

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AXES RELATED TO ROMAN CAMPS IN BISTRIȚA-NĂȘĂUD, CLUJ AND SĂLAJ COUNTIES IN ROMANIA

Ioana Irina GUDEA<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** *Archaeological Axes Related to Roman Camps in Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj and Sălaj Counties in Romania.* The current research has a desire to launch the concept of archaeological tourism on the territory of Romania. The goal is to make tourists aware of the many discoveries made over the years and to create a form of self-contained tourism. We identified 2 main tourist axes of the Roman camps in Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj and Sălaj counties, camps that once belonged to the territory of Dacia Porolissensis. The role of these axes is to create a notoriety of the archaeological destinations and to reduce the transit type tourism. Through institutional cooperation these areas could become points of regional and national interest.

**Keywords:** *tourism, archaeology, heritage, touristic axes, Roman camp, Dacia Porolissensis.*

### Introduction

It is known that Romania is a country with a very rich archaeological cultural heritage and traces of human existence can be found since Antiquity. The presence of many archaeological sites and uniqueness elements from all over the country can favour a significant growth of a niche of tourism with high potential. The archaeological heritage is a broad concept, being represented by the set of archaeological real estate listed in the National Archaeological Repertory and also by the movable property, objects and traces that attest the human presence.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Babeș-Bolyai University, Faculty of Geography, Doctoral School of Geography, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, e-mail: ioana.gudea@yahoo.com*



The current research focuses on the connection between two different disciplines, which nonetheless share common elements. For the purpose of the paper to be better understood it is necessary to clarify the two terms, tourism and archaeology (Lawrence and Collins-Kreiner, 2018). A more general definition argues that archaeology is a discipline that studies human activity in the past through analysis of cultural material and data left behind and discovered. Archaeology as a science is defined from several points of view and there are a lot of various definitions, but its purpose remains the one to reconstruct the previous way of life through the left evidence such as artifacts, architecture and many other objects. Since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, archaeology has become a complex study based on ideas and techniques derived from related disciplines (Renfrew and Bahn, 2005). Cultural tourism has a variety of definitions depending on the purpose of the tourist's destination and motivation. However, a definition that is relevant to this study was given by the World Tourism Organisation and defines it as the activity that people manifest in the meeting of their need for diversity and knowledge in order to raise the cultural level of the individual giving birth to knowledge, experiences and meetings (Richards, 2003).

## **Materials and Methods**

The current research targets the camps along the Limes in the Dacia Porolissensis region which has a high potential of tourism development. A Roman camp represents the fortified military camp in which a military unit classified in legions, regular auxiliary troops with 500 soldiers, 1000 soldiers or irregular auxiliary units were stationed (Isac et al., 2013). Almost all Roman camps underwent 2 stages of construction: the wooden phase and then the stone phase. The process of building the camps in Roman Dacia began under the rule of Trajan (106 AD) and further consolidated under Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and the rule of the Severus. They were abandoned after the Aurelian retreat in 274-275 AD.

The starting point is in Bistrița-Năsăud County: the Roman camp in Ilișua. The axis goes then to the camp situated in Cășeu in Cluj County and then in Sălaj County, where there are 2 camps with a great significance for archaeology and tourism: Porolissum and Buciumi. From Porolissum the axis develops a southern direction, it goes to Buciumi and it ends at the Bologna camp in Cluj County.

The research methodology of this article is based on two directions: the tourist function of the archaeological sites and the development of tourism through the tourist zones and the creation of the archaeotouristic development

axis. In order to determine the tourist function of the archaeological settlement the methodology required the analysis of the tourism related statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania and the data collected from the field analysis with physical trips to locations. The development axis model was intended to highlight the strong relationship that tourism and archaeology have. The archaeotourism axis of the Roman camps on the limes from Dacia Porolissensis from Bistrița-Năsăud to Sălaj and to Cluj County can be a strong starting point in the development of archaeological tourism. The main goal is to reduce transit tourism and transform it into a stationary tourism in order to reduce seasonality.

Built with the idea of defending the empire, the purpose of a camp was to provide protection and safe conditions for military soldiers in their 20-25 years of service, until they became a 'veteranus' (Isac et al., 2013). The structure of the camps is a generic one, which was largely respected in every defensive construction in Dacia. In addition to their military and defense role, they became more important from an administrative and economic point of view. Around them started to develop networks of settlements which were built to provide food and equipment.

Being outside and open to the general public throughout the year, the archaeological settlements can feel the imprint of the season because in the cold season it is more difficult to visit some of them. As far as the climate is concerned there is a moderate continental influence by the western atmospheric circulation (Isac, 2003). In the case of the camps of Ilișua and Cășeu, the local topoclimate is influenced by the presence of the Someș River, thus winters being moderate-harsh and the summers hot.

### ***The Roman camp of Ilișua – Arcobadara***

Ilișua is a village located in Uriu (a commune on the E58 European road, DJ171 county road) in Bistrița-Năsăud County. It is located in the lower basin of Someșul Mare river, 20 kilometers upstream of its confluence with Someșul Mic. In this basin, due to the important tributaries of this river, a road has been created since antiquity which was pointed out by a series of archeological discoveries (Gaiu and Zăgreanu, 2011). The camp of Ilișua is placed in a strategic point with a good visibility and control over the communication axes which was the reason why the Romans built here this camp with a defensive role.

The camp was the main Roman defensive base in the northern part of Dacia, being composed of a large network of burgus and watch towers. A civil settlement, temples, baths, workshops, houses and a cemetery were developed around the camp.

### ***The Roman camp of Cășeiu – SAMVM***

Cășeiu is located in the N-W part of Cluj County on the national road Cluj-Dej-Baia Mare (DN17/E58). The camp is located 1.5 km from the village and 300 m from the Someș River (Isac, 2003). The settlement area is located at the interference of three geomorphological units: Ciceului Hills to N-E, Gârbăului Hills to the W and Dejului Hills to the S-W. The closest height is represented by the Măgura Hill (419m) from where there is a very good visibility of the entire settlement. The hydrographic system played a very important role in the location of the camp and military settlements. The camp is exactly positioned at the confluence of the Someșul Mic with Someșul Mare, which at Dej forms the Someș (Samus) which passes by the camp and by the civil settlement.

The SAMVM camp was part of the northern portion of the defensive system represented by the northern limes of Roman Dacia, with the Someș River as its axis where the camps of Tihău, Livezile and Orheiul Bistriței were also included. A military vicus attested in inscriptions under the name of SAMVM was born around the camp, but the full name does not appear as such but it is implied from the inscriptions that the name refers to both the camp and the vicus (Isac et al., 2013).

### ***The Roman camp of Bologa – RESCVLVM***

The Roman camp is located on the left side of the Crișul Repede River between the localities of Morlaca and Poieni at a short distance from the discharge into the Crișul Repede of the Sebeș River, also called Săcuieului Valley. The distance from the national road is about 1.5 km (Gudea, 1977). The traces of the camp can be seen very well on the ground and on all its sides. One can see a ca. 2.5 meters high wave against the ground outside and inside.

In the first phase, between 108-118 AD, the camp was part of the N-W sector of the defensive system of Dacia province together with the advanced line of towers and small fortifications in front of the camp (Gudea, 1977). After 118 AD it was part of the western sector of the border of the province Dacia Porolissensis. Together with the above-mentioned elements of defence, the strategic tasks were to control the traffic along the Crișul Repede Valley and to stop the attempts to enter it from the West.

### ***The Roman camp of Buciumi***

At the feet of Meseș Mountains and at their extremities, the Romans placed a series of well-chosen camps connected by a well-organized network of roads and with an advanced line of towers. Within the system of fortifications in the

North-Western sector of the limes, the Buciumi camp occupies a very important place being located halfway between Bologa and Tihău; these are the southern and northern ends of the limes (Chirilă et al., 1972). The Meseș Mountains create an accentuated curvature in this area and the Buciumi camp is in the middle of it.

The camp is located north of the current village between the confluence of two secondary streams, namely Lupului Valley and Mihăiesei Valley, both flowing into the Agrij Valley. The land on which the camp is built is dominated by several higher hills in the immediate vicinity and between the camp and the summit of Meseș Mountains there are a series of other hills (Măgura Sângeorzului, Dealul Flămând, Măgura Boznei) that hide part of the mountains (Chirilă et al., 1972).

The location of this camp was chosen due to the possibility of controlling both the advanced line of the observation towers in the Meseș Mountains and the passers-by directly connected with the Bologa camp and last but not least due to the connections with the camps on the northern border of Dacia Porolissensis (Găzdac and Pripon, 2012).

### ***The Roman camp of Moigrad- Porolissum***

The archaeological site of Porolissum is spread over several villages: Jac, Brebi, Moigrad, Ortelec and Stana (all in Sălaj County) but the main access to the camp is from Moigrad due to the access roads built here and the bulk of discoveries are visible on the territory belonging to Moigrad village. At the southern end of the village there is a chain of hills that delimits the archaeological territory of the village to the north and northwest: Porcarului Hill, Comorii Hill, Ferice Hill, Ursoaie Hill and Goroniște Hill. To the south and east of these hills, in the middle of a basin formed by valleys, rises a high massif, named the Pomet Hill. The Roman camp is located about 200 meters from the last houses of the village and at a distance of 3.5 kilometers from the road Zalău-Creaca-Jibou.

The Roman military complex at Porolissum is located on the northern border and it constituted the basis of the defensive system of Dacia in its north-western part. Within this complex, there were 2 camps of major importance: the Pomet camp and the Citera camp having both strategic and tactical role. Within the Porolissum complex, the camp on Pomet was the largest and most important fortification, a military base. Due to its grandiose dimensions and totally out of the ordinary position, this camp can be seen as a reference fortification (Gudea, 1977).

## Results

### *The tourist phenomenon in the villages to which the ancient settlements belong*

In order to outline an image of the tourism within each archaeological site, the analysis of the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania were used and relevant indicators were chosen such as: number of tourist structures, existing accommodation capacity, accommodation capacity in function, number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays. The purpose of this approach was to identify if there is a tourist movement and if the villages are transited or visited. This data set helps to create archaeotourism axes in the context of sustainable development.

The first step in this analysis was the identification of the tourist reception structures and the accommodation capacity in operation within each village where the Roman camps are situated. The precise number of tourist units cannot be given due to the lack of owner declaration which ought to be introduced in the national record system.

**Table 1.** Tourist units in the targeted localities

No	Locality	County	Year	Agro-tourism pensions	Tourist Villas
1	Uriu	BN	2021	2	-
2	Cășeiu	CJ	2021	2	-
3	Poieni	CJ	2021	11	1
4	Buciumi	SJ	2021	2	-
5	Mirșid	SJ	2021	1	-

Due to the geographical and hydrographical advantages of the neighbouring localities, the village of Poieni offers good opportunities for the development of tourist services. The vicinity of the Valea Drăganului Reservoir, of a well preserved early medieval settlement, as well as the archaeological discoveries at Bologa make tourism more present on the territory of this commune.

There is a very low number of tourist units in the village of Mirșid in spite of its proximity to the Porolissum complex and the conservation works within the complex. Another cause for this reduced number of tourist units might be the proximity of the village to Zalău, where accommodation conditions for tourists are far better than in a village.

In order to determine the type of tourism practiced in the reference villages, the number of tourist arrivals and the number of overnights stays were analyzed, having as reference point the accommodation capacity in operation (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Accommodation capacity in operation

No	Locality	County	Year	Agro-tourism pensions	Tourist Villas	Accommodation capacity in operation
1	Uriu	BN	2021	2	-	6580
2	Cășeiu	CJ	2021	2	-	8760
3	Poieni	CJ	2021	11	1	55917
4	Buciumi	SJ	2021	2	-	509
5	Mirșid	SJ	2021	1	-	5840

According to tables number 3 and number 4 a trend of transit tourism is identified, as tourists spent one night, but no more than 2 within the tourist units (Buciumi, Cășeiu, Ilișua). The data provided by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania report that in the case of Mirșid, where the Porolissum camp is located, the arrivals and overnight stays were non-existent. From the available official sources that were available, it was found out that the existing tourist unit did not work during the whole year of 2021.

The tourist reception structures are not used to their maximum capacity, which can be less encouraging for entrepreneurs and stops them from developing businesses for the prosperity of tourism.

**Table 3.** Tourist arrivals

No	Locality	County	Year	Tourist arrivals
1	Uriu	BN	2021	643
2	Cășeiu	CJ	2021	476
3	Poieni	CJ	2021	7568
4	Buciumi	SJ	2021	175
5	Mirșid	SJ	2021	-

**Table 4.** Tourist overnights

No	Locality	County	Year	Tourist overnights
1	Uriu	BN	2021	1012
2	Cășeiu	CJ	2021	497
3	Poieni	CJ	2021	16912
4	Buciumi	SJ	2021	351
5	Mirșid	SJ	2021	-

In order to encourage the development of the tourist phenomenon it would be necessary to take certain measures which could contribute to the increase of tourism activity. These should increase the sustainable capitalization of the existing ruins, their promotion in various attractive ways, the creation of a main archaeoturistic axis followed by secondary ones, to develop and encourage a regional and national cultural interest for archaeotourism.

### ***Archaeoturistic axes and development zones***

The three counties discussed here (Bistrița-Năsăud, Sălaj and Cluj) could assure good conditions for archaeological tourism development as the interweaving of the anthropological heritage with the natural conditions highlights a true tourism potential. The Roman camps in these three counties hide in themselves real treasures whose potential have not been yet capitalized. Having their potential been made evident, they could constitute premises for the creation of the main tourist axes.

Starting from these premises, 2 major axes were created: Ilișua-Cășeiu-Porolissum and Porolissum-Buciumi-Bologa. These archaeoturistic axes were developed on two geographical ones: from East to West (Ilișua-Cășeiu-Porolissum) and from North to South (Porolissum-Buciumi-Bologa). The direction of these axes can be reversed, they work in both directions.

For a good functionality of the axes in the present conditions for archaeotourism development it is necessary to develop tourism in a somewhat unitary manner, following common development objectives. The development and function of tourism are in close interaction with the human factor: in the manner the tourist manages his visit and his relation to the environment. Further the axes should be well connected to the regional infrastructure system. To develop the tourism and the functionality of the axes, a series of development objectives were proposed:



*- Development through the connection of the axes to the regional infrastructure system*

The access to the targeted camps in this research is favorable and easy because most of them are on a main national road being signaled to a more visible extent (Porolissum, Buciumi) but Ilișua and Bologa are less visible to a potential tourist. The access roads are either European, national or county paved roads. Moreover, the sites are connected between them by road ever since they have been built.

The railway line is an advantage in the development of the axes. Even if the railway line does not cross directly all the localities where the Roman camps are, it is at short distances, for example: the main electrified railway crosses near Ilișua; a station is at Halta Reteag which is about 8 km from the camp. In Cășeiu the main electrified railway passes the village with a station at Halta Cășeiu; Bologa has a non-electrified railway that crosses the village along the European road E60. The camp is at 800 meters from the station. From Dej to Zalău the non-electrified railway reaches the railway junction in the town of Jibou, from where a secondary branch of the railway goes to Zalău. From Zalău the access to the camp of Porolissum (11 km to the N-W) and the camp of Buciumi (11 km to the S) is only by land which means public transportation, rent-a-car etc.

In this case, there are also 2 railway routes that interconnect the camps: the Ilișua-Cășeiu-Porolissum-Buciumi axis and the Ilișua-Bologa axis. There are direct rail links between these camps. For Buciumi and Porolissum the stop is at Zalău, from where other means of transportation are needed.

*- Tourism development by increasing the number of tourist units*

In order to reach the ideal form of tourism it is necessary to reduce the transit type of tourism and 'one day-visits'. One of the factors that can contribute to this phenomenon is the presence of the tourism supply. The existence in small numbers or even the non-existence in certain areas can lead to a low degree of tourist satisfaction and directly affects the tourist traffic in the area. Accommodation and public catering are basic tourist facilities that have a decisive role in the time the tourist spends there.

The quality of the services offered is necessary to meet the expectations of the tourists. Unfortunately, the tourist phenomenon within the localities where the Roman camps are located is reduced for several reasons: the lack of promotion and interest, but also due to the small number of tourist units. Out of the total number of units with accommodation function in every locality, not all of them have public catering function. Although in some areas there is still a tourist movement, the units are not designed to function in relation to the

existing potential. The development of tourism and raising the potential of the archaeotourism axes can be done by attracting investments in the construction of new units or the reconstruction of the existing ones by rethinking all aspects related to capacity and functions. In addition to the basic facilities such as accommodation and food services, there are no leisure services that have a role in animating the stay.

*- Development of archaeotourism axes through constant promotion*

Unfortunately, at present, there is no major campaign for promoting the archaeological tourism in our country. In large sites such as Sarmisegetusa Ulpia Traiana, Tomis, Callatis, where there is interest and investments for such activities, there are local promotion campaigns.

The most promoted camp among those targeted in the archaeotourism axes is the complex of Porolissum, followed by the one in Buciumi. In the case of the other settlements, the promotion is minimal or non-existent.

The promotion must result from institutional cooperation, with the involvement of public authorities together with entrepreneurs in the private field and the development of local, county and regional tourism projects. The channels and materials necessary for the promotion must be high-quality, with information in several international languages and with many suggestive images and tourist offers.

## **Conclusions**

The development of archaeotourism in Romania should start with taking into account the existing tourist potential, by drawing up a map of the places of interest, noting their stages of development as well as their growth from an economic point of view. Their economic development would generate positive impressions about the localities through which the axes pass and their results would be visible in both the social and the environmental fields.

In order to be acknowledged and be visible on national level, this type of tourism should be included in the historical and archeological tourist routes. If this has been achieved, hopefully there will be investors, there will be an increased number of tourist units with an improved activity and more facilities in the visited sites. With such measures taken, transit tourism and seasonality could be given away and a proper independent tourist activity could be created.

## REFERENCES

1. Buršić-Matijašić, V., Matijašić, R. (2016), *The management of archaeological heritage in Istria County*, in Urošević, N., Rakitovac, K.A. (eds.), *Models of valorisation of cultural heritage in sustainable tourism*, Juraj Dobrića University of Pula, Pula, 2017, pp. 177-190.
2. Chirilă, E., Gudea, N., Lucăcel, V., Pop, V. (1972), *Castrul roman de la Buciumi*, Muzeul de Istorie și Artă, Zalău, pp. 7-9.
3. Costea, M. (2011), *Development of Tourism in the Transalpine Area. Premises and possibilities*, Forum geografic. Studii și cercetări de geografie și protecția mediului, Volume 10, pp. 329-340.
4. Gaiu, C., Zăgreanu, R. (2011), *Inscripții și piese sculpturale din Castrul Roman de la Ilișua*, Editura Accent, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 7-12.
5. Găzdac, C., Pripon, E. (2012), *Castrul auxiliar de la Buciumi*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 11-15.
6. Gubam, D., Nomishan, T. (2020), *Archaeology and Tourism in Nigeria: An Overview*, Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies, Volume 9, pp. 91-101.
7. Gudea, N. (1997), *Das Römergrenzkastell von Bologa-Rescivlm/ Castrul roman de la Bologa-Rescivlm*, Congresul Internațional de studii asupra Frontierelor Imperiului Roman, Zalău, pp. 7-12.
8. Gudea, N. (1997), *Das Römergrenzkastell von Moigrad-Pomet. Porolissum 1/ Castrul roman de pe vârful Pomet- Moigrad. Porolissum 1*, Congresul Internațional de studii asupra Frontierelor Imperiului Roman, Zalău, pp. 7-12.
9. Gudea, N. (1997), *Der Meseș- Limes/Limesul de pe munții Meseș*, Congresul Internațional de studii asupra Frontierelor Imperiului Roman, Zalău, pp. 7-12.
10. Isac, D. (2003), *Castrul roman de la Samvm-Cășeiu*, Editura NAPOCA STAR, Cluj-Napoca, pp.18-23.
11. Isac, D., Găzdac, C. (2007), *The auxiliary forts from Samvm (Cășeiu) and Gilău*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 9-11.
12. Lawrence, N.K., Collins-Kreiner, N. (2018), *Visitors with their 'Backs to the archaeology' religious tourism and archaeology*, Journal of Heritage Tourism, Volume 14, pp. 138-149.
13. Marcu, F., Isac, A., Isac, D., Cupcea, D. (2013), *Peisajul geofizic al așezării de la Samvm și al frontierei romane a provinciei Dacia*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 4-6, pp.14-16.
14. Renfrew, C., Bahn, P. (2005), *Archaeology: The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London and New York.
15. Richards, G. (2003), *What is cultural Tourism?* in van Maaren, A. (ed.) *Erfgoed voor Toerisme*, Nationaal Contact Monumenten.
16. Wendrich, W. (2003), *Archaeology and Sustainable Tourism in Egypt: Protecting Community, Antiquities and Environment*, in Agnew, N., Bridgland, J. (eds.), *Of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation*, Getty Publications, Los Angeles, California, pp. 184-190.

