

The civil settlement from *Micia*

Abstract

Keywords: *roman, vicus, pagus, inscriptions, Micia, arhaeology, fort, auxilliary units, army, amphitheater, workshops, baths, religion, dwellings, magnetic prospection, population.*

We propose for review the thesis entitled: *The civil settlement from Micia*

The Roman Empire included wide spaces and large groups of populations between its borders, it united territories and merged cultural visions; phenomenon far from being unilateral or predictable. For us to understand this changing and integration process of the Roman and autochthonous culture, it is better to start with a small topic and advance toward a wider vision.

Therefore, we will focus over a province of the Empire, Dacia, and mainly over a settlement, *Micia*, currently located 10 kms west from the city of Deva, Hunedoara county.

The ancient settlement won't serve as much as a model for the Roman organisation in Dacia, but as a case study to analyse, in a very particular situation, the Romanisation process and its dynamics.

Starting with the evolution of the word *vicus*, initially used to identify a village, than to name a quarter, as in the case of the quarters of Rome; as the territory will evolve socially and economically, it will signify, especially in the western parts of the Empire, any human agglomeration that has not a city, *municipium* or *colonia* legal status.

The term *vicus* will designate fairs or settlements with handicraft characteristics, usually found in English literature as small – towns and *Straßensiedlungen* in German.

Reflecting this situation, the modern research, although there was no such kind of differentiation in antiquity, divides the *vici* from the western frontier – provinces into two categories: military and civil *vici*. Military *vici* are civil settlement developed in the immediate vicinity of the fortresses, usually called *canabae* in inscriptions, and of the forts. In Dacia, as in all western frontier provinces, most of the town had developed from *vici*, one of those is *Micia*, the main topic of the thesis.

The *pagi* represent territorial circumscriptions of a Roman type administrative unit which are common for the Latin area of the Roman Empire. In Africa, where there are certified a significant number of *pagi*, they represent the subdivision of a colony. A totally different situation is identified

in Gallia where *pagi* represent a subdivision of a *civitas*, the form in which the autochthonous tribal territories received a *cvasi* – urban organisation.

In Dacia there were identified two *pagi* located, significantly, in the territory of *Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa: Aquae* and *Micia*. Thus, we can observe, in *Micia*'s case, an unprecedented possibility of coexistence, side by side, of two different Roman settlements, a military and a civil one.

Since, until present days, there is no synthesis publication about the civil settlement from *Micia*, despite the fact that *Micia* is the biggest near – fort settlement without an urban status. Consistent with this aspect, on its territory were made a lot of archaeological and epigraphical discoveries, mostly published in small articles; the idea of a concrete approach of the study appeared by itself.

Through the present thesis, we are trying to clarify the planimetry of the settlement, mostly established as a result of the older or newer archaeological excavations, to demonstrate the existence of two settlements, a military one developed near the fort and a civil one, extended in the south – western side of the fort and the coexistence of the two in the 25 hectares area of the *Micia* archaeological site.

The archaeological excavations were resumed in the year 2000 and, from the 2002's summer, at the beginning of the campaign, I became a member of the research team of the *Micia* – Vețel archaeological site.

Since the year 2000, the excavations were concentrated in a single sector, in the south – east area from the amphitheatre. The research team was formed by specialists from National Museum of Romania and the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation. The excavations took place in the civil settlement and continued until the year 2010, the results of the research being, excepting a few reports, unpublished. In the year 2008, the site director ph. D Liviu Petculescu proposed me to extend my area of study to the processing of the archaeological material came from the excavations of the workshop zone and to its integration in the entire settlement context, for a better understanding of the discoveries meaning.

Structured as a monograph, the thesis was structured in four parts, each part approaches a social and political aspect of the history of the ancient settlement.

The first part, called *Preliminary considerations*, was conceived to integrate the study of the Roman settlement into the Romanian historiography. *Micia* has aroused interest since the XIXth century when the inscriptions discovered here were included in numerous repertoires and studies, the highlight being the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. From the beginning of the XXth century, the ancient settlement will receive the scientific recognition that it deserves. Here will be carried out, with small interruptions, systematic archaeological excavations resulting in published material

like: excavation reports and studies regarding some aspects of the settlement: the baths, the amphitheatre, dwellings. An important place is occupied by the fort and necropolis study. A part of this chapter consists in the explanation of the geographical frame, the presence of the Mureş River as a defining element for the development of the settlement.

Maybe one of the most important factor that determined the settlement development in this area was the presence of the fort with auxiliary units quartered here from all over the Empire: Mauretania, *Commagena*, Hispania or Britannia, but also with vexillations from the XIIIth Gemina. The main purpose of the army here was to ensure the borders from yazigs attacks.

Also, the unusual dimensions of the fort are the result of a later enlargement, quite necessary after the arrival of the new units, especially if we are talking about cavalry or mixed units. At the peak of its development, the fort must have been accommodated 1500 soldiers and about 500 horses.

The second part, the most consistent one, *The Civil settlement*, shows detailed elements of the settlement: the roads, the amphitheatre, the baths, the cult buildings, workshops and dwellings. Although studied on short distances, the road system, recently discovered, offer us a general image over the *vicus* organisation level. The settlement seems to be organised as big squares, also divided into smaller plots, marked by the main cobblestone roads. The entire settlement, located on a strap road that linked *Partiscum* to *Apulum*, is connected to the main road network of the Empire.

Based on the military aspect of the settlement, on the immediate proximity of the fort and the presence of the cavalry here, it is considered that the amphitheater, discussed in detail in the next chapter, must have been also used, among his main entertainment function, as a foyer space. The small size, the plan and construction simplicity and the humble building materials, place the amphitheater from *Micia* among the military amphitheatres.

Perhaps one of the most impressive buildings from *Micia* is the bath complex. In the seventies of the twenties century, the erection of some industrial buildings led to Mureş River diversion, the erected dam causing the flooding of the area where was discovered, by O. Floca, Şt. Ferenczi and L. Mărghitan, the tiles and bricks workshop. Further research in the west area led, in 1967, to the discovery of a building that will later be identified with the Roman baths. Also, since the thirties, C. Daicoviciu has discovered a building identified by him as a port by the Mureş River. The two constructions proved to be two bath complexes, build after an ingenious plan, maybe some of the biggest baths in the vicinity of the auxiliary forts from Dacia.

The existence of several buildings with this particular functionality was already presumed since the discovery of two inscriptions. Same as before, the study tries to clarify the dating problems that the two complexes raised.

Another equally important element, the economy, has a very good representation in *Micia*. We can find a tiles and bricks workshop, a stone carving workshop demonstrated also by the presence of a semi finished statue base, recently recovered from the riverbed, now part of the museum collection, a glyptics and an unpublished bronze processing workshop.

The author of the present thesis participated at the archaeological excavations that led to the discovery of the bronze workshop. The excavation results were chronologically and historically processed and so, the bronze workshop was dated previously than the main phase of the settlement, the one with stone buildings. It also marks the eastern borders of the early settlement. It will also be followed the process from the simple manufacture of an object to the artistic norico – pannonic and oriental influences. The whole discussion is on display in the chapter *The workshops at Micia, between necessity and art*.

The religious behavior captured in *Micia* has some particularities from other areas of the province Dacia, because of the presence of the army that will bring, from it's places of origin, the religion, such as the archers from *Commagena* or the Moorish *numerus*. The thesis, through the chapter *The Religion at Micia. Buildings and cult monuments* draw the attention on the cult buildings erected by the army units quartered here, but also on the Roman official religion reflected in the temples and large number of inscriptions discovered.

D. Benea identified, on most of the military *vici* from Dacia, the existence of the long buildings, developed in the dept of the plots, with the narrow facade facinf the road (Streifenhouse, striphouses). In her's hypothesis, Benea adopts the logical explanation of S. Sommer according to witch the plan of these buildings is not an evolution from the local ones, but it is the result of the Roman batching system. The theory of Ms. Benea is sustained by the discoveries made in the 2000 – 2010 archaeological camps when a part of an *insula* was investigated, discoveries presented and explained in the thesis *The Roman settlement from Micia*, chapter *Dwellings*.

An important chapter of these thesis is consisted with the presentation of the recent researches in the Roman settlement. We draw attention of the fact that we present the last 10 years of archaeological excavations, carried out between the years 2000 and 2010, with unpublished results. If the previous research followed the identification, analysis and setting the chronology of the main monuments discovered here, the recent prospections tried to establish some highlights of the urban life: territorial and inhabited space organisation, the road networks, or the existance fases of the settlement. The corroboration of the new researche with the modern methods – aerial and magnetic prospection – will bring new results in the study of the site.

The third part was called *The Population from Micia*. The surviving of more than 100 inscriptions, quite an impressive number for a settlement that never won a urban status, made possible a cvasi – complete approach of the population study. Thus we found an intense

colonisation, especially in the areas with military units; an easy to understand phenomenon because of the ethnic blend of the Roman army, mostly the auxiliary units. Regarding these details we jump to the conclusion that, at its arrival, the Roman army, not only it was accompanied by a large number of people, large enough to form a new settlement, not only were brought, following the Roman pattern of colonisation, a lot of colonists in the new conquered territory, but also they would have met here the local population, in large numbers.

The last part contains the settlement review's final conclusions. As we showed before, in *Micia* we can identify an unprecedented phenomenon: the coexistence of two settlements, a civil and a military one, side by side. Although the settlement has developed in Roman times, it did it in such way that it included the characteristics of the Roman, oriental and autochthonous culture, gaining, thus, a unique identity. The members of both administrative factions, *vicus* and *pagus*, lived together as one community. The people inhabited *Micia* during Roman times, lived their lives in a mixture of traditions that made the settlement a unique case in Roman Dacia.

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