Names of the Burgundians in the Romanian Historiography

Irina CROITORU
University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Grigore T. Popa" Iaşi (Romania)

Abstract: The article mentions the forms with which the name of the Burgundians, ancient German population appears in the Romanian historiography, after which, previously, a recapitulation of their history has been done.

Key-words: Burgundians, Germans, German populations, Romanian historiography, lexicography.

Introduction

After we have recently[1] made a recapitulation of the forms under which the Francs' name appears in the Romanian historiography and we have reached the conclusion that the graphic and phonetic differences are not major, due to the oral or written form typical of the period in which the work, which mentions the Germans, was edited, we propose to stop this time at the Burgundians.

As in any investigation, we begin with the references from dictio-

[1] The present article comes after the research paper presented at the Colocviul Internațional de Științe ale Limbajului „Eugeniu Coşeriu", 13th edition: *Dinamica limbilor şi literaturilor în epoca globalizării* (16-18 October 2015), published in the volume *Limbaje şi comunicare*, vol. XIII, I Part, Iaşi, Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2015, pp. 110-117, ISBN: 978-973-152-302-6. The publications which have as subject the names of old German populations are extracts from the author's PhD thesis, entitled *Nume de populații vechi germanice*, coordinated by Prof. Constantin Frâncu, currently under print at Casa Editorială Demiurg, Iaşi.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

naries and the first among them is, obviously, the DEX[2], which for the noun and adjective links the explication of the term only to the medieval or modern age („persoană originară sau locuitor din Burgundia" or „care aparține Burgundiei sau burgunzilor, [...] privitor la Burgundia ori la burgunzi"), referring to the province which holds the name of the population and which appeared, incontestably, after the settlement of the Germans in that specific territory. Thus, there is no reference to the great family of German populations, as if the information did not exist at the beginning of the 3rd millennium. Yet, by going briefly back in the lexicographic time, we notice that Lazăr Şăineanu, in the 8th edition of his known *Dicţionar explicativ al limbei române* (Bucureşti, 1938), at the heading *barbari*, makes the express remark that the Burgundians, as well as the Alans, Franks and Alemanni, are part of the „popoarele sălbatice", which invaded the present territory of France, between the 5th and 7th century A.D. (p. 730), but at the heading *burgunzi*, the author details the explanation: „popor germanic aşezat în Galia, la începutul secolului V, unde fundă *Burgundia*, azi *Bourgogne*" (p. 740). Although the explication is apparently satisfactory, we persevere in the desire to find out more information and we observe the term used today for this old population, *germanic*, while during Lazăr Şăineanu's time it was neither known nor used, the same thing happening with the term *populaţie*, which was not used, thus we do not find them in his *Dicţionarul*, but we do find the term *german*, which the researcher explains as follows: „denumire generală a popoarelor (vechi sau noue), originare din Germania: germani occidentali (alamani, franci, marcomani, saxoni) şi germani orientali (goţi, burgunzi, heruli, longobarzi, vandali)" (p.775). Furthermore, Şăineanu mentions, at the *Niebelungen* heading, that this is a German epic, which dates back to the 13th century and which recounts the Burgundians' battles with Attila. (p. 817). After a short digression, the reader is invited to meditate alone over the phrase *lexicographic progress.*

As is only natural, following the lack of some linguistic, historical and concrete archaeological arguments, the researchers' opinions are numerous and more or less different. A renowned specialist, G. Neumann, considers that the origin of the name is hard to specify, but, most probably, it originates form the derivation of the German adjective *burgund*, which can be translated as „înalt", „care se află la înălţime"[3]. L. Schmidt

[2] Academia Română, *Dicţionarul explicativ al limbii române*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, Bucureşti, 2009, p.127.

[3] G. Neumann, *Burgunden*: I.2. *Namenkundliches*, în *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* von Johannes Hoops. Zweite, völlig neu bearbeitete und stark

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

and other researchers were of the opinion that the name comes from the Bornholm Island, whose old Icelandic name was Burgundarholmr[4]. The hypothesis that the name refers to the character of the population's height[5], which was supported by R. Much, is less likely. The population's name, especially in the version *burgundioni*, is met more frequently only in the 4th century A.D.[6]

According to the information from ancient sources, it is considered that the population came from Scandinavia, in the 2nd century B.C., settling, after a short halt on the Bornholm Island, in the area of outfall of the Oder river. Much later, Claudius Mamertinus's encomium mentions them, together with the Alemanni and Cherusci, as participants to the invasion of Gall, in 289 A.D. Around the years 406-407 A.D., part of them, under the leadership of king Gundahar of the Nibelung kindred, shifts on the left side of the Rhine and become the Roman's allies (*foederati*). In 413 A.D., the Burgundians form a kingdom around the city of Worms. The fall of the Burgundian kingdom took place in the year 435 A.D., when they wished to invade the Belgica I province and they were defeated by Aëtius[7]. It is known that their settlement in the present French territory lead to the creation of the Burgundy province, whose name it owns, later on under the domination of the Franks. For almost 1000 years, the Burgundy dukedom played an important political role in the area, its specific identity fingerprint being recognised during the whole Western Medieval Age time.

In the Romanian historiography consulted until the book *Istoria românilor*, the 2010 edition, the Burgundians' name appears in many various graphics: *burgundi, burgunzi, burgunţi, burgundioni, burgundzioni* şi *urugunzi*, the second form being the general form usually accepted nowadays.

---

erweiterte Auflage unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelehrter, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 4, 1981, pp. 230-231.

[4] L. Schmidt, *Ostgermanen*, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung. Die Ostgermanen*, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München, 1941, p.129.

[5] G. Neumann, *Burgunden*: I.2. *Namenkundliches,* în *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* von Johannes Hoops. Zweite, völlig neu bearbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelehrter, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 4, 1981, p. 230.

[6] M. Schönfeld (ed.), *Wörtebuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen*. Nach der Überlieferung des klassischen Altertums, Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, Heidelberg, 1911, p. 57.

[7] H. H. Anton, *Burgunden,* în *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* von Johannes Hoops. Zweite, völlig neu bearbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelehrter, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 4, 1981, pp. 235-248; R. Laser, *Burgunden*, în *Lexikon früher Kulturen*, 1, 1984, p.165.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

Forme:

➢ **BURGUNDI**

The first historian who mentions them is A. T. Laurian in the work *Istoria românilor*, published in 1853[8], but under the name of *burgundi*. The same name is used also by Gh. Şincai, in 1886[9]: „În anul 436, când Huniĭ se oştea cu *Burgundiĭ*, Theodoric, craiul Visi-Gothilor stricênd pacea cu Romaniĭ, aŭ încungiurat Narbona în Galia, de la a căreia batere în anul 437 l'aŭ alungat povățuitoriul Litorie cu ajutoriul Hunnilor".

➢ **BURGUNZI**

This form, which was kept until today, began to be used by Dionisie Fotino, in 1859[10]; 2008,[11] in the following context: „Atunci generalul oştirilor romane din Italia, Decius, venind la oraşul Arles din Galia, şi unindu-se cu Teodoric împăratul vizigoților, şi cu Berobeu împăratul francilor şi al *burgunzilor* şi al altor popoare vecine, al cărora interes era să gonească pe huni, au plecat asupra Orleanului, şi au sosit tocmai când Attila sfărâmase porțile şi lăsase oraşul în prada soldaților săi".

The historian A. I. Odobescu wrote, in *Cursul de arheologie,* republished in 1961[12] that „Aceste antichități sînt obiecte de mare preț intrinsec, giuvele de aur masiv, împodobite cu pietre scumpe – cari cu sau fără semne de creştinism –, provin toate, fără îndoială, de la popoarele barbare de viță germanică, ce au coprins Europa între al II-lea şi al VII-lea secol, de la goți, de la franci, de la *burgunzi*, de la longobarzi, de la saxoni". In *Dacia preistorică,* 2nd edition, written by N. Densuşianu, published in 1986[13] it appears with the same form: „După această genealogie, de la *Erminus* sau *Armen* îşi trăgeau originea lor goții, walagoții, wandalii, gepizii şi saxonii; din *Inguo* sau *Neguo* descindeau *burgunzii*, thuringii, langobarzii şi bavarii; iar Istio este părintele comun al romanilor de lîngă Rhen, al britonilor, francilor şi alamanilor".

N. Iorga also uses the same form, in the 2nd volume of *Istoria ro-*

[8] A. T. Laurian, *Istoria românilor*, Iaşi, 1853, p.160.

[9] Gh. Şincai, *Hronica românilor şi a mai multor neamuri*, t. I, Bucureşti, 1886, p.123.

[10] D. Fotino, *Istoria generală a Daciei sau a Transilvaniei, Țerei Munteneşti şi a Moldovei*, traducere de George Sion, tom. I, Bucureşti, 1859, p. 83.

[11] *Ibidem*, traducere din greceşte de George Sion, ediția a 2-a, tom. I, Editura Valahia, București, 2008, p. 96.

[12] A. I. Odobescu, *Curs de archeologie. Istoria archelogiei*. *Studiu introductiv la această ştiință*, I, *Antichitatea. Renaşterea*. Prelegeri la Facultatea de Litere din București, Editura Ştiințifică, București, 1961, p. 371.

[13] N. Densuşianu, *Dacia preistorică*, ediția a II-a. Text stabilit de Victorela Neagoe, studiu introductiv şi note de Manole Neagoe, Meridiane, București, 1986, p. 505.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

mânilor, published in 1936[14] and 1992[15]. Although published later, Ion Budai-Deleanu, 1991[16], opted also for the same variation: „Gallus, urmaşul lui Decius, a cumpărat, e drept, pacea de la aceştia, dar ea nu a durat prea mult, căci în anul următor aceiaşi goţi s-au reîntors împreună cu boranii, carpii şi *burgunzii*, şi se zice că ar fi fost înfrânţi în luptă deschisă de către Aemilianus, prefectul Moesiei, care apoi a ajuns şi împărat".

The historians I. Nestor in 1960[17] and I. Ioniță in 2010,[18] confirm that this is the graphic version accepted by the historians until nowadays.

- **BURGUNDZĬ**

Although A. I. Odobescu used, in the first edition in 1877,[19] the version *burgundzi*, in the 2nd edition, the language is updated and that is why the term *burgunzi* appears. This form, which Odobescu prefers in his first edition, is used also by O. Jäger, in 1885[20], as follows: „Dar acest roiŭ, Alanĭ şi *Burgundzĭ*, Suevĭ şi Vandalĭ, nu constituiaŭ întréga putere a emigranţilor de la nord".

The last historian who uses this version is N. Densuşianu, in *Dacia preistorică*, the 1913 edition,[21] as follows: „După acéstă genealogiă, de la Erminus séŭ Armen îşi trăgeaŭ originea lor Goţiĭ, Walagoţiĭ, Wandaliĭ, Gepidziĭ şi Saxoniĭ; din Inguo séŭ Neguo descinedeaŭ *Burgundziĭ*, Thuringiĭ, Langobardziĭ şi Bavariĭ; ér Istio este părintele comun al Romanilor de lângă Rhen, al Bretonilor, Francilor şi Alamanilor".

[14] N. Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, vol II, *Oamenii pământului (până la anul 1000*), Bucureşti, 1936, p.12.

[15] *Ibidem*, vol. II, *Oamenii pământului (pînă la anul 1000)*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 21.

[16] I. Budai-Deleanu, *De originibus populorum Transylvaniae*, ediție de Ladislau Gyémánt, note şi traducere de Ladislau Gyémánt, vol. I, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1991, p. 88.

[17] I. Nestor, *Goții*, în C. Daicoviciu ş.a. (red.), *Istoria României*, I, *Comuna primitivă. Sclavagismul. Perioada de trecere la feudalism*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1960, p. 682.

[18] I. Ioniță, *Populații migratoare pe teritoriul Daciei. Goții*, în D. Protase, Al. Suceveanu (coord.), *Istoria românilor*, vol. II, *Daco-romani, romanici, alogeni*, ediția a II-a, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 2010, p. 802.

[19] A. I. Odobescu, *Curs de archeologie. Istoria archeologiei. Studiu introductiv la această ştiinţă*, I, *Antichitatea. Renaşterea*. Prelegeri ținute la Facultatea de Litere din Bucureşti, 1877, p. 686.

[20] O. Jäger, *Istoria romanilor*, Bucureşti, 1885, p. 553; traducere anonimă; pe un exemplar din BCU Iaşi (III-10.484) este scris de mână „trad. de Ioan Hodoş"; în catalogul BCU Iaşi, autorul trebuie căutat la *Jaeger*.

[21] N. Densuşianu, *Dacia preistorică*. Prefață de C. I. Istrati, Bucureşti, 1913, p. 770.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

➢ **BURGUNDIONI**

This version is used only by Iordanes, in *Getica*, the 1939[22] edition, where we have the text: „Căci el avea ca trupe auxiliare pe Franci, Sarmați, Armoriciani, Liticiani, *Burgundioni*, Saxoni, Ripari[23]".

➢ **BURGUNDZONI**

This version, as well as the previous one, is used by the same author, in the same work, a fact which confirms that *the term was not well known and it found itself in a transition period.* Thus, we have the following text in Iordanes, the 1939[24] edition: „Căci a distrus aproape cu totul pe *Burgundzoni* şi a subjugat şi alte câteva popoare".

➢ **URUGUNZI** (Zosimos 1970)[25].

A form completely unexpected is used by Zosimos, as follows: „Boranii, goții, carpii şi *urugunzii* (neamurile acestea locuiesc lîngă Istru) nu lăsau nicio parte a Italiei sau a Illyriei scutită de continue pustiiri şi jefuiau totul, fără a fi împiedicați de nimeni".

Conclusions

The first references to Burgundians in the Romanian historiography seem to belong to Gh. Şincai, who signals them with the name *burgundi* in his *Hronica românilor*, created in the first decade of the 19th century. Also, they appear under the same name in the later *Istoria românilor* (1853) by A. T. Laurian. Both authors took, most likely, the version *burgundi* from the ancient writers Ammianus (XVIII,2,15; XXVIII,5,9) or Zosimos (I,68,1)[26], who wrote their works towards the end of the 4th century A.D. and, respectively, towards the middle of the 5th century.

More or less in the same period as Gh. Şincai's work or in the decade following that, the version, dedicated to them, *of burgunzi*, appears, presented by I. Budai-Deleanu. The form *burgundzĭ*, present with Al. Odobescu, O. Jäger and N. Densuşianu, detains in that period only a written version of the Burgundians.

An exception to the forms mentioned above is done by G. Popa-Lisseanu. Thus, in his translation from Latin of *Getica* by Iordanes, he transposes the Burgundians' name in two versions: *burgundioni* and *bur-*

[22] G. Popa-Lisseanu, *Izvoarele istoriei românilor*, XIV, *Iordanes* [*Getica*], Tipografia „Bucovina", Bucureşti, 1939, pp.126 and 136.

[23] Francii Ripuari.

[24] *Ibidem*, pp.105 and 148.

[25] *Fontes Historiae Dacoromanae*, vol. II, *De la anul 300 până la 1000*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, Zosimos, *Istorie*, 1970, pp. 303 and 305.

[26] Authors quoted by Schönfeld, *Wörterbuch*, p. 56.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

gundzoni, which will not be used by any other Romanian author.

In Iordanes' Latin text, fully quoted by Popa-Lisseanu before the translation, the Burgundians' name is mentioned seven times, in the following versions: *burgundioni* (XXXVI,190), *burgundzoni* (XVII, 97; XLIV, 231; XLV, 238; LV, 280; LVIII, 297) and, as a subvarience to the latter one, *burgunzoni* (XLVII,244). The name *burgundioni*, which was used starting with the 1st century A.D. by Plinius the Elder, is taken over by G. Popa-Lisseanu in the Romanian translation. In exchange, the references about *burgundzoni*, name which appears in Antiquity, starting with Iordanes, during the middle of the 6th century A.D., are kept only in four places. In the fifth place (XLIV, 231) the name *burgundzoni* from Latin is replaced in the translation with the variance *burgundioni*. With regard to the subvariance *burgunzoni* (XLVII, 244), used by the ancient authors, starting with the 4th century A.D., it appears in the translation by G. Popa-Lisseanu again replaced by *burgundzoni*. In both cases we are dealing with translator's obvious errors, which cannot be explained by possible attempts to update the populations' ancient names. A tendency to update/modernize the populations' ancient names can be observed in the case of various translations from ancient authors, and an edifying example is that of Iordanes' *Getica*. Thus, in fragments, translated by Vl. Iliescu, from Iordanes, the name *burgundzoni* was given with the form *burgunzi*, used currently in the Romanian specialty literature[27].

A rare version for *burgunzi* is given by *urugunzi*, used by Zosimos, which appears in the translation from Greek done by Th. Simenschy and R. Hîncu[28]. In the index at the end of the volume (p.763), the following explanation is given: „*urugunzi*, trib barbar, locuiesc lângă Istru". Thus, there is no connection to the Burgundians. However, the identification of *urugunzi* with the Burgundians was done a very long time ago, namely by M. Schönfeld in his book *Wörterbuch* (pp. 57 and 247).

Bibliografie

Bohnsack, D., *Die Burgunden*, în H. Reinerth (ed.), *Vorgeschichte der deutschen Stämme*, vol. III, Leipzig, 1940, pp.1033-1148.

Filip, J. (ed.), *Enzyklopädisches Handbuch zur Ur- und Frühgeschichte Europas*, Verlag der Tschechoslowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Prague, I, 1966.

Hermann, J. (ed.), *Lexikon früher Kulturen*, Band 1 (A-L), VEB Bibliographisches Institut, Leipzig, 1984.

Hoops, J. (ed.), *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, zweite, völlig neu bear-

[27] *Fontes Historiae Dacoromanae*, vol. II, *De la anul 300 până la 1000*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1970, Iordanes, *Getica*, 97, pp. 420-423.

[28] Zosimos, *Istorie*, 1970, pp. 303 and 305.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)

beitete und stark erweiterte Auflage unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgelehrter, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, 4, 1981, (*cf*. Anton, H. H., *Burgunden*, pp. 235-248, Beck, H., pp. 224-230).

Ioniță, I., *Populații migratoare pe teritoriul Daciei. Goții*, in D. Protase, Al. Suceveanu (coord.), *Istoria românilor*, II, *Daco-romani, romanici, alogeni*, ediția a II-a, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 2010, p. 802.

Musset, L., *Invaziile*, vol. I, *Valurile germanice*, Editura Corint, Bucureşti, 2002, pp.143-147.

Poenaru-Bordea, Gh., *Burgunzi*, în Tudor, D. (coord.), *Enciclopedia civilizației romane*, Editura Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1982, p.147.

Schmidt, L., *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung. Die Ostgermanen*, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, München, 1941, pp.129-194.

Schönfeld, M. (ed.), *Wörtebuch der altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen*. Nach der Überlieferung des klassischen Altertums, Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, Heidelberg, 1911, pp. 55-58 and 247.

Wenskus, R., *Stammesbildung und Verfassung. Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes*, 2, unveränderte Auflage, Böhlau Verlag, Köln–Wien, 1977, pp. 74, 230-232, 398-399, 436, 456-457.

BDD-A22446 © 2015 Editura Universităţii din Suceava
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:56:04 UTC)