

## Migration and Identity in Eurasia: From Ancient Times to the Middle Ages. Edited by Victor Cojocaru and Annamária-Izabella Pázsint.

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Thematic conferences very often give rise to interesting surprises and syntheses full of new perspectives. This is also the case with the volume we describe, which brings together the work of twelve scientists, preceded by an introduction by Annamária-Izabella Pázsint and Victor Cojocaru, who briefly follow the historical background of the research. At an international conference<sup>1</sup> entitled *Migrations and Identity in European History: Communities, Connections, Conflicts* held at the University of Iasi on September 26 and 28, 2019, the pieces of work appeared in a volume edited by Victor Cojocaru, David Braund, Alpár Dobos, Lavinia Grumeza, Annamária-Izabella Pázsint, and Ligia Ruscu. This was published in 2021 as part X of the *Pontica et Mediterranea* series. Although the title promises to discuss migration and identity, the real focus of the volume is concepts of mobility and migration.<sup>2</sup> Reviewing the conference program, we notice that not all of the work presented there has been included in this eloquent publication.<sup>3</sup> The thematic panel brought together nineteen

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1 The conference was supported by the Alexander Humboldt Foundation and the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.2-PCCDI-2017-0116.

2 Numerous studies have already been published on this popular topic, compare the bibliography in the preface (pp. 13–14).

3 I.e., F. Gogâltan et al., *The Late Bronze Age Mega-Fort in Sântana and the Mycenaean World*; D. Zhuravlev, *Greeks and Their Neighbours in the Asian Part of the Bosporan Kingdom: The Colonization Aspect*; D. Topal, *The Griffin Motif in the Scythian Weapons. Migration of an Idea*; V. Kashcheev, *Greek Intellectuals in Rome in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC*; V. Iarmulschi, *Migration von West nach Ost. Die Archäologie der Mobilität in der jüngeren vorrömischen Eisenzeit: Beispiel Poienești-Lukaševka-Kultur*; A. Alemany Vilamajó, *A Prosopographical Approach to the Nomads of the West Eurasian Steppes*; G. Bilavschi, *Agriculture Between Crisis and Stability: The Reason of the Mobility in the East of the Carpathians Territories During the Early Middle Ages*.

scholars from all over Eurasia. Let us present a brief systematic overview of the content of the pages, which is structured mainly based on chronological criteria.

David Braund's paper "In what sense was the Black Sea Thracian?" uses mythical tales of migration not only as a source for the reconstruction of movements, but also as actors—for one of the great powers of Greek discovery was precisely the stories of the heroes and gods through which these foreign landscapes were explored.<sup>4</sup> Based on Herodotus and Strabo, the author attempts to support his vision of the 'Thracian Black Sea' by combining various ideas and evidence (such as about the origins of people such as the Amazons through archaeological and historical inferences). One important aspect of ethnicity is awarded great importance. According to Braund, ethnicity need not be understood reductively—i.e., one ethnicity or identity need not exclude another, and ideas are diverse. One of his examples is the Colchians, who may have been Egyptians but who also remained Colchians<sup>5</sup> and may also have had other ethnic or group identities (p. 36). The same can be said of the Thracians, whom he identifies with the Amazons, who lived in the same area. The Thracians had moved beyond the borders of Thracia to Asia and the Crimean Peninsula. The author explains and interprets this territorial expansion through the legends of the Amazons.<sup>6</sup> In mythology, the common denominator between the two ethnic groups is the prominent role played by strong women (Medea, who was Colchian, and the Amazons, who conquered the southern shores of the Black Sea all the way to the Caucasus).

Marta Oller Guzmán's paper examines Greek colonization from a completely new and innovative perspective, asking the question how emotions affected the colonizers, and to what extent. However, it is difficult to examine these feelings, given that those who described these stories lived much later than the Greek colonizers. In the 'new worlds', away from home, fear and anxiety were the dominant feelings, according to literary evidence. Through an analysis of the stories of the founding of colonies, the author presents the change in these feelings: fear on arrival (fear of news: of terrains, climates and people, whose nature could be cruel or hospitable); the evolution of the relationship with the local population, who first generally regretted the misfortune of those who arrived, but then became increasingly angry at the occupation of their territories. It seemed better for the locals to accept and

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4 Compare: The great campaign of Alexander the Great.

5 The name Colchians itself is an umbrella term; a summary name for smaller groups who also had different cultures such as the *Machlyes*, *Machelones*, *Phasiani*, and *Lazi*, who often lived at the opposite end of the *oikumene*, but at the same time had similar lifestyles and a similar appearance.

6 The founding of Sinope in the name of the Amazon Sanape; the founding of Amisus; and the Sauromatians, who were created through the marriage and mixing of the Amazons (Thracians) and Scythians.

interpret the newcomers than to become involved in conflict. The author shows how the relationship between the local population and the Greek settlers changed from the time of arrival from initial regret and acceptance to envy (rapid growth), fear (fear of the Greek colonists' abuse of local resources) and violence (war, which often ended in the defeat of the locals). Finally, there was also the constant fear of unsuccessful settlement, the dangers of the journey back home, and the welcome home.

Civic, regional, Greek, and non-Greek identities are examined by Victor Cojocaru in a paper that focuses on the Black Sea poleis. Identities which are displayed and how they are expressed depend on the context in which they occur. Focusing on festivals, commemorative anniversaries, meetings of the assembly or religious celebrations, and even internal conflicts and external threats, Cojocaru finds that different identities come to the fore in different situations. In Section One, "Development of identities within the proxeny institution" (pp. 57–61), the author focuses on how the civic community collectively expressed its relations with the outside world. Chaniotis<sup>7</sup> expressed earlier that this area, the Black Sea region, has always been in a special position as it was located on the periphery of the Greek world; the kingdoms founded after Alexander the Great had indirect influence on this area, and were more exposed to intrusions by Barbarians. Therefore, in this area identity was linked to memories of Ionian or Dorian origins, but also permanently confronted by the barbarians in the hinterland. (A remark in relation to future complex overviews: it is not enough to study inscriptions but one needs to take into consideration the depictions on local coins, the representations on grave and honorary monuments, the various religious rites, local history, and the practice of collective memory.)

Mustafa H. Sayar concentrates on the practice of mass deportation in the Mediterranean world through legal and social aspects with a new perspective on population dislocation. There was no exchange of prisoners in the ancient world; prisoners of war were either executed or sold into slavery (men, women, and children), which practically amounted to relocation to a new place. Mass deportation had important, unexpected consequences: the spread of monotheistic religions in the Middle East and multilingualism. The author leads the reader through the story of ancient deportations from the Hittites in Egypt through the occupation of Persepolis by Alexandros to the enslavement of the Anatolians and Phocaeans by the Romans.

Through a detailed analysis of archaeological objects, Mikhail Treister argues against the previously held opinion that the Sarmatians came to the Eastern European region from the territory of Siberia (Transbaikal). Analyzing the burials and funeral rites of East-European Sarmatians, some burials of the Lower Volga

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7 Chaniotis, "Political culture in the cities," 142.

region, and Southern Siberian burials dated to the second and first century BC, he comes to the conclusion that we are dealing here with individual items, usually prestige goods, which may have been carried by the nomads from East to West. He argues convincingly that the appearance of individual objects of Southern Siberian origin in the nomad burials of Asian Sarmatia is no proof of mass migration from Central Asia to the Lower Volga region. In contrast to previous claims based on the analysis of funeral rites, he demonstrates in his study that the number of migrants was not so significant. Treister's thesis is based on the fact that only a few objects (associated with some photos – pp. 108–14) can be identified that were taken from the West to the East; these goods do not necessarily reflect economic ties along the Silk Road.

A specific group of 'migrant workers', Roman craftsmen, are the focus of Rada Varga and Annamária-Izabella Pázsint's paper. In labor migration studies the attention of researchers has recently focused on wider issues of mobility and the workforce. Earlier, the research focus was on specific groups within cities or of specific professional classes (such as medical staff) who moved from one province to another, outside the Empire's borders, or within the provinces of residence. There are specific characteristics of this movement, such as seasonal and rural-urban migration, or the migration of specialized skilled workers (for instance, miners). The second most well-represented profession (with 690 people in the inscriptions on which their occupation is mentioned) were craftsmen—skilled workers who practiced a specific craft. Traders (who mainly sold over some distance) are excluded from the study. It can be seen that different groups considered it important to highlight different things in the inscriptions: the inscriptions of traders are usually found alongside commercial networks and emphasize official legitimacy. Medical staff usually highlighted their origin if they came from a city where a famous medical school operated (Antiochia Syriae, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Samosata); gladiators usually considered the *natio* important (*Germanus*, *Bassus*, *Syrus*, etc.), but artisans did not think it worth highlighting where they came from (of 690 artisans, only 32 specified their origin – pp. 119–20). The authors have examined the ethnicity, *origo*, *domus*, *natio*, local citizenship, or *tribus* of the craftsman. Most of the inscriptions on which the artisans mention their affiliation are known from Gaul, especially from Lugdunum.

A very specific aspect of migration is examined by Lucian Munteanu, Ștefan Honcu, and Dan Aparaschivei, involving *denarii* finds from the site of Schineni.<sup>8</sup> During excavations between 2017 and 2020 in Schineni,<sup>9</sup> which had several phases of habitation, five Roman imperial *denarii* were discovered, all exclusively originating

8 Compare the catalogue of the coins (pp. 151–52) and the plan of the excavation (p. 161).

9 The detailed results of the archaeological excavations of the second–fourth century AD settlement are the subject of a later study.

from the earliest habitation level of the site. Compared to the previously found coins, these *denarii*<sup>10</sup> which originated from the ‘free Dacian’ site prove that imperial *denarii* had arrived in Barbaricum in treasures already established, probably from the first half of the second-century AD. In general, greater caution is required when using this specific category of sources in territories outside the Empire. The local population of ‘Geto-Dacian’ origin (*Costoboci*, *Carpi*) reworked and added to the Roman coins new features (*denarii* used as jewelry and/or amulets or ornaments) which were different to those used in the Empire.

Ten graves were discovered between 1957 and 1987 at the Mitoc-Malu Galben site on the left bank of the Prut River, which are attributed to the Sarmatian culture and date between the second and fourth century AD. Lavinia Grumeza provides an overview of the cemetery, the grave goods, and funerary rituals, and suggests a narrow dating of the finds and their cataloguing (pp. 178–83). These graves were published earlier,<sup>11</sup> but had to be revisited with photographs of the grave goods and with further information about the rituals. According to new information, the people buried in this field belonged to a nomadic Sarmatian group from the north-western Pontus: members of the *Roxolani* tribes.

Alpár Dobos explored an area that has been researched already—the local survival of the Roman population and culture in the early Middle Ages and the immigration of new populations, with the help of natural science. This used to be a sensitive topic in Romania. Based on archaeological data, Dobos has studied the relationship between immigrants and locals in post-Roman Transylvania. The study attempts to provide a brief overview of how migration and the image of the so-called migratory people developed in archaeology during the Migration Period and the Early Middle Ages, with a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological debates in international research. There are parallel national narratives in the Romanian and Hungarian historiography about this period. One of the most problematic methodological issues is how can migration be identified in the archaeological material. The solution of the problem of migration is helped by the cooperation of archeology with scientific methods—for example, the use of archaeogenetics.

10 Very few contain a larger number of coins: Poiana-Dulceş–Varniță-point, Poiana-Dulcești–Siliște-point, Roșiori (Neamț County), Văleni, and Vlădiceni (Neamț County). On the site of Drăgești (Vaslui County), the latest *denarius* from the whole area was discovered in a clear archaeological context of the ‘Poieniști-Vârteșcoiu’ culture (Teodor, Coman, and Alaiba, “Săpăturile arheologice de la Drăgești-Vaslui,” 464; Teodor and Coman, “Săpăturile arheologice de la Drăgești-Vaslui,” 456, 458).

11 The site has not yet been fully excavated and the graves appear to be only a small part of a larger cemetery. The only graves published so far are those from the years 1957 (grave 1), 1978 (graves 2–3), 1980 and 1982 (graves 4–6). Unpublished graves (7–10) discovered in 1986 and 1987 were also included in Lavinia’s paper.

The origin of the European Avars has been the subject of scientific debate for more than 250 years: the work of Gleb V. Kubarev provides an interdisciplinary overview of this. The paper confirms the Rouran hypothesis of Avar origins. A comparison of the Rouran burials found in Mongolia and Northern China with the Carpathian Avar material (especially crescent pectorals and plate decoration belts) and a comparative anthropological and genetic study also confirm the Inner-Asian origin of the Avars. The research raises another important question: what caused the sixth-century migration? (p. 238) Scientific analysis of the finds suggests that the westward migration of the Avars and their subsequent settlement in the Carpathian Basin was the result of climate change and pandemic.

Trade and migration always went hand in hand, as demonstrated by Dilnoza Duturaeva's study of trade routes to China. The trade in luxury items (e.g., silk, amber and oils) was a driver of international migration from this era. In ancient times, amber was imported in the largest quantities from the Bronze Age to the fourteenth century AD (especially from the mid-first millennium BC to the fifth century AD), mostly from Europe to China along the Amber Road. From the Han to the Tang periods (tables pp. 265–66), amber was not an ordinary item of trade but a diplomatic gift. From the tenth–twelfth century, amber came to China in larger quantities and became fashionable material. Merchants changed from time to time, being Romans, Byzantines, Uyghurs, and later Qarakhanids. China is still considered the largest market for Baltic amber, and in China it is valued more than in its place of origin.

The population of the Crimean Peninsula and the cultural influences that affect it are the focus of Sergei G. Bocharov's paper. The Crimean Peninsula belonged to the Byzantine Empire, while after its dissolution it became part of the Trebizond Empire, and then came under the rule of the Golden Horde during the Mongol conquest. Between 1223 and 1320, two waves of Mongols arrived in the Crimean Peninsula. The eastern and western parts of the peninsula developed somewhat differently due to the earlier (Byzantine) administrative division. In the material culture of the Peninsula, identities and their manifestations were influenced by the 'Byzantine' as well as the 'Latin' (Genoese) and the Eastern (Golden Horde, Islamic). The Ottoman conquest of Genoese Gazaria and the Principality of Theodoro in 1475 marked the end of the Mongol era, and in the following centuries various cultural influences intensified and new ones emerged, two of which remained: the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate. From the sixteenth–eighteenth century, Eastern (Islamic) objects of material culture developed further.

This volume examines the concepts of migration through narratives, experiences, and structures, migration and integration, networks, connectivity and cultural interactions, civic identity in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, and migration

(concepts, methods, results, scientific traditions, and political ideology, especially in areas of political debate among modern countries). However, additional migration perspectives and topics, such as the interpretation of religious issues and gods, could have received more attention. Nevertheless, with each study, this volume, which presents a multifaceted perspective, provides a comprehensive picture of the issues of migration (mobilities, diaspora, circulation) in the ancient and early Middle Ages.

## Literature

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