

On the Origins of the Romanian People

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Abstract

I have been often asked where I come from and I have realized that not much is known about Romania, its location, language and history. This paper is an examination of the roots of Romanian history. It is supported by official historical evidence and some of the data is approved by the Romanian Academy of History and Archeology, whereas other information is taken from different sources such as: history of religions, different reports from the Institute of Dacology, encyclopedias, and folklore resources.

Statements on history can be eventually confirmed as well as denied when some new discovery happens. Also, in the case of writing a research paper on the ancient history of a country the lack of sufficient and explicit written evidence left to this day, can obstruct the discovering of facts that are correct, free from ambiguity and vacillation. This paper covers the early historical beginnings of the people that inhabited the territory of modern Romania to the time when the Roman Empire changed the country north of Danube into a Roman colony.

This paper comprises:

A geographical description of Romania

History: the beginnings,

An explanation of the meaning of the Pelasgians

Definition of who the Thracians were.

The Dacians and the Getae and who they were.

The Dacian kings and among them the most important, Buerebista and Decebal

The change of Dacia into a Roman colony

Conclusion

Introduction

The historic magnitude of different peoples on the earth does not always radiate with the same intensity. Some nations have histories with prominent roles. Others are less impressive and have carried out not very agreeable missions, or went without being observed. The Romanians played in history quite an obscure role. Although misunderstood or ignored the life of this nation has been tumultuous. Considering the past, these people could not know the peace and rejoicing, were not able to enjoy the time in order to create something. Continuously attacked they could only think while defending themselves.

Their history is more than a series of struggles for independence. It is an unceasing struggle for centuries on end for their survival. With each battle they risk their right to life and religion, their language and culture. The inhabitants of this country have seen with their eyes the tragedy of living each moment of their life as it were the last.

If we think of some nations, we may notice that there are cases when in order to wipe out that certain nation, its culture is modified by abolishing that particular nation's religion and/or its history. Somebody else will write new books, new history, new religion. The nation itself begins to forget its own history and culture, its original language. And yet, somewhere, somehow, words and expressions, folkloric wisdom, traditional beliefs, names of mountains and rivers and locations all these without an apparent meaning make that nation to seek its old roots.

Geographical description

Romania lies in the south – east of Europe at a threefold crossroads, between Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Southern Europe. It neighbours to the north, northeast with the republic of Moldavia and Ukraine, to the northwest and west with Hungary, to the west and southwest with Yugoslavia and to the south with Bulgaria. Also to the southeast on 244 kilometers Romania is neighboring with the Black Sea.

The area of Romania is 237,500sq.km and its population is of about 20 million people. A characteristic of this country on the world map is the fact that on its territory the 45th North parallel crosses the 25th East meridian, that is the mathematic coordinates that mark the half way between the Equator and the North Pole and between the Atlantic coast of Iberian Peninsula and the Eastern border of the continent, the Ural Mountains, respectively. Along the 25 east meridian the European continent reaches its North and South farthestmost points (the North Cape in the

Scandinavian Peninsula and the Matapan Cape in the Crete Island.)

Physical features of importance are the Carpathians, a mountainous ring that justifies the great relief variety, the lower part of Danube, including the river's branches in its delta and the access to the Black Sea. The country's territory is divided into counties. The capital city is Bucharest with a population of 2, 000,000 inhabitants.

History

It has been noted that civilizations are never been built without foundations. Therefore, it is possible to see traces of the earliest cultures inherent in those that followed. In the case of Romania we have to go back to the very early ages.

Europe was at the beginning covered with an ice cap except with the southeast part, the Carpathian Danubian area. On this part of the continent the vegetation, the abundant waters and salt will give birth to a civilization called Carpathian Danubian or Aryan. According to some historians, and here it is worth mentioning Gordon Childe and his *The Aryans- The History of Civilizations*, the Aryans are not from Rhine or Odder but Danube and Dnister. During the glacial era the Carpathian ranges protected this space. The first inhabitants, who populated this space, were mainly hunters. Only after the conditions improved and warmed an explosion of vegetation, and flora and fauna will bring forth an increase of population.

Man first appeared on the area now called Romania during the Pleistocene Epoch. When Pangaea, the only continent at first existent on the earth was divided into the present six ones, and when Africa distanced from Europe leaving space to the Mediterranean sea, these two continents were and are still supplied by two important rivers, the Nile and the Danube. Both these rivers generated cultures and civilizations. All the great civilizations prospered along the valleys of the great rivers and to the most at their river mouths. One of them is the civilization at the mouth of the River Danube.

The Danube culture

Historical evidence begins with traces of human habitation since early **Paleolithic** times (**The Old Stone Age**) (40,000 BC to 10,000 BC) the earliest period of human development and the longest in phase of mankind's history. Ancient mural paintings from *Gura Chindiei* Cavern were left by the people who lived during the Superior period of the Paleolithic (40,000 BC to 10,000 BC) and coincide with the coming into being of the Cro-Magnon. **Mircea Eliade**,¹⁾ referring to this

period, drew attention to the first archeological indications concerning the religious universe of the Paleolithic hunter. The murals found at Gura Chindiei are of great historical importance and are similar to those in France and Spain, also to those found recently in Turkey at Catalhoyuk. If the Paleolithic age was that of chipped stone the Mesolithic era was that of polished stone tools.

The **Mesolithic period** or the **Middle Stone Age** is the period in human development between the end of the Paleolithic and the beginning of Neolithic. It started with the end of the last glacial period and evolved into Neolithic era. This change involved the gradual domestication of animals and plants. The Mesolithic culture represents a wide variety of hunting and fishing and other food gathering techniques, which began about 10,000 BC and lasted almost until 5,000BC. (According to some historians up to 3000 BC). During this period beside hunting, fishing and food gathering, humans began to develop new techniques of stone working. This culture may be the result of adaptations to changed ecological conditions associated with the retreat of glaciers and a sudden change of the climate. During almost a thousand years the icebergs thawed, catastrophic floods occurred. Perhaps, now we can link this fact to the mythological stories of the Flood completely covered by the flooding waters. According to the findings of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, the Black Sea was a fresh water lake until it was flooded. The findings about the shells found on the shoreline of the Black Sea are astounding: two were shells of extinct fresh water mollusks, probably from the pre-flood fresh water of the Black Sea and seven were salt water mollusks from the post-flood area. That means that the Black Sea was once a vast freshwater lake flooded by the Mediterranean Sea some 7000 years ago.²⁾

Historical traces from the Mesolithic period were found at *Portile de Fier* area, the stone oven, the bowl painted and decorated, the ceramic cup painted in a spiral of white and on a red- colored background. Geometrical writing found at *Schela Cladovei, Portile de Fier*, is worth mentioning. Also, this is the place where the first mattock was found, belonging to the 8th millennium BC. And which is said to be the first plough in the world.

The **Neolithic period** (from the Greek neos “new” and lithos “stone”) begins with the man cultivating plants and domesticating animals. So the Neolithic era is the age when agriculture started and people did not need to move anymore. As a result, village life began as a new way of life for the man. The farmers domesticated bigger animals. They grew a surplus of food, which then they began to trade. Artisans and craftsmen made new tools and clay pottery vessels.

During the Neolithic period (5,000 BC) traces of various civilizations were found, and among them, worth mentioning are the following: The *Pre-Cucuteni* culture, considered being the oldest European culture, the *Boian* culture, which left us the first creation made of clay. The figurines

found at Tangiru contain diagonal lines, spirals, triangles and angles and also other linear signs. From the *Hamangia culture*, we have two statues, **The Thinker and his Woman**. These statues are masterpieces of the Neolithic period and at the same time the forerunners of the modern art – **Rodin's Thinker**.

Also, the statue of a mother holding a child in her arms is of interest. Both are headless and covered with strange geometrical signs and motifs that suggest writing. They come from a small village of Rast, in Western part of Romania.

This Madonna is only 12cm tall and about 7000 years old. It has been hypothesized that mother and child are inscribed with an ancient and last form of proto-European script two thousand years older than the Mesopotamian one.

As masterpieces of Neolithic art, a little sculpture found at *Casicioarele* called The Sacred Marriage is worth mentioning. This represents the ritual coition of the male god and a female goddess and is the only of its kind.

Archeologists inform us of the existence in the 5th millennium BC of “Kurgans”, tombs in the form of mounds. These numerous tombs were filled with sculptures, precious metals, bronze weapons and skeletons of warriors and horses. The area where these kurgans were found belongs to the Eurasia thick steppes, which expanded almost without interruption from Romania to Manchuria. The people of the kurgan culture were pastoral nomads who domesticated horses in the steppes where agriculture was not very productive. Marija Gimbutas,³⁾ considers that the kurgan people came from Turkey through Romania and along the coast of the Black Sea. Shortly after their arrival, these Neolithic farmers domesticated the horse and developed predominantly a pastoral economy. This allowed them to survive and even prosper in an environment ill suited to an exclusively agrarian life.

The expansion of the Kurgan people in the westward direction, toward central and north Europe generated one after another the Celtic, Italic, and Germanic branches of Indo-European languages.

The **Chalcolithic Age (Copper Stone Age)** (5,000 to 3,000 B.C.) During this period the most striking development was the use of copper, which man used to make his weapons and ornamentations. During this period a considerable growth of population was registered in the area, showing not only in the even greater number of settlements, but also in the remarkable progress and development of the materials used.

The discovery of the metal has resulted in the development of trade. This established a network of trading centers and for that there was a need to develop writing, which they used to keep track of their inventories.

A very important culture of this time, worth mentioning is *Vincea* culture (4, 800 BC to 4, 500 BC). We have clay tablets left from this culture, tablets that were discovered in 1961 by Nicolae Vlăsa at *Tartaria* upon River Mures in Transylvania. Some historians dated the tablets as old as from 7300 years BC 2000 years before the Sumerian clay tablets⁴⁾ previously known as the oldest writing. Marija Gimbutas considers these small clay tablets as being the first written message in human history, much before the Sumerian tablets.

There is an important question to be answered in connection to the clay tablets. They contain Sumerian pictographs made of local clay, 1000 years earlier than those in Mesopotamia, tablets which were found in places that have names like: Urastie, Simeria, Kugir.⁵⁾ Is it possible that Sumerian groups have migrated as far as the western Romania? The similarities cannot be explained. Only one fact is true: they contain pictographs almost identical with those found in Djmet-Nasr⁶⁾ around 3300 BC. Monumental stone carvings of winged serpents from 3500 BC were also found in Transylvania along with the clay tablets found at Tartaria.

Also, the diamond of *Cuinea Turcului* on the Danube shore is worth mentioning. It seems that the Carpathian- Danube diamond was exported to the Sumerian space. History, as Marija Gimbutas mentioned, did not start with Sumerian civilization but at Cuinea Turcului in the village Dubova, County Mehedinti, Romania.

The *Cucuteni* culture, the summit of the Neolithic spirituality, is from chronological point the last great copper civilization in the Southeast Europe. Fortified settlements, sanctuaries and temples, a great number of gold objects, fine pottery, storage vessels, small vessels, a trade network, all these are the great achievements of the chalcolithisation of south east Europe.

The Pelasgians

According to Encyclopedia Britannica the Pelasgians were Greek - speaking peoples who arrived from the north during the 2nd. Millennium BC. Noteworthy, they had a sky god. There was also a Cretan sky god and Zalmoxis in Dacia was also a sky god.

To some degree it is uncertain though, whether any ancient people actually called themselves Pelasgi and lived in a marked country. In any case, ancient Greek writers referred to Pelasgians as a prehistoric people whose traces were believed to exist in Greek lands and who preceded the people of Hellas⁷⁾ during the 2nd millennium BC. They also, are said, to be people who lived in Anatolia, the Aegean Sea and around the Danube River. In the Homeric poems Pelasgians were among the allies of Troy. They stood between the Hellespontine⁷⁾ towns and the Thracians living in southeast Europe, i.e. on the Hellespontine border of Thrace. They appear to be settled in

southeastern Thrace in a district called Larissa, a town standing between the Hellespont and Thrace.

Hesiod⁸⁾ calls Dodona⁹⁾ “village of Pelasgians”. He speaks also of a personal Pelasgus as father of Lycaon,¹⁰⁾ the culture-hero of Arcadia.¹¹⁾ Herodotus described Pelasgians surviving on the Asiatic shore of the Hellespont. He alludes to the other places where Pelasgian people lived on under different names. In Lemnos¹²⁾ and Imbros¹²⁾ he describes a Pelasgian population who were only conquered by Athenians shortly before 500 BC, and in connection with this he tells a story of earlier raids of these Pelasgians on Attica and of temporary settlements there of Hellespontine Pelasgians, all dating from a time when Athenians were first beginning to count as Greeks. In many stories from Herodotus Pelasgians were described as different from Greeks and speaking a different language. We know that he didn't understand this language, the language of the “people of the sea”=Pelasgians. Pelagos means sea. The men were regarded as seamen. These explanations are not very convincing, though. More possible is that they were no more than Vlachs,¹³⁾ or Wallachian¹³⁾ shepherds, who in classical times, have been in the habit of wandering in large numbers from the north side bank of Danube down into Greece.

What the language of the Pelasgi was I cannot say with any certainty. If, however, we may form a conjecture from the tongue spoken by the Pelasgi of the present day, - those, for instance, who lived in Creston above the Tyrrenians, who formerly dwelt in the district named Thessalotis, and were neighbors of the people now called the Dorians, - or those again who founded Placia and Scylace upon Hellespont, who had previously dwelt for some time with the Athenians, - or those, in short, of any other cities which have dropped the name but are in fact Pelasgian; if, I say, we are to form a conjecture from any of these, we must pronounce that the Pelasgi spoke a barbarous language.¹⁴⁾

In some writings Herodotus mentions clearly that the Greeks moved northwards occupying Pelasgian territories and borrowing their traditions.

Other explanations about Pelasgians were presented along the lengthy list of information on the Pelasgi. One of them is the communication done to the Dacian Congress and which gives more material on this prehistoric people. In this information concerning this people, two versions were given: Pelasgian and Pelargian. The second variant appeared rarely and no convincing explanation was done. An assiduous research was made by Nicolae Densusianu (1846-1911).¹⁵⁾ However he had no access to more historical evidence during the time he lived.

A marble plate, dated 446 AD was found at St. Zacharia church in Athens. It had an explanatory inscription concerning the controversy of Pelasgi/Pelargi. The plate, which was

moved to the Museum of Archeology in Athens in 1898, was examined by the archeologist, W. Dittenberger, who mentioned it in his writing: *Sylloge Inscriptum Graecorum*. He noticed on the plate the variant of R instead of S. There were some references concerning certain practices in Apollo's temple near Athens.

In his document he supported Thucydide's¹⁶⁾ method of writing, which narrated stories about the war that ended with the peace at Nicaea (431 AD)¹⁷⁾ At that date the form Pelargicon was used. Dittenberger quoted Aristophanes¹⁸⁾ and Polybius¹⁸⁾ and advocated the use of R instead of S. Such being the case we have here the example of a non-Greek term. Densusianu and other historians after him, maintained that Pela(s)(r) gi were actually Arameans,¹⁹⁾ people of Mesopotamia, that means they were the descendants of Aram,¹⁹⁾ Shem's father and so Noah's nephew. They were, therefore belonging to Semitic family. This illustrates the fact that, etymologically we can only look for answers through the help of the Aramaic language.

From the 19th.century Pelargi was the name used in Thucydide's time (460- 400B.C.) and was addressing to a sort of priests, who used to officiate in Apollo's temples. These priests used to carry torches and comment on oracles. Knowing that Apollo's cult was brought from the north it means that the Pelagri belonged to the Aramaic family whose language was identified as Proto-Latin and who invaded the land beginning with the Dacian space and then the whole Balkan Peninsula.

The Thracians

The historical boundaries of Thrace have varied. According to different historians the Thracians were the inhabitants of an extensive area in South East Europe who lived during the third and second millennium B.C. They had specific names in accordance with their specific regions, however their habits were more or less the same. The ancient Greeks maintained that Thracia was a part of the Balkans between the Danube River to the north and the Aegean Sea to the south. The mountains east of Vardar River bound it on the east by the Black Sea, and the Sea of Marmara and on the west. Moreover, from several geographical and archeological findings we now know that the Swedish predecessors were also migratory Thracians.

Herodotus, noted about 440 BC that the Thracians were second most numerous people in the world, outnumbered only by the Indians and that the Thracian homeland was huge. The Thracian people constituted the largest ethnicity among all the rest of the world's races. Should they benefit from one ruling only and be spiritually united, they might accede to become, in my opinion, absolutely undefeatable and to surpass, by far, the greatness of all the other Earth's proud races.

The Thracians bear many names, each one according to their living regions, yet all of them show, through almost everything, highly similar customs.”²⁰⁾ Herodotus limited the number of tribes to 19, while Strabo²¹⁾ was talking about no less those 22 tribes.

Thracian tribes in Dacia were in Apuli (Alba Iulia, Transylvania) Carps, the Eastern slopes of the Carpathians, and Suci in Oltenia (south of the Carpathians and north of the Danube)

During a history of about 2000 years, regrettably the Thracians did not create an alphabet of their own and so a reconstruction of the history of these people is not really possible except from the scanty information left by the literary tradition of the Romans and the Greeks.

We know that the Thracian men wore their hair in topknots and their cloaks were long and decorated with geometric patterns. They were known as brave fighters and also as heavy drinkers. Many worshiped Dionysus, Bendix (Artemis) and Zalmoxis.

The basis of the Thracian economy had been, perhaps, production of foodstuff and raw materials. Also the Thracian exports were particularly easy and the exchange of merchandise was carried out by sea to Phoenicia, Egypt, Crete and Mycenae. This inevitably led to exchanges of political, cultural ideas and perhaps technological information. The social structure of the Thracians was simple: the leader was also the supreme priest and was at the top of the social pyramid. He exercised power helped by some aristocrats and this structure of the society remained unchanged until the Roman Conquest of Thrace in the first century AD. How the Thracians titled their ruler is unknown but the Greeks called them **basileus**. A dragon was depicted on the standard of the Thracians.

In the 7th century BC, the Thracians from Dacia came in contact with the Greek world on the shore of the Black Sea. Herodotus called them Getae and later the Romans called them Dacians. In the 3rd. and 2nd. centuries BC, Rome expanded into the Balkan Peninsula and that evidently affected the evolution of the Thracian living in the Danubian space and in the Transylvanian Basin. They developed a distinct society and culture by the second half of the 4th century BC.

Gebeleizis was the Thracians’ supreme Divinity. He was represented through the shape of a handsome sculptured man wearing a beard. Gebeleizis provoked thunder²²⁾ and lightening. On the old pottery at **Ziminicea** on the **Bucharest Herastrau** and **Surcea Constanta**²³⁾ he appears shown on horseback. Gebeleizis’ cult had spread from Thracia to Asia Minor during 7th century, where was assimilated by Armenians becoming, thus their national Divinity. This divinity’ s name was, Vahagn or the God of War, most famous for slaying dragons. Gebeleizus or the Thraician King is considered by Christian nations to become Saint Gheorge (George) killing the Dragon.

The Dacians and The Getae.

Dacians and Getae are two names for the same people. In the old Greek texts, beginning with the history of Herodotus, 5th century BC, Getae was the name mentioned mentioning the people living north of the Danube. Dacians was the name used by the Romans. According to Strabo, the Dacians were first called *daoi*. The Phrygian word for “wolf” was *daos*. Historically, this population is known as the Geto-Dacians. Mircea Eliade in his book “*De Zalmoxis a Gengis-Khan: Etudes comparatives sur le religions et le folklore de la Dacie et de l’Europe Orientel*” says:

Among the words derived from this root we may note the Lydian Kandaules, the name of the Tharcian war god, Kandaon, the Illarian dhaunos (wolf), the god Daunus, and so on. The city of Daousdava, in Lower Moesia, between the Danube and Mount Haemus, literally meant “villege of wolves”. Formerly, then the Dacians called themselves “wolves” or “those who are like wolves”, “who resemble wolves”. Still according to Strabo, certain nomadic Scythians to the east of the Caspian Sea were also called *daoi*. The Latin authors called them Daliae and some Greek historians *daai*. Probably their ethnic name was derived from Iranian (*Saka*)dahae, which meant, “Wolf”.²⁴⁾

It is interesting to mention the fact that Eliade made reference to Lykaonii (the people of Arcadia) and Lycaonia in Asia Minor and particularly Apollo Lycagenes. The name of Apollo Lycagenes was explained as: “born of the she-wolf.” Also the name of the Samnite tribe²⁵⁾ of the Lycaoni came from Lycos, which meant wolf, (in Romanian “lup”).

Eliade’s hypothesis of the name Dacians may have been connected to a band of fugitives, perhaps migrants or youngsters at odds with the law. These people were haunting the villages and were living by looting them, like wolves or bandits. Also they could be bands of youngsters who were under military initiatory probation. In any case they all behaved like “wolves” and therefore they were called “wolves”. Eliade says about the essential part of their military initiation:

... it consisted ritually transforming the young warrior into some species of predatory wild animal. It was not solely a matter of courage, physical or endurance, but “of a magic-religious experience that radically changed the young warriors mode of being. He had to transmute his humanity into an aggressive outburst and terrifying fury that transformed him into a raging carnivore.” Among the ancient Germans the predator-warriors were called berserker,²⁶⁾ which literally meant “warriors in the body-covering [serkrj] of a bear. They were also known as

itgkedhnar -" wolf-skin men. ²⁷⁾

Related to the name of the animal worthy to remember is the example of Romulus and Remus²⁸⁾ sons of the wolf-god Mars and nursed by the she-wolf (lupoaica) Romulus established a place for the exiled on the Capitol and this place was under the protection of god Lucoris. This god is similar to Lycoreus of Delphi, himself a god-wolf.

The way of how a wolf behaves, the ferocity of how he gets his food, the dignity demonstrated by the man's inability to tame the wolf or to use him in a circus by throwing him a piece of meat in order to jump, surely gave Romanians food for thought.

The wolves mate in autumn and after more than two months the female gives birth to her cubs. Between November and the end of January there are some very old and interesting festivities in Romania that are "dedicated" to the wolf. Some folklore connoisseurs identify all these festivities with a very old ritual of renewing the calendar belonging to the Dacian New Year.

Until the beginning of 20th.century in **Platforma Luncani** in district Hunedoara , not far from Sarmisegetuza – the most important Dacian fortress, the newly born baby was first nursed by using a device made by wolf skin and wolf jaw which the village people used to call 'gura de lup'. ('gura' means mouth and 'lup', wolf.) The reason behind this custom was to drive away all the diseases and vulnerabilities a baby could encounter at the beginning of his young life. Also the babies that were born sick were immediately baptized and given the name Lupu (wolf). Customs and beliefs of this kind represent the remnants of an old Romanian spirituality.

As it was mentioned before, the Dacians inhabited the area between the rivers Tisza, Dnester, the Balkan Mountains and the Black sea. The Dacians are often considered as the northern branch of the Thracians and this affirmation is based on ancient Greek texts. The Greeks who met the Northern neighbors discovered that there were certain similarities in language and customs and considered them a Tracian tribe. Ovid²⁹⁾ speaks about the Geto-Dacians as people who used to travel on horseback. They used to carry a quiver, bow and arrows whose spikes were yellow with the viper's poison. Their voices were hoarse, their faces wild and they looked like the most genuine embodiment of Mars. They never had their hair or bearded cut.

In 547 BC Cyrus the Emperor of Persia defeated the Thracian Lydian kingdom in Asia Minor, extending their sovereignty as far to the northwest shore of the Sea of Marmara. Then, the Persian king Darius I (522-486) undertook an expedition north of Danube River. According to Herodotus, the only branch of the Thracians to fight with them were the Getae from Scythia Minor (today's Dobrogea, Romania) Only the Getae stood against Darius but they were easily defeated.

The supreme Divinity of Geto-Dacians was Gebeleizis, a male divinity. He also goes by having

a feminine alter ego named Bendis, the great goddess who is represented as a woman with curly long hair resting on her back. This goddess might actually be the predecessor of the popular fairy, Ileana Cosanzeana from the beloved popular tales of the Romanians. The goddess appears standing between two sacred animals, which look like deer. The head of the goddess, made of burned clay and measuring 10 cm. in diameter and 1.5 cm. thick, looks like a medallion. It was found at **Costinesti** and at the ruins of **Sarmisegetuza** fortress. Another one made of bronze was discovered at **Piatra Rosie** and measure 14,7 cm in height and 13-cm. widths.

From Herodotus we have some more information about the regions north of Danube. The first one refers to the hemp that was grown in Dacia and the fact that the inhabitants used it to make their own clothes, The second was that the bees were found in great numbers and from here Dacia was called the country of honey.

The hills were excellent for animal breeding, fertile plains enabled agriculture to flourish, salt and gold were found in great quantities. Thanks to her riches Dacia was among the most densely populated and soon became known under the name of Dacia Felix.³⁰⁾ Besides having rich resources of gold, iron and silver the Dacians developed metal crafting and made various handicrafts such as jewelry. Dacia also traded with Greece. The Dacians were a leading tribe of the region by the first century BC.

With regard to how they lived we have some information from archeological discoveries that are worth to point out. First, concerning their dwellings, there is no evidence that they had a civic order or systematization, however they had their houses built along rivers or in a row, all the houses leading to a kind of “center”. This piazza was empty and perhaps served as a meeting place. The gardens and yards were not situated near the dwellings but all the arable fields were located way off.

Second, the clever masons of that time exhibited their skills in building fortresses of stone on hardly reachable peaks. The main sanctuaries from **Sarmisegetuza Regia** were specially arranged in the mountain rock and built without any specific Hellenistic architecture; instead it was adapted as much as possible to the configuration of the land. Some of the fortifications were of military type located to control the main roads, while others had economical functions. They were handicraft centers or commercial locations. Still others had religious or administrative functions.

The houses were built of a wooden structure fastened with twigs and filled with clay. The roofs were made of straw. The plans of the houses were quite simple: a house consisted of two rooms separated by a large corridor. Even nowadays in the country there are still such old houses. The furniture was almost inexistent. There were used to be a large fireplace and next to it a bed. There were no tables however; the existence of a great number of large dishes with long pedestals

might prove that people used them instead of tables.

In his *History* Herodotus wrote about the Dacian customs : they believed in immortality and they had a custom at births and deaths: when a child was born his family would sit around and weep for the woes it will have to undergo now that it is come into the world. When, on the other hand, a man dies they bury him with laughter and rejoicing and say that he is free from a host of sufferings and enjoys happiness.

The Dacian Kings

The Roman and Greek historians left us with evidence and names of several Dacian kings, although the chronology may not be very precise.

Here are some of them:

Zalmoxis 6th century BC

Drohimete 3rd century BC

Rubobostes 2nd century BC

Oroles 2nd century BC

Dicomes 1st century BC in Moldavia

Tholes 1st century BC both in Dobrudja

Dapyx 1st. century BC

Buerebista 70BC – 44BC

Comosicus 44 BC – 28BC during his rule Dacia' s wealth attracted the attention of the Romans and of course this was not the first time. Knowing he was not able to lead an army into battle, Comosicus retired from the throne leaving in his place a strong warrior by the name Decebalus.

Duras 68- 87 Transylvania

Decebalus 87 – 106

Zalmoxis, a semi-mythical personage, was regarded as the first king. The Thracian Dacians also regarded him as their God. The historians consider him as a sky-god and a god of the dead. Herodotus furnished the most valuable evidence. According to him, the Getae believed in immortality of the soul and considered death merely as going to Zalmoxis.

According to what he had learned from the Greeks of the Hellespont and the Black Sea region, Zalmoxis was a former slave of Pythagoras: “freed and gaining great wealth, he returned to his own country. Now the Thracians were a mainly-living and simple-witted folk” : so Zalmoxis undertook

to civilize them. He “made himself a hall, where he entertained and feasted the chief among his countrymen and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendents should waver die, but that they should go to a place where they would live forever and have all good things.”Meanwhile he,“he was making himself an underground chamber”into which he“descended {and} lived for three years, the Thracians wishing him back and mourning him for dead; then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and thus they came to believe what Zalmoxis had told them···. For myself, Herodotus adds,” I neither disbelief nor fully believe the tale about Zalmoxis and his camber: but I think that he had lived many years before Pythagoras; and whether there was aman called Zalmoxis, or this be a name among the Getae for a god of their country. I have done with him.³¹⁾

Once in every five years the Dacians used to choose by lot one of their people and send him as a messenger to Zamolxis to tell him about what they needed. The manner of sending was as follows: Three lances were hold by a few men some others seized the messenger and hurled him on the spear point. If he were killed, they believed that the gods regard them with favor. However, if he was not killed they lamed the messenger and would send another one instead.

Drohimetes

From the historical information we learn about Drohimetes as the king who was in conflict with Lisimah, Alexander the Great’ general. Lisimah became the king of Thracia after Alexander’s death. After he came in power, Lisimath wanted to extend his kingdom on the left side of the Danube. However, Drohimetes wanted some fortresses that had been conquered by Lysimath in the south region of the Danube. Naturally there were some battles and in one of them Agatocles, Lysimath’s son was captured. Even if he was a prisoner of war Drohimetes treated him nicely and sent him back. The reason behind Drohimetes’ kind action was his hope to regain the lost fortresses. However, Lysimath started war in 292 BC against Drohimetes. The army crossed the Danube but soon the soldiers suffered of hunger: Drohimetes was clever enough to burn everything on the land where the Macedonians were supposed to come for fight. Soon the army was surrounded and captured. Now, even the second time Drohimetes treated his prisoners well. It is not in vain that Drohimetes is considered to be not only the first “human” king of the Geto-Dacians but wisest king. Although, the people of Hellas, the capital of the Getae, asked for the prisoners’ deaths, Drohimetes kept them alive and made his people understand that that was the only way to regain their fortresses. Drohimetes was wise enough to realize that even if Lysimath

was punished and executed another king would rise and would come against them. On the contrary, instead of punishment, Drohimete organized a feasting. The Macedonian king promised to give Drohimeres back his fortress.

Buerbista a contemporary of Julius Caesar
(Ruled between 70 BC and 44BC)

The two most important leaders of Dacia were Buerebista and Decebal. Buerbista became king of Dacia around 60BC and brought Dacia to the military and political attention of Rome. Before Buerebista there was another king who is mentioned by Trogius Pompeius³²⁾ in his summary of XXXII Book, in which he mentioned that the Dacian power grew through the king Rubobostes (*Incrementa Dacorum per Robobosten regem*) A lot of theories were written and discussed about this king Rubobostes and there were speculations that the two personages, Burebista and Rubobostes would be one and the same person. Two important questions are made:

- a) When did Rubobostes reign and was that his real name?
- b) What is the meaning of Dacian powers growing?

To the first question we may get an answer by seeing the viewpoint made in Trogius Pompeius' book that wrote that Rubobostes reigned in the 2nd century BC, particularly in the first half. As concerning the name, some writers corrected the name to Burobostes but this is irrelevant, as this name was never mentioned in any book.

In order to get an answer to the second question, we should better take in consideration the different struggles Dacians had with the Bastarn, a Germanic population and perhaps with the Celtic population in Transylvania in order to survive. This brought to the political perfection of the society a century before Buerebista.

Without doubt, much later during his rule the Geto-Dacians flourished. It is estimated that the number of the Dacians living at that time was about two million. They produced a variety of ceramic bowls, manufactured tools made of rock, bone and metal. The social structure was divided into two classes: **the tarabostes**, who were the aristocratic leaders, and who lived in palaces and **the comati**, the free people who lived in simple houses called **dava**.

Controlling both sides of the Danube, Buerebista was the first and greatest of the "Thracian kings".

The center of his Geto-Dacian state was established in a mountainous zone at Sarmisegetusa, a natural stronghold in Orastie, Transylvania There, Buerbista developed a whole system of fortifications, which were continued by his followers Dicomes, Scoryllo and Cotiso. He also

concentrated his power on the Wallachian plains and the ruins of his capital, at Argedava, exist even today on Arges River about 20km northwest of Bucharest.

Buerbista's unifying endeavour led to unity of Geto-Dacian people. He believed in being capable to measure his military strength with that of Romans. He was supported by the great priest Daecaeneus or Deceneu, who learned about divinity and divine soul from masters in Egypt. His authority was great as well as that of Buerbista himself. There is an account by Strabo, who wrote that the Dacians were persuaded to cut all the vines so that no wine could be manufactured anymore. Unfortunately, Buerbisat's increasing power affected his sense of self-worth and with the ego-stroking influence of Deceneu he, feeling invincible led his forces against Roman lands south of Danube. No doubt, Julius Caesar considered Buerbista a threat to Rome's ascendancy in the Balkan Peninsula and began preparation to undertake measures against him. In the meantime, Caesar emerged victorious in the civil war in Rome and vowed to take revenge on Buerbista. And so in 45 BC the Romans launched an attack across the River Danube, unfortunately unsuccessful. From some sources, it is said that the Roman soldiers were frightened by the darkness of the forests.

Before Julius Caesar could set up a new major campaign against the Dacians, Brutus assassinated him. That same year, in 44 BC Buerbista was murdered by a handful of people - some tribal chiefs resentful of his absolute power, as Starbo relates. And with this the kingdom was divided into four.

The union of a great Dacia disappeared with Buerbista's death.

Following him it is thought that Deceneu became king, however his reign is subject to doubt.

Decebal (87 – 106 AD)

After both Buerbista and Julius Caesar's deaths the Romans allied with the Geto-Dacians to defend Moesia (the region corresponding to present north Bulgaria) against the Samaritans, a group of nomadic people from Central Asia. During this period Roman merchants came on the Pontus Eustinus (today Dobroja, Romania) to trade with the Getae. Also the Romans hoped to colonize the Getae land just as the Greeks did before. And so Romans began to build cities and fortresses. However, they realized that the Getae were preparing to wage war with Rome.

Following Burebista there were other kings: Coson, Coryllus and Scorillo in Transylvania, Dicomus in Moldova, Tholes, Dapyx and Zyroxes in Dobruja. The Roman emperor Augustus decided to expel the Getae who lived south of Danube, but the Getae continued to interfere in Roman affairs.

By the beginning of the Christian era, the Dacians continued to maintain the trade with their

neighbors. They had an agricultural economy and also, they had advanced metalworking skills. The Dacians were apparently more advanced culturally and economically than their Tharcian kin living in the south. An independent Dacian state reached its apex under King Decebal.

Decebal began constructing a system of fortresses. Cities grew and prospered and also the trade increased. He unified the various Dacian tribes into one nation and led them in wars against the Roman emperors Domitian and Trajan. He organized the army and attacked the Roman Province of Moesia. In 87 AD he could annihilate the Roman army led by Cornelius Fuscus³³⁾ however, Tettius Julianus³³⁾ defeated him the next year. However, he was still recognized by Rome as a king of Dacia. Then in 98 AD Trajan became the emperor in Rome and he did not show any leniency to the situation. He was determined to launch bloody campaign, which he did in 101AD, which forced Decebal to ask for peace. A treaty was reached however, Decebal broke it. In 105 AD Trajan initiated a second campaign and this time the strong Roman armies could penetrate to the center of Transylvania. They devastated and seized Sarmisegetusa, the Dacian capital. Decebal, and his companions committed suicide. Just before the Roman soldiers could capture them, Decebal and his men drank hemlock.

Trajan ordered the erecting of a Column in Rome known under the name of Trajan' s Column, and the work of Appolodorus of Damascus, (34) which shows scenes of the triumph in bas-relief, is still standing in Rome nowadays. Another column was erected at Adamclisi in Dobrudja, which had been under Roman rule since Augustus.

As main reference for Decebal and Trajan battles and heroism we have the Trajan Column. The story told by the features and reliefs on the column is divided into two: The first is the war between the Trajan' s armies and Decebalus' Dacians from 101 AD to 102 AD and the second war from 105 AD to 106AD). Each war has seven acts and each act is made of episodes. Each episode includes one or several scenes.

The Roman colonization

And now, Dacia became a province of Roma whose capital was at Ulpia Trajana, on the site of the old capital of Sarmisegetusa. There, Trajan stationed two Roman legions and auxiliary troops. Many new Roman centers were built, and historians counted up to twelve of them, on the sites of the old Dacian *davas*. Trajan included in the Roman Empire the provinces of Oltenia, Banat, and Transylvania. Maramures and Crisana remained unattached to the empire. No doubt many Dacians resisted Roman authority, some fled north perhaps to wait until they could take back their homeland.

Trajan had some difficulty in controlling Dacia and so he decided to do what the Greeks did: to colonize the land. For that he brought in Roman legionnaires, plowmen, merchants and artisans. These were brought not only from Rome but also from lands far away, like Spain Gaul, and Syria. Dacia, however retained its traditional practices and remained strong enough throughout the occupation to revolt three times. During the Roman rule, the legionaries as well as some of the Dacians were give land and so they could set up new establishments. Some inscriptions during their rule prove that many of the inhabitants founded locations designated for gold, silver and iron extractions. The rich production of wheat made Dacia an important granary for Rome. And in order to make trade easier, the Romans built resistant roads. No doubt, though many of the roads that were built during the Roman rule were intended to protect the Empire from the incursions of the surrounding barbarians.

Around this time, the ancient astronomer and mathematician Ptolemy made the maps in 13 volumes. Volume 3 contains maps of Dacia Moesia and Thrace. Many if the cities shown on his maps still exist today.

Due to threats of invasions from surrounding invaders Rome decided to pull out in AD 270 making Dacia the first province to be abandoned. The Roman occupation in Dacia lasted 164 years.

Conclusion

It is important for each and every one of us to know the historical beginnings of our own countries. Each country has its own culture and historical evidences and each one of them is of great fascination and magnitude, each one of them is of great value. In the course of writing this paper I have realized all the more that only by learning about them we can realize that not only one single country, that is ours, has a history, but also all the other neighbouring lands, resemble very much the history of our own. This is very true concerning European nations. By learning of what happened millenniums ago on our own land we can learn what happened on the neighboring lands. Reading different historical material presented not only by my fellow citizens but by those belonging to countries like Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, who also claim the legacy of Pelasgian roots or Thracian origins for example, left a strong impression on me and compelled me to believe even stronger that in the beginning peoples were only one.

Archeologists found wall paintings and many objects of daily life, clay or stone figurines in different places in different countries. The excavation results demonstrate that all cultures had something in common, even if the shape of the figurines or the color of the object sometimes

differ. The excavations results show us every twist and turn on the pathway of human evolution.

Maybe at the beginning there was one big tribe or perhaps a few that dispersed themselves and that with time, they got more and more separated, isolated and self-existent. After several of millenniums, more and more small states appear on the map of the world nowadays, and at the same time more and more fierce battles occur followed by bloodshed. What could be the reason of all these?

History shows us that the richness of the soil and subsoil of a country makes it a space coveted by the neighboring tribes and peoples. The inhabitants of this space know the terror and pain but they have to go on with their lives. History is, as Justice Holmes said, 'what the people who won say it is.' It has been disintegrated over long periods of time to fit with each generation's idea of what is fact and what is truth. Religion has not helped in any way to bring together two or more nations. Although each one has taught that people should love each other and live in peace, light is still away, far away.

Also, a combination of politics and social changes has already taken the lives of many people recently, and among them that of many children and women. Political and military treaties cannot give solutions as answers to the problems we have had for thousands of years. It appears that only a new way of thinking can help. This new way is the determination of each one of us, of each nation to realize that one's pain and suffering is the neighbor's pain and suffering as well. The conditions of war and suffering on a large-scale mirror the elements that make such conditions possible on a small scale. To make peace in the world is to make peace in our individual lives. To know and accept one's history is to know and accept other nations' histories. We cannot live separately; we cannot chase happiness only individually. The recent coming into existence of E.U. shows clearly an attempt in the new path of coming together. It is like a doorway, a beginning and I believe in the strength of the human desire for endeavor peace so that we all can stand on the threshold of survival of our species.

Reference Notes and Bibliography

- (1) **Mircea Eliade**, (1907 - 1986) a native of Romania, Professor Eliade lectured in the Ecole des Hautes - Etudes of the Sorbonne and was a chairman of the department of history of religions at the University of Chicago. He is known for his intensive works on religions, myths and legends without falling to syncretistic fallacies.
- (2) The information is from the Research paper with the title: **Further Evidence of Abrupt Holocene drowning of the Black Sea** by R.D. Ballard, D.F. Coleman and G.D. Rosenburg published at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.
- (3) **Gimbutas, Marija**, (1921- 1994) Professor of Archeology at university of California. She presented her "Kurgan Hypothesis" and she was the first scholar to solve the origin of Proto-Indo-European people. She also spoke of the Carpatho-Danubian Space as of the cradle of Ancient Europe.
- (4) **Sumerian tablets** are clay objects with symbols in abstract shapes, with inscriptions and letters apparently used for counting agricultural and manufactured goods.
- (5) **Uraştie, Simeria, Kugir** ~ Names of locations in Romania that are existent to the present day.
- (6) **Jemdet Nasr** or **Dmet** are Sumerian cities. Sumerians were one of the earliest urban societies in Southern Mesopotamia

- more than 5000 years ago. The symbols found were on clay objects.
- (7) **Hellas, Hellespontine** – belong to Hellespont that means “the sea of Helles”, the ancient name of Dardanelles. It connects the Aegean and Marmara Seas thus forming a link in the waterway between the Mediterranean and Black Sea and constitutes a part of the boundary between Europe and Asia.
 - (8) **Hesiod** ~ Greek poet of the 8th century BC. He occupies a unique place in the Greek literature both for his moral precepts and for his colloquial style.
 - (9) **Dodona** ~ Most ancient Greek shrine in Region of Epirus east of Corfu. Priests of the temple interpreted the rustling of a great oak tree, the activities of doves in its branches and the murmurs of a fountain as response from Zeus. The oracle at Diodona was one of the most respected of ancient times and it was consulted by Greeks and by foreigners. The shrine was destroyed in the warfare in 218 BC but was probably restored later. Archeological finds have been made at the site.
 - (10) **Lycaon** in the Greek mythology was the son of Priam and after the Trojan War he was sold into slavery to Achilles.
Lycaonia ~ an ancient country corresponding to modern south-central Turkey. And which belonged successively to the Persians, the Syrians and the Romans.
 - (11) **Arcadia** ~ the name of a region of ancient Greece
 - (12) **Lemnos** or **Limnos** and **Imbros** are eastern Greek islands in the Aegean Sea near the Dardanelles.
 - (13) **Vlachs, Wallachians** ~ People including Romanians, Aromanians, Istro-Romanians and Megleno-Romanians. This term however was mostly used for the people living north of the Danube.
 - (14) **Herodotus**, *The History of Herodotus* translated by George Rawlinson, vol.1, New York, D. Appleton Co. 1885 Book 1
 - (15) **Nicolae Densuseanu** (1846-1911) ~ Romanian historian known for his extensive works on Carpathian- Danubian roots. His most important work is *The Prehistoric Dacia*.
 - (16) **Thucydide** – Greek historian born in Athens. His main interest was in the military side of the war and his most impressive work is History of Peloponnesian War.
 - (17) **Nicaea** ~ Location in Bithanya- an ancient district in the north west of AsiaMinor that corresponds today to the Asian portion of Turkey. It is famous for the two ecumenical councils of the Christian church.
 - (18) **Aristophanes** was one of the greatest Athenian writer of comedy in literary history, **Polibiubs** was a Greek historian. After the conquest of Macedonia in 163 BC, he was sent to Rome as a hostage and there he became the tutor of the Roman General Lucius Paulus’ two sons. His greatest work is *Universal History* in 40 volumes. The purpose of this work was to show how and why all the civilized countries of the world fell under the dominion of Rome.
 - (19) **Aram** ~ an ancient country northeast of Palestine, between the Lebanon Mountains and River Euphrates, roughly corresponding to Syria today. **Arameans** were a Semitic people in the late 2nd. Millennium.
 - (20) **Herodotus** *The Pelasgians and Early Greeks, The History of Herodotus*, George Rawlinson, Vol.1 [New York: D. Appleton and Company 1885] Book 1 and vol. 2, book 3
 - (21) **Strabo** ~ Greek geographer and historian who traveled for many years far away and who wrote a great historical work in 43 books. He is also known for his *Geography*, a detailed description in 17 books of the world.
 - (22) It is interesting to notice that the Japanese word of kamisama consists of a kanji that corresponds to the same meaning - thunder-lightening- as in the case of Gebeleizis.
 - (23) **Constanta** ~ city in southeast Romania on the Black Sea shores. The Roman poet Ovid spent his exile there. Also it was know under the name of Tomi.
 - (24) **Eliade, Mircea** *De la Xalmoxis la Genghis-Han Studii comparative despre religiile si folclorul Daciei si Europei Orientale*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1995, p. 11
 - (25) **Samnite** tribes the name given by the Romans to a federation of four tribes inhabiting the mountainous part of Italy.
 - (26) **berserkir** and the English adjective& adverb **berserk** are of course connected. When we say we are going berserk, we may not realize how extreme a state this might be. Sir Walter Scott introduced this word to the English language. He mentioned it in his novel, *The Pirate* 1822, adopting it from the Icelandic berserkr ‘frenzied Norse warrior’ Such warriors wore hides of bears and became frenzied in battle, howling like animals, foaming at mouth.
 - (27) **Eliade, Mircea**, *De la Zalmoxis la Genghis-Han*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1995, p.12
 - (28) **Romulus** and **Remus** ~ According to traditional mythology Romulus and Remus founded Rome. They were twin brothers and sons of Mars. Their mother Rhea Silvia, in order to escape a curse, had thrown them after their birth in basket on the River Tibres. They were rescued and nursed by a she-wolf.
 - (29) **Ovid** the most influential Roman poet (43 BC – AD 17?) to whom many English poets are indebted.
 - (30) **Dacia Felix** ~ ‘felix’ in Latin means ‘fertile’, ‘auspicious’, ‘happy’
 - (31) **Eliade, Mircea** *A History of Religious Ideas From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*, Vol.2 Translated by Willard R. Trask, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1992, p. 176
 - (32) **Trogus Pompeius** ~ Roman historian, a man of encyclopedic knowledge. His most important work *Historie Philip*

On the Origins of the Romanian People

- Picae* was written in 44 volumes and it was about Macedonian Empire founded by Philip, the king of Macedonia.
- (33) **Cornelius Fuscus** ~ Domitian's proconsul and the commandant of the Praetorian army. He was sent to conquer Dacia but he lost and was killed in the battle in 87 AD. Tettius Julianus one year later wins the war against Decebal.
 - (34) **Appolodorus of Damascus** ~ A great architect who lived during the early part of the second century AD. He acted as the chief architect for the Roman emperor Trajan. He was a master engineer, a bridge builder and sculptor.

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Romania



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2. The 'Thinker and his wife' from Hamangia. A masterpiece of Romanian Neolithic art.



3. Neolithic figurines

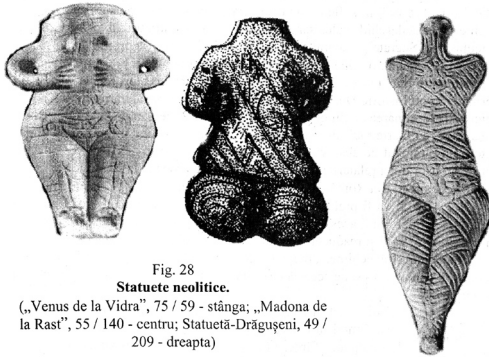


Fig. 28
Statuete neolitice.
(„Venus de la Vidra”, 75 / 59 - stânga; „Madona de la Rast”, 55 / 140 - centru; Statuetă-Drăgușeni, 49 / 209 - dreapta)

4. Tartaria Tablets

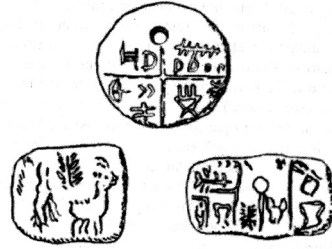


Fig. 23
Tăblițele de la Tărtăria – Ardeal (v. nr. 90)

5. Decebal



6. The Column at Adamaclisi



Fig. 49
Virgiliu Oghina: Adamaclisi, monumentul triumfal al regelui Burebista – coperta studiului

7. Images from the Column in Rome.

a) Huge statues of Tarbostes



Fig. 43
Dac din categoria Tarbostes, din care se alegeau Regii și șefiiștirii Culturii. Este una din cele 8 statui de daci de peste 3 m înălțime fiecare de pe Arcul de Triumf de la Roma al împăratului Constantin cel Mare. A servit ca model pentru monumentul lui Burebista, executat și amplasat la Orștie-Benedea prin grija d-lui dr. Napoleon Săvescu în anul 2001 (84, ed. II, 57)

b) A Dacian aristocrat (pileatus)

