

Climate, environment and human migrations in the Carpathian region during the Late Roman Period and Early Dark Ages

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The Carpathian hinterland was occupied by Romans in AD 106 and abandoned in AD 271, after which date, it was crossed by virtually all Asian migratory tribes reaching Europe. While historically the Roman conquest and subsequent retreat, as well as the migrations, were regarded as having a pure social/political/historical motivations, the recent emergence of high-resolution palaeoclimatic and palaeoenvironmental reconstructions have hinted at a possible climatic and/or environmental conditioning (or at least influence) on these societal developments.

In this paper, we combine qualitative palaeoclimatic reconstructions, maps of past vegetation changes and history data to try to disentangle between environmental impact and cultural processes as factors influencing the dynamics of past human societies in the Carpathian region. Our results show that, generally, rather than being triggered by environmental changes, the dynamics of populations in the region responded to such changes in a muted way, most probably due to the very short periods spent in one place, as they were moving westward.