

THE CARPATHIAN-DANUBIAN-PONTIC SPACE – THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF THE BIRTH OF THE ROMANIAN CHRISTIANITY

Petre MOCANU¹

Abstract: The activities undertaken by Constantine the Great in the Danube, but particularly in the north of them, will contribute not only to return the territory part of borders in Dacia Traian Empire, but also to strengthen of the Romanity and the large spread of Christianity.

This activity is resulting in a first phase, between 324 -328 years, in building a bridge over the Danube between Oescus and Sucidava, having intended to law Empire of the Carpathian-Danubian both because of the threat got that threaten northern borders, but especially to facilitate links between South-eastern Romanity and the Northern Danube. The bridge was inaugurated in the year 328 and is also known as the historical-literary sources and from observations on the ground.

Between 364-378, witnessing a weakening of the Roman rule in the Roman Oltenia, deducted from the monetary crisis in this period and attributed to the Gothic attacks in the south of the Danube and the riot of the usurper Procopius against Emperor Valens (364 - 378). A similar situation characterizes the period and 378 - 383, while also observed a monetary crisis, caused by the Germanic and Hun collisions.

Much more conclusive by the words attributed to the Emperor Iulian the Apostate (361 - 363) of Constantine the Great (306 - 337), which would have said: "the facts are perpetrated against the usurpers above Traian only, and are undoubtedly match His resume of the lands through which it acquired earlier ..", the text is abundantly clear that what seems unsure if Constantine Chlorus, is undeniable on his son Constantine the Great.

A return to the Roman-Byzantine rule at the North of the Danube will take place in the true sense of the word, with bullish on the throne of Emperor Justinian. Between 530 and 533, it will send at the Lower Danube the General Childebrand, which, after many expeditions against Slavs will conquest again some strategic points of Oltenia and Muntenia.

An important role in spreading Christianity and the north of the Danube must be played many bishops established in the IV century in close proximity to the Danube, which include: Aqua, Bononia, Ratiaria, Oescus in Dacia Ripensis, Naisus, and Sarda in Remesiana Dacia Mediterranean, and whose holders are attested during sinoade kept in different danubian territories. They sent probably *horepiscopoi* to strengthen the Christian faith in souls Dacian-Roman population, especially during and after the rule of Constantine the Great, and to consecrate some priests for the community needs.

Key words: Christianity, missionaryism, faith, geographical space, Lower Danube basin

The fate of the Romanity in the former province Dacia Inferior at the time, but especially after the withdrawal of Aurelian in the south of the Danube, has a special problem in Romanian historiography, being enounced many different

¹ University of Craiova, Faculty of Orthodox Theology

views. Thus, some have said that Aurelian would be ceded territory of the Romanian Dacia of Nomad as "foederati"(Tudor, Dumitru, 1968, p. 415), while others considered that, although abandoned, Dacia has maintained uninterrupted relations with the Empire, both during his Aurelian and may later, and that she was not transferred migratory people, a fact confirmed by sources both historical letters and the archaeological (Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p. 24-25).

In two decades of abandonment, the idea that Dacia is, in fact, the whole Empire, appears in spring on the emperor Constantine Chlorus (293 - 306), who pronounces a panegyrist March 1 to 297 words: "For since the party had was removed beyond Tiger, the province of Dacia restored ... "(Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p. 30-31) which would ensue that the emperor would be brought back under the authority of the empire left by Aurelian in 275, however, there are views according to which the text would refer to the province of Dacia South of the Danube.

Much more conclusive by the words attributed to the Emperor Iulian the Apostate (361 - 363) of Constantine the Great (306 - 337), which would have said: "the facts are perpetrated against the usurpers above Traian only, and are undoubtedly match His resume of the lands through which it acquired earlier .."(Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p. 24-25), the text is abundantly clear that what seems unsure if Constantine Chlorus, is undeniable on his son Constantine the Great.

The activities undertaken by Constantine the Great in the Danube, but particularly in the north of them, will contribute not only to return the territory part of borders in Dacia Traian Empire, but also to strengthen of the Romanity and the large spread of Christianity.

This activity is resulting in a first phase, between 324 -328 years, in building a bridge over the Danube between Oescus and Sucidava, having intended to law Empire of the Carpathian-Danubian both because of the threat got that threaten northern borders, but especially to facilitate links between South-eastern Romanity and the Northern Danube. The bridge was inaugurated in the year 328 and is also known as the historical-literary sources and from observations on the ground (Tudor, Dumitru, 1978, p. 422-423).

In the same year, Constantine the Great will recover novel way of the Olt Valley (Popescu, Emilian, 1976, nr. 278), recorded event of a military pole, discovered near Sucidava. The road will be restored to the wave of land, known as "*The Novac's Vallum- Brazda lui Novac*", which started at Hinova (Mehedinti County) and end at Pietroasele in the area of Buzau.

After the bridge construction and restoration of the old Roman road, Constantine the Great will restore the old castrum from Sucidava, where it will build a new castrum at Drobeta (Tudor, Dumitru, 1978, p. 448-450), based on the high emperor Traian (89 - 117) of Ban's Island, esa, Bistret in Dolj County, Slăveni, Olt County. The emergence of several Constantine currencies in the castra and other novels on the Oltenia, shows that, although not all restored by Constantine the Great, they were nonetheless used by it under its policy offensive in the Lower Danube. An important moment of Constantine's rule at the north of the Danube is widespread and spreading Christianity.

The descendants of Constantine the Great will continue to master the region of Oltenia using the castra restored or built to tackle them. Conclusive evidence of this is in many post-Constantine currencies number almost 1700 (Toropu, Octavian, 1976, p. 29), indicating the presence of the military empire north of the Danube, and intense commercial links with this "Romanity of Oltenia" (Toropu, Octavian, 1976, p. 29).

Between 364-378, witnessing a weakening of the Roman rule in the Roman Oltenia, deduced from the monetary crisis in this period and attributed to the Gothic attacks in the south of the Danube and the riot of the usurper Procopius against Emperor Valens (364 - 378). A similar situation characterizes the period and 378 - 383, while also observed a monetary crisis, caused by the Germanic and Hun collisions.

The prosperous period between and 383 - 395, including the rule of Theodosius (379 - 395), resulted in victories over the Goths which ensured a peace time and ending with them in the 382, it follows a gradual weakening and a collapse of the Roman-Byzantine rule in Oltenia.

During the reign of Theodosius II, had often attack the Huns, who destroyed fortifications from the region; everything now and enter the circulation of money in a crisis. With the destruction and Sucidava Drobeta by Huns (447), military control of the Roman-Byzantine weakens in the north of the Danube between 450 - 527, namely between the end of the reign of Theodosius II and the beginning of the reign of Justinian I (527 - 565) Although isolated, more Byzantine coins appear, indicating, in particular, the same commercial links with the local population Byzantine Empire.

A return to the Roman-Byzantine rule at the North of the Danube will take place in the true sense of the word, with bullish on the throne of Emperor Justinian. Between 530 and 533, it will send at the Lower Danube the General Chilbudios, which, after many expeditions against Slavs will conquest again some strategic points of Oltenia and Muntenia (Toropu, Octavian, 1976, p. 37). Emperor will unveil a stupendous edilitary task, contributing to the restoration or construction of new fortresses (Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p 439-445), which they will use to maintain mastery of the Byzantine north of the Danube and thereby facilitating the commercial and cultural relations of Empire with Romanized population in the former Dacia. Mention in this regard restoration of the Constantinian castles from Sucidava, which added an interesting construction, namely, the " secret well", everything is now blooming and the Christian life. In a similar situation is also Drobeta, which recast now, will appear in the documents as Theodora, after the empress Theodora's name although the identity of Drobeta - Theodora is rejected by some researchers. All will now flourish the fortress on the Ban's Isle. In addition to coins discovered in the cities of the Danube (Drobeta, Sucidava), the number 30, other 19 coins were found in the rest of Oltenia, confirming once again links with the local Byzantine south, which has been identified and that belonged to a period of three centuries covered chronologically.

The Empire will still control the "*de jure*" the Carpathian-Danubian until the beginning of the century VII, although the attacks Slavs, Danubian line will be broken "*de facto*", the links will continue despite the fact that no longer can speak of an effective domination Roman-Byzantine in these territories.

The entry and spread of Christianity in the former province Dacia, did not enjoy the special attention from historians. V. Pârvan reserved this issue more pages in the work "*Epigraphic contributions to the history of Dacian-Roman Christianity*", trying, in addition to the few archaeological traces Christian" (Pârvan, Vasile, 1911, p. 74-194), to explain the new religion entry on the Carpathian-Danubian mostly through literary springs, citing the famous passages of Tertullian (*Adversus Iudaeos*, VII) and origin (In Matthew comment ad series. Matthau, 24.9); these texts were subsequently subjected to a rigorous criticism, trying is to prove that the arguments are not worthy to be attention being unclear and confuze. But that does not mean that they do not contain a kernel of truth, so I have to explain how the emergence of Christian objects from the territory III century Roman Oltenia.

The great scientist brought into question misionară activity that would be a place north of the Danube, and of course the current Oltenia, the Holy Niceta Remesiana (around 366 - 418) on the 1-even called "apostle of the Dacian-Roman". The text invoked (Nolanus Paulinus, Carmen XVII), subject to the same criticisms of the above seem to relate, after some research, at Dacia in the south of the Danube, while others say that, because of its missionary of the person, Saint Niceta the past and in the north of the Danube, speculation that it seems to us closer to truth"(Pippidi, D. M., 1967, p. 243-247).

The documentation a bishop named Stephen in the year 328 with the residence on Romula - Malva, must be received with reservations, in the same way with the participation in the Ecumenical Synod of the Bishop Valentine III and of the Bishop Chrisippus to the fourth century, both from the same city (Barnea, Ion, 1977, p. 24).

An important role in spreading Christianity and the north of the Danube must be played many bishops established in the IV century in close proximity to the Danube, which include: Aqua, Bononia, Ratiaria, Oescus in Dacia Ripensis, Naisus, and Sarda in Remesiana Dacia Mediterranean, and whose holders are attested during sinoade kept in different danubian territories. They sent probably *horepiscopoi* to strengthen the Christian faith in souls Dacian-Roman population, especially during and after the rule of Constantine the Great, and to consecrate some priests for the community needs(Păcurariu Mircea, 1981, p. 105-106).

In VI century it seems that Romanian territory of Oltenia has undergone judicial Archdiocese Justinian first established by Novel XI on April 16 in 535 by Emperor Justinian. If we accept the opinion of D. Tudor, that the city of Recidiva of the Novel would have been a corrupt form of the name Sucidava, in this case would be safe on the accreditation status of Christianity north-Danubian; concerned Fortress and its territory should be belonged to the Diocese of Aqua (Prahovo Yugoslavia) (Tudor, Dumitru, 1978 p. 466).

The existence of a bishopric based in Sucidava during this period, should also be treated with reserve, and the participation of bishops from Malva and the Sucidava VII ecumenical Synod of Nicaea, the documents alleged referring to other localities, of other territories than the former Dacia Malvensis (Darrousses, J. 1975, p. 19, 39).

Summarizing, we can say that the Christian religion, in the light of written documents, has penetrated and spread on the territory of Oltenia especially during the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great and its survivors through missionary action sent to south-Danubian bishops, among them an important role -1 must be played for St. Niceta Remesiana and the *horepiscopi* sent by the bishop of Aqua, under the authority of the episcopate from Justiniana I. The territory of Muntenia, surrounded by the Roman Empire and temporarily sober but continuously supervised, was the bridge between the provinces of Dacia and Moesia.

That explains the strong Roman influence found on the one hand, in the settlements of the local population, particularly those located on thoroughfares, and on the other hand, under construction or access them in order to facilitate the trade is to ensure a better defenses. All these events will take place especially after the establishment of domination and the ascent of Constantine the Great, during which witnessing a spectacular recovery to the northern Danube in the north-Danubian, which will cover the territory of Wallachia. In this respect we remember the great wave of earth, with trench, oriented north wave known as the "Brazda lui Novac North" (Tudor, Dumitru, 1978, p. 244—249). This retrenchment what extent approximately 700 km, beginning near Drobeta, cross the middle of Oltenia and Muntenia on the Urlueni, Arges County, about Finta, north of Tîrșor, Prahova County, Ploiesti and Mizil, cut by up to the Pietroasa.

The relations between the Empire and north-Danubian people are clearly proven now because of news that we have about incursiunile Gothic tribesmen from the 315-316, while Constantin will reject even the territory of Wallachia, we come to the foot of the Carpathians. This victory, as the death of Licinius (323), it will cause the emperor to switch to a political offensive against Goths and other barbarian peoples of the field of Wallachia. In this regard, he built or restored more Fortresses and head of the bridge on the Oltenia, but also deprive of a carefully territory of Wallachia (Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p. 307). Here, he built a second castle, which, in addition to the strategic role militarily, and represented an important juncture in view of economic and cultural exchanges between the great mass of the two Roman Moesia and Roman and barbarian people in those areas. In this connection, Procopius informs us that "the emperor Constantine built with much care to the fortress Transmarisca (Turtucaia, Tutrakan, Bulgaria), fortress named Daphne, counting that as in that place the river is guarded on both sides. (Iliescu, Vladimir, 1979, p. 469). It is shown as Procopius, the left bank of the Danube, maybe somewhere in the region of the confluence of the river Arges with the Danube being as it is assumed, entirely destroyed by water. Then, to the east of the mouth of the Olt, 3 km south of Turnu Magurele, were found a Roman Fortresses from the IV, probably fortress Turrus, said the same Procopius. (For

bellis, III, 14, 23). prior to the east, near the Danube empties Ialomita, the Piuia Pietruu, was a fortress from Roman ruins which were removed coins and fragments of ceramic bricks from IV-V centuries. But we have no reliable evidence to assign Constantin. However, concerned Fortress Muntenia yet to bring a proof of the strong relations with the Empire of the said period. Then, at Pietroasele, district Buzau, where it was found treasure "Mother hen with juvenile gold", as there is known, the ruins of a camp of the wall on which the last archeological excavations have found that, he was restored to dry IV, is probably still a construction Constantine, linked to the great wave "Brazda lui Novac north. »(Barnea, Ion, 1971, p. 288)."

The continuous presence of the Roman garrisons on the Northern Danube and implicit the tied-up relationships that have existed between the peoples on both sides of the river since the time of Aurelianus and up to the great destruction of Attila's, we are certified not only archaeological evidence but also by the news extremely valuable to his Procopius that says: "the Roman emperors in the past have covered all the shore of the river with fortifications, not only in the river right, but have built here and there, and opposite the small towns and castles strengthened" (De aedificiis, IV , 5, 2).

The empire thanks of intense links with the people of Wallachia will know a new age of prosperity under Iustinian (527-565), in whose thinking was the idea of regaining of Dacia Traiana may yet persist. In this regard we have some evidence which, if strategic Thrace, called Chilbudius, charged by the emperor with the mission to guard the border Danubian and even to make expeditions in the north of the river (De bellis, VII, 14, 2-3). That Chilbudius spoke in Latin (For bellis VII, 36), is still a secure evidence in supporting the Romanity and Latinity of the North Danubian population. Then transfer the fortress Turrus by Iustinian, anti - fortress that belonged to the Romans from the outset - (For bellis, VII, 32-33), confirms the story that support in that period, this part of Wallachia belonged to secure the Byzantines. As the opera of rebuilding pro,oted by Iustinian on the territory of Wallachia, is very poor compared to the Oltenia region and Dobrogea. On the list of Procopius a single fortress recast the monarch, that is (Constantiniana) Daphne. "With the passage of time - say Procopius - barbarians have destroyed everything, and the emperor Iustinian built at a place since the ground" (The aedificiis, IV, 7, 7-8).

Dobrogea is limited to the north of the Danube Delta Mountains Macin, east, west of the Black Sea, and east of the bottom of the Danube. Dobrogea includes north-eastern Bulgaria Dobrich and Silistra regions. The waters flowing from the territory they are, are few, brief, at low speeds, they are paid in lakes on the Black Sea coast. The most important rivers are Taița, Telit, Slava, Casimcea. There are salt lakes, which can remember: Techirghiol, Nausori, Golovita, Tasaul.

Laying on the intersection of two roads one of which unease North Sea with the Black Sea crossing the central Europe and other Eastern Mediterranean ports with the Pontic steppes, the history dedicate Dobrogea, over the centuries a tumultuous fate.

From the century VIII before our era, the Greek ships bearing whole families of merchants, craftsmen, soldiers and sailors entering the sea called the Scythians Axaina (dark blue) and a name Pontos Euxeinos (euxeinos meaning welcome in Greek). The Danube area deposits through its commercial possibilities, they attract attention, and colonists come from the Aegean coast and the southern tip Euxin (Black Sea) based here several castles-ports. Among the most important of these castles are Odessos (Varna), Apollonia, Dionysopolis (Balchik), Callatis, Tomis, Histria, Argamum, Halmyris, and on the Danube Aegyssos (Tulcea) and Axiopolis (Cernavoda).

Dobrogea has been inhabited since ancient times tribes trace those from the north were called Geto-Dacian (Getae the appointment of the Greek and Roman Gauls). As Herodotus noted in its history, in 514, the dispatch of Darius, Persian Chess, Dobrogea was living in large part by the Geto-Dacian tribes. Even under the mastery of Persian, Greek cities were significantly affected trade between large and Dacia, marking the progress of trade Dacians and their civilization.

In about 330, Alexander the Great take Thracians dependent on the back of Persia and occupied Dobrogea, his empire until reaching the Danube. In 322, the empire of Alexander collapsed, Dobrogea being included in the Macedonian kingdom, and the Geto-Dacians resume its autonomy available to local weather person.

Subsequently, the Greek cities dobrogene entered the sphere of influence of the kingdom pontic led by Mitridate VI Eupator.

In 55 Dobrogea and the Greek cities on the seaside have been incorporated in the state of his Burebista, until 44.

In the fourth centuries BC a. III are listed some leaders Dacians: Zalmodegikos, Oroles, Rhemaxos, Zoltes, and I a. century BC drivers are listed: Roles in southern Dobrogea, Dapyx the center and Zyraxes Dobrogei in Northern Dobrogea, which will be defeated by the Romans. Following this victory, Rome crane mastery and Dobrogea (28 a. BC). Dobrudja was included in the second half of the century I a. Chr in provincia Roman Moesia Inferior by the emperor Octavian Augustus.

During the Dacian wars, Dobrogea has been a theater of war between the Gauls, with Sarmatian allies against the Romans. One of the bright wins the Romans in these wars was the Adamclisi at (102), where the monument was raised from

Among the barbarians began to appear on the Dobrogea in the century III include Goths, Huns and the Gepidae.

With the final division of the Roman Empire in 395, Dobrogea enter into the composition of the Eastern Roman Empire, Christians and gradually named later (the more recent historians, starting with Germany Hieronymus Wolf) "Byzantine Empire."

Along with the great significance that you are in training and development of our people, Dobrogea region and has made a contribution to the absolute and undeniable spirituality and it is the first Romanian land which has contact with the

Gospel of Christ. For this reason, the territory of the Danube River and Sea is often called "Romanian Bethlehem".

Relatively short time after the Holy Mission of the Apostle Andrew on the ground of Dobrogea, Christianity has spread rapidly being adopted easily and naturally, because then people just started to be born was prepared spiritually to receive Christ. Penetration of the Gospel on these lands but has not produced a total of uprooting the old gods, they have been demolished temple, they have been crushed idols and did not fight wore even in the people's conscience, but to hold a popular paganism adapted Christianity until today. Rural population has dropped from customs inherited from the root, seeing no contradiction between the old and new faith. As history shows P. Panaitescu "people go to the mission, which is brought in and entered the Church, bringing with him before the shrines, rites and its prehistoric." In an utterly natural, Dacia's Zamolxis soon became the church of Jesus Christ and the new religion of peace and love.

Christianity spread rapidly in the Dacian-Roman relations were encouraged by cultural, religious and commercial relations with the Greek cities from the Black Sea coast - Histria, Callatis, Tomis - the regions of Balkan Peninsula and in Asia Minor, as well as links communities Danube in the north with the south-Danubian population Romanized, in the middle of the predicate Holy Apostle Paul and his disciples. On entering the new faith have contributed the colonists brought by Emperor Traian (98-117) after the conquest of Dacia in the years 105-106.

To spread the new faith have contributed coloniștii brought by Emperor Traian (98-117) after the conquest of Dacia in the years 105-106.

In the middle of the century III, an important role in the uptake of Christianity in Daco-Romanian prisoners had brought the Goths in the region, who have conducted an intense activity of the missionaries, as noted church historian Philostorgius (368-425 d.Hr.): "When he Valerianus and Galierius, a part of Scythe (Goths) beyond the Istros passed on Romanian soil and waste a good part of the territory of Europe. Then, passing in Asia, have burst into Galatia and Capadocia, where they took many prisoners, among them, and clergy. These prisoners and pious people, living with the barbarians have converted many of them the true faith and convinced him to hug the Christian religion in the pagan faith. " In the next century, missionaries sent by St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom and brought an important contribution to spreading the Gospel of Christ on the territory of the Danube and the Carpathians.

The presence of Christianity in Dobrogea in the first two or three centuries can not be questioned, even if there were no indications found archaeological written corresponding period. This is due to be poverty of the sources do, and allowed the construction of funerary monuments sustainable, or fear of persecution, which cause many Christians do not show and faith in this way, either of the migratory invasions who have destroyed such possible monuments. However, as history emphasizes P. Panaitescu, "on the Lower Danube Christianization Dacian-Roman began much earlier than hint monuments and inscriptions discovered", which dates only from the time of Constantine the Great.

But there are many other testimonies - literary, linguistic and historical - that place beyond any doubt that the population Dacian-Roman Christianity has spread since the first three centuries. A proof to that effect is, for example, the large number of words of Latin origin in the terminology of the Romanian church, which demonstrates that the Geto-Dacians' Christian faith was contemporary with their Romanization.

REFERENCES

- BARNEA, I.**, (1971), *Monumente paleocristiani della Dacia Traiana*, XVIII, Ravenna, 1971.
- BARNEA, I.**, (1977), *Bisericiuțele rupestre de la Murfatlar*, în *De la Dunăre la mare. Mărturii istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, Galați.
- DARROUSSES, J.**, (1975), *Listes episcopales du Concile de Nicee (787)*, în *Revue des etudes byzantines*, t. 33.
- ILIESCU, V.**, (1979), *Izvoare privind istoria României*, vol. II, Editura Academiei, București.
- PÂRVAN, V.**, (1911), *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, București.
- PIPPIDI, D. M.**, (1967), *Contribuții la istoria veche a României*, Ediția a II-a, Editura, Științifică, București.
- TOROPU, O.**, (1976), Toropu, Octavian, *Romanitatea târzie și străromânii în Dacia Traiană, sud-carpatică-Craiova*.
- TUDOR, D.**, (1978), *Oltenia Romană*, Ediția a IV-a, Editura Academiei, București.