

---

## New sculptural monuments found in the Roman fort from Buciumi

---

Radu ZĂGREANU, Horea POP

**Keywords:** Buciumi, funerary *aedicula*, funerary banquet, Dacia Porolissensis.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Buciumi, *aedicula* funerară, banchet funerar, Dacia Porolissensis.

The earliest information about the roman fort from Buciumi are dating since the Middle Ages, starting from the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The ruins of the fort and the civilian settlement were an impressive landmark of the area, with an eloquent toponymy, the place is named nowadays „Grădiște”<sup>1</sup> and „Fortress”. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century occurs the first documentary note of these, when it is mentioned that troops coordinated by John Bornemis-sa, sent on a mission against the Turkish-Tatar contingent in 1594, made their camp on the territory from Vármézo fort<sup>2</sup>. The first archaeological mentions about the fort are made by K. Torma<sup>3</sup>, who makes a detailed description of the ruins, identifies the position of the *thermae*, and mentions an epigraphic discovery from the year 1863<sup>4</sup>. The next reference is about a sculptural discovery in the area in 1879, when a new inscription<sup>5</sup> was discovered, possible from the fort area.

A ground identification was made by I. I. Russu in 1956, when measurements of the fort are made, for the first time<sup>6</sup>. The first excavations took place in 1963 and they continued until 1976, with the contribution, among others, of M. Macrea, E. Chirilă și N. Gudea. Researches performed during 1970-1976 remained unpublished.

The fort with an enclosure made of earth (128 x 160 m) was build by *coh. I Augusta Ituraeorum* and had the corners oriented considering the main cardinal points. The fortification is located north of Buciumi Commune, on the end of a plateau located between Sângiorz Valley and Lupu Valley, at about 3.5 km behind Crasna river gorge<sup>7</sup>. The fort with enclosure made of stone (134 x 167) was build by *coh. II Nervia Brittonum* at the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> century p. Chr. The importance of the fort is confirmed by the presence of a *statio* for consular beneficiaries, as it is attested by the inscription from a consular beneficar *P. Iulius Firmus*, dedicated to Jupiter Dolichenus<sup>8</sup>.

The findings of sculptural pieces from this fort are only few. There are mentioned a series of pedestals, fragments of inscriptions, and fragments of columns. So far there were no sculptural objects of funerary nature discovered in the area.

The cemetery. Informations concerning this area were collected from Silviu Papiriu Pop, local collector of antiques, claiming that agricultural work in the early years after the socialist cooperativization disturbed the level

---

1 Russu 1959, p. 307.

2 Russu 1959, p. 308.

3 Torma 1864, p. 11-12.

4 CIL III 842.

5 CIL III 7645.

6 Russu 1959, p. 309.

7 Gudea 1997, p. 7.

8 Gudea 1997, p. 8.

---

Radu ZĂGREANU, Bistrița-Năsăud County Museum, e-mail: raduzagreanu@gmail.com  
Horea POP, Zalău County Museum of History and Art, e-mail: horeapopd@yahoo.com

of the ancient Roman cemetery, due to the deep plowing with heavy iron plows pulled by tractors. The cemetery would have been in the north-eastern area from the fort and the vicus<sup>9</sup>.

### 1. Side wall from an *aedicula* (Pl. 1 a-b).

Discovery conditions: it was discovered in 2014, in trench S 10, on the latura praetoria around the tower no. 4. in the debris in front of the wall.

It is very likely a fragment of a right lateral wall from an *aedicula*. The fragment is extremely damaged, showing traces of impact during its discovery. It preserves the right side from the lower part of a relief register. Its dimensions are 50 x 28 x 12 cm. It was a wall with two registers on the inner side. From the relief there is still visible the bust of a character, of about 18 cm high, up to its neck and the hands (Pl. I a). The relief is delimited from the bottom of the wall, by a 5 cm wide moulding. The fact that its lower part doesn't show any traces of processing or some sort of epigraphic field, attests that the fragment is part of an *aedicula* wall. Since the monument ends at the bottom, being clearly shaped underneath, the character is placed in the lower register of the wall.

The character wears a *tunica manicata*, but the sleeve was already destroyed at the time of discovery (Pl. 1b). On the right shoulder it seems to have a towel, on his neck, as much as we can see, there seem to be the inferior folds of a *sagum*, clipped probably with a fibula, worn over the tunic. Definitely there is not a *torques*. This should have been placed around the neck, a *torques* of such dimensions, so large that it would have reached to the chest, it is unlikely. Under the *mapa* on his shoulder, in the lower part there are visible the tunic's folds. The right hand of the character is distinguishable from the shoulder down. He has the hand bent towards left, but his fingers are heavily damaged, so that are visible forefinger, the middle finger and little finger. Probably the index finger and the middle finger were higher, being directed towards the object held in his left hand. They are extremely roughly rendered. The left hand is barely visible, being heavily damaged, but apparently it holds between the fingers a cylindrical object, resembling a *volumen*. Even if it is difficult to say, it appears to be a male.

The appearance of the character represented as bust, on the inferior part of a *aedicula* wall, is an unusual occurrence for *aedicula* walls from Dacia. The best preserved analogies have the representations of busts in the upper register, as we see at Turda<sup>10</sup> (Pl. 1, fig. 2). The appearance of a bust in the upper register is specific also for the workshops in Apulum<sup>11</sup> (pl. I, Fig. 3) from where an *aedicula* wall was found, or those from Micia<sup>12</sup>, with three such representations. A possible analogy on what it concerns the arrangement of representation registers, was identified at a fragmentary wall from Micia<sup>13</sup> (pl. I, fig. 4) where, in the lower register were two characters' busts.

Related with the character's gestures, with the right hand fingers directed over the *volumen* held in his left hand, there are some analogies on several monuments from Dacia Porolissensis, of which the most expressive is the posterior wall of *aedicula* from Zam-Sâncrai<sup>14</sup> (fig. 5 detail), or another fragment found at Porolissum<sup>15</sup> (fig. 6). It seems that this type of representation was extremely popular in the military world from Dacia Porolissensis.

In roman Dacia the *volumen* appears on about 19 monuments, most of them *aedicula* walls<sup>16</sup>. S. Chiş noticed the fact that the *volumen* and *theca calamaria* are attributes for parents, while the pens (*stili*) and bags (*crumenae*) are attributes of children and usually only one character is wearing these symbols. Symbols of intellectual occupations have double function: one is for the posterity to transmit a certain image of the deceased as an intellectual during his life, and the second purpose is to show that the deceased was a servant of the Muses, patrons of intellectual occupations, from which he hopes that they will ensure immortality in the afterlife, as a reward for serving them<sup>17</sup>. The attitude of the man must have been a solemn one. The sculptor tried to imitate the way of rendering a character with *toga*, but lacking naturalness and clearly not understanding all elements of the mantle.

9 Gudea 1997, p. 64.

10 Floca, W. Wolski 1973, p. 14, nr. 34, fig. 45-46; L. Ţeposu-Marinescu 1982, p. 212, nr. 62, Pl. XXXVII.

11 C. Ciongradi 2007, p. 215-216, Ae/A 4a, Taf. 75 a-b.

12 C. Ciongradi 2007, p. 222-223, Ae/M14, M15, M16, Taf. 78.

13 C. Ciongradi 2007, p. 223, Ae/M19, Taf. 79 a-b.

14 L. Ţeposu-Marinescu 1982, p. 221, nr. 107, Pl. XLI.

15 Petruţ, Zăgreanu 2011, p. 208, nr. 30, pl. 4/30.

16 Chiş 2014, p. 162.

17 Chiş 2014, p. 163.

## 2. Sculptural fragment (Pl. II, fig. 7).

Discovery conditions: it was discovered in 2014 on the *via praetoria*, in the debris near the fort gate. On this occasion, we want to thank our colleague Ioan Bejenariu for kindly giving us this monument for publication. Inventory no.: CC B26/2014.

Considering the sculpture's fragmented state, it is difficult to specify to which type of monument it belongs. We know it is a funerary monument based on the representation type that appears on it: a funeral banquet scene, from which is preserved the feet of a *mensa tripes*. This one has curved legs, made in quite elegant manner, and the tabletop was probably carved in profile, but its upper side is not preserved. On the right side it appears one leg from a *kliné*, the *mensa* being rendered between its support feet. Given the fragmentary state of the monument, other remarks are impossible. This type of representation of *mensa tripes* we find on few other monuments in Dacia Porolissensis, on an *aedicula* wall found at Gilău<sup>18</sup>(Pl. II, fig. 8), on the fragment from Șaula<sup>19</sup> (Pl. II, fig. 9) and on the pillar element from Ilișua<sup>20</sup>(Pl. II, fig.10).

From Buciumi in the old bibliography is mentioned a fragment of a possible funerary inscription, probably a fragment of a funerary *stela* inscription field, raised by Valeria, the wife and her son, in honor of the deceased, that remained anonymous. But this monument which seems to have been carried to Blaj in 1873, is now lost. Archaeological discoveries of numerous pieces sculpted in stone were known only from honorary inscriptions or fragments of architectural elements, from different buildings inside the fort. The emergence of these two fragments from the new excavations inside the fort, bring some new data regarding the local roman sculptural workshop activity, so little known. We know now, that at some point in the necropolis near the fort, were construction of *aedicula* type, and the funerary banquet theme, so well known as a funerary sculptural monuments representations in all Roman Dacia, was used also by the local roman sculptors.

### Noi monumente sculpturale din castrul roman de la Buciumi (Rezumat)

Descoperirile arheologice referitoare la piese sculpturale în piatră din castrul roman de la Buciumi erau numeroase doar în ceea ce privea fragmente de inscripții onorifice sau elemente arhitectonice provenite de la diferite construcții din interiorul castrului. Studiul acesta aduce în discuție două noi monumente sculpturale descoperite pe teritoriul castrului: 1. Perete lateral de *aedicula* (Pl.1a-b) fragmentar, cu bustul unui personaj, până la nivelul gâtului și mâinile acestuia, într-una din ele ținând se pare un *volumen*; 2. Fragment monument sculptural, decorat cu scena banchetului funerar, din care se mai păstrează picioarele unei *mensa tripes*.

Apariția celor două fragmente din ultimele cercetări aduc câteva completări privind activitatea atelierului local de sculptură, atât de puțin cunoscută. Știm că la un moment dat în necropola din apropierea castrului aici existau construcții funerare de tip *aedicula* iar mult cunoscuta temă a banchetului funerar era folosită și la reprezentările monumentelor sculpturale funerare din zonă.

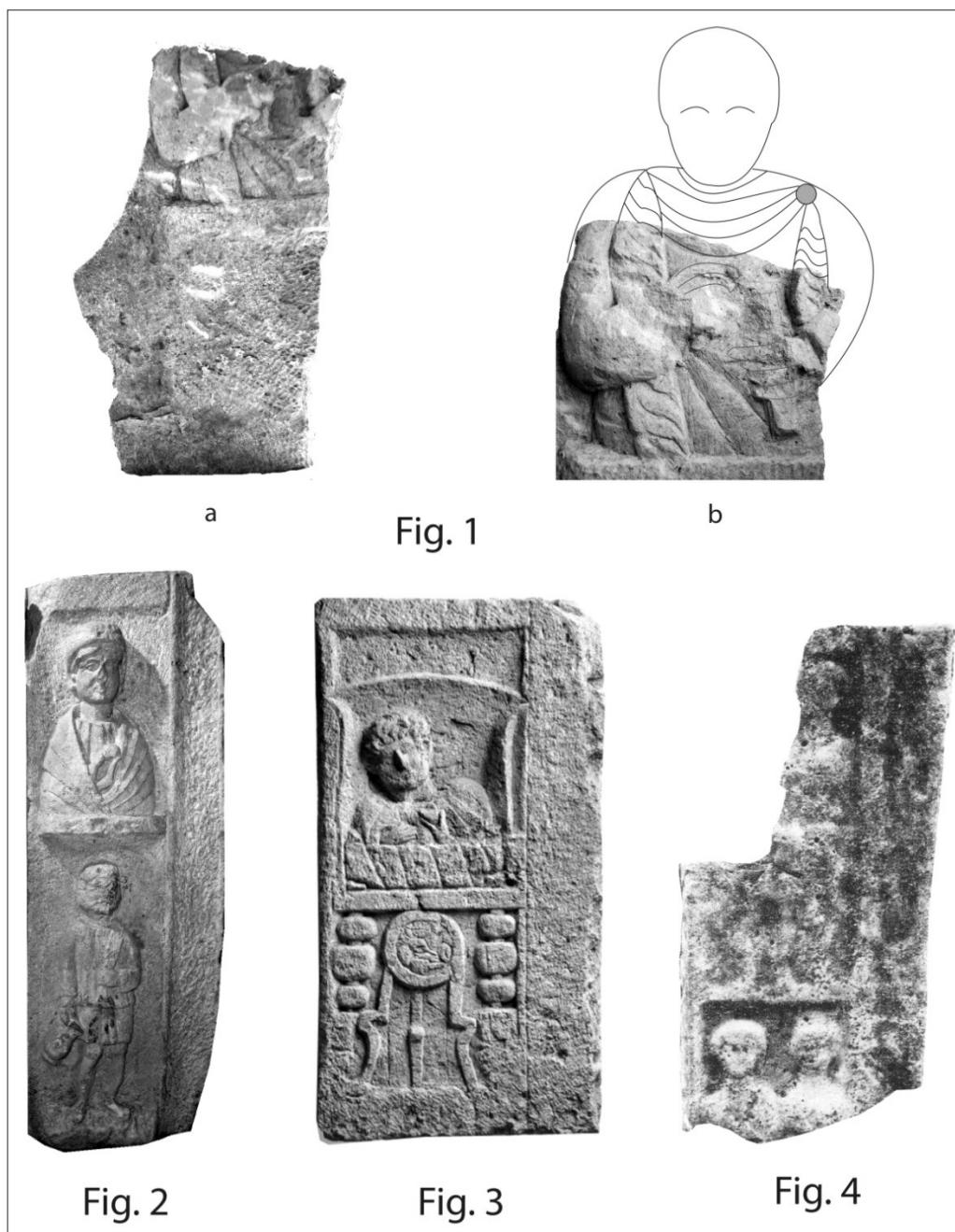
### Bibliografie

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| C. Ciongradi 2007        | Carmen Ciongradi, <i>Grabmonument und Sozialer Status in Oberdakien</i> , Cluj-Napoca, 2007.  |
| CIL                      | <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , Berlin.   |
| Chiș 2014                | S.O. Chiș, <i>Imaginarul funerar în Dacia romană</i> , Cluj-Napoca, 2014.   |
| Diaconescu 1979          | Al. Diaconescu, <i>Un fragment de ediculă din Dacia Porolissensis cu reprezentarea banchetului funebru</i> , AMN, 16, 1979, p. 545-549.                 |
| Floca, Wolski 1973       | O. Floca, Wanda Wolski, <i>Aedicula funerară în Dacia</i> , BMI, 62, 1973, 3, p. 4-50.  |
| Gudea 1997               | N. Gudea, <i>Castrul roman de la Buciumi</i> , Zalău, 1997.   |
| Russu 1959               | I.I. Russu, <i>Castrul și garnizoana de la Buciumi</i> , SCIV, 10/2, 1959, p. 305- 320.   |
| L. Țeposu-Marinescu 1982 | Lucia Țeposu-Marinescu, <i>Funerary Monuments in Dacia Superior and Dacia Porolissensis</i> , Oxford, B.A.R., 1982.                                     |
| Petruț, Zăgreanu 2011    | D. Petruț, R. Zăgreanu, <i>The Funerary Stelae from Porolissum. Typological, Iconographical and Epigraphic Aspects</i> , Marisia, 31, 2011, p. 189-219. |
| Torma 1864               | K. Torma, <i>Adalék észak-nyugati Dacia föld és felirátához</i> , Magyar Tudomány Akadémia Évkönyve, XI, p. 1-34.                                       |

18 Floca, W. Wolski 1973, p. 22-24, nr. 69, fig. 87.

19 Diaconescu 1979, p. 545-549.

20 Gaiu, Zăgreanu 2011, p. 94-95, nr. II.2.1, Pl. X/II.2.1.



Pl. I





Fig. 5



Fig. 6

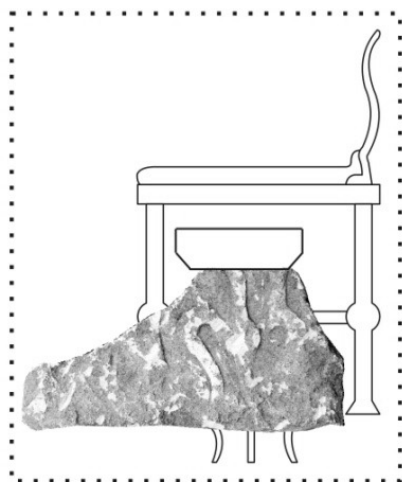


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Pl. II