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# CONTENTS

## STUDIES

### ANCIENT HISTORY

#### **Tobias HOFSTETTER**

D(IS) M(ANIBUS) S(ACRUM) – An Overview of Funerary Behaviours on the Territory of Present-day Switzerland from Late Protohistory to Early Medieval Times Through the Study of Material Remains, Textual Sources and Funerary Inscriptions ..... 5

#### **Haggai OLSHANETSKY**

DO WE REALLY HAVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR JEWISH GLADIATORS? ..... 61

### NUMISMATICS

#### **Ivo TOPALILOV**

THE ΜΕΛΕΑ COINS IN THRACE ..... 69

#### **Cristian GĂZDAC, Vlad-Andrei LĂZĂRESCU, Sorin COCIȘ, Sergiu-Traian SOCACIU**

COINS IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT (II). THE CIVILIAN BATHS OF THE AUXILIARY FORT FROM SUTOR (ROMANIA, SĂLAJ COUNTY) ..... 74

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

#### **Beatrice CIUTĂ**

ARCHAEOBOTANICAL EVIDENCE REGARDING THE DIET OF GAVA CULTURE FROM TELEAC HILLFORT (ROMANIA) ..... 102

#### **Vitalie BÂRCĂ**

THE MIRROR WITH THICKENED RIM AND NAIL-SHAPED HANDLE FROM THE GETO-DACIAN SETTLEMENT OF POIANA (GALAȚI COUNTY, ROMANIA). NOTES ON ITS ORIGIN AND DATING ..... 112

#### **Ceren ÜNAL, Zeynep ÇAKMAKÇI**

VIEWS ON THE SYMBOLIC USE OF TWO RARE BONE FINGER DISTAFFS WITH DOG REPRESENTATION FROM HALUK PERK MUSEUM IN ISTANBUL ..... 135

#### **Alireza KOOCHAKZAEI**

IDENTIFICATION OF FIBERS AND WEAVING TECHNOLOGY IN THE REMAINS OF FABRICS DISCOVERED FROM KUH-E KHWAJA, A PARTHIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN SISTAN, IRAN ..... 148

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOPOGRAPHY

#### **Florin-Gheorghe FODOREAN**

MAPPING ROMAN DACIA. SEVERAL DATA REGARDING THE ROMAN ROAD CONNECTING DROBETA WITH ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA ..... 156

#### **Dan ȘTEFAN, Maria-Magdalena ȘTEFAN**

LIDAR VIEWS OF BRONZE AND IRON AGE HILL-TOP SITES IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN CARPATHIANS ..... 167

#### **Constantin Viorel MARIAN, Mihaela IACOB, Nicolae GOGA**

THE INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MAP - A MODERN APPROACH FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT ..... 215

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Petru Ureche

# Studies

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOPOGRAPHY

### MAPPING ROMAN DACIA. SEVERAL DATA REGARDING THE ROMAN ROAD CONNECTING DROBETA WITH ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA

**Abstract:** We are continuing our series of studies regarding the topography of Roman Dacia with this short note regarding the route of the Roman road which connected Drobeta with Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. The analysis of new archaeological data, combined with the research of the cartographic documentation, lead to some important information which allows us to reconstruct the route of this road. The road reaches several current villages, starting from Drobeta, continuing towards Halânga, Puținei, Malovăț, Lazu, Cocorova, Șișești, Cărămidaru, Peșteana, Stroești, Dealu Viilor, Câmpu Mare, Cătunele, the hill Comorăștea, Vârtopeu, Pinoasa, Dâmbova, Cârbești, Drăguțești, Iași-Gorj, Romanești, Târgu Jiu, Turcinești, Sâmbotin și Gornicele, Bumbești-Jiu, Pleșa, Crevedia, Merișor, Crivadia, Petros, Baru, Livadia, Pui, Galați, Rușor, Băiești, Subcetate, Sântămăria Orlea, Vadu, Pâclișa, Cârnești and Ostrov. By accurately mapping the route of the Roman road, we provide a useful tool for the protection of this important Roman landscape element.

**Keywords:** *Dacia, Roman road, forts, cartographic evidence, old road.*

**Florin-Gheorghe FODOREAN**

Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca  
fodorean\_f@yahoo.com

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**W**e are continuing our series of studies regarding the topography of Roman Dacia<sup>1</sup> with this contribution regarding the route of the Roman road which connected Drobeta with Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. The first mention concerning this road appears in a short note published in 1893 by Al. Stefulescu.<sup>2</sup> He comments upon the state of conservation of the Roman fort from Bumbești, emphasizing that the walls of the forts were visible and they were 3 m high. Following this information, Stefulescu refers to the Roman road, mentioning that the locals name it 'drum mare, vechiu' ("large, old road").<sup>3</sup> Another important observation regards the fact that the locals knew from their ancestors that the Austrian soldiers entered the village using the old Roman road.<sup>4</sup> In order to verify

<sup>1</sup> See for this, selectively: FODOREAN 2013a; FODOREAN 2013b, 113-118; FODOREAN/FODOREAN/MOLDOVAN 2013, 37-55; FODOREAN 2015; FODOREAN 2016, 383-387; FODOREAN 2017a, 187-203; FODOREAN 2017b, 909-917; FODOREAN 2020, 178-184.

<sup>2</sup> STEFULESCU 1893, 340-342.

<sup>3</sup> STEFULESCU 1893, 341.

<sup>4</sup> STEFULESCU 1893, 341: "...se mai găsesec bătrâni în Porcenii și Bumbești cari își aduc aminte a fi auzit de la părinții lor, că pe când aceștia erau mici le-ar fi spus părinții lor, că oștirile împărătești (Austriece) au intrat în sat venind pe drumul vechiu; 'muntenii care l'au străbătut și l' străbat neconținut dau asupra-i informațiunea următoare: *Drumul vechiu* (s.n.) pornește de la Cetate (castru) pe la gura plaiului Porcenii, prin comanda Scărișora, în sus prin muntele Zânoga, prin dâlma Horezu, muntele Moiasa, Porcenii, Cărtianu, Bordeiuul lui Crăcan, Muntele Nemțesc, Șeaua

these data, Stefulescu realized a short field walking in the area, recognizing the traces of the Roman road, with a width of circa 3 m.

We have shortly described the route of this road in 2006, using data from different modern sources.<sup>5</sup> The road is recorded by M. Macrea<sup>6</sup> and D. Tudor.<sup>7</sup>

We present now the main Roman discoveries along this road, to establish, as much as accurate we can, its route. The first most important settlement after Drobeta is Puținei (Izvoru Bârzii commune, Mehedinți County). Here, close to the rivulet Pleșuva (the place is indicated with the toponym "cetatea lui Negru Vodă"), a Roman fort is known, built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.<sup>8</sup> Further to the north, the next important point with Roman discoveries is Cătunele (Gorj County), where a fort of 156 x 114 m is situated on the left bank of the Motru river.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, its role was to defend the Roman road in this area. Further on, another earth and timber fort is known in Vârtopu (Ciuperceni commune, Gorj County), located on the left bank of the Jiu river. It is supposed that it functioned during Trajan's reign.<sup>10</sup> Another earth and timber fort, of 120 x 150 m, is located at Pinoasa (Câlnic commune, Gorj County), on the left bank of the Tismana river, in the eastern part of the village.<sup>11</sup>

Next, another point with Roman discoveries is Bumbăști-Jiu. South of the current town, the remains of an auxiliary fort are located. The fort had an earlier phase during Trajan, and then it was rebuilt in stone (169 x 88 m) at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. The waters of the Jiu river destroyed the fort during time. Close to the fort, in its southern part, the baths were discovered.<sup>12</sup> Further on, at Pleșa (former village Porceni, now belonging to the city Bumbăști-Jiu), an earth and timber fort is known. It was dated during the Trajan's Dacian Wars.<sup>13</sup>

Another important point with discoveries is located at Livadia (Baru commune, Hunedoara County). A Roman settlement is attested here, identified in 1978, in a point called "Livezea". Ceramic fragments, bricks, tiles and foundation walls were identified here since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also, a clay lamp, a spade and mosaic elements are recorded here.<sup>14</sup> A funerary lion is known from

lui Craiu, Stănele, Lespedea, Fântâna Ghedy, Alunișiu, Vâlcanu, Crivedia, Murătoarea, Délu de Babă, Merușoru, Baru, Livadia, Puiu, Băești, St. Maria, Hațeg, Totești, și ajunge la Grădiște".

<sup>5</sup> FODOREAN 2006, 237-239.

<sup>6</sup> MACREA 1969, 153: "În Dacia Inferior, un drum pornea de la Drobeta, trecând pe la castrulele de la Puținei și Cătunele, atingea Jiul la castrul de la Vârtop și apoi continua pe râu în sus pe la Bumbăști și Vârtop, pătrunzând prin pasul Vâlcan în Transilvania, unde, trecând din valea Jiului superior în valea Streiului, ducea până la *Sarmizegetusa*. Acesta era drumul cel mai scurt, dar greu, dintre Drobeta și metropola provinciei".

<sup>7</sup> TUDOR 1968, 50: "De la Drobeta pleca prin Puținei-Cătune-Pinoasa-Bumbăști un drum ce mergea prin pasul Vâlcan la Sarmizegetusa. Urmele acestui drum s-au precizat la Bălvănești de Jos (fost Băsești), Crăgăști și Corcova. La Crăgăști apare pavat cu cărămidă spartă. Aceasta era calea cea mai scurtă din Transilvania la portul Drobetei".

<sup>8</sup> TUDOR 1978, 290-292.

<sup>9</sup> MARCU 2009, 122.

<sup>10</sup> TUDOR 1978, 309.

<sup>11</sup> TUDOR 1978, 286; GUDEA 1997, 97-98; MARCU 2009, 122.

<sup>12</sup> TUDOR 1978, 314-315; GUDEA 1997, 98-99; MARCU 2009, 120.

<sup>13</sup> GUDEA 1997, 99.

<sup>14</sup> MĂRGHITAN 1988, 197-198; TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 97; NEMEȘ 1995-1996, 345; POPA 2002, 111; LUCA 2005, 96.

Rușor (Pui commune, Hunedoara County).<sup>15</sup> The Roman road is also attested within the territory of the village Băiești (Pui commune, Hunedoara County).<sup>16</sup> Other Roman discoveries are recorded within the territory of the village Subcetate (Sântămăria Orlea, Hunedoara County). Here there are recorded ceramic fragments, ruins, coins and fragments from a mosaic.<sup>17</sup>

Maybe the most important settlement with discoveries from this area is the commune Sântămăria Orlea. In the area of the village Ciopeia, in a point called "Melea", close to the road connecting Ciopeia with Sântămăria Orlea, traces from two Roman constructions were found, possibly *two villae rusticae*.<sup>18</sup> In a point called "Troian", there were identified the remains of a Roman road, ceramic fragments and traces from some former Roman buildings.<sup>19</sup> It is possible that the junction of the main Roman road coming from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa with this road coming from Drobeta via the Vâlcan Pass was set in this area during the Roman times.<sup>20</sup> In another point, called "Grindanu", there is another important discovery: one of the largest *villa rustica* in Dacia.<sup>21</sup> Traces of the former Roman imperial road were visible also in the southern part of the village Bucium-Orlea (Sântămăria Orlea commune), close to the bridge along the national road which leads towards Băraștii Hațegului.<sup>22</sup> Roman traces are also recorded within the territory of the village Păclia. In the point called "Brezova", traces of some former Roman buildings were found.<sup>23</sup> In the point called "Mezeiniță", located circa 300 m west of the village Cârnești, Roman traces belonging to some former buildings were identified in the terrain.

The density of the Roman discoveries is increasing in the area of the Depression of Hațeg, while along the route from Drobeta to Vâlcan Pass the discoveries are recorded only in some better excavated sites. Therefore, so far, the only more consistent evidence of the route of this road is the short note published by Al. Stefulescu. Combined with data gathered from modern maps, now we have some more clear indices about this road.

On the maps resulting from the second military survey of the Habsburg Empire,<sup>24</sup> we find some of the toponyms mentioned by Stefulescu in his description of the road. Close to Bumbăști, immediately in the north-western side of the settlement, we find the following toponyms: "Porceni-moșneni", "Pleșa", "Runku porceniilor". More interesting, a road is depicted in this mountain area, with the denomination "Drumu niam zului" (Fig. 1-2). In another map entitled "Charta României meridionale - 1864",<sup>25</sup> the

<sup>15</sup> LUCA 2005, 134.

<sup>16</sup> TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 93; LUCA 2005, 29.

<sup>17</sup> TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 101; NEMEȘ 1995-1996, 349; LUCA 2005, 163.

<sup>18</sup> MĂRGHITAN 1988, 197-198; TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 94-95; LUCA 2005, 48.

<sup>19</sup> NEMEȘ 1988-1991, 42; TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 101; NEMEȘ 1995-1996, 348; LUCA 2005, 141.

<sup>20</sup> FODOREAN 2006, 245.

<sup>21</sup> MITROFAN 1973, 148-149; MITROFAN 1974-1975, 292; MĂRGHITAN 1987, 64; POPA 1988, 213; POPA 2002, 169-170.

<sup>22</sup> TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 94; LUCA 2005, 37.

<sup>23</sup> MĂRGHITAN 1988, 197-198; TATU *et alii* 1988-1991, 98; NEMEȘ 1995-1996, 346; LUCA 2005, 118.

<sup>24</sup> [Europe in the XIX. century | Arcanum Maps.](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Charta României meridionale - 1864 \(gis-it.ro\).](#)

same road is depicted as a line crossing the area of the mountains starting from Bumbăști. The road is indicated with the toponym "Drumu Némțului" (Fig. 3-4). The road is mapped close to the so-called area "Runcu Porceniloru".

Another interesting map where we think that this former Roman road is represented is the one named "Karte des Grossfürstentums Siebenbürgen, vierte nach den neuesten Quellen berichtigte Auflage"<sup>26</sup>, printed in Hermannstadt in 1862 by the publishing house Th. Steinhaussen (Fig. 5). From Porceni ("Poresen" in the map) a thin red line is represented (the cartographic symbol is "Verbindungswege der Ortschaften"), heading towards north via "Vulkan", "Merisor", "Krivádia", "Mezö Livadia", "Hegyallya Livadia" and further on towards Hațeg (Fig. 6).

In the map belonging to the first military survey (1769-1773), the road connecting the Hațeg Depression with the area of the Vulcan Pass is named "Landstraße nach Vulkan"<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 7). Its route might correspond with the one of the former Roman road recorded in 1896 by Al. Stefulescu.

Therefore, based on these data, we can outline that the Roman road Drobeta-Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa was a key artery of the province of Dacia, facilitating the transport from the Danube to Ulpia Traiana. The first sector of this road, from Drobeta to Bumbăști, still needs further investigations. The second sector, from Bumbăști to Ulpia Traiana, can be partially reconstructed in some sectors. According to Stefulescu's description, the road reaches several current villages, starting from Drobeta, and continuing towards Halânga, Puținei, Malovăț, Lazu, Cocorova, Șișești, Cărâmidaru, Peșteana, Stroești, Dealu Viilor, Câmpu Mare, Cătunele, the hill Comorâștea, Vârtopu, Pinoasa, Dâmbova, Cârbești, Drăguțești, Iași-Gorj, Romanești, Târgu Jiu, Turcinești, Sânbotin și Gornicele, Bumbăști-Jiu, Pleșa, Crevedia, Merișor, Crivadia, Petros, Baru, Livadia, Pui, Galați, Rușor, Băiești, Subcetate, Sântămăria Orlea, Vadu, Pâclișa, Cârnești and Ostrov. The length of this road can be approximated at circa 155-160 km.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> [Karte des Grossfürstentums Siebenbürgen \[Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár - MEK-05055\] \(nif.hu\); bigmap09.jpg \(1407x1441\) \(nif.hu\)](#).

<sup>27</sup> [Großfürstentum Siebenbürgen \(1769-1773\) - First Military Survey | Arcanum Maps](#).

<sup>28</sup> FODOREAN 2006, 237.

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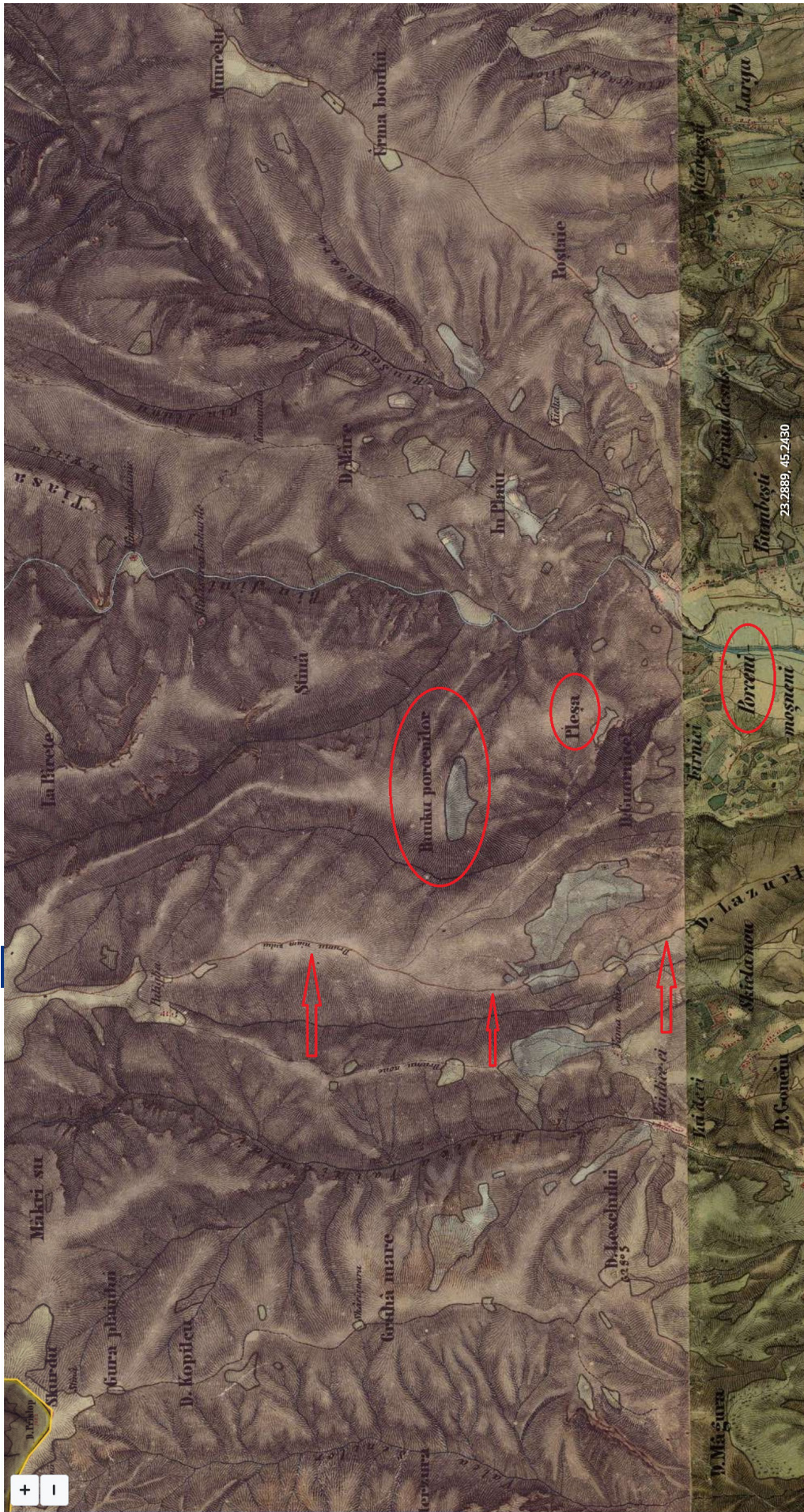
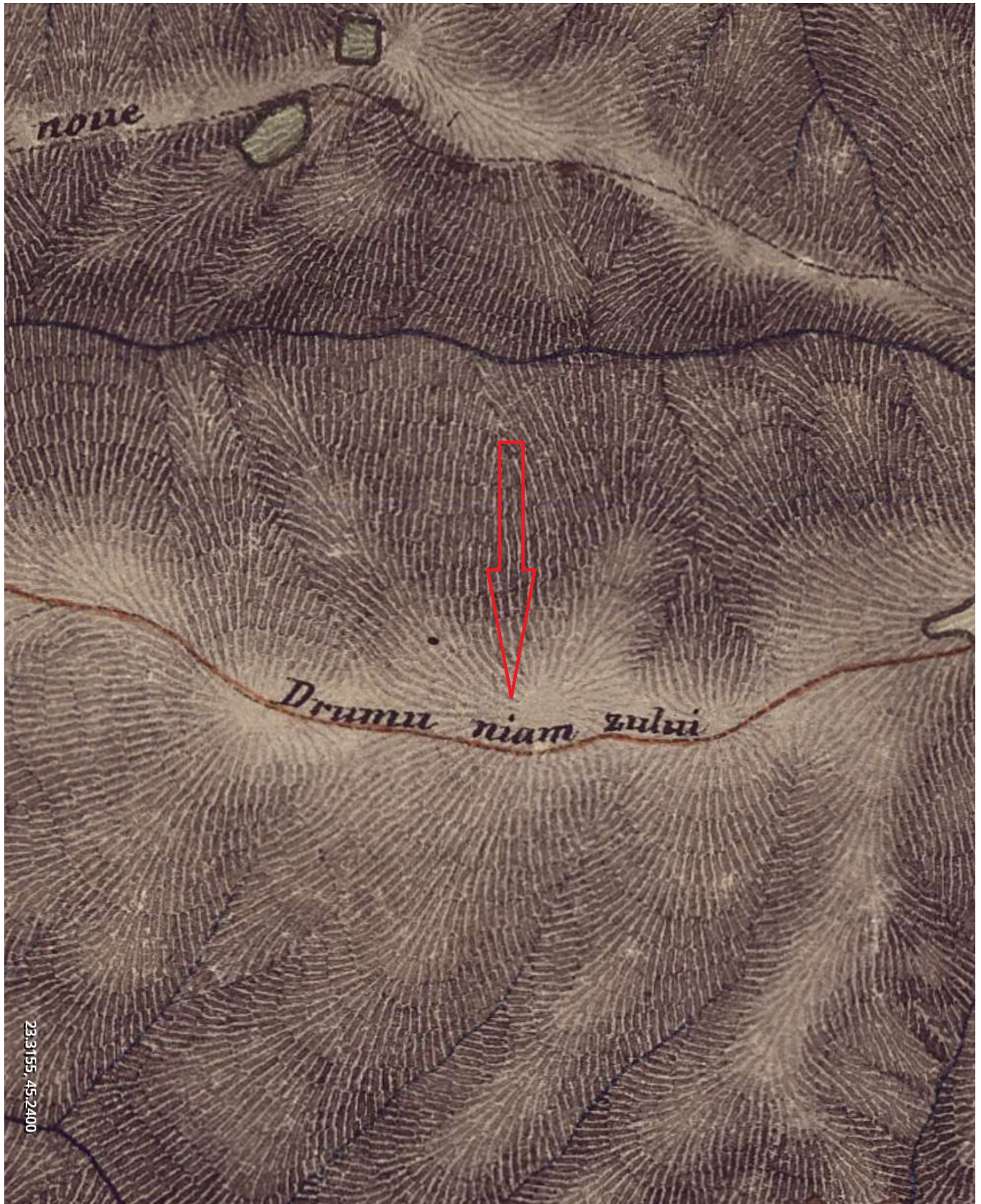


Fig. 1. Fragment from the second military survey of the Habsburg Empire. Source: [Europe in the XIX. century](#) | [Arcanum Maps](#).



**Fig. 2.** Detail from the same maps of the second military survey of the Habsburg Empire. Source: [Europe in the XIX. century | Arcanum Maps.](#)



Fig. 3. Fragment from the so-called "Charta României meridionale - 1864" presenting the same road over crossing the area of the Vulcan Pass. Source: [Charta României meridionale - 1864 \(gis-it.ro\)](http://Charta României meridionale - 1864 (gis-it.ro)).

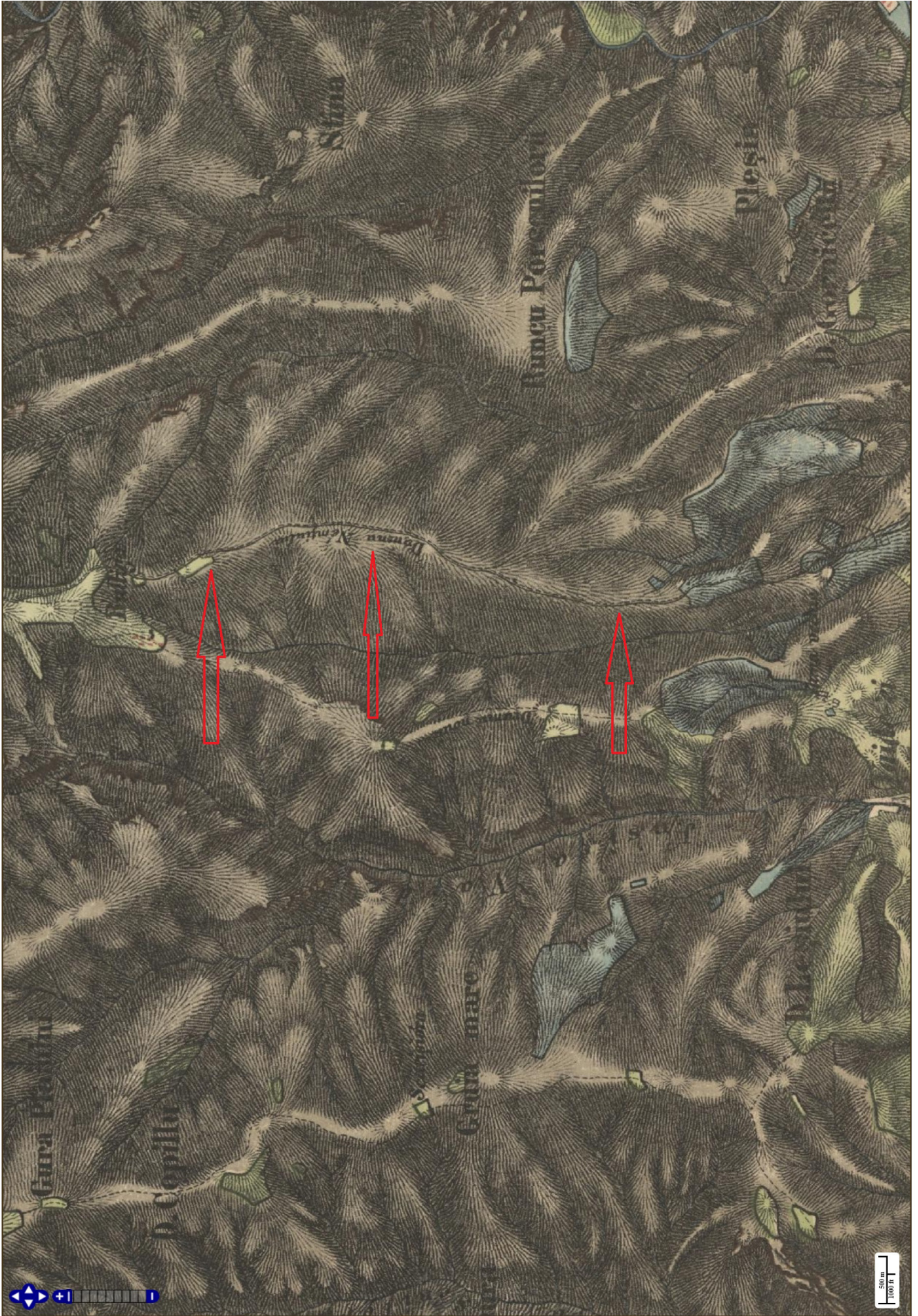
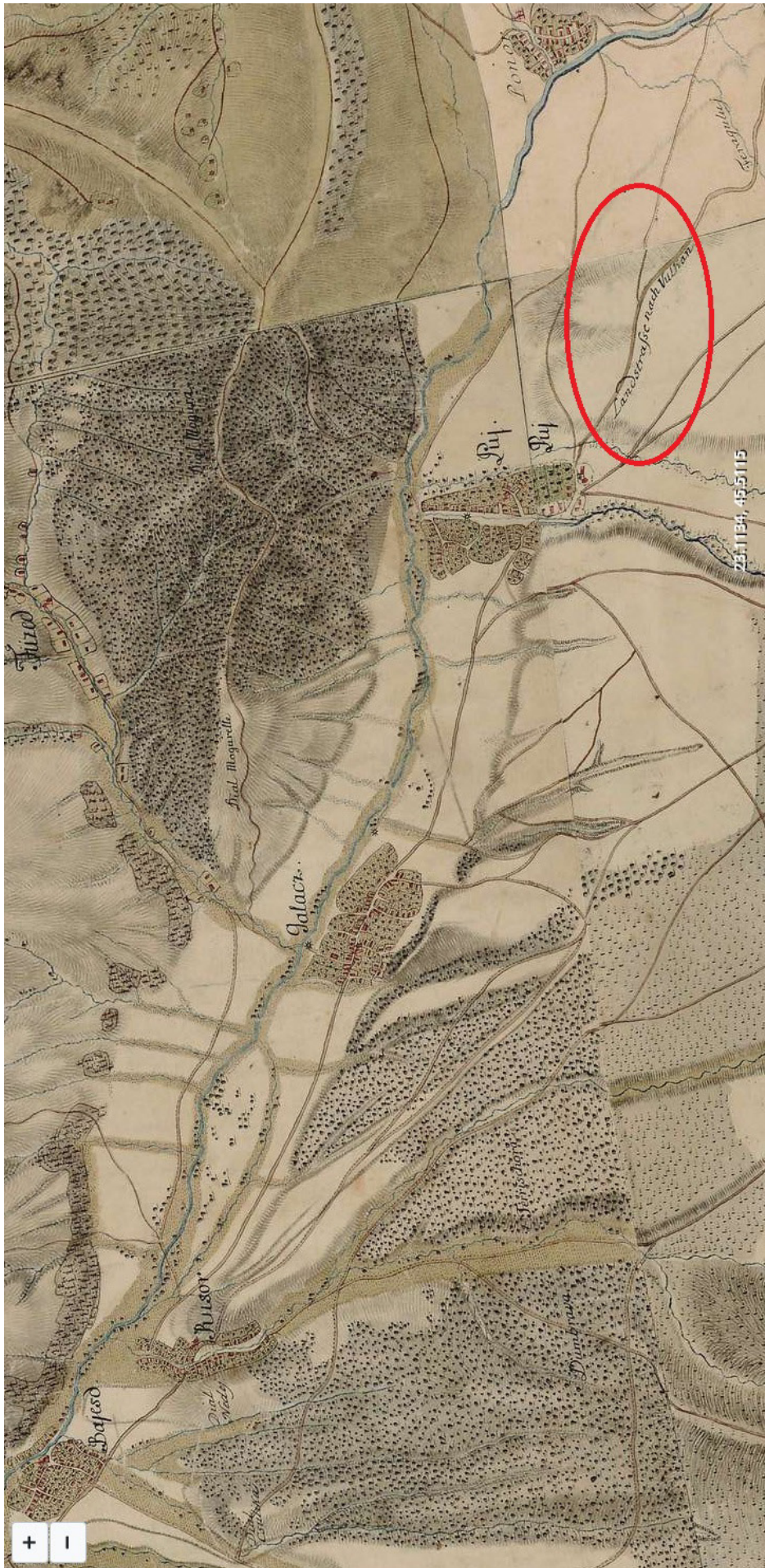


Fig. 4. Detail from the same map "Charta României meridionale - 1864" presenting the same road over crossing the area of the Vulcan Pass. Source: [Charta României meridionale - 1864](http://gis-it.ro) (gis-it.ro).



Fig. 5. Fragment from the so-called "Karte des Grossfürstentums Siebenbürgen, vierte nach den neuesten Quellen berichtige Auflage" presenting the same road. Source: [Karte des Grossfürstentums Siebenbürgen \[Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár - MEK-05055\] \(niif.hu\); bigmap09.jpg \(1407x1441\) \(niif.hu\).](http://www.mek.gov.hu/05055)





**Fig. 7.** Fragment from the maps belonging to the first military survey (1769-1773), indicating the road connecting the Hateg Depression with the area of the Vulcan Pass with the toponym "Landstraße nach Vulkan". Source: [Großfürstentum Siebenbürgen \(1769-1773\) - First Military Survey | Arcanum Maps](#).