

The University of Art and Design Cluj-Napoca

PhD thesis
(Abstract)

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**Roma Madre/The Mother Rome – An Attempt of Archaeological – Artistic
Recuperation**

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The present PhD thesis represents an attempt of archaeological – artistic recuperation of some valuable, figurate pieces that appeared in Dacia, having as sculptural models those from „Roma Madre” (the Mother Rome), discovered in the province conquered by Trajan.

The author also practices, following the mythological and sepulchral relief's specific, on a serie of 16 personal works, where the plastic motives are distributed in symmetrical relations.

As a unitary composition, the PhD thesis has a 5 chapters' structure, joined by annexes (the 6th chapter), with references to the selective bibliography, abbreviations, the list of images and the drawings exposure.

The credit goes to the persons that also contributed to accomplishing the work's purpose and the Reasons' exposure permits to catch a glimpse of the desire in realizing a unitary scientific work, having a theme which hasn't been, so far, in the Romanian scientists' preoccupations. By this work, the author tries to fulfill the gap, which is probably felt in the Romanian historiography, by giving back and promoting some historical vestiges from the so called classic Roman Dacia, integrated in the wide empire of the 2nd – 3rd centuries.

The 1st Chapter. The Researches' Degree

The sculptural representations from Dacia, made from different materials, have to be studied in order to fit in the ancient art's context.

This chapter presents a history of the investigations in this field, starting with the second part of the 18th century's scholars and continuing with the ones from the 19th century until today. The antiquaries's merit was not neglected, due to the fact that they contributed to the historical vestiges' salvation and conservation.

After the reorganization of the museums' network, the chapter presents the most important institutions that keep the objects coming from various historic periods. It is well known that such institutions are the state museums. Therefore, the richest collections are presented with the discoveries coming from Dacia in the II – III centuries.

There are also illustrations of the first, most important writings refering to the Dacian Roman material's analysis. The Romanian bibliography covering this classic period's history is extremelly wide.

One can state that the imperial administration's period in Dacia completes the image of the „Mother” Rome in every aspects of the politic, economic, social, military, spiritual and cultural life. First of all this can be seen in the archaeological diggings, both in the Roman

urban or rural environment. On the former province's territory at the North of the Danube, after 150 years of systematic researches, the ingathered material impresses by its immense quantity.

The chapter's conclusion states that the „Mother” Rome's image receives a pretty obvious outline, Dacia benefiting from the most advanced ancient civilisation's fructifications, at that particular moment and in that place.

The 2nd Chapter. The Mythological and Sepulcral Scenes' Relief – an Archaeology and a Creative Actualisation

On the former trajanese province's territory, the visual art finds itself, obviously stated through sculpture's contribution that is often present in mythological and funeral compositions.

Talking about the artistic and technical quality and also about the Roman Dacia's sculptors' sources of inspiration, it was ascertained that they combine the Italic influence and the Empire's provinces' style with those coming from the South Tracian and Greek space or from the microasian East or the Egyptian one, adding also a certain originality, a very well outlined style that clearly shows the existence of a native school of sculpture in Dacia's capital city, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, but also in other cities of the province, such as Napoca, Potaissa, Apulum, Porolissum, Micia, etc.

What is important to be pointed out as an original aspect, within the context of Dacia's funeral monuments, is the symbiosis of the diverse formal variants and styles' changes on the Empire's territory, a fact which is relevantly illustrated. Very suggestive is the monument in the shape of arched pyramid, with arched cants and having added portraits or figures of the deceased people and also usual funeral symbols as the pine cone, the pigeons and the wreaths of rosettes, etc. Another example, as interesting as the first one, is the medallion model put on the back of two lions protectors against evil. Most of the sepulcral figures present the deceased people's physiognomy, often presented together with the entire family.

Later in this chapter, diverse types of funeral and votive monuments are analysed, such as: Mithras Tauroctonus (The Bull Killer), some votive reliefs representing the goddess of hunting, Diana, Silvanus, the field divinity, joined by Silvanae (the procession of feminine representations), then „The Tracian Horseman”, Apollo as the „Tracian Knight”, Hecate, the patroness of magic and witchcraft as „Triformis”, an ex voto dedicated to Dionisos' cult, and

among the funeral pieces, some walls and other monuments belonging to this field (obelisk, tombstone, pilaster – pyramid's trunk, etc.).

These Roman monuments have been discovered in different places in Transylvania. A judicious description of these pieces is also made with an emphasis on their artistic characteristic features.

An important section of the 2nd chapter is marked by the author's personal contribution, due to his own works (a number of 16 works), seen as his own vision following the sepulchral mythological relief's typology. The works/ plaques are: "Mithras – the Mankind's Rider"; „The Horseman with a Lyre”; a plaque with two iconographies (a. „The Banquet”; b. „Guarding”), then, „Roman Horsemen”; „In the Horse's Pace” (I - II); „Waiting”; „In the Temple's Gateway”; „Philosophers”; „The Happy Family”; „The Family Serenity”; „The Innocence of a Child”; „Juvenile Expression”; „Adolescent Portrait”; „The Mask of the Youth”; „The Cure's Sleep”.

These pieces, made of terracotta, are presented in a catalogue, each work being accompanied by the following heading: 1 – current number; 2 – name; 3 – material; 4 – dimension; 5 – processing technique; 6 – short description; 7 – the number of the picture (drawing). To eliminate the pieces' monotony some frames were made of different kind of wood, having various colours and ornaments.

The 3rd Chapter. The Portrait between the Social Status and the Physiognomy's Reality

Approaching a thematic regarding the Roman portrait in the province of Dacia and its situation between the social status and the physiognomy's reality of the characters is both difficult and delicate. In an introduction, the author speaks about the constitutional and social law in Rome, about the notion of community law, about the official religion's role, about the social differentiations, about the idea of „the family” with an emphasis on the major role of the father (pater familias).

Before defining the Roman portrait's characteristics, a special category of sculptural funeral monuments has to be reminded, emblematically connected with a well known status in the ancient times – the citizenship – artistically transposed in the Lupa Capitolina. It is pointed out that 8 such sepulchral pieces were discovered in Romania, monuments that outrun, as numbers of representations, the similar pieces from other provinces in the Empire, where

the Roman civilisation spreaded in a longer period of time than the 165 years in Dacia, the length of this period of progress in our country.

The portraits discovered on the Trajanese province's territory are numerous and diverse from the artistic realization's point of view (exceptional creations, but also more modest ones), the main concern being the identification of the presented person.

The stone statues from Dacia are also inspired from the Greek-Roman classic models, having an eclectic character. During Dacia's Roman period, can be distinguished lots of categories regarding the portraits: imperial, the civil statues and the ones represented on the deceased persons' funeral monuments (stairs, altars, medallions, etc.). Talking about the provincial sepulchral portraiture, one can state that, in spite of some local stylistic elements (isocephaly, frontality), the craftsmen carefully reproduces the individual characteristics of the represented persons and they have also been attentive in the exact representation of the costume and furniture's details. The majority of the Dacian portraits are anonymous, except the imperial ones.

Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Trajan, Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Gaius (?) Caracalla, Trajan Decius emperors' figures are analyzed, also the head of an unidentified empress, and among the anonymous ones, the figure of a Greek adolescent, the head of a soldier, statues such as male and soldiers' portraits, the figure of a matron, few feminine heads (among them that of a vestal virgin), the face of a boy and the one of a girl, a masculine bust, feminine statues, etc. The monuments are made of stone, bronze, ivory or terracotta.

The individual anatomic infirmities weren't neglected either: an androgynous having a very feminine aspect, a grotesque character (a dwarf, a hunchback).

Spectacular signs regarding the various general physiognomies are given by the plastic monuments of the Roman Dacia, which presents different professions or occupations of the province's inhabitants (a young couple of innkeeper, a „hair-stylist”, a plough-man, different soldiers and horsemen, gladiators, rope walkers). The native portraits constitute a special category because they present the local costume (the bust of a woman, the veteran Iulius Crescens). There are also pieces representing characters that came to the province from other regions of the empire.

Within the portraiture, the variety of forms does not have to be explained only by the *ex toto orbe Romano* colonisation, but also through the receptivity at a superior culture's standard and the great power of assimilation of the inhabitants. Stone engravers, coming from all the Empire's regions, and the native craftsmen „answer” the province's population's needs

and taste, where all the factors (officials, army, civilians), from the desire of finding a way of common coexistence and of protecting it, strived to organically include Dacia in the Roman world's community's life.

The 4th Chapter. Unity and Diversity in the Minor Art on Dacia's Territory. Technological Aspects of Functionality and Decor

The chapter refers to the Trajanese Dacia's art's issues and studying, which are part of the general domain of the Roman art, but also of the region's provincial specific, at the North of the Danube.

This artistic domain was divided into the following well defined categories: the small, stone sculptures made of statues, the thoreutics, the bronze and lead sculptures made of statues, the silver work, the coins, the small dimension sculptural ceramic and the coroplasty, the glyptic, the bone, horn and ivory's processing, the mosaic compositions and the wood's shaping.

Each artistic category from above is presented in some suggestive examples: divinities' statues, anonymous characters, zoomorphic small figures, as well as workshops, tools and pouring techniques for the bronze and lead pieces, gold and silver jeweleries connected with their explanation, the enumeration of the Roman coins' types, the mint for the numismatology, various products of the small dimension ceramic and of the coroplastic ones with the presentation of such processing centres in the province, the glyptic and its products, the glass making (its types and technology), mosaic compositions discovered in Dacia as well as their execution, the wood's shaping.

To conclude we can say that in Dacia we can find, even in the field of the minor art, all the compartments belonging to the classic art. Some iconographies' originality, the unity and diversity of the representations' motives, the way to assert certain forms of expression, with strong local prints will enrich the large fan of the Roman world's cultural patrimony.

The 5th Chapter. Final Notes.

The 5th chapter presents the work's conclusions, passages from the present abstract being extracted from there.

The 6th Chapter. Annexes.

The repertory monuments are shown in the XLI drawings, together with the selective bibliography and the abbreviations.