

RECENZII / BOOK REVIEWS

Mariana-Cristina Popescu, HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN POTTERY IN PRE-ROMAN DACIA (2ND CENTURY BC – 1ST CENTURY AD), Ed. “Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie”, București, 2014, 280 pages, 70 plates, 12 maps, 20 charts, 3 tables, ISBN 978-973-88465-7-9

Mariana-Cristina Popescu's monograph fills a lacuna that had been perpetuated for a long time in the research of the Dacian era. Four decades ago, Ioan Glodariu's studies outlined too briefly the frame of an extremely complex and various issue, namely that of the Hellenic and Roman imports in Dacia between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD.¹ In the meanwhile, significant studies have been published in numismatics,² in archaeology however there were fewer studies on this subject, except those that focus on some types of metal objects.³ Imported ceramics had been left aside, as the Cinderella of the matter. The diversity and the quantity, not at all negligible, of Greek and Roman ceramics, its chronological and symbolic expression which only appears to be less important than that of coins, vessels and fibulae, determines many researchers to drift away from this piece of ground that has so far remained unexplored, almost virgin. Opening this subject requires accuracy in documentation, getting to know the techniques and the morphology of meridional ceramics as well as getting acquainted with a vast professional literature which is often hard to find even in the best supplied libraries in the country. But above all, approaching such a subject requires assiduity and fierce courage – that courage that, despite all odds remains the only guide towards one's own professional completion. In this regard, Mariana-Cristina Popescu's monograph represents an example worthy to be followed by younger people as well as an example for those coryphaei who forget that the true mission of apprentices is to surpass their teachers.

The monograph is the fruit of a decade of labour. It started as a doctoral dissertation at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj (2004, major professor Ioan Glodariu) and continued as a research theme in many museums and libraries all over the country as well as in Athens and Blegen. The study itself represents a classification and a repertoire of the ceramics species imported into Dacia, like for example the “West Slope” and “Hadra” ceramic types, mould-made (“Megarian”) bowls or *terra sigillata*

of different origins etc. The transport amphorae however are missing! For this reason, the title should have been a notice to readers, making them aware of the narrow theme of the study: this is not “ceramics”, generally speaking, but *Late Hellenistic/republican and early imperial banquet pottery imported in pre-Roman Dacia!* Despite this lacuna, the study does *not lose its value*. The use of imported luxury ceramics illustrates one of the significant components of the acculturation phenomenon to the models of the Hellenistic and Roman civilization undergone by the Late Iron Age communities from South-Eastern Dacia. The informational foundation of the study gathers 644 ceramic pieces that the author personally documented. Other 50 fragments were taken from literature but not found in museums. These too should have been numbered (!) in the catalogue. The material in the repertoire was discovered in 24 sites in Muntenia, southern Transylvania and southern Moldavia and was produced in several centres in the circum-Pontic region, in Italy, Greece and Anatolia (p. 24, map 1).

On the other hand, the ordering the catalogue (pp. 97-189) according to the typology is a less inspired decision. A better choice would have been the listing of discoveries alphabetically, and organizing data into categories like archaeological sites and features. The major professor and/or the editor should have insisted more on this matter. The lacuna in this “typological catalogue” is filled by a list of sites (“Appendix. Sources of the material”, pp. 190-207). Nevertheless the two “catalogues” (of imported pottery and of sites) should have been put together in a synthesized manner. This fault must not be imputed to the author alone; it should be understood in the context of the general lack of interest for the methodology of archaeological documentation manifested in the academic environment not only in Romania.⁴

The conclusions that should be remembered from the investigation presented above focus on several aspects crucial for understanding the cultural phenomena in pre-Roman Dacia. The import of Hellenistic-Roman ceramics illustrates a phenomenon that took place mainly outside the Carpathian space; the few discoveries within the Carpathian Basin are grouped in southern Transylvania. Of the listed sites the ones in Bordușani, Brad, Poiana and Răcățau have the supremacy in that which regards quantity (p. 26, chart 2; p. 94, map 12). From the imported categories, the Pontic *sigillata* prevail (53%), followed by the West Slope ceramics (13%); the other ceramics categories are found relatively rarely and

¹ Glodariu 1976.

² Chițescu 1981.

³ Beldiman 1988; Beldiman 1989; Rustoiu 1995; Rustoiu 2001 *et alii*.

⁴ E.g. Teleaga 2008.

vaguely represented (between 1 and 4 %, p. 91, Chart 3). In that which regards the functional aspect, most of the imported luxury vessel consists in drinking containers (p. 91, Chart 4) or, to be precise, pottery types destined for *Symposia*. The flow of the luxury ceramics points to a preferential cultural relationship between the local communities outside the Carpathians and the Greek centres of manufacture from the circum-Pontic regions. The imports of western ceramics appear more timidly, in the 1st century AD. The study presents once more the strange situation according to which, in many pre-Roman sites (excepting those on the Siret river: Poiana, Răcățiu, Brad), chronological indices specific to the 3-4 decades before Trajan's conquest are lacking.⁵

The study could have been completed by putting the studied objects in the general context of the Hellenistic and Roman imports in Dacia between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. The author could have also emphasized the difference between the penetration routes of the luxury ceramic crossing Moesia Inferior and those of the Roman coins or Italic bronze vessels imported from the west (through the Illyrian regions).⁶ It is highly probable that luxury ceramics and the imported coins were meant for distinct social categories and the way they are spread reflects cultural processes that took place almost at the same time although independently. However, such a thorough debate would have gone beyond the frame purposed in the monograph.

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Bibliographical abbreviations:

- Babeș 1975 – M. Babeș, *Problèmes de la chronologie de la culture geto-dace à la lumière des fouilles de Cîrlomănești*, Dacia 19, 1975, pp. 125-139.
- Beldiman 1988 – C. Beldiman, *Cu privire la difuziunea produselor de bronz italice în Dacia preromană (descoperirea de la Țigănești, jud. Teleorman)*, Thraco-Dacica 9, 1-2, 1988, pp. 75-82.
- Beldiman 1989 – C. Beldiman, *Plăcuțe de cuirasă (lorica squamata) din Dacia Preromană*, Carpica, 20, 1989, pp. 125-136.
- Bogdan Cătănicu 1975 – I. Bogdan Cătănicu, *Tezaurul monetar de la Poiana (jud. Teleorman). Unele aspecte ale circulației tetradrahmelor Macedoniei Prima și ale orașului Thasos în lumea traco-dacică*, Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică 6, 1975, pp. 177-188.
- Chițescu 1981 – M. Chițescu, *Numismatic Aspects of the History of the Dacian State: the Roman Republican Coinage*

in Dacia and Geto-Dacian Coins of Roman Type, British Archaeological Report, Suppl. Ser. 112, 1981.

- Conovici 1986 – N. Conovici, *Aspecte ale circulației drahmelor din Dyrrhachium și Apollonia în Peninsula Balcanică și în Dacia*, Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române 77-79, 1986, pp. 69-88.
- Glodariu 1976 – I. Glodariu, *Dacian Trade with the Hellenistic and Roman World*, British Archaeological Report, Suppl. Ser. 8, 1976.
- Horedt 1973 – K. Horedt, *Die dakische Siedelfunde*, Dacia 17, 1973, pp. 122-165.
- Popović 1987 – P. Popović, *Le monnayage des Scordisques*, Novi Sad, 1987.
- Preda 1998 – C. Preda, *Istoria monedei în Dacia Preromană*, București, 1998.
- Rustoiu 1995 – A. Rustoiu, *Le premier horizon de fibules romaines en Dacie préromaine*, Thraco-Dacica 16, 1-2, 1995, pp. 211-219.
- Rustoiu 2001 – A. Rustoiu, *Strucuratori romane din perioada republicană târzie descoperite în cetatea dacică de la Divici (jud. Caraș-Severin)*, in: G. Florea, L. Suciu, (eds.), *Studii de Istorie Antică. Omagiu profesorului Ioan Glodariu*, Cluj-Napoca 2001, pp. 199-206.
- Teleaga 2008 – E. Teleaga, *Griechische Importe in den Nekropolen an der Unteren Donau, 6. Jh. – Anfang des 3. Jhs. v. Chr.*, Marburger Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Band 23, Rahden 2008.

H. W. Müller, I. Piso, B. Schwaighofer, M. Benea, DER MARMOR IM RÖMISCHEN DAKIEN, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, 114 pages, ISBN 978-606-543-282-6

The Dacian provinces are among the most interesting, puzzling and challenging for the scholars of the Roman period. One of the rarely asked questions concerns the provenance of the used lithic material. The volume to be presented here has been published three years ago, declared to be (p. 7-8) the end result of the long-term interdisciplinary project dedicated to the marble monuments of Dacia: *Petrographische und geochemische Untersuchungen der Marmorvorkommen in der römischen Provinz Dakien in Hinblick auf die Bedeutung in der Archäologie*, coordinated by Harald W. Müller and Ioan Piso, leading an international team, with financial support from Austrian and Romanian research funds.

In the introduction (pp. 9-16), after a short presentation of the history of the province (I. Piso), the geologists and mineralogists, co-authors of the volume, discuss the problem of marble quarries in Antiquity followed by the presentation of the status of interdisciplinary studies on marble. As known from several conferences and published contributions, selected marble monuments in Romanian collections, mostly found in the area between the Danube and the Black Sea,

⁵ Babeș 1975, pp. 136-138; Horedt 1973, pp. 151-152; cf. Preda 1998, pp. 319-323.

⁶ Popović 1987, pp. 105-113; Conovici 1986, pp. 71-78, fig. 1-3; Bogdan Cătănicu 1975 *et alii*.