Invasions, Deportations, and Repopulation

Mobility and Migration in Thrace, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia in the Third Quarter of the Third Century AD

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1 Introduction

Imperial systems have always promoted mobility and migration, in various ways.¹ The Roman Empire was no exception to this rule. Regular journeys made by soldiers, officers, and administrators, displacements of armies and fleets in times of war, and movements of troops that were fighting bandits all were consequences of exercising imperial authority and had an impact on the provinces involved. And so did marching and looting bands of invading enemy warriors. Moving around they not only took all kinds of material booty but also deported inhabitants of the empire, thus causing a compulsory form of mobility and migration. In the third century AD, particularly from about 250 to 280, this happened with distressing regularity, in various parts of the Roman Empire. One region that in this way lost a good deal of its material welfare and a large part of its inhabitants was the lower Danube area, more specifically the region made up by the provinces of Dacia, Moesia inferior, and Thrace.

It is difficult to analyze the impact of warfare in the Balkans in the third quarter of the third century AD with a high degree of precision. The literary sources are mostly brief, sketchy, and late in time of composition, and our understanding of the countryside of the lower Danube region is still limited because few sites have been systematically excavated and published.² Nonetheless there is just enough evidence to base some conclusions on, but these will unavoidably have an impressionistic character. Reliable evidence about numbers of people

¹ To quote Greg Woolf's opening lecture of the Twelfth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire, Rome, La Sapienza, 17 June 2015; see Woolf, this volume.

² See A.G. Poulter, 'Cataclysm on the Lower Danube: The destruction of a complex Roman landscape', in N. Christie, ed., *Landscapes of Change. Rural Evolutions in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot and Burlington VT 2004), 223.

involved is still lacking, and any estimates would be tantamount to pure guesswork.

It is fortunate, though, that in recent times a few fragments of Dexippus' *Scythica* were added to our literary sources. They were found on a Viennese palimpsest and in 2014 preliminarily published by Günther Martin and Jana Grusková, with a commentary and a historical interpretation, and give us extra information about Decius' war against the Goths and other invaders (AD 250–251), and about the invasion of the Heruli and other bands of warriors in AD 267–268.³ Equally fortunate is that Andrew Poulter's work on Nicopolis ad Istrum, a town south of the Danube in Moesia inferior (modern central northern Bulgaria), where important excavations have been carried out, was published in 2007. This book mainly focuses on a later period, the years about 400 and the following two centuries, but also sheds some light on devastations dating back to the third century AD.⁴

2 The Balkan Wars from Decius to Aurelian, AD 249–271

The first thing to do is to give a survey of warfare in the lower Danube region in the second and third quarters of the third century AD. A long series of wars and invasions started in the lower Danube region in 238. Maximinus Thrax and his army had left Sirmium to march to Italy, which may have incited Gothic and other warrior bands to invade Dacia, Moesia inferior and Thrace. In 238 Tullius Menophilus, one of the men who had fought off Maximinus Thrax at Aquileia earlier in the same year, was sent to the Balkans to stop the ravaging of Roman territory by free Dacians (Carpi) and Goths. He fought the Carps and bought off the Goths. In 239 Viminacium in upper Moesia, apparently one of Menophilus' headquarters, became a *colonia* and received a mint.⁵

3 G. Martin and J. Grusková, "Scythica Vindobonensia" by Dexippus(?): new fragments on Decius' Gothic Wars, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 54 (2014), 728–54 (= Martin and Grusková 2014a) and "Dexippus Vindobonensis" (?). Ein neues Handschriftenfragment zum sogenannten Herulereinfall der Jahre 267/268, *Wiener Studien* 127 (2014), 101–20 (= Martin and Grusková 2014b).

4 A.G. Poulter, *Nicopolis ad Istrum. A Late Roman and Early Byzantine City. The Finds and the Biological Remains* (Oxford 2007).

5 See U. Huttner, 'Von Maximinus Thrax bis Aemilianus', in K.-P. Johne et al., eds., *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n.Chr. (235–284)* (Berlin 2008) 1, 183. Petr. Patr. *FHG* 4. 186f, frg 8, tells us that the Carpi asked Tullius Menophilus to give them subsidies, just as the Goths were receiving, because they were more

MAP 3.1 *Map of the Roman Balkans in the third century AD. It shows the towns that are mentioned in the article.*

About 247–248 the emperor Philip the Arabian may have been successful in a war against Carpi who had been ransacking Dacia.⁶ A setback was the usurpation of Pacatianus, probably a *dux* with an overarching command. The senator Decius, sent to his home region Illyricum, eliminated him but then successfully usurped imperial power himself.⁷ In his reign, in 250, the situation in the lower Danube region became much worse. Philip's withdrawal of

important than the Goths. Tullius replied that they might have subsidies, if they would submit to the Roman emperor.

6 On this war, see Chr. Körner, *Philippus Arabs. Ein Soldatenkaiser in der Tradition des antoninisch-severischen Prinzipats* (Berlin and New York 2002), 134–55; I. Piso, 'Der Krieg des Philippus gegen die Karpen', in idem, ed., *An der Nordgrenze des römischen Reiches. Ausgewählte Studien 1972–2003* (Stuttgart 2005), 51–59.

7 On Pacatianus' coup and Decius' usurpation, see Körner 2002, op. cit. (n. 6), 282–300, and Huttner 2008, op. cit. (n. 5) I, 199–203.

subsidies to the northern tribes, added to the departure of a large part of the Danube armies to Italy, to fight Philip, may have triggered the attack.⁸

There was enough booty for the barbarians to take, for in the Severan period these regions seem to have witnessed a period of unprecedented material prosperity, probably caused by the rise in pay that the military received under Septimius Severus and Caracalla.⁹ The Danube provinces housed large garrisons, especially in their border regions, and were also an important recruiting ground, which ultimately must have brought extra money into this area as well.

Probably in the spring of 250, Gothic warriors led by Cniva and Ostrogotha together with other tribes, such as Carpi and Bastarnae, invaded the Roman provinces Dacia (the target of the Carpi), Moesia inferior, and Thrace. One column of invaders unsuccessfully attacked Marcianopolis in the east of Moesia inferior, moved southwest along the Maritsa valley, and started to besiege Philippopolis, which was situated at the border between Macedon and Thrace. The other column under Cniva invaded central Moesia inferior, suffered a setback at Novae against the provincial governor Trebonianus Gallus, unsuccessfully attacked Nicopolis ad Istrum, where many inhabitants of the region had taken refuge, and then moved to Philippopolis, where it joined the other column. The emperor's army may have driven the Carpi out of Dacia, but was not completely successful against the Goths. Setbacks and successes succeeded one another. Decius could not drive the invaders off from Thrace and Moesia inferior. Nor could he relieve Philippopolis, where the local militia and the garrison were over-confident and eager to help the emperor to conquer the enemies. Their boldness induced the emperor to warn them in a long

8 J.F. Drinkwater, 'Maximinus to Diocletian and the "crisis"', *Cambridge Ancient History* XII, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 2005), 37 remarks: "The first direct Gothic thrust into the Roman empire resulted from Philip's ending of subsidies to these people." It is not certain, however, that groups of Gothic warriors did not yet join raids into Roman territory earlier. See H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1997), 44; M. Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars from the Third Century to Alaric* (Cambridge 2007), 18; and A. Goltz, 'Die Völker an der mittleren und nordöstlichen Reichsgrenze (mittlere und untere Donau sowie Schwarzmeergebiet)', in K.-P. John et al., eds., *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser* (Berlin 2008) I, 453–7, esp. 456.

9 See M.A. Speidel, 'Roman army pay scales', in idem, *Heer und Herrscher im Römischen Reich der Hohen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 2009), 367, 371 (table 4), and 380 (table 7). On the relative prosperity of the Danube regions under the Severan emperors see A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia. A History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire* (London and Boston 1974), 236 and A. Wilson, 'Urban development in the Severan Empire', in S. Swain, S. Harrison and J. Elsner, eds., *Severan Culture* (Cambridge 2007), 322–323.

letter not to underestimate the Gothic warriors.¹⁰ In the end Philippopolis was taken, which gave the Goths lots of booty. They also deported the inhabitants, which provided them with good artisans and people who could write and read. Attacking the invaders when they were returning home, laden with booty and prisoners, Decius and his army were lured into a trap in northeast Bulgaria, at Abrittus, and lost the battle, which cost his army many soldiers, and the emperor himself his life.¹¹ Of course there were rumors that Decius had been betrayed by Gallus, as there had been about the praetorian prefect Philippus Arabs when the emperor Gordian III had died after losing the battle at Misiche against the Persians, early in AD 244. There *had* to be betrayal, a Roman emperor could not simply lose.¹²

What is the contribution of two recently discovered Dexippus fragments to this reconstruction of events?¹³ The first fragment gives us information about

- 10 Dexipp. frg. 23. References are to the new text and numbering of the fragments in G. Martin, *Dexipp von Athen. Edition, Übersetzung und begleitende Studien* (Tübingen 2006), 110–115.
- 11 In this reconstruction of events I follow Martin and Grusková 2014a, op. cit. (n. 3), 743–748. Evidence is mainly coming from literary sources. See Dexippus, frg. 24 Martin (siege of Philippopolis); *Codex Vindobonensis* gr. 73 fols. 194 and 195, in Martin and Grusková 2014a, op. cit. (n. 3), 734–736; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 29.2–5; Zos. 1.23; Jordanes, *Get.* 101–3; Syncellus 459 (= Dexipp. frg. 17), and Zon. 12.20.
- 12 Zon. 12.20 tells us that Decius engaged plundering barbarians and killed many. When they were hard pressed and offered to surrender all their loot if they were allowed to withdraw, Decius did not give in, but posted Gallus on the route of the barbarians. Gallus, however, told the barbarians where best to attack the emperor. Zonaras thinks that this happened in “Bosporus”, which is impossible. Similar stories about betraying an emperor had been told about Philip the Arabian. In 23.5.17 Ammianus Marcellinus has the emperor Julian in 363 say, in a speech to his soldiers and officers: . . . *iunior Gordianus, cuius monumentum nunc vidimus honorate, apud Resainan superato fugatoque rege Persarum, ni factione Philippi praefecti praetorio scelesti iuvantibus paucis in hoc, ubi sepultus est, loco vulnere impio cecidisset*, “. . . the younger Gordianus, whose monument we just now looked upon with reverence, would have come back with equal glory [like Trajan, Lucius Verus, and Septimius Severus, LdB], after vanquishing the Persian king and putting him to flight at Rhessaena, had he not been struck down by an impious wound inflicted by the faction of Philippus.” In reality Gordian’s army lost the battle at Misiche, on the threshold of fertile south Mesopotamia, against the Persian king Shapur I, and the young emperor himself died—probably of his wounds—on the way back to Roman Mesopotamia. On Gordian’s defeat and death see *Res Gestae Divi Saporis* 3–4 and *Oracula Sybillina* 13.13–20 with D.S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1990), 36 and 203–11.
- 13 The text of these fragments: *Codex Vindobonensis* gr. 73 fols. 194 and 195, Martin and Grusková 2014a, op. cit. (n. 3), 734–736.

the aftermath of the fall of Philippopolis, and shows Decius being concerned about the wrongdoing and loss of his auxiliary force. He assembles a large army (reputedly 80,000, even without the auxiliaries!) and waits for the enemy to cross the river (the Danube, probably) to the other side. He is optimistic and wishes to liberate the Thracian captives. When the advance of Ostrogotha's force is reported to him, he tries to encourage his men through a speech, the beginning of which is reported in this fragment. This fragment attests to the fact that Ostrogotha is not a mythical figure but a historical leader of the Goths in this very war. Besides it shows that Decius had lost important auxiliary forces, probably Germanic allies. The second fragment contains a story about an episode of the siege of Philippopolis, which shows that the town was conquered by Cniva through betrayal and stratagems, by which he misled the Thracian and other defenders.

The consequences of Decius' demise to Thrace, Moesia inferior, and Dacia were enormous. Marauding barbarian bands may very well have stayed on in those regions until about 269 or even longer. Not all Goths and other invaders tried to get back over the Danube again, and every now and then new plundering bands entered those regions. For the next twenty-odd years Decius' successors never had enough armed forces at hand to drive the barbarians out or annihilate them completely, or they had to go and fight elsewhere after initial successes. Trebonianus Gallus, Decius' successor, went to Rome as soon as he could, to take up imperial power there, the *dux* Aemilianus gained some successes, was consequently acclaimed emperor, and took his forces to Italy to fight Gallus, which he successfully did but which again cost many Roman military lives.¹⁴ Gallienus, the son and co-emperor of Valerian, who had eliminated Aemilianus in September 253, put up his headquarters at Viminacium in 254, and was successful enough. He created a mobile army consisting of cavalry and detachments of infantry, which became efficient in tracking down and annihilating looting bands of invaders.¹⁵ He could not stay long enough, though.

14 On the reigns of Trebonianus Gallus and Aemilianus see Huttner 2008, op. cit. (n. 5), I, 211–18. On the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus see A. Goltz and U. Hartmann, 'Valerianus und Gallienus', in K.-P. John et al., eds., *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235–284)* (Berlin 2008) I, 225–95.

15 Gallienus' cavalry is explicitly mentioned by Cedrenus I. 454. On Gallienus' new army, consisting of cavalry and infantry detachments, see H.-G. Simon, 'Die Reform der Reiterei unter Kaiser Gallien', in W. Eck, H. Galsterer and H. Wolff, eds., *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte. Festschrift F. Vittinghoff* (Vienna and Cologne 1980), 435–451; M.J. Nicasie, *Twilight of Empire. The Roman Army from the Reign of Diocletian until the Battle of Adrianople* (Amsterdam 1998), 36f.; I. Piso, 'La réforme de Gallien', in idem 2005, op. cit. (n. 6), 392; P. Cosme, *L'armée romaine* (Paris 2009), 212–215. Pierre Cosme, like Michael

In 256 he had to go west, to defend Gaul against invading Franks. About 262 and 267 new waves of plundering invaders, coming over land and through the Dardanelles, attacked the Balkans and western Asia minor. In 262 the Roman garrison of Byzantium, which had been put there by Valerian from the East, a few years before this emperor was taken prisoner by the Persians,¹⁶ mutinied and plundered their garrison city, which induced Gallienus to punish these soldiers harshly, just before he celebrated his *decennalia*.¹⁷ The damage was serious in 262, but even worse in 267 to 271. The greatest war Gallienus had to fight during his sole reign was the one in the Balkans and the adjacent parts of Greece and Asia minor, which came about in 267, and only ended during the reign of the emperor Aurelian (AD 270–275).¹⁸ Goths, Heruls and other invading groups entered the empire by land and sea. As before the Pontic region was invaded again. Penetrating into northwest Asia minor, warrior bands attacked Cyzicus.¹⁹ Other plundering groups, having crossed the sea, entered the region of the lower Danube. They were defeated by two Byzantines, Cleodamus and Athenaeus, who also fortified many cities.²⁰ A plundering group that was progressing by sea was beaten by a *dux* called Venerianus who was killed in the action himself.²¹

One of the Dexippus fragments adds considerably to our knowledge, showing that one column of invaders crossed Macedonia and Thrace and vainly attacked Thessalonica, where the defenders on their ramparts bravely withstood the invaders. Thereupon the attacking warriors, having heard that more to the south a rich booty was awaiting them, gave up and marched into Greece, to Athens and Achaea. The Greeks manned the passes of Thermopylae under

Whitby, seems to think that Gallienus developed his new army on the Rhine, but he must have done this earlier, on the Danube. See M. Whitby, 'Emperors and armies, AD 235–395', in S. Swain and M. Edwards, eds., *Approaching Late Antiquity. The Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (Oxford 2004), 161f.

16 Zos. 1.36.1–2 tells us that Valerian, having heard of disturbances in Bithynia, sent a trusted commander named Felix to Byzantium (about AD 258–259). On Felix see *PIR*² F 142. He was an experienced man if he was the same Felix who is mentioned in G. Barbieri, *L'albo senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino* (Rome 1952), nr 1113 as *consul ordinarius* in 237 and so possibly an old friend of Valerian. See L. de Blois, *The Policy of the Emperor Gallienus* (Leiden 1976), 31 note 39.

17 HA *Gall.* 6.8 and 7.2.

18 On this war see Goltz and Hartmann 2008, op. cit. (n. 14) 1, 283–7 and M. Geiger, *Gallienus* (Frankfurt am Main 2013), 145–151.

19 HA *Gall.* 13.8.

20 HA *Gall.* 13.6–10.

21 HA *Gall.* 13.7.

the command of the governor of Achaëa, Marianus, the Athenian Philostratus and the Boeotarch Dexippus—who is not the same as the Athenian historiographer Dexippus. The Boeotarch Dexippus tried to motivate his makeshift army through an adhortative oration. All in vain, for the Germanic warriors broke through to Athens, where the Athenian Dexippus had to fight them, which he did, trusting that a nearby imperial fleet would come to his rescue.²² During those years marauding bands swerved everywhere in the Balkans and adjacent Greece and Asia minor. Gallienus conquered one of the invading warrior groups at the river Nessos or Nestos, at the border between Thrace and Macedonia, but had to leave the region again too soon, to fight the usurper Aureolus.²³ Only under the emperors Claudius and Aurelian one marauding band after the other was defeated, dispersed, and destroyed.²⁴ To Moesia inferior, Thrace and probably also Dacia, all this came down to some twenty years of turmoil, human and material losses, impoverishment, and demographic decay through enhanced mortality and deportations. According to Roger Batty, marauding barbarian bands may very well have stayed on in Moesia

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- 22 Dexipp. frg. 25.4; *Codex Vindobonensis* gr. 73 fols. 192–193, G. Martin & J. Grusková 2014b, op. cit. (n. 3), 106–109. Cf. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 33.3. See also HA *Gall.* 13.6–10. The *Historia Augusta* is of some serious value here because when writing about the northwestern and Pontic parts of Asia minor, Greece, and Balkanic regions the author of the *Historia Augusta* is probably following Dexippus, whose *Scythica* concentrated on these territories. Dexippus is explicitly mentioned in HA *Gall.* 13.8. There may have been two Dexippi involved. The Boeotarch Dexippus who fought at Thermopylae was not the same as the Athenian historiographer who tried to harass the Heruls in Attica and was honored at Athens (*IG* 2² 3669, translated from the Greek by O.J. Hekster, *Rome and its Empire, AD 193–284* (Edinburgh 2008), 116). The Dexippus who commanded a local militia in Attica, called P. Herennius Dexippus, also held an adhortative speech before his men. See Dexipp. frg. 25 (Hekster 2008, op. cit. 115f.). The Boeotarch Dexippus must have been from Boeotia, as practically all former Boeotarchs had been, and almost certainly was C. Curtius Dexippus, known from an inscription of Chaeronea or Lebadea, *IG* 7. 3426. The inscription is dated by the script to about 250. This Dexippus was three times Boeotarch, lifetime high-priest of the *Sebastoi*, probably in his native town, and *logistes* of Chaeronea; he must therefore have been Boeotarch at least twice more. I owe this information to C.P. Jones.
- 23 On the battle at the river Nessos or Nestos, a small stream on the border between Macedonia and Thrace, see Syncellus 467. Cf. Zos. 1.39.1. See Geiger 2013, op. cit. (n. 18), 150. On Aureolus' usurpation of imperial power, *ibidem*, 173–84.
- 24 On Claudius II, Aurelian and the Gothic war see U. Hartmann, 'Claudius Gothicus und Aurelianus', in K.-P. Johne et al., eds., *Die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser. Krise und Transformation des Römischen Reiches im 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr. (235–284)* (Berlin 2008) 1, 301–4; 314f.

inferior from 250 until about 269.²⁵ Dacia and Thrace did not fare any better. In *Caesares* 34.3 Aurelius Victor remarks that around AD 269, the invaders almost had been living permanently in those parts of the Roman empire,²⁶ which is much worse than one or two vehement but brief attacks.

Could we estimate from parallel phenomena what was about to happen when marauding enemies stayed on for decades in a region and virtually lived there? We could think of southern Italy in the period of the Second Punic War.²⁷ Continuous violence, plunder and devastation caused many to die. Others were deported into slavery. Surviving peasants who had been pushed below the minimum requirement for subsistence were induced to leave their estates. Confronted with empty stores, destroyed fields, and stolen livestock, added to a continued threat of hostile actions, they left their farms in search of more secure conditions of survival. They could have coped with one or two vehement attacks, but not with continuous misery. Such things, added to plague and deportation, must have happened in the Balkan region during the third quarter of the third century, and undoubtedly diminished the number of productive people. Many people must have died because of violence and a lack of food, and others were deported, as were the inhabitants of Philippopolis. Yet others must have gone to safer places, for example to the coastal cities, where food could more easily be imported, or to Moesia superior, Greece and Asia minor.²⁸

There is a good explanation for such forms of mobility. In his book on the grain market in the Roman empire, Paul Erdkamp shows that the high cost of overland transport in antiquity virtually ruled out the conveyance of large amounts of corn to inland areas, unless any government forced people to do so. Instead, hungry people in war-ridden inland regions would run to the coast, expecting that food would be more readily available there. When the fields in Aemilia in Italy lay bare as a result of the war against the Goths in the sixth century AD, the inhabitants fled to neighboring Picenum, on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, expecting that the famine would be less severe there. It turned out

25 R. Batty, *Rome and the Nomads. The Pontic-Danubian Realm in Antiquity* (Oxford 2007), 388ff.

26 Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 34.3: the emperor Claudius wishes to expel Goths, ... *quos diuturnitas nimis validos ac prope incolas effecerat*. Cf. Oros. 7.23.1: *Claudius... voluntate senatus sumpsit imperium statimque Gothos, iam per annos quindecim Illyricum Macedoniamque vastantes, bello adortus incredibili strage delevit*.

27 See P.P.M. Erdkamp, *Hunger and the Sword. Warfare and Food Supply in Roman Republican Wars (264–30 B.C.)* (Amsterdam 1998), 208–240, esp. 240.

28 This a hypothesis. It should be corroborated by future research.

that the hope of rescue from overseas was false. The historiographer Procopius claims to have been present in the region at the time and paints a vivid picture of mass starvation and its consequences.²⁹

3 Traces of Third-Century Turmoil and Devastation

There are archaeological traces of third-century turmoil. The clearest example was provided by research at Nicopolis ad Istrum.³⁰ In his publication on the excavations and findings, Andrew Poulter concludes that the Severan era in this town was even more prosperous than the second century up to the invasions under Marcus Aurelius had been, but that this happy situation did not last. Already before the middle of the third century fine extramural houses had to be abandoned and were burnt down. For the third quarter of the third century there are traces of devastations. The town was besieged on at least two occasions. The south gate was blocked and the defensive ditch was extended. The extramural area would seem to have been abandoned until the closing years of the century when the frontier was restored. The situation was not as bad as about AD 400, though. At the second workshop of the Network Impact of Empire, at Nottingham in 2001, Poulter made clear that in Thrace and Moesia inferior about AD 400 the economy completely collapsed and well-populated towns were transformed into tiny fortresses. The villa economy disappeared and steep demographic decline was unmistakable.³¹ In this magnitude this did not yet happen in the second half of the third century. Instead, there was some recovery under Diocletian and Constantine. The structure of the built-up environment of Nicopolis suggests that the town in the fourth century had a very small intramural population of several hundred. Some of the finds suggest that there was still wealth in the town, at least in the hands of some of those who were privileged and owned a substantial dwelling.

29 P.P.M. Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire. A Social, Political, and Economic Study* (Cambridge 2005), 198–9, referring to Procop. *Bella* 6.20.18.

30 See Poulter 2007, op. cit. (n. 4), 9–11.

31 A.G. Poulter, 'Economic collapse in the countryside and the consequent transformation of city into fortress in Late Antiquity', in L. de Blois and J. Rich, eds., *The Transformation of Economic Life under the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the Second Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C.–A.D. 476), Nottingham, July 4–7, 2001* (Amsterdam 2002), 244–66. See also Poulter 2004, op. cit. (n. 2), 223–53, esp. 242–7.

4 The Restoration Policy of the Emperor Aurelian (270–275)

Thrace and Moesia inferior may well have owed this partial recovery not only to the tetrarchy but also to the emperor Aurelian's restoration policy. This emperor gave up Dacia, about 271, and moved its Roman population to Moesia. Enemy pressure on Dacia had clearly become too strong and continuous, and a repopulation of Moesia inferior and Thrace was badly needed after the barbarians had been driven out. We are told:

cum vastatum Illyricum ac Moesiam deperditam videret, provinciam Transdanuvinam Daciam a Traiano constitutam sublato exercitu et provincialibus reliquit, desperans eam posse retineri, abductosque ex ea populos in Moesia conlocavit appellavitque eam Daciam, quae nunc duas Moesias dividit.

On seeing that Illyricum was devastated and Moesia was in a ruinous state, Aurelian abandoned the province of trans-Danubian Dacia, which had been formed by Trajan, and led away both soldiers and provincials (*exercitus* and *provinciales*), giving up hope that it could be retained. The people whom he moved out from it he established in Moesia, and gave to this district, which now divides the two provinces of Moesia, the name of Dacia.³²

In 9.15.1 Eutropius is telling us the same, in very similar wordings. He must have used the same source.³³ In 1.71.1 Zosimus relates that the emperor Probus admitted groups of Bastarnae into Thrace and settled them there. From that moment onwards they lived in conformity with Roman law. According to HA *Probus* 18.1, the number of those Bastarnae was large, even one hundred thousand. This is not very plausible, but there clearly was a tradition that this emperor settled a multitude of Bastarnae in Thrace. Under the tetrarchy Thrace received people from Asia minor. The tetrarchs did similar things in the country of the Treveri and in Belgica, by settling Laeti and Franci there.³⁴ If these waves of new settlers could be accommodated in Moesia inferior and Thrace without much

32 HA *Aurelian* 39.7; See Wolfram 1997, op. cit. (n. 8), 45; A. Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London and New York 1999), 54–6, 155–7; Hartmann 2008, op. cit. (n. 24) I, 315 (The legions *XIII Gemina* and *V Macedonica* were stationed at the lower Danube, at Oescus and Ratiaria).

33 See also Syncellus 470.

34 Paneg. Lat. 8.21.1.

friction and within a relatively short period, this province must have lost a lot of people before, and consequently was in need of productive settlers. This was forced migration on a large scale, going hand in hand with a shortening of defensive lines and a restoration of the lower Danube frontier. Such a restoration of defenses necessitated a strengthening of agricultural and manufactural forces in the army's hinterlands, an improvement of the production of necessary goods and food in the zone right behind the military units along the border. This would make logistical lines comfortably short. The alternative would have been to transport food and goods from further away to the Danube, by land and sea, for example from Egypt and Asia minor. Particularly land-transport, however, would have put heavy demands on local communities along transit routes, for example for lodging and means of transportation. Such demands caused complaints and petitions to governors and emperors already in the first half of the third century, also in the Balkans and Asia minor, as is testified by some well-known inscriptions.³⁵ And the thinner the density of population, the heavier the burdens for the communities situated there, because the quantities of army forces could not always be adapted to the numbers of inhabitants in their backyard. If population had gone down heavily in the Balkans, this would have serious consequences to military logistics and to the burdens the remaining population would have to bear. So these forced migrations were necessary, if the emperors Aurelian, Probus, and Diocletian wished to restore a vigorous defense at the Lower Danube border, without over-burdening the direct hinterlands with demands of *annona* and *angareia*. In other words, under-population and a lack of productive hands in the direct hinterlands of large armies did not go hand-in-hand with sound military logistics.

35 See T. Hauken, *Petition and Response. An Epigraphic Study of Petitions to Roman Emperors 181–249* (Bergen 1998), 35–41, either AD 197–211 or 244–249, a petition about extortion by military men from Aga Bey Köyü in Asia minor, a village situated on an imperial domain in Lydia; 203–14, AD 193, a letter by Pertinax and the provincial governor to Tabala about soldiers turning off the prescribed road and demanding all kinds of things; 215f., a petition from Euhippe in Asia against soldiers turning off the road and demanding commodities and services, AD 211–213; 217–43, a complaint from Takina in Phrygia, AD 212–213, against soldiers demanding commodities and services; 74–139, a petition to Gordian III from Skaptopare, situated between two military camps, against all kinds of military misconduct; and 140–161, AD 244–246, a petition to Philip from Aragua, situated on an imperial domain in Asia, against soldiers leaving the main roads and harassing the village. See also S. Mitchell, 'The administration of Roman Asia from 133 BC to AD 250', in W. Eck, ed., *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis 3. Jh.* (Munich 1999), 17–46, esp. 41. On the petition by the villagers of Skaptopara see also S. Connolly, *Lives behind the Laws* (Bloomington, IN 2010), 27–38.

5 Mobility and Migration

In the third quarter of the third century Thrace, Moesia inferior, and Dacia witnessed a lot of migration and mobility. First of all, there were movements of Roman and enemy forces, over more than twenty years, which had a negative impact on the density and prosperity of the regional populations. Secondly, there were deportations. The most spectacular one was the deportation of many people from Philippopolis, but there must have been more, in such a long period of invasion and armed violence. Thirdly, there was a voluntary concentration of people within the walls of fortified towns, as at Nicopolis ad Istrum. Fourthly there was forced migration, for example of at least a large part of the Roman population of abandoned Dacia into Moesia inferior. And last but not least, there was resettlement to repair demographic decay and strengthen the logistical basis of strong border garrisons. The conclusion must be that successive events in the lower Danube regions in the third quarter of the third century AD once more show that prolonged intensive warfare in a region unavoidably results in manifold mobility and migration.

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