

## ROMAN CULTS ON MOESIA INFERIOR ROADS<sup>1</sup>

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To reconstruct the system of roman roads on one territory the researchers are using different information: archaeological, epigraphical, written sources etc. Can the archeological and epigraphical concerning the roman cults provide new data in this? Based on the information concerning the northern part of Dobrudja we are trying to demonstrate that this type of analyses contribute to the reconstruction of the network of roman roads.

The religious manifestations played a crucial role in the integration process of the territory we are talking about in the Roman Empire. The study of the monuments demonstrates that official roman cults penetrate and quickly develop themselves; colonists and soldiers contribute to the spread up of the roman religion to a population already accustomed to the Greek deities<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the policy of religious tolerance promoted by the roman authorities is well known. Thanks to it the oriental cults also arrive in this area<sup>3</sup>.

In our study we use the archaeological and epigraphical data provided us from the *territoria* of the cities, especially from Dobroudja, part of the Moesia Inferior. We shall try to establish if and in what manner the study of the cults could bring into discussion new data concerning the network of roman roads in this geographical zone. Before referring to some of them we shall make a short presentation of the road system in Moesia Inferior.

Along Danube was the border road, the *limes* road which linked all the fortifications and settlements built along the river; it is the oldest and undoubtedly the most important of the region<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the Bulgarian-Romanian Committee in Sofia, 25 September -1 October 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Z. Covacef, *Arta sculpturală în Dobrogea romană*, sec. I-III, Cluj-Napoca, 2002; M. Bărbulescu, *Viața rurală în Dobrogea romana (sec. I-III p. Chr.)*, Constanța, 2001; Al. Suceveanu, Al. Barnea, *La Dobroudja romaine*, București, 1991, Al. Suceveanu, *Viața economică în Dobrogea Romană*, București, 1977; R. Vulpe, I. Barnea, *Romanii la Dunărea de jos, Din Istoria Dobrogei* (further DID II), București, 1968.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, passim.

<sup>4</sup> E. Panaitescu, *Le grandi strade romane in Romania în Quaderni dell'Impero, Le grandi strade del Mondo Romano* X, 1938; V. Pârvan, *Cetatea Ulmetum I*, AARMSI II, 1912, p. 575-576; A. Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană*, București, 1977; J. Wielowiejski, *Na drogach i szlakach Rzymian*, Warszawa, 1984, p. 150; A. Rosset, *Starożytnie drogi i mosty*, Varşovia, 1970, p. 106-107; H. Gajewska, *Topografie des fortifications romaines en Dobroudja*, Ossolineum, Varşovia, 1974,

The prolongation of this road towards south it was represented by another road that went along the coast of the Black Sea from the Danube Delta to Byzantium. As well as the *limes* road this one was connecting the ports and civil settlements lying on the seacoast. This road had more an economic role than a military one. In the harbors along its way goods from others provinces arrived and were after that carried on the land roads till the destination places<sup>5</sup>.

A third route of communication was the so-called "central road"; it was coming from Marcianopolis to Ibida and from this point it was splitting in three roads that were heading Troesmis, Noviodunum and Aegyssus. It is a newer road than the others two. A milestone discovered near Zaldapa, dated in the time of Hadrian, in 118<sup>6</sup>, gives the information about the rebuilt of an older road and its prolongation. This road does not appear nor in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* nor in the *Itinerarium Antonini* and its route was reconstructed based on the written and archaeological sources<sup>7</sup>. This road was intersecting by the ones crossing Dobroudja from West to East, from Tomis to Capidava and Axiopolis. The "central road" was connected with Black Sea coast by the road Zaldapa – Tomis<sup>8</sup>.

The province was crossed through the middle, from West to East by a road parallel with the *limes*, from Naissus through Montana, Comakovci, Nicopolis as Istrum, Abritus, to the Black Sea Coast; in the same time, the cities already mentioned were crossed by the roads orientated North-South, connecting Danube with the province of Thrace. Among them were: Oescus – Philippopolis (through Sipka mountain pass), Oescus – Comakovci – Serdica, Durostorum – Marcianopolis and Novae – Melita – Philippopolis<sup>9</sup>.

Another category was that of local roads which connected every main city with the rural communities from its *territorium*<sup>10</sup>.

The north of Dobroudja provides us some inscriptions naming roman deities. Among them there are three for Diana<sup>11</sup>. In one of them Diana it is called Regina, a very frequent epithet in Dacia and Moesia Inferior<sup>12</sup>. What draws our attention is the fact that all the dedicators were *beneficiarii consulares*. As we know they were the soldiers who have to survey and oversee the roman roads; they were suppose to assure the policy and the security along the roman roads<sup>13</sup>. *Beneficiarii* fulfilled

p. 66-81; M. Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda, Scythia și Notitia Dignitatum*, București, 1988; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *The fortifications of Lower Moesia (A. D. 86-275)*, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 43; DID II, passim; Suceveanu, Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 256; Y. Todorov, *Le grandi strade romane in Bulgaria în Quaderni dell'Impero, Le grandi strade del Mondo Romano XVI*, 1937; V. Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity*, Amsterdam, 1977, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> See also M. Ionescu, Gh. Papuc, *Sistemul de apărare al litoralului Dobrogei romane (sec. I-VII p. Chr)*, Ex Ponto, Constanța, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> DID II, p. 136, see also DID II, footnote 78, p. 136.

<sup>7</sup> Suceveanu, Barnea, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> K. Majewski, *Kultura rzymska w Bulgarii*, Wrocław, 1965, p. 102-104.

<sup>10</sup> See footnotes 3 and 4, also *Tabula Imperii Romani* L 35, București, 1969.

<sup>11</sup> ISM V, nr. 246-247; *Noi monumente epigrafice din Scythia Minor*, Constanța, 1964, p. 179-181.

<sup>12</sup> Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Le Bohec, *L'Armée romaine*, Paris, 1990, p. 56; D. Breeze, ANRW II.1, 1974, p. 436; D. Breeze, BJ 174, 1974, p. 267-277; O. Hirschfeld, *Die Sicherheitspolitzei im römischen*

their obligations in the service of the governor of the province and were quartered in the *stationes*, located on the roads. A *statio* could have also a shrine or a temple<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, Diana was one of the deities especially worshiped by the *beneficarii consulares*<sup>15</sup>. The three inscriptions we are talking about are dedications devoted by *beneficarii*, so it is quite possible that near the springs of Taita to have a *statio* where was also a place to worship Diana.

Other two inscriptions devoted by *beneficarii consulares* were discovered in the vicinity of Taita, at Țiganca and Horia<sup>16</sup>. The deities named in these inscriptions are Diana, once again, at Țiganca and Asclepius and Ygia, at Horia. It is possible to have, at least, at Horia, taking into account also the results of the archaeological diggings, another *station*<sup>17</sup>. If we take a look at the location of these points on the map<sup>18</sup> we notice that they are lying along the natural valley of the Taita River. According to all these elements we think that in this area it was a local road connecting the “central road” with the Troesmis – Noviodunum segment from the *limes* road.

Further we shall discuss some aspects concerning the oriental cults. The monuments attesting them are less numerous than those dedicated to the roman deities<sup>19</sup>. It was noticed that the worshipers of the oriental deities were more from among the population settled here after the roman conquest and less from among the local one<sup>20</sup>.

The cult of Cybele, the great mother of the gods, is attested in the pontic cities from the archaic period, but became more intense during the Hellenistic and roman time<sup>21</sup>. Especially *aediculae* and bas-reliefs prove her worship by the rural communities: Tuzla<sup>22</sup>, Nisipari<sup>23</sup>, where was also a sanctuary and Mihail Kogălniceanu<sup>24</sup>. On the monuments from Fântânele and Limanu she is represented next to the Thracian Rider. Her cult maintains itself intense until the beginning of the IV century A.D.

Kaiserreichs, *SDAW*, 1891, p. 893; A. von Domaszewski, Die beneficiarer-posten und die röm. Strassennetze, *WDZ*, 21, 1902, p. 158-211; D. van Berchem, *L'annone militaire dans l'Empire romain au IIIe siècle*, 1937, *MSAF*, p. 182; Idem, L'annone militaire est-elle un mythe?, *Armée et fiscalité dans le Monde Antique*, Paris, 1977, p. 331-336.

<sup>14</sup> R. Chevallier, *Les voies romaines*, Paris, 1997, p. 281; S. Crogiez, *MEFRA*, 1990, 102.1, p. 389-431.

<sup>15</sup> B. Rankov, *Some observations on the interpretation of beneficiarius inscriptions*, în *XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina, Roma 18-24 settembre 1997, Atti, I*, Roma, 1999, p. 835-842.

<sup>16</sup> *ISM* V, nr. 239, 248; *Noi monumente epigrafice din Scythia Minor*, Constanța, 1964, p. 179-181.

<sup>17</sup> In this place there was also a camp of an auxiliary military unit, see *TIR* L 35, sv Horia; V. H. Baumann, *Peuce* 4, 1973-1975, p. 61 – 75; idem, *Ferma romană în Dobrogea*, Tulcea, 1983, passim.

<sup>18</sup> See the map from *TIR* L 35 (see illustration).

<sup>19</sup> Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 266; Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>20</sup> See de list with the names of the dedicators from the *corpora* of inscriptions.

<sup>21</sup> Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 150-153.

<sup>22</sup> *TIR* L 35, sv Tuzla; Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 150; *ISM* II, nr. 146; Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup> Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 261; Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup> *TIR* L 35, sv Mihail Kogălniceanu; Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

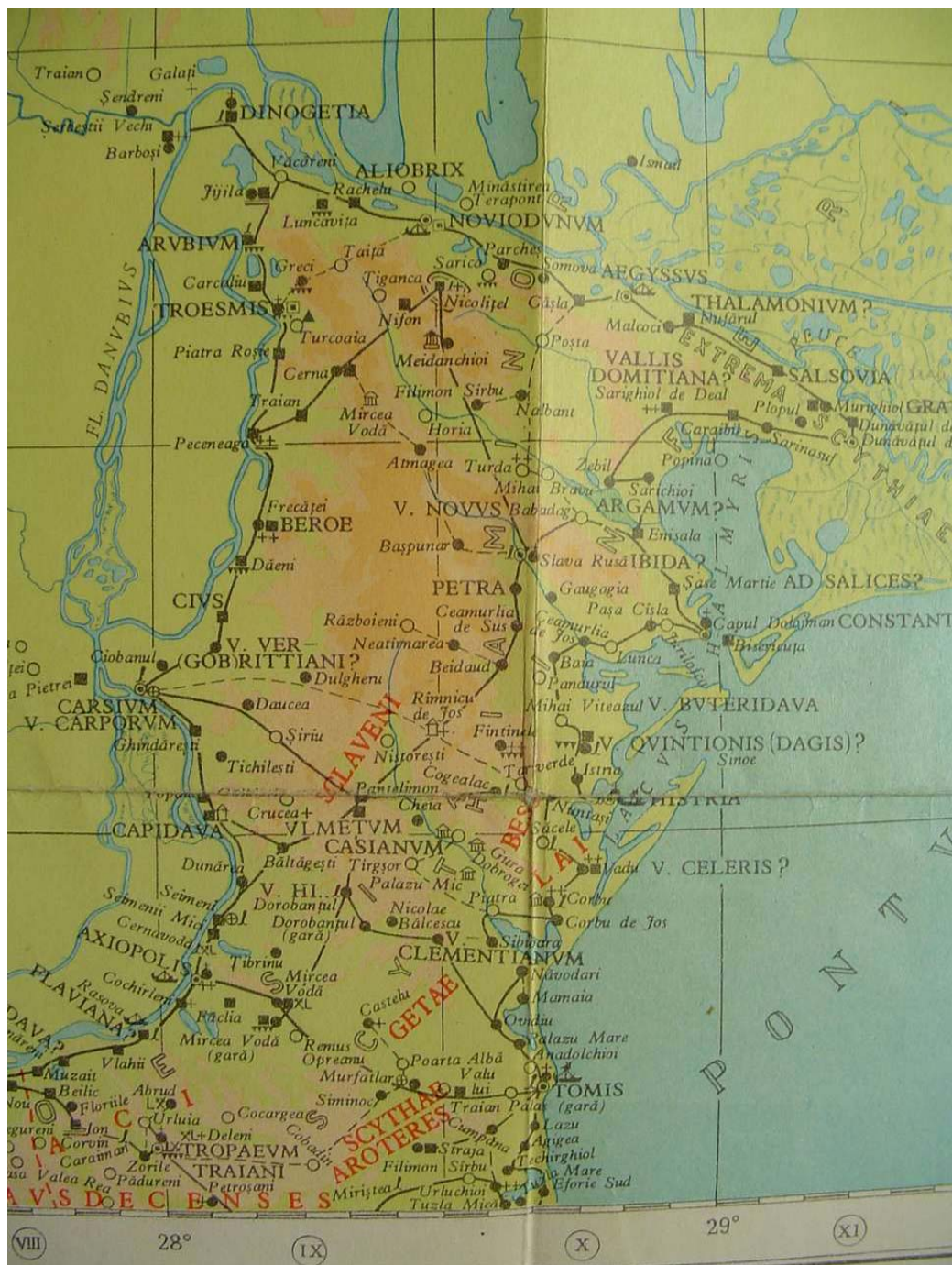


Fig. 1. Map of Dobroudja from TIR, L, 35.

Among the Syrian Deities, Jupiter Dolichenus was very popular in the Roman Empire. As a result of the connections of the military troops which were quartered on the Danube and of the favorable attitude of the Severian Dynasty this cult will spread up also in Moesia Inferior. He is worshiped as warrior god, the one who leads to the victory, assures the personal safety and protects the soldiers<sup>25</sup>. An altar and a votive plate with *tabula ansata* dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus were discovered in Sacidava<sup>26</sup>, where it was a temple of him. Other monuments are from Niculițel<sup>27</sup> and Valea Teilor<sup>28</sup>; both of them are mentioning some priests of Dolichenus which means that it was a temple of him, quite possible at Valea Teilor. Another one was in Cerna, in the territory of Troesmis<sup>29</sup>. A funerary monument from Biruința mentions also two priests of the same god<sup>30</sup>.

Mithras was the other important god worshiped by the soldiers. He was honored in the military camps and in the settlements next to them, for example Troesmis<sup>31</sup>. Two important centers of Mithras cult were at Mircea Vodă in the Troesmis territory and Adam's cave in Tomis territory<sup>32</sup>. At Mircea Vodă five representations of him were discovered in the ruins of a *mithraeum*, while at Targusor two representations<sup>33</sup>, two altars and a votive table. From the second century A. D. Mithras is assimilated to Sol<sup>34</sup>; inscriptions are mentioning Deus Invictus, Deus Bonus Mithras Invictus, Deus Sanctus Sol. Dedications to Deus Invictus were discovered in the territories of Tropaeum Traiani, Troesmis and Salsovia<sup>35</sup>.

If we take a look, once again, at the location of the sanctuaries mentioned above, on the map we notice that all of them are situated on the "central road" or in its vicinity. A road influence in mostly favorable manner the development of social, economic and spiritual life in the country land it passes across. It gave birth to numerous new settlements, shrines and sanctuaries, which appeared in the close vicinity of its route. From this point of view it is possible that the location of these sanctuaries to be meaningless. We are next to an important road; along it were traveling soldiers, merchants, who are active elements in spreading up of the cults, customs, cultural ideas etc. In the same time "the central road" represents an imaginary border between the two cultural areas from Dobroudja: the roman and military, along the *limes* on the one hand and the Greek one, along the Black Sea coast, on the other hand.

<sup>25</sup> Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 163; Barbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 269-270.

<sup>26</sup> Barbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>27</sup> ISM V, nr. 249.

<sup>28</sup> ISM V, nr. 245 (see also the bibliography)

<sup>29</sup> ISM V, nr. 219.

<sup>30</sup> ISM II, nr. 292.

<sup>31</sup> Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 165-168.

<sup>32</sup> Barbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 270-272.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*; see also TIR L 35 sv.

<sup>34</sup> Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 168-169.

<sup>35</sup> Barbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

We tried in this short paper to establish if and in what manner the study of the cults could bring new data to complete our knowledge about the roads system in Dobroudja. In our opinion the arguments brought into discussion sustain the idea of this kind of complementary analyses.