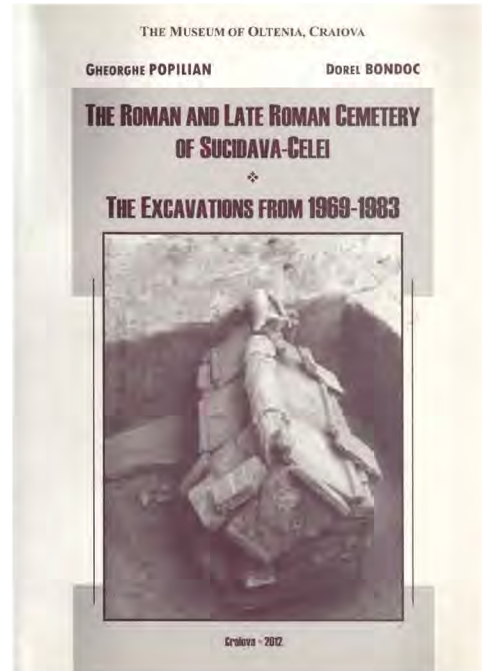


**Gheorghe POPILIAN, Dorel BONDOC: *The Roman and Late Roman Cemetery of Sucidava-Celei. The Excavations from 1969–1983*. Craiova: The Museum of Craiova, 2012, 370 p. il. ISBN 978–973-0–12260–2.**

Prof. Gheorghe Popilian is a well-known name in the archaeology of Oltenia. Born in 1926 in Melinești, Dolj County, he attended the “Carol I” High School in Craiova and the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. He worked at the Museum of Craiova (1956–1959, 1963–1966, 1975–1980, becoming head of department), researcher at the Centre for History, Philology and Ethnography in Craiova, within the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania (later the Institute for Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities in Craiova, of the Romanian Academy, 1966–1975 and 1980–1998, and director between 1990–1998). He was a political prisoner from 1959 to 1963. He obtained his PhD in history with the thesis *Roman ceramics from Oltenia*, defended in 1974 under the supervision of Prof. Gheorghe Ștefan, PhD. He was present on numerous archaeological sites in Oltenia: Celei (Sucidava), Slăveni, Reșca (Romula), Orșova (Dierna), Șimian and Ostrovul Mare, Locusteni, Craiova (“Obedeanu Fountain”), Groșșani-Olt. His bibliography, with emphasis on the Roman period, includes over 120 titles<sup>1</sup>.



His much younger colleague, Petrus-Dorel Bondoc, was born in Craiova in 1970. Although he graduated from a technical high school, he attended, between 1990–1995, the courses of the Faculty of Letters and History of the University of Craiova. He became a PhD in history at the University of Bucharest in 2004, with a thesis on *Roman ruling in the northern Danube after the Aurelian retreat* under the leadership of Prof. Alexandru Barnea, PhD. Museographer at the Oltenia Museum, he collected in his bibliography, between 2000–2012, no less than 14 books and 70 specialized articles<sup>2</sup>.

The book is a useful instrument, intended exclusively for specialists. Written in Romanian, but published in English, translated by Mihaela Pena, the volume is an exhaustive and richly illustrated catalogue with photographs and clear drawings of Angela Ciocâlțeu.

A short *Preface* (p. 5) discerns, among others, the name of Sucidava-Celei, which the authors consistently use to distinguish this settlement from its homonym in Dobrogea (Izvoarele commune, Constanța County). It is specified that the cemetery of Sucidava is the largest of those so-far discovered in Oltenia. Between 1969 and 1983 alone, 480 graves were investigated.

*The introduction* (p. 6–8) states more clearly the subject of the book. In Sucidava, there were identified 3 funerary perimeters. This catalogue refers exclusively to the 3rd perimeter north of the civil settlement, along the road leading up to Romula. The discoveries were made exclusively on the property of Ștefan Mateescu (p. 6). The excavations were undertaken between 1966–1993 by Nubar Hamparțumian (1966–1977), Constantin C. Petolescu and Octavian Onea (1966–1968) and Gheorghe Popilian (1969–1983) (p. 7). They were published by Dumitru Tudor (1968, 1970, 1974), Nubar Hamparțumian (1971 and 1971, together with V[anda] Wolski), C.C. Petolescu

<sup>1</sup> Preda 1978; Poenaru-Bordea 1996 (with the bibliography of the writings, until 1996).

<sup>2</sup> dorelbondoc.blogspot.com, 2013 V 9.

and Octavian Onea (1973), Octavian Toropu (1976 and 1987, in collaboration with Constantin Tătulea). The coins were published by Gh. Poenaru-Bordea (1973) and the ceramics by Gh. Popilian (1976) (p. 8). In addition to the introduction, there are seven pages with figures, including two maps of Sucidava and its territory (p. 9–10).

A first chapter comprises the *Catalogue of the Tombs* (p. 14–82), followed by 134 plates (p. 84–217) of the 478 graves. The third chapter presents the description of the objects discovered in the tombs (p. 218–254): ceramics, the catalogue (compiled by Gh. Poenaru-Bordea and Gh. Popilian) of the 230 coins discovered, fibulae, bracelets, earrings, rings, pendants, mirrors, medical instruments, iron knives, writing instruments, beads, pieces of military equipment, glass vessels, wooden boxes with bronze frames and handles, etc. Chapter IV is devoted to *the Burial Rites and Rituals* (p. 255–258).

It is the *Conclusions* (p. 258–264) that make the work complete.

The authors distinguish eight types of tombs (both cremation and burial). They fall into 3 chronological horizons:

The first is from the 1st century. The oldest coins are from Agrippa and Claudius I. Coins have been discovered in the mouth or chest of the deceased (“Charon’s pay”). Numerous glass beads are linked to the presence of Sarmatians. No objects have been identified, that can be clearly attributed to the Christians. Attempts are also made to ethnically classify tombs, attributed to different populations: Romans and Romanised, Northern Thracians (“Geto-Dacians”), Balkan (Greeks, Southern Thracians, Illyrians), Dalmatians, Celts, Sarmatians (p. 259) and, possibly, Huns (p. 260). The pottery is exclusively Roman. The oldest tombs are from the middle of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century, both for burial and cremation. Numerous graves, dating from the end of the second century and the first decades of the third century, indicate an increase in population. Towards the end of the third century there is a sudden but temporary cessation of habitation, attributed to the attacks of the Carpians (p. 247) and Goths (pp. 248–250). The civilian settlement is diminishing and becomes fortified. But the authors hint at a harsh reality: a possible destruction of the settlement for which there are no vestiges for more than half a century.

A second archaeological horizon covers the period 328/329–378/382. Now cremation predominates. Under Constantine I, there was a strengthening of role played by Sucidava: a prefecture of the V Macedonian Legion, starting point for the road that went up from the Danube to the Olt valley and the stone bridge that connected it to the Trans-Danubian *Oescus*. In the chaos that followed the disaster at Adrianople in 378, Sucidava itself is destroyed around 382. The last coins are from 361 when Constantius II ruled the empire.

The third archaeological horizon begins in 383, when the fortress of Sucidava is rebuilt. The tombs are for burial purposes and belong to military personnel (p. 263). The invasion of the Huns led by Uldes, in 408/409, put a definitive end to the settlement and, with it, to the cemetery (p. 264).

The catalogue concludes with a final set of 104 plates (p. 266–370).

The book is based on a rich bibliography: 31 titles belonging to 38 Romanian authors and 35 titles signed by 47 foreign authors. The bibliography cited in the notes (in a combination of the classical system, with the one used by the Romanian archaeologists, and with the Harvard system) includes titles in Romanian, English, French, Italian, Serbo-Croatian, German and Polish.

## Bibliographic abbreviations

- Poenaru-Bordea 1996      Gh[eorghe] Poenaru-Bordea, *Gheorghe Popilian la a 70-a aniversare*, in *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologice*, t. 47, București: Edit. Academiei Române, 1996, p. 435–445.

Preda 1978

[Constantin Preda], *Popilian, Gheorghe*, in *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești*, coord. Prof. univ. dr. Ștefan ȘTEFĂNESCU (membru corespondent al Academiei Române), București: Edit. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978, [472 p.], p. 271a.

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