

FOREWORD

We are glad to present the international conference proceedings held in Münster at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (26 to 28 June 2019), financially supported by the generous contributions of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and of the Institut Universitaire de France. A special thanks to Professor Edward Dąbrowa for accepting to host the papers in *Electrum*.

Under the title “Ancient Armenia in Context”, we brought together a group of scholars of different disciplines from Armenia, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, the Russian Federation, Turkey, and the USA, in order to establish a dialogue between specialists of Armenia and experts of the neighboring regions, roughly covering the timespan of the ancient kingdom of Armenia, from the rise of the Artaxiad dynasty, in the early second century BCE, to the fall of the Arsacid dynasty in 428 CE. Our declared intention was to consider Armenia within a broader geopolitical context to revise the usual, and mostly incorrect view, of an alleged buffer state between the Roman West and the Iranian East, a peripheral entity at the mercy of two great empires. We chose instead to consider the manifold interrelationships and dynamics of Armenia, in a multi-centered perspective, including the Northern Caucasus and the adjacent steppe areas. For three days, we engaged in an intensive exchange.

In his introductory paper, Giusto Traina outlines the problems in the perception of ancient Armenia, especially focusing on the cliché of an “ambiguous” country: a statement mostly depending on Tacitus. In the next paper, Klaus Geus deals with Ptolemy’s *Geography*, a significant source for the reconstruction of Armenia’s ancient topography that cannot be considered without due recalibration of the geographical data. Only a correct knowledge of Ptolemy’s working methods and mistakes allows us to locate Ptolemy’s place names correctly.

The second part of the conference deals with the relations of Armenia with Iran. Edward Dąbrowa discusses the relations with the Parthian empire in detail until the creation of the dynasty of the Arsacids of Armenia and the enthroning of Tiridates I in 63 CE, the so-called treaty of Rhandaia. Under Tigran the Great, Armenia partially ruled as far as the Mediterranean, but at the same time, came under heavy pressure in the conflict between Rome and the Parthians. Touraj Daryaei’s paper shows the parallel development of the Armenian and Iranian identities in the 3rd century CE, in the context of a mutual interrelation and inner-religious conflicts of Zoroastrianism. Carlo G. Cereti shows the evidence of the relations between the Sassanians and Armenia in the inscription of king Narseh in Paikuli, in the Iraqi Kurdistan.

After Iran, Rome. In the third section of the conference, Pierangelo Buongiorno focuses on the Roman Senate’s role in the Roman relations with Armenia. Despite the military and diplomatic problems, the Senate had a strong interest in providing stability on the Empire’s eastern border. Anahide Kéfélian discusses the image of Armenia in Roman coinage. The variety of representation types and variants indicated a pronounced interest in events in Armenia. Michael Alexander Speidel highlights Roman imperialism in Armenia, especially in

the short-lived conquest during Trajan's Eastern campaign. Although the Roman occupation force quickly built up an efficient infrastructure, they did not succeed to hold their power permanently, as shows the remarkable case of the monumental Latin inscription found near Artaxata, made by the legion IV Scythica in honor of emperor Trajan.

The papers of the fourth part deal with the interregional interactions of Armenia with the neighboring states. Michał Marciak discusses the complex topography of the small states on the upper Tigris valley, which must be considered as political variables in the overall picture. Hamlet Petrosyan studies the phenomenon of regional differentiation for the early Christian period in Arc'ax, for an urban site possibly founded by Tigran the Great. The archaeological evidence from this site shows the development of the sacred architecture, point at an influence from Jerusalem. Considering the period of the Sassanian influence in the Caucasus in the 3rd century CE, Timo Stickler shows the Georgian and Armenian literary sources' challenge, highlighting their value, often neglected. Murtażali S. Gadjiev considers the interactions between Armenia and the *Mazk'utk'* (Massagetes), who lived in the Eurasian steppes and intervened in internal Armenian throne disputes at the beginning of the 4th century CE.

The same close relationship between the inhabitants of the nomadic steppe and the Southern Caucasus's settled societies is also underlined by Lara Fabian, who shows how such relations were by no means as antagonistic as is often assumed. The use of collective names such as Scythians, Sarmatians, or 'Massagetes', for small-scale social structures of peoples of the steppes, is anachronistic.

The last section of the volume deals with Artaxata, the first Armenian royal residence city. Achim Lichtenberger, Torben Schreiber, and Mkrtich H. Zardaryan report about the Armenian-German archaeological project in Artaxata. They show the richness of the city's material culture and the far-reaching connections to both the Mediterranean and Iranian world. The example of Artaxata in particular, provides an impressive demonstration of the independence of ancient Armenia and, at the same time, the diverse cultural interactions with near and far regions. They then continue with the results of new archaeological work undertaken there between 2018 and 2020. The final contribution by Torben Schreiber discusses the impressive collection of archive seal impressions found in Artaxata, dating from the Achaemenid to the Sassanian period. The bullae of Artaxata attest the complex relations of the Armenian kingdom and its connections to the Mediterranean region, including Egypt, the Black Sea region, and Iran, and give evidence of a global network.

As these proceedings show, ancient Armenia cannot be seen anymore as an isolated regional reality or a mere passive actor of the balance of empires. For the archaeology and history of Armenia, this is both a great challenge and an almost inexhaustible research potential. In fact, Armenia was not only between the East and West, but also *in* the East and the West. This is the main reason of the conference "Ancient Armenia in context".

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