

THE ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT OF CRISTEȘTI

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On the left bank of the Mureș (Pl. I/1 - 2), at the place called "The Earth Fortress" there are the vestiges of a large Roman rural settlement¹, spreading over a surface of several hectares. First recorded in 1870, when the visible remains of a Roman road are also mentioned, this settlement has always caught the attention of the researchers² through a great number of discoveries.

I. The Habitation. Building Systems

Although the planimetry of the Roman site of Cristești cannot be, for the time being, satisfactorily reconstituted, the archaeological researches revealed both the intense inhabitation³ in the civilian settlement and its organization into the Roman civilization parameters.

Placed on the secondary road which separated from the Imperial Road at Salinae, following, along the Mureș the Războieni - Lunca Mureșului - Bogata - Brâncovenești itinerary, the *vicus* of Cristești started its existence soon after the organization of the province. The Roman *vicus* does not superpose any former Dacian settlement of the La Tène type⁴, but this does not exclude the possibility that some native settlements existed in its proximity.

In the Roman settlement of Cristești, only surface dwellings were

¹ TIR, L 35, 36; D. Tudor, OTS, 272 - 273; IDR, III/4, 101.

² For the history of research see A. Zrinyi, in *Marisia*, VII, 1977, 91 - 92. After a long interruption the excavations were resumed in 1994 by Nicoleta Man and A. Husar in collaboration with Prof. D. Protase (co-ordinator).

³ I. Paulovics, *Dacia keleti határvonala és az ugynevezett "dak-ezustkinsek" kérdése*, Cluj, 1944, 81-101.

⁴ D. Popescu, in *Materiale II*, 1956, 115 sqq.

also discovered⁵, with stone foundations and walls made of trellis work or beams and covered with shingle, straw or, occasionally, with tiles. The most important construction investigated at Cristești is a imposing edifice⁶ (Pl. II) - partitioned into 16 rooms - which covers a surface of approximately 1600 m². Four construction stages were identified in this building. The foundations were built of a gravel layer, strengthened with lime, on which were layed river stones and gritstone pieces, tied in the first two stages with clay, and in the last ones with mortar. The walls, made of trellis work, were plastered up inside with a stratum of plaster; small pieces of plaster, painted in red, green and yellow, were also found. Some of the rooms in this building - probably the one of the prosperous workshops owner's dwelling in - were endowed with *hypocaustum*, the floors being made of *cocciopesto*. Thus, this imposing building reveals the fact that at Cristești existed some elements of urban comfort - the *hypocaustum* heating system, painted plaster etc. - which is the expression of a life style which was characteristic of the Roman civilization.

Also, the discovery of an overflow sewer⁷ - built of bricks -, which was explored on a lenght of 30 m, could indicate the existence of a sewerage system, as the disposition of the dwellings investigated does not exclude the existence of an irregular street network.

Thus, the constructions and the arrangements of public utility at Cristești point out the fact that Roman architecture and town-planning elements are present, on a smaller scale, in the rural area, too. At the same time, the settlement of Cristești, where the town-planning became manifested itself as an element of civilization, and not as a social-juridical phenomenon, reveals the multiple valences of the urban aspects of life in Dacia.

II. The Economy

1. The Handicraft Production

Ceramics. The settlement of Cristești is known as one of the greatest centres of ceramic production in Roman Dacia. At Cristești, the pottery is outstanding, not only by its large quantity, but also by its

⁵ Al. Ferenczi, in *ACMIT*, I, 1926 - 1928, 216; A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 93.

⁶ A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 94.

⁷ D. Popescu, *op. cit.*, 124.

wide range of shapes, which, implicitly, leads us to its remote functionality.

The 6 furnaces⁸, together with the abundant pottery material and the numerous moulds discovered, reveal a real local pottery "industry" which covered not only the needs of the settlement, but spread out to the neighbouring zones, too. Alike Micăsasa, the *vicus* of Cristești is a typical potters' settlement⁹.

The pottery, extremely varied in shape and quality, is composed of a few luxury enamelled vessels or in the *terra sigillata* technique, but mainly of pots manufactured in the local workshops, some of them imitating the *terra sigillata* stamped vessels, others, for common use, red or grey, which perpetuate the shapes and the decorations of an older native tradition. Besides the abundant Roman provincial pottery material, numerous *lacernae*, statuettes and clay figurines, were also found. Thus, the production of the local workshops appears to us as being extremely diversified.

The common pottery manufactured at Cristești was classified into two large categories¹⁰: the red pots and the grey ones¹¹. As we all know, the quality of the paste of the common pottery differs depending on the type of pot. We can speak of low forms (bowls, plates) and of tall forms (mugs, jugs, provision vessels - *dolia*, amphorae).

According to their shape, the red pots - more frequently encountered than the grey ones - are classified into two categories: a) bowls, cups and plates; b) pots, mugs, jugs, *dolia*. In the case of these types of vessels prevails the paste of high quality.

The grey ceramics of Cristești is manufactured of a porous paste, the shapes are less varied compared with the red pots, and the decoration is more stereotype.

As it was pointed out, certain shapes and decorative motifs encountered on the red pots as on the grey ones show native influences¹². It also underlined the connection which is supposed to exist between the Dacian provision vessels and the big red pots, having similar shapes, found at Cristești.

But, by far the most interesting vessels are the stamped pottery of

⁸ Al. Ferenczi, *op. cit.*, 217; A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 93 - 94.

⁹ O. Floca, St. Ferenczi, L. Mărghită, *Micia, grupul de cuptoare romane pentru ars ceramica*, Deva, 1970.

¹⁰ D. Popescu, *op. cit.*, 124 sqq.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

¹² D. Protase, *Autohtonii în Dacia*, București, 1980, 104, 162, 235.

pure paste, generally dated in the 2nd century. The bowls are the shape of pottery on which appear pre-eminently the stamped motifs. The decoration of these vessels shows a rich geometrical, vegetal and animal repertory. A considerable part of the decorative motifs¹³ was inspired by the decorations found on the luxury vessels, *terra sigillata*. The import pots of the *terra sigillata* type found at Cristești come from manufacturing centres situated in Gallia Lugdunensis (Lezoux) and Belgica (Rheinzabern).

Concerning the vessels with applied decorations, we must mention that from the settlement of Cristești proceeds a serpent decorated pot¹⁴, probably serving the mithraic cult.

These various types of pots and many other ceramic products were manufactured in the local workshops, as proven by the numerous burnt-clay moulds and one of lead found during the excavations¹⁵.

In the settlement of Cristești, numerous oil lamps (*lucernae*) made of clay¹⁶ - the majority of the *Firmalampen* type - were discovered, but just a part of them representing the local production. Some of them belong to the import of luxury goods. The frequency of imitations and their quality prove the craftsmanship of the local ceramists who were performing faithful copies of certain famous products¹⁷.

Finally, concerning the construction materials made of ceramics - manufactured in special furnaces¹⁸ - we must mention the numerous tiles, hollow-tiles, *hypocaustum* tubes and the different types of bricks, among which we also find the 35 bricks having the stamp of the troop garrisoned in the Roman camp of Cristești (*ala I Bosporanorum*). We presume that the tegular unstamped products proceed from civilian brickyards, but, for the time being, no stamps of any private

¹³ As regards the diffusion of *terra sigillata* pottery into Dacia, see D. Isac, *Terra sigillata în Dacia romană*, Diss., Cluj, 1985.

¹⁴ A. Zrinyi, in *Studii și materiale*, Tg. Mureș, II, 1967, 67 - 68, pl. XLVII/2-3. The serpent decorated vessels' problem was broadly discussed by Viorica Bolindeț in *Eph.Nap.*, III, 1993, 123 - 141.

¹⁵ O. Floca, in *BMASM* 1, 15.

¹⁶ N. Gostar, in *ArhM*, I, 149 sqq.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 175 - 188.

¹⁸ N. Baranga, *Urbanismul Daciei romane*, Timișoara, 1980, 113 - 117.

workshops are known at Cristești.

However, the typically local products reflect a revealing image of a certain part of the economic life and daily activities.

Stone Processing. The activity of the stone cutters from Cristești - among whom, Hermeros, *lapidarius*¹⁹, is epigraphically certified - is illustrated by the numerous stone monuments found in the area of this Roman settlement. In the local workshops, several fragments of architectural elements (two capitals, a window or a door frame) were probably processed, which complete the image of the public utility activity and - as it could be an element of civilization - of the Romanization process itself.

Metallurgy. Although there were not identified blacksmith workshops, the discovery of a few iron slag pieces and also a great number of iron tools, enables us to presume the practice of this craft in the settlement of Cristești. The presence of blacksmiths is witnessed by a great number of tools and finished products.

Bone Processing. The bone objects²⁰ are rather numerous at Cristești, and their local processing is certain. Among the jewelry one can remark the hair pins (*acus crinalis, comatoria*) with the end decorated with incised lines or concentric incised circles. The hair pins were used both by men and women in order to arrange and maintain their hairdo. Various commonly used objects, needles for in sewing, spoon handles, blades, also the dice and the gaming pieces (*tesserae*), were made of bone, too.

2. Agriculture and Breeding

If the *vicus* of Cristești had a predominantly handicraft and commercial character, it is also true that a part of the inhabitants were occupied by agriculture and its annexes.

During the Roman epoch, agriculture was greatly stimulated on a technological level by the adoption of new methods of land exploitation and the introduction of new species of plants.

¹⁹ I. I. Russu, in *ActaMN*, I, 1964, 182 - 183 = *IDR*, III/4, 133.

²⁰ O. Floca, *op. cit.*, 6 - 7.

The agricultural tools from Cristești are few but nevertheless related to essential work such as preparing the land for planting and harvesting. Thus, the two ploughshares of Roman type, and also other numerous agricultural tools - sickles, grape-cutting knives, etc. - prove the agricultural practices, such as the discovery of an iron implement served for cattle stamping²¹ indicates that breeding also had a certain weight in the economy of the settlement.

3. Coinage and Currency

The coins found fortuitously or during systematic researches in Cristești - more than 80 pieces come from isolated discoveries - are dispensed from Trajan to Philippus Arabs²². From the Roman settlement come some other currency discoveries. In 1963, for instance, a treasure of about 150 imperial coins was found there, out of which were recovered 118 pieces, which ranged from Marcus Aurelius to Gordianus III²³. The treasure, hidden in the first years of Philippus Arabs's reign, proves that the settlement of Cristești was not spared by the disturbances caused by the Carpic tribes, the attacks or at least the threats, brought about troubles on the banks of the River Mureș. A money-box made of burnt clay was found in 1964. Initially it contained 17 *denarii*, out of which 13 pieces - ranged from Vespasian to Antoninus Pius - were acquired²⁴. From the study of the currency it can be concluded that the silver *denarius* prevailed at Cristești.

In the same settlement, it is belived but not proved, that the following coins subsequent to Philippus Arabs²⁵ Aurelian (2), Probus (1), Constantius Chlorus (1), Constantius I (1), Constantin II (1), Constantius II (14), Valentinian (4), Honorius (1) were found.

4. Trade. Foreign Commercial Relations

The import of luxury goods required an efficient organisation of trade, not only on the regional level, but beyond the provincial

²¹ A. Zrinyi, in *Marisia*, VII, 1977, 95.

²² D. Popescu, *op. cit.*, 179 - 184; Z. Székely, in *SCN*, II, 1958, 469 - 473; M. Petică, in *Marisia*, VIII, 1978, 757 - 759.

²³ D. Protase, A. Zrinyi, in *ActaMN*, II, 1965, 257 - 268.

²⁴ D. Protase, A. Zrinyi, in *ActaMN*, IV, 1967, 461 - 467.

²⁵ K. Horedt, in *SCIV*, IV, 1953, 1 - 2, 298.

borders. For this purpose it was vital to be able to rely on a well developed network of roads and waterways. Cristești was situated on the artery linking the East of Dacia with the imperial road; the *vicus* also profited from its position - on the left bank of Mureș River - which gave access to an entire system of waterways.

At Cristești, the imported products were amphorae (contained oil), luxury vessels *terra sigillata*, oil lamps, as well as glassware. Thus, the well-to-do population indulged in a certain luxury: the inscription on the neck of an amphora²⁶ proves the importation of the oil from the South of Gaul. Moreover, some other products were imported over a great distance. Some of *terra sigillata* pots come from the specialized workshops of Rheinzabern and others from the Central Gaul²⁷. The imported oil lamps are coming mainly from the north of Italy²⁸; more frequently found at Cristești are the *lucernae* FORTIS (4), OCTAVI (4), IEGIDI (3) and STROBILI (2). Concerning the problem of local imitations of some famous products, only a detailed study of each oil lamp found at Cristești will enable us to distinguish the copies from the imported pieces.

Finally, a statuette of a high artistical level - the head of Iuno belonging to a cult statue made of alabaster (Pl. VI/2) - is considered as being imported, as it is impossible to determine, for the time being, the workshop from which this statuette issues.

III. The Spiritual Life

1. Epigraphical Monuments

The inscriptions on stone, almost all fragmentary, are in number of 20, among which only 3 are included in the *CIL*, III (7714 - 15, 12550), the others being published afterwards²⁹. The greatest part of the epigraphical sources are funerary inscriptions, only one being an altar dedicated to Mars Augustus by Q. Caecilianus, *praefectus alae*³⁰,

²⁶ A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 97, pl. LIII.

²⁷ D. Isac, *Terra sigillata în Dacia romană*, Diss., Cluj, 1985.

²⁸ N. Gostar, *op. cit.*, 175 - 188.

²⁹ *IDR*, III/4, 133 - 149.

³⁰ *IDR* III/4, 135.

another being a dedication to the emperor Antoninus Pius³¹, and the third being an architectural fragment with the inscription: *Hermeros lapidarius f(ecit)*³² (Pl. IV/3).

At Cristești all the known inscriptions are written in Latin, a fact which expresses without ambiguity the linguistic situation: in the settlement and inside the Roman camp Latin was spoken.

An important discovery, made in 1886, was that of a military diploma (AD 158)³³ belonging to a soldier from *ala I Gallorum et Bosporanorum*³⁴. Numerous tegular inscriptions belong to *ala I Bosporanorum*³⁵ - the troop garrisoned in the *castrum* of Cristești -, but other stamped bricks were also known there (*legio V Macedonica, ala I Batavorum*)³⁶.

Finally, it should be also mentioned the smaller epigraphical traces such as the stamp-inscriptions on the *lucernae*: AQVIN, CAI, CAI. GEM, CASSI, C. DESSI, FESTI, FORTIS, G.I.P., IEGIDI, LVPATI, MIA, OCTAVI, PVLLI, SEXTI, STROBILI³⁷, VALERIVS ALBIVS³⁸ (?).

2. Art

Besides the epigraphical pieces, the products of Roman provincial art frame are a revealing image of the spiritual life. In this respect, the statues and the funerary monuments - relevant to the tastes and the possibilities of the inhabitants of Cristești - occupy a considerable place.

Thus, the statuaria is illustrated at Cristești by some works of good artistic level: a limestone statue representing Jupiter on his

³¹ *IDR*, III/4, 134.

³² See *supra* note 19.

³³ *CIL*, XVI, 108 = *IDR*, I, *Dip.ID* XVI.

³⁴ I. I. Russu, in *SCIV*, XXIII, 1972, 1, 65, no. 3.

³⁵ N. Gudea, A. Zrinyi, in *EpigrTrav*, 1977, 225 - 231.

³⁶ *IDR*, III/4, 150,1; 152,1. As regards the diffusion of *Legio V Macedonica*'s stamped bricks, see M. Bărbulescu, *Din istoria militară a Daciei romane. Legiunea V Macedonica și castrul de la Potaissa*, Cluj-Napoca, 1987, 53.

³⁷ N. Gostar, *op. cit.*, 155 - 173.

³⁸ A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 94, pl. XLIX/4.

throne (the iconographic type Jupiter *tronans* or *Verospi*³⁹ - Pl. VI/1 a - b), the alabaster head of Juno⁴⁰ and a white marble torso.

The stone statuettes - ex-votos with deity's image⁴¹ - are also well represented. In this category can be found an alabaster fragmentary statuette representing Liber Pater (?)⁴² or, perhaps, Hercules Bibax (Pl. VI/5), the marble head of Liber Pater as Apollo Lybeios⁴³ (Pl. VI/4) and a statuette of a *genius* of plenty⁴⁴ (Pl. VI/3).

There is no doubt that, in the modest dwellings, the little figurines of deities are made of burnt-clay, the local coroplastics manufacturing numerous *terracotta* statuettes of the kind - Juno, Hygia, Silenus⁴⁵, etc. In Cristești certain iconographic representations on burnt-clay moulds were also known. So, the mould of a votive tablet represents Liber Pater⁴⁶ and another - in the shape of a medallion -, the bust of Serapis⁴⁷.

If the statues of high artistic skill - the head of Juno, for instance - were products from importation, the funerary monuments illustrate the activity of the local *lapicides* and of the itinerant artisans.

Indeed, at Cristești several categories of funerary monuments such as *aediculae*, *stelae*, *medallions* were also represented⁴⁸. These sepulchral monuments reveal certain specific features. Owing to the preference for Noric-Pannonian "origin" type of monuments (the *aedicula*, "family *stelae*", the medallion with a smooth profile and the

³⁹ D. Isac, in *ActaMN*, XI, 1974, 76-77, pl. II/3 a-b.

⁴⁰ O. Floca, *op. cit.*, 8 - 9.

⁴¹ Concerning the deity-representation as cult-image, see M. Bărbulescu, *Interferențe spirituale în Dacia romană*, Cluj-Napoca, 1984, 104 - 105.

⁴² C. Pop, in *ActaMN*, VII, 1970, 152, no. 4.

⁴³ Unpublished, Muzeul Județean, Mureș, nr inv. 4303 - which determination is due to Al. Diaconescu.

⁴⁴ A. Zrinyi, *op. cit.*, 98, pl. L.

⁴⁵ C. Pop, in *Apulum*, VI, 1967, 178, no. 11, fig. 11.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, in *Apulum*, X, 1972, 176 - 178, no. 1, fig. 6.

⁴⁷ Al. Popa, in *StCom*, S, 12, 1965, 231 - 232, fig. 1.

⁴⁸ Lucia Țeposu Marinescu, *Funerary Monuments*, 1982, where are presented 8 *stelae*, 3 medallions and 9 lateral walls of *aediculae* from Cristești.

niche with a flat bottom), the settlement of Cristești - as the whole Eastern zone of Roman Transylvania - seems to be closer to Porolissensis than to Dacia Superior, where the direct north-italic influences are most significantly outlined.

Thus, in the figurative repertory of the sepulchral monuments found at Cristești the Noric-Pannonian motifs⁴⁹ prevail: the simplified banquet of the Noric-Pannonian type, the horseman piercing the enemy at the feet of the horse (Pl. V/3), the hunting horseman (Pl. V/2), the lion attacking a horse (Pl. V/5).

A special signification has an image representing the *Lupa Capitolina* (Pl. V/7), seen on two sepulchral monuments from Cristești⁵⁰. Such a representation - *signum originis* - has a clear social and cultural significance: the symbol of the Eternal City represented on the funerary monuments proves the pride of being a Roman citizen, of belonging to the Roman world⁵¹.

As regarding the persons represented on the sepulchral monuments, the deceased and the participants to the *coena funebris*, it was pointed out some time ago⁵² that in the majority of the cases, the clothes (the typical dress - long tunic covered by a shorter one fastened on the shoulders by *fibulae*, shirts with broad sleeves, girdle fastened round the waist), the hairdo and the ornamental pieces are typical for the Noric-Pannonian ethno-cultural area.

All this evidence undoubtedly certifies the presence of the Noric-Pannonian colonists in the settlement of Cristești. But, as in Cristești, and also in other zones of the Roman Transylvania, the Noric-Pannonian influence on the funeral art reveals itself, especially through the spreading of certain general provincial features, typical for the "European Art of Rome" - as being defined by R. Bianchi-Bandinelli -, it means that we deal with a contribution of the Noric-Pannonian Roman world.

So, as it was pointed out, the funerary monuments - perhaps the

⁴⁹ O. Floca, Wanda Wolski, in *BMI*, XLII, 1973, 3, 18 - 21, 35 - 36; Lucia Țeposu Marinescu, *op. cit.*, 44, 46 - 47, 49.

⁵⁰ Lucia Țeposu Marinescu, *op. cit.*, 46. Concerning the monuments representing *Lupa Capitolina* discovered in Dacia, see C. Pop, in *ActaMN*, VIII, 1971, 173 - 185.

⁵¹ M. Bărbulescu, *Potaissa. Studiu monografic*, Turda, 1994, 159.

⁵² O. Floca, Wanda Wolski, *op. cit.*, 40 - 42.

most significant products of Roman provincial art - show that the Roman way of life and the Latin language imposed themselves in the rural environment of Dacia. From this point of view, the strong stimulus given to Romanization by the stable links, firstly economic but military and cultural as well, with the provinces of the Rhine and the Middle Danube and through these with Northern and Central Italy, must be noted.

Finally, Attis⁵³, Gorgona Medusa, Thanatos and protomes of Winds⁵⁴ - frequent appearances in the funeral symbolistics of the entire Roman world - complete the figurative repertory of the sepulchral monuments from Cristești.

3. Religions and Beliefs

Imagery gives clues as to how the gods were envisaged and worshipped. The production of a religious representation may serve several different purposes, not necessarily all mutually exclusive. If a stone carving which portrays a deity is placed in a temple, shrine or *locus consecratus*, it may possess a function separate from one which comes from a domestic context or grave. As regards the area of religious beliefs, the archaeological evidence is augmented by a vastly increased iconography - mainly in stone.

Thus, the sculptural monuments - cult-images or ex-votos - found at Cristești illustrated the image of the religious life in this Roman settlement. On the other hand, images of the deities - Jupiter⁵⁵, Hercules⁵⁶, Amor⁵⁷ - also appear on the ceramic products currently used in daily life, as on the iconographic representations on moulds (cf. *supra*).

One can more or less clearly distinguish two categories of deities: those related to official Roman cults, and those which, although apparently Roman, have not a truly Roman origin. When epigraphic documentation is lacking, it is quite difficult to attribute an ex-voto to this latter category.

The majority of the deities attested at Cristești belong to the

⁵³ Lucia Țeposu Marinescu, *op. cit.*, 202, no. 18, 206, no. 36.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 120, no. 72, 73; I. I. Russu, in *SCIVA*, XXX, 1979, 2, 219, fig. 5.

⁵⁵ D. Isac, in *ActaMN*, XI, 1974, 64, note 17.

⁵⁶ M. Bărbulescu, in *ActaMN*, XIV, 1977, 186, no. 64.

⁵⁷ O. Floca, in *Materiale*, 770 - 771, fig. 11.

classical Greek-Roman pantheon: Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules, Liber Pater, Hygia, Amor and Silenus. The sphere of the personifications is also present, a beautiful marble statuette representing a *genius* of abundance.

The Mithraism is represented by the serpent decorated vessels⁵⁸, which are supposed to have served in the Mithriac cult. The images of other deities such as Attis, Atargatis (Dea Syria), Serapis and Thracian horseman illustrate the presence of the Asian (Asia Minor), Syrian, Egyptian and Thraco-Moesian beliefs. As one can observe, only the Celto-Germanic and the North-Western African cults are not certified at Cristești.

The great number and diversity of beliefs which are attested at Cristești through the different categories of iconographic representations show two general specific features of the religious life in Roman Dacia⁵⁹.

IV. The Population

The population of the Roman settlement of Cristești can be examined thanks to the epigraphical documentation (onomastics) and to the archaeological material (funerary monuments, ceramics).

Owing to the scarcity of inscriptions the proportion of the population whose origin and ethnicity can be established is extremely reduced. The epigraphical documentation offers 15 personal names - *gentilicia* and *cognomina* (civilian population and soldiers). Among these, the greatest part are Roman names as follows: Q. Caecilinus Caecilianus, M. Fabius..., P. Aelius..., P. Aelius Quintus, Pos(tumius?) Clemens Tyranni (filius), Finitus, Supi[nus ?], ... Super, Avita. As for the non-Roman names, two of them are Greek-Oriental (Dionysia, Hermeros), two other are Thracian (Heptapor, Isius) and another one, if the completion is accurate - Aurelius Sa[turninus ?] - seems to be a specifically African Latin name⁶⁰.

It is a well-known fact that a lot of inhabitants of non-Roman origin from the provinces of the Empire carry *nomina Romana*, even at Cristești the situation does not seem to be different. Therefore, in

⁵⁸ See *supra* note 14.

⁵⁹ M. Bărbulescu, *Interferențe spirituale...*, 180 - 183.

⁶⁰ *Idem*, in *L'Africa romana* (Atti del X convegno di studio Oristano, 11-13 dicembre 1992), Sassari, 1995, 1325.

two cases only - when *origo* is indicated - one can specify the ethnic-territorial origin of the colonists: we speak about the ex-serviceman Heptapor (*Bessus*) - the beneficiary of the diploma from 158 AD - and about Isius, his father. Lastly, it should be remembered that the epigraphical manifestations of the natives are absent, reported by the evidence of another nature which certifies their presence⁶¹.

As previously mentioned, the funerary monuments from Cristești offer signs for understanding the ethnic-territorial origin of the inhabitants. Thus, on several *stelae* and *aediculae* walls the typical Noric-Pannonian dress and jewelry are represented, as we could have seen them. On the other hand, the figurative repertory of the sepulchral monuments illustrate, as previously mentioned, the cultural-artistic intercourse between the Noric elements and the Eravisco-Pannonian ones.

Finally, the Dacian typical pottery could seem to indicate the presence of a few natives, side by side with the colonists or in the close vicinity of the *vicus*. Therefore, this ethnical structure shows a *mixtum compositum* in which the most firmly outlined elements are the Pannonian ones.

The Roman settlement of Cristești knew typical social stratification of the epoch. The colonists had diversified juridical status - *cives Romani* or *peregrini* - as well as social positions. Evidently, the greatest part were *peregrini*. The discussion about the population of the settlement of Cristești could not exclude the soldiers, as the majority of the information offered by the epigraphic documentation⁶² are connected with them. All soldiers had to be considered - from an economic point of view - as belonging to *honestiores* in the same social category and also belonging to the workshop owners and certain merchants. Concerning the lower echelons of society (the so-called *humiliores*), the wider they were in fact - craftsmen, merchants, agricultural producers, etc. - the less conclusively were revealed by the epigraphical sources. Seldom do we know their concrete occupations - Hermeros *lapidarius* is, in this respect, a singular example -, and the differences concerning the material level among them have still not been grasped. Lastly, as regarding the *liberti* and *servi* - whose presence is beyond doubt - they are not epigraphically certified.

V. Summary

⁶¹ D. Popescu, in *SCIV*, II, 1951, 1, 279 - 283; *Idem*, in *Materiale*, II, 1956, 154 - 156.

⁶² *IDR*, III/4, 135, 138, 141.

In Eastern Transylvania - whose administrative structure still remains unknown - the few more developed centres in the epoch of the provinces seem to be the garrisons of *auxilia*. The division into *civitates*, the hypothesis proposed by R. Ardevan⁶³, is based upon analogies with certain European provinces better studied, but comparable with Dacia from the point of view of their specific character and their level of Roman civilization - the East of Germania Superior, Northern and Western Britannia; in these less urbanized zones there are situations when *vici* in the vicinity of the auxiliary camps obtained analogous functions to a centre of *civitas*.

At Cristești, an important and prosperous settlement on the Middle Mureș, there were not identified traces of a Roman camp, but its existence is beyond doubt⁶⁴. On the other hand, the camp could have been placed somewhere farther from the civilian settlement, so that it could also have had a different evolution from that of a military *vicus*. However, in the proximity of the important settlement from Cristești a few smaller settlements are known. Therefore, as Mr. Ardevan presumes⁶⁵, the settlement of Cristești could have fulfilled the role of a centre of a *civitas* in the Mureș valley.

The archaeological researches emphasized an intense inhabitation in the civilian settlement, whose existence does not end at the same time as the abandonment of Roman Dacia under Aurelianus (271/274 AD). Briefly, the whole life of this great rural settlement took place between the parameters of the Roman provincial civilization.

The *vicus* of Cristești started its existence soon after the province was organized, at the same time as the arrival of the first groups of colonists. In the 2nd century AD, Cristești experienced a tremendous economic boom. The archaeological material reveals the preponderant manufacturing and trading character of the Roman site of Cristești. Hence we can ascertain that the *vicus* of Cristești is the most developed settlement of the Eastern part of Dacia Superior, a zone where Roman towns did not exist. The pulsations of the economic life considerably diminished after the middle of the 3rd century AD, but the Roman settlement continued its existence after the official

⁶³ R. Ardevan, *Viața municipală în Dacia romană*, Diss., Cluj, 1994, 80.

⁶⁴ N. Gudea, A. Zrinyi, in *EpigrTrav*, 226 - 227.

⁶⁵ R. Ardevan, *op. cit.*, 79.

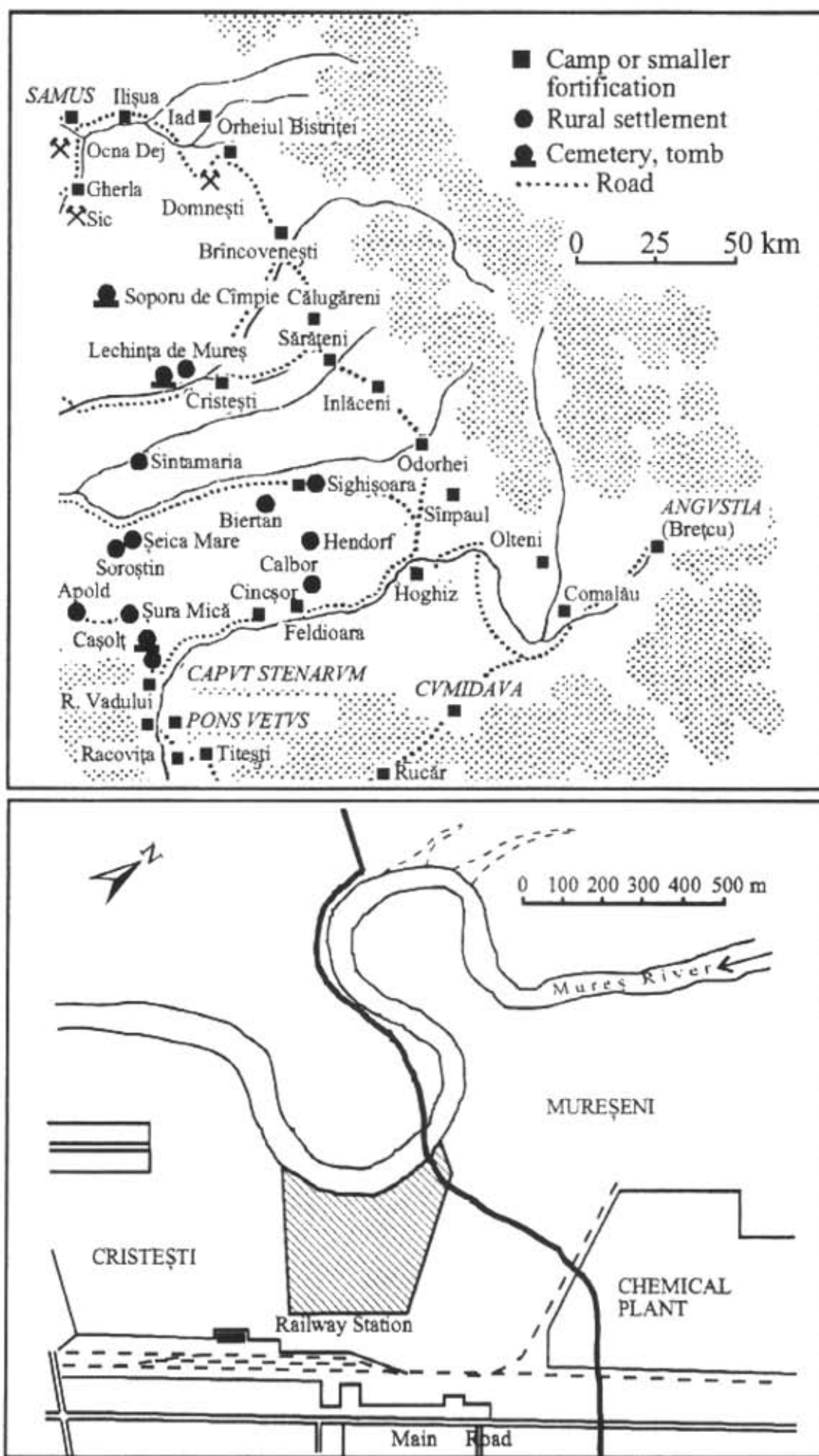
abandonment of the province. In the Late Roman epoch⁶⁶, when a Roman world without an Empire was perpetuated in Transylvania, the settlement of Cristești did not essentially change either its topography or its economic functions. Thus, the discovery of a pot with the Christian symbol of the cross⁶⁷ put on it when manufactured, indicates the fact that in the 4th century AD the Roman settlement kept its economical weight from the epoch of the province to a certain extent. On the other hand, the affluence of Late Roman coins to Cristești seems to be related to the continuation of the handicraft activities. At any rate, it was only towards the end of the 4th century AD, that the Romanic population of Cristești abandoned the settlement⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ M. Bărbulescu, in *Potaissa*, II, 1980, 170.

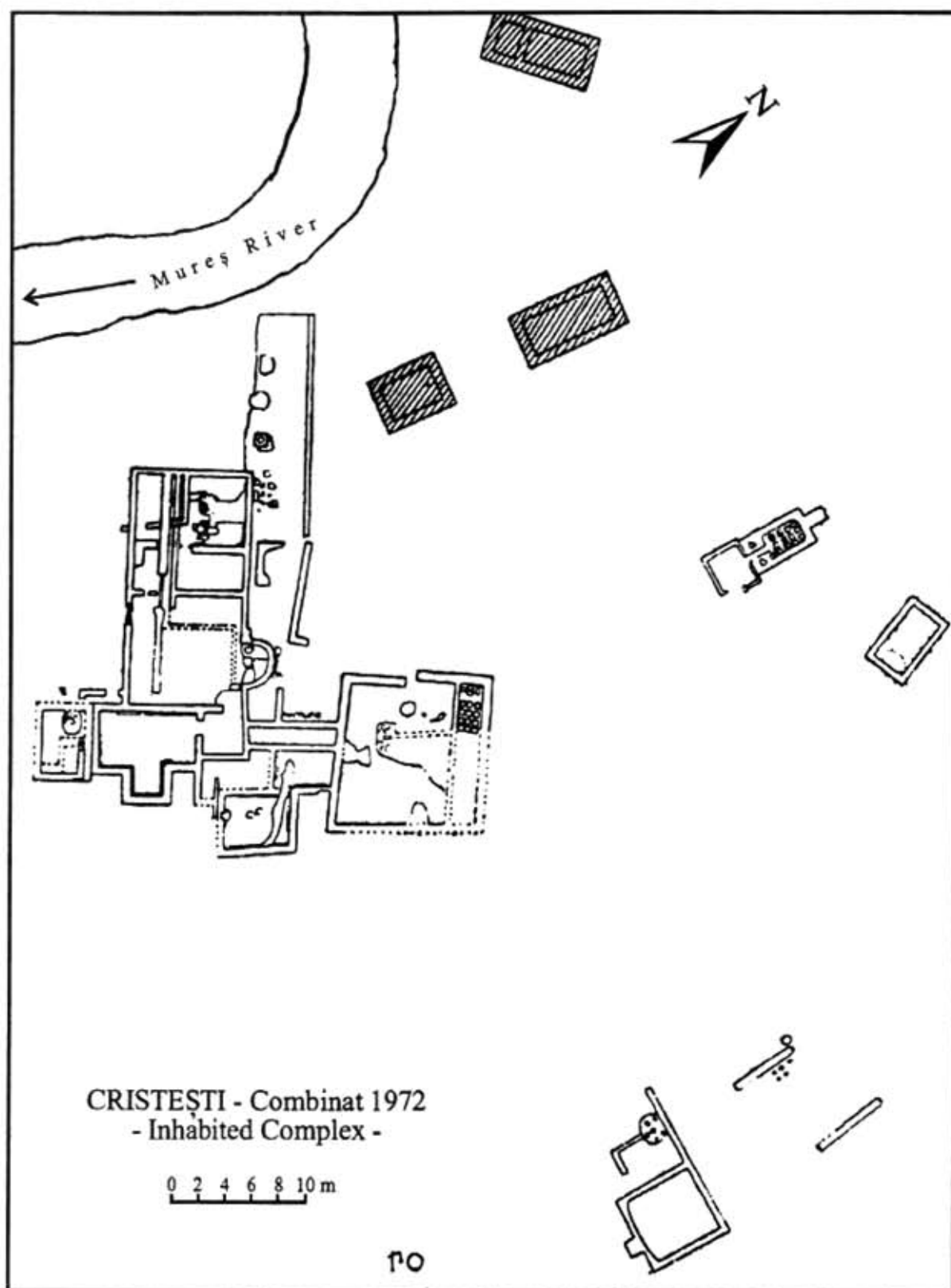
⁶⁷ A. Zrinyi, in *Marisia*, VII, 1977, 96, pl. LII/2; K. Horedt, *Siebenbürgen in spätromischer Zeit*, București, 1982, 219; M. Rusu, in *AIIA Cluj-Napoca* XXVI, 1984, 59, no. 27; N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *Din istoria creștinismului la români*, Oradea, 1988, 197.

⁶⁸ K. Horedt, in *SCIV*, IV, 1953, 1 - 2, 298.

THE ROMAN RURAL SETTLEMENT OF CRISTEȘTI



Pl. I: The Eastern zone of Roman Dacia (1), the Roman site of Cristești - the area which was excavated.



Pl. II: The South-East zone of the *vicus* from Cristești
(according to A. Zrinyi, *Marisia*, VII, 1977, pl. LIV).



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

Pl. III: Ceramic products manufactured at Criste ti:
stamped vessels (1 - 3), serpent decorated vessel (4),
lucerna (5), burnt-clay moulds (6 - 7).



Pl. IV: The epigraphical material: the military diploma dating from 8th of July AD 158 (1), votive altar offered to Mars Augustus (2), fragmentary architectural element (3), stamps of *ala I Bosporanum* (4 - 5), stamp-inscriptions on the *lucernae* manufactured at *Criste ti* (6 - 8).



1



2



3



4



5



7



6

Pl. V: Funerary monuments: *stela* (1), walls of *aediculae* (2 - 7).



1a



1b



2



3



4



5

Pl. VI: Art and Religions: Jupiter tronans / Verospi (1a - b), Juno (2),
Genius of abundance (3), Liber Pater as Apollo Lybeios (4), Liber Pater - ? (5).