

**On the path to Romanian epigraphy:
the birth of a discipline and its evolution in the 20th century**

Introduction

Romanian identity is defined as a historical-cultural construct articulated in three registers: linguistic, with the claim to a Latin heritage as early as the Transylvanian School; territorial, thanks to the assumption of a North-Danubian continuity despite the retreat of 271/260; and political, through the national narratives of the XIXth century and then the protochronism. In the 19th century, Romanian historiography oscillated between two opposing but complementary currents in the quest for origins. By exalting their Latin origins, Romanian historians in the 19th century searched for ennobled the nation and link it to Western civilization. Against this exclusive Latinist narrative, however, the 19th century saw a revival of interest in the people, the Dacians. This autochthonist trend gave additional temporal depth to the nation, tracing it back not only to Rome, but to a valued local pre-Roman people. A notable blind spot in these early constructions is the gap over the IV^e-IX^e centuries, ignoring later migrations (Slavs, Goths) – but especially ignoring the Greeks.

Thus, on the map drawn up in the 1980s at the Museum of Histria, which shows to the visitors of this ancient city founded by the Milesians in the second half of the 7th century BC the populations that inhabited the Dobruja in Antiquity, one can see the “indigenous” Getae, the Romans, the “migratory peoples” including, of course, the Slavs, but not the Greeks! The half-century of ideology that followed the Second World War, during which the site of Histria was systematically excavated, emphasized the material culture produced by the slave society and intended to disguise the “decadent” classical culture. In contrast with the intellectuals of 19th century, favorizing the Latin origins as well as the other cradle of the European culture, the Greeks seem to play only a marginal role in the Romanian “national” history.

This vision of Greek culture as a culture of the elite, contrasted with the defenders of autochthony, brought accusations from the Communist Party and Securitate to any scholar interested in classical culture, and in particular to the historian and epigraphist Dionisie Pippidi. Although before the war had written several major studies to the Emperor Tiberius, he changed his field of interest to devote himself almost exclusively to epigraphy and the history of the Greek colonies of Dobruja. He was not the only member of the “archaeological elite” who secluded themselves in the “ivory tower” of classical culture, itself seen as elitist.

Dionisie Pippidi’s approach is exemplary. He wrote essential works on the history of the Greeks living on the west Pontic shores. The epigraphic direction he gave to his research led him to write landmark studies on Greek and Latin inscriptions in the region and, above all, in 1983, the corpus of Istros inscriptions. At a time when “continuity” was being imposed, leading directly from the Gaeto-Dacians to the Romanians and it had become suspect to deal with the Greeks and any other “foreign” influence, paradoxically the researchers working on the Greek colonies enjoyed more freedom. Histria was not a priority for the new generations of apparatchiks.

Therefore, these colonies have their place in history treatises approved by the regime, presenting less risk for their authors of crossing the line of unique thought. After the 1958 edition of *Contribuții la istoria veche a României*, Bucharest, 1958, a revised and expanded edition was published in 1967 by D. Pippidi. In 2001, his ancient student Alexandru Avram was entrusted with the chapter *Coloniile grecești din Dobrogea* in the treatise *Istoria Românilor*, vol. I. *Moștenirea timpurilor îndepărtate*, 2001, p. 533-557, 571-634 (2010², p. 561-585, 599-666). In the history handbooks of the 1990s, Greek colonization was not included in the

“Romanian” history handbook, but in the “universal” one. However, even before and especially after the fall of communism, people in charge of cultural institutions understood the resource that these “ruins” could be for tourism, depending on their state of preservation.

I. The project of publication of epigraphical corpus

The intention to give a corpus of the inscriptions of Scythia Minor in particular and of the inscriptions founded on the territory of Romania is older. Pippidi himself provides an overview of this field in several programmatic studies that serve both as a call to create epigraphic corpora that are scientifically rigorous and capable of withstanding the test of time, and as a methodological guide for any epigraphist - whether novice or experienced - who undertakes such a daunting task. This overview, enriched with various other insights, will enable us to trace the history of epigraphy while examining the role it plays in what “Party and State” documents have termed “national history”

Following in the footsteps of L. Robert, with whom he is in contact (see *below*), Pippidi emphasizes the need to view epigraphy not as an auxiliary science of history but as a discipline in its own right. He sought to integrate Romanian epigraphic studies into the series initiated by Auguste Boeckh’s *CIG* and Theodor Mommsen’s *CIL*, a series dedicated to regional epigraphy in which, to name only the best known, we can include the *IG* (Berlin, 1903-) and the *IK* (Vienna, continuing *TAM*, from 1972). This is the first initiative to create a national corpus (namely, one compiling inscriptions found in the territory formerly occupied by the Greeks and Romans and now belonging to the Romanian state), using its own resources and the expertise of local scholars. Yet, as he clearly states, he is not the first to devote his attention to epigraphy.

The names that come up repeatedly are those of Alexandru Odobescu and Grigore Tocilescu. In 1878, Odobescu published the first 12 full-pages of a collection intended to bring together all the Latin and Greek inscriptions found in both museums and private collections, with a facsimile of each inscription. Grigore Tocilescu was commissioned by the Historical Section of the Romanian Academy to resume the project in 1894, a project that had been prepared by the submission, beginning in 1877, of dozens of Greek and Latin inscriptions from Oltenia and Dobruja to the journal *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* (*AEM*) in Vienna, although, as D. M. Pippidi ironically notes, his skills as an epigraphist were far from matching his enthusiasm, and the quality of the inscriptions published in the *AEM* owed much to the journal’s editors, O. Hirschfeld and Th. Gomberz. However, although the Romanian Academy decided that such a corpus should be created, this corpus did not materialize anytime soon.

In another study, Pippidi draws attention to the fact that the inscriptions from the Pontic cities (mainly Istros, Tomis, Callatis) do not appear in the *CIG*, although they are mentioned in passing in the commentaries. From the 1850s onward, however, they appear in travelers’ accounts, which describe them, sometimes reproducing the lettering. The best known is Ernest Desjardin, who during his several-month-long journey in 1867 through the Lower Danube region copied numerous Greek and Latin inscriptions in Dacia, Moesia, and Lower Moesia. His other great achievement was identifying the exact location of Istros, where Pârvan’s excavations would later uncover, at the beginning of the 20th century, the ruins of the Milesian settlement. He copied only one inscription at Istros but several others at Constanta, which covers the ruins of Tomis. The region was not, however, completely unknown, since during the Crimean War its ports had been chosen to serve as bases for the allied armies operating off Sevastopol; antiquarians had taken the opportunity to build personal collections or send them to the Louvre and the British Museum. Other inscriptions, copied by amateurs, were published in journals in Athens or Constantinople. Some collectors donated their collections to the State, leading to the creation of Bucharest’s first National Museum of Antiquities in 1864.

With the 1878 Congress of Berlin and the incorporation of Dobruja into the United Principalities, the field of “Minor Scythian” epigraphic studies experienced a remarkable boom. The dominant figure was Grigore Tocilescu, briefly mentioned above, a former professor at the University of Bucharest and director of the National Museum of Antiquities, who had already discovered and explored the Adamclisi monument (Tropaeum Traiani) starting with 1882. In addition to *Monumentele epigrafice* (1902), he also published *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques en Roumanie. Communications faites à l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres à Paris*, 1892-1899. The inscriptions he published are among the most interesting, such as the decree in honor of Aristagoras of Istros, the decree in honor of the architect Epikrates of Byzantium preserved at the Dragomirna Monastery in Bukovina, and two decrees from Tomis. Although not sufficiently attentive to the historical context, as Pippidi notes, Tocilescu paved the way for his successor as professor of ancient history and epigraphy in Bucharest and director of the MNA, Vasile Pârvan. The archaeological site that Pârvan inaugurated at Ulmetum enabled him to publish some fifty Greek and Latin inscriptions discovered during the excavations. He also produced the first archaeological map of Roman Dobruja. It is to Pârvan that we owe the start in 1914 of the Istros excavations, temporarily interrupted by the war and then resumed in 1920, to which he devoted himself until his untimely death in 1927. In his publication project, inscriptions are central, especially since the most significant ones were discovered during the first excavation campaign. In addition to the monographs *Histria IV* (1916) and *Histria VII* (1923), he published a large portion of the inscriptions discovered during a dozen excavation campaigns.

At the other two major sites along the Romanian coast, Constanța/Tomis and Mangalia/Callatis, excavations began later, and epigraphic discoveries were hampered by the fact that modern settlements were built on the sites of ancient Greek cities. At Callatis, sporadic excavations were undertaken between the two world wars by Oreste Tafrales and later by Théophile Sauciu-Săveanu. While Oreste Tafrales devoted two brief monographs to Callatis and Dionysopolis (the modern city of Balchik, built on its ruins, belonged at the time to the Romanian state), listing the main inscriptions, one cannot speak of a true corpus. We owe the increase in the number of Callatis inscriptions before and after World War II to Teofil Sauciu-Săveanu. When Pippidi made his first assessment in the 1960s, he estimated the number of inscriptions from Callatis at around 300, to which were added the 500 inscriptions from Istros and the roughly 700 inscriptions from Tomis, for a total of approximately 1,500 inscriptions for the Pontic cities alone. He proposed adding to this the texts from inland areas, discovered at sites in Dobruja and as far as the left bank of the Danube. The inscriptions were housed unevenly among the museums in Bucharest (the National Museum of Antiquities, later the National Museum of Romanian History), Constanța, Mangalia, Istros, and Eforie.

Furthermore, alongside the epigraphist Ioan Iosif Russu of Cluj, Pippidi developed, toward the end of the 1950s, a plan for a national corpus of Greek and Latin inscriptions from Dacia and Scythia Minor, intended to span about ten volumes and titled *Inscriptiile antice din Dacia și Scythia Minor (Inscriptiones Daciae et Scythiae Minoris antiquae)*: the two coordinators each oversaw a sector: Dacia for Russu (*Inscriptiile Daciei Romane/Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae, IDR, I–III, 1975–1977*), and Dobruja for Pippidi, and mobilized a team of epigraphers who began publishing the planned volumes starting in the late 1970s. In a context where publishing in foreign languages could expose them to accusations of cosmopolitanism, they proposed producing an edition featuring a translation and an extensive commentary in Romanian. The distinctive feature of these new corpora lay precisely in the breadth and precision of the commentary.

In the same study (*Scythica Minora*), Pippidi outlined the organization and responsibilities for the future corpora: he was to be in charge of the inscriptions from Istros and Callatis, while the corpus from Tomis was to be compiled by Iorgu Stoian. As for the inscriptions from inland settlements, those from Capidava and its territory were the responsibility of Grigore Florescu, those

from Tropaeum Traiani were published by Emilian Popescu, while those from the territories of Troesmis and Noviodunum were entrusted to Emilia Dorutiu-Boila, who was also responsible for revising and updating the inscriptions from Capidava following the death of G. Florescu. In most cases, these were students of Pippidi. Indeed, in parallel with his teaching at the University of Bucharest, Pippidi was attached to the MNA, which was replaced in 1956 by the “Vasile Pârvan” Institute of Archaeology; that same year, Pippidi was appointed head of the epigraphy and numismatics section (1956-1973), where he set about building a specialized library. His new situation enabled him to form future Romanian epigraphists, including Emilia Doruțiu-Boilă, Emilian Popescu, Constantin C. Petolescu, and Alexandru Avram.

II. The *Inscriptiones Scythiae Minoris* series and its contributors

The main archaeological and epigraphical interest focused on Istros, whose centenary was celebrated in 2014. Excavations made between 1914 and 1980 reached an exceptional scale. Progress up from the 1950s to 1980s means that this period can be considered the most prolific, even if it was the result of the Communist state’s interest in transforming archaeology into a tool for nationalist propaganda. This period, characterized by very generous state funding, was followed by the 1980s, marked by a massive reduction in funding and. In the first decade following the fall of communism in 1989, funding improved slightly on the previous period. The 18 monographs of the *Histria* series published from 1954 onwards should be mentioned in this context, as a sign of the continuing interest of scholars in this emblematic city of Greek colonization.

Vasile Pârvan was the first to take an interest in Greek and Roman antiquities, but always in the light of the traces of the Gaetic past. This scholar, like his contemporaries, set himself the task of “resurrecting the past” of his country, a major issue for an emerging “small culture”. In the mirror of the northern Euxine Pontus (i.e., southern Russia), Pârvan denounced the very poor state of research on the western coast of the Black Sea, with the still timid exception of Apollonia of Pontus. However, the first discoveries of the site he excavated, Histria, made it possible to outline the spread of Hellenic civilization to the mouths of the Danube. Comparing the northern and western areas of Greek colonization, characterized by a strong Ionian tropism, Pârvan was equally, if not more, interested in the Thracian and Scythian territories in which these cities were settled. His look extends beyond the coastline, to consider relations with the hinterland.

Nevertheless, Pârvan’s vision is traditional: as early as the 6th century BC, the Istrians “had to accept [...] promiscuity with the natives”, as attested by the presence of indigenous ceramics. To trace the city’s history, he can corroborate the literary sources with monumental traces of the cult of Apollo Ietros, honorary decrees, particularly from the Hellenistic period, and artistic manifestations, which show “a rather fine general taste among these Greeks lost in northern Thrace”. Pârvan pictured friendly or tolerant relations between the Greeks and the natives, who remained in a “very sensitive state of inferiority”. Pârvan’s identification with ancestors (“nous autres Gètes”, letter to Jérôme Carcopino), projected into a founding past, is striking, but not surprising for the time. However, the Greeks are seen as a civilizing element *par excellence*.

After V. Pârvan, the direction of Istros’s excavations and epigraphical work was held by Scarlat Lambrino, who studied in Paris at the Sorbonne and later as a member of the second generation of fellows at the Romanian School in Fontenay-aux-Roses (November 1922-October 1925), or the Romanian School in France. He thus had the opportunity to attend courses between 1921 and 1927 at the Sorbonne, the Collège de France, and in particular at the EPHE. After serving, following Pârvan’s death in 1927, as an assistant and lecturer in the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Bucharest, he was appointed in 1932

to the chair of professor of ancient history and epigraphy, a position he held until the definitive establishment of the communist regime. The correspondence he maintained starting in 1929 with Louis Robert, though reduced to only six letters from Lambrino preserved in the L. Robert collection at the AIBL, between 1929 and 1936, revolves around the Greek inscriptions of Asia Minor and then of Istros, as well as the discoveries at this site on the western coast of the Pontus. Lambrino undertook to continue Pârvan's epigraphic series in *Dacia*, where he paid tribute to his mentor. In particular, he undertook to publish the inscriptions from Dobruja and Lower Moesia, but this publication program would be only very partially fulfilled in the following years and mostly after the war. However, papers preserved at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon confirm that in the 1930s S. Lambrino had seen and transcribed numerous inscriptions from Lower Moesia, not only from Istros but also from the rest of Dobruja, northern Bulgaria, and Romanian museums, with a view to a future corpus. The research conducted by D. Dana on the occasion of the publication of the correspondence between D.M. Pippidi and L. Robert highlighted the relationship between these two scholars and S. Lambrino, as well as the significance of the documentation available to S. Lambrino for the creation of the future Istros corpus.

When they left for Rome in 1941 to join the Accademia di Romania, the Lambrinos - Scarlat and his wife Marcelle - took with them the documentation from the excavations at Istros (field notebooks, drawings of artifacts, plans), and even crates full of pottery, though they were unable to make proper use of it during the war. This documentation was taken with them to Portugal, as Lambrino planned two monographs based on the results of the excavations at Pârvan and under his direction: *Histria III. Statues and Reliefs* (200 monuments discovered during the 1914–1931 excavations) and *Histria VIII. Inscriptions* (65 inscriptions discovered during the 1928–1931 excavations). However, Lambrino was considered a traitor to the regime, having not only deserted his homeland after it became communist but also having taken with him what - in the view of the time - rightfully belonged to the Romanian state. With all contact between the Lambrinos and the new Romanian academic institutions severed, the Lambrinos' excavations remained largely unpublished. After 1945, S. Lambrino nevertheless published seven documents from Istros, including the famous decree of Agathocles, for which Pippidi pressured Robert to urge Lambrino to produce an edition. Part of the Lambrinos' documentation was discovered in the Roberts' archives at the AIBL and was forwarded by Alexandru Avram to the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest.

After S. Lambrino's departure for Rome in the early 1940s, exploration of the site had ceased. However, the archaeologists needed a skilled classical philologist to publish the numerous inscriptions. Due to his philological expertise, Pippidi was recruited in 1949 to the Istros excavation team, led between 1949 and 1970 by Emil Condurachi. Pippidi was responsible for excavations in the sanctuary area, known as the "sacred zone" and published reports with his collaborators. The research program at Istros, highly dynamic and well-funded by the new Academy, focused on continuing and expanding previous excavations, as well as on new explorations. Not only were new inscriptions unearthed each year, but since the excavations of Pârvan and Lambrino, a significant number of unpublished finds had accumulated.

This is how the concrete project to compile all inscriptions, whose publication history began with Tocilescu, into a single corpus came about, a corpus that is itself part of the "national" series of ancient epigraphic monuments found on Romanian territory. In his preface to the corpus, Pippidi clearly sets out the criteria that guided him and which should be those of the authors of all the corpora planned as part of this large-scale undertaking. We see him conveying his message of scientific rigor through the way the country's academic authorities, during the dismal 1980s, could make use of the work of epigraphists. The three defining features of this major corpus were intended to distinguish it from other regional initiatives.

First, the idea of compiling all inscriptions, both Greek and Latin, from the earliest times to the end of antiquity, following the example of the two major corpora of the Berlin Academy: *CIG*, (later *IG*, 1903, now edited by K. Haloff) and *CIL* (1868–1936). Thus, volume III of the *CIL*, which included inscriptions from the eastern provinces of the empire, including Dacia and the two Moesias, Inferior and Superior, did not omit Greek inscriptions, following Mommsen's credo. Secondly, the language in which the series of corpora, and thus that of Istros, was to be established was Romanian, used for the first time for a corpus of such scope. This approach contrasted, for a clearly nationalist purpose (which was not, however, the authors' intention), with the general tendency of epigraphists, faced with the inevitability of widespread ignorance of Latin, to use languages of international circulation (English, French, German). Finally, he proposed to provide, in addition to the edition consisting of the restoration and translation of the text, an extensive linguistic and historical commentary, "in order to contribute effectively to the reconstruction of the national past" (p. 9).

Thus, in several of these editorial projects - likely to gain approval from the Academy's authorities - responses to the Party's directives become apparent: every undertaking, even an intellectual one, and every member of society, "om al muncii"/worker in the cultural sphere, was expected to contribute according to their skills toward a specific goal. In the case of epigraphists and historians, this meant demonstrating that the Romanian "nation" ("neam") had a past worthy of competing, during the Stalinist era, with that of Western countries, and then, during the Ceausescu era, with that of "neighboring and friendly" countries and the former Soviet big brother. Epigraphy was a prime field because it provided the text - the precious written record for uncovering traces of the past - and allowed for all manner of speculation, particularly regarding the class struggle, the ideological foundation of socialist materialism, or resistance against the conqueror (though the inscriptions from the northern Carpathians are not in the Dacian language but in Latin!).

Pippidi explains that, in this respect, Romanian epigraphists differ significantly from their foreign colleagues, whose efforts were aimed at reproducing entire texts with the reconstruction of missing passages. This reflects a conception of the epigraphist's work that they rejected from the outset, insofar as it implies a separation between the editing and reconstruction of the text and its "historical interpretation." While he is correct in asserting that these two activities are not only complementary but also inseparable, Pippidi must present an epigraphic approach that was advanced for its time - and given its historiographical isolation - as an ideological necessity. This position demonstrates the extent to which intellectuals, including those supposedly working with direct evidence, the epigraphic document, were subject to pressure and compelled to align with the theses put forward by political leaders.

Nevertheless, between the lines of his statements to the Academy's authorities, Pippidi conveys a methodological approach that is flawless and endorsed by the leading epigraphists of his era. Thus, he asserts, "the reconstruction of a text is directly linked to its understanding, yet its perfect understanding is possible only in the light of the greatest number of parallel texts, in other words, by placing each inscription within a series." He thus follows L. Robert, who himself quoted Eduard Gerhard: "He who has seen one monument has seen none; he who has seen a thousand has seen one". The goal of epigraphy is not to seek a treasure, but to place the ordinary in a series. His correspondence with L. Robert, recently published, reflects the influence and respect that the French epigraphist, though younger than him, inspired in Pippidi. The creation of the corpus is notably mentioned on numerous occasions in connection with Robert, despite the difficulties he encountered.

"In the volume I am presenting to the public today, this method is used consistently, and while it is particularly evident in the sections concerning the decisions of the Istros People's Assembly or documents issued by the Roman state authority, it is in fact present in every chapter of this work" (p. 9). It is easy to understand, first, that the goal was to educate the masses, and second, the emphasis on the political significance of the inscriptions. These inscriptions showed

that society in the Romanian territory had always been organized into an Assembly - the *demos* is referred to by the name borne by the Romanian Parliament of the time - and that decisions were made by the state authority, provided one included the Roman conqueror.

He develops his method, which we will see implemented with the same rigor by his disciple Alexandru Avram in volume III, devoted to the inscriptions of Callatis: bibliographic research, of course, but also the direct examination of the preserved stones, some in the Istros repositories, others in the lapidary of the Museum of Archaeology (the former MNA), and still others in the Constanța County Museum and at the MNIR. Furthermore, he justifies the decision to also publish fragmentary or even highly fragmentary inscriptions: following sound scholarly practice, he refrained from proposing forced, risky, or overly speculative reconstructions, but chose to publish the fragments in the hope that, should further discoveries be made, they will serve to reconstruct a monument and provide a key to its interpretation. Equally justified is the abundant use of photographs and drawings. The aim is to highlight the illustrations in Pârvan's corpus, whose drawings have been remarkably well preserved. This has proven invaluable given that the stones, left exposed to the elements, are affected by the weather and, more generally, by the passage of time : indeed, the epigraphist tasked with publishing the corpus decades after the stones' discovery notes that the stones are in poor condition.

Preceded by a geographical and historical introduction, accompanied by literary *testimonies* and a prosopography (foreigners settled in Istros, and Istrians attested elsewhere in the Greek world), the corpus contained 472 Greek and Latin texts dating from the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. Very detailed indexes, as well as 94 plates of photographs and numerous illustrations in the text, completed the work, which received favorable reviews.

A new tribute, a necessary formality, is paid to the authorities by mentioning the previously unpublished inscriptions that he had the opportunity to edit for the first time in the corpus, preserved in the "new and spacious Istrian museum built with the support of the Committee for Culture of the Constanta Department". In addition to the documents published by his predecessors (Tocilescu, Pârvan, and Lambrino - the latter partially "rehabilitated"), the corpus includes the 36 inscriptions published in the first volume of the series initiated by the Romanian Academy following the resumption of excavations at Istros in 1948, *Histria. Monografie arheologică*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1954, comprising reports on the discoveries made by Pârvan and Lambrino between 1914 and 1943, with an interruption between 1917 and 1920, and another between 1941 and 1948. Of the 36 Greek and Latin inscriptions, 12 had been uncovered before 1949, with the remaining 24 originating from the 1949–1951 campaigns (*Histria* I, pp. 473–564). Of course, the project to publish all the inscriptions "received the warm approval of the History Section of the R.S. Romanian Academy at the time of the establishment of the general collection of ancient inscriptions from the territory of the homeland" (p. 11).

The second volume of Pontic inscriptions, devoted to Tomis, has origins just as ancient as that of Istros. The first inscriptions were published in 1850 by L. Mercklin. Three major periods are identified in the epigraphy of Tomis: from 1850 to 1878 or 1881, then from 1881 to 1948, with three sub-periods (the Tocilescu period from 1881 to 1909, the Pârvan period from 1910 to 1927, the period of Pârvan's direct disciples from 1927 to 1948), and finally from 1948 until the publication of volume II of *the ISM* by Iorgu Stoian in 1987. Starting in 1881, with the incorporation of Dobruja into the Romanian state, Tomitan epigraphy was entrusted to Romanian scholars. The first was Grigore Tocilescu, previously mentioned in connection with the Istros inscriptions. He employed two methods of editing, depending on the type of publication hosting his editions: in the case of his submissions to the *AEM*, he provided the monument's dimensions and a facsimile, without translation and with a brief commentary; in his own publications the edition is complete, indicating the origin, the nature of the monument,

the dimensions, the bibliography where applicable, a facsimile or a photograph, with a translation and a commentary.

The second scholar to take an interest in Tomitan epigraphy was V. Pârvan, an archaeologist, historian, and philologist, and one of the most meticulous epigraphists. Undoubtedly influenced by the German school of epigraphy, his textual editions are not accompanied by translations. Although his focus was on Ulmetum and Istros, he also took an interest in Tomis. Two of Pârvan's disciples resumed the publication of Tomitan inscriptions: D. M. Teodorescu (*Monumente inedite din Tomi*, 1918), and P. Nicorescu (*Monumente noua din teritoriul orasului Tomi*, 1920). After 1948, excavations and the publication of inscriptions at Tomis were not systematic; only certain sectors were involved, with the large-scale work of systematizing the city being expanded to a certain extent. Despite this limitation, new monuments were discovered and published in a collective volume, *Noi monumente epigrafice din Scythia Minor*, Constanza, 1964. We owe the publication of the corpus in 1987 - which appeared posthumously after the author's death in 1983 - to Iorgu Stoian. Stoian conducted excavations at Istros focusing on the city's Roman-Byzantine period (two major buildings) and first edited inscriptions from this city. He also published a collection of studies devoted to Istros: *Etudes histriennes*, Brussels, 1972. The work that earned him his professorship, however, was *Tomitana. Contribuții epigrafice la istoria cetății Tomis* (Bucharest, 1962), which shaped his career path and his commitment to publishing the city's epigraphic corpus.

Despite the commitment he had made to himself, D. M. Pippidi did not carry out his plan to publish a second volume of the Scythia Minor series. Thus, in October 1989, he entrusted the task of compiling the Callatis corpus to Alexandru Avram (1956–2021), his student, an epigraphist, archaeologist, and specialist in amphora stamps. Pippidi passed away in 1993, without having the satisfaction of seeing this corpus completed. The corpus contains 260 inscriptions, several of which were unpublished, edited with the utmost precision and extensively annotated. The epigraphy of Callatis is younger than that of Istros or Tomis, which had earlier attracted the attention of antiquarians and travelers. Following the 1878 Congress of Berlin and the incorporation of Dobruja into the Romanian state, the few antiquities in Mangalia came to the attention of the Romanian authorities. Mihail Kogalniceanu, a Romanian politician and historian, assembled a collection during this period at his summer home in Constanța, which included inscriptions from Tomis and Callatis. These were published by Grigore Tocilescu in 1882, followed by numerous other inscriptions in *AEM* until 1896. No excavations had taken place in Mangalia before World War I; the first true excavation was undertaken by Oreste Tafrales (1876-1937), a professor at the University of Iași who had studied at EPHE, and who provided the first comprehensive overview of the antiquities of Callatis. The other name associated with Calatian epigraphy is that of Teofil Sauciu-Saveanu (1884-1971), who was in competition with O. Tafrales, as it was to Sauciu-Saveanu that V. Parvan, as the director of the MNA, had entrusted the excavations at Mangalia. The excavations took place in the frame of urban development in Mangalia. Sauciu-Saveanu, whom the residents of Mangalia allowed to excavate on their property while antique dealers entrusted him with antiquities found by chance, gathered these antiquities in the Mangalia Museum, which he founded and inaugurated in 1924.

Almost all of his publications give prominence to inscriptions: following in Tocilescu's footsteps, he published what most closely resembles a corpus, without, however, actually compiling one. Calatian epigraphy owes more to him than to anyone else: as an archaeologist and epigraphist, he published inscriptions - albeit not in an exemplary manner - by bringing them to the attention of scholars who corrected, amended, and improved them. Another merit that can be attributed to him is that as soon as he published the first edition, he entrusted the study and commentary to his colleagues, such as Scarlat Lambrino. At the end of World War II, he was imprisoned by the communist authorities, not because of his political convictions but

because he was a native of Bukovina and a professor at the University of Cernauti. The museum's collections have been dispersed.

Starting in 1949, a team appointed by the Romanian Academy, which had taken over from the MNA, organized two excavation campaigns, in 1949 and 1950, yielding epigraphic finds, although priority was given to Istros. In 1958-1959, during work to develop the Mangalia cliff, and in the 1960s, the excavations were directed by Constantin Preda. It was during these years that the museum was reorganized. The excavations of the 1960s-1990s yielded a significant harvest of inscriptions. T. Sauciuc-Saveanu, upon his release from prison, published inscriptions from Callatis until his death in 1971. The publication of the corpus, which Pippidi, due to illness, had given up on undertaking, fell to Alexandra Stefan. She left Romania for France in 1987: the project was finally entrusted, a few months before the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, to Alexandru Avram, who produced a monumental corpus.

Conclusion

Several insights emerge from this study, which aims to be exhaustive while acknowledging its imperfections and gaps. First, one observes among the scholars who have studied ancient inscriptions a dual background and, consequently, a visible dual or even triple expertise as archaeologists, epigraphists, and historians. This is the case for those who conducted excavations and published the inscriptions from the three major sites, Istros, Tomis, and Callatis. They are also highly skilled classical philologists with expertise in Greek and Latin, and in some cases theologians (for example, Emilian Popescu), which is to be expected given their classical education completed in France, Germany, or Italy. They published the inscriptions aware of their importance for understanding the past, but also because these were monuments uncovered during the excavations. Thus, the director of the Istros excavation site was also responsible for publishing the inscriptions. The boundaries between the two specializations were less rigid than they are today : those who discovered the objects handled them and published the texts. Furthermore, they worked in networks, as evidenced by the scholarly correspondence.

A second idea that emerges is that Istros is unquestionably the flagship site, partly because excavations could be conducted systematically on a site where no modern structures had been built over the ruins; this is not the case for Constantza, a major port on the Black Sea, or Mangalia, where inscriptions, like other finds, were discovered by chance during the city's systematization and modernization efforts, and even then only sporadically. The number of inscriptions unearthed over the past century and a half is, however, quite substantial. All epigraphists begin by publishing inscriptions from Istros before turning their attention to other sites (for example, Iorgu Stoian, who published the corpus of Tomis).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that all these epigraphists, without exception, were aware of the need to compile the inscriptions into a corpus, following the publication of dossiers in monographs on the site or first editions in periodicals. This need became all the more pressing when, through contact with foreign specialists, they realized the importance of studying them in series; not only does this serial analysis allow for more reliable reconstructions - the "technical" aspect of the craft is essential here - but it also enables a better understanding of the context and, ultimately, of history. He who has seen a thousand inscriptions sees one...