

From the Editors

FINALLY, WE HAVE AN ACADEMIC OPEN ACCESS PEER-REVIEWED E-JOURNAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF THE BALKANS IN LATE ANTIQUITY!

Launched in 2025 under the aegis of the [HAEMUS International Research Network \(HAEMUS IRN\)](#), the *Chronicles of Haemus (CoH)* is a groundbreaking journal that aims to unite all scholars specializing in the archaeology and history of the Balkans and surrounding regions during the Late Roman and Early Byzantine periods, through an interdisciplinary and transnational perspective on the deep political, economic, and cultural transformations that shaped South-Eastern Europe during the transition that constitutes the 3rd-8th centuries. Our journal is designed to explore all possible themes within the disciplinary fields covered, including, to give some examples, the shift from Roman rule to the rise of “barbarian” kingdoms, urban and economic transitions, or the evolution of cultural and religious practices. Welcoming innovative contributions, mainly in English, but also in French, Italian, German or Spanish, the *CoH* seeks to foster scholarly exchange for a better understanding of a pivotal region and period in European and Mediterranean history, which are too often wrongly regarded as marginal.

Simply, our journal aims to become a key reference for researchers, teachers, students and enthusiasts of archaeology and history, by providing a forum for innovative research, as it will favour interdisciplinary work and new approaches, whether through case studies, regional summaries or cross-disciplinary thematic analyses. Through a rigorous and diversified approach, we also want to encourage young researchers to contribute and to take advantage of the platform to disseminate their research to an international academic public. The *CoH* thus aims to become a vehicle for intellectual and scientific exchange, while highlighting research that is often inaccessible outside the country of production. Alongside the studies, the publishers also want to make room for long critical reviews of fundamental works published in the Balkan countries, which would allow them to be made known throughout the world, while launching dialogues around them. This is the Editorial Board’s overall policy statement!

THE *HAEMUS* INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

Behind the journal, there is a network, and it does not seem inconsistent to slip in a few words about this. On the 18th of June 2021, the *HAEMUS IRN*, taking its name from the ancient name given to the Balkan Mountain range, was launched online, in front of a “virtual” audience of around sixty people. This launch was divided into two parts: first, a presentation of the project by two of its coordinators (Dominic Moreau and Christophe J. Goddard, then a major lecture on the history of archaeological work carried out on the site of Caričin Grad (by Vujadin Ivanišević and Catherine Vanderheyde). This second part also inaugurated what has now become a permanent activity of the network, its *Online Guest Lecture Series*. The impact of the event and the publicity that immediately followed on social networks was such that the mailing list quickly grew, in the space of a few days, from just under a hundred email addresses, all borrowed from personal acquaintances of the Steering Committee members, to just over three hundred. Today, it includes more than 420 researchers and students around the world, making it nothing less than the largest international research network on the archaeology and history of the Balkans!

The foundations of this vast project, which is a real success, were laid during a meeting organized on the sidelines of the 1st Summer School of the *DANUBIUS* project of the [University of Lille](#) and its [HALMA-UMR 8164 Research Centre](#), which took place from the 12th to the 14th of September 2019, with for topic the archaeology of the Late Antique Balkans. The participants in this event, which focused on international archaeological missions involving France (on the [Kvarner Archipelago in Croatia](#), in the [Drin Valley in Albania](#), at [Caričin Grad in Serbia](#), at [Ulpiana in Kosovo](#) and at [Zaldapa in Bulgaria](#)), agreed, following a “closed-door” discussion session, that it was necessary to strengthen all forms of collaboration between the different teams in the field, drawing directly on past experiences in this direction, in particular the CNRS GDR 924 (1988-92) and 1052 (1993-2000), successively directed by Noël Duval, Pierre Cabanes and JeanLuc Lamboley. Wishing, however, to extend the scope of the new initiative to the entire Balkans—the two aforementioned GDRs (for *groupements de recherche*) focused on the former Yugoslavia and Albania—, while going beyond the framework of France’s international relations, the participants chose other enterprises as models. Among these, it is worth mentioning the *Impact of Empire* international network, created in Nijmegen in the Netherlands in 1999, which brings together around 200 researchers, as well as *The Transformation of the Roman World* project, supported by the European Science Foundation between 1993 and 1999. The participants in this “closed-door” session then agreed to rally as many researchers as possible and to identify the key institutions that could lead the enterprise, with the aim of responding to calls

for projects at the national and European level. It did not yet have its name, but the *HAEMUS IRN* had just been born!

Drawing on the archaeological work presented at that summer school, the first project considered temporal markers between the 3rd and the 12th centuries. The difficulty of combining all the national historiographical traditions of the Balkans, particularly in terms of periodization, however, prompted the initiators to decide to focus on Late Antiquity alone, but considering it over a very long period, namely from the 3rd to the 8th century. This choice was all the more motivated by their interest in disseminating the very notion of “Late Antiquity” in Central and Eastern Europe, where its reception is still very uneven today. The discussions and negotiations that took place in the following months resulted in the establishment of a [Core Group](#) for the future network, representing ten leading European research institutions active in the archaeological field in the Balkans: the University of Lille, together with its HALMA Research Center, the [AOrOc-UMR 8546 Research Center](#), the [French School at Athens](#), the [French School at Rome](#), the [Austrian Archaeological Institute of the Austrian Academy of Science](#), the [University of Vienna](#), the [Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe–GWZO](#), the [Romano-Germanic Commission of the German Archaeological Institute](#), the [Italian School of Archaeology at Athens](#), and the [Institute of Heritage Science of the Italian National Research Council](#). This first Core Group has committed to sharing its resources (libraries, archives, specialized techniques, etc.), while establishing [ten work packages](#) (eight work packages and two transversal work packages) to structure the network’s work.

English was chosen as the network’s language of communication, but the organization of activities in any of the languages represented by the lead institutions is still encouraged. Very quickly, the initial consortium wanted to associate itself with at least one recognized British partner in the field of Late Antique archaeology, as well as at least one other in the field covered by the network, pending the creation of a scientific committee representing each of the countries included in the study area. Taking into consideration a series of opportunities offered at the same time by the ISITE ULNE Foundation of the University of Lille (now [Initiative d’Excellence de l’Université de Lille](#)), the decision was made to rely, initially, on its strategic partners. The institutions then selected were the [University of Kent](#) in the United Kingdom (as a member of the [3i University Network](#)) and the [Babeş-Bolyai University](#) of Cluj-Napoca in Romania (as a member of the European University project [InclusU: University Network for Inclusiveness](#)). This strategic choice proved to be wise, as the *PRAE-HAEMUS* initiative, aimed at the first implementation of the network, was awarded, at the beginning of 2021 two successive grants, one by the ISITE ULNE Foundation, as part of its call for the program “Support for the development of international networks”, and the other directly by the University of Lille, as part of its

call for projects “Internationalization”. This situation then placed Dominic Moreau as the first coordinator of the network.

These first grants were the real starting point for the network, with the first half of the year partly devoted to the creation of a full [Scientific Board](#), bringing together representatives of key institutions in archaeological research in each of the eleven Balkan countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia) and of two neighbouring countries (Hungary and Turkey, for its European part). Joined into a single governing body, the scientific committee and the Core Group now formed the Steering Committee. This first half of 2021 also saw the organization of the inaugural activities, as well as discussions on future funding to be sought, all the partners having quickly agreed that a response to the *COST Actions* calls for projects, funded by the European Commission, was necessary, due to the scale and ambition of the network. For this purpose, the delegation of the Hauts-de-France region to the EU offered its support to the future application. It is this effort to build and consolidate synergies around the archaeology and history of the Balkan world in Late Antiquity, as well as the planning of the network’s future activities, which was presented at the inaugural session on the 18th of June 2021.

In addition to the launch of the *Online Guest Lecture Series*, which included four lectures through to the end of 2021, the same year also saw various public presentations by the network, [interviews with some of the coordinators](#) and the publication of a special edition of the *Dossiers d’archéologie* (Faton), [in support of the candidacy of the eastern part of the Danubian limes to the UNESCO World Heritage list](#). The highlight of the first year of the *HAEMUS IRN*, however, was the organization at the University of Lille of a [major international workshop \(around forty speakers\) on the theme of the villae](#). Initially planned to be annual (this is not the case, anymore), the network’s international workshops are intended to be scientific thematic forums, leading to reference works that are not “simply” conference proceedings. The book resulting from the first edition is in press in the *Rome and After in Central and Eastern Europe–Roma* series at Brepols Publishers, which is now an associate partner of the network, and will inaugurate the *HAEMUS Companions to the Late Antique Balkans* subseries.

The University of Lille having offered the *HAEMUS IRN* a second successive year of funding as part of its “Internationalization” program, 2022 was no less rich than 2021, even if, unfortunately, it was not possible to organize the second edition of the thematic workshops. A project, proposed by the [Iași branch of the Romanian Academy](#), had been accepted by the Steering Committee at the end of 2021, but the prolongation of hostilities in Ukraine and the uncertainty surrounding the real intentions of the Russian army ultimately led, for security reasons, to the cancellation of the event just before the beginning of summer, without any real alternative solution. The funds available to the

network at the time, which should have been used to cofinance the Iași workshop, were then allocated to **four activities**: a session on cities at the *Roman Archaeology Conference* (Split, Croatia, 68 April), as well as the participation in the organization of the international workshop *Late Antique Elites of the Countryside in the Middle and Lower Danube Provinces* of the *MASLAP* project (Budapest, Hungary, 28 October), the international conference *Archaeology of the Balkans from Prehistory to the End of Antiquity: Recent Discoveries and New Methods* (Pristina, Kosovo, 17-19 November) and the international conference *Les églises tétraconques dans l'Antiquité tardive – Le chiese tetraconche nella Tarda Antichità – The Tetraconch Churches in Late Antiquity* of the *DANUBIUS* project (Rome, 28-29 November). In parallel, the *Online Guest Lecture Series* continued throughout the year with nine lectures.

Despite all this activity, the network has found itself at a crossroads since 2023, as it no longer has its own funds. The time has now come to increase the number of responses to calls for projects, the *COST Actions* program being obviously an ultimate goal. However, the Steering Committee still needs to be consolidated in its entirety, by identifying an explicit role for each member. Above all, it should be fully demonstrated that the *HAEMUS IRN* is a real project incubator, and not just a series of colloquiums and conferences, by applying to a major European funding program. In the meantime, the network exists and lives thanks to the goodwill and interest of its many members, the *Online Guest Lecture Series* continues (seven lectures in 2023, eight in 2024, four, at this moment, in 2025, for a total of thirty up to now), and the *HAEMUS IRN* is always ready to be actively associated with scientific events, as was the case for the international workshop *Peristyle Buildings in Late Antiquity: Architecture, Landscape and Function* of the *MASLAP* project (Pécs, Hungary, 7-8 September 2023). Moreover, a *Young Scholar Circle*, which can already be followed on *Facebook*, was launched in 2023, with the aim of better integrating doctoral students and postdoctoral fellows into the life of the network. Led directly by a group of young scholars, it organizes, in particular, an annual online workshop in the autumn, which gives the floor only to young researchers from around the world. The third workshop will take place next November. An international exchange system, both for students and for researchers, must also be established in the future, because our network aims above all and before anything else to be a space for exchange and sharing on an international scale, open to all researchers, whether emerging or established, interested in the Balkans in Late Antiquity.

Given the difficulty of organizing the network's thematic workshop on an annual basis, in a context where the demand for participation is very high, it was decided to make it the equivalent of a congress and organize it every 4 to 5 years. Thus, the next event, which will focus on cities, will take place in Belgrade in the Spring of 2026, with the support of the Serbian Academy of Sciences. Other activities are underway,

including the creation of an online register of archaeological and historical missions and projects related to the network's theme. The most obvious achievement of its vitality, however, is the creation this year of this journal, thanks to the École française d'Athènes, in particular its director, Véronique Chankowski, and its publication director, Bertrand Grandsagne. They have always believed in the project and have supported it since its inception, and for this, the members of the *CoH* Editorial Board would like to offer them their most sincere thanks. Their thanks also go to James Crow, Carla Sfameni, Lucia Alberti, Francesca Colosi, Tatjana Koprivica and Olga Pelcer-Vujačić, who all agreed to "play the game", by offering the first two scientific deliveries of this first issue, two deliveries resulting from online lectures they offered, for James Crow, on the 29th of April 2022 (lecture No. 6), and for the others, on the 2nd of October 2023 (lecture No. 17). These two contributions set the bar very high, as they are of such high quality. The *CoH* is thus launched under the best auspices, and the reader of these lines should understand them as a permanent call for contributions, because it is now up to you to feed this journal.

Long live the *HAEMUS* International Research Network! Long live the *Chronicles of Haemus*!

Dominic Moreau

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