

REVIEW

GREEKS ON THE BLACK SEA

Victor Cojocaru and Christoph Schüler, edd., *Die Aussenbeziehungen pontischer und kleinasiatischer Städte in hellenistischer und römischer Zeit. Akten einer deutsch-rumänischen Tagung in Constanța, 20.–24. September 2010*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014. Pp. 311. Hardback, €54.00. ISBN 978-3-515-10737-2.

The volume edited by V. Cojocaru and Chr. Schüler originates from a Romanian-German conference held at Constanța in 2010, and offers more food for thought than the title seems to promise. For some of the Romanian contributors, aspects of regionalism in the Black Sea area are among the main focuses of discussion. Through analysis of the area's political, cultural, economic, and religious relations, especially with Asia Minor and Greece, they are able to deconstruct the paradigm created by the Russian ancient historian J. G. Vinogradov.¹ He considered the Pontic area in Classical and Hellenistic times as a closed, indissoluble unity, whose development was determined by the conflict between the Greek cities and local populations like the Sarmatians and Scythians. To such an isolationist conception of the Black Sea area, strictly connected with the Soviet and now Russian geopolitical agenda, the Romanian scholars counter with a different view characterized by mobility and interconnectivity, presenting the Greek cities of the western coast as fully embedded in the Greek world at large.

In the 'Introduction' the editors state (12) that the research approach adopted in their volume derives from the seminal work edited by C. Renfrew and J. F. Cherry, *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change* (Cambridge, 1986). With its attention to mobility and connectivity, *Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2001) by P. Horden and N. Purcell has also been a significant influence on the volume. More specifically, its perspective was anticipated by M. Dana, *Culture et mobilité dans le Pont Euxin* (Bordeaux, 2011) and C. Müller, *D'Olbia à Tanais. Territoires et réseaux d'échanges dans la Mer Noire septentrionale aux époques classique et hellénistique* (Bordeaux, 2010), while it was followed by V. Cojocaru, A. Coşkun, and M. Dana, edd., *Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Cluj-Napoca, 2014) and V. Cojocaru and A. Rubel, edd., *Mobility in Research on the Black Sea Region* (Cluj-Napoca, 2016). The collective work under review, however, is

¹ See especially J. G. Vinogradov, *Pontische Studien. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte und Epigraphik der Schwarzmeerraumes* (Mainz, 1997).

the best-structured and most insightful in the series of books on the Black Sea area just mentioned. Its papers cover a wide range of themes, and often present innovative results. Taken as a whole, they offer a broad view of the processes governing the external relations of the cities of the Pontic area.

In the first chapter, the only one based on literary sources, A. Robu gives a new interpretation of a fragment of Memnon of Herakleia (*FGrHist* 434 F 13 (21)) which centres on the conflict between the inhabitants of Byzantion, Callatis, and Istros for the possession of the *emporion* of Tomis, dating to slightly before the middle of the third century BCE. The author, against the view generally held, considers this conflict as a regional one determined by local causes, rather than as a corollary of the confrontation between the Hellenistic kings Antiochus II and Ptolemy II. According to Robu, the interest in Tomis, on the one hand, and the later purchase of Hieron on the Asiatic coast of the Black Sea, on the other, show the intention of Byzantion to take an active part in the organization of the commercial traffic in the Pontic area. In short, as V. Gabrielsen wrote some years ago, Byzantion did not tolerate the possibility that other cities could exercise a sort of monopoly on the western coast of the Black sea; it could have been lethal for its own monopoly on the area of the Straits.²

All the other papers are primarily based on epigraphic material, but even the most specialized ones never lose sight of the general perspective of the volume. R. M. Errington deals with the clause guaranteeing the interests of Rome in the treaty between Chersonesos Taurica and Pharnaces of Pontos (*IOSPE* I² 402). Taking also into consideration the peace treaty between Eumenes II of Pergamon and the same Pharnaces reported by Polybios (25.2), the author attributes an important role to the Italian city on the Black Sea stage already in the first half of the second century BCE, after the peace of Apamea and before the end of the Third Macedonian War. Two unpublished inscriptions are presented in the paper by Barbulescu and Buzoianu. One of them confirms the existence of a gymnasium at Tomis, already known epigraphically, and indicates that in the second/third centuries CE traditional Greek education was cultivated in the city. From Tomis comes another unpublished inscription discussed by A. Avram. Mentioned here is the erection by the *triakastologoi* (a financial office unknown until now) of a new building ‘in the heroon’ as an expression of gratitude for the restitution of *eleutheria* to the city. The author attributes this restitution to the Emperor Hadrian, but as G. Kantor has suggested, it is perhaps better to think of Antoninus Pius, whose involvement in the affairs of the Black Sea area is well known.³

² V. Gabrielsen, ‘Trade and Tribute: Byzantion and the Black Sea Straits’, in V. Gabrielsen and J. Lund, edd., *The Black Sea in Antiquity. Regional and Interregional Economic Exchanges* (Aarhus, 2007) 287–324.

³ G. Kantor, *JHS* 135 (2015): 237.

The core of the work comprises four papers dealing with the external relations of the Greek cities of the Black Sea area in general. V. Cojocaru, one of the volume's editors, starts his contribution by offering a brief geopolitical picture of the entire region. Most of the work, however, is occupied by the analysis of the external relations—private and public—of Tyras, Olbia, Chersonesos, and the Greek cities of the Bosporan Kingdom during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. These relations concern not only the Pontic area, including the 'barbarians' of the hinterland, but also the Greek world outside of it (*in primis* Asia Minor), and finally Rome. More than 700 epigraphic documents are examined to arrive at the conclusion that the Black Sea area, notwithstanding its marginal position, was fully part of the Greco-Roman world and participated in the political, economic, social, cultural dynamics of the Mediterranean. This conclusion is soundly based, but the differences between the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as far as the patterns followed by the external relations of the cities are considered, are not duly underlined. It must also be noted that Prusias ad Hypium in Bithynia, whose link with Olbia is rather strong in the Imperial period, was not Dio Chrysostom's birthplace (51). The rhetorician, who gave one of his most important speeches in the Pontic city (*or.* 36), was born at Prusa ad Olypnum.

Complementary to V. Cojocaru's paper is that by L. Ruscu, which focuses on individual mobility—inbound and outbound—in the Hellenistic and Roman periods with regard to the seven western Pontic cities of Istros, Tomis, Kallatis, Dionysopolis, Odessos, Mesambria, and Apollonia. Making use of more than 200 inscriptions, Ruscu is able to create a picture in which the western Pontic area is tightly interconnected, above all with Greece and Asia Minor. The reasons motivating this mobility are various and are not restricted to trade, as seems to be suggested by a passage of the speech delivered by Dio Chrysostom at Olbia (*or.* 36.25). Official representatives of cities, students, teachers, artisans, and, especially in the Imperial period, soldiers were also moving around. Worthy of note is the fact that, in the case of Tomis, during the Imperial period the epigraphic material allows us to register seventy-three people arriving from outside as compared to only thirteen inhabitants of the city leaving it for other places. This imbalance, in order to be explained, would have deserved a discussion on the character of Tomis as a city able to attract visitors, not least in light of its role as seat of the governor of Moesia Inferior.

The mobility of students and teachers from the Black Sea area in Hellenistic and Roman times is the subject of M. Dana's paper, following the trail of her monograph mentioned above. First of all, Dana highlights the contribution to Greek culture by Pontic authors like Aristophanes of Byzantion and Bion of Borysthenes. What is important in her paper, however, is the analysis based on the epigraphic material of the flow of students from the Pontic area towards Greek cultural centres. Dana is right to stress that the destinations are not only Athens and Alexandria, but also the gymnasia and the philosophical

and medical schools of intermediate, so to say, centres such as Cyzikos and Byzantion, not to mention the gymnasia of Pontic cities of some importance in Roman times such as Tomis. In parallel, Pontic teachers leaving their home cities to carry out their activity in what we have just called intermediate centres are quite numerous. On the basis of these results Dana challenges the use of the centre-periphery model for the study of the cultural life of the Black Sea area. Her conclusion is that the latter cannot be considered a region cut off from the rest of the Greek world. Going further, adopting a polycentric approach, we could say that the Black Sea area is fully part of it also with respect to the cultural life and its organization.

F. Matei-Popescu tries to outline the role of the Roman army in the western Pontic Greek cities. They became part of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the first century CE, and were characterized—especially Tomis, the seat of the governor of Moesia Inferior—by the presence of large numbers of Roman military personnel. The author convincingly rules out that this personnel had a defensive function, given that it is not possible to prove, at least until the end of the third century CE, the existence of a ‘maritime limes’ along the western coast of the Black Sea. On the basis of the epigraphic material, according to Matei-Popescu, Roman soldiers, and in particular the *beneficarii consularis*, were part of the governor’s staff and helped him in policing the area. In short, the author, accepting N. Pollard’s model for the Near East, considers Roman soldiers active in Moesia Inferior as a type of mediator between central and provincial administration and the Greek cities.⁴ This role is confirmed by the presence of a number of *veterani*, who were potentially functional to the maintenance of public order.

The section dealing with the Pontic area is concluded by J. Nollé with a contribution on a series of coins minted by the Roman colony of Deultum, founded by Vespasian, on the western coast of the Black Sea, in modern Bulgaria. On these coins, dating back to the first half of the third century CE, is portrayed the liberation of Andromeda by Perseus, while the language for the legend is Latin, as befits a Roman colony. The author rightfully identifies the choice of a scene taken from Greek mythology as a way for the city to claim an ancient Greek origin and an ennobling connection with the old king Perseus. He also notes that the myth represented on the coins had a certain diffusion in other marginal areas of the Greek *oikoumene*, such as Ethiopia and Palestine, Egypt and Isauria. But he does not give an answer to the question why Deultum felt obliged to look for a Greek ancestry. The answer perhaps may be found in the cultural climate favourable to Hellenism created by the Second Sophistic, and which also thrived in the Pontic area, and even more in the

⁴ N. Pollard, ‘The Roman Army as “Total Institution” in the Near East? Dura-Europos as a Case Study’, in D. L. Kennedy, ed., *The Roman Army in the East* (JRA Suppl. Ser. 18; Ann Arbor, 1996) 211–27.

vitality of Hellenism in the cities of the western coast of the Black Sea. In order to compete with them in the regional context, notwithstanding its title of Roman colony, Deultum had to use the myth of the liberation of Andromeda by Perseus on its coins with the function of gaining at least a shade of Hellenism.

At the end of the volume we find two papers concerning the external relations of some Hellenistic cities outside the Black Sea area. They somehow break the geographical and conceptual unity of the work; however, they are good examples of sound epigraphic technique. In the first, by U. Kennert and Chr. Marek, a fragmentary inscription discovered some years ago in the excavations of Kaunos in Caria is published for the first time. Probably dating back to the third century BCE, the new inscription reports two decrees: the first from Samothrace, honouring the people of Kaunos and granting *proxenia* to the *theoioi* of the Carian city; the second is the reply from Kaunos accepting the honours. The two cities shared relationships of *syngeneia* and *philia*. At the base of that link it is easy to identify the presence of the famous sanctuary of the Cabeiri on the island of Samothrace.

Chr. Schüler too deals with a relationship of institutional type involving two Hellenistic cities, already known to us from an inscription (*I. Arykanda* 1). It regards the treaty of *symbmachia* between two small centres of Lycia, Arykanda and Tragalassos, which at the time of Antiochus III's conquest of the region succeeded in finding enough common ground to strike an alliance. The author is right in stressing the importance of texts such as this in order to understand how the Hellenistic state system worked, and to acknowledge the margin of manoeuvre still left to cities for autonomous conduct, a margin perhaps wider than is usually believed. But work on the external relations of the Greek cities in the Hellenistic and Roman periods cannot restrict itself to the publication and study of treaties and decrees, that is to say to the institutional dimension.

It is only by looking beyond the institutional dimension that we can detect those contacts, interconnections, and forms of mobility which allow us to achieve a multifaceted and dynamic view of the entire Greek world—also under Roman rule—a view that is of great help when trying to study regional divisions on a new basis, which transcends administrative borders and modern geopolitical agendas. The papers concerning the Pontic area gathered in the volume under review offer a substantial example of its rewards.