

STATUARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GETO-DACIANS IN TRAJAN'S FORUM IN ROME

"Getae are more wise than almost all the barbarians and they are more alike the Greeks"
Dion Chrysostomos ; Iordanes, *Getica*, 39-40 ; Fontes, II, p. 413, 417

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The research on the iconography of the Daco-Getae monumental sculptures represents a very important chapter in the history of art, but still little approached by specialists and known to the public. Representations in marble and porphyry of the Daco-Getae from the Forum of Trajan (Rome) were collected, identified and studied for over 15 years by the author. They were the substance of a doctoral thesis, presented in 2000 at the École pratique des Hautes Études - Sorbonne, Paris, with the title: *Les Daces Romaine dans la sculpture. Étude d'iconographie antique*. Daco-Getae statuary is of exceptional historical and iconographic. There have been identified and analyzed more than a hundred Roman sculptures, representing the ancient inhabitants of Dacia in fierce attitude of great dignity. These sculptural works were made during the height of Roman art during the reign of Emperor Trajan (98-117) for his forum in Rome, designed and built in six years by the famous architect Apollodorus of Damascus, inaugurated in 112 d.Hr .

Archaeological discoveries in the Forum of Trajan, and restorations performed by Italian and American experts have shown that for this large architectural complex two series of statues of Daco-Getae were made. Different in size, they had a well-established place in the forum, at heights, as false caryatids, located at courtyard gates in the attics above each support column of the galleries of these porticoes and the exterior facade (south side) of the Basilica Ulpia. The statues had dimensions 2.68 m (for those at the porticoes) and 3,084 m (those on the south facade of the Basilica Ulpia building).



Reconstruction of Forum of Trajan: the front of the southern side of the Basilica Ulpia and the northeast side of the portico of the Forum (James E. Packer, *The Forum of Trajan in Rome. A study of the monuments in Brief*, University of California Press, 2001).

For what purpose the many representations of Daco-Getae in the Roman art were made? Was it only a "mere" political-military propaganda? Why did the Roman artists create this vast iconographic ensemble dedicated to Geto-Dacian people? May the idea be advanced that these images signify a noble "homage" dedicated by Romans to their most powerful adversary? Several arguments can be invoked to support these statements: respect, even admiration, felt by Trajan (and probably by some Romans in general) for the Daco-Getae warriors, as evidenced by the large number of Roman legions composed only of Geto-Dacian soldiers, as well as the gold of Daco-Getae taken as war booty, which substantially contributed to the economic recovery of the Roman Empire. It is possible to consider that the Emperor Trajan dedicated this architectural complex (Forum) equally to Daco-Getae, representing them in the Roman official art, a fact quite exceptional. Daco-Getae were put in value, their dignified, monumental image was placed in the center of Rome, in the most luxurious forum constructed in the Roman world; this achievement was not made ever before for another people called "barbaric"; and the noble image of Daco-Getae managed to overcome the destructive factor of Time and come up today; this is a very important and valuable fact for the history of representations of Daco-Getae in ancient Roman art and for the culture of Romania. The great quality of the sculptures of Trajan's reign characterizes the sculptural art with Daco-Getic topic, realized when the Roman portraiture art was in the point of its greatest artistic expression. Roman artists understood and at the same time, they felt that, before the physiognomy of each character (external appearance) to be seen, studied and rendered, the interior, mental (psychological moment) of each "model" had to be observed, decrypted and understood: here is prestige of the portrait art of the Roman school under the reign of Trajan.

No other people subjugated by Rome benefited of so much attention from the Roman artists. It can be said that more than the Gaules, Germans, Parthians, or other "barbarians", Daco-Getae occupied a privileged place in the Roman art and in the heart of Rome, the Forum of Trajan. Geto-Dacian people was, we can say, glorified in an unprecedented manner by the Romans. These sculptural representations are of great importance for the European and Romanian cultural heritage. Trajan's Column bas-reliefs and Daco-Getic statues represent a cultural heritage of great artistic and iconographic value, priceless ancient sculptural testimonies. These sculptural works must be studied and valorized, they are invaluable iconographic evidence of the predecessors of the people who now is named Romanian people.

The Roman sculptors masterly represented the Daco-Getae in their art. The physical and psychological aspect was rendered in a natural and realistic style for each character; these portraits of a great artistic and iconographic quality, characterize the noble physiognomy of Geto-Dacian people.