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Radu Harhoiu, Daniel Spânu, Erwin Gáll, Barbari la Dunăre, seria „Istorie Documente Mărturii” [Barbarians at the Danube, the series “History Documents Evidences”], Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, 162 pages, 73 figures, ISBN 978-973-109-287-4

The authors are known for their contributions and studies regarding the Middle Ages and the Dacian period, working as researchers at prestigious institutions in the country. Their articles show an intense work in the field of archaeology and history of the Late Antiquity and Early Middle Age.

Barbari la Dunăre [Barbarians at the Danube] is a short study about the presence of the barbarians in the Danube region, especially on the Romanian territory. The contribution it brings is minor as content, but includes some good points of view regarding the barbarian tribes, their territory, their influence and material culture, all being part of a current trend in the study of migratory populations that has started after the nationalist movement in archaeology had stopped with the fall of the communism.

An introduction or an argument is missing from the book, but what seems to be its main purpose is to describe the Late Antiquity period using historical information from primary sources like Latin authors, correlating and corroborating them with archaeological information.

The information is accurate, being organized chronologically and following the important events of the era, and the interpretation is mostly technical.

The book is divided in three parts: *Teritoriul [The Territory]* (p. 7-19), *Barbarii [The Barbarians]* (p. 19-77) and *Înceiere [Ending]* (p. 77-79) to which the catalogue of archaeological

discoveries (p. 79-140) and the table of illustrations (p. 140-145) are added.

The first part (p. 7-19) deals strictly from a geographical point of view with the regions that are part of the Romanian territory, defining the central region - *Transylvania*, the western part of Romania - *Partium/Crișana, Banat*, the East-Carpathian region- *Moldova and Bucovina* and the South-Carpathian region- *Dobrogea, Muntenia, Oltenia*. The geographical description is objective, pointing the natural borders of every territory (rivers, mountains, gorges or hollows), the neighbors and the climatic conditions.

The second part (p. 19-77) starts with a general characterization of the concept of *barbarian* and the difference between the Greeks, the Romans and the barbarians. After this sort of introduction, the authors talk about the barbarians that were near the Roman province of Dacia. The study of the barbarians is made from an ethnical and chronological perspective. The first presented is the Costoboci tribe with the *Lipița culture*. The free Dacians from the western of Romania and Muntenia are also mentioned along with their artifacts which are part of the *Chilia-Militari* or *Poienesti-Vârțișcoiu* culture. *Poienesti-Vârțișcoiu* also indicates the Carpi population. The authors have dedicated a more ample study to the Carpi, talking about their forays in Moesia and Dacia and the conflict with *Filip the Arab*. The necropolises of the *Poienesti-Vârțișcoiu culture* are seen from the point of view of the different burial rites (incineration to inhumation) and the Roman imports, like silver earrings, glass and amber beads or fibulas. Their inventory is the first evidence of the acculturation phenomenon. The historical events that had the Vandals and the Sarmatians as main characters are also described here, with details explaining the Sarmatian burial rite and inventory.

The subchapter *Goți și romanici [Goths and Romanic peoples]* (p. 33-38) presents the history of the Goths, their settlements,

tombs and their artifacts as part of the *Sântana de Mureș-Černeahov* culture. The end of the subchapter shows how this culture has ended along with the unitary cultural evolution of the Romanian space.

Iureșul hunic [The Hunnish invasion] (p. 39-44), the next subchapter illustrates the replacement of the Gothic influence with the Hunnish one, presenting the feats of Atilla. Aside from the historical facts, the presentation of Hunnish archaeological materials, especially the luxurious ones, is not missing. The last pages indicate how the Gepids joined the Huns in their expeditions.

Regii gepizilor [The kings of the Gepids] (p. 45-49) is dedicated to the ascension of the Gepids to the disadvantage of the Huns, their influence being indicated by the archaeological discoveries, one of the most famous being that from Apahida.

Prăbușirea limesului. Gepizi, slavi și avari [The fall of the limes. Gepids, Slaves and Avars] (p. 50-58) describes how the *limes* from the inferior Danube was threatened by a new population, the Avars, as the Gepids had their last years of existence. Then, as we have already been accustomed to, an enumeration of the regions with their archaeological materials is made. The desolate picture of the 6th century A.D. is completed with the funerary discoveries, which are very poor, as depicted by the authors.

The subchapters *Sub semnul grifonului [Under the sign of the griffin]* (p. 59-63) and *La cumpăna vremurilor [At the crossroad of times]* (p. 64-65) define the decline of the Avars and the rising of the Proto-Bulgarians, one of the last archaeological expressions of the late Avars being the thesaurus from Sănnicolau Mare. Another problem discussed is that of the earth ramparts from Dobrogea, the construction of the second fortification system being attributed to the Bulgarians.

The last subchapter *Ultimii barbari [The last of the barbarians]* (p. 66-76) shows the end of the first Bulgarian tsardom and

the rise of the Pechenegs and the Hungarians in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. This subchapter deals with the problem of ethnical identification, criticizing the nationalist theories and explaining that archaeology in itself cannot attribute an ethnical identity just by analyzing the material culture, having to take into account other distinctive signs and traditions that are indirectly related with one's identity. There is another interesting and challenging question: when can we observe the migration or acculturation? The authors tried to give some answers regarding the Hungarians or the Magyars using information from the funerary rituals and admitting that archaeology has to collaborate with another interdisciplinary sciences for clearer information.

Înceiere [Ending] (p. 77-78), the last part, is a short conclusion to the information presented until now, showing the importance of the Danube for the different populations.

The catalogue of archaeological discoveries is very well documented and the illustrations are of a very high quality. The annex that contains the artifacts discovered after the book manuscript had been written is very accurate.

The book is a description of the barbarian tribes that were present near the Danube, with very well structured chapters and with some new and valuable theories concerning the necessity of using the archaeological discoveries for ethnical identification - this can be of use especially to researchers, but also as a starting point for students who will want to study this subject.

As weak points we can note, as we have already mentioned, the absence of an introduction or an abstract. The technical language can also be seen as a disadvantage if the readers aren't specialized. Advantages of the study are the writing style, the chapters' structure, the use of classical writers for general information and the criticizing of the nationalist theory concerning ethnicity. The table of illustrations with

color drawings, photography of the materials found and reconstruction of the dwellings is an improvement that any archaeology book should have.

To conclude, the book is a very short study, easy to read for specialists, but interesting, a study that can make the dark millenium era more attractive for both students and researchers.

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