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**ASPECTS CONCERNING THE CIRCULATION OF
THE ROMAN REPUBLICAN DENAR IN DOBRUDJA**

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The discovery, during the time, of a Roman Republican relevant currency led to the change of image of the currency we present here, and the appearance and implication of the Roman state from “Dunărea de Jos” suffered same changes concerning these information. This currency circulation, although “shyer” during the Roman Republican period than the one in the other Romanian territories (MITREA 1958, 123-138; CHIȚESCU 1981, *passim*; WINKLER 1955, 126, 158; GLODARIU 1974, 276-300; MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980a, 15-43, 291-303; 1980b, 189-205; 1990, 93-113, 148-160; OCHEȘEANU 1981, 56-91; PREDA 1998, 281-317), is an active part from the Dobrodgean currency’s circulation being, in the same time, the essence of a complex exchange (economic and commercial) process in the South-Western zone of the Black Sea coast.

Although a universal currency (MITREA 1978, 8; 1970, 133; MIHĂILESCU 1980a, 30; PREDA 1998, 281), the Roman denar has its appearance in Dobrodgea, in an economic market which used – concerning the currency – the Greek nominal (especially Tomitan, Histrian, Callatian and also from other economic towns) and this explains, up to a certain moment, its rare appearance in discoveries (chronological as well as archaeological).

First we can notify the small number of discoveries – approximately 140 isolated currencies in 180 years. Also, a big and important part of these has no certain origin (sometimes their origins are related to Dobrodgea, Northern Dobrodgea, South-Western Dobrodgea or Dobrodgea-passim).

Talking about the same currency we should add that the cognition of a big part of these is due to some surface investigations, happening discoveries or information from antiquaries and only in a small amount we due this to systematic investigations.

In spite of all these problems, the analysis, of the issues under the circumstances already mentioned can partially offer an almost relevant image of the role of the Roman Republican denar in the monetary exchanges in the end of the 1st millennium B.C. the denar being relevant for the political, military and economical ascent of the Republican Rome.

As we already know, the currency is indeed an institution that depended, during the ancient times, upon the general political context as well as the economical one. The Roman Republican denar, being the exponent of a powerful state that was in a permanent expansion, had been variable accepted in Dobrodgea (taking in account the zone and the time), being supported by the trust of the ones which accepted it for the payment of the products and continued to use or treasure it.

The interest directions concerning the Republican denar's discovery are: the right shore of the Danube, the seacoast of the Pontus Euxinus and the inside territory between the Danube and the Sea (OCHEȘEANU 1971, 83; POENARU-BORDEA 1974, 219-230; TALMAȚCHI 1998, 279-280). The last direction, in fact the central part is, according to the present datum, the less favored one for the prospect of our research – we can find them as treasures as well as isolated. Suppositional we can say that this zone had a natural difficulty – we are talking about the South – Eastern Dobrodgean zone – explained for that time, by the presence of an extremely dense vegetation made of bushes, very hard to be passed by merchants (HAIMOVICI 1999, 219; CHIRIAC, PAPASIMA 2000, 222). We can notify that this situation, concerning the discoveries, appears also in the Greek epoch and continues in the Imperial one at least for the Ist-IIIrd centuries A.C. (OBERLANDER-TÎRNOVEANU 2000, 405-420). We should add to this opinion that the Southern-Central part of the analyzed zone didn't benefit of the same attention as the ones from the Pontus Euxinus and Danube's shore because of objective and subjective causes being less researched, except the Pantelimon zone (PÂRVAN 1912, 495-607; 1913, 245-420; 1915, 265-304).

In order to identify the Roman Republican denar's penetration we took in consideration three big stages: 211–101, 100–51, 50–32\31 A.C. They are partially arbitrary and we took in account the Republican discovery's motion and the datum lapse of time according to M. Crawford's catalogue (1974, *passim*) about the isolated issues. For the first time we have no significant discoveries in the Northern half (zone) and the ones from the Central – Southern part are few. There are also some important ones on the Danube's shore up to Hârșova and some dominant ones on the Pontus Euxinus shore – 51,70 %. During the second stage a spectacular development of the Central–Northern zone takes place during the process of Danube's shore take over of the first place with 43,43 % and the Black Sea's shore subtraction to 26 %. In the last stage the discoveries from the Danube's shore (41,17 %) and those from the Black Sea area (35,28 %) eclipse the ones from the South–Central zone. Again, just like in the 1st

stage, the Northern half isn't very much present, reflecting, probably as a possible explanatory factor, the uncertainty and the devastations made by Burebista's military action (RĂDULESCU 1977, 67) - the one that created an unchallenged recoil in the account's mechanism. This started, for a short period of time, a change / in the negative way – of the local realities, but not for a long time as the military and economic interests started again together with a considerable Roman account's wave.

A careful view over the isolated Roman Republican denars' discovery in Dobrodgea offers us the possibility of deriving some conclusions. The penetration of the Roman currency in the zone we've already analyzed had been made through a Southern direction, South–Western at first – probably along the seashore – and then along the Danube, its shores often serving to the mutual advantages in terms of communication made in the specially equipped places (WINKLER 1981, 111-121). Somewhere around the 1st part of the 1st century B.C. the river becomes the main way to penetrate from the military, economically and commercial point of view this zone. Also, the North–Dobrodgean half didn't represent a favorable zone for accepting and using the denar this being an important space in the native community. Although we have used the term of Central – Southern zone concerning these discoveries, somehow it is an improper one because the discoveries had been made along the commercial way, which used to unite Tomis and Axiopolis, and it probably used to be very much used in the second part of the 1st century b. Chr.

Consulting the already discovered Roman currency we find a significant quantity of issues specific to the 2nd and 3rd decades of the 1st century B.C. (OCHEȘEANU 1986, 80-81; TALMAȚCHI 2001, 27), in other words a dominant Roman control over the land where Danube flows into the Sea, a control which won't last – probably up to the West–Pontic colony's uprising (PIPPIDI, BERCIU 1965, 276-282). The difficulty concerning the penetration of the Roman Republican denar is obvious because of its absence during 55–49 b.Chr. – taking in account the issue's date -, the problems could be solved , if we think about Burebista's well known Pontic military campaign which, from the geographic point of view, covered the entire Western Black Sea shore (CRIȘAN 1977, 243-256; RĂDULESCU, BITOLEANU 1998, 68-69). Of course that the Greek rural colonies are taken in account. Having such a military background the Roman commercial activity suffered, the absence of the currency magistrates between 55-49 b. Chr. being the reflection of the above-mentioned situation. Generally speaking, the period after the West–Pontic uprising is characterized by a cash decrease having as a background the Roman financial efforts made

for the Gauls, and the crisis due to the civil wars (POENARU-BORDEA, COJOCĂRESCU 1984, 71-74). We can observe, partially, a synchronization between the Roman Republican currency situation from Dobrodgea with the one from Muntenia, the similarity being connected to these region's Balkan currency supply, after all the regions are neighboring (OCHEȘEANU 1981, 59-91; 1986, 81). So, we can find a permanent denar's penetration diminish up to the 2nd and 3rd decades of the 1st century B.C. By this time we get to a decrease top and then to a perpetually growing tendency with some syncope's towards the end of the same century. The explanation for this is the permanent issues' publication made by the Republican mint on the background of the already existent accounts (Idem, 1992, 120-121).

In Moldavia the Republican denar appears, probably, in the second half of the 1st century B.C. and continues to massively penetrate the local market in the 1st century A.C., being associated with Imperial issues (BABEȘ 1975, 133; CRAWFORD 1980, p.52; MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980a, 41-42; 1990, 99-113) together with the "Dunărea de Jos" border's fortification.

The isolated discoveries during the 30`s bring up the circulation of the Roman currencies, one which happened only during the 2nd and the 3rd decades of the 1st century B.C. Politically and military Dobrodgea goes under Roman occupancy, being leaded by the proconsul of Macedonia, Marcus Licinius Crassus, between 28-27 b. Chr. (RĂDULESCU, BITOLEANU 1998, 74-75). During this period of time we assist to a reestablishment, in terms of competition, of the Roman currency, theoretically speaking – at least taking in account the historical data. A large amount of Marcus Antonius issues were published in the moving monetary workshops (OCHEȘEANU 1986, 81) in order to sustain his military efforts but we are going to speak about this further.

Speaking again about the "map of the discoveries", a small part of them identifies with or is near some bigger or smaller towns from the Getic period having a big number of native inhabitants (DIACONU, ANGHELESCU 1968, 348-351; IRIMIA 1973, 35-42; SIMION 1977a, 31-48; 1977b, 49-72; CONOVICI 1986, 129-143; CONOVICI, MUȘEȚEANU 1975, 541-550). In other words we can say, especially concerning the central and Danubian zones of the Dobrodgean territory, that the Republican denar was a way of payment in the local exchanges. Obviously, speaking about the merchants' traffic, an important role in the dissemination of the Roman currency in the native trade had been played by the presence of the military troops, passing by at first, and then during their staying there (ARICESCU 1977, 24-30; YURUKOVA 1963, 17).

A new aspect which is worth to be reminded – if we take in account a later circulation of the currency – is that according to which the merchants' and troops' roads in this area approximately coincide – concerning the discoveries (isolated or as treasures) – with the three main ways from the early Imperial epoch as well as with their ramifications – the subordinate roads. The assumption is based upon the already mentioned importance of these ways of penetration (mostly the central ones) for the above mentioned epoch as roads of quick crossing between same important towns, places where the Greek local or imported currencies have circulated (OBERLÄNDER-TÎRNOVEANU 1978, 65-66). The building of the Roman Imperial military and commercial roads in Dobrodgea hasn't been made accidentally over unchecked roads or uncirculated ones from the commercial point of view, but it started from an already known local reality (BAUMANN 1973-1975, 43-44; IRIMIA 1980, 79-80).

Otherwise, the penetration of the Republican denar had been facilitated by the political and military events that led the Greek colonies to the gradual lost of the monetary influence in the native towns. The future secondary Imperial roads during the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. had their place and importance in the economic and commercial realities (see the already mentioned connection Axiopolis – Tomis or the one between Isaccea and Histria).

At last, the biggest density in discoveries (treasures / isolated) is established in the area between Durostorum (Silistra) and Oltina, along the Danube. This, in our opinion, can be explained on the one hand by the presence of the most important way of crossing the river at Izvoarele, between Transmarisca and Carsium and towards Muntenia. The commercial ford had been valid before the Romans' arrival as well as many centuries afterwards, many archaeological and numismatic discoveries being made there (TALMAȚCHI 1998 b, 25-34).

On the other hand we can consider the importance of the old centers of Durostorum but, unfortunately, the information we have about the pre-Roman period are vague and this is why we cannot say something sure about this period. Anyway, there are some Histrian dragma treasures that worth to be reminded because they confirm the settlement's place as a transit one for the products that came from South and went to Histria (BUZOIANU 2001, 295).

As we already know, the Roman currency's penetration in the transdanubian territory directed it towards circulation – for the current exchange – or towards hoarding. In the same time it is hard to know if the treasures came from local savings or from the outside of the territory, being

brought by human circulation. If they come from local savings made in different stages they would notify us about our territory's currency circulation, being collected gradually from the currency's market (OCHEȘEANU, PAPUC 1986, 134) - a method used also in the South of Danube (Bulgaria) (OCHEȘEANU 1981, 63). There had been found a number of eight buried treasures with Roman Republican denars belonging to the 1st century B.C. but we have almost complete information only about seven of them. The biggest part of these denars correspond to the 1st century B.C., their chronological belonging – according to the currency's dating – to the IIIrd and IInd centuries B.C. Unfortunately, besides the classification of the treasures into two treasure groups according to their chronological storage, the first – buried somewhere after 64-62 B.C. – is chronologically superior to the second which has four hidden treasures in the second half of the 1st century B.C. The earliest treasure is the one discovered in Ostrov being associated with Thasian tetradrahmas (MOISIL, 1922, 58, nr.91), followed by the one from Lipnița (Constanța) buried sometime after B.C. (TALMAȚCHI 1998a, 284, n. 63). Depending on the moment of their circulation – their hoarding and burial – is hard to establish certain connections between the numismatic documents and the military and political facts. We also have vague or incomplete information about some of these treasures, others are not totally recovered or they are deliberate selections, and, therefore, the possible conclusions would have a dangerous relativity for the scientific truth.

In the 1st century B.C. the Republican denars are present in early Imperial treasures in proportion between 24,32 % - 84,31 %. During the Augustus epoch the biggest part of the denars, which were present in the Dobrodgea market exchanges, used to be Republican issues. Generally we can observe a shy participation of the denars – belonging to Julia Claudia Dynasty – to the moulding of the monetary material, which was in circulation. It is not happening the same thing with the issues from the Flavia Dynasties, denars that used to be Imperial and in a 100% proportion. The biggest part of these treasure are made in the rural zones, the issues of the Julia Claudia Dynasty missing from Belica and Adamclisi, situation explained, partly, by the first Emperor's monetary politics and by the big silver quantity of the denars before Nero's currency reform, the ones that got out of circulation according to the Gresham Law (OCHEȘEANU 1998, 25). The structure of the treasure discovered in Tulcea is different from the others, containing a new currency, the cash from a Roman camp or from its neighbourhood being different from the one found in rural zones. But this treasure together with the ones from Belica and Adamclisi form a group of

treasures that were buried because of some special military and political situations previous to Domitian's actions in the Danube area – maybe a barbarian raid that covered Dobrodgea from North to South, mentioned in historical sources, excepting the numismatic ones (Idem 1988-1989, 97).

The presence, in treasures, of the denars for legions – issued in Efes by Marcus Antonius (legionsdenare) – calls our attention and we can notice the percentage: 33 % in the Casicea treasure, 29 % in the one from Adamclisi and 42,85 % in the treasure discovered in Tulcea. The currency's bad conservation and their wear and tear are due on the one hand to its long time of circulation, on the other hand to the stencil's, excessive use and because of these matters above mentioned the currency is not perfect. In order to remain in circulation two issues were made, such treasures being discovered in Durostorum – buried during Costobocs' invasion (CHARITOV 1987, 17-26) - and in Goleş, the last denar being dated 180 a. Chr. (HRISTOV 1987, 87-92). These denars were hoarded during Flavias' epoch – maybe in the same time with the currency reform made by Nero in 64 a. Chr (POENARU, OCHEŞEANU 1996, p.79). There seems to be an exception – the denars from Costineşti were not treasured because they had a low silver percentage and for this matter they were of no interest for merchants. But, after Marcus Licinius Crassus' action according to Gresham's Law, the Marcus Antonius denars are going to migrate in Dobrodgea and an important number is present in the treasures of the Flavias' epoch – 35 % of the Republican currency and about 16 % of the isolated discoveries. Generally, depreciated concerning the title, having a considerable copper content (WINKLER 1971a, 97; MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980a, 40), the denars for legions issued in a very big quantity have been accepted, under unknown circumstances, in the Roman Empire's peripheral areas (WINKLER 1971a, 104; 1971b, 285). They "got" there at least 50 – 100 years later than their issue and were, probably, taken out of circulation during Traian's reign due to their low value. In the isolated discoveries from Dobrodgea they appear in the following percentage: 38,45 % on the seashore, 30,76 % along the Danube (from Bugeac to Isaccea) and 30,76 % between Bărăganu and Enisala. The denars' penetration – later than their issue – is due, mostly, to the commercial activities (DRĂMBOCEANU 1975, 221; WINKLER 1971b, 97-104), although, for Dobrodgea, the probability according to which the currency's presence is earlier – since the moment of their issue – was asserted (taking in account the Greek colonies' position during the Antonius – Augustus conflict) (POENARU-BORDEA 1974, 235).

The circulation of the legions denare Marcus Antonius type chronologically ends the presence of the Republican currency in the currency's market. The beginning of the Roman Republican denar's circulation in Dobrodgea is a delicate matter and this is the reason why we are cautious in giving verdicts. Anyway, we would be tempted in sustaining a relatively late penetration, maybe during M. Terentius Varro Lucullus' campaign during 72-71 B.C. (RĂDULESCU, BITOLEANU 1998, 66; PETOLESCU 2000, 26), sporadically at first. A brake in this Republican currency rush was brought by Burebista's military campaign, this situation being rectified after 45 B.C. and obtaining a bigger spreading after 28/27 B.C. and in the first part of the 1st century A.C.

An interesting problem is the presence of the Roman Republican denars' imitation in Dobrodgea. They are rough and easy to be identified due to their style and general aspect and also to the substantial differences from the original inscription (MITREA 1968, 59; CHIȚESCU 1971, 210). There are also imitations that appear in isolated discoveries (3) and in treasures, after 84, 74, 68 – 66 and 55 B.C. We can make an analogy between the situations happening in Muntenia and Oltenia where the discovered currency use the same period's prototype, in other words Dobrodgea can be somehow integrated on the whole of the currency's circulation from the Danube's zone – the same thing happens with the discoveries from the Northern Bulgaria (POENARU-BORDEA 1974, 227).

In terms of metrology the Roman Republican denars discovered in Dobrodgea have an average weight inferior to the theoretical weight, which is 3,86 g (CRAWFORD 1974, 594) - being situated between 3,60-3,70 g. There are also issues which overweight 4,00 g but they are only exceptions from the metrological Dobrodgean average.

Finally, the last analyzed aspect is that of the checks. Unfortunately, because of the same small number of discoveries from the Dobrodgean zone, they are few and the biggest part of them is worn out. Generally these issues are known in different geometrical shapes and they used to be the guarantee for the metal's quality and for the denar's originality (PREDA 1998, 286).

Studying the checks' usage concerning the Republican denars discovered in Moldova, V. Mihăilescu-Bîrliba called our attention to the existence of a period of time between their issue and the check, and that this procedure used to be a guarantee of the issue's value, the same check appearing, sometimes, on issues having different dates (MIHĂILESCU-BÎRLIBA 1980a, 37) – these statements seem to come out of the Dobrodgean check's analysis.

The study of the Roman Republican denar's circulation in Dobrodgea cannot give, yet, a categorical answer to many of the problems that appeared during the research. There are many interrogative aspects whose explanation is uncertain. The most difficult one is about treasures. Why are they mostly present at Dobrodgea's purlieus? Why didn't we find more treasures in the interior of the territory? (PROCOPOV, VLADIMIROVA-ALADJOVA 1995, 53) Was there such a big difficulty for merchants to penetrate the interior of the region so they didn't even try? Was the Tomis – Axiopolis way more sure for them during the Roman Republican denar's later circulation than other times well – known in the historical sources? These are just few questions out of the ones that wait for an answer based on solid arguments, which probably, only the future discoveries will solve, even if it will appeal to private collections, fortuitous information or discoveries.

Translated by *Laura Panait*

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