

ABOUT THE HORSES IN THE *DAVA* FROM RADOVANU-GORGANA A DOUA

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Abstract: The horse osteological remains, as well as two items made of burnt clay that rendered cabalines, have enabled the authors of the article to make a deeper analysis regarding the importance of the respective animal for the Getic communities and especially for southern Romania. There are considered the direct proofs (bones, harness pieces), but also the indirect ones (items made of burnt clay and metal with horse representations, depictions of cabalines, as well as riders on clay and metal objects).

Cuvinte cheie: cai, situri getice, Radovanu-Gorgana a doua, sudul României.

Rezumat: Resturile osteologice de la cai, precum și două piese din lut ars ce reprezintă cabaline, au permis autorilor articolului o analiză mai profundă a importanței respectivului animal pentru comunitățile getice în special din sudul României. Sunt trecute în revistă descoperirile de dovezi directe (oase, piese de harnașament) și indirecte (piese din lut ars și metal reprezentând cai, dar și imagini ale unor cabaline sau călăreți pe obiecte din lut și metal).

Direct proofs of the horse presence at Radovanu: osteological remains

Both the older archaeological campaigns (1971-1985) and the recent ones (2003-2008) have resulted in the identification of a relatively rich amount of animal osteological remains, in the Getic complexes (dwellings and pits) and in the archaeological strata, either belonging to the Level I or II of the *dava* situated on the *Gorgana a doua* from Radovanu¹, Călărași County. Even if this material was not fully analysed by the archaeozoologists, a first study has been dedicated to the bones recovered until 1980², while a preliminary report referred to the excavations of the campaign since 2008³.

¹ About the field investigations in the *dava* on the *Gorgana a doua* from Radovanu see Șerbănescu 1985; Șerbănescu 1987; Șerbănescu 1998; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2005; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2006; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2007; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2008; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2009; Șerbănescu *et alii* 2012; Schuster, Morintz, Chelmec 2005; Schuster, Șerbănescu 2007; Șerbănescu, Schuster, Morintz 2009.

² Udrescu 1982.

³ El Susi 2009.

Mircea Șt. Udrescu has noticed that from the total osteological remains of *Equus caballus* (209 fragments, meaning 5.3% of the total amount of animal bones), 27 have been recovered from closed complexes, while the others have been found in the cultural layer⁴. In his opinion, “the fragmentary character of the remains, together with the burning and cutting traces performed with sharp objects points out the fact that this species has been also used in alimentation. We consider that the use of the horse as food was absolutely accidental, being usually raised for riding and maybe also for his power force. In favour of this presumption we bring the fact that these bone fragments belong to immature animals... Two complete metapods permitted the establishing of the horse stature: 131.7 cm and 132.7 cm, values that fit into the variability limits of the horses that were usually found in the Geto-Dacian settlements”⁵.

Cabaline bones have been documented, as already mentioned, even after the investigations

⁴ Udrescu 1982, Tab. 1.

⁵ Udrescu 1982, 141.

carried out in 2008, but they have been recovered exclusively from *level II*. Thus, in the surfaces Q, U, V, R and S, but mostly in the proximity of those two outdoor overlapped hearth (out of which the upper one, *Hearth no. 5* was decorated⁶), that were situated in the center of the *Surface Q*, between the *Dwellings no. 28* and *29*⁷, 16 bone fragments could be identified, meaning 5.4% from the total amount, coming from four individuals⁸. Among these, it could be noticed the presence of a 1st posterior phalanx with a length of 84 mm, a *distal tibia* with dimensions of 71/42.5 mm and a *calcaneus* with the maximal length of 104.5 mm, very probably, belonging to an adult individual⁹. The author of the archaeozoological study has noted that: “out of the four individuals, just one had an immature body, the others being adults; we do not exclude the consuming of the horse meat, as many broken bones have come from regions of alimentary importance”¹⁰.

For comparing the finds from **Radovanu**, the archaeozoologists have focused their attention upon the Getic sites situated in its proximity, or in more remote positions, but all being on the territory of Muntenia. The archaeological investigations in the area of **Prundu – Greaca – Căscioarele** have resulted in the identification of some horse bones, for instance in the *Dwelling no. 22* and *Pits no. 2* and *no. 19* on the spot “*Șuvița Hotarului*”, as well as those from “*Valea Fântânilor*” and “*La Slom*”¹¹. Their analysis shows that the proportion the osteological remains belonging to this species has reached 4.1-4.7 % of the total animal bones recovered¹². It is interesting to see that a clear statement has been done, that “*this small percentage shows that the species has not been used for alimentary purpose, except as a subsidiary*”.

The percentage, established by the number of fragments (69), of the osteological remains belonging to *Equus caballus* from the settlement at **Vlădiceasca**¹³ has reached 3.6%, fact that urged M. Șt. Udrescu to consider again that its use in alimentation was done in a very small scale¹⁴. Those two statures (of 134.9 and 139.9 cm) determined by the metapods, “*are between the*

variability limits of the “regular” horses, currently used for different works in the household, the second one being closer to the “elite” horses, used for riding”¹⁵.

As a matter of fact, as a conclusion to the analysis of the osteological material of the site, Valeria E. Ionescu¹⁶, has noted that “*regarding the horses, there are no proofs that could document their use in alimentation; most of the long bones being complete*”, continuing by the opinion that “*the relatively high stature of the horses for the analyzed period (3rd-2nd and 2nd-1st c. BC)*” is “*a possible hint about the concern for this species*”.

Horse osteological remains, consisting in just a jaw, have been discovered in the *Dwellings no. 2* and *3* from **Bordușani – Popină**¹⁷. Discussing about the horses breeding in the *dava* from **Grădiște**, Mircea Șt. Udrescu, in study since 1992 had mentioned that “*the height alone, which could be established based on a metatarsal bone, could get fit into the lower limit of the “elite” horses of the Geto-Dacians*”¹⁸. In another article, also referring to the animals from the mentioned site, Carmen Hrișcu, Luminița Băjenaru and Mircea Șt. Udrescu would note late that regarding the horses, the measurements taken from other remains had led to the conclusion that they “*belonged to the heights of “regular” horses, most frequently found in the Geto-Dacian communities*” and that “*the traces of cutting, as well as the existence of some burnt pieces, suggested beyond any doubt the use of this species as a source of food*”¹⁹.

Also considering the animal breeding at the community in the *dava* from **Grădiște**, Valeriu Sîrbu has mentioned that the cabaline remains have reached 6-8% of the total determined individuals, at the same time noting the differences between the quantity of bones recovered from distinct complexes²⁰. Thus, for instance, in *Pit no. 147* it was discovered a fragment of a proximal ulna and another one of a femoral condyle, in *Pit no. 148* a part of a metatarsal bone, a phalanx and a fragmentary sacrum, while in *Pit house no. 12* there were 34 osteological pieces (calcaneus, metatarsal bone etc.), some of them bearing cutting marks; those remains have belonged to regular

⁶ Șerbănescu, Schuster, Morintz 2009, 246, fig. 3; Șerbănescu *et alii*, 2012, 114, fig. 12.

⁷ Șerbănescu *et alii*, 2012, 108 f.

⁸ El Susi 2009.

⁹ El Susi 2009, 139, Table 2.

¹⁰ El Susi 2009, 140.

¹¹ Hrișcu, Bejenaru, Udrescu 1996, Tab. 1.

¹² Hrișcu, Bejenaru, Udrescu 1996, 135.

¹³ Ionescu 1975, 178, Tab. 1; Ionescu 1976, 143 f., Tab. 13.

¹⁴ Udrescu 1990, 84, Tab. 1.

¹⁵ Udrescu 1990, 84.

¹⁶ Ionescu 1976, 151.

¹⁷ Trohani 2005, 13, 16.

¹⁸ Udrescu 1992, 48.

¹⁹ Hrișcu, Băjenaru, Udrescu 1997, 99.

²⁰ Sîrbu 1996, 39. In his opinion, “*For the moment, still, the discovered bones have no indubitable traces that would proof that this animal could have had a significant role in alimentation*”.

horses, in fact used also by the contemporaneous populations from Central and Western Europe²¹.

In a synthesis about the animal breeding at the Geto-Dacians from the southern part of Romania (especially in its south-eastern one) compared with other regions (Moldavia, for instance), M. Șt. Udrescu would emphasize that the cabalines, when referring to the proportion of fragments in the total excavated amount would reach 2.6-6.5%, “a too small percentage for discussing about a species of alimentary significance”²². But, he also shows that “the persistence of the osteological remains belonging to the horse among the refuse remains, the existence of their cutting with sharp instruments, as well as the burnt bones, leave no doubt about the use of this animal also in alimentary purposes”.

In another article, since 1985, the same Udrescu, using for analysis several sites of southern Romania (Radovanu, Popești, Vlădiceasca, Cârlo-mănești, Piscu Crăsani) has mentioned that «nous n'avons enregistré qu'une faible proportion (2,6-5,9%) de fragments attribuables au cheval. Cette situation s'explique en premier lieu par le fait que le cheval, utilisé de plus en plus dans des buts militaires et comme animal de traction dans

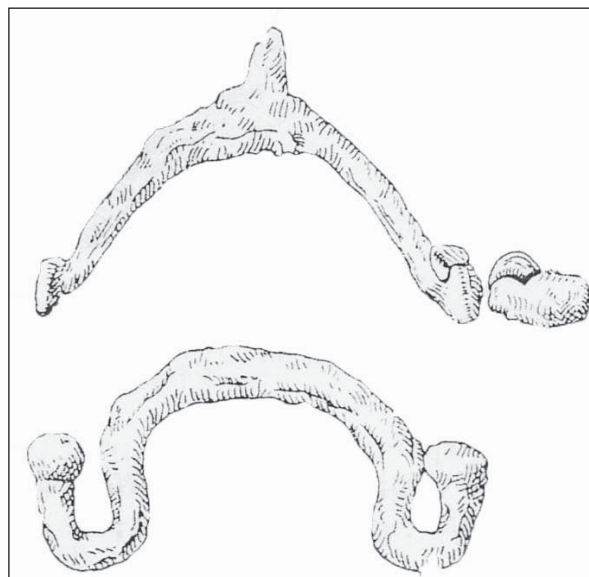


Fig. 1. Radovanu – Gorgana a doua. Iron spurs (after Șerbănescu 1985).

l'exploitation agricole, était tombé au second plan sous le rapport alimentaire »²³.

In a very interesting article, it was presented the information regarding the “Traumatic lesions in domestic animals and some empirical healing practices in the Geto-Dacian period”²⁴. Unfortunately, the authors, Dardu Nicolăescu-Plopșor and Mircea

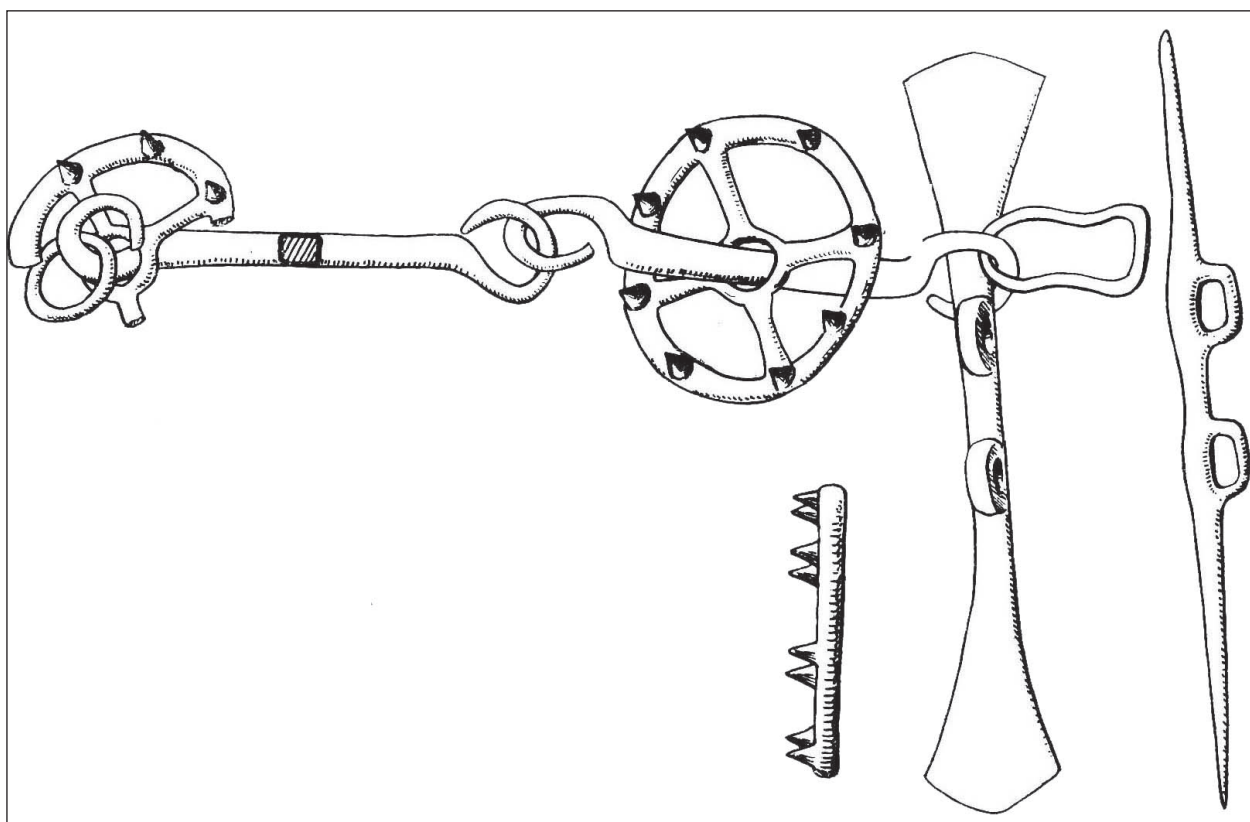


Fig. 2. Radovanu. Tumulus: a horse bit (after Vulpe 1976).

²¹ Tarcan-Hrișcu, Băjenaru, Udrescu 1996, 301 ff.

²² Udrescu 1985a, 64.

²³ Udrescu 1985b, 131.

²⁴ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Udrescu 1987.

Șt. Udrescu, when they discussed about the fractures in large animals, especially referring to the rib ones, do not make a clear distinction between *Bos taurus* and *Equus caballus*. It was just general information, mentioning that most of the fractures “are in transversal plan, while those in an oblique one have different degrees of obliquity”²⁵. It could be observed that the “location of the fractures in most often in the area of maximal curvature of the ribs and just in rare cases in the proximity of the rib-vertebral joint” and that “there are no signs to support the assumption that the fractures had been opened and over infected”.

The fractures identified on the ribs of some of the horses from the Getic sites at Radovanu (one case), Vlădiceasca (two cases), Piscu Crășani (eight cases) and Popești – Nucet (11 cases)²⁶, in the opinion of the archaeozoologists, “could not be provoked”, “otherwise than by the humans”²⁷. Possibly that at the horses, some of the fractures could be caused as a result of some human acts during riding (in fights), or during hunting.

Such fractures could often be overseen, especially that they “have no obvious consequences upon the productivity or behavior” of the horses²⁸. Concerning the healing of these traumas, it could be connected with the “natural way of being diminished by the breathing mechanism, but also with the muscle-fibrous and tegument loco-regional contention”.

Indirect proofs of the horse use by the Getae from Radovanu

Harness pieces. The presence of the horse at **Radovanu** has been also indirectly proven. Some metal items have been discovered, which show that *Equus caballus* has been used for riding. In *Dwellings no. 2, 10 and 17*, belonging to the *Level II*, some iron spurs have been found (fig. 1)²⁹, “made of bars, with different transversal cross-sections: plan convex, squared, or rounded. They have a semicircular shape and have semicircular knobs, small perforations for binding, or a small hook at their ends in the middle part of the semicircle, the spurs have, more or less outlined spikes”³⁰.

Also, in 1937, on the territory of the Radovanu village, have been discovered by hazard, in

a cremation burial situated in the mantle of a tumulus, a *sica*, two spear points, a chain mail, but also a horse bit (fig. 2), dated at the end of the 2nd c. and beginning of the 1st c. BC³¹. Also on the Lower Argeș, upstream from Radovanu, in the *dava* from **Popești-Nucet** and in the *Tumulus no. 4* from **Novaci**, other similar horse bits could be identified, being used by the Getae between the year 150 BC and the Augustus epoch³². Not far from Radovanu, at **Chirnogi-Terasa rudarilor**, in *Burial no. 49*, mixed with the cremated bones of a deceased individual, have been discovered the horse bit, two spurs and two buckles³³. The horse bits belong to the *Type III* established by Ioan Glodariu and Eugen Iaroslavschi³⁴. The spurs, dated at the end of the 2nd c. and beginning of the 1st c. BC³⁵ have been also documented in other sites from the neighboring areas of the site from Radovanu; we mention here **Popești** and **Vlădiceasca**³⁶. To the same period belong the buckles that were also part of the harness pieces, being similar to those from **Novaci-Tumulus no. 4**³⁷.

The zoomorphic plastic representations from Radovanu. During the older archaeological campaigns, in the *dava* from **Radovanu – Gorgana a doua** have been discovered some items made of burnt clay, rendering human or animal personages. Besides the anthropomorphic figurines³⁸, two zoomorphic ones have been found (a ram horn and an animal head of unknown species³⁹), together with several avimorphic lids⁴⁰. During the investigations we had undertaken more recently, namely in 2004⁴¹, two figurines representing horse heads have been also brought to light⁴².

The first one has been discovered in the *Storage pot no. 2* from *Section no. XIII*⁴³. Inside the vessel,

³¹ Vulpe 1976, 209, fig. 18; Sîrbu 1993, 73, fig. 12.

³² Vulpe 1976, 113 f.; Turcu 1979, pl. IX/1; Trohani 1997, pl. XVII/2.

³³ Șerbănescu 1998, 262.

³⁴ Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, pl. 73/17, 22-24.

³⁵ Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979, 126 f.

³⁶ Trohani 1975, fig. 3/1; Turcu 1979, pl. IX/6.

³⁷ Vulpe 1976, 207, fig. 16/1, 7, 12.

³⁸ Șerbănescu 1985, 27, fig. 2/1-2; Sîrbu 1993, 120; Sîrbu 2009, 45.

³⁹ Șerbănescu 1998, 172. See also Sîrbu 1993, 125 and Sîrbu 2009, 61.

⁴⁰ Șerbănescu 1985, 25, fig. 2/5; Sîrbu 2009, 61. We should not forget here also the bronze oil lamp bearing zoomorphic representations, see Trohani, Șerbănescu 1975, 284, 286, fig. 9/1; Turcu 1979, pl. XXXVIII/1-3; Șerbănescu 1985, 27.

⁴¹ Șerbănescu *et alii*, 2005, 287.

⁴² The items have been also mentioned by Sîrbu 2009, 61.

⁴³ Șerbănescu *et alii*, 2013, 69, fig. V-VI.

²⁵ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Udrescu 1987, 64, fig. 1-2.

²⁶ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Udrescu 1987, Tab. 3.

²⁷ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Udrescu 1987, 67.

²⁸ Nicolăescu-Plopșor, Udrescu 1987, 67.

²⁹ Șerbănescu 1985, 27, fig. 4/14.

³⁰ Șerbănescu 1998, 175.

that was preserved in a proportion of 65%, being deteriorated just in its upper part, some bigger parts, as well as beads of adobe have been found, some of them bearing imprints of the poles (the maximal diameter that could be traced has measured 0.12 m) as well as traces of the wickerwork, ashes, charcoals, different broken animal bones (coming from bovines, ovicaprines, suines) and rare ceramic fragments (coming from hand-made or wheel-made pottery). Among bones, about 0.70 m above the conical bottom of the receptacle (which had on its base a “panel hole”), it was found an almost complete horse skull, put horizontally, with its base downwards and with its “sight” towards south-east.

At 0.05 m above the skull, in the north-western side of the storage pot, in a thin layer of ash (of 0.03 m), pigmented with beads of adobe and charcoal, it was found a horse head (with its preserved length from mouth to ears of 6.4 cm, its maximal width being of 3 cm) and part of the neck, both having a triangular cross-section and belonging to a cabaline, being made of burnt clay. Its colour is greyish outside, inside and in the breakage, the item being well smoothened and burnished at the surface, especially in the region of the neck, due to its repeated contact with the hand. Unfortunately, it was fragmentary preserved, very probably coming from a zoomorphic receptacle, or from a vessel with a beaker shaped as a horse head (figs. 3-5). For this we bring as argument the perforation that starts on the forehead of the horse, piercing the head and the arched neck, as much as it was preserved. The forehead part is shaped as a “horn” (with a height of 1.1 cm, with a diameter on its point of 1.1 cm and of 1.7 cm on its base; the perforation having an opening of 1 cm), thus giving the animal the appearance of a unicorn (the length from the point of the “horn” and up to the limit of the preserved neck has measured 6.3 cm). The ears, chirpy from ancient times, are slightly turned to the back. Also affected since ancient times was the end of the muzzle. On the forehead and on the upper part of the muzzle there were four rows of circles. They have been also done on the outer side of the ears and on the lateral parts of the muzzle, there existing a raw that ran in parallel with the muzzle and another one that was vertically placed. Also in lateral, on the lower segment of the muzzle, some hachure have been “cut”, rarer on a side and denser on the other.

It is obvious that the impressed circles (with a slightly oval shape and a maximal diameter of 0.4 cm), all of them done with the same instrument, have rendered the bridle, very probably decorated



Fig. 3. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse head; image of the right side. Photo Gh. Chelmec.



Fig. 4. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse head; image of the left side. Photo Gh. Chelmec.

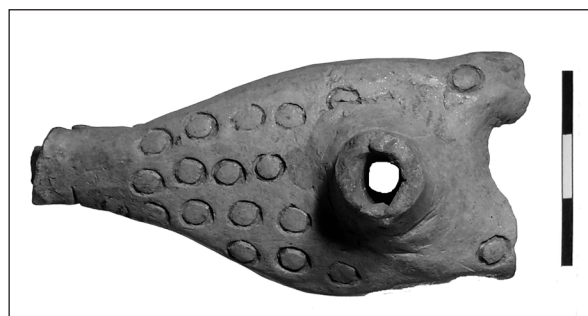


Fig. 5. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse head; image of the upper side. Photo Gh. Chelmec.



Fig. 6. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse; image of the left side. Photo Gh. Chelmeac.



Fig. 7. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse; image of the right side. Photo Gh. Chelmeac.



Fig. 8. Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua*. Fragmentary horse; image of the front side. Photo Gh. Chelmeac.

with disk-shaped appliquéés. The hachure, even if it could possibly be other components of the bridle, they are more probably hairs that some of the horse have in the area of the mandible or, hard to believe, the mane. It can be also taken into consideration the working hypothesis that the hachures could represent the grain sack fixed on the head of the horse, so that he could eat.

The second item has been identified in the *Surface no. XXXI*, from *Dwelling no. 21*, belonging to *Level II*. The fragmentary item, rendering just the head and part of the horse's neck, it was found 0.45 m west of a hearth, that, at the moment of its discovery was in a very poor condition (it probably had a rounded shape, with a preserved diameter of 0.94 m). The cabaline head (with a maximal length from the mouth up to the ears of the animal that reached 3.6 cm), curved at the middle, was rendered in a realistic manner, had an almost square cross-section (maximal dimensions of 2 x 1.9 cm) and rounded corners (figs. 6-9). The eyes mouth and pricked up ears, the main rendered by incised lines, as well as the bridle. The straps of the bridle went round the neck beneath the ears, then towards their frontal part, unified in front of the ears, went down on the forehead, and bifurcated to the left and right before the nostrils. They stopped near the mouth, suggesting the existence of a horse bit, afterwards running down towards the neck of the horse. On the forehead of the animal it could be noticed a row of four impressed circles (some of them slightly oval due to the curvature of the object, with a maximal diameter of 0.4 cm), that pointed to the existence of the bridle straps and some disk-shaped appliquéés. Probably in order to point out the presence of the horse bit in the mouth of the animal, part of the frontal teeth on the mandible have been represented by three almost triangular impressions. The paste used for the zoomorphic idol was one of a good quality, without any impurities. Its burning was also good, the obtained colour being of greyish nuance.

The analogies with two fragmentary item in the *dava* from Radovanu – *Gorgana a doua* are, unfortunately, just few. Upstream, on the Argeş river, in the **Popeşti – Nucet dava**, "in the southern bank of the surface Z"/1954, at the depth of 0.80 m, among the burnt and leveled remains of a surface dwelling belonging to level III", of the first half of the 1st c. BC, Corneliu Beldiman has found by hazard a burnt horse clay miniature, in a fragmentary condition (its preserved length = 6.2 cm, the width between the mane and the leg end = 3.2 cm)⁴⁴. This (fig. 10) has been modeled

⁴⁴ Beldiman 1994, 26 f., fig. 2/2. See also Sîrbu 1993, 124 f.

"of paste mixed with fine sand, of light brick-color, with strong traces of secondary burning on a side (in longitudinal plan). The small head, had muzzle and conical ears (the left one being broken in ancient times), without eyes and mouth, long neck, arched downwards, semicircular mane, rendered by pressing the clay between the fingers. The body, with cylindrical shape, out of which the short, conical legs have been pulled, the same as the tail (it was preserved just the right front leg, the others, the same like the tail, being broken in ancient times). On the body it could be noticed the presence of five incised lines".

Fragments of horses and men figurines discovered in constructions and their pits from **Cârlomănești**, seem to document the existence of some riding personages, namely of some knights⁴⁵. Thus, "the biggest fragment comes from the anterior part of the body, with the starting point of the front legs and with the largest part of the neck situated at 45° from the body horizontal plan. Determinant for this interpretation is the typical shape of the horse neck (with a triangular cross-section), as well as the man representation, by oblique incisions, on one of his sides"⁴⁶. It is important to point out here that the neck of this horse had also a triangular shape, the same like the first described object, from Radovanu.

Statuettes rendering horses have been found at **Băiceni** (4th-3rd c. BC)⁴⁷. Valeriu Sîrbu has mentioned "an almost complete figurine that probably rendered a horse – 4th-3rd c. BC – information by I. Tentiuc", discovered by chance at **Hlingeni**, in Republic of Moldova⁴⁸. In the settlement of the free Dacians from **Șcheia**, in

the burning chamber of an oven, it was identified a fragmentary horse, whose muzzle and tail have been broken in ancient times⁴⁹.

Burnt clay horses have been also discovered shaped as protomas. Even on the Argeș River, in the *dava* from **Popești – Nucet**, it was brought to light a fragment of a *rython*⁵⁰. Such items have been found in Romania at **Piscu Crășani**, **Calomfirești** (fig. 11)⁵¹ and **Cetățeni** (if it really renders a



Fig. 9. Radovanu – Gorgana a doua. Fragmentary horse figurine, image of the back side. Photo Gh. Chelmeș.

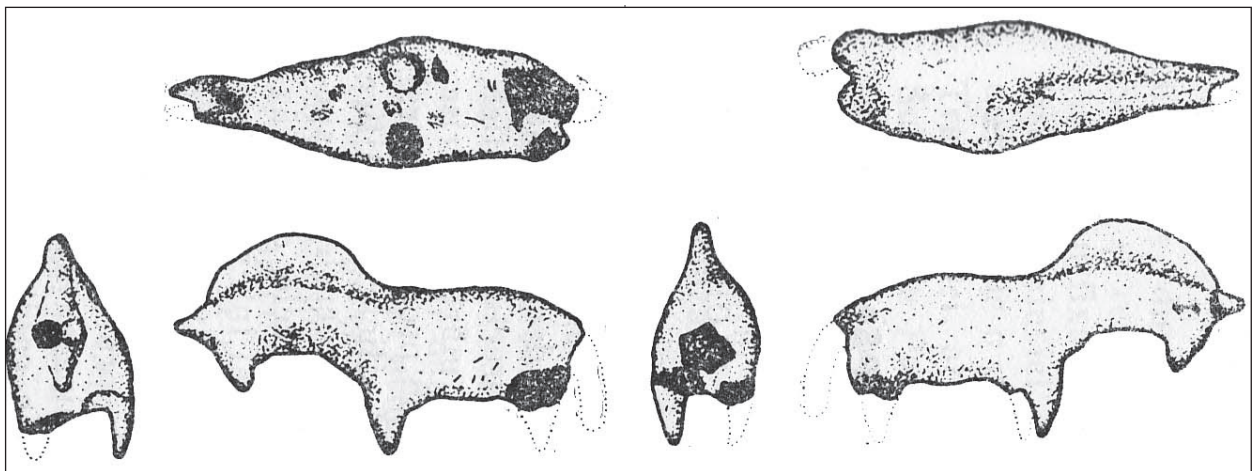


Fig. 10. Popești – Nucet. Clay horse (after Beldiman 1994).

⁴⁵ Babeș 1977, 336 f., 340, fig. 10/6-8, 11/1-2. See also Sîrbu 2009, 67, fig. 13/2-3.

⁴⁶ Babeș 1977, 337, fig. 10/6.

⁴⁷ László 1969, 85, fig. 6a-b.

⁴⁸ Sîrbu 1993, 124.

⁴⁹ Sîrbu 1993, 125, fig. 55/3.

⁵⁰ Vulpe R 1955, 253, fig. 13/6; Turcu 1979, 131, pl. XXXVI/4; Conovici 1987; Sîrbu, Florea 2000a, fig. 52/1.

⁵¹ Popescu 1941, 189 f.; Conovici 1987, 92 f., fig. 1-2; Mirea, Pătrașcu 2006, 35, fig. 46/1.



Fig. 11. Calomfirești. Horse protomas (Photo P. Mirea).

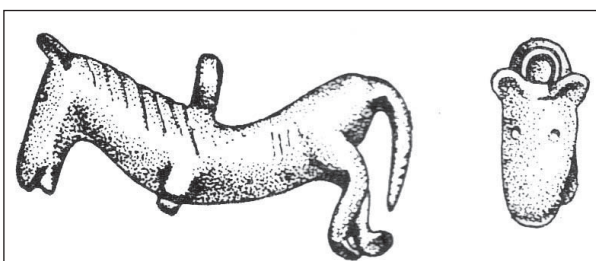


Fig. 12. Bâzdâna. Bronze horse (after Tătulea 1984).

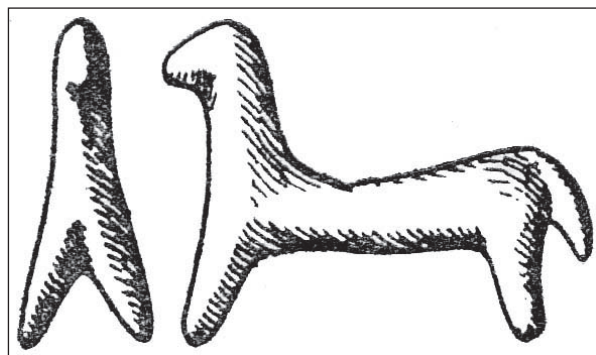


Fig. 13. Bujoru. Bronze horse (after Moscalu, Beda 1988).



Fig. 14. Țibrinu. Bronze horse (after Irimia 2011).

cabaline)⁵² while in Bulgaria a similar object of this kind with a horse protome has been discovered on the bank of the **Măndren Lake**⁵³.

At **Bâzdâna** it was also found a zoomorphic figurine, namely a very nicely modeled horse (fig. 12), as part of a larger object, made of bronze and dated at the end of the 4th century and beginning of the 3rd c. BC⁵⁴. Upon it there were no harness pieces but, in turn, it could be recognized the animal muzzle, the eyes, pricked up ears and the mane. This item was partly similar to those made of bronze from Hallstatt ones, from **Bujoru** (fig. 13)⁵⁵ and **Țibrinu** (fig. 14)⁵⁶.

The bridle rendered on both items from **Radovanu**, the same as the harness straps of a horse from **Cârlomănești**⁵⁷, corresponded to the harness mode used by the Thracians, as represented in some scenes, or upon silver, or gold appliques⁵⁸. As examples, of those representations, we mention the helmet from **Agighiol**, some appliques in the hoard from **Letnica** and **Lukovit**, as well as the *phalera* from **Galiče**, the last three sites being from Bulgaria. That on the harness pieces the Getae used also to fix appliques seems to be confirmed by the image of the horse rendered on the barrel-vessel from **Răcătău**, where the strap that girdled the chest and neck of the animal was decorated with roundels⁵⁹.

⁵² Crișan 1969, 194, fig. 106/4.

⁵³ Conovici 1987, 96 with lit.

⁵⁴ Tătulea 1984, 102, fig. 7/3

⁵⁵ Moscalu, Beda 1988, 29, figs. 3/11, 4/5.

⁵⁶ Irimia 2011, 27, pl. I/1, XIII/1.

⁵⁷ Babeș 1977, 340, fig. 10/7.

⁵⁸ Sirbu, Florea 1997, 91, figs. 8/2, 17/1-5, 18/3, 22/1, 41/8, 10.

⁵⁹ Sirbu, Florea 1997, figs. 73, 80/1.

The discovery of those two fragmentary burnt clay horses, the osteological remains in some dwellings, *Storage pot no. 2* and the archaeological layer, the same as the iron spurs that conform the existence of horse riders in the *dava* from **Radovanu – Gorgana a doua**, attest the fact that *Equus caballus* has played an important role for the Getic community from there. But, as shown by Valeriu Sîrbu, we also believe that in the case of this *dava*, “we don’t have sure evidences which could point to a cult dedicated to the animal itself”, but, we must rather admit that “there were probable the animal sacrifices meant to assure the breeding and enhancing the number of animals, unlike those for expelling the “evil spirits” beyond the borders of the human community, the same as those against disease, famine, drought etc. (inhumation of complete animals, or heads in settlements or at their periphery), due to the supposed magic power which has been assigned to them”⁶⁰.

Even if we cannot be sure of this sense, it seems that the *Storage pot no. 2* has been deteriorated in its upper part even beginning with the Getic period. Subsequently, this process has continued, so that, at the moment of its excavation by us, the receptacle was destroyed in the region of the rim in a percentage of 35%. For backing up this hypothesis we can use also the fact that inside the vessel have been found adobe pieces, charcoals, ashes, ceramic fragments, all showing that the pot has been used for “the storage of debris”. Seeming, the vessel has taken over the role of a pit. “A pit”, which, by its content and implicitly is accepted by most of the archaeologists, should have been of “domestic” use. But, we cannot elude the idea that the same pot could have served in a certain moment as a “cultic pit”⁶¹. It is known that this kind of pottery has been created for storing food – grains. Maybe, in order to expel the famine or drought, the community from *Gorgana a doua* has inhumed a horse head. The presence of the burnt clay horse head, most probably a part of a recipient commonly used for libations, seems to urge us to consider *Storage pot no. 2* as being the expression of an attempt of relenting the divinity for expelling the drought. Maybe, at that moment the Argeș had a smaller debit, or the river course was away from the place where it usually flowed, namely the base

⁶⁰ Sîrbu 1993, 131. See also Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 43.

⁶¹ In the category of the Getic “cultic pits” have been also included “those containing... animal inhumations... When we discuss about unburned animal parts, or cremated remains of complete animals, or just their parts, then, most probably we refer to the offering brought to the divinity, or to deceased people, by the nature of the context in which they have been found”, Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 45.

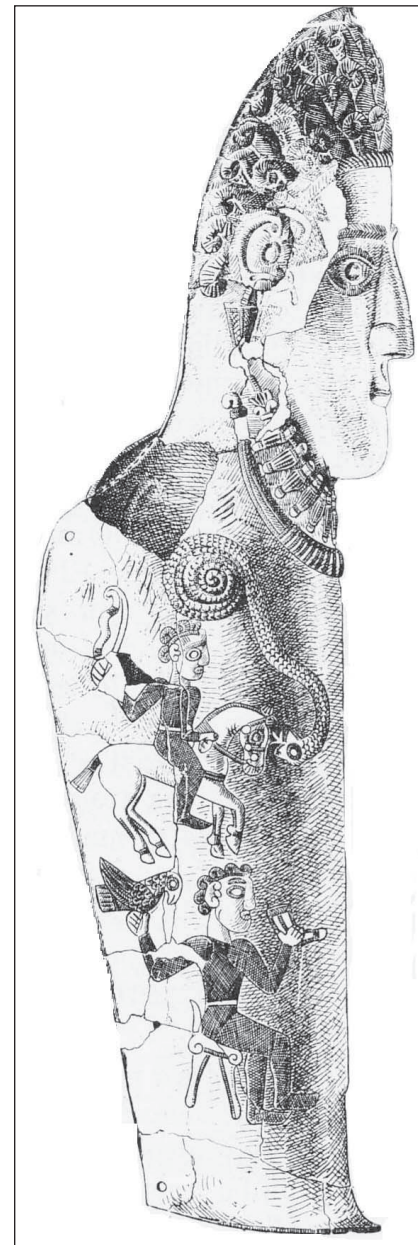


Fig. 15. Agighiol. Grave no 1 (after Berciu 1969).

of the *dava*, “migrating” to the north⁶². Or, maybe, the springs that even nowadays exists on the high terrace of the Argeș, some of them even in the proximity of those two *davae*, has diminished their debit, or have been temporarily dried, thus the community lacking a rich water supply.

If we are allowed now, we could also mention that even in present, at Radovanu the rain clouds are carried by the wind almost exclusively from south-east, namely exactly towards the place where the horse head from the storage pit had its “sight” to. We should not overlook also the fact that the Argeș

⁶² If, initially the river flow to the base of the high terrace in its right side, gradually its course has “migrated” to north-east. At the moment when the systematic archaeological excavations started at the beginning of the ’70 in the 20th century, the Argeș was flowing at a distance of about 2.5 km eastwards. Cf. Morintz, Șerbănescu 1985, 5; Schuster, Șerbănescu 2007, 241.



Fig. 16. Agighiol. Helmet (after Berciu 1969).

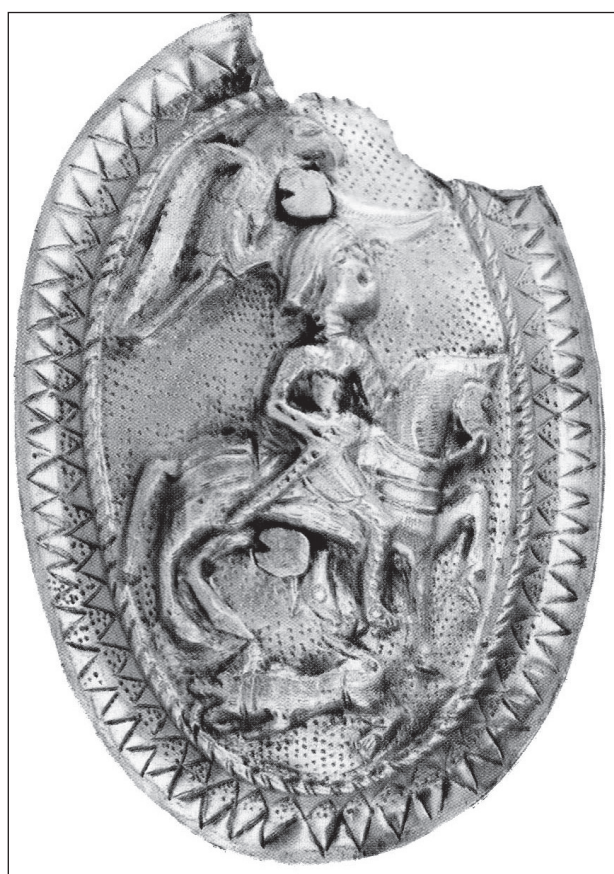


Fig. 17. Surcea. Phalera (after Glodariu, Moga 1994).

River flows to south-east⁶³, and there is also the Danube⁶⁴.

Some the archaeological finds from Muntenia and Moldavia attest that the Getae used to bring offerings to the protecting divinity of the water sources⁶⁵. In this category we could also include the discovery from **Conțești**, a site situated on the bank of a lake⁶⁶, “the road” of wood beams in the swamp from **Lozna**, where, amongst other objects a horse bit has been also placed, as well as the wells form the *dava* from **Popești – Nucet**, on the Argeș, **Ciolănești din Deal**, on the Câinelui (Dog’s) creeks, and **Brad**⁶⁷. These last three complexes belong to the end of the 2nd c.-beginning of the 1st c. BC. According to one of the specialists opinion, “A cult of the springs, of the water, of the rivers had all the Indo-European people and the Dacians must have also had. If the existence for the Geto-Dacians of a divinity that could be similar to Fons and a festivity like Fontinalia are for now just hypotheses, very probably the name of some rivers or of some river springs must have had the name of the water divinity, as we find in the Celtic or Roman world”⁶⁸.

We have reached the conclusion that those two fragmentary burnt clay horses in the *dava* from **Radovanu – Gorgana a doua** have been modeled by the same person. In this sense, we bring as arguments the paste (of good quality, without impurities), the burning mode, which resulted in the same colour of the items and not at the least, their decoration, which rendered the harness pieces.

⁶³ By the way, the easiest access from the Danube to the *dava* from Radovanu is the one upstream, along the river. Also from south-east, we believe that it was the most accessible way for the enemies. Of course, another route from the river or its neighbouring lakes seems to be the one from Căscioarele. It is only that, at the time when the *dava* from Radovanu were in use, the one from Căscioarele – *D-aia parte* would cease its existence (in the 3rd c. BC), cf. Șerbănescu 1998, 6-79 with lit.

⁶⁴ Regarding the river and its importance for the Getae, we should not forget what it was written in the *Comments of Servius*, Virgiliu, II, 497: “Aufidius Modestius has stated that he read about the Dacians who had the custom that, before going to the war, did not start their job before drinking by their mouth from the Istros a certain amount of water, like as a sacred wine and before making an oath that they would not return to their motherland before killing their enemies”.

⁶⁵ Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 44.

⁶⁶ About this find see Vulpe, Popescu 1976; Sîrbu 1993, 131; Sanie 1995, 49 ff.

⁶⁷ Petrescu-Dîmbovița, Sanie 1972, 257; Petrescu-Dîmbovița 1974, 286; Sanie 1987, 127 f.; Ursachi 1995, 80 ff., fig. 24; Sanie 1995, 44 ff., pl. XII-XIII; Palincas, Lippert 2003. For later periods, some wells have been documented at București-Străulești (2nd-3rd c. AD) and Ghermănești (4th c. AD), see Sanie 1995, 45, 47.

⁶⁸ Sanie 1995, 48 f.

We don't know if the person who has modeled the horses was a "*specialized*" local, or he was an itinerant craftsman. Considering also the small number of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic statuettes in this fortified settlement, we can hardly admit that there could have existed a workshop proper, similar to the one from **Cârlomănești**⁶⁹.

There are also differences between those two objects from Radovanu. One of them was an idol; the second was very probably part of a recipient. It is obvious that the respective "*vesse*" has been used for the liquid storage, being probably used during some cultic activities. It is true that the beak of the "*unicorn horn*" is relatively small, becoming even narrower when passing into the horse's neck, so that the liquid quantity that could have been poured was rather limited, with a small flow that was rather a drip.

Niculae Conovici, when discussing about the *rython* with a horse protoma from **Piscu Crăsani**, has considered that "*other vessels also, without having the shape of a horn, could have also served as a rython*", mentioning here the receptacle "*decorated with a ram, or a Billy goat, under which it was a small tube for pouring*", discovered at **Popești**, as well as the "*horned bird*" vessel (discovered on the territory of the **Bucharest** city) and those parallelepipedic ones from **Răcățau**, "*could have had the function of a rython*"⁷⁰. Starting from this idea, we can also include in this category the receptacle with horse head from **Radovanu**. The functionality of these vessels was as cultic receptacles, so that "*by analogy with the metal rythons we can assume that ceramic replica has been used also for libations for worshipping some divinities, maybe even by the noble that ruled the settlement, as spiritual chief of the tribe*"⁷¹.

The *rython* from **Radovanu** has been discovered, as we could already see, in a storage pot, above the skull of a real horse. Is it possible that the respective storage pot could have belonged to the "*chief*" of the *dava*? It is certain that the vessel was part of a row of other such storage vessels, placed in a north-south arrangement and situated in the south-eastern part of the settlement.

The other item from **Radovanu** has been discovered not far from the hearth of a dwelling, whose dimensions in furniture have been rather impressive. This dwelling was not different from the others from the settlement. Speculating here also, we could think that both horses, being



Fig. 18. Polovragi. Plaque (after Marinescu 1977).



Fig. 19. Lupu. Plaque (after Spânu 2012).



Fig. 20. Lupu. Plaque (after Spânu 2012).

⁶⁹ Babeș 1977, 343.

⁷⁰ Conovici 1987, 97. See also Sîrbu 1995, 75.

⁷¹ Conovici 1987, 98.

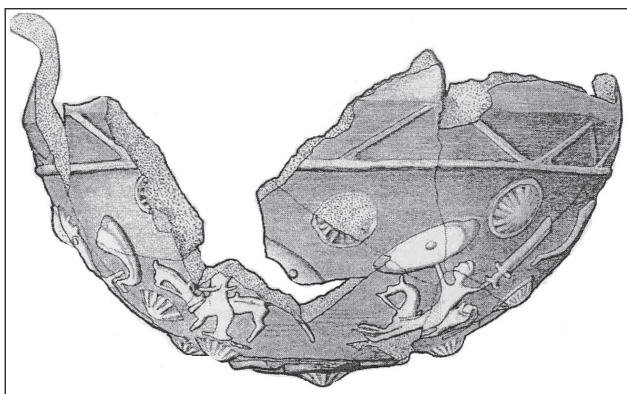


Fig. 21. Zimnicea. Fragmentary cup (after Spănu 2006).

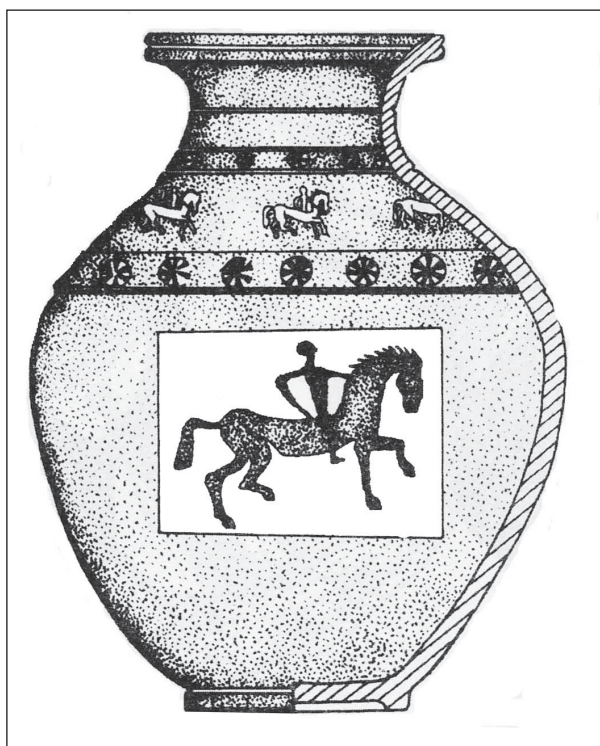


Fig. 22. Zimnicea. Pythos (after Moscalu 1983).

done by the same hand, maybe for the one and same beneficiary, *House no. 21* and *Storage pot no. 2* have been owned by a single person, or family. The respective personage was one of the chiefs of the *Level II* of settlements or was one of the *dava's* knights?

Looking carefully at the horse, the idol fragment has rendered the eyes, mouth and nostrils. On the zoomorphic receptacle fragment this anatomical details are missing. In turn, for both items the ears have been modeled in the same technique (pulled with the fingers from the raw clay lump, not subsequently added). The idol's ears are pointed to the front, pricked up, showing an interested, incited animal... The ears of the other animal are turned to its back, rendering sadness, anger, anxiety, or fear.

Thus, the potter has managed to transpose into clay two diametrically opposite states. Yet, we could pose the question if the mentioned positions of the animals had anything to do with the symbolic meaning for the owner (owners) of those items. Compared analysis with other Thraco-Dacian cabaline representations has proofed that *Equus caballus* had been rendered in both ways. Pricked up ears have also the horses from **Popești** and **Băzdăna**, those (some of them being winged) on the helmets from **Poiana Coțofenești**, **Băiceni** and **Agighiol**, those on *Cnemid no. 1* from the last mentioned site, the appliques from **Băiceni**, **Craiova**, **Letnica**, **Lukovit**, **Vraca – Moghilanska** and **Duvanli – Goliam Moghila**, the plaques from **Polovragi** and **Letnica**, the *phalera* from **Surcea**, those on *Mug no. 155* from **Rogozen**, the barrel-vessel made of burnt clay and rendering a knight riding a horse, as well as the paralelipipedic one from **Răcățău**, the *rythons* from **Popești** and **Piscu Crăsani**⁷². Ears turn to the back seem to be those of the horses on the *Mugs no. 157* and *159* from **Rogozen**, the *phalera* from **Galiče**, the applique from **Sveshtari**, the *kantharos* and “burnt clay mold” from **Răcățău**⁷³.

No rule could be established for the ears representation. Pricked up or turned to the back ears have been documented both for moving animals (in trot, or running) but also for those standing still. Some horses were afraid by the attack of some wild animals, others, on the contrary, were vigilant. Winged horses have been rendered both with pricked up ears and turned to their back, the last ones seeming brought in this position by the resistance of the air that *Pegasus* has filed through.

We have already mentioned several horses in the settlement from **Răcățău**. Among these, a special case is the image of a winged horse, identified upon a paralelipipedic recipient⁷⁴. As already observed by specialists, it is clearly an influence of the Greek-Roman mythology. Only that the *Pegasus* from **Răcățău** has something more than other representations of this fantastic animal⁷⁵; on his

⁷² Conovici 1987, fig. 1-2, 4; Beldiman 1994, fig. 2/2; Sîrbu 1995, figs. 2/1a-b, 2a, 3a-d; Sîrbu, Florea 1997, figs. 4/1-2, 6/3, 8/1-2, 9/1, 10/1, 16/1, 17/1-5, 20/1, 22/3, 23/1-2, 49/5, 51/1, 53/1-2, 63/3, 64/1, 73/a-c, 74/2a, 80/1, 84/1; Sîrbu, Florea 2000a, figs. 3/1, 5/3-4, 9/1-211/3, 12/1, 14/2, 17/1-4, 18/1, 19/1, 23/1, 25/2-3, 30/1, 37/2, 42/1, 44/2, 52/1, 53/1-1a, 61, 62/2a, 64/2, 81/2, 82/1, 84/2 85/1-2, 86/187/1

⁷³ Sîrbu, Florea 1997, figs. 20/2-3, 22/1, 26/3, 63/4, 72/h; Sîrbu, Florea 2000a, figs. 19/2-3, 26/3, 60/g, 87/2, 90/1.

⁷⁴ Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 101, fig. 74/2a.

⁷⁵ Which looked like the winged horses on the *Mug no. 162* from

forehead he has a very possible horn. Among the animals rendered by scratching on the limestone blocks of the paraments from a wall of the Dacian fortress from **Căpâlna**, seems to have appeared also the representation of a unicorn⁷⁶. Therefore, “the horned horse” from **Radovanu** would not be unique in the Geto-Dacian art. It is true that, we don’t know if our object was also a “winged” one. It is certain that this horse also, “confirms the fact that the Dacian imaginary was populated by fabulous animals, similar to the medieval unicorn”; but, as well emphasized, “must keep the proper reluctancy to the similarities among the ancient symbols and medieval ones, not to mention that we cannot know for certain which were the real significances assigned by the Dacians to those fantastic creatures”⁷⁷.

About sacrifices and animal ritual inhumations in the past few years have been publishes several studies by Valeriu Sîrbu and Gelu Florea⁷⁸. Therefore, in 1993 Sîrbu has detected a series of sacrifice traces both in burials, but also in the settlements, or outside of them. Among the uncremated offerings discovered in the southern part of Romania, he mentioned the “princely” tumulus from **Agighiol**⁷⁹, with a chamber (that distinguished itself from the remainder assembly of stone and beams), inside which three horse skeletons have been identified, two of them bearing harness pieces, the head and legs of a horse in a burial from **Andolina**; harness pieces from minimum six horses in the tumulus destroyed at **Găvani**; the horse head in the “princely” burial from **Peretu**; the skeletons of those 14 horses of Oriental type discovered at **Zimnicea** (complete and fragmentary skeletons, all castrated or stallion males; most of them between 6-9 years⁸⁰), some of them deposited with harness pieces⁸¹. It is significant that all these examples have belonged either to the 4th c. BC, or between the 4th-3rd c. BC.

Besides the unburned offerings found in funerary monuments, we should mention here also those in the pits, from the settlements, or even outside of them. At **Căscioarele-Coinea II** it was discovered a pit (noted as Pit no. 1), with rounded shape in the plan and trapezium-shaped in the profile, with

a slightly curved base⁸². Inside it, besides the skeleton of a hare (*Lepus europaeus*), it was also found a horse skeleton (*Equus caballus*). “The cadaver of the latter, complete and in anatomical connection, was placed close to the opening of the pit, set on its right side, with the head towards SSE and laid on its left scapula, as it didn’t fit into the pit; the spine was slightly arched, rear legs in normal position, of walking, while for the front ones the right leg was bent from the knee and raised, while the left was almost stretched”⁸³. According to the zooarchaeological study, “the deposited individual has been sacrificed at the age of 4 years and we are probably discussing about a male”, which, in the opinion of Mircea Udrescu and Elena Dobre⁸⁴, was part of the “group of “regular” horses”, relatively constantly found in the Geto-Dacian settlements”, having a stature of 132.5 cm.

Sîrbu, Ciocea and Damian desired to point out that “we couldn’t know if the pit has been especially dug for the cadaver deposition... or a disaffected storage pit has been reused. Also, we cannot establish for sure the cause of death: “natural death killed in battle or sacrificed at the death of his master. Regarding the hare, we believe that he was sacrificed on the occasion of the ritual made for the deposition of the horse”.

Together with the horse, there were also found the bridle, the horse bit and a buckle, all made of iron and entirely preserved⁸⁵. These harness pieces, based on their analogies with similar items from **Zimnicea**, **Făcău**, **Găvani** and **Tolstaja Moghila**, enabled their finders to date the pit in the second half of the 4th c. BC, “more probable towards the end of that century”⁸⁶.

Also on the territory of the **Căscioarele** village, but on the spot “Cătălu”, George Trohani has partly investigated a pit shaped as a bell (Pit no. 2) belonging to the 2nd c. BC, in which a horse skull has been identified⁸⁷. Unfortunately, it is not known for certain if the complete animal or just the skull has been placed in there⁸⁸. Also at **Vlădiceasca**, in the Pit no. 3 dated in the 3rd c. BC have been identified parts of a fragmentary skull (facial massif) of a horse⁸⁹. Its presence alone in an isolated

Rogozen, or on the helmet from Băiceni see Sîrbu, Florea 1997, figs. 4/2, 20/4.

⁷⁶ Glodariu, Moga 1989.

⁷⁷ Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 101.

⁷⁸ Sîrbu 1990; Sîrbu 1993; Sîrbu, Florea 1997; Sîrbu, Florea 2000a.

⁷⁹ Bolomey 1968.

⁸⁰ Haimovici 1971; Haimovici 1983.

⁸¹ Alexandrescu 1983; Sîrbu 1993, 101 ff.

⁸² Sîrbu, Ciocea, Damian 1992, 25 f., pl. I/1-2, III/1-2, V; Sîrbu 1993, 103, fig. 32, 60/1.

⁸³ Sîrbu, Ciocea, Damian 1992, 25.

⁸⁴ Udrescu, Dobre 1992, 30, Tab. 1.

⁸⁵ Sîrbu, Ciocea, Damian 1992, 25 f., pl. I/1, V.

⁸⁶ Sîrbu, Ciocea, Damian 1992, 25 f. with lit.

⁸⁷ Stoica 1984, 142.

⁸⁸ Sîrbu 1993, 104.

⁸⁹ Ionescu 1976, 144; Stoica 1984, 142.

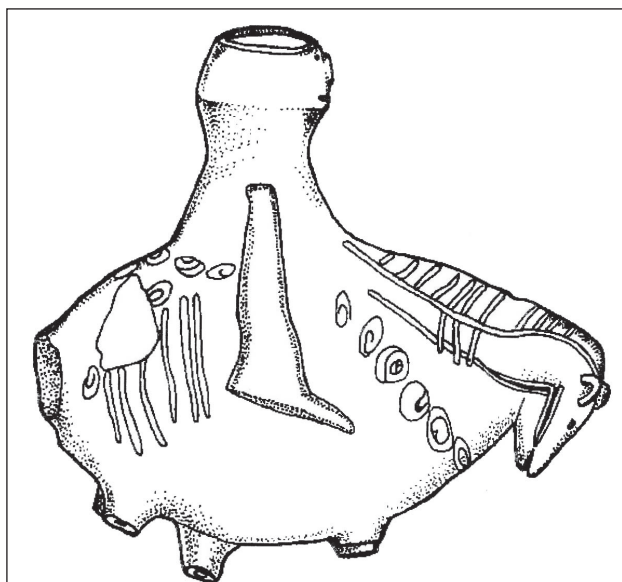


Fig. 23. Răcătău. Barrel-shaped vessel (after Căpitanu 1994a).



Fig. 24. Răcătău. Kantharos (after Căpitanu 1994a).

complex “could be suggestive for a more special care given to this animal”⁹⁰. At **Zimnicea**, in a pit of the 2nd c. BC, two complete horse skeletons could be identified⁹¹.

In the Dâmbovița County, in the Getic settlement of the 2nd c. (second half)-1st c. BC, in the **Cătunu** village, have been found three complexes with horse osteological remains⁹². Therefore amongst

the materials recovered from the *Surface dwelling* no. IV, bones of a horse head could be also identified⁹³. The archaeozoological analysis has shown that they belonged to “a horse aged at 7-8 years”⁹⁴. A truncated pit (noted as *Pit* no. 19) has contained the skeleton of a complete horse, flexed, with the stretched front legs and head orientated to the east⁹⁵. His age was estimated to 8-9 years⁹⁶. Another pit, situated towards the periphery of the settlement⁹⁷ has contained the head and extremities from two legs of an adult female individual, very probably aged at about 4 years⁹⁸. The individuals from Cătunu have been included into the category of the Oriental horses⁹⁹. In the opinion of Cornelia Stoica, « *L'enterrement de certains parties du squelette de cheval, sans autre objet de mobilier funéraire, pourrait représenter une continuation simplifiée d'un rituel funéraire plus ancien, à savoir le dépôt à côté du mort (inhumé ou incinéré) de certaines parties des animaux sacrifiés à l'occasion du banquet funèbre, ou bien des tombes symboliques ne renfermant pas les os du mort. ... nous estimons que la pratique des enterrements partiels de chevaux, sans autre mobilier funéraire..., ainsi que les tombes de chevaux au squelette entier..., pourraient représenter une influence de rituels funéraires pratiqués dans le milieu thrace, greffées sur des traditions locales géto-daces* »¹⁰⁰.

In the site from **Bordușani – Popină**, of the 2nd c. BC, in *Pit* no. 91, it was discovered “a horse skull with the mandible situated upwards and a swine talus with polishing traces, placed close to its bottom, at the depth of 1,41 m... with a NV-SE orientation”¹⁰¹. To the first half of the 1st c. BC has been also assigned the complex of about 15 sqm from **Conțești – Lacul lui Bârcă**¹⁰², on which cremated horse, ovicaprines, suines and bovine remains have been discovered¹⁰³, together with iron objects, among which five spurs have been identified.

Unburned offerings of *Equus caballus* have been found not only in the perimeter of the settlements. A horse skull has been discovered in a pit from

⁹³ Stoica 1980, 195.

⁹⁴ Stoica 1980, 195.

⁹⁵ Stoica 1984, 138 f., fig. 2.

⁹⁶ Haimovici 1984, 145.

⁹⁷ Stoica 1984, 138, fig. 1.

⁹⁸ Haimovici 1984, 145.

⁹⁹ Haimovici 1984, 149.

¹⁰⁰ Stoica 1984, 143.

¹⁰¹ Trohani 2005, 91 f., pl. 138.

¹⁰² Vulpe, Popescu 1976; Sirbu 1993, 106.

¹⁰³ Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1976.

⁹⁰ Ionescu 1976, 151.

⁹¹ Stoica 1984, 142.

⁹² Stoica 1980; Stoica 1984; Sirbu 1993, 104. Other horses were discovered at Zimnicea necropolis (information Anca Ganciu).

București-Bucureștii Noi, while at **Vadu Săpat**, on the spot “*Budureasca 3*”, in the ring-ditch of a tumulus, “have been placed seven (?) horse heads, from which two with their muzzle towards the exterior, grouped on the northern side. The bones were either in anatomical connection, either represented just by the skull, mandible, or few cervical vertebrae. The horses skulls have been arranged either on the bottom of the pit or slightly above it”¹⁰⁴. If the pit from “*Bucureștii Noi*” has been dated in the 2nd c. BC, the complex from “*Budureasca 3*” has been assigned to the 5th-4th c. BC. An assembly that was similar to the last mentioned find has been investigated at **Gherăseni**¹⁰⁵, where horse skull has been placed in a circular ring-ditch.

The cabaline osteological remains have been discovered either in settlements or outside them, even beyond the “*borders*” of¹⁰⁶: **Divici** (1st c. BC), **Dumbrava** (1st c. AD), **Poiana** (2nd c. BC-1st c. AD), **Someșeni** (1st c. BC-1st c. AD), **Șura Mică** (2nd-1st c. BC).

An interesting situation has been revealed by the faunal study of the remains from the fortified enclosure of the 1st c. AD from **Pietroasa Mică – Gruiu Dării**. In various complexes, besides other materials, horse bones have been identified (Complexes 2, 3, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 63, 71, 92)¹⁰⁷. In *Complex 45*, for instance, the osteological fragments have come from a juvenile and an adult, in *Complex 46* from an individual older than 15 months, in *Complex 63* from a sub adult individual. The percentage of *Equus caballus* in the total amount of domestic animals has reached 2.34%. According to the archaeozoologists, “the material is very fragmented, the evident traces revealing the marrow being retrieved from the bones and this is why, we consider that it was consumed. Defleshing, or traces of fire could not be detected, fact which could suggest the boiling of meat pieces”¹⁰⁸. It is also interesting the conclusion that “a surprising second place, regarding the meat that could be provided was occupied by the domestic horse, that doesn’t mark itself out with too many remains, but is well represented by the minimal number of individuals”¹⁰⁹.



Fig. 25. Răcățau. Clay mold (after Căpitanu 1994b)



Fig. 26. Rome. Trajan Column, Scene no. XXXI (after Vulpe R. 1988).

Some Conclusions

In some of the antique written sources, it was pointed out the importance given by the Getae to their horses. Unfortunately, those writings are scarce¹¹⁰. Even so, the antique writers noticed,

¹¹⁰ Thucydides, II, 96, 1; Arrianus, *Anabasis*, I, 4, 4-5; Arrianus, *Cynegeticus*, 23, 2, 72; Dio Cassius, LI, 26, 1; Ovidius, V, 7,



Fig. 27. Rome. Trajan Column, Scenes nos. CXLIII-CXLIV (after Vulpe R. 1988).



Fig. 28. Rome. Arch of Constantinus, Large freeze of Trajan (after Gramatopol 2011).

13-14; Dio Chrysostomos, XII, 19. See also Pippidi 1967, 183 ff.; Cotiugă, Alexianu 2001, 11, 20-21, 30, 78.

that in Dacia, “one could see everywhere swords, breast plates, spears and all places were full of horses, weapons and armed men”¹¹¹.

On the other hand, it could be observed that also the “*cultural*” images of the “*Thracian knight*”, prior to the Roman conquest, were in a relatively small number, both north and south of the Danube¹¹². Few such representation of knights north of the mentioned river are, as we already mentioned before, those on the *Cnemid no. 1* (fig. 15) and helmet (fig. 16) from **Agighiol**, the *phalerae* from **Surcea** (fig. 17) and the plaques from **Polovragi** (fig. 18) and **Lupu** (figs. 19-20), the Getic fragmentary cup with relieved decoration (fig. 21), as well as on the *pythos* (fig. 22) from **Zimnicea**, the barrel vessel (fig. 23), the *kantharos* (fig. 24) and “the burnt clay mold of the Thracian knight” (fig. 25) from **Răcățiu**¹¹³.

Even if the written and iconographic information regarding the Getae and their horses is not very rich, it proofs that *Eqqus caballus* had played a significant role in the life of the Getic communities, both in their economic and religious domains. If in the economical activities it is obvious that the regular horse had been used, in turn, the elites had used, as stated above, the so-called “*elite horses*”. These latter horses are to be found, most probably in the depictions rendered upon some items, like those from **Polovragi**, **Lupu**, **Surcea** or **Răcățiu**. It is not excluded that riding personages, represented upon some objects could have been in fact “the Thracian knight” and the “*danubian*” one from the Roman Imperial time¹¹⁴. Daniel Spânu has recently draw the attention that the “*Falerae with male personages do not render simple riders... The shield, the spurs, the sword or the mantle, or maybe especially the horse representation, should not be perceived just as hints of the “warrior” character of the rendered personages, but mostly as references to the privileged social mythological status. From this reason, this armed, mounted characters, could be called, “knights” no matter*

their additional mythological significance which they possess.”¹¹⁵.

Despite the importance given by the Getae to the horses, images of horse riders belonging to this population are rare on the Roman monuments raised after the Daco-Roman wars. In the large majority of cases the warriors are rendered as pedestrians. Thus, on the *Trojan Column* we could mention, among others, the Scenes XXIV, XXXII, LXXV, XCIII, CXXXV¹¹⁶.

Mounted Dacians are being rendered, in the opinion of some of the authors who have studied the Column, on the occasion of the invasion that occurred during the first Daco-Roman war of the Decebalus allies on the Lower Danube. Thus, in Scene XXXI knights could be noticed (Dacian and Sarmatian ones) trying to cross the Danube (fig. 26)¹¹⁷. Radu Vulpe had described this moment with the following words: “*In the front plan there were rendered several knights crossing the river. But this could be done in dramatic conditions. In the lower left corner, near the separation tree, two individuals that were partly sunken, step the water in despair, trying to keep themselves above it by using a shield that they cling to. One of them had raised a hand, asking for help. In front of them a third one, being in the same situation, had raised his both hands begging for being rescued. But no one could help them, because beyond them, two riders fight also with this trouble: one had fallen over the mane of the horse, who swam fearfully and could hardly be controlled, while the other, whose horse with the head lost into the waves goes into the deep, stretches his arm to the bank, where a comrade grabbed it and rescued him thus reaching to the dry land... More in front, in the middle, a rider could hardly make himself stay on the horse, with one hand keeping the bridle, while with the other he grasped the mane. Near the chest of the animal it could be seen fallen the wolf head of a Dacian flag*”¹¹⁸. In the opinion of Vulpe, the artist, who

¹¹¹ Appianus, 18, 1.

¹¹² Sanie 1995, 69.

¹¹³ Crișan 1969, 209, fig. 115/1-2; Moscalu 1983, 93, pl. LXVII; Căpitanu 1969, 66, fig. 46-47; Căpitanu 1987, 72 ff., 78, fig. 1a-d, 2a/3; Căpitanu 1994a, 335 ff., fig. 1-2, 4; Căpitanu 1994b, 123 ff., fig. 1-2, 4-5, 8; Marinescu 1977, 30, fig. 8; Glodariu, Moga 1994, 36, 39, fig. 7-8, 18-19; Sanie 1995, 95, 97, pl. XXXII/1; Sîrbu, Florea 1997, 63, 67 and fig. 8, 16/1, 31/3, 73; Sîrbu, Florea 2000b; Sîrbu, Florea 2000c; Spânu 2006; Spânu 2012, 75, pl. 68, 136/1. Mioara Turcu (1979, 138) suggests that on another Getic “*Delian*” cup horses are being represented but, it is obvious, as considered by Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu (1966, 115, fig. 1-2), that they are Billy goats.

¹¹⁴ Spânu 2007, 68.

¹¹⁵ Spânu 2012, 112.

¹¹⁶ Daicoviciu, Daicoviciu 1968, pl. 12-13; Vulpe R. 1988, 53 ff., 75 f., 84 f., 88 ff., 128 ff., 132 ff., 178 ff., 199 ff., 218 f., and Scene no. XXIV on page 55, Scene no. XXXII on page 75, Scene no. XXXVIII on page 85, Scene no. XL on pages 89, 91-92, Scene no. XLI on page 93, Scene no. LXIV on page 129, Scene no. LXVI on page 133, Scene no. LXX on page 138, Scene no. LXXI on page 139, Scene no. LXXII on page 141, Scene no. XCIII on page 179, Scene no. XCIV on page 180, Scenes nos. XCV-XCVI, Scenes nos. CXI-CXVI on pages 199-204, Scene no. CXXXIV on page 219, Scene no. CXXXVI on page 221; Petolescu 1991, fig. 1, 4-5, 7; Petolescu 2010, 114 f., fig. 4/1, 5, 6/1.

¹¹⁷ Daicoviciu, Daicoviciu 1968, pl. 17-18; Vulpe R. 1988, Scene no. XXXI on page 73.

¹¹⁸ Vulpe R. 1988, 72.

worked the respective scenes, desired to render those who had tried to cross the Danube riding, as being Dacians, as we see the clothing, the hair done and beard of the personages. The intention was also strengthened by the presence of the *draco* flag. It is only that, according to the mentioned specialist, the artist could have been mistaken, as in Moesia just the mounted Sarmatian detachments could have attended the fight, as the “cavalry was a weapon by excellence belonging to the field Getae...As the Getae from Muntenia and Lower Moldova were now disarmed and dispersed, at the disposal of the Romans, it is mandatory to take into consideration just the Sarmatians”¹¹⁹. Maybe also the lack of an own significant cavalry could have determined the king to make alliances with other barbarian populations, who could compensate this deficiency.

We think that the supposition of Radu Vulpe might be correct, the same as the assertion according which the Getae from the field excelled in taking the benefit of the military use of the horse. In fact, this could be also an explanation for the raids of the Gets south of the Danube, in most of the cases for plundering, purpose for which an efficient final imposed

the presence of the cavalry¹²⁰. We should not forget also that, without a very mobile cavalry, Burebista would have been unable to make his wars on such a wide spaces¹²¹.

Seemingly, the mounted Dacians had played a rather minor role in the Daco-Roman wars, fact which is also suggested by the fact that on the Column, next to the *Scene XXXI*, appeared just one more image, with *Scenes nos. CXLIII-CXLIV*, upon which Dacian riders could be seen, amongst them being possibly the king Decebalus, on whose trail it could be seen the Roman cavalry (fig. 27)¹²². That still Dacian mounted detachments, made of noble people, had attended the fight, is a fact confirmed by the “*Large freeze of Trajan*” on the Arch of Constantinus from Rome, in which the Emperor could be seen when defeating the Dacians, where a *tarabostes* is also present, falling together with his horse (fig. 28)¹²³.

¹²⁰ Petolescu 1991; Petolescu 2010, 99 ff.

¹²¹ Crișan 1977, 230 ff.; Petolescu 2010, 43 ff.

¹²² Daicoviciu, Daicoviciu 1968, pl. 17-18; Vulpe R. 1988, 227 and *Scene no. CXLIII-CXLIV* on page 227; Petolescu 1991, 38, 89, fig. 8; Petolescu 2010, 115.

¹²³ Gramatopol 2011, fig. 58.

¹¹⁹ Vulpe R. 1988, 74.

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