

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DACIAN DOMESTIC FAUNA BEFORE THE ROMAN CONQUEST

(SUMMARY)

The present paper is a systematic study on the domesticated animals from Dacia before the Roman conquest, on the basis of osteological studies. Reflecting the present stage of knowledge the study has a double aim:

- a) to give a global image of the subject mentioned in the title

- b) to prepare a documentary fund for a more larger study with a stress on the evolution of the activity in the Roman age.

To attain these goals we surveyed on the hand almost all known data about domestic animals from Dacia (*Daicoviciu* 1972; *Glodariu* 1974 etc.), on the other hand general analyses (*Haimovici* 1967; *Haimovici* 1973; *Haimovici* 1987; *Udrescu* 1985) and the special studies of the bone materials per settlements (see tables in the text). To these we added some studies concerning the animal representations either on coins (*Haimovici-Bărliba* 1995), or ritual representations. (*Sârbu* 1993; *Sârbu* 1996).

The basis of our ascertainments is constituted by the osteological analyses made in 15 settlements 1 in Transylvania, 3 in Banat, 1 in the western part of the country, 4 in Valachia and 6 in Moldova. (fig. 1)

By regrouping in synthetic tables per settlements, ranking the proportions of the domestic species (number, percentage) and respective by the MNI (minimum number of individuals), by additionsometimes: to the authors' charts the calculation of the height as a personal contribution we obtained, on the one hand, the general image of the spectre of domestic animals, on the other hand a series of ascertainments concerning the age, the sacrifice age, animal types, height and other morpho - physiological characteristics as well as aspects connected with the usage of these animals. As a consequence we reached some general conclusions about the morphological characteristics of species (cattle, caprovines, swine, equidae, dogs and bird) as well as some observations with a historical, economical and social character:

a) the Dacians were well acquainted with and grew all the domestic species known in central and south - east Europe of the time before the Roman conquest (3rd century BC - 1st century AD) (*Bökönyi* 1974 p. 127, 177, 215, 257, 264): cattle, sheep, goats, swine, equidae, (horse and donkey), dogs and birds (hens, geese) and were practicing a system of extensive breeding.

b) the proportion between the species and their numerical gravity are nearly the same as those in Celto-Germanic Europe (*Bökönyi* 1974, p. 34-35).

c. V. Sârbu (*Sârbu* 1993 p. 68-69) thinks that he has found sacred kits (with magical objects) which contain along with zoomorphic figurines, vessels in miniature, pottery items objects, having magical value. The author says that these kits were used by breeders in magical rituals meant to increase the live stock, to protect the animals, to chase the evil spirits which were affecting the life and activity, of the animals. These observations are very important for the implication of the Dacians in animal breeding and prove this activity.

d. The intensified research on the Dacian world offers the fact that many animals had been used for ritual sacrifices and for meat offerings either for burials or cremations. V. Sârbu states that nine species of animals had been buried particularly, five of them being domestic: cattle, caprovines, swine, dogs and birds (*Sârbu* 1993 p.46-50). One could suppose that beside animals grown for production purposes (meat, milk, eggs) there were animals grown and used also for cult activities.

e. It was possible to ascertain, especially in the case of species whose bones were found in great number, so used mostly as food, that the Dacians had elementary knowledge both about the sacrifice age and also about the preservation of a reproduction group recording perhaps a first stage in the beginning of a selection process.

f. One can affirm that in spite of the usage of primitive races with low productive performances (large dimensional variety, small size, slow breeding, horned sheep, great length of the splanchnocranium and tall back of the swine) the Dacians grew systematically the main animal

species. In one case (Cârlomănești) there were attempts to improve the cattle race. In three cases attempts for improving the swine race were recorded (Pecica, Zimnicea, Sighișoara) and in the case of the cattle from Răcătău where there are horned beef already (a sure sign of racial improvement) the lack of gelded males does not necessarily mean the absence of a systematic breeding activity. One could also notice a much improved race of equidae, the so called "elite" horses, but it seems that the process of improvement of primitive races was not generalised. All these mean, a priori, that the Dacians had minimal knowledge about the feeding and breeding of these races (as a support for this ascertainment could be the Dacian sheepfolds mentioned by H. Dăncoviciu (*Dăncoviciu 1972*, p.160))

g. It can be affirmed for sure that all domestic animals were used as food.

h. The presence of the donkey as an import animal is noticed (Vlădiceni, Zimnicea), and that of the cat as an import from the south (Zimnicea); which could mean the existence of a special component in the foreign trade of the Dacians.

Unfortunately, in the present stage of the research, due to the reduced number of the searched settlements from an archaeozoological point of view, and the small quantity of bones studies per settlements it is not possible to notice any sign of medical care or of the application of any means of medical prophylaxy.