

# INTRODUCTION

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The mighty Danube River flows from its headwaters near the German/Swiss border, through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, touching also the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In addition to its many smaller tributaries, the Danube is fed by the Drava River at Osijek, the Sava River at Belgrade, the Tisza River at Novi Slankamen, and the Olt River at Turnu Margurele. The Danube represents both a hindrance and a passageway and has hosted permanent human settlements by at least the seventh millennium BC. While it served, for the most part, as a cultural boundary, there was considerable interaction amongst the cultures that inhabited the Danube's banks.

By the reign of Augustus, the Danube represented the border between the Roman Empire and Barbaricum. Fortresses and outposts were established on the south bank of the river and along the Black Sea coast under Augustus and his Julio-Claudian and Flavian successors. By the middle of the first century AD, the major military centres of the middle and lower sections of the Danube valley were fully operational: Singidonum, Viminacium, Rataria, Oescus, Novae, Durostorum, and Noviodunum. For nearly 170 years, Rome controlled territory to the north of the Danube, Dacia. There was frequent warfare in the region, but also lengthy periods of friendly interaction between the Romans and their neighbours. With legionary and auxiliary troops, natives and colonists, the region was 'Romanised' and also an ethnic and cultural melting pot.

Cities in the regions adjacent to the Danube underwent radical changes in the late Roman period. Fortification walls were reinforced and re-configured to defend against both internal and external threats. Christian basilicas replaced pagan foundations. The Empire was strong because of the military and civilian presence in the region, but the Danube valley also represented the springboard of decline. Tens or even hundreds of thousands of Goths crossed the river ca. AD 376 as a result of the ravaging of their lands by the Huns; two years later an emperor was killed in battle against these hostile refugees. The Huns, themselves breached the Roman lines of defence in the late fourth and fifth centuries. Alaric, whose family may have been among the Gothic refugees, formed an army that raided the Balkans and ultimately sacked Rome in AD 410 (the first invasion of Rome by a foreign army in 800 years).

Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian scholars have been studying Roman sites in the middle and lower Danube valley for more than a century. Foreign scholars from Poland, the U.K., the USA, and a small number of other countries have also taken an interest in the vast history of the region. Sites, such as Viminacium, Novae, Rataria, and Durostorum have been well-excavated and important

programs of restoration and preservation have been implemented. Still, the scientific importance of the region is not adequately recognised beyond the borders of Southeastern Europe. And, due to the agendas of national schools of archaeology as well as linguistic barriers, there has been little interchange amongst scholars of the region.

This volume springs from the conference "*Bridging the Danube: Roman Occupation and Interaction in the Middle and Lower Danube Valley, first – fifth centuries AD*," organised by the editors and sponsored by the Universitatea de Vest Timișoara and the American Research Center in Sofia (Timișoara, April 2014). The conference was intended to gather scholars working on aspects of the Roman period at sites along the Danube River in Romania, Serbia, and Bulgaria to discuss and compare their research methods and results. The two-day conference attracted nearly 50 scholars from six countries. Although it was not our direct intention, we celebrated two senior scholars, Prof. Doina Benea (West University of Timișoara) and Prof. Tadeusz Samowski (University of Warsaw) who have dedicated their careers to the study of the region.

The participants were invited to submit articles for a peer-reviewed volume for BAR-IS. The papers underwent an initial, internal review and proofreading process. Authors were asked to make modifications. When the papers were resubmitted, drafts were sent to the editors of BAR-IS who asked four external reviewers to consider the volume. Based upon the BAR reviews and other considerations, authors were asked to make further changes. The reviewers also suggested we alter the title of the volume in order to better reflect the nature of the papers, many of which did not specifically discuss Roman occupation and interaction in the region. The volume, therefore, presents case studies in current research in the middle and lower Danube valley.

Readers will be interested not only in the results of the studies, but in the kinds of questions being asked and methods being employed. We hope that the volume may lead to more coordinated studies of the region and collaborations between the scholars represented here as well as by readers who may be enticed to redirect their research interests.

The papers are organised in a roughly chronological-thematic manner, beginning with two articles that address late Iron Age Dacians and Thracians in the light of the Roman advance into the middle and lower Danube valley. The article by Berzovan and Borangic investigates changes in defensive systems and weaponry adopted by the natives of Dacia in response to their increasing conflicts with Rome. Tomas's article assesses native

settlements in the region surrounding Novae in order to determine the extent to which the Romans may have evacuated newly conquered territory. Also concerning shifts in military strategies, the article presented by Dziurdzik demonstrates the increased employment of cavalry in the middle and lower Danube region; in this paper, the author discusses the origin of the formation's denomination 'Dalmatian'.

Two papers spring from research conducted at Viminacium. A paper by Ilić concerns food supply in the middle Danube region and provides a small catalogue of architectural features in the region identified as having stored foodstuffs. The primary focus of Golubović's article is on the reuse of amphorae in graves at Viminacium; a secondary focus concerns the origin of amphorae to the site. Continuing within the realm of death, the article by Mureşan and Mureşan investigates the question of Roman funerary law and the degree to which laws were adhered to in the lower Danube region.

In the only article with a focus on technology, Condurăţeanu demonstrates how nineteenth century descriptive surveys in the lower Danube region and state of the art technology can be merged in order to better understand historical topography.

Two papers consider epigraphy in order to pursue avenues of research pertaining to demography. In his paper, Alexandrov examines funerary inscriptions in order to clarify the origin of soldiers stationed in Moesia Inferior; an important section of the article addresses methodology. In the article by Balaci Crînguş and Balaci, the authors consider epigraphic monuments from Drobeta and its environs in order to discuss families and family relations.

Jęczmienowski indicates modifications in the construction of fortresses and garrisons in Upper Moesia during the Late Roman period.

Finally, in the only art historical contribution, Dimitrov presents a brief catalogue of imperial portraiture from the Bulgarian-Polish excavations at Novae and discusses the historical implications, such as visits to the region by emperors.

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The editors hope that scientific cooperation continues to bring specialists from both sides and the great lengths of the Danube together. There is clearly a need for dialogue between the various national schools that work in the region as well as an injection of foreign interest in order to gain a broader and deeper knowledge of the cultures, including the Romans, which inhabited the Danube valley.