

0. WHO WAS HE? - Story Preface

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This map depicts the oldest-known surviving map of Constantinople, a major city which Attila the Hun targeted but did not conquer. Created in 1422, the map was designed by a cartographer (Cristoforo Buondelmonti) who lived in Florence, Italy. It is now maintained by the BNF in Paris. Online, via Wikimedia Commons.

Not long after Ruga negotiated a homeland for his people, he died. He was initially succeeded by his nephew Bleda, about whom little documentary evidence exists. Bleda had a much more famous brother named Attila.

Little is known of Attila during his youth. One fact, however, is clear - and most interesting.

The Huns had a habit of capturing children of high-profile Romans to use as hostages. One such captive was Flavius Aetius who later became one of the most powerful men in the Roman Empire. When he was young, Aetius knew Attila. Later, when the two met on one of the most famous battlefields in history, each had advantages not normally possessed by opposing sides.

About a decade after he assumed power, Bleda died - apparently in a hunting accident. Historians have always speculated whether his brother had him killed. Whatever the facts, Attila became the sole King of the Huns in 443.

With Constantinople (today's Istanbul) in his sights, Attila began a new military campaign in 447. Callinicus, an ecclesiastical chronicler, wrote about that campaign:

The barbarian nation of the Huns, which was in Thrace [today's Bulgaria], became so great that more than a hundred cities were captured. There were so many murders and blood-lettings that the dead could not be numbered. Ay, for they took captive the churches and monasteries and slew the monks and maidens in great quantities.

Others put the number of captured towns at about seventy. Sofia, the modern capital of Bulgaria, was one of the cities Attila and his army ruined.

Attila did not capture Constantinople, although his advance instilled great fear in the people of that capital. In addition to the city's formidable natural defenses, Attila's army endured dysentery and, more likely than not, malaria. (It would not be the last time that happened.) In his "Homily on the Royal City," Isaac of Antioch gave thanks for the Huns' misfortunes:

The sinners drew the bow and put their arrows on the string - and preparation had perfected itself and the host was on the point of coming quickly - then sickness blew through it and hurled the host into wilderness. He whose heart was strong for battle waxed feeble through sickness. He who was skilled in shooting with the bow, sickness of the bowels overthrew him - the riders of the steed slumbered and slept and the cruel army was silenced.

The army was not silenced for long. Moreover, Attila's forces had developed such a fierce reputation that people in their path were willing to pay significant tribute just to keep Attila away.

He was, it is said, becoming seriously rich.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHO-WAS-HE-Attila-the-Hun)

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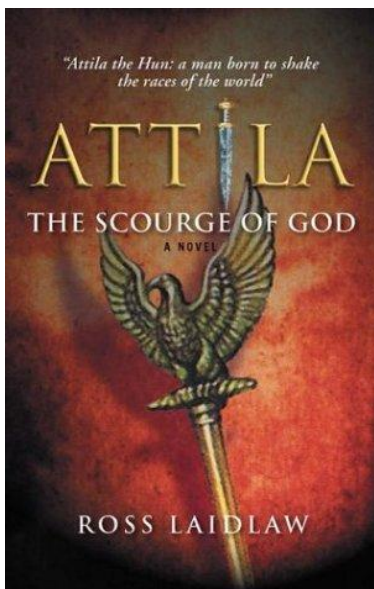


Flavius Aetius

Image of Flavius Aetius from *Ancient History for Colleges and High Schools: Part II - A Short History of the Roman People*, by William F. Allen; Ginn & Company, Boston, 1895. (See page 331.) Online, courtesy Google Books.

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Attila: The Scourge of God - by Ross Laidlaw

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

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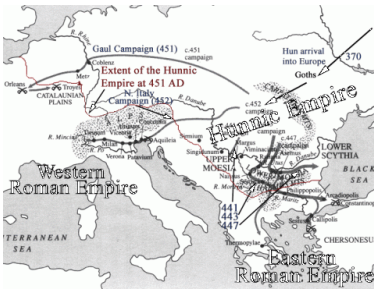
Constantinople - Medieval View

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Hunnic Campaigns

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Sofia - Map Locator

This map image is online, courtesy the Perry-Castañeda Map Collection at the University of Texas, Austin.

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Attila - Attacks Against Eastern Roman Empire

Clip from *Attila: Scourge of God* (1987). Written by Jesse Sublett; narrated by Monte Markham; aired on A&E's "Biography" series. Clip online, courtesy Uralic's Channel on YouTube.

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