



**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI
DI CAGLIARI**



DIPARTIMENTO DI LETTERE,
LINGUE E BENI CULTURALI

University of Cagliari

Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage

Campus Sa Duchessa, Via Is Mirrionis 1, Cagliari (Italy)



BETWEEN EAGLES AND DRAGONS

**Identity Negotiation and Ethnic Diversity
in the Ancient World**

**International Conference
17-19 September 2026**



Scientific Committee

Antonio Maria Corda	Piergiorgio Floris	Enrico Emanuele Prodi
Filippo Costantini	Francesca Piccioni	Felice Stama
Donato De Gianni	Antonio Piras	Veronka Szöke
Silvia Einaudi	Elisabetta Poddighe	Tiziana Pontillo

Organising Committee

Francesca Cau
Morena Deriu
Alessandro Giudice
Giorgia Oggiano

**Between Eagles and Dragons:
Identity Negotiation and Ethnic Diversity in the Ancient World**

University of Cagliari, Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage
17-19 September 2026

Call for Papers – Deadline: 31 March 2026

Ethnic diversity was a fundamental aspect of the ancient world, where the presence, migration, and interaction of peoples characterised by distinct ethnic identities shaped societies from West to East. These interactions frequently resulted in coexistence, hybridisation, resistance, inclusion, as well as exclusion, depending on shifting social, political and cultural conditions. Contact between different habits and customs, as well as the exchanges among various codes of values and linguistic systems, gave rise to a new identitarian consciousness.

This conference examines the dynamics of identity negotiation in multi-ethnic contexts across ancient Eurasian societies, including – but not limited to – those of Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, the Germanic frontier, India, and China. It aims to investigate how societies created, imposed, contested, or modified categories of belonging and otherness, considered not as reflections of a single cultural model but as historically situated and unstable constructions.

This conference departs from traditional approaches that treat these worlds as separate historical universes. Instead, we examine how parallel and interconnected processes of ethnic identity negotiation operated across Eurasian societies. By bringing these contexts into dialogue, we ask: Do imperial systems (Roman, Chinese) deploy similar discourses of 'barbarism', and how do their chroniclers encode or question such categories? How do colonial contexts reproduce, challenge, or generate alternative models of multiethnicity? These questions frame our investigation into how normative frameworks, religious customs, political institutions, myths, memories, historiographies, and genealogies shaped — and were contested by — diverse communities across ancient Eurasia.

Through the observation of case studies from various languages, regions, and disciplines, the conference aims to shed light on the complex, often unstable processes through which identities were forged in antiquity, whether under the shadow of Western Eagles or Eastern Dragons, symbols of imperial authority across both ends of the ancient world.

Thematic Axes

Below is a list of potential thematic axes to explore during the conference, while remaining open to further developments:

1. Contested Boundaries and Institutional Exclusion

How did normative frameworks of citizenship construct and police ethnic boundaries? What mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion did institutions deploy, and how were these boundaries transgressed, renegotiated, or destabilised by subordinated groups and borderline figures?

2. Margins and Minorities: Foreigners, Stigma, and Social Exclusion

What strategies of containment, tolerance, or assimilation were deployed by dominant groups, and how did marginalised communities resist, subvert, or strategically conform to these frameworks?

3. Politics of Memory and Genealogies: Competing Narratives of the Past

How did different communities and social groups within multi-ethnic societies construct competing, contradictory narratives of their past? How did colonised, enslaved, or subordinated populations contest and rewrite ethnic mythologies? What silences and erasures characterised ancient historiography's treatment of non-dominant groups?

4. Entangled Worlds: Cultural Exchange and Hybrid Identities

What new forms of linguistic, religious, legal, or symbolic expression emerged from contact zones between East and West, between established powers and emerging identities? How did multilingualism, code-switching, and linguistic hybridity shape new forms of ethnic consciousness? How did communities navigate competing systems of communication and meaning-making?

5. Transgressing Hierarchies: How Foreign and Marginal Elites Negotiated Power

How did individuals and groups marked as 'foreign' or 'barbarian' navigate, appropriate, and contest structures of power? How did they renegotiate their ethnic identity through access to authority, and how did established elites respond to this mobility? What limits and precarity characterised the power of foreign-origin elites?

Disciplinary Fields and Interpretive Approaches

The conference will focus primarily on the following **fields**, while remaining open to other approaches: Greek and Roman history; Greek and Latin language and literature; Classical philology and Byzantine philology; Egyptology and Coptic civilisation; Germanic philology; History, religions, and philosophies of South and Central Asia; Indology and Tibetology, Languages and literatures of China and Southeast Asia. The conference explicitly moves beyond all binary oppositions – “center/periphery,” “civilised/uncivilised,” “insiders/outside,” “male/female” – to explore the fluidity and constant renegotiation of ethnic, cultural, political, and gendered boundaries in ancient Eurasia.

Date and Venue of the Conference

The conference will take place **from 17 to 19 September 2026** at the **Department of Literature, Languages and Cultural Heritage of the University of Cagliari** (Campus Sa Duchessa, Via Is Mirrionis 1, 09123 Cagliari, Italy).

Selected speakers are expected to present **in person**, while participation **via remote connection** will be allowed **only under exceptional circumstances**, to be indicated at the time of proposal submission. The audience will also be able to follow the sessions **online via MS Teams**.

Submission of Proposals

Proposals are invited from researchers at all career stages, with special encouragement for early-career scholars, including PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. Contribution proposals should be sent to **between.eagles.and.dragons@gmail.com** by **31st March 2026**.

The file (in .pdf format) should include an **anonymous abstract of no more than 500 words** and a reference bibliography.

A **brief biographical note**, accompanied by the **title of the proposal**, should be submitted in a separate file.

Each paper (in Italian or English) should last 20 minutes.

The Scientific Committee will evaluate the proposals and announce the selection by the end of April.

Contributions will be published, subject to double-blind peer review.

Between Eagles and Dragons:
negoziiazione identitaria e diversità etnica nel mondo antico

Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Dipartimento di Lettere, Lingue e Beni Culturali

17-19 settembre 2026

Call for Papers – Scadenza: 31 marzo 2026

La diversità etnica fu una componente strutturale del mondo antico. Presenze stabili, migrazioni e interazioni fra gruppi etnici differenti contribuirono a plasmare società e istituzioni dall'Occidente all'Estremo Oriente. Da tali contatti nacquero forme di convivenza e ibridazione, ma anche frizioni, resistenze, pratiche di inclusione e dispositivi di esclusione, in risposta ad assetti sociali, politici e culturali in continuo mutamento. Il confronto fra tradizioni, codici etici e sistemi linguistici diversi favorì inoltre l'emergere di nuove forme di consapevolezza identitaria.

Il convegno intende indagare i processi di negoziazione identitaria in contesti multietnici dell'Eurasia antica – dall'Egitto al mondo greco-romano, dalla frontiera germanica all'India e alla Cina – senza, tuttavia, precludere l'apertura ad altri ambiti. L'obiettivo è analizzare come le società abbiano definito, imposto, contestato o rielaborato categorie di appartenenza e alterità, considerate non come riflessi di modelli culturali univoci, ma come costruzioni storiche situate, dinamiche e instabili.

In contrasto con approcci che trattano questi mondi come universi separati, il convegno si propone di mettere in dialogo esperienze e tradizioni diverse, al fine di osservare affinità, divergenze e possibili connessioni nei processi di costruzione identitaria. Ci si chiede, ad esempio, se e in quale modo grandi sistemi imperiali – come quello romano e quello cinese – abbiano elaborato concezioni comparabili della “barbarie”, e come tali categorie siano state registrate, legittimate o messe in discussione nelle rispettive tradizioni storiografiche. Allo stesso tempo, l'attenzione si concentra sui contesti coloniali e di frontiera, per comprendere quando essi riproducano classificazioni rigide e quando, invece, aprano spazi a configurazioni alternative di convivenza multietnica.

In questa prospettiva comparativa, il convegno analizza norme, pratiche religiose, istituzioni politiche, tradizioni mitiche e genealogiche, memorie collettive e scritture storiografiche quali luoghi privilegiati di costruzione e, spesso, di contestazione dell'identità. A partire da contesti storici e documentari eterogenei, il convegno mira a mettere a fuoco la natura complessa, dinamica e spesso precaria dei processi identitari nell'antichità, *fra aquile e dragoni*, emblemi del potere imperiale alle estremità del mondo antico.

Assi tematici

Il convegno si articola attorno ai seguenti assi tematici, restando aperto a ulteriori sviluppi:

1. Contese di confine ed esclusione istituzionale

In che modo le norme sulla cittadinanza contribuirono a definire, mantenere o contestare confini etnici e sociali? Quali pratiche di inclusione ed esclusione furono messe in atto dalle istituzioni e come tali confini furono attraversati, rinegoziati o messi in crisi da gruppi subordinati e da figure collocate ai margini dell'ordine civico?

2. Margini e minoranze: stranieri, stigma ed esclusione sociale

Quali strategie di controllo furono elaborate dai gruppi dominanti nei confronti di stranieri e minoranze? In che modo le comunità marginalizzate reagirono a tali dinamiche, attraverso forme di resistenza, adattamento strategico o assimilazione selettiva?

3. Politiche della memoria e genealogie: narrazioni concorrenti del passato

In che modo gruppi e comunità diversi all'interno di società multietniche costruirono narrazioni concorrenti del proprio passato? Come popolazioni colonizzate, schiavizzate o subordinate rielaborarono, contestarono o sovvertirono genealogie e mitologie etniche dominanti? Quali silenzi, omissioni o cancellazioni segnano la rappresentazione delle componenti non egemoniche nelle fonti antiche?

4. Scambi culturali e identità ibride

Quali forme di espressione linguistica, religiosa, giuridica o simbolica emersero nel contatto tra culture e sistemi di potere differenti? In che modo multilinguismo, alternanza di codice e pratiche di ibridazione linguistica contribuirono alla formazione di nuove configurazioni identitarie? Come le comunità si orientarono tra sistemi concorrenti di comunicazione e produzione del significato?

5. Gerarchie trasgredite: élites straniere e negoziazione del potere

In che modo individui e gruppi identificati come “stranieri” o “barbari” riuscirono ad accedere a posizioni di autorità o a inserirsi nelle strutture del potere? Come l'esercizio dell'autorità influenzò la rinegoziazione dell'identità etnica e quali reazioni suscitarono tali dinamiche presso le élites consolidate? Quali forme di instabilità e precarietà caratterizzarono il potere delle élites di origine straniera?

Ambiti disciplinari e approcci interpretativi

Il convegno si concentra principalmente sui seguenti **ambiti disciplinari**, senza escludere altri approcci: storia greca e romana; lingua e letteratura greca e latina; filologia classica e filologia bizantina; egittologia e civiltà copta; filologia germanica; storia, religioni e filosofie dell'Asia meridionale e centrale; indologia e tibetologia; lingue e letterature della Cina e del Sud-Est asiatico.

Il convegno intende superare le opposizioni binarie – “centro/periferia”, “civilizzati/incivilizzati”, “interni/esterni”, “maschile/femminile” – con lo scopo di esplorare la fluidità e la continua rinegoziazione dei confini etnici, culturali, politici e di genere nell'Eurasia antica.

Date e sede del convegno

Il convegno si svolgerà in presenza **dal 17 al 19 settembre 2026** presso il **Dipartimento di Letterature, Lingue e Beni Culturali dell'Università di Cagliari** (Campus Sa Duchessa, Via Is Mirrionis 1, 09123 Cagliari, Italia).

I relatori e le relatrici selezionati saranno tenuti a presentare **in presenza**, mentre la partecipazione in modalità telematica sarà ammessa **solo in circostanze eccezionali**, da indicare al momento della presentazione della proposta. Il pubblico potrà seguire gli interventi **anche online** tramite la piattaforma MS Teams.

Presentazione delle proposte

Accogliamo proposte da studiosi e studiosi a tutti i livelli di carriera, con un incoraggiamento particolare per giovani ricercatori, inclusi dottorandi e post-doc. Le proposte devono essere inviate all'indirizzo e-mail **between.eagles.and.dragons@gmail.com** entro il **31 marzo 2026**.

Il file (in formato .pdf) dovrà contenere un **abstract anonimo di massimo 500 parole** e una bibliografia di riferimento.

Si richiede, inoltre, l'invio di **una breve nota biografica sull'autore/autrice**, accompagnata dal titolo della proposta, in un file separato.

Ogni intervento (in italiano o in inglese) avrà una durata di 20 minuti.

Il Comitato Scientifico valuterà le proposte e comunicherà la selezione entro la fine di aprile.

È prevista **la pubblicazione dei contributi**, soggetta a doppio referaggio cieco.

Selected Bibliography

- Amitai, Reuven, and Michal Biran (eds.). 2004. *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*. Vol. 11. Leiden: Brill.
- Assmann, Jan. 2012. *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barfield, Thomas J. 1989. *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Beard, Mary. 2015. *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome*. London: Profile Books.
- Belvedere, Oscar, and Johannes Bergemann (eds.). 2021. *Imperium Romanum: Romanization between Globalization and Colonization*. Palermo: Palermo University Press.
- Brancaccio, Pia. 2007. "Close Encounters: Multicultural Systems in Ancient India." In *On the Cusp of an Era: Art in the Pre-Kuṣāṇa World*, edited by Doris Srinivasan, 385–397. Leiden: Brill.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cimino, Rosa Maria (ed.). 1994. *Ancient Rome and India: Commercial and Cultural Contacts between the Roman World and India*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Cobb, Matthew. 2018. *Rome and the Indian Ocean Trade from Augustus to the Early Third Century CE*. Leiden: Brill.
- Courrier, Cyril, and Julio César Magalhães de Oliveira (eds.). 2022. *Ancient History from Below: Subaltern Experiences and Actions in Context*. London–New York: Routledge.
- Dalrymple, William. 2024. *The Golden Road: How Ancient India Transformed the World*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Davies, William Vivian, and Louise Schofield (eds.). 1995. *Egypt, the Aegean, and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC*. London: British Museum Press.
- Demetriou, Denise. 2012. *Negotiating Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean: The Archaic and Classical Greek Multiethnic Emporia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dench, Emma. 2018. *Empire and Political Culture in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Derks, Ton, and Nico Roymans (eds.). 2009. *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. 2002. *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Di Serio, Chiara. 2024. *Alessandro e i Brahmani: La costruzione di un'alterità ideale dalla Grecia antica al Medioevo*. Roma: Bulzoni.

- Duistermaat, Kim, and Iona Regulski (eds.). 2011. *Intercultural Contacts in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Leuven: Peeters Press.
- Filonik, Jakub, and Janek Kucharski. 2021. "Discourses of Identity in the Ancient World: Preliminary Remarks." *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought* 38(1): 1–5.
- Filonik, Jakub, Christine Plastow, and Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz. 2023. *Citizenship in Antiquity: Civic Communities in the Ancient Mediterranean*. London–New York: Routledge.
- Foxhall, Lin, Hans-Joachim Gehrke, and Nino Luraghi (eds.). 2010. *Intentional History: Spinning Time in Ancient Greece*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Geary, Patrick J. 2001. *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Gehrke, Hans-Joachim. 2007. "Myth, History, and Collective Identity: Uses of the Past in Ancient Greece and Beyond." In *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus*, edited by Nino Luraghi, 286–313. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gehrke, Hans-Joachim. 2022. *The Greeks and Their Histories: Myth, History, and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goetz, Hans-Werner, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter Pohl (eds.). 2003. *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*. Leiden: Brill.
- Gorman, Vanessa B., and Eric W. Robinson (eds.). 2002. *Oikistes: Studies in Constitutions, Colonies, and Military Power in the Ancient World. Offered in Honor of A.J. Graham*. Leiden–Boston: Brill.
- Gruen, Erich S. 1984. *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*. Berkeley–Los Angeles–London: University of California Press.
- Gruen, Erich S. 2005. *Cultural Borrowings and Ethnic Appropriations in Antiquity*. Oriens et Occidens Band 8. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Gruen, Erich S. (ed.). 2011a. *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications.
- Gruen, Erich S. 2011b. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gruen, Erich S. 2020. *Ethnicity in the Ancient World – Did It Matter?*. Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter.
- Hall, Edith. 1989. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Jonathan M. 1997. *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, Jonathan M. 2002. *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heather, Peter. 2009. *Empires and Barbarians: The Fall of Rome and the Birth of Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hingley, Richard. 2005. *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire*. London: Routledge.

- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. "Introduction: Inventing Traditions." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jacobson, Esther. 2022. *The Art of the Scythians: The Interpenetration of Cultures at the Edge of the Hellenic World*. Leiden: Brill.
- Johnson, Janet H. (ed.). 1995. *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Karttunen, Klaus. 1997. *India and the Hellenistic World*. Studia Orientalia 83. Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society.
- Karttunen, Klaus. 2015. *Yonas and Yavanas in Indian Literature*. Studia Orientalia 116. Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society.
- Karttunen, Klaus. 2025. *India and the Roman Empire*. Studia Orientalia 125. Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society.
- Kemp, Barry. 2006. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Liu, Xinru. 1988. *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges A.D. 1–600*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Liverani, Mario. 1990. *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600–1100 B.C.* Padova: Sargon.
- Lomas, Kathryn (ed.). 2004. *Greek Identity in the Western Mediterranean: Papers in Honour of Brian Shefton*. Leiden–Boston: Brill.
- Loprieno, Antonio. 1988. *Topos und Mimesis: Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur*. Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 48. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Luce, Jean-Marc (ed.). 2007. *Identités ethniques dans le monde grec antique*. Pallas 73. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail.
- Malkin, Irad (ed.). 2001. *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*. Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia 5. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Malkin, Irad. 2011. *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Masterson, Mark, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, and James Robson (eds.). 2015. *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*. London–New York: Routledge.
- Mattingly, David J. 2011. *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- McInerney, Jeremy (ed.). 2014. *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Malden, MA–Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

- Menozzi, Olivia. 2024. *From Sabin to Roman: Cultural Change and Hybridization in Central Adriatic Italy*. Oxford: Archaeopress.
- Most, Glenn W. 2021. "Ancient Greece and the Identity of Modern Europe." In *Concepts and Functions of Philhellenism: Aspects of a Transcultural Movement*, edited by Martin Vöhler, Stella Alekou, and Miltos Pechlivanos, 275–286. Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter.
- Oren, Eliezer D. (ed.). 1997. *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania.
- Panagiotopoulos, Diamantis. 2006. "Foreigners in Egypt in the Time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III." In *Thutmose III: A New Biography*, edited by Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor, 370–412. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Pohl, Walter, and Helmut Reimitz (eds.). 1998. *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*. Leiden: Brill.
- Price, Jonathan J., Margalit Finkelberg, and Yuval Shahar (eds.). 2021. *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations. New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Redford, Donald B. 1992. *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Roosens, Eugeen. 1989. *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis*. *Frontiers of Anthropology* 5. London–Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Scheidel, Walter (ed.). 2022. *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schneider, Thomas. 2010. "Foreigners in Egypt: Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Context." In *Egyptian Archaeology*, edited by Willeke Wendrich, 143–163. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Smith, Stuart Tyson. 2003. *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire*. London: Routledge.
- Stoneman, Richard. 2019. *The Greek Experience of India: From Alexander to the Indo-Greeks*. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Terrenato, Nicola. 2019. *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy: Elite Negotiation and Family Agendas*. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vanacker, Wouter, and Arjan Zuiderhoek. 2016. *Imperial Identities in the Roman World*. London: Routledge.
- Ward, William A. 1994. "Foreigners Living in the Village." In *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir el Medina*, edited by Leonard H. Lesko, 61–85. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Woolf, Gregory. 2011. *Tales of the Barbarians: Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West*. Chichester–Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.