

**Mobility in Research  
on the  
Black Sea Region**

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# Mobility in Research on the Black Sea Region



**Editors:**

Victor Cojocaru & Alexander Rubel

**in collaboration with:**

Diana Stah & Thibaut Castelli

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## Preface

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The events which have occurred in the countries of the Black Sea region since the 1990s (especially in the last years) demonstrate a need to reflect on the past in order to gain a better understanding of the instability and risks that have emerged. Against such a background, conjoining the research traditions of scholars educated in the West with those of scholars educated in the East provides a good chance to absorb, interpret and integrate the constant flow of new information about the Black Sea region into mainstream western classical scholarship. The 'Mobility' conference brought together 35 scholars from Europe, Asia, and North America, willing to discuss aspects of political, social, cultural, and economic history in Greek, Roman and Byzantine times.

This gathering reflects and exemplifies a tradition of fruitful collaboration between the Institute of Archaeology of Iasi with many academic institutions from Romania abroad. Its roots lie in important earlier initiatives, and in many networking meetings, organized mainly in the last decade. In this respect, the international symposium *Ethnic Contacts and Cultural Exchanges North and West of the Black Sea between the Greek Colonization and the Present* (Iasi, June, 2005) may be mentioned. Next, we would like to pick out three recent networking gatherings. Their proceedings were published and warmly welcomed at national and international level. In 2010, at Constanta took place the conference on 'Foreign relations of the cities of Black Sea area and Asia Minor in Hellenistic and Roman times'. It was followed in 2012, this time in Bucharest, by a national symposium on the topic 'Poleis in the Black Sea region and Propontis in Hellenistic and Roman times'. In 2013 an international symposium was organized again in Constanta – 'Interconnectivity in the Mediterranean and Pontic World during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods'.

Such meetings firmed up the timeline of the topic, and helped to establish a permanent discussion within a research group focused on the Black Sea region in the ancient world. In that way we gradually developed the idea of an interdisciplinary research network of Romanian and foreign

scholars (especially historians, epigraphists, classical archaeologists and numismatists), which would engage in some large international projects. Among the participants of the current conference, most have contributed to the events mentioned above; some joined our research network even earlier. 'Mobility' provided plenty of opportunities not only for exchanging updates related to recent literary, epigraphic, numismatic, iconographical and archaeological discoveries, but also to share perspectives, methods, and frameworks from which to look at ancient texts and artefacts, whether to gain a better understanding of the past, or to make ancient objects or histories more meaningful for us today.

Out of the 27 papers presented in Iași, 19 have been included in this volume; four (by L. Ballesteros Pastor, D. Braund, V. Mordvintseva, and A. Popa) were subsequently admitted as very fitting contributions to the subject of mobility in the Black Sea region. The subsequent collection of papers has been organized into three main blocks based on research fields and chronological criteria. Their content can be easily accessed through the abstracts available in all three languages of the conference.

Charles King, the author of a brilliant history of the Black Sea (Oxford 2004), points out that "Today, there are few places in the world where political elites and average citizens know less about their neighbours than around the Black Sea. But this is a wilful ignorance, furthered by versions of history that take the nation as timeless, the state as predestined, and the region as ephemeral" (p. 239). As a solution to this impasse, the same author proposes to understand the Black Sea as a discrete unit. Rather than dividing it among nations and states, new generations of scholars are uncovering the ways in which what happened in one part of the sea was intimately linked with the fate of every other part of it.

In what follows, we would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the many individuals and institutions that have supported the Mobility conference in Iași and/or the publication of its proceedings.

The symposium was organized by the Iași Branch of the Romanian Academy, in collaboration with the German Cultural Centre of Iași. We are particularly grateful to Mihail Voicu, President of the Iași Branch of the Romanian Academy, as well as to Valerica Apopei, George Bilavschi, Sever-Petru Boțan, Cristian Carp, Roxana-Gabriela Curcă, Meda Gâlea, Monalisa Iftene, Lucian Munteanu, Margareta Munteanu and Ionel Tudosă. Their continuous and generous support in the run-up to and during the conference was invaluable. Among the other institutions involved, first mention is owed to the Romanian National Agency for Scientific Research (CNCS – UEFISCDI): we are grateful for its financial support of the conference as well as for the subsidizing of the present publication. We

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also owe particular thanks to Lavinia Grumeza (Caransebeş) for editing the illustrations of this volume.

As editors of the present volume, we would also like to express our deep gratitude to our colleagues within the editorial board of the book series 'Pontica et Mediterranea': David Braund (Exeter), Altay Coşkun (Ontario), Mădălina Dana (Paris) and Joachim Hupe (Trier), who have generously supported us as reviewers and language editors. Last, but not least, we would like warmly to acknowledge that our collaboration with the Mega Publishing House has been very collegial and efficient, so that we look forward to continuing this cooperation in future.

June 2016

Editors