

Old Names, New Peoples: Listing Ethnonyms in Late Antiquity

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Old Names, New Peoples: Listing Ethnonyms in Late Antiquity

By

Salvatore Liccardo



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To my Mother and in memory of my Father



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Preface

The first time I seriously thought about ethnonyms as a subject of research was almost ten years ago when, full of hope and enthusiasm, I moved from Venice to Vienna and decided to collaborate on the drafting of a project proposal. This proposal was accepted and I started writing my doctoral thesis within the “Ethnonyms by comparison” project supported by the DOC-team funding program of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Fascinated by ethnicity and ethnic identity since my first years of university, I found it strange that there was no scientific monograph dedicated to the theme of ethnonyms in Late Antiquity. Once I started digging, I realized why. Ethnonyms are an elusive theme. Because I could not write a book on linguistics or rhetoric, no matter how ubiquitous they are in the sources, ethnonyms to me seemed just names. And after all, “what’s in a name?” Ethnonyms do not offer the grand narratives of the past found in historiographical sources, nor do they possess the same allure as the biographies of historical figures. And yet, since there is no people without a name, there is no historian who does not study them in one way or another.

As a map enthusiast since childhood, ethnonyms finally stopped being an enigma once I realized their central importance in conceptualizations of space and place. In both the mental and real maps of Late Antique authors and readers, ethnonyms act as landmarks, they make the space they occupy significant. Evoking past tales and ethnographic traditions, ethnonyms make the world, especially the less well known parts of it, accessible, as well as less frightening, to anyone who is familiar with them. However, I realized the proportions of the research subject before me, the numerous cultural and political dimensions, beyond the obvious ethnic ones, associated with ethnonyms, only when I stopped analyzing them individually and concentrated on catalogues of ethnonyms. Gathered in lists and included in panegyrics, provincial registers, and schoolbooks, I found, ethnonyms relate to contemporary political messages and practices, as well as learning techniques.

This book addresses these functions and meanings of ethnonyms in Late Antiquity. It does not focus on their role within Biblical exegesis and Christian thought about the origins of ethnic groups – a theme discussed at length by the scholarship – nor does it tackle the political and cultural significance of ethnonyms in the Byzantine Empire. Since most of the selected sources were highly influenced by Greek knowledge, or were even originally written in Greek, the book is not strictly limited to the Latin tradition, but it concentrates on evidence that played a role in the discourses of identity, the intellectual life, and the political climate of late and post-Roman societies in western Europe.

I would like to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to my supervisor, project leader, and mentor Prof. Dr. Walter Pohl, whose trust and support never failed over all these years. He has overseen my research from the very beginning with great interest and provided me with invaluable assistance and guidance, without which it would have been impossible to navigate this complex subject of study. I also would like to thank my second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Danuta Shanzer, with whom I have discussed my research during regular talks and who helped me tremendously both during my Ph.D. and after.

The completion of this research would have not been feasible without the financial support and scholarly network offered by the Institute for Medieval Research (IMAFO) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the project “Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600 CE)”, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). This investigation has benefitted greatly from the numerous discussions I had the privilege to take part in at the Institute for Medieval Studies (IMAFO) and the University of Vienna, especially within the framework of the Vienna Doctoral Academy (VDA). Furthermore, I profited immensely from the opportunity to talk about my research at several conferences and workshops across Europe and North America. In particular, I would like to give thanks to all the participants in the Princeton-Oxford-Vienna-Berlin-Mainz Graduate Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine and Medieval History, with whom I have discussed many of the themes of this book.

The number of colleagues who have helped me along the way is too large to name them all. However, I cannot fail to mention at least some. Very special thanks go to Prof. Dr. Helmut Reimitz, who offered to be the faculty sponsor for a period of study that I spent at Princeton University as Visiting Student Research Collaborator, and who provided me with precious feedback throughout my research. I also would like to express my gratitude towards Univ. Prof. Roland Steinacher, with whom I have the honor to collaborate frequently. Moreover, by attending the seminars organized at the monastery of Zwettl, I had the exceptional opportunity to discuss my research with Univ. Prof. Herwig Wolfram. I also thank Prof. Dr. Veronica della Dora, Prof. Dr. Alexander Podossinov, and Prof. Dr. Michael Rathmann for encouraging my research interests in historical geography. Finally, although I met him only in the final phase of this research, I am indebted to Univ. Prof. Benjamin Garstad, who has most kindly revised the language of the entire manuscript and gave me some incredibly helpful last-minute suggestions.

Deeply felt thanks go to Mariña Bermúdez Beloso, Peter Fraundorfer, Anna Gioffreda, Cinzia Grifoni, Nikolas Hächler, Isaac Lampurlanés, and Patrick Marschner, all my friends first and colleagues second, who accompanied me

on this long journey. I am also grateful to the reviewers for their constructive feedback, as well as to the editors at Brill. Obviously, remaining errors are my sole responsibility.

Last but by no means least, I want to thank my fiancée Tetiana Maksymenko, who has filled with joy the last year of my life. I am eternally grateful to my mother, who made me love history and geography since I was a kid, and to my father, who did not live to see the realization of this project, but taught me most of what I know about life and work. This book is dedicated to them.

Vienna, May 2023

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Abbreviations

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique: Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine</i> , Paris (1888–)
<i>BAtlas</i>	<i>The Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World: Map-by-map Directory</i> , edited by Richard Talbert, Princeton (2000)
<i>CCSL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> , Turnhout (1953–)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , Berlin (1863–)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , Vienna (1866–2012), Berlin (2012–)
<i>IosPE</i> 1 ²	<i>Inscriptiones Antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae</i> 1, 2nd ed., Vasily Latyshev, Petrograd (1916)
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae selectae</i> , edited by Hermann Dessau, Berlin (1892–1916)
<i>MGH AA</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi</i> , Berlin (1877)
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> 1, edited by Arnold Hugh Martin Jones et al., Cambridge (1971); 2 and 3, edited by John Robert Martindale, Cambridge (1980–1992)
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , Stuttgart (1941–)
<i>RE</i>	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart (1893–1980)
<i>RIB</i>	<i>The Roman Inscriptions of Britain</i> , edited by Robin Collingwood, Richard Pearson Wright, et al., Oxford (1965–)
<i>RIC</i>	<i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> , London (1923–)