

## Introduction and summary: A quarter of a century later ...

Hubert Fehr, Irmtraut Heitmeier

The Bavarian-Salzburgian state exhibition „Die Bajuwaren. Von Severin bis Tassilo 488–788“ (“The *Bajuwaren*. From Severinus to Tassilo 488–788”) in 1988 marked a temporary end to an intense debate on the Early History of the Baiern in years before. It conveyed an image of the beginnings of Baiern that has been widely received by the public and remained prevalent up to the present day. Based on an interpretation of the Baiern-name as ‘men from Bohemia’, it was believed that a ‘kernel of tradition’ (Traditionskern) immigrated from there, initiating the ethnogenesis of the Baiern from different ‘Germanic’ tribes and local population. Moreover, since this assumption seemed to correspond to the archaeological Friedenhain-Přešt’ovice group of finds, the impression was created that “... after centuries of efforts the mystery of the origin of the Bavarians had been solved” (SZ Nr. 299 v. 24./25/26.12.2004 S. 51).

In the almost 25 years that passed since then, all disciplines involved in protohistory (Frühgeschichte) have been dealing intensely with theoretical and methodological principles for the interpretation of their relevant sources. In this context, the concepts of ‘tribal formation’ (Stammesbildung) and ‘ethnogenesis’ (Ethnogenese) have been developed further so that today the formation of the identity of protohistorical groups is under discussion. While archaeological sciences increasingly question whether ethnic identities manifest themselves in the archaeological record (burial habits or style of cloth-

ing), historical research deals with the problem of how (historical) tradition and its reception throughout the centuries created these ethnic identities in the first place. Eventually intense onomastic and etymological research in language border and interference areas proved the one-sided ethnic view of language also to be a product of national ideas of the 19th century.

This scholarly debate puts a different complexion on the beginnings of Baiern and poses new questions. A critical assessment of the sources in conjunction with newly gained insights toppled many an older 'certainty', so that the 'mystery' cannot be regarded as solved by any means – on the contrary: The early history of Baiern is more open than ever!

Against this background, the aim of the conference in Benediktbeuern in March of 2010 together with the present volume was to re-initiate the debate on this topic. It was not intended to replace the older model with a new one – at the current state of research this also would not be possible. In fact, the main focus was to take stock of the current debate and reveal different points of view. This is being reflected by the contributions in the present volume, which introduces numerous new approaches as well as different competing and to some extent, contradicting views.

On one hand, the development in recent years was characterized by a vast increase of archaeological finds and findings in conjunction with improved capabilities for analysis, for example regarding detailed chronology or the use of methods of natural sciences. Even the field of linguistics accesses a significantly broader and methodically more thoroughly edited material-base today. On the other hand, methodological principles for the interpretation of primary sources were discussed intensely in individual disciplines, with the result that the validity of one's own sources is being evaluated differently today than before. Hence, a problem arising in the related disciplines is that it is impossible to keep track of either the abundance of individual results or their methodological realization. This has significant consequences for interdisciplinary cooperation. In some cases, the lack of transparency in the research-progress causes the adoption of results from related disciplines without the necessary awareness of the problem. In other cases, related subject areas are treated with great skepticism, in extreme cases to the point of complete disregard.

In view of this development, it seems absolutely essential not only to converse between disciplines about the results, but also about their realization and methodological principles. Ultimately, specific primary source material of the individual disciplines only allow a certain view on protohistory. Therefore, no discipline is able to present a comprehensive historical picture based solely on their specific perspective. Only in an active interdisciplinary debate, which also includes methodological aspects, is it possible to

recognize not only the potential but also the pitfalls of the interdisciplinary approach.

As indicated before, in the past the category of *ethnos* appeared to be suitable to integrate contributions of various disciplines. In a way, the question of how the Baiern emerged as a tribe or people constituted a common point of focus for all subjects. However, his approach has become questionable due to findings of recent decades regarding the structure of ethnic communities in the Early Middle Ages. In addition, by focusing on *ethnos*, another category, which, from a present-day perspective, is considerably better suited to serve as a common reference for interdisciplinary research, has faded from the spotlight: Space. Primary sources of all disciplines involved in the research of the early history of the Baiern possess notable spatial reference: Archaeological material usually is located in space precisely; the same is true for skeleton finds that are addressed by anthropology. Toponyms are inherently space-related and written sources refer to specific places and regions in many cases. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that in contrast to the state exhibition of 1988 the colloquium in Benediktbeuern was entitled "From Raetia and Noricum to early medieval *Baiovaria*". With this in mind, the present volume also focuses on the historical territory of Baiern, with its beginnings in the Alpine Foreland of Bavaria-Upper Austria between Iller and Lech in the west and the Enns River in the east, as well as its subsequent expansion into the Alpine Region in the south.

In recent times, the so-called 'spatial turn' in historical research raised awareness for the potential of an examination under spatial aspects. Space in its various forms is more than just a common reference point for all disciplines involved: it offers general geographical preconditions for settlement, commerce, and transportation, for strategic and political importance – consequently providing substantial information for the comprehension of historical developments. As early as in Late Antiquity, a region like early Baiern constitutes a human-made 'cultural area' (Kulturraum) with structures of administration and political power that are, for instance, reflected in names of the Roman provinces. It is subject to debate to what extent these structures provide the basis of early medieval *Baiovaria*. Ultimately, almost all primary sources pertaining to protohistory are not to be interpreted without regard to location or geographical reference. Last but not least, this is true for the 'onomastic landscape' (Namenlandschaft), which obtains further validity due to its spatial manifestation. Thereby, space itself becomes a primary source and it must be examined which 'notions of history' (Geschichtsbilder) can be constructed plausibly on this basis.

As a visual aid to this methodological approach, the present volume provides various topical maps intending to facilitate the notion of spatial constellations as well as the comprehension of subsequent developments. The

fact that historical content sometimes is pinned down more precisely than the state of discussion actually allows for needs to be considered individually. The contributions of this volume can be divided into two groups: The first group of articles deals with questions directly related to early Baiern in terms of time and space. The second group is made up of contributions that illuminate problems of the early period of Baiern in comparison with examples from other contexts.

Michaela Konrad's contribution sketches the different developments of the two provinces Raetia and Noricum since the Early Principate. While Noricum came under Roman influence early and experienced radical urbanization, Raetia remained a province dominated by the military with considerably less 'Romanized' conditions of living – preconditions whose consequences on the further development have not been discussed yet.

Roland Steinacher summarises the current state of discussion about identity formation in early medieval communities, elaborating that protohistorical identities are a highly complex and, in many cases, situationally constructed phenomenon. Thereby, they barely have anything to do with the concept of a culturally and linguistically homogeneous group, that developed as late as the Modern Period.

Jochen Haberstroh discusses the concept of the archaeologically defined Friedenrain-Přešt'ovice group of finds. Therewith, the so far predominant model of the immigration of a Baiovarian 'kernel of tradition' (Traditionskern) is – from an archaeological perspective – deprived of its basis. At the same time, he demonstrates ways for a systematic study of plastically decorated fine-ceramic from the Migration Period, which still remains to be done despite numerous approaches on the topic of Friedenrain-Přešt'ovice.

Ludwig Rübekel succeeds in offering new explanations for the very name Baiern. He analyses the ethnonym with a comparative approach, taking into consideration other names with the ending *-varii*. This typological study illustrates that these names are not based on ethnic, but rather on military structures. Furthermore, their spatial reference does not allude to a place of origin but to an area of military action. The lack of ethnic continuity becomes manifested in the Baiern name, whereby 'on-site' identity formation is proved also from a linguistical point of view.

Alheydis Plassmann examines the 'legend of origin' of Baiern (Stammesage), which is problematic due to its late tradition in medieval manuscripts. On one hand, she points out that the non-tradition of an early origin legend of the Baiern must not constitute an argument of research in either in a positive or a negative way. On the other hand, Plassmann emphasizes that the high medieval narrative possibly drew on older material, but a 12th century contextualization is also justified, which is why the legend can by no means be applied for the early period of Baiern.

Taking up Carl I. Hammer's recent argument (HAMMER, *From Ducatus to Regnum*, 2007, 49), who trenchantly points out that the earliest dukes' affiliation to the Agilolfings is not verifiable, while vice versa the eldest known Agilolfings were not dukes of Baiern, Britta Kägler discusses the axiom that the dukes of Baiern always were Agilolfings since the mid-6th century.

The following two contributions address the early onomastic landscape. Christa Jochum-Godglück discusses toponyms including *Walchen* – a group of toponyms that has been seen as evidence for 'residual roman culture' (,Restromanentum') in older research. Composed with the Germanic ethnonym \**walh-oz-* (equated with *Romanus* in glosses), they are a phenomenon of bilingual language border areas. In addition, they frequently contain a location that reminds one of a development in the context of fiscal organisation of space. This conclusion of a contextual appearance limits the importance of the *Walchen* names for settlement patterns.

Dealing with the area of Iller, Danube, and Lech, Andreas Schorr turns to the western fringe of *Baiovaria*. He poses the question of whether specific elements of early Bairisch or Alemannic can be found in toponyms as well as personal names (,Namengut') of this Bairisch-Alemannic intersection area. Schorr also discusses the state and tendencies of the etymological debate – in particular for even earlier periods – based on various categories of toponyms. He fathoms the consequences for an interdisciplinary conversation by discussing their respective statements concerning communication range and questions of continuity.

Brigitte Haas-Gebhard's contribution regarding the grave field of Unterhaching presents one of the most significant new archaeological discoveries of recent years in Bavarian early medieval archaeology. Furthermore, she demonstrates the wide spectrum of modern archaeological investigation methods. The archaeological record shows that around the year 500 C.E., a high-ranking group of people resided on the Munich gravel plain – an important location in terms of traffic and administration. According to the evidence, this group also was of Christian faith.

On a larger scale, Arno Rettner addresses the testimony of archaeological sources in Raetia. He points to the gravestone of Pierius as a little-known evidence of one of the main protagonists of the late 5th century, discussing the problem of archaeologically perceived breaks as a result of methodological deficits. Regarding the potential of the grave field, Rettner presents new arguments for the Germanic or Romanic interpretation of certain burial attributes from the Early Middle Ages. In conclusion, he emphasizes the significance of Augsburg due to early Christian evidences.

Opposingly, Hubert Fehr postulates that the concept of the immigration of the *Baiovarii* and the extensive resettlement of the Alpine Foreland by Germanic immigrants during the Migration Period is a master narrative, that

can not be proven from an archaeological point of view. Neither would the typical linear cemeteries hint to such an immigration, nor could grave goods like weapons or bow-fibulas be labeled as Germanic.

Barbara Hausmair looks into the problem of the hiatus, which is suggested by the archaeological record in Upper Austria for the period from the Roman retreat from the province of *Noricum Ripense* in 488 C.E. to the second half of the 6th century. She raises the question of whether there was an actual discontinuity of settlement – which was frequently presumed based on the *Vita Severini* – or rather a research gap. Structural and partially stratigraphic coherences of the findings indicate that particularly the numerous graves without goods in late Roman and again in early medieval cemeteries could be the missing link.

Archaeological sources of the Migration Period in Bohemia as well as its ties to neighbouring areas are being addressed in Jaroslav Jiřík's article. He is able to demonstrate that intense archaeological connections to present-day Southwest Germany and the Middle Danube Region become apparent; however archaeological proof for immediate contacts between Bavaria and Bohemia is rather sparse and therefore stands in contrast to the traditional assumption of an immigration from this area.

Based on the example of the early medieval grave field of Enkering, Eva Kropf's contribution explores the potential and limits of the anthropological study of protohistoric skeleton finds. On one hand, traditional morphometric methods still have great potential. On the other hand, in recent times there is the risk of repeating old mistakes in the interpretation of data due to a noncritical usage of new scientific methods.

From the viewpoint of economic history, Josef Löfl points out Baiern's central location and accessibility via the Danube as a fast waterway and the access to various Alpine passes. He emphasizes that organisational continuities are to be expected, especially in the context of shipping and freight traffic. Due to a period of unfavorable weather conditions in the 5th and 6th century as well as unstable political development, the focus in agriculture changed to animal husbandry, which is less prone to external threats.

Stefan Esders discusses the late Roman ducate (*ducatus*) as a military organisation of frontier areas like Raetia, which can be considered as a predecessor of early medieval duchies. Using the examples of the Libyan *dux Pentapoleos* around the year 500 C.E. and the *dux Histriae* around 800, Esders illustrates their institutional preconditions and financial resources. The ducate of Istria also serves as an example of a seamless transition from the Byzantine Empire to the Franks, while changing opponents, which also needs to be taken into consideration for Raetia. To comprehend the preconditions of the ducate in Baiern, as for other Merovingian duchies, it is

necessary to study long-term substructures diachronically and analyse them in local operational contexts.

Based on the question, what the background of the equation of Baiern with Noricum in early to high medieval sources could be, Irmtraut Heitmeier develops the model of a dual formation of the duchy of Baiern. Since in late Roman administration Raetia was part of the Italian dioceses and Noricum part of the Illyrian, the Inn River received a superior function in the organisation of space, which separated different spheres of sovereignty already in the Ostrogothic and later in the Merovingian period. The integration of parts from both territories can help to explain the structural dichotomy of the subsequent duchy as well as the peculiarities of the dukeship of Baiern.

In the discussion on the nature of the dukeship as a hereditary sovereignty, the parallel of Aquitaine has been referenced particularly. For this reason, Philippe Depreux looks at the *princeps* in Aquitaine in the 7th and 8th centuries. Thereby, he points out contradictions and chronological problems in the „principautés périphériques“ – as evolved by Karl Ferdinand Werner. By analysing the *Miracula sancti Martialis* accurately, Depreux shows that the *principatus* in Aquitaine is a construction of the 8th century and therefore much later than the postulated peak of the „principautés périphériques“. Ultimately, it was a title granted by the Carolingians in retrospect to those in power in Aquitaine, when it had already become a minor kingship.

With the question ‘Christians or Pagans?’, the following two contributions stress the problem of early Baiern’s identity once more. Christian Later explores the question of how religious denominations and Christianity in particular can become apparent in archaeological evidence. He not only deals with the different types of sources but also – based on the cross pins of the Aschheim thermae – offers the theory that those cross pins could constitute a reference to local forms of Christian denomination. The archaeological evidence is hardly conclusive but easily compatible with the conception that Christianity has long been widespread as the official religion in the Roman provinces of Raetia and Noricum Ripense and therefore did not need to be expressed explicitly in burial rituals.

This is Roman Deutinger’s thesis, based on a critical analysis of written sources. He exposes the reports of a Christianization of Baiern not until the 7th and 8th centuries as a master narrative. Its premises are, on one hand, the idea of individual conversions, and on the other hand, the assumption that an ethnic and religious (Pagan) identity of the Baiern already existed before the integration into Christian empires. The latter had already been refuted, but it still needs to be done with the former. In a long Christianized settlement area headed by a Christian duke, in the 6th century the Baiern could not have been pagans anymore. The primary question concerns the quality of their Christianity.

The volume is concluded by four short articles on Regensburg and its hinterland by Silvia Codreanu-Windauer, Arno Rettner, Wolfgang Janka, and Alois Schmid. These contributions originated from a roundtable debate during the conference in Benediktbeuern and discuss the previously approached questions in the specific case of the *metropolis Baioariae*. Their main emphases lie on the continuity or transformation of the population, the question of the early ‘capital’ of Baiern, and the issue of the transformation of the Roman *territorium legionis* as a basis of power for the Agilolfing dukes. These short contributions are intended to serve as material for further discussions.

At last, the spelling of the Baiern-name needs to be addressed briefly: The territory of the early Baiern covered in this volume reached far beyond the borders of the modern-day Free State of Bavaria, especially in the east and south, whereas it was bounded on the north by the Danube. To signify this in writing too, the spelling Baiern with <ai> is being used. In linguistics, it correlates with the customary spelling of ‚bairische Sprache‘ (Bavarian language), whose geographical distribution in central and southern dialect areas of Bavaria corresponds to the early Baiern more or less. In early medieval sources, *Baioaria/Baiovaria* was commonly used as the toponym, and the residents were referred to as *Baiovarii*. Today’s popular spelling *Bajuwaren* originates in a 19th century misconception of the word *Baiuuarii*, where <uu> stands for <w> and not for <uw> (Rübekeil). When Ernst von Schwind entitled his edition of the Code of Baiern ‚Lex Baiwariorum‘, he did not make this mistake, for which reason his title is given preference to the prevalent ‚Lex Baiuvariorum‘ in this volume. Altogether, it seemed desirable to revise a problematic conception of the 19th century and to restore the names of people and territory in accordance to the sources: *Baiovarii* and *Baiovaria*.

Translation: Julia Ess