THE TIMES AND WORKS OF PAMFIL POLONIC

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Abstract: Around 1900 Romanian topography was in full development, Generals Barozzi and Brătianu working on a detailed and precise map of Romania. This was the atmosphere of the period when P. Polonic worked and we want to present it using speeches of general C. I. Brătianu. Those were the times when a topographic engineer – formed in military schools – could act at the ideal moment for the cataloguing of historical and archaeological monuments and for the creation of an archaeological map. As an example of his activity, we presented here the information on four sites, some already known, some gone or left unexcavated.

Rezumat: În jurul anului 1900, prin activitatea generalilor Barozzi și Brătianu, topografia românească era în plină dezvoltare, căutându-se a se realiza o hartă a României cât mai precisă și detaliată. Aceasta era atmosfera în care P. Polonic a lucrat și pe care vrem să o prezentăm folosind discursurile generalului C. I. Brătianu. Acestea era epoca în care un inginer topograf – format în școli militare – putea acționa în condiții prielnice pentru repertorierea monumentelor istorice și arheologice cu scopul de a realiza o hartă arheologică. Ca un exemplu al activității sale, prezentăm informații despre patru situri, unele deja cercetate, altele rămase până azi necercetate.

The activity of the topographic engineer P. Polonic – employed by the National Museum of Antiquities[1] – must be regarded today taking into account the everyday realities of the beginning of the 20th century in the newly created kingdom of Romania. A short insight into the atmosphere of the time when his efforts to record the ancient and medieval monuments of Romania took place, is thus necessary.

In order to understand the historical context, we shall revise some of the speeches of General Constantin I. Brătianu,[2] where he was stressing the necessity of producing an accurate and detailed topographic map of the freshly established European state. Appointed director of the Geographic Institute of the Army,[3] the general fought real "battles" to create these topographic maps, bringing scientific arguments in support of his speeches delivered at the plenary sessions of the Romanian Academy. The first one was the very speech delivered at his acceptance as a Corresponding Member of the Academy in 1899.[4]

A few facts preceding the activity of P. Polonic

Starting with 1832 the Organic Regulations stipulated the foundation of a geographic department and the creation of a map for the Walachia and Moldavia which would only happen in 1872.[5]

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[1] Barbu 1965, Mateescu 1969, Mateescu 1978, Păunescu 2003, Măgureanu 2010, Măgureanu 2013a, Măgureanu 2013b.

[2] Constantin I. Brătianu (1844 - 1910) – General, geodesic and topographic engineer, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy (since April 10th, 1899). **Studies**: in 1864 he graduated the School for Officers in Bucharest as a 2nd lieutenant Corps of Engineers; he later graduates École des Mines and Army Staff College in Paris (1864-1867); he specialized at the Paris Observatory and the cadastral Service of France; between 1868-1870 he was detached at the Army Headquarter of the Geographic Service of the Belgian Army and at the Military Geographic Institute in Vienna. **Career:** during the Independence War (1877-1878), as an officer at the Army Headquarter, he re-organized the Service for Cartographic Reproductions and he commanded the Topographic Section at the High Command of the Romanian Army; in 1885 he was the director of the Geographic Institute of the Army; in 1887 he was appointed sub-commander of the High Command of the Romanian Army; in 1896 he was brigade general. **Selected works:** *Notițe asupra chartelor actuale ale României, urmate de un proiect pentru alcătuirea chartei generale a Regatului* (1888); *Instrucțiuni pentru determinări geodezice* (1895); *Trebuința de a se face cadastrul României cu modele de întrebuințat. Organizarea serviciului cadastral și proiect pentru buget de venituri și cheltuieli* (1899). He coordinated, together with Grigore Tocilescu and George Ioan Lahovary, under the auspices of the Romanian Geographic Society, *Marele dicționar geografic al României* (he was one of the founding members -1875); cf. Militari 2012, p. 16; Toderiță, Gustăreață 2012, pp. 12-13.

[3] A position he would hold for 15 years, *cf.* Brătianu 1907, p. IX.

[4] *Notițe despre lucrările cari au avut de scop descrierea geometrică a României* (1900); *Însemnătatea chartei României pentru economia noastră națională* (1901); *Însemnătatea chartei țării pentru apărarea națională*, (1902); *Stabilirea regimului cadastral de care are nevoie România* (1903); *Însemnătatea chartei țării pentru istoria patriei și a neamului* (1905); *Însemnătatea chartei țării pentru stabilirea regimului cadastral în România* (1910).

[5] Brătianu 1901b, p. 23.

In 1858, through a decree, the Army Corps of Engineers ("Biroul de Jeni")[6] was created. A few years later – in 1875 – the Royal Geographical Society was founded, aiming "to drag the country out of anonymity through geographic maps and volumes"(speech of King Carol I at the inauguration of the society – at 15th/27th of June 1875).[7] In 1895, given the achievements reached until then, Romania became a member of the Geodesic International Association.[8]

The first topographic works in which Romanian officers were involved, took place in 1855-1857, when at the creation of the topographic map of the Romanian Country drafted by Austrian officers, the first class of officers of the Military School in Bucharest also participated.[9] In 1872 a systematic program for creating a topographic map as accurate as possible was initiated. The stages, as they appear in the speeches of General Brătianu, were as follows: in 1872-1875 works took place in Moldavia, in 1875-1877 the efforts concentrated on Bessarabia, in 1880-1883 in Dobrudja and later they continued in Moldavia and Walachia (with the hope of having them finished by 1905),[10] but between 1901 and 1904 all was stopped for reasons of budget austerity.[11] Still, in 1906 when Bucharest hosted the General Romanian Exhibition, the Geographic Institute of the Army reported that the map was covering a surface of 101,017 km^2, with other 32,738 km^2 planned for the future.[12]

The efforts of developing such an exact topographic map were finally rewarded when the Geographic Institute of the Army obtained an important award at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900 for their outstanding achievements in geodetic triangulation and geometric levelling. The award consisted of three gold medals and a silver one, and the director of the Institute, General Brătianu, was awarded the cross of the Legion of Honour, in the degree of Commander.[13]

A new occasion that put into the spotlight the efforts of our topographers and military engineers occurred at the Exhibition in 1906,[14] when, alongside cartographic representations, instruments were also displayed, some of them invented by Romanian officers, practically showing "the mechanisms of such works on the field, in the office and in workshops".[15]

The same as in any other case, this grand project, the topographic map of Romania, benefited of specific means and methods, bearing in mind a precise purpose.

Among the equipment used at the time for field surveys, General Brătianu first mentioned the Starke theodolite and the Brunner azimuth (for triangulation), the alidade with a visor, a stadia rod and a levelling rod.[16] These were – we believe – the best indicators regarding the type of instruments that P. Polonic might have used while doing his surveys. Among the used methods, the geodesic triangulation (the base of topographic surveys) providing the geodetic levelling for land configuration was mentioned. The purpose – said the general – was to offer a working instrument for engineers, geologists, astronomers, geographers, historians and the military.[17]

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[6] Popescu-Spineni 1978, p. 232; for the process of reformation of this service within the Great Military Headquarters and the members see: Brătianu 1900, pp. 30-32 and the list of officers who worked to create this map; see also Brătianu 1907, p. 41, note 1.
[7] Giurescu 1935, pp. 200-202.
[8] Brătianu 1901 b, p. 5.
[9] Brătianu 1900, p. 4, note 2.
[10] *Ibidem,* p. 16.
[11] Brătianu 1906, p. 17, note 2; Brătianu 1907, p. 47, note 1.
[12] Brătianu 1907, p. IX.
[13] Brătianu 1901a, p. 10, note 1; Brătianu 1901b, p. 20. His activity was appreciated by his contemporaries; we quote only what the Bishop Netzhammer noted in his diary "[...] the very merituous former director of the Geographic Institute [...]" *cf.* Netzhammer 2005, p. 134.
[14] The General Romanian Exhibition, dedicated to the 25th anniversary from the proclamation of the Romanian Kingdom, 40 years of reign of Carol I and 1800 years from the Roman Conquest of Dacia (*cf.* Cofas, Constantinescu 1997, p. 145).
[15] Brătianu 1907, p. 38, p. 48.
[16] Brătianu 1900, pp. 16-17; at a later date the means diversified and improved, and new equipment was invented: the graphic goniometer (Major Popovici), the topographic telemeter (Captain B. Bădescu), the distance binoculars (Leut.-Colonel V. Ionescu) to mention only a few, *cf.* Brătianu 1907, p. 48.
[17] Brătianu 1900, p. 19.

We shall insist a little on this declared aim, as the way it appears in the speeches of General Brătianu (who consulted Gr. Tocilescu over matters of archaeology and ancient history) offers a good hint on how Pamfil Polonic himself worked. Of course, in his efforts to gather funds to create the map, the General at times exaggerated, but from his words clearly appears the image of an age when the interest for topography intertwined with that for the identification of various archaeological monuments. We can now understand why Gr. Tocilescu employed P. Polonic, we get closer to the latter's way of thinking, so similar to that of General Brătianu, as they both came from the same military engineering *milieu*.[18] Further we can reach an accurate understanding of his notes where he looked for topographic or toponymic explanations for the archaeological facts.

We present below a few excerpts from his work we considered more relevant for the present paper: "[…] the map of the country is of real help, not only for the historical, geographical, philological research but also for the ethnographic, archaeological and prehistoric one."[19] In a similar way, such a map "is needed for the toponymic and archaeological understanding of our land, of the true history of our country and people […]."[20]

The study of toponymy is also important: "The map of Romania is a sure means to fully see through the obscurity of events, in order to understand their purpose and development, to understand why their ending was the way it was and not a different one, and finally, to see who were the foreign peoples that crossed our land through the centuries and what traces they left behind in the country's toponymy [...]".[21] On the map there are places marked as "[…] Jidova, Jidovii and names such as Cetate, Cetăţue, Grădiştea that could suggest "the name of a *castrum*, a Roman or medieval fortification."[22]

The importance of the analysis of field surveys is also outlined: "The significance of the Map of Romania for the history of the country and its people comes also – as I have mentioned above – from the influence it has over the people and events that took place in the country's past."[23]

"Topographic and historical documents add to one another in order to finally give us the True History".[24]

"Only the relentless researcher, who undertook a life-long task of discovering on the field all ancient traces, only the researcher who had walked from the mountain to the river, who has wandered up and down on the fields and hills of Romania with a scientific, historic or artistic aim, only he could recognize the need of a good map – at times the only safe lead in his inspired quest […]".[25]

The activity of P. Polonic

The quote above (coming from a study of General Brătianu) is, we believe, one of the best characterizations for the activity of such a passionate professional as P. Polonic.

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[18] In fact, General Brătianu proudly mentioned Gr. Tocilescu among the users of the map of the Geographic Institute: Brătianu 1901a, p. 21.
[19] Brătianu 1906, p. 51: "[…] harta țerii este de un ajutor real, nu numai pentru cercetările istorice, geografice, filologice, dar și pentru cele etnografice, archeologice și preistorice […]".
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 43 ": […] de un ajutor real, și pentru deslegarea topică și arheologică a pământului ţării, în scopul unei adevărate istorii a patriei și a neamului".
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 2: "[...] Harta României este un mijloc sigur pentru a putea pătrunde cu temeinicie în negura evenimentelor, pentru a ne da seama de rostul și cursul lor, a vedea de ce a trebuit ele, să se termine așa și nu altfel, cari sunt în fine, roiurile de neamuri streine, care au tot perindat pe la noi în cursul veacurilor și ce urme lăsat-au ele în toponimia ţării".
[22] *Ibidem*, p. 45.
[23] Brătianu 1905, pp. 3-4: "O atare însemnătate a Hartei României pentru istoria patriei și a neamului reese, cum ziceam adineaori, din însăși influenţa, ce o are terenul asupra oamenilor și asupra evenimentelor făptuite în trecutul ţării". The relationship between the topography of the land and the understanding of the development of military events was noted in a study from 1888, cf. Brătianu 1895.
[24] Brătianu 1906, p. 7: "Documentele topografice și documentele istorice se completează unele printr'altele pentru a ne da în mod temeinic Istoria cea adevărată".
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 51: "Numai acel neobosit cercetător, care și-a luat ca sarcină a vieţei, descoperirea pe teren a ori-cărei urme antice din cele mai vechi timpuri, numai acela care dela munte la baltă, în sus și în jos a tot colindat câmpiile și dealurile României în scop științific, istoric sau artistic, numai dânsul a putut recunoaște cu prisosinţă trebuinţa unei bune hărţi – adesea unica călăuză sigură a colindei lui inspiratoare […]".

During a period of effervescence in gathering topographic data, at a time when maps had started to be regarded as *corpora* of data ready to be used for the identification of historical places especially through toponymic studies (cetate/fortress, jidovie,[26] măgură, movilă/mound), Pamfil Polonic, a topographic engineer with a professional formation similar to that of General Brătianu, joined this action under the coordination of Gr. Tocilescu.

By studying his notes from the archive of the "Vasile Pârvan" Institute of Archaeology we observed that the activity of cataloguing and locating ancient remains happened in at least two phases: the office activity and the field surveys.

In the Office

This phase mostly consisted in going through the existing maps, using the map drafted by the Austrian in 1855-1857 mainly and later, more and more, the maps drawn by the Geographic Institute of the Army. Through topography and local toponymy a series of lists of possible monuments were created[27] – containing mainly fortresses and monasteries, but also mounds and *valla*. The explanation sheets for the map contain the indicatives, followed by details on the existence of possible historical or archaeological remains.

For example, when studying the explanation sheet Series III Column U, Polonic was comparing the information obtained from the locals with details provided by the map. Thus:

"It seems that near Tgu. Ştefăneşti there are some *valla*. In Cucuteni village – prehistoric items were found. 1 km east from Slobozia = Olariţa Valley. North of the rock on the Prut bank there's a hill called Căsoaia Doamnei (Lady's Manor). West of Ştefăneşti = D. Stâlpii de peatră (The hill with the stone pillars). Why was the village named Mov. Ruptă (the Broken Mound)?"[28]

Another example, by looking at the explanatory sheet Ser. XIV Col. X: "West of Coroda a large mound = M^la Vlamnic (Mound Vlamnic). 1 km north from Urleşti in the valley there is a rounded shape, fortress ?, similarly 3 km west from Băleni there are two twin mounds on the hillside. West of the Coroda village there is a circle with valla – perhaps a prehistoric fortress."[29]

The explanatory sheet Ser. XIII. Col. U mentioned: "4 km west of Rugineşti = Cetăţuia (Fortress). East of Hornocea = D. Cetatea (Fortress hill) and D. Taberei (Camp Hill) and further south = Râpă roşie (the Red Ravine). At Poiana = Mov. Cetăţuia (the Fortress Mound). West of Hornocea P. T. Siliştea. At Ajud = Mov. Boscani (Boscani mound), 4 km north-west of the town = La Vrastaţi. At Păuneşti = D. Novak (Novak Hill). South of Domneşti = a large mound – then Mov. Comoara (Treasure Mound) and M. Arâncoasa (Arâncoasa Mound). West of Toflea on the map at 1:300.000 appears a monastery that does not show on our map. It seems that by Covoag goes Trajan's vallum coming from Bessarabia." [30]

Contrary to the mentioned examples, in some cases he only noted "In Ser. IV, Column Q there is nothing". Note – the same remark for Ser. XIV, Col. Y and Z.

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[26] Something, usually very large, constructed / created by *jidovi* (Romanian legendary creatures – giants).

[27] There are 51 localities in the list for Buzău County, being mentioned fortifications and ancient ruins, monasteries or only toponyms that can imply a possible anthropic background, cf. Măgureanu 2013b.

[28] Polonic Mss. XVIII envelope XVIII, leaf 5 (IAB archive, Polonic collection) "Se zice că lângă Tgu. Ştefăneşti ar fi valuri. Satul Cucuteni – aci sau gasit lucruri praehistorice. La 1km spre E. de Slobozia = V. Olariţa. La nord de Stânca pe malul Prutului se găseşte un colţ de deal numit Căsoaia Doamnei. La apus de Ştefăneşti = D. Stâlpii de peatră. De ce se numeşte satul Mov. Ruptă ?".

[29] Polonic Mss. XVIII envelope XVIII, leaf 26 (IAB archive, Polonic collections) "La apus de Coroda o mov. mare = M^la Vlamnic. La 1km n. de Urleşti în vale un ocol rotund, cet. ?, asemenea şi la 3 km spre apus de Băleni 2 mov. alăturate pe coastă. În satul Coroda la apus un cerc cu valuri poate o cet. praeh.".

[30] Polonic Mss. XVIII envelope XVIII, leaf 25 "La 4 km spre apus de Rugineşti = Cetăţuia. La răs. de Hornocea = D. Cetatea şi D. Taberei şi mai spre sud = Râpă roşie. La Poiana = Mov. Cetăţuia. La apus de Hornocea P.T.Siliştea. La Ajud = Mov. Boscani, la 4km spre N.W. de oras = La Vrastaţi. La Păuneşti = D. Novak. La sud de Domneşti = o movila mare – apoi Mov. Comoara şi M. Arâncoasa. La apus de Toflea este notat pe harta 1:300.000 mănăstire, pe harta noastră nu există. Se vorbeşte ca pe la Covoag duce valul lui Traian care vine din Basarabia" .

Fig. 1. Ciocăneşti: 1. Polonic's topographic sketch (IAB archive, Polonic's fond, mss. VIII envelope VIII, leaf 70); 2. Area of Grindul Comorilor on the military map from 1898; 3. Aerial view of the area (Google Earth).

The detailed study of the maps was completed with information extracted from specialised literature of the time,[31] adding basically information founded in the Questionnaire addressed by Al. Odobescu to rural intelligentsia[32] or in different geographical dictionaries.[33]

The Field Survey Phase

Beyond the office stage, Pamfil Polonic had an uninterrupted field activity. Among the many field survey instants where the map information and the data collected from the locals coincided, we chose to present here four cases that best outline the quality of Pamfil Polonic's field documentation. We shall follow the presentation of four sites recorded in Polonic's notes, providing important data on sites that no longer exist today (the case of the fortress from Ciocăneşti), or that have never been studied (the fortress from Axintele). The importance of the documentation left by Pamfil Polonic is also obvious when comparing his data with the data obtained through systematic archaeological excavations – such as at Albeşti and Coconi.

Sites that no longer exist

In the note entitled "Roman castrum (?) from Ciocăneşti", P. Polonic mentions (Fig. 1):

"4 km south of the village, in the marshes, on the Treasure sand dune (Grindul Comorii) on a higher area [there are] the towers of a stone fortress [...] the locals uncovered only the western part of the fortification, meaning the western side, with a length of 106 steps, while from the southern side 80 steps were uncovered and from the eastern one only 40 steps – the fortress is rectangular, the walls are 2 m thick. The mortar suggested it is an ancient construction – the locals said that alongside the walls they found hard bricks and shingles. No excavations took place inside the fortification. The location of the fortress in this spot is explained by the fact that in the area from here to Spantov, it is the best place where to cross the marshes, especially as

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[31]   Măgureanu 2013.

[32]   Păunescu, 2003, pp. 53 – 54; only for four counties was enough information to be assembled into dedicated volumes. The information for Buzău County was gathered together between 1870-1872. According to Al. Odobescu, informations for Buzău County were less correct then those for Dorohoi and Botoşani Counties, but more reliable then those for Prahova County; nevertheless, that questionnaire was considered to be a starting point for "future more correct information" and following necessary updates can represent a "precious guide for serious archaeological researches" cf. Odobescu 1989, pp. 99-100.

[33]   Before the Great Romanian Geographical Dictionary (5 volumes edited between 1898 and 1902 by C. I. Brătianu, G. I. Lahovary and Gr. G. Tocilescu) some other dictionaries were edited, first of them being that of Dimitrie Frunzescu, published in 1872: Topographic and Statistic Dictionary of Romania (Dicţionaru Topograficu şi statisticu alu României). The 536 pages volume, contain information regarding "20.000 toponyms, like mountains, hills, knolls, mounds and valleys, rivers, streams, lakes, slops, mineral waters and islands, counties, regions, cities, towns, small towns, villages, hamlets and isolated houses, monasteries, hermitages, ancient fortresses and ruins, battle places, etc. prefaced by country's geography and statistic".

Fig. 2. Axintele: 1. Aerial view of the site (Google Earth); 2. Orthophotoplan; 3. Area of the site on military map from 1896-1898.

across the Danube in Bulgaria, in the proximity of Vecena village (Vetrena) are the ruins of a Roman town".[34]

There were no entries about this site in the Great Geographic Dictionary (MDGR),[35] so Polonic had no source of information available at that time.

Later, in the summer of 1923, Radu Vulpe, at the time working as an assistant at the National Museum of Antiquities, was asked by Vasile Pârvan to gather data for an "archaeological map of the bank of the Mostiştea pond and of the Mostiştea and Călăraşi Danubian meadows".

"Nearby to the south-west is the Treasure Sand Dune (Grindul Comorii), named after some old diggings of the locals when some stones were found, one bearing a script. I found this statement in Odobescu's Questionaire and it was confirmed to me by some locals who took us to the very spot. Still, we could not find any traces there, no stone, and no pottery. There might be something but as the land is in a floodable area and every year the spot is covered by alluvium brought by the Danube, and also because of the dense vegetation we could not see anything".[36]

I searched for other information in the Archives of the Archaeological Repertoire,[37] but no files existed for this site.

The area surveyed by both Polonic and Vulpe is a floodable one and subjected to the whims of the Danube. Thus, the information collected by Polonic could not be verified by R. Vulpe after less than 20 years, thus making it even more valuable today. Also, we must note that P. Polonic's assumption regarding the location of a fortress in that area was based on observations of this micro-zone, as the area is one of the most suitable for crossing the Danube.

Sites that had never been studied

In the note entitled "the fortress of Axintele on the banks of Ialomiţa", Polonic wrote (Fig. 2): "Part of a hill between the villages of Axintele and Bratia, located on the right bank of Ialomiţa River – is separated by the rest of the area by a ditch and a vallum, forming thus a strong fortification. Within this area there are

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[34] "La 4km spre sud de sat se află în Baltă pe «grindul Comorei» pe un loc mai redicat turnurile unei cetaţi de peatră [...] s-au desgropat de locuitori numai partea despre apus a cetăţei, adica latura despre apus care arată o lungime de 106 paşi, din latura de sud s-au desfăcut o porţiune de 80 de paşi ear din cea de sud se vede zidul numai pe o lungime de 40 paşi – colţurile cetăţei sunt dreptunghiulare – zidul are o grosime de 2 m – După mortar se vede că este o construcţie foarte veche – locuitorii spun că pe lângă zid au găsit cărămizi foarte tari şi olane – Prin interiorul cetăţei nu s-au făcut săpături – Aşezarea aci a unei cetăţi este explicabilă fiindcă de la Spanţov şi până aci nu se găseşte nicăeri prin Baltă o trecere mai lesnicioasă şi mai ales că vis à vis în Bulgaria se găsesc lângă satul Vecena (Vetrena) ruinele unui oraş roman". (IAB archive, Polonic's collection mss. VIII envelope VIII, leaf 68).

[35] Lahovari *et alii* 1899 vol. II, p. 417.

[36] Vlădescu-Vulpe 1924, p. 83 "În apropiere spre SV e grindul Comorii, numit aşa pentru că acolo s-ar fi săpat odată şi s-ar fi dat de pietre vechi, dintre care una scrisă. Această afirmaţie am găsit-o în răspunsurile la chestionarul lui Odobescu şi ni s-a confirmat de către unul din locuitori, cari ne-au dus chiar la faţa locului. Totuşi acolo noi n-am găsit absolut nici-o urmă veche, nici-un ciob, nici o piatră. Se poate să fie ceva, dar din cauză că terenul este inundabil şi în fiecare an e acoperit cu aluviuni dunărene, şi din cauză că vegetaţia era foarte deasă şi înaltă, noi n-am putut constata nimic".

[37] In the '50, it was a collective effort of the Institute of Archaeology (former Museum of Antiquities) to gather all the archaeology informations into a national repertoire of archaeological sites from Romania, project still unpublished till today.

fragments of prehistoric pots but also iron arrows and spears.

1 km north further north, in the Ialomiţa meadow, there is a mound, called Elisaveta and in between the mound and the fortification there is a stone cross, known as "the cross of Capitan Axentie". 3 km south of the Axintele village there is a spot known as the "Maiden's Fortress".[38]

This was the first time the fortress was mentioned, as these particular sites never appeared in the MDGR.[39]

In the Archives of the Archaeological Repertoire can be founded eight leafs having information over this site, all being based on Polonic's information. So, I. Barnea noted that the triangular shaped fortress at Axintele has a defensive earth fortification on the south side, the other sides being naturally defended. Another author, D. V. Rosetti, mentioned that his information is from Gr. Tocilescu's manuscripts at the Library of the Romanian Academy (no. 5144, leaf 63), revealing a new information: the existence on the area between Axintele and Frumuşiţa of a 250 m long ditch. Next, Gh. Cantacuzino, in two taped leafs, quotes the information from Polonic's manuscripts (no. 22 / 940, vol. IV, sheet no. 4, leaf 12, and vol. III, leaf 7 – LAR's archive, Polonic collection), and, under the influence of dialectical materialism, considered the site like a "fortress from primitive society (Rom. *orânduirea primitivă*)". At his turn, D. Tudor briefly mentioned a triangular Dacian fortress. Summing up all information from her colleagues, Ecaterina Vulpe made a new file ignoring all cultural and ethnic assumptions considering the site like "un-researched, epoch unknown". Later, on this file, two manuscript mentions were added. First one, signed by E. Comşa, mentions the results of a survey from 1952: Neolithic pottery (Gumelniţa culture), fortification is possible to be from medieval time, early medieval pottery found on the road between Brătia and Axintele, possible graveyard in the region (local information). Finally, R. Vulpe put together all the information for an ultimate form of the file of this site.

More recently, in the National Archaeological Record of Romania (RAN - code 100932.02), for the area of the Axintele village there is only the mention of the "La Cetate" (At the Fortress) archaeological site, as a civilian settlement together with surface finds from various ages – Bronze Age, Latène (1st century B.C. – 1st century A.D.), medieval times (10th – 11th centuries).

The positioning of the site on a terrace east of the Borcea arm of the Danube, west of the road DJ 201 and east of DJ 313, is rather vague. The study of present photographic and cartographic information suggests errors in the location of the site. Thus, the site is east of DJ 313 (at 392 m) but it is south of DJ 201 (at 580 m), and there are more than 90 km to the Danube. The site is actually located on the Ialomiţa River, way west of the Borcea arm.

The surface of the site was estimated at 6.15 ha. We believe that, at the moment the site was identified, the ditch in front of the promontory stretching out of the terrace was not observed, and thus the site was considered as a civilian settlement and not a fortified one.[40] Based on the satellite maps, correlated with information from earlier maps and the information provided by Polonic, we could estimate the area of the fortified settlement as about 9 ha, not considering the ravine on the east side which has affected the site pretty badly.

Axintele fortification is not the unique site in the area, as it lies less than 8.9 km west from the better known site of Piscu Crăsani.

From this example we may see that the information recorded by P. Polonic a century ago is still extremely useful, as it complements and at times corrects the RAN and List of Historical Monuments (LMI) information. Also, one must note the recording of the toponyms close to Axintele settlement, despite the fact that there seemed to be no direct link.

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[38] "Un colţ de deal dintre satele Axintele şi Bratia, de pe malul drept al Ialomiţei este separat de cellalt teren prin un sanţ şi val formând astfel o cetate puternică. In interiorul ei se găsesc cioburi de oale preistorice dar şi săgeţi şi suliţe de fer. La 1 km mai spre nord, se găseşte pe lunca Ialomiţei o movilă, Elisaveta. Ear între movilă şi cetate se găseşte o cruce de peatră numita «crucea lui capitan Axentie». La 3 km spre sud de satul Axintele este un loc care se numeşte «Cetăţuia Fetei» (IAB archive, Polonic collections, mss. XII envelope XII.G, leaf 12).

[39] Lahovari *et alii* 1898 vol. I, p. 142.

[40] In LMI / 2004, and LMI / 2010 respectivly, the site appeared as a fortified settlement (code LMI: IL-I-s-A-14028).

Fig. 3. Albești: 1. Aerial view of the site (Google Earth); 2. Area of the site on military map from 1906; 3. Polonic's topographic sketch (IAB archive, Polonic collection, mss. XII envelope XII, leaf 55); 4. Polonic's sketch overlapped on aerial view.

Excavated sites

In the note entitled "The Albești fortification", Polonic mentioned (Fig. 3):

"West of the Albești village, on "Panaite's Hill" there's a place known as "the Fortress" or the "Tartar Fortress".

It is located on a hill side, on the left bank of the Albești river, at its confluence with Vedea river; to the north-west the fortress has a deep ditch, 296 m long, separating it from the rest of the area; the vallum is 2.5 m high and the ditch is 1.50 m deep. On the top of the vallum there are the remains of a wall, built of blocks of fired soil, with yellow clay mixed with straw instead of mortar; on some of the blocks imprints of sticks are visible, the same as in the case of the vallum (Troianul) from Teleorman, going north towards Flamânda, through Roșiorii de Vede.

The other sides of the fortress benefit of natural protection, as they are located on the top of the steep slopes of the hill – but of course they had been also protected by a brick wall, which in time collapsed into the valley below. The north and south sides are almost 500 m in length. The fortress is triangular in shape. Inside the fortification there were iron arrow tips and spurs and also many fragments from prehistoric pottery.

The locals say that the Tartars used to live here before the Romanians came, and that at the time the Romanians came with Prince Radu Negru the entire Romanian Plain was inhabited by Tartars – who each had 10 women. Those Tartars had been chased away by Radu Negru and he gave the land to his soldiers who then settled in the area".[41]

At the time, the only information on this fortification came from the MDGR: "traces of a fortification, surrounded by a ditch, about 60 in length and 3 m high, alongside with the artefacts one finds when ploughing: brick fragments, arrow tips and other warfare items".[42]

For this site we found in the Archives of the Archaeological Repertoire nine leafs, all having like source of information either Polonic's notes, or the MDGR. In this respect, D. V. Rosetti quotes facts from the pages of volume 1 of the MDGR (s.v. Albești), but C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor used references from the volume 4 of MDGR (s.v. Panait).

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[41] "La apus de satul Albești pe «Dealul lui Panaite» este un loc numit «Cetate» sau «Cetatea tătărească». Ea este situată pe un colț de deal pe malul stîng al Pîrîului Albești la revarsarea lui în rîul Vedea; - în partea despre nord vest ea are un sanț adânc, de 296 pași (222 m) lung prin care este separată (taiată) de cellalt teren, valul este de 2,50 m înalt ear șanțul de 1,50 m adânc. Pe creasta valului se văd urmele unui zid construit din blocuri de pământ ars care între ele sunt legate cu lut galben mestecat cu pae – în unele blocuri de pămînt ars se văd urmele de nuele cum se găsesc și la Troianul din Teleorman care duce de la Flamânda prin Roșiorii de Vede spre nord. Laturile celelalte a cetăței sunt natural înterite fiind sus pe creasta coastelor abrupte ale dealului - unde desigur au fost întărite și cu un zid brut de cărămidă care însă cu vremea s-a prăbușit la vale. Laturile de nord și sud au o lungime de aproape 500 m – Cetatea are forma unui triunghi – In interiorul cetăței s-au găsit vîrfuri de săgeți și pinteni de fer – și se găsesc multe cioburi de oale preistorice. Locuitorii spun că aci au locuit Tatarii înainte de venirea Românilor – și că la venirea Românilor sub Radu Negru toata câmpia românească era locuită numai tătari care avea câte 10 fimei – Pe acești Tatari i-a gonit Radu Negru și a împărțit pământul ostașilor lui care apoi s-au așezat prin aceste locuri". (IAB archive, Polonic collections, Mss. XII, envelope XII, Albești).
[42] Lahovari *et alii* 1898 vol. 1, p. 39.

Unlike D. V. Rosetti and C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopşor, D. Tudor used in his leaf information from Polonic's manuscripts, modernising the language: instead of *hill corner* he wrote *hill nose*, he changed *500 m* with *1/2 km*, but more important, D. Tudor wrote *wall made from burned soil* instead of *wall made from blocks of burned soil*. Based on the same information, Gh. Cantacuzino typed a new file, mentioning this time the source: Polonic's manuscript no. 22/940, vol. 4, book 2, pages 18-19 (LAR's archive, Polonic collections). The same text appears on another typed file, this time unsigned.

Information from Tocilescu and Polonic's manuscript (no. 5137 - LAR's archive, Tocilescu collection, no. 22/940 - LAR's archive, Polonic collection) was first verified by I. Spiru that completes a field survey in the 50s, published in an article from 1959,[43] when he corrected Polonic's affirmation about the cardinal position of the earth fortification: it is not to North-West, but to South and South-West.

Some other unsigned leafs mention only the existence of a plan of the site made by P. Polonic (no 5137, page 277 and 290 - LAR's archive, Tocilescu collection) and the fact that some objects discovered at that time are in collection of D. Dumitrescu (no. 5141, page 102 - LAR's archive, Tocilescu collection).

From the excavations of E. Moscalu that took place at a later period,[44] it appeared that the fortification (composed of a defence ditch and a "vitrified" *vallum*) was semi-circular in shape with a length of about 180 m. The ditch had an opening of about 4.25-5.50 m at the upper part and the base at about 2.50-3.75 m down from the present day walking level. The present day height of the "vitrified" *vallum* varies from 0.50 m to 1.10 m.

The *vallum* was composed of granulated soil exhibiting various degrees of firing, mixed with daub fragments of various sizes, showing pole and timber imprints. The *vallum* had vertical walls and buttresses made of a yellow soil, suggesting the idea of a wall with a palisade on the top. On the surface of the fired area there were several bricks made of clay mixed with chaff, rectangular in shape. The size of the bricks was 0.25 x 0.15 x 0.08 m.[45]

The early Latène pottery recovered from the sunken huts and pits was dated (based on the amphora fragments from Thassos and Chios) to the middle of the 4th century B.C.

It is easy to notice that Polonic's information was more accurate and complete than what was mentioned in the Great Geographic Dictionary and very close to the data gathered through excavations.

Apart from the accuracy of the data, there was a lot of attention paid to the data gathered from the locals, despite the fact it had more of an ethnographic value rather than a historical one.

In the note entitled "COCONI", Polonic specifies (Fig. 4):

"North of the village, on a promontory advancing into the Mostiştea Lake (a sort of a peninsula) there is a square fortification; the locals know the place as "at the ditches". On the southern side, the fortress is 289 m long, the surrounding ditch is 16 wide and 2 m deep; the vallum (widened by ploughing) is only 1 to 0.5 m high with a width of 12 m. 16 m away from the south-west corner one can see a gap into the vallum where the gate was located. The northern side has the same length as the southern one – in the centre there is also a gap for the gate – the ditch is 15 m wide and 2 m deep; the vallum was ploughed and is only 0.5m high. South of the vallum one can see the traces of an earlier ditch, 20 m wide and 0.5 m deep stretching from one bank to the other, separating the peninsula from the rest of the land and thus making it a prehistoric fortress similar to many others in Romania".[46]

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[43] Spiru 1959, p. 704.
[44] Moscalu pp. 340-341.
[45] For comparation at Bâzdâna (Dolj County): 0.40 x 0.20 x 0.10 m (cf. Zirra 2004, p. 53); Coţofenii din Dos (Dolj County): 0.45 x 0.25 x 0.12 m (*cf.* Zirra 1994, p. 367).
[46] "La nord de sat se află pe o limbă de deal care înaintează în lacul Mostiștea (un fel de peninsulă) o cetate patrată; locuitorii numesc locul «la șanțuri». Latura de sud a cetăţei are o lungime de 289 m, Șanţul înconjurător este de 16 m lat și 2 m adânc – valul lăţit prin arături are o înălţime numai de 1 până 1/2 m pe o lăţime de 12 m. La 16 m depărtare de colţul sud vestic se vede tăetura în val unde a fost poarta cetăţei. Latura de nord are aceiaş [lungime] ca latura de sud – în mijlocul ei se găseşte asemenea tăitura porţei – şanţul este de 15 m lat și 2 m adânc; valul fiind arat are o înălţime numai de 1/2 m. La sud de acest val se văd urmele unui sanţ mai vechi, de 20 m lat și 1/2 m adânc care disparţea peninsula din mal în mal de cellalt teren făcând astfel o cetate preistorică cum se mai găsesc în mai multe locuri în România". (IAB archive, Polonic collection, mss. VIII, envelope VIII, leaf 69).
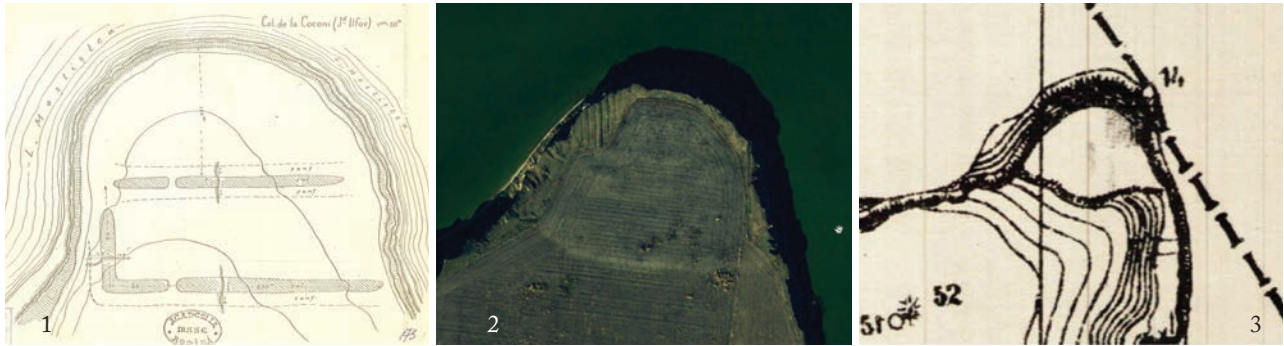
Fig. 4. Coconi: 1. Polonic's topographic sketch (IAB archive, Polonic collection, mss. VIII, envelope VIII, 173); 2. Aerial view of the area (Google Earth); 3. Area of the site on military map from 1896-1898.

There was no information on this site on the Great Geographic Dictionary either.[47]

Also in the summer of 1923, Radu Vulpe, during his work for the "archaeological map of the banks of Mostiştea pond and the Mostiştea and Călăraşi Danubian meadows"[48] noted in his report for V. Pârvan: "Other than the quoted Neolithic and Getian sites, there was only one more, at "Căldarea (the Cauldron), on a high and steep peninsula between Sultana and Coconi, which is a more recent settlement, dating to the historical times of the Ţara Românescă".[49] In a footnote he also mentioned "The place is surrounded by two small ditches, too well preserved to be ancient. During my three visits only very recent pottery was found, but not modern one though. Other than this we also found barrel staves not decayed yet. I had no access to the coins the locals found on the spot decades ago."[50]

The two pieces of information for the Coconi site contained data that probably filtered by the two different authors: the information from Polonic provided a more detailed topographic information while R. Vulpe was more preoccupied by the archaeological finds (pottery and coins) and the dating of the site as a medieval settlement.

Information about Coconi can be found in the Archives of the Archaeological Repertoire as well. Four leafs, three handwritten and one typed, contain the same information about the medieval fortified settlement from "Căldarea", but none used the information from Polonic's manuscripts. Nevertheless, in the file related to the Latène site from "Piscul Coconilor", in two leafs we can see a large description of a fortified settlement, based on Polonic's notes. Details from the text show that was confusion in the redaction of that files: it is not about "Piscul Coconilor", but about "Căldarea" also known like "La Şanţuri". The confusion seems to belong of D. Tudor, his name being mentioned in the bibliographical list only when this misunderstanding appears.

In RAN (code 104207.03) on the area of Coconi village is mentioned the fortified medieval village of Coconi-Căldarea (La şanţuri), comprising one fortified settlement and three cemeteries attributed to the former. Following excavations in 1960-1966, N. Constantinescu dated the existence of the village to the 14th-15th centuries.

Analysing the present day information on the site, there is some data that can be added. The positioning is rather vague: east of Coconi village, on the right bank of the Mostiştea lake, on a terrace promontory. Thus, the site is 1 km NE of the village.

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[47] Lahovari *et alii* 1899 vol. II, p. 543.
[48] Vlădescu-Vulpe 1924, p. 82.
[49] *Ibidem*, p. 83: "În afară de staţiunile neolitice şi getice citate, n'am mai găsit alta decât una singură: la Căldarea, o peninsulă înaltă şi râpoasă între Sultana şi Coconi, dar care e o Silişte cu mult mai nouă, din plină epocă a istoriei Ţării-Româneşti".
[50] *Ibidem, loc. cit.,* note 1: "E un loc înconjurat cu două rânduri de şanţuri mici, păstrate prea bine spre a fi antice. În trei visite pe care le-am făcut aci am găsit numai ceramică de caracter foarte nou, fără a fi totuşi modernă. Afară de aceasta am dat şi peste doage de butoiu de stejar încă neputrezite. Din monezile pe cari locuitorii spun că le-au găsit acum câteva decenii aci, n'am putut să văd niciuna".

The estimated surface of the site was about 1 ha. Based on the satellite maps correlated with earlier information and those provided by Polonic, and also with the plan published by N. Constantinescu we can estimate a surface for the fortified perimeter of about 3.9 ha, with the real surface of the site being probably bigger.

In what concerns the exact time when the site was discovered, 1923 was suggested – being the year when Radu Vulpe was doing his field survey gathering data for an archaeological map, information that he also published the following year. It is worth mentioning though that the identification and the first description of the site actually belonged to P. Polonic. This was acknowledged 40 years ago by the excavator of Coconi, N. Constantinescu, at the time he published the monograph of the medieval village.[51]

Conclusions

We attempted to recreate the atmosphere of the period when P. Polonic worked and to offer a few examples of his works.

Around 1900 Romanian topography was in full development. Under the coordination of General Barozzi and General Brătianu (mainly the latter), the Geographic Institute of the Army started working on a detailed and precise map of Romania.

Those were also the times when it became obvious – as Polonic also stated – that "a map should speak to us like a different script".[52] Thus, various types of information were recorded considering they could be good indicators for the ancient history. We also showed that General Brătianu had supported the necessity of having an accurate map of Romania, using in his discourse arguments of historical and archaeological nature, underlying the fact that through a correct topographic record it would have been easier to observe fortifications, ways of access and even understand the development and finality of certain historical events, such as battles.

Those were the times when a topographic engineer – formed in military schools – could act at the ideal moment for the cataloguing of historical and archaeological monuments and for the creation of an archaeological map. All these were possible with the support and guidance of Professor Gr. G. Tocilescu, who – together with General Brătianu – was always either coordinating the Great Geographic Dictionary (MDGR) or organizing exhibitions where the historical national component was always present.

Thus, P. Polonic benefited from the progress of topography (maps and instruments) that he had used to record data referring to numerous and various archaeological sites. As an example of his activity, we presented here the information on four sites, some well known, some gone or left unexcavated.

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[51] Constantinescu 1972, p. 23.
[52] Măgureanu 2013b, p. 91.

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