

Mobility, ethnicity and identity: the evidence of the funerary inscriptions from Pantikapaion

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Керчь ... осколок Греции, квартал Пирея,
перенесенный в иссохшие степи Крыма, на его
лысье предгорья.

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Geographical mobility is a key factor in the development of identities. The meeting between members of different cultures, ethnic groups or language areas may bring them closer together through processes of assimilation and acculturation, but in other cases it can strengthen the individuals' sense of otherness and identity.

Analysing patterns of mobility and travel may provide important information on trade routes, economic relations and the relocation of army units, to give just a few examples. There is a large number of such studies of mobility to or from a specific region of the ancient Graeco-Roman world: in a Bosporan context, one that immediately comes to mind is Grakov 1939. The most recent and one of the most ambitious studies in this genre is Lothar Wierschowski's large-scale survey of civilian geographical mobility in the Gallic provinces of the Roman Empire, containing c. 680 documented cases of geographical mobility, gleaned from a body of more than 13,000 inscriptions. (Wierschowski 1995; 2001).

A great deal of new material for the Pontic region, especially epigraphical, has been published since Grakov's time. The new edition of IOSPE under preparation by the team of professor Askold Ivantchik at Bordeaux will be electronically searchable and will make it far easier to undertake systematic analyses of the inscriptional material from the northern Black Sea shores, including the Bosporan kingdom. The paper presented here is therefore *not* intended as a definitive study of its subject but rather as a sort of pilot project, to explore and propose lines of research for a more extensive project to be undertaken when the new edition of IOSPE becomes available.

The ancient Graeco-Roman world of which Pantikapaion and the Bosporan kingdom formed a part was characterized by a comparatively high level of geographical awareness, a highly developed system of transport and communication, and a corresponding level of geographical mobility for its inhabitants. Though absolute data are lacking, the relative mobility of various social groups can be estimated, and three points have been generally accepted, namely that:

- a. men had a greater mobility than women;
- b. the elite had a greater mobility than lower social classes;
- c. military personnel had a greater mobility than civilians.

The findings of Lothar Wierschowski, quoted above, confirm hypothesis (a) though it turns out that women make up a larger proportion of civilian travellers – 18% -- than one might have expected, given the place of women within ancient society. They likewise confirm hypothesis (b), though again the proportion of middle- and lower-class travellers is significant. Since Wierschowski's material is limited to civilians, it does not impact directly on (c), but this assumption is corroborated by other studies (e.g., Bekker-Nielsen 1985). These also show that within the army, officers – the elite – have a greater mobility than civilians.

While directly relevant to the study of the western provinces, Wierschowski's findings, thanks to the large material on which they are based and the very detailed data breakdown that has been possible, may also provide a useful background for the re-examination of smaller bodies of data from other areas. Many of these have of course been studied already, but comparing them against Wierschowski's data, it is possible to add some new observations on what these inscriptions have to tell us – and especially what they do *not* tell us.

Among the inscriptions in CIRB, pride of place is taken by the large body of funerary epitaphs from Pantikapaion, numbering more than 600 and making up about half the total number of inscriptions in *CIRB*. Eleven other sites in the region have also yielded funerary inscriptions in limited numbers.

Nearly all Bosporan funerary inscriptions are Greek, and in accordance with Greek tradition, most are brief compared to those of the Latin west. The Bosporan epitaphs are generally limited to the name and filiation of the deceased, sometimes supplemented with information on his/her age or place

of origin. The proportion of Bosporan epitaphs providing useful geographical information for our purposes is comparable to the c. 5% of the inscriptions in Wierschowski's material; but whereas one in two of the Gallic inscriptions additionally provides information on the occupation or social status of the deceased, this is exceedingly rare in our material. In toto, we have c. 35 cases where the deceased is stated or known to originate from outside the region. These inscriptions of course reveal only one half of the picture: the other half is the Panticapaeans who travelled abroad and died there, recorded in Grakov's material.

Comparing the geographical distribution of ethnic appellations in the total body of *CIRB* inscriptions with those of the funerary inscriptions provides an insight into funerary practice and preferences. If we take all inscriptions as a whole, the representation of a locality within the epigraphic material varies inversely with the distance. This is simple enough: the closer a city is to Pantikapaion, the larger the number of inscriptions in Pantikapaion naming that city. But this only applies when we consider the total body of inscriptions, including *proxenia* decrees and the like. While Gorgippeia and Theodosia figure prominently in the total record (being near Pantikapaion) no Gorgippeians and only one Theodosian (Filoxrenos son of Stratonax, *CIRB* 231) are named in the epitaphs. The explanation is not difficult to find: when a man or woman died, the heirs would try to have him/her buried in their native city. Transferring the remains or more likely the ashes from Pantikapaion to Gorgippeia or Theodosia was not difficult, so Gorgippeians and Theodosians would normally be buried in their native soil. Chersonesos was farther away, so we have three recorded cases of persons from Chersonesos being buried at Pantikapaion (*CIRB* 173, 194, 195; cf. also one person *chersonesites genos*, *CIRB* 243) in the fourth century BC.

Mixed marriages are a special situation. Timotheus set up a memorial to himself, his homonymous son and his wife Kallistrateia (*CIRB* 709; now lost). He identifies himself as *sindax*, i.e. from Taman, but gives no ethnic identifier for his wife or son. Presumably Pantikapaion was the native city of Kallistrateia and the adoptive city of her husband, that is why he was commemorated here rather than among the *sindoi*. Diphilos from Mytilene and his wife Sopyra are another possible, though debated example of a mixed marriage, (*CIRB* 274; Kerch museum) though in this case the distance would in any case deter attempts to repatriate the remains. There may be other cases of mixed marriages in our material, invisible to us if the spouses do not share a gravestone.

The absence of a geographical identification in an epitaph does not permit us to conclude *e silentio* that the person commemorated was a native Panticapean. There may be various reasons for omitting the deceased's place of origin, one of them economy. The omissions may well be selective: a prestigious or well-known place of origin more likely to be commemorated than an obscure mountain town. Further, persons dying far way from home sometimes had no local relatives or friends to arrange for a burial and an epitaph. And the elite will be under-represented, since even after death, the rich and powerful were more mobile than average citizens and might be transferred over long distances for interment in the family tomb: Agrippina the Elder transporting the ashes of Germanicus from Antioch to their final resting place in the mausoleum of Augustus at Rome is a well known but extreme example (Tacitus, *Annales* 2.75; 3.1-4).

Despite these limitations, we can observe some characteristic traits in our material. The first is that, as we might expect, the number of persons hailing from outside the Bosporan region and buried in Pantikapaion is inversely proportional to the place of their origin: the Black Sea cities of Chersonesos (CIRB 173, 194, 195, 243), Sinope (CIRB 208?; 703a, 733), Tios (CIRB 705) and Amisos (CIRB 249, 250) head the list, followed by Aegean and Mediterranean cities represented by one individual each (e.g. Mytilene, CIRB 274; Chios, CIRB 155). An apparent – but not actual – exception to this rule is Cyprus with three epitaphs (CIRB 236, 691, 726), to be discussed below.

A striking feature is the absence of individuals originating from the western Mediterranean lands. Among the persons recorded by Wierschowski as settling in the Gallic provinces, 53 persons or c. 8% originated from the Greek east; 7 of these persons came from the Black Sea region. In our material, we have no evidence for any settlers or travellers, neither from the Greek colonies of the west nor from the Latin-speaking western provinces.

The westernmost origin recorded is that of Melas, son of Simo(s), from Syracuse, who was buried at Pantikapaion, probably in the third century BC (CIRB 203). Significantly, this record is of pre-Roman date and relates to a Greek city. Another Panticapean inscription of the same period and from the same site records the parents and brother of another – or possibly the same – Simo (CIRB 193). If the two are in fact the same person (the name Simo/Simos is rare in Pantikapaion, otherwise attested only by the fragmentary CIRB 571) then CIRB 193 and 203 offers some tantalizing glimpses of family connections, mobility and identity.

Empires of the modern period have tried to foster integration by mixing ethnic groups from different regions and systematically posting soldiers to stations far from their place or origin. This policy was not generally followed by the Roman Army; in so far as army service provided an instrument of romanization, this took place *after* the termination of service, by settling legionary veterans in colonies scattered throughout recently conquered areas. This policy produced general disaffection among the soldiers (cf. Tacitus, *Annales* 1.17) and by the late first century AD, the allocation of provincial land to veterans had been abandoned in favour of a cash gratuity.

Two epitaphs from Pantikapaion (*CIRB* 691, in Kerch museum; 726, now lost) record soldiers of the Cypriot cohort. This might be seen as a confirmation of the hypothesis that military personnel had a greater range of mobility than civilians, but in actual fact it is unlikely that ethnic Cypriots are involved. By the late second or early third century, the likely date of these two epitaphs, ethnic appellations of auxiliary units no longer reflected their composition. While the original Cypriot cohort was no doubt raised in Cyprus – probably in the 60's AD (Bekker-Nielsen 2002) – it will later have been kept up to strength by local recruitment in the area where it was garrisoned, i.e. on the lower Danube, where the Cypriot cohort saw service during the Dacian wars. The names of those commemorated – Lucius Volusius and Gaius Memmius – and the fact that *CIRB* 691 is bilingual suggest that certainly one, probably both of these veterans hailed from a Latin-speaking province, probably from Moesia.

In the second century AD, Dizas, commander of the first cohort of Thracians, is commemorated along with his wife, Helene on a relief stele found 1874 and now in the Kerch museum (*CIRB* 666). Thrace had at one time been an important recruiting ground for Roman auxiliaries and Thracian cohorts are attested across the Empire. Whether “our” Thracian cohort was kept up to strength by recruitment from Thrace is uncertain, though the name Dizas – occurring on civilian gravestones in the Balkan peninsula (e.g. *ILBR* 163, 165) – supports a Thracian origin for its commander.

Exceptions, as the saying goes, prove the rule. The sojourn of Lucius Volusius and Gaius Memmius in Pantikapaion was not their own choice but linked to their army service. Apart from these two, the other foreigners recorded by the funerary inscriptions of Pantikapaion originate from a Greek settlement. This suggests that the Panticapaeans themselves primarily maintained trading relations

within the Greek-speaking *koine* of the Eastern Mediterranean rather than with the Latin-speaking west – and that Greek-speaking travellers and traders found the Cimmerian Bosphorus a congenial environment in which to settle: a little piece of Greece on the steppes of the Crimea.

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