SETTLEMENTS FROM THE 2\textsuperscript{ND}-EARLY 5\textsuperscript{TH} CENTURY AD IN BANAT (I). STATE OF RESEARCH AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DISCOVERIES FROM ROMANIA

\textbf{Abstract}: The present paper was based on 351 settlements identified in the archaeological literature throughout the highland and lowland areas of the Banat, dated between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century and the beginning of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The sites are overwhelmingly ascribed as Daco-Roman or Dacian, defined as a rural, sedentary population, with uniform, unchanging features throughout 400 years.

\textbf{Keywords}: settlements, Banat, Daco-Roman, ethnic attribution, chronology

\section*{THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDS AND THEIR ETHNIC ATTRIBUTION}

The present paper was based on 351 settlements identified in the archaeological literature throughout the highland and lowland areas of the Banat, dated between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century and the beginning of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The aforementioned figure is highly contingent as the

\[ \text{No. of modern townships} \quad \text{No. of identified rural settlements} \]

\begin{tabular}{l|l|l}
  & 104 & 104 \\
 Townships with a single rural settlement identified & 104 & 104 \\
  Townships with two rural settlements identified & 62 & 62 \\
  Townships with three rural settlements identified & 51 & 51 \\
\end{tabular}

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\textsuperscript{2} The region under scrutiny, known from the 18\textsuperscript{th} century onward under the name of Banat, is today divided between three states: Romania, Serbia and Hungary. The geographical borders of the region are: the Mureș River in the north, the Tisa River in the west, the Danube in the south, and the Carpathian Mountains to the east. 18,966 km\textsuperscript{2} of the territory is part of present day Romania (Timiș and Caraș-Severin Counties along with some parts of Arad and Mehedinți Counties), 9276 km\textsuperscript{2} belong to the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in Serbia, and a territory of 284 km\textsuperscript{2} is part of Hungary (Csongrád County). Within this vast region O. Bozu identified initially over 130 settlements dated between the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} centuries (BOZU 1990, 158). According to a later assessment (BEJAN 2000, 519), some 455 rural settlements are mentioned, belonging to the perimeter of 188 present day townships within the historical Banat (not including the Szeged area), as follows:
The vast majority of the sites (around 90%) were identified as a result of non-intrusive methods, rather than systematic archaeological research. A further shortcoming is due to the fact that neither one of the sites was investigated in its totality, only certain features were excavated, while the finds, consisting overwhelmingly of pottery, were published in a selective manner devoid of typological classification and statistical analysis.

The beginnings of the archaeological investigation of 2nd–5th century settlements can be traced back to the 1980’s (Hodoni–Pustâ, Timișoara–Freidorf, Grădinari–Sâliște, Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlașkikrai, etc.), the researched sites being attributed to a Daco–Roman population, resulted from the ‘synthesis of Roman material culture with specific elements adopted from the Dacian environment’. 7

The majority of these studies contain merely the description of the archaeological features and finds, without drawing a comparison with archaeological situations reported in the western part of the Banat, in the Barbaricum. The occasional search for analogies was strictly limited to the territory of Roman and pre-Roman Dacia, to the east of the Banat.

This method leads to contradictory interpretations concerning the finds and complexes associated with 2nd–5th century AD settlements of the Banat region in the three implicated countries Romania, Serbia and Hungary. These interpretations and ethnic ascriptions were often determined by nationalist agendas. Consequently, in Romania these settlements were attributed to a Daco–Roman population,

| Townships with four rural settlements identified | 10 | 40 |
| Townships with five rural settlements identified | 9  | 45 |
| Townships with six rural settlements identified | 4  | 24 |
| Townships with seven rural settlements identified | 1  | 9 |
| Townships with ten rural settlements identified | 2  | 20 |
| Townships with over ten rural settlements identified | 3  | 48 |
| Total | 188 townships | 455 settlements |

In 1996 D. Benea mentioned an identical number of 455 rural settlements identified mostly through field surveys (Benea 1996, 122). Later on M. Mare identified 375 settlements dated to the 2nd–4th centuries AD (MARE 2004A, 49). In a recent paper D. Micle pointed out 335 present day townships with ‘post–Roman settlements dated between the 2nd century and the beginning of the 5th century AD’ in their perimeter (MICLE 2011, 276) while B. Muscalu mentioned 460 such settlements (MUSCALU 2009, 101). The abovementioned figures resulted from the quantification of both Roman and barbarian/Sarmatian settlements from Banat and the Dierna–Tibiscum line, interpreted as manifestations of the Daco–Roman culture. The present paper will address exclusively the problem of the modest settlements characterized by small and medium-sized sunken houses built in simple earth and timber techniques and their equally unpretentious annexes, from the Romanian part of Banat.

4 BENA 1997.
5 BOZU 1990.
6 BOZU/EL SUSI 1987.
7 BENA 1996, 114.

In Serbia they were linked to early Slavic inhabitants, while Hungarian researchers asserted the persistence of the Sarmatians in the area throughout the timespan between the 1st and 5th centuries AD. 8

These discrepancies were highlighted on numerous occasions by historians, however without offering an objective research model or a solution to this paradox. 9 A. Bejan și M. Mare underlined the existence of two models of interpretation:

• The association of the settlements with a Daco–Roman population (in the Romanian literature)
• The association of the settlements with a Sarmatian population (in the Hungarian and Serbian literature) 10

D. Micle further emphasised the divergent cultural interpretation, according to the author the term ‘Daco–Roman’ is utilized exclusively in the Romanian literature, while the term ‘lazycles’ is only to be found only in the Hungarian literature. The historian argued for the existence of mixed populations comprised of Romanised Dacian and Sarmatian elements in the area. 11 The possibility of a similar cultural melange was also put forward by B. Muscalu. Although the author rejects the prospect of ‘ethnic purity’, 12 his interpretations follow two lines which eventually give birth to a paradox, asserting that the settlements recorded in the Banat lowland belonged to Daco-Romans, while the necropolises from the same region belonged to the Sarmatians. 13 According to this theory the material culture of the Sarmatians is perceivable exclusively in the case of the necropolises, which ‘owing to the funerary ritual and ceremony offer the only clear elements of ethnic ascription’. 14 Foeni–Sâliște (Timiș County) is the only Sarmatian settlement recognized as such on the Romanian side of the Banat, due to its connection to a Sarmatian cemetery. 15 In addition to this there are only settlements with Dacian and Roman pottery belonging to a sedentary population with hitherto unknown cemeteries. Therefore, the term ‘Sarmatian settlements’ in the case of the Banat lowlands is strongly rejected in the literature. 16

The lack of ‘ethnic purity’ is also addressed by M. Mare and D. Tănase in the case of the settlement from Timișoara–Freidorf, which is than extrapolated by the authors to the entire Hungarian Plain, the argument being that during the 3rd–4th centuries AD there is no evidence for ‘an exclusively Sarmatian presence in the rural communities of the time’. For instance, the discovery of handmade pottery displaying specific Dacian forms and decoration could be an indication

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8 GRUMEZA 2014, 27–36.
9 According to D. Benea the difficulties of ethnic ascription in this case are due to the fact that no Sarmatian or indeed no Daco–Roman rural settlement has ever been completely researched. Consequently, only full-scale, comprehensive archaeological research could help overcome these historical ambiguities (Benea 1996, 115).
10 MARE 2004, 251.
11 MICLE 2011, 179.
12 MUSCALU 2009, 150.
13 MUSCALU 2009, 98.
14 MUSCALU 2009, 103. The example cited by the aforementioned author is not a suitable option considering that we are dealing with two different sites: Foeni–Săliște (a Sarmatian period settlement) and Foeni–Cimitirul Ortodox (Sarmatian period cemetery), the distance between the two sites is about 3 km, see GRUMEZA 2011, Pl.I/2.
of the presence of this population in the region. 17

The main concept behind this interpretation was that the habitat of the Banat lowlands is optimal for a sedentary indigenous population, and less suitable for nomadic Sarmatian communities comprised of cattle and horse breeders. 18 It is obvious that the passage XXVI, 2 from Ammianus Marcellinus, in which the Sarmatians were presented as a nomadic population, was adopted uncritically by Romanian researchers. 19 ‘Bearing in mind the nomadic lifestyle of these populations (...) the stable settlements of the Banat lowlands cannot be attributed to the Sarmatian Iazyges, but only to the Daco-Roman natives’. 20 Therefore, we are dealing with a Daco-Roman habitat, ‘a synthesis of Roman material culture and elements belonging to the Dacian environment’. This synthesis resulted in a Romani culture. 21

A different opinion was articulated by E. Dörner, during the 1970s. The historian from Arad showed that the finds from the Banat lowlands coming from Cenei, Sâncicolui Mare, Cherestur, Dumbrița, Timișoara–Cărămidărie, Timișoara–Freidorf, Moșnița, Bărateaz, Zădăreni I, II, Sânpetre German I, II, Checea, Beba Veche, Hodoni, Beșenova Veche, Tomnatic, Lovrin, Vizejdia, Satchinez, Cerneteaz, Sâcalazi, Șag, Ciocova and Deta (25 sites in total), belonged undoubtedly to the Sarmatian Iazyges throughout the entire timespan between the 1st and 4th centuries AD. 22 Furthermore, Dörner was familiar with the contemporary Hungarian studies regarding the Sarmatians from the Great Hungarian Plain. Consequently, the author dated the beginning of the Sarmatian presence in Crișana to the 1st–2nd centuries AD based on the discovery from Vărsand, while the same phenomenon was dated to the 2nd century in the case of the Banat, based on the discovery from Beba Veche, along the line of Hungarian historians A. Alfüöldi and M. Párducz. 23

According to D. Benea the ethnic ascription of the aforementioned sites is governed by confusion both in the Romanian, but especially in the foreign (Hungarian and Serbian) archaeological literature. Romanian researchers interpreted these finds as either Sarmatian or Dacian. Furthermore, the same historian considers that in the case of similar sites in the region between the Tisa and the Danube Rivers, their interpretation as Sarmatian settlements might be of assistance in the chronological correlation of Sarmatian settlements and cemeteries. 24 This chronological inconsistency between settlements and cemeteries is due to the research methods implemented at that time: the field walking and small-scale archaeological surveys exposed only small pieces of settlements and cemeteries. The concurrent research of settlements and their corresponding cemeteries (e.g. Arad–Bariera; 25 Giarmata–Sit 10; 26 Seceani–Obiectiv nr. 02 și 03; 27 Murani–Obiectiv nr. 4; 28 Hunedoara Timișană 29) was made possible only in recent years as a result of extensive infrastructural development works.

2. DISTRIBUTION, DIMENSIONS AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF SETTLEMENTS

In the archaeological literature various criteria of classification were put forward for these settlements:

A. From a geographical point of view, a distinction was made between:

1. Lowland settlements
2. Highland settlements
3. Mountainous settlements

Concerning the distribution of settlements in the Romanian part of the Banat it is observable that a part of these settlements are grouped on the main rivers of the region (Mureș, Aranca, Beșa, Timiș, Caraș etc.), 31 while most of them can be found in the interfluvial areas (Fig. 1). According to M. Mare the highest settlement density can be observed in the Banat lowlands, e.g. 8 settlements were identified in the territory between the Tisa and the Danube. This is followed by the highland areas (e.g. 18 findspots were identified at Gătaia and 8 at Ghetrenis) and the depression regions (e.g. 5 settlements were identified at Vraniuat and 5 at Beriște). 32 Nevertheless these figures must be handled with caution as the respective sites were identified exclusively based on non-intrusive surveys. Probably as a result of this shortcoming, in the case of the township of Liebling no less than the 1st century AD (ALFÖLDI 1939, 533–534). C. Daicoviciu rejected this theory and asserted that the Jazyges arrive in Banat only in the second half of the 3rd century, subsequent to the Roman withdrawal from Dacia (DAICOVICIU 1940, 104). Daicoviciu’s standpoint determined most of the research concerning the 2nd–4th century Banat, Romanian researchers almost unanimously adopting his views.

17 DÖRNER 1971, 687.
18 DÖRNER 2004A, 51.
19 MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 197.
20 DÖRNER 1971, 687.
21 DÖRNER 688–687, 1971. Hungarian historian A. Alfüöldi argued in numerous studies that the territory between the Mureș, Tisa and Danube Rivers was not part of Roman Dacia, being controlled by the Sarmatian Iazyges as early as the end of the 1st century AD (ALFÖLDI 1939, 533–534). C. Daicoviciu rejected this theory and asserted that the Jazyges arrive in Banat only in the second half of the 3rd century, subsequent to the Roman withdrawal from Dacia (DAICOVICIU 1940, 104). Daicoviciu’s standpoint determined most of the research concerning the 2nd–4th century Banat, Romanian researchers almost unanimously adopting his views.
24 The explanation put forward in the Hungarian literature for the absence of settlements in the Great Hungarian Plain between the mid-1st century and the first half of the 2nd century is based on the nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle of the first Sarmatian communities which settled in the region. In time the Sarmatians were compelled to renounce their traditional way of life due to the geographical conditions of their new home (VÁDAV/SZEKERES 2001, 261; ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 2013, 195). Furthermore, the eastern nomadic populations, comprised of shepherds and warriors settled in the Carpathian Basin were faced with a number of challenges: a limited territory, a different climate marked by a high rate of precipitation and overpopulation. These topographical, climatological and political adversities stimulated the Sarmatians to adopt new survival strategies, including sedentariness. Isolated from their habitual geographic environment, they gradually lost a significant part of their archaic material culture which defined the group culturally in the Eurasian steppe; the funerary rituals were simplified, the funerary inventory was reduced in quantity and became less sophisticated, while the usual imports from the north Pontic area were replaced with goods imported from the western part of the Empire. The entire Sarmatian way of life was transformed. Therefore, it can be asserted that this nomadic population developed a new material culture in the Great Hungarian Plain (BARTOSIEWICZ 2003, 105, 120; VÁDAV 1999; ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 2013, 194).
26 MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 197.
27 MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 197.
28 MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 197.
29 MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 197.
than 40 'archaeological objectives' belonging to the 2nd–5th century AD were recorded.\(^{33}\)

The positioning and organisation of the habitat were obviously adapted to the natural environment. All considered settlements are unfortified and ‘open’.\(^{34}\) The excavations from the Central Tisa region showed that the settlements from this period were situated in close proximity of each other, having a temporary character probably due to the depletion of the community’s farmland.\(^{35}\) The possibility of migration, caused possibly by demographic expansion against the backdrop of an extensive farming tradition, was also put forward.\(^{36}\)

Furthermore, the houses show no traces of reparations or renovations, suggesting that they were abandoned as new dwellings were built. The only known instances of houses violently destroyed by fire are the ones from Baranda–Ciglana (the Serbian part of Banat) and Grădinari–Seliste.\(^{37}\) In the majority of cases the concentration of dwellings indicate large farms surrounded by cropland and grazeland, while smaller settlements are known only in the mountainous areas.\(^{38}\) In most cases the 2nd–5th century sites show no signs of systematisation. The only elements of systematisation which indicate a certain degree of recurrence are related to the workshops which usually can be found either in the back of the houses, at the edge of the settlements or in the immediate vicinity of the craftsman’s house. Wells and water basins were placed either in the proximity of watercourses or between the houses. The houses were surrounded by storage pits and flood protection ditches.\(^{39}\)

In the case of the late site from Arad–Barieră, it was observed that the houses and annexes display a tendency of grouping into ‘nests’. A first group was identified in the north of the site, while further two similar groups, comprised however of fewer and more dispersed structures, are located to the right and to the left of the aforementioned area, presumably where the cemetery was beginning. The limit between the settlement and the necropolis was duly marked.\(^{40}\) At Timișoara–Freidorf, on a researched area covering 0.5 ha, the houses and annexes belonging to both phases of the settlement were concentrated on the central area of the promontory, while the pottery kilns were placed in the vicinity of the settlement’s margin.\(^{41}\) In the same site the structures were positioned at variable distance from each other, with a tendency of grouping into ‘nests’, while the presence of aligned postholes suggests the marking of property limits.\(^{42}\)

A different situation was observed at Hodoni–Pustă, where the structures were aligned in rows with 7–10 m distance between the houses and rows.\(^{43}\) Both in the case of

\(^{33}\) FLOCA 2013, 123–138, 168; Tab. 8.
\(^{34}\) MARE 2004A, 27; MARE/et. al. 2011, 95.
\(^{35}\) GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 14.
\(^{36}\) MARE 2004A, 50.
\(^{37}\) MARE 2004A, 34.
\(^{38}\) MARE 2004A, 28.
the aforementioned site and at Sânnicolau Mare–Seliște the homesteads were encircled by ditches and fences.44

B. According to dimensions, A. Bejan distinguished between:
1. Small settlements (between 2,500 and 10,000 m²)
2. Medium settlements (between 15,000 and 30,000 m²)
3. Large settlements (between 40,000 and 250,000 m²)

According to M. Mare the maximum dimension of 25 ha proposed for the rural settlements should be treated with caution.45 One cannot ignore the fact that on the territory of present-day Hungary a number of large Sarmatian settlements were extensively researched, such as the one from Szeged–Kiskundorozsma–Nagyszék II (Site 26/72, No. 35, on the M5 motorway), where 708 1 overwhelmingly Sarmatian features were uncovered, spread on a surface of 55 099 m², the total surface of the settlement ranging between 72 000 and 108 000 m². Furthermore, at Cegléd (4/14–Burgeházidála) in Pest County a 44 672 m² surface was uncovered, where 776 Sarmatian features were discovered.46

Considering that in Banat not a single settlement was completely researched, its extent is difficult to assess. There are only three published instances of 2nd–4th century settlements for which the approximate dimensions are known: Arad–Barieră, Timișoara–Freidorf and Dumbrăvița, all researched through development led excavations. In case of the site from Arad–Barieră, 12 236 m² were uncovered, but certainly the Sarmatian settlement extended beyond this perimeter towards the east and west, the research being confined to the eastern and western limits of the motorway.47 A larger surface was presumed in case of the Dumbrăvița settlement, which seemingly encompassed an area between 20 000 and 30 000 m².48

C. According to site character a distinction can be made between:
1. Agrarian and herding sites
2. Agrarian and production sites (pottery production and ironworking)49

The agrarian character of these settlements is suggested by the presence of numerous storage pits, hand mills (found in every settlement), charred seeds (found at Timișoara–Freidorf and Saravala), as well as agricultural tools, present in high numbers at Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlaškikrat.50

Pottery kilns were reported from the rural area of Banat, from Grădăni–Seliște, Timișoara–Freidorf, Dragșina and Hodoni. Three kilns belonging to Henning type B were investigated at Grădăni–Seliște. This type of kilns are known for their central walls and single flue. Their body is conical with a circular raised oven-floor, except for kiln no. 2, which has an oval plan, somewhat resembling a horseshoe.51

The dating of the contexts starts with the first half of the 3rd–first half of the 4th century, based on the coins of Claudius II, Gordian III and Constantius II.52 The pottery assemblages consist overwhelmingly of wheel thrown fine grey ware (95%), while only a small portion is handmade (5%).53

The settlement is situated in the vicinity of the Lederata–Arcișova (Varadâia)–Berzobis–Tibiscum road, at only 3 km from the fort and civilian settlement from Văradia.54 Taking into account the position of the site as well as the number of kilns analysed, one can presume that the workshop was of considerable dimensions. A similar settlement, although much larger, was researched at Üllő, southwest from Budapest, also in the immediate vicinity of the limes, where approximately 50 kilns were excavated.55

A similar situation was reported in the case of the settlement from Timișoara–Freidorf. One of the kilns had an oval shape, its diameter varying between 60 and 70 cm; the superstructure was not preserved, the walls had clay lining on the interior, their preserved height being 24 cm. The kiln had a reverberator plaque and a cross-like daub structure composed of four arms. The second kiln was similar, the only major difference was the presence of six arms instead of four.56 Within the assemblages from the settlement, the wheel thrown fine reduced ware has the highest proportion, followed by the brownish handmade coarse ware. A low number of fragments belonging to oxidised colour-coated Roman provincial wares, as well as amphorae and terra sigillata fragments were also discovered.57 The local pottery thrown on the slow wheel is also present in significant numbers and dated between the second third of the 4th century and beginning of the 5th century AD.58 The local pottery assemblages are comprised mainly of tableware, namely bowls, jugs, flagons and cups, and respectively storage vessels used both for the keeping of prepared foods and supplies: jars, two-handled vessels and storage vessels.59

In Timișoara–Dragșina, on the left bank of the Timiș River a large pottery kiln of Henning type B, with central wall, was discovered.60 The products linked to the kiln consist of storage vessels (11.82%) with biconical bodies, pots as well as bowls with either footing or raised platform, produced mostly of semi-fine fabrics.61

In the settlement from Hodoni dated to the 3rd–4th centuries AD, a circular pottery kiln was discovered (type Henning B7) with the diameter of 1.7 m, its raised oven floor destroyed probably already in antiquity. The pottery from the settlement consists of handmade and wheel thrown vessels. The former, amounting to 10% of the assemblage, is made up of coarse brownish-grey pots, while the latter consists mostly of reduced fine ware (70%) in addition to some oxidised fine ware (30%).62

The local pottery production is overwhelmingly based

44 BEJAN 2000, 532.
45 BEJAN 2000, 520.
46 MARE 2004A, 29.
47 SZALONTAI/TÓTH, 78–79.
48 GRUMEA/URSUȚIU/COPOSU 2013, 14.
51 BENEĂ 1996, 163–164.
52 ROZU 1990, 149.
53 BEJAN 2000, 532.
54 BEJAN 2000, 520.
57 BENEĂ 1996, 163–164.
59 BOZU 1990, 152.
60 BOZU 1990, 158.
61 KULCSÁR/HERAI 2011.
62 MARE/ET AL 2011, 11.
63 MARE/ET AL 2011, 12.
64 MARE/ET AL 2011, 44.
65 MARE/ET AL 2011, 45.
66 MICLE 1997, 77.
67 MICLE 1997, 78.
68 BEJAN 1993, 376.
on the manufacture of wheel thrown burnished grey wares, consisting of jars, pots, storage vessels, often decorated with incised wavy lines, occasionally displaying figurative decoration. The handmade pottery, as well as the pottery thrown on the slow wheel is usually represented in small proportions, however higher numbers are characteristic to certain sites, such as Timișoara–Freidorf.

A further category of the so-called ‘agrarian and production sites’ is comprised of the sites based on iron processing. The most important iron deposits can be found at: Oravița, Moldova Nouă, the perimeter of Boșa-Dognecea-Ocna de Fier, and the middle course of the Bârzava River (from Reșița, Berzovia, Soșdea, up until Gătaia). The iron processing in the lowlands was usually based on the low-quality and low metal content secondary deposits, the so-called bog iron. Furnaces used for bog iron processing were discovered at Biled, Cârpiși, Drăgșina and Cerna. At Criciova–Rătăul la Morea a small-sized circular based furnace with conical superstructure was discovered, similar to furnaces known from Soșdea, Fizeș, Reșița and Berzovia. Near the base of the furnaces one or two perforations could be usually found, used for the insertion of the tuyere. Furthermore two fragments from small-sized iron blooms (the bloom discovered at Berzovia weighed 40 kg). The vast majority of the pottery discovered in the area of the furnace (89%) displays a high degree of similarity to Dacian pottery. The furnace was dated to the 3[d century AD.

Production sites can usually be found in the close proximity of prime material deposits (iron, clay, etc.). The vicinity of water courses and forests was also essential for manganese production as part of the smelting process. The pottery kilns and household ovens were usually placed near the furnaces known from Soșdea, Fizeș, Reșița and Berzovia. The proximity of prime material deposits (iron, clay, etc.) was essential for manganese production as part of the smelting process. The pottery kilns and household ovens were usually placed near the furnaces known from Soșdea, Fizeș, Reșița and Berzovia. The proximity of prime material deposits (iron, clay, etc.) was essential for manganese production as part of the smelting process.

3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES WITHIN THE INVESTIGATED SETTLEMENTS

As already mentioned above, 90% of the sites were identified through non-invasive methods, the number of excavated archaeological features is very low: 3 at Criciova–Rătăul lui Morea, 6 at Foeni–Seliștea, Lugoj–Știuca Veche and 16 at Hodoni–Pustă. A larger amount of features was researched owing to development led archaeology, resulting in the excavation of 48 features in Arad–Barieră and a further 63 at Timișoara–Freidorf. Even so, the number of investigated houses, storage/refuse pits or ovens is extremely low, amounting 195.

For the description of the houses, usually the terms ‘surface houses’ and ‘sunken houses’ are employed in the archaeological literature. According to M. Mare the dwelling structures which are between 30 and 40 cm below the walking level can be termed surface houses (32%), while the sunken houses (68%) are usually as deep as 1 m below the walking level. Their plan is usually rectangular, circular or irregular. Occasionally dwellings with oval plans have been recorded, but the majority of discoveries have rectangular/square plans. The entrance was placed on one of the short sides, opposed to the wind direction.

Typically, the area of a sunken house is about 14 m², while that of a sunken house ranges between 9.7 and 14 m². Unfortunately in most cases the upper part of the houses was destroyed by agricultural interventions. Their structural frame was made up of girders covered by a compact layer of clay mixed with straw or chaff. A similar wooden frame was also employed for the roof built in both the gable roof and hip roof versions and covered with straw of chaff. For the fastening of the components, no metal implements were used, the builders relying on wood-binding techniques instead.

At Moldova Veche–Vinograda the walls were made from wattle and daub, the diameter of the wattle ranging between 2 and 5 cm. Houses with two rooms are extremely rare, indeed only two such structures were reported thus far, one from Hodoni–Pustă and one from Timișoara–Cioieni. Refurbishments and restoration phases were noticed in the case of structures from Lugoj–Știuca Veche, Hodoni–Pustă and Timișoara–Cioieni, which display two or even three such phases. In the case of houses from Hodoni–Pustă and Timișoara–Cioieni, it was noticed that the structures were enlarged at a later phase. Even so, these interventions were made at fairly short intervals. Nearly half of the houses were equipped with interior hearths, usually circular, occasionally rectangular, with clay lining and surrounded by stones, or ovens borrowed in one of the houses’ walls.

All of the 8 houses of the Sarmatian settlement from Arad–Barieră analysed in 2013 were rectangular sunken houses with rounded corners, with two or three central postholes. Besides wood, clay was also used in the superstructure of the houses, indicated by the numerous daub fragments discovered both inside the houses and in the refuse pits. Most of the houses display medium or small dimensions with areas ranging between 9 and 10 m², the largest one having a surface of 10.8 m², while the smallest one 4.45 m². The identification of the entrances was not possible.

The only probable identification of an entrance can be supposed in the case house 061a, on the opposing side of the hearth. Furthermore, given the usual NW–SE orientation of the houses the entrance can be hypothetically placed on the
south-eastern side, thus the dwellers would have benefited from the maximum amount of natural light. None of the 8 investigated houses showed signs of refurbishment phases neither in the case of the floor nor the oven from house O61a, indicating thus a relatively short period of use.64

The exterior annexes of the houses include hearths, ovens, pottery kilns, storage/refuse pits and fences. The number of storage pits varies according to the dimensions and the character of the settlement. The site from Hodoni–Pustă yielded 16 storage pits and 7 refuse pits, while the settlement from Timișoara–Freidorf 22 storage pits and 20 refuse pits.65 Some of these pits have both internal and external features, such as an external roof suggested by the presence of postholes next to the storage pits, as well as interior steps.66

The storage and refuse pits are the most common archaeological features discovered in these sites across the Great Hungarian Plain. From a typological standpoint, according to their section, the following types can be identified: pits with straight sides, with a flat or concave base, trapezoidal shaped (the opening wider than the base), bell-shaped, funnel-shaped and irregular pits. In addition to these, so-called systems of pits or double-pits which were simultaneously in use, with identical fills and finds were also recorded.

The wells played an essential role in the daily life of the Sarmatian communities, as a crucial source of drinking water and equally important in animal husbandry and other aspects of their economy. Wells can be classified according to multiple criteria: the shape of the roof, the lining, the structure of the water extraction mechanism, the shape of the channel as well as the type and building technique of the frame.67 Unfortunately a considerable proportion of the wells’ elements were made of perishable materials, while in most cases their base cannot be explored due to the water table. No instances of wells belonging to this period and displayed its cultural conservatism through its dwelling structures consisting of sunken and surface houses.68

4. THE INVENTORY OF THE SETTLEMENTS

The identification of the settlements was based on the discovery in their vicinity of ‘atypical archaeological finds consisting of grey pottery’. In D. Benea’s view these finds are not characteristic to the Sarmatian material culture, considering that ‘this population did not use this kind of pottery in the North Pontic area’.69

As usual pottery finds are the most common archaeological material within the sites from the Banat region. The pottery analysis was usually based on the firing/colour of the ceramics, as well as the morphology and functionality of the vessels. Typological and statistical analysis are very rare, in most cases covering only a part of the material, not the entire assemblage.

In case of the settlement from Grădini–Săliște 95% of the pottery assemblage consists of wheel thrown vessels, and merely 5% was handmade.70 At Dragașina, on the left bank of the Timiș River the majority of the pottery vessels (91.6%) consist of wheel thrown grey wares, tempered with sand and mica. Only one fragment from a handmade vessel was found.71 Similar statistical data is available in the case of the settlement from Hodoni dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries. The handmade pottery in this case amounts to 10% of the assemblage, consisting mostly of coarse greyish-red pots, while the rest of the assemblage is comprised of good quality wheel thrown pottery of both grey (70%) and red colour (30%).72 From a morphological viewpoint, no differences can be noted between the oxidised and the reduced wares. The cooking pots are the most common vessel types encountered.73 Based on these pottery analysis, A. Bejan concluded that the material ‘proves the continuity of the Roman lifestyle in the Banat region throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries’,74 without any other notable influences.

According to the statistical analysis carried out for the pottery assemblages recorded at the site Arad–Barieră dated to the latter half of the 4th century AD, 37.14% of the material is comprised of storage vessels, 28.47% are cooking pots and 17.14% are bowls. The flagons and globular vessels amount to only 8.57%.75 Over 80% of the analysed vessels are wheel thrown, while the rest are handmade or were thrown on the slow wheel, the distribution corresponding to other 4th century Sarmatian sites from the Great Hungarian Plain.76 Further statistical analysis was carried out with regard to the firing and fabrics quality of the vessels from the site (Fig. 2–5).

It is therefore fair to say that the 2nd–5th century pottery is derived from the combination of Dacian, Celtic and Roman technical and stylistic elements.77 Burning is also characteristic feature of the wheel thrown pottery

64 GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 15-16.
65 MARE 2004A, 44.
67 VADAY 2003.
68 MARE 2004A, 44.
70 BEJAN 1996, 114.
71 BOZU 1990, 151.
72 MICLE 1997, 80.
73 BEJAN 1995, 376.
74 BEJAN 1995, 376.
75 BEJAN 1995, 389.
76 GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 30.
77 GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 37, with bibliography.
78 VADAY/JANKOVICH/KOVÁCS 2013, 232.
of this period. Starting from the 2nd century AD, the burnished pottery with geometrical motifs gradually made its way into the customary Sarmatian pottery production practice, lasting until the late Sarmatian and Hun period.\textsuperscript{99} The burnished decoration consists mostly of geometrical motifs, the most common being the wavy line, while the occurrence of figurative motifs is considerably lower, and are characteristic for the late Sarmatian and Hun period.\textsuperscript{100} Starting with the latter part of the 4th century, the spreading of the floral and elaborate figural decoration can be partially linked to the influence of the Cerneahov culture and the arrival of new populations in the Great Hungarian Plain. The combinations of burnished geometrical and animal motifs, typical for the late Sarmatian period can be noted especially on flagons, vessels with one or two handles and bowls with a raised base.\textsuperscript{102} This type of pottery is characteristic for the middle-Tisa basin, the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Western Banat and Bâcska (Serbian: Bačka).\textsuperscript{102} The stylistic aspects such as the burnishing of the vessels, the grey, often metallic colour of the fabric, the rich variety of burnished motifs (Fig. 6-7) were only occasionally addressed in the Romanian archaeological literature.

According to the archaeological record, the Roman pottery import must have been a rare occurrence, the pottery demand of the settlements being mostly achieved through local production. Other Roman products such as bronze vessels, silverware, terracotta and lamps are also unaccounted for. The bulk of Roman imports is comprised of \textit{terra sigillata} vessels. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of this material, discovered at Timișoara–Cioreni, Hodoni, Iecea Mică, Timișoara–Freidorf, Satchinez, Criciova, Becicherecul Mic, Foeni–Seliște, Biled, Herneacova, Dumbrăvița and Liebling, is highly fragmentary. Furthermore, fragments of amphorae were published from Timișoara–Cioreni, Iecea Mică, Timișoara–Freidorf, Satchinez, Biled and Dumbrăvița.

The infiltration of this material into the Banat Plain took place either from the province of Dacia through the supply lines connecting the province with the Danube area or from the Tisa region of the \textit{Barbaricum} through the system of local roads.

Unfortunately, in the case of the amphorae, because of the fragmentary state of the material, its precise chronological classification is impossible, the finds being usually dated between the 1st and the 4th century AD. The only verified data in this regard is linked to the
houses from Timișoara–Freidorf which yielded terra sigillata and amphora finds and are dated to the 3rd and 4th centuries.

Furthermore the state of fragmentation also prevents the typological classification of the finds. According to D. Benea the fact that in the Tisa–Danube area the majority of the terra sigillata vessels belong to the type Dragendorff 37 suggests a similar situation in the case of the rural settlements from the Banat region.

Metal small finds such as brooches, coins or weapons are also very rare, amounting to only 1% of the discoveries, appearing mostly in funerary contexts. The brooches are dated to the period between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 5th century AD, and were supplied from the neighbouring Roman provinces. No complex typological and chronological analysis can be encountered in the archaeological literature concerning these finds.

Brooches were reported from the following sites (Fig. 8/1-8):

1. Timișoara–Freidorf – a knee brooch with a rectangular plate, arched body small circular head; the spring is made of windings covered by a semicylindrical plate in addition to two brooches with returned foot, one them made of bronze, the other one from iron
2. Criciova–Tramnic – early variant of a bronze returned foot brooch
3. Grădinari–Săliște, house no. 6 – a ‘T-shaped brooch’ described by O. Bozu
4. Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlaškikrai – yielded the highest number of brooches (9) belonging to various types: with onion-shaped knobs, with returned foot and of the crossbow type. In O. Bozu’s view the large number and variety of iron finds (tools, weapons, jewels), the iron slag and fragments of molten metal, indicates large scale iron working activities at this site.
5. Timișoara–Cioreni – a bronze brooch with returned foot dated between the end of the 2nd century and the
beginning of the 3rd century AD
6. Foeni–Selîște – a fragmentary bronze brooch with returned foot and an iron spring discovered in a context dated between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD103
7. Arad–Barieră, feature no. 12 – a fragmentary iron brooch with a part made of bronze (possibly a winding). Usually these types of brooches are made of bronze and have a long foot comprised of 5 to 12 windings; the respective piece is similar to a variant of the returned foot brooches dated to the latter part of the 4th century AD104
8. Satchinez – a bronze brooch with returned foot
9. Iecea Mica – an iron brooch with returned foot105

Based on the material two chronological groups can be identified: the first group consists of brooches dated between the end of the 2nd century and the latter part of the 3rd century AD, while the second one can be dated between the end of the 3rd century and the late-4th, or early 5th century. The earlier finds are comprised of a small number of knee brooches and a certain variant of the crossbow type brooches, as well as brooches with returned foot. The latest finds consist of large brooches with returned foot, occasionally made of iron, brooches with onion-shaped knobs, dated as late as the end of the 4th, or beginning of the 5th century. The most common brooches belong to the type with a returned foot (Timișoara–Freidorf, Timișoara–Cioreni, Foeni–Selîște, Satchinez, Iecea Mica) occasionally repaired with iron windings.106

In contrast with the Roman provincial environment and the Sarmatian cultural milieu east of the Carpathian, weapons have only been rarely reported in the Banat region, in fact the only site with such finds is Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlășkikrai. The following weapons were discovered here:
1. An arrowhead (Fig. 8/11)
2. A spearhead with 4 blades, the socket was obtained by bending the plate, L = 15 cm, L = 10 cm, L = 5 cm, D = 1.5 cm (Fig. 8/10)
3. A spearhead with a long and narrow leaf-shaped blade and a well-preserved socket, L = 39.5 cm, L = 27 cm, l = 3.5 cm, L = 12 cm, D = 2.5 cm (Fig. 8/9).
Accordingly, the weapons can be placed in three distinct chronological phases:
1. The first phase (end of the 2nd–beginning of the 3rd century) yielded only two finds of defensive and offensive weapons from grave tumuli from the Northern Banat. The weapons were probably brought by warriors arriving during the Marcomannic Wars.
2. The second phase, dated between the last third of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century AD, yielded 10 finds belonging to the group of offensive weapons, coming exclusively from simple graves with north–south or east–west orientation. This demand of weapons as well as the arrival of new groups of ‘barbarians’ is linked to the important political changes from the Lower Danube, especially the repeated barbarian attacks and the reorganisation of Roman rule in the area, namely the withdrawal from Dacia in 271 AD and the restructuring of the neighbouring provinces.

The later phase, dated between the latter part of the 4th century and the early-5th century yielded further 10 weapon-finds. The funerary finds are concentrated in the area of Vârșet, and the history of this period (D1 according to the Central European chronology) is determined by the arrival of the Huns.107

The weapons discovered at Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlășkikrai are dated to this late period. This site stands out due to the rich and varied archaeological finds it yielded, comprised of agricultural and woodworking tools, 13 coins, numerous brooches and weapons108. The richness of the site can be linked to its placement on the banks of the Danube, 23 km from the late Roman fortification of Gornea and 7 km from the auxiliary fort of Pojejena.109 Nonetheless, O. Bozou and G. El Susi, who analysed the site have not placed much emphasis on the weapon-finds from Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlășkikrai. The large number of such finds may be due to the economic wealth of the settlement as well as its vicinity to the border and the Danube.

In the region of the Banat belonging to present day Romania, coin-finds have been reported from 11 settlements110:
1. Bobda: one coin issued by Constantius II111
2. Becșa Voioșoaei–Gruniul Cetății: 17 bronze coins112
3. Deta: two denarii issued by Trajan and Antoninus Pius, in addition to other coins from the 4th century113
4. Grădinari–Săliște: two bronze coins issued by Gordian III, Claudius II Gothicus, two follis issued by Constantius II114
5. Hodoni–Pustă: one denarius issued by Traianus Decius115
6. Iecea Mică–Rapas: one coin from the 4th century AD116
7. Ilidia–La Funți: two coins from the 4th century AD117
8. Liebling–Teiina Mare: two denarii issued by Marcus Aurelius (December 173–June 174 AD)118
9. Liebling–L 28 (?): one sestertius issued by Marcus Aurelius, one AE issued by Constantius II (330–333 AD), one AE issued by Constans (347–348 AD)119
10. Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlășkikrai: three denarii from the 2nd–3rd centuries, 10 coins issued between 320 and 361 AD and a coin hoard dated to the 4th century AD120

103 ZENTMIKLISI/TIMOC 2005, 61.
104 GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 47.
105 BENEÁ 2013, 133.
106 BENEÁ 2013, 132–133.
11. Dragșina: one coin issued by Hadrian\textsuperscript{121}

In addition to these coins dated predominantly to the 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD, M. Mare suggests the remarkable figure of 50,000 4\textsuperscript{th} century coins discovered in the Banat, especially in the southern and central part of the region, discovered individually or as hoards.\textsuperscript{122} A. Bejan mentions 77 coin discoveries dated to the 3\textsuperscript{rd}–4\textsuperscript{th} centuries, 52 isolated finds and 30 coin hoards, all in the perimeter of the settlements or in their immediate vicinity.\textsuperscript{123} The hoards are also considered by D. Benea, who completed a classification based on the number of coins yielded by these discoveries: Biled (2000 coins issued by emperors Trajan–Constantine the Great), Timișoara I (comprised of coins issued by emperors Vespasian–Hadrian), Timișoara II (coins issued by emperors Antoninus Pius–Philippp I) and Recaș, from the period between 218 and 251.\textsuperscript{124}

Based on the coin-finds two main phases can be outlined in which Roman currency penetrated into the Sarmatian environment at a large scale: the period marked by the rule of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, respectively the period between the end of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and middle of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century (especially under the rule of emperors Constantine I – Valetinianus I).\textsuperscript{125} The large number of coins issued by Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius is directly linked with the events of the Marcomannic Wars. Throughout the 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD one can notice a significant increase of bronze coins (97% of the total number of coin-finds), which according to T. Kačina can be translated into an intense commercial exchange with the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{126}

A further artefact-type found in settlements is the comb, an indicator of Germanic influences, ascribed usually to the Sântana de Mureș–Cerneahov culture. It can be noted that these artefacts were also ignored by the archaeological literature from the western part of Romania. Such finds have been reported from Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlăsikrai, Timișoara–Freidorf, Ictar–Budinț as well as Giarmata–Site 10 (Fig. 9, 10).

The respective combs are made of bone, having one (type II = type 3f, Sovan 2005) or two functional sides (type I = type 5, Sovan 2005), are fastened in the centre with iron rivets, and are dated between the end of the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, and beginning of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD.\textsuperscript{127} Bone combs are rare finds in the western Sarmatian environment, G. Pintye counted 61 such artefacts discovered in the Great Hungarian Plain up to 2009, the majority being dated to the late Sarmatian–Hun period.\textsuperscript{128} In the southern part of the Plain their number amounts to merely 6, among which 4 were discovered in settlements and 2 in funerary contexts.

5. THE DATING OF THE SETTLEMENTS

A further shortcoming concerning the research of this period has to do with the dating of the settlements in the Banat region. The absolute dating of the sites was based on the Roman imports: brooches, terra sigillata and 126 In T. Kačina’s view, the hoards with a high number of coins were probably the result of an accumulation from acts of systematic thievery in the area to the south of the Danube, see KACINA 2014, 169.

The late chronology of these sites was based by M. Mare on the following arguments: the presence of certain types of jewels, the disappearance of the Roman ‘red’ pottery and the increase in numbers of fine wheel thrown grey wares, in addition to the presence of a ‘Dacian type’ coarse brownish-black handmade pottery.\textsuperscript{137}

Until recently the concept that the presence of red pottery indicated the early phases of the Sarmatian period, while the grey-coloured pottery was a product of the late-Sarmatian period was dominant in the Romanian archaeological literature. The analysis of Sarmatian sites from the Great Hungarian Plain revealed no such chronological divisions related to the colour of the pottery\textsuperscript{138}. The same can be said in the case of the site from Arad–Bariera.\textsuperscript{139}

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to define in general terms the habitat of the 2\textsuperscript{nd}–5\textsuperscript{th} century AD Banat, exploring issues such as the organisation and positioning of the settlements, their numbers, and the types of archaeological features associated with them: houses, storage/refuse pits, wells and other structures. The analysis includes a short description of the archaeological finds associated with them: pottery, brooches, coins and weapons.

The habitat is typically ‘barbarian’, defined by modest, small and medium dwellings, usually sunken houses made of timber and clay. The annexes are also adapted to this lowland environment. The archaeological record of these sites differs profoundly from the Roman environment of western and south-western Dacia, characterised by urban settlements (towns, \textit{vici} and \textit{paggi}), forts, \textit{villae rusticae}, etc. According to M. Mare there is an urban and a rural area in the Banat, both belonging to the Daco-Roman culture.\textsuperscript{140} The sites from the lowland area of the Banat are overwhelmingly ascribed as Daco-Roman or Dacian, defined as a rural, sedentary population, with uniform, unchanging features throughout 400 years.

The investigation methods employed (either non-intrusive methods, or slotting, without large scale and interdisciplinary research), the selective publishing of the material, the absence of internal chronologies of the sites prompted these implausible interpretations in the Romanian archaeological literature.

\textit{Translated by David Petruţ}

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136 VADAY 1999, 530.
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138 MARE/et al. 2011, 41, 52.
139 MARE/et al. 2011.
140 BENEÁ 2013, 127.
141 BENEÁ 2013, 176.
142 BENEÁ 2013, 124.

According to M. Mare there is a smaller group of settlements, comprising of approx. 20\% of the analysed sites, which can be dated as early as the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, up to the 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Even so the largest group is composed of the sites beginning in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD, continuing throughout the 4\textsuperscript{th} century, in some cases up to the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The late chronology of these sites was based by M. Mare on the following arguments: the presence of certain types of jewels, the disappearance of the Roman ‘red’ pottery and the increase in numbers of fine wheel thrown grey wares, in addition to the presence of a ‘Dacian type’ coarse brownish-black handmade pottery.

138 MARE 2004A, 49.
139 MARE 2004A, 49–50.
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