

“LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU  
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PATRIMONY  
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY AND VALORIFICATION  
OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN PATRIMONY IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

# ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS

IX



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**ACTA TERRAE SEPTEMCASTRENSIS**

**IX, 2010**

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SEPTEMCASTRENSIS**

**IX**

Editor: Sabin Adrian LUCA

**Sibiu, 2010**

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**Contact adress:** „Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu, Faculty of History and Patrimony, *Institute for the Study and Valorification of the Transylvanian Patrimony in European context*, B-dul Victoriei Nr. 5-7, 550024 Sibiu, România; tel. / fax. 0269 / 214468; 0745 / 366606; e-mail: [sabinadrian.luca@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:sabinadrian.luca@ulbsibiu.ro), [ins.arheologie@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:ins.arheologie@ulbsibiu.ro); web: <http://arheologie.ulbsibiu.ro>.

## Content

### Section I

Sabin Adrian LUCA, <b>Introduction</b> .....	7
Marco MERLINI, <b>Building archaeological museums as protagonists of Virtual reality</b> .....	9
Cosmin Ioan SUCIU, Florian DUMITRESCU-CHIOAR, Benjamin Adrian PĂRĂU, <b>The experience of Lucian Blaga University from Sibiu to deliver e-courses as a tool to build virtual museums</b> .....	37
Adrian LUCA, <b>DigiBruk. Digitization project of the Brukenthal National Museum journals</b> .....	45
Dana Roxana HRIB, <b>Museum pedagogy – a successful programme</b> .....	51

### Section II

Lolita NIKOLOVA, <b>Towards the Accumulation of Wealth and Social Complexity in Prehistory</b> .....	57
Ali HAGHIGHAT, Adel SA'DODDIN, <b>Toteganism: towards the definition of a missing phase in Ancient Metaphysics</b> .....	65
Marius-Mihai CIUTĂ, Cristian Titus FLORESCU, <b>Preliminary considerations regarding Vinča anthropomorphic figurines discovered in archaeological site Limba- Oarda de Jos, Sectors: <i>Bordane, Sesu` Orzii</i> and <i>Vărăria</i> (Alba County)</b> .....	85
Laura COLTOFEAN, <b>Neolithic and Cooper age Signs – methodology of translations</b> .....	113
Diana-Maria SZTANCS, Corneliu BELDIMAN, Dan Lucian BUZEA, <b>Fiches typologiques de l'industrie osseuse de Roumanie. I. Préhistoire. 1. Idole / Pendeloque / Amulette anthropomorphe énéolithique en bois de cerf de Păuleni-Ciuc, dép. de Harghita</b> .....	121
Georgeta EL SUSI, <b>Unpublished data on the management of mammals in the settlement Petrești culture from Moșna (Sibiu district)</b> .....	15!
Iosif Vasile FERENCZ, Cristian Constantin ROMAN, <b>The Dacian fortress from Ardeu - research directions -</b> .....	172
Beatrice CIUTĂ, <b><i>Vitis vinifera</i> specie used in libations and in daily life Apulum-Liber Pater Sanctuary (In Vino Veritas...)</b> .....	185

**THE DACIAN FORTRESS FROM ARDEU  
- RESEARCH DIRECTIONS -**

**Iosif Vasile FERENCZ**

Dacian and Roman Civilisation Museum Deva, Romania, [fiosifvasile@yahoo.com](mailto:fiosifvasile@yahoo.com)

**Cristian Constantin ROMAN**

Corvins Castle Museum Hunedoara, Romania, [cricr2001@yahoo.com](mailto:cricr2001@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *The investigation at Ardeu, during the last years had focused the interest of the scientific community about an archaeological site considered depleted and designed to be destroyed. The affluence of the archaeological material, connected with the complexity of the archaeological contexts justify the enhancement of the researches in the next period. The aim of this paper is to establish the main directions of the researches but also some targets and sequences for the improvement of the monument.*

**Keywords:** *dacian, fortress, settlement, Ardeu, educational, Cetățuia Hill, archaeological research.*

**1. The emplacement of the site**

Ardeu village is placed in southwestern Transylvania, in the Apuseni Mountains on one of the routes which connect the Mureș Valley to the area rich in precious metals (Pl. I). The southern part of the village is protected by *Cetățeaua*, a hill formed of Jurassic limestone, partially destroyed by the stone exploitation activity (Fig.1)<sup>1</sup>. The hill had some inaccessible steep slopes on the northern and western sides, these being premises for a better defense of the dwellings placed here. Given that it's slightly gentle shape on the east, the slope is ending with a plateau known as *Judele* or *Dealul Judelui*. *Cetățeaua* Hill is offering the view toward Mureș Valley and beyond as well as Șureanu Mountains. The district road passes close to this elevation and because of geo/morphological characteristics of the terrain we may believe that in ancient times the road could follow the same way, in its neighborhood.

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<sup>1</sup> In present day, the limestone quarry is stopped with the help of the mass media, the community and politicians. See for ex: <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=6089&idm=1,34&idl=1>, seen on 16 June 2009.



Fig. 1. Cetățuie Hill; on the left side the limestone quarry can be seen.

## 2. The archaeological file

The antiquities found on *Cetățeaua* and *Judele*, first attested at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (1888) by Téglas Gabor (*Téglas 1888, p.134-138*) produced almost a century later an interest among researchers. We shall not insist on this topic because it has been broached by us in some recent papers (*Ferencz 2003, p. 100; Ferencz 2006, p. 372*), we still want to mention that at the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the first systematical research, whose results have been presented briefly (*Nemoianu, Andrițoiu 1975, p.181-190*). Between 2001 and 2004, the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization reopened the research as preserve excavations financed by Direcția Județeană a Drumurilor Hunedoara (Road District Center) R.A (*Pescaru et all 2002, p.41-43, Ferencz et all. 2003, p.40-42*), and between 2003 and 2004 as a systematical excavation financed by “1 Decembrie 1918” University and Ministry of Culture and Cults (*Ferencz et all. 2004, p.43-45; Ferencz et all. 2005, p. 56-57*).

The archaeological campaign carried on 2002 was the longest, from August until October, when it was investigated the upper plateau of *Cetățeaua* Hill (*Ferencz et all. 2003, p. 40-42*).

In the autumn of 2004, our collaboration with Maria Magdalena Duțescu and Dan Ștefan from the Domain Digital company from Bucharest made possible the first topographic survey of the site (Pl. 2).

## 3. The main results of researches carried on the upper plateau

During the 2002 campaign two archaeological trenches disposed “crosswise” were traced in order to estimate the archaeological situation from the hill’s upper plateau. By researching surfaces of 5x5 m the uncovering of the whole area was started. Parts of some edifices were discovered, which completed our image about the inner organization of the fortification. Thus, we are able to say that on the hummock that dominates the entire upper plateau of the hill were found traces of a

structure that we consider a tower dwelling (*Bodó, Ferencz 2004, p. 150*) because of its form and dimensions.

Besides the tower dwelling which dominates the whole fortification area, existed some other structures (dwellings) inside the walls, inhabited by the persons closed to nobles and/or members of garrison and their families. The remains of two of this kind of buildings were researched in those two archaeological units during the 2002 (*Ferencz et all. 2003, p. 41*) campaigns. In order to lay out this kind of dwellings, the rock was leveled, and a concentration of archaeological materials being found in the area (Pl. III, 2-3). In addition, in the same campaign of 2004, the wall (Pl. III, 1) of the Dacian fortification (*Ferencz et all. 2003, p. 41*) was discovered, as well as various and highly spectacular archaeological materials.

The Dacian habitation had destroyed the other ancient traces (Copper Age, Bronze Age and First Iron Age) but we were still able to find some materials belonging to those historical periods. Materials that are more recent were discovered as well. A small number of them are belonging to the time of the Roman Dacia Province (2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century), several to the Migration Times (4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century) and others belonging to the Middle Ages (11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries).

#### **4. The settlement**

We have located the settlement on the Southern and Eastern slopes, on some natural (*Judele*) and artificial terraces and on the bank of the brook (the place named *Gura Cheilor*). The excavation between 2001 and 2003 (*Pescaru et all 2002, p. 41-43; Bodó, Ferencz 2003, p. 147-158; Ferencz Bodó 2003, p. 20-21; Ferencz et all. 2004, p. 43-45*) shows some frames of the habitation in Dacian times, as well as in the Prehistoric times (Copper Age, Bronze Age and First Iron Age) (*Pescaru et all 2002, p. 41-43; Ferencz et all. 2004, p. 43-45*).

We had identified some dwellings (*Pescaru et all 2002, p. 41-43; Ferencz et all. 2004, p. 43-45*) in those areas and the traces of a bronze processing workshop (*Ferencz Bodó 2003, p. 20-21*). The stratigraphy of the Dacian settlement shows two levels: the older belonging to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., and the other one is dated between the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. to the time of Traian's wars in Dacia (*Pescaru et all 2002, p. 41-43; Ferencz et all. 2004, p. 44-45*). For the time being, we do not have enough data in order to render a more accurate dating.

#### **5. The archaeological site – expectations of the research**

There is now enough evidence to prove the importance of the site for the Dacian history and for some other periods. That is the reason for our fight to protect the integrity of the site, as much as it is possible. In the summer of 2006 with the help of a few young and enthusiastic members of Dacia Nemuritoare association, we placed a panel to point out the main characteristics of the site (Fig 2).

Some other activities had taken place with the aim of making the importance of the archaeological site and the entire area known to the local community and in the entire county. This consisted in meetings with the local community members (Fig.



3) and some materials and interviews published in the most popular local newspapers and on the local television broadcasters.



Fig. 2. The panel pointing the main characteristics of the site.



Fig. 3. Meeting with the local community members at Ardeu in the Summer of 2009.

The initial topographic survey was extended for the entire site, according to the cutting of young vegetation done between 2008 and 2009. For the topographic measurements, done in the reference system STEREO 70, the Leica TC 407 total station was used. We have used the points “Pleșa Mare” and “Biserica Ardeu” from the national geodesic network. Using these points, we have determined and materialized other points in the area of the archaeological site, points that we have later used in the detailed land surveys. In order to transfer the data from the total station to the computer we have used the LEICA Geo Office Tools 6 program. Later on the data has been operated with Microsoft Office Excel and Autocad 2008. The 3D models, the profiles and the contour lines were operated with the TopoLT (for Autocad) model and with Surfer 8. If the future archaeological research will require it, we will be able to render some 3D models of the Cetățuia, transversal profiles on different directions or other specifically topographical presentations<sup>2</sup>.

Our goal is that the data bases will contain, in a first stage, the pottery, physics-chemical analysis (metallic objects – end products and in course of processing – metallic slags) and osteological analysis. The extension and development of the data bases will depend on the ongoing archaeological research as well as on the existence of a rich documentary background, derived from specialty papers. In realizing this objective we were graciously supported by Dr. Ing. Romulus Ioan Vasile (from TMK Reșița) and Dr. Corneliu Beldiman from Universitatea Creștină «Dimitrie Cantemir», Facultatea de Istorie, București.

In studying Ardeu we have also used “Zeus”, a program recently implemented by Prof. Dr. Gheorghe Lazarovici (*Lazarovici-Micle 2001*) and computer expert Lucian Tarcea. For the Second Iron Age this program motivated the generation of catalogues on pottery motifs, forms, lips, bottoms and handles. The already existing dictionaries for the technology of pottery (on category, mixture, color, lean material, firing) have been completed with new terms, especially since a main characteristic of the pottery is that it was wheel turned.

For the scientific community we have already prepared some papers presented to some cultural and scientific manifestations, like symposia, congresses and others. We have also published articles regarding special artifacts discovered at Ardeu during that time.

In the same time, we had traced the main lines for the researches, for the future. Drawing up a “*Project for researching the site*”, for three years, we had established the strategy for excavating the site through the “*Management yearly planning*”. Now our research focuses to the top of the “Cetățuie” Hill. In the [first](#) stage we were able to investigate the entire surface of the upper plateau by excavating surface areas of five by five meters on the entire area (Pl. IV).

The presence of the fortress [entrenchment](#)'s wall in the Western side is another purpose of the investigation and all of these are very important to delineate the image of the Dacian fortress in the ancient time.

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<sup>2</sup> Many thanks for mr. Bogdan Tomuș and his team, who made the topographic survey in 2009.

Another question is that about the entrance in the fortress and about the main ways used in the ancient times and in medieval period for climbing the hill. It is very possible that the main gate was located in the Southern Part of the upper plateau. In the earliest written record about the antiquities from the „Cetățuie Hill”, Téglas Gabor mentioned walls built of stone blocks looking like those of the Dacian fortresses (*Téglas 1888, p. 134*). The walls seen by Téglas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, if indeed they were actually there, had disappeared along the time, partly probably used by the peasants to make lime, and partly destroyed by the limestone quarry. However, thinking about the walls described by Téglas, we are supposing that they belonged to the medieval fortification. That supposition is confirmed by the fact that a thick layer of soil now covers all the walls. It is also a fact that no Dacian fortress specific limestone blocks were ever found at Ardeu. Moreover, according to our observations, the medieval walls (Fig. 4) are made by local limestone processed and fixed with mortar.

At the same time, the Dacian walls are erected with local limestone just summary processed and stabilized with clay. This structure was strengthened by timber poles and possibly by a wooden structure.

The base of the medieval wall (which was detected in only one trench – S3/2001) has two rows that at first sight seem to be made of stone that was not bound with mortar. We suppose that could indicate the line of the Dacian wall that was used in the Medieval time.



*Fig. 4. The remains of the Medieval wall.*

The objective of the second stage of the investigations must be, in our opinion, the plateau named „Judele”. The surface researches and a small trench excavated in

2001 (S2) in the area proved the existence of habitation in different periods (*Pescaru et al 2002, p. 41-43*). The same excavation system used on the upper plateau should be implemented on the „Judele” too.

On the third stage of the researches we intend to excavate the settlement that we had identified at the basis of the hill. Only when this stage of research is over will we be able to create a complete picture of the Dacian habitation at Ardeu. This kind of research approach in several archaeological sites should be able to bring results that we think will allow us to better understand the more complex aspects of the Dacian society in the last centuries before the Roman conquest. At the same time we believe that the research in the area should be intensified in order for us to be able to more clearly see the general frame of the dwelling from Ardeu.

In accomplishing this we need to generate data basis like the ones made by scientists in Sibiu or Cluj for the Neolithic Age. The initial goal of these data basis will be to articulate the information on Romania for the general and particular characteristics of the Second Iron Age (geographical environment, geology, climate, types of habitat, settlements, fortified settlements, fortresses, necropolises, sacred premises, iron and bronze metallurgy, bone and antler manufacture, agriculture, religion, magic, sacred architecture, means of communication and commerce, interaction with the Hellenistic and Roman milieu etc).

#### 6. Valorization of the site.

One of the consequences of gathering knowledge from the archaeological research should be the one to try to integrate the investigated monument in the touristic circuit.

As for promoting and the valorization of Ardeu the research group has set a series of short, medium and long time objectives. In a first phase our efforts went to presenting the site to the press, signaling the monument and presenting to results of the research to the scientific community in communications, studies and articles. We have also initiated collaboration with the illustrator Radu Roşian, who made possible the realization of some idealized sketches representing the ensemble of the monument and some of its buildings. This project is based on the knowledge on the monument at the moment and it tries to present an image of the Dacian fortress to the public.

We have organized activities for the locals in order to make them understand the importance of the monument for their village and we have launched a website dedicated to the fortress<sup>3</sup>, its volume and value are conditioned by further research. The event is a first, Ardeu being the first of the Dacian fortresses to benefit such a promotion. The website will be able to be connected to other specialized sites, of museums, research institutes and private associations with concerns on cultural mobile and immobile patrimony. We have also initiated the idea to mount up presentation panels of the site on three places on the road (DN7) and also to include Ardeu in an ideal tourist circuit for the most important Dacian “hot spots”

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<sup>3</sup> [www.ardeu.ro](http://www.ardeu.ro)

(Grădiștea Muncelului, Costești, Blidaru, Piatra Roșie, Bănița, Hunedoara, Căpâlna, Piatra Craivii, Tilișca).

In the near future we will organize itinerary theme exhibitions that will present the discoveries from Ardeu. Also we would like to create virtual reconstructions of the site, which will be used as part of the future exhibitions dedicated to this site.

We foresee a finance project that will result in roads up to the upper plateau of the hill, information and explanations for the entire ensemble and its components. As the research will advance we will extend our work with architects and illustrators, hoping these collaborations will result in a project that will be able to offer the visitors at least part of the glory of this erstwhile fortress.

Translated by: Delia - Maria Roman

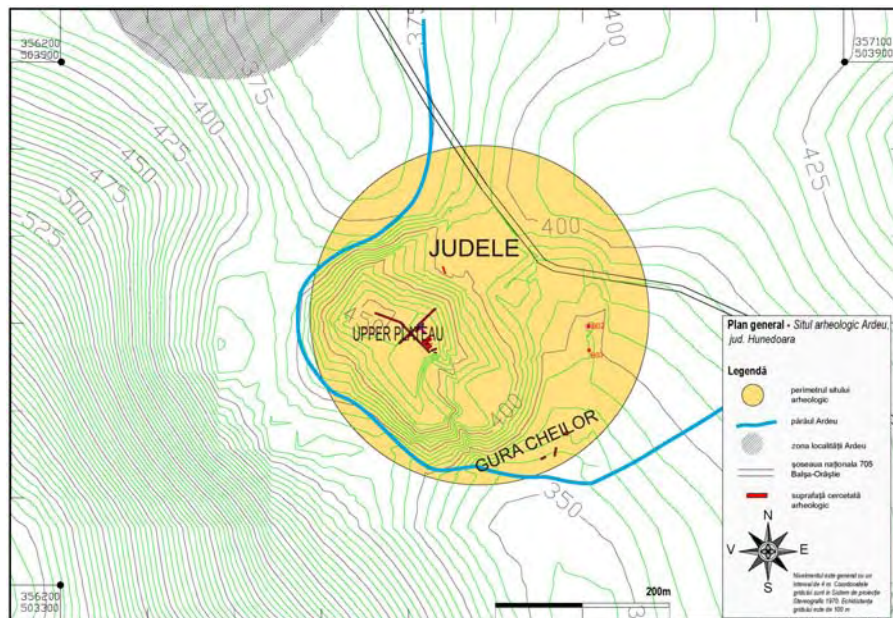
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Explanation of the plates



Pl. I. The emplacement of the village Ardeu.



Pl. II The first topographic survey of the site (Domain Digital 2004).



1



2



3

Pl. III 1. The remains of the Dacian wall on the Est side; 2-3. Agglomeration of archaeological materials on the leveled rock, that show the remains of a Dacian House. (foto I.V.Ferencz, drawing Andrei Ștefan).



