

Reviews

ALEXANDRU POPA, UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZU DEN RÖMISCH-BARBARISCHEN KONTAKTEN ÖSTLICH DER RÖMISCHEN PROVINZ DACIA

ANTIQUITATIS Reihe 3

ABHNADLUNGEN ZUR VOR-UND FRÜHGESCHICHTE, ZUR KLASSISCHEN UND PROVINZIAL-RÖMISCHEN ARCHÄOLOGIE UND ZUR GESCHICHTE DES ALERTUMS, Band 47, Bonn 2015: Dr. Rudolf Habelt, 279 pgs., 130 figures, 58 plates, ISBN 978-3-7749-3884-7

Our report below regards the issue of a monograph, which will most definitely be highly appealing to the scholars of Roman archaeology. Its title is *Untersuchungen zu den römisch-barbarischen Kontakten Östlich der römischen Provinz Dacia* (*Studies on the Roman-Barbarian contacts east the Roman province of Dacia*) and is authored by the renowned scholar Al. Popa, published by the prestigious publishing house Dr. Rudolf Habelt of Bonn. The volume is, we must emphasize, as mentioned in the preface, the improved variant of the habilitation thesis which the author defended with the Rheinische Friedrich-Universität Bonn in 2013. Previously, Al. Popa published several articles and studies approaching various aspects of this topic¹.

As it results from the abstract, the volume is composed of the following: 1. *Introduction* (p. 1-10); 2-6. Five chapters (p. 11-176); 7. *Synthesis* (p. 177-198); to which add: 8. *List of finds* (p. 199-212); 9. *References* (p. 213-279) and 10. *Figures and Plates*.

In the introduction, the author briefly discusses the purpose and main objectives of the study, the chronological (end of the 1st century BC – second half of the 3rd century AD) and geographical frame of the work, underlining at the same time the importance of the research of the contacts between the Roman world and the Barbarians via the Roman “imports” in the *Barbaricum*, in general, and the eastern and south-Carpathian areas in particular.

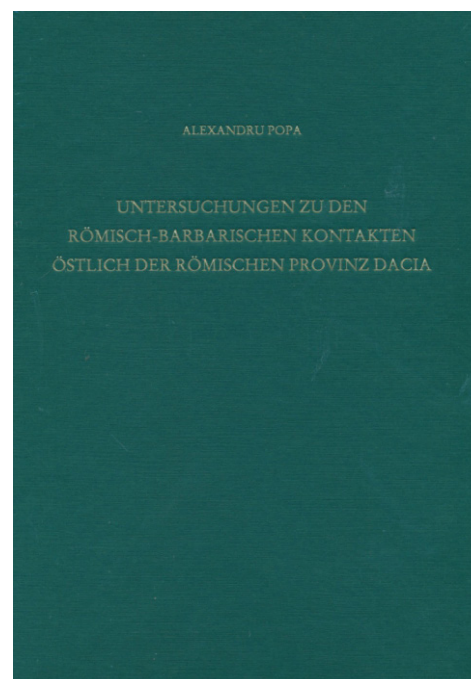
In the first chapter (2), titled “Die Barbaren” (“the Barbarians”) (p. 11-48), the author presents general information on the populations and cultural groups specific to the east and south-Carpathian areas by the end of the 1st century BC – second half of the 3rd century AD: the Geto-Dacians, the Costoboci and the Lipița culture, inhumation graves assigned to the German culture on the Upper Dniester, the Carpi, the Chilia-Militari group, the Etulia group, the “late Scythian” culture in the north-west of the Black Sea and the Lower Dniester and the cultural group of the nomad peoples (the Sarmatians).

Within the context of the first chapter, we wish to underline a few interesting views that Al. Popa expresses concerning the so-called Sarmatian culture. According to the scholar, until present, the specialty literature makes no difference between the Sarmatian tribes mentioned by the written ancient sources and the “Sarmatian culture” as a proper archaeological culture (p. 44). Moreover, based on the written classical sources, the author maintains, these populations were assigned only funerary features, disregarding certain finds

¹ POPA 2004; POPA 2007; POPA 2009; POPA/CIOBANU 2003.

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in Muntenia² and the Republic of Moldova (p. 45, nota 343), suggesting the presence of settlements/sites which belonged to these populations (p. 45).

In the following chapter (3), titled “Die Römer und ihre Reichgrenze an der unteren Donau und in Dacia” (“The Romans and their border by the Lower Danube and in Dacia”) (p. 49-58), Al. Popa examines the emergence and structure of the Roman border in this region. The author establishes to this effect, four stages for the establishment and evolution of the Roman limes: 1. the imperial period until the reign of Domitian; 2. the Trajanic phase; 3. the period of Hadrian’s rule; 4. the final period.

The third chapter (4), called “Die Numismatik: Die römischen Fundmünzen als Quelle für die Untersuchungen der römisch-barbarischen Kontakte nördlich der unteren Donau” (“Numismatics: the Roman coin finds as source for the study of the Roman-Barbarian contacts north the Danube”) (p. 59-60), tackles the Roman coin finds dated between the end of the 1st century BC and AD 275 in the south and east-Carpathian regions. The author specifies that compared to bronze coins, those in silver predominate. Furthermore, Al. Popa notes that, when originating from most certain finds, many come from the area stretching between the Siret and the Eastern Carpathians, the majority from the settlements assigned to the Poieniști-Vârteșcoi culture (p. 60). Within the same context, the researcher assumes that the relatively large number of the silver coins mirrors in fact the external Roman policy in this region. Thus, the author agrees, they might have reached the area as subsidies, later as “assets” for maintaining peace in the region (p. 60).

In the following chapter (5), called “Die Schriftquellen: Die Beziehungen der Römer zu den Nachbarn jenseits der moesisch-dakischen Reichgrenze im Lichte der römischen Schriftquellen” (“The written sources: the Roman relations with the neighbours past the Moesian-Dacian border in the light of the written Roman sources”) (p. 61-65), presents general information regarding the Roman written sources on the contacts between the Romans and the Barbarians north the Lower Danube. According to the author, the Roman expansion in the Lower Danube region starts under Octavian Augustus (p. 61), the first military operations occurring in 29-28 BC, when the tribes of the Bastarnae, whose archaeological remains in the east-Carpathian area were identified with the Poieniști-Lukașevka culture³, attempted to mass migrate south the Danube. Beginning with this episode and until Dacia was abandoned by the Romans (between 260 and 271 AD), several military conflicts between the Barbarians and the empire took place in the mentioned area. Worthy of note is the author’s observation regarding the information preserved in the Hunt papyrus⁴, mentioning that Piroboridava and Buridava, identified in the specialty literature with the fortified settlements at

Poiana (Galați county)⁵ and Stolniceni (Vâlcea county)⁶, were part, for a short while, from the Roman province of Moesia Inferior (p. 63).

The fifth chapter (6), called “Die Archäologie: Provinzialrömische Funde aus dem Gebiet jenseits des moesisch-dakischen Limes” (“Archaeology: the provincial-Roman finds beyond the Moesian-Dacian limes”) (p. 76-176), is the basic division of the monograph. The author analyses in detail the other categories of pieces of provincial-Roman origin discovered in the Barbarian environment in the south and east-Carpathian region as following: the fine pottery, the amphorae, the silver wares, the bronze wares, the glass recipients and *flabella*. Each group of items is approached by the following structure: current state of research, typology, geographical and cultural diffusion, production centres and chronology.

In the Synthesis (7) (p. 177-198), Al. Popa discusses several aspects targeting the subject at hand. Firstly, the researcher analyses the chronology and dynamics of the Roman imports flow to the south and east-Carpathian region. To this effect, the author highlights two broad chronological phases (1. end of the 1st century BC – early 2nd century AD; 2. end of the 2nd century – first half of the 3rd century AD) when the Roman origin products entered this area. In the first phase, the archaeologist notes, Roman imports are more frequent nearby the Prut and the Dniester, while during the second phase, they comprise mostly the sub-Carpathian area (p. 177-178).

Another topic intensely debated in the synthesis of this study is how the provincial-Roman merchandise entered the region, the author underlining the following possibilities /paths: trade, production of Roman goods in the *Barbaricum* (the presence of artisans), local copies, war spoils, pays for various jobs, subsidies and payments to keep the peace in the region, diplomatic gifts and via individuals who lived both in and outside the province.

Further there, the author approaches other aspects regarding this topic, like for instance the Roman imports and the local power centres, the Romanisation, the external policy of the Roman empire during the existence of the province of Dacia etc.

The volume ends with the list of finds (p. 199-213) and the references (p. 213-279), which comprises works and excavation reports that the author analysed, figures and plates.

Summing up the above, the work is of a special scientific interest, firstly for those concerned with the Roman period. Undoubtedly, the monograph that Al. Popa wrote shall open the path to more clear explanations of the phenomena and cultural-historical processes occurring in the south and east-Carpathian area during the early Roman period. We can only congratulate our colleague for this exceptional study.

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⁵ VULPE 2003.

⁶ BERCIU 1981.

² Gheorghe Alexandru Niculescu, „Die sarmatische Kultur in Zusammenhang der kaiserzeitlichen archäologischen Funde aus Muntenien – unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Funde von Tirgușor“, der Aufsatz vorgestellt zur Tagung Kontakt – Kooperation – Konflikt. Germanen und Sarmaten zwischen dem 1. Und 4. Jahrhundert nach Christus, Neumünster, Marburg, 12.-16. Februar 1998.

³ BABEȘ 1993.

⁴ FINK 1971.

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