

Collapse of the Hunnic Empire: Jordanes, Ardaric and the Battle of Nedao

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Abstract

This thesis examines the evidence surrounding the Battle of Nedao, an engagement between Ardaric, leader of the Gepids and other rebelling tribes, and Ellac, the eldest son of Attila. It argues against the claim that, after Attila's death, it was the sons of Attila who ruined the Hunnic empire through civil war. Instead, the political crisis which inevitably led to the battle was brought about by Attila's murdering of his brother and co-king, Bleda, in 445 and his intestate death in 453. If there was civil war between Attila's sons, it did not occur until after Nedao. Furthermore, Ardaric was not of Royal Hunnic status fighting for succession at Nedao. He was, instead, one of the leaders of a rebellion that was not limited to Germanic tribes.

The thesis focuses primarily on one source, Jordanes, since his *Getica* is the only known account of the battle which is not mentioned by any other contemporary source. The paper analyzes both Jordanes as an author and the language in his *Getica*, finding him not to be the semiliterate copyist of Cassiodorus, but instead underlines his own agency in the organizing of the work. From this broader understanding of Jordanes and *Getica*, it furthermore determines that he may, in fact, harbor an anti-Gepid sentiment towards the Gepid kingdom of his own day in the sixth century. Jordanes may, therefore, be anachronistically ascribing strength and importance to the Gepids' role at Nedao, as Gepid-Constantinopolitan tension reached its zenith at the time he composed his work, thereby critically affecting our interpretation of the Battle of Nedao narrative.

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been one of the greatest pleasures of my life. Before I began, I had never imagined that the field of Hunnic studies teetered off after the death of its most famous proponent, Attila. Of course, I understand now that any research on the Huns after Attila's death is entirely dependent on our good friend, Jordanes, around whom scholarship is still divided. Thus, when my supervisor, Geoffrey Greatrex, pitched to me the idea which came to be this thesis, I was both flabbergasted and overwhelmingly excited. Grabbing hold of it, I ran. Sometimes into the black holes of speculation, and other times into confusing grammatical structures, an endemic feature of Late Latin. Other times, I would surface after days spent reading and present a theory to him, just to have him recommend several days more worth of reading and a calm reminder not to get carried away. I am deeply indebted to his guidance.

I would also like to thank Roger Blockley for always being supportive, offering feedback on any interesting theories I may have had, and for the coffee. Furthermore, Marie-Pierre Bussièrès for her most remarkable knowledge of Latin, Karin Schlapbach for pushing me to work harder than I ever knew I could, Richard Burgess (especially for the matter on Prosper) as well as Morgan Rooney and Rajiv Bola for listening to some of my wilder hypotheses. I would further thank Greg Fisher, Shawn Graham, Marianne Goodfellow, Louise Stephens, Theodore De Bryun, Dominique Coté, Efharis Kostala, Heather Lobe, John Serrati, and Shelley Rabinovitch who have all, in many ways, influenced my work for the better.

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Introduction

There is difficulty in conceiving of the Hunnic Empire without directly attributing its grandeur to the equally great life of Attila the Hun. Some rightfully question Attila's genius, preferring to humanize the man, by scrutinizing the literary sources to approach his reality.¹ To date, this same diligence in proving his deeds has yet to be applied to the consequences of his death.² Many accept Jordanes' account of the sudden collapse of the Hunnic Empire, modernity's sole extant source: *De origine actibusque Getarum (Getica)*.³ This account deems it plausible that the many sons of Attila, vying for their own equal portions, tore his kingdom to pieces. It is generally accepted that Ardaric, king of the Gepids, led a rebellion against the sons of Attila and, at the River Nedao located somewhere in Pannonia, defeated the Huns in a spectacular showdown. Thereafter, the 'countless' Gepids supplying the bulk of the force at Nedao, received the lion's share of the collapsed western Hunnic empire.

Superficially, the details of Jordanes' account create a hypothesis for the death of Attila and the abrupt demise of the Hunnic Empire. However, many of the accepted details lose reliability under scrutiny and in their wake new hypotheses can be drawn. This thesis will argue that the Battle of Nedao was not caused by Attila's sons, who through civil war brought about the demise of the state, but was instead the by-product of Attila's usurpation of the whole state coupled with his sudden intestate death. His death catalyzed a political crisis and his sons (Ellac, Dengizich, and Ernak), the next reigning princes, were forced into negotiations for the continuation of the Hunnic state. Whether their kingdom would return to diarchy or proceed as a monarchy (and in

¹ Thompson 1996, 1-5.

² Heather 2006, 354-356, does attempt to analyze certain aspects of the death of Attila but still largely accepts Jordanes' account as plausible.

³ There are indeed other sources, such as the chronicler, Prosper, who vaguely details some of the events immediately after Attila's death (discussed in 2.4). There are then the accounts of the *Hervararsaga* and the old English poem *Widsith* which are treated in section 2.7 and 2.8).

the instance of the former, who would rule which tribes and where?) were their options, considered under the watchful gaze of every notable member of the Hunnic state. The sons of Attila did not rule rashly, as we shall see; they united at Nedao to preserve their kingdom and if there was civil war between them, it did not occur until after the battle and the defeat of the combined Hunnic forces in 454 AD at Nedao.

There are several distinct perspectives to consider, and in a way they are all Jordanes'. By closely evaluating his work for truths, fictions, and underlying biases, a more holistic interpretation of the battle of Nedao and its causes and effects can emerge. To do this, discussion of Jordanes' texts, critique of the battle itself, and investigation of Justinian zeitgeist must be the foundations.

Chapter 1(sections 1.1-1.6) will discuss Jordanes and relevant primary sources. Based on a review of the literature produced on fifth- and sixth-century Huns and Gepids, arguably very little about Jordanes can be verified, and what is known reflexively comes exclusively from his own works. This is significant, because it couches the narrator of *Getica* and *De summa temporum vel origine actibusque gentis Romanorum (Romana)* in self-described terms, calling into question whether the author is Jordanes himself or his conception of himself projected for audiences. However, in a closer reading, critical attitudes towards the Gepids and Huns, which impact reader interpretation of certain events described in *Getica* and *Romana* (further discussed in sections 3.4-3.5), become apparent. It is therefore prudent to remain open-minded to the possibility that Jordanes may have had more to say than has otherwise been fully acknowledged by scholarship, and his agency in the drafting of *Getica* cannot be understated. Other authors of interest such as Priscus, Procopius, John Malalas, and Marcellinus Comes must be examined in order to situate them in their historical contexts as potential foils to Jordanes.

Focus should then turn to the Battle of Nedao itself (sections 2.1-2.9). Examination of this fifth century battle is multifaceted and multipurpose: to discuss the mechanics of the Hunnic state which presaged the battle, to determine Jordanes' literary purpose for the battle as a device within *Getica*, and to investigate Ardaric's motivation at Nedao. It will be argued that Ardaric did not participate in the Battle of Nedao as a royal Hun but instead as a rebel in league with the Rugi and Heruls.⁴ Examination of the actions taken by the sons of Attila and whether they were instrumental in the downfall of the Hunnic state is necessary to conclude that instead it was Attila's murder of Bleda and subsequent sudden death which initiated the political crisis. His sons, even in the face of this catastrophe, did not immediately turn on one another but instead united under Ellac, Attila's eldest son and successor for the eastern Hunnic empire, to fight at Nedao. If there was a civil war, it did not occur until after Ellac's death when the Huns vanish from history until the early 560s.

Finally, a discussion of the Battle of Nedao and the Gepids in the sixth century coupled with Jordanes' anti-Gepid bias (sections 3.1-3.8) will serve to further illuminate the authorial and historic prejudices at work. Ardaric, king of the Gepids, is said to have been the leader of the rebellion and his Gepids made up the bulk of the rebelling faction.⁵ However, Jordanes appears to be embellishing both Ardaric's significance as well as the strength of the Gepids during the time of Attila. Jordanes deliberately retrojects the strength of the Gepid nation. Ardaric may indeed have been the leader of the rebellion with no evidence to suggest otherwise, but his faithfulness to Attila and the strength of his Gepids at the battle have been exaggerated. Not only did Jordanes bend the factual events of the battle in order to satisfy his own anti-Gepid rhetorical program but may have been further pressured to do so because of the noted anti-Gepid sentiments already circulating in Constantinople before he started writing *Getica*. This rhetoric can likewise be seen

⁴ Ardaric the royal Hun: Kim, 2013, 91.

⁵ Jordanes, *Getica*, 259-263.

in the works of Justinian, Procopius, and perhaps even John Malalas. To Jordanes, Ardaric was a dishonourable opportunist and his Gepids would get their just desserts at the Battle of Bolia, where the Amal Goths massacre them with exultation.

Jordanes may have preserved the bare skeleton of the truth of the Battle of Nedao, but some specific details have been distorted. Ardaric's role as the leader of the rebellion, the rashness of the sons of Attila ruining his empire, Jordanes' anti-Gepid attitude and his distaste for trickery (something Ardaric, Mundo, and the Gepids employ in his narrative) all point towards him manipulating events. Therefore, the greater the scrutiny applied to Jordanes' passages involving the Gepids, Huns, and Ardaric in order to challenge his moralizing views of the sons of Attila, the clearer the ruination of the glorious empire becomes.

Chapter 1: The Literary Sources

1.1: Introduction

This chapter is largely focused on Jordanes, our primary source for the Battle of Nedao, the Huns after Attila, and the Gepids prior to the sixth century. We shall see that while Jordanes is of critical importance to any discussion about the Huns and the Gepids, we know next to nothing about him – an issue we must bear in mind while moving forward. The chapter is organized as follows: we will first discuss who Jordanes was, what works he wrote, why he wrote *Getica*, his attitudes (especially towards Justinian and the Gepids which can be detected through his works), who the intended audiences for the *Getica* were, and finally his relationship with the famous senator, Cassiodorus. From there we will then briefly discuss Priscus of Panion, about whom we know a fair bit more and who is directly cited by many authors of interest to us including, but not limited to: Jordanes, Procopius, and John Malalas. Priscus is of interest for though Jordanes cites him multiple times, he does not do so for the Battle of Nedao or for Catalaunian Plains. We then turn towards Procopius, Marcellinus Comes and John Malalas who each are especially important for positively detailing the life of Mundo, Ardaric's grandson, while Jordanes regards him quite negatively.⁶

⁶ There are other sources that will be cited, such as Sidonius Apollinaris and Claudian, but they do not necessarily pertain any historical content for our purposes. Likewise, The Battle of Nedao exists in only one source, Jordanes' *Getica*, but fragments may also be preserved in two other sources, the Icelandic *Hervararsaga* and the Old-English poem *Widsith* (discussed in 2.7-2.8). Maenchen-Helfen argues that the battles preserved in the saga/*Widsith*, on the other hand, are describing the war between the Gothic leader, Valamer, and remnants of a defeated Hunnic force. The Gallic Chronicler, Prosper, in the year 455 does have an entry which gives some vague details on the happenings after Attila's death (further discussed in 2.5), but it is rather vague on details, entry 1370 (Mommsen, *Chron. min.* 1: 482-83). Outside of these few windows into the past, there is otherwise nothing else we can draw on for evidence. Archaeology cannot be used for the battle as Jordanes, the saga and *Widsith* are all painfully vague on where the battle itself took place, some even suggesting different sites (Jordanes says by the river Nedao; the saga and *Widsith*, on the Danube Heath). Were it not for Jordanes, indeed, we may never have known the battle ever took place with any certainty.

1.2: Who was Jordanes?

It is unfortunate that we know very little of Jordanes and what we do know, without speculation, comes from Jordanes' own writings.⁷ He is otherwise not attested in any other source. There have been attempts to link Jordanes with pope Jordanes, but such connections remain conjecture.⁸ We do not know when he was born or when he died. He was likely born in Thrace as he does know a fair bit on the geography and history of that region.⁹ He appears to have been an Orthodox Christian, as seen by his negative regard for Arianism.¹⁰ The remainder of Jordanes' life and motivation as an author, as we shall see, is less clear. In such an order, this section will discuss: Jordanes' residence in Constantinople and his bias towards the city, his identity as a Goth, his use of not only Greek and Latin histories, but of his own works as well, and will conclude on why Jordanes calls himself *agramatus*. After reviewing the various interpretations of this statement, we shall conclude that Jordanes may just be exercising humility and his supposedly illiteracy should not be taken literally. The author in question appears to be, instead, highly literate as can be seen by, as we shall see, the plethora of works on which he drew during the composition of *Getica*.

Jordanes wrote his works, *Getica* and *Romana*, in Constantinople.¹¹ It is apparent he had been living in Constantinople for quite some time, seen from the way he addresses the city as “our city” or as the “royal city.”¹² We do not know how, why, or when Jordanes decided to arrive in the city. We do, however, know that he was a *notarius* for a *magister militum*, Gunthigis – about whom we know very little (Jordanes claims he was of Amal stock and the *dux* of a mixed group of

⁷ Most of what we know is from *Getica*, 266 and some from 316.

⁸ Mierow 1915 1-15; Goffart 1988, 44-45.

⁹ Illyrian: Croke 2003, 368; Familiarity with geography: *Getica*, 4-15.

¹⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*, 132.

¹¹ Goffart 1988, 28; Bjornlie 2013, 111. Some argue that Jordanes wrote in Italy, cf. Momigliano 1955 and Giunta and Grillone 1991.

¹² Goffart 1988, 28; *Getica*, 38: *in nostro urbe*; 107: *regiae urbis*. Croke 2005, 473-493.

soldiers, including the Amal Goths that did not follow Theodoric to Italy in 488 but, instead, remained behind in Moesia).¹³

Some scholars theorize that Jordanes lived in Italy and was amongst the Italian exiles, among whom was the famous senator, Cassiodorus.¹⁴ Such a theory would explain how Jordanes came to be an acquaintance of the senator who wrote the twelve-book history of the Goths, which Jordanes claims to be abridging in his *Getica*. Van Hoof and van Nuffelen, on the other hand, show that there is absolutely no evidence that we know of which suggests Jordanes spent any time in Italy.¹⁵ Furthermore, just how familiar Jordanes and Cassiodorus were can also not be concluded with any certainty.¹⁶ Therefore, we must remind ourselves that we truly know very little about the famous Jordanes, even as we turn to the matter of his heritage.

Jordanes claims to be both of Gothic descent and assures us that his upbringing does not bias his narrative;¹⁷ he, however, is not only incredibly biased towards the Amal Goths, but may also be biased against the Gepids (further discussed in 3.4). On the matter of Jordanes' family and birth, we are left with very little to work with. As mentioned, he was probably of Gothic upbringing but may also have been, at some point, of Alan descent. Regardless, what is important is to understand that Jordanes' family was well-to-do and if indeed he originated from the Amal Ostrogoths and/or the Alans, his parent tribe probably fought with the Huns at the Battle of Nedao, a point we will return to later.¹⁸

¹³ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, iv. The copy of the article I possessed during the writing of this work, obtained via academia.edu, had no page numbers. The roman numerals thus used indicate the page reference counting from the beginning of the work.

¹⁴ Bjornlie argues that Jordanes moved to Constantinople after being exiled from Italy; 2013, 110.

¹⁵ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, iv.

¹⁶ On the depth of the ambiguity, see van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017.

¹⁷ *Getica*, 316.

¹⁸ Valamer fought under Attila at Catalaunian Plains and the Goths did not ask for land from the Romans until after the Battle of Nedao, *Getica*, 264. Admittedly, Jordanes is not wholly clear on which side the Goths fought at Nedao and I think that vagueness is to overstep the fact that they fought for the Huns.

Cuius Candacis Alanoviiamuthis patris mei genitor Paria, id est meus avus, notarius, quosque Candac ipse viveret, fuit, eiusque germanae filio Gunthigis, qui et Baza dicebatur, mag. Mil., filio Andages fili Andele de prosapia Amalorum descendenta, ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannnis ante conversionem meam notarius fui.

Paria, the father of my father Alanoviiamuth (that is, my grandfather), was the notary of one, Candac, and was so for as long as (*quos*) Candac himself lived; and of his sister's son, Gunthigis, who is also called Baza, *magister militum*, the son of Andag, the son of Andela <who> descended from the line of Amals, was likewise I, Jordanes, although not a man of letters, was <his> notary prior to my conversion.¹⁹

Jordanes' grandfather was Paria, who was also a *notarius* of the warlord, Candac, for as long as he lived, and Jordanes' father was Alanoviiamuth, about whom we know nothing else.²⁰ Jordanes' heritage is important in some arguments as it influences how scholars read *Getica*. Goffart, for example, dismisses Jordanes' Gothic heritage claiming him to be thoroughly Byzantine.²¹ Such a conclusion benefits Goffart's overall argument that Jordanes' work was purely propaganda for Justinian's court and had little to no historical merit. On the other hand, other scholars put greater emphasis on Jordanes' Gothic heritage for they wish to see the *Getica* as, first and foremost, a history of the Goths.²²

Unfortunately, just how Gothic or what Gothic-ness to Jordanes even was, is not certain; but we can conclude that suggesting he was of Gothic descent must have given his account on the

¹⁹ *Getica*, 266. Note that *agramatus* is sometimes spelt *agrammatius*.

²⁰ Goffart notes that just because Paria worked for an Alan king and Jordanes' father had 'Alan' in his name does not mean that Jordanes was of Alan descent, 1988, 32, as argued by Mommsen who corrected the name to Alanovi Amuth (that is, Amuth of the Alans). Since the Alans are all but ignored in *Getica*, it is safe to presume that if Jordanes were an Alan, it would strictly be by descent and not by cultural upbringing (for which he would have been either Amal-Gothic, Byzantine, or perhaps Italian). Therefore, his possible Alan descent is not especially important. PLRE II: s.v. Paria, 832; Candac 1, 256-257; Alanoviiamuth, 43.

²¹ 1988, 22, 42-

²² Wolfram 1988; Thompson 1996, 16-17; Kim 2015, 133, 136.

history of the Gothic peoples more weight, especially if he hopes to convince the reader that he is, at least to some extent, abridging Cassiodorus.²³

nec me quis in favorem gentis praedictae, quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem, aliqua addidisse credit, quam quae legi et comperi.

Let him not believe that I have added anything which is in favour of the aforementioned people, as though from them <my> origin derives, other than what I have read and knew for certain.²⁴

Jordanes defends himself against all future charges of embellishing his history's narrative in favour of the *Getae* (*gentis*) because of his origin.²⁵ It is interesting that Jordanes would defend himself against charges of being biased towards the Goths. For, it seems, he would only present such a defense if he knew that there was a good possibility of his readership interpreting his narrative in such a manner. Perhaps he was thinking of the sort of backlash that Rufinus faced from Jerome for translating Origen's work (something Jordanes most certainly would have known having borrowed lines from Rufinus' introduction to his translation of Origen's commentary of *Romans*); in the final line of Jordanes' introduction he writes: *et si quid parum dictum est et tu, ut vicinus genti, commemoras, adde, orans pro me, frater carissime. Dominus tecum. Amen.*²⁶ Jordanes is, after all, claiming to abridge the famous twelve histories of Cassiodorus which, in some eyes, may be a poor attempt. Nevertheless, not only is his narrative distinctly pro-Amal, it also betrays an anti-Gepid bias which is so stark it exceeds that of Procopius in severity, which we will discuss further

²³ Goffart argues that Jordanes may have been Gothic in stock but was fully Byzantine, 1988, 22, 32. Goltz argues that Jordanes may be "Alan or Gothic, but which does not necessarily matter as the ethnic boundaries between the two peoples flowed together in Late antiquity. What is important is that he associates with the Goths and the Gothic people." 2008, 268-269. All German translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own work.

²⁴ Mommsen, *Jordan. Roma. et Get.*, 126.316. Unless otherwise specified, all Latin translations are my own.

²⁵ Likewise see *Getica*, 3, for Jordanes calling Castalius a 'neighbour to our race'.

²⁶ *Getica*, 316. It is also obvious that he defends himself only at the end of his work, after the reader has read it in entirety, and not at the beginning. His calling attention to the authenticity of his words at the end is to not draw attention to the fact that many details during the work may not be factual.

below;²⁷ and indeed, the Gepid-Gothic animosity may have begun at the Battle of Nedao, but was certainly compounded by the wars between the two nations in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.

There is one important difference in the translation I have presented that deviates from Mierow's famous English 1915: the interpretation of *comperi*. Mierow translates this as 'learned by inquiry' however I have taken it as 'knew for certain'.²⁸ It is a subtle difference. Mierow's interpretation places the veracity of the facts presented in *Getica* on Jordanes' sources, both those from which Jordanes read (*legi*) and those whom he, presumably, spoke to (*comperi*). We know *comperi* does not mean learned by investigation via reading, otherwise it would make the word redundant. Thus, in Mierow's interpretation, it must be learned by verbal investigation. This is certainly possible, but it is more plausible that Jordanes is referring to his own previously written works:

Ad quos et ex nonnullis historiis Grecis ac Latinis addedi convenientia, initium finemque et plura in medio mea dictione permiscens.

To which (this book, *Getica*) I added appropriate <accounts> from several Greek and Latin histories, both an introduction and conclusion as well as including many things of my own authorship.²⁹

The interpretation of *in medio mea dictione* is taken from Mierow, who interprets as I do here.³⁰

We can see that Jordanes is adding to his work histories from other Greek and Latin works as well as some of his own works. Therefore, Jordanes has added nothing more to the work than what he read (*legi*) and what he knew for certain (*comperi*), that is, what he himself has written about in the same manner as those histories he has included. My interpretation has underlined Jordanes'

²⁷ On Procopius' attitude towards the Gepids, see 3.3; on Jordanes', 3.4 and especially of Jordanes view on Mundo the Gepid, 3.6.

²⁸ Mierow 2006, 142.316.

²⁹ *Getica*, 3.

³⁰ Mierow 2006, 51.3.

own authorship (a detail sometimes overlooked by positivist scholars). This is an important interpretation for, as we shall see especially in chapter three, Jordanes may, in fact, be adding much more of his own authorship than was previously understood (particularly in matters involving the Gepids).

It, therefore, comes as a surprise that Jordanes would claim himself to be *agramatus*, ‘uneducated,’ for, as we have already discussed, not only was he a *notarius*, but so was his grandfather who was so for ‘as long as Candac lived’ (and thus for him not to be uneducated is suspicious).³¹ For Jordanes was, in a sense, born into a dynasty of notaries. It appears that Jordanes is not being literal, but humble in a similar way how he refers to himself as ‘nobis’ and we should, therefore, not take him literally when he calls himself ‘uneducated’.³² Nevertheless, scholarship is still divided on what he meant by *agramatus* and can be split into several camps: Jordanes was illiterate, he lacked a polished education, and calling oneself uneducated prior to religious conversion to Christianity is a known trope. This third interpretation, however, relies also on one’s understanding of the word *conversio* which may be secular just as much as religious.

On being illiterate, Jordanes’ extant manuscripts are fraught with errors and this fact has led many to believe that *agramatus* for Jordanes meant that he was illiterate or lacking education.³³ But Bradley argues that the errors in the manuscripts were just as likely made by the copyists themselves than as by Jordanes.³⁴ Though the details may be woefully vague, if Jordanes were

³¹ Gunthigis was at least *magister militum* for the first two decades of the sixth century. *PLRE II*, Gunthigis, 1292.

³² He uses ‘mihi’ just twice in *Getica*, once during his passage from Rufinus in his introduction and during Attila’s speech to his soldiers; Rufinus: *Getica*, 1. Attila: *Getica*, 203. He uses it once more in *Romana* when discussing why he is not including a long list of consular names; *Romana*, 114. Goffart similarly points out that if Jordanes claimed to be unlearned, it only applied for the time when he was a notarius and clearly not thereafter; 1988, 43.

³³ Mierow 2006, 1, 16; Momigliano 1955, 196; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 17; Wolfram suggests that he was uneducated, 1975, 13.

³⁴ Bradley 1995, 346-362.

illiterate, how could he have been a *notarius*, especially that of a *magister militum*? This conclusion is simply implausible.

There are likewise other who have interpreted *agramatus* as ‘lacking a polished education’.³⁵ This is possible, especially if he grew up outside the empire. But again, his connection to his grandfather, the notary of the warlord, Candac, puts Jordanes into a well-to-do family with good connections where he could have obtained a polished education. It is likewise difficult to conceive that one who did not have a polished education could have become *notarius* of a *magister militum*. Jordanes would have been at least trilingual: Latin and Greek, for correspondences to and from Gunthigis, and Gothic for the language of the soldiers in Moesia and Thrace.³⁶ Furthermore, as scholarship continues to study *Getica*, it finds that Jordanes may be employing literary allusions to other major works such as Virgil and Herodotus as well as other more contemporary works such as Rufinus, who is taken almost word for word in the opening passage. *Getica* employs similar language constructions used by Sidonius and Claudian (either suggesting that he knew both the authors’ works or that he, like they, had some rhetorical training), it uses whole extracts from Priscus’ history, written in Greek, along with a host of other authors from the Greek and Latin historiographical traditions.³⁷ Finally, he boasts to have read and is, at least partially, abridging twelve volumes of Gothic history written by Cassiodorus. All this

³⁵ Goffart 1988, 44 (but only when he was a *notarius*).

³⁶ Croke 2001, 88-101; 2005, 75, 474. Constantinople was full of Latin speakers: Croke 2001, 78-101; 2005, 75-76. Agreed by Whately 2013, 74-75. Examples of possible notable readers: Croke 2001, 90-91.

³⁷ Rufinus, *Getica*, 1. Jordanes’ battle seen at Nedao is reminiscent of other listings of peoples/gods found in Sidonius (ie. Pan. Anthem. II, 21, 320; Pan. Avitus. VII, 121, 126; Pan. Major. V, 65) and most especially Claudian (ie. Pan. Prob., 83-99; Contra Ruf. II, 66-67; Pan. Hon. IV, 288-289; 291, 294, 295, 298, 317-318, 320-322, 328-329, 332; Consulship of Stilicho I, 373, 376-377, 379, 381, 390-391; Con. Stil. II, 11, 30; Con. Stil. III, 44-45, 60, 60-61, 64-65; Con. Hon. VI, 83, 87-88). Each of these shows a listing of proper nouns, be it peoples, generals or gods, made in a similar way to how Jordanes, in the sixth century, constructed his Battle of Nedao sequence. It may not necessarily be proof that Jordanes read these works, but it does show a trained knowledge of Latin rhetorical constructions, therefore suggesting a polished education. Herodotus: Brodka 2008, 227-245; Kim 2015, 127-142. Virgil: Swain, 2010; also compare the Battle of Nedao/Catalaunian Plains to the gathering of forces in Virgil, *Aeneid*, 10.165.

evidence points to one who was not only highly literate, but was also well-read. It is, therefore, likely that when Jordanes refers to himself as being *agramatus* that he is simply being humble and should not be taken literally.

Continuing, for the third camp, the concept of Christians calling themselves ‘uneducated’ prior to their conversions to Christianity is a known trope. It is a statement for their willingness to eschew worldly matters and focus solely on God, an idea Jordanes himself states in his introduction to *Romana*.³⁸ But, this is not necessarily what Jordanes is saying when he wrote: *ante conversionem meum notarius fui*. *Conversio* itself has many possible translations. Mierow translates the entire line as follows: ‘I also, Jordanes, although an unlearned man prior to my conversion, was [a] secretary’. But this interpretation is problematic: the line goes: *ego item quamvis agramatus Iordannis ante conversionem meam notarius fui*. ‘Iordannis’ in this passage is neatly separating *ego item quamvis agramatus* from *ante conversionem meam notarius fui* thus making the most likely interpretation to be ‘likewise I, Jordanes, although not a man of letters, was a notary prior to my conversion.’ *Conversio* goes with *notarius* and it is for this reason that I think it more probable that the sense of *conversio* is not a conversion of faiths, but instead converting from being a *notarius*, that is, the abandoning of a secular career.³⁹

Nevertheless, there are many theories on the interpretation of *conversio* and without more context, scholars will continue scratching their heads. The list of theories is extensive, but some more popular are conversion from: Arianism to Chalcedonianism, converting to a more religious life involving monkhood, and just simply the abandonment of a secular career.⁴⁰ As with many

³⁸ *Romana*, 5.

³⁹ A position also taken by van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II.

⁴⁰ Arianism to Chalcedonianism: Amory 1997, 195-235 and Bjornlie 2013, 111; van Hoof & van Nuffelen refutes this theory, 2017, II. Monkhood, Heather 2006, 351; Kelly 2010, 226, 265. Secular career, van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II.

other matters when it comes to Jordanes' life, nothing is known for sure. But it is notable that every facet of his life somehow impacts our understanding of him as a reader. To be clear, the bread crumbs of who he was are relevant to us seeing him as an educated Christian of possible Gothic decent who had the capacity (at least later in life) to abridge the twelve volumes of Gothic history. The narrator of *Getica*, if you will, may be subtly reminding us of his, Jordanes', authority as an author (and he himself has written and included his own works).

1.3 Jordanes' works, *Getica*, and his Attitudes

Only two of Jordanes' works survive, the *Romana* and *Getica*. He may have written at least one other work, the Life of Boethius.⁴¹ *Getica*, being the primary source for this thesis, will be our focus but *Romana* has an important place in teasing out some of Jordanes' more critical views. This section will first focus on why *Getica/Romana* were written. It then moves onto how the two works can be read together so long as we are cautious. However, Goffart's conclusion that Jordanes was a court propagandist is too strong, but his skepticism, in part, is well taken. For not only does Jordanes have more to say than the simple writing of a history, but also has biases which filter through his words. Jordanes wholeheartedly endorsed the conquest of Italy. Finally, *Getica* may contain oral history, but how that can be detected is indeterminable. This section will introduce the reasons why Jordanes wrote his works and how he did so in order to further delve into the Jordanes-Cassiodorus problem in the following section (1.4). Therefore, some conclusion will be withheld until then.

Getica was undertaken at the request of one Brother Castalius, about whom we know very little.⁴² Castalius may have been a monk, as suggested by the title 'Brother', but the title does not

⁴¹ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, XX.

⁴² Kaldellis even conjectures that he may not have existed at all. Such a conclusion would be most interesting; 2017, 48.

necessarily indicate monkhood. Castalius is either older than Jordanes or of a higher status. As we saw in the closing lines of *Getica*, Jordanes is confident in his work but concedes that if Castalius remembers (*commemoras*) differently, that he should add it (*adde*) to the work.⁴³ It may also be that if Jordanes was not an acquaintance of Cassiodorus that it may have been Castalius who referred Jordanes to the famous Italian senator.⁴⁴ But, as with all matters of Jordanes' life, the evidence is meagre and therefore most theories lack solidity.

The writing of *Romana* was requested by Jordanes' *nobilissime* Brother, Vigilus, about whom we likewise know very little.⁴⁵ Vigilus appears to have been either Jordanes' esteemed senior (which would be impressive as Jordanes was very old already, possibly in his seventies);⁴⁶ or, *nobilissime* may have indicated Vigilus' higher social, clerical, and/or monastic standing (if indeed Jordanes was a monk). Jordanes' advanced age and possible monkhood, fueled by the events transpiring by the time he finished *Romana* (which would have been after *Getica*), may be why Jordanes adopts a more overtly 'parrhesiastic' stance against Justinian.⁴⁷

Regardless, in *Romana*, Jordanes claims that both it and *Getica* should be taken as two parts of a single work, a world history.⁴⁸ Some modern scholars accept Jordanes' suggestion to

⁴³ *Getica*, 316. Meier's article on John Malalas might be relevant here. He shows that some of the distortion found in Malalas may be the result of diverging source traditions that produced 'living texts'. These texts were ones which could be picked up, added to, and sent back; 2017, 337-352. Thus, when Jordanes says *adde*, he may be alluding to this new trend of living text by which he is freely telling Castalius to modify his work as he pleases. If so, one must wonder just what might have been Jordanes' authorship and what might be part of 'nobis'.

⁴⁴ Van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, XVIII.

⁴⁵ Once more, Kaldellis states that we know so little about them that they may not have existed at all; 2017, 47. This is unlikely, but not beyond the realm of reason. For more on what we know about Vigilus see: Goffart 1988, 43-46.

⁴⁶ Croke 1987, 119; Kaldellis 2017, 48. cf. Goffart who is skeptical 1988, 43, footnote 103.

⁴⁷ Parrhesiastic: see Kaldellis 2017, 56-58. Kaldellis also argues that *Parhessia* was not a good tool for historians, who preferred more evasive tactics and thus does not state that Jordanes used it; 57-58. *Parhessia* is the ability to speak candidly, and often critically, to upper officials, including emperors, without recourse. Such rhetorical practices are usually limited to monks and very aged bureaucrats who have left their careers behind them.

⁴⁸ *Romana*, 4.

read both works as part of a singular whole while others disagree and say they should be read separately.⁴⁹ Both works are fairly different: *Getica* is a history while *Romana* is a chronicle (largely inspired by that of Marcellinus Comes).⁵⁰ Either way, since the two works were written around the same time, we may be able to detect some of Jordanes' concerns and critical views during his time of writing. So, long as we are not necessarily looking for historicity and continuity of narrative, but more specifically for the author's attitudes and mentality in his portrayals of the Huns, Goths and Gepids, we can, reasonably, take the two works as one.⁵¹

As van Hoof and van Nuffelen argue, while *Romana* presents a narrative of Roman military success and expansion, claiming a pessimistic tone that expresses a Christian rejection of the world, it does not lament the tragedies of human life. It instead laments the loss of imperial power. It is constructed in this way so that its reader might become more critical of Justinian's achievements, a view also argued by Kruse.⁵² *Romana*, therefore, claims one thing (rejection of the world and its kings that control the fates of men on their whims), but a closer reading reveals that it expresses a different perspective (lamenting the loss of imperial power, especially due to Justinian's policies).

It is still possible that Jordanes is actively attempting to reject worldly matters in place of Christian wisdom but cannot contain his criticism for the great emperor. *Romana*, for example, praises Julian ('the apostate') and his success against the Persians, a conspicuous passage for an

⁴⁹ Taken together: Goffart 1988, 21; Kaldellis 2017, 47. Separately, Goltz 2008, 273.

⁵⁰ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 485. Marcellinus Comes is discussed in further detail in section 3.6.

⁵¹ Kulikowski's warning on how 'we cannot simply pick and choose among the evidence offered by a text on the grounds of its seeming plausible or 'historical',' 2007, 54, is well taken.

⁵² van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II; Kruse 2015; Kaldellis 2017, 47-48. However, I find it curious why Jordanes does not feature in Kaldellis' conclusions; 56-58. Nevertheless, his conclusions on historians of the sixth-century being more prudent and evasive than willing to wield *Parrhesia* does, I would argue, rightfully to apply to Jordanes.

ardent Christian, while he uses more and more explicit language about Justinian's failures.⁵³ Such criticisms, as we shall continue to see, can likewise be detected in the works of Procopius. Dissatisfaction with Justinian's policies was not an isolated phenomenon.⁵⁴ Many authors during the sixth century often employed evasive language techniques because some imperial criticism was met with pogroms of the literary elite, thus making circumlocution, metaphors and allusions some of the ways that contemporary authors could discuss events without fear of reprisal.⁵⁵ Such criticism of Justinian can likewise be detected in *Getica* during the Battle for the Catalaunian Plains.⁵⁶ Therefore, whether each work should be taken with the other is beside the point as there is enough evidence to show that even if they are separate works, they are still linked by Jordanes' critical views of Justinian and the Gepids.

Goffart theorized that both *Getica* and *Romana* bore little (if any) historical value; he argues they should both be taken together and were not histories but were, instead, pieces of Justinianic court propaganda.⁵⁷ Mierow likewise called *Getica* a political pamphlet "portraying the reconciliation of Goth and Roman under the beneficent rule of Justinian."⁵⁸ Goffart took this a step further and said that *Getica* should therefore not be associated at all with Cassiodorus' twelve volumes and the reference to the volumes is a literary device attempting to obscure his true motives: propaganda targeting Italians, declaring "the birth of a child of mixed Roman and Gothic blood, symbolizing the assimilation or fusion that would take place once the emperor Justinian had

⁵³ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II. Julian: *Romana*, 363, 376-377.

⁵⁴ Croke 1983, 81-119; Scott 1985, 99-109; Bjornlie 2013, 82-123; Kruse 2015, 233-247; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, 1-26; Kaldellis 2017, 38-64.

⁵⁵ Bjornlie 2013, 84; Kaldellis 2017, 56-58.

⁵⁶ See Whately, 2013, 73.

⁵⁷ Goffart 1988, 21, 57-58, 73-79.

⁵⁸ Mierow 2006, 16.

suppressed Gothic independence.”⁵⁹ This conclusion, Goffart argues, could have had no place in Cassiodorus’ history and thus Jordanes should not be trusted.

Heather disagrees with Goffart for such an argument would mean that the first quarter of the work would have been superfluous.⁶⁰ Goltz likewise disagrees as the language used in *Getica* and *Romana* was inappropriate for the imperial court and Jordanes’ views of Justinian are just too critical.⁶¹ However, while many disagree with Goffart about the aims of *Getica* and *Romana*, many agree that Jordanes has a decidedly Christian and byzantine perspective.⁶² Nevertheless, Goffart’s skepticism, while too strong, is well taken. For, as we shall see especially in the third chapter, Jordanes may have been influenced by Justinianic propaganda (3.2) and he appears to be using his two works to portray his anti-Gepid (3.4) and anti-Hunnic (3.5) biases.

Jordanes wholeheartedly endorsed the conquest of Italy by Justinian, as seen via Kruse’s study on Jordanes’ positive view of Belisarius and negative view of Justinian recalling him from Italy for, seemingly, no good reason.⁶³ This is an important point, for) we will see that Jordanes chastises Mundo the Gepid for not renewing his oath to Athalaric after the death of Theoderic the Amal (see 3.6). He further judges Mundo because after working for twenty years under Theoderic, Mundo turns against Theodahad (Theoderic’s nephew and new king of the Ostrogoths) and defeats two Amal-Gothic armies.⁶⁴ We should not understand Jordanes to be against the war in Italy when he treats Mundo, but is instead using it to moralize at Mundo’s expense.

⁵⁹ Goffart 1988, 22, 73-79.

⁶⁰ Heather 1991, 48.

⁶¹ Goltz, 2008, 271-273. Similar arguments are put forward by Heather 1991, 40-46; Amory 1997, 303; and van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II.

⁶² Goffart 1988, 22; especially note Kulikowski’s cautious approach in 2006, 50, 54-56.

⁶³ Kruse 2015, 233-247.

⁶⁴ There are many Gothic groups, as Heather shows: 2007, 352-353.

Finally, it has been suggested that *Getica* likewise may contain oral history.⁶⁵ The presence of this sort of history may give weight to one of Jordanes' interests – the establishment of a dynastic link between Theoderic and Eutheric.⁶⁶ However, whether it may or may not be so, many scholars have decided to avoid this subject as it is impossible to determine what comes to us from oral history and what does not.⁶⁷ Kulikoswki further argues that while Jordanes does claim descent from the Goths, modern assumptions about what that entails clouds our understanding of Jordanes. Even if *Getica* retains oral history, just because the Goths believe the contents of their oral history does not make it true.⁶⁸ Thus the matter of oral history, as many other scholars have done, must be set aside.

1.4 Jordanes, Cassiodorus and *Getica's* intended audience

Another vague remark left by Jordanes, one that has perplexed scholarship, is to what extent he is actually abridging Cassiodorus' twelve volumes of Gothic History. Lamentably, or understandably, Cassiodorus' history does not survive and Jordanes' work is the only extant work which directly cites it. As we shall see, Jordanes could not faithfully abridge Cassiodorus and, therefore, the work he produced was not a positivistic abridgement but a whole new independent work. This section will begin with a block translation from *Getica* about the problematic matter of his abridging before moving onto two further points: first, scholarship is separated into three camps based on how they interpret Jordanes' abridgement of Cassiodorus. As we shall see, while he did attempt to abridge Cassiodorus, he simply could not faithfully do so and thus deviated from the original request by adding new sources into the making of an entirely new history.⁶⁹ Second,

⁶⁵ Heather 1991, 63-97. Amory 1997, 294-297.

⁶⁶ Heather 1995, 148.

⁶⁷ Goffart 1988, 26-29; Amory 1997, 295-298; Kulikowski 2007, 54-55.

⁶⁸ Kulikowski 2007, 54-55.

⁶⁹ The perspective argued by van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, 1-26.

Jordanes' audience were Latin speakers in Constantinople, perhaps the same audience as that of Marcellinus Comes (which would include Illyrian military and bureaucratic officials). It, however, must be iterated that we know very little about Jordanes and while it is possible that the two mentioned audiences may be Jordanes' targets, it is not for certain.

relictoque opusculo, quod intra manus habeo, id est, de abbreviacione chronicorum, suades, ut nostris verbis duodecem Senatoris voluminal de origine actusque Getarum ab olim et usque nunc per generationes regesque descendentem in uno et hoc parvo libello choartem: [2] dura satis imperia et tamquam ab eo, qui pondus operis huius scire nollit, inposita. Nec illud aspicias, quod tenuis mihi est spiritus ad implendam eius tam magnificam dicendi tubam: super omne autem pondus, quod nec facultas eorundem librorum nobis datur, quatenus eius sensui inserviamus, sed, ut non mentiar, ad trudanam lectionem dispensatoris eius beneficio libros ipsos antehac relegi. Quorum quamvis verba non recolo, sensus tamen et res actas credo me integre retinere.

you urge me to leave behind what little work I have in hand, that is the diminution of the chronicles, so that, in my own words, I might abridge the twelve volumes of the senator, [Cassiodorus], on the origin and deeds of the Goths whence they came all the way to the present day – descending through generations and kings – in one tiny book: [2] a sufficiently difficult command, as if imposed by one who did not know the burden of the task. Nor do you consider this, that my breath is too feeble to bring forth such a noble composition of speech: however, above every obstacle is that access to his volumes was not given to me where I might preserve his sense; but, so that I do not speak falsely, in the past I reread the books themselves on a three-day reading [due to] the kindness of his steward. Although the words of [the work] I do not recall, I believe I still honestly retain the general sense and the record of events.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Jordanes, *Getica*, 1-2.

First, scholarship is still uncertain to what extent Jordanes abridged Cassiodorus; but it can be carved into three separate camps: the Positivists, the Skeptic and the Independents.⁷¹ The positivists agree that, to some extent, Jordanes' *Getica* (though not necessarily *Romana*) is faithfully abridging Cassiodorus and his citing of other works are faithful.⁷² The skeptic argues that the work is not even attempting to abridge Cassiodorus for its motivation is not posterity, but court propaganda.⁷³ Then there are the independents, which is by far the largest category. This camp feels that Jordanes is attempting to abridge Cassiodorus but is simply unable to do so, particularly because of his lack of sufficient time with the twelve volumes. Thus, Jordanes is abridging what he recalls and cannot only cite Cassiodorus due to his time constraints; thus, he includes his own writings and those of other authors.⁷⁴ The first camp is more willing to accept Jordanes' accounts as historical narrative (though not always), the second does not at all and the third is near-uncertain about the whole work and is thus cautious in its usage.

Jordanes himself says that he cannot perfectly abridge Cassiodorus' work, only a sense, because he had just three days access to it. He may have, however, read the work previously (*relegi*). Moreover, as a result of a lack of agreed methodology or set principles for 'reliably ascribing certain parts of Jordanes to Cassiodorus', all efforts to specifically identify certain

⁷¹ Goffart similarly splits scholarship into two camps (which he drew from Wagner "Getia" 1967, 57-59): The German School, which considered Jordanes to be a servile shadow, faithfully abridging Cassiodorus, and the Italian School, which emphasized an identity of his own; 1988, 23-25.

⁷² Into this camp are Momigliano 1955, 194-196 (though he does recognize some independence in 1960a); Wolfram 1975, 13; Heather 1993, 317-353; 2006, 352-353; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 15-17 (but does come second to Ammianus where there is disagreement); and Kelly, 2010 (though there is some deviation).

⁷³ Goffart 1988; 2005, XVII, 383. cf. Liebechuetz who discounts any propagandistic aim in *Getica*, 2011.

⁷⁴ Amory 1997, 291-307; Bjornlie 2013; Croke 2003, 363-375; Goltz 2008; Kim 2013, 75, 91: distorted account in favour of Goths; it is difficult to identify Kim's stance on Jordanes, but he is generally critical of him. However, he sometimes cites Cassiodorus-Jordanes as though the latter is the former's epitome, 77, and then cites other information without challenging it (ie. with regards to Ardaric's loyalty to Attila), 94. Kulikowski 2008; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017; Swain 2010; and Whately 2013. Heather acknowledges Jordanes' use of his own work, 1991, 48.

passage are likely to remain fruitless.⁷⁵ Still, Jordanes does suggest that he has read Cassiodorus' work before, though what constitutes a previous reading we do not know.⁷⁶ It is likely that Jordanes obtained the permission to read the twelve volumes of Gothic History when Cassiodorus arrived in Constantinople in the late 540s – 554.⁷⁷ It is also likely that Jordanes and Cassiodorus did have some kind of relationship or acquaintanceship for it is highly improbable that Jordanes would be granted access to the twelve volumes based solely on the decision of Cassiodorus' steward. Still the kind of relationship that Jordanes had with Cassiodorus is best summarized as 'ambiguous'.⁷⁸ Van Hoof & van Nuffelen show that not only might Jordanes have abridged Cassiodorus' twelve volumes, but also may have used other works from Cassiodorus, namely the *Historia Tripartita* and *Chronica*, in the creation of *Getica*, perhaps because of his limited time to use the twelve *Gothic histories*.⁷⁹ Thus Jordanes, by using more sources than what was requested of him by Castalius (not to mention using some of his own knowledge), he did not strictly abridge Cassiodorus' histories for 'the references to these other authors is all the more striking as Castalius had asked Jordanes not [for] a history of the Goths, but for an abbreviation of Cassiodorus' *Gothic History*. By relying on Cassiodorus only to a limited extent whilst also integrating other sources, Jordanes strongly suggests he has produced more than an epitome of Cassiodorus' *Gothic History*.⁸⁰ This work will, as van Hoof & van Nuffelen argue, assume that Jordanes has produced

⁷⁵ Croke 2003, 365; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, III.

⁷⁶ For the argument around the interpretation of '*relegi*' as either 'read' or 're-read' see van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, III, XII, who argues that re-read is the more preferred interpretation, which is reasonable.

⁷⁷ Croke 2003, 364; Bjornlie 2013, 31, 80; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, XV.

⁷⁸ For more on their relationship, and on Jordanes' supposed connections to the Italian exiles, see van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017.

⁷⁹ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, III.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, III.

more than an abridgement of Cassiodorus' twelve volumes and, therefore, emphasizes independence from Cassiodorus' historical model.

Second, as for who the intended audience for *Getica* was, there are a few possible groups: Balkan military commanders, upper elites from Illyricum and the group of Italian exiles, of which Cassiodorus was a part.⁸¹ It was Croke who argued that the audience of Marcellinus Comes were the military commanders and elites of Illyricum, which Whately then theorized could also be applied to Jordanes' *Getica*.⁸² But, once more van Hoof & van Nuffelen caution, 'because of a lack of evidence for other Moesian or Balkan Goths in Constantinople, we cannot raise Jordanes to the level of a paradigm for a particular group' whether that be Balkan Goths or Italian exiles.⁸³ Thus, it may be that he had one or both such groups in mind as neither can be argued for definitively to be his intended audience. Like many matters pertaining to Jordanes, they seem particularly nebulous. There is very little that we know about him and too much that we wish to assume. We must bear this in mind as we progress even into the portions of *Getica* which cite Priscus. While there are some parts where Jordanes appears to be pulling from Priscus faithfully, such as Attila's funeral, the Battle of Nedao, as we shall see, may be laden with propagandistic exaggerations of Gepid strength. For this reason, we must also turn to Priscus and discuss his famous history that became a popular source in the sixth century.

1.5 Priscus of Panion

Of all the sources mentioned in Jordanes' *Getica*, Priscus of Panion bears the most importance for matters involving the Huns and, as a result, is often cited by later authors on such

⁸¹ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, IV. It could be that Jordanes too hoped that court officials might read his work, but the language of the *Getica* and *Romana*, which van Hoof & van Nuffelen stress, is not appropriate for such an audience. Thus, it may be that court officials read it, but it was not written specifically for them.

⁸² Croke 2001, 88-101; 2005, 76; Whately 2013, 75.

⁸³ van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, IV.

matters (with varying degrees of accuracy).⁸⁴ There is much about Priscus that we do not know but certain details about his life and works still survive. He was likely born in the 410s, but it cannot be said when he died.⁸⁵ He was trained in diplomatic and political rhetoric, having traveled to a number of places including Rome, Damascus, Alexandria and to Attila's court in the Hungarian plains.⁸⁶ Furthermore, he had a classical education in literature and rhetoric, much of it can be seen in the fragments of his lost history, and perhaps in law as well. He moved within the upper echelons of society and was a subordinate of the *Magister Officiorum* in the Roman East, Euphemios. His religious inclination is still unknown for "the tone of the history is determinedly secular, and religious considerations are effaced as much as is possible... Thus, the question of Priscus' religion is not answerable, nor does it seem especially important."⁸⁷

In the portions of Priscus that have come down to us, we can see his history bore extensive knowledge on the mechanics and happenings within the Hunnic empire. One work, the *Suda*, says that he wrote two histories in particular, one on *Byzantine History* and one *On Attila*, in eight books.⁸⁸ He was likely in his thirties during the time of his experiences in Attila's camp and in his sixties when he finally wrote the history.⁸⁹ His work is a classicizing history, utilizing anachronistic and classical terminology found in the works of, for example, Herodotus and Thucydides. Nevertheless, though his work may be classical, Priscus does not let the terminology influence the veracity of his work and "the imitations or allusions are merely a literary device not affecting substantively the information within the text."⁹⁰ Priscus makes reference, though, to many

⁸⁴ Such as, for our purposes, Procopius, John Malalas, Jordanes, and Marcellinus Comes.

⁸⁵ Given, 2014, xi.

⁸⁶ For more on Priscus' social life and career, see Given, 2014, xi-xiv.

⁸⁷ Blockley, FCH vol.1, 60; cf. Rohrbacher 2002, 87; Given 2014, xi-xii,

⁸⁸ *Suda Test.* 1, 2; ct. Given 2014, xiv.

⁸⁹ Given 2014, xi.

⁹⁰ Kim 2015, 127, 133. Given, likewise, argues similarly, 2014, xx.

matters, some of which he probably knew little about (such as military operations and the movements of distant tribes).⁹¹ But this may not have been important to his audience, who were a narrow, educated group of readers that ‘expected certain canons of composition to be observed’.⁹²

That said, Jordanes’ use of Priscus might not always be faithful. Blockley argues that very little of Jordanes’ passages on Attila and his sons actually came from Priscus.⁹³ Attila’s description in *Getica* is not consistent with other excerpts from Priscus, thus it probably came from some other Gothic source.⁹⁴ Ellac’s preference as Attila’s favorite son in *Getica* is contrary to Priscus’ account which posits Ernak as Attila’s favorite.⁹⁵ The Battle of Nedao, most relevant for our purposes, Blockley observes that while it may have come from Priscus, it has been highly distorted and given a Gothic slant. Furthermore, though Brodka argues that the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (relevant for sections 2.4 and 3.4) is an excerpt from Priscus, Blockley does not include it in his edition.⁹⁶ Such as it is, we are fortunate to have some of Priscus’ work survive for us at all. For this reason, all available fragments will be used in this thesis to determine the happening at the Battle of Nedao and its reception (and by extension the importance of the Gepids) in the sixth century authors. Procopius of Caesaraea, the next author we shall discuss, similarly cited Priscus numerous times and was a contemporary of our key author, Jordanes, in Constantinople.

1.6 Procopius of Caesaraea

Procopius was born in Palestinian Caesarea, ca. 500, likely to a family that ranked among the richest and most prominent citizens.⁹⁷ His father may have been Procopius of Edessa, governor

⁹¹ Knew little on certain matters: Wolfram 1988, 9.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Blockley, FCH vol.1, 113-114.

⁹⁴ Blockley, FCH vol.2, 63, also see footnotes 6 and 7 on page 113, further detailed on 165.

⁹⁵ Blockley, FCH vol.2, 114.

⁹⁶ Brodka 2008, 227-245; cf. Blockley, FCH vol.1, 118-123.

⁹⁷ Treadgold 2007, 176. For more on Caesarea, see Greatrex 2014, 77-79.

of *Palaestina Prima* under Anastasius. Raised an orthodox Christian, he professed conventional morals and conservative principles.⁹⁸ Having acquired an excellent classical education, he studied rhetoric in Gaza, a city known for its classical learning.⁹⁹ He was tolerant of pagans and heretics, regarding them more as a disease which should be cured if possible, but not eradicated. Fluent in Latin, Procopius perhaps studied law either in Constantinople or Berytus.¹⁰⁰ He eventually became the *assessor* for Belisarius and perhaps even his personal secretary. Once promoted to commander of the army, Belisarius continued to employ Procopius, who then began to document his campaigns, keeping detailed notes which he doubtlessly used to write his histories.¹⁰¹ Procopius was well-placed and capable of collecting, retaining, and disseminating relevant information.

Procopius set out to write a sophisticated view of posterity based on oral and written sources, involving classicising literary devices and narratives to comment on individuals, Roman or barbarian, ethnic identities, and political loyalties in the Balkans.¹⁰² Procopius does not always approve of Justinian's Balkan policies and will at times point to exaggerated devastation wrought by barbarians as proof of Justinian's inadequate policies, especially for relying on tribute payments made to barbarian groups.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ There are, however, views that Procopius was a Neo-Platonist: Kaldellis 2004a, 97-117. Cameron, however, is not convinced: 2004, 1621; Greatrex 2014, 91-92.

⁹⁹ Treadgold 2007, 177; Greatrex 1996, 128-133; 2014, 79. On Gaza: Greatrex 2014, 81-82.

¹⁰⁰ Latin: Procopius, *Pers.* 1, 1.14-5; 2, 22.1; *Goth.* 7, 15.23; 8, 6.9. Bjornlie 2013, 103. Law: Greatrex 2014, 80.

¹⁰¹ Procopius, *Pers.* 1, 12.20-24. Bjornlie 2013, 103.

¹⁰² Sarantis 2017, 218; Basso & Greatrex 2017, 59-60, who show this is especially so not only in the mimesis of Thucydides' and Herodotus' prefatory statements as a feature of Procopius' preface, but also the elaborate way the two models are integrated. Procopius' preface needs to be read closely using both Herodotus and Thucydides, not allowing the former to be clouded by the latter; 70.

¹⁰³ Sarantis 2017, 220. For further reading see: Sarantis 2017, 217-237. Procopius also did not necessarily need to use circumlocution to criticize Justinian; it was, instead, a feature of the classicizing genre: Greatrex 2014, 90. But also note that while such criticisms also tell us about Procopius' attitudes towards certain barbarians and are not, therefore, strictly a 'mirror-image of Roman society', Greatrex Forthcoming, 5. Furthermore, while he recognized regional identities (some of which he was critical of, such as the Heruls and Gepids), Procopius, as in the case of Pharas the Herul, did not hesitate to make exceptions for certain individuals, *ibid.* 10-11. On Pharas see: Procopius, *Goth.* 4, 4.29-31. Procopius also notes that Justinian let himself be distracted by Christian doctrine instead of

However, Procopius was not strictly concerned with criticizing Justinian; for comparisons to ‘archaeological, legislative, and other literary sources confirms that the historical information – events, places, people, and dates – at the heart of Procopius’ narrative can be taken seriously’.¹⁰⁴ He was a contemporary of many of the events on which he wrote, had political connections, and wrote from his own experiences as well as drawing on other primary source documents and from oral sources.¹⁰⁵ He relied more heavily on external sources for his works on the Balkans due to his lack of experience there, which is in contrast to his works on the Gothic, Persian and Vandal wars which he witnessed first-hand. Because of this, Balkan narratives will necessarily contain not just his own perspectives, but also those of his various source authors, potentially including barbarians.

Procopius is flexible in his employment of barbarian *topoi*.¹⁰⁶ But more than just using these *topoi* to advance his narrative agendas or reinforce positive and negative portrayals of particular individuals, one can get a sense of his perception of reality (that is, how he feels about particular barbarians). Barbarians are not just used to criticize emperors, like when Justinian pays the Gepids tributes or interacts with them in order to accentuate Justinian’s cruelty and treachery; but they can also be used to demonstrate non-Roman motivations for independence or group loyalty (such as his attitudes towards Ildiges and Mundo).¹⁰⁷ Ethnic identity and political loyalty, as Sarantis puts it, ‘are not necessarily the same thing as is sometimes implied by modern historians of early medieval barbarians.’¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Procopius knew how to both wield barbarian tropes to

finishing off the matter of Italy; *Goth.* 7, 35.11. Greatrex also summarizes some of the more extreme perspectives of Procopius which see Justinian’s reign as a brutally oppressive regime; 2014, 83-84. Kaldellis, for example, argued that Procopius opposed Justinian’s wars entirely; 2004a, 118; 2005a, 13; and again in 2010a, 257-259. cf. Brodka 1999, 243-255, who shows signs of favour.

¹⁰⁴ Sarantis 2017, 223.

¹⁰⁵ For more on Procopius’ sources, see Sarantis 2017, 223.

¹⁰⁶ Greatrex 2012, 62 also, Forthcoming (2018), 1-12.

¹⁰⁷ Sarantis 2017, 232. i.e. The Lombard, Ildiges, is regularly referred to by Procopius as a Lombard, while Mundo was both a barbarian and Gepid although he left the Gepids forty years prior.

¹⁰⁸ See also Greatrex Forthcoming, 5-6, 10-11.

advance an agenda and, at the same time, tell the reader just how he feels about particular barbarian groups. This understanding of Procopius is critical for when we discuss the matter of Procopius' attitude towards Justinian and the Gepids in the third chapter and, perhaps, how Jordanes himself may be sympathetic to some of Procopius' views.¹⁰⁹ While Procopius and Jordanes are sometimes critical of Justinian's reign, Marcellinus Comes, by contrast is quite supportive.

1.7 Marcellinus Comes

Born ca. 480 into the region of Illyricum, perhaps in the town of Scupi, Marcellinus was a native speaker of Latin who would eventually come to write in Constantinople for its Latin readers.¹¹⁰ He was a Christian, was tolerant of Pagans, and upheld Chalcedonianism against the Monophysites.¹¹¹ His family may have been decurions, thus explaining his lack of a polished education in Latin and Greek, though where he was educated cannot be said. He probably left Illyricum for Constantinople in 498, and enlisted in the imperial army where he was made a junior clerk.¹¹² By 520, he had become a senior clerk (*cancellarius*) and was working under Justinian.

Around the same time Marcellinus became *cancellarius*, he composed his first edition of *Chronicle*, and, ca. 527, was granted the titles of count (*comes*) and 'most celebrated' (*clarissimis*).¹¹³ He was apparently modest and wrote unpretentiously. He claims to be continuing Jerome's continuation of Eusebius, beginning in the year 379 after the death of Valens and the accession of Theodosius I, and ending in 518.¹¹⁴ His *Chronicle* was neither well written nor well

¹⁰⁹ See section 3.4-3.5.

¹¹⁰ Croke 2001, 20-21; Treadgold 2007, 227-228.

¹¹¹ On Pagans see: Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.*, 462, 468; on Monophysites: 451, 458, 459, 463, 466, 486, 494.1, 495, 511, 512.2-9, 513, 514.1, 516.3; Treadgold 2007, 228.

¹¹² Croke 2001, 22-24; Treadgold 2007, 228.

¹¹³ Treadgold 2007, 230.

¹¹⁴ We will discuss the significance of the year momentarily.

researched, often copying and combining a select few sources with little abridgement.¹¹⁵ He prefers to criticize advisors but not emperors, and payed attention to western matters.¹¹⁶

By 534, he was a member of Justinian's most trusted inner court and had begun to revise and extend his original version of *Chronicon* which coincided with the initiation of hostilities between Constantinople and Ostrogothic Italy. His new edition extended from the year 519 to 534. Responding to Zosimus' *Nova Historia*, in his *Chronicle*, Marcellinus shifts the blame for the decay of the empire presented in Zosimus' work by starting his history in 378, thereby indicating that it was not Christians who were bringing about the downfall of the empire, but the Goths.¹¹⁷ This blaming of the Goths was tactical. He argued that the western empire, in the year 476, perished viz. the deposition of the 'Gothic king', Odoacer.¹¹⁸ The fall of the western empire in 476 meant that the kingdoms which came to inherit the previously Western Roman empire were all barbaric, thereby giving legitimization to its reconquest.¹¹⁹ Thus, caution must be employed when considering the use of Marcellinus Comes due to his propagandistic programs and his lack of specificity. His near-contemporary, John Malalas, has similarly been identified as a possible contributor to the debate surrounding Justinian's policies.

1.8 John Malalas

Similar to Jordanes, most of what we know of Malalas comes from his own work.¹²⁰ He was born during the reign of Zeno (ca. 490 though exactly when cannot be said) and died sometime

¹¹⁵ Treadgold 2007, 233.

¹¹⁶ Treadgold 2007, 232.

¹¹⁷ Bjornlie 2013, 90-93.

¹¹⁸ Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.*, 476.2, 489; Croke 1983, 81-119; Treadgold 2007, 232, also notes that Odoacer was neither Gothic nor a king of the Goths. This may be so, but as we have seen identities are blurring in this time and thus the attribution of Odoacer to be a Goth shifts from impossible to plausible in the eyes of less learned individuals.

¹¹⁹ Bjornlie 2013, 94.

¹²⁰ Jeffreys et al 1990, 2-4.

after the death of Justinian in 565.¹²¹ Since his work is assumed to have ended with the death of Justinian, John Malalas may have been very old when he died. Because of his familiarity with the city of Antioch, it is generally assumed that he was born in Antioch or at least lived there for quite some time, hence why he is also known as ‘John of Antioch’.¹²² This is likely as he was also identified as a Syriac speaker from a Syriac culture.¹²³

He may have held the office of *Comes Orientis* in Antioch (where the office was located).¹²⁴ Sometime between 532 and 540, John entered the imperial service of Constantinople but should not be linked or confused with John Scholasticos, the patriarch of Constantinople from 565-577.¹²⁵ A loyal supporter of Justinian and of orthodox doctrinal views, he appears to have avoided falling under official censure.¹²⁶ He likely remained there working in the bureaucracy until his death sometime in the 570s.¹²⁷

The *Chronographia*, Malalas’ only extant work, was set out with two main purposes: to write a sacred history as interpreted by the Christian chronographic tradition (such as Africanus, Eusebius, Theophilus, Dominos, Nestorianos and other ‘City Chronicles’ of Antioch and Constantinople)¹²⁸ as well as, to write a history from the time of Adam to the reign of Justinian across 18 books.¹²⁹ It integrated the whole of Hebrew and classical history in a way reminiscent

¹²¹ Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxii.

¹²² Also known by another name: ‘John the Rhetor’; Jeffreys et al 1990, 3-7. Educated in Antioch: Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxii. May have had a lower level of Greek language education, fitting the *scrinarii* (who had profited from Justinian’s reforms); Treadgold 2007, 235-256; Bjornlie 2013, 117-118.

¹²³ He also appears to have traveled quite a bit from Thessalonika to Constantinople and Antioch.

¹²⁴ Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxii; Jeffreys et al 1990, 11.

¹²⁵ Treadgold, 2007, 235-256; Bjornlie 2013, 117. Scholasticos: Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxii; Jeffreys et al 1990, 17.

¹²⁶ Bjornlie 2013, 117.

¹²⁷ Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxii.

¹²⁸ Burgess & Kulikowski 2016, 94-113, argue that Malalas’ work is not a Chronicle, but a *breviarium*. Secondly, they discourage the use of the term ‘World Chronicle’ to dismiss any work that is not written in the classicizing historical style.

¹²⁹ Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxiii; Jeffreys et al 1990, 1. Malalas and John of Antioch, refuting Treadgold’s view (2007, 118-119, 246-256, 311-329), did not reproduce the chronicle of Eustathius of Epiphania; Greatrex 2017, 2; Mecella

of Gnostic and Manichaean traditions and was ‘firmly located in the context of the religious world of the sixth century.’¹³⁰ Similar to Marcellinus Comes’ *Chronicle*, it is conspicuously devoid of theological interest.¹³¹ In his work, he uses his own experiences as well as the experiences of others, though he does not usually indicate when he does.¹³² Broadly, he relies on written sources (some local sources and *breviaria*), drawn from Greek and Latin authors, up until his accounts on the reign of Zeno where he then relies more on oral history.¹³³

A more interesting aspect of Malalas’ *Chronographia* is his use of highly propagandized information. Scott argues that much of Malalas’ information about Justinian’s reign originated from propaganda but stresses that the work itself is not propaganda.¹³⁴ This is seen by how both Procopius and Malalas agree on many of the same basic facts of certain events but have widely different interpretations.¹³⁵ Indeed, Scott concludes, being a writer at all, even if one avoided polemical issues and the classical genre, was to run the risk of being labelled a Hellene.¹³⁶ However, Bjornlie takes this one step farther and argues that Malalas was himself a propagandist and that his work ‘bears the stamps of official court propaganda’.¹³⁷ One of Bjornlie’s major

2017, 74-78. But Malalas did indeed use Eustathius of Epiphania, Greatrex 2017, 2; Brodka 2017, 155-185. Scott argues he used Eustathius heavily for his earlier history; Greatrex 2017, 3; Scott 2017, 217-235.

¹³⁰ Jeffreys et al 1990, 11.

¹³¹ Jeffreys et al 1990, 14; Croke 2001, 99. Allen argues doctrinal allegiances in the early sixth century were complex. She infers from Malalas’ neglect of documenting church conflicts that he was writing in the Neo-Chalcedonian movement that attempted to reconcile supporters and opponents of the council; Greatrex 2017, 2; Allen 2017, 185-201.

¹³² Jeffreys et al 1990, 8; he drew on oral culture: Scott 1985, 102-103; Jeffreys & Scott 1986, xxiii.

¹³³ *Breviaria*, Greatrex 2017, 3; Kulikowski 2017, 203-217. Scepticism about Malalas’ sources can go too far, such as the fabricating of Philostratus out of nothing when the author is attested elsewhere; Greatrex 2017, 1; Carrara & Gengler 2017, 17.

¹³⁴ Scott 1985, 99, 106. Bernardi & Caire 2016, 119-131, argue that Malalas did not refrain from drawing on all sources available to him, intermingling legends and history. Some propaganda may have been the consequence of direct imperial prompting, Greatrex 2017, 3; Scott 2017, 217-235.

¹³⁵ Especially see: Scott 1985, 100-102.

¹³⁶ Scott 1985, 106.

¹³⁷ Bjornlie 2013, 118 – 121.

arguments is to accentuate the polemical discourses occurring in Constantinople especially during the sixth century, to which Malalas contributed.¹³⁸ To be clear, *Chronographia* was therefore structured using selective topics, many of which were polemical accounts over which critics of Justinian's reign and imperial court supporters contested.¹³⁹ In such a reading, he particularly adulterated events which involved the Goths to counter the idea of a Gothic state which rivaled that of the Romans (put forth by works such as *Getica*) and his willingness to do so shows how sensitive the issue of Gothic Italy had become in political conversations at the higher levels of the capital.¹⁴⁰ Malalas, in this case, muted the roles of the Goths in his work and intentionally manipulated events in which they, supposedly, participated (such as Valens no longer being killed at Adrianople but instead during an arms inspection).¹⁴¹ Thus, only a good Christian emperor had divine support in defending the state and, in Malalas' hands, the re-invention of past accounts to propagandistically promote Justinian became 'purposefully inventive'.¹⁴² Whether Malalas was a propagandist or not, both Bjornlie and Scott agree that the information presented in *Chronographia* during the reign of Justinian may be highly propagandized (whether intentionally made so or not).

1.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, Jordanes, writing in his advanced years, certainly appears to have the linguistic and literary training to alter texts and form them into his own narrative. Far from being illiterate, Jordanes draws on a variety of sources in multiple languages and wrote his histories right up to his own day.¹⁴³ Though writing independently of Cassiodorus, he did attempt to abridge his

¹³⁸ See chapter 4: Voices of Discontent in Constantinople, 2013, 82-123.

¹³⁹ Bjornlie 2013, 118.

¹⁴⁰ Bjornlie 2013, 118-120.

¹⁴¹ Bjornlie 2013, 120. cf. Malalas 13.34-35.

¹⁴² Bjornlie 2013, 118, 120.

¹⁴³ Goffart argues that Jordanes may be establishing himself as a 'low' character viz. his barbaric parentage and supposed lack of education, 1988, 82.

Gothic history but was practically unable to do so. He drew on a variety of sources and formed them into his own narrative. Jordanes' attitudes towards, ie. Justinian and the Amal Goths, have already been brought to light; thus, it is not beyond the realm of reason that Jordanes may have more to say about other tribes and characters in his *Getica/Romana* than previously thought (which we shall return to in 3.4).

While a difficult source shrouded with uncertainty (both in his use of sources and for his life), Jordanes has authored the most important surviving work for matters of the Huns following the death of Attila. For he not only speaks briefly on what happens to the Huns, but also cites Priscus, one of the foremost knowledgeable on the Huns of his day. Though there is evidence to say that Jordanes did not faithfully draw on Priscus in his Battle of Nedao scene, were we not to have *Getica* whole swathes of Hunnic history would have vanished without trace. Likewise, the works of Procopius, Marcellinus Comes and John Malalas are each integral for either corroborating some of Jordanes' attitudes or for giving alternative historical accounts (especially, as noted, for the matter of Mundo's career). Therefore, while this work will endeavor to be cautious in its usage, *Getica* will be analyzed in various ways in search of any details which may lend a glimmer of insight into the events following the death of Attila in 453, the Battle of Nedao in 454, and for the historiographical reception of the battle in the sixth century.

Chapter 2 The Battle of Nedao

2.1 Introduction

Stretching from the shores of the Black Sea to the reaches of the lower Rhine, the empire of the European Huns came to dominate nearly the entire trans-Danubian region. In Jordanes' narration of Attila's death, the catastrophic collapse of his empire initiated waves of people into migration – many of them headlong into the Roman frontiers.¹⁴⁴ The ruination of the Hunnic empire, he claims, was due to the rashness of Attila's sons, who attempted to evenly parcel out subjugated tribes as a family inheritance. But, this chapter will argue, it was not the rash ruling of Attila's sons which brought the fall of the Hunnic state, it was Attila's usurpation of his brother, Bleda, followed by Attila's unexpected death on his wedding night that plunged the empire into crisis. If there was civil war between the sons, it did not occur until after the death of Ellac, Attila's eldest son. Ardaric, the possible leader of the rebelling faction at the Battle of Nedao, was likewise not a royal Hun, vying for succession. He was a rebel and, as we shall see in the following chapter, his purpose in the Battle of Nedao scene, may not be as clear as we have assumed.

The chapter is divided into three parts: mechanics of the Hunnic state and why the battle took place, the literary purpose of the battle in Jordanes' narrative, and Ardaric's motivation at Nedao and are organized as follows: 2.2 begins with a discussion on the basics of Hunnic succession. The state was divided into two wings, each with its own king; it also presents a map of the Hunnic empire, centralized around the Carpathian Mountains. In 2.3 we shall then determine that the Huns not only practiced stratified leadership, but also their system of governance appears to be determined by a combination of lateral succession and agnatic seniority.¹⁴⁵ Under such a

¹⁴⁴ For more on the movements of barbarian after his death, see: Heather 2009, 207-265; and 2015, 209-229.

¹⁴⁵ That is, the next eldest males – whether brother, son or nephew – are most often the next elected kings. Stratified leadership is the ranking of kings. Thus, there is a junior king and a senior king.

model, we can understand why, after the loss of the lands west of the Carpathians, the Huns continued to practice diarchy. As a secondary objective, two tables are also produced: one which details the family of the Hunnic ruling dynasty, and another of their kings. The remainder of the chapter will be dominated by discussion pertaining to the Battle of Nedao.

In section 2.4, the battle itself is presented in both Latin and English. The passage appears to be formulaic, drawing on literary tropes which go all the way back to Homer's counting of ships. In 2.5, the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains is identified as a possible literary pair with Nedao; for one occurs just after the introduction of Attila, and the other just after his death. In 2.6, we discuss why the Battle of Nedao took place. Jordanes blames the sons of Attila ruling rashly, but the evidence seems to suggest that it was Attila's usurpation (and subsequently impressive reign) that shattered the line of inheritance understood for each wing of the empire. But worse yet, because Attila died on his own wedding night, followed by his funeral, the turmoil exploded because every notable figure in Attila's regime was present that day. The disagreement between the sons of Attila was, in reality, a dispute over the negotiations and subsequent reassertion of the traditional Hunnic ruling system, for which Attila's armies would need to be re-divided.

In 2.7, attention is drawn to the rebelling faction. Seeing that many of their kingdoms were about to be divided during the Hunnic negotiations, many kings of the subjugated tribes chose to rebel. Ardaric, king of the Gepids, appears to have led this rebellion. In 2.8, however, we find that Ardaric was not a royal Hun fighting for his own piece of Attila's estate. In the Icelandic *Hervararsaga*, Mundo's relationship as Ardaric's grandson, and Ardaric's name meaning 'Oath-king', as we shall see, are all tenuous connections for linking Ardaric to the family of Attila. Ardaric, we will conclude, was a rebel at Nedao and not a royal Hun. With this conclusion, we

then turn towards the sixth-century in chapter three and examine the historiographical reception of the Battle of Nedao during the reign of Justinian.

2.2 The East/West Geopolitical Divide

To begin, we must consider how and why the Huns divided their empire, in order to understand the outcome of the Battle of Nedao. Prior to the battle, the Carpathian basin constituted the heartland of the Hunnic West, with the Danube acting as the western and southern boundary and the Carpathians as the northern and eastern. The Eastern empire, flanked by the Danube to the south, the Carpathians to the west and the Pontic Sea to the east, was similarly well-fortified to contend with threats from the north and north-east beyond the Dniester River.¹⁴⁶ The mountains made up a convenient legal boundary between the two wings of the empire, just as the Danube separated Rome from barbaricum. The Carpathian Mountains did not, however, generate the Huns' system of stratified dual-kingship, it was their natural form of governance.

Stratified dual kingship (one king being the senior over the other) was natural to the Huns. The Hunnic kings: Octar, Mundzuk, Attila and Dengizich all ruled the western portion of the Hunnic empire and Rua, Bleda, Attila (after Bleda's death), Ellac and Ernak ruled the eastern.¹⁴⁷ From the reigns of Octar and Rua to that of Attila, the Western portion of the empire was west of the Carpathian Mountains and Eastern portion was east of the Carpathians.¹⁴⁸ Maenchen-Helfen argues this division may reflect the presence of at least two major tribal groups with distinct

¹⁴⁶ See figure 1 below in this section. Control, depending on the time, extended as far as Bug and Dneper rivers.

¹⁴⁷ Though Kim rightly questions how much control over the eastern reaches Attila had due to the murder of Bleda; 2013, 95. To be discussed more in the next section, Mundzuk's rule is not certain. Thus, his inclusion should be taken with caution.

¹⁴⁸ It is uncertain where the Huns ruled during the reigns of Uldin and Charaton. But we do know that Uldin did operate west of the Carpathians and the Olt river and therefore so would have Charaton; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 59.

identities and that it is unlikely the Huns had a natural system of dual-kingship; instead, it was a consequence of ruling over a multitude of tribes.¹⁴⁹ Kim turns this argument around by showing the Huns did have a concept of dualism (dual kingship) ‘representing the two wings (Left and Right or East and West) of the traditional steppe imperial system’ citing the Xiongnu system of government as a point of reference.¹⁵⁰ Olympiodorus in 412 calls the Hunnic king, Charaton, ‘first of the kings’ indicating that the Huns had a stratified system of dual kingship.¹⁵¹ By practicing dual-kingship, each king would thereby share rule over the same domain or over separate provinces (perhaps with some overlap).

Just as the Romans understood the Danube as a natural and legal boundary between Roman territory and *barbaricum*, so too may the Huns have used the Carpathians as their legal division between the two wings of the state.¹⁵² For the Western wing, the Danube as it turned north would have acted as a natural, and strategic boundary. Even when the Huns controlled Pannonia, they could rely on the defensive nature of the wide Danube as well as the Dinaric Alps to the west and the south to help fortify their territory. The Carpathians, likewise, stretched north and west, almost connecting the Danube with the Carpathian crescent. The Mountains, for all intents and purposes,

¹⁴⁹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 85-6.

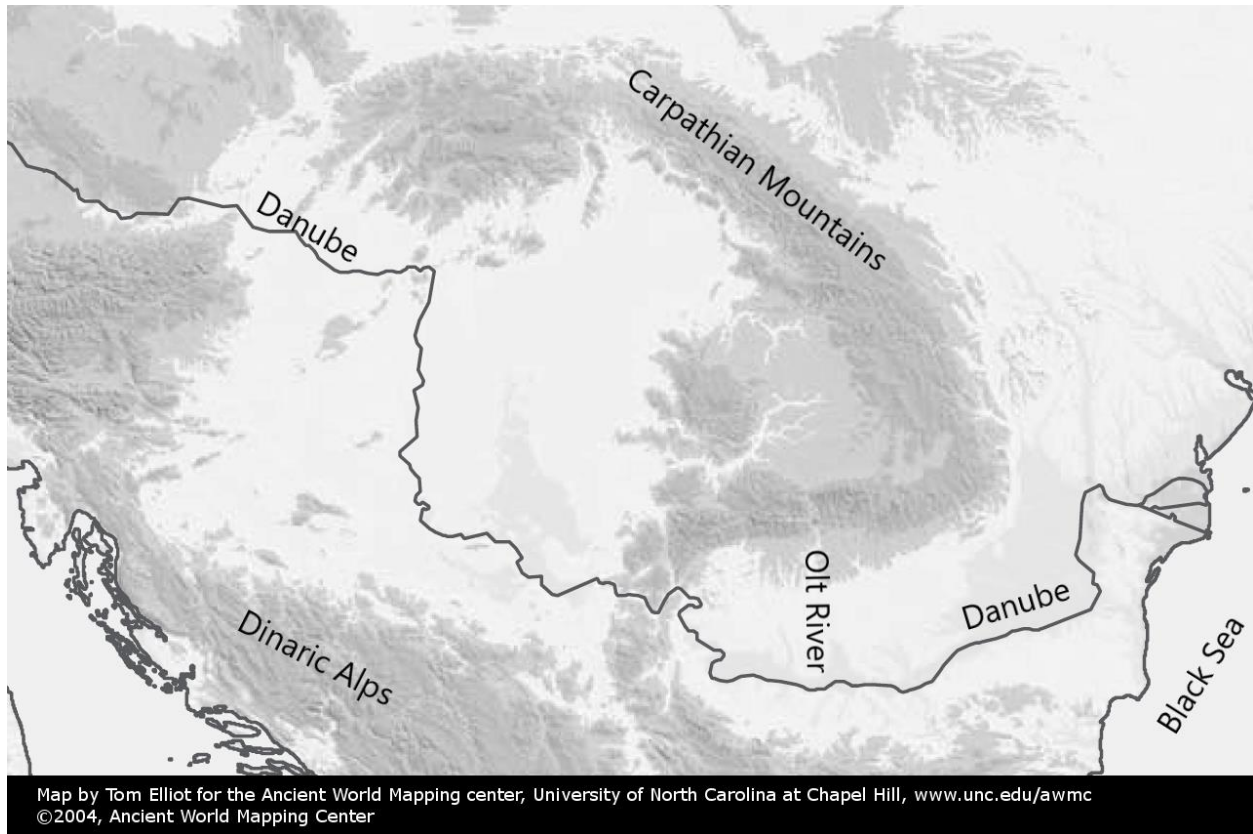
¹⁵⁰ Kim 2013, 23, 34-40, 86. Heather calls multiple kings and stratified leadership highly appropriate for nomadic society; 2009, 220. Having two wings was likewise useful for defending against other nomadic invaders to the east; 2009, 213.

¹⁵¹ Discussed further in 2.3. Charaton is not actually called a Hun, but it is easily inferred. Olympiodorus, fr. 19; Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 80; Blockley, FCH vol.2, 182.

¹⁵² See Figure 1, below. On the legal understanding of the Carpathians, we can look to the Romans as an analogue. On the flexibility of *finis* see: Trouset, 1993, 26-7; for further reading on the definition of *limes*, see Isaac 1988, 125-147. The boundaries could be natural geographical features which legally separate the empire from *barbaricum*: Greatrex 2007, 106-107. cf. Whitaker, 1994. It was important to know when one reached Roman soil and at what point Roman law no longer applied; Carrie, 1995, 49-51. Especially note that the Persians and Romans knew exactly where their borders were: *De Cerimoniis*, 89, in Greatrex & Lieu 2002, 124-8; Ps. Sebeos, 84.20-32, in Greatrex & Lieu 2002, 174; Greatrex 2007, 109-110. It is, therefore, not unreasonable that the Romans and Huns also came to understand the Danube as their legal division and for the two wings of the Hunnic state to conveniently separate themselves using the Carpathians.

were a natural fortress that conveniently split the Hunnic empire and fortified its western portion.¹⁵³ After the Battle of Nedao and the eastern retreat of the Huns, the Mountains became the western flank of their reduced empire.

Figure 1: The Hunnic Empire and the Carpathian Mountains



The Carpathians divided the Western portion from the Eastern, but the mountains did not necessarily lead to the Huns' system of stratified dual-kingship.¹⁵⁴ There are other empires and kingdoms that practiced dual kingship.¹⁵⁵ The Turks had an eastern (or sometimes called northern) and western political division. Each kaghan, a Turkish king, ruled over their respective portion of

¹⁵³ It is not unreasonable to assume that certainly the Western empire grew and shrank beyond the Carpathians, but the Basin would have constituted the heart of the kingdom.

¹⁵⁴ See figure 1. Thanks to Jashong King for cropping the map.

¹⁵⁵ See Kim 2013, 34-40, for examples of dual-king steppe empires. Sinor 1990, 305-308.

the empire, with the eastern kaghan being the senior.¹⁵⁶ It would be prudent to point out that while the Turks and Huns appear to both practice dual kingship, the Huns did not necessarily recognize the Eastern ruler as the senior; for, if this were the case then Dengizich, Attila's second eldest son, would certainly have become the Eastern ruler over the Akatziri and not Ernak, the youngest of Attila's sons.¹⁵⁷ That Dengizich continues to operate in the West is indicative that geography is likely not a factor in the selection of the senior king.

Likewise, the Gepids and the Suevi may also have had dual kings.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the divide could not have been due to the presence of the Carpathian Mountains, for even after the death of Attila and Ellac (when the Western empire was lost to Ardaric and the other rebelling tribes), the Huns regrouped under Dengizich and Ernak (both were Ellac's younger brothers and were sons of Attila and Erekan – Attila's first wife), ruling together over the remainder of the Eastern Empire (with the former ruling the new Western half and the latter the Eastern). This shows that it is doubtful that dual kingship, as Maenchen-Helfen argues, was the result of a multitude of tribes.¹⁵⁹ The presence of dual kingship in the years after Nedao, and also both kings being from the same dynastic family, is itself evidence that diarchy was the Huns' traditional system of rule. Were it not, dual kingship would certainly not have survived the loss of the Western empire.

There are also plenty of examples of tribes who dwelled in the same regions that did not practice dual kingship. Before and after the arrival of the Huns, both the Visigoths and Ostrogoths

¹⁵⁶ Sinor 1990, 305-316. However, the Turk's matter of seniority appears to only be an issue of practicality. The eastern state seems to have had more resources than the western but tension between the two wings led to much infighting and political maneuvering. Also note the Hsiung-nu's seniority of the Wise king of the Right; Barfield 1989, 38.

¹⁵⁷ Attila, likewise, would have shifted his headquarters east.

¹⁵⁸ Kim 2013, 95.

¹⁵⁹ Kim 2013, 40 also argues that dualism is revitalized with the accession of Dengizich and Ernak.

appear to have practiced solitary rule and inherited succession, as well as the Franks and Vandals.¹⁶⁰ The Gepids, before and during the reign of Attila, also appear to have practiced monarchy, as we only hear of Ardaric being *the* king of the Gepids at both the battles of the Catalaunian Plains and Nedao. It is only after their victory at Nedao that the Gepids *perhaps* took on dual kingship.¹⁶¹ As can be seen, prior to the arrival of the Huns, central and eastern Europe largely practiced monarchy and father-son (inherited) succession thus indicating that the presence of diarchy thereafter was, perhaps, the result of the arrival of the Huns in Europe.

We may, therefore, conclude that the division of the Hunnic empire, as well as their dual kingship, are traditional features of the Huns and are not necessarily circumstantial due to their geographical location between the great Hungarian steppe, the Danube, the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea. Furthermore, their system of succession, to be detailed imminently, and dual kingship are revolutionary compared to what existed at the time of their arrival in Europe. Thus, the evidence presented suggests that Kim is correct: the Huns did indeed have a concept of an East-West divide with dual kings, a tradition they shared with the Turks, Xiongnu and other steppe empires.

2.3 The Hunnic Kings & Mechanics of Succession

We turn to the mechanics of succession practiced by the Huns. By understanding why power was transferred between the kings, we can reasonably infer how it came to be that Ellac,

¹⁶⁰ There are always exceptions. The Goths described in Jordanes also appear to idealize father-son inheritance as seen by the ruling of the first eight kings of the combined Goths. Regardless of whether it is true, it perhaps gives us a glimpse into their preferred system of dynastic succession. Heather 1991, 20-33. By the 470s, on the other hand, the Ostrogoths regarded victorious leaders as demi-gods, which can also be seen amongst many other gothic groups – even Theoderic’s prodigious deeds could not dissuade the Goths from selecting their kings based on practical leadership ability. Heather 1995, 173.

¹⁶¹ Kim 2013, 95. However, whether the Gepids practiced father-son inheritance cannot be said with any certainty because of scanty evidence. Still, we do know that Mundo was Ardaric’s grandson and that he was considered a prince.

eldest son of Attila, became the next king of the Huns even though he is nowhere referred to as such.¹⁶² Furthermore, we can then understand how and why Dengizich and Ernak came to be co-kings after a decade of silence. Again, both were Ellac's younger brothers and were sons of Attila and Erecan – Attila's first wife.

This section will proceed as follows: though the evidence is thin, it appears that the Huns practiced a form of *agnatic seniority* instead of proper lateral succession.¹⁶³ This means that brothers, sons, or nephews of the current reigning monarchs were mostly likely to be appointed, with the order of succession determined by how old they were and from which wife they came. Similarly, seniority among the two kings was determined not by geography but by age.¹⁶⁴ Uldin and Charaton were, as far as we know, the first two kings of the Huns, who may or may not have been from the same dynastic family as Attila. Donatus, on the other hand, was not a king of the Huns. Before the reigns of Octar and Rua, it is also easier to think of the Hunnic state not in terms of West and East, but rather in terms of Left and Right wings. For prior to the Huns settling on both sides of the Carpathians, the relative geographical locations of the kings are not easily split between western and eastern portions; this becomes evident again after Nedao when both Dengizich and Ernak are found east of the Carpathians. Nothing can be said with certainty about the identity of the unnamed king who led a raid into the Roman Empire in 422 (between the reigns of Charaton and Octar/Rua). However, from the reigns of Octar and Rua (Attila's uncles) to

¹⁶² To be clear, Ellac is not called a king of all the Huns in any source. *Getica*, 262-263; Priscus, fr. 8.56, 8.90-91, 8.128, 8.156; cf. Blockley, FCH vol.2 fr. 11.2-15.1. he is, however, understood to be king of the Akatziri Huns. Priscus fragments (if otherwise not specified) follow Given 2014 (though his fragment numeration is based on Carolla's, 2008). Given has conveniently juxtaposed the fragments of Carolla and Blockley, FCH vol.2, as well as his own translations on pages xlvi-xlvi, 2014.

¹⁶³ Agnatic Seniority is a patrilineal order of succession whereby brothers of the king succeed until exhausted then their sons succeed. Lateral succession is a system where the next king was elected or chosen from the ruling dynastic family. Indeed, it seems the Hun's system blended these two into their own hybrid practice.

¹⁶⁴ Kim argues that the eastern king was always the senior; 2013, 54-55.

Dengizich and Ernak, we are more certain about the familial relationships between these various kings. Thus, this part will analyze the remaining kings, indicating their order of succession and over which wing they ruled. As a result, this section will produce two trees: a genealogical table of the ruling family of the European Huns starting from Uldin and Charaton then finishing with Ernak, and a tree of all the Hunnic kings which includes their order of succession, which wing of the state they ruled and which of the two kings held seniority.¹⁶⁵

The form of succession practiced by the Huns is still a topic open for debate, but there may be evidence to suggest that the Huns practiced a form of agnatic seniority (passing the kingship to the next eldest male heir in the family). Thompson argued that the Huns had no kings at all during peace time and during wartime, the Hunnic kings ruled like Alans who were ‘simply those who had won the greatest reputation as military leaders.’¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the Huns did not have a royal dynasty until at least the 420s when Rua rose to power; and so, they did not yet have a dynastic kingship.¹⁶⁷ Maenchen-Helfen disagrees with Thompson on the matter of succession. As Priscus indicated during his travels to Attila’s camp in 449, Attila’s beard was already sprinkled with grey. Attila could not have been born before 400 and Mundzuck, his father, before 370. Therefore, the existence of a hereditary aristocracy was present long before the Huns broke into what is today Ukraine.¹⁶⁸ Kim continues the debate by juxtaposing the Huns alongside other steppe empires, which practiced lateral succession.¹⁶⁹ He concludes that the Huns did not strictly practice

¹⁶⁵ PLRE II, 283, s.v. Charaton; 1180, s.v. Uldin. Note Ernak’s prophesy to restore Attila’s empire after an eclipse: fr. 8. As we shall see, it is easier to think of the Hunnic empire as being split into two wings prior to their settling around the Carpathians. Thus, it will be shown that the western Hunnic king (the king that ruled west of the Carpathians) was the king of the Left prior to their settling around the mountains and the Eastern king was the king of the Right.

¹⁶⁶ Thompson 1975, 44-45.

¹⁶⁷ Thompson 1996, 62-67.

¹⁶⁸ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 198.

¹⁶⁹ Kim 2013, 14. Primogeniture is the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child.

primogeniture and that any male heir could inherit the crown as the position of the king was not owned by the individual steppe monarch, but by their ruling clan.¹⁷⁰ While Kim's system of inheritance is largely correct, the evidence preserved in the historical record suggests that inheritance was biased to the next eldest males and that the senior king appointed the next junior king.¹⁷¹

Before the reigns of Octar and Rua, we know of only two Hunnic kings whom we can identify with any certainty: Uldin and Charaton. It is unlikely that Uldin and Charaton co-ruled together. Instead they both ruled the Western (or Left Wing) of the Hunnic steppe empire, the former before the latter, as it entered eastern Europe. In this period, it is easier to conceive Hunnic rulers not as kings of the West or East, but as kings of the Left and Right wings.

The first Hunnic warlord of whom we are certain was Uldin, who, in 408, crossed the Danube and invaded the Roman Empire.¹⁷² It is unclear whether Uldin ruled alone or with a co-king. Altheim conjectures that Uldin and Charaton ruled together until as late as 414, but, as Maenchen-Helfen points out, there is no textual evidence to support this hypothesis.¹⁷³ Too much is uncertain of this period due to the loss of Olympiodorus' *History*, written in the fifth century.

¹⁷⁰ We must also recognize that Kim's system of lateral succession needed to include his arguments on Ardaric being a royal Hun. In other words, for Ardaric to be a royal Hun fighting for succession at Nedao, the Huns' system of succession would need to be able to recognize one who married into the royal dynastic family as a possible contender to the inheritance. Therefore, this section is also partly arguing against this possibility, for all the Hunnic kings appear to be paternally related.

¹⁷¹ The Hsiung-nu's system of succession was, by contrast, almost exclusively agnatic (brothers before sons, so long as they were old enough); Barfield 1990, 41-45. For clarity, this thesis presents a model which favours the eldest males, regardless if they were a brother or son.

¹⁷² Jordanes claims the first king of the Huns is Balamer. However, Balamer's existence is so uncertain that even Maenchen-Helfen did not devote a section to the 'shadowy' king; 1973, 59; he instead begins with Uldin. Heather too considers Balamer not a Hunnic king but a Gothic one; 1995, 148. Thompson likewise agrees that we are now reasonably certain that he did not exist; 1996, 63. For these reasons, we can acknowledge the possibility that Balamer was a Hunnic king but will otherwise not include him into the list due to a lack of certainty.

¹⁷³ Altheim 1951, 98; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 73. There is even speculation that Uldin was the father of Octar and Rua; Seock 1920, 282.

In a similar way to how Priscus' history recorded the Huns under Attila and thereafter, Olympiodorus' history seems to have recorded the Huns during the early fifth century.¹⁷⁴ If Charaton and Uldin were co-kings, following Altheim's conjecture, then Charaton would have been the Western king (of the Left Wing) and Uldin the Eastern (of the Right), for Olympiodorus' work was primarily concerned with the Western Roman Empire and it is from his work that we hear about Charaton.¹⁷⁵ But, arguing against Altheim, it is more reasonable that Uldin and Charaton were *not* co-rulers and that the latter replaced the former as the king of the Left Wing. Olympiodorus narrates:

ἽΟτι διαλαμβάνει περὶ Δονάτου καὶ τῶν Οὔνων, καὶ περὶ τῶν ῥηγῶν αὐτῶν τῆς εὐφροσύνης τοξείας, καὶ ὡς πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ Δόνατον ὁ ἱστορικὸς ἐπρέσβευσε. καὶ τὴν διὰ θαλάσσης αὐτοῦ πλάνην ἐκτραγῶνδεῖ καὶ τὸν κίνδυνον. καὶ ὅπως ὄρκῳ Δόνατος ἀπατηθεὶς ἐκθέσμως ἀποσφάζεται, καὶ ὅπως Χαράτων, ὁ τῶν ῥηγῶν πρῶτος, ἐπὶ τῷ φόνοῳ εἰς θυμὸν ἀνάπτεται, ὅπως τε πάλου βασιλικοῖς δώροις διαπραΰνεται καὶ ἡσυχάζει· ἐν οἷς καὶ ἡ πρώτη τῆς ἱστορίας δεκάλογος.

[Olympiodorus] discusses Donatus and the Huns and the natural talent of their kings for archery. The historian describes the embassy on which he went to them and to Donatus and he waxes tragical on his wanderings over the sea and the danger he faced. He tells how Donatus was deceived by an oath and wickedly killed, how Charaton, the first of the kings, flared up with rage at the murder and how he was calmed down and pacified with regal gifts. This marks the end of the first group of ten books.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 73; Thompson 1996, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Olympiodorus, fr. 19; Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* 80; Blockley, FCH vol.2, 182. Left and Right Wings: In the times before the reigns of the Hunnic kings Octar and Rua, when we are uncertain about who ruled where, it is easier to think of the Huns split into two wings as opposed to ruling over set geopolitical locations (especially since such nomenclature can be misleading with respect to their understood geopolitical spheres of operation). Indeed, Charaton is named as the first of the kings.

¹⁷⁶ Translation from Blockley, FCH vol.2, 182-183; Olympiodorus fr. 19.

Before we address the issues of Charaton and Uldin ruling the same territory, it has been, and still is, argued that this Donatus was a king of the Huns.¹⁷⁷ This hypothesis came from Pritsak, who argued that Donatus was the first of the Hunnic kings.¹⁷⁸ But Maenchen-Helfen rejects this, arguing it is groundless and based on assumptions in the fragment.¹⁷⁹ Blockley agrees with Maenchen-Helfen, stating that Photius does not say Donatus was a Hunnic king, as Donatus is a Roman name. But, Blockley continues, the passage does imply Donatus was some sort of leader among the Huns.¹⁸⁰ Maenchen-Helfen's and Blockley's interpretations are the most reasonable for it is quite doubtful that Charaton, the first of the [Hunnic] kings, would have been placated by regal gifts if his co-king were murdered while a Roman envoy was visiting his camp. In fact, were Donatus a king of the Huns, the passage would more clearly reflect that a king, and not just a Roman defector, had been murdered (assuming Olympiodorus would have survived the ordeal at all).¹⁸¹ It is therefore improbable that Donatus was a king at all and shall thus not be ranked among them.

The words *Χαράτων, ὁ τῶν ῥηγῶν πρῶτος*, “Charaton, the first of the kings” implies that Charaton is not only king [of the Huns], but first among kings, that is, he is not chronologically the first king, but the first king among a number (which we can infer as the first among two kings). There are a number of implications for this passage. Firstly, it hints that, as we have already discussed, the Huns practiced not only dual kingship, but also stratified their leadership (one of

¹⁷⁷ Thompson 1996, 66, maintained that Donatus was a king. Kelly 2010, 89 agrees. Also see, PLRE II, 376, s.v. Donatus 2.

¹⁷⁸ Pritsak 1954b, 213.

¹⁷⁹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 73.

¹⁸⁰ Blockley, FCH vol.2, 216.49.

¹⁸¹ Using Priscus' account as an analogue, we can see the tension which befell the Roman embassy when the conspiracy to murder Attila was unearthed. Should a king have been killed, it is doubtful any embassy could buy its way out. Priscus, fr. 7, 8.27-35.

the kings was the senior). Secondly, because Olympiodorus is primarily concerned with matters of the Roman West, presumably Charaton was the Western Hunnic king to whom Olympiodorus was sent as an embassy. Thirdly, there is no mention of Uldin ruling with Charaton.¹⁸²

Since Uldin operated both east and west of the Olt River and the Carpathians, it is unlikely that the Huns understood the Carpathians yet to be the legal boundary between the two wings of the state.¹⁸³ Instead, the two kings (that is, Uldin and whoever his co-king was) operated as two groups under one banner with each king controlling a flank – the Western king (we will call the Left Wing) invaded new lands while the Eastern (the Right Wing) guarded the rear from invaders.¹⁸⁴ This might explain why only Uldin is known to the sources and his co-king is otherwise unattested in any extant source.

Uldin would have been the most important detail to the Romans – that is, he was operating along the Danube. He was, for example, called upon by Stilicho in 406 to help defeat Radagaisus and crossed the frozen Danube in 408.¹⁸⁵ The fact that Uldin was center stage in the sources prior to Olympiodorus' embassy to the Huns in 412 means that Uldin must have been in control of the Left Wing while his co-king controlled the Right (and is thus unknown or not of significance to the sources prior to 412). This highlights another implication: Uldin not being mentioned in Olympiodorus (nor ever again) implies that Charaton is the new king of the Left, operating closest to the western Roman empire. Being kings over wings is also plausible for after the Huns' defeat

¹⁸² One could even speculate that it was the catastrophic ending to Uldin's reign which resulted in the adoption of dual kingship, in which Charaton became the senior over his unknown junior in the right wing.

¹⁸³ Olt River: Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 59.

¹⁸⁴ For further reading on the Huns migrating west across Inner Asia, see de la Vaissiere, 2015, 175-192. Kim 2013, 23, 34-40, 86

¹⁸⁵ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 60.

at Nedao, in the 460s we find Dengizich and Ernak both operating as co-kings again with the former becoming the king of the Left (West), and the latter, the Right (East).¹⁸⁶

Therefore, it is more likely that Uldin died sometime between 408 and 412 and Charaton became the new western Hunnic king (of the Left), succeeding Uldin. Charaton and Uldin, thus, did *not* co-rule together. This system of Left and Right also helps us understand how the Huns divided their kingdom prior to settling around the Carpathians, where the mountains then became a convenient legal boundary that separated the Western Hunnic empire (the old Left) and the Eastern empire (the Right). In this Left and Right system, Uldin and Charaton were both kings of the Left who, so to speak, were tasked with the invasion of new lands into which their steppe empire could progress while their unknown Right kings defended the rear.

After Charaton and Uldin, the next Hunnic ruler is the unnamed king that led the invasion of 422. In this raid the Huns devastated Thrace, but no king is named as their leader.¹⁸⁷ Kelly speculates that the unnamed Hunnic king was either Octar or Rua.¹⁸⁸ This is certainly possible, as both Octar and Rua are seen operating in the 430s. However, Maenchen-Helfen discusses the events around the raid of 422 with greater detail and does not suggest, nor sees any reason to; the evidence is completely silent on the matter and therefore the identity of this unknown Hunnic ruler remains inconclusive.¹⁸⁹

Octar and Rua are the earliest Hunnic rulers about whom details are known.¹⁹⁰ It is possible that Uldin is the father of Octar and Rua, but this is speculation.¹⁹¹ As we shall see, whatever Uldin

¹⁸⁶ The Hsiung-nu likewise practiced this form of co-ruling with Left and Right wings, Barfield 1990, 37-38.

¹⁸⁷ Marcellinus Comes, *Chron.* s.a. 422.

¹⁸⁸ Kelly 2010, 89.

¹⁸⁹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 74-76.

¹⁹⁰ Jordanes also claims there was a Hunnic king by the name of Balamer, but it is uncertain if this individual has ever existed.

¹⁹¹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 85.

and Charaton's relationship to each other and to Octar and Rua, it is more probable that they were all from the same dynastic family and to speculate further would be groundless.

Octar and Rua were brothers, and the former ruled in the West, the latter in the East.¹⁹² After Octar died, sometime between 430 and 432, their brother, Mundzuk, may have taken Octar's position in the West, with Rua in the East.¹⁹³ Shortly thereafter Rua died, ca. 435, and Bleda, Mundzuk's eldest son, took his place in the East. Mundzuk died soon after Bleda's accession, leaving the West to Attila, Bleda's younger brother.¹⁹⁴ After the death of Bleda in 445, murdered by Attila, Attila became the sole ruler of the Huns until his death in 453.¹⁹⁵ Thereafter, Attila's eldest son, Ellac, probably became either sole ruler or, if he had a co-ruler, the Eastern king.¹⁹⁶ After Ellac's death in 454 at Nedao, we next hear of Dengizich ruling in the West, ca. 460, and Ernak, his younger brother and the youngest of Attila's sons, in the East.¹⁹⁷ After Dengizich's death in ca. 469, we hear nothing about Ernak or the European Huns again. Ellac, Dengizich and Ernak are all siblings from the same mother, the first wife of Attila, Erecan.¹⁹⁸

From the history detailed above, we can establish that the Huns appear to be practicing a form of agnatic seniority. Octar and Rua are brothers and when the former died, power may have gone to their brother, Mundzuk. After Rua died, his portion of the empire went to Bleda,

¹⁹² Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 86.

¹⁹³ On Mundzuk being king, PLRE II, 767, s.v. Mundzuch. His ruling as a king is highly uncertain, but possible. If Mundzuk did not rule, we ultimately do not know why he was passed over. As previously noted, he was probably born ca. 370, which would make him well into his 60s during the reign of Rua. Age alone may not necessarily preclude him from becoming king, but other age-related maladies most certainly could. For indeed Rua ruled alone, it seems, for a few years before finally appointing Bleda as his successor.

¹⁹⁴ PLRE II, 951, s.v. Rua.

¹⁹⁵ Fyfe 2016, 9; Halsall 2007, 251; Kelly 2008, 129; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 126; Thompson 1996, 178.

¹⁹⁶ Note that power here likely passes to Attila's sons as there are no other male claimants to the throne following Attila's grab for power from Bleda.

¹⁹⁷ PLRE II, 354-355, s.v. Dengizich; 400-401, s.v. Ernach.

¹⁹⁸ PLRE II, 400, s.v. Erecan; 1337, s.v. 47. Erecan is sometimes referred as 'Kreka; Given 2014, 67, 77.

Mundzuk's eldest son and Rua and Octar's nephew.¹⁹⁹ When Mundzuk died, his portion went to Attila, Bleda's younger brother. Though Attila's murdering of Bleda is the exception to the norm, after Attila's death we see power transfer to Ellac (though we do not know if he was sole ruler or co-ruler).²⁰⁰ After Ellac we next hear of Dengizich and Ernak as kings, Ellac's brothers from the same mother. As far as we can see, the evidence points towards the next eldest males of the ruling dynasty taking priority in being the next king.

It is also clear that power was transferred primarily via paternal parentage. While we do not know precisely who Octar and Rua's father was, if it were Uldin, or Charaton, it would fit the system. Bleda and Attila inherited their roles via their father, Mundzuk, just as Ellac, Dengizich and Ernak did through Attila. There were no attempts at inheritance via the mother's family (a detail to remember when considering if Ardaric could become a royal Hun via marriage).

However, it does appear that the ranking of wives from whom male heirs issue does impact the succession protocol. It is no coincidence that Erecan is the first wife of Attila and that all of her sons came to be kings of the empire.²⁰¹ We know that Attila had many wives, of whom Ildico was the last. If indeed the Huns are practicing agnatic seniority, then the order of wives, ranking from first married to last, might then also determine the order of succession: after Ernak, who Priscus tells us was Attila's youngest son with Erecan (his first wife), would be the next eldest male of the second wife, or perhaps the third, should the second not have any sons, and so forth.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Mundzuk, Rua, and Octar had another brother: Oebersius. The fact that he fails likely indicates that either he willingly chose to not rule, thereby passing rule to the next eldest, Bleda or was younger than Bleda and Attila. See: PLRE II, 793-794, s.v. Oebersius.

²⁰⁰ Attila's reign was 'contrary to steppe practices', making him a usurper. Kim 2016, 87, 93.

²⁰¹ Man posits that Attila married multiple wives not because of his libido but because the presentation of a high-born woman was a form of tribute and their seizure was a way of reaffirming Hunnic dominance over unruly vassals, 2006, 318.

²⁰² It is well known that the Parthians also practiced Polygamy, though they did not have the same system of succession (nor did the order of wives married necessarily determine right of succession).

For the senior king, some scholarship has attempted to juxtapose the Hunnic ruling system with other steppe empires; just as other steppe empires tend to have the eastern rulers as seniors, so too did the Huns.²⁰³ This is a mistake, for seniority appears not to be based on geography but on age. Age determining seniority, likewise, is inherent with their system of agnatic seniority, always leaving the elder male as the *de jure* ruler until he dies, transferring seniority to the junior king and so forth. As stated, Uldin's seniority is unknown. Charaton was the senior king probably of the Left. Octar was the senior ruler and upon his death, Rua was made senior. He then may have appointed Mundzuk as ruler of the west. If indeed the Huns practiced agnatic seniority, then it stands to reason that Mundzuk was younger than Rua. After Rua died, Bleda, Mundzuk's son, became ruler of the East. However, it is implausible that Bleda would then become the senior ruler over his own father.²⁰⁴ When Attila became ruler of the west, following the death of Mundzuk, it is quite possible that his station as junior king fueled his desire to overthrow his brother, Bleda, who was now the senior. It would, furthermore, be unusual if then Ernak, the youngest of Attila's sons, became the senior ruler over Dengizich, his elder brother. In each case, if the senior ruler determined seniority, certainly Dengizich would have claimed control over the Akatziri for himself. Thompson also argues that the Huns did not value the land they ruled so much as the tribes over whom they ruled.²⁰⁵ It seems, therefore, that seniority did not solely reside with the Eastern ruler, but instead with the elder of the two male kings. As the senior king passes away, the junior king is promoted to the senior (who then appoints a new junior king), and so forth.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Kim 2013, 23. See Maenchen-Helfen parallels must be made with caution; 1973, XXV.

²⁰⁴ Indeed, if the eastern region made the king senior, then we would only hear of senior kings coming from the eastern region and western kings moving east after the demise of the eastern king.

²⁰⁵ Thompson 1996, 167.

²⁰⁶ The senior king appointing the next king can also be seen in the Hsiung-nu model. Though the senior king for the Hsiung-nu was/became the Wise king of the Right, the senior appointed the junior; Barfield 1989, 38-39. It is also prudent to note that the Wise king of the Left (the junior king) ruled the eastern portion of the Hsiung-nu

One point of contention is Ellac's status at Nedao and whether he had a co-regent at the time. What is known is that Ellac is not named as a king by Jordanes.²⁰⁷ He was Attila's eldest son and was sent to rule the Akatziri in the east in 448.²⁰⁸ Also ruled by Bleda and Ernak, the Akatziri were a powerful Hunnic group and, during the reign of Attila, may have been ripe for rebellion as a result of Attila's murder of Bleda; hence Attila sent Ellac to rule them.²⁰⁹ It may be that Attila did not have an official co-regent, as his reign was effectively illegal, but Ellac was his righthand and his *de facto* co-ruler. Coupled with Ellac being the eldest of Attila's sons, Ellac would have had grounds to claim either the whole empire (as Attila had done) or the Eastern empire (in the case of a second king).²¹⁰ If Ellac had a co-regent, the two most plausible candidates would have been Oebersius or Dengizich (Priscus relates that Oebersius was a paternal uncle of Attila's).²¹¹ The best reason why Oebersius did not become king earlier would be that he either was younger than both Bleda and Attila or there was some other unknown factor barring him from kingship.²¹² In either case, after the death of Attila, Oebersius might have taken up the co-kingship with Ellac. This, however, is less probable as we see Dengizich ruling as the king of the Left Wing (the West)

state; *ibid.* 42 (see also table 2.1 on page 43 for a good representation of the Hsiung-nu system of succession) Thus, we must note that while there certainly are commonalities among the steppe empires, analogies must be backed with direct evidence.

²⁰⁷ Jordanes, *Getica*, 262. However, as we shall see, this may be because Jordanes is wishing to emphasize the disunity among the sons of Attila and, therefore, not naming Ellac king subtly accentuates the state of decay.

²⁰⁸ Eldest: Jordanes, *Getica*, 262; Priscus, fr. 8.

²⁰⁹ On the discontent Akatziri see Kim 2016, 86. Also implied in Priscus' passage; fr. 8.

²¹⁰ There is an interesting analogue for this event found among the Turks. While the second Kaghate was at the peak of its glory, Kaghan Bilga was poisoned by a trusted member of his entourage and died, November 25th 734 AD. Bilga's son had no difficulty claiming the kaghate for himself (also note that the Turks practiced Lateral Succession). However, his life was short and after Bilga's son passed the following decade is a mess of usurpers and kings, all claiming to be rulers of the Turks. Indeed, coincidentally, in 745 the head of the last Kaghan was presented to Hsuan Tsung. Ellac, the son of the Great Attila, just as Bilga's son, used his father's reputation to easily secure himself the kingship. It is, then, only after the death of Ellac/Bilga's son that both the Hunnic empire and the Turkish plunged into extreme civil war; Sinor 1990, 313.

²¹¹ Priscus, fr. 8.180.

²¹² He could have, of course, simply declined kingship, finding life as one of Attila's most trusted advisers satisfactory; see Priscus, fr. 8.180-182, where he sits on Attila's couch in the same spot Ellac sat.

in the 460s. Therefore, if Ellac ruled with another at the Battle of Nedao, then Dengizich would have been that other king.²¹³

Thus, the Huns appear to be practicing a form of agnatic seniority, and this is substantiated to a certain degree by facts, with the age of their candidates usually determining order of succession to be appointed by the current senior king. Age also determined which king would be the senior. It is, likewise, easier to conceive of the Hunnic state as being split into Left and Right wings during the reigns of Uldin and Charaton (when they had not yet fully settled on both side of the Carpathians), and again during Dengizich's and Ernarch's reigns after the loss of the western Hunnic region to the rebels. It is, however, convenient enough to think of the remainder of the Hunnic kings as rulers of the West and of the East with the Carpathians legally, and conveniently, separating the two halves. While age determined eligibility for succession, the order of wives was also a factor in the selection process. Erecan, the first wife of Attila, was mother to Ellac, Dengizich and Ernak – all of whom became kings with the two latter kings succeeding even after the catastrophic defeat at Nedao which, effectively, resulted in the loss of the Western half of the Hunnic empire.

²¹³ It is also interesting that the *Hervararsaga* relates that at the Battle of the Danube Heath there were two Hunnic kings, Humli and Hlod. But, as we shall see shortly, this work is not entirely reliable.

Figure 2: Dynasty of the European Huns, ca. 400-469

- - - denotes marriage.

- - uncertain relationship

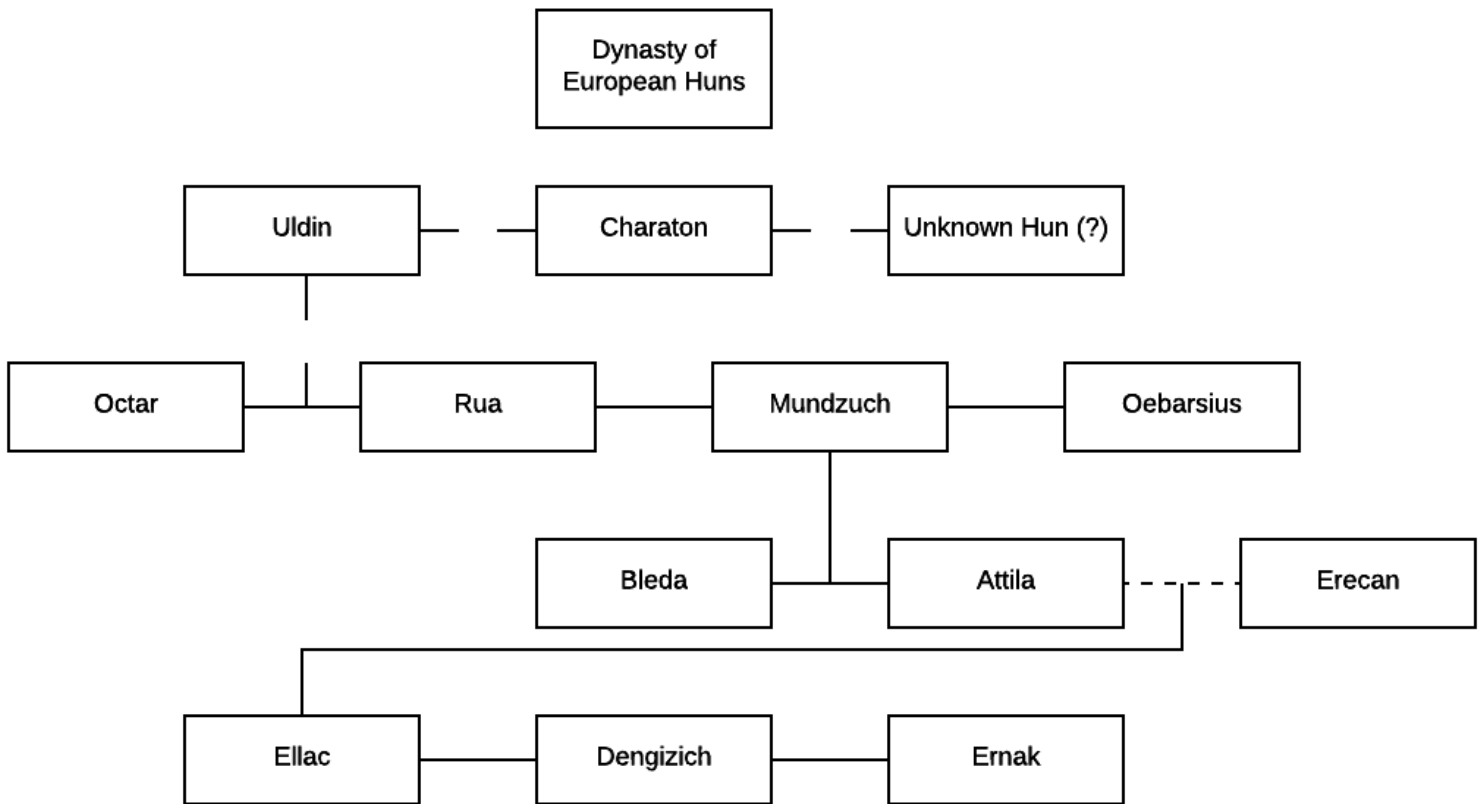
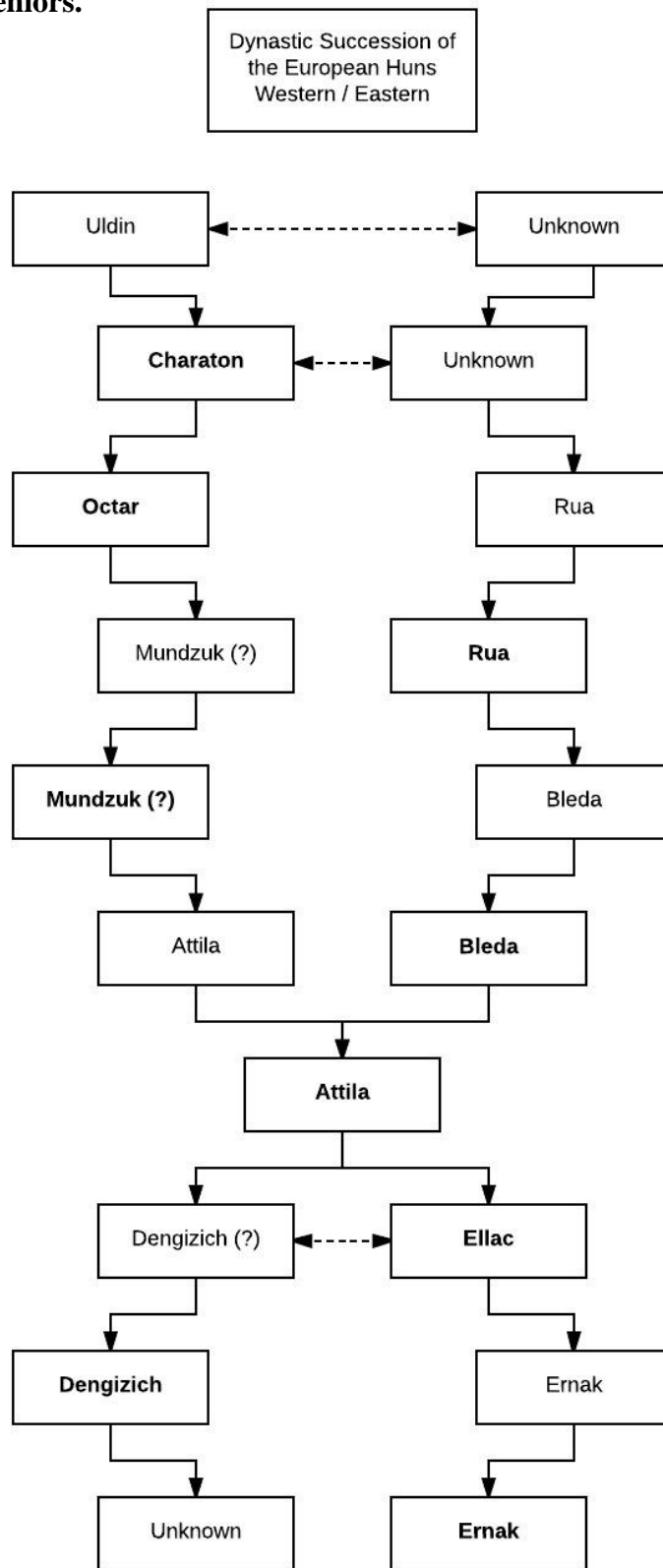


Figure 3: Dynastic Succession of European Huns, ca. 400-469

- - - indicate uncertainty about which wing of the empire they ruled.

Bold kings are the seniors.



2.4 The Battle of Nedao

In 453, Attila died on his wedding night to his latest wife, Ildico. Within a year the western Hunnic world was punctuated by rebellions. It is impossible, as we shall see using solely Jordanes' *Getica*, to determine a timeline or to order the sequence of events with any certainty. Precisely when and where the battle took place cannot be said with any certainty, except to say it took place in 454 somewhere in Pannonia. Prosper, writing in 455, does have an entry for 453 which gives us yet another outline of what occurred. However, he may be adding the events of 454 into the entry of 453, leaving us again without certainty on the sequence of events. Finally, Jordanes' near-entire passage for the Battle of Nedao is introduced in both English and Latin. Therefore, as we shall see, nothing is certain about the Battle of Nedao and every detail ought to be scrutinized closely.

In 454 by the river Nedao, Ardaric, at the head of the rebelling tribes clashed against Ellac, the legitimate successor of Attila, senior king of the Huns (and, should he have a co-king, was ruler of the East).²¹⁴ Indeed, Jordanes' account suggests that nearly the entire west rallied under Ardaric to defeat Ellac.²¹⁵ While the battle proper is referred to in the singular, Jordanes may be suggesting that it took place over several days but its exact location in Pannonia is unknown.²¹⁶

As noted, Prosper, in his 455 edition, is the most contemporary surviving account on what happened following the death of Attila.²¹⁷ In a similar manner to Jordanes, he details the Hunnic

²¹⁴ On the specific date of Nedao, see Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 144-147.

²¹⁵ Wolfram 1988, 258-9.

²¹⁶ See Maenchen-Helfen for the discussion on the location of the River Nedao, 1973, 147-149. The largest problem is that Jordanes uses names for some rivers not mentioned in any other source. Likewise, if one wishes to use the saga, it places the battle on the 'Danube heath' as opposed to Nedao, thus adding to the uncertainty. *Hervararsaga*, 102. Also see Maenchen-Helfen's discussion on the saga and *Widsith*, 1973, 152-156. Suffice it to say, there is insufficient evidence to determine where the battle took place except that it took place in Pannonia. *Getica*, 261. It may also be that Jordanes himself is not certain where the battle took place and thus the name, Nedao, could just make it sound exotic to his readers. Heather also posits that we do not know if it was one big battle or several smaller battles; 2006, 354.

²¹⁷ For details on Prosper see: Muhlberger 1990, 48-55.

empire's plunge into civil war between the sons of Attila. Indeed, he infers that within the same year multiple wars took places among the sons and then further wars were waged because of the great rebellion of previously subjugated peoples. The similarity between Prosper's and Jordanes' ordering of the events after the death of Attila may be because Cassiodorus himself copied Prosper's entry.²¹⁸ Prosper's account is, unfortunately, completely vague, omitting any specific details, and may be combining the events of 454 into 453.

Attila in sedibus suis mortuo magna primum inter filios ipsius certamina de optinendo regno exorta sunt. Deinde aliquot gentium, quae Chunis parebant, defectus secuti causas et occasiones bellis dederunt, quibus ferocissimi populi mutuis incursibus contererentur.

Attila died in his homeland, and at first great struggles to take control of his kingdom arose among his sons, and then the consequent defections of some of the tribes who used to be subject to the Huns provided motives and opportunities for <further> wars, in which <these> most savage peoples wore themselves down with attacks on one another.²¹⁹

The year 453 was bad for the Huns. The great struggle is *magna... certamina*, implying that the whole state broke out into civil war, echoing the events following Alexander the Great's death. However, there are no specific details in this account. He does not say who fought whom nor what tribes rebelled. His account is, for all intents and purposes, so vague that his source for this information was probably hearsay. He claims that a struggle arose among his [Attila's] sons (*inter filios ipsius*). Jordanes himself claims that the sons of Attila erupted in a struggle *contentio* but also notes that the sons of Attila also rallied under Ellac.²²⁰ Maenchen-Helfen, furthermore, places the date of the Battle of Nedao to 454.²²¹ Thus, while it may have been that the rebellion which ultimately led to the battle began in late 453, the war which Prosper alludes to would not have

²¹⁸ CM II, 157 (1258). Noted by Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 143-144.

²¹⁹ Prosper, *Chron.* 482-483 (1370); translated by Richard Burgess. His translation follows manuscript *H* which has *quae Hunos predabant* instead of *quae Chunis parebant*.

²²⁰ See *Getica*, 263 below: *Reliqui vero germani eius, eo occiso fugantur iuxta litus Pontici maris, ubi prius Gothos sedisse descripsimus*. We can infer that the sons which fled were either: all the sons who rallied under Ellac or those who were left alive after the struggle. Nothing is clear.

²²¹ 1973, 144.

occurred until the following year. The only detail we can truly glean from Prosper's passage is his apparent delight to see these 'most savage peoples' tear each other to pieces, a fitting end 'for a kingdom based on murder and war'.²²² Not only did these savages (*ferocissimi*) live for war but they all took every opportunity (*occasione*) to legitimize more wars, and in so doing they killed one another in barbaric fashion. As such, Prosper's account lends us no details for what happened following the death of Attila except for his own attitude and a broad outline of what might have happened.

Thus, we turn to Jordanes' account. While at times vague, it does give us more insight into what happened during the years following Attila's death. In this part, the Latin and English translation are presented first. Thereafter, two comments are made: first are comments on Jordanes' blaming the sons of Attila for ruining his empire as well as the interpretation of *constat*, then second, comments on how the battle scene may be drawing on several literary tropes and traditions which herald all the way back to Homer's counting of ships.

259. Talibus practis, ut solent animi iuvenum ambitu potentiae concitari, inter successores Attilae de regno orta contentio est; et dum inconsulti imperare cupiunt cuncti, omnes simul imperium perdiderunt. Sic frequenter regna gravat copia quam inopia successorum. Nam filii Attilae, quorum per licentiam libidinis pene²²³ populus fuit, gentes sibi dividi aequa sorte poscebant, ut, ad instar familiae, bellicosi reges cum populis mitterentur in sortem.

259. With these great rites finished, because the minds of young men are accustomed to being roused by the urge for political power, the struggle between the successors of Attila over his kingdom was born and while they desired to rule rashly, they all simultaneously destroyed his empire. Thus, frequently an abundance, rather than a shortage, of successors is a burden for kingdoms. For the sons of Attila, who through their unbridled lust nearly constituted a people of their own, demanded that the nations be equally distributed so that fierce kings along with their peoples might be divided by lot like a family estate.

²²² Muhlberger 1990, 123.

²²³ Taken as *paene*.

260 quod ut Gepidarum rex conperit Ardaricus, indignatus de tot gentibus velut vilissimorum mancipiorum condicione tractari, contra filios Attilae primus insurgit, illatumque serviendi pudorem secuta felicitate detersit, nec solum suam gentem, sed et ceteras quae pariter premebantur, sua discessione absolvit, quia facile omnes adpetunt quod pro cunctorum utilitate temptatur.

260 When Ardaric, king of the Gepids, learned this, outraged that decisions were taken about so many nations as if [they were] of the condition of the vilest slaves, was the first to rise against the sons of Attila. Seizing the opportunity, Ardaric expunged the inherited shame of his servitude and released, by his withdrawal, not only his own people but also others who were equally oppressed since they all readily desired that which was sought for the advantage of them all.²²⁴

261. In mutuuum igitur armantur exitium, bellumque committitur in Pannonia, iuxta flumen cui nomen est Nedao. Illic concursus factus est gentium variarum, quod Attila²²⁵ in sua tenuerat ditione. Dividuntur regna cum populis, fiuntque ex uno corpore membra diversa, nec quae unius passioni compaterentur, sed quae exciso capite invicem insanirent; quae numquam contra se pares invenirent, nisi ipsae mutuis se vulneribus sauciantes ipsas discerperent fortissimae nationes. Nam ibi admirandum reor fuisse spectaculum, ubi cernere erat contis pugnantem Gothum, ense furem Gepidam, in vulnere suo Rugum tela frangentem, Suavum lapide, Hunnum sagitta praesumere, Alanum gravi, Herulum levi armatura acie struere.²²⁶

261. Thus they are stirred into mutual destruction and battle is engaged in Pannonia by a river called Nedao. There the encounter of diverse nations took place which Attila had held under his authority. Kingdoms divided along with their peoples and many limbs are made out of one body so that they did not feel pity for the suffering of the whole but, with their head cut off, would drive each other mad. They would never find equals against them, unless, inflicting wounds on one another, the most powerful nations tore themselves to

²²⁴ tractari + de = to discuss/negotiate, s.v. tracto, Lewis & Short, 1907, pp. 1883, b-c.

²²⁵ *quas Attila*, G&G 1991, 107. The Latin texts used here are all from Mommsen. It has been suggested that certain irregularities in Mommsen's edition have been corrected by Giunta & Grillone, 1991; Marie-Pierre Bussières (personal communication). Thus, while the Latin presented in the body of the work comes from Mommsen, the corrections taken from Giunta & Grillone will be indicated in a footnote and the English translation will use the correction.

²²⁶ *aciem struere*, G&G 1991, 107.

pieces. For in that place, I think was a most astonishing spectacle where one was to see the Goths fighting with their pikes, the Gepids wild with their swords, the Rugi breaking the missiles in their wounds, the Suevi with their slings, the Huns leading with arrows, the Alans fit with heavy armour and the Heruls fit with light forming into battle array.

262. *Post multos ergo gravesque conflictos, favit²²⁷ Gepidis inopinata victoria. nam xxx fere milia tam Hunnorum quam aliarum gentium, quae Hunnis ferebant auxilium, Ardarici gladius conspiratioque peremit. In quo proelio filius Attilae maior natu nomine Ellac occiditur, quem tantum parens super ceteros amasse perhibebatur, ut eum cunctis diversisque liberis suis in regno preferret;²²⁸ sed non fuit vota²²⁹ patris fortuna consentiens. Nam post multas hostium cedes²³⁰ sic viriliter eum constat peremptum, ut tam gloriosum superstitis²³¹ pater optasset interitum. 263. Reliqui vero germani eius, eo occiso fugantur iuxta litus Pontici maris, ubi prius Gothos sedisse descripsimus.*

262. As I was saying, after many grave clashes, victory surprisingly favours the Gepids: for the sword and plotting of Ardaric killed nearly thirty thousand men, Huns as well as other tribes who brought them aid. In this battle, the eldest son of Attila, named Ellac, whom his father was said to have loved so much more than the rest that he favoured him above all his various sons in his empire, was killed. Fate did not agree with the will of his father; for after cutting down many of his enemies, it is well known that Ellac had died so bravely that his father before him would have desired an end so glorious. 263. Indeed, with Ellac slain the remainder of his brothers were chased to the shore of the Pontic Sea into the place where we earlier determined that the Goths had settled.

263. *Cesserunt itaque Hunni, quibus cedere putabatur universitas. Adeo discidium perniciose res est, ut divisi corruerent, qui adunatis viribus territabant. Haec causa Ardarici regis Gepidarum felix affuit diversis nationibus, qui²³² Hunnorum regimini inviti²³³ famulabantur, eorumque diu maestissimos animos ad helaritatem libertatis*

²²⁷ *favet*, G&G 1991, 107.

²²⁸ *praeferret*, G&G 1991, 108.

²²⁹ *voto*.

²³⁰ *caedes*.

²³¹ *Superstes*.

²³² *quae*, G&G 1991, 108.

²³³ *invitae*.

*votivam*²³⁴ *erexit; venientesque multi per legatos suos ad solum Romanum et a principe tunc Marciano gratissime suscepti distributas sedes, quas incolerent, acceperunt.*

263. And so the Huns withdrew, to whom the universe was thought to yield. So destructive is the matter of division that those who used to intimidate with a unified front, toppled to the ground when divided. This [successful] cause of Ardaric, king of the Gepids, aided the many people who were reluctantly servile to the whims of the Huns; for it raised their long downtrodden spirits up to the promise of freedom; and many coming to Roman land via their ambassadors were accepted and most gratefully received allotted settlements to inhabit from the emperor at that time, Marcian.²³⁵

The rites in the beginning of 259 refer to the burial and funeral of Attila.²³⁶ For the burial of Attila, Jordanes directly names Priscus as his source and thus the following sections, 259-263, may also hail from Priscus' history, though as will be seen in the following chapter, much may have been changed. Jordanes' use of *constat* (late Latin for 'it is well known that...') in respect to the death of Ellac may be suggesting that Priscus had a scene detailing the Battle of Nedao in which Ellac died bravely and that this passage was well-known.²³⁷ It could, just the same, have nothing to do with Priscus and that Ellac's death was well known as an oral tradition. Neither can be said for certain, but Jordanes details Ellac for a reason – he wishes us to pay attention to Ellac and the allusion to Attila (discussed further in 2.5).

Jordanes' account on the matter of the collapsing Hunnic empire is clear: the young minds of Attila's sons (and there were many), 'are accustomed to being roused by the embrace of political power' and desiring 'to rule rashly', 'simultaneously ruined his empire'. Likewise, all of his sons

²³⁴ *votivae*.

²³⁵ Jordanes, *Getica*, 259-263.

²³⁶ Klaeber wrote an interesting work on the similarities between Attila's and Beowulf's funeral, 1927, 255-267. It may be that the details of the funeral passed into folk lore and oral history, straight through the middle ages.

²³⁷ Jordanes, *Getica*, 263. This is inferred by the fact that Priscus was the most famous writer on the Huns. It is, however unlikely, possible that the tale of Ellac's death did come from another source. Indeed, the fact that Jordanes uses a word such as *constat* suggests that while he might be pulling from Priscus' history, his account is likely far different for were it not, he would have no reason to appeal to common knowledge.

‘demanded that the nations of Attila be equally distributed so that fierce kings along with their peoples might be divided by lot like a family estate’. This last line reveals a certain incredulity, an absurdity in the prospect that a kingdom and its king(s) could be divided by inheritance like slaves, especially if Jordanes is of Gothic descent.²³⁸ One can see, on the surface, Jordanes appears to be keenly interested in how the reader interprets the actions of the Gepids and emphasizing the disorder among the Huns after Attila’s death.

The two forces, one under Ardaric, ‘king of the Gepids’, and the other under Ellac, clash at the river Nedao in Pannonia. The battle scene, as one can see, draws on literary tropes. Jordanes stresses the greatness of both armies, making out each to be so well-matched that nothing more than skill and strategy could turn the tide of war for ‘they would never find equals against them, unless, inflicting wounds on one another’. Furthermore, the list of barbarians presented at the battle, and what identifying weapons they used or strategies they employed, is one familiar to Greco-Roman literature. We can see similar listings of proper nouns with defining features in Claudian and Sidonius, especially in panegyrics.²³⁹ In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the landing of Aeneas’ forces against king Turnus bears a certain resemblance.²⁴⁰ Kim argues that Jordanes may have had Herodotus in mind for portions of the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains while Brodka attributes the same battle to Priscus who was turning Attila into a tragic character.²⁴¹ The famous counting of the ships and their respective city-states is famous in Homer’s *Iliad*. Each work employs similar lists of warriors to build either the tension or the prestige of those presented. Therefore, it may be

²³⁸ Recall Thompson’s argument on the Huns valuing people over land; 1996, 167.

²³⁹ See Chapter 1, footnote 38.

²⁴⁰ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 10.165. Swain’s article on Virgilian allusions in Jordanes, while not discussing this passage exactly, shows that Jordanes did use Virgil elsewhere.

²⁴¹ Brodka 2008, 227-245, further discussed in section 3.4; Kim 2015 127-142.

that these groups presented by Jordanes were involved in the battle, but their associated weapons should not be taken as anything other than dramatic effect.

It is, therefore, apparent that while Jordanes' Battle of Nedao is far more detailed than that of Prosper, offering specific names, motivations, and even places for events, it also suffers from vagueness. Furthermore, immediately we can see that there may be more at work in the scene for he may be drawing from the Greco-Roman literary tradition in the organization of the battle. In the next section, we will discuss Jordanes' use of literary devices further, perhaps to even comment on then-contemporary events.

2.5 Comparison with the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains

The Battle of Nedao on the surface has little in common with the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Yet a closer reading reveals that the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, arguably the central battle of the book, may be literarily paired with the Battle of Nedao.²⁴² First, Attila is introduced as a character in Jordanes' narrative just prior to the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains and dies just before the Battle of Nedao.²⁴³ Whately similarly argues that Catalaunian Plains may have been a literary device for Jordanes to subtly criticize emperor Justinian (discussed further in section 3.4). If indeed we can understand the two battles in such a way, then it is possible that the Battle of

²⁴² Whately 2013, 71. The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains was the culmination of a war between the Romans and many of their barbarian allies and Attila in 451 A.D. The battle, after one night, ended as a stalemate.

²⁴³ Attila introduced in 178, Battle of Catalaunian Plains from 190 – 217, Attila exploiting opportunities against Romans and Goths, 218 – 227. 228-245 is the fate of the Visigoths and their relations with the Western and Eastern Roman Emperors, no mention of the Huns in this section. 246-253, the confusing history of the Ostrogoths under Hunnic rule, especially the reign of Balamer. 253, the reintroduction of Attila; 254, his marriage to Ildico and subsequent ignoble death; 255 Marcian's prophetic dream about Attila's broken bow, making Attila's death a gift to Marcian; 256 to 257, song of Attila's life cited from Priscus; 258, Attila's funeral; 259 – 263 is the Battle of Nedao and the 'sudden' collapse of the Hunnic Empire; 264 – 268, the shattered empire and the migration of many tribes, including the Huns; 268-269, the defeat of the Hunnic remains by Valamer; The total defeat of Dengizich 272; then finally the supposed defeat and subjugation of Mundo, who traced his descent to the *Attilani* and made himself the king of highwaymen (*grassatoribus*), 301. On Mundo, also see: PLRE II, 767-768, s.v. Mvndo.

Nedao is the imaginative preferred outcome of what should have occurred in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Ardaric, king of the ‘slow’ Goths (the Gepids), defeats Ellac at Nedao, effectively finishing what Thorismund should have been able to accomplish were it not for Aetius.²⁴⁴ Jordanes may be, furthermore, comparing Ellac and Attila against Theodorid and Thorismund, resulting in subtle moral judgments on how and why Thorismund and Theodorid were superior. Therefore, if the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains is what happens when one lets opportunities slip away, then the Battle of Nedao is what happens when they are seized; for the death of Ellac at the hands of Ardaric is used to portray what should have been the death of Attila/Totila at the hands of Thorismund/Belisarius. If indeed these two battles are being paired as a literary device, then further scrutiny on the author must be applied to extract historical fact from his rhetorical exercise.

First, Attila is introduced in *Getica*, section 178, as ‘the Lord of all Huns and nearly the only ruler in the world of the entire Scythian tribe, who was extraordinary because of his fame among all the tribes.’ After his physical descriptions, he becomes the rival (*inimicus*) of the Visigoths (especially Thorismund) at the Catalaunian Plains and only survives because of Aetius’ intervention.²⁴⁵ In line with Whately’s argument, Attila continues to pester the Roman Empires, showing what happens when opportunities are not seized because of kingly indecision.²⁴⁶ In this argument, Whately theorizes that Jordanes manipulated the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains passage to subtly criticize Justinian for intervening in Belisarius’ war in Italy. That is, as Belisarius’ opportunity to kill king Totila was lost due to Justinian’s intervention, so too was Thorismund prevented from stopping Attila because of Aetius’. The next time Attila returns to the

²⁴⁴ Jordanes, *Getica*, 215-216.

²⁴⁵ *Inimicus* is sometimes used to describe the enemy of the Goths/Huns, giving us a sense of a personal, frequent foe: *Getica*, 214, 218.

²⁴⁶ Whately 2013, 71-73. Also see section 3.2 of this thesis.

narrative is at his wedding and he dies immediately after. Attila's funeral and dirge further build his character as the grand nemesis, making him all the more famous so that the collapse of his empire after his untimely demise will appear all the more tragic. Just as Attila's character is built from sections 178-263 (with holes between 228-253), his legacy and empire last no more than a few passages thereafter. If indeed Attila's life and Jordanes' lament of lost opportunities are the links between the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains and Nedao, then the latter battle's scene has two key functions: to show what a leader *can* do when opportunities are seized (Ardaric, not weighed down with indecision, groups the tribes under his banner for the advantage), and to figuratively illustrate the defeat of Attila.²⁴⁷

Ardaric, with sword and plotting (*gladius conspiratioque*) destroyed the Hunnic Empire of Attila by taking advantage of the disunity among Attila's sons. Indeed, the situation between Ardaric and Ellac appears to be the preferred outcome of what should have happened at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains between Thorismund and Attila for: 'so destructive is the matter of division, that the divided toppled to the ground who used to intimidate with a unified front.'²⁴⁸ If we recall in Whately's argument how Jordanes feels about the situation between Belisarius and Justinian, we can again see that perhaps the situation between the general and emperor deteriorated to a point that Jordanes saw a division, or at least a discontinuity of trust (echoing the result of rash ruling as exemplified by the sons of Attila). This is critical because if the sons of Attila are being

²⁴⁷ Gepids and Goths are kinsmen, though the Gepids are 'slow' Goths; thus, Ardaric is taking the place of Thorismund: Jordanes, *Getica*, 95.

²⁴⁸ Jordanes, *Getica*, 263.

deployed as a rhetorical exercise, then we must not positivistically pull this information from the author just because it sounds plausible.²⁴⁹

If the sons of Attila are being employed as a rhetorical exercise, then Ellac's purpose is to replace Attila; for naturally after Attila's death, Ardaric could not finish what Thorismund failed to do (kill Attila).²⁵⁰ It seems plausible, therefore, that this is why Ellac's account receives such a good portion of the Battle of Nedao scene: to detail the heroic manner of his death, while explicitly relating how Attila would have wished to have died in such a way (instead of dying ignobly). A closer look at Ellac's death reveals that the way he dies, likewise, resembles that of Theodorid, Thorismund's father.

But fate did not agree with the will of his father; for after dispatching a host of his enemies, it is well known that Ellac had died so bravely that his father before him would have desired an end so glorious.²⁵¹

The connection between father and son is obvious here: Attila would have wished to have been like Ellac in his moment of death, for Attila's own death was brought on by drunkenness, 'a shameful end to a king famed in war.'²⁵² Similar to Ellac's death, Theodorid, while he fell from his horse and was trampled to death, was discovered 'where the dead lay thickest, as happens with brave men' where 'you might have seen bands of Goths, unharmoniously with their dissonant voices, rendering the last rites to the body while the battle still raged' for 'it was death indeed, but the Huns are witness that it was a glorious one.'²⁵³ Theodorid and Ellac, while one is a father and

²⁴⁹ As indeed many scholars have done: Wolfram 1988, 258-9, Thompson 1996, 167-168; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 15-17, 149-152; Man 2006, 336. Heather 2006; 354; 2009, 207-208 although he does concede that it may be rhetorical. Sarantis 2016, 52.

²⁵⁰ Perhaps the connection between fathers and sons is something that Jordanes and the *Hervararsaga* share. See section 2.7 for the discussion on the Saga.

²⁵¹ On Ellac's death, Jordanes, *Getica*, 262-263.

²⁵² Jordanes, *Getica*, 254.

²⁵³ Jordanes, *Getica*, 214.

the other the son, are both given brave deaths surrounded by their enemies. Theodorid has his last rites sung to him during battle but Jordanes admits that it is only what ‘one might have seen’. Jordanes also relates that Ellac’s death was well known (*constat*) but Theodorid, by contrast, was not – hence his use of the subjunctive. So, it is likely that Theodorid’s death was fabricated to contrast against that of Ellac.

Whether Theodorid or Ellac had died in such manners or whether both these characters are given such heroic deaths as literary devices is uncertain. Ellac is no doubt given such a glorious death as it makes Ardaric’s victory more conspicuous, emphasizing his seizure of the opportunity that, effectively, resulted in a victory (though Jordanes states that it came as a surprise). This makes sense in Jordanes’ narrative as it appears to be setting up Ardaric’s victory as the preferred outcome of what should have happened at the Catalaunian Plains had Aetius not intervened with Thorismund. Therefore, if the two battles are literary contrasts, Theodorid must be given a death to match that of Ellac’s, lest his end go unnoticed.

Furthermore, the dirge sung during battle over Theodorid’s body also reminds us of Attila’s funeral song.²⁵⁴ Theodorid and Thorismund can be contrasted against Attila and Ellac. Theodorid is ‘brave’, ‘glorious’ and had tears shed for him ‘but the kind that were customarily shed for brave men’ with the Huns as his witness. Just the same, Attila was great, said to have done nothing cowardly, and that, upon finding him dead, his men ‘disfigured their faces with deep wounds so that the renowned warrior might be mourned, not by effeminate wailings and tears, but by the blood of men.’²⁵⁵ One cannot help but notice that Theodorid’s funeral is being compared to Attila’s, just as much as Theodorid’s death is to Ellac’s. Though they both had dirges equal in

²⁵⁴ Jordanes, *Getica*, 257. Also cited to Priscus: fr. 23.

²⁵⁵ Nothing cowardly, Jordanes, *Getica*, 212. Gashing faces, *Getica*, 255.

greatness, as we have seen, Attila died in a drunken stupor and would have wished to have died in battle. To Jordanes, therefore, Theodorid died nobly, Attila ignobly.

Thorismund and Ellac too can be compared. Following Theodorid's death, Thorismund not only became king of the Visigoths with ease, but also is able to rout Attila a second time when Attila moved to subjugate the Alans.²⁵⁶ Thorismund, for the second time, defended his land against Attila's incursions, for should Attila have won over the Alans in this second occasion, he would have had a striking point against the Visigoths.²⁵⁷ Thorismund is, therefore, a two-time victor over the 'Lord of all the Huns' when Attila was at full-strength (which included the Gepids and Ostrogoths under Ardaric and Valamer).²⁵⁸ Ellac, by comparison in Jordanes' narrative, could not even keep his father's empire together and was defeated by Ardaric, king of the 'slow' Goths (the Gepids). We again find that disturbing comparison to Belisarius and Justinian here again. Ellac rallies a great army and engages Ardaric but, to Jordanes, it is too little too late because the Huns had fractured. Unlike Thorismund, Ellac could not hold it all together, for, again, 'so destructive is the matter of division, that the divided toppled to the ground who used to intimidate with a unified front'.

Thus, there is abundant evidence to suggest that there is more at work in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains and Nedao scenes than one suspects. Jordanes could have detailed the war over Attila's kingdom as a minor event, much as he does with Valamer's defeating of the remaining Huns;²⁵⁹ that he does not is interesting. If the Battle for the Catalaunian Plains is what happens when leaders let opportunities slip away, then the Battle of Nedao is what happens when they seize

²⁵⁶ Jordanes, *Getica*, 227.

²⁵⁷ Jordanes, *Getica*, 226-227.

²⁵⁸ Jordanes, *Getica*, 199.

²⁵⁹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 268-269.

the advantage. It likewise shows what happens when a unified-front divides, echoing Jordanes' subtle criticisms of Justinian's interventionist policy of Belisarius' campaign in Italy, (one which caused a divide and allowed an opportunity to slip away).²⁶⁰ That said, just because the Battle of Nedao may be used as a literary comparison to reflect Jordanes' anxieties, that does not necessarily mean that it lacks any historical value. While biased and shaped to reflect a subtler narrative, the battle's account is still likely representative of a historical fact.²⁶¹

2.6 Circumstances for the Battle of Nedao

There is much about the battle that remains unclear. The timeline, for example, lacks coherence. Jordanes, as we know quite well by now, suggests that immediately following Attila's death, his empire collapses as a result of infighting between Attila's successors (*successores*). He does not mention when this specifically occurred nor gives any dates, just that the sons of Attila ruined his empire. In reaction, Ardaric, 'outraged that it was discussed of so many nations as if [they were] of the condition of the vilest slaves, was the first to rise against the sons of Attila.' If one is to assume Jordanes is writing chronologically, then he implies that the empire collapsed before the Battle of Nedao. One possible explanation could be that Jordanes is referring to a sort of summer of blood, similar to that which followed the death of Constantine.²⁶² Immediately following the death of Attila, because of his myriad heirs from various wives, many could have been killed off to cement the rule of the next reigning heir(s).

A more reasonable alternative is that Jordanes is somewhat misleading the reader (or that he himself or his sources are ignorant of the actual events) that the struggle over inheritance described is the reassertion of the traditional Hunnic system of governance after Attila's death. As

²⁶⁰ Again, discussed further in 3.4.

²⁶¹ Further discussed in 3.8 on the reanalysis of Ardaric and his roles in Jordanes' *Getica* as a character.

²⁶² For further reading, see Burgess 2008, 5-51.

previously discussed, the murder of Bleda by Attila was, effectively, an illegal act within the Huns' system of succession. By murdering Bleda and refusing to acknowledge a second king, Attila in effect claimed the entire empire as his own inheritance, thereby shattering the line of inheritance defined for each side of the Hunnic state when he died without officially appointing the next king(s) and their provinces.²⁶³ The circumstances surrounding Attila's wedding and subsequent death might also be a key to understanding the Battle of Nedao. Attila died in 453 and the Battle of Nedao took place sometime in 454.²⁶⁴ This leaves little time for armies to be mustered and alliances formed for a rebel faction whose military might rivaled that of the state's.

If redistribution of Attila's inheritance also includes the splitting of certain tribal groups, then when Jordanes says 'For the sons of Attila... demanded that the nations be equally distributed so that fierce kings along with their peoples might be divided by lot like a family estate', a sense of his opinion can be detected. As previously noted, he finds the prospect of dividing tribes and kings absurd. The role of the adjective *bellicosi* here is to accentuate the reputation that many of these kings had. They were not mere kings who could be easily split but war-like kings, or fierce kings, with pride and a right to rule. Furthermore, these kings are not just split but feel as though they are being treated like a household of slaves (*ad instar familiae*), to be freely divided at their master(s) bidding. Jordanes' opinion is fairly clear: as he sees the Huns negotiate which king will rule who and where, the subjugated kings, feeling indignant to being treated like slaves in an inheritance, rose in rebellion. This is quite plausible, though, once again, Jordanes is not clear how many sons partook in the inheritance.

²⁶³ It may also be that because oaths of loyalty expire on the death of the reigning king – and because there was no other king to whom all tribes swore loyalty left alive (perhaps a reason why the Huns preferred diarchy) – then with Attila's death all oaths expired at the same time giving legitimacy for a full rebellion.

²⁶⁴ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 143, 147.

There were many sons of Attila, and he reminds us, so many that they nearly constituted a people of their own (*populus fuit*). Indeed, as discussed earlier, the Huns practice a form of agnatic seniority and polygyny, hierarchically ranking their wives to determine lines of succession. If Ildico were, for example, Attila's seventh or eighth wife, and with each wife he had as many children as he did with Erecan, (three) then there are indeed many potential heirs to the kingship. But if we look back upon the previous successions from Octar to Attila, we only see the inheritance, save for Attila's murdering of Bleda, being split in two. As Jordanes explains, Attila murdered Bleda specifically to unite the Huns under himself to bolster his army for his expedition against the Romans and Visigoths.²⁶⁵ There is no mention, at any point, of there being a third or any other Hunnic king.

Before Attila's reign, the rebelling tribes understood where they operated and did so underneath their own kings as well as the Hunnic king of their Wing. However, because Attila both usurped the entire state and the gathered the bulk of the entire Hunnic field army around himself, he disrupted the understood province of the eastern king, king of the Right wing.²⁶⁶ If the tribes were not re-divided into two wings, then the western king would be the *de facto* senior due to the overwhelming inequality of army strength (if Ellac were to be king of the Eastern empire, this would have been of grave concern to him).²⁶⁷ Thus, when Jordanes claims that the sons of Attila desired to evenly divide Attila's inheritance among all his sons (a policy which, as far as we can

²⁶⁵ Jordanes, *Getica*, 181.

²⁶⁶ Thompson 1996, 168: implies that many, if not most, of the Germanic peoples rose in rebellion with Ardaric, whom would have constituted a significant portion of the Hunnic field army. Wolfram 1988, 258-9.

²⁶⁷ It is, however, improbable that the Huns would have split every tribal group in two; such a task would have been a logistical nightmare and may have sown even deeper seeds for rebellion. Therefore, Jordanes must be referring to several groups: the tribes who lived near the broad frontier that separated the Western portion from the Eastern (approximately the Carpathian Mountains and the Olt river), the tribes brought under Hunnic influence during the reign of Attila himself, as well as the consolidating the army in the West. But which, if not all of these reasons, is exactly what Jordanes is referring to cannot be determined with any certainty.

see, had no historical precedent in the Hunnic world), we can infer it was actually the reassertion of the Huns' traditional form of kingship: diarchy.²⁶⁸ It is this event that Jordanes cites as being the catalyst for Ardaric's rebellion but instead of blaming Attila for illegally usurping the whole empire, he points the finger at Attila's sons who failed to cooperate and negotiate in such a way that let the Germanic tribes save face.

The coincidence of Attila's wedding and subsequent funeral may also be a driving force behind Ardaric's rebellion for, without any kings, the Huns would have needed to appoint their new ruler(s) immediately. At such an event, it could be expected that all of the prominent actors in Attila's regime would have been present, gathering generals and heirs alike. Then, because he died on the night of the wedding, it can once more be anticipated that every general, heir and other figures of importance would have likewise attended Attila's funeral. Such a gathering of all notables in the Hunnic state, especially following a death so ignoble for their great king, may have been the scene of the vague dispute between the sons of Attila accounted in Jordanes. For, again, Hunnic royal succession is more interested in the distribution of the tribes rather than of the land and because Attila died without a clear inheritance (to continue monarchy or reassert diarchy) negotiations over which king would control which tribes would need to proceed without a senior king to preside.²⁶⁹

We cannot say for certain when exactly the Huns normally held the appointment for a new ruler, but until the present situation there was always another king to run the empire until the second was selected. Rua, for example, ruled alone for a time until Mundzuk or Bleda was

²⁶⁸ It is certainly plausible that some of the sons (especially sons of lesser wives) argued this point, which Jordanes found scandalous enough that it added dramatic effect to his narrative. But it was not the way of the Huns.

²⁶⁹ Thompson 1996, 167.

appointed as his co-regent. The presence of a second king (or the appointment of his heir) guaranteed that the state always had a king to solve disputes.

Therefore, prior to the death of Attila, the appointment of a new king was not as critical as it had become once the sole king of the Huns, Attila, had died without a designated heir or co-king to appoint a new one. Furthermore, when Attila passed without leaving a clear understanding of which king would rule over whom and where, he initiated a political crisis of a similar magnitude felt after the death of Constantine. His sons would need to immediately come together and not only decide if they would resume Attila's sole monarchy or return to diarchy, but also, in the case of the latter, to redistribute the *entire* Hunnic state between the two monarchs. Diarchy, as we have seen abundant evidence to suggest, was what they selected, and the negotiations plunged the entire state into war.

2.7 Ardaric's Bid for Success

Before we continue this line of reasoning, we must also consider how it was possible for Ardaric to muster such a large force, especially one which rivals the majority of the Hunnic Field army under the leadership of Ellac, in so little time.²⁷⁰ This section will introduce Ardaric's motivating factors. Jordanes claims that Ardaric is fighting for freedom and "since they all readily desired that which was sought for the advantage of them all" (that is, because they all wanted what he wanted) other subjugated tribes followed Ardaric.²⁷¹ This explanation is vague. It is certainly reasonable that with the death of Attila, many tribes saw an opportunity to revolt, maybe even with hopes for gaining independence. However, the idea of freedom may initiate but not necessarily

²⁷⁰ Death of Attila in ca. March 453; battle of Nedao sometime in 454. Wolfram even suggests that nearly the entire western portion of the Hunnic Empire rallied under Ardaric. Wolfram 1988, 258-9. Thompson, likewise, suggests that this was the great Germanic uprising but cautiously does not give us any indication of how many fought on Ardaric's side. 1996, 168.

²⁷¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 259, 263.

win wars nor would it convince many to lay down their lives or jeopardize their social and political standings. On the other hand, armies and political connections do. It must be remembered that these people had their own lives and concerns to manage and the Huns notoriously punished dissenters, something that must have weighed on the mind of any would-be rebel.²⁷² If they failed, rebelling against the Huns would have been almost certain death for the kings and their families. Continuing, Kim posits that Ardaric was a royal Hun fighting for succession against his brother-in-law, Ellac. This, as we shall see, is unlikely; Ardaric was a rebel fighting for independence alongside the Heruls, Rugi, and various other tribes at Nedao.

If Jordanes is to be trusted, Ardaric was one of Attila's most faithful generals and his Gepid force, at least at the battle of the Catalaunian Plains, was large.²⁷³ Thus Ardaric, again if we trust Jordanes about Ardaric's loyalty to Attila, may have had significant connections within Attila's court. What this does not explain is why Ardaric would take such a drastic action as rebelling against the eldest son of the man to whom he was so fiercely loyal, let alone with any hope of success. Ellac would have legitimately inherited the Hunnic empire as the senior ruler and successfully rallied a significant force to his banner. Jordanes may, it seems, be embellishing Ardaric's importance and loyalty to Attila.²⁷⁴ However, if loyalty to Attila did not inspire the other tribes to rally to Ardaric, especially with the knowledge that failure would have resulted in not only their deaths but the deaths of hosts of their people, then how is it that he came to control such a large force?

²⁷² Note the Huns' determination on the return of political refugees and their treatment of rebellions. Thompson, 1996, 91, 95.

²⁷³ Jordanes, *Getica*, 199-200.

²⁷⁴ To what end will be discussed in section 3.6 on Ardaric's grandson, Mundo. For he, like Ardaric, also did not renew his oath to the next Amal king, Athalaric, after the death of Theoderic. Indeed, Jordanes may be arguing: like grandfather, like grandson (or, most likely, vice versa).

In one theory, Ardaric was a royal Hun and a successor of Attila, vying for his own inheritance of the empire.²⁷⁵ If such a theory were to be true, he would have some legitimate authority to garner a significant force comprised of both Hunnic princes and Germanic kings. In this theory, it is argued that Mundo, Ardaric's grandson and the nephew of the Gepid King, Trapstila, was also a descendant of Attila.²⁷⁶ It is furthermore presented that Ardaric's name may have been a title which means 'oath-king' which further shows Ardaric's closeness to Attila's court. Finally, the Icelandic *Hervararsaga* potentially establishes a familial connection between Ardaric and Attila, if one assumes Ardaric to be analogous to Angantyr and Ellac to be Humli or Hloth. Such a theory, however, also relies heavily on the Huns practicing lateral succession, so that being married into the Hunnic royal dynasty would be enough to grant legitimate authority in an election for kingship. But, as this thesis has argued, the Huns practiced a form of agnatic seniority and not pure lateral succession, and thus Ardaric, in the former's model, has no grounds to garner any legitimacy. Furthermore, while Mundo's relationship to Attila (and Ardaric not being his name but instead his title) are interesting, they alone are not sufficient evidence to prove that Ardaric was "a member of the Hunnic royal family, [and] a key player in the succession struggle" for not only is the fictional *Hervararsaga* unreliable, it is also primarily concerned with matters of inheritance, which directly impacts its use as a citation for Ardaric's familial link to Ellac/Attila.²⁷⁷

2.8 The 'Battle of Nedao' in the *Hervararsaga* and Ardaric's motivation

There is much to consider about the 'Battle between Goths and Huns' found in the *Hervararsaga*, hereon referred to as the 'Battle of the Danube Heath'.²⁷⁸ While it is agreed that

²⁷⁵ Kim 2013, 92-95.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. On Mundo: Jordanes, *Getica*, 301. But, as we shall see in 3.6, Mundo's connection to Attila and Ardaric may be another point of interest for Jordanes. PLRE II, s.v. Trapstila, 1124-1125.

²⁷⁷ Kim 2013, 95. As we shall discuss in section 3.6, it is unlikely that Mundo was an heir of Attila.

²⁷⁸ Particularly lines 55-59 which describe the battle itself.

the Battle of the Danube Heath may preserve the traces of a war between Goths and Huns, Maenchen-Helfen himself casts doubt on whether the battle itself is Nedao, as it could also be the war between Valamer and the scattered Hunnic forces thereafter.²⁷⁹ It is, simply put, not possible to determine which event it represents with any accuracy. However, it has been argued that Ardaric is Angantyr in the Icelandic saga, and that Ellac is Humli, the new king of the Huns.²⁸⁰ This section will argue that not only is the *Hervararsaga* an unreliable source for the possible preservation of the Battle of Nedao, but Angantyr's relationship to Hloth/Humli is the one portion most likely to have been fictionalized during the writing of the saga in order to fit the saga's overarching narrative: the legacy of king Heithrek and inheritance.²⁸¹ Therefore, the linking of Ardaric to Angantyr and Ellac to either Humli or Hloth is completely unreliable and almost certainly fiction. In order, we shall discuss: the context of the *Hervararsaga* and a brief summary of its plot followed by the historical value of the narratives in the saga. Then, we will review why the saga was written. Its main thrust was to argue against bastards being able to inherit a fair share of their father's estate and to promote primogeniture/the chivalric model. The similarities between the Battle of Nedao and the Danube Heath will also be reviewed with a block quotation from Tolkien's translation. Finally, we confirm that Ardaric cannot be connected to Ellac's family viz. the saga due to the unreliability of the legendary saga.

Written in the thirteenth century, the *Hervararsaga* was named after the daughter of Heithrek, Hervor, who was also the estranged half-sister of Angantyr and Hloth – it tells of how

²⁷⁹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 153; acknowledged by Kim 2013, 94, but otherwise not discussed. Thompson, likewise, does not even mention the saga, 1996.

²⁸⁰ Kim 2013, 95.

²⁸¹ For more on the saga's main purpose being inheritance, see: Tulinius 2002, 75.

she found the cursed sword, Tyrting, and uses it to obtain her portion of Heithrek's inheritance.²⁸² The saga is composed of the abridgement and adaptation of several independent eddas (poems) in order to create a fictional dynastic lineage for one king, Heithrek, who is also fictitious.²⁸³ Any expert on Jordanes will immediately see the pitfalls of such a work, except this work was built not just on eddas, which may or may not preserve the fragments of oral history, but was intended to be fiction for readers who *knew* that it was fiction.²⁸⁴ The account of Hloth, the bastard son of Heithrek, half-brother of Angantyr, and adopted son of Humli, was adapted from the edda 'Hlothskvída', which itself was a 'patently fictional work even though it presents itself as history.'²⁸⁵ The edda which recounts the battle between Goths and Huns, while recognized as likely the oldest edda used in the creation of the saga, is lost – though it does retain hints that the edda itself had already been edited several times.²⁸⁶

Unsurprisingly, as Tolkien puts it, there is 'little to no historical authenticity' in the legendary sagas.²⁸⁷ Tulinius further emphasizes 'the importance of being very cautious when probing these [sagas] for information about the period in which the action is supposed to take place, for even if the themes, characters, and situations are ancient, they are transmitted to us through a lens which is that of the era in which the texts were composed', and 'to interpret them [the sagas] correctly, therefore, it is necessary to understand how Icelanders in the High Middle ages conceived of the past. For though the themes are presented as legacies of the past, they are

²⁸² Heithrek also spelt as Heithrekr, Heidrek, or Heidrekr. Tolkien refers to the work as 'Saga of King Heidrek the Wise', 1960.

²⁸³ For more on the dating of the composition of the saga, see Tulinius 2002, who places it into the second half of the thirteenth century.

²⁸⁴ Built from independent poems, Tulinius 2002, 75. Written and read as fiction, Tulinius 2002, 63-65; Tolkien, 1960, 1.

²⁸⁵ Tulinius 2002, 92.

²⁸⁶ Tolkien 1960, xxi-xxii. The old English poem, *Widsith* also appears to be very similar in 'air and structure'.

²⁸⁷ Tolkien 1960, 1.

used in the authors' present and pressed into the service of that present.'²⁸⁸ The *Hervararsaga* is no exception. The saga as it has been handed down was composed by 'a Christian, with Christian parents, Christian grand-parents, and Christian great-grandparents,' and thus the saga is 'a story infused with Christian patterns of thought, though removed from Christian faith.'²⁸⁹

This leads us now to the purpose of the *Hervararsaga*. Recall how it was theorized that Ardaric could be represented in Angantyr's character from the saga and the issue of inheritance between Angantyr and Hloth (and consequently Humli) became evidence to prove that Ardaric himself was a royal Hun and that the Battle of Nedao, as a result, was a war over inheritance and not rebellion. However, the greatest flaw in this comparison is not that the saga was written 750 years later or that it was fabricated by Christians writing fiction, but that its primary interest, 'the cement that holds the different sections together' is legitimacy and primogeniture, and thus also inheritance.²⁹⁰ That is, the foremost purpose of the *Hervararsaga* is to create a continuous dynastic succession of the fictional king Heithrek and to argue that certain illegitimate members of that dynasty should not attempt to seek a fair portion of his inheritance, which includes Hloth, Angantyr's younger half-brother who was also of Hunnic descent. This is most relevant as Humli's claim to any portion of Angantyr's estate is strictly through Hloth, without whom there would be no case to be made.

The legendary sagas – that is, the sagas as a genre – were written for Icelandic aristocratic elites and were enjoyed by these elites as fictional entertainment, and were often read orally at gatherings. For their audience, the sagas were written to portray: the nobility of the of Icelandic

²⁸⁸ Tulinius 2002, 39.

²⁸⁹ Tulinius 2002, 114.

²⁹⁰ Tulinius 2002, 102-103. Tolkien likewise agree that its plot revolves around the inheritance of Heithrek. Tolkien, 1960, 1.

aristocratic lineage, to justify the holding of their lands and the right to command and judge,²⁹¹ and Icelandic elites desired to imitate aristocratic customs flourishing in Europe.²⁹² Moreover, the sagas are sympathetic to the rise of the chivalric model spreading across Europe.²⁹³ The *Hervararsaga* itself is concerned with the Icelandic social transition from the ‘Sippe’ system to the ‘Geschlecht’ system; that is, from a system of ‘Sippe’, where ‘all sons – whether legitimate or illegitimate made no difference to inheritance, provided they had shown their mettle – received their equal share of an inheritance’, to ‘Geschlecht’: ‘a system that privileged the eldest and the legitimate.’²⁹⁴ With thus stated, we now turn to the text:

Angantyr asked how great was the host of the Huns, and Gizur replied, ‘Huge is their multitude’: (102) Of soldiers have they / six phalanxes, / every Phalanx / has five thousands, / every thousand / thirteen hundreds, / and a full hundred is four times counted.’ Angantyr learnt now of the strength of the Hunnish host, and then he sent out messengers to every quarter, summoning to him every man who could bear arms and would give him service. He marched then to the Danube Heath with his army, and it was great; and the Hunnish host came against him, and it was as great again.

On the next day they began the battle, and all that day they fought, and in the evening they went to their tents. They fought thus for eight days without the captains being wounded, but no-one could number the fallen. But by day and night men thronged in to Angantyr from every quarter, and thus it was that he had no fewer men than at the beginning of the battle. And now the fighting grew yet more bitter than before; the Huns were ferocious... But the Goths were defending their freedom and the land of their birth against the Huns, and for this they stood firm, and each man urged on his comrade. When the day was far spent the Goths pressed on so hard that the Hunnish legions gave way before them... then

²⁹¹ ‘This literature described how the [Icelandic] chiefs’ ancestors, possessors of royal blood, came to settle in Iceland, how they took possession of the land and the right to command in their territories.’ Tulinius 2002, 45.

²⁹² Tulinius 2002, 45. Purpose 3) is also related to a broader movement in Iceland at the time when elites were ‘Compelled by the desire to integrate itself with medieval Christiendom while proving, to itself as well as others, the nobility of its lineage, and while adopting aristocratic Continental modes of life and thought.’

²⁹³ Tulinius 2002, 99.

²⁹⁴ Jochens 1985, 95-112, ct: Tulinius, 2002, 99.

the ranks fell apart before the kings of the Huns, and brother struck at brother. There Hlod fell and Humli the king, and the Huns took flight; but the Goths slew them, and made such carnage that the rivers choked and turned from their courses, and the valleys were filled with dead men and horses.

Angantyr went to search among the slain, and finding his brother Hlod he said: (103) ‘Treasures uncounted, / kinsman, I offered you, / wealth and cattle / well to content you; / but for war’s reward / you have won neither / realm more spacious / nor rings glittering.’

And then he said: (104) ‘We are cursed, kinsman, / your killer am I! / It will be never forgotten; / the Norns’ doom is evil.’²⁹⁵

It is immediately apparent that there are tantalizing similarities between the *Hervararsaga*’s Battle of the Danube Heath and Jordanes’ Battle of Nedao. The Huns in both accounts have an impressive force and Ardaric/Angantyr needed to muster quickly in order to fight them. Both battles took place by a river. The battles took place in multiple engagements, though the saga distinctly tells of it being over many days while Jordanes is vaguer.²⁹⁶ Many were killed on either side but more on the Hunnic side, including the king(s).²⁹⁷ The Goths were fighting for freedom and the battles presumably took place along the middle to western end of the Danube as Jordanes indicates Pannonia, and the saga narrates ‘the land of their birth’, presuming they are the Gepids. The Gothic forces brought many tribes together in order to fight the Huns that continued to bolster their ranks. Finally, the role of fate that killed Ellac against Attila’s imagined wishes and the Norns that doomed Hloth, Angantyr’s half-brother that wanted more of their father’s, Heithrek’s, inheritance, is similar.

In the theory that Ardaric was a royal Hun, vying in a struggle for succession, Ellac is said to be Humli in the saga and Ardaric, Angantyr – both connected through Hloth’s familial relation

²⁹⁵ *Hervararsaga*, 101-104 (pages 55-58). Note that Hloth = Hlod. Sometimes also written as Hlothr or Hlodr, bearing a certain semblance to the name ‘Lothar.’

²⁹⁶ Note Jordanes’ ‘*Post multos ergo gravesque conflictos*’.

²⁹⁷ Note that Ellac is killed in Jordanes’ account but both Humli and Hloth are killed in the saga.

with Angantyr and Heithrek. As stated earlier, Hloth's life comes from the edda *Hlothsvida*, which is known to be fictitious, and his arrival in Reithgotaland, Angantyr's kingdom, 'marks the final and most prominent occurrence of the theme of illegitimacy. He has come to demand his share of the inheritance; and illegitimacy, as we have seen, is closely tied to problems of inheritance.'²⁹⁸ Each section of the saga is marked with a trouble-making younger brother character who hold together the saga in this pursuit and they, altogether, form 'a cycle of genealogical schema and the sections coincide with the appearance of each new generation.'²⁹⁹ Angantyr and Hloth need to be made brothers so that Angantyr, the older legitimate son of Heithrek, can kill Hloth, the younger illegitimate son.

In conclusion, the greatest problem with the saga is, once again, that it is primarily concerned with matters of familial heritage and inheritance and because the original edda for the battle between Goths and Huns is no longer extant, what has been altered and what truly preserved is unknown. Though the eddas may preserve the remnants of a much earlier oral tradition, it was written in the thirteenth century at least 750 years after the Battle of Nedao – a sufficient amount of time to thoroughly distort the original event. Regardless of the original eddas' veracity, the author of the *Hervararsaga's* intention was to write fiction for an audience who knew it was fiction, even drawing on works that were known as fiction. The saga itself is composed of otherwise unrelated eddas, adapted into a legendary narrative about the lineage and inheritance of King Heithrek, which portray the narrative lengths the author went through to select and apply known stories all for the purpose of weaving an account that reflects the changes in thirteenth-century Icelandic aristocratic culture (which was changing from the 'Sippe' system to the

²⁹⁸ Tulinius 2002, 103. Furthermore, 'the link between the state of bastardy and exclusion from inheritance was first established in the second section of the saga when Hervor, learning her father's identity, goes to reclaim her inheritance from his ghost.' 104.

²⁹⁹ Tulinius 2002, 75, 106.

'Geschlecht' system). 'Sippe', in which lineage gave way to merit, was being replaced by the more formal and prescriptive 'Geschlecht', that favoured the eldest legitimate son. Pulling on such unrelated content and massaging it to fit with the author's reflections on changes in inheritance automatically strikes a blow against the possible literalness of the end account.

Thus, to use the saga as evidence for arguing that Ardaric was a part of Attila's family, even by marriage, directly cites the one portion of the saga most likely to have been altered from the original edda during the creation of the saga. Therefore, whatever the similarities between the two accounts, the distance in time and the intention behind the writing of the *Hervararsaga*, the saga is highly unreliable on any matter that deals with familial connections. Jordanes' account, therefore, is still the most reliable source for determining Ardaric's motivations for his role in the Battle of Nedao. Thus, Ardaric may be a royal Hun competing for succession at Nedao, but if so, the *Hervararsaga* cannot be used as evidence in this manner. Furthermore, Ardaric's name meaning 'Oath King' and his grandson, Mundo, possibly being related to Attila are both also not certain. As we shall see in the third chapter, both examples may be part of Jordanes' anti-Gepid rhetorical program and should thus be scrutinized further before consideration.

2.9 Conclusion

Ardaric not being of royal status, however, does not preclude him from a significant position in Attila's court. It is certainly possible that Ardaric became a Hun in the same manner that the Thracian merchant identified as a Hun in Priscus' famous account.³⁰⁰ But such status still would not have granted him a position in royal succession. As has been determined in this chapter, Hunnic elites recognize agnatic seniority as their system of inheritance for kingship, which precludes Ardaric from candidacy. Thus, Ardaric must be a rebel and the problem remains: if he

³⁰⁰ Priscus, fr. 8.94. Identity in this period was also malleable; Heather 2009, 228.

was not a successor of Attila, how did he muster such a massive force in so little time? Jordanes provides a hint about how to connect his account with the circumstances surrounding Attila's wedding and ensuing death:

When Ardaric, king of the Gepids, learned this, resentful about so many nations being dragged off like the most worthless of slaves because of their agreement, was the first to rise against the sons of Attila. With the advantage of luck, Ardaric wiped off his obtained shame of servitude [and], because of his withdrawal, he released not only his own people but also others who were equally oppressed since they all readily desired that which was sought for the advantage of them all.³⁰¹

The line in the passage, 'because of his withdrawal' (*sua discessione*), is the most interesting. As observed in section 2.7, Jordanes may be referring to a singular event (the wedding/funeral) in these introductory passages to the Battle of Nedao, where, following Attila's death, his two predecessors needed to redistribute the province of each king and the people over which each will rule. If so, then Ardaric's withdrawal can be read as his leaving of the negotiations, literally withdrawing from the table, as opposed to a metaphorical withdrawal from Hunnic rule (though both meanings can simultaneously exist). This is doubly important because if Ardaric was attending these negotiations and realized just what his authority to rule his own people meant in the face of disagreeable Hunnic inheritors who wished to carve up his kingdom for their armies, then so too may have other major tribal leaders of the western Hunnic empire. There may, likewise, have also been lesser princes in the line of succession (begot by lower wives of Attila) who wished to make gains during the rebellion where they would otherwise have made nothing.

To conclude, it was Attila's wedding and subsequent funeral which drew in every reputable Hun, from his generals to tribal chieftains, followed by Attila's lack of clear inheritance that initiated the crisis of negotiations which subsequently exploded into full rebellion. This is how

³⁰¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 260.

Ardaric gathered such a large force in so little time. Freedom is not, as said, a satisfactory answer as to why so many revolted and in such large numbers, especially under the banner of a rebel during a time of slow communication. In Jordanes' mind, the dividing of peoples to satisfy inheritance was absurd. Thus, freedom would be the propaganda proposed by the rebelling faction, and consequently echoed by Jordanes, but authority to govern their own (non-divided) peoples was the real backbone of Ardaric's force. Furthermore, the conspiracy to revolt could have been formulated before the rebels withdrew from the negotiations, thereby not requiring them to send missives to one another. This, it seems, makes the most sense for how so many gathered under Ardaric's banner; there is no need to assume that all tribes under the rebelling faction were Gothic or Germanic – just kings and their peoples who wished to rid themselves of the current Hunnic dynasty's rule. With Ardaric and the Gepids supplying the bulk of the force, they obtained the lion's share of the rewards (the majority of the former western Hunnic Empire).³⁰²

On the Hunnic side, it is generally accepted that Ellac was the senior king at Nedao, if not the new supreme ruler of the Hunnic empire, like Attila had been. While most scholarship accepts Jordanes' account and states that the Huns fell into civil war, this chapter has shown that Jordanes' passage lacks clarity and therefore should be scrutinized more carefully. For, immediately following Attila's death, the sons of Attila are not seen fighting other sons. Instead, Ellac rallies the sons of Attila into a sizable force beneath his banner in 454 (one year after Attila's death) as a legitimate successor of the Hunnic kingdom.³⁰³ The only word to suggest physical conflict in

³⁰² Interestingly, after Nedao the Gepids *may* have become an imperial ally, seen by the signet ring and sword (donatives of an emperor) in the grave of a supposed Gepid royal, Bystricky 2008, 30. This conclusion, however, is further questioned and examined in 3.7.

³⁰³ Argued by Kelly 2009, 267-279 and Thompson 1996, 167. Kim also states that the collapse in Jordanes' account was unrealistically sudden, 2016, 118. cf. for scholars who accept Jordanes' account at least in part: Whitby 2008; Kelly 2009, 202. Sons rallying implied when Jordanes says that after the battle the remainder of the sons fled to the Pontic sea, where they eventually fight Valamer. Jordanes, *Getica*, 266.

Jordanes would be ‘struggle’ (*contentio*), which could just likewise imply a verbal dispute, not necessarily resulting in war between the successors. The ‘struggle’ may also have been a summer of blood, the likes of which were seen following the death of Constantine, where potentially problematic heirs were cut down. If there was a war between the sons, then it is more likely that it did not occur until *after* the Battle of Nedao, when the Huns vanish from the historical record until the mid-460s. Furthermore, while the loyalist Hunnic forces are defeated at Nedao, the Huns are seen, nearly a decade later, operating under yet two more sons of Attila (that is, Dengizich and Ernak), both younger brothers of Ellac and sons of Attila’s first wife, Erecan. Dengizich and Ernak settled east of the Carpathian Mountains with Dengizich controlling the lands closest to the Danube (king of the Left Wing) and Ernak at the head of the prominent Akatziri Huns, the same tribe that Ellac himself was sent to govern by Attila (king of the Right Wing). Even following a crushing defeat and the loss of the entire western arm of the empire, the Hunnic system re-emerged under the rule of the same dynasty as that which ruled before Nedao, albeit significantly reduced in military might and geographical scope.

In the next chapter, we shall continue the discussion on the Battle of Nedao but from the perspective of the sixth-century. Indeed, as we shall see, there is evidence to suggest that much of the information presented in Jordanes’ *Getica* may be anachronistic and that he himself bears a strong aversion to the Gepid kingdom of his own day.

Chapter 3 Nedao through the Lens of Justinian's Era

3.1 Introduction

Following the Battle of Nedao, history for the Huns is poorly recorded. After Ellac's death, ten years elapse before Dengizich's and Ernak's operations east of the Carpathians are mentioned. Reasonable speculation about the intervening period and its implications for the Hunnic heirs can be made, but the Gepids are another matter entirely. For this, the focus must change from the Hunnic empire to the Gepid kingdom which grew out of it. Since almost all information about the Gepids prior to the sixth century comes from Jordanes, interpretation of his attitude towards this tribe is critical.³⁰⁴ Scholarship to date largely accepts Jordanes' account for the fall of the Hunnic Empire with little to no deviation.³⁰⁵ However, there is reason to believe that Jordanes anachronistically purposefully exaggerated the role of the Gepids at Nedao, making them the largest actors on the side of the rebels, because that is how he saw the Gepid kingdom of his own day. This is compounded by the distinct possibility that Jordanes himself had an anti-Gepid attitude when he wrote *Getica* in Constantinople, in 550-552, a time when anti-Gepid rhetoric and propaganda was circulating.³⁰⁶ All of these accounts of the Gepids – including those regarding their origin, Ardaric, and Mundo – may have been manipulated.

An overview of Gepid-Constantinople history in the sixth century and the presence of an anti-Gepid sentiment in Constantinople – the result of the rise of Gepid military dominance beyond the Danube- is required. Procopius' negative attitude towards the Gepids and his critical view of

³⁰⁴ As Karalambieva notes, very little can be said about the Gepids without using Jordanes; 2013, 245.

³⁰⁵ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 144; Thompson 1996, 167; Kelly 2010, 267; Kim somewhat accepts Jordanes' account but disagrees with the specifics of who Ardaric was and, therefore, why the battle took place. As discussed, he claims Ardaric was a royal Hun vying for succession, which we determined to be improbable in section 2.8; Kim 2013, 91, 133.

³⁰⁶ Amory also suggests that Jordanes was influenced by propaganda. 1997, 298-299.

Justinian also necessitate scrutiny. Discussion of Jordanes and his critical attitude towards Justinian and the Gepids in *Getica*, both of which can be gleaned from the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains and Nedao scenes, follows. Indeed, it is possible that both Procopius and Jordanes share certain views on contemporary events involving the eastern emperor and the Gepid tribe. However, their views on the Huns, and Mundo, differ quite starkly. Jordanes' description of Mundo is so negative when compared with other contemporary sources that it seems Mundo's worth is debased solely because of his familial lineage. Ardaric and his role as a character within Jordanes' narrative should also be reconsidered in relation to the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains and Nedao; Ardaric is not only a user of stratagems (something which Jordanes appears to dislike), but may also be treacherous. The tribes he mustered at Nedao did not see him as a hero but, instead, as an opportunist to whom they bore no loyalty. Ardaric was, to Jordanes, a mercenary king. Should this research bear fruit, Jordanes' critical attitude of the Gepids will impact understanding of the collapse of the Hunnic state.

3.2 Anti-Gepid sentiment in Constantinople

The Gepids in the sixth century became more than just an independent state beyond the Danube. Having been able to capitalize on the capture of Sirmium, a former imperial capital, they amassed so much military and political leverage that they became a serious threat to the security of the Balkans. In response, an anti-Gepid sentiment appears to have developed in Constantinople before and during the time of Jordanes' writing of *Getica*. Constantinopolitan writers of the 540s to 550s, such as Justinian, Procopius, Jordanes, and perhaps even John Malalas, may be colouring their views of the Gepids as a result of the then-current political and ideological climate. In Jordanes' case, this is of critical importance: by the 550s, the Gepid situation had reached its zenith and Jordanes could have been relating his history to us through an anti-Gepid lens. Looking back

at the fifth-century's extant sources, there is no evidence of the Gepids having been as large a force as Jordanes suggests. In fact, following the collapse of the Huns, the Rugi appear to have been the most noted tribe and, perhaps, the most belligerent. Sixth century Gepid-Constantinople relations are integral to understanding the historic reality of the period of which Procopius is particularly critical. After the Gepids captured Sirmium, Justinian agreed to pay them subsidies yet the Gepids continued to ferry Hunnic and Sklaveni raids into the Balkans. As a result, Justinian wrote *Novella* 11, a work propagandizing the importance of Sirmium and Procopius calls the Gepids 'Treaty-breakers'. With the possibility of an anti-Gepid sentiment existing in Constantinople, in part generated by Justinianic propaganda, Malalas, when calling Attila a Gepid, may actually be doing so because of such propaganda. Procopius' and Jordanes' critical attitudes of the Gepids both further cement the possibility of anti-Gepid rhetoric circulating in Constantinople and, more importantly, identify how Jordanes may be interpreting the role of the Gepids in his Gothic history.

Contemporary fifth century sources are all but silent on the importance of the Gepids. Prosper, writing in 455, makes no mention of the Gepids as key actors in overthrowing Attila's state.³⁰⁷ Sidonius in his panegyric, looking to sensationalize the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains by adding in the names of many of the participants, mentions the Gepids only in passing.³⁰⁸ In the fifth century the Gepids are insignificant.

Following the Battle of Nedao, the former Hunnic west appears to have been split among the Gepid kingdom, the Heruls and the Rugi.³⁰⁹ It is not until Odoacer sends a major expedition

³⁰⁷ Even the hagiography, life of Saint Severinus, is all but silent on the Gepids. In fact, both the Sidonius and *Vita S. Severini*, 1, appear to place more prominence on the Rugi as actors in the two Pannonian regions. Prosper, *Chron. Min.* 1, 482-483 (1370).

³⁰⁸ For Sidonius, see footnote 37. Also note that the Rugi are given an adjective while the Gepids are just another name in the list.

³⁰⁹ Heather 2009, 224-225.

across the Danube in 486, killing the Rugi king, Feletheus, that the Heruls and Gepids become the major powers. The Lombards, in 488, filled the vacuum left by the collapsed Rugi kingdom. In 508, the Lombards defeated the Heruls and the remainder of them split into two groups: one which went north to Scandinavia and one that joined the Gepids.³¹⁰ It is at this time that the Gepids became the major rivals of the Lombards and a power beyond the Danube, nearly six decades after the Battle of Nedao. It may be that supposed importance of the Gepids came from Priscus, but it is conspicuous that the two accounts which remark on the prominence of the Gepids are the two battle scenes in *Getica* which are not agreed to have come directly from Priscus.³¹¹ It is also not unreasonable to surmise that Jordanes is anachronistically ascribing importance to the Gepids, as he did the very same with the Greuthungi kingdom of the fourth century.³¹²

It was during the sixth century that the Gepids began to mobilize into a powerhouse beyond the Danube. After seizing Sirmium in 536, they used the city to bolster their military resources and diplomatic power. By the late 540s, the Gepids had organized so effectively that they could ferry Hunnic and Sklaveni raiders across the Sava and Danube into Roman territory. By the end of the 540s, they had nearly doubled their military power and were becoming the next all-powerful state beyond the Danube, the likes of which had not been seen since the collapse of the Hunnic Empire nearly a century earlier.³¹³ It is only after the collapse of the Herul kingdom in 508 that the Lombards became the main rival of the Gepids for the former Hunnic west but, having taken Sirmium, the Gepids were quickly growing militarily.

³¹⁰ Heather 2009, 224-226.

³¹¹ Blockley doubts much of Nedao comes from Priscus; FCH vol.1, 113-114.

³¹² Heather 1995, 151.

³¹³ Sarantis 2016, 266-278.

As a result of their mutual conflict, both kingdoms sought the support of Justinian.³¹⁴ This dispute between the Gepids and Lombards, ‘understandable when we recall the propagandistic significance Justinian accorded to Sirmium, the former imperial capital, in *Novella* 11, emerges as the main reason behind the emperor’s decision to side with the Lombards’.³¹⁵ Justinian not only sided with the Lombards because the Gepids were growing quickly, but also launched propaganda to confirm his decision after the Gepids seized Sirmium. That such anti-Gepid rhetoric was produced is a major insight to how Constantinopolitans in the 550s viewed the Gepids.

In the 540s, the Gepids continued to bolster their forces with large numbers of Lombards, Slavs, Heruls, and Kutrigur Huns. The Gepid king, Thorisin, also may have encouraged the defection of two anti-Roman Heruls, Datus and Aordus, along with 3,000 soldiers, initiating the Gepids’ first significant diplomatic coup.³¹⁶ The exiled Lombard prince, Ildiges, turned coat and joined the Gepids during the dispute of 548, bringing with him Lombard and Sklaveni troops in exchange for the Lombard throne.³¹⁷ All of these defections and recruitments resulted in the Gepids nearly doubling their military strength by the end of the 540s. The importance attributed to Sirmium coupled with the threat of the Gepids becoming the next all-powerful state beyond the Danube as the Huns had been before Nedao, gave cause for concern to Constantinople and made way for critical reception of the Gepid kingdom. They had taken a former imperial city and had become a real threat.

Prior to Lombard-Gepid negotiations in the 540s - 550s, not only did the Gepids take Sirmium, but also alliance subsidies were paid to them by Justinian, something Procopius is

³¹⁴ Ibid, 270-271.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 269.

³¹⁶ Sarantis 2016, 271.

³¹⁷ It is curious that Ildiges’ name reminds one of Attila’s last wife, Ildico, whose wedding night he died on.

particularly critical of. He uses the Lombard envoy as a mouth-piece for his speech to criticize Justinian's Balkan diplomatic policies while also bombarding the Gepids with insults.³¹⁸ The conflicts between the Gepid kingdom and Constantinople by the time of Jordanes' compositions in 551 had reached their zenith. Since Justinian had launched a propagandistic campaign against the Gepids after the capture of Sirmium, reasonably there was high-profile and well-noted animosity towards the Gepids by the early 550s. Jordanes makes no attempt to conceal his dissatisfaction with the Gepids by calling them *gepanta*, and Procopius too calls them dishonourable treaty-breakers.³¹⁹

It is likely that many of Procopius' views presented here may have been shared by Jordanes, as he speaks about the Gepids in similarly derogatory terms. The Gepids being the target of Justinianic propaganda – which Jordanes and Procopius, though both critical of Justinian, supported – suggests that there was an anti-Gepid sentiment in Constantinople during the time of Jordanes' writing of *Getica*.

A further piece of evidence for anti-Gepid propaganda originating in Constantinople can be found in Malalas. John Malalas infamously identified Attila as a Gepid.³²⁰ It is possible that this identification was not accidental, but the product of Justinianic propaganda which was then incorporated in Malalas' *Chronographia*. Though some scholars dismiss this connection between Attila and the Gepids as impossible (and therefore absurd), Meier argues that the association of Attila with the Gepids was the by-product of the blurring of differences between the Goths, Gepids,

³¹⁸ Procopius, *Goth.* 7, 34.16-18; Sarantis 2016, 269-270. We shall return to this point shortly. Furthermore, the Gepids may have had backing from the Ostrogoths under Totila, who played a role in funding the Sklaveni attack of 551. That the Goths, being at war with the Romans at this time, makes such a Gepid-Goth alliance highly plausible. Sarantis 2016, 277.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 269.

³²⁰ Malalas, *Chron.* 358.

and Scythians (of whom the Huns were a part) seen in Procopius' list of the Gothic tribes.³²¹ Thus, he concludes, sometime between 451 and Malalas' chronicle, the historical coherence of the Roman empire, which encompassed both the East and West, was lost beyond the political level.³²² In this light, Attila may have become a Gepid due to this blurring of lines and general ignorance of past events at the popular levels. However, Scott showed well that John Malalas drew on propagandized historical accounts which were issued directly from Constantinople (or, argued by Bjornlie, he could just have fabricated it altogether). Greatrex (and others), emphasize that our current 12th century copy of Malalas is a poor rendition of the author's original work, which must be remembered.³²³ The issue of the Gepids had reached a critical level and, with their capture of Sirmium, they were becoming the next all-powerful state beyond the Danube, echoing the reign of Attila which no doubt still lingered in political memory. Therefore, the association of Attila with the Gepids could be Justinianic propaganda to garner support for aiding the Lombards against the treacherous Gepids. If indeed Meier's hypothesis is correct on the blurring of identities among the 'Gothic' tribes, then such a juxtaposition of Attila and Gepid might be possible. But again, we must stress that the editions of Malalas extant are poor representations of his original work.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that during the mid-sixth century Constantinople was taken hold of by an anti-Gepid sentiment. Becoming the largest power beyond the Danube, which had not been seen since the death of Attila, must have deeply troubled the Byzantine Empire (in no small part due to the loss of Sirmium). Bolstered by barbarian raiders and Lombard/Herul

³²¹ Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 130. Meier 2017, 337-352; Procopius, *Vand.* 3, 2.2.

³²² Meier, 2017, 351-352.

³²³ He shows that Malalas' original work may have had far more information on the western world but due to the six centuries of copyists abridging and removing details of little interest, much of the original text has been completely distorted. This means that inferences based on omissions in the text mean very little in our current circumstance; Greatrex 2016, 169-186. See also Jeffreys 2016, 139-148 who argues that there were several editions of John Malalas circulating in the sixth century. Carolla 2016, 239-252, likewise stresses the damage the text incurred even by the 10th century.

exiles, the Gepids were a true menace who became the target of propaganda for Justinian himself, Procopius and possibly even John Malalas and Jordanes.

3.3 Procopius of Caesarea and his Critical Attitude of the Gepids

There is ample evidence to suggest that Constantinople during the mid-sixth century had become hostile towards the Gepid kingdom. Procopius, having started his histories in ca. 544 or 545 and finished in the 550s (around the time that Jordanes had begun to write *Getica*), likewise is more critical of the Gepids than he is of other barbarian nations, such as the Huns.³²⁴ The Gepids were not typical barbarians (like the Huns who, while primitive and savage, could be hired and settled on Roman land and eventually placated); instead, the Gepids were a treacherous lot who not only wished to gather wealth but also had no interest in civilizing themselves. To Procopius, the Gepids were proud of who they were and wished to obtain Roman gifts without becoming Romans. Therefore, in this section we shall first look at his critical view of Justinian and of the Gepids. With this, we turn to Jordanes whose attitude towards the Gepids are similar but, by contrast, treats the Huns far more severely.

Procopius's own view of the Gepids might be important for how we understand Jordanes'. Because Jordanes did not leave us a polemic on why he detests the Gepids, we can only infer from Procopius that, perhaps, Jordanes shared in some (or all) of his views. Procopius' stance on the Gepid kingdom is firmly negative, something they share in common.³²⁵ Procopius does not refer to the Gepids as violent, primitive, or savage – these adjectives he saves for the Huns and other Slavic groups.³²⁶ Instead, they are treacherous and unreliable in their diplomatic dealings with the

³²⁴ Bjornlie 2013, 105. For more specific details on the dating of Procopius' Wars, see Greatrex 2014, 97-100.

³²⁵ Also, not Procopius total lack of detailing the Gepids, aside from them taking Singidunum and Sirmium: *Vand.* 3.2.2-6.

³²⁶ Sarantis Forthcoming, 8.

Roman empire, especially as a result of their capture of Sirmium, ‘presumably because it rankled with the Constantinopolitan government and elites.’³²⁷ Thus, the Gepid and Lombard speeches in Procopius’ *Wars*, delivered in Constantinople in 548, both focus on the Gepids’ decision to occupy Sirmium, regardless of their alliance with the Romans. Procopius criticizes the occupation using language such as ‘shameless’, ‘insulting’ and ‘ungracious’, while buffeting the Gepids with insults like ‘vile wretches’.³²⁸ Aside from the anti-Gepid rhetoric, the speeches delivered in Procopius also portray the Gepids as militarily powerful and politically ambitious.³²⁹ Such criticisms should not be easily dismissed as stereotypical barbarian traits for the Gepids had become the dominant power beyond the Danube.³³⁰ For, as Greatrex put it, the newest barbarians were often the most dangerous.³³¹ The Gepids, while they had been in close proximity, were redefining themselves into a military state the likes of which the east needed to become accustomed to.

Likewise, Justinian expended diplomatic effort and military resources on countering the Gepids’ growing strength. In short, the Gepids were not typical primitive and savage barbarians but ‘sophisticated, cunning and Machiavellian’ in their dealings with the Eastern empire.³³² Furthermore, instead of being motivated by typical ‘barbaric greed for Roman land and wealth’, the

³²⁷ Sarantis Forthcoming, 10. Note Procopius’ speech after the seizure of Sirmium, ‘How could anyone adequately depict in words the outrageous nature of their action? Did they not heap contempt upon the Roman Empire? Did they not break the bonds of both treaty and alliance?’ Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.16-17; cf. Sarantis Forthcoming, 10. Also not Vela’s murdering of Ildibadus via assassination because the latter had married off his love affair while he was away: *Vand.* 3, 7.44.

³²⁸ Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.6-24; Sarantis Forthcoming, 10.

³²⁹ Ibid. ‘The Gepids, o emperor, are holding Sirmium and boast that they are in possession of all Dacia.’ Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.17. and ‘The Gepids are far superior to the Lombards both in multitude and valour.’ Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.28. Sarantis likewise further details how the Gepids were able to bolster their military strength by taking in exiled Lombard and Herul leaders in the 540s, and via their domination of the Sava and Middle Danube river crossings, allowing them to ferry in Sklaveni and Kutrigur Hunnic raiders.

³³⁰ Sarantis 2017, 228.

³³¹ Greatrex Forthcoming, 12.

³³² Procopius, *Goth.* 7, 34.16–17; Gepids growing stronger than Lombards: Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.28, especially because they possess Sirmium (and therefore control Dacia): Procopius, *Goth.* 7.34.17. Machiavellian: Sarantis Forthcoming, 10.

Gepids fortified themselves politically in Southern Pannonia, just beyond the Eastern empire; they were also power-hungry and faithless. These ‘bad’ Gepids were likewise Arian Christians, unlike the ‘good’ Lombards who, having adopted Orthodox Christianity, were even considered ‘reasonable’ and ‘restrained’.³³³ Therefore, ‘Procopius’ contrasting portrayals of these barbarian groups presumably owed more to the sources available to him and his eastern Roman worldview than to reality’.

If, therefore, Procopius had acquired his negative attitude towards the Gepids from his sources, perhaps from Justinianic propaganda, then so too may have Jordanes. For if these two authors are swayed by similar anti-Gepid sources – Procopius: a classically trained and well-connected historian who worked under Belisarius (who Jordanes naturally speaks highly of) and Jordanes: a notary of Gothic descent who worked under a *magister militum* – then it is quite reasonable that the remainder of Constantinople had fallen into a polemical debate about the Gepid kingdom in which the two were participating. As we have now abundantly discussed, the issue of the Gepids had reached its zenith by the early 550s.

While Procopius’ comments on barbarians may be driven by classicizing tropes of the uncivilized barbarian (and may appear to only be part of a senatorial anti-Justinianic narrative), Procopius’ attitude towards barbarians is not uniformly negative.³³⁴ He was capable of separating an individual that hailed from a particular ethnic background from their parent group, such as having a fairly positive view of Mundo while remaining critical of the Gepids (which shall be

³³³ Sarantis 2017, 230.

³³⁴ Furthermore, ‘we need to look for and understand contradictory messages and alternative viewpoints in his *Wars*, which tend to be hidden away from its main narrative thrust... these diverse interpretative strands are examples of Procopius’ own ambivalence regarding certain issues and interest in different perspectives.’ Sarantis 2017, 233. We must also remember that he is not writing for only classically trained elites, but also officers classes from the Balkans. See also Greatrex Forthcoming, 5-11; Sarantis Forthcoming, 1-2 and especially his distinction between the Gepids, Lombards, Huns and Sklaveni, 8-10.

discussed in 3.6). This ‘ambivalence’ could also belie the original content of barbarian sources. Thus, if Jordanes shared Procopius’ anti-Gepid view (for he too speaks ill of the Gepids in their origin story), then are his accounts of the Gepids reliable?³³⁵ In the next section we shall juxtapose Procopius’ anti-Gepid attitude with Jordanes’.

3.4 Jordanes’ Critical Attitude of Justinian and the Gepids

Bearing certain similarities to Procopius, Jordanes is critical of both Justinian and the Gepids. As we have already seen in section 2.5, Jordanes may be using the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains as a vehicle to criticize Justinian and his intervention in Belisarius’ war for Italy. This battle is important for three reasons: it shows that Jordanes may be writing *Getica* for more than just posterity; it also comments on events transpiring in his own day which have become polemical topics. Then, in the scene he reveals to us his aversion to stratagems and indecision which results in the loss of opportunities; these two attitudes can, likewise, be seen in the Battle of Nedao. For, if the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains is what happens when opportunities are not seized, then the Battle of Nedao shows us what even a tribe like the Gepids can do when they are seized – they can overthrow an empire. Finally, to Jordanes, the Gepids are an unsavory lot and in his origin story for them he makes no attempt to conceal his distaste. By determining similarities between Procopius and Jordanes, we can once more confirm that there may not only have been an anti-Gepid atmosphere in Constantinople during the mid-sixth century but also that Jordanes does harbour an aversion to the Gepids, perhaps similar to that of Procopius, which colours his perspective of the Gepid kingdom, Ardaric’s grandson, Mundo the Gepid, as well as Ardaric’s

³³⁵ The alternative is, if Jordanes is not using the same sources as Procopius for his negative view of the Gepid kingdom in his day, then his aversion may, while coincidental with Procopius’, come from his Gothic cultural heritage.

own role as a character in *Getica*.³³⁶ Indeed, as we shall see in the next section, Jordanes' aversion also extends to the Huns, particularly for their use of trickery (*fraudibus*).

If Jordanes is indeed criticizing Justinian in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, then it is not beyond reason that he may be doing the same with the Gepids and the Huns in other parts of his work.³³⁷ For at the outset to the Catalaunian Plains scene, Jordanes laments the loss of human life to the whims of kings:

Quae potest digna causa tantorum motibus invenire?³³⁸ aut quod odium in se cunctos animavit armari? Probatum est humanum genus regibus vivere, quando unius mentis insano impetu strages sit facta populorum et arbitrio superbi regis momento defecit quod tot saeculis natura progenuit.

What worthy cause can initiate the movements of so many nations? Or what hatred among them roused them all to incite war? It is proven that humanity lives for its kings. Because of the insane fury of one mind is the slaughter of peoples made and what nature generated for ages ends in a moment by the will of an arrogant king.³³⁹

Jordanes in the prelude to the battle reveals what he thinks of worldly politics and how so few men wield the lives of so many. Note here that Jordanes does not specify a certain kind of king which he detests, but rather just kings (*regibus*), implying all kings. What he means by this seems to come forward in his introduction to *Romana*.³⁴⁰ Jordanes' position on the matters of the world being beneath those of God seems clear: for while 'the world passes away, together with its desires... he who does the will of God endures forever.' The Battle of the Catalaunian Plains is 'proof that the human race lives for its kings because of the insane fury of one mind is the slaughter of peoples

³³⁶ Mundo to be further discussed in 3.6.

³³⁷ Jordanes' critical views of Justinian are well argued by a number of scholars including, but not limited to: Kruse, 2015, 233-247; van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, 1-26; Whately 2013, 65-78.

³³⁸ *inveniri*, G&G 1991, 81.

³³⁹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 193.

³⁴⁰ Jordanes, *Romana*, 4-5.

made' when humans should, instead, 'love neither the world nor the things in it' and that is how, 'learning of the disasters of various people, you might desire to become free of all trouble and turn to God, who is true freedom.'³⁴¹ Kings are worldly and transient, as are those who freely follow them. Van Hoof & van Nuffelen, however, argue that while Jordanes claims to lament the loss of human life, he is, in fact, more interested in imperial power.³⁴² We can immediately see Jordanes says one thing and yet truly believes another. He is not being entirely forthcoming to his readers.

The kings Jordanes has in mind are probably Attila, Ardaric and, perhaps, even Justinian.³⁴³ Attila caused the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, Ardaric caused Nedao, and, if Justinian can be counted among them, he setback Belisarius' progress in Italy. Whately argues that the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains may have been a safe place for Jordanes to raise his own concerns during the age of Justinian, a time when criticism was not likely to be met with reasoned discussion.³⁴⁴ He identifies three passages that Jordanes placed in the battle scene which exhibit Jordanes' anxieties over Justinian's policies:

- 1) That the earth had become the threshing floor of countless races and both sides joined battle in an open field, nothing done under cover.
- 2) That humanity lives for its kings and so the decision to go to war, which was insanity, was that of an arrogant king, and, most importantly,

³⁴¹ Indeed, as Paul said, knowledge of the world is useless, 1Cor 3:190.

³⁴² van Hoof & van Nuffelen 2017, II.

³⁴³ We do need to be cautious because of the matter of calling Justinian a *rex*. For, if Jordanes is referring to Justinian as a king, it would be highly unusual to use the term *rex*. Kruse, however, argues that Jordanes' *Romana* is detailing how the Roman world will not be reborn, as Justinian is striving for, but will decline and focuses on explaining that decline. Also see how Rome's *harmatia* was its incompetent rulers; 2015, 240-244. Thus, it is possible that Jordanes may be calling Justinian a *rex*.

³⁴⁴ Whately 2013, 73. The interestingly muted roles of the Goths in Malalas' *Chronographia*, as noted by Bjornlie 2013, 120 may be because the resolution of the Gothic war in Constantinople had become a polemical issue. For Procopius, by contrast, the Gepids were of keen interest and indeed his stance on the Gepids is strong. It may be that by the time Jordanes sat down to write *Getica*, the resolution of the Gepid war had, similarly, become the next polemical issue around which he would need to tread carefully.

- 3) “Human frailty, while it rushes into suspicions, often intercepts an opportunity to do great things.”³⁴⁵

Point one discusses Jordanes’ aversion to stratagems and trickery by noting that the battle was carried out in the open. In so doing, Jordanes is carefully criticizing Justinian and his methods, for Jordanes is generally positive about Belisarius as seen by Jordanes’ silence on Belisarius in the later portions of *Getica*.³⁴⁶ This point is well taken for Jordanes shows frequently his distaste for trickery and deception.³⁴⁷

Point two relates to who is at fault for initiating the wars. Jordanes blames the kings (perhaps implying Justinian) and Procopius likewise criticizes Justinian for bringing the whole world to war.³⁴⁸ “Justinian himself advertised his role widely in everything from the legislative compilation which he commissioned to his tableware” which tells us that he most certainly had a hand in the planning and execution of the war in Italy.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ 1) *Getica*, 192; 2) *Getica*, 193; 3) *Getica*, 194. Whately 2013, 71-73.

³⁴⁶ Whately 2013, 73. Goffart and Whately note that Jordanes seems familiar with Procopius’ *Wars*. Goffart 1988, 94-96. Whately, *Ibid*. Also in the second stage of Belisarius’ war invasion of Italy, he was unable and unwilling to meet his foes in open combat. Procopius, *Goth.* 7, 19. *Iff.* cf. Thucydides, 6.44.2. *ct.* Whately 2013, 73. For More on Jordanes’ position on Belisarius vs. Justinian, see Kruse who focuses on Jordanes’ *Romana*; 2015, 240-244.

³⁴⁷ Note the Jordanes’ creation myth of the Huns, who wielded trickery (*fraudibus*); *Getica*, 123 (discussed more in 3.5). Mundo, likewise, schemed spoils (*praedas innectens*) from his neighbours; *Getica*, 301 (discussed more in 3.6). Ardaric, too, won at Nedao using *conspiratio*; *Getica*, 265 (discussed in 3.7). Jordanes uses many other examples of *fraus* to mean ‘deception’, ‘trick’ or ‘plot’; cf. 163, 181 (Atilla’s treachery to Bleda), 227 (Thorismund, who like Attila, could see through *fraudem*), 257 (in Attila’s dirge), 302; *Romana*, 97, 144, 187, 198 (two examples), 282, and 334. Each example is associated with the enemy or someone whom Jordanes deems unfavourable (excluding Thorismund, who can see through such tricks). cf. Jordanes’ distaste for *dolus*; *Getica*: 57, 66, 135, 136, *dolose* 154, 178, Valamer *erat... dolis gnarus*, 200, Attila anticipated *dolum* but that is not the way of the Goths, 218, 235, in the causes for the Battle of Bolia (to be discussed momentarily) Hunimund led the Suevi and Sciri back into war using a *dolum*, 275. *Romana*: 91, 96, 101, 121, 157, 305, 322, 327, 330, 334, Stotzas (to be discussed more in 3.6) 369.

³⁴⁸ Whately 2013, 73-74. Procopius, *Anecd.* 18.

³⁴⁹ Corippus, *In the Praise of Justin II*, 3.120-125; *ct.* Whately 2013, 74.

Point three is Jordanes lamenting that opportunities must be seized.³⁵⁰ He is content with Belisarius' progress until, following the death of Theodora, Belisarius is recalled to Constantinople from Sicily, giving Totila an opening to recapture Rome. As a result, this seemingly arbitrary decision undid much of their progress in Italy.³⁵¹ To Jordanes, Belisarius had an opportunity to finish off Totila but was stopped by Justinian's arbitrary actions just as Thorismund had an opportunity to end Attila but was stopped by Aetius' arbitrary actions. Both Catalaunian Plains and Belisarius' war in Italy, led to the enemy (Totila/Attila) of Belisarius/Thorismund continuing to operate in Italy because of Justinian's/Aetius' intervention.³⁵²

Brodka, interestingly, speculates that Priscus, Jordanes' source for the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains, was attempting to establish a motif for the career of Attila and that Priscus molded Attila into the 'Herodotean pattern of human *hubris* (usually that of a tyrant or barbarian king) being struck down by *nemesis* (military disaster or unfortunate, usually gruesome demise of the individual concerned).'³⁵³ On one hand, if this was Priscus' intention, then perhaps Jordanes molded Priscus' literary exposition to include a subtle criticism of Justinian. Just as Attila, like Xerxes, suffered from *hubris*, so too may Justinian. On the other hand, the detailing of the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains may have been entirely of Jordanes' own design for the very same reasons as we are still uncertain if Priscus was his source for Catalaunian Plains. If Jordanes/Priscus intentionally employed a literary motif of *hubris* and *nemesis*, it would fit Jordanes' supposed view of kingship (that man is controlled by the whims of kings – the insanity

³⁵⁰ See especially in his final words of *Romana*, 381-382.

³⁵¹ Whately 2013, 74. PLRE IIIB, s.v. Totila *qui et* Baduila, 1328-1332.

³⁵² Also note the similarity between the names Totila and Attila. The former may be the title of whichever famous king is behind it.

³⁵³ Brodka 2008, 230; cf. Kim 2015, 135. Brodka claims that much of the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains comes from Priscus, 227-245; cf. Kim 2015, 133. Kim, however, that the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains could be a Herodotean allusion to the Battle of Marathon which was not the work of Priscus but of Jordanes; 2015, 127-128.

of one mind) and, by extension, Jordanes may be suggesting that just as these great kings fell (especially Attila), so too might Justinian if he intervenes too frequently. As we can see, there is some evidence to suggest that Jordanes may be using *Getica* as a literary device to criticize Justinian, much as he does with *Romana*. If Whately's three points are correct, and indeed we saw in 2.5 that Nedao could be seen as the preferred outcome of what should have happened at Catalaunian Plains, then we must also be cautious when dealing with Jordanes' *Getica* as he may be altering events in order to fit his more subtler narratives: Justinianic criticism and anti-Gepid rhetoric.

The Gepids, as we know, played significant roles in Jordanes' narrative as victors at Nedao and Ardaric was a key general at Catalaunian Plains. Thus, Jordanes' thoughts on the Gepids must be determined and how this attitude towards the Gepid kingdom of his own day may be influencing his narrative.

Quarum trium una navis, ut adsolet, tardior nanta nomen genti fertur dedisse; nam lingua eorum pigra gepanta dicitur. Hinc factum est, ut paulatim et corruptae³⁵⁴ nomen eis ex convicio nasceretur Gepidas.³⁵⁵ Nam sine dubio ex Gothorum prosapie et hi trahent³⁵⁶ originem; sed quia, ut dixi, gepanta pigrum aliquid tardumque designat, pro gratuito convicio Gepidarum nomen exortum est, quod nec ipsud credo falsissimum: sunt etenim tardioris ingenii et graviores corporum velocitate.

As was customary, the one ship out of the three found [to be] slower was said to have given its name to the tribe: for 'gepanta' in their language means 'slow'. Henceforth, it happened that the name, little by little and due to corruption, was made into 'Gepid' out of an insult. There is no doubt that they draw their origin from the ancestry of the Goths. But because, as I said, 'gepanta' indicates someone dull and slow, the name of the Gepids sprang out of

³⁵⁴ *corrupte*, G&G 1991, 43.

³⁵⁵ *Gepidae*.

³⁵⁶ *trahunt*.

an unremunerative jeer which I do not believe to be wrong. Indeed, they are slower in mind and more burdened by their bodies for quick actions.³⁵⁷

Soon after introducing the Gepids, Jordanes calls them kin of the Goths but since their ship was the last to leave Scandza, they were called ‘*Gepanta*’, that is, ‘the slow’ ones because they are sluggish in mind and body. Of all the tribes presented in *Getica*, the Gepids are the only ones whose name Jordanes attempts to interpret (with an overwhelmingly negative result).³⁵⁸

In another passage, Jordanes finally rejoices in the massacre of the Gepids as they ally with other unsavory tribes against the Goths. In the battle between the Goths and the Suevi (which we will now refer to as the Battle of Bolia), Jordanes tells of how many tribes, including the Rugi and Gepids and other tribes, came to the aid of the Suevi and were all, resolutely, defeated.³⁵⁹

*consertoque proelio, superior pars invenitur Gothorum, adeo ut campus inimicorum corruentium cruore madefactus, ut rubrum pelagus appareret, armaque et cadavera, in modum collium tumulata campum plus per decem milibus oppleverunt.*³⁶⁰ [279] *quod Gothi cernentes, ineffabili exultatione laetantur, eo quod et regis sui Valameris sanguinem et suam iniuriam cum maxima inimicorum strage ulciscerentur. de vero innumeranda*³⁶¹ *variaque multitudine hostium qui valuit*³⁶² *evadere, perquam*³⁶³ *effugati, vix ad sua inglorii pervenerunt.*

With battle engaged, the faction of the Goths was found [to be] so superior that the plain was drenched with the gore of their dying enemy, appearing as a red sea. Arms and corpses filled the field, buried in the fashion of hills for over ten miles. [279] The Goths seeing this, exulted in unspeakable joy, for with this greater slaughter of their enemies

³⁵⁷ *Getica*, 95.

³⁵⁸ If the Gepids were ever called *gepanta*, it would most probably have been a name that the Goths called them as a jeer, which Jordanes is introducing us to. Bystricky 2008, 20. For his theory on how ‘Gepid’ may mean ‘rich’, harking back to the god, Gapt, see: 2008, 21.

³⁵⁹ *Getica*, 277.

³⁶⁰ *in modum collium tumulata campum per decem milia oppleverunt*, G&G 1991, 115.

³⁶¹ *innumerabili*.

³⁶² *valuerunt*, 116.

³⁶³ *perquam*.

they avenged their own injustice and the blood of their king, Valamer. However, concerning the countless and diverse horde of their enemy who were strong enough to escape, having been completely routed, the inglorious scarcely returned home.³⁶⁴

The Gepids and the Rugi, those who brought the bulk of aid to the Suevi and Sciri, were among the ‘myriad horde’ of the Goths’ enemy. It is conspicuous that each time the Gepids appear outside of the two battle scenes, they are either the target of jeers (as in their origin myth) or they have their failures accentuated (at Catalaunian Plains and here). In Jordanes’ narrative, the Gepids’ victory at Nedao is short-lived and their deaths are a point of pride – even their journey home was inglorius.

It is unlikely to be coincidence. Jordanes appears to have an anti-Gepid attitude which he shared with Procopius. Writing at the height of Gepid-Constantinople tension, Constantinople itself may have held hatred towards the Gepids as well; for Justinian himself launched anti-Gepid propaganda after the capture of Sirmium. If Jordanes is indeed using the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains as a literary vehicle to criticize Justinian in a time when the matter of the Gepids no doubt became polemical, then we must scrutinize each account involving the Gepids carefully. For, as we saw in this section, not only does he regard the Gepids as ‘slow’ Goths, but also rejoices in their slaughter at Bolia. However, before we turn towards Ardaric and the reanalysis of the Battle of Nedao, we must first look at Jordanes’ critical attitude of the Huns and Mundo, Ardaric’s grandson.

3.5 Jordanes and Procopius’ critical attitudes of the Huns

Where Procopius and Jordanes’ attitudes begin to diverge is over the Huns. While Procopius is chauvinistic, seeing the Huns as primitive and savage, he does understand that they

³⁶⁴ *Getica*, 278-279.

can be hired and settled (and perhaps even civilized, like Chelchal the Hunnic general for the Eastern Roman empire, Pharas the Herul or Mundo the Gepid).³⁶⁵ Jordanes, by contrast, sees the Huns as archetypal barbarians about whom there is very little good. Not only do we see Jordanes' dislike for trickery featuring as one of the attributes of the Huns, but also his description of the Huns is important for understanding Mundo's account in *Getica*, and by extension of Ardaric.³⁶⁶

Between Procopius and Jordanes, the latter is considerably more hostile towards the Huns (especially with respect to their origin story). To Procopius, the Huns, like the Sklaveni and Antae, were savage, anarchic and primitive in their lifestyle.³⁶⁷ They are greedy, driven by a 'pathological desire for Roman wealth', bloodthirsty, faithless, and any tribute paid to them only encourages them to raid more. Indeed, to the Romans, and no less Procopius, the Huns were quite barbaric;³⁶⁸ but Jordanes' opinion, by contrast, is considerably worse:

Post autem non longi temporis intervallo,³⁶⁹ ut refert Orosius, Hunnorum gens omni ferocitate atrocior exarsit in Gothos. Nam hos, ut refert antiquitas, ita exitisse conperimus. Filimer rex Gothorum et Gadarici magni filius qui post egressu³⁷⁰ Scandzae insulae iam quinto loco tenens principatum Getarum, qui et terras Scythicas cum sua gente introisse superius a nobis dictum³⁷¹ est, reperit in populo suo quasdam magas mulieres, quas patrio sermone Haliurunnas is ipse cognominat,³⁷² easque habens suspectas de medio sui proturbat longeque ab exercitu suo fugatas in solitudinem³⁷³ coegit errare. [122] Quas

³⁶⁵ Chelchal: Priscus, fr. 39. Pharas: Greatrex Forthcoming, 10-11. Mundo: Sarantis 2016, 51-60. But, indeed, these individuals are exceptions. Procopius, however, considers the Hephthalite Huns as civilized as the Persians. They were also white and not ugly, nor did they raid the Roman Empire: Sarantis Forthcoming, 5; Greatrex Forthcoming, 10-11.

³⁶⁶ Mundo will be discussed more in 3.6 of this chapter.

³⁶⁷ Sarantis Forthcoming, 6.

³⁶⁸ Sarantis Forthcoming, 14.

³⁶⁹ *intervallum*, G&G 1991, 53.

³⁷⁰ *egressum*.

³⁷¹ *dictus*, 54.

³⁷² *cognominavit*.

³⁷³ *solitudine*.

spiritus inmundi per herimum³⁷⁴ vagantes dum vidissent et eorum complexibus in coitu miscuissent, genus hoc ferocissimum ediderunt, quae fuit primum³⁷⁵ inter paludes, minutum tetrum atque exile quasi hominum genus nec alia voce notum nisi quod humani sermonis imaginem adsignabat. Tali igitur Hunni stirpe creati Gothorum finibus advenerunt.

After a brief amount of time, as Orosius records, the Hunnic race, more ferocious than savagery, raged against the Goths. For, as our forefathers related, we discovered them to have come into being thus: Filimer, king of the Goths and son of the great Gadaricus who, after departing the island of Scandza, was now the fifth in line to hold the kingship of the Goths – and who, as we discussed to have invaded the Scythian lands with his people, discovered certain magical women among his people whom in his ancestral speech he called ‘Haliurunnas’; considering these women suspicious, he drove them away from his community and compelled the exiled women to wander in solitude, far from his army. [122] [There] foul spirits watched the women while they wandered the wastes and, grasping hold of them, initiated sexual intercourse. They produced this most savage race which at first appeared among the marshes – a tiny, hideous, and lank race of nearly men, known by no other speech but that which gives the image of human language. In such a way, therefore, did the Huns, created from the lineage of Goths, come to be in their territory.³⁷⁶

We can immediately see that Jordanes’ opinion on the Huns is going to be coloured by cultural, and perhaps ethnic, prejudice.³⁷⁷ The Huns in this tale are born by foul spirits (*spiritus inmundi*) that embraced (*eorum complexibus*) these magical (*magas*), Gothic, exiled women (*mulieres*) and engaged in sexual intercourse (*in coitu miscuissent*). Before continuing with Jordanes’ clear aversion to the Huns, one can see that Jordanes may be drawing on a literary allusion in this

³⁷⁴ *eremum*.

³⁷⁵ *quod pimum fuit*, G&G 1991, 53.

³⁷⁶ Jordanes, *Getica*, 121-122. Some interpretations suggested by Marie-Pierre Bussières (personal communication).

³⁷⁷ Maenchen-Helfen also argues that Jordanes based the origin of the Huns on the Christian legend of the fallen angels; 1945c, 244-248; ct. 1973, 5. This interpretation also gives the Huns a decidedly fiendish slant, making the Huns the, as it were, scourge of Christians.

passage. The tale of how these spirits procreate by embracing the Gothic witches sounds similar to the legend of the Amazons.³⁷⁸ In this allusion, a warrior race uses another mythical or foreign one to reproduce itself; in the case of the Amazons, they embrace men, for the Huns, they embrace the witches. That the women are not only witches but also exiles from Filimer's tribe, adds further layers of wickedness to the origin myth of the Huns. Furthermore, the eastern origins of both the Amazons and the Huns is apparent. The Amazons were traditionally ascribed to the land of the Tanais in the 5th and 6th centuries.³⁷⁹ The similarity in mythological procreation and in eastern origins gives us another example of how Jordanes may be deploying Greek mythology in the creation of *Getica*.

The Huns, to Jordanes, are semi-mythical avatars of pillaging and plundering. Tiny and hideous (*minutum, tetrum*), they could barely speak an intelligible language, making them fitting barbarians. This scene is overwhelmingly negative and as we review the following passage, Jordanes' revulsion of the Huns only thickens.

Quorum natio saeva, ut Priscus historicus refert, Meotida palude ulteriore ripe insidens, venationi³⁸⁰ tantum nec alio labore experta, nisi quod, postquam crevisset in populis, fraudibus et rapinis vicinarum gentium quiete³⁸¹ conturbans.

The savage people, as Priscus the Historian relates, were settling in the Meotid swamp on the farthest bank; having hardly any skilled labour than hunting except for, after they had grown in multitude, disturbing the peace of their neighbouring nations with rapine and trickery.³⁸²

³⁷⁸ An interpretation suggested to me by Marie-Pierre Bussières (personal communication).

³⁷⁹ cf. Servius *Ad. Aen.* 11.659; Procopius, *Goth.* 8.3.5-7.

³⁸⁰ *venatione*, G&G 1991, 54.

³⁸¹ *quietem*.

³⁸² Jordanes, *Getica*, 123; the passage continues to say that the Huns happened upon Scythia while chasing a doe and that the evil spirits (*spiritus illi*) were driven by jealousy (*invidia*) towards the Scythians. They then swept across the vast swamp (*ingentem paludem*) like a whirlwind of tribes (*quasi turbo*), dragging off many peoples to be sacrificed to Victory (*litavere Victoriae*). 124-126. Further descriptions of the Huns being horrifyingly ugly and gouging their faces with cuts can be seen in 127-128.

These swamp dwelling savages are good at nothing except hunting, tricking and taking what they wish. Indeed, Whately's theory of Jordanes' aversion to trickery appears to be the case here as well.³⁸³ In Jordanes' eyes, the Huns are tiny, wicked creatures that bring no good to the world except to take everything – imagery he readily echoes in the Battle of Nedao scene. Indeed, it makes one wonder just what Jordanes is implying when he calls Ardaric Attila's trusted general or, indeed, *Mundo of the Attilani*.³⁸⁴

Though Procopius' attitude towards the Huns may similarly have been conditioned by his cultural upbringing, he did not criticize the Huns to the same extent that Jordanes did.³⁸⁵ To Procopius, they were, simply, primitives who wished to improve their quality of life and doing so through warfare was what they knew. The Huns could be hired and settled. His more scathing remarks are held for the treaty-breaking Gepids. This meant that the Romans (for Procopius worked within the East Roman bureaucracy) in the mid sixth-century may have been more threatened by, and frustrated with, Germanic-speaking groups, such as the Gepids and Heruls, living west of the Carpathians (in the previously Western Hunnic Empire) than with the Huns. But to Jordanes, his utter revulsion of the Huns (via their use of trickery, attacking of neighbours, their ugliness and pathological desire to plunder) may not necessarily be brought on by anti-Hunnic rhetoric, but by his Gothic upbringing.

³⁸³ Jordanes' opinion on trickery and stratagems, see 3.4.

³⁸⁴ *Mundo* and *Attilani* to be discussed in section 3.6 momentarily.

³⁸⁵ Sarantis Forthcoming, 14-15. Cameron likewise mentions these few wise words which, it would seem, need to also be readily applied to Jordanes: 'but when conservative historians like Zosimus and Procopius, who also tended to be the most vocal, fail to understand the depth of the structural change that had taken place, and prefer to lay blame on moral factors or individuals, we should be fully aware how far such judgements have been conditioned by the nature of their education and cultural background.' Cameron 1993, 55.

3.6 Mundo, grandson of Ardaric

Mundo is perhaps one of the more complicated Roman generals of the Eastern empire. He is relevant, however, for two reasons: he was a Gepid and yet authors such as Procopius, Marcellinus Comes and John Malalas treat him either neutrally or favourably; but Jordanes does little to conceal his dissatisfaction with the Gepid general, even after Mundo had joined the Roman Empire. Indeed, Jordanes once more reveals his aversion to Gepids in his account on Mundo and his bias towards the Amal kingdom whom Mundo turned his sword against, much as Ardaric turned his sword on the Hunnic kingdom at the Battle of Nedao.

It was previously believed that Mundo the Hunnic-freebooter (as described in Jordanes) and Mundo the Gepid-Roman general, were two separate individuals.³⁸⁶ Croke, on the other hand, persuasively argues that these two were, in fact, one and the same.³⁸⁷ Thus, we shall begin with an overview of Mundo's life before we analyze Mundo's supposed Hunnic ancestry which is entirely

³⁸⁶ PLRE II, s.v. *Mvndo*, 767-768; cf. PLRE III, s.v. *Mvndvs*, 903-904; Bury 1923, I 460; Hodgkin 1885, 439-442; cf. Croke 1982, 126. Additionally, to argue that Mundo is a Hun, Kim posits that both Mundos are the same individual but takes *Attilanis* to mean 'of Attila's family' to argue that Ardaric was related to Ellac at Nedao; 2013, 94, especially footnote 36 on page 232. Kim claims Croke's translation is forced but does not elaborate how. He reaffirms hybrid identities by citing Attila the Gepid-Hun, which we already have discussed is a difficult subject considering the state of Malalas' current text which dates to the 12th century; Greatrex 2016, 169-186. Regardless, whether Mundo is a Hun or not is not especially important as both interpretations confirm Jordanes' hatred for the man.

Again, we should stress, *Attilani* may mean Mundo was, to some extent, a Hun but it does not necessarily mean he was a descendant of Attila directly. Jordanes would certainly be more explicit about this if it were so as he is with other sons of Attila. Kim similarly calls on Pohl 1980, 290, who argued that Mundo may have been the son of Giesmos, a son of Attila who might have married a daughter of Ardaric. However, what is conspicuous is Kim does not reference Amory 1997, 398-399 who, while Amory reminds us of the flexibility of identity, shows Mundo is always mentioned as a Gepid/Getae and not at all as a Huns. Sarantis too just calls Mundo a Gepid; 2016, 51-60. Amory also argues that Mundo was given an ethnic identity which depended on who was observing him, 1997, 399; "He [Mundo] was *de Attilanis* for Jordanes because he was embroiled in the mess left by the remnants of Attila's former followers in the Balkans". There were no doubt Huns who joined the Gepids after the collapse of the Hunnic state, thus to conclude Mundo may have been ethnically part Hun is, to some extent, reasonable, but there is no evidence to claim him to be of royal Hunnic identity. cf. Tate who calls him a descendent of Attila, 2004, 36.

³⁸⁷ John Malalas clearly discusses how Mundo the freebooter came to be Mundo the Gepid, 450.19-451.10. Croke 1982, 125-135. Although his arguments on the clarity at which sources could recognize the difference between Goths, Gepids, and Huns is, as we shall discuss more shortly, too strong. cf. Meier 2017, 338-340.

dependent on one's interpretation of the word *Attilani* in *Getica*. Not only was Mundo just a Gepid but the use of *Attilani* might be a literary device to draw the reader's attention to³⁸⁸ Mundo, who was acting like a Hun, and to the time of Attila when Mundo's grandfather, Ardaric, rebelled against the Hunnic state.³⁸⁹ To Jordanes, Mundo's willingness to leave the Ostrogoths and join the Romans in 529 (after twenty years of service) was a slight against his proud Amal nation. For, unlike Liberius who renewed his vows to the next two Amal heirs, Mundo did not. However, what really appears to have bothered Jordanes was Mundo's two decisive victories over the Amal-led Goths in Dalmatia in 535 and 536. Thus, the only section of Jordanes' *Getica* and *Romana* that mention Mundo were a single passage in the former work, detailing his exploits as a freebooter beyond the Danube operating in barbaric fashion, and a passage in the latter work, telling about how he deserved to die. By contrast, other sixth-century sources speak quite highly of Mundo. Therefore, the meagre and negative descriptions of Mundo in Jordanes' works are indications that he dislikes Mundo, presumably for his turning against the Amal house to whom he once swore loyalty and because he was a Gepid. Since Mundo was Ardaric's grandson, Jordanes may thus be calling 'Ardaric' by such a name as a jeer to once more draw attention to the fact that Ardaric, like Mundo, was a true mercenary – that is, they kept their oaths until they expired, but bore no sense of loyalty to the houses whom they previously served for decades.

Before we turn to Jordanes, we shall look briefly at the history of Mundo found in a combination of sources, so that we can better understand Jordanes' attitude towards him. Born sometime before 488, Mundo was the son of the Gepid king, Giesmos.³⁹⁰ In the years after

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³⁸⁹ *Getica*, 300-301, which will be discussed momentarily. As Croke puts it, Mundo may have had some sort of Hunnic ancestry, 1982, 134; but if so, there is no textual evidence to support it except *Attilanis*. See 3.5 on how Jordanes saw Huns, especially if Mundo, in his eyes, were acting like one.

³⁹⁰ Theophanes, *A.M.* 6032, ct. Croke 1982, 126.

Dengizich's death and Ernak's vanishing from history, the Ostrogoths remained in Pannonia. In the 470s and 480s they were drawn into the Balkans by the Roman empire and the Gepids, taking advantage of the vacuum left behind, seized Sirmium for the first time.³⁹¹ In 488 on their way to Italy, the Ostrogoths collided back into the Gepids and their king, Trapstila, was killed; however, Mundo, Trapstila's nephew, was spared.³⁹² Malalas and Theophanes record that the Ostrogoths invited Mundo to join them immediately after the death of Trapstila.³⁹³

In 505, we next hear of Mundo in Jordanes' account where he is beyond the Danube occupying the tower, Herta, at the head of an army of freebooters, invading their neighbours. In response, the Romans dispatched the Illyrian *magister militum*, Sabinianus, to halt their efforts.³⁹⁴ Why he is wandering outside Gepid territory might be because he was banished by his cousin, Trasaric, son of Trapstila.³⁹⁵ Theoderic the Amal then sent Count Pitzias at the head of an army to capture Sirmium from the Gepids. Once conquered, Pitzias then turned north to bring aid to Mundo

³⁹¹ Croke 1982, 127-128. On the Gepids taking Sirmium: Ennodius, *pan. Theod.* XII.60.

³⁹² Ennodius, *pan. Theod.* VII. 28-34. Mundo was under the tutelage of Trapstila (Ennodius) after his father had passed away sometime before 488; Paul the Deacon, *Hist. Rom.* XV.15.

³⁹³ John Malalas, 450.19; Theophanes, A.M. 6032. Croke theorizes that it was unlikely that Mundo was offered a military role because of Mundo's age. 'But it could mean that he became a royal *hospes* at the Gothic court, just as Theoderic had been at Constantinople; 1982, 129.

³⁹⁴ *Getica*, 300. Herta, as we shall see, is described as a *turrem (turris)*. It is not clear what kind of fortification this was. He uses *turribus* in *Romana*, 159, but here it refers, I think, to the cages which housed the beasts. *Sed nihil libentius populus Romanus aspexit quam illas quas timuerat cum turribus suis beluas, quae non sine sensu captivitatis summissis cervicibus victores equos sequebantur*. Then there is the *turritos* which are the towers resting on the backs of elephants, *Romana*, 227. This *turris* may be a *burgi* that was built during the fortification projects of Diocletian and Constantine. However, such structures are much too small for an army to operate within as they are little more than watchtowers; see Christie 2007, 547-573, *burgi* on page 554. It may be that Herta was closer to a *castella* but perhaps not quite as large; see Dinchev 2007, 479-534, *castella* on page 482. Unfortunately, Jordanes uses neither *burgi* nor *castella* in the entirety of his works, thus we have no basis for comparison. What we do know from Jordanes was that Herta was across the Danube, therefore beyond the *limes* of Pannonia. Because placing a *castellum* in barbarian territory was a risky venture, especially because the Danube would need to be crossed in order to support it, I conjecture that Herta was closer to a *burgi*, a fortified tower.

³⁹⁵ Croke 1982, 129.

and they routed Sabinianus' army.³⁹⁶ Mundo thereafter remained under the employment of the Goths, also perhaps during their deployment in Gaul in 523.³⁹⁷

After the death of Theoderic (526), by 529 Mundo had left the Ostrogoths and petitioned Justinian to join the Roman Empire.³⁹⁸ He was accepted and appointed the *magister militum* of Illyricum as the successor of Belisarius.³⁹⁹ The same year, he successfully routed the Getae (who were possibly Slavs) and in 530 also pushed back the Bulgars that invaded Thrace.⁴⁰⁰ In 531, he replaced Belisarius again as *magister militum per Orientem* (although this appointment was short).⁴⁰¹ 532 he was once more appointed the *magister militum* of Illyricum and coincidentally partook in successfully quelling the Nike riots.⁴⁰² In 535, at the outset of Justinian's campaign against the Ostrogoths to recover Italy, Mundo was sent to Dalmatia, which was under the control of the Amal Goths, and captured Salona.⁴⁰³ However, in 536 the Goths sent a new force to Dalmatia and Mundo's son, Mauricius, was killed during a reconnaissance mission. Driven by grief, Mundo led a counter-attack which resulted in a Cadmean victory.⁴⁰⁴ Procopius, in spite of Mundo's Gepid ancestry, praises him in two books as a bold and vigorous soldier who was extremely loyal to Justinian.⁴⁰⁵

³⁹⁶ Under Ostrogothic rule, Sirmium was given its own royal official who had both civil and military authority; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 3.23, 24. Although conjecture, Stein suggests that Mundo, in 510 during the partitioning of Illyricum, may have controlled the Danubian bank of Moesia inferior; 1959, II, 156; ct. Croke 1982, 129. Sarantis 2016, 53.

³⁹⁷ Cassiodorus, *Variae*, V.10.2. Croke 1982, 126.

³⁹⁸ Malalas, 450.19-451.10; Theophanes, *A.M.* 6032; Cedrenus, I, 652 ct. PLRE III, Mvndvs.

³⁹⁹ This was likely precipitated by the invasion of the Bulgars, Croke 1982, 125, 132.

⁴⁰⁰ Getae: Marcellinus Comes, s.a. 530. Slavs: Procopius, *Vand.* 3, 3.1-9 and *Goth.* 5, 1-2, Sarantis, Forthcoming, 9; Bulgars: Marcellinus Comes, s.a. 530; John Malalas, 451; Theophanes, *A.M.* 6032; Cedrenus, I, 652; see also PLRE III, Mvndvs.

⁴⁰¹ John Malalas, 466.

⁴⁰² Appointment: Procopius, *Pers.* I, 24.41. Nike: see PLRE III, Mvndvs.

⁴⁰³ Sent to Dalmatia: Procopius, *Goth.* I, 5.2. Salona: *Goth.* I, 5.11.

⁴⁰⁴ That is, the victor, Mundo, died during battle; Procopius, *Goth.* I, 7.1-5.

⁴⁰⁵ Procopius, *Goth.* I, 5.2; *Pers.* I, 24.52

With Mundo's life detailed, we turn to Jordanes who, on two occasions, mentions Mundo and each account appears to bear the same anti-Gepid bias.

Nam hic Mundo de Attilanis⁴⁰⁶ quondam origine descendens Gepidarum gentem fugiens ultra Danubium in incultis locis sine ullis terrae cultoribus divagatus et plerisque⁴⁰⁷ abactoribus scamarisque et latronibus undecumque collectis turrem quae Herta dicitur super Danubii ripam positam occupans ibique agresti ritu praedasque⁴⁰⁸ innectens vicinis regem se suis grassatoribus fecerat.

For this Mundo, a descendent in origin from the former *Attilani*, roamed abandoned lands devoid of any cultivators for the earth, fleeing the tribe of the Gepids on the far side of the Danube; having gathered many cattle rustlers, bandits and brigands from all directions, he captured a tower called Herta, situated on the bank of the Danube. There, in the countryside way, he made himself king of his highwaymen and schemed spoils from his neighbours.⁴⁰⁹ Jordanes claims Mundo descends in origin from the *Attilani*. One's interpretations of this statement is the crux for any argument that claims there to be more than one Mundo. But, as Croke rightly argues, *Attilani* itself is highly irregular. It features only two times in all the sources: here and in Justinian's *Novella* 11, 1, the very same which, perhaps coincidentally, was released as propaganda against the Gepids for their capturing of Sirmium (for the second time in 536).⁴¹⁰ In the *Novella*, *Attilanis temporibus* is indicating 'time when' whereas in *Getica* it is clearly in agreement with the preposition *de* implying that he is of *Attilani* descent. Jordanes, therefore, is stating that Mundo traced his origin to what used to be the *Attilani* and *quondam* should be understood as the period of the 440s to 450s.⁴¹¹ *Attilani*, however, does not necessarily mean 'of the family of Attila' for

⁴⁰⁶ *attilani* in AZ and *attilana* in XY: see MGH.AA 5,1 135, n. 12. G&G 1991, use *Attilana* from XY, 124. Interestingly, if *Attilana* is used, it would change the meaning to 'of Attilan origin', whatever 'Attilan' may imply.

⁴⁰⁷ *pluribus*, 124.

⁴⁰⁸ *praedans*.

⁴⁰⁹ *Getica*, 300-301.

⁴¹⁰ *Autem Attilanis temporibus eiusdem locis devastatis Apraemius praefectus praetorio de Sirmiana civitate in Thessalonicam profugus venerat.* ed. Schnoell-Kroll; ct. Croke 1982, 130.

⁴¹¹ Croke 1982, 130.

were this the case, Jordanes would have been more explicit.⁴¹² Instead, it refers to the confederation, or rather the kingdom, of Attila of which the Gepids were a part – and indeed Mundo was the son of a Gepid king.⁴¹³

Fleeing the Gepids, Mundo operated like a barbarian across the Danube. He became a king of vagabonds, captured a tower, Herta, and, using the tower as a headquarters, engineered raids on his neighbours. Croke accepts this passage as a time when Mundo was a ‘hot-headed leader’ in his 20s.⁴¹⁴ Indeed, the passage may be true, but certain details about the passage look familiar to the Gepid kingdom of the 530s to 550s. The Gepids were barbarians, drawing in other barbarians to their banner to become the next major power beyond the Danube just as Mundo drew in every cattle rustler, bandit and thief. The Gepids captured Sirmium and Mundo captured Herta.⁴¹⁵ That the Gepids ferried Hunnic and Sklaveni raiders across the Danube also makes one think about how Jordanes specifically states that Mundo operated on the far side of the same river, conceivably crossing only to plunder his neighbours. The passage also has certain similarities to his account of

⁴¹² cf. the many times he indicates the ‘sons of Attila’, especially during the Battle of Nedao and the accounts on Dengizich and Ernak; *Getica*, 259-263, 266, 272.

⁴¹³ Croke does concede that Mundo may have been, somehow, related to Attila. But if so, this evidence cannot be used to argue that point; 1982, 130. It is certainly possible as we know Attila indeed had many wives; however, this is conjecture. For more on Mundo’s identity as a Gepid see: Croke 1982, 131-132. However, as mentioned previously, Croke does, perhaps, overstate Roman sources to identify the differences between Gepids, Huns and Goths; cf. Meier 2017, 338-340. It is, nevertheless, fascinating that Jordanes calls the Huns and the Gepids, Goths. That Jordanes considers these two tribes part of the Goths must mean that, on a sociological level, these two groups were familiar to the Goths. Indeed, it may mean that when John Malalas calls Attila a ‘Gepid-Hun’, he may be seeing the same familiarity that Jordanes sees. It may mean that our current perspective of ‘Germanic’ tribes is somehow interfering with our ability to see how sixth-century authors saw the differences between the Goths, Gepids and Huns. All having arrived from north of the Black Sea, it is possible that they too still saw familiarities amongst themselves even in the sixth century.

⁴¹⁴ 1982, 133.

⁴¹⁵ The Huns also upon capturing Scythia used it to conquer the Alans and Ostrogoths. *Getica*, 125-130.

Sotzas.⁴¹⁶ As we can see, there is the possibility that there is far more at play within this account than just the detailing of history.

This passage also echoes Jordanes' origin myth of the Huns. Of *Attilani* descent, Mundo roamed abandoned lands (*incultis*) just as the Huns roamed swamps (*palude*). The Huns themselves, as we have seen, are purely barbaric and dismayed their neighbours (*vicinis*) with rapine (*rapinis*) and trickery (*fraudibus*) just as Mundo invaded his neighbours (*vicinis*) and plotted raids (*praedasque innectans*). As we can see, *Attilani* may have a literary function. It is a device used to capture our attention, suggesting to us that Mundo is acting like the proto-Huns in the Meotid swamp, and perhaps, by extension, the Gepid kingdom of the sixth century.

Perhaps most importantly, the passage might remind us of Ardaric and the Gepid kingdom, who were a part of the *Attilani* that led the rebellion against Ellac. We recall that Mundo was not only offered to join the Ostrogoths after his father's death in 488, but also that, perhaps Mundo calling on this invitation, sought the aid of Count Pitzias against the *magister militum* of Illyricum, Sabinianus, who was dispatched to end Mundo's robberies.⁴¹⁷ After their victory, Jordanes relates, Mundo was made a grateful subject of king Theoderic the Amal. As we can recall, Mundo remained in the service of the Ostrogoths until the death of Theoderic (526) and then in 529, he joined the Roman empire. It was these events: Mundo's not renewing of his oath and then his subsequent two-time victory over the Amal-led Goths at Dalmatia that shows why Jordanes may dislike Mundo (in addition to his being a Gepid). Mundo, like his parent tribe, was not to be trusted.

⁴¹⁶ *Romana*, 369. Stozas, nearly the worst soldier (*pene ultimus militum*) and leader of mutineers (*auctor seditiosorum*) seized tyranny (*tyrannidem arripiens*) by murdering many notables and judges by means of trickery (*dolo*). Then, in the manner of a tyrant (*tyrannico ritu*), he devastated the whole of Africa. By no surprised, it is Belisarius in the next passage who defeats him; *Romana*, 370. The similarities in being leaders of ill-reputed men, using of trickery and acting as a barbarian/tyrant suggests that Jordanes is employing a rhetorical template.

⁴¹⁷ *Getica*, 301.

Not swearing loyalty to the new Amal king may have been Jordanes' first problem with Mundo. After twenty years, a sufficiently long time in the ancient world, Mundo declined to renew his oath to Athalaric after the death of Theodoric and left Italy shortly thereafter. Mundo may, from 526 to 529, have fought for the Gepids again until he joined the Romans.⁴¹⁸ Jordanes speaks highly of Athalaric who, while a boy, brought about peace.⁴¹⁹ However, this was certainly not Jordanes' only issue as we do know of another individual of prestige in Ostrogothic Italy, Liberius, who, after the death of king Theodahad in 536, does not appear to have renewed his oath either to king Vitiges; yet Jordanes' accounts of Liberius are fairly neutral.⁴²⁰ Theodahad, on the other hand, was deposed by Vitiges and murdered.⁴²¹ Theodahad was, effectively, the last Amal king of Italy. Thus, if Jordanes had an issue with Mundo's leaving of Italy, it was because Mundo refused to renew his oath to Athalaric and then to Theodahad, both of whom were Amals, which Liberius did do.⁴²²

This issue of oaths, however, would have been nothing compared to the damage that Mundo caused against his once-patron state. Jordanes near the end of *Romana* relates:

⁴¹⁸ Sarantis 2016, 53 (also see footnote 186). He also argues that the loss of Mundo was a serious military and diplomatic coup because of Mundo's experiences in the north-west Balkans. This is seen through his quick appointments and series of victories obtained over other Barbarians, 54. Mazal argues similarly but also states that the usefulness of Mundo was two-way: he was an effective general to be used against the Gepid kingdom, 2001, 183.

⁴¹⁹ *Getica*, 304-306.

⁴²⁰ Jordanes refers twice to Liberius and each time is it a neutral account, especially considering that he led a fleet against Totila in 550; *Getica*, 303 and *Romana*, 385. cf. PLRE II, s.v. Liberius 3, 677-681. cf. *Goth.* I, 4.24. for a more positive account of Liberius.

⁴²¹ *Getica*, 309-310, 313-314.

⁴²² Cassiodorus, *Variae*, VIII.6. It is, on the other hand, evident that Jordanes also did not like Theodahad for killing Amalasuetha (305-36) and therefore caused the war over Italy (307). However, this appears just to be typical rhetoric to justify the invasion led by Belisarius. Theodahad, though Jordanes is happy enough to see him murdered by Vitigis for throwing himself at the mercy of Belisarius (309-310), was still an Amal which he holds against Mundo for especially not swearing to Athalaric, as Liberius did. cf. Goffart who remarks Jordanes had no sympathy for the loss of the Amal kingdom 1988, 28.

Langobardorum gens, socia Romani regni principibus, et Theodahadi sororis filiam dante sibi imperatore in matrimonio iungens regi suo, contra emulos Romanorum Gepidas una die pugna commissa eorum pene castra pervasit, cecideruntque ex utraque parte amplius LX milia; [378] nec par, ut ferunt, audita est in nostris temporibus pugna a diebus Attilae in illis locis, praeter illa quae ante hanc contigerat sub Calluce mag. Mil. Idem cum Gepidas aut certe Mundonis cum Gothicis, in quibus ambobus auctores belli pariter conruerunt.

The nation of Lombards were allies to the princes of the Roman empire and [after] the emperor gave to them the daughter of the sister of Theodahad, joining [her] to their king in marriage, they joined battle against the Gepids, enemies of the Romans [and] in one day, nearly penetrated their forts.⁴²³ From both sides, more than sixty thousand were cut down and no comparable battle in those places, as it is said, is heard of in our time, since the days of Attila; except those which had happened before this under Callux, *magister militum*, against the Gepids or surely of Mundo against the Goths, in both of which the *auctores* of the war equally fell.⁴²⁴

After the Lombards married into the Ostrogothic family, Jordanes sheds no tears for the Gepids as they are completely overrun in a single day – praising that more than sixty thousand barbarians, Gepids and Lombards alike, died. The Gepids did not stand a chance. Yet this battle rivaled in magnitude the previous one with the Gepids during the time of Callux, *magister militum*, as well as that of Mundo against the Goths. Whether it was Callux or the Gepids that struck first, we cannot say, but Marcellinus Comes does relate that Callux fought two wars against the Gepids and in the

⁴²³ If *una* is treated as an adverb, another possible interpretation can be made: ‘on the same day (as the wedding) with battle having been joined against the Gepids, enemies of the Romans, they almost penetrated their forts.’ In either interpretation, Jordanes is relaying that the Lombards, in one day, nearly dispatched their rivals.

⁴²⁴ *Romana*, 386-387. Some interpretations suggested by Marie-Pierre Bussières (personal communication).

second was killed.⁴²⁵ Indeed, Jordanes appears to be suggesting that Callux was an *auctor*, that is, he was a bad or enemy leader.⁴²⁶

Mundo, however, by this point had replaced Belisarius, of whom we know Jordanes was supportive, as the *magister militum per Illyricum* and *Oriente*.⁴²⁷ Furthermore, Procopius details the Battle for Dalmatia which Jordanes is referring to.⁴²⁸ After spending twenty years in the service of Theoderic the Amal, Mundo then took an army to Dalmatia, then under control of Theodahad the Amal and captured Salones.⁴²⁹ In the following year, once a new force of Ostrogoths was dispatched to retake Salones, Mauricius, Mundo's son, was killed and in a fit of rage Mundo launched a counter-attack.⁴³⁰ The counter-offensive resulted in a crushing defeat for the Goths and the death of Mundo during the Goths' rout. This event is what irked Jordanes so thoroughly about Mundo. He disregarded the loyalty he once swore to Theoderic (even though the oath had expired with his death ten years earlier), took what he knew of Gothic culture and tactics and dealt two decisive blows against his once-patron Amal house.

We know Jordanes is supportive of Justinian and Belisarius for the war in Italy.⁴³¹ We also know that Procopius and the other sources are generally quite supportive of Mundo and his

⁴²⁵ Chron. Addit. a. 539. Also see Desgrugillers' edition and translation, 2014, 96, 169. On Callux: PLRE III, s.v. Calluc, 266-267.

⁴²⁶ *Auctores* here is also a key to understanding how Jordanes thinks of Callux and Mundo. The first time Jordanes uses the word *auctor* in *Romana* is in passage 146 (*hostis auctor fuit*). But here he appears to use the word much as he does in *Getica* – meaning 'authority' or 'witness'; cf. *Getica*, 10, 14. In this context, it is of no use. However, when *auctor* is used in the context of a leader, it appears to be an enemy; cf. Hannibal, *Romana* 183; Stozas, 369; and Callux & Mundo, 387; as well as, though more indirectly, in the mentioned passage, 146.

⁴²⁷ For more on Jordanes' support of Belisarius see: *Getica*, 171, 307, 309 (note the curious use of *principibus*), 313, 315; *Romana*, 366, 369, 370, 375, 377, 380.

⁴²⁸ In *Romana*, 386-387.

⁴²⁹ Procopius, *Goth.* 1, 5.11.

⁴³⁰ Procopius, *Goth.* 1, 7.1-5.

⁴³¹ The war in Italy were especially against Theodahad and Totila. One can easily see Jordanes' opinion of Theodahad in *Getica* 306-309. While an Amal, he was to blame for the war in Italy. He, therefore, approves of Vitigis for deposing him, 313-314. We can then see his attitude toward Totila in *Romana*, 379-380, 382. Indeed, that Totila assassinated Erarichus, the previous short-reigned king after Vitigis, may also be echoing Jordanes'

accomplishments. However, that Jordanes only mentions him twice, once in *Getica* and once in *Romana*, accentuating, in the former work, his mercenary and barbaric background, and, in the latter work, his deservingness to die for being an *auctor*, distinctly sets Jordanes apart. There are absolutely no mentions of Mundo's achievements in Jordanes, not like Belisarius'.⁴³²

In conclusion, the word *Attilanis* may be a literary device to make the reader pay attention to what Jordanes thinks of Mundo: that he and the Gepid kingdom are acting like Attila.⁴³³ But, because Mundo is also likely Ardaric's grandson, *Attilanis* again may be an indicator for us to think back on the Gepid kingdom of the fifth century and how they were members of Attila's empire – a warning that the Gepids of the 540s to 550s were becoming the next power beyond the Danube, in no small part owed to their reconquest of Sirmium (about which *Novella* 11 was propagandistically concerned).

As for why Jordanes is so critical of Mundo might come down to two factors: his loathing of the Gepids and Mundo's turning against the Amal house. For, in the words of Croke, though admittedly he did not mean for them to be interpreted in this way, 'when Theoderic died Mundo, like the Gepid king Ardaric after the death of Attila, failed to transfer his loyalty to the new Gothic king. Instead, it seems he returned to his tribe in the Save/Danube region where in 529, now a more experienced general, he offered his services to Justinian... The Gepid Mundo subsequently proved himself a loyal, diligent and effective Roman general in the Balkans, on the Persia frontier, in

distaste of stratagems; see: PLRE III, s.v. Erarichvs, 447-448. Interestingly, Procopius' attitude towards Totila is more positive, particularly in his death at the end of book 8: *Goth.* 8, 32.28-30; also noted by Greatrex 2014, 95.

⁴³² *Romana*, 380-382. Also noting Kaldellis' argument that omissions may speak volumes 2017, 58.

⁴³³ Even if we accept *Attilani* to mean 'of Attila's family', (though this work has argued the alternative) then Mundo would be both Gepid and Hunnic. Thus, the interpretation of *Attilani* is not especially important for the purposes of identifying Jordanes' ire towards Mundo; both give him cause to dislike the Gepid general.

Constantinople and finally in Dalmatia', much to the chagrin of Jordanes.⁴³⁴ Therefore, there is abundant evidence to suggest that Jordanes not only has a distinct loathing for all Gepids, but is also be anachronistically embellishing Ardaric's role at Nedao in order to suit his own anti-Gepid bias.

3.7 Reconsidering Ardaric and the Gepids in *Getica*

One can now see that it is quite possible that Jordanes is pushing an agenda. As we discussed in 3.4, while possibly criticizing Justinian, Jordanes may also be ascribing strength and importance to the Gepids when fifth-century sources are all but silent. In other words, he is colouring his reader's view of the Gepids and misrepresenting their importance, much as he did with the fourth-century Greuthungi, to match the Gepid kingdom of his own day.⁴³⁵ Similarly, his hatred for the Gepids may likewise be influencing his narrative. There are, thus, three traits of Ardaric which must be reconsidered: first, his use of stratagems (*conspiratio*), second, his faithfulness to Attila, and third, the loyalty that the other rebelling tribes had towards the Gepid king at Nedao. Ardaric may not have been the hero of the great Germanic rebellion, but instead was, to Jordanes, a dishonourable opportunist to whom the tribes followed only to suit their own benefit. Such a reading would question the very foundation mythology of the Gepid kingdom, who no doubt credited Ardaric and his leadership for their victory at Nedao and used it as their justification to rule.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Croke 1982, 135. Mundo efficacy is persuasively argued by Sarantis 2016, 51-60. Mundo was more than a general, his recruitment into the Roman army led to a series of victories in the first two years. His leave Italy, it would seem, was a great loss to the Goths.

⁴³⁵ Heather 1991, 9, 16-19, 29-31; 1995, 151.

⁴³⁶ This is especially true if the Gepids, like the Ostrogoths, revered their victorious leaders as demi-gods: see Heather 1995, 167. Heather also noted that Theoderic and Valamir may have fabricated myths about their ancestral dynasties to encourage other Gothic groups to join them; 1995, 150-151. In a similar manner, the Gepids (especially Ardaric) may have done the same.

The first trait: Jordanes' aversion to stratagems can be seen criticizing Ardaric in the Battle of Nedao scene:

Post multos ergo gravesque conflictos, favit Gepidis inopinata victoria. nam xxx fere milia tam Hunnorum quam aliarum gentium, quae Hunnis ferebant auxilium, Ardarici gladius conspiratioque peremit.

As I was saying, after many grave clashes, victory surprisingly favours the Gepids: for the sword and plotting of Ardaric killed nearly thirty thousand men, Huns as well as other tribes who brought them aid.⁴³⁷

Jordanes does not say that the Gepids fought well in open combat, which Whately determined was Jordanes' preferred strategy. If we recall the Battle of Bolia, the scene between the Goths and the united forces of Suevi, Sciri, Rugi and Gepids, Jordanes states that the battle took place in a plain ten miles wide (*campum plus decem milibus*) by the river Bolia yet still the Goths thoroughly slaughtered their enemies.⁴³⁸ It is curious that the Battle of Bolia, which took place by a river, was also called a plain – the ten miles of bodies imply that it was an open plain. At the Battle of Nedao, not only is there no open plain, but Ardaric also won using stratagems (*conspiratio*).⁴³⁹

Jordanes is alluding to the reader that the victory at Nedao was not fair but won through trickery. He is reminding us that Ardaric may have defeated the Huns, but he did so not only because Thorismund was prevented from doing so, but also because he used stratagems. Indeed, it seems that again the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains (victory for Romans and Goths), Bolia (victory for Goths and massacre of Gepids et al) and Nedao (unexpected victory for Gepids) are

⁴³⁷ *Getica*, 262.

⁴³⁸ *Getica*, 277.

⁴³⁹ There is one other use of *conspiratio* in Jordanes' *Romana*, 9. In this passage, the *conspiratio* are they whom Noah (and by extension the Hebrew) were not a part (*quia nec in illa conspiratione interfuit*). For the *conspiratio* were those who caused the confusion of tongues (*confusionem linguarum*) because of their sins (*ob delicta*). Whether *conspiratio* is to be translated as 'stratagems' or 'an undesirable group' within the context of Nedao cannot be said with certainty. However, in either interpretation, Jordanes is clearly showing his disliking of the Ardaric and the Gepid tribe.

being used as literary contrasts.⁴⁴⁰ While Ardaric seized the advantage, he still used tricks to win because he is a Gepid (like Mundo); although Thorismund did not kill Attila, he fought in the open without any trickery. We are intended to see Ardaric not as a hero, but as a dishonourable opportunist, his achievement flanked (and eclipsed) by the victories of the Goths at Catalaunian Plains and Bolia.

The second trait: In Ardaric's introduction as a character to Jordanes' narrative, he is called Attila's most trusted general at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains.⁴⁴¹ This induced image would serve two functions, to justify how the Gepids in the 550s became such devious and cunning barbarians, but also to explain that, while their founding father was faithful to the greatest and most savage of barbarians, he, Ardaric, turned on the Hunnic state by taking up arms against Ellac just as Mundo did with the Amal Goths.⁴⁴² Both Ardaric and the Gepids were, and still are, a treacherous lot. It yet seems more conspicuous that Ardaric's name itself may mean 'Oath King' and the name, as far as we know, only features in *Getica*. We know Jordanes does play with names, for in the Gepids' origin story he relates 'Gepid' with '*gepanta*.' Therefore, Oath King may be a contradiction to the treacherous view of the Gepids held by Procopius and Jordanes, mocking the man by dubbing him with a title so clearly at odds with that of his and his people's character.

Indeed, like Attila, the Gepids of Jordanes' day ferried hordes of barbarians (Huns and Sklaveni) across the Danube and into Roman territory where they could run amok, plundering

⁴⁴⁰ Both Bolia and Nedao were also fought in Pannonia. Thus, just as Jordanes may be comparing the deaths of Attila/Ellac to Theodorid/Thorismund, he may also be comparing Nedao to Bolia.

⁴⁴¹ *Getica*, 200.

⁴⁴² It should be noted that we do not know if subjugated kings swore oaths to the Hunnic kings that conquered them or to the state itself. If the former, often such oaths were canceled upon death of one of the parties (As with Mundo who was freed from his oath to Theoderic after his death); if the latter, the oath could, theoretically, exceed the life of the current reigning king. It may be that oaths were sworn to both kings but because Attila died without officially appointing a co-king, all oaths were effectively canceled, giving legitimacy for a full rebellion.

Roman resources.⁴⁴³ Though the damage caused by these Hunnic/Skalveni raids was not near those done by Attila, they nevertheless gave the Gepids a bad reputation, especially for doing so when they had been paid subsidies not to.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, it may be that Jordanes' description of Ardaric is not praise at all but a subtle invective against the Gepid hero, written at the peak of Gepid-Constantinopolitan turmoil (and perhaps, as we have discussed in 3.6, as a slight against Mundo).

In the third trait, as discussed, Ardaric rallied a sizable horde of previously subjugated peoples at Nedao.⁴⁴⁵ In a more traditional reading, this scene is complimentary to the grandeur of the Gepids, heroes of the 'Germanic' peoples. However, if Jordanes is anti-Gepid then Ardaric's role in this scene must be reanalyzed. For if Ardaric is not just treacherous and slow, then he's also not a hero and the tribes he rallied bore no allegiance to him. They, instead, rallied to fight Ellac because they wanted what Ardaric wanted and, in Jordanes' view of the event, he had the army to accomplish this. The tribes had no loyalty to him whatsoever. We can also see this lack of respect for Gepid authority in Jordanes' account of Mundo, about whom Procopius is less hostile.⁴⁴⁶

It is, therefore, possible that Jordanes has more to say than what is presented in his battle scenes. A closer reading of these battle scenes, the Battle of Bolia, and his account on Mundo suggest that Jordanes not only prefers open combat, finding stratagems distasteful, but also that Ardaric's own name may be a title which was fabricated by Jordanes, or used intentionally, to taunt the famous hero; for the sixth-century Gepids were popularly conceived as a treacherous lot.

⁴⁴³ Gepids in the 540s and 550s release barbarians into the Roman Empire: Sarantis 2016, 321-323.

⁴⁴⁴ Sarantis 2016, 321-323. Furthermore, Slav and Hunnic raids ceased after the fall of the Gepid kingdom until the arrival of the Kutrigur Huns and Avars in the late 550s and early 560s.

⁴⁴⁵ *Getica*, 265.

⁴⁴⁶ Procopius, while acknowledging Mundo's Gepid descent, can see his merit as a Roman general. For more on Procopius' attitude towards barbarians, see Greatrex Forthcoming, 5-11.

3.8 Conclusion

As we have seen, there is much we must reconsider about Jordanes and his accounts involving the Gepids. For it is quite possible that in his two battle scenes he has more to say than the recording of Gothic history (which includes both the ‘Gothic’ Huns and Gepids). It cannot be said with any certainty that Nedao, Bolia and Catalaunian Plains are literary vehicles, but they do appear to reveal the author’s attitude towards the Gepids and stratagems. At Catalaunian Plains, the Romans and the Goths are Jordanes’ protagonists and their victory is resolute and clear (even though a great opportunity was lost). The same can be said in the victory at Bolia where Jordanes rejoices in the massacre of the Gepids. At Nedao, by contrast, both the lead actors (that is, the Gepids and the Huns) were unsavory to Jordanes but the event was pivotal to the history of the Goths. Therefore, he grudgingly acknowledges the Gepids’ unexpected victory, even though they were only finishing what Thorismund, at the height of Attila’s power, could have accomplished long before. Ardaric was also fighting a divided Hunnic state unlike Thorismund who was winning against the unified Huns under Attila. The victory obtained by the Gepids was not as great as that at Catalaunian Plains and the amount of lines dedicated to each scene reflects that accordingly. We have also seen that the Gepid state did not truly become a power beyond the Danube until after 508, when the Heruls fractured. Still, the bulk of the Gepids’ military power was not yet obtained until their capture of Sirmium (for the second time) in 536, fifteen years prior to his writing of *Getica*. The strength and importance Jordanes ascribes to the Gepids at Nedao (and perhaps even Catalaunian Plains) appears to be reflective of the Gepid kingdom of his own day and not of the fifth-century post-Attila Gepid kingdom. Furthermore, it is evident that the Gepid kingdom of Jordanes’ day influenced the author’s opinion on not just Ardaric, but all Gepids in *Getica* (including Mundo). The Gepids are the ‘slow’ ones, Ardaric is a cunning (and perhaps treacherous) opportunist, and Mundo is a king of highwaymen. In conclusion, it appears that Jordanes is both

exaggerating the strength of the Gepids to match the kingdom of his own day, but was also vexed by an even more virulent strain of anti-Gepid sentiment, which inhabited Constantinople during the time of his writing of *Getica*.

Conclusion

The image of an illiterate or semiliterate Jordanes who slavishly copied Cassiodorus' work with little of his own authorship does not appear to hold ground. The Jordanes presented here, perhaps not in possession of a full rhetorical education (such as that held by Procopius or Priscus), is a far more independent author with his own flair for literary allusion than that previously suggested.⁴⁴⁷ Mierow himself reminded scholarship that Jordanes was not without his own vivid depictions, especially those involving war.⁴⁴⁸ Jordanes drew on classical tropes, the kind which more learned individuals such as Sidonius and Claudian used, to order his battle scenes. Indeed, he also knew the classics, such as Virgil's *Aeneid*, Homer's *Iliad*, and perhaps even Herodotus as well as more contemporary writers, such as Rufinus and Origen (and a multitude of others).⁴⁴⁹ If Jordanes did not receive a polished education during his youth, by the time he finally wrote *Getica* and *Romana*, he had closed the gap with age and experience.⁴⁵⁰ When he calls himself *agramatus*, he is likely expressing humility and should not be taken literally.

We also do not truly know who Jordanes was, with his undoubtedly eventful life related in just few lines about who he was as a narrator. Everything we learn about Jordanes in *Getica* pertains to the transmission of his text to our eyes and our interpretation of that text.⁴⁵¹ Jordanes might have been Gothic but this, he reminds, should not impact his bias.⁴⁵² He is apparently an Orthodox Christian, reminding his readers that heretical factions of Christianity, i.e. Arianism, are

⁴⁴⁷ Perhaps Jordanes' education was similar to that of Marcellinus Comes, his contemporary and fellow Illyrian.

⁴⁴⁸ Mierow 1923, 140-142.

⁴⁴⁹ Mierow 2006, 19-44.

⁴⁵⁰ Goffart suggested that whatever the interpretation of *agramatus*, it is also limited in time to when he was a *notarius*; 1988, 82.

⁴⁵¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 266. See section 1.2 on his life. Though Jordanes does not frequently refer to himself, like, for example, Ammianus Marcellinus who frequently appears in his own work (Alan 2016, 4-5, 27-28), the few lines Jordanes does write should not be taken without careful consideration to how it reflects the persona of the narrator in addition to the author.

⁴⁵² Jordanes, *Getica*, 316.

undesirable.⁴⁵³ His claiming to be *agramatus* while accepting the undertaking to abridge twelve volumes of history, whose author was the famous Italian senator, Cassiodorus, flies in the face of this epithet.⁴⁵⁴ Jordanes' relationship to the senator, as van Hoof & van Nuffelen argue persuasively, is quite ambiguous and the work he ultimately produced in *Getica* was more than an epitome.⁴⁵⁵ All these details known about Jordanes pertain to how he, as an author, wishes us to see him as a narrator. Knowing nothing about the author should temper how we read *Getica*.

Getica and *Romana* can be presented as a pairing, though one may be a history and the other a chronicle of sorts, if considered alongside their author's attitudes. Both works were written at the height of Gepid-Constantinople tension in the early 550s and thus reflect his anti-Gepid bias.⁴⁵⁶ We can then apply this critical understanding of Jordanes' attitude to the Battles of Nedao and the Catalaunian Plains scenes, neither of which is directly attributed to Priscus.⁴⁵⁷ If the two battle scenes did come from Priscus, they have been highly distorted. Both scenes are the only accounts in all *Getica* and *Romana* to feature Ardaric, king of the Gepids. It is highly suspect that the same two scenes are likewise used to establish the strength of the Gepid people in Jordanes' narrative during the reign of Attila.

We can conclude that Jordanes' Battle of Nedao scene, while supposedly drawn from Priscus, has been significantly transfigured by the author's biases and his rhetorical program.⁴⁵⁸ Perhaps he set out to faithfully abridge Cassiodorus but along the way let his own authorship seep

⁴⁵³ Jordanes, *Getica*, 132.

⁴⁵⁴ Failing to do so, he turned towards the Greek and Latin literary traditions, an extensive pool of knowledge.

⁴⁵⁵ 2017, I-XXVI.

⁴⁵⁶ Section 3.4 and 3.6 on Mundo.

⁴⁵⁷ Nedao discussed in 2.4. Catalaunian Plains in 2.5 and 3.4.

⁴⁵⁸ Though let us not forget Blockley and Given agree that while Jordanes did draw on Priscus for the Battle of Nedao, it appears to be highly distorted and thus very little remains of the original passage. FCH, vol.1, 113-114; Given 2014.

into the narrative and influence the recollection of this history. Regardless, the result is that the Gepids in his *Getica* are either met with jeers or have their failures accentuated consistently.⁴⁵⁹ Even in the Battle of Nedao scene, the most favourable portrayal of the Gepids in the entirety of his works, he judges Ardaric to be a dishonourable opportunist for using *conspiratio* to win the war against Attila's dynasty to whom he previously pledged allegiance. Mundo, Ardaric's grandson and perhaps one of Ostrogothic Italy's more prized generals, similarly used *fraudibus* and turned against the Amal dynasty (with two crushing defeats in Dalmatia) after having worked for them for twenty years.⁴⁶⁰ Both grandfather and grandson controlled armies composed of mercenaries – Ardaric at the head of the rebellion which split into several kingdoms thereafter and Mundo, the general of cattle rustlers and brigands whose otherwise well-attested career is completely ignored.⁴⁶¹ As for the Gepids who fought at Bolia, Jordanes delights in their failures and reminds us how the Amal Goths and Romans were superior in every way.⁴⁶²

Jordanes' anti-Gepid attitude was not an isolated phenomenon.⁴⁶³ The sentiment was already present in Constantinople by the time the Gothic writer embarked on his two works. Procopius, Justinian, and perhaps even John Malalas all generated or drew on existing anti-Gepid rhetoric for their works and it seems Jordanes had no aversion to adding to this mire.⁴⁶⁴ The ramifications of Jordanes having such a bias would further prove the hypothesis that parts of the

⁴⁵⁹ In *Getica*: the Gepids being 'slow' Goths (94-95) and the Ostrogoths rejoicing in the slaughter of the Gepids et al. at the Battle of Bolia, 277 (which bears a certain similarity to the Gepids' defeat at the hands of the Ostrogoths under Ostrogotha, 100. We can also see the 'envy' the Gepids had for the Ostrogoths (96) and how the Gepids were the belligerent ones of the two 'kinsmen' (99). The Gepids cannot win in Jordanes' narratives.

⁴⁶⁰ Mazal 2001, 183. Sarantis 2016, 51-60.

⁴⁶¹ See 3.6 on Mundo.

⁴⁶² See 3.4 on Jordanes' attitude towards the Gepids.

⁴⁶³ See 3.2 on anti-Gepid rhetoric and sentiment in Constantinople.

⁴⁶⁴ In 3.2, however, we stress that Malalas' example is strictly hypothetical for his editions, even by the tenth and twelfth centuries had been damaged and distorted.

battles of Nedao and Catalaunian Plains scenes may be inherently unreliable.⁴⁶⁵ However, since narrative reliability is ambiguous, save from what has been already discussed, we can cautiously draw some conclusions for events surrounding the end of Attila's life.

Because Attila died on his wedding night, news of his death would have spread very quickly. His death, however, was an irregular circumstance for the Huns; he murdered his brother and then refused to appoint a co-king.⁴⁶⁶ Then gathered the bulk of the army in the Western empire, where his headquarters were, and died without appointing an heir or clearly setting out which governmental system was to be used thereafter. Instead of dying in his own headquarters, in a time when communication was slower, which would have allowed the ruling dynastic family a moment to quickly elect a new king (thereby deterring rebellion), Attila died on his wedding night amid celebrations. Every notable character in his state would have been present: both those who supported or resented him would know almost immediately.⁴⁶⁷ Thus, negotiations for how the Hunnic empire should proceed, as a monarchy or diarchy (and if the latter, who would control whom), would all have to be done while nearly every king, prince, heir and would-be rebel in the nation was listening.

These difficult circumstances were Attila's design and fault, with the inopportune grouping of political players so close to hand being a further consequence of Attila's choices. There would no doubt have been a rebellion regardless of when Attila died, as was often the case, but this celebration full of loyals and would-be dissenters led to more than just several smaller rebellions. It brought about a situation where several ambitious generals, presumably the kings of the Rugi, Heruls and Gepids (under Ardaric, whatever his real name may have been), could coalesce.

⁴⁶⁵ The same, of course, applies to the Battle of Bolia.

⁴⁶⁶ See 2.3 on Hunnic succession.

⁴⁶⁷ See sections 2.6 – 2.7 on the circumstances surrounding the Battle of Nedao.

Hearing of the negotiations for how the two new Hunnic kings would split the kingdoms of the three tribes into Eastern and Western factions, the aforementioned notables, perhaps led by Ardaric, could foment a rebellion that would effectively turn the majority of the western Hunnic Empire against the Eastern, all before they left the wedding/funeral.⁴⁶⁸

There is no evidence, however, to suggest that the ‘countless’ Gepids were a subjugated super state in the fifth century.⁴⁶⁹ If the Gepids were as strong as Jordanes relates, then the sources would certainly have reflected that historical reality; that they do not suggests the kingdom did not become the dominant force beyond the Danube until at least the defeat of the Heruls in 508 or the capture of Sirmium in 536. It was not until at least sixty years after Nedao that the Gepids started to grow into the next Attila-like super state, which they became by the late 540s – 550s (around the times when Procopius and Jordanes wrote their histories). Just like the fourth-century Greuthungi realm, Jordanes had intentionally ascribed the strength of the sixth-century Gepid kingdom to his accounts of the fifth century Gepids under the rule of Attila.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ On the East/West division of the Huns see 2.2. On the Huns greater interest in peoples than land see Thompson 1996, 167. On the Full rebellion as a consequence of Attila’s death after his marriage, see 2.9. Because the only king of the Huns, Attila, had died, it would also mean that all oaths or service to him also expired. This is perhaps one of the advantages of a diarchy where two lives upheld the service of subjugated tribes. Anyway, with their oaths of service to the Huns expired, subjugated tribes would have had legitimate grounds to rebel.

⁴⁶⁹ Countless: Jordanes, *Getica*, 199. Discussed in 3.2.

⁴⁷⁰ I would also suggest one more hypothesis concerning the Battle of Nedao: since the role of the Ostrogoths is all but overlooked in the Battle of Nedao, and we do know Goths were present at Nedao, it would seem that the parent group from which Jordanes heirs may have fought on the losing side of the battle. That is to say, Jordanes’ Amal Goths were still under the heel of the Huns at Nedao and thus Jordanes’ silence on their role in the battle, just as his silence on Mundo’s career is purposeful; it speaks about what just may have happened. Heather shows that Jordanes is interested in tracing the two Gothic bloodlines, those of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, and does oversimplify who belonged to which group; 1993, 317-353; 1995; 145-173. Thus, in a sense, to Jordanes there are only two groups of Goths. So, when Jordanes notes that Goths were present at Nedao, and since it could not have been the Visigoths (who fought at Catalaunian Plains under Theodorid and Thorismund), they must have been the Ostrogoths. Now, by contrast, if the Ostrogoths were on the winning side, we could expect that Jordanes would have embellished their importance and victory, such as those at Catalaunian Plains and Bolia; that he does not, I think, indicates they fought on the losing side. Thus, the original source of Amal Gothic-Gepid animosity may have originated at the very battle for independence often cited as the ‘Great Germanic Rebellion’ at which the famous Goths fought on the wrong side and never forgave the Gepids for the defeat they partook in inflicting. Such a theory would also make sense why Jordanes does give some praise to the Gepids: it is to keep our attention away

But the Huns did not simply allow the rebellion to consume their empire. The sons of Attila rallied under Ellac and after several engagements, Ellac was killed and the Huns were routed. It is only after the Huns were defeated at Nedao that the remainder of the sons fled to the Black Sea.⁴⁷¹ If there was civil war between the sons it was either a summer of blood that immediately followed Attila's death or it did not occur until after Nedao. Thus, it was not, as Jordanes so vehemently claims it to be, the sons who ruined the Hunnic empire but, instead, Attila's reckless ambition and lack of foresight magnified by his untimely death on his wedding night that brought about a political crisis that caused the entire Western Hunnic empire to implode. These events, we must cautiously acknowledge, bear startling resemblance to the death and collapse of Alexander the Great's empire.

Finally, with the loss of the West, the Huns regrouped in the East and revitalized their natural system of kingship, diarchy, through the joint rules of Dengizich and Ernak. The Huns practiced a hybrid system of lateral succession and agnatic seniority, in which the senior king appointed the next junior king and almost always chose to elect the next eldest male heir of the ruling family. The wives of these kings determined the order of succession. The sons of the first wife were chosen before the sons of the second and so forth (or that the wives beyond the first did not matter for they were married as a form of tribute from unruly or distant vassals).⁴⁷² Within this model of succession, we can see how and why Ellac would have become the next king of the Huns. We can also understand why Ellac's brothers (Dengizich and Ernak), who were from the same mother and father as Ellac, became the next kings after him. This model also shows that only sons

from what the Ostrogoths were doing at the battle, just enough so that we would assume they fought with the rebels without explicitly stating that they did.

⁴⁷¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, 263; specifically, the Pontic Sea.

⁴⁷² Man 2005, 318.

and brothers of the current reigning diarchs were eligible for succession and that being married into the Hunnic dynastic family would not have made one eligible for kingship.

Therefore, Ardaric could not be a royal Hun vying for succession.⁴⁷³ There were three points of reference made to connect Ardaric to Attila: Mundo being an heir of Attila, the *Hervararsaga* and ‘Ardaric’ whose name was a title meaning ‘Oath King’. We have seen that Mundo being a son of Attila is strictly contingent on one’s interpretation of *Attilanis* but there is greater evidence to suggest that Mundo was simply a Gepid.⁴⁷⁴ The *Harvararsaga*, in which Ardaric is Angantyr and Ellac is Humli, is a highly tenuous connection. For not only is the saga keenly interested in matters of inheritance, but its author wrote it to be fiction for a readership who knew that it was fiction, ca. 750 years after the Battle of Nedao.⁴⁷⁵ Finally, Ardaric’s name meaning ‘Oath King’ is interesting but it, once more, may also have been another subtle invective against the Gepid king whose name is so clearly out of character with the view held by sixth-century Constantinopolitans towards the Gepids. The title both depicts Ardaric as being Attila’s most faithful general (and indeed Attila was a barbarian) but also relates that he did not renew his oath to Attila’s son.⁴⁷⁶ Ardaric was therefore not vying for succession at Nedao, but was rebelling against the state.

Though the Hunnic state was faced with a crisis, which resulted in the loss of its entire western reaches, it did not, as Jordanes records, collapse spontaneously. It continued east of the

⁴⁷³ Introduced in 2.7

⁴⁷⁴ See 3.6, especially footnote 348 which shows that Mundo was never referred to as a Hun. However, as we have seen in 3.6, not only is there enough evidence to show that Attilani does not refer to ‘of Attila’s family’ but also that Mundo’s description in *Getica*, 300-301, is conspicuously similar to Ardaric’s (3.6) and the birth of the Huns (3.5), *Getica*, 121-128. Furthermore, as argued, Jordanes would certainly have been more explicit about Mundo being of Attilan descent if he were truly related (as he is with Ellac, Ernak and Dengizich).

⁴⁷⁵ *Hervararsaga* discussed in 2.8.

⁴⁷⁶ Again, noting that Mundo did the same to Theoderic’s son, Athalaric.

Carpathians until at least the late 460s before vanishing from history, perhaps even merging with other steppe empires (such as the Bulgars) as they crossed into modern day Ukraine.⁴⁷⁷ Wherever the Huns met their end, their lives significantly impacted the long history of the Roman empire and their 'barbarism' became the stuff of legends that even modern states today claim as part of their national heritage.

⁴⁷⁷ Kim 2013, 137-155. Likewise, fragments of Attila's life may also have been preserved in works such as, but not limited to, the 13th century romance, *Nibelungenlied*, and the poetic eddas, *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál*. Though, it must be stressed, these works were compiled much later and contain little historicity.

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Abbreviations:

- FCH – Blockley, R. *Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus*, Vol. 2, ed. and Translated by R. Blockley. Liverpool 1983.
- G&G – Giunta, A. and Grillone, A. *Getica*. Rome: Gnomon, 1991.
- PLRE – Martindale, J. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. Vol. 2-3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

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