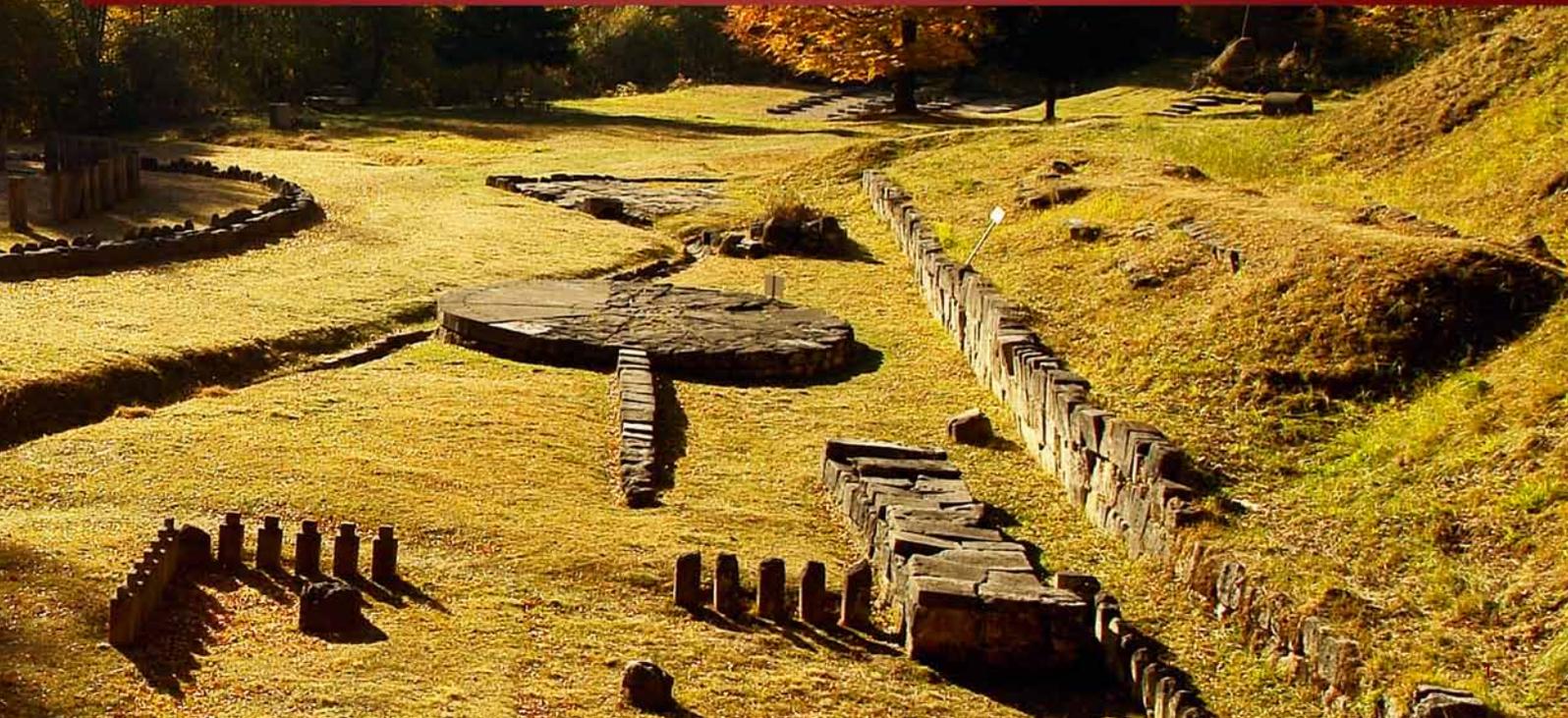


"...NUMQVID DE DACIS AVDISTI?"



CETATILE
DACICE
DIN MUNTII ORASTIEI





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INTRODUCTION

„The archaeological research is a tradition of the National Museum of Transylvanian History (MNIT) since its formation, as one of the main ways to enrich the institution's patrimony. The museum's archaeologists are working, each year, on sites all over Transylvania, or in other regions of the country, as well as abroad. Thanks to them, as well as to other colleagues researchers, the history of Transylvania, from the prehistoric times to the modern age, is uncovered and presented to the public.

The study of the Late Iron Age, or of the Roman times, including the sites in the area of the Dacian central-place, Sarmizegetusa Regia, has a long tradition with the MNIT, since the museum's specialists are performing archaeological studies there uninterruptedly for more than six decades.”

Dr. Carmen Ciongradi,
General Manager of the National Museum of Transylvanian History

The Multiannual Archaeological Research Program called The Dacian Fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains is coordinated by the National Museum of Transylvanian History (MNIT) in Cluj and financed by the Ministry of Culture, the results of which will be constantly presented to the public on this portal.

UNESCO

Through the "Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage" (1972), The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proposed a protection plan for the world's cultural assets. Presently, the World Heritage List includes seven monuments or sites in Romania. Since 1999, we also count in this list the complex of Dacian fortresses from the Orăștie Mountains, in the historical province of Transylvania.

Built in the so called "murus dacicus" technique, the six fortresses represented the nucleus of the Dacian state during the reign of Dacian kings from Burebista to Decebalus. The ruins of the Dacian complex of fortresses and settlements on Orăștie Mountains represent priceless testimonies of one of the most significant periods of Romania's ancient history. A trip to these places is more than a simple visit to historical remains, it is a real return in time to the origins of the Romanian people.

The UNESCO authorities have taken note and have sanctioned the universal value of these sites and

monuments, according to the fulfilling of some criteria:

(ii) The Dacian fortresses represent the unique synthesis of external cultural influences and local traditions regarding the construction techniques, as well as the ancient military architecture.

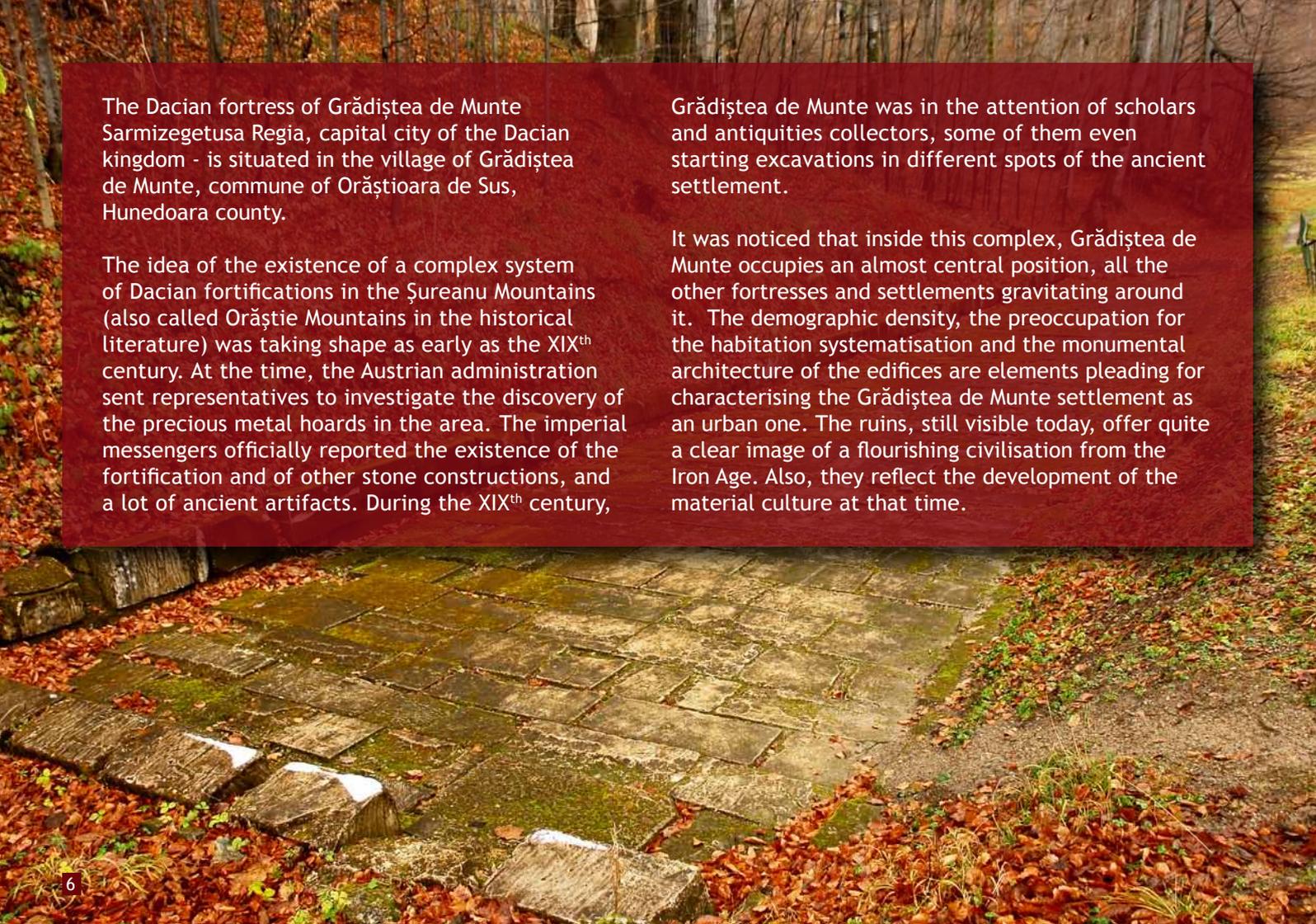
(iii) The Dacian fortresses are the material expression of the exceptional stage of development of the Dacian kingdoms civilisation at the end of the 1st millennium BC.

(iv) The Dacian fortresses are exemplary monuments when it comes to the phenomena of the evolution from fortified centres to proto-urban settlements (oppida), characteristic for the end of the European Iron Age.

These considerations underline the place of the Dacian monuments of the Orăștie Mountains in the European context of the ancient civilisations and also their singularity as expression of an indigenous cultural environment.



SARMIZEGETUSA
REGIA



The Dacian fortress of Grădiştea de Munte Sarmizegetusa Regia, capital city of the Dacian kingdom - is situated in the village of Grădiştea de Munte, commune of Orăştioara de Sus, Hunedoara county.

The idea of the existence of a complex system of Dacian fortifications in the Şureanu Mountains (also called Orăştie Mountains in the historical literature) was taking shape as early as the XIXth century. At the time, the Austrian administration sent representatives to investigate the discovery of the precious metal hoards in the area. The imperial messengers officially reported the existence of the fortification and of other stone constructions, and a lot of ancient artifacts. During the XIXth century,

Grădiştea de Munte was in the attention of scholars and antiquities collectors, some of them even starting excavations in different spots of the ancient settlement.

It was noticed that inside this complex, Grădiştea de Munte occupies an almost central position, all the other fortresses and settlements gravitating around it. The demographic density, the preoccupation for the habitation systematisation and the monumental architecture of the edifices are elements pleading for characterising the Grădiştea de Munte settlement as an urban one. The ruins, still visible today, offer quite a clear image of a flourishing civilisation from the Iron Age. Also, they reflect the development of the material culture at that time.



Modern archaeological excavations confirmed the richness of the artifacts found, for instance under the ruins of the ancient dwellings, workshops, many of them burnt down probably during the Roman wars. They became essential in the study of the Dacian civilization in that area. Mainly, the huge quantity of iron found in raw state is noticed (split blooms, ingots of various shapes and weights) as well as a large variety of tools, weapons, construction materials etc. Taking advantage of the local rich iron ore resources, the Dacians transformed the area in one of the most important metallurgic centres of Europe at the end of the Iron Age.

The pottery is the most frequent artefact discovered in the archaeological sites. Besides some common characteristics encountered in all Dacian fortresses of Orăștie Mountains (specific techniques and vessel shapes), Sarmizegetuza Regia is more prominent due to its preference for an elegant tableware, with visible Mediterranean influences. Specific for this site is more evidently the ceramics painted in complex geometric patterns, floral and animal figures. It brings testimony on the performance of the local potters at the end of the Iron Age, but it also displays an entire mythological universe artistically expressed in the figurative style used to adorn these vases.



COSTEȘTI-CETĂȚUIE



The Dacian fortress of Costești - Cetățuie - is situated in the village of Costești, commune of Orăștioara de Sus, Hunedoara county.

The Dacian fortress of Costești is situated on Dealul Cetățuia ("Stronghold Hill"), at the 561 m altitude, on the left bank of the Apa Grădiștii at the point where the valley is narrowing. Even if it is not the highest point in the area, the hill dominates the landscape offering a good visibility over the Mureș Valley to the north.

The Dacian ruins from the Dealul Cetățuie ("Stronghold Hill") were visible in the XIXth century yet they are only briefly mentioned in the time's reports.

The fortress had a complex system of fortifications and different facilities. Many of them are still visible today, going through a process of primary conservation. The civil settlement probably occupied the lower terraces as well as the lowland near the valley, under the present centre of the village.

The pottery was wheel-thrown storage and table ware (jars, "fruit bowls", jugs and cups) and also the usual hand build pots. Spindle whirls and loom weights also were found.

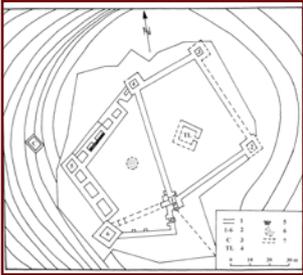
The iron tools and the usual household utensils are not very numerous but are quite diverse: sickles, scissors, pruning knives. Some punches and chisels specific to the iron smith's work as well as carpentry tools (axes, hatchets, adzes or drills) also were found.

A significant quantity of other iron artifacts is related to everyday life (knives, nails, spikes, joints) or to the warrior's panoply: arrow- and spearheads, horse bites, spurs or a sword. A particular finding is a bronze artefact (modiolus) belonging to a catapult.

Within the fortress and in its vicinity some local imitations of Greek or Roman coins were found, as well as 35 coins issued by the Greek city of Histria.



COSTEȘTI-BLIDARU



The Dacian fortress of Costești - Blidaru - is situated in the village of Costești, commune of Orăștioara de Sus, Hunedoara county.

The Dacian fortress of Blidaru is situated on a hill at the altitude of 705 m, connected to Muchia Faeragului (Faerag Ridge) through an upland between Apa Grădiștii and the Valley of Faerag. The position has a good visibility towards the Valley of Grădiștea and even further towards the Valley of Mureș River, to the north.

Having an approximately trapeze-like shape, the Dacian fortress of Blidaru had strong stone walls and rectangular towers. All these constructions are highlighting the mainly military character of the Dacian occupation.

The interest for the Blidaru vestiges is relatively recent, compared to the long term attention

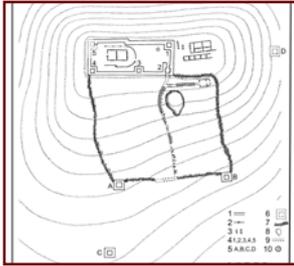
accorded to other Dacian sites of the Orăștie Mountains. In the beginning of the XXth century appeared the first mentions on Dacian artifacts, discovered by chance in the area, at that moment being also remembered older traces of treasure seekers.

The findings within the fortress are scarce: especially pottery fragments from storage jars. Several such jars were discovered in the south-western tower. They are large, wheel-thrown, reddish vessels used to store water or cereals.

Near the citadel, at Pietroasa lui Solomon, where ancient pottery, some stone parts coming from temples were found, also incidentally occurred a small silver statuette of a sitting lioness.

A photograph of a stone staircase in a forest. The steps are made of large, rectangular stones, many of which are covered in green moss. The ground is covered with fallen brown leaves. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting autumn or winter. The sky is overcast.

LUNCANI- PIATRA ROȘIE



The Dacian fortress of Luncani - Piatra Roșie - is situated in the village of Luncani, commune of Boșorod, Hunedoara county.

The Piatra Roșie fortress is located in the western sector of the Oraștie Mountains. The Piatra Roșie cliff ("The Red Cliff") hidden among mountains, attracted the attention of intellectuals and antiquities amateurs since the XIXth century, mentions being made of ancient artefacts and ruins as well as of the greed of treasure hunters.

The fortress was built on a prominent rock, flanked by two valleys. The only access to the enclosure is a rock cut road guarded by towers. The position, chosen at the end of the second Iron Age, adds to the artificial defensive systems a remarkable natural defence.

At times, the main military character of the fortification was put forward, as well as the lack of

a civilian settlement, but this image might change in the future. Objects imported from the Mediterranean world were also symbols of social status: bronze vases and lamps as well as the "millefiori" glass fragment.

A special piece is the bronze mask of a feminine figure (also known as "Bendis of Piatra Rosie") very likely of Celtic origin, in which a deity was identified. The weaponry and harness pieces suggest the warrior profile of the Dacian aristocracy at the end of the Iron Age. Wrought iron disks ("shields") found in the apse building on the first terrace and in a nearby antique pit seem to have been religious adornments of some sort.

Other findings (tools, bronze casting moulds) indicate the presence of craftsmen in the entourage of the fortress lord and complete the complex landscape of the life 2000 years ago at the "court" of such aristocratic character.



BĂNIȚA

The Dacian fortress of Bănița - is situated in the village of Bănița, commune of Bănița, Hunedoara county.

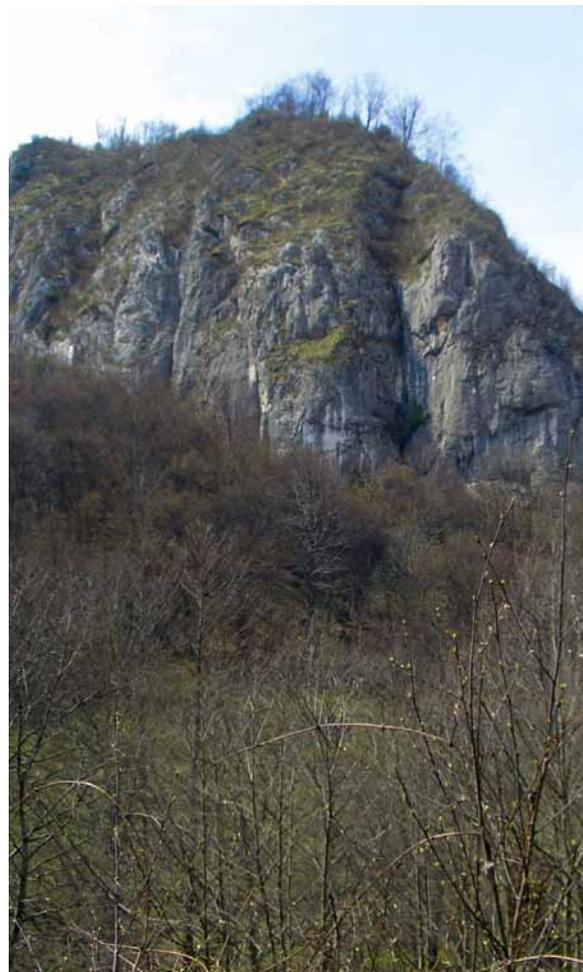
The fortress was meant to guard the southern access to Grădiștea de Munte - Sarmizegetusa Regia. The dominant position of the chosen place, an almost cone-shaped cliff called Piatra Cetății or Dealul Bolii (“The Fortress Rock” or “Boli’s Hill”), insured a very good visibility on the nearby valleys.

The civil settlement was placed at the foot of the hill, but it was destroyed in a large proportion by the construction works from the XIXth century.

Because of the damages inflicted to some parts of the site by the XIXth century works, most of the archaeologists’ attention focused on the so called defensive, more visible, structures, so civilian buildings or facilities are still virtually unknown.

Most of the artifacts found on the site are small size pottery fragments coming from tableware and storage jars, along with some iron objects: nails, tools and even weapons, but in a smaller quantity than in any other late Iron Age fortress of the area.

From the citadel itself, as well as from the surrounding area some coins, a beautiful silver bracelet and a brooch were also found.



An aerial photograph showing a dam structure across a river, with a large reservoir to the right. The surrounding area is densely forested with green trees. A road curves along the top edge of the reservoir. A dark red banner with a scalloped bottom edge is positioned in the lower-left quadrant, containing the text 'CĂPÂLNA' in white serif font.

CĂPÂLNA



The Dacian fortress of Căpâlna - is situated in the village of Căpâlna, commune of Săsciori, Alba county.

The Dacian hill-fort was built on the 610 m high Dealul Cetății („Fortress Hill”), on the left bank of the Sebeș river. The only access to the fortress is a narrow ridge; all the other slopes of the hill are really steep. This position offers from the hill top an excellent visibility over the valley of the river. The upper part of the hill was levelled by the Dacians and the area was surrounded by a limestone wall. Outside the fortification, on the northern and south-eastern slopes, there are artificial terraces on which various late Iron Age structures were built.

The pottery found was worked by hand, especially the cooking vessels, as well as on potter's wheel, as the tableware or storage jars. From the ceramic products we can enumerate painted vases, pottery pieces of foreign inspiration or importations. Also T-shaped clay moulds were discovered, used for modelling

vases, whorls used for wool spinning as well as tokens made from pottery walls, probably used for different games.

The iron objects are numerous and varied: blacksmith (hammers, tongs, chisels), carpentry (axes, hatchets) and agriculture tools (plough share, hoes, sickles) construction materials (nails, tacks, staples), current use items (pots, strainers, knives), horse bit pieces (bit, pelham) or weapons (daggers, lance and arrow points). The clothing pieces and the jewellery were also varied, made of iron, bronze and silver (links, buckles, bracelets, rings, brooches). A special place in the jewellery from the fortress is given to two earrings and a golden pendant necklace that were discovered by treasure hunters.

Inside, as well as around the dwelling-tower 29 Roman silver coins were found, probably part of a hoard belonging to the ancient resident. At least half of them are local imitations of Roman republican denarii.



COMMUNITY

The Dacian Fortresses of the Mountains of Orăștie are a part of the local communities and represent their cultural identity.

The visit of the archaeological sites, their research and public capitalisation cannot be done without the involvement of the local communities who, in our opinion play the most important role, starting with the safekeeping and conservation of the cultural objectives and continuing with these objectives' promotion.

For this reason, a larger project started in 2012, dedicated to the study of the monuments left by the

Dacian civilisation. The Multiannual Archaeological Research Program for the Orăștie Mountains is coordinated by the National Museum of Transylvanian History of Cluj-Napoca and financed by the Romanian Ministry of Culture.

It aims to the investigation by modern means and methods of the entire area, the scientific publication and the valorisation for the public of the research results. Until the present day, this is the most important archaeological project ever endeavoured in Romania.



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