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**ITALIC ELEMENTS IN THE ISTRO-PONTIC RURAL REGION
(2ND CENTURY BC - 3RD CENTURY AD)**

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0.0. When Dobrudja became Roman territory she had been for a long time heavily influenced by the Roman civilization; V. Pârvan (1923) foretold this in the early 1920's in a paper famous for its clarity and concision. The insufficient archaeological discoveries at that time didn't affect his brilliant observations on the great attraction exercised, from the very beginning, by Rome over the Danubian populations and especially over the Greeks from the western Black Sea (PÂRVAN 1973). Following distinguished scholars as Winckelmann, Schliemann and Mommsen, Pârvan (1926) underlined Italy's major role in the cultural development of the Lower Danube territories.

Pârvan's work was continued by his disciples who studied in the capital of the Roman world, the very place where Șerban Cantacuzino, Inochentie Micu-Klein and Gh. Șincai had found the first leads on the genesis of the Romanians.

0.1. The archaeological excavations made in the Istro-Pontic region in the last 50 years proved his historical ideas to be correct. Moreover, the investigation of the rural territory made possible the observations concerning the ways in which Roman products arrived on the local market, market that will be shortly introduced in the circuit of the Roman values. For example, the use of the Roman coins in Istro-Pontic villages represented the first and the most important step in their romanization process.

1.0. The first Italic items documented relate to Rome's expansion eastwards in the 2nd -1st centuries BC, this being the specific case of the Roman Republican hoards. Such a hoard from Rachelu (Tulcea County) ends with pieces from the first half of the 1st century AD, but contains coins from the 2nd century BC as well (POENARU, OCHEȘTEANU 1996, 77-78). Another 17 pieces hoard (of which 3 local imitations) found at Tulcea proves the local population's orientation towards the Latin culture (PREDA,

SIMION 1960, 545-546, no. 2, 10, 12). Other Roman Republican denar hoards were discovered at Niculițel (Tulcea County) – ending with Claudius I (DECULESCU 1966, 577-592) coins and at Viile (Constanța County) – ending with a coin from Augustus (OCHEȘȚĂ *et al.*, *PAȘCĂ* 1983-1985, 127-141). They prove the exchange between the Dobroudjan Gets and the Romans. To these we can add the hoard series found at *Aegyssus*, Casimcea and Belica-Turtucaia (POENARU, OCHEȘȚĂ *et al.* 1996, 90, footnote 15, with the bibliography: the *Casimcea*, *Adamchisi* and *Belica-Turtucaia* hoards; OCHEȘȚĂ *et al.* 1998, 15-26: the *Aegyssus* hoard).

1.1. The presence of Roman coins can be linked with the Campanian pottery found in this area. In the Gettic necropolis from *Aegyssus* (on Nalbelor street) was discovered in 1989 a Campanian black polished bowl dating from the middle of the 2nd century BC (LUNGU 1996, 58, cat. 16) and a fragmentary plate belonging to the same category was discovered in a waste area in the Gettic settlement from Sarichioi-Sărătura (BAUMANN 1995, 200, no. 14).

We can say that in the Danubian region the Italic products preceded the Roman campaigns in Thracia at the end of the 2nd century BC, or were at least contemporary with them.

2.0. If these discoveries show Italic products in an area impregnated by Hellenism a century before this territory became a Roman one, beginning with the 1st century AD they are more frequent. However, compared with the huge amount of Roman imports, the Italic product percentage is rather low during the 2nd-3rd centuries AD; oriental artifacts heavily dominate the Istro-Pontic market.

2.1. A very special place among the Italic products imported here occupy the figured bronzes. The rich Alexandrine ornamentation used in southern Italy centers will be passed on to the Roman provinces in the 2nd century AD. A 1986 study published in Wien (SIMION 1986, 375; cf. VELIČKOVIĆ 1969, 37-38) shows that, applying an X ray method on 35 figured bronzes found in the Istro-Pontic region, 19 were produced in Italy – 10 in northern centers, 9 in southern centers. We mention some of the southern Italic products kept in the Tulcean museum: a figured lamp (black African face) from Fântâna Mare (OPAIȚ, *BAKNEA* 1977, 239-243), Tulcea County, two bowls (*situlae*) – representing Eros fisherman and Phaeton's myth, from Noviodunum's necropolis (SIMION 1977, 146, pl. IX; idem 1984a,

495, pl. XI) (pl. II/3,4) and an Eros decorated with vine cords, found at Valea Teilor (idem 1984 b, 693) (pl. I/3). Other northern Italic bronzes were discovered at Telița and Rachelu (Tulcea County). Two bronze statuettes representing Mars, part of a battle chariot's decoration, were discovered in a *villa rustica* situated close to the Celic-Dere monastery (near Telița) (RĂDULESCU 1971, 279-285). The ornamentation shows their provenience from a 1st-2nd century AD workshop (BAUMANN 1983, 89). In another big rural settlement situated NE from Telița a new decorative bronze piece belonging to a war chariot was discovered, a gryphon, integrated to a Mediterranean iconography group (idem 1991, 250) (pl. II/2). At Rachelu, on the right bank of the Danube, a golden bronze piece representing Pegasus was found; a vine leaf replaces the saddle. A vine cord fragment realized in the same manner as the Pegasus proves the existence of a statuary group, imported product of Italy (idem 1989, 55-58) (pl. I/1,2). The accuracy of the shapes reminds the bronze representation of vine cords from Bacchus's hand at Pompei (SANTINI 1972, 14).

3.0. Is well known today that the villages and the farms founded by Roman colonists essentially contributed to the romanization of the provinces entered under the Roman rule and Dobroudja was no exception from this point of view. These rural settlements, examples of the Roman way of life, will introduce into the circuit Italic products. We saw earlier the figured bronzes, many of which could be linked to the Dionysiac cult of *Liber – Libera* and to the celebration of the vine feasts: *vinalia urbana* and *vinalia rustica*. In the same context the existence of *collegia* of worshipers for Silvanus in the settlements from Ulmetum (*ISM* V, 89, no. 66) and Neatârnairea (*ISM* V, 92, no. 67). (central Dobroudja), besides the presence of a widespread cult of this deity in the Roman world, show undoubted Italic influences. At Ulmetum (2nd century AD) and at Neatârnairea (3rd century AD) we have shrines offered by the worshipers at the annual celebration of Silvanus (June the 1st), which coincided with the *Rosalia*.

3.1. Talking about the funerary monuments in the northern Danubian area (BAUMANN 1984, 214-215), we meet semi-pyramidal shaped couronnements as well as Harpy or Sphinx shaped *acroterae* on *aediculae* and mausoleums. Such ornaments are characteristic for Aquileia (DAICOVICIU 1968, 350) from where they spread, in the 1st century AD, into the Danubian provinces (pl. IV 2, Horia, 2nd century AD). The Harph

funerary motif entered the Istro-Pontic region in the 2nd century AD, also coming from north-eastern Italy (RENARD 1968, 303-304).

4.0. Not always the items discovered give the ethnicity of their carriers. This is the case of the 2nd - 3rd centuries AD *villae rusticae* from Horia and Niculițel (BAUMANN 1983, 97-123) which present specific architecture for the Italic farms. The farm from Horia belongs to the *villa rustica* type with column lines and garden, reminding a type known in southern Italy since the Republican period (ÉTIENNE 1970, 249). The presence of a little interior space, *atriolum*, built to separate the summer unheated rooms on the north side from the *hypocaustum* heated ones on the south side, includes this farm in the double courtyard Roman *villa* category. The main characteristic of this type is grouping the rooms into the principal building, by constructing an inner yard around which dwelling rooms are situated and an outer yard towards which the other rooms open. The pastoral *villa* from Niculițel is another example of heavy Italic influence, visible in the construction system as well as in the internal structure of the farm: two yards, wide spaces northwards destined to the animals, two watertanks, following strictly the recommendations of the Roman specialists - Vitruvius, Varro, Plinius Maior, Palladius (BAUMANN 1983, 143-144, notes 327-331). The *peristylus* is the most important element that groups around it all the other constructions. The stone precinct and the partition by column lines of the interior spaces limit the dwelling; the owner's apartment is in the south-eastern corner. Generally, the farm of Niculițel respects the Vitruvian principles regarding the partition of the interior spaces, a specific feature of the Italic farms, in which the constructions lay on three sides around a big yard and the façade is constituted by the precinct wall with the gate (DA 1919, 874-877, plate 748: the farm's plan *apud* Vitruvius).

5.0. The Roman world developed as an agricultural society for which land represented the main source of wealth and prestige. The Istro-Pontic region hadn't enough cultivable land to offer, so animal raising and crafts occupied the same place in a mixed economy that became in the 2nd century AD stable and harmonious. Both the Roman farmers and the *vici* colonists, owners of land given by the State, inherited, most times directly from Italy, an advanced agricultural technology based on natural fertilizers, crop rotation, the use of the *planaratrum* with the iron *vomer* type plough

(Cato, *De agricultura*, 54; Vergilius, *Georg.*, I, 215; Columella, *De re rustica*, II, 9, 14; 10, 1), bettered traction animal breeds, cabalannes and horned cattle - appreciated both in production activities and in alimentation (HAIMOVICI 1996, 393-407). The agricultural inventories from Pervelia-Mošneni, in the Callatian territory (CONDURACHI 1950, 90-92), and from settlements and farms in the Noviodunian territory, containing ploughs with attachment bracelets to the *planaratum* (BAUMANN 2000, 234), show the powerful Italic influences in the north Dobroudjan agricultural economy during the 2nd -3rd centuries AD. Paleofauna studies from north Dobroudjan sites revealed the existence of small and medium horned cattle, indispensable for agricultural activities (*iumenta*), brought here and raised by the colonists.

In our opinion this economic phenomenon emerges in the arts as well, on votive bas-reliefs from all over Dobroudja, as at Tomis during the Severian dynasty (the bas-reliefs of Dekeballos and Aurelius Sozomenos: pl. IV/1) (BĂRBULESCU 1990, 5-9; COVACEF 1998, 275-276, plates 6, 8) on C. Iulius Quadratus' funerary monument from Ulmetum (pl. IV/3) (*CIL* III, 12491; see the bibliography at COVACEF 1998, 268, note 30) and on Ulpius Maximum's votive monument (pl. III) from Făgărașu Nou (near the *castrum* from Beroe) - an excellent ethnographic scene (DRAGOMIR 1962, 421-429).

The bas-reliefs from Tomis, Ulmetum and Topraisar, in the Tomitan territory, have common elements with the one found at Făgărașu Nou. On all these monuments the ox is shown as the traction animal, realistically represented, respecting the dimensions and proportions. We think that the monuments present in daily life scenes the image of a new horned cattle breed, unknown to these territories before the Roman colonization.

6.0. We can say, without mistaking that, at least until the beginning of the 3rd century AD, normal and permanent relations with Italy existed, facilitating the introduction of imported products which influenced not only the material and the spiritual culture of the Dobroudjan populations but, together with the other civilization elements, contributed to the romanization of this Danubian province.

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Pl. I

1



1



2

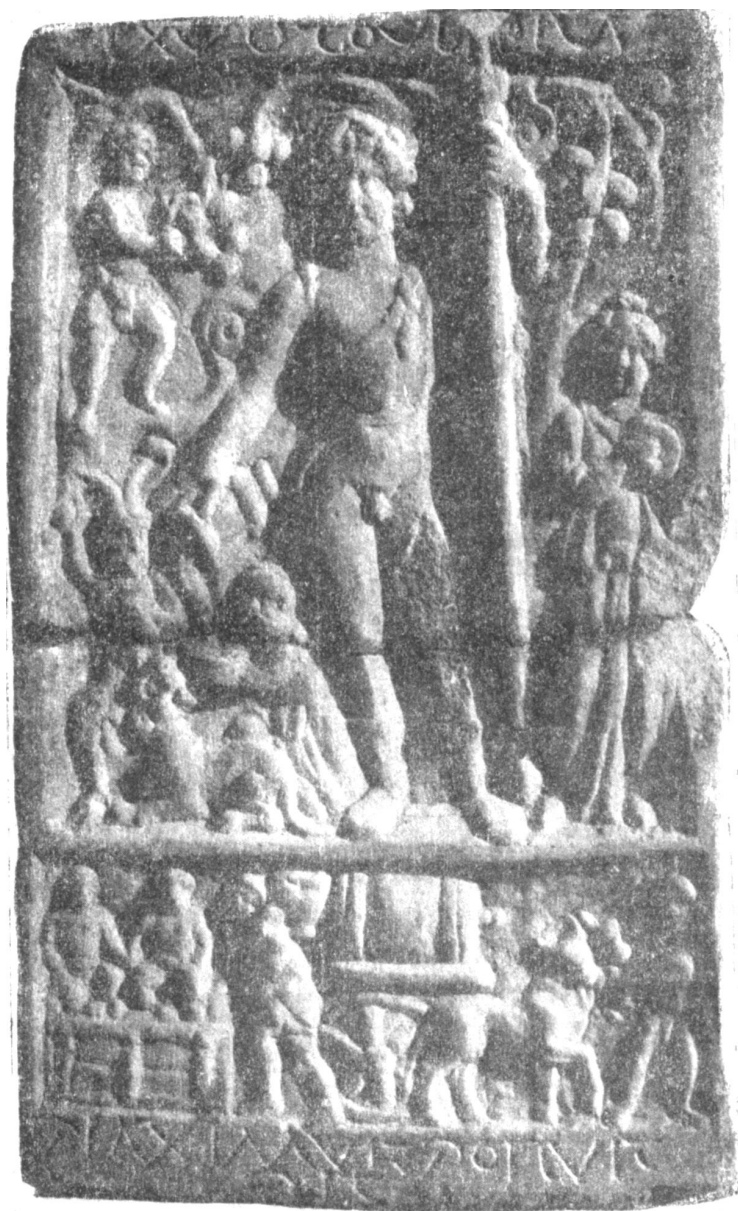


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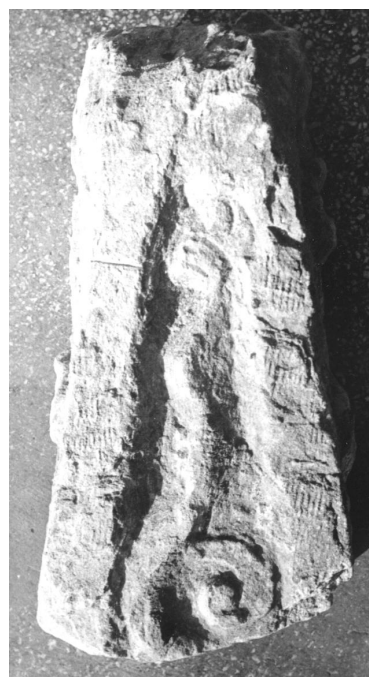
Pl. II



Pl. III



1



2



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PL. IV

