

THE IMPERIAL ROMAN ROAD BETWEEN POTAISSA AND THE FORTRESS OF RĂZBOIENI

The archaeological research concerning the itinerary of the Roman road between Turda and the Fortress of Războieni was initiated by a small group led by Dr. Iuditha Winkler from the Institute of History and Archaeology in Cluj and which had the undersigned among its members. The initial aim was to trace and localise the ancient Roman bridge that used to cross Arieş Valley near the former Bethlen mill. The traces of this bridge could be seen by the end of the last century. This was also confirmed by Urban Bolasz, the one who said that "the traces of the Roman road were at 100 steps lower than the Bethlen mill at 320m height. In 1875, this mill could be found at the southern end of A. Russo Street. Today, there is a mill situated at the cross of A. Russo Street with Panait Cerna Street, very close to the old one.

The archaeological diggings in this sector helped us to identify fragment of the roman road in the terrace of the river meadow of Arieş Valley that "fell" perpendicularly on its axis. Here there were found stratified lens of gravel having a thickness of 60 cm, that contained Roman ceramic fragments and tiles. Thus we could say that this was the crossing point over Arieş Valley. An important element regarding the location of the Roman road on the other side of Arieş Valley was provided by archaeological diggings made by the University Professor Dr. Mihai Bărbulescu, near the Water works In Turda. The big necropolis discovered here helped us to infer that we were near the Roman road. The research made during this period of time permitted us to identify it in the zone of shooting grounds brought to light by the erosion of the surface waters.

We suppose that the starting point of the Roman road in Turda was Ecaterina Varga Square (nowadays the Roman Square), continued in A. Şaguna, the Wood Market and then, this true main "highway" of Dacia went to south, crossing Sând Valley, passing on to the territory of the "septinian taven" and then, reached the Roman bridge across the Arieş river, down stream the Bethlen mill. From this point, an a length 1,5 km, facing N-W, S-E, the Roman road goes through the industrial zone of Turda, crossing the railway to Buru, very close to the zone of Barracks in order to finally arrive to the southern end of 22nd December Street (former Red Army Street) where, as I have said before, we found ourselves right in the middle of Southern necropolis of Potaissa. From the Waterworks, the Roman road keeps the same orientation, mingling with the present road to Bogata on a length of about 1000 m. up to the lower part of the terrace of the Arieş river (325 m. height), on the bridge of which is situated Michael the Brave's Tomb.

From this point up to which the soil is quite plain, it rises suddenly on the front side of the terrace on a length of 750 m with a medium slope of 2° , the highest in the entire itinerary of the Roman road up to the Fortress of Războieni. The elevation of the terrace is of 345 m and the level difference as compared to the river meadow terrace is of 20 m.

From this point the Roman road mingles with the districtal road to Călărași but just up to the southern end of Bogata village where it takes a different direction, making a short curve to S-E, at the foot of Bogata Hill (450m height), turning about the shooting grounds. It keeps going up, with the same orientation, about the shooting grounds. It is called where the local gentry calls it "Traian's road", as it has been mentioned in the topographical and cartographic documents at the end of XIXth century. It finally reaches the "Cross" (475m height), the highest point in the entire itinerary of Roman road. Here it intersects the village road that came from Unirea and goes to Călărași, getting a "saddle" (550m) of 750m length that links the two higher zones: "La Observator" Hill (475m) on the Eastern Side and "Meghieresș" Hill (487m) on Western side. Feldioara Valley that goes through the hollow having the same name, has its origin in the southern point of this "saddle". From this point, the ancient road goes down on the right side of Feldioara Valley, avoiding the marshy meadow on a length of about 300m, up to the first house of a small village, still facing N-W, S-E. In its way out of the village, the Roman road changes suddenly its direction, facing south by making a short curve close to a triptych (300 m height). This is the moment where it leaves Feldioara Valley as it becomes too marshy and thus, unsuitable for the construction of a road. Then, it goes up slightly to 750m, on the southern side of "Sfântul Nou" Hill (320m) in order to reach the plateau of this hill that it crosses on its eastern edge, on a length of 1 km, facing N-S and with an inclination under 1° . From the edge of the plateau, it goes down gently of 1,5 km up to the church in the Fortress of Războieni, near which there is an auxiliary Roman camp (250m height).

From all the elements presented here, one can clearly see that the Roman copyists built the Roman road by taking account the local geomorphological, geological and hydrological conditions in order to ensure the best conditions for a high-secured road traffic. On its length of 18,8 km from the Roman bridge in Turda and up to the auxiliary Roman camp in the Fortress of Războieni, the medium slope is of 1° , overpassing only twice the limit of 2° , the maximum visibility is provided by "La Observator" Hill where one surveys the Roman road from Arieș Valley up to Mureș Valley; there are plenty of drinking water sources around; the road avoids the unsuitable marshy zones; the construction material is specific to this sector, limestone's, grit stones, volcanic tuffs and river gravel, there are a few but longradius curves; the general orientation of the road is NW-SE excepting the side to Războieni. The viability if those things mentioned before is also underlined by the fact that even today, this road is used by the local gentry for

traveling between the hydrogeographical basin of the Arieș river and that of the Mureș Valley.

In those sectors where the Roman road is not visible, it has been traced by means of aerophotogrammetrical, geological or geodesical methods.

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