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Sorin Nemeti, *Finding Arcobadara. Essay on the Geography and Administration of Roman Dacia*, Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2014, pp. 178, 16 figures, 1 map, ISBN: 978-606-543-514-8

Sorin Nemeti tackles in this book some of the subjects that have pre-occupied him for quite a few years now, i.e. the administrative structure of Roman Dacia and the interpretation of the data that the ancient geographer Ptolemy presents about this province.

The first chapter of the book analyses a very important inscription discovered in 1989, in the settlement next to the Roman auxiliary fort from Ilișua, on the northern fringe of the province. The inscription is dedicated to the *genius* of the *territorium Arcobadarense* (or *Arcobarense*), which bears a name that corresponds to the one of a settlement mentioned by Ptolemy as existing in Roman Dacia: Ἀρκοβάδαρα. The author accepts I. Piso's reconstruction of the consuls' names mentioned in the inscription as being those of C. Bruttius Praesens and C. Allius Albinus, which would date the inscription to the year A.D. 246. The name Ἀρκοβάρα seems to us - as to the author himself - also more probable than the version Ἀρκοβάδαρα in the light of the convincing etymological arguments presented in the last part of the first chapter.

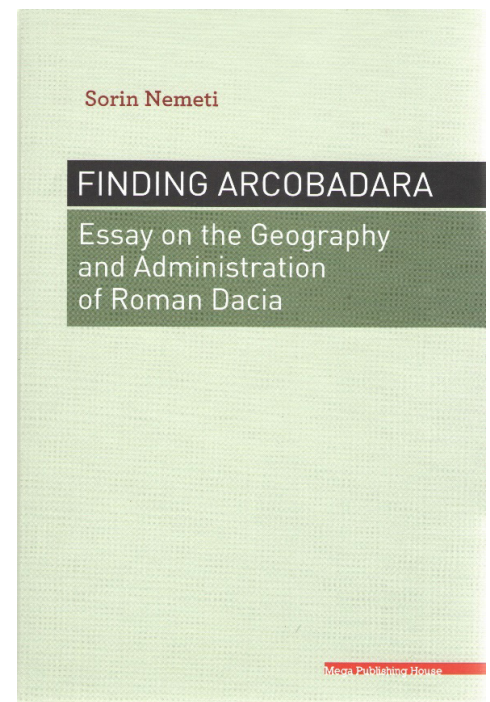
The second chapter is an extended and detailed analysis of the map of Roman Dacia as it is contained in the ninth map of Ptolemy's *Geography*. Sorin Nemeti interprets correctly in our opinion the so-called „peoples” or „tribes” listed by the ancient geographer as being administrative structures created by the Romans in Dacia, after the conquest of it, within the process called *redactio in formam provinciae*. By investigating the Roman geographical knowledge of the 1st century A.D., the author proves that the names of the „Dacian” tribes appear nowhere at that time, with the exception of the names of two old Celtic populations that once lived in northern and northwestern pre-Roman Dacia (*Anarti* and *Taurisci*), whose names remained merely as geographical denominations, and the *Costoboci*. Most of the names however are derived from settlements, like *Predavenses*, *Racatenses*, *Caucoenses*, *Buridavenses*, etc. The author's opinion that these first districts of Roman Dacia, created very soon after the conquest, were at that time most probably under military control is also credible, as is his conclusion that the location of these districts on a modern map based only on the very vague placement by Ptolemy is meant to fail.

Concerning the list of *poleis* of Dacia given by Ptolemy, we think that Sorin Nemeti is right in stating that it pertains the years immediately after the conquest of Dacia. I also believe that he could have accepted I. Piso's idea that the *terminus ante quem* for the existence of these cities should be the founding year of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (most probably A.D. 108), since only the Dacian royal residence Ζαρμιζεγέθουσα τό Βασίλειον is listed and not the Roman colony as well.

Coming back to the inscription found in Ilișua mentioning *Arcobadara* (*Arcobara*), the author can finally prove that it was located inside of Roman Dacia and not to the east of the Carpathians. Still, he sees Ilișua as being

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located on the eastern border of the province, which in our opinion is not accurate, since it still lies on the northern sector of this border, even if close to its eastern end. Based on this confirmed location and on other epigraphically confirmed identities of ancient toponyms, he plausibly locates other settlement names from Ptolemy's list within the part of Roman Dacia that lies inside of the Carpathian arch.

In the final part of the second chapter, Sorin Nemeti convincingly demonstrates that the so-called "road through eastern Dacia" of the Anonymous Geographer from Ravenna has nothing to do with Roman Dacia, but with a fictitious country that was placed by this geographer to the north of the Black Sea.

The third chapter is dedicated to the *territorium Arcobadarense* and the administrative structure of Roman Dacia. The author analyses the evidence concerning the attested names of possible types of administrative units in Roman Dacia: from the *kastella* that appear only in the gold mining area of western Dacia to the *pagus Miciensis* (and not "Miciense", as it appears on p. 83); the *territorium Arcobadarense*, the *territorium Sucidavense* and the *regio Ansamensis* (and not "Ansamense" as on p. 89). Here he draws a clear (and necessary) demarcation line between the settlements that are centers of *regiones* and *territoria* and are located on *ager publicus* from the settlements in the immediate vicinity of the auxiliary forts, that he further calls with the conventional name of *vicus militaris*. By reviewing the evidence pertaining *territoria* and *regiones* also from other Danubian provinces, Sorin Nemeti finds better documented analogies for the ones from Dacia and can extrapolate that the *territorium Arcobadarense* (or, should we say, *Arcobarense*) also must have had similar organizational structures of leaders (*magistri* or the like) and a council (*ordo*) of *curiales* or even *decuriones*.

The next part of the third chapter is dedicated to the people of *Arcoba(da)ra*, their origins (as much as this can be deduced especially from their names), the social composition of that segment of the population that is mentioned in inscriptions, the epigraphically attested pantheon from Ilişua and the funerary inscriptions. Again, it is shown that no bearer of a Dacian name and, surely, no Dacian deities appear in the inscriptions or in the figurative monuments, a situation that is common – with very few exceptions – in Roman Dacia as a whole.

Several appendices usefully gather the person names, the inscriptions, the statuettes, funerary monuments etc.

In the last part of the final chapter, Sorin Nemeti attempts to define the extension of the *territorium Arcobadarense* and even to hypothetically establish its borders by trying to define the neighbouring administrative entities, not epigraphically attested as of now. In this case, the method is based on spots of concentrated archaeological discoveries that the author separates into three categories according to the proximity of an auxiliary fort, types of finds and their richness. This is a fair try, however, we cannot define such borders of territories and other entities with certainty without, at least, partial epigraphical confirmation. The author is careful enough to observe that P. Caius Valerianus – a centurion of the legion X Fretensis, who presents himself as *regionarius regionis Neridonisensium* (and not *Neridonisense*, as on p. 138) on an inscription dedicated to Iuppiter

Dolichenus found in Domneşti¹ – could have hold this position in a *regio* from Syria as well. Thus, this administrative unit – not attested elsewhere – could be one in that Near Eastern province.

The text of the book ends with brief and well-presented conclusions that summarize its most important achievements. A substantial bibliography and the figures and maps of good quality make up a very pleasant-to-read book.

Sorin Nemeti's book is well written and overall convincing in the argumentation of its main theses. The author's choice to use Latin translations of Ptolemy's work instead of the original Greek and the English translations is unusual, but, it was ultimately a matter that did not impede on the quality of this endeavour. This book is an important and useful contribution to the themes of the geography and the administration of Roman Dacia, showing that this province had an administrative structure similar to the one of other Danubian provinces.

¹ Domneşti (Bistriţa-Năsăud County) is a locality in the vicinity of the auxiliary fort of Livezile, which is the next frontier fort to the southeast from Ilişua.