

## PHASES IN THE HUMANIZING OF THE CRIȘ PLAIN RURAL SPACE SINCE ITS APPEARANCE IN DOCUMENTS

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**Abstract:** *Phases in the humanizing of the Criș Plain rural space since its appearance in documents.* We observe the main phases of the space humanizing process from the Criș Plain and we emphasise the undoubted age and continuity of the native population of the area. Using archeological, historical, geographical, ethnographical and topographical sources we trace the evolution of settlement on the Criș Plain in the wider context of the Tisa Plain as a whole; also Transylvania as a component of Carpathian-Danubian space which is the ultimate framework for explanation.

**Rezumat:** *Faze în procesul de umanizare al spațiului rural din Câmpia Crișurilor de la apariția sa în documente.* În încercarea de a surprinde principalele etape ale umanizării spațiului din Câmpia Crișurilor, considerăm că ar fi importantă ilustrarea indubitabilei vechimi și continuități a populației autohtone pe aceste meleaguri și mai ales posibilitatea în care aceasta, aflată într-o permanentă relație cu alohtonii, a reușit să-și păstreze neștirbită identitatea și să-și organizeze viața socială în funcție de propriile sale posibilități. Urmărind diversele tipuri de izvoare arheologice, istorice, geografice, etnografice, topografice, etc., vom încerca să surprindem evoluția umanizării Câmpiei Crișurilor în contextul devenirii istorice a întregului spațiu al Câmpiei Tisei, inclusiv a celui Transilvan, ca părți componente ale spațiului carpatodanubian, deoarece numai raportând-o la o astfel de scară, considerăm că aceasta ar fi în măsură să ofere cadrul unor explicații mai plauzibile.

**Key-words:** *humanizing process, dacians, hovel, Crișurilor Plain.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *proces de umanizare, daci, bordei, Câmpia Crișurilor.*



## 1. THE BEGINNINGS OF HUMANIZING IN THE CRIȘURILOR PLAIN

In the pre-historical period the human life was powerful influenced by nature, which offered to the primitive men various conditions of accessibility (valley edges, terrains, shelter place (caves) and food which have allowed a certain stability.

The earlier inhabitation beginnings advance to quaternary, when the warm and cold periods alternation have determined a certain mammal cycling and the Paleolithic men (The Neanderthal Men) was bound to adopting to the climatic conditions, or living in the open arranging simple cabins, or he were living in caves.

Due to the appeared changes from Post - Glacial Period the Tisa Plain was not completely exempted from the Panonic Lake waters, this being easily flooded and swampy even after the Levantine waters recession. In fact, the inhabitation conditions especially for the plain low area were not favorable only more later. In these conditions, the paleolithic population was bounded to locate in the higher areas from the Occidental Carpathians periphery. In this way it is explained the fact that Paleolithical traces were not discovered in the plain but in the surroundings areas or in the Apuseni Mountains (Vadu Crișului cave), even in certain capes situated in the front of them (Fughiu, Peștiș, Iosășel, near Gurahont).

The carving stone and bone tools remains, fire hearths discovered here which age determination is supposed that belongs to the Superior Paleolithic marked important changes in the human life organizing process. Now, it seems that it takes place the first work division which is marking the passing from the harvester, hunter and the fisher stadium of the man to the individualization of the first activities in the field of the land cultivation, period that correspond with the passes to the Neolithic Stadium of the modern man civilization.

The Neolithic (IV-III b. o. e. millenniums) represents for the analyzed space the period in which these places (especially these from the higher plain and from the contact area of it with the adjacent hills) begin to be well-populated as a consequence of the imposed sedentary activity by the agriculture practicing. In this context, it appeared the stable settlements emplaced on the river terraces, at that times took place the animals domestication justified the numerously bones that belong to the domestic species, the primitive cultivation of the crops, the cereals rests – straws and chaff being frequently in the discovered ceramic paste.

During the all Neolithic Period this area has been resigned under a directly influence of a population that came from Orient through Antlia, Ciclad and Thesalia, the diffusion process being represented by a ethnical migration which contributed to the formation of a Neolithic cultural complex known under the name as Starcevo - Criș Culture, considered the oldest Neolithic culture from the Romanian territory (Doina Ignat, 2000).

From the geographical point of view the cultural vectors of the Starcevo Criș Complex have been occupying in the west part of the county the plain area (Biharia, Cefa, Oradea, Salca, Șantău Mic, Sânnicolaul Român, Sântandrei) and the surrounding hills area (Râpa, Suplacu de Barcău, Tășad).

The settlements were located on the terraces with lower fall (Biharia) and even on the

rivers bridges (Sântandrei) these being unfortressed with a single living level. The archeological diggings made in the areas of these settlements (Râpa near Tinca, Biharia – Dumitrașcu, S., 1972, 1973, Suplacu de Barcău, and Fughiu – Ignat Doina, 1978, 1979, Cefa – Dumitrașcu, S., Crișan, I., 1985) have revealed three types of households: cots (cabins), quasi - cabins and surface dwellings.

The cabins were deepest dwellings on the ground, being frequent nor in the oldest phases and their presence on the West Plain prove a real cultural unity with the settlements situated on the others Romanian provinces they not being attested in Hungary.

The quasi-cabins were represented by those dwellings that where been partial deep on the ground all these being an intermediary type between the cabins and the surface dwellings. These last ones were appearing as above hovels with reduced dimensions with a width about 1, 90 m.

Close by Starcevo - Criș culture, on the Crișurilor Plain territory, there is present the second archeological culture that corresponds to the Middle Neolithic known as Tisa Culture which traces were discovered in the areas of Belfir, Ianașda, Inand, Salonta, Sântandrei, Oradea, Socodor localities represented by stone holed tools for using the fangs and stone devices.

For Tisa culture there are specific all phases of settlements with successive living rests forms emplaced in higher island areas situated in the interior of the sloped plain precinots which are known as 'tell' (word with Arabian origin used for representing the hillocks). These ones were built on the levels situated always over the flooded one (about 2 meters highest); from here resulting the fact that all these were destined to a population with defensive aims towards (against) the foreign populations attacks.

The Bronze Epoch (about 2000-1200 b. o. e.) is marked in the West Plain and in the whole middle basin of Tisa, including here the North Eastern Hungary and East Slovakia, through the development of otomani culture (named in this way after ottomani settlement from Bihor county) which known many oscillations during its evolution. Thus, the settlements from the dry areas, untouched by floods, but with hardly position in defense against the enemies were abandoned in favour of the settlements emplaced on the islands from the sloped areas as tell along Tisa River and its affluences; this fact is proved by the ground fortress from otoman population. The dwellings were the surface ones and more of these cabins situated along the rivers and the construction material were represented especially by day which was applied on the twings framework.

Viewing the houses emplacement mode (the position in settlement its form dimensions) it is hard to make such a reconstitution because till present there was not integral explored the settlements from Bronze area, with the ones from Iron Era concerned an edification plan.

The Iron discovery and processing together with the Bronze manufacturing represent another level in the human community evolution. Thus, the Iron Era, with its two important periods (ages), Hallstatt (about 1200 - 1300 b. o. e.) and La Tene (about 300-100 b. o. e.) is present in Curicular Plain territory, too. The archeological discoveries made in the Sânnicolaul Roman, Girișu de Cîrș, Tămașda, Sântandrei, Cefa and Zerindu Mic areas demonstrate the belonging of the various objects discovered ere (tools and iron and bronze weapons, dense and

fine shining ceramic, etc) to the Basarabi Culture that is specific to the Iron first age.

As there can be observed, the living traces were discovered in the lower plain areas fact that combat the supposition for the lower plain area was avoided for living, testimony being the archeological discoveries from Zerindu Mic and Cefa.

At Zerindu Mic, in a place called 'to the glass houses' (The Priest land), together with the housekeeper dips there has been discovered a surface household with a fire hearth with circular form. In a proximity area on the left edge of Crișul Negru River there have been dug another surface dwelling-house with wood floor and in the place called 'Dambul Cetății' along the all edge of Crișul Repede River, which is supposed to be the existence of a settlements which after the last flood seems to be quit by the Earlier Hallstatt population. It has been later demonstrated by the traces of a cabin detected on a 2, 25 m length and having a deepness about 2 m (Dumitrașcu, S., Chidioșan, N., 1977).

The second Iron edge (La Tene) corresponds to the consolidation period of the Gets and Dacians tribes which will have a role in the political and military life of the whole Carpatian mansion. For the western part of Romania (The West Plain) this period have been connected to the in-moving of the Celtic tribes, which have been assimilated by the native inhabitants (Gets and Dacians) even if during the interval of the IV-II b. o. e. centuries these ones is as developing as a dominated population from political and military point of view.

This period can be identified on the Crișurilor Plain by a series of objects (vases, chips with black and ashen color, as also many iron tools) discovered on the Sântandrei, Crișu de Criș, Oradea, Tinca localities areas (Dumitrașcu, S., 1972 si 1985) and Cefa (Crișan, I., 1987).

The Geto-Dacians society passing to the La Tenne period represents a fundamental premise in the formation of the first social antagonist classes and of course of the Dacians state (Daicoviciu, H., 1978, p. 8)

Beginning with the 2<sup>nd</sup> century b. o. e. it is registered many progresses in the production field and also concerning the increasing number of the inhabitants and the human settlements, all these being an outcome of a important social and political field.

## **2. THE DACIAN PERIOD AND THE PASSING THROUGH MEDIEVAL AGE (THE 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES A. S.)**

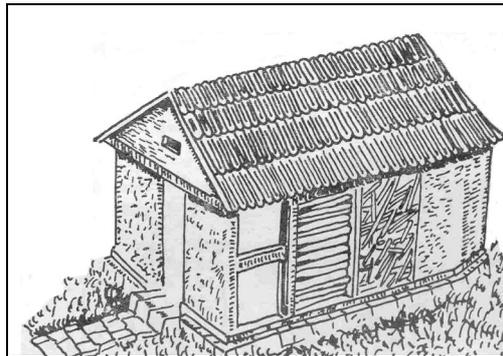
The Dacian Period can be retraced due to the various discoveries, fortresses, castles, bonded settlements monetary, treasures and fineries that covers the whole surface of Crișurilor Plain illustrating the civilizations force and also the strength of Dacian culture from the western part of Dacia and the Dacians links which the greatest civilizations as the Greek one and especially the Roman culture.

The Dacians and the Gets' households were, of course, under the influences of the handicrafts development and also of the economic specific of different regions. In the plain areas it is frequent to see the hovels usually in a rectangular form with round corners. Other ones were as surface households in a quadrilateral, oval, circular and rectangular form. (Daicoviciu, H, 1972, p.162).

In the next characteristics we present the built traits of a Dacian settlement based on the reconstruction made by the same author. Many households were placed on a stone foundation that has the role to stop the beam's rot in contact with the land. The construction material for the walls was most frequently the wood existing different modalities for the walls construction. Some times the beams were placed horizontally, one above another and only from place to place, especially on the corners were fixed on the ground vertical beams. In this case, on the wells there were set a thin clay soldering pointed on the different corners.

Other times the inhabitants were satisfied to beat on the ground some stakes tied by wattles that were strongly pasted by clay this last one being often easily to get. Over these materials the inhabitants has applied the mortar, in some cases, even a colored one. Often, a stone threshold or a stone disruption in its order marked the entrance, where we suppose the existence of a wood door.

The houses has usually one or two rooms but there existed some cases when the houses had floor increasing in this way the number of the rooms. The floor was built by bet land, carefully leveled and the roof was built by straws or single, spread especially at the poor inhabitants, while on the rich ones this was made by tile with a Greek type boot (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** *A house from Dacian Period*  
(reconstruction accorded to C. Daicoviciu, 1972)

For the threat-ness character of the native population towards the other peoples together with the presented traditional living forms (types) for Dacians were specific the fortresses and the reinforcement settlements as the ones discovered on the localities boundaries as: Craiva, Zerind, Slonta, Tamașda, Tinca (Dumitrascu S, 1985).

The rural settlement from Zerindu Mic is considered as being the oldest one form Dacians period attested to the 4<sup>th</sup> century b. o. e, this lasting in its existence over the Hallstattian level. Once with the beginning of the Dacians-Romans war (101-102 d. Ch.) in the Crișurilor Plain and in the whole Crișana the fortresses and the reinforcement settlements stopped to exist.

It seems that there will appear new settlements due to the population coming from the fortresses to the plain, where the built rural settlements were able to supervise more accurately. Together with the new settlements, in this area continue to be the oldest ones as the one from Zerindu Mic which had an agricultural population the Romans permit to it the existence on the older historical, geographic and social specific.

The continuity of the Dacian life after the wars' end represented the perdurable of the Dacians' community life, an agricultural and pastoral life in the conditions of the change economy become more powerful as an outcome of the Roman Empire impulses and on the other hand the lasting links of the free Dacians from the neighboring areas (Apuseni Mountains and areas situated at the South of Mureș Vallery) contributing in this way on the remark of the Dacians unity in Dacian-Roman sense was offered in 271-275 d. Ch and to the end of the romanization process in the latest Roman phase, exactly the Romano-Bizantin one (Dumitrașcu S, 1985).

The free Dacians situated on the exterior of the Roman Dacia will live in the II-III centuries in many settlements from the Crișurilor Plain and its surrounding areas, as it result from the archeological discoveries Tinca, Zerind, Crișu de Criș, Livada de Bihor, Oradea in the place called Salca, Sântion, Sântandrei, Salonta and Cefa localities.

On the Oradea periphery, in a place called Salca, on the bank of Peta River, the discovery of a Dacian cemetery supposed the existence of a settlement attested on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Century d. Ch, and the certain existence of some traces (big pots, Dacian cups), revealing a settlement attested to the period during the II-III d. Ch centuries.

On Sântion locality boundary there have been discovered many hovels but also a surface dwelling built by adobe having imprinted beams and rods traces. The discovered materials from here (brown ceramics and bowls fragments, vases postherds made by hand) showed the existence of a strong community which has been living in a large settlement.

On the edge of the Cefa village, near Rădvani Forest, on the place called "On the Forest" there have been identified ten dwellings that belonged to the free Dacians from II-III Centuries d. Ch, while on the north-eastern part of the village, on "Mocâș" area there have been identified a sector of the one of the land waves built by the Roman Empire in the Tisa Plain in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century with the stopping role of the Dacians and the migrators.

In this way, it results the fact that neither the lower level of the Crișurilor Plain was not a wilderness land, but more of that permanently humanized by the aboriginal. The material rests resulted once with the archeological discoveries created the opportunities to consider that this Roman and Past-Roman settlements have been permanently a continuously fact of the some from the previous centuries, from the Free Dacia period and not settlements built by the Dacians that have come after the Dacia conquest by the Romans (after 106 d. Ch.)

These settlements are continuously developing lasting in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century and even later in this region. For example, the archeological materials from the Crișurilor Plain, especially all ones from Moroda, Chișinău Criș, Oradea - Salca, Biharia, Sânnicolaul Român attests not only the links with Dacia, but more of that the Dacians lasting in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the monetary treasures from Batâr, Salonta and Biharia, shows that the inhabitants were situated in the commercial sphere of the Roman currency.

Viewing the continuity idea the population process of the aboriginals in the Crișurilor Plain territory, this one is argued not only from the historical and geographical point of view, a testimony in this sense being the archeological discoveries in spite of the fact that a long period of time after the back off process of the Aurelian period and till the Hungarian occupancy, this territory including here the demographical and economic processes are situated in a shadow cone unlighted by the documentary value of the written documents. If we consider the rich economic potential of this territory it is hard to imagine that this one would be unpopulated. In this sense, some archeological discoveries confirm this continuity. It is about a sum of discoveries that belongs to the IV – VI Centuries d. Ch., as the ones from the areas of Roit, Girișu de Criș, Tămașda, Moroda, localities that are built in brown ceramics, sometimes with glazed motifs and black rough ceramics. Beside these materials it appeared the hand worked ceramic with belts and cells of old Dacian tradition. From this phase it is known the circular mills, fact that demonstrates once again the existence of a sedentary population whose activities were based on agriculture. The ethno-genesis process results are obvious in the spoken language by the Romanians and in the toponymy of the area with many aboriginal topics of Dacian origin or with Slovenian and Latin origins imposed by the Romanian filters.

### **3. THE OLD ROMANIAN PERIOD (THE EARLIER MEDIEVAL PERIOD VIII – XI CENTURIES D. CH.)**

After the ending of the ethnic origin process of the Romanian people (6th-7th centuries) that registered a calm period towards the barbarian invaders, the population from depression areas and also by the plain including here the Crișurilor Plain registered a social and economic progress, fact that will permit the passing to new forms of social organization. Viewing the Crișurilor Plain the social organization and the demographic evolution will not be approached only through the lens of major trends of manifesting at the whole scale of the Carpathian-Danubian land. Thus, beginning with the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, there starts to outline the first social and political formations with medieval specific as the type of communities that soon will be grouped in the rural communities unions in which the inhabitants dispose by social and juridical freedoms, as owners of the houses situated on the village hearth; also, they had in a familial use a land with a various specific: field, pasture, orchards and in a common use the pasture, the forest and waters. These kind of communities (according to Pascu, Șt., 1972), in the Crișana Voivodeship on the Crișul Alb and Crișul Negru Valleys, in Salonta Plain, on the Crișul Repede Valley and Barcău Valley, some of these are continuing their existence under the form of Romanian Districts, a long time in the medieval period being managed by *cnezi*. These communities often were been grouped forming the community unions with the main objective of economic development through the goods changes and also for the consolidation of the political and military system.

These communities have been dominated by notorious dukes as it was Menumorut in Crișana Region. Thus, the communities were composed by villages whose number varying in function by the geographical position. The inhabitants of these villages, the rural people with a

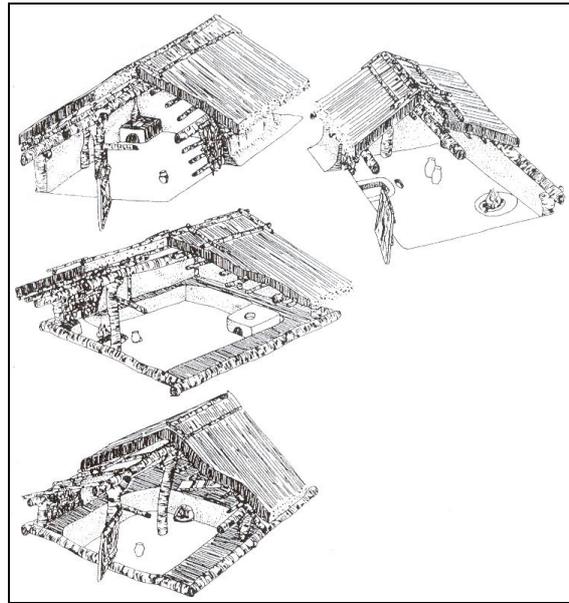
patriarchal life had the most part of the land, through its owners („*juzi*”, „*cnezi*”) sharing the agricultural land periodically, often one to three years on families after their needs and possibilities. In this context, there is practiced the drawing of lots system, fact for the familial plot was called *soarta*. Other part of the land were used by whole community being cultivated in collaboration by the all families, and the produces and goods were representing the common reserve, in other words the community food reserve in hard times (wars, droughts etc).

The fact for some families got a bigger and better *soarta* in connection with the occupied place in the community and with cultures possibilities represents a premise of material level stratification with the trends of the appearance of a dominant social group. The archeological researches illustrated in the rural settlement and its surroundings various types of human households as quasi-huts easily deepness on the ground, surface households with wood walls proper stiffed on the ground. There were also discovered surface households with wood walls stiffed on stone with two rooms, so with a large surface. These three types of dwellings doesn't reflect three distinct social classes but permit the opportunity to see some rich and social status differences of the people that lived in this constructions. In these last ones with the occasion of other archeological diggings there have been discovered many adornment and decoration objects that belongs to the IX-X centuries.

We can mention in this context some of them discovered on the areas of many localities from Crișurilor Plain as: bronze wire knit earrings (Biharia, Șiclău), glass corals in cylindrical form, white corals with red circles (Șiclău), bronze wire corals (Biharia), bronze bangles with local belonging (Șiclău, Biharia) (according to Șt. Pascu, 1972). The situation of the people who had surface houses with two rooms and porch grounded on the stones and of those who lived in hovels was different. This fact marks the appearance of the first signs of the social classes that are specific for the medieval period. The houses distribution process was analysed (with annexes and other constructions) in the frame of village hearth made by scientific research showing many economic and social aspects that are important for knowing the particularities of the rural societies from the period between 9th-11th centuries. In general, the dwellings (hovels or surface houses) were arranged in nests with groups about 3-4 houses ordered in rows in which the free spaces were access alleys (Figure 2).

The nests number varied from a settlement to other the medium value being about 4-6 nests for each settlement (The Romanians History, volume III, 2001, p. 216).

In the following part of the paper we present some houses characteristics that are specific for this period based on the concretely terrain researches illustrated by the previous cited source. The dwellings form were, generally, rectangle, the side dimensions varying between 2 and 5 meters; sometimes these ones could have an oval form. The walls were built by rods pasted with clay sustained by evens whose traces can be observed on the hovels corners and sides and also on the corners and sides of the surface dwellings. In some cases the walls were rising from the ground surface being set on the wood foundation and, rarely, on the stone base. In the interior of these houses there were arranged river stone ovens or clay mixed with stones. On the walls there were cracks used for lodging the domestic tools. Very important for this period is the inhabitable surface of the settlement division into zones with economic profile, with the aim of depositing the different domestic utilities and house devising.



**Figure 2:** *The reconstruction trials of some types of households from 9th-11th centuries (according to Șt. Olteanu et al., 2001, p. 212).*

In this way, it was starting the individualization of the rural dwellings that comprises besides the proper households many annexes, constructions and production tools. The sensible economic development that is specific for the first millennium has been conditioned by a demographic increasing as an outcome of a peaceful time.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Basing on the first considerations, we can sustain the fact the Crișurilor Plain territory was inhabited from the oldest times. In the period between 8th-9th centuries, in this space there existed a new successive living, a continuous one, which was known increasing demographic periods due to the penetration of some strange ethnic groups, and also some periods with temporary diminishing demographic process caused by the rigidity of some populations in migration.

The continuous living succession is demonstrated by the permanent character of many settlements as Salca, Biharia, Moroda, Belin, Sântandrei, Sântion, where this continuous lasting living can be observed on the entire presented period, approximately in the same place, in the

frame of the same communities and on the other hand the living continuity can be realized through the mobile lasting as the cases of some localities which from different reasons (wars, fires, dishes, floods etc) have been obliged to move its hearth to a smaller or longer distance from the previous one.

Also the Romanian old Period (sec. VIII-IX) demonstrates the existence of some older hearths of Romanian villages in Crișurilor Plain with old Romanian culture and civilization with Dacian and Dacian-Roman influences, following its existence in the lower and also in the higher one in the conditions in which the life of these rural settlements will be characterized by an aboriginal medieval cultural life, an economy, mentality and social organization which is a real source of Romanian language, culture and civilization.

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