

*VOTA PRO SALVTE IMPERATORIS*  
IN AN INSCRIPTION AT ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA

By LIVIU MĂRGHITAN and CONSTANTIN C. PETOLESCU  
(Plate VII)

The evidence for the first town founded in Dacia after the Roman conquest is recorded in an important epigraphic document: '[Ex] au[ctoritate Imp(eratoris) Cae]sar[is] divi Nerv[ae] f[ilii] Nerv[ae] Traiani Augusti condita Colonia Dacica per [D(ecimum) Terenti]um Scaurianum [leg(atum) eius] pr(o) pr(aetore)'.<sup>1</sup> From the reign of Hadrian onwards, the town bears in inscriptions the name of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa, sometimes given in a simplified form; in the third century A.D., during the reign of Severus Alexander, the title of 'metropolis' is added. Sarmizegetusa was the seat of the governor of the province of Dacia, and then of Dacia Superior, and finally became that of the general governor of the three Dacias (*legatus Augusti pro praetore trium Daciarum, consularis Daciarum III*). Throughout the Roman period, Ulpia Traiana was the political, cultural and religious metropolis of Dacia.<sup>2</sup>

So it was natural that excavations on the site should have brought to light much valuable material, both epigraphic and sculptural, of the greatest importance to the history of Dacia and of the Empire. These include a fragment of an epigraphic monument discovered by chance in June 1964 on the northern side of the Roman Amphitheatre.<sup>3</sup>

Marble slab; height = 0.47 m; width = 0.30 m; thickness = 0.165 m. The letters are well cut and uniform; they are 1.5 cm high, except in line 6 where they are 1.3 cm. Plate VII.

OVEM  
DĒCORAT  
TIBIINEAD  
MINERVAQVA[e  
q]VODHODIEVO  
SAVRODECORATI  
· I · O · M · B  
VOTHODIEVOVIM  
MCORNIBVSAVRO  
RSPATERGRADIVE  
DECORA TISVOV  
XISTVNCTIBIINE  
MVSESSEFVTVRV[m  
CORNIBVSAV  
VSASTVEA  
BVŞA

It is evident that the text of the inscription contains formulae of the type to be found in the Acta of the Arval Brothers.<sup>4</sup> The first line of such an Arval record generally contained the names of the consuls in office, then the month and day; there followed the indication of the place where the invocation was performed ('in Capitolio'), then the name of the Emperor and then the formula: 'vota nuncupaverunt fratres Arvales in haec verba quae infra scripta sunt'.<sup>5</sup> Iuppiter Optimus Maximus was invoked first, then Iuno Regina, Minerva etc. But there is some variation of detail according to the date and more according to the occasion—whether it is that of the *vota annua* of 3 January or of *vota extraordinaria* for some particular crisis.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *CIL* iii 1443.

<sup>2</sup> C. Daicoviciu, in *RE*, Suppl. x, col. 610–55, s.v. 'Sarmizegethusa.'

<sup>3</sup> *idem*, in *Ritmuri Hunedorene* 8 (December), Deva, 1967, 6; Liviu Mărghitan and Constantin C. Petolescu, in *Studii Clasice* xvi (1974), 245, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See G. Wissowa, *RE* iii, 1895, col. 1463–86, s.v. 'Arvales fratres'; C. de la Berge, *DA* i, 449–53, s.v. 'Arvales fratres'; G. Gatti, *DizEp* i, 1895 (1961), 682–710, s.v. 'Arvales'; A. Pasoli, *Acta fratrum Arvalium* (1950).

<sup>5</sup> *CIL* vi, 2023–2119, 32338–92, 37164–5.

<sup>6</sup> We have completed our text with some emendations added to the version published in *Studii Clasice* xvi, 245–7, according to comments made by Miss J. M. Reynolds, to whom we address our warmest thanks, both for these comments and for other suggestions we shall mention further. We also express our gratitude to the Editor for the kindness he showed in conveying to us Miss Reynolds' and his own contributions and for agreeing to publish our paper in the *Journal of Roman Studies*.

Of the deities addressed, the third is Minerva and the fifth Mars Pater Gradivus; the second must be Iuno Regina, but the fourth and sixth remain conjectural. Mars does not appear among the gods invoked by the Arvales for *vota annua* or *pro salute* or *pro valetudine*. But he is several times invoked for *vota extraordinaria*.<sup>7</sup> So the occasion of these *vota* is perhaps a campaign (*gradivus*), and Miss J. M. Reynolds therefore suggests Mars Victor for the sixth place, and Salus Publica P. R. Q. for the fourth.

VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM IVNO REGINA QVAE

INVERBA · I · O · M · BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM QVOD  
 HODIE VOVIMVS ASTVEA ITA FAXIS TVNC TIBI IN EADEM VERBA BOVEM CORNIBVS  
 AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRAM MINERVA QVAE INVERBA · I · O · M · BOVEM  
 CORNIBVS DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM QVOD HODIE VOVIMVS ASTVEA ITA FAXIS  
 TVNC TIBI IN EADEM VERBA BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRAM  
 SALVS PVBLICA · P · R · Q · OVAE INVERBA · I · O · M · BOVEM CORNIBVS AV  
 RO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM QVOD HODIE VOVIMVS ASTVEA ITA FA  
 XIS TVNC TIBI IN EADEM VERBA BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS  
 VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRAM MARS PATER GRADIVE QVAE INVER  
 BA · I · O · M · BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FV  
 TVRVM QVOD HODIE VOVIMVS ASTVEA ITA FAXIS TVNC TIBI IN EADEM VERBA  
 BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM MARS VIC  
 TOR QVAE INVERBA · I · O · M · BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS  
 VOVIMVS ESSE FVTVRVM QVOD HODIE VOVIMVS ASTVEA ITA FAXIS TVNC  
 TIBI IN EADEM VERBA BOVEM CORNIBVS AVRO DECORATIS VOVIMVS  
 ESSE FVTVRVM

FIG. 1. RESTORED TEXT OF VOTA FROM SARMIZEGETUSA  
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By comparing it with the texts of the Acta of the Arval Brothers, the inscription at Ulpia Traiana may be restored as follows:

..... bovem cornibus auro decoratis v]OVEM[us esse futurum. Iuno Regina,  
 quae  
 in verba I. O. M. bovem cornibus auro] DECORAT[is vovimus esse futurum quod  
 hodie vovimus astu ea ita faxis tunc] TIBI IN EAD[em verba bovem cornibus  
 auro decoratis vovimus esse futuram.] MINERVA, QVA[e in verba I. O. M. bovem  
 5 cornibus (auro) decoratis vovimus esse futurum q]VOD HODIE VO[vimus astu ea ita  
 faxis  
 tunc tibi in eadem verba bovem cornibu]S AVRO DECORATI[s vovimus esse futuram.  
 Salus Publica P. R. Q., quae in verba] I. O. M. B[ovem cornibus au-  
 ro decoratis vovimus esse futurum q]VOT HODIE VOVIM[us astu ea ita fa-  
 xis tunc tibi in eadem verba bove]M CORNIBVS AVRO [decoratis  
 10 vovimus esse futuram ..... Ma]RS PATER GRADIVE, [quae in ver-  
 ba I. O. M. bovem cornibus auro] DECORATIS VOV[imus esse fu-  
 turum quod hodie vovimus astu ea ita fa]XIS TVNC TIBI IN E[adem verba  
 bovem cornibus auro decoratis vove]MVS ESSE FVTVRV[m. Mars Vic-  
 tor, quae in verba I. O. M. bovem] CORNIBVS AV[ro decoratis  
 15 vovimus esse futurum quod hodie vovim]VS ASTV EA [ita faxis tunc  
 tibi in eadem verba bovem corni]BVS A[uro decoratis vovimus  
 esse futurum .....

Enough remains of this important document to put its essential character beyond doubt; however, several problems arise when we try to establish its source, because the acts of the priestly college of the Arvales are recorded only in Rome.

However, the Dacian monument is not lacking in analogies. In 1962, Miss J. M. Reynolds published two fragments of inscriptions discovered in Cyrene and Ptolemais, written in similar terms.<sup>8</sup> In 1965 she added two more fragments which came also from

<sup>7</sup> cf. Henzen's indices in *CIL* vi.

<sup>8</sup> J. M. Reynolds, 'Vota pro salute principis' *BBSR* xxx (1962), 33-6.

Cyrenaica.<sup>9</sup> These inscriptions most probably record the religious activity which went on in this province,<sup>10</sup> in connection with the invocations and sacrifices that were annually offered on the third of January for the health of the Emperor and his family.<sup>11</sup>

In the correspondence between the Emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger, as *legatus* of Bithynia, we twice find mentions of invocations made for the Emperor in the province,<sup>12</sup> in terms which remind us closely of the inscriptions from Cyrenaica and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. So, in one of the epistles, Pliny informs the Emperor: 'Solemnia vota pro incolumitate tua, qua publica salus continetur, et suscepimus, domine, pariter et solvimus precati deos, ut velint ea semper solvi semperque signari'; and the latter answers: 'Et solvisse vos cum provincialibus dis immortalibus vota pro mea salute et incolumitate et nuncupasse libenter, mi Secunde carissime, cognovi ex litteris tuis'.<sup>13</sup> In another letter of the governor of Bithynia, we read: 'Vota, domine, priorum annorum nuncupata alacres laetique persolvimus novaque rursus certante commilitonum et provincialium pietate suscepimus precati deos, ut te remque publicam florentem et incolumem ea benignitate servarent, quam super magnas plurimasque virtutes praecipua sanctitate, obsequio, deorum honore meruisti'; and the Emperor answers: 'Solvisse vota dis immortalibus te praeunte pro mea incolumitate commilitones cum provincialibus laetissimo consensu et in futurum nuncupasse libenter, mi Secunde carissime, cognovi litteris tuis'.<sup>14</sup>

The term *provinciales* could stand (it is merely a suggestion) for the communities of provincials represented in a *concilium*. For comparison, let us mention an inscription of the year 161 from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa: '[Dis] faventibus et con[c]ordia imp(eratorum) evenit quod a primo adventu suo P(ublius) F(urius) S(aturinus) leg(atus) Aug(ustus) donec provincia deceder(et) ita singulos un[i]versosq(ue) benignitate sua tractarit oneribus etiam rel[e]vaver[it] ut felicissim[a] et praecipuis virtuti[b(us)] eius (sic) obs[er]vata simul [e]t devota provincia ei [grat]ia[s] agat . . . . . Germ . . . . .p(. . . . .) . . . .'.<sup>15</sup> By the term *devota provincia* some authors understand *concilium provinciae Daciae Superioris*.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in the letters of Pliny, instead of the representative authority (the koinon), there could appear those who are represented (*provinciales*).<sup>17</sup>

Thus it is possible that our inscription refers to the activity of this *concilium III Daciarum* which has been supposed to date back to the union of the three Dacias under Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 168-9).<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, as concerns the dating, Miss J. M. Reynolds draws our attention to the fact that the formula *bovem cornibus auro decoratis* can be found once in the same form in the Acta of the Arval brothers: . . . . ORATIS BOVEMVS ESS[e] . . . . ., where Henzen's suggested emendation [au]ratis for the stone's [dec]oratis must clearly be rejected. This inscription is dated under Marcus Aurelius between 166-9, and it is a useful indication for the dating of the inscription from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa as well (according to the letter forms, the second half of the second century).<sup>19</sup>

The name of Mars Pater Gradivus present in *vota nuncupata* from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa is in keeping with the critical military situation which required the presence of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius on the Middle Danube frontier. At that time, the capital of Roman Dacia itself was threatened, as emerges from an inscription to the Emperor by the 'colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica ancipiti periculo virtutibus restituta'.<sup>20</sup> In this instance, we could even suggest that this *nuncupatio votorum* was paid not only *pro salute principis*, but for the salvation of the threatened capital of Dacia.

### Muzeul de Istorie, Bucarest

<sup>9</sup> eadem, *PBSR* xxxiii (1965), 52-4.

<sup>10</sup> eadem, *PBSR* xxx (1962), 36.

<sup>11</sup> *ILS* 4918. See J. M. Reynolds, *PBSR* xxx (1962), 33, n. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, n. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ep.* x, 35-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ep.* x, 100-1.

<sup>15</sup> *CIL* iii 7902 (= *ILS* 7155); cf. I. Piso, *Acta Musei Napocensis* ix (1972), 463-4.

<sup>16</sup> See I. Piso, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 467 and nn. 26-30.

<sup>17</sup> cf. *idem*, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 467 and n. 32.

<sup>18</sup> M. Macrea, *Viața în Dacia romană* (1969), 69.

Cf. J. Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit* (1965), 139; C. Daicoviciu, *Acta Musei Napocensis* iii (1966), 153-63.

<sup>19</sup> *CIL* vi 32383 (= A. Pasoli, *op. cit.* (n. 4), no. 75 b).

<sup>20</sup> *CIL* iii 7969 (= *ILS* 371).



SARMIZEGETUSA: FRAGMENT OF INSCRIPTION RECORDING *VOTA*

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