

## Book Reviews

**Victor Cojocaru, Annamária-Izabella Pázsint (eds.),** *Migration and Identity in Eurasia: from Ancient Times to the Middle Ages*, Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2021.

The collective volume reviewed below comprises twelve articles that revolve around the concepts of "migration" and "identity". Most of the papers have been presented at the international conference entitled *Migrations and Identity in European History: Communities, Connections, Conflicts*, held in 2019 within the framework of a larger research project coordinated by the Romanian Academy branch from Iași. The conference had three panels, the presentations being grouped thematically and ordered chronologically. Thus, this book comprises studies connected to the subject of the first panel, which makes it the inaugural volume of a tripartite series.

Let's start from the beginning: the *Preface* (p. 7-12). The editors commence by enumerating the various recent directions chosen by researchers when approaching the "topical concepts" of migration and identity from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. The terms and concepts are not defined, a discussion on the relevance of these directions is not proposed, an overview of these approaches is not given. The reader is simply being redirected towards the appropriate bibliography, a choice blamed by the editors on the "requested space limits". As such, the book lacks an appropriate introduction.

The very brief contextualization of the book is followed by the description of the project within which the conference and the editing of the volume took place. After providing the reader this information, the editors continued by pinpointing the aims and results of this collaboration. According to V. Cojocaru and A. I. Pázsint, the goal of the contributors was to bring to the table the most recent approaches and debates that concern migration and the impact it had on the communities their research revolves around. By focusing on various sources, be they literary, epigraphical, numismatic, iconographical or archaeological, and by underlining the nature of the interpretations these sources were subjected to during years, the authors managed to exchange ideas and propose new ways (*i.e.* "methods and frameworks") of looking at the peoples of the past. Or, nowhere in the book is the reader provided with an overview of the conclusions that were reached by the contributors. As such, the book lacks an appropriate ending.

It may seem as if this conclusion was drawn too hastily. However, once the reader gets to this part of the *Preface*, he expects to see what was the ultimate common goal of such a collaboration. Were there no commonalities found between the methods of approaching certain types of sources from different periods and areas studied by the authors? Did the exchange of the various perspectives, theories and methods that were proposed, applied and discussed by one researcher, not prove to be helpful to other scholars specialized in other periods and cultures who participated at the conference? Was the conference a simple medium where various unconnected situations were presented, or did it help each of the participants to gain new insight on the issues of migration of individuals and groups, or on the exchange of ideas and products inherent to this type of mobility?

A real (and necessary) analysis of the outcomes of the conference was replaced by the editors with a "systematic overview" of the studies that comprise the volume. However, if the "requested space limits" were so restrictive, why did the authors waste the few pages they had to summarize the contributions (in some cases, by simply paraphrasing the conclusions of authors)? This synopsis is especially redundant since every paper from this book is provided with an abstract in both English and German.

Therefore, it becomes clear that the reader should look for the novelty brought by the various new approaches regarding mobility and its implications for past identities in each separate article. Here lies the good part of the volume: although no real collective effort to define a framework within which to examine migration is apparent, and the fact that the contributions are connected by a very thin thread – in the sense that they revolve around the common concepts of migration, mobility, exchange, and the identities which permeate the analyses of such phenomena –, almost all of these individual studies represent original and relevant contributions.

Before proceeding with the description of the contributions, one other problem has to be pinpointed. The articles were arranged according to the chronological criterion, but this has no relevance in the economy of the book. If the editors would have chosen to group them based on the nature and chronology of the main types of data used by the authors, it would have been easier for the reader to notice that specific sources (*e.g.* literary, epigraphical, archaeological and historiographical ones) from a given chronological interval pose similar problems and require certain methodological approaches. This being the case, the contributions will be presented below by disregarding the order proposed by the editors.

Both David Braund (p. 21-42) and Marta Oller Guzmán (p. 43-53) analyzed ancient literary Greek sources, but from very different perspectives. In the first case, Braund explored the ideas of Herodotus and other authors regarding the origin and ethnicity of peoples from the Pontic coastlands, mainly the Colchians and Thracians. It is a very complicated and multilayered examination of how the Greeks understood and integrated the history of neighboring populations, the result of which is an intricate portrait of the interplay between various traditions, mythical tales of migration, preconceptions of the ancient authors and the information (be it factual or fictitious) of ethnographic nature they obtained during their interactions with the members of non-Greek communities.

On the other hand, M. Oller Guzmán brought together various accounts of the fears, anxieties and other feelings such as compassion, pity or envy, of both the Greek colonists and the natives from the lands the Greeks wished (or badly needed) to settle. The author provided the reader with an immersive experience, allowing him to understand the feelings and attitudes that were triggered by mobility, and the interactions between people during the waves of Greek colonization.

Therefore, both authors showed how much information about the mentality and perceptions (sometimes of a very personal, intimate nature) can be extracted from ancient texts, if one looks critically and carefully at these sources and correlates those accounts with other types of data.

On the other hand, Mustafa H. Sayar (p. 75-85), who also looked at ancient texts to talk about migration, did not manage to immerse the reader into the microcosms he described in a similar manner. M. H. Sayar set out to examine mass deportations during Antiquity from the perspective of their legal and social consequences. He provided various examples of such practices, but discussed them unequally, as he did not comment on the outcomes of forced migration in all the cases. The author focused exceedingly on elements of political history and on the legal consequences, which allowed him to see that this practice is connected with the "exercise of power", but this observation was clearly expressed only in the abstract, the latter even containing some information that is not to be found in the text. Additionally, the conclusive paragraph comprises some general ideas regarding the consequences of migration in Antiquity that could not have been directly inferred by the reader from the text itself. As such, when reading M. H. Sayar's article, one feels as if he is looking at a puzzle only half done, while the rest of the pieces are still in the box.

A study similar to that of M. H. Sayar is the one of Sergei G. Bocharov (p. 269-284), as they both focus on political history, even though the latter does not include data from primary written sources, and is

preoccupied with the history of the Crimean Peninsula during the Middle Ages. As such, Bocharov offered a detailed account of the stages of the inclusion of the said region in the Golden Horde state, including some interesting considerations regarding the ways through which various outsiders (the Byzantine Empire, the Mongols or the Genoese and Venetian traders, etc.) either imposed their political control and administrative system, or tried to forge relations with the local political institutions based on economic and commercial needs. The author also mentioned some of the consequences such events had on the local population during several centuries of interactions (both peaceful and violent in nature), such as the influence of various cultures ("Byzantine", "Latin", Islamic) on architecture, art, technology or religion. However, the latter are discussed at a smaller degree. Therefore, both M. H. Sayar and S. G. Bocharov's papers have interesting premises and are very rich in what is mostly factual data. However, too little attention has been paid to the actual impact of movement and interrelations of ancient and medieval populations, given the scope of this volume.

Other ancient written sources, namely the epigraphical ones, were subjected to analysis by Victor Cojocaru (p. 55-73) and Rada Varga, in collaboration with Annamária-Izabella Pázsint (p. 115-138). Based on both previous and ongoing research projects, V. Cojocaru's article revolves around the civic, regional, Greek and non-Greek identities conveyed by the honorary decrees found in the Greek *poleis* from the North-Western Pontic area. The author focused specifically on the evolution of the institution of *proxenia* in the Pontic region during several centuries, to reveal various (and sometimes overlapping) types of interactions, such as those between Greeks and foreigners, or those among the citizen body and its benefactors, but also the interrelationships of the Pontic *poleis*. As a result, V. Cojocaru showed that even though Pontic institutions are deeply rooted in the traditions from the area of origin of the Greek colonists, they evolved differently from the rest of the Greek world, which can be explained by the regional differences and the economic networks of the Black Sea cities.

On the other hand, R. Varga and A.-I. Pázsint focused on a common phenomenon in the Roman world, namely "labor migration". They selected, from a very large corpus of inscriptions from the Western provinces, but also from Moesia Inferior, since it is from the Greek speaking area and is integrated in different networks, the inscriptions that mention the craftsmen, for which they proposed "prosopographical reconstructions". Besides the various remarks regarding Roman occupational epigraphy in general, the identification of regional specificities, or the prosopographical commentaries dedicated to

individuals who moved to other places to practice their craft, the authors pinpointed a very important identity characteristic of the artisans, that is revealed by their inscriptions: they insisted on showing their affiliation to a professional network, school, or area of origin which is known for practicing their craft, to indicate their competences and legitimacy.

Both papers described above are excellent examples of how local, regional, ethnic, professional and other identities can be distinguished in inscriptions, and how much can be understood about the individual and community histories through comprehensive examination on both micro- and macroregional level. The authors also showed that the study of epigraphy is useful when analyzing mobility and identity, their articles responding harmoniously to the desiderata of the book.

Although the archaeological sources are just as fragmented and incomplete as the epigraphical ones, much can be said about ancient individuals or groups and about their movements when the analysis of archaeological finds is correlated with other data. The volume comprises three different case studies that focus on different categories of archaeological features or artifacts, thus providing distinct types of historical information.

In his study, which is a shorter version of a previous article published in the Russian language, Mikhail Treister (p. 87-114) put to test the hypothesis stating that a series of burials from "Asian Sarmatia" dated between the 2nd and the 1st c. BC contained objects that migrated, together with their owners from the East, since many of the artifacts seem to have counterparts in Central Asia. The author kept an open mind and included all the arguments that either support or invalidate the theory. As such, by studying the objects in question based on their shape, decoration and manufacturing technique, and by rechecking every suggested analogy, he disproved the theory, showing that only some of the objects indicate Eastern influences, while it is also possible that a small number of nomads from Central Asia migrated or interacted with the Sarmatians from this region.

Lucian Munteanu, Ștefan Honcu, and Dan Aparaschivei (p. 139-165) examined five coins they found during the excavation of a so-called "Free Dacian" settlement from Western Moldavia, dated in the 2nd-3rd c. AD. Since they were discovered in closed contexts, their dating is rather clearer than that of their counterparts from contemporary settlements. Therefore, the authors took the opportunity to discuss the distribution of Roman Imperial coins from all similar settlements east of Roman Dacia, which makes this study very useful. The interpretation of the plated or pierced coins from this area of *Barbaricum* is interesting, and it shows that

an in-depth analysis of the role of coins at this periphery of Dacia may prove to be an promising line of inquiry. Unfortunately, the authors did not elaborate on the issues of migration or identity, which constitute the topics of this volume.

The last type of archaeological sources subjected to analysis are the burials. Lavinia Grumeza (p. 167-200) investigated ten burials from a Sarmatian cemetery from Botoșani county, six of them having been published before, but in an unsatisfactory manner. Although the first part is more like an excavation report, it is useful since the author added new information, including available bioarchaeological data. The second part of the article is very inciting, because L. Grumeza discussed the female (and ethnic) identities expressed by their grave goods – namely the elements of dress, but also their skeletal remains, which showed that some women had their skull intentionally deformed. As such, the author emphasized the identities conveyed by burials of the Roxolani that migrated from the East, and who have preserved some of the traditions from their place of origin.

The article of Dobos Alpár (p. 201-227) stands out from the studies reviewed above, because it is historiographical and it revolves around the concept of migration in post-Roman Transylvania. The author provided a critical overview of the narratives regarding this subject, placed them in context and analyzed the faults in the reasoning of Hungarian and Romanian archaeologists. Although no solutions to the problem are provided, this investigation responds to a very poignant need of debating this subject, since new theoretical and methodological frameworks have to be introduced in the study of the archaeology of Transylvania during Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages.

Up until now, we have seen what the analysis of various types of primary or secondary written sources and of archaeological materials can tell about the identities related more or less to the migration of people and objects. Additionally, the book contains two papers that focus on these issues by combining more types of sources. Gleb V. Kubarev (p. 229-249) concerned himself with the origin of the European Avars. As such, he showed that by combining written and archaeological information, but also anthropological, genetic and linguistic data with various results of palaeoclimatic, dendrochronological and radiocarbon analyses, the supposed Inner Asian (Rouran) origin of the Avars from Europe can be confirmed and even nuanced, since the corroboration of the data can even suggest some of the motives for their migration to the West.

On the other hand, Dilnoza Duturaeva (p. 251-267), who also combined a variety of sources, including archaeometric studies, took the reader on a journey through time and space, by following the routes and

the traders that brought Baltic (but not exclusively) amber to China in the pre-Modern times. The author discussed in length how migration of people and commodities can influence other cultures and create new identities, while indicating the various routes and connections between very distant peoples. This contribution is one of the best from this book, since D. Duturaeva managed to use an enormous amount of data to create an elaborate image of how migration contributes to the appearance of new ideas.

In conclusion, most papers comprised in the book represent remarkable contributions. However, as shown above, some of the authors used the concepts of "migration" and "identity" as a pretext for different types of studies, although that does not necessarily minimize their relevance. Overall, the contributors have fulfilled the desiderata expressed by the editors in the *Preface*, including one omitted until now: the conference and, thus, the book was meant to bridge the gap between researchers from the West and the East. And that, it did, not only because the contributions are written in an accessible language, namely English, but also because the authors tried to analyze various types of data (historical, archaeological, etc.) from the micro- and macroregional perspective, while the amount of information included and discussed in every article is impressive.

As stated in the first pages of this review, the book lacks cohesion in the sense that there is neither an introductory, nor a concluding chapter, which would elaborate on the ultimate common goals and the outcome of this collaboration. For this reason, the book is heterogenous and the articles are connected only by the concepts proposed for analysis and meditation. Since similar collective projects usually result in volumes that comprise disparate articles connected only by a common topic, it appears that this practice is considered normal. However, one might be right in thinking that the scope of such collaborations is to contour one or more theoretical and methodological framework(s) that would make it easier for researchers from different countries to work together when studying migration and its relation to identities from a specific time period and/or a vaster area. Nevertheless, this should not be taken as criticism, but as a reflection on the relevance of collaborations at a such large scale, since the importance of each individual contribution from this book cannot be refuted.

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**Rada Varga**, *Microistorii din Dacia romană*, (Micro-histories from Roman Dacia), Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2022.

Le sujet principal de cet ouvrage est la recherche et l'exposition de plusieurs thèmes concernant la vie sociale dans la Dacie romaine. Récemment publié, l'ouvrage est le résultat de plusieurs études menées par la chercheuse scientifique de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, Rada Varga, qui tout au long de sa vie s'est occupée de la recherche sur certaines catégories de personnes de l'Empire romain. Il convient de noter que cet ouvrage n'est pas scientifique, mais s'adresse au grand public, ayant ainsi pour objectif principal l'exposition de la recherche scientifique dans un langage accessible à tous, faisant connaître une partie de la vie sociale des personnes qui vivaient à l'époque romaine.

D'un point de vue structurel, ce livre est composé de 11 chapitres, à savoir: I. Introduction. Dacie romaine (p. 12-19); L'intégration de la Dacie à l'Empire romain ou les limites du multiculturalisme (p. 20-31); Qui étaient les habitants de la Dacie romaine? (p. 32-39); À la recherche des personnes derrière les noms (p. 40-49); Les Daces après la conquête, en Dacie et dans l'Empire (p. 50-60); Exploitation de l'or: les Illyriens d'Alburnus Maior (p. 61-69); L'élite de l'armée roumaine: *ala I Batavorum Milliaria* (p. 70-81); Femmes romaines de Dacie (p. 82-89); La religion de Dacie, entre magie et réalité sociale (p. 90-101); Marginalité et criminalité (p. 102-110); Mini-biographies de la Dacie romaine: Aurelius Aquila et Herculanius (p. 111-120). Suivent un court épilogue (p. 121) et quatre annexes: un glossaire qui comprend l'explication de plusieurs termes latins (p. 123-125), le système monétaire romain et les principales monnaies (p. 126), la liste des empereurs romains (p. 127-128) et médaillons biographiques des auteurs anciens cités dans le texte (p. 129-131). Le livre contient diverses illustrations, cartes ou images de bonne qualité qui aident un lecteur non-spécialiste à mieux comprendre les informations contenues dans chaque chapitre. Quant à la bibliographie, elle ne se trouve pas à la fin du livre, mais à la fin de chaque chapitre de cet ouvrage, car elle indique une série d'ouvrages et d'articles scientifiques de référence.

Le premier chapitre est une courte introduction, où l'auteure présente brièvement différents aspects qui ne sont pas liés à la vie sociale des habitants de la Dacie romaine, mais les aspects nécessaires à la compréhension du cadre général et des sources primaires (archéologie, épigraphie, textes littéraires) à travers lesquels nous pouvons rechercher de tels thèmes. L'exposition de ces informations est extrêmement pertinente compte tenu du fait que le grand public ne cerne souvent pas comment une telle subtilité peut être recherchée, dans les conditions où toutes ces sources doivent se corroborer. Par la suite, une brève introduction à l'histoire



politique et administrative, avec des informations sur la structure des sociétés romaines, l'armée romaine et de la province de Dacie.

Le chapitre II se concentre sur la mise en évidence des deux processus: de romanisation et de latinisation. Sachant que ce sujet a été beaucoup abordé en historiographie, étant parfois difficile à appréhender pour le public non averti. Ce processus était différent pour chaque province, en tenant compte du fait qu'en Dacie, il n'y a pas de structures préromaines connues qui furent pendant l'existence de la province. Ce processus s'est déroulé assez rapidement, étant amené ici différentes catégories de colons, l'armée, l'administration. Cependant, le phénomène d'acculturation est présent, la société étant très complexe, avec diverses catégories de personnes. Dans la deuxième partie de ce chapitre, en analysant les bases épigraphiques nécessaires à l'étude des personnes, l'auteur expose le fait que le nombre de Daces est rarement attesté. Pour la province de Dacie, nous pouvons soutenir le fait qu'il y a eu un processus d'acculturation, qui s'observe principalement à partir des découvertes archéologiques. En ce qui concerne l'épigraphie et l'écriture, comme l'a dit à juste titre l'auteur, presque toutes les inscriptions sont écrites en latin, ce qui indique l'adoption des coutumes romaines.

Dans le troisième chapitre, nous abordons la population de la Dacie et de sa démographie, ainsi que les coutumes de commémoration mortuaire. Pour connaître ces informations, l'épigraphie est encore le principal moyen d'analyse des personnes décédées, qu'elles soient femmes ou hommes, ces derniers pouvant faire partie de l'élite locale. Chaque inscription donne parfois des détails sur la mort d'un individu ou d'une famille, auquel cas elle est due à des épidémies ou à des guerres. A ces informations s'ajoute le chapitre suivant, dont le thème principal est l'onomastique et l'étude des noms. On sait qu'il existait dans la province de Dacie une multitude de catégories de personnes, regroupées selon le droit romain en citoyens ou non-citoyens. Le statut d'une personne peut le plus souvent être révélé sur la base de l'étude du nom, ainsi un citoyen a un nom différent (*nomen, praenomen, cognomen*) qu'un pérégrin (nom + gentilice du père). Le chapitre comporte également une section consacrée aux soi-disant *cognomina* et *supernomina*.

Dans les quatre chapitres suivants, plusieurs catégories de personnes présentes dans la province de Dacie, à savoir les Daces, les Illyriens, les Bataves et les femmes, sont analysées en particulier, chacune ayant un statut juridique distinct, étant soit des militaires de carrière, soit des colons, soit des indigènes. Concernant les femmes et leurs statuts, pour les non-spécialistes, l'image de la femme peut souvent leur sembler inférieure aux autres catégories. L'auteur parvient dans le chapitre suivant à exposer une petite

partie de la vie des femmes, prouvant en fait le contraire. Les femmes, du moins certaines d'entre elles, ont certains droits, étant indépendantes et capables de conclure certains contrats, contrairement au droit romain, comme on le voit dans une tablette d'Alburnus Maior. Aussi, certaines de ces femmes pouvaient élever diverses épitaphes ou laisser un héritage, par l'intermédiaire d'un tuteur. L'un des exemples pertinents est celui de Tuticia Adrastilla, morte à 19 ans, sa fille érigeant une inscription en l'honneur de sa mère. Il s'agit d'un cas particulier compte tenu du fait que la fille pouvait avoir au maximum six ans au décès de la mère, avec un tuteur qui s'occupe de l'héritage, compte tenu du fait que d'un point de vue juridique, il s'agit d'une pupille. Le chapitre est pertinent car il note qu'une femme avait en fait plus de droits que nous ne le supposons aujourd'hui, parfois même le mariage étant illégal.

Le chapitre IX a pour sujet un petit aspect de la religion romaine en corrélation avec la médecine et les dieux guérisseurs. Ils évoquent également les eaux thermales et les soi-disant divinités qui s'occupaient de ces lieux, les nymphes. Suit un petit sous-chapitre sur Mithra, le dieu arrivé en Dacie, par les soldats, auquel seuls les hommes avaient accès, étant un culte des mystères. L'avant-dernier chapitre traite d'un autre groupe de personnes, cette fois les marginaux. La sécurité à l'époque romaine n'est pas comparable à celle d'aujourd'hui, c'est pourquoi, comme indiqué dans le chapitre, nous voyons comment une multitude de voleurs ont assassiné diverses personnes, qu'elles appartenaient ou non à l'élite locale. On mentionne généralement si la personne tuée a été vengée, étant donné que c'est un acte que les familles souhaitaient généralement accomplir.

Le dernier chapitre présente deux mini-biographies: celle d'un commerçant, Aurelius Aquila et celle d'un esclave impérial, Herculanus. Considérant le thème, il peut être considéré comme particulièrement important, illustration ainsi dans une certaine mesure comment on peut faire une recherche sur un sujet, une personne, plus précisément une partie de la vie de ces personnes sur des bases épigraphiques. La paternité de deux personnes ayant un statut juridique différent, un fait pertinent pour l'exposition, puisque chacune des provinces a sa propre histoire. Dans ce qui identifie l'esclave impérial, Herculanus, en corroborant plusieurs sources et en analysant correctement plusieurs inscriptions, il a été constaté qu'Herculanus s'est marié deux fois, et du second mariage est né un enfant, qui a repris son statut juridique d'esclave, mais pas celui de sa mère, qui était citoyenne romaine. En gardant cela à l'esprit, on devrait affirmer qu'en vertu du droit romain, un enfant né hors mariage hérite du statut juridique de la mère. Dans le cas présent il s'agit d'une exception ou comme l'affirme l'auteure, la qualité d'esclave impérial était plus bénéfique que celle d'être

un simple citoyen. Chaque personne, citoyen, non-citoyen, esclave ou libre avait sa propre vie, et ainsi dans certains cas en corroborant plusieurs sources on peut reconstituer la vie d'un homme vivant en Dacie romaine.

A noter que quelques informations complémentaires liées au retrait par l'empereur romain Aurélien auraient pu être apportées. Ce fait historique est mentionné dans le troisième chapitre. Malgré le fait qu'il ne s'agisse pas du sujet principal, nous estimons qu'il aurait fallu débattre de ce sujet, assez controversé encore aujourd'hui. L'auteure affirme que le retrait d'Aurélien a eu lieu en 273, mais c'est toujours un sujet controversé, la plupart des chercheurs affirmant que 271 est l'année généralement valide, tandis que d'autres mettent en discussion les diverses découvertes monétaires, affirmant que le retrait d'Aurélien a eu lieu en 274-275. Étant donné que ce sujet est assez controversé, il pourrait être mis en lumière, d'autant plus que c'est un débat qui représente une curiosité chez les gens.

En somme, il faut révéler l'importance de ces livres, qui doivent avoir une place de choix et représenter un premier pas dans la connaissance du monde antique pour les non-spécialistes, et ainsi en dédier au grand public. C'est un ouvrage qui vise à faire connaître la population de la Dacie, plus précisément la diversité catégorielle des personnes. En même temps, la manière de présenter et d'exposer les informations doit être soulignée, étant un travail accessible. De tels ouvrages doivent être conçus pour l'avenir, car en ce qui concerne le monde antique, le grand public n'est souvent pas informé. La bibliographie n'est pas très riche, mais elle est suffisante pour un livre de vulgarisation qui se veut accessible à tous. A noter également l'introduction d'illustrations bien conçues et d'annexes en fin d'ouvrage, nécessaires pour ce type de livre.

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**Ana Honcu**, *Aedes ad Danuvium. Inițiative publice și private în fenomenul edilitar din provinciile Dacia și Moesia Inferior (secolele I-III p. Chr.)*, (*Aedes ad Danuvium. Public and Private Building Initiatives in the Provinces of Dacia and Moesia Inferior, 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD*), Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2022.

The question of Romanization and the degree to which it took place within the Roman frontier provinces has attracted the interest of several researchers over time. One of the great challenges of such a research direction is the identification of the diffusion level of the Roman culture and values within the newly annexed provinces. The researcher's effort is channeled towards identifying the cultural and social aspects that could indicate the degree to which the population of a certain province has appropriated the Roman lifestyle, adopting, at the same time, that *forma mentis* characteristic of Roman culture and civilization. There are several means by which such aspects can be identified in the provincial world. Among these, the most suggestive ones can be inferred from the study of the urban planning initiatives carried out within the various settlements in the provinces, and of the phenomenon of euergetism, which is the basis of such initiatives. Within the Lower Danube provinces, several studies were carried out regarding the urban planning initiatives and the aspects of urbanism in these provinces. The most recent work that addresses the issue of these phenomena belongs to the researcher Ana Honcu and we will present it below.

Ana Honcu is a postdoctoral researcher in the field of ancient history, member of the project *State politics and personal destinies. Recruitment and leaving the hearth in the Daco-Moesian provinces* and museographer at the National Museum of Romanian Literature in Iași. Ms. Honcu's book, *Aedes ad Danuvium. Inițiative publice și private în fenomenul edilitar din provinciile Dacia și Moesia Inferior (secolele I-III p. Chr.)*, published in 2022, is an enriched version of her doctoral thesis with the same title, defended in March 2019. This analysis proposes a synchronic and diachronic approach to the public and private building initiative in two neighboring provinces (Dacia and Moesia Inferior), by comparing the euergetic phenomenon in the two provinces with the building programs initiated with public money in the same regions. The approach of the work is based on the analysis of the epigraphic material that attests to the public and private building initiatives in the two provinces, which consist in the construction or repair of some public buildings. In order to carry out the proposed analysis, the work is structured in five chapters that deal with different aspects of the building initiatives.

In order to understand the building phenomenon in the two provinces, it is essential to know its general characteristics at the level of the entire Empire. That is why, in the first chapter of the work, the author provides an overview of the construction policy within the entire Roman Empire, reviewing, at the same time, the main monuments of the urban landscape. The symbolic meaning and role of these constructions is presented, starting with the forum, temples, baths, theaters and amphitheaters, and continuing with larger infrastructure projects including water supply installations, porticos, harbors or city walls and gates. The framework, the context and the reasons that determined the intervention of the municipal administration, the imperial power or private individuals in the construction of the edifices are then described. The author attempts, at the same time, to determine the role played by the various political bodies (the city, the representatives of the imperial authority in the province or the emperor himself) in the respective building projects. The ambiguities of the expressions *ob liberalitatem*, *ob honorem* and *summa honoraria* are highlighted and analyzed, noting the juridical differences between them. The chapter ends with general information about the vocabulary of the inscriptions, which is mostly sparing and sometimes ambivalent.

The next two chapters run in parallel, having a common structure. Within these chapters, the building phenomenon in the province of Dacia is presented in chapter II, respectively in the province of Moesia Inferior in chapter III. In both chapters, the way in which the city policy was manifested through the *Public Initiative* and the *Private Initiative* was examined. The plan of the two subchapters covers the geographical distribution of the inscriptions from each provincial center separately, allowing a functional approach. In the third subunit of the two chapters, the profile of private donors for each province is analyzed and their ethnic origin, legal and social status were emphasized.

The fourth chapter - *Between public and private. The building phenomenon in the Lower Danube* - represents an overview of the building phenomenon in both provinces. A parallel is made between the building processes, and the common elements and the particularities of the two provinces were identified. The chapter is structured in several parts, analyzing the geographical distribution of the inscriptions, which accumulate mainly in the large centers of both provinces. The constructions thus seem to be in close connection with the road network, with the commercial areas where the financial means were concentrated, or with the legionary or auxiliary camps. Next, the chronological distribution of the inscriptions is examined, followed by an analysis of the patrons, tracing

the main characteristics of public and private initiatives. In the last part of the chapter, the edifices are presented. The latter indicate a preference of individuals for religious constructions, while the emperor and the local administration took care of extensive works, such as the construction of aqueducts, terms, walls, and roads.

In the last chapter, titled *Between East and West. The public and private initiative in the building phenomenon in Dacia and Moesia Inferior - overview and comparative perspective*, the problem of the acculturation process within the Eastern provinces of the Empire is briefly discussed. The theories regarding the existence or loss of political autonomy of cities, and the ones regarding the application of a general imperial policy in the building phenomenon are debated.

In *The final considerations*, the conclusions drawn throughout the work are presented briefly. The main differences between the two provinces are highlighted once again. It was found that the private initiative in Dacia is much better represented, comprising a percentage of 75% of the epigraphic attestations, while in Moesia Inferior we have a percentage of only 34%. This can be attributed to the social structures in the two provinces. While in Dacia we are dealing with the founding and development of new cities, characterized by a new local elite eager to assert itself, in Moesia Inferior the urban environment is mainly represented by the old Greek *poleis*, which already had a stable social structure. Therefore, one can see the need of the elites in the cities of Dacia to assert their own superiority through acts of euergetism, while the aristocracy in the Greek cities of Moesia Inferior already had an established hereditary order and did not need to legitimize themselves through public benefactions.

At the end of the work, a *supplementum epigraphicum* is added, which includes the catalog of epigraphic sources used in the creation of the work, grouped by province and presented in a concise and clear manner. This epigraphic catalog is thus an excellent working tool in the study of social and especially urban development phenomena in the two provinces. In addition to this, there is a series of tables, graphs and distribution maps that facilitate the comparative analysis between the two Danube provinces.

The main merit of the work is that it managed to illustrate how the two types of building initiative (public and private) progressively contribute to the gradual urbanization of the provinces. We see, therefore, how the two provinces exemplify the adoption of practices found throughout the Roman Empire, both in the urban and rural areas. Through the systematic and thorough analysis of the available sources, combined with the review of a substantial bibliography, Ana Honcu manages to trace

the main urban development characteristics of the two provinces, highlighting the similarities and differences between them.

In conclusion, we believe that Ana Honcu achieves her proposed objectives, managing to create an overview of the building phenomenon, through the prism of public and private initiatives, which shaped the urban evolution of the two provinces. The connection of the local elites to the Roman lifestyle is highlighted by their involvement in the development of their own cities, thus highlighting an essential aspect of the provincial romanization process. Therefore, we can consider Ana Honcu's book an important scientific contribution, both to the knowledge of urban planning initiatives through the prism of the euergetic phenomenon, and to the knowledge of the social strata that participate in public life in the analyzed provinces, and that gradually acquire the Roman mentality and lifestyle, with which they come to identify.

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