



Sit tibi terra levis

2013 was the year in which archaeology has lost several specialists who have dedicated their whole life to its practice. Not only this scientific field, but also their family, which included numerous friends, colleagues, admirers and foes, even the latter regarding them with the due respect. Their loss is as tragic as it is unexpected. All were senior researchers recognized nationally and internationally. The first was Alexandru Suceveanu, followed by Dan Isac, Dorin Alicu and Nubar Hampartumian. They were not alone, surrounded by friends and many people they have taught this very special craft to.

Dan Isac was part of a famous family that gave its name to the street where he lived, in downtown Cluj. The Isac family became famous through his great-grandfather and grandfather, dr. Aurel Isac, a famous member of the Memorandum movement, and Emil Isac, a representative of symbolism and modern literature, both involved in defending the rights of Romanians in Transylvania in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Despite these antecedents Dan Isac has dedicated his life to archaeology and Roman history, having a teaching career at Babeş-Bolyai University for over 40 years, becoming in 1969 at only 23 years of age, assistant professor, supporting courses and seminars in Roman army and pottery, but also in modern methods in archaeology. He has published over 70 studies and five books. His first preoccupation was the study of luxury pottery, Roman religion and Roman art, followed by the Roman army, by leading excavations in two major camps near the Northern frontier of Dacia. His research led to his international recognition, the results of excavations of Roman forts at Căşeiu and Gilău clarifying major issues of Roman provincial history. He was a polyglot, becoming recognized early as a European scientist, with scholarships in Athens, Venice, Frankfurt, Passau, Cologne and Stuttgart. He participated in numerous national and international congresses and conferences, also coordinating several research projects.

I remember Dan Isac, telling us how much he loves this profession, saying that at any moment had he been offered the option for something better, he would have chosen the same profession, without a second thought. He never doubted that choice he made; therefore passion was often the only thing that still kept him connected. Even when, as now, archaeological research was neglected by the

authorities, nothing stopped him to go on practising it, imagining it, attracting also others in this magic - the discoveries that are still to come. The most charming was the act of discovery itself, as it should be for each specialist, the emotion he felt and transmitted when after scraping a surface, a timber wall, a hut, a fountain or a pit appeared. He anticipated, after the German routine, and mastered every detail, although sometimes seeming theatrical for the younger. If he was leaving for the excavation at 5 a.m. nothing prevented him to leave behind the delayed colleagues.

Unfortunately, gradually we lose all those that can induce this passion to teach and to practice archaeology, without perverting its purpose. There are increasingly more people who practice archaeology, but fewer who understand and truly love it. His childlike, but charming naivety, sometimes needing additional explanations to understand jokes, was offset by a serious and deep understanding of the science that he practiced. He was a young optimistic spirit, loving the pleasures of life, beginning to age well, close to his children, but continuing to do his job. He was proud of his retired status, but failed to enjoy the hard-earned freedom. Hopefully he does where he is now.

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