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Photo on the cover: gold earring from Zimnicea cemetery

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THRACO-DACICA

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MIHAIL ZAHARIADE, *The Thracians in the Roman Imperial Army. From the First to the Third Centuries AD I Auxilia*,

Cluj-Napoca, 2009, 409 pages, 2 Tables, 10 Figures, 15 Plates

CONSTANTIN C. PETOLESCU

This book, the first of a projected series of five volumes on Thracians in the Roman Imperial Army of the Principate, initiates discussion of the Thracian contribution. The other four volumes of this grandiose undertaking as Prof. Dr. Mihail Zahariade promises in his "Foreword" will include a second tome on the Thracians in the legions, a third on the Praetorian guards, a fourth on the *equites singulares*, and a fifth on the Imperial war fleets at Misenum and Ravenna. If achieved, Dr. Zahariade would offer a significant contribution to the study of ethnical groups in the Roman Army, especially important for understanding the complexity of the integration of non-Italians into this vital body of Roman society.

Previous studies of particular ethnic groups in the auxilia of the Roman army have produced remarkable works. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I would mention particularly M. Bang, *Die Germanen in römischen Dienst* (Berlin 1906); W. E. Brown, *The Oriental Auxiliaries of the Imperial Army* (Ann Arbor/London, 1941); A. Balil, *Alae y Cohortes Astures en el ejercito romano*, in *Homenaje al Conde de Vega del Sella I* (1956) 299-313; Garcia y Bellido, *Alas y cohortes espanolas en el ejercito auxiliary romano de epoca imperial*, *RHM I* (1957) 23-49; G. Simpson, *Britons and the Roman Army* (London 1964); B. Dobson and J. C. Mann, *The Roman Army in Britain and Britons in the Roman Army*, *Britannia* 3 (1973) 191ff.; José M. Roldán Hervás, *Hispania y el ejército romano: Contribución a la historia social de la España Antigua* (Salamanca 1974); and F. Gayet, *Les unités auxiliaires Gauloises sous le Haut-Empire Romain*, *Historia* 55 (2006), 64-103. Study of Thracians in the Roman army, however, began already in the nineteenth century with J. Keil's *De Thracum Auxiliis* (Leipzig, 1882). After a long hiatus J. Bogaers in 1974 collected the evidence for Thracian auxilia in the Dutch part of Germania Inferior (*Proceedings of the IXth International Congress of Studies on the Roman Frontiers in Mamaia* [Bucharest/Köln 1974] 445-464). Also worth noting is M. Tatcheva's, *The Thracian Bessi Domo et Militiae*, *Ziva Antika* 47 (1997) 199-210, and

especially his *Die thrakischen Bessi in der römische Armee*, in *Atti dell' XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina* (Roma 1997) 877-884. Thus, despite precursors, Zahariade's volume excels previous work in its empire-wide coverage and discussion of the complexity of problems.

The volume is divided into two parts. Part I, "Descriptive," treats in nine chapters the epigraphic material and literary sources in detail. A reader will here derive the most complete picture of the Thracians in the Imperial auxilia possible on available evidence. Part II, "Appendices" and "Illustrations", transforms the narrative of Part I into tables and lists for ready reference and synoptic overviews of the material.

Chapter I, "The Background. Thrace and the Thracians" (pp. 17-38) is divided in two parts. The first fully treats the history, topography, and ethnic divisions of the Thracians, about whom Herodotus (V 3.1) stated that "they were the most numerous in the world after that of the Indians", although he also noted their disunity. Many Roman historians, such as Livy, Pomponius Mela, Tacitus, and later Vegetius mention the Thracians' warrior aptitudes. After a brief overview of Thracians – from the Trojan War to the annexation of Thrace into the Roman Empire – Zahariade examines the history and topography of the major Thracian tribes, exhaustively citing, besides modern literature, the literary and epigraphic sources. A complete list of Thracian tribes is given in the introductory paragraph. The core of the Thracian population in pre-historic and historical times occupied the eastern Balkan Peninsula (Thrace proper), but Thracian elements were also commonly found in western Asia Minor, the steppe north of the Black Sea, Macedonia, and northern Greece. Of particular interest for the author is the northern branch of the Thracians, which included the Moesi, Getae, and (further north in Transylvania) the Dacians. The second part examines the administrative reorganization of Thrace after Roman annexation and conversion of the previous Hellenistic strategies, still current in the first century, into the *regiones* of the second and third centuries, with the urbanization of

Thrace increased. A table reproduces the literary and epigraphic sources for the original strategies.

Chapter II, “Rome and Thrace: A Political and Military History of the Conquest of Thrace” (pp. 39-85) traces the political and military course of Thracio-Roman relations: Rome’s advance in the Balkan Peninsula up to the Danube with the establishment of a fortified river frontier or *limes* in the Late Republic and Early Principate and initial Roman contacts with Transdanubian populations. Before Roman annexation, clients-kings (*reges amici et socii populi Roma-ni*) of the Sapaean dynasty (with a Odrysian origin) ruled a Thracian kingdom, Thracia, whose name the Roman province preserved. Initially Thrace was organized as an Imperial province, governed by a procurator of equestrian rank. From Trajan on, the governors were of praetorian rank with the title *legatus Augusti pro praetore*. Only insignificant military forces (two or three auxiliary cohorts) served as a garrison.

Chapter III, “The Recruitment and the Setting of *Alae* and *Cohortes Thracum*” (pp. 59-111) beginning treatment of the subject proper, contains five parts. The first thoroughly analyzes the epigraphical and literary sources to create a coherent picture of stages in the establishment of the oldest regiments, which date late under Augustus or even earlier. The author examines in detail the date of the creation of each regiment of *Thracum*. The Imperial onomastics are a key element. For six regiments, *alae I-III Augusta Thracum* and *cohortes I-III Augusta Thracum*, the Imperial title *Augusta* indicates a considerable employment of Thracians under Augustus. These units may have originated in the already existing forces of the Odrysian kings Rhoemetalses I and II, staunch allies of Rome, or the Thracian mercenaries of Herod. They could also be fresh levies. Once the province of Thrace was created in 46 and throughout the period of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, no new Thracian regiments received the Emperor’s name. The title Flavia is attested for only two cohorts raised among the Bessi. Later creation of new units labeled *Thracum* apparently ceased. Zahariade successfully presents a comprehensive picture of Thracian recruitment in the second and third centuries, when Thracian recruits continued to supply manpower to non-Thracian auxiliary regiments in a period even after a system of local or regional recruitment became the norm. The epigraphical evidence demonstrates that Thracian recruits in considerable numbers replenished auxiliary units in the Rhine valley, the Pannonian provinces, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia.

Zahariade devotes special attention the mixed units of *Galli et Thracum* and regiments called *Syriaca*. Of particular interest is the section entitled “The Recruitment Basins”, for which a better title would have been “The Recruitment Pools”. The known regions of recruitment in Thrace are reviewed: the tribal regions or semi-urban and urban centers, such as Serdica-Sardica and the surrounding region, Dardania, the tribes of Dentheletae, Sapaeanians, Bessians, and a

wide range of other Thracian tribes generally called Thraci or Thracum. Significantly, Zahariade also looks at Thracian communities outside Thrace, the Thracian diaspora, and its role in supplying recruits for both regiments labeled *Thracum* and units with non-Thracian titles. Here the statistics and commentaries display Zahariade’s mastery of the literary and epigraphic sources as well as the secondary historical literature.

Chapter IV, “*Auxilia Thracum*. Identification, Structure and Number” (pp. 113-117) an introduction to the detailed study of individual units to follow, holds a particular place in the work’s economy as an attempt to present *avant la lettre* the exact identity of the Thracian units. Here is assembled a scholarly compendium of earlier views on the Thracian auxilia, thereby avoiding in the following two chapters on individual cavalry and infantry units treatment of controversies and conflicting viewpoints. Such “streamlining” of scholarship deprives the reader of the potentially fruitful comparison of opinions on individual units. The opportunity for a very useful *état de question* has been missed.

Chapter V, “*Alae Thracum*” (pp. 119-135) presents a gazetteer of Thracian cavalry regiments, of which a preliminary list appeared in Zahariade’s paper in the *Proceedings of the XII International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy in Barcelona* (Barcelona 2007). The history of each of the twelve individual regiments is analyzed: date of creation, movements, building activities, service in wars, and personnel (officers, NCO’s, and soldiers). A complete list references is appended to the discussion of the individual units. The following cavalry regiments (*alae*) have been identified: (1) *Gallorum et Thracum Antiana sagittariorum*, (2) *Gallorum et Thracum Constantium*. (3) *Gallorum et Thracum Classiana*, (4) *Veterana Gallorum et Thracum*, (5) *I Augusta Thracum*, (6) *I Thracum*. (7) *I Thracum Herculiana*, (8) *I Thracum Mauretana*, (9) *I Thracum veterana sagittaria*, (10) *I Thracum victrix*, (11) *II Augusta Thracum*, and (12) *III Augusta Thracum sagittariorum*. The list, although not indisputable, offers the author’s identifications, as disentangled from numerous opinions about the epigraphical evidence.

Chapter VI, “*Cohortes Thracum*” on infantry regiments follows the model of the previous chapter on cavalry units. Twenty-six *cohortes Thracum* are: (13 [1]) *I Flavia Bessorum*, (14 [2]) *I Augusta Thracum civium Romanorum equitata*, (15 [3]) *I Thracum*, (16 [4]) *I Thracum civium Romanorum pia fidelis*, (17 [5]) *I Thracum equitata civium Romanorum*, (18 [6]) *I Thracum*, (19 [7]) *I Thracum equitata civium Romanorum*, (20 [8]) *I Thracum Germanica equitata civium Romanorum*, (21 [9]) *I Thracum milliaria*, (22 [10]) *I Thracum sagittariorum*, (23 [11]) *I Thracum Syriaca equitata*, (24 [12]) *II Flavia Bessorum*, (25 [13]) *II Augusta Thracum equitata*, (26 [14]) *II Gemella Thracum equitata*, (27 [15]) *II Thracum veterana equitata pia fidelis*, (28 [16]) *II Thracum equitata civium*

Romanorum, (29 [17]) II *Thracum Syriaca*, (30 [18]) III *Augusta Thracum equitata*, (31 [19]) III *Thracum equitata civium Romanorum bis torquata*, (32 [20]) III *Thracum Syriaca sagittaria equitata*, (33 [21]) III *Thracum veterana*, (34 [22]) III *Thracum equitata pia fidelis*, (35 [23]) III *Thracum Syriaca*, (36 [24]) [V *Thracum*], (37 [25]) VI *Thracum equitata*, 38 [26]) VII *Thracum equitata*. Remarkably only two are raised among the *Bessi*; the great majority are termed *Thraeces*. Fifteen cohorts were *equitatae*, therefore having a component of cavalry. The majority were probably *quingenaria* and just one *milliaria*. As Zahariade demonstrates, the highest unit number for *alae* and *cohortes Thracum* is VII. Thus a *cohors* V is very likely from the existence of regiments numbered VI and VII. Since several units had the same number, their individual identification is based on other elements. A unit is called *gemella*, when two regiments of the same ethnic origin and number were established.

Chapter VII, “The Dynamics of the Thracian Regiments” (pp. 163-168) examines the mobility of the *alae* and *cohortes*. The author summarizes movements of the regiments in a systematic and concise manner, using unit numbers to produce a comprehensive picture of where the units served and where recruits were sent during the first-third centuries. A useful table (pp. 166-68) systematizes a vast amount of epigraphical and literary documents.

Chapter VIII, “*Auxilia* at War” (pp. 169-193) presents the political and especially military events (civil wars, operations behind or beyond the Roman frontiers), in which the Thracian regiments were engaged. Military diplomas and inscriptions, supplemented by a few literary sources, furnish the evidence. The author identifies the service of Thracian units in the following operations: the Mauretanian war under Caligula and Claudius, the conquest of Britain, participation in Corbulo’s Armenian expeditionary force, events during Domitian’s reign (annexation of the *campi decumati*, Agricola’s campaign in Britain, wars with the Dacians, Sarmatians, and Suebi), Trajan’s Dacian and Parthian wars, Hadrian’s suppression of the Jewish revolt, Antoninus Pius’ war against the Moors in Mauretania, Marcus Aurelius’ Marcomanic wars, Septimius Severus’ Parthian wars, Caracalla’s Rhine expedition (213), and repulse of Moorish incursions under Severus Alexander and Gallienus.

Chapter IX, “*Auxilia Thracum* at Work” (pp. 195-212) treats the building activities of Thracian units in the provinces where they were billeted or occasionally in other regions. Inscriptions and brick or tile stamps, the only sources for this type of activity, attest a wide range of objectives: roads, bridges, forts and fortlets, baths, storehouses, temples, and other edifices. Brick and tile stamps reflect a unit’s direct or indirect (through export) involvement and also offer evidence of the garrison’s location.

Brief “Conclusions” (pp. 213-214) and lengthier “References” (pp. 219-258) complete Part I. Although

standard Oxford abbreviations are used in the footnotes, the bibliography of the “References” displays a hybrid system of citation confusing the reader. Indeed the “References” more properly belonged after the “Appendices” of Part II for easier consultation.

Part II, “Appendices and Illustrations” (pp. 261-357) provides numerous useful addenda. **Appendix I**, “Service in the Thracian Regiments” (pp. 216-319) presents the prosopography of the Thracian auxilia: equestrian officers, *principales*, *equites*, *pedites*, and *veterani*. The discussion of veterans (pp. 302-319) demonstrates social mobility and geographical preferences of the individuals for settlement after discharge. Statistical tables reveal the clear preference of Thracian veterans to settle either in Thrace proper or in areas closely related linguistically (Moesia, Dacia). Remarkable, however, are also large numbers of Thracian veterans in the Rhine valley and middle Danubian provinces.

Appendix II 1 (pp. 320-325) “Thracians in the Auxiliary Regiments”, lists the names of all known Thracian soldiers in both Thracian and non-Thracian units. The names are grouped in two categories: with and without recorded *origo*. **Appendix II 2** (pp. 326-357) collects the epigraphical data on Thracian regiments or individuals of Thracian origin, following the same order of Chs. V-VI. There is also a considerable amount of data reproduced from inscriptions and military diplomas mentioning Thracian military in auxiliary regiments of non-Thracian origin. Some items here require supplements or clarification:

p. 331 (*CIL* III 3393): *Silvanabus Augg(ustorum)*; as a grammatical form *Silvanus* was a single deity; *Silvanae* were collective deities; the dative plural used in that case is usually *Silvanis* (see *IDR* III/3, 220), but the termination of the third declension as in *deus et dea > dis deabus* was preferred.

p. 333 (*AE* 1974, 587): the son of a centurion of the *cohortes I Flavia Bessorum* was an *eques Romanus*, a remarkable fact for the progeny of a centurion in an auxiliary unit.

p. 337 (*CIL* III 3319=10299=*RIU* 1018): the sons of *L. Septimius Tatulus vet(eranus) ex optione coh(ortis) I T(h)racum Germ(anicae)* and of *Aurelia Verina* bears the gentilices of both parents: *L. Aurel(ius) qui et Sep(timius) Constans, mil(es) coh(ortis) s(upra) s(criptae), Aur(elius) qui et Sept(imius) Constantinus, mil(es) leg(ionis) I Ad(iutricis), Aur(elius) qui et Sep(timius) Victorinus, Aur(elius) qui et Sep(timius) Verinus*.

p. 341 (*ILAlg.* 2, 6877): *qu(a)est(or) coho(rt(is)) II Gemellae T(h)ra[cum]*; his office of *quaestor* in the Roman army is also known in some cases in the legions VII Claudia (*AE* 1970, 363=*IDRE* II 363), XXI (*AE* 1998, 975) and XXII Primigenia (*CIL* XIII 6669) and in an auxiliary unit: *signifier et quaestor n(umeri) Brit(tonum)* in Dacia Superior (*IDR* III/3, 243) as well. He administered the pay-office of the unit, which sometimes appears when some building works were carried out by the troop, *ex quaestura sua*; we cite here

some inscriptions in Dacia, from Mehadia-Praetorium (AÉ 1912, 5=IDR III/1, 76) from Veșel-Micia (CIL III 1379=IDR III/3, 58; AÉ 1982, 847=ILD 308) and Râșnov-Cumidava (AÉ 1950, 16=IDR III/4, 221).

p. 349 (AÉ 1993, 1595), *Aurelius Pimetala*; the given name is well known as being Thracian (see also p. 324); he can be compared with *Rimetalca-Rhoemetalces*.

Ibidem (Musait), *dī[sperd]tus in barbarico*; see the inscription from Preslav (AÉ 1991, 1378), a soldier from the legion I Italica, *multis periculis in barbarico liberatus* (*barbaricum* was the barbarian area north of the Black Sea).

p. 350 (G. I Katsarov, *Die Denkmäler der thrakischen Reitergottes in Bulgarien* (Budapest 1938) no. 602, *a mil(es) alarix*, obviously *mil(es) alaris*, soldier in an *ala*. The term *miles* is therefore correct also for a cavalry unit; the reading *miles turmaris* on a fragment of a tile from Câmpulung-Jidava (IDR II 610), is possible.

Ibidem (AÉ 1993, 1590): *ann(orum) L hopitus (?) domo T(h)racia*; here the uncertain word must be understood as *obitus*: “dead at 50 years”.

Ibidem (CIL V 898=AÉ 1995, 570b): a high-ranking soldier from an auxiliary unit is *translatus in I(egionem) Au(gustam?)*; this inscription can be utilized for comparison with another from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, in which some soldiers (of unknown provenance) are *translat(i) in leg(ionem) XIII G(eminam)* (IDR III/2, 245).

p. 351 (AÉ 1993, 1596); *salararius al(a)e Ulp(iae) cont(ariorum) fecit in salario an(os) XX vixit an(nos) XLV*; the expression indicates the years of service; it is commonly rendered through the genitive

salariorum (in other inscriptions mentioning soldiers it is expressed through *stipendiorum*; see AÉ 1993, 1589-1592).

p. 354 (CIL XIII 8188), *Petitor Pirobori*: the patronymic of this soldier is obviously Thracico-Getic and can be closely compared with the Getic place name *Piroboridava* (attested in the Hunt papyrus and at Ptol. Geog. III. 10.8).

The “Illustrations” (pp. 359-362) feature nine maps, 43 photos and 28 drawings (inscriptions, stamped bricks, tiles). The detailed and original maps, an instructive supplement to text, aid a full understanding of the Thracian area, recruitment, deployment of the Thracian units, and their participation in wars or building activities. More photographs, however, for each regiment could have added with arrangement according to the order in the gazetteer. The book’s versatility is seen its usefulness with or without many of accompanying documents. An “Index” (pp. 391-409) ends this scholarly and resourceful work.

In sum, Zahariade’s new analytical treatment of the fascinating history of the Thracians constitutes a solid contribution, making optimal use the Greek and Latin literary and epigraphically sources. Once examined, the book’s real scientific value becomes obvious: the first original synthesis of the role of the Thracians in the defense of Roman civilization in the first three centuries AD. Indeed the work’s publication in English renders it accessible to a worldwide scholarly audience, as already attested in its solicitation by libraries, other specialists in the field, and students of numerous nations.