

# CAIETE ARA

ARHITECTURĂ. RESTAURARE. ARHEOLOGIE.

13, 2022

CAHIERS ARA ARA HEFTE ARA REPORTS



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# Caiete ARA

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*Editor / Editor:*

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Mihai Păunescu, mpaunescu@yahoo.com

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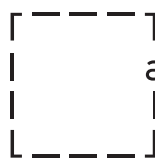
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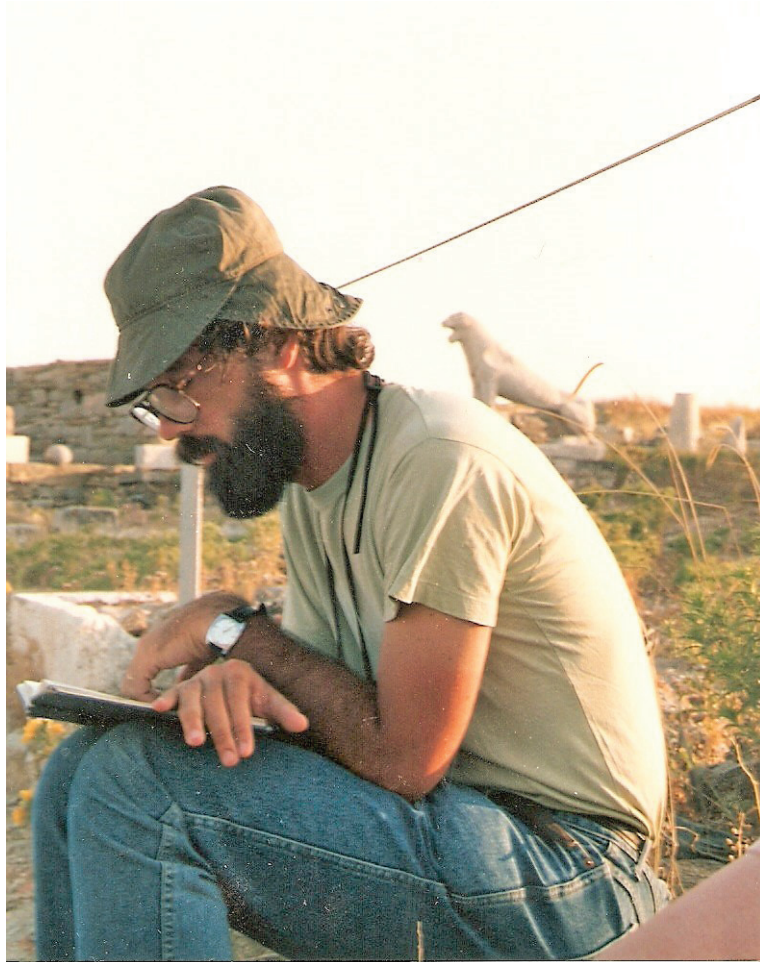
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**ALEXANDRU AVRAM**  
(SEPTEMBER 16, 1956, TULCEA – AUGUST 4, 2021, HISTRIA)

Professor Alexandru Avram is a special figure amongst the Romanian historians who have dealt, in recent decades, with the space between the Danube and the Black Sea in Antiquity. He succeeded, in an admirable and rare manner for a historian, in combining work in the library with work in the field, as the author of numerous syntheses on Greek history, with a special focus on Greek colonial settlements (e.g. *Les diasporas grecques du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à la fin du III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris, 2012; “Coloniile grecești din Dobrogea”, in *Istoria Românilor*, vol. I, Bucharest, 2001), but also as the author of several original studies on the three main cities in Romanian Dobruja. His studies of the territories of Histria and Callatis stand as fundamental references for current research; in each of these, Professor Avram added his own field investigations (excavations at Histria, Callatis, Histria Pod, Cogealac, and Istria; surveys around Histria and Callatis) to his profound knowledge of the written sources. The result of these investigations is one of the most thoroughly detailed and best documented archaeological maps of the territories of the two cities, from their foundation to the Roman conquest. In addition to ancient history, ancient geography was also a persistent interest in his youth, and it was not by chance that his first lectures in the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest were on this subject.

His greatest passion, however, was Greek epigraphy. Alexandru Avram studied under a great scholar of the local antiquities, professor Dionisie M. Pippidi, whose work he had continued after the 90s of the previous century. This passion was also fuelled by his development as a philologist, well beyond his knowledge of the classical languages. It was impressive, for whomever knew him, to see him express himself eloquently in foreign languages, especially in German and French. His natural aptitude for philological research was evident until the end of his life: in his final years, for example, his need to better understand the history of the Black Sea led him to learn Old Persian, Phrygian, and modern Turkish. With respect to Old Persian, he even recently made an important contribution to the reconsideration of a cuneiform inscription from Phanagoreia, a city in the north of the Black Sea area. His extensive publications of Greek inscriptions place Alexandru Avram among the great Romanian epigraphers of Dobruja, scholars such as Grigore Tocilescu, Vasile Pârvan, Scarlat Lambrino, Radu Vulpe and Dionisie Pippidi. He completed the corpora of inscriptions from Callatis and Tomis (*Inscriptions grecques et latines de Scythie Mineure*, vol. III. *Callatis et son territoire*, Bucharest – Paris, 1999; *Inscriptions grecques et latines de Scythie Mineure*, vol. VI. *Suppléments*, fasc. 2 : *Tomis et son territoire*, Bucharest – Paris, 2018), and was working on the corpus for Histria, beginning with the amphora stamps (*Histria VIII. Les timbres amphoriques. 1. Thasos*, Bucharest – Paris, 1996). Other volumes of inscriptions and stamps still wait to see the light of the printing press. Three fascicles from the series *Inscriptiones Graecae* are expected to appear posthumously in Berlin and concern the inscriptions from Callatis, Tomis and Histria. A volume on the Rhodian amphora stamps from Histria, co-authored with another departed colleague, Nicolae Conovici, and finalised a few days before his passing, is being printed at the Editura Academiei for the Histria series. He was an important contributor to the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* and *Bulletin Épigraphique*, publications in which he presented new epigraphic materials from the Greek centers along the coast of the Pontus Euxinus.

His passion for Antiquity was inspired, even from the beginning, by his archaeological research in Histria. He arrived at the site as a student during his undergraduate days at the end of the 1970s, and after an initial experience on the plateau, he participated as a student and then as a specialist in the excavations in the „Sacred area” of Histria, excavations which were at the time headed by professor Petre Alexandrescu. He was involved in the protests associated with the fall of the Communist state and after December 1989 was possible to finish his PhD. The subject of his doctoral dissertation, completed in 1992 under the supervision of Petre Alexandrescu, was the corpus of Thasian amphora stamps from Histria. This work was published in the monograph series *Histria* in 1996. Alongside his ongoing program of excavation in the Sacred Area of Histria,



he also conducted field research in Callatis. In 2011, he became co-director of the overall excavation program at Histria. During the last decade, he also participated in archaeological excavations in Pessinus, Phrygia, in collaboration with his friend Gocha Tsetsckhladze. Here, he dealt with the inscriptions, some of which were in Phrygian.

His scientific activity, especially in his early years, was closely tied to the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, where he began as a research assistant and finished as a Senior Researcher I, the highest research position at the Institute. For a short period of time, he was also the deputy director of the institute and head of the department of epigraphy and Greek and Roman archaeology. He also had a distinguished academic career. He taught epigraphy in the Faculty of Classical Languages of the University of Bucharest from 1996-1998 before joining the Faculty of History of the same university as Professor of Greek History in 1998. Here he established a tradition of scholarship that is renowned today for its depth and breadth, especially in Western Europe, where many of his former students now hold faculty positions. In Bucharest, after several years, he founded a school that is renowned today especially in the West, most of his students being obliged to continue their careers in France. In 2002, he became Professor of Greek History at Le Mans University (France), but he continued to collaborate with top quality in Romania, especially with the Institute of Archaeology and the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. He was co-director of the series *Il Mar Nero* and vice-president of the organising committee of the International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities, the last of which took place at his initiative in Constanța in 2017.

Professor Alexandru Avram was tightly connected to Romanian Dobruja, and it is not by chance that both the beginning and the end of his life found him here. He remains without a doubt an iconic figure in the humanistic sciences of the last few decades, having dealt with this region with a rare passion. His disappearance leaves behind an immense body of scientific work and the the lasting memory of his erudition and generosity for those who knew and cherished him for the model of knowledge and humanism that he offered.

Julian Bîrzescu, “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology, Bucharest