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Kitap Eleştirileri / Recensiones

Вагалински, Л. Ф., **Кръв и Зрелища / Vagalinski, L. F., *Blood and Entertainments. Sports and Gladiatorial Games in Hellenistic and Roman Thrace,* National Archaeological Institute with Museum Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,** Sofia, 2009, 228 pages + plates.

(İnci Delemen)

The book based on L. Vagalinski's Ph.D. thesis at Sofia University has a main text in Bulgarian and a summary in English. The author aims to compile and discuss an array of finds relating to sports and gladiatorial games in Hellenistic and Roman Thrace. It should be mentioned that the focus is on material from the Bulgarian part of Thrace.

Of the two main chapters making up the monograph, Chapter 1 is devoted to the topic of sports. Vagalinski first examines architectural remains (1.1). He discusses the remains of the stadium in Philippopolis (Plovdiv), which has not yet been excavated. Based mainly on epigraphical data, he dates the construction of the stadium to the reign of Hadrian and associates its extensive use with the Severan period. The next section (1.2) treats the inscriptions about ephebes, agonothetes, athletes, and gymnasiarchs, followed by a section comprising numismatic evidence (1.3). The majority of the epigraphical and numismatic data belongs to the Roman Imperial period. Sports gear (1.4) is investigated according to category, such as strigils, strigil holders, and weights. Special attention is paid to the strigils, since they are represented by an abundance of finds in Thrace from the fourth century B.C. to A.D. fourth century. They are studied from the aspects of findplaces, materials, and types, as well as gender utilization. Chapter 1 closes with sculptural finds depicting athletics, athletes, or athletic equipment (1.5).

Chapter 2 deals with gladiatorial games on a similar format. The first section in this chapter examines the remains of amphitheaters in the Bulgarian part of Thrace (2.1). Noteworthy in this respect are the amphitheaters in Marcianapolis (Devnya) with a capacity of ca. 4000 spectators and apparently from the Severan times, in Diocletianopolis (Hisarya) with an irregular arena and a capacity of ca. 1000 spectators, and in Serdica (Sofia). The latter two

were probably constructed in Diocletian's reign. There also exists evidence for the use of the theater in Philippopolis during gladiatorial games. Notice should be taken of a similar use of theaters in numerous cities to the east, like in Ephesos, Perge, Side and others in Anatolia. It is also mentioned in this section that some remnants in Augusta Traiana, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Deultum, and Novae could have served as amphitheaters or the like. From architectural data, Vagalinski moves on to the inscriptions relating to gladiatorial games (2.2). He observes that the organizers of gladiatorial games in the Bulgarian part of Thrace were high priests honoring the emperors. Whether male or female and whether bearing Greek, Roman, or Thracian names, they belonged to the local elite. As for the gladiators, we learn that none bear Thracian names in the inscriptions, although there is evidence for the Thracian gladiators to have taken Greek or Roman nicknames. This is interesting, because not only ancient writers and inscriptions from the western part of the Roman Empire refer to Thracian gladiators like the renowned Spartacus, but also there is ample evidence for the class of "Thracian" gladiators characterized by heavy armor and long curved knife. The succeeding sections in this chapter embody the numismatic data (2.3) and the representations of gladiators and gladiatorial games in art (2.4).

L. Vagalinski concludes by incorporating the results of his research on each group of material mentioned above. In reference both to sports and gladiatorial games, he proposes the termini and climax viable for different regions of Thrace. A crucial observation is that both athletics in the pre-Roman period and gladiatorial games in the Roman period take start in and around Greek colonies –subsequently, cities– but later find a path inland. As regards the gladiatorial games, Vagalinski states that they were popular through inland Thrace by A.D. second century. He attributes the climax of gladiatorial games in Thrace as a whole to the Severan era, which in fact is an economic peak for the region.

The text is complemented by a catalogue in Bulgarian that features keywords in English. This obviously facilitates the readers on a broader basis. The illustrations of the architecture tackled in the text and of the objects in the catalogue are assembled at the end of the book. The plates also include a map of Thrace that covers the findplaces mentioned in the text and catalogue. It would, however, be more useful, if the find type – at least in general terms, like "architectural remains", "inscriptions", "reliefs", etc. – or perhaps the chronology was somehow indicated. Doubtlessly such differentiation would support the conclusions drawn by the writer in a visible fashion.

L. Vagalinski's monograph brings together an abundance of material on sports and gladiatorial games from Thrace, which is a contribution to archaeology in itself. Additionally, the discussions particularly on architectural finds, strigils, and inscriptions about gladiatorial games are highly beneficial. Without doubt the finds presented as well as the discussions will offer valuable analogical material for similar research in the neighboring regions, particularly Anatolia.

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