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**The Early Medieval Habitation  
(7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries)  
in the Someşul Mic River Basin.  
The Settlement from Jucu de Sus  
(Jucu com.), Cluj County**

**ABSTRACT**

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**The Early Medieval Habitation  
(7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Centuries) in the Someșul Mic River Basin.  
The Settlement from Jucu de Sus (Jucu com.), Cluj County  
Abstract**

*Key-words: early medieval epoch, settlement, Jucu de Sus, Someșul Mic, floodplain, natural resources, horizontal structure, sector, groups, economic groups, household groups, settlement ground level, features, deepened features, surface features, stratigraphy, economy, special artefacts, iron, piercers, occupations*

The researches from 2007-2008 on the territories of the Jucu and Bonțida communes, documented the presence of several archaeological objectives. Due to rescue archaeological excavations started in 2007, at the north-eastern limit of the S.C. Nokia S.R.L. investment project, in Jucu de Sus, the presence of an early medieval (site I, sector Ia) and also some iron age features was signalled. Also, about 500m towards west from this sector, the contemporary cemetery (site II) was revealed (partially intersected by a later necropolis). The subsequent year, another investment, approximately 170m north-west of the previous years' excavations, helped uncover the north-western sector (Ic) of the settlement, on the territory of the Răscruți locality (Bonțida commune).

Up to now, the researches have been turned into account in some synthetic reports (Stanciu *et alii* 2007, Stanciu *et alii* 2009, Stanciu *et alii* 2015), studies regarding ritual aspects (Stanciu, Bindea 2008), some of the features from the north-western sector and chronological framing (Stanciu 2014), the cemetery (Diana, Meșter 2013) and more recently the study of the bone piercers discovered in the settlement (due to be published).

This dissertation is meant to investigate the horizontal structure of the settlement, the main types of features and internal chronology of the site. An important aim is to verify the complex economic structure of the settlement, belonging to a rather poorly known (archaeologically and historically) time sequence. Introducing it in the background of the so-far documented contemporary archaeological sites from the micro-region dominated by the presence of the Someșul Mic River and its basin (but also farther regions) is intended in the introductory chapter of the work.

The study focused mainly on the archaeological structures and less on the artefacts. The pottery was only briefly described, because less than 16% of the entire quantity has been drawn so far, providing thus incomplete information. The special artefacts were used to establish the destination of the features (as much as possible) and for distinguishing areas

characterised by a more or less specialised production (workshops). Moreover, they point to the predominance of some categories, as indication for the most important occupations of the inhabitants.

The *Introduction* clarifies the way the work was structured and the main technical aspects, methods used to get to the desired results, being a "guide" for a better understanding of the succeeding chapters.

*Chapter I* points out the natural conditions which favoured the living in the Transylvanian Depression and the place that this environment held in the history and economy of the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium (especially after the 6<sup>th</sup> century) for the neighbouring areas: communication routes (same as the ones used by the newcomers to enter), economic resources and their role in the demography of the area.

The natural resource played a tremendous part in the economical, technological and cultural development of this space, influencing to a great extent the movements of populations and the commercial destinations as well. The terrestrial routes, used from very early times as trade paths, usually followed the main and secondary water stream valleys, easier to access. In the period of the Roman administration, they were developed and maintained up to a level that allowed their use for a long time after the leaving of the administrative apparatus.

Following the evidence, if we take a look at the hydrographic network that includes the Someşul Mic River, we could infer that the water way commercial exchange (transportation, economic and cultural exchange etc.) was supported by important permanent water streams like Someş, Tisa and then the Danube, with significant consequences for the evolution of the geographic regions belonging to this network.

It was considered important to define and individualize the area that comprises the site from Jucu de Sus and the way in which this settlement fits in the surrounding environment (landscape), seen as an ensemble of natural and anthropic factors acting in accordance to one another, influencing the ecologic equilibrium and determining the life conditions. The main characteristic of this environment is precisely the emergence (within the system) of new elements and new relations that alter the aspect of the physical milieu as compared to its original image.

The post-Roman and early medieval epochs appear to be times of regeneration for the environment (smaller-scale exploitation of the natural elements with respect to the previous time) and reduced implication of the human factor in the landscape.

Hierarchically, the landscape/environment is organized on three levels (Roșu/Ungureanu 1977. 223. Fig. 26. 232, table 7): planetary level, regional level and topological level or local. This latter one is made of the geosystem (fundamental landscape), geofacies and geotope. To be able to apply this system to our site, the areas were defined as it follows (Baciu 2014. p. 95, anexa 5 and also Baciu 2014, p. 51)

Level	Landscape type	Unit
Regional	Region (> 100 km <sup>2</sup> )	The Transylvanian Depression
	Sub-region	Transylvanian Plain
	Micro-region	Valley of the Someșul Mic River – framed by the Cluj and Dej Hills <sup>1</sup>
Local	Geosystem (10-100 km <sup>2</sup> )	Floodplain of the Someșul Mic River, between Apahida and Bontida <sup>2</sup>
	Geofacies (1-10 km <sup>2</sup> )	Left side floodplain of the Someșul Mic River, in the Jucu de Sus –Răscruci sector <sup>3</sup>
	Geotope (< 1 km <sup>2</sup> )	Archaeological site from Jucu de Sus-Răscruci

Therefore, our intention is to create a clear image of the historical-geographical picture of the region (Transylvanian Depression), but even more important, the image of the Someșul Mic basin: the tributaries of the main stream being the main access paths linking the settlements from the river valley to the ones situated on higher altitudes. The nucleus of this image is in this case the site/geotope Jucu de Sus-Răscruci (Chapter II).

*Chapter II* of the thesis was built around the data given by the archaeological research and comparing them to other known situations.

The surface excavated so far from the settlement is around 6150 m<sup>2</sup>. The complete dimension of the village is no more than 0,8ha (we refer to the inhabited nuclei, not the isolated features), anyway not much under this figure, meaning a little bit more than what has been researched so far. According to these data, it is reasonable to consider that, though having a reduced area, reported to the number of houses (16), the settlement fits into the category of the large contemporary settlements.

If compared to the sites investigated so far from this period, this settlement combines the "nests" organization type – groups of 2-3 houses with the one of houses organized around a circular plan, an area deprived more or less of constructions (though both in sector Ia and Ic there seem to have been certain surface features in this "empty" central space). There is a

<sup>1</sup> This corridor delimitates the Someșan Plateau from the Transylvanian Plain, playing the role of both border and bridge at the same time. To this, we added more or less arbitrary the left and right affluents of the Someșul Mic River.

<sup>2</sup> Between the two localities, the floodplain widens giving the impression of a depression area (see Chapter III), up to the affluents Gădălin și Borșa

<sup>3</sup> The floodplain develops left of the river Lunca (and the meanders used to have the tendency of forming towards the west, until the river bed stabilization), while to the right the altitude increases gradually

very slight possibility that future research point out also an area of row-disposition of households (most likely in the area of trench SI, where the households have not yet been completely uncovered).

The two nuclei of the settlement from Jucu de Sus-Răscruci consist of both household groups and economic ones, with deepened and surface structures. Up to this moment a total of 6 households (together with the 7<sup>th</sup> one, presumed, since only annexes were documented so far) in sector Ia and 2 households (the third one consists of a construction which could have served as a house, but was cut by a contemporary pit which erased the details that might have clarified its destination) in sector Ic. The ones in sector Ia are made of at least 2 houses and (cx 174 is an exception from this rule, having a special position with respect to the other households and also lacking the complexity of the other households investigated in this site), at least one deepened structure – workshop and/or storage place and at least a surface structure. As to the situation of sector Ic, in any case different from the one shown in sector Ia, one of the households is made of 2 houses and a deepened structure – workshop and/or storage place, while the other comprises a single house and a surface construction (because of the stratigraphy of this sector, we believe that this construction could also have been slightly deepened into the ground, though not clearly enough delimited).

The economic spaces are situated around or in the peripheral areas of the households. They comprise both deepened and surface features, mostly hard to individualize. Some of the groups or even singular features hold an isolated position (more than 3m from other features or groups of features), emphasizing once more their economic function. Sector Ia has two main economic zones, out of which the southern one is more developed, both regarding the features number and the surface they extend over. Like in the case of the households, the separations between the groups were based on the distance principle, resulting into 5 different groups of features. In sector Ic there are also 5 distinct groups of peripheral complexes, best individualized being the one from the west – the group that comprises 8 pits of clay exploitation. Still in this sector there are the only open air kilns from the entire settlement.

In both sides of the village there is the "central" un-constructed space. In sector Ia this is between the households that seem to have constituted the primary core of the settlement, while in sector Ic it has the households on one side and economic groups on the other, at a remarkable distance from each other.

*Chapter III* consists of the typological classification of the archaeological features documented so far in sectors Ia and Ic. Taking into consideration the configuration of the



settlement, with household areas and economic areas, the main feature types were accordingly classified. Another criterion used in the classification was the report between the features and the contemporary ground level: excavated/deepened features (with parts of the structure underneath the ground level) and surface features (with all elements above the ground level).

Out of the 398 features recorded in the settlement, 316 fitted the typological study, the rest being part of feature associations within houses, re-numbered features or un-important number of elements, with no archaeological significance.

Typologically, there is no clearly evidenced predominance of a certain construction style for the houses. According to the structural frame, there are constructions with one or two posts, with four corner posts or even more than 6 posts, as well as buildings with no posts.

For the fire installations inside the houses, the stone ovens, with horse-shoe shape base seem to have been the most popular, like in other settlements from the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century.

The pits are a common appearance in both types of areas (living and economic ones). Most of the small ones would have been post holes. Nevertheless, in most of the cases we could not delineate a construction they served for. There are still some pits, be they medium or large, having a small pit close to them which might have been used to hold up a light roof (maybe together with supplementary elements). The same goes for the features with grouped or un-grouped materials, with this kind of small pits in their proximity.

The medium sized pits are difficult to interpret as role within the groups. In very few cases we deal with postholes dug inside another bigger hole.

The situation is quite different for the large pits. A distinct case is the one of the circular pits from sector Ic, used for clay exploitation, deliberately abandoned after their filling with garbage and "sealing" them with pebbles.

The large pits, of different shapes, are interesting appearances in both sectors, associated with both types of areas. They are difficult to interpret as function, though we can presume on the one side their practical use, sheltering some activities and on the other their use as storage space, given the absence of the proper storage pits in the settlement; they could have also fulfilled both purposes. The dimensions and shape finds frequent analogies in the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries discoveries from Hungary (Straub 2011. 401, 403, Abb.2).

From the deepened features category, we have the 6 water wells also. They are present in considerable number, if taken into account the fact that the village was built near the river stream. Apart from one (cx 379a), studied and published by the author of the archaeological

research and placed in the AIII.1 Biermann category (Stanciu 2014. 329; Biermann 2001. 218, 223, Fig. 5, 226), together with the comments regarding the chronology of this type of well, the rest seem to have had a simple structure, probably lacking more intricate constructions.

For the time being, the most problematic task would be to reconstruct, both as shape and functionality, the surface features, like groups of materials or un-grouped materials types of features. The small ones, especially the circular ones, were mostly used for post fixing (the pit not clearly enough delimited). The medium ones and even more the large ones could have been used as floor-like constructions for surface buildings or maybe materials dislocated from their original context.

Not lastly and also of great importance, the open-air ovens are characteristic exclusively for the peripheral zones of sector Ic and are made of stone or clay.

*Chapter IV* uses the clues given especially by the special materials, associated with data regarding the horizontal structure of the settlement and features types, to define the character of the settlement and the main occupations of the inhabitants.

The site from Jucu de Sus proved to be a rather complex one, from the artefact categories' perspective and the materials used to make them and also, above all, their impressive number, all of which depict the multifaceted character of the settlement. The iron objects dominate all the other categories of artefacts (except for the pottery): 120 pieces, to which another 5 pieces of other metals add up and an important quantity of 52 fragments of dross and iron pigs. Secondly, there are the bone awls (and a few other bone objects), totalling 30 pieces after which there are the spindle whorls (8) (Fig. IV.21).

Also relevant is the situation of the special artefacts distribution in the settlement. Though the iron pieces are the ones that turn the scales in favour of the economic areas (aspect that links even more the production of this type of objects to the no-houses spaces) the same fact can be seen in the case of the bone awls. The spindle whorls are poorly represented and therefore cannot significantly change the figures.

The data given by these artefacts confirms that the economy of the village consisted of an entire range of occupations, among which agriculture, wood, fibre, bone, clay and stone processing, hunting and fishing, alluvial iron exploitation and its processing, as well as tannery held an important role. Apart from these, also due to the positioning of the settlement on a main trade and communication route, the inhabitants must have been involved in products exchange.

As proven by the stratigraphy of the site, it is certain enough that the settlement was not used for a long time. The situation is even more obvious in sector Ic, where the archaeological stratum appears strictly near the features. On the other hand, the presence in sector Ia of a specific layer on the bottom of several deepened features could be a conclusive argument for the abandonment of the settlement.

The *conclusion* gather the data obtained by the analyses of the previous chapters, to reconstruct the image of the village, with all its elements.

The last part of the thesis consists of additional material: the bibliography, the catalogue of discoveries from the Someșul Mic river basin, the inventory list from the two main sectors, to which the plates with drawings of the features add, to complete the images inserted in the text pages, the last of the plates displaying the map of the researches from 2007-2008.

The novelty of the present thesis consists in the modalities used to approach the archaeological material and their application on yet unpublished information. The research is so far unique in Transylvania: there are no contemporary settlements in the Someșul Mic Basin or on other river basins from the area to have been researched up to 50-60% and the importance is increased by the uncovering of the cemetery belonging to the settlement in the vicinity. Also, we believe that it could be useful to regard the way the archaeological features were presented as a proposal (naturally with certain modifications, due to the specificity of each research) for turning into account of the results of the investigations (which in this case were carried out with deep concern about essential details) and what should be documented during archaeological studies, undoubtedly followed by better results for reconstruction models and statistic calculations.

As to the continuation of the results obtained by this study, it depends up to a certain point on the future research projects of the site, both in the settlement and in the cemetery.

On the other hand, a logical and indispensable direction is the virtual reconstruction of the features and of the entire 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries village from Jucu de Sus, both by drawings and using specialized tridimensional software, already initiated by the author of the present thesis.

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