

From Argamum to Troemis. Land and water routes in northern Dobruja in Antiquity.



The idea behind this project is to clarify the how important the Danube river and the Black Sea were for the Roman Empire from a military and economic standpoint by carrying out land and underwater archaeological prospection and excavations in north-eastern Dobruja (Romania). In particular, during fieldwork campaigns (on land and under water) selected areas will be investigated with so-called archaeological prospection methods, scanning, one might say, the ground or the water to have an idea, what might be hidden below the surface. These

methods are called non-invasive, because they do not require excavations, the process usually associated with archaeology. The chronological scope of the project focuses on Antiquity and Late Antiquity: the times of the Greeks and Romans.

Around the Black Sea, significant settlements had appeared during the Greek colonization, and a number of these cities were located on what would later become the coastline of the Roman province *Moesia inferior* – today Romania and Bulgaria. The central site is the Greek and Roman town Argamum, which will be investigated on land and from the perspective of the nearby Lake Razim, using underwater methods. The other sites on land are three Roman forts: Satu Nou, Dealul Consul (Consul Hill) and the legionary fortress Troesmis. These are all connected by the valley of the river Taita, and the road running along this valley was a very important backup route in case the Danube was frozen and therefore another key element of our studies.

Underwater surveys are also planned further away from Argamum towards the south and north, especially around the two mouths of the St. George Danube branch, where ships coming from the Black Sea entered the Danube. Apart from those overall six fieldwork campaigns, the project seeks to analyse and then publish the results of the surveys.

The Danube route played an important role in supplying Roman army, at a time, when the big river marked the border between the Empire and the outside world. The study of this area makes it possible to answer the question of what imperial policy looked like on the borderland, define the nature of interactions with the neighbours, and how they changed over time.

The idea of the underwater prospection is to look for shipwrecks, which are like time-capsules holding condensed data on supply lines and economics, as evidenced by a recent such find very close to Argamum.

Our main hypothesis is that the region between north of the Argamum-Troesmis line played a far more crucial role for the Roman Empire than we might think. By undertaking this project we hope to generate a better understanding for the specific nature of the relationships between Romans and non-Romans in the wider area and how this frontier zone between Danube and Black Sea functioned in the past.

By using the non-invasive methods, we ensure the unaltered preservation of the ancient remains. Many ancient structures at Argamum and other sites are made of brittle walls which collapse shortly after being excavated therefore our investigations can help excavate only as much as necessary to understand the architecture.

The project is undertaken in international cooperation between the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, the Eco-Museum Research Institute Gavrilă Simion in Tulcea (Romania), and the School of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences, University of Bradford (UK).