



Old Germanic Languages

Historical and grammatical survey

Václav Blažek



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1 INTRODUCTION

The whole book is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes the oldest linguistic, epigraphical and archaeological traces of the ethnic groups using one of the Germanic languages. The second part outlines the history of all Germanic languages, from the oldest times of tribal society up to the modern dialects if they still exist. Each of these histories begins with quoting of selected historical texts which mention the given people. Then, brief historic descriptions of the migration from the Migration Period follow together with the delineation of the processes which formed the future nations. Further, the respective ethnonyms are analysed from the etymological point of view. The epigraphical stage in the development of the majority of the old Germanic languages is illustrated by examples of the early runic inscriptions with their interpretation. In case any literary texts were written, at least one is cited together with its translation. A brief overview of the literary works constitutes a bridge to the present days. The third part brings the representative bibliography chosen especially from the diachronic perspective, consisting of both the used and recommended works which are arranged in both alphabetic and thematic order.

The attachment consists of eight parts. The first two parts comprise graphs which model the position of the Germanic language branch within the Indo-European language family and its inner classification. The third and fourth ones present an outline of comparative Germanic phonetics and morphology. The fifth one mediate some longer Latin texts relating to the history of Germanic tribes with translations. The sixth part bring clearly structured tables with variants of runic and Gothic script. The seventh part demonstrates the application of so-called ‘recalibrated’ glottochronology to the classification of the Old Germanic languages, including the used lexical lists of the Gothic, Old Norse, Old English, Old Saxon and Old High German languages, plus reconstructed Proto-Germanic. The eighth part is devoted to the classification of the modern Frisian dialects, applying the same glottochronological method.

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2 GERMANIC PEOPLES AT THE TURN OF PREHISTORY AND HISTORY

The identification of Germanic peoples at the outset of history leans on the following fields: Classical and Germanic philology which interpret texts written in classical and old Germanic languages. Comparative historical linguistics analyses both ethnic and place names and also early loan words. These help to map the traces of the original Germanic settlements, their early migrations and relationships. No less important are both the epigraphical analysis of the oldest original inscriptions and archaeology which mediates material culture of these peoples.

2.1 The oldest information on Germanic peoples from ancient writers

The ethnic name *Germani* is first mentioned 222 BCE in the inscription on the Roman Capitoline Hill. It deals with the victory of Claudius Marcellus who beat Gaelic Insubres and Germanic people at the battle of Clastidium in Northern Italy south of the river Po: DE GAL-LEIS INSUBRIBUS ET GERM(AN[EIS]). Nowadays, it is no longer possible to determine safely whether this is really an authentic record from the 3rd century BCE or an additional insertion from the times of Augustus. In any case, the presence of Germanic peoples south of the Alps would be rather surprising at that time. The first Germanic tribes who the ancient world might have known about were the Teutons and probably also Goths.

Around 325 BCE, a Greek, Pytheas of Massalia (= Latin Massilia, today's Marseille), undertook a voyage to the British Isles and further to the North (and probably also to the Northeast). The original description of his voyage is not preserved directly, but it must have existed judging from sceptical responses appearing a couple of centuries later. Fortunately, at least individual pieces of Pytheas's work have been preserved as citations of later authors, e.g. Eratosthenes of Cyrene (3rd century BCE) Hipparchus of Nicaea (2nd century BCE) Marcianus of Heraclea, Polybius of Megapolis, Posidonius of Apamea, Strabo and the authors writing in Latin primarily Pliny the Elder. In his book "*Naturalis Historia*", he writes [37.35-36/12/11] "...Pytheas says that the *Gutones*, a people of Germany, inhabit the shores of an æstuary of the Ocean called Metuonidis, their territory extending a distance of six thousand stadia; that, at one day's sail from this territory, is the Isle of Abalus, upon the shores of which, amber is thrown up by the waves in spring, it being an excretion of the sea in a concrete form; as, also, that the inhabitants use this amber by way of fuel, and sell it to their neighbours, the *Teutones*."¹

Pliny's insertion from the 1st century CE on the classification of the Teutons and Gutons as Germanic peoples must be anachronistic but objectively correct. The identification of Gutons with Goths does not pose any problems if we consider that in the manuscripts different forms appear. In addition to the forms *Gotonibus*, *Gut(t)onibus* another variant emerges *Guionib*[

1) ... Pytheas Gutonibus, Germaniae genti, accoli aestuarium oceani Metuonidis nomine spatio stadiorum sex milium; ab hoc diei navigatione abesse insulam Abalum; illo per ver fluctibus advehi et esse concreti maris purgamentum; incolas pro ligno ad ignem uti eo proximisque Teutonis vendere. Translated by John Bostock, & H.T. Riley (1855).

(Mette 1952, 29, note 1818), its anticipated nom. pl. **Guiones* has no parallel in any of the known Germanic ethnonyms. If we consider emendation of *G-* for *S-*, we get the form *Suiones*, which we know from Tacitus's description of Scandinavia [§44]: „And now begin the states of the Suiones, situated on the Ocean itself, and these, besides men and arms, are powerful in ships.“². From Pliny's quotation of Pytheas's report which might refer to Danish islands as well as to southern Sweden, only the reference of the *Teutoni* can be considered certain. The *Teutoni* appear again on the historic scene in the last quarter of the 2nd century BCE when they together with the *Cimbri* and most probably also with other tribes, the *Ambrones* and the *Charudes*, set out towards the Southeast across the Hercynian Forest where they were driven back by the *Boii*. Then they headed for the Danubian *Scordisci* and afterwards to the West for the *Helvetii* [Strabo 7.2.1-2].

In 113 BCE, the *Cimbri* invaded the province Noricum where they defeated the Roman army of consul Gnaeus Papirius Carbo for the first time. Then they headed for southeastern Gaul and after a couple of minor battles, they clashed with Romans for the second time in 109 BC and together with Teutons, they again achieved victory. Not even then did they gain any land in densely inhabited Gaul. Four years later in the Battle of Arausio (today's Orange), they defeated the Romans for the third time. However, they did not gain the favour of the local inhabitants and therefore they left for Hispania where they experienced a similar fate. Thus they decided to invade Italy itself. Previous military failures led the Romans to an effective reorganization of their army. Therefore in 101 BCE, Gaius Marius defeated the *Cimbri*, *Teutones* and *Ambrones* in the Battle of Aquae Sextiae (today's Aix-en-Provence).

It can be stated with certainty that the ethnonym *Germanic* was first used by Caesar in the first book of his “*Commentarii de Bello Gallico*” written in the 50's of the 1st century BCE. His interpretation of this name designated only some tribes living along the lower Rhine: “Then at least of necessity the *Germanic people*, drew their forces out of camp, and disposed of them canton by canton at equal distances: *Harudes, Marcomanni, Tribocci, Vangiones, Nemetes, Sedusii, Suevi*”³ [1.51]. At another place it is mentioned that “... Ariovistus the king of the Germans, had settled in their territories, and had seized upon a third of their land, which was the best in the whole of Gaul, and was now ordering them to depart from another third part, because a few months previously 24,000 men of the *Harudes* had come to him, for whom room and settlements must be provided.”⁴ [1.31]. Caesar ascribed Germanic origin also to *Cimbri* and *Teutoni* who had fought with the Romans already in 2nd century BC judging from his words: “the Germans should by degrees become accustomed to cross the Rhine, and that a great body of them should come into Gaul, he [Caesar] saw [would be] dangerous to the Roman people, and judged, that wild and savage men would not be likely to restrain themselves, after they had possessed themselves of all Gaul, from going forth into the province and thence marching into Italy (as the *Cimbri* and *Teutoni* particularly as the Rhone [was the sole barrier that] separated the *Sequani* from our province.”⁵ [1.33].

Pliny (24–79 CE) in his *Naturalis Historia* uses the term *Germani* in a wider sense than Caesar. He is the first one who offers a classification of Germanic tribes [4.99-100]: “There are five German races; the *Vandili*, parts of whom are the *Burgundiones*, the *Varini*, the *Carini*, and the *Gutones*: the *Ingævones*, forming a second race, a portion of whom are the *Cimbri*, the *Teutoni*, and the tribes of the *Chauci*. The *Istævones*, who join up to the Rhine, and to whom the *Cimbri* belong, are the third race; while the *Hermiones*, forming a fourth, dwell in the interior, and include the *Suevi*, the *Hermunduri*, the *Chatti*, and the *Cherusci*: the fifth race is that of the *Peucini*, who are also the *Basternæ*, adjoining the *Daci* previously mentioned. The more

2) *Suionem hinc civitates ipsae in Oceano, praeter viros armaque classibus valent.*

Translated by Alfred John Church & William Jackson Brodribb (1942).

3) *Tum demum necessario Germani suas copias castris eduxerunt generatimque constituerunt paribus intervallis, Harudes, Marcomanos, Tribocos, Vangiones, Nemetes, [S]Edusios, Suebos.*

4) *Propterea quod Ariovistus, rex Germanorum, in eorum finibus consedisset tertiamque partem agri Sequani, qui esset optimus totius Galliae, occupavisset et nunc de altera parte tertia Sequanos decedere iuberet, propterea quod paucis mensibus ante Harudum milia hominum XXIII ad eum venissent, quibus locus ac sedes pararentur.*

5) *Paulatim autem Germanos consuescere Rhenum transire et in Galliam magnam eorum multitudinem venire populo Romano periculosum videbat, neque sibi homines feroces ac barbaros temperaturos existimabat quin, cum omnem Galliam occupavissent, ut ante Cimbri Teutonique fecissent, in provinciam exirent atque inde in Italiam contenderent, praesertim cum Sequanos a provincia nostra Rhodanus divideret.*

Translated by W. A. McDevitte & W. S. Bohn (1869).

famous rivers that flow into the ocean are the Guttalus, the Visculus or Vistula, the Albis, the Visurgis, the Amisius, the Rhine, and the Mosa. In the interior is the long extent of the Hercynian range, which in grandeur is inferior to none.”⁶. Before the end of the 1st century CE, Tacitus in his *Germania* noted [§2]: “In their ancient songs, their only way of remembering or recording the past, they celebrate an earth-born god, Tuisto, and his son Mannus, as the origin of their race, as their founders. To Mannus they assign three sons, from whose names, they say, the coast tribes are called *Ingaevones*; those of the interior, *Herminones*; all the rest, *Istaeuvones*. Some, with the freedom of conjecture permitted by antiquity, assert that the god had several descendants, and the nation several appellations, as *Marsi*, *Gambrivii*, *Suevi*, *Vandilii*, and that these are genuine old names. The name Germany, on the other hand, they say, is modern and newly introduced, from the fact that the tribes which first crossed the Rhine and drove out the Gauls, and are now called Tungrians, were then called Germans.”⁷.

If we compare Caesar’s, Pliny’s and Tacitus’s information, it can be concluded that Tacitus confirms Caesar’s narrower sense of the ethnonym *Germani*. On the other hand, Tacitus remarkably corresponds with Pliny in the designation of the proto-tribes: *Ingvaeoni* (Pliny) : *Ingaevoni* (Tacitus) “inhabitants of the closest seas”; *Hermioni* “inland” (Pliny) : *Herminoni* (Tacitus); *Istvaeoni* “the closest to Rhine” (Pliny) : *Istaeuvoni* (Tacitus). The function of the ethnonym *Germani* limited to the tribes living around the river Rhine is also confirmed by the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea in his description of the “Gothic War” (Latin *De Bello Gothico*) up to the first half of 6th century CE [4/8.20]: “The *Varni* dwell beyond the Ister River, and extend as far as the northern ocean along the river Rhine, which separates them from the Franks and the other nations who dwell in that region. Now among all these nations which in ancient times dwelt on both sides of the Rhine river each people had its own particular name, but the whole group was called in common Germans.”⁸.

2.1.1 The origin of the ethnonym *Germani*

Among the many often implausible attempts to explain the ethnonym *Germanic*, the oldest etymology seems to be the most convincing. Strabo in his *Geographica* finished at the beginning of the 1st century CE wrote [7.1.2]: “Next after the Keltic nations come the Germans who inhabit the country to the east beyond the Rhine; and these differ but little from the Keltic race, except in their being more fierce, of a larger stature, and more ruddy in countenance; but in every other respect, their figure, their customs and manners of life, are such as we have related of the Kelts. The Romans therefore, I think, have very appositely applied to them the name *Germani*, as signifying genuine; for in the Latin language *Germani* signifies genuine.”⁹ It is obvious that Strabo considered plural of the Latin word *germānus* “of brothers and sisters, full, own”, metaphorically also “real, true” which he translated into Greek as γνήσιος “native;

6) *Germanorum genera quinque: Vandili, quorum pars Burgodiones, Varinnae, Charini, Gutones. alterum genus Ingvaeones, quorum pars Cimbri, Teutoni ac Chaucorum gentes. proximi autem Rheno Istvaeones, quorum mediterranei Hermiones, quorum Suebi, Hermunduri, Chatti, Cherusci. quinta pars Peucini, Basternae, supra dictis contermini Dacis. amnes clari in oceanum defluunt Guthalus, Visculus sive Vistla, Albis, Visurgis, Amisis, Rhenus, Mosa. introrsus vero nullo inferius nobilitate Hercynium iugum praetenditur.* Translated by John Bostock & H.T. Riley (1855).

7) *Celebrant carminibus antiquis, quod unum apud illos memoriae et annalium genus est, Tuistonem deum terraeditum. ei filium Mannum originem gentis conditoresque Manno tres filios adsignant, e quorum nominibus proximi Oceano Ingaevones, medii Herminones, ceteri Istaeuvones vocentur. quidam, ut in licentia vetustatis, plures deo ortospluresque gentis appellationes, Marsos Gambrivios Suebos Vandilios adfirmant, eaque vera et antiqua nomina. ceterum Germaniae vocabulum recens et nuper additum, quoniam qui primi Rhenum transgressi Gallos expulerint ac nunc Tungri, tunc Germani vocati sint: ita nationis nomen, nongentis, evaluisse paulatim, ut omnes primum a victore obmetum, mox et a se ipsis invento nomine Germani vocarentur.* Translated by Alfred John Church & William Jackson Brodrigg (1942).

8) Οὐάρνοι μὲν ὑπὲρ Ἰστρον ποταμῶν ἴδρυνται, διήκουσι δὲ ἄχρι ἐς Ὠκεανὸν τὸν ἀρκτῶρον καὶ ποταμῶν Ῥήνον, ὅσπερ αὐτοὺς τε διορίζει καὶ Φράγγουσκαι τὰ ἄλλα ἔθνη ἃ ταύτη ἴδρυνται. οὗτοι ἅπαντες, ὅσοι τὸ παλαιὸν ἀμφὶ Ῥήνον ἐκατέρωθεν ποταμῶν ᾤκηοντο, ἰδίῳ μὲν τινος ὀνόματος ἕκαστοι μετελάχανον, ἐπὶ κοινῆς δὲ Γερμανοὶ ἐκαλοῦντο ἅπαντες.

Translated by H.B. Dewing (1928).

9) εὐθὺς τοίνυν τὰ πέραν τοῦ Ῥήνου μετὰ τοὺς Κελτοὺς πρὸς τὴν ἕω κεκλιμένα Γερμανοὶ νέμονται, μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττοντες τοῦ Κελτικοῦ φύλου τῷ τε πλεονασμῷ τῆς ἀγριότητος καὶ τοῦ μεγέθους καὶ τῆς ξανθότητος, τὰλλα δὲ παραπλήσιοι καὶ μορφαῖς καὶ ἥθεσι καὶ βίους ὄντες, οἷους εἰρήκαμεν τοὺς Κελτοὺς. διὸ δὴ καὶ μοι δοκοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι τοῦτο αὐτοῖς θέσθαι τοῦνομα ὡς ἂν γνησίους Γαλάτας φράζειν βουλόμενοι: γνήσιοι γὰρ οἱ Γερμανοὶ κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων διάλεκτον.

Translated by H.C. Hamilton & W. Falconer (1924).

of the genuine, proper descent”, metaphorically also “real, true”. Strabo’s explanation based on the ‘real Celts’ is evidently naive and indefensible. Strabo’s interpretation becomes clearer if we consider Tacitus who wrote in his *Germania* at the end of the 1st century CE: [§2] “The Germans, I am apt to believe, derive their original from no other people; and are nowise mixed with different nations arriving amongst them...”¹⁰; [§4] “For myself, I concur in opinion with such as suppose the people of Germany never to have mingled by inter-marriages with other nations, but to have remained a people pure, and independent, and resembling none but themselves. Hence amongst such a mighty multitude of men, the same make and form is found in all...”¹¹. In other words, at that time Germanic people seemed to a Roman observer as similar as if they were of the same descent and therefore the Latin *germāni*.

2.1.2 The testimony of toponyms, especially hydronyms

A detailed analysis of the originally Germanic hydronyms, their morphological structure and external parallels with Baltic, Slavic and other hydronyms led J. Udolph (1994, 925–32), a specialist on European hydronymy, to demarcate the most archaic area of Germanic hydronyms within the following borders: North – the river Aller (the right tributary of Vézère); East – Middle Elbe; South – Ore Mountains and Thuringian Forest; West – Westphalia, Lower Rhine. According to Udolph right in this area, the Germanic dialect was formed from the late Indo-European continuum which manifests itself as the s.c. ‘Old European’ hydronymy. Therefore this area can be identified with the original Germanic homeland.

2.1.3 Archaic Germanic loanwords in non-Germanic languages

Remarkably rich information on the form of one of the Germanic dialects which did not change much from the original Proto-Germanic language is provided by Finnish and other Balto-Finnic languages in which hundreds of early Germanic loanwords are found. To give some examples taken from *LGL*:

Finnish, Karelian *akana*, Livonian *agān*, Votic, Estonian *aganas*, (*h*)*agan* “chaff” ~ Germanic **axanō* > Gothic *ahana* id. or **aganō* > Old Icelandic *ogn*, Old Swedish *aghn* id.;

Finnish *ansas* “bearing timber” ~ Germanic **ansaz* > Old Icelandic *áss* “timber, beam”, Old Swedish *ās* “timber, beam (for a bridge)” or **anzaz* > Gothic dat. sg. *anza* “timber, beam”;

Finnish *kulta* “gold” ~ Germanic **gulþa-* id. > Gothic *gulþ*, Old Icelandic *gull*, Old Swedish *gul*, *gull-*, *guld* id.;

Finnish, Estonian *kuningas*, Karelian *kuninkas*, Votic *kuningaz* “king” ~ Germanic **kuningaz* > Old Swedish *koning(h)*, Old High German *chunink*, *kuning*;

Finnish *lammas*, gen. *lampaan*, Karelian, Estonian *lammas*, Veps *?ambaz*, Livonian *lāmbaz* “sheep” ~ Germanic **lambaz*, *-iz* > Gothic, Old Gutnian *lamb* “sheep”, Old Icelandic, Old Swedish *lamb* “lamb”;

Finnish *miekka* “sword” ~ Germanic **mēk(i)ja-(z)* > Gothic *meki*, Old Runic accusative *makija*, Old Icelandic *mækir* id.;

Finnish *pelto*, Karelian *peldo*, Votic *pōlto*, Estonian *põld* “field” ~ Germanic **felþu-* > Old High German, Old Saxon, Old English *feld* id.;

Finnish *rengas*, Votic *rengas*, Estonian *rõnnas* “circle” ~ Germanic **xrengaz* > Old Icelandic *hringr*, Old High German, Old Saxon *hring* id.;

Finnish, Estonian, Votic *rikas*, Livonian *rikās* “rich” ~ Germanic **rikjaz* > Gothic *reiks* “ruler”, Old Icelandic *ríkr* “powerful, mighty”

10) *Ipsos Germanos indigenas crediderim minimeque aliarum gentium adventibus et hospitibus mixtos ...*

11) *Ipse eorum opinionibus accedo, qui Germaniae populos nullis aliis aliarum nationum conubiis infectos propriam et sinceram et tantum sui similem gentem exstitisse arbitrantur. Unde habitus quoque corporum, tamquam in tanto hominum numero ...*

Translated by Alfred John Church & William Jackson Brodrick (1942).

Finnish *ruhtinas* “leader, tribal chief” ~ Germanic *ǣruxtiñas* > Old Icelandic *dróttin*, Old High German *truhtīn*, *druhtīn* id.

From the point of view of Germanic dialectology, it is certain that the concerned source language was neither West Germanic nor their common Northwest Germanic protolanguage. V. Thomsen, the author of a classical work on early Germanic loanwords in Balto-Finnic languages and in Saami languages (1870), thought that the source language was Gothic. Although there is no direct historic evidence on Goths neighbouring with Balto-Finnic peoples, indirect indications of partially legendary origin (e.g. according to so-called *Guta Saga*, a part of the population left the island Gotland because of overpopulation and moved to Estonia) makes Goths or their ancestors to the most probable candidates. The high number of borrowings indicates that an integration of a certain population using one of the early (East?) Germanic dialects might have occurred. The semantic nature of the borrowings testifies that this population soon won the position of military, economic and social elite.

2.2 The oldest epigraphical relic

The first written record of a Germanic language is neither Gothic, which became a literary language in the first half of the 4th century, nor the early runic language whose first known written record dates to the 1st century CE. The oldest is the s.c. inscription B on the Negau helmet (the inscription A on another helmet found at the same time actually consists of 4 short texts: three Celtic and one Rhaetian). 26 helmets of Etruscan shape were discovered in 1811 at the village Ženjāk near Negau, Duchy of Styria. Today, this place is located in north-eastern Slovenia 13 km from the Austrian border. The helmets were made in 5th century BC and all the helmets were buried before 55–50 BCE. This date also presents the latest time when these inscription might have originated. No sooner than in 1924 was the Norwegian German and Celtic scholar C. Marstrand able to read the text written from right to left in northern Etruscan alphabet (closely related to Venetic alphabet)

NI//RFIETITSAKIPAE
awiet itsagīrah

he deciphered the inscription as HARIGASTI TEIWA and pointed to its Germanic nature. There are some recent interpretation for comparison (for a detailed survey see Nedoma 1995):

- Bonfante (1987[88], 35) develops Pisani’s idea (1959) that it is a gift formula “for Harigasti Teiwa”.
- Bammesberger (1990, 125, 223) sees in the inscription a personal name with an attribute in vocative “divine Harigasti”.
- Nedoma (1995, 74) supposes that it represents the name of the owner in nominative sg., i.e. *Harigasti[s] Teiwæ*. However, he was not able to explain the loss of the expected final -s.
- Kretschmer (1929) and other authors ascribe this feature to West Germanic nature of the language of the inscription.
- Seebold (1999, 260, 269–70) advocates the interpretation which was presented by R. Egger (1959): HARIGASTI TEI V A III IL “Harigasti, [the son of] Tei”. The author considered the form *Harigasti* to be a genitive with a Latin suffix. The other word then might be a patronym, a title or a nickname in nominative sg. **Te(i)us*. Seebold interprets the rest of the inscription in the same way as Egger, i.e. as numbers and abbreviations of Latin words: VEXILLATIO/-ARIUS ALARUM III ILLYRICUM.
- Markey (2001, 121–22) sees in the inscription a Rhaetian transcription of Germanic **xarjagastiz teiwaz* without endings which is characteristic for Rhaetian and Etruscan transcriptions of foreign names.

2.3 The testimony of archaeology

Although the identification of any preliterary archaeological culture with a concrete language poses problems, Germanic ethnogenesis and glottogenesis is traditionally connected with the archaeological Jastorf culture which spread since the 7th and 6th century BCE on the lower Elbe in Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. Around the half of the 1st millennium BC, this culture of the first people capable of processing iron in the North of Germany spread through Mecklenburg-Vorpommern to Lower Silesia in the East, to Thuringia and Harz Mountains in the South, up to lower Rhine in the West and to Jutland and Southern Sweden in the North (Mallory, *EIEC* 321–22).

Another early iron culture called Harpstedt-Nienburg is also considered to be Germanic; it was located along the river Aller and along the middle Weser. The origin of this Southwestern neighbour of the Jastorfs culture is dated to the half of the 8th century BCE (Kilian 1988, 81; cf. map 28). The Harpstedt-Nienburg culture can be considered to be the older evolutionary stage of the Germanic dialect continuum which later spread in the Jastorf culture for the following reasons: it was older and more influenced by Hallstatt culture which might have been predominantly formed by Celtic speaking people and the substantially higher correlation with the most archaic Germanic hydronymy as it was defined by Udolph (1994, 925–32; see §1.2.2.).

3 OVERVIEW OF OLD GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND THEIR FOLLOWERS

3.1 East Germanic Languages (“Vistula–Oder Languages”)

The East Germanic branch includes several tribal dialects which were spoken during the first four centuries CE in the area of present-day Poland, Ukraine and the eastern Balkans. They later spread to the central Danube area, northern Italy, southern France, to the Iberian Peninsula and in case of the Vandals also to northern Africa. None of the East Germanic languages/dialects, with the exception of Crimean Gothic, survived after the year 1000. Nor have any texts written in any of the East Germanic tribal languages/dialects been preserved, with the major exception of Gothic (a translation of a large part of the New Testament and several early runic inscriptions). Their inclusion into the East Germanic language group is based on characteristic phonetic features in the small amount of glosses noted in Latin texts (and also in proper names and loanwords into languages which were finally superimposed on their territory), as well as on the evidence found in ancient and early medieval texts describing the kinship between individual tribes (compare with the above-cited account by Pliny of the “Vandils” and their kinship with the Burgundians, Gutons, etc.).

3.1.1 Vandalic

There are three known variants of the Vandalic tribal name: *Vandali* (3rd century: Cassius Dio 55.1.3; 5th c: Orosius 7.15.8; 6th c: Jordanes *Getica* 60.11, 80.16, and others), *Vandili* (1st century: Pliny 4.99) and *Vandilii* (1st century: Tacitus 2), and *Vanduli* (3rd century: *Tabula Peutingeriana*). The initial form **Wandālōz* probably meant “[people of the] beautiful valley” (Trubačev 1974, 56). The path of Vandal settlements leads to the Jutland Peninsula. The northern part of the peninsula is still called *Vendsyssel* (*Vændlesysæl* in Old Danish) and its northernmost promontory *Vandilsskagi* (Saxo Grammaticus, 9th century; Adam of Bremen, 11th century). The Prose Edda mentions “sea kings” called *Vinill* and *Vandill*. However, the ancient records, which are several centuries older, place the oldest settlements of the Vandals between the rivers Vistula and Oder. Jordanes (6th century) notes that the Goths conquered the *Hulmerugii* as well as their neighbours, the Vandals [§26]. It seems that at the time of the arrival of the Goths, the Vandals settled on the western bank of the Vistula, probably in a more southern location than the *Hulmerugii*. Based on the information extracted from Cassius Dio, a Roman historian writing in Greek, the Vandals had spread as far as the Giant Mountains (Krkonoše) by the beginning of the 3rd century: “The Albis rises in the Vandalic Mountains, and empties, a mighty river, into the northern ocean. Drusus undertook to cross this river, but failing in the attempt, set up trophies and withdrew.” [55.1.3].¹²

12) μέχρι τοῦ Ἀλβίου, πάντα πορθῶν. ἐκείνον γάρ ῥεῖ δὲ ἐκ τῶν Οὐανδαλικῶν ὄρων, καὶ ἐς τὸν ὠκεανὸν τὸν προσάρκτιον πολλῶ μεγέθει ἐκδίδωσιν ἔπεχείρησε μὲν περαιωθῆναι, οὐκ ἠδυνήθη δέ, ἀλλὰ τρόπαια στήσας ἀνεχώρησε.

Translated by Earnest Cary with Herbert B. Foster (1914–1927).

One of the Vandalic tribes, the **Silingi** (positively identified as Vandals by Hydatius, a Spanish bishop and author of chronicles [...*Vandali cognomine Silingi*] around 420), lived in the area of present-day Silesia in the 2nd century [Ptolemy 2.11.10]. This ethnonym is undoubtedly connected to the name of the area itself, which is *Silesia* in its Latinized form (1017 in *pago Silensi*), *Śląsk* in Polish, regardless of the origin of this name (derived from the “holy” mountain *Ślęza*, renamed *Sobótka* in the 14th century and called *Zobten* in German, which had been worshipped long before the arrival of Christianity; or from the river *Ślęza*, 1155 *Selenza*, detailed account in Udolph 1995, 335–354).

In the 3rd century, Cassius Dio noted the existence of two Vandalic kings from the **Hasdingi** family (= Old Icelandic *Haddingjar*, Old English *Heardingas*, Old High German *Hartunge*; the respective Gothic form would be **Hazdiggōs* and all are derived from Germanic **xazd-* “long hair as a sign of aristocratic origin?”, cf. Old Icelandic *haddr* “long female hair”), whose names he noted down as *Raptos* and *Raos* (cf. Gothic *raus* “reed” and Old Icelandic *rapttr* “log?”): “Under the leadership of their chieftains Raos and Raptos, the Hasdingi came to Dacia with all their possessions, hoping to secure the property and the country as a service to their allies. When this plan failed, however, they left their women and children in the protection of Clemens, until they conquered the land of the Costoboci with their weapons; after subjugating that nation, they continued in plundering Dacia no less than before” [72.12]. Two Vandalic kings are also mentioned in the text *Origo gentium Langobardum* from the 7th century (see Appendix) and Paul the Deacon’s “History of the Langobards” from the 8th century. Both of these sources call them *Assi* and *Ambri* and tell us that they were the leaders of the Vandals at the time when the Vandals still lived in the country of *Scoringa*, probably located in the Jutland Peninsula. At that time, they were supposedly attacked by the *Winnili* tribe (that is, the Langobards), who were also led by two chieftains, *Ibor* and *Aion* [*Origo* § 1 – see Appendix].

According to Jordanes, around 336 the Vandals lived between the rivers *Marisia* (present-day *Marusza*), *Grisia* (present-day *Körös* in Hungarian, *Griul* in Romanian), *Miliare* (present-day White *Körös*) and *Gilpil* (present-day Black *Körös*); that is, in the territory of what is now eastern Hungary and north-western Romania. Their neighbours were the Marcomanni to the west, the Hermunduri to the north and the Goths to the east. It was here, on the banks of the river *Marisia*, that the Vandals led by King Wisimar from the Hasdingi family fought the Goths led by King Geberic. After this fateful battle, the remaining Vandals moved to the west. The emperor Constantine gave them permission to settle in Pannonia [*Getica* §§ 113–15].

Around 400, they were forced to leave it under pressure from the Huns and their allies among other Germanic tribes. They made alliances with other tribes, primarily with the Silingi, but also with the Suebi and with the Iranian Alans. Under the leadership of King Godigisel, the Vandals plundered the upper Danube area in Rhaetia in 401. By 405 they had already got as far as the river Neckar and in the winter of 406–407 they crossed the frozen Rhine with their allies, despite the resistance of the Frankish allies of Rome. Over the following three years, they plundered Gaul while moving into Hispania. Here, the Suebi and the Hasdingi settled in Gallaecia in the north-west of the peninsula and the Silingi and the Alani occupied Baetica in the south. However, in 419 or 420 they were attacked by Wallia king of the Visigoths, who were Roman allies at that time.

The resulting critical situation was resolved by the Hasdingi: they allied with the Silingi and created a common power structure. During the second decade of the 5th century, they added a new element to the usual conquering and subsequent plundering of towns throughout the land: invasions of port cities from ships that they had learned to use in a very short time. Owing to this skill, 80,000 Vandals and their allies from the Alan tribe managed to cross from Hispania, which was becoming far too small for them, to northern Africa. In a short time, they overcame coastal towns and manors. They seized Carthage in 439. The Vandals became infamous for their pirate raids on places ranging from the Balearic Islands to Greece. In 455, they penetrated Hispania and the crowning achievement of their gangster politics was to sack Rome in the same year. The Vandalic military elite was kept strictly separated from the indigenous inhabitants. However, the comforts of life in their stolen luxury led to a loss of military instinct in the Vandals and this proved disastrous. In 533, the Vandals were defeated by a Byzantine army lead by Belisarius. It is symptomatic of them that they

left almost nothing behind in northern Africa or in Hispania and southern France (with the possible exceptions of the territorial name *Andalusia* and the place name *Gandalon*, known in the 10th century as *Castrum Vandalorum*).

The Vandalic linguistic material comprises a few dozen proper nouns. There are only two known common nouns from a phrase noted in the Latin text *Collatio Beati Augustini cum Pascentio ariano* in the form *sihora armen*. The interpretation of these words is problematic. A slightly fictive reconstruction of the phrase, **frōja armēs*, is supposed to mean “God, have pity”. The East Germanic character of the language is obvious from the development of Proto-Indo-European **ē*: it changed to **ā* in Northwest Germanic, while remaining unchanged or contracting to **i* in the Eastern branch of this language family. The name of the Vandalic chieftain Geilamir (6th century), for example, would correspond to the Biblical Gothic **Gailamers*; also compare Old High German *Sigimar*, Old Icelandic *Sigimarr*, Old Runic (Sweden: 550–600) *SigimArAz*. Even though the Vandalic language material is limited and based mostly on proper nouns written down in Latin or Greek texts (cf. Hartmann 2020), it shows that Vandalic had substantially reduced its nominal flexion. For example, the final *-s* is lost (except for masculine nominal stems ending in a velar of the *-riks* type).

3.1.2 Burgundian

The Burgundians are first mentioned by Pliny around the middle of the 1st century CE [4.99]: “There are five German races; the Vandili, parts of whom are the Burgundiones, the Varini, the Carini, and the Gutones” in translation of John Bostock & H.T. Riley – see above – §1.1.). Approximately a century later, Ptolemy wrote:

[2.10.15] “.. and the *Suevi Semnones*, whose boundaries beyond the Albis extend from the area we mentioned towards the east up to the Suevus river, and the *Burguntae*, who inhabit from there to the Vistula.”¹³

[2.10.16] “Between ... *Ruticleos* and *Burguntas* {live} *Aelvaeones*.”¹⁴

[2.10.18] “Back below the *Semnones* the *Silingae* have their seat, and below the *Burguntae* the *Lugi Omani*, below whom the *Lugi Diduni* up to Mt. Asciburgius.”¹⁵

[3.5.20]. “Lesser races inhabit Sarmatia near the Vistula river. Below the Venedae are the Gythones, then the Finni, then the Sulones; below whom are the Phrungundiones; then the Avarini near the source of the Vistula river; below these are the Ombrones, then the Anartophracti, then the Burgiones, then the Arsietae, then the Saboci, then the Piengitae and the Biessi near the Carpathian mountains.”¹⁶

Ptolemy’s “Frugundioni” living on the right bank of the middle Vistula probably represent the same ethnonym which reached the geographer of Alexandria by a different source [3.5.20]. It is possible that an even older trace of Burgundian settlements is represented in the name of Bornholm, the easternmost Danish island. The name of the Burgunds was retained in the name of a part of the southern Baltic coast until the end of the 9th century, when it appeared in the description of the Baltic and Scandinavian coast by the sailor Ohthere. This description was included in the Old English translation of Orosius by Alfred the Great (888–893/7):

“Then to the north of the Danube’s source and to the east of the Rhine are the East Franks, and to the south of them are the Swaefas on the other side of the river Danube, and to the south and east of them are the Begware – the part called Regensburg – and directly east of them are the Baeme and northeast are the Thyringas. To the north of them are the Old Saxons and northwest of them the Frisians. West of the Old Saxons is the mouth of the river Elbe

13) [2.10.15] καὶ τὸ τῶν Σηήβων τῶν Σεμνόων, οἵτινες διήκουσι μετὰ τὸν Ἄλβιν ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰρημένου μέρους πρὸς ἀνατολὰς μέχρι τοῦ Σηήβου ποταμοῦ, καὶ τὸ τῶν Βουργουντῶν τὰ ἐφεξῆς καὶ μέχρι τοῦ Οὐϊστούλα κατεχόντων.

14) [2.10.16] μεταξύ ... Ρουτικλείων δὲ καὶ Βουργουντῶν Αἰλουαίωνες.

15) [2.10.18] Πάλιν ὑπὸ μὲν τοὺς Σέμνονας οἰκοῦσι Σιλίγγαι, ὑπὸ δὲ τοὺς Βουργούντας Λούγοι οἱ Ὀμανοί, ὑφ’ οὓς Λούγοι οἱ Διδούνοι μέχρι τοῦ Ἀσκιβουργίου ὄρους.

16) [3.5.20]. Ἐλάττονα δὲ ἔθνη νέμεται τὴν Σαρματίαν παρὰ μὲν τὸν Οὐϊστούλαν ποταμὸν ὑπὸ τοὺς Οὐενέδας Γύθωνες, εἶτα Φίννοι, εἶτα Σούλωνες· ὑφ’ οὓς Φρουγουδιωνες, εἶτα Ἀδαρινοὶ παρὰ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ Οὐϊστούλα ποταμοῦ· ὑφ’ οὓς Ὀμβρωνες, εἶτα Ἀναρτοφράκτοι, εἶτα Βουργίωνες, εἶτα Ἀρσιῆται, εἶτα Σαβῶκοι, εἶτα Πιενγίται καὶ Βιέσσοι παρὰ τὸν Καρπάτην τὸ ὄρος.

Translated by Edward Luther Stevenson (1932).

and Frisland, and northwest from there is the land which is called Angeln and Sillende and some Danish territories. North of them are the Afdrede and northeast the Wilte known as the Haefeldan; east of them is the land of those Wends who are called Sysyle, and southeast the Maroara who extend over a wide territory; the Maroara have to the west of them the Thyringas and some Behemas and half the Begware, and south of them on the other side of the Danube river is the land Carendre extending south as far as the mountains called the Alps. To that same mountain range lie the boundaries of the Begware and Swaefas. Then to the east of the land Carendre beyond the uninhabited district is the land of the Pulgare and east of that is the land of the Greeks. To the east of the land of the Maroara is the land of the Vistula, and east of that are those Datia who were formerly Goths. To the north east of the Maroara are the Dalamentsan and to the east of the Dalamentsan are the Horigti. North of the Dalamentsan are the Surpe and west of them the Sysyle. To the north of the Horigti is Maegtha land and to the north of Maegtha land the Sermende as far as the Riffen mountains. West of the South-Danes is the arm of the ocean surrounding Britain, and north of them is the arm of the sea called Ostsae. To the east and north of them are the North-Danes both on the main lands and on the islands. To the east of them are the Afdrede, and south of them is the mouth of the river Elbe and part of the Old Saxon lands. The North-Danes have to their north the same arm of the sea which is called the Ostsae, east of them are the tribe the Osti, and to the south the Afdrede. The Osti have to the north of them the same arm of the sea and the Wends and the Burgendan; south of them are the Haefeldan. The Burgendan have the arm of that sea to their west and Swedes to the north. East of them are the Sermende and to their south the Surfe. The Swedes have south of them the arm of the Ostsae and to their east the Sermende and to their north beyond the uninhabited land is Cwenland. Northwest of them are the Scridefinne and west are the Norwegians.”¹⁷

Also included in Alfred’s translation of Orosius was the testimony of another sailor, Wulfstan of Hedeby, who undertook a voyage from Jutland to the eastern Baltic. His *Burgenda land*, that is “the land of the Burgundians”, is probably the island of Bornholm:

“Wulfstan said that he travelled from Hedeby, arriving in Truso after seven days and nights, the boat running under sail the whole way. To starboard he had Wendland, to port Langeland, Lolland, Falster and Skane. All these lands belong to Denmark. ‘Then we had Bornholm to port, where the people have their own king. Then after Bornholm we had on our port side the lands which are called Blekinge, More, Öland and Gotland, and these lands belong to the Swedes. Wendland was to starboard the whole of the way to the mouth of the Vistula.’ This Vistula is a very large river which separates Witland and Wendland. Witland belongs to the Este. The Vistula flows out of Wendland into Estmere which is at least fifteen miles wide. The Elbing flows into Estmere from the lake on the shore of which Truso stands, and they flow together into Estmere, the Elbing west from Estland and the Vistula north from Wendland. Then the Vistula deprives the Elbing of its name for the estuary is known as the Vistula estuary and flows from Estmere northwest into the sea.”¹⁸

17) *þonne wið norþan Donua cewielme be eastan Rine sindon Eastfrancan; be suþan him sindon swæfas, on oþre healfe þære ie Donua. be suþan him be eastan sindon Bæggware, se dæl þe mon Regnesburg hætt. ryhte be eastan him sindon Bæme, eastnorþ sindon Þyringa(s). be norþan him sindon Ealdseaxan, be norþanwestan him sindon Frisan. be westan Ealdseaxum is Ælfe muþa þære ie, Frisland. þonan westnorð is þæt lond þe mon Ongle hætt, Sillende sumne dæl Dene. be norþan him is Alfrede eastnorþ Wilte, þe mon Hæfeldan hætt. be eastan him is Wineda lond, þe mon hætt Sysyle, eastsuþ, ofer sum dæl, Maroara. hie Maroara habbað bewestan him Þyringas, Behemas, Begware healfe; be suþan him on oþre healfe Donua þære ie is þæt land Carendre suþ oþ þa beorgas þe mon Alpis hætt. To þæm ilcan beorgan licgað Begwara landgemæro Swæfa. þonne be eastan Carendran londe, begeondan þæm westenne, is Pulgara land. be eastan þæm is Creca land. be eastan Maroara londe is Wisle lond. be eastan þæm sint Datia, þa þe iu wæ ron Gotan. Be norþaneastan Maroara sindon Dalamentsan sindon Horigti. be norþan Dalamentsan sindon Surpe; be westan him Sysyle. Be norþan Horoti is Mægþa land; be norþan londe Sermende oþ þa beorgas Riffen. Be westan Suþdenum is þæs garsecges earm þe liþ ymbutan þæt Ostsæ; be eastan him be norþan sindon Norðdene, ægþer ge on þæm maran landum ge on þæm iglandum; be eastan him sindon Afdrede; be suþan him is Ælfe muþa þære ie Ealdseaxna sum dæl. Norðdene habbað be norþan him þone ilcan sæs earm þe mon hætt Ostsæ, be eastan him sindon Osti þa leode; Afrede be suþan. Osti habbað be norþan him þone ilcan sæs earm, Winedas, Burgendan; be suþan him sindon Hæfeldan. Burgendan habbað þone (ilcan) sæs earm be westan him; Sweon be norþan; be eastan him sint Sermende, be suþan him Surfe. Sweon habbað be suþan him þone sæs earm Osti; be eastan him Sermende; be norþan him ofer þa westenne is Cwenland; be westannorþan him sindon Scridefinnas; be westan Norþmenn. Edited by Bright (1913); translated by Christine E. Fell (1984).*

18) *Wulfstan sæde þæt hē gefōre of Hæðum, þæt hē wære on Trūsō on syfan dagum and nihtum, þæt þæt scip wæs ealne weg yrnende under segle. Weonodland him wæs on stēorbord, and on bæcbord him wæs Langeland, and Læland,*

However, the island certainly was not the permanent home of this powerful tribe, but rather a temporary stop on the way from somewhere else (from Scandinavia?). This scenario is also supported by one etymology for this ethnonym; it is possible to derive it from the Germanic **burgundijōz* “mountain people”. The only mountains which may possibly have been the cradle of the Burgundians are located in what is now Norway. According to an eminent Germanist Ernst Schwarz, the ancestors of the Burgundians were the neighbours of the Rugii. A more probable etymology has the ethnonym derived from Germanic **burg-* “fortified place”, documented in Gothic *baurgs* “town, tower”, Old Icelandic *borg* “wall, castle, town”, Old High German *burg* “fortified place, castle, town”, etc. In that case, the tribal name would mean “people living in fortified settlements” and there would be no foundation for locating the Burgundian Urheimat to the mountains.

Information about the further migrations of the Burgundians is scarce. Jordanes writes that during the reign of the emperor Decius, i.e. around the middle of the 3rd century, the Burgundians fought with the Gepids, who were led by the warlike King Fastida [*Getica* §97]. Whether the battle took place in the Vistula basin or somewhere in the central Danube area is unclear. At the end of the 3rd century, the Burgundians [*Burgunziones*] are listed in the document called *Laterculus Veronensis* or *Verona List*, dated to 297 CE (see Mommsen 1863, 492) between the Chatti and the Alemanni; that is, in the upper and central Main area: *Gentes barbarae quae pullulauerunt sub imperatoribus: Scoti, Picti, Calidoni, Rugi, Heruli, Saxones, Camari, crinsiani, Amsiuari, Angri, Angriuari, Fleui, Bructeri, Cati, Burgunziones, Alamanni, Sueui, franci, Gallouari, Iotungi, Armilausini, Marcomanni, Quadi, Taifruhi, Hermundubi, Uandali, Sarmatae, Sciri, Carpi, Scitae, Gothi, Indii, Armeni, Horro I Palmoerni, Mosoritae, Marmeritae, Theui, Isaur / Friges, Persae.*

Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman historian writing at the end of the 4th century, noted that “... first, because the Burgundians know that they are descendants of the Romans from ancient times; and then, since they frequently quarrelled with the Alamanni about salt-pits and boundaries.”¹⁹

In 406–407, the Burgundians crossed the Rhine under the leadership of Gunther and occupied the area around Strasbourg, Speyer and Worms; the last mentioned became their centre. Afterwards, they united with the army of the Gallic usurper Jovinus and in 412–413 they attacked southern Gaul together. In 436, the Burgundian army of 20,000 men – again under the leadership of Gunther – was surrounded by the Huns and totally defeated. The Nibelungenlied epic is based on this event. According to Orosius, they accepted the Christian faith as early as the beginning of the 5th century, but even before their fatal encounter with the Huns, the Burgundians had allegedly converted to Arianism. In 443, they obtained the status of Roman allies and, in addition, they also gained the area of modern Savoy in today’s southern Switzerland and in the adjacent part of France. In 445, they joined the Romans, Goths and other Germanic tribes in battle against the Huns and their other Germanic allies such as the Gepids. Several years later, they went on a military campaign over the Pyrenees against the Suebi. During the 5th century, the Burgundian territory was stabilized within the borders set by the rivers Sane in the North, Rhone in the West and Lake Neuchâtel in the East. They fought over the southern border with Provence. Among the most important towns in the Burgundian territory were old Gaulish centres, such as Lyon [*Lugdunum*], Genoa [*Genua*], Yverdon [*Eburodunum*] and Lausanne [*Lousonna*]. In the second half of the 5th century, the Burgundians repelled the invasion of the Alemanni into the Sane valley (454 and 472), as well as the attempts of the Visigoths to occupy the the eastern side of the Rhone (469–475).

and Falster, and Scōnēg; and þās land eall hýrað tō Denemearcan. And þonne Burgenda land wæs ūs on bæcbord, and þā habbað him sylfe cyning. Þonne æfter Burgenda lande wæron ūs þās land, þā synd hātene ærest Blēcinga-ēg, and Mēore, and Eowland, and Gotland on bæcbord; and þās land hýrað tō Swēom. And Weonodland wæs ūs ealne weg on stēorbord oð Wislemūðan. Sēo Wisle is swýðe mycel ēa, and hio tōlið Witland and Weonodland; and þæt Witland belimpeþ tō Estum; and sēo Wisle lið ūt of Weonodlande, and lið in Estmere; and sē Estmere is hūru fiftēne mila brād. Þonne cymeð Ilfing eāstan in Estmere of ðæm mere, ðe Trūsō standeð in stæðe; and cumað ūt samod in Estmere, Ilfing eāstan of Estlande, and Wisle wūðan of Winodlande. And þonne benimð Wisle Ilfing hire naman, and ligeð of þæm mere west and norð on sǣ; for ðy hit man hæst Wislemūða.

Edited by Bright (1913); translated by Christine E. Fell (1984).

19) *prima quod iam inde a temporibus priscis subolem se esse Romanam Burgundii sciunt, dein quod salinarum finiumque causa Alamannis saepe iurgabant.* Translated by John C. Rolfe (1935–1940).