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THE DACIANS FROM NORTHERN TRANSYLVANIA
(THE SOMEȘ RIVER BASIN DURING THE 2ND C. BC - 1ST C. AD)

Doctoral dissertation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction...	4
II. Geographic context...	11
III. State of the art...	25
IV. Catalogue of finds...	41
V. Settlements	
V.1. Location of the settlements...	102
V.2. Typology and character of the settlements...	104
V.3. Chronology of the settlements...	107
V.4. Houses and associated structures...	109
VI. Fortifications...	118
VI.1. Location of the fortifications...	121
VI.2. Classification of the fortifications...	127
VI.3. Layout and typology of the fortification elements...	133
VI.4. Chronology of the fortifications...	139
VI.5. Fortification systems...	141
VII. Economic and artisanal activities...	145
VII.1. Agriculture...	145
VII.2. Pottery production...	148
VII.2.1. Handmade pottery...	153
VII.2.2. Wheel-thrown pottery...	163
VII.2.3. Other clay objects...	170
VII.3. Metallurgy...	173
VII.3.1. Iron mining and iron working...	173
VII.3.2. Tools and utilitarian objects...	178
VII.3.3. Weapons...	180
VII.4. Precious metals working...	182
VII.4.1. Precious metals mining and precious metals working...	182
VII.4.2. Costume accessories and jewellery ...	185
VII.5. Other artisanal economic activities...	193
VII.5.1. Stone working...	193
VII.5.2. Salt mining...	199
VII.6. Trade...	203
VII.6.1. Commercial routes and connections...	203
VII.6.2. Imported products...	209
VII.7. Coins and monetary circulation...	211
VII.7.1. Local coin issues and other Dacian coins...	211
VII.7.2. Greek coins...	220

VII.7.3. Roman coins...	222
VIII. Ritual and funerary manifestations...	226
VIII.1. Ritual pits...	226
VIII.2. Cremation graves...	231
IX. Power centres ...	235
X. Conclusions and research directions...	244
XI. Bibliography...	248
XII. Figures and plates...	266

Summary

Key-words: regional monograph, Dacians, Northern Transylvania, 2nd c. BC - 1st c. AD, settlements, fortifications, archaeological finds, economic activities, ritual manifestations, power centres.

I. Introduction

The paper represents a regional monograph about the Dacian time in Northern Transylvania. The area hasn't been previously studied from a general perspective, therefore the elaboration of a synthesis paper on the subject has been considered useful. The dissertation refers to the Dacian finds already known and several formerly unidentified settlements and fortification. The chronological frame defined for the research covers a period of three centuries (2nd c. BC - 1st c. AD), beginning with the last Celtic horizon in Transylvania, until the Roman conquest at the beginning of the 2nd c. AD.

II. Geographic context

From a hydrologic point of view, the area studied is delimited by the Transylvanian Someș river basin. The only geographic unit that is not tributary to the Someș rivers is the Huedin Depression, which is drained by the upper valley of the Crișul Repede river and its tributaries. From an administrative point of view, the area belongs to Cluj (except for the southern part, the part of the Arieș river basin), Sălaj (until the limit of the Meseș mountains) and Bistrița-Năsăud counties. The southern limit of the territory is outlined by the separation between the Bistrița hills and Reghin hills to the east, between the Someș plain and Mureș plain, and continues towards the west over the Feleac massif until the limit between the Gilău mountains and Muntele Mare. The western limit is quite clearly marked by the Vlădeasa and Meseș mountains, continuing to the north through the Someș couloir until the Benesat-Ulmeni gorge. To the north, the limit is represented by the northern margin of the Purcăreț-Boiu Mare plateau and of the Sălătrucului hills, following the foot of the Țibleș and Rodnei mountains towards the spring of the Someșul Mare river. The eastern limit is set by the inner margin of the Bârgău and Căliman

mountains, almost reaching towards the south the exit of the Mureş river from the Topliţa-Deda gorge.

III. State of the art

This chapter discusses the archaeological contributions of those who added to the knowledge of the Dacian realities from Northern Transylvania. The first Dacian finds mentioned by the earlier professional papers of the 19th c. were the coin hoards and those containing silver jewellery. Owing to their special value, these have been taken to Vienna, thus capturing the attention of the specialists. During the first half of the 20th c. other finds than the hoards started to be mentioned, leading to the identification of the first Dacian settlements and fortifications in this region. After the Second World War, an increasing number of sites dating from the Dacian period is signalled in Northern Transylvania, mostly as a result of field surveys. The archaeological research took place mostly during the Communist rule, including some smaller scale fieldworks, involving test trenches. After 1989, the stagnation of the research oriented towards the Dacian period has led to a deepening of the gap in research compared to the other regions.

IV. Catalogue of finds

The catalogue of finds presents all the discoveries known so far, dating from the above defined time frame. The finds correspond to 143 localities, of which some providing several such discoveries, representing settlements, fortifications and various types of isolated finds. The catalogue of finds reflects the situation of the finds at the conclusion of this paper. The uncertain finds, which can't be dated with certainty from the 2nd c. BC - 1st c. AD, have been provisionally included in the catalogue of finds. The presentation of each discovery is followed by the corresponding bibliography.

V. Settlements

The Dacian settlements from the Someş river basin have been analysed first of all from the point of view of their location. Several determinant factors, such as the topography, the water source or the natural resources in the proximity have been considered. The settlements have been classified not only according to their typology but also based on their permanent or seasonal character. The chronology of the settlements could be more narrowly defined only in the case of the better-known sites, while the majority could be dated only largely from the Middle or Late La Tène. At the end of the chapter, the habitation complexes identified inside the settlements have been discussed, particularly the houses, pit-houses or ground-level house, but also different annexes, such as hearths and pits.

VI. Fortifications

The Dacian fortifications from Northern Transylvania are relatively well represented amongst the finds. In total 22 fortifications are known, including those recently identified following field surveys. Their location has been influenced by the topographical characteristics, but also by

strategic reasons required by the role of each fortification in its territory. The classification of the fortifications has allowed the distinction between fortified settlements, fortresses or fortifications with a strictly military purpose. The arrangement and the typology of the fortification elements have been discussed as well, including the chronology, thus allowing the identification of different local fortification systems.

VII. Economic and artisanal activities

This chapter discusses the main economic and production activities that have been indicated by the archaeological discoveries. Although the agriculture and animal husbandry were the main productive activities, the state of the art hasn't provided more precise information on the subject, except for the settlement at Moigrad, where osteological analyses are available. On the subject of pottery production, general data about the modelling of ceramic ware and the various pottery shapes, handmade or wheel-thrown, together with other clay objects have been presented. In connection with the metallurgy of iron, the mining and working of iron and the resulting final products, mainly tools and weapons, have been considered. Concerning the working of precious metals, possible sites of precious metals mining and workshops have been identified, followed by the analysis of the jewellery and costume accessories (bracelets, chains, collars, finger rings, pendants, brooches, buckles, belt buckles). An activity specific to Northern Transylvania was the production of querns in the workshops from the settlement at Ciceu-Corabia, where probably most of the Dacian-type querns from Transylvania have been made. The mining of the rich salt deposits of the Someş river basin had a particular importance for the local economy as well, although the evidence of salt mining is only indirect. The discussion about the trade focuses on possible routes and commercial relations, and respectively the imported objects found in the region. The coin finds are very well represented in the Someş river basin. Of a particular importance are the local Dacian coin issues of the first half of the 2nd c. BC, represented by the coins of Crişeni-Berchieş, Tonciu and Medieşu Aurit types. Other types of Dacian coins and Greek or Roman coins circulated during the studied period.

VIII. Ritual and funerary manifestations

The ritual manifestations are so far illustrated in the studied area only by ritual pits, especially the great field of such pits on *Măgura Moigradului*. Other several ritual pits at Fântânele (Bistriţa-Năsăud county) and a foundation sacrifice from the Dacian settlement at *Băile Someşeni*, near Cluj-Napoca, have been identified as well. No sacred constructions are known. The funerary domain is underrepresented, with only several cremations known.

IX. Power centres

Four regional power centres have been outlined in the Someş river basin. They have been analysed in connection with the different aspects that influenced their delimitation, including of their territories. In three of four cases the name survived the Roman conquest. A clear parallel

has been observed between the power centres from the Early and the Late Iron Age, partly owing to the geographic conditions.

X. Conclusions and research directions

Lastly, several general conclusions have been given. The synthesis of the Dacian discoveries from Northern Transylvania indicates that there was an intense habitation during the 2nd c. BC - 1st c. AD in this region, which was equally complex as in the other areas inhabited by the Dacians and the Getae. Alongside conclusions, several new research directions have been presented in this chapter.