

Advances in Ancient Black Sea Studies: Historiography, Archaeology and Religion



Editors:
Victor Cojocaru, Ligia Ruseu,
Thibaut Castelli and
Annamária-Izabella Pázsint



**ADVANCES IN ANCIENT BLACK SEA STUDIES:
HISTORIOGRAPHY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND RELIGION**

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Preface

The volume 'Advances in Ancient Black Sea Studies' is in line with our efforts in recent years to bridge the large gap between two scholarly traditions, conjoining the research traditions of scholars educated in the West with those of scholars educated in the East in order to absorb, interpret and integrate the constant flow of new information about the Black Sea region into mainstream western classical scholarship.

The 'Advances' conference brought together 61 scholars from 12 European countries, ready to discuss key advance of recent years in ancient Black Sea studies, in Greek, Roman and Byzantine times, with a focus on scholarly traditions, archaeology, religion and the preservation of cultural heritage. Of the 44 papers presented in Constanța, 24 have been included in this volume; two more (by V.P. Yaylenko and N.V. Zavoykina) were added, being very suitable contributions to the subjects of colonization and identity, and entailing new discoveries. The subsequent collection of papers has been organized into four main categories based on research fields and chronological criteria. Their content can be easily explored through the abstracts available in all of the three languages of the conference. Taking into account the large number of contributions and the topics approached, we decided that the papers on the preservation of cultural heritage should be published in a separate volume (ed. by S. Musteață). In what follows, we intend to provide a more systematic overview of the selected studies, based on the way in which the main themes of this volume were addressed.

a) Several contributions deal with the study of the Black Sea between colonization and identity. THIBAUT CASTELLI focuses on the navigational conditions of sailing ships in different seasons, by using the nautical sources of the last two centuries (sailing directions, travel stories, etc.), as well as ancient literary sources. MADALINA DANA specifically examines a certain exoticism visible in the manner of speaking, dressing and behaving among Greeks in the Black Sea, where they are surrounded by 'Barbarians'. The author ponders the ways in which the Euxine was perceived by

other Greeks, as a place of cultural innovations, but also with respect to the traditions and cultural heritage which the inhabitants of the Pontus themselves tried to conserve and bring to the fore. The overall intention of DAVID BRAUND is to bring together literary traditions on colonial settlement and ancient ethical considerations on related matters, – touching on aspects such as the primary relationships between colony and mother-city, and the importance of religion in the process of overseas settlement. VALERY P. YAYLENKO rejects the correction proposed by F.V. Shelov-Kovedyaev regarding Diodorus' Ἀρχαιανακτίδαι (ἀρχαὶ ἀνακτισταί), arguing that the ending -αι of Ἀρχαι- is a Lesbian phonetic feature, which supports the correctness of Diodorus' form. Moreover, the author reveals new evidence concerning the Aeolians on the Taman peninsula. Disagreeing with previous scholarship, MICHAEL A. SPEIDEL argues that the pattern that emerges from the surviving evidence suggests that the expression *natione Ponticus* was rooted in the Roman naval force's administrative practices. Its use, nevertheless, remained ambiguous and prone to 'misunderstandings'. DAN RUSCU describes the image of the Black Sea in the historical writings of Late Antiquity, thus offering valuable information not only on the contemporary knowledge of the region, but also on the way this information was articulated and transmitted.

b) A second cluster of articles concentrates on the Greeks and non-Greeks between scholarly traditions and acculturation. VICTOR COJOCARU explains the reason why the bibliography project *Bibliographia classica orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini* was set in place, presenting its general structure as well as its innovative elements compared to other bibliographical works. This is followed by further reflection on the contribution of the Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet schools in the study of North Pontic antiquities. VALENTINA MORDVINTSEVA discusses the expressions 'Late Scythian culture' and 'Crimean Scythia' as two modern concepts. According to the predominant point of view, the Late Scythian culture of the Crimea was constantly transforming in the course of the 'Sarmatization' process. This position seems to the author unsustainable. Some migrations to the Crimea from the North Pontic steppe or the Caucasus could well have occurred, but newcomers certainly had much less effect on the functioning of the social networks and the economic and cultural appearance of 'Crimean Scythia' than the proximity of the ancient centres and geopolitical aspirations of the great hegemonic powers from outside the region. LAVINIA GRUMEZA focuses on the issue of recent research on funerary archaeology in ancient Crimea. The author summarizes some of the most important publications of the last 10 years or so, on topics such as: cemeteries (graves – inventory – rituals); external influences on beliefs and on the selection of inventories; evidence of cultural contacts based on

the 'funerary' costume, ethnicity and multicultural societies. MARINA YU. VAKHTINA and MAYA T. KASHUBA present Nemirov and its special place among the gigantic early Scythian city-sites of the forest-steppe zone of the Northern Black Sea Coastal Region. A detailed survey of the local pottery complex of the site made possible a distinction between several components, among them the early nomadic or Early Scythian culture, the so-called Carpathian-Danubian Hallstatt cultures and perhaps the influences of the cultures of the Eastern-Hallstatt circle of Central Europe. FRANÇOIS DE CALLATAÏ aims to reconsider the question of the 'arrowheads' found *en masse* along the western shore of the Black Sea. Past literature on the topic has largely endorsed the idea that they were monetary objects (both standards of value and means of exchange). Put into perspective however, this idea does not fit well with the general framework: an area with a hinterland which remained poorly monetized up to the end of the Hellenistic period. AMIRAN and EMZAR KAKHIDZE make some observations concerning the acculturation in the Classical period of coastal Colchis on the basis of the Greek and Colchian cemeteries at Pichvnari. The ritual of burying the dead in a contracted position was widespread in the Bronze and Iron Age cultures of Georgia and of the Caucasus. The discoveries at Pichvnari suggest that Greeks no longer practised this custom by the 5th century BC, although it seems to have been in use for some time among the locals. MIKHAIL TREISTER discusses evidence which may lead to the interpretation of Greek, Macedonian and Roman bronze vessels found in Scythia and Sarmatia as 'second-hand' objects. The signs of repair on the vessels may in rare cases, when this type of repair is unusual for local metalwork and typical for that of Greek/Roman origin, give hints which suggest that the vessels found their way to the nomads in an already repaired format. JEAN COERT and TASSILO SCHMITT propose a re-dating (the middle of the 4th century AD) of the inscription on a silver bowl from the city of Mtskheta. Of importance in supporting this theory is the origin of the dish (Gaul). The artefact might be a political gift from Constantine I to a king Dades, who gave it to the *pitiax* Bersumas to ensure loyalty and good relations. The result has consequences for the understanding of the Christianization of Iberia.

c) A third section assembles those contributions which are dedicated to new discoveries and to prospective research directions. ULRIKE PETER presents the corresponding online catalogue for the Western Pontic shore, which is in the making and which is part of a larger international project for the cooperative registration of ancient Greek coin types. With the *Corpus Nummorum Thracorum* (www.corpus-nummorum.eu), an innovative Web portal for Thracian coins was established. This is a research database for collecting and categorizing, based on inventories, imports,

larger collections, into which external coins can be integrated. NATALIA V. ZAVOYKINA proposes a new dating and reading of a *graffito* from Phana-goria. This private letter, dated between the second half of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th century BC, adds to our knowledge of anthroponomy, private life, and the linguistic characteristics of the language used by the Phanagorians in the Classical period. DOREL PARASCHIV, MIHAELA IACOB and COSTEL CHIRIAC synthesize some results of the systematic archaeological research of the city of (L)Ibida, which began in 2001. Among other matters taken into account are the following: the evolution of the site during the Principate, the Roman building in the 'Curtain' sector, the stratigraphy of the Roman period, the ceramic finds as well as other categories of archaeological materials. ȘTEFAN HONCU and LUCIAN MUNTEANU present an iron shield umbo from a rural settlement of Ibida – 'Fântâna Seacă'. The artefact was (exceptionally) found in a civilian area, in a settlement with a dominant agricultural character, situated in the rural territory of a fortified town. The owner of the villa where the umbo was uncovered seems to have been a veteran with a role in the local administration or even an active soldier. DAN APARASCHIVEI makes a detailed presentation of 12 fibulae and fibula fragments used by the inhabitants of the fortress of Ibida, from the 5th century to the early 7th century AD. Along with the other previously published finds, the publication of this batch of fibulae allows the construction of a relevant picture for this site, which is representative for the province of Scythia, from the 2nd century until the beginning of the 7th century AD.

d) Finally, the fourth cluster of articles focuses on various religious aspects. JORGE TELLO BENEDICTO aims to present a selection of the Archaic literary and epigraphic evidence regarding Artemis and Apollo in Ionia and its colonial territories in the Black Sea. Such a study may contribute to the understanding of religious, social and political life in the Archaic Ionian world, its dynamics and its development from one Mediterranean shore to the other. Taking as a case study the so-called 'Borysthenes coins', the largest and most famous bronze series in the history of the Olbian coinage, VLADIMIR F. STOLBA explores the connotative meaning of coin imagery and its potential as a communication and marketing tool. An integrated approach that takes into account not only the metrological and chronological characteristics of the coins, but also the contextual typological analysis, along with the distribution of the finds within and beyond the polis territory, this approach gives the key to understanding a number of other coin types and iconographic motifs in the coinages of Olbia and other Greek centres of the region. LIVIA BUZOIANU and MARIA BĂRBULESCU select two categories of artefacts from the archaeological discoveries of Albești which found analogies or similarities over a large area in the Pontic and

Mediterranean Greek world: 1) ceramic altars with decorative registers on the four sides; 2) appliqués with representation of a female deity wearing a veil. Both categories are considered to be votive objects. The main area of their distribution is the Black Sea region, hence the hypothesis of their production in several local workshops. ANNAMÁRIA-IZABELLA PÁZSINT brings into focus the private cult associations from the Greek cities of the Black Sea. The paper provides a comparative outlook on the private cult associations from each of the Black Sea's shores, in order to understand the differences which distinguish them, as well as the aspects which bring them closer. Even though the area is not characterised by uniformity, the common Greek core of these cities – in which the associative phenomenon is a constitutive element – gives them a certain degree of coherence, despite their different political evolution and their economic specificities. The paper of GABRIEL TALMAȚCHI is dedicated to the Helios monetary type issued at Istros, considered until a few decades ago as insignificant both with respect to the number of pieces and to the role of the deity in the local religious life. In the non-numismatic bibliography on the cult of Helios at Istros, the most recent opinion denies its possible presence in this city. But, the reality of the monetary discoveries could point to another approach to the subject, in correlation with the finds from Olbia and other places. MARTA OLLER GUZMÁN addresses the inscriptions attesting the *strategoí* of Apollo *Prostatès* at Olbia, considering that such a study may offer valuable information for the better understanding of the political, social and religious life of the Pontic city in the Roman period. LIGIA RUSCU considers the coming of Rome as a turning point for the Black Sea poleis in many respects, including their religion and cults. Against the background of the impact of religious novelties on the traditional structure of the cults of the poleis, the paper examines the consequences of the evolution of some of the most ancient and venerable cults, as evinced by the place of priestly offices, especially eponymous priesthoods, within the careers of office-holders.

Our hope is that this volume reflects once again a tradition of fruitful collaboration between the Institute of Archaeology of Iași and many academic institutions from Romania and abroad. Among the participants, most have contributed to our previous initiatives, especially to the recent network conferences and volumes 'Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods' (Constanța, 2013 – published in 2014), 'Mobility in Research on the Black Sea Region' (Iași, 2015 – published in 2016), and 'Advances in Ancient Black Sea Studies: Methodological Innovation, Interdisciplinary Perspectives and International Cooperation' (Iași, 2017 – some topics have been developed in this volume). Some of the authors joined our research network even earlier.

Such meetings helped to establish a permanent dialogue within a research group focused on the Black Sea region in the ancient world. And while the current gathering was based, to a certain extent, on our previous network conferences and volumes, we have moved forward and we took another successful step in the research of the Black Sea region in antiquity.

As editors of the present volume, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of the authors for their efficient cooperation during the editorial process as well as to our colleagues within the editorial board of the book series 'Pontica et Mediterranea', who were involved as reviewers and language editors. Last, but not least, we would like warmly to acknowledge yet again the collegial and very efficient collaboration with the Mega Publishing House.

June 2019

The editors

Natione Ponticus: Roman Navy Soldiers and the Black Sea

Michael A. Speidel

In 1998, D. von Moock published a collection of Attic gravestones from the Roman imperial period in which he included the previously unpublished second century stele of one Titus Flavius Maximus. This monument bears the following text:¹

D(is) M(anibus) / T(itus) Flavius Maximus / mil(es) cl(assis) pr(aetoriae) Mis(en)sis / milit(avit) annis X vix(it) / annis XXX / natione / Ponticus.

Titus Flavius Maximus is not the only known navy soldier qualified as *natione Ponticus*. The second and third century gravestones of a handful of others have also come to light:

n(atione) Ponticus (CIL VI 3094, Rome)
n(atione) Ponticus (CIL VI 3143, Rome)
natione Pontic(us) (CIL X 3397, Misenum)
nat(ione) Pontic(us) (CIL X 3425, Misenum)
nat(ione) Pontic(us) (CIL X 3461, Misenum)
n(atione) P(onticus) (CIL X 3495, Misenum)
nat(ione)] Pont(icus) (CIL X 3581, Misenum)

To be sure, no distinct tribe or people called ‘Pontics’ (*Pontici*, Πόντικοι) existed in the ancient ethnographic tradition.² However, there was a long

¹ VON MOOCK 1998: 193 no. 568 = AE 1999, 1486 (Athens). – Research for this contribution was carried out in the context of the author’s fellowship no. UMO–2016/23/P/HS3/04141 of the National Science Centre, Poland. This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 665778.

² Remarkably (though perhaps only due to chance), all eight gravestones record service in the *classis praetoria* of Misenum, even though Vegetius (4.31.6) claims the ‘Pontus’ to have belonged to the sphere of operations of the *classis praetoria Ravennatis*.

tradition in Greek and Latin of using the adjective *Ponticus* or Ποντικός as a qualifier to describe those who lived on the coasts of the Black Sea.³ Were these navy soldiers therefore referring to their origins from a distinct ‘Pontic’ world and a ‘Pontic’ way of life with which they identified? Individuals and communities are recorded in literary and documentary evidence for being ‘Pontic’ from at least the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD.⁴ Thus, not unlike the navy soldiers above, a woman named Doris called the ‘Pontos’ her home (πατρίς) on her fourth century BC gravestone from Piraeus.⁵ The inscription on a third century BC gravestone from Oropos in Boeotia of a man named Apollonios Alfinou describes the deceased as ‘Pontic, from Kal-latis’ (mod. Mangalia, Romania), a Greek city on the Black Sea’s West coast.⁶ Without further specification, one Aphrodisia, daughter of Protopogenês, is called Ponticê on her gravestone in Athens in the second century BC.⁷

Only very rarely, however, do our sources provide any insight into what it might have entailed to be ‘Pontic’. To be sure, Pliny called all inhabitants of the province of ‘Pontus et Bithynia’ *Bithyni et Pontici*, and Ulpian, in the early third century CE records the privilege granted to the *Pontici* by Pompey in 64 BC to regard anyone born from a ‘Pontic’ mother (*Pontica matre natus*) as being a *Ponticus*.⁸ This ruling may still have been effective centuries later. For Evagrius ‘the Pontic’, one of the central figures of Egyptian monasticism in the late fourth century AD, was called *Ponticus* (according to his friend and disciple, Palladius of Hellenopolis) because he came from the city of Ibora (mod. İverönü in the northern Turkish province of Tokat), and was the son of a ‘Pontic’ family.⁹ At any rate, in the second half of the third century AD, Gregory the Miracle-Worker, the bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus, called upon his congregation not to forget that they were Ποντικοὶ καὶ Χριστιανοί.¹⁰ Whatever the exact meaning of Ποντικοί may have been in this particular time and context, Gregory apparently used it with the intention to evoke feelings of pride and belonging. Being Pontic, then, was not just an indicator of origin but also a marker of identity by the third century AD at the latest.

In a seminal study that set the ground for the search of a ‘Pontic

³ The true ethnonym was ‘Pontios’: MITCHELL 2002: 39f. For known *Pontici* see AVRAM 2013.

⁴ See e.g. MITCHELL 2002: 39. IG II² 10108 (Piraeus, fourth century BC). Cf. DAN 2014: 51–53. IG II² 10107 (Athens, second century BC). Cf. DAN 2014: 53f.

⁵ IG II² 10108. Cf. DAN 2014: 51–53.

⁶ SEG 31, 483 = BE 1974, 369: Ποντικός ἐκ Καλλάτιος.

⁷ IG II² 10107. Cf. DAN 2014: 53f.

⁸ Plin. *Ep.* 10.112–113. Remarkably, Trajan only speaks of *Bithyni* in his reply. Ulp. *Edict.* 2 (Dig. 50.1.1,2): *Celsus etiam refert Ponticis ex beneficio Pompeii Magni competere, ut qui Pontica matre natus esset, Ponticus esset.*

⁹ Palladius *HL* 38.2; *Coptic Life* 4.

¹⁰ Gregory Thaumaturgos, canon. 7.

identity', St. Mitchell therefore concluded that the evidence suggests that Pompey's establishment of the province of 'Pontus et Bithynia' in 64 BC changed the meaning of the term *Ponticus* to specifically refer to people and places from within the territorial boundaries of Pompey's original Roman province, even after it was dissolved and reformed on numerous occasions.¹¹ Yet, as M. Vitale more recently observed, some of the epigraphic and numismatic evidence for the use of the term *Ponticus* and similar references of belonging to the 'Pontus' complicate the picture.¹² Thus, numerous coins and inscriptions of various dates between the first century BC and the sixth century AD reveal many Greek cities both on the West and the South coast of the *Pontus Euxinus* to have regularly or occasionally included a reference to the Black Sea to their names:¹³ Olbia,¹⁴ Tomis,¹⁵ Apollonia,¹⁶ Byzantium,¹⁷ Herakleia,¹⁸ Zela,¹⁹ or Komana.²⁰ In fact, the term *Ponticus* was not even limited to the West or South coasts of the Black Sea during the Roman imperial period but also included the North and the East. The mid-first century BC historian Diodorus of Sicily, for instance, described the Crimean *Tauri* in the North as 'from the Pontos', and a second century Latin inscription from Southern Italy from the reign of Hadrian (or Antoninus Pius) locates Absarus on the Colchian East coast, *in Ponto*.²¹ Pomponius Mela, the early imperial geographer from Hispania Baetica, called all the inhabitants of the Black Sea littoral *Pontici*.²² Finally, a similar sentiment is expressed in a Greek inscription with a popular decree from the northern Pontic city of Olbia in the mid-first century AD.²³ By this decree, the people of Byzantion honoured one Orontas, son of Ababos, for his Pontic-wide benefactions, calling him "foremost not only in

¹¹ MITCHELL 2002: 48–50.

¹² VITALE 2014. Simultaneously, A. Dan argued that the adjective 'Pontic' was often used not only in a purely technical sense to indicate origins from the entire Black Sea region, but also for stylistic reasons, hinting at "certain religious allusions – both maritime and erotic": DAN 2014: esp. 44.

¹³ For 'Pontic' cities see most recently VITALE 2014; MAURER 2014; MATEI-POPESCU 2014.

¹⁴ IOSPE I² 79.

¹⁵ CIL III 753: *civitas Pontica Tomitanorum*.

¹⁶ Coins: MUSHMOV 1912: 3153. LESHORN – FRANKE 2009: 59. Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 5.3.1303a 35: Ἀπολλωνιάται οἱ ἐν τῷ Εὐχεΐνῳ πόντῳ. VITALE 2014: 50, 58 & 60.

¹⁷ IOSPE I² 79.

¹⁸ Coins: Rec. gén. 361–383, nos. 103–255. Inscriptions: I.Iasos 135; I.Heraclea Pont. 73.

¹⁹ Coins: Rec. gén. 159–162, nos. 4–20. Cf. LESHORN – FRANKE 2009: 269.

²⁰ Str. 12.3.32, 34, 36; Plin. *Nat.* 6.11; Ptol. 5.6.9.

²¹ D.S. 3.43.5: (...) τῶν ἐν τῷ Πόντῳ Ταύρων. CIL X 1202 (Abella).

²² Mela 1.15.5: *circa Pontum aliquot populi alioque fine uno omnes nomine Pontici*.

²³ IOSPE I² 79 = I.Byzantion 3 (ll. 1–6): ὁ δᾶμος ὁ Βυζαντίων / ἔδοξε τᾷ βουλᾷ καὶ τῷ δᾶμῳ. τοῖ στραταγοὶ εἴπαν ἐπεὶ Ὀρόντας Ὀλβιοπολείτας Αβαβου / υἱὸς ἀνδρὸς οὐ μόνον τᾷς πατρίδος, ἀλλὰ καὶ / σύνπαντος τοῦ Ποντικοῦ πρατιστεύσαντος / ἔθνεος (...). Cf. e.g. COJOCARU 2010: 52; DANA 2012: 262f.; VITALE 2014: 59.

his home city [i.e. Olbia] but also throughout ‘the entire Pontic nation’ (τὸ σύμπαν ἔθνος Ποντικόν).” The ‘*ethnos Ponticos*’, in the opinion of the authors from Byzantion, evidently included their own city (although it did not belong to any region or province that included the name ‘Pontus’) and stretched (at least) all the way to the North shores of the Black Sea. Moreover, the text appears to reveal a certain shared identity among those belonging to the ‘*ethnos Ponticos*’ in the first century AD. Although imperial Rome regarded these regions in the North and East of the Black Sea as being under its control, they were not Roman provincial territory. Being Pontic in the imperial period was therefore not wholly determined by Roman administrative geography.²⁴ Rather, some kind of ‘Ponticness’ had its roots in the shared interests, economic ties, historical experience and connectivity of the countries and peoples around the Black Sea, all of which contributed in shaping the outside, Mediterranean, perspective of the Black Sea basin as one very distinctive part of the ancient world.²⁵

As a geographical designation, the term *Ponticus* is therefore ambiguous. In many cases it implied belonging to the Roman province of ‘Pontus et Bithynia’ but in others it could refer to practically all of the various different peoples, communities and countries that surrounded the Black Sea.²⁶ What, then, was the true meaning of *natione Ponticus* in the case of Titus Flavius Maximus and his fellow navy soldiers? While this is not the place to reinvestigate the entire respective evidence for the semantic field of the terms *Ponticus* and Ποντικός, it is necessary to take a look at the use of the term *Ponticus* in the Roman imperial army during the first three centuries, if we hope to determine the ‘Ponticness’ of our navy soldiers. The term is preserved in several ‘military’ inscriptions, which, however, have not yet been studied in this context. It is perhaps unsurprising to find that the term *Ponticus* was also used in various different and sometimes even ambiguous ways in these texts. The closest to the expression *natione Ponticus* as used by the navy soldiers is *natione Pontico* on a second or early third century gravestone from the city of Rome.²⁷ This monument, set up by Aurelius Sanctinus, a *decurio* of the *equites singulares Augusti*, bears a funerary inscription and a poem for a slave who had served Sanctinus as a groom. The deceased is described as having been of ‘Pontic origin’ (*natione Pontico*), ‘born from Pontus, Achillean soil’ (*hunc Pontus Achillea genuit humus*). Yet what exactly does this mean? The true ethnic origins (*natio*) of the slave would, of course, have mattered a great deal, particularly on a slave market, where his ethnicity would have been taken to indicate

²⁴ Thus, also VITALE 2014: 60f.

²⁵ Cf. MITCHELL 2002: 35–37.

²⁶ MITCHELL 2002: 38.

²⁷ AE 1989, 91 = SPEIDEL 1994a: no. 692. Cf. SPEIDEL 1994b: 118f. SPEIDEL – PANCIERA 1989.

quality (as was the case with other goods).²⁸ Yet, surprisingly perhaps, his funerary monument remains rather vague in this respect.

A. Dan, following a suggestion by A. Avram, recently took *natione Pontico* here to refer to the Roman province as the slave's origins or the place where he was abducted or sold.²⁹ If true, *natione* was used here in a rather atypical (albeit not unattested) manner, for on the gravestones of soldiers of the Roman army *natione* is usually followed by the names of peoples and tribes (e.g. *natione Bessus* or *natione Batavus*) rather than by adjectives referring to provinces.³⁰ S. Panciera and M.P. Speidel in their publication of this gravestone in 1989 therefore had reason to take the expression 'Achillean soil' of the poem in its established sense as a reference to the slave's origins from the North coast of the Black Sea, and therefore to regions beyond Roman provincial territory. This solution may appear all the more attractive, as these regions were also well-known centres of the slave trade.³¹ If true, *Ponticus* was used here in its general over-arching sense, indicating origins from anywhere around the Black Sea. The ambiguity may have been intentional, as neither interpretation can be safely ruled out.

In any event, the term *Ponticus* was indeed occasionally used in the Roman army to designate or to include areas beyond Roman provincial soil. That was, for instance, the case with the *vexillationes Ponticae apud Scythia(m) et Tauricam* set up from Lower Moesian forces probably in the 70s of the second century AD, or with Vibius Severus, *speculator Ponticus*, who surely served in the staff of the Roman governor of Moesia Inferior.³² In both cases, the adjective described the sphere of operations along the northern coasts of the Black Sea. The Roman Black Sea fleet, the *classis Pontica*, may also have been called 'Pontic' because its sphere of operation covered the entire Black Sea basin, but it no doubt originally owed its name to the circumstances of its creation, as it was set up from ships of the fleet of king Julius Polemo II of Pontus when Rome took over his kingdom in 64 AD.³³ Auxiliary units that were integrated into the Roman army as transformed former

²⁸ Slaves: Dig. 21.1.31,21 (Ulpian). Cf. 50.15.4,5 (Ulpian). Var. L. 9.93. For 'Pontic' and Colchian slaves see FINLEY 1962; BRAUND – TSETSKHLADZE 1989; AVRAM 2007. Goods: Philostr. VS 6.12.

²⁹ DAN 2014: 55; AVRAM 2013: no. 2681.

³⁰ For exceptional use of *natione* with provincial adjectives on the inscriptions of soldiers from the army cf. *natione Hispanus* (AE 1962, 51), *nation(e) Hispan(us) Tarraconensis* (AE 2010, 1261), *natione Britan(n)icianus* (CIL VI 3279), *nat(ione) Noricus* (CIL X 1755), or *natione M(o)es(i)a{a}cus* (CIL VI 2736). Cf. also *domo Noricus* (CIL III 14935) and *domo Dacus* (CIL III 13379), although in the latter case it is uncertain whether the reference was to the province or the people.

³¹ SPEIDEL – PANCIERA 1989: 122 with reference to Ov. *Ib.* 330.

³² *Vexillationes*: CIL VIII 619 (cf. 11780) = ILS 2747 (Maktar). Cf. SAXER 1967: 42 & 91f. no. 74. For the date see also PIR² P 463 and PME P 41 and suppl. Severus: IScM II 327. MATEI-POPESCU 2014: 185.

³³ Tac. *Hist.* 3.47.1–2; J. BJ 2.16.4 (366–367). Cf. FRENCH 1984; MAREK 2003: 59f. and most recently WHEELER 2012.

royal regiments were often given names that referred to their pre-Roman origins.³⁴ This, in particular, was also the case with *cohors I Pontica eq(uitata) c(ivium) R(omanorum)*, known from a single, recently published inscription from near Beirut.³⁵ The cohort no doubt originated as a transformed regiment from king Polemo's army and was named *Pontica* at the same time that Rome's authorities also gave its new Black Sea fleet that name.³⁶ The Diocletianic *legio I Pontica*, on the other hand, owed its name to the Late Roman province of 'Pontus' where it was stationed.

Evidently chronological and semantic considerations rule out the possibility that *natione Ponticus* could have expressed historical allusions in the case of individual soldiers of the imperial navy in the second and third centuries AD. Nor did the Roman army usually recruit soldiers from beyond provincial territory into its regular units (to which *classis praetoria Misenensis* of course belonged). Hence, the term *natione Ponticus* in the inscriptions of our navy soldiers most likely refers to the province in which these soldiers were recruited. In fact, unlike the soldiers in the army, navy soldiers very often specified their origins in their inscriptions of the second and third centuries using the formula *natione* with an adjectival form of the name of the province in which they had been recruited.³⁷ However, *natione Ponticus* in the inscriptions of the navy soldiers is not likely to have been a reference to *provincia Pontus et Bithynia* in its entirety, but only to its eastern half, the actual 'Pontus'.³⁸ This is not only suggested by the formula *natione Bithynus (vel sim.)* on several other navy soldiers' gravestones, but also by the similar distinctions made in the case of other 'double provinces' such as *Lycia et Pamphylia* and *Alexandria et Aegyptus*.³⁹ Perhaps the most likely explanation for recording recruits from *Bithynia* and *Pontus* in separate lists is that recruitment procedures for the imperial fleets were carried out separately in each part of the 'double province'.⁴⁰

³⁴ See for instance GRAF 1994 and SPEIDEL 2009: 577.

³⁵ ALIQUOT – CAILLOU 2014 = AE 2014, 1391.

³⁶ Pontic regiments transformed into Roman cohorts in 64 CE: Tac. *Hist.* 3.47.

³⁷ Just see the many examples from Misenum and Ravenna in CIL X, CIL XI and AE. On recruitment to the praetorian fleets see most recently TUCK 2015 and BEKKER-NIELSEN 2017, neither of which are however aware of the existence of navy soldiers *natione Ponticus*.

³⁸ Soldiers from other 'Pontic' regions within the Empire would presumably have been registered in the lists of their native provinces (i.e. Moesia Inferior, Galatia, Cappadocia).

³⁹ E.g.: *Bithyni*: CIL X 3490 (Misenum); X 3492 (Misenum); X 3597 (Misenum); XI 52 (Ravenna); XI 70 (Ravenna). Cf. CIL X 3553 (Misenum); RMD I 74 (212 AD, of a navy soldier's wife). – *Pamphylia*: CIL X 3400 (Misenum); TUCK 2005: 51, no. 58 (Misenum); RMD I 38 (139 AD). – *Lyci*: CIL XVI 177 (140 AD). – *Alexandrini*: CIL VI 3096 (Rome); X 3504 (Misenum); XI 3737 (Castel di Guido). – *Aegypti*: CIL X 3469 (Misenum); XI 3528 (Civitavecchia); XI 3534 (Civitavecchia); XIV 239 (Fiumicino); AE 1996, 425 (Misenum).

⁴⁰ Whether or not the fact that all hitherto known *Pontici* from the imperial fleet served in Misenum is somehow connected to this recruiting practice is not readily apparent.

The ways in which soldiers referred to their homes in their inscriptions have recently been thought to express identity and genuine feelings of belonging.⁴¹ Yet the repetitive and extremely formulaic expressions they used instead appear to reflect administrative practices and traditions of the Roman military authorities, for these recorded the origins of each and every soldier during the recruitment procedures (*probatio*) at provincial headquarters as a matter of routine.⁴² Documents in the units' archives bearing such formulaic references to soldiers' origins would continue to play an important and prominent role throughout their military service.⁴³ It is remarkable, therefore, that the contemporary second and third century military diplomas of soldiers of the praetorian fleets with their texts from the imperial chancellery also emphasised provincial origins by using the formula *civitas ex provincia* – e.g. *Oniando ex Lycia* or *Selinunt(o) ex Cilicia*, etc. – since the reign of Hadrian.⁴⁴ Yet such administrative practices were hardly intended to create, among navy recruits, feelings of belonging to specific units of Roman administrative geography.

As a result, the qualifier *natione Ponticus* of those registered in the eastern, 'Pontic', list of navy soldiers from *provincia Pontus et Bithynia* ended up being ambiguous. For although the term was used within the military sphere strictly as a category of military administration and related to Roman administrative geography, anyone beyond the spheres of military bureaucracy could just as well understand it to express an individual's belonging to the greater 'Pontic' world of the Black Sea littoral. Context, therefore, and the reader's personal perspective determined above all else the individual perception of the specific meaning of *Ponticus* despite its technical use in the military language of the Roman army.⁴⁵

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⁴¹ E.g. DERKS 2009; TALBERT 2013. The concept, however, is not new, cf. MOMMSEN 1884: 34: "offenbar beruhte das Schema auf einem Gefühl der factischen Stammverwandtschaft, das mit der Zugehörigkeit zu demselben politischen Gemeinwesen, der Gemeinde, der Provinz, dem Staat nichts gemein hat und von diesem absieht, ja einen Gegensatz dazu bildet, also auf eine Anschauung wie etwa unsere Landsmannschaft und vermutlich gleich dieser von vager und von individuellem Belieben abhängiger Handhabung".

⁴² *Probatio*: AE 2013, 2182 & 2184: (...) *vel ex dilectu probati parum examinata origine parentum vel ex alia qua causa translati* (...). On the subject in general cf. SPEIDEL 2009: 222–224 and SPEIDEL 2017 with further literature.

⁴³ SPEIDEL 2009: 213–234; 2017; STAUNER 2004.

⁴⁴ Cf. SPEIDEL 2017: 42f.

⁴⁵ The ambiguity of such terms called for puns that even the Roman senatorial elite enjoyed. Cf. HA *Carac.* 5.6 (*Lucanicus*) and 10.6 (*Geticus Maximus*); HOHL 1950.

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Abstract: A small number of Latin inscriptions on gravestones of Roman navy soldiers qualify the deceased as *natione Ponticus*. Theodor Mommsen believed that such designations were part of an empire-wide pattern that reveals feelings of ethnic belonging and disregards Roman administrative geography. Similarly, a recently published theory holds that soldiers chose the way in which they indicated their homes with regard to how they felt about their places of origin, and that therefore such designations conveyed

sentiments of identity. Accordingly, individuals describing themselves as *natione Ponticus* ought to have felt particularly strong about their 'Pontic' identity. However, the pattern that emerges from the surviving evidence suggests that the expression *natione Ponticus* rooted in the Roman naval force's administrative practices. It nevertheless remained ambiguous and lent itself to 'misunderstandings'.

Zusammenfassung: Eine kleine Anzahl lateinischer Inschriften auf Grabsteinen römischer Marinesoldaten bezeichnet den Verstorbenen als *natione Ponticus*. Theodor Mommsen glaubte, dass solche Benennungen Teil eines reichweitenweiten Schemas waren, das "auf einem Gefühl der factischen Stammverwandtschaft" beruhte und römische Verwaltungsgrenzen missachtete. Nach einer ähnlichen, kürzlich veröffentlichten Theorie formulierten die Soldaten die Herkunftsangaben in ihren Inschriften und Dokumenten mit der Absicht, damit ihre Beziehung zur Heimat auszudrücken. Solche Herkunftsangaben seien demnach Ausdruck der individuellen Identität dieser Soldaten. Dementsprechend hätten Personen, die sich selbst als *natione Ponticus* bezeichneten, ihre „pontische“ Identität besonders stark empfunden. Das Muster, das sich aus den überlieferten Quellen ergibt, legt jedoch nahe, dass der Ausdruck *natione Ponticus* viel mehr als Ergebnis der Verwaltungspraktiken der römischen Seestreitkräfte entstand. Er blieb jedoch zweideutig und bot sich „Missverständnissen“ an.

Résumé: Un petit nombre d'inscriptions latines sur les pierres tombales de soldats de la marine romaine qualifie le défunt de *natione Ponticus*. Theodor Mommsen a estimé que de telles dénominations faisaient partie d'un schéma général basé sur «un sens d'affinité généalogique» et ne respectant pas les frontières administratives romaines. De même, une théorie récemment publiée soutient que les soldats ont choisi la manière dont ils indiquaient leur domicile en tenant compte de leur sentiment vis-à-vis de leur lieu d'origine et que, par conséquent, ces désignations traduisaient des sentiments d'identité. En conséquence, les individus se décrivant comme *natione Ponticus* auraient dû se sentir particulièrement attachés à leur identité «pontique». Cependant, le schéma qui se dégage des sources traditionnelles suggère que l'expression *natione Ponticus* s'enracine dans les pratiques administratives de la force navale romaine. Il restait néanmoins ambigu et se prêtait à des «malentendus».