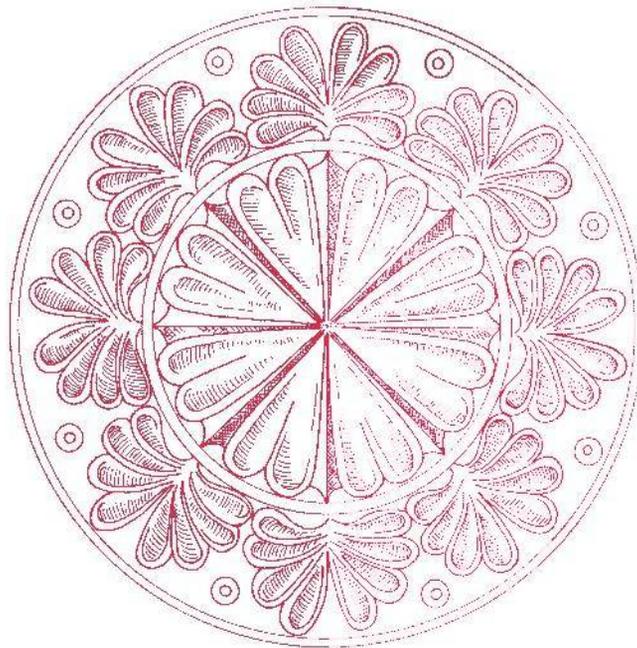


CAIETE ARA

ARHITECTURĂ. RESTAURARE. ARHEOLOGIE.

11, 2020

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EDITURA „ARHITECTURĂ. RESTAURARE. ARHEOLOGIE.”, BUCUREȘTI

Excerpt from Caiete ARA 11, 2020

Caiete ARA

Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie.

Cahiers ARA
ARA Hefte
ARA Reports

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Editura ARA - „Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie”, București

Excerpt from Caiete ARA 11, 2020

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ARA REPORTS

REVISTĂ ANUALĂ DE ARHITECTURĂ, RESTAURARE ȘI ARHEOLOGIE, PUBLICATĂ DE ASOCIAȚIA ARA

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Editura ARA - „Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie”

ARA - “Architecture. Restoration. Archaeology” Publishing

editura@simpara.ro

www.simpara.ro

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Tipărit / Printed by:

Pro Editură și Tipografie, București

Coperta / Cover:

Sarmizegetusa Regia. Decorated disc.

(Virgil Apostol, Răzvan Mateescu, p. 91, fig. 41).

ISSN 2068-0686

Manuscrisele propuse pentru publicare vor fi adresate redacției editurii ARA, pe adresa / Manuscripts proposed for publishing shall be addressed to the ARA publishing, at: editura@simpara.ro

Excerpt from Caiete ARA 11, 2020

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Nikolas Hächler, *Kontinuität und Wandel des Senatorenstandes im Zeitalter der Soldatenkaiser. Prosopographische Untersuchungen zu Zusammensetzung, Funktion und Bedeutung des *amplissimus ordo* zwischen 235–284 N. Chr.*, Brill, Leiden–Boston, 2019, 890 p. (Impact of Empire. Roman Empire, C. 200 B.C.–A.D. 476, volume 33).

The book here under review, published in the highly prestigious series *Impact of Empire*, is the reshaped version of the doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Zurich in 2017. It is divided into two parts: 1. *Auswertung der Prosopographischen Sammlung* (Evaluation of the prosopographic collection), p. 21–232, and 2. *Prosopographische Sammlung* (Prosopographic collection), p. 234–650, and followed by five appendices (p. 651–778), bibliography (p. 779–843) and indices (p. 844–890). It is an impressive achievement, taking into account the complexity of the subject. Since the prosopography of the Roman Empire heavily relies on the epigraphic material, the period under investigation experiences a drop of the number of the inscriptions and of the epigraphic habit as a whole, at least comparing with the Antonine and Severan periods.

Starting with Maximinus Thrax' reign (on his relations with the Senate see the discussion at the pp. 154–172), the Roman Empire entered into a deep crisis that touched every strata of the society, the *senatorius ordo* as well. From the main political and military body of the Empire, in the end, under Diocletianus, the *senatorius ordo* lost almost everything, retaining only a symbolic prominence. Under Gallienus, they were practically excluded from the ranks and command of the army, which was a step forward in the complete professionalization of the Roman military high-command¹ (the so-called *Gallieni edictum*, Aur. Vic. *Caes.* 33, 33–34; 37, 6: *senatum militia vetuit et adire exercitum*; the author here rightly points out that the senators were only excluded from the army and they did not command the legions anymore, but they kept being sent governors of the provinces, pp. 29–32; it seems that Vitulsius Laetianianus in Britannia superior (no. 301) and C. Iulius Sallustius Saturninus Fortunatianus, *legatus legionis III Augustae Gallienae* in Numidia (no. 157), are the last attested senators to command the legions, p. 52). This happened so quickly, although the transformations already began during the Severan period, since it was felt that a professional body of commanders was needed. Many years the historiography just pointed out on the numerous perils that the Empire had to face, and the direct consequences were the loss of the Dacia province, around AD 262

¹ See Pflaum 1976 and Piso 2014, pp. 130–146, with the older bibliography.

(*amissio Daciae*),² the devastating raids in the Balkan provinces and on the Rhine and Upper Danube frontiers, and Valerianus' humiliation in the East,³ but the crisis seems to have been embodied in the Roman society as well. The problems at the frontiers simply speeded up the transformations, the causes being merely related with the Augustan social, political and military system itself, too conservative in all of its aspects, especially regarding the army high-command, reserved only to the senators, many with little military training and experience. For about two centuries, the Roman army lived with this paradox, a complete professional army, led by non-professional high-commanders. The crisis at the middle of the third century AD brought this paradox to an end, that being in fact the core of Gallienus' reform. From that moment on, the senators were active only in the civil and juridical administration, another step towards the separation of the civil and military careers, which would have been the pattern of the Later Roman Empire (pp. 124–126).

All the other studies dedicated to the senatorial elite of the Empire stopped at the end of the Severan dynasty (W. Eck,⁴ G. Alföldy,⁵ P. Leunissen,⁶ and D. Okon,⁷ all mentioned and discussed by the author at pp. 13–14). The other studies on the Roman Senate and senatorial elite in the 3rd century AD were only overviews or parts of the larger studies on other aspects of that period.⁸ By the senatorial elite, I understand here, following G. Alföldy, the prominent families that had given the much part of the *virii consulares*, disregarding their geographic origin. They were in fact the back bone of the Empire, they ruled the provinces, had the clients from both orders spread all over Empire to defend their politically and economically interests. I am not all convinced that the distinction between patrician and plebeian senatorial families played such an important role, as M. Christol and other stressed out. Much of the patrician families were of Italic origin, but step by step senators from other parts began to play an important role in the administration of the Empire. I think that the influence of one or another senatorial family was more related with their connection to the Imperial House, like the Syrians and the Africans during Septimius Severus' reign (see for example the list of the *XV virii sacris faciundis* during the Secular Games of AD 204, within one can find a Cassius, a Fabius, two Fulvii,

² Piso 2018.

³ Christol 1997, pp. 137–162. For the Balkan provinces see also Mitthoff 2020, Piso 2020 and Poulter 2020; for the western provinces see Witschel 2020.

⁴ Eck 1970.

⁵ Alföldy 1977.

⁶ Leunissen 1989.

⁷ Okón 2017–2018.

⁸ Christol 1997; Alföldy 2011, pp. 218–272, esp. pp. 229–233; Duncan-Jones 2016 (see also Kłodziński's 2019 review).

a Manilius, a Pompeius – Iulius Pompeius Rusonianus, also from Lepcis Magna played a special play during the games; and members of the senatorial municipal Italic families like Gargilius, Ofilius, Pollienus, and Vetina, without any connection with the patrician families),⁹ among whom C. Fulvius Plautianus, member of the municipal elite of Lepcis Magna, and his family and clients excelled until his execution in AD 205.¹⁰ Since the Imperial dynasties changed usually through Civil Wars, the group of senators that had supported the winning party gained the influence.

But even, without a Civil War, certain senatorial families could have gained influence within the Imperial House. That has been the case when Nerva adopted Trajan (son of a *homo novus* who had been elected among the patricians by Vespasian in AD 73/74), a decision that was supported by a group of senators, among which Sex. Iulius Frontinus and L. Iulius Servianus, both from Gallia Narbonensis, played a prominent role, together with the highly influenced senators like L. Licinius Sura and C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus.¹¹ Trajan's rival was the highly decorated war hero of the Lower Danube and governor of the Syria province, M. Cornelius Nigrinus Curiatius Maternus from Liria Edetanorum, Hispania Tarraconensis (a member of the provincial municipal elite, adopted by Curiatius Maternus and elected in the Senate by Vespasian in AD 69 or 73/74, therefore a *homo novus*), who probably had his own supporters (such as Publicius Certus, A. Didius Gallus Fabricius Veiento, Q. Fabius Postuminus, Domitius Apollinaris, but all of them accepted Nerva's choice and made also careers under Trajan).¹² Thereafter both Sex. Iulius Frontinus and L. Iulius Ursus Servianus are attested third time consuls, which had been an extraordinary reward for their role in the previous succession's crisis. Both came from aristocratic families, but their merits brought them to the highest status among their peers.¹³

During the 3rd century, due to the numerous usurpations and the very existence of the splinter Gallic (see no. 68, M. Cassianus Latinius Postumus)¹⁴ and Palmyrene (see no. 260, Septimius Odaenathus)¹⁵ Empires, the distinction between patrician and plebeian senatorial families became obsolete (see the 5th chapter of this book: *Die soziale Zusammensetzung des Senatorenstandes*, pp. 143-153), since there were

too many centres of power in the same time (Cologne, Mediolanum, Siscia, Sirmium, Antiochia), Rome being only one among them (see the 4th chapter of this book: *Die geographische Herkunft senatorischer Amtsträger*, pp. 128-142).¹⁶ Therefore, it is not an easy task to follow the senatorial families, their ties and influences during such a turbulent period.

I spotted only few shortcomings or omissions, related to the evidence for the governors of the Moesia inferior province, which are of course understandable taking into account the large amount of data used by the author. Important to highlight, that senators governed the province up to Aurelianus, which makes the Moesia inferior province practically the last province on the Roman frontier to be governed by the senators. Pp. 169-170, note 77, C. Pe[[- -]] (no. 213) was active in Moesia inferior only after Tullius Menophilus' tenure (no. 274), therefore after AD 240, as in fact the author points out at the p. 533. Important to mention that his name was erased from all three inscriptions attesting his tenure (CIL III 7606a = ISM V 98a, Carsium; CIL III 14430 = ILB 262, Sostra; AE 1993, 1375 = ISM VI. 2, 614, Tomis). Pp. 174-175, note 85, a certain [- -]sulan(us) is mentioned as *legatus Augusti pro praetore Moesiae inferioris* in AD 244-247, while in the catalogue (no. 266), he is corrected identified as the governor of Syria-Coelis, based on an inscription discovered at Palmyra (AE 1991, 1574). Pp. 183-184, note 139, C. Iulius Victor (no. 160) is attested *legatus Augusti pro praetore Moesiae inferioris* by the inscription from Sostra, the fort of the *cohors II Red(ucum)*, in AD 261, but his tenure began earlier in AD 259/260.¹⁷ Therefore, he likely governed Moesia inferior in AD 259/260 – AD 262-263. For no. 252, Sallius Aristaenetus, one should also see C. C. Petolescu' contribution.¹⁸ Since the inscription from Topalu seems to date from AD 270/271 (AE 1994, 1532), it is therefore clear that M. Aurelius Sebastianus was his successor AD 272-275 (no. 50). He could have been identical with the anonymous no. 316 (CIL III 14460, Sexaginta Prista) and not no. 306, as the author wrongly asserts at p. 313. It is not clear why Titius Saturninus (no. 269) is listed among the *incerti* at p. 682, since he is clearly attested as *praeses provinciae* under Claudius II (AE 1993, 1377 = ISM VI.2, 617, Tomis).

⁹ Birley 1999, pp. 159-160.

¹⁰ PIR² F 554; Christol 1997, pp. 26-29; Birley 1999, p. 163.

¹¹ Eck 1997, pp. 16-17.

¹² Alföldy, Halfmann 1973, pp. 363-369; Eck 1997, pp. 14-15.

¹³ Vide contra Duncan-Jones 2016, p. 21, who considers that the personal merit did not play such an important role for the senatorial careers.

¹⁴ Kienast 2011, pp. 243-249.

¹⁵ *Idem*, pp. 239-242.

¹⁶ Duncan-Jones 2016, p. 63, calculates that, between AD 193-284, 46% of the attested senators had a provincial origin, whilst Okón 2018, p. 25, calculates that 60% of the attested senators during the Severan period had a provincial origin.

¹⁷ Eck, Ivanov 2009 (AE 2007, 1222 = 2009, 1222); Piso 2014, pp. 143-144; see also AE 1993, 1376 = ISM VI.2, 615 and AE 1981, 750 = ISM VI.2, 616 (not taken into consideration by the author, but which probably also mentions C. Iulius Victor, *praeses provinciae*), both from Tomis.

¹⁸ Petolescu 2014, pp. 299-302, no. 6.

To sum up, the author succeeds to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the *ordo senatorius* and senators during the 3rd century crisis. The book will surely become a reference for everyone studying the social and political history of the Roman Empire during that period.

Florian Matei-Popescu

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