A Demographer's Considerations on Migrations in Antiquity

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1. Seneca and the Nature of Migration

> I find some writers who declare that mankind has a natural itch for change of abode and alteration of domicile: for the mind of man is wandering and unquiet; it never stands still, but spreads itself abroad and sends forth its thoughts into all regions, known or unknown; being nomadic, impatient of repose, and loving novelty beyond everything else.

So writes Seneca[1], exiled to Corsica by Emperor Claudius, in his epistle to his mother, Helvia. The nature of man is not made "from the same elements as the heavy and earthly body, but from heavenly spirit: now heavenly things are by their nature always in motion, speeding along and flying with the greatest swiftness". The human spirit rejoices in it, moved by a personal need for change, and so it is for humankind.

> What is the meaning of Greek cities in the midst of barbarous districts? or of the Macedonian language existing among the Indians and the Persians? Scythia and all that region which swarms with wild and uncivilized tribes boasts nevertheless Achaean cities along the shores of the Black Sea. Neither the rigours of eternal winter, nor the character of men as savage as their climate, has prevented people migrating thither. There is a mass of Athenians in Asia Minor. Miletus has sent out into various parts of the world citizens enough to populate seventy-five cities. Asia claims the Etruscans as her own: there are Tyrians living in Africa, Carthaginians in Spain; Greeks have pushed in among the Gauls, and Gauls among the Greeks. The Pyrenees have proved no barrier to the Germans.

Two thousand years ago, the world known to Seneca was a melting pot of many ethnicities, cultures, and languages. It was a world of migrants, moved by human nature along often impervious and unknown routes.

> Men drag along with them their children, their wives, and their aged and worn-out parents. Some have been tossed hither and thither by long wanderings, until they have become too wearied to choose an abode, but have settled in whatever place was nearest to them: others have made themselves masters of foreign countries by force of arms: some nations while making for parts unknown have been swallowed up by the sea: some have established themselves in the place in which they were originally stranded by utter destitution.

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If human nature is mobile and predisposed to migration, there are still factors that initiate a definite shift in migration, which is nothing more than the abandonment of the context of life, customs, "domus", and domicile.

> Nor have all men had the same reasons for leaving their country and for seeking for a new one: some have escaped from their cities when destroyed by hostile armies, and having lost their own lands have been thrust upon those of others: some have been cast out by domestic quarrels: some have been driven forth in consequence of an excess of population, in order to relieve the pressure at home: some have been forced to leave by pestilence, or frequent earthquakes, or some unbearable defects of a barren soil: some have been seduced by the fame of a fertile and over-praised clime. […] The movement of the human race is perpetual: in this vast world some changes take place daily. The foundations of new cities are laid, new names of nations arise, while the former ones die out, or become absorbed by more powerful ones.

I offer these beautiful words, written two thousand years ago, as a premise to the reflections in this paper. They can guide us in our efforts to interpret the migratory events of humanity. They could represent the beginning of a modern migration treaty if this type of literature still existed. Here we find all the topics of a contemporary debate. First is the fact that migration is inherent in the human species, and all animal species and stars – and nature – are always in a 'the greatest swiftness'. Even today, as in the days of Seneca, the mixture of peoples and ethnic groups is evident, a consequence of the historical stratification of migration. Today, several hundred million people live in countries where they were not born. In his Roman world, Seneca may not have had the comfort of numbers, but he did have his observations and the testimonies of contemporaries, facts, and historical evidence.

Then there are the ways and characteristics of travel, "their children, their wives, and their aged and worn-out parents". For some, these were unseeded movements; for others, of vacant spaces, or of spaces occupied by other populations to be conquered "with weapons." If migration is inherent to humans, what are the direct causes that set them in motion? They migrate because they are "stripped of their possessions" because they are driven out by conflicts or natural scourges such as plagues and earthquakes. Or because of factors that today would be called Malthusian, "to relieve the pressure […] of an excess of population", or because they are attracted "by the fame of a fertile and over-praised clime". Finally, Seneca remembers that migrations ensure the renewal and turnover of societies because "new names of nations arise, while the former ones die out, or become absorbed by more powerful ones". Contemporary scholars struggle to explain with models and algorithms the primary causes of migrations by weighing and measuring the *pull* and *push* of the costs and benefits resulting from a change of dwelling. Like Seneca, they are driven by an intellectual curiosity for a phenomenon whose intimate substance has not changed much over the millennia.

If Seneca has been widely mentioned, it is not to use a rhetorical artifice, but to remind us that today, and two thousand years ago, the migratory phenomenon developed with mechanisms and modalities different in form but similar in substance. Historical thinking is, therefore, essential to nourish the knowledge of

the present. Such knowledge implies comparing the reasons for the movements. These include their modes and forms, the selective factors affecting migrants, the ability of migrants to take advantage of the migration, and the mutual expediency of migration for the migrants and the communities that receive them. Considering these factors allows us to understand better the phenomenon even when there is a lack of information (almost always lacking for the past) that we consider essential today: the number of migrants, their demographic and social characteristics, their birthplaces, and their destinations.

2. Colonies and founders, αποικοι and οικιστησ

Seneca wrote to Helvia: "That whole coast of Italy which is washed by the Lower Sea is a part of what once was Greater Greece". From the eighth century B.C. forward, the expansion of Greek civilization focused on the coasts and islands of the eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor, the Black Sea, the Italian peninsula, and its extensive islands extending to the Mediterranean coast of the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the migrant settlements were often developed in an organized form, by population growth and the scarcity of land, linked to commercial needs or caused by political disagreement and internal conflict. The process of emigration evolved in forms shaped by extensive prior experience.

The settlement and foundation of the colonies – αποικοι – took place under the guidance of a chosen prominent person – οικιστησ (head settler). The head settler used criteria for selecting migrants and in ways that maximized the success of the new colony, after which it maintained close contact with the motherland. Many settlements were commercial outposts (*emporion*); others were stable communities that, in turn, produced additional settlements. Thucydides described the history of settlements in Sicily[2]:

> Of the Hellenes, the first to arrive were Chalcidians from Euboea with Thucles, their founder. They founded Naxos and built the altar to Apollo Archegetes, which now stands outside the town, and upon which the deputies for the games sacrifice before sailing from Sicily. Syracuse was founded the year afterwards by Archias, one of the Heraclids from Corinth, who began by driving out the Sicels from the island upon which the inner city now stands, though it is no longer surrounded by water: in process of time the outer town also was taken within the walls and became populous.

Thucydides did not tell us whether Naxos was founded by agreement or in contention with the local populations. Still, the founding of Syracuse took place violently, the city prospered, and "became populous". As a result, the indigenous peoples could not rest peacefully:

> Meanwhile Thucles and the Chalcidians set out from Naxos in the fifth year after the foundation of Syracuse, and drove out the Sicels by arms and founded Leontini and afterwards Catana.

As confirmed in the passage below, contact with the motherland was maintained by the settlers following their departure from Megara. They founded Megara

Hyblaea in Sicily and, after one hundred years, followed the head settler Pamillus, who arrived from the Megara motherland and founded Selinus. The foundation of Megara Hyblaea was at the invitation of King Hyblon, who likely sought to enhance his lands.

> About the same time Lamis arrived in Sicily with a colony from Megara, and after founding a place called Trotilus beyond the river Pantacyas, and afterwards leaving it and for a short while joining the Chalcidians at Leontini, was driven out by them and founded Thapsus. After his death his companions were driven out of Thapsus, and founded a place called the Hyblaean Megara; Hyblon, a Sicel king, having given up the place and inviting them thither. […] a hundred years after they had settled there, they sent out Pamillus and founded Selinus; he having come from their mother country Megara to join them in its foundation…

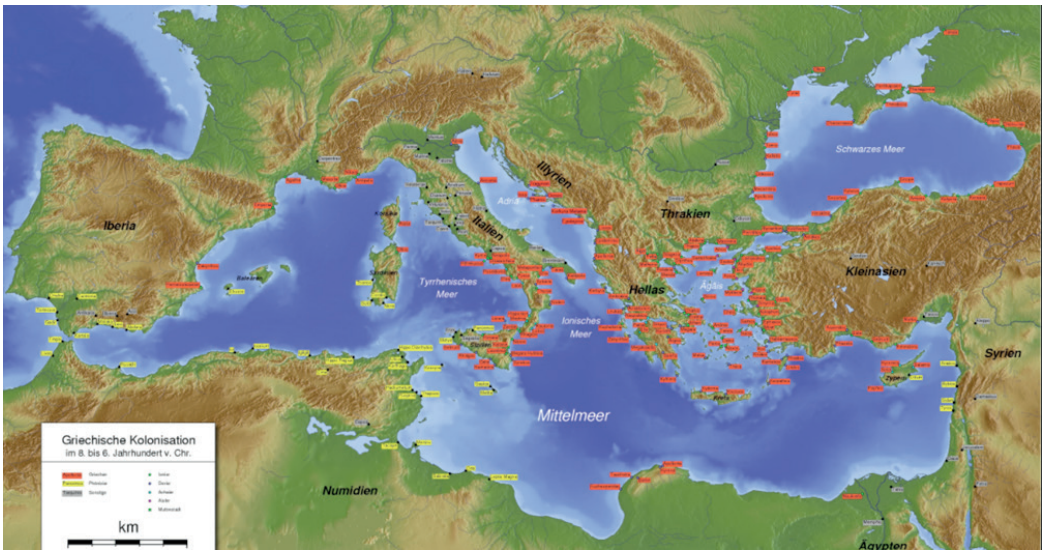
Groups of settlers, with their leaders, also came from the islands of Crete and Rhodes, or Cuma, a Greek settlement near Etruria.

> Gela was founded by Antiphemus from Rhodes and Entimus from Crete, who joined in leading a colony thither, in the forty-fifth year after the foundation of Syracuse […] Zancle [Messina] was originally founded by pirates from Cuma, the Chalcidian town in the country of the Opicans: afterwards, however, large numbers came from Chalcis and the rest of Euboea, and helped to people the place; the founders being Perieres and Crataemenes from Cuma and Chalcis respectively.

The colonies were founded with similar processes extending from the eighth to the sixth century B.C. There was a mother city, a colony, and close political and commercial ties between them. However, the colony was independent of the motherland; the founder was a notable (οικιστής, or head settler) who organized the transfer of settlers, presumably composed of families. We know little about the number of early settlers; however, it was likely that several dozen families could survive independently. We know extraordinarily little about how recruitment took place. If it involved selection, who made the selection? The head settler? How was the distribution of land made? How did many colonies survive and how did many dissolve, and in which way? Nevertheless, in the first century B.C., the Mediterranean appeared, in Cicero's eyes, "as if it had been woven, around the shores populated by barbarians, a fringe of Greekness"[3].

There is no specific element with which to assess the demographic profile of this migration and settlement process. The new settlements consisted of several hundred, increasing in numbers that reached their peak in the sixth century. Their numerical size remained modest, as did the population of Greeks. We do not know how much growth occurred in the major centers. For example, some could exceed 5,000 inhabitants, and others, such as Athens and Syracuse, reached almost 100,000. Was their growth due to natural increase, immigration, and the capture of slaves? The colonial cities extended from the east coast of the Black Sea to the Mediterranean coast of Iberia. Their number, the intensity of traffic and trade, the progress in navigation, and other documentary and literary testimonies suggest that mobility was exceedingly high. Around 700 B.C., in southern Italy and Sicily,

Fig. 1. *The Mediterranean in the 6th century B.C.: Phoenician settlements (yellow), Greek settlements (red), and other marked territories*



Source: *Colonies in antiquity*, Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonies_in_antiquity).

there were 23 or 24 colonies: if we assume that their size was on average a few hundred people, we can think that, in about 50 years, the total population could have exceeded 10,000 (it has been estimated that Megara Hyblaea was founded in 728 B.C. with two to three hundred settlers). These were small numbers but with clear growth potential. During these centuries, the urban centers from which the settlers came were growing, but their dimensions were of the order of few thousand inhabitants, except Athens that, based on inhabited areas and other objective parameters, in 500 B.C. had an estimated population of 20,000. "By 431 BC Athens probably had 40,000 residents, and its harbor town Piraeus another 25,000. Fifth-century Syracuse was roughly the same size as Athens, and a century later had between 50,000 and 100,000 inhabitants" (Morris 2005). These were the two largest Greek cities. For demographic reasons, migratory flows had to count small numbers, but with significant consequences in the medium and long term.

Our limited knowledge about migrations during the classical era offers a valuable model. These were organized migrations, decided by the community of origin that chose the founder and decided on the criteria for identifying and selecting migrants. The mother communities required considerable knowledge of the settlement territory, the nature of the available land, and the makeup and attitude of the indigenous peoples. The mother communities assembled (or supplemented) the resources necessary to transport the migrants by sea: ships, animals, working tools, seeds, and food stocks. Finally, the migrants had to cope with the potential for hostile indigenous peoples. It is also likely that some migrations were driven by environmental constraints, hunger, or conflict. On the whole, however, this phenomenon was a kind of investment from which commercial and political returns were expected.

3. The achievements of the divine Augustus: armies and migrations

A few years before his death, Augustus wrote a celebratory review of his achievements, destined to be placed in the Mausoleum he built for himself and his family (Res Gestae Divini Augusti). Two short paragraphs of the 35 contained in the document (3 and 28) outline a type of mobility and migration that appears different from what the Greek world claimed. Augustus[4] wrote:

> I undertook many civil and foreign wars by land and sea throughout the world, and as victor I spared the lives of all citizens who asked for mercy. When foreign peoples could safely be pardoned I preferred to preserve rather than to exterminate them. The Roman citizens who took the soldier's oath of obedience to me numbered about 500,000. I settled rather more than 300,000 of these in colonies or sent them back to their home towns after their period of service; to all these I assigned lands or gave money as rewards for their military service.

The round numbers cited by Augustus appear at first glance to be exceedingly high. Yet, they are a plausible order of magnitude based on historical accounts and consistent with many other established historical sources. In the final stages of the civil wars, Rome maintained an army of 60 legions, each with 5,000-6,000 legionaries, totaling more than 300,000, not counting auxiliary troops. The legionaries were Roman citizens committed to military service (in Augustus's time, the length of service was 16 years). At the end of their service, they received compensation in the form of money or land. The figures provided by the censuses are open to interpretation. However, many scholars believe the population of Italy at the time of Augustus was five or six million (including one to one and a half million slaves). Approximately one-quarter of Roman citizens were able to take up arms (Scheidel 2007, 6). That a half million Roman citizens joined in military service with Augustus, therefore, appears plausible. Many died, disappeared, or were deserters before the end of the campaign. Just over 300,000 veterans returned home or were "settled" in colonies in various parts of the Roman Empire:

> I founded colonies of soldiers in Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, both Spanish provinces, Achaea, Asia, Syria, Gallia Narbonensis and Pisidia. Italy too has twenty-eight colonies founded by my authority, which were densely populated in my lifetime.

The number of people who went on to form new colonies (among those in Italy, Aosta, Turin, and Trieste) is unknown. Still, it was many tens of thousands of people, who with their families and their slaves numbered several hundred thousand. The estimates are significant only to confirm that the army was one of the driving forces of the migratory processes in the Roman world, particularly in the last phase of the Republic.

Almost a century ago, Rostozsev commented on the periodic land redistributions that took place during the civil wars: "According to accurate calculations, no less than half a million people received land in Italy in the last fifty years of that murky period. After the great changes caused by the 'social war,' these redistributions were perhaps the most influential factor in Romanization and Latinization of Italy" (Rostovzev 1953, 37).

During the second triumvirate (43-33 B.C.), another significant colonization plan was made for veterans. "So that the new military colonization of the triumvirate affected partially the lands that had been left to the local populations […] to make room for veterans who had to be satisfied in every way, since the satisfaction of their needs depended on the success of future war campaigns and the very possibility of new enlistments" (Levi 1968). There were 170,000 veterans to settle, and at the end of the civil wars, it would require more assignments for the victors and perhaps even for the defeated veterans if peace were to be desired. However, "an equally large number of people expected to be expelled from the lands on which they lived and worked. The expulsions and expropriations were legal and lawful […] but the social consequences of the operation that was taking place could be serious and cruel".

Other forms of mobility also existed, such as forced migration for slaves, prisoners of war, or those condemned to work in mines. However, recruiting, deploying, and resettling the military (often far from home) was perhaps the predominant kind of mobility. According to some authors, there were no frequent mass displacements of populations from one part of the Roman world to another based on political or economic convenience. That practice occurred in previous centuries in large autocratic empires such as Egypt or Persia (Woolf 2016).

The Roman migrations were substantially different from the Greek migrations, although the results were similar, despite the enormous differences in external conditions. Over the centuries, Greece and Rome promoted and created a network of well-established and structured settlements extending and strengthening trade and cultural exchanges with areas previously out of direct control. They produced a mix of ethnicities and enriched the urban network of the Mediterranean.

In both cases, the mother city or the state promoted and organized the sustained migrations in the initial stage, at a minimum covering the cost. In Rome, the state organization led the migration movements aiming at specific purposes and addresses. Considering the Greek case, the expansion of the colonies presented competitive characteristics with neighboring or rival cities. In the case of Rome, there was an evident selection of the founders, almost all veterans, men accustomed to conflict and discipline. Even if the first settlers were not a representative population of the Greeks, they represented most social and professional classes. The founding Greek settlers had to live together or compete with the local populations, while the Romans settled in safe lands under the central state's control.

4. *Limes*, not always barriers

Along the Empire's borders (the *limes*), the central power was the engine for other migrations through the army's actions. A contemporary historian effectively summed up the migration issue of the Roman Empire: a people with evident internal inequalities, but "strong in a stable administration and an integrated economy; outside peoples forced to survive with insufficient resources, threatened by hunger and war, and increasingly demanding entry; a militarized border to filter refugees and immigrants; and government authorities who have to decide on a case-by-case basis how to handle these emergencies with options ranging from forced removal

to mass reception to the setting of entry quotas to the provision of humanitarian aid and jobs" (Barbero 2006, V).

The Roman world, in its complexity, offered many interesting ideas about mobility. Over many centuries, the world expanded to embrace the entire Mediterranean basin as far north as Britain, giving rise to various forms of mobility and migration. The state played a significant role in two key aspects. First was the management of the borders, primarily militarized, in the dual function of barrier and filter. The army, positioned to guard the Empire's borders, played an essential role in the Roman migration involving the conflicting relations with the "barbaric" populations at the cross-border. The urbanization phenomena were catalytic in mixing the indigenous peoples, who were not always allied and friendly, in the Roman territories. The second aspect was the upheavals of the external populations, those not allied or federated with Rome. These populations were the object of forced migrations and mass relocations, dictated by the need to defend themselves in the face of invasions, tame the most aggressive peoples, and create buffer territories.

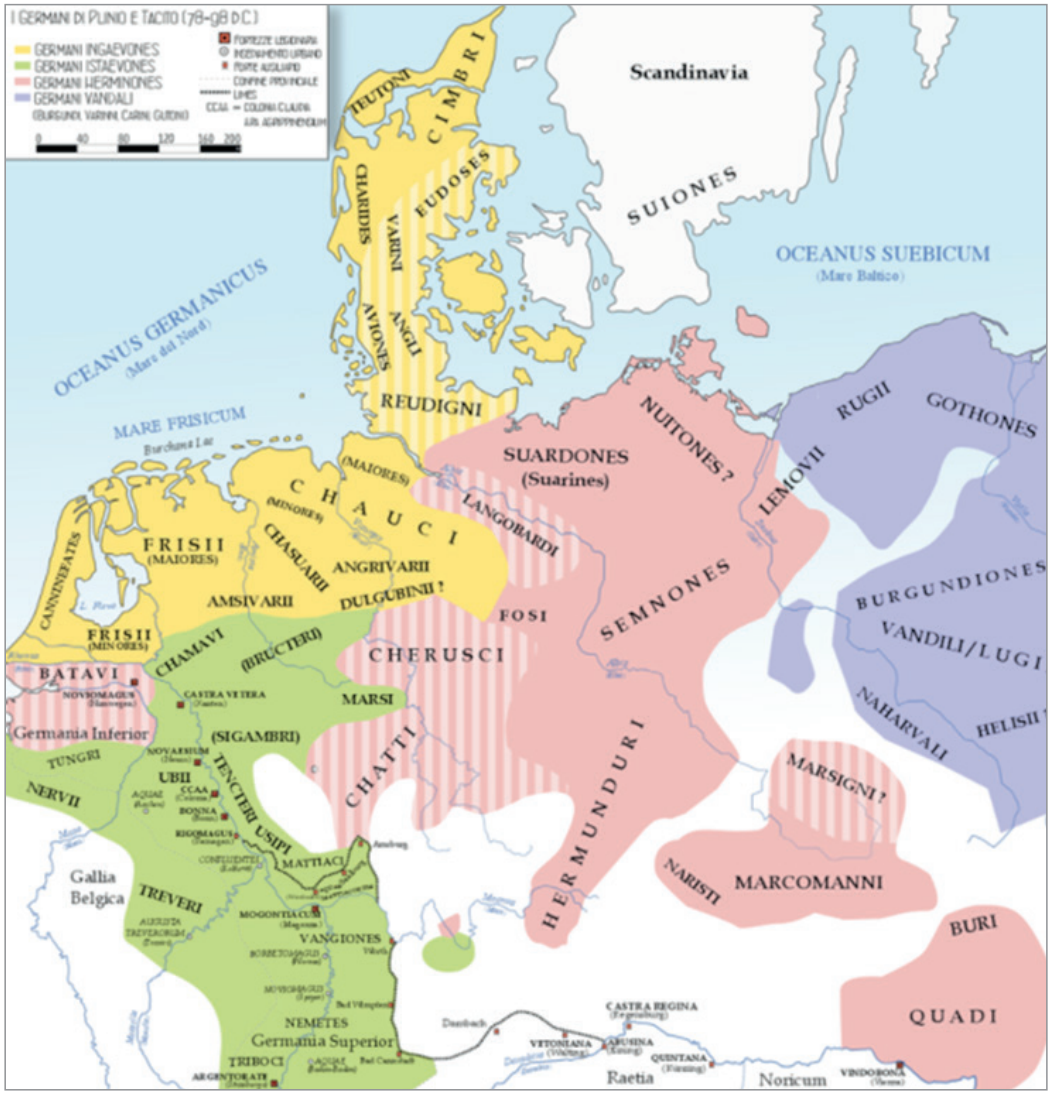
At the same time, the *limes,* established for the primary purpose of blocking unwanted immigration and invasions by people outside Rome's jurisdiction, were a factor influencing mobility and exchange. The controlled border of the Rhine was 1,300 kilometers long, and more than twice as long was the border on the Danube. The *limes* were dotted with fortresses, entrenched fields, positions, and garrisons controlled by the army. In the first century A.D., as many as eight legions, estimated at 40-50 thousand men, defended the 1,300 kilometers of the Rhine *limes,* in addition to auxiliary troops. In Trajan's time, the Danubian *limes,* more than twice the length of the Rhine *limes*, were defended by 12 legions (60-70 thousand men), in addition to the numerous auxiliaries.

Around the fortresses and fortified fields stood clusters of civil settlements *(canabae),* attracting various humanity, including merchants, artisans, tavern-keepers, prostitutes, jugglers, and slaves. These settlements often turned into permanent urban communities and were meeting places for garrison soldiers and indigenous people. However, even the Germanic people, who settled on the opposite banks east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, often had friendly relations with the Roman military and their following. The borders were often infiltrated by groups of barbarians eager for better living conditions.

> If we now follow the course of the Danube, as we before did that of the Rhine, we first meet with the Hermunduri; a people faithful to the Romans, and on that account the only Germans who are admitted to commerce, not on the bank alone, but within our territories, and in the flourishing colony established in the province of Rhaetia. They pass and repass at pleasure, without being attended by a guard; and while we exhibit to other nations our arms and camps alone, to these we lay open our houses and country seats, which they behold without coveting[5].

The complex relations between the two shores likely gave rise to prolific unions between indigenous people and Roman soldiers who were forbidden to marry or take their wives with them. However, given the length of the borders, the many

Fig. 2. *Germany and its internal divisions (Ingaevnoes, Istaevones, and Herminoes) of the ancient historians Pliny (Naturalis Historia) and Tacitus (Germans), which can be dated to 78-98 A.D. (Vespasian-Trajan)*



Source: *Ingaevones*, Wikepedia (https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingaevones).

barbaric populations and ethnicities, and the variety of peaceful or conflictual situations, relations between Romans and indigenous people were highly varied. They cannot be traced back to a single model.

The Hermunduri were friends of the Romans, while for decades in conflict, the Sugambri were defeated by Tiberius, who "brought forty thousand prisoners of war over into Gaul and assigned them homes near the bank of the Rhine" (Suetonius, Tiberius, 9)[6]. In the east during the same years, "Sextus Aelius Cato installs 50,000 Geti, which are probably Daci, south of the Danube, in what will later become the

province of Mesia" (Barbero 2006, 15). Given that the numbers were notoriously unreliable and exaggerated, the populations displaced and transplanted from one place to another were considerable. These were forced migrations dictated by the state, for strategic and political considerations, in the state's interest. The mobility generated by the *limes* management focused on compulsory conscripts and the volunteers who took advantage of enlistment moving voluntarily.

5. The migration of peoples

From the third century onwards, pressure from the Germanic populations on the Empire's borders became more intense. History shows us a kaleidoscope of peoples and ethnic groups, almost always with uncertain origins. Their history is shrouded in fog, with records of primarily nomadic conflicts and intermingling in vast and sparsely populated territories. Their number likely increased over time since many were making a slow transition from nomadism to stable lives. On the other side of the *limes* stood an extensive, populous, and well-organized empire with a much higher standard of living, knowledge, and technology. The growth of the Empire and its recurring crises, and the multiple pressures of barbarians at the borders, required the adoption of a flexible policy, capable of allowing settlements within the *limes*, when convenient. That policy allowed foreigners in the army to strengthen their ranks when necessary, bargain with neighboring tribes, and suppress raids and invasions (Barbero 2006, 102).

Until then, the Empire had shown that it could manage the pressure of the external peoples, notably the Alamanni and the Franks, along with the Rhine *limes*. Barbero mentions the so-called Panegyric of Constantius (Constantius Chlorus, father of Constantine). The panegyric was written in 297 A.D. following victories over the Franks, who had crossed the Rhine and invaded the delta lands in Gaul. The Franks were driven back across the river or taken prisoner and deported[7]:

> […] legions of barbaric prisoners who sit under all the arcades of the cities; the trembling, wild, but mute men; the old and the wives incredulous at the impotence of their children and husbands, and intent on comforting their children in the family language; and all of them distributed in the service of the inhabitants until they are led to the depopulated areas that they will have to cultivate […]. So now the Chamavian and the Frisian are plowing for me, the tramp and the thief are forced to do hard work and they come to sell their cattle in my markets, and it is a barbarian farmer who pays the tax. And if he is summoned for conscription, he rushes and consumes himself with the service and undergoes discipline and is happy to serve enlisted in the army.

From the panegyric, we can infer that the Empire's ability to contain the barbarian peoples were still intact and would allow taking advantage when barbarians were settled in depopulated areas either forcibly or as a result of formal agreements. However, the panegyric also reported that deportation was not just about men or warriors but also about whole people, including the elderly, women, and children. Moreover, it is plausible that the mobility that characterized the lands inhabited by the barbarians in the north and east of the Empire involved entire peoples.

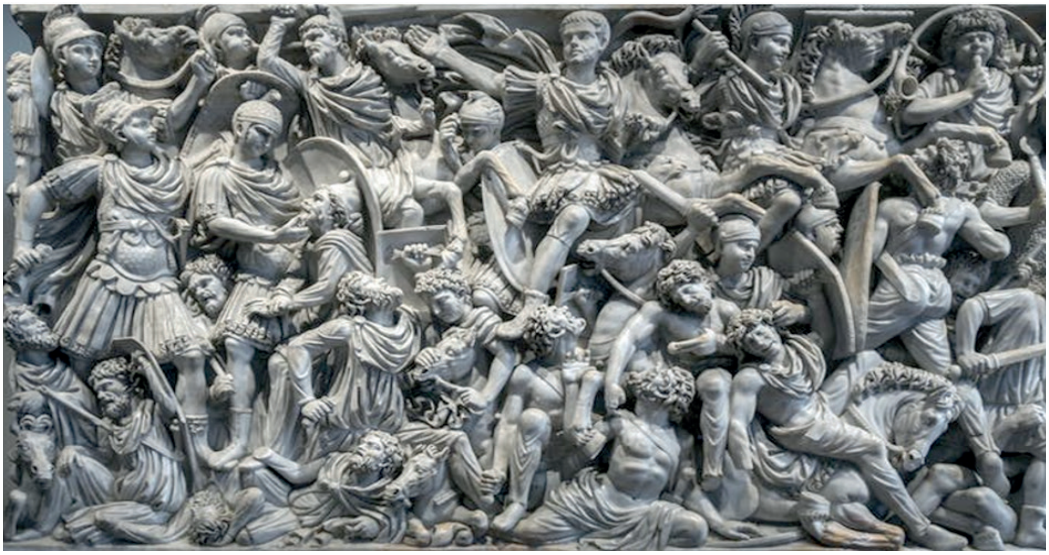
To the east, the Danube *limes* separated the Empire from various barbaric populations, among them the Goths. Their pressure on the frontier and incursions beyond it had been effectively contained during the reign of Constantine the Great (306–337 A.D.). The Goths were in the process of Christianization and maintained multiple contacts with the Romans. Conditions quickly changed with the arrival of the Huns from the eastern steppes, who overwhelmed many ethnic groups and tribes in their path before approaching the Danube. A century later, the Byzantine chronicler Zosimus recounted the approach of the Huns in 373 A.D.[8]:

> These were the Huns […] described as a weak people with flat noses […]. For I have met with, a tradition, which relates that the Cimmerian Bosphorus was rendered firm land by mud brought down the Tanais [river], by which they were originally afforded a land-passage from Asia into Europe. However this might be, they, with their wives, children, horses, and carriages, invaded the Scythians [Goths] who resided on the Ister [Danube]; and though they were not capable of fighting on foot […] but live perpetually, and even sleep, on horseback, […], by the suddenness of their excursions and retreat they occasioned great slaughter among the Scythians [Goths]. In this they were so incessant, that the surviving Scythians were compelled to leave their habitations to these Huns, and crossing the Ister.

The Huns were whole peoples who migrated with women, children, and belongings but were ready to settle during their journey. Furthermore, the Goths[9] crossing the Danube in dramatic situations were "people" and not just warriors. A contemporary historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, military soldier and advocate of the civilizing mission of Rome, tells of the Goths, pressed by the Huns, asking Emperor Valens for permission to cross the river and settle peacefully in Roman lands: "and sent ambassadors to Valens, they asked with a humble prayer to be welcomed, promising to live quiet, and to administer relief even when circumstances required". Valens allowed them to pass, thinking that the Goths would re-blood the army and settle in the unproductive lands of Thrace and send relief and wagons to carry[10]:

> Full of this hope he sent forth several officers to bring this ferocious people and their waggons into our territory. And such great pains were taken to gratify this nation which was destined to overthrow the empire of Rome, that not one was left behind, not even of those who were stricken with mortal disease. Moreover, having obtained permission of the emperor to cross the Danube and to cultivate some districts in Thrace, they crossed the stream day and night, without ceasing, embarking in troops on board ships and rafts, and canoes made of the hollow trunks of trees, in which enterprise, as the Danube is the most difficult of all rivers to navigate, and was at that time swollen with continual rains, a great many were drowned, who, because they were too numerous for the vessels, tried to swim across, and in spite of all their exertions were swept away by the stream. In this way, through the turbulent zeal of violent people, the ruin of the Roman empire was brought on. This, at all events, is neither obscure nor uncertain, that the unhappy officers who were intrusted with the charge of conducting the multitude of the barbarians across the river, though they repeatedly endeavoured to calculate their numbers, at last abandoned the attempt as hopeless: and the man who would wish to ascertain the number might as well (as the most illustrious of poets says) attempt to count the waves in the African sea, or the grains of sand tossed about by the zephyr.

Fig. 3. *The sarcophagus "Grande Ludovisi" depicts a battle between Romans and Goths in the third century A.D.*



Source: Ludovisi Battle sarcophagus (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludovisi_Battle_sarcophagus).

What was supposed to be a peaceful migration quickly changed. The relief promised by the Emperor did not arrive or was intercepted by corrupt soldiers. The Emperor's benevolence turned into a strict ban on new Goth migrants, who nevertheless crossed the river. The situation changed radically into an out-of-control campaign against the Goth raids. These armed clashes came to a tragic conclusion in the battle between the Goths and the Roman army at Adrianople.

The chronicles are confusing, imprecise, and consistently unreliable concerning numbers. However, a contemporary scholar estimated that the Goth warriors (Grutungi and Thervingi) who defeated Valens at Adrianople were many thousands and the Danube gothic populations that crossed the river were capable of fielding 20,000 warriors, a figure that could represent a population of between 50 and 100 thousand (Heather 1999, 55). Regardless of the number and role of the Goths in Rome's territory in the following century, it was the first mass invasion of barbarians beyond the *limes* of the Empire, ending with the fall of the Western Roman Empire one hundred years later. However, even the dominance of the Goths in Italy declined more than two centuries later, due to the arrival from the north of another migrant people, the Longobards, whose story is told to us by Paul the Deacon:

> Then the Longobards, having left Pannonia, hastened to take possession of Italy with their wives and children and all their goods […]. Therefore, when king Alboin with his whole army and a multitude of people of all kinds had come to the limits of Italy […][11].

Migration of entire peoples, such as the Longobards and, before, the Goths, became the most powerful form of mobility, in the Italian peninsula. "Barbaric"

migrations, comprising e few tens of thousands of components, swift and often conflicting, overwhelmed the Roman Empire and prevailed over the various forms of organized mobility.

[1] L. Annaeus Seneca, *Of Consolation to Helvia*, in "Minor Dialogs". Translated by A. Stewart, Bohn's Classical Library Edition; London, George Bell and Sons, 1900. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Of_Consolation:_To_Helvia. The Author is grateful to Elio Lo Cascio who, many years ago, brought to his attention this wonderful script.
[2] Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, VI. Translated by R. Crawley, Project Gutenberg, 2009. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7142/7142-h/7142-h.htm.
[3] Cicero, On the Republic, II, 9. Translated by C.W. Keyes, Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928. http://www.attalus.org/translate/republic2.html.
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Riassunto

Le considerazioni di un demografo sulle migrazioni dell'antichità

Le modalità che hanno caratterizzato la mobilità in epoca antica sono state estremamente varabili, andando da una lenta mobilità di prossimità, determinata dal naturale evolversi di comunità e popoli in rapporto al territorio occupato, a trasmigrazioni rapide, anche su lunghissime distanze, di intere popolazioni in cerca di nuovi insediamenti. Il fenomeno della mobilità nell'età antica si articola in una grande varietà di modi che si è tentato di sintetizzare in queste pagine. In particolare, si sono considerate circostanze e modalità delle migrazioni nel mondo greco e romano e, a partire dal III secolo, le pressioni dei popoli germanici sulle frontiere dell'Impero.

Summary

A Demographer's Consideration on Migrations in Antiquity

The modes of mobility in ancient times were highly variable. They ranged from the slow mobility of proximity, determined by the natural evolution of communities and peoples concerning the occupied territory, to rapid transmigration, even over immense distances, of entire populations seeking new settlements. This paper summarizes many phenomena of mobility in ancient times. In particular, we considered the circumstances and methods of migration in the Greek and Roman world and, beginning in the third century, the pressures of the Germanic peoples on the Roman Empire's borders.

Parole chiave

Antichi popoli germanici; Colonie greche; Demografia antica; Impero Romano; Migrazioni.

Keywords

Ancient Germanic peoples; Greek colonies; Ancient demography; Roman Empire; Migrations.