

## A ROMAN SETTLEMENT AT COJOCNA (CLUJ COUNTY)

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*This paper reports the discovery of a Roman Age settlement that occurred during a field survey conducted on the territory of the village Cojocna (Cluj County). Although no Roman settlement was previously known at Cojocna, traces of the Roman exploitation of salt have been observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Johann Michael Ackner and mentioned briefly in the specialized literature dedicated to this subject ever since, without any thorough researches being conducted in this matter. The distribution of the pottery shards seems to indicate that later on, during the Migration Age, the Roman settlement was overlapped by a new, perhaps narrower, habitation.*

The great abundance of the salt deposits found at Cojocna (Cluj County) have attracted human communities over long periods of time, their interest for the exploitation of this significant natural resource being further more extended by the presence of fertile soils and grazing lands. So far little is known about the archaeological topography of Cojocna, as only a few points with archaeological discoveries have been recorded so far in the specialized literature<sup>1</sup>, therefore in full contrast with the 40 archaeological points, some with multiple levels of habitation<sup>2</sup>, that are mentioned on the territory of Sic, another village located in the County of Cluj, that also showed traces of salt exploitation during Roman times.

No Roman settlement has been so far identified at Cojocna, but various traces of Roman rock salt exploitation have been indicated by Johann Michael Ackner<sup>3</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and this information perpetuated unaltered until the more recent bibliography<sup>4</sup>, while a bronze fibula, kept in the collections of the National Museum of Transylvanian History with the inventory number 2601<sup>5</sup>, is said to have originated from Cojocna, unfortunately without mentioning the precise finding spot.

Not surprising at all, a field survey conducted in the spring of 2015 has led to the identification of a Roman settlement in the eastern border of the Cojocna commune (**Fig. 1**).

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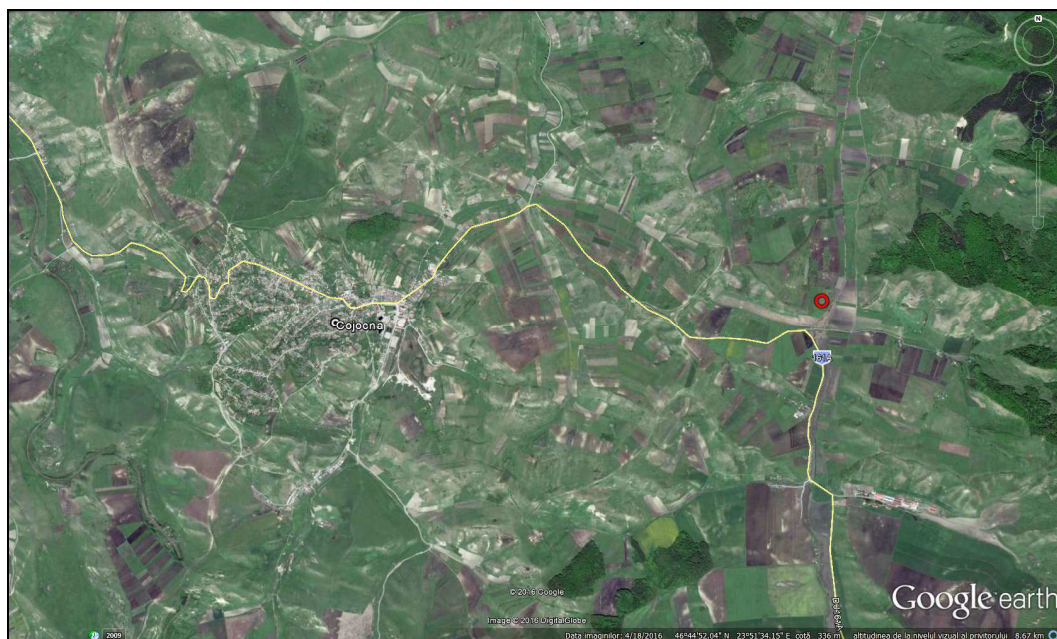
<sup>1</sup> Crișan *et al.* 1992, p. 155-158.

<sup>2</sup> Crișan *et al.* 1992, p. 342-353.

<sup>3</sup> Ackner 1856, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Gooss 1876, p. 288; Marțian 1909, p. 353, no. 346; Christescu 1929, p. 50; Macrea 1969, p. 306; Wollmann 1996, p. 243; Benea 2007, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Crișan *et al.* 1992, p. 155, nr. 8.



**Fig. 1.** The location of the Roman settlement (processed after Google earth) (Accessed: 20.09.2016)

North of the road bend (161A) that links Cojocna with Iuriu de Câmpie, to the left of the Căianului Valley (that forms at North of the Staja and Iuriu de Câmpie villages). The settlement was located on a gentle, non-floodable, slope with south-eastern exposure (**Fig. 2**).



**Fig. 2.** The location of the Roman settlement found at Cojocna (Photo: D. I. Bereteu)

Although the surface seems to have not been ploughed in recent years, many Roman pottery shards can easily be observed by naked eye, through the rare grass or on the molehills, as well as ones dating from the Migration Age, labelled frequently in the literature as “Morești type”, together with some handmade pottery shards with prehistoric features that could not be attributed culturally until now.

As far as the field survey can tell us, the distribution of the pottery shards seems to indicate that the habitation during the Age of Migrations might have overlapped only partially the Roman one, being probably spatially more limited. This type of pottery seems to have been handmade or manufactured with a slow wheel out of clay mixed with a lot of sand, with different shades of brown and gray, and decorated with fine horizontal striations or lines bent into waves, specific ornaments for the local population during the Gepidic domination in Transylvania. A single rim shard, decorated by stamping, raises the question if we can even talk about a Gepidic presence in the settlement or in the surrounding area, especially if we take into consideration the fact that this would not be the only 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. inhabitancy attested at Cojocna, another one being mentioned by István Ferenczi in the point known as *Ghiurbărc*<sup>6</sup>.

The Roman pottery found here is in general of a good quality, wheel-thrown, mainly from a fine orange paste, covered by a brick-red or brown thin layer of slip. More rarely a dark gray pottery, of the same good quality, can be observed as well. Among the typical ceramic fragments that could be seen on the site, we could distinguish a rim belonging to a large earthenware container (*dolium*), manufactured from coarse gray paste, having in the superior part grooves that provide a secure fit for placing the lid (**Fig. 3/1**). Other typical fragments include two rims belonging to gray bowls, one from a very fine paste with slip (**Fig. 3/2**), the other from a coarser paste, without slip (**Fig. 3/3**), as well as a small shard belonging to a reddish bowl, decorated by stamping with the rosette motif (**Fig. 3/4**).



**Fig. 3.** 1-4. Pottery fragments (Drawing and photo: D. I. Bereteu)

<sup>6</sup> Ferenczi 1962, p. 49-50, nr. 28 c.

Unfortunately for now, relying solely on the few archaeological materials described here, we can only provide a vague dating range for the Roman settlement, between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.

Even though the chronology of the Roman inhabitancy at Cojocna cannot be specified more accurately for now, we can assume that the settlement, probably a *villa rustica*, must have been linked to the salt exploitation activities that were conducted in the area, and most certainly this Roman settlement could not have been the only one in the region.

All the *salinae* found in Dacia were the propriety of the emperor, directed by *conductores* on his behalf and usually leased together with the grazing lands found in the area<sup>7</sup>, as it is suggested by three inscriptions found at Apulum<sup>8</sup>, Domnești<sup>9</sup> and Micia<sup>10</sup>, that mention the double function of a *conductor pascui et salinarum*. Such a *conductor salinarum* or *conductor pascui et salinarum* could have existed at Cojocna as well, but upon further researches we will confine ourselves only at raising this question.

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### O așezare romană la Cojocna (jud. Cluj)

#### Rezumat

Articolul semnalează descoperirea prin cercetări de suprafață a unei așezări de epocă romană, situată pe teritoriul satului Cojocna (jud. Cluj) (**Fig. 1-2**). Cu toate că până acum nu se cunoștea nici o așezare romană la Cojocna, urme ale exploatării romane a sării au fost observate în sec. XIX de M. J. Ackner și menționate ulterior în

<sup>7</sup> Macrea 1969, p. 306.

<sup>8</sup> IDR III/5, 443.

<sup>9</sup> ILD 804.

<sup>10</sup> IDR III/3, 119.

literatura de specialitate dedicată acestui subiect, fără ca cercetări mai amănunțite să fie întreprinse în acest sens. Distribuția fragmentelor ceramice (**Fig. 3/1-4**) pare să indice că ulterior, în epoca migrațiilor, așezarea romană a fost suprapusă de o nouă locuire, probabil ceva mai restrânsă.

### Lista ilustrațiilor

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**Fig. 2.** Amplasamentul așezării romane de la Cojocna (Foto: D. I. Bereteu)

**Fig. 3.** 1-4. Fragmente ceramice (Desen și foto: D. I. Bereteu)