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THE LIMES PROGRAM AND THE INTEGRATION OF THE TIBISCUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE INTO UNESCO

Abstract: This paper presents the case study of Roman city Tibiscum, as part of the Roman borders of the province of Dacia, which together with the German-Retic Limes, the Wall of Hadrian and the Wave of Antoninus Pius, constitute the most significant elements of the Roman frontier present in Europe. The city of Tibiscum raised to the rank of *municipium* at the time of Septimius Severus as important military and economic centre, located on the south-western border of Dacia. On this occasion we presented the history of its research and protection, with emphasis on the area which was transformed into a museum and archaeological research base. The museum was inaugurated in 1980 and has an exhibition area of 300 square meters where the discoveries of the site are presented. Likewise, we also pointed out other ways of promotional activities organized for the purpose of popularizing the heritage presented here i.e. bringing it closer to a wide audience, such as the European Night of Museums, as well as the Open Day on the Tibiscum Archaeological Site.

Key words: Limes, Tibiscum, Frontiers of the Roman Empire, archaeological heritage

INTRODUCTION

The European Union's Culture 2000 programme, 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire', sprang from the proposal to create a World Heritage Site which might encompass all the frontiers of the Roman empire. Roman archaeologists working on the frontiers of the Roman Empire in Europe responded to this challenge by calling a meeting to discuss the creation of a research strategy which would embrace all the European frontiers. The need for finance to proceed further was immediately apparent and an application to the Culture 2000 programme was made. In 2005, the application was successful¹ (**Fig. 1**).

The structure of the limes consists of an extremely complex system of towers, earth waves, walls, small fortifications, the camps behind the limes usually placed at a distance of about 5 km from the limes, the related civil settlements and non-Roman structures.² A total of over 70 camps, 50 small fortifications and more than 150 towers are known through-

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¹ Breeze, Jilek 2008, 5-7; https://limes.univie.ac.at/FRE_DOWNLOADS/FRE_book_final_00.pdf

² Breeze, Marcu, Cupcea 2021, 9-11; <https://limesromania.ro/ro/articole/despre-proiect/>

out Romania, although their number must have been higher. In addition, there are other structures that were part of the border system, the most important being the artificial dams, generally made up of earth waves, but also with a stone wall. Of the camps, only four or five are accessible to the public, but no part of the wave, wall or tower. In most places the limes are no longer visible, which is why it is difficult to identify. Topographically, the limes is partially protected, no element being in urbanized areas³(Fig. 2).

The vestiges of the Roman borders of the province of Dacia constitute, together with the German-Retic Limes, the Wall of Hadrian and the Wave of Antoninus Pius, the most significant elements of the Roman borders, present in Europe. Camps, boroughs, towers, waves, walls, along with connected infrastructure and civilian settlements indicate an important exchange of human and cultural values at the height of the Roman Empire, through the development of Roman military architecture, extending technical knowledge in construction and management to the edges of the Empire.

CASE STUDY – TIBISCUM

The oldest mention of the river Timiș belongs to Herodotus who in the *Histories* (IV, 49) writes the following: “Three other great rivers, the Atlas, the Auras, and the Tibisis, descend from the peaks of the Hae-



Fig. 1. Frontirs of the Roman Empire.



Fig. 2. Limes Dacicus. Permanent border of the province.



Fig. 3. Tabula Peutingeriana (Segmentum VI and VII); <https://www.tabula-peutingeriana.de/tabula.html?segm=6>

³ Breeze, Marcu, Cupcea 2021, 9-11; <https://limesromania.ro/ro/articole/despre-proiect/>

mus mountains, and, taking it to the north, flow into the Istru.” In their order, these documents continue with the writings of Ptolemy “Introduction to Geography” (III, 8, 4) which calls it *Τιβισκοῦ* and is located on the river *Τιβισκος*, the border river of Dacia (Fig. 3). The third document of overwhelming importance, both for us and for the knowledge of the entire Roman Empire in the third century, is the Tabula Peutingeriana, a copy from the 11th-12th centuries of a map of Roman roads. The name derives from the owner of the document from the beginning of the 16th century, namely Conrad Peutinger from Augsburg. The map is drawn on a roll of parchment with a width of 0.34 m and a length of 6.80 m, composed of 12 segments, but lacking the initial one with the author’s name.

In the segment VII that presents the Roman roads in Dacia, the name of Tivisco appears (on the map there is also a building) at the end of the road that started from *Apus fl(umen)* and followed the route *Arcidava-Centum Putei-Berzobis-Aizis-Caput Bubali*. This path is also known from the work of the grammarian Priscian (Latin Grammars, VI, 13), who in turn copied it from the history of the wars with the Dacians, written by Trajan. It is said that in the first war with Decebalus, the emperor passed through Berzobis, then went to Aizis “*de inde Berzobim, de inde Aizi processimus*”. The second Roman road starts from Dierna and follows the route *Ad Mediam-Praetorium-Ad Pannonios-Gaganae-Masclianae* reaching *Tivisco*, following the route *Agnaviae-Pons Augusti* and *Sarmizegetusa* (Fig. 4).

The ancient ruins are located on either side of the Timiș River⁴ on an area of approximately 60 ha, being part of the administrative point of view within two territorial units. The part to the right of the Timiș River belong to the village of Jupa,⁵ which in turn



Fig. 4. The modern map of Banat. With the Roman roads between Viminacium and Ulpia Traiana.

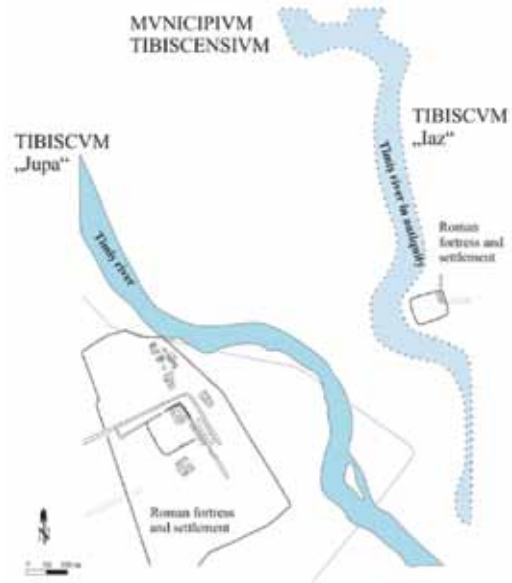


Fig. 5. The location of the ancient ruins.

⁴ Caraivan, Sava 2013, 23-30.

⁵ Coșeriu 1996; 1998.

is part of the administrative unit of Caransebeș. The other part of the ancient ruins belong to the village of Iaz which is part of the commune of Obreja⁶ (Fig. 5). Due to its special geographical position, the place chosen for the founding and development of Roman settlements corresponds to those written by Vitruvius (*De Architectura*, X)⁷ in the chapter on the construction of military camps and cities. Due to its position at the intersection of the main roads that crossed the region, they made it well known.

The name Tibiscum seems to be known in the Thracian-Dacian world, there are such place names and hydronyms, with a similar or close meaning, meaning “swampy place”⁸. Like most hydronyms and toponyms known and taken over by the Romans in Dacia and the name Tibiscum, according to some hypotheses it was taken over by the Romans, after the Dacian settlement supposed to be nearby, but still undiscovered.⁹In 101 AD, the Romans attacked Dacia, led by Emperor Trajan, who crossed the Banat from Lederata and reached Tibiscum, where he organized a military camp¹⁰. The confrontation with the Dacians takes place in Tapae,¹¹ a locality not discovered today, but probably located between Tibiscum and the Iron Gates of Transylvania.¹² The Romans manage to defeat the Dacians but fail to conquer the capital of the Dacian kingdom located at Sarmizegetusa in the Orastie Mountains. The conquered territories (including Banat and Oltenia) are occupied by Roman military troops and the administration of this area is done by the governor of the province of Moesia Superior at Viminacium.¹³ The IV *Flavia Felix Legion*, which was stationed at Singidunum, is moved to Berzovia,¹⁴ where the camp of the legion is being built, which participates in the construction of military roads and garrisons, including the future capital of the province of Dacia, Ulpia Traiana.¹⁵



Fig. 6. Tibiscum/Jupa-Auxiliary camp. Aerial view of archaeological sites.

Two camps are being built at Tibiscum, on either side of the Timiș River, where troops of Palmyra archers are stationed as a result of a military diploma dated February 12 (or January 31) 126 in which they are mentioned: “*Palmyreni Sagittarii qui sunt in Dacia Superiore*”, who were stationed at Tibiscum as well as the name and patronymic of the veteran soldier Perhev Athenatan, a typical Palmyreno-Semite. At the time of Antoninus

⁶ Itineanțu 2002.

⁷ Vitruvius 1964.

⁸ Russu 1959, 79-80.

⁹ Pârvan 1925; Borza 1943, 67-68.

¹⁰ Petolescu 2010, 123-160.

¹¹ Ardeț 2021, 139-144.

¹² Petolescu 2010, 123-160.

¹³ Piso 1993, 339.

¹⁴ Tudor 1968.

¹⁵ Daicovicu, Alicu 1984.

Pius they are mentioned in the form of a *vexillatio Palmyrenorum*¹⁶ during works on the temple of Liber Pater (Fig. 6).

Soldiers stationed at Tibiscum built the camp and laid the groundwork for the civilian settlement. The first known band is *Cohors I Sagittariorum*,¹⁷ known from the stamps discovered in several variants: COH + H.I.S., C.I.S, COH.I.SAG. The unit was stationed in the small camp from the time of Hadrian¹⁸ until 196/197 when it participated in the Orient campaign of Septimius Severus.¹⁹ After 196/197 the unit is stationed in Drobeta.²⁰ In the years 159/160 they were organized in a *numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium* as an irregular auxiliary unit²¹ that stationed until leaving the province. The second known band is *Cohors I Vindelicorum militaria c. R.* It is known at Vărădia in 109²² and, after moving the *Cohort I Sagittariorum* to Drobeta, it is brought to Tibiscum²³ where it will station until the end of the province. After the year 155, they brought to Dacia *Mauri pedites et equites*²⁴ which formed at Tibiscum, *Numerus maurorum Tibiscensium*, which remained until leaving the province.²⁵ A possible band identified by the PCH stamp would be *P (edites) C (ohortis) H (ispanorum)*²⁶ which is known in 114.²⁷

Due to research conducted in 1922-1924²⁸ at Jupa are identified inside the large camp with dimensions of 230 x 170 m. These discoveries are continued after 1964 by Marius Moga, who identifies inside the big camp and the existence of another stone fortification, with the dimensions of 110 x 101 m.²⁹ The most representative monument preserved to date in Tibiscum is the large stone camp with preserved dimensions of 170 X 230 m, being unveiled in the 70s.³⁰ The defensive system of *agger, murus, berma, and fossa* was investigated in 1976 and 1979³¹ and continued in 1983–1984³²(Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Tibiscum/Jupa. The enclosure wall of the camp built of shaped rock blocks.

¹⁶ Piso, Benea 1999, 91-107.

¹⁷ Benea 1976, 77-84; Benea 1982, 175; Țentea 2007, 209-218.

¹⁸ Timoc 2004, 802 - 805.

¹⁹ Benea 2018, 125-127.

²⁰ Benea 1976, 80-83, fig. 2-4.

²¹ Petolescu 2002, 139-140.

²² ILD, D.10.

²³ Benea 2018, 127-128.

²⁴ Benea 1985, 150-151.

²⁵ Petolescu 2002, 135

²⁶ Moga 1970, 146.

²⁷ Benea 2018, 135-137.

²⁸ Ardeț, Ardeț 2015, 95-111.

²⁹ Moga 1964, nr. Special, 433; Moga 1965, 433; Moga 1971, 55-56.

³⁰ Moga 1964, nr. Special, 433; Moga 1965, 433; Moga 1971, 55-56.

³¹ Bona, Petrovszky, Petrovszky 1982, 324-325.

³² Benea, Bona 1994, 38-53.

Among the archeological objectives brought to the surface, we can mention: *Porta principalis sinistra* researched in the 70s,³³ has an opening of 10.55 m, with two towers of 3.10 x 3.00 m and 4.20 x 4.10 m; *Porta principalis dextra* is no longer preserved due to the Timiș River overflows; The *Principia* of the big camp was fully researched, research resumed³⁴ in the 80's when it identifies a building measuring 36 x 31.5 m, which has an inner courtyard and a covered basilica. The building consists of three basic components, represented by the courtyard (atrium) with the rooms: the armamentaria arranged on the north and south sides, the basilica and the west side with *aedes* and the other rooms³⁵ (Fig. 8). The basilica was a space that covered the entire width of the command building 36 x 8.00 m, with an area of approx. 25% of the space built in the camp. Most of the honorary monuments were discovered here by M. Moga.³⁶ Another area is represented by the *Aedes* and the rooms on the west side of the principle, and in the basement is the *Aerarium* (underground chamber/ niche) placed in the basement of the *Aedes*, where the treasury of the cohort was kept.³⁷



Fig. 8. Tibiscum/Jupa. Aerial view of Principia.



Fig. 9. Tibiscum/Jupa-Civilian settlement (military vicus).

Located to the north of the camp, the civil settlement consists of XVI fully unveiled buildings³⁸ and the Roman road (*kardo maximus*) paved with limestone slabs that has a width of approx. 7 m³⁹ (Fig. 9). Located at approx. 400 m east of the civil settlement from Jupa, in the Roman settlement from Iaz⁴⁰ three buildings were fully investigated: between 1988-1989⁴¹, and in 1990-2009 buildings IV

³³Moga 1964, nr. Special, 433; Moga 1965, 433; Moga 1971, 55-56.

³⁴ Petrescu, Rogozea 1990, 125.

³⁵ Benea, Bona 1994, 44-50.

³⁶ Moga, Russu 1974.

³⁷ Benea, Bona 1994, 48-49.

³⁸ Benea, Bona 1994, 62-75.

³⁹ Ardeț, Ardeț 2004, 55-64.

⁴⁰ Ardeț 2012, 49-60.

⁴¹ Bona, Rogozea 1985-1986, 339-451; Bona, Rogozea 1985, 155-167; Piso, Rogozea 1985, 211-218; Benea 1995, 149-172.

and VI⁴² are fully investigated, then four other identified buildings were researched in the following years.⁴³

The expansion of the Roman ruins on both sides of the river Timis has posed and poses many problems for specialists in identifying the place where the future Roman city of Tibiscum was formed and developed.⁴⁴

The elevation of the Roman settlement of Tibisum to the rank of Latin municipality⁴⁵ was a recognition of the urban community with incomplete city rights from the Roman point of view, being subject to taxes and the obligation to perform military service, but maintaining its autonomy with their old laws and habits. Their citizens had a number of rights that equated them with Roman citizens: *ius connubii*, *ius commercii*, *ius suffragii*, but not the right to be elected, *ius honorum*, except by exercising magistrates in their own city through their membership in the municipal senate, *ordo decurionum*⁴⁶ (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Tibiscum / Iaz. Aerial view of Building VI in the Roman city.

We are certainly witnessing at the time of Septimius Severus the elevation of the military *vicus* to the rank of municipality.⁴⁷ The first great crisis in the Danube provinces was the incursions of the Carpathians, the Sarmatians and the Goths from 238-244 AD, followed in 263 by the greatest barbarian invasion initiated by the Goths over the province of Dacia. During this period there is the re-use of funeral and civil monuments at the erection of fortifications and the organization of earth waves in order to stop these incursions.⁴⁸ Due to the permanent invasions of the eastern peoples led by the Goths and strengthened by the presence of Heruli, Gepis, Bastarni and Sarmatians, Emperor Aurelian decided to withdraw the civilian and military administration from Dacia Felix. (271-275 AD), the territory of the former province of Dacia is controlled by the Goth tribes through Ostrogoths and Visigoths until 376 AD.⁴⁹ At Tibiscum were discovered two monetary treasures that were dated to the fourth centuries AD.

⁴² Ardeț, Ardeț 2004, 65-73.

⁴³ Ardeț 2009, 13-25.

⁴⁴ Ardeț 1993, 83-88; Ardeț 1994, 61-65.

⁴⁵ Grimal 1966, 25-55.

⁴⁶ Ardevan 1998, 105-120.

⁴⁷ Zerbini, Ardeț 2021 (in print).

⁴⁸ Hügel 2003.

⁴⁹ Gudea 1977.

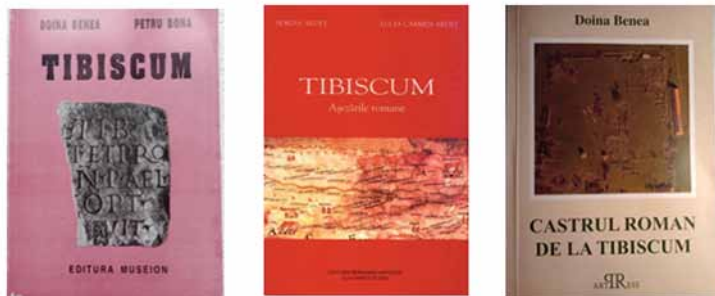


Fig. 11. Archaeological-documentary monographs from Tibiscum.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: HIGHLIGHTING THE HERITAGE DISCOVERED AT TIBISCUM

The patrimony discovered during the archeological researches was the domain of some scientific publications called at the beginning Studies and Communications of Ethnography and History,⁵⁰ continued by the Tibiscum bulletin reached today number 21. Three monographic volumes were dedicated to the archeological researches: “Tibiscum” (1994),⁵¹ The Roman settlements of Tibiscum (2004)⁵² and the “Roman camp of Tibiscum-Jupa” (2018).⁵³ Also, this year will see the light of day the historical-archaeological monograph “Tibiscum and the Mediterranean world”.⁵⁴ Monographic studies have been published on various categories of archaeological material, ranging from handicraft workshops⁵⁵ to pottery discover⁵⁶ (Fig. 11).



Fig. 12. Tibiscum / Jupa. Archaeological research base.

Particularly important was the organization and protection of the monuments brought to light, so that in 1930, 7 ha are removed from the “noble pasture” of Jupa village and passed into the state patrimony as cultural goods and in 1976 to add other 10 ha and a stable of cows from the Agricultural Production Cooperative (CAP) and which has been transformed into a museum and archaeological research base, with bedrooms, bathrooms, library and conference room (Fig. 12). The museum was inaugurated in 1980 and has an exhibition area of 300 square meters where the discoveries of the site are presented (Fig. 13). Likewise, every year is organized the

⁵⁰ <https://www.muzeul-caransebes.ro/tibiscum-magazine/>

⁵¹ Benea, Bona 1994.

⁵² Ardeț, Ardeț 2004.

⁵³ Benea 2018.

⁵⁴ Ardeț, Ardeț, Zerbini 2022 (in print).

⁵⁵ Benea *et alii* 2008.

⁵⁶ Ardeț 2009.

European Night of Museums which serves to the site's promotion, as well as the Open Day on the Tibiscum Archaeological Site during the summer archaeological excavations. On that occasion research results are presented together with gladiator fights and film screenings with the aim of bringing the archaeological heritage closer to the widest possible audience. Though all these activities increase the visibility of one local museum and site, they generally contribute to the additional values of the entire heritage of Roman limes in the province of Dacia, such as its final infrastructure improvement.



Fig. 13. Tibiscum / Jupa. Permanent exhibition hall.

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Rezime:

INTEGRACIJA ARHEOLOŠKOG NASLEĐA TIBISKUMA U UNESCO LIMES PROGRAM

Ključne reči: Limes, Tibiscum, Granice Rimskog carstva, arheološko nasleđe

U radu je prikazana studija slučaja rimskog grada Tibiskuma, kao dela rimskog limesa u provinciji Dakiji, koji zajedno sa Germansko-Retskim limesom, Hadrijanovim zidom i zidom Antonina, čini najznačajniji deo granice Rimskog carstva u Evropi. Grad Tibiskum dobio je status municipijuma tokom vladavine Septimija Severa, predstavljajući veoma važan vojni i ekonomski centar smešten na jugo-zapadnoj granici Dakije. Budući da ovaj lokalitet ima veoma dug i kontinuiran istorijat istraživanja, ukazano je na najznačajnije faze tog procesa i njegovih otkrića, sa naglaskom na aktivnostima zaštite i prezentacije. Tako je predstavljen postupak pretvaranja jednog značajnijeg dela ovog lokaliteta u muzej koji je inagurisan 1980. godine, dok se na njemu danas nalazi i istraživačka arheološka baza, zajedno sa modernim izlagačkim prostorom od 300 m². Takođe, ukazano je i na druge aktivnosti koje se sprovode na lokalitetu sa ciljem popularizacije znanja o arheologiji, kao i njegovog otvaranja za širu populaciju, poput manifestacije Evropska noć muzeja ili otvorenih dana Tibiskum-a, kada posetioци mogu da se upoznaju ne samo sa njegovim nasleđem, već i procesom arheološkog rada. Na taj način ne samo da se povećava vidljivost jednog lokalnog muzeja i nalazišta, već i stvara dodatna vrednost koja unapređuje infrastrukturu celokupnog nasleđa rimskog limesa u provinciji Dakiji.