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Miszellen und Forschungsberichte

BERNARD S. BACHRACH

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE »GOTHS« AT WAR

Herwig Wolfram's monumental »Geschichte der Goten« first appeared in 1979 and in 1980 a second edition was published. In 1983 an abridged version appeared and in 1985 an Italian translation. In 1988 a fully reworked English edition, i.e. not simply a translation of the second German edition, was published in the United States. The basis for the present study is the third German edition: »Die Goten. Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts. Entwurf einer historischen Ethnographie« which is based by and large on the English version, »History of the Goths«. By the time this essay is published, a French translation will also likely have appeared¹.

All of this very concentrated attention paid to the »Goths« and more particularly to Wolfram's treatment of them is fully justified by the exceptionally high quality of the work throughout. Wolfram has struggled to deal with intractable problems many of which have been encrusted by generations of scholarship in the numerous languages of »Mitteleuropa« and the West. Indeed, the mutation over time of this work and particularly the ability of the author to take advantage both of the critiques which have been made and of new research that has appeared deserve our respect. A good example of Wolfram's perspicacity and insight can be seen in the handling of the »settlement problem« as revolutionized by Goffart and Durliat². However, these attributes certainly do not make Wolfram's work immune from criticism. In a brief review of the English translation, I noted that Wolfram's study was the most important work on the Goths since World War II, but »Since the *Goths* covers so much ground, and Wolfram does not hesitate to make the strongest case for his views, specialists have and will continue to quibble with him on many large and small points«. I then suggested a need for greater emphasis »on the weaknesses of the germanic peoples vs. the Roman empire« and the need to give greater positive attention to »cooperation between the Germans and Rome«³.

Indeed, it is in this spirit of a cooperative enterprise that the discussion below has been put

1 The third German edition (Munich 1990), is throughout the subject of the present study, and the publication history is to be found on p. 11. For convenience, I have cited the English translation when quoting in English. The latter was done by Thomas J. DUNLAP and published by the University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles.

2 Die Goten, p. 295, and 487-488, n. 35. Walter GOFFART's new book, *The Narrators of Barbarian History. Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon*, Princeton 1988, appears not to have been given the reception it deserves by Wolfram who did little to alter his views concerning the *Origo Gothica* (Die Goten, p. 15ff.). H. WOLFRAM, *Einleitung oder Überlegungen zur Origo gentis*, in: *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern, I*, Vienna 1990 (Denkschriften der Österreich. Akad. d. Wiss. Phil.-hist. Kl., 201), is based upon a paper originally given in 1986 but revised to note GOFFART's work (p. 20, n. 8) regarding the Cassiodorus-Jordanes problem. However, it is not a detailed response to Goffart. See my review of »Narrators«, in: *Francia* 17/1 (1990) p. 250-256.

3 *Choice* (Feb. 1989), p. 486.

forth concerning the »war between the »Goths« and the Huns«⁴. Wolfram's reconstruction of Athanaric's response to the Hunnic invasion of the region between the Dniester and the Danube in 376 appears to me to be internally inconsistent and several important points to be dissonant with information provided by Ammianus Marcellinus who ostensibly is the best informed source closest to the events in question and arguably the most reliable source⁵. Wolfram observes that during the summer of 376, Athanaric led »a strong army« to the western bank of the Dniester in the region of Bessarabia. There he built a »Roman-type fortified camp« at »quite a distance from the region called the valley of the Greutungi«. Wolfram explicitly affirms that there was »no contact« between the Tervings and the Greutungs. However, with the *castrum* having been established, Wolfram indicates that »two noble chieftains, Munderic and Lagariman, led a »vanguard« about »twenty miles« east across the river; they were to observe in »foreign countries« the advance of the Huns«. This »vanguard« Wolfram implies was »bait« for the Huns. The latter, whom Wolfram regards as »not very numerous«, are said to have »dispsied this bait« and »showing great familiarity with the region« crossed the Dniester »on a moonlit night« and »fell unexpectedly upon Athanaric«. Wolfram then credits Athanaric with having managed to retreat »without suffering any losses worth recording« much in the same way he had out maneuvered the emperor Valens in the past. According to Wolfram, the Tervings' retreat was made to the Bessarabian forest zone into which the Huns could not follow⁶.

Some inconsistencies seem rather apparent; i.e. a »not very numerous« band of Huns is believed to have made a surprise attack on a *castrum* defended by »strong army« under Athanaric's direct command, routed the latter, who nevertheless suffered no noteworthy casualties and were able to execute an extended retreat into the Bessarabian forest zone. To take the last point first, Ammianus states: »after having suffered the loss of only a few of their own men, they [the Huns] forced him [Athanaric] to take refuge in the steep mountains« (XXXI.3.7). Athanaric was forced into hiding in the »steep mountains«, he did not carry out a retreat maneuver to »the Bessarabian forest zone«. Perhaps the »Bessarabian forest zone« does contain »steep mountains« or even »steep hills« in a location relevant to the flight of Athanaric's forces but Wolfram needs to give precision to his generalization. Secondly, Ammianus' report of very light losses refers to those suffered by the Huns not by the Tervings under Athanaric's command. Ammianus writes: *Eumque stupentem ad impetum primum, amissis quisbusdam suorum coegerunt ad effugia properare montium praeruptorum* (XXXI.3.7).

In addition, Wolfram's reconstruction must be doubted in so far as we are told or asked to

4 OTTO MAENCHEN-HELFEN, *The World of the Huns*, Berkeley 1973, p. 25–26, accepts the reconstruction by Carl PATSCH, *Die Völkerbewegung an der unteren Donau in der Zeit von Diokletian bis Heraklius*, Vienna 1928 (Sitzungsberichte der Österreich. Akad. d. Wiss. Phil.-hist. Kl., 208,2), p. 59–66, which provides the location for the encounter upon the highly problematic and controversial identification of *Caucalandis locus*. Wolfram's treatment of the geography (see below) would seem to rest also on Patsch's work but the latter is not cited in the text at the appropriate place (see below) but only in the bibliography (WOLFRAM, *Die Goten*, p. 539, where the first name is given as Karl).

5 WOLFRAM, *The Goths*, p. 70–72. Regarding Ammianus see the seminal work of E. A. THOMPSON, *The Historical Work of Ammianus Marcellinus*, Cambridge 1947; and more specifically Henry T. ROWELL, *Ammianus, soldier-historian of the later Roman Empire*, Cincinnati 1964; Gary A. CRUMP, *Ammianus Marcellinus as a Military Historian*, Wiesbaden 1975; N. E. J. AUSTIN, *Ammianus on Warfare: An Investigation into Ammianus' Military Knowledge*, Brussels 1979. Cf. Klaus ROSEN, *Studien zur Darstellungskunst und Glaubwürdigkeit des Ammianus Marcellinus*, Bonn 1970, who despite calling attention to some very important stylistic tendencies seems to exaggerate their effect on Ammianus' reportage. Throughout the present study the basic text edited by C. U. Clark, *Ammiani Marcellini rerum Gestarum*, 2 vols., Berlin 1910, 1915, has been used. This has been checked against the edition by W. SEYFARTH, *Ammianus Marcellinus, Res Gestae*, Leipzig 1978, 2 vols.

6 WOLFRAM, *The Goths*, p. 70–71.

infer that a force of Tervings after its leader had been »stunned by the initial charge of the Huns«, in what is reported by Ammianus to have been a swift surprise attack at night, were able to regroup within their *castrum*, mount their horses and execute a safe retreat. First, a night attack on Athanaric's *castrum* by a force of mounted Hunnic archers must be ruled out as utterly inconsistent with the latter's basic tactical capabilities⁷. In short, it must be assumed *prima facie* that Athanaric and the forces under his command were not in the *castrum* when they were attacked. Ammianus does not say that they were in the *castrum*. The remainder of the account (see below) makes it clear that they were not in the *castrum* but that Athanaric had developed a rather subtle plan to deal with the Huns which called for a division of the Terving army into three units of unequal size and its deployment in the open.

Further, it should be emphasized, contrary to the manner in which Wolfram reconstructs this first phase of the war, that Ammianus reports neither the size of the Hunnic army nor that of Athanaric's army. However, Ammianus does permit the inference that Athanaric commanded a large force, by contrast he does not permit the inference that the Hunnic force was not very large. When discussing the division of the Terving army, Ammianus says that Athanaric »sent Munderic with Lagariman and other *optimates* to observe the enemy« (XXXI.3.5), and not as Wolfram says »Two noble chieftains... led a vanguard«⁸.

Ammianus implies that this group led by Lagariman was to be used as bait to lure the Huns into some kind of a trap. Several observations can be made from these data. A force led by several *optimates* likely was comprised of their respective »Gefolgschaften« if we follow Wolfram's view of the organization of the Terving military which is likely accurate on this point⁹. These forces surely were mounted for the following reasons: 1. their normal role in the peregrinations of the magnates who employed them required mobility; 2. to carry out a reconnaissance of the Huns required mobility; and 3. to act as bait for a Hunnic attack likely required mobility as well.

However, for Athanaric's bait to have been attractive to the Huns, the force led by Lagariman would have to have been regarded by the Hunnic leaders as sufficiently inferior to provide a substantial opportunity for victory. Thus, if Athanaric knew anything about the size of his enemy's forces, and the logic of his behavior strongly suggests that he did, it must be assumed that he did not dispatch Lagariman and his fellow *optimates* in such large numbers as to frighten the Huns and thus have them avoid the bait. In addition, Ammianus makes it very clear that the Huns avoided Lagariman's force because they feared a trap. Ammianus does not say that the Huns regarded themselves as so numerically inferior that they feared to attack the Tervings under Lagariman's command. Thus, both the logic of Athanaric's plan, e.g. using Lagariman's force as bait, and Ammianus' statement as to what motivated the action of the Huns undermine Wolfram's hypothesis that the Hunnic force was not large. Although, *au fond*, one must admit that rather vague formulations regarding size can lead to much misunderstanding.

7 MAENCHEN-HELFEN, *The World of the Huns*, p. 201–258.

8 It is clear from this account that Lagariman was the leader of the group. However, Ammianus had considerable information concerning Munderic and very likely knew the man personally. Indeed, Munderic may have been Ammianus' source concerning this episode. Regarding Munderic see A. H. M. JONES, et alii, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire: 260–395*, Cambridge 1971, p. 610. Regarding Ammianus' use of living sources see THOMPSON, *Ammianus*, p. 20–41. WOLFRAM, *Die Goten*, p. 400, n. 95, seems to agree that Munderic was Ammianus' informant but the argument he makes from this recognition seems tendentious. Wolfram relies for Ammianus' use of Munderic as a source upon Raimund F. KAINDL, *Wo fand der erste Zusammenstoß zwischen Hunnen und Westgoten statt?*, in: *Mitteil. des Inst. für Österreich. Geschichtsforschung* 12 (1891) p. 305–306, and the entire article (p. 304–311) is of use as a guide to older literature. See H. WOLFRAM, *Gotische Studien I: Das Richtertum Athanarichs*, in: *ibid.* 83 (1975) p. 2, n. 8.

9 WOLFRAM, *Die Goten*, p. 106–109.

Finally, in dealing with the first phase of the war, it is necessary to address Wolfram's notion that Athanaric established his *castrum* at »quite a distance from the region called »the valley of the Greutungi« and that »there was no contact between the Tervingi and the Greutungi...«¹⁰. Ammianus writes on this matter: *Castris denique prope Danastii margines a Greuthungorum vallo longius opportune metatis...* (XXXI, 3, 5). The phrase *longius opportune metatis* emphasizes that the spacing between the Greuthung fortification and Athanaric's *castrum* was measured out in an opportune manner at rather a distance. Not only do Ammianus' remarks not permit the conclusion that there was »no contact« between the two peoples but his choice of words would seem to imply that Athanaric's *castrum* was sited in consideration of the location of the Greuthung *vallum*¹¹.

10 The Goths, p. 70.

11 This generally accepted reading is provided in an emendation by M. PETSCHENIG, *Bemerkungen zum Texte Ammianus Marcellinus*, in: *Philologus* 51 (1892) p. 689. Basic to discussion of the wall is Radu VULPE, *Le vallum de la Moldavie inférieure et le »mur« d'Athanaric*, The Hague 1957, p. 25–27. However, WOLFRAM, *Goths*, p. 407, n. 209 (*Die Goten*, p. 400, n. 96), follows Franz ALTHEIM, *Geschichte der Hunnen*, I, (2nd ed. Berlin 1959) p. 352, n. 33, who preferred the reading of ms. *V agere ut ungoru vallem*. Wolfram observes that »this could easily be turned into a *greuthungorum vallem*, whereby *a* with the accusative could be explained in a number of ways«. If one follows the method outlined here of omitting and adding letters and revising spacing in order to meet the requirements of a particular reading which is dictated by a peculiar vision of historical reality, what is to keep an editor who is prone to employ such criteria from reading the accusative as *vallum* rather than as *vallem* regardless of what the ms. may say (see below)? – As noted above, Latinists and paleographers have followed Petschenig and long rejected the reading of ms. V. N. b. SEYFARTH, A. M., p. 167, in the new Teubner edition of Ammianus' text explicitly rejects Altheim's argument. – It is clear that the text of V is corrupt. The mss. tradition is problematical and worthy of some review in the present context. R. P. ROBINSON, *The Hersfeldensis and the Fuldensis of Ammianus Marcellinus*, in: *University of Missouri Studies* 11 (1936) p. 118–140, showed that ms. V was copied in the second half of the ninth or early tenth century from ms. M. The latter cannot be shown to have influenced any of the other copies directly with the exception of G. Part of the present problem results from the fact that only six leaves of M now survive and the editor of G apparently did not use M for book XXXI. Nevertheless, ROBINSON (loc. cit.), working only with the six surviving leaves of M, has shown that the scribes who copied V from M introduced several score errors into their text. Among the more important types of errors in regard to the present context that were identified by Robinson are: 1) changes in word divisions, 2) changes in punctuation, 3) the introduction of new letters, 4) the omission of letters found in M, and 5) the totally unwarranted changing of letters. Finally, ROBINSON (p. 120) shows that ms. M was almost certainly copied from an Insular archetype and that this »ancestor was in Anglo-Saxon rather than in Irish script«. Thus, even when the men who transcribed V copied exactly from M they may have copied an inaccurate reading since the man who copied M from the archetype apparently had considerable difficulty in reading the Insular script of the archetype correctly. (I would like to thank my colleague in paleography, Regents Professor Rutherford Aris, for his help in suggesting useful bibliography concerning the above.) – While paleographic considerations leave the matter quite unsettled, the emended and now traditional reading provided by Petschenig has the virtue of being consistent with a common sense view of the military situation. Thus Ammianus tells us (XXXI,3,3) that the young Greuthung ruler, Viderich, was under the care of Alatheus and Saphrax, »two *duces* known for their experience and courage«. Such men were far more likely to see to it that a *vallum* was constructed for the defense of their group than to have had the Greuthungs huddled together unprotected in an as yet unidentified *vallis* somewhere to the south (?) of the area in which Athanaric later had the Terving *castrum* constructed. – In addition, it seems unlikely that a new toponym, such as »Greuthung Valley«, in the Greuthung (?) language, had been coined to replace an old toponym. Even more unlikely is the assumption that such a putative new place name would remain the means of identifying the valley after the Greuthungs had left following only a very short sojourn in the region. Finally, a third very unlikely occurrence would have to have taken place, i. e. this Greuthung place name would have to have been of sufficient importance that Ammianus translated it into Latin. – Specialists in toponymy generally take the position that the place names of natural phenomena such as rivers,

It would seem safe to suggest that Wolfram's treatment of phase one of the war can be improved upon through a closer reading of Ammianus' text and a more consistent examination of its implications. As Ammianus tells the story, Athanaric was extensively appraised of the previous actions of the Huns and also concerning a band of Greuthungs under the actual command of two experienced *duces*, Alatheus and Saphrax (XXXI, 3, 1-3). Thus the Terving leader decided upon a plan to crush a large number of the Huns after they had crossed the Dniester but in as close proximity as possible to the riverine frontier. If such a plan worked, Athanaric would be able to keep the Huns from ranging widely over the countryside of *Gothia* (the land between the Dniester and the Danube) in devastating pillaging expeditions. Athanaric understood that the lower reaches of the Dniester were defended by the Greuthungs, who, in addition, had built a wall between the latter river and the Prut. Thus Athanaric established a *castrum* along the banks of the Dniester sufficiently up river from the Greuthung *vallum* to make it highly unlikely that a Hunnic force would attempt to cross the Dniester in the region between the two fortifications.

With his base established (there can be no doubt that its location was well known to the Huns whose sources of information concerning all aspects of Terving troop deployment as well as concerning the local terrain were of high quality according to Ammianus), Athanaric, who for a time at least was undisturbed, prepared his forces for battle (XXXI,3,5-6). Athanaric had already dispatched Lagariman with a group of *optimates* and their »Gefolgschaften« twenty miles up river and into enemy territory with a double mission of obtaining intelligence concerning the movements of the Huns and acting as bait to provoke an enemy attack.

It would appear to have been Athanaric's plan to lure the Huns into attacking Lagariman's force. The latter, »as bait«, would then have undertaken an extended feigned retreat to lead the Huns onto the main body of the Terving army which was comprised largely of rather immobile foot soldiers¹². Tactically, this group would play the role of the anvil, while Athanaric with the main force of Terving mounted troops would attack the Huns from the rear and thus serve as the hammer which would trap and crush the highly mobile force of lightly armed mounted archers. Such a plan is consistent with the most efficacious way to deal with a group commanding the faculties of the Huns when one had the kinds of resources commanded by the Tervings¹³.

However, even more importantly, the plan, as reconstructed above, accounts for Athanaric's division of his army into three parts as can be seen clearly from Ammianus' account: 1. Lagariman's force; 2. the horsemen commanded by Athanaric who were attacked by the Huns and were able to flee successfully because they were mounted; and 3. the main body of the Terving army deployed at some distance from the Dniester whom the Huns successfully avoided when they launched their surprise attack on Athanaric.

valleys, and mountains tend to last for a long period of time and outlive short term historical episodes. By contrast, the names of man made features of the landscape, e.g. Offa's Dyke, tend to become associated with their creators. Indeed, Ammianus wrote his account of the episode under consideration after the band of Greuthungs led by Alatheus and Saphrax had already crossed into the empire (XXXI,12,12). Thus a reference to their »valley« would have been highly problematical in so far as the reader would not have had a sound grasp of the geography or topography. By contrast, a reference to the »Greuthungs' wall«, which was a man made artifact and likely still in place when Ammianus wrote, would not have caused the same kind of problems for the reader.

12 WOLFRAM, *Die Goten*, p. 106-109, needs fundamental reworking in regard to Roman influence concerning armaments, tactics, strategy, and weapons.

13 Concerning mounted tactics and combined tactics see B. BACHRACH, *Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare*, in: *The Study of Chivalry*, eds. H. CHICKERING and T. SEILER (Kalamazoo Michigan, 1988), p. 173-211; and IDEM, *Animals and Warfare in Early Medieval Europe*, Spoleto 1985 (*Settimane di Studio de Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo*, 31), p. 707-764.

Athanasius, however, made two very serious errors. First, he underestimated the ability of the Huns to gather intelligence and to evaluate accurately what they obtained. The Huns not only ascertained the location of the main body of Terving foot soldiers, whom they avoided, but also the position of Athanasius's mounted column which they routed in a surprise attack. Thus, it may be surmised that because the Huns understood the intention behind the deployment of these two groups, they were able to conjecture accurately the role that Lagariman's force was to play. As Ammianus puts it, *Huni... sunt in coniectura sagaces* (XXXI,3,6). Secondly, Athanasius assumed that the Huns would fall into his trap and thus he failed to take the precautions necessary should his plan not succeed. For example, not only did he fail to defend the fords across the Dniester or at least the ford that the Huns used, but also he failed to take the elementary precaution of keeping the fords under observation by scouts so that the Terving commanders would have advance warning of a Hunnic crossing should one take place as in fact happened.

Indeed, from a tactical perspective, it would have been even more advantageous for the Tervings to have kept the fords under constant surveillance so that an attack could be launched on the Huns while they were crossing the Dniester when their mobility was at a minimum. Such a plan would likely have been more efficacious and certainly simpler than a hammer and anvil tactic which depended upon the success of the feigned retreat by Lagariman's force.

In addition, Athanasius would appear to have been so sure of the success of his basic plan, which was rather complicated and depended upon many variables all falling exactly into place, that he failed to encamp the force under his direct command in a manner that would make a surprise attack at night by mounted Hunnic archers unlikely to succeed. Thus, the Huns were able to ignore the bait provided by Lagariman's force, avoid the main body of Terving foot soldiers deployed at some distance from the river and rout Athanasius along with the bulk of the Terving mounted forces under his direct command.

Wolfram's treatment of the second phase of the war is also problematic. Thus he argues that following the Hunnic victory discussed above, Athanasius mustered the greater part of the Terving confederation in the area between the Prut and Siret rivers. In this locality, apparently in the region about sixty kilometers north of the Danube, as indicated by Wolfram's placement of the wall on map 4, Athanasius »began to fortify the exposed southern flank of the central plateau of Moldavia with a long rampart«. In Wolfram's estimation this fortification seems to have extended approximately seventy-five kilometers and would appear to have been in the region from the modern town of Putesti through Certesti to Cavadinesti as I estimate the situation from his map 4. Wolfram sees this wall as the result of Athanasius's »great efforts to organize the defense« of the region¹⁴.

An examination of Ammianus' report concerning Athanasius's building project indicates that it varies in some very significant ways from Wolfram's reconstruction. For example, where Wolfram sees the wall as being located between the Prut and the Siret, Ammianus says that the walls were situated between the Prut (*Garasus*) and the Danube. Ammianus also makes it very clear that »he [Athanasius] built rather high walls« (*muros altius erigebat*) not »a long rampart« as Wolfram interprets the text. Finally, there is no reason to believe that Athanasius was building a fortification to defend the Terving nation. Rather, Ammianus makes clear when he

14 WOLFRAM, *The Goths*, p. 70. Wolfram's maps in the German edition, in general, are very difficult to use because of a lack of scales. The maps in the English edition have scales but Wolfram did not endeavor to draw in the location of Athanasius's wall for these maps. Curiously, the wall as drawn in the German edition, map 4, appears to have been intended to block an attack from the south. All in all, my attempts to understand Wolfram's location of the walls which Athanasius is reported to have built and their length have been seriously hampered by the poor quality of the maps and Wolfram's failure to be explicit in the text. Much better maps of the specific region are to be found in VULPE, *Le vallum* (n. 11), figs. 1 and 3.

writes: *hac lorica... in tuto locandam securitatem suam existimans et salutem* (XXXI,3,7) that Athanaric was building these fortifications to assure his own security and safety, not that of the Terving people.

Ammianus does not say that the walls in question were not lengthy. Their length would have been obvious to the reader from the landmarks provided in the account (see below). Rather, Ammianus wanted his readers to appreciate, in addition, that the fortifications were »rather high«. Further, in this context, it might be suggested that Ammianus wanted to make a distinction between the kind of defenses the Greuthungs had built, i. e. a *vallum*, and those the Tervings had built, i. e. *muros altius*. In addition, Ammianus wanted his readers to understand that although Athanaric worked quickly (*celeri*) the walls were carefully (*diligentia*) constructed and that, on the whole, they constituted a well planned work (*efficax opera*) (XXXI, 3, 7–8). How Wolfram came to conclude that Athanaric built his rampart between the Siret and the Prut, despite Ammianus' clear statement that the walls ran from »the Prut and extended up to the Danube«, is not at all clear. Puzzlement must only increase when it is recognized that Wolfram systematically rejected the efforts that have been undertaken by archaeologists to identify the physical remains of these fortifications. This includes the stronghold at Concesti on the upper Prut which he characterizes as »early Hunnic« and »must have therefore grown up only after the retreat of the Tervingi«. In addition, Wolfram rejects summarily and as »pharaonic« various scholarly efforts to develop a sense of the scale of this project. All of this scholarship is dismissed without specific documentation or critical and detailed arguments¹⁵. In short, Wolfram identifies the location of Athanaric's walls without the benefit of archaeological evidence and in explicit contradiction of the best contemporary written evidence provided by Ammianus¹⁶.

It seems reasonable, by contrast with Wolfram's approach, to take as the starting point for any discussion of the location of Athanaric's fortifications and their strategic purpose the account provided by Ammianus. The latter's observation that one terminus of the walls reached the Danube provides a useful starting point for this investigation. The respective courses of the Danube and the Prut rivers make it possible, on the one hand, that Athanaric's wall came to rest on the banks of the Danube somewhere between the confluence of the two rivers and the entrance of the latter into the Black Sea about 150 kilometers down stream. On the other hand, the walls may have abutted the Danube somewhere between about twenty to twenty-five kilometers west of its confluence with the Prut and just east of the confluence of the Siret and the Danube.

If the former configuration were employed, then the Prut provides the western limits of Athanaric's security zone, the Danube provides the southern base and the walls described by Ammianus provide the hypotenuse, i. e. the eastern leg, of a roughly triangular security zone created by two rivers and rather high walls. If the latter configuration were employed then Athanaric's walls provided the western defense while the Prut and Danube, respectively, provided the eastern and southern borders of the security zone.

The only sure way to ascertain the configuration of this security zone is to determine whether Athanaric's walls at their northern terminus abutted the left bank of the Prut or the right bank. Ammianus observed that Athanaric's walls covered the distance from »the *superciliis* of the Prut river up to Danube«. This requires that the topographical features to which Ammianus intended to call attention, i. e. the *supercilia*, be identified.

In addition to the situation under discussion here (XXXI, 3, 7), Ammianus uses the word

15 Die Goten, p. 400, n. 96. Of more than nominal interest here is the fact that Altheim, upon whom Wolfram relies regarding the *vallis*, above n. 4, sees the area of Athanaric's walls as connecting the Prut and the Danube and not the Prut and the Siret. VULPE, Le vallum (n. 11), 29–31, insists that the *Gerasus* is the Siret but his position has not won adherents.

16 See, above, n. 4.

supercilium (pl. *supercilia*) instead of the less nuanced *ripa* or alternately *litus*, in the appropriate context, on at least four occasions. In XIV,10,6, Ammianus writes *ubi prope Rauracum ventum est ad supercilia fluminis Rheni*; this calls attention to the exceptionally broken and mountainous course of the Rhine in the area of *Augusta Rauricorum*, modern Augst, rather close by Basel¹⁷.

At XVII,9,1, Ammianus calls attention to the topographical peculiarities of the Meuse where Julian built three strongholds: *munimenta tria recta serie superciliis imposita fluminis Monsae*¹⁸. A pattern seems evident, i. e. that *supercilium* does not simply mean river bank, a mere synonym for *ripa*, but a type of river bank congruent with the meaning of *supercilium* as a ridge (literally eyebrow ridge) or extrusion. This would seem to mean either the extrusion of a »brow« or »brows« in the course of the river, a »brow« or »brows«, e. g. hills, on the surface topography or perhaps even both at the same time. Here Ammianus would appear to be using *supercilium* as a synonym of the Greek *ophrues*¹⁹.

Thus in XIV,8,5, the text reads: *ab Euphrates fluminis ripis ad usque supercilia porrigitur Nili*. Ammianus apparently is calling attention by using *supercilia* to the greatly elevated banks of the Nile which inhibited commerce on the river. Finally, at XXII,8,8, Ammianus writes regarding the sinuous and rocky coast in the environs of Constantinople: *Nam supercilia eius sinistra Athyras portus despectat et Selymbria et Constantinopolis... et promuntorium Ceras praelucentem navibus vehens constructam celsius turrim*.

It seems clear that Ammianus chose to use *supercilia* rather than *ripae* to denote the exact location on the banks of the Prut where Athanaric chose to base his fortifications because the term accurately represented the topography. The Roman military officer, turned historian, used *supercilia* because he knew that his readers would have associated his choice of words with a particular geographical feature. With this in mind, it must be emphasized that one and only one salient characteristic of the Prut which stands out like a brow (or brows) lies approximately seventeen kilometers north of the confluence with the Danube about mid-way between the modern towns of Tuluce ti and Frumusita; the *supercilia* of the Prut extrude to the west.

If these suggestions concerning the points at which Athanaric's wall abutted the right bank of the Prut river in the north and the Danube river, just east of the confluence of the latter with the Siret, in the south are correct, then the walls built by Athanaric to create his security zone may be thought to have been about twenty-two kilometers in length. The enclosed area, with riverine defenses on two fronts and rather high walls on the third or western front, thus would have been in the neighborhood of 150 kilometers square i. e. 1,500 hectares²⁰.

17 Concerning Augst see P. DE JONGE, Sprachlicher und historischer Kommentar zu Ammianus Marcellinus, xiv, 2. Hälfte c. 7-11, Groningen 1939, p. 102-103.

18 Concerning the Meuse situation see P. DE JONGE, Philological and Historical Comment on Ammianus XVII, Groningen 1977, vol. 6, p. 233.

19 ALTHEIM, Geschichte der Hunnen, 1, p. 353, n. 36, recognizes this meaning for *supercilium*, connects it to the Greek *ophrues*, but fails to make clear the full range of Ammianus' use of the term or its topographical implications for the problem under consideration. VULPE, Le vallum (n. 11) p. 31-33, also recognizes the Greek synonym and even understands its topographical significance, but because he believes that the *Gerasus* is the Siret river (see n. 14) he confuses the situation greatly (p. 33 ff.).

20 Only detailed archaeological study of the region will provide confirmation for this interpretation of Ammianus' description. In this context, some important work in the historical geography of the region also needs to be done. In particular, it may be suggested that the Covurlul river may have played a role in the defenses developed by Athanaric, and the historical course of that river thus requires investigation. In addition, the presence of lake Brates within Athanaric's security zone, as outlined by Ammianus, was a tactical asset because the Huns, should they have succeeded in breaching the outer defenses, would have had great difficulty in maneuvering within the zone because of the water courses. Finally, future work may perhaps be able to ascertain whether the installations which resulted from previous Roman operations in this region played a role in Athanaric's defenses. With regard to the

Atharic's security zone clearly was considerably more than a military camp. For example, an average Roman military camp of the late Republic or early empire which was intended to house in a secure manner some 6,000 legionaries with a few groups of auxiliaries would enclose 20–25 hectares²¹. William the Conqueror's military encampment at Dives-sur-Mer during the summer of the 1066, which provided security for some 14,000 men and at least 2,000 horses, enclosed about 40 to 50 hectares²². Thus it must be assumed that Atharic gathered a substantial civilian population into the security zone, and it was impossible for that area to have been defended at all points along the perimeter at the same time. Rather, through the use of a system of guard posts and towers along the Prut and the high walls to the west (the Danube was not likely to be the source of a Hunnic attack), Atharic could be warned of an attempted enemy incursion and respond with his mounted troops in the first stage of a defense of the security zone. If the conflict were to be prolonged, an unlikely eventuality in light of Hunnic tactics and strategy, Terving or allied foot soldiers could be brought up as reinforcements²³.

As Wolfram sees the final stage of the war with the Huns, the latter »made another completely unexpected attack«. However, despite this surprise, Atharic met them at the »northern edge of the wedge between the Siret, Prut, and Danube, right where the forest zone turns into open country«. The Huns were so laden with booty, however, that they were unable to carry home the victory against Atharic. Thus the Huns broke off the conflict, and the Tervings did not meet »their fate«²⁴.

Although the Tervings avoided defeat, Wolfram argues that Atharic had lost the war: the Huns had thoroughly looted the region and had destroyed the basis for the Goths' food supply. There was no way Atharic could stop the Huns and thus he had no way to maintain his legitimacy among his followers. Wolfram concludes with a sort of defense of the Terving *iudex* by arguing »No one knew how to defend against the Huns, not even Atharic who in his days had outmaneuvered the Romans«²⁵.

Ammianus presents a somewhat different picture. First, the Roman historian gives no indication concerning the site of the last battle between the Huns and the Goths. Wolfram's siting of the battle is not an unreasonable conjecture. However, it is much strengthened if we see Atharic's security zone in this very same region, as I have suggested above, rather than some sixty kilometers to the north as asserted by Wolfram. In addition, the Hunnic surprise attack on Atharic's forces either within the security zone or closeby once again permits the inference that the Terving *iudex* had not properly prepared for an enemy which had the sudden striking capacity of the Huns. Finally, the willingness of the Huns to attack, even when overladen with booty, indicates that they had little respect for Atharic's operational abilities. I suggest that we must reject the notion that Atharic was a military leader of great

Roman presence in the later second and early third centuries see C. PATSCH, *Der Kampf um den Donaauraum unter Domitian und Trajan*, Vienna 1937 (Sitzungsberichte der Akad. d. Wiss. Phil.-hist. Kl., 217/1), p. 149–152. N. b. VULPE, *Le vallum* (n. 11) p. 5–25, provides a good background to pre-World War II scholarship. What is notably missing from his work published in 1957 is evidence from aerial photography.

21 Regarding Roman military camps see F. HAVERFIELD and R. G. COLLINGWOOD, *The Provisioning of Roman Forts*, in: *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* NS 20 (1920) p. 129.

22 B. S. BACHRACH, *Some Observations on the Military Administration of the Norman Conquest*, in: *Anglo-Norman Studies VII*, ed. R. Allen Brown, Woodbridge 1986, p. 1–25.

23 Concerning the Terving military see WOLFRAM, *Die Goten*, p. 106–109, and regarding the Huns, MAENCHEN-HELFEN, *The Huns*, p. 201–203.

24 *The Goths*, p. 71.

25 *Ibid.*

talent and, indeed, question the capacity of the Tervings as a polity to assimilate many of the more important concepts of the military art²⁶.

I have examined Wolfram's views on the ›War between the Goths and the Huns‹ in some detail not only because it is an exceptionally important episode in the history of both peoples²⁷ and therefore it is worthwhile getting the facts straight, but also because Wolfram's treatment of this episode provides some insight into the manner in which he has read the sources in light of a very lengthy and often highly controversial historiographical tradition so as to provide his view of what one might characterize as his sense of the Terving ›Verfassung‹. In short, I will suggest that despite the immense complexity of the source problems involved in writing a monumental history of the Goths, it is necessary to reexamine each text anew and to provide a thoroughgoing critique of the status questionis. ›Die Goten‹ is a synthesis, and Wolfram's many articles which preceded the first edition are of exceptional importance, but more detailed work is required and must be ongoing. Thus in the present study I have tried to illustrate the need for such work in the hope that future editions of ›Die Goten‹ will be even more responsive than past editions have been to the constantly evolving research front.

26 Cf. WOLFRAM, *Gotische Studien I*, p. 1–32.

27 The ›Nachleben‹ of this war reached all the way to late medieval Scandinavia as indicated by: *The Saga of King Heidrek The Wise*, ed. and trans. Christopher TOLKIEN, London 1960, p. xxi–xxviii, p. 45–58.