

The Vandals and Sarmatians in a New Perspective

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This study discusses the relations between the peoples known as Sarmatians, Alans, Vandals, and other groups in the context of fluid identities and political affinities of Late Antiquity and early medieval Europe. It is argued that the Vandals underwent a substantial transformation from being dominantly farmers to centre on horse breeding and mounted warfare. In this process, Sarmatian and Alanian influence on the Vandals was crucial. One could speak of a ‘Sarmatisation’ of Vandal warfare, economy, dressing, and conduct, but also of a Vandal confederation of identities to which other ‘barbarian’ peoples could be connected.

Introduction

The term Vandals denotes an ethnically mixed tribal confederation centred on the Germanic tribe of Vandals who during the 3rd and 4th century C.E. ravaged the Roman frontier and provinces, and who in the early 5th century settled in the North African provinces of the Roman Empire (Schmidt 1964: 308). The history of the Vandals is a widely researched subject with a large body of books, monographs and papers. Therefore, there is no need to elaborate on the history of the Vandals here. However, most of the works written by scholars and researchers in the English, German and French-speaking world focus on Vandals in the context of the Germanic Migration in Late Antiquity and its impact on the Roman Empire. It is often omitted or downplayed that sometime from 418 C.E. onward, the rulers of the Vandals were called *Rex Vandalorum and Alanorum* – King of Vandals and Alans. The Alans were Sarmatian people, who initially dwelled on the Pontic steppes, and who like their close kin the Scythians spoke North-Eastern (sometime known as North Iranian) languages (Sulimirski 1969: 22). The following work aims to explore the history of the Vandals from a different, unconventional angle. It will attempt to explore the Sarmatian influence, impact and contribution to the history, culture, society and warfare of the Vandals as a result of their mutual affiliation and liaisons. Most attention will be paid to the Sarmatian Alans who in the course of history had the longest and closest association with the Vandals.

The Sarmatian people by the 1st half of the first millennium C.E. were widely spread out from the Northern Caucasus to the eastern shores of the Danube, and as far as the Chinese Far East. There were numerous Sarmatian tribes recorded in historical sources that included the Alans, Antes, Aorsi, Assi, Iaxamates, Roxolani, Serboi, Siraces, Spali, Yazyges and many others. For the purpose of this work we are going to be concerned mainly with the Alans, Roxolani and Yazyges. As mentioned, the Sarmatian people that have the longest association with and had the greatest influence on the Vandals were the Alans. In historical sources the Alans were referred to as *Alanoi* or *Alanmoi* (*Αλανοί*, *Αλανμοί*) in Greek and *Alanliao* in Chinese in the 2nd century C.E. (Fan Ye 2003: 19) and as *Alani* in the 3rd century (Yu Huan 2004: 25). In fact as we can see, we have various peoples with the same name stretching from the Danube, through the Pontic Steppes, to the Far East. Surely they were not the same people, but must have originated from the same locality somewhere in the Pontic Steppes and North of the Caucasus. For the purpose of this work we will be concerned with those Alans who dwelled on the Western Pontic Steppes and in Eastern and Western Europe. The Alans, like the other Sarmatians, were a loose association of tribal groups, getting together, splitting, forming alliances and often fighting each other (Appendix 1). In the steppes and lands beyond Roman control the Celts, Dacians, Thracians and mainly various Sarmatian tribal groups, including the Alans, lived the way the Iranian Scythians lived before. Their leaders, often referred to in sources as “kings”, were in reality warlords or tribal leaders (Strzelczyk 1992: 24–25; Zaroff 2000: 2–3). Beginning around the middle of the 2nd century C.E. Germanic-Sarmatian liaisons and ethnic fusion was nothing unusual¹ As stated earlier, the Sarmatian association and influence on the Eastern Germanic people besides the Vandals is often overlooked in historiography. It is worth noting that various Alan tribes formed part of the Ostrogothic, Visigothic and Lombard confederations. For example, at the Adrianopole battle of 378, the Sarmatians (Roxolani, also known as the White or Shining Alans) played a decisive part in the Gothic victory and the death of Emperor Valens.² The battle was decided by the cavalry charge of the Goths and Roxolani (Ammianus, XXXI.12–13.5; Alemany 2000: 8). The names of the Gothic cavalry leaders were Saphrax, which is definitely Iranian, and Alatheus which was almost certainly Iranian as well (Kim 2013: 201, n78). No doubt at Adrianopole the Gothic army were mainly foot warriors, while the majority of the cavalry were predominantly Alans and Roxolani. At the eve of the Migration Period the political and social structure of all the Eastern Germanic peoples was a legacy of life and warfare

¹ On the Sarmatisation of Eastern Germanic people, see Sulimirski 1969: 146, 169–170.

² On the Adrianopole battle: Ammianus, XXXI.12–13.5; Sulimirski 1969: 168.

in close proximity to the steppe peoples. This saw a shift in their warfare towards being more cavalry-dominated rather than using mostly infantry.

In the course of history almost all Sarmatians and their Alan branches lost their ethnic and linguistic identity and melted in with the European population. As a matter of interest it is worth noting that the only people who still speak the North-Eastern Iranian language, closely related to Alanian, are the Ossetians. There are around 600,000 Ossetian speakers who live mainly in Russia, north of the Caucasus in their own autonomous republic of Alania (still sometimes called North Ossetia). There is a significant Ossetian minority in the so-called self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia which has been a part of Georgia since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1990. The Ossetians are orthodox Christians, and although it is beyond the scope of this work we should remember that, in the infamous 2004 school massacre in Beslan over 90 percent of child victims were not Russians but Ossetians.

To date the best publication comprehensively summarising the history of the Alans in Europe is Bernard Bachrach's work *A History of the Alans in the West, from their first appearance in the sources of classical antiquity through the early Middle Ages*. As for general knowledge about the Sarmatian people, the book "*The Sarmatians*" by United Kingdom-based Polish historian and archaeologist, Tadeusz Sulimirski is to my knowledge the best publication. There is also an excellent publication by Agusti Alemany - *Sources on the Alans: A Critical Compilation* - providing historical sources and commentaries for the Alans. Also, please note that longer citations are placed in Appendices.

The Vandals and the Sarmatians

The Vandals is a general name for the tribal association of Eastern Germanic and non-Germanic people that played an important role in European history between the 2nd and the 6th centuries C.E. Until their settlement in North Africa, the Vandals were never a uniform people with a fixed rank nor were they a single, politically unified ethnic entity. Rather, they were a loose tribal confederation or collection of fluctuating and constantly changing associations and alliances of various smaller tribes, clans, families and splinter groups. What unified the disparate groups were the occasions when they shared a common, usually short-term, goal or co-operated in response to a current external threat, or to conduct raids for booty. This was also a common occurrence among the other Germanic people such as the Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Gepids, Suebi, Heruli, Quadi, Marcomanni, Burgundians and others. Unfortunately, this process of "joining in" or "splitting out" is hardly traceable in

historical records.³ For that reason the search for a uniform Vandal people at the dawn of history is like chasing a mirage. Today, this has been recognised by the overwhelming majority of modern scholars.

The name *Vandali* first appeared in Pliny the Elder in the 1st century C.E., and referred to some Germanic people on the southern shores of the Baltic.⁴ They must have come there from Scandinavia like the Goths, Gepids, Heruli, Burgundians and the other numerous Eastern Germanic tribes. At the turn of the 2nd century some people called *Vandilii* were reported somewhere in Central Europe by Tacitus (*Germania*, II). Around the close of the 2nd century C.E. the two peoples called Hasdings (Asdingi) and Silings were being regarded as Vandals, by contemporaries, occupied the slopes of the Sudety (Sudeten) Mountains in Silesia; and Little Poland in modern Poland respectively (Strzelczyk 1992: 43). The material culture of that period is known as Przeworsk, named after a place in modern Poland. Direct association of an archaeological culture with a single ethnic group is a tricky business and at present regarded by most scholars as mere unproven assumption. The analysis of Przeworsk material culture shows clearly that it was a diverse and fragmented complex. Nonetheless, it is also clear that it has a substantial Germanic component and many artefacts can surely be associated with Germanic people. The Przeworsk complex more or less corresponded to the area inhabited by the Vandals of that period. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that a certain association and degree of correlation existed between the Przeworsk culture and the Vandals. During the 2nd century C.E. the Przeworsk culture began to expand south and south-east across the Carpathian Mountains into eastern Slovakia, Carpathian Ruthenia, eastern Hungary and north-western Romania, most likely through the Dukla Pass and Moravian Gate, and therefore not alongside the north-eastern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains toward the Pontic steppes in the way the other wave of Eastern Germanic peoples (Goths, Gepids, Heruli) migrated (Strzelczyk 1992: 44–57). We cannot say for certain whether those people were the same Vandals who we know from later sources. There is however no doubt that the Przeworsk people must have contributed to the emergence of a Vandalic identity, as the Vandals were recorded there by Cassius Dio and in *Historia Augusta* in relation to Marcomanni Wars in the years 166–180 (Strzelczyk 1992: 45).

There is little evidence about Vandal society and economy when they entered the Carpathian basin during the 2nd century C.E. We can however safely draw parallels with other Germanic people of the period. There is solid and undisputable

³ On early Eastern Germanic tribes, see Diesner 1982: 86; James 1988: 35.

⁴ On the Vandili, see Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, IV.12.

archaeological evidence from Northern Germany and Scandinavia indicating that during the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.E., Germanic people were farmers. While animal husbandry and cattle breeding did play an important role, their economy was, nonetheless, based on agriculture.⁵ Also, it is often overlooked that the bulk of most of the Germanic tribal armies in Europe, like those of the Teutones, Marcomanni, Franks, Alemanni and many others, comprised foot soldiers and only had small detachments of mounted warriors (Todd 2005: 42; Halsall 2003: 185).

When the Vandals moved into the Carpathian basin, they came across various people but above all they encountered the Sarmatian Yazyges, who already dwelt there as far north as the Hungarian Plains of modern Hungary and Southern Slovakia (Bachrach 1973: 5, 9). They appeared from the Pontic Steppes around the Lower Danube sometime around the middle of the 1st century B.C.E., following the collapse of the Dacian kingdom of Burebista. By the mid-1st century C.E. they pushed north through Oltenia into Pannonia, the Hungarian Plain, southern Slovakia and northern-western Dacia (Harmatta 1970: 41–42; Sulimirski 1969: 115–116, 134). As Roman auxiliaries they participated in the Roman-Dacian wars in the years 85–101. However, during the Marcomannic Wars they sided with Marcomanni and some other Sarmatian people, most likely the Alans. After being badly defeated in 175 C.E. they subdued to the Romans. There are some archaeological indications that during the 3rd century new waves of Sarmatians (most likely the Alans) arrived on the Panonian Plains. We have no records or ways of finding out what kind of relationship existed between the Vandals and Yazyges, but we can assume that they coexisted in close proximity to one another. They were probably often allied, taking into consideration that in the mid-3rd century the Yazyges together with the other Germanic Quadi were raiding the Roman provinces across the Danube (Sulimirski 1969: 174–177).

The Vandals as well as the Quadi came under strong Sarmatian influence over there. We can assume that the process of their Sarmatisation must have begun as early as the second half of the 2nd century C.E. A witness to it is Paul the Deacon's account based on the 7th century anonymous source *Origo gentis Longobardorum*, which mentions two Vandal leaders – Ambri and Assi (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Longobardorum*, I.7). It is hard to determine to what period it refers, but it can be placed sometime between the second half of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd

⁵ On Germanic people farmers, see Tacitus, *Germania*, XXVI; Diesner 1982: 123; Goffart 1980: 28.

centuries.⁶ While the account itself is semi-legendary the names Ambri and Assi are not, whether referring to individuals, people or tribes. The name Ambri is doubtfully German and even Dutch linguist Moritz Schönfeld was not certain about it, even allowing for the possibility of it being Celtic (Schönfeld 1911: 17). As for Assi it sounds like a very Sarmatian name. The name Assi (Ἀσσιοί/Ἀσσοιοί) appears in Ptolemy describing a Sarmatian people of that name, often regarded as related to the Alans or identifying with them (Ptolemy, 5.9.16 & 6.14.10). In the 13th century a Sarmatian people called Jasi/Jassy appeared in southern and Central Europe and settled in modern Hungary after escaping from the Mongol onslaught. Moreover, the modern Ossetians share their name with the Assi.⁷ This shows not only a Sarmatian and very likely Celtic or Daco-Celtic influence on the early Vandals, but also how open, complex and fluid their society was. It goes beyond the scope of this work, but the whole region was an ethnic melting pot of various cultural, ethnic and tribal groups of Celtic, Dacian, Germanic and Sarmatian-Alanian extraction (Strzelczyk 1992: 74–76).

The Sarmatians including the Alans, Yazyges and Roxolani lived as semi-nomads in wagons and moved from place to place with their herds of horses and cattle. When they found suitable pastures they made a camp by putting their wagons in a circle to create a protective enclosure. When the pastures and other resources were exploited the tribe would move to another location of their claimed territory (Ammianus, XXXI.18–19; Strabo, VII.3.17; Appendix 2). Like many semi-nomadic people before and after, the Sarmatians, including the Alans, were a warrior society where all able men were expected to be a warrior. Their division of society was simple. There were men who could fight and hunt and the rest that could not. There was only one honourable way for a male warrior to die - in combat. They also perceived fighting on foot as dishonourable (Ammianus, XXXI.2.20; Bachrach 1973: 23; Appendix 3).

There is no evidence that the Sarmatians practiced slavery and it has been suggested that those captives who it was “worth” keeping alive but not holding for ransom, were absorbed into their society to perform the same tasks the other Alan people did. Consequently they were quite open to absorbing other peoples and as a matter of fact mixing with others (Bachrach 1973: 19–22; Appendix 4). Bernard

⁶ Jordanes in *Getica*, XVI.89, places a conflict between the Goths and Vandal before the reign of Emperor Philip the Arab (244–249). And it must have taken place during or after Marcomanni Wars (166–180). That is a period of an internal turmoil within the Germanic world of Central and Eastern Europe.

⁷ Sarmatian Assi sometime also called Aorsi or cognate appear in numerous ancient sources. For more details, see Thordarson 1987.

Bachrach says that the Alans had no council of elders like the Germans did (Bachrach 1973: 21–22). However, this seems not to be the case. Although contemporary sources do not give us much insight into this issue it is an improbable claim. The contemporary Germanic people had a tribal assembly called *thing* comprising not only elders, but leaders of clans and leaders of communities, as well as prominent warriors who chose the leader for the duration of war, raids, etc. The Alans were also clan based people and their social organisation must have been similar, as the examples of other nomadic groups indicate (Pohl 1998: 19–20). Therefore, the leaders for larger enterprises, such as war or migration would have been elected by some form of tribal assembly such as Germanic *thing* or Slavic *veche* known from the later times. This is supported by Tacitus' account using the terms *principes* and *nobilissimi* in relation to prominent Roxolani (*Germania*, I.79). Numerous later examples of nomadic and semi-nomadic people such as the Huns or Avars indicates that, in any warrior oriented societies there were warlords – war leaders elected by tribal assembly on the basis of their military prowess. When they came into contact with Roman or post-Roman Europe such leaders often tried to make their war time powers permanent and hereditary. An example would be the Alan leader Addac (Attaces), killed in 418 fighting the Visigoths. Hydatids called him *rege*, a king,⁸ in a manner typical of ancient writers who used such terms to describe important tribal leaders.

The main mode of Sarmatian, including Alan, fighting was on horseback. They fought with spears, but also used reflex bows and lassos. In close combat they resorted to fighting with swords. They used relatively long swords around 130 centimetres long, and sometimes held them with two hands. They also occasionally used shorter dagger-like swords, known as *akinakes*, with lengths from 35 to 60 centimetres.⁹ Some Sarmato-Alans wore armour, usually made of layers of bovine leather, and sometimes lamellar breastplates made of horn scales and conical leather helmets. Wealthy warriors and war leaders wore armour and similarly styled helmets made of iron. According to a number of ancient sources they were fierce fighters to reckon with. The Sarmatian charges were hard to withstand by many contemporary foot troops or cavalry. If unsuccessful they (as well as later Vandals) would feign a retreat as a tactical move. This would often make enemy infantry or cavalry break their ranks and become much more vulnerable to sudden counter attack (Appendices 2C, 5).¹⁰

⁸ Hydatius, *Chronicon*, 418.68. On emergence of wider and stronger leadership, see: Geary 2012: 38–42.

⁹ Sulimirski 1969: 31; Brzeziński & Mielczarek 2002: 33; use of lasso: Josephus, VII.4; on use of bow: Lucian, *Toxaris*, 54.

¹⁰ Ammianus, XVII.12.2–3.; Strabo, VII.3.17.; Tacitus, *Germania*, I.79; feign retreat: Bachrach 1973: 8–9, 24, 35.

Their tactics were well recognised by contemporaries and counter-tactics on how military units should respond to an Alan attack were described in detail in *Strategikon* - a military manual usually attributed to the Byzantine Emperor Maurice.¹¹

At this point we have to briefly focus on some other Eastern Germanic people such as the Goths, Gepids, Heruli and others. What differentiated them from the Vandals, Quadi and Suebi were the path and the destination when they moved south-east. While the Vandals, Quadi and Suebi crossed the mountains to reach the Carpathian basin, they migrated to the Pontic Steppes alongside northern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains in the course of the 2nd and the 3rd centuries C.E. In this new territory, the Goths, Gepids, Heruli and others encountered different environmental conditions and many non-Germanic nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, predominantly of Sarmatian stock. As a result, their economy shifted and began to rely heavily on cattle breeding. Nevertheless, agriculture still played an important part in the Eastern Germanic economies when circumstances allowed. This shift in their economic subsistence brought about yet another very important change in their society and warfare whereby they consequently relied more on cavalry, albeit the majority of their tribal forces were still foot warriors, and all adult able-bodied males were expected to serve as warriors (Todd 2005: 42).

Returning to the Vandals, one of the most profound characteristics of their later society was their mode of warfare. The Vandals, Quadi and Suebi came into contact with the Sarmatian people in the Carpathian basin, while their Gothic and other brethren on the Pontic Steppes. It appears that the Sarmatian influence in the Carpathian Basin was much stronger. From historical records we know that Vandal-Alanic forces were skilled horsemen and mounted warriors. What distinguished them from many other Eastern Germanic people was that, even by the time they lived in North Africa and during the conflict with the Byzantines, during the 5th century and first half of the 6th century, their forces were exclusively cavalry. It is worth noting again that later in North Africa the Vandal army was exclusively cavalry, while any foot soldiers were either their subjects or allies of non-Vandal and/or non-Alan extraction.¹² Procopius of Caesarea described Vandal warfare of the 6th century as follows: "...nor did they know how to go into battle on foot, but they were all horsemen, and used spears and swords for the most part..."¹³

¹¹ Maurice, *Strategikon*, 6.2, (p. 158 in Greek, p. 219 in German).

¹² On horsemanship: Vegetius, I.20 & III.26(27); and in Bachrach 1973: 15-16; Strzelczyk 1992: 163.

¹³ Procopius, III.XIX.20-22: οὔτε πεζοὶ ἐς μάχην ἰέναι ἠπίσταντο, ἀλλὰ ἵππεις τε ἦσαν ἀπαντες, δόρασι τε ἐπὶ πλείστου καὶ ξίφεσιν ἐχρώντο...

The swift charge by the Vandal cavalry that took place during the war with the Byzantines at Decimium is described in some detail by Procopius.¹⁴ It is also symptomatic that in times of African conquest the Vandals were ineffective in siege. Their exclusively cavalry army was ill-prepared for a tactical siege or for storming walls, which was a legacy of their Alan-like modes of war. For example, their siege at Hippo was merely a blockade, albeit not a really tight one, and was abandoned after a long time (Procopius, III.III.29–36), while in the case of capturing Carthage they managed to seize the city through a quick surprise attack (Victor, Intro., p. IX). Additionally, the demolition of all major city walls, with the exception of Carthage, by Vandal king Geiseric (r. 428–477) in the conquered parts of North Africa (Procopius, III.XV.9–10) indicates that he was fully aware of his people's inability to raise a siege and take a walled city or stronghold in case of his subjects' rebellion.

All this implies a long lasting and very strong influence by the Central European Sarmatians on the Vandals that led to their fundamental cultural and social transformation long before they invaded Gaul at the turn of the 5th century. The same profound development also took place among some other Germanic people. Ammianus Marcellinus recorded that the Quadi, neighbours of the Vandals, also adopted a Sarmatian way of life and warfare:

...the Sarmatians and the Quadi, who were on good terms with one another because they were neighbours with a similar way of life and similar weapons, had joined forces and were making raids in detached bands into the Pannonias and Upper Moesia. (Ammianus, XVII.12.1)

As the Quadi lived on the territory of modern Bohemia at a certain stage, the Sarmatians being referred to must have been close Alan relatives, likely the Yazyges living on the Hungarian Plains. Both made rapid and devastating mounted reoccurring raids into the Roman provinces of Pannonia and Moesia (Ammianus, XVII.12.1).

In the second half of the 4th century C.E. the advancing Huns put into motion the numerous peoples inhabiting the Pontic steppes. This consequently created a domino effect on many Germanic and Sarmatian people, including the Alans who began moving back towards the north-west alongside the Danube. In the 370's a large number of different Alans and other Sarmatians moved into Pannonia and the Hungarian Plains, and settled among or alongside the Vandals and Sarmatian

¹⁴ Procopius, III.VIII.27. The entire Book III and parts of IV shows clearly cavalry exclusive Vandal forces.

Yazyges. There is archaeological evidence supporting the notion of a substantial influx of steppe people into the region during the second half of the 4th century. (Sulimirski 1969: 164). As we also know, after the Battle of Adrianopole in 378 various and numerous Alan groups penetrated Pannonia and the Hungarian Plains and were mentioned there in Pacatus' work (Alemany 2000: 65). The Alans and Vandals were not strangers and were probably in contact before this, as well as perhaps being in some loose association or cohabitation for a much longer time. It is worth noting that on the occasion of Caesar Aurelian's Triumph in 273 C.E. captive Vandals and Alans were mentioned, among others (Bachrach 1973: 15).

Around the turn of 407 C.E. a swarm of people attempted to cross the Rhine river somewhere between Mainz and Worms (Merrills & Miles 2010: 36; Strzelczyk 1992: 86). They comprised of Alan groups, most likely accompanied by some Yazyges and other Sarmatians, and also included Hasding and Siling Vandals as well as Suebi. Either prior to or during this crossing they encountered the Franks on the east bank of the river, where it appears that the Franks attacked them as Roman *foederati* rather than on their own initiative (Collins 1991: 56–57). Whatever the case may be, the Franks were defeated in this fierce battle in which the Hasding Vandal "King" Godigisel (r. 356–407) was also killed. Apparently the Franks were about to win but the fate of the battle was decided by the charge of the Alans led by Respendial (r. >407–>418) who saved the day for the invaders. After crossing the Rhine they swarmed into Gaul practically unopposed by the weak Roman forces. Gregory of Tours in his work cites Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus' account of around the mid-5th century, where it is written that there was another group of Alans led by Goar, who joined the Romans and stayed in Gaul (Gregory of Tours, II.9; Bachrach 1973: 52–54). It is not entirely clear from this account whether there was one group or two groups of Alans, though the most plausible assumption is that there was one group under Respendial, and Goar's Alans split from the main group later when they were already in Gaul.

After this, Gaul was ravaged by the Vandals, Alans and Suebi until 409 CE when they crossed the north Pyrenees and seized Roman Spain. Not long after, in 418 the Alans in Spain were badly defeated by the incoming Visigoths under Vallia. Their defeat must have been severe as their ruler Addac (Attaces) (r. around 418) was killed there, and the Alans formally asked the Vandal ruler Gunderic (r. 407–428) to unite with his people. Around this time Vandal kings began to assume the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* – "king of Vandals and Alans". This title was used by Vandal rulers until the destruction of their state in 534 C.E. (Sulimirski 1969: 171). We don't know the details of the arrangements or treaty they agreed upon, however

we can guess that the Alans submitted to the Vandal ruler on more or less equal terms, meaning that they formed a confederation of equal people and no doubt freely intermarried.

Contrary to some claims and popular perceptions, the Vandals were not a significant force North of the Middle Danube, in neither Pannonia nor the Hungarian Plains during their stay in the Carpathian Basin. During the 3rd and 4th centuries various Sarmatian people including Alans were recorded much more often (Merrills & Miles 2010: 33). This indicates that when crossing the Rhine the Alans rather than the Vandals were the leading force. Also, the size of the regions seized by the Alans in Roman Spain is often overlooked or downplayed. The Alans took control of two central provinces of Lusitania, roughly modern Portugal south of the Douro River and adjoining Spanish provinces; and Carthaginiensis, approximate to the modern Spanish provinces of Valencia, Alicante and Murcia. Baetica, more or less the area equivalent to modern day Andalusia, came under the control of the Siling Vandals. The Suebi and the Hasding Vandals settled in Gallaecia, today's Spanish Galicia, as well as part of Asturia and part of Portugal north of the Douro River (Prosper, 392.XXVII (p. 877); Alemany 2000: 54; Pohl 2004: 37). Around the year 411, about two years after they crossed the Pyrenees, the newcomers were probably granted those territories by Rome as *foederati*. If this is the case however, these allotments would have been granted *post factum*, due to internal turmoil within the Roman Empire (Strzelczyk 1992: 94; Collins 1991: 77). When looking at the map (Map 1) it is clear that the majority of the Iberian Peninsula, stretching from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean coast, fell under Alan control. Moreover, the two branches of Vandals were separated, also resulting in the Hasding Vandals and the Suebi receiving the "poorer" region. This Alanic political dominance finds confirmation in Prosper of Aquitaine's (almost contemporary) *Chronicon*, where on the occasion of the crossing into Spain in 409 he stated: *Alani, et Vandali, et Suevi Hispanias ingresii area*. This was repeated by Hydatius (who most likely relied on Prosper) in his Chronicle (Prosper, 392.XV (p. 876); Hydatius, 409.42). By placing the Alans first, it can be seen that he certainly considered them more important than the Vandals. Hydatius then expressed it more boldly (drawing from Prosper) when describing the Alan defeat by the Visigoths in 418 as follows:

The Alans, who dominated the Vandals and the Suebi were annihilated in such a way by Goths, when that their king Addac died, the few who had survived,

once the name of their kingdom has been suppressed, put themselves under the protection of Gunderic, king of the Vandals, who lived in Gallaecia...¹⁵

Similarly Orosius, in his *Adversum Paganos*, recording the crossing of the Rhine by “Barbarians” listed them in the following order: *gentes Alanorum, ut dixi, Sueborum, Vandalorum*, which is also confirmed by Prosper (Orosius, VII.40.2–4; Prosper, XXIV (p. 878)). Orosius also recorded them in the same order in relation to the pillage of Gaul and Roman Spain (Orosius, VII.38.3–4). These accounts, by authors who could almost be considered contemporary, clearly imply that Spain in the early 5th century was under the control of loosely allied Alans, Siling Vandals and Hasding Vandals, and that the Alans were a supreme force. Orosius’ account also indicates that this was the case in Gaul, which shows that the Alans were a leading political player in the Hungarian Plains before crossing the Rhine, and that there were Alans, under Respendial, who led the invasion of 406/407. At the same time it demonstrates that the Siling and Hasding Vandals were in fact minor players.

According to numerous sources, the Visigoths attacked the Siling Vandals first in 416 and inflicted a decisive defeat upon them, although reference to their annihilation must be a gross exaggeration (Hydatius, 418.67 (p. 123); Collins 1991: 76). To attack those in Baetica they must have crossed lands controlled by the Alans. Therefore, although unreported, Vallia’s initial attack must have been directed against the Alans. This further indicates that Vallia aimed his attack at the strongest opponents. With the severe defeat and death of Addac in 418 the Alans lost their supreme, leading position and submitted to the Hasding Vandals (Prosper, 392.XXIV (p. 878); Hydatius, 418.68 (p. 123)). Vallia did not continue his campaign and left the Hasding Vandals and Suebi in Gallaecia, most likely because he did not see the relatively poor province as being of much importance, nor did he see the Hasding Vandals and Suebi as a real threat at that stage. Only from 418 C.E. onward, due to a change of fortune, did the Hasding Vandals become a dominant force in the confederation that later ruled Northern Africa till 534.

The Alan impact and influence on Vandal people and their society can only truly be understood when viewed from the earliest beginnings of their history. The complex Vandal identity and culture was the product of a long process. Silesian Vandals were completely different people in all respects to those who crossed the Gibraltar Strait, and also different to those Vandals who were defeated by the Byzantines in 534. The Roman influence in the times of the Vandal kingdom in

¹⁵ Prosper, 392.XXIV., p. 878; Hydatius, *Chronicon*, 418.68 (p.123): *Alani, qui Vandalis et Suevis potentabantur, adeo caesi sunt a Gothis, ut extincto Addace rege ipsorum pauci, quisuperferant, abolito regni domine Gunderici regis Vandalorum, qui in Gallaecia resederat...*

North Africa had an enormous impact on them, but this issue is beyond the scope of this work.

When the Vandals entered Gaul at the beginning of the 5th century, their way of life was the same as the Sarmato-Alan people, as described earlier. These significant social changes could not have happened as a result of the influence of Gothic tribes as they were not in direct or even close contact prior to 375. The East Germanic people together with other various Sarmatians and others entered Dacia and Moesia via the Lower Danube area after 375 or perhaps after 378. Knowing that the Hungarian Plains and large parts of Dacia were inhabited by various Sarmato-Alanian peoples for a long time (Alemany 2000: 15, 42), it is them who mixed and strongly influenced, and consequently transformed Vandal society.

Physical anthropology or Vandal burials cannot provide much information about Alanian influences mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the Alans anthropologically did not differ much from Germanic people. We can cite Ammianus Marcellinus here, who stated that, “Nearly all the Alani are men of great stature and beauty; their hair is somewhat yellow, their eyes are terribly fierce.” (XXXI.2.21)

We can only guess what Ammianus meant through his use of the adjective “fierce”, though green or blue eyes could make such an impression on a person of Mediterranean stock. The contents of any burials cannot provide many clues either. In fact, basically all the grave goods are practically the same and indistinguishable. For example, Gothic type fibulas found in many Eastern Germanic graves common across Europe were also present in graves in Normandy, in an area where no Goths lived, but there is evidence that the Alans were present there at a certain stage. Typical small Alanic bronze mirrors and small golden or bronze plaques, which were sown onto clothes, were only found in a few graves (Sulimirski 1969: 168–170). There is no direct evidence for intermarriage between Vandals and Alans, but common sense dictates that it was common since both people encountered each other.¹⁶ No doubt, such liaisons must have intensified and become much more common, if not the norm, after 418 when both peoples formally united under Gunderic.

It is worth noting some hunting mosaics from Carthage at this point, showing three Vandals on horseback wearing trousers and a long shirt-like tunic and cloak - a typical Sarmatian and adopted Eastern Germanic outfit. One of the depicted riders attempts to catch a deer with a lasso (Merrills & Miles 2010: 91), another typical Sarmatian item of war or hunting. Yet another depicts a hunter with a spear and hunting dog. This is of special interest for us as there exists a breed of large, strong, fast and fierce dog in Spain, known as the Alan Dog, or *Alano Español* in Spanish

¹⁶ On Sarmatian-Germanic relationship, see Sulimirski 1969: 146, 169–170.

(*canis Alani*). The breed originated in the Pontic Steppes and was used by the Sarmatians for hunting, cattle herding and sometimes in war. Today the Alano Español is a recognised breed in Spanish and it is worth noting that through interbreeding it's the parent of a number of modern Molosser category dogs (Bachrach 1973: 118; Littleton & Malcor 2000: 36). Big game hunting by Alan men (for food, pleasure and simply as a manly challenge) was shared, or rather wholeheartedly adopted, by the Vandals who also loved to hunt wild beasts. It finds reflection in a poem by Carthaginian poet Luxorius, who describes a painting of a Vandal noble killing a boar with a spear, kept in the noble's residence. In another, the poet writes about an elderly noble man still eager to ride a horse, hunt boars and deer, and wanting to die on horseback. The notions of hunting with spears and a pack of dogs, as well as horse riding, reoccur in a number of Luxorius' poems (Luxorius, 18, 21, 48, 49, 74) and in Procopius (IV.VI.7-8). The importance of and care for horses in Vandal culture and society even found expression in royal



Figure 1: Iberian Peninsula c. 409-418. Please note: The map is a general approximation only. (Source: Wikicommons.)

correspondence between king Gelimer and his brother Tzazo (Procopius, III.XXV,15). This shows a strongly embodied mounted warrior and hunting ethos among the Vandals. Of course horsemen and hunting as such cannot be attributed solely to the Vandals' ethos, but it seems that it played a markedly prominent role in their culture and society due to Alan influence.

Linguistics

Both the Vandals and the Alans did not leave records in their own language, nor do historical sources provide us with clear information about what language was in common use during the existence of the Vandalo-Alanic confederation and their African state. The Vandals definitely did not use Latin in their everyday speech with one another in North Africa. For example, records show that on one occasion the Arian Bishop Cyrila pretended that he does not speak Latin (Victor, II.55), meaning that he must have spoken some other language. His name was Greek, but was he of Vandal or Alan extraction, or was he of a mixed background with a feeling of affinity to both? Or did he simply feel to be a part of that single Vandal-Alan political, cultural and social entity? Whatever the case, we can assume with a high degree of certainty that in the early 6th century Vandals continued to speak languages other than Latin.

We find some hints about the language they spoke in *Latin Anthology*, particularly from the epigram *About the barbarian feasts* (*De convivii barbaris*), a sort of lamentation by a Roman poet, where we read: *Inter eils goticum scapia matzia ia drincan! Non audit quiscuam dignos edicere versus*. This translates: "Amongst the Gothic 'cheers!' (*eils*) 'fetch food and drink!' (*scapia matzia ia Drincan*), No one ventures to write decent poetry" (Strzelczyk 1992: 279; Merrills & Miles 2010: 94). The texts highlighted in parentheses are actually Latinised Gothic words. There are also some other words and phrases which indicate that around the turn of the 6th century the Vandals spoke an Eastern Germanic language closely related to Gothic (Strzelczyk 1992: 296). It is, however, also unlikely that the Sarmatian language completely disappeared within just over a century, so we can assume that many Vandals, especially those of Alanic extraction, could speak and understand Sarmatian. So, the language of the Alans most likely survived as a second or domestic language within a Vandal community of North Africa.

Personal names can provide some insight into Alano-Vandalic relationship. As in the case of other Germanic and Sarmatian people of the Late Antiquity, intermarriage was a very common occurrence. The issue may be a bit confusing as Alans often had Germanic names and vice versa, while Greek and Latin names were

also encountered. As an example, Victor - a 4th century Byzantine master-general of the cavalry – was a Sarmatian by birth bearing a Latin name (Ammianus, XXXI.12.6).

In our Vandal context, personal names that were recorded were those of prominent people and mainly of members of the Hasding dynasty. These names were predominately Germanic, for example Gunderic, Geiseric, Hilderic, Gelimer and others. Some Sarmatian-Alanic names however also reflected a common Vandal-Alanic heritage. We can recall here Ammantēs (Ἀμμάτας), king Gelimer's (r. 530–534) brother, who died during the decisive battle with the Byzantines at Ad Decimum in 533, whose name appears to be of Iranian origin. This is most likely a corruption of the name Amad, which is cognate to the Avestan adjective "āmāta" meaning "able" or "skilful" (Justi 1895: 14). The Iranian roots "āmān and āmānt" are also found in Massagetae names such as Aiach-**man**-os or Chorb-**amant**-is (Alemany 2000: 217). Eoamer (Οάμερ), a skilful commander and nephew of king Hilderic (reigned 523–530) who led an army against the rebels of Antalas, is another example (Procopius III.IX.2–3). This is a germanised form of the Alanic name Goar/Eochar which is cognate with the modern Ossetian name Iæukhar (Bachrach 1973: 96–97). In sources it reoccurs as the name of a number of Eastern Germanic rulers and chieftains in the following spelling variations: Gomoar, Eoathar, Eocharic, Eutharic and Eoatharic. It may also be that Teucharica, the name of the Vandal Heldica's wife (Victor, II.15), is cognate with Goar/Eochar. Also, Obadus (Victor, II.43) who was king Huneric's royal superintendent had a Sarmatian (Alanian) name as we have (H)ubāduš, an Old Persian name meaning "strong in arm" (Tavernier 2007: 203, 578). More, Athenaeus of Naucratis, a Greek rhetorician and grammarian of the 3rd century recorded the name Obatis, who was a daughter of "Scythian" Sarmatian king Homartes (Justi 1895: 231). A certain Sersao, a relative of king Geiseric was mentioned by Victor of Vita (Victor, I.35). It seems to be a corrupted form of Saroes/Sarus, another Alanic name. There was also Sarus, an Alan leader from the Pontic steppes who was an Avar envoy to the Byzantine commander in Colchis in 558. His name was recorded as Saroes (Σαρώης) by Theophanes of Byzantium. It appears to be cognate to the Ossetian term "sær", meaning head, leader.¹⁷ It is also worth noting that there was a Visigothic leader in 403 C.E. of the same name – Sarus (Saros) (Martindale 1980: 978–979), – but throughout their history the Visigoths also had various Alanian allies and presumably bore Alanian names while the Alans often had Germanic ones. There was even a Sarmatian tribe on the Pontic Steppes called Sorosgi/Sorosges, reported by Priscus of Panium in the 5th century, against whom the Huns campaigned.¹⁸ We also have Tzazon/Tzazo (Τζάζων), another

¹⁷ Sulimirski 1969: 184; Justi 1895: 87. On Ossetian, see Alemany 2000: 242.

brother of king Gelimer. His is clearly a Sarmatian name and cognate to numerous Iranian names such as, for example, Zazzous/Zazzo (Ζαζζοῦς/Ζαζζοῦ), who was a Scythe; Zizais, who was a Yazyge “prince” of the mid 4th century; or Zizirazala - an ancient place in Media.¹⁹

Process of integration and assimilation

After the conquest of North Africa the Vandals and Alans settled in a relatively compact area, in the province of Zengitana, north-west of the Carthage, which became their capital. Because of dense Vandal and Alan settlement the area became known as *Sortes Vandalorum* (Diesner 1982: 127; Merrills & Miles 2010: 149). They imposed their rule upon the local Roman population and became the ruling elite. A large number of imperial, church and private estates were confiscated and distributed among the invaders’ nobility and the Arian clergy.²⁰ Whether the persecution of Catholics was the result of conviction or rather a political tool has been the subject of debate. Orosius suggested that on crossing the Rhine, the Vandals were pagans (VII.41), while Salvian’s account suggests the Vandals might have been Arian Christians during their time in Spain, before their crossing to Africa in 429 (Salvian, VII.3–4). If so, taking into consideration the short time between the adoption of Arian Christianity and the pattern of conversion of other people across history, the persecution of Catholics by religious conviction is doubtful. After the conquest of North Africa, the majority of Vandals and Alans must have been pagans and the Hasding ruler’s Christianity was very superficial. Hence, the manifestation of Arianism aimed to make it a social binding force and a tool to manifest Vandal unity. This in turn must have facilitated the assimilation of the Alans taking into consideration that, according to Andy Merrills and Richard Miles, the Arian liturgy was in Vandalic (Merrills & Miles 2010: 94–95). Furthermore, in situations where mobile groups are vulnerable to hostile locals, volatile political situations and so on, such conditions facilitate the emergence of stronger political leadership and ethnic fusion. In hostile territory they could only count mutually on one another, and this situation must have facilitated and sped up the process of integration of the Vandals and Alans into a single cultural, social and political entity.

To what degree and when the Alans were assimilated is difficult, if not

¹⁸ Priscus, p. 278. Priscus called them Scythians, but they were Sarmatians as the former disappeared from historical sources more than half millennium before.

¹⁹ On Zizas and Zazzous, see Justi 1895: 384, 386.

²⁰ On confiscations, see Diesner 1982: 126.

impossible to assess. They were recognised as a different ethnic entity by Bishop Possidius, who was in Carthage under siege, and clearly distinguished between Vandals and Alans (Bachrach 1973: 57). However, it seems that he recognised them by their speech rather than manner or appearance. Also, according to Procopius, in the times of Geiseric the Vandals and Alans in North Africa were divided into military units led by “millenarii” (Procopius, III.V.18–19). This account implies that in the first half of the 5th century the Alans were still a separate ethno-linguistic entity and formed separate military units. The following account however, indicates that by the 6th century both these people merged into a single entity identifying as Vandals.

...by their natural increase among themselves and by associating other barbarians with them they came to be an exceedingly numerous people. But the names of the Alans and all the other barbarians, except the Moors, were united in the name of the Vandals.²¹

It is symptomatic that, writing in the mid-6th century, Procopius mentioned the Alans and confused them with Germanic Goths: “the Vandals...associating with themselves the Alani, the Gothic people” (III.III.2; and III.IV.24). As his *Histories of Wars* indicate, Procopius was aware of the ethnicity and origin of many people within the Roman Empire, and participated in Belisarius’ campaign of 533 against the Vandals. Hence, if he regarded the Alans as Gothic people, then both Vandals and Alans were so ethnically and culturally intermingled that they formed an almost uniform ethnic and cultural entity, at least for outside observer.

The rulers of the Hasding Vandals used the title *Rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* - King of Vandals and Alans, probably since the Alan defeat by the Visigoths in Spain in 418 (Victor, II.39 (and p. 38n.)). Nevertheless, the title was first recorded on the edicts of king Huneric on 20th of May 483. The last of the Hasding kings was celebrated as *Geilamir rex Vandalorum et Alanorum* in an inscription on a magnificent silver basin, probably sent to the Ostrogothic court as a diplomatic gift (Merrills & Miles 2010: 96; Steinacher 2004: 165). The term was also used in royal correspondence in a letter to king Gelimer from his brother Tzazon in 533 (Procopius, III.XXIV.3). After the capture of Carthage by Belisarius in 533, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I added *Alanicus, Vandalicus, Africanus* to his title (Strzelczyk 1992: 179; Victor III.3). It does not appear to be an empty title, and the reality must be that people referred to as Vandals in sources were in fact an amalgamation of Germanic

²¹ Procopius III.V.20-22. ...ἐπειτα μένοι τή τε κατά σφάς παιδοποιία καί άλλους βαρβάρους ἐς μεγάλην τινά πολυανθρωπίαν ἐχώρησαν. Τά δέ τών Αλανών καί τών άλλων βαρβάρων ὀνόματα , ἠλγὴν Μαυρουσίωυ, ἐς τό τών Βαυδίλωυ ἀπαντα ἀπεκρίθη.

and Alanian populations. We also find this tradition in the poetry of Felix who dedicated a poem to king Tharasmund (r. 496–523) and wrote: “Oh! Great king of Vandals! A heir to a dual crown!” (Felix, *Anthologia Latina*, 215 (p. 357)). So, it would not be surprising, in the historical context, that people could identify themselves with the Vandal kingdom while at the same time recognising their distinct Alanic identity and heritage.

To estimate what proportion of the population of Vandal-Alan confederation the Alans comprised when they crossed into Africa could only be a guess. The Alans, after their defeat in 418, suffered substantial losses including the death of their king Addac, but so did the Siling Vandals who after that date ceased to be a distinguished group within the confederation and were never mentioned again. We can add some loose bands of Suebi who in the overwhelming majority stayed on the Iberian Peninsula, and no doubt some Romano-Hispanic people. We can only therefore guess that Alans might have comprised up to 40 percent of the people that crossed into Africa.

One more issue of interest

Bernard Bachrach suggested that some Alanic connection played a part during the Byzantine conflict with the Vandals in 431/2 (Bachrach 1973: 46). The Byzantine forces were commanded by *magister militum* Flavius Ardabur Aspar who was an Alan in the Imperial services. In the course of this conflict the Byzantines were somehow feeble and were defeated by the Vandals. Aspar remained in North Africa for over two years and negotiated a treaty with Vandal king Geiseric in 435 at Hippo Regius. The treaty practically ceded part of North Africa to Geiseric, as evidenced by the statement in Prosper of Aquitaine’s chronicle: “*Pax facta cum Vandalis data eis ad habitantum Africae portione*”. As part of this agreement a young Byzantine officer named Marcian was also released. It is worth noting that he was elevated to the imperial Byzantine throne by Aspar in 450. Also, when in 440 the Byzantium sent a fleet to retake Carthage, under the command of Aspar, it stayed idle in Sicily for more than two years. Aspar was undoubtedly instrumental in making peace offers to Geiseric who accepted the Roman *foederati* status in 435 and also in 442, but on his own terms.²² We may never find out, but Aspar might have secretly supported Geiseric, and they might both have had some type of mutual understanding because of the Alan connections at Geiseric’s court. Aspar surely played his own Imperial

²² On the Vandals as a Roman *foederati*, see Musset 1975: 57.

politics at Constantinople,²³ but his Alan connections would be very useful in his political plotting.

Conclusion

Summarising, the substantial Sarmatian and especially Alanian influence mainly upon the Vandals and also on other East Germanic groups is still grossly underestimated and neglected, or sometimes even ignored, in many works concerning the Late Roman Empire.

The East Germanic tribes and the Sarmatians of the Migration Period were tribal societies, hence basically very similar. The Vandals entered history in the region associated with southern precincts of Przeworsk culture of Silesia and Little Poland. By the middle of the 2nd century C.E. they had moved to the Carpathian Basin where they encountered Sarmatian Yazyges. A number of consecutive waves of Sarmatian-Alanian people entered the region in the following centuries, so the number of Sarmatian-Alans in the region must have been substantial prior to the Vandal-Alans crossing the Rhine around the turn of 407. It has to be remembered that, in the 4th century in the so-called ethnic boundaries of the "Barbaricum", identities and political affinities were fluid, not rigid, and were not defined in the modern sense.

In the context of the Hungarian Plains and North-Western Dacia of that period, the people we know as Alans who crossed into the Rhine must have been an amalgamation of various groups of Sarmatian Alans, Roxolani, Yazyges and other smaller groups, led by one of the Alan tribal leaders. The Alans retained their dominant position within the confederation with the Hasding and Siling Vandals and the Suebi while ravaging Gaul, and in the Iberian Peninsula until 418 when they suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Visigoths. Only after that did the Hasding Vandals rise to a leading position within the confederation of tribes, and they retained that position until 534 when their kingdom was destroyed by the Byzantines.

Initially the Vandals were farmers involved in some animal husbandry, but under Sarmatian influence they underwent a complete social and cultural transformation, with a shift of their economy to cattle and horse breeding. Importantly, the Sarmatisation of Vandal warfare was so profound and so complete that it must have been due to strong and long-lasting influences during the time they lived in Central Europe. This was a significant social transformation, as Vandals dressed, fought and

²³ Marcian story: Procopius, III.VI.2-16; On Geiseric and Aspar, see: Strzelczyk 1992: 130–132, 143–144; Bachrach 1973: 42–48. Bachrach is citing French historian prof. Gautier on p. 48.

conducted themselves in a Sarmatian fashion that emerged on the Pontic Steppes. This included the wearing of cloaks, loose trousers and high boots known as *tzangaë* (Collins 1991: 94). All this marked a fundamental social, cultural and especially a mental change. From the early Germanic farmer society into a mounted warrior like one, where tilting soil would be a dishonourable activity not worthy of a true warrior. Nonetheless, as the evidence shows they still retained their Germanic language. It looks as though the Sarmatian Alans retained their separate cultural identity for a long time but accepted Germanic leadership while freely intermarrying. So, in short, people referred to in sources as Vandals in the 1st century C.E. were definitely not the same people as those who were defeated by the Byzantines under Belisarius in 533/534.²⁴

Also, it is necessary to say that, ethnicity or ethnic affiliation, during Late Antiquity and Early Medieval times were of a different nature than those manifested in modern times. Whilst language may have played a part, it was not a determining factor. We recognize now, that the frame of mind of those people was much different than in a modern national consciousness. The identity of those people evolved by association of followers of tribal leaders and war lords, often cited in the sources as kings, on their trek across Roman territories, not necessarily by any particular linguistic criteria. However, religion, in this case Arianism, would be an important factor since the late 5th century (Geary 2012: 11–12, 34–35). Also, it needs to be noted here that the ethnic boundaries were fluid and dynamic and some groups may have been incorporated or they departed from particular *gens* or *ethnos*. Therefore, we may conclude that while contemporaries called them the Vandals, as it happened they were an amalgamation of various peoples, predominantly of Vandal and Alan descent, with multiple, multi-level affiliation unified by a common cause and interests. Probably the best description concerning the assimilation and integration of the Alans within the Vandal confederation was versed by Andrew Merrills and Richard Miles:

The ‘Alans and other barbarians’ may not have lost their own distinct sense of separateness, but they were increasingly included within a broader ‘Vandal’ ethnicity. This identity was not set in stone, then, but proved to be a broad church in which many different groups could gather.” (Merrills & Miles 2010: 84)

Therefore, the author feels at liberty to invent a new term – the “Vandalans” – to describe later Vandal people, society and their African kingdom.

²⁴ On social, ethnic and cultural transformation of the people during the Migration Period, see Collins 1991: 98–99.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans

Then the Alani, being thus divided among the two quarters of the globe (the various tribes which make up the whole nation it is not worthwhile to enumerate), although widely separated, wander, like the Nomades, over enormous districts. But in the progress of time all these tribes came to be united under one generic appellation, and are called Alani. Ammianus, XXXI.2.17.

APPENDIX 2

A. Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans

They have no cottages, and never use the plough, but live solely on meat and plenty of milk, mounted on their wagons, which they cover with a curved awning made of the bark of trees, and then drive them through their boundless deserts. And when they come to any pasture-land, they pitch their wagons in a circle, and live like a herd of beasts, eating up all the forage – carrying, as it were, their cities with them in their wagons. In them the husbands sleep with their wives – in them their children are born and brought up; these wagons, in short, are their perpetual habitation, and wherever they fix them, that place they look upon as their home. (Ammianus, XXXI.2.18)

B. Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans

They drive before them their flocks and herds to their pasturage; and, above all other cattle, they are especially careful of their horses. The fields in that country are always green, and are interspersed with patches of fruit trees, so that, wherever they go, there is no dearth either of food for themselves or fodder for their cattle. And this is caused by the moisture of the soil, and the number of the rivers which flow through these districts. (Ammianus, XXXI.2.19)

C. Strabo on Roxolani

They make use of helmets and breastplates made of untanned ox-hide. They bear wicker shields; and as weapons, lances, the bow, and the sword, such as most of the other barbarians do. The woollen tents of the nomads are fixed upon their chariots, in which they pass their lives. Their herds are scattered round their tents, and they live on the milk, the cheese, and the meat which they supply. They shift their quarters ever in search of pasture, changing the places they have exhausted for others full of

grass. In the winter they encamp in the marshes near the Palus Mæotis, and in the summer on the plains. (Strabo, VII.3.17)

APPENDIX 3

Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans

A. All their old people, and especially all the weaker sex, keep close to the wagons, and occupy themselves in the lighter employments. But the young men, who from their earliest childhood are trained to the use of horses, think it beneath them to walk. They are also all trained by careful discipline of various sorts to become skilful warriors. And this is the reason why the Persians, who are originally of Scythian extraction, are very skilful in war. (Ammianus, XXXI.2.20)

B. ... and as ease is a delightful thing to men of a quiet and placid disposition, so danger and war are a pleasure to the Alani, and among them that man is called happy who has lost his life in battle. For those who grow old, or who go out of the world from accidental sicknesses, they pursue with bitter reproaches as degenerate and cowardly. Nor is there anything of which they boast with more pride than of having killed a man: and the most glorious spoils they esteem the scalps which they have torn from the heads of those whom they have slain, which they put as trappings and ornaments on their war-horses. (Ammianus, XXXI.22)

APPENDIX 4

Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans

They have no idea of slavery, inasmuch as they themselves are all born of noble families; and those whom even now they appoint to be judges are always men of proved experience and skill in war. (Ammianus, XXXI.2.25)

APPENDIX 5

Ammianus Marcellinus on Alans and Roxolans

These tribes are more suited to predatory incursions than to regular war; they carry long spears, and wear breastplates made of horn scraped and polished, let into linen jackets, so that the layers of horn are like the feathers of a bird. Their horses are chiefly geldings, lest at the sight of mares they should be excited and run away, or, when held back in reserve, should betray their riders by their fierce neighing. They cover vast spaces in their movements, whether in pursuit or in retreat, their horses being swift and very manageable; and they lead with them one or sometimes two spare chargers apiece, in order that the change may keep up the strength of their

cattle, and that their vigour may be preserved by alternations of rest. (Ammianus, XVII.12.2–3)

Tacitus on Roxolans

...the Roxolani, a Sarmatian tribe ... It is wonderful how entirely the courage of this people is, so to speak, external to themselves. No troops could shew so little spirit when fighting on foot; when they charge in squadrons, hardly any line can stand against them ... the weight of their coats of mail, they could make no use of their pikes or their swords, which being of an excessive length they wield with both hands. These coats are worn as defensive armour by the princes and most distinguished persons of the tribe. They are formed of plates of iron or very tough hides, and though they are absolutely impenetrable to blows. (Tacitus, *Histories*, I.79)

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