



Smithsonian Associates

The Huns: Nomads, Attila, and the Fall of Rome

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Wednesday, December 13, 2023 - 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. ET

THE HUNS: A QUICK TIMELINE

- 311 Chinese city of Luoyang sacked by the Xiongnu
- c.350 First Hun attacks on the Don Alans and Greuthungi Goths
- 376 Tervingi and Greuthungi Goths flee to the Danube
- 395/6 Hun attacks through the Caucasus into Syria and Persia
- c.401-8 Huns moving west towards the Carpathians
- 408 Uldin raids across the Danube
- 412 Embassy of Olympiodorus to Charaton
- 413 Construction of the Theodosian Walls of Constantinople
- 420s Hun raids in the Balkans, Hun mercenaries serve in Roman armies
- 432 Alliance between Roman general Aetius and Hun king Rugila
- 434 Death of Rugila, accession of his nephews Attila (434-453) and Bleda (434-c.445)
- 441 Attila and Bleda attack the Balkan provinces
- 447 Attila again attacks the Balkan provinces
- 448 Embassy of Priscus to Attila
- 450 Death of eastern emperor Theodosius II, accession of Marcian
- 451 Attila invades Gaul; Battle of the Catalaunian Fields
- 452 Attila invades Italy; Meeting with Pope Leo I
- 453 Death of Attila; Hun empire begins to collapse
- 454 Battle of Nedao, Gepids break free of Hun rule
- 469 Attila's last son, Hernac, seeks alliance with eastern Roman empire

THE HUNS: SOME SUGGESTED READING

D.M. Gwynn, *The Goths: Lost Civilizations* (Reaktion Books, 2017) provides a rapid introduction to the Huns and their impact upon the Goths and the Roman empire. The following suggestions are intended for those who wish to read more deeply on nomads, the controversial history of the Huns, and on Attila.

The Nomadic World

T.J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (1989)
M. Kazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd Edition (1994)
H. Kennedy, *Mongols, Huns and Vikings: Nomads at War* (2002)

The Huns and the Roman Empire

P. Heather, *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe* (2010)
H.J. Kim, *The Huns* (2016)
O.J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in their History and Culture* (1973)
E.A. Thompson (revised by P. Heather), *The Huns* (1996)

Attila

P. Howarth, *Attila: King of the Huns* (1994)
C. Kelly, *Attila the Hun: Barbarian Terror and the Fall of the Roman Empire* (2008)
M. Maas (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila* (2015)

Primary Sources

Our sources on the Huns are scattered and often distorted. English translations of Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* and Jordanes' *Getica* can be found fairly easily online. The surviving fragments from Olympiodorus of Thebes and Priscus of Panion, both of whom went on embassies to the Huns, are translated in R.C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, Volume II (1983).

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