

SETTLEMENTS FROM THE 2ND-EARLY 5TH CENTURY AD IN BANAT (I). STATE OF RESEARCH AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DISCOVERIES FROM ROMANIA¹

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 2nd century and the beginning of the 5th 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.

Lavinia Grumeza

West University of Timișoara
lavinia_grumeza@yahoo.com

Keywords: settlements, Banat, Daco-Roman, ethnic attribution, chronology

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 2nd century and the beginning of the 5th century AD.² The aforementioned figure is highly contingent as the

¹ This work was co-financed by the European Social Fund, through the Operational Sectorial Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Contract Code: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140863, Competitive Researchers on a European Level in Humanities and Social Sciences. Multiregional research network (CCPE) and the National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project code: PN-II-RU-TE-2012-3-0216.

² The region under scrutiny, known from the 18th 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. 18966 km² of the territory is part of present day Romania (Timiș and Caraș-Severin Counties along with some parts of Arad and Mehedinți Counties), 9276 km² belong to the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in Serbia, and a territory of 284 km² is part of Hungary (Csongrád County). Within this vast region O. Bozu identified initially over 130 settlements dated between the 3rd and 4th 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:

	No. of modern townships	No. of identified rural settlements
Townships with a single rural settlement identified	104	104
Townships with two rural settlements identified	31	62
Townships with three rural settlements identified	17	51

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–Pustă,³ Timișoara–Freidorf,⁴ Grădinari–Săliște,⁵ Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlașkikrai,⁶ 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
		Alibunar 11, Biled 19, Gătaia 18
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.

³ BEJAN 1981A; BEJAN 1981B; BEJAN 1995; BEJAN/BENEA 1985.
⁴ BENEA 1997.
⁵ BOZU 1990.
⁶ BOZU/EL SUSI 1987.
⁷ BENEA 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 'Iazyges' 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–Seliște (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

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, 150.
¹⁴ MUSCALU 2009, 98.
¹⁵ 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–Seliște (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.
¹⁶ MUSCALU 2009, 99–101.

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 breeders¹⁸. 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 stabile 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 Romanic culture.²¹

A different opinion was articulated by E. Dörner, during the 1970's. The historian from Arad showed that the finds from the Banat lowlands coming from Cenei, Sânnicolaul Mare, Cherestur, Dumbrăvița, Timișoara-Cărămidărie, Timișoara-Freidorf, Moșnița, Bărateaz, Zădăreni I, II, Sânpetru German I, II, Checea, Beba Veche, Hodoni, Beșenova Veche, Tomnatic, Lovrin, Vizejdia, Satchinez, Cerneteaz, Săcălazi, Șag, Ciacova 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 Vârșand, 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. Alföldi and M. Párducz.²³

¹⁷ MARE/et al. 2011, 99.

¹⁸ MARE 2004A, 51; MUSCALU 2009, 99; BENE 2013, 114.

¹⁹ 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 (VADAY/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 precipitations 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; VADAY 1999; ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 2013, 194).

²⁰ MARE 2004A, 51.

²¹ MARE 2004A, 250; BEJAN/BENE 1985, 197.

²² DÖRNER 1971, 687.

²³ DÖRNER 688-687, 1971. Hungarian historian A. Alföldi 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 Jazyges as early as the end of

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-Barieră;²⁵ Giarmata-Sit 10;²⁶ Seceani-Obiectiv nr. 02 și 03;²⁷ Murani-Obiectiv nr. 4;²⁸ Hunedoara Timișană²⁹) 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 settlements³⁰

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, Bega, 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 of Satchinez and 5 at Frumușeni. This is followed by the highland areas (e.g. 18 findspots were identified at Gătaia and 8 at Gherteniș) and the depressionary regions (e.g. 5 settlements were identified at Vrâniș and 5 at Berliște).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

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 settlements in question belong to a sedentary environment comprised of a population which inhabited the territory between the Danube and Tisa Rivers (BENE 2013, 114).

²⁵ GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013.

²⁶ GRUMEZA 2013, 413-414.

²⁷ IONESCU/et al. 2010; PÂSLARU/et al. 2010.

²⁸ PÂSLARU/et al. 2010.

²⁹ BĂRCĂ 2014.

³⁰ MARE 2004A, 34.

³¹ MARE 2004A, 28.

³² MARE 2004A, 28.

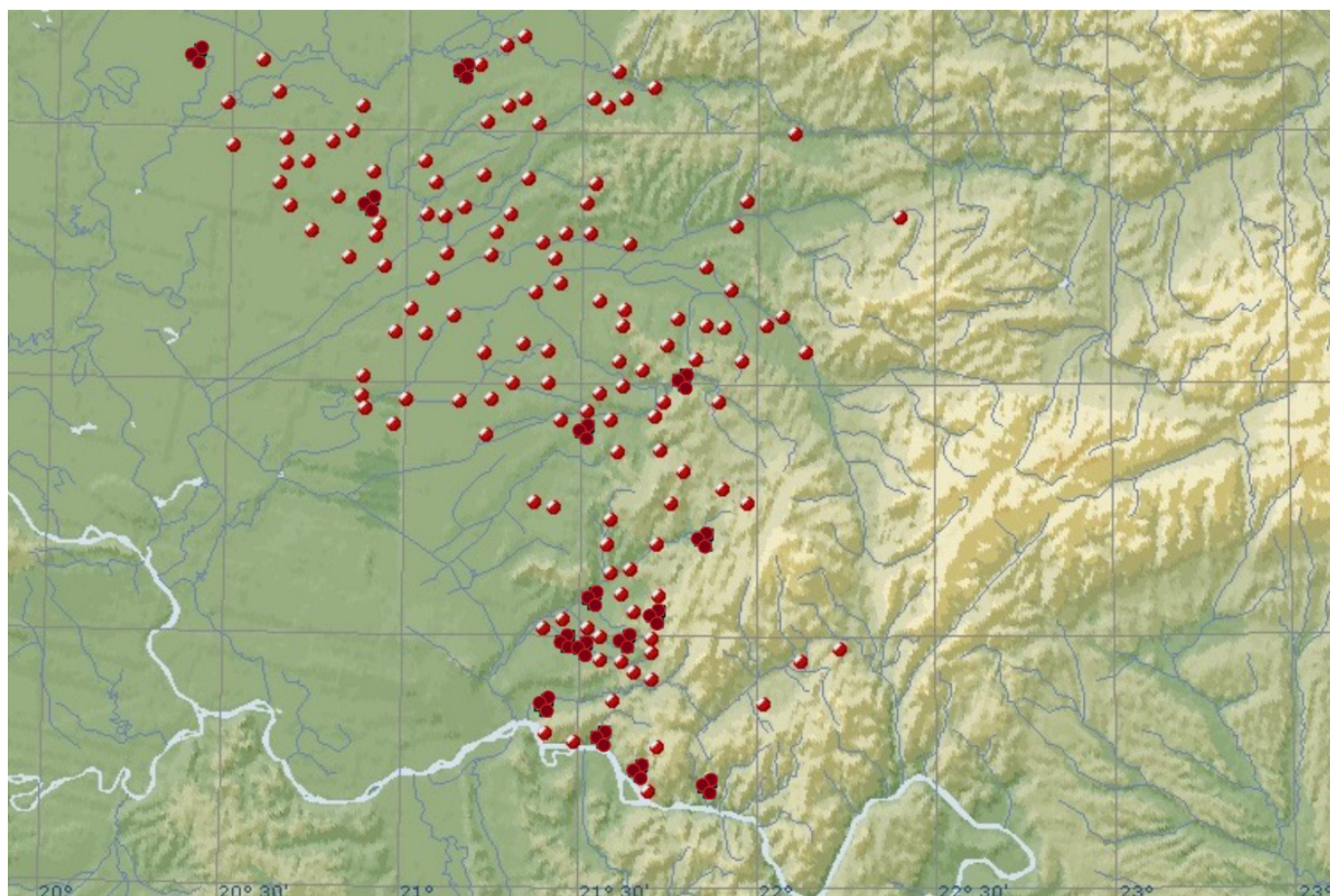


Fig. 1. Distribution of settlements in the Romanian part of Banat (2nd–early-5th century AD)

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–Seliște.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.

³⁹ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 13–15 with bibliography.

⁴⁰ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS, Pl. II.

⁴¹ MARE/et. al. 2011, 95.

⁴² MARE/et. al. 2011, 95.

⁴³ MARE 2004A, 33.

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)⁴⁵

According to M. Mare the maximum dimension of 25 ha proposed for the rural settlements should be treated with caution.⁴⁶ 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–*Bürgeházi-dűlő*) in Pest County a 44 672 m² surface was uncovered, where 776 Sarmatian features were discovered.⁴⁷

Considering that in Banat not a single settlement was completely researched, their 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.⁴⁸ A larger surface was presumed in case of the Dumbrăvița settlement, which seemingly encompassed an area between 20 000 and 30 000 m².⁴⁹

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)⁵⁰

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 Saravale), as well as agricultural tools, present in high numbers at Moldova Veche–*Vinograda Vlașikrai*.⁵¹

Pottery kilns were reported from the rural area of Banat, from Grădinari–*Seliște*, Timișoara–*Freidorf*, Dragșina and Hodoni. Three kilns belonging to Henning type B were investigated at Grădinari–*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.⁵²

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.⁵³ The pottery assemblages consist overwhelmingly of wheel thrown fine grey ware (95%), while only a small portion is handmade (5%).⁵⁴

The settlement is situated in the vicinity of the Lederata–Arcidava (Vărădia)–Berzobis–Tibiscum road, at only 3 km from the fort and civilian settlement from Vărădia.⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰

In Timișoara–*Dragșina*, on the left bank of the Timiș River a large pottery kiln of Henning type B, with central wall, was discovered.⁶¹ The products linked to the kiln consist of storage vessels (11.82%) with biconical bodies, pots as well as bowls with either footring or raised platform, produced mostly of semi-fine fabrics.⁶²

In the settlement from Hodoni dated to the 3rd–4th centuries AD, a circular pottery kiln was discovered (type Henning B?) 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 fineware (70%) in addition to some oxidised fineware (30%).⁶³

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 GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 14.

⁴⁹ DRAȘOVEAN/et al. 2004, 38.

⁵⁰ MARE 2004A, 29. Similarly D. Micle mentions Daco-Roman settlements with an agrarian and herding character and production-based Daco-Roman settlements (MICLE 2011, 181–182).

⁵¹ BENEÁ 1996, 163–164.

⁵² BOZU 1990, 149.

⁵³ BOZU 1990, 157.

⁵⁴ BOZU 1990, 152.

⁵⁵ BOZU 1990, 158.

⁵⁶ KULCSÁR/MERAI 2011.

⁵⁷ MARE/et al. 2011, 11.

⁵⁸ MARE/et al. 2011, 12.

⁵⁹ MARE/et al. 2011, 44.

⁶⁰ MARE/et al. 2011, 45.

⁶¹ MICLE 1997, 77.

⁶² MICLE 1997, 78.

⁶³ BEJAN 1995, 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 Bocșa-Dognecea-Ocna de Fier, and the middle course of the Bârzava River (from Reșița, Berzovia, Șoșdea, up until Gătaia).⁶⁴ 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, Cărpiniș, Dragșina and Cerna.⁶⁵ At Criciova-Râtul lu Mocrean a small-sized circular based furnace with conical superstructure was discovered, similar to furnaces known from Șoșdea, 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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ The furnace was dated to the 3rd century AD.⁶⁸

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.⁶⁹ The pottery kilns and household ovens were usually placed on the margins of the settlements, as e.g. in the case of Grădinari-Săliște.⁷⁰ The extraction and processing of the iron minerals was concentrated in the hilly and mountainous areas of Southern Banat, where according to M. Mare there are 119 identified iron processing production sites (94 in the highlands, while further 24 sites were based on the smelting of so-called bog iron).⁷¹

3. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES WITHIN THE INVESTIGATED SETTLEMENTS

As already mentioned above, 90% of the sites were identified through non-invasive methods, consequently the number of excavated archaeological features is very low: 3 at Criciova-Râtul lui Mocrean, 6 at Foeni-Seliștei, 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.⁷² Their plan is usually rectangular, circular or irregular.⁷³ Occasionally dwellings with oval plans have been recorded, but the majority of discoveries have rectangular/square plans.⁷⁴ The entrance was placed on one of the short sides, opposed to the wind direction.⁷⁵

Typically, the area of a sunken house is about 14 m², while that of a sunken house ranges between 9.7 and 14 m².⁷⁶ 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 or chaff.⁷⁷ For the fastening of the components, no metal implements were used, the builders relying on wood-binding techniques instead.⁷⁸ At Moldova Veche-Vinograda the walls were made from wattle and daub, the diameter of the wattle ranging between 2 and 5 cm.⁷⁹

Houses with two rooms are extremely rare, indeed only two such structures were reported thus far, one from Hodoni-Pustă and one from Timișoara-Ciorenii.⁸⁰ Refurbishments and restoration phases were noticed in the case of structures from Lugoj-Știuca Veche, Hodoni-Pustă and Timișoara-Ciorenii, which display two or even three such phases.⁸¹ In the case of houses from Hodoni-Pustă and Timișoara-Ciorenii, it was noticed that the structures were enlarged at a later phase. Even so, these interventions were made at fairly short intervals.⁸² Nearly half of the houses were equipped with interior hearths, usually circular, occasionally rectangular, with clay lining and surrounded by stones, or ovens burrowed in one of the houses' walls.⁸³

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

⁶⁴ MARE 2004A, 31.

⁶⁵ MARE 2004A, 31.

⁶⁶ BENE 1993, 81.

⁶⁷ BENE 1993, 82.

⁶⁸ BENE 1993, 82.

⁶⁹ MICLE 2011, 181-182.

⁷⁰ MARE 2004A, 34.

⁷¹ MARE 2004A, 133.

⁷² MARE 2004A, 137.

⁷³ MARE 2004A, 40-41.

⁷⁴ BEJAN 2000, 529.

⁷⁵ MARE 2004A, 40.

⁷⁶ MARE 2004A, 40-42.

⁷⁷ MARE 2004A, 40.

⁷⁸ MARE 2004A, 40.

⁷⁹ BOZU/EL SUSI 1987, 244.

⁸⁰ MARE 2004A, 40.

⁸¹ MARE 2004A, 35.

⁸² BEJAN/BENE 1985, 191-192; MARE 2004A, 42.

⁸³ MARE 2004A, 43.

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 061a, indicating thus a relatively short period of use.⁸⁴

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.⁸⁵ 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 steps⁸⁶.

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 have been 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.⁸⁷ 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 displaying stone, brick, wood or wattle lining are known in the Banat.

The presence of wells is mainly characteristic to settlements with no water courses, lakes or springs in their vicinity. Even so wells from the Sarmatian period are rarely identified and investigated. At Timișoara-Ciorenii a cylindrical well was partially investigated, down to a depth of 2.25 m, and was dated to the latter half of the 4th century AD.⁸⁸ At Arad-Barieră 3 such wells were discovered, in two cases (Cx 017 and Cx 042) wooden girdles were identified in the fill of the complexes, belonging probably to the structure of the wells.

According to D. Benea archaeological complexes such as storage and refuse pits or bread ovens, discovered next to houses 'indicate along with the archaeological material associated with them their belonging to the Dacian environment', considering that we are dealing with 'modest, small, one-room houses built from wood, clay and reed'. These are, according to the aforementioned author indications for the presence of a sedentary Dacian population which

displayed its cultural conservatism through its dwelling structures consisting of sunken and surface houses.⁸⁹

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'.⁹⁰

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 Grădinari-Săliște 95% of the pottery assemblage consists of wheel thrown vessels, and merely 5% was handmade.⁹¹ At Dragșina, 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.⁹² 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%).⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ 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',⁹⁵ 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%.⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸ Burnishing is also characteristic feature of the wheel thrown pottery

⁸⁴ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 15-16.

⁸⁵ MARE 2004A, 44.

⁸⁶ BEJAN/BENEA 1985, 195; MARE 2004A, 44; BEJAN 2000, 531.

⁸⁷ VADAY 2003.

⁸⁸ MARE 2004A, 44.

⁸⁹ BENE 2013, 299.

⁹⁰ BENE 1996, 114.

⁹¹ BOZU 1990, 151.

⁹² MICLE 1997, 80.

⁹³ BEJAN 1995, 376.

⁹⁴ BEJAN 1995, 376.

⁹⁵ BEJAN 1995, 389.

⁹⁶ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 30.

⁹⁷ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 37, with bibliography.

⁹⁸ VADAY/JANKOVICH/KOVÁCS 2011, 232.

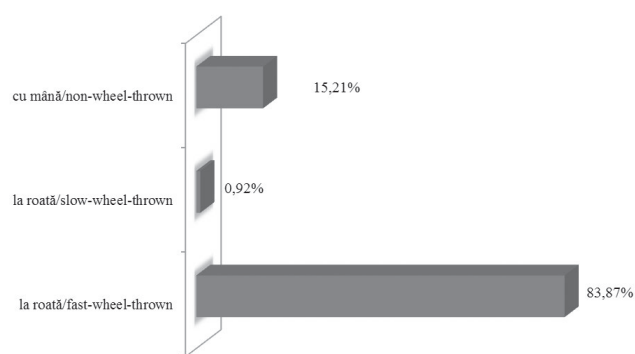


Fig. 2. Production technique of the pottery vessels from Arad-Barieră (GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013)

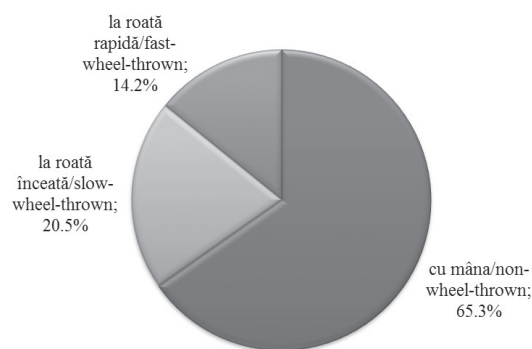


Fig. 3. Production technique of the pottery vessels from the 4th century Sarmatian settlements between the Mureș and Criș rivers (VADAY/RÓZSA 2006)

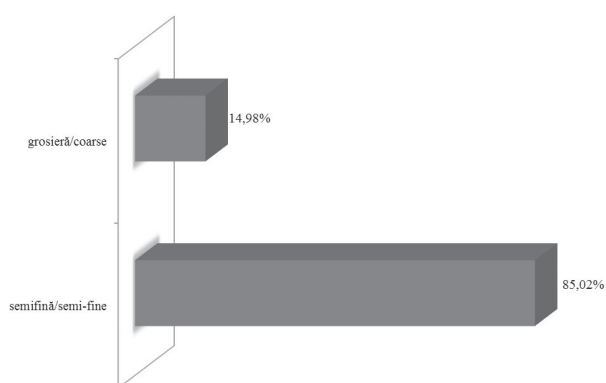


Fig. 4. Fabric quality of the pottery from Arad-Barieră (GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013)

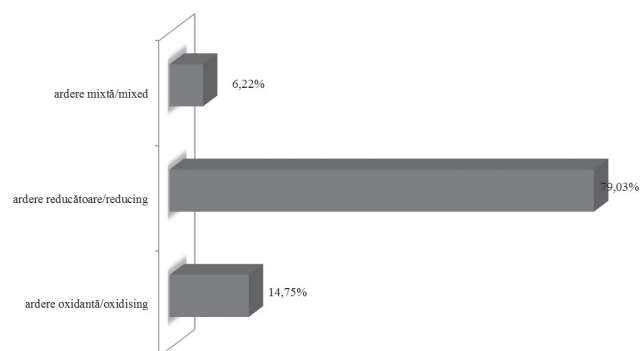


Fig. 5. Firing of the pottery vessels from Arad-Barieră (GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013)

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.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.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.¹⁰¹ This type of pottery is characteristic for the middle-Tisa basin, the southern part of the Great Hungarian Plain, the Western Banat and Bácska (Serbian: Bačka).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.

⁹⁹ VADAY/MEDGYESI 1993, 63.

¹⁰⁰ VADAY/JANKOVICH/KOVÁCS 2011, 229-230.

¹⁰¹ VADAY 1982, 121, 128.

¹⁰² VADAY/MEDGYESI 1993, 63.

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 *terra sigillata* vessels. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of this material, discovered at Timișoara-Ciorenii, 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-Ciorenii, 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 *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

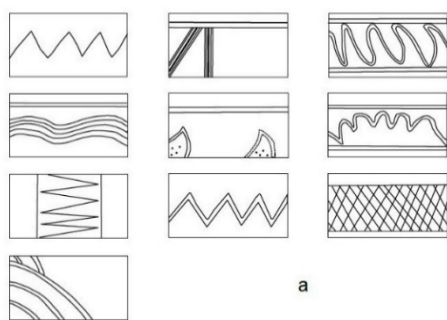


Fig. 14. a) Ornamente realizat prin lustruire; b) Ornamente realizate prin incizie
a) Burnished patterns; b) Incised patterns

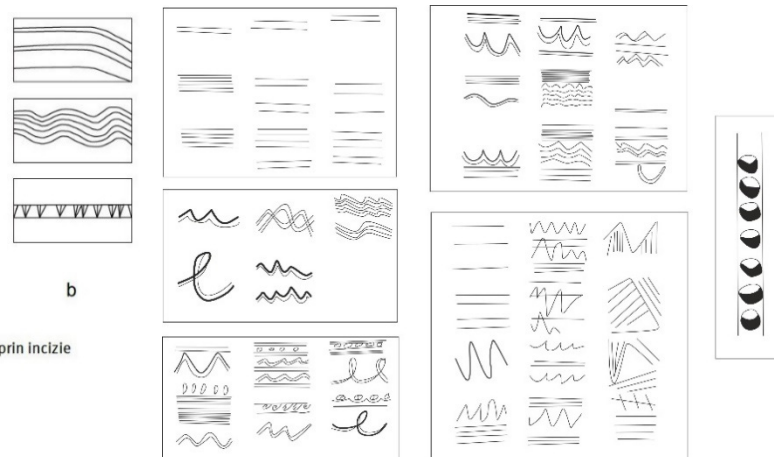


Fig. 6. The ornamental motifs of the pottery vessels from Arad-Bariera (GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013)

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-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 Vlașkikrai – 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

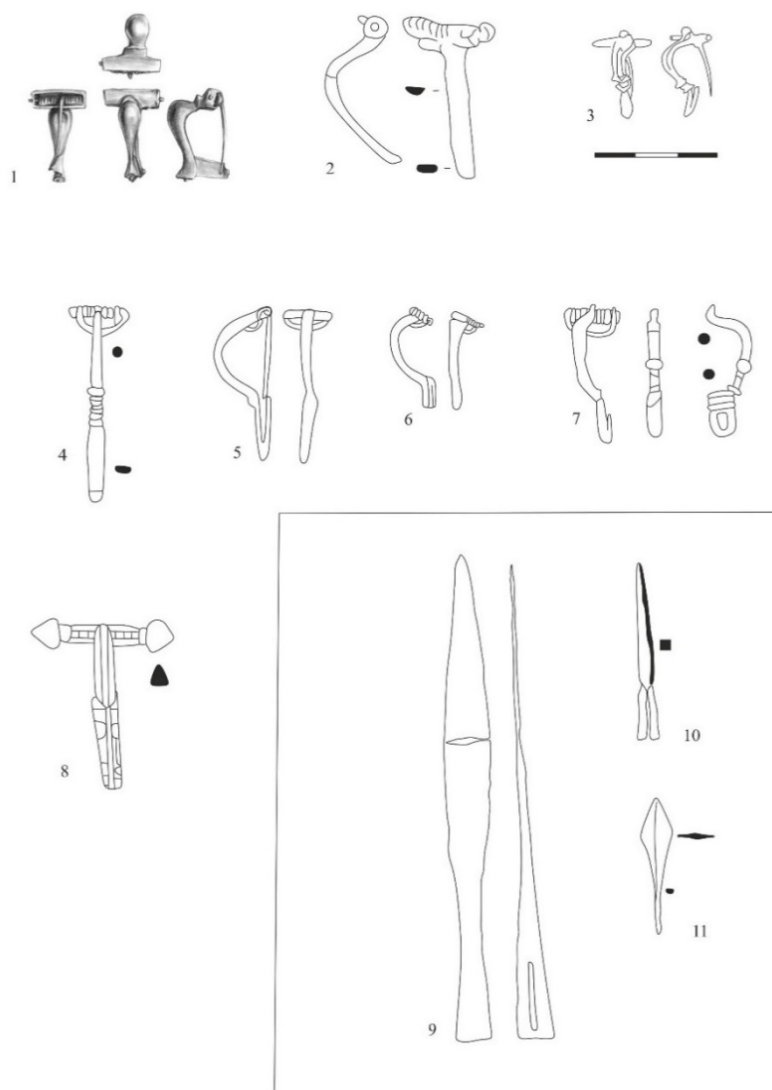


Fig. 8. Brooches and weapons discovered in settlements from the Banat Plain: 1. Timișoara–Freidorf MARE/et al. 2011), 2. Foeni–Seliște (SZENTMIKLOSI/TIMOC 2005), 3. Grădinari–Săliște (BOZU 1990), 4-11. Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlașkikrai (BOZU/EL SUSI 1987).

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-Seliște – 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-Seliște, 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 Vlașkikrai. 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_{tip} = 10 cm, L_{socket} = 5 cm, D_{socket} = 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_{blade} = 27 cm, l = 3.5 cm, L_{socket} = 12 cm, D_{socket} = 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 Vârșeț, 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 Vlașkikrai 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. Bozu and G. El Susi, who analysed the site have not placed much emphasis on the weapon-finds from Moldova Veche-Vinograda Vlașkikrai. 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. Bocșa Voislovei-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 *folles* 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 Funii: two coins from the 4th century AD¹¹⁷
8. Liebling-Țelina Mare/ L 41 (?): one *denarius* 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 Vlașkicrai: 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

¹⁰⁷ GRUMEZA 2014, 122.

¹⁰⁸ BOZU/EL SUSI 1987, 267.

¹⁰⁹ BOZU/EL SUSI 1987, 269.

¹¹⁰ Only the cases in which the coins were discovered in clear archaeological contexts were taken into consideration.

¹¹¹ LUCA 2006, 41.

¹¹² MARE 2004A, 160.

¹¹³ DOMOCOȘ 2014, 244.

¹¹⁴ BOZU 1990, 157.

¹¹⁵ BEJAN/MARE 1987, 24.

¹¹⁶ MARE 2004A, 181.

¹¹⁷ BENEĂ/ BEJAN 1994, 137.

¹¹⁸ BĂLĂRIE/GRUMEZA 2012, 85.

¹¹⁹ FLOCA 2013, 133.

¹²⁰ BOZU/EL SUSI 1987, 253, 256.

¹⁰³ SZENTMIKLOSI/TIMOC 2005, 61.

¹⁰⁴ GRUMEZA/URSUTIU/COPOS 2013, 47.

¹⁰⁵ BENEĂ 2013, 133.

¹⁰⁶ BENEĂ 2013, 132-133.

11. Dragășina: one coin issued by Hadrian¹²¹

In addition to these coins dated predominantly to the 4th century AD, M. Mare suggests the remarkable figure of 50 000 4th century coins discovered in the Banat, especially in the southern and central part of the region, discovered individually or as hoards.¹²² A. Bejan mentions 77 coin discoveries dated to the 3rd–4th centuries, 52 isolated finds and 30 coin hoards, all in the perimeter of the settlements or in their immediate vicinity.¹²³ The hordes 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–Philipp I) and Recaș, from the period between 218 and 251.¹²⁴

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 3rd and middle of the 4th century (especially under the rule of emperors Constantine I – Valetianus I).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 4th century AD one can notice a significant increase of

according to T. Kačina can be translated into an intense commercial exchange with the Roman Empire.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 Vlașkicrai, 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 3rd, and beginning of the 5th century AD.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.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

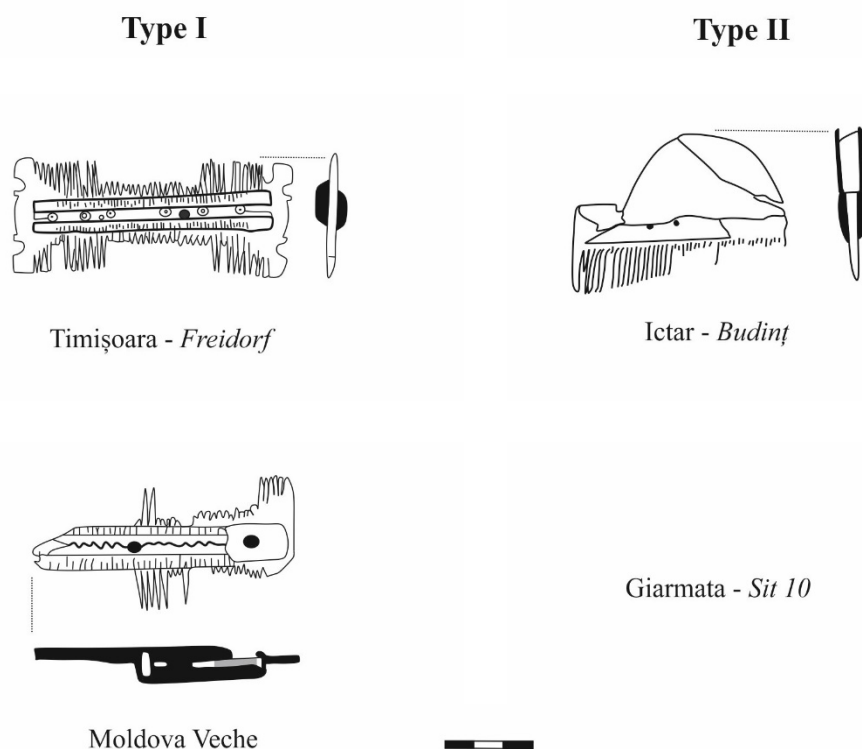


Fig. 9. Combs discovered in the Banat region (redrawn after MARE 2004A)

bronze coins (97% of the total number of coin-finds), which

¹²¹ BENEA 2013, 133.

¹²² MARE 2004A, 32, with bibliography.

¹²³ BEJAN 2000, 521.

¹²⁴ BENEA 2013, 133.

¹²⁵ VADAY 2005, 21.

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 KAČINA 2014, 169.

¹²⁷ PINTYE 2009, 166, 184.

¹²⁸ PINTYE 2009, 184–190.

coins. According to A. Vaday this method has numerous deficiencies, the most important being that it ignores the vital period between the production of the goods, their commercialisation, use, and finally their hoarding or their loss.¹²⁹

In the Romanian archaeological literature, the settlements were dated in 75% of the cases to the 3rd–4th century AD. None of these sites could be integrated with certainty into the timeframe between the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD, due to the fact that only a very small proportion of these sites benefited from systematic archaeological research, rather than non-intrusive investigations.

Habitation levels (without definable archaeological contexts) dated to the late-2nd–3rd century AD were identified at Foeni–Seliște¹³⁰ and Timișoara–Freidorf, where the Roman dwelling lasts until the 5th century AD. Numerous finds from Timișoara–Freidorf can be dated to this early period (late-2nd–3rd century AD) were reported so far:

1. One knee brooch
2. Imported *terra sigillata* (type Dragendorff 37)
3. Imported amphorae¹³¹

The Timișoara–Freidorf settlement was initially dated to the period between the early-3rd century and the last third of the 4th century AD, unfortunately a clear division between the habitation levels was not possible. Later the chronology was revised and the settlement was dated between the beginning of the 3rd century and the last third of the same century AD, and thus was partially contemporary with the province of Dacia. Even so, the majority of the archaeological complexes are dated to between the second third of the 4th century and the early-5th century AD. Dwelling at the site ended probably at the beginning of the 5th century, considering that the graves dated after the year 400 are cutting the houses and pits belonging to the early settlement.¹³²

Based on some *terra sigillata* and amphorae fragments, D. Benea dated the settlement from Dumbrăvița between the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD.¹³³ According to the assertion of the aforementioned author the mere presence of the respective pottery fragments (without the precise identification of type, production centre and chronology) is enough to establish an early dating for these settlements.¹³⁴ A similar chronology was put forward by D. Benea for the sites from Timișoara–Cioreni, Sănnicolau Mare and Liebling.¹³⁵

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 2nd century, up to the 4th century AD. Even so the largest group is composed of the sites beginning in the 3rd century AD, continuing throughout

the 4th century, in some cases up to the 5th century AD.¹³⁶ 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.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 pottery¹³⁸. The same can be said in the case of the site from Arad–Barieră.¹³⁹

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to define in general terms the habitat of the 2nd–5th 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, *vici* and *pagi*), forts, *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.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.

Translated by David Petruț

REFERENCES

- ALFÖLDI 1939
 ALFÖLDI, A., Die Roxolanen in der Walachei. In: Wegner, M. (ed.): *Bericht über der VI. Internationalen Kongreß für Archäologie, Berlin 21.-26. August 1939* (Berlin: Gruyter), 528–538.
- BARTOSIEWICZ 2003
¹³⁶ MARE 2004A, 49.
¹³⁷ MARE 2004A, 49–50.
¹³⁸ VADAY 1996, 558.
¹³⁹ GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 39.
¹⁴⁰ MARE 2004A, 25–29.

¹²⁹ VADAY 1999, 550.

¹³⁰ TIMOC/SZENTMIKLOSI 2008, 118.

¹³¹ MARE/et al. 2011, 41, 52.

¹³² MARE/et al. 2011.

¹³³ BENEA 2013, 127.

¹³⁴ BENEA 2013, 176.

¹³⁵ BENEA 2013, 124.

Site	Interpretation / dating	Bibliography
Hodoni–Pustă	‘ Daco-Roman settlement from the 3 rd –4 th century AD. The continuity of the Roman way of life throughout the Banat’	BEJAN 1981A BEJAN 1995
Lenauheim	‘Rural post-Roman settlements dated to the 3 rd –4 th centuries AD. Fundamental elements of the Daco-Roman continuity in the Banat region.’	BEJAN 1981B
Jebel		
Satchinez–Pământul Galben		
Herneacova		
Timișoara–Cioreni		
Grădinari–Săliște	‘ Daco-Roman settlement dated to the 4 th century AD. The entire territory comprising the Danube, Mureș and Tisa (...) according to the unanimous opinion of the historians was an integral part of the Roman period throughout the 3 rd –4 th centuries AD’.	BOZU 1990
Moldova Veche–Vinograda Vlașkikrai	‘Rural settlement inhabited by a strongly Romanised native population (mid-3 rd –early-4 th century AD).’	BOZU/EL SUSI 1987
Sânnicolau Mare–Seliște	‘The territory is either part of the <i>municipium</i> Tibiscum or of <i>pagus</i> Micia, therefore it is part of province Dacia ’	BENEA 2005
Dumbrăvița	‘ Daco-Roman settlement from the 2 nd –4 th century AD’.	DRAȘOVEAN/et al. 2004
Foeni–Seliște	‘Settlement dated to the late-2 nd –early-4 th centuries AD’.	TIMOC/SZENTMIKLOSI 2008
	No ethnical ascription given	
	‘ The only accepted Sarmatian settlement from the Banat in the archaeological literature up to 2009’	MUSCALU 2009
Timișoara–Freidorf	‘3 rd –4 th century AD settlement / Unfortified rural settlement’.	MARE/et al. 2011
	No ethnical ascription given	
Arad–Barieră	Sarmatian period site dated to the 4 th century AD.	GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013
Conclusions		
The settlements from the Banat (both the lowlands and highlands)	‘The settlements belonged to autochthonous populations of Daco-Romans (consisting of native Dacians in various phases of Romanisation in addition to Roman colonists and veterans); a synthesis of the material culture with specific elements from the Dacian environment’.	BEJAN 1995 BENEA1996 MARE 2004A
	The Sarmatians, comprised of nomadic populations throughout the 1 st –5 th centuries, arrive in the Banat only after the Roman withdrawal.	DUMITRAȘCU 1993
	D. Benea in the footnote of a 2013 study asserted that these settlements were ‘outside the limits of the province (extra provinciae), beyond the limes, therefore the term Daco-Roman is not particularly suitable’.	BENEA 2013, 114, n. 529

BARTOSIEWICZ, L., A millennium of migrations: proto-historic mobile pastoralism in Hungary, *Bulletin of the Florida Museum of Natural History* 44/1, 101–130.

BĂLĂRIE/GRUMEZA 2012

BĂLĂRIE, A./GRUMEZA, L., Archäologische Entdeckungen des II.-III. Jahrhunderts bei Liebling “Țelina Mare” (Kreis Timiș), *Tibiscum* (S.N.) 2, 83–95.

BEJAN 1981A

BEJAN, A., Contribuții arheologice la cunoașterea așezărilor rurale daco-romane din Banat în lumina descoperirilor de la

Hodoni (jud. Timiș), *Banatica* 6, 153–169.

BEJAN 1981B

BEJAN, A., Așezări rurale daco-romane din Banat din secolele III–IV e.n. în lumina unor recente cercetări arheologice, *Analele Banatului* (S.N.) 1, 21–25.

BEJAN 1995

BEJAN, A., Ceramica romană târzie din așezarea de la Hodoni (jud. Timiș), *Analele Banatului* (S.N.) 4, 376–392.

BEJAN 2000

- BEJAN, A., Habitatul rural de sec. III/IV-VII/VIII din spațiul actual românesc. Metodologia cercetării (I), *Analele Banatului* 7-8, 515-534.
- BEJAN/BENEA 1985
BEJAN, A./BENEA, D., *Șantierul arheologic Hodoni Pusta. Raport preliminar 1979-1984*, *Banatica* 8, 187-199.
- BEJAN/MARE 1987
BEJAN, A./MARE, M., Descoperiri arheologice de epoca bronzului și sec. III-IV e.n. la Hodoni-Pusta (Raport privind cercetările arheologice din anii 1983-1984), *Studii de istorie a Banatului* 13, 21-30.
- BENEA 1993
BENEA, D., Un atelier metalurgic la Criciova (județul Timiș), *Ziridava* 18, 79-90.
- BENEA 1996
BENEA, D., *Dacia sud-vestică în secolele III-IV* (Timișoara: Editura de Vest).
- BENEA 1997
BENEA, D., Quelques observations sur la céramique de l'agglomération daco-romaine de Freidorf-Timișoara, *Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica* I, 55-76.
- BENEA 2005
BENEA, D., La céramique romaine tardive de Praetorium (Mehadia, département de Caraș-Severin, Roumanie), *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum. Acta* 39, 307-317.
- BENEA 2013
BENEA, D., *Istoria Banatului în antichitate* (Timișoara: Excelsior Art).
- BENEA/BEJAN 1992
BENEA, D./BEJAN, A., Viața rurală în sud-vestul Daciei în secolele II-IV (I), *Acta Musei Napocensis* 24-25, 347-360.
- BENEA/BEJAN 1994
BENEA, D./BEJAN, A., Viața rurală în sud-vestul Daciei în secolele II-IV (II), *Acta Musei Napocensis* 26-30, I/1, 127-148.
- BOZU 1990
BOZU, O., Așezarea daco-romană de la Grădinari-“Săliște” (jud. Caraș-Severin), *Banatica* 10, 147-186.
- BOZU/EL SUSI 1987
BOZU, O./EL SUSI, G., Așezarea romană târzie de la Moldova Veche Punctul „Vinograda-Vlașkicrai” (județul Caraș-Severin), *Banatica* 9, 239-270.
- DAICOVICIU 1940
DAICOVICIU, C., Bănatul și iazygii, *Apulum* I, 98-109.
- DAICOVICIU 1941
DAICOVICIU, C., Compte rendu: A. Alföldi „Die Roxolanen in der Walachei” (Vortrag, gehalten auf dem 6. Internationalen Kongress für Archäologie in Berlin, 1939, Bericht, S. 528-538), *Dacia* 7-8, 459-463.
- DOMOCOȘ 2014
DOMOCOȘ, V. B., *Circulația monetară în spațiul dintre provinciile Dacia și Pannonia* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega).
- DÖRNER 1971
DÖRNER, E., Dacii și sarmații din secolele II-III e.n. în vestul României, *Apulum* 9, 681-691.
- DRAȘOVEAN/et al. 2004
DRAȘOVEAN, F./MARE, M./TÂNASE, D./CHIU, F./REGEP-VLASCICI, S./ȘTEFĂNESCU, A./BENEA, D./MUNTEAN, M./CRÂNGUȘ, M./MICLE, D./SZENTMIKLOSI, A./TIMOC, C., *Săpături arheologice preventive de la Dumbrăvița* (Timișoara: Waldpress).
- DUMITRAȘCU 1993
DUMITRAȘCU, S., *Dacia Apuseană (teritoriul dacilor liberi din vestul și nord-vestul României în vremea Daciei romane)* (Oradea: Cogito).
- FLOCA 2013
FLOCA, C., *Liebling monografie arheologică* (Timișoara: Excelsior Art).
- GRUMEZA 2011
GRUMEZA, L., The Sarmatian necropolis from Foeni (Timiș County), *Analele Banatului* (S.N.) 19, 181-205.
- GRUMEZA 2013
GRUMEZA, L., *Necropole și morminte sarmatice de pe teritoriul Banatului (secolele I - IV p. Chr.)* (Alba Iulia: PhD diss.).
- GRUMEZA 2014
GRUMEZA, L., *Sarmatian cemeteries from Banat (late 1st-early 5th centuries AD)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega).
- GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013
GRUMEZA, L./URSUȚIU, A./COPOS, G., *Arad “Barieră”. Cercetări arheologice preventive într-un sit de epocă sarmatică/Arad “Barieră”. Rescue excavation in a Sarmatian period site* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega).
- HENNING 1977
HENNING, J., Entwicklungstendenzen der Keramikproduktion an der mittleren und unteren Donau im 1. Jahrtausend u. Z., *Zeitschrift für Archäologie* 11/2, 181-206.
- IONESCU/et al. 2010
IONESCU, M./PÂSLARU, I./COLEȘNIUC, S. M./ANGELESKI, S./GERASKOVA, L./TATAR, A./COLȚEANU, P./CERNEA, C./CERNĂU/I., Seceani, com. Orțișoara, jud. Timiș. Punct: Obiectivul nr. 02 de pe autostrada Arad - Timișoara - km 29+500 - km 29+800, *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România. Campania 2010*, 227-230.
- ISTVÁNOVITS/KULCSÁR 2013
ISTVÁNOVITS, E./KULCSÁR, The „upper class” of Sarmatian Society in the Carpathian Basin. In: Hardt, M./Heinrich-Tamáská, O. (eds.): *Forschungen zu Spätantike und Mittelalter. Macht des Goldes, Gold der Macht. Herrschafts- und Jenseitsrepräsentation zwischen Antike und Frühmittelalter im mittleren Donauraum. Akten des 23. Internationalen Symposiums der Grundprobleme der Frühgeschichtlichen Entwicklung im Mittleren Donauraum, Tengelice, 16. - 19.11.2011* (Weinstadt: Greiner), 195-209.
- KULCSÁR/MERAI 2011
KULCSÁR, V./MERAI, D., Roman or Barbarian? Provincial models in a Sarmatian Pottery center in the Danube frontier. In: De Sena, E. C./Dobrzanska, H. (eds.): *The Roman Empire and Beyond: Archaeological and Historical Research on the Romans and Native Cultures in Central Europe* [BAR International Series 2236] (Oxford: Archaeopress), 61-80.
- KAČINA 2014
KAČINA, T., *Relațiile economice ale Moesiei Prima cu Barbaricum* (Timișoara: PhD diss.).
- LUCA 2006
LUCA, S. A., *Descoperiri arheologice din Banatul românesc. Repertoriu* (Sibiu: Altip).
- MARE 2004A
MARE, M., *Banatul între secolele IV-IX* (Timișoara: Excelsior Art).
- MARE 2004B
MARE, M., Cercetări arheologice în așezări rurale din mileniul I d.Hr. efectuate în perimetrul municipiului Timișoara. In: Crînguș, M./Regep-Vlascici, S./Ștefănescu, A. (eds): *Studia Historica et Archaeologica in Honorem Magistrae Doina Benea* (Timișoara: Eurostampa), 231-236.
- MARE/ET AL. 2011
MARE, M./TÂNASE, D./DRAȘOVEAN, F./EL SUSI, G./GÁL, S. S., *Timișoara-Freidorf. Cercetări arheologice preventive din anul 2006* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega).
- MICLE 1997

- MICLE, D., Un centre de poterie dans l'agglomération daco-romaine de Drăgășina (Département de Timiș), *Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica* I, 77–81.
- MICLE 2011
MICLE, D., *Un model practic de aplicare a topografiei și cartografiei arheologice în analiza spațială a habitatului rural post-roman din Dacia de sud-vest între sfârșitul secolului al II-lea și începutul secolului al V-lea p. Chr.* (Timișoara: Excelsior Art).
- MUSCALU 2009
MUSCALU, B., *Cultura materială și spirituală în teritoriul dintre Dunăre și Tisa. Sarmații iazygi și relațiile cu Imperiul Roman* (Timișoara: PhD diss.).
- PÂSLARU/et al. 2010
PÂSLARU, I./COLESNIUC, S. M./IONESCU, M./GERASKOVA, L./COLȚEANU, P./DIMACHE, M./GEORGESCU, Ș. V./HEROIU, A./PETCU, R., Murani, com. Orțișoara, jud. Timiș Punct: Obiectivul nr. 04 de pe autostrada Arad – Timișoara – km 29+500 – km 29+800, *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România. Campania 2010*, 202–205.
- PINTYE 2009
PINTYE, G., A Kárpát-medencei szarmata települések csontfésűi, *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 134, 165–195.
- SZALONTAI/TÓTH 2003
SZALONTAI, CS./TÓTH, K., Szeged Kiskundorozsma Nagyszék, II, (26/72., M5 Nr. 34. lelőhely), Szeged Kiskundorozsma Nagyszék II (Site 26/72 No. 34, M5 motorway), Úton-útfélen, *Múzeumi kutatások az M5 autópálya nyomvonalán*, Szeged, 69–81.
- SZENTMIKLOSI/TIMOC 2005
SZENTMIKLOSI, A./TIMOC, C., Die Ersten Archäologische Ausgrabungen von Foeni, Ort "Seliște", *Banatica* 17, 59–73.
- ȘOVAN 2009
ȘOVAN, O. L., *Necropola de tip Sântana de Mureș-Černejacov de șa Mihălășeni (județul Botoșani)* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun).
- TIMOC/SZENTMIKLOSI 2008
TIMOC, C./SZENTMIKLOSI, AL., Câteva date despre ceramica descoperită la Foeni–Seliște (jud. Timiș), *Analele Banatului* (S.N.) 16, 113–134.
- VADAY 1982
VADAY, A., Bemerkungen zur Frage der eingeglätteten Keramik mit figuraler Verzierung, *Mitteilungen des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 10/11, 121–130, 385–392.
- VADAY 1996
VADAY, A., *Cultural and landscape changes in south-east Hungary. II, Prehistoric, Roman barbarian and late Avar settlement at Gyoma 133 (Békés County Microregion)* (Budapest: -).
- VADAY 1999
VADAY, A., Sarmatian settlements in the Great Hungarian Plain. In: Vaday, A. (ed.): *Pannonia and Beyond (Studies in Honour of L. Barkóczi)*. *Antaeus* 24, 547–562.
- VADAY 2003
VADAY, A., Wells excavated in the Carpathian Basin during a decade, *Anteus* 26, 25–68.
- VADAY 2005
VADAY, A., *Corpus des römischen Funde im Barbaricum*, Ungarn Band 1. Komitat Szolnok (Budapest: Akaprint).
- VADAY/MEDGYESI 1993
VADAY, A./MEDGYESI, P., Rectangular Vessels in the Sarmatian Barbaricum in the Carpathian Basin, *Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae*, 63–90.
- VADAY/RÓZSA 2006
VADAY, A./RÓZSA, Z., Szarmata telepek a Körös – Maros közén 1. (Kondoros 124. LH. – Brusznyci-Tanya), *A Szántó Kovács Múzeum Évkönyve* 8, 89–130.
- VADAY/SZEKERES 2001
VADAY, A./SZEKERES, Á., Megjegyzések az Alföld korai szarmata telepeinek kérdéséhez (A jazyg bevándorlás és megtelepedés kérdésköre), *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve – Studia Archaeologica* 7, 231–298.
- VADAY/JANKOVICH/KOVÁCS 2011
VADAY, A./JANKOVICH, D. B./KOVÁCS, L., *Archaeological Investigations in County Békés 1986–1982* (Budapest: Prime Rate Kft).