

ECATERINA DUNĂREANU-VULPE

Seventy Years in the Service of Archaeology

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Ecaterina Dunăreanu, captain Dunăreanu's daughter, was born on 10th May 1901 in Constanța, in the very centre of the old Tomis. She started the elementary school in Bucharest and then continued it at Tulcea, where her father was moved in 1910. Even as a little pupil, she showed great application in her studies, especially in geography and music. That is why, her father provided her with a great selection of maps, and gave her even a piano as a present at which she practised in all her spare time.

In 1913, a short time before the military campaign in Balkans, major Dunăreanu was moved again to Constanța. Since there was not a secondary school for girls in this town, the young pupil was admitted as a boarder to the "Școala Ortodoxă" in Bucharest, which had been set up by Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino. Here, although so far from her family, she managed to adapt herself quickly, showing the same application in her learning. Two years later, her father resigned from the army and moved to Bucharest and his daughter, accordingly, was reunited again with her family.

Soon, the war breaking out, her father was mobilized on the front. Remaining with her mother only, although the schools were closed for some time, she continued to learn by herself at home, reading whatever books she could get, a real contribution to her background. Being enthusiastic over the discoveries by H. Schliemann's writings, before graduating from the secondary school, she decided to devote herself to the historical studies.

In June 1920, Ecaterina Dunăreanu graduated from her secondary school – passing examination, after which, in autumn, she is admitted as a student to the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, History department. She was particularly attracted by the lectures given by N. Iorga, S. Mehedinți, D. Onciul, and especially those on Antique History and Archaeology given by Vasile Pârvan, which charmed the audience. It is with deep emotion that she remembers the moment when, together with her colleague Radu Vlădescu-Vulpe, they presented themselves to professor Pârvan in order to ask him to recommend them the works which they had to read besides the lectures. The professor received them standing and was genuinely impressed by the obvious passion shown by the two young students for the study of antiquity, passion which was never to cease.

Influenced especially by I. Andrieșescu, his closest collaborator, Pârvan, gradually gives up the idea of an extensive work *Straja romană la gurile Dunării* (The Roman guard at the mouths of Danube), and gets more and more preoccupied with the problems of our autochthony. In order to solve this, archaeological researches begin soon in the Romanian Plain (Danubian Plain) followed shortly by excavations organized by the National Museum of Antiquities, the higher body of the archaeological excavations. Although in the second university year only, the student Dunăreanu together with Radu Vlădescu-Vulpe, accompanied by the colleagues C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor and Gr. Avachian, in April 1922 carry out researches in the Teleajen Valley and at Tinosu, in Prahova Valley, following in Cesar Bolliac's footsteps, in the literal sense. It is also in that year that R. Vlădescu-Vulpe carries out the same kind of researches at Crășani, on the Ialomița (site where D.C. Butculescu carried out some research in 1870) and keeps Miss Dunăreanu¹ well informed on all the discoveries. The archaeological material brought to the Museum was considered to be extremely interesting by Pârvan who decided that excavations should be carried out and assigned this task to Andrieșescu. Helped by R. Vlădescu-Vulpe, Dionisie Pecurariu, the drawer of the Museum, and by the young teacher Orest Tohăneanu, Andrieșescu carried out the excavations in 1923². After finishing this excavation, Andrieșescu carries out excavations in the Neolithic site at Sultana³, on Mostiște.

¹ "I went yesterday to Piscul Crășanilor... Walking for about two hours I collected a great number of various shivers (above 100), with various ornaments, of different shapes, made of various pastes..." (from the letter dated 20th April 1922, in the custody of Vulpe

family).

² I. Andrieșescu, *Piscul Crășani*, ARMSI, 3, 3, mcm. 1, 1924, 111 p., 3 pl.

³ *Idem*, Dacia, 1, 1924, p. 51–107.

As a way of crowning the activity on the field, the young researchers R. Vlădescu-Vulpe and Ecaterina Dunăreanu were nominated for assistants at the National Museum of Antiquities. In the next year Ecaterina Dunăreanu graduates from the university, passing the examination with *magna cum laude*, and finishes the University Pedagogic Workshop, after which she marries Radu Vlădescu-Vulpe⁴.

In 1924 Andrieşescu leads the excavations at Zimnicea, Latène site and cemetery, where Bolliac had previously carried out researches. It is here as well as to Crăşani and Sultana that come for practice the assistants of the Museum and of Pârvan's chair, now also Andrieşescu's collaborators. "The participants then carry out periegesis or are detached, by turns, to various individual spots of work"⁵. With the researches and the excavations carried out in the Romanian Plain and those at Histria, little by little, unthinkingly, the Archaeologic School Pârvan-Andrieşescu was forming.

In the same year, 1924, Ecaterina and Radu Vulpe carry out excavations at Tinosu – a special confidence and honour for beginner archaeologists. From now on they will collaborate closer and closer, so much so that it is often almost impossible to make a clear-cut distinction between the contribution of each of them. The excavation carried out at Tinosu⁶ was highly appreciated by Andrieşescu and by Pârvan, who fully used it in writing a chapter in *Getica*⁷. The ceramic material was treated and reconstituted by Ecaterina Vulpe who used appropriate technical methods for the first time in the Romanian archaeology.

In autumn, Ecaterina and Radu Vulpe (fig. 1 A), for the published works⁸, receive scholarships of two years at the Romanian School in Rome, where they had Gr. Florescu as colleague of the same year and of the same speciality. In the first year, untired readers of the books in the libraries, especially in the library "Luigi Pigorini", they visited archaeological working places (fig. 1 B) and studied the materials displayed in the museums in Italy, especially in the north of Rome. In the next year, they studied those of the museums in the south of Rome and in Sicily in order to find comparable material for the studies which they were preparing together or separately.

In 1926 Ecaterina and Radu Vulpe came back home and resumed their archaeological occupations. Ecaterina Vulpe begins writing scientific cards for the pieces exhibited in the Museum and in the next year, together with Radu Vulpe, opened the excavations at Poiana site, which Pârvan had assigned to Radu Vulpe for excavations. In the same year Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe passes her degree examination with the thesis *L'espansionne delle civiltà italiche verso l'Oriente danubiano nella prima età dell'ferro*⁹. The degree paper was appreciated by the commission and given *magna cum laude* and was also appreciated by many personalities among whom: S. Reinach, "... sujet très intéressant ..." ¹⁰; G. De Sanctis "... capitale lavoro ... corredato da una interessantissima carta ..." ¹¹.

In 1928, as well as continuing to write the museum cards (activity which was to last for many years), Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, alone, carries out excavations in the cemetery of the Bronze Age at Poiana, since Radu Vulpe is busy solving other archaeological problems and has to sit for the degree examination. Owing to their scientific activity, N. Iorga grants them scholarships for a year at the Romanian School at Fontenay-aux-Roses which was led by him (fig. 2/A), place where they arrived at the beginning of 1929. In France, as it had happened in Italy, besides the libraries, they had the opportunity to see archaeological excavations, and to do research work at museums and exhibitions both in the metropolis and in the various provinces. As her personal work contribution Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe writes the study *Considérations sur certaines formes caractérisant l'Âge du Bronze de l'Europe Sud-Orientale*¹². As in the case of other works, it did not take long for several personalities to appreciate it: S. Reinach "Cet argument est bon, le reste de la brochure aussi"¹³; G. Poisson: "... (cette) étude très complète et publiée en français a pour nous une grande valeur"¹⁴, and so did other personalities.

Towards the end of the year, they went on a greater trip to England in order to study the museums in London and they remained for a longer time (two weeks) at the British Museum. Then they come back home and take up their favourite preoccupations, especially the preparations for the excavation campaign at Poiana. It is also published the study *Sull'origine e l'evoluzione delle securi di rame carpato-danubiane*¹⁵, which was appreciated by several specialists.

⁴ From now on they sign Radu Vulpe and Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, or, more seldom, Ecaterina Vulpe.

⁵ I. Andrieşescu, *Dacia*, 3–4, 1927–1932, p. 5.

⁶ R. Vulpe et Ecaterina Vulpe, *Dacia*, I, 1924, p. 166–223.

⁷ V. Pârvan, *Getica. O Protoistorie a Daciei*, ARMSI, 3, 3, mcm. 2, cap. VI La Tène-ul, p. 571–758.

⁸ Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, *BCMI*, 17, 1924, fasc. 42, p. 177–184, 193–194; R. Vlădescu-Vulpe, *BCMI*, 17, 1924, fasc. 39, p. 80–87, 97, 2 h.

⁹ Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, *Ephemeris Dacoromana*, 3, 1925, p. 58–109.

¹⁰ S. R(cinach), *Revue archéologique*, 25, 1927, p. 247.

¹¹ G. D(c) S(anctis), *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione classica*, N.S., 5, 1927, fasc. 1, p. 134.

¹² Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, *Mélanges de l'École roumaine en France*, 1929, sec. part., p. 509–566.

¹³ S. R(cinach), *Revue archéologique*, 17, 1931, p. 190.

¹⁴ G. P(oisson), *Revue anthropologique*, 41, 1931, p. 179.

¹⁵ Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, *EDR*, 4, 1930, p. 181–211.

In 1931 Ecaterina Vulpe is also invited to run the student-girls hostel in Prahova, succeeding in transforming it, in less than a year, into a model institution for other similar hostels as well.

In 1933 Dacia III–IV (1927–1932) is published, to which Radu and Ecaterina Vulpe have an important contribution *Les fouilles de Poiana. Campagne de 1927*¹⁶. Although it was carried out according to the methods in use at that time but with the utmost care, the excavation made it possible for the stratigraphic observations to be recorded, observations which could be taken as a model by other researchers as well. At the same time the chronology of every culture stratum was being determined, from the Bronze Age to the Roman one. In the same volume they also publish the result of the prospecting holes carried out in 1927 at Perchiu, Tecuci county¹⁷, Vasile Pârvan's native village who did not have the chance of knowing the prehistoric site. Since the ground had been displaced owing to the agricultural works and it was not possible for the stratigraphy to be determined, they fixed the chronology according to the typology of the ceramics from Poiana. The work received favourable appreciations both abroad and at home. In the following year, 1934, the Association of the Former Members of the Romanian School in Rome publishes the volume *În Memoria lui Vasile Pârvan* to which Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe collaborates with the study *Un tezaur de denari romani găsit la Piroboridava*¹⁸. The volume satisfied all the requirements of the specialists.

After the small excavation carried out by Radu Vulpe, in June 1935 at Calu, Neamţ county, Ecaterina Vulpe excavates here, in October, for the National Museum of Antiquities¹⁹. Stratigraphically, two strata of culture can be distinguished, both of them of importance: one of them with painted ceramics Cucuteni A, and the other Latène.

Excavations of great importance begin in 1936 at Izvoare, Neamţ county, site in the area of the painted ceramics signaled by the priest C. Matasă. In six small campaigns carried out between 1936 and 1948²⁰, Radu and Ecaterina Vulpe distinguished stratigraphically, from the beginning, the Precucutenian, although such ceramic fragments had been known for a long time but had not been put in the right place stratigraphically or chronologically. Thanks to the stratigraphic clarifications obtained from Izvoare, a decisive step forward was made in the researches of the painted ceramics and more light was shed on this culture. In some excavation campaigns, some archaeologists took part for practice, and Ecaterina Vulpe prepared the archaeological material for the printing.

In 1938 Dacia V–VI (1935–1936) comes out, in which Ecaterina Vulpe published *La Nécropole de l'Âge du Bronze de Poiana*²¹ bringing into prominence the necropolis, dated 1600 B.C. In the same year, she supervises the excavation at Costișa, Neamţ county, site with painted ceramics. Three years later, in Dacia VII–VIII (1937–1940) comes out another contribution: *Les restes préhistoriques de Ruginești (Dép. de Putna)*²² after the surface researches which she had carried out. The stratigraphy lacking, the author sets out some considerations regarding the helping sciences and, according to the archaeologic material, she distinguishes three cultures: bronze, hallstattian, and geto-roman.

In 1943, Ecaterina Vulpe carries out excavations at Rădeni, Bălţi county, where she discovers two precucutenian sites of Izvoare type and, in another place, Latène ceramics²³. In the same year, she is entrusted with the chair of Art History at the Academy of Arts in Iassy. The minister of National Culture, I. Petrovici and the representative of the Plastic Artists, I. Jalea, attended the inaugural lecture. Without interrupting her scientific relationships with the National Museum of Antiquities, she did her work as a professor – during the refuge as well till 1950, the year when she was purged, later than the year when Radu Vulpe had been purged.

After the war, both of them were to suffer terrible injustices – and like many others – for no other “fault” than that of having served the science and education at hard moments. But, having faith in the future, especially because the scientific value and the moral behaviour made this necessary, they endured all the hardships. And, little by little, a few rays started to appear among the black clouds, some of their achievements which could not be overlooked starting to be recognized. It was too little in comparison with what it should have been. In that dark epoch of our history they steadfastly continued on the abnegation way, developing the same constructive activity, in the full conviction that nobody else could have done it better.

In 1949, thanks to the reorganization of the archaeologic research, Radu Vulpe is assigned to supervise the excavations at Poiana and Poienesti–Vaslui²⁴, on which Ecaterina Vulpe collaborates and, for practice, archaeologists and students. In the following years, 1950 and 1951, the excavations at Poiana are resumed, Ecaterina

¹⁶ R. et Ecaterina Vulpe, Dacia, 3–4, 1927–1932, p. 253–351.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 157–166.

¹⁸ Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, in *În Memoria lui Vasile Pârvan*, București, MCMXXXIV, p. 126–133.

¹⁹ R. Vulpe, Dacia, 7–8, 1937–1940, p. 14.

²⁰ *Idem*, *Izvoare. Săpăturile din 1936–1940*, București, 1957, 390 p., 7 pl.

²¹ Ecaterina Dunăreanu-Vulpe, Dacia, 5–6, 1935–1936, p.

151–167.

²² *Idem*, Dacia, 7–8, 1937–1940, p. 103–118.

²³ Ecaterina Vulpe, *Raport provizoriu asupra cercetărilor arheologice din Moldova și a săpăturilor dela Rădeni din Basarabia*, in MNA, *Raport asupra activității științifice a Muzeului Național de Antichități în anul 1942 și 1943*, București, 1944, p. 83.

²⁴ R. Vulpe, SCIV, I, 1950, I, p. 41–46 (Poienesti); p. 47–52 (Poiana).



A



B

Fig. 1. – A Radu Vulpe and Ecaterina Dunărcanu-Vulpe in 1924. B Vasile Părvan(1), Ecaterina Dunărcanu-Vulpe(2), Gr. Florescu(3) and the members of the Romanian School in Rome visiting Pompei in 1926.



A



B

Fig. 2. A N. Iorga(1), Ecaterina Dunărcanu-Vulpe(2), Radu Vulpe(3) and the members of the Romanian School in Fontenay-aux-Roses in 1926. B Ecaterina Dunărcanu-Vulpe at the Museum in Tecuci in 1978 getting to work on the archaologic material from Poiana.

Vulpe continuing to collaborate in order to solve the problems which arose. In the same year, 1951, she is brought back to the National Museum of Antiquities, without also being entrusted with the functions which she had had. It is here that she begins to organize the museum department and the exhibitions of archaeology which followed the excavations.

In 1954 Radu and Ecaterina Vulpe carry out excavations at Popești²⁵, an important geto-dacian site in the Romanian Plain, which had been known thanks to the previous excavations. The main problems which were being studied regarded the determination of the stratigraphy and chronology (Bronze Age, hallstattian, geto-dacian), the fortifications, the dwellings, the agriculture, and the "grain pits", the ceramics, iron tools, coins. The solving of these problems could make an important contribution to the clarification of a dark chapter of our history. That was why the excavations continued for several years.

In 1956 Ecaterina Vulpe is authorized to receive the Thesaurus from Pietroasa and other thesauri which were given back by the Soviets. On this occasion she publishes a small-sized study on the thesauri given back²⁶, and afterwards she publishes *Tezaurul de la Pietroasa* in several languages²⁷.

Although in full activity and exactly when her contribution was most needed, she was pensioned off in 1961. Without interrupting the archaeologic research even for a short time, she and Radu Vulpe (pensioned off in 1962) managed to find the time to travel, at their own expense, nearly every year between 1970 and 1984, to the Museum in Tecuci, in order to prepare the materials from Poiana for the museum and for the printing (fig. 2/B). And after the unexpected passing of Radu Vulpe in November 1982, she revised his manuscript *Columna lui Traian* and published it²⁸. And not forgetting the researches from Poiana and from Popești, she has continued to work for archaeology.

Having an exceptional culture in her speciality, which has been supported by a great number of researches carried out in the museums in the countries of East and South-East of Europe, the scientific activity of seventy years done by Ecaterina Vulpe both in the excavating field and at the chair by communications and lectures contributed to the progress of archaeology in Romania. That is why we wish her many further years and a great power of work in the service of Science and of the Country.

²⁵ *Idem*, *Materialc*, 3, 1957, p. 227–246.

²⁶ Ecaterina Dunărcanu-Vulpe, *Tezaurile antice* in Institutul de Istoria Artei, *Studii asupra tezaurului restituit de URSS*, București, 1958, p. 33–56.

²⁷ *Idem*, *Le trésor de Pietroasa*, Bucarest, 1967, 96 p.

²⁸ R. Vulpe, *Columna lui Traian, Monument al Etnogenezei Românilor*, București, 1988, 254, p., 2 h.