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MIGRATIONS OF ETHNONYMS, MIGRATIONS OF PEOPLES:
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE ETHNIC LANDSCAPE
AROUND THE BLACK SEA THROUGH THE STUDY OF
LATE ANTIQUE LISTS OF ETHNONYMS

This contribution aims at highlighting the importance of the study of ethnonyms and, in particular, of lists of ethnonyms for understanding late antique discourses of ethnicity. The selected sources for this contribution are the *Laterculus Veronensis* (314 CE) and the *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius (5th century CE). Both works consist in a series of catalogues of place names and ethnonyms, which provide invaluable material for the analysis of the ethnic vocabulary of the time. Drafted with different purposes, these texts serve to elucidate the role of ethnonyms in both the political communication and the educational system of Late Antiquity. In this context, as a cultural and geographical borderland, the area north and east of the Black Sea represents an ideal subject of studies. Its apparently frozen representation in several Late Roman sources exemplifies the dynamic between direct knowledge of the area, the persistence of centuries-old ethnographic traditions, and the agenda of the authors. The following examination will focus on a few ethnic names, such as the Vandali and the Sciri, whose transmission history evidences continuity and change of the ethnic discourse applied to the populations inhabiting this geographical area. In Late Antiquity, the Greco-Roman world experienced numerous drastic transformations that made familiar representations of the ethnic landscape increasingly outdated. The selected sources represent two different examples of the attempt of reconciling the developments on the ground with the older but authoritative ethnographic tradition. In conclusion, these registers reveal the importance of ethnonyms within the organization of knowledge and the learning techniques of the time, as well as the political undertone of ethnic names and their lists.

Keywords: Late Antiquity, ethnonyms, Black Sea, Sciri, *Laterculus Veronensis*, *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius, ethnic discourse

On the importance of studying ethnonyms and lists of ethnonyms

It is easy not to talk about ethnonyms for a historian. In fact, one could ask oneself whether only linguists and philologists might have the necessary skills

to analyze them. Moreover, while use and functions of ethnonyms in rhetorical and poetical writing is established, understanding characteristics and purposes of ethnonyms from a historical perspective is a more arduous task. However, as this contribution aims to demonstrate, names applied to ethnic groups have also socio-cultural, political, and even educational repercussions. Ethnonyms relate to the identity of the defined groups. They can have symbolic meanings. They trigger associations and serve as means for claiming ownership on past events and collective memories. The connection between ethnonyms and their real-life referents is not always clear, but they are more than simple stylistic embellishments. Ethnonyms did and still matter in a variety of ways. They can be studied as parts of speech and rhetorical devices, but they also take part in history.

One can find ethnonyms in a large number of texts of very different genres. If one concentrates on Late and post-Roman literary texts, ethnonyms are particularly numerous in historiography, geography, and poetry. In historiography, they abound in ethnographic excursuses, in which authors displayed their knowledge of the barbarian world and their familiarity with ancient literature and mythology¹. Texts transmitting geographical information are even more abundant of ethnonyms. They represent one of the cardinal elements that constitute the description of space both in ancient and medieval geographies². Finally, ethnonyms are ubiquitous in poetical writing, especially in late antique panegyrics. A relatively ample corpus of speeches written in honor of late Roman emperors survives to this day. In these texts, the names of defeated barbarians served the primary goal of aggrandizing the military successes accomplished by Roman emperors. Mentioning centuries-old names, such as *Scythae* and *Persae*, or alluding to the fabulous *Amazones* and *Blemmyae*, these rhetoricians blurred the line between history and myth and lent an epic coloring to the Roman victories.

A specific way of employing ethnonyms is gathering them in dedicated lists. By drafting such catalogues, late antique authors collected, organized, and transmitted knowledge in a concise and easily accessible manner. Although certainly not exclusive of the period, to Late Antiquity date a significant number of texts often known under the title of *laterculus* or *notitia*. Regardless of their subject, the lowest common denominator of all these texts is their format. They all consist of one or more lists of names³. Rather than a distinct genre, catalogues are a specific form of discourse that played a central role in late antique intellectual cultures and practices of power. First, regis-

¹ On role of ethnographic topoi embedded in historiographical narratives, e.g. Free 2020; Almagor, Skinner 2013; Kaldellis 2013. P. 1–25.

² On the importance of ethnonyms in geographies and, in particular, the Peutinger Table, Liccardo 2020.

³ An introduction to the study of lists in the Roman world, with a focus on the Late Republic and the Early Empire, Riggsby 2019. P. 10–41.

ters were instrumental in the late antique administration system. In an era of frequent reforms, lists helped Roman bureaucrats to get their facts straight. The most famous example of such lists is the *Notitia Dignitatum* (editions: Neira Faleiro 2005; Seeck 1876). In addition to administration, lists could also function as archive of geographical and topographical data. Since geography was not thought as a separate subject, but rather functioned as a background for other branches of knowledge, catalogues of place-names and ethnonyms were used by teachers of grammar and rhetoric. By collecting toponyms and ethnonyms cited by ancient and authoritative authors, these lists constituted convenient reference books, which helped the students in recognizing the correct spatial framework of the stories they had to learn about⁴.

In the next pages, I will focus on two specific examples of lists of ethnonyms. These are the *Laterculus Veronensis* and the *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius. The aim is to understanding what these catalogues can tell us about the ethnographic knowledge of their authors; whether these lists were adapted to reflect the changes occurring on the ground; and how do they reflect the migrations occurring around the Black Sea in Late Antiquity.

The Laterculus Veronensis and the Sciri, or rather when ethnonyms do not migrate

The *Laterculus Veronensis* (henceforth *LV*) consists of a register of Roman provinces, organized in twelve dioceses, and three shorter lists, which gather ethnonyms and names of five *civitates* located across the Rhine⁵. Preserved in just one manuscript, the Verona Biblioteca Capitolare II (2), fols. 255r–256v⁶, and mostly lacking in references to datable events, the *LV* has been a bit of a headache for modern scholars. However, after much debate, today the *communis opinio* describes the *LV* as a coherent document drafted in the later months of 314 (Jones 1964. P. 43–47. Overviews on the dating of the text, Barnes 2007. P. 203–204, 1996. P. 548–550; Kuhoff 2001. P. 338; Rees 2004. P. 24–30; Porena 2003. P. 173–186; Zuckerman 2002).

While almost every research dedicated to this work has focused on the provincial list, neither the purpose nor the single items of the catalogues of ethnonyms have received much attention. These lists reflect the transformations of the ethnographic and topographic lexicon of the time. Karl Müllenhoff published the only extensive examination of these listings back in 1863 (Müllenhoff 1863). More recent, but partial, analysis of these catalogues are

⁴ For a long and detailed discussion of these lists, Racine 2009. P. 41–64. For an overview on the teaching of geography in late antiquity, Gautier Dalché 2014; Lozovsky 2002. P. 102–138.

⁵ See the editions Seeck 1876. P. 247–253; Riese 1878. P. 127–129. The title *Laterculus Veronensis* is a modern invention. Bibliography in Hartmann 2008. P. 34; Fuhrmann 1989.

⁶ For a description of the manuscript, Gryson 1999. P. 278, n. 182; Spagnolo, Marchi 1996. P. 51–52, II (2). The Manuscript contains also the recension B of the *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius.

included in the third volume of *Griechische und Lateinische Quellen zur Frühgeschichte Mitteleuropas*, edited by Joachim Herrmann, and in ‘Eastern Europe in Roman Cartographic Tradition’ (*Vostochnaya Evropa v rimskoi kartograficheskoi traditsii*), authored by Alexander Podossinov (Herrmann 1991. P. 401–402, 644–646; Podossinov 2002. P. 99–105. See also: Mathisen 2011. P. 22–23).

These registers of ethnonyms collect names of barbarians living in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Introduced by the heading *Gentes barbarae, quae pullulauerunt sub imperatoribus*, the first one of these lists contains four different clusters of names. These correspond to the peoples living in Britain and Ireland, the trans-Rhenine barbarians, the trans-Danubian groups, and, finally, the *gentes* that dwelt near the Eastern frontier. The section dedicated to the groups living north of the Danube and the Black Sea reads:

Armilausini Marcomanni / Quadi Taifruli Hermundubi Uandali Sarmat[ae] / Sciri Carpi Scitae Gothi

The sequence follows roughly a west-east direction and has the Danube as the main point of reference. After the Armilausini, an example of a non-ethnic term turned into an ethnic denomination⁷, and the usual pair Marcomanni-Quadi⁸, the *LV* presents a mixture of classical and recent ethnonyms, as well as of small *gentes* and large ethnic confederations. One finds in this section the well-known ethnic umbrella term *Sarmatae* and probably the most re-used and re-adapted ethnonym of Greco-Roman ethnography, i.e. *Scythae*. However, there are also names of minor groups, such as the Hermunduri⁹ and the Taifals, a *gens* attested only by a handful of sources transmitting a very limited amount of information.

The *LV* represents a valuable source for the history of the Vandals and, even more so, of the Sciri. These names represent two cases of ‘disappearing and reappearing’ ethnonyms¹⁰. Known by authors of the Late Republic and the Early Empire, these names disappear from the sources at our disposal and resurface during Late Antiquity. Chronologically distant textual references to ethnic groups bearing the same or a very similar name are not *per se* proof of the uninterrupted existence of the given people. However, the reappearance of such ethnonyms cannot always be disregarded as a bookish identification.

⁷ Rübekel 1996. P. 1331; Sitzmann, Grünzweig 2008. P. 39. Miller has suggested another etymology pointing at a possible river called Armala, corresponding to the Pregolya, Neman or Łyna River: Miller 1916. P. 615.

⁸ On the etymology of these ethnonyms, Sitzmann, Grünzweig 2008. P. 202–203, 222–223.

⁹ For a linguistic analysis and the oldest references of this ethnonym, Neumann 2008. P. 345–346; Sitzmann, Grünzweig 2008. P. 114–115.

¹⁰ On this concept, Heather 1998. For three monographies dedicated to this gens, Steinacher 2016; Merrills, Miles 2010; Castritius 2007.

The sources encourage us to reflect on whether ‘old’ and ‘new’ groups with the same name were indeed connected. In answering to this very complex question, the *LV* provides some precious evidence. Thanks to the *LV*, in fact, one can try to fill the gap in the historical record of ethnonyms that, after their first appearance in the 1st century, disappear from sight for several decades.

Called by Latin sources either *Vandili*, *Vandali*, or *Vanduli*, the Vandals are mentioned both by Pliny and Tacitus¹¹. At the beginning of the 3rd century Cassius Dio informs us of the diarchy of the Asdingi – a group usually considered as being a sort of ethnic sub-unit of the Vandals, since the name was later adopted by the Vandal royal family – and locates the spring of the Elbe River in the ‘Vandalic Mountains’¹². Afterwards, the ethnonym resurfaces in the second half of the 3rd century CE, when Dexippus refers to a peace treaty signed by the Vandals and the emperor Aurelian¹³. Negotiated in 270, the pact brought to an end a largely unsuccessful invasion of Roman Pannonia and set forth the enlistment of Vandal cavaliers in the Roman army¹⁴. According to Zosimus, Emperor Probus defeated a group of Vandals about ten years later (Zos. *Historia Nea* 1.68). This time the Vandals were allies of the Burgundians and their theater of operations was the Roman province of Raetia (Steinacher 2016. P. 26). Finally, a few years before the composition of the *LV*, the Vandals appear also in a speech in honor of emperor Maximian (21 April 289). Here the Vandals, together with the Gepids, are described fighting a coalition of Taifals and Tervingians (Paneg. Lat. 11(3).17.1).

In conclusion, this *gens* seems to have played a secondary role in the Middle Danube region during the 3rd century. While no extant source refers to the Vandals in the context of the ‘Gothic wars’ in 250s and 260s, they were involved in military activities of limited scope. This is also evidenced by the fact that no coeval Roman emperor bore the victory title *Vandalicus*, which entered the Roman titlature only under Justinian. The Vandals were a small ethnic entity, fractioned in even smaller groups that were only rarely in conflict with the Romans. The limited size increased the mobility of the Vandals, who pillaged both Pannonia and Raetia within a few years. As confirmed also by the *LV*, between the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century the ethnonym re-entered the ethnic vocabulary of Roman persons of letters. Nevertheless, the scarce number of instances shows that the Vandals became

¹¹ “Germanorum genera quinque: Vandili, quorum pars Burgodiones, Varinnae, Charini, Gutones.” Plin., *NH* 4.14.99. On the etymology of this ethnonym, Sitzmann, Grünzweig 2008. P. 295–297. Tac. *Germ.* 2.2.

¹² Cass. Dio *Historia Romana* 55.1.3 (the Vandal Mountains), 72[73].2.4 (together with the Iazyges and the Buri), 77[78].20.3 (together with the Marcomanni). On the peculiar institution of the diarchy, Castritius 2008. On the identification of these mountains as the Riesengebirge, Swan 2004. P. 42.

¹³ Dexippus *F* 30 (ed. Martin, 136–137).

¹⁴ *Notitia Dignitatum*, in *partibus Orientis* 28.25 (ed. Seeck, 59).

prominent only at the beginning of the 5th century, after a mixed group of Alans, Vandals, and Suebi crossed the Rhine the last day of 406. Concerning the location of the Vandals, the *LV* places them between the Hermunduri and the Sarmatians, thus beyond the Middle Danube.

The name *Sciri* represents another, more complex, and thus perhaps more intriguing case of a disappearing and reappearing ethnonym. The paucity of the sources and the extremely wide time intervals that divide the few-recorded mentions make any interpretation very tentative (on this: Castritius, Zimmer 2005. Also: Sitzmann, Grünzweig 2008. P. 240–241; Goffart 2006. P. 203–205). The name's etymology points at the PIE root **skeHi-* meaning 'to shimmer' or 'to shine.' The Sciri are thus 'the bright ones' or 'the shining ones.' The oldest source attesting to the Sciri is an inscription found in Olbia, an ancient colony of Miletus located near the estuary of the Southern Bug in today's Ukraine. Dated to the last quarter of the 3rd century BCE, the text is an honorific decree devoted to a wealthy and influential citizen, called Protopogenes, who held a series of public offices and had the merit of defending the city from barbarian raiders¹⁵. The inscription praises Protopogenes for providing out of his own pocket donatives for several tribes that were instrumental in convincing such barbarians to spare the city. One passage of the inscription goes:

Deserters were reporting that the Galatians and the Sciri had formed an alliance, that a large force had been collected and would be coming during the winter, / and in addition that the Thisarnatae, Scythians and Saudaratae were anxious to seize the fort, as they themselves were equally terrified of the cruelty of the Galatians¹⁶.

Although the epigraph does not provide precise geographical information, it suggests that the military alliance formed by the *Γαλάται* and the *Σκίροι* was alarming the neighboring peoples pushing them towards the city of Olbia. The text implies that Galatians and Sciri were dwelling further inland in comparison to the Thisarnatae, the Scythians, and the Saudaratae.

It exists a second inscription containing this ethnonym that dates roughly to the same period¹⁷. Engraved on a marble stele, the text is another honorific decree for a distinguished citizen, a certain Meniskos. Found in reuse at Pliska, the inscription was erected in 215–210 BCE in the city of Histria, a Mile-

¹⁵ Austin 2006. P. 217–222. The inscription is included in the collection *Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae*, as IOSPE I² 32. For the historical context, Vinogradov 1999. P. 70–75. For a much broader analysis, as the historical context, Braund 2002.

¹⁶ Austin 2006. P. 220. The original text goes: “τῶν δὲ αὐτομόλων ἐπαγγελλόντων Γαλά- / τας καὶ Σκίρους πεποῖσθαι συμμαχίαν καὶ δύ- / ναμιν συνῆχθαι μεγάλην καὶ ταύτην τοῦ χει- / μῶνος ἦξειν ἐπαγγελλόντων, πρὸς δὲ τοῦ- / τοις Θισαμάτας καὶ Σκύθας καὶ Σαυδαράτας ἐπι- / θυμῆν τοῦ ὀχυρώματος, δεδιότας ὡσαύτως καὶ αὐτοὺς τὴν τῶν Γαλατῶν ὀμότητα.” IOSPE I² 32, face B.1, 5–11.

¹⁷ Alexandru Avram has newly edited and commented the inscription, Avram 2015.

sian colony located near the Danube Delta. Meniskos is described convincing the civic authorities to donate a certain amount of gold to the king of the Sciri, named Ates, in order to facilitate a peace treaty with this menacing group. This second inscription evidences the presence of a *gens* called Sciri on the Lower Danube just a few years after their appearance in the hinterland of Olbia.

Pliny the Elder is the first Latin author that mentions the Sciri, localizing them together with Sarmatians, Veneti, and Hirri, in the area between Aeningia (possibly Aestingia, i.e. the Baltic area) and the Vistula River¹⁸. In the following centuries, the ethnonym vanishes from historical records. Any hypothesis on how the name survived is highly speculative, but one can suppose that this extraordinary long period of silence is the consequence of a lack of political and military independency. This might be the reason why later sources, referring to an area they barely knew, used only the ethnonym of more influential *gentes*. Therefore, it seems plausible that the name Sciri was abandoned by Greco-Roman authors in favor of the ethnonyms Galatians and Bastarnae, the latter being a term used for specifying the Galatians living near the Danube¹⁹.

If the equation between the names *Bastarni* and *Sciri* is correct, the expression *Basternici motus*, found in the prologue of Justin's *Epitome* may refer to the same incursions whose circumstances are narrated in the aforementioned inscriptions commissioned by the citizens of Olbia and Histria (Avram 2015. P. 51–52; the expression is in Justin *Epitome*, Prologus 28). Moreover, in Tacitus' *Germania* the Bastarnae are located in an ethnic context very similar to the one described by Pliny in regard to the Sciri. Similar to other *Germani* for their language, religion, and way of life, the Bastarnae are said to neighbor the Veneti and the Fenni, and to intermarry with Sarmatians so frequently to resemble them more than fellow Germans (Tac. *Germ.*, 46.1. On this reference on their appearance: Isaac 2004. P. 142). A further element that indicates the Roman ethnographic attitude of treating these ethnonyms as denoting affiliated groups comes from the *Ethnica* of Stephanus of Byzantium. This 6th-century dictionary defines the Sciri as a 'Galatian people' (*Γαλατικόν ἔθνος*) (Steph. Byz. *Ethnika*. S. 210).

The testimony of the *LV* is particularly remarkable because it attests to the reappearance of the ethnonym after centuries of silence. Moreover, the *LV* shows that from the point of view of the Roman literati the Sciri continued to occupy roughly the same area. Inserted between the Sarmatians and the Carpi, they are included among the *gentes* that dwelt near the Lower Danube. Referring to an event occurred in 381, Zosimus pairs them with the Huns and the *Καρποδάκαι*, placing them, again, in the same geographical context, namely north of the Lower Danube (Zos. *Historia Nea* 4.34.6). At the beginning of

¹⁸ Plin. *NH* 4.13.97. On Pliny's sources, Avram 2015. P. 49–50; Schmidt 1934. P. 97.

¹⁹ For an overview of the history of this gens, Batty 2008. P. 353–356.

the 5th century the Sciri are connected to the Huns, with whom they raided the Roman Empire in 408 under the leadership of Uldin (Soz. *Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.5). The eventual defeat of the barbarians led to the imprisonment and deportation of both Huns and Sciri that were redistributed among Roman landowners as *coloni* (Cod. Theod. 5.6.3 (409); this population transfer is explained by the *constitutio de Scyris*, Rosafio 2011). In conclusion, the name of the Sciri represents the extraordinary case of an ethnonym defining both in the Hellenistic period and in Late Antiquity an ethnic group that did not change its dwelling place. What is peculiar regarding the Sciri is that their disappearance as well as their reintroduction in the Greek and Latin ethnic nomenclature does not appear to be the consequence of their migration, but of a change of posture of Roman authors as well as transformations occurred within the *barbaricum*.

The *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius and a seemingly unchanged ethnic landscape

The second case study comes from a 5th-century geographical text known under the title *Cosmographia* and authored by a certain Julius Honorius²⁰. This text is explicitly connected to late antique teaching practices. A colophon included in the oldest manuscript containing the *Cosmographia* illustrates its purpose and provides a few information on its author²¹. It calls this work a *liber exceptorum*²², that is to say a collection of lecture notes, and refers to it as “the excerpts from the sphere or rather its content” (*excerpta eius sphaerae uel continentia*). In other words, the *Cosmographia* is the written legend of a globe, the textual form of a map²³. If, from a modern perspective, the copying of the names found on a map seems a quite dull, if not pointless undertaking, for Julius Honorius and his students the *Cosmographia* had its advantages. Since the curved surface of the globe made it difficult to read its numerous inscriptions, the text facilitated the use of the sphere in class, so that teachers and students started reading the *Cosmographia* as its explanatory booklet.

²⁰ With the exception of the edition provided by Salvatore Monda – Monda (2008) –, no modern study has been entirely dedicated to the *Cosmographia*. On the other hand, there are analysis dedicated to certain sections of the text, as well as useful summaries and overviews. For an introduction, Gautier Dalché 2014. P. 157–159; Altomare 2013. P. 18–22.

²¹ The *Cosmographia* has a rather complex transmission history. Scholars have recognized three different recensions, defined as A, B, and C. The recension A has only one witness. It is the manuscript Paris Lat. 2769, f. 23v + Paris Lat. 4808, ff. 53–65 (MSS A¹ and A¹¹). The rest of the sigla codicum includes the manuscripts (V) Verona Biblioteca Capitolare II (2), (O) El Escorial, R. II. 18; (S) Paris, lat. 10318; (P) Vatican, Pal. lat. 973; (R) Vatican, lat. 3864; (C) Paris, lat. 4871.

²² The term *excepta* refers to the entire book and not only to the summary (*compendium*) inserted at the end of the main text. Cf. Monda 2008. P. 17–24; Gautier Dalché 2014. P. 158; contra Spallone 2003. P. 132.

²³ The latest and most detailed analysis of this passage is in Diederich 2019. P. 126–135.

Furthermore, the aforementioned colophon calls the author, Julius Honorius, a *peritus* and *doctissimus* teacher, thus confirming the context in which the text was drafted. In plain terms, the text consists of a series of catalogues of place-names and ethnonyms. The *Cosmographia* reflects a clear, fourfold division of the *orbis terrarum*, according to the cardinal points and follows the order: East, West, North, and South. For each quarter of the world, the text includes six lists of toponyms (these are names of seas, islands, mountains, provinces, cities, and rivers) and one catalogue of ethnonyms. It offers a collection of names of localities and peoples that the pupils of Julius Honorius could perceive as both chronologically and spatially distant. By gathering them, the *Cosmographia* made the students familiar with their location as well as their cultural and historical significance.

Finally, it is worth noting that the catalogues of places and peoples are prefaced by the account of the measurement of the world. Thoroughly analyzed by Claude Nicolet and, more recently, by Christopher Krebs and Silke Diederich (Diederich 2019. P. 134–135; Krebs 2018. P. 113–116; Nicolet, Gautier Dalché 1986. P. 157–183), this section of the text, the so-called *dimensio* of the world, describes a geographical enterprise started during the last consulate of Julius Caesar (44 BCE) and concluded during the reign of Augustus²⁴. According to this account, in a few decades four *sapientissimi viri* observed and measured the four quarters of the world at the behest of the Roman authority. Regardless of the authenticity of this tale and the circumstances of its transmission (Simon 2013. P. 39), its inclusion in the *Cosmographia* attests to the political essence of geographical investigations and the ideological meaning of these seemingly dry lists of place-names and ethnonyms. For the ethnic landscape of the Black Sea Region, the *Cosmographia* contains a quite long albeit mostly outdated archive of names. According to the proposed fourfold division, the *gentes* living around the Black Sea occupied the northern quarter of the world. The text goes:

Gentes oceani septentrionalis quae sint. Scythae gens | Borysthenes <gens> | Nomades gens | Sauromatae gens | Cercetae gens | Heniochi gens | Colchi gens | Phasis gens | barbari albi | ignobiles gens | Thermonos gens | Ryndacos gens | Xanthii gens | Mossynoeci gens | Leucosyri gens | Arimaspi gens | Futtui gens | Dahae gens | Scythae Anthropophagi gens | Derbiccae gens | Pasicae gens | Seres gens | Theriodes gens | Anartacae gens | Chorasmi gens | Massagetae gens | Bactriani gens | Paropanisidae gens | †Traumeda gens | Sigotani gens (Cosmographia 38, ed. Monda, 56–57).

²⁴ The date oscillates between 19 BCE and 4/5 CE.

Up until the entry *Leucosyri gens*²⁵, the list proceeds clockwise around the Black Sea, from the northwestern coast to its southern shore²⁶. It opens with the ever-present Scythians and two entries – *Borysthenes* and *Nomades* – considered by the Greco-Roman historiographic and geographic tradition as referring to two Scythian sub-units. This set of ethnonyms strikes for its conventional character, since it follows the description of the area first provided by Herodotus. With the following entry – *Sauromatae* – and the omission of the Basilides and the Melanchlaeni, the *Cosmographia* diverges from this model and cuts short the series of names recorded by Herodotus, Mela, and Pliny²⁷. The ethnonym *Sauromatae* divides the people living north of the Black Sea from the ones inhabiting its eastern coast. This position suggests that on the map this ethnonym was located around the mouth of the Tanais (the Don River).

This specific entry reveals the varied nature and chronology of the content illustrated on the *sphaera* used by Julius Honorius. While the Latin ethnonym *Sarmatae* among the *gentes* of the Western Ocean shows the presence of a group with such name among the peoples dwelling north of the Danube – the ethnonym is inserted between the Quadi and the Bastarnae – this second item signals the representation on the map of a Greek and older understanding of the ethnic landscape. The relation between the ethnonyms *Σαυρομάται*/*Sauromatae* and *Sarmatae* is not entirely clear²⁸. If it is true that Pliny puts it as a simple linguistic matter – these are the Greek and Latin versions of the same name (Plin. NH 4.12.80) – the terms can refer to different *gentes* and the same Pliny treats them as distinct denominations applied to separate groups²⁹. Here the co-occurrence of these names evidences the presence of Greek inscriptions on the original globe and the stratification of this depiction. Furthermore, it exposes its dissimilarity with the Peutinger Table. Contrary to this extant ancient map, the *Cosmographia* does not include any of the groups considered by the sources as Sarmatian sub-units, neither in Eastern Europe, such as the Roxolani or the Iazyges, nor in the Northern Caucasus Region³⁰. In the text, there is only one entry, the name *Sarmatae*, alluding to the Sarmatian groups that became a threat to the Roman provinces of Pannonia and Moesia from the 3rd century CE onwards. Contrasted with the entries *Carpi*,

²⁵ On ancient sources localizing this group in the north-east of Asia Minor, Dan 2010.

²⁶ For an overview of the latest researches on this region, Tsetschladze, Avram, and Hargrave 2021.

²⁷ Hdt., 4.20. As in the case of the Anthropofagi, according to Herodotus the Melanchlaeni were not a Scythian group. Also Mela and Pliny describe Nomades and Basilides as neighbors, Mela 2.1.4; Plin. NH 4.12.84. However, both Latin authors place the Melanchlaeni further east, in the Colchis, Mela 1.110; Plin. NH 6.15.

²⁸ For a longer discussion and bibliography, Dan 2017a. P. 114–115.

²⁹ E.g. describing the peoples living near the Caspian Sea, in the hinterland of the city Pityus, Pliny defines the Epageritiae as a Sarmatarum populus that neighbors the Sauromatae, Plin. NH 6.5.17.

³⁰ On the migration of the Sarmatians, Dan 2017a; Grumeza 2021.

Goti, and *Gippedi*, which are included in the list of western *gentes* and are either ‘new’ or reappearing ethnonyms, the lack of details in this section shows the western focus of the *Cosmographia* and the absence of terminological update for describing the nomads living in the Eurasian steppe³¹.

The hypothesis that the *Cosmographia* reflected a mostly unchanged image of the Black Sea Region is further supported by the entries *barbari albi* and *ignobiles gens*. These are considered as two separate items by Salvatore Monda, the last scholar publishing an edition of the *Cosmographia*, and they are written as such in the oldest manuscripts containing the *Cosmographia* (A^{II} and V)³². On the other hand, Alexander Riese, the German scholar who edited the famous collection *Geographi latini minores*, interpreted these words as referring to a single map legend, which the editor of the booklet conveyed as *barbari alii ignobiles gens*, in place of the grammatically correct *barbarae aliae ignobiles gentes* (‘other unknown barbarian peoples’) (Riese 1878. P. 45). In this case, one has to bear in mind that no manuscript has the wording *alii* and that color names can be used in ethnographic designations to distinguish sub-units of the same group. This is the case for the well-known White Huns (*λευκοὶ Οὐννοὶ*)³³, or the White Syrians (*λευκόσυροι*), a name attested also by the *Cosmographia* (*Leucosyri gens*) a few items later.

However, this second hypothesis – i.e. interpreting the caption as referring to ‘other unknown barbarian groups’ – would help to recognize the origin of this entry in some other explanatory notes located on the globe that referred to a certain ‘land of the barbarians.’ In order to identify this region one can take into consideration the Albi Map, which offers a comparable example³⁴. By and large dependent on the image of the world described by Orosius in the *Historiae adversus paganos*³⁵, this 8th-century world map contains the legend *Barbari* between the illustrations of the Caspian and the Black Sea³⁶. In a map otherwise devoid of ethnonyms, this inscription has the symbolic function of marking the area as quintessentially barbarian (Coumert 2013). It is the same Orosius, the main source of the Albi Map, to define this area as *Barbaricum* while describing the north-eastern end of Europe (Oros. *Historiae adversus paganos* 1.2.54).

³¹ For a take on the narratives regarding the Nomads north of the Black Sea, Podossinov 2019.

³² Same situation in O, while in other manuscripts this segment is divided into three different entries – *barbari*, *albi*, *hicnobilis* (S); *barbari gens*, *Alchi gens*, *Ignobiles gens* (C). In P this section is missing.

³³ Described at length in Procop. BP 1.3.

³⁴ As suggested by Arnaud 2014. P. 48; one can also take into consideration the Tournai Map of Asia, which contains the inscription [B]arbaries. In that case, the legend is located north of the Danube and near the source of the Alanus fluvius (usually identified with the Prut).

³⁵ In the manuscript, after the map one finds an index of seas and winds, and Orosius’ geographical introduction (f. 58v–61v).

³⁶ Recently on this map, with a detailed bibliography and the context, Dan 2017b.

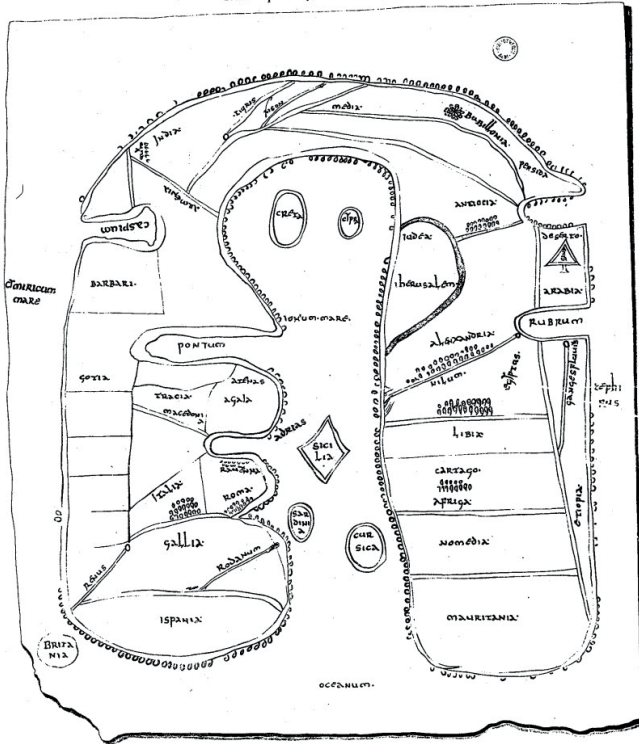


Fig. 1. Albi Map, sketch from Miller 1895. P. 58.

Further evidence is provided by Isidore of Seville, who, in the 7th century, repeats this account, offering next to the geographical location also a clear explanation of the name:

The first region of Europe is lower Scythia, which begins in the Maeotian swamps (i.e. the Sea of Azov), stretching between the Danube and the northern Ocean up to Germania. And this land is called Barbarica in general usage on account of the barbaric people by whom it is inhabited³⁷.

To these sources, one can add an episode told by Curtius Rufus that seems to echo this geographical tradition. At the beginning of Book 3 of his *Historiae Alexandri Magi*, Curtius Rufus describes Darius III in the act of reviewing his multi-ethnic army in 333 BCE near Babylon. Fashioned after Herodotus'

³⁷ "Prima Europae regio Scythia inferior, quae a Maeotidis paludibus incipiens inter Danubium et Oceanum septentrionalem usque ad Germaniam porrigitur; quae terra generaliter propter barbaras gentes, quibus inhabitatur, Barbarica dicitur." Isid. Etym. 14.4.3. Translation in Barney, Lewis 2006. P. 289.

description of the military review made by Xerxes at Doriscus in 480 (Blänsdorf 1971), the account provides details on the forces of infantry and cavalry units. The ethnic origin of the troops is the main organizing principle of this passage, which is a sort of catalogue of the Achaemenid army. Towards the end, after listing the troops coming from the Caspian Sea, the author mentions two thousand foot soldiers and four thousand knights recruited among *ignobiles aliae gentes* (Curt. *Historiae Alexandri Magni* 3.2.8). Included at the end of a list of discrete items, the expression serves to blur the limits of the catalogue conveying the idea of an unlimited number of military units. However, structured as a geographical excursus, the text could also mirror the Greek ethnographical tradition of describing peripheral areas between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea as crawling with nameless and unknown barbarians.

Conclusions

By focusing on two late antique lists of ethnonyms and, more specifically, their sections devoted to the *gentes* inhabiting the Black Sea Region, this contribution aimed at highlighting elements of continuity and adaptability in Late Roman ethnographic and geographic discourse. The first catalogue of ethnonym completed a list of provinces and was drafted in 314, while the second one was included in a 5th-century school handbook. These registers reveal the importance of ethnonyms within the organization of knowledge and the learning techniques of the time, as well as the political undertone of ethnic names and their lists.

With its focus on two cases of ‘disappearing and reappearing’ ethnonyms, the analysis of the *Laterculus Veronensis* has emphasized the possible adjustments of the ethnic vocabulary in Late Antiquity. Gathering both ancient and coeval names, this source reflects an intermediate phase in the development of the Late Antique ethnic nomenclature. If names such as *Calidoni*, *Bructeri*, and *Celtiberi* display the lexical conservatism of early 4th-century Roman literati, the inclusion of relatively recent ethnonyms, such as *Scoti*, *Alamanni*, and *Bavares* hints at the limited updates that the shared repertoire of ethnic names was experiencing. With the reintroduction of long forgotten names and the addition of a few recent denominations, the *Laterculus Veronensis* indicates a certain Roman receptiveness to revise ancient ethnographic schemes and taxonomies. In particular, the case of the Sciri highlights both the importance of this source for the study of lesser-known groups and the often ambiguous relationship between the use of a certain ethnonym and the history of its real-life referent. The vanishing of this ethnonym from the historical record, as well as its reappearance in the same ethnic landscape, encourages us to recognize the complexity and sophistication of Greco-Roman strategies of identification and distinction (for these concepts Pohl, Reimitz 1998; Pohl, Heydemann

2013). It urges us to avoid reducing ethnonyms to a mere matter of authors' style, but also considering them as a conclusive evidence of the existence and survival of the corresponding ethnic groups.

The second selected source has further elucidated the various meanings and functions that ethnonyms could assume in Late Antiquity. Read and studied in class, the *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius exemplifies the importance of listing and memorizing ethnonyms as part of the late antique school curriculum. In this handbook, ethnonyms were included as terms to be studied and remembered per se, for their intrinsic value, but also as tools for categorizing the world. The section of the *Cosmographia* centered on the *gentes* inhabiting the Black Sea Region reveals the glaring contrast between the marked traditionalism of this source and the drastic changes that were unfolding on the ground. The difference between the image of this region, as depicted by the *Cosmographia*, and the actual migrations of peoples is so stark that one may wonder if late antique education served more to isolate pupils from the surrounding world, rather than providing them with the instruments for understanding it³⁸. By conserving the same literary canons and transmitting vocabulary and content dating to classical Rome, the educational system fostered a sentiment of nostalgia for a better and idealized version of *vetustas*. The repetition of names made renowned first by Herodotus and the inclusion of general statements on the barbarian nature of these distant lands concur to create a distinctively archaic and exotic image of the area north and east of the Black Sea. This region continued to represent an essentially barbarian land and the historical homeland of waves of unknown barbarians.

In conclusion, the *Laterculus Veronensis* and the *Cosmographia* of Julius Honorius attest to the importance of listing ethnonyms in Late Antiquity. Although lists and registers are certainly not an invention of Late Roman culture, the cultural trends and epistemic horizons of the time were particularly suitable for the drafting of this kind of texts. These sources mirror processes of dislocation and new contextualization of ancient knowledge within late and post-Roman cultural environments³⁹. While in the *Laterculus Veronensis* the catalogues of ethnonyms substantiate the Roman claim of universal dominion – the subjugated barbarians are the counterpart to Roman provincials and make the imperial authority truly *sine fine* – in the *Cosmographia* the names of the *gentes* complete the image of a world shaped by Roman knowledge and power. In this tension between a largely conservative ethnographic discourse and lexicon, on the one hand, and an ever-changing ethnic landscape, on the other, the study of the peripheries of the Late Roman world, such as the Black

³⁸ On this interpretation of late antique education, Stenger 2022. P. 5–7. One specific field that did experience some innovations is legal education, Szabat 2015.

³⁹ Overview of these several processes, Dusil, Schwendler, Schwitter 2017.

Sea Region, represents the best litmus test. In the descriptions of these borderlands, the attempts of conserving, adapting, and re-negotiating centuries-old ethnic taxonomies and cultural boundaries appear more clearly⁴⁰. It is especially in regards to these areas that late Roman elites employed ethnonyms as basic components of their analytical models to represent, interpret, and influence a human world that migrations, political unrest, and cultural changes, were profoundly transforming.

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⁴⁰ On this 'transitional' aspect of ethnonyms, Lampinen 2019.

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МИГРАЦИИ ЭТНОНИМОВ, МИГРАЦИИ НАРОДОВ: ПОСТОЯНСТВО И ИЗМЕНЕНИЯ В ЭТНИЧЕСКОМ ПЕЙЗАЖЕ ПРИЧЕРНОМОРЬЯ СОГЛАСНО ПОЗДНЕАНТИЧНЫМ ПЕРЕЧНЯМ ЭТНОНИМОВ

Цель этой работы – показать, как важно изучение этнонимов и, в частности, списков этнонимов, для понимания позднеантичных дискурсов об этнической принадлежности. Основные источники – сочинения *Laterculus Veronensis* (314) и «Космография» Юлиа Гонория (V в.). Обе работы содержат ряд каталогов

топонимов и этнонимов, предоставляющих бесценный материал для анализа этнического словаря того времени. Задачи текстов были разными, но они оба помогают показать роль этнонимов как в политической коммуникации, так и в системе образования в период Поздней Античности. В данном контексте северо-восточное Причерноморье, будучи культурной и географической контактной зоной, представляет собой идеальный объект для изучения. Его кажущееся неизменным описание в нескольких древнеримских сочинениях являет образец динамики познания этого региона, живучесть вековых этнографических традиций и решаемые авторами проблемы. В нашем исследовании мы сосредоточимся на нескольких этнонимах, таких как вандалы и скиры, история переноса которых свидетельствует о континуитете и изменениях этнического дискурса применительно к населению этого географического региона. В период Поздней Античности греко-римский мир претерпел множество коренных преобразований, которые всё больше изменяли знакомую картину этнического ландшафта. Наши источники – это два разных примера попытки примирить развитие событий на местах с устаревающей, но не теряющей силы этнографической традицией. Наконец, эти списки показывают значение этнонимов для упорядочивания знаний и методов обучения того времени, наряду с политическим подтекстом этнонимов и их списков.

Ключевые слова: Поздняя античность, этнонимы, Черное море, скиры, *Laterculus Veronensis*, «Космография» Юлия Гонория, дискурсы об этнической принадлежности

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