

On the Beginnings of the Town of Roman

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Résumé: Les problèmes spécifiques liés à l'histoire de la ville de Roman (*Târgul de Jos*), situé sur le cours inférieur de la Moldova, à la confluence avec le Siret, ont attiré de manière particulière l'attention des historiens roumains, ce qui a été bien reflété, d'ailleurs, dans la fréquence des références bibliographiques. L'importance spéciale dont la ville a joui dans l'histoire politique et sociale de la Moldavie a constitué, sans doute, l'argument principal de cet intérêt assidu, alimenté, également, par le statut particulier et la nature très originale de l'évolution précoce de la ville de Roman. Le fait que cette préoccupation constante a permis un grand nombre d'erreurs et de confusions va de soi, si l'on tient compte de la rareté et l'imprécision des sources documentaires, aussi que de l'absence des monuments archéologiques de surface capables de remédier à ce manque. De cette perspective, la nécessité de clarifier le contexte où la ville médiévale de Roman est apparue semble impérative, et c'est pour cette raison qu'elle fait l'objet de notre étude.

The first documentary attestation of the town appears on March 30, 1392, in a document written “in our fortress, the fortress belonging to the reigning prince Roman” (“în cetatea noastră a lui Roman voevod”) (*DIR*, A, I, 1966: 2-3). Beyond its intrinsic value, this document has a special significance, being the first internal act emitted by the princely office that has reached us and which mentions the status of “only great master of the country, from the mountains to the sea” (“mare singur stăpânitor al țării, de la munte până la mare”) of the reigning prince of Moldova, which, in our case is, of course, Roman I Mușat (1391-1394).

Our attention is drawn especially by the reigning prince's title, who had evolved from the quality of duke (duce / *dux*)⁶ or simple reigning prince (voievod) – denomination that can be found for Petru I Mușat (1375-1391) –, to the status of “great and only master” (“mare singur stăpânitor” / *samodîrjeț*, autocrat), assumed, as we have mentioned earlier, by his brother Roman I. On the one hand, we notice the “homologation” in Moldova of the title that the rulers of Walachia used in order to introduce themselves (§ Papacostea, 2001: 9-39), which proves the strong influence that the Bulgarian tsardoms from the south of Danube exerted, which were themselves imbued with Byzantine tradition. On the other hand, this “formula”, recently become part of the titles of the Mușat rulers, corroborated as well with the specification that their authority extended up to the coast of the sea, denotes both their claims of independence and sovereignty, and the conclusion of the unification process of the

⁶ “We, Petru, reigning prince, by the grace of God, duke of the country of Moldova (“Noi Petru voevodul, din mila lui Dumnezeu, duce al Țării Moldovei...”), in the act bearing the date May 1, 1384 and issued in Hârlău, on the order of Petru I Mușat (*DIR*, A, I, 1966: 1).

Moldavian territories and their being placed under the authority of a single principality⁷.

Then follows an unmerited documentary absence for the town and its very vague memory is only occasionally revived by a few sporadic and imprecise references present in different chronicles. Such is the case of some late interpolations from the chronicle of Grigore Ureche, attributed to Misail Călugărul (Misail the Monk), later on taken over by other people as well, in which there is an obvious confusion between the old town situated on the left bank of Moldova and the “new fortress” (“Cetatea Nouă”) of Roman, built by Ștefan cel Mare 5 km away, on the left bank of Siret. Though the chronicle of Melchisedec Ștefănescu, written in the middle of the 19th century signals the above-mentioned confusion promptly, it will nevertheless be perpetuated in Romanian historiography, which continued, until the second half of the 20th century, to identify Mușat’s fortress, presumably destroyed by Matei Corvin in 1467, with the New Fortress (“Cetatea Nouă”) of Ștefan (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 291).

The erroneous identification of the place of the old town has been accompanied by a just as hazardous estimation of its ancientness. Despite all the accessible documentary information, which indicate precisely and unanimously the fact that the settlement from Roman did not appear before the 14th century, there were some opinions according to which the town, under the name of “Sâmedru” (Saint Dumitru), might have appeared even in the 13th century. This interpretation – based on the toponym *Smeredova / Smedorova*, used by Grigore Ureche exactly in order to refer to “Cetatea Nouă”⁸ –, supported by I. Minea and by N. Grigoraș, was rapidly “cancelled” by the archeological observations made in the area of the old town (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 292).

Even on the “paternity” of the fortress made of wood and earth, and of the town itself, the appreciations have proved to be no less erroneous. Moreover, they linger on in Romanian historiography⁹, being an unbearable consequence of the fact that all the results of the archeological research are ignored, when they should, on the contrary, constitute peremptory arguments in such disputes¹⁰. The error, consisting in attributing the quality of founder to the reigning prince whose name it bears, is certainly determined by the homonymy of the parties under analysis. And concerning the ancientness of this mistake, we can say that it goes back

⁷ The problem of the existence of two Moldavian *countries*, one up and one down (*de Sus* and *de Jos*), placed, until the end of the reign of Petru I Mușat, under distinct princely authorities and having their centers of authority respectively in Suceava and Bârlad, has been fiercely discussed and debated in Romanian historiography, and still has not found its final solution. For example, Al. V. Boldur, a renown specialist in medieval Moldavian history, in a study published a few decennia ago (1974: 432-435), was in favor of the existence of *Țara de Jos* (the Lower Country) as distinct political entity, having its capital in Bârlad. This is where the Lithuanian prince Iurg Coriat (1374-1379) must have reigned, before being poisoned in Suceava on the order of Petru I, and replaced by a hypothetical grand-father of Petru I Mușat, the reigning prince Costea-voievod, actually attested as reigning prince in 1386 (Ș. Papacostea, 1988: 97-112).

⁸ “In the year 6991 (1483), the reigning prince Ștefan began to build the fortification from Roman market town, which is called Smedorova” (“Văleatul 6991 (1483), au început Ștefan Vodă a zidi cetatea de la târgul Romanului, ce se chiamă Smedorova”) (*Letopisețul Țării Moldovei...*, 1916: 66).

⁹ See, for instance, Șt. S. Gorovei’s opinion: “We owe Roman the founding of the fortification situated near the town bearing the same name: *our fortification, namely the fortification of the reigning prince Roman (cetatea noastră, a lui Roman voievod)*” (1976: 36). Recently, M. Șlapac has rallied, she too, to the same erroneous attribution: “To the fortification actions of this reigning prince [Roman I] must be connected as well the construction of the fortification of wood and earth from Roman market town, attested on 1392” (“De acțiunile de fortificare ale acestui domnitor <Roman I> trebuie legată edificarea cetății de pământ și lemn din târgul Roman, atestată în 1392”) (2004: 17).

¹⁰ In a recent study, M. D. Matei expressed the following opinion: “... what seems to me really strange is the fact that, despite all the material evidence provided by archeology and defying an elementary historical logic, a great deal of Romanian Historians continue to credit to the reigning prince Roman I Mușat two historical merits, which actually do not belong to him: respectively the building of the fortification of wood and earth from Roman and the founding of the town bearing this *name*.” (2004: 117).

in time to Miron Costin: the chronicler made this confusion for the first time in his work called *Poema polonă* (The Polish Poem), where he considers that, while Roman was reigning price, “during his reign was built the town that bears his name” (“sub dânsul s-au ridicat oraşul Roman care-i poartă numele”) (1958: 235). Axinte Uricariul, in his turn, confirms this statement in an interpolation of the chronicle of Grigore Ureche - Simion Dascălul: “he had the market town of Roman built and gave it his name, as the ownership act that can be found at Pobrata Monastery demonstrates (“au făcut târgul Romanul pre numele lui, precum mărturiseşte la uricul lui, carele se află la mănăstirea Pobrata”) (*Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei...*, 1916: 17). The same opinion, taken over by Nicolae Costin as well, will be adopted, later on, by most researchers starting with A. D. Xenopol, N. Iorga or P. P. Panaitescu (cf. C. C. Giurescu, 1967: 262).

Actually, the archeological research, focused on the area of today’s bishopric church, which is not accidentally known as “the small fortress” (“Cetăţuia”), led to the identification of the initial fortress – on a high plateau, about 10 m higher than the river level – the fortress founded by Petru I Muşat. The earthen fortress, shaped as a horseshoe, was endowed with a trench, an earthen stronghold and a defensive wall. According to all the indicators, the duration of functioning of this fortress was short. There is no proof of massive destruction; on the contrary, the general impression is that of abandon and even of systematic dismantling of the initial building material. Very significant is, however, the very *moment* of this abandon, which certainly took place during the first part of the reign of Alexandru cel Bun (Alexander the Good). In this sense, the stratigraphic evidence is conclusive: one of the entrances in the area of the defensive wall is cut by a hut hole, which was estimated to have existed, according to the data borne by two coins found there, towards the end of the reign of this reigning prince, which strongly suggests the presence of civil settlements in the area of the old fortress, probably even since the first half of Alexandru’s reign.

Similar numismatic evidence has been invoked as well to clarify the chronological limits valid for the entire interval of existence and functioning of this settlement, interval whose lower limit can be placed, given the presence of four coins issued by Petru I Muşat, towards the end of this prince’s reign.

The most “irritating” of the problems set forth by the archeological observation resides, of course, in the explanation of the reasons that led to the rapid abandonment and destruction of this fortress. M. D. Matei considers that the reasons for this decision must be searched, first of all, among the very reasons that supported the need of the edification of this fortress in the first place. In his opinion, the fortress from Roman never played a defensive role in relation to external threats, but instead it served a clear goal, that of consolidating the princely authority in the southern Moldavian area, during the process of political unification of the territories situated east of the Carpathian Mountains¹¹. So, at the beginning of the 15th century, when this goal had already been accomplished, and the existence of the fortress from Roman had obviously become useless, the decision of its abandonment occurred perfectly naturally.

The presence of the “court” and of the princely suite of Roman I in the fortress of Petru Muşat represented, no doubt, one of the most powerful motivations for the crystallization, in Roman, of an urban-type agglomeration. Significant for the nature of our approach is the fact that, even since the beginning, the civil burgh was, itself, protected by its own defensive trench, the town’s fortification being, actually “directly linked to the fortress’s

¹¹ “While on the strategic purposes of this fortress there seems to be little doubt - it being attributed the role of defense and supervision of the important road of the valley of Moldova, a road having both a commercial and military importance -, moreover the fact that the fortress was placed so close to the river mouth of Moldova, at its junction with Siret River, ensured as well a full control of a strategically crucial area for the central zone of the country “ (M. D. Matei, 2004: 116-117).

defensive system, ...being a continuation of the precincts of the fortress along the edge of the entire plateau...” (“direct legată de sistemul defensiv al fortăreței, ... continuare a incintei acesteia din urmă de-a lungul marginii întregului platou...”) (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 296). Just like the fortress, the defensive structure of the civil settlement was endowed with a defensive wall that completed the protection given by the 10 m wide trench. The fortification system of the civil “burgh” from Roman consequently becomes extremely relevant, in the context of the fact that the Moldavian towns have been considered for a long while to lack such protection.

The type of urban fortress present in Roman raises a lot of extremely interesting problems. So, the building technique, unique in the Moldavian area, seems to be specific for the central and especially east-European zone. In fact, while in all the other cases on the Moldavian territory, the dwellings were only defended by the defensive wall, but were not included within it, the town from Roman whose walls are made of wood and earth introduces itself as an “accident” in the landscape of the Moldavian military and civil architecture. Without being able to be included among the local traditional fortifications, it rather reminds of a fortified civil settlement:

“*Situated lower in the ground, but being one body with the defensive wall, the area destined for dwellings and victuals, (meant, of course, for the garrison) is part of the fortification of Roman itself, and the extremely careful technique used (walls planked with roughly cut wood, ceilings that used the same materials) show a rich and mature building-related experience. And, taking into account the complexity of the construction and the fact that, locally, we find no similar previous construction, to me it does not seem possible to conclude – I repeat, during the actual research stage –, which may have been the model that inspired it. What might, however, offer some clues in the clarification of this issue is to turn our attention to the civil fortified settlements, and the geographic area where some answers could be found is extremely large, including the entire area east of Elba, up to the zones where the so-called “horodiști” (pre- and immediately post-Mongolian settlements) have been the current type of civil fortified settlements.*” (M. D. Matei, 2004: 119).

The full contemporariness of the military building and of the civil fortress from Roman is supported not just by typological arguments, but also by the identity of the archeological and numismatic material identified in the two areas.

“*Appearing as simple logical deductions (!), the opinions that take for granted the anteriority of the town compared to the fortress neglect exactly the most important result of the archeological research from Roman: the town’s fortifications – consisting in a defensive trench and a defensive wall – are perfectly “articulated” with the side of the fortress facing the town, just as the technique used for building them is identical with that used for the construction of the fortress.*” (M. D. Matei, 2004: 119).

There is enough archeological evidence that can confirm as well the *longevity* of the civil fortification from Roman, which survives for sure after the moment when the military fortress is abandoned, at the beginning of the 15th century. The numerous ceramic fragments that can be identified as coming from the second half of the 15th century, along with two coins issued by Stephen the Great (Ștefan cel Mare) and identified in an indisputable stratigraphic context, just as the evidence of destruction by *fire*, support this idea, just as they support the references concerning the fact that during Matei Corvin’s campaign the town was set on fire. In fact, a critical evaluation of the information provided by the chronicle of Antoniu Bonfinius validates entirely the archeological observations: its description, which mentions the defensive trench and wall, concerns, without a doubt, the fortification of the **town** of Roman, and not that of the military fortress, which did not exist in 1467. At the same time, the eventuality that the reference may have been about the New Fortress (“Cetatea Nouă”) built of stone is excluded, as, according to all the available data, Matei Corvin did not get there.

Moreover, certain documentary information encourage the idea that the settlement's fortifications were remade after this event, by the middle of the 16th century being attested two "towns", separated by Siret River: "Cetatea Nouă", that Ștefan cel Mare had built in 1466, and the old "burgh" of Roman.

The only types of artifacts discovered in the area of the fortification are ceramics, and, to a significantly lower degree, armament and military equipment parts. Both of these types of artifacts are totally characteristic for the end of the 14th century and for the beginning of the 15th and confirm absolutely entirely the estimated duration of functioning of this fortification (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 298-299). However, the historical information accessible based on these categories of documentation does not refer only to the chronological delimitation of this settlement. On the contrary, it equally helps us understand the broader historical context of which the ephemeral princely residence from Roman was part.

A first observation is that the military equipment and the armament recovered entirely from the area of the defensive wall and from the cultural levels corresponding to the period when the fortress functioned, strongly suggest the serious dimension of the garrison that set camp in Roman. The ethnic make up of this military cohort raises, however, a series of problems whose relevance is even ampler. Without considering it necessary to insist on the descriptive details, already dealt with by the authors of the researches (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 298-308), we will content ourselves with underlining the fact that, based on technological and typological criteria, it was possible to distinguish between two categories of ceramics: a *type* considered to be of autochthonous origin, which is of mediocre quality, simply decorated with grooves and meant for domestic use, and a second category, made from a very homogeneous ground mass, whose color is gray and which has stamped ornamentations, being attributed to a foreign population.

The massive presence of local ceramics is a strong argument in favor of the idea that the garrison included some indigenous soldiers. On the other hand, the homogenous and foreign character of the gray stamped ceramics identified both in Roman and in other areas in Moldova has been unanimously accepted in the Romanian historiography. The closest and most convincing typological analogies for this category of ceramics, attributed in general to the German colonists, can be found in Central Europe (Poland, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Germany etc.).

Its absence from the Russian area, and from Transylvania, represents a serious argument in favor of its penetration from north, very probably from Poland. Such an interpretation is supported as well by the obvious concentration of the discoveries in the area nearby the boundaries between Moldova and Poland. The identification of the origin of this type of ceramics in the areas colonized by Germans in Poland (L. Chițescu, 1964; M. D. Matei, 1964) is perfectly in agreement with the indisputable strengthening of the Moldavian-Polish relations, which occurred towards the end of the 14th century and highlighted by the conclusion of the 1387 vassalage treaty, in Lemberg (M. Costăchescu, 1932: 600-601).

The appearance of this type of ceramics in Roman, its concentration exclusively during the period when the fortified town functioned, and also the northern analogies for the parts of the military equipment, represent sufficient reasons to attribute the presence of the two types of artifacts to a military cohort made up of mercenaries of German origin (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 310-311).

The previous identification is all the more probable as the very sudden appearance of this type of ceramics, during the last decennia of the 14th century, is completed by a just as abrupt disappearance at the beginning of the following century. This ephemeral presence, which excludes the possibility of the production of the gray ceramics by foreign artisans in Moldova and, consequently, forbids the hypothesis of a colonization, only allows for one veridical hypothesis, that of the presence of a certain number of foreign mercenaries serving

the Moldavian reigning prince, who gradually adapt themselves to the local conditions.

We consider that the presence of this *type* gray ceramics in Roman, under the circumstances evoked above, can give rise to a series of questions, whose clarification requires our special attention. On the one hand, its transient existence is not explained by the presence in Roman of some German builders, as it happened in Suceava, the type of fortification from Roman excluding the need for their contribution. In this case we wonder, however, where did the builders of this fortified town come from? The most plausible of all the variants – the help of some professionals who had come from the Russian area seeming to us totally improbable – we consider that they must have been autochthonous, which makes it possible for these builders to have learnt their job being influenced by the knowledge of their *homologous* eastern neighbors.

But, why such an atypical building in the context of the fortifications made of stone built during the reign of Mușat (Cetatea Șcheia, Cetatea Sucevei, Cetatea Neamț), which, as we know, were built on the order of Petru I? We estimate that the answer lays in the very transient character of the need for the fortification from Roman, built during the period when the Moldavian territory was united, including under the princely authority the south-eastern area of the country *as well*. In fact, the fortification from Roman had no other role than to support the *expansion* of Mușat's principedom towards the seacoast and towards Cetatea Albă, a fact accomplished by the end of the 1380s.

From this perspective, the option for the previously mentioned type of fortification no longer seems so strange. There was no point in building a construction made of stone, analogous to those from “Țara de Sus” – costly both in point of construction materials and of the *manual labor* for which the German artisans would have asked a lot of money.

Following the same logical thinking, we, too, consider that the rapid disappearance of the fortified town, once it accomplished its purpose, is not strange at all. On the contrary, the systematic abandonment, accompanied by the recovery of all the wooden material, are a proof in this sense, all the more as the whole action was doubled by the positive evolution of the town, as the main beneficiary of a favorable economic position.

On the other hand, the huge quantity – at least as percentage (95%) – of the gray ceramics compared to the ratio of the local ceramics found within the fortified town makes it impossible to contest the appreciation according to which it belonged to the German cohort (M. D. Matei, 2004: 121), which was serving the reigning prince, exactly in the context of the unifying effort evoked above.

In this sense, the ephemeral existence of the gray stamped ceramics naturally coincides, in our opinion, to the period of the presence in Moldova of its “bearers”, the German builders or soldiers. Their services were required by the reigning prince exactly at the moment of some critical events of the history of Moldova, when the newly-created state had to withstand the Hungarian attempts to subordinate it, while carrying out its own unifying efforts. The presence of the German mercenaries was attested neither before, nor after these moments, as they served the principedom of Moldova exactly as much as necessary. Actually, we will venture to express our opinion that the Polish royalty in general and especially the German merchants may have been co-interested by the reigning prince of the Mușat family in his action of opening and securing of the commercial corridor Lvov-Cetatea Albă. If this scenario, perfectly plausible from the perspective of the subsequent evolution of the Moldavian-Polish relations, proves true, it could suppose, concerning the presence of the German builders and soldiers, the character of *offered services*, rather than remunerated service, for the Moldavian ruler.

The archeological observations prove to be crucially important for understanding the historical context that determined the early evolution of the town of Roman. First of all, the research has proved the total absence of any evidence of dwellings prior to the edification of

the fortified town, at the end of the 14th century. Another fact, crucially important for understanding the beginnings of the evolution of the urban life in Moldova, and highlighted as well using the archeological research, is the preponderantly *political* motivation of the setting up of the fortification from Roman. And its contemporariness, relative as it may be, to the civil settlement whose development it favored is indisputable.

The relevance of this situation in the edification of a typology of the Moldavian towns is obvious, because, just as the authors of these discoveries have highlighted, the formation of civil settlement around a military fortress, a well-known phenomenon in the Europe of the Middle Ages, represents one of the ways how medieval towns appeared¹², and, concerning Moldova, this genesis mechanism can be considered even “*exemplary*”:

“For several reasons, it can be considered that Roman represents, for the history of Moldova, a typical example, illustrating the way how, under specific circumstances, the principdom could contribute decisively to the formation of a town. Complex interests (military, political and not in the least place, economic) determined the reigning prince Petru I Mușat to have a military stronghold built, at the confluence of Moldova and Siret. Inasmuch as we can admit that this stronghold had a double role of Princely Court and fortified town, Roman is the only case in the history of the extra-Carpathian Romanian Countries when an urban settlement was set up around and under the protection of a princely construction, as here we cannot talk about an anteriority of the civil settlement, despite the (not proven) affirmations of certain historians. As the fact took place *after* the appearance of the feudal state of Moldova, it acquires a value of typical example.” (M. D. Matei, 1997: 93).

On the other hand, while the archeological research managed to satisfactorily clarify the context of the appearance of the settlement from Roman, it opened, at the same time, the way to new interrogations concerning the *character* of the civil settlement under analysis. Unfortunately, one of the main landmarks for understanding the evolution of the medieval town, namely the degree of economic development is quite difficult to discern, both because of the massive destruction undergone by the initial settlement, and because of the documentary references concerning this aspect, which are sporadic and late. In this sense, indirect and limited is especially the information concerning the artisan activity carried out in this town.

Despite these documentary *impediments*, the rapid subsequent development of the civil settlement, quite obvious if we consider how often the town of Roman appears in written documents during the first half of the 15th century, shed some kind of light as well on its initial character.

First of all, it is obvious that the geographic setting of the town, near the confluence of Moldova and Siret, gave it notable commercial opportunities. Though there is no indication of the exploitation of this location *before* the appearance of the military fortress, it is certain that it soon became profitable.

Without ignoring the absence of any proofs of artisan activity *inside the fortress*, and taking into account the quantity of goods and services naturally demanded by a garrison of appreciable dimensions, the only viable conclusion is that the respective needs were covered, from the very beginning, by the activity of the artisans from the civil *burgh*. More to the point, this settlement had, from the very first sequences of its existence, “the artisan and

¹² These *burghs* of the Middle Ages were areas surrounded by walls, sometimes even by a kind of fortification made of wood, their surface was reduced and they were placed under the authority of a *castle administrator*. In each of them, the prince had a dwelling available for himself and for his suite, during the permanent travels he had to carry out because of the war or because of his administrative activity. *From how they appear, burghs are first of all military settlements. But to this initial character, very soon was added that of administrative centers.* Consequently, the castle administrator will cease to be just the commander of the fortress’s garrison, as the prince gives him financial and judicial authority over a more or less extended area around the fortified precincts. (H. Pirenne, 2000: 50-51).

commercial character that forms the basis of all the medieval towns, even from their pre-urban evolutionary phase” (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 315).

Just as evocative for the significance of the civil settlement from Roman is as well the fact that a “governor” of the town is attested early in the history of the town, namely “pan Vlad Tuciaischi vornic de Târgul Roman”(Mister Vlad Tuciaischi, mayor of Roman Town)¹³ member of the private council of the reigning prince and, at the same time, the first known magistrate in the history of Moldova (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 315). The information, which explicitly suggests the degree of administrative and political organization of the town, equally highlights the special importance given to Roman by the principedom. The simple existence of its own fortification system, built very early, indicates both the demographic dimensions of the initial town – big enough for the population not to be able to take refuge inside the military fortress, despite its dimensions –, and the feasibility of such an enterprise, unimaginable if the civil settlement had not merited such a costly investment (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 316). Actually, the series of princely initiatives¹⁴ that follow one another in the history of Roman remains eloquent for the ever-growing importance of the town, development that remains little affected by the disappearance of the military fortification that Mușat had built.

Summing up all these data, it is not at all hazardous to conclude that the town of Roman disposed, at the beginning of the 15th century, of “all the characteristic features of an urban organization, both economically, and also juridically, politically and religiously” (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 315).

What should be especially highlighted is, however, the *exemplary* status of the context of the genesis and development of the town of Roman. The clarifications that the archeology brought concerning the chronology of the foundation of this urban settlement fully support the observation that “during the 13th century and during the first half of the previous century, the feudalization process of the Moldavian society *was not able* to create the necessary objective conditions that would have led to the constitution of some medieval towns, *based on this process*” (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 317). This incapacity is usually considered to be the result of the absence of some superior formulas of political organization, and of the degree of development of the autochthonous economy, which was still shy during the first half of the 14th century.

In exchange, towards the end of the century, the indications concerning the indigenous economic contribution – at least in the artisans’ domain –, identified both in Roman, and in other contemporary settlements (Suceava, Iași, Neamț), are numerous enough to credit an autochthonous element with an increased production rate in the economic urban life, without excluding through this idea the presence of certain foreign ethnic elements (M. D. Matei, L. Chițescu, 1966: 319).

What is worth remembering is the fact that, although it appeared following a *political* initiative, the town of Roman soon proved to be able to challenge, as importance, other Moldavian towns. There is not a doubt that such a rapid rhythm of development cannot be considered exclusively the result of the economic needs of the military garrison that set camp here. The fact that Roman continues to flourish even after the disappearance of the garrison and of the administrative body it supposed shows that, at the beginning of the 14th century, the

¹³ Its existence is mentioned in the gift act issued in the stronghold of Suceava (“cetatea Sucevei”), on January 7, 1403, on the order of Alexandru cel Bun (*DIR.*, A, I, 1966: 14).

¹⁴ The reigning prince Roman I will chose this place to be a burial place for his wife, and Alexandru cel Bun will periodically reside in Roman, where he actually confirms his submission to Vladislav, the king of Poland, promising each other help against the Hungarian king. The act is drafted on May 25, 1411, in “*Târgul de Jos*” of Roman (M. Costăchescu, 1932: 637-639). Roman will be as well the siege of the first Moldavian bishopric and, in 1415, it will even obtain the right to participate with representatives to the Council from Constanța (C. I. Karadja, 1927: 70).

vigor of the economic mechanisms and the commercial advantages of the geographic setting constituted sufficient reasons to permit the continuity of a complete urban life.

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