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Gothic Christians in Constantinople in 4th and 5th century: The Nicene Christians and Christianization

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Abstract

At the turn of the 4th and 5th century the Goths represented a significant minority in Constantinople. Many of them were Christians of several confessions and apart from the Arian Goths and Psathyrians, we recognize Nicene believers there as well. They actively cooperated with representatives of the Episcopal see, especially with John Chrysostom and his companions, who vigorously Christianized barbarians inside and outside of the Empire. At the same time, the Constantinopolitan agents of the Church tried to convert the heretical barbarians to Nicene Christianity. This paper deals with the topic of Nicene Christian Goths in Constantinople and their interaction with representatives of the Nicene church. The topic of Arian Goths in Constantinople was presented in the previous issue of *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* (Jurík 2021).

Keywords

Goths; John Chrysostom; Constantinople; Christianity; Nicene Christianity; Crimean Goths

In the 4th century, there are several allusions to the Orthodox Christian missions among the barbarians who inhabited the lands north from the Danube.¹ Nevertheless, we should be very careful in evaluations of the sources which mention the confessions of the Christians in Gothia because we do not know how aware the Gothic Christians were about the theological distinctions and disputes which were taking place in the Roman Empire, and, at the same time, how the representatives of Arian and Orthodox Christianity were able to “privatize” various persons for the needs of ideological struggle.² However, besides the Arian Christianization, there was a parallel Orthodox one. Aside from Cappadocia and the city of Tomis in *Scythia minor*, it is possible to reconstruct in another centre, at Constantinople as a background for the existence of the Orthodox Christianization of the Goths. After the reign of the Arian emperors, Nicene Christianity was re-established in the capital city by Gregory Nazianzen around the Anastasia chapel and community, which represented the resurrection of Nicene faith in the Empire (therefore the name Anastasia).³ It was finally completed by a policy of Theodosius Great (379-395 C.E.), who suppressed heretical movements and expelled the Arians to hold their masses outside of the cities.⁴ Completely accurate information concerning the first appearance of the Nicene Goths in the main city is not available; nevertheless there are two possible causes, and while the one of them has a little speculative character, we can look at it closer.

1. Athanaric and the Nicene Christianization of the Goths

The federate treaty in 382 was made only with the Goths, who crossed the Danube in 376. The main mass of them were Tervingi and part of the Greuthungi, who stayed with them. A need to end the rebellion and the possibility of recruiting of other troops, which the Goths were able to provide, was the cause of unprecedented character of the treaty in 382. In addition to the space to settle the whole communities (*kuni*, *kunja*) in one region, it seems that a religious tolerance was granted to them as well.⁵ However, this

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- 1 A bishop of the Goths, Theophilus, had already been at the Nicene council in 325. *Analecta Niceana*. (Cowper 1857: p. 27); a certain missionary, Eutyches, is mentioned by Basil of Caesarea. Basil also had a great interest in the remains of the martyrs in Gothia, whom he had to perceive as Nicene Christians. Basil. Caes. *Epist.* 155, 164, 165. According to Thompson, the bishop Goddas, probably was orthodox too Thompson (2008: pp. 161-165); in this paper I use the terms Nicene and Orthodox as synonymous, while the term Arianism is used here generally for the subordinate Trinitary theology; for the widely-held and problematic perception of everything that can be thought of as the Arian confession, see Hanson (1988).
 - 2 Paradoxically, for the Audians, the confession, which is not so well documented, is possible to judge that its followers in Gothia were holding the theological positions which were determined by Audius. It can be deduced from the fact that Audius as an outcast was himself operating there. Epiph. *Adv. Haeres.* 3.1.70; Theod. *HE.* 4.10.
 - 3 See Snee (1998: pp. 157-186).
 - 4 *CTh.* 16.5.6.
 - 5 Regarding the tolerant religious practice towards the barbarians, this could have been mentioned in the second canon of Constantinopolitan council (Alberigo et al. 1962: pp. 27-28), the interpretation of this canon is questionable and it can signify aspects of organization of barbarian churches, not freedom in the theological sense see Mathisen (1997: p. 668).

would not necessary be a case for the other barbarian groups, over which the Empire gained a categorical victory, or for the groups which entered on to Roman soil later, in the times of Theodosius I.'s rule. The conditions for the asylum seekers had been determined, the same as in the 376, by Emperor. In such light, we should see admission of Athanaric and his Goths to Constantinople⁶. Apart from the fact that Theodosius accepted him very ostentatiously as his friend, the reports about his funeral suggest that this former persecutor of Christians could have converted to Christianity in the end of his life, or at least had been a catechumenate. Ammianus in this context said that he was ... *exsequiis ritu sepultus est nostro*.⁷ Although the religious identity of Ammianus was very likely pagan,⁸ thanks to Jordanes we know that the Emperor was present at the funeral of Athanaric, and even led a procession.⁹ It is quite improbable that the very pious Emperor would have led the procession of pagan funeral, in which the pagan ceremonies had to happen, the acts considered by Christians to be the worshiping of demons. Themistius, the pagan rhetor, in the context of Athanaric' arrival in Constantinople, mentions that the tolerance and kindness of Theodosius towards the mankind will eventually conquer the barbarians.¹⁰ This kindness must have been shown to Athanaric, whereas the word conquer does not mean only political subjugation, but identification of the subject with the Roman culture and rules of the life. From the perspective of the Church Fathers, this dimension would mean, of course, to be a Christian, although Themistius, as a pagan, does not mention it in this way. On the other hand, Gregory Nazianzen, in his letter to Moduarius, a relative of Athanaric, talks about their shared piety while the virtues of Moduarius, proved that the words barbarian and Greek held different meanings with regard to bodies but not souls.¹¹ In addition to the developments of overlapping perception of the terms *Romanitas* and *Christianitas*, the letter clearly shows Moduarius' Nicene confession. On the other hand, he as a member of the royal family did not belong to the party which in 376 crossed the Danube and was rebellious towards the Athanaric.¹²

6 These Goths were his entourage and fraction of his former followers who lived in Caucaland after the time when Athanaric had to retreat there from the pressure of the Huns. Wolfram (1975: pp. 3-4).

7 Amm. 27.5.10.

8 For the opinions of Ammianus Christianity see Thompson (1947: p. 114).

9 Jord. *Get.* 144; the ostentatious, and kingly funeral ceremony and a kindness of the Emperor, must have enchanted the Goths of Athanaric, who then served Theodosius as the guardians on the Danube borders. Zos. 4.34; regarding the Christians, Ammianus is not hostile, and he describe many events connected to church matters without the religious context and from the secular point of view see: Hunt (1985: pp. 186-200); reference about Athanaric' funeral could be the other example of his ignorance of the religious context; at least Athanaric was in death finally Romanized Den Boeft & Drijvers & Den Hengst & Teitler (2009: p. 126).

10 Them. *Or.* 14 ff. p. 275; these rhetorical elements about the subjugation of the Goths in the context of Athanaric' arrival, could be the preparation of the auditors of Roman Empire for the change of the imperial policy towards the Goths and the treaty in 382. Heather (1991: p. 167); he was in Constantinople only two weeks from 11.1. to 25.1. 381 *Consul. Constant.*, a. 381.

11 Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 136.; Zos. 4.25.2.

12 Regarding the crossing of the Danube and conversion of the Goths see: Heather (1986: p. 315); however, there are other concepts of conversion of the Goths to Christianity, see Thompson (2008: pp. 78-93); Schäferdiek (1979: pp. 90-97); Rubin (1981: p. 53); Lenski (1995: pp. 85-86); Bednaříková (2013: p. 79).

Simultaneously, as a loyal member of the royal family during his stay in Gothia, Moduaris followed, we can assume, the pagan belief of the king. The account of Zosimus reveals how he later subjugated himself and faithfully served Theodosius (the same as the followers of Athanaric then). One of the conditions for his acceptance for service to the emperor could be also the adoption of the emperor's "proper" faith, which would explain his confession. Unfortunately, it is not possible to identify the date when it happened, but is clear, that his acceptance was made before the treaty in 382. It cannot be also excluded that Mondarius was present at Constantinople in the time of Athanaric' arrival and could actively have influenced his supposed conversion. The fact that some defeated groups of Goths in the time of Theodosius accepted the Nicene faith is testified by the appearance of the Nicene Gothic monks at the estate of one Promotus, who is probably identical with the famous *magister peditum* and then *equitum* of the Roman Empire.¹³ The Goths settled on this estate could be the part of these barbarians who had been defeated by him. In this context it can be considered that the Goths who defended the Danube borders, mainly in *Scythia minor*, also became Nicene Christians, and the Goths of Athanaric were part of them.¹⁴ We know about a Gothic garrison, which was settled outside the city wall of Tomis. The settlement of the barbarians and military garrisons outside the city walls was common practice and it has nothing to do with the expulsion of the heretical confessions to outside the cities. A following skirmish between the Goths and garrison of city Tomis under the leadership of Gerontius, does not tell us much about their confession, although the fleeing barbarians found asylum in a church. However, the emperor was very angered about the action of Gerontius, and evidently, he perceived these barbarians as very important allies.¹⁵ In this respect it is necessary to take a closer look at the region in which they were settled. The province *Scythia minor* represented a default area of the Nicene Christianization of the Goths, even during the reign of the Homoian Emperor Valens.¹⁶ At the turn of the 4th and 5th century the seat of bishopric at Tomis was occupied by Theotimus, who worked very hard for the Orthodox Christianization of people living on the other side of Danube, and who was apparently Goth by origin.¹⁷ In this respect he also cooperated his activities with John Chrysostom,

13 Jo. Chrys. *Ep.* 207; Promotus several times defeated the barbarian groups, whereas in negotiations with them he used loyal barbarians, who served him as translators. Theodosius thanks to his *φιλανθρωπία* released defeated prisoners and bound them for a military service. Zos. 4.35,3,39; see Doležal (2008: pp. 286-287); due to more limited access to the resources I use Migne's edition of John Chrysostom works in this paper, although I'm aware that there is newer edition of his letters and works in *SC* series. I believe that this does not have an impact on interpretation.

14 Zos. 4.34.

15 Zos. 4.40.

16 Basil the Great maintained some correspondence with political and church representants of *Scythia minor* in times, when bishopric seat of Tomis was occupied by Bretanio of Tomis, eager Orthodox who was able to resist to Emperor. Sozom. *HE.* 6.21.4-5; the one of the letters of Basil, which in the header is addressed to Ascholius, in fact, could be addressed to Bretanio. Basil. *Caes. Ep.* 165, according to edition Deferrari (1928: p. 421); equally, the remains of Saba, were sent by Iunius Soranus to Cappadocia, presumably to Basil. *Passio Sancti Sabae* 8.2-3.

17 Sozom, *HE.* 7.26.6: "Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Τόμεως καὶ τῆς ἄλλης Σκυθίας τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἐπετρόπευε Θεότιμος Σκύθης, ἀνὴρ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατραφεὶς..."

the Archbishop of Constantinople, who paid a great attention to the Christianization of the barbarians as well. According to Theodoret, John had sent to the barbarians who had been “thirsty” for salvation, competent people.¹⁸ It is very likely that this reference in Theodoret’ narrative is related to the activities of Theotimus. Theotimus had a close relationship with John and in the dispute about Origenes and the “Tall Brothers”, he was unequivocally on John’s side. The fact that he even opposed Epiphanius in this matter underlines his affiliation to John’s loyal bishops.¹⁹ On the other hand, John trained a group of Gothic presbyters in Constantinople, who were to be a tool for the conversion of pagan barbarians, possibly the Arians as well, in the “right” faith. However, such a policy probably had roots before John’s episcopacy. The ordination of bishops with Gothic origin (in 392) such as Theotimus in Scythia Minor was, for sure, not a coincidence. Except the Christianization efforts beyond the borders of Roman Empire, this Gothic language knowing bishop had to be shepherd not only for the Roman, or more precisely Greek, but also for the barbarian-Gothic Orthodox population of the Scythia Minor as well, which was the province where Athanaric’ Goths were settled after his dead too.

These several indications in sources allow us to state the hypothesis that during a stay of Athanaric’ and the other Goths as well (who were not settled under the treaty in 382) in Constantinople, they could have been converted to Nicene form of Christianity, although, the sources do not tell it explicitly.²⁰ Among other things, it would make sense in the perspective of the religious perception of Germans, and with the events which preceded the acceptance of Athanaric by Theodosius. The German polytheistic leaders used to, thorough a cult, make a relationship with a specific god who was able to secure them success, especially in military field. As Sacral rulers and chieftains, they were directly responsible for the good relationship between their tribe fellows and gods.²¹ Athanaric, the pagan Gothic leader, who persecuted the Christians and was very unsuccessful in his last years on the battlefield (war with Valens, Huns), must have been very impressed when he heard that his Gothic fellows, who had become Christians, although of Arian confession, had defeated and massacred a Roman army in battle of Hadrianopolis. This fact and the critical situation in which he found himself, could have persuaded him to be willing to adopt a new faith. The mere fact that he broke an oath under the terrible curse which he swore to his father, that he would never set foot on and enter Roman territory, is sufficient evidence that he changed his attitude and strictness towards maintaining of

18 Theodor. *HE.* 5.32.1; Theodoret also confirms a wide engagement of John in Thracia, Asia and Pontus. Theodor. *HE.* 5.29.2; John’s acting confirms that the exercise of Constantinopolitan Archbishop authority over the other bishoprics was in practice long before the legal confirmation at the Council of Chalcedon in 451: *Canon*, 9.; John’s authority over these regions is also testified in his *Funerary Speech*, 23.

19 Socr. *HE.* 6.12.4-6; Sozom. *HE.* 8.14.7-8.

20 If we did not have in the case of Moduaris, the letter from Gregory Nazianzen, we would not know his Nicene affiliation, although he is mentioned in the other source as the servant of Theodosius Zos. 4.25.

21 The German leaders, used to in some cases convert to Christianity, because they chose the god who was strong and able to protect them in battlefield see: Bednaříková, (2013: p. 73); Christ could have been even venerated as god in Gothic polytheistic pantheon see D. H. Green comment in the discussion of Schwarcz paper (Schwarcz 1999: p. 461); for the Sacral rule of barbarian leaders see Bednaříková (2015: pp. 23-34).

the pagan Gothic rules.²² The might and wealth of the capital city and Emperor must have strengthened his sentiment towards the Christ as an extraordinary powerful God. His words, which he said during his visit in Constantinople are best for describing of his feeling: *'deus', inquit, 'sine dubio terrenus est imperator et quisquis adversus eum manu moverit, ipse sui sanguinis reus existit.*²³ For the pious Emperor, it was not a problem explain to the barbarian king, to whom he and his Empire were thankful for wealth and power. It is also necessary to ask a question. Would not the Emperor try in this friendly relationship at least once to fulfil the one of the basic commandments of the new faith, the imperative to spread the Gospel? I think so. However, it is not necessarily meant as a general rule, but in the cases when it was possible, i. e. with a smaller and defeated group of barbarians or asylum seekers, these assumptions would be logical. Apart from the distraction of several groups of barbarians in different places in Empire, their potential orthodoxy could have been a promise of faster integration of barbarians into Roman society and thus a mitigation of tension in Roman-barbarian relationships. The Nicene confession in this respect could have been spread to a greater extent among the people scattered and divided from the main mass of Goths (who entered the Roman territory in 376).

As I have already mentioned the need for the conversion of the Goths to the Orthodoxy, was perceived by John Chrysostom too. Against the traditionally and generally accepted view he was convinced that the barbarians were able to accept the values of the Roman civilization and conform to the society. The means of assimilation was, in John's view, the Christian faith.²⁴ Thanks to him we know about the more targeted forms of Christianization of the Goths and other barbarians. Through his episcopal power, he tried not to convert only pagan, but the Arian barbarians as well.²⁵ This very vigorous bishop used different methods in fighting with Arianism and other heretical confessions. He established e.g. Nocturnal Assemblies and singing of Antiphonal Hymns, which were already used during the weekends and church holidays by the Arians. To avoid the threat of possible conversions of his parishioners, since these processions were evidently very popular, he begun to organize them in more ostentatious form. The resulting unrest

22 Amm. 27.5.9: ... *Athanicus sub timenda execratione iurandi se esse obstrictum mandatisque prohibitum patris, ne solum calcaret aliquando Romanum...*; the father of Athanaric was a part of the delegation present in Constantinople in 332 and played important role there Wolfram (1975: pp. 3-4); his name is not known, but he was probably son of Arioric *Anon. Vales. 6.31*; see also Doležal (2020: pp. 368-369); the following deterioration of relationship among the Romans and Goths and the oath, by which Athanaric father bonded him, talks about his position regarding Christianity. According to Wolfram the institution of *iudex* (ruler) was strongly bonded with territory and he sees the breaking of the oath by Athanaric, who at this time did not hold this function, in this context Wolfram (1975: pp. 18-19). But Ammianus is quite clear, he presents the oath on the personal level between father and son and there is no indication that it was connected to the function of Athanaric. It is very intriguing, because an oath was strongly bonded to the aspects of religion in Gothic tribal society and the breaking of an oath was perceived as sacrilegious act.

23 *Jord. Get. XXVIII. 143.*

24 Doležal (2006: p. 174).

25 According to Doležal (2006: pp. 170, 180, 181) John Chrysostom tolerated Arian Goths, took care of them, and even his missions to the Goths we should see in such light, which I found unlikely. See below.

between the Arians and Orthodox people during the night processions led to the forbidding of these festivals for Arians.²⁶

The fight of John Chrysostom and his companions with Arians was manifested in effort to convert them, not in their full damnation. In this respect, it seems, John had a certain degree of success. The sources reflect that skirmishes among the heretical movements caused a great outflow of heretical believers and the conversions to the Nicene form of Christianity.²⁷ The abundance of Goths in Constantinople and their Arianism forced John to pay special attention to this group of inhabitants of the main city. He assigned for them the church with its own staff (πρεσβυτέρους, και διακόνους), able to preach in “Scythian” language. John himself had preached there with an interpreter as the main administrator of the Constantinopolitan church several times, although one of his sermons is preserved to us.²⁸ According to Theodoret, thanks to these activities he gained many Arian Goths for the Nicene confession. However, it is necessary to approach this information very carefully because the authors of Church histories could overestimate successes of that kind. Nonetheless, considering John’s personality and information about his activities, it can be believed that the partial successes in this matter could have happened.

2. The Church of the Goths

The Church mentioned above, in which the Goths had meeting for masses, was not of insignificant character. It was placed inside the city wall, in the very heart of Constantinople, near the Imperial Palace and was vulgarly called “the Church of the Goths”, which only underlines their frequent presence there.²⁹ Although it served the Nicene community of Goths, this building became the victim of fire in the context of Gothic massacre, when Emperor declared Gainas, the Gothic commander, who at this time was not present in the city, an enemy of the Empire.³⁰ If the church of St. Paul, in which was presented *Homilia habita postquam presbyter Gothicus concionatus fuerat* by John Chrysostom,³¹ is “the Church of the Goths”, it means that it is a sacral building to which the remains of St. Paul, a former Nicene bishop and patriarch of Constantinople, and great opponent of his Arian archenemy Mecedonius, were transferred and installed (by Theodosius I.). The building was built on the order of Macedonius, and Sozomen described it as μέγιστος ὢν καὶ ἐπισημότερος.³² Paul was very respected person in Nicene circles, and at the same time a persecuted confessor, who literally symbolised the fight with Arianism.

26 Socr. *HE.* 6.8.1-9; Sozom. *HE.* 8.8.

27 Sozom. *HE.* 8.1.6, 8.5.1.

28 Theodor. *HE.* 5.31.; Jo. Chrys. *Homiliae* 8. PG.63.499-510.

29 Sozom. *HE.* 8.4.17: „τὴν δὲ καλουμένην τῶν Γότθων ἐκκλησίαν ἐμπιπρῶσιν.”; Zos. 5.19.

30 Socr. *HE.* 6.6.26-28; Sozom. *HE.* 8.4.16; Philost. *HE.* 11.8; Zos. 5.19.

31 PG 63. 499-510; regarding the content of the homily see Doležal (2006: p. 175).

32 Sozom. *HE.* 7.10.4; Socr, *HE.* 5.9.1-2.

It is completely unacceptable that this church should have served for the Arians.³³ However, it is true that power over the assignment, or more exactly removal of the church was not only in the bishop hands, but the emperor's as well. It even seems that this power was at this time more typical for the emperors than bishops because the sources, later, in the context removal of churches by bishops talk about the strengthening of their power and competence.³⁴ Theoretically, Arcadius could have, despite John's disapproval, assigned the church for the Arian Goths inside the city wall. For the strengthening of this position, the account of Synesius and that of Caesarius, who was able help Gainas in the request of the Church for Arian services is often used.³⁵ Nevertheless, Synesius' text about Caesarius' efforts has been misinterpreted and it, in fact, refers to what Caesarius set himself to bring about without any implication about his success.³⁶ On the other hand, according to Kelly, the critical reaction of John towards Gainas' request should not be seen as an explicitly hostile approach.³⁷ Gainas himself, thanks to his Christianity, although Arian, should have respected the Constantinopolitan patriarch, because of his pastoral interest about the Goths and the personal charisma which John undoubtedly had.³⁸ The fact that Gainas and John had some confidence and respect towards each other is testified by the sending of John as an ambassador to Gainas during the crisis. John even negotiated with him in Chalcedon about the releasing of Aurelianus and Saturninus, in which he was successful since they were sent only to the exile.³⁹ However, we should not consider from that relationship that John took very benevolent position to Gainas confessional standing and was willing to make concession for the Arians. He rather wanted to convert this important person of the Arian Gothic community in Constantinople to Nicene Christianity. This is testified by Gainas' correspondence with Nilus of Ancyra, friend of John, with whom Gainas discussed theological matters about the relationship between the Son and the Father⁴⁰. Thanks to Gainas' willingness to discuss such matters, it is very likely that in personal level he had the same discussions with John Chrysostom himself. John was esteemed and respected among wide groups of the population, which intently listened to his thoughts and opinions. Arcadius had to be very aware that John was a very weighty "influencer" of his period, and could have in the case of assignment of the Church to the Arians stimulated some kind of unrest or

33 I have dealt with it in the paper about the Arian Goths in Constantinople Jurík (2021: p. 86); see also Baur & Gonzaga (1960: p. 77); Kelly (1995: pp. 157-158); Albert (1984: pp. 156-158); Cameron & Long & Lee (1993: pp. 327-328); Mayer & Allen (2000: p. 20-21); Schäferdiek (2006: pp. 289-290); contra: Liebescheutz (1990: pp. 190-191); Doležal (2008: p. 283); chronicler Marcellinus also testifies that church was orthodox Marcell. chron. (399) XII: *fugientes ecclesiae nostrae succedunt*.

34 Socr. *HE*. 7.7.3-5,7.11.

35 Synesius. *De Prov.* 115B; the English trans. by Cameron & Long & Lee (1993).

36 Kelly (1995: pp. 157-158); a recently edited source (Wallraff 2007), the Funeralary Speech for John Chrysostom completely deny, that John would be willing to provide the Church for the Arian Goths *Funerary Speech*, 50; English trans. Barnes & Bevan (2013).

37 Theodor. *HE*. 5.33.; Sozom. *HE*. 8.4.6-10; Synesius. *De Prov.* 115B.

38 Kelly (1995: p. 157).

39 PG 52.413-420; Zos. 5.18.

40 Jurík (2021: p. 87).

smear the family name of Emperor. At least it would be preserved to us through a homily, letter, etc., in which he would be very worried and protestive about this assignment. John's authority is one of the other reasons for the rejection of the thesis that the church served for the community of the Arian Goths in Constantinople. Rather it seemed that through the assignment of Church for the Nicene Goths, he wanted to gain other souls for Orthodoxy. As can be seen from the example of Nocturnal Assemblies, which he copied from the Arians, he made things glamorous and magnificent. I think we should see the assigning of a significant Church in the city centre near the Palace in the same way. The Nicene Goths suddenly had for their services the μέγιστος ὢν και ἐπισημότερος church in the very heart of the city, while their Arian fellows had to meet each other for masses outside the city wall. There is also the possibility that in the same way that John was inspired by the Night procession of the Arians, Gainas inspired him by the making of a place in which Constantinopolitan Goths could have the masses in their language.

3. The school and Gothic companions of John Chrysostom

An information about the Gothic presbyters and deacons in the Church, i.e., for these purposes trained people, can confirm two things. The first one is that at the time of John's installation in the Constantinopolitan episcopal see, there already existed a base Orthodox Gothic community which he developed and could build other activities upon. The second, John had with some exaggeration "the school" where he educated church staff of Gothic origin for the needs of the barbarians. This trained staff was a response to the time in which was necessary to provide a liturgy in their language for the Goths living on Roman territory, and to create a background for the Christianization of the regions outside the borders of the Empire. John perceived, just as Gregory Nazianzen did, that the proper worship of God and application of the Christian virtues, erased the inner frontiers between the Roman and barbarian.⁴¹ This school for Gothic clerics could have been among a community of Gothic monks, i.e., in the monastery on the estates of Promotus.⁴² Among the students at this school belonged Unila, Moduarius (not the commander) and the barbarian presbyter Tigrius, a former slave in the house of a "δέ του τῶν ἐν δυνάμει", who could be Promotus himself. Tigrius must have obtained his freedom on account of his faithful services.⁴³ Unila was a bishop of the Goths, whom John ordered to an episcopal see for the barbarians, who inhabited the Crimean Peninsula, whereas Moduarius was a deacon, who came to Constantinople with a message from the king of the Goths, requesting another bishop for his people after the death of Unila.⁴⁴ From

41 PG 55. 461; Greg. Naz. *Ep.* 136.

42 Kelly (1995: p. 143); Dagron (1974: p. 466).

43 Sozom. *HE.* 8.24.9; maybe even Theotimus, since he was ordained as bishop in 392, while the beginning of the monastery can be dated after the 386, when Promotus defeated the Goths of Odotheus. Zos. 4.35; these Goths were after that brought to Constantinople *Consul. Constant.* a. 386.

44 Jo. Chrys. *Epist. ad Olymp.* 9.5; a reference regarding the Christianization of barbarians, which can be connected to Crimea region see: *Funerary Speech*, 25.

the letter to Olympias sent by John from exile, we find that he was informed about the above-mentioned matters by Gothic monks who lived at the estates of Marsa, probably the wife of Promotus.⁴⁵ These were very same Goths of Promotus, who after his death became the property of his wife.⁴⁶ John maintained good relationships with them and their life outside the city represented for him a right concept of the monastic life. In other cases, he used to get into the conflict with monks who appeared in the city and tried to use its benefits and wealth.⁴⁷ The Gothic monks were not only close to John, but to his companions around him as well. An example is Serapion, who as a bishop, after the expulsion of John, was hiding among them.⁴⁸ Serapion had been a deacon in the John's Church and after the initial disagreements with him, he represented his most loyal person and one of his closest companions, who was co-accused with him in the Synod at the Oak.⁴⁹ Among accused were above-mentioned Tigrius, and lector Paul as well. Serapion is in John's letter from the exile designated as a bishop⁵⁰ while from the other source it is known that John before his expulsion appointed Serapion as the bishop of Heraclea.⁵¹ I think that it was Serapion who became the local leader of the Johannites, a group of Nicene Christians which did not want to accept the banishment of their patriarch and separated themselves from the Nicene church organization led by the new bishop Arsacius, and then, by Atticus, who finally enrolled John Chrysostom to the list of the Constantinopolitan bishops and ended this schism.⁵² In the other letter, which was dedicated to these monks, who are again mentioned as "τοῖς μονάζουσι Γότθοις τοῖς ἐν τοῖς Προμώτου", John encourages them in faith and to be able to stand against the wiles that are imposed on them.⁵³ No specific names of people who should have imposed these wiles are mentioned in the text, but it is clear that warning is related to the John's opposition and people around the new archbishop Arsacius, who replaced him. The other person close to John was Theodulus, to whom he sent a letter from exile, the same as in the case of Olympias, about the ordination of the new bishop for the Goths. John reminded Theodulus of the endurance and endeavour in the organization of the mission activity among the Goths, while he mentioned the people who were not in the favour of this matter, and tried to stop it. It was not specifically said who these people

45 In letter is the form: οἱ μονάζοντες οἱ Μαρσεῖς, οἱ Γότθοι. Jo Chrys. *Epist. ad Olymp.* 9.5; the fact that she was the wife of Promotus is testified by Palladius, the biographer of John Chrysostom: Μάρσα Προμώτου γυνὴ Pallad. *Dial.*25. See in Doležal (2008: p. 287).

46 Vasiliev (1936: pp. 36-37); Doležal (2008: p. 287).

47 Sozom. *HE.* 8.9.4-6.

48 Jo. Chrys. *Epist. ad Olymp.* 9.5.

49 During John's journey to Ephesus, he placed the administration of see in the hands of Serapion, Mayer & Allen (2000: p. 9) which underline his confidence towards him.

50 Socr. *HE.* 6.4.1-7,6.11.12-18,6.15.15; Sozom. *HE.* 8.9.1-3,8.10,8.14.11,8.17.6-10; Jo. Chrys. *Epist. ad Olymp.* 9.5.

51 Socr. *HE.* 6.17.12.

52 Socr. *HE.*7.25.2; Sozom. *HE.* 8.21,8.23; Theodor. *HE.* 5.36.4.

53 Jo. Chrys. *Ep.* 207.

should be, but from the conspiratorially tuned letter, it seems, that it could be the Roman authorities.⁵⁴

From the above-mentioned correspondence, and mainly from the letter to Olympias, it is clear that John wanted to intervene actively in the installation of the new bishop of the Goths. As an outcast and deposed bishop, he did not have a right to do so, and therefore only one interpretation is possible. John was identified with the parallel evolving church structure, based on his followers, and called the Johannites. There is not a lot of information about the Johannites, except for the fact that they started to have meetings in other places than the Nicene believers, who stayed under the see of the new Archbishop Arsacius. A new parallel church structure had been created, which was many times, as the authors of the Church Histories state with regret, persecuted.⁵⁵ Serapion, who had been installed in the Episcopal see of Heraclea, had become, after the expulsion of John, the local leader of the Johannites. The fact that during the several waves of persecution Serapion hid himself among the Gothic monks testifies to a deep cooperation and trust between the Nicene Goths in Constantinople and the Christian companions of John. These ties must have had roots in several past years of trust built between Church officials and the Goths; the correspondence between the John and monks only underlines this fact. Although from a distance, John still represented an authority in some circles, while he perceived himself as a legitimate church power, who had the right to continue in his pastoral activity. This is especially true when from his point of view, evil and wicked people were installed in the official posts. This attitude was strengthened in him by the support of the western bishops who criticised his deposition, among whom was Innocent, the bishop of Rome. John's intervention into the matters of Constantinopolitan church, finally led to his relocation from Cucusus to the more distant location in Pitiunt (Pityus). Nonetheless, his effort to act remotely from exile is not very surprising. In the long term, he represented an uncomfortable person in many issues, and he was able to resist not only the highest secular power, but the predetermined strict rules as well. In biblical terminology, it is possible to mark him as a person who followed a spirit of the law and not its letter.

4. The Crimean Goths, Constantinople, and Gothic alphabet

It is not well known how his efforts about the Crimean Goths ended up; at the same time, it is not known whom he wanted to ordain as bishop in the place of the deceased Unila. Nevertheless, from the letter to Olympias is clear that he wanted Moduarius, a Gothic deacon, to come after him. It is possible that Moduarius was the one who was to take the position of the new bishop, or at least he had to inform the designated and competent person to take over this position. John expresses a great concern in his letters

⁵⁴ Jo. Chrys. *Ep.* 206; Doležal (2008: p. 286).

⁵⁵ The persecutions had sometimes very cruel forms. Already mentioned Tigrius was undressed, whipped and with bonded hands and feet hung up. Sozomen mentions his extraordinary qualities and compassion towards the foreigners and poor. Sozom. *HE.* 8.24.8-9.

about the continuation of the mission, which he started before. His concern indicates a less welcoming approach of his successor in the episcopal see towards the missions in barbarian lands, which was maybe determined by the fact that John himself personified these efforts. Besides that, the Gothic orthodox enclave in the Crimean Peninsula still existed in 6th century, when with an almost identical request, the Goths requested from the Emperor Justinian a new bishop there. These Goths were called Tetraxites, and the traces of their presence can be found in the following centuries, since the Gothic language was still being spoken in these lands in the 16th century.⁵⁶ These Nicene Goths kept in touch with the Constantinopolitan clergy in the 5th, 6th and even in the 10th centuries.⁵⁷ Regarding the language, the recent examination of the Gothic graffiti from Mangup and Bakhchysarai in Crimea claims that inscriptions follow the variant of the Gothic alphabet which is sometimes referred to as “Script I” (or “Σ-type”), which is generally thought to be older and closer to Wulfila’s original design than the better attested variant of Codex Argenteus with its Latin-like S.⁵⁸ Moreover, the formulas from Bakhchysarai emphasize the divinity of Jesus, which could echo Nicene polemics aimed at Arian doctrine. On the other hand, Gothic Homoians would not outright negate Christ’s status as God since this is explicitly stated in the New Testament.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it seems that these inscriptions are the fruits of the “Nicaeanisation” of the Gothic Bible and church service that were imported by the Crimean Goths either directly from Constantinople with its populous presence of Goths through the Early Byzantine period, or via some of their Nicene kinsmen.⁶⁰ I think that we can see the roots of the Wulfilian alphabet in Crimea in Constantinople in the efforts of John Chrysostom. It is evident that he was absolutely comfortable with the use of an Gothic translation of the Bible for the Orthodox Christianization of the other barbarians and services in Constantinopolitan church, since Wulfila’s translation is based on the Greek original text.⁶¹ John was even very excited that the gospel was spreading in the tongue of barbarians.⁶² Even decades later, Marcian had the Gospel read in Gothic at the Anastasia Church on festal days, as a gesture of thanks to Ardaburs, who, although Arian, in this context attended the Nicene liturgy.⁶³ As was mentioned in the case of Nocturnal processions, John was very eager to use everything

56 Procop. *Wars.* 8.4.9-12; Evagr. *HE.* 4.23; Wolfram (1988: p. 79); Schäferdiek (1996: p. 98).

57 Prostko-Prostyński (2020: p. 56); Schmidt (1939: pp. 215-216).

58 Vinogradov & Korobov (2020: pp. 172-173); Vinogradov & Korobov (2018: p. 226); the quotation from the psalter in fragment I.1 presupposes the familiarity of the Crimean Goths with Wulfila’s Bible and with almost completely lost Old Testament part (p. 233).

59 Vinogradov & Korobov (2020: p. 175); Zakharov (2020: pp. 12-13).

60 Vinogradov & Korobov (2020: p. 177).

61 The old hypothesis that the text preserves traces of Homoean/Homoian creed in Phil 2:6 does not find a general consensus today. Moreover, it is worth noting the translation of Jn 10:30, 17:11, 21, 22, where a Gothic dual form is used to render a Greek plural, e.g.: *ik jah atta meins ain siju* ‘my Father and I are one’ for ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἐν ἑσμεν (Jn10:30). The fact that Wulfila has used the dual to indicate the close relationship between the Father and the Son could – paradoxically – be interpreted as a hint of their consubstantiality for the translator Falluomini (2015: p. 15).

62 Theodor. *HE.* 5.31; PG 51.87; PG 63.499-510.

63 Snee (1998: p. 180).

that showed itself to be very successful in the case of the Arians. The translation of the Bible into Gothic provided another opportunity itself and John, I think, did not hesitate to use it. His ordination of bishops and sending people skilled in Gothic to the Crimean region it is possible perceive as the beginning of the Gothic literacy and Orthodox Gothic liturgy at this region.⁶⁴

5. Other Gothic pupils of John Chrysostom?

The Christian mission to the Crimean and Danubian Goths testifies that John Chrysostom had a great interest about the barbarians, but besides that he built around himself a group of educated people of Gothic origin. A lot of them actively participated in church life, in pastoral activities among the barbarians, their Christianization, and in intellectual activities as well. An example could have been a bishop of Heraclea with an undoubtedly Germanic name, Fritillas. In the following controversy about the teaching of Nestorius, he was inclined on his side, in other words, he was among those bishops who wanted to wait for the presence of John of Antioch and the other bishops inclined to Nesotrius during the preparations for the Council of Ephesus. The bishop Euprepus was subscribed on Fritillas behalf in this case.⁶⁵ If Fritillas were one and the same as Fretela, who with another Gothic Christian, Sunia, maintained a correspondence about the translation of the Psalms with Hieronymus, this might testify not just to his Gothic origin but also the fact that he could actively participated on the intellectual activity.⁶⁶ In the text, which Hieronymus addressed to them, is no allusion that they might be heretics, and it is very likely that they were Nicene Christians, and not Arians.⁶⁷ Regardless, if Fritillas and Fretela were the same person, the dating of the correspondence with Hieronymus and the language skills of both Gothic Christians would agree with the needs of the Church, which John assigned to the Goths in Constantinople, in which, according to Theorodet, there were the linguistically proficient translators. On the other hand, it seems that the position of a Heracleian bishop who had a Gothic origin, the same as in the case of Theotimus, was not accidental. It can be supposed that Heraclea was inhabited by Goths and Fritillas should have been, besides the Greek or Roman people, their pastor. I have already mentioned that Serapion had a close contact and relationship with the Goths among whom he was hiding himself during the crisis after the John's deposition. His ordination as the bishop in Heraclea by John probably was not accidental as well. He earned it thanks to his loyalty to John, but it would make sense, that he fit this position well through his good relations with Goths, and maybe thanks to a little knowledge of Gothic language as well.

64 See also Schäferdieck (2006: pp. 289-296).

65 *ACOec. I.4. s. 28: Fritillas episcopus Heracliae Europae per Euprepium episcopum Bizae subscripsi.*

66 Hieron. *Ep.* 106; the letter is dated to *circa an.* 403. PL. 22. pp. 837-867.

67 Mathisen (1997: p. 674, n. 69); see: Zeiller (1918: pp. 566-568).

Conclusion

During the 5th century the barbarian element in Constantinople was increasing. Nevertheless, the traces of Nicene Goths who actively participated in Church matters are scarce. Apart from the lack of the sources, there may be several other reasons. In the relatively short time of two generations, many Goths could have been completely Romanized in the environment of the capital city. However, the barbarian origin was still present in the names of some significant representatives of the Church. In addition to the above-mentioned Fritillas, there was Fravitta, (not commander) bishop of Constantinople in 489-490 C.E.⁶⁸ Christianity also provided a new form of identity, which suppressed the tribal, Germanic older one. It was manifested at the turn of the 4th and 5th century, when from the religious perspective, there was not unity among the Constantinopolitan Goths. We recognize Nicene Christians, Psathyrians, Homoians, Agapians, Johannites and even pagans, as we can see in the case of Fravitta, *magister militum* of the Roman Empire. They were as fragmented as their Roman fellow citizens, and they were the subject of the same fight for the souls and power. In these struggles, the representatives of Nicene Christianity were focused on the conversion of the Goths not only in Constantinople but beyond the borders of the Empire as well. These efforts can be traced to the 4th century, but John Chrysostom was the first to realize that for the success of the Nicene mission among the Goths that which their Arian counterparts already had was necessary. This was people educated in Gothic language, who would have to defend the Nicene theology. In this respect the Wulfilian translation of the Bible was used, which, in principle, did not reflect the theological differences. At least at Crimean Peninsula the introduction of Wulfilian alphabet in the Nicene environment was successful. In the case of the Constantinopolitan Goths, it was, we can suppose, the same, but thanks to the Roman-Greek environment the barbarian minority was quickly disappeared. However, as the cases of Fritillas, and then of Archbishop Fravitta testify, the fruits of the Nicene Christianization of the Goths in Constantinople, which began in the time of Theodosius I. and were significantly developed during the episcopacy of John Chrysostom, led to the ordination of people with Gothic origin to the highest ranks of the Nicene Church hierarchy.

Abbreviations

GCS = *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte*

GRBS = *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*

JAEMA = *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*

Loeb = *Loeb Classical Library*

MIÖG = *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*

MusHelv = *Museum Helveticum*

⁶⁸ Evagr. *HE.* 3.23.

NOWELE = *North-Western European Language Evolution*

PG = *Patrologia Graeca*

PL = *Patrologia Latina*

SC = *Sources Chrétiennes*

Vestnik PSTGU = *Vestnik Pravoslavnogo Sviato-Tikhonovskogo gumanitarnogo universiteta*

ZAC = *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*

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