

NOVENSIA 33

# NOVENSIA 33

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Piotra Dyczka

# NOVENSIA 33



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## A POSSIBLE BRANCH OF THE SILK ROAD IN THE ROMAN DANUBE PROVINCES

**Abstract:** Numerous fragments of camel bones have been found in the ancient Roman Danube provinces. They belong mainly to the Bactrian or hybrid species, but more rarely, dromedary remains also appear. Since a large number of these bones were found at a distance from military sites, it seems justified to associate them with animals that were not used by legionaries, but as pack animals by merchants. Indeed, river transport was not suitable for certain perishable goods, which were more safely transported by land. In addition, overland transport allowed goods to be transported to destinations very distant from the waterways and seashores. Given the importance of long-distance trade at that time, the author wonders whether these discoveries can be linked to the Silk Road, along which many luxury goods were transported. Another question raised in this article is the possible use of abandoned amphitheatres as stopovers for caravans.

**Keywords:** camel, Danube, Roman provinces, Silk Road, amphitheatre

Camel bones have been discovered at archaeological sites in the former Roman Danube provinces. This article presents an attempt of interpretation of these findings.

One-humped camels have been bred in North Africa and the Middle East since antiquity, while the two-humped Bactrian camels are a typical Asian breed.<sup>1</sup> The Romans may have first encountered dromedaries during the conquest of North Africa, but the earliest definite information about them dates from the first century BC.<sup>2</sup> Dromedary bones from the time of the Roman Empire have been found mainly in Western Europe,<sup>3</sup> namely in the present-day Spanish, French, Belgian and British territories. They have also been found in Hungary.<sup>4</sup> Bactrian camel bones, on the other hand, are found mainly in the Black Sea and Danube regions.<sup>5</sup> Crosses between these species (so-called hybrids) have also been identified in areas where the Bactrian camel was used.<sup>6</sup> Camel remains found on a range of archaeological sites in the Danube and Balkan areas are dated to the Roman Empire and the period after its fall.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, these bones do not only appear in the neighbourhood of military sites, but also, above all, on civilian sites far from them.<sup>8</sup> This may

<sup>1</sup> BILLER 2017, p. 50, fig. 1.

<sup>2</sup> RIPINSKY 1985, pp. 134–141; IRWIN 2010, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> DÖVENER, OELSCHLÄGEL, BOCHERENS 2017, p. 195; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> DARÓCZI-SZABÓ *et alii* 2014, p. 265; BILLER 2017, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> PIGIÈRE, HENROTAY 2012, pp. 1531–1539; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> DÖVENER, OELSCHLÄGEL, BOCHERENS 2016, p. 195, map 7.

<sup>7</sup> BOEV 2019, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> BILLER 2017, p. 52.

indicate that they are bones of pack animals.<sup>9</sup> On the territory of present-day Bulgaria, bones of several specimens have been identified in Novae,<sup>10</sup> where the camp of the *legio I Italica* (province of Lower Moesia) was located, and others in nearby Popovo,<sup>11</sup> as well as in Nicopolis ad Istrum, Kabile, Anhialo, Serdica and Biela Voda.<sup>12</sup> In Hungary, similar remains were found at the sites of TÁC-Fővenypuszta and Dunaújváros-Intercisa, Budapest-Aquincum (capital of Lower Pannonia), Budapest-Mezőkövesd Street 1-3, Perkáta-Homokbánya, Budapest-Albertfalva, the Hunyadi János Road, Balatonlelle-Kenderföld, Dunavecse, Daruszentmiklós-Alsó Pázmánd, Budaörs-Kamar-aerdei-dűlő, and Keszthely-Fenekpuszta.<sup>13</sup> Similar discoveries have also been made in Austria.<sup>14</sup> In the western Balkans, remains of these animals have been identified in Ajdovščina, Casta and Hrušica, and Ad Pirum<sup>15</sup> in Slovenia, as well as in Serbia, in a range of sites such as Viminacium (capital of Upper Moesia, and camps of *legio VII Claudia* and *legio IV*), Sirmium (capital of Pannonia Secunda), Gomolava, Vranj near Hrtkovi, Davidovac-Gradište, and Pirot-Sarlach Bazilika.<sup>16</sup> The demand for luxury goods was probably high in Roman Dacia, a province that became rapidly wealthy, but data on possible caravans in this region are lacking to date. Numerous inscriptions from Roman Dacia indicate the presence of people who came there from Syria. This may indicate the trade contacts described here. Noteworthy, researchers report such finds like camel bones also on the other side of the empire's borders, for example in Dunavecse-Ugordáció, which may indicate that goods were transported across the Roman *limes*. Cross-border trade has also been confirmed by numerous amphorae found on the other side of the border.<sup>17</sup> They may be evidence that merchants were entering the Barbaricum territories. Considered together with the camel bones, amphora fragments may lead us to believe that the rich tribal elites also bought luxury goods from the Roman provinces and, to a lesser extent, from the East.

The camel is an animal with certain characteristics that should be recalled. In ancient times, it did not exist in the wild in Europe.<sup>18</sup> As a livestock animal, it was not well suited to agricultural work.<sup>19</sup> Adult camels generally walk too fast for the ploughman to follow them. Only young specimens can be harnessed to the plough, and usually, smaller animals are preferable for this use. Oxen and mules, being strong and slow animals, were much better suited than camels for field labour. In addition, on farms, the smell of camels tended to scare away horses and mules,<sup>20</sup> which was an additional disadvantage for breeders. Apart from military use, the breeding of camels was limited to their use as beasts of burden, or to obtain milk,<sup>21</sup> wool and manure,<sup>22</sup> or, once the animal was slaughtered, meat, leather, bone or blood.<sup>23</sup> Camel meat happened to be prized for its taste,<sup>24</sup> but as a slow-growing animal, it was unprofitable to raise for its meat, which was relatively expensive.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, even today, camels are rarely raised for slaughter. As for the milk and wool that can be obtained from them, the quantities are so small that breeding only becomes profitable in the case of large herds, and there is no evidence that such herds existed in the regions concerned. The few bones found at various sites on the Danube do not seem to indicate that there was any significant breeding during the period under study. The Roman army, which made greater use of

<sup>9</sup> PIGIÈRE, HENROTAY 2012, p. 1531; DARÓCZI-SZABÓ *et alii* 2014, p. 267.

<sup>10</sup> SCHRAMM 1975, pp. 214–241.

<sup>11</sup> NINOV 2008, pp. 198–211.

<sup>12</sup> BOEV 2019, pp. 29–36.

<sup>13</sup> BÖKONYI 1989, p. 399; BARTOSIEWICZ 1996, pp. 447–453; DARÓCZI-SZABÓ *et alii* 2014, p. 266–271.

<sup>14</sup> RIEDL 1999, pp. 81–92.

<sup>15</sup> BARTOSIEWICZ 1999, pp. 311–322; BARTOSIEWICZ, DIRJEC 2001, pp. 279–285; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, pp. 251–267; VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, pp. 281–295.

<sup>17</sup> POPA 2016, pp. 203–242.

<sup>18</sup> BARTOSIEWICZ 1995, p. 119.

<sup>19</sup> ROBINSON 1936, p. 52; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> ROBINSON 1936, p. 55.

<sup>21</sup> KASKOUS 2019, p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> LASOTA-MOSKALEWSKA 2005, p. 154; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> TOMCZYK 2016, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 291.

<sup>25</sup> BARTOSIEWICZ 1995, 124.

camels,<sup>26</sup> did not usually station in the concerned areas.<sup>27</sup> Outside North Africa and Syria, there is only one information about a temporary stationing of *ala I Ulpia dromadriorum Palmyrenorum milliaria*, in Thrace.<sup>28</sup> Of course, the use of these animals by the army for transport purposes, e.g. for loads or mail,<sup>29</sup> cannot be ruled out, but it is likely that the camel remains from the ancient times found today are related rather to long-distance trade. Bactrian camels are also resistant to very low temperatures, which makes them suitable for winter transport, when river navigation is impossible. The animals resulting from the crossing of the two species (hybrids) are characterised by their strength, resistance to cold and exceptional endurance.<sup>30</sup> The adult dromedary can carry 200–320 kg, the Bactrian camel much less, but the hybrid resulting from the crossing of the two species can carry up to 320–420 kg.<sup>31</sup> The first generation of hybrid males is even capable of carrying up to 500 kg.<sup>32</sup> For the merchants, these were certainly highly prized animals. These figures show how profitable camel caravan transport was: caravans could cover several tens of kilometres a day, three camels together could carry a total load of about one ton, and a single camel driver was sufficient to lead them. On the other hand, in the case of longer caravans, the number of attendants was higher and the security of the goods transported was better guaranteed. Palmyra and other regions of the “Fertile Crescent” were known to provide excellent professionals capable of coping with the difficulties and carrying out long journeys.<sup>33</sup>

In the light of the sources available to us today, water transport is considered the dominant mode of transport in the Roman Empire. It was faster, much cheaper and more convenient than land transport. This was also the case for routes from Asia to Egypt, through the Indian Ocean, with the intention of further transports to the markets of the Roman Empire. Large cargoes could be transported by a small crew. A crew of only a few people could handle the transport of large volumes of goods. Sea, river and land routes converged on the port cities.<sup>34</sup> Throughout antiquity, waterways served as the main transport routes for supplying the border legionary camps and the cities along the rivers.<sup>35</sup> This is clearly visible in the artefacts found today: imported goods from distant regions of the empire are discovered at sites along the major rivers. In contrast, the transport of these categories of objects to localities far from the waterways was considerably limited. In the case of long-distance trade over the empire’s borders, the role of maritime transport increased when political problems arose, for example when the Parthians, who controlled the land routes between China and Rome, posed an obstacle.<sup>36</sup> Nomads could also be a danger.<sup>37</sup> Roman emissaries tried to win the favour of local chiefs in order to protect the interests of merchants.<sup>38</sup> But these “friendships” could be short, sometimes even forced, and therefore probably illusory.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, but for natural reasons this time, it was not always possible to use sea or river routes. In the Indian Ocean, it was necessary to wait for the monsoon season,<sup>40</sup> because only then could the winds allow navigation between the Far East and Egypt or the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>41</sup> In the Mediterranean, storms were frequent from autumn to spring, so sailing was avoided during this period. In the considered area, the Danube and its tributaries were key transport routes,<sup>42</sup> but after reaching the mouth of the river, merchants could encounter difficulties. Most European rivers froze in winter, making navigation impossible. At other times of the year, their currents could

<sup>26</sup> TOYNBEE 1996, p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> DĄBROWA 1991, pp. 364–366.

<sup>28</sup> *CIL*, XVI 106; *AE*, 1947, 171.

<sup>29</sup> DAVIES 1967, p. 117; VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 263.

<sup>30</sup> POTTS 2004, p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> POTTS 2004, p. 157.

<sup>32</sup> VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 262.

<sup>33</sup> LI 2016, p. 147; AUTIERO 2015, p. 118; MÜELENAERE 2017, p. 159.

<sup>34</sup> See WILKES 2005, p. 126, fig. 1.

<sup>35</sup> EAST 1932, p. 330.

<sup>36</sup> LI 2016, p. 143; JUPING 2014–2015, p. 138.

<sup>37</sup> JUPING 2014–2015, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> SPEIDEL 2016, pp. 155–193; JONES 1974, p. 151.

<sup>39</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2017, pp. 123–132.

<sup>40</sup> WARMINGTON 1974, pp. 35–83.

<sup>41</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2017, p. 119.

<sup>42</sup> WILKES 2005, pp. 124–225; ŻMUDZIŃSKI 2001, pp. 191–197.



become too strong when the snow melted, and they could have periods of unexpected floods or low water in summer. Water level variations were irregular and unpredictable. Navigation could also be hampered by natural obstacles, such as rapids in the area of the Danube Iron Gates.<sup>43</sup> Land transport, on the other hand, offered the possibility of reaching cities and garrisons that were distant from the waterways. Not all cities, indeed, were located on large navigable rivers like the Rhine or the Danube. They could be several days away from the rivers. But they were interesting markets that were worth the journey and the risk.

In addition, the transport of various goods was conditioned by their susceptibility to humidity and therefore to deterioration. This was certainly the case with incense and spices, which transport by land was much safer.<sup>44</sup> The Romans imported various expensive spices from Asia, including curry and pepper.<sup>45</sup> The degradation of a single bag of these goods presumably meant a major loss for the trader. Therefore, it can be assumed that transport by land was preferable in these cases. This was also the case probably for medicinal and aromatic plants,<sup>46</sup> and for myrrh. Certain dyes such as indigo and fabrics dyed with it were also imported from Asia. These products also needed protection against moisture and, because of their high price, transporters were required to deliver them in the best possible condition. Stale, mouldy or rotten goods were worthless, and the trader's loss was all the greater as he also had to support the transport costs. Transporting textiles by land could also be advisable for the same reasons, and some merchants avoided the sea route that started from India, choosing various caravan routes.<sup>47</sup> Others took the risk of transporting their goods by sea from India to Egyptian ports<sup>48</sup> and then further on to Europe, where large quantities of cotton cloth were exported, as well as unknown quantities of silk.<sup>49</sup> This latter commodity was so important that the country of its producers was called Seres, i.e. the land of the "silk people", which roughly corresponded to China.<sup>50</sup> It was purchased, like other exclusive items, to underline the social prestige of the buyers.<sup>51</sup> Multicoloured silk fabrics, which were sometimes decorated with motifs designed to suit the buyers' tastes, were particularly expensive.<sup>52</sup> Fabrics embroidered with gold, decorated with pearls or made of so-called sea silk were probably transported in the opposite direction.<sup>53</sup> It should be noted that in the period under consideration, China already cared to organise the production and trade market<sup>54</sup> in such a way as to create favourable conditions for the development of handicrafts and to allow for the growth of wealth.<sup>55</sup> A significant part of the workshops produced for export to distant countries and sold their products to merchants who traded with the Roman Empire. Another notable Asian export item — this time from the Middle East to the empire — was carpets. They adorned the floors of villas and palaces, and floor mosaics imitating them give an image of what they looked like. They are also mentioned by Lucretius, who speaks of the resplendent lustre of Babylonian carpets.<sup>56</sup> Their brightness was due to the incorporation of silk threads, which considerably increased their price. Precious and semi-precious stones and pearls from Asia probably were also transported by land.<sup>57</sup> These valuables could be hidden in luggage and transported to their destination in relative safety. Elephant tusks,<sup>58</sup> hides, furs, wigs and slaves<sup>59</sup> could also be transported by land, as could gold,<sup>60</sup> perfumes and plants.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>43</sup> EAST 1932, p. 325.

<sup>44</sup> SIDEBOTHAM 2011.

<sup>45</sup> LI 2016, p. 147; WARMINGTON 1974, p. 181.

<sup>46</sup> PARKER 2008, pp. 150–154.

<sup>47</sup> CHRISTIAN 2000, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> HILDEBRAND 2016; WILSON 2015; EVERS 2017, pp. 51–58.

<sup>49</sup> PETER, WILD 2014, p. 94; ŻUCHOWSKA 2013, pp. 133–154.

<sup>50</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2017, p. 31; HOPPAL 2017, pl. 1, MALINOWSKI 2012, pp. 13–26.

<sup>51</sup> ŻUCHOWSKA 2013, p. 154.

<sup>52</sup> See ŻUCHOWSKA 2014, p. 162.

<sup>53</sup> ŻUCHOWSKA 2015, pp. 216–244.

<sup>54</sup> YANG 2015, pp. 421–433.

<sup>55</sup> LEESE-MESSING 2019, pp. 497–527.

<sup>56</sup> LUCR. 4.1026–1029.

<sup>57</sup> SCHOFF 1915, p. 31.

<sup>58</sup> LI 2016, p. 144.

<sup>59</sup> See WARMINGTON 1974, p. 145; PARKER 2008, p. 157.

<sup>60</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2015, p. 118.

<sup>61</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2017, p. 134.

Caravans probably often carried a variety of goods at the same time. Indeed, a larger arrival of a single commodity at any one time could make it more difficult to sell and meant a risk of having to sell it at a lower price. For this reason, it is likely that the caravans' cargoes were as varied as those found today in the wrecks of merchant ships. It can be assumed that in the major centres at the crossroads of caravan routes, merchants who had not yet reached their final destination not only replenished their supplies of water, fodder or provisions, but also traded goods. Among the few products that the Romans sold in Asia and that were difficult to transport on rough seas, was glassware, considered an exclusive luxury product by the Orientals.<sup>62</sup> The Romans also probably sold wine in the East. Assumably, it was transported in amphorae<sup>63</sup> when shipped by sea, and in wineskins by land. Skins and furs that could come from the Barbaricum were sometimes exported to the Far East.<sup>64</sup>

Palmyra<sup>65</sup> and Antioch,<sup>66</sup> among others, were important commercial hubs for goods from the Middle and Far East and gathering places where caravans were formed. Petra, Damascus and the ports of Gaza and Tyre also played this role.<sup>67</sup> These rich cities served as departure points for caravans on long journeys to Africa, the Near East, the Middle East and the Far East, and as destinations for those on their way back from the European provinces of the Roman Empire.<sup>68</sup> As in the port city of Alexandria, goods could be traded at the crossroads of sea and land routes, including the "Incense Route".<sup>69</sup> Caravans probably often left from port cities,<sup>70</sup> where glass from Syria, ivory,<sup>71</sup> ebony, cotton from Asia,<sup>72</sup> frankincense, myrrh and carpets from the Middle East, Asian spices, silk from China,<sup>73</sup> indigo and porcelain<sup>74</sup> were all traded on a single marketplace. Small live animals, including parrots and pheasants, were also transported by land from the Far East to the Middle East, as sensitive goods.<sup>75</sup> The cities where trade routes crossed were places of exchange of useful information, where decisions were made about trade routes.<sup>76</sup> To travel from Palmyra to Europe, for example, one could either take a route along the northern coast of the Black Sea,<sup>77</sup> or a much shorter one, but that involved crossing the Bosphorus Strait. Camel bones found in the Black Sea steppes prove that both routes were used.<sup>78</sup> The import of luxury goods from the Far East into the region is attested, for example, by the discovery of Chinese lacquered cases and silks in the Scythian cemetery of Ust'-Al'ma in Crimea.<sup>79</sup> Travelling from Palmyra to Europe, the caravans could take the road to Constantinople and then head towards the Danube to Aquincum via Oescus and Carnuntum. It was then possible to continue northwest, around the Alps, towards the Rhine *limes*. To go, for example, to Singidunum or Viminacium and then to Italy after passing the Bosphorus Strait, it was possible to follow the western shores of the Black Sea, via Odessos and Tomis, and then to follow the Danube via Durostorum, Novae, Oescus, Ratiaria, Viminacium to Singidunum. To go west, it was possible to take a slightly shorter route, known as the Via Militaris, from the Bosphorus Strait via Philippolis, Serdica and Naissus to Viminacium. In the Danube region, secondary roads deviated from the main route and led to the same cities in the direction of the Adriatic coast and the Balkan Peninsula. The length of the caravan journeys should also be taken into account. Depending on the various possible routes, the distance between Palmyra and

<sup>62</sup> ŻUCHOWSKA 2016, pp. 77–112; ŻUCHOWSKA, SZMONIEW-SKI 2017, pp. 161–188; HOPPÁL 2015, pp. 285–301; HOPPÁL 2016, pp. 99–114; HOPPÁL 2017, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> AUTIERO 2015, p. 114.

<sup>64</sup> WARMINGTON 1974, p. 157.

<sup>65</sup> MILLAR 1995, pp. 319–336.

<sup>66</sup> SCHOFF 1915, p. 34; BAUM 216, p. 11–32; MÜELENAERE 2017, p. 160.

<sup>67</sup> IRWIN 2010, p. 145; JUPING 2014–2015, p. 122; MILLAR 1995, pp. 310–318.

<sup>68</sup> SCHOFF 1915, p. 31; FRANK 1962, p. 191.

<sup>69</sup> KOLB, SPEIDEL 2017, p. 119.

<sup>70</sup> See ŻUCHOWSKA 2013, p. 154.

<sup>71</sup> WARMINGTON 1974, p. 163.

<sup>72</sup> See DALE 2009, pp. 79–88.

<sup>73</sup> ŻUCHOWSKA 2013, pp. 133–154.

<sup>74</sup> See EVERS 2017, p. 22; IRWIN 2010 p. 146.

<sup>75</sup> WARMINGTON 1974, p. 154.

<sup>76</sup> YANG 2015, pp. 421–433.

<sup>77</sup> MÜELENAERE 2017, p. 159.

<sup>78</sup> TOMCZYK 2016, pp. 1–2.

<sup>79</sup> PUZDROVSKIY, TRIUFANOV 2016, p. 8.

Carnuntum, for example, was about 3300 km. With a normal load of animals and a daily journey of about 50 km, it would thus take about 66 days to cover this distance stopping only for the night. Asian two-humped camels were known to be very resistant to heat and cold. Loaded normally and walking slowly, at their own pace, they could work up to 10 or even 14 hours a day if the conditions were favourable. If they were not overloaded, they could travel up to 60 km per day. With heavier loads, the animals tired more quickly and the stages had to be shortened. Of course, difficult winter conditions, with snowdrifts or icy roads, or other unexpected adverse conditions could considerably extend the journey time. The journey could also be extended by unforeseen events, such as the need to defend against brigands or predators. Findings of camel bones along the possible caravan routes go together with the discovery of eastern coins.<sup>80</sup> It should be noted, however, that the caravans did not travel in a straight line, trying to reach their destination as quickly as possible, but stopped at all the major fairs and periodic markets on their routes.<sup>81</sup> It is even likely that the skilled caravaneers knew the markets' calendars and did not actually move from place to place, but from market to market.<sup>82</sup> The actual duration of the journey was increased by the time spent travelling to the next fair and stopping there at least for a few days to sell lots of goods.

The study of the issue at hand confronts us, in an unexpected way, with another aspect of the phenomenon. Camel bones have been found in Roman amphitheatres, including in buildings that were no longer used in antiquity. For example, a camel skeleton was found in Viminacium, and the body of this animal dates from the middle or second half of the fourth century, i.e. from a time when the amphitheatre had already ceased to fulfil its traditional function.<sup>83</sup> This is also the case, for example, in Serdica<sup>84</sup> and Cartago Nova, in Spain.<sup>85</sup> Camels were practically not used in the circus games.<sup>86</sup> They did not feature in the *venationes*, and gladiators did not fight on camel-back. Gladiatorial combat was supposed to be an attractive spectacle, not a slaughter of domestic animals. If camels were not common animals in the territories of the empire, unlike elephants, panthers or bears, they could hardly be considered a wild animal or a game in Europe at the time. Camel racing in circuses was also rare.<sup>87</sup> The remains of these animals found in the amphitheatres must have had other reasons. The Romans were very pragmatic. Their way of thinking is well illustrated by the basilicas, which served as courts, courtrooms or commercial offices depending on the day.<sup>88</sup> However, given that camel remains have been found in various amphitheatres, one has to wonder why this happened. At present, the reasons remain uncertain, but the thesis — admittedly somewhat risky — that the pragmatic Romans could have used the abandoned amphitheatre buildings for various purposes does not seem to be excluded. For example, it seems possible that the disused amphitheatres could have been used as stopovers for caravans. These buildings, indeed, were adapted to the presence of animals. The problem of droppings or other pollution caused by animals did not arise, as they were disused places. In addition, the amphitheatres were supplied with water by aqueducts, from the time when water had been necessary for the circus animals, the gladiators and the spectators. The building also formed an enclosure that could be closed from the inside, where tired animals could rest without being disturbed. In such places, the beasts of burden and the valuable goods they carried were safe. Spending the night in an open forum always carried the risk of being attacked by stray dogs and brigands. Obviously, the caravaneers had to ensure that their animals and the goods they carried would reach safely their destination. For these

<sup>80</sup> MÜELENAERE 2017, p. 159.

<sup>81</sup> See DE LIGHT, 1993, p. 117.

<sup>82</sup> See DE LIGHT 1993, p. 120.

<sup>83</sup> VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 251.

<sup>84</sup> BOEV 2019, p. 32.

<sup>85</sup> VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 291.

<sup>86</sup> See VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 291.

<sup>87</sup> VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 291.

<sup>88</sup> See WARD-PERKINS 1983, p. 158.

reasons, we believe that the discovery of camel bones in the amphitheatres may indicate that these buildings served as stopovers and shelters for the caravans. The remains found there are probably from animals that died in the journey or were slaughtered and consumed because they were no longer fit for use as beasts of burden.<sup>89</sup> The probability of the thesis of the use of amphitheatres as caravanserais can be supported by the use of the ancient theatre of Aspendos in the Ottoman period<sup>90</sup> or, more surprisingly, of the opera house of Tiflis (now Tbilisi), built in the nineteenth century, which hosted not only performances but also such commercial activities.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, in the Turkish city of Han, an Ottoman caravanserai was used as a theatre.<sup>92</sup> Due to the development of trade in modern times, almost every city in the Middle East had its own caravanserai.<sup>93</sup> But earlier, makeshift solutions must have been used, including, perhaps, the use of amphitheatre as enclosures.

### Conclusion

Findings of camel bones in the Roman Danube provinces suggest that merchant caravans may have travelled through these territories during the Roman Empire.<sup>94</sup> They left from the East and headed northwest. Some of them may have reached Italy or other regions of Western Europe. Findings of camel remains from the Roman Empire are usually interpreted as related to the presence of armies, especially mounted fighters.<sup>95</sup> However, the flourishing trade of the Roman Empire is likely to have fostered the breeding of various species of camels in conquered areas.<sup>96</sup> The use of these animals for the transport of goods from Africa, the Near and Middle East cannot therefore be totally excluded. It seems likely that the bones found can be linked to a branch of the Silk Road, along which luxury goods were transported from the Orient.<sup>97</sup> The choice of overland transport is explained, on the one hand, by the concern to ensure that valuable products travelled in good conditions and, on the other, by the fact that it allowed to reach cities or fairs that were far from waterways. This mode of transport also made deliveries independent of rough seas or frozen rivers in winter. For these reasons, we believe that the increasing number of camel remains found in this region, mainly Bactrian and hybrids, could be evidence of a developed trade between the peoples of Asia and the Roman Empire. The middlemen were Near and Middle Eastern natives who were familiar with camels, while the goods they carried could also come from other parts of the world, including the Far East. In the opposite direction, merchants carried coins, metals and handicrafts produced in the empire, including glassware.

### Abbreviations

*AE*  
*CIL*

*L'Année Épigraphique*, Paris.  
*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ed. TH. MOMMSEN *et alii*, Berlin 1863–.

<sup>89</sup> See VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 263; TOMCZYK 2016, p. 10; VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 292.

<sup>90</sup> See MISZCZAK 2014.

<sup>91</sup> See NAKHUTSRISHVILI 2021–2022.

<sup>92</sup> Oral information, courtesy of Mrs Ezgi Dilan Yildirim.

<sup>93</sup> See FINDIK, KARASU 2002.

<sup>94</sup> VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 264.

<sup>95</sup> VUKOVIĆ, BOGDANOVIĆ 2013, p. 264; VUKOVIĆ-BOGDANOVIĆ, BLAŽIĆ 2014, p. 293.

<sup>96</sup> BROGAN 1954, p. 126.

<sup>97</sup> See DARÓCZI-SZABÓ *et alii* 2014, p. 274.

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