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## Walchen, Vlachs and Welsh: A Germanic ethnonym and its many uses

In the early Middle Ages a new ethnonym emerged, which in many variations proved persistent over many centuries and had a renewed impact on identification processes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> The names *Walchen*, Welsh, Walloons, Vlachs and Walachians are all derived from it. The term originally came from the Celtic ethnonym *Volcae*<sup>2</sup>, but when it appears in early medieval sources such as chronicles, glosses or place names, it was mostly used to describe the neighbouring Romans, with whom early medieval speakers of Germanic languages had contact in many regions of Europe.<sup>3</sup> Later, the name was also used in Slavic languages and in Greek, and sometimes it could be transformed from an outside designation into a self-identification. Thus we have variations of *w(e)alh* in Old Saxon / Old English, denoting a Briton, Middle Dutch *wale* for Frenchman, Old High German *wal(a)h* for Italian or Frenchman, Old Norse *valir* for northern Frenchmen, *vlah* for Italians or Vlachs in Slavic languages, *olasz* for Italians and *oláh* for Rumanians in Hungarian and *bláchoi* for Vlachs in Greek.

The emergence of this onomastic field from the British Isles and the Germanic-Roman contact zone along the Rhine, in the Alps and to the Balkans has, for the first time, been treated comprehensively in the 2017 collaborative volume '*Walchen, Romani und Latini. Variationen einer nachrömischen Gruppenbezeichnung zwischen Britannien und dem Balkan*'.<sup>4</sup> It offers a broad overview of the state of research and of new perspectives on the use of the name *wala(h)* in its variations and alternative forms of self-designation and outside designation for Romans in the early Middle Ages and beyond. The contributions focus especially on the relationship between self-perceptions of Romans and perceptions of Romans by others in different parts of Europe. Based on this, conclusions are drawn about the continuity of 'Romans' or speakers of Romance languages and their social integration from the early Middle Ages onwards.

Philological and historical contributions in the volume complement each other in their examination of four linguistic areas: the southeastern European *wala(h)*-variations *vlach-*, *blach-*; central Europe and its *walch-*, *welsch-* appellations; self-desig-

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1 This article gives an overview over the collective volume: Pohl, Walter / Hartl, Ingrid / Haubrichs, Wolfgang (eds.) (2017), *Walchen, Romani und Latini. Variationen einer nachrömischen Gruppenbezeichnung zwischen Britannien und dem Balkan*, Vienna. All articles quoted are published in this volume. The research leading to these results received funding from the European Research Council in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–13) under the ERC grant agreement No. 269591.

2 Haubrichs 2017, 82.

3 Kramer 2017a, 202.

4 Pohl/Hartl/Haubrichs 2017.