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THE ROMANIZATION PROCESS IN CRIȘANA IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCHES

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In this paper the 2nd to 4th century period for Crișana is highlighted, when this area was massively inhabited by the tribes of free Dacians, the ones not incorporated in the Roman Empire. They lived between the Iazyg Sarmatians and the Germanic people from the West and North-West and the Roman province Dacia. Their material culture lives on, changes in their structure are made by the appearance of black grainy pottery and the brick-red usual roman pottery. Gradually their culture is metamorphosed in a provincial Roman one. The settlements belonging to the free Dacians on the Crișul Repede, Crișul Alb, Crișul Negru, Barcău and Ier valleys were archaeologically researched. We mention the settlement from Medieșul Aurit where dozens of pottery kilns were discovered and where Roman style pottery was produced on a grand scale destined for trade. Researches showed that the free Dacians continued their lives even after the Roman conquest. They had contacts with Sarmatians and Germanic people but the strong Roman influence cannot be contested, especially through trade and social relations. After the Romans left the province one can observe movements of romanized Dacians towards West and North-West but also movements of free Dacians' territory towards the once Roman Dacia. The process of romanization continues here until the arrival of the Slavs and in the 9th-10th century the Romanians form here a separate political formation.

Keywords: *Crișana, free Dacians, Romanization, Roman Dacia, archaeological research, continuity of settlements, pottery.*

PROCESUL DE ROMANIZARE ÎN CRIȘANA ÎN LUMINA CERCETĂRILOR ARHEOLOGICE

În această lucrare este evidențiată perioada secolelor II-IV d.Hr. în Crișana, când această zonă a fost locuită masiv de triburile dacilor liberi, cei care nu au fost încorporați în Imperiul Roman. Ei au trăit între sarmații iazygi și populațiile germanice din vest și nord-vest și provincia romană Dacia. Cultura lor materială continuă, schimbările în structura ei constau în apariția ceramicii negre zgrunțuroase și a ceramicii cărămizii romane uzuale. Treptat, cultura lor se metamorfozează într-una romană provincială. Au fost cercetate arheologic așezările aparținând dacilor liberi de pe văile râurilor: Crișul Repede, Crișul Alb, Crișul Negru, Barcău și Ier. Menționăm așezarea de la Medieșul Aurit, în care au fost descoperite zeci de cuptoare de ars lutul, unde ceramica de factură romană a fost produsă pe o scară mare fiind destinată comerțului. Cercetările au arătat că dacii liberi și-au continuat viața aici chiar și după cucerirea romană. Ei au avut contacte cu sarmații și cu populațiile germanice, dar influența puternică romană nu poate fi contestată, mai ales prin relațiile comerciale și sociale. După ce romanii au părăsit provincia, se pot observa deplasări ale dacilor romanizați înspre vest și nord-vest, dar și ale celor din teritoriul dacilor liberi înspre fosta Dacie romană. Procesul romanizării continuă până la venirea slavilor, iar în secolele IX-X românii formează aici o formațiune politică separată.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Crișana, dacii liberi, romanizare, Dacia romană, cercetări arheologice, continuitate de locuire, ceramică.*

The process of Romanization and Romanian ethnogenesis in the Carpatho-Danubian area is a widely debated topic and why not, of continued actuality in our historiography, the more that archaeological researches generate perpetual evidence of this phenomena. The paths that led Romanization of the population in both provinces, Dacia and Moesia, are straightforward, the process is the undeniable result of events that occurred in their territory after the Roman conquest, but the question is what happened to those territories that were outside the borders of the Roman Empire, but right next to them?

Prestigious Romanian historians, like Ion Nestor and Constantin Daicoviciu drawn attention to this process, expressing their point of view in their works and highlighting the necessity of researching archaeologically the territories occupied by the free Dacians.

Ion Nestor stated that after the Roman administration and the army left Dacia, the Roman element continued not only in the provinces of Dacia and Moesia, but also in the territories inhabited by free Dacians. He considers that the time of Romanization, daco-romanization and passing to feudalism on the territory of our country is the same as the time of formation of the Romanian people, extending the continuity point of view not only in the Roman provinces on the territory of now Romania, but on its whole [1, p.1427-1428].

Constantin Daicoviciu in a writing about the origins of the Romanian people states that the process of ethnogenesis extended also to regions that were never romanized directly or from where the romanization disappeared. He says that: "A series of historical, linguistic and geographical facts lead us to this ascertainment." [2, p.98].

Romanization being primarily a linguistic and cultural phenomena, besides the testimonials offered by linguists, especially because ancient written sources are scarce, the archaeological researches come to help offering a rich and important material. Thus the archaeological researches in the 1960's and after became of impetuous necessity.

For Crișana which was a territory inhabited by Dacians as written sources making direct references to them (as megaloi dahai, corrupt form) we have the Greek *Sybilline Oracles* and the geographer Ptolemy in his work called *Geography*. Although archaeological findings from the classical period (1st BC-1st AD centuries) were reported before, the contribution of archaeologist Sever Dumitrașcu beginning with the 1960s through his assiduous archaeological researches in the above mentioned territory is one of a major importance. Thus were discovered settlements, strongholds, monetary treasures, silver Dacian ornaments and a rich ceramic material. The ties with the Hellenistic world are proven for example by the monetary treasures of type Dyrhachium and Apollonia, and by some Hellenistic type pottery, but from the first century BC we also find here roman republican coins [3, p.700-701].

The first century AD marks the Dacian situation in general. Some of them are incorporated in the Empire, those in Pannonia and Moesia. The territories at East from the middle Danube will be dominated by Iazyg Sarmatians and the Quadi entered the Western part of Slovakia. The Dacians from Crișana will participate later, at the beginning of the 2nd century AD in the military conflicts between Decebalus and Trajan. These yielded the destruction of the earth fortifications with wooden palisades that were built from the 2nd century BC in the West of the Apuseni Mountains, having dire consequences upon the life of the later Dacians in that zone, this fact being demonstrated by archaeological researches from the Dacian fortifications from Clit (Arad County) and Marca (Sălaj County). Professor Sever Dumitrașcu, based on his field observations states that: "Crișana was not incorporated in the Roman Dacia and according to our present knowledge, nor were roman cities erected there, so there was no urban life. The rural life continues though, the history of free Dacians, besides which Sarmatian Iazyges enter the Western Plains" [4, p.22].

Together with the conquest of Dacians by the Romans and the administrative organization of the province of Dacia things change for the Dacians in the North-West. The relations between them and the Romans intensify and the ones with the Dacians from the province continue.

The Roman imports enter the area inhabited by free Dacians in the North-West of the country even before the Roman conquest of Dacia. Some monetary treasures were discovered in this region (Covăsinț, Vânători, Aștileu, Cherechiu, Diosig, Ghirișa, Teceu) [5, p.124-125], hoarding being a phenomenon which begins in the 1st century AD as a consequence of the intensification of commercial relations with the empire which began the previous century and were maintained even after the conquest of Dacia. In the following centuries we encounter it in a lesser degree probably due to the weakening of these relations and after that due to the instability of the situation at the beginning of the 3rd century AD.

We will not pass in review the numerous archaeological researches and materials, for example we will stop in detail on a zone from Crișana, Girișul de Criș (Bihor County) settlement and its surroundings.

Closest to our zone is a treasure of 171 dinars and one gold coin from Constantine found in Sântandrei [5, p.132; 6, p.112-113]. At Cheresig some isolated roman imperial coins were discovered [5, p.132]. Also here a Celtic style vessel was discovered in the right bank of the collecting canal [7, p.23].

Pottery from the 4th century was discovered in Girișul de Criș in the Alceu margin "Ivanis' Fountain" point [7, p.36-37], characterized only by pottery with polished score, made on wheel, some Sarmatian by shape [8, p.76].

The archaeologist Sever Dumitrașcu, in order to define the ethno-demographic situation in the North-West of Romania in the 2nd-4th centuries, divides the findings, for this period, in Crișana and Maramureș by the zone in which they were researched (close to the sources of water, between Mureș and Crișul Alb, on Crișul Negru, on Crișul Repede, on the Barcău valley, on the Ier valley, in the Someș plain and Oaș, in the Country of Maramureș). From the discovered material point of view, especially the black-grainy pottery and the usual

brick-red Roman provincial pottery, it is a rural culture, with Roman provincial aspect indicating the influence of the Roman Empire over the free Dacians. We cannot omit that Sarmatian Iazyges discoveries were recorded in this area also [9, p.76].

In this context it is mentioned the Oradea group (on Crișul Repede) with the settlement from Girișul de Criș [9, p.70,7; 10, p.239-257], but also the Oradea-Tărian group with Sarmatian Iazyges discoveries [11, p.55]. The Sarmatians together with other populations will influence Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov culture, which manifests itself in the 3rd-4th centuries AD from Dnieper till Transylvania. Sarmatian graves of 3rd-4th centuries AD were also discovered in the margin of Tărian village [5, p.141]. In the place called *Dâmbul lui Ciordaș*, in the researched Sarmatian graves it was discovered a small vessel of brick-red color, appearing of Roman style, *terra sigillata*, in a shape of a small jar with an *umbo* at the base, with its rim drawn towards the exterior and adorned with two lines under the rim [5, p.128].

After researching a large area in Crișana, observing on the field the life of the free Dacians in the area, the archaeologist Sever Dumitrașcu states: "Crișana is inhabited in the in the 2nd-3rd centuries CE by free Dacians, which live their lives in continuation or in new places, in the villages sprinkled on the three Criș, Barcău, Crasna, Someș and Tur. The Iazyges-Sarmatians only occupy a narrow strip in the west of Crișana, the majority of Sarmatian discoveries, even in this area, are from the 4th century CE [...] the roman products continue to enter from Roman Dacia, with even greater intensity, in the world of the free Dacians from the West: coins, *terra sigillata*, glass, pieces of clothing (fibulae, buckles) and so on" [4, p.21].

A specific Dacian form of pottery is the dolium, a big vessel for provisions, generally used to keep grains, but also water and other liquids. In the collection of the Criș County Museum there is a fragment of a dolium rim dated in the 3rd-4th centuries from Girișul de Criș, "Peste Criș" point, of a grey-soapy color, made on wheel and being adorned with bands of lines in waves [12, p.11]. In the same point, also called "between bridges" there was discovered a small settlement, maybe temporary shelters, with huts from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD [7, p.36-37]. In two holes at 0.60-0.70 meter depth there were discovered traces of coal, ashes but also animal bones and pottery sherds. The pottery sherds coming from jar-vessels, possibly also a Dacian cup(?), dolia, bowl rims were made on wheels, from grey or brick-red paste or with hand from grey-black paste [5, p.101]. Some, in the Potoran collection, were molded by hand and adorned with alveolated girdles, with buttons, having jagged rims and others made on wheels were adorned with simple or waved lines [8, p.77].

We specifically mention the discoveries from the settlement called "Șuculeu" from the Medieșul Aurit on Someș, where it appears that there were dozens of ceramic kilns [13, p.447-448]. In this settlement there was discovered black grained pottery, adorned with bands or simple lines and with Roman rim specific profiles. Pottery of this type was also discovered in Dacian settlements on Cigher, tributary of Crișul Alb, on Crișul Negru and in the Holod Depression (2nd-3rd centuries AD). One can see that this was not imported, but produced locally by free Dacians, with analogies to the pottery discovered in other Dacian-Roman settlements or rural Roman settlements in Roman Dacia. Since this type of pottery was not found at the Sarmatians or Germanics in Crișana, the possibility of them having some type of influence can be excluded, free Dacians taking over this Roman elements from the Dacians in the province of Dacia [4, p.23-24; 9, p.70].

As Roman, prefeudal and feudal era archaeologically researched Dacian settlements we mention Moroda (Arad County) on Chiger [14], Râpa (Bihar County) on Crișul Negru [15], Biharea on Ceșmeu, tributary to Barcău [16], Unimăt between Ier and Crasna [4, p.26].

Regarding the romanization of the free Dacians from the North-West of Romania, we can state that it was not a primary but a secondary one, where the process of romanization extended from the Romanic people in the province through economic and social relations from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD. Thus, professor and archaeologist Sever Dumitrașcu, in order to differentiate these territories and the ways in which the Roman culture elements entered, suggests the term romanization. The ethnogenesis process continues in the 4th-7th centuries AD until the arrival of the Slavs through the osmosis between the daco-romans from the intra-Carpathian Transylvania (called romanic people) and free Dacians influenced by Roman civilization. In the 8th century, according to decades of research, Sever Dumitrașcu considers that one can talk about Romanians, which later in the 9th-10th centuries organize themselves a political formation, profiting from the decline of the power of Avars and the Cazaro-Bulgars taking over temporarily the Slavs [4, p.28].

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