

‘A POTAISSA NAPOCAE MP X’.
TRAJAN’S IMPERIAL ROAD AND THE *MANSIO* FROM AITON (CLUJ COUNTY)

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Abstract: Nowadays Aiton is a small village located in the center part of the Cluj County, between Turda and Cluj-Napoca. At Aiton, during the Roman times, an important rural settlement was established, in close relation with the main road of Roman Dacia. Archaeological investigations in the area of this village were carried out mostly in the last century, but most are accidental discoveries. During the Roman period, Aiton was probably an important rural settlement within the territory of Potaissa, and we suppose that a *taberna* was set up here. Why? First, because of the distance from Potaissa: 10 Roman miles. Second, because of the discoveries within the territory of the village. My purpose is to analyze, interpret and map all data available. Based on what we know so far, I was able to distinguish two areas with Roman discoveries. One is located in the northern part of the village, close to the Roman road. I reached the conclusion that in this part of the village we should locate the former *taberna*. The other area is located in the eastern part of the village. I concluded that we should locate the rural settlement here. All in all, these data allowed me to conclude that Aiton represented, during Roman times, an important settlement between Potaissa and Napoca.

Keywords: Dacia, landscape archaeology, Roman roads, *taberna*, Aiton

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Nowadays Aiton is a small village positioned in the center part of the Cluj County, between Turda and Cluj-Napoca. During Roman times, according to the current information, combined with data from archaeological research, a *mansio* was established here and it is possible that a Roman settlement developed close to the main Roman road of Dacia. In the following, we will combine all data and we will try to locate, as accurately as possible, the areas where the *mansio* and the rural settlement were built.

2. AITON AND THE LIST OF THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

Many sites survived within the territory of the former province Roman Dacia, but the exact location of a large number of archaeological sites is still unknown. A project implemented between 2006 and 2010 focused on the discovery of new archaeological sites within the territory of Timiș County. After four years of field surveys,

¹ This study represents a part of the research project of Florin Fodorean, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, Romania, entitled “Cartografierea digitală a siturilor romane din

Dacia Porolissensis” (‘Digital mapping of the archaeological sites in Dacia Porolissensis’), grant GTC 34034/01.11.2013. This project is implemented as a grant for postdoctoral researchers, financially sustained by the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca in 2013–2014.

circa 300 new archaeological sites were discovered.² In Hungary, as well as in Romania, large infrastructure projects (motorways, railways, commercial centers) dramatically changed the number of potentially unknown sites. On average a site was discovered every 1–1.5 km along a motorway (70–100 meter wide). In Romania, all archaeological sites are listed and shortly described in an official document issued by the Ministry of Culture, entitled the List of Historical Monuments (*Lista Monumentelor Istorice* LMI).³ The list was updated in 2010. Unfortunately, because a unified, digital database recording all archaeological sites in the country has not yet been developed, this list contains numerous errors. Each site is recorded with an individual code (random example: CJ-I-m-A-07180.01). CJ represents the acronym of the county (in this case Cluj). The next item is a Roman numeral, which indicates the monuments by categories: “I” is for archaeological monuments, “II” for architectural monuments, “III” for public monuments and “IV” for memorial and funerary monuments. Then a lower case letter follows, indicating: “m” for monument, “a” for ensemble and “s” for archaeological site. This is followed by a capital letter (A or B), which represents: A = monument of national interest; B = monument of local interest. The final part of the code indicates a unique serial number across the country (e.g. 00001.01).

In numerous cases, due to the lack of information, archaeological structures found on the present ground surface, mainly consisting of ceramic fragments, are categorized and registered as sites belonging to the category A (sites of national importance). This classification is based on the Law 422 dated to 18 July 2001 regarding the protection of historical monuments and Government decrees no. 2682/2003 (regarding the approval of methodological regulations for the classification and registration of historical monuments, and of the list of historical monuments) and 562/2003 (issued by the Ministry of Transport, regarding the technical regulations focused on the regional plans). In order to update and maintain an accurate database, continuous field investigations must be made, because otherwise sites which no longer exist (destroyed by agricultural works, for example) are registered in the lists. Therefore, from a socio-economic or cultural point of view, as well as from a scientific perspective, this kind of methodological approach will improve the level of knowledge concerning archaeological sites.

For Aiton, the updated list from 2010⁴ mentions the following archaeological finds: 1. CJ-I-s-B-06937. Archaeological sites, in the point entitled “Șurilor”, with two short specifications regarding the period: CJ-I-m-B-06937.01 – Bronze Age, Wietenberg culture; CJ-I-m-B-06937.02 – Neolithic, Turdaș culture; 2. CJ-I-s-B-06938 (RAN code: 56274.02). Archaeological sites, in the point entitled “Deasupra Morii”, with three short specifications regarding the period: CJ-I-m-A-06938.01 – the migration period; CJ-I-m-A-06938.02 – Roman period; CJ-I-m-B-06938.03 – Prehistory; 3. CJ-I-s-A-06939 (RAN code: 55605.18). Archaeological sites, in the point entitled “Între Pâraie”, with three short specifications regarding the period (CJ-I-m-A-06939.01, RAN code: 55605.18.03, CJ-I-m-A-06939.01, RAN code: 55605.18.03, CJ-I-m-A-06939.02, RAN code: 55605.18.02), of which none is related to the Roman period; 4. CJ-I-s-B-06940, RAN code: 55605.04. The traces of the Roman road are listed under the point entitled “La cruci”. Compared with data from the regional gazetteer and from other publications, the list of historical monuments mentions only an insignificant data set. Based on this small body of data, one cannot understand the general picture of this site. In the following, we will describe the evolution of research focusing on Aiton.

3. HISTORY OF RESEARCH. SHORT REVIEW OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

Aiton became known in the XVIIIth century, precisely in 1758, when a Roman milestone was found here, within the territory of the village. Unfortunately, we do not have accurate data concerning the exact location of this monument. This situation led to several suppositions summarized here: the milestone was discovered south or north of the village or within its territory. The milestone is lost and we also lack a detailed description of this monument. Luckily, Iudita Winkler discovered a drawing of the monument in a manuscript kept in the central library of Cluj-Napoca.⁵ The drawing belonged to M. P. Szathmári. During the XVIIIth century, in 1773, J. Seivert was the first who read and published the text of the milestone.⁶ In the XIXth century, other historians debated the text of the inscrip-

² <http://www.banaterra.eu/romana/colectiv-arheogis-baza-de-date-patrimoniului-arheologic-cuprins-lista-monumentelor-istorice>.

³ <http://arhiva.cultura.ro/Files/GenericFiles/LMI-2010.pdf>.

⁴ <http://www.cultura.abt.ro/Files/GenericFiles/LMI-2010.pdf>, 735.

⁵ WINKLER 1982a, 83.

⁶ WINKLER 1982a, 80.

tion.⁷ K. Torma was the first who actually read and commented upon the inscription.⁸ In 1982, I. Winkler discussed the inscription of the milestone in a short note.⁹

In addition to the discovery of the milestone, archaeological excavations were also carried out in Aiton. In 1913, Márton Roska excavated the remains of a building with five rooms, in the northern part of the village, at a point named “Podul de piatră” (“The Stone Bridge”).¹⁰ The building has an “L” shape (Fig. 1).

The foundations walls are of 0.50 cm thickness and were built from stones with cement (*opus incertum*) and bricks. On the western side of the building an apse was excavated. One of the rooms had a *hypocaustum* and a *praeefurnium*.¹¹ In 1978 M. Blăjan and T. Cerghe published a short study in which they described several archaeological finds from Aiton, mainly fragments of ceramics. Tiberiu Cerghe, teacher at the local school in Aiton, even though an amateur, was passionate about archaeology. He and his students managed to excavate some locations within the territory of the village,¹² and discovered numerous artifacts. Aside from the usual fragments of ceramics, two artifacts are of special interest. One is a fragment of an amphora handle stamped VIRGIN.¹³ The other find is a small terracotta statue, representing a female.¹⁴ Except for these data, no precise topographic details are recorded.

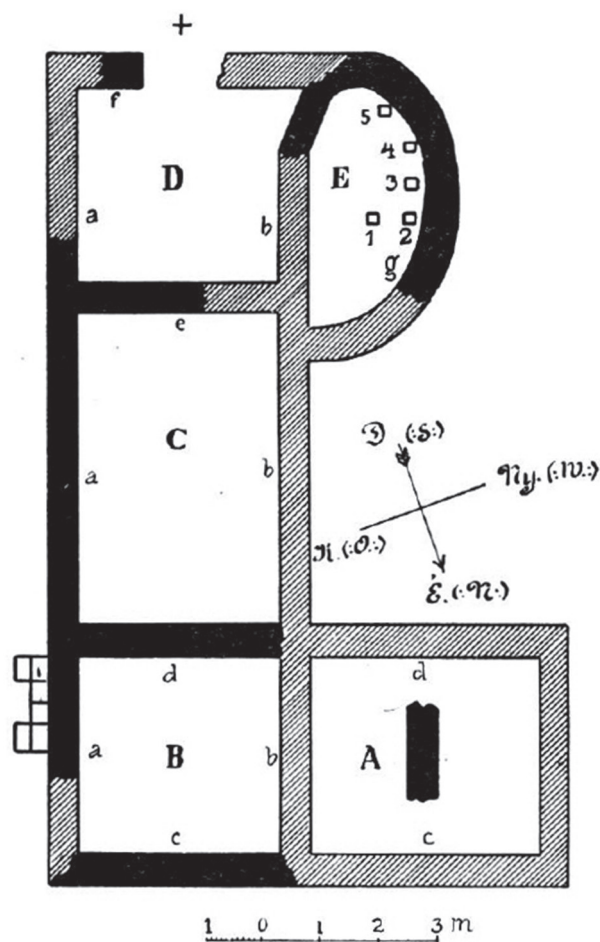


Fig. 1. The building excavated in 1913 by Márton Roska in the northern part of Aiton (after ROSKA 1915, 49)

⁷ NEIGEBUR 1851, 221–222; ACKNER–MÜLLER 1865, 149; GOOSS 1876, 64; MARȚIAN 1920, 6.

⁸ TORMA 1864, 30.

⁹ WINKLER 1982a, 80–84.

¹⁰ ROSKA 1915, 48–50.

¹¹ BLĂJAN–CERGHİ 1978, 21; MOȚU 1990–1991, 178, 194, fig. 2 and 195, fig. 3.

¹² WINKLER *et al.* 1980, 63–73; WINKLER 1982b.

¹³ BLĂJAN–CERGHİ 1978, 22–23.

¹⁴ BLĂJAN–CERGHİ 1978, 24.

Only two observations are related to the topography of Aiton in this study. The authors mention the place named “Cânepi”, in the south-eastern part of the village, where fragments of tiles and stones were found scattered over the surface brought to light by agricultural works.¹⁵ Traces of another building were identified 0.5 km south-west of the village. The same authors mention another point, location circa one kilometer south of the rivulet Togu, on its right terrace, where ceramic fragments were identified.¹⁶ All these data are more-or-less difficult to locate and have never been accurately mapped.

Other data related to the topography of Aiton can be found in several articles published from 1973 to 1980.¹⁷ In 1980, I. Winkler, M. Blăjan and T. Cerghi published an article in which they presented the Roman road in detail.¹⁸ The authors mainly described the sections excavated between the village of Gheorghieni and Aiton. As a consequence of these excavations (more than 40 sections), the path of the Roman road was identified at numerous points. Within the territory of Aiton seven sections were excavated to establish the infrastructure of the road. One of the sections was excavated within the courtyard of the local school (*Fig. 2*), where the authors of the research found the Roman road, at the depth of circa 1.60–1.70 m.

A tile fragment was discovered on the road surface stamped of *legio V Macedonica*.¹⁹ This small road sector was preserved and a copy of the milestone was erected here. As of today the copy still exists, but the traces of the road were covered (*Fig. 3, Fig. 4*).

4. AITON AND ITS MILESTONE

A Roman milestone was erected in AD 108, during Trajan’s military campaign along the main imperial road at Aiton (Cluj County), exactly 10 miles (14.785 km) North of Potaissa. The monument found in 1758 (*Fig. 5*) was unfortunately lost. Its inscription was:²⁰

IMP(erator) / CAESAR NERVA / TRAIANVS AVG(ustus) / GERM(anicus) DACICVS / PONTIF(ex)
MAXIM(us) / (tribunicia) POT(estate) XII CO(n)S(ul) V (sic) / IMP(erator) VI P(ater) P(atriciae) FECIT / PER
COH(ortem) I FL(avia) VLP(ia) / HISP(anorum) MIL(liaria) C(ivium) R(omanorum) EQ(uitata) / A POTAISSA
NAPOCAE / M(illia) P(assuum) X.

This piece of evidence has triple importance:²¹

1. In the formula *a Potaissa Napocae* we find the first epigraphic evidence of Potaissa and Napoca; 2. This road sector was built by *cohors I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum milliaria civium Romanorum equitata*. This troop is mentioned among the military forces used by Trajan in the war against the Dacians. After fulfilling its mission, it was garrisoned at Orheiul Bistriței, along the northeastern frontier of the province.²² The term *equitata* suggests the use of this cavalry unit for the recognition of the landscape of northern Dacia; 3. This particular case can be added to the list of military units which built roads even if Michael Rathmann argued that little evidence could be found to demonstrate the individual existence of the term *via militaris* in Roman times.²³

5. MAPPING THE ROMAN ROAD. NEW DATA

In AD 106 Dacia became a Roman province. During the two military campaigns in AD 101–102 and AD 105–106 preceding the conquest, the Roman engineers led by Balbus succeeded to draft and to begin the construction of the first Dacian ‘highway’: the road starting from the Danube, towards the Banat region, including two branches – the Western road, from Lederata to Tibiscum, and the Eastern road, from Dierna to Tibiscum. In fact, these two branches were the two lines used by the Roman army to penetrate the Dacian territory. From Tibiscum,

¹⁵ BLĂJAN–CERGI 1978, 22.

¹⁶ BLĂJAN–CERGI 1978, 22.

¹⁷ STOIA 1976, 273; BLĂJAN–TATAI–BALTĂ 1978, 33; BLĂJAN–CERGI 1978, 131–147.

¹⁸ WINKLER *et al.* 1980, 63–79.

¹⁹ WINKLER *et al.* 1980, 68.

²⁰ CIL III, 1627.

²¹ FODOREAN 2006, 65–68; FODOREAN 2013, 34.

²² PROTASE 2008.

²³ RATHMANN 2003, 40.



Fig. 2. The local school in Aiton, where the main imperial Roman road in Dacia was excavated (photograph F. Fodorean)



Fig. 3. The copy of the milestone from Aiton, in the courtyard of the school (photograph F. Fodorean)



Fig. 4. The courtyard of the school in Aiton, where the Roman road was identified (photograph F. Fodorean)

where the two branches met, the road continued along the valley of the river Bistra in the narrow corridor of the Iron Gates of Transylvania, until it reached the future capital of Dacia, Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. From here, the road continued to North, towards Apulum, Potaissa, Napoca, ending at Porolissum, the northernmost point of Dacia. From south to north, the road had a total length of circa 450 km. According to the inscription of the Roman milestone discovered in Aiton, the construction began in A.D. 101–102 and probably ended around AD 110.

Between Potaissa and Napoca this road was identified in the terrain and accurately mapped. The total length in this sector is 36 km, i.e. 24 Roman miles (*Fig. 6*). In several points, close to the area of the current village of Ceanu Mic, the road was the object of some preventive archaeological research in 2005. What is more important is the position of the legionary fortress at Potaissa²⁴ (Turda, Cluj County) in relation to this road. Choosing the location for one large legionary fortress such as the one from Potaissa (23.37 ha) was not an easy task. The only plateau in this area has been the hill called ‘Cetate’ (altitude 375 m) positioned in the western part of the current city. This place was also close to a stone quarry (the distance from here to the quarry of Săndulești is circa 5.5 km toward the north as the crow flies). The plateau has a light slope: the terrain is a little higher towards north-west, where *porta decumana* was built compared to the east side. From the north-eastern corner of the fortress one could easily see the Roman leading up to the top of the hill called ‘Dealul Dăbăgăului’. Our view shed analysis demonstrates that towards the north, there was visibility up to Aiton, and towards the south, the entire Arieș valley was visible, almost to the point when this river flows into the Mureș.

Potaissa was the most important military settlement in the Northern part of Dacia. With an estimated population of 20,000 inhabitants, Potaissa was the headquarters of the *legio V Macedonica*. Its fortress (573 × 408 m) was positioned on the Cetate Hill, in the western part of the city. From Potaissa to Napoca the Peutinger map mentions XXIII miles (35.484 km). The whole sector between these two settlements was identified in the terrain, surveyed and mapped.²⁵ This road is very important. It is, after all, a section of the first road built in Dacia. To es-

²⁴ BĂRBULESCU 1987; BĂRBULESCU 1994; BĂRBULESCU 1997.

²⁵ WINKLER *et al.* 1980, 63–73; WINKLER 1982a, 587–589.

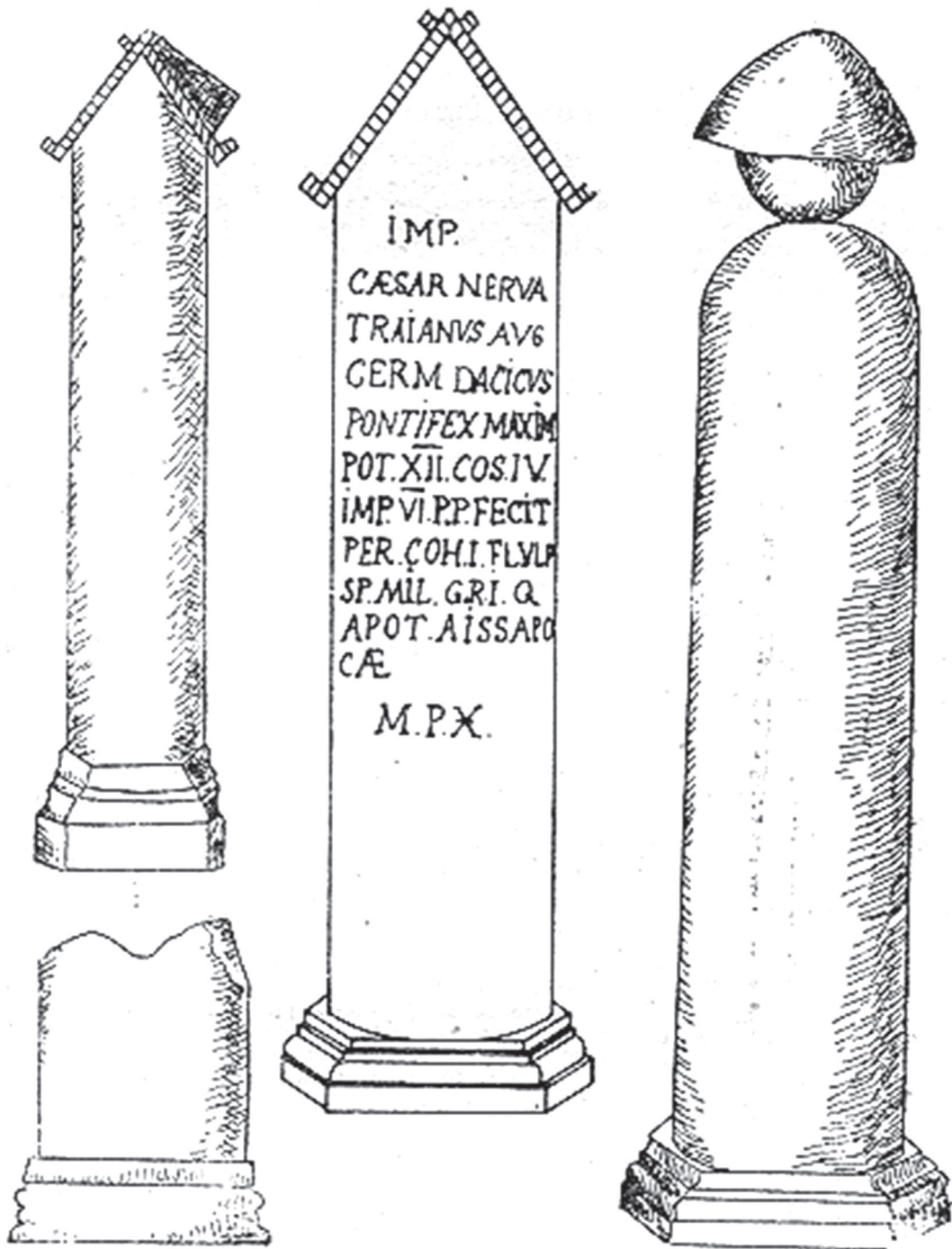


Fig. 5. Drawing with the milestone discovered in 1758 in Aiton (after WINKLER 1982a, 83)

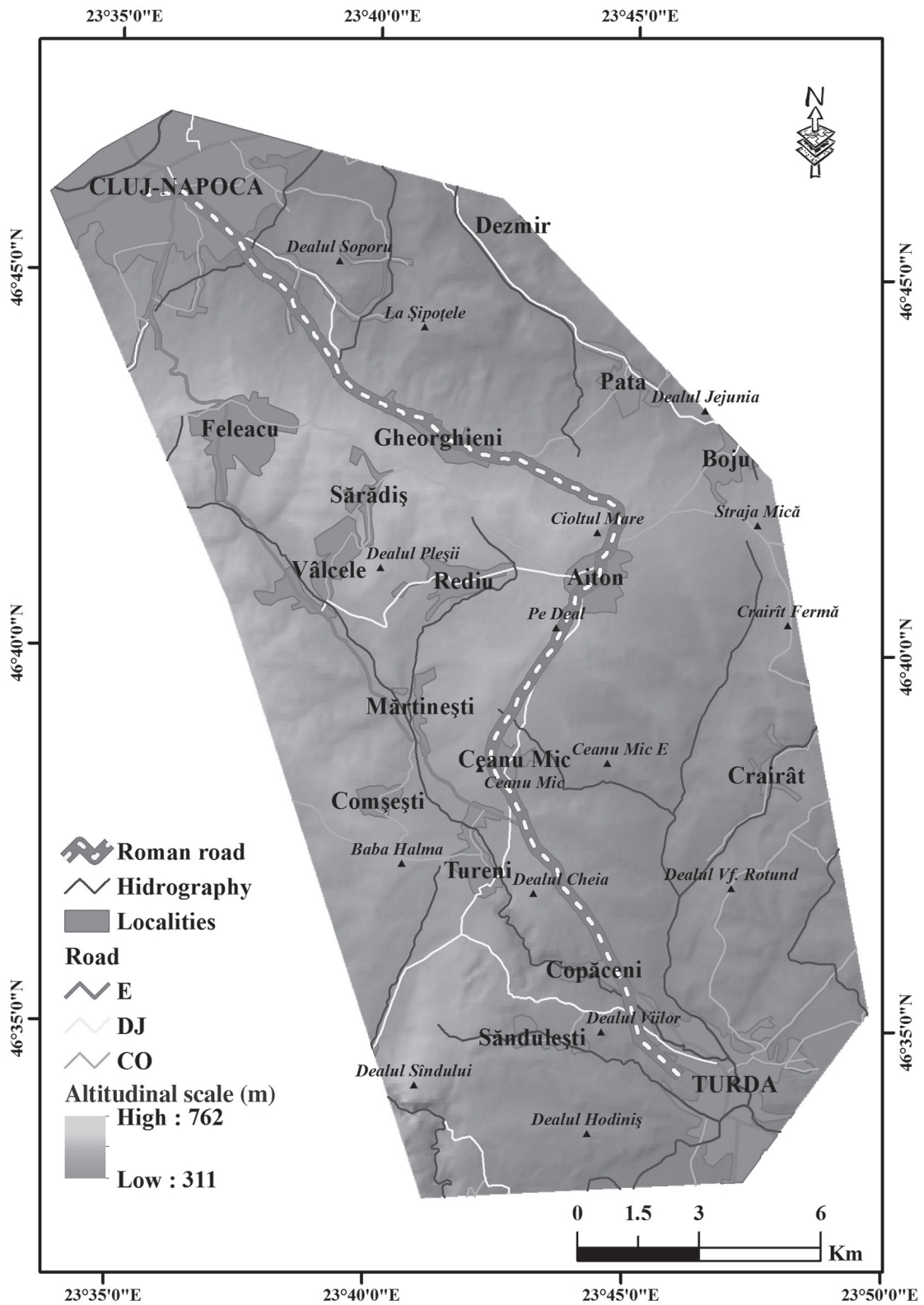


Fig. 6. Digital elevation model of the Roman road between Potaissa and Napoca (map F. Fodorean)

establish the exact topography of the Roman road we created a cross section and we read all its parameters. These parameters are as follows:

1. Start position: 392463.625, 586288.289;
2. Start height: 352.16 m;
3. End position: 405504.407, 564440.419;
4. End height: 378.407 m;
5. Straight-line distance: 25.447 km;
6. 3D distance on surface: 31.724 km;
7. Vertical difference (start to finish): 26.2 m;
8. Total Climbing: 571.6 m;
9. Total descending: 545.4 m;
10. Minimum elevation on path: 347.361 m;
11. Maximum elevation on path: 653.386 m;
12. Azimuth: 148° 09' 5.3";
13. Slope/Tilt: 0.06°;
14. Max path slope: 11.13° [29.39 km along path].

6. MAPPING THE *MANSIO*. OTHER DATA CONCERNING THE ROMAN SETTLEMENT

Archaeological investigations in the area of this village were carried out mostly in the last century. During the Roman period, Aiton was an important rural settlement within the territory of Potaissa, and we assume that a *mansio* was set up here. Why? First, because of the distance from Potaissa: 10 Roman miles. The second argument is proved by the analysis of the find distributions. What do we know so far? How do we imagine Aiton during the Roman times?

We have already discussed these points along with the archaeological discoveries mentioned in the list of the historical monuments. The list contains three toponyms, three areas with archaeological findings: 1. the point "Șurilor", with two short specifications, but none of these belongs to the Roman period; 2. the point entitled "Dea-supra Morii", with three short specifications, of which one refers to ceramic fragments from the Roman period; 3. the point entitled "Între Pâraie", with three short specifications, of which none is related to the Roman period. The Roman road is also listed, in the point "La cruci". So, the list of historical monuments provides 8 points, of which only one is related to the Roman period.²⁶

The local gazetteer, i.e. the archaeological repertory of Cluj County, mentions 22 points with archaeological discoveries in Aiton.²⁷ I have tried to arrange these descriptions from south to north and to map them as well, using the same order, starting from south. These are the main discoveries mentioned in the archaeological repertory of Cluj County (*Fig. 7*):

1. Close to the rivulet Togu there is a small terrace, 1 kilometer south of the entrance in the village. Ceramic fragments belonging to the Roman period were discovered here;²⁸
2. In the south-eastern part of the village, in a point indicated by the toponym "La Cânepi", numerous archaeological remains were discovered: stones, tiles, ceramic fragments. Several sections were excavated on a surface of circa 40 × 50 m. The foundations of a building of 17.6 × 14 m were discovered. The building had several rooms. The walls were made of wood. Below the Roman level fragments of prehistoric ceramics were also found. The archaeological investigations remained unpublished;²⁹
3. On a small terrace, positioned close to the southern entrance of the village traces of several former walls were observed scattered on the ground surface;³⁰
4. In the garden of the house no. 130, archaeological excavations lead to the discovery of a channel, in a length of 11.60 m. Close to this channel Roman ceramic fragments were discovered. Below this level,

²⁶ <http://www.cultura.abt.ro/Files/GenericFiles/LMI-2010.pdf>, 735.

²⁷ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 22–26.

²⁸ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 17.

²⁹ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 10.

³⁰ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 18.

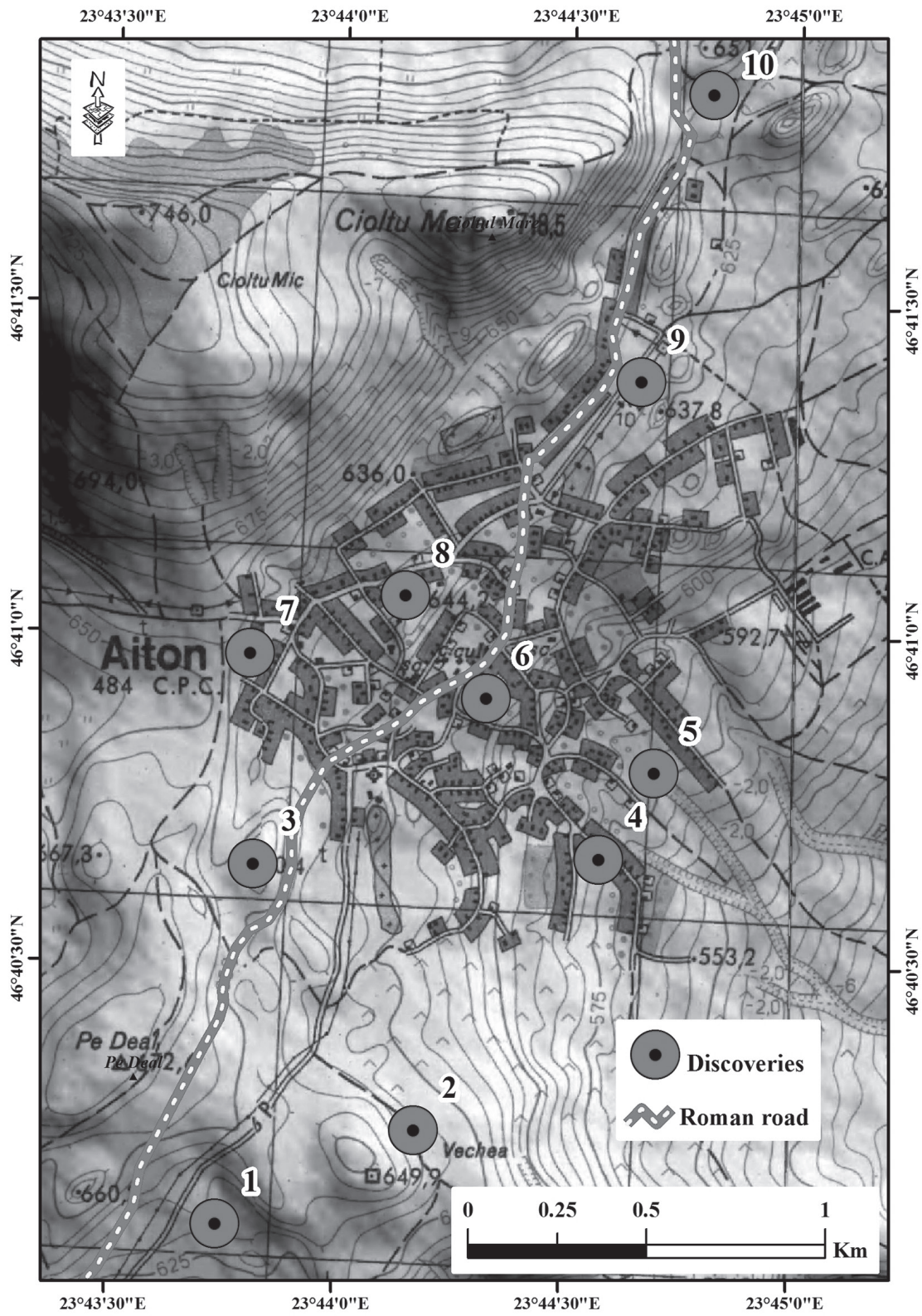


Fig. 7. The repartition of the Roman sites indicated in the archaeological repertory of the Cluj County (map F. Fodorean)

- prehistoric fragments of ceramics were found. Above the channel two fragments of Roman monuments were identified, one of them dedicated to IOM;³¹
5. Agricultural works lead to the discovery of Roman materials in the gardens of houses no. 83, 84, 116, 121, 126, 160 and 316;³²
 6. In the garden of the orthodox church a Roman terracotta statuette representing a female was discovered;
 7. The western part of the village is called “Podul de Piatră”. In this area, several important discoveries were recorded: traces of Roman buildings (walls, stones, bricks and tiles), ceramic fragments and an amphora fragment with an inscription. A building with 5 rooms was discovered. The walls were built in *opus incertum*, with a pavement of *cementicium*. This building was first discovered, according to the archaeological repertory of Cluj County, in 1903. There is a mistake in this publication: the building was first excavated by Márton Roska, who published in 1913 the results of his investigations.³³ There was also another mistake: the location of this point is not accurately indicated in the map on page 21 in the repertory. Point no. 9 is located in the western part of the village, while I. Moțu mapped it in the northern section close to the exit from Aiton towards the next settlement, Gheorghieni;³⁴
 8. In the garden of the house no. 135 fragments of Roman ceramics were discovered. Archaeological excavations were carried out here. Four sections were excavated, revealing a corner of a building;³⁵
 9. In the garden of house no. 346 other remains of Roman settlement were found, together with a large quantity of Roman ceramic fragments;³⁶
 10. Within an area delimited by the toponyms “La Izvoare” and “Butură”, in the north-western part of the village, Roman ceramic fragments were found.³⁷

In 1990–1991 I. Moțu published an article on the rural settlement from Aiton.³⁸ The author presented the results of several field surveys and a rescue excavation carried out from 1979 to 1982. I. Moțu describes all the major areas where traces of buildings, ceramics, fragments of monuments, or other artifacts were found. The field surveys, resulting mainly in surface observations, were carried out mostly in the spring when archaeological remains are more easily identifiable on the ground surface.³⁹ On page 194, the author published a sketch, where he tried to map all points described in the text (*Fig. 8*). Unfortunately, this sketch, although useful at first glance, is difficult to read and interpret. First, it is oriented with the North deviated from the northern direction with circa 22°. This would not be the main problem. The most difficult was to establish a scale, since the author did not provide any mathematical elements to his sketch. So we considered the school, the reformed and the orthodox churches as landmarks. We measured the distance between the school and the orthodox church using plans with a detailed 1:5000 scale. We have also used the Google Earth to measure the same distance. The result was the same: circa 260 m. I used the same method in measuring the distance from the school to the reformed church. The result was the same: circa 200 m. I measured the distance from the school to the orthodox church in the sketch published by I. Moțu: 2 cm. Using this method I obtained a scale of around 1:13,000 for the sketch.

The first area is located in the south-eastern part of the village. I. Moțu outlined that on the terrain belonging to the house no. 186 a wall of circa 7.10 m was identified. This wall was actually used by the landowner in the foundation during the construction of a stable. The wall is oriented from north-east to south-west.⁴⁰ This observation is important: the Roman road is oriented the same way, together with another construction, excavated in 1913 by M. Roska. Thus there is actually a pattern: the buildings are oriented using the same main direction as the road. This building, identified by I. Moțu, was conventionally named building D. To be more accurate, we will indicate the geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Romanian Stereo 70 system which limit the area where building D was identified: 403691.241 (46°40'42.0910"N), 576368.069 (23°44'27.3240"N). Close to this building other two structures were identified. Unfortunately, I. Moțu does not mention how close. One building, conventionally named

³¹ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 12.

³² CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 15.

³³ ROSKA 1915, 48–50, and fig. 1.

³⁴ MOȚU 1990–1991, 194, fig. 2.

³⁵ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 11.

³⁶ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 13. There is a mistake, the number of the house is written as 436. In fact, it is 346.

³⁷ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 16.

³⁸ MOȚU 1990–1991, 175–219.

³⁹ MOȚU 1990–1991, 176–179, and 194, fig. 2.

⁴⁰ MOȚU 1990–1991, 176.

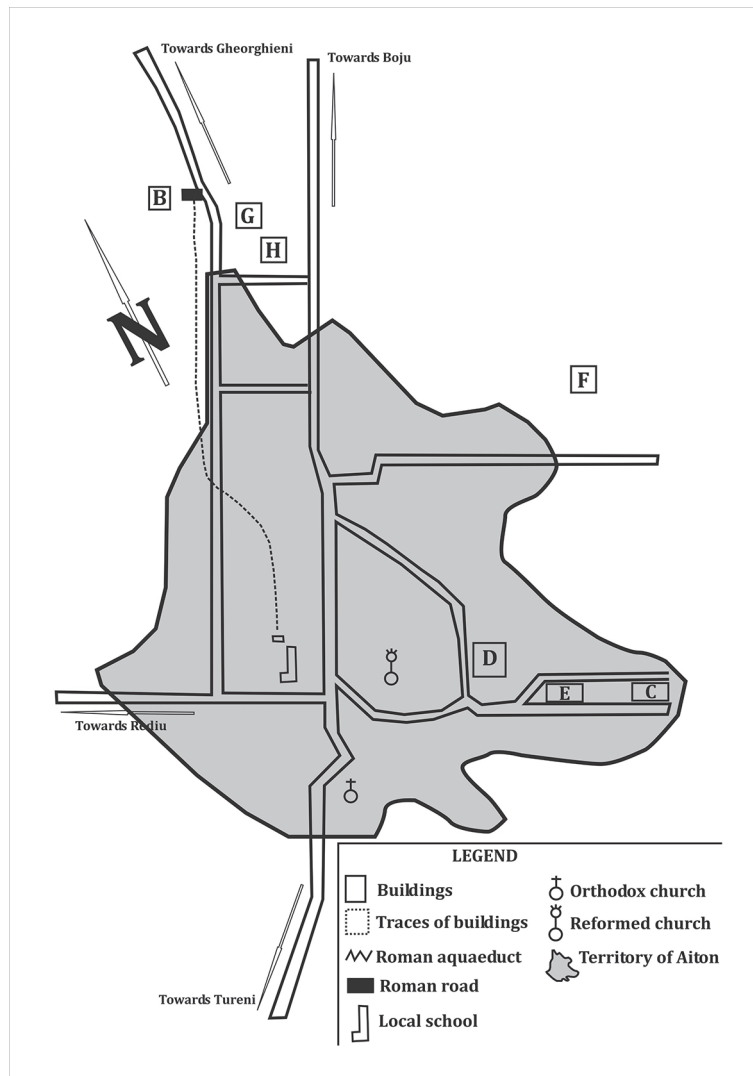


Fig. 8. The drawing (a simple sketch, without scale) published in 1991 by I. Moțu (after Moțu 1990–1991, 194)

“building C”, was identified in the courtyard of the house no. 121.⁴¹ The geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Stereo 70 system are as follows: 403784.326 (46°40′42.0910″N), 576152.345 (23°44′31.8653″E). The other building, named “building E”, was identified in the courtyard of the house no. 131.⁴² The geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Stereo 70 system are as follows: 403796.992 (46°40′48.3675″N), 576345.953 (23°44′32.3165″E).

Close to this address, in the courtyard of house no. 130, a channel was identified in 1978.⁴³ Fragments from two monuments were also discovered here. Building E is located 14 m east of this channel.⁴⁴ We measured the geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Stereo 70 system: 403700.891 (46°40′48.8487″N), 576362.339 (23°44′27.7824″E).

According to our measurements using the 1:5000 plans, all these discoveries are concentrated in an area delimited in the south by the rivulet Togu and in the northern part by the rivulet Cânepi. The area is obviously located close to the houses with numbers 121, 130 and 131. The house no. 131 is positioned circa 550 south-east from

⁴¹ Moțu 1990–1991, 176.

⁴² Moțu 1990–1991, 176.

⁴³ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 12.

⁴⁴ Moțu 1990–1991, 176.

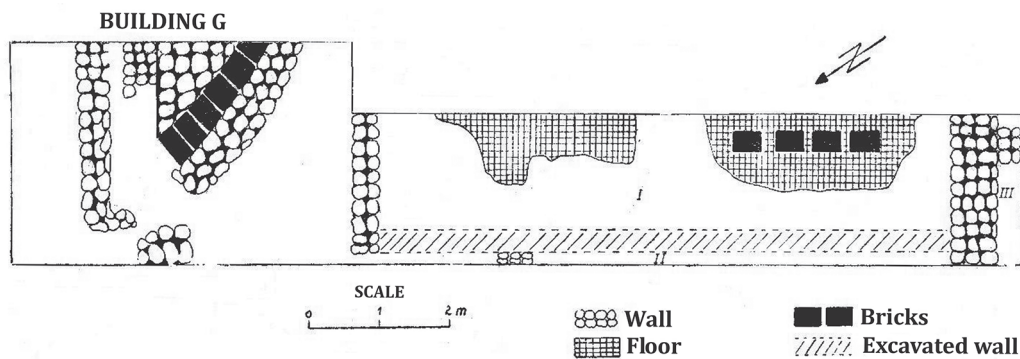


Fig. 9. The so-called “building G”, located in the northern part of Aiton (after MOȚU 1990–1991, 194, fig. 2)

the school, building D is located circa 400 m south-east from the same school, and building C is located circa 700 m south-east from the school.

The second area that yielded several interesting archaeological finds is located in the northern part of the village, close to the present-day road and also the former Roman road. In 1913 M. Roska excavated a building in the northern part of the village.⁴⁵ On the western side of the building an apse was identified. The building has five rooms. Room “E”, the one with an apse shape, had a *hypocaust* installation. A *praefurnium* was identified in the southern part of the room D.⁴⁶ From the plan published by M. Roska one can observe that the excavated construction had five rooms, of which one with an apse, noted by Roska with the letters A, B, C, D, and E. The dimensions of the rooms are: A = 4 × 3.5 m; B = 3.5 × 3.5 m; C = 5.60 × 3.40 m; D = 3.5 × 3.5 m.⁴⁷ This building was named “building B” by I. Moțu in the sketch from page 194.⁴⁸ The recently established geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Stereo 70 system are as follows: 1. 403831.622 (46°41′25.4346″N), 577489.986 (23°44′33.0912″E).

Close to this construction another building was identified and excavated during the autumn of 1982 by I. Moțu.⁴⁹ The point where the building was located is named by the local inhabitants “Locul lui Poțu”. The area is located at the exit from the village, on the right side of the current road and very close to the Roman road. I. Moțu named this point “building G”.⁵⁰ We will indicate the geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the system Stereo 70: 403882.286 (46°41′24.2725″N), 577453.295 (23°44′35.5030″E).

One observation deserves special attention. I. Moțu noted that in 1982 the traces of the building were visible at the surface of the ground, scattered over an area of circa 60 m². During the course of rescue excavations, a surface of circa 35 m² was uncovered. At a depth of circa 0.80 m, a building with three rooms was found.⁵¹ In this case a *hypocaust* installation was also identified (Fig. 9).

Among the artifacts, a bronze coin from Faustina Iunior was identified. Unfortunately, in his study I. Moțu gave inaccurate indication about the location of building B (the building also excavated in 1913 by M. Roska). He noted that building B is located circa 800–900 m north-west of building G.⁵² This distance is too far. If we measure the distance on digital maps, the location of the building should be circa 800 m north of the exit of the village, which is impossible. In the sketch, I. Moțu indicated the building as close to building G.

South of these buildings, in their close proximity, another area containing Roman artifacts was identified on the ground surface. The foundation of a stone wall was identified, together with ceramic fragments, fragments of tiles and stone fragments. Because of all these discoveries, I. Moțu suspected the existence of another building in this area, conventionally named “building H”. A fragment from a column was also found close to this point. The geographical coordinates and the coordinates in the Stereo 70 system are as follows: 403832.225 (46°41′19.7607″N), 577314.774 (23°44′33.2505″E).

⁴⁵ ROSKA 1915, 48–50.

⁴⁶ BLĂJAN–CERGIH 1978, 21; MOȚU 1990–1991, 178, 194, fig. 2 and 195, fig. 3.

⁴⁷ ROSKA 1915, 49.

⁴⁸ MOȚU 1990–1991, 194, fig. 2.

⁴⁹ MOȚU 1990–1991, 175.

⁵⁰ MOȚU 1990–1991, 194, fig. 2.

⁵¹ MOȚU 1990–1991, 195, fig. 3.

⁵² MOȚU 1990–1991, 178.

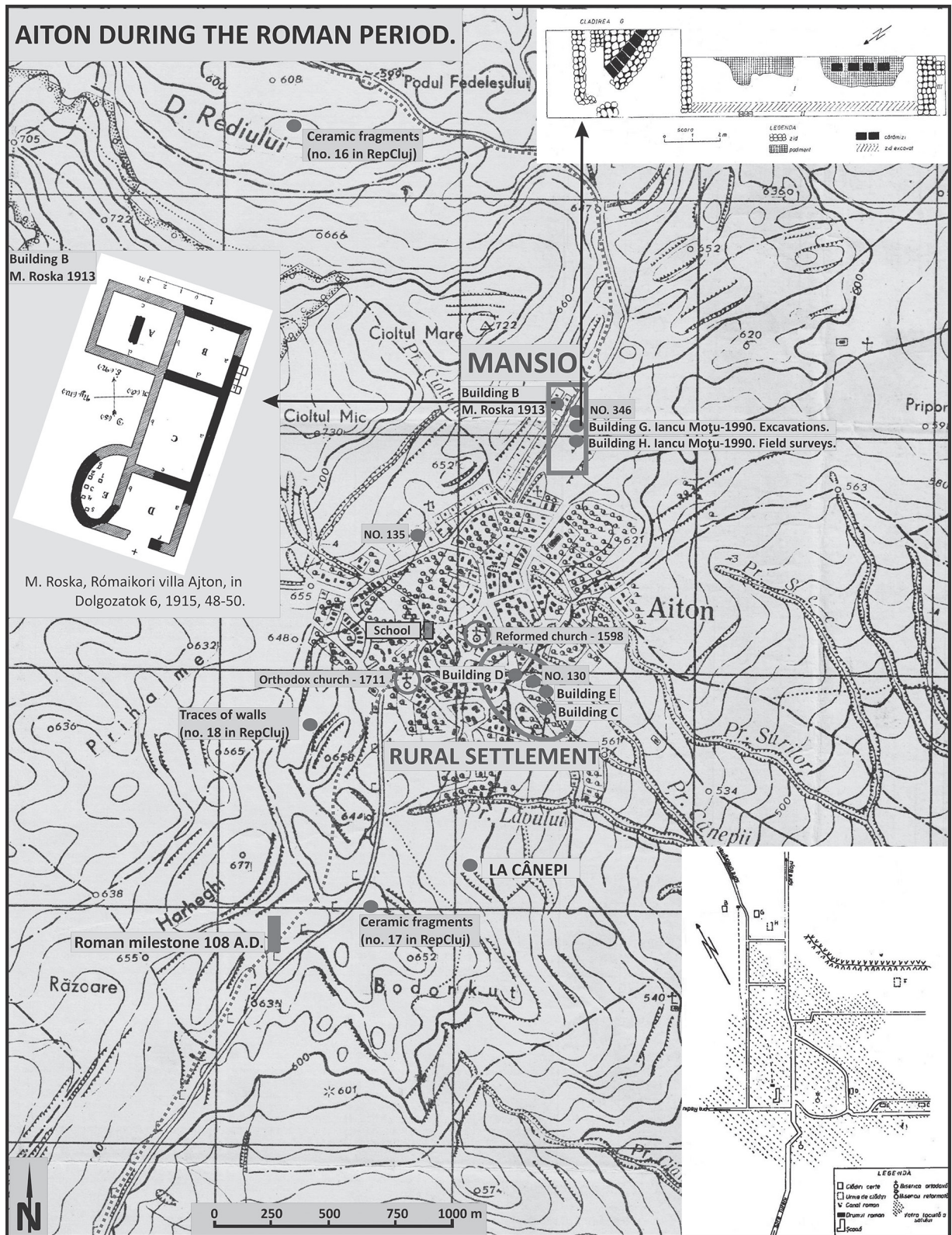


Fig. 10. The topography of Aiton, indicating the location of the first *mansio* in Dacia and the rural settlement (map F. Fodorean)

Between these two buildings, G and H, fragments of inscriptions, two weapons and other artifacts were identified on the ground surface. This area corresponds to the one described in the archaeological repertory of Cluj County, under point no. 13.⁵³ In fact, this is the courtyard of the house no. 346 in Aiton, positioned at the exit of the village, on the right side of the current road and close to the former Roman road.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Discoveries grouped in the northern part of the village, close to the Roman road indicate a certain fact (*Fig. 10*): these buildings, some of them archaeologically excavated, were part of the *mansio* which functioned here in the proximity of the Roman road. These discoveries are very consistent: foundations of stone walls, fragments of inscriptions, fragments of monuments, fragments of columns, coins, installations of hypocaust heating etc. But the most important and essential argument is, in fact, the location of these finds. They are all very close to the Roman road, at a distance of circa 10 Roman miles away from Potaissa and 14 Roman miles south of Napoca. It is logical to assume that there was an important *mansio* here. We have numerous examples and analogies in other provinces. In 1995 E. W. Black published a book about *mansiones* in Britannia. He discussed circa 200 constructions of this type, so one can actually see that there was, obviously, a logical pattern regarding the location of these structures, near Roman roads.⁵⁴ The discoveries grouped in the eastern part of the village indicate the area where the rural settlement was established. With all these data we should abandon clichés or statements such as “here a *villa rustica* or a *mansio* existed etc.”⁵⁵ Instead, we should analyze in detail the archaeological discoveries and, if there is enough information, affirm the functionality of the buildings. Otherwise, *mansio* and *villa rustica* are obviously not the same.⁵⁶ The most important criterion in our opinion is the location. A *mansio* should be located very close to a road. Another criterion is the careful analysis of the artifacts. Then, analogies should be carefully examined. If these criteria are fulfilled, one can try to distinguish between these two types of buildings. Also, an important aspect is the analysis of ancient itineraries. For example, the Antonine itinerary contains numerous toponyms with direct reference to *mansiones*.⁵⁷ We should also be more careful when we try to find a typology for *mansiones* of for the Roman farms. In fact, if we take a closer look at plans of *mansiones* or Roman farms, we do not find so many common features.⁵⁸ On the contrary, by analyzing the plans of *mansiones* excavated in Britain, Germany or in other Roman provinces different plans can be recognized. Some of them are courtyard structures. Others are, practically, irregular groups of buildings. In other cases, *mansiones* consist of a single building.

In the beginning of this paper all the discoveries within the territory of Aiton were mentioned as recorded in the list of the historical monuments. As a result of this investigation, instead of a single point with Roman findings, 13 points were mapped, or even 14, if counting the point indicating the location of the Roman milestone. The results of this study will also be useful in updating the information from the list of historical monuments and in more accurately delineating areas which should be protected in the future.

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⁵³ CRIȘAN *et al.* 1992, s.v. Aiton, 23, no. 13.

⁵⁴ BLACK 1995.

⁵⁵ So many articles, books, or regional gazetteers mention this stereotyped confusion. See, for example, MITROFAN 1973, 127–150, or MITROFAN 1974, 41–59. In other cases, the authors tried to distinguish between these two types of buildings. See BENEÀ 2006, 279–282.

⁵⁶ PANAITE 2004, 185–201.

⁵⁷ ARNAUD 1993, 33–49.

⁵⁸ PANAITE 2004, 186 described a general typology for *mansiones*: “From the typological point of view mansiones are edifices with a yard. This type with a central yard around which all the annexes of the *mansio* (with the second floor generally made of wood) are placed, appeared in the second half of the second century. In some cases they had two yards, the second one being given to vehicles. A *mansio* had rooms for travelers (*cubicula*), a dining hall (*taberna*), a bath (*therma*), workshops, deposits, a shrine and a necropolis.” In my opinion, it is difficult to establish common features for these buildings.

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