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Doctoral thesis

THE DACIAN POPULATION OF MUNTENIA
(2nd-3rd centuries AD)
- Abstract -

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-Abstract-

Western Muntenia. Dacian settlements in western Muntenia from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD are of the rural type, this being due to the short period of Roman rule, which did not allow the emergence and development of urban centers as in Dacia. Nor is the origin of the population that will make up Chilia-Militari culture it not clear either, it is assumed that they are the descendants of the Dacians who came down from the mountain areas after the withdrawal of the Roman armies from the time of Emperor Hadrian. Probably the ancestors of the Chilia-Militari population lived in the higher mountain areas, descending into the plain area after AD 120. The high density of settlements discovered around the city of Slatina, for example, does not seem accidental, and it seems that the population came early to settle in these places. After the year AD 120 even if isolated evidence of the penetration of the Sarmatians into the center of Muntenia begins to appear.

Settlements of the Chilia-Militari culture from western Muntenia were discovered mainly on the banks of some rivers or on their high terrace, on lands favorable to agriculture and animal husbandry. Among the discovered settlements are those on the high terrace of rivers such as those from Ipotești, Vulturești, Cucuiești on Olt, Dâmboviței Bridge on Dâmbovița, Milcovul from Deal on Milcov, the low ones Chilia on Ciorâca, Scornicești on Plapcea Mică, Colonești-Mărunței on Vedita, or on promontories such as Dumitrești. Most of these settlements are on low river terraces and no evidence of being fortified has been found at any of the surveyed. In the west of Muntenia, only the settlements of Colonești-Guesti, Colonești-Mărunței and Scornicești and the necropolis of Chilia were investigated, most of the others identified by periegesis and field research, are not researched, for now.

The type of settlements of the culture are small, open and made up of surface dwellings and especially of sunken huts like those of the Dacians of the province and those of La Tène period, and it is observed that the dwellings are ordered in the direction of the slope or grouped in clusters. The dwellings on the surface, they are usually square or rectangular in shape, built of sticks, and in the middle of each there is also a fire hearth of round-oval or rectangular shape. The sunken huts, which were discovered in much larger numbers than the

surface dwellings, have a square shape with rounded corners or rectangular but also round-oval. Quite a few surface dwellings were discovered for the area west of Muntenia, identifying three in Colonești-Mărunței and one in Scornicești.

The sunken huts in these settlements are more numerous than the surface dwellings, the most common shape is rectangular or square with rounded corners, but round-oval shaped brothels have also been discovered. In some of these sunken huts, steps made of spared earth were discovered that could serve as beds, benches or shelves for dishes, but also pits. In the settlements there is evidence that there were also ore reduction furnaces and pottery kilns, such as the one from Colonesti-Mărunței.

Apart from surface dwellings, huts, hearths and ovens, most complexes in a settlement are represented by pits, either for supplies or worship. The pits are usually cylindrical or cylinder-shaped and sometime troconical, example, the pits at Colonești-Mărunței and Scornicești are all cylindrical, but at Vulturești there were three cylindrical, one troconical. Pit no. 9 from Colonești-Mărunței is cylindrical in shape with two steps that facilitated the descent into the 2.30 m deep pit and which had a clayed interior and burnt walls to stop water infiltration, which is why it is considered to have been used as a deposit perhaps for the wheat reserves of the settlements, on its bottom charred wheat grains are discovered. So far it is the only one in this geographical space with burn marks.

In the settlements of Muntenia of the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, pits supposed to be cult pits were also discovered with inventories that included mirrors with tamgas (Mătășaru, Străulești, Militari, Târgșor), fragments of crust from hearths and oven fragments. These would be evidence of a hearth and fire cult. Dog burials would also be related to worship and religion, pits with bones of this kind being discovered in Matășaru, Udeni, Bucharest-Tei and Militari.

Since the beginning of the last quarter of the 3rd century (ca. AD 275-280) most settlements and necropolises cease to exist, but Gh Bichir believed that these settlements lasted until the beginning of the 4th century. AD. The end of the culture would be related to the Roman withdrawal but also to the changes in society and the penetration of the first Germanic peoples (at first the Visigoths) to the Lower Danube.

In western Muntenia, necropolises of the culture have also been discovered. Two necropolises were investigated in Chilia and Scornicești, and others were identified in

Sprâncenata-Viespești, Stoicănești and Socetu. A tomb of this type was discovered by chance in the town of Dăneasa.

Central Muntenia. More settlements were also discovered, among them those from Mătăsar, Militari-Câmpul Boja, Dulceanca, Bucov, Udeni. Many settlements have been identified around Bucharest, and in the counties of Teleorman, Prahova, Argeș, Călărași.

Most of the settlements belonging to the Dacian population from the 2nd-3rd centuries BC. Chr. identified and researched in the center of Muntenia are located on the high or low terraces of other rivers or streams, or on promontories, near water sources. Most settlements surveyed, for example, around the capital, are made up of brothel-type dwellings. Some of these huts have a flight of steps on the inside or pits of provisions on one side or in the centre, with no hearths of fire or furnaces on the inside, only two or possibly three such installations have been identified in this set, on the outside.

An important settlement in the center of Muntenia is the one in Mătăsar (Dâmbovița county) on the banks of the Tinosa stream, which is also the only settlement with two levels of habitation, where 40 sunken huts and 12 surface dwellings are identified.

The situation is a little different at Dulceanca settlement which is about 15 km from *limes Transalutanus*, in Teleorman County. Only half or three-quarter sunken huts facing south of its oval rectangular shape, at quite a distance from each other, have been discovered here. The entrance is with a step or two like in Mătăsar, located on the north or south side, with storage pits inside. In Udeni, only two sunken huts were investigated, which, as in other settlements, were rectangular with oval corners, and in Bucov, in the area of Ploiești, the only area with a weaving loom known so far was discovered

Among the dwellings are pits of provisions or even of worship in some settlements. In Militari most pits are cylindrical, but they are also troconical and bitronconical. In Mătăsar, a pit with a step and burnt walls was also discovered, with fragments of hemp stems, and mohor seeds, similar to the one from Colonești-Mărunței, and the only one of its kind discovered for now in the center of Muntenia.

In addition to these are pits supposed to be of worship, five at Militari, in four of them with a dog skeleton deposited on the left side with the head facing north, in two of them with knives and mirror fragments, and the fifth with a hearth inside, on which the skeleton facing west was laid. In Mătăsar, a pit was discovered in which the dog was placed on the left but

facing east, and pits in which there are almost exclusively pieces of hearth crust, pieces of solder from the casing of some household ovens, burnt stones, coals, and in Udeni another incomplete dog skeleton.

Numerous objects have been discovered in homes, most of which are of course ceramic vessels made by wheel and hand, among the most interesting such objects are opiates made of handmade or imported paste. In Mătăsar, one of the hand-made paste in the shape of a Dacian cup was discovered, and of red-burned Roman imports, in both levels of habitation in Dulceanca, another fragment of reddish lamp with glossy firnis, and in Militari, one of fine paste worked on gray wheel with black slip, circular with several combustion vents and analogies in Dacia Apulensis. Another rushlight was discovered in Străulești, dated in the 2nd century BC. Chr. and one in Bucharest-Tei with the stamp „Flavi”. In addition to these, other materials were discovered: iron knives, three specimens of scissors in both levels of residence in Mătăsar, also there two iron axes, other specimens being discovered in Tei Băneasa and Militari; fragments of bronze vessels, iron chisels, and drills also in Mătăsar.

Proof of the practice of agriculture and household crafts are the 15 fragments of sickles from Mătăsar, iron fishing rods, three iron rods, a plow knife, grinders, most of them of the Roman type, a basket with a sleeve with a rod at the handle, grains of wheat and charred millet, fragments of hemp stems and gloomy seeds, in Mătăsar, a Roman-type coulter in Bucharest-Tei and two sickles in Străulești. In Udeni, weights from looms, an iron sickle with a rod at the handle, adobe fragments with traces of wheat ears and grinders were discovered, and in Dulceanca other round or frusto-conical clay weights, stone grinders, a deer horn piercer, an iron chisel and a spindle. In Militari, weights from the weaving loom were also discovered, of two types, in the shape of a pyramid trunk, and another frusto-conical, fusaiole, of several types: conical, frusto-conical, bitronconical, spherical, with grooved and flat edges. At a Bucov, numerous difficulties from a weaving loom were discovered.

The inventory is completed by other various materials such as bronze drops, chisels, a balance, two iron bells, crucibles, an umbo bowl, a kantharos-type bowl, a balsamari, a Roman key, ornaments, clay wheels, fusaiole, at Militari, where a *lorica squamata* made up of 14 bronze plaques. Among the most numerous inventory items in the settlements are fibulae, mostly of bronze and less of iron and silver, most of the type with the leg turned underneath.

Handmade ceramics are generally less numerous than wheelwork in most surveyed settlements, and are of several types. At Militari, one from the most important settlements

researched, according to the technique used and the composition of the paste, it is of two types: coarse and semi-coarse. The first is also of two kinds, vessels made of coarse paste with shards crushed in the composition, most often of a brick-yellowish color, and less often gray, represented by sticks, medium-sized vessels, small pots, lids, Dacian cups and frusto-conical vessels. The second type is represented by vessels made of coarse paste containing sand and crushed shards, uniformly burned, porous and friable, also represented by sticks. Semi-coarse ceramics are represented by pegs, bell-shaped vessels, pyriform vessels, frusto-conical vessels, bitronconical vessels, pots of various types, ovoidal, cylindrical vessels, tall vessels, lids, cylindrical cups, bowls, totconical cups. The pottery in the settlement is of Dacian and Sarmatian origin and forms from both cultures that would be proof that they cohabited here.

And in Matăsaru, handmade ceramics are less numerous than wheeled ones, although there are some complexes, especially brothels where they predominate to represent 60% of the ceramic inventory, and it is more present in the older level. Here, only one type was observed, namely vessels made of coarse paste, containing sand and pebbles, and less often with crushed shards, without chaff as in the Carpic environment. The vessels are fired at brick-yellowish and rarely grey-yellowish, with lighter or darker hues. The main forms here are the jar-vessel, the Dacian cup, frusto-conical vessels, represented by cups without a cup. The decoration is most often represented by the raised girdle, notched or alveolated, but also by conical or cylindrical projections, double girdles, raised ribs, and notches and alveoli. Less often there are incisions, represented by horizontal lines in the wave, vertical or oblique incisions, or groups of lines incised vertically or obliquely on the body of the vessel, an ornament that often appears on Sarmatian ceramics, similar fragments being discovered in Colonești-Mărunței.

In Dulceanca, however, handmade ceramics are almost equal in proportion to wheelwork, and are mainly represented by vessels made of coarse paste with pieces of limestone, sand and sometimes crushed shards, some quite large, with lumps, and some of a more carefully kneaded and denser paste, most of which is yellowish-reddish in color, or white with gray spots, reddish, yellowish, grayish, grayish-yellowish, grayish-black, very porous and little resistant, being probably used to preserve cereals. The main shapes of vessels here are the large, tall ones, representative being the large, high-necked pot, then the sticks, the sticks, and the Dacian cup with the funnel-shaped opening.

In most settlements, the ceramics made on the wheel by the locals are of two kinds: the one that follows the old Dacian tradition and the rough one whose technique, shapes and ornaments resemble that of Roman provincial inspiration. In Matăsaru, the vessels of Dacian origin are made of fine, well-kneaded paste, without any other ingredient in the composition, most of them burnt to gray with lighter or darker shades, and less to brick-yellowish, the latter more frequent in the late phase of settlement. Representative are the jar vessels, without a rod, of several types, including the large ones, but also the type vessels *Krausengefässe*.

Coarse ceramics represent 35% of the total ceramics discovered, among the specific forms are jar pots, plates (of various types made of sand and mica paste, sometimes burnt to gray with chestnut reflections) and lids made of sandy paste with pebbles that give it the appearance coarse, burnt to gray, yellowish, or brick. The pots are also of several kinds, with a domed body, the maximum diameter in the upper part of the bowl, short neck, the lip folded out, with a groove, with a straight or concave bottom, or with the domed body with a simple lip, slightly thickened flat, without chanting, etc. The decoration is rarely represented most often by lines incised horizontally on the shoulder, especially in the wave. The pots have analogies in the Roman provinces of the Lower Danube, but those of Matăsaru are made on the spot.

In Dulceanca, on the other hand, the vessels worked on the wheel are almost equal in number to those worked on the hand. Fine polished pottery is represented by shingles of various types, tall, short, wide or cup-shaped, and less often by cups, made of fine paste, without milky-grey sand, sometimes almost black gray, but and so called „cement paste”. The other type of ceramic is represented by ceramics made of a rough paste, which contains fine sand in the composition and is represented by pots for common use, with an arched lip on the outside, an inner groove, a globular body, or an elongated one with a straight bottom or a ring from the repertoire provincial Roman ceramics.

At Militari ceramics it is of two types: fine, with sand and small in composition, with several subcategories: brick-colored vessels, yellowish-brick, yellowish-colored vessels, chestnut, and gray of several kinds: gray, yellowish-gray, gray with blackish slip, gray with polished blackish slip, represented by pitchers, amphorae, jugs, bowl, pots, and cups. The second type is represented by vessels made of coarse paste, and these with two subcategories: the first of sandy appearance with three subtypes: sandy ceramic light brick – and the second type with sand and pebbles, in composition, of several subtypes, vessels of color brick, brick-

yellowish, gray, gray with black and black slip represented by lids, pots, pots, and pans. The main forms of vessels from Militari are pitchers, amphorae, jugs, cups, pots, bowls, pans and lids.

The chronology of these settlements was established mainly due to the research of Gh. Bichir who, following the study of the settlement of Matăsaru-the only one of its kind known for now as having two levels of habitation - established its beginnings in the middle of the second century, after the reign of Emperor Hadrian, and the end in the beginning of the fourth century AD. Other settlements of the culture have been dated as follows: the settlement of Bucharest-Tei in the 3rd century, as well as that of Măgurele, Târgșor, Militari and Chilia beyond *limes Transalutanus*, but Gh. Bichir believes that these, like others, survived the beginning of the 4th century AD. Another important settlement is the one at Udeni, the end of which is also considered at the beginning of the 4th century, based on a coin from Galerius Maximianus from the years AD 302-303, the settlement at Cățelu Nou in the second half of the 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd century AD.

The necropolises of central Muntenia are planar rite only of cremation with two types of tombs, with urn and without with several subvariants. Only 16 graves were saved and investigated from the Matăsaru necropolis. Necropolis were also discovered in Târgșor near Ploiești, in Bucharest-Tei where several cremation graves, without urns, belonging to a necropolis destroyed by utilitarian works, were discovered on the edge of the Chilia-Militari settlement. Also near Bucharest, a necropolis was identified in Măgurele, mostly destroyed where only gray urns with a lid made of fine paste would have been discovered. Two urns with similar calcined bones were discovered by chance in 1962, graves of the same kind being discovered in Budești and Vasilati in Călărași county, and in the village of Curcani, also in Călărași county, a cremation grave was discovered in the hearth of the village in which there was a vessel- urn made of fine paste, burnt to gray. Gh. Bichir identified a necropolis of the same type on the territory of Lipia village, Gruiu commune, Ilfov county.

Imports. Provincial-Roman imports are considered the craft products reached outside the imperial provinces by several routes, trade, as spoils of war, stipends, subsidies or even by chance, some being later used as models for local imitations.

Most Roman imported objects were discovered in Matăsaru. The discovered materials are mainly represented by ceramic vessels, but also household objects, ornaments, buckles and tools used in medicine and cosmetics. It is also interesting that the import goods

discovered here come from *Moesia Inferior* or Dacia. There is also another hypothesis regarding this influence, namely that Roman soldiers stationed here who watched over the area and were supplied with these goods.

As I mentioned, the Roman imports from Mătăsarū were mainly represented by ceramics, namely amphorae, shavings, but also opiates. In addition to these, fragments of glass glasses were also discovered in both levels of habitation, but also Roman keys made of bronze and iron and needles made of bone, bronze buckles with the semicircular ring, simple, or ornate, with the rectangular or oval spin in section, also of Roman type.

Also in Matăsarū a silver pendant in the shape of a barrel appeared, in a fragmentary state, worked in the filigree technique. Among other possibly imported ornaments is a silver lunula pendant from the newer level from Matăsarū, with analogies in the Roman world, but also in Sarmatian culture.

Very important for the study of the dynamics of Roman imports in Muntenia are the instruments considered to be medicine and cosmetics from Matăsarū. In two homes, two rectangular-shaped, greenish-black volcanic tuff plates were discovered, used in the preparation of ointments, with analogies in different parts of the empire (Italy, Pannonia, Gallia, Dacia), but also in Dacian settlements from the 1st centuries BC–1st century AD where they also arrived from the empire. In the inventory of house no. 1 also appeared two teaspoons, one of silver and one of bone, another bronze needle-shaped utensil with a pointed end, another with a domed end and the other in the shape of a blade, considered to be part of a doctor's kit, and a spatula also made of bronze. A third spoon, made of bronze sheet, was discovered in house no. 5, along with another bronze utensil in the shape of a sharp needle at one end, and at the other in the form of a rectangular plate, which forms a small concave shovel. Near this dwelling, a stylus decorated at the top with oblique grooves, probably made by twisting, was also discovered. It is possible that some small clay jars in these homes and other complexes were also used to store medical or even cosmetic preparations. A small similar vessel from Dulceanca probably served the same purpose. Knife or scalpel blades have also been found, and some comb fragments are considered by Gh. Bichir to be of Roman provenance. All these objects found in the settlement from Matăsarū have clear analogies in the Roman world. A last imported item from Matăsarū is the fibulae, two specimens of the bronze „knee” fibula.

In the settlement of Dulceanca, mainly imported red Roman ceramics were discovered, but here it represents only 3% of the total ceramics discovered and is represented by an amphora or jug with a very arched body, cups and two opiates.

La Militari roman imported materials were discovered, most of them represented by clay vessels. This type of ceramics represents approximately 16% of all ceramics discovered at Militari. It is represented by transport and preservation dishes, dishes for serving at the table and rarely for cooking. Fine Roman pottery is brick-colored and less often gray, and is represented by rasps, amphorae, pots, eaves, jugs, mugs, mugs, a khantaros-type vessel, a bowl, and an opaiț. And in the pits located in the settlement, ceramic fragments from Roman imported vessels were discovered, among them are fragments from an amphora made of fine, yellowish paste with glossy angoba (with traces of *tituli picti*), another vessel also made of fine yellow-green paste fragments from cups made of fine whitish or brick ceramic, amphorae made of fine red or whitish paste, with traces of red paint, amphorae made of brick color, with glossy angoba, a kaolin vessel. Apart from pottery, other Roman import items appeared in the settlement at Militari, such as a „knee” fibula, appliques, a Roman bronze key, an iron key, and a Roman ring buckle, without a tongue.

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