

Impact of Rome at the Danube's Mouth - The North-Dobrudja (South-East Romania) Rural Communities as a Case Study

George Nuțu¹, Simina Margareta Stanc²

¹ Institute for Eco Museal Researches, Tulcea - Romania. 14 Noiembrie Street, no. 1 bis, 820009

E-mail: nutugrg@yahoo.com

² Faculty of Biology, Al.I. Cuza University, Iași-Romania. Cuza I Blvd., no. 20A, 700505

E-mail: simina_stanc@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

The presence of Rome at the Danube's Mouth shaped the original landscape. The Roman introduced a system of rural settlements composed of colonists and *veterani*. Some of these new communities were built in place of former *Getae* settlements. *Vici* and *villae* were built in an area already connected to the Mediterranean world throughout the Greek colonies from the West Pontus.

Archaeological evidence

There are interesting issues concerning the local communities and their resilience as well as the transformations occurred in their material and spiritual life. Archaeological findings from the Northern Dobrudja rural areas denote strong connections with wide areas from the Aegean and Mediterranean basins. Besides imported products, the local production of different goods (pottery, bone and horn carving) begins to develop. Local resources of iron ore were exploited, indigenous animal breed were improved and workshops for producing building materials were expanded.

There is archaeological evidence documenting the resilience of local traditions, mirrored especially in the pottery influenced by La Tène, discovered in the same contexts with Roman pottery. Although all main aspects of Greek-Roman pantheon were embraced, some discoveries confirm the endurance of local deities.

New settlements like the *vici* from Telița and Niculițel, the *villae* from Niculițel and Horia prove the influence of the Roman "way of life" in the west area of the Pontus. Archaeological researches from the last decades show an intensive exploitation of the local resources of metal ore, clay and wood used for in the local pottery and metal workshops. The presence of the *Legio V Macedonica* at *Troesmis* and of the *Classis Flavia Moesica* at *Noviodunum* resulted in a demand of objects of daily life use and food supplies.

The settlement from Telița prove the existence of instalations for reducing the iron ore. This activity seems to be of Latène tradition and the Roman administration continues to exploit the local ore resources during the early Roman period. Starting with the early 2nd century AD these workshops will start to function until mid 3rd century AD. A brick bearing the stamp CLFM discovered inside one of the kilns could be connected with the activity of some soldiers from *Classis Flavia Moesica* having the main *statio* at *Noviodunum*, on the Danube, not far from Telița.

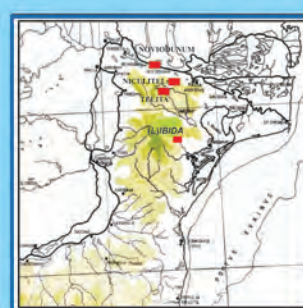
At the same time, one can emphasize the discovery of typical Roman pottery of Moesian origin together with eastern imports in the same stratigraphic units with pottery of Getian tradition. This fact is not unique among the early Roman settlements from the Lower Danube region. A good example is a recently excavated Roman *villa* in Niculițel (Tulcea county), also in the territory of *Noviodunum*.

Niculițel is located in the North of Tulcea county (Dobrudja, South-East Romania) a few kilometers from the River Danube, near the ancient city *Noviodunum*. During the Antiquity, this area belonged to the northern side of the province *Moesia inferior* (between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD). Between 2009 and 2011 salvation archaeological researches were conducted in the north side of the today village, revealing an early Roman *villa*, which functioned starting with first half of the 2nd century and last until mid. 3rd when the entire area was destroyed by the Carpians and Gothic invasions.

During the archaeological researches more than 50 bone finds were discovered together with a large quantity of pottery of Roman origin and of a local tradition.



Dobrudja and the Balkans



Roman cities in Dobrudja



Map of Moesia Inferior

Archaeozoological evidence

The archaeozoological data used in the present paper proceeds from previous studies concerning the sites of Isaccea, Horia, Telița Amza, Niculițel being mainly based on taxonomic identification and quantification. The archaeozoological quantification (NISP-number of identified specimens and MNI-minimum number of individuals) aimed at evaluating the relative frequencies of identified species in order to estimate the animal resources and subsistence practices (animal husbandry, hunting, fishing), such as animals used as food in each settlement.

In all samples, the remains of domestic mammals have the highest proportions (between 85% - Telița Amza and 98% - Horia and Isaccea) indicating the importance of animal husbandry. The identified domestic mammal's species are: cattle, sheep, goat, horse, donkey, dog, cat. Cattle have the highest frequencies in all settlements, ranging between 53% (Horia) and 70% as number of identified remains NISP (Niculițel). In second place are sheep/goat, which have a frequency between 11% (Telița Amza) and 27% NISP (Horia); in the third rank is the pig, with a frequency that varies from 7% (Niculițel) to 16% (Isaccea); there are also exceptions, such as the samples from Telița Amza, where its proportion is higher than the sheep/goat proportion.

Based on metrical data, two types of cattle were identified in the settlements from Niculițel, one of them being large in size (probably improved or brought by the Romans) and other, smaller in size (probably indigenous).

In the sample from Jurilovca, no remains belonging to wild mammals have been identified. The proportion of wild mammals remains varies from one settlement to another, between 1.2% (Horia) and 5.3% (Niculițel). The wild mammals species identified are: red deer, wild boar, roe deer, aurochs, hare, wolf, bear, badger, marbled polecat. Among the wild mammals, red deer and wild boar appear in all samples and have the highest percentage. The proportion of red deer remains varies between 0.9% (Isaccea) and 5.9% (Telița Amza). The frequency of wild boar remains ranges between 0.4% (Isaccea and Horia) and 6.8% (Telița Amza).

Aurochs, beaver, red deer and bear are identified in the settlements from first millennium AD, but today there are not found in the area anymore. Red deer and bear are two species whose distribution areas were confined within the Carpathian territory.

The exploited animal resources in the settlements from 2nd-7th centuries from Dobrudja are varied, including mainly fish, birds and mammals.

Mammals breeding had a major importance in the economy of the settlements from 2nd-7th centuries in the area between Black Sea and Danube and most households had focused on breeding cattle, pig and sheep/goat; the relative representation of these species varies from one settlement to another. Cattle remains occur constantly in almost all the investigated settlements. Hunting had also a predominant importance for the inhabitants from Telița Amza; for the other settlements, hunting is less important.

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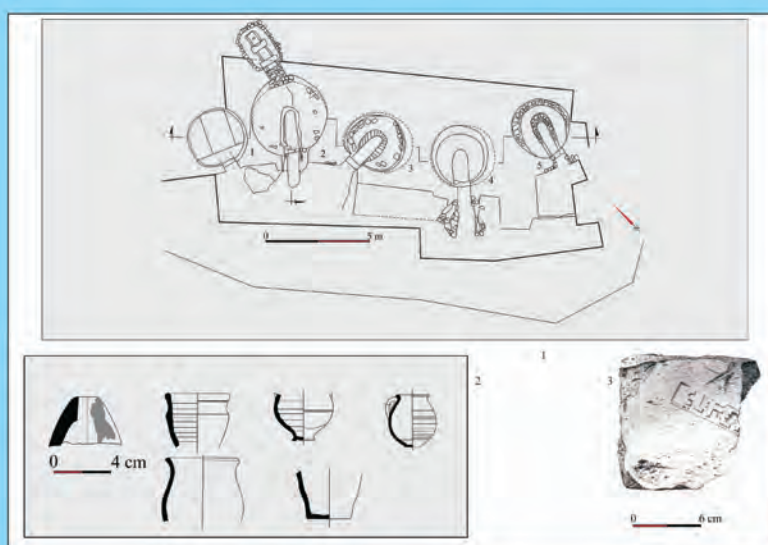
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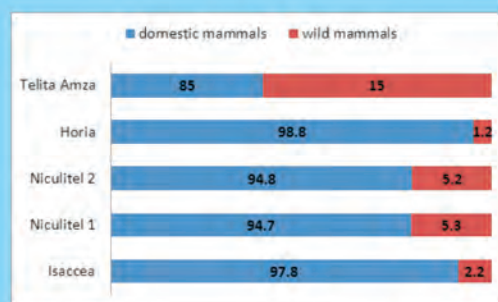
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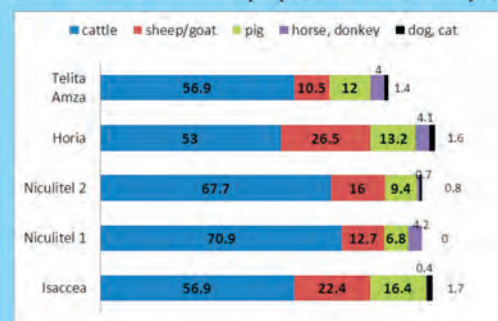
Iron ore kilns from Telița



Roman fine and cooking ware from the Roman villa in Niculițel



Domestic and wild mammals proportions in the analyzed samples



Quantification of domestic mammal remains using the number of identified specimens (NISP)



Getian pottery from the Roman villa in Niculițel