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JAN WILLEM DRIJVERS / HANS CAREL TEITLER

Gratian's Campaign against the Lentienses and his Journey to Thrace (Ammianus Marcellinus 31.10 & 31.11.6): A New Chronology

ABSTRACT: This paper offers a new chronology for Gratian's journey from Trier to Thrace, his campaign against the Lentienses as well as the route he followed in 378, as described by Ammianus Marcellinus (31.10 and 31.11.6). According to Otto Seeck and others, Gratian left Trier shortly after 20 April 378 (*Cod. Theod.* 8.5.35). It is argued here that Gratian left Trier soon after 1 June (*Cod. Theod.* 1.15.9), a date dismissed by Seeck on weak grounds, and that the events described by Ammianus perfectly fit within a chronological window of the months June and July of 378.

Keywords: Gratian – (Alamannic) Lentienses – chronology – Theodosian Code (1.15.9) – Otto Seeck – Danube

1. Introduction

Chapter 10 is the only chapter of the last book of Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* that discusses affairs in the western part of the Roman empire ruled by the emperor Gratian (367–383). The other chapters, apart from chapter 3 (a digression on the Huns and Alans) and chapter 14 (a necrology of Valens), deal with affairs in the East, more in particular the events in Thrace leading up to the disastrous defeat of the Romans by the Goths at Adrianople on 9 August 378 and its aftermath.

Summary 31.10

Ammianus narrates how the Alamannic Lentienses¹ broke their long-time treaty with the Romans. Direct cause was the information they received in the winter of 377/378 from a compatriot who was *armiger* in Roman service, that Gratian was summoned by Valens to march eastward to reinforce the military strength against the Goths in Thrace. In February 378, the Lentienses crossed the frozen Rhine but were driven back by the Roman army units of the *Petulantes* and

- 1 Ammianus is the only source for this Germanic people that lived in what is now southern Germany in the region of Lake Constance; D. Geuenich, 'Lentienses', *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 18 (2001) 266–267. The Lentienses and their inroads into Roman territory were previously mentioned by Ammianus in 15.4.1 (... *et Lentiensibus, Alamannicis pagis, indictum est bellum collimitia saepe Romana latius irrumpentibus*, "and war was declared on the ... Lentienses, tribes of the Alamanni, who often made extensive inroads through the Roman frontier defences". English translations of Ammianus are by Rolfe (Loeb Classical Library), sometimes slightly modified; *Ammianus Marcellinus, with an English Translation*, ed. J. C. Rolfe, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA and London 1935–1939).

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the Celts. Knowing that the greater part of the Roman army was on its way to Illyricum, the Lentienses assembled a force of forty (or seventy) thousand men, to invade Roman territory again. Gratian, alarmed by these developments, recalled cohorts that had already been sent to Pannonia and gave Nannienus and Mallobaudes command against the Lentienses. The latter were crushed in the battle of Argentaria and only 5,000 Lentienses escaped with their lives. When the emperor Gratian heard about the victory of his generals while already on his way to the East, he interrupted his line of march and crossed the Rhine, hoping for glory by utterly destroying the Lentienses. The Lentienses, surprised by the sudden arrival of Gratian and his troops, retreated to higher grounds. Five hundred soldiers selected from every legion scaled the mountains together with the emperor in pursuit of the Lentienses, but when they were not able to defeat them and suffered great losses, Gratian decided instead to starve them out by closing them in on all sides. The Lentienses kept up their resistance and retreated deeper into the hills, but seeing that Gratian was determined to destroy them they eventually surrendered. A treaty was made with the Lentienses, the contents of which are unknown apart from the fact that the Alamannic tribe had to surrender their strong young men to serve as recruits in the Roman army. After this Gratian resumed his march eastward by way of Arbor Felix (Arbon in Switzerland) and Lauriacum (Lorch-Enns in Austria).²

The chapter has not received much scholarly attention,³ probably because it was considered a distraction from the main narrative of Book 31, i. e. the crossing of the Danube by the Goths, their settlement in Thrace, the hostilities between Romans and Goths, and Valens' defeat and death at Adrianople. Nevertheless, 31.10 is an important chapter for affairs in the West in the year 378 and their impact on the events in Thrace. The same is true of the last paragraph of the next chapter (31.11.6), which provides information about Gratian's journey to Thrace after his Lentiensian expedition. The chronology of this expedition is insecure, as is the timeline of Gratian's journey eastward. Most scholars have followed Seeck's reconstruction (see below), which in our view is based on a feeble argumentation. We offer a new chronology, arguing that Gratian's campaign against the Lentienses and his journey eastward took place in June and July of 378.⁴

In chapter 31.10, Ammianus, as usual, provides few chronological details. It contains only two chronological indications: *Haec autumnno vergente in hiemem funesti per Thracias*

- 2 The chapter furthermore contains details in sections 18–19 and 21–22 about Gratian's character and ends with the replacement of Frigeridus, an extremely able commander in the eyes of Ammianus who should have remained in command considering the situation the empire was in at the hands of the notoriously corrupt and unreliable Maurus.
- 3 Significantly, Gratian's journey is not dealt with in S. Destephen, *Le voyage impérial dans l'Antiquité tardive: des Balkans au Proche-Orient*, De l'archéologie à l'histoire [67] 68 (Paris 2016). See, however, A. Solari, 'La campagna Lenziese dell' imperatore Graziano', *Byzantion* 7 (1932) 69–74; U. Wanke, *Die Gotenkriege des Valens. Studien zu Topographie und Chronologie im unteren Donaauraum von 366 bis 378 n. Chr.*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 3.412 (Frankfurt a. M. 1990) 175–178; S. Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti. Rom und die Alamannen 350–378*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 3.722 (Frankfurt a. M. 1997) 168–176; M. Colombo, 'Una revisione critica di Amm. 31.10', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47 (2007) 203–216; J. F. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome 213–496 (Caracalla to Clovis)* (Oxford 2007) 310–315.
- 4 For a full and detailed commentary of the chapter see J. den Boeft, J. W. Drijvers, D. den Hengst, H. C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XXXI* (Leiden 2017) 171–179.

turbines converrebant ("This is what, throughout Thrace, the destructive storms of affairs swept together as autumn was verging upon winter", 31.10.1), referring to the winter of 377–378, and: *Lentienses ... conferti in praedatorios globos Rhenum gelu pervium pervadunt pruinis Februario mense* ("The Lentienses ... formed themselves into predatory bands, and in the month of February tried to cross the Rhine, which was sufficiently frozen over to be passable", 31.10.4), referring to February 378. The only chronological detail offered by 31.11.6 is a stay of four days of Gratian at Sirmium (*Sirmium introiit et quadriduum ibi moratus*). Also regarding geographical and topographical details Ammianus is not as informative as his (modern) readers would like him to be. In 31.10 and 31.11 he mentions a few place names – Argentaria, Arbor Felix, Lauriacum, Bononia, Sirmium and Castra Martis – but he offers no information about the location of these places or the route that Gratian followed.

2. Invasions by the Lentienses

Because of troubles with the Goths in Thrace in 377, the western court sent troops, first under the command of Frigeridus, later under Richomeres, to join the army that the emperor Valens had sent from Syrian Antioch to Thrace (31.7.3–4). After the battle near the town of Salices (31.7.5–15),⁵ Richomeres returned to Gaul towards the beginning of the autumn of 377 (*anno in autumnum vergente*) to get reinforcements (31.8.2). Frigeridus must also have returned to Gaul, but afterwards he returned to Thrace on the order of Gratian (*Gratiani monitu reversus in Thracias*; 31.9.1) and pitched his camp near Beroea (modern Stara Zagora, Bulgaria). He subsequently defeated the Gothic chieftain Farnobius, and guarded the Succus pass to prevent the Goths from moving into Illyricum (31.9.1–4; 31.10.21). The western court was thus heavily involved in the struggle against the Goths. This had not gone unnoticed by the Lentienses.

For reasons not explained by Ammianus, the Lentienses ended their treaty with the Romans and invaded Roman territory in February 378 (31.10.2–4).⁶ The winter conditions provided them with an excellent opportunity to cross the frozen Rhine. Where exactly they crossed the river is unknown, but it was probably somewhere in the region

5 The precise location of *oppidum Salices* (31.7.5) is not known, but Szidat has convincingly argued that it must be sought near Marcianopolis: J. Szidat, 'Die Dobrudscha in den *Res Gestae* des Ammianus Marcellinus. Zu den Ortsbezeichnungen *Oppidum Salices* (31,7,5) und *Vicus Carporum* (27,5,5)', in: V. H. Baumann (ed.), *La politique éditiltaire dans les provinces de l'empire romain, IIème-IVème siècles après J.-C.* (Tulcea 1998), 25–34. Cf. in general for the changes undergone by the Danube in modern times H. Konen, 'Project Exploratio Danubiae – new insights into troop transport on the river Danube in the late Roman period', in: N. Hodgson, P. Bidwell and J. Schachtmann (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 2009. Proceedings of the XXI International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies (Limes Congress) held at Newcastle upon Tyne in August 2007*, Oxford 2017, 679–686 at 681.

6 No treaties between the Lentienses and Rome have been explicitly mentioned by Ammianus, but it is not unlikely that an agreement was reached in 356 between Constantius and the Alamanni, including the Lentienses, after they had been defeated by forces commanded by the *magister equitum* Arbilio in 355 (15.4.7–13); cf. 16.12.15 *pacem impetraverunt* and 16.12.16 *postea vero pace data discesserat imperator*. Cf. Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 169 n. 701 and Colombo, 'Una revisione critica di Amm. 31.10', 204.

between Basel and Strasbourg. They were pushed back by the army units of the Petulantes and the Celts (31.10.4).⁷ However, this did not stop the Lentienses, incited by their (otherwise unknown) king Priarius, from even greater inroads into Roman territory. Although Ammianus does not say when this invasion took place, it must have been when conditions were good for traversing the Rhine, i. e., from the second half of May onwards when the water was lower. An invasion earlier in spring is unlikely, not only because of high water in the Rhine, but also because Alamannic society was a subsistence economy and the men were needed to work the land for food production.⁸ The most likely date for the second invasion therefore is around the middle of June. Again, where exactly the Lentienses crossed the Rhine is unknown, but the site of modern Breisach am Rhein is a reasonable conjecture.⁹ Their force consisted of 40,000 men (31.10.5).¹⁰ Such a large number seems an exaggeration in order to eulogize Gratian's victory. However, it need not be unrealistic. The Alamannic army that was defeated by Julian in the battle of Strasbourg in 357 consisted of 35,000 men (16.12.26). Gratian was clearly alarmed by these incursions. He recalled the cohorts he had already sent eastward (31.7.4) and combined them with troops he had left behind in Gaul (31.10.6). Nannienus (it is unclear which office he held) and the *comes domesticorum* Mallobaudes were given command over this force and they defeated the Lentienses at Argentaria. Argentaria (or Argentovaria) cannot be located exactly, but it must have been in the region not far from Colmar in the Alsace. The prevailing view situates it at the site of the modern village of Horbourg, but Biesheim and Kunheim are alternative candidates.¹¹ When the battle took place is again not revealed by Ammianus. We would suggest shortly after the middle of June, a date closely connected with Gratian's leaving Trier for Thrace.

3. When did Gratian leave Trier? The Date of *Codex Theodosianus* 1.15.9

It is generally assumed that 20 April 378 is the latest attested date for Gratian's presence in Trier. This date is furnished by *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.35, issued by the emperor in his Trier residence. It is also assumed that Gratian started his journey to the eastern part of the empire soon thereafter. However, there is a later law – *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.9 – issued by Gratian in Trier on 1 June 378 and addressed to Alypius,¹² supposedly *vicarius* of Afri-

7 These units of the *auxilia palatina* are often mentioned together by Ammianus (20.4.2, 20.4.20, 20.5.9, 21.3.2, 22.12.6); see also e. g. *Not. Dign. Occ.* 5.16, 17.

8 H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350–425* (Oxford 1996), 22, 30, 78–79; Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 78.

9 Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 170; Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 314.

10 The number of 70,000 also mentioned by Ammianus, is, presumably, exaggerated in order to flatter Gratian. Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 170 n. 705; Colombo, 'Una revisione critica di Amm. 31.10', 207.

11 R. J. A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton 2000), 11 H4; Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 170–171 (n. 712 has many references to literature); H. U. Nuber and M. Reddé, 'Das römische Oedenburg (Biesheim / Kunheim, Haut-Rhin, France)', *Germania* 80 (2002) 169–242 on pp. 212–218; Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 312.

12 PLRE I, Alypius 13, "? Vicar of Africa a. 378".

ca, who received it on 7 July of that year: *Dat. K. Iun. Treviris. Accepta Non. Iul. Valente vi et Valentiniano ii AA. consul.*¹³ Reconstructions of Gratian's eastward journey and his campaign against the Lentienses have hardly ever taken this law into consideration. The main reason for that is the fact that some hundred years ago Otto Seeck argued that the date of the law could not be right and that it should be dated to 1 January 378 instead of 1 June. Seeck has two reasons for his rejection of the June date of the manuscripts. First, he argues that it would have taken much longer than five weeks for the law to arrive in Africa (Carthage) from Trier.¹⁴ Secondly, he states that it would have been unlikely that Gratian was still in Trier on 1 June 378 as he would already have been on his way to Thrace.¹⁵ Most scholars have accepted Seeck's line of reasoning,¹⁶ and therefore date Gratian's departure from Trier shortly after 20 April 378 and the battle at Argentaria in the first half of May.¹⁷

However, there are no compelling reasons to follow Seeck in adapting the date of *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.9. Firstly, all manuscripts imply a date of 1 June (*k. Iun.*) 'in the year of the sixth consulship of Valens Augustus and the second consulship of Valentinian (II) Augustus', that is, 378. Secondly, if the law was issued on 1 January, as Seeck suggests, it would have taken more than six months before it reached Alypius on 7 July, which is rather unlikely, even in wintery conditions. Thirdly, the law could easily have reached Alypius within 37 days, particularly in the summer, when the sea was open and weather conditions were good. This is, for instance, evident from *Cod. Theod.* 11.19.1, which reached Carthage in 33 days from Sirmium where it was issued (on 17 April 321).¹⁸ And lastly, Seeck's assertion that Gratian could not have been in Trier on 1 June because by then he was on his way to Thrace is a circular argument that is not based on any evidence.

In our view, then, there is no reason to deviate from 1 June 378 as the date that Gratian issued *Cod. Theod.* 1.15.9 and there is no reason either to doubt that the emperor was still in Trier on that date. We take therefore 1 June 378 as the starting point of our chronological reconstruction, assuming that it was soon after this date that Gratian be-

13 'Given on the kalends of June [i. e. 1 June] at Trier. Received on the nones of July in the year when Valens Augustus was consul for the sixth time and Valentinian Augustus [i. e. Valentinian II] was consul for the second time [i. e. 7 July 378].

14 O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr. Vorarbeit zu einer Prosopographie der christlichen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 1919, repr. 1964), 99: "zur Reise von Trier nach Karthago brauchte ein kaiserlicher Brief in der Regel viel längere Zeit, als hier zwischen Datum und Acceptum liegt".

15 Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser*, 99: "Zudem ist es sehr unwahrscheinlich, dass Gratian am 1. Juni 378 noch in Trier war, da er im Sommer dieses Jahres seinem Oheim, der gegen die Gothen kämpfte, zu Hilfe zog."

16 Colombo, 'Una revisione critica di Amm. 31.10', 206–207 is the exception to this rule.

17 Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 172–173. Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 312 is chronologically less specific: "All these conflicts [battle of Argentaria, campaign against the Lentienses, Gratian's journey to Sirmium] occurred in 378. Gratian's crossing of the Rhine must have occurred between 20 April, when he was still in Trier, and mid-August, when he is reckoned to have been in residence in Sirmium."

18 A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford 1964), vol. 3, 92. Jones also mentions *Cod. Theod.* 1.3.1 which was issued in Verona and reached Africa in 45 days. Admittedly, in winter it took longer, as appears from *Cod. Theod.* 8.10.1 which took 99 days to get from Trier to Carthage and *Cod. Theod.* 11.36.23 which took 86 days; we are grateful to Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner for this information. However, 86 days and even 99 days are clearly less than the six months of Seeck.

gan his journey to the East, that is, somewhat more than a month after Valens left Antioch for Constantinople.¹⁹ Moreover, Gratian's military actions and movements fit very well within a chronological window of two months (June and July), since the emperor travelled at great speed as may be concluded from Ammianus' words *Gratianus ... exserta celeritate aliorum properans expedit* ("Gratian showed great rapidity while he was hastening in another direction", 31.10.18) and *Gratianus ... digressus ... porrectis itineribus* ("Gratian hastened by long marches", 31.10.20).

4. New Chronology

Since Gratian was still in Trier on 1 June, he cannot have travelled far when he heard of the victory over the Lentienses by Mallobaudes and Nannienus at Argentaria, which, as we suggested above, took place shortly after the middle of June. The emperor may have taken the route from Trier to Metz and from there to Strasbourg; from Strasbourg he must have continued south along the Rhine to Augst from where he followed the Rhine to the east.²⁰ He traversed the region where Argentaria was located but the battle only took place when Gratian had already passed. Preparations, however, in anticipation of the Lentiensian invasion – e.g. the appointment of Nannienus and Mallobaudes, and the recalling of troops that were already sent to Pannonia – must have started, when Gratian was still in Trier. The Lentiensian invasion must have been foreseen based on information the Romans had received from the other side of the frontier.

Gratian may have heard about the successes against the Lentienses before he reached Lake Constance. The news led to his decision to cross the Rhine and campaign against the remaining Lentienses himself.²¹ Various sites of the crossing have been suggested: Basel, Kaiseraugst, Zurzach (ancient Tenedo), Burg/Eschenz.²² The distance from Trier to Kaiseraugst is 157 Roman miles (= 232 km) according to the route just described;

19 31.11.1: *His forte diebus Valens tandem excitus Antiochia longitudine viarum emensa venit Constantinopolim* ("It chanced that at that time Valens was at last called forth from Antioch, and after making the long journey arrived at Constantinople"). Valens entered Constantinople on 30 May as we know from *Consul. Constant.* a. 378; see also *Socr. Hist. Eccl.* 4.38.1. He may therefore have left Antioch by the end of April.

20 Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 173 assumes a different route for the first part of Gratian's journey: "Es ist denkbar, dass Gratian bei seinem Vormarsch die Strasse genommen hat, die von Trier über Bingen und Mainz nach Basel und schliesslich in Richtung Arbon führte."

21 31.10.11: *Hac laeti successus fiducia Gratianus erectus iamque ad partes tendens eoas laevorsus flexo itinere latenter Rheno transito spe incitatio bona universam, si id temptanti fors affuisset, delere statuit malefidam et turbaram avidam gentem* ("Gratian, filled with confidence at this happy success, and being already on his way to the regions of the east, turned his line of march to the left, secretly crossed the Rhine, and spurred on the more by sanguine hope, determined, if fortune favoured his attempt, utterly to destroy a race faithless and greedy for trouble").

22 L. Angliviel de la Beaumelle n. 484 in: G. Sabbah, *Ammien Marcellin, Histoire VI (Livres XXIX–XXXI)* (Paris 1999) 273: Gratian "a sans doute franchi le Rhin du côté de Zurzach"; Lorenz, *Imperii fines erunt intacti*, 172: "In Frage kommen Kaiseraugst, Zurzach, Burg/Eschenz oder Basel"; Colombo, 2007, 210: "quasi sicuramente a Targaetium / Burg bei Stein am Rhein".

that to Zurzach is 187 miles (= 277 km).²³ This distance could have been covered by a fast-moving army within eight to ten days.²⁴ Having left Trier soon after 1 June, Gratian would then have heard about the victory of Nannienus and Mallobaudes by mid-June.

From Ammianus' elaborate description (31.10.12–17) one could get the impression that the Lentiensian campaign took quite some time. However, in this case appearances are probably deceptive. The Lentienses were already heavily defeated by Gratian's generals, and the emperor's expedition therefore may have taken no more than a few weeks, say, the last week(s) of June and the early days of July. Why Gratian decided to pursue the Lentienses, remains in the dark. Possibly the young emperor – he was only nineteen – saw an opportunity to enhance his status as military commander by a quick and easy victory over an already heavily defeated enemy.²⁵

The campaign ended with the capitulation of the Lentienses and a treaty in which they surrendered their young men as Roman recruits (31.10.17). Gratian then resumed his journey to Thrace. This would be by the beginning of July, if we are right in assuming that the campaign on the other side of the Rhine had taken no more than a few weeks. He first passed by Felix Arbor in Raetia – modern Arbon in Switzerland – located at the southern shore of Lake Constance and part of the Rhine-Iller-Danube frontier, and then by Lauriacum in Noricum, modern Enns-Lorch in Upper Austria, at the confluence of the Danube and the Enns, “to bring aid to the hard-pressed part of the country” [i. e. Thrace]” (*Gratianus ... digressus per castra, quibus Felicis Arboris nomen est, per Lauriacum ad opitulandum oppressae parti porrectis itineribus ire tendebat*, 31.10.20). Lauriacum had a legionary camp and was a base for the Danube fleet. The *Notitia Dignitatum* mentions it as the station for the *praefectus legionis secundae Italicae* (Occ. 34.39) and the *praefectus classis Lauriacensis* (Occ. 34.43). It is not certain which route Gratian took, but the shortest distance between Felix Arbor and Lauriacum was 350 Roman miles (= 518 km).²⁶ To cover this distance must have taken Gratian and his soldiers some seventeen days: assuming that they were in a hurry and made long marches (*porrectis itineribus*, 31.10.20)

23 These calculations are derived from R. Voorburg, *Omnes Viae: Roman Routeplanner. A Reconstruction of an antique Roman Map with Internet Technology* (<http://www.omnesviae.org/>), based on the information provided by the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.

24 A day's march varied but averaged 20 km. Fast moving armies, i. e. armies without wagons and pack animals, could exceed 30 km per day; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 245.

25 According to Ammianus (31.10.10) only 5,000 out of 40,000 Lentienses survived the battle of Argentaria. O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, 6 vols. (Stuttgart 1920–1923^{2–4}) vol. 5, 112 is very critical about the action “eines unreifen Jünglings” and writes: “Dies törichte Unternehmen, das nie zum Ziele führen konnte, raubte dem jungen Kaiser viel kostbare Zeit.” Drinkwater, *The Alamanni and Rome*, 314 agrees and considers the campaign “ill-timed, unnecessary and basically unsuccessful in that Gratian won no great victory in the field. And in the long term it seriously damaged the Empire by contributing to defeat at Adrianople.” N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire. Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 34) (Berkeley 2002) 365–366 is also critical, as is Wanke, *Die Gotenkriege des Valens, 176–177*. After his success against the Lentienses, Gratian adopted the title *Alamannicus*; *ILS* 771.

26 www.omnesviae.org; cf. the modern ‘Falk Routenplaner’ (<http://www.falk.de/routenplaner/>): 500 km.

they may have covered at least some 30 km per day, and perhaps even more.²⁷ Gratian may therefore have arrived at Lauriacum in mid-July.

From 31.11.6 it is clear that at a certain point during his journey Gratian himself and his lightly armed troops descended the Danube by ship (*ipse cum expeditiore militum manu permeato Danubio*) “while his baggage and packs were sent on ahead by land” (*pedestri itinere praemissis impedimentis et sarcinis*). Since Ammianus explicitly mentions the naval station of Lauriacum, it seems probable that Gratian embarked here.²⁸

5. The Journey down the Danube

In 31.11.6 Ammianus picks up Gratian’s journey eastward. He sailed down the Danube via Bononia to Sirmium and, “having paused there for four days, he continued by the same river to Castra Martis” in Dacia Ripensis (*permeato Danubio delatus Bononiam Sirmium introiit et quadriduum ibi moratus per idem flumen ad Martis castra descendit*). In order to chronologically reconstruct this part of the journey we need to know the distance that was covered as well as the speed of the rowing boats going downriver. Concerning the latter, Walter Scheidel calculated that in mild weather conditions like in summer, a military rowing boat going downstream could cover some 120 km per day.²⁹ As to the distance of the route, information is provided by the Danube Commission³⁰ as well as by the device ‘measure distance’ of Google Maps; occasionally the modern ‘Falk Routenplaner’ is also used.

By river the distance between Lauriacum (Enns-Lorch) and Bononia (modern Banostor, Serbia³¹) is 835 km according to the Danube Commission;³² Google Maps provides the same information. In the fourth century the distance was probably somewhat

²⁷ Cf. note 24 above.

²⁸ The boats may have been of the same type as the *lembi* Julian used when he sailed down the Danube in 361; 21.9.2 *cumque ad locum venisset, unde navigari posse didicit flumen, lembis escensis* (“And when he came to the place where he learned that the river was navigable, embarking in boats”); these *lembi* probably also had a sail. Like Julian had done, Gratian divided his army, going downriver with light-armed troops while the rest of the troops travelled by land; cf. Zosimus 3.10.2–3 Ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς Ραιτούς ... πλοῖα ποτάμια κατασκευάσας αὐτὸς μὲν ἅμα τρισχιλίους εἰς τὸ πρόσω διὰ τοῦ Ἰστρου παρήγε, διςμυρίους δὲ πεζῇ τὸ Σίρμιον καταλαμβάνειν διέταττεν. Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν συνεχῆς εἰρεσία μετὰ τῆς τοῦ ῥοῦ φορᾶς καὶ τῶν ἐτησίων ἀνέμων αὐτῶ συντελεσάντων, ἐνδεκάτῃ μὲν ἡμέρᾳ περὶ τὸ Σίρμιον ἦλθε (‘On arriving in Raetia ... he [Julian] built river boats; he continued himself down the Danube accompanied by 3,000 men, and ordered the other 20,000 to make for Sirmium by foot. Thanks to the unremitting efforts of the rowers in combination with the current and the Etesian winds, he reached the environs of Sirmium on the eleventh day’). Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 366 rightly observes that because Gratian used river transport he could only have brought with him a few thousand soldiers.

²⁹ W. Scheidel, ‘The Shape of the Roman World’, *Stanford/Princeton Working Papers in Classics*; <https://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/scheidel/041306.pdf>, 2013.

³⁰ The Danube Commission is an organization of countries along the Danube, established in 1948; <http://www.danubecommission.org/dc/en/danube-commission/>.

³¹ Talbert, *Barrington Atlas*, 21 B4. Bononia is also known as Malata.

³² http://www.danubecommission.org/uploads/doc/publication/KM_ANZEIGER/ACROBAT/242-269-YU-a4.pdf.

longer.³³ Gratian could have made this journey in seven days considering that he covered some 120 km per day.³⁴ The emperor and his soldiers could then have reached Bononia by about 22 July. At Bononia the emperor and his soldiers disembarked and marched on to Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia³⁵), 19 miles (i. e. 28 km) further on (*Bononiam a Sirmio miliario nono disparatam et decimo*; “Bononia, distant nineteen miles from Sirmium”, 21.9.6); here they presumably arrived on the following day, i. e. 23 July. Gratian remained for four days in Sirmium, so until 27 July, and then he supposedly returned to Bononia where he arrived the day after (28 July). At Bononia he embarked again – probably the following day (29 July) – to sail down the Danube to Castra Martis,³⁶ a Roman fortress in Dacia Ripensis, on the modern site of Kula in Bulgaria. Since Castra Martis is not on the Danube, the western emperor and his troops probably disembarked at (another) Bononia (modern Vidin, Bulgaria³⁷) and journeyed from there to Castra Martis, about 30 km inland. The river journey from Bononia (Banostor) to Bononia (Vidin) is some 480 km according to Google Maps (measure distance). Covering approximately 120 km per day Bononia (Vidin) could have been reached by Gratian and his light-armed troops within four days, so by 1 or 2 August. Since it took a day to cover the 30 km from Bononia to Castra Martis, Gratian and his soldiers could have arrived there by 2 or 3 August. At Castra Martis Gratian's journey ended. Castra Martis was still some 550 km, i. e., a march of 18–19 days, away from Adrianople,³⁸ where Valens was awaiting his co-Augustus.

According to Ammianus, Valens was jealous of Gratian's victory over the Lentienses and did not want to wait for his co-emperor; rather than giving Gratian a share in the victory in a battle which he thought was already but won, he instead confronted the Goths on his own (31.12.1 and 7). However, Valens must have been aware through Richomeres, who was sent ahead by Gratian with a letter for his uncle (31.12.4), that the western emperor and his Gallic troops were still far away. It may have been one of the reasons why Valens decided not to wait for Gratian and to fight the Goths without the military help of his co-emperor. Valens just could not afford to wait another 18–19 days. If Gratian had not decided to campaign against the Lentienses, a campaign which took some two weeks, he might have been in Thrace in time and the disaster at Adrianople could have been avoided.

33 F. Himmler, H. Konen, and J. Löfl, *Exploratio Danubiae. Ein rekonstruiertes spätantikes Flusskriegsschiff auf den Spuren Kaiser Julian Apostatas* (Region in Umbruch 1) (Berlin 2009), 105 n. 9: “Auf der damals unregulierten Donau war die Distanz sicher noch höher”.

34 As we saw in n. 28, Julian reached Sirmium on the eleventh day according to Zosimus 3.10.3. But Julian did not start his journey in Lauriacum, but from a place *unde navigari posse didicit flumen* (21.9.2), presumably near present-day Ulm, at the confluence of the Danube and the Iller.

35 Sirmium: Talbert, *Barrington Atlas*, 21 B5.

36 Castra Martis: Talbert, *Barrington Atlas*, 21 E6.

37 Bononia: Talbert, *Barrington Atlas*, 21 E5.

38 www.omnesviae.org has 543 km; according to the modern ‘Falk Routenplaner’ the distance between Kula (Castra Martis) and Edirne (Adrianople) is 556 km. Cf. Wanke, *Die Gotenkriege des Valens*, 178.

Summary Chronology 31.10 and 31.11.6

- Winter 377–378: Lentienses hear of Gratian's plans to march eastward (31.10.1–3). February 378: Lentienses cross the frozen Rhine, exact location unknown; they are turned back by the units of the Celts and the Petulantes (31.10.4).
- Middle of June 378: the Lentienses cross the Rhine, possibly at Breisach, with a large force of 40,000 men (31.10.5). They are defeated by Nannienus and Mallobaudes at Argentaria (31.10.6–10).
- 1 June 378: Gratian still in Trier (*Cod. Theod.* 1.15.9): *Dat. K. Iun. Treviris. Accepta Non. Iul. Valente vi et Valentiniano ii AA. consul.* He probably left Trier soon after 1 June.
- Shortly after the middle of June 378: Gratian hears about the victory of Nannienus and Mallobaudes while heading to Thrace, probably before he arrived at Lake Constance (31.10.11).
- Last week(s) of June to the beginning of July 378: Gratian crosses the Rhine and campaigns against the Lentienses (31.10.11–17).
- Beginning of July 378: Gratian resumes his journey to Thrace and travels past Felix Arbor (31.10.20).
- Beginning of July – mid-July 378: journey overland from Felix Arbor to Lauriacum (31.10.20).
- Mid-July 378: at Lauriacum Gratian embarks with a band of light-armed troops and sails downstream the Danube to Bononia (modern Banostor in Serbia) (31.11.6).
- Ca. 22 July 378: arrival at Bononia (31.11.6).
- 23 July 378: arrival at Sirmium (31.11.6).
- 23–27 July 378: sojourn at Sirmium (31.11.6).
- 28 July 378: return to Bononia (Banostor).
- 29 July 378: at Bononia Gratian embarks again to continue his journey downstream the Danube.
- 1/2 August 378: arrival at Bononia (Vidin in Bulgaria).
- 2/3 August 378: journey from Bononia (Vidin) to Castra Martis (31.11.6).

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