TYPES OF GETO-DACIAN SETTLEMENTS AND DWELLINGS
IN IALOMIŢA BASIN

Mihaela Sencovici*

Key words: fortified settlements, non-fortified settlements, dwellings

Abstract: Ialomiţa Basin is one of those natural units that combine the essential features of the Romanian landscape with obvious particular characteristics. The fact that the physico-geographical structure is ranged in tiers, which constitutes the main feature of the territory belonging to Ialomiţa Basin, a feature that is however common to the entire Romanian land, is a consequence of the ample latitudinal development of the relief (8 m high at the confluence with the Danube and 2507 m high at Omu Peak). In general, based on the material that was discovered in different settlements, one can reconstitute the stage of development of the Geto-Dacian society in its different historical moments, which makes it possible to have a typology of the settlements that were used by the Geto-Dacians.

I. The natural environment

Ialomiţa Basin is situated in the south-east of the country, its general orientation going from north-west to south-east. The total surface of the basin is of 10 430 km², unequally divided between the three natural units: 15% mountains, 25% hills, 60% plains.

The mountainous unit is made up of: Leaota Mountains, Baiului Mountains, Bucegi Massif and Ciucaş Zăganu Massif. The inaccessible and abrupt relief, in correlation with the soil and climate from the high mountainous area constitute restrictive elements from the point of view of the permanent human settlements; however, pastoral activities are an activity practiced since times out of mind.

The Sub-Carpathians are made up of a succession of hills of different heights, strongly fragmented by the drainage network. At the entrance in the Sub-Carpathians, Ialomiţa Valley suddenly becomes larger. The southern line of the depression corridor is marked by a series of hills: Comani Hill (845 m), then Fata Mare Hill (774 m) on the right of Ialomiţa River, and Plaiu Sîrnei at the source of Bizdidel River. Another alignment is given by the Depression of Bârbuleş, which joins the Depression of Bezdăed in Ialomiţa Valley, both of them being limited in the south by a series of hills.

The plain, the youngest relief unit, is represented by a small slope of the interfluvies, which are fragmented. Non-homogeneous from the physico-geographical point of view, this relief unit comprises the following sub-units:
- the high sub-mountainous plain (at the contact with the Sub-Carpathians), with a slight slope and moderately fragmented, with divergent valleys and fan-like terraces, which disappear step by step downstream (Târgovişte Plain, Prahovei High Plain, Istriţei Hill)
- the subsidence plain is low (under 80 m), almost horizontal (Gherghiţei Plain and Săratei Plain)
- the loess plains go beyond the limits of Ialomiţa Basin (Vlăsiei Plain, Mostiştei Plain, Bărăganului Plain – with sand hills and subsidence micro-relief)

II. Types of settlements

The archaeological research has led to the identification of an important number of fortified and non-fortified settlements, arranged uniformly in a varied geographical environment, which has been turned to good use by the Geto-Dacians.

* Valahia University of Târgovişte
1. Fortified settlements

The main elements of the fortifications are: fosses associated with walls (made of earth, with stone cores or just of stone) and sometimes with palisades (simple or multiple ones). Called *davae* in the Geto-Dacian language, these fortified settlements were economic, political, military and cult centers, always situated in a densely populated area.

We will try to present briefly the most important Geto-Dacian settlements in Ialomița basin:

a) *Gura Vitioarei* (Pravhova County) – favorable position, situated on Movila Hill on the eastern side of Teleajăn River, at its confluence with Donciului Rivulet. The ceramic fragments found here prove that the area was inhabited.

b) *Piscul Crăsani* (Balaciu Commune, Ialomița County) – situated between the villages of Crăsani and Copuzu, on an outlet of the right bank of Ialomița River, this fortified town, subject to permanent erosion, occupied a dominant position above the ways of communication going along Ialomița River. According to the inventory of the discoveries (settlement remains, native and Greek ceramic, coins, ornament objects) the fortified town belongs chronologically to the period between the end of the second century B.C. and the beginning of the first century A.D.

c) *The settlement from Tinosu* occupies a strategic position at the boundary between hills and plain, on a prominent area of the terrace from the eastern bank of Prahova River. The fortification of this settlement consists in a wall and a fosse. On top of the wall, a palisade was built, stuck with massive wattles of clay mixed with straw. The inventory is made up of: local and imported ceramics, metallic objects, a candelabrum of Greek-Italian origin, a treasure of Vârteju-București-type Getic coins, a Roman coin made of bronze dating from the time of Claudius and bearing Agrippina’s effigy, which situate the locality between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D.

d) *The settlement from Iedera* (Dâmbovița County). In the point “Cetățuia”, 4 km north-east of Iedera village, on a hill oriented north-west – south-east, there is a fortified Geto-Dacian settlement identified in 1934 by D. Berciu. The plateau is defended towards north, west and east by the abrupt sides of the valleys Ruda, Cetățuia Mare and Cetățuia Mică; towards south the access is blocked by a wall and a defense fosse. The archaeological material discovered here confirms the Geto-Dacian character of this settlement.

e) *The settlement from Pietroasele-Gruiu Dării* (Buzău County). It is situated at around 4 km away from the center of Pietroasele Commune on a summit of Istrița Hill, surrounded by abrupt flanks towards south-east.

Two levels of Geto-Dacian dwellings were discovered. At the first, the fortification consists in a wall made of stone and earth and a fosse. The second level does not exactly represent a dwelling place; in fact, it is a place of cult, where the researchers discovered tombs placed in a ring of stone, with a rich inventory, containing coins as well.

2) Non-fortified settlements

Situated along the valleys of Ialomița River and of its tributaries, on their terraces, the non-fortified settlements have turned to better account the natural conditions offered by this location. These non-fortified settlements are often found nearby the fortified ones. For instance, near the fortified settlement from Tinosu the researchers discovered the open settlements from Cătunu, Butimanu, Bujoreanca, Frasinu.

*The settlement from Cătunu* (Cornești Commune, Dâmbovița County), situated on a terrace of Ialomița River in a forested area at the limit between the plain and the hills, presents two levels of inhabitation: (1). dwellings dating from the first century B.C. and (2). under this level, two earth huts and two pit houses were found, dating from before the
first century B.C. The fragments of luxury ceramics, the cups and the objects made of iron that were discovered here reflect the high standard of living of the population.

The settlement from Ocnita, situated 1 km away from nowadays Ocnița locality, in the point “La Hoagă”, was discovered in April 1979 while some arrangement works of Ocnita Rivulet, a tributary of Slanic River were taking place. It consists of traces of a Geto-Dacian settlement. The ceramics worked by hand (rushlights, jar-like vases decorated with incised motifs in relief, a pot for victuals), ceramics made at the wheel (fragments of fruit dishes, mugs, bowls, strainers).

III. Types of dwellings

The buildings destined to be inhabited are the most numerous architectonic achievements in these Geto-Dacian settlements. They are divided into surface dwellings and dwellings built in the ground (huts and semi-huts). In order to build their dwellings, the Geto-Dacians used wood, clay and, exceptionally, stone and brick. The art of building was passed from one generation to the next.

1. Surface dwellings

The most numerous Geto-Dacian dwellings, met both in the areas of plain as well as on the hills and mountains, are those built at the surface. Clay and wood were used for their construction. The roof with two sides was made of reed or straws, and in the hill and mountain areas tiles of wood (and very rarely ordinary tiles) were used. The floor was made of clay mixed with chaff or straws, generally placed on a layer of river stones. Permanent surface dwellings were discovered at Piscul Crăsani, Tinosu, Ocnita, and seasonal ones in the mountainous area and in the plain. It was impossible to reconstitute the plan of such dwellings, but one thing remains certain: they were built at the surface of the earth, on poles put in the ground, having between them a knitted work of twigs covered with clay to keep it tight.
2. Dwellings built in the ground

They are divided into huts and semi-huts, depending on the depth of the cavity that was dug compared to the level of treading on the antic soil.

a) The huts, which go 0.80-1 m below the treading level, are situated in plain areas. Their design is usually oval and rarely rectangular with rounded corners.

In general they have just one room (3.50/3m), the inhabited room was relatively large and the entrance was found on the long axis and one had to climb down on steps carved in the earth. The walls were covered in knitted work between the wooden poles sustaining the roof; the roof was made of reed or straws shaped conically or in two sides and situated close to the earth. It remains a mystery how these huts were warmed, as there were no fireplaces; the warmth provided by their being buried in the ground could not have been sufficient. It is possible that the floor of these dwellings may have been covered with skins or birch bark.

b) The semi-huts - the design of these dwellings is quasi-round or oval, rectangular or polygonal (irregular). The building system consists in a ditch of up to 0.50m in the ground below the treading level, the walls are built on poles covered with knitted work, which is fixed with clay on both sides. Sometimes there were holes in the floor were victuals were kept, but separately these holes can be found outside these dwellings. Such a semi-hut was found at Cătunu (Dâmboviţa County).

The area of Ialomiţa Basin, especially its Sub-Carpathian zone, was intensely inhabited by the Geto-Dacians, a fact that is confirmed by the numerous discoveries that were attributed to them.

References

Conovici N., Neagu M. (1983), Șantierul arheologic de la Pîscul Crăsani, Materiale, XV, Oradea
Diaconescu M. (1989), Contribuţii la studierea civilizaţiei geto-dacilor pe teritoriul judeţului Dâmboviţa. Aşezarea de la Ooniţa, Târgovişte
Diaconescu P. (1975), Cercetări arheologice de teren în zona satului Cătunu, comuna Corneşti, Judeţul Dâmboviţa, Valachica, VII
Loghin V. (1997), Modelarea actuală a reliefului şi degradarea terenurilor în bazinul Ialomiţei, Bucureşti
Popp N. (1939), Subcarpaţii dintre Dâmboviţa şi Prahova. Studiu geomorfolologic, St. cerc. geogr., III, SRRG, Bucureşti