

**UNIVERSITATEA „LUCIAN BLAGA” SIBIU
FACULTATEA DE ȘTIINȚE SOCIO – UMANE**

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

Basarabi finds from Banat

The settlements from Valea Timișului – *Rovină*

and Remetea Mare – *Gomila lui Gabor*

- Summary -

**CONDUCĂTOR ȘTIINȚIFIC:
Prof. Univ. Dr. Sabin Adrian Luca**

**Doctorand:
Cedică Valentin Cornel**

SIBIU 2013

Basarabi finds from Banat
The settlements from Valea Timișului – *Rovină*
and Remetea Mare – *Gomila lui Gabor*

- Summary -

Key words: *geographical framework; paleo-climatic and paleo-botanical data; Basarabi finds from Banat; conclusions.*

Geographical framework

The land of Banat, as a congruent physical, geographical and historical entity, is bordered by the Mures river (in the north), Cerna River Valley, Tarcu - Godeanu Mts. and Ruscai Mts. (in the east), Danube River (in the south) and Tisa River (in the west).

Throughout the paper, references to Banat will regard that portion of it which is located on the territory of Romania - Romanian Banat, bounded to the north by lower Mures River course, to the east by the west end of Carpathians Southerners, respectively Godeanu Mountains, to the south of the Danube trans-mountain sector and to the west by the border of the Romanian state.

Within these limits are present three major relief areas (the mountains, the hills and the lowlands), whose altitude decreases gradually from the east toward the west and which are each divided in more than one sub-areas or compartments, corresponding to different steps of height and physical-geographical sub-units.

Mountain area has two main steps of height, the Godeanu Mountains and the Banat Mountains.

The first has minimum heights of approximately. 700-800 m and maximum of more than 2,000 m and is located at the east end of Banat.

The second step height main mountain area is represented by the *Banat Mountains*, located at the north-east and the central and southern regions of the area in question and belongs, from the geologic point of view, to the Western Carpathians.

In the sedimentary area Resita - Moldova Noua is the largest and most compact limestone area in Romania (807 sq.km), where a complex karst had developed.

To the north of the tip Semenik (1446 m), at an average altitude of 1410 m, in the area of sources and marshes of peat, are the origins of the Timis River.

Integrated within the Banat mountain area there are a number of corridors and depressions, caused by certain moves or action of waters, with particular importance as areas of living quarters or traffic routes.

Aisle *Timis - Cerna* separates west end of the Carpathian Mountains from the Banat Mts. and constitute the most extensive populated area in the mountains of Banat, distinguished by its age and permanent human dwelling.

The southern boundary of Banat is represented by the *trans-mountainous sector of the Danube River*.

As morphological unit, the Danube undertake on the right-hand side (in Serbia) Dobrianske Planine, Komolske Planine and Miroć Planina and on the left-hand side (on the territory of Romania) mountains Locvei, Almajului, Mehedinti and Mehedinti Plateau. The Danube gorge marks the distinction between Carpathian Mountains and the Balkans.

The gorge itself of the Danube (*the Iron Gates, Djerdap, Eisernes manufacturer*) starts, on the territory of Romania, beside locality Pescari (inland waterways 1048) and take up to 941 km inland waterway, in contact between Mehedinti Plateau and the Depression Turnu Severin - Comanesti (between Gura Vaii and Dudasu Schelei).

A second major area of the landscape, the hilly one, is represented by the *Banat Hills*, appearing as a step well personalized to the edge of the west Mountains Banat, with average height between 200 and 300 m.

The third area of major embosses *plain of Banat*, with an absolute altitude between 75 and 180 m and a slight inclination general from the east toward the west. West limit is given at the border between Romania and Hungary and Serbia; the east by the Banat hills and to the north by the Mures River. Limits to the east and north are very sinuous, penetrating throughout hills, along rivers.

A major role in ensuring the unitary character of this region with embossed so varied is played by the hydrographical net, well developed and well-balanced, centered on the orographic knot of the Mountains of Banat.

The hydrographical net of Banat belongs to catchments area of the Danube River and most of the water courses have their origin in the mountain areas.

In addition to the three rivers forming the natural borders of Banat - Mures, Tisa and Danube, the most important flowing waters are Bega, Timis, Moravita, Caras, Nera, Cerna and Barzava. For a description of Banat hydrographic network have been identified several river basins: Aranca, Bega, Timis, Barzava, Moravita, Caras, Nera and Bârzava.

The catchments area of flowing waters is completed by lakes.

Paleo-climatic and paleo-botanical data

The period of the Basarabi culture can be built of the post glacial period (approx. 10,000 - Present), respectively upper Holocene, phase Sub-Atlantic (approx 800 - present). In the Sub-Atlantic climate can be characterized as a cold and wet, favoring an extension of maximum habitats that are situated within some arboreal elements attached to the forests of beech, in expansion, lowering in the mountains in mountain valleys and in hill.

For the Banat area the number of pollen analyzes is extremely low.

A recent study shows the results of the analysis of a sample / profile (1.6 m) of peat taken in 1998 in Semenic Mountains, at an altitude of 1,400 m above sea level.

Timestamps with radiocarbon indicates, for the transitional period Sub-Boreal – Sub-Atlantic (207-2586 ± 39 BP) end of the first maximum (40 %) of beech area enlargement (*Fagus*). The Sub-Atlantic started with a sudden decrease for the beech and an increase of the spruce (*Picea*), hornbeam (*Carpinus*), elm (*Ulmus*), linden (*Tilia*) and hazel (*Corylus*). It is reasonable to assume, for early and middle Sub-Atlantic, the existence of mixed forests of beech and hornbeam at altitudes lower than some of beech and spruce at altitudes higher. As for partial replacement of beech, the authors assign human factor, the impact being put into direct connection with the *management* of the forests (grazing and the so-called *Mittelwald economics* - economy of forest).

Basarabi settlements

The vast majority of Basarabi from Banat are located in areas of the lowlands, hills and higher locations, along or in the vicinity of water courses and were identified mainly by surface collection (Figure 1).

Thus, in plain to the south of Mures are signalled Basarabi settlements within the borders of localities Chesint, Neudorf, Zabrani, Periam and Sannicolau Mare.

In the area are reported along the course of Bega River settlements at Bodo, Budint.

Along Timisului commune, Basarabi settlements were found at Ilova, Valea Timisului, Buchin, Jdioara, Lugoș and Foeni.

In the Poganişului Valley are located the settlements from Poganiş and Duleu, and in the Barzavei Valley the one from Gataia.

In the area of River Caras was another group of Basarabi settlements: Brosteni, Greoni, Varadia, Vrani, Vraniut, Milcoveni.

There is also a grouping of settlements on Danube river valley, between Moldova Veche and Berzasca, (Moldova Veche, Pescari, Liborajdea, Gornea, Berzasca), in connection with those of the rival of the Danube.

The only presence located on upper plateaus of some hills is those from Poganiş and Varadia.

As regards strongholds, current information does not claim existence of such features belonging to Basarabi culture on the territory of Banat. This situation suggests, at the present stage of research and access to information, the absence of conflicts intra and threats evident outside this space ethno-cultural archaeological, as outlined by researches. Same meaning can have the fact that there are almost no information on violently ending (fired) settlements or traces of such events in the evolution of the settlements stratigraphy. Only in the case of two houses assigned to carriers of the Basarabi culture one can speak of their fire, but it cannot be issued, at this stage of the research, hypotheses well documented on the significance of these situations.

As for mentioning the presence of Basarabi carriers in caves, the repertoire of the caves with traces of their living quarters, drawn up by P. Rogozea for the space of south-west of Romania included 17 caves in which there are reported archaeological traces which are placed in phase Ha C. M. Guma indicated 7 caves with findings belonging to Basarabi culture and later he could record only 3 cases in which assigning Basarabi culture evidences in caves is secure.

This Basarabi presence in caves had very likely only the character of present sporadic, seasonal work and of short duration. These present can be related to the so-called "speleological shepherding".

Stratigraphy of settlements. Types of houses

Most of the Basarabi settlement reports in the territory of Banat are due to field research. Only in a few cases sites have been investigated, resulting in data on stratigraphy and stratigraphic relations within these settlements.

The Gornea - *Tarmuri II - Pod Pazariste* top-level (with a width between 0.15 and 0.20 m) overlays directly a level containing Gornea - Kalakača materials. The situation has been found at Vrani also, where the middle level (with a thickness as caught between 0.15 and 0.20

m), assigned to Basarabi culture superimposes a Gornea - Kalakača level, being superimposed, in his turn, to a level belonging to the late stage of the Early Iron Age.

If in the case of these two settlements stratigraphic comments have had a great importance for the establishment Basarabi culture relationships with the cultural horizon immediately above, in the case of the other settlements observations of vertical stratigraphy showed that overlapping by Basarabi horizons levels belonging to the Balta Sarata group cultural. This is the state of things in the case of the sites Ilova (the thickness of the layer Basarabi: 0.20 - 0.25 m), and Valea Timisului, where average thickness of the Basarabi layer was 0.25 - 0.30 m.

The thickness of relatively low layer Basarabi culture caught in systematic archaeological research may be a clue for the duration of the existence of such settlements and, where appropriate, of mobility in space of the communities of this type, mobility determined by extensive agriculture needs and for grazing.

The Basarabi dwellings found in Banat, by their number and numeric ratio between different types, gives a more complete and somewhat different of this aspect of material culture, in relation to the full range of culture. In general, the culture Basarabi reference is made to the appearance of "cenusar" (*zolniki*) of settlements and in high frequency of surface dwellings in the area of the settlements.

As regards the Banat, archaeological research (especially those from Valea Timisului), suggests a more complex picture.

At Valea Timisului – *Rovina*, 11 houses were investigated: 4 dugouts, 6 half-deepened houses and a surface dwelling.

The dwelling L_{2 Ha} was rectangular, with the platform of packed gravel covered with a layer of clay. Another surface dwelling, with the same characteristics, has been partially unearthed at Gornea - *Tarmuri* - *Pod Pazariste* .

The 6 half-deepened dwellings (with pockets going down to -40 cm as compared with the level of ancient soil) investigated at Valea Timisului were larger in size than the dugouts, with the floor of packed gravel in some cases and all had one room. In two of these was discovered an oven inside, in one corner. In one of these houses, in addition to an oven, a central circular hearth had been discovered. In the case of L_{1 ha}, the dwelling had a pillar hole in the center, and a circular hearth outside.

Some of dugouts investigated at Valea Timisului had some special features. B₁ was oval-shaped, showing a second pockets so arranged that they do at the top. B₂, quadrilateral with rounded corners, in the four corners of roads of the hop poles and a platform inside.

Remnants of material culture

Ceramic material belonging to Basarabi culture brought to light to the period assigned to this cultural horizon, in comparison with other categories of artifacts discovered, in terms of the quantity, diversity of forms and ornaments and by their chronological value, particularly as regards internal relative periodization of the culture.

The Basarabi ceramics was exclusively made by hand and is representative of all known ceramic categories, from the point of view of the texture: common use ceramic, semi-fine and smooth ceramic.

Coarse (common use) ceramics had generally brown color (or shades thereof) and content of sand and pebbles in paste. Types of vessels with this facture are limited to the jug "jar" with a slightly outward lip, with a decor consisting in the notches and alveolated or notched belt.

Semi-fine and fine ceramics has been made of a more homogeneous paste, with a mixture of sand, in general brown-black or black colored and with a well polished surface in most cases. Ceramic typology of this category includes: vessels of urn type, with molded belly, neck tall and flare lip, without handles; cups with a lug "pulled" of the lip, and slightly over-raised with round body, slightly squashed; cups with one or two handles; bowls with lip inward lip ornamented on the lip and shoulder and bowls with outward lip, less numerous, ornamented on the top of the lip.

Ornamental repertory is very rich, consisting in channeling, incisions, and impressions. In early stage of development of the culture decor done by printing and incisions, including numerous components inherited from the fund of Insula Banului type dominated. In the second phase, ceramic has a decor complex (printed, incised and excised), giving the *classic* image looks of Basarabi culture ceramics, even though the proportion of decorated vessels is lesser than in earlier stage. In late stage of the culture is to be found a decrease of the specific ceramics with decor, almost total disappearance of printed and the presence of massive grooved decor.

Metal objects belonging to Basarabi culture discovered in Banat were made of bronze or iron-plated bronze: garment accessories, parts of harness or utensils. In 1918 they come from discovery by character funeral, less of the settlements.

In the category of clothing accessories the fibulae must be noted, belonging, in general, to variants of the series with two springs and the body in the form of bow, (*Zweischleifige Bogenfibeln*).

In the category of adornments are also registered rings made of double bronze wire loops, heads bent in the shape of "8", bracelets, foot rings and torques.

Circular pendants bronze buckle with perforated peduncle are considered to be part of harness. They would have been attached to various belts. Other objects of bronze found in Basarabi sites are buttons and pearls. Other utensils discovered are knives, found both in funeral context as well as in domestic environment,

It must be noticed that in discoveries from Banat there are no knives ("cleaver") with the blade folded and handle in the shape of a "T".

In this category enter also stone grinder, with an elongated shape and slightly dished, whetstones (non-perforated, slightly elongated) and other items, made from clay burned: spindle whorls, stamps for ceramic ornamentation.

Funeral finds. Ritual and Rite

Four of the six tumuli investigated on Moldova Veche - *Ostrov/Groblia*, unknown up to that point had been published by M. Guma.

In the case of Tumulus III, funeral rite could not be established, while in Tumulus IV a cremation grave was discovered. Funeral complex content in Tumulus V consisted in at least four (possibly five) inhumation graves, rite which can be assumed and in the case of Tumulus VI. These data have been completed, and the quite blurred, of the problems related to the rite and ritual funeral Basarabi culture within the area. The bi-ritualism of this Basarabi necropolis sends to the analogous situation from Balta Verde and Basarabi and foreign ethnic components (Illyrian) to the problem of components of such necropolises.

The results of researches in the area of Berzasca – *Statia de pompare IFET* seem to indicate, in this case, the practice of cremation, at least for a part of the graves here, a situation which was also documented in the case of the discovery from Svinita "*Piatra Elisovei*". Graves identified in the area Iaz - *Dâmb*, belonging to Basarabi tumuli burials illustrates the cremation rite.

The scarce data funeral rites conditions of funeral discoveries (like in the case the fortuitous finds from Iaz and Svinita) from Banat, the results of the systematic research of the inhumation graves from Moldova Veche are the only available .

In 2000-2002 in the point Iaz - *Susara - Rovina / Damb* (along the edge of the second terrace of the Timis River) cremation graves have been discovered graves, with different ritual (deposition in the hole, cavity or cavity with cairn).

In the case of inhumation graves, deceased (or the deceased in the case of the complexes containing several skeletons), was placed on a bed of stones, covered with several layers of stones with different shapes, it being covered by the earth mantle of the tumulus. Ritual comprised breaking of vessels, as well as submission of vessels offering to head or feet's decedent.

Internal Timeline and periodization

Analysis of metal objects in specific associations (in the framework of hoards or funerary inventories) gives a more coherent image on the evolution of the historical and geographical evolution of the Basarabi culture, once with the possibility of a more "fine" dating in relation to those based on the evolution of ceramics types.

Using as a components or "fossil" guidelines (= chronological indicators) different types of fibulae (considered as the artifacts with the most value from this point of view, due to the fast typological evolution and "capacity" to adapt to the requirements of "fashion"), in the framework of association with other metal objects of port, associations characteristic only for relatively short periods of time, M. Guma supports the hypothesis of internal developments of the culture Basarabi divided into three phases. These phases are dated as follows: phase I (early) - the first half of 8th c. BC; Phase II (mid/classic) - the second half of 8th - the first half of 7th c. BC; phase III (late) - the second half of sec. 7th c. BC.

The evolution of the Basarabi culture is dated throughout 8th and 7th c. BC.

In this way, the Basarabi culture is considered the most representative ethno-cultural manifestation of middle stage of the Early Iron Age in Banat, integrated into the major spreading area of this culture. This genesis of the culture took place in the south-west Romania, Vojvodina, north and north-eastern Serbia, north-western Bulgaria, as a result of a synthesis between cultural groups Gornea - Kalakača and Insula Banului and the black fluted ceramics of Gáva type, at the beginning of the Early Iron Age. It follows, in the case of Carpathian - Danube spaces, the Balkans and and north-west Black Sea regions, the north-Thracian groups with printed ceramic, the Gornea - Kalakača group in Banat, the late phases of the complex with black grooved Gáva ceramic - in southern half of Transylvania to Romania. General Evolution of culture, 8th and 7th c. BC.had comprised three stages of development.

Settlements are generally open, as there is no documented evidence of fortified settlements and are of relatively short duration, indices of the phenomenon of the movement of the communities within restricted areas. This situation, along with the lack of weapons in the

archeological Basarabi findings, the sporadic presence in caves, seem to indicate extensive pursuit of agriculture and livestock farming as main occupation of the Basarabi culture carriers, not to exclude craft (it should be noted great achievements in the field of ceramics decoration).

Spreading map of the Basarabi findings from Banat (associated with available data on these findings) indicates mobility (in historical terms) of these communities. "Bearers" of this culture have penetrated the downstream and upstream on major watercourses (Danube) and its tributaries (left and right of the river).

At least in Banat, it seems that there were no warriors. The relatively frequent movements of the Basarabi bearers were determined on the conditions relating to the quality of the soil and climate, all the more so as archaeological evidence does not show obvious signs of aggressions upon settlements.

Funeral rites documented in this area and to this chronological horizon (inhumation and cremation) is an argument in favor of mixed ethnic components.

Such a "regionalization" of the Basarabi culture (phenomenon) is advocated by ethno-cultural realities immediately preceding it, which have contributed to its genesis and spread over different areas.