



CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EARLY MEDIEVAL LANDSCAPES IN WESTERN HUNGARY (POSSIBILITIES FOR RESEARCH)¹

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As a principle, the major parameters of any territory can be described by its geographical and natural features. The most important are terrain configurations, hydrogeology, soils, vegetation, and fauna. These are the characteristics which fundamentally determined the settlement of people in the past. People changed an environment and the land became a cultural landscape. The same is true in the case of western Hungary, which went through a remarkable change, mainly in the Roman period. This change had a strong effect that continued into post-Roman times and posed a challenge for the new populations that appeared in the region. In this article I will show the possibilities and expectations for further research concerning the post-Roman landscape of Western Hungary,² formerly part of the Roman province Pannonia. At the present stage of research, my main goal is to take the archaeological sources, methods, and potential problems into account, and, additionally, to scrutinize questions about the changes of landscape management and landscape use in this period.³

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Archaeological research on the fifth- to the eighth-century in Hungary has revealed mainly cemeteries; therefore, scholars have examined this period predominantly through burials and grave goods (that is, single objects or object types). These scholars had to face a number of problems in the case of other features such as fragmentary remnants of settlements originating after the

¹ This article is an extended version of the paper “Continuity and Change of Landscapes in the Early Middle Ages,” given at the conference *Translatio, Transformatio (Changes of Late Antique and Early Medieval Christian Cult Places and Sites in the Middle Ages)* held in the Department of Medieval Studies at CEU, Budapest, 16 September 2006.

² I have deliberately restricted my survey of Roman Pannonia to Transdanubia (modern western Hungary) due to the better accessibility of its archaeological material. For purposes of comparison, I use the published materials from the complete territory of the province.

³ The themes discussed here form part of my PhD dissertation, in process at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (dissertation supervisor: Tivadar Vida).



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surrender of the province. Researchers have tended to investigate this process and period of change principally through archaeological and written sources in order to analyze the material culture of each migrating population to see it from the point of view of ethnicity, culture, and settlement continuity. The fundamental question has been what happened to the inhabitants of the province after the Huns took over the political rule in Pannonia, and what kind of continuity or discontinuity can be discovered in this post-Roman period.⁴ This examination had three major directions. The first was distinguishing the relationship between local and migrating populations—a problem which had to address sorting archaeological finds based on ethnicity.⁵ The second direction was defining settlement continuity—predominantly urban—by asking whether Roman sites continued to be used in their original function by local (provincial) inhabitants or only as simple dwelling places by “barbaric” migrating people. The third was establishing the appearance or the survival of Christianity and its connection to the local and migrating populations.⁶ Of course, these three

⁴ The investigation of various aspects of the survival and continuity of the Romanized population of Pannonia, the Migration Period, and the ethnic origin and the merging of the arriving people with the locals started as early as the end of the nineteenth century, see Sándor Márki, “A középkor kezdete Magyarországon” (The beginning of the Middle Ages in Hungary), *Századok* 24 (1890): 311–327, 396–413; András Alföldi, *Der Untergang der Römerherrschaft in Pannonien* Vol. 2 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1926); Ambrus Pleidell, “A Magyar várostörténet első fejezete” (The first chapter of Hungarian urban history), *Századok* 68 (1934): 1–44, 158–200, 276–313.

⁵ The investigation of the archaeological material of the *foederati* (the barbarian population that seems to have appeared in Pannonia in the second half of the fourth century according to the written records) started somewhat later. Their material culture was connected to the so-called Szabadbattyán-Csákvár type cemeteries, see Ágnes Salamon, László Barkóczi, “Pannonien in nachvalentinianischer Zeit (376–476). Ein Versuch zur Periodisation,” in *Severin. Zwischen Römerzeit und Völkerwanderung. Ausstellungskatalog*, (Linz: Oberösterreichischer Landesverlag, 1982), 147–178; László Barkóczi, Ágnes Salamon, “Das Gräberfeld von Szabadbattyán aus dem 5. Jahrhundert,” *Mitteilungen des Archäologischen Instituts der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 5 (1974–75): 89–111; László Barkóczi, Ágnes Salamon, “Tendenzen der strukturellen Änderungen pannonischer Siedlungen im 5. Jahrhundert,” *Alba Regia* 21 (1984): 147–187.

⁶ Scholars investigating Christianity have concentrated on its appearance in the Roman province of Pannonia, its survival in the early Middle Ages, and its presence among the migrating populations; see András Alföldi, “A kereszténység nyomai Pannóniában a népvándorlás korában” (Traces of Christianity in Pannonia in the Migration Period), in *Emlékkönyv Szent István király halálának kilencszázadik évfordulóján* (Memorial volume on the nine-hundredth anniversary of the death of Saint Stephen), ed. Jusztinián Serédy (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1938), 150–170; Endre Tóth, “Vigilius



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research directions could be followed at the same time, for instance in the case of the so-called Keszthely Culture.⁷

In the Western part of Europe in the last 15 years increased emphasis has been placed on the transformation of the Roman World, and the Early Medieval period became a target of landscape archaeology recently. In Hungary Neil Christie made the first important steps in the early 1990s, when he started to investigate the survival of Roman settlements in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages (between the fourth and tenth centuries) from a new perspective. He considered new aspects and directed more attention to basic problems, which were not entirely unknown before, but the transformation of the landscape lacked an overall investigation. Christie attempted to survey the published archaeological materials for the whole province, and showed that even small, fragmentary data are worthy of a context-based analysis: features which were known before could be interpreted in a new light, and changes in time could be detected. He systematically analysed the late antique and early medieval re-use of standing Roman buildings, the possibilities of continuity in site usage, and the type and function of the re-use.⁸

episcopus Scaravaciensis,” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 26 (1974): 269–275; Endre Tóth, “Das Christentum in Pannonien bis zum 7. Jahrhundert nach den archäologischen Zeugnissen,” in *Das Christentum im bairischen Raum. Von den Anfängen bis ins 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. E. Boshof, H. Wolff. (Cologne: Böhlau, 1994), 240–272; Edit B. Thomas, “Das frühe Christentum in Pannonien im Lichte der archäologischen Funde,” in *Severin. Zwischen Römerzeit und Völkerwanderung. Ausstellungskatalog* (Linz: Oberösterreichischer Landesverlag, 1982), 255–293; Dóra Gáspár, *Christianity in Roman Pannonia*, British Archaeological Reports International Series 101, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002); Tivadar Vida, “Heidnische und christliche Elemente der awarenzeitlichen Glaubenswelt, Amulette in der Awarenzeit,” *Zalai Múzeum* 11 (2002): 179–209.

⁷ Efforts have been made to interpret and to connect the archaeological material of the Keszthely Culture to ethnicity and to written sources, see recently Volker Bierbrauer, “Die Keszthely-Kultur und die romanische Kontinuität in Westungarn (5–8. Jh.). Neue Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem,” in *Von Sachsen bis Jerusalem. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel der Zeit. Festschrift für Wolfgang Giese zum 65. Geburtstag* eds. Hubertus Seibert, Gertrud Thoma (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2004) 51–72, with a good summary of the previous publications and in general Falco Daim, “Keszthely,” in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 16. Band (Jadwingen – Kleindichtung) ed. Johannes Hoops (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000) 468–474.

⁸ Neil Christie, “The Survival of Roman Settlement along the Middle Danube: Pannonia from the Fourth to the Tenth Century,” *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 11, No. 3 (1992): 317–339 (hereafter: Christie, “The Survival”); Neil Christie, “Towns and People on the Middle Danube in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,” in *Towns in Transition. Urban Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie and



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Since the investigation and evaluation of the fifth to eighth centuries in Pannonia has been based principally on cemetery excavations, the macro- and micro-environmental surroundings of the sites have been neglected. This is also due to the scarce data on settlements connected to this period; those that exist are geographically scattered and haphazardly treated. The idea of creating a complex landscape history is also new. Even a recently published overview of Hungarian archaeology lacks a chapter on landscape research from this period.⁹ Concerning archaeological topography, scholars' interest focuses mainly on environmental archaeology and aerial photography. Nevertheless, projects such as the recently started Keszthely-Fenekpuszta or Szólád-Lombard cemetery projects¹⁰ are essential for research into this period; they have the same goal, to fully evaluate the excavated material of an archaeological site and carry out its complete environmental investigation.

My research will investigate in detail how the arriving new populations used or reused the Roman landscape—including urban and rural settlements, *villae*, military edifices, roads, and strategic points—in post Roman times. One might call this detecting the changes in the settlement system, although in both periods—due to the lack of adequate data—it is still hard to speak about complex settlement systems. The research equally involves published material and data available through the databases of museums and the National Office for Cultural Heritage. I have begun to build up a GIS-based topographical database containing all available data for each site. Based on my preliminary

Stephen T. Loseby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996): 71–98 (hereafter: Christie, “Towns and People”); Neil Christie, “Towns, Land and Power: German-Roman Survival and Interactions in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Pannonia,” in *Towns and Their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. G. P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, and Neil Christie (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 275–297 (hereafter: Christie, “Towns, Land and Power”).

⁹ *Hungarian Archaeology at the Turn of the Millenium*, ed. Zsolt Visy, (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003), although it contains a summary and bibliography regarding landscape archaeology in the Middle Ages on page 385.

¹⁰ The complex archaeological and environmental investigation of the late Roman castle and the early medieval features at Keszthely-Fenekpuszta and its surroundings is carried out jointly by the Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum (Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas, Leipzig, Germany) and the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Budapest, Hungary), in the framework of the project “Kontinuität und Migration in und um Keszthely-Fenekpuszta von der Spätantike bis zum 9. Jahrhundert.” The excavation of the Lombard cemetery at Szólád was started by Uta von Freedon (Römisch-Germanisches Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt a. M., Germany) and Tivadar Vida (Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary) in 2004. They plan to carry out an environmental study concerning the area of the whole site in 2007.



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survey, there are approximately 500 known archaeological sites in western Hungary, where some kind of connection between Roman and the fifth- to eighth-century features can be observed.

This research has three levels. 1. The evaluation of all published and accessible data from western Hungary. 2. The evaluation of the relevant data from Veszprém County (the only area with a complete and revised archaeological topography) and the M7 highway (running south along the Lake Balaton, archaeologically investigated in the last seven years) as a control area.¹¹ 3. The evaluation of the Roman and post-Roman features and finds from one single site—in this case a site in Sopron—to learn about their exact relationship.¹² The material examined comes from the archaeological excavations of the past approximately 120 years, hence the quantity and the quality of the documentation and the interpretations of the archaeological finds vary widely. This also

¹¹ The archaeological topography of Veszprém County is complete, see Kornél Bakay, Nándor Kalicz, Károly Sági, *Veszprém megye régészeti topográfiája. A keszthelyi és tapolcai járás*. (The archaeological topography of Veszprém County. The Keszthely and Tapolca districts) (Magyarország Régészeti Topográfiája 1) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966); István Éri, Márta Kelemen, Péter Németh, István Torma, *Veszprém megye régészeti topográfiája. A veszprémi járás*. (The archaeological topography of Veszprém County. The Veszprém district) (Magyarország Régészeti Topográfiája 2). (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969); Kornél Bakay, Nándor Kalicz, Károly Sági, *Veszprém megye régészeti topográfiája. A devecseri és sümegi járás*, (The archaeological topography of Veszprém County. The Devecser and Sümeg districts) (Magyarország Régészeti Topográfiája 3). (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1970); Margit Dax, István Éri, Sándor Mithay, Sylvia Palágyi, István Torma, *Veszprém megye régészeti topográfiája. A pápai és zirci járás*. (The archaeological topography of Veszprém County. The Pápa and Zirc districts) (Magyarország Régészeti Topográfiája 4). (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972). A partial revision was carried out by order of the Hungarian National Office for Cultural Heritage in 2006. The recent excavations along the M7 highway have added significant data to the archaeological study of the early medieval period; see Péter Polgár, “Zamárdi, Kútvolgyi-dűlő” (Zamárdi, Kútvolgyi field), *Régészeti Kutatások Magyarországon 2002* (Archaeological Investigations in Hungary, 2002). (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, Budapest 2004), 297 (hereafter: Polgár, “Zamárdi”); Péter Skriba, András Sófalvi, “Langobárd település Balatonlelle határában” (Lombard settlement in the territory of Balatonlelle), *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 129 (2004): 121–163 (hereafter: Skriba, Sófalvi, “Langobárd település”).

¹² Part of the archaeological site called Sopron-Városház utca was excavated by Klára Sz. Póczy between 1966 and 1972. According to a recent evaluation of the excavation data, this part of Scarbantia was used uninterruptedly after the Roman period up to the second half of the sixth century. I would like to thank Klára Sz. Póczy for the opportunity to use her documentation.



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applies to the extent of the research in both time and place. When mapping the known sites, the most eye-catching feature is their locations in relation to the most important museums. The informational value of the above-mentioned 500 sites is also very uneven; data revealed by finds from both late Roman and early medieval periods from the same site are the most uncertain if originating from field walking and the most reliable if provided by a large-scale excavation with a clearly visible context. Unfortunately, up to now, the latter has been rare. Additionally, finding the precise location of the sites of older and unpublished excavations and the connection between excavations far from each other in time are a great challenge.¹³ In an ideal case (that is, if a whole area were fully and completely excavated), the topography of sites would show the complete settlement system of that area in each period. Of course, in reality the excavation of all archaeological features in a large area is rarely attainable, but even if it were, the real picture would be influenced by a number of circumstances. The real value of the actual state of research is very much dependent on the number of proper excavations carried out in the area. Field surveys often provide insecure data and this method cannot guarantee a complete list of all sites from all periods. The issue of sampling also arises; how typical is an areal survey for a larger area. Large-scale excavation can provide some control for previous intensive field surveys, but it is unlikely to have many such excavations in a region. The situation is the worst in the case of old, poorly recorded finds and documentation stored in museums. In such cases one has to take into consideration the size of the area, the type of former investigation, the interest and goal of the observer, the potential accuracy in recording the data, and the methods of evaluation and interpretation. The scientific value of the data must be subject to an investigation in each such case.

When comparing data from two historical periods following each other in one and the same region, several problems occur. The first and most important one is the determination of the precise chronology of the sites involved. It concerns particularly the archaeological material from field surveys of settlements. It is hard to distinguish the relationship between archaeological features, to answer the questions of whether they are contemporary with each other, have direct or indirect connections, directly overlap each other or are

¹³ Re-evaluating old excavations and refining the chronologies of the ceramic material of uncertain periods can present an opportunity in the future to fill in the gaps in the chronology and would help to solve some of the problems of this transitional period. See Neil Christie, "Landscapes of Change in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Themes, Directions and Problems," in *Landscapes of Change. Rural Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 2 (henceforth: Christie, "Landscapes of Change").



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separated by a chronological gap. Looking at the partial overlap between the Roman and early medieval settlement systems a question arises as to what extent it is a consequence of a similar reaction of the inhabitants to the same environmental challenges. Of course, one has to take into account the changes in the Roman settlement system; only the sites which existed until the end of the fourth century are worth including in the inquiry, because only these sites will show a real contemporary network of settlements.¹⁴ Moreover, one should not forget about the population density. It was more-or-less even during the Roman period, although slightly influenced by the road network and natural conditions, while it was rather sparse in time and space in the early Middle Ages. During Roman times, the location of rural settlements mostly followed the established infrastructure; thanks to their varied economic activities, rural people could be partly independent from the natural conditions. The same situation was unknown in the early medieval period. Evaluating and interpreting the features and finds from two periods at the same site¹⁵ provides a more detailed picture of the changes in the settlement system than creating a map with all the sites of a region from the two periods.¹⁶

Not least because the previous research focused principally on identifying continuity and assessing ethnicity, these aspects are worth proceeding with, but new aspects are also worth involving. Continuity has many types and levels:

¹⁴ Concerning landscape archaeology, earlier attempts are known to detect the Roman centuriation in Pannonia, which was shown in the case of *Savaria*/Szombathely by András Mócsy, "Savaria utcarendszerének rekonstrukciójához" (On the reconstruction of the street system in Savaria), *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 92 (1965): 27–35 and Endre Tóth, "A savariai insularendszer rekonstrukciója" (The reconstruction of the system of *insulae* in Savaria), *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 98 (1971): 143–169. Recent publications, such as Dénes Gabler, "Die ländliche Besiedlung Oberpannoniens," *Passauer Universitäts-Schriften zur Archäologie* 2 (1994): 377–419; Zsolt Visy, "Die ländliche Besiedlung und Landwirtschaft in Niederpannonien," *Passauer Universitäts-Schriften zur Archäologie* 2 (1994): 421–449; Endre Tóth, *Itineraria Pannonica. Római utak a Dunántúlon* (Itineraria Pannonica. Roman roads in Transdanubia), (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2006) also provide some knowledge on rural landscapes in the Roman period. The previous research, however, has been more concerned with urban and military sites. No comprehensive picture has been developed for rural landscapes in Western Hungary in the late Roman period.

¹⁵ From the perspective of a micro-regional survey, the smallest geographical unit where one can detect an archaeological site, see Walter Janssen, "Römische und Frühmittelalterliche Landerschliessung im Vergleich," in *Villa – Curtis – Grangia. Landwirtschaft zwischen Loire und Rhein von der Römerzeit zum Hochmittelalter*, ed. Walter Janssen, Dietrich Lohrmann. (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1983), 85 (hereafter: Janssen, "Landerschliessung").

¹⁶ Janssen, "Landerschliessung," passim.



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population, material culture, religion, settlement, location, and so forth.¹⁷ To research continuity more easily, it is worth keeping in mind the differentiation between ethnic and territorial (landscape) continuity. Ethnic continuity means the survival of a local population with a certain language, material, and spiritual culture—even if they are mingled with a newcomer group who merged with them.¹⁸ Conversely, territorial or landscape continuity means the use or reuse of the natural and artificial environment (that was formed or re-formed by a certain population). The nature of an ethnic landscape is active, while a territorial landscape is a passive type. I would like to concentrate rather on the landscape continuity, although the significance of the ethnic landscape cannot be neglected; the final goal is not to answer the question of continuity or discontinuity, but to interpret these terms.¹⁹

This period has produced heterogeneous find material which is hard to divide according to archaeological cultures. The goal is to detect the reasons for each population's selection of preferred locations, the method of organizing space, and transitions in the settlement system. The possibilities for an interpretation must be clear; one has to look for the connection between archaeological features, archaeological cultures, and ethnic groups. To create such a connection between two—not to mention all three—of them is difficult in most cases; moreover, it also requires thorough source criticism of the archaeological sources. Based on these ideas, the problem of continuity cannot be separated from the ethnic identification of the populations.

The investigation of the problem of ethnicity and all its issues came from the social sciences. It is complicated, however, to give an exact definition of the

¹⁷ Christie, "The survival," 336. Continuity and discontinuity can be discussed, according to Sebastian Brather, only if the cultural and ethnic development can be separated; see Sebastian Brather, "Ethnic Identities as Construction of Archaeology: The Case of the Alamanni," (hereafter: Brather, "Ethnic Identities") in *On Barbarian Identity (Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages)*, ed. Andrew Gillett. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 159 (hereafter: Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity*).

¹⁸ Attila Kiss, "Pannonia rómaikori lakossága népvándorláskori helybenmaradásának kérdéséhez" (Contribution to the Survival of the Roman-Age Population of Pannonia in the Migration Period) *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve* 10 (1965): 81–123 esp. 93 (hereafter: Kiss, "Pannonia rómaikori lakossága,") with a good summary of the previous research; Endre Tóth, "La survivance de la population romaine en Pannonie," *Alba Regia* 15 (1977): 107–120; András Mócsy, "Grossgrundbesitz und Kontinuität in Pannonia," *Godišnjak* [Sarajevo, Center for Balkan Studies] 13 (1976): 321–326.

¹⁹ Christie "Landscapes of Change," 24.



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notion *ethnium*,²⁰ since several disciplines (for example, linguistics, sociology, cultural anthropology, ethnography, history, and archaeology) use the same words with various meanings and connotations. These often-used phrases of ethnic studies (such as ethnicity, ethnic identity, ethnic group) are not only challenging to define, but their use applied to archaeological cultures and populations is rather inconsistent and changeable. Their cautious and critical application to the investigation of the archaeological material from the late antique and early medieval periods is a fairly new development.²¹ Still, the ethnic self-assessment of the populations migrating to western Hungary in the fifth to eighth centuries is less important for this study than the issue of ethnicity itself. I see it as more important to reveal the possibilities at our disposal to separate the archaeological material of the whole period on an ethnic basis. The major problem is how to connect an archaeological culture to a population known by its name from the written sources.²² This is most apparent in the case of fourth- to sixth-century Pannonia; there are archaeological sites, finds, and features which do not fit into the general culture of the major population during the subsequent Avar period either.²³ The real relationship between settlement

²⁰ Siân Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*, (London: Routledge, 1997), passim (hereafter: Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*).

²¹ Alexander Callander Murray, “Reinhard Wenskus on ‘Ethnogenesis,’ Ethnicity, and the Origins of the Franks,” in Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity*, 41.

²² This problem has generated several theoretical discussions, not least because the “automatic” connection of certain groups of artifacts to certain populations was questioned. Those who cast doubt on such an automatic mechanism declared that “archaeological cultures are an abstraction based on the selection of arbitrary features from a continuum of differences,” see Walter Pohl, “Ethnicity, Theory and Tradition: A Response,” in Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity*, 235. In other words: “the archaeological periodization is nothing but the division of a continuum into sections,” see Brather, “Ethnic Identities,” 158–159. Siân Jones suggests reconsideration in the subject: is archaeology suitable at all for such a flexible and situation-dependent activity as the definition of ethnic identity, see Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity*, 126; see also subject: Jenő Szűcs, *A magyar nemzeti tudat kialakulása* (Budapest: Osiris, 1997), and Sebastian Brather, “Ethnische Interpretationen in der frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie,” in *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 42. ed. H. Beck, D. Geuenich, and Heiko Steuer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004).

²³ For attempts to sort out ethnic identities from the mixed populations of the early Middle Ages on the basis of the archaeological material from the fifth and sixth centuries, see Ágnes Salamon, “Über die ethnischen und historischen Beziehungen des Gräberfeldes von Környe (VI. Jh.),” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 21 (1969): 273–297; István Bóna, “Beiträge zu den ethnischen Verhältnissen des 6–7. Jahrhunderts in Westungarn,” *Alba Regia* 2–3 (1961–62): 49–68; István Bóna, “Ungarns



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structure and ethnicity is hard to estimate. This is so simply because landscape usage is less influenced by the ethnic status of the people than by the actual circumstances of their lives (such as technological development, commercial networks, their social, economic, and cultural state, natural resources, and political boundaries).²⁴ These circumstances, however, can be strongly influenced by the ethnic identity of a population.²⁵

What are the key questions which are worth asking to learn more about how the landscape changed in western Hungary during the period examined? The following fundamental topics were suggested by Neil Christie: first, demographic and power structures, that is, the relationship between indigenous and incomers; second, the character of settlement, that is, gaps or biases in the continuous use and reuse of the urban and rural landscapes; and third, religion and ethnicity (related to the first question), that is, the role of Christianity in creating barriers or enhancing the process of acculturation between indigenous people and incomers.²⁶

Völker im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert. Ein historisch-archäologische Zusammenschau,” in *Germanen, Hunnen und Awaren. Schätze der Völkerwanderungszeit. Die Archäologie des 5. und 6. Jahrhunderts an der mittleren Donau und der östlich-merowingische Reihengräberkeis* (Exhibition catalogue), ed. Wilfried Menghin, Tobias Springer, Egon Wamers (Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 1987), 116–129 (hereafter: Bóna, “Ungarns Völker”); Endre Tóth, “Zur Geschichte des nordpannonischem Raumes im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert,” in *Die Völker an der mittleren und unteren Donau im 5. und 6. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herwig Wolfram, Falko Daim, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften 145 (1980), 93–100. On the Avar period see Attila Kiss, “Abriss der Siedlungsgeschichte und ethnischen Verhältnisse des Komitates Baranya in der Awarenzeit,” *Acta Antiqua et Archaeologica* 14 (1971): 105–113; Attila Kiss, “Das Weiterleben der Gepiden in der Awarenzeit,” in *Die Völker Südosteuropas im 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bernhard Hänsel. *Südosteuropa Jahrbuch* 17 (1987) 203–218; Ferenc Fülep, “Beiträge zur Frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte von Pécs (Sopianae–Quinque Basilicae–Fünfkirchen),” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1973): 307–326; Attila Kiss, “Germanen im awarenzeitlichen Karpatenbecken,” in *Awarenforschungen 1–2. Studien zur Archäologie der Awaren 4.*, ed. Falco Daim (Vienna: Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Wien, 1992) 35–134; Orsolya Heinrich-Tamáská, *Studien zu den awarenzeitlichen Tauschierarbeiten* (Monographien zur Frühgeschichte und Mittelalterarchäologie 11) (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 2005).

²⁴ Brather, “Ethnic Identities,” 159.

²⁵ Brather’s opinion is that “‘ethnic identity’ is beyond the reach of archaeology.” He thinks that it is a false point of view to look for “ethnic identity” in archaeological features because this only proves the modern way of thinking about nationalism, see Brather, “Ethnic Identities,” 175.

²⁶ Christie, “Towns, Land and Power,” 287.



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These topics refer to problems which have already been investigated by scholars; the difference is in the new point of view. Additionally, questions concerning the afterlife of the provinces (both in the central and the Mediterranean areas and on the frontier) have to be considered.²⁷ The beginning of the investigated period in western Hungary is closely related to its late Roman phase; despite historical differences the transition was similar in many ways in most provinces. The basis was formed everywhere by the final period of the Roman Empire, in which the provinces had to face the same or very similar problems. The major differences could be in the answers to those questions.

Some Case Studies

In the following, I will present the potential of this research with some brief case studies. These are all sites with either overlapping or closely situated late Roman and early medieval structures, which might have been directly connected in some way. They indicate the types of relevant archaeological sites and also to show how informative they can be²⁸ (Fig. 1).

The Roman villa at Kővágószőlős (Fig. 1. 1)

The Roman villa at Kővágószőlős (Baranya County, 12 kilometers west of the Roman town of *Sopianae*/Pécs) was situated next to a small stream on the lower slope of Jakab hill (Fig. 2). It was excavated between 1977 and 1982. Unfortunately, the excavation covered only the central part—the *villa urbana*—which can by no means be considered to represent the whole *villa* complex. Information was recorded about a huge stone building, presumably the first main building of the villa, which was erected in the second half of the second century. There was also a bath-house connected to this building, and—to the south—a late Roman mausoleum. Another stone building was found during a rescue excavation not far from these edifices—unfortunately with an unidentified location—which was ruined by construction. Based on the archaeological observations, there was a re-development of the first stone building in the fourth century; in the late Roman period it mainly served an agricultural purpose. A great number of agricultural

²⁷ For a list of such questions see Christie, “Landscapes of Change,” 27.

²⁸ One has to consider that it is often quite hard to gather adequate data about a site, especially from older excavations, because archaeologists do not always pay attention to features which they judge to be unimportant. In the case of Roman sites, this means that the post-Roman structures, which are usually hard to recognize, often simply “disappear.”

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tools came to light from nearly every part of the building, and one of the rooms had been converted into a makeshift smithy.²⁹ This shows a coincidence with

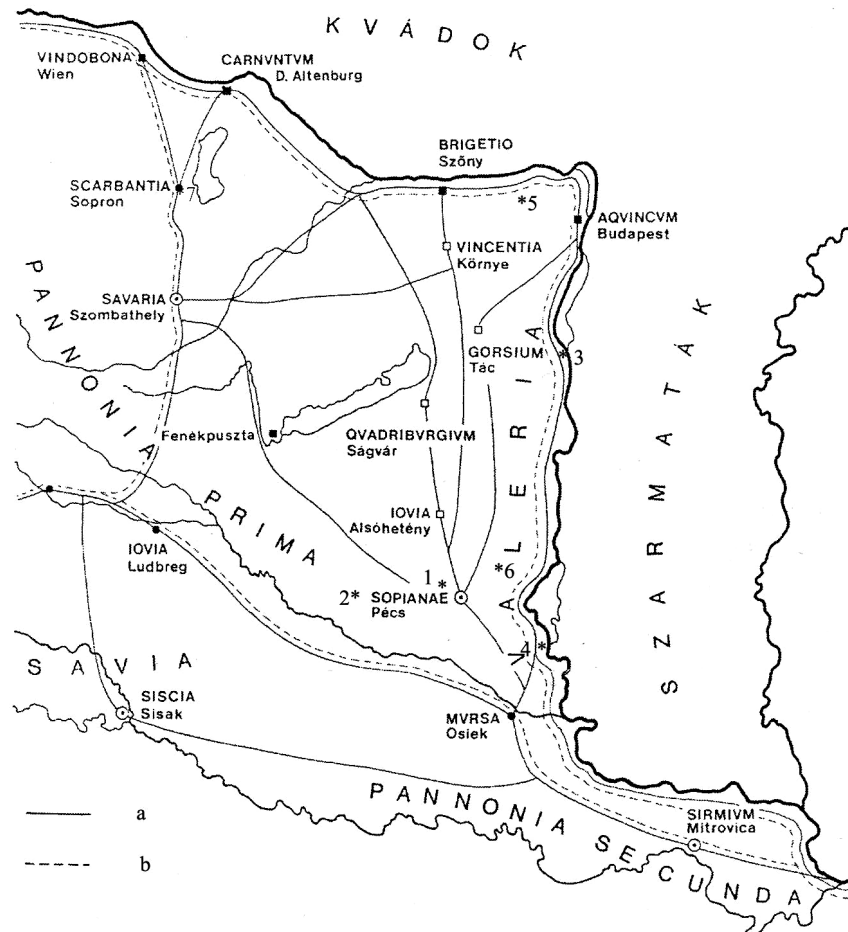


Fig. 1. The sites of the case studies on the map of Roman Pannonia (1. Kővágószőlős, 2. Szigetvár-Zsibót-Domolospuszta, 3. Rácalmás, 4. Kölked, 5. Tokod, 6. Szebeny, 7. Sopron), with the Roman routes of the Itinerarium Antonini (a) and the Tabula Peutingeriana (b) in Pannonia (after Tóth 2006).

²⁹ Alice Sz. Burger, "The Roman Villa and Mausoleum at Kővágószőlős near Pécs (Sopianae): Excavations 1977–1982," *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve* 30–31 (1985–86): 66 and 163–164 (hereafter: Burger, "The Roman villa and Mausoleum at Kővágószőlős").

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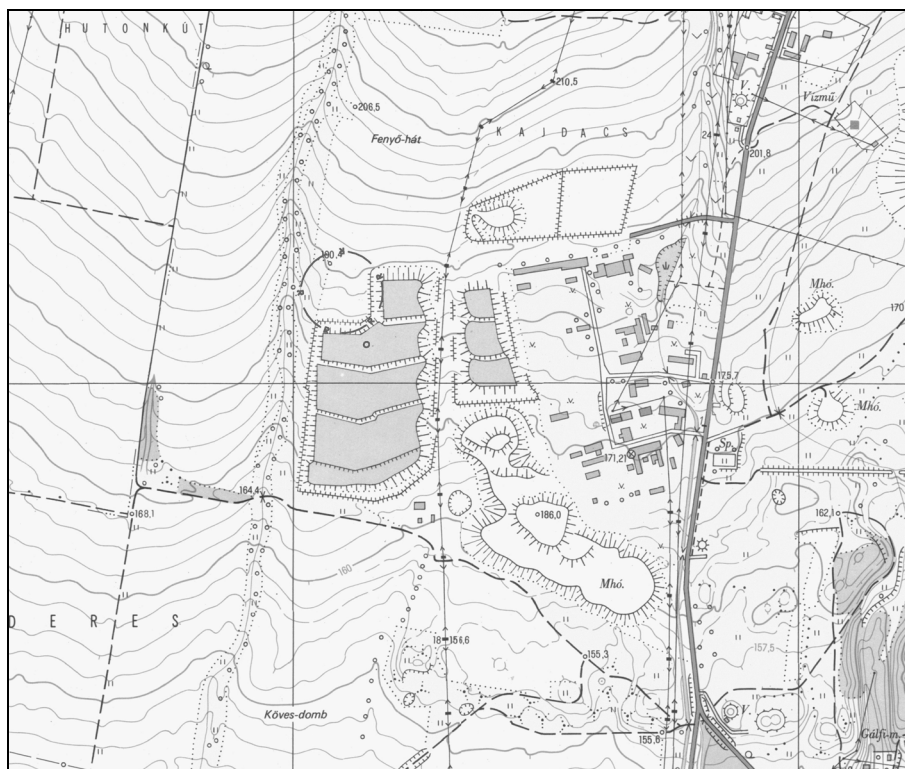


Fig. 2. Kővágószőlős

O = early medieval cemetery; -R- = Roman villa

(after Burger 1985 and Gábor 1998; map number: EOV 14-133).

The site was partially destroyed by the slurry-reservoirs of the uranium mine of the Mecsek region, which is apparent in the map.

the tendency of changes in late Roman *villae* in the western provinces.³⁰ In this period it seems that the owner of the villa moved to live in the second stone

³⁰ According to the most recent excavation results, the rebuilding and altered use of *villae*, such as the division of the great rooms into smaller areas, breaking up the mosaic floors, giving new (e.g., agricultural) functions to representational areas, and so on, already started in most parts of the empire in late Roman times. These changes were not necessarily connected to migrating (barbarian) people; they might be signs of adaptation to a new reality in life (see, for example, Alexandra Chavarría Arnau, “Interpreting the Transformation of Late Roman Villas: The Case of *Hispania*,” in *Landscapes of Change. Rural Evolution in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Neil Christie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 76, and Christie, “Landscapes of Change,” 10–12.

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building, which was decorated with mosaics and wall-paintings. Surrounding this later building there were semi-subterranean houses dating from the late Roman period.³¹ The mausoleum, along with the other parts of the villa, was in use beyond the fourth century, although there is a destruction layer as a consequence of a fire in the first stone building.³² The site was also inhabited later, although there is no evidence for unbroken continuity. There was a small cemetery (with 7 graves, possibly not far from the second stone building), dating from the second half of the fifth century,³³ and a semi-subterranean house (with a brick oven) above the foundation walls of the second stone building.³⁴ It is likely that the villa site was re-used after the fourth century.³⁵

A burial from Szigetvár-Zsibót-Domolospuszta (Fig. 1. 2)

A rich single female grave at Szigetvár-Zsibót-Domolospuszta (Baranya County) is likewise dated from the fifth century.³⁶ Its precise location or how it was inserted into the landscape was not thoroughly examined, although it deserves some attention. The burial is located near a small brook, and—as indicated by field survey—one can assume a Roman *villa* site in the vicinity³⁷ (Fig. 3). Regarding the observations on the spot, and based on the earliest maps (the Military Mapping Surveys of Austria-Hungary, from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), this site may have been a local ford in the Roman period

³¹ Gábor Kárpáti, Borbála Maráz, “Kővágószőlős – I. üzem” (The site at Kővágószőlős, 1st factory), in *Régészeti Füzetek* 29 (1976): 40 (hereafter: Kárpáti and Maráz, “Kővágószőlős”); and Burger, “The Roman villa and mausoleum at Kővágószőlős,” 164.

³² The latest coin found in the mausoleum can be dated to 375 AD, but the building, together with the second stone building, might have survived this period, as indicated by animal bones and traces of fireplaces found in the corridor of the mausoleum, see Burger, “The Roman villa and mausoleum at Kővágószőlős,” 176–179.

³³ Olivér Gábor, “5. századi sírok Kővágószőlős határában” (A fifth-century cemetery from Kővágószőlős). *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve* 43 (1998): 131–140.

³⁴ Kárpáti and Maráz, “Kővágószőlős,” 40.

³⁵ The dating of the destruction layer of late Roman villas known only from old excavations is mostly uncertain, since only the numismatic evidence gives some support. Accepting this result, however, can be misleading; therefore, the data must be controlled by thoroughly analyzing all available archaeological material (however dispersed or unsure the information is), see Christie, “Landscapes of Change,” 7.

³⁶ János Dombay, “Der gotische Grabfund von Domolospuszta,” *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve* (1956): 104–130.

³⁷ Database of the National Office for Cultural Heritage, Hungary (identification number: 21326.).

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as well.³⁸ In the fifth century, significant burials often appeared near earlier Roman sites—like cauldrons of the Hunnic period³⁹—but their relation to the settlements is still unknown.

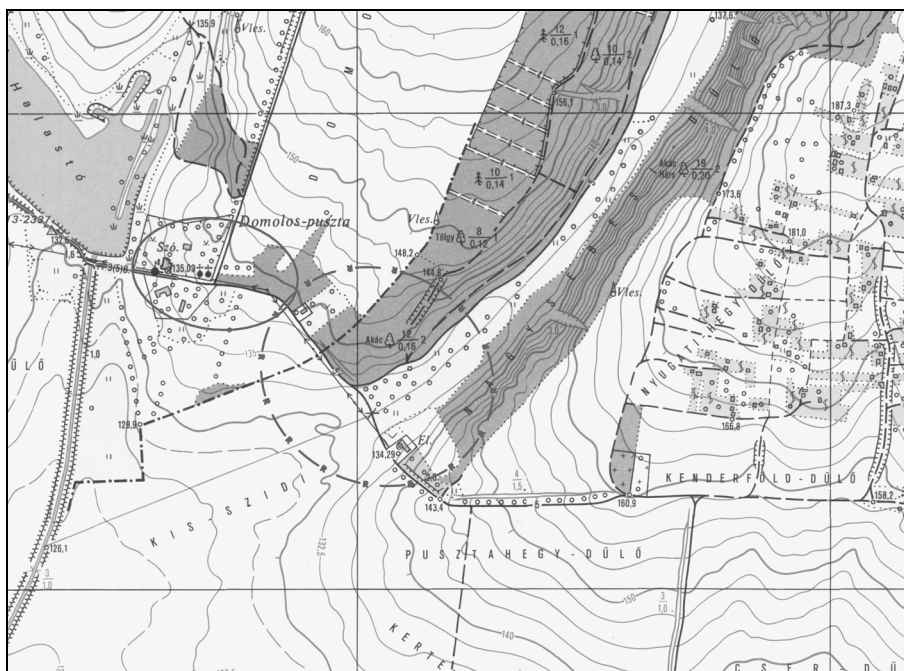


Fig. 3. Szigetvár-Zsibót-Domolospusztá
 — = 5th century grave; -R- = the site of the supposed Roman villa
 (after Dombay 1956 and the Database of the National Office for Cultural Heritage,
 Hungary; map number: EOV 13-234).

³⁸ The field next to the site is called “Kis-híd” (small bridge), next to the stream “Sebes árok” at the village Botykapeterd, see Frigyes Pesti, *Baranya megye földrajzi nevei* 2 vols. (Pécs: Baranya megyei Levéltár, 1982), 476.

³⁹ Christie, “The Survival,” 327; István Bóna, “Die Hunnen in Noricum und Pannonien,” in *Severin. Zwischen Römerzeit und Völkerwanderung. Ausstellungskatalog*. (Linz: Oberösterreichischer Landesverlag, 1982), 186–194; and Bóna, “Ungarns Völker,” 117–119.



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A small cemetery at Rácalmás (Fig. 1. 3)

For the sixth century, I chose an archaeological site, the small family cemetery at Rácalmás (Fejér County), which is principally known from its finds. Its precise location could not be identified due to the lack of any published maps, but it is clear from the preliminary reports that the site was east of the Roman *limes* road, that is, close to the Danube, between *Vetus Salina*/Adony and *Intervisa*/Dunaújváros. (Fig. 4. 1 and 3) This was the first site with archaeological evidence for traces of a Lombard settlement in Hungary, situated next to a Roman *burgus* which was surrounded by three rectangular ditches. One edge of the cemetery was directly along the outermost ditch. The two outermost ditches were filled up before the sixth century, since the Lombards dug two trash-pits (containing Lombard pottery fragments and animal bones) in its filling, but the innermost ditch was probably still in use in the sixth century. The *burgus* had a thick terrazzo floor and its roof was covered with ceramic tiles. Although there is no information how the Lombards might have used the edifice, it is remarkable that there was an intact *terra sigillata* vessel in one of the graves. The opinion of the archaeologists who excavated most of the site is that the Lombard population living there might have guarded a ford which was situated on the southern periphery of Csepel Island and probably existed in the Roman period as well.⁴⁰ Knowledge about Lombard settlements has been limited in Hungary until recently. It was assumed that these people settled close to some kind of Roman edifice (*villa*, *castrum*, *castellum*, or *burgus*). However, there was no direct evidence to prove this idea, apart from stray finds and some cemeteries which were situated close to these places, although this “closeness” often meant a distance of a few kilometers.⁴¹ The real

⁴⁰ István Bóna, “Langobárd temető Rácalmásán” (Lombard cemetery at Rácalmás), *Alba Regia* 1 (1960): 167–170; István Bóna, “A népvándorlás kora Fejér megyében” (The period of migrations in Fejér County), in *Fejér megye története az őskortól a honfoglalásig* (The history of Fejér County from prehistory to the Hungarian conquest) vol. 1, No.5, ed. Jenő Fitz. (Székesfehérvár: Fejér Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 1971), 232; István Bóna, “Langobárdok nyomában” (On the track of the Lombards) in *Évezredek hétköznapjai* (Everydays of millennia), ed. Viktor Szombathy (Budapest: Gondolat, 1973), 376–379 (hereafter: Bóna, “Langobárdok nyomában”); and István Bóna, János Cseh, Margit Nagy, Péter Tomka, Ágnes Tóth, *Hunok, Gepidák, Langobárdok (Történeti régészeti tézisek és címszavak)* (Huns, Gepids, Lombards. Historical archaeological theses and keywords) (Szeged: A József Attila Tudományegyetem Magyar Őstörténeti Kutatócsoportja, 1993), 159 (hereafter: Bóna et al, *Hunok, Gepidák, Langobárdok*).

⁴¹ István Bóna, “Abriss der Siedlungsgeschichte Ungarns im 5–7. Jahrhundert und die Awarensiedlungen von Dunaújváros,” *Alba Regia* 20 (1968): 611; and István Bóna, *The Dawn of the Dark Ages: The Gepids and the Lombards in the Carpathian Basin* (Budapest: Corvina

significance of the archaeological features unearthed at Rácalmás was not recognized earlier. The first well-documented sites that show a more detailed picture of Lombard rural living conditions originated from recent excavations of the highway along the southern part of Lake Balaton.⁴²

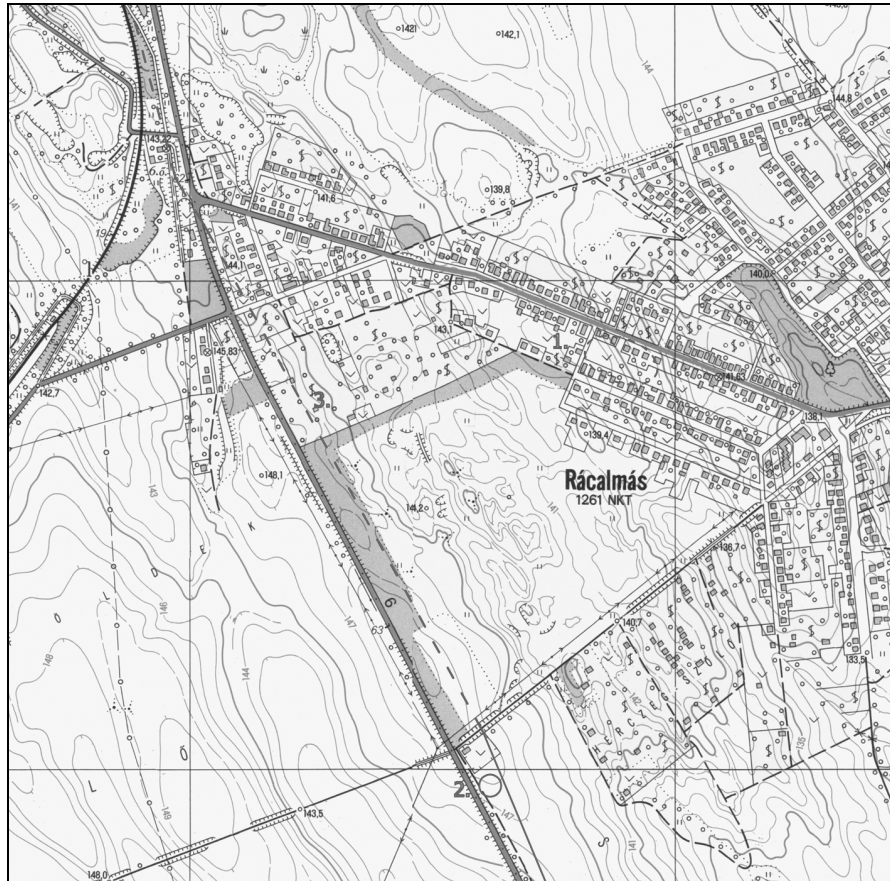


Fig. 4. Rácalmás

1 = Lombard cemetery, 2 = Roman burgus (VSA 8), 3 = the Roman limes road (after Bóna 1993, Vízny 2000, and the Database of the National Office for Cultural Heritage, Hungary; map number: EOV 45-123).

Press, 1976), 30–31. These cemeteries were viewed as the possible continuation of the Roman *extra muros* burial customs. See also Christie, “Towns, Land and Power,” 290.

⁴² The sites: Zamárdi-Kútvölgyi-dűlő (Polgár, “Zamárdi”) and Balatonlelle (Skriba, Sófalvi, “Langobárd település”).



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A settlement and cemeteries at Kölked-Feketekapu (Fig. 1. 4)

The well known site of the settlement and cemeteries of Kölked-Feketekapu (Baranya County) and its location in the landscape also deserve attention. The site was inhabited from the end of the sixth century through the Avar period by a mainly German (presumably Gepid) population.⁴³ It is situated beside the sweep of a now-dry backwater of the Danube, close to the Roman *limes* road (Fig. 5. 5–6). Approximately 1–1.5 kilometers to the north, the site of the Roman *castellum Altinum* (in use by the Romans from the first until the fourth century) and its surrounding *vicus* are situated on a small hill called Hajlokpart⁴⁴ (Fig. 5. 1–3). A Roman *burgus* was located south of the early medieval site, in close proximity⁴⁵ (Fig. 5. 4). So far, the survey of these sites has shown that the Roman edifices were not used directly by the early medieval population, but the choice to settle on this spot could not have been accidental.⁴⁶ Historical maps showing the hydrogeology of the site before the regulation of the river reveal that the Danube was split here into several channels, possibly allowing easier access to the other bank. Conceivably, the primary reason to settle here were the strategic possibilities of the place.

The following two examples show a typical situation of a number of sites where the relationship between structures or sites from the Roman and the Early Medieval period is even less clear at present.

⁴³ Attila Kiss, “Das Gräberfeld und Siedlung der awarenzeitlichen Bevölkerung von Kölked,” *Folia Archaeologica* 30 (1979): 185–192; Attila Kiss, “Das awarenzeitliche gepidische Gräberfeld von Kölked-Feketekapu A.” *Monographien zur Frühgeschichte und Mittelalter-archäologie* 2. (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1996); and Attila Kiss, “Das awarenzeitliche Gräberfeld von Kölked-Feketekapu B I–II,” *Monumenta Avarorum Archaeologica*, Vol. 6. (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2001).

⁴⁴ Zsuzsa Katona-Győr, “Altinum Castellum,” in *The Roman Army in Pannonia. (An Archaeological Guide of the Ripa Pannonica)*, ed. Zsolt Visy, (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003), 132–134.

⁴⁵ Zsolt Visy, *A Ripa Pannonica Magyarországon* (The Ripa Pannonica in Hungary) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2000), 99 and map 28. (ALT 1 is the name of a small Roman *burgus* on the map.)

⁴⁶ The Roman sites were not thoroughly investigated and unfortunately part of the *castellum* was destroyed by construction work; therefore, further research may modify the present results. According to Neil Christie, the fort might have served as a refuge for the Avar-period population, see Christie, “The Survival,” 334, and Christie, “Towns and People,” 91.

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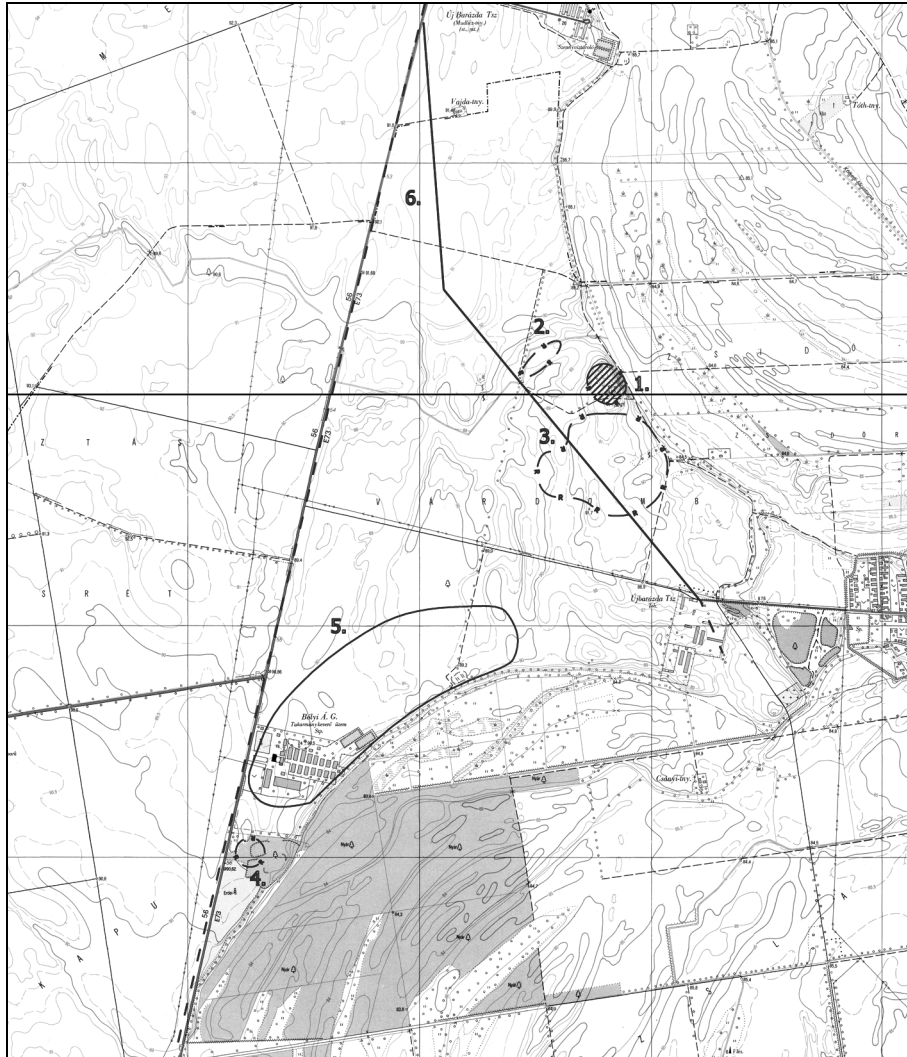


Fig. 5. Kölked

*1 = Altinum castellum, 2–3 = Roman vici, 4 = Roman burgus (ALT 1),
5 = settlement and cemeteries from the Avar period, 6 = Roman roads
(after Kiss 1979, 1996, 2001, and Visy 2000; map number: EOV 14-422 and 14-444).*



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The Roman fort and Avar presence at Tokod (Fig. 1. 5)

The Roman fort at Tokod (Komárom-Esztergom County) was presumably built during the reign of Valentinian I and was temporarily used again after the surrender of the province⁴⁷ (Fig. 6). There is evidence that the site and its surroundings were in use in the Avar period as well. Inside the large southeast tower, situated opposite the main gate of the fortress, archaeologists excavated post holes belonging to an early medieval building, dated by an Avar iron pickaxe. Every part of the surface except this edifice was covered by a thick layer of rubble from the destroyed tower, huge masses of burned grain, and iron objects.⁴⁸ In the area of the Roman *vicus*, northwest of the Roman fort, rescue excavations revealed several Avar objects,⁴⁹ but unfortunately the circumstances of their precise provenance are unknown. It is not known yet whether the Roman fort or the other edifices might simply have been used as convenient shelters or whether a more complex reuse of the sites occurred here.

The Roman villa, Roman cemetery and Avar cemeteries at Szebény (Fig. 1. 6)

Next to Szebény (Baranya County), northeast of Roman *Sopianae*, Csele Creek runs between sloping hills: an ideal place for human settlement in every historical period. A Roman villa (Fig. 7. 1),⁵⁰ other settlement remains (Fig. 7. 3–4), a Roman cemetery (Fig. 7. 2), and three Avar cemeteries (Fig. 7. I–III) are spread over a large area.⁵¹ In western Hungary, cemeteries from the early Avar period seem to have been located close to military buildings of Roman origin and next to major Roman roads.⁵² Contrary to this tendency, cemeteries of the late Avar period, when the Avars had already settled down and were no longer involved so much in animal husbandry but rather in agriculture, were often placed close

⁴⁷ András Mócsy, (ed.), *Die spätrömische Festung und das Gräberfeld von Tokod*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981), 45 (hereafter: Mócsy, *Die spätrömische Festung*) and Márta Kelemen, "Tokod Fortress," in *The Roman Army in Pannonia. (An Archaeological Guide of the Ripa Pannonica)*, ed. Zsolt Visy, (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2003), 85.

⁴⁸ András Mócsy, "Tokod," *Régészeti Füzetek* 14 (1962): 39.

⁴⁹ Mócsy, *Die spätrömische Festung*, 21.

⁵⁰ The previously assumed Roman villa was revealed by a rescue excavation. I would like to thank Ádám Hajdú (archaeological inspector of Baranya County, National Office for Cultural Heritage, Hungary) for indicating the precise location of the site.

⁵¹ Éva Garam, "The Szebény I–III. Cemetery," in Éva Garam, Ilona Kovrig, János Győző Szabó, and Gyula Török, *Avar Finds in the Hungarian National Museum*. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 50–52 = Ilona Kovrig, ed., *Cemeteries of the Avar Period (567–829) in Hungary*. Vol. 1.

⁵² Christie, "Towns and People," 90–91.

to former Roman rural sites. This is also the case at Szebény. Although the relations between these sites cannot yet be explained, in addition to other possibilities it seems likely that the use of the Roman landscape (including the use of former Roman buildings) can be seen here from the later centuries of the Early Medieval period. This may be an example when spatial organization was connected to the lifestyle of the population.⁵³

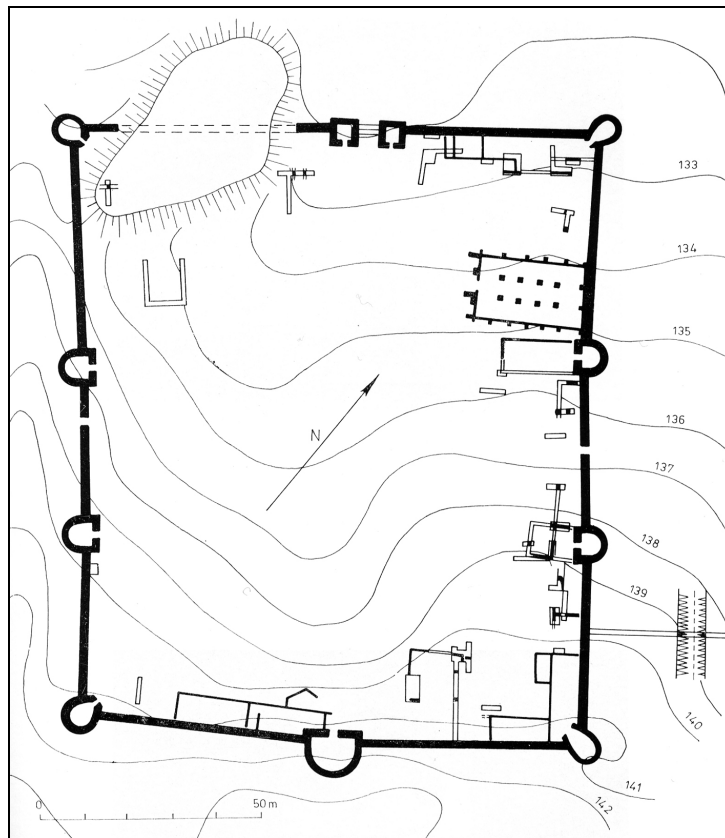


Fig. 6. Tokod
The ground plan of the Roman fort (after Mócsy 1981).

⁵³ Late Avar graves are known next to the small Roman *burgus* at Rácalmás, opposite the Lombard cemetery, while the early Avar cemetery was northwest of the later graves, on top of a huge sloping hill (Bóna, “Langobárdok nyomában,” 379–380).

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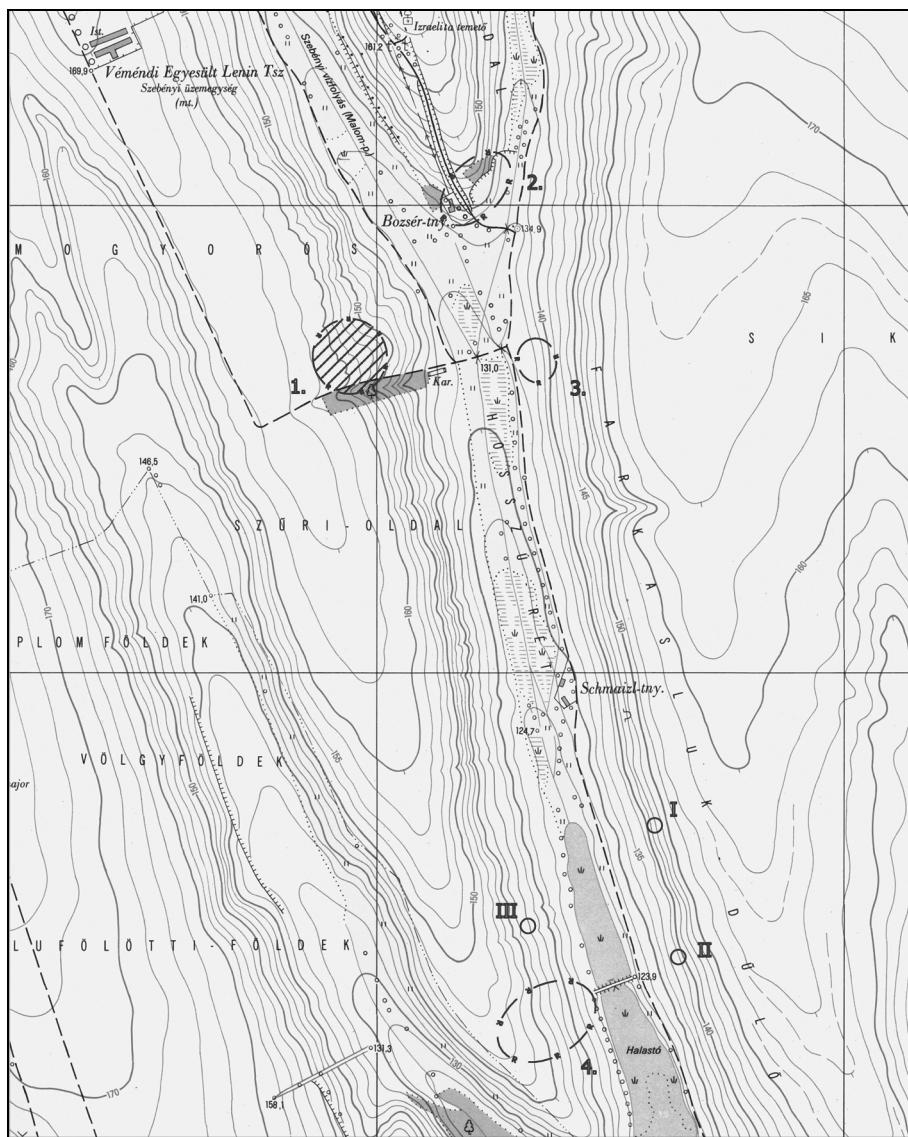


Fig. 7. Széchenyi

1 = Roman villa, 2 = Roman cemetery, 3–4 = Roman settlements, I–III = Avar cemeteries
(after Garam 1975 and the Database of the National Office for Cultural Heritage,
Hungary; map number: EO V 14-241.



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The Roman town and Early Medieval settlement in Sopron (Fig. 1. 7)

Although for a long time Hungarian scholarship has considered mainly Roman towns and military fortifications as places of continuity, the examples above clearly outline a more detailed picture. I will complete this image by citing an urban example from Sopron (Győr-Moson-Sopron County), Roman *Scarbantia*, a well-known site for the present topic because it has served as one of the best examples of the late Roman transition in Pannonia. *Scarbantia* was located next to the Amber Road, approximately half-way between *Savaria* (modern Szombathely) and *Carnuntum* (Deutsch-Altenburg) or *Vindobona* (Vienna). The settlement attained the rank of a *municipium* during the Flavius dynasty; canalization, paving the streets, and rebuilding the houses in stone took place in the same period.⁵⁴ However, the town was encircled with a stone wall only in the fourth century.⁵⁵ Around the *forum* several archaeological finds have come to light which reveal the changes in the late and post-Roman periods (Fig. 8). During the fourth century some of the nearby houses were rebuilt, others were demolished, and wooden edifices were constructed. From the next century, wooden houses with stone foundations, some of them with simple floor- and wall-heating are known, which do not fit into the earlier street system and partly overlap with the Roman buildings.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ János Gömöri, "Recent Archaeological Finds Concerning the Topography of Scarbantia," in *La Pannonia e l'Impero Romano. Annuario dell'Accademia d'Ungheria* (Rome: Accademia d'Ungheria, 1994), 251 (hereafter: Gömöri, "Recent Archaeological Finds"); and János Gömöri, "Sopron – Municipium Flavium Scarbantia," in *Pannonia Hungarica Antiqua*, ed. Gyula Hajnóczi, Tamás Mezős, Mihály Nagy, Zsolt Visy (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 1995) 23.

⁵⁵ Klára Sz. Póczy, "Scarbantia városfalának korhatározása" (Dating the town walls of Scarbantia), *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 94 (1976): 142 and 150–151.

⁵⁶ These early medieval buildings are presently known only from short preliminary reports or by their topographic location. Concerning these edifices, see Imre Holl, Gyula Nováki, Klára Póczy, "Városfalmaradványok a soproni Fabricius-ház alatt" (Remains of town walls under the Fabricius house in Sopron), *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 89 (1962): 47–67; János Gömöri, "Sopron, Fabricius ház (Beloianisz tér 6)," *Régészeti Füzetek* 25 (1972): 38–39; János Gömöri, "Sopron-Városház u.," *Régészeti Füzetek* 37 (1984): 56; János Gömöri, "Sopron-Városház u.," *Régészeti Füzetek* 38 (1985): 48–49; János Gömöri, "Scarbantia foruma" (The forum of Scarbantia), *Soproni Szemle* 39 (1985): 1–24; János Gömöri, Grabungen auf dem Forum von Scarbantia (1979–1982)," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 38 (1986): 343–396; János Gömöri, "Neue Erkenntnisse zur Topographie des Forums in Scarbantia," *Carnuntum Jahrbuch* (1991): 57–70 (hereafter: Gömöri: "Topographie des Forums"); Gömöri, "Recent Archaeological Finds," 251–261; János Gömöri, "Sopron, Városház utcai régészeti park," *Régészeti*



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Since the Roman town has been relatively well excavated (mainly with test soundings), it is increasingly apparent that in the late and post-Roman periods town life was restricted to the area of the *forum* and its surroundings. On the basis of the available data it is clear that the life of the town between the fourth and sixth centuries was not without change. Changes in the fourth century (right up to the early 500s) definitely followed the general flow of history and the inner structural changes of the whole empire. Understanding the period between the 420s/430s and the second half of the sixth century seems, however, more difficult. Most of the (as yet unprocessed) finds from the dated buildings are pottery with smoothed-in line decorations, which, according to the excavator, originated from several periods.⁵⁷ More precise dating will be available only after a thorough, systematic investigation of all the late and post-Roman material (which is quite numerous from all over the *forum*). Although some scholars connect these objects to later squatters and call it the “poor cottage period,” life in the town was seemingly continuous in the fifth century, although in a totally different way than in the Roman age. The break came only in the sixth century.⁵⁸

*kutatások Magyarországon (Archaeological Investigations in Hungary) 1999 (Budapest, 2002): 244–245; János Gömöri, “Von Scarbantia zu Sopron (Die Frage der Kontinuität),” in Zwischen Römersiedlung und mittelalterlicher Stadt. Archäologische Aspekte zur Kontinuitätsfrage. ed. Sabine Felgenhauer-Schmiedt, Alexandrine Eibner, Herbert Knittler. Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich 17 (2001): 223–231; Klára Sz. Póczy, “Sopron, Szent György u. 3,” *Régészeti Füzetek* 24 (1971): 37–38; Klára Póczy, “Die Anfänge der Urbanization in Scarbantia,” *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 23 (1971): 93–110; Klára Sz. Póczy, “Sopron, Városház u. 7,” *Régészeti Füzetek* 26 (1973): 46–47; Klára Sz. Póczy, *Scarbantia. Sopron in the Roman Period* (Budapest: Corvina, 1977); Péter Tomka, “Sopron, Új u. 23–25,” *Régészeti Füzetek* 24 (1971): 72; Sándor Tóth, “Sopron, Városház utca (Mozi),” *Régészeti Füzetek* 23 (1970): 33–35; Sándor Tóth, “Sopron, Városház u. (Mozi),” *Régészeti Füzetek* 24 (1971): 51–52; and Sándor Tóth, “Sopron, Városház u. (Mozi),” *Régészeti Füzetek* 25 (1972): 55. To establish their chronology and relationship to spatial organization will be possible only after a detailed elaboration of the finds and a structural analysis of the sites.*

⁵⁷ Sándor Tóth, “Sopron, Városház u. (Mozi),” *Régészeti Füzetek* 24 (1971): 51–52.

⁵⁸ As indicated by remains of camp fires and animal bones from the layers right above the pavement of the Roman forum, life in this period was not similar to the earlier Roman way of life, see János Gömöri, “Sopron, Új u. Szt. György u. sarok” *Régészeti Füzetek* 35 (1982): 52–53, and Gömöri “Topographie des Forums,” 65–66.

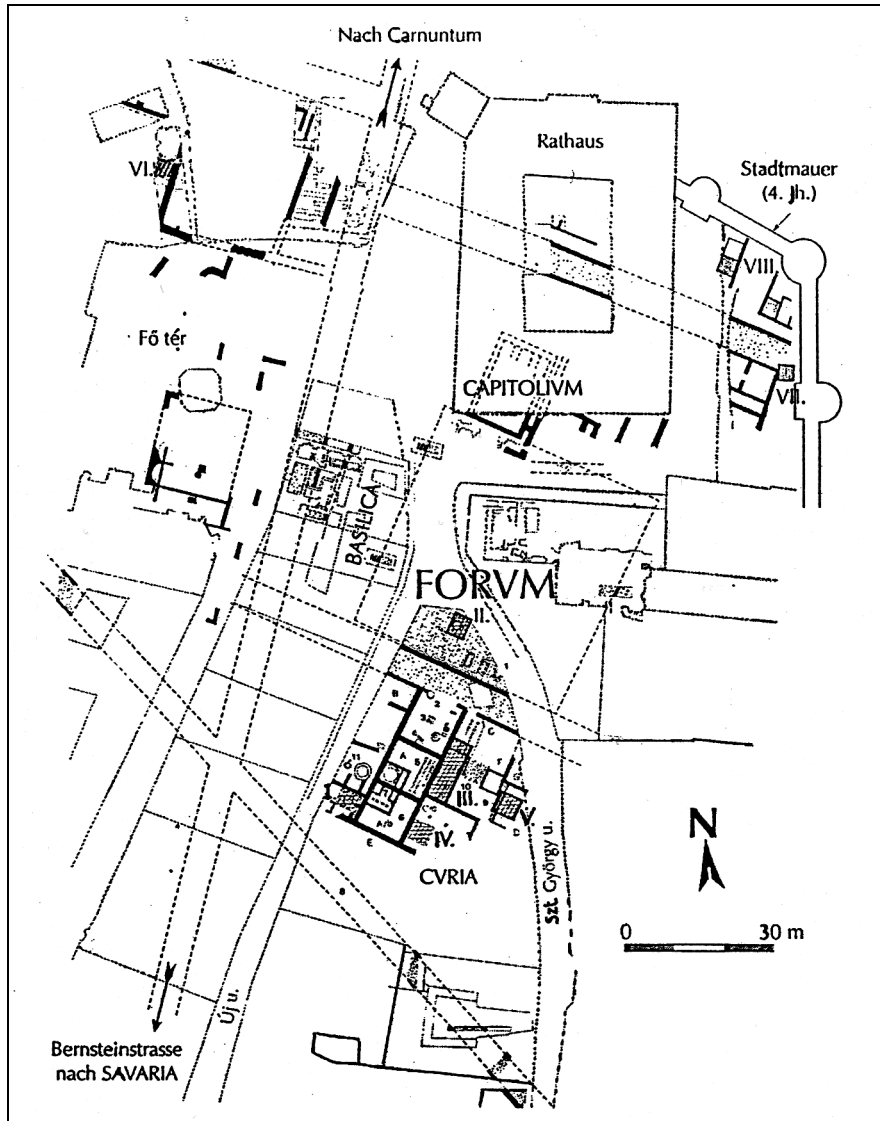


Fig. 8. Sopron

The ground plan of the Roman forum and its surroundings, with the places where the Early Medieval edifices were found (I–VIII) (after Gömöri 2001).

Concerning the question of squatters or barbarian immigrants, I have to add that ethnic identification is rather difficult even during the Roman age. The native



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inhabitants and those who moved in from all over the empire did not form a homogeneous ethnic group. Before the great migrations in Pannonia in the fifth to eighth centuries, there could have been a slow assimilation process which also included the *foederati* who moved in during the fourth century and settled among the culturally more-or-less already homogeneous native people. The change in the Roman buildings and how they used the landscape in the late Classical period is not necessarily the consequence of the appearance of new ethnic groups, but may have been determined by new living conditions.⁵⁹ When the central administration system of the empire collapsed, the towns of Pannonia, as most towns in the empire, followed their own ways in a kind of reflection of the historical changes. Therefore, when investigating continuity in the case of an urban site, one has to focus on the changes. The final picture will be heterogeneous because scholars will surely face traces of demolition and continuity equally in the very same period when analyzing the various archaeological sites in a town.⁶⁰

Concerning *Scarbantia*, habitation during the sixth century was clearly demonstrated by an S-shaped brooch from the filling of a later building from the Lombard period and several unpublished pottery fragments of same type as those known from the nearby cemeteries of the so-called Hegykő group.⁶¹ Archaeological excavations have revealed only limited evidence to show a possible Christian community in the settlement.⁶² Buildings with undoubted ecclesiastical function are not known, but some features may be interpreted as a reference to certain liturgical elements.⁶³ Moreover, if one accepts that the reports of the Councils in Grado in 572 and 577 really refer to a practicing bishop in *Scarbantia* (which is debated), the town should still have had a living Christian community in at least the mid-sixth century.⁶⁴ Additionally, Klára

⁵⁹ Christie, "Towns, Land and Power," 279–280.

⁶⁰ Brian Ward-Perkins, "Urban continuity?" in *Towns in Transition*, eds. Neil Christie and Simon T. Loseby. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), 1–2.

⁶¹ Péter Tomka, "Sopron, Új u. 23-25," *Régészeti Füzetek* 24 (1971): 72. It is possible that the S-brooch could also be connected to the archaeological material of the Hegykő-group, Bóna et al., *Hunok, Gepidák, Langobárdok*, 148–149.

⁶² The late Roman cemeteries of the settlement have not yet been published.

⁶³ The floor of the house where the S-shaped brooch came to light also yielded a floor tile with a scratched-in male figure, probably a saint with blessing hands and a halo. Pieces of an altar (red and white marble) were found in the next layer, that is, from the previous period, not far from this house, see János Gömöri, "Scarbantia foruma," *Soproni Szemle* 39 (1985): 18–19; and János Gömöri, "Sopron-Új u.-Szent Görgy u. sarok," *Régészeti Füzetek* 36 (1983), 47.

⁶⁴ Endre Tóth, "Vigilius episcopus Scaravaciensis," *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 26 (1974): 269–275.



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Póczi has excavated the remains of a wooden construction outside the Roman town wall (to the east): a 12-meter long, single-room building with a double row of central pillars and a stone dais at its north end. Under and around this building there were late Roman burials. The excavator interpreted the building as a sixth-century chapel.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, and despite the attestations of the previous examples, the major structures of the late antique town (including also the ecclesiastical buildings)—unlike many other cases in the central provinces—did not organize the space in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Hungarians built one of their county centers here. Although this early Árpáadian-age earthwork castle followed the lines of the partly still-standing Roman walls (also incorporating them into the new defense system), space was otherwise organized fully independently from the late Roman or late Classical systems simply because urban life in *Scarbantia* ceased in the sixth century at the latest.⁶⁶

Conclusions

Based on the investigations of the last few decades and seen in the examples above it is becoming more and more obvious that the situation in the late Roman and early medieval periods, as well as the transition between the two, was more complex and complicated than previously thought. It is not so easy to think or talk about clearly defined periods or ethnically or culturally separable populations; the division lines are blurred. The goals of the research reported here are better detection, documentation, and understanding of the changes and transitions. Even continuity hides a structured system of events; if it can be proved at one site, it does not mean that it is valid for the whole former political or geographical unit. Detecting local continuities and understanding their nature is possible; local studies would be an extra benefit for analyzing changes in landscape use over a wider region and interpreting historical events.

My examples are not well-known, obviously significant sites and structures, rather they are archaeologically elusive. These sites were usually known earlier, but the special relationship between them was never a subject that Hungarian scholars felt inclined to investigate further. Hence, the nature of relationships between sites following each other—simply the fact that an earlier site could have influenced a later one—is argued for; understanding the nature of this relationship is not easy

⁶⁵ Klára Sz. Póczy, “Sopron, Szt. György utca 15,” *Régészeti Füzetek* 19 (1966): 27; Klára Sz. Póczy, “Sopron-Városfal, Lenin krt. 104,” *Régészeti Füzetek* 20 (1967): 42; Klára Sz. Póczy, *Scarbantia. Sopron in the Roman Period* (Budapest: Corvina, 1977), 49.

⁶⁶ János Gömöri, *Castrum Supron. Sopron vára az Árpád-korban* (Castrum Supron. The fortification of Sopron in the Árpáadian period) (Sopron: Scarbantia Társaság, 2002), 49–93.



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and simple. Based on my research so far, a continuous use of the landscape in the whole territory of Pannonia is quite likely, although some local gaps cannot be excluded. Especially in the late antique period it seems probable that certain parts of Pannonia were not fully separated from the central provinces of the former Roman Empire. However, this is just the beginning of the research; the final picture may differ from that known at present. Migrating populations always had to face the results of a previous spatial organization, but how they were influenced, motivated or constrained by their natural surroundings and the various political, economic, and cultural factors in their lives to alter the landscape around them are questions yet to be answered.⁶⁷

Methodologically, for the reasons explained above, I would suggest first reconstructing local sites and micro-regions and only then building a spatial analysis system on this basis. The location of each archaeological site is important when coming to an interpretation. When investigating the relationship of nearby or overlapping settlements from various periods, one has to take into consideration the relation between a site and its natural surroundings in general. A location supplied with the basic needs for a human settlement (good soil, conjunction of different geographical areas, nearby water, and so on), despite any earlier settlement there, might have been the decisive factor that in certain cases inspired newcomers to settle there, not earlier uses of the landscape. However, the strategic position of a site in the landscape and its relationship to earlier Roman-age conditions was also surely decisive and investigations must focus on this.

It would be an overestimation to rely on landscape archaeology as a method to answer all ambiguous questions concerning the early Middle Ages; this method alone cannot suffice, even to provide a complex and reliable picture of past times. The archaeological evidence utilized in landscape archaeology and the ways scholars actually think about these questions are simply no more than analytic possibilities.⁶⁸ Still, they can all serve as additional data for a better appreciation of an era and a better understanding of the relationship between archaeological and historical data.

⁶⁷ The period of the fifth to the eighth century can be considered in a certain sense a coherent era, and is an archaeologically relatively easily definable period. Contrary to this time unit, the ninth century, which also marks the end of the Avar era, is uncertain from both the archaeological and historical points of view. The process of change in that century was already an introduction to the “real” Middle Ages, and can be related to the following rather than the previous centuries. Therefore, it seemed more reasonable to neglect it here and connect its investigation to that period.

⁶⁸ Julian Thomas, “Archaeologies of Place and Landscape,” in *Archaeological Theory Today*, ed. Ian Hodder (Malden: Blackwell and Polity Press, 2001), 181.