

Reviews

Ian Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces. The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans*. Oxford: University Press, 2013, pp. 430, ISBN 978-0-19-965534-2

For the Roman military history, *Blood of the Provinces* represents a comprehensive and a brand new historical and archaeological research, regarding Roman military *auxilia* and its very important role within the making of provincial society and the social transformation of this kind of society.

The purpose of this book is to illustrate using latest theories and archaeological finds, but also reconsidering the older ones, the major role of the Roman auxiliary troops, *alae* and *cohortes*, within the Roman army, and also, how this military units are directly related with the social, cultural and political changes of the roman provincial society. As the author says, this book “focuses more on community than combat”, and demonstrates how auxiliary soldiers, individuals, were incorporated into a number of networks “that defined the Roman Empire”.

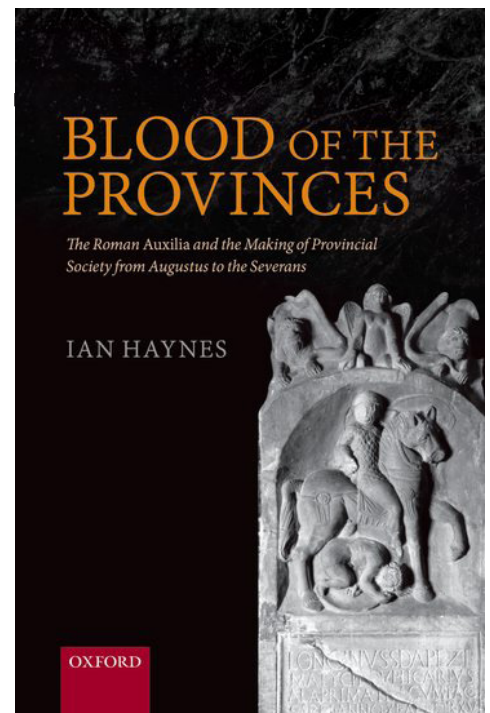
The author is exploring the community of Roman auxiliary soldiers and its surrounding civil society, using a series of theories that explains in his view the development of the provincial society and the functional patterns of the *auxilia* (incorporation, veterans, religious life, ritual activity, military tactics, communication, etc.). The book is divided into 7 parts (21 chapters plus the introduction chapter).

In *Part I. The Auxilia and the Structures of Imperial Power* (pp. 31-92), I. Haynes illustrates the history and the evolution of Roman *auxilia* from the formative years, in the Late Republic until the Severans in the 3rd century B.C. It is gradually and chronologically followed the creation and the development of the Roman auxiliary army within the Civil Wars that marked the end of the Republic. The analysis goes through the reign of Augustus and explores the transformation of society in his time, but are discussed here also the major implications of changing condition for the auxiliary soldier. Further, the author presents the evolution of roman *auxilia* from Claudius to Trajan, examining the military camps dated on this period and the improving of legal status and privileges. The reign of Hadrian brings forward new ways of incorporation of provincial society, as the author says: “a surge of investment in urban centres and development of demarcated frontiers” (p. 76). The so called “Antonine Revolution” shows us a change in the military equipment, and a wider cultural revolution within the army, but are also exposed in this chapter a series of extended rights concerning citizenship and marriage within the roman soldiers. In the last chapter of this part, the author illustrates the destiny of the *auxilia* under the reign of Severans. Marked by civil wars and deeply social changes, the roman society experience “the rise and fall of cities, a rapid rise in the influence of the east and a noteworthy enrichment of the soldier” (p. 85). The author also analyse here the impact of *Constitutio Antoniniana* on military army, and some facts regarding the military camp discipline, very permissive in the reign of Septimius Severus.

In *Part II. The Human Resources: The Recruitment of the Auxilia and its*

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Consequences (pp. 95-142), Haynes explores the recruitment pattern of auxiliary soldiers and demonstrates through a series of examples and case studies how the Roman army harnesses the human resources from different provinces. The first chapter of this part presents “two glimpses of the way in which individuals were pulled into service within the *auxilia*” (p. 96), Haynes illustrating here with two examples the experience of individual recruitment. The first example illustrates how the early first century B.C. Thracian elite relates to the Roman recruitment policy and the second example brings into question the recruitment policy, one century later, among the Roman auxiliary army from Egypt. The second chapter of this second part is related to a geopolitical recruitment pattern. Also, in this chapter I. Haynes explains the mechanism of selective exploitation of some specific groups by Rome and its army. In the third chapter some issues of the recruitment policy are taken into account: the circumstances under which the auxiliary troops are moved away, far from their homeland and how and when the auxiliary regiments “became increasingly ‘local’ in character as a result of the continued influx of new recruits” (p. 122). In the last chapter of this part, the author examines several theories, especially the ones related to the special ethnic recruitment practices and argues that “the evidence does not support the existence of special recruiting practices sustaining ethnically distinctive enclaves of soldier” (p. 136).

The 3rd part, *A Home from Rome: Daily Life in the Auxilia* (pp. 145-188), divided into two chapters, the author presents some daily basis elements of an auxiliary soldier. The first chapter of this part deals with the relationship between urbanism and military service exemplified by a case study about the military urban life and city life at Dura-Europos. The second chapter of this part brings into question some ideas about daily life in the army, but as the author claims: “Discussion of daily life in the Roman army almost invariably focuses on the duties performed by soldiers”. (p. 166). It is also analysed here the habitus of the soldier and the daily off-duty routine.

Part IV. Through the Eyes of Believers: Religion, Ritual Activity, and Cult Practice (pp. 191-236), contains some theories about *religio castrensis*, the religious life in camps, the religious life, the cults and the religious experience of Roman auxiliary soldiers. The theories are correlated with a plenty of archaeological records to create a comprehensive image of religious activities in military camps. The first chapter deals with two major concepts: the sacred space of soldiers and the sacred time of soldiers which means the feast days and the holy days. The second chapter illustrates the unifying role of an imperial cult in the Roman military community. In the last chapter of this part the author presents the role of local deities within the *auxilia*, illustrating here the case of *Hercules Magusanus* and his army worshipers within different Roman provinces. It is also discussed here the role of the mystery cults in *auxilia*.

In the *Part V Arms and the Men: Equipment, Tactics, and Identity* (pp. 239-298) the author offers a series of theories and discussions about weapons, armours and battlefield tactics of the Roman auxiliary army. During this chapter, Haynes demonstrates how the Romans have borrowed and adapted the military equipment. As the author says: “While

the legionary and auxiliary might have appeared distinct into the 2nd century, by the 3rd century it would have been increasingly difficult to distinguish them by dress on the battlefield (p. 241). In the first chapter of this part, the author discusses the factors that influenced the types of military dress and the adoption of some distinct features among high rank soldiers. The author argues that this discussion about *bricolage* and the origins of auxiliary equipment is important “for the study of Roman military material culture and a vital complement to the study of incorporation of provincial society” (p. 241). In the second chapter the author presents some symbols of prestige worn by soldiers and discusses some theories regarding this distinct social class based on military ranks. The next chapter brings into question the existence of ethnic stereotypes and ethnic fighting traditions within the *auxilia*. The author starts the discussion with a very logical question: “Given the distinction made between citizens and non-citizens units, might units have preserved distinct arms and fighting tactics recalling their own very distinct origins?” (p. 286). In the 3rd chapter Haynes discusses the role and the position of *auxilia* on the battlefield and offers a detailed discussion about the terminology used to name Roman weapons like *gladius*, *spatha*, *pilum* and assigning them to specific troops like *alae*, *cohortes* or *legiones*. In this final chapter we will find three case studies that examine the perpetuation of origin features and distinctive dress within the auxiliary troops: the Dacian, the Syrian archers and the Batavi, the author demonstrating how “ethnic diversity was actually a genuine reflection of cultural variety in the Empire” (p. 283).

In the 6th part, *Pen and Sword: Communication and Cultural Transformation* (pp. 301-336) the author emphasizes the role of the spoken word within the army, noting very well the role of multilingualism in studying this particular phenomenon. The first chapter deals with the issues of the language spoken by *auxilia* troops, linguistic influences and *sermo castrensis*, the military slang which is probably a mixture of words and terms from different languages, creating a particular “camp language”. As the author says: “Exposure to languages other than Latin and Greek was also an inevitable part of a soldier’s life”. (p. 303). The second chapter represents a quite detailed analysis of writing phenomenon in *auxilia*, a number of written documents like letters - ostraca, inscriptions - being discussed here, etc. but are also brought into question the frequency of styli found in archaeological excavations and other discoveries of this kind.

The last part of this book, *Auxiliary Veterans and the Making of Provincial Society* (pp. 339-381) focuses on the veterani and their role in the society, and how this people are integrated into civil society, after an honourable discharge. I. Haynes notes that “It is a failure exacerbated by lack of recognition that not all veterans necessarily held recognized status as *veterani*” (p. 340). Indeed, the author analyses in this first chapter different types of veterans such as *missicus*, a soldier discharged without *honesta missio*, without honourable discharge and how different kinds of *veterani* are integrated in the provincial society and in different types of settlements (rural, urban and extramural). The rights of *veterani* are also mentioned here.

At the end of this review, it can be clearly stated that

Blood of the Provinces represents a milestone in understanding the grand military machine of the Roman Empire, and as a specific feature, to understand the individuals who served and died under the *vexilla* of *auxilia*.