

RELIGION AND CULTURE IN SCYTHIA MINOR

Nicolae V. DURĂ*

Rezumat. *Din antichitate, religia și cultura și-au găsit expresia în principal în arcadele templelor, unde au fost sub semnul motivației și al inspirației naturii spirituale și religioase, păstrându-și tipologia sacră până în epoca modernă. În spațiul românesc, religia și cultura și-au făcut simțită prezența dintru începutul genezei poporului român, chiar din cultura protoromână.*

Abstract. *Since the antiquity religion and culture have mainly found expression in the temple porches, where they have been, above all, under the sign of the motivation and inspiration of the spiritual and religious nature. In fact, they have preserved the typology of the sacred up to the Modern Times, upheld by outstanding names of universal culture. Nowadays, on the Romanian territory religion and culture have been expressing their presence since before the genesis of the Romanian people. "The Muses" have been at home here since the emergence of the Proto-Romanian culture, which originated many centuries before the emergence of the Romanian people. It is the presence of the Μουσείοι in Istros (as early as the beginning of the 3rd century BC) that certifies that religious and cultural activities in the region situated from of the Danube were under the sign of the Muses.*

Keywords: religion, culture, sacred typology

Religion and culture have also found a fertile ground in the Gettic-Dacian settlements in the Danubian-Pontic space, on the ground of which the fortress cities of Histria, Tomis, Callatis, etc. were founded. There, they have been above all an act of faith we could call, with good reason, "the ultimate science" (Plato, *The Republic*, parts IV and V). The exponents of this "ultimate science" were the famous "Scythian Monks" in the 4th and 6th centuries, the founders of European medieval culture.

The term of "culture" comes from the Latin word "*cultus-us*", which means "honoring the gods, the divinity". In the ancient times, the act of culture was, first of all, an act of honoring the Divinity, being expressed not only by the proper liturgical act - namely, by the fulfilment of the liturgical rite, along with sacrifices - but by artistic creation (poetry, theatre, music, sculpture, painting, etc.). This historical reality was also typical for the North-Danubian territory, long before the birth of Christ, when culture was, above all, a product of religious faith. Indeed, since the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. - when the first Greek and Thracian colonists of Asia Minor (the latter being Hellenized by language and culture) have founded their fortress cities on the Black Sea coast; therefore, we can talk of a

*Professor, Ph.D., Priest, Vice-President of „Ovidius” University, Constanța.

material culture, of universal span also on the Romanian territory. Yet, we should not ignore or hide the fact that in the Greek fortress cities (Histria, Callatis, Tomis, etc.), this culture was first of all an act of faith too and, *ipso facto*, “an ultimate science”, as Plato called it in his “Republic” (see parts IV and V).

Referring to Plato’s plea for “*faith*” (see parts IV and V), Mr. Andrei Cornea wrote - in the year 1986 - that “... the people who «believes» in something is making up, as a whole, a different scene from the ones who simply «know» something, being certain about it. The latter ones - he specified - are but a collection of intelligences focused onto a sole direction under the external and invincible action of demonstration. They are only bound by this common “to know”; nothing else keeps them together except the common constraint represented by the fact that none of them was allowed to appropriate “the science”, but “the science took them in possession, by the authority of the master that points to the slave. On the contrary, the other people, the “believers”, remain to a great extent free. Free to keep their faith or to deny it. That is because they themselves have chosen to believe in something and if they do so they are grateful to anybody else who does the same, thus finding, in a parallel option, a support and an encouragement regarding their own faith. The ones who “know” can ignore each other, which does not affect their „science”; the ones who “believe” cannot keep their faith without being united. Thus, the former are just a mathematical set of isolated individuals, while the others make up a community”.¹

These words - uttered by the Romanian philosopher in a time when the censorship of the regime wanted to rule even over the people’s subconscious - will stand as well for the existence of a number of high-class Romanian intellectuals, regarding their morality and civic sense, from the group of the ones “chosen” by God, who haven’t prostituted their intellectual status. Among them there are some scholar-clergymen as well², who loved Christ and not Mamona, who offered “power” to the “weak-willed” ones, as well as posts of honor, Seats, positions, and money at their whim. But, unfortunately, how few were those Romanian Christian intellectuals and clergymen (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) who had the courage not to sell their souls?!

In Pontical Dacia we could talk of a “local culture” since the 4th to the 3rd century B.C. This culture - the result of that cohabitation of the natives (the Thraco-Getans) and the colonists who mainly came from Millet and from the

¹A. Cornea, *Interpretation of The Republic*, in Plato, *Works*, vol. V, Științifică și Enciclopedică publishing house, Bucharest, 1986, p. 79.

²One of these was also the priest Professor Dr. Ioan V. Dură, who, on October 29, 1989, protested against the demolition of Romanian churches, addressing an open Letter to the General Secretary of the Churches’ Ecumenical Council in Geneve (see C.T. Dârțu, *Romanian personalities and their deeds 1950 - 2000*, vol. VIII, Iassy, 2004, p. 117).

Pontic Heraclea, where there also was a population of Thracian origin, but largely hellenized - has also had, from the beginning, a religious character. In these Greek fortress cities of Dobrudja, too, the source and the matrix of this culture - a fortunate product also of the symbiosis of the natives' (the Getans) and the colonists' religious beliefs - was the act of faith in the époque's divinities. And, it is this very faith - lived with intensity on the occasion of ceremonies dedicated to gods - which was being studied and learned in the Schools of the above-mentioned fortress cities, namely in those gymnasia of Greek language, where both the mind and the body were educated.

Regarding this local culture, emerging in these Greek colonies, historians have also noticed some aspects of gymnasia life, in these schools where the youth fulfilled both their religious and intellectual education and their physical one, similarly to those in ancient Greece, where these were public places where the gymnasiarchs (the gymnasia principals) were teaching both physical education and the religious-philosophical one. In Dobrudja, such gymnasia have been well known since the beginning of the 3rd century. For example, in Istros we have information about "the feasts celebrated here, especially for Hermes and Heracles, protective divinities of the gymnasium par excellence", about the "sports contests" and the religious-intellectual education "according to age groups"¹. We have the same information regarding "the gymnasium and gymnasiarchs" in Tomis, Callatis, etc.

In this sense, the activity of these gymnasiums had mainly been focused on celebrating some religious feasts dedicated to some divinities of the Greek-Roman and oriental world, such as Dionysius, Asklepios, Hygieia, Kybele, Sarapis and Isis, etc. Along with specific sacrifices, these feasts "were celebrated by the entire community, others being typical of the association, being only open to the initiated, in hidden places, deliberately imitating the mythical „cave” (μυχός) ..."².

Concerning the "Myth ambience" - including the one regarding "the cave" Plato talked about - they said it "offered itself some pieces the plurivalence of which seemed liable to support religious fidelity as well - as the history of the long previous centuries had shown - but also the physicalism, if they were directed as such"³. In the gymnasia situated in the fortress cities of Scythia Minor (Dobrudja) Greek colonies, "the ambience of myths" was directed both to theological reflection, regarding the gods and "mythical mythology", and to the philosophical one, regarding the world's creation, which - according to the old

¹A. Avram, *The Greek colonies...*, p. 583.

²*Ibidem*, p. 582.

³I. Brianu, *Greek philosophy up to Plato*, vol. I, part 1, Științifică și Enciclopedică publishing house, Bucharest, 1979, p. XXXVII.

Greek philosophy, taken over and refreshed by Plotin (the 3rd century A.D.) - came out of that initial “One”, which actually summed up the entire thinking of the Ionian School on the primordial physical principle and its relation to the manifoldness of things. Regarding the ontology of this „One”, they said it is “so hard to assimilate by the modern philosophical thinking” that this “could only be outlined - I. Brianu wrote - by meditating on the structure of the philosophical thinking in the pre-classical stage”¹. And this was also done by the Fathers and the theologians of the Tomitan Church (*St. Teotim*, the Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop of Tomis (4th-5th cent.), *St. Ioan Cassian* (4th-5th cent.), *St. Dionisie Exiguus* (5th-6th cent.), etc.), who have meditated and reflected both on the structure of the philosophical thinking in the pre-classical stage and in the classical one (Plato and Aristotle), inherited and conveyed through the gymnasia in Istros, Callatis, Tomis, etc., up to their age. Through their thinking - inspired from the pages of the Holy Book revealed text - these Fathers and theologians of the Tomitan Church have actually reached that knowledge of the “ultimate science” taken into discussion by Plato in His “Republic” (see parts IV and V), in the case of which “reaching the goal is mediated by an «if» and by an act of faith”², leading from the «mythical cave» to the noetic understanding of the fact that “the soul is something immortal” (Plato, V, 621).³

Talking about the religious-philosophical culture disseminated by the gymnasia in the Greek fortress cities on the Romanian shore of the Black Sea, we must emphasize that the Greek philosophy emerged - in the 5th century - in “Ionia”⁴, the metropolis of which, Millet, was the colonizing fortress city of the Pontus Euxinus’s shore in Scythia Minor (Dobrudja). Thus, we should notice the fact that few peoples of the world have had the chance to feed themselves with this philosophical thinking created by the Milesians, which was mainly represented by the mathematics of Thales of Millet (640-550 B.C.), that pride of noetic substance in ancient thinking.

The fact that such gymnasia have institutionalised the first “theatres” on the territory of Scythia Minor (nowadays Dobrogea) stands for the purely cultural character of the religious-cultic acts (the celebration of certain deities, sacrifices, public banquets, games, etc.). „Unfortunately - a Romanian archaeologist wrote - none of these edifices was localised so far by archaeological excavations, although benches that were components of those theatres (destroyed by the long run of time) were identified as spaces within the reconstruction of some more recent walls (at the big gate of the late fortress of Istros and recently at the gate of

¹ *Ibidem*, p. XCIII.

² A. Cornea, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 444.

⁴ I. Brianu, *Op. cit.*, p. LII.

the Roman-Byzantine fortress of Tomis)”.¹

Scythia Minor, (Dobrodja), Romanian territory long under the rule of the Roman Empire (The Eastern and the Western ones) was the birthplace of Daco-Roman and Romanian (sacred and profane) literature and culture. The beginnings of our literature and culture in the Daco-Roman period can be traced back into this geographical space of Pontic Dacia and their creators and toilers were the very sons of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church, such as Ioan Cassian, Dionysius Exiguus, John Maxentius (Exiguus), etc.; so we can notice the indisputable contribution of this metropolitan autocephalous Church in Scythia Minor, in the creation, development and assertion of the language, literature and (theological and lay) culture of Latin expression in the north-Danubian space, inhabited in those times by Daco-Romans, the ancestors of nowadays Romanians.

Its political, clerical, military and especially cultural relationships to the Old Rome and the New Rome (Constantinople) allowed the history of the Romanian people the access not only to the European history of those times, but to the history of universal culture. And this registration of the history of the Romanian people into the history of the European culture and civilization was, first of all, possible due to the indisputable contribution of the Tomitan Church, that, by its enlightened hierarchs, by its exquisite theologians, monks and priests, of a humanist-ecumenical formation, knew how to prepare the ground for the Romanians' entrance in the space of Christian, ecumenical culture and, through that, in the European space of yesterday and nowadays. That is why we cannot talk about that „oikuméne” or „orbis terrarum” of the known world of those times, of the Europe of yesterday and nowadays, without mentioning the „Tomitan Metropolitan Church” and its hall of fame (hierarchs, monks, clergymen and laymen), who had a ground-breaking contribution both to the Proto-Romanian civilization and culture and, ipso facto, to the Romanian one and to the European one, of a humanist-Christian origin².

Great representatives of the present-day European culture assert that the European culture is based on the Judeo-Christian spirituality and culture.

However, those who have also contributed to the making up of this culture - built on the religious culture and spirituality of a Biblical and patristical origin - are the founders of European medieval culture, among which the two “Scythian”

¹A. Avram, *The Greek colonies ...*, p. 584.

²See, N. V. Dură, *Monachism in Pontic Dacia. “The Scythian monks” (Daco-Roman) and their contribution to the assertion of ecumenical unity and the development of the European humanist-Christian culture in The Romanian Orthodox Church*, CXXII (2004), no. 3-4, p. 347-357; Idem, *Christianism in Pontic Dacia. The „Scythian Monks” (Daco-roman) and their Contribution to the Advance of Ecumenical Unity and the Development of the European Christian Humanist Culture*, în *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 2003, no. 1-4, p. 5-18.

(Daco-Roman) monks, *Ioan Cassian* and *Dionysius the Little* (the Humble), who, by their work, written in Latin, the language of their people, brought the spiritual and cultural values of their country into the pantheon of universal culture.

Their followers in the process of literary-humanist creation have also brought the same great contribution to European culture. For example, during the 20th century, Cioran and Eliade were to leave their mark - by means of Pascal's and Voltaire's language - not only on the French culture, but on the European and world one.

By writing their work in a language of international span - this time in a Neolatin language, such as their mother tongue - they succeeded in disseminating the cultural and spiritual treasure of their own folk, proving that there are no so-called "great cultures" or "great cultural centres" and "outside cultures", "provincial ones", produced by the so-called "small people" or "medium ones".

The Romanian cultural contribution - of the 5th to the 6th and the 20th centuries - to the European and world cultural and spiritual patrimony proves, beyond any doubt, that a so-called "great culture" is, in fact frequently amplified - if not also created - by representatives of so-called "small cultures". Although far from the metropolises of those Countries, such exquisite scholars of the Romanian people have brought their contribution to the treasure of European culture and spirituality of yesterday and of nowadays.

Referring to the literary and spiritual sources St. Ioan Cassian has used in his work, professor Ioan G. Coman stated that this one has "inspired himself" both from the "great Latin classics such as Vergilius, Horatio, Cicero, Persius, Salustius, etc.", and from "the Bible and the Saints Athanasius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianz, Saint John Chrysostom, Evagrie the Pontic, ..., Ilarius of Pictavium, Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Ruffin, Augustine etc., ..., keeping, as a Daco-Roman, the balance between the East and the West".¹ Indeed, *St. Ioan Cassian* - who made the proof of a rich and elevated classical, literary, philosophical and spiritual-religious culture, with a pronounced humanist character - has inspired himself both from the pages of the Holy Script and of the Great Fathers of the Eastern and Western Church of the 4th to the 5th centuries and from the works of the great Latin classics, thus revealing not only his classical (literary and philosophical) education, but his humanist-Christian orientation.

By his writings in the Latin language, of a biblical-patristic inspiration, the Daco-Roman Cassian has not only connected "the oriental Roman world" to the

¹I. G. Coman, *Patristical literature of Lower Danube in the IVth to VIth centuries as a genesis of Daco-Roman and Roman literature and culture - Ioan Cassian and Dionysius the Little*, in *The Romanian Orthodox Church*, XCIX (1981), no. 7-8, p. 777.

“occidental Roman world”, but created as well the basis for a common spiritual-religious orientation, of a monastic nature, thus contributing “fully to the progress of Romanization and the unity of Europe”. Moreover, Cassian “has conveyed to the West - the same Romanian patrologist noted - elements of the East’s patristic teaching and created the first spiritual link between Dacia and Gallia, namely between Romania and France, ...”.¹

By these contributions, the Daco-Roman Cassian was rightfully considered not only a forerunner of Romanian-French relationships, but also *an avant là lettre* founder of Europe’s cultural, spiritual and religious unity. At the same time, Cassian can be registered - along with his great conational, Dionysius Exiguus, in the list of Europe’s Holy Fathers of the Middle Ages.

Evoking the humanist character of his work, the same Romanian patrologist, the lamented professor Ioan G. Coman, wrote that some of his works “can be transformed into as many theatrical dramas, where the destiny of sins or of human virtues is performed. A literary humanism as by Aeschylus and Sophocles, but also an ascetism and moral order, reminding, up to a certain point, those of the pilleatuses and kapnobatai Strabon and Iordanes talk about”.² This destiny of “sins” or of human “virtues” - taken over as a pattern both from Aeschylus’s and Sophocles’s dramas and from those of Strabon and Iordanes - was spiritualized and humanized by Cassian from the viewpoint of the biblical and patristical teaching, on the basis of which he wrote his ascetical-philosophical work, where “ascetism” and “moral order” are terms and realities with the value of a classical reference.

Concerning Dionysius Exiguus, we know he “had taught courses of dialectics at the University of Vivarium”³ (Calabria, Italy), together with Cassiodor. Dyonisius (the canonist, the humanist, the translator, etc.) can be thus also considered the first Romanian university professor having taught in a University beyond the country’s borders. This university professor, of an European formation - who “worked under ten Popes”, some of them of Greek origin⁴ - “... has edited the pontifical Decrees, has translated the Canons of the first four ecumenical synods from Latin and Greek for the Romanian Church, then a number of letters of Chiril of Alexandria for the needs of “Scythian monks”, then works of Gregory of Nyssa and Proclu of Constantinople, a number of edification works and the structure of an important Anthology of patristic texts,

¹*Ibidem*, p. 778.

²*Ibidem*, p. 777.

³*Ibidem*, p. 778.

⁴See, I. V. Dură, *Ten Greeks elected Popes in the first eight centuries of Christianity. A less-known chapter of the history of Universal Church*, in *The Romanian Telegraph*, 1995, no. 3-4, January 15, p. 4.

where, just like Ioan Cassian, he quoted writers from the west and the East. As for the original works - professor Ioan G. Coman mentioned, he wrote: works of chronology: *The Book about Easter, Easter Arguments* and two letters about calculating the Easter Day”.¹ Last but not least, Dionysius the Little has founded the Christian Age, proposing that the years of the age people lived in, in those times, within the Roman Empire, be no longer calculated since Diocletian, but since Jesus Christ’s birth, ... This proposal was firstly adopted in Italy, in 525, then in France, England and, progressively, throughout the world. This is our nowadays era, common to the entire planet. Such an acquisition of universal value, owed to a humble-monk having left Pontic Dacia, sheds on the Daco-Roman literature it produced - professor Ioan G. Roman wrote - a light and a consideration that no other contemporary European literature has, for an approximately similar problem”.² Quod erat demonstrandum!

Obviously, we cannot talk of “Proto-Romanian culture” and, *ipso facto*, of “Romanian culture and spirituality” and, especially, of a historical continuity of those issues, without the concrete existence of the basic institution having ruled and amplified them, namely the Tomitan Metropolitan Church. Who could actually deny that we, the Romanians, have entered “the universality” (ecumenicity), the pantheon of universal culture, by these scholar “monks”, such as *St. Teotim I, St. Ioan Cassian, St. Dionysius Exiguus*, etc., who were sons of this Archbishopric and Metropolitan Church in Scythia Minor?!

The Daco-Roman (Proto-Romanian) or old Romanian culture has entered the network of European culture and, *ipso facto*, of the values of humanist spirituality and culture due to the contribution of these “humble” monks, founders of European medieval culture. But, how could we talk about these “founders of European medieval culture” - as European specialised Dictionaries and Encyclopaedias and the ones from above the ocean label them - without associating their origin and ethnical and spiritual-religious affiliation to the metropolitan church they left from?! So, this is another reason why this institution should exist as such nowadays, because its inexistence would mean to deny - unconsciously or out of ignorance - our own cultural and spiritual heritage and, inherently, its authors, the Fathers of the Church and of the Romanian people, nobody else than the founders of European culture.

For example, who could talk today about the history of Romanian philosophy, without explicitly referring to that “*vir in philosophia enutritus*” (man nurtured in the spirit of philosophy), namely to *St. Teotim*, the archbishop and metropolitan bishop of Tomis (about 392-407)?! Who, if ever, could talk

¹*Ibidem*.

²*Ibidem*, p. 779.

about the history of European, western spirituality, without explicitly referring to St. Ioan Cassian, the one who laid the foundations, in the European, western world, of a theological-philosophical spirituality and culture of oriental origin? Finally, who would dare to talk about the year 2004, 5, 6, 7 etc., without mentioning the name of Dionysius Exiguus, the creator of “our era” (the Christian one) and “*the father*” of western Canonical law?!

Without the theological work of Daco-Romans in Scythia Minor, Romanian theology could have no past to match its claims ... In fact, without a Ioan Cassian, a Dionysius Exiguus, a John Maxentius, etc., Romanian theology could not claim its fundamental contribution, that of the founder of Christian ecumenical theology, in the first millennium.

These are but some illustrative and convincing examples, that amplify the necessity of registering the Romanian culture and spirituality in its birthplace, “Scythia Minor”, Roman province, whose capital, Tomis, was the political and clerical metropolis of the Daco-Roman (Romanian) people.

Of course, it is hard to believe that somebody could still be insensitive to such a historical reality, which would so remain only a past event, because this “historical past” - a part of the very being of our Romanian people - needs to be reactivated and amplified up to its maximal possibilities of affirmation, beginning from its very core, “The Tomitan Metropolitan Church”, an eloquent evidence both for us and for the foreigners, that we are the successors of those persons nurtured into the philosophy of Christ, but who were unfamiliar to nothing in the culture, philosophy and spirituality that the human spirit had generated up to their times.

Without the presence of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church we could not talk about the constructive and real contribution of the Romanian Orthodox Church, “the mother of our people” (M. Eminescu), to the construction of the European „Home”¹, whose far-off foundation consists in the oneness of the Christian ecumenicity of the first millennium, promoted by the great founders of European culture and spirituality, coming from the Tomitan Church (Cassian, Dionysius, etc.).

The reactivation of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church would therefore mean becoming conscious of our affiliation to the European cultural and spiritual heritage also generated by the sons of the Tomitan Church (hierarchs, monks, laymen) and, *ipso facto*, of our registration into the historical process of a natural ethnical, cultural and spiritual continuity on the Romanian land. But, a claim and a

¹See, N. V. Dură, *The Churches of Europe and „The European Union”, Ecumenism, Christian Reconciliation and European Unity*, in *Theological Studies*, LIII (2001), no. 3-4, pp. 102-103.

rendering valuable of Christian, Roman and Daco-Roman Dobrudja's cultural and spiritual patrimony of the first millennium could not be done without lighting the beacon of Romanian consciousness at Tomis again, in the metropolis of Daco-Romans, laying on the Sea shore, where the Father of Romanian poetry, Ovidius, also lived his days and where the great tutelary spirits of European medieval culture (Cassian, Dionysius etc.) were born and lived.

However, lighting this beacon again cannot be done but from the flame that once flickered in the votive light of the cathedral of the Tomitan metropolitan church and that still hasn't vanished from the souls of those who confess the faith revealed by the Saint Andrew the Apostle. But, what more convincing reason could we consider for proving that this flame of apostolic faith is still alive in our minds and souls, than the reestablishment or, better said, the reactivation of the first metropolitan church on the Romanian land?!

Regarding this flame of apostolic faith lit on the Romanian land by St. Andrew the Apostle and the priceless contribution of the tutelary spirits of Proto-Romanian (old Romanian) conscience and culture to the heritage of the Christian-European spiritual-religious and cultural patrimony, the apostolic bishop of Rome has also made a specific reference, on the occasion of his visit in Bucharest, in May 1999. Pope John Paul II really wanted to declare that "the seed of the Gospel", brought on the Romanian land by St. Andrew the Apostle, has fallen "on a fertile ground" and it has brought about "an abundance of fruits of holiness and martyrdom. I'm thinking - His Excellence, Pope John Paul II declared, of Saint Ioan Cassian and Dionysius Exiguus, who have contributed to the convection of spiritual, theological and canonical treasures of the Greek East to the Roman West ..."¹. However, these spiritual treasures, both theological and canonical, that these daystars of European medieval civilization and culture have conveyed to the Latin West, were part of the very spiritual and cultural heritage of their land of origin, Scythia Minor.

Kneaded and cultivated by the sons of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church, these treasures will also remain a very valuable track of the Romanian culture, which finds in the heritage left by these "humble monks" not only its origin, but also its identity and its contribution to the European culture.

Without reactivating the Tomitan Metropolitan Church we are not able to talk about the cradle of Romanian civilization and culture, of European origin or about the "*ab antiquo*" autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but especially about its "apostolic character" and its orthodox and ecumenical faith, about which – explicitly - even the Head of the Roman-Catholic Church, Pope

¹The discourse during the ceremony..., in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Cahier Spécial, Vatican, 1999, p. 5.

John Paul II reminded, on the occasion of his historical visit to Bucharest, in May, 1999. Indeed, since its arrival on the Romanian land, the Sovereign Pontiff wanted to declare that, “as it is known, according to tradition, faith was brought to this land by the brother of Peter, the apostle Andrew, who sealed his continual missionary work by his martyrdom in Patras¹”.

So, the first apostolic bishop of the West was himself certifying the evangelising mission of St. Andrew the Apostle in the north-Danubian regions and, *ipso facto*, the apostolic character of our Church, certified by the very presence of the “first called” to apostleship on the land of Pontic Dacia.

On the occasion of the same visit of His Excellency, Pope John Paul II, in Bucharest - in May, 1999 - the first citizen of the Country, the president, wanted to declare that “the apostolic land of nowadays Romania has piously celebrated the attestation of the first millennium of Christian life, just as the Romanian language and culture have preserved up to this day the indisputable proof of the fact that along with Rome and prior to the expansion of the Byzantine Empire Christianity has been absorbed, in a natural way and for eternity, in the mind and the soul of those living between the Carpathian Mountains, The Danube and the River Prut, as a defining component of their way of living in this world”².

However, how could we talk of “Romania’s apostolic land” and, moreover, of the first millennium of Christian life on the Romanian land, of Romanian language and culture, without the presence - in its historical continuity - of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church?! What else could offer a better evidence of this first millennium of Christian life than the Tomitan Metropolitan Church?! Hasn’t Christianity been seeded on the Romanian land “once with Rome and the expansion of the Byzantine Empire” in Pontic Dacia and in its metropolis, Tomis?!

If we were to limit ourselves only to these few meanings suggested by the occasion of a unique, historical moment, namely the visit of the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope John Paul II, in Romania, it would be enough that the legitimate ones, namely the members of the Saint Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, consider and assess, in a responsible way and being detached by all ephemeral interests, both the reality of the first Christian millennium and the perspectives of the present and the future of our Country and Church and to decide, spontaneously and unanimously, the reactivation of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church, that certifies based on documents, not only the first millennium of “Christian life” of our Romanian people in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area, but of Romanian history and culture.

¹*Ibidem.*

²*The reverential message of the Republic’s President*, in the volume *The Apostolic visit...*, p. 15.

By this reactivation of the Tomitan Metropolitan Church - whose documentary attestation goes back to the Epoch of the First ecumenical Synod (Nyceea, 325) - another good evidence regarding both the apostolic character of the Romanian Church and its ecumenical vocation could be brought forward, rendered vivid especially on the occasion of the participation of the Tomitan hierarchs in the ecumenical Synods, which had been real parliaments of that Christian “*oikouméne*” or of that “*orbs terrarum*” of those times.

This ecumenical vocation of the Romanian Church is also manifest nowadays, both by the hierarchs’ and theologians’ position, attitude and contribution regarding the approach of the theological dialogues’ (Christian confessional and inter-religious) problems¹ and by their efforts to fulfil the Christian unity in the first millennium.²

Who else, but the sons of the Tomitan church, who have brought an unrivalled contribution to the European culture of their time, could more appropriately certify that, in the north-Danubian space, people have written and spoken both the Latin language, the language of the authorities (Daco-Romans) and the language of Herodotus, which at the time of the first ecumenical Synods was the “*lingua franca*” of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire?! That is why by the reactivation of the Metropolitan Seat of Tomis we can not only reassert the „apostolic character” of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but also revive and offer a clear evidence on its first millennium of existence on the Romanian territory of today, a millennium of intense Christian life and with a high culture of Latin language, conveyed by the representatives of the Tomitan Church not only to the East, but also to the West (Italy, Gallia, the Iberian Peninsula, etc.).

¹See, N. V. Dură, *Considerations on the theological dialogues of the Orthodox Church with the Churches: Roman-Catholic, Anglican, Old-Catholic, Oriental (Non-Caledonian) and Lutheran*, in *The Orthodoxy*, XXXVII (1985), no. 3, p. 390-449; Idem, *The interreligious ecumenism. The theological dialogue with the non-Christian religions (Judaism and Islamism)*, in *The Voice of the Church*, XLIII (1984), no. 7-9, p. 611-621; Idem, *Europe’s Churches and „The European Union”*. *Ecumenism, Christian Reconciliation and European unity*, in *Theological Studies*, LIII (2001), no. 3-4, p. 102-117.

²Idem, *Le Régime de la synodalité selon la législation canonique, conciliaire, oecuménique, du I^{er} millénaire*, Bucharest, 1999, p. 1000-1023; Idem, *Collégialité et synodalité. La primauté à la lumière de la législation canonique, oecuménique*, Éd. L’Age D’Homme, Lausanne-Paris, 2003, p. 217-239.