarich byl pravděpodobně spjat s římskou armádou více, než je na první pohled zřejmé. Gótský velitel zřejmě nebyl potomkem žádných urozených rodičů a na základě básnických děl Alarichových současníků můžeme hledat místo jeho narození na dunajském ostrově Peuké. Pokud s těmito zprávami budeme dále pracovat, je možné hledat Alarichův původ mezi gótskými vojáky sloužícími v římských dunajských pevnostech.

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