

## OBECNĚ

*Les barbares*, ed. Bruno DUMÉZIL,  
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In his closing statement, Bruno Dumézil reminds the reader that “the ancient and medieval barbarian figure belongs to the contemporary era as much as it belongs to antiquity and the Middle Ages.” In *The Barbarians*, the authors focus on this incomparable character that can be traced back to as early as the classical Greek era; a figure that evolved and was perpetuated from generation to generation until the present day.

The word “barbarian” was removed from the scientific vocabulary during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but is still used today, in ideological and political speeches, for example. Far from being forgotten, the barbarian and its different embodiments have found a second life in our day, often via movies, literature, or even comic books. The “barbarian” seems to be an unavoidable mirror that societies use to define themselves by contrasting themselves against it. The authors of this collective book demonstrated this point by creating a dictionary of barbarians, choosing not to define the word barbarian, so as to avoid giving it a material consistence, but instead they studied the evolutions of this polymorphic notion through time.

The core of the book consists of a dictionary of barbarians. Approximately one hundred authors worked together to write entries, each spreading over a couple of pages. The contributors are mainly French, but a few come from other European countries. They mainly focus on the ancient and medieval periods in Europe and the area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, but not exclusively. The fields of study are varied; from linguistics and archaeology to law and museology, ethnology, and art history. Some entries cover the use of the word “barbarian” in different languages while others focus on historical personalities, movies, TV series, comic books, historical sources, people, artwork, clothing, culinary trends, historians, territories, objects of material culture, divinities, myths, etc. Each entry includes a general

presentation of the subject explaining why it is relevant to the question of the barbarian figure through the ages. They also offer a few suggestions for further reading. At the end of the book, one finds a short, thematically-ordered bibliography as well as a chronology, several maps, a presentation of the authors, and an index.

The authors start with a reminder of the polymorphous features of the barbarian: the forms and social uses of the term have been numerous through the ages, reaching a point where one can no longer exactly define it. Taking a more unassuming stand, the authors intend to “explore the history of the peoples that have been remembered as ‘barbarians,’ but also to explore the mindsets and representations they are based upon.”

In five linear chapters, several specialists then expose the different representations of the barbarian, from the Greeks to the present day. In chapter one, Charlotte Lerouge-Cohen analyses the birth of the Greek *barbaros* during the 6<sup>th</sup> and mainly 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The Greeks were sincerely curious about the barbarians, and therefore described them extensively. While these descriptions have quite a number of common features, they vary according to the author’s purpose and sources. The Greeks were fond of this split, yet they sometimes challenged it. In the next chapter Liza Méry studies the Roman period between the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The Romans, as opposed to the Greeks, had a more politically-based and flexible approach to the barbarians. To them, the *barbarus* embodied radical alterity, yet he was a potential subject of the Empire, maybe even a citizen-to-be. Roman authors also tended to depict a “noble barbarian” character so as to criticize the corrupting effect of civilization. Bruno Dumézil shows in Chapter 3 that the dichotomy between barbarian and civilized took a turn in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Barbarians were then a part of the Empire and seemed to climb the social ladder at an ever-increasing pace. While the barbarians tried to showcase their modernity, the Roman elite despised them and made new use of old mindsets. They also reinterpreted Christian scriptures and saw the barbarians either as people that had to be subdued by the Christian empire, or as the forewarnings of the Apocalypse. In the next chapter, Bruno Dumézil focuses on the time between the end of the Roman Empire and the Carolingian period. He first goes over the different patterns of interpretation used at the time, then onto how the distinction between Roman and barbarian faded away, replaced by ethnic and linguistic designations that are linked to the birth of barbarian

kingdoms. At the end of the chapter, the author also alludes to the barbarian figure in contemporary Byzantium and the Islamic territories. The final chapter depicts the barbarian figure since the end of the Middle Ages as put forward by three medieval specialists. Sylvie Joye analyses the evolution of the debate around ancient barbarians since their return to the spotlight during the Renaissance (after a blackout from the 13<sup>th</sup> century) up to the present day. She broaches the subjects of the quest for national origins, the medieval declinist vision, and colonial ideology. Adrien Bayard then brings up the birth, rise, and evolution of museums and archaeology principles, along with the development of historical research on barbarians. Finally, William Blanc undertakes a study of the barbarian in popular culture, from Conan the Barbarian to fighting women to bikers.

Central Europe and the Czech lands are not neglected in the contributions that follow the linear chapters. Thomas Lienhard analyses the way Frédégaire's chronicle made use of topics traditionally associated with barbarians, such as polygamy. The Slavs of Samo's Empire were considered either God's punishment or a people defending their interests against an oppressive foreign power. Bruno Dumézil argues the Christianisation of Central European populations became a mission that was taken to heart by the Emperors of the Ottonian era. Following a pattern going back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, these populations were said to have been allowed to escape barbarism by embracing Christianity. Laurence Leleu concurs with this view in her contribution about Stephen I of Hungary. However, she also shows Boleslav I was a very ambiguous character according to the sources: he was pictured as a very Christian prince by Bruno of Querfurt, yet he was seen as the barbarian archetype by Thietmar of Merseburg.

The church and its clerics sometimes used the notion of the barbarian to their own benefit. Edina Bozoky examines the way Central Europeans' evangelisation created the cults of a number of saints, like Bruno of Querfurt or Gerard of Csanád. Martin Nejedlý underlines how figures such as Adalbert of Prague and Wenceslas were considered champions of civilisation after their martyrdom. In the contribution concerning "Holy Kings and Queens," Alban Gautier looks closely into the story-pattern featuring a Christian prince that is violently murdered and then worshiped as a martyr. The first examples were found in 6<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-century Gaul and England and then the pattern met with great success in Central and Northern Europe, exemplified by the

case of Olaf of Norway in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. If one accepts European populations exited barbarism by embracing the Christian religion, a way of seeing history that has been completely accepted by said population, Thomas Lienhard underlines how the Slavs continued to have a reputation as "outsiders" or late-comers at the very least in the Western historiography.

To sum up, the introductory chapters offer the reader an exceptional historical narrative about the notion and figure of the barbarian since the Greek era. The knowledge acquired about the conceptual patterns will help readers to better understand and use the sometimes-ancient sources, especially the bibliography. The dictionary that follows the introductory chapters was created as a tool very useful for its variety and the quality of its entries. Readers can pleasurably discover and explore unknown geographical areas and unfamiliar subjects. Specialists in scarcely-mentioned subjects (the authors don't pretend to give an exhaustive view) will find inspiration in terms of subjects for further study thanks to the analyses offered in the book. In conclusion, it's worth mentioning the very modern approach that appears through the selected direction of analysis, inviting the reader to understand and question the way our societies think, imagine, and sometimes create otherness.

ARTHUR PÉRODEAU

Zbigniew DALEWSKI, *Modele władzy dynastycznej w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej we wcześniejszym średniowieczu*, Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa 2014

321 s., ISBN 978-83-63352-41-7

Zbigniewa Dalewského není třeba dlouho představovat, jeho kniha o rituálech v Gallově kronice přešla do obecného povědomí a byla rovněž přeložena do angličtiny. Ve své další monografii se autor vydává po stopách utváření dynastií, dynastické moci a legitimizačních strategií. Na knihu se dá nahlížet jako na pokus oživit „středoevropský“ model, avšak v rovině imaginace, nikoli sociální a mocenské struktury. Autor primárně porovnává vývoj v Polsku, v českých zemích a Uhrách, činí tak ale na půdorysu celoevropské komparace, jež je hlavní metodou jeho práce. Slouží mu velmi dobře při vážení specifik, případně při sledování