

IN THE NORTHERN DOBROUDJA A HYHPOTETICAL IDENTIFICATION OF THE FORTRESS GENUCLA

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Abstract: One of the "enigmatic" fortified Getic towns of the Northern side in Dobroudja (Eastern Romania) was GENUCLA and it is mentioned, few times, for being involved in some big military and commercial issues, on the lower Danube. It was not possible to locate yet the location of GENUCLA, because on the shores of Danube, on the last two hundred kilometers of its flow, the archaeological research found a few vestiges of former fortresses, but all destroyed, as a mark of the large scale military confrontations there in the ancient times. Mr. Nicolae, a local historian and leader of the "GETIA MINOR FOUNDATION" from Tulcea, summarize a short picture of historical and archaeological research in the area, including references to the stormy military history of the last centuries BC, and concludes with a hypothetical identification of the ancient Genucla (by himself, with the support of the members of his foundation). Actually, even their research is not interfering with the specific archaeological activity, the conclusions and the facts expounded by Mr. Nicolae Nicolae can be helpfull to a productive archaeological research.

Keywords: paleolithic; mesolithic; neolithic; ister-danube; hamangia-culture; gumelnitza-culture; bronze age; iron age; hiperboreea; thracians; geto-dacians; Herodotus; Sarmizegethousa; Genucla; the lead plates from Sinaia ; Ederile hill; satellite image

In 1853 one of the founders of so-called *Prehistory*, Jacques Baucher de Perthes, in a trip trough Delta of Danube have ask if in the big river alluvial deposits were found also deposits of *Antediluvian*; a question without an answer at that time. Later, like in 1910, after some dredging into the heart of Delta (on the top of a bank ridge, in Caraorman), were collected mammoth bones, a few bones of rhinoceros, wild horses, etc., all of them *Paleolithic fossils* (more exactly: from *Pleistocene*). In 1927 starts the sound digging at Topalu (*Pestera*); there is a fossil fauna assigned to *the Middle and Upper Paleolithic*. Ion Băncilă made diggings at Cap Midia and Mamaia-Sat, where he found relics of flint, assigned to *Musteriane*. Other Romanian archaeologists have organized a systematic research at Peștera Liliecilor, Peștera Bursucilor, Gura Dobrogei, Adam Clisi, etc. Alexandru Păunescu have got remarkable results at Poarta Albă, Saligny, Făclia, Mircea Vodă, Tichilești, Garvân, Enisala, some zones with many *Paleolithic* settlements and some *Mesolithic* dwellings. (Soon the archaeologist branch will see those "special type" of building all around Dobroudja!). We point out here only a small part of those detections which show in all bearings the way of Dobroudja, from a deep past to the new historic times.

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The next human culture, the *Neolithic*, have entered soundly in the care of researchers: in Dobroudja came up the outstanding culture *Hamangia*, (in fact the single one neolithic culture which came by colonization² into "Romanian Neolithic", assimilated, localized and spectacular developed here) and the native *Gumelnitza* culture, both of them defined by an application of ornamented ceramic and by terra-cotta statuettes, true effigies of the old relics in our museums.



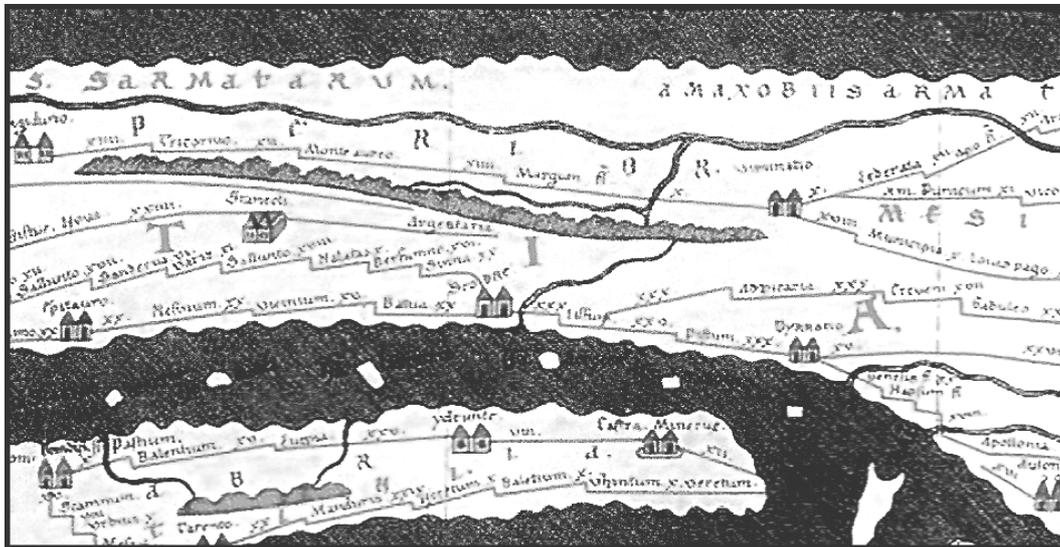
1. *Chirnogi*;
A vessel (Gumelnița).



2 "The Thinker From Cernavoda
And His Pair"(Hamangia).



3. *Golovița*;
A feminine figurine
(Hamangia).



Excerpt from the old map " Tabula Peutingeriana", (III-IV AD ?) – where Genucla can not be found!

² Ion Miclea, Radu Florescu, *Preistoria Daciei*, 1980, p. 71

Soon, in spite of a true evolution of the local population to the *Thracian-Gete* ethnic level (which will be culminating in the 1st century BC with Burebista's Kingdom), the care of historians and archaeologists preponderantly went - we assume - to the social and cultural expression of... the Greek fortified towns, colonies founded between IX-III centuries BC as commercial terminals on the shore of Pontus Euxinos (Black Sea); and, after it, to the Greek-Roman symbiosis in "Schytia Minor" country, which became a stable part of Roman Empire. (We are not neglectful of the fact that the written reports and comparative analyses associated with the well confirmed patterns from Aegean Sea area and from all around Mediterranean world, were more attractive, more... "over frontiers" and then, certainly more productive in acquiring an academic or an university notoriety!...) But the recovery of the gaps from that time becomes a moral duty of Romanian historiography, especially because the so called "country *between Istros and Pontus*" hold in his store great and very important surprises.

... After the (presumed) migration from the North (?) of Indo-Europeans, we can see a better archaeologically documented migration, in a new way: *from Europe to Asia*. This is the time of the early outset of the *Bronze Age*, a historical period in which the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic dwellers will get their "special spirituality" (so named by the written sources of Antiquity). Let's remember: for that time is more and more visible the build-up of villages and seatings which will grow as towns, more coherently outlined. Regarding the settlers from the Carpatho-Danubiano-Pontic Arch, those people are called sometimes in the history books *Hyperboreans Pelasgy*. That's also the time when begin new swarming moves, from Hyperborea - located "over the Okeanos Potamos" (namely *over Danube*) - to the warmer Mediterranean regions, a few waves which will repeat like every 200 years, and will disturb deeply some cultures of South (the *Knossos* and *Mycenaean* civilization). Anyway, something must be underlined: the dating in all archaeological investigations on the Carpatho-Pontic area, was done only with *relative-method*; today these data no more tally with the require of a real modern knowledge.

Ordinarily, the end of *Eneolithic Age* should transmute itself in a transitional area, to the *Early Bronze Age*; but - unfortunately - for the region in our sight, Dobroudja, we have not evidence of the Early and the Middle Bronze Age. Is identified archaeologically here only the *Late Bronze Age*. (...Like arriving from the blue sky?!)...Nevertheless, in Dobroudja were a big number of *tumulus*, some scholars assume the conclusion that those tumulus are from *Early* and *Middle Bronze Age*. Regrettably, from the massive number, thousands of tumulus, a big part were turn down by agricultural arrangement of the territory, and the archaeological inventory from them was scattered, lost, or stolen and sold dirt-cheap. But, from the hundreds of tumulus *still existing*, we underline: were hallowed and investigated only... 1% !.. (That is for why more and more researchers refrain to agree that the "...*Early and Middle Bronze Age is... absent in Dobroudja*" ... !).

The terminal phase of *Bronze Age* here, in Dobroudja, is marked by a mini-culture called *Pre-Babadag*, which is a continuation of *Monteoru culture*, and which directly induced here the start of *Iron Age*. From then, the archaeological data became to multiply, pointing out that fortresses are build strategically on the right shore of the Danube, with a military mean, but also - and especially! – for a commercial destination. The phase passing from *Late Bronze Age* to the *Iron Age* also correspond to some big struggle in Europe; and from here will let out, to South, waves of warlike people; (see the "*Great Invasion of The Sea People Into Middle East*", recorded like that by Egyptians: it was a big "European coalition"; and, for sure, into heart of that was a Thracian constitutive: at that time the Thracians were the dominating people by number, in the South-East of Europe.

Then comes a new time, when a part of those tribes or subdivisions which have emigrated in the past from Hyperboreea, will return, not with the best intentions, but for plunder and robbery, becoming a true danger for the native settlers. A plunder was considered then a normal merit, a justified and a very honorable military action ("*The Great Robbery of the Golden Wool*" from... Hyperboreea, by a Greek team of adventurers, commemorative recorded by the Greek mythology, is a perfect example for it!). Of course, the communities have fortified themselves to defend their goods, sometimes in larger coalition. The historic sources mention well-known troubles, like the big military Persian war of "Darius (Dareios in Greek) against the Scythians". As Herodotus recorded it in his "HISTORIES", the Balkan Thracian tribes and their fortresses capitulated without fighting to Persian army, but not the "GETAI" (GETE), "*the Thracian tribe settled on Danube*"; quote:

93. "*But before he (Dareios) came to the Ister, he conquered first the Getai, who believe in immortality: for the Thracians who occupy Salmydessos and are settled above the cities of Apollonian and Mesambria, called the Kyrmianai and the Nipsaioi, delivered themselves over to Dareios without fighting; but the Getai, who are the bravest and the most upright in their dealings from all the Thracians, having betaken themselves to obstinacy, were forthwith subdued.*"³²

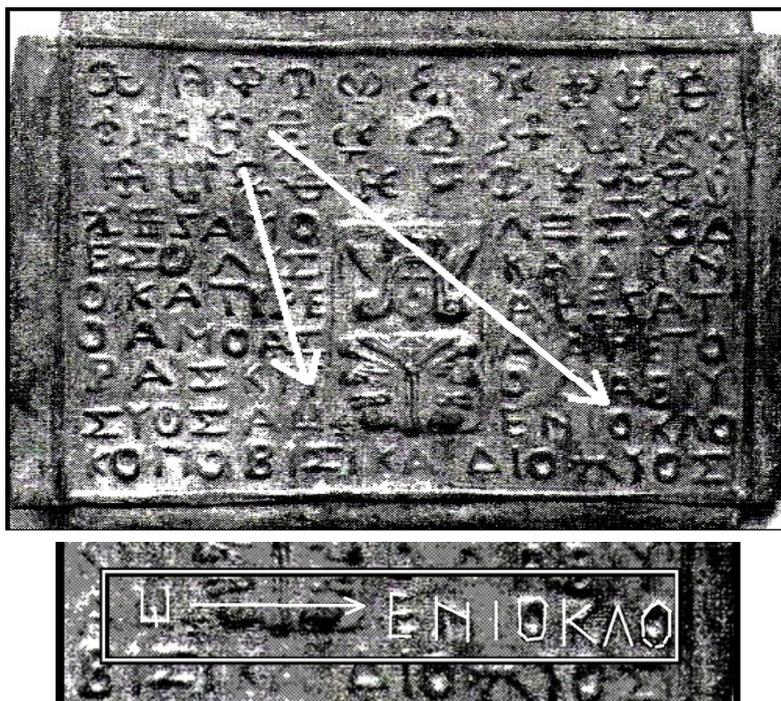
One of the most famous GETAI's stronghold, then (and it survived a few decades after the rapid tear-out of the powerful kingdom of Burebista), was the fortress called GENUCLA. The fortified town resisted to the Roman assaults till 28-27 BC, when it was dismantled by legions of Roman Macedonian governor Crassus. Genucla was a lot of time an important port on Danube and, at least for Northern present-day Dobroudja, a true Eastern capital, (maybe equally in fame with *Sarmizegethousa* of Dacians, in the West, over the Carpathian Mountains?!).

Unfortunately, we have not a written proof locating *GENUCLA*. Some investigative research from the beginning of previous century, tried to locate the fortress – hypothetically - were two Moldavian rivers, SIRET and PRUT, meet the Danube. (Of course, it was a potential good commercial area, which support the

³ Herodot, *Istoriei*, 92

hypothesis of a justified location; but no archaeological proof confirmed it. Nicolae Densușianu and Nicolae Săulescu have indicated the possible location of the fortress somewhere close to current town Galați. Undoubtedly, then were more other fortresses along with Danube shore, but no written map from the time to know: which, where?!

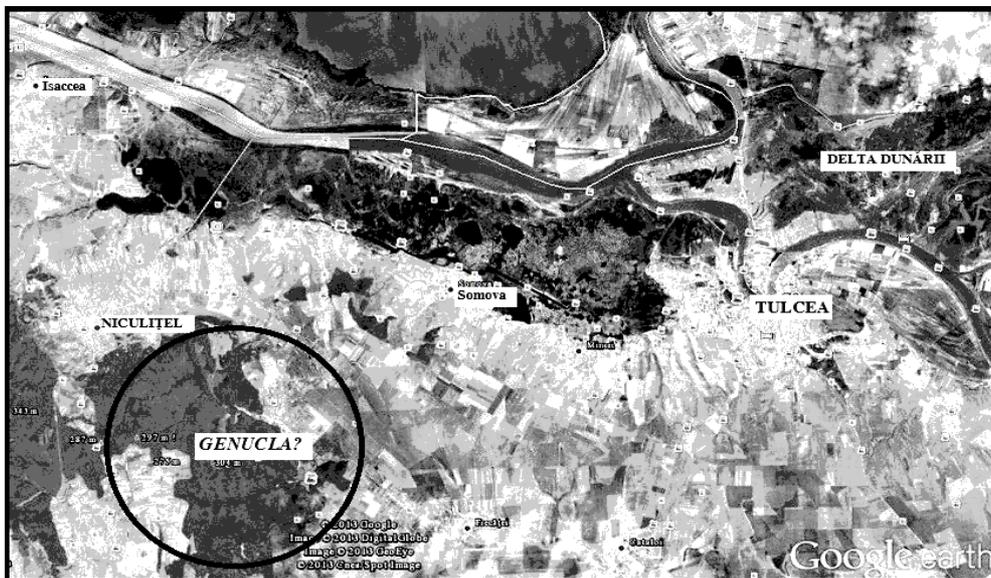
Even summary, the geographical description corroborated with the known direction of the Roman legions in their advance to occupy the Danube end (where the river mouths draw into Black Sea), indicate the *North of Dobroudja* as a zone of maximum interest. For it, the archaeologist branch of historians started to look for location of Genucla more and more *to East*, mandatory on the Danube banks. In what concerns us - especially after we found the name "GENUCLA" in a lot of those revealing *LEAD-PLATES-FROM SINAIA*⁴ - we choose to search the perimeter enclosed by villages Parcheș, Mănăstirea Celic and Niculițel, in our Northern Dobroudja. The perimeter is located some 30 kilometers South-West from town of TULCEA, the current capital of the region. (And when I say "we", I'm talking about the most enthusiast and diligent members of our foundation from Tulcea, the people of "GETIA MINOR")



A LEAD PLATE FROM SINAIA (nr. 1, Romalo, pg.16), one of the plates of this series where appears the name of GENUCLA, written here "DJ-EN(I)OKLO" (full and detail; the name is severed by the bottom of the central image).

⁴ Dan Romalo, *Cronica apocrifă pe plăci de plumb?*, București, 2003

“*Getia Minor Foundation*” is a public endowed establishment for historical knowledge and research, counting on over 450 members. At least 50 of them - with different professions – are all very active and interested in *practical research*. From ten years ago we make periodically visits to that site, which is located in our proximity. In our trips there we are doing visual *periegeses*, photographic research, altimetry examination; and recently we started to search the area with the help of satellite image (on-line), which is a turning-point in our scientific reasoning.

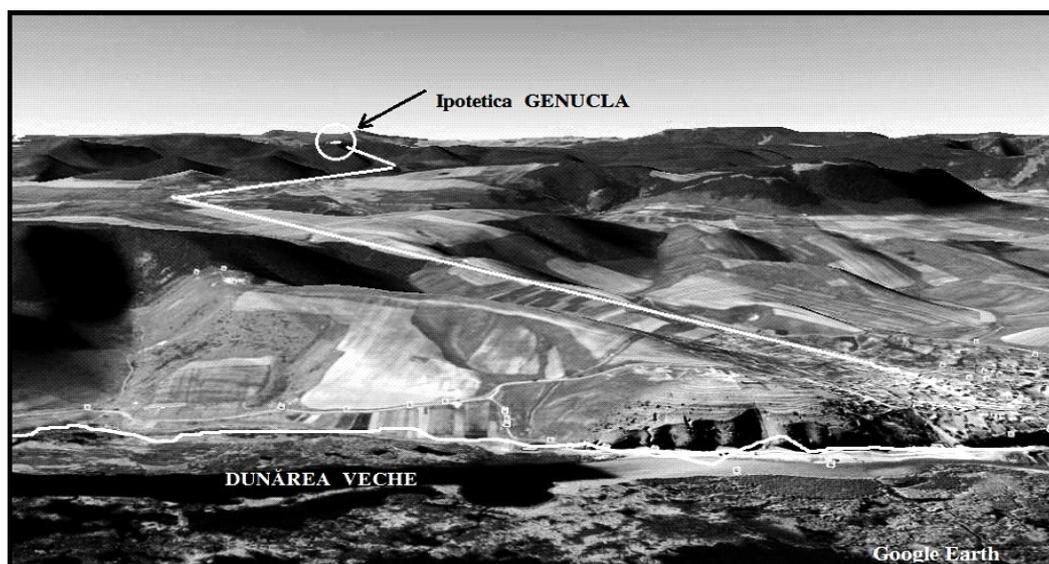


**The place of supposed location of GENUCLA:
a forest, close to OLD DANUBE and to the village Niculițel**

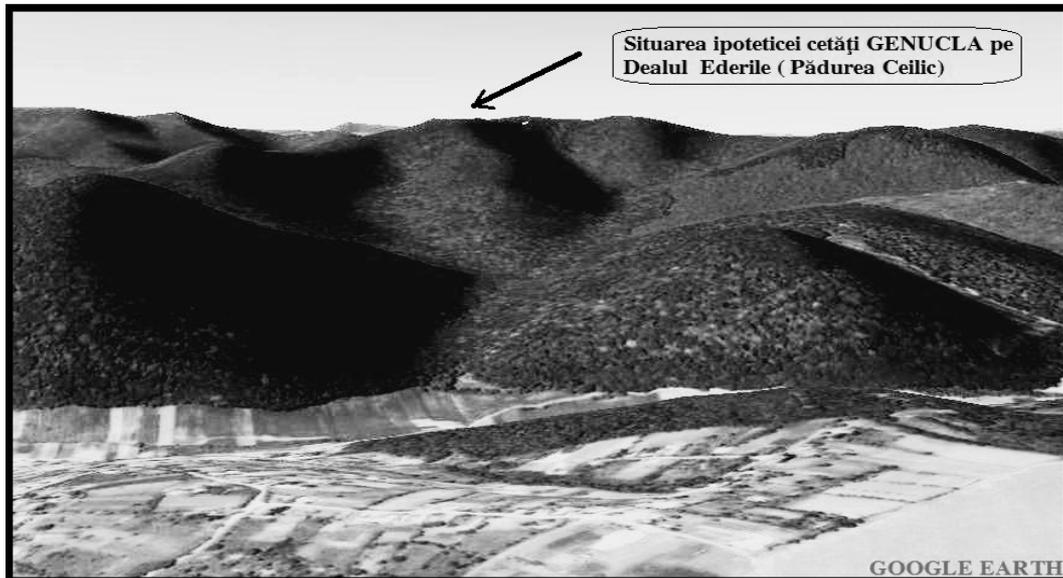
In the farmer house-holdings, in the near fields, in the forest, day by day come out all kinds of relics which send us thousand and thousand years in the past. The archaeological investigation along the time have revealed some pile of strong dwellings, still from the *Early Neolithic*. In that area were the archaeologists have partialy explored, are six sites which demonstrate a remarkable density of houses, domestic pits, a few necropolis. The most important relics: three very large jars (with utmost large dimensions!), a boat-launcher platform (close to the former shore of Old Danube, were – in Antiquity - the Big River *was four-five times larger* than the current river Danube, for that being then named "Okeanos Potamos" (“*The Big River like a Sea*”). The archaeologists found also some smelting furnaces for metal minerals, some kind of old coins, amphoras, ear rings, bracelets, glass beads, etc.

Four kilometers from the monastery of village Celic, there is a *necropolis* in the woods, with many tombs. At least two of them look impressive, there are some "stone rings" and other inventory was collected as a result of a save-digging. Estimating by the many *military relics* (swords, knives, daggers, shields), we may conclude that roughly three thousand years ago, here was settled a numerous community of GETE, in the peak of their social developing. That community was hypothetically dated from the end of *Bronze Age* and the beginning of Iron Age. We underline that all the relics were estimated with *relative methodology*. No C-14 or other modern device for a more accurate estimation was used. But the great number of relics supported us into idea that - somewhere in the surrounding area - *must be* a fortress, a fortified town, from where the region was politically, commercial-transaction and, of course, military - protected and managed!...

Many years ago, the former General manager of ICEM Tulcea and of Country Museum, the archaeologist Simion Gavrilă, with the help of two local forest guards, have discovered in the woods a fortress, a strange fortress at the first sight, on the top of the first hill to West, looking from the front of monastery Celic: the *EDERILE HILL* . Soon after it, the regretted archaeologist have passed away, without starting his intended sounding digging.



The presumtive location of the fortress is pretty close to the shore of OLD DANUBE

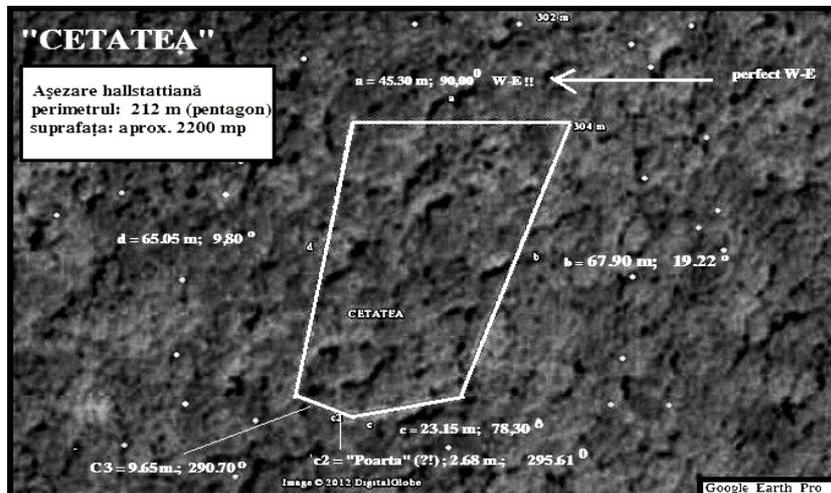


The location of the fortress is on the "plane top" of EDERILE HILL

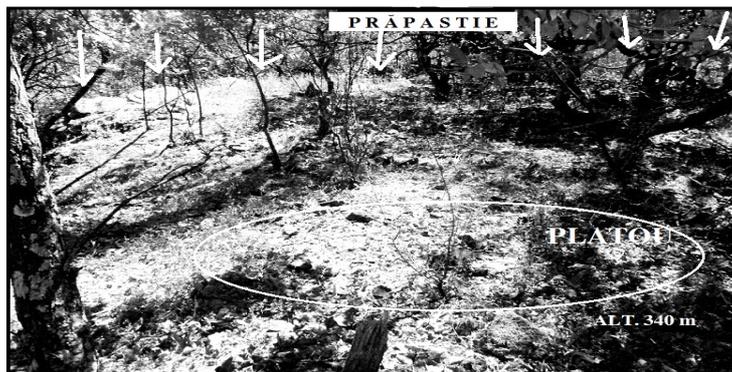
Starting year 2010, the site was taken over by the archaeologist V. Sârbu, from Brăila. He made some pits inside of that "strange" perimeter, surrounded by steep crags, over a half-round cliff. Probably a wall was built up between the large and marginal belt of rocks and natural slabs. The sounding digging was made by cutting a few cassettes (2 x 1 m.) and the work was done with students from Poland. (!)

Three weeks they worked with absolute discretion, in silence; and after the inventory found in those cassettes was collected, recorded and taken by Mr. Sârbu, the cassettes were carefully stopped up, but marked each with a wooden plug as a witness. (Well done job; just we don't understand why the archaeologist did not invite *Rumanian students*; maybe the fact that the foreign students don't understand the Romanian language was considered a.. better protection of the site secrets? For what is useful this "*secreto-mania*" in guarding out of the public sight the outcome of a possible important discovery?! Maybe is the fear that some malefactors will squeeze at the site to rummage in for a... treasure, or for some dirt-cheap marketable relics?! Well, the archaeological research, here, could have had the surprise not of despoilers, but opposite: a *public foundation* with members dedicated to learn about the past of their country; a hand of History lovers which know the site from at least ten years ago, ready to protect it and being well informed about the merit of the archaeological work; some of those members of GETIA MINOR Foundation could have been *volunteers* ready to help the research for free...

Even the analysis and opinions of the regular members of foundation have no academic or university endorsement, some of their suggestion could have been (and still may be!) useful marks for a professional leader; especially because those "amateurs" come in with *various professional and technical skills...* "GETIA MINOR Foundation", with respect for all legal provisions, already had start to "explore" the site by some *pluridisciplinary methodology*, out of the regular archaeological work; not touching the soil, like the law requires; not interfering the specialist; but ready to help him with useful information. We currently use the visual research, the photography, the video and satellite images, the spectrography etc. Our outcomes, regularly published in DACIA MAGAZINE, are *publicly displayed*, and not for a personal profit but for the benefit of a true History of Romania.



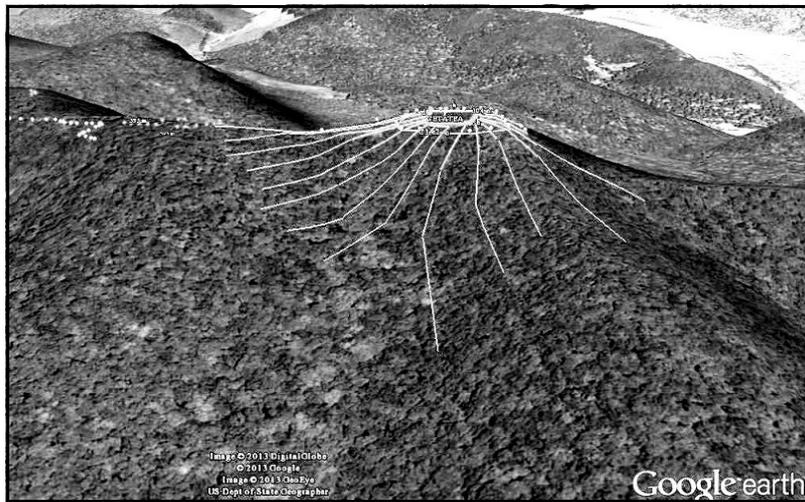
In a search with the satellite images (GOOGLE EARTH), we find out the limits of fortress, by amazing orthoscopic line of 304 m altitude, the same and uniform altitude of whole 2 ha terrace.



The hypothetic Genucla (or one component of her complex, the Fortress) is surrounded by a semi-circular cliff, deep and difficult to assault.

The fortress is an *irregular pentagon* and cover an *unusual large area* for a simple fortress (0.25 ha!); the longest side is 68 m. There is an almost plan-surface (a plateau, except for a group of large stones in the middle of Southern half, a zone we call-and.. maybe it is !?-"*The Agora*"). The plane-terrace looks like *manmade* (or, that's a... glorious cooperation with an exceptional offer of Nature?). Only a large, professional digging, could give a correct answer.

The site is located on the top of *Ederile Hill* and the satellite verification of the slope angles confirm the essential attribute of the fortified place: the defensive capacity.



The fortress is surrounded by a *natural defensive*: a semicircle of cliffs

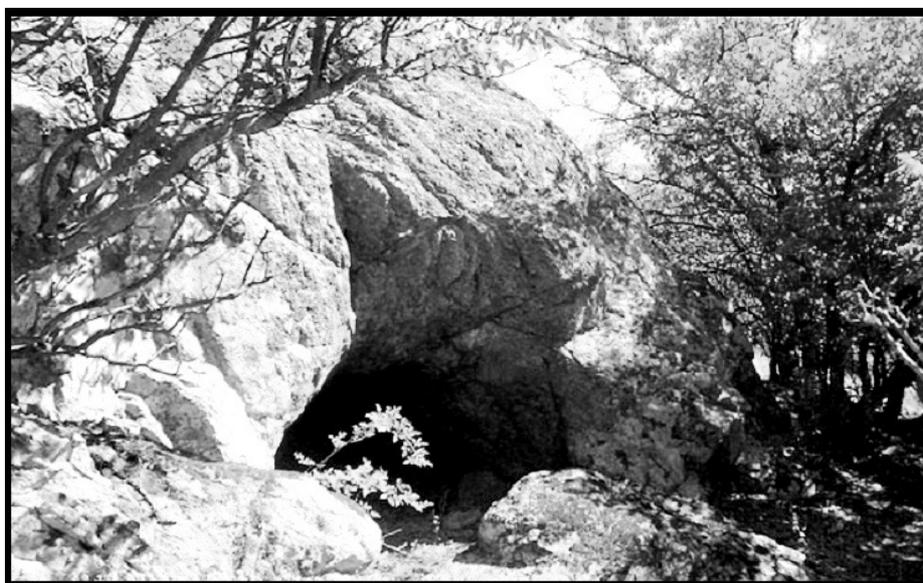
From the top of the hill you can see, throw-down to vale, till to the hill base, thousand of slabs and rocks, some visibly carved; but all of them, we suppose, detached from the old wall of the fortress. For a while, we have identified three entrances (South-Eastern, Northern and Western); and because it is a *defensive fortress*, well - no reason to look for a... *fourth entrance*!? In the North-East side, the stones - but also a very little remnant of the former wall, are deeply burned. By the poor inventory of the relics spread around and recorded by Simion Gavrilă, the fortress was dated - for a while - as *halstattian*. Looks like, but we are waiting for Mr. Sârbu's conclusion.

Another (but vague) information could come from the... *name of the hill*. It is called locally: "EDERILE". At the first sight it sounds like a Turkish name?! (In Dobroudja, which was not only into Roman Empire, but also a few hundred years into the Turkish one) there are a lot of Turkish denomination. However, someone who claim he knows something about the Thracian language says: "EDERILE" (with the accent on *the first syllable*, not like in Turkish, *on the last*

one!), is a compound name: from the root "EDE" ("priest"), the attached "RI" ("a sacred place") and " - LE", an usual ending attached to some names, signifying: "bright, brilliant"... But, in the *Arumanian idiom*(which is a *Romanian Language* sub-dialect, in the same time historically close to *Thracian* language), "(Y)ED" means, like in *Romanian*, "the *cub of a goat*", with the same form extended to some other wild animals. "DERI" is a *North- Albanian* word and means "wild boar". For the first part of the name, see - also in *Albanian* - "GJEDHER", which means "bovine" (and where "GJ" is pronounced "Y"!). Also, very likely, the oronym can be reported to a word from the *Old Romanian* and possible to the *Paleoromanian*: " (I)EDERĂ{" , = "ivy", (and it is cognate with *Latin* "hedera"). Your choice!...

At the Northern side of the fortress, the 45 m long wall (the 304 m altitude) draw the line EAST-WEST with an impressive accuracy. It may suggest a cult of Sun divination, and more: a certain astronomical activity, because "the straight wall" has at the two extremities ...*exactly oriented to equinoctial sunrise and sunset!* 30 m from that Northern side, inside, you can see a carved rock, like a table, which could have been a shrine, an altar, a "table of sacrifices" (?).

And, like one kilometer downhill, to South-East-South, half-opens a grotto, 1.5 m high, 3.5 m wide and 5 m deep. Knocking the wall with a hammer, you get a "hollow-sound", like in the opposite side, indeed, should be a...."room"(?!). (Maybe there are some "escape-stairs" from the fortress?). As we know, so far the grotto wasn't yet investigated by a professional speleologist.



The grotto from EDERILE Hill is located at an altitude 35-40 m lower as the Fortress terrace.

Concluding on the "*hypothetical GENUCLA*", we underline that:

The fortress (a part of a fortified town?) is located in the Northern Dobroudja and lasted from the *Halstatt Age*, (maybe... *older*, as a good, a naturally protected site?),

- It is located aprox. 2.3 - 2.5 Km (air line) from the right shore of the former course of Danube, on a hill which perfectly oversees 30 km. of its flow. A geological analysis shows that Old Danube (*Okeanos Potamos*), then four-five times bigger than today, had the flow tangential to the shore of current village Somova (maybe a... *former port of Genucla?!*)

- The entire region is pithy of worship locations, with a clear tradition of this profile. Maybe, that is another mark of the old habitat in the region by many dwellers, under the control of a stronghold, a fortified town.

With those three feature (all mentioned in the old historical references), the fortress from *Ederile Hill* could be hypothetically identified with the old fortified town GENUCLA.