

# **The Spread of the Christian Life Through the Migration of Spiritual Ideas Among ‘the Bravest of all Thracians’**

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ABSTRACT: The Christian teaching was received quickly, peacefully and by scores by ‘the bravest of all Thracians’. The Christianization of the Dacians, renowned by their steadfastness in faith, traditions, language and area in which they lived, seems surprising considering that all the influences which came from the migratory and oppressing nations haven’t deterred them from their way of life. The documents of that era, the archeological discoveries and historic logic all lead towards the conclusion that the Savior’s teachings was seen by the Dacians as a fulfillment of their own monotheistic religion.

KEY WORDS: Christianity, Christianization, Dacians, Dacia, ethnogenesis and the Christianization of Romanians.

## **Folk Christianity**

**E**ssential characteristics of the Dacian religion, such as monotheism and asceticism, contributed to the easy acceptance of the Lord’s Gospel among the population. Christian teaching for our ancestors was of popular origin, preached since the 1st century A.D. by the Holy Apostles: Andrew, the first called into apostolate (Scythia Minor–today’s Dobrogea)<sup>1</sup> and Philip (today’s area of Dobrogea, Oltenia and Muntenia)<sup>2</sup>, being received and adopted by open hearted inhabitants and lived fully.

The preaching of Saint Andrew the Apostle in today's Dobrogea is mentioned by several written sources. Saint Ipolit (c. 170–c. 236) mentions that Saint Andrew the Apostle '*preached (The Gospel) to the Scythians and the Thracians*'. Bishop Eusebius of Palestine's Caesarea (265–339/340) wrote in his *Church History* that Saint Andrew the Apostle preached in Pontic Dacia, future Roman province Scythia Minor (today's Dobrogea): '*When the Holy Apostles and followers of our Lord spread across the inhabited earth, Thomas, according to tradition, got (to preach in) Parthia, Andrew got Scythia, John got Asia. . .*'.<sup>3</sup> Scythia, where Saint Andrew the Apostle preached, is the area between the Danube and the Sea (Pontic Dacia), future Roman province Scythia Minor (during Diocletian). As proof stand the writings of poet Ovidius (43 B.C.–17/18 A.D.) who complained in his *Tristele* and *Ponticele* that he was exiled in Tomis among '*the Scythians*'.

Dobrogea is a Getic country and Tomis is more of a Getic city than it is Greek.<sup>4</sup> In the Constantinople Sinaxarian, The feast of St. Andrew from November 30<sup>th</sup>, is mentioned that after Christ's Ascension to heaven, the Holy Apostles drew lots for which country to go and preach the Gospel in. Saint Andrew the Apostle got '*to preach in the whole area of Bithynia and Pontus, in the Roman provinces Thrace and Scythia, in Pontus Euxinus regions*'.<sup>5</sup> An old Christian tale says that at Cuzgun Saint Andrew the Apostle and his followers rested in a forrest at the end of the village where there were two caves. The caves served as a place of rest and worship, later being used as places of worship for the first Christians from Scythia Minor. As proof of Saint Andrew the Apostle's crossing are also the carols and folk creations kept until today in Dobrogea. '*Saint Andrew the Apostle's Cave*'<sup>6</sup> is a ballad spread in all of Dobrogea which tells about the connection between Saint Andrew and Decebal, King of Dacia.

The preaching of Saint Philip the Apostle in today's Dobrogea, Oltenia and Muntenia, is recorded in a Goth Sinaxar (calendar) from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and in two Martyrologies from the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> The aforementioned documents do not provide many news.

The certainty of apostolic preaching among the Scythians and their Christening in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. comes from Saint Paul the Apostle who says in the letter to the Colossians: '*...where there is no*

*Greek and Jew, circumcision and no circumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free man, but all and in everyone Christ.'*<sup>8</sup>

Georg Kraus, a Sas chronicler from Sibiu, provides some interesting news about some writings of Saint Paul the Apostle left in Arges, saying that he saw those writings: *'In January 1611, Bathory led a great army into Tara Barsei after leaving strong sentinels in Sibiu, and marched toward Brasov. Because he didn't dare attack the city openly he caused a great deal of damages in the surrounding areas. Then he left for The Romanian Country and attacked the brave hero, Voivode Radu Stefan by surprise, robbed churches and monasteries, burning everything to the ground. He caused great damages especially to the widely famous Monastery of Arges, which has no equal in the area. Because the Monastery was covered in led, Bathory ordered for the led to be removed and found, at the top of the church's bell tower (Copula undt Spitz dess Tempels), a great treasure which he stole. It must be said that according to rumor, Saint Paul the Apostle, during his travel to Nicopol, arrived at this monastery. . . . Seeing that here he found few people but great forests, harsh mountains and a foreign language, he left one of his writings in Greek at the monastery and then went back to Nicopol. Thus the famous saying: 'They were left like Saint Paul did with the Wallachian' was born. This church was rebuilt and covered in led again (by Matei Basarab n.a.) and the foreign travelers are shown even today the writing of Saint Paul, which even I, the author of these lines, saw often.'*<sup>9</sup>

There are other sure testimonies of the ancient writers regarding the Christening of the population from The Carpathians, the Danube and the Black Sea in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. Tertulian of Carthage (c. 160–c. 240), towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century when he was Christened, wrote in his work *Against the Jews* (Liber adversus Judaeos): *'For in who else did all the nations believe but Christ who came?...the different nations from the Gaul provinces and Bretagne regions, out of reach for the Romans, but subject to Christ; as well as the Sarmatians, the Dacians, the Germans and the Scythians and many other nations.'*<sup>10</sup> Despite these testimonies one mustn't believe that the majority of the population was Christian. In the same period of time, Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–254) wrote: *'a lot<sup>11</sup> of Britons, Germans, Dacians, Sarmatians and Scythians haven't heard the Gospel.'*<sup>12</sup> The number

of Christians was small, hence the necessity of a continuous Gospel preaching. The testimonies are very important because they show that both the Dacians and the Scythians on both sides of the Danube were Christened.

The Christianization was made without the intervention of certain leaders or external political authority in this matter.<sup>13</sup> Taking into consideration the major role the Dacian High Priest had, shown by the enforcement of Deceneu's decision,<sup>14</sup> during the time of Burebista, to destroy the vineyards in order to eradicate the sin of inebriation; I consider that the Dacians were Christened with the accord of the Dacian High Priest or by following his example. I say this taking into account the existent similarities between the monotheistic Dacian religion and Christianity and considering that Jesus Christ came to 'restore' the world affected by sin, a world that still had the natural Divine revelation seeded deep into the human being at Creation, as Saint Paul the Apostle writes: *"the pagans (non Christians n.a.) who have no law, make law by nature, these, having no law, are their own law, which shows the letter of the law written in their hearts, through the testimony of their conscience and through their judgments, which casts blame upon them or protects them."*<sup>15</sup>

The will to live intense, with dignity and freedom<sup>16</sup> are other similarities the Dacians found between their own life and Christian teaching. For the Dacians freedom was essential and maybe this contributed to Dacia being the first province freed from the Roman Empire. Furthermore the care and love for one's family and children, shown in the scenes with Dacians carved in Trajan's Column, are another dimension of Christian life in which Dacians found themselves as morality and faith: *'If however somebody doesn't take care of his own, especially his household, he rejected the faith and he is worse than a non believer'*<sup>17</sup>

*'The Dacian Supreme God is without a name, without qualification'*,<sup>18</sup> Zamolxis being only one of His representatives, the Geto-Dacian High Priest. Therefore what an inspired Saint John the Evangelist will say in the Apocalypse, about God: *'I am Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, The One who is, The One who was and the One who comes, the Almighty'*,<sup>19</sup> repeated years later by Dionisie Areopagitul: *'He who is above any name and any reason*

and knowledge",<sup>20</sup> was known by the Dacian priesthood before the Incarnation of the Logos. Some researchers believe that the Dacians had the faith of the Divine connection with the human race, even of the Man-God, from their ancestors, the Pelasgians, long before the birth of our Savior, worshiping the Supreme Deity, Saturn, which had the name of Father and Forefather, being honored in the archaic cult with the name of Man.<sup>21</sup> Because of this many mountain peaks were consecrated to the 'divinity of Man.'<sup>22</sup> *The Peak of Man*, highest point in the Bucegi mountains, *the Obârșiei Valley* that leads to the Peak of Man, *the Sphinx*, which is around, the cave that crosses the Man mountain and the *Sky Column*, named by the people *the Moon Axis* and *the Centre of the Earth*, all these and other sacred places from the mountains, like *Babele*, could be parts of an open air altar where our ancestors prayed to the Heavenly Father, whose name of worship was one we all carry: Man.<sup>23</sup> Seeing these similarities it's possible that the Dacian High Priest from the time of Saint Andrew the Apostle, prepared the Dacians, who believed in the Man-God, to receive the Incarnated Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Being part of the 'Father's' or 'Forefather's' household, as it was the archaic name of God, the High Priest knew from the primordial divine revelation brought forth by the descendants of Adam, or maybe he had the revelation about the coming of the Savior promised to the original parents Adam and Eve. It is even possible that Saint Andrew the Apostle, who founded the first church in the Cave that bears his name, and who, according to tradition, named the Dacian altar from Namaiesti, to have met the Dacian High Priest who also lived in a cave in the sacred mountain.<sup>24</sup> This assumption is based on the influence the High Priest had and on the fast and peaceful Christianization of the Dacians, renowned by the ancients for their steadfast and profound belief in the immortality of the soul and also for their bravery and thirst for freedom. The ancient Romanian tradition continued, God took human form and walked the earth with Saint Peter.

The Dacians received Christ slowly, harmoniously, in every city, every village and every hearth, from the hills to the valleys then back to the hills, to the ever secret places from the top of the mountains,

the embrace of Christianity being made at the advice of the Dacian priesthood, as a fulfillment of their own religion.

Geto–Dacians worshiped one deity, called Gebeleizis, who had Zamolxis as High Priest, later deified.<sup>25</sup> The statement that Zamolxis was Pythagoras's apprentice is a naïve legend, repeated by Strabo (VII, 3, 5). Herodotus rejects it, being sure that *'this Zamolxis lived longe before Pythagoras'* (IV, 96). Herodotus insists on the Geto–Dacians belief in the immortality of the soul or its existence after death,<sup>26</sup> because the idea wasn't familiar to the Greeks in the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. For this reason he mentions them as some unusual men *'those doctors of the Thracian King Zalmoxis, about whom it is said that they master the craft of making one immortal'*.<sup>27</sup>

The Dacians were able to be harmoniously Christianized because they were not migratory, despite their East, South–East and Central European great spreading and having a previous monotheistic religion which prepared them (*praeparatio evangelica*) to fulfill their lives in Christ. Together with the religious similarities, the moral life preached by our Savior Jesus Christ was close to the Dacians morality. The fact that the new Christian religion offered the poor and oppressed population, forced to comply with the Roman polytheist cult, the perspective of a new happy life, without slavery, in which all people are born equal and are equal before God, contributes to the Christianization of the Dacians. Furthermore, in Christianity people found the strength to endure the hardships and oppression having the hope of obtaining freedom and eternal life. The Christian religion, precisely starting from the equality of men before God and from the fact that every man has his own guardian angel and is made in the image of God, legitimized marriage, regardless of the social statute. These were ways of life that appealed to the whole population.

Due to the peaceful Christianization, without the need to destroy the altars, the traditions and forcing the people to accept the Christian faith, many elements of the previous religion were kept as traditions in the new Christian cult. One example is the cutting of the white roosters given to priests at funerals in some parts of Romania. Before the Christianization these sacrifices were placed on the Dacian altar.

Thus, according to the testimony of P.P. Panaitescu '*the village people, keeping its old habits, didn't see a contradiction between the old and the new religion; they bowed before the new mission that was brought to them and stepped into the church bringing along their prehistoric rites before the altars.*'<sup>28</sup>

The fact that we were a stable, peaceful and faithful people was also seen from the fact that the founding of the Romanian Country was made later than other migratory populations, where them uniting around a leader was essential to be strong and to be able to conquer and pillage the people they invaded.

Due to the existing similarities between the Dacian religion and its fulfillment in Christianity, a lot of Dacian altars became Christian, also in a peaceful way. Before the Edict of Mediolanum (today's Milan) issued by the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great in the year 313<sup>29</sup>, which assured ensured religious freedom for the Christians within the Roman Empire, the Christian faith was known and embraced by the people North of the Danube.

There are several archeological evidences regarding this matter in today's Dobrogea as well as in today's area of Oltenia and Muntenia. I mention only the three cave churches from Arges and Muscel: Corbii de Piatra, Namaiesti and Cetatuia Negru Voda, which according to the local traditions, were originally Dacian altars. The Namaiesti Monastery legend, passed by word of mouth from generation to generation since ancient times is indicative: Saint Andrew the Apostle, while preaching in the area, found the Dacian altar carved into stone. Asking if someone was there, he said to his followers: *Nemo est* (there is nobody).<sup>30</sup> As a sign of his crossing and preaching, he supposedly left here one of the oldest icons of Mother Mary with her Baby, painted by Saint Luke the Apostle and Evangelist. Thus the name of the place remained up until this day.<sup>31</sup>

The chrismation of the voivode and later the ruler was a normal manifestation of the people and its leaders profound Christian faith. From the true believers, from the bottom to the top, from the civilization of the depth to the peak, this act that accompanied the ascending to the throne was admitted, asked for and imposed.<sup>32</sup> Our neighbors—the Bulgarians, the Hungarians, the Serbs, etc—were Christianized later and sometimes only '*from the bottom to the top*'—

*'with the axe'*, by force, sometimes exercised by *a single* military ruler, such as Sviatislav from Kiev for the Russians, or King Saint Stephen for the Hungarians.<sup>33</sup>

To this point of view, Radu Vulpe synthesizes: *'Our people was born Christian spontaneously, naturally, along with the forming of its Romanization, to which the popular Christianity contributed to its completion. We are Romanians because we are Christians and we are Christians because we are Romanians.'*<sup>34</sup>

### Linguistic and Archeological Evidence

Linguistic evidence and archeological discoveries attest apostolic Christianity and the continuity of the Christian communities in the region. The living continuity of the Romanized Geto-Dacian population in the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic territories and the peaceful apostolic Christianization it enjoyed, as a fulfilment of its own monotheistic religion, are essential elements in the Romanian people ethnogenesis. The idea about the origin, continuity and permanence of the local population *'is not a Romanian national product of the collectiv enthusiasm, or of the Romanian and humanist chroniclers'*<sup>35</sup>, because it was considered by Romanians as basic truth that doesn't have to be proved.

The Czech W. Tomaschek said that: *'The Daco-Romans are Romanized Dacians and Getae, which never left Dacia. During the nations migration the old countries were ruled by Sarmatians, Vandals, Goths, Gepidae, Slovenians, Bulgarians, Pecenegi and Cumans. When it happens for the historians to talk about these regions, it's normal that they mention only the ruling nations which actively manifested themselves and not the passive population, albeit greater in number, of sheppards and mountain men of Romanian origin, who continuously ruled the old territory and was only torn and overwhelmed by invaders.'*<sup>36</sup>

The essential arguments regarding the Romanians ethnogenesis are: language, historic and literary testimonials, archeological, epigraphic, numismatic and ethnological documents, etc. The limited documentary material regarding quality and quantity, gaping and sometimes incoherent regarding the demographic situations from

the former Dacian territory, is supplanted by the language of the people which is the coronation of its soul and identity, as well as by the apostolic Christianity, popular and militant which assured our continuity in this land blessed by God.

### **Linguistic Evidence**

Saint Andrew the Apostle surely ordained priests and deacons in the areas that he preached. In the beginning, as it happened in all the Christian world, the Christians private homes were the place where they met and performed 'the breaking of the bread'. As the Christians numbers grew, the first places of worship, called basilicas, started to appear, some of them being discovered in the cities from Scythia Minor.

The endurance of the apostolic Christianity in these areas is proof of the local Christian's population permanent continuity, even if there were many times when it was oppressed. Christianity's contribution to the Romanian people's ethnogenesis process certifies a historic reality specific to us: our Orthodox Latinity and our Latin Orthodoxy. This reality specific only to Romanians is peremptory proof to the Daco-Romanized population's continuity of life even if it had to cohabit with the migratory populations who passed through here. The ones who stayed were assimilated by the locals. For these reasons Vasile Parvan considered that '*Christianity has a somewhat more complicated development in Trajan's Dacia*'<sup>37</sup>.

The Romanian people's ethnogenesis, started with the colonization of Dacia and with the Romanization of the local element, continued between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century; but the spreading of Christianity also continued among our ancestors. After Constantine the Great issued the Edict of Mediolan in 313, the Christian mission within the Empire and outside its borders received a strong momentum, the Emperor himself showing support for the Christian religion. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was South of the Danube, so very close to the former Roman Dacia, a whole string of dioceses. Their number increased after the year 313, thus towards the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the next there were over 40 Danubian Episcopal Chairs. Some of them were seated on the right shore of the Danube: Singidunum, Viminacium, Aquae, Ratiaria,

Castra martis, Oescus, Novae, Sexanta Prista, Appiaria, Durostorum, Abrittus, Marcianopolis and the dioceses from Scythia Minor headed by Tomis. Considering the Christianity's strong missionary character from the first centuries and with the help from Emperor Constantine and his descendants, the aforementioned Episcopal Chairs helped intensify the preaching of the Gospel in the nearby areas as well given the fact that they spoke the same Latin language.

Because the Daco-Romans spoke Latin, the Christian missionaries preached in Latin around these areas. There also was preaching in Greek because in today's Dobrogea there were Greek communities and in the migratory nations language. One such testimony about the languages Christian teaching was preached in among the people on the left of the Danube comes from Auxentius, Bishop of Durostorum, former apprentice of Bishop Ulfila (Ulphilas). Auxentius, a native of the Daco-Romanized population from the Lower Danube, left a precious testimony before becoming Bishop of Durostorum: *'And there was Ulfila a Bishop with a highly elevated life. . .and words, true believer of Christ, . . . Accomplishing this and others alike and shining with glory for 40 years in the episcopate, he preached through the apostolic gift, without pause, in Greek, Latin and Goth in the one and only church of Christ. . . He left behind, in these three languages, several treatises and a lot of comments, to be for those who would want to use them enlighten the soul. . .'*<sup>38</sup> Ulfila preached the Gospel in Latin because the area was inhabited by Romanians.<sup>39</sup>

Another proof of the Daco-Roman population's Christianization, concurrent with the ethnogenesis process, is the fundamental terms of faith, which are of Latin origin. The Romanian language *'by origin, structure and vocabulary, is a Latin language, the only direct descendant of the Latin spoken continuously in the Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire'*.<sup>40</sup> It originated in the common Latin (spoken), to which elements kept from the Geto-Dacian idiom were added and lexical elements from the Slavonic language from the cohabitation with the Slavs. What the Slavs added and to a small extent other nations, didn't change the original, fundamental and Romanic nature of our language. The Romanic nature is given by morphology, syntax and fundamental elements of the lexicon, all from the Latin language.<sup>41</sup>

This is the birth certificate of Christian Daco–Romans and of their living continuity in the Carpatho–Danubian–Pontic areas.<sup>42</sup> The ethno–cultural and linguistic researches proved that many Latin terms that name the basic notions of the faith and some basic forms of the cult were created before or during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, therefore they preceded the 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries namely the exact period in which the Romanian people was formed.

We have testimonies of our Christianity's evolution in time, from the Romanian language itself, through the Latinity of the words that express basic notions of the faith: *cruce* (*crucem*), *a cumineca* (*communicare*), *a boteza* (*baptisare*), *crestin* (*christianus*), *rugaciune* (*rogationem*), *sărbătoare* (*dies servatoria*), *a ajuna* (*ajunare*), *păcat* (*peccatum*), *a răposa* (*repausare*), *mormânt* (*monumentum*), *îchina* (*inclino, are*) etc.<sup>43</sup>

In the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father*, and in the *Symbol of Faith* or *Creed*, formulated at the first two Ecumenical Councils, from 325 and 381, so before the Slavs came, over 90% of the words are of Latin origin.<sup>44</sup>

Some words belonged to the Dacian religion, others were taken from the pagan Roman world but received a new Christian meaning and others were made up on the spot especially to express the new notions of faith<sup>45</sup>.

*Duminică* (*Sunday*), comes from *dies dominica*, 'Princely Day' or 'The Lord's Day', word that replaced the weekly pagan holiday, *dies solis* (sun day, *deus sol invictus* being the spiritual patron of some Roman Emperors).

*Crăciun* (*Christmas*), popular word, unknown in the religious books, for the Nativity celebration, can come from *creatio* (*acuz. Creationem*, in popular Latin *creation*), so the day of the 'creation' of the new world, through the embodiment of Jesus Christ.

*Colindă* (*Carol*), originated from the popular *colendae* (in Latin cult *calendae*), first day of the month for the Romans (from where the word *calendar* also comes). January's *calendele* from the beginning of the year, were celebrated with songs and cheers that Christianity adopted but imprinted them with the religious Christian character.

*Floriile* (*Palm Sunday*), (*Flurii*, in its archaic popular form) bears the name of a spring pagan holiday, *Floralia* (commonly known as

Florilia), dedicated to the Goddess Flora and close as celebration date with our Saviour's Entry into Jerusalem. The name of the pagan celebration was kept but the content of the celebration was modified which is part of the history of salvation.

*Rusaliele (Whitsuntide)*, comes from the name of the Rosalia celebration, a day of remembering the dead, celebrated during Spring with the blooming of the roses (*rosa*), close as date from the feast of Pentecost. The name was kept but with a new Christian meaning.

*Paști (Easter)*, originally a Hebrew word, in Latin a *dat dies pascharum*, and in Romanian kept its plural form like in Latin.

The word *păgân (pagan)* comes from the Latin *paganus*, resident of the rural area (*pagus* = village). In the first three centuries, Christianity developed more into the cities while in the countryside, the more conservatory population kept the pagan religion. Thus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century when Christianity becomes an allowed religion and then the official one, *paganus* designated a worshiper of a pagan religion.

*Biserică (Church)* comes from the Latin 'basilica', naming a public edifice in the Roman forums. It received a Christian religious meaning around the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and thus it circulated both in the oriental Latin as well as in the Western Latin. The word is unknown in the other neo-Latin languages, which starting with the 4<sup>th</sup> century adopted the derivations from 'ecclesia'. The word 'basilica', meaning place of worship and Christian community is prior to the word 'ecclesia'.<sup>46</sup> In the Oriental Romanity, isolated due to the Huns, Gepidae, Avars and Slavs, remained in use the word church, derived from basilica, like it remains nowadays. The preservation of this word proves that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century takes place a spreading of Christianity in our areas of massive proportions.

The word with exclusive Christian meaning are the verb *to baptize, to baptize*, the noun *baptism* (*boteziune* in old texts), from the Latin *baptisto, -are*, derived from the Greek *βαπτίζω*, plunging into the water.

*Creștin (Christian)* derives from the popular version of Latin *chrestianus*, which in turn derives from *Chrestus* or *Crests*, as our Saviour was called in vulgar Latin. The word *chrestianus* is certified

to the church writers Tertulian (c. 160–249) and Lactantiu (c. 240–after 317) so our ancestors used it at least till then.

Some words were created here, with the help of the people who spoke Latin in its Eastern dialect: *inviere* (*resurrection*) from the suffix *in* and the verb *vivo, vivere*, meaning *revenire la viata* (*returning to life*), fundamental theological truth, expressed by own means: *credinta* (*faith*), from the popular *credentia*; *facatorul lumii* (*maker of the world*), from *facio, -ere*, and *lumen, -inis = lumina* (*light*), with the meaning of universe; *imparatia lui Dumnezeu* (*the Kingdom of God*), from *imperium = imparatie* (*kingdom*); *Tata* (*Father*) for God, from the familiar Latin *tata*; *Fecioara* (*Virgin*), for the Mother of God, from the popular *fetiola = fata* (*girl*); *fin* (*godson*) from the popular *filianus*, spiritual son; *piresimi*, for Postul Mare (Lent), from *quadragessima = patruzeci* (*forty*); *a impartasi* (*to share*) and *impartasanie* (*Eucharist*), from the suffix *in* and *partio, -ire*; *rascumparare* (*redemption*), from the suffix *ras* and *compare, -are*. Same were created the words: *altar* (*altar*), from the accusative *altarem*; *cer* (*sky*), from *caelum*; *a cumineca* (*to communicate*) from *communico, -are*; *cruce* (*cross*), from the accusative *crucem*; *a ingenunchia* (*to kneel*), from *ingenunculare* (from *genunculum - genunchi* (*knee*)); *a cununa* (*to marry*) from *corono, -are*; *a (se) inchina* (*to worship*) from *incline, -are*; *minune* (*miracle*), from the accusative *mirionem*; *pacat* (*sin*), from *peccatum*; *rugaciune* (*prayer*) from the accusative *rogationem*; *tampla* (*temple*) (for iconostasis or catapeteasma), from *templum* etc.<sup>47</sup>

These words are different from the ones with similar meaning used by the Western Church, which proves the popular character of the Romanian Christianity, its particular development and the fact that our ancestors were evangelized by Easterners. The Christian terminology of Latin origin is poorer in the notions regarding the Church's organization and cult, because for Romanians, with the spreading of the Slavo-Byzantine rite, terms of Slav origin were used or broke through the pathway of that language.

The Christian terminology of Latin origin, from the Romanian language is an essential argument that the beginnings of Christian life for us starts in the apostolic period and continued into the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. A generalization of Christianity was made in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

We were kneaded Christians and Romanians, being steadfast in these blessed lands, due to the attachment towards faith, traditions, language and land. We kept our faith and traditions despite all the influences from the oppressors and migratory nations.

### **Archeological Discoveries**

The seniority of the terminology kept until nowadays is confirmed by the archeological diggings.<sup>48</sup> The archeological researches started in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which continue today, led to the discovery of almost 35 historical and archaeological researched and determined basilicas.<sup>49</sup> Thus, at Dnogetia–Garvan (Jijila village, Tulcea county), the research done<sup>50</sup> brought to light the whole citadel, with many interior architectonic complexes. The citadel from Dobrogea’s North–Western extremity had in the South–West corner a small basilica from the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. measuring 16 meters in length and 9.70 meters in height. The place was a slight trapezoid due to the enclosure wall which it sticks to. The narthex is missing and the body is split in three naves. It was build between the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> and went through at least two distructions and rebuilds. The first rebuild dates from the time of Anastasius (491–518), the second from the time of Iustinian (527–565) when the apse is added, at the exterior, a pentagonal wall, from stone mixed with cley, slightly bigger than the basilica’s width with the interior split in half.<sup>51</sup> Here several Paleo–Christian objects were found: bronze pattern for simple little crosses, circa 50 small crosses from the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>52</sup> a Byzantine led seal with the diameter of 25,5–27mm.<sup>53</sup> Another led seal, measuring 17mm in diameter, represents the face of the Mother of God, with Christ’s icon in a medallion on the chest, praying. On the reverse there is an inscription: ‘*the seal of Mihai hierarch of Rosia*’.<sup>54</sup> The sigilograph Ion Barnea identified the owner as being Metropolitan Mihai of Kiev (1130–1145),<sup>55</sup> who was of Greek origin.<sup>56</sup> All these proof that in this area there was the residence of a Bishop who kept in touch with other neighboring bishops.

In the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries, 15 capital cities from the territories on the shores of the Danube and the Black Sea, out of the almost 40

fortified settlements, cities and towns, also became the headquarters of the dioceses from inside the late Roman province. The most important among them, by statute and rank, famous even nowadays, is the city of Tomis, capital city of Scythia Minor province.<sup>57</sup>

In Tomis (today Constanta), the metropolis of the region, were discovered already 5 basilicas. The archeological diggings are very slow because the new city is on top of the old metropolis. The grand basilica, located under the C<sub>2</sub> block, in front of the Romanian Navy Museum, is the biggest basilica in Dobrogea. It was built from rocks and bricks held together by mortar in alternating layers. The measurements are impressive for that time period: 48,10 meters in length and 23,45 meters wide facing ESE–WNW. The shape is rectangular and is divided in three big naves by colonnades. The interior was paved with sesqui–pedales<sup>58</sup> type bricks, geometrically encaustic. In the central nave, to the West, there was a crypt which had marble stairs. The stairs were taken from other older edifices. The walls had painted stucco. The crypt contained an ensemble of rooms for reliquaries, organized after a plan which was suitable to the Episcopal character and size of the basilica.<sup>59</sup>

Bishop Paternus is the first known hierarch who shepherded dioceses from the entire province. The importance of the Tomis Episcopate, where was the headquarters of the ‘Scythian Diocese’ (namely of the local people) is shown by Emperor Zenon’s decree<sup>60</sup> regarding ‘*the situation of the most holy churches held under the administration of the city of Tomis*’ which would ‘*not be subject to its constraint* (of the new decision) *but to remain with own organization.*’<sup>61</sup>

When the church took, in the Empire, in every province, city and even village, more and more prerogatives of laic leadership, the Scythia Minor province continued to stay at a centralized system, with only one Bishop from the capital which shepherded the whole province. Around the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century there already were about 15 dioceses in the countryside directly subordinated to the Bishop in the capital, according to the Empire’s general rules.<sup>62</sup>

Five basilicas were discovered in Tropaeum Traiani (today’s Adamclisi), where it lays the triumphal monument built on Emperor Trajan’s orders between 106–109 to commemorate the victory

over the Dacians, and the city build by the Romans over the Getae settlement<sup>63</sup>. One is of 'marble' Greek design, containing an atrium and a baptisterium. Another 'transept' church, or 'T' shaped, the only one of its kind in Dobrogea, is the largest (33,80 x 13,70m) and it contains narthex, nave, baptisterium, transept with a crypt and apsis.<sup>64</sup>

In Histria were discovered the foundations of seven churches dating from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>65</sup> Other basilics were discovered in Argamum (Capul Dolojman), Axiopolis (Cernavodă), Callatis (Mangalia), Capidava, Ibida (Slava Rusă) etc.<sup>66</sup>

### **Paleo-Christian Art**

Pieces of the Paleo-Christian art are also arguments of the initial Christianity as well the inscriptions (about one hundred), especially from the funeral monuments from the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The great silver gilt disc (61 cm in diameter) belonging to Bishop Paternus of Tomis (beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century), has a large chrismon<sup>67</sup> in the center, flanked by the letters A and Ω<sup>68</sup>, and around it, on a round frieze, a Latin inscription is engraved: † *Ex antiquis renovatum est per Paternus, reverentiss(imum) episc(opum) nostrum, amen* [= (This disc) was made again, from old (pieces), by care of Paternus, our venerable Bishop, amin]. So the disc was older and was rebuilt by Bishop Paternus, during the time of Emperor Anastasius I (491-518). The disc was discovered by chance in Malaia Perescepena, Ukraine, in the year 1912, together with a great treasure containing in over 400 gold and silver pieces, weighing about 500 kg. The disc and four other pieces belonged to the Tomis church. Currently it is on display in Ermitaj Museum in Sankt Petersburg.<sup>69</sup>

The Biertan Donarium, Christian votic object, dating from the Constantinian era (4<sup>th</sup> century), was discovered near the town of Biertan from Sibiu. The inscription *EGO ZENOVIVS VOTVM POSVI* (*Ego Zenovius votum posui*-I, Zenovius submitted this gift), under which there is the monogram of Jesus Christ, is proof of the Latinity, the Christianity and the continuity of the local population from Transylvania in the first Christian centuries<sup>70</sup>.

A golden pectoral, ornated with the sign of the Holy Cross and the monogram of our Saviour was discovered at Someseni, in Cluj.

Hone and marble patterns, for the making of small simple crosses were discovered in the Danube area, in Olteni, but also in the North of the country in Botosani. The ceramic art from the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries proves not only the spreading and density of the pre-Romanian population, its continuity in the whole area of the country, but also the crystallized Christian faith. The pans, mugs, plates, bowls, rushlights and also the bronze lamps and adornment objects (earrings, rings, buckles) discovered in Alba Iulia, Oradea, Ulpia Traiana, Drobeta, Apulum, Histria, Tomis, Luciu-Ialomița etc, all have Christian marking decorations. All these archeological discoveries date before the Slavs started their migration attracted by Byzantium's splendor and pomposity.<sup>71</sup>

These pieces of Paleo-Christian art, richly inwrought with Christian symbols, show the profound Christian way of life in these areas. Furthermore the hierarchs, servants and true believers had a very good theological training and a distinguished way of life. One such proof is the participation of Bishop Paternus at the Constantinople synod, from 520, and the signing of the synodal document with the title of '*Provinciae Scythiae Metropolitanus*'.<sup>72</sup>

### **Martyrs for Christ since the Second Century**

The martyrs for Christ, who suffered in the Northern Danube area since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century are proof of the apostolic, popular Christianity of the local people.

The four edicts<sup>73</sup> issued by Emperor Diocletian (284–305),<sup>74</sup> intended to destroy the places of worship and the Christian writings, ban the religious gatherings and kill the Christians that did not worship the gods. From the time of Diocletian, Galeriu and Liciniu's persecutions, the names of some martyrs are recorded in the citadels both on the Danube's right shore in the riverside provinces (Pannonia Inferior, Moesia Superior, Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Inferior și Scythia Minor), and in the southern provinces (Dacia Mediterranea, Dardania și Dalmatia).

In Sirmium<sup>75</sup> suffered priest Montanus and his wife Maxima (natives of Singidunum) who were drowned in the river Sava on

March 26<sup>th</sup> 304. Montanus is the first Daco–Roman priest known by name until now.<sup>76</sup> Bishop Irineu also suffered there, he was beheaded on April 6<sup>th</sup> 304 and on April 9<sup>th</sup> his deacon Dinitried was killed by spear. Later, Prefect Leontiu of Illyric build a church in Tesalonic in honor of deacon Dimitrie, in which his miracle performin relics were layd to rest (October 26<sup>th</sup> 413) and one in Sirmium. The Slavs named Sirmium as Mitrovita or Dimitrie’s City. Several young women suffered with Saint Dimitrie, in Sirmium. Other martyrs were: faithful Secundus in July 20<sup>th</sup>, maiden Basilla on August 29<sup>th</sup>, maiden Anastasia on December 25<sup>th</sup>, then gardener Sineros and five carvers from near Sirmium who were baptized by Bishop Chiril of Antioch exiled in that area at the time. In Cibalae<sup>77</sup> lecturer Pollion was martyred on April 28<sup>th</sup> 304 as wel as other clerics from the Sirmium area (lecturer Hermogen, priest Romulus, deacon Silvanus, deacon Donatus and his brother Venustus). In Singidunum<sup>78</sup> suffered deacon Ermil and jailer Stratonic, who were tortured amd thrown in the Danube on January 13th probably 307. In Dacia Ripensis suffered martyrs Agheu and Gaius and exorcist Hermes from Bononia.<sup>79</sup> In Mediterranean Dacia suffered martyrs from the town on Naisus (today the city of Nis). In dardania suffered the carver brothers Flor and Lavry, commemorated in August 18<sup>th</sup>.

In Moesia Inferior suffered Lupus, in Novae.<sup>80</sup> A lot also suffered in the city of Durostorum,<sup>81</sup> probably in the year 298: brothers Pasicrat and Valentin, beheaded on April 24th, soldiers Marcian and Nicandru, together with 47 other soldiers, killed on June 8th, veteran Iuliu on May 27th, soldier Hesichius on June 15th. In the village of Ozovia, near Durostorum, three peasant believers were beheaded: Quintilian, Dadas and Maxim the Scholar (as it turns out the Christian teaching also reached the rural areas).<sup>82</sup>

In Scythia Minor suffered several martyrs. In Tomis, on March 7<sup>th</sup>, around the year 300, suffered even Efrem the city’s Bishop. Macrobiu and Gordian as well as several other people<sup>83</sup> were burnt to the steak around the years 320–323.<sup>84</sup>

Bishop Tit of Tomis suffered because he refused to enlisted around the year 323. In Axiopolis<sup>85</sup> Chiril, Chindeia and Tasius (Dasios) suffered around 303. In Halmyris<sup>86</sup> on Joly 8<sup>th</sup>, between the years 298–303 suffered priest Epictet and his young convert, Astion.

Their relics were discovered, after the archeological researches from the years 2000–2001, in the crypt of a basilica build in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Many other Christians suffered in Noviodunum<sup>87</sup> and Dinogetia.<sup>88</sup>

In Niculitel (Tulcea county), in 1971, the relics of martyrs Zoticos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippos were discovered under a church's altar. The relics of two other Christian martyrs were discovered under them, which seem to predate them but their names are not known.<sup>89</sup> If at first, based on some circumstantial analysis, it was believed that martyrs from Niculitel are from the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, new elements prove that they are from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The Bishop of Thrace, Sotas of Anhial, a settlement from the Black Sea's Western coast, is mentioned in a letter of Aelius Publius Iulius, Bishop of Debeltum,<sup>90</sup> quoted by Eusebiu of Caesarea<sup>91</sup>. According to Lightfoot, he is the same person with Zotikos (replacing S with Z was a common occurrence at the time) who banished the demon inside Priscila, Montanus's prophetess. He lived in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and was mentioned in the antimontanist treaty, dedicated to Abercius (m. 200), Bishop of Hierapolis, by an unknown author. In this treaty Zotikos from Outros, a settlement near Hierapolis, is named '*contrate preot*'. He was probably martyred during Marcus Aurelius's persecution which was especially bloody. At the time the persecutions from the Empire's borders were very violent, no exception being made for the Thracian area on the Black Sea's West coast. In Lyon was then martyred the Bishop of Pothin together with many other Christians.<sup>92</sup>

The Syrian martyrology mentions that Filippos was martyred in Noviodunum (today's Isaccea, approximately 10–12 km away from Niculitel) on June 4<sup>th</sup>. The Hieronymian martyrology mentions the four martyrs *Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis and Filippos* together with 25 other martyrs whose names are not given.<sup>93</sup>

Other martyrs for Christ suffered in the ancient city of Noviodunum either during Diocletian's persecutions (284–305), Galeriu's (292–311) from 304–305, or Liciniu's from 320–324<sup>94</sup>. Most of the martyrs from Scythia Minor date from this period.

The crypt from Niculitel is storeyed, as reaserches which continued in 1975, showed. Two offering vessels, one from the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries and the other from the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>95</sup> were

found at the lower level, beneath the four martyrs. The entrance was sealed by two chalk slabs, one having a text engraved in stone and painted in red, on three lines in Greek: *Here and there (lays) the blood of the martyrs*.<sup>96</sup> 110 burnt bone fragments were laid in the crypt belonging to martyrs whose names are not known to us. The anthropological analysis established that it's about two martyrs aged between 45–55 years who suffered the martyrdom probably during the time of Decius (294–251) or even earlier. The discovery in the two different rooms of two bone fragments from two phalanges of the same toe and the fact that the fragments were mixed with soil of two different colors, made V.H. Baumann to say that they were brought from somewhere else and buried here. The researches from then also revealed the ruins of a structure with stone walls held together by clay, which was demolished up until the brick pavement. This structure, which probably was a small basilica, covered the first crypt of the two martyrs.<sup>97</sup>

Theodosius II's coin of *Gloria Romanorum* (408–423) type proves that this crypt was opened. Probably it was then when the basilica was ravaged by the Huns. It was also disturbed around the mid 5th century. A red globular vessel discovered there, dates since then. The crypt was probably sealed after the death of the last heir of the Constantinian dynasty in order to protect the holy relics.<sup>98</sup>

On the plaster from the wall right of the entrance it is written in red-brown ink: μαρτιρεσ μαρτιρες / Ζωτικος Zoticos / Ατταλος Attalos / Καμασις Kamasis / Φιλιππος Filippus.

On the front wall it was written in same ink the words: Μάρτυρες Χριστού (martyrs in Christ). The lower room had an entrance sealed by a stone tile on which this text was written in Greek: *'here and there (lays) the blood of martyrs'*.<sup>99</sup>

Known martyrs were also in Buzau. Even the Christened Goths, headed by their Bishop, Ulfila, were persecuted by Athanasius, in 372, and had to seek refuge south of the Danube, Ulfila being made Bishop in Nicopolis ad Istrum<sup>100</sup> or Durostorum. According to some historians Ulfila was at first an Orthodox, in the Nicean way, and then he converted to Arianism wishing to get in touch with the Eastern Empire which Emperor and Bishop were then Arians.<sup>101</sup> Important is the fact that north of the Danube, according to some in Buzau areas,

he created his own alphabet and started translating the Bible in the Gothic language<sup>102</sup> used for a long time by the Germanic nations.<sup>103</sup>

The manuscript *Sabas Gotus translatus in Capadociam* (The Church of Gothia's Letter to the Church of Capadocia) was displayed in the „Monumenta Romaniae Vaticana” exposition–documents about Romanians from the Vatican's secret archive, opened in 1996 in the Sistine Salon from Vatican. The scroll accompanied the moving of Saint Sava's relics from Southern Carpathians, area under the control of Athanaric's Goths, through Tomis. The document describes the martyrdom, its circumstances and development, showing the strength of faith of the whole Christian community from the current area of Buzau. This is another proof of the ties between the Proto-Romanians from the north of the Danube with the ones across the Danube from 'Romania', namely one of the Eastern Roman provinces, either Moesia or Scythia Minor.<sup>104</sup>

Moreover the ties between Saint Vasile the Great, notable representative of the Cappadocian monachism, with the Tomis Archbishop of the time, Bretanion, another great personality of the Christian world, are proof of the existence from the first Christian centuries of enlightened monks in the current Romanian territory. The followers of Archbishop Bretanion, Gherontie or Terentius, Teotim I, Timotei, Ioan, Alexandru, Teotim II, Paternus, Valentinian, etc, were also great hierarchs of the world, personally attending the Ecumenical Councils and indirectly to the dogmatic disputes of the time.<sup>105</sup>

Saint Sava the Martyr is proof that, in eastern Muntenia areas, so outside Scythia Minor, there were Christian communities in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which had churches (probably made out of wood) and priests. This assumes the presence of hierarchs to ordain the priests, to sanctify the churches, to oversee the Christian brotherhoods and to continue the threefold hierarchal mission given by the Lord: sanctifying, teaching and leading.

Even though we do not know the hierarchs names due to the persecutions and the large distances between the hierarchal residences known in today's Dobrogea and south of the Danube, there were for sure hierarchs, horbishops<sup>106</sup> or visiting bishops

(periodeut)<sup>107</sup> who supported the Christian communities North of the Danube.

The names of other martyrs persecuted by the Goth King Athanaric, from 373, were mentioned in a fragment of a Goth calendar and some martyr documents. There are mentioned the names of priests Verca and Batwin (Bathusios) with two sons and two daughters, monk Arpila and 18 other martyrs. These were burned alive in a church located near the Arges's flow into the Danube. Their relics were gathered by Gaatha, a Christian woman and wife to a Goth leader, together with her daughter, Dulcilla and were transported to Cizic, on the shores of the Sea of Marmara, in a colony of Christian Goths. On their return, Gaatha and Vellas were stoned to death.

Saint Nichita also suffered during Athanaric's persecution; he was burned alive on September 15<sup>th</sup>. By name and by the fact that his relics were placed in a church from the twon of Mopsuestia, from Cilicia province, we believe that he probably was the descendant of a family of Greek captives.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, in the year 372, despite the Roman rule and later the barbarian persecutions, before the Slav and Hun invasions, and the splendor of Byzantium lights, the Christian faith was lived and kept holy by the Proto-Romanians in these areas.

Surely there were many Christian martyrs in all Christian centers. As proof to that are the inscriptions of martyric character from Axiopolis, Niculitel, Tomis, etc, from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>109</sup>

The high numbers of known martyrs, to which the unknown ones are added, prove that the inhabitabts of the Danubian provinces had the certainty of the Christian faith in which service they gave their lives for. The generalization of the Christian faith happened on the left of the Danube after the Aurelian retreat and with even greater intensity after Constantine the Great became the leader of the Roman Empire. As proof are the Scythian monks who had an important role in the whole Christian world at the time, but also objects and inscriptions of Christian character as well as the places of worship dating from that period of time.

### **Notable Monks in the Christian World**

The name, work and writings of the Scythian monks from the first centuries are other testimonies of the flourishing Christian life in these lands.

*Saint John Cassian* (360–435), Scythia Minor native<sup>110</sup>, was a very learned monk and respected writer in Latin. In his writings<sup>111</sup> we find testimonies about the existence of the flourishing monachal communities in the area: *'ever since childhood I found myself among monks. . .'* In another excerpt from *Clerical conversations XXIV*,<sup>112</sup> he describes the nostalgia of the time spent in his childhood among this enlightened Christian monks, from whom he grew a lot in faith and theological knowledge.

The Greek language was known there, which proves the existence of a Eastern Christian environment in Dobrogea where Greek was spoken alongside Latin, at least in the religious cult. The fact that both Greek and Latin were used is proven by the marble block with a bilingual Christian inscription (Greek and Latin) discovered in Tomis, dating from the 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>113</sup> In the year 404/5 he traveled to Rome where he met Leon, the future Bishop of Rome. Around the year 410/1 he left Rome and in 415/6 he founded a monastery for monks and one for nuns in Massilia (today's Marseille), for which he *'conceived the first Western monachal rules, after the Eastern example, with some necessary adjustments according to the land'*. Therefore John Cassian brought the Eastern monachal ways into the West. His work has a more ascetic character. Around the year 435 he passed away and was celebrated as saint almost immediately both in the East and the West.<sup>114</sup>

*Dionysius the Small or Exiguus* is a personality of the Christian world from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, who placed the chronology in connection to the Birth of Christ. He self titled himself 'the Small' or 'Exiguus' as a token of modesty and humility. According to his own statements, recorded by Cassiodorus, he was born in Scythia Minor around the year 470. He received his education in one of Dobrogea's monasteries. Good connoisseur of Greek and Latin, he was invited by Pope Gelasius

to Rome where he traveled to at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and settled at the Saint Anastasia Monastery. He had an extremely rich activity in Rome during the episcopate of ten Popes.<sup>115</sup> Dionysius Exiguus left an invaluable work to the Christian Church. Through the translations made by writers and fathers of the Eastern Christian Church, like Chiril of Alexandria, Grigorie of Nysa, Proclus, etc, he made the Eastern theology known in the Latin environment, making the crystallized Christian teaching available from a dogmatic point of view, as it was thought, lived and preached by the Eastern theologians, connoisseurs of the philosophical argumentation less familiar to Rome at the time. Thus he was a promoter of the Eastern Christian theology, redacted in Greek, in the Eastern Church, the Eastern and Western Church sharing the same apostolic faith. The Bishops of Rome requested the Scythian monk to translate in Latin the collection of church canons, issued by different synods or councils. He put together three distinct legal collections, ranging from apostolic canons to contemporary Papal letters. Thus Dionysius was *'the founder of the Western canonic law'*. Dionysius the Small was the first church historian who had a new Christian vision upon chronology *reforming the Christian calendar by fixing the Birth of Jesus as starting point of the Christian era*. Thus he abandoned Diocletian's era and accepted the year 753 a.u.c. as the year of the Birth of Jesus and the starting point for the Christian era. His calendar, with a certain margin of error, was adopted by Italy (527), France and England (the Council of Whitby 664), slowly expanding all throughout the whole Christian and non Christian world.<sup>116</sup>

The Scythian hierarchs and monks mentioned were protectors and preachers of Christ's Gospel and also founders of the European medieval culture not only in the Carpatho–Danubiano–Pontic area but also in Western Europe. One example being Saint Dionysius Exiguus who, in the ecumenical Christian conscience, is considered by the canonists as the founding father of the Western canonic law.<sup>117</sup>

All these aspects and many others not mentioned in this material, attest to the fulfillment of the Dacian religion in Christianity, the steadfastness and dignity of the Romanian people. As Father Dumitru Staniloae said: *'The Romanian spirituality adopted these defining traits of its ego, appropriated from the Byzantine culture, in its*

*own way, according to its vital necessities and its particular position it held between the Catholic West and Orthodox East. Our nation's spirit of synthesis is not only explained by its persistence from ancient times in the middle space between East and West, but also by mixing in it of the Latin character and Orthodox Christianity. . . . Our Latin character is no stranger of our being's Thracian seniority, who never moved from this middle ground between East and West'.<sup>118</sup>*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius Caesarensis, „*Historia ecclesiastica*”, in J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Patres graeci*, t. XX, lib. III, cap. I, Paris, 1857; Eusebiu de Cezareea, *Scrieri. Partea I*, Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești (P.S.B.), nr. 13, (București: Editura I.B.M.B.O.R., 1987), 99; *Fontes Historiae Dacoromanae / Izvoarele istoriei României*, vol. II, *De la anul 300 până la anul 1000*, (se va cita *Fontes*, II), editat de Haralambie Mihăescu, Gheorghe Ștefan, Radu Hîncu, Vladimir Iliescu, Virgil C. Popescu, (București: Editura Academiei, 1970), 14–15; C. Daicoviciu, „În jurul creștinismului în Dacia”, in *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, an. I, nr. 1/1948, 122–127; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. I, București, 1980, 55–61; Alexandru Suceveanu, „Timpul istoriei”, I, in *Memorie și patrimoniu în onoare emeritae Ligiae Bârzu*, București, 1998, 172–174; Casian, Arhiepiscopul Dunării de Jos, „Mărturii ale sfințeniei în istoria creștinismului românesc la Dunărea de Jos”, in *Istorie bisericească, misiune creștină și viață culturală, de la începuturi până în secolul al XIX-lea*, vol. I, Galați, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, 2009, 227.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Emilian Popescu, „Sfântul Apostol Filip, misionar pe pământul românesc”, in vol. *Logos. Înalt Prea Sfințitului Arhiepiscop Bartolomeu al Clujului la împlinirea vârstei de 80 de ani*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Renașterea, 2001), 386–398; *Idem*, „Apostoliceitatea creștinismului românesc: Sfinții Apostoli Andrei și Filip în Dobrogea”, in vol. *Creștinismul-sufletul neamului românesc*, (Făgăraș: Editura Agaton, 2002), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Vasile Pârvan, *Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei*, (București: Cultura Națională, 1926), 211.

<sup>5</sup> Delehaye Hippolyte, „*Sinaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e Codice Sirmodiano*”, in *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum novembris*, Bruxelles, 1902, col. 265–266.

<sup>6</sup> Dumitru Manolache, *Andrei, Apostolul lupilor*, (București: Editura Dacica, 2008), 495.

<sup>7</sup> Its about the documents of Adon și Usuard. Nicolae Dănilă, „Apostolul Filip și Scythia Minor”, in *Cultura creștină*, Blaj, serie nouă, an III, 1997, 33–49;

Emilian Popescu, „Creștinismul timpuriu pe teritoriul României”, in *Priveghind și lucrând pentru mântuire*, (Iași: Editura Trinitas, 2000), 194–214.

<sup>8</sup> Col 3:11.

<sup>9</sup> Georg Kraus, *Cronica Transilvaniei 1608–1665*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1965), 11–12. *The Chronic*, having *Codex Kraussio-Kelpianus* as a temporary original title, was redacted by the author starting with 1650, taking amny information from the registries of the city of Sibiu's Town Hall and from the Sass in Transylvania, the author worked as a notary for a while (1646–1649), in Sighișoara. Born on September 17th 1607, Georg Kraus studied in Sibiu, Cluj, Vienna, Venice and Padova, returning home to Sibiu, in 1631 (see the introduction to *The Chronic*).

<sup>10</sup> Q. Septimius Tertulian, „Împotriva iudeilor”, cap. 7, in *Fontes ad Historiam Dacoromaniae pertinentes / Izvoare privind istoria României*, vol. I (to quote *Fontes*, I), editat de Vladimir Iliescu, Virgil C. Popescu, Gheorghe Ștefan, (București: Editura Academiei, 1964), 640–641.

<sup>11</sup> Uses the term *plurimi*, which means *very many*.

<sup>12</sup> Origen, *Comentariul 39 la Evanghelia de la Matei, XXIV, 14* apud Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. I, ed. cit., 67.

<sup>13</sup> Dinu C. Giurescu, *Țara Românească în secolele XIV–XV*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1973), 351.

<sup>14</sup> Iordanes, *De origine Getarum sive Gothorum origine et rebus gestis*, (Stuttgart: Ediția Carol Aug. Closs, 1861), 50–51.

<sup>15</sup> Rom 2:14.

<sup>16</sup> Freedom is an essential dimension of the face of God within man.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Tm 5:8.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Strabon, *Geografia*, VII, 3, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Rv 1:8.

<sup>20</sup> Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre numele divine*, XIII, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolae Densușianu, *Dacia preistorică*, București, 1913, XI, 6., 1152 p.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Vasile Lovinescu, *Dacia hiperboreană*, Ediția a II-a, (București: Editura Rosmarin, 1996), 33–34.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ioan Glodariu, „Civilizația geto-dacă în a doua jumătate a secolului al II-lea a. Hr. până la începutul secolului al II-lea d. Hr. Viața spirituală”, in *Istoria Românilor*, vol. I, București, 2000, 785.

<sup>26</sup> Around the belief in the imortality of the soul gravitaed all other religious concepts and moral life of the Getae. A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. I, *Dacia ante-romană și Dacia romană*, ediția a III-a, (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1925), 68.

<sup>27</sup> Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației*, III, (București: Editura Saeculum I.O., Editura Vestala, 1998), 371.

<sup>28</sup> P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1969), 103.

<sup>29</sup> Ioan Rămureanu, *Istoria bisericească universală*, (București: E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1992), 101.

<sup>30</sup> C. D. Aricescu, *Istoria Câmpulungului, prima rezidență a României*, vol. I, (București: Imprimeria lui Ferdinand Om, 1855), 217. Of course the author repeats a teaching legend that circulated among the vilagers in the 19th century Al. Odobescu, *Basme mitologice*, (București: Cartea Românească, 1925), passim.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Gligore și Radu Tascovici, „Mănăstirea Nămăiești”, in *Domnitorii și ierarhii Țării Românești, Ctitoriile și mormintele lor*, (București: Editura Cuvântul Vieții a Mitropoliei Munteniei și Dobrogei, 2009), 792.

<sup>32</sup> Radu Ștefan Vergatti, „Mitropolia Țării Românești sau a Ungrovlahiei”, in *Domnitorii și ierarhii Țării Românești, Ctitoriile și mormintele lor*, ed. cit., 475.

<sup>33</sup> Andrei Nikolaevich Mouravieff, *A History of the Church of Russia*, trad. în lb. engl. de R. W. Blackmore, New York, 1971, 7-27; James Craig Robertson, *History of the Christian Church. From the Election of the Pope Gregory the Great*, vol. II (A.D. 590-1122), part II, new ed., revised and enlarged, London, 1862, 365-378, 473-476 apud Radu Ștefan Vergatti, „Mitropolia Țării Românești sau a Ungrovlahiei”, ed. cit., 475.

<sup>34</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. I, ed. cit., 69.

<sup>35</sup> I. I. Russu, *Etnogeneza românilor*, (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981), 27, 158-159.

<sup>36</sup> Apud Alexandru Philippide, *Originea românilor*, vol. I, *Ce ne spun izvoarele istorice*, Iași, 1923, 689.

<sup>37</sup> Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, (reeditare după ediția din 1911) (București: Editura Libra, 2000), 197.

<sup>38</sup> Auxentius din Durostor, *Scrisoare despre credința, viața și moartea lui Ulfila*, in *Fontes*, II, 110-111.

<sup>39</sup> Nicolae Stoicescu, *Continuitatea românilor*, (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1980), 148-150.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandru Rosetti, *Istoria limbii române, I: Limba latină*, (București: Editura Științifică, 1964), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. a III-a, (Iași: Editura Trinitas, 2004), 66.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Dinu C. Giurescu, *Țara Românească în secolele XIV-XV*, ed. cit., 351.

<sup>44</sup> Exception being: mistake, temptation and saves

<sup>45</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. a III-a, ed. cit., 67.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Lazăr Șăineanu, „Terminologia creștină la români”, in vol. *Încercare asupra semaseologiei române*, București, 1887, 28-64; Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, ed. cit., 85-144; Niculae M. Popescu, „De la priveghere la privighetoare”, in *B.O.R.*, an LXI, 1943, nr. 4-6, 207-224; Haralambie Mihăescu, *Limba latină în provinciile dunărene ale Imperiului Roman*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1960); Dumitru Stăniloae, „Vechimea și

spiritualitatea termenilor creștini români în solidaritate cu ale limbii române, în general”, in *B.O.R.*, an XCVII, 1974, nr. 3-4, 563-590 Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. a III-a, ed. cit., 67-72.

<sup>48</sup> C. Daicoviciu, „Există monumente creștine în Dacia traiană în sec. II-III?”, in *Dacica*, Cluj, 1970, 505-516; *idem*, „O senzațională descoperire arheologică în Transilvania”, in *Dacica*, ed. cit., 522-523; I. Barnea, „Cultura Sciției Minore în secolele IV-VII”, in Radu Vulpe, Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. II, (București: Editura Academiei, 1968), 456-464.

<sup>49</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, „Bazilici și monumente creștine în contextul etnogenezei românești din secolele III-VII în Dobrogea”, in *Monumente istorice și izvoare creștine. Mărturii de străveche existență și de continuitate a românilor pe teritoriul Dunării de Jos și al Dobrogei*, (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1987), 10.

<sup>50</sup> The synthesis of researches done up until 1967 is made by Prof. Gh. Ștefan și I. Barnea, Maria Comșa, Eugen Comșa. Alexandru Barnea, „Descoperiri arheologice noi în preajma cetății Dinogetia”, in *S.C.I.V.A.*, tom. 25, nr. 1/1974, 1, 103-114.

<sup>51</sup> I. Barnea, *Les monuments paléochrétiens de Roumanie*, Città del Vatican, 1977, 154-156.

<sup>52</sup> Radu Ștefan Vergatti, „Începuturile creștinismului în Dobrogea de Nord și Mitropolia din Vicina”, in *Istorie bisericească, misiune creștină și viață culturală de la începuturi până în secolul al XIX-lea*, vol. I, ed. cit., 227.

<sup>53</sup> The seal had on the head a saint that blesses with his right hand and in the left he is holding the Holy Gospel. The word *Saint* is written in Greek on the right side. The word from the left side cannot be read anymore. It's probably Saint Nicholas, often present on Byzantine seals. On the seals tails the following it's imprinted on six lines in Greek: 'Lord help Simeon, famed and katepan of Paradounavon in the last years of Vasile II the Macedonian's reign (976-1025). For the evolution of Dobrogea's name see Nicolae Banescu *Les duchés byzantins de Paristrion (Paradunavon) et de Bulgarie*, bucharest, 1946, 193 David Areianites, the first Byzantine ruler of Bulgaria also had the title of 'katepan', named after the destruction of the Bulgarian czar (1018). V. Zlatarski, Eugen Stănescu, P. Diaconu, Ivan Jordanov and other historians, analyzing the political situation of Byzantium in the Lower Danube area, believe that Simeon was 'katepan' between the years 1050-1070. Eugen Stănescu, „Denumirile bizantine ale regiunii de la Dunărea de Jos (sec. X-XIII) și sensul lor istoric”, in *S.C.I.V.*, 19, 1968, 3, 473; P. Diaconu, „Istoria Dobrogei în unele lucrări străine recente” (III), in *Revista de istorie*, 30, 1977, 10, 1896.

<sup>54</sup> I. Barnea, „Relațiile dintre așezarea de la Bisericuța Garvăn și Bizanț în secolele X-XII”, in *S.C.I.V.*, an. IV, nr. 3-4, 1953, 641-671.

<sup>55</sup> I. Barnea, „Sigiliul unui ierarh al Rosiei în așezarea de la Garvăn”, in *S.C.I.V.*, 7, 1956, 189-195.

<sup>56</sup> Preot Ion Bica, „Sigilografia bizantină în România”, in *Argessis. Studii și comunicări*, Seria Istorie, Tom XII, Pitești, 2003, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Alexandru Barnea, „Dobrogea în secolele IV–VI, Organizarea administrativă. Orașe și târguri”, in *Istoria românilor*, vol. II, *ed. cit.*, 488.

<sup>58</sup> Measuring unit for about 60 cm bricks.

<sup>59</sup> A. Rădulescu, *Monumente romano-bizantine în sectorul de vest al cetății Tomis*, (Constanța: Muzeul Regional de Arheologie Dobrogea, 1965), 80.

<sup>60</sup> *Cod. Iust.* I, 3, 35–36.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Alexandru Barnea, „Dobrogea în secolele IV–VI, Organizarea administrativă. Orașe și târguri”, in *Istoria românilor*, vol. II, *ed. cit.*, 491.

<sup>63</sup> I. Barnea, *Tropaeum Traiani. I. Cetatea*, (București: Editura Academiei, 1979), 260.

<sup>64</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, *op cit.*, 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–16.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–17.

<sup>67</sup> The monogram of our Saviour Jesus Christ, consists of the letter X vertically crossed by the letter P.

<sup>68</sup> The letters A and Ω, first and last of the Greek alphabet, symbolize ‘the beginning and the end’.

<sup>69</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri și până azi*, (București: Editura Albatros, 1971), 155.

<sup>71</sup> Dionisie Șincan, *Noi, latinii Bizanțului*, Colecția Repere XXI, (București: Editura Casa Radio, 2003), 94.

<sup>72</sup> Remus Rus, *Dicționar enciclopedic de literatură creștină din primul mileniu*, (București: Editura Lidia, 2003), 415.

<sup>73</sup> Three edicts were issues in the year 303 and the fourth is spring of 304.

<sup>74</sup> Dioclețian is the one who initiated the sistematic persecution of Christians.

<sup>75</sup> Sirmium is today’s Mitrovița, in Serbia. Back then it was the Pannonia Inferior province.

<sup>76</sup> Nicolae M. Popescu, „Viața Sfântului Montanus presviterul din Singidunum”, in *B.O.R.*, an LII, București, 1934, nr. 3–4, 145–148.

<sup>77</sup> Today’s Vinkovci from Serbia.

<sup>78</sup> Today’s Belgrade. Back then it was part of Moesia Superior.

<sup>79</sup> Today’s Vidin from Bulgaria.

<sup>80</sup> Today’s Svistov from Bulgaria.

<sup>81</sup> Today’s Silistra from Bulgaria.

<sup>82</sup> Ioan Pulpea (Rămureanu), „Sfântul mucenic Emilian din Durostor–Studiu critic și traducerea actului său martiric”, in *B.O.R.*, an LXII, 1944, nr. 4–6, 125–140.

<sup>83</sup> We know the names of Heli, Lucian and Zotic, Valerian, brothers Argeu, Narcis and Marcelin.

<sup>84</sup> Ene Braniște, „Martiri și sfinți pe pământul Dobrogei de azi”, in vol. *De la Dunăre la Mare. Monumente istorice de artă creștină*, (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și a Dunării de Jos, 1977), 34–62.

<sup>85</sup> Today's town of Hinog, near Cernavodă.

<sup>86</sup> Today's town of Murighiol, from Tulcea county.

<sup>87</sup> Today's Isaceea.

<sup>88</sup> Today's town of Garvan from Tulcea county. Ioan Pulpea (Rămureanu), „Sfinți și martiri la Tomis–Constanța”, in *B.O.R.*, an XCII, 1974, nr. 7–8, 975–1011.

<sup>89</sup> Victor H. Bauman, „Basilica cu „martyrion” din epoca romanității târzii, descoperită la Niculițel (jud. Tulcea)”, in *Buletinul monumentelor istorice*, an XLI, 1972, nr. 2, 17–26.

<sup>90</sup> Debeltum is a Thracian colony. See Eusebiu de Cezareea, *Scrieri. Partea I*, Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești (P.S.B.), nr. 13, *ed. cit.*, 211.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>92</sup> cf. *Sfinți români și apărători ai legii strămoșești*, is issued with the blessing of the Most Holy Father Teoctist, Patriarhul B.O.R., (București: Editura I.B.M.B.O.R., 1987), 173–177.

<sup>93</sup> I. Barnea, „Martirionul de la Niculițel”, in *B.O.R.*, anul XCI, nr. 1–2, 1973, 218.

<sup>94</sup> Ioan I. Rămureanu, „Martiri creștini de la Niculițel, descoperiți in anul 1971”, in *B.O.R.*, anul XCI, nr. 3–5, 1973, 465–466.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>96</sup> V. Baumann, „Noi dovezi arheologice referitoare la vechimea martirilor de la Niculițel”, in *B.O.R.*, an XCIV, nr. 5–6, 1976, 581–582.

<sup>97</sup> Episcop Gherasim Cristea, „Martirii de la Niculițel și cum au ajuns sfințele lor moaște la Mănăstirea Cocoș”, in *Istorie bisericească, misiune creștină și viață culturală de la începuturi până în secolul al XIX-lea*, vol. I, *ed. cit.*, 47.

<sup>98</sup> V. Baumann, *op. cit.*, 586.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

<sup>100</sup> Dionisie Șincan, *op. cit.*, 91–92.

<sup>101</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. a II-a, (București: Editura I.B.M.B.O.R., 1991), 108.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Several copied manuscripts were in circulation, the most famous being *Codex Argenteus Upsaliensis*, from the 5th–6th centuries.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Atlas istoric al mănăstirilor și schiturilor ortodoxe din România: sec. XI–XXI*, Issued with the blessing of Î.P.S. Pimen, Arhiepiscop al Sucevei și Rădăuților, (București: Editura Bibliotecii Naționale a României, 2010), 7.

<sup>106</sup> Country bishops who resided in the rural area.

<sup>107</sup> Between the 4th and 8th–9th centuries in the church there were the so called „periodeuți” bishops or „periodevți” (περιοδευτής = caretaker of the souls, also called exarchs, in Greek, or visitatores, in Latin). They lived in the eparchial bishop's Citadel of the Throne and had the mission to visit the eparchy, according to the provisions given by the city hierarch. These clerics, ordained bishops, could

do missionary work between the Danube and the Carpathians, as delegates of the bishops from the right shore of the Danube, sanctifying churches, ordaining, preaching, strengthening the catechesis and performing the holy religious services. The mission was held in Latin, language used by both the episcopal chairs South of the Danube and the Daco-Romans believers in the North.

<sup>108</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, ed. a III-a, *ed. cit.*, 121–124, 155–161.

<sup>109</sup> *Atlas istoric al mănăstirilor și schiturilor ortodoxe din România: sec. XI–XXI*, *ed. cit.*, 7.

<sup>110</sup> The archeological diggings made by Vasile Parvan, in 1912, revealed the place called *Vicus Cassiaci*, considered by Tillemont, E. Schwartz and H. I. Marrou as the birthplace of Saint Casian. By Scythians is meant the inhabitants of the Roman province Scythia Minor, namely the Getae.

<sup>111</sup> Sfântul Ioan Cassian, *Așezăminte mănăstirești și Convorbiri duhovnicești*, au fost tipărite în cadrul Colecției Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești (P.S.B.) nr. 57, Sfântul Ioan Cassian, *Scrieri alese. Așezăminte mănăstirești și convorbiri duhovnicești*, Traducere de prof. Vasile Cojocaru și prof. David Popescu, (București: E.I.B.M.B.O.R., 1990).

<sup>112</sup> Sfântul Ioan Cassian, *Scrieri alese. Așezăminte mănăstirești și convorbiri duhovnicești*, *ed. cit.*, 608

<sup>113</sup> Adrian Rădulescu, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>114</sup> Remus Rus, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>115</sup> Served the Church of Christ in Rome during the popes: Atanasie II, Simachus, Laurentius (antipapă), Hormisdas, Ioan I, Felix IV (who claimed the throne for the third time), Bonfaciu II, Dioscur (antipope), Ioan II; Agapet I, Silveriu and Virgiliu. (Cf. Remus Rus, *op. cit.*, 187).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 187–189.

<sup>117</sup> cf. Nicolae V. Dură, „Străromânul Dionisie Exiguul și opera sa canonică. O evaluare canonică a contribuției sale la dezvoltarea Dreptului Bisericesc”, in *Ortodoxia*, XLI (1989), nr. 4, 37–61; *idem*, „Un daco-roman, Dionisie Exiguul, părintele dreptului bisericesc apusean”, in *S. T.*, XLIII (1991), nr. 5–6, 84–90.

<sup>118</sup> Preot prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român*, (București: Editura Elion, 2001), 14–16.