

# The Heruls

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Detailed version



6-04-2018

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## Abstract

*In 553 AD the Byzantine historian Procopius wrote about the dynasty of the Eastgermanic Heruls and some of their followers arriving to the Scandinavian Peninsula around 512 AD after being defeated by the Lombards. Historically we know the main group and the dynasty from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century at the Black Sea from where they followed the Huns and settled in a new kingdom in Mähren/Moravia. Here they became famous as Roman mercenaries and terrorized their neighbours until their defeat. A group choose to join the East Roman emperors and we baptized. A smaller group, the Western Heruls at the North Sea coast, were known as Roman mercenaries since 286 AD and later as pirates until they disappeared in 476 AD.*

*Except for a short contact in 548 AD and some later runic stones the history of the Heruls ended at the Scandinavian borders. The North European poems and sagas contain distaint memories of the event, but they cannot be regarded as history. Consequently, the destiny of these trained and frightening mercenaries has been discussed for centuries. Their arrival is certain, but how many and where did they settle?*

*The hypothesis of this paper is that they first settled in Blekinge/Värend, but before 548 AD most of them were expelled by the Danes – mentioned by Jordanes. Most likely the next target for most of the group was the expanding economi of Uppland which flourished as an international center in the next centuries. Probably they simply served as mercenaries and military advisors as they did in the Roman empires. When they were integrated in the Nordic societies their name disappeared and became the title earl.*

## Preface

*The work behind this article began in 1995 as a search for a reason behind the Danish traditions regarding the elections of the medieval kings. During the searching it became obvious that the history of the Heruls had been misunderstood in Scandinavia.*

*It is an ambivalent feeling to spend time on a repellent people like the Heruls. Parts of the legends around them have been used by the historical philosophers behind the Nazi-party. It is no coincidence that Ludvig Schmidt in 1934 could write: "Die Heruler waren ein echtes Herrenvolk,"*

*Especially modern well-meaning Swedish scholars avoid to talk about ethnicity and have neglected the Heruls, though several large archaeological excavations are performed regarding the time of the Heruls. The development from the Heruls over the Viking Ages to the democratic Scandinavian monarchies should be interesting to a modern world too, but the scholars have probably been caught in a trap as a reaction on the earlier Nazi-sympathies among the scholars. Unfortunately, the idea to suppress material which can be misused in ethnical matters will make the suppressors blind too.*

*Only the local historian Tore Ganholm at Gotland did maintain in "The origin of Svear" that the Heruls*

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settled in the Mälär Valley in 512 AD. Unfortunately, he claimed that the Heruls with their god, Odin, became the Svear in a hostile takeover, which was not necessarily the case.

I was not aware of that past when my first web-article in June 2000 was provoked by an internationally acknowledged article in Scania by the Swedish linguist Alvar Ellegaard. In 1987 he claimed that the Heruls were a warriorband, who left Scandinavia after a short visit in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. His article became popular among the Swedish scholars, who got an excuse for their neglect of the Heruls, but it was obvious, when reading his sources that the method of Ellegaard to reject sources did not follow the usual scholarly criterias of historians.

The purpose of this article written by a third "outsider" is to present the material again and suggest an explanation - in the hope that a scholar one day may find a better basis of assessment.

The first main chapter about the acknowledged history of the Heruls in Southern Europe is as far as possible following the works of Professor Andreas Schwarcz, the University of Vienna, and his student Angelika Lintner-Potz. We have agreed to publish her "Diplomarbeit zur erlangung des Magistergrades", "Die Eruler", at my website (in German). I do not agree in detail in all suggestions being not attested in the scattered sources, but those cases will be mentioned below and will not change the conclusions.

The second main chapter about the settlement in Scandinavia is based on 5 questions about the Heruls asked in 1996 by the late Swedish professor in archaeology, Åke Hyenstrand in his book, "Lejonet, Korset och Draken" - written to his young students. The questions appear to have been ignored in Sweden, but the chapter is structured as an answer to his questions.

The third main chapter about the Norse literature shall only address that one of the arguments against the presence of Heruls in Scandinavia has been that their name was never found in the Northern Europe. Inspired by the observations of the Danish professor of archaeology in Oslo, Lotte Hedeager, the English linguist Ben Slade and the Danish historian Niels Lukman and the national antiquarian of Iceland, Barði Guðmannsson I have searched the Norse literature for traces of the Heruls. The chapter will explain the disappearance of the name and the relevant sagas, but it shall not be regarded as history and a proof of a Herulic presence in Scandinavia.

The research results are organized as a short web-article written in both Danish and English and the comprehensive and detailed paper in pdf below. The text from the English web-article is contained in this paper – being spread over the paper in black frames as summaries. The same numbering of chapters is followed in both articles with the purpose to find details, notes and references in the paper when reading the short web-article.

Furthermore, links are found to the separate articles about the runestones in Blekinge and Rök.

Copenhagen, September 24th 2016  
Troels Brandt

# 1 The South European history of the Heruls

## 1.1 The Roman Sources (history)

### 1.1.1 The origin of the Heruls

In most history books the Heruls are mentioned as a people of Scandinavian origin. The only historical source for that claim was the work "Getica" from 551 AD by the Gothic historian, Jordanes. But Jordanes never wrote that – and no other historian wrote that they returned, as Procopius is often falsely quoted. Jordanes connected their etymology with the swamps at the Black Sea, where they were first time mentioned by Greek and Roman historians in 267 AD. Consequently, he could not regard them as Scandinavians. First when the news about a Herulian envoy to Scandinavia in 548 AD were circulating in the city of Constantinople both Procopius and Jordanes wrote about Heruls and Danes in 551 and 553 AD – and Procopius also told that they arrived there in the first decade of his own century. Earlier no historians – not even Tacitus nor Ptolemy – mentioned Heruls in Scandinavia. The idea about the Scandinavian origin of the Heruls was based on 5 bungled words in the geographical introduction of Jordanes, where he wrote about the Danes "*expelling the Heruls from their settlements*" – words which were misunderstood already in 1783 as an event before 267 AD, when they first time appeared in Greece. Modern linguists read these words in the introduction as a reference to an event of his own time – making it instead an expulsion from a first settlement between Danes and Goetes in Scandinavia 40 years earlier.

The Danish archaeologists, however, combined the expulsion of the Heruls with a warrior elite settling in Himlingøje in the Roman Iron Ages. They even believed a wrong translation of Jordanes according to which the Danes should be of the Swedish stock, but he just wrote that they were of the same stock, the unknown Vinovilo – maybe the Vinnili mentioned as the ancestors of the Lombards too.

In the Migration Ages people changed rapidly all the time in the sources as many constellations consisted of semi-nomads following a successful dynasty and maybe its religion – regardless of family or tribal connections. They were not tied to a specific territory as agriculturists, but may have lived in the same territory as these as a warrior class. The Eastern Heruls may have been established in this way at the Russian river Dnieper in the third century as an ethnogenesis between Germanic tribes, Sarmatian/Alanic nomads and Bosphorians – with Gothic/East Germanic as their language. Many of these Germanics were probably East Germanic Goths. Later they may have been mixed up with Huns too.

The belief in a Scandinavian origin was supported by a group of Western Heruls crossing the Rhine in 286 AD – probably from Frisia. A migration from Jutland to Ukraine is supported by metal combs and monster brooches, but these could also be remains of migrating Jutes (Eudoses). Therefore, a more likely combination is that a royal family from a group of Western Heruls, Harudes or Jutes established a mixed group in Ukraine, but also an earlier people, the Harii, has been suspected based on names and character. Neither can we of course exclude a Scandinavian origin.

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Under all circumstances we must conclude that the origin of the Heruls is unknown – just like the origin of the Goths who are today being related to the areas around the mouth of the Polish river Vistula – not with Scandinavia.



The routes of the Heruls, which shall be regarded as a general movement of their dynasty – not as one specific migration.

### 1.1.1.1 The modern interpretation of Jordanes

The former theory of the origin of the Heruls was based on the four words by Jordanes<sup>1</sup> about the Danes "Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt" ("drove from their homes the Heruli" or more directly "expelling the Heruls from their settlements"). Already the source critical Lauritz Weibull questioned that this sentence could tell anything about their origin. Later linguists and historians like Lönroth, Ellegaard, Goffart and Andreas Schwarcz have regarded the sentence as a description of a recent event due to grammatical reasons and the context in his work. Apparently Jordanes added these four words to a 30 years old description by Cassiodorus, which he used to describe the people of Scandinavia.

<sup>1</sup> Jordanes III, 23. Jordanes was the secretary of an Ostrogothic or Rugian family. He wrote "Getica" in Byzans in the winter 551 (Wolfram 1988), just before the last remains of the Ostrogothic Kingdom broke down. Normally he is supposed to have used information from a lost work of Cassiodorus (Chancellor of Theodoric the Great) finalized around 519 AD, and for some parts also Ablasius, who was possibly the powerful chief of the Pretorians at the court of Constantine the Great (Nordgren 1999). Where nothing is mentioned in chapter 2.1, Jordanes is the source to the Herulian and Gothic history until 480 AD, but Jordanes is normally regarded as a doubtful source, which is discussed further in Chapter 4.4. As the Gothic history is not the subject here, Wolfram's "History of the Goths" is used as a main source to the Gothic part of the history in spite of later research. Works like "Cassiodorus and Jordanes" of Arne Sjøby Christensen and "The Goths" of Peter Heather have of course been taken in consideration too.



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The Danes had never been mentioned before and were only mentioned three times by the historians in the 6th century - twice due to a contact between the Danes and the Heruls. It should be a very strange coincidence if these two stories both told in Constantinople by Jordanes in 551 AD and Procopius in 553 AD were two different contacts separated by more than 300 years. It is nearly impossible, and it will later (in chapter 1.1.4) be explained how the two authors less than three years before got that actual and for Justinian embarrassing story about the Heruls in Scandinavia, which therefore circulated in Constantinople in 548-553 AD.

The Ravenna Cosmography told around 732 AD about the “patria” called “Dania” pervaded by great rivers next to the Saxons. The Ravenna Cosmography referred to the missing works of the learned Aitanaridus, Eldevaldus og Marcomirus at the court of Theodoric as a source – also mentioned by Herwig Wolfram in 1979. There is no doubt that the Danes were mentioned at the court of Theodoric by Cassiodorus due to the Norwegian Roduulf, but just as it is agreed that Jordanes changed the sentence of Cassiodorus due to a new event in 553 AD it is likely that the unknown author of the Ravenna Cosmography 200 years later expanded the information about the Danes with actual knowledge. At that time the Danes had established their rule at Dannevirke and met the Franks. We do not know if the details are describing the 6<sup>th</sup> or the 8<sup>th</sup> century, but the referral can be regarded as an independent confirmation of Procopius’ and Jordanes’ knowledge of the Danes at that time. However, it must be regarded as a more secondary source than Jordanes and Procopius.

Later in his work Jordanes used information from Ablasius describing how the Heruls (or Elouroi) got their name at the Sea of Asov, where we first time heard about them in 267 AD. He used an etymology explaining their name as deriving from the swamps ('eloi in Greek), where they lived. Even if he is wrong, he clearly used a local etymology from the Black Sea to explain their name. Consequently, it is not likely that it was his intention to describe their origin as Scandinavian in the introduction, and neither is a Scandinavian origin or a return described anywhere else in his or other works.

Therefore we have no reason at all to expect the episode about the Danes and the Heruls in the same work to be connected with a history of an origin in Denmark. It is a reference to a contact in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century like the earlier reference in the same chapter to the Scandinavian king Roduulf seeking refuge at the court of Theodoric. The Heruls were by the sources in the 5th and 6th century regarded as a Germanic people – Gothic according to some authors – due to language<sup>2</sup> and size. As the Heruls were closely related to the Goths they could as well be a tribe being separated from the Gothic group in the Black Sea Region, where the Heruls were called 'Elouroi. Neither the Heruls nor the Danes were mentioned anywhere by Tacitus and Ptolemy in the two first centuries AD – which they should if they existed under that name.

### 1.1.1.2 The old interpretation of Jordanes

Already in 1783 the Danish historian, G. Schønning, argued based on Jordanes and several other sources that the original Heruls lived in Southern Jutland or Northern Germany. Schønning was fully aware that this was his own construction, but since then the interpretation of Jordanes' story as a 300 years old event and a Scandinavian origin of the Heruls has been an accepted truth among the Scandinavian historians. Jordanes told more clearly that both the Danes and the Suetidi traced their origin to the unknown Vinovilo<sup>3</sup>. Later in 899 AD the Danes lived in Scania, Halland and Sealand according to Ottars description [Lund, 1983], while the Jutes lived in Jutland, which was earlier populated by Cimbrians and Anglians too [Tacitus] – and Harudes/Charudes [Ptolemy].

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2 In Cassiodorus' *Varia* VI, 2 Theodoric wrote in Latin to the Herulian king, but promised that the messenger would speak Gothic to him.

3 [Jordanes III] In general the sentence "of the same stock as the Suetidi" has been interpreted as a Danish migration from Sweden, but he just wrote that the Dani and Suetidi both descended from the Vinovilo<sup>3</sup>, which is probably a version of the name Vinili - being mentioned as a former name of the Lombards by Paulus Diaconis. Neither need the Suetidi to be the Svear in the Mälaren Valley, as he mentioned the Suehans there. This will open for interesting combinations and explanations outside the topic of this article.

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In the first centuries AD contemporary trade centres were established around the Baltic Sea. In Denmark they are found at Stevns (Sealand) and in Gudme (Fyen), but the most important centres were probably the old trade centre at Gotland and the Gothic society at the mouth of Vistula in Poland. At that time the Marcomannic Wars along the Roman/German border forced the trading routes to go east of the Alps to the rivers Oder and Vistula – the old Amber Route. Michel Kazanski has later described this route leading the Goths to the Black Sea along the Bug, but in the 5<sup>th</sup> century especially through the Moravian Gate to Carnuntum along the March/Morava River [Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014]. The first movement is reflected in the change from Elder to Younger Roman Iron Age in Denmark around 160 AD. However it has to be noticed that Gudme had obvious trade connections with South-Western Europe. Also the mounds of the first chieftains at Stevns indicate a connection to the Elbe-area in Thuringia. Later in the 3rd and 4th century glasses and other items from the Gothic Cernjachov-culture showed increasing contacts against south east [Khrapunov/Stylegar 2011 and 2014].

In this way the Scandinavians had plenty of connections with the Gothic societies at the Black Sea making it difficult to identify a Herulic migration to the Black Sea by using archaeology – if it happened.

The Danish archaeologist Brøndsted was inspired by the old interpretation of Jordanes to work out a theory about a Danish invasion from Sweden. He related the theory to the big mounds of Stevns (Himlingøje and Varpelev) – a peninsula in Sealand into the Baltic Sea – indicating a new civilisation at the coast in the end of the second century AD<sup>4</sup>. This theory does not need to be changed if the old interpretation of Jordanes is wrong, but the Danish invasion has lost its historical support.

The theory about a Herulic origin from Scania and Sealand is still the most accepted due to conservatism, though no Heruls were mentioned by Tacitus or Ptolemy in the second century AD<sup>5</sup>.

### 1.1.1.3 Other combinations

The new interpretation of Jordanes will leave us with a problem with the Western Heruls, who were first time mentioned by Mamertinus in Trier - operating there in 286 AD as barbarian attackers 18 years after the emperor defeated a group of the Eastern Heruls in Thrakia. A possibility is that the refugees from that defeat – i.e. the later mentioned group of Naulobates joining the Romans – were resettled as mercenaries by the Romans far away from their hostile kinsmen. Already in the 2nd century AD the Romans used Alanic and Sarmatian mercenaries in France and England who were transferred with women and children. They remained in Western Europe.

The problem is, however, that the Western Heruls were described as a barbarian people<sup>6</sup> - not as mercenaries, and that they came from a distant location ("*ultima loci*") further away than the Burgundians and the Alemanni. As later confirmed below by other sources it must have been as neighbours to the Saxons in Harlingen or Northern Frisia.

This is in the same region as the earlier Harudes/Charudes (Cesar, Augustus and Ptolemy), who attacked

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4 The settlement of the Danes was first mentioned by Brøndsted, who also mentioned the northeastern Jutland as a possibility. But the intruders here might be Gauts (from Götaland) or Norwegians (finds in Illerup Ådal). Later on Lotte Hedeager has described the theory in "Danmarks Historie". Normally the settlement is dated to 175-200 AD. We cannot exclude that these rich graves similar with the graves at the Elbe (Hassleben etc.) should be combined the rich female graves in Badelunda and the Vinoviloth mentioned by Jordanes (Vinili / Longobards).

5 There is still one connection (besides 2.3), as the name Hariso is found at the backside of a fibula in Himlingøje. This is also the name of a Herul at a tombstone in Concordia. As Himlingøje used the trade route along the Vistula where the Harii lived at that time, the Harii are a possible connection.

6 Panegyri of Mamertinus, XI, Trier, 289 AD. In 286 AD Emperor Maximianus sent out a couple of cohortes to defeat the Heruls and the unknown Chaibones, who had attacked Gallia together with Burgunden and Allemanni. Mamertinus wrote that the Heruls and Chaibones we all killed. They could not bring the messages home to their mothers and wives. He also mentioned that they lived most distantly away. The Chaibones could be the Aviones of Tacitus.

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the Roman Empire in the same way as the Western Heruls 200 years earlier. The name of the Harudes is possibly met as a personal name later among the Heruls as Aruth – maybe originally a name used for people coming from the Western Heruls. The Western Heruls may have got the name Eruli from the Romans, who regarded the two tribes as the same people. The Harudes disappeared at the same time.

Another possibility is that the Western Heruls were the original Heruls forming a group or a part of a dynasty, who followed the Goths to the Black Sea and established the Eastern Heruls there together with Gothic and Sarmatian/Alanic warriors – bringing us back to the old theory by G. Schønning – later supported by von Friesen. Already the Scandinavian Cimbrians followed by other Germanic tribes passed these regions before attacking Italy.

Maybe the two groups of the same name simply were two different people/tribes getting a dynasty in common - coming from one of the two groups or from somewhere else. In that connection we shall not forget that the name Heruli/Eruli is a Greek/Latin version, which can be a misunderstanding or even given by the Romans, when they received Naulobates and his group.

If we look at the archaeological observations by Michel Kazanski [RGA, Black Sea] and the Ukrainian archaeologists, Boris Magomedov [Magomedov 2001] and Maxim Levada [Levada 2000] they are placing the migrated Heruls at Crimea, the Dniepr and in the Moldavian region. Magomedov later wrote about the Chernyakhov Culture "*The presence of the Herulians (who came from Jutland) is marked by the existence of the "long houses", by the presence of monster-brooches, items with runic inscriptions, iron combs and a certain type of pottery*" [in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014]. Earlier he wrote about these finds as ethnical indicators and added "*most scholars think that these persons were the Heruls*" [in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2011].

Combining Tacitus, Ptolemy and Flavius Arianus it has been claimed that a group of Germanic speaking Eudoses (Jutes) arrived at the Black Sea in the 2nd century AD. Later some of them moved eastwards. The finds of metal combs which are one of the key objects showing the above mentioned migration of a people to Ukraine are concentrated in Jutland and Fyen – not in Northern Frisia or Harlingen. That may indicate that the migration primarily were the Eudoses, but it does not exclude that a part of a Herulian dynasty followed and established the Eastern Heruls. We shall, however, remember that the name of the Heruls was not mentioned by Tacitus or Ptolemy as a tribe in any end of the route.

Hervig Wolfram (Wolfram 1988) has proposed that the Heruls were first established as a warrior band with an etymology connected with the word "harjaR/harjiZ" (=army/harrier). This appears to be a reasonable suggestion, if this group operating in the border areas of the Goths later formed a people at the Black Sea - maybe with members of their neighbours joining them by marriage and ethnogenesis. "HarjaR/harjiZ" is a widespread component found also in names like Harigast (Negauer helmet), Hariso (Both in Himlingoeje and a Herul in Concordia) and Hariwulf (Scania/Blekinge, 600 AD). An interesting connection between "Hariwulf" and "Herul/Airouloi" is the name of a mad Gothic warrior around 380 AD, "Erioulphos", mentioned by Eunapius (Fragmenta of Eunapius, Dindorf, Historici Graeci Minores, vol. 1, p. 253).

Another theoretical possibility connected with "harjaR" has to be mentioned. Plinius told about Hirri in the first century BC and in the first century AD Tacitus told as our only source about a tribe of the strongest warriors of all, the Harii. Tacitus placed them just south of the Gotones at Upper Vistula. They may have followed the Goths to the Black Sea when the migrating Gothic groups passed. After the Gothic migration we never heard about these strong warriors, but south east of the new Gothic kingdom a new tribe of harrying warriors was met - the Heruli. According to Tacitus the Harii painted their shields and their bodies black and attacked in the night as a ghostly army. Some scholars connect them with the legends about "The wild hunt" in the night – also connected with Odin/Wothan. In French the hunter is called Harlequin/Hellequin (Eorle cyn/Harleking?). Their disappearance could be explained by a change of name at the Sea of Asov caused by the influence of the common Alanic language of the region. This is of course pure guesswork, and it is questioned if the name of the Harii is a misunderstanding by a copyist, though a conglomerate of neighbouring Harii, Goths and Alanes would make sense. The claims that the Heruls were black wolf-warriors are based on that kind of suggested connections and are not supported in the sources

elsewhere.

If we are following the old interpretation of Jordanes or if we are regarding some of the Heruls as belonging to the Goths we can in both cases assume, that the Heruls in the 6th century falsely regarded Scandinavia as their ancestral home - if they believed Jordanes' origin of the Goths.

In this article the most likely explanation is regarded to be that Goths and Sarmatians/Alans at the Black Sea joined a dynasty from the marshes of the Wadden Sea (Harlinger Land) - i.e. from a group of Harudes living in the marches – together with people from Jutland. This "compromise" will explain the Western Heruls, the later European spread of the runes, the common Aruth-names among the Heruls, and make sense in most other combinations. Due to the immense uncertainty the explanation of the origin has not been further investigated below, and nothing is finally concluded as the conclusions regarding the later history of the Heruls below are independent of that explanation.

### 1.1.1.4 The Gothic Migration and migrations in general

In general, the migrating groups were not necessarily formed by one single people<sup>7</sup>. They may often have been smaller groups of different people or tribes following a strong leader or dynasty and probably also their religion – especially those in the migrating ages – opposite those who were tied to a piece of land due to agriculture. Lotte Hedeager has described a society where people had left their original tribal structure and were independent of a specific territory. They could live together with local farmers of another ethnicity as a kind of warrior class and they moved around.

The “nationality” of the leading dynasty would often by observers be regarded as the nationality of whole the migrating group. Often, they were separated again later. The migrations could take place stepwise over several decades, and often when the Germanic tribes were mentioned in the written sources the Romans had only met raiding groups, occupying warriors or mercenaries operating far away from their people.

An EU-financed historical project lead to the political conclusion that most movements of people were diffusions of individuals and not migrating groups. That is probably true – especially along the Roman borders – but it will not change the fact that the movements of people like the Huns, Goths and Vandals etc. were groups of warriors with families travelling far and taking new land in possession by military force – though they may have been of mixed original ethnicity.

Ingemar Nordgren has in his PhD-assertation described a theory in which the Goths were not originally an ethnic people by birth but a cultic league consisting of different tribes from many regions around Kattegat and the Baltic Sea (Sinus Codanus) with leaders claiming to descend from a god named Gaut<sup>8</sup>. Maybe such people left traditional agriculture to be tradesmen or nomads with cattle while most tribes of Scandinavia remained agriculturists with a fertility cult worshipping the gods Ing/Nerthus<sup>9</sup>.

By the reasons mentioned above the ethnic and geographic origin of a migration people is in general difficult to determine. As they joined the turbulence of the Migration Ages the importance of their origin is also limited to us in this case. If we want to understand the background of the new societies they formed when they finally settled, it may be more important to know which cultures and religions they had been in touch with in the last centuries before the settlement – but the history of the dynasty could be important to its legal

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7 Wolfram “History of the Goths”, 1988 (and Wenskus) – Goffart “Barbarian Tides”, 2006,

8 “Goterkällan” (PhD-dissertation from 1999 at Odense University) by the Swedish Ingemar Nordgren - published in Swedish in 2000 by Historieforum Västra Götaland. The names Goths, Gauts, Geats, Götes, Gutes and Jutes may all have the same origin – most possibly from a cult in Southern Scandinavia and around the Baltic Sea. Most of the Continental Gothic tribes are supposed to come from the south-eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. When the Goths later on went to the Black Sea, Gaut may have changed character from a creator god to a warrior god - being a more Wothan-like god. Jordanes called Mars an important god, but he also mentioned one of their ancestors, “Gapt” - probably being Gaut.

9 Tacitus.

right to kingship in the society – so important that it was often manipulated and mixed up with religion.

According to Jordanes the Goths were originating from Scanza, but in that case archaeology indicates that they could only be very small groups migrating long time before Christ. It is more likely that such small groups of Scandinavian Gauts inspired religiously, when people in the south-eastern corner of the Baltic Sea merged and formed the Goths – creating new burial practices etc. In contemporary sources the Goths were first time met in the first centuries AD, when they lived in the area around lower Vistula and Oder<sup>10</sup> with connections to the Romans along the Amber Route. Possibly they formed the above mentioned trade network with the islands and cities of the Baltic Sea as centres. Most historians are dating the following migration of the Goths from the area of Gdansk<sup>11</sup> to Ukraine to the years around 150 AD or later in the century. According to archaeologists groups from the Wielbark culture at Vistula in Poland may have moved stepwise to Ukraine and Upper Moldavia (the Cernjachov-culture) around 200 AD. Here they became one of the dominating groups of people. The true history of the Gothic origin and of Gaut is not the subject here as it is uncertain (Jordanes wrote Getica centuries later based on manipulated explanations and reconstructions by Cassiodorus) and without any importance for the conclusions below. What is regarded as certain is that they were an East Germanic-speaking people.

### 1.1.1.5 Sarmatians in the ethnogenesis?

Walter Pohl and Andreas Schwarcz are probably right that the Heruls were under all circumstances a mixed people (Schwarcz 2005). Andreas Schwarcz has beside the Goths and a North European element - as those mentioned above - mentioned the Alans, who were a Sarmatian tribe. For 1500 years the Scythian and Sarmatian nomads dominated the Russian Plains north east of the Black Sea. They were a large group of Indo-European people belonging to the Iranian group of languages, though some of the eastern groups may have been Turk speaking too. They expanded from the earlier fertile areas of the Altai-region in Central Asia. First the Scythians dominated the western plains. At a late stage a group of the Aorsi Sarmatians became known as the Alans (later as As)<sup>12</sup> at the Black Sea in the centuries AD, but earlier a group of these people

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- 10 Ptholemeus – Second century AD. They were called Goutones - the name Goths was first met at the Black Sea in the third century. Archaeologists connect them to the Wielbark Culture at the eastern bank of the river Vistula (=Weischel) and regard their origin to be an ethnogenesis taking place there.
- 11 A smaller group of Goths was supposed to live here at the Lower Vistula until 500-600 AD. Otto von Friesen, Kemp Malone and other scholars have identified these Goths as the Hreidgoths mentioned by the Swedish Rök Stone, Hervararsaga and Widsith, but this is an open question, which is discussed in a later chapter.
- 12 The Alans were according to Flavius Josephus (c. 100 AD) a Scythian people ravaging Media and Armenia. Later on Procopius called them Goths – probably because they followed the Huns together with the Heruls in a group dominated by Ostrogoths. The correct ethnicity is a group of the Indo-European Sarmatians, who arrived to the Russian Plains from a belt from the Altai-region in Central Asia to Iran in the centuries BC expelling the Scythians in the eastern part. Ammianus Marcellinus called in the 4th century the Alans tall and fair haired, and they are sometimes described as blond with grey/green eyes – like the 3000 years old blond mummies found in the Chinese XinXiang Province near the Altai Mountains. Oleg Bubenok and other scholars claim the Alans, Asi (modern Azes), Yas, Osi and Osseten to be different names or variations hereof of the same group of Sarmatians. "As" is the Turko-Mongolean name for Alans and it is supposed to derive from IE "Asu" meaning "swift" (like the Heruls). The Wu-Sun people at the Silk Road in XinXiang north west of China were described by the Han Dynasty in the 2nd century BC. According to Sulimirski these Usuny (in Russian) were identical to the Iazy/Aorsi (Alans) while the more westerly Yen'ts'ai were identical to the Antae (another Alanic group). A change of sound from "ri" to "l" is mentioned in Ossetic (Fridrik Thordarson) also making a connection between Arian and Alan. These are just possibilities to be mentioned as the Germanic word for god, "ansi"/"ansuz", is regarded to be the real explanation of the Norse "Asir".

Artificial skull deformations were usual in Central Asia, and both the Huns and the Alans used this custom. The early Sarmatian groups in Europe such as the Roxolani and the Iazy did not use the custom at that time.

Thor Heyerdahl has funded the excavations of Azov revealing a city at the hilltop since the 2nd century BC opposite the city of Tanais already described by Herodot. Here a branch of the old Silk-route was supposed to cross River Don. The name could be related to the As-people. The Alans who did not escape to Caucasus were subdued by the

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(Yen'ts'ai/Antae/Alan) were reported by the Chinese historians in the XinXiang Province as neighbors to the Huns. The Alans and other Sarmatian people dominated the area around the Greek colony of Tanais and the Bosporan Kingdom at the Maeotic Sea (later the Sea of Asov) when the Heruls were first time mentioned there. The Sarmatian Roxolani and Iazy settled along the northern bank of Danube in Romania and Hungary. Much later some Alanic people became known as Osseten and their names are still found in the republic Osetinskaya/Alania. Other groups of Alans ended up in Thrakia, Poland and Spain following for a while the Huns. The Alans were by Ammianus Marcellinus described like Huns, but tall and swift with fair hair.

The Heruls were regarded as more primitive than the Goths and some of their names do not have a clear Germanic character – The name of the Herulic leader, Naulobates, was known as a Sarmatian or Bosporanian name. In the north-eastern corner of the Black Sea the peninsula Crimea forms the Sea of Asov, where River Don is flowing out into a swampy area. The Greeks established early their colony Tanais at the north bank of the river mouth – an important place for the trade along the Russian Rivers and one of the China-routes from Europe. Here Asia and Europe met and the area must have been an ethnic "melting pot". In the beginning of the first millennium the population in the area appear according to Russian scholars to be "Iranized", and D.B. Shelov mentioned that 33% of the names known in Tanais were Sarmatian and only 8% other barbarians. Recent excavations in the town of Asov at the south bank of the mouth of Don opposite Tanais showed that this town prospered at the time of the Alans and Heruls, while Tanais was burned down in 255 AD - according to Schmidt [1933, p. 210, 550] probably by Heruls. The Heruls lived according to Jordanes in the swamps of the Meotic Sea – the antique name of the Sea of Asov – being the most easterly Germanic group living between Goths and Alans<sup>13</sup>, but that is not supported by the archaeology telling us that the Germanic settlements of that time only reached the Dnepr. They also avoided the small belt of steppes at the coast of the Baltic Sea leaving the mouth of Dnepr for the Bosporanians at Crimea. If the first Heruls had their settlements at the lower Dnepr they could easily be mixed with some of the Sarmatian Alans or in the theory also with the Bosporani, who probably had an Iranian background too though being Hellenised for centuries.

There was probably a grain of truth in Ablasius' etymology. In 259 AD the first pirate attacks were mentioned when "Scythians" used the Bosporanian navy. The attacking people were called Boradi, but such a people is unknown. Probably this name meant "people from the north" covering the newly arrived Goths and maybe the Heruls. In the same way they may have misunderstood the name of the later attacking Heruls as "Eliouroi" meaning "people from the swamps", if they believed the Heruls came from the Maeotic swamps – a part of the kingdom of the Bosporani, who provided the Heruls with ships in those raids. Probably their settlements were in the Gothic Cernjachov-culture having outposts as far away as south east of the last bend of the Dniepr according to the archaeology, but that does not change the fact that they believed their settlements had been at the Meotic Sea, when Jordanes wrote in the 6th century.

### 1.1.2 The migrations of the Heruls

The Eastern Heruls were first time mentioned in 267-269 AD when they attacked Greece and the coasts of Asia Minor as pirates. They were together with the Goths using the navy of the Bosporanes. The most spectacular event was the looting of Athens from where we have our historical sources. Also the defeat of their leader, Naulobates, by the Roman emperor Gallianus at

Huns in 350 AD and followed their campaign through Europe. A group of them (Antae) settled in the area of Krakow, where Jens Ulriksen has found similarities to Gudme (in his book "Anløbspladser"). Most of the Alans left the Huns and crossed the Rhine in 406 together with the Vandals heading against Spain.

- <sup>13</sup> In 1100 the Polovetsians changed the original name Meotic Sea to Sea of Asov. The sea is surrounded by swamps because of the mouths of Don and Donets. According to Jordanes the Heruls lived in these Swamps of Hele, but "Hele" (Eloy) was simply a word for "swamp", and Dexippos called the Heruls Eluroy – maybe a mistake. The language of the Crimean Goths was found at Crimea as late as 1700. According to some scholars there are linguistic similarities to the Western Germanic around Saxony or Frisia (Nordgren), where the Western Heruls lived.

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Thessaloniki was mentioned. Afterwards Naulobates was appointed a Roman "consular insignia". Consequently the Western Heruls being first time mentioned in 286 AD may in the theory have been his soldiers being resettled in Frisia as mercenaries. According to Jordanes the king of the Eastern Heruls, Alaric, was later defeated by the legendary Gothic king, Ermaneric. From around 375 AD the Heruls joined many other East Germanic and Sarmatian people in the Hunnic campaign through Europe, and as most of the other followers they were not mentioned in those years. After the defeat and death of Attila these East Germanic followers raised in rebellion in 454 AD against the sons of Attila at Nedao – except most of the Ostrogoths. Nearly all the Huns were driven back to the Black Sea, but some of them may have followed people like the Heruls, with whom they appear to have many common archaeological features.

Most of the East Germanic and Sarmatian people established their new kingdoms at the northern bank of the Danube, while the Ostrogoths found place in Roman territory in Southern Pannonia. There is no reason to discuss exact borders as these horse-riding nomads were not tied by the local agriculture. For decades the Ostrogoths waged wars against their earlier companions and had problems with the Romans too. In 468 AD the Ostrogoths succeeded in that way to destroy the Sciri. The Eastern Heruls established a strong kingdom in Moravia (Mähren) and Marchfeld (at Brno and Vienna) by subduing and tributing all their neighbours - even the Lombards. The Western Heruls - and from 454 AD also the Eastern Heruls - were feared as Roman mercenaries and sometimes as pirates too. The Roman historians regarded these foot soldiers as "swift on their feet" and light-armed, but that was primarily the Western Heruls. The Eastern Heruls became also cavalry like the Huns and Ostrogoths they followed. They were even told to be the strongest group supporting Odoaker when he replaced the last Emperor of Rome in 476 AD. Odoaker was afterwards elected as king of Italy by his own Germanic soldiers - called Rex Herulicus. Odoaker himself was a prince of the Sciri, but his father was a Thuringian of birth. The rich princely tomb in Blucina, which is from that time, is regarded to be a royal Herulian grave - very similar with the tomb of the Frankish king Childeric in Tournais, who was an allied of Odoaker. Both kings had probably been Roman foederati.

Later the Ostrogothic king, Theodoric, agreed with the East Roman emperor to remove Odoaker. Theodoric had grown up in Constantinople and was an Arian Christian. He besieged Odoaker in Ravenna for several years and when celebrating the following peace in 493 AD he murdered Odoaker by his own hand. Most of the Herulian mercenaries of Odoaker must have returned to Mähren, were Theodoric ten years later proclaimed their king as "his son of arms". The Heruls appear in this way to have ended up as a kind of subjects to Theodoric, who also asked the Heruls, the Thuringians and the Varni to join an alliance against the Franks.

Our historical sources regarding the Heruls consist of scattered remarks from the Roman and Byzantine historians and authors, as the people did not have their own historians. An exception is the Byzantine historian Procopius, who was the secretary and juridical advisor of the superior East Roman general Bellisarius. He must have known the Herulian mercenary officers personally. He spent two chapters of his work about the Gothic Wars on the Heruls - a work which he finished in 553 AD. He told that the Heruls "*were superior all the barbarians who dwelt about them both in power and number*", but due to arrogance and disregard of their gods their king, Hrodolphos, suffered a serious defeat against the Lombards and was killed himself. The defeat, which is dated to 508 or 509 AD, is also known from much later Lombardic sources in a more anecdotal form.

### 1.1.2.1 Herulian raiders and mercenaries

The first historical appearance of the Heruls was described in different sources in the third century AD. They

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were placed at the Black Sea in the neighbourhood of the Goths – as mentioned due to archaeology probably south east of these at the Dniepr ([Map](#)).

After 20 years of fighting the Romans returned in 271 AD to the south bank of the Danube leaving their Dacian Province (Romania) for the Goths. The archaeologists regard the Sintana de Mures-culture in Transylvania as a result hereof. In that area the Tervingi Goths and the Gepides were for the first time mentioned as separate tribal names in 291 AD.

In 267-69 AD a fleet of Herulian and Gothic vessels had plundered the coasts of Turkey and Greece – obviously as a part of the above mentioned war. A group of Heruls and Goths tried to operate on shore in Greece, but these inland groups were destroyed by the Romans. The Herulian group attacked Thessalonica but their survivors had to surrender in Moesia. Their leader Naulobates became a Roman "consular insignia"<sup>14</sup> (Wolfram 1988) indicating that the rest of these Heruls went into Roman service. A big fleet consisting of Heruls and Goths attacked all the time from the sea like the later Nordic Vikings. Especially their looting of Athens is famous, but they were successfully ravaging other places too like Crete, Rhodes and the coasts of Asia Minor. After a year they returned to their homes<sup>15</sup>.

Around 350 AD a group of Goths in Moesia changed religion to the Christian Arianism, and their bishop Wulfila translated the Bible into Gothic language. At the same time the Greutungi (Ostro-) Gothic king Ermaneric launched an offensive defeating and subduing many tribes – the defeat of the strong Heruls ruled by Alaric was especially emphasised by Jordanes.

After the defeat a group of Alans and Heruls may have escaped against south or east instead of being subdued by the Goths. As did a group of Eudoses settling east of Crimea and Tanais for a while. Such Germanics may have followed the Silkroad to Eastern Turkestan in order to settle there among related Sarmatian/Alanic people like the Wu-Sun, and some of them may have continued their way into China as the

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<sup>14</sup> Wolfram 1988, Georgios Synkellos, Chronographia.

<sup>15</sup> Already in 251 the Boradi (an unknown people connected with the Goths) conquered the navy of the Bosporani (a Crimian people). First time they sent home the navy operated by Bosporanians after the landing, and were lucky to escape on stolen Roman ships after the attack. Next time they had learned to operate as pirates with their ships ready for escape. The people of the Black Sea were skilled sailors, who were willing to teach the barbarians sailing - which a group from Crimea were punished for in 419. How much the Bosporanians were able to choose in the 260'ies is doubtful as archaeology reveals that their towns at Crimea were spoilt at that time – probably by the newly established Heruls.

In 267 AD a fleet of 500 ships together with an army following at the north-western coasts attacked and ravaged Greece including Athens. At Athens they were finally defeated by Dexippos, who called them Scythes in the few fragments we know from his work. Later authors like Synkellos (8th century) and Stephan of Byzans (6th century), who based their works on Dexippos, called them Goths, Boradi and Elouroi, while Zosimus (5th century) used the names Goths, Boradi (Borani) and Heruli. Scriptores Historiae Augustae from around 400 AD mentioned in this connection the Eruli as a Scythian group. Most of the Herulian warriors in this campaign attacked afterwards Thessalonica, where they were also defeated. From there they escaped in 268 AD against north into Macedonia and Moesia, where 3000 Heruls were killed at Nestos by the Romans commanded by emperor Gallienus. They were not totally destroyed as their chieftain Naulobates became a Roman "consular insignia" (Wolfram 1988). The name Naulobates was also the name of a Bosporan co-ruler around 233 AD. As the Bosporan kings had often Sarmatian names this may indicate that Alans - rather than Bosporani - were mixed up with the Heruls as they all lived in the same area near Lower Dnepr and the Sea of Asov.

In 269 Byzantine sources persist that 2000 ships were seen at Byzans. These Goths and Heruls operated with success by ships along the coasts of Greece, Asia Minor and at the islands. They probably used ships conquered from the Roman supporters.

The historians do not totally agree about the events, but the version compiled by Angelika Lintner-Potz is used here. Under all circumstances the relatively light armed "pirates" were obviously not able to fight against regular Roman forces on shore when these were prepared on the attack, while the last group operating with quick raids from their ships was successful in that way.



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mysterious Indo-European Holo-people, who arrived there around 380 AD. This has not been further investigated, but in 1318 Brother Pelligrini, following Marco Polo, reported 30,000 Christian Alans living at the Chinese coast opposite Taiwan, where the Holo-people was supposed to end up.

In Eastern Turkestan the Huns had lived for centuries and terrorized their neighbours. In this period the Chinese Wall was erected. Some of the Huns travelled against west, where they first subdued the Alans and in 370 AD they invaded Europe (crossed the Don) defeating the Goths. The Visigoths and many of the Ostrogoths escaped to the southern bank of the Danube, where they were granted exile by the Roman Emperor in 380 AD. Ermaneric committed suicide and the remaining Ostrogoths, the Alans and other Sarmatians, the Rugians, the Gepides and probably also the Heruls became subjects under Hunnic regime.

From Dacia the Huns and their followers invaded the Central Europe subduing many barbarian tribes. As a consequence the eastern trading routes from the Romans to the Baltic Sea must have been cut off 16. Just at that time the Roman Iron Ages ended in Denmark and the superior civilisation disappeared from the Danish peninsula Stevns.

In the Hunnic period we do only hear about Herulian mercenaries, but it is obvious that the Eastern Heruls followed the Huns as they were under Ostrogothic reign at the Black Sea, when the Huns arrived, and showed up next time in the upraise against the sons of Attila at the Danube, where they got their share of his Empire. At that time they were still pagans opposite the refugees in the Roman Empire, and their disappearance from history was not unusual as even the history of the Ostrogoths in the Hunnic group is unknown (except for the story of Jordanes). They were obviously assimilated into the Gothic group of Hunnic followers, regarded by Priscus as one community of language 17.

As a parallel the Western Heruls lived in the Frisian area as mercenaries – especially in England. As we are not aware of connections between the two groups the sparse history of the Western Heruls is described in a separate chapter.

Under the leadership of Attila the campaign of the Huns and their followers was intensified until Attila in 451 was defeated in France by a united Roman, Visigothic and Western Germanic army. According to Sidonius Apollinaris the Heruls joined Attila in France<sup>18</sup> - making it probable that they joined the Huns all the time. Shortly after the death of Attila, the Gepides were in 454 AD the leaders of a rebellion against the Huns, where the elder son of Attila was killed at the battle of Nedao. The northern bank of the Danube was divided between the rebels, and according to Jordanes the Heruls joined the Gepides in the rebellion.

This is confirmed by a Herulian kingdom north of Pannonia, where they apparently already had operated decades before the rebellion. Most of the Huns returned to southern Russia and Moesia at the Black Sea, but at that time the Barbarians had already weakened the old Roman Empire from which the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire was separated in 395 AD.

The large migrations of the century brought many of the Germanic tribes against west and south as the Vandals, Burgundians, Lombards, Franks and Anglo-Saxons. In the same period first the Visigoths and later on the Ostrogoths headed west. The result was the Visigothic Catalonia (418 AD), the Frankish kingdom (482 AD), the English kingdoms (450 AD) and the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy (493 AD) and the later Lombardy (568 AD). Instead the Slavs dispersed over the North Eastern Europe from where they slowly penetrated into the Czech Republic (6th century) and Germany (7th-8th centuries). The general pattern appear to be, that the Christian and Arian kingdoms of Germanic people were established in the old Roman area inside Limes, while the pagan tribes such as Bavarians, Alemanni and Saxons were first accepted

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16 The effect was probably increased by a Roman ban against trade with the Barbarians from 368 (Maenchen Haelfen).

17 They must have been assimilated into the group of Hunnic followers. Priscus described in 448 AD the headquarters of Attila in Dacia, where he described the Huns as several tribes talking either Hunnic or Gothic language ([Web-version](#)). The Heruls may have joined the Ostrogothic group counting also Gepides and Rugians. At that time some of the Alans had left for Spain.

18 Sidonius Apollinaris 7.12 and 8.15 (7.319-322)

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outside - probably as they had no strong and threatening kingship. However in 498 AD the Franks attacked the Alemanni, who thereafter concentrated around the Upper Danube and Lake Boden. Also the Christian Burgundians inside Limes were defeated by the Franks in 494 and 534 AD after their kingdom at the Rhine had been defeated by the Huns in 435 AD – an event which has been mixed up with the wars between Heruls and Goths around 500 AD in the much later German legends.

According to Julius Honorius – writing in the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> or beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century – the Heruls had already then formed a kingdom between the Quadi and the Marcomanni<sup>19</sup>. We shall realize that a kingdom of horse-riding nomads probably were settlements without borders where they subjugated a remaining population of farmers as far as they could. Actually Honorius was indicating the same position of the Heruls as the later historians – being the lowlands north of the Danube along Morava (March) River covering in the end most of Moravia and Marchfeld (Eastern Weinviertel in Austria and Zahoria in Slovakia). A group of remaining Suebi (Quadi) lived east of the Heruls, but many of the Quadi probably also lived inside the territory of the Heruls. The Quadi were mentioned by Tacitus (Annales) as living at the Marus River - a name derived from "Mar" meaning swamps and bogs. This is probably the name ending up in March and Mähren in Germanic language and Morava and Moravia in Slavic. It is interesting to notice that also their settlement here was connected with swamps as told earlier by Jordanes, and it is realistic to assume that the name Marings<sup>20</sup> was a nickname of these new coming Heruls to distinguish them from the Western Herulian mercenaries. The Gepides settled in Dacia, while the Ostrogoths, who hardly joined the rebellion except a few groups, were allowed to settle in Roman territory in Pannonia south of Danube. West of the Heruls the Rugians settled as neighbours to the Roman province Noricum with a centre in Krems <sup>21</sup>.

In 468 AD Jordanes mentioned an alliance between the people at the northern bank of the Danube (Suebi, Sarmatians, Sciri, Gepides and Rugi) against the Ostrogoths. He also mentioned a king Alaric in this alliance, whom he forgot to present by ethnicity following his own principle in the text. As we are missing the Heruls in the alliance and as the first known Herulian chieftain also was called Alaric, this unknown Alaric was probably a Herulian king [Schwarcz 2005, the Slovakian National Museum and Angelika Lintner-Potz 2007]. The leader of the Sciri, Edica, was probably related to the later officer of Herulian mercenaries, Odoaker, but his tribe was totally destroyed by the Goths after a battle in 268 AD and the battle of Bolia in 469 AD together with the Suebes and the few remaining Huns.

Jordanes emphasized the powerful support from the Herulian mercenaries<sup>22</sup> when Odoaker became king of Italy by displacing the last Roman Emperor in 476, symbolising the final fall of the Western Roman Empire <sup>23</sup>. This is confirmed by sources calling him "Rex Herulorum"<sup>24</sup>, but he was not a Herul himself and his group also consisted of other ethnicities than Heruls.

In 488 AD Odoaker attacked the Rugians, who left the area and joined Theodoric. They were replaced by the

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<sup>19</sup> Here I disagree with Angelika Lintner-Potz (Walther Pohl?) regarding their settlements as her unattested theory about different settlements is opposed by both Honorius, Laterculus Veronensis and Procopius. She has based her assumptions on the archaeological remains of the former people, but her remark about the Quadi changing to horse-riders may have been the Heruls who settled in their area subduing the remaining farmers.

<sup>20</sup> The name was close to a Germanic word for famous, but if this is a coincidence or a consequence is outside my knowledge. It is however the same as the Old Norse Marika, as -ika as a diminutive parallel to -ing.

<sup>21</sup> Eugippius living in Noricum has mentioned the Rugians and the plundering Heruls. Julius Honorius (geographer from the 5<sup>th</sup> century) has mentioned the Heruls living between Marcomannen and Quadi. Sidonius Apollinaris told that mercenaries from the barbarian group at the Danube joined the Roman Emperor against the Vandals in 458 AD - including Sciri and Eruli.

<sup>22</sup> Angelika Lintner-Potz can be misunderstood, when she at page 105 writes: "*der relativ große Anteil von Erulern in der Gefolgschaft Odowakars auf seinem Weg nach Italien.*" Odoaker and his Herulian mercenaries were already serving at the imperial court in Ravenna, while their king and the rest of the people probably stayed in Mähren. Odoaker shared out 1/3 of the land to his army, but it shall probably be regarded as a taxation. It was no migration and Odoaker was not the king of the Herulian people.

<sup>23</sup> In Consularia Italica the Heruls were indicated to have the most important role.

<sup>24</sup> Auctorium Havniensis ordo prior a. 476. In the same source (a. 487) Odoaker was once more mentioned as Rex Herulicus.

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Lombards, but according to Procopius these Lombards were subdued by the Heruls. In the next two decades the Herulian kingdom expanded and the town of Pöchlarn/Herilungoburg<sup>25</sup> in Nibelungengau may have been a westerly outpost against the Lombards.

Shortly after the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great attacked Odoaker after an agreement with the Byzantine Emperor. Odoaker was defeated in several battles, and escaped to Ravenna in 491 AD. The chancellor of Theodoric, Cassiodorus, told later about an event where “*Odoaker left Ravenna with the Heruls in the night across the Candidiani Bridge and met my lord Theodoric in a memorable battle*”<sup>26</sup>. It became later famous in the Germanic legends as the “*Rabenschlacht*”, which may be the reason why the stronghold in Ravenna (*Raben*) was called “*Maeringaburg*” in the ON-poem *Deor* – named after the heroically defending Heruls from Mähren. They were never defeated by Theodoric, but Odoaker had no luck to break out and after being sieged in two years in “*Maeringaburg*” the bishop of Ravenna tried to arrange a peace agreement. Theodoric used the opportunity to murder Odoaker.

The town now became the capital of Theodoric and the Heruls lost the 30% income of their land in Italy to the Gothic soldiers. Theodoric also made an agreement with the Heruls at the Danube<sup>27</sup>, but that was probably later.

For at least 250 years the Heruls kept their separate identity in spite of a rootless life as pirates, plundering gangs and mercenaries where Heruls even fought against Heruls in different armies. Probably they were kept together by a religious ancestor cult. We shall, however, regard them as a smaller basic group around the royal dynasty in the Hunnic times and then a host of followers around this dynasty in times of success. In this way local Quadi, the remains of the Sciri and others may have joined them.

### 1.1.2.2 The Western Heruls

The Western Heruls were first time mentioned by the Romans in 286 AD when Heruls attacked Gallia<sup>28</sup>. In the third century the Frisians temporarily left the coastal area due to a rising of the sea level, which made turbulence in the area. If the Heruls lived in Harlingen or Northern Frisia they probably had the same problems, but we do not know if their attacks were provoked by that situation. Ammianus Marcellinus told in the 360'ies several times about Herulian mercenaries in England, where they joined the Bataves. Later in 409, 455 and 459 AD the Heruls plundered the coasts of Gallia and Spain as pirates<sup>29</sup>.

It is rather obvious from the text that the Herulian mercenaries in the Roman armies until 454 AD were all Western Heruls, who may have been recruited together with the Bataves living at the Mouth of the Rhine. We do not know how far north the Heruls lived, but Mamertinus used the expression “*ultima loci*”, “*Laterculus Veronensis*” mentioned two groups (the westerly group being mentioned between the Saxons and the Rugians)<sup>30</sup>, Ammianus Marcellinus told that the Herulian mercenaries in 360 AD had their homes beyond the Rhine<sup>31</sup>, and in 478 AD Sidonius Apollinaris met Heruls in Toulouse living at the furthest shore of the

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<sup>25</sup> Pöchlarn at the Danube in Nibelungengau west of Vienna. Here the region of Herilungoburg was mentioned in a charter of Ludvig the German from 832 (including Pöchlarn, Harlanden and some other towns). Herilungoburg was probably the old Roman camp, Arilapa, which is hidden under Pöchlarn, being earlier an island at an important crossing of the Danube.

<sup>26</sup> Ennodius, *Consularia Italica* and Cassiodorus *Mommsen Chronica minora saec. IV.V.VI.VII vol 2*.

<sup>27</sup> Valenianus 491 and maybe a letter from Cassiodorus to an unnamed Herulian king.

<sup>28</sup> *Panegyrici* of Mamertinus, 289 AD. Described earlier in note 6. Jordanes, who is the source to the above description of the Heruls, did not mention the Western Heruls – probably because they had disappeared at his time without being ever involved with his Goths.

<sup>29</sup> In 455 and 459 the Western Heruls were mentioned as pirates at the Spanish coasts attacking with 400 light armed men (Hydacijs) and in Gallia in 409 (Hieromnimus).

<sup>30</sup> Their presence is probably confirmed by *Laterculus Veronensis* (4th century), where Heruls were mentioned both in north-west (between Rugi and Saxons, which could be Jutland) and in east (between Rugi and Sarmathae) – just like the Rugi who were supposed to be living near the island of Rygen and in the Hunnic area.

<sup>31</sup> The Romans mentioned in the 360'ies several times Heruls and Bataves together – especially in England. The

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ocean<sup>32</sup> – at a time when the Heruls had a well-known kingdom in Moravia too. It is obvious from these texts that at least two groups of Heruls existed in those centuries. If we combine the sources the Western Heruls must have lived at the south western coast of Jutland (Dithmarshen / North Friesland) or Harlingen and in 478 AD maybe in England – with Harlingen as the likely area if we use archaeology and names.

We do not hear about these Heruls after 478 AD, unless the letter for assistance from Cassiodorus was meant for them as suggested by Wolfram and Goffart – but in that case he should also address the Saxons. It was rather meant for the Eastern Heruls if the Western Heruls lived northwest of the Saxons – but it is not important as we have plenty of evidence for two groups already. The only problem worth to discuss about these Heruls today is if they were a branch of the Heruls or a separate entity.<sup>33</sup>

### 1.1.2.3 The Herulian way of fighting

As mentioned the early Herulian mercenaries in England and at the Rhine were Western Heruls. It is most likely that the mercenaries following Odoaker were Eastern Heruls who had been allied with the Sciri against the Goths and Huns since 454 AD, but we cannot exclude that some Western Heruls joined them. The later Herulian mercenaries in the armies of Justinian were Heruls from Moravia – Eastern Heruls – as told by Procopius.

In the early historical sources the Heruls were famous as swift on their feet and light-armed<sup>34</sup> foot soldiers opposite the Goths and the Alans, who were known as heavy cavalry. We shall be aware that the sources normally described the Western Herulian mercenaries – except Procopius telling on his side about slaves and young warriors of the Eastern Heruls, who had to demonstrate their courage by fighting without protecting armouring. We have no description of the experienced Eastern Herulian warriors, who had joined Huns, Goths and Alans across the plains. Their style was apparently a compromise between Hunnic and Gothic

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Bataves lived according to Plinius (BC) south of the Rhine-mouth, where the Western Heruls later appeared nearby. Ammianus [Ammianus, XX,1/4] told about Herulian mercenaries in the army of Julian in England (before he became an emperor). When Constantine felt threatened by the success of Julian, he demanded the strongest troops of Julian – Heruls, Bataves and Celts – to be sent to the Parthian War. Julian protested arguing, that he had promised these soldiers they could never be sent behind the Alps, as they had their homes beyond the Rhine (“laribus transrhenanis”). No one would dare to use that argument against the emperor if these Heruls were soldiers living at the Danube as claimed by some scholars.

- <sup>32</sup> Sidonius Apollinaris told in 478 [Sidonius, VIII,IX] from the court of the Western Gothic king Eurich in Bordeaux “Here strolls the Herulian with his glaucous cheeks, inhabitant of the Ocean's furthest shore, and of one complexion with its weedy deeps”. In this description they were mentioned together with Ostrogoths, Burgundians, Sygambrians and Saxons – the latter being mentioned as pirates also in VIII,VI. The Saxons lived north east of the Frisians around the mouth of the Elbe – which is in accordance with Laterculus Veronensis (4<sup>th</sup> century AD). Sidonius was a Gallic noble being born in Orleans, who should be supposed to know the geography of North Western Europe. These sources appear to be stronger than guesswork based on the name Harlinger Land (Herloga - Adam of Bremen) – the chapter about the ErilaR. A claim about another version of Harlinger Land = Herlogango/Heruling has not been attested.

- <sup>33</sup> Walther Goffart, 2006, p. 205-209.

- <sup>34</sup> Several sources including Jordanes describe the Heruls in this way - opposite the “heavy” Goths and Alans. Probably the arms of these were a light single-edged sword, a shield and a dagger – and maybe in battle formations a lance/spear. The heavier weapons of that time were lances, spears, axes and long double-edged swords. Bows were especially used by the Hunnic horsemen. Together the “light-armed Heruls”, the “heavy Gothic horsemen” with lances and the “mounted Hunnic archers” were a terrifying force. Separated they were not able to match the Roman and Byzantine mercenaries in the long run. Procopius later mentioned that the 3000 Herulian mercenaries of Narses were all horsemen, but that happened after the fellowship with the Huns, and in the great battle against Totila they were forced to dismount before the battle as Narses was afraid they would ride away. Wolfram is guessing a connection between Heruli and the word “fast”, which he also connected to the “Rosomoni” wounding Ermanaric in Jordanes Getica. Actually it is not surprising if the Heruls turned against their conqueror when he was attacked by the Huns. In the 8th century the Ravenna-Geographer (Source: The Gothic Marcomir) moved the title “the fastest” from the Heruls to the Danes, whom Jordanes had called “the tallest”. Is it a coincidence?

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style as horsemen using both sword and bow or lance. Two times the mercenaries of Justinian were mentioned as horsemen. Especially their living places at riversides and marches forced them to avoid the heaviest armouring. The light armed Western Heruls on their side were foot soldiers being able to fight as Vikings from ships and in tight woods.

### 1.1.2.4 The last migration of the Heruls - Procopius

After the death of Theodoric the Byzantine Emperor Justinian began to purge out the barbarians (incl the Arians) from his area of interest. When the Byzantines finally defeated the Ostrogoths in 553 Procopius finalised his last book about the history of the Gothic Wars. It is quite clear from the descriptions that he met the Heruls personally as a secretary and legal advisor of the great Byzantine general Bellisarius and later on he must also have met officers in Byzans like the Herulian general Suartuas. In a mixture of fascination and despise he dedicated two chapters to a valuable description of the Heruls. These chapters by Procopius, who as a reporter described his own time, are the main source to the history of the Heruls.

Up to the sixth century the Heruls were regarded as one of the most primitive Germanic tribes offering human beings to their "host of gods"<sup>35</sup>. This distinctive character indicates that they kept their own religion, and the description could as well be a description of the later Vikings of Scandinavia. Maybe a Gothic worshipping of the war god had been turned more in the direction of the West Germanic Wothan or past members of their own royal family. Probably they were even influenced by Alans and Huns joining the Herulian kings.

Procopius was a Christian and a part of his job was possibly to control if the pagan mercenaries joining Justinian had become Christians as they had promised. It was especially a problem regarding some of the Heruls.

Procopius sarcastically described how they earlier, as they became superior in power and in number, made their neighbours in Pannonia subject and tributary to themselves including the Lombards. When finally having no longer anyone in the world to assail, they attacked without reason the Lombards in a very careless way. Rodolphus was killed in the battle and the Heruls had to leave their kingdom in Moravia<sup>36</sup>. According to the general translation of Procopius the battle took place in 494 AD 3 years after Anastasius became emperor. A half century later Procopius probably mixed up the time of the defeat of Odoaker with the defeat of Hrodolphus - both being Herulian defeats. The battle most likely took place in 509 AD<sup>37</sup>. Procopius had

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<sup>35</sup> This expression by Procopius was about the Heruls in old days. The Heruls and Ostrogoths following Attila were without doubt pagans - confirmed by an Ostrogothic human sacrifice in Italy in 407. The Ostrogoths became Arians around 475AD - 100 years later than the other Goths. Later also the Gepides were Arians, but Procopius emphasized the Lombards as Christians opposite the Heruls in the description of the battle - which probably is an overstatement. Justinian persuaded the Illyrian Heruls to be Christians in 529, but Procopius described them with disgusting pagan manners as late as in the 540'ies, which indicates that they had not been Arians by themselves before. The idea that they had to find their king in the distant Scandinavia indicates a pagan ancestor cult, and it is very unlikely that these Heruls in Scandinavia should be Christian or Arians.

His description is similar to the way Thietmar of Merseburgs and Adam of Bremen described gods, hangings and sacrifice of human beings in the Danish and Swedish kingdoms at the end of the first millennium. Jordanes had a similar description of the Goths in early times too.

<sup>36</sup> Procopius and Paulus Diaconus have their separate versions of the battle, but in both versions the Heruls surprisingly lost the battle because of arrogance – and according to the writers also due to despise of the Christian God.

According to note 2.2.8 the Heruls made up an important part of the troops of Odoaker. Procopius told that a part of the deal in 476 was to give away 1/3 of the farming land (should be regarded as 1/3 of the income hereof) to his mercenaries, which Theodoric in 494 transferred to his allies. A part of the Heruls, who did not support Theodoric, may have returned to the kingdom at Danube causing turbulence and a need of expansion there around 494 or later.

<sup>37</sup> According to Procopius the Heruls laid down their weapons when Anastasius took over the Roman empire - which was in 491 AD. The battle took place at least 3 years after this ceasefire.

Wolfram analysed the alliances of Theodoric against the Franks. According to Wolfram Cassiodorus (Theodoric) with the preserved letters to the Heruls, the Varni and the Thuringians tried to form a northern front line against the

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obviously his sympathy at the Christian Lombardian side and his explanations regarding this battle in the past are not convincing. Paulus Diaconus told much later a Lombardian version where he on his side "forgot" that the Lombards had been subdued, but he also emphasized that Hrodolphus did not join the battle. He was killed afterwards. Also Procopius told that the Lombards followed the Heruls afterwards and killed a lot there.

The sources do not appear to be dependent of each other, and they both tell that the Heruls were defeated in two battles. They do not agree about the motive, but we should never expect a motive to be correct – especially not from Paulus. One of the historians are placing the death of Hrodolphus in the wrong battle, but it was no important fact to remember as the two battles were combined. We could wonder why Paulus was so interested in that battle, but he was at that time involved with Scandinavia as an envoy from Charlemagne, and he may have been aware that the Royal family of the Heruls now lived in Scandinavia.

Probably the real explanation behind the events in Pannonia was that Theodoric agreed with the Heruls that they should calm down and just collect the tribute according to the treaties with their neighbours. This most likely took place between 505 AD, when a conflict broke out between Theodoric and Byzans about Pannonia, and 507 AD, when the Franks attacked the Western Goths. Maybe due to that agreement and an alliance against the Franks Hrodolphus (who was not mentioned by name) was in 507 AD appointed weapon son (adoptio per arma) of Theodoric<sup>38</sup> - a title Theodoric was earlier given himself by the emperor. He got horse, spears, shield and other equipment from Theodoric, and the Heruls came under Gothic protection. The title explains why the Rök Stone could call Theodorik "the first of Seawarriors and Märingar" (se chapter 2.1.1.3).

A possibility is that an aggressive part of the Heruls on their own initiative in 508/9 AD attacked the Lombards against their agreement with Hrodolphus (even Procopius made it clear that Hrodolphus was against the attack). The Heruls lost and fled to the vast mountains north of the Lombards (Old Rugian territory). The Lombards, who until then had been a smaller tribe, got due to their success support from other tribes being subdued by the Heruls. Afterwards they may have attacked the Heruls in Moravia/Marchfeld killing Hrodolphus and sending the escaping royal family up in the valleys of the Carpathes. In that way we can read Paulus Diaconus and Procopius. The part of the warriors who did not care about the kingdom and preferred to continue their life as mercenaries and harriers of their neighbours (probably those attacking the Lombards) went south along the Danube - and were later driven away by the Gepides. Most of the family of Hrodolphus probably went north already in 509 AD, and the fact that the royal family did not go to their allied Theodoric (only few Heruls did so) indicate that they had a more convenient alternative. That will explain both the Herulian/Byzantine version of the battle by Procopius and the Lombardian version by Paulus Diaconus adjusted according to their motives. Both authors were against the Heruls, but the Lombards probably didn't want to tell that they had been subdued for years by the Heruls and found another reason for the war. The last section is a guess as we do not know what happened exactly at the battles.

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Franks - making these Heruls the Western Heruls, but they could as well be the Pannonian Heruls south east of the Thuringians. Wolfram regards Rodolphus as a strong ally to Theodoric at the eastern front line, who was let down when the Franks attacked the Visigoths in 507 in south-west. Accordingly the battle between the Heruls and the Lombards took place shortly after 507. Unfortunately Cassiodorus' letter to Theodoric's Herulian "son in arms" has no name or date, but Andreas Schwarcz has from the order of the letters of Cassiodorus dated the battle to 509 AD (Schwarcz 2005).

- 38 Cassiodorus' *Varia* V 2 (507-511 AD): From King Theodoric to the King of the Heruli: *"It has been always held amongst the nations a great honour to be adopted as 'filius per arma.' Our children by nature often disappoint our expectations, but to say that we esteem a man worthy to be our son is indeed praise. As such, after the manner of the nations and in manly fashion, do we now beget you. We send you horses, spears, and shields, and the rest of the trappings of the warrior; but above all we send you our judgement that you are worthy to be our son. Highest among the nations will you be considered who are thus approved by the mind of Theodoric. And though the son should die rather than see his father suffer aught of harm, we in adopting you are also throwing round you the shield of our protection. The Heruli have known the value of Gothic help in old times, and that help will now be yours. A and B, the bearers of these letters, will explain to you in Gothic (patrio sermone) the rest of our message to you."*

### 1.1.3 The arrival of the royal family to Scandinavia

According to Procopius many of the Heruls went north to the Scandinavian Peninsula led “*by many of the royal blood*”. First they went to the Varni living in the Elbe-/Mecklenburg-area. From here they passed the nations of the Danes without violence and crossed the sea. Arriving to the Scandinavian Peninsula they settled “*at that time*” at the Götes (“*Gautoi*”). As the Danish expulsion of the Heruls mentioned by Jordanes is regarded to be a contemporary description from the 6th century his information will also be a contemporary confirmation of the story by Procopius about the Herulic presence in Scandinavia.

We shall be careful about the use of the detailed information from Jordanes and Procopius as they had no general idea of the geography of Northern Europe. Furthermore, their sources regarding events 40 years before their own time could be handled uncritical and circumstantial. They had opposite motives to describe the arrival of the Heruls. The interpretation of their way to describe it can therefore be that the Heruls first settled between the Danes and the Goetes from where they were later expelled further north - in two steps. This is maybe confirmed by Procopius' use of the expression “*at that time*”.

As mentioned the rest of the people led by many of the royal blood earlier left for Thule (the Scandinavian Peninsula) - a journey which probably took place between 509 and 512<sup>39</sup>. They passed the Slavs, crossed barren country and came to the Varni. From there they passed the nations of the Dani without suffering violence, and from the shore of the Ocean they were sailing to Thule, where “the arriving Heruls at that time settled at/beside the Gautoi” – one of the most numerous nations there.

The route has often been discussed among historians. At that time the Slavs had reached Slovakia and Upper Moravia. The text of Procopius can be explained if the Heruls tried to walk through the Moravian Gate the usual way towards the Vistula but were surprised by the new Slavic groups. Therefore they turned more westerly and crossed the barren East Saxon Moors on their way to the Baltic Sea. The description may indicate that they had planned to follow the old and settle at the mouth of Vistula, but were prevented from this purpose by intruding Slavs. Procopius wrote that the Varni lived between the Rhine and the Northern Ocean, but he totally neglected the Saxons in Germany and England. The Varni were generally supposed to live in Mecklenburg and Eastern Holstein<sup>40</sup>. As the Varni later became a part of the Saxons and the Saxons were missing among the potential allies in the letter of Cassiodorus few years earlier (Varni, Thuringians and Heruls) we cannot exclude that the Varnian king represented some of the scattered Saxon tribes at that time.

500 years later Helmold in his “Chronicle of the Saxons” told about Heruls living west of Berlin, but this is regarded to be a simple mistake – though they could be some of the Mazur-Germanen going west.

The route has been used in order to prove, that the Danes - in spite of later sources - lived in Jutland<sup>41</sup> using

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<sup>39</sup> According to Procopius they went north before the rest of the Heruls crossed the Danube in 512. Since the battle at least some of those going south lived in a barren part of the former Rugian area in Bohemia, but they were starving and tried for a short while a corner of the Gepidian kingdom in Dacia, before they crossed the Danube. The Slavic tribes invaded according to some sources Upper Moravia around 502, which is indirectly confirmed by Procopius. The period for the departure to Scandinavia has to be 509-512. Procopius did not express himself clearly when the two groups separated as he possibly did not know, but probably they left just after the battle.

<sup>40</sup> Ptolemy. The Varni were around 550 forced against west by the Slavs, but apparently the river name “Warnow” survived.

<sup>41</sup> In the 9th century Ottar called the Danish islands, Scania (Skaane) and Halland as the country of the Danes, while

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the logical argument, that if the Heruls first crossed an ocean after passing the Danes, they had to walk to Jutland and from there cross Kattegat to the coast near Götaland in Sweden. However we should never expect Procopius to be exact regarding Scandinavian geography - actually he did only mention people/nations (or barren country without nations) except for the word Thule which the Romans regarded as the farthest island in the north separated from the Continent by the ocean. Probably the source of Procopius simply told about the Varni as the only German people because the Heruls had to negotiate with their former ally about ships for their travel directly to Scania. It made no sense to cross two Danish islands needing ships three times in order to go to Thule. In Scania they may have passed the Danes settling next to or at the Gautoi at "the island in the farthest north" - the rest of the description might be his own reconstruction based on Ptolemy, other old geographers and general knowledge. As Thule was regarded as an island he knew they had to sail, but we are not able to read whether they sailed the short way to the Danish Islands or Scania or they passed Jutland and maybe Fyen, and we do not know whether the ocean was Kattegat, the Baltic Sea or the narrow Oeresund. It is relevant to compare with Procopius' description of Britain/Brittia (Book VIII, xx) – there he demonstrated that he knew nothing about North European geography.

According to Procopius they passed the Danish nations (in pluralise) "without violence" – most likely by passing the Danish islands and maybe even a Danish Scania by ship - and settled at the Götes. It has to be noticed that the Gautoi were important to be mentioned by Procopius as they were supposed to be the family of the Goths – a possible target of Germanic people after the Gothic wars. Other Scandinavian tribes may have been closer. Jordanes told about a Danish expulsion of the Heruls. If this expulsion referred to the same group it will probably mean that they had settled in the border areas between the Danes and the Götes - Blekinge/Smaaland - before the expulsion. Also Procopius indicated, that this was not their final settlement as the settlement at the Götes was "at that time" (when they arrived) and that "they remained there on the island" (Thule) meaning that they possibly were sent north of the Götes by the Danes. These sources are too short and unspecific in their expressions to be regarded as certain, but this is discussed in a later [chapter](#). The final settlement of the royal family has to be identified by archaeology or other kind of information.

Procopius told about 13 kingdoms in Thule and he mentioned the war god Ares as the most important god there – but this remark must refer to the time when Datius returned to Illyria. Regarding the arguments below it is worth noticing that most of Procopius' description of Scandinavia covered the Scridfennae and the midnight sun north of the Svear. He even mentioned that he had interviewed eyewitnesses to the midnight sun taking place more than 800 kilometres north of Uppsala.

Procopius just mentioned Gautoi as a numerous group in Thule, while Jordanes specifically told about Ostrogoths, Vagoths and Gautigoths at the "island" Scanza, which he in his geographical description confused with Gotland<sup>42</sup>. The Gautigoths could therefore be the Guter at Gotland, but we have to notice, that Tacitus described the Suiones in the way we should expect the people of Gotland to appear. He had Sitones with a female rule next to them, which could mean Svealand seen from the Vistula. The Suetidi or Suehans of Jordanes could be the people of Svealand, but the Suehans could also be the people of Hälsingland/Medelpad. As both Tacitus and Jordanes used pairs of names both groups could alternatively belong to the Mälär Valley with the Sitones connected to the cult in Badelunda, but other possibilities exist too. The explanation of the names is not important regarding the Heruls and the sources are very unreliable. However, the Suehans of Jordanes with splendid horses like the Thuringians should in any way be noticed, as this may refer to a Germanic people being involved in the southbound fur trade – also mentioned by Jordanes.

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Jutland in the sagas was called Hreidgotaland. From the middle of the sixth century Dani became the common name for all people from the Scandinavian countries to people from the Continent, while the English historians later called all Scandinavians Normans.

<sup>42</sup> Ptolemy placed the 4 islands of Scanza with the largest eastern island north of the river Vistula. The Romans regarded the Scandinavian Peninsula as an island in Sinus Codanus (The Gothic Bay). Following Jordanes descriptions of tribes in Scanza, Scanza must be identical to the Scandinavian Peninsula, but in his geographical description he appears to describe Gotland due to the shape and the distance from Vistula. Procopius used the name Thule - meaning the farthest north - but from his description of the tribes and the midnight sun it is quite clear he talked about the Scandinavian Peninsula.



### 1.1.4 The Heruls in Illyria

Their remaining kinsmen at the Danube drifted around until they were received by the East Romans in Illyria, where they settled near Belgrade. Their mercenaries later became an important element in the army of Justinian, but his condition was that they were baptised. Lead by Mundus they assisted Justinian during the Nika-revolt in Constantinople, which resulted in the rebuilding of the current Hagia Sophia church in 537 AD. Procopius emphasized several Herulic officers – Suartuas and especially Phara, who had a leading role in the defeat of the Vandals. Procopius wrote that these Heruls around 548 AD sent an envoy to Scandinavia for a new king - and found "*many there of the royal blood*" opposite in Illyria. They returned with of Datius, Aordus and 200 young Herulian soldiers and sent back the candidate of Justinian, Suartuas, who instead became a commander of Constantinople.

It is obvious that this story was well known in Constantinople 548-553 AD as "hot news". In 551 AD Jordanes finished his work in Byzans and in 553 AD also Procopius finished his work at the same place - in other words two independent sources had less than 5 years after the return of the envoy told about Heruls and Danes in Scandinavia for the first time – both in combination. A small hint like the one of Jordanes would be understood, and they could not lie about such an event if their works should be taken seriously - they could just let out inconvenient facts. These contemporary stories are decisive for the evaluation of our information about the Heruls in Scandinavia – opposite the earlier migration to Scandinavia and the misunderstood origin.

Procopius received from a position close to the Byzantine court information from this Herulian envoy, which had just returned from Scandinavia 38 years after their arrival. He also told that they were much delayed as their first candidate died at their way back at the Danes - telling in this way that they lived far north of the Danes, who lived at Sealand and in Scania. He even told that he had interviewed witnesses from Scandinavia about the midnight sun. Unfortunately, he did not mention the rule of their royal family in Scandinavia in the first 38 years. His purpose was to "prove" that the new king and his supporters in Illyria were faithless and "*utterly abandoned rascals*" - a people impossible to rule, as they dismissed the royal candidate of Justinian. Among these words he also indicated that they were homosexuals – raging words used today in connections which this uncertain kind of historical foundation does not support.

Procopius' explanation of the reason behind the conflict was probably influenced by his own part of the responsibility as juridical secretary for their chief. Probably the problem was that a part of the Heruls did not follow the agreement, but were still pagans and wanted a king from the pagan Heruls in Scandinavia.

Regarding the number of Heruls, who settled in Scandinavia with the royal family, it is worth to notice that the Illyrian group made up an important unit in the Byzantine army. This in spite of a massacre on the people in Illyria after 512 AD. Procopius counted around 548 AD 3.000 soldiers in the army of Datius and 1.500 in the Roman army, and in 553 AD he counted 3.000 soldiers in the Roman army – covering around 12% of the army against the Goths. Procopius own words were: "*some of them, as it is has been told to me ... , made their home in the country of Illyricum, but the rest were averse to cross the Ister River, but settled in the very extremity of the world.*" How many they went to Thule is difficult to know from this historical record, but if we suggest that 1/3 went north it is equivalent with 2000 males in the soldiers age – corresponding with the 200 returning with Datius.

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The position of Datius in opposition to Justinian inside the empire was impossible and he was soon expelled to the Gepides north of the Danube at River Tizsa. Both people were in 567 AD destroyed by the Romans and the Avars. A daughter of a Herulic king, Silinga, was married to the Lombardic king Wacho and her son, Valthari, was crowned as king of the Lombards. She was probably killed by a Lombardian arrow [Tejral in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014], and he died young shortly after. The only Herulian dynasty being mentioned later in Southern Europe was a branch of the descendants of Phara, who were a part of the Agilofingy dynasty of the Bavarians at the upper Danube.

It is worth to notice that the Romans tried to assimilate the Herulian soldiers, as they made up an important part of the Roman army in the next 40 years<sup>43</sup>. Their king Grepes was baptised in Constantinople in 528 AD<sup>44</sup>. Later it was a condition from Justinian that they became Christians before they could settle in the area of Singidunum, where they covered an important hole in the Roman fortifications along the Danube. The Herulian soldiers in Africa fighting the Vandals were nevertheless mentioned as Arians.

When the Illyrian Heruls according to Procopius around 547/48 AD murdered their king Ochus (ON Hoch?), they had no new candidates of royal blood - confirming that nearly all the royal family went north as he wrote. An envoy was sent to Thule in order to find a new member of the royal family. They found many there of the royal blood, but the first one fell sick and died among the Danes. They went back and chose Datius to go south followed by his brother Aordus (ON Hord?) and 200 young warriors. Procopius emphasized the long delay in this connection, which Justinian took advantage of in Illyria placing his own Herulian general Suartuas as a new king. However, when Datius arrived he was elected by the Heruls as a new king and Suartuas had to take flight to Byzans<sup>45</sup>. A furious Justinian decided to reinstall Suartuas and caused once more a split among the Heruls. Many of them joined the Gepides in Dacia Inferior, who were enemies of Byzans and the Lombards.



The Hagia Sofia Church

The key to the understanding of these conflicts – hereunder the murder of Ochus – might be a general split among the Illyrian Heruls. After the offer from Justinian in 529 AD they appear to be separated into a Christian group of at least 1500-3000 professional soldiers following Justinian and a group of at least 3000 warriors who more and more openly returned to barbarian manners – obviously neither orthodox nor arian Christians and maybe worshipping the war god and their distant royal ancestors.

At the time of the final split there were already hostilities between the Gepides and Lombards, the latter being supported by Justinian. Under these hostilities Aordus was killed in battle against the troops of Justinian. Obviously his brother, Datius, became a Herulian king exiled in Dacia - which makes sense as he had caused the split. The defeat of Aordus led to a short ceasefire, but in 552 AD the Gepides in Dacia were defeated by the Lombards with Byzantine support headed by Suartuas, and in 567 AD under Justin II the Gepides were defeated into oblivion by the Lombards and the Avars. Also the Heruls disappeared from the history in Dacia now being conquered by the Avars. The Herulian mercenaries of Narses had also disappeared - probably assimilated among the Romans and the Lombards, when these shortly after moved to Italy. Some of the Heruls simply became Christian Roman provincials who marked a distance to their former ethnic identity. The only Heruls we suspect to continue a rule in Southern Europe were the descendants from Bellisarius' Herulian commander, Phara, who became the royal dynasty of the new established Bavaria, the

<sup>43</sup> Sarantis 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Malales Chronographia.

<sup>45</sup> Suartuas might be a source of Procopius to the last part of the Herulian history, and he was probably well informed about his northern rivals and the journeys to Thule. Procopius knew the officers from his former job and they were both in Byzans when Suartuas returned from the Heruls, so it is very unlikely that the historian should write two chapters about the Heruls without questioning Suartuas, as he mentioned, that he asked people coming from there about the midnight sun.

## The Heruls

Agilofingi 46.

Procopius covered without doubt political motives behind his description of the “drunken and treacherous” Illyrian Heruls. First, they denied to follow Bellisarius and preferred the other Byzantine general, Narses, who was competitor of Bellisarius, and later most of them revolted against Justinian and Suartuas before going to the Gepides. On the other hand Procopius had no obvious motive to twist the description of the journey to Thule - except maybe for the sentence "*without suffering any violence*" and the settlement "*at/between the Gautoi*". Procopius could not change the fact that Datius was found in "Thule" and returned in his own time, and somewhere the Heruls had to stay in the meantime. His and his readers' knowledge about Scandinavia and its geography was very limited, but there is no reason to believe that the description of the journey itself was manipulation. His reliability, sources and motives are further discussed in chapter 1.3.1.5.

Many questions have been asked about the Heruls, but most scholars agree in the fact that the Eastern Heruls moved from the Black Sea Region towards west to a kingdom in Moravia. In the theory they could be different groups, but that does not make much sense and their movement is explained as a part of the Hunnic movement. Most scholars also agree that the royal family 494-512 AD migrated to the Scandinavian Peninsula via Eastern Saxony and Danish surroundings settling first as neighbours to or at the Gautoi. They could still be found in Scandinavia 39 years later. Nevertheless, we have never heard about Heruls in Scandinavian history and legends - as Heruls.

How do we imagine this people to disappear in Scandinavia? Was it possible for such an outstanding, individual, feared, powerful and militant people to disappear from all the Nordic narrators, historians and archaeologists, when the Illyrian Heruls 35 years after their arrival were able to find many of royal blood in Scandinavia? Why did they not all follow their prince and his group of 200 young warriors back to the strong Herulian soldiers in Illyria if things went wrong in Scandinavia?

The most - and maybe only - probable explanation is that they appear under another name or are assimilated into another shape in Scandinavia.

Our only contemporary information from Scandinavia is of archaeological character, and therefore the archaeological conclusions and traces have to be analysed and compared independently with the history written by Procopius in order to confirm this history. Afterwards the more unreliable sagas and chronicles from Northern Europe will be compared in order to find possible explanations and to show that the Heruls

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46 According to Procopius 3000 Herulian warriors joined the Gepides when Aordus was killed, while 500 Heruls joined the Byzantines sent by Justinian in order to help the Lombardian king Audoin. Later 3000 Heruls were together with Lombards an important element in the army of the Byzantine Narses (these Heruls made up 12% of the Roman army), when he defeated the Ostrogoths for ever (Wolfram 1988), but the last time we heard the name Herul in the Roman sources was when Narses around 560 defeated a Herulian king Sindualt of the Brents near Passo de Brennero. According to F. Eckhardt based on chronicles from Wuertzburg and Salzburg the Bavarian duke Garibald (ancestor of the Agilofings) was probably son of the Herulian commander under Bellisarius, Phara, and duke Tassilo I, who followed Garibald as king of the Bavarians, was probably son of his nephew, the Herulian king Sindualt of the Breones. The daughter of Garibald was married with the Lombardian king Authari in 589 and her brother became duke of the Lombardic Asti. This indicates that the Illyrian Heruls were still accepted as a people of importance and took part in the political matrimonial alliances between the Germanic dynasties. Another example was the queen Silinga of Lombardia, who according to *Origo Gentis Longobardorum* (ca 670 AD) was the daughter of a Herulian king. In the same chapter it is stated that the Heruls (at the Danube) had no king after Rodolphus and consequently Silinga should be the daughter of Rodolphus. These family-branches were not accepted as kings by the Illyrian Heruls in 548, and therefore the examples cannot be used as evidence against the royal family earlier leaving for Scandinavia, but they might indicate connections between Scandinavia, Bavaria, Raetia and Lombardia.

In 554 the Heruls left Narses during a battle because he executed one of their officers, but the last years they had been fighting together with the Lombards, so maybe the last contingent of Herulian mercenaries became a part of the Lombards conquering Italy - making together with Silinga a connection between the Heruls and the Lombardian Style II possible in the late 6th century.

may have been mentioned in the legends after all.

### 1.2 Scandinavian connections before 509 (archaeology)

The migration of the royal family to Scandinavia was no coincidence as the Heruls had a close connection with Scandinavia, which had nothing to do with their origin. The connection can be divided into several stages based on archaeology combined with history:

As mentioned earlier the Moravian kingdom of the Heruls covered in the second part of the 5th century a part of Moravia and of the Marchfeld in Eastern Weinviertel and Zahoria. Moravia is a later Slavic name of Mähren – maybe identical with Maurungani/Mauringa mentioned by Cosmographer of Ravenna and Paulus Diaconus as a Lombardian settlement after crossing the Elbe going south. In the end of the 5th century the Herulian superiority was expanded to a.o. the former Rugiland up along the Danube until around Nibelungengau, where the Lombards soon after settled.

Already Ammianus Marcellinus told in the 380'ies that the Huns and their followers had occupied the land north of the Danube from the Black Sea to the area mentioned above, which is in accordance with Julius Honorius, who already placed Heruls in Moravia in the end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th century. At this early point it was probably scattered camps of horse-riding nomads in the country of the Quadi-agriculturists – half nomads who had also earlier been used to live in marches.

What made this position important was that the Moravian Gate in the Carpathes was a key point at the main route to the Baltic Sea from Rome and the Balkans – the old Amber Route along the Vistula River and another route along the Oder - both rivers having their wells in Upper Moravia close to the Moravian Gate. As earlier mentioned the Marcomannic Wars in this area forced in the 2nd century the trade between the Orient/Rome and Scandinavia along the eastern routes controlled by the Goths. Hoards from that connection are especially found at Fyn (close to Gudme) and in the Götalands. When the Huns arrived and the Goths moved, these routes were blocked, but the Amber Route was still a route between Scandinavia and the Huns and their allied – used also by Scandinavian mercenaries and allied with the Huns.

The Amber route was Byzans/Rome - Aquilaia - Carnuntum - Moravian Gate - Vistula - Oeland/Gotland - Helgoe - Högom - Trondheim/Berntnem - Westen Norway/Lofoten and with a branch Oder - Bornholm - Scania - Vestergötland - Viken - Southwestern Norway. It is shown in Chapter 1.1.1.

#### 1.2.1 The Eastern Heruls 375 - 454 (Phase A1)

Remains in Sösdala may indicate Hunnic burial rites from a group of Hunnic horsemen and their East Germanic companions (ae. Heruls and Ostrogoths) operating at the Scandinavian Peninsula in the first half of the 5th century before or during the campaign of Attila – maybe in order to explore new possibilities or to recruit Scandinavian allied or warriors for the campaign. As the same type of sacrificed horse equipment is found in great numbers in the Scandinavian war booties in the bogs of Finnestorp and Vennebo some of these horsemen may have been killed, when they tried to penetrate Vestergötland. The unique foreign character and the number in Sösdala and Fulltofta indicate that they were not just mercenaries returning to their homes with Hunnic souvenirs. Lotte Hedeager has described these remains as the result of a more general Hunnic strategy for a short period in the first part of the 5th century placing strongholds in Northern Germania during their campaigns. This is not attested, but instead her arguments will also explain the historically attested Heruls and thereby a strong Hunnic influence on the Scandinavian religion.

The ongoing discussion if the horsemen were Huns or their Gothic, Herulic or Scandinavian allied

is irrelevant for the purpose in this paper as the remains under all circumstances show the connection between Scandinavia and the Hunnic campaign in which the Heruls participated.

First we will take a look at the finds in Southern Sweden indicating connection with the East Germanic people in the Hunnic campaign in the early 5th century. In Sösdala and Fulltofta in the middle of Scania and in Vennebo and Finnestorp in the borderlands between Halland and Western Götaland equipment for horsemen is found in a context quite similar with the finds in Moravia and the Middle Danube Region called the Cosoveni or Untersiebenbrunn Style [Fabech 1991; Tejral 1997a] – closest is the bridle in Kachin in Ukraine. Tejral has in 2007 [Tejral 2007, 58-60] described this style as connected with Estgermanic and Alanic people from the Bosporan area at the Black Sea. He wrote that they apparently had a power center at that time just north of the Danube and Carnuntum in the first part of the 5th century. This mixture of people is exactly the expected ethnogenesis of the Eastern Heruls. The finds are unusual in Northern Europe, but are according to Tejral known at the mouth of the Elbe and at the mouth of the Vistula too. In Vennebo and Finnestorp - being excavated again in 2002-2012 - the finds come from wet or former wet areas covering a longer period of time until 550 AD - also containing Nydam-style [Nordqvist 2007]. The few isolated places with a large number of foreign equipment indicate that they cannot be a result of general trade or a few returning mercenaries, but appear to be offerings of weapons from warrior groups like the earlier finds in Jutland.



Charlotte Fabech connected in 1991 these finds with East Germanic horsemen – probably Heruls or maybe Ostrogoths. Her reason was that the finds around Sösdala (several places between Ringsjön and Fenjasjön in the middle of Scania) do only contain horse equipment buried in hills of gravel [Fabech 1991]. This is similar with burial rites found in places like Pannonhalma in Hungary. The Huns used to sacrifice horses or horse equipment after burials in Asia. Finds like Pannonhalma are normally connected with the Huns or maybe their companions. It is unlikely that returning Nordic mercenaries should bring Hunnic burial rites back to Scandinavia, and that the surviving warriors should spoil the prestigious and expensive equipment the dead man brought back – the act must be a part of a religious act. These Scandinavian finds must be connected with a group of Huns or people closely related to the Huns – probably in a group of horsemen of a mixed ethnic origin being a part of the Hunnic expeditions. Charlotte Fabech was wrong about her timing with the royal Herulic family as the dating is too early, but basically she was right in her observations in 1991 as the numerous finds had no items of Scandinavian origin at all except their saddles.

The Danish professor of archaeology at the University of Oslo, Lotte Hedeager, has presented the hypothesis<sup>47</sup> that the Huns ruled in Scandinavia for a short period in the first part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century based on information from Priscus. He wrote by referring to the Italian ambassador at Attila's court, Romulus: *“By no one ... had such great things been achieved in such a short time, since he ruled even the islands of the Ocean and, in addition to Scythia, held the Romans also to the payment of tribute.”* The islands in the Ocean are generally regarded to be the Baltic islands (incl. Scandinavia). Based on this historical information, the shamanistic character of Odin, the above mentioned finds in Sösdala, the mirror in Uppsala and 10 earrings found in Denmark and Norway, she has suggested that the Scandinavian animal style and the cosmology was inspired by the Huns. Her suggestions have caused a heated debate regarding the way the Scandinavian archaeologists are treating new theories – especially with the Swedish professor Ulf Näsman<sup>48</sup>, who in his doctoral thesis in 1984 has written that the Huns hardly were able to control land north of the Carpathians.

The historical arguments of Lotte Hedeager regarding the Huns are weaker than the arguments regarding the Heruls brought forward in this paper, but it will not change the hypothesis about the Heruls if she is right that the Huns ruled Scandinavia a few years in the first part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Her arguments do under all circumstances strengthen the hypothesis about the Heruls too, as this hypotheses can explain most of her observations and resist the objections from Ulf Näsman.

<sup>47</sup> Hedeager 2007 and Hedeager 2011.

<sup>48</sup> [http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2008\\_111.pdf](http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2008_111.pdf), [http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2008\\_279.pdf](http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2008_279.pdf); [http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2009\\_045.pdf](http://fornvannen.se/pdf/2000talet/2009_045.pdf).

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In spite of the heated debate both sides agree that the Huns had impact on Scandinavia and Franz Herschend has stated that the character of the life of the Huns has caused that only few remains of them are recognised in Europe – and the same could probably be said about the Heruls who were their companions.

”Unfortunately” Charlotte Fabech's theories 1991 about Sösdala supported Lotte Hedeager in her disputes with Ulf Näsman, in 2008. This was unlucky as Charlotte Fabech had now married Ulf Näsman. Her theory is now changed, when you read their common article 2014 [in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014]. What shall we believe? Charlotte Fabech had made the mistake to write that the finds may be caused by the Heruls of Procopius, but this argument did not change the character of her archaeological arguments. The only argument for a change is that the 5 saddles of the find probably are of Scandinavian origin, while the 2 bridles probably were of South European origin.

The wooden saddles were definitely of a Hunnic type, but they had a saddle ring and combining mounts, which is only found in Soesdala, Finnestorp and Hoegom. This is used as an argument for a Scandinavian origin of the war booties, assuming that saddle rings were only used by Scandinavians. A part of the reasoning by Charlotte Fabech and Ulf Näsman is now that Scandinavian warriors went south and learned to use the Hunnic saddles, but in that case some of these rings should be found in the South too and the saddles would more broad spread in the North if we follow that hypothesis – apparently that is not the case. There may be other explanations – ae. that some Scandinavians followed the intruders in Scandinavia or rather that horse and saddle did not always follow the horsemen over the sea. Some of them may have got local horses and saddles in that size after combined Hunnic and Scandinavian rules when they crossed the sea, as the Scandinavian saddle of such horsemen was similar with the Hunnic except for the ring and the combining mount. Thomas Grane has confirmed that combinations could even be expected at the same artefact [Kkrapunov/Stylegar 2014, page 138]. Consequently we do not need to follow the argument used for a change of the theory by Charlotte Fabech and Ulf Näsman.

In the same article it is stated that the forested area around Sösdala has very rich finds from the Estgermanic areas in the Migration period.

The finds in Finnestorp and Vännebo are war booties leading to the most probable conclusion that a group of horsemen (those at Sösdala or related) tried to intrude Västergötland, where they were defeated and their equipment was sacrificed to the gods in the bogs.

As the Heruls according to Julius Honorius lived in the early phase with Untersiebenbrunn in the their territory just opposite Carnuntum the Heruls probably joined the horse-riding warriors to Scandinavia along the old trade route.

What is interesting in their common article from 2014 is one of the conclusions “*At present it seems hazardous to suggest that the two hords with horse equipment at Bar and Kachin indicate that the old communication corridor between the Black Sea and the Baltic north of the Carpathians was still open in the fifth century. They rather indicate that the eastern part of an interactive zone were where Late Roman, Germanic, and Nomadic cultures met in the early Migration period.*” This is exactly the zone the Heruls operated in and it should bring them to the same conclusions as Igor Gavritukhin and Maxim Levada if they would think their conclusion all the way through.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Igor Gavritukhin has pointed out that certain types of glass beakers indicate a connection between a group in South Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. He especially pointed at the Eastern group of the Heruls as the bearer [Gavritukhin in Kkrapunov/Stylegar 2011]. In his article about the fibulas he mentioned the same conclusion [Kkrapunov/Stylegar 2014].

In the same work other archaeologists as Maxim Levada was of the opinion that the connections were primarily established by Scandinavians going south [in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2011]. A main argument regarding the 5<sup>th</sup> century appears to be that the finds of niello were concentrated in Scandinavia and spread

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over Europe. However these concentrations were due to Scandinavian war booties, and Charlotte Fabech has later argued that the workshops were Roman [Levada in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014]. In the same work Levada mentioned that a group of belt buckles (Szabadbattyán, Yalta, Bar etc.) with niello (see also chapter 1.2.4) were produced by the same artist in the Mediterranean area – confirming that niello can not be used as an indication of Scandinavian production. Again we are ending up in Herulian range of operating and far more than that as we shall see.

It has to be emphasized that above we are only discussing the special warrior and horse equipment in this style using stamped ornamentation and animal heads in profile, as the technique and stylistic elements became more widespread in South Western Scandinavia under the name Sösdala Style in the first part of the 5th century. This spread does not need to be connected with the finds in Sösdala. The Sösdala Style inspired from South Eastern Europe existed side by side with the carved Nydam Style, inspired by Roman military equipment. Later these two styles were combined in the Scandinavian Style I.

Lotte Hedeager has in “Iron age myth and materiality” (Hedeager 2011) mentioned the diagnostic features of a Hunnic precense in Scandinavia, which will as well cover the Heruls.

First of all she is mentioning the bronze mirror in the East Mound of Uppsala, but it will be mentioned in a later chapter as the mound was from the 6th century. She is also mentioning the sacrifices in Sösdala by referring to Tomka (1987) and Bemman (2007).

Further she mentioned a special type of earrings of solid golden rings in Denmark and Norway, which have never been identified as Hunnic before. They are strayfinds – probably from graves - and have never been found in the golden hoards.

In addition she mentioned gold foil figures and the Asiatic dress and the horsemen, but that will be mentioned in the 6th century instead.

The discussion if the horsemen in this phase were Huns or their Gothic, Herulic or Scandinavian allied is irrelevant for the purpose in this paper as the remains under all circumstances show the connection between Scandinavia and the Heruls joining the Hunnic campaign together with Huns and other Eastgermanic tribes.

### 1.2.2 The Eastern Heruls 454 - 509 (Phase A2)

The Heruls probably established their rule in Moravia in the beginning of the 5th century, but after the Hunnic defeat around 454 AD several archaeological finds indicate a continuation of the earlier connection between Scandinavia and the East Germanic people in South Eastern Europe – i.e. Bornholm, Scania, Finnestorp and Hoegom in East Scandinavia and Eveboe and Snartemo at the western coast of Norway. Among these artefacts are special types of hunnic saddles and arrow heads – but regarded to be produced in Scandinavia. A special kind of a sword pommel with animal heads in Scandinavian Style I is only found similar in the above mentioned Herulian grave in Blucina, Moravia, and another version in the tomb of Childeric in Tournais – probably both kings of strong Germanic mercenary people in the South being Roman foederati. Several pieces are found in graves and sacrifices in Scandinavia near the trade route. More generally the Scandinavian fibulas in the region of the Baltic Sea are influenced by East Germanic stylistic elements like rosettes, animal heads and curved heads with three knobs. Opposite the similar fibulas with more than three knobs from the Allemanni and the Franks never reached Scandinavia.

Especially the chieftain in the mound in Högom in Norrland had close connections with the East Germanic people. It was that region Jordanes praised for its precious furs, which appear to have been one of the most important export articles of Scandinavia at that time. He was probably a part of a network of chieftains along the trade routes at both sides of the Scandinavian Peninsula,

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extending the old Amber Route from Carnuntum - a network which appears to have used the CIIa1 bracteate too. Apparently the rich dynasty in Högom disappeared from that area around 500 AD, when the Vendel culture expanded.

The Heruls probably used their knowledge from their early connections as Hunnic allies and decided to keep control with the Amber Route through the Moravian Gate in the Carpathes which passed their kingdom - rather by taxation than as merchants. According to Procopius that was the way they treated their neighbours. Some of the Heruls should in that case be expected to ride north in order to inspect the possibilities and negotiate deals about trade and protection - or as mercenaries in Scandinavian service. Neither can we exclude that a small group of Heruls and other allies following the Huns in the beginning of the fifth century had settled in Blekinge/Värend, but this is not certain.

It is important to be aware of the mixture of people being initially mentioned. That makes it difficult to separate the Heruls by archaeology from the other East Germanic people following the Huns. Probably the population in the Herulian kingdom included besides Heruls i.e. Sammartian Alans, Huns, Thuringians and Sciri. Archaeology has revealed that the earlier population of Svebes still were living in the area as agriculturists. The Heruls became a class of warriors probably defending the farmers if they paid for that service. Ostrogoths and Rugians may have taken part, but their own dynasties waged war on the Heruls and other East Germanics until some time after 493 AD, and all Gothic attention was turned against the Romans. We must therefore expect the Heruls to block the Gothic and Rugian access to the trade route through the Moravian Gate. It is therefore most likely that the Scandinavian connection at that time were members of the Herulian dynasty and their companions. When the Ostrogoths after the defeat of Odoaker became the Heruls' superior they were Christians and still busy in Italy. They had no reason to settle in Scandinavia before their own defeat around 550 AD - and hardly at that time either as they opposite the Heruls were Christians.

The connections between Scandinavia and the Hunnic or Eastgermanic people until 565 AD has been neglected for years by especially the Scandinavian archaeologists, who preferred the Frankish contacts. The two conferences Inter Ambo Maria at Crimea in 2010 and 2012 will hopefully change that picture - though many details still have to be discussed.

The archaeology cannot tell us with certainty if the style and items were brought to or from Scandinavia by Heruls, by Huns, by Scandinavians or by trade, but the history is telling that the Heruls controlled the key region passed by the route along which the spread took place - giving in one way or the other the contact against north, which will explain their expectations regarding Scandinavia and the later events.

Due to their blurred archaeological profile and their missing historical writings some scholars have claimed that the Heruls were just a band of warriors – especially a linguist like Alvar Ellegaard. That must be due to insufficient study of texts like the one of Procopius as it is obvious that they through 300 years were an ordinary migration people with women and children and with their own dynasty, gods and traditions. Opposite, some of their groups of travelling mercenaries may be regarded as bands of warriors.

### 1.2.2.1 Solidi

Lots of solidi are found in the Baltic region of Scandinavia (660 in Sweden – hereof most at Gotland, Öland and Helgö – and 150 at Bornholm), both from the 5th and the 6th century. 77% of the solidi in Scandinavia are Byzantine, but as some of the Byzantine solidi were made in western mints 40% of the solidi are from the



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western part of the empire [Fagerlie 1967]. This percentage is nearly the same from Theodosius to Justinian. It should be noticed, that none of them (except an old one) are from the Ostrogothic mint of Theodoric, and the most intense stream was from Leo I and his contemporaries (458-476) (Odoaker dismissed the Vest Roman emperor in 476 AD.) After (or maybe during the reign) Anastasius (491-518) the stream of golden coins ceased dramatically. 82% of the coins are found at the three Baltic islands, but at Oeland nearly no coins are from after 476. We also know, that the highest concentration of Theodoric-coins (3-400) was found in South Western Germany, that 400 solidi of the same kind as in Scandinavia in the 5th century were found at Lower Vistula, and that only 5 solidi were found in the middle Danube area. Only 4 coins of Odoaker are known, as he did not want to provoke the emperor but used Byzantine coins or older coins.

How do we interpret that? The solidi were a usual payment for mercenaries and tribute to threatening barbarians who could use them as raw material. There is no doubt that the concentration at the Baltic Islands and Helgoe was due to the status of these places as trade and workshop centres. Many of the later precious fibulas and the "guldgubber" are found at these places too. Therefore they are not necessarily found where those people lived who brought the solidi to Scandinavia. The society was not based on exchange of coins, and the total lack of Ostrogothic coins contradicts earlier theories about an Ostrogothic connection, and maybe also a generally used trade route, which should result in a more general spread geographically and regarding to types of coins. Therefore the deposits of solidi found at the centres were probably meant for raw material. This is maybe also confirmed by the fact that after the decrease of the stream of solidi and the disappearance of the golden hoards in 536 AD as the latest, nearly all gold in Scandinavia disappeared. The solidi may have been payment from imperial mercenaries, but this is contradicted by the constant spread between Byzantine and western coins all over the period, so tribute from various other people, who had got the solidi from the Roman Emperors, is an obvious alternative. The big number of similar coins in the Vistula-area indicates that the connection was established along the Vistula and maybe the Oder. It is important to realize that the date of a coin will only tell the day the first owner got the coin – they were probably lost or buried in Scandinavia years later. The spread 60%/40% indicates a collecting position between Rome and Byzans, and therefore a people operating in the Danubian area in the second part of the 5th century – like the Heruls – is an obvious possibility as a part of it. The general stream of solidi except to Gotland first time ceased when Odoaker took over (or when a change took place on Oeland) and again when the Heruls left the Moravian Gate close to the wells of Oder and Vistula (or when the Slavs expanded). But there is no doubt that the stream was due to trade and mercenaries along the Amber route and its alternatives.

### 1.2.2.2 Burials - Moravia

First we shall examine the finds in Southern Europe where the Heruls had lived. In that region there are no cremations at all found from the time when the Heruls lived there. As we know from Procopius that the pagan Heruls burned their dead, he must have referred to the Heruls in Sweden. Accordingly we will apparently waste time on looking for similarities regarding the royal family arriving in 509 AD, but we can still find connections in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. They followed probably the local customs which at the same time shifted to flat cremation graves. In Moravia all tribes used similar skeleton- burials, Heruls as well as other tribes.

The Czechish professor, Jaroslav Tejral, has both in 1987 (Menghin 1987), 1988, 1997 and 2014 (Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014) mentioned what he regarded as Herulian burials due to history north of the Danube in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century they were replaced by Lombardic burials with Elb-Germanic pottery. But the area had also burials with other ethnicities, which is in accordance with our expectations, both regarding mixed population and historical information (based on Procopius', Eugippius' and Lucius Honorius' remarks)<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> In the area of Vienna and Moravia finds from 450-550 AD indicate a very mixed population with Lombards, Suebes, Eastern Germanics, Sarmatians/Alans and Huns. Many of these are of course Herulic, but the pattern will be complicated and the artefacts brought to Scandinavia may sometimes have been used for many years because of longer distances to the resources.

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He found also burials of Germanic looking women with Hunnic skull-deformations in the Danube-region in the 5th century. In his early works he guessed these to be Heruls, but later he has indicated that they probably were Huns or Sarmatian Alans following the Herulian group of mixed people. Also in the Bavarian Erding, where a woman with Scandinavian jewellery was found, 10 women were buried with such skull-deformations, but at this time some of the Huns were still present in Western Europe – including in the army of Narses. Even if some of the Heruls may have used skull-deformation, they probably left this custom after the uprising against the Huns in 454 AD and neither was the habit ever mentioned by Procopius. Therefore there is no reason to expect skull-deformations in Scandinavia when the Heruls went there in the 6th century. In the Volga-region 70% of the Alanic male burials showed skull deformations. Skull-deformations have been used by other people in other times too, but the spread in Europe in the Migration Ages is similar with the probable spread of the Huns and the Sarmatian Alans, who had used this custom in Asia for centuries.



From the Blucina tomb

This is only one of the many examples of the uncertainty when we attempt to separate the tribes in this turbulent period of Pannonia and surroundings. It is difficult to combine archaeology and ethnicity in an area with a very mixed population, but Tejral has tried and his conclusion is that the Heruls due to history were the leading of the mixed tribes until the Lombards took over shortly after 500 AD. The archaeology is telling exactly the same story. He also quoted Paulus Diaconus that the Lombards “took on many warriors from subjugated nations”, which probably were the tribes subjugated by the Heruls as told by Procopius.

Anyhow the archaeologists of the Czech Republic and Austria have pointed out some princely burials from the second half of the 5th century in Moravia/Marchfeld to be Herulian - primarily burials with attributes of East Germanic horsemen in the area regarded to be the Herulian kingdom. The Blucina-Cezavy tomb 50 south of Brno is of a standard close to the famous Childeric's mound in Tournai - they even wear fibulas and identical arm rings as signs of military rank among the Roman foederates. It is interesting to notice that Childeric had an alliance with Odoaker, who was supported by the Heruls. The archaeologists agree that his reflex bow, arrowheads and horse equipment show that he was belonging to the East Germanic people earlier following the Huns. The richness of the Blucina tomb, the attributes of an officer, the dating around 466-85 AD, the bow, the horse-equipment and the central location in this part of Moravia makes it almost certain that this grave in Blucina is the burial of one of the Herulian leaders, who at that time began to subdue and tribute all their neighbours and to follow Odoaker. Maybe this was the tomb of Alaric – the king

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However at Brno (Blucina and Zuran Hill (Austerlitz)) and at Rothenseehof (Mistelbach north of Vienna) royal burials from the second half of the 5th century are found - some of them in combination with large mounds. They are supposed to be graves of Herulian or Lombardian kings, but also other Herulian graves are probably found there.

- 50 The low mound in Blucina contained the skeleton of a chieftain at 30-40 years from 450-485 AD with a spatha, a sax, a bow, a shield and precious horse equipment including a saddle. At the shoulder he wore a "buegelfibula" - generally accepted as a sign of high military rank in the Roman army according to Tejral [Article in Menghin 1987]. A part of the equipment was cloisonné similar to the Merovingian Childeric-tomb (482 AD) and the later Sutton Hoo. A similar buckle in Gudme is by the Danish National Museum used as an example of the connection between Denmark and the Franks though the cloisonné appears nearly identical with the buckle in Blucina possibly being buried before the Merovingian Empire was established. In Jaroslav Tejral's article "Archaeologischer Beitrag zur Kenntnis der völkerwanderungszeitlichen Ethnostrukturen nördlich der Donau", chapter II,2 [in Friesinger 1990], the chieftain in Blucina is regarded to be a Herulian and connected with Procopius, Ottars Mound, the Uppsala Mounds and Zuran Hill. He mentioned that the top of the golden handle of the spatha appear to be a type known as Scandinavian. Other scholars call the burial Herulian or at least East Germanic in the literature [Windl in Tejral 1997a, Karel Tihelka, Parmatky Arch. 54, 1963 and RGA (Blucina)]. According to Birgit Arrhenius [Arrhenius 1985] the cloisonné of that time were Byzantine modules used in local workshops – not Frankish or Alemannic craft as often referred to in Scandinavia.

mentioned by Jordanes in 467 AD.

Tejral and Windl do also agree that the oldest tomb in the nearby Zhuran Hill must be a royal Herulian tomb too<sup>51</sup>, as already the excavator Paulic suggested. Under a gigantic Lombardian mausoleum at the top of the battlefield of Austerlitz the remains were found of the burial of a horseman with several horses like Childeric – but in a way also used by Euroasian people at the steppes (Tejral in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014). The tomb was dated around 500 AD, but like the tomb of a Christian woman beside it and like the mausoleum this grave was totally plundered. Only two fragments were found: Iron pieces of a character of horse riding nomads from the Russian Plains (or maybe a holder for standards like Sutton Hoo) and a piece of wood with a pattern only known at that time from Nydam (spear shaft) and Scandinavian bracteates from the Scania-region. The combination with the later gigantic Lombardian mausoleum - which the excavator Josef Poulic regarded to belong to Waccho - might indicate that the other tombs contained Waccho's Herulian wife Silinga and her father - who is often supposed to be Hrodolphus. However, this is guesswork, and it was rather Waltari than his father Waccho who was buried in the mausoleum. She died after being hurt by a probably Lombardian arrow in the cheek in an age of 38 years and had in her grave several old artefacts – some of the glasses often found in Scandinavia too. If we follow Quast she was buried together with an old royal treasure, which was later stolen (Quast 2011, p. 135). If she was the daughter of Hrodolphus, she was only a child, when he was killed. According Tejral we can “*not exclude that the female was Silinga, daughter of the defeated Herulian king Rodulf*”.

In the southern region of this kingdom around Mistelbach in Weinviertel Windl has referred to mounds in Rothenseehof and female graves in Ladenhoff as Herulian – the same has Tejral regarding Tesany and Schmalzberg near La Thaya (Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014). Though the mounds in Uppsala are now dated later, it is important to notice, that K. Hauch in 1954, Menghin in 1987 and Tejral in 1990 in articles combined the

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<sup>51</sup> In Zhuran Hill 3 plundered burials from the Herulian/Lombardian Period were registered at 3 mounds from the Stone Ages. At the east side of the old central mound a man from the second part of the 5th century was buried with many horses as Childeric. It is not registered if a separate mound was erected over him, but there is no doubt that they used visual effect of the top of the plains and the row of 3 existing mounds. Only some Hunnic/East Germanic iron pieces and a piece of wood with strap work of "Scandinavian" Style I "bandfletwerk" were found. The burial appears in a way indicating hurry with the burial, but this is difficult to determine due to the later destruction.

Poulic searched for the 3-band strap work but found it only in a similar strap work of metal at a Lombardian cross in Italy from around 600 AD. Tejral however referred to the Erilar-bracteate from Esketorp but this must be confused with the Aasum-bracteate from Scania with identical strap work – both 2 and 3 bands identical with the Lombardian cross - but nearly a century older. The same strap work is found on bracteates at Bornholm and Oeland, and at a spear shaft in Nydam. The Aasum-bracteate is of a type with a horseman which Malmer called CIIa2 found mostly in Scania and at the Danish islands, but the similar CIIa1 is the type of bracteate found in most of Scandinavia and 12 in Eastern Europe too. As the bracteates are of Nordic origin the general spread of the CIIa1 type in Scandinavia makes it impossible to tell from where the East European bracteates arrived, but it is likely that the strap work in Zhuran was influenced from the coasts of the Baltic Sea. Strap work with exactly the same bands but other patterns can be found at the helmet in Vendel XIV, at the shield boss in Vendel XII and as a fragment in the eastern Uppsala Mound. This kind of strap work was generally used by the Vikings later on. Tejral has later [RGA Zhuran] changed the dating of the grave based on the strap work, but he has missed that this kind of strap work was already used in Nydam.

At the north side of the central mound in Zhuran a woman was buried in the first part of the 6th century. The grave contained several pieces of glass of a kind also known from Uppsala/Vendel and the East Germanic area and two fragments of a small relief of ivory, where one figure carried a cross. At the top of the central mound a new mound and mausoleum was erected covering the two earlier graves. The mausoleum dated to before 567 AD was of a type like Augustus' and Hadrian's in Rome with a radius of 30 meters. It was destroyed early when the stones were used - including the grave chamber. The excavator Poulic regarded the horseman as East Germanic and the two in the other tombs as royal Lombards - due to the unusual nature he guessed the mausoleum contained the famous king Wacho. Another possibility which fits the combination of an East Germanic horseman and Christian Lombards in the same mound is Wacho's third queen Silinga, their son Waltari, who died as a young king in 547 AD, and one of her Herulian ancestors - as example Hrodolphus. This would also explain the character of the first burial, as the Heruls had just been defeated in this region.

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Blucina tomb and Zhuran Hill with Procopius, Ottars Mound in Vendel and the mounds in Uppsala, and Tejral also mentioned similar artefacts in Moravia and Scandinavia - including the top of the golden sword-handle in Blucina and the strap work in Zuran I, which is found similar in Scania and the Vendel boatgraves<sup>52</sup>. It has however to be stressed, that the burial mounds in Uppsala are not like Blucina and Zhuran I – or any other earlier burial. They contain cremations.

Under all circumstances Tejral and his archaeologists in Brno have confirmed the claims of Procopius regarding the area.

### 1.2.2.3 Burials - Högom/Norway

In Scandinavia we have rich chieftain burials in the 5<sup>th</sup> century with connections along the trade route – especially in Högom, Norway and Gotland. Around 500AD the custom with flat cremations in the field was introduced in large numbers all over Eastern Scandinavia, but also earlier a majority of the people had been cremated.

The burial in Scandinavia most similar to Blucina is the grave in Mound II in Högom. In Sundsvall in the Swedish Norrland (just north of Hälsingland) the largest of the 12 Högom mounds contained a very rich inhumation burial of a chieftain with obvious connections to Southern Europe – i.e. Blucina. These were the only mounds in Scandinavia of that time except for some mounds in South Western Norway. While the sword in Högom points in the direction of Southern Norway and England [Menghin, 1986] and a bridle points at Finnestorp [Nordqvist, 2007], 13 three-winged arrowheads and especially a saddle point at a close contact to people following the Huns [Anke, 1998]. As the arrowheads were more identical with the Norwegian arrowheads than with the hunnic arrowheads Anke wrote that the arrows in the tomb could be due to fashion, but the Norwegians apparently had the same connection. Also in the Blucina tomb three-winged arrowheads were found. Finally 2 antique glasses from the Black Sea region with a position indicating a cultic purpose [Ramqvist 1990] were found in the mound. As the signs of high rank like rings, fibulas, swords and equipment with cloisonné were common among all Germanic chieftains serving the Romans at that time, they do not reveal the ethnic origin of the man in the grave.

The other mounds contain earlier cremation burials, but in Mound 3 was only a globe stone buries like the one at Inglingehog in Varend - without any ornaments, however. The mounds in Högom are dated around 350-500 AD with Mound II dated in the end of the 5th century - the time between the Sösdala finds and the Heruls of Procopius.

It should be mentioned, that Högom is placed at the earlier mentioned trade route to Halogaland. This was probably the centre of the people trading with furs as mentioned by Jordanes. Bridles with similar-looking eagle heads are found in Högom, Stockholm and the sacrifice in Finnestorp in Götaland. Regarded isolated in the light of the finds of southern Sösdala-equipment in Finnestorp and Vennebo this could indicate that losers from Western Götaland also tried their luck in the cultures of Högom/Svealand, but the attackers could of course originate from these regions. Also an example of the East Germanic inspired fibula-type with curved heads mentioned above is found in the Högom-region and Lofoten – indicating a connection between the Atlantic route along the Norwegian coast to Lofoten and the Botnic route along the Swedish coast from Helgoe/Uppsala crossing the mountain range at the lowest place between Högom and Bertnem. This may be the way Procopius got his information about the midnight sun and the Scridfennae brought south by Heruls from Högom or Uppsala.

The mound excavated in Högom constitutes the centre of a row of 3 big mounds like the mounds in Uppsala, Vada and Bertnem in Namsdal north of Trondheim - all found on the trade route. There are no signs of this

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<sup>52</sup> Pictures of the Blucina and Zhuran mounds including the finds can be found in Germanische Museum's "Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren" [Menghin 1987], where Birgit Arrhenius describes connections between Scandinavia and South Eastern Europe and Menghin describes like Tejral connections between Zhuran, Blucina and the Uppsala mounds. The report about Zhuran is found in Slovenska Arkeologia 1995 [Poulic 1995].

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activity later than Mound II indicating that this society disappeared contemporary with the emerge of the society raising Ottars Mound and the 3 mounds in Uppsala.

In Enebø (Eide) at Nordfjord in Western Norway a similar mound was found - also with three-winged arrowheads and a Syrian glass - and at Barshalderhed at Gotland such a grave without a mound was found too - with identical arrowheads and a glass from the Danube-region. The only other three-winged arrowheads of iron are found at the western coast of Norway as Enebø (at least 17 places) from Jæren to Trøndelag indicating this as the origin of these Nordic arrows inspired by East Germanic horsemen - but also indicating a connection with Högom as mentioned above. In the mound at Enebø was also found a geometrical toy of kind only known from Iran and Afghanistan, and at Barshalderhed a clasp was of Slovakian origin. All three chieftains were buried without cremation in the end of the 5th century, and together with the contemporary grave at Snartemo in Southern Norway these burials constitute the four richest burials in Scandinavia in the 5th century.

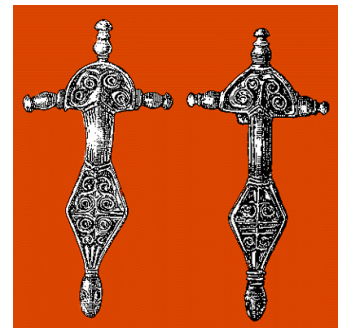
In Snartemo grave near the south coast of Norway a chieftain was buried in a small mound with his famous sword in Style I from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century [Menghin 1983]. The sword pommel is of the same type as in Blucina with two animal heads – which were originally inspired from South Eastern Europe. Such sword pommels are found in Broåsen (Grimeton-Hunnestad in Halland), Sjörup (Scania) and Finnestorp, but these find places were no graves. As the style is Scandinavian Style I, the sword pommel in Blucina should be expected to be Scandinavian – but as Childeric's sword pommel in Tournais as one of the only Continental pommels (in more expensive materials) had these animal heads too we cannot be sure of the background. Under all circumstances the sword pommels show a connection between Blucina and Scandinavia, and especially the sword pommels in Blucina and Finnestorp are very similar. The golden handle from Blucina is found in Tournais and Snartemo too. The guard of the sword from Blucina is found in Snartemo, Scania, Gotland (4), Södermanland and Sutton Hoo. Most of these finds are dated in the second part of the 5th century. The sword type in Blucina is regarded as a transition from Hunnic to Germanic swords.

There is no doubt that the chieftains in Scandinavia were connected in a way which involved the East Germanic people in the Danubian area. If they were Scandinavian mercenaries or East Germanics we are not able to decide - making Scandinavians the most probable answer. Their locations could together with the other finds indicate that they at that time formed a network extending the old Amber Route from the workshops at Gotland over Högom to Northern and Western Norway.

These find all show a connection between the Heruls and the Norse chieftains along the routes in the second part of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when the Huns had redrawn and the Ostrogoths had settled in Pannonia at the other side of the Danube.

### Fibulas - Style I

The fibulas are often indicating trade connections and/or movements of people. In the old Herulian kingdom covering Moravia and Marchfeld many curve headed relief-fibulas with 3 knobs are found being called the Sokolnice-type [Tejral 1997a]. Tejral dated these fibulas to the period just after 450 AD while Bierbrauer has placed them in the last quarter of the 5th century. They are found all over the area – with 5 knobs also in the female grave in Ladendorf, which according to Helmuth Windl [Tejral 1997a] was Herulian 53. Two versions of identical fibulas are found in Melsted near Gudhjem



Sokolnice Fibula

53 A fibula from Sokolnice, grave 5, near the mound Zuran Hill at Brno is by Jaroslav Tejral [Tejral 1997a] called a forerunner of several East Germanic fibulas with “spiralranken”. The end of them all was the head of an animal, which more stylized became an important motive in Style II. Identical fibulas are found over all Moravia/”Mittler Donauraum” and examples are found single in France, South Germany, Italy, Kerch at the Sea of Asov and Bornholm. At Bornholm two quite identical fibulas are found in Gudhjem and one in Rutsker. Further developed they are found at Oeland and Lake Mälär near Helgö. In Ladendorf near Rothenseehof north of Vienna two nearly identical fibulas (but “funfknopf”)

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[Anke, 1998] and a similar in Rutsker - all at Bornholm. Further locally developed types are found at Öland, Gotland, Östertälje near Helgö, Falster and Dalshøj/Sorte Muld at Bornholm 54.

Most of these places are known as trade centres with central workshops on the Baltic trade route, but 2 items in Medelpad and in Steigen at Lofoten [Sjøvold 1993] point further north too. The Sokolnice-type is also found at the Upper Rhine, in Burgundy, in Kerch at the Sea of Asov and in Northern Italy, but they are all by the French archaeologist Michel Kazanski [Tejral 1997a] characterized as Danubian of origin and by the Czech Jaroslav Tejral [Tejral 1997a] characterized as East Germanic. Both the Heruls and the Ostrogoths had operated in all these areas - but the Ostrogoths lived in the area south of the largest concentration of these fibulas.

Also east of the mouth of Vistula in the Olsztyn region a type of curved relief fibulas with 3 knobs are found (Mazur-Germanen) [Kleeman 1956] – in the same region as the above mentioned finds of the Untersiebenbrunn-/Sösdala-style at the “Amber Routes”. Wojciech Nowakowski [Curta 2011, p31-52] has in “Neglected Barbarians” suggested that culture as a Germanic group “returning” to this region being successively integrated among the surrounding Slavs. Galindians, Ostrogoths and Heruls are mentioned. They probably lived by trade with furs, amber and beeswax.

In the second part of the 5th century simple versions of the Sokolnice-fibula were also found around Paris and the Rhine, but afterwards all relief fibulas in the Frankish region got 5 knobs and even more knobs in the Alemannic and Lombardian regions. It is important to notice that these common Alemannic and Frankish curved fibulas with 5 or more knobs are never found in Scandinavia, while curved relief fibulas with 3 knobs are found in 16 cases [comparing Koch 1998 and Sjøvold 1993].



Dalshøj Fibula

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are found in a female grave by Helmuth Windl called Herulian [Article in Tejral 1997a].

- 54 Since the excavations of Vendel in the 19th century several graveyards have been excavated between Gudhjem, Kobbæaa and Oesterlars. The latest description used from South Eastern Bornholm is by Lars Jørgensen and Anne Nørgaard Jørgensen [Lars Jørgensen 1997] mentioning, that the area had been inhabited by a rich family of chieftains in several family branches from around 500 AD until 800. Especially in the beginning the grave goods were very impressive, but later this changed to standard equipment – probably not because the richness decreased, but because the power was so consolidated that waste and boasting was superfluous. Some chieftains got their horses with them in the grave, and the graves were often low mounds – sometimes covered with stones. The Sokolnice-fibulas are found south of Gudhjem in a female grave in Melsted and one similar in Rutsker. The larger cemeteries are in the hills near the coast a.o. Glæsergaard, Bækkegaard and at Kobbæaa. At Nørre Sandegaard the women wear their biggest fibula across the chest in a high position between the shoulders and two smaller fibulas lower at the chest. Here several disc-on-bow fibulas of the Style II type with cloisonné are found – a common type at the Scandinavian coasts and islands at the Baltic Sea – including Vendel.

In the hills behind Svaneke 10 kilometres south of Gudhjem there was since the Roman Iron Ages a big settlement consisting of i.e. Sorte Muld and Dalshøj. According the archaeologists the old settlement was destroyed around 500AD, but a new settlement was established with an important market place. Dalshøj is famous for the hoard with a fibula and 10 solidi with Anastasius as the latest. He was emperor since 492 and when the Heruls left Pannonia. Several of the hoards with the big fibulas and coins are known in Denmark, but only the hordes at Dalshøj and Elsehoved (Fyen near Gudme) contained solidi – normally they contained bracteates. The most impressive are the finds of 2350 gold foil figures at Sorte Muld. They are normally found at marketplaces like Lundeborg at Gudme. The gold foil figures are thin stamped plates like the plates at the helmets, but very small. The stamped style was first met in Scandinavia as the Sösdala-style similar to the Untersiebenbrunn-style. The purpose is unknown, but the motives and the low volume of gold indicate religious purposes. Probably they symbolic plates were sold as offerings for the gods giving the principal of the temple a solid income. At Rutsker a die is found used for some of the gold foil figures in Sorte Muld. In the settlement iron from the Lake Mälaren-area is found. In 2001 a new goldhoard was found at Sorte Muld containing Roman coins from the 5th century and bracteates from 500 being contained in a Roman silver plate. The hoard is for the moment regarded as a sacrifice.



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The dating of the finds and of the development at Bornholm does not fit in with the description of the Heruls by Procopius and the finds may as well be caused by East Germanic inspired craftsmen at Bornholm. Among the 130 Scandinavian relief-fibulas [the maps of Sjøvold 1993] 18% had curved head plates, but in the districts up to the Baltic Sea south of Gotland these made up 80% against 50% at Gotland and 3% in the rest of Scandinavia. Of course the analyses of the shape do not cover all aspects of these fibulas, but the geographical spread of a fashion should not be neglected - especially as Kuhn has paid much attention to the symbolic importance of shape and ornamentation [Kuhn 1973]. The significant number of these fibulas in South Eastern Scandinavia prove that this part of Scandinavia had some very strong connections being absent in the rest of Scandinavia, and this total absence in the neighbourhood also indicates that the distribution was not due to normal trade - the skilled craftsmen of the islands probably changed their products due to the presence of people with other symbols in Scania/Blekinge and the Baltic Islands. The character of the head plates (including the three buttons) and the geographical position point at the East Germanic people in the Carpathian Basin. However the fibulas at Bornholm are based on a Sokolnice style at a stage earlier than the Heruls arriving around 509-12, and according to the text of Procopius the Heruls did hardly choose Bornholm as their destination. It has to be stressed, that the nomadic Heruls of Procopius and their possible followers from Western Europe may have brought styles with them from many corners of Europe forming a new mixed style – being probably later a part of the Vendel style.

A stylistic element of the Sokolnice fibula was the row of spirals which was also a part of the special Sjörup-style found very close to Sösdala in Scania 50 years later than the Sösdala finds. This style was according to Birgit Arrhenius closely related to East Germanic style in the Roman border areas around 500 AD, and also these elements became a part of Style I. [Arrhenius 1985; Tejral 1997b]

Obviously the relief-fibulas spread from the beginning of the sixth century all over Scandinavia in the upper level of the society were a combination of the style from Sokolnice and the traditional Scandinavian square-headed fibula. Therefore the Scandinavian fibulas are much more varied than the square-headed relief fibulas in Kent/Mercia/East Anglia, where only one curve headed fibula is found from around 450 AD - regarded as Jutish. The Scandinavian fibulas appear more expensive than the small Sokolnice-fibulas – probably with the purpose to demonstrate power and richness. The archaeologist Jutta Waller from Uppsala has in her dissertation wondered which connections from outside lead to the changes of fibulas and dress-pins in the Mälars Valley just before the Vendel Period, but she primarily looked in the direction of England - not of Pannonia [Waller 1996]. One of her reasons was that the richest of the later Scandinavian fibulas got a disc on the bow (i.e. the Kitnæs and Skodborg finds), and they are also found in England. In Uppland surprisingly few relief fibulas are found, but later disc-on-bow fibulas with cloisonné were common there as in most of Scandinavia. The cloisonné-inlay in Scandinavia is described as Merovingian, but the method was Byzantine and it was already used by the East Germanic people at the Danube before the Merovingian kingdom was established.

Igor Gavritukhin has written an interesting article about the brooches of the Levice-Tokari Sub-group which is not yet involved here [Kkrapunov/Stylegar 2011].

### The trade route and the Heruls

It is obvious from the many similarities that there was a connection along the old trade route – especially after the Huns left and normal trade connections to Rome and Constantinople could be re-established along the route. Except for a few finds such as Blucina the archaeology cannot tell us about the ethnicity of these East Germanic connections, but due to their key position in Mähren together with Blucina the Heruls and their followers are the obvious choice. The Ostrogoths have been mentioned too, but as the Ostrogoths waged war against their earlier companions from 454 to sometime after 494 the Heruls probably blocked the trade route for supporters of the dynasty of the Ostrogoths. That is confirmed by the fact that no Theodoric coins are found in Scandinavia, but 3-400 in Southern Germany – indicating that the Arian Goths had no interest in Scandinavia at that time.

There is no reason to believe that the Heruls were merchants at the route themselves as Procopius described their way of income as tributing and looting of their neighbours. Probably this was the way they treated those

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passing by at the trade route too, though taxation and protection probably was their method rather than looting – just like the Danes later used their position in Øresund.

It is impossible to say how often they went to Scandinavia themselves. Probably they went north for negotiation and reconnaissance, and maybe some of them went into Scandinavian service as advisers and mercenaries, but in the time of Odoacer they probably rather headed south. However it is a possibility that some of them established a position in Scandinavia i.e. in Högom.

The archaeology indicates that a Germanic people (Galindians, Goths or Heruls ("Mazur-Germanen")) at the mouth of Vistula were an important partner at the trade route as both the Untersiebenbrunn-style, the round headed 3-knob-fibulas [Curta 2011] and the solidi are found there too. In the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Slavs penetrated the area around the river Vistula, but the Oder-route was probably used until around 567 AD, when all Scandinavian connections turned against the Elbe and the Rhine.

The finds in the wet areas of Finnestorp and Vennebo contain Nydam-, Ejsbøl- and Sösdala-style from a longer period up to around 550 AD, indicating that these artefacts were brought up by attackers being defeated by the Götes. This question will be discussed later.

### 1.2.3 The Western Heruls 286-509 (Phase B)

As a more or less independent parallel, the Western Heruls living at the East Frisian coast, probably operated along the south westerly Scandinavian coasts - just as they according to the sources harried Gallia in 409 AD and Spain in the 450'ies AD. They have sometimes been regarded as a warriorband, but in 286 AD the Romans mentioned their families living north of Limes – refuting already then Alvar Ellegaard. These Heruls had served as Roman mercenaries - mostly in England in the 4th century - but after the Romans left England and the emperor was removed, their mercenaries had to find other sources of income. Later many of them probably went back to England together with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours - it is obvious to suspect that they were among the mercenaries being called to England by the Britains in 448 AD. They were mentioned for the last time in the historical sources in 478 AD. Some of them may have turned north against the Scandinavian kingdoms as military advisers and mercenaries. These suggestions, however, will be discussed in a later chapter.

Hundred years after the event the Celtic monk; Gilda<sup>55</sup>, wrote that the Saxons were invited to England by the Britons as a defence against the Picts and Scots. The same wrote the clerical historian Bede in the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. He added that the Anglo-Saxons were led by Hengist and Horsa<sup>56</sup>. The Anglo-Saxons first

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55 Gilda ca. 548 AD, 23: "At that time all members of the assembly, along with the proud tyrant, are blinded; such is the protection they find for their country (it was, in fact, its destruction) that those wild Saxons, of accursed name, hated by God and men, should be admitted into the island, like wolves into folds, in order to repel the northern nations. Nothing more hurtful, certainly, nothing more bitterly, happened to the island than this."

56 Bede, 731 AD: "In the year of our Lord 449 ... the nation of the Angles, or Saxons, being invited by the aforesaid king [Vortigern], arrived in Britain with three long ships, and had a place assigned them to reside in by the same king, in the eastern part of the island, that they might thus appear to be fighting for their country, whilst their real intentions were to enslave it. Accordingly they engaged with the enemy, who were come from the north to give battle, and obtained the victory; which, being known at home in their own country, as also the fertility of the country, and the cowardice of the Britons, a more considerable fleet was quickly sent over, bringing a still greater number of men, which, being added to the former, made up an invincible army. The newcomers received of the Britons a place to inhabit, upon condition that they should wage war against their enemies for the peace and security of the country, whilst the Britons agreed to furnish them with pay. Those who came over were of the three most powerful nations of Germany Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent.. The two first commanders are said to have been Hengist and Horsa. Of whom Horsa, being afterwards slain in battle by the Britons, was buried in the eastern parts of Kent, where a monument, bearing his name, is still in existence. They were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vecta, son of Woden; from whose stock the royal race of many provinces deduce their



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tried to call the Romans as they did in 366 AD when the Romans sent the Heruls and the Batavi, but now 75 years later the Romans had left England and were busy with Attila. What was more natural than to call the Western Heruls back again to fight the Picts and the Scots once more?



This shield painting is known from the West Herulian mercenaries in the Italian infantry unit "Heruli". It was found in a medieval copy of *Notitia Dignitatum* from the beginning of the 5th century AD. Consequently, we cannot be sure of this picture - and we do not know which symbol is behind the circles. The circle was *ao*, a symbol of the sun in the soldiers' Mithras Cult - worshipped in temples along the Wall of Hadrian in England, where the Heruls were posted together with the Bataves. It is unknown whether the Eastern Heruls used the same symbols, but circles and half circles are recognised at many artefacts found in their tracks.

Gilda and Bede did not know the details of the past, and together with Procopius they mentioned Frisians, Saxons, Angles and Jutes<sup>57</sup> – or just barbarians. We cannot put much value into names of people they mentioned so much later. At that time all pirates in the South were simply called Saxons if their Germanic tribal name was unknown. We must assume that members from all the tribes along the coast from Normandy to Jutland joined the migration, including the Western Heruls, who – as argued earlier – lived at the western coast between the Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. Especially for the Western Heruls this was as mentioned a return to their earlier area of operations.

Archaeologists believe they have traced the Jutes by some big fibulas found in Jutland and in Kent, and at the Lake Flevo in Netherland a settlement points at the Jutes too. All these people were probably mixed up in the Migration Ages.

A branch of the Western Heruls remaining at the peninsula of Jutland could be the later Myrkingas in Northern Frisia mentioned only in Widsith. Their name may have an etymology similar with the twisted etymology mentioned by Jordanes: *Eloi* = "The people from the swamps" which in West Germanic could be Myrings (Swedish "myr" - ON "myrr" - German "moor" - Old-Frisian "mor"), just like the later mentioned "Marings" in Moravia (Chapter 2.1.1.3).

We cannot reach any historical conclusion about the fate of the Western Heruls as they probably were split up between Scandinavia, England and the Frisian Coast – hypothesis being mentioned or used in the following chapters.

### 1.2.4 Odin in Finnestorp and the Eastgermanic buckles

The war booties in Finnestorp represent several groups of warriors of different ethnicity being defeated in Västergötland from 350-550 AD. One of the late sacrifices is a belt buckle with a face with leaning eyes, beard and three circular tattoos. It is convincingly interpreted as Odin drinking of the well of Mimer. In this connection a group of earlier belt buckles spread from Crimea to Normandy call for special attention. Apparently they are produced in the middle of the 5th century by one artist – or at least one workshop in the Roman border areas. The one from Yalta has a face with leaning eyes, beard and three circular tattoos as the one in Finnestorp – but in an earlier version. As another of the buckles has the runic inscription *Marings*, which means Goth or Herul, the buckles are probably made for one of these Eastgermanic people. The ornaments (see the figures

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*original. In a short time, swarms of the aforesaid nations came over into the island, and they began to increase so much, that they became terrible to the natives themselves who had invited them."*

<sup>57</sup> Procopius 553 AD, VIII, xxx: "*The island of Brittia is inhabited by three very numerous nations, each having one king over it. And the names of these nations are Angli, Frisones and Brittones ... And so great appears to be the population of these nations that every year they emigrate thence in large companies ... and go to the land of the Franks. And the Franks allow them to settle*". Procopius mixed up the Northern geography and he never mentioned any Western Heruls who had disappeared 75 years before his time.

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in chapter 1.2.4) being used at some of these buckles are later met in Finnestorp (a.o. at the Odin buckle), at the Scandinavian fibulas and at the Mausoleum of Theodoric. Especially the name and the three circular tattoos at each cheek must be connected with a certain group across geography and time. When these three buckles are combined with the rune stone in Strängnäs showing the inscription “erilaR . wodinR“ the runic/archaeological traces may primarily point at the Heruls – but that does not exclude that some of the war booties were made in Scandinavia.

We do not know if the event, at which the owner of the buckle in Finnestorp was defeated, took place before or after the Herulian royal family arrived according to Procopius. Odin and the runes will be addressed in the next main chapters. In the current main chapter the finds shall only be used as another indication of the connection between Scandinavia and the people in the Hunnic campaign.

The excavations in Finnestorp are being examined for the moment. The finds are war booties belonging to people who were defeated by the local population around this central place in Falbygden. They show obvious traces of a.o. Heruls, and such possible connections can be divided into following phases:

- 375-454 Huns and East Germanic horse riding warriors (Sösdala Style\*)
- 400-550 Western Herulian officers and mercenaries (Nydam Style\*)
- 454-509 Heruls wandering along the trade route (East Germanic/Sjörup Style\*)
- 509-? Heruls living between Danes and Götes (East Germanic/Sjörup Style\*)

\* Simplifications

The first three groups are described in the chapters above. It will later be mentioned below that the group around their royal family may have plundered or tried to attack Västergötland before they were expelled by the Danes.

A very interesting find in Finnestorp is a buckle showing the head of a man (left below) at the root of the tongue. Bengt Nordqvist has convincingly argued for an interpretation as Odin drinking of the well of Mimer [Nordqvist 2010]. Interesting too are the three circles at his cheeks – appearing to be tattoos. Sidonius Apollinaris described in 478 AD the many different people in Toulouse: “*Here strolls the Herulian with his glaucious cheeks*”. This is by the scholars interpreted as blue/green tattoos at the cheeks, but though it is mentioned by Sidonius as a special mark of the Heruls also other people probably used tattoos – ae. in the Hunnic campaign. The circles, however, are quite similar with the red shield mark of the “Heruli Seniores” in Notitia Dignitatum from around 410 AD (copy from 1400 AD). In this way the two only visible signs known from descriptions of the Heruls are found at this head in Finnestorp – most likely pointing at a mercenary officer from the Heruls as the owner.

A similar face turned opposite at the tongue of a buckle is found in Yalta, Crimea, and was compared with Finnestorp by Maxim Levada [in Kharapunov 2011]. The face has the same characteristic features: Leaning eyes, moustache and three circular tattoos at each cheek. Earlier Joachim Werner found parallels between the Yalta buckle and finds from the Danubian Basin [Annibaldi, Werner 1963]. Both in 2011 and 2013 Maxim Levada wrote that the Yalta buckle appears to be produced by the same artist as the buckle in Bar and the buckle in Szabadbattyan with the inscription “Marings” [in Kharapunov/Stylegar 2014]. Marings is translated Goth, but does most likely mean “Herul”. It is also known from the Swedish rune stone, Rökstenen (see chapter 2.1.1.3). At the backside of the two other buckles he draw a pentagram instead (ao. Pythagoras' symbol for eternity). The other buckles are Sagi and Airan/Moult (both had lost the plate at the backside) and maybe Barlad. The spread corresponds with the operational area of the Goths and especially of the Heruls, who also operated as pirates at the French coasts. As the leaf ornaments at some of the buckles are unknown in Scandinavia but common in Southern Europe and as “Marings” is spelled in Gothic language (used also by the Heruls) the buckles are probably produced in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century in a Gothic/Herulic culture somewhere around the Danube a.e. Panonia Inferior (with Szabadbattyan) – close to the Roman borders as suggested by Näsman/Fabeck [in Kharapunov/Stylegar 2014].

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The “circle on triangle”-ornaments and other ornaments on the buckles in Szabadbattyán and Bar are also later found on the Odin-buckle and several other items in Finnestorp, at the mausoleum of Theodoric (died 526 AD) and at later Scandinavian fibulas.

It is therefore likely that some of the Scandinavian war booties were remains from raids of Huns and their Gothic/Herulic companions. The combination of the finds mentioned above also indicate that it most likely were some of the Heruls who ended their lives in Västergötland.

The two buckles with the head may support the theory of Lotte Hedeager that one of the shapes of Odin was inspired by the Hunnic Attila [Hedeager 2011], who supposedly had such an Asiatic look. According to Jordanes the Heruls lived around the swamps of Asov, while Odin according to Snorri arrived from the region of Tanais – both places next to Crimea where the eldest buckle was found.

It can be discussed where the late war booties in the bogs (originally lakes) of Finnestorp and Ejsbøl are produced – as the only certain regarding the origin is that the intruders were no locals. The most remarkable, however, is that out of 5-6 known buckles from the same workshop motives from 2 of these buckles are later met in a princely environment in Scandinavia – just like the mentioned ornaments. It is improbable that two oriental-looking faces (faces are unusual in this connection) should get three circular tattoos with marked centres at each cheek by a coincidence – the buckles must have belonged to members of a group of the same ethnicity or religion. The early buckles belonged to a Gothic speaking society being apparently interested in symbols like circles and the triangular pentagrams – and some of them obviously ended up in Scandinavia. The second “motive” is the name “Marings”. Both motives have independently of each other a character which will connect them with a certain group of people regardless of geography and a timespan of 50-75 years – and together they represent a strong connection between Goths/Heruls and Finnestorp and Rök.



Finnestorp [Nordqvist 2011]



Yalta and Szabadbattyán [Levada in Khrapunov 2013/14]

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Close up of the head with the tatoos



Theodoric / Finnestorp

It shall be mentioned that a small fragment from a buckle at a sword with a head with the same hair (helmet?) as Finnestorp – but without punched tatoos – is found at a hill top at Lærkefryd near Jørlunde in North Zealand. 7 kilometres away near the old roads to Sweden a fragmentary cikada-fibula from the Black Sea is found together with a piece of a buckle – regarded as metal scrap. Here at the other side of a bog a rosettefibula with runes and the green glass from Khrapunov/Stylegar 2011 page 143 fig. 9 are found. Lærkefryd is mentioned in Journal of Danish Archaeology [Søren A. Sørensen, Vol 14, 2006], but unfortunately the details regarding this find from 2008 are still unpublished. Further excavations in 2012 appear to have been disappointing, and it is unclear if this find is from ritual meals as most of the finds there are told to be from the Viking Ages.

<http://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/artikel/309665:Historie--Offerplads-gennem-1000-aar>

The inscription from Strängnäs is ".rilaR . WodinR". It is described further in chapter 2.1.1.2.

## 1.3 Evaluations and conclusion regarding the history

### 1.3.1 Sources and critics

The official North Germanic history of the 3-6th centuries has not been a scientific conclusion based on facts, but mostly a "decided truth" based on conservatism – including in the scholarly networks.

Originally it was accepted as the truth that the Heruls were expelled by the Danes in the 3rd century, and returned around 500AD. Ivar Lindquist and von Friesen assumed they settled south of the Götes, while Lukman, Gudmundsson and in 1969 Wessén assumed they brought the East Germanic legends to Scandinavia. Already in 1925 Lauritz Weibull raised doubt about their Scandinavian origin, and later the interpretation of all the sources has been discussed.

#### 1.3.1.1 Alvar Ellegaard

In 1987 the sources of the Herulian history were eliminated by Alvar Ellegaard<sup>58</sup> - who was no historian, but

<sup>58</sup> The articles in Scandia 1987 (53) – Götiska Minnen nr 113, 1992 are unfortunately by many regarded as the latest Scandinavian research concerning the Heruls.

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a former professor in English - except Procopius and some brief Roman reports of Herulian mercenaries. With help from the inexact Latin of Jordanes Ellegaard in this way made room for alternative theories.

The searching and criticism of the sources carried out by Ellegaard is mostly a careful work, which with modifications has been used here too. On the other hand his final theory looks like a provocation<sup>59</sup>. When Ellegaard wrote in 1987, he was not the first, but he is here used as the most recent representative for the actual scholarly attitude to the Heruls in Scandinavia, as many historians supported similar theories or elements hereof.

In most Scandinavian history books the Heruls still have their origin in Scandinavia - dating the expulsion in the 3rd century as Brøndsted and von Friesen, but in the last decades most scholars have accepted the interpretation maintained by i.e. Ellegaard, Goffart and Andreas Schwarcz that it was a recent event when Jordanes wrote, as already described in Chapter 2 above. This shall not be repeated here as that claim of Ellegaard is accepted in this article too – though the arguments are not identical.

The next claims by Ellegaard are improbable. He claimed that Procopius' telling about the Heruls in Scandinavia was only covering some hundred individuals for a period of 35 years – or in other words: The expulsion described by Jordanes might be the same story as the return of two princes followed by 200 young warriors being described by Procopius.

Ellegaard accepted as a source Procopius, who in 553 AD told that the royal family was still numerous in Scandinavia and that the Heruls remained on the "island". He also told that the envoy went back to the Scandinavian Heruls, when the first candidate died on his way to Illyria. Therefore, the information that Darius the second time left for Illyria followed by his brother and 200 young warriors gives Ellegaard no basis at all for his claim that all the Heruls returned – quite opposite the words implicate that the rest remained. It is even in this way indicated that they were a rather large group in Sweden since they could send these warriors away. His claim does not make any sense.

Many scholars regard like Ellegaard the number of Heruls going to Scandinavia to be very low, but this is not due to the information in the historical sources.

Moreover Ellegaard claimed that the Heruls were not a tribe or a people but a group of warriors formed by the Romans around 300 AD in Castra Batava. This claim stands in contradiction to the rest of my description above supported by most European historians and the sources he referred to himself<sup>60</sup>, and he forgot both

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<sup>59</sup> Alvar Ellegaard, who was earlier a professor in English language, provoked later in Scandia 1993 the historians and the theologians with a very hard criticism of their sources and with theories in opposition to the accepted theories regarding the Bible.

<sup>60</sup> Ellegaard developed with reference to Wenskus the theory that all migration people in fact were vagrant groups of warriors – including the Heruls. He forgot to distinguish between simple robber bands, military expansion into the neighbour countries, vagrant nomads and a real migration of a people to a new country. First of all Procopius mentioned the Heruls as a numerous superior people with its own king, secondly he mentioned their different religion (with a “host of gods” which could not be Arian) and curious family habits, and thirdly he mentioned how the Gepides raped their women and stole their cattle. Ammianus mentioned the Heruls among other independent people, and Jordanes called them a nation. The historical evidence of that time is therefore against Ellegaard and apart from this, a group of warriors was not able to exist separately in 200 years – still less to arise in the Roman army with a separate religion. There must have been a people behind, which did not interest other Romans than Procopius. The Heruls were probably a half nomadic people from the border area between the Goths and the nomads at the Russian steppes. Some of their young men formed warrior bands serving as mercenaries or acting like robbers. These warrior bands were often mixed up with the people by the written sources, as these groups were everywhere in the front line.

Ellegaard's theory about the Heruls starting as a German warrior group in Castra Batava (Passau at Danube 250 west of Vienna) in the 4th century is based on a hypothetical fellowship with the Bataves in Castra Batava. However the only common stamps between Heruls and Bataves are the reports of mercenaries from Ammianus about campaigns in England and at the Rhine. Probably the Roman use of the two people together was due to their living places in Frisia near the Rhine, where the Bataves were mentioned from around year 0 and the Heruls from 286 AD. As



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the Western Heruls and Ablasius. However his explanation may cover the much earlier establishment of the Heruls in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century as mentioned in Chapter 2. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century there had to be a people behind the Herulian warrior groups operating in so many places over so many years - as told i.e. Procopius of the Gepides at the court of Justinian: "*...Indeed thou hast bestowed upon the Franks and the nation of the Eruli and these Lombards such generous gifts of both cities and lands, O Emperor, that no one could enumerate them. ...*".

Theoretically his claims are possible, but his two last claims are very unlikely – especially as his conclusions do not follow Procopius, although he has proclaimed Procopius to be his only reliable source. Ellegaard went too far in order to provoke and find an alternative to the Scandinavian origin – and unfortunately many Swedish scholars uncritically followed him – due to national pride?.

It has to be emphasized, that Ellegaard – as the linguist he was – regarded the connection between Eruli and Eorl/Jarl as "very probable" – which in a way even contradicts his own claims too.

### 1.3.1.2 Andreas Schwarcz

Andreas Schwarcz, professor at the University of Vienna, wrote in 2005 the essay "Die Heruler an der Donau" describing the history of the Heruls until they left March/Morava. Nearly all the content of that essay is accepted above as the most probable explanations. However, he also wrote in the essay that "at any rate, there is no talk of long-lasting aftereffects in Central Europe, and in Northern Europe it falls into the realm of speculation". He has earlier called the Scandinavian sources literature – but their migration is not a part of that speculation. The conclusion in the article is a little unspecific at that point as it was not the purpose of the essay, but he had earlier emphasized his view in letters confirming that Procopius is reliable in this connection and that it can be regarded as certain that a group with the royal family of the Heruls arrived and settled at "Thule". He has reconfirmed that statement as late as 2018.

In 2005 Andreas Schwarcz accepted the traditional German opinion since Much, that the Heruls had their origin in Scandinavia. In 2011, however, he has stated that he has changed his mind and is now regarding the Eastern Heruls to be an ethnogenesis at the Black Sea.

In his view it probably was an example of integration. He also suggested that the interpretation of Procopius' use of the word "para" can be that the Heruls settled among the Götes and were integrated as a part of the Götes. The general translation of "para" is "by" - normally in the meaning "beside" or "along". Schwarcz has argued that Procopius also used "para" describing the settlement of the Heruls at Singidunum, which became a part of the Byzantine Empire. These Heruls, however, settled at the southern bank of Danube at the very border of the Roman Empire, they remained Heruls with their own king, and a part of them separated from

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mentioned in note 2.2.5 the historian Ammianus told the Heruls were living "beyond the Rhine", which is maybe a little diffuse, as he also mentioned Celts, but this could never describe the area north of Passau, where it also was difficult to argue why they never should cross the Alps (note 2.2.5). Laterculus Veronensis, mentioning Heruls in northwest and east, is rejected as "corrupt" by Ellegaard without mentioning other reasons than it was contradicting his claim. It is correct, that the Romans as a defence against the barbarians stationed some Batavian cohorts in Castra Batava, who were still mentioned by Eugippius in 480, but contrary hereto Eugippius mentioned the Heruls as plundering barbarians – coming from their kingdom at the northern bank of Danube a little more east in the old Hunnic Empire. Normally the Herulian mercenaries are supposed to be stationed in Concordia near Triest due to grave stones. The Bataves later became a part of the Franks. The information used by Ellegaard to indicate, that the Heruls arose as a group of warriors at Passau, could indicate several other explanations. Therefore there is no reason to choose an explanation which contradicts all other information.

Furthermore the theory depends on a mistake by Jordanes mixing up "Heruli" with some hypothetical "Heluri", supposed by Ellegaard to operate together with the Goths at the Black Sea in 267AD. Finally the story by Jordanes about Ermaneric defeating Alaric in 350 had to be free fantasy. As many Heruls lived around Jordanes in Italy and Byzans such a signal mistake of their home only 150 years before is possible in the theory but very unlikely. But even in this case, the Heruls might believe what Jordanes believed.

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the Romans again by going north to the Gepides after nearly 40 years - they were never integrated.

It makes sense that the Heruls were attracted by the Gothic legends to settle in the area of Götaland, but nothing in the archaeology and myths indicates changes or new settlers in Götaland in that period, and it does not make much sense that these unruly warriors should totally disappear. The Rök Stone is the only Norse source which may connect the royal family with Götaland - but that was 300 years later after the expansion of the Vendel Culture. But as this also is speculation, it will be discussed later. Andreas Schwarcz is probably right that the mentioning of the Gautoi is no coincidence, and that the Heruls at their arrival intended to settle in or beside the widespread territory of the Götes – which they probably did.

This, however, does not mean that they stayed. Andreas Schwarcz has also mentioned that Procopius' use of the word "tote" (meaning "of/at that time") about the settlement might indicate a later change of settlement – and in that case they could not have been integrated first time.

According to Andreas Schwarcz, Walther Pohl and other scholars a successful migration could only end up as a settlement where the former inhabitants were expelled or as an integration. This is probably correct, but the word "integration" must have very wide limits - from the intruders placing themselves in the top of the society to joining mercenaries accepting of the existing kingship. The lower groups of the society should in all cases be integrated over time. If both royal families survived the future cooperation could be secured by marriage.

Andreas Schwarcz has earlier expressed doubt if they had a king after Hrodolphus, as Origo Gentis Longobardorum later told that they had no kingly office after the fallen Hrodolphus. But "Origo" probably referred to the Heruls remaining in the region of the Lombards - not to the Scandinavian Heruls who were not mentioned in this source at all as they had lost any importance for the Lombards. Procopius however told that the trek against north was led by many of royal blood though he did not mention a name of the king. We know that there was a king in the Illyrian group at the time of Justinian, and we know that they still found many of royal blood in Scandinavia, when there were no candidates back in Illyria. This strongly indicates that most of the family went north and it is obvious that a group at such a mission had a leader among them, who necessarily had superiority over the royal family - a king. All Procopius' talk about royal blood indicates that the kingly office was important for the Heruls, and it should be so for a people of warriors.

### 1.3.1.3 Walter Goffart

Walther Goffart was for many years a professor at Toronto University. He was educated at Harvard and is now emeritus at Yale. He is one of the most esteemed modern experts on the barbarians together with Peter Heather and the professors from the University of Vienna. Walther Goffart focussed on Jordanes in his book from 1988 and also in his book, *Barbarian Tides*, 2006, he concentrated on the role of Jordanes in the first part. According to Goffart Jordanes described with the words "The Heruls had been driven from their homes by the Dani" a recent event<sup>61</sup> - no sources have ever mentioned that the Heruls had an origin in Scandinavia.

Therefore, the warning from Lauritz Weibull regarding the former dating of Jordanes' expulsion can be replaced by Walther Goffart, Walter Pohl, Andreas Schwarcz and Alvar Ellegaard stating this to be a recent event, whereby the origin of the Heruls should most likely be found near the Black Sea. Nevertheless, only very few Scandinavian scholars want to face this growing international consensus.

He agreed that "the evidence divides rather clearly into western and eastern clumps" and used the usual arguments for the Western Heruls, but like Wolfram he also used the letter from Cassiodorus opposite other scholars<sup>62</sup>. The last reference is probably wrong, but that does not change the conclusion (Chapter 1.1.2.2).

The journey to Scandinavia and the envoy described by Procopius was told by Goffart as history, but after

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<sup>61</sup> Goffart 1988 note 366 and again Goffart 2006 p. 205

<sup>62</sup> Goffart 2006 p. 205

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telling about the murder of Ocho, he wrote “This arresting but unverifiable narrative is perplexing especially if one mistrusts Procopius as an ethnographer. Does this account bear on the question of the eastern and (north)western Heruls?” It is obvious that such details in his history could not be verified, but his confusion appears to be due to an unnecessary mix of the eastern and the western Heruls. Neither Jordanes nor Procopius ever mentioned the western Heruls at the North Sea – they probably knew nothing about them as a separate group. It is obvious that Procopius with his Varni (Warne, Mecklenburg) and Gautoi (Götaland) wrote about the Scandinavian Peninsula in the Baltic Sea, where the Danes at that time probably lived in Scania and Sealand (Alfred’s Orosius History 899). The western Heruls in Frisia lived far away from the Danes and they probably joined their Anglian and Saxon neighbors to their old working field in England.

But first of all, it is highly improbable that Jordanes should mention the combination Heruls/Danes and Procopius should mention the same combination within two years in the same city in the opposite corner of Europe if Heruls concerned two separate people with the same name meeting both the Danes at that time. It is nearly impossible. This is simply correct information brought by the envoy from Scandinavia in 548 AD which together with the following rejection of Suartha was well known all over Constantinople, when they wrote. The two authors could not lie about that if they wanted to be respected, and thus we have two sources with opposite purpose confirming the presence of the Heruls in Scandinavia and thereby the journey too – but the details we can make reservations for.

In 1988 Goffart developed theories about the motives of Jordanes and brought also a note with a motive of the Byzantine Procopius. Procopius mentioned that the Heruls passed the Danes without fight and settled near the Goths in order to show that the Goths could be sent back to their “ancestral” homes safely<sup>63</sup> – opposite Jordanes who mentioned the expulsion as he probably was against that idea. However, Procopius confirmed under all circumstances the reliability of the three sources:

- The existence of the Western Heruls
- The recent dating of the expulsion by the Danes
- A journey of the Heruls to Scandinavia

In “Barbarian Tides” he is going through all the main topics regarding the Heruls, and except for his referral of the Cassiodorus-letter to the Western Heruls and a Danish expulsion of the Western Heruls, this article is following his view. We shall later combine this evaluation with the comments from Andreas Schwarz in chapter 1.3.1.7

### 1.3.1.4 Florin Curta: “Neglected Barbarians” (Sarantis and Steinacher)

As an editor the archaeologist Florin Curta in 2010/2011 published the composite work, “Neglected Barbarians”, which has been rather neglected itself. Today some of the articles can be found free at the internet.

Two chapters are dedicated to the Heruls: Roland Steinacher's “The Herules. Fragments of a History” and Alexander Sarantis' “The Justinianic Herules. From Barbarian Allies to Roman Provincials”.

#### Roland Steinacher

Roland Steinacher, who at that time was a junior scientist – now researcher at the University of Tübingen – wrote the other article in “Neglected Barbarians” about the Heruls. Later in 2017 he has written a book “Rom und die Barbaren”, but in regard to the Herulian journey to Scandinavia he has never been able to separate Procopius' propaganda against the Heruls from the actual information, though he has several times referred to Walther Goffart. First time it was obvious that he believed that all the story was a lie, which was rather self contradicting as he also referred about the envoy to and from the Heruls in Scandinavia in 548 – which should be a result of the journey, as Steinacher also maintained that their origin was from the Black Sea. In his new book it is difficult to read his own opinion as he is hiding behind a young student who also wants to demonstrate his abilities for conspiracy theories and literary allusions, which are far from the

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<sup>63</sup> Goffart 1988



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earthbound and reporting style of Procopius. Of course, Procopius painted the Heruls in a disadvantageous light due to their disobedient and unholy manners in order to explain the failure of Bellesarius with the Heruls, and of course Procopius did not want to tell that the Heruls were later expelled north in Scandinavia, as it may have been his opinion that the Goths should go up there too – opposite Jordanes. Procopius did not tell anything about their life in Scandinavia, thus he did not need to mention the expulsion, but as noticed under the chapter with Walther Goffart Procopius could not lie in this case.

Steinacher is also dismissing the Western Heruls as a separate group living at the coasts of the North Sea. His first argument is that the letter from Theodorich to three barbarian kings may have been sent to the Herulian king in Moravia instead of the Western Heruls. This is probably correct, but it is no argument against the Western Heruls as the letter in no way shall be regarded as a proof of their existence – it has just by Goffart and Wolfram earlier been combined with the Western Heruls because they were already regarded to exist. He is also arguing that the statement of Sidonius Apollinaris about their living at the furthest sea may be a possible mistake based on a 200 years old story from Grece – again the same easy way of removing inconvenient sources by declaring them corrupt as used by the linguist Ellegaard. He even have to forget the rest of the arguments Ammianus Marcellinus' "beyond the Rhine", Mamartinus' "ultima loci" and two groups in Laterculus Veronensis (Chapter 1.1.2.2). Among the more general arguments against Steinacher it appears rather unlikely that mercenaries from Moravia should suddenly operate several times as pirates in the Atlantic Ocean. It can be agreed that they were mentioned in that way in the Aegean Sea two hundred years earlier – but as warriors joining a Bosporanian fleet.<sup>64</sup>

Unfortunately, Steinacher was so haunted by political fear that right wings might misuse the migration history of the Heruls<sup>65</sup>, when reading my article, that he did not care about my arguments. Maybe he therefore missed the arguments regarding Ammianus Marcellinus, Laterculus Veronensis, Mamertinus and Goffart? It is a dangerous way to write history – instead of the truth.

Steinacher claimed in his final section (page 359) of his article that the Heruls did not origin from Scandinavia and did not return. I could agree in that statement, but it is ambiguous, and he is still rather foggy in his statements. After his first article he explained in a letter that he followed Walther Goffart, but that must count his unnecessary reservation. Consequently, it is recommended regarding this question just to read "Barbarian Tides" from 2006 by the experienced scholar, Goffart, with the comments in the chapter above as he tells the coherent history.

### Alexander Sarantis

Alexander Sarantis – presented in the book as PhD from Oxford University, now the University of Tübingen – had been asked to write about the Heruls in Illyria serving Justinian. My present article (which he has referred to in his introduction) is in accordance with his article – and he has given a valuable record of the importance of the Herulic armies in East Roman service in the 6th century. He has seen through the attitude of Procopius regarding the Heruls and is concluding that they must have consisted of two different political groups in Singidunum. One group submitting to Justinian, while the other was more pagan than baptised. He is therefore also aware why the envoys from the second group went to Thule to find a new pagan royal candidate – and in that way he has recognized their presence in Scandinavia in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, which he has also later directly confirmed by letter. The journeys are well attested and the later disappearance of the Heruls in Thule is explained by the main conclusion of Alexander Sarantis: "*The integrated barbarians tend to be neglected barbarians*".

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<sup>64</sup> The arguments regarding the Western Heruls are described in Chapter 1.1.2.2.

<sup>65</sup> In his first book Steinacher quoted in his note 44 a part of a discussion of the Wicingas of Widsith – found in chapter 3.4.1 of this website – completely out of its context. The purpose was here to explain that the author of Widsith may have known the story about the Danes and Heruls told by Jordanes – but without using their original name. But Steinacher has explained his mistake later as a fear that their migration history in that case could be used by right wings – in which I doubt – but I have received his apology. In the next book he did not refer to my website at all – and made the same mistakes.

### 1.3.1.5 Jordanes' sources

Jordanes' *Getica* is based on a lost 12-volume work by Cassiodorus. Cassiodorus was the chancellor of Theodorich and finished his final version of "History of the Goths" before 533 AD (probably around 519 AD), where one of the purposes was to show that the Amal-family of Theodorich according to the tradition had the legal rights to the Ostrogothic throne. Jordanes had lived in an Alanic/Gothic environment in Moesia and finished his *Getica* in Byzans in 551 AD. His purpose appears to have been to support the falling Gothic Kingdom. He told that his work was based on Cassiodorus' work, but that these books had not been available for him in three days. While Jordanes obviously had his own sources for the time after Cassiodorus, the *Getica* before this time is regarded as an abbreviation of Cassiodorus' work<sup>66</sup>, where he accordingly had to concentrate on the Goths and to let out the descriptions (being irrelevant at the time of Jordanes) of the political landscape around Theodorich, which a politician like Cassiodorus without doubt would pay much attention to in his work.

Walther Goffart doubted Jordanes purpose and has suggested that he wrote in Byzans in order to make a short version of the Gothic work which could be acceptable to the victors in Byzans.

Arne Sjøby Christensen ("Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths", 2002) is among the scholars claiming that the works of Cassiodorus and Jordanes cannot be regarded as history. His arguments, however, are based on irregularities in the royal genealogies of Cassiodorus, which had a clearly manipulating purpose - and which are irrelevant regarding the questions being discussed here. As another example he demonstrates that the episode presenting the word "Ansis" is not historically correct and concludes by using this argument that Ansis "cannot be part of a long Gothic tradition" (p. 127) - notwithstanding his observation regarding a single king does not lead to such a firm conclusion as Ansis probably was a general custom. The discussion if some of the Getae ended up as a part of Goths is also avoided by him - though this would explain some of the problems he points out. There is no doubt that a great part of the early history of the Goths and the Amal family lines were collected or maybe even constructed by Cassiodorus for political purposes - which was what caused Arne Sjøby Christensen's examples - but which Roman or medieval historian (or modern?) was not influenced by politics?

It appears to be popular in certain schools of historians when writing their doctoral theses to reject a whole classical source by demonstrating inconsistency or unreliability in a few cases in that or others works of the author. This is especially a problem if they use descriptions of earlier events to conclude about episodes contemporary with the author. Not even a serious classical author used old sources after our scholarly criteria, but that does not influence his own contemporary observations. As we have too few sources to provide us with the necessary confirmation, when analysing Germanic history before 750 AD and Nordic history before 1250AD, there is no reason to spend time on history of that time at all if all the information from a historian can be rejected in that way - especially if the comparison with archaeology is avoided because it is another scholarly branch.

As we know from the letters of Cassiodorus the Heruls had played a role in Gothic politics, and they could still at his time be expected to play a future role - indicated by political marriages like Silinga's and the way Justinian treated them. Therefore their expansion, defeat and split must have been mentioned in his voluminous work - including the story of the group of Heruls migrating against north. As Jordanes mentioned a Scandinavian king Roduulf at the court of Theodoric Cassiodorus was probably well informed, and the chapter about the people of Scanza in Jordanes' *Getica* is by most scholars regarded as a copy of Cassiodorus' text - except probably the short sentence about the Heruls.

Jordanes was not interested in the Heruls. When he finished his work in 553 AD they could not support the Goths, as the Heruls were now Roman soldiers, Gepidian subjects or a distant Scandinavian people - except for the few being assimilated among the Goths 40 years earlier. But not even these Heruls were mentioned. He just mentioned the Heruls as participants in the stories of Ermaneric, Odoaker and Attila - probably being important stories in Cassiodorus' Gothic history - but nothing about the Heruls around the Gothic Kingdom

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66 Arne Sjøby Christensen, "Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the history of the Goths" - Doctoral thesis 2002.

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and the Roman Empire in his own 6th century and nothing about the Western Heruls at all. The only other remark is the small sentence put into the chapter he copied from Cassiodorus about Scanza - "*Herulos propriis sedibus expulerunt*".

As mentioned Cassiodorus probably wrote a story about the Heruls going to Scandinavia beside the chapter describing the original people living in Scandinavia. In that case it was natural to Jordanes to let out the description of the Heruls in the abbreviation process. In order to keep a correct listing of the people in Scandinavia he may simply have put a short sentence into the existing text with their name related to one of the other people - causing the clumsy grammar. How did he choose that remark? The most natural choice was the same source as Procopius – but as he had another purpose he brought the information that they were later expelled by the Danes, while Procopius told about their first settlement without violence. That was exactly what Goffart told us they would do.

If we assume that Jordanes did not refer to a Herulian origin in Scandinavia since he described an etymology from the Black Sea (Chapter 2) this expulsion must have taken place after the Heruls had left the Black Sea and before 551 AD. In this way we have two independent contemporary sources reporting about Heruls and Danes after the Hunnic campaign – but of course both based on returning Heruls. The probable time of this expulsion is between 509 AD and 548 AD – and the different explanations of Procopius and Jordanes will in this way fit totally into each other. The expression "*propriis sedibus*" will make sense even at an expulsion shortly after the Heruls of Procopius arrived.

### 1.3.1.6 Procopius' sources

As all historians of his time Procopius was not critical when using his old sources, and furthermore he had no clear picture of the geography outside the Roman Empire of his time. Therefore, his geographical descriptions and the legends and the numbers of warriors from the past were often unreliable (as his description of England in Book VIII, xx x). This cannot be used as an argument against his description of contemporary events, as the most important part of his work covers the wars which he had been very close to as the secretary and legal advisor (assessor) of Bellisarius - at least until around 540 AD when he settled in Constantinople with close connection to the court of Justinian. His task was the description of the wars and not the earlier history, which he just often used as a background serving his purpose. Therefore, his details from the past may be invented or distorted by himself or his sources in order to make a colourful story, but he probably knew only the general headlines from the beginning of the 6th century. Therefore his description of the defeat by the Lombards in 509 AD and their route to Scandinavia must be regarded as uncertain - but comparing with other sources and his general way to write there is no doubt that this kind of events took place in one way or the other.

Neither is there any doubt that Procopius manipulated the text, but his possibilities were limited regarding events in his own neighbourhood and time as he would lose reliability among his readers if his descriptions were outside the limits of their own knowledge. In such cases suppression and distortion were the tools. Procopius had definitely been close to the Illyrian Heruls, and he regarded them with a disgust and curiosity, which is obvious from his text ([Extracts of his text](#)). In case of the midnight sun in the chapter about the returning Heruls he specifically stressed that he "*made inquiry from those who come to us from the island*", and the description has the correct details which are not found at earlier authors and Jordanes, who also wrote about the midnight sun. There is no doubt that he also used Suartuas and other Herulian officers as sources when following Bellisarius and living in Byzans afterwards at the same time as Suartuas. Neither is there any doubt that he after 540 AD met several participants in the events involving the Illyrian Heruls and that he at the imperial court or at a journey talked with at least one person coming from Scandinavia knowing where the Heruls had settled. Unfortunately he did not tell us because he end his readers did not care.

From the text of Procopius it is also obvious that Justinian, Bellisarius, Suartuas - or maybe even Procopius himself as an earlier assessor – wanted to justify the political change or mistake which took place regarding the Heruls. Some of the Heruls were more loyal to their own royal family than to Justinian in spite of the

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Roman "generosity" giving this totally defeated people a chance to get a civilized life. Procopius therefore called them "the basest of all men" and used all kinds of abusive language. Probably in order to smear them he indicated homosexuality among them, which is showing how homosexuals were regarded at that time rather than showing that the Heruls were different than other groups of mercenaries in that way. They had to be described as uncivilized, ungrateful, unreliable and disloyal in order to explain to the Romans, their allies and themselves, why the politics of Justinian in that case were unsuccessful and why a major part of these brilliant soldiers were forced to leave the empire and join the hostile Gepides - making it necessary for Suartuas and two other generals to attack them. This is a strong motive to be considered when interpreting Procopius' descriptions of the Heruls.

Especially Procopius' former chief Bellisarius - now also close to him in Byzans - had the problem that he had not been able to rule, Christianize and socialize his Herulian soldiers - and Procopius may even as the secretary or assessor of Bellisarius have been personally involved in this process. Therefore it was important for Procopius to emphasize that the Heruls could not be ruled at all - and therefore he made a long story out of the destiny of Ochus and of Suartuas. In spite of his words it is obvious that they wanted a king, but he had to come from the group 1600 kilometres away in the pagan Scandinavia. About this Scandinavian Datius Procopius just indicated, that he was a second choice they had to make in a hurry among the numerous royal family. Procopius could in no way tell in his books if they had a successful ruler in the Scandinavian group - but his silence about the position of the dynasty in Scandinavia is speaking too.

A more traditional motive also mentioned above is the description of the Christian Lombardian forces destroying the pagans by the help of God 40 years earlier - an event which was now a part of the past which could be "painted" a little without creating uncertainty among the readers. It has to be noticed, that Paulus Diaconus told another version pleasing his people better, while the earlier Origi Gentis Longobardorum was more neutral.

### 1.3.1.7 Conclusion based on historians

The two only experienced professors in barbarian history above, Andreas Schwarcz in chapter 1.3.1.2 and Walther Goffart in chapter 1.3.1.3, both concluded that Procopius reliably described the journey of the Heruls to Scandinavia by the people they passed - in spite of his limited knowledge of geography. They also agreed with the linguists that Jordanes described a recent event based on information from the returning envoy in 548, but Goffart suggested that they were Western Heruls.

The way the information must have arrived since Jordanes finished his work in 551 or a little later and Procopius finished in 553 AD, they must both have got their information from the envoy returning in 548 AD from the Eastern Heruls at the Scandinavian Peninsula. It is rather improbable that Jordanes on that occasion got information about the Western Heruls living in Frisia, and Goffart had no indications pointing at the Western Heruls instead of the Eastern Heruls. We may therefore assume that that they will both point at the Heruls in Scandinavia.

Andreas Schwarcz has analysed with the Greek text of Procopius about the settlement. The conclusion was that he wrote: "And one of the most numerous nations there are the Gautoi, and it was at/next to them that the incoming Eruli settled at the time of question."

If we use the conclusions of Goffart about the purposes of Procopius and Jordanes they were opposite and their remarks were opposite too. Procopius told they passed the Danes peacefully when they arrived, but Jordanes told they were expelled from their homes by the Danes. If we shall follow the observations by both Schwarcz and Goffart, Jordanes wrote about a later event where they were driven from their first settlement while Procopius wrote about their arrival to the first settlement in a way indicating that it was temporary. In that case they both followed their purpose as mentioned under the Goffart-chapter.

An explanation may be that they first passed the Danes by sea with help from the Varnies landing at the Listerland and settling in Blekinge/Värend. Later they began to plunder the neighbors as usual and were

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expelled by the Danes, who therefore became famous for the first time in the history. As they in 548 were found far north of the Danes they must have been expelled north.

### 1.3.1.8 The Swedish archaeologists

Opposite von Friesen and Ivar Lindquist the Swedish archaeologists to day do not describe any theories about the Heruls of Procopius – their arrival is not even mentioned in the work, "Vendel Period", from the Historical Museum of Sweden. Since World War II Scandinavian archaeologists are in general sceptical or at least cautious when archaeology is used to explain ethnicity - as this is done now in Germany and Eastern Europe. Based on this attitude most Swedish scholars reject that archaeology gives any reason to believe that an East Germanic people settled in Sweden. They are arguing that the Vendel Culture was a natural local development by the tribe of Svear (Suiones) influenced 50-70 years later by the Merovings – and that this could be supported by the Högom-finds. This is not surprising as already Olof Rudbeck in the 17th century tried to prove that the Uppsala-society was the lost Atlantis from where European culture was spread out. In spite of the usual reaction against such claims the royal mounds in Uppsala have been the symbol of the Swedish nation ever since. Normally the popular modern critiques, Goffart and especially Ellegaard, are referred to support this view, but none of these scholars have tried to deny, that the Heruls had been in Sweden. This possibility cannot be rejected, but not even traces of such a low activity are registered by the Swedish archaeologists as possible Herulian in Uppland or Götaland, and integration in an existing local people of a small number of immigrants (primarily upper class) does not appear to be analysed either.

An argument against Procopius has been that there are no similarities between the Nordic power centres and the archaeology of Moravia/Marchfeld. First of all this is not correct as Tejral and Menghin have demonstrated similarities and mentioned the possibility. Secondly the similarities should not be significant as no specific Herulian characteristics are known from Southern Europe and as a majority in Svealand or Götaland still be local tribes after the arrival of the Heruls. Furthermore, the argument is eliminated by the mounds in Svealand, some similar finds in Moravia and Uppsala, the development of the fibulas in the Baltic area, the Sösdala-equipment, and the presence of Scandinavian artefacts in the Herulian surroundings in Illyria/Dacia. In this connection it makes no difference that the early finds of Sösdala-equipment and the fibulas do not point at Uppsala.

Another argument against Procopius has been that the Vendel-finds and -style point at the Merovings. As earlier demonstrated the early Merovingian style is in many ways similar with the Herulian style - probably because they were both based on Roman/Byzantine style as they were allies and Roman foederati. Later the style became Western Germanic, but due to political and religious conflicts between Heruls and Franks other connections than the Franks themselves are more probable, though the Scandinavians may have copied the strong enemy.

Of course we can always find exceptions. In all fairness against the Swedish archaeologists shall be mentioned the head of the excavations in Finnestorp, Bengt Nordqvist, to a certain degree, professor Birgit Arhenius and the late professor Åke Hyenstrand. Åke Hyenstrand's questions in his book "Lejonet, draken och korset" (Hyenstrand 1996) will be basis for the next chapter.

### 1.3.1.9 General counter arguments – their number

A general counter argument has been that Herulian soldier- and pirate-kings were not able to establish a new hierarchical level in this wide region. The total population in Uppland and surroundings was assumed to be around 10.000-30.000 at that time while Hyenstrand in 1974 assumed 40.000 in the whole Lake Mälaren Valley excl. Närke (Hyenstrand 1996) in the end of the Iron Ages. This corresponds to 1.500-8.000 men being able to fight in that kind of society. We do have to remember that parts of Uppland were new territory at that time due to the fall of the sea-level.

Procopius told that the Heruls in the Danube-area became their neighbours superior in number and in power.

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The battle against the Lombards weakened the Heruls perceptibly, but his reference to the interference of God showed us his motive to exaggerate the victory of the Lombards. We do not know the relative difference between the two splitting groups after the battle in 508-09, but since many of royal blood went north and the Illyrian group (“*some of the Heruls*”) had to send for a king there, it was a substantial group. Later the Romans under Anastasius held a massacre on the Illyrian Heruls, but still they were at least  $3.000 + 1.500 = 4.500$  warriors in 548AD<sup>67</sup>. They were even more warriors than that as the imperial group consisting of 1.500 members in 548 AD were 3.000 mercenaries in 553AD – being an important unit in the army of Narses. The group was still very interesting to Justinian and Procopius<sup>68</sup>, so it is obvious that the Heruls crossing the Ister in 512AD were very powerful – and that must count for the group around the royal family too. The figures of Procopius should in this case be reliable due to his professional role, as this were the actual numbers of soldiers in their own army.

It is difficult to guess their number of warriors in Sweden which could be all between 500 and 5.000 warriors. We may guess that 1/3 of the surviving people went north based on Procopius’ choice of words. As we had at least 4.500 soldieres in Illyria in 548 they probably had more than 2000 males in the soldiers age in Scandinavia. That makes sence as the number of young men returning with Datus was 200 according to Procopius – 10%, which probably was so many they could spare.

The question is also how much it will tell us as military strength is not just a question of numbers, but also of equipment, training, attitude, organisation and leadership - demonstrated by the relatively low numbers of soldiers used by the Romans at Limes (30.000) and by Theodoric (20.000).

It has to be considered that the Heruls were trained by Romans and Huns, and that they had actual experiences from the Danube-region subduing the other migration people 10-20 years before. Furthermore they had observed or joined Theodoric and Odoaker. Maybe they were joined by followers - a/o Western Heruls, people they met on their way, suppressed people in Scandinavia or refugees from the Alemanni from 498, the Visigothic defeat in Gaul in 507 or the later Byzantine expulsion of Barbarians. In Northern Europe in the 5th century young Scandinavian leaders full of initiative heading south against the warmer climate and the Roman gold or heading to England in order to get their part of the remains of the Roman Empire might have caused a vacuum in leadership or a lack of young warriors. As mentioned the Heruls must have known the situation in Scandinavia. Did the Heruls get a strategic advantage moving opposite the usual migrations using the Theodoric-model stepwise in the vacuum?

This way of thinking was in 1934 put into a gloomy perspective by the German expert in the Goths, Ludwig Schmidt, who without knowing the destiny of the Heruls – and his own people – presented this evaluation of the Heruls in “Die Ostgermanen”: “*Die Heruler waren ein echtes Herrenvolk*”!

The evaluation is absurd, but if they regarded themselves in that way, the need of rehabilitation of the royal family after the defeat in Moravia might together with a need of distance to the new Christian nations (see below) explain the power which urged them all the way to Scandinavia ending as neighbours to the Gautoi. It is a strong indicium that a neighbour region to the Gautoi – Uppsala – for the first time in the history got a superior position among all the small kingdoms of Scandinavia at the very time the Heruls arrived, who left such a position in Moravia<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> This interpretation of Procopius is confirmed by Alexander Sarantis (*Sarantis 2011*), who has described the importance of the Heruls in the armies of Justinian.

<sup>68</sup> Justinian persuaded the Heruls to be Christians, he used them early against the Nika-revolt, later they were an important element of his army, and he interfered in their election of a king. Procopius seems to be very interested in the Heruls in spite of his disgust and he often emphasized them in the army together with the Lombardian mercenaries. Even the letter from Theodoric and Cassiodorus to the king of the Heruls may have been sent to the Heruls at Danube.

<sup>69</sup> Procopius told about the many kingdoms in Thule. In “To rede and to rown” Svante Norr describes a later hierarchical structure of kingship in Scandinavia. Maybe it was caused by the Herulian “occupation” of kingdom and religion.

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It is obvious why they chose Scandinavia. As demonstrated in all chapter 1.2 they had the last century had many connections with Scandinavia living at the two important routes for trade and mercenaries along the Vistula and the Oder. To use an expression from the Ukrainian archaeologist, Igor Gavrithukin [in Khapunov 2011] : “*The way was paved before, when the Herulic group*” went to Scanza. They did not return.

500 years later this process can be recognised again, when the Viking Ages were put to an end by the Norman dukes from Normandy establishing in England as a new ruling class. Later the Normans became English as the population they ruled – but for generations these new English earls were still called Normans just like the Heruls may have been called Earls.

The purpose with these comments is not to claim that the Heruls subdued the people of Uppland – just that it was possible and that they under all circumstances constituted a military force of importance. In chapter 2.2 is presented the scenario that they simply travelled to the expanding society in Uppland as mercenaries – just as they had been earlier in Italy – and became related to the royal family of the Svear as their earls (jarler).

### 1.3.2 Conclusion

The archaeological Scandinavian connections mentioned above in the 5<sup>th</sup> century are here only used as an explanation why the Heruls, who did not want asylum at the East Roman or Gothic Christians, went north with their pagan royal family. Their way was already “paved” to this pagan world from where Jordanes/Cassiodorus told about splendid horses and expensive furs traded to the Romans through innumerable tribes. There is no evidence that they had an origin in Scandinavia.

The evidence regarding their settlement is based on two contemporary reports about their presence in Scandinavia in 548 AD – 30 years after their defeat and journey – written by Jordanes and Procopius with opposite motives. At least Procopius had even met some of the Heruls returning from Scandinavia in 548 – and both published a few years after. This will lead us to the simple conclusion:

A group of high-ranking Heruls with their family and supporters settled without doubt somewhere at the Scandinavian Peninsula around 510 AD. The open question is just: Where and how many?

The international specialists in barbarian history, professor Walther Goffart, Toronto/Yale, and professor Andreas Schwarcz, Vienna, have confirmed the settlement of the Heruls in Scandinavia. Schwarcz has as a specialist in Heruls suggested that they were integrated in a Scandinavian people, but he has left that question open for the archaeologists or speculation in Norse literature. The Oxford-historian Alexander Sarantis too has confirmed the journey and added: “*The integrated barbarians tend to be neglected barbarians*”.

How could the leading dynasty of this strong and feared people of warriors disappear in Scandinavia without a trace in archaeology or legends? These are some of the many neglected questions our investigations will provide answers to.



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## 2 The settlement in Scandinavia

### 2.1 Five questions by Åke Hyenstrand

Scandinavian historians and archaeologists have - with a few exceptions - ignored the arrival of the Heruls. They have only been interested in the claim about their "Scandinavian origin" - that in spite of the fact that only their arrival in the 6th century is confirmed by history. Instead the substantial development in Scandinavian culture in the end of the Migration Ages (especially in Sweden) has been regarded as an internal expansion - in spite of its obviously international character. In modern times first of all Birgit Arrhenius has pointed out the clear East Germanic influences on the first stages of the Vendel Culture, which probably made Åke Hyenstrand ask his five questions about the Heruls in 1996 (both professors in archaeology at the University of Stockholm):

*Which connections exist*

- *Between Heruls and Svear?*
- *Between Heruls and the god Eric?*
- *Between Heruls and the powerful elite later called Earls?*
- *Between Heruls and boat graves?*
- *Between Heruls and Runes?*

In 2007 Lotte Hedeager (professor of archaeology at the University of Oslo) first time presented her hypothesis that the Huns for a short while in the beginning of the 5th century established strongholds in Scandinavia and got a strong influence on Scandinavian cosmology and iconography - which does not conflict with this article. Quite opposite she is confirming that the Scandinavian archaeologists have neglected the strong South East European influence on Scandinavia in those turbulent years, and that a nomadic people would leave very few direct traces. Her theories regarding the Huns are found too excessive as her historical arguments are not sustainable, but her archaeological arguments will also cover their Herulic companions, who may explain her many observations. Also Jaroslav Tejral and Igor Gavritukhin have pointed at the Heruls as a bearer of Eastgermanic culture to Scandinavia<sup>70</sup>.

Of course the questions about the Scandinavian hypotheses being asked here may not be fully answered. We cannot, however, avoid them regarding this time of change if we want to describe the development in Scandinavia leading to the famous Vendel Era. Obviously Hyenstrand found that question enevitable, but no official answers have ever been published. Below the intention is to answer the questions as well as possible - but in another order. Afterwards the question about the settlement of the Heruls will be answered as an example using the most likely scenario.

#### 2.1.1 Heruls and Runes?

##### 2.1.1.1 The first runes

The first inscription in runes, "*HarjaR*", was from around 160 AD. It was at a comb, probably from

<sup>70</sup> Khrapunov/Stylegar 2011 and 2014.

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Northern Germany, but it was found in a war booty in Viemose at Fyen. Most of the runes in the Roman Iron Ages until 375 AD are concentrated around South Western Norway, Fyen and Eastern Sealand - if we ignore the war booties in Jutland having a foreign origin. Maybe this pattern indicates a connection with the Western part of the culture connecting Himlingøje at Eastern Sealand, Avaldsnes in Norway and Badelunda in the Mälar Valley. Opposite there are no early runic finds in the Herulic areas of that time except a single one in Moldavia. Consequently there is no basis for referring the origin of the runes to the Eastern Heruls, and no particular basis for an origin at some West Herulian ancestors in Harlinger Land either.

The runes in South Eastern Europe are spread where the Eastern Heruls earlier operated, but the finds are so few that the 24 sign Futhark-alphabet was hardly invented here. In a grave from the end of the second century AD in Oevra Stabu, Oppland in Norway a spear point of South Eastern European type was found with the inscription "RaunijaR" (ON Reynir). According to most scholars the runes were invented in Denmark or North Western Germany, which could rather point at the Western Heruls. The first North European letters - probably being an early version of the runes - from the first century AD (Bernard Mees in Stoklund 2006) were found in Dithmarschen (Meldorph and Osterroenfeld am Eider), and the first runes from a century later were found at the war booties in Viemose and Thorsberg. But the appearance is too weak to claim a connection.

### 2.1.1.2 The ErilaR inscriptions and the name Herul

Turned primarily against the south westerly coasts of Denmark, Norway and Sweden 11 runic inscriptions with "*ek erilaR*" ("I the Eril") are found from around 450-550 AD. Earlier there was no doubt that "erilaR" was identical with "Herul" – and with this kind of spread of the inscriptions it must originally have be related to a seaborne people. Later that connection was opposed by dogmatic linguists, but they still accepted that Erilar could have been the background for the title "earl"/"jarl". The rejection of the connection between Herul and ErilaR is according to the Russian runologist, Makaev, done on wrong premises as the transferral of names between different language groups does not follow the rules of linguistic development. "The missing link" with the the Germanic "H" is found in the old kingdom of the Heruls at the Danube in shape of the place name "*Herilungoburg*" (832 AD). Furthermore, the name Heroluestuna (1086 AD) – now Harleton – is found in East Anglia near Sutton Hoo confirming that the development Herul – Harle – erl/eorl/earl/jarl was possible. The runic "*eril(aR)*" was probably a translation of the written Latin "*Erul(i)*" as the mercenary officers probably knew their name in Latin.

An exception from the geographical spread is the fragment of a stone found in a church wall at the southern shore of the Maelar (Strängnäs). The find has been hidden for the public for 50 years - claiming it was a fake, which is now refuted after several examinations. The reason was the clear and inconvenient text "*.rilaR . wodinR*". The carving indicates that it could be a little younger than the other inscriptions. The connection between the ErilaR and the Woden cult is obvious - and it also indicates a connection between the Maelar region and Southern Germany, where the other early Woden-inscription was found in Nordendorf.

What was an Erilar? Runologists have often followed the critical linguists and interpreted ErilaR as "rune master", but that is not consistent with the WodinR-inscription and the spread along the coasts with very different techniques. Rather ErilaR let the inscription make like the magnate Varin in Rök. It is more likely seaborne men being able to order the runes as owners of the items using local runemasters. The Heruls were at the time of the inscriptions used in the Roman Empire as experienced generals and mercenaries. It is therefore obvious that the Heruls going north – Eastern or Western Heruls – got the same profession in Scandinavia and England. They were not of the

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royal families in the existing kingdoms, where they were later integrated, but it is obvious that leading Heruls may have been used at the next level under the king. Their Germanic name may in this way have survived as the later word for this level, “earl/jarl”.

The name “ErilaR” in 11 runic inscriptions was earlier with certainty interpreted as “Herul”, but later the connection has been rejected by several linguists following dogmatically the Indoeuropean idea. They were playing with a fictive Protogermanic “\*erlaz” (jarl) and criticized the missing “H”.

Nevertheless works like the RGA-lexicon confirm the connection between ErilaR and Herul, and basically the linguistic arguments against the development is a false scenario. The Russian scholar E.A. Makaev has claimed that problems with a development from Roman Herul to Erilar have no value as arguments. The Greek/Latin “Erouloi” and “Eruli” must have been formed in early translations from the Germanic name - not the opposite way.

The H still existed in their own Germanic languages. This is confirmed by the German name from 832AD, Herilungoburg and Herilungowelde, at the Danube in the earlier Eastern Herulian territory. Today we know that the present East Anglian town “Harleton” in 1086 was called “Heroluestuna” in Domesday Book. This is confirming that the development from Herul to Herle is possible and from here it is a natural development to erl/eorl/earl and the Scandinavian “jarl”. The “j” in jarl is probably a remain from the Germanic “h”. Our problem is probably that some linguists have mixed up the Germanic development of Herul with the translation from Latin to the runic ErilaR. They are two different developments.

The runic Erilar is probably a separate translation from the latin Erul(i) to the runic Eril(aR) caused by the Western Heruls, who attacked France and Spain as sea warriors in 409, 451 and 459 AD. It was therefore obvious for them to operate in Western Scandinavia too as shown on the map below. The Western Heruls had been in Roman service for centuries as mercenaries – their officers knew how their name was spelled in written Latin while a Herulian scripture did not exist. Eril(aR) was probably the translation by them or the Scandinavian rune masters.

It is difficult to find any good reason why the runologists should choose “erilaR” as a rune master - except that it was easy to use the short “fabrication stamp” from the earlier war booties, when the linguists were confused. The article regarding the latest find of an “Ek erilaR”-bracteate by Magnus Källström in Fornvännen 2013 is probably showing the state of the art. It has for a long time been a consensus that it is no personal name, but a “title”. He is mentioning the possibilities Heruls, jarl, warrior and rune magician. Many runologists tend to support rune master, but only the late West Swedish inscriptions are mentioning that the Eril did or carved it. When we read the similar sentence at the Rökstone, “Varin fapi”, it must be obvious that the magnate, Varin, did not carve that stone himself. The meaning must be that he ordered a runemaster to carve the text – and maybe told him what to carve.

When we look at the spread of the identical expressions “ek erilaR” along all the western and southern coasts in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century it is obvious that it was spread by people travelling by the sea. As the incriptions are found in very different content, context, style and media local rune masters were hardly the common part. The



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Herulian officers and advisors may have been known as “the Herul” in the hall of the king or chieftain. Apparently, it became a fashion among them to order the local runemasters to write incantations with their name at weapons, bracteats and stones. Later, when they disappeared as a people, their name, Herul, remained as the title, earl/jarl. In Ireland a transitional version of earl is found as “erell” in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

Nearly all the 11 known “Erilar”-inscriptions<sup>71</sup> use the formula “Ek erilaR” but except for two of the bracteats they are all very different. The two southern inscriptions, Kragehul and Lindholm, are from 400-550 AD and both contain the 3 repeated letters being found later at stones like Lister and Rök – probably an incantation. The next 3 inscriptions, Väsby, Esketorp and Trollhättan, along the coastal areas of Kattegat are all bracteats from 500-550 AD. In the Trollhättan inscription found in 2009 we can also read the name “MariþeubaR”, which also points at Herul as we will see in the next chapter. Järsberg is a stone in Kristinehamn at the Vänern dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century – probably also this place was accessible for sailors. By, Buskerud is a stone near Oslo, which is dated to 550-600, while the basis for the other inscription in the region, Bratsberg, is a fibula dated to 400-500 AD. A fibula may be carved in another place and the dating of the stone appears to be wrong. The Rosse-inscription near Hardanger is at a stone, dated to 400-500 AD, and Veblungsnes in Möre is a stone dated to 500-550 AD.

The dating of these 10 inscriptions appears to be very uncertain, but as the formula, ek erilaR, appear to have been a fashion, they are probably all carved around 450-550 AD. They do not all need to belong to Western Heruls – Eastern Heruls may have found work in Scandinavia too.

The last “erilar”-inscription is the fragment of a stone found in a church wall in Strängnäs at the southern shore of the Lake Mälaren 40 kilometres from Uppsala. The find has been hidden for the public for 50 years – claiming it was a fake, which is now refuted after four examinations by laser, X-ray and 3D scanning<sup>72</sup>. According to Sven Janson it was regarded as a fake because it was very well conserved and he concluded that the inconvenient text “.rilaR . WodinR” would give the scholars puzzles for years “*Sætte myror I huvudet*” – a typical Swedish reaction. The carving indicates that it could be a little younger than the other ErilaR-inscriptions as similarities with Rök and Sparlösa were found, but the alphabet was still the old Futhark. The inscription proves a connection between the ErilaR and the Woden cult – and it confirms a connection between the Mälaren region and Upper Danube-region, where the other early runic Woden-inscription was found in Nordendorf – spelling the name “Wodan”. The controversial connection with Odin makes it very improbable that the ErilaR was a rune master – it would hardly be accepted – it was the position of a jarl or a king.

The development of the name may also be used in another connection. It has often been a German suggestion that the Heruls in Frisia had their settlements in Harlingerland in East Frisia – as neighbours to the Saxons as indicated by their order in Laterculus Veronensis from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. This is the district mentioned as Herlo-ga(gau) by Adam of Bremen 1070. With the Harle- and Harling-names in England derived from the name Herul it will be obvious to accept the German suggestion, especially as two boatgraves – one with Scandinavian /Latin runes from 431 AD belonging to a roman mercenary chieftain - are found in Fallward, Wremen at the Weser mouth just opposite Harlingerland. Probably the Heruls lived 286-476 AD in these marsch areas, where we find the small rivers, Harle and Neuharlinger Tief – and maybe also at the other side together with the Chauci. Earlier the Frisian area was bigger than today, but the old Frisians left in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Frisian coasts due to the rise of the sealevel which in 400 AD became like today. Tineke Looienga has in 2013 described a development in the 4<sup>th</sup> century where the more easterly people from the Ems to the Eider (including Harlingerland) under the common name Saxons filled out the area against west. The Western Heruls were earlier mentioned as attacking the Romans together with the Chaibones (probably the Chauci) – both must have been members of the Saxon group. She wrote about these Saxons : “*One of the typical features these Anglo-Saxons brought with them was the knowledge of runes. Even if we have very few attestations left, the evidence is clear. Runic objects from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards are found in the eastern*

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<sup>71</sup> Maybe we know some other Erilar-inscriptions. At Gotland we have the spelling ErlaR and in Norway we also have the inscription AirlingR - probably meaning Erling.

<sup>72</sup> Fornvännen nr. 4 2011. Gustavson, Helmer & Swantesson, Jan O.H. Strängnäs, Skramle och Tomtebodas: tre urnordiska runinskrifter. Page 306-321.

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*and southern parts of England.*” The conclusion must be that the Western Heruls knew both runes and boatgraves, and they may even have been the people in Fallward, Wremen. The Heruls lived in the swamps of Asov in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and the Eastern Heruls later settled around the swamps of River March – they were used of marshes.

The abovementioned Harleton is situated as a town around 30 kilometres north of Sutton Hoo. Another village of the same name is found in the same distance north west of Sutton Hoo. The boatgrave here and the boatgraves in Sweden are 150 years later than the Oestfrisian boat graves in Fallward, but Sutton Hoo (from the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century) is famous for its richness and its archaeological similarities with the boatgraves in Uppland, where the boatgraves were often placed in towns with the syllable “tuna”. Beowulf is usually regarded as a part of that culture, but is compiled on basis of legends from a.o. the Danish royal court of Lejre. The Heruls were unknown as a people at the time of the Domesday Book and their name was so unusual that it is difficult to find another explanation of the old name Heroluestuna than the town of the Heruls. Of course, we cannot be 100% sure that the town was called after the Heruls, but under all circumstances the name has documented that a name over 1000 years could change from Heruli to Harle in Western Germanic.

Harle- and Harling-names are especially common in East Anglia – confirming in that way that a part of the Western Heruls may have joined the Anglians, Saxons and Frisians to their old working place as mercenaries in England, when their people was splitted up in the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century – as suggested in the earlier chapters.

The English dictionaries use several times the Herelingas of Widsith to explain the name Harlington. If we look at the name Herelingas in RGA it is assumed to be related to the Harlungen Twins being hanged by Ermaneric in the old Germanic legends. Herwig Wolfram suggests these twins to be Heruls. Wolfram has as earlier suggested (Götiska Minnen 1992) that the name Herul was derived from the Protogermanic “\*harjaZ” (army) - being maybe even in this way connected with the earlier Roman versions of Hirri/Harii. However, Tacitus’ Harii are sometimes mentioned as a later misunderstanding by a writer. The name in Himlingöje, “Hariso”, could be derived from this word. Also the Gothic name “Erioulphos” (Blekinge: Hariwulf/Hærfulf), mentioned by Eunapius (Fragmenta of Eunapius, Dindorf, Historici Graeci Minores, vol. 1, p. 253), could form a bridge between Greek/Latin “Erul” and Runic “ErilaR”.

Other earlier historians claimed that the name Herul was derived from the Gothic “hairus” (sword) where “ai” would be pronounced “ae”, but that did not explain the “l”. A reader of this website, Richard Paulsson, has suggested, that “hairus” was used together with the diminutive suffix “-ila” as the Heruls were described as swift and lightly armed - which might indicate small swords opposite the heavy Gothic weapons. If we follow his suggestion we will end at a name being pronounced “Haruila” or “Haerula” following the development from Gothic “magus” to “magula”. As the Heruls had no written language it is obvious that a Greek or Roman listening to the Goths and Heruls around 268 AD in pluralise could write that name as “Heruli” or “Eruli”. This would be frozen by the Romans in written language - used as the name of the mercenaries, who were primarily Western Heruls in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Eastern Heruls, who followed the Huns, did not use written language and in their East Germanic world the name would still be “Haeruila”, which might become the personal name “Herila” used by a “comes” in Rome in 462 AD. Among the Alamanni the name “Herilo” was known. The king in the “wild hunt” is known as King Herla. A lot of speculations exist regarding the name, but we shall just continue with the traces in Scandinavia.

In Blekinge several scholars have mentioned a Herulian settlement. This was probably the Eastern Heruls arriving from the Varnies in Mecklenburg according to Procopius. Maybe they were assisted by the Varnies and some of the Western Herulian sea warriors – being later mentioned at the Rök Stone. Some of them may have remained in Listerland when the Eastern Heruls went north. They may have raised the Lister Stones using the same incantations as the ErilaR-inscriptions in Kragehul and Lindholmen. They may also have brought the name Lista to Listerland – a name which according to Svensk Etymologibok derive from the

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old Saxon/Frisian word Lista for beach. They came from the sandy beaches of Harlingerland and met the sandy beaches, which are typical for Listerland – opposite for the rest of Blekinge, where we only find a Sandvik near the eastern Listerby, where the last of the group of runestone, Björketorp, is raised. Also at the south-western coast of Norway we find Lista-strendene, which are some of the only sandy beaches in Norway. Nearby we find the famous Snartemo Sword from the 5<sup>th</sup> century – a sword like those we know from the mercenary-kings in Europe. Se also [www.gedevasen.dk/lister.pdf](http://www.gedevasen.dk/lister.pdf).

### 2.1.1.3 The Marings and the Rök Stone

From the 5th century two runic inscriptions are known from the Danubian region where the Eastern Heruls were operating. Totally 6 runic inscriptions have been ascribed to the Ostrogoths due to the suffix "s" and words used by Wulfila. Probably also the Heruls spoke Gothic, and at that time the Goths had developed their own alphabet - making it more likely that the runes are Herulic/Scandinavian. The Pietrossa Ring mentioned the name Goths, but may have been a gift or written by a Herul or Skandinavian. The other find - a buckle in Pannonia opposite the mouth of River March - has the inscription "*Marings*". Buckles by the same artist appear to be spread from Crimea to Normandy – two of them with pentagrams instead of the inscription and one of these at Crimea with an Odin-like head like Finnestorp. The Stentofte Runestone in Blekinge was placed in a pentagram of stones. According to the simple logics of naming the Marings should be the people from Mar, which was the name of river March according to Tacitus. That region was the kingdom of the Heruls with the later Germanic name Mähren / Slavic Moravia. Both names ment marsh areas like the "Eloi" of Jordanes.

The scholars have combined Marings with the Old English poem "Deor" which is telling: "*Theodoric held for 30 winters Maeringa Burg*". It is agreed that Maeringa Burg must be the stronghold in Ravenna, where the Heruls and Odoaker were besieged for two years by Theodoric. Accordingly, there is no reason to believe that the name meant "Goths" as many scholars have done without being able to explain the origin of "Mar" in that case. On the contrary Mar- was found again as "*MaribeubaR*" in 2009 at the latest found ErilaR-inscription – without any reaction from the scholars.

The scholars could have used the name as a key to the interpretation of the [Rök Stone](#) in Östergötland, which according to the official reading by Riksantikvarämbetet is mentioning Theodoric as "*chief of sea warriors*" (which is unknown as a Gothic label) and "*first of Marika*" – the last being a runic diminutive form af Marings. In the stanza before we find the riddle "*who 9 generations ago lost his life with the Hreidgoths, and died at them for his guilt.*" The riddle appears to be answered in the next stanza with "Radulf", which is the same as "Hrodolphus", the king of the Heruls, who 9 generations before the stone was appointed "weapon son" under the protection of Theodoric and died when he sustained the anger of the Gods - which also Paulus Diaconis wrote 772 AD. Theodoric could in this way be superior chief of two groups – the Western Heruls (who were known as sea warriors and maybe were the Wicinga of Widsith) and the Eastern Heruls (who were probably the Marika). The name combinations correspond in all directions. In the first numbered riddles at the stone Varin simply traced his family back to the weapon son of the Germanic hero, Theodoric, and his family going to Scandinavia. In that way the stone became a traditional memorial for a dead son, The inscription was set up according to the culture which a few decades earlier had emerged at the court of Charlemagne.

It is all very simple in that way. The pieces of the puzzle have been wrongly combined - with the result that the scholars nowhere were able to explain names and connections. When the Eastern Heruls arrived to River Mar(us) they may have got the byname Marings/Marika to



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distinguish them in the West from their kinsmen - the Western Heruls, who in Scandinavia and England may have been known as Wicinga. Both groups may have been known as ErilaR. In Scandinavia names and legends indicate that the Eastern Heruls were also confused with the Huns they had followed earlier.

It has to be mentioned that the interpretation of the Rök Stone is still eagerly discussed among the runologists. Consequently, it can not be used here as a proof of the presense of the Heruls – which should neither be necessary.

It is likely that the remarkable Rök Stone (Rökstenen) in Östergötland was raised by descendants of the royal family of the Heruls around 800 AD. The scholars have worked with the stone for 150 years and nearly all runes and words can now be read - but there is no generally accepted interpretation. The text consisting of 750 runes is very complicated with a lot of information which should be expected to have a meaning since a man used all this effort to write it. A very simple structure in the text, however, is indicated by "sakum" ("I say/tell") followed by who/where/which. Probably the text of the stone consists of riddles and answers as many other texts of the Viking Ages - where the answers here are hidden in the next riddle. The text and the riddles are described in a separate article to which the reader is referred ([Rök Stone](#)).

Here it shall only be mentioned that one of the conclusions of that article is that Varin probably regarded his ancestors to derive from the Herulian king Hrodolphus, being weapon son of the Germanic hero, Theodoric the Great. Hrodolphus was known for his mistake provoking the anger of the Gods – mentioned both by Procopius and Paulus Diaconis. This family was according to the text ruling the Marika/Marings, which may as earlier mentioned be a name of the Eastern Heruls - also met as a runic inscription at a Hungarian buckle (1.2.1) and in OE Deor. The sea warriors mentioned in the same stanza may be the Western Heruls (Wicingas - 3.4.1)

In the former chapter we met MaripeubaR as an ErilaR. Maybe the prefix Mar indicated that he was an Eastern Herulian jarl. The Eastern Heruls lived in the region of Tacitus' river Mar (later March/Mähren and Slavic Morava/Moravia). Now we find MaripeubaR together with ErilaR in Trollhättan, Mariki together with Theodoric in Rök, Marings at the Danube and Maeringaburg together with Theodoric in England, where the final syllables -iki/-ings/-inga are the same runic/Eastgermanic/ON syllable as the final syllable -inge in the name of a people – the people of Mar. Was it their way to separate the Eastern Heruls from the Western Herulian sea warriors who probably were regarded as Wicinga in Widsith?

He also told that his son was lying dead between the family of the "jgOldiga" – a family with Thor as one of the ancestors. The runic "jgOld(i)ga" is normally translated as Ingwaldings with the root "IngvaldR" – and sometimes even as Ynglings, which is unlikely. The most obvious reading is Ingeldings, who could be the family of the Scylding Ingeld being famous all over Europe around 800 AD – a family regarding themselves to be descendants of Odin. The son of Varin may have assisted this family in Denmark in the wars 812-815 AD and died there together with several members of that family.

A runic text of that age will always be uncertain and of course such an interpretation will be criticized - at least by scholars fighting for their own interpretations or who just want to keep their old mysteries alive. As long as the interpretation is not generally accepted the Rök Stone shall not be used as a proof of the presence of the Heruls in Scandinavia – it was not necessary in the first chapter.

Under all circumstances a connection between the Heruls and the family of Varin in Eastern Götaland in the 9th century will not rule out the possibility that the Heruls settled in Uppsala in the 6th century. According to the sagas the royal family in Uppsala spread out later, and this is supported by the contemporary Sparlösa Stone in Western Götaland referring to a father sitting in Uppsala and royal names similar with the names in Ynglingasaga.

It shall also be noticed that the stone was placed in an area from where members of the Götic jarle family and

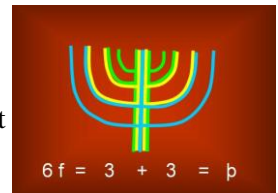
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a secondary royal family 300 years later probably emerged.

### 2.1.1.4 Rune stones in Blekinge

In Blekinge the three rune stones at Lister and the Björketorp-stone have traditionally been combined with the Heruls. They are from the transition period between the 24- and 16-sign futharks, and they are consequently dated to the time 550-700 AD. The connection with the Heruls has primarily been based on the repeated combinations of the names Hariwulf - Hathuwulf - Heruwulf. In that way we do not get the same certainty as on the Rök Stone, but the odd sentence "put staves 3 fff" at the Gummarp Stone – three "staves" we already met in the ErilaR-inscriptions, Kragehul and Lindholmen – will explain a sign at the Rök Stone, which according to the runologists is unexplained though they agree it should be a "þ". The sign is combined by fff and a reverse fff, which can mean "þ" (3,3 in ciphercode). "fff" must be a religious incantation like the word "futhark" with "f" as the first sign - and will in that way be a common cultic feature between the stones in Blekinge and Rök and the ErilaR-inscriptions. An explanation may be the seaborne Western Heruls. There is a obvious track from the two southern ErilaR-inscriptions over the Blekinge Stones to Rök, but we will analyze their arrival further in the later chapter 2.1.3.2.

It is often claimed (since von Friesen and Ivar Lindqvist) that the rune stones around Listerland in Blekinge (Istaby, Stentofte and Gummarp) with the names "Hariwulf", "Hapuwulf" and "Hæruwulf" were Herulic. That is not possible to prove in this way, but the names of the family members are constructed in the same way as the names at the Rök Stone, "Rapulf", "Hraipulf" and "Rukulf". As earlier mentioned "Hariwulf" was probably the Gothic name in Greek, "Erioulphos". Further more the Gummarp-inscription contains 3 "f"s as a possible parallel to the 6 "f"s in line 21 at the Rök Stone as described above – but while the Lister stones are written in the old futhark, the Rök Stone is mostly written in the new futhark as it is younger.



The stone in Björketorp is located 50 kilometres east of Listerland at the southern end of the long civilisation of Johannishusåsen and Västra Vång from 0-1100 AD. Västra Vång is now regarded as the Iron Age center of Blekinge with fertile land and iron production. At this stone is used exactly the same long incantation formula as the Stentofte Stone in Listerland and they are both a part of a monument of 3-5 erected stones. No names are mentioned in Björketorp, but they are definitely carved by the same dynasty.

The location of the three runestones in Listerland is interesting as "lister" according to linguists probably is originating from the Frisian or Lower Saxon word "lista", which is translated as "edge/beach" – this is the region of Harlingen, where the Western Heruls came from. It is probably derived from Latin "litus" meaning beach. It is characteristic when visiting Listerland that the last sand beaches are found here, when travelling from Scania against the east. The Istaby runestone was placed close to the impressive beach, Sandviken – but Istaby itself is given another local explanation though it may sound as Listerby.

The stone in Björketorp is located at the southern end of the 6 kilometres long civilisation. A kilometer against east we find the name Listerby close to a beach and two kilometres against south west we have a coastal village named Sandviken – just like in Lister. The beaches are not sandy any more – maybe due to houses and harbours – but at least Sandviken must have been sandy earlier.

The most likely reason for this spread of the runestones is that the family from Lister tried to control or serve this rich and old society. Actually we also have a qualified guess who these people were - carving the runestones of Lister. The Western Heruls came from Harlingen or at least Eastern Frisia where they had operated as pirates along the coasts of France and Spain – and probably also against north. They must have been used to operate from sandy beaches, where they could also build and repair their ships. They brought with them their name of beaches, "lista", and found here the only sandy beaches in Blekinge. In this way



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many questions are answered regarding “erilar”, the connection with the Rök Stone and the local topographic names, but as we shall see in a later chapter also questions regarding other names and the reason for their presence here is answered.

Of course the name is weak as a proof, but it is supported by the find of two boat graves and runes in the neighbourhood which will be explained in chapter 2.1.3.2.

### 2.1.1.5 Other runes after 509 AD

After the Heruls arrived to Scandinavia, the spread of the runes changed. They were now spread in Scandinavia, England, Frisia and north of the upper Danube - correlating the areas where the Eastern and Western Herulian dynasties established after the defeats in Southern Europe. From that time the first runes are also found mentioning Wodin in the Mälar Valley and at the Upper Danube.

From 500 AD to 800 AD the old runic inscriptions with 24 characters were slowly substituted by the 16 sign Futhark - a change which is contemporary with a change in the Scandinavian languages, as some linguists called the 6th century the most stormy century of Nordic language. It should be noticed that the only high concentration of runes outside Scandinavia increased as late as in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century around the Upper Danube among the Alemanni and Bavarians – probably when these pagan people broke their ties with their Frankish sovereigns in 638 AD and struggled for independence. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century they were reduced to provinces of Francia again and were baptised<sup>73</sup>. This was the time when also Style II was found in Allemannia, Lombardia and England and members of the Herulian families ruled in Bavaria and Lombardia. Also the English and Frisian runes belong to that time. We may wonder why the more efficient written languages from the South and from England did not reach Scandinavia for 500 years, but the explanation may be found in Rígsthula, where the runes were described as magic runes controlled by the earls - maybe confirmed by the Sparlösa-stone and the many incantations on weapons. Nevertheless the background for the runes was probably very prosaic as messages carved in wood (Venantius Fortunatus in the 6th century), but we cannot exclude that the pagan Nordic earls did not want to give up the exclusive power provided by a written language - especially as general reading supported the Christian belief.

Under all circumstances a common language, "Danish Tongue", was said to be used in the Viking Ages and the simplification of the runes from 24 to 16 characters may support that.

### 2.1.1.6 The personal names

Other names from the Herulian history should be noticed too. Ochus is probably a Latinized Hoch (Beowulf/Widsith) or Hauk/Hake. Aordus is a Latinized Hord - being maybe derived from the Harudes in Jutland and Norway. This name is probably also found in Procopius' Herulic names Aruth and Aruphus –

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<sup>73</sup> Early finds of runes are known from Jutland, but their place of origin is unknown, though many scholars point at Southern Scandinavia, where most of the early runes are found. The other high concentration is found in Alemannic and Bavarian territory at the Upper Danube (Primarily in the Swabian Alps), but this isolated group was from 550-800 AD. The 16-sign Futhark of the Vikings was first seen in Scandinavia around 500, and in the next 200 years it totally succeeded the old 24 sign Futhark. The Pietrossa-ring and the runes of Eastern Europe - including the few runes at the Black Sea - are found concentrated near the early Gothic centres. In Germany there is a concentration of runes in the Upper Danubian area, but they are later than the Migration Period. A tribe travelling as a part of the Goths might be the best explanation. Even as the runes are found near the route of the Heruls, there is no clear connection, but the new 16-sign form might have been developed by the Heruls. The history of the runes is too uncertain to be used here, but more about runes can be read at [Arilds runes](#) and the links found there.

The language connected to the runes in Scandinavia demonstrate a development similar to the runes. The 6th century is by Scandinavian linguists called "the stormy century in the history of the Scandinavian languages" introducing the syncope, the vowel mutations and the break. However this also happened in other Germanic languages - somewhere a little earlier (Vemund Skard).

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being under all circumstances the same name as the runic Haruth at the Rök Stone.

The royal Herulian names Hrodolphus, Alaric and Haruth and the Gothic Theodoric and Eric are all found at the two runestones in Rök and Sparlösa from around 800 AD. These runestones are found in the Götalands, but as Sparlösa refers to their father sitting in Uppsala this does not point at the Götalands as the place of the final Herulian settlement 300 years earlier. Also the Gothic Erioulphos as Hariwulf in Blekinge and the Herulian Herila as Erilar are as mentioned pointing that way, while the earlier Hariso in Himlingöje and Constanza can only be a relevant connection if it was caused by the Western Heruls. We shall, however, be aware that Germanic names were often based on the same roots.

### 2.1.1.7 The answer

Based on the arguments above we must conclude that there is no proof that the Heruls invented the runes, but the pattern of the spread indicates that they were some of the later users, who spread the runes.

## 2.1.2 Heruls and Earls?

### 2.1.2.1 Niels Lukman and Barði Guðmundsson

The Danish scholar, Niels Lukman, elaborated in 1943 in his doctoral thesis on the theory that the Heruls became earls in the Danish kingdoms. He suggested that their families brought the many legends from Central and South Eastern Europe to Scandinavia. He wrote in German during the German occupation of Denmark leaving his theories no future in Denmark in the following decades. However, his idea was supported by Elias Wessén, and in 1959 he was also supported by the national Icelandic antiquarian, Barði Guðmundsson, who complemented with a transfer of Herulic legends to the Icelandic sagas with East Scandinavian settlers at Western Iceland. Since then no scholars have used these theories as the folklorists are of the opinion that legends cannot be remembered for so many years, though the claims of the folklorists are disapproved by the bracteates. As we are talking about distorted fragments their arguments will only work as a rejection of the sagas as historical sources, and Lotte Hedeager has pointed out the similarity between many of these legends and the archaeology.

Some of the theories of Niels Lukman are discussed in chapter 3.1.3.

### 2.1.2.2 A likely explanation

Without using the legends as an argument, it must be a fact that the West Herulian officers and mercenaries lost an important source of income when the West Roman emperor left England and his empire later collapsed. They had to find work elsewhere. In the 450'ies AD they performed the Viking raids against Spain and France, but such ships could even more likely bring them north. At that time the new Scandinavian kingdoms emerged with an obvious market for the experienced Herulic officers as military advisers and army commanders. Those, who did not join the Anglo-Saxons to England in the same role, would hardly leave out that possibility - and Eastern Herulian mercenaries may have acted similar. Probably the "ek erilaR" inscriptions shall be regarded as their "carte de visite". It is no surprise, if they brought Wodin with them as the Strängnäs-inscription may indicate, but it was a more general and earlier spread than the migration in 510 AD. Their role leads to the titles "jarl" in Scandinavia and "eorl" in England - and in this way the well known cultural connection between these areas may have been established until the second Christianisation in

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England. An example of such a role model in the old legends could be the Starkad figure - Sterkedius was even the name of an East Germanic officer in Rome. In the Vendel Era in Uppland a more formalized structure of earls was apparently established - symbolized by the ring swords (an earlier Frankish tradition) and the golden rings, as shown above at the helmet plate (matrix) from Thorslunda.

### 2.1.2.3 The answer

It is very likely that the title jarl/earl has a background in the Herulian mercenary officers - even without using the linguistic background as an argument. It is the logical explanation - but it is not possible to prove it by history today.

## 2.1.3 Heruls and Svear?

### 2.1.3.1 The general development in Scandinavia 400-600 AD

In most of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Europe was dominated by kings from a uniform aristocracy of horseriding mercenary officers like Childeric, Odoaker and Theodorik using animal style I. When they became Christians and settled in the 5<sup>th</sup> century the style also changed to the more abstract style II, where the symbolic animals were decomposed. It is impossible to see where the style came from as it was still spread by the same aristocracy from Italy to Scandinavia – just as the Heruls.

Already in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century the golden bracteates appeared in South Western Scandinavia based on Roman medals. Some of the C-bracteates are regarded to be a result of the cult of Odin. Soon after the sacrifices disappeared from the bogs and the burial customs were changed to flat burials and especially cremations directly in the field. Together these changes could indicate a change in religion, where the Germanic Woden during the next two centuries spread from south west and became the Norse god Odin.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century new greater kingdoms emerged – i.e. the Danes were now mentioned for the first time by Southern historians in 3 cases. The military equipment became more uniform and was more rapidly and contemporarily changed. The burial mounds had in a few cases been used in Norway and Högom, but now the big royal mounds were raised in Sweden - with the mounds in Uppsala as the greatest. Also Lejre was established in the 6<sup>th</sup> century as a small copy of Uppsala. Uppaakre, Lejre and Gudme were now the most important centres we know of the Danes. Also the first boat graves appeared in the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century - especially in Uppland, where they are supposed to represent a new structure of vassals or earls. According to the latest archaeology the boat graves are a symbol of the Vendel Culture, where Uppland emerged as the power centre with old Uppsala as the strongest concentration of houses and ceremonial constructions in Scandinavia from the 6<sup>th</sup> century – but they are also known elsewhere.

In this period of change Europe was also hit by a climatic catastrophe with "the three dark years" 536-538 AD followed by "the disease of Justinian". In those years especially the Scandinavian

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famine must have weakened the old dynasties connected with the failing fertility gods - being an advantage to new Odinistic warrior dynasties like the Heruls.

Archaeology indicates a connection between the Vendel Culture, the Anglian part of England, Southern Germany and Lombardia - such as identical pictorial motives at the helmets, Animal Style II, runes and the name Woden (no runes and Woden-names in Lombardia). That spread is identical with the last places where we heard about Herulic dynasties outside Scandinavia. The spread could indicate dynastic connections between these places. Opposite the military equipment was nearly the same in all the Germanic societies.

The movements and the split-up of the army of the Hunnic Attila and the Germanic migrations to England were followed by significant changes and formations of new people. This has without doubt caused a more diffuse archaeological pattern in Europe in the years after 450 AD – especially in the region where the Heruls had their kingdom. Moreover, the Germanic people along the Roman borders and the mercenaries working closely together in the Roman armies got a more homogeneous character, making it even more difficult to identify the individual people – especially when analysing royal graves as they were also influenced by political marriages. Language, economy, the earlier Iron Curtain and different educational and scholarly traditions may earlier have caused many Scandinavian links to point at the well documented western reference group, the Merovings. The finds in the mound of Childeric in the Belgian Tournai from 482 AD are regarded as a model for the royal equipment in the following generations, but the new empire of the Merovings was first established with the baptism of Clodeweg in 496 AD. Childeric should be regarded as one of the Germanic mercenary-kings – the Roman *foederati*. The Christian Frankish society became during the 6th century a cultural centre, but before the Herulian settlement in Sweden the Heruls had the same characteristics as the other Germanic people following the Huns. As example the finds made in the Czech Blucina tomb in the former Herulian territory are both similar with and contemporary with the tomb of Childeric. Jaroslav Tejral described in 2012 this pattern and called the Heruls a royal elite leading a people consisting of many ethnicities – with Blucina and Thuran in Moravia as possible royal burials with connections to Scandinavia<sup>74</sup>. He also mentioned Bešeňov in Slovakia and the female graves in Smolin and la Thaya. Furthermore, a group of warrior burials around Vienna as Leopoldau, Sigmundsherberg, Velatice, Držovice – but spread in Central and Eastern Europe from Poland to Bulgaria.

The Western Heruls were close to the Bataves in England in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, but the Bataves joined the Franks later in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. We do not know for sure what happened to the Western Heruls but it is obvious that new blocks were formed with the Christian Franks and the people they subdued along the Rhine at one side and at the other side the pagan people ending up in the bigger groups of Frisians, Saxons and Danes. The way the Thuringians, Alemanni and Burgundians were treated must have influenced the northern people. They were no friends, but it is obvious that the pagans had to follow and copy their strong enemy in their development of weapons and military organisation.

The Eastern Heruls could not according to Tejral be separated by archaeological characteristics at their known living places in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but the East Germanic people did of course have certain other characteristics than the Scandinavians. It is, however, important to realize that the migration of the Heruls of Procopius should not be expected to cause a significant East Germanic impact on Scandinavian archaeology. They were a military force – not a cultural trend setter.

In Denmark the significant votive gifts ceased in the moors, and both in Denmark and Sweden numerous golden treasures from the previous period were deposited in the dry soil - including destructed cultic objects. This may be the background for the invention of some legends of dragons defending golden treasures<sup>75</sup>. Nearly all the gold disappeared except gilded silver and the thin gold foil figures (*guldgubber*) normally found close to the market places. In 1996 Åke Hyenstrand summarized these general changes in Sweden.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Article by Jaroslav Tejral in /Stylegar 2014.

<sup>75</sup> This supernatural protection is described in e.g. Beowulf.

<sup>76</sup> At page 119 in "Lejonet, draken and korset" Hyenstrand wrote that in the Migration Ages - primarily in the 6th

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The richness of a society, however, will not necessarily be revealed by the finds in the ground as a Scandinavian society would never waste the imported metals except due to accidents, hiding for enemies, religious reasons or a special need for a manifestation of power.

The Danish archaeologist Morten Axboe has recently suggested that some of the Danish hoards were offerings to the gods due to a bad harvest in 536-538, which is the latest date of these hoards (especially the expensive fibulas with bracteates like Kitnæs) [Axboe 2007]. The purpose could also be hiding due to plunderings following the bad harvest, which is supposed to be caused by dust in the air from a volcanic eruption in the Far East, but the combination of fibulas and bracteates is in that case too uniform. Under all circumstances some of the general changes shall be regarded in connection with the famine caused by this event, which would support a war-like people like the Heruls. If the latest dating of the mounds in Uppland [Ljungkvist 2005] is correct this may even explain such a Herulic take-over in Uppsala. The dark years were followed by a plague raging Europe just before 550 AD, but many archaeologists doubt it had any impact in Scandinavia as no signs of the black rats spreading the disease are found in the excavations.

### 2.1.3.1.1 Bracteates and gold foil figures

Most of the bracteates are Scandinavian. They were inspired by Roman coins, but in the middle of the 5th century they appeared in South Western Scandinavia with abstract pictures - probably connected with the new Wothan Cult. Standard types of ornamentation cover most of the bracteates being called A- to F-bracteates. According to statistics presented by Mats Malmer [Malmer 1963] especially one type called CIIa1 can be found in South Eastern Europe (12 out of the 23 items in Eastern Europe), but this type is also widespread all over Scandinavia (77 items in 1963) with a rather high concentration in Southern Norway. As the bracteates are of Scandinavian origin and not a usual trading object the flow must have followed Huns or East Germanic horsemen from Scandinavia back to South Eastern Europe. Because of the spread we cannot tell from where in Scandinavia these bracteates and their carriers arrived. If we regard the similar CIIa2 bracteate a 3-band strap work used at some of these bracteates and at spear shafts in Kragehul and Nydam was also found in the Czekish Zhuran-mound (Chapter 5.4) indicating maybe a Scandinavian connection. These bracteates were found in Eastern Scania, Bornholm and Oeland around the Hanoe Bay.

The motive at the C-bracteates is by some scholars [latest Jensen 2004] regarded to be a picture of a shamanistic Odin leaving his body (contradicted by a human foot at some bracteates) while other scholars interpret it as the story about Odin and the horse of Balder (The Merseburg charm)[Axboe 2007]. The A bracteate shows a head like an emperor and B shows the head at the C-bracteates. Also the D-bracteate could be a symbolic picture of Odin at a shamanistic stage (animals and a few human parts (the ear)) - just like it was described by Snorri in Ynglingasaga. The two most obvious motives show Tyr and Balder being disabled and killed - their exit as ruling gods. It is remarkable that these myths could be told 700 years later without a written language, but we should also notice, that these are the only known myths about these gods

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century - several important changes took place, which should be regarded in connection with the changes in Europe (he quoted especially Jordanes and Procopius regarding the Heruls):

Changes in the settlements (especially in the Mälär Valley and on Gotland)

Defended workshop areas (especially in the Mälär Valley and Oestergötland).

Culmination of Helgö.

Chamber burials.

Burial mounds (a.e. Uppsala and Högom.)

Changes in burial customs.

Boat graves.

Symbols regarding horsemen.

Offerings of gold (especially Västergötland).

Golden bracteates.

Iron production.

War booties (Swedish a.e. Finnestorp and Vennebo).

Animal style I & II.

Rune stones.

Burials with horses.

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losing their importance due to these stories. No of the gods being important at the late stage are recognised at bracteates and guldgubber - except maybe Odin and Balders horse. Their stories may have been currently changed. These bracteates may be the first indication of a change of the religion - probably the presentation of the West Germanic Woden as a Norse Odin.

Later when the stream of gold ceased the bracteates were substituted by the small gold foil figures (guldgubber) also wearing stamped religious motives, which have not been interpreted.

Lotte Hedeager (2011 p. 203/204) has mentioned that the persons at the helmet plates and the gold foil figures wear ceremonial dress similar to the Caucasian caftans of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Also the short belted tunic, which was introduced into Scandinavia in the 5<sup>th</sup> and early 6<sup>th</sup> century, was the traditional garment of the steppe nomads (short or long). Later the caftan has been ascribed to direct Asiatic influence in Scandinavia (Mannering 2006) just like the military organisation towards eastern steppe cultures.

### 2.1.3.2 The place of arrival – Blekinge/Värend?

As mentioned the Eastern Heruls arrived to the Scandinavian Peninsula – the island Thule – from the Varni. According to Procopius they passed the Danes without fight and crossed the sea, but we shall be careful with older interpretations of such descriptions. We shall probably notice the word “passed” as it makes no sense that they should cross the Danish belts three times – it was too risky. They had their allies, the Varnians, and their kinsmen, the Western Heruls, who could assist them by passing the Danes sailing directly to Blekinge. We cannot trust Procopius’ order of the Danes and the sea as he had a very limited geographical knowledge about Northern Europe – he just knew the order of the people they passed. The text could imply that they simply passed the Danes by boat on their way to Blekinge.

First of all the connection between the incantations at two southern Eira-incrptions, the Blekinge rune stones in Lister and Rök was mentioned – and at the last the name Sea Warriors (Wicinga) was mentioned together with the Marika. Also the Frisian/Saxon name Lista for beach, which is characteristic for Lister, may indicate that the Western Heruls were involved. There are, however, some other indices supporting that. In 1993 two boatgraves were found in Fallward at the eastern side of the Weser Mouth – just opposite Harlingerland. The graves were 2 kilometres from the famous settlement, Feddersen Wierde, which was left around 500 AD. The most famous boat grave dates to 431 AD due to dendrology. In the grave a chieftain was found with a belt belonging to a Roman mercenary officer and a spatha – a colleague to the Western Heruls – or simply a Western Herul. Also a chair and a footstool (schamel) made of wood were found – the last containing a short runic inscription in usual North Germanic runes. We do not know if he was a Herul, but the Heruls were apparently living in the area around the mouth of the Weser – regarded as a part of the Saxons migrating to England in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This may explain the connection between Sutton Hoo and Scandinavia. Under all circumstances the Western Heruls knew in this way the costumes with graves and runes, which we also find in Lister and Augerum – though these finds are separated with 50-150 years. As the female boat grave in Augerum was excavated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it is difficult to compare it with the new German boatgrave, but Augerum was one of the first boat graves in Scandinavia together with Uppland since the boat graves at Bornholm in the Roman Iron Ages several hundred years earlier. Consequently the six separate indices support that some Western Heruls joined the Eastern Heruls at the transfer to the Scandinavian Peninsula and the first settlement in Blekinge.

Birgit Arrhenius and Lotte Hedeager have written about the many East Germanic artefacts in the region after the finds in Sösdala. However already von Friesen and Ivar Lindqvist pointed out Lister and Värend as the settlement of the Heruls - first of all due to the rune stones in Lister and the

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boatgrave in Augerum. The boat grave is far more easterly than the runestones, and the runestones are dated 550-700 AD – after the Heruls were expelled. This has weakened their arguments – especially as they referred to the Eastern Heruls. More important as a track of the Eastern Heruls is probably the unusual globe stone on Inglingehoeg at Thorsjö, as the ornamentation appear as a combination of the East Germanic fibulas, the bracteats and lilies. A similar stone is found in a mound beside the chieftain in the Högom-mound with the Eastgermanic tracks – without ornamentation. The way to cut the hard stone was hardly done by Scandinavians as no similar work is known at that time in Scandinavia (the Gotlandic stones were of another hardness). Close to Inglingehoeg the legendary Blotberg (blot=sacrifice) is found with 12 mounds from the Iron Ages at the small location "Odensjö".

It is likely that the Heruls had a temporary settlement in Blekinge/Värend, but as they were no farmers they had no chance to live there - except if they began looting and tributing the Danes in Scania and the Götes. This may be the reason why the Sjörup Style was found as war booties in Finnestorp, and the Danes formed a stronger alliance expelling the Heruls – which made them known for the first time in the South. Such an event is possibly even reflected in Beowulf (Eorlas), Widsith (Wicinga) and Saxo (Huns) – which will be elaborated in chapter 3. The names, people and kings were mixed up so many years later when the Heruls had disappeared as integrated, but it is possible to explain them as the Heruls. These stories shall not be regarded as history, but the reason why these Scandinavian archaeological tracks and legends are found around Sutton Hoo in East Anglia is probably explained by the connections of the Western Heruls.

Jordanes told about the expulsion, and Procopius indicated that their settlement at the Gauts (seen from Byzans) was only their first settlement. According to Procopius we shall look for their next settlement far north of the Danes where the development indicates the arrival of such a strong people in the middle of the 6th century.

The Lister stones may indicate that some of the Western Herulian sailors preferred not to leave the coast and were allowed to settle more permanently at Lister between the Danes and the society in Västra Vång – maybe due to a marriage treaty or a job as mercenaries/earls.

### 2.1.3.2.1 The arrival of the Heruls

Procopius told that the Heruls peacefully passed the Danes around 512 AD, but Jordanes told that the Heruls were expelled – which must have been a later event. As earlier mentioned the authors had different purpose – Procopius wanted the Hoths to go to Scndinavia two, while Jordanes wanted them to stay (Goffart). In the meantime the Heruls settled near the Gauts as Procopius mentioned their first settlement in that way. As they were later driven away by the Danes, they probably settled between the Gauts and the Danes in Blekinge/Värend as told by the archaeologists Ivar Lindquist and Otto von Friesen. The expulsion must have taken place before 548 AD as the Heruls according to Procopius found their royal candidates far north of the Danes.

The Lister stones cannot be carved by the arriving Heruls as they are dated later. At that time most of the Heruls were driven north by the Danes. However, some of the Heruls may have remained in Blekinge – most likely some of the seaborne Western Heruls if they had assisted in the transfer from the Varnies to the Scandinavian Peninsula. They had no interest in leaving the coast and as mentioned in chapter the tracks in Blekinge point at these Heruls.

Strategic marriages were known from Southern Europe, but such marriages probably also took place between the Herulian dynasty and the Scandinavian dynasties – the Erilar-inscriptions indicate that there already

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existed relations between the people. A legend by Saxo points at such an arrangement between Frode and the Huns, and the linguist Elias Wessén has suggested that the royal Danish name Halfdan may have been a child between a Danish king and a Herulian princess – due to the name. Some of the Heruls may therefore have preferred to stay in Blekinge and were accepted by the Danes.

If we read Widsith and Beowulf - written maybe centuries later - we will also read how the Danish kings expelled the Wicingas and Eorlas exactly as Jordanes told about the Heruls. That event was probably famous all over Europe and the scalds may even have known the telling by Jordanes about it as they all tell about an unusual expulsion – not a victory. The Heruls, however, had at the time of these Anglosaxon works disappeared as integrated in one or several Scandinavian people. Their name had been changed to the title jarl/earl instead. That will explain the name Eorlas of Beowulf, but not the Wicingas of Widsith written before the Vikings were known in Scandinavia<sup>77</sup>. The English people who wrote Widsith knew the Western Heruls, who had operated in the Channel and England, better than the Eastern Heruls – if they separated the groups at all. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Western Heruls probably had the nickname vikings in England – a word which still existed, when the Heruls disappeared – a word which was later used about these and similar people in Scandinavia.

At the Rök Stone we find the riddle about Theodorik and his weapon son, the Herulian king Hrodolphus. Hrodolphus died at the Goths as chief of sea warriors and of Mariki. The first group were probably the Western Heruls – called Vikings by Widsith – and Mariki/Mährings were probably the people from the kingdom in Mähren – the Eastern Heruls. Theodorik was the superior chief of both groups and in this way we are able to understand all the riddle.

We shall notice that in 547-8 AD the royal Herulian candidate fell sick and died at the Danes at his way back to Illyria. As that incident delayed the envoy so much that Justinian according to Procopius appointed his own candidate instead, their finally settlement must have been located far north of the Danes. At that time, they could have passed Denmark by boat, but obviously they were not enemies anymore. We may also wonder, why the Heruli, who were professional soldieres, just left Blekinge – apparently even leaving some Heruls in Blekinge. Had the Herulian dynasty a more important target than Vährend? How could they live as mercenaries in Vährend? That answer we will investigate later.

Except Procopius and Jordanes these sources can not be regarded as historical sources as they are written later, but we have explained several names and words, which we have never been able to understand before, as everything suddenly appear to be connected. These statements are supporting the historical sources, but we cannot regard the rest as history – just as a likely explanation.

Another event took place in these years. The "dark sun" 536-538 may have weakened many Nordic societies at that time – probably causing famine and illness. Several contemporary hoards with fibulas and bracteates indicate a threat. The archaeology shows dramatical archaeologic changes in the following time. This would support the progress of a warlike people as the Heruls.

We do not observe remains of wars at that time except for the short attack on the fortress of Sandby and the war booties in Finnestorp, which may be caused by herulian attacks, but we shall remember that most Heruls probably preferred claim of tribute and the job as mercenaries as in Moravia.

### 2.1.3.2.2 Traces of the arrival

What precisely happened in the 5th century will be assumptions as this is not explained by the historical sources, but it is obvious that the Heruls from the kingdom in Moravia were under all circumstances fully

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<sup>77</sup> Modern investigations regarding the word Wikinga/Vikings point at the verb "vikja" (to turn) in the meaning "one shift of oarsmen changing places with another at the oars" – maybe used about rowing boats on long trips. Bertil Daggfeldt 1983 - Anatoly Liebermann 2009. The Western Heruls were known as pirates and long distance rowers in the Atlantic Ocean in the 5<sup>th</sup> century – and probably known as such by Widsith.



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aware of the situation in Scandinavia, when their royal family joined by a part of the people in 512 AD or three years earlier set out for Sweden after their great defeat. If we follow the explanation above the migration mentioned by Procopius was only the culmination of a long development building up a network - originally for trade purposes.

Procopius did only describe the route by mentioning the most important people they passed – except for the final goal Thule. As they passed the Varni (who later became Saxons) and the Danes they probably followed a more westerly route than the Lower Oder - surprised by many groups of the expanding Slavs in the East. It is likely that they established contact with some of the people, whom Cassiodorus before 507 AD tried to gather in an alliance against the Franks – Heruls, Thuringians and Varni. The passage of the Varni was even mentioned by Procopius. He emphasized the surprisingly peaceful passage of the Danes, which indicates that they did not thread Danish territory directly when they passed - also indicating that the hostilities mentioned by Jordanes, but not by Procopius, took place at another time. The later remark of Procopius appearing independent of the earlier description of geographical route "it was at/beside the Gauts the arriving Eruli settled at that time" does not tell if they settled beside or among the Götes. However "at that time" indicates that they later moved away from the Götes and if this is combined with a peaceful arrival and Jordanes' expulsion by the Danes, the Heruls must have settled a first time between these two people.

The place for the first settlement was probably somewhere in the area between Ringsjön, Bolmen, Växjö and Augerum. Most likely they first settled in open areas of the forests north of the plains of Scania, which would not upset the Danes<sup>78</sup>. At the northern side of the forests they had the Götes. The Sjörup finds may origin from these new Heruls, and so could Inglingehoeg, the boat grave in Augerum, the Lister-stones, the necklace in Ravlunda, the Bosjö-eagle - just to mention some possibilities in the surroundings of Sösdala pointing at East Germanic connections around 500 AD. This is the same region where the bracteates with the Zuran-pattern were found and the Sokolnice-style was spread.



The most impressive mound in southern Sweden is Inglinge Hoeg in Varend with the remarkable "globe"-stone at the top. These stones are not found elsewhere with ornaments of that character, but a similar stone was as mentioned buried in one of the other mounds in Högom without ornamentation. Birger Nermann regarded the stone as a bronze age stone because of the ornaments, but similar ornaments are found at the bracteates and the style earlier mentioned as Sjörup Style connected with South Eastern Europe along the Danube. It is known from the curve headed fibulas - like the Scandinavian Dalshøj - and the Anastasius dish from Sutton Hoo. In the centre of the stone there is a figure with four corners and

around this a circle with "beams" - maybe symbolizing the four corners of the world and the sun. In the next circle 19 lilies are found – unknown in Scandinavia at that time but common in Ravenna - and at the side of the stone the 12 above mentioned spirals are placed. The mound is not excavated, but it is by other archaeologists dated around 500 AD - as are some of the graves around. Sune Lindquist regarded the mound to belong to the Uppsala-dynasty. West of Inglingehoeg an Odensjö is situated and here a cliff can be found

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<sup>78</sup> Local Swedish historians are talking about Herulian finds consisting of inheritance rules, runic inscriptions and coins in Varend and Listerland (Småland/Blekinge). These theories were earlier presented by Ivar Lindquist and Otto von Friesen. In Varend women had the same rights as men in the inheritance rule like in Roman rules until the 13th century. Varend means place with many men (earlier called Virdar), while Växjö once was Vesjeo probably deriving from "vi" (holy place) and the big lake is called "Helgasjö" with the island "Helgö" where "helg" is "holy" too. In the neighbourhood we can find these names and Inges Hög, Ingelstad at Torsjö, Odensjö, Odenlanda, Borlanda, Salen, Skäggelösa, Rinkaby, Tunatorp, Hovtorp, Huseby, Lidhem, Vikensved, Vikensjö and Dansjö with Brävalla. Also an unrecorded boat grave should be found in Varend long time ago. The only strong indications of Heruls in this area are however the finds in Sösdala, but dated before 450 AD they must be forerunners long time before the Heruls of Procopius. Snorri mentioned a stop of Odin in Odensey, which he regarded as Odense, but the old legend he used may as well have mentioned a place like Odensjö in Varend. Hyenstrand has mentioned Hovshage - a northern suburb to Växjö - as the place with most finds in the area (Hyenstrand 1996, page 28).

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called "Blotberget" (Offering Mountain) with 12 mounds from the younger Iron Ages on the top (unexcavated). An old legend about women defeating the Danes while their husbands were in warfare elsewhere is related to this cliff (a similar Czech legend about the female warrior Zarka is known from the 6th century).

As the Heruls "remained there on the island" they settled next time farther away from the Danes and the way it is expressed probably also apart from the Götes at Thule - pointing north of the Götes with Viken, the Mälär Valley or Högom as the most likely possibilities. This northern position makes sense as Procopius through the envoy met people who were able to give a precise description of the Saami and of the midnight sun, which begins 700 kilometres north of Uppsala and which was not described so detailed by any other author though the midnight sun was already known by Pytheas 300 years BC. Also the delay of the envoy due to the return to the Heruls (because of the death of the first candidate at the Danes) indicates such a position far north of the Danes.

Procopius' focusing on the Gauts might indicate that these Gauts were in some way involved as a target of the migration. Assuming there was a religious community between the Gauts and the Goths until the Arianism, as proposed by Ingemar Nordgreen, it is likely that the Heruls, who had followed the pagan Ostrogoths until 453 AD were attracted to settle in their neighbourhood after all their problems with the Christian Germanic tribes. The Western Gauts on their side, however, appear to have had troubles already with the East Germanic "forerunners" (Finnestorp and Vennebo). When the Heruls took up their old way of living (plundering and tribute) - which they had to do when living in Smaaland/Blekinge - they provoked the Danes to expel them, and the Gauts would probably support the Danes. Therefore the next choice of the Heruls most likely was the Mälär Valley with its increasing richness due to the trade routes with the Helgoe-centre and the new methods of metal-winning in Bergslagen - especially if the northern outpost of the same trade route in Högom was already ruled by their allies. From Uppland they could control the trade with furs described as valuable by Jordanes. This position was similar to Moravia.

In Smaaland they do not appear to have been integrated since they were expelled and they may therefore have expelled or subdued a smaller people there unless they found barren country. In the Mälär Valley they obviously found a rather peaceful solution - as example by offering the Svear military assistance as Gilda's description (545 AD) of the Saxons and the Britains in 450 AD (later Bede's Hengist-tales) - with unclear archaeological consequences. When this second settlement took place we do not know, but as mentioned in Chapter 6.4 it probably took place in the decades after 509 AD. This is confirmed by the missing significant archaeological signs of a settlement south of the Götes.

The only place found by the archaeologists north of the Danes at Thule, where a society arose of the kind we should expect being influenced by the Heruls, was at Uppsala. Gudhjem and Gotland do not fit his description of Thule, which obviously was the Scandinavian Peninsula north of the Danes. Högom was probably too far away and the culture of the society began and ended up too early. The dating and the character indicates that the mounds in Uppsala could be connected with the first members of the royal family of the Heruls in Scandinavia, and just this place was by Adam of Bremen described as the religious centre of the Odin Cult around 1000AD. Some may wonder why the boat graves are also found in Vendel, Valsgärde and the "-tuna"-villages, but probably Uppsala became the holy temple area for superior priest kings, while the local vassals or rulers of Svealand (jarls) lived at strategic and convenient places in the neighbourhood - maybe Tuna-villages. In the beginning these earls may have been a part of the royal family in Uppsala, but the very few DNA-tests do not indicate that the position as earl in a certain district was inherited.

### 2.1.3.3 The final settlement?

According to the historical sources a final settlement shall be found at the Scandinavian Peninsula and we shall according to Procopius' explanation about the Herulian delegation look for a place far north of the Danes. The place shall fulfil three conditions:

1. The place shall be generating values which could be picked up by the Heruls, who according to

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Procopius had lived of warfare as mercenaries, looting and payment for protection.

2. It shall be a place where general archaeological changes in the 6th century showed strong international influence.

3. We shall find there the necessary traces of a nomadic people of mercenaries - but as in Southern Europe these traces will be very few. They were a slain people used to adopt the style of their employers.

### 2.1.3.3.1 Norway, Götaland and the islands

The Norwegian west coast could have been a target due to the connections in the 5th century, but these small isolated societies flourished already in the 5th century and no substantial expansion is realised in the beginning of the 6th century pointing at an arrival of the Herulian dynasty.

Also Vestergötland flourished already in the 5th century with rich golden treasures and the famous golden neck rings. The finds of war booties in the bogs are indicating that the local people there were able to keep out the intruders, because these people at the Swedish plains were according to Jordanes used of a pressure on their borders. Just like the Gudme area they had contacts with the Black Sea in the beginning of the Migration Ages. The later sacrifices in Finnestorp have a clear Herulic / East Germanic touch, but they are war booties from loosing intruders. Still the culture in the area appears to be local - even though Herulian earls may have supported the development at a later stage.

A few scholars do now attempt to date [The Sparlösa Stone](#) in the 6th century, but that interpretation does hardly work as both the runic text, the house and the ship indicate a dating in the late 8th century. Therefore, the stone cannot be used as a proof of an early dating of a connection.

Neither in Halland nor Östergötland we know centres indicating the arrival of such a people. Even though the Rök Stone is found there it may be caused by a branch of the royal family moving there some time in the following 300 years - and the text of the Sparlösa Stone even indicate an earlier movement from Uppsala.

At Öland the impressing and unusual strongholds of stone were erected, but that too was in the 5th century - as the above mentioned civilisations. If the strongholds had anything with the Heruls to do they were rather provoked by the Hunnic and East Germanic horsemen in the 5th century. Besides Procopius told they remained in Thule, leaving out also Gotland and Bornholm. The attack at Sandby could be caused by Heruls, but in that case it was rather a punitive expedition than a settlement.

All the places mentioned above may have received Herulian mercenaries - or for that sake Ostrogoths who believed Scandinavia was their original home. This may be one of the reasons behind the uniform military development in the 6th century.

The reasons for leaving out Norway and Götaland are already mentioned. Especially Finnestorp was described in chapter 1.2.4.

Öland, flourishing like Gotland in the previous period, was characterised by a big threat in the 5th and 6th century, where the people concentrated inside big stone walls living there until the 7th century <sup>79</sup>. These

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<sup>79</sup> Coins and fibulas in a/o Eketorp indicates a directly or indirectly connection to the Ostrogoths [The museum at

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castles appear to be constructed by people having been south in Europe. As mentioned the stream of solidi ceased earlier at Öland than at the other marketplaces in the Baltic Sea - around 476 AD. Öland must have been situated close to a people plundering their houses and spoiling their trade.

While Öland appear to be weakened around 470 AD - as earlier mentioned - Gotland still received solidi and the change is primarily indicated in the end of the 6th century, when Uppland and Gotland got more finds in common. Gutesaga from Gotland indicates that the people of Gotland always were independent, but that they once made a peace treaty with the kings of Svealand. This may be a political manifestation like the manipulations of Saxo, but according to Karen Høilund such a development is probable in the end of the 6th century.

At Bornholm around Gudhjem and Svanneke a new wealthy kingdom was established around 500 AD. Later the inspiration apparently became Merovingian, but in the beginning there was also an obvious connection to the East Germanic people living at the wells of the River Oder and Vistula. Like a nomadic people these chieftains around Gudhjem primarily kept cattle opposite the agriculturists dominating the island until then. 10 kilometres against south the settlement Sorte Muld with the famous gold foil figures flourished as a market place. Also hill forts are found at Bornholm – one of them in the hills behind Gudhjem – and the first Scandinavian boat graves from the Roman Iron Ages are excavated at Slusegaard at the south coast of the island. The archaeologists have recognised many similarities between Bornholm and the Vendel-culture, and also the similarity with the names around Uppsala should be noticed: Gudhjem (Gudium 1547), which means “Home/place of the Gods” at “Salene Bay” north of “Saltuna”. In every second of the towns with boat graves in the Vendel-culture “tuna” or “sala” is a part of the name, but no boat graves or helmets are found until now though the people at Bornholm were some of the first to use boat graves at an earlier stage. Bornholm was still a separate kingdom in 899 according to Wulfstan. Just north of Bornholm in Augerum in Blekinge the oldest boat grave was found.

### 2.1.3.3.2 The Mälär Valley

It is obvious that the Maelar region fulfilled the two first conditions above. It was placed near the trade route from north (Högom) mentioned by Jordanes - the same route the Heruls had controlled in Moravia - and the iron in Bergslagen was another source of growing wealth. Furthermore, the changing level of the sea caused an increase of arable land in the region for cattle and agriculture, while other societies had exhausted their land. The mounds and especially the content of the boat graves indicate a new structure of the society. Here we find an expansion which the Heruls could make use of according to their historical record and we are in the Vendel Culture able to find the changes they would cause after having lived a generation in Sweden.

Uppsala and the Vendel Culture was archaeologically characterized as the power centre of the Scandinavian Peninsula from the middle of the 6th century - a culture being initially strongly influenced by an East Germanic culture with contact to the regions where the Herulian dynasties still appeared to live. Here Birgit Arrhenius emphasized especially the shield boss, a buckle and a mount from the Vendel boat grave XIV, which is regarded to be the first of the boat graves. Identical items are found at River Tizsa in Romenia, to where Datius escaped to the Gepides. The shield boss is of a type which is typical for Vendel in those years. Another identical shield boss is found in a tomb at the Rhine containing also items of Gepidic character. The time connections may indicate that it belonged to the Datius-group where the survivors probably may have escaped towards the

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Eketorp] – or theoretically to the Heruls. Ulf Näsman has demonstrated (Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society) the ringwalls to be spread in even districts all over the island of Öland with the farmers cottages inside the walls. This indicates, that the walls are ideas of local earlier mercenaries from the island and not caused by an occupying army. Earlier scholars (a.o. Werner) claim that Öland was attacked 480-500 causing a lot of hoards with solidi. As a reaction against a possible overinterpretation this is rejected by modern scholars (a.o. Herschend).

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west after the destruction of the Gepides and the Illyrian Heruls in 565 AD. Vendel XIV also contained one of the famous helmets for parades. They were made in Scandinavia but looked like Roman cavalry helmets from the 5th century - belonging to people who played on and had a strong veneration for a past as Roman mercenaries.

The content and character of the Ottars' Mound in Vendel and maybe the so-called Sami-DNA in a boat grave may indicate a connection with the society of Högom in Norrland being influenced by East Germanic culture. This society appears to have been left in the beginning of the 6th century. Opposite Högom the mound in Vendel contained a cremation. In the ashes was found a very seldom coin from the East Roman emperor Basiliscus ruling only in the year 476 AD, when Odoaker dismissed West Roman Emperor. This coin is also known from the tomb of Childeric. Maybe the dynasty from Högom met their Herulic allies in Uppland and joined them. Here in Uppland a new centre of richness emerged based on the fur trade route via Helgoe and the new iron extraction in Bergslagen - activities which without any doubt would attract the Herulian warrior kings. This was exactly what they needed.

The three royal mounds in Uppsala are dated inside the interval 500-625 AD - which was the time when the Heruls established in the area - for the moment the later part. The eldest mound in the middle is not excavated, but it is known to contain a cremation packed with stones as the two other mounds. The East Mound contains a woman and maybe also a boy burned at temperatures so high that nearly everything in the mound was destroyed. Among the fragments was a helmet for a woman or a child with a helmet plate identical with some of the plates in Sutton Hoo in East Anglia. The motive is dancing warriors with horned helmets - probably depicting the Germanic mercenaries, Cornuti, from the Roman army. In the mound also two simple female articles for daily use were found - a make up palette and a mirror with an eye to be hanging in the belt. Both normally belong to the women of the nomads in South Eastern Europe, and the mirror is found in 100 examples at the Danube and at the Black Sea. North of the Danubian Basin only two such mirrors are found - one in Thuringia and the one in Uppsala. Therefore the East Mound of Uppsala must contain a woman of East Germanic/Sarmatian family - the Herulic mixture of people. The West Mound is the youngest containing fragments of glass from the Black Sea, ivory gaming pieces from South Eastern Europe and Sassanidian camees.

The new cremation customs in the Mälar region are quite opposite the old burial customs of the Heruls as no cremations are found where they operated in Southern Europe. As Procopius could tell about pagan Heruls burning their dead in big fires, he must have described the habits of the Heruls in Scandinavia being referred by followers of Datius. The Heruls must have changed their burial customs, when they were integrated in Scandinavia, which may have been a part of the general changes of the burial customs in Scandinavia being observed at that time by archaeology.

No characteristics of the Heruls are known in the areas where they lived in South Eastern Europe - except maybe the burial mounds from the 5th century in Moravia/Marchfeld being connected with Uppsala by Czechish archaeologists and some other Eastgermanic graves between the Swebes. The Heruls were ethnically so mixed and had joined so many other people that they cannot be separated from other East Germanic people following the Huns. Taking into consideration the very limited material being left from the cremations in Uppland we must conclude that we have found all the traces we could expect to find after a Herulian dynasty and their followers being integrated as a minority in the local people. Most of the mounds and boat graves being excavated are from more than 50 years after they left Moravia as we shall find their first left items in Blekinge/Värend.

Even when the contacts after the destruction of the East Germanic people turned against the Franks

- or rather their pagan easterly neighbours - the content of the boat graves is still of the same character as the other rich European princely graves. Only local patriots - or people caught by the promising ideas of Olof Rudbeck - can claim that the warrior-level of the Vendel Culture was based on an internal Swedish development.

Of course the flourishing of Uppsala is not an argument which can stand alone, as such a people in the theory could arise as a reaction on the arriving Heruls - as the Danes. Opposite no places are found with a development substantial enough to match the consequences of this dominating East Germanic people. If this was the case, too much East Germanic influence is found in Uppsala and the boat graves.

As late as in the 11th century this centre in Uppsala was described by Adam of Bremen as the centre of Odin, where Odin, Thor and the old Vanegod Frej were worshipped side by side.

The question about the settlement can only be answered by analysing the archaeology. In the following chapters each kind of finds will be described separately. The new finds in Uppsala are not yet incorporated in the description as they are not documented yet, but the new finds of cultic constructions will only support the choice of Uppsala as the Herulian target.

### 2.1.3.3.2.1 Burials - Mounds in Uppland (6th c.)

Around 500-625 AD the 3 big royal mounds were erected in Uppsala<sup>80</sup>. The content of the two youngest mounds excavated until now are small fragments burned at a pile of wood at very high temperatures. In the eastern mound was probably buried a young prince and/or a woman in the twenties. In the western mound a warrior king was buried. The chamber in the third and earliest mound is not excavated, but the type of the inside chamber of stone indicates a cremation too. Some of the small mounds at the hill in Uppsala are supposed to be erected earlier, but the cremation in the 3 big mounds of a size not seen before in Scandinavia totally deviate from usual burial practise and cremation in the region. Except for the size of the mounds and the type of burial/cremation the mounds in Uppsala were most likely inspired by the earlier mounds in Högom (and maybe Norway) – or maybe also in Moravia.

Due to the high temperatures nearly all artefacts in Uppsala were spoilt, but we know that the cremated persons were supplied with rich gifts, horses and other animals. Like in Högom prestigious weapons like swords do not point at the specific origin of the buried man, as these weapons were made in special

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<sup>80</sup> Most of the big mounds and especially the later boat graves are found near the small river Fyris Aan an its tributaries in Gl. Uppsala, Valsgärde (3 km away from Uppsala) and Vendel (30 km away). Uppsala was obviously the religious center with 1000-2000 mounds and own boat graves, while Vendel and Valsgärde may have been the seats of local kings/earls. The eastern mound in Uppsala is from 525-75, the western from 560-600, and the mound in the middle is undated [Arrhenius 1993; Dutzco 1996; Norr 1998 (mail)]. Recently John Ljungkvist has suggested these two intervals to be 550-600 and 575-625 [Ljungkvist 2005]. The other mounds in the area are younger, but in the western part of Högaasen at least one of the mounds is older. The mounds here contain cremations. Some of the settlements are older than the royal mounds confirming that the Suiones had lived here long time before the Vendel Age began in 550-570 with a period of transition defined from 520 - according to the archaeologists.

Around 500 chemical tests show an increase in organic material around Sigtuna supposed to be horse dung in the area - but this might as well be from cattle like in Gudhjem at Bornholm. Procopius described a situation where the Southern Herulian mercenaries used horses in battle. Possibly they had learned to use horses from the Huns and the Alans, but it was impossible to use the horses in fight in this way in the Nordic forests like at the open plains of Southern Europe. In Scandinavia the first known battle of cavalry was at Fodevig in the 12th century, but we have much earlier pictures of soldiers fighting by horse and the chieftains used horses for transportation already before 500 AD. The warrior was buried with a horse in several of the boat graves of the Vendel period, but also in Gudhjem at Bornholm horses are found in the graves. The horse was often used in offerings in the Norse religion and was regarded as an animal close to the gods.

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workshops available for all the Germanic chieftains and mercenary officers. They were probably often used as an object of gifts. Among the less prestigious items were in both mounds some items pointing against South Eastern Europe and Persia 81.

In 1993 the German archaeologist Bodo Anke analysed the horse riding nomads of the Migration Period in his PhD-dissertation. One of the important items in his investigation was a mirror with an eye (ösenspiegel) being originally Sarmatian. The mirror was made for hanging in the belt of a horse riding woman. Totally he found 94 mirrors west of the Black Sea and 87 of these were found in rich female tombs at the lower and middle Danube and its tributary rivers - especially Tisza and Morava. 5 were found west of Moravia in regions where the Huns and Alans had operated around the Alps, and the last 2 were found north of Moravia. Of these two the first one was found in Thuringia in the tomb of a woman with a deformed skull, which as mentioned earlier is a clear indication of Sarmatian Alans, Huns or maybe their East Germanic followers. The last fragment of such a mirror was found in the eastern mound of Uppsala as the only one in Northern Europe. The mirror was not prestigious but antique when the mound was raised. A slightly different type of these mirrors is often found in the same context as the Sokolnice-fibulas from Moravia. In the mound was also found a make-up palette. There is probably only one reason to find such a mirror for daily use in Uppsala: A young woman cremated in the eastern mound had ancestors among the people earlier following Attila. At that time she was with high probability one of the Heruls – maybe one of Sarmatian origin.

Earlier she was regarded to be an old woman being cremated together with her son or master. At that time a small jaw with colour from metal like a helmet was regarded to belong to a teenage prince. However preliminary DNA-tests from other bones showed in 2000 a young woman in the twenties. Because of the fragments of a sword and a helmet plate a man is still assumed to be cremated too, but in 2003 the tomb from the 6th century of a tall female warrior wearing shield and dagger was found in Lincolnshire. As the helmet plate in the same mound in Uppsala has a picture identical with the one in Sutton Hoo south of Lincolnshire a connection existed between the customs in the two regions. Consequently we cannot exclude that the mound was raised to honour a warrior queen - which should not surprise the readers of Saxo as he mentioned such a queen.

A few kilometres south of the boat graves in Vendel Ottars Mound was erected. The mound has been excavated showing a cremation burial where the ashes were collected in a wooden bucket. This kind of bucket is only known from the inhumation burial in the before mentioned Ekebø, where the bucket had another purpose. The bucket contained a Basiliscus coin from 475/76 which will be commented later. The tomb is dated around 500 AD, and Birgit Arrhenius mentioned [RGA Ottars Mound] that the tomb probably belonged to the founder of this new society (indicated by pollen-analyses to be a new settlement). In this mound a man and a woman were cremated together. She suggested as a possibility that he could be a Norwegian vassal of the kings in Uppsala, but as the similarity in buckets can be explained by the connection Ekebø - Högom - Gotland mentioned above, it is more likely that the connection was Högom, as the dynasty left Högom at that time. Consequently a movement from Högom to Vendel will explain the new society in Vendel and the custom with mounds in Uppland – but not the society in Uppsala.

Big mounds from the Vendel- and Viking ages are found all over Scandinavia. Some of the most impressive

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81 In the youngest western Uppsala mound are found 4 camees of sardonyx of Sassanidian origin, a gaming piece of ivory and pieces of glass (as in Blucina) from South Eastern Europe, a golden knob for a sword and cloisonné from a workshop in the Rhine area (Trier?).

In the eastern mound is found a fragment of the helmetplate type showing the dancing warriors in with horned helmets (the mercenaries Cornuti) like in Valsgärde and Sutton Hoo. A strapwork was found with a band like in Zhuran, but the most important find is a mirror of Sarmatian type for daily female use [Anke 1998]. The special version found in Uppsala was found also in Thuringia, Carnuntum, Hungary and Romania. The highest concentration of these mirrors is found around the Morava River (the Herulian Kingdom) and around the Tisza River (where the Datius-group ended up). The few bones from the excavation in the 19th century are not fit for DNA-tests, but tests have recently showed that some of the bones belonged to a young woman in the twenties. A new excavation is discussed according to the newspapers.

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are Skalundahoeg from the 7th century in Vestergötaland and the before mentioned Inglingehög in Varend, but they are not connected with rich finds and an obvious civilisation like Uppsala.

Big mounds are found over the most of Europe too including at the mouth of River Don and in the later Frankish territory - and of course including the later Sutton Hoo boat grave in England from around 625 AD. Thus the first new kings in Uppsala used a well-known effect known from Southern Europe, but the custom was known in Scandinavia too and was used in Norway and Högom and even in a few examples in Uppsala. What was new was the size and the cremation in the mound inspired by the customs of the local people. When being transferred to Uppsala cremation was used according to the description of Procopius, and the later increase of the first mound in the middle indicates, that the big size was a new idea. The first mound has a very big centre of stone, but later they filled more sand on the top to make it similar to the two later mounds with smaller centres of stone. Now the mounds got nearly the same size as the contemporary Lombardian mausoleum in Zhuran covering the earlier Herulian grave there.

The cremations in the 3 Uppsala-mounds may appear to deviate from the logic if the new dynasty were Heruls, but here the description by Procopius support the explanation. Procopius described as mentioned the death of an old Herul – killed by a dagger and burned at a pile of wood. This is by Procopius described as the old burial habit of the Heruls, but in the last 25 years before he wrote these Illyrian Heruls had been Christians and in the regions of Moravia/Weinviertel and Belgrade where they had lived since 100-150 years ago there were as mentioned no cremations at all - nor in the rest of the region. He may of course have described a very old habit, but comparing with his usual detailed style and his other descriptions this does not appear to be something from a distant past - and would they know that? Neither the Goths had used cremation funerals for centuries since their time in Poland. According to the archaeology the custom described by Procopius did never existed in Moravia and Illyria, when the Heruls lived there. Opposite we know for certain that the custom at the time of Procopius existed in Uppsala and the rest of Sweden. Procopius told that the bones afterwards were gathered and buried, and this was exactly what happened in Uppsala and Ottars Mound where the bones from the fire were placed in a vessel at the place of the fire and covered by stones. He probably believed, that the customs he heard from the Heruls returning from the pagan Sweden, were also the old habits of the pagan Heruls - and this is for the moment the only way to explain, why Procopius combined such a description with the Heruls. The only Heruls Procopius knew worshipping openly the old gods were the Heruls arriving from Sweden. Furthermore Procopius mentioned with surprise that the wife of the dead man was expected to take her own life - and in Ottars Mound and maybe in Uppsala women are found in the ashes too.

### 2.1.3.3.2.2 Helmets and weapons

While the grave goods (excl. Bornholm) and the finds of gold generally disappeared, it is already described how the rich royal burials took a beginning in the Uppsala area (Uppland). After 500 AD the big mounds were erected – especially the Uppsala Mounds, Anunds Hög and Ottars Hög. The spoilt Grydehøj in Lejre from around 550-650 AD was a cremation mound too, and close to that in Gevninge a part of a "Vendel-helmet" was found. Unfortunately the grave goods are nearly totally spoilt due to the high temperatures of the fire at the burial in both Uppsala and Lejre.

Around 567 AD the first boat graves of the Vendel Period were established in the settlements around Uppsala – later also recognised in Sutton Hoo in East Anglia. The equipment in these burials is connected with the special Byzantine inspired "Style II" with heads of beasts and birds which flourished in Scandinavia - just like at the Lombards in Italy<sup>82</sup>. Normally the style is attributed to the Alemanni, but this is not clear at all.

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<sup>82</sup> According to most archaeologists the expansion of the so called Style II accelerated in the middle of the 6th century – maybe from the Alemanni.

According to Johan Engström in "The Vendel Chieftains" (Anne Nørgaard Jørgensen 1997) pictures in the Vendel graves and equipment often looks like Iranian armouring – and especially the cloaks of the horned warriors found both in Vendel, the Uppsala Mounds and Sutton Hoo. The Heruls had at the Black Sea and as mercenaries been in



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The style is not identical in the different regions, but the local styles had several similar elements and structures in common. Especially in Uppland and East Anglia the armouring had sometimes an Iranian touch – maybe because the company of mercenaries, Cornuty, used that style.

The famous helmets found in the ship burials of Uppland are probably local work, but they look quite similar with the Roman helmets from the 5th century or Byzantine/Gothic helmets from 400-550 AD. Some of the pictures at the helmet plates show boar crests at the helmets. These boar crests had the same function as the eagle heads found on Roman helmets. Similar boar crested helmets are already found as pictures at the much earlier Gundestrup Vessel, but this is regarded to be a Celtic vessel originating from Dacia/Thracia. The boar crested helmet of Roar is mentioned in Beowulf and Ynglingesaga and two contemporary examples like the helmet plates in Sweden are found in the English kingdom of Mercia<sup>83</sup> ([Examples](#)), but in Scandinavia the real crests are more stylized. The poems and works - written down much later and therefore doubted - are in

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contact with the Iranian tribes, who were related to the Alans - companions with the Heruls in the 4th century.

The Lombards, who also adapted Style II, had lived in the area of the Elb in Germany, but later they fought several times against Herulian kings. In spite of this, marriages and fellowship in the Byzantine army seem to have caused a reconciliation between groups of these two tribes - at least with the Illyrian Heruls.

- <sup>83</sup> The helmets having a central position in the ship burials of Vendel and Valsgärde are possibly the key to the understanding of the connections. The helmets are obviously produced in Scandinavia, but Bertil Almgren has in "Vendeltid" (published 1980 by the Historical Museum of Sweden – and in an the english version in "Vendel Period Studies", 1983) demonstrated a similar appearance as the helmets from the imperial cavalry of Rome and the helmet in Sutton Hoo, which also has a face protection similar to a helmet from the imperial palace of Byzans. This attitude among Swedish archaeologists is as late as in 1999 confirmed by Burenhult in "Arkeologi i Norden" and in November 2000 by Svante Norr in the E-list EuropeanArchaeology.

In Thorslunde, Oeland, a die for metal foils is found showing a picture of a column of warriors with boar helmets from around 600 AD, where the first warrior has a ring button on his sword – probably an officer/chieftain - and the next wearing armrings, which according to Beowulf were the reward for the warriors. The boat graves of Uppland contain several of these metal foils showing warriors with crested helmets looking like boar heads. These crests are also found on Roman helmets, where the crest ended in an eaglehead. An example of such an eagle or griffin head (from a standard) is found in Viemose at Fyen. Snorri told that Rolf conquered a boar-helmet from Adils of Uppsala, and as mentioned Beowulf told about the golden helmet with the boar crest belonging to the "Skyldings", but none of the excavated helmets wear at the first view this crest – only found as pictures on the metal foil plates of the helmets. The difference between the crests of the real helmets and the crests pictured at the helmet plates forced Greta Arwidson (Vendeltid) to consider if these helmet plates were Roman - but probably this is contradicted by the die from Oeland, the Sparlösa runestone (note 10.3.3) and finds in Mercia (Nottingham area) of two helmets with boar crests - Benty Grange (1867) and as late as in 1997 a "Spangenhelmet" in Northhamptonshire [\(Homepage Angelcynn\)](http://www.angelcynn.org.uk/history_helmet.html). Many helmet plates are found, but the same motives of animals and oldfashioned warriors are repeated again and again – pointing into the past. Some of the helmets in Vendel are also identified as the Spangenhelmet-type, and looking at the boars from Mercia combined with the Oeland die it is obvious that the crests of the later Vendel helmets and the one of Sutton Hoo are also stylized animals – probably snakes or dragons.

We know that the boar was a sacred animal connected with Frey in Norse mythology, and possibly also earlier connected with the fertility cult and Ing. A very early example of two boar helmets and one with a bird were shown at the Gundestrup Vessel 500 years earlier. This could indicate, that the helmets had nothing to do with the arriving Heruls, but the Gundestrup Vessel is now regarded as a Thracian work from 0-100BC originating from Thracian/Celtic tribes in the Lower Danube area near the Black Sea - possibly brought home by Cimbrians. Also a coin with a boar helmet was found at the Danube and other finds indicate that the boar was a common symbol among the Celts. Therefore the boar crested helmets could be brought from the Danube area to Scandinavia by the Heruls. Before the Goths left the Baltic Sea Tacitus mentioned the boar in relation to the Aestis as a divine weapon and protection connected to the mother of gods, so probably also these boar crested helmets symbolized a divine protection of the warrior.

Under all circumstances the boar crest helmet in the Beowulf poem indicate together with symbols of power as the ringbutton swords and the golden rings common knowledge or traditions between the courts of Mercia/East Anglia, the Vendel dynasty and Roar of Lejre - and the last emperors of Rome or their mercenaries.

this way confirmed by the archaeology.

The double-edged ring button swords, known from the belt Ravenna-Saxony-Northern Frankia, were also found in chieftain burials in Scandinavia and England, while a simple copy of the light single-edged Scramasax was found all over Scandinavia. The ring button is regarded as a symbol of an officer's oath to the king – used in many Germanic societies. The Danish archaeologist Anne Noergaard Joergensen describes a change in military systems around 500 against international uniform weapon sets changing fast all over Scandinavia – but most significantly in the eastern parts<sup>84</sup>. Primarily she refers to similar weapon burials in Southern Germany, but Merovingian weapon burials as a general term are mentioned to include burials in Austria/Hungary too. Opposite the development in the south eastern part of the Baltic Sea now differs from Scandinavia – the old connection with the Goths in that region had probably ceased when the Slavs settled there.

### 2.1.3.3.2.3 Shield marks and helmet plates

In medieval versions of *Notitia Dignitatum* from around 400 AD we can find lists of the military Roman units and their shield marks. The “Heruli Seniores” are found in a group of auxiliary troops under *Magistri Peditum* in the western part of the Empire. They are found beside the Batavi whom they joined in England in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. At that time the Eastern Heruls still joined the campaign of the Huns. The shield mark of the Heruli Seniores consists of white and red concentric circles ([www.gedevasen.dk/Shieldmarks.pdf](http://www.gedevasen.dk/Shieldmarks.pdf)). In the group we also find the Cornuti and their fellows, the Brachiati. The Cornuti, which means “horns”, became famous in the battle at Milvian Bridge in 312 AD, where Constantine I won his great victory – and their horned helmets can be found at the Arch of Constantine in Rome [Aldöfi 1953]. Ammianus Marcellinus told about their dancing before the battles and their war cry. The horns are the shield mark of i.e. the Cornuti, the Brachiati, the Celtae, the Marcomannae and the Batavi Juniores (we do not know a shield mark of Heruli Juniores). It may appear like the Western Heruls joined a group of primarily West Germanic warriors worshipping a god with this feature, though their seniores used the common symbol of the circles which may be connected with the sun and Mithras - being worshipped among the Roman soldiers in England. The interesting is that these horns are similar with the horned helmets at the helmet plates found in Vendel, Uppsala, Sutton Hoo and Allemania. Probably the Western Heruls and maybe also the later Eastern Heruls were members of a brotherhood or cult among the mercenaries. On the other hand it is obvious that the helmet plates do not point especially at the Heruls.

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<sup>84</sup> Anne Nørgaard Jørgensen expressed in another connection following in “Warrior and retinue in Germanic Iron Age” (Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark 1996): “Against the background of the Continental inspiration, a military elite arose in Denmark as early as 500 AD”. In “Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society” (1997) she wrote, that around 500 AD the military system changed from regionally-differentiated arms to an international arming - a so-called Pan-European horizon with uniform sets of weapons. At the same time the weapon-sacrifices were followed by a few rich weapon-graves, according to which she in “Nørre Sandegaard Vest” primarily referred to burials in Southwestern Germany (Reihengräber), but also referred to Franks in general and to weapon burials in Austria and Hungary. In 1999 she has in “Waffen und Gräber” by analyzing the Scandinavian burials with weaponsets demonstrated that the weapons were changed often and over all Scandinavia at the same time – especially in the south eastern part.

The distribution of the double-edged ring button sword in Europe is similar to the route of the Heruls and the people mentioned in *Nibelungenlied* (note 2.2.9) and the south eastern England. In Sutton Hoo there was also a ring button on the shield. In Scandinavia they are found in Sealand, Blekinge, Götaland, Svealand, Viken (Oslo), Gotland and the south-western Finland from 500-750. From an earlier phase around 450-500 another ring button type of pure gold is found in Gudme, Norway and the northern part of the Frankish kingdom, which was just then under formation (The four in Gudme were without sword – probably merchandise). The ring button is supposed to symbolize the oath the chieftain has sworn to his king, and was probably in Scandinavia and England the sign of dignity to the officers of the royal army – obviously inspired by an earlier Merovingian use.

The scramasax became the principal weapon found in drastically increasing numbers from the end of the 6th century. Maybe the Huns brought it to Europe. In another version (very few examples) they also existed in Denmark 0-200 AD.

## The Heruls

What is more interesting is that the shield mark of the Heruls has the same circles being found at the cheeks of the head of “Odin” at the buckle in Finnestorp. According to Sidonius Appollinaris tattoos at the cheeks were characteristic for the Western Heruls he met at the court of the Visigoths in 478 AD.

### 2.1.3.3.2.4 Later fibulas and Style II (6th c.)

In Vendel tomb XIV containing one of the most famous helmets (with a Zhuran-like strap work) a shield-boss is found being identical with a boss from Hodmezovasarhely-Kishomok at the Tisza River 180 km north of Beograd, where also 2 of the 5 solidi mentioned above were found. As the Gepides were expelled by the Avars in 567 AD, this boss in Vendel must according to Birgit Arrhenius be dated to 560-570 AD. In both graves also identical mounts and buckles were found. An identical shield-boss was found in Morken-Harff in Frankish territory near Aachen with Gepidic items too. More advanced types of that shield boss were later developed both at the Rhine and in



Shield boss from Vendel XIV

Vendel. The Tisza region was probably the area where the Herulian king Datus settled after his escape from Illyria around 550, and here his warriors must have been defeated in 567. Birgit Arrhenius primarily used the similarities between these tombs for dating purposes, but she also mentioned in 1983 that important elements of the Vendel-style appear to come from Eastern Europe. The shield boss in Vendel XIV indicate a connection between Vendel and the region where the Heruls of Datus disappeared, and the one at the Rhine may be due to refugees from the Gepidic defeat.

Precious “disc-on-bow”-fibulas of the Skodborg/Kitnæs type are primarily based on the Scandinavian square-headed fibula without the East Germanic elements, and such Danish fibulas are normally found in hoards with solidi or bracteates being hidden before 540 AD. These fibulas possibly belonged to people being attacked and subdued by other chieftains - but as mentioned they could also be offerings due to the bad harvest 536-38.

At the Continent the Scandinavian fibulas are found at the river Tisza [a.e. Szolnok-Szandaszollos 124] and at the coast of Frisia, where the Western Heruls earlier lived. Furthermore two “disc on bow”-fibulas are found in Ulpiana in Kosovo (the military headquarters of Illyria) in a female grave younger than 538. The fibulas were placed in the grave in a way similar to the position of the fibulas in Gudhjem [Mihailo Milinkovic, University of Beograd]. In Ganløse, North Eastern Sealand near a principal road to Sweden a piece of a cicada-fibula of South East European 6th century origin was found - possibly as metal-scrap. These fibulas were often Hunnic.

Earlier Nils Aaberg claimed a trading route to exist between the early Vendel Culture and the Carpathian Basin without being able to identify it. Haseloff has later asked for an explanation, when he identified 15 examples of Scandinavian Animal-style I from the beginning of the 6th century around the middle and lower Danube and Tisza [a.e. Szentes-Nagyhegy 84 and Gyala]. He wrote in 1982 that he was unable to compare because of the lack of Scandinavian analyzes. He connected the finds with the Lombards, but also Gepides and Herulian mercenaries were operating in that area of the withdrawing Goths. Datus arrived around 546 from Scandinavia to the Heruls in Singidunum (Belgrade) and he escaped later to the Gepides north of the Danube/Sava-line – possibly to the area with the highest concentration of Scandinavian finds at Tisza 180 km north of Singidunum. It is also obvious that the Herulian mercenaries had connection with the Byzantine military headquarters in Ulpiana, where the female burial with 2 disc-on-bow fibulas was found. South of the Danube in the area of Singidunum Germanic graves are found, hereunder 2 so called Herulian graves in Kamenovo at the river Morava (in Dacia Ripenses), but the fibulas and other artifacts in these graves point both at Lombards, Gepides and Byzans. Even though this historically is known as a Herulian area the graves are Germanic in general and do not reveal any special characteristics [Attila Kiss, 1984] – a view which is later confirmed by Jaroslav Tejral [in Khrapunov/Stylegar 2014].

These finds are confirming the historical information about Datus and his group of young warriors leaving

Sweden around 548 AD. There is no reason to wonder about this attested connection between Scandinavia and the Illyrian/Dacian region. The interesting is that some of them point so directly at the items in Vendel XIV.

### 2.1.3.3.2.5 Halls and marketplaces

The big halls appear to have an important function at the royal courts of the Scandinavian kingdoms - “*mead halls*” as Beowulf called them. The inner of the big hall in Lejre is according to Frands Herschend [Herschend 1998] arranged to function like the basilica of Theodoric in Mljet. These halls have now been found in Uppsala, Skiringssal, Uppåkre, Lejre, Tissø and Gudme a.o.. Most of the known halls are dated later around 800 AD, but the first hall in Lejre is from the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century – as is the temple and a hall in Uppåkre.

The theories are rapidly changing in these years. Small temple like buildings - probably in more than one stock - from the 6<sup>th</sup> century are found in Uppåkre and Lejre and later at Tissø. Close to the halls in Sealand hoards of stones are found. In Uppåkre and Sortemuld offerings of spearheads are found at an early stage around 500 AD. In the end of the Iron Ages and in the Viking Ages a more standardized pattern is found in Scania and Sealand with a hall and outside the south western door a fence around a temple like building. In Lejre a grave is found inside such a hall being rebuild twice - indicating that it was a grave of a founder or rather a king being divined like the Swedish Erik as told by Rimbert. Probably these groups of buildings without agricultural functions were the local representative and religious centres of a travelling king of the Danes.

Another kind of centres were connected with craft and market places. Trading activities are obvious at the 3 island in the Baltic Sea and religious ceremonies too at Bornholm. Uppsala, Old Sigtuna and the Vendel Culture at Fyrisaan are closely related to the trade centre excavated in Lake Mälär - Helgoe/Birka - where Ansgar visited the king of the Svear around 830AD and 854 AD. His biographer, Rimbert, also mentioned another “thing” in the kingdom of the Svear, which must be Uppsala being mentioned as the religious centre of Scandinavia by Adam of Bremen, Snorri and Saxo. According to the archaeology Uppsala and the Vendel culture appear as a significantly stronger power centre than any other known cultures at the Scandinavian Peninsula in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The centre kept its religious and commercial position until Christianity. No other Scandinavian centres of this character are mentioned except Thietmar of Merseburg's words about Lejre.

The centres and marketplaces will tell us something about how the society was organized, but they do not tell much about where the Heruls settled. If they brought something with them it was probably soon used in all societies.

### 2.1.3.3.2.6 Ships

The first pictures of ships using sails in Scandinavia are dated around 600 AD – earlier the picture-stones at Gotland showed rowing boats. A few picture stones dated around 600 AD show a simple sail. The ships were the flexible and seaworthy Scandinavian boat types. In the Roman Iron Ages they had been constructed for rowing (The Nydam Boat), and they did not have the stem and keel necessary for an efficient sail. According to Procopius the invaders of England did not use sails in the 5<sup>th</sup> century [Procopius 553, VIII, xxx] and also Sidonius Apollinaris wrote about the Saxons oarsmen in Gallia [Sidonius VIII, vi, 480]. In the 6-7<sup>th</sup> century the ships were changed and equipped with sails like the Roman sails. The new ships became an important factor, when Scandinavia was established as a great power in the Viking Ages.

There is no sign of that the Heruls brought the sail or other elements of the ship to Scandinavia. What is learned may be learned by the Scandinavians directly from the south.

### 2.1.3.3.2.7 A summary of the archaeology

In the areas at the Black Sea-region, Moravia and Singidunum/Belgrade, where we know with certainty that the Heruls lived, it has until now been difficult to find signs separating the Heruls with certainty from their neighbours, and no archaeologists have found common tracks of that kind between these southern regions though we know the Heruls lived there. First in 2007 and especially in 2013 Jaroslav Tejral has pointed out the possible Herulian graves in Moravia partly based on history – and the buckles in Szabadbattyán and Yalta have strongly indicated that a group the Heruls at least reached Västergötland as Procopius told. The archaeology combined with history indicates that the Heruls appeared as a Germanic people with signs common with the other East Germanic people in the region north of the Alps from France to Slovakia and Hungary. They are even confused with West Germanic Quadi. The rich Herulian graves after Attila were even heavily influenced by the connection with the other Germanic mercenaries in the West. Therefore an absence of significant tracks of Heruls in Scandinavia should not be an argument against a Herulian integration there – however, the answer is often that East Germanic traces are caused by Scandinavian mercenaries or gifts – but nobody knows.

In Scandinavia the archaeological finds indicate a general change taking place around 500 AD with the first signs coming from south in the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. One branch penetrated through Jutland and spread first around Kattegat and the North Sea, while the other branch affected the Baltic coasts and islands with an obvious East Germanic stamp – possibly via Scania, Bornholm and Gotland. A connection with the Roman Empire had been obvious for centuries and the local armies had even been equipped with Roman weapons, but around 500 AD the earlier differences between the regions disappeared, a few strong power centres arose - a.o. Uppsala - the gold was replaced by silver and a change of the religion was traced. Normally these changes are regarded to be due to the expanding Merovingian Empire, but the style-elements from the South West primarily appeared later in the century, while the connections around 500 AD could point at the Middle Danubian area as well, as there was no significant difference between Tournai, Blucina and the Gepidic-/Lombardian finds – all being inspired by the Byzantines. We shall even expect to find typical West Germanic signs caused by earlier Western Herulian mercenaries. Furthermore the coins point against a more easterly connection than Franks, Alemanni and Goths. Nothing contradicts the changes in the first part of the 6th century to be a mixture of East Germanic influence as in the 5th century, adaption of general military systems from the earlier mercenaries and influence from the nearest neighbours in south.

The above mentioned burial traditions with new types of graves either in mounds, boats or plain in the field, the cease of the votive gifts in wetlands and the increase of and the motives on bracteates/guldgubber indicate a change of religion around 450-550 AD. The parallel inhumation and cremation could indicate that two religious philosophies of life continued side by side in the same settlements, but as the inhumation was only connected with one person per generation per centre this custom was probably connected with a separate religious status of the king/earl. It has to be noticed that normally there has never been found a consequent choice of cremation or inhumation in the societies of Scandinavia - even when they were supposed to share the same religion. Looking at the C-bracteates an Odin-shape appear to have been introduced at latest in the second part of the 5th century AD, and these bracteates indicate a Wothan expanding from southwest<sup>85</sup>. Except for bracteates and guldgubber and a few earlier wooden statues with a big phallus, we do not know many pictures of the Norse gods for certain. Already in 864 AD the pope in a letter to Horik II criticized that his gods were made by human hands – being statues or even figurines like the one newly found in Lejre. Adam of Bremen later told about in the temple of Uppsala. Such statues were probably spoiled by the Christians as Saxo described the destruction of Svantevit, the god of the Wends. Maybe other pictures were not allowed, just like the name of Odin was taboo. Neither were statues allowed in Islam – developed in the same centuries.

Strong impulses from outside formed without doubt the changes 500-570AD around Uppsala. Under all

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<sup>85</sup> The bracteates are found before the Heruls arrived, which can be explained by the expansion of the Wothan-cult - also leaving names like Vojens and Vonsild in Southern Jutland, while the normal Danish form is "Oden-" and "Ons-". The bracteates were succeeded by the guldgubber (gold foil figures) being found concentrated at market places from 600 AD and later.

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circumstances the big mounds with the unique cremation burials and the boat graves prove a change in the traditions of the ruling dynasties in Scandinavia in the first half of the century, and the inhumated kings/chieftains - maybe together with the flat cremations in the field - a change of the religion. It is difficult to explain these fast contemporary changes of both religious, stylistic, economic and dynastic character to be a local development so far north as the character is international with too many East Germanic stains in the beginning to be a coincidence. Such signs can never be used to point out a specific ethnicity by archaeology alone, which is the usual problem for the archaeologists, but that is not our situation this time. We are searching the other way round looking for the settlement of a people, we know arrived somewhere at a certain time – a settlement which we should expect to have a boasting character of soldiers who had seen much stronger monumental manifestations of royal power than we know in Scandinavia.

The only manifestations of power centres being still visible in the landscape are the big royal mounds being raised at that time and the stone forts. We know that the halls were used in that way too, but this was already common among the Scandinavians and they had a short life. That means that the places should not be hidden, but we cannot be sure of that.

Öland can probably be ruled out as other islands and a dating being too early. Norway is too isolated for the Herulian way of life, except the Viken-area where there are no signs of such emerging cultures at that time. In the same way the centres in the Goetlands were flourishing too early. The Danish areas in Denmark and Scania can be ruled out due to the basic historical sources.

Högom attracts attention with the mounds and the royal tomb being a typically princely weapon grave among the Germanic tribes of that time with elements pointing at a close connection with people following the Huns. We cannot let out that the colonisation of Vendel was caused by the dynasty from Högom going south, but we should not expect the Vendel Culture as a whole to be developed by that small northern society alone. If they were a part of that they rather met their old Herulian partners in Uppland due to a renewal of their old alliance.

For a century some archaeologists have pointed at Blekinge and Varend as the settlement of the Heruls. According to early works of Birgit Arrhenius East Germanic finds exist in the triangle Augerum - Sösdala - Växjö, and the finds like Inglingehoeg, the runestones and the boatgrave are mentioned above, but no permanent culture of that kind is registered. Hyenstrand has pointed at Hov in Växjö and Bolmen as a possible centre in the Iron Ages - especially around Bolmsö and Ljungby - and he mentioned that an area north of Stora Mosse indicated substantial changes in population in the Iron Ages [Hyenstrand 1996, page 28-29].

That leads us back to the impressive mounds in Uppland, which also had the best strategic position to the Heruls placed as it was at the old trade route with access to the iron extraction. Here we have the signs of an international mercenary dynasty with clear East Germanic traces in the first generations – most directly confirmed by the presence of a Herulian or Sarmatian woman in the East Mound and the shield boss in Vendel XIV. Unfortunately the cremations at high temperatures do not leave us with many traces – especially as the number of Herulian graves has to be small due to the minority. With the datings of the mounds presented by John Lundqvist the variations of the first general changes in Scandinavia are up to 40 years later than the arrival according to Procopius, but that can be due to the natural intervals in royal burials, a first settlement between the Danes and the Goetes or a connection with changes provoked by the atmospheric darkening 536-538 AD.

We can, however, pay much attention to impressive royal monuments in the Herulian kingdom of Moravia and in Uppsala, to similarities between the descriptions of death, and to explanations about the changing burial habits just when the relatively few Heruls arrived. We can conclude that the burial traditions do not contradict the hypothesis that some Heruls settled in Uppsala - but neither is the rest of Sweden excluded, though the indications there are much weaker. If the royal family of the Heruls arrived to Sweden, we should according to the Czech and Austrian finds expect royal tombs with gifts and inhumation burials - maybe in mounds. The original burial type of their people is primarily recognised in Högom and later at Bornholm,

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but if the explanation of the change of burial habits by Procopius above is accepted, the mounds and boat graves point at the Uppsala region as the only other probable location known today.

While the indications in the 5th century pointed against connections between Scandinavia and Moravia/Marchfeld this changed in the first half of the 6th century to the Danube/Tisza area in Hungary, Pannonia and the old Yugoslavia. From the Vendel-period (beginning 560/70) it is obvious that the cultural connections were between Scandinavia and the Western Germanic people - especially in Mercia/Anglia and around the Upper Danube/Rhine in Southern Germany indicated by Style II and runes. They are even so strong that they indicate a dynastical connection – maybe between a dynasty of Western Heruls and the Herulian dynasties of Phara's family or refugees from the Illyrian Heruls. At the Eastern Bornholm also traces of refugees from the Frankish expansion - a.e. Alemanni or Burgundians – are found in chamber graves.

What should also be noticed is the cremation at high temperatures in Grydehøj in Lejre - contemporary (but not identical) with the mounds in Uppsala. Maybe just a short style-intermezzo separated by 600 km, but the excavated halls and the shared religious cults [Thietmar/Adam of Bremen/Snorre] indicate a later religious commonship between these places. Karen Højgaard Nielsen has demonstrated that the artefacts were not identical in Uppland and Southern Scandinavia at that time - they were not a part of the same society or a close trade network

It is not possible to expound the archaeology in an unequivocal way by using only the archaeology, but if a “take over” took place without a total substitution of the people the archaeological signs would appear in the successive way described above.

Lotte Hedeager has used several of these arguments to prove that the Huns arrived to Scandinavia, but as the Huns disappeared from Europe around 453 AD and the Heruls are attested historically in Scandinavia it is much more likely that the traces are Herulian as they were similar.

### 2.1.3.4 The answer

The fact is that no other places are found with substantial changes matching this strong people of warriors. In the theory the Vendel culture may have arisen as an alliance against the Herulian dynasty supported by other Herulian earls – like the alliance of Danes. We cannot exclude that such a place has existed, but it is rather unlikely that such a counterpart to Uppsala should not have left any tracks or legends.

The most probable explanation regarding Heruls and Svear must be that a great part of the Eastern Heruls settled in the Uppsala region and became mercenaries before they were integrated as a part of the Svear. Their dynasty became as earls a part of the dynasty of the Svear. The archaeology is showing the necessary tracks of that development – the merger simply caused the new Vendel culture.

### 2.1.4 Heruls and boat graves?

Boat graves are unknown in the areas where the Eastern Heruls lived in the South and they do not make much practical or symbolic sense regarding the Eastern Heruls. We know boat graves at Bornholm from the Roman Iron Ages, but they are too early. However, the boat grave, Fallward, in Wremen was found in 1993 at the mouth of the Weser opposite Harlinger Land. At a schedel, which is dated by dendrology to 431 BC, a runic inscription was placed. A belt-set indicate that he was a



mercenary serving the Romans – probably in England. He must have been a Western Herul or one of their Saxon neighbours, indicating that the western Heruls under all circumstances knew the habit with boat graves and runes when they left Frisia. We do not know if there were other boat graves in the area, as the area has been flooded. In Augerum, Blekinge, we have found one of the first Swedish boat graves and rune stones indicating that the western Heruls may have joined the Eastern Heruls in Blekinge – especially with regard to the other indications in Listerland.

The content of the boat graves in Uppland is similar with the content of the other pagan princely graves in Europe. These customs were probably in Scandinavia combined with the boats as a mixed burial custom of Eastern and Western Herulian Habits. As mentioned Birgit Arrhenius has emphasized the East Germanic connection on the early Vendel Culture - hereunder Vendel XIV - where the spread of the boat graves appears to be connected with a structure of earls - a structure which the Heruls had learned from Odoaker and Theodoric.

### 2.1.4.1 The boat graves

Around 565-600 the boat graves spread in the region - nearly all containing inhumation of bodies, weapons and rich equipment. Most of these boat graves are found in places containing burials since the end of the Roman Iron Ages and these graveyards were used until the Viking Ages.

Birgit Arrhenius [Tuna och Husby i Vendel, 2000] has based on the excavations around Vendel demonstrated that new settlements took place in Vendel around 540 AD. According to her these settlements appear like Valsgärde to be connected with the king in Uppsala and possibly the Tuna-name too (a Tuna has existed in Vendel too).

Both in Vendel and Valsgärde there was in average only one boat grave per generation with the skeleton of a man – all other graves at these places were simple cremations. In the later Ulltuna and Tuna in Alsike this was not so consequently done and the boat graves of Tuna in Badelunda contained only women and no men. This place is however usually regarded as a cultic place since the 2nd century.

In Tuna in Alsike DNA tests have shown kinship in the male line among two of the buried, but not with the third. The third had according to articles a male Saami among his ancestors due to an Y-chromosomal allele of the marker DYS388 known from a grave in Norrland. However reading the PhD-dissertation of Anders Götherstroem this conclusion was very uncertain as the Swedish reference sample missing this allele was too small (n=37), while the allele was found in a German sample. It was not mentioned if this allele exists among people of Mongolian origin, and even if he had a male Saami among his ancestors this does not exclude the Heruls as they had been in contact with the people of Northern Sweden. In later books published in 2001 and 2003 the archaeologists from the SIV-project made conclusions which cannot be covered statistically by these small samples mentioned by Anders Götherstroem - maybe because the books were based on seminars earlier than his dissertation was published. Thus the background of the third man is uncertain, but even the very limited number of tests does indicate that there was not just one ruling family. The position was not necessarily inherited which indicates that the boat graves contained vasals or military commanders - as suggested by Birgit Arrhenius regarding the earlier Ottars Mound too.

Procopius description of the envoy and the returning Datius around 548 AD shows that the royal family was visibly and numerously represented in Scandinavia 35 years after their arrival, that they may have had a peaceful relationship to the rulers of the Danes at that time, and that they had a kind of ancestor cult stabilizing the power of the royal family. The reason for the last statement is that this is the best reason why some of the Illyrian Heruls would go so far for a king, and it corresponds with the cult of Gaut/Wothan/Odin. The find in Kosovo of fibulas like the one in Skodborg (placed in the grave like the fibulas at Bornholm), the finds of several Scandinavian artefacts in the Danube/Tisza-area and the identical shield-bosses, could be a confirmation of this part of the description of Procopius - though these finds could theoretically also be due to trade.

### 2.1.4.2 Cremations after 565 AD

Besides the royal burials in big mounds and nearly invisible boat mounds a new habit was as mentioned introduced with flat cremations in the field in large numbers all over Eastern Scandinavia around 500 AD. It was primarily the type of the grave which changed, as a majority of the people had all the time been cremated. Earlier some of the rich people had been buried in chamber graves without cremation. So it was also in Northern Jutland (Lindholm Høje) and Norway, but in the Gudhjem-area at Bornholm they began to use similar flat burials without cremation – sometimes with a low mound of stone. In the rest of Denmark, where cremation and rich inhumation burials were earlier found, tombs are simply missing after 500 AD except for Lejre's Grydehøj<sup>86</sup> of Uppsala-type, and a few examples with spatha and inhumation (Kyndby) - indicating cremation directly in the field as the new tradition here too. Where the soil was suited for agriculture and where stones for building materials were sparse - as in Denmark - such graves were probably spoiled later by agriculture if they were not protected by several stone ships like at Lindholm Høje. In Birka a group of graves showed inhumation in chambers, but they are supposed to be Christians or foreign merchants/craftsmen. Among the boat graves a similar number of chamber graves existed with the same kind of burial as the boat graves.

Taking only the above mentioned archaeological observations in consideration the conclusion must be that the people of the Mälär Valley continued their old – but earlier not consequent - cremation customs. The way they were cremated was normally changed from 500 AD, when also the burials of the kings became clearly separated from the people by raising very big mounds. After 2-3 generations the king/earl was buried unburned with full equipment as the only person in the society. These heads of the society obviously existed in at least 2-4 parallel places in the region being local kings or earls.

The royal mounds could indicate that the change was initiated by a new dynasty accepting the general traditions of the existing people but marking the importance of the king with a big mound. First they totally accepted the old cremation traditions of the people though the burial concept was changed, but when a new balance was established (obvious due to the wealth of the society) the chieftain/priest was buried as a person going to a new life - probably in Odin's Valhalla (Birgit Arrhenius has suggested the theoretical alternatives that this was a cult of Freja (Schoenbeck 1994) or a sacrifice, but the purpose of the burial ritual was well described in Beowulf and the sagas. This difference continued for 400 years until Christianity and must therefore have been due to a stable status of the king and the religion. Except for the boats these royal graves were similar to the earlier royal pagan Germanic weapon graves along the Roman border in Central Europe, but there his different status is not so obvious to observe today as neither his people was cremated there. In Scandinavia the difference indicates a special religious role of the dead chieftain - indicating that the southern ancestor cult based on Wothan/Gaut was now established around Uppsala.

The change of burial practice has been used as an argument against the hypotheses of this article, but inhumation and cremation has existed side by side in Scandinavia all the time indicating that one religion did not necessarily afford one single burial practice. Procopius description of the cremation demonstrates that the Heruls cannot be identified in Sweden by their inhumation burial custom from Moravia as they could now use cremation too. Later they may have found it necessary to give the king/chieftain in Sweden a separate

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<sup>86</sup> In Grydehøj remains of golden clothe were found (also found in Uppsala), and the cremation resulted in the same high temperatures as in Uppsala. The grave is by C14 dated around 550-650 AD, and a fibula is found in the area from the same time. None of the other mounds are excavated except the "Mound of Harald Hildetand" – from the Stone Ages. This example shows us, that we can not rely on the old names of the mounds, which should be noticed in Uppland too. The "stone ships" of Lejre are still dated to the Viking Ages because of graves from the iron ages underneath.

In the last decades the big halls from around 550-950 AD have been excavated, but only small parts of Lejre have been systematically excavated until now. Downstreams in Gevninge an eyebrow of a helmet being of the same kind as the helmets in Vendel was found in 1999.

## The Heruls

status in death symbolizing an eternal life of a divine person - using their old habits from Moravia and the symbolic Scandinavian boat. In the last 10 years boat graves are found at Sealand as the Roman Iron Age boat graves at Slusegaard, Bornholm. What is found in the Uppsala region may be a mixture of the old Herulian inhumation burials, the royal mounds used both in Central Europe and Uppsala, and the Nordic cremation burials caused by the integration of two people different habits – not finding the final balance in the first round. Also when the Goths were earlier gathered as a new group at Vistula a new burial practice was established. This will be further discussed in Chapter 11.5 as Snorri may have explained this problem. We shall not forget however, that this could also be a more consequent organisation of the old mixed customs before the Uppsala Mounds – as archaeology leaves both possibilities open.

Danish archaeologists have mentioned similarities between the Alemannic "reihengräber" and Bornholm, where horses are found in the tombs like in Vendel/Valsgärde/Tuna, but also these tombs are from the later Vendel-period. E-W-oriented "reihengräber" were under development in Moravia already in the 5th century, but the graves at Bornholm could be connected with other people along the Roman and Frankish borders.

In general Scandinavian archaeologists have referred to similar royal Merovingian graves, but after Childeric's burial in 482 AD the graves in France were church burials and of those only the grave of Arnegunde in St Denis around 570 AD is known today - containing only personal jewellery as burial gifts. The graves with precious gifts and weapons referred to as Merovingian are situated in Köln and Morken at the Rhine, Beckum in Westfalen and Niederstotzingen at the Upper Danube – all in the eastern border-areas of the Frankish kingdom and with many artefacts of an Eastern European character. Merovingian shall in this case refer to the period and not to the Christian Frankish people and their dynasty.

### 2.1.4.3 The answer

The connection between Heruls and boat graves is likely to be regarded as a Westgermanic knowledge being combined with the Eastgermanic chamber graves of the European mercenarie-kings.

In the old settlements of the Uppsala-area (Vendel, Valsgärde and the "-tuna"-villages) the boat graves and Style II first appeared 25-75 years after the first Scandinavian change of civilisation in Uppsala. Probably this demonstration of wealth was the result of a consolidation of the royal power and the "earl-structure". The new style points was as mentioned influenced by East Germanic style, but spread primarily in the Lombardian, Alemannic, Bavarian and Anglo Saxon regions too. In the two last regions also the Scandinavian runes were spread. This could simply be due to the change in Europe when the East Germanic kinsmen of the Heruls disappeared from South Eastern Europe – some of them to Lombardia/Italia and the Rhine. The Franks became dominating in the trade centres along the Rhine, where former allies of the Heruls and the Western Heruls lived at the eastern bank of the river. A small part could in the theory be due to pagan Alemannic refugees from the Frankish expansion following the Herulian king - maybe from Bornholm, which name could indicate Burgundian refugees too.

The development in Scandinavia indicates that the Danes and the people at the islands in the Baltic Sea had better craftsmen than the Heruls, who probably had another focus in the turbulent years. Besides an original style of Herulic equipment and craft was washed out by the vagrant life together with other tribes as nomads, mercenaries and thieves. It was only natural that the new mixed society used the impulses coming from the successful Merovings and their later supporters, the Alemanni after the destruction of the East Germanic people in 567.

There is especially an obvious connection regarding the symbolism of power between Uppsala and East Anglia/Mercia until the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the character it was hardly due to trade, but because of a common dynastic connection. This topic will be discussed separately as a whole in chapter 3.

## 2.1.5 Heruls and Eric – the god?

### 2.1.5.1 The god Eric

This question by Åke Hyenstrand referred to the biography of Ansgar by Rimbert who in the second part of the 9th century visited Birca and mentioned the considerations about raising a dead king Eric to a god. Hyenstrand referred to the royal names Eric, Alric and Rolf as Herulic, but no Herul is known by the name Eric and all these royal names are formed by general Germanic words. Therefore the name itself cannot be used to identify any Heruls, but it is relevant to discuss the more general connection between the ancestor gods and the pagan Hunnic and Germanic people like the Heruls – or the general change of religion as Lotte Hedeager has done with focus on the Huns.

The Germanic ending ”-ric” is the same as the Latin ”rex” and indicated that the name was royal. Åke Hyenstrand had noticed that according to Rimbert the gods of the Svear had announced through a man listening to their meeting: *”We will agree to summon your former King Eric to join us so that he may be one of the gods”* [[Rimbert](#) /Robinson 1921, Chapter XXVI]. Hyenstrand compared with Jordanes mentioning the names Erik and Alrik, which were also found in Ynglingatal. Jordanes, however did not mention any Herulic king of that name (her referred to a Visigoth) and Ynglingatal referred to much older legends. The problem is not that we do not know a Herul of that name as they probably used it. The problem is that it was a generally used Germanic name. Consequently the use of it in Sweden was not necessarily caused by a Herulic presence there. Unfortunately Hyenstrand focussed on the name instead of the principle. He should have asked: Heruls and ancestor gods?

### 2.1.5.2 Heruls and ancestor gods?

Procopius told about the Illyrian Heruls that these reckless barbarians worshipped a host of gods. It shall be noticed that the barbarians had no problem with worshipping the Christian God between their other gods – it is just a Christian problem. Jordanes on his side told that the migrating Goths earlier - before they were baptised as Arian Christians - worshipped the heroes among their ancestors. He told that the Gothic word for ancestor gods was "ansis", which appears to be a background for the rune name "ansuZ" (God) and the divine group of "Ases". The first ancestor in "Getica" was Gapt. In the early royal genealogies in England from the 7th century Geat and Wothan were placed in front - indicating a similar connection between the gods and the royal ancestors there. Gapt and Geat were possibly identical with the god named Gaut, who in the ON poem Grimnismal was mentioned as an earlier name for Odin - the main god of the Ases.

In spite of the mentioning of ancestor gods Jordanes also told that the war god of the Goths was earlier Mars, just as Procopius told that the main god in Scandinavia was a war god (Ares/Mars). A war god as main god was probably Odin - though he was not a real war god in his later shape.

Earlier the gods in Scandinavia were Mercurius, Tyr, Nerthus and Ing according to Tacitus. The two last gods may have been fertility gods of the old society of independent farmers - the Vanes.

When the warrior elite emerged the importance of the gods changed too. The main god of the Scandinavian warrior elite, Odin, probably first arrived as the West Germanic or Hunnic inspired god Woden/Wothan in the 5th century. Maybe he had a parallel in a North- or East Scandinavian cousin Gaut. Some of his shamanistic features could even together with the animal styles point back against the Hunnic/Scythic/Sarmatian nomads. The Heruls may have brought with them some of these elements of the main god, but he existed in Scandinavia before their royal family arrived as pointed out by Lotte Hedeager.

The mixed Pantheon is mainly known from the Norse literature and will be discussed in a later chapter, as it cannot be used as arguments regarding the Heruls.

Jordanes wrote about the Goths: “*And because of the great victory they had won in this region, they thereafter called their leaders, by whose good fortune they seemed to have conquered, not mere men, but demigods, that is Ansis. Their genealogy I shall run through briefly, telling the lineage of each ... Now the first of these heroes, as they themselves relate in their legends, was Gapt*” [Jordanes/Mierow 1921; Chapter XIII/XIV]. Arne Sjøby Christensen has denied that Ansis was a Gothic tradition, but his arguments do not lead to that conclusion – just that the king 400 years earlier was not historical, which is no surprise (see chapter 1.3.1.4.). It is quite obvious that Jordanes referred to a usual ancestor religion as a parallel to the main gods, where he mentioned that their war god was Mars: “*highly were the Getae praised that Mars, whom the fables of poets call the god of war, was reputed to have been born among them....Now Mars has always been worshipped by the Goths with cruel rites, and captives were slain as his victims*” [Jordanes/Mierow 1921, Chapter V]. When Jordanes wrote the Goths were Arian Christians, but he referred to earlier customs at a time when the Heruls and Goths were closely related East Germanic people, whom we should expect to have the same kind of religion. We have no details about the gods of the Heruls, but Procopius wrote they were “*worshipping a great host of gods, whom it seemed to them holy to appease even by human sacrifices.*” [Procopius/Dewing 1921, Book VI, XIV]. About the religion in Scandinavia he further wrote about their first captive in war: “*for they sacrifice him to Ares whom they regard as the greatest god*” and he mentioned that they had gods for all elements [Procopius/Dewing 1921, Book VI, XV].

Maybe the two historians could not distinguish between the religions of these people, but the same kind of religion appears to have been used by all the other Germanic people led by their warrior elite.

The Gothic expression “ansis” is very close to the rune “ansuZ”, which meant “god” as a rune name. This linguistic connection indicates a Scandinavian relation between gods and ancestors, which is further supported by the divine name “Ases”, which is regarded to derive from AnsuZ.

This is of course far from our way to regard a god, but it is in accordance with the Germanic way to regard the royal family. When the Germanic people were baptized and got a written language one of their first tasks regarding history was to set up a royal genealogy. Among the first kings in these lists were always found some of their earlier main gods such as Gaut, Geat, Wothan, Odin, Ing and Thor. This was not in order to throw suspicion on the old religion, as claimed by some scholars, but in order not to throw out the traditions which placed the right to the throne on the royal family. All these royal lists must have been manipulated for that purpose.

This was not possible in a religion worshipping as example the sun as a god. Here the king could be a representative or a reincarnation of the god<sup>87</sup>. This is maybe the original difference between the so-called Vanes from the old societies of farmers and the Ases of the warrior elite.

In this way the same society could operate with more than one level of gods – as also Jordanes indicated above. Gods, where some of them could be placed in the royal genealogies, and ancestors being raised as gods.

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<sup>87</sup> According to Tacitus already the old fertility cult of the Ingviones had sacral kings or kings, who were reincarnations of gods. The name Suiones may indicate a worshipping of the sun, as the first part of the name derive from Svi, and therefore the Svear possibly also had a fertility cult. Later these kings became descendants of the divine ancestor Gaut, and the same is supposed to be the background of the Southern Germanic god Wothan, who was probably “born” in the turbulent border areas between Germania and the Roman Empire. Both Gaut and Wothan were primarily gods of the warriors and nomads. This change of religion may be caused by a change from agriculture to cattle/nomadic life as the climate changed or as the farmers were attacked by enemies. The Heruls lived side by side with Goths and Alans, whom they probably were influenced by. There are also obvious Scythian remains in the Norse myths. Later on most of the Goths became Christians (Arians), when they met the Romans.

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It is obvious that the Heruls had such a family since Procopius told about “royal blood” and the Illyrian Heruls searched for a king from the family 1000 km away.

Above we have one example of the royal lists where Gapt is normally being regarded as a misspelling of Gaut [Wolfram], the Scandinavian god of the Götes, as Jordanes regarded the Goths to be Swedish Gautoi (Göter). He was probably the same as Geat in the English lists, but more examples will be mentioned in a later chapter.

Both Jordanes, Rimbart and the royal genealogies tell us that ancestor cults were a part of the Germanic religions. That is not controversial at all, as they also were a part of the Roman religion before Christianity, the cult around the Roman emperors being raised as god after their death – and the cult around the earlier Scandinavian burial mounds.

In that way we should expect a kind of ancestor cult among the Svear independently of a Herulic settlement in the Mälär Valley.

### 2.1.5.3 The answer

Apparently the Germanic people regarded their royal families as descendants of the gods - at least when the Ases were introduced. Obviously they used to raise heroes to gods as Jordanes and Rimbart told, but they also manipulated the royal lists by putting existing main gods in front of their royal genealogies - maybe a part of the change of religion.

Under all circumstances the development of the pagan religion with its mixture of ancestors, Ases and Vanes appear to be Germanic in general and was hardly caused by the Heruls alone.

## 2.2 A possible scenario

Based on the most probable answers a possible scenario can be that the Eastern Heruls sailed from the Varni to Blekinge and passed the Danes without suffering any violence. They were here assisted by the Varni and the Western Heruls, who had ships and had lived close to the sea at the borders between the Saxons and the Frisins. At the arrival they settled in Blekinge/Värend - maybe the Eastern Heruls around Thorsjö/Odinsjö, while the Western Heruls remained at the coast. The archaeology indicate that there may already have been a settlement in the region of former allies or East Germanic horsemen from the earlier Hunnic expeditions. As they were no farmers and the local farmers were few they had to take up their usual plundering and threat of their neighbors. Consequently the "Danish Nations" made an alliance and threatened to do like the Lombards. Some of the Heruls may have made an alliance with the Danes - maybe the seaborne Heruls - and remained in Lister, where they raised the runestones a century later.

The Heruls focused instead on the economic and strategic position of the Swedes - if this was not the final target from the very start. Actually the Swedes were the obvious choice for the Heruls when we look at the expanding economy of the Swedes at the old trade route, which the Heruls had followed from the Moravian Gate as written in Chapter 2.1.3.3.2.

Many combinations of possibilities will now lead to the same result. The king of the Svear may have called on the Heruls as professional advisers and mercenaries against neighbours threatening their expanding wealth - a problem at that time for the people on the Swedish plains according to

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Jordanes. It is impossible to say if the Heruls took power or simply became military commanders (earls/jarler) in the layer next to the king as they used to do. It would be usual to make an alliance by marriage, which would place the Heruls in the top of the society. They could also later use their power as the Continental barbarians did in England according to Gilda and Bede. Alternatively the Heruls and their allied from Högom simply attacked the Svear and took power, but that was hardly their plan.

Together the two people established a new structure of earls at the Tuna-centres and planned an efficient integration of the two people, where burial customs, religion etc. were harmonized. A part of the model for such a successful establishment of power they had learned from Theodoric 10 years earlier and Odoaker, and they themselves had been used to change customs after the people they served or followed.

The difference between the fiasco in Illyria and a possible success in Scandinavia was probably the monotheistic character of the Christian religion. It is obvious by reading Procopius that the Heruls in Illyria could not be accepted as true Christians as a part of them did not want to follow the monotheism. Opposite told the Saxon historian, Widukind, much later that the Scandinavians accepted foreign gods side by side with their own gods. The gods of the warrior elite, the Ases, could in that way be mixed up with the old fertility gods of the Svear, the Vanes - a development which had already started in Scandinavia before the Heruls arrived. As in the other Germanic people Woden and Frej were placed in front of the royal genealogy to secure the family's exclusive right to the throne - and at a later time the god Woden/Odin found his way into fragments of their old legends about the migrations of the people. Maybe we shall notice that the Swedish kings were not claimed to be descendents of Odin as the Danish kings - but descendents of Yngve-Frej - the Ynglings.

Centuries later the dynasty spread their power to other kingdoms - or married or escaped that way - where the rune stones in Sparlösa and Rök were raised 300 years later. In the same way Ynglingetal and Ynglingesaga were later written.

It is possible to put more details into the scenario above by reading Ynglingasaga by Snorre and the legends about Frode and Gylfe. This shall, however, be regarded as literature and not as historical sources as described below.

We know that the Heruls were living in Scandinavia – at least in the 6th century – but the historical sources fail to describe the settlement in Scandinavia. Several scenarios can be set up explaining what happened based on the information and hypotheses above. In order to show how likely it is, a single one was chosen here out of several possibilities.

### 2.2.1 The journey and the motives behind

As described in main chapter 1 a group of Heruls was already present in Scandinavia in the 5th century - probably due to trade. Under all circumstances a trade route existed, as did a connection of warriors bringing the solidi to the Scandinavian workshops and market places. Therefore the Heruls knew exactly what they were heading against.

Procopius indicated that the Heruls were among the last Goths worshipping the old gods, and probably their royal family based their power on an ancestor-cult worshipping the war god – being Gaut, Wothan or another name. The general political situation in 507-09 AD was that the alliances of Theodoric against the Franks failed. The Visigoths were defeated, the Alemanni were pressed up against the Alps and the Heruls suffered a



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disastrous defeat. Now the Christian Franks and Lombards began to dominate the Germanic people. As Theodoric had taken the Heruls under protection and regarded Hrodolphus as his "son in arms", the Heruls should be expected to go into exile in Italy at Theodoric, but only a small group went there according to the scholars – probably because they were pagan and the Goths were Arian Christians. The homeless royal family of the Heruls probably needed to settle in an area where their old religion and their own "divine" position was still accepted. The legendary "homelands" of the Gauts at Scandia (accepted by Gothic historians of that time) were of course an obvious possibility, and later Procopius even stressed that here "the Gautoi were numerous".

Of course they could find religious freedom elsewhere, but their natural choice would be to follow the trade route which had given them a part of their income by taxation until now. This should also be possible further north.

First they tried to follow the Vistula, but here the Slavs were expanding. Therefore they turned against North West, but they did not settle in the empty areas west of the Slavs and they did not follow the Oder. Maybe they instead visited some of the people who Theodoric/Cassiodorus had tried to gather against the Merovingian kings – as they passed near to the regions where the Thuringians and the Varni (later a part of the Saxons) lived. Maybe groups of these people even followed a charismatic king of the Heruls towards the dream of a religious sanctuary. Maybe also pagans among the other people along the Frankish borders and even among the Franks followed the Herulian king going north. In the second part of the 6th century archaeology showed connections from Scandinavia to the very same areas.

The knowledge about Scandinavia from their partners up there may have caused the migration to follow a plan after which they from an interim base at their allied, the Varni, negotiated with the Varni and Danes about the right to pass the Danes on ships sailed by the Varni (as the Bosporanians sailed them earlier). Therefore Procopius could tell that they "passed the Nations of the Danes without suffering violence".

In that case they would go to shore somewhere at the eastern coasts of Scania or in Blekinge – with Listerland is a likely possibility. Here and up along the river in Varend in a scarcely populated area they could stay for a while waiting to be gathered and reconsolidated inside the reach of Scania and the trade centres at Bornholm and Oeland. They were probably able to buy some cattle for their golden treasures, but they had to take up their old way of living too.

They probably needed such a place of gathering. We shall be careful by regarding this as a migration of one single army. A group of the original Goths were under pressure at the mouth of the Vistula. Their destiny is unknown, but some of them may also have migrated to Scandinavia when the Slavs penetrated the Eastern Europe<sup>88</sup>. Also small groups of Heruls and pagan Goths can be supposed to arrive from the Germanic defeats in Southern Europe<sup>89</sup>, but there are no signs of Christian Goths in Scandinavia at that time.

Maybe they even knew themselves that it was only a matter of time before the Danes had to stop them. Procopius mentioned the Dani "nations" in pluralise – maybe at least Scania, Sealand and Halland as separate nations, but they more likely consisted of many local chieftains. Probably one of the Danish chieftains took the lead at that time and formed an alliance as a king – a process which went on until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. That was probably what also the Lombards did. The Heruls did not find the poor area worth to fight for – at least does the scattered information indicate that the Danes just frightened or expelled the Heruls, which is even reflected in the Norse legends (Chapter 3.4).

If they had not already done it before they arrived, they had now had the opportunity to search for and

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<sup>88</sup> Some scholars find them identical with the Heathobeards – hereditary enemy of the Scyldings, but this is not correct. The Heathobeards were a branch of the Scyldings - descendents of Frode (Troels Brandt, 2004: Danernes Sagnhistorie).

<sup>89</sup> Examples: Ermaneric 350-75, Attila 451, Odoaker 493, Visigoths 507, Heruls 494-512 and 548-566 or Ostrogoths 536 and 553.

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analyse the possibilities. The Danes had become too strong, the Norwigean places were too small and isolated – even more than Varend – the Götes at the plains had been used to keep out the intruders for centuries. The Götes had earlier slain the horse riders, and the finds in Finnestorp may indicate that the Heruls had tried again. It was still the fur trade route which was most interesting, but the islands on the route were not what the Eastern Heruls were used of – they were horse riders. Their allies from Högom had possibly at that time found a new living place in the Mälär Valley. This was open fertile land, in the nearby Bergslagen they had found a lot of iron, and the trade route passed the area with Helgö in the mouth of the Mälär (at that time a firth) as a rich trade centre for centuries. The Mälär Valley was the obvious choice – a flourishing economy was exactly what they needed.

### 2.2.2 The take over and the integration

They had two main possibilities. They could negotiate an alliance regarding military protection as mercenaries or they could conquer the area.

The alliance is not unrealistic. The Svear were probably attacked all the time as Jordanes described the situation for the people in the fertile areas. Bede told<sup>90</sup> that the Angles, Saxons and Jutes 50 years earlier were called to England to help the Britons against the Picts – a group probably containing Western Heruls too. Later these protectors turned their weapons against the same Britons.

An alliance of that kind would probably imply marriage between members of the royal dynasties, which could later lead to an integration of the dynasties. Political marriages were usual among the Germanic dynasties.

Maybe the Heruls were experienced soldiers, but we have under all circumstances to regard them as a minority. If it was a military take over together with the allied from Högom, they may have subdued some of the local tribes one by one instead of expelling them. 10-20 years earlier the war-experienced Heruls subdued their neighbours around the Danube – and lost the power again. They had probably learned by their mistakes using now the same tactics as their ally Theodoric did in Italy 5-15 years before they left.

Theodoric had occupied Italy with a Gothic/Rugian army<sup>91</sup> after the war against Odoaker, but he let the civilian Roman society work without interference – to his own economic advantage. Already Odoaker had followed such tactics by the use of Heruls. The people of Northern Italy were probably happy to pay 1/3 of their harvest in tax as they for the first time in many years could live in peace. He was an Arian though growing up in Constantinople, but he accepted the Catholics in Italy. Theodoric is even mentioned at the Rök Stone and he is supposed to be a model for the Danish mythical king Frode Fredegod (the German Dietrich of Bern) about who is told, that he under his "Frode Peace" could place a golden ring at the road without any one touching it - just like Theodoric under his "Gothic Peace". If Theodoric could end up in the Danish legends as the great ideal – maybe through the narratives of the Heruls<sup>92</sup> – he could also be a role model to

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<sup>90</sup> Bede's "Historia Ecclesiastica" (c. 730) and the Celtic Gilda from around 550 AD. Gilda called them all Barbarians or Saxons, and according to Gudmund Schytte Bede was not 250 years later able to distinguish the different people and tribes. As Gilda mentioned, that these wild beasts were feared as they had been there before, and that they defended their coasts against them, it is therefore more likely, that they first called for assistance in the nearby Frisian area, where groups of Herulian mercenaries were supposed to live. Earlier the Britains called Roman Legions for help, with the result that Western Herulian mercenaries in the 360'ies twice assisted at the Scottish border (Ammianus).

<sup>91</sup> Theodoric is supposed to have used 20.000 soldiers to defeat Odoaker and cover Rome and Italy.

<sup>92</sup> In Danish history we find many kings under the name Frode, who might have Theodoric as their model. Some scholars regard Frode as a general nickname "The wise", others regard Frode as Frey, but in Old English "Freothu" means "Peace". Probably Frithu (peace in Gothic) is the link between Theodoric - famous for his Gothic peace - and the name Frode, where the most famous Frode later on got the nickname Fredegod consisting of the elements "peace" and "good/gode/Goth" in Danish. The description of the death and funeral of Frode Fredegod, where his body was transported around in the whole country, has according Niels Lukman similarities to ancient Gothic habit of royal funerals.

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the people of his “son in arms”.

It is not so important if a member of the Herulian dynasty became king or they remained earls as the dynasties just may have melted together. The important is that the Herulic minority probably was integrated with the Svear.

How it could be done we can only guess. They both spoke a Germanic language, being at that time closer to each other than today. In that way the initial problem was easily solved. In general the Heruls were probably eager to support the integration process in order to follow the ideas of Theodoric<sup>93</sup>.

They probably build up a structure of smaller units controlled and protected by an earl and his soldiers as Theodoric did in Italy. The structure is indicated by the Tuna-settlements and the boat graves.

Scandinavia must have been severely hit by the “dark years” 536-38, where the sun disappeared in a cloud of dust all over the world. It was a catastrophe being described by many historians as a great famine. The king of a society of pagan farmers would normally be held responsible for that, but hardly the earls and their soldiers who would profit on that situation. The warlike Heruls would without doubt strengthen their position at that time.

The religion was obviously a great problem between Justinian and the Heruls as indicated by Procopius. The reason here was the monoteistic character of the Christian religion. That is the reason why Angelika Lintner-Potz could call her thesis “The Heruls – a failed ethnogenesis”.

Among the pagan religions the problems did not need to be so heavy - especially if the religions had the same character as described above. They probably had different gods, but it is no coincidence that the Roman authors could translate them with their own names. The Saxon historian Widukind told much later that the Danes could accept Christ as a god side by side with their own gods. In that case it was just a question about merging the two Pantheons – and that was exactly what appear to have happened in Scandinavia. The final result was the three main gods Odin, Thor and Frej side by side in Uppsala as told by Adam of Bremen.

The change of the religion was a process, which went on for centuries, but as mentioned a radical change happened 450-550<sup>94</sup>. This was the introduction of Wothan/Odin in Scandinavia – and that was without doubt used by the Heruls too.

The Heruls had probably been used to many burial customs when travelling around and serving other people. As semi nomads they had probably not felt it necessary to raise impressing monuments before Mähren. The change of religion made it also possible to change the burial rites of Scandinavia. The result was the anonymous cremations placed flatly in the field – inexpensive without difference between ordinary people. Only the kings got monuments, but they were burned as the rest as also Procopius told. Later the earls wanted to show their position in the society and religion, and found a combination of the European princely graves with the Norse customs.

In order to tie the throne to the family they had to make the god a part of the family as described earlier, but how this was done we can only guess. Maybe Odin became the head of the Herulic dynasty and Frej of the dynasty of the Svear.

A consequence may have been that the high-priest-function (the "gode") was exercised by or controlled by

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<sup>93</sup> This may be the reason why the name of the Heruls could disappear imperceptibly. They wanted to be identified with their new people as their ruling class.

<sup>94</sup> Maybe the timing was perfect after the fifth century, as the cult of Wothan already had expanded from south displacing the old fertility cult of the Ingviones in many regions – a.o. Jutland. Especially the bracteates of the 5th century may indicate that expansion. The Danes at Sealand and Scania "were of the same stock as the Suiones" according to Jordanes - maybe just meaning original worshippers of the sun - which corresponds with Tacitus.

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the king. Maybe the "gode"-function in Uppsala was the only official justification of the superior king - except for the superiority inside the family. The superior royal courts (thing) may have been combined with sacrifice, feast and market - maybe, if the kingdom covered wide areas, combined by an astronomical calendar being used in every corner of the kingdom. Narratives and archaeology may indicate such a combination, but this will never allow us to conclude the opposite way.

### 2.2.3 The consolidation

The new society and its official religion was probably formed over a period of at least 50 years – though being continuously changed afterwards. Most of the small Scandinavian kingdoms probably continued, but some of the neighbouring kingdoms were in the Vendel Period subdued and maybe sometimes ruled by the "Earls" - and even the islands in the Baltic Sea showed around 600AD a uniform style.

In the middle of the 6th century the Heruls lost their old connections with the area of Dacia and Pannonia, when the Avars replaced the Lombards, Gepides and Heruls. Therefore the connections with the Western Germanic cultural centres became the most important, which inevitably affected the cultural development in Scandinavia, when the dynasty had to manifest its power and wealth imitating their victorious former enemies, the Franks and the Lombards.

The archaeological signs of a contemporary military and religious change all over Scandinavia to a homogeneous area with a new strong concentration of power around Uppsala – and with some less significant centres in Gotland, Gudhjem, Lejre and Gudme – could indicate that the kings in Uppsala expanded their power with Uppsala as the base of the superior king. This was probably only the case in the Middle and Northern Sweden - and first at a later stage - as the trade connections between the centres appear to be low most of the time (Karen Højlund Nielsen) and as the uniformity can be explained as above with Heruls working as "earls" in the other kingdoms or just as their symbols and weapons may be copied.

Later the dynasty appears to have been spread to other places which the rune stones in Rök and Sparlösa indicate around 800 AD. The same was even indicated in the Norwigeian Ynglingatal in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. We do not know if this was due to superiority or if the family were now refugees due to a new dynasty.

The Sparlösa-stone could indicate an Uppsala-superiority over Götaland around 800 (unless it referred earlier events) - making these kings a part of an old dynasty from Uppsala. Such a rule shall not be regarded as an Uppsala-empire, but subjugation for a short period of time with payment of tribute. Maybe Uppsala had a kind of a religious superiority with Heruls placed in some of the other kingdoms or married into the royal families - just as in Southern Europe.

## 2.3 DNA

The suggested Y-haplogroup Q1a2 of the Huns has a subgroup Q1a2b1 found in high-intensity (5%) in parts of Scandinavia - especially Götaland - and in Burgundy, which in the legends is combined with the Heruls and the Huns. As a part of the Herulian royal family's companions presumably may have had Hunnic blood in their veins there may be a correlation. At least the concentration in Götaland is interesting. High intensity is found on places where we know the Heruls settled (Dnepr, Moravia, Belgrade and Sweden). When the intensity in Sweden is high a reason may be that regions of Götaland have been isolated. On the webside also the question "Huns in Sweden?" is asked. In addition the question is whether the Sarmatians had a similar type of DNA. There are no published correlations between 500-century chieftain graves in Scandinavia and Central Europe. Present DNA studies of the character above are very uncertain. For the moment DNA shall not be part of the arguments regarding the Heruls, but the theories about DNA do not contradict the hypotheses of this article.

## 2.4 Conclusions regarding the settlement

The questions by Åke Hyenstrand could not be answered without any doubt, but the main question about Heruls and Svear combined with the presence of the Western Heruls lead to the most probable explanations, which also indirectly answered most of the other questions. The answer based on a combination of history and archaeology without any use of legends leads to the following conclusion about Scandinavia:

There is no doubt that the Herulian dynasty was operating in Scandinavia in the 6th century and that this was due to connections between the Heruls and Scandinavia in the 5th century. The most probable explanation is that the Moravian Heruls settled in the Uppsala region and that their dynasty as earls became a part of the dynasty of the Svear. The archaeology does show the necessary tracks of that, but archaeology will probably never constitute a proof.

The usual attitude has been that Uppsala and Vendel is an internal development until the opposite is proven – with an article by the professor in English, Alvar Ellegård, as the historical alibi. This attitude is – like the Strängnäs-episode – irresponsible as the risk is that the most likely explanation regarding the Heruls will be left out of the archaeological research and examinations – just as it is hardly mentioned in the Swedish literature.

### 2.4.1 Conclusion about history compared with archaeology

The very concrete information from Procopius that the Heruls settled at the Scandinavian Peninsula – first time at or beside the Gauts - and that their dynasty still possessed power in Sweden 39 years later, should be regarded as reliable as this was a contemporary information – obviously even passed to him by eyewitnesses. He was not able to manipulate the description of the return of Darius from Scandinavia as this was already well-known by his relevant contemporary readers. He would only lose his credibility by manipulating that information. Further a Herulic presence in Scandinavia after the defeat of the Huns should be regarded as confirmed by Jordanes and 300 years later probably also by the Rök Stone. It will even be demonstrated in the next chapter that the earlier argument against the Heruls that they left no trace in the Norse legends is no longer valid – though it can neither be used as an evidence for their presence. Their arrival can not be neglected as already concluded in Chapter 1.

The combination of the indications in the wording by Procopius and Jordanes points at an interim settlement between Danes and Götes. This should be followed by a later integration with a Scandinavian people further north, where their royal dynasty was still active, but that part of the historical conclusion is not unequivocal as statements in the sources used for the purpose are very short and unclear. Though Jordanes in this way may confirm Procopius this is too uncertain to be a historical proof of a settlement in Uppsala, but we have a clear historical indication of a settlement so far north. Furthermore we should in the opposite case find international archaeological traces from the 6th century in one of the former countries of the Götes stronger than in Svealand – which is not the case.

The theoretical possibility that also the royal family disappeared is rejected by the Rök Stone. Maybe they were integrated by intermarriage, but they did not forget the origin of the family. This would also be totally against their earlier behaviour, their military background, the determination bringing them all the way to Sweden and especially the fact that they were worth sending for, when the Illyrian Heruls wanted a new king of the royal bloodline 39 years later.

The archaeological recognition in the Uppsala area of a new kind of royal manifestation with a touch of

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Roman mercenary culture should be regarded as certain - and independent of Procopius. The area was since then - and according to some legends and the archaeology also before - the residence of the kings of Svealand. The East Germanic fibulas and the Scandinavian bracteates from the 5th century confirm that the Heruls in Moravia had heard about the Scandinavian destination, but they do not specifically point at the Mälars-region. Neither does the more general change in offerings and burial traditions in the first part of the 6th century. What does point against the Mälars Region is the archaeology from the 6<sup>th</sup> century as summarized in Chapter 2.1.3.3.2.7, which shall not be repeated here. As also concluded in that chapter the founders of the civilisation will never be identified unequivocally by archaeology with the usual technology.

The conclusion that Uppsala is the most likely explanation is based on the combination of history and archaeology, as we know their tracks shall be found. We cannot exclude that Uppsala was a local development, which would mean that two similar international societies of former mercenaries with East Germanic connections grew up contemporarily near the Götes, but it is rather unlikely – especially as we have no tracks of such a second society.

The last question in Chapter 1 was: “How could the leading dynasty of this strong and feared people of warriors disappear in Scandinavia without a trace in archaeology or legends?” The answer to the first part of the question is that we have such traces in Uppland matching this former allied with Odoaker, Childeric and Theodoric, but it is not possible to identify them with certainty

### 2.4.2 Certainty and further possibilities

Wanting more certainty we do have to wait for further archaeological finds or investigations, including more detailed analyses of weapons, burial traditions and fibulas. DNA-analyses of human bones and maybe horses in the graves comparing the countries along the Danube with the Scandinavian centres around 500AD will be very important. In this connection DNA-analyses of the Norwegian queen in the Oseberg ship burial (being regarded as a descendant of the Ynglinga-family by Norwegian scholars) show that she probably had an ancestor in the Black Sea region - but that may have been centuries or millennia back in time. A planned excavation of the Eastern Mound in Uppsala could be a step in the right direction if the DNA-profiles are compared also with DNA samples from the tombs around Blucina. However the archaeological characteristics of the Heruls were blurred by 75 years of fellowship with Huns and Ostrogoths ending only 50 years before the migration, and by the role as mercenaries in armies of mixed Germanic nationality. As they were a relatively small part of the population in Scandinavia we shall never expect many such finds, but something should be found.

Another group of sources is found among the Frankish historians and the Scandinavian and English storytellers, where the single information does not have any historical value because of a late recording. However the total impression might give us some headlines of the historical development in Scandinavia. Snorri Sturlasson clearly tells us, that the kings of Uppsala originated from the area around Don – just like the Heruls – without mentioning the Heruls at all. Actually this was the missing link, if we wanted to present a convincing evidence of the Hypothesis of the Heruls using only history, but the source is not reliable for this purpose. However if we regard this ”literature” from a higher perspective we will in a surprising way get an explanation of the hypothesis described in the following chapter.

### 3 The Norse myths and legends

It has often been used as an argument against the Heruls in Scandinavia that they were never mentioned in the rich literature found in Northern Europe about the Scandinavian past. It is therefore necessary to evaluate this part of the literature too, though it is common for nearly all these works that they were written down 1000-1300 AD – long time after the events. Accordingly they can never be regarded as historical sources though they contain invaluable information about the Viking Culture.

We have already touched the East Anglian poems of Beowulf and Widsith which are older than the manipulated Scandinavian legends and had a knowledge to Scandinavia due to the Western Heruls. The interesting is, that they both mention a Danish expulsion of a foreign people called Eorla or Wicinga. The event has not been noticed due to the unknown names, but probably pirates like the Western Herul were called Wicinga in England long time before we meet that name in Scandinavia. If they also knew Jordanes, who told exactly the same, we do not know. At least it became a reputation for the Danish kings in Europe which made them famous from Byzans to England. Probably it was the same expulsion Saxo referred to, when he wrote about Frode and the Huns. As their name had become earl the later scalds probably believed they were a part of the Huns they followed earlier. Saxo even described Starkad and Erik like foreign mercenary advisors. It is not history, but nevertheless a Northeuropean acceptance of Jordanes. The Heruls were mentioned in Northern European legends!

Lotte Hedeager has as a part of her theories about the Huns suggested that the myth about Odin's journey in Ynglingesaga was inspired by Attila. In Iceland Snorri Sturlason wrote in the Edda a dialog between the Svea-king Gylfe and the god Odin, but initially he told the traditional story about the origin of the gods and the royal family in Troy – a late Christian version. After travelling around in Scandinavia Snorri later told in Ynglingesaga another legend about a king, Odin, and his "men from Asia", who came from the surroundings of Tanais (River Don). This "Odin" first time settled at one of the several places called "Odinsey" – which could as well be Odinsjö in Sweden as at the Danish Odense as Snorre believed. From here the king negotiated with Gylfe. Later he moved to Sigtuna and got a temple in the town of Gylfe – Uppsala. Snorri told about Odin merging the Ases and the Vanes – the Wothan cult of the warriors and the old Scandinavian fertility cult, where Tacitus' Nerthus and Ing were succeeded by Njord and Frej. He told how the king "Odin" was raised as a god – in accordance with the stories by Jordanes and Rimbart – a natural process in the history of religions. Then he told about a successful Scandinavian integration project, including new burial customs with cremation (except for Frej – the ancestor of the Ynglings).

Rather than the history of Attila this narrative may remind us of the history of the Eastern Heruls who also believed their origin to be Tanais according to Jordanes. Though Snorri's description of the route was based on the geographical understanding and the travel routes of the Medieval Ages it is possible to recognize elements of the history of the Heruls and partly of their Hunnic kahn – Attila – though many of the old narratives probably had melted together over the long span of years. A settlement in two stages like the Heruls' – ending finally up in Uppsala.

We are not able to decide today how much of the works by Snorri are reconstructions and how much are fragments of old legends about the kings, where the gods in the traditional way were placed in the front of their list. Rabid scholars have accused Snorri for inventing it all as a Christian in the 13th century in order to throw suspicion on the pagan religion as euhemeristic. The case is

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that he did not need to invent that. The Germanic ancestor cult and the cult around the Roman emperors were by nature euhemeristic. Quite opposite a lot of the material used by Snorri is known from earlier historians and poems.

In 2011 Lotte Hedeager presented in the end of her book a rehabilitation of the Danish scholar Niels Lukman – mentioned in chapter 2.1.2.1 – who claimed that the Heruls brought their old myths about their companionship with the Huns in Central Europe to Scandinavia and became known there as "Jarls". If we combine these two hypotheses – considering that the Heruls probably were regarded as a part of the Huns in Northern Europe and influenced by these Huns – her ideas will be in accordance with the history in the former chapters. This will apply regardless of an eventually deserved criticism by Ulf Näsman regarding her historical and archaeological argumentation, and regardless of Niels Lukmann who probably exaggerated how many Scandinavian mythical kings had an East Germanic or Hunnic origin.

Later in 2011 the publication of the Strängnäs inscription ".rilaR . WodinR" has even proved a connection between Wothan and ErilaR – an inscription which would have supported Lukman if it had been published when it was found in 1962 as he was still alive at that time.

The journey in Ynglingesaga was just one example of possible traces of the Heruls in the North European literature, where the name Herul had disappeared – maybe because it was now understood as the title "jarl"/"earl".

There is no doubt that the sources behind the sagas have been changed over the years – which the Icelanders were not able to see through. The Pantheon of Snorri is as example a frozen picture which only indirectly reflects the many differences locally and over time in a dynamic process – but most religious people regard their religion in that way too. Snorri told i.e. about the changes in burial customs in the 6th century which the archaeologists reveal in our time – just as Beowulf (and Snorri) described the boar helmets of the 6th century, which are now excavated. It is more likely that Snorri got this information from old poems than he invented such information. Neither could the Scandinavians have invented the East Germanic touch in many of the legends.

Maybe the manipulated and unreliable Scandinavian sagas and chronicles do in this way contain fragments of the history of this vagrant royal family and their superior Huns. It is of course interesting to search for the hidden tracks, which may put a new content in the legends and may explain how the Heruls could disappear in Scandinavia – but they cannot change the historical evidence.

The conclusions in the two first main chapters are in no way dependent of the Norse literature, but due to the arguments and examples referred from the main article above the Norse literature will be analysed with focus on these topics. In the following chapter the relevant information will be emphasized in:

1. Sagas, chronicles and legends
2. The Norse religion

as the background for

3. The journey of Odin.

Afterwards two other examples of parallels between classical history and Norse literature will be mentioned:

4. The expulsion of the Heruls – Norse parallels to Jordanes
5. Burial costumes – Parallels between Snorri, Procopius and the archaeology



### 3.1 Sagas, chronicles and legends

The Nordic myths and legends were written down several hundred years after the events. They contain a lot of contradictions and obvious mistakes, and accordingly most scholars reject them as sources at all - just like they have been neglected in the chapters and the conclusion above. Even the most ingenious philological interpretation of these legends can be rejected by critique, and many of the legends are of course pure fairy tales or narratives combined from different places or times.

Among scholars it is popular in a thesis to demonstrate knowledge about historical source criticism by showing parallels between these medieval works and the classical works. Scholars like Curt Weibull, Niels Lukman, Karsten Friis-Jensen, Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, Heinz Klingenberg, Claus Krag and Arne Sjøby Christensen have demonstrated that single stylistic elements, names or general story lines may have been copied from classical works. There is no doubt that a writer like Saxo used his classical knowledge when he manipulated the legends. However several scholars exaggerate the consequences of these observations - but not necessarily the above mentioned scholars themselves.

Karsten Friis-Jensen has as example observed that Saxo must have used a work by Valerius Maximus owned by Absalon, which he quoted 1862 times, but Karsten Friis-Jensen has explained that Saxo used these sentences to make his language more sophisticated in the classical style. He did not use the content – except for the use of Vergil in parts of Bjarkemaal.

Obvious presence of classical stylistic elements in a poem implicates that the poem was created, changed or written down by a writer educated in Romanesque style, but that does not tell anything about the content - except that such a Nordic source must be a secondary story if the events took place earlier than the 11th century.

Similarities between names from the Migration Ages and names from the Norse Sagas and Myths do not prove that such stories are late transferred legends as Curt Weibull and Niels Lukman have claimed. The East Germanic names from the Migration Ages were common at the Nordic rune stones already in the 9th century and earlier. The same is the case regarding similar events. It is normally possible somewhere to find a general line of history appearing similar with the one being analysed, but only elements of a classical story identified with certainty by several details and names may prove, that the Nordic source is unreliable. Even in such cases the work may still have a substantial Nordic content, as the problem may be a mix up caused by the compiling by later authors.

Even though stylistic elements, names and elements of action in the story in this way can be proven to originate from a classical work, this will not prove that the total work is made up or has a classical background.

The Norse poems and legends cannot in general be brushed aside by the above mentioned kind of arguments, but on the other hand they can never be claimed as reliable and convincing. Basically they are literature, but literature is a mirror of the knowledge at the time it was written - including the existing earlier sources at that time. We will never get any knowledge of the events and the way of thinking in the Nordic Iron and Viking Ages if we do not carefully try to find the headlines in the superior structures and courses of events in those sources – if possible combined with archaeological or external historical information.

Especially the basic religious myths with their headlines and laws are supposed to be better preserved until Christian times than the normal legends - if political considerations did not contradict.

Below we will go through the most relevant chronicles and sagas. The connection between Vendel, Lejre and East Anglia will be discussed based on Beowulf, Widsith, the history of the East Germanic people and the problems with the name Geat. The connection between South East Europe, the Huns, the Heruls and the sagas will be discussed based on Hervararsaga and the theories of Lukman. The last works we will go through are Dudo mentioning the mysterious Danish/Dacian connection, the purpose behind the Danish

chronicle of Saxo, where the Heruls can be traced and then of course the works of Snorri. Finally a short discussion of the confusion of names being probably the reason why the Heruls have never been identified in the Norse myths and legends.

### 3.1.1 Beowulf and Widsith

Initially the Old English poems, Beowulf and Widsith, shall be discussed as they may illustrate the problems with the identification of the various Germanic people.

Beowulf is known in only one version from the 10th century, but it is by many scholars supposed to origin from a Christian English court in the 8th century. It was based on old pagan legends (many of them usually regarded as Danish as they tell about Danes and Swedes) put into a fairy tale about the dragon killer, Beowulf – just like the use of historical persons in poems i.e. Nibelungenlied.

#### 3.1.1.1 Geat and the Geats

Maybe we should notice that Beowulf was a Geat - a name which is known as a personal name from the royal genealogies and the poem Deor, but unknown as the name of a people. The English bishop Asser told around 887 AD in "The life of King Alfred" that Alfred's ancestor Geat was worshipped as a pagan god for a long time. To support that he referred to the Irish/Roman poet Sedilius, who in 455 AD mentioned the "ridiculoque Geta" - obviously the ancestor god of the pagans<sup>95</sup>. At that time "Getae" was according to both Procopius (553 AD) and Dudo (1020 AD) a common name for the "Gothic people" - Goths, Gepides, Vandals, Alans, Sarmatians a.o. - and probably also the Heruls, who were often regarded as a Gothic people. Since the 5th century this name had been generally used, though it was mixed up with an old non Germanic people of Thracia<sup>96</sup> - neighbours of these new "Dacians". Of course Asser could be mistaken, but as he combined the English Geat with the Latin Geta<sup>97</sup> he and his contemporaries probably regarded the Geats as the Getae. Jordanes called his own work about the Goths "Getica", where he referred the claim of Cassiodorus that the Goths were originally Gauts from Sweden. Consequently the Gauts/Götes of Sweden would to an Englishman knowing Jordanes be a part of the Geats – if they regarded the ethnic manipulation by Cassiodorus as the Gothic origin. That may explain why English poets combined Götic (the fights against the Swedes) and the Gothic legends as that of Ermaneric in Beowulf. The attempts by the Church to identify the Goths/Getae with Gog and Magog of the Bible (Isodor de Seville, I) cannot be used to question the reasoning above. A background for the confusion may have been that Gaut, Gapt (misspelling by Jordanes), Geta, Geat and Geot were all names in different languages covering the same Germanic ancestor god of old times, who in Scandinavia according to Grimnismal was later substituted by Odin. It could be a part of that substitution, when Origo Gentis Langobardorum and Paulus Diaconus used Godan for Woden, and when Frau Gauden in the folklore of Mecklenburg was known as a female Woden in the "wild hunt" – but the change could also been a usual change between Latin and Germanic. Ingemar Nordgren's suggestion about a common cultic league worshipping Gaut around the Baltic Sea (Nordgren 2004) may be one of the ways to explain that, but less will do regarding the explanation of Beowulf.

The confusion will explain why the Gothic king Ermaneric had a role to play in Beowulf, and will explain

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<sup>95</sup> [Link to "The life of King Alfred"](#). Sedilius or Sedulius was probably of Irish birth and studied pagan religions before he settled as a poet in Italy and Greece, where he wrote this verse in Carmen Paschale. He shall not be confused with the later Irish monk of the same name. The OE name "Geot" (which was used as a parallel to "Geat") may according to Ben Slade (Slade 2003, Deor-notes) be derived from "yeotan", which meant "to pour". Similarly Ingemar Nordgren (Nordgren 2004, page 173-178) has referred to the scholars discussing "Gaut" being derived from an old ON version of this verb "to pour" (Da: "gyde", Sw: "gjuta", OSw: "giuta", OWN: "gjota")(ao. Th. Andersson 1998, page 5). Several connections from the water being connected with the god of birth from old over the spread of sperm by the phallus-dominated idols to the meaning "man" have been proposed.

<sup>96</sup> Both Claudian, Marcellinus Comes, Jordanes, Procopius, Isodor of Seville and Orosius made that mistake.

<sup>97</sup> As did Nennius in spelling, while the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle used the combined people name "Geata" and the Anglian royal lists of Lindisfarna used Geat/Eat with the son Godwulf.

from where the death of the Geatic king Higela (the uncle of Beowulf) was copied. The latter was called king Hyglaco of the Getorum in Liber Monstrorum from the 6th century. The death of this king was by Gregory of Tours described as the death of a Danish king Chocillaicus - killed in Southern Frisia 515-530 by the Franks<sup>98</sup>. Why he 50 years later was called a Dane by Gregory is unknown, but at that time also Venantius used "Saxones et Dani" as the names of the pirates in France. He was rather the king of a group of Getae – i.e. Gothic refugees or remaining Western Herulian pirates from Harlingen or Northern Frisia (Southern Denmark), who at that time disappeared from the sources.

### 3.1.1.2 Beowulf and the "Dane" Chocillaicus

In connection with the mentioning of Dani in France we shall notice that the Ravenna Cosmography around 700 AD told that next to the Serdifinni (Scridfinni/Sami) was situated "a country called Dania. In this country people derived, according to the learned Goths, Aithanarius, Eldevaldus and Marcomirus, being faster than all other people [as the Heruls were earlier described]. This Dania is now called the country of the Nordomans (Normans)." [Ravenna Cosmography, IV, 12]. As known the name Normanni was later used to cover all the people from Scandinavia, which may indicate that the name Dani, which first appeared around 550 AD, was used by the early Franks as a general name of all Germanic people coming from Scandinavia.

Among Danish historians, however, it was accepted as a consequence of Gregory of Tours and Beowulf that a friend of Beowulf, King Rolf (Hrodwulf) in Lejre, should be dated to the time around 500 AD. However the dating does neither correspond with the archaeology of Lejre nor with the range of the Scandinavian warships in the beginning of the 6th century<sup>99</sup>. Rather should the founder of Lejre live in the middle of the 6th century. The death of Hagleik is mentioned 3-4 times in Beowulf poem without motivation and sometimes in a wrong place in the chronology – probably a result of a Christian break-up of the original pagan environment<sup>100</sup>.

The only link between the Danish Roar (Hrodgar) and the death of Hyglaco in Frisia was limited to the mythical figure, Beowulf, in a poem several hundred years later – unknown from all other sources and with the only role to fight against supernatural dragons. It is difficult to regard the claimed link as convincing. Years after my first publishing of my statement above also the Danish historian, Arne Søby Christensen, claimed in *Historisk Tidsskrift* 2005-1 that Chocillaicus was not a Dane - after I had asked him some questions in that regard. However, he also wrote that the Chocillaicus of Gregor of Tours could not be Higela of Beowulf due to differences in spelling. Unfortunately that conclusion is typical for the scholarly reactions against the poem. Higela could easily be "Hyglaco" of Liber Monstrorum, who without doubt was the same as the later Chocillaicus of Gregory of Tours as they described the similar event.

No Goths nor Geats were mentioned by Bede, but when he listed up the pagan Germanic people around Britain (Frisians, Danes, Rugians, Old Saxons and Bructers (Bede V,ix)) he also included the Huns - a name which may have included their Germanic followers i.e. Ostrogoths and Eastern Heruls. The Heruls had been forgotten as a people for years when Bede wrote. The Hagleik-story of Beowulf has probably an origin among these East Germanic (Getic) groups without any connection with the history of Roar and his Danes.

What is interesting, however, is that the kings known from the Danish legends, i.o. Roar and Rolf, were key

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<sup>98</sup> The event in the description by Gregory is normally dated to 516, but at that time Theodoberth, the killer of Chocillaicus, was very young. Therefore Chocillaicus may have died some years later. Venantius described a similar event in the middle of the 6th century where Saxons joined the Danes as pirates. Liber Monstrorum mentioned "Hyglaco" as king of "Getorum".

<sup>99</sup> Rolf was the second generation in Lejre, and he probably lived around 600 AD (This is explained in "Danernes Sagnhistorie" by Troels Brandt).

<sup>100</sup> Opposite the style of the poem, the first episode describes a future event and as an explanation of the importance of the necklace Brisingamen it has without doubt contained the pagan story of Freja and Brisingamen. The episode about Beowulf swimming home looks like a repetition of the earlier Breka swimming, and it indicates that his home was England or Frisia. The two other episodes are a part of the historical framework like in Widsith and Nibelungenlied, where the framework was a mixture of events from different times and places.

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figures in Beowulf. As were the Swedish kings of Uppsala being mentioned in Ynglingatal – Ongentheow, Onela and Adils – the last name also mentioned at the Sparlösa-stone from around 800 AD.

Roar, Rolf and Ongentheow – but not Hagleik and Beowulf – are also mentioned in the English poem Widsith, but that poem mixed up heroes from 300-600 AD<sup>101</sup>.

### 3.1.1.3 England, Scandinavian archaeology and Beowulf

The names in the Beowulf poem and the fact that it was found in England indicate a link between Lejre and Mercia/East Anglia. In the poem also the boar crested helmets are mentioned, though they disappeared in the graves around 700 AD. These helmets are now found in graves in England and on helmet plates in Sweden indicating that these old Celtic symbols were used again as signs of social rank in both the Scandinavian countries and the kingdoms of Mercia/East Anglia – even though the new kind of boar helmets first appear after the Angles had left Jutland. In the Anglian countries the kings all claimed to descend from Odin/Woden – here the members of the dynasties had later the same title, eorl/jarl – and here in both areas the ring button swords were found (earlier a Frankish symbol). The Style II found in Vendel is also found in the Sutton Hoo grave in East Anglia from about 625 AD among artefacts of Roman or Byzantine origin<sup>102</sup>. Also the runes were used in England, but as England had been Roman with a written language they were not used in the same way. These connections between the dynasties of Scandinavia and England were apparently lost, when the kings of East Anglia and Mercia were baptised in the beginning of the 7th century.

There are too many common signs between East Anglia and Scandinavia and they are too closely connected with legends and the symbols of royal power to be caused by the trade connection, which also existed between the countries. The Danish myths in England were probably caused by family connections between the Danes and the so called Wuffingas in East Anglia – also indicated by Norse myths about Roar describing him as exiled and grown up in England with an English wife.

Already in the 5th century we know big Jutish square headed fibulas and bracteates in Kent confirming that a people from the peninsula of Jutland were involved in the migrations as Bede told. It is more difficult to observe migrations between England and Vendel. The Vendel Era was later than the migration to England and the kings of Uppsala have nearly always concentrated their actions in Sweden, the Baltic Area and Russia. Accordingly a jump to a country 1400 kilometres south-west of Uppsala sounds unrealistic in the period before the Viking ships got sails. In the beginning of the 6th century there were signs of retreat among the invaders of England, but the refugees joined the Franks – none are mentioned going north, and if so they would probably have settled in the "empty" Angel<sup>103</sup>. Also the Vendel dynasty might theoretically come

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<sup>101</sup> The poem, which 3 separate parts probably originate from the time around 700 AD, had obviously the same sources as Beowulf. Of the kings from the later Denmark Widsith "met" Roar and Rolf, the Seadane Siger, the mighty Danish king Ahlewi (who lived at the same time as the Anglian king Uffe (5th century)), the Haching (the Halfdane Hnaef's father in Beowulf was Hoch) Hnaef, the Eute (Jute) Gefwulf and some small Danish kingdoms. Also tribes with the names Herefarer (King Hringwald) and Herelingas are mentioned. Notice the similarity between Herelingas, Herilunge-(veld – earlier note) and ErilaR. However Herelingas is normally connected to the Harlungen Twins, who according to Malone are again connected to "The wild Hunt" and Wothan (Harjan) - but by Wolfram mentioned as possible Heruls.

<sup>102</sup> It is possibly the grave of king Readwald of East Anglia. He was the third generation of Wuffingas (After Wuffa (Uffe) and Tytilus (the Gothic name Totila?). He wavered between Christianity and paganism (Bede II,XV). The Helmings of Beowulf may be a branch of these Wuffingas where also a Wilhelm is found as ancestor.

There are many similarities between weapons and equipment in Uppland and Sutton Hoo, and the two Iranian inspired dancing warriors with horns from the Sutton Hoo helmet are also found at the helmet in Valsgärde 7 and as a fragment in the eastern mound of Uppsala. Coins and bracteates in Sutton Hoo are also found at Gotland, but the presence of these artefacts at Gotland might easily be caused by a trade connection.

<sup>103</sup> The sources for the people returning to the Continent around 530 are Nennius (they went for assistance in Germania), Procopius (every year many left England to join the Franks) and Adam of Bremen (many Saxons left England going to the Franks to fight against the Thuringians). Bede mentioned Angel as an area which became

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from Southern Jutland (Angel), but we have no archaeological indications of the same culture there (except maybe the Nydam Style in Finnestorp), neither do we have any historical indications of a connection to Vendel and in this case we would not be able to explain the connections to the South Eastern Europe.

If we focus on a connection due to a migration to England from Denmark, Frisia and Saxony we should maybe notice the mythical Hengist, who was both the leader of the first group of invaders arriving to Thanet and later the leader of immigrants fighting against the Brittons. Gildas told in 542 AD (Gildas II,23) that the "fierce and impious" Saxon mercenaries were invited by the Britton Gurthrigern (Vortigern) - probably covering all the ethnicities of the immigrants. Snorre called much later Hengest a Saxon, while he was called a Dane joining the battle of Finsbourg in Beowulf104. The English sources like Bede and Nennius emphasized that Hengist arrived early. First later he got help from an increasing group of Anglians and Saxons when he defeated the Brittons ruled by Vortigern and Vortimer. Bede mentioned that the gravestone of the brother Horsa still existed at his time with the name on it - but many scholars have rejected Hengest and Horsa as phantasy names. Hengist's nationality is described as confusing as the invaders of England mentioned in an earlier chapter. Bede, Nennius and the royal genealogies did all place his descendants in Kent, which should have been invaded by people from Jutland according to the archaeology and the English historians. According to Nennius and the genealogies Hengist descended from the godlike Geat/Geta - indicating that the Geates of Beowulf were the ancestors of the dynasty of Kent. A fast conclusion could be that the Geats were the Jutes, but the Anglian genealogies compared with Nennius show that Geat was an ancestor to Woden from whom all the Germanic kings descended. Asser emphasized a connection with Sedilius' pagan god, Geta, which indicated that they regarded themselves as descendants of the Getae of Jordanes/Procopius as well. As the Western Heruls (Bede's Huns and Procopius' Frisians?) could be regarded as Getae and they possibly lived in Harlingen or Northern Frisia at the peninsula of Jutland, they could be the Geates of Hengest and Beowulf.

Of course these relations cannot be regarded as history. They are mythical tracks. The old Frisian language was very close to the OE-language, fibulas of the Scandinavian/Anglo-Saxon type were found in the coastal region of Frisia, and Procopius mentioned Frisians as an important member of the invasion of England. Did Geatic Western Heruls (some of Bede's Huns?) from Frisia join the Anglo-Saxon migrations to England? Were western members of the Herulian royal family the first link between Vendel and Sutton Hoo? Was this link creating the connection East Anglia - Lejre, which was later used by Rolf as a refugee? The king erecting the first hall in Lejre (Roar according to the legends) was probably cremated in Grydehøj in a new style – close to the style of the Uppsala mounds.

There may also be a connection between the symbolic Skjold in the prologue of the Beowulf-poem and the stories of the legendary Danish king, Frode Fredegod – a king who expelled an unknown people from the country of the Danes (described even by Saxo calling them Huns). A part of the "historical frame" in Beowulf is the legend about the feud of the Scyldings described by the family of Roar – or rather the family of his English wife. When analysing the legends it is obvious that the Heathobeards of Beowulf were not an independent people but the nickname of the descendants of the legendary Frode Fredegod – a part of the Danish royal dynasty, the Scyldings. The story about the Scylding (Skjold, Frode or Roar) establishing a strong Danish kingdom may be legendary fragments of the Danish king expelling the Heruls according to Jordanes [Troels Brandt, 2004].

It is likely that some Western Heruls joined their surrounding neighbours, the Angles, Saxons, Frisians and

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empty, but it is more likely if he had heard about the moors and marches of the western region of Schlesvig than the modern peninsula Angel.

104 The Finsbourg Battle was mentioned in two different poems, where it in Beowulf was used as a legend from the Danish past. Hengest, who in some translations was called a "Half Dane", might be identical with the first king in the Anglo Saxon migration (Bede I,XV). Bede described him as the leader of an attack, which appear as identical with the "fierce and impious" Saxon mercenaries invited by the Briton Gurthrigern (Vortigern) (Gilda (545 AD) II,23). Just like in Scandinavia the English kings at the time of Bede (710 AD) were originating from an old ancestor Woden, who must have been Odin or Wothan. Later (Nennius around 800 AD) also Geat/Geta was used as an ancestor to Woden.

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Jutes in the migration to England – and the membership of a single one of the new royal families in England is sufficient to explain the above mentioned rather confusing tracks. As earlier explained it is even possible that they were known as the Myrgings - the people of Widsith. Gudmund Schytte simply assumed that Bede had mixed up Jutes and Western Heruls.

All this confusion just to tell that the old myths did not care much about ethnicity and names of the different people – and we should not pay so much attention to their attempts to separation either.

It has to be stressed that the English / West Herulian link is uncertain and without influence on the Hypothesis of the Heruls.

### 3.1.2 Hervararsaga and the Hreidgoths

Hervararsaga, which was based on an older poem from where only fragments are known, appear to be legends of Swedish origin, but the text possibly reflects fragmentary memories from the Migration Ages. In the saga a legend is told about the Hreidgothic king Heidrik fighting the Huns victoriously – the Huns who disappeared in the fifth century from Europe. An early version of that legend may be connected with the first riddle of the Rök Stone.

Earlier scholars paid much interest in the names from the saga - especially Otto von Friesen, [Friesen 1920], who made the following observations regarding personal and geographical names. First of all it is very interesting that Heidrik with his "wife" Sifka and their sons Angantyr and Hloed – all met in Hervararsaga – are mentioned just after Theodric in the OE Widsith too (115): "Seccan sohte ic ond Beccan, Seafolan ond Theodric, Heathoric ond Sifeca, Incgentheow ond Hlithē." Widsith also told that the "Hraeda" often with their swords had to defend their old homes against Attila in the forests of Vistula (Wistlawudu), where Widsith visited Wulfhere and Wyrnhere.

According to Hervararsaga "Hunaland" was situated east of the Hreidgothic royal seat "Arheimar" at "Danparstadum". It also told that the forest "Myrkvith" separated the Huns from the Hreidgoths living at the plains of "Dunheidi". The battle between the Hreidgoths and the Huns took place at "Dunheidi" below the "Iassarfiillum" and the Hreidgothic king Heidrik died at "Harfada Fiall".

Some of these places are probably identified. "Danparstadum" were "the beaches of Dniepr". "Iassarfiillum" were the "Eastern Carpathes" (meaning the mountains with ash-trees in Slavic). "Harfada Fiall" were the "Western Carpathes" (The mountains of the Chorvates) against Mähren, where the wells of the Vistula and the Oder were situated at the northern slopes close to the wells of river March. "Myrkvith" is normally interpreted as the dark Germanic forests (Hercynia silva) north of the Carpathes (Aristoteles: Arcunia ore) and east of the Rhine, but according to Plinius and Julius Ceasar these forests covered the northern banks of the Danube from Helvetia to Dacia – including the forests of the Carpathes and Transylvania too. "Dunheidi" could be the region where the "Lougioi Dounoi" of Ptolemeus stayed (von Friesen), but it could also be the "Marchfeld" or other plains at the Danube - or the Russian plains between the rivers Dnepr and Don. The rest of the names are nearly all Scandinavian.

It is today agreed by the archaeologists that a part of the Goths originated from the mouth of Vistula. The Dnepr-region (Danparstadum with Arheimer) probably became a centre of the Greuthungi Goths (Cherniakow culture) with the Huns east of River Don (Tanais), when the Gothic kingdom according to Jordanes reached the Baltic Sea at the time of Ermaneric. At that time the Tervingi Goths lived in Transylvania surrounded by the Carpathes (Sintana de Mures culture). Ermaneric was defeated by the Huns and a century later the Hunnic Attila and his Gothic followers had their headquarters in Hungary, south of the Western Carpathes and Myrkvith. Attila and his followers were defeated by Romans, Franks and Visigoths in France and two years later his sons were defeated by the followers (Gepides, Heruls etc.) - but the Ostrogoths living now west of Hungary did not join any of these victors.

Otto von Friesen claimed that Widsith placed the Hreidgoths at the mouth of the Vistula (Wistlawudu), but

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the forests of Vistula would rather be the big forest, Myrkwith, at the wells of the Vistula - if a poem of that character could be used for geographical purposes at all. The Huns may have fought at the Vistula against a group of "Hraed" headed by Wulfhere and Wyrnhere of Widsith (Ormar in the *Hervararsaga* and *Saxo*?). If these Goths were Tervingi Goths from the group around the Carpathes, Mazur-Germanen in the Vielbark area or another group is historically unknown.

Hermann Reichert has proposed "Hreid" being connected with the Adriatic Sea as Ravenna was the Gothic capital in the 6th century. Other scholars claim that the "Hreidgoths" were the "Famous" Goths (OE "Hraed" / ON "HródR") or the "Nest" Goths (ON "HreidR") living at the Vistula as indicated by Widsith. However the name was only used in Norse writing. In a Norse mind of the ninth century the kingdom or the "nest" of their hero, Theodoric, was probably what they believed to be the kingdom of the legendary Ermaneric (if not Götaland). This continental kingdom was surrounded by the Mediterranean-, Black- and Baltic Sea - and all these oceans could be "Hreidmar" as the geography of earlier times was mixed totally up in the 9th century. At that time even Jutland was in Alfred's version of Orosius called "Gotland" - a misunderstanding later met in Iceland, where Jutland was called "Hreidgotland" - opposite "Eygotaland" being the Danish islands and the Scandinavian Peninsula.

It is characteristically for the names above that they are all connected with places where the East Germanic followers of Huns operated - but at different times - and outside the range of the later Vikings except the Dnepr. Possibly *Hervararsaga* reflects legends from different stages of the history of the East Germanic people, at a time when the Goths were more or less joined by the Heruls – making both people possible sources for the names though the legends are totally mixed up.

### 3.1.3 The East Germanic legends

The similarities between the legends in various countries were observed i.o. by Curt Weibull and Niels Lukman. Latest in 1995 Lars Hemmingsen<sup>105</sup> showed that the background for a part of the Danish legends may be found among Heruls, Huns, Lombards and Ostrogoths in Dacia/Pannonia – just like the Battle of Tanais by Snorri. Already Lukman concluded by similar reasons that our legends are foreign narratives and therefore without any historical value. But it is just as legitimate<sup>106</sup> to conclude that some of these legends were brought to Scandinavia by immigrants moving around in Europe with name traditions and legends of the earlier people of their family as a part of their identity and history.

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<sup>105</sup> Lars Hemmingsen "By word of mouth", unpublished PhD dissertation from University of Copenhagen 1995.

<sup>106</sup> The weakness in the arguments of Lukman and Weibull can be illustrated by regarding Rolf Krake as an example. Also Lars Hemmingsen has analysed this example, which was relevant in note 2.2.9 too.

Lukman maintained the battle and death of Rolf Krake to be an adaptation of the battle between Rodolphus and the Lombards. The argumentation was a comparing of structural elements in the stories, but these elements have a very elementary character - just like good stories often have. We have to notice that our source Paulus Diaconus also told another legend about the same Rodolphus using exactly the same unique point as used in a later legend about the Danish king Gorm and the death of his son Knud. Nobody will deny that Gorm was a Dane and that Diaconus wrote two centuries before Gorm was born. Consequently the same chain of reasoning used on Rolf Krake will lead to a wrong conclusion used on Gorm. The use of stolen elements or fairy tales from Southern Europe in the legends of a Danish king do not prove that he was not a historical Danish person. They do only indicate a certain influence or a mixture of legends - the later narrators of the legends of Rolf Krake and Gorm knew the legends of Rodolphus, but they were not able to identify him and mixed therefore the legends up.

Lars Hemmingsen even tried to support theories about a late introduction in Denmark explaining that these legends might have been brought to Denmark by the Danish Hvide-family in the 13th century. He later admitted that this explanation made it impossible to explain how the English poems like Widsith could mention these kings as Danes in the 10th century or earlier. In *Beowulf* Roar and Rolf were related to boar crested helmets (note 3.11.2). These helmets are now found by modern archaeologists in Mercia and as pictures on helmets in Vendel from the 6-7th century. This indicates that Roar and Rolf were Scandinavian kings as told in the Nordic legends although Saxo or earlier authors may have used elements of the Pannonian Rodolphus too.

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Actually Niels Lukman regarded the Heruls of Procopius as mercenary officers of the Scandinavian kings bringing these legends to Scandinavia. Lukman was later supported by the Icelandic scholar Bardi Gudmundsson, who in 1959 accepted the possibility that the Heruls were a leading dynasty - the Earls. He suggested that some of their descendants brought their skaldic traditions to Iceland from East Scandinavia. The Rök Stone confirmed that there may be a truth behind that, but we have to remember that the Heruls were a small minority in Scandinavia, who were probably fully integrated when Iceland was colonised 400 years after their arrival. The Icelandic versions are more a question of a skaldic tradition than an ethnic and dynastic question.

It should be noticed that most of these foreign legends follow a geographical belt from Huns, Ostrogoths and Heruls over Thuringians and Saxons to the Scandinavian nations and maybe England. The Heruls followed that belt and later both the Dacians and Odin were in the sagas claimed to follow the same belt.

The confusion of names along this belt was already mentioned above in relation to the Hervararsaga, but the confusion is also found in a group of Icelandic Edda-poems about Sigurd Fafnersbane and the Völsungs. In these poems about the fall of the Burgundian kingdom at the Rhine in 437 AD Huns and Goths were clearly mixed up in different ways in different versions - even with the death of Attila and the much earlier revenge of the Rosomoni on Ermaneric. As followers of the Huns the Heruls had probably been involved here too, but the name of the Heruls was not mentioned at all - maybe because they were regarded as a part of these groups. It is here quite obvious that fragments of real history (being already known from Jordanes and other authors) were mixed up in the Icelandic poems and the later sagas. No of these fragments appear to be of younger origin than the time when the Heruls disappeared from Southern Europe. The same happened with exactly the same story around 1200 AD in the German Nibelungenlied where the Heruls/Goths as the original allies of Attila became Danes/Saxons<sup>107</sup>. In that connection we shall notice that the names used in Iceland were historically more correct.

Earlier the Old-English poems Beowulf and Widsith also had – as mentioned - the Gothic king Ermaneric in an important role, though operating in the area of the Black Sea centuries before. We may wonder why this in the long run unsuccessful hero is mentioned so many times in connection with the past of the Scandinavian kings, if the Scandinavian kings had no dynastic connections with the Goths and Heruls at the Black Sea. If such legends were changed into Nordic surroundings they were possibly borrowed, but these obviously distant kings and locations were handled as a natural part of the Scandinavian history indicating that the Scandinavians knew about such far connections in the past.

Consequently it is natural to explain some of the foreign legends by regarding them as a confirmation of the theory that a part of the history of the North European dynasties has to be searched for among the East Germanic nomads<sup>108</sup>. Maybe the descendants of the Heruls regarded their ancestors as Gothic "Earls" serving the famous Theodoric, who became the hero of Charlemagne and the Scandinavian Vikings.

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<sup>107</sup> German scholars regard the Herul Rodolphus as identical with Rydeger von Bechlarn, where Bechlarn is the town Pöchlarn (with the earlier mentioned Herilungoburg) at the Danube in Nibelungengau west of Vienna. Rydeger has an important role in Nibelungenlied written down around 1200 ([Web-version](#)). He was also mentioned in the Norse Tiedrich-saga as a count under Attila with the name Rodolf of Bekelar. The same role in Nibelungenlied has Dietrich of Bern, who is supposed to be identical with Theodoric. These two kings were together with Iring von Denmark and Irnfried von Thuringia described as sub-kings under Attila. Only Dietrich survived the final battle of Ragnarok. It has to be noticed, that the allies of Attila against the Burgundians were called Danes and Saxons – the original allies beside the Thuringians were the Heruls and the Ostrogoths (the people of Rodolphus and Theodoric) and they were not mentioned in this later written version at all. Historically Attila died when Rodolphus and Theodoric were babies, so the legend about dragons and hidden treasures seem to be framed by historically well-known persons in very unhistorical connections.

<sup>108</sup> This may be the reason for the many stories about Huns in the legends and in Gesta Danorum (Saxo). The royal names of the Heruls and their rulers from Southern Europe – including the superior Hunnic kings – can therefore be found all over Scandinavia. Today we will often use names of popular persons from other countries for our children. If similarity in names between two people is totally missing it is a strong indication of two separated people, but similarity in names will not prove they are the same people.



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Of course this does not change the fact that other legends may have been transferred due to a general spread of legends, but the coincidences pointed out by Lukman, Weibull and Hemmingsen together with the coincidences above do not indicate a general spread but a certain pattern – an early connection with the East Germanic tribes causing a Scandinavian mix of Herulian and local legends. In spite of the problems with the exact identifications the connections between the names in South Eastern Europe, the sagas, the ON poems and the archaeology may confirm Lukman's theory about an early origin of the legends behind the Norse poems (though extremely exaggerated).

### 3.1.4 The Dacian kings - Dudo

When the French historians Dudo and Guillaume de Jumieges mentioned the Danes they claimed them to be Goths originating from Dacia at Danube, and 880-1240 AD Dania was in general often mixed up with Dacia – even in official Danish documents.

Dudo wrote around 1000AD: "*The Dacians now call themselves Danais or Dani and boast that they are descended from Anthenor, he who once raided the lands around Troy and escaped the Achaians and later reached the Illyrian borders with his people. These Dacians who, according to traditional tale, had been expelled from their homes ..*". Although Anthenor was a prince of Troy and the last sentence refer to a later event, the explanation obviously contains elements of the Herulian history – and we do not even need to erase the eternal myth of Troy, as the Heruls actually had harried the areas around Troy. Like Procopius and Adam of Bremen also Dudo mentioned Dacian sacrifices of human beings – but to the god Thur.

In Flandern Lambert in 1125 wrote a short Danish history<sup>109</sup> with a list of kings containing Gothic kings followed by Odoaker (somewhere called Rex Herulorum) and Danish/Norman earls.

The legends about this connection are much older as "Gesta Regum Francorum" already in 720 mentioned people from Troy building the city Sicambria near the mouth of Tanais River. Maybe the Heruls from Tanais of this reason regarded the people of Troy as a part of their past. However the author and Fredegar probably mixed up a lot of names as Gregory placed the origin of the Salian Franks in Pannonia, where Sicambria was a name for Budapest.

It was usual for the historians of the monasteries in northern Europe to describe the origin of their people – most of them used pagan gods, but some of them combined them with classical legends. In 965 AD Widukind in this way mentioned the former Macedonian army of Alexander as the ancestors of the Saxons, but he also mentioned the Goths and Jordanes. Bede mentioned in 710 AD Wothen as an ancestor to several of the Germanic kings invading England and later also the name Geat – probably referring to the Goths - was mentioned.

The similarities between the names Danais, Tanais (Don), Danubis, Dani and Daci are coincidences without any doubt, but we do have to notice: When the French historians wrote about the Danish history before the first official Danish historians, it was from unknown sources obvious to them, that the Danes, who claimed to be relatives to the earls of Normandy, had a background connected with the Danubian surroundings, with the Goths and with Odoaker – just like the Heruls!! This is rather confusing as the Danes expelled the Heruls, but according to Saxo the Danish king Sigfried was a descendent of the Ynglinga-family.

Dudo is often regarded as an unreliable historian, and several Germanic tribes told about Roman or Greek ancestors. The legends about Troy are false – and actually they were also rejected by Dudo himself, although he is normally regarded as an idealisation maker. However the monasteries of northern Europe form the only link between the antique history and the local, written medieval history of Scandinavia, and they are all consequently mentioning a relation to the countries around the Danube and the Black Sea. This will never

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<sup>109</sup> Dudo wrote his history of the Dukes of Normandy around 1000 AD, de Jumieges wrote in 1060 and Lambert wrote about the Danes in 1125 in Liber Floridus. Lambert was supposed to have a connection to Carl the Dane of Flandern (son of the Danish king St. Knud)

make a proof but the general relation is worth to notice. They assumed in their version of the history a rough parallel to the migration described by Procopius, but none of them mentioned the Heruls - they wrote about Danes, Goths, Macedonians and the people of Troy.

### 3.1.5 Saxo and his manipulations

Saxo finished his work, "Gesta Danorum", around 1220. He had without doubt the political purpose to support the rule of Valdemar the Great and his family. Some of the sagas might have the purpose to legitimate that the right to be king always belonged to the "divine" family of Odin. In this way the old Germanic system of elections<sup>110</sup> was overruled. This overruling was obviously continued in Christian times in the traditions of the royal elections at the 3-5 Danish "landsting". The paradox is that in spite of the Danish kings until only 300 years ago were told to be elected, they always came from the same family<sup>111</sup>. In the old Danish law of inheritance the eldest son had no first priority. A consequence was that they had to elect one king among several candidates from the royal family.

The negative consequences were frequent fights between brothers and cousins<sup>112</sup> and the risk, when Christianity took over, that other families would claim the power of kingship too. It is probably from that point of view we shall regard some of the manipulations by Saxo, when he combined the old legends. As late as 1170, when Valdemar the Great by a coup got his son Knud anointed by the archbishop, the dilemma was the choice between the elected monarchy and the religiously based hereditary monarchy<sup>113</sup>. Maybe a purpose when Absalon financed the work of Saxo was to convert the "divine right of Odin" to the juridical term "custom from ancient times" in a united Danish kingdom. In that way the archbishop could explain why the church should make great efforts to secure the power of the royal family.

Under all circumstances his royal genealogy had a main purpose, which is now generally accepted by Danish scholars. He wanted to demonstrate a historical Danish independence from the Roman Empire, which was now succeeded by the German Emperor. This was the reason why Saxo – maybe with earlier genealogies as sources – mentioned royal legends and names in a number reaching back to the time before Augustus<sup>114</sup>.

Probably Tjodolf of Hvini, the supposed author of Ynglingatal, had the same purpose when he earlier "invented" the first group of kings in Ynglingatal supporting Harald Haarfager as a king with rights older than the Danes, who since the 8th century usually claimed superiority over Southern Norway and Western

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<sup>110</sup> According to the manipulated interpretation of Tacitus the Germanic people elected their chieftains in a "democratic" way, but he also mentioned that the Goths at Vistula had a stronger kingship than the other Germans. This may be due to the old Gaut-religion, which might have been the most important reason for the dominating position of the Goths in the Migration Ages. He also mentioned the Suiones, who are normally interpreted as Svear, but as he told, that their weapons were normally not available for them – which correspond with the Gothic male burials without weapons – he may have mixed up Scandinavian Gauts and Svear.

<sup>111</sup> The only exception in historical times was "Magnus the Good", but as Yngve was among his ancestors, he would have been accepted in pagan ages.

<sup>112</sup> Examples: The descendants of Roar, the battle of Braavalla, the descendants of Godfred and the cousins Sven, Knud and Valdemar.

<sup>113</sup> Valdemar the Great was the last king to be elected at a "landsting" (because of the civil war only at the thing of Jutland). He got his son Knud anointed already as a child by the archbishop Eskil, but archbishop Absalon later on send Knud at the traditional tour to the "landstings", where the function now was to acclaim and taking oath. Reading Saxo it is tempting to conclude, that Saxo personally had the opinion, that the Danish king should be elected at the "landstings" by the whole people.

<sup>114</sup> In his manipulations Saxo always made the following king son of his predecessor. He also told about "the false god Odin", but in accordance to his purpose he did not combine Odin with the royal family as Ynglingesaga did. Saxo was maybe aware of the problems he caused later on as he did not call his books "The history of Denmark". He attached importance to independent episodes – Gesta Danorum - the exploits of the Danes. His own sophisticated composition of the work is described by Inge Skovgaard-Petersen and later on by Karsten Friis-Jensen, who also like Axel Olrik mentioned his purpose letting the royal family reach back before Augustus, in order to make the kingdom historically independent of the German/(Roman) emperor.

Sweden.

A past of some of the Nordic royal families as Herulian mercenaries serving the emperor would be a catastrophe for the politics of the Nordic countries in the 12th and the 13th centuries.

It is surprising that Snorri did not follow that line. Snorri's Scandinavian kings left according to himself Tanais when the Roman emperors arrived. With this story in Ynglingasaga Snorri simply shot down the arguments of Saxo ordered by the Danish church and royal family. We do not know any political motive behind that – maybe he just wrote what he knew to be the truth.

Unfortunately the cover stories of the church and royal families with efficiency have hidden the manipulations and the real history for us all in Scandinavia. Actually the historian Sven Aggesen indicated that Absalon and Saxo were manipulating the history as he referred that Absalon had ordered him to leave certain periods of the history only to be covered by Saxo. He also mentioned that liars had written false royal lists. Neither were they nor their predecessors, however, able to change the old French tradition, so already in line 2 the sly fox Saxo dissociated himself from Dudo by denying a connection with the “Danais” without mentioning at all the Dacian connection, which was the real problem for the Danish kings. How much Saxo really knew will probably never be revealed.

### 3.1.6 Snorri Sturlusson

The narrator Snorri Sturlusson wrote his version of the Icelandic sagas c. 1220-1230 AD based on old poems and tales. His description of the old religion<sup>115</sup> and Scandinavian history was written with a more neutral curiosity than the manipulated version by Saxo, but still the content was of course old legends given a touch of Christian moral. We have to notice that he was a political leader in Iceland, that he between writing Edda and Heimskringla was in exile at the Norwegian royal court, and that he later on was killed by supporters of the Norwegian king. He was not an apolitical person, and he was a Christian writing about a pagan religion he should not be expected to defend.

Snorri's background, however, does not support that he did not tell the myths about the religion and the Swedish kings correctly as he knew them - it should just warn us to be careful about his explanations. If the myths do not give us a coherent impression of the former kingdom and religion another reason could be that royal and divine myths were mixed up earlier.

Scholars often use his description of Odin as a human Asian king in order to prove that his descriptions are false, as the church often used that kind of descriptions to tell about pagan religions. Even if he had such motives it can never be used in reverse as a proof of his unreliability. His king Odin could have been a human being.

In Ynglingesaga Snorri based his genealogy on the old poem Ynglingatal, which he quoted and kept to later times in this way. His own genealogy, however, began with the three gods, Odin, Njord and Frey, but in these three cases he did not quote Ynglingatal. The genealogy is treated below.

### 3.1.7 The confusing Scandinavian names

We could suspect that the names/words Erila, Eorl, Jarl, Hun, Märing and maybe even Viking did all originally refer to the people, who in the latinised form were called Heruli. How could they get so many

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<sup>115</sup> The beginning of Ynglingesaga in Heimskringla (1230). In the preface of Edda (1220) he also mixed King Priamos of Troy into the story, while “Upphaf allra frasagna” from the 14th century, which is supposed to be an abstract from “Skjoldungesaga”, mentioned Turks and people from Asia. As later mentioned his first versions are similar to the myths of the French historians using the general Germanic myth of origin connected to Troy opposite the later Heimskringla.

## The Heruls

names? Probably because the arriving Heruls got different nicknames in the different countries.

Dudo mentioned that the Getaes were also known as Goths, Alans, Sarmatians etc. – in other words also the As-people - but neither Snorri, Saxo, Lambert nor Dudo ever mentioned the name of the Heruls although they possibly used different elements of the Herulian history. The Eastern Heruls were probably never called Heruls in Scandinavia because of the Western Heruls – the ErilaR. Around 550 AD the Dani were mentioned for the first time among the historians in the South – the first two times because they resisted the Heruls – and in the next centuries a common name for Scandinavians as pirates together with the Saxons.

It is also possible to understand the confusion “Dani” - “Heruls” - “Daci” – “Ases”, if the Heruls from Danube were a part of the Geats, who became Earls (~Eruli/jarler) of the Swedes and some of these were later related to the Danish dynasty. Therefore the Earls from Moravia, Dacia Ripensis and Dacia Inferior were now identified with the people they ruled, and the old name sank into oblivion (maybe hidden behind their lies about kings from Asia or Troy) - or the name became a title. The ancestors of the Earls were at the same time raised to divine Ases using myths inspired from religions earlier met by or worshipped by the Heruls. This simple explanation is in harmony with the personal comments or conclusions from Dudo, Saxo and Snorri, and with the divine appointment of the Earls in Rigsthula. We may brush aside their comments as religious propaganda, but after all they are our best sources, who tried to explain events, looking peculiar also to themselves - and it is important to realize, that they must have known sources now lost.

## 3.2 The Norse religions

### 3.2.1 Dumezil and the Indo-European theories

Dumezil has founded a school of the religious history describing a general development based on an Indo-European structure. He used the religion described by the Indian RgVeda and other poems, where an earlier fertility cult originally based on a "Mother Earth" changed into a religion of functional gods, where several details and structural elements looked like the Norse religion. It was therefore obvious to compare the Indian and the Norse religions - especially as also the languages were related.

The early societies were totally dependent of the conditions given by nature and environment and the religion should always be expected to reflect that. Nearly all societies have followed a development from hunters via "independent" farmers to societies of complicated functions coordinated by an elite supported by soldiers. Chieftains leading soldiers and armies were known since the Bronze Ages, but during the first millennium AD some of the Nordic villages were changed and also influenced indirectly by the Romans. They became a part of stronger societies - the so called warrior societies. This evidently had to result in warlike conditions and the following change of religion indicated by the archaeology.

If Dumezil's theories are used without breaking this general rule his observations may be useful, but his theory was that the gods and the myths were the same in India and in Europe - a theory which is still accepted by many scholars. RgVeda was written down around 1200 AD (as Snorri's work) but the functional gods should exist when the warrior-like Aryans arrived around 1700 BC in India. Some of the names of their gods were confirmed around 1300 BC by the Hittites. Dumezil believed that the religion was spread together with the Indo-European languages in the Bronze Ages, but today it is eagerly discussed if the IE languages were spread much earlier together with agriculture - long time before warrior societies like the Aryans. Under all circumstances the societies compared by Dumezil in India, Southern Europe and Northern Europe did not follow each other in their development of society contemporary. Therefore they should not at the same time follow each other in the development of religion either - making it rather difficult to learn the convenient stage from a society which had left the stage centuries or millenniums ago. It is not possible to copy such a dynamic process over a time space of several centuries without copying the "environment" too. Of course they used elements from each other - supported by the similarity in languages - but as the religions existed at different stages the development would never be identical due to mutual influence. The religion

had primarily to follow the stage and development of the society - and the natural development may as described above have taken place in identical order.

Most of Dumézil's observations are probably correct. His three-levelled mythology was a result of the functional society being divided into priests/kings, warriors and farmers as described in RgVeda - though we have to add a fourth class of slaves. The classes were differently described in Rigstula, where the third class were the slaves, but nevertheless his basic way to divide society and religion in the same way was probably fitting the situation well in both places. Also the counterparts of the nature sun/moon, day/night, summer/winter, life/dead, man/woman and goodness/evilness may demand these pairs of opposite gods everywhere - which he observed. The basic elements of nature are in classical philosophy water, earth, air (sky) and fire. The gods representing the sky he often divided into sky, sun and weather. These gods he placed at the first level as the original masters of the pantheon. Later the god of the warriors at the second level took over as the king of the gods - as the king became stronger in a warrior society. The fertility gods at the third level were on their side often a pair of twins - sometimes followed by one of their parents representing the former fertility cult - originally connected with the above mentioned three elements. Also the mythical war between the old and the new gods is a description, which could always be expected where a warrior elite seized power in a society of agriculturists. The similarities are often unclear, but Dumézil was an expert in finding an explanation. Consequently some of his parallels are not convincing. However Dumézil was probably right that some fragments of the myths and some gods were borrowed from the same basic religion as the Indian religions - spreading slowly like rings in the water. He just forgot that the names of similar gods did not need to spread together with the IE-languages, but could easily spread because of the already existing common IE-languages or simply be constructed from the same words.

The first two regions where our civilisation was developed to a specialised society were Egypt and Sumer (Iraq) - but this took place long time after agriculture spread from the same region to Europe. The Indo-European and Semitic cultures and religions probably spread from Sumer. If we observe the development in the Near East from Sumer to Anatolia (Turkey) via the Hurries and Hettites to the Urartu and Luwian people, we can find the same similarities with the Norse religion as Dumézil described with the RgVeda - some of the names are even more likely. In this line of development - parallel with the Vedic religion - we can find the god of weather and thunder, Tarchunt / Taru / Tesheba and his partner, the god of sun and light, Tiwaz / Siwini. The third main god among the Urartu in Turkey was (C)haldi - the ruler and god of heaven. In the other societies the weather god was the ruler. Earlier in this structure the weather god was called Ishkur (Hettites and Sumer), who was described like the Norse Thor. His wife was normally a sun-goddess like Arinna and Shala - similar with Thor's Sif with the golden hair. It is tempting to recognise Thor, Sif and Tir in this pantheon instead of the Vedic pantheon - and actually Snorri told that Thor arrived from these regions.

### 3.2.2 The Norse religions

Many poems have described the old Norse religion with its different worlds, the old gods and the tree of life.

The Scandinavian religions of the Bronze Ages - after the spread of the Indo-European languages and contemporary with the Aryans - appear from their rock carvings to be a nature religion of a people of agriculturists based on the sun and fertility. The axe is the only sign of a warrior cult, but these axes (always appearing in pairs in the finds) must have been used for sacrificing. We are not in these rock carvings able to identify the warrior gods of the Migration Ages, and this kind of carvings are not known from any other regions of the IE-people. Later in the early Iron Ages wooden idols appeared in the bogs - a sign of personified gods as a continuation of the few figures with male attributes and maybe the marks of hands and footsteps in the rock carvings.

In 99 AD Tacitus told about the main gods Nerthus (Earth), Tuisto and Ingui worshipped in different areas around the Western Baltic Sea. The religions in Asia Minor and in India had a father being god of the Heavens and a mother being goddess of the Earth. They were probably gods from the old fertility cults of the agricultural society, who should still explain the mysteries about creation and birth. Statues of this mother are known elsewhere 25.000 years back in time. These gods may represent the earlier stage of the personified

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gods - marking the continuity from the Bronze Ages to Yngve-Frey, who was probably the last "merged" stage of that branch before Christianity. Also the Romans spoke of a great mother, where the father became Jupiter/Juve.

The role of Tiustu (Dyias in RgVeda / Zeus in Greek) in Scandinavia at that time is uncertain. The story of Thor in Snorri's Edda and his role as a Norse Jupiter may indicate that he was Tuistu, but normally Tyr/Tir is regarded to have been Tuistu. According to Tacitus the Ingaviones were the descendants of Tuistu in Northern Europe. There is no doubt that Ingui and Yngve is the same name. Ingui was also known as an ancestor of the Anglian kings in England and in Historia Norwegie<sup>116</sup> Yngve was the ancestor of the kings of Svealand – later Snorri called him Yngve-Frej. He even had a rune and according to the OE rune poem he first appeared among the East Danes. In Beowulf the Scyldings were called Ingwina. According to many scholars there is also an obvious connection between Tacitus' Nerthus and Njord – the father of Yngve-Frej according to Snorri.

That means that the medieval genealogies of both the Anglian, Danish, Swedish and Norwegian kings can be traced back to the two gods Tacitus claimed to be worshipped in the Nordic countries in the first century AD. Both gods were fertility gods - at least at the late stage. We do of course not know if a part of this is a result of later writer knowing Tacitus.

Tyr has a very resigned role in the Norse Myths. Actually he is primarily known for his weekday and for his loss of a hand to the Fenris Wolf - the latter already known from a bracteate around 500 AD. This may indicate that he was pushed aside by Thor and Odin and left as a disabled god of justice before or during the general change of religion around 500 AD.

Tacitus wrote that Tuistu was earthborn and we shall remember that Thor at the late stage was son of the Norse goddess Jord (Earth), who was probably identical with Nerthus. It is uncertain when a god like Thor arrived to Scandinavia, but he probably spread among the Celts, where we know a similar god under the name Taranis - the later Germanic Donar. As mentioned he had parallels in Asia Minor too.

Also Balder was killed at the bracteates around 500 AD - but he did not need to be a son of Odin at that time. Some scholars suspect him to be Baal.

In Southern Europe Mercury and Hercules were mentioned by Tacitus as the gods of the warlike Germanics, when the migrations in Eastern Europe began and the wars were starting at the Roman borders. At that time the warrior-society in India must have been 1800 years old - making it impossible to copy a dynamic development. In these more complicated societies the specialized functional gods became a necessity. In the vagrant or fighting groups the leader got a central importance so strong that the religion had to be combined with his power and functions. In an uncomplicated agricultural society the king could be a descendent of a fertility god or a reincarnation of the Sun, which for them represented the fundamental divine power. For warriors and nomads like the Goths, however, the most important ideal to be worshipped were strong kings and heroes being succesful in battles. This was confirmed by Jordanes' talk about the Gothic ancestor gods, "Ansis" - the Norse "AnsuZ" or "Asir". For these people (or their leaders) an ancestor cult with a divine ancestor as the war god and a religious reward to the warriors fallen at the battlefield must have been the most important element of the religion.

Already when reading place names it is obvious that the gods were not worshipped in the same way in different regions of Scandinavia, just as the religion changed over time. The Scandinavians probably knew several gods and chose some of them as their personal and tribal protectors. In that way even Christ could be a god among others to them as being described by Widukind [Widukind III,LXV].

The Norse religion of the warrior society was described as a whole by Snorri in Heimskringla and especially in the Prose Edda. Fragments however can be read in the earlier poems, which probably were a part of his

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<sup>116</sup> Historia Norwegie is written by a Norwegian monk in the 12th century (before Snorri) and probably based on Ari's Isländingabok.

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sources too. This should be a picture of the religion as it was, when Christianity took over, and Snorri was probably one of the best to tell - if he wanted to tell the truth. The hierarchy of these gods, as he described it, was without doubt a reconstruction influenced by knowledge of the classical religions.

As already mentioned the odd construction of the Northern mythology split up between Ases and Vanes must be a mixed religion of a warrior society and a people of agriculturists. Both the old fertility gods and the cult around the warrior god Wothan/Odin could be found in the reconstructed pantheons - and Snorri even told about the reconciliation of the old Vanes and the Asir coming from the Black Sea. Adam of Bremen told that Frey and Odin around 1000 AD were standing in Uppsala with Thor as Jupiter in the middle - even if the temple (or rather the hall) did not exist at the time of Adam himself - this was the official picture.

### 3.2.3 The god Odin

The confusion among the Christian authors in the 11-13th centuries may have been caused by a dynamic process which could still be traced in the myths when Christianity took over. A problem was that Odin's final role as father of the gods and leader was not reflected in all the myths. Thor appeared in the old sources as the highest of all gods and Njord and his son Frey as the ancestors of the kings of Uppsala.

Tacitus told - as mentioned - that Mercurius was the most important god in Germania. He also mentioned Hercules. Of course this was based on the closest tribes east and north of Limes, and in the Heidelberg-region we know 6 inscriptions with Mercurius Cimbrianus – some of them at alters at hill-tops. This name was of course a Roman name, but he is regarded to be a Germanic or Celtic Woden in the surroundings of Odenwald. This similarity is attested both in Columan-Vita of Jonas (640AD) regarding the Suevians around Bregenz and by Paulus Diaconus around 790 AD regarding the Lombards. Mercurius was primarily the god of merchants and travellers, but also of death. In Scandinavia Odin was later the god of battle and death, but one of his shapes was the old wandering god with the broad brimmed hat and the black clothes - a shape deriving from an old Celtic god. He was not described as a traditional war god – Thor was the warrior fighting against the Giants. Later Snorri told us that Odin was able to change his shape being a man, an animal and a god. He was described as a superior king, a shaman-like “gode” (priest), the god of “skjaldskab” and runes and the god of the dead warriors<sup>117</sup> In England and Germany he was called Wothan or Wothan. There is no doubt that he became the Norse Odin (known first time in Scandinavia mentioned as Wodin at the Strängnäs Stone), though this Norse Odin may have received elements from other kinds of deities too – including shamanistic features and myths from the Heruls, who were also inspired by Huns and Sarmathes. Linguistically the names are identical - even according to Snorri.

In 99 AD Tacitus regarded the people of Northern Europe as worshippers of Nerthus and the ancestor god Ingui – a parallel to the earlier mentioned Gaut. This was the time when the warrior elite took over in the continental Jutland – registred both in the structure of the villages and in the war booties. The Hjortespring boat and the Cimbrian migration caused by flood and bad agricultural conditions was probably some of the first indications. By that reason a wargod must have existed in Jutland in the first half of the millennium, but he could be Tyr, Thor, Tuisto, Ull or another god. The development spread successively to the rest of Scandinavia, but first in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries the general change to a new religion took place as earlier told. The introduction of Wothan in Scandinavia was according to several archaeologists represented by the riding head at the C-bracteates in the 5<sup>th</sup> century [Jørgen Jensen, 2004]. Also the symbolic animals must have been a part of the pagan religion from that time, and it has to be considered that such symbols were often

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<sup>117</sup> Odin is difficult to identify as a god. He was the god of battle, but also of death and poetry. He was described as the clever wanderer, but also the king of the warriors from Valhalla. Odin lied in periods dormant (was he secretly abroad?), and scholars calls him shaman-like. He was handsome to his friends but the sight of him scared his enemies. The shaman-like Odin is i.e. described by Lotte Hedeager in "Skygger fra en anden virkelighed". According to Wolfram the name Odin was first met after 550. Odin is because of the linguistic similarity normally regarded as a Nordic version of the continental Wothan (English: Wothan). Gaut is told to be much older – maybe from the first migrations of Goths – but he is only known from a few Nordic fragments and maybe as Gapt of Jordanes.

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combined with shamanism - just as Odin was himself in the myths. That is an important element used by Lotte Hedeager.

Jordanes mentioned Mars and Gapt/Gaut (Geat/Geta – see Chapter 3.1.1.1) as Gothic gods – Gaut in a few later sources also a Götic god. The contemporary Procopius mentioned Ares, the war god, as the greatest god in Scandinavia around 550 AD, but that does not need to cover all Scandinavia. Maybe he just referred to the Heruls there and their main god does not need to be Odin – at least not in the role of a father. In runes Odin was first attested at the Strängnäs Stone (WodinR), which is not finally dated (old Futhark), and in the 7<sup>th</sup> century at the South German Nordendorpher fibula (Woden) and at a Danish scull in Ribe. In 782 AD a poem of Paulus Diaconis mentioned "Waten" and "Thur" protecting king Siegfried of Denmark. In the 8th century Wothen was attested by Bede in English genealogies too, and Origo Gentis Longobardorum and Paulus mentioned a battle where Guoden and Frea in the past were gods of the Lombards, who back in the time of Tacitus worshipped Nerthus.

Some scholars claim that the one-eyed god was found much earlier as a few wooden statues and ceramics in Jutland. If these “blind” eyes are not just questions of bad quality this feature may have belonged to a local god before it was used when the Norse Odin was shaped. It can neither be excluded that these idols represented the predecessor of Odin, Gaut.

It is rather obvious that Odin in some of the Norse societies was advancing and passing Thor and Ingui-Frej in importance. This was not an unusual process regarding the gods of warlike kings as the Viking kings - especially if they regarded the god as their ancestor. Actually Dumezil [Dumezil 1962] told about the war god Indra advancing among Vedic gods in nearly the same way, when the warriors took over - though he believed Thor was Indra!!

At the time of Snorri Odin was known as the superior god of ancient times and in some stories also as the ancestor to the kings, but apparently he had only been the most important god to the kings, earls and warriors. The place names show that the farmers worshipped Frej, who was called one of the Vanes from the old fertility cult, and Snorre even told that Frej was identical with Yngve, who was ancestor to the Ynglings. Popular among the people was also Thor<sup>118</sup>, who at the late stage was mentioned as one of the Asir and a son of Odin. The name Odin is found in remarkably few place names.

The Poetic Edda and Gylfaginnung told that Odin at their time was the ruler and father of the Pantheon. Earlier Dudo and Adam of Bremen told that Thur was the main god. Skjoldungesaga and the introduction to Gylfaginnung told that Thor was the father of Odin. Saxo and Aelfried wondered why the names of the weekdays indicated that Thor was Jupiter, who was the father of Mercury being regarded as Odin.

Did the son of Thor (Jupiter), Odin (Mercurius), originally marry the daughter of Njord, Freya? This would make sense as Odin's wife Frigga is only connected with a couple of stories, and as Freya's husband in the late myths was called Od – a husband who had disappeared. Frea is often regarded as the background of

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<sup>118</sup> Adam of Bremen regarded Thor as a Jupiter from his attributes and his position in the temple of Uppsala between Odin and Yngve-Frey. So did Saxo later by comparing with the names of the weekdays. This is further discussed in chapter 9.1.

The last stanza of the Rök Stone could be interpreted as "Thor, husband of Sif (Sibi at the stone), protector of the temples, was born a child by a ninety year old" – an event identical with that of Abraham and Sara giving birth to Isac - the first ancestor of the Jews. Maybe a Christian myth was used when introducing Wothan in the Scandinavian pantheon. Later he was regarded as the first ancestor of the kings.

There is a general agreement about the runes and the words of the stone, but there is no official interpretation of the text. I found the missing statements indicated by the stanza-numbers and a system explaining the stanzas except the last one mentioned above. In the end of 2003 I wrote an article with my personal explanation of nearly all the text of the stone, its purpose and the historical background. Details were discussed with some of the specialists studying these topics and the article was afterwards circulated among a few scholars and editors. The article was presented in "Danernes Sagnhistorie" in 2004 and at a separate website in 2005.



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"frau", which was the role of Frigga, and in the old *Origo Gentis Longobardorum* from the 7<sup>th</sup> century Frea was the wife of Wodan.

The [Rök Stone](#) indicated around 815 AD a stage where Odin was a late son of Thor and Sif, which would be the most natural way to let a "new" god join the divine genealogy. He may have been introduced by using a myth borrowed from the Christians - the myth of Abraham, Sara and Isaac. He may have taken over roles from Tyr and Ull - even pushing Ull out to be an illegitimate son of Sif.

As a part of the following process the old introduction myth as a son of Thor and Sif had to be left. Also the taboo around his name, Odin, and the use of many other names (including Gaut and Skilfing according to *Grimnismal*) may have been a cover of that process.

Maybe the myths about the arrival of the gods can tell about that problem too. It is important to notice that Snorri told two different stories about the origin of the gods separated by around 10 years.

In the first version, *Edda* (1220), the god Thor left Troy in Tyrkland (Turkey) in accordance with the traditional stories of the origin of the Germanic people and went to Thrakia<sup>119</sup>. As Dudo laughed of that story 200 years earlier, Snorri cannot be blamed for the story. He probably referred it correctly, but we have to be aware that Troy was believed to have a position at the mouth of River Don (Tanaïs) at that time. Neither was the real Troy placed in the Tyrkland of Snorri as the Turks had not reached the Western Turkey at that time.

In the last version in *Heimskringla* (1230) he told about the "Ases" (Men from Asia), who came from Asia and at the river Tanaïs (Don) and met the old "Vanes". According to Jordanes the Heruls lived there near the old Greek colony Tanaïs at the mouth of river Don<sup>120</sup> between the Goths and the Iranian Alans<sup>121</sup>, and here they were later subjugated by the Huns. Snorri told that Ases and Vanes fought and reconciled<sup>122</sup>. Later on Odin as their leader led them from Tanaïs (Don) through Gardaríke (Russia) to "Saxland" – according to Snorri in order to avoid the Romans. All the 12 chieftain-priests followed Odin, while his two brothers stayed behind with a part of the people.

A common feature in his two old legends is that Odin went from the countries around the Black Sea to

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<sup>119</sup> Ludwig Schmidt believed the Illyrian Heruls lived in Dacia Ripenses (a part of the old Thrakia) before Justinian gave them Singidunum, and Darius lived at the Gepides in Dacia after his escape from Singidunum. Some of the Heruls could be regarded as Dacians. Thor himself may be identified in the Celtic Taranthus and in the Hurrian Taru being identical with the Hittite Ishkur - making him much older than the Norse Odin and the Ases. It is difficult to see if any of these elements were known or used by later writers.

<sup>120</sup> Snorri describes the border between Europe and Asia as Tanaqvisl (Don) – the river at the Greek colony Tanaïs where the Heruls according to Jordanes settled in the swamps. Note 2.1.10.

<sup>121</sup> Maybe the Heruls first became worshippers of Wothan or Gaut at the Black Sea, but here they also met the Iranian influenced Alan/As-people (Chapter 2.1). Theoretically there may have been fights and a following religious influence between Heruls and Alans. Iranian influence is traced both in the Norse religion and in the military equipment in Vendel, but there might be other reasons. The name of the Asi could easily evoke associations to the Ases - and the tribe could have inspired to the Ases, but the name Ases probably derive from "ansu" (ancestral god). Also the Huns may have had such an influence on the Heruls.

The recent theory developed by Thor Heyerdahl (*Jagten paa Odin*, 2001) could have the same background. Thor Heyerdahl had in excavations at Asov and the surroundings found traces of a connection between the people living there in the 2nd century BC and the Scandinavian Vikings. He assumed Asov to be Asgaard, the old castle of Odin. He also assumed this was a direct connection before Christ, but this is contradicted by the strong archaeological indications of a change of religion coming to Scandinavia from south in the 6th century AD – unless the Asov-connection was carried through later by the Alans and Heruls. Heyerdahl was primarily attacked by scholars because of the long span of years making archaeology useless, and because he had used the names too far. Gro Steinsland has probably correctly argued that Ases derive from the word Ansu (God/Ancstral god) existing much later than the time when Odin should have left with the Asi according to Heyerdahl.

<sup>122</sup> The beginning of *Heimskringla*.

## The Heruls

Saxony, where 3 of his chieftains settled. Passing north he settled for a while at Odinsey (by Snorre regarded as Odense) before the journey ended in Old Sigtuna in Uppland - the region of Lake Mälär.

The king of Suithiod, Gylfi, reconciled with Odin and offered him a part of his kingdom around Uppsala<sup>123</sup>, where the central "temple" of Odin was established<sup>124</sup>. The sons or chieftains of Odin were placed as sub-kings in the Nordic countries<sup>125</sup> – e.g. Skjold<sup>126</sup> in Lejre at Sealand, Yngve in Uppsala and Säming in Norway. While Odin stayed in Odinsey Skjold became the first king of Lejre, as his wife Gefion ploughed Sealand out of the soil of Svealand after a deal with Gylfi leaving a big hole – the Lake Mälär.

In his reconstruction Snorri used a story about Odin and his Ases at a place in the genealogies, which according to earlier myths like *Historia Northwegie* belonged to Ingvi/Yngve. Ari even mentioned an "Yngve of Troy". The story is unknown elsewhere though the divine Troy-connection was a part of the late tradition. The story about the king Odin is a separate story which may be a fragment of a legend about a human king as Snorri claimed himself.

An odd character of a god is connected with Odin. Odin was characterized by periods of absence. This is also the case with the "later" king Aun/Audun in *Ynglingatal*, when other rulers took over. Earlier also Saxo<sup>127</sup> wrote about a "false god Odin" still often travelling between Uppsala and Byzans, where Odin according to Snorri had substantial possessions. Later the king Svegger in *Ynglingasaga* left for Great Svitjod/Tyrkland to find Odin, but he returned after 5 years. All this sounds more like a human king with several points of interest than a god.

In general the historical sagas and chronologies were reconstructions by the Christian authors who had only fragmentary information in poems and tales at their disposal. They were not aware that the religion changed both geographically and successively over the years - and sometimes their job was to manipulate the past. We have to regard the tales as consisting of fragments about gods or kings put together in different ways – based on the old religion with its different worlds and the tree of life.

Snorri was a serious politician. When he wrote *Heimskringla* ordered by the Norwegian kings he had already described the general Troy-story 10 years before, which probably was a well-known final stage of the religion at his time – already told by Dudo. He did not want to use that origin of a living royal dynasty and chose instead a human legend. He could not just invent a new story but had to use another legend which he could defend – just like Saxo combined existing legends suiting his purpose in the old genealogies. The story of King Odin existed as indicated in *Skjoldungesaga* as an alternative story of origin with strong parallels to the classical story of the Christian clerks. Probably the story in *Heimskringla* was an older version – maybe consisting of fragments from a real royal legend of the past. We will never know how much was reconstructed by Snorri and his predecessors.

## 3.3 Odin and the king of the Heruls

### 3.3.1 The men of Asia and the Heruls

The similarities between the migrations of the Heruls (described in the earlier scenario) and the story of King Odin and his men are rather obvious.

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<sup>123</sup> Gylfi is mentioned in *Edda*.

<sup>124</sup> Adam of Bremen. Snorri also mentioned Sigtuna, which was the big city of his time near Uppsala.

<sup>125</sup> The beginning of *Heimskringla*.

<sup>126</sup> He is mentioned as a son – not only a chieftain – in *Edda*. Also in the late Christian version of *Beowulf* the arrival of Skjold has a supernatural character.

<sup>127</sup> The chapter of Hadding, Odin and Midodin in Book 1.

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The area of Tanais (Don) in Ynglingesaga is close to the Swamps of Hele at the Sea of Asov into which the Don is flowing. From there the Heruls joined the raid of the Huns – the men of Asia. The route is not the same, which will be examined in the next chapter, but they are met again in Northern Germany where the Varni, whom the Heruls visited, were a part of the Saxons, when Snorri wrote.

King Odin and his 12 chieftain-priests left back two of his brothers with a part of the people – a parallel to the separation of the Heruls in 509.

Probably the Heruls sailed directly from the Varni to Blekinge/Värend and stayed in the surroundings of the local Odinsjö – while Snorri wrote Odinsey (Odense) at Fyen. From Odinsey Odin sent his daughter Gefion to Gylfe in Uppsala. In her negotiations her father got a part of the kingdom of Gylfe and she herself became queen of Denmark – inspiring to the explanation about a deal á la Hengist in the scenario in Chapter 2.2.2. Odin settled in Sigtuna and got his temple in Uppsala, where the mounds with traces of Central European mercenaries are found.

Snorri told that the Ases and the Vanes fought at the Tanais and were reconciled. It was here the Heruls fought the Goths and the Huns before joining them, while the reconciliation between the war- and fertility-gods found its more prosaic place and reason in Uppsala.

Snorri told that Odin changed the burial customs of both people to cremation by law. Later Frej, the ancestor of the Ynglings, was buried without cremation to honour his divine character – and he was placed in a mound. It is correct that the burial customs changed to cremation in general, when the Heruls arrived – this is described by archaeology and even indirectly by Procopius regarding the Heruls. The first kings in the mounds were cremated too, but afterwards most of the earls in the boat graves were buried. Snorri failed regarding the mounds, but how did he get the idea about the complicated change between burial and cremation? Did the telling already exist?

The invading Herulian king may in the sagas be identical with Audun/Aun<sup>128</sup> – a name which according to Snorri was identical with the Wothan-like name Odin. The same Aun from Ynglingesaga connects the Odin cult in Uppsala with a calendar related to Rome and the year 476 AD when Odoaker took over. In the theory Audun could be the name of the arriving king as similar names are found among the Germanic people in the South. An Audoin with a mother from Thuringia and an unknown father became king of the Lombards in 545, when he as former guardian followed the young Waltari (ON Valdar) at the throne. Waltari was dying young as a son of Silinga (Wacho's third wife) being the daughter of a Herulian king – probably Hrodolphus<sup>129</sup>. Moreover an Ostrogothic noble Odoin was executed in the year 500 AD. Such a coincidence could explain why the myth of the king was mixed up with the religious myths - or maybe misused in the past.

We shall probably disregard an original connection between the king and the god. In that case other names are possible. The first Herulian king mentioned around 350 AD was called Alaric, and also Jordanes told about a king Alaric in 468 AD, who could have been the father or grandfather of the Herulian king Rodolphus. One of Rodolphus' sons or brothers was probably leading the migration to Scandinavia around 512 AD. We do not know the name of this king, but if we read Ynglingatal a horse-riding king Alrik without any history was father to king Yngve – also being the name of the founder of the new dynasty in Svealand. If

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<sup>128</sup> "King Auns Calendar", which according to Göran Henriksson (TOR 27) is connected to the sight lines at the mounds of Uppsala, seems to begin in the year 476 AD (the year where the Heruls assisted Odoaker to put an end to the Roman Empire) with a cycle of 304 years. The calendar might be established in Southern Europe as its structure is Roman/Julian, and Aun may have brought it to Scandinavia. The calendar was connected to the new 8 (9) years cycle at the Disething in Uppsala – known from Adam of Bremen and local reports from the 18th century (read also about Aun in note 8.3.13). The Icelandic scholar Einar Palsson presented more complicated theories about the use of geometric figures and numbers in the landscape, but this shall not be used as an argument here. Einar Birgisson has in his new book "Egyptian influence and sacred geometry in ancient and medieval Scandinavia" [[Link](#)] shown how these theories can be used around Uppsala using some interesting examples.

<sup>129</sup> Origo Gentis Longobardorum and Paulus Diaconus.

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we assume that the invading king used the usual royal name of the Heruls, Alaric (=Alrik meaning king of all), the new god Odin (=a Norse version of Wothan) probably later absorbed his "history" and was put in front of Ynglingatal.

Snorri told in Edda that Odin and his men on their way from Asia to Uppsala were celebrated as gods, but his explanation in the beginning of Ynglingesaga was that the divine dignity of Odin was caused by the warriors, who began to call upon the famous warrior king before a battle. That explanation is probably more likely – but that could happen to him as an "ansis" too long time after his death.

Saxo maybe even indirectly explained to us how "the men of Odin" could become superior in Scandinavia, when he described the battle formation "Svinefylkingen" as a divine idea of Odin. The Romans and their mercenaries like the Heruls used the battle formation called "Porcinum Capet" or the "Swine Head" to split a primitive row formation<sup>130</sup>. At least it is an example how experienced soldiers like the Heruls could win though being a minority. It could of course be brought to Scandinavia by other reasons - but if so, why was it combined with Odin?

Snorri told in Ynglingesaga that Odin knew were to go and settle when they felt threatened. Snorri wrote about a Roman threat, but a similar claim in "Chronicon Lethrenses" about Augustus will probably show up to be later events caused by the Frankish Kings around 700 AD, when comparing with archaeology [Troels Brandt, 2004: Danernes Sagnhistorie]. The threat against Odin could as well be Huns or Christian Lombards or East Romans as Snorri did not mention any details. Therefore there is no reason to place the departure of Odin in the Roman period.

If we continue with the example above mentioning the names Alrik and the shaman-like Aun, Alrik may be the man at the divine throne in shape of a Germanic Wothan figure using the Norse version of the name Odin/Audun/Aun – four versions of the same name. Alternatively the royal priests of Uppsala later placed the former warrior kings Alrik (Aun), Yngve and maybe Jorund<sup>131</sup> under the godlike names Odin/Wothan,

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<sup>130</sup> Saxo (VII,10) made a detailed description of this triple wedge formation, which "an old man called Odin" learned the Danish hero, king Harald Hildetand. Saxo did not give it a name, but the sagas mentioned the name "Svinefylkingen" (Swine group) for a formation more simple than the complicated Saxo-formation. The Romans had a similar wedge (Cuneus) - by the soldiers called Swine Wedge (Porcinum Capet) (Paddy Griffith: "The Viking art of war" - Vegetius 5<sup>th</sup> century). The first soldiers of the formation may be expected to be regular berserks.

<sup>131</sup> These names were based on the poem Ynglingatal from the ninth and tenth century, which was used by Historia Northwegiae and later by Snorri. The dating of Ynglingatal was provokingly criticized by Claus Krag in 1991 as described at page 120, but he has later been opposed.

The kings Agne (In Danish pronounced Aune) – Alrik (Overlord/King of all) – Ingjald (Yngve-Frey/Ongentheow) – Jorund (Njord?) – Aun (Audun/Odin) are placed in different order in Historia Northwegia and Ynglingatal, and they may be regarded as a mixture of doubles in different stages of the process from king to god, when the family of Odin was put into the sequence of the old Inglinge-dynasty. Odin became a god in front of the list as the new ancestor together with Njord and his son Yngve-Frey (Heimskringla) – maybe instead of Ing and his reincarnations.

In this part of the list we also find Alaric - a name of Herulian and Gothic kings. The Nordic form Alrik is – just like his brother Erik – the name of a Visigothic king at the same time. The name might be the title "Overlord"=Odin. In Ynglingatal he and his brother seem like empty shells. Like Attila Agne died in the bed at his wedding night. Probably some of the kings were a result of "foreign legends".

The author has in "Danernes Sagnhistorie" proposed the line of kings Alrik/Aun - Yngve/Ongentheow - Ottar - Onela/Hunding - Adils.

The names from Ynglingatal - Adils, Alrik and Erik - were found at the rune stone from 750-850 in Sparlösa near the later centre of the church in Västergötland, Skara (just as some of the names were mentioned in Beowulf and Widsith). We may expect this similarity in royal names to be a coincidence due to the difference in time. However the stone is interesting due to the mentioning of magic runes and Uppsala, where Aiuls is mentioned as king while his son Alrik probably was king in Götaland. The pictures show a hall, a ship with sails and a mounted warrior with sword and a boar(?)crested helmet - probably the symbols of power in the Vendel Dynasty. Was this a demonstration

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Frej and Njord in the new world of gods mixed by Ases and Vanes, where the shapes changed and took new positions during the years - just like Grimnismal told. We will probably never be able to tell what happened, but under all circumstances some historical myths of Scandinavia became the myth of the divine family of Odin and the Ases – the Ynglings, Skjoldungs etc. The descendants were therefore able to use the relation to Ases to legitimate a family-right to the throne – a right met in many societies, probably including the Heruls as earlier mentioned.

The remains of this process from man to god does not exist only in Jordanes' and Rimberts works, but also in the Norse legends. Saxo mentioned both an Odin and a Midodin – the last just like Snorri's Odin being a man calling himself a god. As mentioned also Ynglingesaga described these stages between man and god - i.e. Aun.

The North Germanics kept their pagan belief 400 years longer than their southern kinsmen. Maybe the ancestor-cult preserved the power of the royal dynasties and vice versa until the pressure from Christianity undermined its functions - but obviously this way of stabilising the political regimes in Scandinavia based on inheritance was able to function all the next millennium.

A part of the religion was in that way a result of politics – manipulated as the royal genealogies. That does not mean that the general rules of Dumezil shall be totally neglected when analysing the Norse religions. The explanation will not be perfect according to religious philosophy and in relation to the normal Indo-European structures as described by Dumezil, but neither is the merged Norse pantheon - marked as it is by a compromise with a background in political power. Actually this was precisely what Snorri described in 1230 - only he did not link them to any historically known people - he did not mention the Heruls of Procopius or the Dacians of Dudo.

It is important to emphasize that an Odin as a king from old Herulian myths does not implicate that the god Odin just was a divined ancestor. In Scandinavia the god Odin probably became a Herulian shaman-like ancestor inspired by Attila mixed up with the Westgermanic god Wothen, who in the 5<sup>th</sup> century began to spread into Scandinavia from South West.

### 3.3.2 The route of Odin

On a superficial view the three parts of migration history mentioned in the chapters above look very separated from each other. Snorri had even two versions of the route to Saxony - one along the Danube and one along the Russian Rivers and across the Baltic Sea. First we have to look at these discrepancies.

The first unclear description from the Edda of Snorri was very similar to Dudo's description of an origin from Troy and a later route from "Tyrkland" against north west, but at the time of Snorri Tyrkland was not the Turkey we know today, and the lost Troy was in a contemporary description placed near Tanais. Actually Snorri's purpose to present the old myths correctly is confirmed by this use of a story which was presented 200 years earlier by Dudo - Snorri did not invent or manipulate that story as claimed. He just referred Dudo. Therefore there should be a reason why Snorri ten years later rejected the Troy-legend choosing instead the more distinct description with a fictive "Asgaard" behind Don/Tanais. Today we still know the city of Asov at that position. This change may be caused by knowledge unknown to us – i.e. by lost Nordic legends – as he rejected the old clerical historians and the general glamorous Troy-myth preferring instead the barbarian neighbourhood of an unknown easterly colony of Greece.

Snorri may have found a new source, but unfortunately the explanation appears to be reconstructed by Snorri or his source - maybe because they only knew fragments. Angrimur Jonsson indicated that parts of the story already existed in the later disappeared Skjoldungesaga, which was written before Snorri. In the new version of Ynglingesaga Odin went from Tanais against west to Gardarige (Russia), which appear a little too similar to the much later route of the Vikings between the Eastern Baltic Sea and Byzans – except for the

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of the power of Uppsala in Götaland?

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contradiction between the direction “west” and the place “Gardarige” against north. From there he went to Saxony, Fyen and Uppsala. It seems, however, illogical to follow a route from the Black Sea via nowadays Russia and Latvia to Saxony before going back to Uppsala – the detour is absurd. Snorri was caught up in the same trap as his contemporaries when he tried to make up the puzzle – he was not able to make the legends fit as his picture of the world was wrong<sup>132</sup>.

We shall notice that Odin in both legends settled in Saxony – Odinsey – Old Sigtuna (close to Uppsala). If we leave out the contradictory Gardarige, which was an area they just passed like the Vikings coming from the Black Sea, the “Men from Asia” travelled against west and arrived to Saxony from South East. This is the same route as the old myth about Troy, and even the Dacian kings of Dudo followed that route. The combined result will look like this: From Tanais the ancestors of the Nordic kings had followed the Danube/Elbe-route over Dacia and Saxony (in north east earlier called Varni) to the Danes, Gautoi and Svear. That is exactly the route of the Huns and Heruls, and as earlier mentioned Snorri even told about a split of the royal family and old properties in Byzans.

An objection should be that the Heruls probably never lived at Tanais, but that does not change anything as they believed so, when Ablasius and Jordanes wrote. Probably they later mixed up Tanais (Don) with Dnepr (ON Danpr), which in the 3rd century was the border between the Germanic tribes and the Sarmatian Alans. If the Alanes were integrated they may even have brought legends from Tanais and Asov with them into the Herulian group.

This very natural combination of the migrating kings described by Snorri and Dudo, who both wrote in North Western Europe, will be identical with a combination of the South-European Procopius and Jordanes describing the route and living places of the Heruls.

A combination seen from this point of view will indicate that the myths of origin of Odin and the legends of some of the royal dynasties in Scandinavia could be the missing Nordic history of the Heruls. Unfortunately events from the 300 years of migration are totally mixed up – but such a mess should be expected as Dudo wrote 500 years later and Snorri wrote 700 years later.

Making a kind of summary we can ask the question: How did Snorri get that idea? We have 3 possibilities:

1. He invented a route himself - and hit by a coincidence the travelroute of the Heruls.
2. He found fragments of one or more Nordic legends or poems describing a route of some nameless Heruls.
3. He knew the route of Procopius.

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<sup>132</sup> Snorri told in his second version of the legend in Heimskringla that Odin after going westward from Tanais to Gardarike (Russia) went south to the Saxons. The consequence of that explanation is that he went north along River Don and against west to the Baltic Sea turning south west against Saxony. From there he went back north east again. Gardarike is only mentioned as an area he passed from Don, but in both versions Odin subdued Saxland. In Edda they originate from Troy, but the geographer al-Idrisi placed at a map in 1154 Troy at River Don - a map Snorri may have known as al-Idrisi served a Normannic duke Roger of Sicily. In Edda he went north from Tyrkland to Saxland, and out of 12 sons, who followed Odin, 3 (Vegdeg, Beldeg (Balder) and Seggi) already settled in Germany (Austr-Saxlandi, Vestfal (where the grave in Beckum was found) and Frakland). If Snorri had not involved Gardarige and the trip against south (Great Svitjod or Dacia/Pannonia would have fit), the initial western direction can be regarded as a connection to all the other descriptions following the Danube/Elbe-route. The possible combinations are Oder/Weischel (never mentioned in this connection), west – north west (Danube - Elbe) or north - west – south west (Baltic Sea). None of the descriptions told in northern Europe sounds reliable except for the last part from Saxony to Scandinavia – just opposite Procopius, who was not able to describe the last part in a way to be trusted. The lacking ability to reflect the round shape of the Earth in the maps and the Christian church’s unwillingness to accept it caused a confusing impression of the world - unless Pytheas and scientists like Pythagoras very early had recognised the round shape. If a man as an example went 1400 km eastwards from Vestfold in Norway and then 1400 km southwards (along the Russian rivers) he reached Tanais, but if he went from Vestfold 1400 km southwards and then 1400 km eastwards (along the Danube) he reached Dacia. Therefore Christian writers, who regarded the Earth to be a disc as described by Snorri, had serious problems with directions and location of the countries at a flat map or the cylindrical map used by some scientists.

Reading these possible answers the last answer appears at the first glance to be most realistic while the first is nearly impossible. However, if he knew Procopius there was no reason to follow the Viking route through Russia letting them go from Latvia to Saxony and back to Uppsala. This is also an argument against the first possibility. Furthermore it is as earlier mentioned difficult to explain why he did not refer to Procopius if he knew him - in order to support the Christian argument that Odin was a human being. This leads us back to one or more Norse myths containing fragments of the Herulian history as the background for his final reconstruction. As we do not expect to find Procopius-readers in the early pagan Scandinavia, the Heruls themselves appear to be the most probable source for such Norse myths. However this alone can never constitute a convincing proof.

### 3.3.3 The later kings of Ynglingesaga

Both in Heimskringla and Historia Norwegie the description of the gods was instantly followed by the genealogy of the kings descending from Yngve-Frey - known from the much earlier poem Ynglingatal. They are normally divided into four groups.

The kings in the first group covering Dag and his “ancestors” have obviously no connection with the rest. They appear to be fantasy figures or maybe mythical kings from the earlier kingdom. Probably the purpose was to prolong the list of kings and connect them with the gods.

The next group from Agne to the shaman-like Aun<sup>133</sup> were mentioned in different order in the two versions of Ynglingatal and seem to contain doubles. Some of them appear with elements of gods or of Hunnic and Visigothic kings. Maybe they were used as a fill up to make the family older than the Danish kings – being elements of other kings or gods. It cannot be excluded that the story of Aun and the human Odin were constructed by elements of the same legendary king.

The kings of third group are known as the “Skilfings” from Beowulf too - the name may be derived from skjalf (Highseat). Skilfing was in Grimnismal told to be an earlier name of Odin – just like Geat. These kings are normally regarded as more reliable figures – if we can talk about reliable in that connection.

The fourth and last group became Norwegian kings as the family had to escape, when Ivar Vidfadme of Scania was told to conquer most of Sweden around 700 AD.

The similar saga of the kings from the Danish Lejre – Skjoldungesaga – is unfortunately only known from small fragments. Maybe Ivar Vidfadme was identical with the symbolic figure Dan known from the Cronical of Lejre and from Saxo. Snorri knew and used Skjoldungesaga, when he wrote Ynglingesaga.

The names of the kings in Ynglingasaga were based on the poem Ynglingatal from the ninth or tenth century, which was used by Snorri and probably also earlier by Historia Northwegiae. The dating of Ynglingatal was provokingly criticized by Claus Krag in 1991, but though he has later been opposed in a convincing way in doctoral thesis by Gro Steinsland, Svante Norr and especially Olof Sundqvist many scholars prefer to refer to his critical comments supporting their general view. In note<sup>134</sup> is described that his conclusions do not

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<sup>133</sup> According to Ynglingesaga Aun/Audun ruled over several periods through 200 years indicating a superior king between gods and human beings – an Odin-shape. The superior king possibly corresponds with Jarl from the poem Rigsthula explaining the background for the classes of the society – slaves, free farmers and earls. The god Heimdal here points out the descendants to Jarl – son of Heimdal and Mother – to become kings and “Godes” with the title “Rig” (=king). He taught him the magic language of the runes. Jarl was followed by his son Kon (konung=king). The last part of the work is missing, but Kon was told, that Dan and Danp were better Vikings. Danp is elsewhere presented as a brother to Yngve (Skjold?). (Danp was also the Norse name of Dnepr, where the Heruls earlier lived.) The Viking-rumour indicates that the survived version is connected to the take-over by the later Danish king Dan (as in the Lethre (Lejre) Chronicle) even though it explains the earlier formation of the supreme kingdom.

<sup>134</sup> Claus Krag stated that the information in the genealogy of Are and Historia Northwegia was one version of the past and Ynglingatal and Snorri's Ynglingesaga another version due to different spelling of personal names, chronological order and the kingdoms ruled by the Norwegian kings. As Ynglingasaga was the youngest he

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follow simple logics as he has ruled out the most likely explanations.

Counting generations from the death of Harald Blaatand back to Harald Hildetand and via his grandfather Ivar Vidfadme to the members of Ynglingatal Aun should be expected to die in 510 AD using the average length of generations from the historical part of the Danish royal family through 1000 years. Nearly the same result is reached by using the Swedish list from Erik Sejersäl. The uncertainty around the length of generations (average from birth to birth) and the lists of kings will make this dating useless, but at least the following theories are not destroyed by such a calculation.

Odin became one of their Ansis - an Ansuz - and in that way the name of the Asir may have been formed. In Götaland Wothan as Odin possibly replaced their version of Gaut as the oldest ancestor of the royal family, while the Ynglings in Uppland were combined with the Skilfings (Herulian/Swedish dynasty) by the kings in Ynglingatal's group 2 - and therefore Grimnismal told that Gaut and Skilfing were earlier names of Odin.

We shall, however, notice that (opposite in the Edda) Odin was not an ancestor of the Ynglings in Ynglingesaga. The ancestor to Yngve (Frej) and Aun was the Vane Njord. Did Snorri know that the "men of Asia" became earls without conquering the throne or was it due to another myth letting the original royal line of the Svear continue in order to legitimate the dynasty?

Snorri wrote about Ases, Vanes, Earls, Danes, Swedes and people from Troy and Tanais, but he never mentioned the Heruls.

### 3.3.4 Independent sources?

The similarities above will immediately bring up the question: Did Snorri and Dudo use the works of Jordanes and Procopius?

Procopius was mentioned in connection with the Apostle of Germany, Bonifatius around 700 AD, but Procopius is not traced in the later sources from northern Europe. Jordanes, however, was mentioned by Widukind – confirming that he was known in the northern monasteries around 1000 AD. Dudo seems to have read Jordanes, but he did not mention the part of the Herulian history reminding us about the history told by Snorri. The use of Priamos of Troy is showing that Snorri knew the Danish tradition of a background in antique history already mentioned by Dudo 200 years earlier, when the first people from Iceland were studying in Paris.

It is obvious that Snorri may have known the same source as Roger Bacon, who in 1250 AD mentioned the As-people in the area of Asov, and this could have been Snorri's inspiration to Asgaard – especially as Troy

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concluded that Ynglingatal was younger than Historia Northwegiae!! He forgot the most likely possibility that Ynglingatal as Snorri told was the oldest version existing together with one or more other lost poems or sagas with a different content - just as HN and Ynglingasaga were different. Accordingly the authors had to pick up what they personally believed, which could cause the discrepancies he observed. He emphasized that both Ynglingatal and Snorri had Agne - Alrik in the opposite order than Historia Northwegia, which made him conclude that Are and the author of Historia Northwegiae did not know Ynglingatal. But he forgot that the only version of Ynglingatal is known from Ynglingasaga, where Snorri may have changed the order of these kings due to other sources. Furthermore he claimed that the author of Ynglingatal knew the "four elements". That may be correct, but that will not prove that the author was a Christian as the pagan philosophy was influenced by Christian thinking as mentioned by Claus Kragh himself in another connection. In that case he referred to FornjotR, but he ignored that FornjotR's three sons did only cover three elements. His best argument could be that the Norwegian Ynglinga kings in Historia Northwegia were kings of "Opplandene" while they in Ynglingatal and Ynglingasaga were kings of Vestfold too. Historia Northwegia does not tell that they did not rule Vestfold too, and the only remark about Vestfold in Ynglingatal was that Harald Hvitbeine was buried in Sciringssal. His argument about euhemerism was the usual that euhemerism was used by the Christians as an argument and accordingly gods with a human past must have been invented by the Christians - a common mistake among scholars forgetting that religion based on ancestors was common in the past – even described by the pagan Romans. The argument simply does not work both ways.



## The Heruls

appears to have been placed in this area at a map from 1154 AD. However the only connection between the people around Asov and Scandinavia were the Heruls, but Snorri never mentioned the Heruls.

Close to the Azes in Azerbadjan Thor Heyerdahl also claimed to find a Van-people at the other side of Ararat in Eastern Turkey. The existence of this people was confirmed by local scholars, and we can find the town and the Lake Van at modern maps. He also found an Udin-people (pronounced Odin) in Azerbadjan. The method by comparing names used by Heyerdahl may lead to totally wrong conclusions because of coincidences, but there are several other possibilities. Snorri may have been inspired by legends from Caucasus, or he may have reconstructed certain elements because of similarities in names he knew. Some of Heyerdahl's observations may be right, but the Udin-connection is contradicted by the connection between the Norse Odin and the earlier German Wothen even mentioned by Snorri. Also the more likely As-connection is contradicted by the generally accepted linguistic development from "Ansi" and "Ansu" to "Ases". As "Ansu" meant "God" or "Ancestral god" this chain of development seems very logical, but this may be a coincidence as well or the development may have happened the opposite way. This is not written to defend Heyerdahl's theories, but Snorri may have made some of the same mistakes, including the combination of the name Ases and Men from Asia. However such a mistake does not mean that the basic theory, which Snorri believed his Asia-mistake would strengthen, is wrong. That kind of arguments are often misused.

Snorri's Tanais-legend using a route through Gardarige could never be a result of Snorri reading Procopius, and Snorri also used other names - he mentioned Tanais and Saxony but not Procopius' Ister (Danube) and the Varni. Without a combination with Procopius or without Nordic legends about the Heruls the few remarks of Jordanes covering the Heruls should never bring associations to a reader leading to the migration of Odin. Dudo probably used elements of Jordanes, but Snorri used remarkably few elements of Dudo, Jordanes and Procopius in his stories - if any. Probably Snorri reconstructed a part of the geographical description using routes from the Black Sea and place names he knew from the Vikings, but if he was deliberately manipulating the whole geographical story based on Procopius, this was extremely clever done and his motives are not even obvious.

If Snorri knew Procopius and in any way connected his history with "The men from Asia", we should expect the Christian historian to uncover and use a connection between the pagan gods and the Heruls in his warning against paganism in *Skaldskaparmál* - unless he was forced to suppress the connection between Heruls and gods. But this suppression should only be expected to take place if the Hypotheses of the Heruls were true. Alternatively he did not combine Odin and the Heruls or he did not know Procopius. In the first case he had no reason to use the story, but if he nevertheless was inspired by Procopius he had no reason to reconstruct a (wrong) route and he had no motive to invent a brand new myth about Nordic gods behind Tanais centuries after Odin was given up as a god - as he did not use it for any purpose. Consequently his story about the "Men from Asia" appears in both cases independent of Procopius.

Finally the basic myths of the religion are supposed to be developed in a much older pagan environment, where no one would be expected to read antique historians and combine them in that way. The picture-stones at Gotland indicate that antique legends were known early, but not necessarily from books. Dudo confirmed only 40 years after Denmark was officially baptised that the Danes boasted of Greek ancestors. Therefore the Dacian tradition was already well established at that time without any connection with Procopius and his Heruls. Thus Snorri did not invent the south eastern connection. On the contrary his explanations and different versions show doubt in his mind about the Troy-legend, but not about men from the region of Tanais becoming kings of Scandinavia. If the "Men from Asia" had not already used the Greek Troy-legend as Snorri maintained, the Danish boasting was probably caused by the first Christians converting a pagan Tanais-legend of the royal family to "civilised" antique "history".

The outstanding similarities regarding Tanais and the routes - looking at a modern map - indicate in spite of the uncertainty that the Norse myths are independent descriptions of the same events, which were never combined later because of different names, dating and approach. As one version is a migration history surviving in separate parts from a Byzantine and a Gothic historian, while the other version survived as a

central Nordic religious myth and as some parallel legends of kings in an antique shape, this will only strengthen the assumption of totally different sources – but it will never constitute a proof of any historical event.

### 3.3.5 A possible source

Maybe Procopius description of the migration is in this way confirmed by one or two apparently independent descriptions, but unfortunately they are not known as contemporary descriptions.

The three stories do not only contain similarities making it possible to combine them, but after the combination they will supply each other in a way explaining many historical, archaeological and religious matters in the Iron and Viking Ages.

We may wonder why Snorri told two versions of the south eastern connection. Looking at works like the *Hervarar-saga* primarily operating in the areas around Danube and the Black Sea, it does not seem unlikely that Snorri in his investigation looking for an explanation behind the Troy-legend found a legend pointing at the Greek Tanais. One possibility is that he found an old legend of a war between As- and Van-people in Caucasus (mentioned by Heyerdahl) inspiring to the names, as we know Roger Bacon some years later knew the As-people, but such a past of the Van-people is unknown today. The etymology behind the "Ases" might be a reconstruction by Snorri reading the above mentioned source about the As-people and maybe the town Asov. However these theories by Heyerdahl do not appear to be likely.

A more likely possibility may be that the source of Snorri was a Nordic legend about a battle at Danpr – namely the battle he described as the battle between Ases and Vanes though this “divine war” took place later in Scandinavia. We may suspect this to be an Attila-legend as Lotte Hedeager, but Attila first became leader when they reached Dacia/Pannonia and a story about the Huns should have lead Snorri to the Danube-route. Apparently Snorri never realized that his distant battle probably was a battle between the Heruls and Ermaneric or the Huns – both parties often mentioned in Nordic legends. The defeat forced the Heruls to follow the victorious leaders – Attila was the last of them – towards west to Moravia, from where the head of their own royal family brought some of them to Sweden. Snorri never realized that the narrators may have repressed a complicated and humiliating history of 150 years. Maybe Snorri when he found these Tanais-legends in good faith mixed them up and chose the best route he and his contemporaries knew – the Viking route from Don to Scandinavia and not the Gothic route from the Dnepr. Maybe the Tanais-legend was later converted into a Troy-legend. Snorri did under no circumstances invent the story himself as the headlines were mentioned in the earlier *Skjoldungesaga* (*Fragmenta rerum Danicarum*).

The long travels of Odin and his possessions in Byzans, mentioned by Snorri and Saxo, may be due to a religious dynastic superiority of the Scandinavian dynasty over the other Herulian kings - including over some of the Heruls in Illyria, although they were a part of the Byzantine rule. As Darius was sent from Sweden he must have been a pagan – probably like the group asking him to come. Later on Darius had to escape with the men loyal to the royal family to a new kingdom in Dacia under protection of the Gothic Gepides. Snorri/Saxo in combination with Procopius indicates a continuous connection between Scandinavia and these Heruls, who may even have returned from Dacia to Scandinavia after the defeats of the Gepides. This explains why they had to send for Darius in Scandinavia, why Justinian opposed these pagan kings by using Suaruas, why Procopius criticized the character of the Heruls, why the royal party of the Heruls let this conflict be the end of the advantageous collaboration with Justinian, and why the Danes could regard some of the members of these earls as Gothic Dacians as Dudo told.

## 3.4 The expulsion of the Heruls - Norse parallels to Jordanes

Snorri is not the only Norse or Northern European sources where traces of the arriving Heruls can be found. Both *Widsith*, *Beowulf* and *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo contain such elements, but the earlier mentioned

confusion of names has made it impossible to identify with certainty.

### 3.4.1 Widsith, Wicinga and Vikings

In Widsith we can read that the Danish kings, Roar and Rolf, drove off the tribe of the Wicinga cynn (cynn was a tribe or a family), which is usually translated in this way:

Hrothwulf and Hrothgar, nephew and uncle,  
held peace together for many years  
after they had driven off the “*wicinga cynn*”  
and beaten down Ingeld's line of battle,  
cut down at Heorote the “*Heaðobeardna*” forces.

The English linguist, Christine Fell, has suggested that the verb “wician” meant to stay temporarily opposite to stay permanently (“buan”)<sup>135</sup> – based on Ottar's journey in Alfred the Great's Orosius-translation. There Ottar was sailing in the day and “wician” at beaches or in inlets at night. The translator of Beowulf at [www.heorot.dk](http://www.heorot.dk), Benjamin Slade, has confirmed that difference between the two words – mentioning too by referring to the word “wic” in the Oxford English Dictionary that both words probably had the same IE-root found in the Latin “vicus” (“village”). The name “Wicinga” may at that time have described a tribe of nomads or half nomads as the Heruls. Later the word may have been used to describe the Scandinavian pirates attacking the English coasts – often with camps and colonies at English ground – the Vikings. In that way the word Viking may have ended up in ON as a loan word from OE. Another loan word may be “vik” (inlet) where the Viking ships were “wician” - but that has no influence on the discussion of the Heruls. A Frisian/Anglo-Saxon parallel based on “vicus” is the syllable for camp/town “wic/wich/wick”, which may also have been used on some of the camps of the Vikings.

The name Wicinga in Widsith is often combined with the Heathobeards later in the sentence, but the two parts of the sentence appear to describe different events. Normally the third line in the Widsith quote above is translated “*after they had driven off the Heathobard tribe*”, but in the original OE text the name was “*wicinga cynn*” as here. This line and the two next lines about the Heathobeards are describing two different events. This first mentioning of the Wicingas may correspond with the expulsion of the Heruls mentioned by Jordanes. The next line about the Heathobeards shall probably be regarded in relation to the events in Beowulf between Roar and the Heathobeards, Frode and Ingeld - the latter being defeated at Heorot (the Hall of Lejre) in Widsith. The Heruls were hardly the Heathobards as that name did not cover a people but a branch of the legendary Danish dynasty - the Scyldings. The English sources mentioning king Roar and an English queen were written before the Danish legends were manipulated by Saxo and the other clerical authors. The Danish legends apparently preferred the line of Frode<sup>136</sup> being placed as the ancestors to the later Skjoldunger (Scyldings) or the Ingoldings at the Rök Stone after the confusion caused by the killing of Rolf Krake<sup>137</sup>. Though Skjold in some works is called a son of Odin there is no reason to regard the Danish dynasty as a part of the Heruls, but they may have been influenced by marriage and mercenary officers (earls).

We do not know any tribe called Wicinga and the word Viking is not known in any Norse sources before the Viking Ages. According to an article by the English linguist Antoly Libermann [Libermann 2009] “Wiking” probably originated from the expression “shifting of oarsmen”, which described a people rowing fast and far. The word is found in Frisia in a form which due to the palatination of the “k” probably origin from before 500 AD. This is the time and area where the Western Heruls operated as vikings and were mentioned in Spain and France. It is possible that the Anglo Saxons used this nickname for the Heruls as they only knew

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<sup>135</sup> Christine Fell in Lund 1983.

<sup>136</sup> The kings of the Heathobeards were in Beowulf called Frode and Ingjald. The manipulation of the legends is not the topic of this website and is explained in “Danernes Sagnhistorie” by Troels Brandt, 2004.

<sup>137</sup> The “foreigner” Fredleif being in other sources called a son of a Frode was in “Lethre Chronicle” a Danish king married with a daughter of Hrodwulf (Rolf Krake).

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these Heruls. When later Widsith and Beowulf should mention the Danish expulsion of the Heruls – when *erilaR* had become the word *earl/jarl* – they could both use *Wicingas* and *Eorlas* as they did. Later the Rökstone could in the same way use both Chieftain of the Sea Warriors (*stilar flutna*) and the first of Marika (the first of Mährings) in the riddle about the Herulian king Hrodolphus. If the “*Wicinga cynn*” meant the Heruls in this case Widsith used exactly the same wording as Jordanes. It is characteristic that this people neither in Jordanes’ *Getica*, Widsith nor Beowulf was beaten by the Danes which is the usual victory.

In the later Viking Ages this “shifting of oarsmen” simply became the name of the sailors.

Widsith also used the Herul-like “*Herelingas*” – maybe covering a personal name at that position in Widsith and therefore unchanged by the authors of Widsith. The personal name is normally regarded to cover the Harlungen Twins, who may have been Heruls too [Wolfram 1988].

### 3.4.2 Beowulf and Eorl

The interpretation of Widsith above may be confirmed by line 6 in Beowulf where “*Scyld ... egsode eorl*” maybe should be interpreted as “*Scyld (or rather the Scyldings) ... terrified the Heruli*”, which was suggested by Wrenn though later denied by Chambers, as Chambers and Klaeber believed in the old dating of Jordanes’ expulsion and regarded this sentence early in the Prelude too general to mention a single people. However no scholars appear to have considered the parallel in Widsith mentioned above. As *Scyld* had seized many mead-benches (= halls = kingdoms) there was no reason to add a sentence about earls, but as Jordanes told about the expulsion of the Heruls by the Danes as one of the only events worth mentioning in Scandinavia, it appears likely that Beowulf mentioned this event when presenting the Danes. Therefore Wrenn is probably right, and his view is today regarded as plausible in the PhD thesis of [Carl Edlund Anderson \(note 36\)](#) and the Beowulf translation by [Benjamin Slade](#).

### 3.4.3 Saxo and Huns

Among the many legends of Saxo we also find some information, which could reflect the arrival of the Heruls. In his chapter about Frode Fredegod Saxo has 3 descriptions of the Huns, who were probably never in contact with the Danes as a major group. The Scandinavians may have mixed up the Huns with their followers, the Heruls, which is confirmed by the Dietrich-saga where the ancestor of the family in Rök, the Herulian king Hrodolphus, is called Rodolf of Bekelar as an earl of the Hunnic Attila. The “Huns” arrived in the neighbourhood together with a Russian fleet lead by Olimar, but the Russians did not exist at that time. The fleet may have belonged to the Varini as suggested earlier based on Procopius. According to Saxo Frode married a Hunnic princess, but after 3 years they were separated. At last a battle took place between Frode and the Huns and the Huns disappeared from the stories of Saxo. It is obvious that this story of Saxo may be the combined story we have heard from Procopius, Jordanes, Beowulf and Widsith. Frode was the Scylding who in the Danish legends tried to get a peaceful relationship with the arriving Heruls, but had to expel them afterwards - which made him the strong and famous king of the Danes [Troels Brandt, 2004].

The method used by the “Huns” was in this way an occupation with initial plunderings, fightings or thread followed by integration.

As demonstrated above both Widsith, Beowulf and Saxo mentioned events like Jordanes’ expulsion of the Heruls, but Widsith and Saxo used more general names which could refer to the Heruls. But we still have to be aware, that neither Widsith, Beowulf nor Saxo can be regarded as historical sources regarding the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.5 Burial customs – Snorri, Procopius and archaeology

Procopius description of the death of an old sick Herul was mentioned earlier – killed by a dagger and burned at a pile of wood as he should not be a burden to his family. His wife should hang herself. Snorri told in Ynglingesaga that an old king should not die sick in his bed, and he told that the king Odin was wounded by a spear and burned at a pile of wood, when he wanted to die – in another story he hanged himself. These may be two versions of the same theme confirming that Procopius had this story from the pagan Scandinavian Heruls, but Snorri explained much further. He described the reconciliation between the religion of the Svear of Gylfi and the religion of the migrating "Asian" warriors of Odin. He told about the "Cremation Ages" and the "Mound Ages", and in Ynglingesaga he told, that Odin and Njord were burned, while Yngve was the first to be buried in a big mound in Uppsala. He told that all dead men should be burned with their belongings, and their ashes should be buried or cast into the sea. The higher the smoke arose the higher he was raised in the next life (which affords a high temperature of the fire as observed in Uppsala and Lejre). For men of consequence a mound should be raised in his memory. In this way there is nearly total correspondence between the stories of Snorri and Procopius and the development told by the archaeologists in the Uppsala-district – especially the content of the three Uppsala mounds, which he had no chance to interpret from an archaeological point of view in 1230 AD.

However, as mentioned the cremations and especially the three Uppsala-mounds constitute a problem if the leaders in Uppsala were Heruls. Also Snorri's descriptions are incorrect if he just described the Svear. Here the reconciliation between religions or people mentioned by Snorri is an important explanation - especially as Odin according to Snorri also made a new law demanding his own people to be cremated as mentioned above. We shall not forget that the laws probably were remembered better than other texts and that law was Snorri's official job. Neither shall we forget that some people in the Scandinavian societies were able to write and that the runes were made for carving in wood - which probably caused the Swedish juridical term "balk". Even if Snorri knew the content of the royal Swedish mounds, which he hardly did, he or his sources could not have constructed this well-fitting old law explaining everything. The real archaeological combinations found in the Swedish and Moravian graves are simply too complicated. A majority of the people in Sweden and nearly all along Fyrisåen except for the ruling families in chamber graves were already cremated. It made only sense to make such rules if the purpose was to change the customs of an integrated people who were not cremated until now – namely the Heruls. The invading Herulian king must according to European archaeology combined with Procopius have forced his own people to follow the customs of their new people.

That was what Snorri explained as a part of the above mentioned reconciliation, where Odin even ordered them to cremate himself. Later, when the kings and earls consolidated their position with a demonstration of power known as the Vendel Culture, the Heruls used their own and the local leaders former traditions in order to make the king immortal and the family divine – maybe also inspired by experiences from the society in Högom. Snorri's story about Odin, who consequently followed his own new rules for the people, is logically connected with the short period of royal cremation customs in Uppland as demonstrated by the archaeology – just before the Vendel Ages, when the divine royal family got their own burial customs separating them from the ordinary people. In this connection we shall not forget that Snorri did not make Odin an ancestor of Yngve-Frey, who was the son of Vane, Njord. If we shall believe the content of the myth as told by Snorri the Ynglinge-family were Svear in their male lineage – not Heruls.

Snorri told exactly what would happen if a king called Odin really had arrived from Moravia. Snorri could tell what was hidden in the earth of Sweden and Moravia 700 years before he wrote – and excavated 700 years after his death. Of course the modern scholars shall focus on the long span of years. They do also focus on the medieval writers' general use of classical elements, which does not prove anything. They forget that the Scandinavian kings had a language written in wood and a tradition of law, which make Snorri's and Procopius' story about the burial practice more likely.

### 3.6 Conclusions - Norse literature

Due to the uncertainty of the legends most scholars prefer to avoid these as historical sources - calling them literature. Though they basically are so and though many of them were even manipulated, they may provide us with a valuable picture of society, kingship and religion filling up some of the holes in the historical pattern. In his PhD-dissertation at the University of Uppsala Svante Norr described indications of the establishing of a superior level of kingship in Scandinavia - based primarily on Norse legends and English poems and chronicles, which he had to defend to a certain degree. He described the kingship as appearing similar with the structures of power and kingship among the Anglo-Saxon and East Germanic people - especially the Goths - in which structures the Heruls earlier tried to reach a higher level.

The many examples leading to a general similarity between the headlines of the Nordic legends, the history of the Heruls and archaeology are striking and cannot be a coincidence. Many of the elements in the history of Procopius can be recognised as fragments in the sagas, and furthermore the legends simply fill out holes and explain the background behind the Hypothesis of the Heruls as it was described in chapter 2. That does not imply that the story about Odin's men from Asia in Ynglingesaga was the accepted myth of that time as Snorri in that case would have mentioned it earlier. The story as it was told in Ynglingesaga must have been a late reconstruction by Snorri based on fragments in old Norse poems and sagas and maybe even fragments of ancient classical knowledge. Already in the missing Skjoldungesaga a part of that story was known according to Arngrimur Jonsson.

We shall never expect to find surviving sources telling about a ruling Norse dynasty with a past as mercenaries serving the Romans. That would be totally against the politics of the Nordic kings and bishops of the time, when these tales and poems were written down. The only author moving against those limits was Snorri - and he was in fact murdered, though that could be a coincidence as he did not cross the limits.

Apparently independent of Procopius and archaeology these legends have located the centre of this kingship and the religion to the Uppsala area - which was later historically confirmed by Adam of Bremen, when he tried to describe the religious centre (even though his description of the temple itself probably was based on an old rumour). To a certain extent this was also confirmed by Ansgar/Rimbert in Birka mentioning another court, where people listening to the gods were heard. As earlier mentioned these legends point at kings from the countries in the South East as founders of a superior kingship in Uppsala. In that way the legends provide us with the missing link in the accumulating historical evidence in chapter 2 above - without being scholarly acceptable because of the general unreliability of the sources. It is important to notice that no legends tell about people settling among the Götes. The location in Uppland and the described burial practices corresponds with the archaeological conclusions, which with a few decades uncertainty date the establishing of the later expanding centre to the arrival of the Heruls. The legends indicate this new religion or culture of Uppsala to arrive from south covering most of Scandinavia - just like the archaeology and the history.

The most important conclusion in this chapter is that there is no lack of traces of the Heruls in the Norse myths and legends though the missing name has been mentioned as an argument against Heruls in Scandinavia. Quite opposite the probability of the Hypothesis of the Heruls is strengthened by the clear connections between history, archaeology and myths - in spite of the unreliability of these legends which exclude them as historical evidence.

## 4 Scandinavian perspectives

Under all circumstances the Heruls arrived to Scandinavia where they - combined with the earlier impact of the Huns in Northern Europe - must have been an important catalyst in the development process leading to the greater kingdoms of the Vendel Culture and the much later Viking Culture. They are most likely the explanation of the earls of Uppland, but we shall not regard them as the only reason for the Viking Culture as the looting, which made them famous, was a general backside of the culture around the warrior elite in the Iron and Viking Ages until a new combination of kingship and church changed this way of life in the

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These hypotheses cover an area where it is normally impossible to prove anything according to usual scholarly criteria - except if new techniques as DNA-analyses can help us. Unfortunately the historians have not (like other scholarly areas) found a method of reporting uncertainty - though all historical reports and analyses contain uncertainty. The Scandinavian historians therefore avoid the Iron Ages. Some historians also avoid the Heruls as they are afraid to support right wing philosophies, but there is no such support in a people from South Eastern Europe being successfully integrated in Scandinavia. The purpose of this article by an outsider is to combine the fragmentary historical and archaeological information in a more probable and coherent way - in the hope one day to inspire a scholar to find a convincing way out of the dead ends.

Half nomades and mercenaries like the Herulian earls may be a part of the explanation, why the basis of kingship in Scandinavia was the distribution of loot and tribute characteristic for the kings of warriors and migration people (Widsith called this "eorlscipe" in the 8th century). Distribution of precious rings as salary and reward was according to the English poems essential for the reputation of the king - and in this way also for the warrior's incentive and respect for his leader. As the basic farming-, trading- and tax-income of a superior warrior king in Scandinavia was normally limited, most of the distributed treasures had to come from plundering, tribute, protection, custom, market fee and offerings. The need of extravagant reward to housecarls and navy may have tempted chieftains and kings to carry out the large Viking raids - an occupation for the Heruls since the 3rd century. But they were not the only reason. The war offerings in Jutland tell us that the Iron Ages were no peaceful time before the Heruls arrived, but a part of the culture around the Odin Cult must have been initiated by a nomadic culture or migration people - it is not likely to be initiated by agriculturists.

The expansion of the Franks and a trading route from Frisia/England crossing Southern Jutland to the Baltic Sea (later following the rivers of Russia to Byzans) moved around 700 AD the military power center of Scandinavia towards the "border region of the Danes" (=Denmark in Germanic language). That was the time of the king with the symbolic name Dan establishing a royal superiority in an area, which became the Danish "lande". Therefore, the traditions from the past are most obvious in early history of Denmark, from where also a part of the scaldic tradition of Iceland came according to the Icelandic scholar Bardi Gudmundsson. When Christianity prevented the Danes from plundering their neighbours - a plunder which at last could not be covered behind crusades and "defensive" raids against the Slavic robbers - this became an important reason for the change in power structure and for the total economic collapse of the Danish kings in the later Medieval Ages.

As mentioned this work was started years ago by the search for the origin of the Danish Kingdom and the election procedure. The thread mentioned above from the pagan and vagrant warrior king to the Christian medieval king could be said to form together with the earlier mentioned election and inheritance traditions manipulated by Saxo the sixth main track of indices supporting the Hypothesis of the Heruls. It corresponds with the other five: Procopius/Jordanes, Snorri, Dudo, the East Germanic legends and the archaeology. As the rows of indices are mostly independent, the Hypothesis of the Heruls will not fall, if one or more of the indices are false. In this connection it has to be noticed, that the most important of all the indices is the combination of archaeology and Procopius' description of a royal Herulian settlement in Scandinavia - a settlement which has never been seriously contradicted by historians although their number and the place of settlement has been discussed.

There is no reason to expect to find historical sources from the Scandinavian Iron Ages meeting the

historical assessment criteria of our time, but this hypothesis may give us an explanation of the mystery of the Heruls, which is far more probable than a trackless disappearance. The hypothesis is worth a consideration, as it may give an explanation of the archaeology, the Viking culture and the structure and evolution of Scandinavian kingship.

## 5 Literature

Forfatter /Oversætter	Årstal	Titel	
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Albrechtsen, Erling	1984	Dudo, Normandiets Historie	L
Andersson, Thorsten.	1998	"Göter, Goter, Guter" in Namn och Bygd 1-1998	
Anke, Bodo	1998	Studien zur Reiternomadischen kultur 4./5. jahrh.	
Arrhenius, Birgit	1985	Merovingian Garnet Jewellery	
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Arwidsson, Greta	1954	Valsgärde 7,8	
Axboe, Morten	2007	Brakteatstudier	
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Birgisson, Einar G.	2004	Egypt. infl. & sacred geometry in .. Scandinavia	
Blockley, R.C.	1981	Eunapius, Priscus - History after Dexippus	
Boer, R.C.	1910	Die Sage von Ermaneric und Dietrich von Bern	L
Bondesen, Erling	1982	Havspejlsvingninger	
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Burenholt, Göran	1999	Nordisk Arkeologi	
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Christensen, A.E.	1977	Danmarks Historie (Gyldendal)	
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Christensen, Tom	1991	Lejre - syn og sagn	
Crossley-Holland, K	1980	Norse Myths	



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Forfatter /Oversætter	Årstal	Titel	
Curta, Florin	2011	Neglected Barbarians	
Davidson, H.E.	1979	Saxo Grammaticus	
Dalton, O	1915	The letters of Sidonius Appollinaris	L
Duczko, Wladys.	1996	Arkeologi i Gamla Uppsala II	
Dudo (Liefshitz)	1911	Gesta Normannorum	L
Dumezil, Georges	1962	De nordiska gudarna	
Ellegaard, Alvar	1987	Who were the Eruli?	
Eugippius (Noll)	1963	Viti sanctus Severini	L
Evans, Angela Care	1994	The Sutton Hoo ship burial	
Fabech, Charlotte	1991	Soesdala, Fulltofta og Vennebo	
Fagerlie, Joan	1967	Late Roman and Byzantine solidi	
Faulkes, A.	1987	Snorri Sturluson Edda	L
Fett, Per	1938	Arms in Norway - Bergen Museums Aarbok	
Friesen, Otto von	1917	Herulernas bosaetning i Scandinavien	
Friesen, Otto von	1920	Rökstenen	
Friesinger, W. / Daim	1990	Typen der Ethnogenese ... der Bayern	
Friis-Jensen, C / A. Lund	1982	Skjoldungesagaen	
Flavius Josph/ Harsberg	1997	Den jødiske Krig	
Gaimster, Marit	1998	Vendel period bracteates on Gotland	
Galbraith, V.H.	1969	Bede's Ecclesiastical History	
Gannholm, Tore	1996	The Origin of Svear	
Gelting, Michael	1979	Roskilde Krøniken	
Gertz, M.C.	1916	Sven Aggesoens historiske Skrifter	
Gjellerup, Karl	1895	Rigsthula og Hyndloljod	
Goffart, Walther	1988	The narrators of barbarian history	
Goffart, Walther	2006	Barbarian Tides	
Gregor af Tour	1917	Gregors Frankerkrønike	L
Guðmundsson, Barði	1967	The origin of the Icelanders	
Götiska Minnen	1992	Tidiga Nordiska Östkontakter	
Haarder, Andreas	1986	Beowulf	
Haggmann, Bertil	1999	Eruli influence in South Scandinavia (Zagreb U.)	
Hald, Kristian	1965	Vore stednavne	
Hansen, Ulla Lund	1995	Himlingøje - Seeland - Europa	
Haseloff, Gynther	1981	Die germanische Tierornamentik	
Hedeager, Lotte et.al.	1991	Det europæiske Hus	

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Hedeager, Lotte	1988	Gyldendal/Politiken - Danmarks Historie 2	
Hedeager, Lotte	1989	Skygger af en anden virkelighed	
Hedeager, Lotte	1997	Mellem stamme og stat	
Hedeager, Lotte	2011	Iron Age myth and materiality	
Helgason, Jon	1924	Hervarar og Heidriks Saga	L
Hellstam, Antonia	2012	Huns or Heruls?	
Hemmingsen, Lars	1996	By word of mouth	
Henriksson, Göran	1995	Rigsbloten og Uppsala högar (TOR 27)	
Hermodson, Lars	1995	Herulerna - Vildfarna vildar? (Popul. Hist.)	
Herschend, Frands	1997	Livet i hallen	
Herschend, Frands	1998	The Idea of the Good	
Herschend, Frands	1998	Guldet i Vittene og Timboholm	
Heyerdahl/Lilliestroem	2001	Jakten paa Odin	
Hall, Clarck	1980	Beowulf	
Hines, John	1997	Anglo-Saxon great square-headed Brooches	
Hodgkin	1886	The letters of Cassiodorus	L
Horn, Winkel	1876	Hervarar saga ok Heidreks	
Houts, E.M.C	1992	The Gesta Normannorum ducum of W. de Jumieges	
Hyenstrand, Aake	1996	Lejonet, draken och korset	
Ilkjær, Jørgen	2000	Illerup Ådal	
Jahnkuhn, H.	1957	Die Frühgeschichte	
Jensen, Jørgen	2004	Danmarks Oldtid	
Jesch, Judith	2003	Scandinavians from Vendel period to 10th century	
Jørgensen, A. Nørgaard	1996	Kriger og hird i germ. jernalder (Nat.mus.Arb.)	
Jørgensen, A. Nørgaard	1997	Military aspects of Scandinavian Society	
Jørgensen, A. Nørgaard	1999	Waffen und Graeber	
Jørgensen, Lars m.fl.	1992	Cronological Studies, England-Lombardy-Vendel	
Jørgensen, Lars m.fl.	1998	Guld, magt og tro - danske skattefund	
Jørgensen, Lars.	1990	Bækkegaard and Glasergaard	
Jørgensen, Lars et al.	1997	Noerre Sandegaard Vest	
Jørgensen, Lars et al.	2003	Sejrens Triumf	
Jordanes (Mierow)	1915	The Gothic History	
Khrapunov, Igor et al.	2011	Inter Ambo Maria	
Khrapunov, Igor et al.	2013	Inter Ambo Maria II	
Kiss, Attila et al.	1984	Interaktion der mitteleuropäischen Slawen	

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Kleemann, Otto	1956	Masurgermanisher fibeln (Dokumente Archaeologica)
Koch, Alexander	1998	Bügelfibeln im Westlichen Frankenreich
Kroman, Erik	1976	Det danske rige i den aeldre vikingetid
Kuhn, Herbert	1973	Die Germanischen Bügelfibeln
Lamm, J.P.	1986	Vendel Period Studies
Larsson, Lars et.al.	1998	Centrala Platser, Centrala Frågor
Leake, J.A.	1967	The Geats of Beowulf
Lefolii	1901	Tacitus
Levada, Maxim	2010	Metal Combs in Eastern Europe - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Century
Libermann, Antoly	2009	What did the Vikings do before
Lintner-Potz, Angelika	2006	<a href="#">Die Eruler</a> (Unpubl. diploma thesis)
Ljungkvist, John	2005	Uppsala Högars datering (Fornvännen 100)
Looijenga, Tineke	1997	
Lukman, Niels	1943	Skjoldunge und Skilfinge
Lukman, Niels	1981	Frode Fredegod - Den gotiske Fravita
Luchi	1768	Venantius, Honorius "Fortunatus"
Lund, Niels	1983	Ottar and Wulfstan
Lund, Niels	1996	Lid, leding og landeværn
Magomedov, Boris	2001	Cerniachovskaja Cultura
Menghin, Wilfried	1983	Das Schwert im fruehen Mittelalter
Menghin, Wilfried et.al.	1987	Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren
Menghin, Wilfried et al.	1990	Fruehgeschichte Bayerns
Moltke, Erik	1976	Runerne i Danmark og deres oprindelse
Mommsen, Th.(edit.)	1894	Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores Antiquis
Maenchen-Helfen, J.O.	1973	The World of the Huns
Malone, Kemp	1962	Widsith
Michaelsen, Karsten K	1996	Jernalder i Gudme
Mierow, C.C	1908	Jordanes - The Origin and Deeds of the Goths
Musset, Lucien	1971	Les Invasion
Nordgren, Ingemar	2004	The wellspring of the Goths
Nordqvist, Bengt	2007	<a href="#">Offerplatsen Finnestorp</a>
Nordqvist, Bengt	2010	En praktremsölja av kunglig valör, Finnestorp
Norr, Svante / Sundquist	1995	Valsgärde Revisited (TOR 27)
Norr, Svante	1998	To rede or to rown

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Olausen, M et al.	2000	En bok om husbyar	
Olrik, Jørgen	1900	Chronicon Lethrense / Lejrekrøniken	
Olrik, Joergen	1931	Saxonis Gesta Danorum	L
Paulus Diaconus (Foulke)	1907	History of the Lombards	
Poulik, Josef	1995	Slovenska Archaeologia - Zuran	
Price, Neil S.	2002	The viking way - AUN 31	
Procopius (Dewing)	1914	Gotic Wars	L
Ramqvist, Per	1992	Hoegom I	
Rimbert /Robinson, Char.	1921	Vita Ansgar	L
Roesdahl, Else	1987	Vikingernes Verden	
Rolfe, J.C.	1964	Ammianus Marcellinus 1-3	
Sandwall, Ann et al.	1980	Vendeltid (Statens Historiska Museum)	
Sarantis, Alexander	2011	The Justinianic Herules (Curta: "Neglected Barbarians")	
Saxo (Seeberg/Olrik)	2000	Gesta Danorum	
Schjoedt, Jens Peter	1999	Det førkristne Norden	
Schmidt, Ludvig	1934	Die Ostgermanen	
Schneider, H.	1934	Germanische Heldensage	
Schnet	1951	Ravenna Geographer	
Schwarcz, Andreas	1992	Die Gotischen Seezuege des 3. Jahrhunderts	
Schwarcz, Andreas	2005	Die Heruler an der Donau (Festschrift f. G. Lipold)	
Sjoevold, Thorleif	1993	The Scandinavian Relief Brooches	
Skard, Vemund	1973	Norsk Språkhistorie	
Skautrup, Peter	1944	Det danske sprogs Historie	
Skovgaard-Petersen, I	1987	Da Tidernes Herre var nær	
Slade, Ben	2003	Beowulf (Web: Heorot.dk)	
Snorri Sturlason		Edda	
Snorri Sturl.(Holts m.)		Heimskringla	
Spurkland, Terje	2001	I begynnelsen var Futhark	
Stoklund et.al	2006	Runes and their secrets	
Storgaard, Birger	1997	Forbindelser m. Sydsandinavien og Sydøsteuropa	
Strebickie C	1982	Die Cronik des Thietmar von Merseburg	
Strubbe	1968	Liber Floridus (Lambert of St. Omer)	
Stummann, Steffen	1997	Farums Arkæologi	
Svennung, J	1967	Jordanes und Scandia	
Tejral/Friesinger	1997	Neue beitraege zur erforschung...mittlern Donaauraum	

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Tejral/Fischer/Precht	1997	Germanen beiderseits des spaetantiken Limes
Tejral, Jaroslav	2007	Barbaren im Wandel
Toldberg, H.	1958	Den danske Rimkrønike
Ulriksen, Jens	1997	Anløbspladser
Ulriksen, Jens	1998	Træk af Gl. Lejres historie
Waller, Jutta	1996	Dräktnålar och -skik i Østra Mälardalen
Weibull, Curt	1964	Källkritik och historie
Weibull, Laurits	1925	Arkiv f. Nordisk Filologi nr. 41
Weibull, Laurits	1948	Nordisk historia - forskningar och undersoekningar
Wenskus, Reinh.	1961	Stammesbildung und Verfassung
Wolfram/Schwarcz	1985	Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn
Wolfram, Herwig	1988	History of the Goths
Wolfram, Herwig	1990	Das Reich und die Germanen