

ALEXANDRU SUCEVEANU

(March 11, 1940 – May 23, 2013)

ALEXANDRU BARNEA *

Alexandru Suceveanu left us too early. Perhaps it was partly the many hardships he went through during his last years that made him wish to pass untimely into a better world.

For over four decades he remained one of the most important personalities of Greco-Roman archaeology and history in Romania and south-east Europe. His inquisitive spirit and his formation as a classical philologist were certainly of great benefit to the field.

During the last part of his life he was a senior researcher (grade I) at “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology of the Romanian Academy, and Associated Professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of History (Department of Ancient History and Archaeology).

All things considered (research work, publications, mentoring), he would have undoubtedly deserved to become a member of the Romanian Academy (at least) a decade ago. The following lines, as well as the list of publications attached are more than enough a motivation.

THE HISTORIAN

We should perhaps start by remembering Alexandru Suceveanu’s research in the field of history – truly innovative, well developed and rigorously demonstrated albeit unjustly rejected by some scholars (despite their lacking of plausible evidence).

Among his most important achievements we consider worth mentioning first the re-dating (to the year 74 AD and not to the time of Emperor Claudius) of the moment when the territory of Dobruđa became part of the province of Moesia.

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Alexandru Suceveanu offered the best supported hypothesis regarding the phenomenon of Romanization. Moreover, it was a hypothesis explaining the process for the case of the Lower Danube but could be extrapolated as well to the entire Roman Empire.

Another major success was the location of the ancient settlement site of *Argedaua*. Also extremely important were his studies regarding the Roman fleet at the Lower Danube.

And last but not least we would like to mention his ground-breaking theories regarding the defensive system of the western coast of the Black Sea during the Roman period, theories that were later proven correct by the archaeological excavations.

THE ARCHAEOLOGIST

We owe to Alexandru Suceveanu the first ever stratigraphy to be established for the Greek city of Histria, the earliest Paleo-Christian basilica (and the only one securely dated in the region), the identification of the Episcopal Church (one of the largest in the area and second in size in *Scythia*, after the incompletely published one in Tomis). During the excavations at the Episcopal Church he also uncovered and correctly refitted the fragments from the altar table – bearing a Greek inscription evoking the Holy Trinity.

His published work incorporated the majority of his archaeological excavations: the largest number of monographic volumes regarding his work at Histria, various papers and contributions regarding the other sites he excavated. He was the author or major co-author of ten volumes published between 1977 and 2009, and of at least 100 papers published between 1965 and 2012 in Romania and abroad.

Last, but not least, we would like to mention his written account of the research at Histria between 1990 and 2012. This above mentioned document is, in fact – as he told me and also noted down on May 7, 2013 – his “archaeological will”.

A COLLEAGUE AND A FRIEND

We got to know each other better in the summer of 1967, when I – as a freshly graduated Classical Philology student and thus only professionally acquainted to Alexandru Suceveanu – took part in the archaeological excavations at Histria’s *Thermae II*, under his direct supervision, as he was, at the time, conducting the excavations in that particular sector.

Later on, as a member of the Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest, I shared with him the same office for many years. His tonic personality and his acute sense of humour were a great support in all times and circumstances. Perhaps especially in the very trying cold winters of 1984 to 1989, when, after returning from field excavations and having to write our reports we had to work in our unheated room, where water was freezing in the glass because of the energy-saving policy. He would still manage to make us smile, encouraging us with his jokes and personal example, despite the inhuman working conditions.

May God rest him in peace!

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