

The long tradition of the Italian historical studies allowed achieving significant results – which have not been sufficiently investigated yet –, useful for improving the understanding of those territories located along the Danube valley which, between ups and downs, were subject to Rome at least beginning with the time of Augustus. On a first analysis of the published material, it became apparent how – out of all the Danubian provinces – the Italian researchers focused their interests on *Dacia* from various reasons, out of which the most important is the widely perceived linguistic and cultural proximity to contemporary Romania; likewise, the impact of Trajan's conquest, which continued to spread throughout the following centuries, involving directly the first scholars who approached ancient history from a lay perspective during Renaissance. On the other hand, the two *Moesiae* have never been the object of a greater attention from those who were conquered by the inexhaustible fascination of those territories united by the crossing of the Danube, once Roman territories, but having their own particular cultural traits and traditions. Despite this fact, an exceptional documentation is preserved in Bologna: the documents elaborated by Luigi Ferdinando Marsili in the XVIII-th century, a direct witness to a series of masterpieces of Roman military engineering, many of which no longer exist today.

Due to its vastness, the research has been divided into two phases, in order to correspond to the two purposes, the first one generic and the second one extremely specific:

1. To begin with, it was evaluated the contribution of the Italian tradition with regard to the Danubian Roman provinces, in order to obtain a synthetic vision of the research and studies carried out along the centuries. The resources employed are obviously composed of published bibliographic material and, to a lesser extent, of archival material. A bibliographic and archival approach represents a proof of scientific and knowledge (or awareness) spirit, which is often ignored in favour of the less traditional approaches. The phenomenon of dividing the subjects into sectors is nowadays a serious obstacle in the path of knowledge development, since the synthesis efforts and the energies employed in establishing a specific and secure starting point – including all the previous steps – are more and more scarce.

In this first stage, we have consulted all the Italian authors who, beginning with Renaissance, have even briefly or marginally dealt in their works with historical aspects of the Danubian Roman provinces. This endeavour made possible the identification of the merits and contribution of the Italian tradition; however, it also highlighted the inexplicable gaps and

a huge amount of limits which characterize the history of studies from this century. Where possible, these situations have been interpreted and explained, as in the case of the involutive parable in the historical criticism, initiated in the XX century and inexorably continued until the post-war period. The attention given to the reconstruction of context represents a value and, at the same time, a limitation of the current work. On the one side, the fact itself that such an extraordinary quantity of published material existed made possible a systematisation of a large amount of information and the development of a complete and critical synthesis, useful for all subsequent studies; on the other side, overcoming the limits of the History-Archaeology module and the approach from the perspective of the recurrently interrogated source was a challenge only partially overcome: unfortunately, some of the works included in this research would have required a more detailed study, so that they could be really understood. A double perspective has been adopted: synchronic (in an interdisciplinary manner), but above all diachronic, since these subjects do not have a universal value, but they have to be systematically introduced in the atmosphere of the time in which their authors wrote.

Each selected work was interpreted in the light of a divergent perspective: a look set on the present, and another look, mobile, set on the past.

Following the presented perspective, there have been identified all the essays and epistles of Cyriacus of Ancona (Ciriaco d'Ancona) on archaeological themes, starting from the inscriptions, the letters to friends and biographers, until the information on the Arch of Trajan. For that purpose, no new major element has been detected, however there have been emphasised some aspects related to the subject in question and to the originality of Cyriacus's view point towards his contemporaries. A limited space was dedicated to the biographical aspects because, in Cyriacus's case, they were intrinsically related to the writing activity. This fact is extremely relevant if it is connected with the detailed geographical descriptions presented in his work, where – based on the first geographers of the VIth century B.C., authors very appreciated by Cyriacus – the mythic fact is found, but a predominant role is reserved for the physical and geomorphological data. The analysis of the historical routes in search of the ancient remains is sometimes expressed in a very realistic manner, or at least with an obvious adherence to facts (and even to the truth), very far from the XVIth century's perception. Subsequently, Marsili's XVIIth century work marks the distance from the humanist geographical studies, but these documents are dedicated a distinct study.

On the borderline between the XVIIIth and the XIXth centuries, the situation has changed radically: in Italy there was a climate of openness which determined the intellectuals to take interest in ancient history from a new perspective, that of the scrupulous and learned collector. The reference is clearly to Scipione Maffei, the collector par excellence. In this case, apart from the biographies and essays published, the archive material found at Biblioteca Capitolare Library of Verona was given much attention. The so-called “flyers” have awakened a strong interest because, as in Marsili’s case, they hadn’t been systematically studied yet and, therefore, could have contained new information, able to clarify open-ended questions or raise new questions. In fact, it was difficult to give an appropriate answer to this situation, since the huge amount of material, together with the subsequent publications (which it wouldn’t have been fair to eliminate or ignore), represented an enormous limitation. Being aware of its partiality and of the lack of an exhaustive enquiry of the accessed documentation, the present study managed to preserve its interpretative effort. Thus, we found out that in Italy the studies on the informational potential of the Maffeian documents had reached a dead end for at least a century (except the isolate case of Buonopane). At this point, it appears that the study of the archival documents of the one which we might probably call the most well known Italian antiquarian has been entirely included in the interest of the European research, however not in that of the Italian research.

At this point of the synthesis, it was brought up the degree of approximation unfortunately required for Bianchi Bandinelli’s work. In this sense, an appropriate work would have been impossible to address here with due care, if we didn’t want to reach exaggerated proportions and ignore the initial purpose of well-organized synthesis; on the other hand, the short approach of the extraordinary load of these works and the limitation to considering what is obvious or what was part of the basic acquisitions of the historical tradition – not only Italian, but European – would have ignored another intention, that of a critical synthesis. The adopted solution – objectionable, of course – occurred spontaneously during the examining of Silvio Ferri’s essays, another crucial author for the study of the history of Danubian provinces, but not as known as the others. Ferri’s studies are seldom marked by a blind nationalism and are rarely characterised by their openness to other trends except the “Romano-centric” one; however, some originality characteristics are obvious, especially regarding the focus on the historical context in which the art works were created, but also through a mechanism of artistic critique which we might anachronistically define as *ekphrasis*. These two elements also describe the mature critique of Bianchi Bandinelli,

especially regarding the creation – extraordinary for that period – of the concept of art's historicity, whose relevance is not addressed here. Therefore, we wanted to directly connect these two methodological intuitions, admirably developed by Bianchi Bandinelli, to Ferri's prior acquirements, on the one hand in order to provide a different view point on the work of the most famous art historian, by placing him in the perspective of continuity and not of breaking with the foregoing Italian tradition, and on the other hand in order to provide a place and a reevaluation of Ferri's work, whose production was initially marked as "fascist" and, accordingly, almost forgotten in time.

The second half of the XX century is characterised by the development of numerous studies on the Danubian Roman provinces, especially by scholars from the Adriatic side, as is the case of Pavan. Being a relatively recent work, it was difficult to offer original assessments compared to those already expressed in the modern research. In order to fully understand the originality and vastness of Pavan's contributions, we mustn't make the mistake of dissociating the author's spirit and ideas from his works. We have analysed the essayistic work and we have identified its limits, which refer to a great extent to the lack of attention for the indigenous substratum of the territories conquered by Rome. This observation falls under the more general view of the Italian studies, which – for almost the entire XX century – is still dominated by urban archaeology, with Rome being in the centre of the historical research. We must highlight the fact that in the present study we avoided the contribution of the living researchers, since the continuous progress of research (and the possibility of subsequent revision) would surpass the intention of outlining a comprehensive and conclusive synthesis.

a. Until after the Second World War, the Italian interest in the Danubian territories limited inexplicably, including only Dacia. The writings mentioning the Moesiae are extremely rare, and Pannonia is practically absent. This phenomenon might be explained by noticing the progressive growth of the intellectuals' interest in the possibilities to observe and study the most famous Roman monuments: among those, the Trajan's Column becomes a real milestone; simultaneously, the lack of visibility of as many monuments able to highlight the effect of the Roman conquests in the Danubian territories would have been the cause of a momentary omission.

b. The effect of the fascist propaganda on the archaeological and historical research has been debated over and over again; considering the sectoral character of the subject and its vastness, it was considered useful not to investigate further, except the case in which this aspect has

become part of the researchers' training, influencing the outcome. The choice – which surely represents a huge limitation of the work carried out – was dictated by the awareness of not being able to deal with the subject in an appropriate manner, and out of respect for the work of numerous scholars, the results of a research carried out throughout a lifetime. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that the feelings of sympathy for colonialism and Romanity, promoted by fascism, resulted in (among other things!) drawing the historians' interest towards many cultural and archaeological aspects of the Roman provinces, with special reference to Africa; another consequence consists of the negative a priori consideration in which the subsequent tradition kept the researchers who formed themselves during the dictatorship. This aspect involved a superficial interpretation of their works.

c. In this sense – and having these premises – the contribution of Silvio Ferri, a scholar considered marginal by tradition, turns out to be remarkable. The reason for the lack of interest is probably found in the discontinuous nature of his works, marked by a lack of a general logic. Despite this limitation, his essays from 1962 must be considered to be of extraordinary interest. More, their contemporaneity with the most renowned works of Bianchi Bandinelli allows a complementary reading, able to explain the intellectual demands of the time.

2. From the beginning it appears obvious the uniqueness of some documents, those included in the Marsili Fund from the Library of the University of Bologna (BUN Fund) and those found in the private archive Bevilacqua-Ariosti (ABA), the latter being full of unpublished documents. Letters, works and other published and unpublished documents regarding the Roman vestiges noticed by Marsili at the borderline between the XVIIth and the XVIIIth centuries have been studied in the third chapter of our paper. After an overview and an outline of the general state of the XVII-XVIII centuries in the so-called “Republic of Letters”, the emphasis has been on the study of speciality, in order to reach the understanding and description of the bibliographical events from Marsili's documents, from their elaboration and drafting to the current disorganised arrangement. Only from this moment we have dedicated ourselves to the systematic research of all the materials, selecting those related to the theme: *Miscellanea* and *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus*. Comparing the two sources, there are two significant data:

a. Unpublished biographical documents, which we have only indicated, since they were out of our research objectives;

b. Countless notes and annotations included in *Miscellanea* referred to a previous published version, compared to the version published and known from *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus*. Comparing the differences, there were some hypotheses regarding their origin, in order to explain Marsili's hypertrophic tendency and, above all, there existed cartographic differences. At the end of the chapter there was a complete catalogue, with all the fortifications and sites registered by the Count, out of which some were eliminated in the paper's final drafting and, consequently, whose traces had been lost. Likewise, the notes introduced by Müller gained an origin and therefore they were included in the catalogue, together with the description of the sites;

c. A part of the correspondence included in *Miscellanea* refers to Trajan's Bridge, to its state of preservation in the XVIIIth century and to some speculations on the sources: serious criticism of Dio Cassius and hypotheses about its building. These judgments seem to be of extraordinary importance, especially compared to the unpublished documents preserved in the ABA Fund, which have never been taken into consideration until now;

d. A letter was identified which – truth be told – had already been published in the XIXth century in a general work about the authors in Veneto y Friuli, addressed to Del Torre. The XIX century publication has no note or critical apparatus, since its purpose was a simple collection of epistles. This letter immediately drew the attention, for it contained references to *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus*. However, the general interest would have remained to a simple observation if the answer hadn't accidentally been found, too, in the ABA private fund – this fact being completely unprecedented.

To conclude, a particular consideration was given to the epigraphic aspect; we especially focused on that group of epigraphs shipwrecked in *Tibiscum*, collected by Ariosti and annotated by Scipione Maffei, but seen by Marsili *in situ*, during the construction of the Carlsburg fortress (Alba Iulia). This is a subject well known to the European epigraphers. We have endeavoured here to add a few small pieces to a story already controversial and extremely complex, affected by time, names more or less known, unforgivable lightness and remarkable discoveries. With the aim of providing new ideas for research, we have focused on the iconographic apparatus, fact documented in Ariosti's anthology, but unanimously deemed as incomplete and, above all, uncertain as regards the drawings. We have included here the graphic documentation of Marsili, comparing it to that of Ariosti, always hoping to bring up new materials.