

## BOOK REVIEW

*Ethnic Constructs, Royal Dynasties and Historical Geography around the Black Sea Littoral*. Edited by COŞKUN, ALTAY. Stuttgart, DE: Franz Steiner, 2021. Pp. 381. Paperback, \$83.87. ISBN: 978-3-515-12941-1.

This present volume, dedicated to Hans Heinen (1941-2013), spans from several workshops and conference panels devoted to old and new trends in ancient Black Sea studies. The collection consists of fourteen chapters—each beginning with an abstract in English and Russian—on the history, archaeology and geography of the ancient Black Sea region. Combined, they provide a panoramic view of all four coastlines, hinterlands and beyond, while addressing issues from the archaic to the Byzantine period.

Valentina Mordvintseva (Chapter 1) examines Michael Rostovtzeff's early work on the northern Black Sea region, which had introduced such terms as Barbarization, Iranization and Sarmatization. Mordvintseva situates Rostovtzeff's work in the broader context of studies of the region, mostly in Russian.

Joanna Porucznik (Chapter 2) surveys cult and funerary practices in Olbia and its *chora* in order to describe a participating group's self-definition during different phases of Greek settlement in the area. Porucznik eschews a traditional ethnic-oriented methodological approach, whereby material culture is assumed to provide clear ethnic markers that are used to demonstrate either the "Greekness" of Olbia and its *chora*, or a more "mixed," Greco-barbarian character of the settlement. Instead, a distinction between ethnicity and cultural identity is drawn, which allows for the analysis of cross-cultural objects and traditions without unnecessary attempts to attribute them to a given *ethnos*.

Philip Harland (Chapter 3) seeks to move past the idea that the Greek literary elites tended to construct an ethnic self-understanding primarily in juxtaposition to a generalized inferior "other," the barbarian. Rather, Harland focuses on the ancient habit of ranking peoples in relation to one another. In addition to Herodotus, Harland investigates the Hippocratic corpus, the works of Aristotle and of Strabo.

Marta Oller Guzmán (Chapter 4) investigates local responses to Greek settlers by examining the Greek sources in an attempt to delve into the motivations of the locals that guided their actions. A first group of examples focuses on recurring patterns in the narratives of settlement histories, before a second part explores various aspects of Hellenization, such as the roles of the local elites, the introduction of new cults, as well as the exploitation of natural and human resources.

Alexandr V. Podossinov (Chapter 5) examines the portrait of Scythians by Greek and Roman authors as either noble or cruel, with a focus particularly on Strabo's *Geography*. As Podossinov suggests, it is evident that the Scythians' idealization was primarily the result of an ancient writer's disappointment in his own society and values. Podossinov also demonstrates how the opposition of Greco-Roman and barbaric cultures underwent a significant change among early Christian authors, such as Prudentius.

Madalina Dana (Chapter 6) investigates the Bosporan Kings and the Greek features of their culture in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Despite their multiple ethnic backgrounds and diverse political power relations, the Bosporan dynasts doggedly presented themselves as perfect Hellenic rulers to the Greeks among their subjects and beyond. Dana also shows that, gradually in the course of the first century BCE, the adherence to the values of Hellenism was paired with the display of friendly relations with the Roman people and the Emperor.

Germain Payen (Chapter 7) examines the consequences of the peace of Apameia for the Black Sea, particularly in the Anatolian peninsula. Payen especially traces the rivalries between the Attalid, Bithynian and Pontic Kingdoms, as they vied for control over their various spheres of influence. Roman hegemony, Payen maintains, remained a distant political factor.

Luis Ballesteros Pastor (Chapter 8) analyzes the evidence for how Pharnakes II, son of Mithridates VI Eupator, represented himself as an Achaemenid ruler. In doing this, Pharnakes followed the official genealogy established in the court of Pontos that traced the lineage of the Mithradatids back to Cyrus the Great. Pharnakes' return to Pontos, the realm of his ancestors, was represented as an "exaltation of the Iranian roots" of the king.

Altay Coşkun and Gaius Stern (Chapter 9) revisit the South Frieze of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, with particular focus on the two figures that have been identified as the Bosporan queen Dynamis and the prince Aspurgos. The paper includes a discussion of Bosporan dynastic history relating to queen Dynamis, the iconography of the *Ara Pacis*, as well as the date of the procession that is depicted on the monument, and possible alternatives to the Bosporan queen and prince.

Two papers by Altay Coşkun (Chapters 10 and 11), explore the geography of Pompey's Eastern settlements in Asia Minor. The first paper attempts a reconstruction of the territories of the Galatian Deiotaros I Philorhomaioi, whilst the second studies the closely related subject of Pompey and the "Eleven Cities" of the Province of Pontus. Coşkun seeks to determine the exact geographical organization of the province of Pontus. The last paper in this section (Chapter 12), also by Coşkun, searches for the Sanctuary of Leukothea in Kolchis, located by Strabo somewhere in Colchis.

Dan Ruscu (Chapter 13) investigates Christianity and urban changes in late Roman Scythia Minor, focusing on colonies on the Black Sea shore: Tomis, Kallatis and Istros, and further on Tropaeum Traiani.

Hugh Elton (Chapter 14) analyzes agricultural decision-making on the south coast of the Black Sea, in particular, Pontos and Paphlagonia, in Classical Antiquity. Elton uses literary and archaeological evidence, such as pollen cores, in studying ancient agricultural choices.

The diverse methodological approaches presented in this well edited and presented volume will appeal to both students and scholars in different fields.

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