

Theodoric the Great

Walter Pohl

[This is an accepted manuscript of an entry in: Hans Dieter Betz (ed.), *Religion Past and Present* 12 (Leiden: Brill 2012) 604-605; ISBN: 978-9-0041-6332-4].

Theodoric the Great (c. 450, Pannonia – Aug 30, 526, Ravenna), king of the Ostrogoths.

Brought up in Constantinople as nephew of the king of the Pannonian Ostrogoths, he succeeded to the throne c. 470; in 473 he and his Goths moved into the Balkan provinces of the East Roman Empire. From that base, at the behest of Emperor Zeno he conquered Italy, then ruled by Odoacer, between 476 and 489. Under his leadership, the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy was supreme among the regna of what had been West Roman soil. Internally Theodoric emphasized institutional continuity and accommodation with the Roman majority of the population; he had the support of leading senators, including Cassiodorus. Like his Goths, he was an Arian (or Homoean); even today formerly Arian churches still stand in Ravenna, his capital. But he was on good terms with the orthodox Catholic Church; even in the Laurentian papal schism, his support was sought. Only in the final years of his reign did he come into conflict with influential senatorial and ecclesiastical circles, which culminated in the execution of Symmachus and Boethius, an event that cast a dark shadow on the picture of Theodoric in Christian writers.

Literature:

- Herwig Wolfram, *Die Goten* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1979, ⁴2001).
- Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988).
- John Moorhead, *Theodoric in Italy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992).