

# ROMANS IN THE SCHOOL. NOTES ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTION OF THE KUUN COLLEGE FROM ORĂȘTIE – SZÁSZVÁROS

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**REZUMAT:** *Articolul prezintă câteva dintre monumentele romane redescoperite din colonia Sarmizegetusa, anterior parte a colecție arheologice a colegiului Kuun din Orăștie – Szászváros și scurta istorie a uneia dintre cele mai importante colecții școlare din Transilvania. Articolul reflectă, de asemenea, asupra contextului istoric al anticarismului în școlile din Imperiul Austro-Ungar și importanța lor în prezervarea patrimoniului cultural din regiune.*

**CUVINTE-CHEIE:** *anticarism în Transilvania; colegiul Kuun; Orăștie; arheologie romană; Dacia; Sarmizegetusa.*

**ABSTRACT:** *The article presents some recently rediscovered Roman monuments from colonia Sarmizegetusa, once part of the archaeological collection of the Kuun-College from Orăștie – Szászváros and the short history of one of the most important school collections of Transylvania. The article reflects also on the historical context of antiquarianism in the schools of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and their importance in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** *antiquarianism in Transylvania; Kuun-College; Szászváros; Roman archaeology; Dacia, Sarmizegetusa.*

Several Roman monuments were identified by the author of these lines in the summer of 2017 in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg, Romania) during the renovation of the Apáczai Csere János High School and in the Calvinist Church from the Farkas Street (Str. Kogălniceanu, Cluj-Napoca). Four Roman objects (cat. nos. 1–4) were found at the loft of the Apáczai Csere János High School in Cluj, all of them discovered in colonia Sarmizegetusa, capital of Roman Dacia and part of the archaeological collection of the Kuun-College till the early 1920's<sup>1</sup>. The research history of these important monuments gives an interesting insight in the history of late antiquarianism and the age of archaeological school collections from the Belle Époque and also in the research history of colonia Sarmizegetusa<sup>2</sup>.

## DISCOVERING SARMIZEGETUSA AND THE FORMATION OF THE KUUN COLLECTION

The rich archaeological heritage of Roman Dacia was looted and collected by clericals and the local aristocracy since the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Transylvania<sup>3</sup>. While the aristocratic collectionism of the

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<sup>1</sup> The fifth object (cat. no. 5.) has an unknown chronology and provenience.

<sup>2</sup> The relief of Hekate (cat. no. 1.) was analyzed in details in: Piso, Szabó 2019.

<sup>3</sup> A short history of antiquarianism in Transylvania see: Bodor 1995; Papp 2013; Szabó 2017.

15–18<sup>th</sup> centuries created rather eclectic collections of ancient and medieval objects<sup>4</sup>, in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first museums and systematic collections were formed in Transylvania (Sibiu – Brukenthal Museum, Alba Iulia – Batthyaneum)<sup>5</sup>. In 1859 the Transylvanian Museum Society was formed, which had a great impact on the later formation of several local county-associations of historians and archaeologists in the 1880's<sup>6</sup>. This period represents also the formation and the pioneering activity of the Association of History and Archaeology of Hunyad County (Hunyad Vármegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat) formed in 1880<sup>7</sup>. The archaeological excavations carried on by the Association in Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, the capital of Roman Dacia between 1881 and 1893 had two major impacts: they introduced for the first time systematic excavations in the settlement and contributed to the awareness of the intellectual elite in the county, which intensified the local interest for the ruins of Colonia Sarmizegetusa.

This period was not only the age of the first systematic excavations and the beginning of modern museology in Transylvania<sup>8</sup>, but also the golden age of school-collections. The most important school collections of antiquities were formed however much earlier in the Bethlen College from Nagyenyed<sup>9</sup>, the Saxon College from Segesvár<sup>10</sup> and the Calvinist College from Székelyudvarhely. Most of these collections were formed in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and vanished in the revolution of 1848–49. Some of the most relevant objects however were mentioned in the German and Hungarian literature on antiquities of Transylvania in the mid–19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>11</sup>.

The Calvinist High School in Orăștie (Szászváros, Broos) was founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Princip of Transylvania, György Rákóczi I. and rebuilt after 1858 during the directorship of György Szabó and Kuun Kocsárd<sup>12</sup>. The new, monumental building (**fig.1.**) hosted one of the biggest archaeological school-collections of Transylvania. Between 1876 and 1918 the school had an annual yearbook, which published the new archaeological acquisitions and presented the current state of the collection of archaeology and numismatics<sup>13</sup>. The collection of the school was formed by objects looted and collected on different sites of Hunyad county (mostly Várhely – Sarmizegetusa, Kitid, Alsófrakadin, Nalácvád, Zeykfalva, Pusztakalán, Kalánfürdő)<sup>14</sup>. The school collection was founded and managed by Béla Jánó, history teacher of the college<sup>15</sup>. Jánó was a well known collector of antiquities, interested especially in Roman numismatics. He visited regularly Colonia Sarmizegetusa since the early 1900's, collecting Roman small finds (especially lamps, bronze objects, coins), figurative monuments (reliefs, terracotta objects, statuettes, statues, column-capitals) and inscriptions (columns, altars). In 1915, the collection had a large number of archaeological objects in the collection, mostly from Roman period. Only in that year, more than 60 objects were bought or donated for the school. The archaeological collection was

<sup>4</sup> A short list of collections before 1848 see: Kővári 1852, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Szabó 2016, p. 152–154.

<sup>6</sup> Varga 2014, p. 181–186; Boda 2014, p. 310 with further bibliography.

<sup>7</sup> Boda 2014, p. 310.

<sup>8</sup> Szabó 2016, p. 151–153.

<sup>9</sup> Benkő 1800. Formed as a natural history museum in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the collection had numerous archaeological monuments too described in details by Benkő who visited colonia Sarmizegetusa and collected numerous Roman coins, bronze statuettes and other stone statues too, among them a Jupiter Tonans. See also: Papp 2013. Unfortunately, the collection was destroyed in 1848–49, later refounded by Károlyy Herepei: Nagy 1947; Bakó 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Somogyi 2015, p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> Neugebauer 1851; Kővári 1852.

<sup>12</sup> The high school was named later as Kuun-tanoda and Kuun-Kollégium after the generous Maecenas and re-founder of the institution, Kuun Kocsárd (1803–1895). See: Vörös 2013, p. 129–130.

<sup>13</sup> A Szászvárosi Államilag Segélyezett Református Kuun-Kollégium Értesítője. In: Biblioteca Centrala Universitara, Cluj-Napoca, cat. A1294.

<sup>14</sup> Jánó 1912, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately we know almost nothing about his personal life. Beside his teaching activity he was an active member of the Hunyad Vármegyei Történelmi és Régészeti Társulat (Historical and Archaeological Association of Hunyad County).

kept in the cell of the building, in a 28 m long lapidarium. The acquisitions were paid by the Múzeumok és Könyvtárak Országos Főfelügyelősége (National Inspectorate of Libraries and Museums), which financed the archaeological collection of the Kuun-college every year with 400 korona<sup>16</sup>. The exact number of the objects in the collection is unknown, although the collection was catalogued as a red inventory number suggests on the relief of Hekate, which suggest a possible list of the objects too<sup>17</sup>.

Among the objects from the school museum we find numerous inscriptions from *colonia Sarmizegetusa* (IDR III/2, 10; 81; 335; 348; 382, 406; 441; 455; 477; 480), *Micia* (IDR III/3, 57; 71; 81; 104; 126) and *Aquae* (IDR III/3, 23). Jánó was aware of the importance of the epigraphic material discovered by him or bought by the school and published regularly the archaeological material not only in the yearbooks of the college but also in academic journals. In 1909 Jánó published the Greek coins of the college<sup>18</sup>, followed by another volume of the Roman coins<sup>19</sup>. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1911 Béla Jánó mentioned, that on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1911 he visited Várhely (*Sarmizegetusa*) and examined the remains of a Roman sarcophagus discovered *in situ* with the body of a person and a coin from the period of Hadrianus<sup>20</sup>. He published also three other important inscriptions from the collection in 1913<sup>21</sup>: AE 1914, 0116 = IDR III/2, 10<sup>22</sup>; AE 1931, 0120 = IDR III/3, 71 and AE 1931, 0121 = IDR III/3, 81. The objects recently rediscovered were published in 1912.



Fig. 1. Photo of the Kuun-college from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (photo from the cover of the Yearbook of the college, 1912–13).

<sup>16</sup> A Szászvárosi Államilag Segélyezett Református Kuun-Kollégium Értesítője 1914–15, p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> A part of the documentation from the high school now is part of the Archives of the Calvinist Church in Cluj Napoca.

<sup>18</sup> Jánó 1909.

<sup>19</sup> Jánó 1910.

<sup>20</sup> Jánó 1912b.

<sup>21</sup> Jánó 1913.

<sup>22</sup> A Szászvárosi Államilag Segélyezett Református Kuun-Kollégium Értesítője 1914–15, p. 70. The inscription was bought for 2 korona. Although it is a very important inscription mentioning a rare military unit of the Palmyrene groups, the inscription is missing today.

## THE DISCOVERY OF THE OBJECTS

Béla János described in details his visit in Várhely (Sarmizegetusa) on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1912. He visited the house of a local person on the hill in front of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, where he had also a short archaeological excavation. As a result, he discovered an inscribed altar dedicated to the god Men (IDR III/2, 267), a Roman lamp with Fortis inscription and a coin dated to the reign of Hadrian<sup>23</sup>. During his visit from 1912 in Sarmizegetusa János documented also the archaeological collection of the local priest, judge and procurator. In the collection of the local priest, János saw two inscriptions (IDR III/2, 17, 220), one of them dedicated to Hekate (IDR III/2, 220). The priest had also 8 reliefs, Roman lamps, a statue-fragment and 35 Roman coins<sup>24</sup>. In the collection of the local procurator, János documented an inscription (IDR III/2, 254), a bench of the amphitheatre and a funerary lion.

The judge of the village had in his collection a funerary lion, a head of a female statue<sup>25</sup> a 40 cm high female statue with three faces (probably a statue of Hekate Triformis)<sup>26</sup> and the relief of Hekate (cat. no. 1.)<sup>27</sup>. Later in August 1912 János return to Várhely and bought another, fragmentary inscription (cat. no. 2.)<sup>28</sup> redicovered recently in Cluj. Interestingly, János mentions, that during his second visit to Sarmizegetusa in 1912 he saw also a beautiful, fragmentary (10 × 10 cm) relief of Hekate, which seems to be the third object observed in 1912 related to this divinity<sup>29</sup>. The large number of Hekate monuments found in this period in Sarmizegetusa suggests the existence of a possible sacralised space for the divinity<sup>30</sup>. A part of these objects observed and described shortly by János were bought by the school and transferred into the archaeological collection of the Kuun-college from Orăștie (Szászváros). The relief of Hekate was bought for 50 korona<sup>31</sup>, while the missing statuette of the divinity for 40 korona.

The collection was growing till 1915, but during the First World War there were no more financial aid for the school to buy more objects from local habitants of Várhely. The majority of the items described for the first time by János were later published in several important corpora and articles too, named as missing objects in the bibliography after 1918<sup>32</sup>. Due to his incorrect reading of the inscription on the Hekate-relief, the inscription was unknown till recently<sup>33</sup>.

After the political changes in the post-war period, the high school was closed in 1923 and the archaeological collection was divided: a part of them was transferred in the Museum of Déva (Deva, Hunedoara county)<sup>34</sup>, while few objects from the collection<sup>35</sup> – together with a part of the rich

<sup>23</sup> János 1912, p. 50.

<sup>24</sup> The reliefs were not documented by Janó.

<sup>25</sup> János identified the head of the statue with Juno Sospita. Without a drawing or a detailed description, it is not possible to identify the object: János 1912, p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> The statue is considered as a missing object: János 1912, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup> The three objects seems to be part of the same archaeological context, but their discovery and provenience within the ancient city is not documented.

<sup>28</sup> János 1912a, p. 408.

<sup>29</sup> János 1912a, p. 407. The relief was found by the owner of the house no. 165 from Várhely.

<sup>30</sup> Piso, Szabó 2019.

<sup>31</sup> A Szászvárosi Államilag Segélyezett Református Kuun-Kollégium Értesítője 1912–13, p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> The two inscriptions were mentioned in the AE and IDR volumes and copied in numerous important studies later as missing objects.

<sup>33</sup> He read the inscription as: HILAREVOCATA DEPPIAGIDEEXVOTOPOSVIT. The reading was copied also by I.I. Russu and the later literature too.

<sup>34</sup> A part of the inscriptions were identified in the museum of Deva, however the small finds are missing. A further and more detailed research can identify these objects too.

<sup>35</sup> The exact number of the archaeological material transported from the Kuun-College to Cluj is unknown. An exhaustive study in the Archives of the Calvinist Church would be necessary to find the catalogue of objects transported in 1927 in Cluj.

collection of plaster models and moulds<sup>36</sup> – were transferred to Cluj in 1926–27 in the newly formed Girl-gymnasium of the Calvinist Church<sup>37</sup>. Since 1927, 5 objects from the Kuun-college were lying in the deposits of the Apáczai High School used for a while as illustrative tools for artistic education and art history, later kept in the loft of the school. Four of them (cat. nos. 2–4.) are preserved there even today<sup>38</sup>. The relief of Hekate (cat. no. 1.) was transported in 2017 in the Calvinist Church from the Farkas street, where it was displayed till November 2019 when became also part of the new school museum.

## FINAL REMARKS

In this article I presented the story of rediscovering a part of an important school-collection. A short glimpse in the history of the Kuun-collection from Orăștie (Szászváros) shown the importance of these early archaeological collections and the important role of self-educated history teachers in a period, when archaeology was just transforming from antiquarianism into a professional discipline<sup>39</sup>. This case study shows also the importance of the study of old school collections and their archives, which can serve with numerous new data on the already known archaeological material.

## CATALOGUE

### 1. Relief of Hekate Triformis (fig. 2)

Dimensions: 45 × 30 × 2 cm; Place of discovery: unknown context, on the territory of colonia Sarmizegetusa. Possibly part of a sanctuary of Hekate; Place of preservation: once preserved in the collection of the local priest from Várhely, the object became part of the museum of the Kuun-college in 1912. In 1926–7 was transported in Cluj. Today is kept in the school-museum of the Apáczai Csere János High School, Cluj-Napoca; Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. Description: rectangular relief with one figurative register, bordered in the inferior part with an epigraphic camp. The superior and the right part of the undecorated border is damaged and partially restored with gypsum. The central part of the relief represents Hekate Triformis in a Greek chiton. The three-faced goddess wears on her frontal head a polos or kalathos. Behind her shoulders, a lunar-crescent is represented. Two of her arms are holding her classical attributes, the raised torches, while the arms behind are holding two torches down. The legs of the goddess are beautifully elaborated, however



Fig. 2. Relief of Hekate (IDR III/2, 365). With the kind permission of the Director of the Apáczai Csere János School. Photo: Iván Rohonyi.

<sup>36</sup> The Rajszsertár (art and drawing collection) had 924 objects in 1915. A part of these were bought from the central gips workshop of Budapest: *Árjegyzék* 1904. See also: Paap 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Vörös 2013. Vörös' article presents only the fate of the collection of natural sciences and botanics, but not the archaeological and historical collection. The history of the collection between 1918 and 1927 is unknown. Similarly, its transportation and later history after 1927 is not documented and need a much careful attention.

<sup>38</sup> In November 2019 a new museum of the school was inaugurated, where the objects are displayed too. Verbal confirmation of Alpár Vörös, director of the school.

<sup>39</sup> Vincze 2014.

the inferior part near the epigraphic camp is damaged. The inscription is carved in two separate lines; Inscription:

Fl(av)ia Revocata de(ae) p(raesentissimae) placid(a)e ex voto posuit

Bibliography: Jánó 1912, p. 52; Finály 1912, 531; IDR III/2, 365; Alicu *et alii* 1979, p. 75, no. 34. See also: Bodor 1989, p. 1126–1127; Ștefănescu 2002–2003, p. 131–140; Stoian 2004, p. 173–193; Carbó García 2010, p. 306–307, p. 942–943; Piso, Szabó 2019.

## 2. Fragment of a construction plaque (fig. 3)

Dimensions: 32 × 41 × 6 cm; Place of discovery: unknown context, on the territory of colonia Sarmizegetusa; Place of preservation: part of the museum of the Kuun-college between 1912 and 1923. In 1926–7 was transported in Cluj. Today is kept in the Apáczai Csere János High School, Cluj-Napoca; Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.; Description: lower right corner of a large construction plaque of a public, sacralised place. The epigraphic field is surrounded by a double border. The right part of the exterior border is damaged. From the epigraphic camp two, partially preserved lines (G / NT) were described by Jánó and copied by I.I. Russu in the upper right corner which is missing today. The currently preserved epigraphic camp has five, partially preserved lines. The third line is continuing on the exterior and interior border too, with numerous *ligaturae* which can date the inscription on a later, Severan period; Inscription:

-----? / [---? Aug(ust-)] / [---NT] / [---]mnis / [--- A]ug(ustalis) col(oniae) / patr(i) cultorum / [ex v]isu fecit / l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)

Bibliography: Jánó 1912b, p. 408; Finály 1913, p. 335; AE 1914, 112; IDR III/2, 355; Sanie 1981, p. 77; Piso 2005, p. 434; Piso 2006, p. 114.



Fig. 3. construction plaque (IDR III/2, 355). With the kind permission of the Director of the Apáczai Csere János School. Photo: Iván Rohonyi.

## 3. Doric capital (fig. 4)

Dimensions: 35 × 22 × 18 cm; Place of discovery: unknown context, on the territory of colonia Sarmizegetusa; Place of preservation: part of the museum of the Kuun-college between 1912 and 1923. In 1926–7 was transported in Cluj. Today is kept in the Apáczai Csere János High School, Cluj-Napoca; Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.; Description: capital and fragment of a Doric column. The abacus is perfectly preserved. The echinus is decorated with rudimentary carved egg-shaped motifs. The shaft of

the column is partially preserved (9 cm). This type of capital is well attested from colonia Sarmizegetusa. Bibliography: Unpublished. See also: Diaconescu, Bota 2009; lupa 17415–6.



Fig. 4. Doric capital. With the kind permission of the Director of the Apáczai Csere János School. Photo: Iván Rohonyi.

#### 4. Corinthian capital (fig. 5)

Dimensions: 45 × 28 × 25 cm; Place of discovery: unknown context, on the territory of colonia Sarmizegetusa; Place of preservation: part of the museum of the Kuun-college between 1912 and 1923. In 1926–7 was transported in Cluj. Today is kept in the Apáczai Csere János High School, Cluj-Napoca; Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.; Description: capital fragment of a Corinthian column. The architrave and the abacus is missing. The capital is decorated with two volutae and a floral motif in the middle. The inferior part of the capital is decorated with two leaf of acanthus flowers. Bibliography: Unpublished. See also: Diaconescu, Bota 2009; lupa 17417.



Fig. 5. Corinthian capital. With the kind permission of the Director of the Apáczai Csere János School. Photo: Iván Rohonyi.

#### 5. Historicizing relief (fig. 6)

Dimensions: 70 × 40 × 25 cm; Place of discovery: unknown context; Place of preservation: probably part of the museum of the Kuun-college between 1912 and 1923. In 1926–7 was transported in Cluj. Today is kept in the Apáczai Csere János High School, Cluj-Napoca; Chronology: unknown. Roman or possibly 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century; Description: fragmentarily preserved relief, probably part of a larger, architectural structure. The quadrant shaped stone is marked with a strong border. The central element of the relief is the representation of a warrior or warrior god (Mars?), holding in his right arm a long spear. The

bearded person wears a hat which imitates the form of a Phrygian cap. He wears a military costume of a centurio, holding an eagle headed gladius, as sign of a high rank office. In his right there are two other spears. Although the vestment and the armor seems to be Roman, the bearded person with the Phrygian cap would be a rare representation for Mars or a high officer of the Roman army.



Fig. 6. Historicizing relief with soldier or warrior divinity. With the kind permission of the Director of the Apáczai Csere János School. Photo: Iván Rohonyi.

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