

Măgura Moigradului - Ritual Sacred Area or Dacian Settlement

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In what follows, we shall make a presentation of the finds that concern the civil Dacian settlement¹ on the Moigrad knoll.

Known in the historical literature of this period, due to some finds, as having a strong ritual character² that had initially been interpreted as funeral monuments³, the Moigrad knoll appears to us more and more as a great fortified Dacian settlement, within which - as in some other cases - there can be also identified unquestionable ritual complexes, adjoining the numerous elements which are specific to a civil settlement⁴.

Therefore, starting from 1958, there have been discovered 243 pits, 43 fireplaces, 4 deepened dwellings, 8 ovens and 28 so-called "ceramical platforms". It is quite possible that some worse-preserved ovens, due to some condition, have been counted as fireplaces, but this fact will not fundamentally change the data of the problem⁵.

Another detail that deserves to be mentioned is the fact that from among the 243 pits already discovered, at least 45 are pits of heavy stanchions for Roman buildings, 2 pits of heavy Dacian stanchions, 5 are prehistorical pits. The rest (191) are Dacian ritual or for provisions pits.

As far as the so-called "ceramical platforms" are concerned, we stand for their identification with shallow dwellings. These "ceramical platforms" include in their stock broken vessels, burned and unburned bones as well as some other things specific to everyday life. Their form are irregular. They often suppose a fireplace and more frequently, pits. Such being the case, we consider them as shallow dwellings built on wood beams, because of their high level of volcanic rock, which is specific to the Moigrad knoll. These beams have left behind no archaeological traces that could have been detected.

The older researchers made some investigations which regarded especially the eastern and south-eastern part of the plateau, between 1958-1959⁶, that was over 1 km in perimeter and a surface of 7 hectares, being on an maximal altitude of 514 m (pl. 1).

Generally, the deepened dwellings of the Moigrad knoll have a circular plan and they penetrate the rock from about 0.3-0.4 m to 0.7 m. The roof is made up of two slopes and it is supported by stanchions situated within this construction, which deepens even 0.6 m under the inner level of the stepping. It varies from 2 to 3.5 in diameter. None of this type of dwellings has an inner fireplace. This type of

dwelling is dated by the 1st century B.C.⁷ This sort of dwellings has in its stock pottery, bones, small tools and stones which had fallen from the roof very probably made of straw (or thatch).

Like shallow dwellings, which are dated in the 1st century A.D., the deepened dwellings were found in only two thirds of the whole area of the plateau of the knoll, which measures 70.000 sqm. Therefore, the 45.000 sqm used during 250 years before the Roman conquest are mostly represented by the borders of the plateau, which were sheltered from the winds due to a diminished altitude, compared with the top of the hill. From the 70.000 sqm of the platform, there were systematically investigated only about 3730.35 sqm (5.32%), starting with 1958. In this surface there were found 193 Dacian pits (2 of them have stanchions, 79 from the 1st century B.C., 31 from the 1st century A.D. and the rest undated), 43 fireplaces, 8 ovens, 4 deepened dwellings (1st century B.C.) and 28 shallow ones (1st century A.D.).

An estimation on the whole surface that could have been dwelt - 45.000 sqm - would give figures hard to be accepted: 2931 pits (240 from the 1st century B.C., 373 from the 1st century A.D. and the rest undated); 518 fireplaces, 96 ovens, 48 deepened dwellings (from the 1st century B.C.) and 337 shallow dwellings (from the 1st century A.D.). The proportion dwellings - pits would be 1 dwelling/7.6 pits (for the 1st century B.C. 1 dwelling/19.7 pits and for the 1st century A.D. 1 dwelling/1.1 pits), an unusual situation for a La Tène D settlement⁸.

If we took into consideration a five-member⁹ family we would get a community of 240 inhabitants for the 1st century B.C. and 1685 for the 1st century A.D.* on condition that all the dwellings were contemporary, which is impossible from the very beginning.

The actual stage of the investigation does not allow us, for the time being, to draw a final conclusion, due to the sounding-character of the archaeological inquiries concerning both the archaeological site of the Moigrad knoll, where exhaustive diggings on representative microzones are necessary.

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* The knoll of Moigrad is even now rich in sources of water situated near the zones fortified during the Dacian epoch. The source of water which supplied the Roman cistern build on the knoll, surely had a constant debit even before the Roman conquest (Al. V. Matei, quoted work, p. 126-128).

NOTES

1. H. Pop, *Civil architecture and habitat during La Tène D in the Depression of Șimleu*, Acta MN, 32, I, 1995, p. 103-118.

2. Al. V. Matei, *Așezarea dacică fortificată de pe Măgura Moigradului*, Acta MP, 10, 1986, p. 126-128; Al. V. Matei, C. Stoica, *Cercetări arheologice pe Măgura Moigradului. Campania 1987*, Acta MP, 12, 1988, p. 158-160; H. Pop, *Contribuții metodologice privind cercetarea spiritualității dacice reflectată în descoperirile arheologice*, Acta MP, 17, 1993, p. 91-105.

3. M. Macrea, M. Rusu, *Der dakische Friedhof von Porolissum*, Dacia, N.S., IV, 1960, p. 201-229; M. Macrea, D. Protase, M. Rusu, *Șantierul arheologic Porolissum*, Materiale, VII, 1960, p. 361-391; M. Macrea, M. Rusu, I. Mitrofan, *Șantierul arheologic Porolissum*, Materiale, VIII, 1962, p. 485-504.

4. Al. V. Matei, H. Pop, *Șantierul arheologic Porolissum-Moigrad*, Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, Satu-Mare, 1994, p. 50-51; idem, *Așezarea dacică fortificată de pe Măgura Moigradului. Campaniile 1992-1993*, Acta MP, 18, 1994, p. 111-114; idem, *Șantierul arheologic Porolissum-Moigrad*, Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 55-57; idem, *Măgura Moigradului. Situri arheologice cercetate în perioada 1983-1992*, Brăila, 1996, p. 73-74.

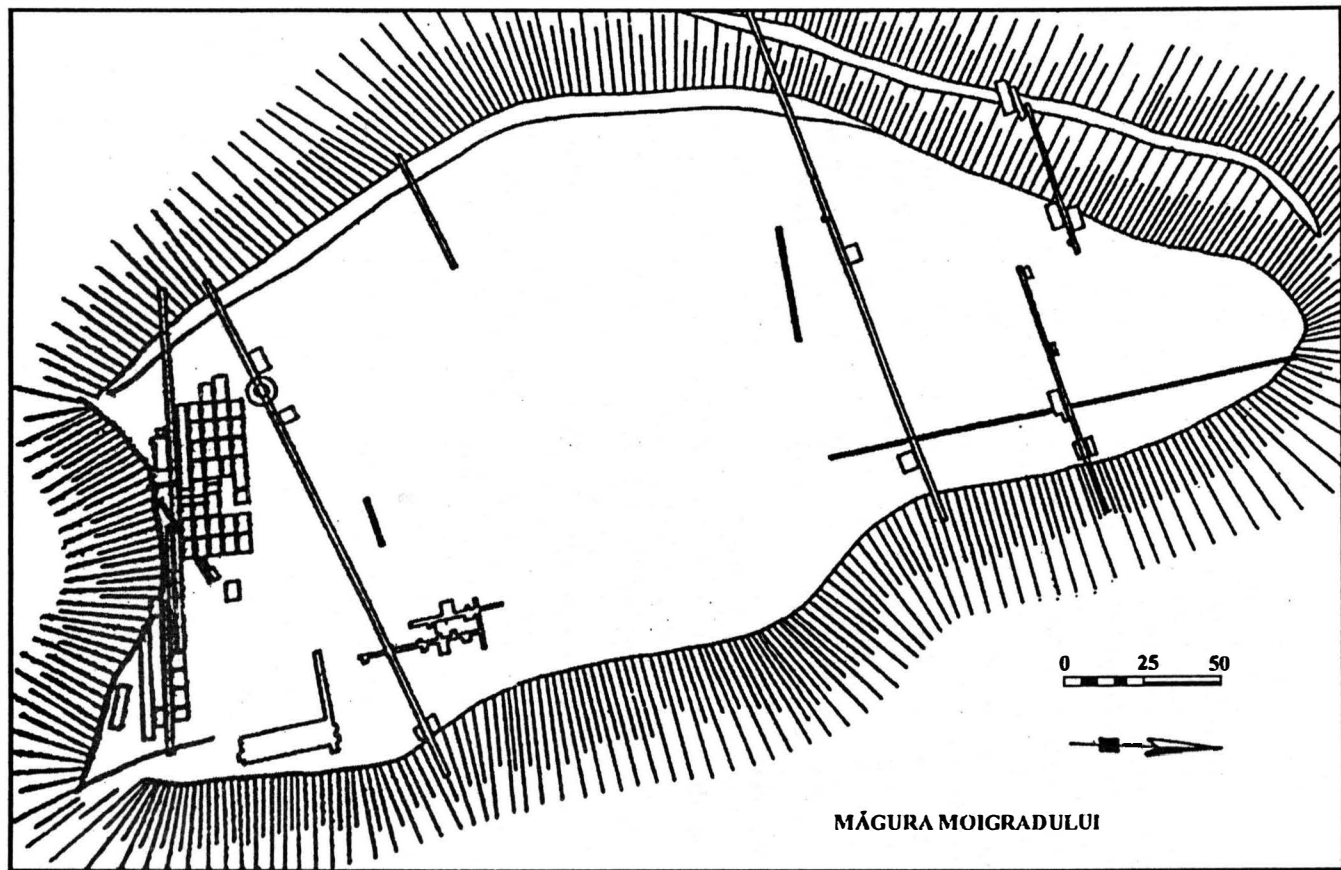
5. H. Pop, quoted work, p. 105.

6. M. Macrea, M. Rusu, I. Mitrofan, quoted work, p. 485-504.

7. H. Pop, Al. V. Matei, *The typology of grey pottery discovered in the Dacian settlement from the Măgura Moigradului* - material communicated at the Pre-Congress Colloquium: The Stamped Grey Pottery, Zalău, 27-30 June 1996.

8. M. Macrea, I. Glodariu, *Așezarea dacică de la Arpașu de Sus*, București, 1976, p. 8, 89.

9. V. Crișan, *Despre situația demografică în estul Transilvaniei în sec. II î.e.n.*, Acta MN, 26-30, I/1, 1989-1993, p. 79-89.



Pl. 1. The general plan of settlements - 1958-1995.