

CASSIODORUS AND THE RISE OF THE AMALS: GENEALOGY AND THE GOTHS UNDER HUN DOMINATION*

By PETER HEATHER

I. INTRODUCTION

From the mid-third century, Gothic tribes inhabited lands north of the river Danube; they were destined, however, to play a major role in the destruction of the Roman Empire and the creation of the medieval world order. In the last quarter of the fourth century, in the face of Hun attacks, some Goths (those commonly known as Visigoths) fled into the Roman Empire, winning a famous victory at Hadrianople in 378 and sacking Rome in 410. They later moved further west to found a kingdom in southern Gaul and Spain. Of equal historical importance are those Goths (usually known as Ostrogoths) who remained north of the Danube under Hun domination from c. 375 to c. 450. They too then entered the Empire, and, under Theoderic the Great, established a kingdom in Italy which is known to us through Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Ennodius. Much less well known, however, is the formative stage of their history when the Ostrogoths endured Hun domination, and it is on our sources for this period that this study will concentrate.

Little relevant information survives in contemporary, classicizing Graeco-Roman historians. Ammianus Marcellinus reports nothing north of the Danube after 376, and while the fragments of Priscus show that he must originally have dealt with Danubian events for the entire period c. 375–450, they preserve detailed information only from the 430s, and concentrate on the Huns until the 460s. Of necessity, the history of Goths under Hun domination must be reconstructed from two passages of the *De Origine Actibusque Getarum* or *Getica* of Jordanes. This work is independent of Priscus for its Gothic (though not its Hunnic) history,¹ and the passages cover a period of obscurity between Ermenaric and Valamir, Gothic kings known to us from other sources.

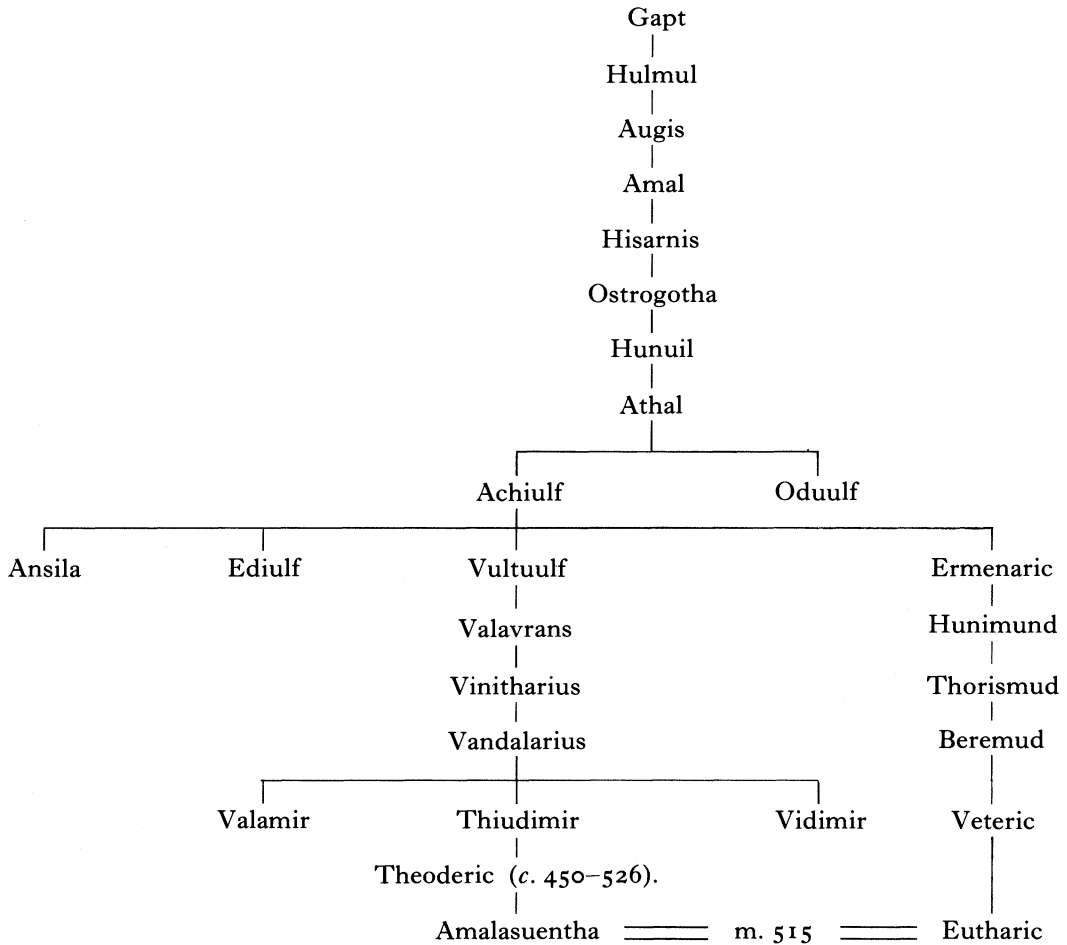
The first passage (*Getica* 23:116–24:130) emphasizes the glory of the fourth-century Gothic empire ruled by king Ermenaric, who belonged to the Amal family. The *Getica* claims unique royalty for this dynasty; it had provided Gothic kings for nine generations before Ermenaric and continued to do so for many more after him. At the height of Ermenaric's power, however, the Huns of Balamber invaded, taking advantage of his wounding in a political dispute. This caused Ermenaric's death at the age of 110, allowing the Huns to overrun and conquer the Ostrogoths. The second passage (*Getica* 48:246–52) deals with the period after Ermenaric's death, and describes how the Amal family continued to rule these Goths through Vinitharius, Ermenaric's great-nephew, who was subordinate to the Hun Balamber. After an unspecified time Vinitharius rejected Hun control and defeated the Antes, but Balamber refused to accept his independence, and, with the help of more Goths under Gesimund, killed Vinitharius. Still under the aegis of the Huns, Ermenaric's son Hunimund succeeded Vinitharius. He was followed by his son Thorismud, who died fighting Gepids in the second year of his reign. The Ostrogoths mourned his loss so deeply that no one succeeded for forty years until Valamir became king with the help of his two brothers, the three being sons of Vandalarius, the son of Vinitharius. Valamir first ruled under Attila's overall control, and then re-established Gothic independence after Attila's death.

The relations between the kings can be illustrated by the Amal genealogy, explicitly a genealogy of rulers (*Getica* 14:79–81), whose lower reaches illustrate the

* I should like to thank those who have read this at different stages of composition and offered much sound advice: Dr S. Barnish, Prof. M. Davies, Dr J. Howard-Johnston, Prof. M. Maas, Dr J. F. Matthews, Mr B. Ward-Perkins, and Drs M. and M. Whitby, as well as the Editorial Committee of the *Journal*.

¹ Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Th. Mommsen, *MGH, AA* 5. 1 (1882). On Priscus and Jordanes, see R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire: Eunapius, Olympiodorus, Priscus and Malchus* 1 (1981), 48 ff., 113 f.

interplay of the two Amal lines (descended from Vultuulf and Ermenaric) recounted in the text.



Narrative and genealogy thus suggest considerable continuity. According to the *Getica*, Ermenaric and Valamir, together with the otherwise unknown kings between them, belonged to a single royal family, the Amals, whose rule pre-dated and survived the Hun invasions, Valamir and hence Theoderic being descendants of Ermenaric's brother Vultuulf. Likewise, the Goths ruled by Valamir were descended from those Ermenaric had commanded. The Hun invasions were traumatic (causing the deaths of Ermenaric and Vinitharius, and a forty-year *interregnum*), but dynastic loyalties and social bonds survived. This view of Ostrogothic history has been followed by general histories of the migration period,² but contains serious problems which must be confronted before it can be used to write history.

To start with, it is not contemporary. Jordanes brought the *Getica* to its present form probably in Constantinople in 551. He had been a secretary on the staff of an officer of the Imperial army, but at the time of writing seems to have been leading at least a semi-monastic Christian life in the capital of the eastern Empire. He did, however, reuse material from two earlier Gothic histories: those of Ablabius and Cassiodorus. Nothing is known of the former, but Cassiodorus was an important functionary at the court of Theoderic and his successors in Italy, and in the *Getica's* preface Jordanes acknowledges a considerable debt to his work. Its extent has been

² Most recently E. Demougeot, *La formation de l'Europe et les invasions barbares*. 2. *De l'avènement de*

Dioclétien (284) à l'occupation germanique de l'Empire romain d'occident (début du VI^e siècle) (1979), 342 ff.

debated, but a justly famous article of Momigliano has proved highly influential, suggesting that Jordanes essentially copied Cassiodorus. The suggestion that Cassiodorus prompted Jordanes to produce the *Getica* in c. 550 to influence court opinion in Constantinople, on the eve of campaigns which destroyed the Gothic realm in Italy, has found less acceptance.³

There is also a Gothic origin to some of the *Getica*'s material, which makes it unique among surviving sources. It specifically refers to Gothic stories which recorded Filimer's migration into the Black Sea region (4:28), and deeds of Gothic heroes (5:43). Jordanes also reports that the death of the Visigothic king Theoderic I in battle against Attila the Hun stimulated further compositions (41:214), and that other tales were concerned with the origins of peoples.⁴ Recent studies have stressed the importance of this material, suggesting that because of it, the *Getica* gives us a privileged insight into Gothic history. Applying this to the matter at hand, even though they would doubt that there was total continuity (by descent) between the followers of Ermenaric and those of Valamir, they view both kings as part of a genuine tradition of Amal leadership, which stretched from Theoderic the Great back some half a millennium, perhaps as far as Scandinavia itself. This tradition has been thrust into the forefront of historical debate, because even though our sources describe them as Goths, the Ostrogoths were not purely Gothic, but in fact a multi-racial political unit; this has been shown to be a general phenomenon of the migration period. The recent studies have therefore argued that it was this continuous Amal Gothic tradition, rather than the racial origins of their followers, that made the Ostrogoths Gothic.⁵ In investigating whether Amal rule did indeed pre-date and survive Hun domination, therefore, one is addressing a major issue in Gothic history.

The two passages also pose more specific problems. Above all, Jordanes' account differs markedly from a version of seemingly the same events in Ammianus Marcellinus. The latter reports that Ermenaric put a voluntary end to his life because he feared the Huns, but Jordanes blames his death primarily on a wound. The two also disagree about Ermenaric's successors. In Ammianus, Ermenaric is succeeded by Vithimiris, and then by Vithimiris' son Vithericus (31. 3. 1-3).⁶ Jordanes records that Ermenaric was followed by Vinitharius, and then by Hunimund and Thorismud, while Vinitharius' son was Vandalarius, who was not a king. Begetting three famous sons is the only activity for which he is remembered, and the schema of succession denies him royal status. The crown passes from Thorismud, Vandalarius' cousin, to Valamir, his son, omitting Vandalarius himself (48:250 f.).

In addition, Jordanes' account seems to lack internal coherence. 'Balamber' was probably pronounced 'V-alam-b-er', and V in the Latin sources is equivalent to B in the Greek, so that the name could also be written 'Valamver'. Byzantines wrote the

³ Good accounts of the evidence for Jordanes can be found in N. Wagner, *'Getica'. Untersuchungen zum Leben des Jordanes und zur frühen Geschichte der Goten* (1967), 39-57; S. J. B. Barnish, 'The Genesis and Completion of Cassiodorus' Gothic History', *Latomus* 43 (1984), 336-61 and B. Croke, 'Cassiodorus and the *Getica* of Jordanes', *Classical Philology* 82 (1987), 117 ff. Momigliano first put his case in 'Cassiodorus and the Italian Culture of his time', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 41 (1955), 207-45, reprinted in *Secondo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (1960), 191-225 and reiterated it in 'Gli Anicii e la storiografia latina del VI secolo d.C.', *ibid.* 231-53. More recent work arguing for Jordanes' independence includes D. R. Bradley, 'The Composition of the *Getica*', *Eranos* 64 (1966), 67-79; L. Várady, 'Jordanes-Studien: Jordanes und das "Chronicon" des Marcellinus Comes—die Selbständigkeit des Jordanes', *Chiron* 6 (1976), 441-87; J. J. O'Donnell, 'The Aims of Jordanes', *Historia* 31 (1982), 223-40 and B. Croke, art. cit. and 'A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point', *Chiron* 13 (1983), 81-119.

⁴ e.g. Hunnic origins 24:121 f. This makes me think that a story about the Gepids, similarly deriving the tribe's name from an insulting Gothic word (17:94 f.)

also comes from Gothic oral history, and I would hypothesize the same about Berig's migrations (4:25), and a war against the Gepids which blames them for initiating war between kin (17:97). Collecting native traditions is a mark of Latin writing, where the Greek approach explained the origins of foreign peoples by extending Greek myth, E. J. Bickerman, 'Origines Gentium', *Classical Philology* 47 (1952), esp. 75 ff. Note, however, the *Getica*'s disparaging remarks about oral tradition: 5:38.

⁵ R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der Frühmittelalterlichengentes* (1961), *passim* demonstrated that multi-racial political units were the norm in the migration period. *Ibid.*, 478 ff. and H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. T. J. Dunlap (1987), *passim* and esp. 5 ff. and 36 ff. deal with the Goths in particular, suggesting that it was the traditions of ruling families that held them together and gave them a Gothic identity. This is winning some support, e.g. P. Geary, *Before France and Germany. The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (1988), 62 ff.

⁶ The son is called both Vithericus (31. 4. 12) and Viderichus (31. 3. 3).

Gothic king Valamir's name as βαλαμερ, and Mommsen records 'Balamir', 'Balamur' and 'Balamer' among manuscript variants for Balamber. Given the lack of standardized spelling and the possibility of copying errors, Valamir and Balamber are potentially variants of the same name.⁷ Balamber also reportedly marries Vinitharius' granddaughter Vadamerca. She does not appear in the genealogy, but (cf. p. 104 f.) would be of the same generation as Valamir and his brothers. She marries the man who led the Hun assault in c. 370, yet others of her generation appear c. 450.⁸

The forty-year *interregnum* is a similar chronological oddity. While not impossible, it is unlikely that a family could maintain its pre-eminence over forty years without actually ruling. A final question concerns Thorismud's great-grandson Eutharic, an important historical figure. Fl. Eutharic Cilliga was brought from Spain to marry Theoderic's daughter Amalasuetha in 515, and was made his heir, in recognition of which the Emperor Justin adopted him as son-at-arms and accepted him as consul for 519. Both Eutharic's grandfather and father (Beremud and Veteric) are said by Jordanes, however, to have moved from the Ostrogoths to the Visigoths in Gaul before 419. This leaves a century to be covered by the lives of Veteric and Eutharic, the former alive in 419 while the second married and produced two children after 515. Again, this is not impossible, but there do not seem to be enough generations to cover the time-span.⁹

These passages have been examined many times, but scholars have not reached agreement over the best solution to their difficulties. A consensus did emerge that naming principles first identified among Frankish nobilities (where sons were often named after grandfathers, and the same name was not used for consecutive generations) could be applied to the Amal genealogy to solve the problems. But Wolfram has shown that while these principles can make sense of the names, the result is historical nonsense. In addition, where the dynasty's names are better known, variation on the names of ancestors (rather than directly naming children after them) is the norm. Thus Thiudimer's children were Theoderic, Theodemund and Amalafrika, Theoderic's Amalasuetha, Ostrogotha and Theodegotha, both sets partly recalling their fathers, and partly the mythical ancestors Amal and Ostrogotha ('Theod-' and 'Thiud-' are interchangeable). No children are named directly after royal ancestors, and the *Getica* also reports that Vidimir had a son Vidimir alive at the same time as himself, and is explicit that the younger one was named after his father (56:284, 'filium suumque synonymum'). The Amals did not, therefore, name their children in the way the consensus supposed.¹⁰

Further investigation is thus required. Precisely because the *Getica* contains

⁷ e.g. L. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgange der Völkerwanderung. Die Ostgermanen* (2nd ed., 1934), 256; or Wolfram, op. cit., 254. O. J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns* (1973), 414 claims that Balamber is Hunnic, but offers no arguments. The MSS variants are *Balamir*, O to 24:130; *Balamur*, B to 24:130; *Balamer*, HPVXZ to 48:249. HPV belong to the group of most authority, OB to the secondary group and XZ to the third group, cf. Mommsen, op. cit. (n. 1), lxxi ff. There is a strong tradition, therefore, that the name at 48:249 might be Balamer (a Latin transcription of how Priscus spelled Valamir). For other variations, see M. Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen* (1911), 250 f.

⁸ cf. J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge. Ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840–940)* (1903), 369 f. and P. Grierson, 'Election and inheritance in early Germanic Kingship', *CHJ* 7 (1941), 6.

⁹ Eutharic: *PLRE* 2, 438. *Getica* 33:174 f. and 48:251 record Beremud's migration to Gaul; the chronological problem was first pointed out by H. von Sybel, *Entstehung des deutschen Königiums* (2nd ed., 1881), 201 f.

¹⁰ Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 252 ff. *contra* K. A. Eck-

hardt, 'Die Nachbenennung in den Königshäusern der Goten', *Südost-Forschungen* 14 (1955), 34 ff.; N. Wagner, 'Germanische Namengebung und kirchliches Recht in der Amalerstammtafel', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Literatur* 99 (1970), 1 ff.; R. Wenskus, 'Amaler', *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* 1 (2nd ed., 1973), 246 ff. (not without reservations); and the earlier view of Wolfram himself in 'Theogonie, Ethnogenese, und ein kompromittierter Grossvater im Stammbaum Theoderichs des Grossen', in R. Wenskus and E. K. Jaschke (eds), *Festschrift für Helmut Beuman* (1979), 83 ff. The consensus was forced to argue from the practice of Imperial families, which is irrelevant, and Visigothic evidence, which is inconclusive. Alaric I was a maternal great-grandfather of Alaric II, and Liuva II the great-nephew of Liuva I. But both Alaric and Liuva were famous kings and this is probably why the names were reused. Thus Hermenigild called a son Athanagild after another famous king (Athanagild I, 551–68) when there was no family relationship. A failed revolt prevented Athanagild's succession but he would have been an Athanagild II with no relation to Athanagild I. There is also no evidence that Reccared II was related to Reccared I, and again the reused name was that of a famous king; under Reccared I the Visigoths converted to Catholicism.

unique source material, the case cannot be proved absolutely, but it will be argued that Ammianus Marcellinus, the *Variarum* of Cassiodorus, and a full appreciation of the historical context largely solve the problems. The *Getica's* account of Ermenaric is based upon Ammianus and takes all its reliable information from there. And while the second passage purports to describe Ermenaric's successors (c. 375 onwards), it actually provides a partial description of Valamir's rise to power in c. 450. Discussion of the composition and sources of the passages also sheds incidental light on Gothic oral history, Cassiodorus' role in shaping the Amal genealogy, and Jordanes' use of Cassiodorus.

II. CASSIODORUS AND GENEALOGY

The discussion here offered has been partly inspired by insights from anthropological studies of royal genealogies and king-lists, and work applying them to historical examples; these studies add analytical sophistication to often-voiced suspicions about the accuracy of such listings. Royal genealogies are political documents because, in listing a ruler's descent where previous generations have ruled (or claim to have ruled), they are recording part of the claim to the throne. A suitably impressive genealogy provides a *de facto* king with his legal title to rule. As such, genealogies can be expected to embody legal conventions and fictions: if a king is expected to have numerous royal ancestors, they will be found for him, so that royal genealogy often parts company with biological fact.¹¹

The possibility of oral transmission is also important because pre-literate societies tend to preserve history to explain the present. The past is not unalterable, but rationalizes current social configurations; as these change, so must collective memory. This is relevant to the Goths because they seem to have had no literate historical tradition, literary Gothic being confined, after Ulfila's example, to the religious sphere.¹² The most extreme effects of oral transmission are visible in so-called segmentary lineage societies, where all claim descent from a single ancestor, and sub-groups use genealogy to define their relations. As social relationships change, so do the later generations of the genealogies, so that the latter have no historical depth and do little more than rationalize the present. Here genealogy not only expresses relationships but validates them by what anthropologists call genealogical charters; the oral context makes these adjustments much simpler, since there is no independent record of the past of the kind that written texts usually provide in literate societies. A similar process also applies to politically more-centralized societies (more relevant to the Ostrogoths with their Amal kingship), where oral narratives and attendant genealogy provide historical justifications for current kings. Here elements fade in and out of stories and genealogies as the monarchical institution(s) change. This does not mean that oral traditions contain no history; anything that derives from a non-literate record of the past must, however, be treated with care.¹³

¹¹ This is now a truism, but see for instance, A. I. Richards, 'Social Mechanisms for the transfer of Political Rights in some African tribes', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (1960), 175 ff.; G. Balandier, *Political Anthropology*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (1970), 81 ff.; D. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition. Quest for a Chimera* (1974), *passim*; or J. C. Miller, 'Listening for the African Past', in id. (ed.), *The African Past Speaks. Essays on Oral Tradition and History* (1980), 18 f. Henige, *ibid.*, chs 1 and 2, provides a comprehensive account of the ways in which royal genealogies can be manipulated. Examples of historical applications are K. Sisam, 'Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies', *ProcBA* 39 (1953), 287-348 and, particularly, D. N. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal lists', in P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (eds), *Early Medieval Kingship* (1977), 72 ff.

¹² On Ulfila (sources and works) see W. Streitburg, *Die Gotische Bibel* (1908) with the useful commentary of E. A. Thompson, *The Visigoths in the time of Ulfila* (1966), xiii ff. For more detailed discussion of the

surviving evidence for literary Gothic see G. W. S. Friedrichsen, *The Gothic Version of the Gospels* (1926) and *The Gothic Version of the Epistles* (1939).

¹³ On segmentary lineages and ease of adjustment see *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. Goody (1968), esp. 31 ff. and 44 ff. and the classic article of L. Bohannan, 'A Genealogical Charter', *Africa* 22 (1952), esp. 312, cf. Dumville, art. cit. (n. 11), 85 ff. A good recent approach to history in oral tradition is R. G. Willis, *A State in the Making. Myth, History and Social Transformation in Pre-Colonial Ufipa* (1981), part 1; cf. Miller, art. cit. (n. 11), 1-5 on current debate about the historical value of such traditions. On the specific pitfalls of orally transmitted genealogies see, for instance, I. Berger, 'Deities, Dynasties, and Oral Tradition: The History and Legends of the Abacwezi', 61 ff. in Miller, *op. cit.* (n. 11); Henige, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 17 ff.; or J. C. Miller, 'The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central African History', *Journal of African History* 13 (1976), 551 ff.

In part, the Amal genealogy illustrates aspects of the legitimizing genealogies discussed by anthropologists. Its first eight generations consist of an extended chain of father-to-son succession, from Gapt to Athal (p. 104). Such successions are very common in traditional genealogies and king-lists, and always refer (as they do here) to the earliest period a dynasty claims to have ruled. Recent studies have pointed out how rare extended father-to-son successions turn out to be in periods where independent data exist beyond a dynasty's own lists and genealogies. *A priori*, therefore, such smooth successions are likely to be fiction. To illustrate the point, in later, independently-documented generations of the Amal dynasty, we do not find such a succession pattern. Valamir was succeeded by his brother (Thiudimir), then his brother's son (Theoderic), then his brother's great-grandson (Athalaric), and finally his brother's granddaughter (Amalasuenta) before the Amals were replaced altogether. In all of this, covering the period *c.* 460 to *c.* 535, only one succession out of four was father to son. Dynasties often impose on the past an idealized pattern of father-son succession that has nothing to do with the real ebb and flow of dynastic rivalries and the biological improbability that a single line will continue to produce male heirs over a large number of generations.¹⁴ The Amals are no exception to the rule.

Their genealogy also includes eponymous heroes: Amal (from whom the dynasty took its name), Ostrogotha (name-giver to the Ostrogoths), and possibly also Athal. Theoderic's grandson was called Athalaric, suggesting that Athal also perhaps had eponymous significance, but the *Getica* tells us nothing about him. Either way, Amal and Ostrogotha, at least, are analogous to eponymous heroes elsewhere. They were probably used to explain why the Amals ruled the Ostrogoths—that is, how the two got their names—but their existence in fact presupposes that of the Amals and Ostrogoths, which inspired their creation. Placed in the genealogy of the Amal rulers of Ostrogothic Italy, the names are not historical.¹⁵ If circumstances had changed, different eponymous figures would have reflected the new situation. The fall of the Amal dynasty, for instance, would have been followed by the creation of a new eponymous hero matching the generic name of the new rulers.¹⁶ The Bulgars provide a good contemporary illustration of such changes: in the sixth century the Utigurs and Kutrigurs explained their circumstances—when they were conscious of a relation but lived apart—by the story that a certain man (anonymous in Procopius) had two sons, Utigur and Kutrigur, from whom the tribes were descended (*Wars* 8. 5. 1 ff.). The much wider diffusion of Bulgar groups in the seventh century, on the other hand, is reflected in stories of a certain man, here called Koubrat, having five sons. These myths thus encapsulated contemporary reality and changed with it; Amal and Ostrogotha probably played a similar role among the Italian Ostrogoths, and cannot be taken as evidence that Amal rule extended into the distant past.¹⁷

The Amal genealogy has also passed, however, through the hands of at least two literate interpreters: Cassiodorus and Jordanes. The *Getica*'s information is thus not directly from Gothic oral history, and we should expect to find upon it marks of the literate Roman world. An example of this is probably the fact that the genealogy

¹⁴ Henige, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 34 ff. and esp. ch. 2; cf. Miller, *art. cit.* (n. 11), 12 ff. with references.

¹⁵ The *Getica* has nothing to report of Amal, a further indication that he is not historical. Two wars of Ostrogotha are recounted, but neither suggests a real king. That against the Gepids (17:96 ff.) explains the origins of hostility between the related Gothic and Gepid tribes. I consider it likely, therefore, to have come from Gothic oral history, providing no evidence that Ostrogotha is historical (*contra* Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 45 n. 61 who uses it to 'date' Ostrogotha). The account of Ostrogotha's other war against the Emperor Philip (16:89 ff.) probably originated in written sources, but Ostrogotha's name seems to have been inserted in place of the genuine third-century Gothic king Cniva, cf. Wolfram, *ibid.* The need to ascribe to him another king's activities is further confirmation that he is mythical. Wolfram (*ibid.*, 24) realizes that

Ostrogotha is eponymous, and that his name presupposes the existence of the Ostrogoths, but still treats him as historical (*ibid.*, 58 ff.).

¹⁶ On eponyms and other spurinymys, see Henige, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 46–8 and Dumville, *art. cit.* (n. 11), *passim*. Classical ethnography also used eponymous heroes to account for origins of peoples and cities, cf. Bickerman, *art. cit.* (n. 4), 65 ff. The early origins of dynastic propaganda around Amal and Ostrogotha (p. 106) make it unlikely, however, that they are an *interpretatio Romana* with no roots in Gothic oral history.

¹⁷ On the Bulgars, L. M. Whitby, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian* (1988), 129. They strongly recall the Gonja cited by Goody, *art. cit.* (n. 13), 33 f. where the number of a notional king's sons varied according to the number of current sub-units without the Gonja being aware of it.

descends rather than ascends; that is, it takes the form 'x begat y' instead of 'z son of y son of x'. Descent largely defined the individual's standing in Germanic and similar tribal societies, and an ascending pedigree was usual, starting with the father as the most important and immediate reference point; examples elsewhere in the *Getica* take that form. That the Amal genealogy descends perhaps reflects the influence of the Bible, where genealogies universally descend.¹⁸

Other literary-inspired interference seems to have had a more distorting effect. The *Variae* preserve a general account of Cassiodorus' genealogical activities put in the mouth of the Amal Athalaric (9. 25. 4 f.).

He set out our lineage from antiquity, gaining by reading a knowledge that even the songs of [Gothic] elders scarcely recalled ('lectione discens, quod vix maiorum notitia cana retinebat'). He drew forth from the hiding place of antiquity long-forgotten kings of the Goths ('Reges Gothorum longa oblivione celatos, latibulo vetustatis eduxit'). He brought the Amal family back into view, showing clearly that our ancestors have been royal for seventeen generations.

As has long been recognized, this surely refers to the Amal genealogy, and suggests that what appears in Jordanes' *Getica* was put together largely by Cassiodorus. Although possibly rhetorical, it clearly implies that, in part at least, Cassiodorus went beyond the historical memory of the Ostrogoths, so that a Roman senator was interposing his own alterations on the genealogy of a Gothic ruling house. We know, at least, that Cassiodorus was willing to manipulate history. It was his boast to have found the Goths' origins in Roman history ('originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam', *Variae* 9. 25. 5). The point of this seems clear from early sections of the *Getica*, which comprise material from Graeco-Roman historical traditions referring to various peoples who had held land above the Black Sea: Scythians, Amazons, Getes, and Dacians (5:44–13:78). These are made relevant by false equations of the Goths with these different groups, so that the material is taken to describe early Gothic history; and the Goths can participate in well-known events from the Graeco-Roman past. If Cassiodorus was willing to fill out Gothic history in this way, it is unlikely that he would have had qualms in the matter of genealogy.¹⁹

Strikingly, even something so basic to the genealogy as its length—seventeen generations as Cassiodorus reports in this passage—may well have been classically inspired. In Roman historical reconstruction seventeen generations separate Romulus from Aeneas; the desire for the Goths to match Rome seems to have led Cassiodorus to choose this particular figure for the length of Amal rule.²⁰ Roman senators, in fact, were very interested in genealogy. Links with the classical past were part of their self-definition, one way to express their unique prestige. Ammianus complains that they prided themselves on their ties to ancient families, and correspondents of Jerome illustrate why the historian was annoyed. Paula's father claimed descent from Agamemnon, her mother from the Gracchi and the Scipiones, and her husband from Aeneas. The examples can be multiplied; one fifth-century Gallic aristocrat traced his line to Cornelius Fronto, another to the Pontic king Mithradates. Roman aristocrats were as liable to indulge in genealogical fabrication as Gothic oral history.²¹ On occasion it could also be put to political use. In 310 Constantine suddenly announced that he was descended from Claudius Gothicus, a bogus claim designed to add to his

¹⁸ Dumville, art. cit. (n. 11), 89, discussing Anglo-Saxon evidence. *Getica* 22:113 refers to Gerberic, son of Hilderith, son of Ovida, son of Nidada; 50:266 to Jordanes' own family and that of Gunthigis Baza—both ascend.

¹⁹ Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 30 f. and n. 93, claims that the Amal genealogy can only be explained as Gothic tradition, denying that this quotation suggests Cassiodorian interference, cf. R. Wenskus, 'Sachsen-Angelsachsen-Thuringer', *Wege der Forschung* (1967), 508 f. and n. 92. But Wolfram himself undermines this by arguing, plausibly, that its length mimics Aeneas and Romulus (ibid., 31, cf. n. 20), and that the Amal line

between Ermenaric and Eutharic is Cassiodorus' invention (ibid., 252 ff.).

²⁰ cf. H. Wolfram, 'Einige Überlegungen zur gotischen Origo Gentis', *Studia linguistica Alexandro Vasilii filio Issatschenko a collegis amicisque oblata* (1978), 490 ff. and N. Wagner, 'Bemerkungen zur Amalergenealogie', *Beiträge zur Namenforschung* 14 (1979), 27 ff.

²¹ A.M. 28. 4. 7 with Jerome, *Epp.* 54. 4 and 108. 1 ff.; on the Gallic aristocracy see K. F. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (1948), 10 ff. with refs, especially Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 8. 3. 3 (Fronto) and *Carm.* 22. 158 ff. (Mithradates).

legitimacy.²² Insights from anthropology must be combined with allowance for the role of Cassiodorus, whose more literary-inspired distortions may pose as great a threat to the unwary as the workings of oral history.

III. ERMENARIC AND THE *GETICA*'S USE OF AMMIANUS

Historians have long been suspicious of the Amal genealogy between Ermenaric and Eutharic. It makes Ermenaric (who, from Ammianus, was a famous fourth-century Gothic king) into an Amal, advancing the dynasty's prestige, and conveniently provides Theoderic with an Amal heir in Eutharic. Older work achieved no consensus on specific issues,²³ but had good reason to suspect manipulation. In addition, Wolfram has since pointed out that Ermenaric does not seem to have been a figure of great renown to the Amal-led Goths. In 533 Cassiodorus recounted Amalasuetha's royal forbears, giving each a distinguishing characteristic.

Enituit enim Amalus felicitate, Ostrogotha patientia, Athala mansuetudine, Vinitharius aequitate, Unimundus forma, Thorismuth castitate, Valamer fide, Theudimer pietate, sapientia, ut iam vidistis, inclitus pater.

Ermenaric is not mentioned, which led Wolfram to conclude that Ermenaric enjoyed no great reputation in Ostrogothic Italy, since he could be omitted from the list of ancestors legitimizing Amalasuetha's rule.²⁴ This seems sound. Compared to the full genealogy (probably already complete by 533²⁵), the list is selective (nine kings rather than seventeen generations), so that Ermenaric might have been omitted by chance. However, all Amal kings of real significance seem to have been mentioned in the shorter list.

From the upper reaches of the genealogy (where smooth and unhistorical father-to-son succession prevails, p. 104 above), Cassiodorus mentioned only the eponymous Amal and Ostrogotha, and the possibly eponymous Athal. They are fictitious, but probably did play an important role in the mythology of the Ostrogoths. Stories about them were no doubt fostered by the Amal family whose prestige they enhanced; at least Amal and Ostrogotha were being echoed in the names given to children well before 500.²⁶ The omitted figures seem to have had a less particular significance. Gapt (if a variation of Gaut) is met elsewhere as a personification of Woden, Hulmul appears in Danish genealogies, while Hisarnis can be translated 'Man of Iron' suggesting a legendary hero of some kind.²⁷ No explanation has been advanced for Augis and Hunuil. The reappearance of Gapt and Hulmul in other contexts suggests that there was nothing specifically Amal about them, so that it is perhaps not surprising that they were left out of Cassiodorus' shorter list. A similar explanation may account for the omissions of Hisarnis, Augis, and Hunuil. For if the genealogy's length is deliberate, designed to recall Aeneas and Romulus, then Cassiodorus must have adjusted it to achieve the right number. He was perhaps forced to add these names, which meant little to the Amals, to extend their pre-eminence for the required number of generations. Non-Amal kings, such as Berig and Filimer, did figure in Gothic oral history (n. 4), so that Cassiodorus could have found others to add.

Likewise, the list seems to have selected only the more important figures from later generations. Of the nineteen names in the genealogy between Athal and Amalasuetha, only seven appear in the *Getica*'s narrative as Gothic kings. Six of these appear in the king-list; the one omission is Ermenaric. Some of the deeds of Vinitharius, Hunimund, Thorismud, Valamer, Thiudimir and Theoderic are de-

²² First claimed in *Pan.Lat.* 7(6). 2 ff. and repeated consistently: *PLRE* I. 223 f.

²³ Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 7), 253 f. and Grierson, art. cit. (n. 8), 6 doubted Ermenaric was an Amal, while J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400-1000* (3rd rev. ed., 1985), 35 supposed that Theoderic was not.

²⁴ *Variarum* II. 1. 19, cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 252.

²⁵ *Variarum* 9. 25. 4 f. of 532 already refers to seventeen royal Amal generations.

²⁶ Thiudimir, died 474, named a daughter Amalaf-rida, and Theoderic called two of his Ostrogotha and Amalasuetha, cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 32.

²⁷ On Gapt/Gaut, see H. Moisl, 'Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and Germanic oral tradition', *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), 219 ff.; Hulmul: Schonfeld, op. cit. (n. 7), 142. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 31 would see Hisarnis, perhaps a Celtic name, as a memory of ancient Celtic domination of the Goths.

scribed by Jordanes, who even repeats the characteristic of Hunimund mentioned in the king-list (his *forma* at *Getica* 48:250). The non-appearance of the other names in the narrative suggests they were omitted from the king-list because they were not so significant. This is the case where there is a check. Amalasuētha's great-grandfather, Vandalarius, is not mentioned in the list, and the *Getica's* narrative implies that he was never king (p. 105 above). Likewise, Beremud, Veteric and Vidimir, who do appear in Jordanes but not in the list, have only subordinate roles.²⁸

In contrast to the other omitted figures, the *Getica* portrays Ermenaric as 'nobilissimus Amalorum' who dominated 'omnibus ... Scythiae et Germaniae nationibus' (23:116 ff.). If he really played anything resembling such an important role in the oral history of the Italian Goths, he merited inclusion; it would not have been difficult for Cassiodorus to find in him a characteristic that Amalasuētha could mirror. As the only king with a major role in the *Getica's* narrative not to appear in the king-list, Ermenaric's absence is striking, and it does seem likely, as Wolfram concluded, that he did not figure strongly in Amal and Ostrogothic memories.²⁹ The actual information the *Getica* reports of the king can now be examined.

That Ammianus partly underlies the *Getica's* account of the Hun assault upon the Goths is clear. Because Ermenaric was thought a king of renown, however, the *Getica's* knowledge of him has not up to now been linked to familiarity with Ammianus. Yet once doubts are raised about the extent to which Ermenaric figured in Gothic memories, attention turns to Ammianus as the possible source of the Ermenaric of the *Getica*. In his edition Mommsen pointed out where material from Ammianus appears in the *Getica*.³⁰ It draws on Ammianus precisely where he mentions Ermenaric: the early part of Book 31, Ermenaric's kingdom being described in its third chapter. From chapter two (just before Ermenaric is mentioned), the *Getica* abbreviates Ammianus' Hun digression and echoes part of his description of the Alans. The Hun digression is adapted to the *Getica's* purpose and new information added, but the general sense and some of the language are recognizably from Ammianus.³¹ When dealing with the 'Visigoths', the *Getica* also shows knowledge of the Ammianus chapter that actually refers to Ermenaric. Jordanes' account of their decision to enter the Empire draws on Ammianus 31 chapter three.³² Similarly, the *Getica's* whole description of the subsequent Gothic revolt is closely modelled on chapters four and five of Ammianus. The author of this part of the *Getica*, therefore, clearly used chapters two to five inclusive of Ammianus 31, and Ammianus' account of Ermenaric in chapter three was known to him.³³

In the *Getica*, Ermenaric is the 'noblest of the Amals' who ruled many tribes, and conquered the Heruli, the Venethi, and the Aestii. He was the ruler of all Scythia and Germany, but died fighting the Huns, his death the result partly of a wound and

²⁸ Beremud and Veteric were never actually kings (33:174 f. and 48:251), while Vidimir is subordinate both to Valamir and to Thiudimir (48:253 ff.).

²⁹ Later tales about Ermenaric have been thought to show that his name lived on in German folklore, cf. C. Brady, *The Legends of Ermenaric* (1948). The question cannot be dealt with fully here, but the *Getica* was an influential source in shaping the traditions of subsequent centuries, and manuscripts of the text are plentiful from the eighth/ninth to the twelfth centuries. Mommsen, op. cit. (n. 1), xlv ff. cites twenty, and another (dated c. 800) has since been identified: F. Giunta, *Jordanes e la cultura dell'alto medio evo* (1952), 187 ff. Additionally, the *Getica* is cited or quoted by at least sixteen and perhaps twenty contemporary Latin authors: Mommsen, op. cit. (n. 1), xlv ff. and I. Korkannen, *The Peoples of Hermanaric: Jordanes, Getica 116*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, series B, 187 (1975), 21 ff. None of these had any information about Ermenaric beyond Ammianus and Jordanes. Since the earliest mentions of Ermenaric in vernacular literature also revolve around the same information, an obvious suggestion follows. The later knowledge of Ermenaric is best explained by wide reading of the *Getica*. The alternative must suppose

that a pan-Germanic folklore preserved his memory through the 'Dark Ages', since the tribal life of the Ostrogoths was exterminated by Justinian. This seems implausible, since anthropologists have shown that oral history alters with every major upheaval and is generally chauvinistic.

³⁰ op. cit. (n. 1), xxxiii f. and footnotes to the text.

³¹ Hun digression: *Getica* 24:127 f. echoes Ammianus 31. 3. 2 ff. on the Huns' ugliness, cruelty to children and warfare, although it has additional information on the appearance of their eyes and why they cut the cheeks of their children. The *Getica's* characterization of the Alans (24:126) parallels Ammianus 31. 2. 21, cf. Mommsen, op. cit. (n. 1), 90 f. and notes.

³² *Getica* 25:131 strongly recalls Amm. 31. 3. 8-4. 1. This is not marked by Mommsen.

³³ *Getica* 25:131-26:138 corresponding to Amm. 31. 4 and 5; cf. Mommsen, op. cit. (n. 1), 92 ff. and notes, and O. Gschwantler, 'Ermanrich, sein Selbstmord und die Hamdirtsage—zur Darstellung von Ermanrichs Ende in *Getica* 24, 129 f.', in H. Wolfram and F. Daim (eds), *Die Völker an der mittleren und unteren Donau im fünften und sechsten Jahrhundert*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, Denkschrift 145 (1980), 202 f.

partly of the horror the Huns inspired within him. His death brought the Huns victory. Some of this requires little comment. Calling him the 'noblest of the Amals' is probably propaganda, since he is not listed among Amalasuetha's predecessors. More generally, while the *Getica* includes much that is not in Ammianus, it appears that miscellaneous information has simply been added to a core taken from his work.

Analysis begins with Ermenaric's death. According to Ammianus, Ermenaric tried to stand his ground against the Huns for some time (*diu*), but exaggerated rumours of the dreadful fate awaiting him led him to seek release by accepting death voluntarily (31. 3. 2).

independentium tamen diritatem augente vulgatus fama, magnorum discriminum metum voluntaria morte sedavit.

Ammianus is possibly explaining that Ermenaric died voluntarily in expiation of the bad luck which had caused the Huns to attack his lands.³⁴ Jordanes' account is somewhat different. While Ermenaric was still considering what to do about the Huns, two brothers from the Rosomoni, Ammius and Sarus, wounded him, avenging their sister Sunilda, whom Ermenaric had had torn apart between horses because of her husband's treachery. Unable to bear the wound or the strains of the invasion, Ermenaric died aged 110 (*Getica* 24:129 f.).

The Sunilda story has been much discussed because it reappears in medieval literature; the Norse *Hamdismal* describes how Hamdir (Ammius) and Sorli (Sarus) attacked Jormunrek (Ermenaric), king of the Goths, because his horse had trampled their sister Svanhild (Sunhilda). Svanhild has become Jormunrek's wife, and the story is one of personal tragedy and revenge. This contrasts with the *Getica* where the emphasis is political. The wound explains the death of the king, and his death explains why the Goths were defeated by the Huns: 'cuius mortis occasio dedit Hunnis praevalere in Gothis' (24:130). This change used to be taken as a model for the process by which legend develops out of history. The *Getica* was thought to reproduce the story Gothic bards were telling in the sixth century, when fourth-century events had not yet lost their political context. The focus of later versions on personal relationships was assumed to reflect the evolution of history into legend.³⁵

More recent work has rejected these conclusions, however, because the story directly modifies Ammianus' less flattering version of Ermenaric's death, where he so dreads the Huns that he prefers rather to die voluntarily than resist them. Ammianus' account is in fact retained by Jordanes as one half of his explanation of Ermenaric's death—'quam etiam Hunnorum incursionibus non ferens' (24:130)—but emphasis is transferred to the other half, the wounding. Six lines in Mommsen's edition describe the wounding, but dread of the Huns occupies only one, and it is not stated that Ermenaric accepted death voluntarily. The chain of events reinforces the emphasis. The wound first incapacitates Ermenaric, allowing the Huns to invade, and then combines with the invasion to kill him. The implication is clear; without the wound, Ermenaric would not have died nor the Huns been victorious.

Ammianus' less flattering version has always been preferred because it is contemporary, but there is a more specific point. Without the Sunilda story, Jordanes' account would be identical to Ammianus'. Since Ammianus was known to the *Getica*'s author, it seems very likely that the Sunilda story was deliberately introduced into the *Getica*'s account to make Ermenaric's death less humiliating. Goths would not have appreciated hearing about a great Gothic king who preferred to die rather than fight the Huns.³⁶ Even though they disagree, therefore, Ammianus would seem to be the primary source for the *Getica*'s account of Ermenaric's death.

³⁴ Gschwantler, art. cit., 195 ff. Burgundian kings certainly took the blame when luck turned bad: Amm. 23. 5. 14.

³⁵ *Hamdismal*, ed. and trans. U. Dronke, *The Poetic Edda* 1 (1969). On the old view of legend development, see Brady, op. cit. (n. 29), esp. 2 ff. and 271 ff. Gschwantler, art. cit. (n. 33), 187 and T. M. Anders-

son, *A Preface to the Nibelungenlied* (1987), 3 ff. stress the importance of this passage for the study of 'germanischen Heldensage'.

³⁶ cf. Gschwantler, art. cit. (n. 33), 190; Andersson, op. cit., 8 f.; cf. L. M. Hollander, 'The Legendary Form of the *Hamdismal*', *Arkiv fur Nordisk Filologi* 77 (1962), 57 f. and Dronke, op. cit., 192 f.

The significance of the information about Sunilda remains unclear. Some have seen the episode as a genuine story about Ermenaric, and since the wounding does not seem heroic, they suggest that, as in the later *Hamdismal*, the avenging brothers were the heroic characters and not the king.³⁷ This is possible, but Ermenaric does not seem to have enjoyed great renown in Amal Italy. And if medieval readings of the *Getica* were the inspiration of later versions such as the *Hamdismal*, they provide no corroborative evidence for the form or even existence of an earlier Gothic story (pp. 110–11 above and n. 29). Alternatively, the Sunilda material has been viewed as complete fabrication. Sunilda has a similar name to Sunigilda, the wife of Odovacar, Theoderic's rival, whom he starved to death in prison. The story has been thought an echo of these events, perhaps designed to make Theoderic's treatment of Sunigilda seem less cruel.³⁸ Again this is inconclusive, but for our purposes the uncertainty is not crucial. Whatever its origins, the Sunilda story was used to alter Ammianus' account of Ermenaric's death.

Jordanes' descriptions of the tribes Ermenaric ruled and his wars again include much that is not in Ammianus, but close inspection suggests that the directing thought was likewise Ammianus' briefer account. Ammianus describes Ermenaric as ruling 'late patentes et uberes pagos', and as

... bellicosissimi regis, et per multa variaque fortiter facta, vicinis nationibus formidati (31. 3. 1).

Jordanes' information is an extended gloss on this concise description. The list of peoples ruled (23:116) expands on Ammianus' first comment, the wars (23:117–20) on the second. Since the topics even occur in the same order, it is tempting to think that Ammianus' few words have been carefully expanded.³⁹

This cannot be proved absolutely, but examination of Jordanes provides some support. In Mommsen's text, the tribes ruled are described:

habebat si quidem quos domuerat Golthescytha Thiudos Inaunxis Vasinabroncas Merens Mordens Imniscaris Rogas Tadzans Athaul Navego Bubegenas Coldas.

Research into these names has produced interesting conclusions. Some of the words are Gothic, while others from classical sources follow Gothic grammar. Despite going back to the Gothic language, however, it is no administrative list or historical memory of peoples Ermenaric actually ruled. According to a recent and convincing interpretation, it is composed of the Gothic for peoples familiar from classical geographies, a biblical reference, and some widely known ethnic names. Adjusting Mommsen's text, the list can be interpreted thus:

The peoples of Scythia (*Scythathiudos*), wagon-dwellers (*inaunxis* = ἀμάξοικοι), nomads (*vasinabroncas* = νομάδες), royal Sarmatians (*merens* = βασιλικοί), raw-flesh eaters (*mordens* = μοδόκται), plain-dwellers (*imniscans* = *campestres* or perhaps Roxolani), Rugi (*rogas*), Iazyges (*Iadzans*), the family of Gog, descendants of Noah (*athaul naue *goc*),⁴⁰ Peucenai (*Bubegenas*), and Celts (*Coldae*).

As one might expect, they would all seem to be names of peoples who inhabited Scythia and Germany—the lands that, according to the *Getica*, Ermenaric ruled. Many are not specific, and the list shows familiarity with classical literature; *inaunxis*

³⁷ Gschwantler, art. cit. (n. 33), 193 ff., Andersson, op. cit. (n. 35), 8 f.

³⁸ On Sunigilda, see *PLRE* 2, 793 with the arguments of N. Lukman, *Ermanaric hoc Jordanes og Saxo*, in *Studier fra Sprog -og Oltidsforskning* 208 (1949), 35 ff. The explanation is that of T. M. Andersson, 'Cassiodorus and the Gothic legend of Ermanaric', *Euphorion* 57 (1963), 41 ff.

³⁹ Brady, op. cit. (n. 29), 2 ff. noted that Jordanes' account reads as an elaboration of Ammianus.

⁴⁰ Because of the Hun invasions, eschatological prophecy about Gog and Magog sweeping down from the north came to be associated with the peoples of Scythia, A. R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (1932), 9 ff., hence the reference to Gog.

vasinabroncas is probably Gothic for the ἀμάξιοι καὶ νομάδες of classical ethnography (cf. Strabo 7. 3. 7 and 11. 2. 1), while *merens mordens* is perhaps Gothic for βασιλικοί καὶ μοδόκαι (Ptolemy 5. 9. 16).⁴¹ It is a list of Scythian and German peoples from various sources, without value as a witness for Ermenaric's fourth-century kingdom. Instead it strongly suggests that a variety of classical literary sources rather than Gothic memories were used to find suitable subjects for a ruler of Scythia and Germany, the names then being transposed into Gothic.

Ermenaric's three wars against Alaric of the Heruli (23:117 f.), the Venethi (23:119), and the Aestii (23:120) are very vague, providing no detail other than the name of the opponent. Relevant ethnographic material is placed in between. By any standards this has little to do with fourth-century reality, as the histories of two of the peoples fought confirm. The Venethi are little known before c. 450, and are associated with the Slavic peoples who seem to have come into direct contact with the Graeco-Roman world only after the collapse of Attila's Empire.⁴² Their inclusion corresponds well with the idea that the wars are a sixth-century gloss on Ammianus. Of the Baltic Aestii nothing is heard between the first century and the sixth, when an embassy from them arrived at Theoderic's court in Ravenna. In return they received a letter from Theoderic, written by Cassiodorus, which stressed that their embassy had renewed contact after a long silence. This is a striking coincidence, suggesting that the appearance of this embassy in the sixth century prompted the thought that, by conquering them, Ermenaric's supposed realm could be extended north to the Baltic.⁴³

The *Getica* also adds epithets and allusions which emphasize Ermenaric's glory. He is described as 'ruler of all the nations of Scythia and Germany', and, as has been seen, this is justified by the peoples he ruled and wars he fought. There was also, perhaps, a more specific thought behind this title. At his funeral (*Getica* 49:257), Attila is said to have been proclaimed

the chief of the Huns, King Attila, born of his father Mundiuch, lord of the bravest tribes, who, with a power unheard of before himself, alone mastered the Scythian and German realms ... ('qui inaudita ante se potentia solus Scythia et Germanica regna possedit ...')

The *Getica's* Ermenaric, therefore, would seem to have been designed as a Gothic answer to Attila. Like the great Hun king, he ruled all Scythia and Germany. This account of Attila's funeral is probably from Priscus, often the source of the *Getica's* information about Attila,⁴⁴ in which case the claims for Ermenaric might be a specific rebuttal of the statement that no one had ever exercised such a dominion before Attila. This emphasizes that the *Getica's* more glorious Ermenaric was a deliberate creation.

A more explicit parallel is drawn between Ermenaric and Alexander (23:116). The comparison may have been on the obvious level that Ermenaric, like Alexander, conquered many peoples. However, there was a legend in antiquity that, having failed to conquer the Scythians, Alexander built a wall to contain them.⁴⁵ If alluding to this, the *Getica* was perhaps claiming that Ermenaric was greater than Alexander because he had managed to conquer Scythia. Either way, the comparison indicates that we are dealing with a literary creation rather than Gothic memory, since in rhetorical

⁴¹ *Getica* 23:116; cf. Korkannen, op. cit. (n. 29), 48–73 (review of previous scholarship, *ibid.*, 32–46). The interpretation of these names is contentious, but Korkannen's cautious approach is very sound compared to others (cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 86 ff. who does not cite Korkannen) who wish to identify the names with little-known Baltic tribes. Classical ethnography had a strong tendency to reuse inherited categories and information rather than undertake real research. B. D. Shaw, "Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk": the Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad', *Ancient Society* 13/14 (1982/3), 5 ff.

⁴² e.g. *Getica* 5:34 ff.; Venethi are mentioned by Ptolemy, *Geography* 3. 5. 7 and Pliny, *NH* 4. 97, but

play no major role in Roman sources until the sixth century.

⁴³ Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 5. 2; I am grateful to Dr S. Barnish for this, and for indicating its relevance to the ancestry of Eutharic (p. 106). The Heruli are likewise prominent from the mid-fifth century (e.g. Procopius, *Wars* 6. 14 f. and Cassiodorus, *Variarum* 4. 2), but they had also been enemies of the Empire in the third century, so that little can be made of their inclusion.

⁴⁴ Blockley, op. cit. (n. 1), 113 f.

⁴⁵ Tribal movements of the migration period were conceived of by some as the breaking of Alexander's Wall, letting loose Gog and Magog: Anderson, op. cit. (n. 40), 9 ff., cf. Korkannen, op. cit. (n. 29), 76 ff.

handbooks such as that of Menander Rhetor Alexander was a stock comparison for celebrating a subject's conquests and military ability.⁴⁶

A Biblical allusion completes the picture. Ermenaric's age at death equates him with the patriarchs Joshua and Joseph, who likewise died aged 110. The actual wording—'grandevus et plenus dierum' (24:130)—also recalls the Bible's formulaic description of the deaths of Isaac and Job. It has been plausibly argued that the parallel with Joseph goes beyond their age. After Joseph died, the Jews became slaves in Egypt, and the parallel was perhaps meant to prompt the thought that after Ermenaric's death the Goths similarly became slaves of the Huns.⁴⁷ These allusions merely emphasize that the *Getica's* Ermenaric is not historical. Given patriarchal dignity and placed on a par with the greatest of barbarian and Graeco-Roman conquerors, the Ermenaric of the *Getica* is a symbol of Gothic greatness. It is not surprising, however, that he was probably little known to the sixth-century Ostrogoths, because the *Getica's* king is an artificial and literary creation. Ammianus' account was filled out to give the king glorious wars, a wide dominion and a less ignominious death.⁴⁸

A number of conclusions follow. Nothing suggests that this inflated picture has any basis in reality beyond its foundations in Ammianus. Since Ammianus makes no mention of Ermenaric belonging to the Amal dynasty, suspicions about the family link between Theoderic and Ermenaric seem well-founded. Ermenaric was not an Amal, but a fourth-century king whose memory was resurrected and amplified when someone found him in a copy of Ammianus Marcellinus. The family link between Theoderic and Eutharic (Theoderic's heir who was deliberately imported from Spain to marry his daughter, p. 106 above) must therefore also be false. In the genealogy, Ermenaric actually ties Eutharic into the Amal dynasty. It is the supposed fact that Ermenaric was the brother of Vultulf which makes Eutharic into a suitable Amal heir for Theoderic. Since Ermenaric's position in the genealogy is false, the relations dependent upon him are also false, and Eutharic's genealogical qualification as an Amal disappears. This probably points to the specific intent behind the whole introduction of Ermenaric into Amal history. Beyond a general desire to increase the dynasty's prestige, Ermenaric was used to manufacture a genealogical link between Theoderic and his heir. This in turn explains why Ammianus' account of the king became so extravagantly inflated; a king of unique distinction was required for such an important role.

These points indicate that it was Cassiodorus who rewrote Ammianus' account of Ermenaric. The great (and false) reputation established for the king by the *Getica's* narrative equips him for the significant (and equally false) role he plays in the genealogy. If, as seems certain (pp. 108–10 above), the genealogy was the work of Cassiodorus, then so was the reworking of Ammianus which created a king of suitable stature to provide a vital genealogical link.⁴⁹ The striking coincidence noted above supports this conclusion. The *Getica* states that Ermenaric conquered the Aestii, and one of Cassiodorus' letters records that contact with them was renewed in the time of Theoderic, echoing the same passage of Tacitus (*Germania* 45) as does the *Getica*. The sudden appearance of an embassy from the Aestii seems to have inspired in Cassiodorus' mind the thought that they could be used to extend Ermenaric's empire.

More generally, the idea that Cassiodorus found Ermenaric in a copy of Ammianus and amplified the report for other purposes aptly fits Cassiodorus' own account of his activities. The *Variae* refer to Cassiodorus' work in reviving the

⁴⁶ *Menander Rhetor*, ed. and trans. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson (1981), 112 ff.

⁴⁷ e.g. Wagner, art. cit. (n. 10), 15 or Wolfram, art. cit. (n. 10), 82.

⁴⁸ Non- or semi-literate peoples tend to rever the written word over their own traditions, so that Cassiodorus may have been responding to the Goths' own prejudices when importing Ermenaric from a written source: Henige, op. cit. (n. 11), ch. 3, cf. Goody, op. cit. (n. 13), 11 ff.

⁴⁹ The sixth-century grammarian Priscian had a copy of Ammianus in Constantinople, but the tradition of the surviving text is western, having been copied from a MS in insular hand in Carolingian times, so there is no difficulty in supposing Cassiodorus to have used Ammianus. The insular hand had copied a MS in late Roman capitals, perhaps the text of Cassiodorus: C. U. Clark, *The Text Tradition of Ammianus Marcellinus* (1904), 62 f.

memory of virtually forgotten Amal kings, specifically mentioning his use of written sources (p. 109 above), and this is precisely how he might have justified his addition of Ermenaric to Amal history. Once he mentioned the name he had found in Ammianus, then no doubt some Goth could be found who remembered him as an important Amal. Cassiodorus also had strong links with Eutharic. Not only were the two contemporaries at Theoderic's court, but Eutharic was Cassiodorus' patron, and the latter's *Chronicle* was composed to celebrate Eutharic's consulship.⁵⁰ Finding a suitable ancestor to tie his patron into the Amal family was probably another aspect of this relationship. The chain of thought may have been started by the slight resemblance between the names 'Eutharicus' and 'Ermenaricus'. Both the inflated account of Ermenaric in the *Getica's* narrative and his place in the Amal genealogy, therefore, are false. Ammianus provides the only historical information about the king, and all the other detail was fabricated by Cassiodorus, who mobilized the considerable genealogical expertise of a Roman aristocrat for the benefit of his Gothic king. Analysis can now turn to *Getica* 48:246–52, describing Ermenaric's successors.

IV. THE SUCCESSORS OF ERMENARIC

There are some resemblances between Jordanes' and Ammianus' accounts of Ermenaric's successors; this is of course to be expected. Similarities concentrate in Ermenaric's immediate heir: Vithimiris in Ammianus (31. 3. 3) and Vinitharius in Jordanes (48:246–9). Both are actually described as his successor, and their names sound somewhat alike. Both die in battle, and there is again a vague resemblance in the names of tribes they fought; Vithimiris waged war against the Alans, Vinitharius against the Antes. It has also been argued that Ammianus and the *Getica* do not regard this successor as Ermenaric's son. The genealogy makes Vinitharius Ermenaric's great-nephew, while Ammianus' words 'rex Vithimiris creatus' have been thought to deny a direct family link.⁵¹ These similarities have decisively shaped previous discussion. Differences have been argued away in order to equate Vinitharius with Vithimiris, and make Jordanes as a whole agree with Ammianus. Ammianus is the more trustworthy source, so that to show that Jordanes' account is essentially the same establishes the *Getica's* reliability.⁵² Resemblance is so superficial and disagreement so profound, however, that this view cannot be maintained.

While Vithimiris and Vinitharius sound similar, they are different names, and do not support the identification of one man with the other.⁵³ An alternative approach has therefore been adopted, which sees Vinitharius as a descriptive second name, meaning 'Wend-Fighter'. Procopius records a Goth with the name Vasandus Vandalaris, so that a hypothetical name *Vithimiris Vinitharius is not impossible, but this does not prove that our two men are one and the same.⁵⁴ If we do accept such an equation, then Jordanes gains credit (in a slightly underhand way) for being correct about Ermenaric's successor but only at the expense of all the information he otherwise supplies. Ammianus is more authoritative, so that wherever the two differ, he must be preferred. Since they differ at every point, the result of equating Vinitharius with Vithimiris is to reject every detail of Jordanes' account.

Both die in battle, but fighting different peoples. Vinitharius is killed by the Hun Balamber (48:248 f.). Ammianus saw the Huns as the root cause of Vithimiris' troubles, but he seems to have died fighting Alans (31.3.3). As Ammianus did not make this explicit, it will not be stressed, since disagreement is more marked in other areas.

⁵⁰ Its preface and postscript (*C.M.* 2, 120 and 161) make the relationship clear, cf. J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (1979), 33 ff.

⁵¹ Wenskus, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 479, cf. Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 252.

⁵² Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 252 f. has now rejected this approach, to which he previously subscribed (refs as n. 10). He clearly shows that it makes historical nonsense, but still seems inclined to equate the two sets

of father and son (*ibid.*, 252), so that it remains important to pursue the argument.

⁵³ cf. Schonfeld, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 260 f. (Venetharius) and 263 (Vidimir).

⁵⁴ Procopius, *Wars* 5. 18. 29–33. This was proposed by Marquart, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 368 and accepted by the scholars cited in n. 10. Schmidt, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 256, rejected it.

The two men fought, for instance, different peoples. Vithimiris' Alans were nomadic Iranians who shared the south Russian steppe with the Goths in the fourth century. The Huns fell first on the Alans, pushing them westwards, so that the Goths had to fight both Alans and Huns (Amm. 31. 2. 1; 12; 3. 1-7). The Antes, by contrast, were Slavic. The *Getica* brackets them with the Slavs and the Venethi, and records that the three shared blood ties. Procopius similarly stresses that Slavs and Antes were closely related; they had previously shared the same name (Σπόροι), spoke the same language, and were identical to one another in manner of life. The *Strategicon* of Maurice likewise states that Antes are in every way similar to Slavs.⁵⁵ Alans and Antes are distinct tribal groups, so that if Vinitharius and Vithimiris are equated, Ammianus' report that the king fought the Alans must be preferred.

The relationship between Ermenaric and his successor is also problematic. In Jordanes, Vinitharius is the king's great-nephew, but, as we have seen, Ermenaric was a late addition to the Amal genealogy and his reported relationship to its other figures is not trustworthy. The relationship of Ermenaric and his successor must be discussed using only Ammianus. His words ('rex Vithimiris creatus') do not, in fact, necessarily imply a distant relationship. As Schmidt suggested, they leave the question open.⁵⁶ And while this is not conclusive, blood ties were clearly a factor of importance in deciding succession among Ermenaric's Goths. After Vithimiris' death, his son became king even though he was still a minor and the tribe faced difficult circumstances (Amm. 31.3.3).

If Vinitharius and Vithimiris are equated, the substance of Jordanes' narrative must be rejected. His version of the name must be explained as a descriptive title; the king fought Alans rather than Antes; Jordanes may have him die fighting the wrong people; and the parameters of his relationship to Ermenaric must be decided from Ammianus. This pattern is reinforced when the two accounts of Ermenaric's successors are considered as a whole.

Vinitharius' son is Vandalarius, while Ammianus calls Vithimiris' son Vithericus (or Videricus). There is no similarity in name here, and even if Vandalarius is treated as a second name—'Vandal-Fighter' (as argued by the scholars cited in n. 10)—the two accounts still do not agree. Vithericus went south of the Danube in 376 to escape the Huns, guided by Alatheus and Saphrax (Amm. 31. 4. 12 f. and 5. 3). If Vandalarius is the same man, one must explain how his sons (Valamir, Thiudimir and Vidimir) were able seventy years later to command those Goths who had remained north of the river under Hun domination; Valamir is first mentioned as a Gothic leader subordinate to Attila (*Getica* 48:252 f.). Explanations have been advanced, but if not impossible, they are conjectural, and do not make an equation of Vandalarius and Vithericus likely.⁵⁷

The *Getica* denies that Vandalarius was ever actually king. The crown passes via the *interregnum* from Thorismud, Vandalarius' cousin, to Valamir, his son, omitting Vandalarius himself (48:250 f.), and Vandalarius also fails to appear among Amalasu-entha's royal forbears (cf. pp. 110 f.). This view of Vandalarius contradicts Ammianus' description of Vithimiris' son as 'Vithericus Greuthungorum rex' (31. 4. 12). Moreover, in Ammianus succession passes smoothly from Vithimiris to Vithericus (father to son), both of whom are kings. In Jordanes succession from father to son is interrupted by Hunimund and Thorismud, and the son never reigns (*Getica*

⁵⁵ *Getica* 23:119, cf. 5:34 f. and 48:247; Procopius, *Wars* 7. 14. 22-30; Maurice, *Strategicon* 11. 4. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 252 argues on the basis of an Iranian etymology for 'Antae' and the names of some of their leaders (F. Altheim, *Geschichte der Hunnen* 1 (1959), 71 ff.) that in the fourth century the Antae were Iranian, so that Jordanes' Vinitharius and Ammianus' Vithimiris do have the same enemy, cf. R. Werner, 'Zur Herkunft der Anten: ein ethnisches und soziales Problem der Spätantike', *Kölner Historische Abhandlungen* 28 (1980), 573 ff. This is not convincing; an etymology for 'Antae' can be constructed from Slavic (M. Gimbutas, *The Slavs* (1971), 60-2), and Haussig (in Altheim, *ibid.*, 75 f.) comments on similarities

between the names of Antae and Slav leaders.

⁵⁶ Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 7), 257. Ammianus uses *creare* of both the choice and the ceremony in elevating a leader. Where it describes the latter, *creare* could be used of a ruler elevated because of a blood tie. Thus Ammianus has Julian describe himself as 'creatum Caesarem' by Constantius. The two were first cousins, and Julian was to continue the Constantinian dynasty (Amm. 20. 8. 6). Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 252 also argues that Vithimiris cannot have been Ermenaric's son because in the sagas Ermenaric kills his offspring. I would deny (cf. n. 28) that these later literary accounts have historical value.

⁵⁷ cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 252 f.

48:250–2). Attempts have been made to dismiss Hunimund and Thorismud, making Jordanes again agree with Ammianus, so that, for our purpose, the pattern is repeated. Jordanes can be made to agree with Ammianus only by rejecting all of his information.

Although, like Ammianus, it purports to describe Ermenaric's successors, the *Getica's* account is quite different. To date, scholars have been swayed by superficial resemblances to find ways around the accounts' deeper incompatibility. But since even the names of the kings are different, an alternative approach suggests itself: allowing profound disagreement to override vague similarity (as *a priori* it should) prompts the different conclusion that Jordanes and Ammianus are in fact describing different events. This is why they cannot be made to agree, and the superficial resemblances might then explain how different events were first confused.

This raises a number of questions, but there is at least a logical point of confusion between Ammianus and Jordanes. As we have seen, there is some resemblance between Vinitharius and Vithimiris (a similarity in names, the fact that both die in battle and that the names of their enemies both begin with 'A'), but on all other counts this second passage is totally different from Ammianus' account of Ermenaric's successors. Vithimiris and Vinitharius thus provide the only possible point of confusion between the information of this section and Ammianus, and knowledge elsewhere displayed in the *Getica* shows that its author had indeed read Ammianus' account of Vithimiris. The *Getica* draws on Ammianus' report about Ermenaric at 31. 3. 1–2, and Vithimiris is mentioned at 31. 3. 3. Since the *Getica* also contains material which appears in Ammianus from 31. 3. 8 onwards, its author clearly knew Ammianus' account of Vithimiris. Similarities between it and the *Getica's* extant account of Vinitharius thus provide a reasonable point of confusion.⁵⁸

As Vithimiris does not actually appear in the *Getica*, the confusion of him with Vinitharius could only have been made by someone who actually had a copy of Ammianus. Rather than supposing every contributor to the *Getica* to have had access to this quite rare text,⁵⁹ it is more likely that the same student of Gothic history used Ammianus twice: first to attach Ermenaric to Amal history and then to equate Vithimiris and Vinitharius. Ermenaric's role in Eutharic's ancestry suggests that Cassiodorus was responsible for the former. He can thus also be identified as the author of the confusion between Ammianus' Vithimiris and that Vinitharius who, to judge from his role in the *Getica* and place among Amalasuetha's forbears, seems to have been a figure of importance to the sixth-century Ostrogoths (*Variae* 11. 1. 19 with p. 110 above).

The reason for such a confusion follows Cassiodorus' use of Ammianus. Ammianus was the basic source of information about Ermenaric whom Cassiodorus imported into the ancestry of Eutharic. Cassiodorus thus needed to integrate Ermenaric into what was already known of Ostrogothic history. I would suggest that resemblances between Vinitharius, well known to these Goths (cf. his appearance among Amalasuetha's forbears), and Vithimiris, who appeared in the new information as Ermenaric's successor, were seized upon to attach the new information to the old. Vinitharius thus became Ermenaric's successor in Cassiodorus' historical reconstruction. This cannot be proved, but is a reasonable hypothesis, and there is a nice irony in the thought that Cassiodorus originated this equation which has plagued modern scholarship. A solution begins to emerge, therefore, to the problems encountered in this second passage of the *Getica*: disagreements between it and Ammianus are due to the fact that different events are being described. Problems remain, but its reliability need no longer be undermined by comparison with Ammianus.

V. HUNIMUND AND THORISMUD

Jordanes and Ammianus have previously been reconciled by arguments that Hunimund and Thorismud are foreigners wrongly included among the Amals. Their

⁵⁸ *Getica* 25:131–26:138, ed. Mommsen, 92 f. and p. 111 f.

⁵⁹ Only Priscian and the *Getica* show knowledge of it in antiquity, n. 49 above.

names contain a *mu[n]d* ending and do not alliterate with others in the genealogy, prompting the thought that they were neither Amals nor Ostrogothic leaders. Roughly contemporary figures with the same names have therefore been identified as possible causes of confusion: a Suevic king Hunimund and the Visigothic king Thorismud.⁶⁰ Arguments based solely on names are rarely satisfactory, however, and Amals with *mu[n]d*-type names are known (even if not in the genealogy). Theoderic had a brother Theodimund, and was also related to a certain Sidimund.⁶¹ Name forms thus prove nothing, and since Hunimund and Thorismud do appear among Amalasu-entha's royal forbears, their possible role as Gothic leaders must be taken more seriously (cf. pp. 110 f.).

There are better reasons, in fact, for thinking that Hunimund and Thorismud were not Amals, though they probably were Gothic kings. In the genealogy, they are the son and grandson of Ermenaric, but Ammianus provides our only reliable information about Ermenaric, and he mentions neither of the two, so that the genealogy is probably misleading.⁶² Hunimund and Thorismud would seem to have become Amals incidentally, when Cassiodorus attached the line of Eutharic (in which they appear) to the Amals.

Some confirmation of this, and that Hunimund and Thorismud can still be retained as Gothic kings is to be found in a letter of Cassiodorus mentioning one Gensemund. A slight problem exists because the *Getica* recalls Gesimund rather than Gensemund, but these are versions of the same name, and Gesimund is well attested among manuscript variants of Cassiodorus' letter. The two can probably be equated and the information of letter and narrative combined, since it is unlikely that two figures with the same uncommon name both played important roles in Ostrogothic history.⁶³

The *Getica* describes Gensemund as Hunimund's son which would make him Thorismud's brother. Supposing the genealogy simply to have omitted him, perhaps because he was never king (as, indeed, it omits Theoderic's brother Theodimund), a coherent picture emerges. The letter records that Gensemund was adopted by the Amals as son-at-arms, so that he was not related to them by blood. This would imply that his father and brother (from the *Getica*, Hunimund and Thorismud) were not Amals either. Even so, according to the letter, Gensemund had been a potential Ostrogothic leader:

Gensemund, a man whose praises the whole world should sing, a man only made son by adoption at arms ('solum armis filius factus'), yet joined himself with such devotion to the Amals, that he transferred it to their heirs, even though he himself was asked to be king ('quamvis ipse peteretur ad regnum').

Although not an Amal, Gensemund was asked to take up the leadership, but declined it. Even if one does not accept that Cassiodorus' letter and the *Getica* combine to establish Gensemund's family links, it had clearly been possible in earlier generations for a non-Amal to lead these Goths. This also strengthens the identification of Gesimund and Gensemund. Calling on this man to be king ('ipse peteretur ad regnum') would make perfect sense if his father (Hunimund) and brother (Thorismud) had both previously ruled.

The *Getica*'s account of Hunimund and Thorismud thus presents no major

⁶⁰ The consensus among both older and more recent scholarship: e.g. Schmidt, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 253 f. and the scholars cited in n. 10. The Suevic Hunimund was adopted as son-at-arms by the Amal Valamir, and it has been argued that this caused him to become an Amal, the confusion being mirrored in the fact that the Gothic Hunimund fights the Suevi (*Getica* 48:250 and 53:273 ff.). Similarly, the two-year reign of Thorismud has been thought to derive from that of the Visigothic Thorismud (451–3). The Visigothic king also lost his horse in battle as did the supposed Amal (*Getica* 40:211 and 48:250). These similarities make confusion possible, but not probable. The Visigothic Thorismud did

not fall off his horse, for instance, but was first wounded and then pulled off it.

⁶¹ Malchus, *Blockley fr.* 20, Müller *fr.* 18.

⁶² The conclusion from different arguments of Schmidt, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 253 f. and Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 252 ff.

⁶³ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8. 9. 8 with Schönfeld, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 147 and *Getica* 48:248. Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 253 f. accepts Gensemund as historical but doubts the equation with Gesimund because the latter must have been operating in c. 376 if he fought alongside Balamber. However, cf. p. 124 ff.; the Gesimund/Balamber episode can be redated c. 450, removing the objection.

problems. They were probably not Amals, but Cassiodorus' letter shows that such men had been able to rule. There seems no reason not to accept the implication of the king-list and the *Getica's* narrative that Hunimund and Thorismud had led the Italian Goths and for that reason were remembered by them. They appear in the king-list, it is worth noting, in the same order as in the text of the *Getica*. It is their inclusion in the Amal genealogy, rather than their role as Gothic kings, which is problematic.⁶⁴

Two possibilities present themselves. Like Ermenaric, they may have been introduced falsely to Eutharic's ancestry. As former Gothic kings, Hunimund and Thorismud would have made suitable additions to Eutharic's genealogical title. Alternatively, Eutharic may really have been descended from them, in which case their inclusion among the Amals simply followed his, caused by the false link provided by Ermenaric. There is no way to decide conclusively, but, as the more economic explanation involving fewer falsehoods, the latter is preferable. After all, Theoderic ruled both Visigoths and Ostrogoths after 511, and was able to choose his heir from all the Goths of Italy, southern Gaul and Spain. He is likely to have picked a Goth of distinction to marry his daughter, even if he could not find a genuine Amal. If Eutharic's ancestry is correct apart from his attachment to the Amals through Ermenaric, then Theoderic's choice of him as heir becomes entirely comprehensible. Descended from a family that had previously ruled the Italian Goths, Eutharic would, in alliance with an Amal wife, have had a good chance of maintaining Theoderic's kingdom after his death. Since there is a context for Eutharic's family to have moved to the Visigoths (p. 122 below), it is more likely that Theoderic chose his heir from a distinguished family of former Ostrogothic rulers, rather than a nonentity requiring an entirely fictitious genealogy.

VI. VALAMIR'S SEIZURE OF POWER

Of Balamber the *Getica* reports information which seems to deny any doublet with the Amal king Valamir. He led the Hun invasion, and after Ermenaric's death, conquered the Goths. With the help of Gesimund, son of Hunimund, he later killed the Amal Vinitharius, who had broken away from his overlordship, marrying Vinitharius' granddaughter Vadamerca (*Getica* 24:130 and 48:248–9). Given the historical context and the confusion between Vinitharius and Vithimiris, however, the doublet can be maintained. Full proof is impossible because the *Getica's* information goes beyond anything in other sources, but the argument makes sense of the problems and the context.

There are two obvious questions. Why should Valamir appear as a Hun king contributing to the death of Ermenaric, and why should he be reported killing his own grandfather and marrying Vadamerca, who must have been his first cousin or sister? Given the way that information from Ammianus has been integrated, an answer presents itself to the first. It starts from the hypothesis—not necessarily correct—that there is a logical reason for Valamir/Balamber being described as a Hun king of the time of Ermenaric. If this leads to a reasonable explanation, however, as here it does, it seems fair to say that it has provisionally justified itself.

The *Getica* had no reliable information about Ermenaric beyond that still available to us in Ammianus. Ammianus mentions no Hun leader called Balamber, so that his role in the death of Ermenaric must be a mistake on the part of the author of this part of the *Getica*; that is, Cassiodorus. It has also been established that the point of contact between information from Ammianus and other material in the *Getica* is that Cassiodorus thought Vinitharius and Vithimiris to be the same man. The appearance of Balamber as a Hun king is thus the result of a double confusion.

⁶⁴ Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 253 suggests that there may have been two Hunimunds. Hunimund is styled *magnus* at *Getica* 48:248, and W. Kienast, 'Magnus = der Ältere', *Historische Zeitschrift* 205 (1967), 1–14 showed that in medieval documents *magnus* could mean 'the elder' rather than 'the great'. This seems unnecessary. Kienast, esp. 10 ff., is explicit that it could still

mean 'great', particularly in contexts drawing on Late Antique models. Jordanes is a Late Antique author, and both the genealogy and Amalasuetha's king-list recall only one Hunimund. The reference to *Alaricus magnus* (*Getica* 47:245), also cited by Wolfram, is no problem; 'great' is an appropriate epithet for a Gothic history to use of the Goth who conquered Rome.

Cassiodorus knew from his non-Ammianus material that Vinitharius was killed by Balamber. Since he thought Vithimiris and Vinitharius were one man, this seemed to provide him with information which supplemented Ammianus by supplying the name of Vithimiris/Vinitharius' killer. This in turn, it can be suggested, led him to suppose that the killer of Vinitharius/Vithimiris was also responsible for the death of Ermenaric, Vithimiris' immediate predecessor, so that he simply added Balamber's name to Ammianus' account of the Hun invasions. The anonymous Huns of Ammianus thus acquired a leader—the result of the *Getica's* confusion between Vithimiris and Vinitharius. This would explain why the *Getica* insists that the Huns had a single leader in 376 when the trustworthy Ammianus states that they were then governed by their great men in combination (31. 2. 7).⁶⁵

The first objection to a doublet of Balamber and Valamir can be countered, therefore, but the argument depends entirely on the author of the *Getica* knowing that Balamber killed Vinitharius. Hence the second problem not only remains, but cannot be explained as a confusion. In the light of the genealogy and Cassiodorus' king-list, it makes no sense for Balamber/Valamir to have killed Vinitharius and married Vadamerca. These documents establish relationships between the three which are incompatible with a fight to the death and marriage. The genealogy and king-list cannot, however, be taken at face value. Ermenaric's addition to Amal history shows that the genealogy is untrustworthy where it cannot be checked. Equally, the king-list includes Hunimund and Thorismud among Amal ancestors of Amalasuetha, so that, in part at least, it is as misleading as the genealogy. These two interpretative documents are the propaganda of a dynasty seeking historical legitimacy through the claim that Amal rule had been continuous over a long period. Preconceptions founded upon them are quite unjustified, since they combine the genealogical manipulations of both a Roman senator and Gothic oral history. There is no evidence that the Amals had, as they later claimed, monopolized power among the Ostrogoths since time immemorial.

Once this preconception is called into question, a power struggle between Vinitharius and Balamber/Valamir begins to make sense. It combines with the existence of Hunimund and Thorismud as non-Amal Gothic leaders to suggest alternative circumstances where a number of smaller Gothic groups existed under independent leaders. Struggle between Balamber/Valamir and Vinitharius can be seen as one part of the process whereby these smaller groups combined to create one larger unit: the more familiar Ostrogoths. That Vinitharius should have later appeared among Amalasuetha's royal forbears and in the Amal's legitimizing genealogy is no problem, because to include defeated rivals in a victor's genealogy is a standard means of increasing prestige.⁶⁶ The process would have been facilitated here by the marriage between Balamber/Valamir and Vinitharius' granddaughter Vadamerca. Even if posthumously, Vinitharius became Balamber/Valamir's 'grandfather-in-law', easing his integration into the Amal line where he appears as Valamir's true grandfather. This provides, perhaps, an example of oral history adjusting to changed circumstances. The preconceptions which battle between Vinitharius and Balamber/Valamir undermine are those of the *Getica* itself. Its view of Gothic history is thus betrayed unconsciously by its own narrative—the kind of slip which can allow the historian to dismantle legitimizing genealogies.⁶⁷

Other evidence supports the argument that conflict between Balamber/Valamir and Vinitharius should be taken at face value, and preconceptions adjusted as this demands. The most specific is the account of Gensemund in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8.9.8

⁶⁵ This reconstruction must assume that Cassiodorus understood that the same enemy was responsible for the deaths of Vithimiris and Ermenaric. Ammianus seems to suggest, however, that although the Huns caused Ermenaric's death, the Alans killed Vithimiris (31. 3. 1 ff.). He does not make the Alans' role explicit, however, and elsewhere states that the Huns attacked Alans to themselves before attacking the Goths (31. 3. 1). Cassiodorus may have assumed, as have modern

authorities, that the Alans who killed Vithimiris were under Hun control, and in any case it was also the general contemporary understanding that the Huns had defeated the Goths in the 370s.

⁶⁶ Henige, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 42–6, who demonstrates that this is common, even if often undetectable without evidence independent of royal tradition of the kind the *Getica* here accidentally provides.

⁶⁷ cf. Dumville, *art. cit.* (n. 11), 94.

and *Getica* 48:248. The letter describes how his loyalty to the Amals prevented Gensmund from accepting the Gothic crown, and the *Getica* describes how he led his own Gothic followers in support of Balamber/Valamir's war against Vinitharius. Gensmund thus commanded his own at least semi-independent military force, which is what presumably made him a potential Gothic king. This confirms that, in earlier times, leadership among the Italian Goths had been exercised by a number of important figures, each with personal followings, and that overall control was not the preserve of the Amal line. Such a situation provides a plausible context for conflict between two Gothic leaders such as Balamber/Valamir and Vinitharius.

This view of what might be termed 'Ostrogothic pre-history', where small groups each had their own leaders, also fits what is known more generally of the history of Goths in eastern Europe after 450. The *Getica* implies that there was continuous Amal domination of all Goths who did not flee south of the Danube in 376 (i.e. all non-Visigoths), but several independent Gothic groups are known. Goths led by Bigelis invaded the eastern Empire between 466 and 471. This is recorded only in Jordanes' *Romana*, suggesting that numbers were small, but there is no reason to suppose that Bigelis was an Amal.⁶⁸ Similarly, two Gothic groups inhabited the Crimea after the collapse of the Hun Empire. Neither was large, but again there is no suggestion of Amal leadership.⁶⁹ More important were the Goths led by Theoderic Triarius (or Strabo, 'the Squinter'). From at least the 460s he commanded a large force that had close links with Constantinople.⁷⁰ Jordanes states that he was not an Amal (*Getica* 52:270), and a recent attempt to undermine this statement is unconvincing, so that Triarius' existence confirms that several Gothic groups existed independently of the Amals in c. 450.⁷¹ This evidence puts Amal claims to have ruled all non-Visigoths into perspective, and strengthens the suggestion that Valamir had to compete with other ruling lines. Precisely the same process is well documented for the 470s and 480s, when Valamir's nephew Theoderic fought and overcame the Triarius line, uniting two previously independent groups.⁷²

The Amals were thus not the only Gothic ruling family, and political power had to be asserted against rival dynasties in a far from united tribal world. Given this context, it is better to believe the actual information given by the *Getica* about Balamber/Valamir and Vinitharius, than the relationship which its legitimizing genealogy establishes between them. One would envisage, therefore, that various smaller groups came together by different means to form the Ostrogoths. On occasion, this came about by force, such as the wars between Valamir and Vinitharius and those later between Theoderic and the Triarius line, but not always. The relationship between Gensmund and the Amals, for instance, seems to imply non-violent amalgamation. Instead of asserting independence, Gensmund supported Amal leadership and renounced his own claims.

Such political struggles also provide a context for Beremud's flight to the west. The *Getica* states that this took place because Beremud grew to despise those Goths

⁶⁸ *Romana* 336; for the date, *PLRE* 2, 229.

⁶⁹ Procopius, *Wars* 8. 4. 9 ff. and *Buildings* 3. 7. 13.

⁷⁰ Most recently, Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 268 ff.

⁷¹ Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 32 produces two arguments. First, Aspar, whose wife was Triarius' aunt, had a son called Ermenaric, so that the Triarii are Amals because an Amal name is reused. However, there is no evidence either that Ermenaric was an Amal, or that Amals reused names in this way (p. 106 f.). Second, John of Antioch, fr. 214. 3 records that Theoderic Triarius' son was the ἀνεψιός of Theoderic the Amal in 483/4. ἀνεψιός can mean 'nephew', 'first cousin', or cousin more generally. John of Antioch otherwise uses it to mean 'nephew' (fr. 209. 2 and 217b), but this does not seem possible here. It would mean that Theoderic the Amal was the brother of Theoderic Triarius or his wife, and if the first is impossible, the second is very unlikely. 'First cousin' also seems unlikely, for this would make either Theoderic Triarius a fourth brother for Valamir, Thiudimir, and Vidimir (impossible), or

Triarius' wife their sister. This illustrates an important point; the only way in which ἀνεψιός can have either of its precise meanings is for a female Amal to have married into the Triarius line. This would give Recitach some Amal blood, but does not turn the Triarii into Amals. If the term has an imprecise meaning, the ways in which the link could have formed increase dramatically, and as the relationship becomes more vague, there is ever less necessity for it to imply that the Triarius line were Amals. We should perhaps return to the old suggestion, therefore, that a marriage alliance linked Theoderic and Recitach, cf. K. Martin, *Theoderich der Grösse bis zur Eröberung Italiens* (1888), 24 f. Alternatively, since John of Antioch reworked older material and ἀνεψιός cannot here mean 'nephew' as it usually does in his work, confusion may have crept in, a broad racial relation, for instance, being confused for a family one. The fact that γένος means 'race' or 'family' often causes difficulty.

⁷² For a recent account, see Wolfram, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 268 ff.

who had accepted Hun domination (33:174 f.). However, as the son of Thorismud, an independent Gothic leader, Beremud was important in his own right and would have posed a threat to rising Amal power. As the case of Gensemud shows (and as is well documented more generally among Germanic tribal groups), important men attracted their own followings of armed retainers. This made them a dangerous focus for any discontent, and a potential rival such as Beremud was unlikely to be left in peace by an emerging dynastic line. He probably chose to move west rather than continue the struggle with the Amals or accept subordination.⁷³

His action finds a parallel in Valamir's brother Vidimir, who in c. 473 also went west, seemingly after a quarrel with the other brother, Thiudimir. The *Getica* again hides the event's political connotations (56:283), but the three Amal brothers each had their own followings and did sometimes act independently. They settled in separate areas of Pannonia (*Getica* 52:268) and even fought individually: Valamir with the Huns (52:269) and Sciri (53:276), and Thiudimir with the Suevi (53:274). It was a natural further stage in the consolidation of power for fraternal rivalry to follow victory over competitors from other lines. Thiudimir, indeed, seems deliberately to have destroyed the old order where brothers shared power. Not only did he break with Vidimir, but just before he died he also designated Theoderic alone of his sons to be king (*Getica* 56:288), ignoring the claims of at least one other son. Power thus became the preserve of the eldest male of a single line.⁷⁴

Valamir's early career should be rewritten. He did not inherit undisturbed Amal rule over the Ostrogoths, but united several groups who had been ruled independently by other dynasties. At least two can be detected: that of Hunimund and his descendants (Thorismud, Gensemud and Beremud) and that of Vinitharius. As unification proceeded, these lines suffered different fates. A branch of the former under Gensemud accepted Amal rule peacefully, Beremud chose to flee, and Vinitharius had to be fought. Reconciliation was attempted, however, when Valamir married Vadamerca, Vinitharius' granddaughter. The doublet of Balamber and Valamir can be maintained, therefore, and the actions reported of him in this second passage of the *Getica* seem likely to be accurate.⁷⁵

Valamir's career now strikingly resembles that of the Frankish king Clovis; both opened new eras in their peoples' histories by uniting previously autonomous political units. As Gregory of Tours shows (*Historia Francorum* 2. 40 ff.), Clovis was only one Frankish leader among several when he succeeded his father. He subsequently expanded his following by methodically assassinating the rulers of other Frankish groups. Gregory also records that some of Clovis' defeated rivals (Ragnachar, Ricchar, and Rignomer) were related to him. In part at least, the Frankish struggle was between different branches of an extended family. Was this the case among the Ostrogoths?

The Amal genealogy is not exhaustive and does omit Amals of importance. Sidimund, a relative of Theoderic, was a Roman ally in Epirus, and another Amal was a *magister militum* of the eastern Empire, so that some of the rivals might be Amals subsequently ignored by the genealogy.⁷⁶ Moreover, rivalry between Thiudimir and Vidimir was certainly inter-familial. There is no indication, however, that Vinitharius was related to Valamir, although arguments from silence cannot be conclusive. For the line of Hunimund matters seem more certain. If, as is likely, he was the father of Gensemud, Cassiodorus' statement that the latter was not an Amal clearly applies both to him and his offspring (Thorismud, Beremud, etc.). The fact that Cassiodorus

⁷³ Although probably uncle and nephew, Beremud and Gensemud would have had to be dealt with separately since important figures in the Germanic tribal world had their own retinues. E.g. the three Amal brothers had separate followings (*Getica* 52:268 ff.), and Theoderic had an armed retinue at the same time as his father (*Getica* 55:282). Cf. W. Schlesinger, 'Lord and follower in Germanic institutional history', 64 ff. in F. L. Cheyette (ed.), *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe* (1968).

⁷⁴ cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 248 and 270.

⁷⁵ This passage is thus the primary reference to 'Balamber', from which he was later introduced into the account of Ermenaric's death. The strong manuscript tradition that the king's name was here originally 'Balamer' (cf. n. 7)—simply a latinized version of how Valamir's name appears in Greek sources (βαλαμερ)—might provide further confirmation that the supposed Hun king is a confusion of Valamir.

⁷⁶ Sidimund: Malchus, Blockley fr. 20, Müller fr. 18. The Amal *magister militum* was Guthingis Baza (*Getica* 50:266), cf. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 248.

had to use Ermenaric to fabricate a genealogical link between this line and the Amals would also suggest that they were not related.

Likewise, Theoderic Triarius, clearly a powerful Gothic leader, was not an Amal (n. 72), and evidence from the Italian history of these Goths confirms that the Amals were not (outside their own propaganda) a unique royal dynasty. While Gothic supremacy was secure, loyalty was accorded them even when the dynasty produced unsuitable rulers, such as Athalaric, a minor, and the seemingly lazy Theodahad. When the Goths were attacked, however, the nobility murdered Theodahad and elected a non-Amal, Wittigis. An Amal connection was maintained because Wittigis married Theoderic's granddaughter Matasuentha, but Wittigis had been chosen for his military ability. Wittigis' own propaganda stressed, indeed, that he belonged to Theoderic's line only because his deeds were of similar stature.⁷⁷ After Wittigis, Ildibad and Totila were elected, neither with Amal connections.⁷⁸ Even in Italy, leaders were elected from outside the Amal line, confirming the probability that the Amals' struggles were not all with rival branches of their own family. The centralization of power around Valamir and Theoderic resulted from two processes; the claims of collateral Amal branches were defeated, but rivals from different families also had to be overcome.

VII. CHRONOLOGY

Identifying Balamber as Valamir also solves the chronological problems identified in the second passage, p. 106 above. Valamir's appearance dates much of its action to *c.* 450, with a margin for error of little more than a decade; he is first mentioned among Attila's retinue in 451 (*Getica* 48:252 f.). Vinitharius and Gensemund were Valamir's contemporaries since they fought and were allied with him, while Thorismud, if he was, as seems likely, Gensemund's brother, also belongs to this generation. Both Ermenaric and Vithimiris were dead, however, by 376, so that confusion between Vithimiris (dead before 376) and Vinitharius (alive *c.* 450) has caused chronological distortion.⁷⁹ More particularly, Valamir appears on either side of the *interregnum*. As Balamber he defeats Vinitharius before it starts, and as Valamir he becomes king to bring it to an end. This suggests strongly that the forty-year *interregnum* is a deliberate addition by the author to the sequence of events, since it should not interrupt different phases of Valamir's career, all of which must have occurred *c.* 450. Given the *Getica*'s use of Ammianus, its own information, and the Amal genealogy, this can be explained.

The *interregnum* spans a gap between Ermenaric's immediate successors and Valamir in the time of Attila. Whoever added it must have felt that a significant number of years separated Thorismud from Valamir. Given the confusion between Vithimiris and Vinitharius, this makes sense. Since the author thought that they were one man, then in his mind the *Getica*'s narrative of Ermenaric's successors started before 376. This passage of the *Getica* does not include a full chronology, but the indications given do not suggest that its events covered many years. Vinitharius' independence lasted less than a year (48:248); no regnal length is given for Hunimund but only one event is recalled (a war against the Suevi: 48:250), while Thorismud died in the second year of his reign (*ibid.*). If these three reigns were thought to have started before 376, there would certainly have seemed insufficient action to stretch from that point to Valamir in *c.* 450; at the same time, Cassiodorus' king-list shows that Valamir was considered to have succeeded Thorismud (*Variae* 11. 1. 19). The author needed, therefore, to cover the period from Thorismud's death (not long after 376) to the mid-fifth century, with no other kings intervening. The *interregnum* solved this problem, and was the means whereby a limited amount of material was made to cover the entire period *c.* 375–450; it is the result of the author attempting to make sense of his sources.

⁷⁷ Procopius, *Wars* 5. 11. 1 ff. with his propaganda in Cassiodorus, *Variae* 10. 31.

⁷⁸ Procopius, *Wars* 6. 30. 4 ff. and 7. 2. 10 ff.

⁷⁹ Schmidt, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 254 f. argued long ago that certain details suggest that events in this passage should be placed in the time of Valamir.

The *interregnum* must again have been the work of the man who added information from Ammianus to the *Getica*, for its whole purpose is to circumvent the basic chronological problem—a lack of information to cover the requisite period—that follows an equation of Vithimiris and Vinitharius. Only a person who actually had the text of Ammianus in front of him would have known that Vithimiris/Vinitharius died before 376, and that it was necessary to stretch out the few known events. Like the actual equation itself, therefore, the *interregnum* would seem to be the work of Cassiodorus. As at least circumstantial supporting evidence, Cassiodorus' *Chronicle* shows that he had a good enough understanding of the chronology of the Hun invasions to realise that there was a gap to fill. It dates the first Hun attacks to the 370s and Attila's death to 453 (*Chronicle* 1127 and 1158), so that Cassiodorus knew that over fifty years separated Ermenaric and Attila.

Why forty years? Calculation leads nowhere, because the chronology of Ermenaric's supposed successors is incomplete. Biblical influence, however, is evident in the list of Ermenaric's peoples and in certain time-lengths recorded by the *Getica*, such as Ermenaric's age at death. The forty years of the *interregnum* may also be Biblically inspired, forty years being a common time period in the Old Testament; it is also a reasonable span to cover a notional gap from the death of Thorismud sometime after 376 to the emergence of Valamir in c. 450.⁸⁰ Forty years was thus perhaps an informed guess doubly inspired by the author's knowledge of things Biblical.

Finally, this redating may also solve the difficulty encountered in Eutharic's line. The *Getica* reports that after Thorismud's death, Beremud went with his son Veteric to the Visigoths, then ruled by Vallia (416–19). Beremud chose not to reveal his royal blood, although he eventually became a trusted counsellor of Theoderic I (419–51) (*Getica* 33:174 f.). As was noted above (p. 106), there do not seem to be enough generations of this family to cover the time span. Veteric is reportedly already alive in 419, and yet his son Eutharic married Amalasuetha in 515. Since Thorismud—the brother of Gensemud and Valamir's contemporary—should be redated c. 450, the lives of Veteric and Eutharic need now cover only the period c. 450 to 515, so that Eutharic was probably no more than forty when he became Theoderic's heir. This is much more likely than taking the *Getica* at face value, for its report that Eutharic's father was alive in 419 would imply that Theoderic chose an heir who was, like himself, about sixty years old.⁸¹

VIII. *GETICA* 48:246–52

To summarize, this passage contains important information. It is not, as its author thought, an account of Ermenaric's successors, but recalls Gothic leaders who independently commanded smaller groups. It describes some of their wars (Vinitharius' against the Antes and Hunimund's against the Suevi), and, most significantly, illustrates part of the power struggle in which the Amal dynasty, particularly in the person of Valamir, created the Ostrogoths out of previously autonomous units. He killed Vinitharius and conciliated his followers by marrying his granddaughter, while Gensemud, leader of another group, seems simply to have accepted his authority, and Beremud fled. The passage also forms a unit with the earlier one describing Ermenaric. Equating Vithimiris with Vinitharius, and importing Balamber/Valamir into the account of Ermenaric's death indicate that both passages were originally composed by the same man. Since Cassiodorus probably rewrote Ammianus' account

⁸⁰ Korkannen, op. cit. (n. 29), 73 ff. Wolfram, op. cit. (n. 5), 9 plausibly suggests that the forty years were also designed to echo the period that the Children of Israel spent in the wilderness.

⁸¹ *Getica* 33:174 f., which unconvincingly claims that the Visigoths would have chosen Beremud to be king if they had known who he was. *Getica* 32:166 also confuses the chronology of Vallia's reign, reporting that he still ruled in 427, so that there are good grounds for

thinking that the *Getica* is confused over Beremud's departure from the Ostrogoths. Eutharic's age is the subject of contradictory reports. *Getica* 58:298 states that he was full of youthful vigour in 515, while Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8. 1. 3 describes him as 'nearly the same age' as the Emperor Justin, which would make him about sixty-five in 515, Justin having been born c. 450: *PLRE* 2, 650. I prefer the *Getica*'s report.

of Ermenaric, he can also be held responsible for the information about Balamber, Vinitharius, Hunimund, Thorismud and Gensemund.

There is no way to decide the matter conclusively, but it seems most likely that this is information Cassiodorus gathered directly from the Ostrogoths of Italy. As we have seen, it lacks chronological detail, and is often quite vague (only a few events are mentioned, and they are never given a geographical setting), which suggests that we are not dealing with information from the classicizing Graeco-Roman histories, but with the less precise echoes of the past to be found in Gothic oral tradition. Gensemund, at least, was known in Italy (*Variarum* 8. 9. 8), and Cassiodorus perhaps hints at the Gothic origins of his information when he styles him as one whose praises should be sung by the whole world ('Gensemundus ille toto orbe cantabilis').

Such an origin would make sense on two levels. These kings had played important roles in the Ostrogoths' (not too distant) past, the events occurring some seventy years before Cassiodorus wrote. Some of the Italian Goths' grandfathers would have been participants, so the events would have been remembered, but it would not be surprising if details had begun to fade. By Cassiodorus' time there had also been a major change in the political constitution of these Goths; Amal rule was firmly established over the united Ostrogoths. This perhaps explains why Cassiodorus did not recognize 'Balamber' as Valamir. From this later perspective, it did not make sense for two Gothic kings to have fought one another, and comparative examples suggest that such constitutional changes cause great disruption in oral historical records. Since these stories of Valamir/Balamber did not conform to the picture of Valamir created by later dynastic propaganda, where he appears as the inheritor of established Amal rule over all the Ostrogoths, it seems likely that the teller of stories about Vinitharius no longer realized that the 'Balamber' who appeared in them was in fact Valamir.⁸² The equation of Vinitharius and Vithimiris then made Cassiodorus think that Balamber must have been a Hun (p. 120 f. above).

IX. CONCLUSION

The historical value of the *Getica's* account of the Goths under Hun domination has for the most part become evident. The first passage, describing the kingdom of Ermenaric and its conquest by 'Balamber', cannot be trusted where it departs from Ammianus. Nor can the second passage be taken at face value, although it does preserve seemingly genuine information. From these observations follow general conclusions for Gothic history.

It is very likely that the Ostrogoths were not ruled solely by the Amal family when subject to Hun domination. Amal rule over these Goths cannot be pushed back into the fourth century through Ermenaric, because the family link between him and Theoderic is false. Study of Ermenaric's supposed successors in the *Getica* puts the dynasty's claims into even clearer perspective. Balamber/Valamir's wars and other indications suggest that Amal pre-eminence originated only with Valamir himself in c. 450, when a number of smaller, independent Gothic groups united under his leadership. It is also clear that other, non-Amal, ruling families had to be defeated or conciliated before Amal rule was consolidated. The *Getica's* genealogy and associated statements, which backdate Amal rule into the distant past, are no more than dynastic propaganda, attempting to legitimize the Amals' *de facto* seizure of power.

This is no space here for a full discussion, but this reconstruction of Amal history strongly suggests that the family did not incorporate an ancient tradition of leadership. Miscellaneous kings (some of very general significance; p. 110 f. above), eponymous heroes, and a king of the fourth-century Greuthungi imported from Ammianus provide no secure basis for thinking that the Amals had unique prestige. They must have been relatively important in c. 450 for Valamir to be able to compete for overall control, but at this stage he was one leader among several. Amal pre-

⁸² On the evolution of history into legend, see Miller, art. cit. (n. 11), 21 ff. and on the tendency of oral tradition unconsciously to reform the past as the pre-

sent changes, references as n. 13. For a specific example, see J. C. Yoder, 'The Historical Study of a Kanyok Genesis Myth', in Miller (ed.), op. cit. (n. 11), 82 ff.

eminence was created by his victories and those of his nephew Theoderic, and never in practice rested on anything other than practical success. When the dynasty failed to produce satisfactory kings in Italy, it was ousted (p. 124 above). It seems unlikely, therefore, that the traditions of their Amal rulers can really have been the essential element that made the Ostrogoths Gothic, and alternative approaches are needed for a full understanding of the ethnic character of the political units which appear in the migration period.⁸³

Leaving aside Gothic history, discussion of the two passages suggests that here at least Jordanes followed closely Cassiodorus' lost *Gothic History*. On the basis of *Variarum* 9. 25. 4 f., the Amal genealogy has always been seen as Cassiodorus' work rather than Jordanes', and for one of its central elements this can be confirmed. Eutharic was Cassiodorus' patron, and it is very probable that Cassiodorus rewrote Ammianus to turn Ermenaric into a suitably heroic figure for establishing the family link between his patron and Theoderic. Not only is the rewriting of Ermenaric essentially Cassiodorus' work, but so also is the narrative of his successors in the second passage. As we have seen, Vinitharius could only have been mistakenly equated with Ermenaric's real successor, Vithimiris, by someone who had a copy of Ammianus in front of him, and it seems unlikely that Jordanes and Cassiodorus both had access to this text. That it was Cassiodorus who used Ammianus has further consequences. Strong echoes of the early chapters of Ammianus 31—including occasional parallels in vocabulary—are still evident in the *Getica* as it now stands (p. 111 f. above). Yet these represent only an indirect borrowing through Jordanes' use of Cassiodorus. This implies that not only did Cassiodorus follow Ammianus closely in places, but also that Jordanes must have followed Cassiodorus equally closely. Otherwise the marked dependence on Ammianus would not still be evident.

Here at least, then, Jordanes' notes from Cassiodorus must have amounted virtually to copying: despite Jordanes' claim that he could remember the sense but not the words of Cassiodorus (*Getica*, Preface 2), at least one other case of copying has been identified.⁸⁴ But while Jordanes' debt to Cassiodorus can be shown to be great in these two passages, it is important not to generalize too rashly. It seems likely that Jordanes' notes from Cassiodorus' work would have been briefer or fuller at different points depending on his interest in the particular events being recounted, and I would not doubt Jordanes' claim to have added other relevant material.⁸⁵ It also seems impossible that Jordanes' low-level Latin could ever have been aimed at the Imperial court, so that it is difficult to view Jordanes, with Momigliano, as Cassiodorus' stooge.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Jordanes does seem virtually to have copied out Cassiodorus' account of Ermenaric and his supposed Amal successors.

Perhaps above all, these two passages illuminate Cassiodorus' bold approach to his materials; as we have seen, the passages are problematic not so much because of the information they include, but because of the way that material has been integrated and interpreted. We should sympathize with him, for a mixture of fragmentary oral and written sources must have made it difficult to construct a coherent narrative. The equation of Vithimiris and Vinitharius (probably a genuine mistake), the consequent importing of Balamber king of the Huns into his carefully inflated history of Ermenaric, and the forty-year *interregnum* all bear witness to his determined attempts to solve the taxing problems posed by his sources. However, the passages also show evidence of more deliberate distortion. Some of this may not have been his fault: Gothic oral history, for instance, perhaps integrated Vinitharius into the Amal family as Valamir's grandfather, hiding the fact that he was really the grandfather of Valamir's wife, and a dangerous rival whom Valamir defeated in battle. Equally, by generating stories around the eponymous Amal and Ostrogotha, it may also have led

⁸³ Argued against Wenskus and Wolfram, cf. n. 5. The forthcoming revised version of my doctoral thesis—*The Goths and the Balkans A.D. 350–500*—will address this question in more detail.

⁸⁴ *Getica* 60:313 uses a flower metaphor that Cassiodorus applied to his Gothic history at *Variarum* 9. 25. 5, cf. O'Donnell, op. cit. (n. 50), 52 f.

⁸⁵ *Getica*, preface 3, cf. Croke, art. cit. (n. 3), 123 ff.

⁸⁶ art. cit. (n. 3), 217 ff. Barnish, art. cit. (n. 3), 349 ff. argues partly in support of Momigliano, but even he (356 ff.) would deny that Jordanes' *Getica* was an authorized summary of Cassiodorus' work, with a political purpose.

Cassiodorus to believe that Gothic kings had always come from the Amal family. This can only partly excuse his somewhat cavalier rewriting of Ammianus' account of Ermenaric, but he should not be judged with anachronistic harshness. Thankfully, enough other information has survived to allow more of the true historical significance of the Amal family to emerge.

Worcester College, Oxford