Who were the Goths?

The Goths were a number of Germanic tribes in the Migration Period, which appeared in written history in the third century in the areas north of the Black Sea between the rivers Danube and Don. Except for frequent raids they invaded the Roman Empire first time in 268 AD, and later in 376 AD. The Western Goths settled a few years in the Garonne valley in France, until they conquered a kingdom, which included Spain and the South of France. In France they were displaced by the Franks after a few years, and Spain was in 711 AD conquered by Muslim invaders - but the Goths descendants took the country back in the Middle Ages. The Eastern Goths established a thriving kingdom in Italy, but after only 67 years, they were defeated by armies sent by the emperor in Constantinople.
However, it did not last forever. From ancientweb.org.
Right: An artistic reconstruction of the Western Goths in battle with Attila's Huns at Chalons. From ancientweb.org.

When the first Goths arrived at the northern coast of the Black Sea about 170 AD, the climate was still influenced by the Roman Warm Period, which, however, ended about 400 AD. The Vandals crossed the frozen Rhine new year's eve 406 AD, thus commencing the Migration time and heralding the downfall of the Western Roman Empire. The fact that the Rhine was frozen, testifies to a rather cold climate. I do not recall the Rhine has been frozen in modern times. From then on, until the disaster at Guadatea in Spain in 711 AD, when the Western Goths were defeated by invading Muslims, the climate was cold with snowy winters in northern and central Europe.

Goths can be traced further back in history to today's northern Poland, and even in the distant past to their origins in Scandinavia and the Baltic area. Thus Jutland through thousand years was called Gotland.

Paul the Deacon tells about how the Langobards migrated from their original island in the ocean: "Now when the people living there had multiplied to such a number that they could no longer live together, they divided, it is told, their whole people into three parts and decided by casting lots, which of those, who were to leave the homeland and seek new places of residence." Dudo confirmed many years later that it was a traditional way of solving problems of overpopulation in Scandinavia.

Also, the Gotland Gute Saga says that some of the people were taken for emigration by casting lot: "After a long time the people were so increased that the country was not able to feed them all. So the land was distributed, on which every third tilled, each of these were allowed to keep and bring and take away everything, which he in his life had acquired."

Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) wrote: "Pytheas says that the Gutones, a people of Germania, inhabits the shores of an estuary of the Ocean called Mentmonom, their territory extending a distance of six thousand stadia; that, at one day's sail from this territory, is the Isle of Abalus, upon the shores of which, amber is thrown up by the waves in spring, it being an excretion of the sea in a concrete form; as, also, that the inhabitants use this amber by way of fuel, and sell it to their neighbours, the Teutones."

Plinius wrote: "Pytheas says that the Gutones, a people of Germany, inhabit the shores of an estuary of the Ocean called Mentonomon, their territory extending a distance of six thousand stadia." Other ancient writers also believed that the Baltic Sea and inner Danish waters was a major estuary. Procopius wrote about the returning Heruls: "After these they passed by the nations of the Danu, without suffering violence at the hands of the barbarians there. Coming thence to the ocean, they took to the sea, and putting in at Thule, remained there on the island." - "And one of their most numerous nations is the Gauthi, and it was opposite (next to?) them that the incoming Eruli settled at the time in question."
We must believe that Procopius shared the ancient authors believe that the Danish waters and the Baltic Sea was a large estuary, in which case it "opposite the Goths" can be understood: on the opposite side of the estuary. Alternatively, it should be translated "next to the Goths." However, in both cases, suggesting that the Heruls were not Goths.
There is some uncertainty about how long a stadium was, the proposals vary between 160 and 192 m. That means that the coast line, which was inhabited by Gutones, was between 960 and 1.152 km. long. That gives a range from Skagen to the Vistula estuary at Gdansk.

It suits very well with that the Jutland peninsula before the Viking Age was called Gotland, as it is the case in Ottar's travelogue, added in Alfred the Great's translation of Orosius' Roman history from about 850 AC: "When he sailed there from Skiringssal (at Oslo), Denmark was on the port side and to starboard for three days was the open sea. And then, two days before he came to Hedeby, Gotland was to starboard (hym was on þeot steorborg Gotland), and Sillende and many islands. The Angles dwelt in that area before they came here to this land."

Since the area was inhabited by Gutones in time before Christ - according to Pytheas - and as part of it still was called Gotland 800-900 AD, it is reasonable to assume that at least the coast along Kattegat and the Baltic Sea were the Goth's original homeland.

Ottar's and Wulfstan's travels according to additions in Alfred the Great's translation of Orosius' Roman history. Both Jutland and the island in the Baltic Sea are called Gotland. (The island of Gotland is not shown on this map).

That will indicate that Cimbri, Teutons, Angles and all other tribes, who lived along this coastline, and whose names we are not sure about, all originally have thought of themselves as kinds of Goths speaking the same language, namely Gothic.

Some believe that the Gutones on the densely populated Jutland east coast very early crossed the Kattegat and gradually populated West and East Gota Land - and from there the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea.

In Alfred the Great's translation of Orosius' Roman history is also added Wulfstan's travel report from a voyage from Hedeby to Truso in Vistula's delta from about 850 AC, which reads: "Wulfstan said that he traveled from Hedeby, and that he was in Truso in seven days and nights, and that the ship all the way went under sail. Wendland was on his starboard side and to port, he had Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Scania. These countries all belong to Denmark. So we had Bornholm to port, and they have their own king. So after Bornholm we had the countries named first Blekinge, More, Oland and Gotland to port (and Gotland on bæcbord), and these countries belong to the Swedes. And we had Wendland to starboard all the way to the Vistula river mouth." By Gotland is here obviously meant the island of Gotland or maybe the coast of Eastern Götaland.

Ptolemy placed the people Goutai on the island of Skandia and the Gudones by the Vistula river.

Left: Gothic cross found in Spain perhaps from 700's. From pinterest.
Right: Right and left side of a lance head with runic inscription found near Kovel in the Northwest corner of Ukraine. The runic inscription to be read from right to left. "Tilharids". It has been identified as likely East Germanic, most likely Gothic because of the nominative s-suffix. It is from the beginning of third century. From Wikipedia.
hand upon the reins closes somewhat tighter here than among the other tribes of Germans, but not so tight yet as to destroy freedom. Then immediately following them and on the ocean are the Rugii and Lemovii. The distinguishing features of all these tribes are round shields, short swords, and a submissive bearing before their kings." This means that Gotones, who was ruled by a powerful king, lived north or northeast of the Lugii and further inland than the Rugii and Lemovii, which he explicitly stated as residing at the sea. Perhaps Gotones lived at the Vistula river.

Jordanes located the peoples Ostro-Goths, Ewa-Greutingis and Gaiti-Goths on the island of Scandia. Gauti-Goths were "a race of men bold and quick to fight", he wrote, and further, "But still another race dwells there, the Sweans, who like the Thuringos, having splendid horses." With the term "another race" he must have meant that they were not Goths. "All these nation surpassed the Germans in size and spirit, and fought with the cruelty of wild beasts", he concluded the description of the peoples on the Scandinavian peninsula.

He mentions different tribes of Goths, who lived on the island of Skandia, including Greutingis and Ostro-Goths, which names we later recognize for Gothic peoples on the Danube and in Italy. This makes it likely that it is true that the Goths, who attacked the Roman Empire, originally came from Scandinavia and the coasts of the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, there are several areas of southern Scandinavia, which have been called, or still are named as Gotland with different spellings, which also support the theory that this region was the original homeland of the Goths. In his report on the Gothic war in Italy Procopius mentions the Rugi, as part of the Goths in Italy; they are also referred to by Jordanes as one of Skandia's indigenous tribes. They are also mentioned in other ancient sources.
Pollen analysis from Abkjær Mose at Vojens. It appears that forest, especially beech, increases sharply and herbs typical of open land, grass and heather decrease immediately after the migration time around 500 AD indicating that the forest returned to areas that previously were pastures for cattle. Similar studies in other parts of the country show the same pattern. It is reasonable to interpret that this could be due to emigration.

Also Procopius report on the returning Heruls suggests that Scandinavia was quite thinly populated. For how could they just "settle down", as if they came to an untouched prairie? If not the country had been relatively sparsely populated. However, when large parts of the original population had turned their back to good pastures, it may not only have been hunger and misery that drove them to emigrate.

It is known that for several hundred years of late Imperial time the Roman legions were mostly populated with various Germanic soldiers, since the Roman Empire's own citizens did not seem to have been suitable. You could say that every Roman legion was a sort of Foreign Legion, in which also many young men from the South Scandinavian region must have served. Therefore the tribes around the Baltic Sea may have concluded that they were the best and the bravest - and therefore deserved to rule. Such attitudes among the Germanic tribes were most likely critical to the doom of the Western Roman empire.

All these ancient authors wrote before official correct spelling was invented; they wrote in different languages with different alphabets and over a period of several hundred years. They reproduced words for Goths that often for them were in an unfamiliar language, besides most likely Gothic by this time had already developed in several dialects. It is quite understandable that they spelled it in so many different ways, and we do not have to connect any deeper meaning in the different spellings.

Like other Germanic peoples the Goths lived spread out over farmland in small villages with each maybe about 8-10 houses and farms.

In Book III of Justinian's wars Procopius wrote about the Goths' early history: "Now while Honorius was holding the imperial power in the West, barbarians took possession of his land; and I shall tell, who they were and in what manner, they did so."

http://www.dandebat.dk/eng-dk-historie12.htm
There were many Gothic nations in earlier times, just as also at the present, but the greatest and most important of all are the Goths, Vandals, Visigoths, and Gepaedes. In ancient times, however, they were named Sauromatae and Melanchlaeni; and there were some too, who called these nations Getic. All these, while they are distinguished from one another by their names, as has been said, do not differ in anything else at all. For they all have white bodies and fair hair, and are tall and handsome to look upon, and they use the same laws and practise a common religion. For they are all of the Arian faith, and have one language called Gothic; and, as it seems to me, they all came originally from one tribe, and were distinguished later by the names of those who led each group."

Procopius is undoubtedly correct that most Germanic migrations peoples were a kind of Goths; they resembled each other and spoke largely the same language. But then they must originally had come from the same tribe, as he wrote. That is, we must believe that they all came more or less directly from the original Gothic area along the Baltic Sea, the Danish waters and from the southern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Procopius believed that also the Vandals and Gepids were kinds of Goths, although they were not generally named as such.

Moreover, in Denmark are clear indications of a big drop in population density in Germanic Iron Age relative to the Roman Iron Age, which indicate a considerable migration.

Gothic Language

| Atta unsar þu in himinam, |
| Fader vor du i himlen. |
| Father our, you in heaven, |
| Weihtai namo þein. |
| Helligt være navnet dit. |
| hallowed be the name yours, |
| Qimai þuðinassus þeins. |
| (lad) Komme kongeriget dit. |
| (let) come kingdom yours. |
| Wairþai wilja þeins, |
| (lad) ske viljen din, |
| (let) be done will yours, |
| swe in himina jah ana airþai. |
| Som i himlen og på jorden. |
| As in heaven and on earth. |
| Hlað usarsana þana sinteanan gif uns himma daga. |
| brød vort dette daglig giv os (i) disse dage. |
| bread our daily give us in these days. |
| Jah aﬂat uns þatei skulans sijaima, |
| og forlad os hvilken skyl d v Påtte være (have). |
| And forgive us which guilt we may (have). |
| Swaswe jah weis aﬂetam þaim skulam unsaraim. |
| Sامت vi forlader skyldene vore. |
| And we forgive them that have guilt against us. |
| Jah ni briggais uns in fraistuniajai, |
| og ikke bring os in fristelse, |
| And not bring us into temptation. |
| ak lauset uns af þamma ubilin. |
| Men løs os fra det onde. |
| but deliver us from evil. |
| Unte þeina ist þjóðangardi jah mahs jah wulþus in aiwins. |
| thi dit er kongedømme og magt og herlighed i evighed. |
| For yours is kingdom and power and glory in eternity. |
| Amen. |
| Amen. |

In the Gothic Bible is a Lord's Prayer, as we well know.

Gothic, as spoken by both the Western as the Eastern Goths was a Germanic language closely connected to modern Scandinavian, German and English. Thanks to the Gothic Wulfila Bible, which was written in Italy in the sixth century and the Fleming Busbeccq's notes about his meeting with representatives of a small group of long surviving Goths in the Crimea, whom he met in Constantinople in the 16. century, we have a fairly good knowledge of the Gothic language.

The Gothic Bible is a translation from Greek to Gothic of the four Gospels in the New Testament, as well as a part of Paul's letters. It contains almost nothing of the Old Testament.

We recognize the majority of words from German and Scandinavian. **Atta** means father as in "æt", the old Danish word for family or lineage. **Unsar** we find the German "uns" (us). **þu** we find in Danish and German "du" and
Danish and German. In the first syllable of Weinai we recognize the German Weihnacht (Christmas Eve) Namø means "name" as in English and German and "navn" in Danish. Wilja svarer til "vilje" på dansk, "will" in English and "wille" in German. The preposition ana is corresponding to the German "an", which also has been used on Danish and is still in use in compound words and phrases as "anledning" (occasion), "angive" (inform) og "anliggende" (matter) as well as the English "on". Hlauf corresponds to "leve", an old Danish word for bread, as well as the English "loaf". Aflet og aflatam gives associations to the Dansih "aflede" (divert). Gif is equivalent to "giv" in Danish, "to give" in English and "geben" in German. Himma corresponds to the old Danish "hine" (these) daega corresponds to "dage" in Danish, "days" in English and "Tage" in German. Skulans means guilt, as a scowling ("skule" in Danish) person may look like a guilty person. Ak means "but", indicating that a traditional Danish or German exclamation of sorry "ak-ak" or "ach-ach" originally could have meant "but-but". Lausei correspond to the Danish "løse", German lösen and English "lose". Ubulin corresponds to "Übel" (evil) in German. Mahts corresponds to "magt" in Danish, "might" in English and "Macht" in German. Pjadian-gardi has two parts, the first one is something with piu, which is "king" in Gothic, and the other has to do with -gard, which is "gård" (farm) in Danish, geard in Old English and "gard" in Old Saxon - here it refers to a type of category.

The Gothic Bible also includes the Christmas story from Luke ch. 2: Warb þan in dagans jainans, urann gagretis fram kaisara Agustau, gameljan allana midjungard. Literal translation: It came to pass and in days those, (that) there went out decree from Caesar Augustus (that) should be taxed all (in) the world.

Extract from the list of words that the Fleming Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq heard from two representatives of the Goths on the Crimea during a dinner in Constantinople around 1560. See link below: Krimgotisk by Poul Erik Jørgensen.

Note that the word for world, midjungard, is very similar to the Scandinavian Midgard.

A page of the Wulfila Bible. It is also called "codex argenteus", which means "Silver Bible". It is believed that it was written for the Ostrogothic king of Italy, Theodoric the Great. Originally the Bible was translated from Greek to Gothic by Bishop Wulfila in the Balkans in the third century. It is written with the special Gothic alphabet, which was also created by Wulfila. It is called the silver bible, because it is written with ink, which contains silver and gold on costly thin parchment. It was originally stored in the
Benedictine monastery in Werden in Germany. It was looted by the Swedes in the Thirty Years' War, and after a turbulent period it ended up in the University Library in Uppsala in Sweden.

There are three genders in Gothic namely masculine, feminine and neuter, as in modern German and old Danish. There are two times, past and present, as well as four kasus, namely nominative, accusative, genitive and dative and also, of course, singular and plural.

In Crimea lived Goths until about the 16. century. The Flemish Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, who was ambassadør of the Holy Roman Empire in Constantinople 1560-62, has in his report provided us with knowledge of their language. He became aware that two representatives of the Goths on Crimea, whom he had heard of, were visiting Constantinople to present some cases for the Sultan. He managed to invite them to a dinner, during which he questioned them about their language and culture.

The definite article in Gothic was very similar to English. Busbecq told: "in front of all the words he put tho eller the".

In Danish we have retained the "sw" sound associated with sister in the names for the spouse familie, "svoger" (brother in-law), "svigerfar" (father in-law), "svigermor" (mother in-law) and "svigerfamilie" (family in-law).

The two Gothic representatives also told Busbecq several other words that were not so similar to Flemish and German.

It is seen that Gothic differs from Danish and other Germanic languages by a number of words ending with -a, giving the language an exotic southern touch. The famous king of the Ostro-Goths was for example called Totilla, and it sounds almost Mexican, at least Spanish. It is believed that this frequent -a ending was an abbreviation, which replaced older, longer and more laborious endings. It is very imaginable that Spanish and to some extent Italian have the frequent -a endings from Gothic. Jordanes, who himself was an Got, called occasionally the Heruls for "Erulos" which -os ending also sounds Spanish and Mediterranean, but Jordanes had never been to Spain, so it originates probably also from Gothic.

How did Goths look like?

The Roman writer and diplomat Sidonius Apollinaris described the Gothic king Theodoric in a letter to his brother in law Agricola:

"You have often begged a description of Theodoric, the Gothic king, whose gentle breeding fame commends to every nation; you want him in his quantity and quality, in his person, and the manner of his existence. I gladly accede, as far as the limits of my page allow, and highly approve so fine and ingenuous a curiosity."

Olof Palme as a young man - It is no easy task that Sidonius gives us. When we look around, we notice that short-skulled types with round heads may have stoop nose, and long-skulled types with narrow faces can have eagle nose. However, a short-skulled type with round head and eagle nose is almost an impossibility. Olof Palme seems to be little long-skulled, but not much, and has a slightly curved nose. Sidonius' Goths may have looked something like that.

"Well, he is a man worth knowing, even by those who cannot enjoy his close acquaintance, so happily

http://www.dandebat.dk/eng-dk-historie12.htm
have Providence and Nature joined to endow him with the perfect gifts of fortune; his way of life is such that not even the envy which lies in wait for kings can rob him of his proper praise. And first as to his person. He is well set up, in height above the average man, but below the giant. His head is round, with curled hair retreating somewhat from brow to crown. His nervous neck is free from disfiguring knots. The eyebrows are bushy and arched; when the lids droop, the lashes reach almost half-way down the cheeks. The upper ears are buried under overlying locks, after the fashion of his race. The nose is finely aquiline; the lips are thin and not enlarged by undue distension of the mouth. Every day the hair springing from his nostrils is cut back; that on the face springs thick from the hollow of the temples, but the razor has not yet come upon his cheek, and his barber is assiduous in eradicating the rich growth on the lower part of the face. Chin, throat, and neck are full, but not fat, and all of fair complexion; seen close, their colour is fresh as that of youth; they often flush, but from modesty, and not from anger. His shoulders are smooth, the upper- and forearms strong and hard; hands broad, breast prominent; waist receding. The spine dividing the broad expanse of back does not project, and you can see the springing of the ribs; the sides swell with salient muscle, the well-girt flanks are full of vigour. His thighs are like hard horn; the knee-joints firm and masculine; the knees themselves the comeliest and least wrinkled in the world. A full ankle supports the leg, and the foot is small to bear such mighty limbs."

He does not mention anything about how the rank and file Goths look like, but in the middle of the description he switches to plural; then we must believe that they have resembled their king.

In a letter to a senator named Catullinus Sidonius tells about how it felt like for a Roman to be surrounded by barbarians: "Why - even supposing I had the skill - do you bid me compose a song dedicated to Venus the lover of Fescennine (city in Etruria known for scurrilous and joking verses) mirth, placed as I am among long-haired hordes, having to endure German speech, praising oft with vry face the song of the gluttonous Burgundian who spreads rancid butter on his hair? Do you want me to tell you what Tecks all poetry? Driven away by barbarian thrumming the Muse has spurned the six-footed exercise ever since she beheld these patrons seven feet high. I am fain to call your eyes and ears happy, happy too your nose, for you don't have a reek of garlic and foul onions dis- charged upon you at early morning from ten breakfast, and you are not invaded even before dawn, like an old grandfather or a foster-father, by a crowd of giants, so many and so big that not even the kitchen of Alcinous could support them (Alcinous supplied Jason and the Argonauts with food on their return from Colchis)."

The drawing could imagine young Germans, who volunteer to serve in the Roman legions - Throughout the late Roman Empire the real Roman combat troops consisted of the Huns, Alans, Goths and other Germans. One could say that they were a kind of foreign legions. Units with soldiers recruiter within the Roman Empire were largely reduced to perform secondary tasks, such as guarding.

Sidonius says nothing about his Goths hair and eye color, so we can believe that it has been the usual in Gaul at this time. Maybe their hair had different medium and dark blonde shades, as is the case with many of today's Scandinavians. It is not because Sidonius was not interested in eye colors, it can be seen from one of his poems. But maybe he did not find it opportune to irritate the king by dwelling too much by the fact that many Goths had this unattractive blue eye color.

The Romans did not think that it was nice to have blue eyes. They often used the term "threatening
Sidonius was allowed to keep his estates after the Western Goths had taken over the South of France. In gratitude, he wrote a little poem to King Euric. He wrote it allegedly for his friend Lampridius, but certainly with the ulterior motive that he would show the poem to the King: "We see in his courts the blue-eyed Saxon, lord of the seas, but a timid landsman here. - We see thee, aged Sygambrian (poetic name for the Franks) warrior, the back of the head shaven in sign of thy defeat - Here strolls the Herulian with his glaucous cheeks, inhabitant of Ocean's furthest shore, and of a complexion with its weedy deeps. Here the Burgundian bends his seven feet of stature on supplicant knee, imploring peace. - And here, O Roman, thou also seest thy protection - ".

The reason why that perhaps not all Goths had blue eyes, we can find in Ammianus, who wrote about the Western Goths' initial looting in Thrace a few hundred years before: "For without distinction of age or sex all places were ablaze with slaughter and great fires, sucklings were torn from the very breasts of their mothers and slain, matrons and widows, whose husbands had been killed before their eyes, were carried off, boys of tender or adult age were dragged away over the dead bodies of their parents. Finally many aged men, crying that they had lived long enough after losing their possessions and their beautiful women, were led into exile with their arms pinioned behind their backs, and weeping over the glowing ashes of their ancestral homes - ." All these matrons, widows and boys would probably have been used for something; they got Gothic children, not all had blue eyes.

Procopios also wrote about the appearance of the Goths in his book on the Justinian Wars: "All these, while they are distinguished from one another by their names (Goths and other migration people), as has been said, do not differ in anything else at all. For they all have white bodies and fair hair, and are tall and handsome to look upon, and they use the same laws and practise a common religion. For they are all of the Arian faith, and have one language called Gothic; and, as it seems to me, they all came originally from one tribe, and were distinguished later by the names of those who led each group."
hanging loose. Perhaps these bared breasts and loose hair symbolize something, for example rape, as a demonstration of the Roman Empire's power. Wikipedia.

Jordanes tells about Deceneus, who was a sort of philosopher and sage for a group of early Goths: "But he ordered them to call the rest of their race Capillati (hairy, ie, long-haired, them with curls). This name the Goths accepted and prized highly, and they retain it on the day to day in their songs (Jordanes)." And indeed, on many depictions the Western Goths are shown with curly hair.

The Arcadius column in Constantinople was erected to celebrate the Emperor Arcadius' victory over the Goths under king Gainas around the year 400 AD. The Goths, who are pictured on the column, was dressed in pants and Tunic very similar to the clothing, which was taken from Thorbjerg Mose near the city of Slesvig. The women are shown dressed in sleeveless clothes and with hair in disorder.

The Early History of the Goths

Jordanes describes how his own people, the Ostro-Goths, originally came from the interior of the Scandinavian Peninsula, perhaps from the Gota lands: "The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region, that is in the north, a great island named Scandia, 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. But how or in what wise we shall explain hereafter, if it be the Lord's will."

The tribes on the island Scandza after Jordanes - quite randomly placed by the author. We can place Halogi, Serrithfinni, Finn Haith and Finni mitissimi north after their names. Sweans and Swithedi around Malern - as we believe that they are the Swedes. Gautigoths and Ostrogoths in the Gota lands, Dani in Scania and some people reminiscent of modern Norwegian place names, Raumarici and Agadii as well as possible in Norway. The rest I have placed pretty randomly.

Jordanes lived around 550 AD in Constantinople. It is assumed that the Ostrogoths left Scandza around 150 AD. If a generation is considered to 25 years, it will then be 16 generations since they left the Scandinavian Peninsula. In all that time they had preserved the memory about the country that they left long ago, orally from generation to generation. The witnesses of a strong sense of national identity. Another possibility is that they had sporadic connection to their original homeland all the time.

"Now from this island of Scandia, as from a factory of races or a vagina of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name. As soon as they disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightway gave their name to the place. And even to-day it is said to be called Gutisk-Andja"
"Soon they moved from here to the abodes of the Hulm-Rugians, who then dwell on the shores of the Ocean," Jordanes continued, "where they pitched camp, joined battle with them and drove them from their homes. Next they subdued their neighbors, the Vandals, and thus added to their victories."

It is believed that the Ostro-Goths went ashore in what today is modern Poland, at the mouth of River Vistula. It happened around 150 AD.

Archaeologists have unearthed burial sites in the Vistula River delta and lower reaches, which exhibit many common features with contemporary burial sites in southern Scandinavia. The culture has been baptized the Wielbark culture after the main findings place. There have been found both inhumation grave and cremations, just as is the case in Jutland and Gota lands at the same time. The deceased is laid to rest in stone-built tombs, and they have rarely been given weapons, but sometimes spores, which is also a similarity with inhumation graves in Jutland at the same time. Most believe that the Wielbark culture can be attributed to the Goths and Getae, but not everyone is convinced. The graves have been dated from the first century until 300-400 AD.

Keramics from the Wielbark culture exhibited in the Polish Museum Odry - Photo Wikipedia.

When the Goths had lived for a while at the Vistula River delta, they decided to go south, where, however, a disaster awaited them. Jordanes recounts: "But when the number of the people increased greatly and Filimer, son of Gadarik, reigned as king about the fifth since Berig, he settled on the plan that the army of the Goths with their families should move from that region. In search of suitable homes and pleasant places they reached the lands of Scythia, which in their tongue are called Oium. Here they were delighted with the great richness of the country, and it is said that when half of the army had been brought over, the bridge, whereby they had crossed the river, collapsed irreparably, nor could anyone thereafter pass to or fro. For the place is said to be surrounded by quaking bogs and an encircling abyss, so that by this double obstacle nature has made it inaccessible. Indeed, one might give credence to the assertions of travelers even if
they have heard it from afar that in that area even today the lowing of cattle is heard and traces of men are found."

Normally, it is not expected of a king, a responsible leader, to abandon half of his people in the wilderness and just leave them to their fate. One must think that the situation was desperate.

In this way the Gothic army and their families became split into two parts, namely the group that already had crossed the river led by Filimer, and the remaining group, which did not manage to get across the river: "So having crossed the river, this part of the Goths which migrated with Filimer went into the territory of Aujom, they say, took possession of the desired land. There they quickly came upon the race of the Spali, joined battle with them and won victory."

The Pietroasele treasure was found in Pietroasele near Buzau in Romania in 1837. It is a Gothic treasure from the fourth century. It is on display at the National Museum of Romanian History in Bucharest. Originally it consisted of 22 pieces, but only 12 have been preserved including a neck ring with a Gothic runic inscriptions in older futhark - photo wikipedia.

"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," Jordanes recounts. "To return, then, to my subject. 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 the Sea of Asov."

Only now Jordanes mentions that Filimer's people were divided into two groups of Goths, led each by its own dynasty: "In their third dwelling place, which was above the Black Sea, 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 Balti and the Ostrogoths served the renowned Amali."

Jordanes tells nothing about what became of the part of the original group that was cut off because of the disaster at the bridge.

Especially previously, most historians believed that Visigoths and Terwingi were only different names for Western Goths and Ostrogoths and Greuthungi were other names for the Eastern Goths. But we must remember that Jordanes told that both Ostrogothae and Ewa-Greutingi were tribes that populated the interior of the island Scandia; this alone makes it unlikely that Ostrogoths and Greutungi was one and the same.

_They looked like each other and spoke the same language_, as Procopius wrote. So they must also have had same origin: the original Gothic area in Southern Scandinavia and around the Baltic Sea. Most likely it had been a bit by random if the ancient writers included...
Greiutungi, Terwingi, Rugi, Vandals and Gepids in the group of Goths or not. Most of the tribes, who arrived to the Roman Empire through Black Sea coast, were classified as Goths, while other, who did not came in contact with the Roman world via the Black Sea area, were not, even though they spoke Gothic.

It is tempting to recall that all Gothic areas on the southern Scandinavian peninsula and along the Baltic Sea and inner Danish waters were very densely populated in Roman Iron Age, if not overpopulated. One can easily imagine that other Gothic people tried their luck in the south. However, they did not have a chronicler, like the Ostrogoths had in Jordanes.

Jordanes wrote about the emigration from the Vistula delta that Filimer decided that: "that the army of the Goths with their families should move from that region", he did not write that the entire people emigrated. A migrant people like Filimer's Goths, who went through a relatively sparsely populated areas and even were halved by the disaster with the collapsed bridge, may, for logistical reasons, not have included much more than maybe a few thousand people.

In connection with the disaster at the bridge the story mentions that long after one could hear the roaring of cattle at the abyss; it indicates that the Goths brought their cattle. But there would have been limits on how much cattle and thus how many people, who could travel the same path, for there must be grass for the cattle.

They arrived at the northern coast of the Black Sea about 170 AD, and already around 250 AD - only three generations after - they were numerous enough to populate most of southern Ukraine and Romania, to conclude agreements with the Roman Empire and subsequent to attack the nearby Roman provinces. It must have required a Gothic population of several hundred thousand. This means that if Filimer's Goths had been the only origin to the numerous Gothic population in the area, then they should have performed a bluntly miraculous fertility, which seems very unlikely also with the contemporary living conditions considered.

Battle scene between Romans and Germans or Dacians on the Portonaccio sarcophagus. The barbarians all have curly hair and beard, The man in bottom right has a kind of cap or helmet - which is said to be characteristic for Dacians - otherwise only the Roman soldiers carry helmets. The sarcophagus is found in Rome and dated to the 2. century - Photo Wikipedia.

It is much more credible that the Gothic population in southern Ukraine was created by many small groups - similar to Filimer's Goths - which had emigrated from the over-populated original Gothic area in the north, but only Filimer's Goths got their quest immortalized by a chronicler. The historian Peter Heather mentions, for example, at least seven different groups of Goths.

Amminius wrote about the reason for the Goth's later wish to seek refuge in the Roman Empire: "Yet when the report spread widely among the other Gothic peoples, that a race of men hitherto unknown had now arisen from a hidden nook of the earth, like a tempest of snows from the high mountains, and was seizing or destroying everything in its way - " The phrase: "the other Gothic peoples" clearly gives the impression that there were many Gothic peoples and not only two.
Moreover Athanaric, who was king of the Western Goths, wanted to establish a defense against the Huns, but other leaders, Alavivus and Fritigern, preferred to seek shelter inside the Roman Empire with their subgroups and left Athanaric and the rest of the Western Goths to their fate. If the Western Goths had been an homogeneous group, which Jordanes suggests, could we then imagine such desertion?

Likewise with the Eastern Goths, led by Alatheus and Saphrax; they ran away from it all and left the rest of the Eastern Goths face to face with the Huns. Would they have done this, if the Eastern Goths had been a homogenous group, one people with a common history? It is much more likely that both the Western and the Eastern Goths were coalitions of many original groups.

The main route of the ancient amber trade went down along the river Vistula and then to Carnuntum in Austria halfway between Vienna and Bratislava, from there the route led to the River Po, which in ancient times was called Eridanos, where there was a market for amber. In addition, several other very old trade routes have been identified in Eastern Europe. Already in the Bronze Age amber, bronze and slaves were transported along these routes. We can imagine that the Cimbri and Teutons traveled down along the Oder to Linz on their infamous raid. We must believe that many groups of Goths with their kilometer long road trains followed the rivers Vistula and Dnieper to the coast of the Black sea. The amber routes were well known even in Rome, so as Emperor Nero sent an agent to the Baltic to buy a large quantity of amber for decorations of the imperial palaces. - From "The Goths" by Peter Heather.

Ptolemy placed the people Goutai on the island of Skandia while the people Gudones at the Vistula River. It is most often explained as a kind of mistake or name confusion, but the right explanation is probably that already then were several groups of Goths; It is also historian Herwig Wolfram's view.

The Gothic armies have likely been composed of many different groups of Goths, who identified themselves with the names of their original homes in the north or the names of their leaders as Procopius said; such as Ostro-Goths, Greuthungi Goths, Gaiti-Goths, Visi-Goths, Terwingi Goths, Rugi and Rheid-Goths. Eudoses has likely originated from Jutland. Scirii is said to have spoken Gothic language, though no ancient sources call them Goths. One can imagine that the Gothic area north of the Black Sea was a kind of that time America, where different groups of emigrants from the original Gothic area became mixed together in alternating coalitions.

A very large Gothic group under Radagaisus, went directly against Italy, but was stopped at Florence by a Roman army of overwhelmingly strength. Nothing is said about them to be Eastern or Western
Goths; they were only a kind of Goths, who came more or less directly from the Goth's northern homeland.

**Romans and Goths on the Danube and Black Sea**

It is said that around the year 245 AD the Ostro-Goths lived near the Danube estuary into the Black Sea led by their first king of the Amal lineage, Ostrogotha, who was famous for his patience. In any case, he was famous, his reputation reached all the way to England as he is mentioned in the famous Widsith poem from about 800 AD: "East-Gotan frodne and godue, fæder Unweness". Jordanes kalder dog hans søn for Hunuil.

Dacia was a Roman province in the early Roman Empire, which stretched north of the Danube. Most its area belongs to Romania today. Dacia was conquered by Emperor Trajan 101-106 AD but already in 270 AD Emperor Aurelian chose to evacuate Dacia and pull the border of the the Roman Empire back to the Danube, which was far easier and less expensive to defend. Some sources say that the Romans effectively lost Dacia already around 250 AD - Dacia was fairly quickly taken over by the Western Goths, among which the Visigoths were the dominant tribe. Then, Moesia, Thracia and Macedonia became targets for Gothic plunder. Beroe and Abritus are marked in red.

It is also said that the Goths through twenty years received an annual sum of money to protect the Roman border against the Sarmatians. But Emperor Philippus Arabs, who ruled 244-249 AC stopped payments, prompting the patient king Ostrogotha to lose patience and lead his Goths into the nearby Roman provinces, Dacia, Moesia and Thracia in order to loot.

In 249 AD the Roman general Decius made rebellion against Emperor Philippus, and had himself declared emperor by his troops. Philippus was killed in a battle near Verona. Goths under King Cniva took advantage of the prevailing chaos and were preparing to lay siege to Nicopolis on the Danube, when they were surprised by the freshly made emperor and had to escape through the difficult terrain of Balkans, however, here they received reinforcements and turned surprisingly against their pursuers and attacked and plundered their camp near Beroe, which today is called Stara Zagora, and then it was the Romans, who had to flee. It was first time a Roman emperor fled in a confrontation with the Gothic barbarians.

Then the Goths conquered Philippopolis, which today is called Plovdiv and returned to their homeland laden with booty and important prisoners.
Details from the Ludovisi sarcophagus, a Roman sarcophagus found in a grave near Porta Tiburtina in Rome. It is dated to around 250 AD. It was discovered in 1621 and named after its first modern owner, Ludovico Ludovisi. The sarcophagus is now displayed in Palazzo Altemps in Rome, which is a part of the National Museum in Rome. The motive is Roman victory over barbarians, in all likelihood Goths. Note their curly hair; both Sidonius Apollinaris and Jordanes mention that the Goths had curly hair. All the Goths have beards. Photo Wikipedia.
From left to right:
A Goth is mortally wounded by a spear in the chest.
A Roman lifts the head of a dying Goth by the beard. Above a Got lifts his sword, he is wearing a kind of hat.
A Goth is struggling desperately against superior forces surrounded by fallen comrades.
Heap of fallen Goths in the bottom of the motive, all dressed in tight pants and with curly hair and beard.

Emperor Decius and his son Herennius Etruscus soon sought to wash away the humiliation at Beroe by moving their troops across the Danube and attack the Goths. The decisive battle took place in 251 AD on the swampy terrain of the small town, Abrittus, which today is called Razgrad, in northeastern Bulgaria. The Roman writer Sextus Aurelius Victor recounts: "After he had ruled for two years Decius and his son Abrittus died because of treason, while pursuing the barbarians over the Danube. Many reports tell that his son fell in battle, while he pushed in a too daring attack; the father, however, strenuously argued that the loss of a single soldier seemed him too little to matter. And then he resumed the fight and died violently struggling in a similar way." His body was never found. Decius was the first Roman emperor, who died in battle against the kingdom's external enemies.

The Byzantine theologian and historian Zonaras narrated: " - he and his son and a large number of Romans fell into the marsh land; all of them perished there, none of their bodies to be found, as they were covered by the mud."
The early history of the Goths and Gothic language

Details from the Portonaccio sarcophagus, which is a Roman sarcophagus found in the Portonaccio neighborhood of Rome. It is dated 180-190 AD and can be seen in Museo Nazionale Romano.

Left: A barbarian woman with one breast exposed. In several columns and reliefs Germanic women are shown with one breast exposed and the hair in disorder. It may be thought to have been a particularly advanced Germanic fashion from the Migration Period, but it is more likely that it should demonstrate the harsh treatment that the legionaries gave the subdued's women, as a symbol of the Roman armies' omnipotence.

Right: A barbarian warrior and his horse are in trouble in the bottom of the battle. All Germans, Goths and Dacians are shown with curly hair and beard. - wikipedia.

The good Romans raised an outcry, when it became known that Gallus - the new emperor after the disaster at Abrittus - paid the Goths to keep the peace. However - unfaithful to their leaders' agreements - some groups of Goths continued to loot in the Roman province Elyria (Albania). However, they were quickly beaten by a general named Aemilianus, who then was proclaimed emperor. Gallus was murdered by his own soldiers, who then joined the usurper's army; but soon after he too was murdered, and the empire came into the hands of Valerian and his son Gallienus. But in 260 AD Valerian led a daring expedition in the war against the Persians and never came back.

Battle scene on the Portonaccio sarcophagus between Romans and Germans. One of the Germans, Dacian or possibly Gothic warriors is still standing. He could be a typical Gothic warrior armed with spear and shield - with curly beard and hair, dressed in tight pants held up by a belt, like the typical germanic trousers found i Thorsbjerg Mose near Slesvig. Photo: Wikipedia.

During these fifteen years from Ostrogoths raids into Moesia and Thracia until Emperor Decius' death in the battle of Abrittus, other Goths along with other barbarians conducted massacres and looting many places in the Roman Empire. Heruls, Goths and Eudoses, which probably also were Goths, from Crimea sailed across the Black Sea and captured the great city of Trebizond, where they
abducted a large amount of prisoners and took a big prey. The same fate befell the large and splendid cities of Bithynia, Chalcedon and Nicomedia. It is said that they were all fortified with strong garrisons, but for fear of Gothic terror resistance was rarely attempted.

However, the most known and infamous Gothic raid was the conquest and looting of Athens in 262 AD. A fleet of five hundred ships - it is said - led a large army of Goths and Heruls through the Bosphorus and Hellespont. On their way to Athens they destroyed the city of Cyzicus, which stood at coast of Asia Minor between the Bosphorus and Hellespont, and they burned down the famous Temple of Diana in Ephesus, with its hundreds of tall marble columns and many beautiful statues - one of the ancient Seven Wonders.

Then the Gothic pirates crossed the Aegean Sea, anchored off Athens and plundered the famous city - Plato and Socrates' birthplace - completely. But at least they did not burn the city, and we know that they left many distinguished and beautiful buildings and artworks, which first would be destroyed by the Turks many years later.

Battle scene between Romans and Goths on the Portonaccio sarcophagus. A bearded bareheaded Gothic warrior armed with shield and spear in battle against a similarly bearded Roman legionary equipped with helmet and sword. As several other Goths he is wearing a cape held together by a buckle on the chest. Photo: Wikipedia.

When they had finished looting of Greece, they went to the coast of the Adriatic Sea. Maybe they thought of invading Italy. But however, Emperor Gallienus, Valerian's son, had finally woken up to action and led a large army against them. The expedition leaders began to quarrel among themselves, and one of Heruli leaders, Naubobatus, went in Roman service with all his men. He was very well received by the emperor, who gave him rank of consul. The remaining Goths divided into two groups. One group went to Greece's east coast and from there by ship to Thracia, and from there they travelled over land home to their villages. The other group continued to ravage Moesia another year without meeting significant resistance because of continued rivalry between the Roman generals.

In 268 AD emperor Gallienus was assassinated, and Claudius was appointed to emperor. In his time Greece was attacked by an invading army of thousands of Goths, who had emigrated from the area near the mouth of Dniester at the Black Sea, bringing their wives and children. The invasion army landed near Thessalonica and was soon engaged in grueling battles with Claudius forces. Thousands of Gothic prisoners were sold as slaves; many young men were enrolled in the imperial armies. A plague ravaged both Goths and Romans. The rest of the Goths fled into the Balkan mountains. For this victory Emperor Claudius earned his name of honour, Gothicus.
The barbarian peoples along the borders of the Roman Empire in the fourth century by Peter Heather: "The Fall of the Roman Empire - A new history". Jordanes narrated that after the Goths had arrived in the Black Sea area, they divided themselves into two groups, which usually are called respectively Tervingi - Visigoths - Western Goths and Greutungi - Ostrogoths - Eastern Goths. But the most likely is that there were many Gothic tribes, who had emigrated from the overpopulated original Gothic area in South Scandinavia and around the Baltic. Tervingi and Greutungi were only the names of dominant tribes. It is not even sure that for example Tervingi and Visigoths represented the same tribe. We know, for example that also Fudoses and Rugi were part of the exodus. Moreover, as Procopius writes about the barbaric peoples, he had met: "All these, while they are distinguished from one another by their names, as has been said, do not differ in anything else at all. For they all have white bodies and fair hair, and are tall and handsome to look upon, and they use the same laws and practise a common religion." Vandals, Gepids, Sciri, Burgundians and Angles talked all a dialect of Gothic and also resembled each other, so technically one could call them all a kind of Goths.

On His deathbed Claudius appointed a young man named Aurelian as emperor. Very soon the empire was again attacked by new hordes of Goths led by a chief named Cannabaudes. Aurelian concluded a settlement with the Goths so that the province of Dacia, which today mainly is made up by Romania and the eastern part of Pannonia, which is today's Hungary, was finally abandoned to the Goths against that they provided two thousand cavalry to the Roman army, and sent young men and women of noble families to the Roman Empire as hostages. The result of these agreements were the Goths lived in peace with the Roman Empire in the following fifty years.

A Goth - or could it be a Persian - is taken away captive of the Roman cavalry. Motif on Constantine's mother Helena's sarcophagus in Pio-Clementine Vatican Museum in Rome. He has curled hair and beard and is dressed in robe and pants. However these pants are unusual being knee short - Wikipedia.

The Goths broke the peace in 322 AD, when a unified army of Eastern and Western Goths and several Slavic tribes led by King Aliquaca invaded the Roman provinces south of Danube. But however, the Emperor Constantine, who later earned the name of honour, "the Great," responded by crossing the Danube and defeat them on their own territory. The emperor offered however honorable peace terms, the Goths were allowed to keep all their possessions and privileges against that the king should send his son as a hostage to Constantinople, and that Gothic forces should participate in the Imperial Army. When Constantine a year later fought the decisive battle against his rival, Licenius at Hadrianople, he was therefore assisted by a large Gothic army under Aliquaca. The victory at Hadrianople gave Konstantin power throughout the Roman Empire and made it possible that he could declare Christianity as the religion of the state.

Around 350 AD the Goths on the banks of the River Dnieper chose Ermanaric of the Amal lineage as king. Not since Ostrogotha they had had an Amal as king. Ermanaric made no attempt to invade the provinces of the Roman Empire, but he made his Gothic
kingdom to the center of a great empire. The Roman Ammianus Marcellinus wrote that he ruled "extensive large and fertile areas"; Jordanes wrote that he ruled the country Oium and compared him with Alexander the Great. Through many generations, his fame survived in Scandinavian, German and Anglo-Saxon sagas and poems. In "The saga of Hervarar and Kong Heidrek" the Goths' capital is called Arheimar and located at the Danpar river, which is Dnieper. The name Árheimar has been interpreted as Oium, as place names with the suffix -heim in many cases have been reduced to -um.

Scene from Hideareks Saga - Hjalmar farewell to Orvar Odd after the fight on Samsø. Painted by Mårten Eskil Winge - wikipedia.

In this saga Heidrek unfairly usurps the throne of Reidgotaland. He kidnaps the Hunnish princess Sifka, rapes her and sends her pregnant back to the Huns, her son with Heidrek is given the name Hlød. When Heidrek dies in the Carpathians, he is succeeded by his son Angantyr. But his second son Hlød, who had grown up among the Huns, requires his heritage and attacks with a great Hunnisk army of mounted warriors. The Goths are assisted by the old Geatian King Gissur, and the war ends in an epic battle on the plains of the Danube, where Angantyr kills his brother Hlød.

We can understand from sagas and poems that Ermanaric was admired as a great conqueror and ruler, but he was also bitterly hated by the subdued peoples as a cruel tyrant.

In the western part of the Gothic area along the Black Sea King Athanaric of the Western Goths reigned. Since the time of Constantine the Great they had faithfully complied with the agreement to protect the empire's eastern border and to send several thousand soldiers to the Roman army each year. However Athanaric made the mistake to support the wrong emperor. A general named Procopius rebelled against Emperor Valens, and temporary he got the power in Constantinople. Athanaric sent his Gothic troops to Thrace to support Procopius in the belief that he was the real emperor. However Valens came back strongly, overcame his rival and his Gothic troops, whom he reportedly sold as slaves. Moreover Valens then went over the Danube with his legions and made war and plunder on the Goths, however, without he was able to win a decisive victory.

After three years of war between the Western Goths and the Romans King Athanaric met with Emperor Valens in 369 AD on a barge on the Danube and agreed peace terms; among others Valens agreed to Athanaric's requirement to deliver the Gothic Christians, who had sought refuge in Constantinople.
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