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THE ROLE OF IRON AGE SETTLEMENTS AT OARDA - BULZA IN THE AGRICULTURAL EXPLOITATION OF THE MUREȘ VALLEY

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Keywords: Iron Age, Mureș valley, settlement organization, agricultural practices, landscape archaeology.

1. Introduction.

The Apulum Roman Villa Project (ARVP)¹, a SSHRC-funded collaboration between the University of British Columbia, the Institute of Archaeology and Art History of the Romanian Academy, the National Museum of Unification Alba Iulia, and the “1 December 1918” University of Alba Iulia, with the contribution of the museums of Deva and Timișoara, examines the “provincialization” and “de-provincialization” of Roman Dacia through the

¹ <https://arvp.home.blog/about-arvp/>

archaeological micro-history of the *villa* site at Oarda - Bulza, just outside the provincial capital at Apulum (**Fig. 1**). As one of the very few villas in Dacia to be excavated systematically and from a multidisciplinary perspective, the site promises to shed new light on the interplays between forms of production, cultural consumption, community formation, and incorporation into a host of new imperial networks (economic, military and social).

During the pilot phase of the project, which started in 2018, we have selected a complex site consisting of several structures datable to the Roman period, visible in aerial photographs (**Fig. 2**), outside the modern village of Oarda de Sus (south of the Roman *colonia* at Apulum) for intensive, multidisciplinary investigations. The primary aim is to understand the micro-history of the *villa* holistically: to explore the ways in which power, cultural symbol-systems enmeshed with forms of consumption, and forms of economic production and exchange within market networks were interlinked. In order to do so, aerial, geophysical, and field surveys have been first organized, looking for the layout of the settlement, the communities occupying the site, and their practices. These initial investigations will be followed by targeted excavations designed to understand further the development, use, and social dynamics of different parts of the *villa*.

Besides the Roman period discoveries, which will be published in a separate article², archaeological evidence that can be dated to different phases of the Iron Age have also been identified during these preliminary investigations. The aim of this article is to discuss this evidence in the wider context of agricultural exploitation of the middle Mureş valley before the Romans' arrival in the region.

2. The site and research methodology.

The archaeological site at Oarda - Bulza has been initially identified at the end of the 1990s by Gabriel T. Rustoiu during some field surveys carried out in the surroundings of modern Alba Iulia. A number of ceramic fragments belonging to the late Bronze Age, the beginning of the Late Iron Age and the "Dacian" horizon have been recovered on that occasion. These finds have been published in 2000, when the presence of some Roman ceramic fragments and building materials has also been mentioned³. The site is located on a quite large, high terrace on the right bank of the Bulza stream, close to the confluence with the Sebeş River, which is a tributary of the Mureş River. A line of hills ca. 700 m to the east of the terrace hosts several natural springs. This is an extremely

² McCarty *et alii* forthcoming.

³ Rustoiu 2000; Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000.

fertile area, where agriculture was practised continuously since the Neolithic until today.

The Roman *villa* was first noted by Ioana Oltean and Bill Hanson during their July 2000 aerial campaign, which allowed a tentative plan of the site to be drawn⁴. Subsequent aerial campaigns by our collaborators re-surveyed the Oarda - Bulza site in 2012, 2013 and 2016 (**Fig. 2**)⁵. While many of the features that Oltean and Hanson observed were clearly visible, others also appeared, and some of the features reconstructed by them could not be confirmed. Consequently, we sought to clarify these issues before starting the excavations by organizing a series of geophysical surveys in 2018: a targeted campaign of resistivity to clarify the plan of the main building (March) (**Fig. 3**); a campaign of magnetometry over the buildings seen from the air to confirm their presence and provide information on their condition (March); and a second, more extensive campaign of magnetometry to define the extent of the built areas and any features not visible from the air (August) (**Fig. 4**). However, the last round of investigations in August 2018 was partially hampered by particular conditions in the field, caused by modern agricultural works, so we only managed to conduct a wider band of survey outside this area, leaving a gap between the March and August data sets.

Together, these non-intrusive investigations produced a more detailed plan of the various structures belonging to the Roman *villa*, and allowed the identification of a few other features more likely belonging to the pre-Roman times, including some sunken huts or storage pits and at least one pair of pottery kilns east of the *villa*, though others could also exist in the still un-surveyed area or under the Roman period structures.

In order to build a better picture of the condition of the site, given the impact of modern agriculture, and to begin to understand how different areas of the site might have been used through time, a pedestrian survey of the surface has been organized shortly after the field had been ploughed in August 2018. The modern field was divided into 20 X 20 m grid squares. To provide a systematic sample, every other grid row was surveyed, with each square walked at 4 m wide transects. All anthropogenic material was collected. Ceramic building materials (CBM) were recorded by weight. Pottery was identified by period (Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, Late Iron Age, Roman, Medieval and Modern), counted, and weighed; diagnostic fragments were drawn. All other finds were treated individually. The geo-referenced statistics and typo-chronological interpretation of the collected ceramic fragments and other artefacts reveal details about the chronology of the site, the patterns of

⁴ Hanson, Oltean 2003, p. 109-114.

⁵ Czajlik *et alii* 2014, and unpublished data courtesy of Sándor Berecki.

consumption of its occupants, and the ways that various structures may have been used. As previously mentioned, the Roman provincial finds will be published separately⁶, while the pre-Roman ones are discussed below.

3. The Iron Age settlements.

Significant quantities of Early and Late Iron Age pottery have been found in pockets across the site. Additionally, a handful of iron and copper alloy artefacts have also been identified (**Fig. 5**). The quantified distribution map indicates a series of concentrations on the east side of the main building (A) and also between buildings C and D, though scattered finds have also been identified across the area occupied by other *villa*-related structures. Nevertheless, these distribution patterns are heavily influenced by a series of factors including the Roman period disturbance of the earlier-dated features, the continuous cultivation of the area through time, and in particular the use of heavy machinery and regular deep ploughing after the 1950s, and the method of targeted pedestrian survey conducted by the team, primarily focusing on the built area of the site.

Chronologically, the Iron Age finds recovered from the surveyed area can be ascribed to three distinct horizons which are discussed below.

3.1. The Early Iron Age.

A number of ceramic fragments belonging to the Early Iron Age have been recovered from the surveyed area. These include fragments of handmade vessels made of coarser or finer fabrics, black on the outside and reddish on the inside; some belong to larger bitronconical pots decorated with grooved garlands (**Fig. 6/1**) and others to bowls with a lobate rim (**Fig. 6/2**). These forms are specific to the Gáva culture⁷ of the 10th – 9th centuries BC, which is attested by a number of settlements identified on the Mureş valley⁸. Other ceramic fragments belonging to the same culture have also been discovered during the first survey conducted in the 1990s⁹. At the same time, a brief survey of the wider surroundings of the site, conducted in 2018 and 2019, allowed us to note that ceramic fragments specific to the Gáva culture are also present to the west, on the slope and foot of the terrace, on the floodplain of the Sebeş River, and on both sides of the Sebeş – Turda motorway, covering an area of more than 8 ha in total.

⁶ McCarty *et alii* forthcoming.

⁷ Kemenczei 1984; Vasiliev *et alii* 1991, fig. 46; Gumă 1993, pl. 31, 34-36 etc.

⁸ Vasiliev *et alii* 1991; Ciugudean 2012; Bălan, Ota 2012; Bălan *et alii* 2015 etc.

⁹ Rustoiu 2000.

Rural settlements belonging to this culture have already been identified in many other places on the middle Mureş valley¹⁰. These include the settlements at Alba Iulia - Recea (Monolit)¹¹, Miceşti - Cigaşe¹² and Gâmbaş¹³, which were characterised by an area of compact habitation surrounded by isolated “farms”, covering together a wider area of several hectares¹⁴. Given the size of the area from which we collected ceramic fragments of the Gáva culture type, it may be presumed that the settlement at Oarda - Bulza had a similar form of landscape and habitat organization. In this case, the main settlement could have functioned on the floodplain of the Sebeş River, where the highest density of finds has been noted. The ceramic fragments recovered from the high terrace occupied by the Roman *villa* probably belonged to a “farm” connected to the main settlement.

The presumed Early Iron Age settlement at Oarda - Bulza was more likely part of the agricultural hinterland of the large fortified settlement at Teleac¹⁵ which is located ca. 10 km upstream. This was a major centre of power, occupying more than 20 ha and having multiple functions, which controlled a wider area on the Mureş valley and its resources between ca. 1000 – 700/650 BC.

3.2. The “Celtic” horizon.

The “Celtic” finds include handmade vessels, like the beaker having the handle decorated with knobs (**Fig. 6/4**), which is specific to the La Tène C1 period (second half of the 3rd century BC),¹⁶ and similarly dated wheelmade vessels, like the bowls with vertical rounded rims (**Fig. 6/3**), which have numerous analogies in the eastern Carpathian Basin¹⁷, and on the middle Mureş valley at Aiud, Blandiana, Lancrăm - Glod or Şeuşa - La Cărarea Morii¹⁸.

Besides ceramic fragments, a few metal artefacts have also been identified during the field survey. One is a fragmentary spring of a bronze brooch (**Fig. 6/8**); only two coils are preserved, having the diameter of 12 mm. The brooch could have belonged to the “Celtic” horizon since in the “Dacian” one and later during the Roman provincial period the springs tend to have smaller diameters¹⁹.

¹⁰ Uhnér *et alii* 2017, p. 232-233, Fig. 18-19; Uhnér *et alii* 2019, p. 194-196, Fig. 18.

¹¹ Ciugudean 2011; idem 2012.

¹² Bălan, Ota 2012.

¹³ Bălan *et alii* 2015; Uhnér *et alii* 2017, p. 232-233.

¹⁴ Uhnér *et alii* 2017, p. 232-233, Fig. 20-21.

¹⁵ Vasiliev *et alii* 1991; Uhnér *et alii* 2017; Uhnér *et alii* 2019.

¹⁶ Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000, fig. 4/5-6; Ferencz 2007, pl. 52/7, 55/1-2.

¹⁷ Némethi 1988, fig. 8/12.

¹⁸ Ferencz 2007, Pl. 20/11, 24/1, 48/2, 52/2, 80/3.

¹⁹ See, for example, Rustoiu 1997.

Another fragment belongs to a bronze belt (**Fig. 7/4**); only the extremity of a rectangular segment is preserved. The fragment has a length of 17 mm and a width of 15 mm, being fairly well preserved. Belts of this kind are included in the so-called Hungarian type²⁰. They are widespread in the “Celtic” environment from south-western Slovakia, Hungary (Transdanubia and the Tisza basin), Transcarpathian Ukraine and Transylvania, and in Serbia in the area occupied by the Scordisci²¹. A few pieces are also known from Slovenia²², while belt segments have sometimes been reused as pendants, for example in a grave from Mahrevići, in Bosnia-Herzegovina²³. The composing elements of these belts have a rectangular shape, and are sometimes combined with others having the form of a lyre.

From the chronological point of view, the belts of Hungarian type have been largely dated to the La Tène C and D²⁴ or to the end of the middle La Tène and the late La Tène period (second half of the 2nd century BC – 1st century BC)²⁵. Unfortunately, most of these artefacts were incidentally discovered. However, some contexts of discovery indicate a narrower dating. For example, the belts from Ciumești, Valea lui Mihai (Romania), Vác - Kavicsbánya, Farnos, Törökszentmiklós - Suryán (Hungary), have been discovered in cemeteries or graves belonging to the La Tène C1 (second half of the 3rd century BC – beginning of the 2nd century BC)²⁶. This dating corresponds to a period characterised by a diversification of the female metal belts used in the eastern Celtic area. These belts were usually associated with brooches of the middle La Tène type (simple, with big knobs on the foot, or with the foot having an enamelled rectangular plaque), bracelets or anklets with large hemispheric hollow knobs, glass bracelets etc. It can be therefore presumed that the belts of Hungarian type are a creation of the La Tène C1 period in the Carpathian Basin. Some of these costume accessories could have remained in use for a longer period, in the same manner as with other enamelled jewellery.

The fragmentary belt segment discovered at Oarda - Bulza provides another indication that the settlement of the “Celtic” horizon can be dated to the La Tène C1 period, corresponding to the second half of the 3rd century – beginning of the 2nd century BC.

²⁰ The type was defined in Reitingner 1966 and analysed in Stanczik, Vaday 1971.

²¹ See Rustoiu 2004-2005, Fig. 3; Bujna 2011, Fig. 47, 49; Dizdar 2015, p. 191-193.

²² Teržan 1973, p. 697, Pl. 12/6.

²³ Truhelka 1912, p. 21, Fig. 12. This situation is not singular – in an incineration grave (no. 3) from the La Tène cemetery at Remetea Mare (Timiș) was found a segment of a belt with astragals which was reused as pendant (Rustoiu 2008, p. 127-128, Fig. 61/4).

²⁴ Stanczik, Vaday 1971, p. 25-26.

²⁵ Jovanović 1983, p. 52-55. Guštin 1984, Beilage 1, no. 49, provides a narrower dating of this kind of belts to the Belgrade 2 horizon, corresponding to the La Tène C.

²⁶ See Rustoiu 2004-2005 with bibliography.

Several rural settlements belonging to this period were already identified in the same micro-zone, occupying the terraces of the Mureş River or the adjacent tributary valleys²⁷; the closest one is located only a few hundreds of metres southward, on the other bank of the Bulza stream²⁸. Their presence reflects a typical way of organizing the agricultural territory in Transylvania during the 4th – 3rd centuries BC²⁹. The local communities, each consisting of a reduced number of individuals (ca. 15-25), were divided into family groups or clans³⁰. This pattern can be best observed in the internal organization of the settlements and also in that of some cemeteries³¹. Regarding the landscape organization, these rural settlements were surrounded by their agricultural hinterland, being located on river terraces or fertile floodplains³². Unlike the settlements, the cemeteries usually occupied higher locations in the settlements' surroundings: hilltops or slopes, higher terraces or promontories³³. Among the relevant examples from this region can be mentioned the cemeteries at Aiud or Blandiana³⁴. As a rule, the cemetery of a community is always visible from the settlement and also from the nearby routes of communication and the neighbouring settlements. Therefore, the cemetery of the “Celtic” settlement at Oarda - Bulza should be located on one of the nearby hills on the eastern limits of the site.

3.3. The “Dacian” horizon.

The finds belonging to the “Dacian” horizon can be largely dated to the 2nd century BC – 1st century AD. Similar ceramic artefacts have also been found during the first survey conducted in the same area in the late 1990s³⁵. The ceramic fragments recovered during the survey conducted in 2018 include several handmade cooking wares made of coarse fabrics, for example jars (**Fig. 6/7**), or the so-called “Dacian mugs” (**Fig. 6/5-6**)³⁶ which are erroneously linked with lighting in specialist literature³⁷.

Aside from pottery, a few iron artefacts have also been identified. These include a fragmentary ring handle of a knife (**Fig. 7/3**) having numerous

²⁷ Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000, p. 188-189, see also the map in fig. 5.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 177-180.

²⁹ Rustoiu, Berecki 2018.

³⁰ Rustoiu 2016, p. 240-244.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² See further in Berecki 2015.

³³ Berecki 2015.

³⁴ Rustoiu, Berecki 2018.

³⁵ Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000, p. 177, Fig. 2/1-4.

³⁶ Rustoiu, Berecki 2015, p. 103-107.

³⁷ Crişan 1969, p. 115.

analogies in the European La Tène environment³⁸, where it was dated to the final stages of the Late Iron Age. A fragment of an iron bloom (**Fig. 7/2**) which could be potentially dated to either the “Celtic” or the “Dacian” horizon has also been recovered during the same survey. It is worth mentioning that traces of metallurgical activities are attested in other rural settlements of the same kind³⁹. In some cases, the manufacturing activities took place in well-delimited areas of the settlements⁴⁰. At Oarda - Bulza, the magnetometric survey in August 2018 identified the possible presence of some pottery kilns in the area east of the Roman period *villa*, and they could perhaps belong to one of the Late Iron Age horizons. A definitive answer will be provided by future excavations in the area.

Among the iron artefacts which seem to belong to the inventory of the Roman period *villa* is a large iron pruning knife with a curved blade and a tubular socket into which a wooden handle was attached (**Fig. 7/1**); the total length of the artefact is of 28 cm. Similar tools belonging to the Henning G1a type, which has a wide dating from the Late Iron Age to the early medieval times⁴¹, were commonly used in vineyards and orchards. In Roman Dacia, this type of pruning knife is attested, for example, in the *villa* at Chinteni (Cluj County), being connected with the existence of vineyards on this estate⁴². Still, some archaeological publications from Romania describe such agricultural tools as “Dacian” weapons⁴³, ignoring the existing archaeological evidence regarding their contexts of discovery. This erroneous idea took off from the urge felt by some enthusiastic admirers of Dacian antiquities to supplement the panoply of weapons of the local warriors, which is quite poorly documented archaeologically. However, these unsubstantiated hypotheses are only pushing the scientific debate regarding this subject towards the bizarre realm of Daco-mania and the nationalist ideology.

The settlements belonging to this chronological horizon are frequently encountered on this sector of the middle Mureş valley, numbering twice as much as those dated to the “Celtic” horizon⁴⁴. This demographic expansion is related to the appearance of the fortresses built on mountaintops in the vicinity, a phenomenon specific to the Dacian Kingdom period. This is the case of the fortress on Piatra Craivii, located ca. 20 km to the west, which dominates the surrounding landscape and very probably controlled a wider area on the middle

³⁸ Todorović 1972, pl. 4/5, 7/4, 35/4.

³⁹ Glodariu, Iaroslavschi 1979.

⁴⁰ See Rustoiu, Berecki 2019; Rustoiu, Ferencz 2019.

⁴¹ Henning 1987, p. 93-96, Abb. 13.

⁴² Alicu 1994, 547, nos. 16-19.

⁴³ This is not a new idea, see for example Diaconu 1988. Among the more recent examples, see Săcărin *et alii* 2013.

⁴⁴ Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000.

Mureş valley during this period. The fortress is clearly visible from the settlement at Oarda - Bulza, so it can be presumed that alongside other similar rural settlements, it was more likely part of the agricultural hinterland of the fortress, together illustrating a particular manner of exploiting the agricultural territory which was specific to this later phase of the Late Iron Age⁴⁵.

4. Conclusions.

Topographically, the Iron Age settlements at Oarda - Bulza follow the patterns specific to the human habitation on the middle Mureş valley during different cultural and chronological horizons. The preferred locations were on the terraces of the Mureş River and its tributaries, though in some cases settlements were also established on the floodplains. The latter locations raise the possibility of different precipitation patterns or a different river flow during the Iron Age, unless these settlements were seasonal. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Mureş River had a very different course before the modern age drainage and embankment works, with numerous branches and meanders which were either permanent or seasonal⁴⁶.

The Early Iron Age settlement occupies both the high terrace on which the latter settlements were established and the lowland area on the Sebeş River's floodplain. Its large extension is similar to that of other sites from the same micro-region, dated to this period. They are characterized by a large nucleus of habitation surrounded by smaller groups of structures resembling a farm. Their general layout and location suggest a particular manner of organizing and exploiting the landscape and its resources. It seems that both the larger settlements and the smaller "farms" depended on the major fortified settlement at Teleac, which functioned as a regional "central place" having complex functions and features.

The settlements belonging to the "Celtic" horizon, including the one at Oarda - Bulza, were usually established in the same favourable locations on the river terraces or floodplains, being surrounded by their agricultural territory.

Lastly, the rural settlements belonging to the "Dacian" horizon followed the same principle, though their number increased significantly⁴⁷. However, given the lack of large-scale archaeological investigations, it remains difficult to say whether this demographic pattern was caused by a "swarming" process in which a community changed places several times during a shorter period (maybe a few decades), or by a process of colonization with communities coming from

⁴⁵ Rustoiu, Berecki 2018.

⁴⁶ Urdea *et alii* 2012, p. 20-31.

⁴⁷ According to an earlier statistics, the number of "Dacian" horizon settlements is twice as much as the one of the "Celtic" horizon: Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000. New discoveries have been made during the last two decades, belonging to both horizons, but the proportion remained largely unchanged.

elsewhere. The latter hypothesis could be supported by the concomitant appearance of the cremation burials containing weaponry, ascribed to the Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii group, during the La Tène C2-D⁴⁸. The presence of these burials indicate a migration from the northern Balkans and the lower Danube to Transylvania of some groups led by warriors who imposed their own structures of power, replacing the earlier ones of the “Celtic” horizon⁴⁹. This was the period in which fortresses were built on heights at Căpâlna, Cugir, Costești or Piatra Craivii, and the appearance of the Dacian Kingdom under the rule of Burebista is just one effect of these social and political changes. In this context, the “Dacian” settlements on the middle Mureș valley more likely belonged to the agricultural hinterland of one of these fortresses, being tasked with supplying agricultural produce and other goods. In turn, the workshops operating in the close vicinity of the fortresses supplied the rural communities from the hinterland with tools and other manufactured goods⁵⁰. This supply and exchange model seems to be confirmed by the discoveries from the surroundings of the fortresses in the Orăștiei Mountains, close to the kingdom’s centre of power⁵¹, and from Piatra Craivii⁵².

Lastly, it has to be mentioned that some characteristics of habitation of the rural settlements repeatedly appeared through time in the micro-region in question. For example, the settlements belonging to the “Celtic” and “Dacian” horizons and the Roman provincial period often occupy the same place on the terraces and floodplain of the Mureș River. Besides the site at Oarda - Bulza, a similar situation has been attested archaeologically (through field surveys or systematic and preventive excavations) at Blandiana⁵³, Vințu de Jos⁵⁴, Șeușa⁵⁵ and Alba Iulia - Lumea Nouă⁵⁶. In other cases, only a succession of “Celtic” and “Dacian” settlements was observed at Pâclișa⁵⁷ and Tărtăria⁵⁸. These examples are confirming that the local landscape features and resources, including agriculturally fertile lands, raw materials and access to water and suitable communication routes, were major determinants in the placing and spatial organization of the rural settlements through time. Nevertheless, the ways in

⁴⁸ Rustoiu 2002a; Rustoiu 2008 etc.

⁴⁹ Rustoiu 2008; see *contra* Măndescu 2013.

⁵⁰ For this model of organization, see Egri 2014, p. 176-177, with further bibliography.

⁵¹ Florea 1986-1987.

⁵² Rustoiu 2002b, p. 200.

⁵³ Moga 1976; Plantos 2000.

⁵⁴ Paul 2006.

⁵⁵ Ciută 2001; Ferencz 2007.

⁵⁶ The Roman period *villa* was recently identified through aerial photography; the information regarding the Late Iron Age discoveries courtesy of Vitalie Bărcă.

⁵⁷ Rustoiu, Rustoiu 2000.

⁵⁸ Ferencz, Roman 2016.

which the agricultural exploitation of the territory was controlled, and the output was redistributed, differed from one historical period to another.

ROLUL AȘEZĂRILOR DIN EPOCA FIERULUI DE LA OARDA - BULZA ÎN EXPLOATAREA AGRICOLĂ A VĂII MIJLOCII A MUREȘULUI

REZUMAT

Proiectul internațional Apulum Roman Villa Project (ARVP), examinează ”provincializarea” și ”de-provincializarea” Daciei romane din perspectiva micro-istoriei arheologice a *villa*-ei romane de la Oarda - Bulza (mun. Alba Iulia), situată în imediata vecinătate a orașului Apulum (*colonia*). Pe parcursul fazei pilot a proiectului, care a început în anul 2018, am selectat situl din punctul Bulza pentru cercetări intensive, multidisciplinare. În urma prospecțiunilor aeriene, au fost depistate mai multe structuri aparținând unei *villa* romane. Au fost apoi efectuate măsurători geofizice, iar ulterior o perieghză sistematică pe baza unui grid geo-referențiat. Cu ocazia acestor investigații de suprafață, în afară de un bogat material din epoca romană, au fost descoperite și vestigii datate în epoca fierului. Scopul acestui articol este de a prezenta aceste materiale în contextul mai larg al organizării și exploatării teritoriului rural și agricol în vremea respectivă.

Ceramica din epoca fierului, precum și câteva obiecte de metal, se încadrează în trei orizonturi culturale și cronologice distincte: prima vârstă a fierului (cultura Gáva), perioada ”celtică” și epoca ”dacică” din a doua vârstă a fierului.

Din punct de vedere topografic, așezările din epoca fierului de la Oarda - Bulza urmează niște tipare proprii habitatelor umane din valea Mureșului mijlociu din fiecare orizont cultural și cronologic amintit. Astfel, au fost preferate terasele Mureșului și ale afluenților săi, dar în anumite cazuri au fost documentate și urme de locuire în lunca, astăzi inundabilă, a râului. Acest fapt ne face să ne întrebăm dacă nu cumva regimul precipitațiilor și nivelul râurilor era diferit în comparație cu situația de mai târziu, sau dacă avem de a face cu așezări sezoniere.

Așezarea din prima vârstă a fierului se situează atât pe terasa pe care se află amplasate siturile ulterioare, cât și la baza ei, în lunca râului Sebeș. Întinderea mare a acestei așezări este similară cu cea a altor situri din aceeași perioadă și micro-regiune. În cazul lor s-a constatat dispunerea elementelor de habitat în nuclee mari, având în preajmă grupuri mai mici de locuințe, un soi de ”ferme”. Acest aspect general al așezărilor indică un mod similar de organizare a teritoriului și de exploatare a resurselor. Toate aceste așezări rurale, fie că erau aglomerații mari, fie doar ferme mici, au fost foarte probabil dependente de marea așezare fortificată de la Teleac, aceasta constituind centrul de putere al regiunii, un ”central place” cu funcții complexe.

Așezările aparținând orizontului ”celtic” sunt amplasate în general în aceleași locuri favorabile de pe terasele sau din luncile râurilor, având teritoriul agricol în imediata vecinătate. În sfârșit, locuirile rurale din perioada ”dacică” continuă să se constituie după același principiu, însă ele sunt mult mai numeroase. Desigur, în lipsa unor săpături arheologice de amploare, trebuie să ne întrebăm dacă acest număr mare de

descoperiri se datorează mutării (“roirii”) dintr-un amplasament în altul a unor comunități în decurs de câteva decenii, sau dacă dimpotrivă, avem de-a face cu o colonizare a zonei de către comunități venite din altă parte. Această ultimă ipoteză ar putea fi susținută de faptul că ele sunt contemporane cu apariția mormintelor de incinerare cu arme, atribuite grupului Padea-Panaghiurski Kolonii și datate în La Tène C2-D. Mormintele respective reflectă o “migrație” dinspre sud, din zona nord-balcanică și de la Dunărea de Jos, în Transilvania a unor grupuri de războinici care impun propriile structuri de putere, înlocuind modelele anterioare din vremea “celților”. Acum apar cetățile pe înălțimi, cum sunt cele de la Căpâlna, Cugir, Costești sau Piatra Craivii, iar constituirea Regatului dac din vremea lui Burebista nu este decât un efect al acestor schimbări de natură politică și socială. În acest context, așezările “dacice” din valea Mureșului s-au situat în hinterlandul agricol al unor cetăți, ele aprovizionând curțile aristocratice cu produse agricole. În sens invers, atelierile meșteșugărești care funcționau în preajma cetăților furnizau unelte agricole și alte produse manufacturate comunităților rurale din hinterland. Acest model de schimb pare să fie argumentat de descoperirile din cetățile aflate în Munții Orăștiei, în preajma capitalei regatului, dar și de cele de la Piatra Craivii.

În sfârșit, mai trebuie precizat faptul că anumite caracteristici de amplasare a așezărilor rurale se repetă în timp. S-a putut constata faptul că în mai multe locuri, mai ales pe terasele râurilor, dar și în lunca Mureșului, așezările din orizontul “celtic”, din perioada “dacică” și din cea romană se succed pe același amplasament. În afară de Oarda - Bulza, această situație arheologică a mai fost observată (fie prin investigații de suprafață, fie prin săpături de amploare diferită) la Blandiana, Vințu de Jos, Șeușa și Alba Iulia - Lumea Nouă. În alte cazuri a fost sesizată doar succesiunea așezărilor “celtice” și “dacice”, la Pâclișa și la Tărtăria. Toate aceste exemple nu fac decât să indice o organizare în spațiu a teritoriului agricol în funcție de conformația geografică naturală a zonei și de accesul la resurse. Modalitățile de controlare a exploatării agricole a teritoriului și de redistribuire a produselor au fost însă diferite de la o perioadă la alta.

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Fig. 3. Resistivity survey of the site (image Alex Turner, courtesy of Apulum Hinterland Project and Ian Haynes).

Fig. 4. Magnetometric survey of the site (centre image Alex Turner, courtesy of Apulum Hinterland Project and Ian Haynes; northern and eastern sectors image Alexandru Popa).

Fig. 5. Density and location of the Iron Age pottery recovered during field survey, by fragments count, and location of the metal finds (black dots) (image ARVP).

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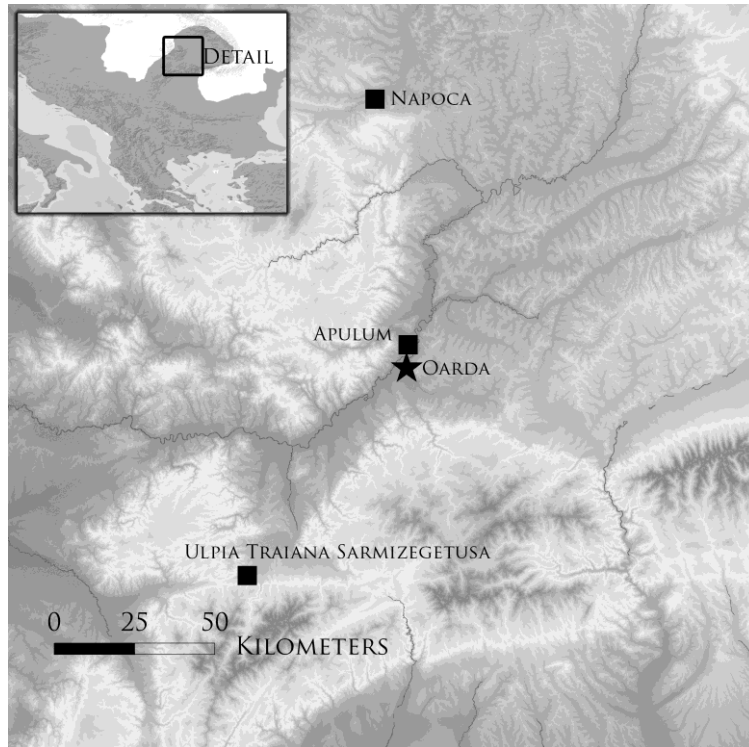


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

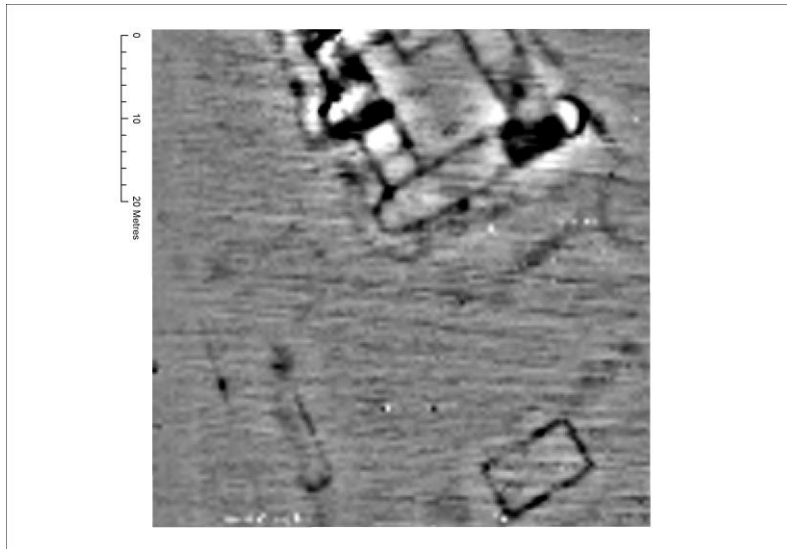


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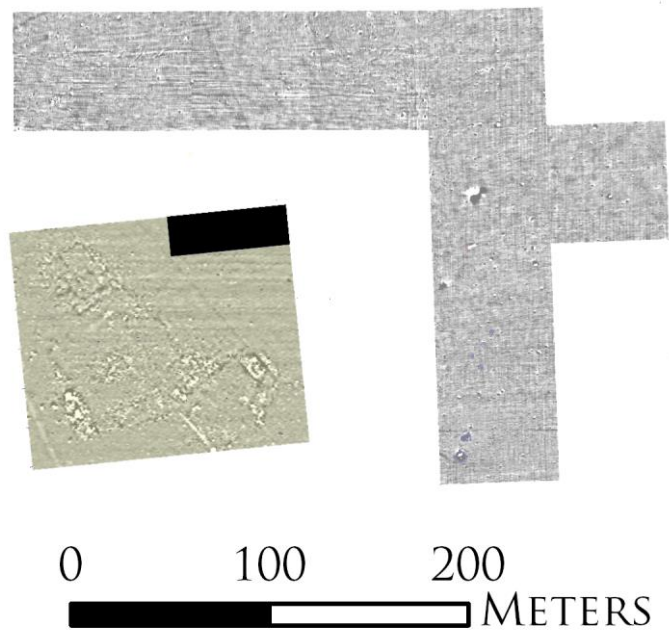


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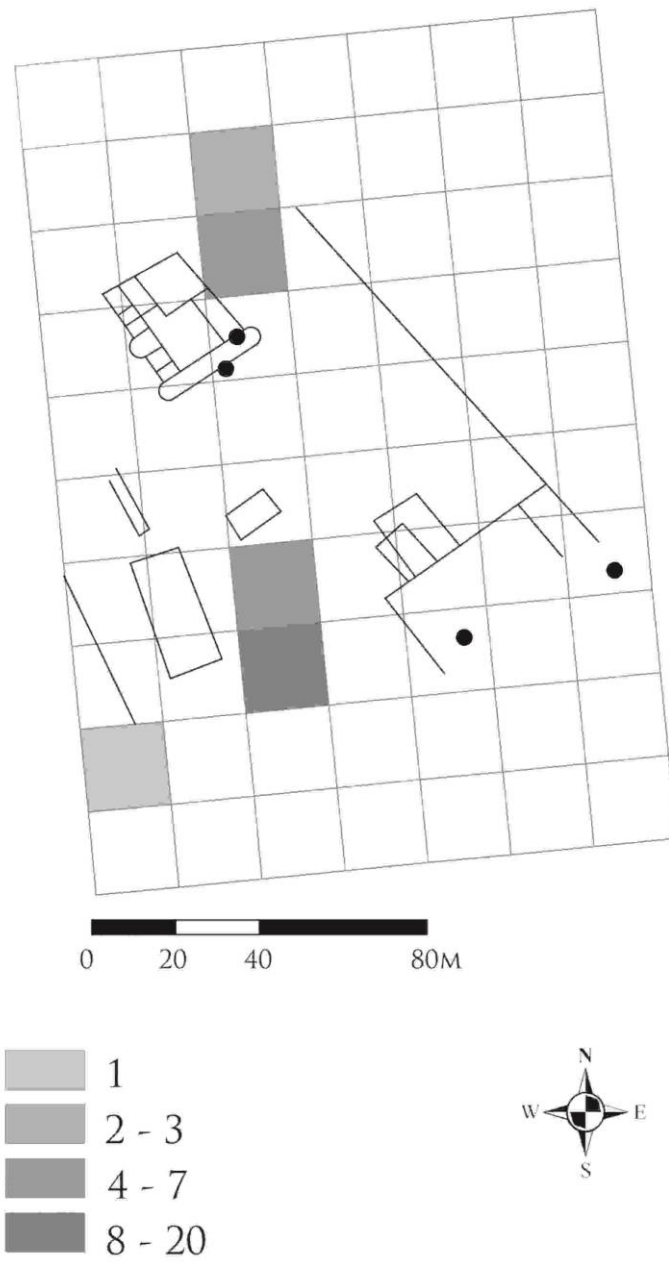


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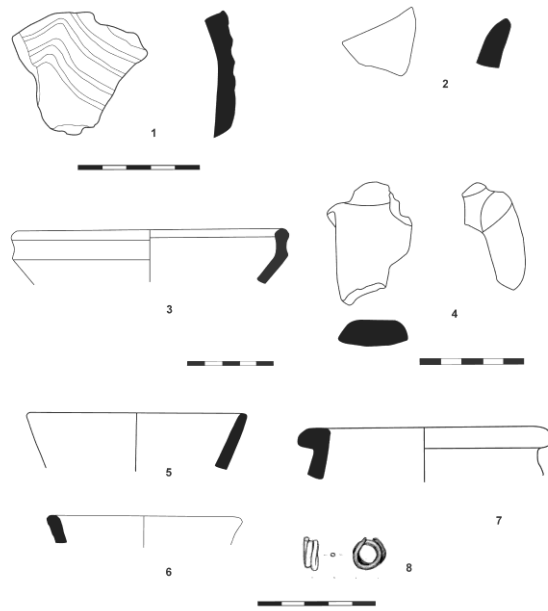


Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.