

## THE GREEK DIVINITIES FROM TROPAEUM TRAIANI

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**Résumé.** *En suivant au moins les données épigraphiques, il y avait dans la ville romaine de Tropaeum Traiani (auj. Adamclissi, Roumanie) et dans son territoire une population d'origine grecque aussi. Notre intérêt pour ces enclaves qui se trouvaient dans un milieu plutôt romain est donné par quelques éléments de leur vie spirituelle remarqués par voie épigraphique.*

*Il s'agit de quelques dédicaces aux divinités traditionnelles concernant des épithètes de la sorte de Ομβριμος ou Κρανοχαιτης que les Grecs des grandes villes (comme celle d'Athènes, par exemple) avaient depuis quelques centaines d'années abandonnées. On peut remarquer en échange des phénomènes apparentés dans les anciennes villes du Pont Gauche, plus ou moins contemporains.*

*L'auteur de ces lignes a renoncé à sa première hypothèse (1969) d'une tradition des communautés plus anciennes. Il s'agirait plutôt de nouveaux venus, des Grecs de l'Asie Mineure, vu le besoin d'artisans et d'autres spécialistes que l'essor de l'activité constructive imposait dans la province.*

*Or, la renaissance de la ville de Tropaeum Traiani sous son nouveau nom demandait sans doute tels artisans dont l'origine était de la région du principal architecte de Trajan, Apollodore de Damas. D'un autre côté, la manière d'apprendre le grec pour chaque génération imposait l'utilisation des anciens auteurs, tel que Homère. Or, c'est là-bas qu'on retrouve des épithètes de la sorte de celles rencontrées dans nos inscriptions plus haut évoquées.*

**Mots clés:** *divinités, Grecs, Tropaeum Traiani.*

In 1968, which was the year of resuming the systematic researches from Adamclissi, stopped by Vasile Pârvan in 1911, it was discovered a shrine with Greek inscription (fig. 1 and 2)<sup>1</sup>. It was a great joy for a new graduate of classic philology and new employee of the Institute of Archaeology of Romanian Academy, being member of the research team from Adamclissi, the one who is now (no way to be the same, as I have noticed before) the author of this paper. The discovery sheds in a new light the ethnic component of *Moesia Inferior*.

Of course, the existence of Greek communities, as a result of the colonizations started in the Black Sea, in the 7th – 6th a. Chr., was a well known fact, a common place in historiography, including the occupation of some positions in the new created colonies *chora*. Beyond the possibility of later migration of colonization or, in the Roman period, from the seaside to the inland of the province of some Greeks from the ex-colonies, there are also other causes of such presences in the later Roman environment.

Starting from the discoveries mentioned before, we tried in 1995, a tinting of the ethnic from the rural from a province as *Moesia Inferior*. The conclusion was, we think, a closer view to the historic reality of the Romanization process and then we distinguish the following ethnic categories: Romans, locals, Romanized locals, Greeks and Romanized Greeks, Hellenized locals and other Romanized people.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription, as we published for the first time in 1969 (fig. 1 and 2), concluded, under the half of the last line, with the schematic representation of god's thunders through three arrows united in a sheaf. This inscription adds to the other seven from the region, already known in the age and dedicated to the same emperor and his son, usually with hammer-wrought names<sup>3</sup>, as in *Tropaeum Traiani* case. It can be dated in 236-238 and attests clearly the existence of a *uicus*, village, inhabited by Greeks, with a Greek mayor, called Protogenes, in the Roman town *Tropaeum Traiani* territory. *Protogenes* was the one who, through his own means, as the epigraphic document mentioned, had put the shrine discovered at about 1730 years from its building.

Beyond this fact, clearly documented for the first time by this inscription, this cult of Zeus Ombrimos is largely commented, because is nowhere attested in Roman world but at Histria and Callatis, in Lower Moesia. At Callatis, the information is due to an honorary inscription dated at the middle of 1<sup>st</sup> century p. Chr., which mentioned Diombria holiday (*ISM* III, 31 b, 14), and at Histria, to a shrine almost contemporary with that from Adamclissi, discovered by Scarlat Lambrino and published in 1934 (*ISM* I, 334). It contained in three lines a greeting in Greek of one of the Histrian tribes of Argadeis for Zeus Ombrimos. In this case it was about, as the first editor of the inscription wrote, the role of this god as tutelary divinity of the tribe from the histrian territory.

Only literary sources may do clarifications regarding this epithet of Zeus. It is quite enough spread, but usually without the suffix *-imo-* which is found in the two inscriptions mentioned before. This suffix, used after the radical of the epithet Ombrimos is very well understood by the Greeks of those communities, starting of course with the limited partners of the texts made public, as the one arrived on an epigraphic way to us, having the meaning of "Raining".

Ombrios God appears for the first time in the literary sources in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century a. Chr. at Lykophron, who had evoked an older human sacrifice on the God's shrine<sup>4</sup>, and later at Strabon<sup>5</sup>. Plutarchos reminds, quoting Solon, the

<sup>1</sup> Barnea 1969, p. 595-609.

<sup>2</sup> Barnea 1998, p. 213-228.

<sup>3</sup> Vulpe & Barnea 1968, p. 224-225.

<sup>4</sup> Lykophron Tragicus (from Chalkis), *Alexandra*, Lipsiae (Teubner), 1964, p. 156 sq.

existence, at Athens, of a shrine of the same God, lapsed in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century a. Chr.<sup>6</sup>. Pausanias in his famous "Description of Greece" mentioned the existence of more shrines dedicated to the same God on the territory of Pentele Dema<sup>7</sup>. All in all, the unique existence of the same epithet as Ombrimos at Herodian (Partitiones, 100) does not change the unique character of its presence to the Low Danube, where every time it appears in a religious context.

Coming back to Tropaeum Traiani and its territory, we may talk, beyond very probable establishment there of some new comers of Greek origin, about a continuity of a community of the same origin till the late Roman period. Actually, even from the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> century p. Chr., Gr. Tocilescu dated a shrine, discovered in 1905 during the excavations led by him, a shrine dedicated to Hera in order to find a water spring useful to the town, till the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> century p. Chr.<sup>8</sup>. The image of the shrine and the text transcription, dedicated to Hera (Iuno Regina in Latin) may be seen at fig. 3.

Another inscription, until recently novel (fig. 4)<sup>9</sup>, was discovered during the campaign coordinated by the author in 2003. In fact, it was a rediscovery. The shrine, that had the inscription, was let on the place of the discovery, provisionally, lying with its face to the ground, in order to be studied by the discoverer, Mihai Sâmpetru (1928-1996), my ex-colleague and collaborator. The report that referred to the area studied in 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and published by the author, does not contain any information regarding this inscription<sup>10</sup>. It was rediscovered on the occasion of the primary conservation works that were made in 2003 and, through its content and form, the inscription is added in a remarkable manner to the context evoked before (fig. 4).

This new document is also surprising through its similarity, from redaction to the letters form, with the one dedicated to Hera. That is the reason why I completed the seven line disappeared from the stone with the motivation of discovering and catching a new water spring for the town. The actual form of the stone does not let any space for the final form from the inscription dedicated to Hera, but, normally it could not miss.

Another interesting fact for this inscription is the archaism from the linguistic and religious point of view. The name form of the god Poseidon it is also found at Homer, *Iliada*, 14, 357, and his epithet from here, *kyanochaitēs*, meaning "with black hair" or "bluemarkin" (as sea waters in storm weather) is also found at Homer (rare or not at all later), 20, 144 or for the last time at Antimachos (5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century a. Chr.) in *Fragmenta Epica*, 7. Thus, we may say that this epigraphic document belongs to the same Greek "family" from *Tropaeum Traiani*, because the very rare epigraphic analogies are very old too<sup>11</sup>.

The archaisms existent in Greeks' religious vocabulary from Tropaeum Traiani are rather the result of a cultural formation (education) than, as we tend to believe, for the first discovery, of a tradition from an old and peripheral community. Of course the phenomenon remains surprising for the epoch and region. It is explained through the high level education that these Greeks received from the training school. This includes knowing the Homer poems and, probable, other old traditional texts. It is added in these communities, special technical knowledge as, for example, if we take into account the epigraphic cases mentioned before, the identification of some water sources and installations for their catching and bringing. Some of these were identified at Adamclisi and, in part, are contemporary with the inscriptions mentioned before.

Taking into account the information already evoked, the author of this study has the conviction that these Greek communities (or maybe closer to reality, this community) from Tropaeum Traiani were formed through colonization after the Dacian wars. Then the need of constructive reorganization, restoration or creation of new towns (as *Tropaeum*, *Marcianopolis*, *Nicopolis ad Istrum*) imposed the bringing of specialists in the field. We can easily understand, if we review, even only, the conception and building of the complex related to the triumphal monument from Adamclisi, *Tropaeum Traiani*, its central point, that during Trajan, there were brought specialists (probably Oriental-Greeks if we think of Apollodor from Damascus), that remained to do their jobs in a familial sequence, natural to that time. They the ones who we epigraphically and technically met since then till 4<sup>th</sup> century and probably later, if we take into account the constructive activity from the Late Roman Empire till the abandonment of the province.

<sup>5</sup> Strabon, *Geographia*, XV, I (India), 69.

<sup>6</sup> Plutarchos, *Septem sapientum conuiuium*, 158 d, in *Moralia*, I, 2, Lipsiae (Teubner), 1925.

<sup>7</sup> Pausanias, *Graeciae Descriptio*, Lipsiae (Teubner), 1903, vol. I, c.1, 32,2.

<sup>8</sup> Gr.Tocilescu, in *RIAF*, 10, 1905, p. 257; idem, in *CRAI*, 1905, p. 565; *IGLR*, 171, where the previous bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> Barnea 2009, p. 121.

<sup>10</sup> Sâmpetru 1984, p. 23-53.

<sup>11</sup> *SEG XLV*, 1995, 776, Mendē, Macedonia, sec. VI a. Chr.

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- Strabon, *Geographia*.
- Vulpe & Barnea 1968 = Radu Vulpe, Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, II, București, 1968.

CRAI = *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions...*, Paris.

IGLR = *Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th – 13th centuries discovered in Romania*, ed. Em. Popescu, București, 1976.

ISM, I = *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris*, vol. I, ed. D.M. Pippidi, București, 1983.

ISM, III = *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris*, vol. III, ed. Al. Avram, București-Paris, 1999.

RIAF = *Revista de Istorie, Arheologie și Filologie*, București.

SEG = *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.

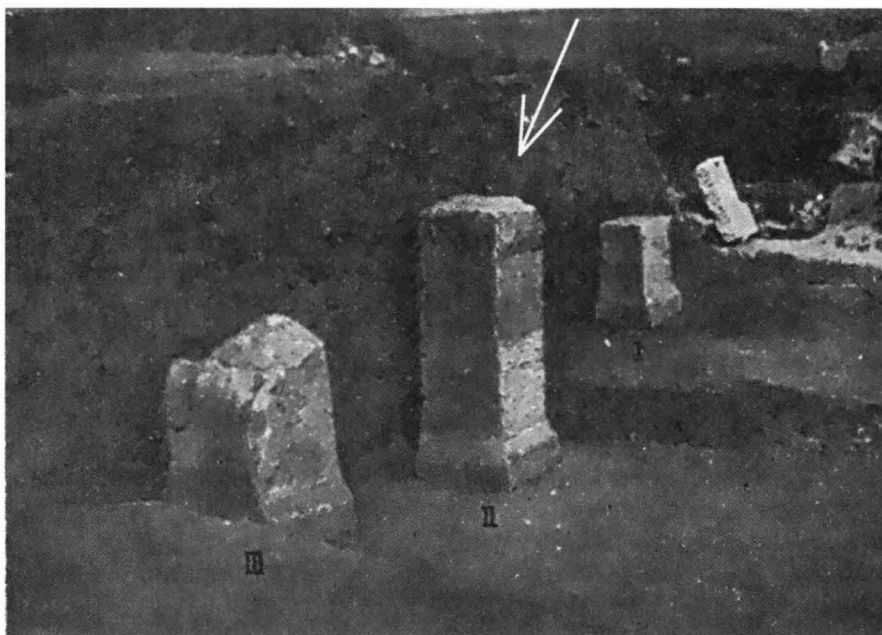
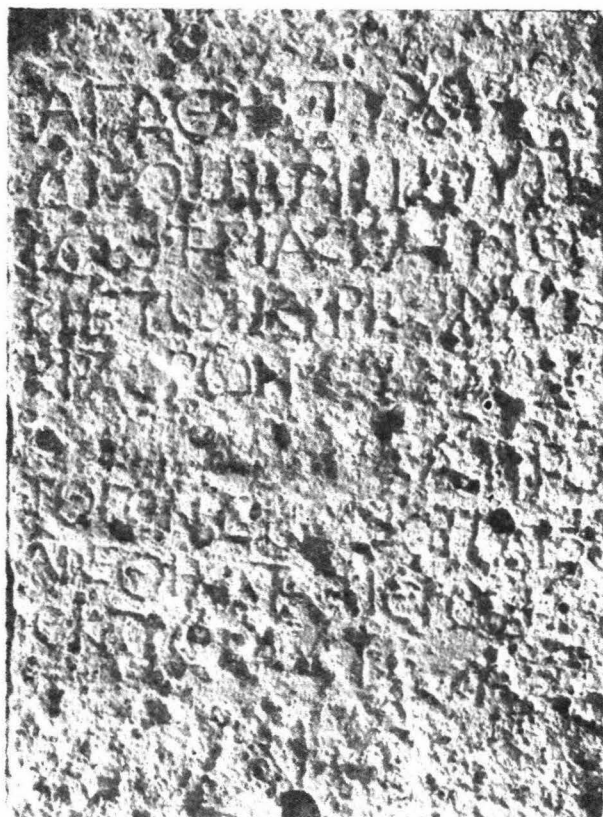


Fig. 1



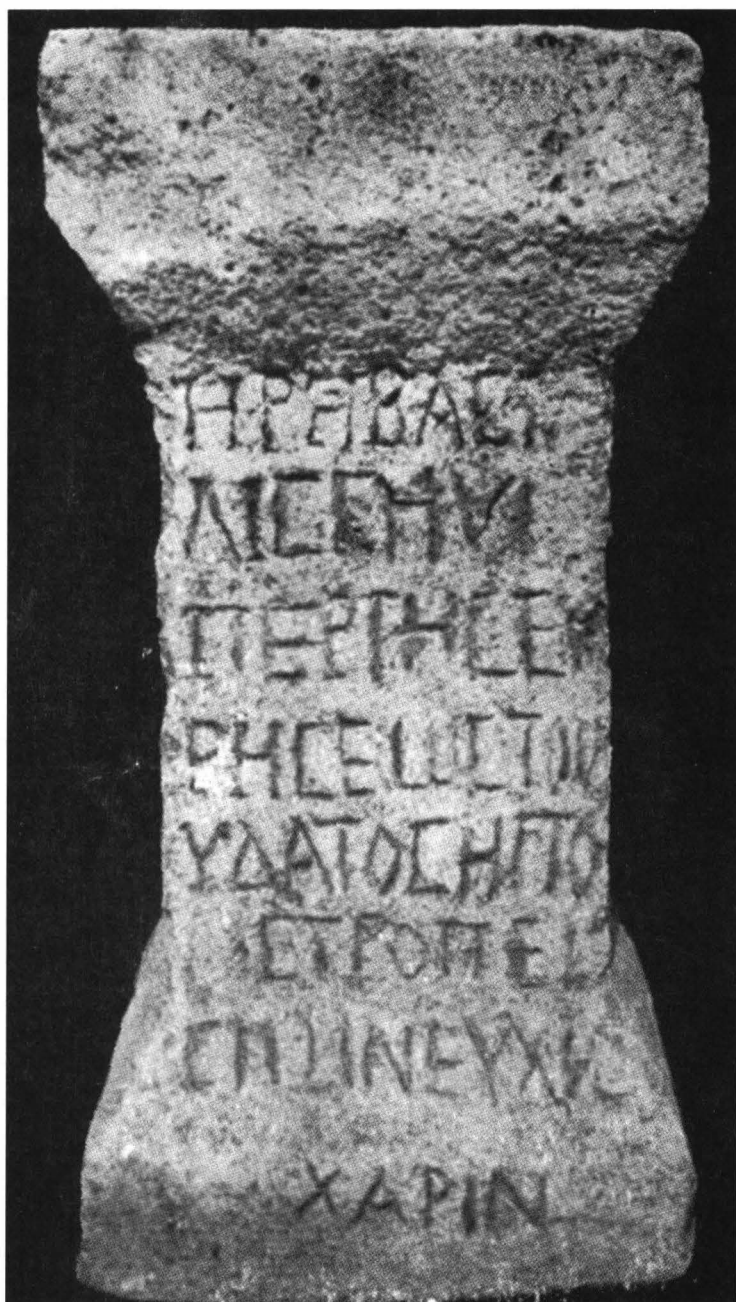
ΑΓΑΘΗ ΤΥΧΗ  
 ΔΙ ΟΥΒΡΙΜΩΥ ΠΕ  
 ΡΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΙ  
 ΚΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΥΡΙΩΝ ΑΥΤΟ  
 ΚΡΑΤΩΡΩΝ  
 ΜΟ ΚΑ ΠΡΩ  
 ΤΟΓΕΝΗΣ ΜΑΓΙΣΤΡΑΤΟΣ  
 ΑΝΕΘΗΚΑ ΤΟ ΙΕΡΟΝ Η  
 ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΙΔΙΩΝ

✚

Αγαθή τύχη  
 Δι Όμβριμω υπέρ  
 σωτηρίας και νεί-  
 κης των κυρίων αυτο-

5. κρατόρων > [Μαξιμίμου // σεβ (αστοῦ) //  
 και Μαξί] μο [u] > Κα (ίσσαρος) Πρω-  
 τογένης μαγίστρατος  
 ανέθηκα τὸ ἱερὸν  
 ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων

Fig. 2



Ἦρη βασι-  
λίση ὑ-  
πὲρ τῆς εὐ-  
ρήσεως τοῦ  
5. ὕδατος ἢ πό-  
λις Τροπει-  
σίων εὐχῆς  
χάριν.

Fig. 3