

THE END OF THE PERIOD OF THE GERMANIC VÖLKERWANDERUNG ON THE MIDDLE DANUBE AND THE BAIOARII

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The legacy of the romantic beginnings of historical research can still be felt in the approach to history today — a fact that has caused more than one misinterpretation. Thus, for example, there exist notions about the Germanic peoples and tribes for which ancient historiography provides no tangible evidence. The so-called Marcomanni War (165—180) and battles along the upper Rhine and the middle Danube which are described in detail in the *Ammianus Marcellinus* were not fought by Germanic people's armies but by their vassals — a fact that clearly emerges from the reports. This Germanic system of vassalage, which was described in great detail by Tacitus also left its mark on the crumbling Roman Empire, with its Bucolic troops — those „private“ colonial troops with which estate owners, state dignitaries and even emperors surrounded themselves.

In the first half of the 5th century the Huns controlled the areas along the middle reaches of the Danube. The other inhabitants, though subjected, were still able to preserve their political organizational framework. Only after Attila's death in 453 could they regain their independence. The East Goth Jordanes, among others, wrote about this a century later. His account is embellished by high-sounding language, but he distorts the facts. It was not the „Sweben“ who, from their base in Slovakia, made predatory incursions into Dalmatia, but the vassals of the Sweben prince Hunimund, who, moreover, did not create any „coalition of the Danube peoples“ against the East Goths, but managed to attract vassals of the most varied origin. Thus not tens of thousands were engaged in battle, but only a few hundred, which fact puts these enterprises in a far more modest perspective. This view is confirmed by Eugippius, who provides a contemporary account of the situation along the Austrian Danube during the late 5th century.

In the first half of the 6th century, the Langobards were the leading political power along the middle reaches of the Danube. Their territory extended from Bohemia to lower Pannonia. Together with members of other peoples, they left the Danube in 568 and occupied northern Italy. For the period which followed, there are, in any case, only scattered Germanic findings, which can be subject to varying interpretation. At either the same time or somewhat later Germanic row graves began to appear in the Danube valley around Regensburg and in the Bavarian pre-Alps that are attributed to the Baioarii. It is tempting to claim a causal relationship between the two events, but traditional attempts to lump whole peoples or tribes together can well be challenged. If, however, the Baioarii are not regarded as an ethnic group, but rather as a political one constituted by a number of vassals

of the most varied origin, the core of whose tradition was shaped on the middle Danube, a convincing answer can be found for a whole set of problems.