

Editorial

Ingrid Hartl and Walter Pohl

We are on the move again. In volumes 13 and 14 we presented studies on the influence the movement of people and things had on socio-political frameworks.¹ Now we focus on the movement of people in connection with their work. Under the title *Moving Jobs: Occupational Identity and Motility in the Middle Ages*, guest editors Annamaria Pazienza and Irene Bavuso have compiled a series of case studies which explore the role of job mobility in early medieval societies in social, economic or military practices as well as in the construction of individual identities. Wide-ranging in terms of geography – from the Southern Tarim Basin and India to the North Sea – and professions – from peasants and artisans to envoys and scholars, the contributions will appear in two installments, in this volume and in December 2025.

The construction of identities stands at the centre of our second thematic section, *Cultural brokers in European and Asian Contexts. Investigating a Concept*, prepared by guest editors Clemens Gantner and Cinzia Grifoni. Here the contributors concentrate on outstanding individuals who acted as mediators between different cultures. They use the concept of cultural brokerage to test whether it yields further insight into the process of intercultural exchange. The results lead to a shift in the focus of the concept – from culture to identifications, which are redefined and transformed by the agency of the broker. They also show that we have to be careful not to obscure unequal power relations and situations of colonial repression if we concentrate on the brokers' role as intercultural mediators.

Our stand-alone article again takes a closer look at people on the move – this time at Eurasian nomads of the Early Middle Ages. Although there are many archaeological findings, which give information about the individual and also rarely about the community, the scarcity of written sources makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the social organisation of these people. Latest developments in interdisciplinary cooperation and ancient DNA analysis, however, have yielded new insights into family life and marriage strategies in the Carpathian Basin. The article *Family Matters* picks up on one aspect that seems to have been common practice in the steppe zone: levirate marriage, in which a widow married her late husband's relative. In a comprehensive survey it analyses ancient and medieval sources from western Eurasia and China dealing with this custom, providing well-founded historical context for current discoveries.

1 See our thematic strand *Movement and Mobility in the Medieval Mediterranean: Changing Perspectives from Late Antiquity to the Long-Twelfth Century* I and II, *Medieval Worlds* 13 and 14 (2021).