

BARBARIAN IDENTITIES.

Transylvania in the Early Migration Period (5th – 6th century AD)

I. Scientific and professional accomplishments

My scientific interests and use of the knowledge that I acquired following my research endeavours in teaching activities have focused on a few fields that I persistently studied from the completion of my university studies to date. Below I shall make a review of the main results I obtained and also sketch a projection of my future research and teaching activities.

1) As a student, I was especially interested in the study of **religions of the Graeco-Roman world** (the polytheism of the Roman imperial period and the *cults and beliefs in the province of Dacia*, in particular). The research took the form of two monographs concerning the religious phenomena in Dacia (*Sincretismul religios în Dacia romană*, Cluj-Napoca, 2005 (*The religious syncretism in Roman Dacia*); *Dialoguri păgâne. Formule votive și limbaj figurat în Dacia romană*, Iași, 2012 (*Pagan dialogues. Votive formulae and figured language in Roman Dacia*), a series of articles and studies published in journals from Romania and abroad as well as in the teaching of special courses on the topics.

2) **Digital management of archaeological data.** Between 2011-2014, I was a member in a research project funded by UEFISCDI, titled *Corpus digital pentru explorarea virtuală a antichității. Artă și text pe monumente romane din Dacia* (*Digital corpus for the virtual exploration of the Antiquity. Art and text on Roman monuments from Dacia*), in which I inventoried the sculptural and votive epigraphic monuments, the information being later transposed in digital language through the *Oxygen XML* editor.

3) **Field archaeology.** From my student years, namely from 1993 until present, I was continuously involved in the archaeological excavations conducted on a yearly basis at Potaissa (Turda, county of Cluj), in the fortress of legion V Macedonica. I attended 26 archaeological research campaigns (5 as a student, 3 as a graduate, 13 as a member of the research team and 5 as the scientific responsible of this team). In the

course of time, I also carried out rescue excavations on the route of the Transylvania highway (sector Deleni – Bogata, Cluj county) where I excavated archaeological sites dating to the Bronze Age, thus becoming familiar with the research techniques specific to the archaeology of pre-history.

In the future, as scientific responsible of the archaeological site of Potaissa, I intend to further its investigation in cooperation with the History Museum of Turda and also take regard to the practical training of the students of the Archaeology Department with the Faculty of History and Philosophy. Enhanced use of the information and materials yielded by older or more recent research is also required: to continue the publication in monograph form of the excavations performed in the fortress (of the baths, *principia* and *centuriae* complexes), but also in the civil settlement, where the most recent campaigns initiated the excavation of a public building.

4) Beside the research of the religion of the Graeco-roman world, my concerns also involved the **geography of the ancient world**, publishing especially, studies regarding Ptolemy's geography, the toponymy of Roman Dacia, but also issues related to geographical-administrative realities (urban and rural *territoria*). Starting particularly with 2006, my research has focused on the following topics: analysis of Ptolemy's Geography, the works of the Roman minor geographers, the toponymy and hydronymy of Roman Dacia, of territorial administrations and status of the rural communities in the Roman empire. These scientific concerns came to fruition in a series of articles and studies which I published in journals and volumes from the country and abroad, and the English issue of a monograph titled *Finding Arcobadara. Essay on Geography and Administration of the Roman Dacia*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega Publishing House, 2014.

5) A related field, that of the **history of the environment in Antiquity** made the object of study during a postdoctoral research stay with the University of Laval in Québec, Canada, between 1 September 2008 and 28 February 2009, subsequent to a postdoctoral scholarship offered by Chaire senior du Canada en interactions société – environnement naturel dans l'Empire romain. There, under the supervision of Professor Ella Hermon, I investigated subjects related to the climate and climate oscillations by the

Lower Danube during the Graeco-Roman Antiquity, concluded with a study dedicated to the *topos* of the *Scythian cold*. Also, I was part of the research team of a project dedicated to environmental realities (occurrences of binomial *ripa – litus*) as presented in the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum* (work that contains ancient survey treaties). In the occasion, I had the opportunity to fully examine the works of Frontinus, Siculus Flaccus, Hyginus Gromaticus, Hyginus, Agennius Urbicus and analyse, based on a systemic method of analysis, various passages regarding the administration of stream and river banks and beaches within the Roman empire.

6) Archaeology of the Migration period. Starting with 1997, while attending the tutorial class for ancient Romanian history, part II, I started to specialise in the topics of the Late Roman period and the period of the early migrations north the Lower Danube. For teaching purposes, I examined many titles from the bibliography of the issue and had the opportunity to make various notes, completions and corrections in the few scientific studies that I published. My scientific concerns moved progressively to this research area, where I also established important connections with the international scientific environment.

In order to illustrate my contributions to the field of the archaeology and history of the Migration period in Romania, I shall discuss broadly the subject of the identity of the populations present in Transylvania over the 5th – 6th century AD, as it results from the analysis of the written and archaeological sources.

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Transylvania in the Early Migration Period (5th – 6th century AD)

I. Argument. When tackling the issues of a complex historical period, like the early Migration period, good knowledge of a class of sources is insufficient. Archaeology, no matter how accurate in establishing the relative chronology of artefacts based on associations of materials in closed features, does not succeed, by itself, to supply information regarding the identity of those who created and used respective

artefacts. The concepts of ethnicity and/or ethnic identity applied to the populaces of Late Antiquity and Middle Ages carry a modern charge, a weight resulted from ideologies emergent during the period when "national consciences" were formed (Pan-Germanicism, Pan-Slavism, Daco-Romanism). I shall attempt below a crisscross analysis that starts from the critical analysis of the written sources and the assessment of material culture data from the area of central Transylvania (in the former Roman towns at Napoca and Potaissa, today Cluj-Napoca and Turda). Here, the archaeological finds record the existence in the 5th and 6th century AD of a significant Barbarian group. Since no written source of the period specifies who these Barbarians from Transylvania were, historians were hesitant and ascribed them various origins, depending on the chronology and diffusion of the remains. They were named as the Ostrogoths, Alanii, Sciri, but especially Gepids, interpreting which prevails in more recent years. Who are the Gepids and whether it is adequate to ascribe all remains from Transylvania to their period we shall attempt to establish below.

II. Who are the Barbarians from Transylvania in the post-Hunnic period? Jordanes on the origin of the Gepids.

I analysed the texts of Jordanes, Procopius, Theofanes, Anastasius, who speak of the Gothic origin of the Gepids and the kinship between the Goths and the Gepids. Jordanes's accounts on the Gepids were a pretext to show how the Byzantine tradition underlay the annexation process of the Eastern "Germanic peoples" (the Goths, Vandals and the Gepids) by the Germanic science of the Antiquity (via its medieval stages - the Gothicism or the excesses of modern historiography - the Pan-Germanism). We reached the following conclusions subsequent to this analysis regarding the Gepids or more precisely the identity of the bearers of the material culture from 4th -7th century AD Transylvania:

Nowadays, the pattern of migrating compact groups of Germanic populaces over long distances in late Antiquity loses ground to that of immobility. As shown, migration as agent of change of the post-ancient world, of transforming the empire into Barbarian

kingdoms is an idea central to the Pan-Germanism ideology. Migration together with method *Siedlungsarchäologie*- which supposes that aspects, cultures and groups defined based on the material culture should be identified with tribes and peoples and must be awarded the name of the tribes and peoples recorded by the written sources in a given space and period - constituted the chief interpretative patterns in Romanian archaeology during the post-war years. Such pattern preserves today inertially and furthers concerns for the identification of archaeological groups defined based on cultural markers, groups seen as foreign and constantly on the move, so to be later applied ethnic labels. Thus, from the abandonment of the province by the Romans until the end of the Avar period, Transylvania and the border areas were the rollercoaster of Germanic migrations. Thus in the 4th and early 5th century AD there succeeded the Vandals (Tayfals and Victofali) bearers of the Przeworsk culture in the western area, the Visigoths and the Chernyackhov culture bearers in the east or more recently the Vandals or early Gepids identified in the so-called Dobrodzień-Guttentager funerary group. The Hunnic invasion dislodges other groups archaeologically identified in Transylvania, like in the richly furnished finds that belong to horizon Apahida - Blučina - Tournai, ascribed successively to the Ostrogoths, Gepids, Alanii, Sciri, Herulii, in a true catalogue of Barbarians set up in the specialty literature alike in the works of Ovid. As regards the 6th century, there is certain consensus, most scholars interpreting the remains as belonging to the Gepids (the Morești horizon).

III. A "Gepid" power centre in Transylvania? The Apahida graves in the light of recent finds. In this chapter were analysed hoard and princely grave finds on the Someș river valley together with contemporary remains, open settlements, row-grave cemeteries and isolate finds. We believe that in all such chance finds of Barbarian jewellery pieces there is a series that exceeds AD 500. The monogram ring, which may belong to a damaged grave, is evidence to the fact. Another example is the belt buckle from the so-called Apahida III grave. Then, the silver brooch from Cluj-Cordoș quarters and the buckle from Fundătura belong to the first half of the 6th century AD. A present

Germanic elite in the region during the first half of the 6th century AD is concordant with the image provided by the analysis of the row-grave cemeteries. There is also another possible explanation for the "cluster" of golden and silver jewellery pieces worked in the polychrome style during the second half of the 5th century AD: the time corresponds to the stage when these "barbarians" settled the Someş Mic river valley, at the peak of their power as *foederati* of the Eastern Roman empire, which also explains the inflow of precious metals into the *Barbaricum*.

As regards the "ethnic" identity of these Barbarian kings, several views were expressed. Since explicit written sources, that would accurately identify them, are lacking, they were believed Ostrogoths, Alanii, Sciri, Sadagari and, evidently, Gepids. In recent years, a *communis opinio* was reached: the "barbarians" who control Transylvania in the second half of the 5th century AD are the Gepids, according to the interpretation of the text in Jordanes regarding the battle of AD 453 between the sons of Attila and the coalition of Germanic peoples.

IV. The princely grave from Turda in context. Remains similar with those on the Someş valley and around the fort of the Roman town at Napoca, also emerge on the Arieş river valley and the former fortress and ruins of the Roman town at Potaissa.

To illustrate the situation of the former Roman town we analysed older and recent finds grouped on classes (funerary finds, isolate metal finds, habitat elements and pottery, coinage and Christian objects). The princely grave discovered in the fortress's baths evidence the presence of Barbarian chiefs there, ruling this important strategic point in the Arieş river valley over the second half of the 5th century and early 6th century AD.

We may conclude that the Germanic inhabitancy at Potaissa starts sometime after mid 5th century and continues over the 6th century AD as well. The material culture emerging in this period in the Great Hungarian Plain and Transylvania retains a strong eastern Germanic constituent mirrored both by funerary manifestations (row-grave

cemeteries) as well as the habitat elements (sunken house) or used artefacts (fine pottery with glazed or stamped decoration, bow brooches of Germanic type, weapons etc.).

V. Conclusions. The situation of the archaeological remains in the area of the former Roman towns at Napoca (today Cluj-Napoca) and Potaissa (today Turda) evidences an extant intense habitation enduring in the 5th - 6th century AD. The attempt to solve the issue in terms of identifying material cultures covering areas inhabited by different populations/ethnic groups according to the principles set up by that Kossinian *Siedlungsarchäologie* resulted only in the emergence of concepts derived from the vocabulary of pre-history archaeology: Sântana de Mureş - Chernyackhov culture, Sfântu Gheorghe group, Bratei culture, cultural aspect Hărman, group Napoca - Sarmizegetusa and Moreşti culture. Varied associated artefacts in the 4th - 6th century Transylvanian settlements and cemeteries of Late Roman - or Germanic origin evidence the material culture of this society and must be taken into account as such, without any attempts to draw up ethnic identifications starting from categories of isolate materials. The richly furnished finds, datable mainly to stage D3 (second half of the 5th century AD), present in the Napoca - Potaissa area, evidence existing Barbarian power centres. Their identity and way that such elite interacts with its own «foreign» subjects or the «natives» are matters that still need evaluation for a better understanding of the period. Archaeology must specify the chronology of the remains, because as mentioned by Th. Pékary, chronology is merely the skeleton of history, however, the body is shapeless without good attachment of the bones. Philology and criticism of ancient sources must establish, from the view of history - representation, the role of the interposed author, how much do we owe to the central image about the periphery, how much of the Barbarian identity/ethnicity is mere imaginary build and altered projection.

A careful archaeologist may identify north the Lower Danube stable and complex societies, evolving synchronously with those in the space of Central and Eastern Europe. Their continuities are our continuities as well, with sharing discontinuities included.

II.A. Essay on the projected future career

As regards the future university career, didactically and scientifically, I propose to further these paths that I followed and consolidated from the completion of my university studies until present. Fields like the religions of the Roman empire, ancient geography and history of the environment in the classical Antiquity, but also the archaeology of the migration period still contain many issues that remained open. As future research projects I propose drafting a synthesis work on the religious cults and beliefs in Roman Dacia, a work on the image of the north-Danubian Barbarians in Latin and Greek sources, and, in the far future, a synthesis of the history of the north-Danubian space during the early and late migrations. As regards applied archaeology, I want to continue, from this capacity of scientific responsible, the archaeological excavations in the fortress of legion V Macedonica from Potaissa.

The main study fields I am interested in and which I intend to approach also in the future are as follows:

a. **the religions of the Graeco-Roman world**, in which I intend to continue my research of the local cults and gods of the populations integrated in the political conglomerate which was the Roman empire and the forms of folk religiosity.

The books about the religious syncretism and human – divine communication forms in the polytheism of the imperial period are mere partial reflections, introductory, on this complex issue. In the future I intend to approach also other subjects, like that of the local deities known as the Danubian Riders, for which I am working on a corpus of monuments, seen as an *addenda* to the *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis Equitis Danuvinorum*, published in 1976. Also, another field considered is that of the cults termed as mystery cults, where I want to explore from the view of compared history of religions the extant material for the province of Dacia (namely, cult buildings, religious associations, epigraphic inscriptions and figurative monuments dedicated to the gods placed at the heart of the these cults, like Ceres and Proserpina, Cybele and Attis, Isis and Osiris, Dionysos and Mithras). Another peculiar field of interest, especially in the more recent years, is the evolution of the civic religion in the border province which is

Dacia, the interaction of the imperial cult and the civic religion with the local cults, the social and ideological control exercised by religious intermediary.

b. The history and archaeology of the Migration period and early Middle Ages in the north-Danubian space. In this field I wish to make enhanced use of the research and experience resulted from the long term teaching activity concerning the material culture in Transylvania of the Migration period and the chronology of the remains. I believe continuous theoretical reflection on method is required so that the Romanian archaeology environment made the transit from simplistic cultural-historical approaches to methodology and post-process interpretation in order to synchronise with current views from West-European and north-American spaces. In order to see how ancient ethnographers apply various ethnic labels to Barbarian groups it is required to explore the ancient literary sources, of Greek and Latin origin, from Herodotus to the late Byzantine authors. In the occasion there shall be identified recurrent cliques, *topoi*, because of the importance which the learned tradition has in the science of ancient and owing to the altered projections of the central groups producing written sources on the Barbarian periphery.

c. Field archaeology. As future plans in terms of field archaeology, the archaeological research of the fortress of legion V Macedonica will continue like every year. From 2014, I have become the scientific responsible of the archaeological site of Potaissa – Turda, the fortress of legion V Macedonica and from then to present, the systematic archaeological excavations have been conducted without breaks, in the last years unveiling a complex of *centuriae* (soldier barracks) in the area called *praetentura sinistra*. The great challenge of the archaeological site at Potaissa is the enormous accumulation of archaeological material and technical excavation data resulted from the campaigns of 1971-2018. The current members of the team have worked and still work on the monograph publication of some of the complexes.

Research projects:

At present, I am the director of a research project funded by UEFISCDI, *Dacii în Imperiul Roman. Construcții provinciale* (2016-2019) (*The Dacians in the Roman empire.*

Provincial constructions). For the last year are provisioned the publication of the proceedings of the international colloquium *The Roman Provinces. Mechanisms of Integration* and of a synthetic volume on the integration issue of the Dacians in the Roman world, with papers of the project members.

In the near future I intend to complete an older project by publishing a commented corpus of *V Macedonica* tile stamps, the majority in the collection of the History Museum of Turda.

As regards the studied archaeological site, namely Potaissa, the legionary fortress and town, I estimate the draft of a volume discussing the urban society, yet also the role of the military element in the town. Some chapters have already been completed, various preliminary studies being published or forthcoming.

For the period of the migrations several studies targeted the analysis of literary sources and the way they present the north-Danubian Barbarian populations. Some notes have already been published in partial studies, yet I intend to draw up a synthesis volume, titled *The Scythian or hospitality*. The issue of the Migration period in the area of Mid and Lower Arieş river valley shall be approached in an extended study: *From Turda to Potaissa. Study of regressive archaeology*.

In conclusion, future projects will remain within the same specialty framework, pursuing the same fields of interest: the religions of Roman Dacia, the archaeology and history of the Roman town at Potaissa, the north-Danubian space in the Migration period, as recorded by historical and archaeological sources.