

**„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IASI
FACULTY OF HISTORY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HISTORY**

**TOMIS IN THE CONTEXT OF TRADE
RELATIONS IN THE EASTERN
MEDITERRANEAN (centuries I-III AD)**

SUMMARY OF THE PhD THESIS

PhD coordinator:

Prof. Univ.dr. Octavian Nicolae Bounegru

PhD candidate:

Lău Cozmei Monica Luminița

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Keywords:

Tomis, political reality, hinterland, koinon, archaeological sources, the alliance of Pontic cities, necropolis, “buffer zone”, commercial vastness, epigraphic information, Roman civilizing factor, social inversion, harbor commercial network, archaeological sources, geographical strategic position, civitas libera, commercial city, merchandise traffic, mosaic building, economic social system, underwater discoveries, temporal progress.

The fundamental problem

This paper proposes an inclusion of the old issues listed at the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the next century, but also a number of new approaches, from a modern perspective, connected to the overall picture of interdisciplinary research, at a national and international level: “economic”, “harbor archeology”, “maritime archeology”, “landscape archeology”, regarding the economy of the city of Tomis, by historians like Iorgu Stoian¹ and Vasile Pârvan. Demonstrating the position of the city of Tomis, as a leader in the Left Pontus area, and as a connection city between Europe and the North African spaces, regarding its commercial activity, was, in brief, the matter of the thesis.

Hypothesis

Holding a strategic position, this great city was engaged in maritime trade with numerous important commercial centers from the Pontic and Mediterranean areas, which involve a multitude of maritime activities, commercial (goods and money exchange) or communication exchange (cultural exchanges, religious influence, peculiarities of the local elite and military). Tomis was one of the most important commercial structures which have “absorbed” the products of Eastern Mediterranean. To a certain extent, these goods coming from the East, were transferred further along the Danube, Sava, towards the Central Mediterranean. The harbor city of Tomis becomes the connection “link” between these two geographical areas.

¹ Stoian 1962, 1: „O monografie a Tomisului nu a fost scrisă. Și nici nu putea să fie, cât timp cercetările arheologice sistematice - aproape singurele de la care sunt de așteptat informații în marea majoritate a problemelor - de-abia se poate considera că au fost începute...Ceva mai bine s-ar părea a sta totuși lucrurile, măcar la prima vedere, cu documentele epigrafice, destul de numeroase-peste cinci sute -, care ne stau de mult, fie și împrăștiate în tot felul de publicații mai ușor sau mai greu accesibile, la dispoziție” [*A monography of Tomis hasn't been written. Nor could be, as long as the archaeological systematic research-almost the only ones of which we can expect information regarding most of the problems-we can hardly consider that they have started...Something better would seem to be the things, at least at first sight, with epigraphic documentation, quite numerous, over five hundred-, which have been available to us for a long time, scattered in all sorts of publications, easier or more difficult to find.*]

The objectives of the PhD thesis

1. Understanding the role of the city of Tomis in the local and regional economy; 2. Identifying the local resources and their economic exploitation; 3. The analysis of the dynamics of the agricultural economy in the city's *chora*; 4. The assessment of the impact the city had on the local economy; 5. The emphasis of a flexible economic activity through the exploitation of natural resources (minerals exploitation, land productivity), simultaneous with pastoral activities (the processing of raw materials of animal origin); 6. The relations between human activities and natural coastal resources; 7. The identification of the role of producers, entrepreneurs, ship-owners and local or foreign traders; 8. The analysis of the development and transformation of the city harbor of Tomis; 9. The topographical evolution of Tomis, in relation to its economical development and the identification of the commercial and manufacturing areas of the city; 10. The involvement of the State in the economical development, on the basis of the reinterpretation and analysis of epigraphic testimonies; 11. The analysis of both local and imported artifacts.

The research methodology: the analysis of the inscriptions regarding the topic; research at the Archaeology Museum in Constanta and BCU Iasi; participation in the exchange programmes with the other students in the country, on the same research domain.

Chapters synthesis

The **first chapter** exposes the undesirable connection between the geographical position of the entire area and the further historical posture, favorable for the progress of the city, between the centuries I-III AD. We want to present, in the following pages, aspects of Roman domination, falling under the Roman provincial world, issues which constitute a special chapter in the history of the South-East of Europe. Under the unprecedented increase of the Roman power, Dobrogea manages to keep its individuality for centuries. Influences come from both directions, either from the Greek or Roman side, and these will represent a guaranty for the cities from the Left Pontus, in the context of Romanization, an inevitable process for all the conquered Roman provinces, from which Dobrogea makes no exception. In this chapter, I have inserted the resources I used: archaeological, literary and epigraphic. A special chapter is devoted to the history of Romanian epigraphy.

The **second chapter**, "*Political and economical realities in the I-III centuries AD*", in the Left Pontus, deals with aspects of the history of Tomis, throughout the South-East of Europe,

and especially with the relations between the Romans and the Thracians. The area between the Danube and the sea is drawn into this “vortex” of historical events, initially as a “buffer” at the border of the empire, against migratory people from the Asian steppes or the south of Moldova. With no doubt, the most important event was the annexation to the Roman Empire (27 BC.-14 AD) of the western fortresses from the Black Sea shore, under the reign of Augustus. The fortresses had the guaranteed right of self-government and had the same limits, they were only supervised by *praefectus orae maritimae*, of the maritime seashore². The *koinon* alliance was composed of: Tomis, Istros, Callatis, Dionysopolis, Odessos and Mesambria³. The history of Tomis history is in ascension-the headquarters of Pontarch are chosen on a limited period after two inscriptions, then as an area of great interest for the “inland sea” that was supposed to be the Black Sea and the ties with Minor Asia⁴. The Pontic cities make a pact with the Romans, whom they view as a shield⁵.

The subchapter “*Archeological sources regarding the harbor city of Tomis*” represents a detailed analysis of the aspects that will mark its progress, an essential part for the development of this city among the other imperial-harbour cities.

The **third chapter**, “*Archaeological sources regarding the harbor city of Tomis*”, is divided into two subchapters, surface and underwater research. The whole Roman maritime and fluvial world is remarkably concentrated in ports. There is a real harbor hierarchy, which is both economic and maritime, if we only refer to some ports characteristic of the Roman world: Alexandria, Ostia, Portus, Carthage, Marseille, Narbonne, Hispalis, Seville⁶. The most important archaeological discoveries were made in the „Cathedral Park” and in the area between Ovidiu Square and the mosque in Constanta. Commercial activities were present in the ports, this being the space where imported products from various geographical areas were unloaded. In these circumstances, the equipment of the ports with warehouses was necessary, and accommodation

² Pippidi, Berciu 1965, 300.

³ Stoian, 34.

⁴ Strabo: „Cât despre Burebista acesta a pierit din pricina unei răscoale, mai înainte ca romanii să apuce a trimite o armată împotriva lui. Urmașii acestuia la domnie s-au dezbinat, fărâmițând puterea în mai multe părți. De curând, când Caesar Augustus a trimis o armată împotriva lor, puterea era împărțită în cinci părți...astfel de împărțiri sunt vremelnice și se schimbă când într-un fel, când într-altul.” [As for Burebista, he died because of a revolt, before the Romans managed to send an army against him. His successors to the throne were divided, breaking down the power in several parts. Recently, when Caesar Augustus sent an army against them, the power was divided into five parts...such divisions are temporary and change in a way or another.]

⁵ *Ibidem*, 75.

⁶ Rougé 1975, 179.

for travelers and taverns as well, as those present in Limenas, Sozopol, Tomis, Chersones.⁷ Underwater archaeological discoveries⁸ began in the 70s, at a professional level, were resumed, at an amateurish level, nowadays, and have enabled a number of observations on Tomitan harbour installations, and the identification and mapping of some wrecks, that most likely carried the amphorae. The foundation of underwater archaeological research in Romania is due to Constantin Scarlat, who was the Commander of the Group of divers from Mangalia, which was the first autonomous unit of scuba divers (1967-1969). Most of the materials that have been identified (anchors, amphorae) are related to the harbour of Tomis and the highly dynamic port activity found here.

The **fourth chapter** contains a comprehensive synthesis regarding the activity of the *Sailors and carriers association*, and of the *Tomis merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean*, in parallel with the association of foreign merchants at Tomis. The existence of the merchants' association is a strong argument of this thesis, which proposes to motivate, on real arguments, the development of trade relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, with an extension in the Black Sea region. From Augustus to Antonius Pius, Tomis has, as the town of the Left Pontus, a continuous ascension: politically, it becomes the capital (*Metropolis*) of Moesia Inferior. Regarding the economic and commercial development, Tomis (along with the surrounding area) is characterized by production stability, its growth and continuous exchange, which allows us the possibility to claim the huge role it had during the I-III centuries AD. As organization, in the territory, traditional forms are retained, but Romanization homogenized the appearance of the city, from a social-administrative point of view. The constitution of the body of shipowners and seafarers: shipowner, *magister navium*, was the owner of a vessel or captain, *governer* of a ship. They were citizens of the city's elite, sometimes pilgrims, rarely of servile condition. The tax immunities provided, the right to citizenship, the establishment of special⁹ status privileges were other benefits for seafarers and carriers, during the centuries we are discussing, I-III AD, besides the autonomy they enjoyed. The State rewarded them for the services provided, for the provisioning of the cities.

The **fifth chapter** represents the conclusions of the PhD thesis, „*Tomis in the context of trade relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, centuries I-III AD*”. Tomis is a city with a history

⁷ Karagianni 2013, 25.

⁸ Flaut 2006, 9-18.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 61

that marked the development of the entire West coast area, a link between Eastern Mediterranean and Central Europe. The Euxin Port has a double political and commercial value, changing its economic configuration and its position in the Roman Empire, according to *various periods*: at the beginning of first century it had a peripheral position, of a „buffer”, of defense and crossing of Roman commercial products. With the second and third centuries, the situation of the West coast is changing, it becomes an obvious link zone with the nearby areas, towards Asia. The infrastructure in which the Empire is investing together with the political, military and tax measures, shows the change of the situation. Due to these investments, the area gets a *triple connotation value*: military, economical and political.

Tomis was one of the most important commercial structures that have „absorbed” Eastern Mediterranean products. To a certain extent, these goods coming from the East, were transferred further along the Danube, then along Sava and then towards the Central Mediterranean. The city port of Tomis becomes the connection „link” between these two geographical areas.

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