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LIFE ON ROMAN LIMES. CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS ON EASTERN LIMES OF DACIA (BETWEEN THE CAMPS FROM BRÂNCOVENEŞTI AND SĂRĂŢENI)

Nicoleta MAN*

The term rural settlement requires some definition. Rural settlement are the settlements that did not have an urban or military character or a specialised industrial function, but was primarily an agricultural base. The Eastern Limes of Dacia was effectively rural. A settlement itself is an area of domestic occupation that was substantial enough to leave physical traces.

Keywords: Dacia, limes, civilian vicus, roman settlement **Cuvinte cheie:** Dacia, limes, vicus, așezare romană

Eastern limes of Dacia, between Brâncovenești and Sărățeni was located behind volcanic mountains Călimani, Gurghiu, Harghita. Mures Valley and its tributaries offer opportunities for building camps and the flat summit of the mountains for the emplacement of guard towers.

A limes was not only a military environment¹ although this was his main attribute. Over the border, especially in river valleys or gentle slopes of the sub-Carpathian where farming conditions, subsoil exploitation of livestock was born settlements with rural character. Marginal depressions are characterized by hilly terrain or a high plain with good agricultural terraces and rich reserves of salt.² In the vicinity of the limes are certified, both through research and by chance finds, a series of small settlements, which were built after the founding of the Province, but some are further Dacian settlements. I have intentionally omitted *vici militaris* and military watch towers,

considering it military remains or points developed in close connection with the Roman army presence in this area. Points with Roman discoveries on this section of the *limes* are:

Deda

Roman Road is identified near the Mureş valley to the top called Scaunul Domnului. Ancient ruins under the feudal castle and around it have proved unfounded.³

Bistra Mureșului

At point long before the alignment of forts, was discovered a gold ring, brooches, weapons etc. without ceramic, just below the topsoil at a depth of 0.20 m. Although the place is suitable for the emplacement of a tower, it has not been identified. In point "Monastery" located throughout the valley of Bistra, close to uncovering those parts was supposed the existence of a Roman

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¹ Oltean–Hanson 2001, 123–134; Morillo–Dominguez 2012, 519–530.

² Oltean 2004, 143–164; Rorison 2001, 24–101; Salway 1967.

³ Neigebauer 1851, 250; Goos 1876, 70; Marțian 1920, 284; Christescu 2004, 103; Christescu 2009, 109; Paulovics 1944, 26; Ferenczi–Petică 1982, 568–570; Lazăr 1995, 119.

tower, but the researches carried out in this place in 1981 did not reveal any Roman traces.⁴

Rușii Munți

In the place called "Monastery", in northeast part of the village (old hearth of the village) was discovered a Roman rural settlement from which were found incidentally two *lucernae* (mark *Octavi*) and a ceramic glass from a Roman settlement.⁵

Maiorești

From the zone of the village come some substructures of the walls and brick-shaped mosaic from a Roman settlement.⁶

Alunis

A settlement is located on the left bank of the Mureş in place called "Fortress Hill" (Varbitsa). Here are presents substructures of stone walls, brick and pieces of tiles and mosaic low 8-shaped. Here is reported a wave of ground, with traces of Roman building probably a stone tower.⁷

Vălenii de Mureș

The site is considered as traces of a tower dating from Roman times. It's place at 2–3 km in a straight line from the camp of Brâncoveneşti. Here is possible to preserve the traces of a Roman settlement. Surveys made here in 1997 revealed traces of a residential area with a fireplace outside house and a modest ceramic inventory.

Batoş

Incidentally was discovered a silver denarius from the time of Vespasianus, issued in 79 AD.

Av. IMP(erator) T(itus) CAESAR

VESPASIANUS AUG(ustus), king's head, crowned with laurel, on the right;

Rv. TR(ibunicia) POT(estate) VIII CO(n) S(ul) VII, character with a bare chest, leaning in his right knee, with head to the left.¹⁰

At the north of the village, in the point "Gledinel", there is a settlement with several levels of living, one of them, from Roman Period. From here have been harvested several Roman pottery fragments.¹¹

Uila

Roman observation tower and imperial Roman coins from Vespasian and Septimius Severus.¹²

Dedrad is situated about 7 km distance to the border. To the east of the village, can be collected from the ground surface, together with Roman pottery other remains of material culture, indicating the existence of a Roman settlement.¹³ In the spring of 1964 was discovered by chance, about 300 m north-northeast of the meeting point of the road, that leads the village with the road that comes from Reghin, a deposit of iron pieces and some ceramics fragments at 0.40 m depth and an area of about 0.50 m. The deposit consists: four Dacian plug mouldboard (length: 31.8 cm, 29 cm, 28.7 cm, 37.1 cm) and one Roman plug (length: 31.6 cm), a plug with a knife (length 47.5 cm) and an iron sleeve for fixing. Pottery was dating in the second and third centuries. They also observed other traces from buildings and walls.14

In 1965 was initiated a research, on the site where it was discovered the iron deposit. The conclusion after research was there was a rural

⁴ Zrinyi-Petică 1994, 599-600.

⁵ Lazăr 1995, 205; Popa 2002, 159.

⁶ Neigebauer 1851, 252; Marțian 1920, 415; Lazăr 1995, 205; Popa 2002, 112.

NEIGEBAUER 1851, 252; ACKNER 1856, 25; II (1857) 81; Goos 1876, 91; Orbán 1869, IV, 78; Paulovics 1944, 31; Lazăr 1995, 46

⁸ Paulovics 1944, 26; Petică-Zrinyi 1995, 127-130; Ferenczi-Petică 1995.

⁹ Petică-Zrinyi 2000, 327-328.

¹⁰ Petică 1977, 452.

¹¹ Lazăr 1975, 605–611.

¹² Lazăr 1995, 70.

¹³ Glodariu 1974, 227–243.

¹⁴ Glodariu–Câmpianu 1966, 19–32.

settlement, totally destroyed by the agricultural works.¹⁵ In the two sections have outlined, were discovered three housing area with adobe walls, consisting of one room and a domestic pit.

Goreni

Out of the village, towards Dedrad, it seems to be another Roman settlement observed only after surface evaluation.¹⁶

Lueriu

In this village exists two points with Roman finds, to westwards, close to Goreni and Dedrad. Ioan Vlassa from place called "Susurduc" collected Roman bricks and pottery. In place called Huroc, at the surface appears ceramics and roman bricks.¹⁷

Ideciu de Jos

In the section "Castle Hill" is evidence a quadrilateral construction, which may have belonged to a Roman tower, because the position gives good visibility to limes.¹⁸

Reghin

From the area of the town comes several Roman Imperial denarius issued under the emperors Titus, Domitianus, Nerva, Traianus, Hadrianus, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Faustina, Geta, Caracalla, Filipus Arabs, Gordina, Maximianus, Helena, Constantinus, Constantinus II.¹⁹

From a Roman settlement identified in the town, comes some Roman objects (urns, weapons, coins, etc.) and a series of 23 ornamental pieces of bronze. Roman road was found in the town on Mures valley.²⁰

Apalina (now is dependent to Reghin)

Were discovered 32 silver Roman coins, 39 bronze coins, eight gold beads, 4 glass beads, an amber bead, two brass wires.²¹

Solovăstru

Some Roman ceramics, from the middle of village, are located in the County Museum collection. All are Cristeşti workshop provenience.

Jabenita

It involves the exploitation of salt from Roman times. From Jabeniţa come Roman Imperial Coins: a denarius from Elagabal issue in Orient between 218–220 and a sestertius of Philip the Arab, with the legend of Dacia Province.²²

Gurghiu

Modest Roman settlement which was retained ceramic piggy banks,²³ a dish with lid and three Roman vessels and two coins: Antoninian from Otacilia Severa; Denarius from Severus Alexander issue in 227. Pieces are in Sighișoara Museum collection and come from the collection of Evangelical College.²⁴

Ibănești

On the point called "Cetățuia mică", at about 2 km. south of the village, with clear view throw Gurghiu valley, has been identified and investigated a Roman watch tower of a quadrangular shape, with dimensions 25x17m.²⁵

Hodoşa - Sâmbriaş

In the place called "Chişhed Hill", a hilltop at an altitude of 675 m., is known a Roman observation tower.²⁶

¹⁵ Popescu 1966, 709–727.

¹⁶ Glodariu 1974, 227–243; Popa 2002, 93.

¹⁷ Lazăr 1995, 248; Popa 2002, 112.

¹⁸ Ferenczi-Petică 1982, 570-571; Zrinyi -Petică 1994, 599-600.

¹⁹ Chirilă et al. 1972, 13.

²⁰ Neigebauer 1851, 250–251; Gooss 1876, 101; Christescu 1929, 103; Christescu 2009, 109.

²¹ Deciulescu 1966, 586; Protase 1966, 87–100; Suciu 2000, 19, 60.

²² Chirilă et al. 1972, 14.

²³ Winkler 1965, 206.

²⁴ Chirilă et al. 1972, 13; Popa 2002, 93.

²⁵ Ferenczi –Petică 1982, 582–584.

²⁶ Ferenczi–Petică 1982, 570–571.

Călușeri

At the edge of the village, at place called "Saint Peter well" were found Roman coins, fragments of coarse ware and pieces of bricks, possibly from a Roman settlement.²⁷

Mărculeni

In place called "Ugra Mare", near the village, located at 200 m. from the border of ancient Dacia Superior, not far from the fort and the settlement of Călugăreni was discovered by chance in 1965, a warehouse containing over 400 pieces. Along with the blacksmith tools, carpentry and household items, deposit contain a significant number of agricultural tools and bronze vessels.

The deposit consists of agricultural tools: mouldboard Roman plug, a plug cutter, cutting knife, many scythes, sickles, mattocks of various types; carpentry tools: axes, fragment saw, adze, compass; blacksmithing tools: anvil, ladle, along with many other household items. In the inventory of the warehouse was part a fragmentary bronze vessel with several pieces of vessels. Dating to hide store is supposed to be attributed to the year's 171–173, in time of Marcomanic wars.

Here could be a Roman settlement or a *villa rustica*. The deposit was dated from the late 2nd, early 3rd century.²⁸

Bereni

Hoard consisting of 57 Roman imperial bronze coins: Augustus, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Domitian, Traian, Hadrian, Sabina, Antoninus Pius, Faustina Senior.²⁹

Sovata

On the Feldioara Hill (Földvár) have seen traces of Roman buildings, here have emerged fragments of bricks, ceramics and coins. It is believed that the salt mines were exploited in Roman times.³⁰

From the point called "Dealul Viilor", on the former village Şiclod are mentioned the ruins of a Roman quadrilaterals building. In the same area were identified the Roman road tracks that the location can be identified with the road connecting the fort from Sărăţeni with salt mine from Praid.

"Quarry stone" is a point at the edge of town, during the excavation of the quarry land was found a Roman imperial gold coin. It seems that the piece was alone. The coin is an aureus, issued during the reign of Vespasian.³¹

Traces of earth walls called Fairy Road; - has uncertain origin, but is considered by some dating from Roman period.³²

Although tracks are quite dense, only a few have been investigated and in a few cases had sufficient expansion, to allow reconstruction the plans, internal organization, relations with the agricultural territory and relations with the centre around which revolved economical and administrative.

However it may be noted the difference in status and level of development between rural settlements situated in towns and camps territories³³ or those located close to major axes of communication and villages on the periphery of the side valleys of the province. If in the first category are certified stone construction, tegular material, epigraphy, many imported products, in outlying areas, predominate the modest settlements, consisting of huts and houses of wood and adobe, with modest inventories, and limited economic circuits.

The main branch of the Roman economy remains agriculture and animal husbandry. But the introduction of new agricultural tools and their widespread use allows for the more profitable agriculture.

²⁷ Orbán 1869, 98; Glodariu 1975, 242; Lazăr 1995, 126.

²⁸ Glodariu et al. 1970, 207–231.

²⁹ Suciu 2000, 26–27; Chirilă–Grigorescu 1981, 277–285.

³⁰ Orbán 1869, 14; Martian 1920, 284.

³¹ Lazăr 1975, 379–381; Chirilă et al. 1980, 155–166.

³² Orbán 1869, 14; Paulovics 1944, 42.

 $^{^{33}}$ Höpken et al. 2016, 241–250.

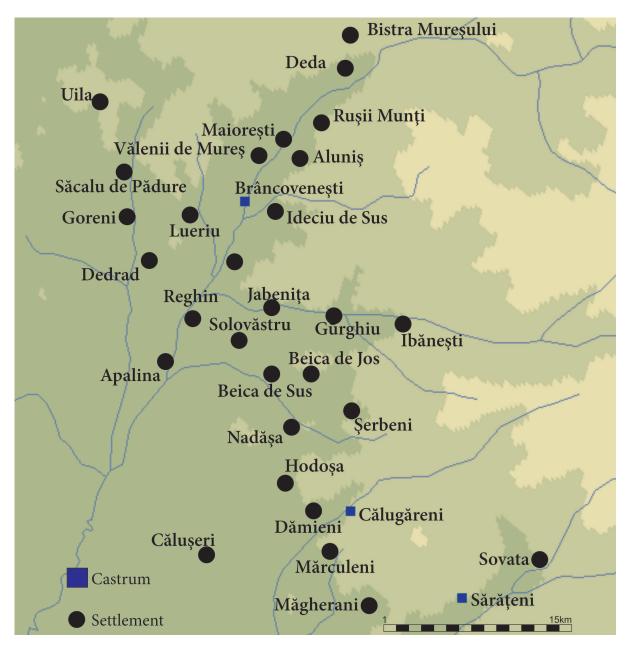


Fig. 1. Map of Roman Settlements in Eastern Dacia.

Agricultural tools used in the upper part of the Mureş valley, are known by studying farming tools discovered in deposits tools, like Mărculeni, Dedrad, or through the study of tools found during archaeological research in civil settlements from Brâncovenești and Maiorești. The multitude and variety of agricultural implements parts of the deposits discovered in studying area are able to outline a fairly complete picture of the inventory of tools used in agriculture.

The most common tools found in such deposits tools are pieces of metal plough, scythes,

sickles, hoes, spades, mattocks, grinder, etc. Coulters or cutters plough are roman types.

Agricultural tools of these findings are able to give us some pointers on advanced techniques of those times. These are, first, use the most refined type of plough knew then: the plough with coulter, iron cutter and wheels. The presence in the deposit from Mărculeni, two different types of cutters plough, with different shape and massiveness, suggests using either of them, depending on soil strength, in other words, we can speak about specialized tools based on terrain features.

At such supposition leads us the existence of spades, used in other parts of the Roman world, to the rocky land, unfit for the plough. Finally, prove the same specialty of tools, the two types of scythes found in deposit from Mărculeni: ordinary scythe cutting grass (falax foenaria) and massive scythe and short (falax sirpicula) used especially for cutting sedge.

Large number of tools related to the cultivation and use of cereals: plugs, scythes, sickles, grinders, and burnt grains of wheat discovered at Dedrad, proving that this area is mainly producing grain. But archaeological discoveries have revealed many other tools that show the practice and the other branches of agriculture. Thus, a hoe with fork, discovered at Mărculeni proves horticultural practice, or as a blade found in the same deposit, indicates its use for chopping straw.

Although we have no concrete archaeological evidence about the existence of forests in this part of Dacia and the fact that in major cities of the province exists colleges of carpenters indicates the wood exploitation in this land. Forest areas are more extensive, as in plain, probably in the past ages forests occupied a large area (at least this proves that the names of villages: Ibănești-Pădure, Sângeorgiu de Pădure, Lunca Bradului).

Existence of a livestock activity is demonstrated also by numerous discoveries. Grill discovered in the Mărculeni proves that the owner and his family ate meat, so there practiced farming activities. Numerous animal bones found in Waste pits: bull bones, pigs, sheep and goats come to prove also widespread livestock.

It is believed that the salt mines from Sovata and Jabeniţa were exploited in Roman times. For such an assumption also suggested building a guard tower, possibly at Gurghiu, only 4 km from the mines to Jabeniţa, whose role, in addition to border defence, and that was sure to serve guard nearby salt exploitation. About of salt mines from Sovata, M. Roska still recalls in his repertoire the existence of traces of Roman material, traces which talk about salt mining since Roman times. Moreover, large military system, the camp

from Sărățeni, the wave of land and possibly guard tower on the hill Bekecs course served and guard these lands. Salt mining in this area can be indirectly proven by border pattern, which includes deposits of salt-rich region and the fact that in addition to developing a strong defensive system, represented by two camps, defensive towers, earth walls, to the saline stops the Roman road which climbs the valley of Niraj valley. Salt mines operated in the upper area of the Mureş valley satisfactory, primarily local needs, but it was sent elsewhere, making transportation on Mureş. Tenants, with the exploitation of salt, were entitled to sell them. Although there is attest a activity for processing metals (proof by casting spoon and forging objects discovered at Mărculeni), it was poorly represented, reducing the production of small objects: hinges, frame mirror, nails, keys, etc., which requires obtaining a small amount of raw materials.

Commercial ties not only between the settlements of eastern Dacia Superior were performed on primary and secondary roads, which liaises with the great trade flow in the rest of the province and the Empire. Mureş River was an important artery of communication, which allowed the trade to large distances, linking the area with great river arteries of the empire, the Danube.

Another aspect of economic life in the area, is the presence of many treasures, discovered at Dâmbău, Sălaşuri, Cristeşti, Reghin (Dumbrăvioara), Bereni and discoveries of coins, containing a smaller number of pieces, made in some civil settlements, or where such settlements are supposed to Cristeşti, Tăureni, Țigăreni, Morești, Glodeni, Band, Călugăreni, Sărăţeni, Brâncoveneşti, Deda, Solovăstru, Gurghiu, Dumbrăvioara, Ideciu de Sus, Bogata, Voivodeni etc.³⁴

Among these, treasures from Dumbrăvioara (Reghin) and Bereni is close to the limes. Hoard from Bereni contains 57 bronze pieces (10 Dp. and 47 as) and bronze ornaments (fragmentary bracelets, a ring and a buckle or fibula). Treasure is scheduled between Augustus and Faustina, the last piece being issued in the years 150–151.³⁵

³⁴ Chirilă et al. 1980, 24–26.

³⁵ Suciu 2000, 26-27; Chirilă-Grigorescu 1981, 277-285.

Hoard of Dumbrăvioara (Reghin) consisted of 600 pieces, of which 300 pieces (299 denarius and a Lycia drachmas) issued under Trajan were recovered. Chronologically, the coins are spread from Marcus Antoninus to Commodus, the last piece being issued in 180–183.³⁶

According to Viorica Suciu interpretations, it can speak about treasures belonging to rural area, when monetary discoveries were made in areas where Roman archaeological remains are poor and there are not important settlements. Hoard from Bereni comes from an area with two limes camps, Sărățeni și Călugăreni, but obviously that does not reflect the economic situation of camps, because of socio-economic point of view, Bereni treasure is very modest, provided the modest betrays of its possessor. Analyzing the structure of treasures found in the vicinity of the limes and the Mures valley (we considered treasures from Cristești, Sălașuri, Dâmbău and another treasure from the limes, discovered at Păuleni, it seems that they are part of a horizon of treasures, triggered

by political events during the reign of Antoninus Pius, in the 6th decade of the 2nd century.

All these aspects show an intense habitation of the eastern area of Dacia, among which the most important role, in the absence of cities, was detained by the vicus militaris, which were the main administrative centres, economic and religious of the area.³⁷

From the administrative point of view, the territories of 11 towns of Dacia cover only a part of the province, the remaining blank spots on the map of Dacia was divided into civitates. Uncertainty is highest for Eastern Dacia Superior, a large area devoid of towns. An example that lends itself to the situation of Dacia, we find in northern Britannia, where British experts have proposed an administration focused on the *vici militares*, which have played the role of administrative centres for less developed areas. Applying this hypothesis to the specific case of the eastern region of Transylvania, where agglomerations are concentrated around the camps, so the *vici militares*, this hypothesis appears plausible.

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³⁶ Găzdac 1994, 179–192; Suciu 2000, 50–51.

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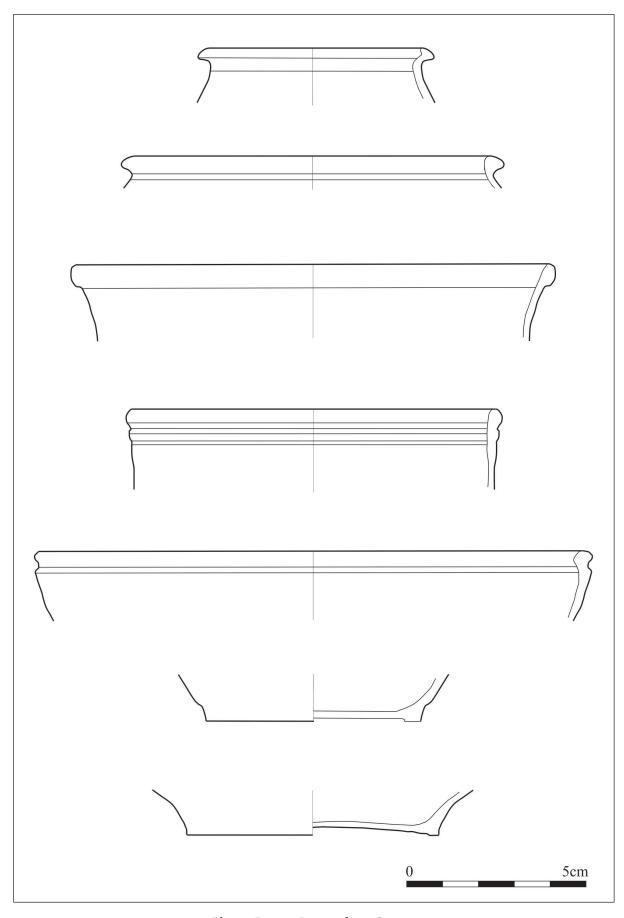


Plate 1. Roman Pottery from Goreni.

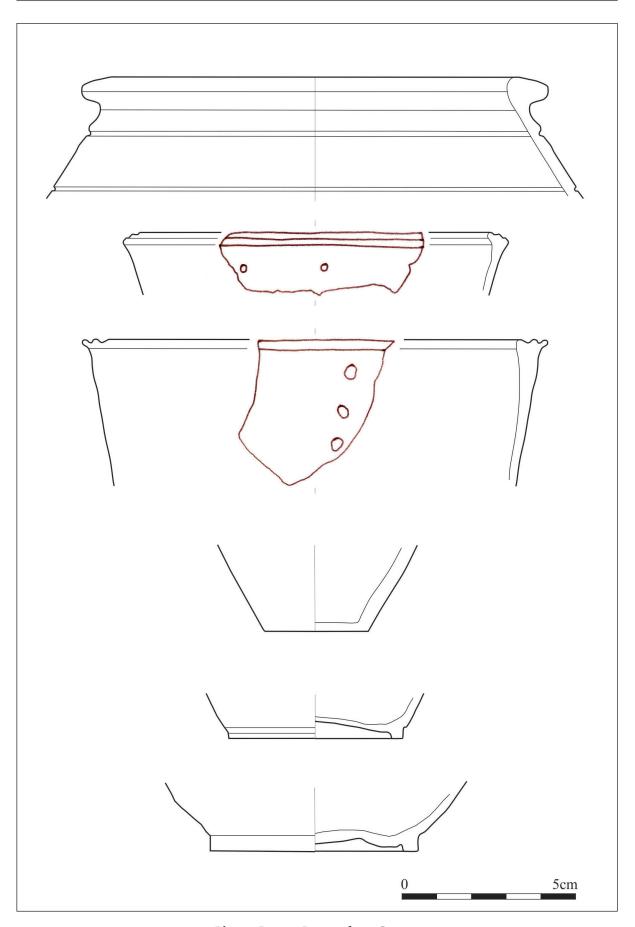


Plate 2. Roman Pottery from Goreni.

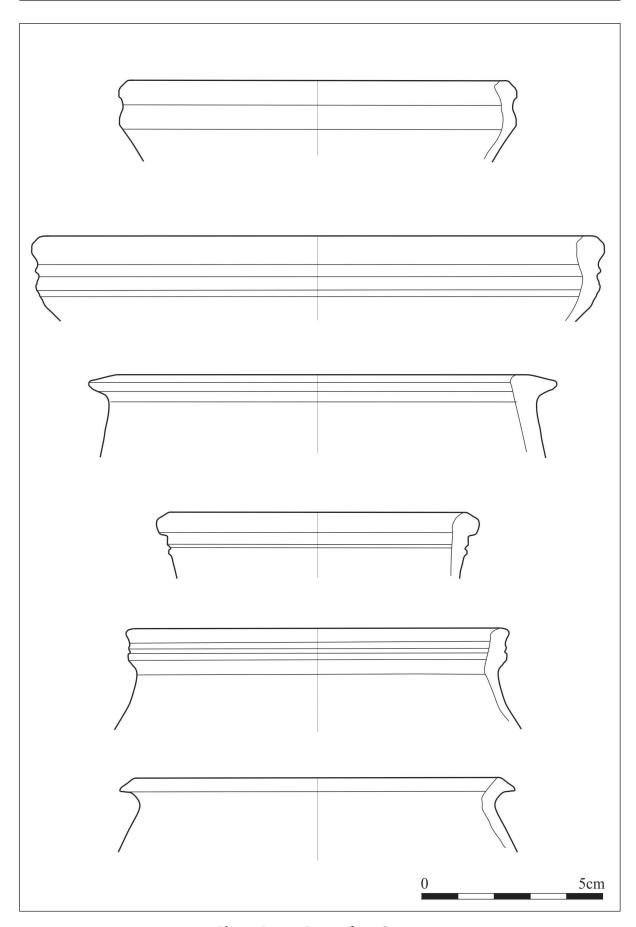


Plate 3. Roman Pottery from Goreni.

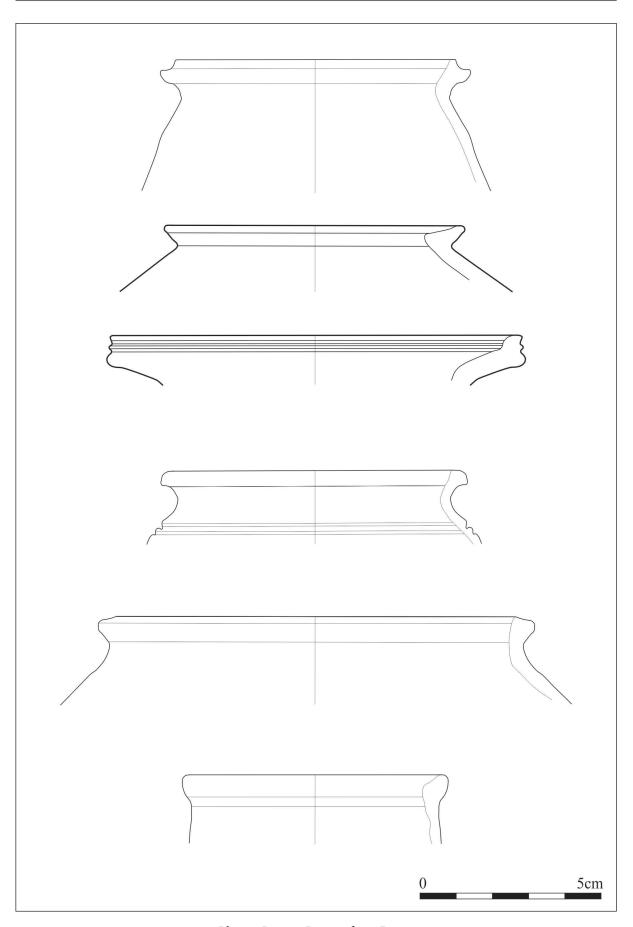


Plate 4. Roman Pottery from Batoş.

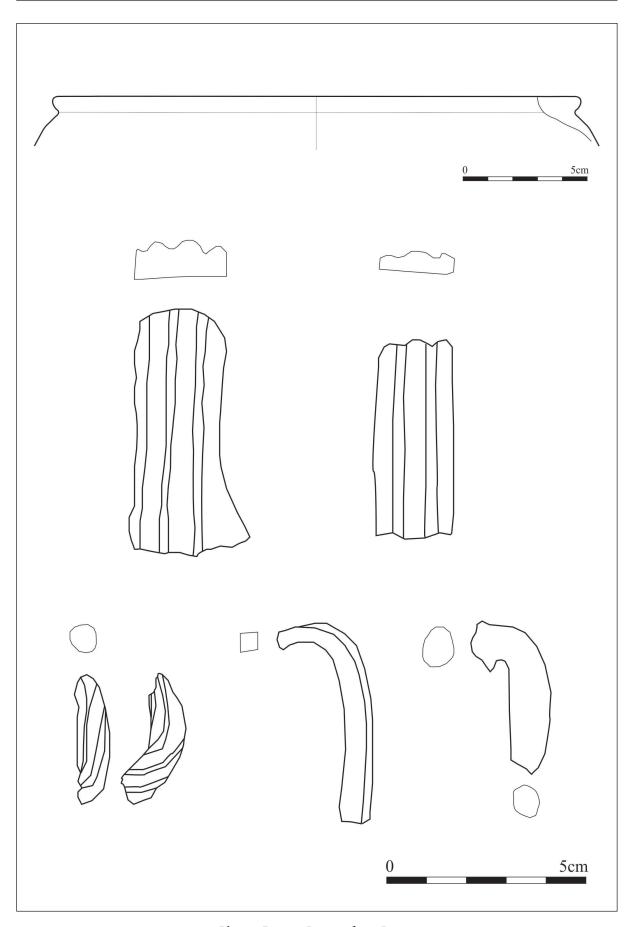


Plate 5. Roman Pottery from Batoş.

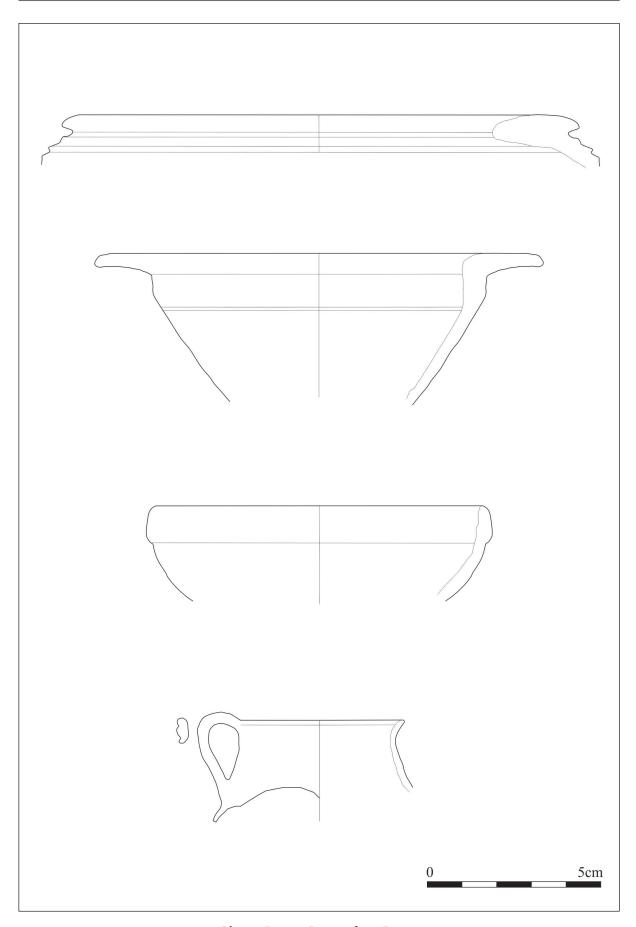


Plate 6. Roman Pottery from Batoş.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA Archäologischer Anzeiger. Beiblatt zum Jahrbuch des Archäologischen Institut,

Berlin

Acta (Siculica), Muzeul Național Secuiesc, Sfântu Gheorghe

Acta Archaeologica Carpathica, Academia Scientiarum Polona Collegium

Cracoviense, Kraków

ActaMNActa Musei Napocensis, Cluj-NapocaActaMPActa Musei Porolissensis, ZalăuActaTSActa Terrae Septemcastrensis, Sibiu

Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Historica, Alba Iulia Angustia Angustia, Muzeul Carpaților Răsăriteni, Sfântu Gheorghe

Antaeus Antaeus. Communicationes ex Instituto Archaeologico Academiae Scien-

tiarum Hungaricae, Budapest

Apulum, Acta Musei Apulensis, Alba Iulia

Archért Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest

Archkorr Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt, Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmu-

seum, Mainz

ArhMold Arheologia Moldovei, Iași
ASZ Agrártörténeti Szemle

AttiSocFriuli Atti della Sociéta per la preistoria e protostoria della Regione Friuli – Venezia

Giulia

AVSL (NF) Archiv des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, (Neue Folge),

Hermannstadt

BAI Bibliotheca Archaeologica Iassiensis, IașiBAM Bibliotheca Archaeologica Moldaviae, Iași

Banatica, Muzeul de istorie al județului Caraș-Severin, Reșița

BAR British Archaeological Reports, International Series / British Series, Oxford

BCMIBuletinul Comisiei Monumentelor IstoriceBMABiblioteca Mvsei Apvlensis, Alba Iulia

BMM Bibliotheca Mysei Marisiensis, Archaeologia, Târgu Mureș / Cluj Napoca

BMN Bibliotheca Mvsei Napocensis, Cluj-NapocaBMP Bibliotheca Mvsei Porolissensis, Zalău

Budapest Régiségei, Budapesti Történeti Múzeum, Budapest

CA Cercetări Arheologice, București

CCA Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România, București
CMM Catalogi Musei Marisiensis, archaeologia, Târgu Mureș
ComArchHung Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae, Budapest

Cumidava, Anuarul Muzeelor Brașovene
CsSZMÉ Csíki Székely Múzeum Évkönyve, Csíkszereda

Dacia (N. S.) Dacia. Recherches et décuvertes archéologiques en Roumanie, I-XII (1924-

1948), București; Nouvelle série (N. S.), Dacia. Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire

anciene, București

Dissertationes Pannonicae, ex Instituto Numismatico et Archaeologico Univer-

sitatis de Petro Pázmány nominatae Budapestinensis provenientes, Budapest

DolgKolozsvár (Ú.S.) Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, (új sorozat,

2006-), Kolozsvár

Drobeta, Muzeul Regiunii Porților de Fier

EJA European Journal of Archaeology
EMúz Erdélyi Múzeum, Kolozsvár

EphemNap Ephemeris Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca

ESzNMJ Emlékkönyv a Székely Nemzeti Múzeum 50 éves jubileumára

FK Földtani Közlöny, Budapest

HesperiaHesperia, the American School of Classical Studies at AthensHydrobiologiaHydrobiologia. The International Journal of Aquatic SciencesJAMÉA Nyíregyházi Jósa András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza

JQSJournal of Quaternary ScienceJRAJournal of Roman Archaeology

Lymbus Lymbus. Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények, Budapest

Marisia (V–), Studii și Materiale, Târgu Mureș MCA Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București

MIMK Molnár István Múzeum Kiadványai, Cristuru Secuiesc/Székelykeresztúr

MNy Magyar Nyelv, Budapest

Művészet, Országos Magyar Képzőművészeti Társulat, Budapest

NK Numizmatikai Közlöny, Budapest

NyIK Nyelv- és irodalomtudományi közlemények

NumZ Numismatische Zeitschrift, Wien

RevBis Revista Bistriței, Complexul Județean Muzeal Bistrița-Năsăud

RevIst Revista Istorică, București

Sargeția, Buletinul Muzeului județului Hunedoara, Acta Musei Devensis, Deva

SCIV(A) Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie 1974–), București

StComSM Studii și Comunicări Satu Mare

Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, Iași

Studia UBB Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, series Historia, Cluj-Napoca

Studia UBB, TCV Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, series Theologia Catholica Varadinensis

Studii Studii. Revistă de Istorie, București

Suceava, Anuarul Complexului Muzeal Bucovina Századok Századok, A Magyar Történelmi Társulat folyóírata

Terra SebusTerra Sebvs, Acta Mvsei Sabesiensis, SebeşVAHVaria Archaeologica Hungarica, BudapestWMMÉWosinsky Mór Múzeum Évkönyve, SzekszárdZiridava (StudArch)Ziridava (Studia Archaeologica 2010–), Arad