

Nicetas' (of Remesiana) Mission and Stilicho's Illyrican Ambition : Notes on Paulinus of Nola *Carmen XVII (Propempticon)**

In 394/5 Pontius Paulinus, scion of the noblest and richest Aquitanian family, created a stir in senatorial and ecclesiastical circles by renouncing wealth and sex in favour of ascetic life in Italy¹. Five years later he received a visit from Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana in *Dacia Mediterranea*. Upon Nicetas' departure Paulinus composed a *propempticon* or a poetic farewell to his newly acquired friend. An exchange of ecclesiastical calls of this sort was hardly an event, but Nicetas' presence in Italy and his subsequent movements do not appear to have been solely due to a desire to participate in the feast of St. Felix of Nola, Paulinus' patron. His journey back to his seat and his activities in Illyricum throw light on attempts of the church of Rome to extend its jurisdiction within the eastern provinces of the empire. They also provide significant insights into an ill documented period of the relations between Arcadius' government and Stilicho, Honorius' strong man, at the beginning of the fifth century.

I. – DATE AND JOURNEY

Paulinus' *Carmen* 17 describes the road which Nicetas chose to embark upon from Nola back to Dacia. The Dacian bishop avoided the direct overland route via northern Italy and Pannonia which would have taken him through western territory. Instead, he set sail to Epirus and circumnavigated the Peloponnese to Thessalonike². From the Macedonian capital the bishop's route became even more circuitous. Paulinus records several places : Philippi in Macedonia, Tomi

* I am very grateful to Dr. André Basson of RAU Johannesburg, for his stimulating conversation and indirect inspiration.

1. AMBROSE, *Ep.* 58.

2. PAULINUS, 17.177f. : *Arctos procul usque Dacos, / ibis Epiro gemina videndus / et per Aegeos penetrabis aestus / Thessalonicen*. And not overland *pace* - P. G. WALSH, *The Poems of Paulinus of Nola (Ancient Christian Writers 40)* (New York 1975), 374, n. 21.

on the Black Sea, and Scupi³. The text presents major difficulties. One is a crucial emendation which reads *Stobi* for *Tomi*. Another difficulty involves the precise meaning of the reference to Nicetas as *Dardanus hospes*. A third is Paulinus' reliability : does he describe a historical or a mere poetic journey, and if the former, does he give the correct order of Nicetas' stations ? All three are interconnected. Admittedly, Hartel's century-old edition of Paulinus' works is not free from faults, but changing *per Tomitanam urbem* to *Stobitanam urbem* is not without its attendant problems and may go far beyond the original reading⁴. Recently, the emendation found the support of Y.-M. Duval who further claims that the newly revised sentence presents Nicetas' itinerary in perfect logical order⁵. If this is the case, what was Nicetas doing in Philippi which was hardly on the direct route between Thessalonike and Remesiana ? A substantial digression such as the one that took Nicetas all the way to Tomi may appear at first rather strange but not altogether an unlikely divergence in view of the circumstances that brought Nicetas back home (below).

Paulinus' depiction of Nicetas as a Dardanian host/guest points to a connection with Troy⁶. But the interest of the venerable bishop of Remesiana in ancient ruins has never been demonstrated. On the other hand, Scupi, an attested locality along Nicetas' route, belonged to the province of Dardania, a region known for its cheese and lard⁷. Assuming, then, that *Dardanus hospes* represents the larger area of a city just named, Paulinus' precision is nevertheless surprising. When referring to Philippi, he did specify the province, Macedonia, presumably to avoid confusion with Philippolis. Such a specification, however, seemed uncalled for in the case of Scupi. Paulinus' description of Nicetas' journey is too literal and matter of fact to have been a mere figment of his imagination. Perhaps a more pertinent question would be to ask whether the localities mentioned were the only stops which Nicetas made along a rather lengthy way. Paulinus' own familiarity with the geography of the eastern provinces cannot be doubted. His mentor, Ausonius, had at least two close relatives who held eminent positions in the eastern provinces and his poetic work includes references to cities of the Greek world⁸. Ausonius' father held the dignity of the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum when Dacia and

3. 17.189f. : *sed freto emenso superest viarum/ rursus in terra labor, ut veharis/ usque felices quibus es sacerdos/ praestitus oras./ tu Philippeos Macetum per agros./ per Tomitanam gradieris urbem./ ibis et Scupos patriae propinquos/ Dardanus hospes.*

4. Emendation and its supporters are recorded in Y.-M. DUVAL, «Niceta d'Aquilée : Histoire, légende et conjectures anciennes», in *Grado nella storia e nell'arte I* (Udine 1980), 169. It is accepted by A. E. BURN, *Niceta of Remesiana. His Life and Work* (Cambridge 1905), lii, following Pagi, without further specification, but reprinted as *per Tomitanam* in idem, p. 148, where the text of the poem is given (presumably) according to Hartel's edition.

5. *Ibid.*

6. WALSH, *op. cit.*, 374, n. 21, adding that «the names are hardly more than vague pointers».

7. *Expositio totius mundi*, 51.

8. Ausonius' son-in-law, Thalassius, was *vicarius Macedonia* in 376/7 (*PLRE* I.887-8) ; for his father, below. *Ordo Urbium Nobilium* (Constantinople, Athens, Antioch, Alexandria).

Macedonia belonged to the west⁹, and Ausonius' grandson, Paulinus, was born in Macedonian Pella. Neither the geographical names in Paulinus' *Propempticon*, nor the order of visits, therefore, need to be suspect, and it can be safely assumed that Nicetas' Italian host recorded the projected journey as it was undertaken.

Nicetas' journey has usually been placed in 400¹⁰. He had been at Rome where he was much admired (Paulinus, *Ep.* 29.14), and then spent January with Paulinus, sharing in the annual celebration in honour of St. Felix of Nola¹¹. Then he left in a hurry, soon after the feast, although a departure in midwinter would have put him at the mercy of a sea ordinarily closed for navigation¹². The fact has never been remarked upon, nor has it ever been associated with the aims of the journey or the troubles which swept Arcadius' realm precisely when the bishop of Remesiana was making a stately progress in Illyricum and Thrace.

II. – ILLYRICUM IN 400

Nicetas' return to his episcopal seat coincided with momentous events in the history of the region and of the eastern empire. Since the mid 370s Illyricum had become the playground of various meandering barbarians, most notably the Visigoths (*Tervingi*) led by Alaric¹³. Two attempts in the mid 390s to check their plunderings and to put a halt to the misery of the locals ended in failure¹⁴. In 397 Eutropius, the strong man of Arcadius' government, resorted to a diplomatic solution and conferred on Alaric a Roman military command¹⁵. The newly appointed *Magister Militum (per Illyricum ?)* seems to have kept the peace for four years, but virtually nothing is known about this crucial period in the history of Illyricum or its Goths. Nicetas' activities seem to

9. *PLRE I*.139 (Iulius Ausonius).

10. G. FABRE, *Essai sur la chronologie de l'œuvre de saint Paulin de Nole* (Paris 1948), 115 ; WALSH, *op. cit.*, 373 ; J. T. LIENHARD, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism* (Köln 1977), 190.

11. N. MOINE, «Melaniana» *RAug.* 1 (1980), 26-7, juxtaposes Nicetas' visit with that of Melania the Elder (*Ep.* 29.14), dating the former to January. LIENHARD, 165, on Nicetas' sojourn in January at Nola.

12. 17.1 : *iamne abis et nos properans reliquis*, where echoes of Virgil and Ovid reverberate.

13. H. WOLFRAM, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley 1989), 117f. ; V. GRUMEL, «L'Illyricum de la mort de Valentinien à la mort de Stilicon», *REByz* 9 (1951), 5-46.

14. A. CAMERON, *Claudian* (Oxford 1970), 156f.

15. The precise nature of Alaric's military title remains unclear. CLAUDIAN, *In Eutropium*, II, 214-5 and *De Bello Getico*, 535f. are our main source, but seem to create a deliberately misleading image of both military and civil authority. Thus the first poem records Alaric as *praesidet Illyrico* which may imply the office of a governor (*praeses*), as Cameron, *Claudian*, 174 infers ; while in the second poem Claudian refers to Alaric as *dux*, a non-existing office at the time. Hence, as A. DEMAND, *RE Suppl.* XII, 730, assumes with many others, Alaric was *Magister Militum*.

constitute one exception and a new reading of Synesius' *De Regno* may offer another.

Alaric's Illyrican tenure extended over troops whose weapons were forged in the armament factories of Ratiaria, Horreum Margi and Naissus, all three within short distances of Remesiana¹⁶. These, however, were managed by the civil authorities, and more specifically by the *Magister Officiorum*¹⁷. Nor did Alaric have access to the vital food supplies which continued to be controlled by the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum. Between 397 and 399 the eastern government issued a series of decrees to Anatolius, *Praetorian Prefect per Illyricum*, who was hardly likely to have been an appointee of Alaric¹⁸. His presence signifies the continuing interest of Arcadius' court in maintaining control over the affairs of the prefecture. Among the laws addressed to Anatolius one (*CTh* 11.14.3) restricted access to state storehouses. Since regular food provisions had been a major component of every agreement between Romans and barbarians throughout the century, the law further reflects Eutropius' reluctance to relinquish such crucial assets to the Goths. Even Alaric's presumed civil jurisdiction must have extended only to cases involving his own people or soldiers stationed in the area, and his financial authority was hardly likely to reach the civilian taxpayers¹⁹. In brief, the treaty of 397 did not confer new privileges on the Goths other than, as it seems, a distinguished Roman military title on their leader.

Sensible as Eutropius' Gothic policy may have been, his rivals were anxious to emphasize the continuing and imminent danger which Alaric and his Goths posed to the security of Arcadius' capital, Constantinople. According to a new interpretation of Synesian chronology, *De Regno* was delivered as early as 398, and not in late 399, as has been previously assumed²⁰. In this light, the arch villain of the piece is Alaric in Illyricum and not Gainas in Constantinople. The suggestion is attractive, even though, by the same interpretation, Synesius' remarks and proposals bore little weight and were not made in public²¹. Addressing himself ostensibly to the emperor, Synesius launched a full-scale private oration on the ideal king, paying special attention to the military aspects of kingship.

An ideal monarch, he claims, does not rely on the military services of barbarians, since their loyalty is dubious, nor does he confer civil honours on them²². Synesius' exhortations on the occasion seem indeed to fit Alaric and his Goths with their recent history of alternate service and revolts. They further display an awareness of the risks entailed in a policy of barbarian employment

16. *NDOr.* 11.18-39.

17. A.H.M. JONES, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1964), 448.

18. *CTh* 11.14.3 ; 4.12.7, 16.8.12.

19. JONES, 489 ; 597.

20. Al. CAMERON et al., *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley 1993), esp. 103-42.

21. *Ibid.*, 134-42.

22. *De Regno*, 22.

which, one may note, had been embraced and pursued with vigor by Arcadius' father. Yet, nowhere does Synesius indicate why, at this point in particular in the troublesome history of the relations between Romans and Goths, the latter were a potential source of trouble. Observations on the perfidious nature of the barbarians were old hat, nor does it appear that Alaric ever intended to make an appearance in the senate house at Constantinople by virtue of his imperial appointment, as Synesius implies²³.

To understand just how dangerous Alaric's presence in Illyricum could have been in time of trouble, one has to turn back to Paulinus' poem on Nicetas. The bishop of Nola praised his friend's intention of turning the minds of gold-digging barbarians from real gold to the brightness of the Roman church²⁴. Gold and conversion make a curious combination. The former played a major role in the relations between Roman government and barbarians, and the latter was an indispensable tool of the expansion of Roman influence. So important were the gold mining areas in the Balkans that they were controlled by a specially appointed *Comes Metallorum per Illyricum* and several *procuratores* stationed in Macedonia, Dacia, Moesia and Dardania²⁵. The gold miners of the region had been subjects of successive imperial legislation which attempted to keep them at work and to prevent them from joining wandering barbarians, like Alaric's Goths, to avoid Roman taxation²⁶. Alaric's command of Gothic manpower and possible access to the gold mines and the armament factories of Illyricum made his people valuable potential allies. In 397, Eutropius secured peace through a lavish bribe, and as long as subsidies were forthcoming, Illyricum was safe.

When Nicetas was crossing Illyricum in early 400, Eutropius was dead, his rival Aurelianus consul, Fravitta the Goth was the chief military commander of the eastern empire, and Gainas the Goth was the strong man of the moment²⁷. The subsidies which kept the Goths of Illyricum at bay were apparently discontinued²⁸. A paranoid like Synesius could easily have envisaged a Gothic plot aided and abetted by Gothic slaves in Constantinople. Just a few months before the bishop of Remesiana set sail from Nola, a Roman army had suffered a serious defeat in Asia Minor, and there was fear that the victor might cross over from Asia to Thrace. So tense a climate offered an ideal opportunity to advance old and unfulfilled ambitions of the sort that Stilicho had long entertained with regard to Illyricum.

23. *De Regno*, 23c ; CAMERON, *Arcadius*, 116.

24. 17.213-16 : *nunc magis dives pretio laboris/ Bessum exultat, quod humi manuque/ ante quaerebat, modo mente caelol/ coligit aurum.*

25. JONES, *LRE*, 838.

26. AMMIANUS 31.6.6 ; JONES, *LRE*, 838.

27. Gainas, Tribigild, and the anonymous heroes of Synesius' *De Providentia* have received much attention. Most recently, Cameron (above n. 20).

28. P.J. HEATHER, *Goths and Romans 332-489* (Oxford 1991), 207.

III. – STILICHO AND ILLYRICUM

Several times during his career as the leading politician of the west (395-408) Stilicho either physically invaded Illyricum or planned an invasion and its annexation²⁹. The area had suffered from a crisis of identity owing to strange mutations which rotated its citizens between the east and the west³⁰. Theodosius' sudden death in 395 created further problem as a result of several interpretations of the arrangement made before his departure for Italy in 394. At any rate there is no doubt that by the time Nicetas travelled there, the area in question (comprising the dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia) had been under the control of Constantinople and Arcadius' court for at least five years. Scholars have long remarked on Stilicho's desire to gain control over Illyricum which some erroneously regard as a prelude to accomplishing his more ambitious design of extending his rule over the entire empire (below). With a view to achieving his aim he propagated as early as 395 a fiction of a double regency over Arcadius and Honorius entrusted to him by their father, Theodosius, on his deathbed³¹. His Illyrican aspirations probably also date to this year.

In both 395 and 396 (or 397) Stilicho was facing Alaric's Goths in eastern Illyricum, although the presence of the chief military commander of the western army on territory officially belonging to the east was, for all intents and purposes, uncalled for, if not altogether illegal. Stilicho's allies explained the inexplicable by praising his magnanimity and readiness to help Arcadius' Illyrican subjects against Gothic depredations³². Touching as this may appear, the explanation is hardly convincing. Such sudden bursts of collegiality make little sense against the background of continuing hostility between the two courts. Both Goths and Romans proved burdensome to the harassed locals and, at any event, the task of succouring the tax payers clearly belonged to the eastern government.

On each occasion, if Stilicho aimed at annexing Illyricum, his timing could have worked well ; yet twice he was prevented from triumphing over the Goths and from achieving his purpose. At the first encounter, Stilicho faced the Goths with the combined might of the western and eastern armies. Had he been successful, Illyricum would have once more belonged in its entirety to the west. Failure, however, did not deter the *ambitious Magister Utriusque Militiae* of Honorius and he tried his luck once more a year later. Had he genuinely wished to curb the Goths in this case, the correct approach would have been to cooperate with Arcadius' government.

What brought Stilicho again and again to Illyricum ? Long ago Mommsen suggested a need for manpower, but by the end of the fourth century Illyricum

29. Al. CAMERON, *Claudian*, 474-7.

30. A subject of much debate. Views are effectively summarised by F. PASCHOD, *Zosime*, III. 1 (Paris 1986), 196f.

31. Al. CAMERON, «Theodosius the great and the Regency of Stilicho», *HSCP* 73 (1969), 247-80.

32. JOHN OF ANTIOCH, *Fr.* 190 (MÜLLER).

was severely depopulated, as repeated imperial initiative to settle barbarians there prove³³. Another hypothesis stipulates that Stilicho wished to extend his influence to Constantinople and the entire realm of Arcadius through the conquest of Illyricum³⁴. Control over Illyricum, however, as desirable as it may have been, was not invariably a stepping stone to the capital. In 400 Gainas, who had aspirations of his own to become the power behind the throne, failed to achieve his aim in spite of his presence in the capital ; his basis of support was too narrow to sustain his ambitions. Stilicho had not support whatsoever among government circles in Constantinople, and the allure of Illyricum had to be considerably more concrete than a phantom pursuit of unachievable glory. Chief among these, as has already been mentioned, were the gold mines and the armament factories. Another was the potential of harnessing the Goths and other disaffected elements in Illyricum to back his plans.

By 400 Stilicho could ill afford to embark on the sort of open hostilities which had brought him eastward twice before with disastrous results. Instead, the poet Claudian revived on his behalf the old claim of a double regency over both Honorius and Arcadius, supposedly the last wish of their father on his deathbed in 395³⁵. And in late 399 Claudian further hinted that only Stilicho could save the east from its own rebellious generals, an idea that was promptly rejected by Arcadius' ministers³⁶. Nor, for that matter, did the eastern government consider employing the Thracian troops at its disposal, or Alaric's Goths, when the affair of Gainas erupted³⁷. It must have become painfully clear to Stilicho that even so drastic a change of regime in Constantinople, as the one which occurred with the fall of Eutropius, was not likely to advance his ambitions. If he were to accomplish successfully the annexation of Illyricum, assuming that this was indeed his overriding desire, methods other than direct military confrontations with the Goths and an elaborate pretense to save the locals had to be explored. In 405 Stilicho concluded an agreement with Alaric in Illyricum and even appointed, in anticipation of success, a Praetorian Prefect for the region³⁸. The move indicates a change of tactics from direct encounters to indirect diplomacy. Nicetas' Illyrican activities in 400 suggest that this switch may have already occurred by then. With Arcadius' realm in turmoil, threatened by a major rebellion in its midst, and a power struggle in the capital, the seizure and annexation of Illyricum became a viable proposition,

33. T. MOMMSEN, «Stilich and Alaric», in *Gesammelte Schriften* IV (Berlin 1906), 516-30. THEMISTIUS, *Or.* 16.211 announces that the empire is better off settling barbarians in depopulated Thrace rather than transplanting Phrygians ! And this in 383. *CJ* 11.52.1 (393) abolished poll tax for the area, a clear mark of impoverishment.

34. CAMERON, *Claudian*, 59f.

35. CAMERON, *Claudian*, 152.

36. CAMERON, *Arcadius*, 310.

37. As JONES, *LRE*, 202, shrewdly observed.

38. SOZOMEN, *HE*, 8.25.3 ; ZOSIMUS, 5.26.2, with PASCHOUD, *Zosime*, 196f. The accord between Stilicho and Alaric has been variously dated to 402, 405 and even 407.

particularly if engineered with the cooperation of an equally interested and no less powerful church of Rome.

IV. – CHURCH, CONVERSION, AND POLITICS

Politically and religiously Illyricum and neighbouring Thrace presented an anomaly in the late fourth century. Dacia and the Danubian parts of the diocese of Thrace were predominantly Latin-speaking areas ; the majority of the inhabitants of Macedonia and the southern regions of Thrace spoke Greek ; and Scythia boasted bilingualism³⁹. Linguistic divisions also created ecclesiastical partitions, and the closing decades of the fourth century witnessed a determined and successful papal effort to extend the authority of the Roman popes into Latin-speaking Illyricum⁴⁰. As a result, by 400 the Roman church had acquired considerable influence in a territory which officially fell outside the jurisdiction of the western Roman emperor.

Thessalonike became the main papal stronghold in the east owing to a shrewd papal move which conferred on its bishop the power to conduct episcopal elections throughout Illyricum⁴¹. Although the pope was acting outside the limits of his authority, the manoeuvre proved successful and lasting. After all, it was also in the interest of the prelate of Thessalonike to preserve the power which had been generously, if unconstitutionally, conferred on his office. Strangely enough, the efforts of the patriarch in Constantinople to assert his authority over a region which fell within the limits of the eastern emperors were doomed to fail.

During his first tenure as the Constantinopolitan bishop (398-403) John Chrysostom attempted to drive a wedge between the pope and the Illyrican church by launching a correspondence with the bishops of Thessalonike, Corinth and Salona⁴². Chrysostom's mission further extended to winning converts from Arianism, an endeavour which mainly involved the Goths. He started with the Gothic colony in the capital and organised missions to Gothic settlements along the Danube and the Crimea⁴³. Such interest appears unusual⁴⁴, but makes sense if perceived against the background of rivalry between the churches of Rome and Constantinople over Illyricum, and of political struggle over the control of Illyricum and its Goths.

Nicetas' first stop was Thessalonike where he would have found both news of recent events in the east and support for his mission. His second stop was at Philippi, still in Macedonia but not far from Thrace, and possibly another papal connection. If, as I suspect, he then turned to Tomi, his journey would

39. JONES, *LRE*, 986.

40. J. ZEILLER, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris 1918), *passim*.

41. JONES, *LRE*, 211 ; C. PIETRI, *Roma Christiana* (Paris 1976), 1073f.

42. PIETRI, *op. cit.*, 1085.

43. J.H.W.G. LIEBESCHUETZ, *Barbarians and Bishops* (Oxford 1990), 169-70, 190 .

44. LIEBESCHUETZ, 170.

have taken him to a territory which presented another ecclesiastical anomaly in late antiquity, namely the authority of one urban bishop over all the cities in the province⁴⁵. For the see of Tomi controlled all of Scythia and was a major stronghold of Latinophile Christianity on the Black Sea⁴⁶. It further appears that Nicetas carefully avoided the imperial capital. His way back home to Remesiana would have taken him through northern Thrace and the Danubian provinces of Illyricum. According to Paulinus, the enterprising bishop from Dacia Mediterranea was very busy converting a host of people to the true Roman Christian faith. The people of Scythia, the Getae, the Dacians, and the Bessi were all recipients of Nicetas' missionary endeavors⁴⁷. The reference to Scythia confirms Nicetas' excursion to Tomi. Perhaps the most curious description of Nicetas' work among the barbarians is the phrase 'the barbarians are learning to resound the name of Christ with Roman hearts'⁴⁸. Paulinus seems to convey here a conviction that conversion encompassed not only religious, but also cultural and political aspects. Above all, Christianity brought with it the idea of Roman peace. Paulinus devotes considerable space to Nicetas' mission among the Bessi, a Thracian tribe known for its mining ability⁴⁹. Owing to Nicetas the Bessi brigands turned into monks and ascetics, and from warriors to peace lovers⁵⁰. Indeed, metaphors of war and peace abound throughout Paulinus' poem, reminding the reader of the military origins of the *Propempticon*. Thus the vanquished Bessi are described in terms appropriate to those over whom the Romans won a triumph by war. The 'father of the north', as Paulinus calls his friend, apparently achieved through his missionary zeal what Stilicho had failed to obtain previously by force of arms⁵¹.

Nicetas was clearly following orders from Rome, but his activities among the Goths and the native population of Illyricum and Thrace paved the way for another western intervention. Honorius' government thought in terms which identified Latinophile Nicenes not only with the church of Rome but also with the Latin speaking secular establishment in the West. That Stilicho and the western army did not follow hard on the heels of the Dacian apostle was due, in all probability, to the swift recovery of the east from the Gothic crisis of 400. By August of 400 Gainas was forced to leave Constantinople and shortly afterwards he was defeated and killed. His conqueror, although a Goth himself, supported the regime of Arcadius and was not likely to back western

45. SOZOMEN, *HE*, 7.19 ; JONES, *LRE*, 875.

46. SOZOMEN, *HE*, 6.21 on an organised opposition to Valens' Arianism in Tomi.

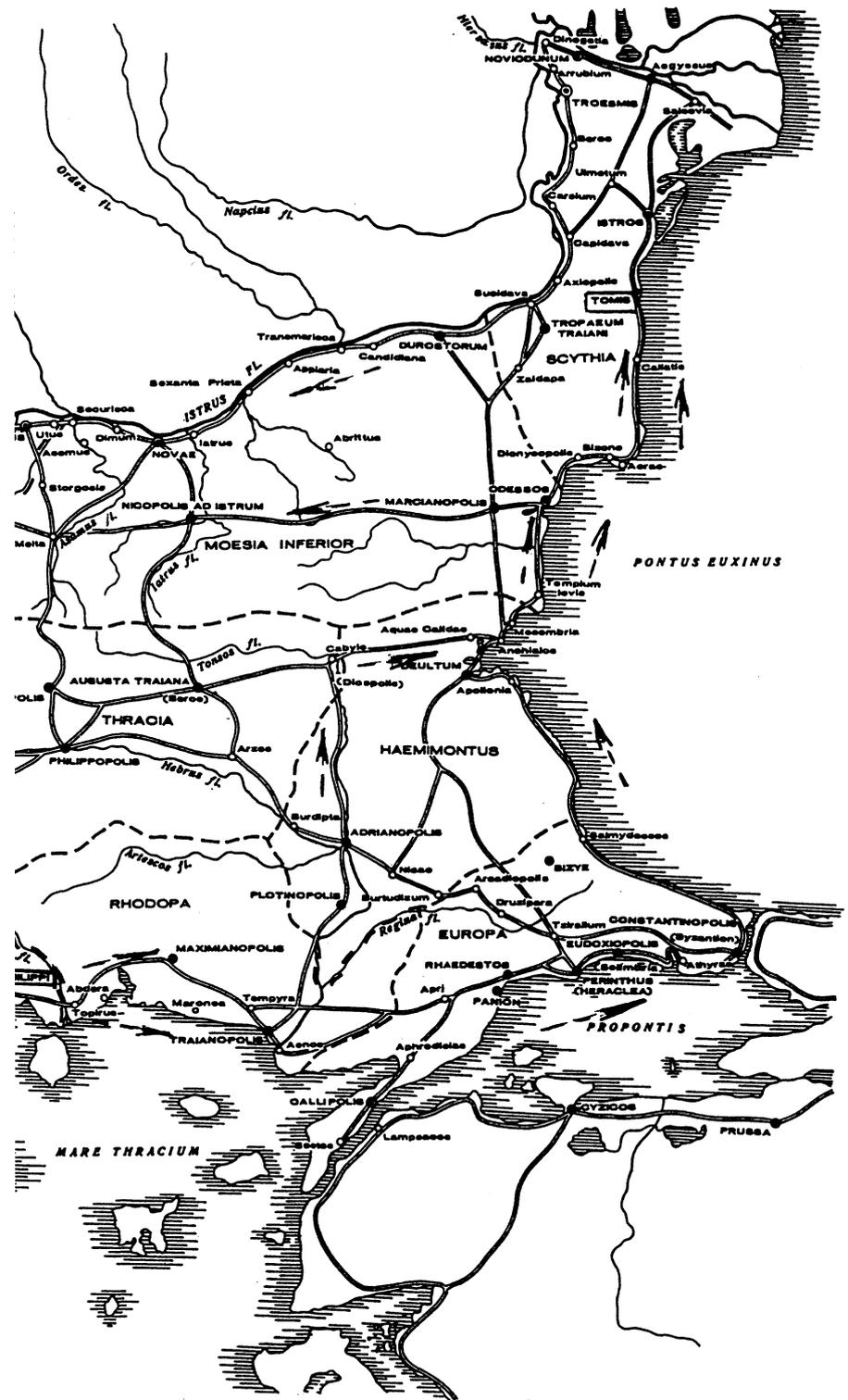
47. 17.205f. ; 245f.

48. 17.262-4 : *barbari discut resonare Christum/ corde Romano placidamque castil vivere pacem*.

49. O. MAENCHEN-HELFFEN, *The World of the Huns* (Berkeley 1973), 264-5. The Bessi have also been identified as the poorer classes among Roman provincials, in brief, a marginalised element in society.

50. 17.205f. esp. 219 : *nunc tegunt <montes> versos monachis latrones/ pacis alumnos*.

51. 17.245 : *te patrem dicit plaga tota Borrae*.



→ Nicetas' route
 --> Nicetas' possible route

□ localities mentioned by Paulinus

pretensions to Illyricum. Stilicho had to wait four more years for another opportunity to advance his Illyrican ambitions. But the church of Rome was able to accomplish its objectives, for Illyricum remained firmly within the orbit of papal authority.

This rather obscure passage in the history of Christianity in Illyricum affords valuable insights into an attempt to combine ecclesiastical interests with secular ambitions. In this case, the commonality between church and state was based on a stake in the same territory. The bishop of Rome employed Nicetas' zeal to convert and to reinforce existing ties ; Stilicho hoped to use the converted to further his ambitions in Illyricum. Both were working against the secular and ecclesiastical establishment in Constantinople. Curiously, but not unpredictably, the methods used by the church proved more efficient ; those utilised by Honorius' government failed.

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ABSTRACT : In winter 400 Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana, embarked on an arduous and long journey from Italy back home. His itinerary, described in a farewell poem written by Paulinus of Nola (*Propempticon, carmen 17*) took him throughout the eastern parts of Illyricum, a much contested territory between the east and the west. Nicetas' activities in the region, and particularly his missionary efforts among the barbarians in Illyricum, illuminate an obscure chapter in the history of Christianity in Illyricum and show how a combination of ecclesiastical interests and secular ambitions could potentially prove a potent weapon in the arsenal of Honorius' government under Stilicho.

RÉSUMÉ : Pendant l'hiver 400, Nicétas, évêque de Remesiana, effectua un long et dur voyage, de retour d'Italie. Paulin de Nole, dans un poème d'adieu, a décrit son itinéraire, qui le conduisit dans la partie orientale de l'Illyricum, territoire en proie aux disputes entre l'orient et l'occident. Les activités de Nicétas dans cette région, et tout particulièrement son œuvre de missionnaire parmi les barbares d'Illyricum, éclairent un chapitre obscur de l'histoire du christianisme illyrien. D'autre part, son activité montre comment la conjugaison d'intérêts ecclésiastiques et d'ambitions séculières pouvait se révéler une arme puissante dans l'arsenal du gouvernement d'Honorius, sous Stilichon.