Competing Narratives between Nomadic People and their Sedentary Neighbours

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Ákos Zimonyi
Semmelweis University

Introduction: The environmental model during Antiquity

The notion that "man's external environment has some direct influence on his physical constitution and health" (Miller 1962: 129) can be regarded as a universal experience of humankind. It can be observed that weather changes have an effect on our mood or even well-being; if someone travels to a country or region with a different climatic environment, body functions are subject to a change, and one needs some time to get used to the new climate. Ancient Greeks and Romans also noticed how different areas of the world have different weather conditions, and the hot or cold, dry or moist weather had an influence not just on the customs of the people living in those places, but they believed that the climate had an influence on the characteristics and even physiology of the inhabitants as well (Isaac 2004: 55–56). The first author to write extensively on this topic was Herodotus, who on several occasions juxtaposed climate and people. For example, he notes that Egypt's climate and rivers are different from those of any other region, and the manners and customs of its residents are also poles apart from other people's common practices (Hdt. 2: 35).[1] Herodotus does not explicitly imply a causation here, i.e. that the habits of Egyptians are different because of the different climate, but it is safe to assume that he noticed a connection between the weather and the habits of the people. The Scythian logos of the Histories (Hdt. 4: 1–82, esp. 16–24) certainly demonstrate that Herodotus had a basic understanding of the climate and the customs of the people living there. But as Lateiner rightly pointed out, climate or weather are not the exclusive factors in forming the habits and manners of its residents (Lateiner 1986: 16. Cf. also Thomas 2000: 102–134). For Herodotus "geography does not determine history; it can only condition human existence and action. Climate may influence devotion to liberty, but national spirit, more relevant, is no predictable product of natural forces." (Lateiner 1986: 16).

1 I am using the Liddle-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon and the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae for the abbreviation of classical authors.

The first work that can be regarded as a systematic discourse about the effects of climatic and environmental factors on health or disease is the Hippocratic[2] treatise "Airs, Waters and Places" dated to the late 5th century B.C., which must have been written as a handbook for the travelling physicians who arrived in a new city or town. When a physician came to a new city, he could find out the main health problems of the city by observing the seasons, winds, waters, elevation, etc. of that city, and establish himself quickly as a competent doctor in a new community (Miller 1962: 129–130; Edelstein 1967: 65–66, 70; Triebl-Schubert 1990: 90). This treatise had a paramount influence on later authors such as Aristotle, Polybius or Galen, as well as on medieval and early modern thought (Backhaus 1976: 170; Isaac 2004: 60). Airs, Waters and Places can be divided into two parts, the first concentrating on how the changes of seasons, the winds, the course of the sun, water and soil quality, and the customs of people influenced their health, and the second part, which some scholars have believe to be the work of another author,[3] "is an exposition of the influence of climatic and geographical factors on the physical constitutions of various nations of Europe and Asia." (Miller 1962: 130). This part of the book also includes the nomadic Scythians, whose description takes up quite a large part of the discussion (Miller 1962: 130; Liewert 2015: 7–8, 21–25). Especially this latter, ethnographical part has attracted great scholarly attention, focusing rather on the ethnocentric and not the medical nature of the work (Backhaus 1976; Triebl-Schubert 1990), even if the primary goal of the Hippocratic author was to explain the physical appearance and customs of the different nations through natural causes, and then cite some examples to further his point. For the author of "Airs, Waters and Places" the changes of the four seasons, winds and the quality of water and soil had a strong influence on the constitution of the human body, that is the quantity of the four body humours (blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile), also known as the humoral pathology of Hippocrates (Liewert 2015: 2–3, 5). The four body fluids had four qualities: hot, cold, wet, and dry,[4] and these qualities were also attributed to the climatic factors of a certain region. For example, the Hippocratic author mentions how the cities facing the cold northern winds in summer have cold and hard water. This water had a basic effect on the constitution of the inhabitants – they were also hard (and

2 There is still a great uncertainty among scholars on the authorship of the Hippocratic Corpus, ie. which works were written by Hippocrates himself, and which were written by one of his sons or students or admirers, so in the scholarship we have to talk about the Hippocratic author, and not Hippocrates. This question is also known as the Hippocratic question (Lloyd 1975: 171–192; Liewert 2015: 40).

3 For a great summary on the scholarly debate of the unity or division of Airs, Waters and Places (Liewert 2015: 27–34).

4 We have to note here that the humoral pathology as we know it today was elaborated in detail by Galen. Hippocratic authors had conflicting views on how many body fluids exist and which qualities (heat, cold, dryness, wetness) they possessed. For a thorough discussion on the matter Liewert 2015: 45–59.

dry): "The natives must be sinewy and spare, and in most cases their digestive organs are costive and hard in their lower parts (…). Their heads are healthy and hard. (...) For their dryness, combined with the coldness of the water, makes them liable to internal lacerations." (Hp. Aer. 4. tr. by W. H. S. Jones).

Despite the main goal of the Hippocratic author to explain diverse customs and habits with the change of seasons, or the harshness or gentleness of the weather, there is an underlying ethnocentric worldview. Exactly in the middle of the book the Hippocratic writer stated: "Now I intend to compare Asia and Europe, and to show how they differ in every respect and how the nations of the one differ entirely in physique (*morphe*) from those of the other" (Hp. Aer. 12. tr. by W. H. S. Jones). Asia, or at least one part of it,[5] is depicted as a place with an ideal climate and fertile lands, so that everything grows abundantly, and people there are tall and handsome and have a placid character. That is also the downside of the moderate weather, as "courage, endurance, industry and high spirit could not arise in such conditions either among the natives or among immigrants, but pleasure must be supreme" (Hp. Aer. 12. tr. by W. H. S. Jones). This is nature's (*physis*)[6] impact on Asians, but there is another factor to be reckoned with, which has a great effect on the customs of the people, and that is the political institution (*nomos*), as the 16th chapter of Airs, Waters and Places reveals (Backhaus 1976: 172–173, 177–178). The author basically repeats the point that Asian people are weaker and more timid, not just because of the weather but also due to fact that they are ruled by kings. Europeans on the other hand, as described by the author, vary in height, stature and appearance, since the change of seasons is harsh, and this harsh climate makes them brave (*eupsychos*), high-spirited (*thymoeides*), more durable, but violent (*agrios*) and even antisocial (*ameiktos*). "Europeans are more warlike, and also because of their institutions, not being under kings as are Asiatics" (Hp. Aer. 23. tr. by W. H. S. Jones).

This antithesis of Asia and Europe is striking. For Herodotus the two continents are more about geography and the laws of the nature, which apply to every nation in the world and which one cannot break without severe consequences (Van Paassen 1957: 326; Thomas 2000: 86–98; Isaac 2004: 61–64). But the Hippocratic author has a very deterministic view of the two continents. Asia has mild weather all around, and seasons do not change harshly, so people do not

5 As the Hippocratic writer admits: "Asia, however, is not everywhere uniform; the region, however, situated midway between the heat and the cold is very fruitful, very wooded and very mild." (Hp. Aer 16). The depiction of this ideal Asian region resembles Herodotus' account of Ionia (Hdt. 1. 142), so some scholars tend to argue that the author of Airs, Waters and Places also discusses Ionia (Liewert 2015: 13).

6 *Physis* literary means Nature in Greek, but there are many facets to this word, as it implies many connotations, like something constantly growing, evolving and changing – and not a finished product. There is also the observation that every creature has its own nature, but that there is a general nature as well as an individual nature – especially for humans (Nestle 1938: 8–17).

differ from each other, and are well tempered but meek. Europe has more extreme weather, so people are different from each other and are more courageous, but not as social as Asians (Isaac 2004: 62–65). Natural (*physis*) causes explain why people from the two continents are different, but there is also the factor of the political institution (*nomos*). One could argue that these two factors, *physis* and *nomos*, go hand in hand in Airs, Waters and Places, so that Asians are weak by nature, and thus ruled by kings. But the relationship between the two factors is more complicated, as the Hippocratic writer never attempts to explain the causation of the two, but states that "all the inhabitants of Asia, whether Greek or Barbaric, who are not ruled by despots, but are independent, toiling for their own advantage, are the most warlike of all men." (Hp. Aer. 16. tr. by W. H. S. Jones with slight modifications). This locus is also the first – and for a long time, last – literary juxtaposition of Greeks (*Hellenes*) and Barbarians (*Barbaroi*) in an ethnographic discourse of classical Antiquity (Backhaus 1976: 178).[7] For the Longheads (*Makrokephaloi*) living in Trapezunt – as discussed in chapter 14 of Airs, Waters and Places – customs (*nomos*) influenced the nature (of people): since a long head was considered a sign of nobility, people living there took matters in their own hands and artificially lengthened the heads of their children. "As time went on the process became natural, so that custom no longer exercised compulsion." (Hp. Aer. 14. tr. by W. H. S. Jones) So this chapter basically states that obtained features can become inherited, and *nomos* can influence and even change the nature (*physis*) of people – as long as Longheads are endogamous, for after marrying with people outside their ethnic group (*exogamy*) the longheaded characteristic seems to disappear (Nestle 1938: 12–13; Backhaus 1976: 175–176; Isaac 2004: 74–75).

The idea that there is a middle ground between people living under extreme conditions, Egyptians and Scythians, is not explicitly stated in Airs, Waters and Places, but it is safe to assume that it is the underlying idea. And that middle line is – of course – Hellas. Hellas is the place which lies between the two extremes, Egypt and Scythia, where not only the weather, but also the flora and fauna, or reproduction, is extreme, Egypt being very prolific, whereas Scythia is almost infertile (Backhaus 1976: 173–175, 179). Hellas is the measure to which these extremities are compared: otherwise the Amazon-like behaviour of the Sarmatian virgins or the Anaries, who are impotent men dressing in women's clothes, do women's work, etc. would not get such a detailed description, nor would the causes of these behaviours be discussed. These behaviours are the complete opposite of the norm in ancient Greece (Triebl-Schubert 1990: 90–91, 93, 96–103). That Hellas has ideal conditions, lying between the extreme climatic zones, and

7 Backhaus 1976: 178 also has an interesting point, when asking what free Greek and Barbarian people in Asia is the Hippocratic author talking about. The Persian Empire conquered the Middle East in the 2nd half of the 6th Century B.C., as well as Egypt, so basically every known Asian nation was under Persian rule in the 5th– early 4th Century B.C. when Airs, waters and Places was written.

thus having the best qualities of both worlds is explicitly discussed by Aristotle: "The peoples of cold countries generally, and particularly those of Europe, are full of spirit, but deficient in skill and intelligence; and this is why they continue to remain comparatively free, but attain no political development and show no capacity for governing others. The peoples of Asia are endowed with skill and intelligence, but are deficient in spirit; and this is why they continue to be peoples of subjects and slaves. The Greek stock, intermediate in geographical position, unites the qualities of both sets of peoples. It possesses both spirit and intelligence: the one quality makes it continue free; the other enables it to attain the highest political development, and to show a capacity for governing every other people—if only it could once achieve political unity." (Arist. Pol. 1327b tr. by Ernest Barker). For Aristotle climate is responsible for political organisation through influencing the two main qualities of their inhabitants, intelligence and courage (or the lack of those qualities). Whereas for the Hippocratic author such a direct link between climate and political institutions is never explicitly stated, for Aristotle environment and politics go hand in hand. This Hellenocentric – later, for Roman authors, Romanocentric – model of Aristotle is found throughout Greek and Roman historiography, even though it underwent some changes; for Romans the two extremes were North and South (Isaac 2004: 82–102).[8] This model can be labelled environmental or climatic determinism. It also found its way into early medieval historical thought, thus it is no surprise that elements of this theory can be found in the Getica of Jordanes.

Jordanes, the author

Jordanes lived in the 6th century A.D. and was a secretary (*notarius*) of Gunthigis Baza, an important member of the ostrogothic Amali clan, before he converted to Christianity. He must have lived in Constantinople after his conversion, where he probably wrote the *Getica* in ca. 551–552 A.D. His other work, titled *Romana*, was written on the request of a certain Vigilius, who is identified by many as pope Vigilius (537–555), living in Constantinople at that time, which would explain why Jordanes was in the capital of the Byzantine Empire (O'Donnell 1982: 223–225; Goffart 1988: 28–29; Liebeschuetz 2015: 137). Jordanes in the preface of *Getica* states that he had to lay aside writing his Roman History (*Romana*) because he was asked "to condense in my own style in this small book the twelve volumes of the Senator on the origin and deeds of the Getae from olden time to the present day." (Iord. Get. 1. 1. tr. by Charles C. Mierow). He had to compile a short excerpt from

8 Interestingly, for Vitruvius the environment had an effect on the quantity of the blood: people up North had a copious amount of blood, because they lived under moist conditions, whereas people in the South had small amount of blood due to the dryness of the climate (Vitruv. 6, 1, 3. Cf. also Isaac 2004: 83–85).

the 12 books on Gothic History of Cassiodorus, which is unfortunately lost, but could only obtain the books for 3 days, so he could not recall everything word by word, only the "sense and the deeds related," (Iord. Get. 1. 2. tr. by Charles C. Mierow) and then completed it with references from classical authors. He indeed incorporated many different sources in his narration, and tends to quote them or at least refer to them, but even if he does not follow this practice, it is not difficult for a reader who is well versed in Latin historiography to see which authors Jordanes has used as a source, e.g. the description of Britain relies heavily on the *Agricola* of Tacitus and Pomponius Mela. This is the main reason why he has been regarded by scholars of late Antiquity and Early Medieval History as merely an epitomator, or worst, as a plagiarist. The *Getica* is regarded as a mere abbreviated and simpler version of the 12 books of Cassiodorus, or even worse, a deteriorated report of the original, since there are numerous errors in the narrative of the *Getica*, e.g. he states that Rome was raided by both Alaric and Athaulf (Iord. Get. 31. 159–160).[9] As a consequence, Jordanes, the author, is regarded by many scholars as irrelevant, as not having his own voice, being only the mouthpiece of the earlier historical tradition, especially of Cassiodorus. For decades Jordanes was used only to collect data on certain nations described in the *Getica*: German scholarship of the 19th century focused mainly on Germanic prehistory, Hungarian scholars on the Huns, etc. (Swain 2014: 13–19).[10]

But more recent studies have been interested more in Jordanes himself, and granted him an authorial voice, maintaining that the opposite is the case: that Jordanes was in command of what he wrote. He does not automatically copy previous works without any consideration and put them into a random order, confusing or leaving out events.[11] His work is more sophisticated than previously thought and shows great understanding of Graeco-Roman as well as Gothic culture.[12] Of course, the influence of Cassiodorus cannot be denied: the Romans and Goths being equivalent in the aspect of a sustained and glorious past or the need for long geographical discourses is highly likely the invention of Cassiodorus; but a nuanced analysis of the *Getica* has shown that e.g. the different political situations of the two authors (Cassiodorus was a leading politician in the Ostrogothic Kingdom when he finished his work on Gothic history in 533 A.D.,

9 On the matter Liebeschuetz 2015: 136, 140–142.

10 The first Hungarian translation in 1904 by János Bokor was also motivated by Hungarian antiquarian interests.

11 Liebeschuetz 2011: 204–205; Liebeschuetz 2015: 136–138.

12 This is demonstrated convincingly by B. Swain 2010: when Jordanes quotes Virgil when he explains that the Romans, after accepting the Goths into the Empire, violated the agreement, taxed and tried to enslave the Goths, and finally attempted to assassinate the leaders of the Goth. The quote from the Aeneid describes a parallel situation: the Trojan Polydorus tries to settle down in Thrace, but the king betrays him, and kills him and takes his gold. It is also noteworthy here, that in this passage of the Aeneid Aeneas tries to settle down in Thrace, where the Getae – usually called Goths by Jordanes – come from.

whereas Jordanes finished his work just after the Ostrogothic Kingdom had been defeated by Iustinian) shaped the narratives of the two authors differently (Goffart 1988: 23–42; Liebeshuetz 2011; Swain 2014: 37–78; Liebeshuetz 2015).

Scholarship has concentrated mainly on the originality of Jordanes and his relation to Cassiodorus, while other questions such as the environment that Jordanes described or what effect it had on the people living there seemingly went under the radar. If (Swain 2010) is to be believed, there might be more than meets the eye. With this background in mind, my aim in this paper is to find out whether the author had a nuanced view of the geographic and climatic explanations on the appearance and temperament of the nomads. It is not impossible that Jordanes (or even Cassiodorus) read the Hippocratic Airs, Waters and Places, since we know that the treatise was translated into Latin in the 5th century A.D. (Miller 1962: 132), but the question is to what extent he was familiar with the model of climatic determinism. The focus of my paper will be on the first part of the *Getica*, concerned with the geographic description of Northern and Eastern Europe and the enumeration of nomadic tribes. Jordanes was, of course, a secretary and historian, not a doctor, so the stories he heard or rather read were interesting for him more as sources for the *ethnogenesis* and history of the Goths, than as accounts of what diseases were affecting the various nations. I am here not concerned with whether this interest for the environment stems from Cassiodorus or from Jordanes, since this should be a matter for another paper.

Environmentalism in the Getica of Jordanes

Jordanes begins his book with a geographical discourse listing the islands which are found in the Ocean (Oceanus), which encompassed the whole world, followed by Britain and then the island named Scandza (Scandinavia), the birthplace of the Goths (Iord. Get. I: 4–9.). Jordanes rushes through the list of islands, but the description of Britain gets a whole chapter, namely the second:

> "(12) In some parts it is moorland, in others there are wooded plains, and sometimes it rises into mountain peaks. The island is surrounded by a sluggish sea, which neither gives readily to the stroke of the oar nor runs high under the blasts of the wind. I suppose this is because other lands are so far removed from it as to cause no disturbance of the sea, which indeed is of greater width here than anywhere else. Moreover Strabo, a famous writer of the Greeks, relates that the island exhales such mists from its soil, soaked by the frequent inroads of Ocean, that the sun is covered throughout the whole (…) day that passes as fair, and so is hidden from sight. (13) Cornelius also, the author of the Annals, says that in the farthest part of Britain the night gets brighter and is very short. He also says that the island abounds in metals, is well supplied with grass and is more productive in all those things

> which feed beasts rather than men. Moreover many large rivers flow through it (…).” (Iord. Get. 2: 12–13. tr. by Charles C. Mierow).[13]

Jordanes lists some authors who were the sources of this chapter, namely Livius, Tacitus, Strabo and Cassius Dio, but the way in which he structured the information which he gathered from his sources was his own. After recounting how Britain had to be conquered before information about the island trickled east, he describes its position and shape, followed by its terrain, the sea that surrounds the island and which makes it cloudy and foggy, the fact that the nights are shorter in its northern part, that the soil is abundant in metal and produces excellent grass, and finally the rivers. After the description of the land Jordanes focuses on its inhabitants: first their appearance, then their customs. This division resembles that of the Hippocratic Airs, Waters, and Places, whose author suggests to first look at the seasons, then at the winds and the rising of the sun, the waters, the soil and finally the *modus vivendi* of the population (Hp. Aer. 1.) One could object that the seasons and winds are missing from the discussion of Jordanes, since he does not describe them explicitly. But in the discussion of the sea surrounding Britain Jordanes mentions the winds, stating that they are unable to move the seawater. This is followed by the quotation from Strabo that due to the island exhaling mist from its soil soaked by the frequent inroads of Ocean, the sun is not visible at any time during the day. In comparison, the Hippocratic author also juxtaposes wind and fog in his Scythian chapter, stating that hot winds cannot reach Scythia, while cold ones, which are cooled down even more by snow and water, are stuck in the mountains, so that fog develops and is constant, which he describes as a “permanent winter,” so that we cannot speak of a change of seasons. “The winds blowing from hot regions do not reach them, save rarely, and with little force; but from the north there are constantly blowing winds that are chilled by snow, ice, and many waters, which, never leaving the mountains, render them uninhabitable. A thick fog envelopes by day the plains, upon which they live, so winter is perennial.” (Hp. Aer. 19. Tr. by W. H. S. Jones). The same is true for Britain according to Jordanes: the only thing which is prevalent is the mist, because the winds cannot reach the Island, so there is no change of seasons either.

That Jordanes was familiar with climatic effects on people is also clear from the same chapter, when he talks about the inhabitants of Britain. Jordanes here follows

13 MGH AA 5,1: 56–57: *Modo vero dumosa, modo silvestrae iacere planitiae, montibus etiam nonnullis increscere; mari tardo circumfluam, quod nec remis facile inpellentibus cedat, nec ventorum flatibus intumescat, credo, quia remotae longius terrae causas motibus negant: quippe illic latius quam usquam aequor extenditur. Refert autem Strabo Grecorum nobilis scriptor tantas illam exalare nebulas, madefacta humo Oceani crebris excursibus , ut subtectus sol per illum pene totum fediorem , qui serenus est, diem negetur aspectui. Noctem quoque clariorem in extrema eius parte minimamque Cornelius etiam annalium scriptor enarrat. Metallis plurimis cupiosam, herbis requentem et his feraciorem omnibus , que pecora magis quam homines alant: labi vero per eam multa quam maximae relabique flumina gemmas margaritasque volventia.*

Tacitus in his account of the Silurans and Caledonians: "The ruddy hair and large limbs of the Caledonians point out a German derivation." (Tac. Agr. 11: 2. tr. by Edward Brooks).[14] With one small exception, which may be crucial: he describes the Caledonians as having reddish hair and large, loose-jointed bodies: "The inhabitants of Caledonia have reddish hair and large, but moist bodies." (Iord. Get. 2. 13. tr. by Charles C. Mierow w. slight modification).[15] Tacitus talked about *artus*, that is joints or limbs, being big (*magnus*), but the other adjective *fluvida*, cannot be found in Tacitus, nor in any other author, so this must have been Jordanes' own contribution. It literary means wet or moist, but wet or moist bodies did not made much sense for many translators, so we find adjectives such as 'soft' or 'loose' instead. As cold weather has a lot to do with the moistness of the body, as the Hippocratic author tells us, living under similar conditions the Scythians "are gross (*pachys*), fleshy (*sarkoeides*), showing no joints (*anarthros*), moist (*hygros*) and flabby (*atonos*)" in regards to their body shape (*eidos*) (Hp. Aer. 19. tr. by W. H. S. Jones). As we saw earlier, the Caledonians lived under similar conditions, in a foggy and cold place, so their body constitution was also similar, at least in that they were moist. The Hippocratic treatise is not concerned with body height, but Vitruvius reveals that coldness and moistness are responsible for great height, while a hot and dry climate causes low height, but he does not discuss the exact causes of this phenomenon (Vitr. 6, 1, 3). One other feature is common to the Caledonians and the Scythians: both nations are savages. The British tribes have huts, but usually live in the forest (Iord. Get. 2. 14), while the Scythians have no houses at all, and are warlike people, eager to fight (Iord. Get. 2. 15).

After the description of the British Island, Jordanes turns to another Island, Scandza, birthplace of the Goths. The description of Scandza begins very similarly to Britain. The author also begins with its position, lying in the Northern part of the Ocean, but this section is longer and more elaborated than that for Britain (Iord. Get. 3. 16–18). We get to know that there are "many small islands scattered round about" Scandza, and "if wolves cross over to these islands when the sea is frozen by reason of the great cold, they are said to lose their sight. Thus the land is not only inhospitable to men but cruel even to wild beasts." (Iord. Get. 3. 18. tr. by. Charles C. Mierow).[16] And then Jordanes directly proceeds with the enumeration of the inhabiting tribes, revealing here and there some information on the climate of the island or the customs and mentality of the listed tribe (Iord. Get. 3. 19–24). That the fauna is an indicator of how good or bad a climate is, is also an

14 *Namque rutilae Caledoniam habitantium comae, magni artus Germanicam originem adseverant.*

15 MGH AA 5,1, 57: *Calydoniam vero incolentibus rutilae cumae, corpora magna, sed fluvida.*

16 MGH AA 5,1, 58: *Ubi etiam parvae quidem, sed plures perhibentur insulae esse dispositae , ad quas si congelato mari ob nimium frigus lupi transierint, luminibus feruntur orbari. Ita non solum inhospitalis hominibus , verum etiam beluis terra crudelis est.*

observation of the Hippocratic author in the Scythian logos (Hp. Aer. 19),[17] so if even the wildest animals get affected by the bad weather conditions, no wonder that men are also exposed to the forces of the environment. Another valuable piece of information is that there are no bees living in Scandza due to the great cold, and since bees are considered a prerequisite for civilised society in ancient thought – Virgil depicted the ideal society with bees in his Georgics –, there is no chance of a functioning, highly developed civilisation in Scandza: "There the honey-making swarms of bees are nowhere to be found on account of the exceeding great cold." (Iord. Get. 3. 19. tr. by. Charles C. Mierow).[18] While in northern Britain there were shorter nights, this far north the sun does not set for 40 days in the summer, but also does not appear during the middle of winter (Iord. Get. 3. 19). In his account of the Screrefennae we get to know that great swamp-regions are to be found on Scandza, but later he remarks that there is also a plain and fertile land, whose inhabitants are under constant attacks from their neighbours due to their better living conditions (Iord. Get. 3. 21). Those "nations surpassed the Germans in size and spirit, and fought with the cruelty of wild beasts." (Iord. Get. 3. 24. tr. by. Charles C. Mierow).[19] But when the Goths managed to live closer to the Roman Empire, Jordanes announces that they came in touch with Greek and Roman philosophy and science, and they were instructed by their philosopher rulers (Iord. Get. 5. 39; 11. 69–72). This new interest cannot merely be explained by the fact that Greece and Rome were now nearer to the Goths, so that philosophers could go to them, or they could go to Hellas or Rome to study philosophy, but perhaps also with the better climate, which makes people more clever. According to Jordanes, Decinius, who was well versed in philosophy, "saw that their (sc. the Goths) minds were obedient to him in all things and that they had natural ability," so he begun to teach them philosophy (Iord. Get. 11. 69 tr. by Charles C. Mierow).[20] The *ingenium naturale* here is of crucial importance: Jordanes is of the opinion that the Goths are wiser than any other barbarian nation, and were almost at the level of Greeks, and this notion is connected with the remark that the Goths lived in Thrace, Moesia and Dacia (Iord. Get. 5. 39). The later text reveals that the Goths were not receptive for philosophy in Scandza or Scythia, but by living near Hellas for a while, they showed interest in philosophy, which Decimius detected (*cernens*). Therefore, natural (*naturale*) here must mean that produced by natural / environmental / climatic causes, similar to what *physikos* meant for the Hippocratic author. This was also a good news for other tribes, as when they

17 The wild animals too that are found there are not large, but such as can find shelter underground. They are stunted owing to the severe climate and the bareness of the land, where there is neither warmth nor shelter. Tr. by W. H. S. Jones.

18 MGH AA 5,1, 58: *Apium ibi turba mellifica ob nimium frigore nusquam repperitur.*

19 MGH AA 5,1, 60: *Hae itaque gentes, Germanis corpore et animo grandiores, pugnabant beluina saevitia.*

20 MGH AA 5,1, 74: *Qui (sc. Decinius) cernens eorum animos sibi in omnibus oboedire et naturalem eos habere ingenium , omnem pene phylosophiam (sic!) eos instruxit.*

settled down in a milder environment, they could become smart enough to practice philosophy, the pinnacle of knowledge.

For the Gothic tribes and later in the text, the Huns, Scythia seemed to be the Promised Land. The description of Scythia follows the same pattern as that of Scandza, recording its position and then the list of tribes, including the tribes up North who did not have houses (*sclaveni*) (Iord. Get. 5. 30–38). Jordanes does not follow here the Hippocratic author, who regarded Scythia as a region with a bad climate, a cold swamp with less than ideal flora and fauna (Hp. Aer. 19). This hostile region was Scandza for Jordanes, and, later in the discussion, the Maeotis swamp (Iord. Get. 24. 123–124), the birthplace of the Huns, who forced the up-till-then invincible Goths out of Scythia. The Huns of Jordanes and the Scythians of Hippocrates have quite a few similarities: they do not look like any other tribe or nation at all. Jordanes expresses his disgust at the appearance of the Huns quite honestly: "a stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human, and having no language save one which bore but slight resemblance to human speech." (Iord. Get. 24. 122. tr. by Charles C. Mierow).[21] Hippocrates describes Scythians as gross (*pachys* usually means thick or fat, but can mean gross, the Latin *taeter* means foul, horrible, vile); both are weak (*minutus* 3, *exiguus* 3), since the weather does not allow for them to develop endurance and strength (Hp. Aer 19); both are without any endurance (*exilis* 2), because without changes of seasons no endurance can develop, as Hippocrates informs us. The *exilis* adjective used by Jordanes also can mean that they are unfertile, which has also been remarked on by the Hippocratic author with regards to the Scythians (Hp. Aer. 21–22). They were both described as nomads (Hp. Aer. 18; Iord. Get. 24. 123).

Conclusion

To conclude, Jordanes was aware that different regions had different climates, and he describes and mentions the environmental circumstances if he regards them as important for his work. It is also clear that he was aware that climate had an important effect on the animals as well as the customs of people. He uses the climatic model consistently during the examined chapters, so he was familiar with the basics of the theory, even if he does not go into detail as to how the winds or the change of seasons influence the bodily constitution of the people, like Hippocrates did. But this is no surprise; as Jordanes was neither a doctor, nor a philosopher, he must have been simply not interested in the question of how exactly the habitat influenced the habits, e.g. what body fluid was predominant in the Goths or the Huns or what this meant in terms of bodily constitution, intellectual capabilities or reproduction. The readership of the work must have

21 MGH AA 5,1, 89: *Genus hoc (...) minutum, tetrum atque exile quasi hominum genus nec alia voce notum nisi quod humani sermonis imaginem adsignabat.*

been aware of the main points of the climate theory as well, so there might have be no need for the author to explain everything in detail. On the question of whether Jordanes read the Hippocratic Airs, Waters and Places, we can conclude that there are no direct references to the Hippocratic work, but from the description of Britain concentrating on the main points of Hippocratic climate lore, or the scattered references the effect of the climate on animals or on the nomadic tribes, we can conclude that Jordanes came in touch with the climate lore of Hippocrates. Whether he read the original work or the Latin translation from the 5th century or learned about this second hand from another author(s), perhaps Cassiodorus, are questions the limited sources do not allow us to answer.

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