

## The Goths

The Goths, originally regarded as a people or nation, were a union of different tribes, mainly of Germanic origin. It is Strabo, a Greek historian, to whom we owe the first information about Guiones, or Gotones. It is from the story of Catualda, a Marcomannic rebel who brought an army of mercenaries from the Goths' country to the Czech Basin and demolished the capital of Maroboduus's kingdom in 19 AD, that we know about the Goths' settlement in Pomerania. Among others who wrote about the Goths were Tacitus (98 AD), Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy (ca. 160 AD), whose maps show Gothic settlements on the right side of the Lower Vistula, and Cassiodorus, who wrote *Gothic History* in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, the latter's work did not survive and we have to rely on the summary written by Jordanes in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup>

century. According to Jordanes, the Goths came from the island of Scandza. Led by their king Berig they set off for the continent in three boats and founded Gothiscandza – a New Scandza. These events took place between 70 and 79 AD and the new land is modern-day middle Pomerania where many cemeteries and stone circles can be found. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup>

century they set off for Oium (or Aujum), in the south. In 230 they stormed Olbia and Tyras and in 239 they were driven back by the Romans under the command of Emperor Gordian III. In 250 the Gothic chieftain Cniva captured Philippolis (Plovdiv). That same year the Goths, supported by the Heruls, burnt Tanais, the easternmost town in Greece (where the Don flows into the Sea of Azov). Between 255 and 258 the Romans gave Dacia to the barbarians. 257 was the year in which legendary pirate raids on the Black Sea started and the Goths captured Bithynia.

In 268, together with the Heruls, they ravaged the Balkans, yet they were defeated by Emperor Gallienus in the Battle of Naissus in Thracia. In 324 they were defeated by Emperor Constantine the Great near Chrysopolis, but on 9 August 378 the Visigoths defeated the Romans in the Battle of Adrianople and killed Emperor Valens. In the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>

century, in what is now Ukraine, there was a kingdom of the Goths led by Ermanaric, who committed suicide in 376 after the Hunnic invasion. At that time, the conversion of the Goths to Christianity took place and Bishop Ulfilas (311-383) translated The Bible into Gothic. The Goths split into the Ostrogoths (the Chernyakhov culture) and the Visigoths (the Sântana de Mureş culture). Alaric, king of the Visigoths, was the first barbarian to capture Rome (24 August 410).

In the 5<sup>th</sup>

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century the Ostrogoths established their own kingdom in Italy with Ravenna as their capital. The Visigoths had two kingdoms; one in Aquitaine with the capital in Toulouse and, later, another in Spain with the capital in Toledo. The history of the Goths in Europe came to an end at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup>

century.

Archaeology equates the Goths with the circle of Gothic cultures which comprises the Wielbark culture, the Masłomęcz culture, the Chernyakhov culture and Sintana de Mureș culture. The Goths ceased settling on Polish territories in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the north of the country different tribes, among them the Goths, established a union and took the name Vidivarii. Gothic settlers stayed in the Hrubieszów Basin until the end of the 5<sup>th</sup>

century AD when they squared up to the Heruls escaping to Scandinavia.

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The arrival of the Slavic tribes at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century brought an end to the Goths in this part of Europe.