

Reviews

Radu Oltean, *Dacia. The Roman Wars. Volume I. Sarmizegetusa*, Art Historia Publishing House, București 2013 pp.152, ISBN 978-973-0-14786-5

"The *Dacia. The Roman Wars. Volume I. Sarmizegetusa* is a history-based popularization book, which contains over 190 color and black and white images, illustrations and hypothetically reconstructions of roman and Dacian buildings, settlements, battlefields, monuments and artifacts, altogether recreating a colorful storyline of the Dacian Wars.

The volume has 7 chapters (152 pages) which contains historical, archaeological and architectural informations about Rome, including an impressive number of photos and color reconstructions, basic informations about the northern Thracians, a brief history of archeological researches in "Orăștie Mountains" and of course, the storyline of the Dacian Wars (Domitian's Dacian War and Trajan's first Dacia War).

The Foreword (p.7) shows the author's intentions and the aim of the book, which in this case is the popularization of the Dacian Wars history for those who are not in touch with the academic and scientific dimensions of the issues in question. Also, the author mentions that he makes an objective narration of historical events without ideological implications.

The first chapter, "Rome" (pp. 11-25), presents, as the title indicates, some of the most important monuments and buildings directly related to the history of the Dacian Wars, against Decebalus, the ruler of Dacia. The chapter begins with a color reconstructions of the Capitoline Hill, the political centre of Rome, made by the author. The chapter also contains photos and illustrations accompanied by descriptions for Trajan's Forum finished in 112 C.E., Trajan's market, located on the western side of Quirinal Hill, Dacian statues scattered throughout the Forum, for glorifying the victorious Emperor; the Arch of Constantine, dated in the 4th century of our era, contains also 7 Dacian statues, similar with those found in the Forum. The great trajanic frieze and the Trajan's Column are the last two major monuments described in this chapter, altogether with a hypothetical illustration of Emperor Trajan's funerals (p.20).

In the second chapter, "The Northern Thracians" (pp.26-30), the author briefly illustrates some aspects regarding La Tène civilization from modern day Romania. The two subchapters bring up fundamental problems regarding Geto-Dacians religion and the terms "*Getai*" used by Herodot in the Vth. century B.C.E. to define the population that lives in the south of the Danube river and in south-east of modern day Bulgaria, and „dacian”, mentioned for the first time by Caius Iulius Caesar in „*Commentarii rerum gestarum belli gallici*" in the 1st. century B.C.E.

"The wars with Romans" (pp. 31-37) is the title of the third chapter. The author presents here the first military conflict between Dacians and the roman army, under the command of Emperor Domitianus. Before that, the author briefly describes the first political and military contacts between Geto-Dacians and romans.

The subchapter "Romans reach the Lower Danube" illustrates the first contacts between Geto-Dacians and Romans, in the mentioned area, around 29 B.C.E., the first military conflict in 29-28 B.C.E. in which were involved

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romans, local kings like Rholes, Dapyx and Zyraxes (from Scythia Minor, modern day Dobrudja) and some Bastarnae tribes. The military expedition of proconsul Sextus Aelius Catus and the deportations of 50.000 Dacians (Strabon) are also mentioned here. The chapter ends with the victory of Tettius Iulianus at Tapae in 88 C.E. and the conclusion of peace between Decebalus and Domitianus.

The fourth chapter, "Short history of the Orăștie Mountains research" (pp. 38–69), introduces the reader into an archaeological area in order to acquaint him with the Dacian material culture, fortified points and sacred areas. In the first part of the chapter, the author tries to reconstruct the ancient landscape of Orăștie Mountains in the time of king Decebalus. The second part of the chapter presents some major Dacian fortified centers and the hypothetical reconstructions of them. These are: Costești, Blidaru, Pietra Roșie and Bănița.

The third part of this chapter focuses on *Sarmizegetusa Regia*, the political and religious center of Dacian Kingdom. The author describes each temple from *area sacra*, and proposes some graphic reconstructions for the main sacred area (p. 59) and for the central zone of *Sarmizegetusa* (p. 55). The last part of the chapter shows the Dacian iron processing and some characteristic iron artifacts of Dacian culture.

In the fifth chapter, "Trajan's wars against Decebalus" (pp.70–135), are presented the main parts of the first war of Emperor Trajan against the Dacian king. The author presents in first part of the chapter, the political and economical growing of the Dacian Kingdom under Decebalus. The Roman

Empire could not tolerate such a growing enemy power at its boundaries. In "*Expediatio Dacica Prima*" the author presents the storyline of the first Dacian war, in AD 101–102. He uses the writings of ancient Latin writers, and makes a lot of colorful graphic reconstructions for the main sequences of the war, like the crossing of Danube River on a bridge made of boats (p. 79) or the black and white reconstruction of *Tabula Traiana*.

The text is accompanied by illustrations and reconstructions that aim to recreate the magnitude of the Dacian Wars for the history amateurs. The chapter contains also informations about the "Battle of Tapae" king Decebalus, Germanic allies and the foundation of Nicopolis ad Istrum after the great victory against a barbaric army. "Back to the Orăștie Mountains range" is the subchapter that illustrates the Roman military maneuvers against the Dacian fortresses. The chapter ends with the defeating of King Decebalus and his requesting for peace in 102 C.E.

The last two chapters of the book (pp. 136–139 and pp. 140–147) deals with the situation of *Sarmizegetusa* after the end of the first war respectively with the triumphal monuments of Emperor Trajan from Adamclisi. The author shows several graphic reconstructions of the Tropaeum Traiani and the finished bridge from Drobeta.

The usefulness of this book is given by the fact that familiarizes the reader who is not in touch with the historical and archeological topic of the Dacian Wars, using a specialized bibliography.