

## READING

A historian with a vivid and intense literary Latin style, Ammiānus Marcellinus was born in the city of Antioch in Syria in around 330 CE, where he received a Greek literary education. His *Rēs gestae ā fine Cornēli Tacitī* (“Deeds accomplished from the end of Cornelius Tacitus’s [history]”) was designed as a continuation of Tacitus’s *Annālēs* and *Historiae*. While the first thirteen books of his narrative have been lost, Books 14 through 31 survive. They contain a compelling account of events from 353 to 378 CE, some of which Ammianus—a Roman army officer stationed in both the western and eastern parts of the empire and a participant in the emperor Julian’s campaigns against the Persians—witnessed at first hand. Of special interest are his digressions on noteworthy aspects of culture, society, and politics.

In this passage, adapted from Book 31.2.1–11, Ammianus describes the customs of the fearsome Huns, a nomadic people who originally came from central Asia. Their movements in the third and fourth centuries CE pushed other peoples westward into the Roman Empire, especially the Germanic Ostrogoths and Visigoths, well before the Huns themselves began invading the Roman Empire in the mid-fifth century CE.

### DĒ HŪNĪS

- 1 Dē Hūnīs in librīs patrum nostrōrum nōn multa sunt dicta. Hī sunt ferī et ferōcēs. Terribilēs vidērī cupiunt timōremque in aliīs hominibus excitāre. Itaque faciēs eōrum cōsultō vulnerantur. Postquam vulnera sānata sunt, cicātrīcēs manent, propter quās barba crēscere nōn potest.
- 5 Hōrum fōrma nōn est pulchra, sed terribilis! Rādīcēs herbārum, quae correptae sunt ex agrīs, comedunt et animālium carnem, quae nōn cocta est sed paulīspēr trīta. Nam carō, antequam ab eis comeditur, posita est inter equum et femora eius quī in equō sedet et ibi paulīspēr manet.
- 10 Casās nōn habent, sed forīs habitant et vīvunt. Vestīmenta gerunt ex animālium pellibus facta. Semper in equīs manent: in equīs comedunt, in equīs dormiunt, in equīs pugnant. In hostēs impetūs celeriter faciunt, quōs in proeliō saepe laqueīs capiunt et captōs gladiīs occīdunt.

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