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SIGLE ȘI ABREVIERI / SIGLE E ABBREVIAZIONI*

ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , II, <i>Prinzipat</i> , Berlin-New York
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Turnhout.
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> , Turnhout.
<i>Cod. Iust.</i>	<i>Codex Iustinianus</i> .
<i>Cod. Theod.</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i> .
DELL	<i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots</i> , par Alfred Ernout et Alfred Meillet, tirage de la 4 ^e édition, Paris, 1959.
EDR	<i>Epigraphic Database Roma</i> (http://www.edr-edr.it/default/index.php).
GCS	<i>Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller</i> , Berlin.
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
OLD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> , Oxford, 1968.
PG	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca</i> , Paris.
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina</i> , Paris.
PLRE I	<i>The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , I, A. D. 260-395, by A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, J. Morris, Cambridge, 2006
PSB	<i>Părinți și scriitori bisericești</i> , București
SC	<i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> , Lyon.
SCIV (SCIVA)	<i>Studii și cercetări de istorie veche (și arheologie)</i> , București.
ThLL	<i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> .

* Cu excepția celor din *L'Année Philologique* și *L'Année Épigraphique* / Escluse quelle segnalate da *L'Année Philologique* e *L'Année Épigraphique*.

HOW ULFILAS BECAME AN ARIAN BISHOP? CONTRIBUTION (I) TO THE CHRISTIAN PROSOPOGRAPHY OF THE *DIOECESIS THRACIARUM*

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Keywords: *Ulfilas, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arianism, Constantinople, Church.*

Abstract: *This paper sheds light on the historical importance taken by Ulfilas, not only among the Tervingi as their bishop, but also as an agent of the Empire, in the context of the initial development of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. His role will be shown by analysing the following events: (1) Ulfilas' first visit to Constantinople and his consecration as a bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia, (2) Ulfilas' participation in the Council of Constantinople in 360, and (3) his third visit to Constantinople, in 381, while the Second Ecumenical Council was held. The key to the understanding of Ulfilas' allegiance to Arianism seems to be closely connected with the rise of Constantinople to the top of the Eastern ecclesiastical hierarchy.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Ulfilas, Eusebiu de Nicomedia, arianism, Constantinopol, Biserică.*

* alenka.cedilnik@ff.uni-lj.si and dominic.moreau@univ-lille.fr. This article is derived from a paper given in Sofia on the 10th of May 2019, at the workshop *Готите на Изток: Извори, археология, идентичност / Die Goten im Osten: Quellen – Archäologie – Identität / The Goths in the East: Sources – Archaeology – Identity*, which was organised by Kalin Stoev and Ivo Topalilov, within the framework of the LABedia project (<https://www.labalkans.org/bg/workshops-list/gotite-na-iztok>). It was first supposed to be published in the *Annales Balcanici* series of the same project (and not in *Folia Balcanica*, as mentioned in Cedilnik-Moreau 2021, 473, n. 129). It should be added that the article is the first of a series of papers given by the same authors, which are linked to each other. The third one was the first to be published. See Cedilnik-Moreau 2021. Dominic Moreau takes advantage of this initial note to thank the École française de Rome, where he was as visiting scholar for a period of 10 months (01/09/2022-30/06/2023), when this article was modified to be submitted to *Classica & Christiana*. Moreover, both authors want to thank Irina Achim (Institute of Archaeology “Vasile Pârvan”, Romanian Academy), for her translation of their keywords, title and abstract in Romanian.

Rezumat: *Cum a devenit Ulfilas un episcop arian? Contribuție (I) la prosopografia creștină a Dioecesis Thraciarum.* Această contribuție pune în lumină importanța istorică pe care Ulfilas a avut-o nu doar în rândul tervingilor, ca episcop al acestora, ci și ca reprezentant al Imperiului, în contextul dezvoltării incipiente a Patriarhatului de Constantinopol. Rolul său va fi demonstrat prin analiza următoarelor evenimente: (1) prima vizită a lui Ulfilas la Constantinopol și consacrarea sa ca episcop de către Eusebiu de Nicomedia, (2) participarea lui Ulfilas la Conciliul de la Constantinopol din 360 și (3) a treia sa vizită la Constantinopol, în 381, în timpul desfășurării celui de-al doilea Conciliu ecumenic. Cheia pentru înțelegerea fidelității lui Ulfilas față de arianism pare să fie strâns legată de ascensiunea Constantinopolului în vârful ierarhiei ecleziastice orientale. [traducere: Irina Achim]

The life of the “Moses of the Goths”, Ulfilas/Wulfila, is described by several sources (Philostorgius first of all, but also Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomenus, Theodoretus, Auxentius of Durostorum and Jordanes), and its basic features are well known to us, through numerous publications.¹ For this reason, this paper will not deal with the general narrative of this bishop’s life, but will rather try to shed light on the least clear aspect of his religious career, as a contribution to the volume in preparation of the *Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire*, which will be devoted to both the *Dioecesis Thraciarum* and the Northern Black Sea Coast (*Cherronesus Taurica, Bosphorus Cimmerius* and *Zechia*).²

That mysterious aspect of Ulfilas religious career is the circumstances in which he became an Arian bishop and a follower of the Homoian doctrine. These events will be analysed through assessing the historically important role played by Ulfilas, not only as the bishop of a branch of the Tervingi, but also as an agent of the Empire, in the context of the initial development of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. Special attention will be paid to the following events: (1) the first imperial invitation of Ulfilas to Constantinople and his consecration as

¹ The most recent full synthesis on Ulfilas and his effort to Christianise the Goths is Faber 2014, 69-127. On the sources of Ulfilas’ life, see Heather-Matthews 1991, 124-144.

² This volume is currently being prepared within the framework of the DAN-UBIUS Project on Christianisation of the Late Antique Lower Danube, which was financially supported from 2018 by both the I-SITE ULNE Foundation up to 2021 and the French National Research Agency (ANR-18-CE27-0008) up to 2022. That project is based at the University of Lille, within the HALMA-UMR 8164 research centre, and its principal investigator is Dominic Moreau. For more information, see <https://danubius.huma-num.fr>.

a bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia, (2) his participation in the Council of Constantinople in 360, and (3) his third visit to the city in 381, at the Emperor's order, while the council which was going to establish the Nicene doctrine as the official faith of the Empire was organised.

1. *Ulfilas' First Visit to Constantinople and his Consecration as Bishop*

In 332, Constantine I concluded the *foedus* with the Tervingian chieftain Ariaric, which, in return for an annual payment, required the Goths to provide auxiliary troops. The "Barbarians" were then allowed to trade with their Roman neighbours across the Danube.³ As the life of Ulfilas suggests, the emperor also had the idea of strengthening Roman influence among the transdanubian Goths by spreading Christianity. We can thus imagine that it was Constantine's project to control the process of Christianisation over the Danube which was at the origin of Ulfilas' first invitation to Constantinople.

The origin of the Christianisation of the Goths, which is little known, dates back to the third century. During one of the Gothic invasions into Cappadocia and Galatia, most probably in 261-262⁴, the invaders captured a lot of prisoners, including Christians. Philostorgius informs us that these latter captives brought a large number of Goths to the Christian faith.⁵ Since the beginning of the process of Christianisation was a consequence of the abduction of these Cappadocians and Galatians, this abduction could perhaps explain the constant support for the Christian mission among the transdanubian Goths offered later by the communities from northern and eastern Anatolia.⁶

³ Schäferdiek 1992, 25; Heather 1996, 61; Chauvot 2000, 803; Wolfram 2009, 70-71; Faber 2014, 66-67; Maraval 2014, 229-230.

⁴ See B. Bleckmann, D. Meyer and J.-M. Prieur's comment on Philost. *h.e.* 2, 5. in Des Places et al. 2013, 202-203, n. 3. See also Bleckmann-Stein 2015 (2), 118 (cf. Philost.). In the scientific literature, we find other dates for the capture of Ulfilas' ancestors. For example, in the year 257 according to Wolfram 2009, 84-85; or in the year 264 according to Gschwantler 1976, 175. See also Schäferdiek 1978, 498; Schäferdiek 1979, 107; Heather 1991, 92 and 96; Schäferdiek 1992, 22-23; Sivan 1995, 280-281; Heather 1996, 90; Heather 2010, 165-166; Faber 2014, 77; Ivanov 2019, 59.

⁵ Philost. *h.e.* 2, 5. On the figure of Ulfilas in Philostorgius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which is by far the main source of this paper, see Chauvot 2006.

⁶ In 373/374, the relics of the Gothic martyr Saba were translated from "Gothia" to Caesarea in Cappadocia. See Schäferdiek 2001, 297. Moreover, Eutyches, an

Ulfilas was a descendant of one of the above-mentioned Cappadocian captives.⁷ The role he was already playing in the early Christian community within the Goths probably accounts for his selection to accompany a delegation of the tribal federation to Constantinople between 332 and 337. Although we don't have complete or reliable data on the following event, it is not impossible at all that it was during his first visit to Constantinople that Ulfilas was consecrated bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia and his Arian followers.⁸ This could be deduced from the information given by Philostorgius about the life of both Ulfilas and another man who spread the Christian faith beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire: Theophilus the Indian.

The passage in his now-lost *Ecclesiastical History* which presented Ulfilas' life and his role in disseminating Christianity among the Goths was followed by short passages about this Theophilus, which were preserved in Photius' *Epitome*:

“Our heretic says that all of the Indians of the interior who had learned to revere Christ from the teaching of the apostle Bartholomew held to the doctrine of ‘other in substance’. He also relates how Theophilus the Indian, who embraced that doctrine, journeyed to their country and gave a full account of their belief. Now those belonging to this Indian people were of old called ‘Sabaeans’, from their capital, Saba, while nowadays they are known as ‘Himyarites’.”⁹

Much more information on Theophilus the Indian is given a few chapters later, in the *Epitome*:

“He says that Constantius sent an embassy to the people called of old Sabaeans and now known as Himyarites. ... Their country is called Great Arabia and Fortunate Arabia by the Greeks. ... Constantius, then, sent an embassy to them with the purpose of converting them to the true faith. He planned to win over the leader of the people by the magnificence and number of the gifts, and hence to find an opportunity to plant the seeds of faith in him. ... Theophilus the Indian was among the leaders of this embassy. Long before, when he was quite young, during the reign of Constantine, the previous emperor, he had been sent to the

“orthodox” from Cappadocia, worked among the Goths during the time of Constantius II. See Schäferdiek 1992, 23; Thompson 2008, 82.

⁷ We do not know exactly which of Ulfilas' ancestors (on his mother's or his father's side?) were from Cappadocia. See Schäferdiek 2001, 297.

⁸ Philost. *h.e.* 2, 5.

⁹ Philost. *h.e.* 2, 6 (transl. Amidon 2007, 22).

Romans as a hostage by the people known as Divaeans. The island they inhabit is called Diva, and they too are among those known as Indians. Now Theophilus, during the considerable time he spent living among the Romans, formed his character to the highest degree of virtue and his beliefs in accordance with orthodoxy, choosing to live in celibacy. He even entered the ranks of the deacons, Eusebius laying upon him his priestly hands, but this happened earlier. When he undertook the embassy, he received the dignity of bishop from those who shared his beliefs. ... Upon reaching the Sabaeans, Theophilus tried to persuade their ruler to worship Christ and renounce pagan error. Now the Jews in their usual way <tried to counter him?>, but when Theophilus with his marvellous works showed on more than one occasion how invincible the Christian faith is, the opposition was reduced, however unwillingly, to utter silence. His embassy was successful; ...”¹⁰

At first sight, the short mention of Theophilus the Indian in conjunction with that of Ulfilas in the second book of Philostorgius’ *Church History* seems somewhat irrelevant. Why would he have written about Theophilus almost immediately after the passage in which Ulfilas is presented, since the information given to us about “the Indian” (the spreading of the Christian faith among the Himyarites)¹¹ doesn’t correspond to the timeline of his second book, which is devoted to the period 326-337? And what are actually the links between Theophilus and Constantine? As we can read above in the second excerpt, Theophilus was sent during his reign as a hostage to the Romans, when he was still very young. He spent a long time among them and converted to Christianity. Then he chose to live a life of celibacy and was consecrated deacon by Eusebius of Nicomedia.

Although both Ulfilas and Theophilus had similar roles in spreading Christianity among their own people, they spent their youth very differently. First, Ulfilas was not a hostage of the Romans, but a member of a Gothic mission, when he first entered the Roman Empire. Second, he didn’t convert to Christianity during this first visit, but he came precisely because he was already a Christian, if Philostorgus’ narrative is right. On the basis of Philostorgius’ writings, it seems there is only one similarity that connects the life of both men with the emperor Constantine: they were both most probably consecrated, Ulfilas as bishop and Theophilus as deacon, by Constantine’s court bishop at the time,

¹⁰ Philost. *h.e.* 3, 4 (transl. Amidon 2007, 40-41).

¹¹ For the location of his mission see Mathisen 1997, 666; Bleckmann-Stein 2015 (2), 124-125 (cf. Philost.).

Eusebius of Nicomedia, and thus, as we can imagine, they became important actors of the Constantinian religious policy. This is most probably the reason why Philostorgius writes about Theophilus in a chapter consecrated to Constantine's reign. Moreover, this could indicate that Ulfilas was also consecrated by Eusebius of Nicomedia during the reign of Constantine, an idea which today finds some supporters, even if most modern commentators consider that his ordination occurred during Constantius II's reign.¹²

In July 336, while Constantine was still alive, a council of Constantinople finally and fully reintegrated Arius and his doctrine.¹³ At that moment, Alexander, a supporter of the Nicene formula, was bishop of the City. Because he opposed this rehabilitation, he was threatened by Eusebius of Nicomedia with being immediately deposed unless he admitted Arius and his followers to communion.¹⁴ As Socrates writes, the Nicene bishop of Constantinople could do nothing except devote himself to continual fasting and praying.¹⁵ Since his return from exile in 328 or 329, Eusebius of Nicomedia was the most influential representative of the Church at the imperial court. Indeed, as soon as he was back in favour, he had replaced Bishop Hosius of Corduba as Constantine's counsellor in the field of religious policy, a position he had held

¹² This possibility could also be confirmed by Socrates, according to whom the Goths embraced the Christian religion for the first time during the time of Constantine. See Socr. *h.e.* 1, 18, 4. For some examples of standard study who favor a consecration under Constantius II, see Heather 1996, 60; Schwarcz 1999, 453; Chauvot 2000, 803-804 (even if he notes that the process of Christianisation of the Goths could have begun during Constantine's reign, as implied in Eusebius of Caesarea's works); Ivanov 2019, 67. For his part, P. Maraval, who studied in depth the texts of ancient ecclesiastical historians, seems rather to favor an ordination after the death of Constantine, but remains cautious and vague. Cf. Maraval 2014, 232; Maraval 2013, 231.

¹³ Barnes 1993, 213; Bardill 2012, 298. Some of the supporters of Ulfilas' consecration under Constantine suggest that it took place during that council. See Schäferdiek 1992, 41; Faber 2014, 79-81. Furthermore, it is possible that Arius had already been rehabilitated at the Council of Nicaea in 327 (but there is nothing certain about that council) – see Simonetti 1975, 119; and readmitted to communion by the Council of Jerusalem in 335 – see Barnes 2009, 109-129. See also Barnes 2011, 141. It is interesting to note that there is a whole scientific literature which rejects, or at least attenuates, the Arian turn of Constantine. See for example Maraval 2014, 300-306.

¹⁴ Socr. *h.e.* 1, 37, 4; see also Soz. *h.e.* 2, 29; Ath. *Alex. ep. Aeg. Lib.* 19, 2-4.

¹⁵ Socr. *h.e.* 1, 37, 6.

previously with Licinius.¹⁶ Eusebius and his followers knew well how to exploit the emperor's trust. After the Council of Nicaea, they did not oppose its creed openly, but they began to tackle its most devoted defenders. Through many synods held in the Greek East between 326 and 335, the Arian party removed many bishops who adhered to the conclusions of the Council of Nicaea. However, the charges against these bishops were, in general, theologically thin, and, for most of them, more linked to personal matters. In fact, most of the prosecuted prelates were convicted for moral and political reasons.¹⁷ It is thus in a context of revenge by the Arian party that Eusebius of Nicomedia, even though he was not yet the bishop of Constantinople, became the main religious figure in the City, and that was the situation when the Gothic mission came to visit.

Besides Eusebius' influence, there is another reason which makes us believe that there was no real obstacle for him to consecrate Ulfilas in Constantinople at a time when he himself was still "only" the head of the church of Nicomedia. The bishops who assembled at the council of Nicaea promulgated this for ordination of new bishops:

"It is by all means proper that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops in the province; but should this be difficult, either on account of urgent necessity or because of distance, three at least should meet together, and the suffrages of the absent [bishops] also being given and communicated in writing, then the ordination should take place. But in every province the ratification of what is done should be left to the Metropolitan."¹⁸

Ulfilas was not a resident of the Roman Empire at the time he was consecrated as a bishop. Therefore, the rules established by the canon could not apply to him. Such theoretical conditions for consecration did not exist for Ulfilas', as he did not depend on any bishop

¹⁶ For the possibility that Eusebius of Nicomedia advised Licinius in the controversy over Arius before 324, see Grant 1975, 3; Drake 2000, 236-237; and Moreau 2022. After Licinius' surrender in Nicomedia, his wife, Constantia, who was Constantine's sister, together with Eusebius of Nicomedia, came before the winner in order to request that his previous colleague be allowed to spend the rest of his days in peace. See Philost. *h.e.* 1, 6e (from the *Vita Constantini ex codice Angelico* 22); Ps. Aur. *Vict. epit.* 41, 7; Anon. *Vales.* 1, 28; Grant 1975, 3; Barnes 1981, 77; Barnes 2011, 106; Maraval 2014, 157-158.

¹⁷ Marrou 1985, 44-45; Lenski 2016, 263-276.

¹⁸ C Nic. (325), *can.* 4 (transl. Percival 1900, 11).

based in a metropolis, *viz.* a bishop who should coordinate his ordination as his provincial/regional superior.¹⁹ And in any case, the Nicene canons may well not have been accepted by the opponents of the council. Whatever the case, the task was left to Eusebius, Constantine's court bishop. Ulfilas' ordination being in the primary interest of the emperor's politico-religious project, the situation was not at all trivial.²⁰ By consecrating a bishop intended for a people then established in the north-eastern Balkans, without involving the churches already established in or near this region, and regardless of his own position as bishop of Nicomedia (so not even from a bordering province), Eusebius was creating a precedent that would provide the foundations for the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

2. *Ulfilas' Participation in the Council of Constantinople of 360*

Unlike Philostorgius, who never suggests that Ulfilas could have changed his belief from the Nicene faith to the Arian one, Socrates and Sozomen share the opinion that he first adhered to the creed of Nicaea. According to them, it was only at the Council of Constantinople of 360, that he abandoned it and signed the symbol that Acacius of Caesarea and his followers had composed.²¹ Both Socrates and Sozomen are, however, most probably wrong. Although it is not possible to make a precise identification of Gothic Christianity at the time of Ulfilas' consecration – since the “orthodox” faith, despite the creed of Nicaea, was not yet completely defined –,²² we can suppose that the circle to which he was connected with remained more or less the same from the time he was made bishop until the above-mentioned Constantinopolitan council.

As Socrates²³ and Sozomen²⁴ write, Maris of Chalcedon was also among the bishops who were invited by Acacius of Caesarea to

¹⁹ See also Mathisen 1997, 667-668.

²⁰ Eusebius of Caesarea describes Constantine as bishop of those outside the Church. See *Eus. v.C.* 4, 24. See also Mathisen 1997, 665; Manders 2019, 249-250.

²¹ Philost. *h.e.* 2, 5; Socr. *h.e.* 2, 41, 23; Soz. *h.e.* 6, 37, 8. Theodoret does not take exactly the same position. See Thdt. *h.e.* 4, 37. For a comparison of Nicene and Arian accounts on Ulfilas' own conversion, see Sivan 1996, 373-386.

²² Schäferdiek 1992, 31-36.

²³ Socr. *h.e.* 2, 41, 6.

²⁴ Soz. *h.e.* 4, 24, 1.

assemble at Constantinople.²⁵ In 360, Maris was one of the four surviving bishops of Eusebius of Nicomedia's closest followers during the last years of Constantine. Therefore, it can be supposed that he cooperated closely with Eusebius at the time when Ulfilas was consecrated as a bishop. Eusebius' circle was present at the Synod of Tyre of 335, being the strongest opponents of Athanasius of Alexandria.²⁶ Besides Eusebius and Maris, the other members of this group were then: Theognis of Nicaea,²⁷ Theodorus of Heraclea,²⁸ Macedonius of Mopsuestia,²⁹ Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum.³⁰ However, Maris was long since Eusebius' man.³¹ Shortly after the council of Nicaea he was exiled, together with his patron and Theognis of Nicaea, because of their link with Arius.³² After Eusebius' death, Maris continued, with other bishops, to follow the theological direction of their master,³³ remaining very influential during the reign of Constantius

²⁵ Among the bishops invited to the Council of Constantinople in 360, Sozomen names Maris of Chalcedon and Ulfilas; while Socrates mentions only Maris. The *Pascal Chronicle* lists the names of 55 bishops and places that of Maris in the first rank. See Chron. Pasch. s.a. 360.

²⁶ Bishops were sent by the Synod of Tyre to Mareotis in Egypt, in order to examine the accusations made against Athanasius. See Ath. Alex. *apol. sec.* 13; 28, 1; 72, 4; 73, 1; 75, 1; 76.2; Socr. *h.e.* 1, 27, 7; 1, 31, 1-3; Soz. *h.e.* 2, 25, 19; see also Ath. Alex. *apol. sec.* 77, 2; 78, 2; 79, 1.

²⁷ Theognis of Nicaea died before the Council of Serdica of 343. See Simonetti 1975, 172, n. 26.

²⁸ Philostorgius (*h.e.* 9, 10) writes that it was Theodorus of Heraclea who placed Demophilus in the see of Constantinople. Since Theodorus could have been already dead in 355, the information is most probably not correct. See Thdt. *h.e.* 2, 16, 10-11.

²⁹ Macedonius of Mopsuestia is mentioned for the last time within the list of bishops who attended the Council of Sirmium of 351. See Hil. *coll. antiar.* B, VII, 9.

³⁰ The same bishops wrote to Julius of Rome, against Athanasius of Alexandria and Marcellus of Ancyra. See Hil. *coll. antiar.* B, II, 1, 2; Ath. Alex. *apol. sec.* 20.

³¹ Maris was already one of Eusebius' supporters before the Nicene Council. See Ath. Alex. *syn.* 17, 1.

³² Socr. *h.e.* 1, 8, 31-33; Philost. *h.e.* 2, 7 and 15. M. Meslin (1967, 72) draws attention to the possibility that Maris and Theognis could have been mediators in establishing contacts between Eusebius of Nicomedia and both Illyrian bishops: Valens and Ursacius.

³³ Maris was among the bishops who participated, after the death of Eusebius of Nicomedia, in the elevation of Macedonius as the new bishop of Constantinople. Other members of this group were Theognis of Nicaea, Theodorus of Heraclea, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum. As Socrates writes, Eusebius' former collaborators assumed all his authority after their patron's

II.³⁴ In his report of the joint closing session for the synods of Ariminum and Seleucia, which was held at Constantinople in 359, Philostorgius emphasises Maris' role and presents him as a supporter of Eudoxius – still bishop of Antioch at that time, but bishop of the New Rome from 360 – and Acacius of Caesarea, the chief initiator of the Council of Constantinople in January 360.

Although Eudoxius was initially a follower of the Anomoean party, he changed his position after 358, and, as it seems, intensified his cooperation with Acacius of Caesarea, Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum, even before the synods of Ariminum and Seleucia.³⁵ It is through the action of these last three bishops that the joint closing session of 359 confirmed the so-called Homoian creed of Nike (of Thrace), which was promulgated under Constantius II's sponsorship, immediately after the second session of the Synod of Ariminum.³⁶ After Eudoxius condemned Aetius of Antioch and his doctrine at the Constantinopolitan Council of January 360,³⁷ he became, on the 27th of the same month³⁸ – as a member of the victorious party –, the third pro-Arian bishop of Constantinople.³⁹

Not only was Ulfilas connected with the same circle of bishops from the time of his consecration, but he was also connected with most of the pro-Arian bishops, who during the same period, enjoyed the

death. See Socr. *h.e.* 2, 12. At about the same time (341 or 342), Maris also travelled to Trier – or maybe to Milan – as a member of the delegation of four Eastern bishops (also composed of Narcissus of Neronias, Theodorus of Heraclea and Marcus of Arethusa), with the task of informing the West about the Fourth Antiochian Creed, and, thus, trying to achieve a reconciliation. See Ath. Alex. *syn.* 25, 1; Socr. *h.e.* 2, 18, 1-2; Soz. *h.e.* 3, 10, 4-6.

³⁴ Philostorgius (*h.e.* 4, 12) emphasises Maris' role at the Constantinopolitan closing session of Ariminum and Seleucia, held at the end of 359, and presents him as a supporter of Eudoxius, at that time still bishop of Antioch, as well as of Acacius of Caesarea.

³⁵ Soz. *h.e.* 4, 16, 21.

³⁶ Maraval 2013, 275-276.

³⁷ Löhr 1986, 153-154. On the place of the council in the context of the early development by Ulfilas of a "Germanic Arianism", see Dumézil 2005, 146-147.

³⁸ Chron. Pasch. s.a 360; Dagron 1984, 426, n. 2, and 437; Berger 2005-06, 462. At the same time, Macedonius was deposed as bishop of Constantinople.

³⁹ The pro-Arian bishops of Constantinople before the prohibition of Arianism at the Second Ecumenical Council were: Eusebius of Nicomedia (339-341), Macedonius (342-347 and 351-360), Eudoxius (360-370) and Demophilus (370-380). Cf. Berger 2005-06, 462. On the Arian period of the See of Constantinople, see Dagron 1984, 411-453.

emperor's support (Constantine I and Constantius II). He may even have played therefore a certain role in appointing the heads of the church of Constantinople. We cannot know whether it was Ulfilas' theological belief which connected him with this group of bishops, or if there were other self-interested reasons. In any event, his connection with these prelates unambiguously shows how Constantinople cared for him and his Goths. Moreover, it is notable that this special interest for the church-among-the-barbarians occurs at a time when the area of influence and jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan church was far from being defined.⁴⁰

In addition to Acacius⁴¹ (and his followers), Maris and Ulfilas, most of the bishops invited to the Council of Constantinople of 360 were Bithynian.⁴² A special invitation to the Bithynians was most probably the result of repeated efforts, since the time of Eusebius of Nicomedia, to unite the western and the eastern shores of Propontis in a single ecclesiastical "Arian" district. It is interesting to note here that there is no proof that Eusebius abandoned his see in Nicomedia when he was named bishop of Constantinople, and perhaps this is the reason why his name was always associated with the first of these cities and never the second one. That may be a basis for concluding that it was probably not a coincidence that both Eudoxius (then bishop of Constantinople)⁴³ and Maris (bishop of Chalcedon, in Bithynia) were recipients of the letter by Aetius' opponents. In this document, written after the death of the emperor Julian, who was Aetius' protector, they

⁴⁰ At the time of the foundation of Constantinople, its church was subordinate to the Archbishop of Heraclea in Thrace. See Dagrón 1984, 63 and 418-419; Berger 2005-06, 461.

⁴¹ The so-called western bishops' party condemned and deposed Acacius of Caesarea at the Council of Serdica in 343, together with Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, Theodorus of Heraclea, Narcissus of Neronias, Georgius of Laodicea, Stephanus of Antioch and Menophantus of Ephesus, as they were considered to be Eusebius of Nicomedia's associates. See Ath. Alex. *apol. sec.* 36, 6; see also Ath. Alex. *h. Ar.* 17, 3. Later, Acacius participated in the Synod of Antioch, which was convened by Eudoxius at the beginning of 358. See Soz. *h.e.* 4, 12, 5.

⁴² The *Pascal Chronicle* notes that seventy-two bishops were present, when Eudoxius was made the bishop of Constantinople, but it names only fifty-five of them. See Chron. Pasch. s.a 360.

⁴³ Philostorgius (*h.e.* 7, 5-6) writes that Eudoxius was well disposed to the Anomoeans during Julian's reign, since Aetius enjoyed the support of the emperor. When they lost the emperor's support after Julian's death, the bishop became openly hostile to them. See Philost. *h.e.* 8, 2 and 4.

condemned Aetius' ordination as well as all ordinations held by him,⁴⁴ although the bishops mentioned by Philostorgius (Candidas and Arrian) were from the provinces of Lydia and Asia (Ionia)⁴⁵, and not from Bithynia.⁴⁶ We therefore detect a dispute between Constantinople and Antioch for control over Western Anatolia.

Besides Aetius, the Council of Constantinople of 360 condemned and deposed a number of Homoiousian bishops, opponents of Acacius and his supporters: Macedonius of Constantinople, Basil of Ancyra, Eustathius of Sebasteia in Armenia, Eleusius of Cyzicus, Heortasius of Sardis, Dracontius of Pergamus, Silvanus of Tarsus, Sophronius of Pompeiopolis in Paphlagonia, Elpidius of Satala in Armenia, and Neonas of Seleucia in Isauria.⁴⁷ With the exception of Macedonius (Constantinople), Silvanus and Neonas (both from the Diocese of the East), the condemned bishops were either from the Diocese of Asia (Eleusius, Heortasius, Dracontius, Sophronius) or that of Pontus (Basil, Eustathius, Elpidius). After the bishops assembled in Constantinople at the end of 359 had officially proclaimed the Homoian doctrine for the whole Church, the Acacian party at the Council of Constantinople of 360, following Eusebius' spirit, discussed the role of the See of Constantinople in the empire, in the presence and with the consent of Eudoxius of Antioch/Constantinople. Their interest was thus not for Bithynia, but for the whole Pontic and Asian region as well. And what was Ulfilas' part in this geo-ecclesiological project? That can be more easily understood if we look at his third visit to the city in 381.

3. *Ulfilas' Meeting with Theodosius I in 381*

In 381, the Second Ecumenical Council met at Constantinople. Its main purpose was to put a definite end to the Arian controversy and unite the churches under Nicene Christianity. It is possible to reconstruct from the fragment of Auxentius of Durostorum's *Epistula de*

⁴⁴ Philost. *h.e.* 8, 4.

⁴⁵ Philost. *h.e.* 8, 2.

⁴⁶ Philostorgius mentions other Anomoean bishops (Theodulus of Chairatopa in Palestine, Poimenius of Constantinople and his successor Florentius, Thallus of Lesbos, Euphronius for Galatia and Cappadocia, Julianus for Cilicia, as well as Seras, Stephanus and Heliodorus, all in Egypt), but we do not know if some are in connection with the above-mentioned letter. See Philost. *h.e.* 8, 2.

⁴⁷ Soz. *h.e.* 4, 24.

fide, vita et obitu Ulfilae that has come down to us in bishop of the Goths Maximinus' *Dissertatio contra Ambrosium*,⁴⁸ that Ulfilas visited Constantinople to discuss theological matters, at the order of Emperor Theodosius I. On the basis of this text, it is, however, impossible to determine whether Ulfilas really took part in the ecumenical council of 381, since Auxentius most probably had another meeting in mind. We can only assume that his mission to Constantinople was – in Auxentius' opinion – not a success, at least on the theological level, because his opponents altered the status of the meeting to which he was invited.⁴⁹

Thus, we do not know exactly the reasons which led Ulfilas to Constantinople on the occasion described by Auxentius. Nevertheless, if we take into account Sozomen's account, we can suppose that the purpose was not necessarily only theological. Sozomen thinks that Ulfilas was forced to accept Arian beliefs, since the chiefs of the Arian faction promised him in exchange that they would lay his requests before the emperor and forward the object of his embassy.⁵⁰ At this point Sozomen's text is not quite clear and certainly not entirely accurate. Just before he writes about Ulfilas' meeting with the chiefs of the Arian faction, Sozomen reports on the Acacian Council of Constantinople of 360, in which Ulfilas would have taken part, because of his thoughtlessness and despite being loyal to the Nicene creed.⁵¹ But as we understand from Sozomen, the decisive point of Ulfilas' accepting Arianism was his desire to achieve the main purpose of his mission before the emperor.

This passage by Sozomen is not his first mention of an embassy by Ulfilas before an emperor, as the same chapter 37 of his

⁴⁸ Maximin. *c. Ambr.* 23 and 39. On Auxentius' letter, see Heather-Matthews 1991, 135-143 (with an English translation).

⁴⁹ Maximin. *c. Ambr.* 39. Auxentius is probably writing about the assembly of bishops convened by Theodosius in 383, to which Arian (Demophilus and Eunomius) and Macedonian/Pneumatomachian (Eleusius of Cyzicus) representatives were also invited. See Soc. *h.e.* 5, 10; Soz. *h.e.* 7, 12. The consequences of this council are reflected in Roman law: Cod. Theod. 16, 5, 11-13. For the assembly, see also Simonetti 1975, 551-552. Based on Maximinus' commentary on Auxentius' letter, it can be concluded that Ulfilas travelled to Constantinople with Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum, both condemned by the Council of Aquileia in 381. See Maximin. *c. Ambr.* 23. See also Bratož 2011, 215; Gryson 1980, 162-165 and 249.

⁵⁰ Soz. *h.e.* 6, 37, 9.

⁵¹ Soz. *h.e.* 6, 37, 8.

Ecclesiastical History mentions a previous one. Thus, a few lines earlier, we read about Ulfilas as the leader of a Gothic embassy sent to the emperor Valens, with the request to allow a Gothic settlement on the territory of the Roman Empire.⁵² Sozomen is the only one who gives this information, which cannot be confirmed in any other way. Although cooperation between Ulfilas and Fritigern (a claimant to leadership of the Goths and Athanaric's rival) seems perfectly plausible, as the conversion of his band of Tervingi early in the 370s is pretty well documented by the sources,⁵³ we can easily imagine that people were invited to join the bishop's flock, the *Gothi minores*, established since the 340s near Nicopolis ad Istrum. Theoretically, the two groups would not have fully and completely merged, since some so-called "Minor Goths" may still have been present in the region in the 6th century,⁵⁴ but it was precisely from the integration of new Christian Gothic elements into Fritigern's Tervingi that the Visigothic nation was to be born.

Thus, it doesn't seem entirely incredible that the Roman authorities engaged Ulfilas - who, as we have seen, had contact with the most influential court bishops - to help solve the "Gothic problem" before and/or after Fritigern defeated the Romans at the Battle of Andriano-ple. As Sozomen is the only one to write about an embassy in the time of Valens, there is, however, a doubt about it. Might there not be a confusion with the embassy to Theodosius? And then there is the question of the conditions for the entry of the *Gothi minores* into the Empire in the 340s. Some scholars suggest that there was a direct meeting between Ulfilas and Constantius II on this occasion, hence the nickname "Moses of our time" that this Emperor seems to have given him.⁵⁵ Knowing that no ancient author offers a really detailed account of the events, the reaction of Aoric (one of the chieftains of the Tervingi during Constantius's reign) against Christianity could have been confused in some texts with Athanaric's reaction – his son according to some

⁵² Soz. *h.e.* 6, 37, 5-6.

⁵³ Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret unanimously ascribe to Ulfilas a leading role in the mass conversion of the Goths to Arianism in the 370s. See Socr. *h.e.* 4, 33; Soz. *h.e.* 6, 37, 5-12; Thdt. *h.e.* 4, 37. See Heather 1986; Heather 1996, 61 and 131; Sivan 1996, 376-377; Schwarcz 1999, 453-455; Chauvot 2000, 804-805; Wolfram 2009, 90-92. See also the critical analysis of the phenomenon in Faber 2014, 137-145.

⁵⁴ Iordanes, *Get.* 267; Schwarcz 1999, 453; Chauvot 2000, 804; Wolfram 2009, 90; Faber 2014, 125-127. For a quick overview, see also Moreau 2020.

⁵⁵ Philost. *h.e.* 2, 5. See also Maximin. *c. Ambr.* 37.

scholars – and vice versa, so that some details of the two episodes could have transposed. Putting aside that insoluble difficulty, we understand, notwithstanding, that Ulfilas could have acted, more than once, as representative of his people before the emperor, when the emperor was dealing with the question of the Gothic settlement inside the empire. Ulfilas' cooperation in solving the "Gothic question" could have been beneficial for Constantius, Valens and Theodosius. Therefore, Sozomen's account may still not be completely unreal.

Moreover, it seems relevant to ask whether Ulfilas took advantage of the situation created by the threat of Fritigern's army over the Roman Empire to try getting some benefits for his Goths? We must remember that Arianism was definitely forbidden to the Romans at this very moment,⁵⁶ while the Goths remained Arians, in the framework of a new *foedus* signed in 382. The maintenance of their Christian faith could hardly be a consequence of Fritigern's Tervingi endeavour, since they were at the very beginning of their conversion. The situation of Ulfilas' Gothic followers was completely different: the oldest converts to Christianity had been Arians already for half a century. For this reason, it seems more likely that it was, first of all, Ulfilas who tried to get permission for his Goths to remain Arians, and we can suppose that permission was granted before the Council of Constantinople of 381 finished its work. Indeed, we learn from the canons of the Second Ecumenical Council that nothing would really be changed in the future for the Church among the Goths:

"The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds, nor bring confusion on the churches; but let the Bishop of Alexandria, according to the canons, alone administer the affairs of Egypt; and let the bishops of the East manage the East alone, the privileges of the Church in Antioch, which are mentioned in the canons of Nicaea, being preserved; and let the bishops of the Asian Diocese administer the Asian affairs only; and the Pontic bishops only Pontic matters; and the Thracian bishops only Thracian affairs.⁵⁷ And let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical ministrations unless they be invited. And the aforesaid canon concerning dioceses being observed, it is evident that the synod of every

⁵⁶ See also Cod. Theod. 16, 1, 2 and 5, 6.

⁵⁷ We see the trio Asia-Pontus-Thrace as the parts of the Empire which were subjected to the Arian church of Constantinople from the time of Eusebius of Nicomedia, and which constituted the very first territorial foundations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. On that matter, see Moreau (forthcoming).

province will administer the affairs of that particular province as was decreed at Nicaea. But the Churches of God in heathen nations (ἔθων) must be governed according to the custom which has prevailed since the times of the Fathers."⁵⁸

At first sight, this last measure might seem paradoxical, in view of the religious situation after the Council of 381. If we consider the possibility that Ulfilas went to negotiate for the Goths, before the time of Theodosius, everything becomes clearer. We can therefore conclude that after the Council of 381 at least two things remained unchanged for the Goths: first, they persisted in Arianism, perhaps with the Emperor's special permission, in exchange for the signing of a new *foedus*, even if Ulfilas' clearly didn't manage to convince the emperor on theological matters, and second, they continued to be theoretically under the direction of Constantinople,⁵⁹ even after the City officially returned to the faith of Nicaea. It is said "theoretically", because, as Socrates and Sozomen write, Marinus, the Arian (anti-)bishop of Constantinople after Demophilus died (most probably in 386), was supported by the Goths, who were under the leadership of Selenas, Ulfilas' successor.⁶⁰

4. Conclusion

In view of the whole course of events presented in this paper, we can presume what were Auxentius' expectations when he was writing about Ulfilas' embassy: after Ulfilas succeeded in achieving permission for the Goths to preserve their faith, it was not entirely

⁵⁸ CCP (381), *can.* 2 (transl. Percival 1900, 176-177). Things are proclaimed even more clearly at Chalcedon in 451. C Chalc. (451), *can.* 28 (transl. Price - Gaddis 2007, 76): "The fathers appropriately accorded privileges to the see of Senior Rome because it was the imperial city and, moved by the same intent, the 150 most God-beloved bishops assigned equal privileges to the most holy see of New Rome, rightly judging that the city which is honoured with the imperial government and the senate and enjoys equal privileges with imperial Senior Rome should be exalted like her in ecclesiastical affairs as well, being second after her, with the consequence that the metropolitans alone of the Pontic, Asian and Thracian dioceses, and also bishops from the aforesaid dioceses in barbarian lands, are to be consecrated by the aforesaid most holy see of the most holy church at Constantinople, while, of course, each metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of the province, ordains the bishops of the province, as is laid down in the divine canons."

⁵⁹ On Selenas' relations in Constantinople, see Mathisen 1997, 674.

⁶⁰ Socr. *h.e.* 5, 23; Soz. *h.e.* 7, 17, 9-12.

unreasonable to expect that he could achieve benefits for other Arians as well. However, Ulfilas' influence seems to have reached its limit and Auxentius could only have been disappointed to find that his Gothic friend's arrival in Constantinople did not bring any success. So happened what no one could ever have expected: Eusebius of Nicomedia's efforts to put Constantinople at the top of the Eastern ecclesiastical hierarchy – which ended up having a lasting result – can only be fully understood by also considering the process of the conversions of the Goths.

Under Ulfilas' episcopal leadership, which he owed to Eusebius, they had accepted the Arian form of Christianity. Being a leading actor of the installation of the Christian Goths within the empire and, thus, of the eventual creation of the Visigothic nation, he never hesitated to negotiate directly for his people with the highest authorities of the Roman Empire. When the situation became more favourable to the Nicene creed, Ulfilas even managed to keep his people in Arianism. However, he lost at the same time his supporters among the court bishops. Ulfilas' success was perhaps possible because the imperial power was not strong enough, at that moment, to prevent the Goths' settlement in the empire. We must remember that the situation of the empire was very delicate in the aftermath of Adrianople, and that Theodosius I had just been baptised, while he was sure he was dying.

Ulfilas' allegiance to Arianism is therefore a much more complex historic issue than usually presented in biographies or other studies devoted to the first actual bishop of the Goths. The key to understanding his allegiance seems not to be found in the different committed narratives, of all kinds, that have come down to us about it, but rather in the history (with a capital "H") of the rise of Constantinople to the top of the Eastern ecclesiastical hierarchy, under the impulse of Eusebius of Nicomedia. The conversion of the Goths to Arianism during the first half of the fourth century is, before its pastoral achievement, a political action, fully involved in the great project of both Constantine and his son Constantius II, to see the centre of the empire move to the banks of the Bosphorus.

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