

The Romanisation of Dacia. An archaeological prospective on a chapter in the history of mentalities.

Abstract

The present paper has two distinctive parts: in the first I tried to discuss several theoretical aspects of the Romanisation process and in the second I aimed to identify some archaeological evidence concerning the Romanisation of Dacia.

1. First of all I rejected the traditional vision in Romanian literature, which sees the Romanisation process as an essentially ethno-linguistic one. I emphasized that the process was more complex, implying a variety of rather sophisticated changing, both in behavior and in mentalities, which went far beyond the simple learning and use of a foreign language. For the Romans themselves these changings had more to do with the notion of "humanitas = civilization" than with ethno-linguistic matters.

Consequently in this theoretical part I broached two different aspects of the Romanisation process, which I felt necessary to underline:

1.1. My main point is that this process has a double nature, which can be expressed only in German by the terms of "Romanisation" and "Romanisierung".

1.1.1. The first term, "Romanisation" implies an active attitude of the Roman authorities, which (in the name of "*humanitas*") aimed to "civilize" the Barbarians and/or to stop the decadence of the Greeks. This was sometimes called "Romanisation from above", and indeed, several Roman authors (such as Vergilius and Tacitus), insisted on the civilizing mission of the Romans. It is also connected to the policy of colonization, which was vigorous at the end of the Republic, decreased in the first generations of the Principate, and was revigorated towards the end of the first century, to reach its peak under Trajan, who used it as a strategic instrument.

1.1.2. The second term, "Romanisation" refers to a more passive process of acculturation, sometimes called "self Romanisation", which involves a close contact between the native élite and the Roman civilization. Actually the social status of this upper class was re-defined after the Roman conquest, so that a warlike and religious aristocracy was eventually turned into a more peaceful bourgeoisie ("*homines boni et locupletes*").

In the case of Dacia, due to the determinate policy of emperor Trajan, the first term is more appropriate, since here the Late Roman Age élite was almost exterminated after the last Dacian war, which ended in complete conquest and submission of the whole land. The huge number of soldiers from the occupation troops (over 60 000 people) was completed by an intense colonization of the new province, which aimed to create a stronghold of the Empire in this Barbarian territory.

1.2. The second idea is that the Romanisation process has differentiated and distinct aspects from