

BISHOP THEOPHILUS AND THE CHURCH OF GOTHIA

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Abstract: Among the participants at the council of Nicaea, a certain *Theophilus Gothiae* is mentioned, who became in time the subject of some discussion among scholars. Analyzing especially the written sources, a somewhat clearer image can be gained, firstly about the location of the Church of Gothia, secondly about the bishop Theophilus and his position in the Christian community of the time, and finally about the structure and theological identity of the Church of Gothia.

Keywords: Gothia; council of Nicaea; Church of Gothia; gothic Christianity.

Rezumat: Printre participanții la conciliul de la Niceea este amintit un anume *Theophilus Gothiae*, care a suscitat de-a lungul timpului o seamă de discuții în literatura de specialitate. Prin analiza surselor scrise ale epocii, poate fi dobândită o imagine mai limpede, mai întâi asupra localizării Bisericii Gothiei, apoi asupra lui Theophilus și a locului său în comunitatea creștină a vremii, și în sfârșit asupra structurii și identității teologice a Bisericii Gothiei.

Cuvinte cheie: Gothia; conciliul de la Niceea; Biserica Gothiei; creștinismul goților.

Among the participants at the council of Nicaea, a certain *Theophilus Gothiae* is mentioned¹, who became in time the subject of some discussion among scholars. The Gothia of bishop Theophilus was considered by modern research to be situated either north of the Black Sea, in the Crimea² – due mainly to the fact that in the mentioned list the eparchy of Gothia is followed by the Bosporus –, or else in the region north of the Danube³.

Analyzing especially the written sources, a somewhat clearer image can be gained, firstly about the location of the Church of Gothia, secondly about the bishop Theophilus and his position in the Christian community of the time, and finally about the structure and theological identity of the Church of Gothia.

The name of *Gothia* occurs on Roman monetary issues of 332⁴ which celebrate the peace concluded by the emperor Constantine with the Goths, following the victorious campaign of that year, in the region north of the Lower Danube⁵. Gothia, mentioned here in what we can consider an official document, signifies therefore

¹ *Patr. Nicaen.* p. LXIV, no. 219; p. 56-57, 70.

² Zeiller 1918, 414; Lippold 1961, 512-531, especially 516; Thompson 1960, 82, note 3; Wolfram 1990, 87, is not so positive as in the 1979 edition of the same work (p. 88); Popescu 1994, 178-186, with the literature.

³ Vasiliev 1936, 11-18; Schäferdiek 1990, 36-37; Schäferdiek 1978, 498.

⁴ RIC, VII 215, no. 531 and 534 (Trier).

⁵ Anon. Vales., *Origo Const.* 6, 31 (526 Rolfe); Eus. *Vit. Const.* 4, 5 (119 Heikel); Eutr. X 7, 1 (67, 12-14 Santini); *Consularia Constantinopolitana* a. 332 (MGH.AA, IX/1, Berlin 1892, 234); Wolfram 1990, 70-71; Odahl 2005, 226; Kulikowski 2007, 84.

in this case the name given by the Romans to the territory held by the Goths north of the river⁶.

More precise data about the location of the territory named Gothia by the Romans are offered by the historical tradition of the 4th-6th centuries.

In the *Origo Constantini imperatoris* (6, 35)⁷, the name of *ripa Gothica* is given to the Lower Danube frontier of the Empire⁸. This work was most probably written shortly after the demise of the emperor and, even if it shows later interventions, the information provided is quite accurate⁹.

Towards the end of the same century, Eutropius relates that at the time when he wrote his Breviary (ca. 370), a Germanic coalition including also Gothic elements held the territory of the former province of Dacia¹⁰. During the same period, Ammianus Marcellinus uses the term of Gothia for the Gothic population which broke into Thrace during the reign of Valens, coming from the north¹¹.

In the next centuries, Gothia is mentioned in the context of geographical descriptions of the Roman world and its neighbours. The first is the history of Orosius which, in the geographical introduction, situates Gothia on the territory of former Trajanic Dacia¹². This information is taken from the geographical writings of the time¹³. The same location of Gothia, on the territory of ancient Dacia, can be found, with additional details, in the *Getica* of Jordanes¹⁴. Taking the information from Orosius, whom he used as a source also for the geographical descriptions¹⁵, Jordanes completed it with the realities of his own time, when the same area was known as Gepidia¹⁶.

⁶ Chrysos 1973, 61; Schäferdiek 1990, 36. A different opinion: Lippold 1977, 271, who argues that the name refers to the Gothic population.

⁷ MGH. AA, IX/1, Berlin 1892, 11.

⁸ Cf. Wolfram 1990, 70.

⁹ Odahl 2005, 3-4; for the dating cf. Barnes 1989, 158-161 and the analysis of Winkelmann 2005, 83-84.

¹⁰ Eutr. VIII 1, 2, 2 (50, 19-20 Santini): *Provincia trans Danubium facta in his agris, quos nunc Taifali, Victohali et Tervingi habent*

¹¹ Amm. Marc. XXX 2, 8 (312 Rolfe); Lippold 1977, 271, note 73.

¹² Oros. I 2, 53 (24-25 Arnaud-Lindet): *In medio ad Danuvium Dacia ubi et Gothia*

¹³ The sources used by Orosius for the geographical introduction are the *Dimensuratio provinciarum* and the *Divisio orbis terrarum*, both of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century. The first, which is the oldest and apparently the most complete, gives also the name of *Getica* to Dacia, cf. Schnabel 1935, 427, and the resemblance of the passage with the text of Orosius appears obvious. Cf. Arnaud-Lindet 1990, XXXVII, note 75; Merrills 2005, 64-79.

¹⁴ Jord. *Get.* XII 74 (33, 14-34, 2 Giunta, Grillone): *Daciam dico antiquam, quam nunc Gepidarum populi possidere noscuntur; quae patria in conspectu Moesiae sita trans Danuvium corona montium cingitur ... haec Gothia, quam Daciam appellavere maiores, quae nunc Gepidia dicitur*

¹⁵ Jord. *Get.* I, 4 (2, 17 Giunta, Grillone). For the sources of Jordanes and their use cf. Th. Mommsen, in: MGH. AA, V/1, Berlin 1882, XXX-XLIV, especially XLIII; Croke 1987, 123-124; Goffart 1988, 20-110, especially 89-90.

¹⁶ For the manner in which Jordanes completed his sources with personal comments cf. Croke 1987, 125. That we have here a comment of Jordanes, bringing to attention realities of the mid-6th century, when he authored the *Getica*, results from the passage quoted above (*Get.* XII 74 (33, 14 Giunta, Grillone)). The *Gepidae* held Pannonia and a part of Trajanic Dacia in the interval between the fall of Attila's realm and the middle of the 6th century, when they were destroyed by an Avar-Lombard coalition - cf. Whitby 2008, 712, 720.

From the above information, it results that in the Roman perception of the time, as reflected by the numismatic data and by the historiography of the 4th–6th centuries, Gothia invariably designates the region north of the Danube¹⁷. Some of these sources connect, as we saw, Gothia with the territory of the former Trajanic Dacia.

The correspondence established by Orosius and Jordanes between Gothia and Trajanic Dacia has to be nuanced on account of the archaeological data available for the area under discussion. The presence of the Goths in the regions north and west of the Black Sea is attested by the discoveries belonging to the Chernjakhov culture, which for the Romanian area developed the specific aspect of the Sântana de Mureş culture¹⁸. According to most interpreters, the bearers of the Chernjakhov – Sântana de Mureş culture entered the area north of the Danube towards the end of the 3rd century, and the culture became stable at the beginning of the 4th century¹⁹. From this point of view, one can argue in favour of the presence of the Goths to the north of the Lower Danube frontier of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the 4th century. Their rule, however, covered only Moldavia and Wallachia and is attested only through a few finds to the west of the river Olt (Aluta); similarly, their presence in Transylvania is not strong²⁰. According to the archaeological data, the centre of the area settled by the bearers of the Chernjakhov – Sântana de Mureş culture has therefore to be located outside north Danubian Dacia; as a result, the identification made by the historical tradition between Gothia and Dacia does not appear sustainable²¹.

Here, however, there are some specifications to be made. To begin with, the limits of the area of a material culture reflect chiefly economic and social realities and do not offer much information about political boundaries²². Therefore, the boundaries of Gothic political authority do not have to coincide with the spread of the Chernjakhov – Sântana de Mureş culture. Secondly, it would be erroneous to put in opposition the data offered by the literary tradition with those provided by archaeology and to try to establish which are the most credible. A similar situation can be observed about the history of the same area in the second half of the 3rd century: although the archaeological finds show a continuity of habitation of the Romanic population on the territory of the former Trajanic province of Dacia, the literary tradition speaks about a total evacuation of the province. In fact, the Imperial authorities lost control of the province due to external threats and, following the strategic reorganization of the frontier, the administration, the army and a part of the population were withdrawn to the south of the river, but most of the inhabitants remained in their ancient places of habitation²³. We can therefore consider the information trustworthy that,

¹⁷ See also Schäferdiek 1990, 37.

¹⁸ Bierbrauer 1994, 98–134 with the literature; Bierbrauer 1999, 211–238; Magomedov 2001 *passim*; Kulikowski 2007, 62–8, 98–9, 100: “the material expression of Gothic hegemony in the lower Danube region”.

¹⁹ Bierbrauer 1994, 123–124. A different opinion in Magomedov 2001, 192 and map 91, which places the stabilization of the Sântana de Mureş culture in the Hunnic period (after year 375).

²⁰ Bierbrauer 1994, 121 and note 206.

²¹ Bierbrauer 1994, 131–132 and Fig. 25; Magomedov 2001, 191.

²² Heather 1998, 488.

²³ Ruscu 1998, 235–254; Ruscu 2000, 265–276.

for the contemporaries of the 4th century, the realm of the Goths - Gothia in political terms - included some parts of the former Imperial territory north of the Danube. This assessment is also important since, in establishing the province of bishop Theophilus, we are to proceed from written information - which reflects rather the perception of a certain structure/authority, in this case an ecclesiastical one -, and not from an archaeological reality. Most relevant therefore for this analysis is not the precise area of the archaeological culture, but rather what the contemporaries understood under the name of Gothia.

It was mentioned above that one of the motives for considering the jurisdiction of Theophilus to be the Crimea is the fact that Gothia is followed in the list of Nicaea by the Bosporus. In the same list though, just before Theophilus of Gothia and Cadmus of Bosporus, there are listed the bishops of Thessaly, Pannonia and Gaul²⁴. The order of the list cannot therefore be considered to be very rigorous geographically. On the other hand, the placing of the two bishops at the end of the list can be otherwise explained. Both the north-Danubian region and the Bosporus were, during the reign of Constantine, under the protection of the Empire, though not integrated into its boundaries²⁵.

For the Bosporan kingdom it is a known fact that, after a quite difficult period in the second half of the 3rd century, when, under the pressure of the Goths, it tried to pursue an independent policy, it returned under Roman protection with the reign of Diocletian²⁶.

Concerning Gothia, there is proof that the north-Danubian territory was under the political influence of the Roman Empire beginning with the end of the 3rd century, when the Tetrarchs contained the attacks coming from across the river²⁷. Constantine repeatedly overpowered the Goths²⁸ and eventually, after the victory of

²⁴ *Patr. Nicaen.* nr. 215-216: Thessaly, 217: Pannonia, 218: Gaul (LXIV Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz).

²⁵ Schäferdiek 1979, 268 supposes that they were placed at the end of the list as they both were territories outside the Empire.

²⁶ Brandis 1897, 785-788; Brandis 1899, 2268-2269; Gajdukevič 1971, 476-478; Nadel 1977, 87-114, especially 104.

²⁷ In *Pan. Lat.* IV (VIII) 3, 3 (84 Galletier), pronounced at Trier on May 1st 297, with the occasion of the celebration of the Britannic victory of Constantius Chlorus, together with his *quinquennalia*, the orator mentions, among the successes of the Tetrarchs, the retrieval of Dacia: *Partho quippe ultra Tigrum redacto, Dacia restituta, porrectis usque ad Danuvii caput Germaniae Raetiaeque limitibus* This statement was rightfully considered to be a propagandistic exaggeration, cf. Zawadzki 1973, 65-68, but also a reflection - using the specific methods of rhetoric - of a certain reality, which we should realistically reduce to a *foedus* with the Goths; this *foedus* would have placed the region north of the Danube into some sort of subordination towards Rome, cf. Lippold 1981, 351, note 19 and 353, notes 31-33; Wolfram 1990, 68. This interpretation is supported by a statement from the same panegyric which relates the submission of the Goths by the Tetrarchs (*Pan. Lat.* IV (VIII) 10, 4 (73 Galletier)), by the title *Gothicus maximus* borne by them (cf. Lippold 1981, 353, note 33. The title *Gothicus maximus* occurs ca. 293, and was later abandoned (296/297?), cf. Kienast 1996, 268), and by the information of Jord. *Get.* XXI, 110 (49, 4-6 Giunta, Grillone), who states that Galerius had, in the Persian campaign of 297, Gothic allies, as a result of a certain bargain/treaty.

²⁸ In 322/323, before the final confrontation between Constantine and Licinius, Anon. Vales., *Origo Const.* V, 21 (521 Rolfe) relates that, taking advantage of the weakening of the defence on the Danube frontier, due to the transfer of troops to Asia, the Goths invaded the provinces south of the river, cf. Zos. 2, 21 (77, 18-78, 16 Mendelssohn). The reaction of Constantine, who was stationed at Thessalonike, was

332, subjected them by means of a *foedus* and expanded Roman control over a strip of land north of Danube²⁹.

The position of the ecclesiastic provinces of Gothia and Bosphorus in the same place, at the end of the list of participants at Nicaea, can be thus explained by their status in relation to the Empire³⁰.

Christianity in this milieu is attested by the literary tradition only, archaeological evidence is lacking. Its origins are in the raids undertaken by the Goths into Asia Minor in the second half of the 3rd century³¹. Among the prisoners taken were also numerous Christians, since Asia Minor was at that time one of the most intensely Christianized regions of the Roman Empire³². These prisoners constituted the nucleus of the Christian community of north-Danubian Gothia. From them, the Christian faith spread in a rather small measure among the Goths³³. At any rate, one cannot speak about a conversion of the Goths in this period starting out from this nucleus – mass Christianization occurred later, after the Goths crossed the Danube in 376³⁴.

The status of Christianity in Gothia from an ecclesiastical perspective cannot be clearly defined. It is known that, canonically, the Churches in Barbarian territories could not be integrated into the Imperial Church, at least not in the 4th century, when she was articulated on the Imperial administrative system, the bishoprics being

swift and the following peace must have brought the Goths again under the control of the Empire, cf. Thompson 1956, 378; Wolfram 1990, 69 and Chrysos 1992, 187–188.

²⁹ The submission of the Goths: Anon. Vales., *Origo Const.* 6, 31 (526 Rolfe); Eus. *Vit. Const.* 4, 5 (119 Heikel); Eutr. X 7 (67, 12–14 Santini); *Consularia Constantinopolitana* a. 332 (MGH.AA, IX/1, Berlin 1892, 234). For the bridge over the Danube as a sign of the expansion of Roman domination across the river: *Epit. de Caes.* XLI 14 (167, 15 Pichlmayr, Gründel) and a medal issued in 328, RIC, VII 283, 331, no. 298 (Rome); cf. Thompson 1956, 373. To this expansion of Roman control beyond the Danube has to be connected also the statement attributed to Constantine in the *Caesares* 329C (396 Wright) of Julian, and the title of *Dacicus maximus*, borne by him beginning with 336, cf. Kienast 1996, 302; Cameron 2007, 105. For the archaeological data connected to the Roman domination north of the Danube in this period, cf. Barnea, Iliescu 1982, 107–123.

³⁰ The only other ecclesiastical provinces in the list of Nicaea which do not belong to the Empire are Persia, integrated to the eparchy of Mesopotamia (no. 82), and Greater Armenia (no. 106–107). The difference between these provinces on the one hand and the Bosphorus and Gothia on the other has to be one of jurisdiction: whereas the Armenian Church was, in the Constantinian period, suffragan to the episcopal see of Caesarea in Cappadocia (cf. Garsoïan 1999, 36–42; Maraval 2000, 876–877), and the Church of Persia was under some kind of jurisdiction of the see of Antioch (cf. Hage 1973, 181; Bundy 2007, 133), there is no information about a direct ecclesiastical connection of the Bosphorus or Gothia to any particular bishopric of the Empire. Mathisen 1997, 665–666, suggests another – I think complementary – explanation: Armenia, as well as Persia, were, areas considered by the Romans to be “civilized”, a fact proved by the hierarchies developed in these regions, following the Roman model. This may be a reason for these two Churches to be regarded by the fathers of the Nicaean council as part of the Imperial ecclesiastical oikumene.

³¹ Zos. 1, 30–35 (21, 15–25, 14 Mendelssohn); Alföldi 1967, 138–153; Salamon 1971, 109–139; Mitchell 2001, I, 235–236.

³² Philostorg. *hist. eccl.* II 5 (17, 6–15 Bidez); Sozom. *hist. eccl.* II 6 (PG 67, 949); about the degree of Christianization of Asia Minor, cf. Frend 1985, 444; Mitchell 2001, II, 37–43.

³³ Philostorg. *hist. eccl.* II 5 (17, 6–15 Bidez); Sozom. *hist. eccl.* II 6 (PG 67, 949); about Christian prisoners converting their masters cf. Ps-Prosperus, *De vocatione omnium gentium* II, 33 (PL 51, 718A); Commodianus, *Carmen Apologeticum* 809–820 (167–168 Dombart).

³⁴ Heather 1986, 289–318.

situated in urban centres³⁵. As a result, the ecumenical councils had to take special decisions for the communities outside the Empire³⁶. Nonetheless these Churches were, in one form or another, connected to the Church of the Empire³⁷.

The first sign of the connection between the Church of Gothia and the Imperial Church is the participation of bishop Theophilus at the council of Nicaea, attested not only by the list of the participants, but also by the mention of a "Scythian bishop" by Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Vita Constantini*³⁸. Regarding his office in Gothia, since we have no proof for the existence of any ecclesiastical structure in the Gothic milieu prior to that date, we cannot suppose that he was elected by the - otherwise insignificant - Christian community north of the Danube. His office in Gothia clearly indicates the involvement of the Church of the Empire: in order to hold the episcopal dignity, Theophilus had to be consecrated by an ecclesiastical authority. As such, from the very beginning he represents a connection between his Church and the Church of the Empire³⁹. This connection has at least one known antecedent. In one of his letters St. Basil mentions a Cappadocian missionary, Eutyches, also a bearer of a Greek name, who was active in the area north of the Danube⁴⁰. St. Basil writes about his mission in a „fortunate" time, which to the mind of the Cappadocian bishop and in the context of that particular letter designates the period of persecutions preceding the "peace of the Church"⁴¹. Eutyches most probably was one of the missionaries (who more likely went of their own accord than were sent by some authority) on the traces of the prisoners taken by the Goths in the 3rd century, who laid the foundations for the later Christian community that was to become the Church of Gothia⁴².

The connection of the Christian community in Gothia with the Church of the Empire, strengthened by the consecration of Theophilus, continued also after him, with the consecration of another bishop: Wulfila, this time a local personage, and most probably the pupil of Theophilus⁴³. It is therefore obvious that the Church of the Empire was constantly interested in the territory north of the Danube. The interest escalated, as is to be expected, from a private initiative in the 3rd century - Eutyches, a

³⁵ For the communities in barbarian lands see Mathisen 1997 passim.

³⁶ Canon 2 from Constantinople (381): Τὰς δὲ ἐν τοῖς βαρβαρικοῖς ἔθνεσι τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκλησίας οἰκονομεῖσθαι χρὴ κατὰ τὴν κρατήσαν ἐπὶ τῶν πατέρων συνήθειαν (Alberigo 1994, 88); canon 28 from Chalcedon: ... τοὺς ἐν τοῖς βαρβαρικῇ ἐπισκόπους τῶν προειρημένων διοικήσεων, χειροτονεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ προειρημένου ἀγιωτάτου θρόνου τῆς κατὰ Κωνσταντινούπολις ἀγιωτάτης ἐκκλησίας (Alberigo 1994, 226).

³⁷ Mathisen 1997 passim.

³⁸ Euseb. *Vit. Const.* III, 7-8 (80-81 Heikel); Zugravu 2008, 293-296. Like the official list of participants at the council of Nicaea, Eusebius sets Theophilus apart in a special/particular position on his list, next to another bishop from a territory outside the Empire, namely Persia. About the identity of Theophilus with the "Scythian" of Eusebius cf. Ruscu 2010 passim.

³⁹ Schäferdiek 1979, 115.

⁴⁰ *Ep.* 164, 2 (II, 98-99 Courtonne).

⁴¹ Ruscu 2011, 80.

⁴² Schäferdiek 1990, 39.

⁴³ Socrates, *hist. eccl.* II, 41 (I, 358 Hussey). About the succession, Schäferdiek 1979, 123, who does not accept, however, the master-pupil relationship between the two, without, however, bringing any substantial arguments against Socrates. There is therefore no real reason to doubt the information of Socrates - the rejection was originally based upon the fact that Theophilus was bishop in the Crimea, cf. Gryson 1980, 165-167; Krafft 1854, 327-334; Kaufmann 1883, 224-240.

missionary in search of the Christians abducted to the Gothic realm – to the appointment of a bishop by the Imperial Church – Theophilus –, to the official appointment of another, in consequence of a political act of supremacy – Wulfila⁴⁴.

The canonical status of bishop Theophilus is equally difficult to determine as that of his ecclesiastical province. From the list of Nicaea it already results that he was not the bishop of a city, as the majority of his peers from the Empire. Another possibility, given the ecclesiastical organization of the time, that of his being a *chorepiscopus*, is excluded by the fact that *chorepiscopi* are invariably mentioned as such in the list of the council, not having been assigned a specific province⁴⁵. Finally, he is not described as the bishop of a *gens* either, as in some cases in this period⁴⁶. All we can say, therefore, about the canonical status of Theophilus is that he was the bishop of an ecclesiastical province covering broadly the Gothia mentioned by the literary tradition of the 4th century. We cannot specify under what conditions he was nominated as shepherd of this community, and a logical question concerns the reasons which determined the imperial Church to consider it worthy of sending a bishop there. Certainly it was not the size of this community – the picture suggested by the acts of St. Sabas at the end of the 4th century is that of a religious minority. Wulfila was consecrated bishop with jurisdiction over “those who were Christians in Gothia”⁴⁷, which also indicates a small group.

Although not very numerous, the Church of Gothia seems to have had a structure of her own, which can be followed not only at the superior level. Towards the end of Constantine’s reign or at the beginning of Constantius’ II, when a delegation of north Danubian Goths travelled to Constantinople, among its members we find Wulfila, who was at the time *anagnostes/lector*, thus belonging to an already functioning ecclesiastical structure⁴⁸. Toward the end of the 4th century, the *Passio* of St. Sabas mentions two presbyters of this community: Sansalas and Gouththikas⁴⁹.

Another relevant aspect of the Gothic community north of the Danube was its determination in preserving the Christian faith. As a religious minority in the realm of the Goths and observing the religion of the main enemy of their masters, the Christians north of the Danube were inevitably subjected to persecution. First it was Wulfila, who had to escape to the south of the river into the Empire, in 348, with a small group⁵⁰. After a few decades, the persecution conducted by Athanaric in the early 370s made several martyrs, like the well-known Sabas⁵¹, or the less well

⁴⁴ The appointment of Wulfila was connected to the statement of Sozom. *hist. eccl.* II, 6 (PG 67, 949), that the Goths came to know the Christian faith as a result of Constantine’s victory of 332 and of the subsequent *foedus*, cf. Schäferdiek 1979, 114.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Patr. Nicaen.* no. 60: Syria Coele, 88: Cilicia (LXI Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz); nos. 99–103: Cappadocia (LXII Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz); nos. 182, 185, 187, 189: Isauria (LXIII Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz); no. 201: Bithynia (LXIV Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, Cuntz). About the chorbishop Kirsten 1954, 1106–1114.

⁴⁶ Mathisen 1997, 678–679, 690.

⁴⁷ Philostorg. *hist. eccl.* II 5 (17, 19–18, 2 Bidez): ἐπισκόπων χειροτονεῖται τῶν ἐν τῇ Γετικῇ χριστιανίζόντων.

⁴⁸ Maximin. *comment* 56 (244 Gryson).

⁴⁹ *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 4 (218 Delehaye); 7 (220 Delehaye).

⁵⁰ Maximin. *comment.* 56 (244 Gryson); 59 (246 Gryson); Philostorg. *hist. eccl.* II, 5 (17, 3–6 Bidez).

⁵¹ *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* (216–221 Delehaye).

known group of Batwin and Werekas⁵². Other martyrs, somewhat difficult to situate in time, are Nicetas⁵³, and the group of Inna, Rhema and Pina⁵⁴. All these martyrs were considered as belonging to the universal Church by the Christians of the Empire. Consequently, Saint Basil of Caesarea organized, with the help of the military commander of Scythia Minor, the transport of the relics of Sabas to Cappadocia, the relics of Nicetas were brought to Mopsuestia through the care of a certain Marianus, and the Gothic queen Gaatha organized the transfer of the relics of the group of Batwin and Werekas to Cyzicus⁵⁵. The remains of Inna, Rhema and Pina were brought by a bishop Goddas to an unknown city named Haliskos⁵⁶. The recognition of their sacrifice was further consecrated by the reception of Sabas and Nicetas into the synaxarium of the Byzantine Church⁵⁷. On the other hand, Inna, Rhema and Pina, together with the group of Batwin and Werekas are present in Gothic Arian calendars⁵⁸.

The reception of the relics of various martyrs of the Gothic community in the churches of the Empire, as well as their description in contemporary sources, opens the discussion concerning another aspect of this community - its dogmatic identity. Since some of its members are described by sources as being Orthodox, or were later accepted by the Orthodox milieu as such, like Theophilus, St. Sabas and Nicetas, whereas others are present in a clearly Arian environment, like the groups of Inna, Rhema and Pina, or that of Batwin and Werekas, as were the martyrs from the same persecution of Athanaric mentioned by Socrates⁵⁹, the legitimate question of the dogmatic affiliation of the Church of Gothia arises. To complicate the situation, there were also the converts of the Syrian sect of Audians, won over by a certain bishop Silvanus, mentioned by Epiphanius⁶⁰, although they hardly represented a noticeable group in the whole picture.

The straightforward explanation, that this community was Orthodox until the episcopal consecration of Wulfila and afterwards became entirely Arian, seems oversimplifying in this context. Rather, the complex picture can be explained by the relation of the Gothic community with the Church of the Empire - as demonstrated above -, and by its influence north of the Danube. It is therefore to be expected that the dogmatic controversies and split groups of the Christianity also influenced this small community on the borders of Roman civilization.

The Church of Gothia can consequently be considered as a structured community on the territory of the Tervingian/Visigothic centre of power north of the Danube, connected with the "ecumenical" Church of the Roman Empire.

⁵² Achelis 1900, 308; Delehaye 1912, 276-281. For the datation see Heather, Matthews 2004, 118.

⁵³ *Passio S. Nicetae* (209-215 Delehaye).

⁵⁴ *Passio SS. Innae, Rimae et Pinae* (215-216 Delehaye).

⁵⁵ For Sabas: *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8 (221 Delehaye); Basil, *ep.* 155 (II, 80-81 Courtonne); *ep.* 164 (II, 97-99 Courtonne); for Nicetas: *Passio S. Nicetae* 6 (212 Delehaye); for Gaatha: Delehaye 1912, 279.

⁵⁶ Delehaye 1912, 215-216.

⁵⁷ Sabas: *Synax. Cpol.* 608-609; 611-612; Nicetas: *Synax. Cpol.* 45-46.

⁵⁸ Heather, Matthews 2004, 116-123.

⁵⁹ Socrates, *hist. eccl.* IV, 33 (II, 560-561 Hussey).

⁶⁰ Epiph. *adv. haeres.* LXX (III, 247, Hohl).

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