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L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba, *Rure vivere in Moesia Inferiore. La population dans le milieu rural d'une province périphérique de l'Empire romain*, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018, ISBN 978-3-447-11062-4.

L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba's book is an exhaustive and comprehensive overview of the population attested in Moesia Inferior during the Roman period. Besides putting together all sources on this matter, it offers an analytic insight into the social, economic and cultural realities of the province's rural inhabitants.

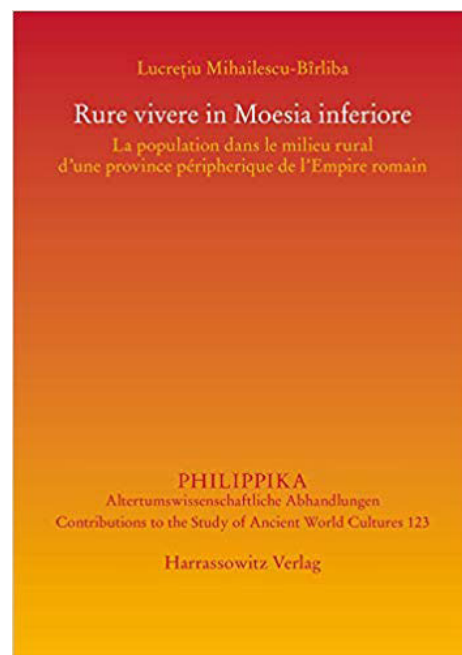
From the *Introduction*, the author explains the three main possible approaches for analysing the Roman rural milieus: based on literary and juridical sources and thus focused on the status of the habitations, based on epigraphy, or based on archaeology and dealing mostly with spatial structures and what they indicate on economical and social development. The present book is mostly part of the second category, extracting its data from epigraphy, with a focus on prosopography, but it also discusses status and jurisdiction, as well as archaeological situations, when the need arises. As well, the introduction presents much welcomed terminological clarifications and overviews on *vici* and *villae* throughout the Empire and the adjacent bibliography (p. 2-6). Equally very useful for the reader is the overview on the historiography of the rural environment of Moesia Inferior.

The main part of the book is formed of three parts, dealing, respectively, with the population of the seaside, the region between the Danube and the Black Sea and the settlements from the Danube shore; it ends with a conclusive chapter synthetizing the data formerly presented. All first three parts, though the sources are not linear in quantity and quality, seek to respond to the same sets of research questions: What is the population dynamics? Which was the status of the colonists, when and how did they come? How were interactions shaped during the Late Empire? How deeply 'Romanized' was Moesia Inferior's rural environment and could we talk about any model of Romanization for the area?

The first section of the monograph focuses on *The population from the rural territories of the Greek cities from the left shore of the Black Sea*. Namely, the chapter deals with the territories of Histria, Tomis, Callatis and Odessos. *Vicus Ulmetum*, situated half way between Histria and Capidava, is considered by the author as pertaining to the territory of Histria, based mainly on an analogy with *vicus Quintionis*, part of the Histrian territory and also born through the colonisation of *cives Romani et Bessi consistentes* (p. 36). We will not detail all the local case studies presented in the book, only remark a couple of peculiarities. The territory of Tomis stands out through the presence of Bithynians, located here, most probably, out of economic reasons (p. 51). One common feature of the rural territory is the massive enough presence of Thracians, most of them coming from the south of the Danube and, interesting enough, many of the families bearing mixed names, so proving the Romanization tendencies which existed from the first decades of Roman dominion over the area

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The second part deals with *The population from the rural territories of the cities situated between the Danube and the Black Sea*. The epigraphy is again bilingual (Latin and Greek), as it was the case of the previously discussed area as well, and onomastics indicates the presence of Thracians, Greeks, Dacians and 'Romans' alike. The first case is Ibdia; in this context, the difficult matter of establishing a *vicus*'s juridical appurtenance is discussed. An interesting situation is that of *civitas Ausdecensium* (p. 101-102), a community attested by a single epigraphic source, that was most probably, a peregrine community, turned into a *civitas* by the Romans, at some unknown point in time. Marcianopolis brings forth a complex state of affairs and underlines the huge diversity of the area (p. 108): even though we have attested a division of the territory into *regiones*, similar to the hinterland of Histria, it also conserves the rural structures of the indigenous population, as we have an *emporion* and *vici* inhabited by Thracians. Another attested *regio* is Montana, with its rural organization and administrative forms closely connected to the imperial mine exploitations from the area.

The third part concerns *The population from the rural territories of the cities situated on the Danube shore*. The first case study of the area is *vicus Classicorum*, proved by the author to pertain to Halmyris, developed mostly around the families of the soldiers serving in the fleet. Other important cities of the region are Noviodunum (which became a *municipium* under the Severan dynasty) and Troesmis, where the *territorium* was divided between *canabae*, civilian settlements and *villae*. A remarkable feature of the local population was the presence of descendants from the first generation of militaries, arrived here from Italy and Asia Minor. An intriguing case is Capidava, where most information come from Late Antiquity vestiges and thus we do not know the city's status during the Principate (p. 197). Nonetheless, its rural territory presents mixed forms of organization, with local *loci* administered by *principes*, as well as Roman-model organized entities, with attested *magistri*.

The fourth part of the book is more analytical and deals with a couple of general features and realities of *The social, political, economical and cultural life in rural Moesia Inferior*. The veterans, coming from the troops of *Moesi*, or having settled here from other provinces, are an important part of local society and live all over the province, in Roman status settlements, as well as in peregrine, mainly indigenous, ones. Many of them have properties in the province, but veterans explicitly attested as *magistri* lack (p. 311), although they are attested as actively involved in the local administration in other ways. As well, other members of the administrative staffs seem to be descendants of first generation soldiers and veterans. The soldiers are a very solid epigraphic presence too. After Claudius, the area became an important recruitment pool, with the peaks of the phenomenon during Trajan (Dacian and Parthian wars), Hadrian (Judean war) and the Severans (the recruitment for

praetorian troops and the fleet becomes constant during the period).

Another interesting population category is the inhabitants of the many *villae* – owners and administrative personnel alike (p. 339). 27 *villae* are attested epigraphically on 32 inscriptions; only 8 of them are written in Greek (one is bilingual) and come, with one sole exception, from the territory of Tomis. Thus, the language of these small communities, as well as their administrative patterns, is Latin and respectively Roman. The recorded owners are a senator, local notabilities, veterans and soldiers, while the administration (*actores, vilici*) is, expectedly, mainly formed of slaves and freedmen.

In the cultural realm, an important local feature is the linguistic and onomastic interaction between Thracian and Roman names and how Romanization worked in this regard. The most relevant feature in this direction is the existence on many mixed names, as well as of families with mixed names, proving interaction, assimilation and permeability of the local and 'migrant' groups alike.

The colonization of the rural environment was directly influenced by the presence of veterans and of people having direct economical interests in the area. There are fewer indigenous rural administration forms attested compared to the Germanies or the Gauls, as well as fewer Thracian and Dacian names than the natives of the mentioned provinces. All in one, we cannot talk about a pre-defined model of Romanization and colonization which worked/were applied in Moesia Inferior, it is natural, dynamic and adjusted to local realities.

One of the book's strengths is the multitude of case studies and prosopographic accounts, which help the reader form an inside opinion on the realities described by the author. This is enforced by the tables present at the end of every sub-chapter, which systematize the information on the attested population and put easily identifiable references at the disposable of the reader. Equally, the map from the beginning of the book offers handy geographical contextualization.

Concluding, the book offers a general sense of very solid documentation and provides all instruments for understanding the population – and the habitation, in general – of the rural areas of Moesia Inferior. As the monographic researches of rural areas, especially at the scale of a whole province, are still historiographical underrepresented, *Rure vivere in Moesia Inferiore* is a more than welcomed example and an excellent working tool for any academic interested in the area.

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