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The Lost Romans: History And Controversy On The Origin Of The Romanians



Synopsis

In AD 101 the Roman Empire undertook the largest military campaign in its history: Trajan's Dacian Wars. It was followed by the Roman colonization of Dacia, the greatest colonization effort in antiquity, and what would be the first step in the making of the Romanian people. Yet, less than 200 years later, Rome would have to abandon Dacia, along with its hundreds of thousands of colonists, due to an unprecedented onslaught of barbarian invasions. This book covers the fate of those left behind, how they survived the fall of the empire and adapted to barbarian rule. How these Roman colonists, the ancestors of the Romanians, survived and persevered in a land that was host to a "Who's Who" list of barbarian tribes is both fascinating and mysterious. The Lost Romans seeks to set the record straight and answer how the Romanians became the island of Latin culture they are today. With an armory of historical and archaeological evidence, and a dash of good humor, this book takes the reader on a ride through over two thousand years of civilization (and a bit of barbarity). Mircea's comedic and critical view of history spares no one: barbarian kings, Roman emperors, and outlandish historical theories are all given an equal roasting in the book. The author's quest to uncover the truth about what happened in this little-known part of Europe. This book provides an entertaining and illuminating read for those wishing to learn more about late antiquity in Southeastern Europe, and how the Roman Empire acted as a force for cultural change on the barbarians at its borders. It also focuses on an aspect oft-forgotten, namely the cultural contributions of the wandering "barbarian" tribes on the local Romanized people. Both the history of the Romanians, and the controversies that have surrounded it, are thoroughly investigated. Helpful illustrations and an accessible bibliography containing hundreds of sources provide for a highly informative overview of late Roman and early Romanian history, and give a firm launching pad for those wishing to delve deeper into Roman, Romanian, and Eastern European history in general.

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Customer Reviews

The first part of the book is a history of the Romanian people, arguing that they have been a continuous ethnic group since their formation by the amalgamation of the Dacians and Roman colonists (mostly retiring soldiers who were granted land in Dacia) at and after the time of the Emperor Trajan's conquest of Dacia around 105CE. The author argues that Dacia remained at least partially Romanized after the evacuation by the Empire in 275CE. Using archeological, linguistic, and literary sources various other theories are considered and rejected. After the Romans, Romania was overrun by nomadic invaders from the east and north more than most: Alans, Avars, Cumen, Khazars, Magyars, Huns, Goths, and even the Mongols overran the place, but the Vlach (old name for Romanians) persevered if often as subject peoples. The story is both tragic and noble. Overall, Part I was a quite interesting illumination of a rather opaque and little known corner of European history. Part II of the book I found less interesting. It is a historiography of the various claims, mostly between the Romanians and Hungarians of who settled where, when. With special attention to building "claims" to Transylvania on behalf of the Hungarians, which the Romanians reject. From context it seems "history" has been a method of "politics by other means" in the region. The history of tendentious tribalism, which still shapes the modern world in that region to some degree, is hard for most of us European-Americans to understand, though I expect our Native Americans have a strong sense of it. The one curious omission from the book is the lack of much DNA evidence.

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