Roman Control and Management of the Rural Economy in Macedonia

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Introduction

The conquest of Macedonia by the Romans meant the end of the Macedonian kingdom in the geographical area where it was born. The changes that occurred were administrative and political as well as economic. The information we have from epigraphic and literary sources about rural policy of the Romans in Macedonia is limited. However, fertile Macedonian valleys and rich mountain pastures, together with farmhouses that have been excavated in recent years in northern Greece, show that the primary sector played an important role in the region's economy. This paper will examine only a few cases concerning the tactics followed by the Romans in the agricultural sector in Macedonia during the Republican and Imperial Period.

Administrative and Economic Changes

The Romans, immediately after conquering Macedonia (168 BC), wanted to secure their domination in this region in order to prevent any attempt at revolution. In addition to other measures, they banned the trade among the four districts ($\mu\epsilon\rho$ i $\delta\epsilon\varsigma$), they did not allow anyone to acquire land in a district other than the one they were registered in and finally banned the lease of public land. However, within each district, the Macedonians were allowed to maintain their autonomy, habits and old laws. They could also own the land they had before the Roman conquest, provided they paid the taxes to the Romans.

The information about Macedonia derived from literary sources of the Roman era focuses mainly on military events and the life in urban centers.

According to this information, during the Republican period, because of the rebellious attempts of the Macedonians, the civil conflicts between Romans, the invasions of tribes from the north, and the counterattacks of the Roman troops in order to preserve the borders in the Balkans, there was a contraction of urban life and an economic recession, in comparison to the Macedonian kingdom era.⁵ As a result, the economic situation of rural populations living in villages and in farmhouses was also affected.⁶

From the time of the Emperor August onwards, Macedonia became a senatorial province and the Balkan borders of the empire moved further north. As a result, a period of peace and prosperity began for the area that we study. Extensive and expensive building projects in a lot of Macedonian cities, the increase of donations and bequests of wealthy citizens to their birthplaces⁷ and the organization of costly festivals,⁸ reflect a progressively prosperous economy.

The over-all peaceful conditions that prevailed in Macedonia during the Imperial times are also reflected in the construction of *villae rusticae*, buildings often of large size with luxurious decoration. The issue that is in need of further investigation remains whether and how the Roman rural policy determined the form, function and number of these rural buildings in the countryside of Macedonia.

Taxation

One of the regular taxes imposed by the Romans was the *tributum soli* (land tax).¹¹ It concerned landowners and growers and was paid in cash or in kind. Land tax was paid by the citizens of the subordinated cities (*civitates stipendiariae*) and from the Imperial times and onwards by the citizens of the free cities (*civitates liberae*)¹² and of the Roman colonies also.¹³

During the Republican period, taxes were collected by δημοσιώνες (tax collectors). Since Augustus, the tax collectors were freelancers or inferior imperial employee (usually slaves or freedmen) under the control of Imperial commissioners.¹⁴

Payment in kind was a type of direct tax and was applied in specific cases. In an inscription from Lete (121–122 AD), near Thessaloniki, the city was obliged to cover the needs of the Roman troops passing through, mainly for wheat, barley, beans and wine.¹⁵

In addition to direct taxation, the Roman state had imposed indirect taxes to the landowners in Macedonia.

In Heraklea Lygistida landowners ($\kappa \epsilon \kappa \tau \eta \mu \acute{e} voi$) were forced to cover, at their own expense, two-thirds of the cost of repairing the road network in the area. ¹⁶ In this way, the Roman administration reassigned the workload of road repairing to the local community.

One special case of taxation in the region of Macedonia is also worth mentioning. In an inscription from Veroia (late first half of the 2nd century AD) the proconsul of Macedonia L. Memius Rufus determined that the incomes from the operation of the city's watermills would cover the running costs of the Gymnasium.¹⁷

Property Categories

After the conquest of Macedonia by the Romans, the lands of the Macedonian king (*agri regii*) were confiscated.¹⁸ Owned by the Roman state, they were classified as public land (*agri publici*) and were rented or were given to the Romans who settled in Macedonia and became landowners.¹⁹

Another type of land was the one belonging to the cities ($\delta\eta\mu\delta\sigma\iota\alpha$ $\gamma\eta$, $\delta\eta\mu\delta\sigma\iota\sigma\iota$ $\tau\delta\sigma\iota$, locus publicus). The profits from its exploitation went to the city's treasury. The civitates liberae (free areas) of Macedonia, which had administrative autonomy, managed

the public land on their own.²¹ However, in some cases, even cities, which belonged to the territory of Roman colonies, had the freedom to manage the public land as they pleased. For example in 159 AD the city Gazoros (40 kms west of Philippi) gave to the landless people public land for cultivation under conditions.²²

During the Imperial period some emperors possessed arable lands in Macedonia. Three inscriptions from Thessaloniki and around mention officials (slaves) responsible for the administration of the emperor's property in the area. ²³ Moreover, some inscriptions inform us about the emperor's representatives in Macedonia ($\tau\alpha\beta\sigma\nu\lambda\alpha\rho\nu\sigma$), responsible for his estate. ²⁴

Also, there were Macedonian governors who were owners of arable land. Sextus Pompeius, proconsul of Macedonia during the period 8–9 AD, owned extensive lands in Macedonia.²⁵

Farmers-Soldiers and Soldiers-Farmers

As mentioned, Macedonia, up until the years of Augustus, was the geographical area where important war events took place. Wars had a significant impact on the lives of rural populations, and in particular landowners. The destruction of crops, the compulsory recruitment and the provision of large amount of crops for the maintenance of the Roman troops, were some of the difficulties the Macedonian farmers faced during that time. From the years of Augustus and until the 2nd century AD Macedonia was largely relieved of the presence of the Roman army and its population ceased to suffer from warfare and raids. However in the middle of the 3rd century AD, the raids of Goths in the Balkan region made it once more imperative to have Roman troops in the Macedonian region. ²⁸

In addition to the regular Roman army, which was positioned in Macedonia, there were also a number of local reserve soldiers, who were often recruited unwillingly. The mandatory recruitment of Macedonians is said to have been imposed by Aimilius Paulus²⁹ as well as in the years of the Civic Wars.³⁰ Costs for the maintenance of these military forces burdened the soldiers or the cities to which they belonged.³¹ Many of those soldiers were farmers.³² In an inscription from Lete, the inhabitants honored treasurer Marcus Annius because he defeated the Skordians in Argos of eastern Paeonia (120–119 BC) without recruiting Macedonians and left them in their (rural) works.³³

Roman soldiers, who settled in areas of Macedonia, also owned part of the arable land. They were mainly veterans of the Roman army, who were rewarded with land for their services.³⁴ Also, in the years of Augustus, some Italians, who were forced to leave their lands in Italy, which were given to veterans of the Roman army, settled in Macedonia and became landowners there.³⁵

What criteria and how much of the Macedonian land was given to everyone remain unknown. It is certain, however, that such rewards were offered during both the Republican and the Imperial period, and that the number of soldiers who acquired land ownership was large.³⁶ We know that the veterans settled in various parts of Macedonia and especially in the Roman colonies.³⁷

Census Property

In the Augustan period, a census ($\alpha \pi o - \tau i \mu \eta \sigma \iota \varsigma$) of residents, properties and estates begun in all provinces. Officials of the Roman administration, called $\kappa \eta \nu \sigma i \tau \omega \rho \epsilon \varsigma$ (in latin *censitores*), conducted the census.

An inscription from Orestida (192/193 AD) in Upper Macedonia refers to the census that includes registered lands, which belonged to the city of Vattyna and were given for exploitation to the citizens of Vattyna.³⁸ The same inscription refers to the name of a $\kappa\eta\nu\sigma\acute{\iota}\tau\omega\rho$ (census officer), the Macedonian proconsul Decimus Terentius Gentianus (117–119 AD).³⁹ Gentianus, a few decades before the inscription, apparently drew a commandment to regulate such issues. This commandment by Gentianus may be identical to the $\pi\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\acute{\alpha}$ $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ (old letters) of the inscription (line 36) and refers to a cadastre or a public property record.⁴⁰ Indicative is the validity of the Gentianus' orders, more than seventy years after his term in Macedonia.

As noted above, the emperors had property in the province of Macedonia. The $\tau\alpha\beta\sigma\nu\lambda\dot{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\iota$ (archivists) kept data about the wealth, in particular about real estate and arable land, of the emperor in Macedonia, in a special record, called *kalendarium* or $\kappa\alpha\lambda\epsilon\nu\delta\dot{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma$. We are aware of the existence of two $\tau\alpha\beta\sigma\nu\lambda\dot{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\iota$ from even inscriptions from Thessaloniki⁴¹ and an assistant of archivist ($\beta\sigma\eta\theta\dot{\alpha}\zeta$ $\tau\alpha\beta\lambda\alpha\rho\dot{\alpha}\sigma\nu$) from an inscription from Thessaloniki also.⁴²

Cadaster

The compilation of a cadastre of Roman provinces started in the years of Julius Caesar in order to determine taxation and to remedy any past injustice concerning properties.⁴³

In the instance of Macedonia successful efforts were made to implement a cadastre for arable lands. Specific aerial photography studies have contributed to the identification of ancient field borders in the areas of Philippi, Dion, Pella and Thessaloniki. ⁴⁴ We ascertain that field delimitation took place in fertile plains of the Roman colonies and in the countryside around the capital of the province.

Foreign Cultivators in Macedonia

The annexation of Macedonia to the territories of the Roman Empire attracted many foreigners who settled in its areas to seek new opportunities for professional career and improvement of their economic status.⁴⁵

Some of them settled permanently and acquired the right of land ownership. In an inscription from Beroea the latter are mentioned as $\vec{\epsilon}\nu\kappa\epsilon\kappa\tau\eta\mu\dot{\epsilon}\nu\sigma\iota^{46}$ and in other inscriptions from Macedonia they are mentioned as $\pi\rho\alpha\gamma\mu\alpha\tau\epsilon\nu\tau\dot{\epsilon}\varsigma$ and actors. They had the right of residence (*domicilium*) but, as far as we know, they did not take part in the political life of the cities. The political life of the cities.

Protection and Guarding

The *altarii* or *saltarii* (in Greek $\sigma \alpha \lambda \tau \acute{\alpha} \rho \iota o \iota$) were responsible for maintaining the safety in the countryside. They are referred in a macedonian inscription from Meleniko (today's Melnik of Bulgaria), dates back to 214–215 AD.⁴⁹ They could be described as field guards (in Greek $\delta \rho \alpha \gamma \acute{\alpha} \tau \eta \delta \epsilon \varsigma$), guardians of estates, foresters (< saltus = forest) and border guards ($\dot{\epsilon} \pi \acute{\alpha} \pi \tau \epsilon \varsigma$ or $\dot{\delta} \rho o \phi \acute{\nu} \lambda \alpha \kappa \epsilon \varsigma$).⁵⁰ Their responsibilities included guarding the wealth and crops from theft and deliberate destructions.⁵¹

Territorial Disputes⁵²

The Roman administration interfered with territorial disputes between the Macedonian cities or between Macedonian cities and other neighboring areas. These areas were exploited by the inhabitants of a region, and were namely arable lands, forests for logging, fishing areas, quarries and mines.

A Latin inscription of 101 AD contains the decision of a Roman judge, following an order of the Emperor Trajan on the border dispute between Dolichi, a city of Perrevia, and the Helimiotes in Macedonia. Both regions shared the disputed lands, which were probably grazing grounds. It is noteworthy that the decision invoked an earlier verdict received by King Amyntas III (393–370 BC) for the same dispute.⁵³

Regarding land use, the relations between native Macedonians and foreigners were not always good. In an inscription from Orestida of Upper Macedonia (192/3 AD) the citizens of the town Vatunna complained about foreigners intruding public land. After the meeting between Ecclesia and the $\pi o \lambda \iota \tau \acute{\alpha} \rho \chi \eta \varsigma$ (chief) of Vatunna, it was decided to prosecute every foreign invader of public land. Afterwards the Roman governor of the province of Macedonia approved this decision. ⁵⁴

According to another inscription (69–79 AD) a territorial difference was between the Roman colony of Philippi and Thasos.⁵⁵ The disputed area was the coastal zone opposite

Thasos, which belonged to the Roman colony of Philippi. The governor of Macedonia, Lucius Antonius, solved the difference in favor of Thasians. ⁵⁶ It is considered that Lucius Antonius had personal interests in these specific fertile lands and for this reason favored the Thasians. ⁵⁷

Conclusions

The agricultural policy implemented by the Romans in Macedonia was characterized by a variation determined by legislation, but also influenced by current political circumstances and, to a certain extent, by the will and interests of governors and state employees. The granting of privileges, the bans and arrangement of disputes aimed at improving the agricultural production and the well-being of the local communities. From the inscriptions we learn that the cities could make decisions concerning agricultural production; however, the implementation of such decisions was effective following the approval of the Roman state.

The foundation of the colonies in Macedonia, the establishment of Italians and army veterans as well as the allocation of arable lands to them, the interventionist role of the Roman administrative bodies, are some of the main elements of Rome's control in the area we study. A common denominator of all the above seems to be the exploitation of fertile soils with a view to reviving rural economy. The agricultural produce covered not only the needs of Macedonians in food but also provided the necessary supplies to the Roman troops in a region of paramount military importance, such as Macedonia.

The concession of Macedonian arable land to veterans shows that Rome did not mainly intend to develop the Macedonian lands for the benefit of local populations, but exploit them.

The taxation of agricultural produce, whether in cash or in kind, was implemented in accordance with Roman laws, as were in every era. Macedonia had large amounts of fertile land, the production of which yielded considerable sums to the Roman state from taxes. Special or exceptional forms of taxation (e.g. in Heraklea Lygistida and in Beroea) were applied to supply specific needs for prosperity and peace in local communities.

The preservation of old Greek institutions in cities, such as the Ecclesia of Demos and the Vouli, did not have a merely customary character, but in some cases their power seems to not have been completely determined by the central Roman administration. The decision of the city Gazoros to make public lands available for cultivation clearly shows the flexibility of Roman laws and certainly a form of freedom, which, according to the inscription, was enjoyed by this specific city.⁵⁸

As far as the landowners of Macedonia are concerned, the information we have is scarce but allows us to gain some knowledge on the subject. There were the lands that belonged to the Roman state or to the local cities, which were given to the landless people or as a form of payment to soldiers. Also, emperors and governors owned land.

Finally, owners of arable land were sanctuaries and private individuals. The sizes of land that each citizen had in Macedonia remain unknown. However, the variety of forms, sizes and decoration presented by the farmhouses excavated in Macedonia also shows the different levels of landowning.

Censuses of properties and the existence of a cadaster reveal the attempt by the Roman state to systematize agricultural production, control the cultivated land and protect the owners from transgressions. The taxation of farmers was important revenue for the Roman treasury, especially from a region like the province of Macedonia, whose economy seems to have relied mainly on agricultural production.

The Roman state intervened to regulate territorial differences between cities and regions, mainly with the aim of maintaining order and avoiding arguments and conflicts that would disturb peace in Macedonia. In many cases of such matters the Roman state respected the old local Macedonian tradition to which the local people were used to. Groups of public servants-guards (e.g. *saltuarii*) show the state's attempt for guarding fields and crops.

The attempt to investigate the Roman agricultural policy in Macedonia encounters many obstacles mainly due to the limited synthetic studies for the region. Information from the literature sources on this subject is minimal. Inscriptions provide more information, but they usually relate to local phenomena and in specific time periods. The overall study of political, social and economic developments, combined with the study of the agricultural settlements identified in Macedonia, is considered to contribute significantly to the research of the rural economy in this region during the Roman period.

Notes

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¹ Liv. 45, 29, 5; Strab. 7, fr. 47; Diod. 31, 8, 8.

² Liv. 45, 29, 10. Romans had imposed similar prohibitions and in other areas just after the Second Macedonian War, 200–196 BC as well as after the Achaean War, 146 BC (Larsen 1959, 279).

³ Liv. 18, 3. 4. A few years later (158 BC) the mines of Macedonia were allowed to be exploited. This led to the conclusion that at the same time the exploitation of public estates were allowed also (Cassiod. chron. min. 2, 130).

⁴ Liv. 45, 29, 4; Iust. 33, 2, 7.

⁵ Strab. 7, 327.

⁶ Cic. Pis. 34, 84: for the disasters caused in Macedonia by the invasion of the Dardanians, Bessi and Dentheletae. See also Papazoglou 1979a, 312–321. In addition, see the inscription from ancient Lete (see below, footnote 15). For the effects of the wars from 146 until 30 BC, see Larsen 1959, 422–435. For a general view of the economy in the Greek cities during the Republican period, see Rizakēs 2004.

⁷ Gounaropoulou – Hatzopoulos 1998, 200–203 (no. 117).

⁸ Sismanidēs 1983 (1st cent. A.D).

- ⁹ See Adam-Velenē et al. 2003 and also Ketanēs 2015/2016.
- 10 The farmhouses in Macedonia from the 2^{nd} cent. BC until the 6^{th} cent. AD are the subject of my doctoral dissertation.
- ¹¹ RE VII A1, v. tributum und tributes, 1–78 (Hans Philipp.).
- ¹² Kanatsoulēs 1955–1960, 290. 291; Kanatsoulēs 1964, 105–107.
- ¹³ Stevenson 1939, 150. 151.
- ¹⁴ For the tax system in the first years of Roman conquest of Macedonia, see Hill 1946. For the direct taxation in Macedonia in the 1st cent. AD, see also Nigdelēs 2012.
- ¹⁵ Picard et al. 1918/1919, 72 et seg., no. 7 [= SEG 1, no. 276].
- 16 Perdrizet 1897, 161. 164 [= IG X, 2 2 52]. The inscription dates back to the early 2^{nd} cent. AD.
- ¹⁷ Gounaropoulou Hatzopoulos 1998, 101–109 (no. 7). For more detailed comments, see Nigdelēs Sourēs 2005.
- ¹⁸ Cic. leg. agr. 1, 5; Liv. 45, 18, 3. For land expropriation and confiscation in Achaia and Macedonia, see Rizakēs 2015.
- 19 Cic. leg. agr. 2, 50.
- ²⁰ Kanatsoulēs 1955-1960, 304.
- ²¹ Pappadakis 1913, 462–477, especially 469; Rizakēs Touratsoglou 1985, 168–176 (no. 186).
- ²² Vatin 1962.
- ²³ IG X2 1 740: *Caesaris nostri servae* (2nd/3rd cent. AD); Trakosopoulou-Salakidou 1993, 1556–1560: *dispensator* (2nd cent. AD); IG X2 1 351: ἐπίτροπος χωρίων δεσποτικῶν (4th cent. AD)
- ²⁴ See also bellow in the subchapter 'Census property'.
- ²⁵ Ovid. ex Pont. 4, 15, 15–23; see also Sarikakēs 1977a, 43–46.
- ²⁶ Sarikakēs 1971, 12-15. 23. 116. 143; Sarikakēs 1977a, 19.
- ²⁷ Sextus Aelius Catus was probably the last governor of Macedonia, who had troops in the province (Sarikakēs 1977a, 43).
- ²⁸ Sherk 1957, 53–60. For the events that took place in Macedonia during the Roman period, see Papazoglou 1994, 192–199.
- ²⁹ Liv. 45, 29, 14; Diod. 31, 8, 9; Sarikakēs 1977b.
- ³⁰ App. Mithr. 41; Frontin. Strat. 2, 7, 8; Caes. civ. 3, 4; App. civ. 4, 75; Cic. Phil. 10, 13.
- 31 Kanatsoulēs 1955-1960, 293-298.
- 32 Plut. Ant. 62, 1.
- ³³ Syll³, 700, line 23-26.
- 34 Kanatsoulēs 1955-1960, 296-298.
- ³⁵ Cass. Dio 51, 41, 6.
- ³⁶ Pompeius in 49 BC recruited an entire legion of veterans who had settled in Macedonia and Crete (Caes. com. civ. 3, 4).
- ³⁷ Kanatsoulēs 1964–1965, 10–15; Kanatsoulēs 1964, 130. Concentrated and comparative study about the veterans who settled in Roman colonies in Macedonia does not exist. For the Roman colonies in Macedonia each separately, see Collart 1937 (Filippoi), Samsarēs 1987 (Cassandreia), Chrysostomou 1990, 226–229 (Pella), Kremydē-Sicilianou 1996, 11–22 (Dion). See also Papageorgiadou-Banē et al. 2000, a study about coinage of the Roman colonies in Macedonia with bibliography on the subject.

- ³⁸ Rizakēs Touratsoglou 1985, 168–176 (no. 186).
- ³⁹ Pappadakis 1913, 465–466; Sarikakēs 1977a, 77–80.
- ⁴⁰ For the record of the cities, where, among other things, contracts for purchase and sale of real estate and property titles were kept, see Kanatsoulēs 1961–1963, 45. See also Sarikakēs 1977a, 143. 144.
- ⁴¹ SEG 44:553 (161–250 AD) and SEG 44:554 (2nd/3rd cent. AD). See also the comments in Nigdeles 1994.
- ⁴² IG X, 2 1 471 (3rd cent. AD).
- 43 Riese 1878, 21.
- ⁴⁴ See Santoriello Vitti 1999 (where the oldest bibliography can be found).
- 45 Kanatsoulēs 1964, 98. 99. See also Papazoglou 1994, 196, notes 23. 24.
- ⁴⁶ Gounaropoulou Hatzopoulos 1998, 159. 160 (no. 59). See also Larsen 1959, 458. 459, fn. 23.
- ⁴⁷ Collart 1937, 289. 290, fn. 4.
- ⁴⁸ Kanatsoulēs 1955–1960, 259. 261.
- ⁴⁹ Mordtmann 1896: Perdrizet 1904.
- ⁵⁰ For δραγατεύοντες and δραγατευόμενα (> δραγάτης) see Arvanitopoulos 1913, no. 165A. 166. Ἐπιστάται and ἐπόπται (loc. cit. no. 166B) may also have had similar responsibilities. For ὁροφύλακες, see Sterrett 1883/1884, no. 65. 156.
- ⁵¹ For the profession of *saltuarius*, see Carlsen 2013.
- ⁵² For related Macedonian inscriptions, see Papazoglou 1979b, 240–242. For the same issue, see Sarikakēs 1986 and Pikoulas 1999.
- ⁵³ Wace Thompson 1910/1911. For another similar case, see SEG 30.573.
- ⁵⁴ Rizakēs Touratsoglou 1985, no. 186.
- ⁵⁵ Dunant Pouilloux 1958, no. 186.
- ⁵⁶ Thassos, as a friend and ally of Rome, received Rome's favor with regard to her territorial claims many times (loc. cit. no. 174, 175).
- ⁵⁷ Loc. cit. 85. 86.
- ⁵⁸ For the degree of "freedom" that Macedonian cities enjoyed during the Roman domination and the survival of the Greek identity in the region, see also in Kremydē-Sicilianou 2005, where monetary production in Macedonia is being studied.

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